2018 Neighbourhood Design Survey

Shelburne

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Introduction

In the spring of 2018, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) partnered with the Economic Development Committee of Shelburne to conduct a survey among Shelburne residents and business owners about neighbourhood design.

The objectives of this neighbourhood design survey (NDS) were:

1. To determine residents' preferences for the built design of neighbourhoods as well as how residents perceive and travel within their current neighbourhood;

2. To assess residents' knowledge of the links between healthy community design (HCD) features and different behaviours; and

3. To gain an understanding of residents' and business owners' preferences and opinions about important features for revitalizing downtown Shelburne, connecting the community, and increasing tourism.

The survey results will help the Town of Shelburne plan for growth and inform the Community Improvement Plan (CIP). The survey will be repeated in five, ten, and fifteen years to monitor changes over time as the community grows.

Survey Development and Distribution

The Neighbourhood Design Survey was developed by Public Health with input from Shelburne's Economic Development Committee. These organizations partnered with Forum Research Inc. to collect the survey data from May 14th to July 2nd 2018. The NDS was primarily promoted and completed online. However, in order to ensure an adequate sample size, random digit dial telephone recruitment as well as in-person, random (i.e. 4th passerby of the general public) interviewing using tablet devices or hardcopy surveys, were used to increase the number of completed surveys.

A total of 333 Shelburne residents and 30 business owners completed the NDS through the various primary data collection methods depicted in Figure 1.
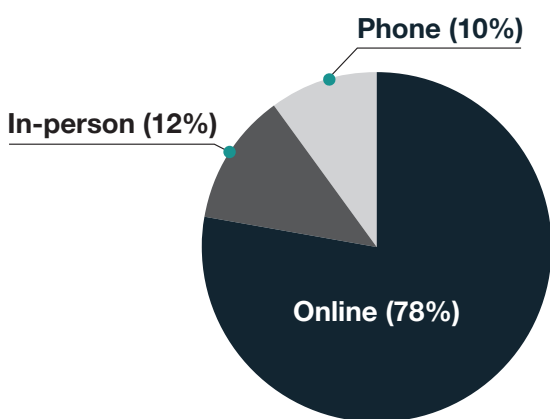

Figure 1: NDS recruitment rates from online (78%), in-person methods (12%), and phone (10%).

The people who completed the survey tended to be older in age, more advanced in education, and more likely to be female compared to the general population. To compensate for this, statistical weighting techniques were used to ensure that the survey results reflected the demographics of Shelburne as measured by the 2016 Census.

During data analyses, similar variables were combined together into one measure to simplify results and identify themes (e.g. "somewhat prefer" and "strongly prefer" combined into "prefer"). The data presented in the following sections of the report highlight key findings and interpretations of these themes. Detailed tables of all variable data can be found in the Appendix.

Background

There is a strong relationship between population health and the built environment in which people live, work and play. Communities can be designed in ways that provide economic cost-savings, promote healthy choices and behaviours, and enhance the social well-being of residents. However, there is a major gap in the availability of data related to healthy community design, both at the physical level and from residents' perspectives. Collaborative data collection and planning efforts between public health practitioners, municipal planners and other disciplines can address municipal priorities and offer significant benefits to a community.[1]

Healthy Community Design Framework

The framework in Figure 2 identifies important elements and principles of a healthy built environment and describes the links between design features, planning, and health.[1] Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health uses this framework to engage with communities to support healthy community design.

The Shelburne Neighbourhood Design Survey encompassed questions about healthy neighbourhood design, healthy transportation networks, and preferences and perceptions of downtown Shelburne features. The following sections will highlight key findings from these areas.

Figure 2: A Framework for Healthy Built Environment.[1] Adapted with permission by BC Centre for Disease Control (2018).

Downtown: Features for revitalizing downtown Shelburne, connecting the community and increasing tourism.

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Neighbourhood Design

Vision

Neighbourhoods where people can easily connect with each other and with a variety of day-to-day services.

Neighbourhood Design

Healthy neighbourhood design describes a community where people of all ages and abilities can live, work, play, connect and access amenities.[1] When land use decisions prioritize the development of complete, compact, and connected neighbourhoods, the community benefits through environmental and economic gains as well as positive impacts on the health and well-being of the population.[1] When neighbourhoods have high residential density, mixed land use, and strong connectivity, residents are more likely to to walk and cycle within their community.

For the purposes of this survey, "neighbourhood" was defined as anywhere within approximately one kilometer from a person's home, which is about a ten minute walk or three minute bicycle ride.

Mixed-Use Neighbourhoods

Complete communities include a diverse mix of land uses, including residential, commercial, and recreational development, with an emphasis on the connectivity between them. This type of community design supports population growth and allows residents of all ages and abilities to safely and easily access neighbourhood amenities, engage in active transportation, and participate in social interactions.[1]

Key Findings

- Most Shelburne residents preferred mixed-use neighbourhoods.
- Most Shelburne residents thought their neighbourhoods were mixed-use.
- Shelburne residents thought mixed-use neighbourhoods encouraged healthy behaviours.

Neighbourhood Features

Integrating features of the natural environment, greenspace, and natural heritage into neighbourhood design has been shown to have positive impacts on physical activity levels, mental health, and resident well-being, while also sustaining a healthy environment.[1]

Key Findings

- The majority of Shelburne residents felt natural, social, and active transportation features were important for a neighbourhood.
- Street trees, nearby natural features, and neighbourhood social gathering spots were items of top importance for residents.

Neighbourhood Design

Connectivity of Neighbourhoods

Neighbourhoods with street and sidewalk connectivity to residential, commercial, and recreational spaces create an efficient network that encourages active transportation and reduces air pollution caused by vehicle use.[1]

Key Findings

- The majority of Shelburne residents preferred a connected neighbourhood.
- Half of Shelburne residents thought their neighbourhoods were connected.
- The majority of Shelburne residents thought neighbourhood connectivity encourages healthy behaviours.

91% of residents preferred mixed-use neighbourhoods

Image C: Shops, services and homes close together.

Image D: Shops and services further from homes.

NDS question:

The NDS used imagery questions to ask about residents' preferences for mixed-use (Image C) compared to less mixed-use (Image D) neighbourhoods, and to classify their current neighbourhood as mixed-use or less mixed-use. "Neighbourhood C" had grocery stores, shops, services, and a range of homes close together. "Neighbourhood D" had grocery stores, shops, and services further from homes.

What did residents say?

When thinking about moving to a different neighbourhood, 91% of residents said they preferred the mixed-use design of "Neighbourhood C". Thinking about their own neighbourhood, 76% of residents felt that their current neighbourhood was more like the mixed-use design of Neighbourhood C. In addition, 99% of residents thought mixed-use neighbourhoods encourage healthy behaviours including walking, biking, and rolling to places, getting daily exercise, feeling safe, socializing with neighbours, and driving less to places they need to go.

Making connections:

Neighbourhoods (including downtown) that are designed with a mix of land uses including residential and commercial development can make amenities and day-to-day tasks more convenient for residents of all ages and abilities.[1] It is an asset when residents perceive their neighbourhood as mixed-use as it encourages active travel (e.g. walking, biking, rolling) and can result in environmental, health, and economic co-benefits.[1]

Percentage of residents who felt each identified feature was important in their neighbourhood:

80%
Street Trees

72%
Neighbourhood Social Gathering Spot

72%
Nearby Natural Features

66%
Connected Active Travel System

45%
Heritage Buildings

38%
Bus Stops

NDS question:

Residents were presented with a list of six features and asked to indicate the importance of each feature if they were moving to a different neighbourhood.

What did residents say?

Street trees (88% of residents), neighbourhood social gathering spot (72%), and nearby natural features (72%) were the three features selected most often by residents as being important. Heritage buildings and bus stops* were reported less often as important features.

Making connections:

The most frequently selected features corresponded with residents' interests in being able to actively travel to community life destinations and recreation destinations. The incorporation of natural landscapes, such as street trees, can offer many benefits including improved air quality, reduced storm water runoff and decreased impervious surface cover which minimizes extreme weather events.[1] Furthermore, tree canopy can provide an increase in shade, thereby offering UV protection as well as an aesthetic appeal to encourage active living.

*Bus transit does not exist in Shelburne, but was included in the survey to gage resident interest.

79%
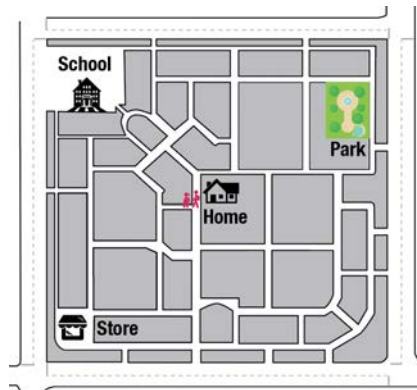**of residents think connectivity encourages healthy behaviours**

Image E:
A connected neighbourhood with grid-pattern streets and sidewalks on both sides of the road.
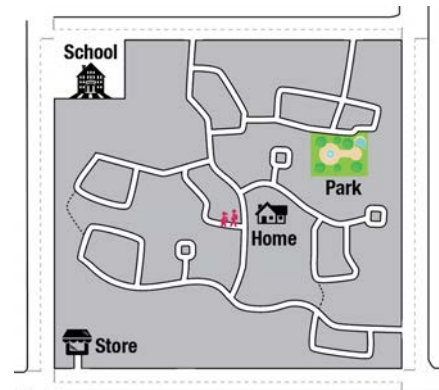

Image F:
A less connected neighbourhood with curved streets, several cul-de-saces and fewer sidewalks.

NDS question:

The NDS presented residents with images of two different neighbourhood connectivity designs. The more connected neighbourhood (Image E), was described as streets in a grid pattern and sidewalks on both sides of the road. The less connected neighbourhood (Image F) was described as a less connected neighbourhhood with curved streets, several cul-de-sacs, and fewer sidewalks. Respondents were asked to think about which neighbourhood they would prefer if they were moving to a different neighbourhood and which design their current neighbourhood looked more like.

What did residents say?

Overall, 63% of residents said they preferred "Neighbourhood E", the connected neighbourhood. However, over half (54%) thought their current neighbourhoods looked connected like "Neighbourhood E". In addition, when asked which of the two neighbourhood designs would encourage healthy behaviours: walking, biking or rolling; driving less to places; getting more exercise; feeling safe using active modes of travel; and socializing more with neighbours, 79% of residents selected the connected design of "Neighbourhood E".

Making connections:

Shelburne residents recognized the benefits of connected neighbourhoods and felt that their neighbourhoods were connected. An assessment of the physical design of Shelburne neighbourhoods via a mapping project would be useful to better understand the actual connectivity within the community. Furthermore, enhancing connectivity through pedestrian sidewalks, cycling lanes, and seamlessly connected trails networks would further promote active living, reduce vehicular modes of travel, and encourage economic development within the community.

Transportation Networks

Vision

Safe and accessible transportation systems that incorporate a diversity of transportation modes and place priority on active transportion over the use of private vehicles.

Transportation Networks

Active Travel-Friendly Neighbourhoods

Communities that prioritize active transportation are designed to offer street connectivity, continuous sidewalks, bike lanes, and proximity and connection to trails and greenspace.[1] Active transportation networks promote universal active living, but they also create safe and equitable access to amenities for residents of all ages and abilities, as well as provide environmental benefits through reduced vehicular emissions.[1]

Key Findings

- The majority of Shelburne residents reported they could travel actively to some or many locations in their neighbourhood.
- Common locations Shelburne residents reported that they could walk, bike or roll to included: park or greenspace, school, grocery store, local stores or shops, and farmers market.

Active Travel Behaviour

Various factors influence a person's decision about how to travel in their neighbourhood including perceived and real safety, fear of crime and violence, traffic speeds, traffic volume, presence of sidewalks, lighting, cycling lanes, and accessibility of amenities.[2]

Key Findings

- The majority of Shelburne residents reported actually travelling actively to some or many locations in their neighbourhood.
- The majority of Shelburne residents felt it was important to be able to travel actively to community life and recreation destinations. Half of residents felt it was important to travel actively to commuting destinations including schools, bus stops, and work.

86% of residents felt they could travel actively to at least six of the 14 locations

88%
A Park or Greenspace

86%
A School

81%
A Grocery Store

NDS question:

Residents completing the NDS were asked to think about their neighbourhood and select, from a list of 14 locations, those that they could access by walking, biking, and/or rolling. Locations included: a community garden, work, a trail, a community meeting space, a health care provider, friends or family, a recreation centre, to exercise, a library, a farmers market, local stores or shops, a grocery store, a school, a park or greenspace, or cannot walk/bike/roll to any.

What did residents say?

Overall, 86% of Shelburne residents reported they could travel actively to six or more of the 14 locations. The locations most frequently selected were: a park or greenspace (88% of residents), a school (86%), a grocery store (81%), local stores or shops (77%), and a farmer's market (76%). For a breakdown of responses for each specific location, please refer to the Appendix.

Making connections:

Residents' perceptions on whether they can walk, bike, or roll to common destinations may influence their decisions to do so. Neighbourhood "walkability" data and measures of Shelburne's street designs, trail networks, and destination locations would be beneficial to review in combination with the NDS data to understand the impact that physical design may have on residents' perceptions of active travel in Shelburne.

90% of residents reported using active transportation to at least 1/3 of the destinations they could travel to

NDS question:

For the locations residents reported in the previous question that they could actively travel to, residents were then asked whether they actually did walk, bike, or roll to those places in the past three months.

What did residents say?

In the past three months, 90% of residents reported using active modes of travel to at least one-third of the locations they previously stated they could actively travel to. Furthermore, 62% of residents walked, biked, or rolled to two-thirds or more of the locations they reported as being able to actively travel to.

Making connections:

Residents' perceptions from the previous question on whether they could walk, bike or roll to common destinations conveniently and safely resulted in active travel behaviours to many of those locations. Healthy neighbourhood design and healthy transportation networks that prioritize active transportation allow and encourage residents of all ages and abilities to walk, bike, and roll to local amenities, support physical, mental, and social well-being, and reduce the environmental impacts of vehicle use.[1]

Percentage of residents who felt it was important to be able to travel actively to certain types of destinations:

70%
Community Life Destinations

68%
Recreation Destinations

51%
Commuting Destinations

NDS question:

The NDS asked residents to imagine moving to a different neighbourhood and to indicate the importance of being able to walk, bike, or roll to a list of 15 different destinations. For analysis, locations were categorized into three general destination categories: 1) community life destinations (grocery store, farmers market, community garden, local stores/shops, health care provider, community centre, family/friends, library, and community meeting space), 2) recreation destinations (park/greenspace, trail, exercise, and recreation centre), 3) commuting destinations (school, bus stop, and work).

What did residents say?

Overall, 70% of residents felt it was important to be able to travel actively to community life destinations and recreation destinations. The four locations most residents selected as important to travel actively to were: a grocery store (74%), local stores/shops (74%), park/greenspace (67%), and family/friends (67%). Residents were less interested in being able to use active modes of travel to access school (54%), bus stop (33%), or work (39%).

Making connections:

Municipal planners could benefit from knowing the types of locations that residents like to travel actively to. This information could be used for prioritizing mixed-use and connectivity throughout the community. Aligning community design with residents' interests would encourage active transporation since many residents reported actively travelling to locations they felt they could actively travel to.

Downtown

Vision

Revitalizing downtown Shelburne, connecting the community, and increasing tourism.

Downtown

The following section outlines residents' and business owners' preferences and opinions about features for revitalizing downtown Shelburne, connecting the community, and increasing tourism. Please note, the data collected from 30 business owners was not statistically weighted and therefore does not reflect the perceptions of all Shelburne business owners.

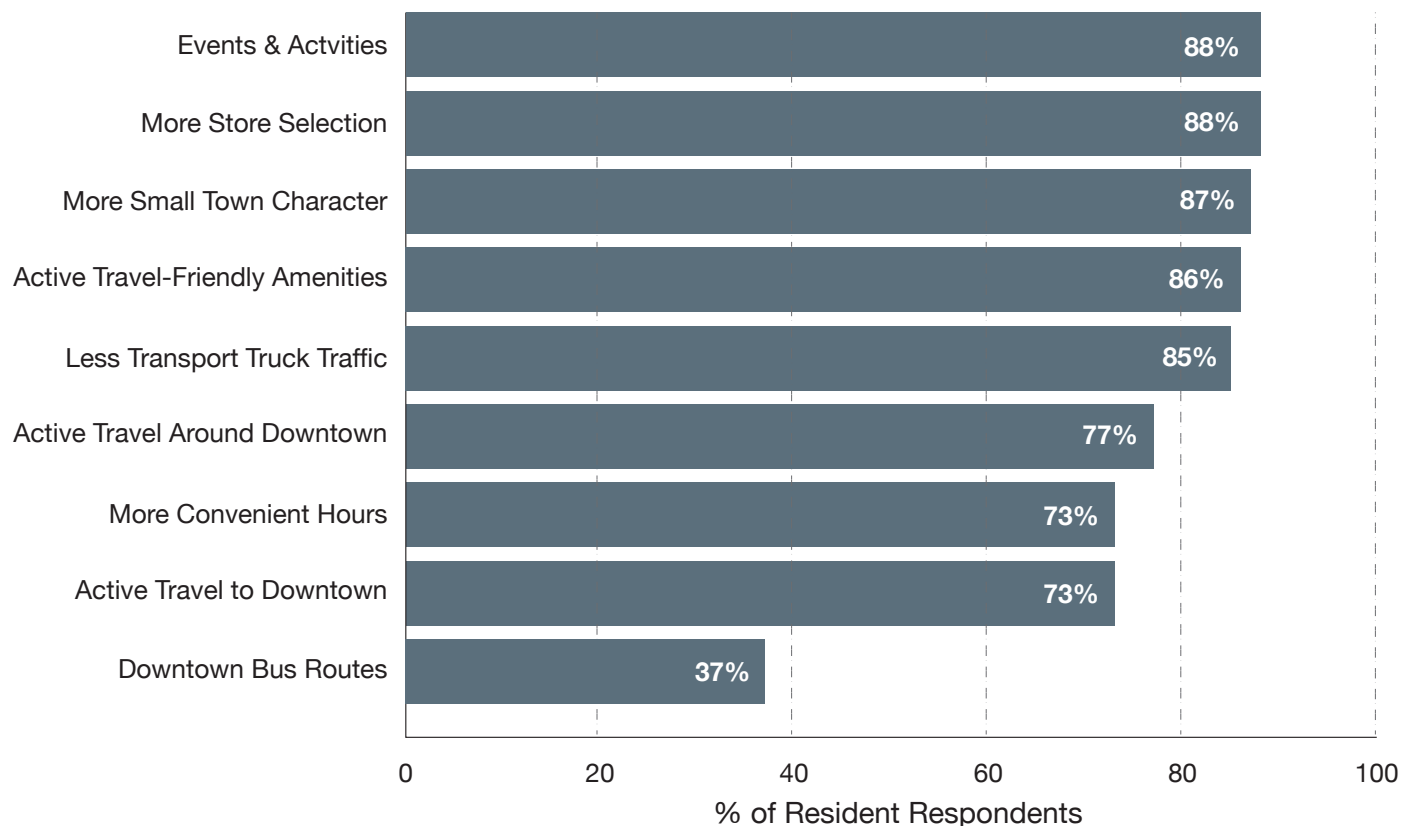## Local Shopping and Features for Downtown

Various factors may influence residents' abilities and decisions to visit and/or shop in downtown Shelburne. The NDS did not outline the specific location of "downtown" Shelburne. Therefore, respondents were left to interpret this definition on their own.

Key Findings

- Over half of Shelburne residents reported spending time once a week or more downtown.
- Residents reported that certain features like events, activities, and more store selection would likely encourage them to spend more time downtown.
- Residents and business owners would like to see the addition of particular businesses and services to the downtown core including a bakery and family dining.

Residents identified particular features that would encourage them to spend more time downtown:

Feature	%
Events & Activities	88%
More Store Selection	88%
More Small Town Character	87%
Active Travel-Friendly Amenities	86%
Less Transport Truck Traffic	85%
Active Travel Around Downtown	77%
More Convenient Hours	73%
Active Travel to Downtown	73%
Downtown Bus Routes	37%

% of Resident Respondents

NDS question:

The NDS asked residents how often they spent time downtown Shelburne in the past 12 months. Residents were then asked how likely various features would encourage them to spend more time in downtown Shelburne.
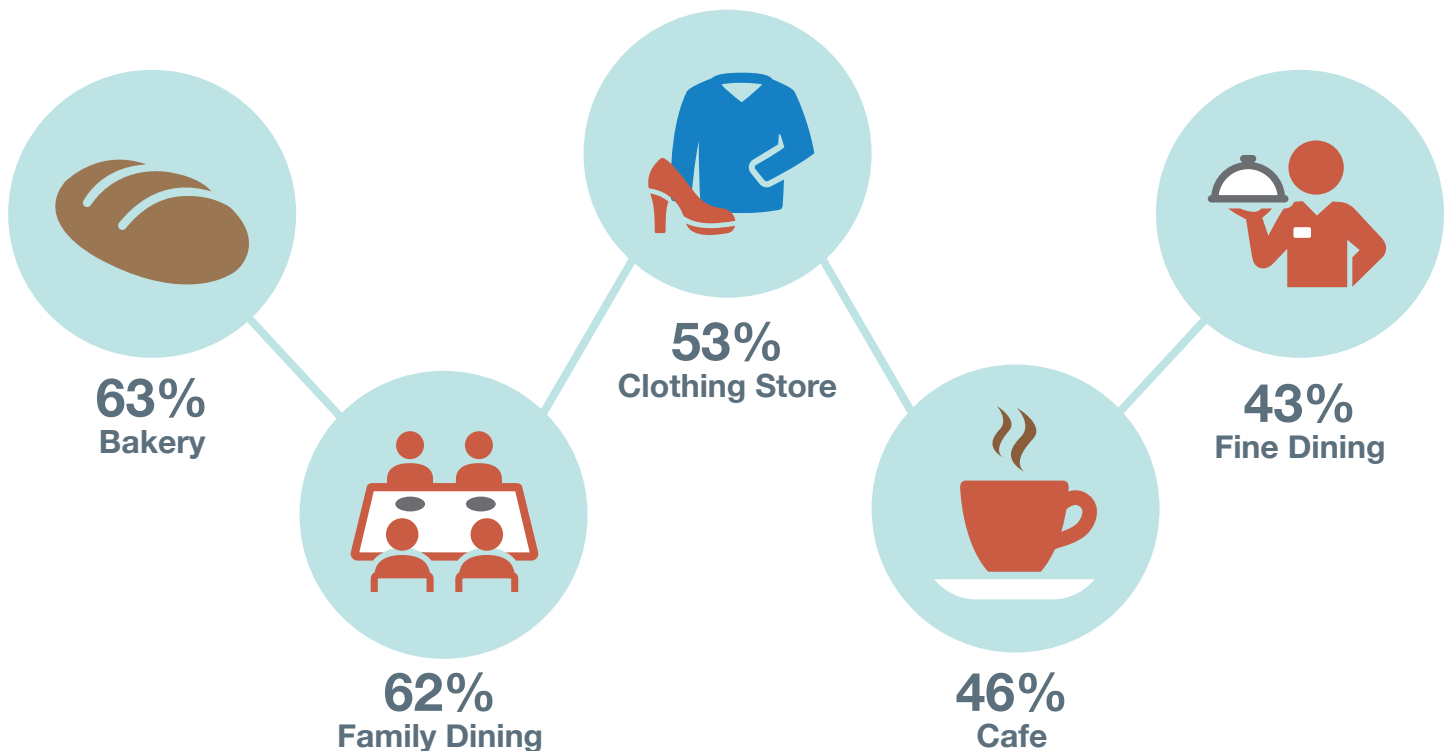
What did residents say?

Over half of residents (54%) reported spending time downtown once a week or more. The features that most residents felt would likely encourage them to spend more time downtown included events and activities (88%), more store selection (88%), more small-town character (87%), active travel-friendly amenities (86%), and less transport truck traffic (85%).

Making connections:

Once again, residents' appeal for active travel was evident as many residents reported that being able to walk or cycle to and around downtown, as well as the presence of benches, street trees, and lights, would likely encourage them to spend more time in downtown Shelburne. These should be enhanced to further encourage economic development. As various features and services may appeal to different residents, additional information about resident demographics and reasons for residents to visit or not to visit downtown Shelburne would further help in understanding any trends.

Businesses/services residents would like to see in downtown Shelburne:

63%
Bakery

62%
Family Dining

53%
Clothing Store

46%
Cafe

43%
Fine Dining

NDS question:

Residents were asked to select, from a list, all businesses and/or services that they would like to see in downtown Shelburne.
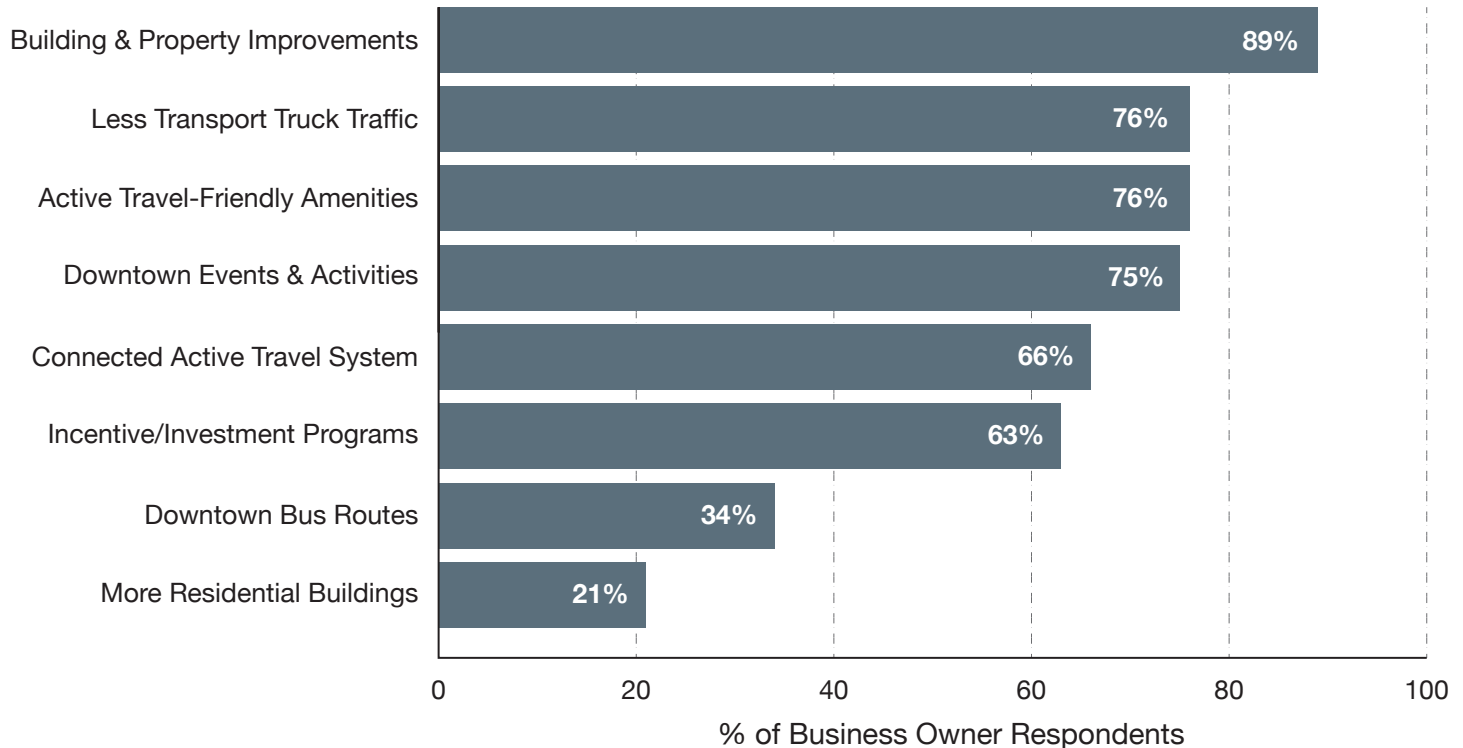
What did residents say?

The businesses most frequently selected by residents were: a bakery (63%), family dining (62%), and a clothing store (53%). The full list of interest for particular businesses and services can be found in the Appendix.

Making connections:

The addition of such businesses and services for downtown Shelburne may influence residents' frequency of visiting and shopping locally, and may benefit economic development. Future assessment of the impact these businesses may also have on residents' self-reported active transportation may also be of interest. Interestingly, business owners were also asked what types of businesses and/or services they would like to see in downtown Shelburne and bakery, family dining, and clothing store were also frequently selected.

Local Shopping and Features for Downtown
Indicator: Business owners' perceptions of features important for
revitalizing downtown

Features business owners reported as important to revitalizing downtown:

Feature	%
Building & Property Improvements	89%
Less Transport Truck Traffic	76%
Active Travel-Friendly Amenities	76%
Downtown Events & Activities	75%
Connected Active Travel System	66%
Incentive/Investment Programs	63%
Downtown Bus Routes	34%
More Residential Buildings	21%

% of Business Owner Respondents

NDS question:

Business owners were asked how important certain features were to revitalizing downtown Shelburne.

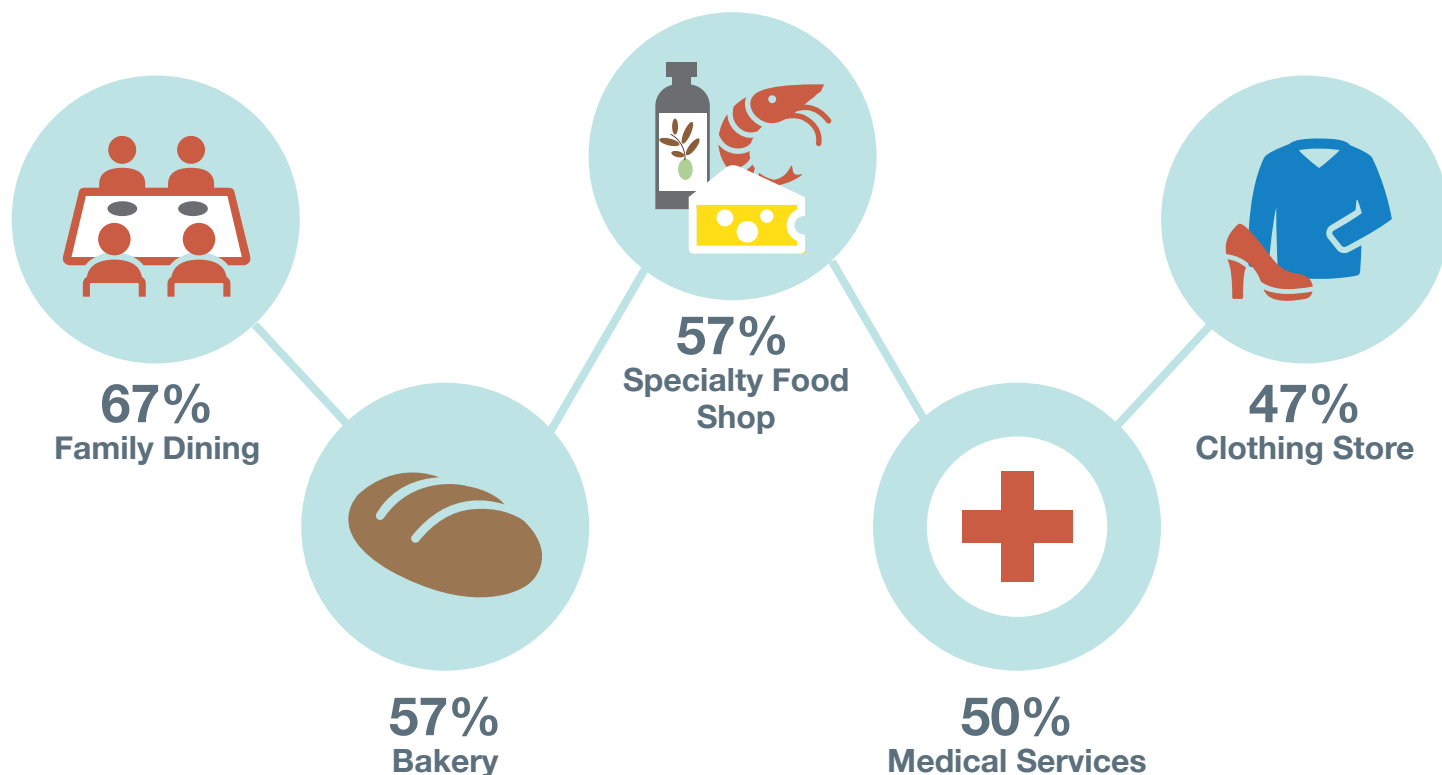### What did business owners say?

Features that business owners felt were important included building and property improvements (89%), less transport truck traffic (76%), active travel-friendly amenities (76%), and downtown events and activities (75%).

Making connections:

Incorporating business owners' perspectives and opinions into planning and considerations for Shelburne's Community Improvement Plan may be beneficial for revitalizing downtown Shelburne.

Businesses/services current business owners would like to see in downtown Shelburne:

67%
Family Dining

57%
Bakery

57%
Specialty Food Shop

50%
Medical Services

47%
Clothing Store

NDS question:

Business owners were asked to select, from a list, all businesses and/or services that they would like to see in downtown Shelburne.

What did business owners say?

Family dining (67% of responses), a bakery (57%), and specialty a food shop (57%) were common selections made by business owners. The full list and interest for particular businesses and services can be found in the Appendix.

Making connections:

Interestingly, both business owners and residents selected bakery, family dining, and clothing store most often as the types of businesses and/or services they would like to see in downtown Shelburne. This information may be useful for business planning and community improvement initiatives.

Recommendations

1. **Collect physical form data**
   The collection and assessment of resident perception data helps gain an understanding of residents' thoughts, preferences, and behaviours related to healthy community design. However, expansion of this project to include measures of physical design elements (e.g. dwelling density, sidewalk to road ratios, trail networks, area of greenspace, etc.) would complement the Neighbourhood Design Survey (NDS) responses, address existing data gaps, and help create a complete understanding of neighbourhood design in Shelburne. Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) could partner with the Town of Shelburne to support this initiative and monitor physical form alongside the NDS data in five, ten, and fifteen years.

2. **Partner on planning**
   Expansion of partnerships between WDGPH and the Town of Shelburne to include the planning department and related stakeholders involved in municipal planning can be valuable in strengthening healthy community design. WDGPH can support the Town of Shelburne with policy planning and land-use development applications as they relate to the built environment and healthy community design. One way to further this partnership would be to add WDGPH to circulation lists for review and comments related to policy matters and development applications.

3. **Sharing findings from the NDS**
   Sharing the NDS key findings with local businesses and organizations may help inform the local business owners network of resident perceptions regarding downtown Shelburne, shape and strengthen Shelburne's Business Improvement Area (BIA), and promote economic development in the community. WDGPH can support this activity by producing these knowledge translation materials in consultation with the Town.

4. **Use the findings to support economic development**
   Application of data from the NDS can be used by Economic Development Committee to advocate and plan for features, events, and attractions that will increase business, visits, and economic development in downtown Shelburne. Additionally, enhancement to the downtown core and community hub by means of attractions and events may increase the active travel behaviours of residents as well.

5. **Increase connectivity**
   Addressing neighbourhood connectivity in Shelburne would involve further exploration into the accessibility of seamlessly connected sidewalks, walkways, trails, and cycling paths throughout the community and connections to destinations of importance to residents. Increased connectivity will promote safe, active transportation options and encourage residents to travel actively to common destinations including downtown.

6. **Address truck traffic**
   The impacts of transport truck traffic and noise on residents' perceptions of active travel and visiting downtown Shelburne remains a concern and should be further investigated. Further exploration of this issue may also be recommended in the form of a literature review or evidence brief completed by WDGPH.

References

1. BC Centre for Disease Control. Healthy Built Environment Linkages Toolkit: making the links between design, planning and health, Version 2.0. Vancouver, B.C. Provincial Health Services Authority, Population and Public Health; 2018.

2. Williams, CH. The built environment and physical activity: what is the relationship? *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*. 2017; Research Synthesis Report No. 11. Available from https://folio.iupui.edu/bitstream/handle/10244/566/no11researchreport.pdf

Appendix

See *Shelburne 2018 Neighbourhood Design Survey: Appendix* document for full appendex content.