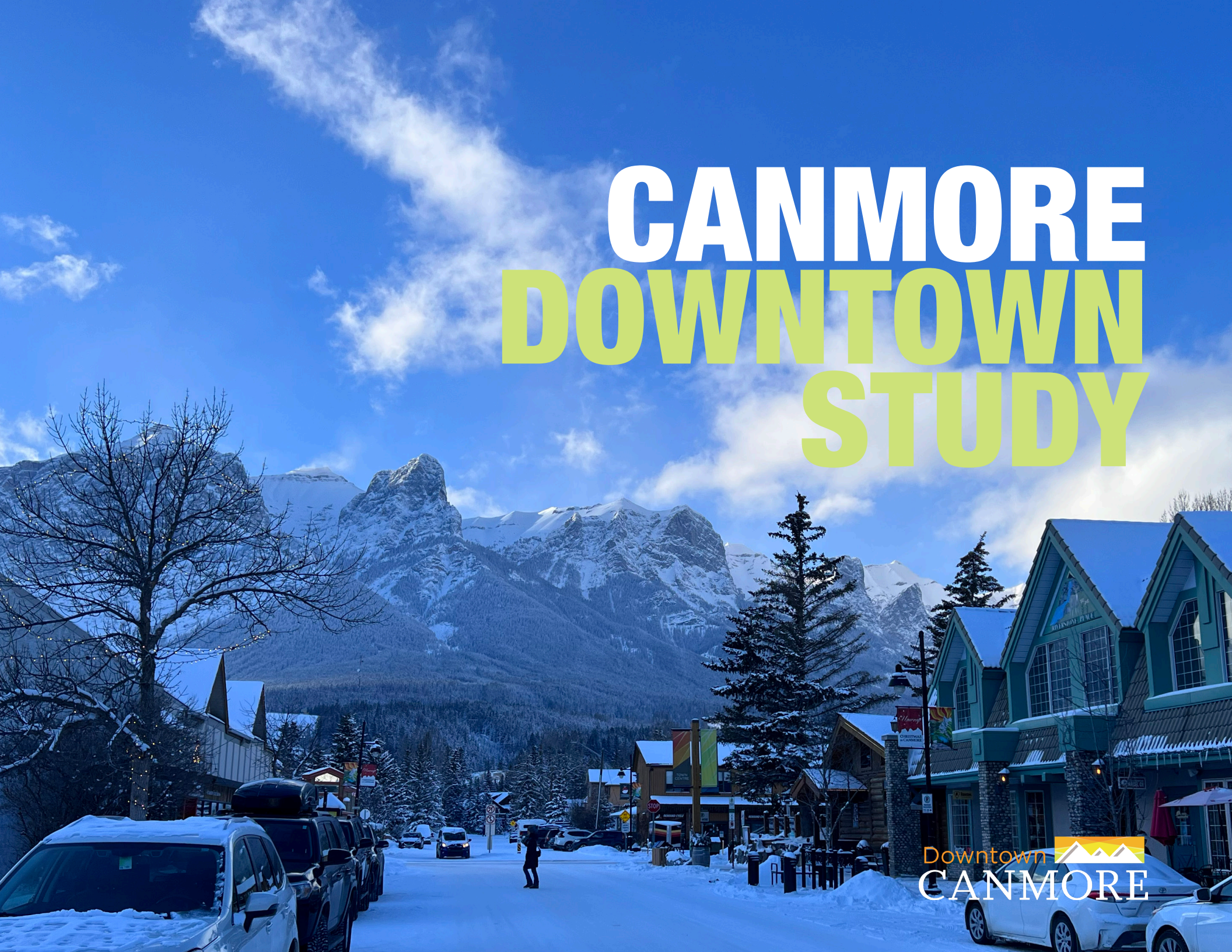


# CANMORE DOWNTOWN STUDY



Downtown   
CANMORE

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Downtown Canmore Business Improvement Area  
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**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**  
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE,  
PLANNING AND LANDSCAPE

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# Executive Summary

## Synthesis of Work

The project commenced with a thorough review of existing literature and best practices regarding sense of place studies and downtown planning, specifically tailored to mountain towns. This phase aimed to establish a solid foundation and guide the subsequent steps, particularly in terms of community engagement strategies.

Following this, an in-depth urban morphology and site analysis of the downtown area was undertaken. This involved tracing the historical evolution of the downtown, scrutinizing current land use patterns and built forms, assessing the quality of the public realm, examining mobility infrastructure and parking facilities, and constructing a digital 3D model.

With the insights gleaned from the literature review and site analysis, the team embarked on a community engagement phase. Four separate focus groups were organized for members of the Business Improvement Area (BIA). These focus groups were designed to solicit feedback on the essential elements contributing to the downtown’s sense of place using a visual preference survey and digitally altered 360-degree photographs. Alternatively, an online survey was conducted to gather additional input from BIA members using the same visual preference survey. In total, 50 participants completed the visual preference study.

Once community input was collected, virtual reality (VR) scenarios were developed using a 3D digital model of the downtown based on the findings from the initial engagement phase. These scenarios

aimed to visualize potential future scenarios for the downtown area. VR engagement sessions were then hosted where participants could immerse themselves in these scenarios and provide feedback on their preferences regarding built form and the public realm.

Finally, the findings from the VR sessions and community engagement activities were synthesized into a comprehensive summary. This summary, a culmination of the collective efforts, included guidelines and recommendations for the future development of downtown areas in mountain towns. It is believed that these recommendations derived from the BIA’s membership input have the potential to shape the Business



Improvement Area's vision and significantly influence future planning processes. The culmination of this phase involved presenting the findings to the Downtown Canmore BIA board and the Town of Canmore Area Redevelopment Plan team.

### **Summary of Recommendations**

Recommendations for the downtown's future growth and development are centered around maintaining its sense of place while accommodating change. Flexibility and diversity should be prioritized to support the town's growth, with an emphasis on preserving the downtown's unique character.

Regarding land use and density, it is advised to keep density within existing limits (11m), potentially allowing for a modest increase to four storeys with setbacks to preserve mountain views. Land uses should primarily interact with the public realm at street level, promoting an active and vibrant streetscape. Residential use at street level in main commercial areas is discouraged due to potential conflicts.

To support local businesses and increase walkability, efforts should focus on increasing the local permanent population and limiting hospitality uses in favor of more permanent residents. As tourism grows, emphasis should be placed on walkable and cycling access rather than increasing

parking, which could detract from the downtown's attractiveness.

Density considerations should be accompanied by a focus on preserving the public realm. This involves illustrating the impact of massing on the public realm, conducting shadow studies, and implementing setbacks to preserve views and limit shadowing. Additionally, efforts should be made to enhance pedestrian access, increase public seating areas, and provide amenities like quality public washrooms, water fountains, and bike racks.

Street design and overall public realm enhancements are crucial for creating inviting spaces. This includes increasing areas for outdoor seating, expanding pedestrian spaces for events and closures, and incorporating diverse landscaping with local plant species and materials, such as mountain materials for sidewalks and streets. Overall, these recommendations aim to balance growth with the preservation of the downtown's unique sense of place and attractiveness.



View of 10th Street

# Introduction

## Background

Situated in the Canadian Rocky Mountains, the Town of Canmore resided within the traditional lands of the Stoney Nakoda Nations of Chiniki, Goodstoney, and Bearspaw, the Tsuut'ina First Nation, the Kainai, Siksika, and Piikani Nations of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) Confederacy, and the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III, and falls under the Treaty 7 Territory region of Southern Alberta.

Known as Châ Úpchîchîyen Kudebi by the Stoney Nakoda, the Town of Canmore underwent significant growth and transformation since its establishment in 1883. At present, it is home to 15,990 individuals and is part of a region that attracts over 5 million visitors annually. Downtown Canmore serves as the nucleus of the community, hosting much of its activity. It functions as a hub offering services and amenities for both locals and visitors, serving as a meeting place and recreational spot. It constitutes a pivotal and integral aspect of Canmore's public realm system and sense of place..

As the town and tourism continues to flourish, downtown faces pressures for change and redevelopment. To manage and direct these transformations, the Town of Canmore Council tasked the Administration with developing an Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP). An ARP, a statutory plan, regulates land uses, densities, and infrastructure components. The ARP process began in the fall of 2023 and has an estimated time of completion at the end of 2024.

All statutory plans necessitate consultation and public engagement throughout the drafting process, with the Downtown Canmore Business Improvement Area serving as a primary stakeholder. While the Town will delineate the scope of the consultation process, involving various stakeholders to varying extents, the Downtown Canmore BIA took to initiative to start their own process of internal consultation of their membership to have a better informed and more cohesive position during the Town's ARP process.

This research collaboration between the Downtown Canmore BIA and the University of Calgary's Urban Lab aimed to prepare for the Area Redevelopment Plan process by addressing key research questions, forming the foundation for the BIA's downtown vision. It aimed to inform the BIA's decision-making process in readiness for the ARP's plan, enhancing knowledge and capacity preceding the ARP process.

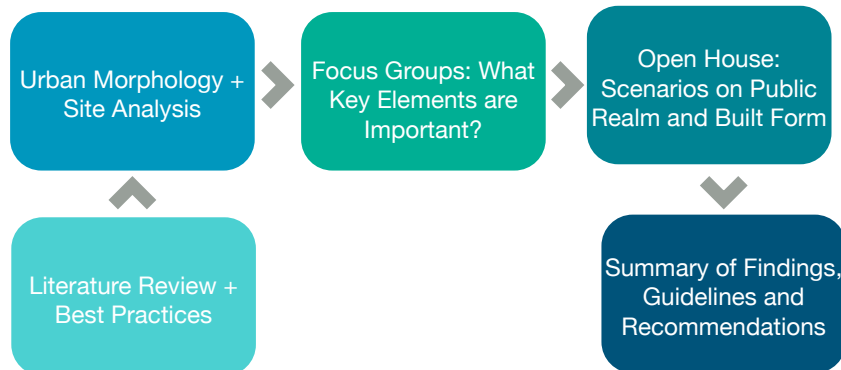
The primary research questions driving this research where:

1. Which key elements of the built environment contribute to downtown's sense of place, and how should they be preserved?
2. How can future development bolster downtown's character while facilitating affordable housing and commercial opportunities?
3. What improvements in built form and public realm are necessary for the successful pedestrianization of 8th Street?
4. How can future changes improve downtown access and enhance mobility, including walking, cycling, transit, and driving?

## Approach

The approach to address these research questions was based on Urban Morphology and Community-Based Participatory Research. Urban morphology entails the study of form over time, focusing on analyzing the current built form by understanding its history. Community-Based Participatory Research involves a collaborative approach where researchers and the community work together throughout the project stages, which is essential for projects addressing community priorities.

The following illustration shows the main project phases:



## Project Phases

The methodology for this project included the following phases:

### 1\_Literature Review + Best Practices (July 2023)

At the project's outset, existing literature and best practices related to sense of place studies and downtown plans for mountain towns were reviewed. This step aimed to establish background knowledge and confirm the approach to community engagement. It encompassed:

- Conducting a literature review on the sense of place and key elements of the built environment in mountain towns.
- Reviewing best practices for downtown plans in mountain towns.

### 2\_Urban Morphology and Site Analysis (September 2023)

Following the literature review, a morphological site analysis of downtown was conducted to identify key elements of the built form. This phase involved:

- Examining the historical evolution of downtown.
- Analyzing current land use, built form, public realm, mobility infrastructure, parking, and environmental factors.

### 3\_Input 1: Sense of Place Key Elements (December 2023)

Building on the previous phase, a series of focus groups were held to



identify important elements of downtown's built form contributing to its sense of place. A visual preference survey was used to capture the participants' feedback. This step included:

- Obtaining ethics certification from the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board.
- Designing questions and develop 360-degree streetscape photographs as visual aids for the visual preference survey for the focus groups.
- Hosting focus group sessions in Canmore with the BIA members.
- Summarizing survey findings and workshop outcomes.

#### 4\_Input 2: Scenarios on Public Realm and Built Form (February 2024)

Based on the findings from Input 1, Virtual Reality (VR) scenarios were developed to visualize potential future scenarios for downtown. These scenarios were presented in an open house using different VR visualizations, allowing participants to assess their preferences on built form and the public realm. This phase involved:

- Building a 3D model of the downtown and developing VR scenarios.
- Hosting an open house VR session with the BIA community members.

#### 5\_Summary of Findings + Guidelines/Recommendations (March 2023)

The findings from the VR events were summarized, incorporating participants' preferences and feedback. Guidelines and recommendations for key built form and public realm elements were developed, serving as the basis for the BIA's vision for downtown's future. This phase also included a final presentation of findings to the BIA board and the Town of Canmore's ARP team.





View of 10th Street

# Literature Review and Best Practices

## Introduction

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is a recognized approach in urban design and community planning. It emphasizes collaboration between researchers and community members to address local issues (Israel et al., 1998). This methodology prioritizes community engagement, empowerment, and equitable partnerships throughout the research process, aiming to produce actionable knowledge that resonates with the community's lived experiences and needs. It recognizes community members as local experts and strives to facilitate and structure their input in the planning process.

Sense of place, a concept deeply rooted in environmental psychology and urban studies, refers to the emotional and psychological relationship individuals have to their surroundings, shaped by physical, social, and cultural factors (Proshansky et al., 1983). Understanding sense of place is crucial in urban planning and design as it influences community identity, social interactions, and well-being, ultimately shaping the character and livability of neighborhoods and cities (Relph, 1976; Williams & Vaske, 2003).

Visual preference surveys (VPS) have emerged as a valuable tool in community-based research, offering a participatory approach to assessing preferences for urban design and built environment features (Federal Highway Administration, 2015). By presenting visual scenarios of proposed plans or projects, VPS enables community members to express their preferences and provide feedback, fostering engagement

and consensus-building in the planning process (Nelessen, 1994; McClure, 1997).

This literature review aims to explore the intersection of CBPR, sense of place, and visual preference surveys, examining how these methodologies can be integrated to inform more inclusive, community-driven approaches to urban planning and design. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, this study seeks to elucidate the theoretical underpinnings, methodological considerations, and practical implications of employing CBPR and VPS to better understand and enhance sense of place in diverse urban contexts.

## Visual Preference Surveys

Visual preference surveys (VPS) offer a cost-effective method for engaging the public in community planning processes by allowing participants to express preferences for various design features. This technique typically involves presenting visual depictions, such as sketches, photographs, or computer images, to participants, who then rate or assess each depiction on a preference scale. Through VPS, participants can provide input on architectural style, signage, landscaping, transportation facilities, and other design elements, ultimately aiding in consensus-building and decision-making (Federal Highway Administration, 2015).

Public participation in visual preference surveys varies depending on the

survey format. This may involve focus groups, public hearings, or display areas where participants can provide feedback through interviews or rating forms (Federal Highway Administration, 2015).

Visual preference surveys complement other survey techniques and can be integrated into various community engagement activities, such as public meetings, vision development sessions, and charrettes (Federal Highway Administration, 2015).

Stanley King et al. (1989) emphasize the importance of visual information as a universal language that facilitates communication across diverse backgrounds. They argue that visualization provides a common ground for both technical and non-technical participants.

Anton Nelessen (1994) introduces the Visual Preference Survey™ (VPS) as a method for articulating community residents' impressions of their present community to inform future development. The VPS uses photographic images rated by participants to build consensus on the desired design of future development.

McClure (1997) presents the Photo Portfolio method, adapted from Nelessen's VPS, as a tool for focused group decision-making. Additionally, McClure describes the Citizen Murals method, which encourages creativity and captures community insights through large multimedia pictures.

Preference surveys, such as those described by McClure, offer

accessibility to participants of various backgrounds and technical abilities. These methods foster hands-on participation and group interaction, making them user-friendly and cost-effective.

While photograph-based methods like VPS are effective for initial planning and consensus-building, they may have limitations in evaluating complex projects or later-stage developments. Computer photo imaging offers advanced capabilities for representing design elements in the context of the built environment and has been successfully utilized in community design workshops.

Computer-aided photo manipulation enhances group decision-making processes by allowing participants to visualize design changes realistically. This technology has proven effective in facilitating discussions and achieving meaningful contributions from visually informed audience participants (Federal Highway Administration, 2015; Stanley King et al., 1989; Anton Nelessen, 1994; McClure, 1997).

### **Precedent Research**

Conducting thorough precedent research for urban design guidelines in mountain towns is essential for several reasons:

1. Contextual Understanding: Mountain towns possess unique geographical, environmental, and cultural characteristics that influence urban design. By researching precedents, planners gain insights into successful design solutions tailored to mountainous terrain, such as

addressing unique heritage, preserving natural features and views, and integrating with the surrounding landscape.

2. Learning from Experience: Precedent research allows planners to learn from past successes and failures in urban design within similar mountainous settings. By studying case studies of projects in mountain towns, planners can identify best practices, innovative approaches, and lessons learned, which can inform the development of effective design guidelines.

3. Community Relevance: Urban design guidelines should reflect the needs, preferences, and values of local residents and stakeholders. By examining precedents in mountain towns, planners can identify design elements and strategies that resonate with the community's identity, heritage, and aspirations, ensuring that the guidelines are contextually relevant and responsive to local needs.

4. Adaptation and Innovation: While precedent research provides valuable insights, it also encourages adaptation and innovation. Planners can use knowledge from precedents as a foundation but adapt design principles to suit the unique characteristics and challenges of the specific mountain town. This iterative process fosters creativity and allows for the development of innovative solutions that address the town's specific context.

5. Guiding Development: Urban design guidelines based on comprehensive precedent research provide a framework for guiding

future development and shaping the built environment cohesively and harmoniously. By establishing clear design principles and standards, the guidelines promote consistency, quality, and compatibility in new development projects, contributing to the overall character and livability of the mountain town.

In summary, best precedent research for urban design guidelines in mountain towns is necessary to gain contextual understanding, learn from past experiences, ensure community relevance, foster adaptation and innovation, promote sustainability and resilience, and provide a clear framework for guiding development in a cohesive and harmonious manner. For this project, precedent research allowed us to identify a set of built form and streetscape elements that have been considered in other projects and plans. These set of elements form the basis of the visual preference questionnaire for the focus groups and open house and are the structure of the recommendations provided in this report.

The following pages include two matrixes summarizing the elements of the built form and streetscape that are covered in the various precedents. The precedent research included towns of similar size and/or conditions in North America, Europe and New Zealand. The plans included in this research are:

New Zealand  
Queenstown Town Centre Spatial Framework  
Queenstown Town Centre Public Realm Design Guidelines

Austria  
Innsbrook Urban Mixed-Use District – Urban Design

Nelson Downtown Urban Design Strategy  
City of Fernie Official Community Plan

United States  
Boulder Downtown Design Guidelines  
Downtown Truckee Plan – Truckee 2040, Lake Tahoe

Ontario  
Town of The Blue Mountains Community Design Guidelines

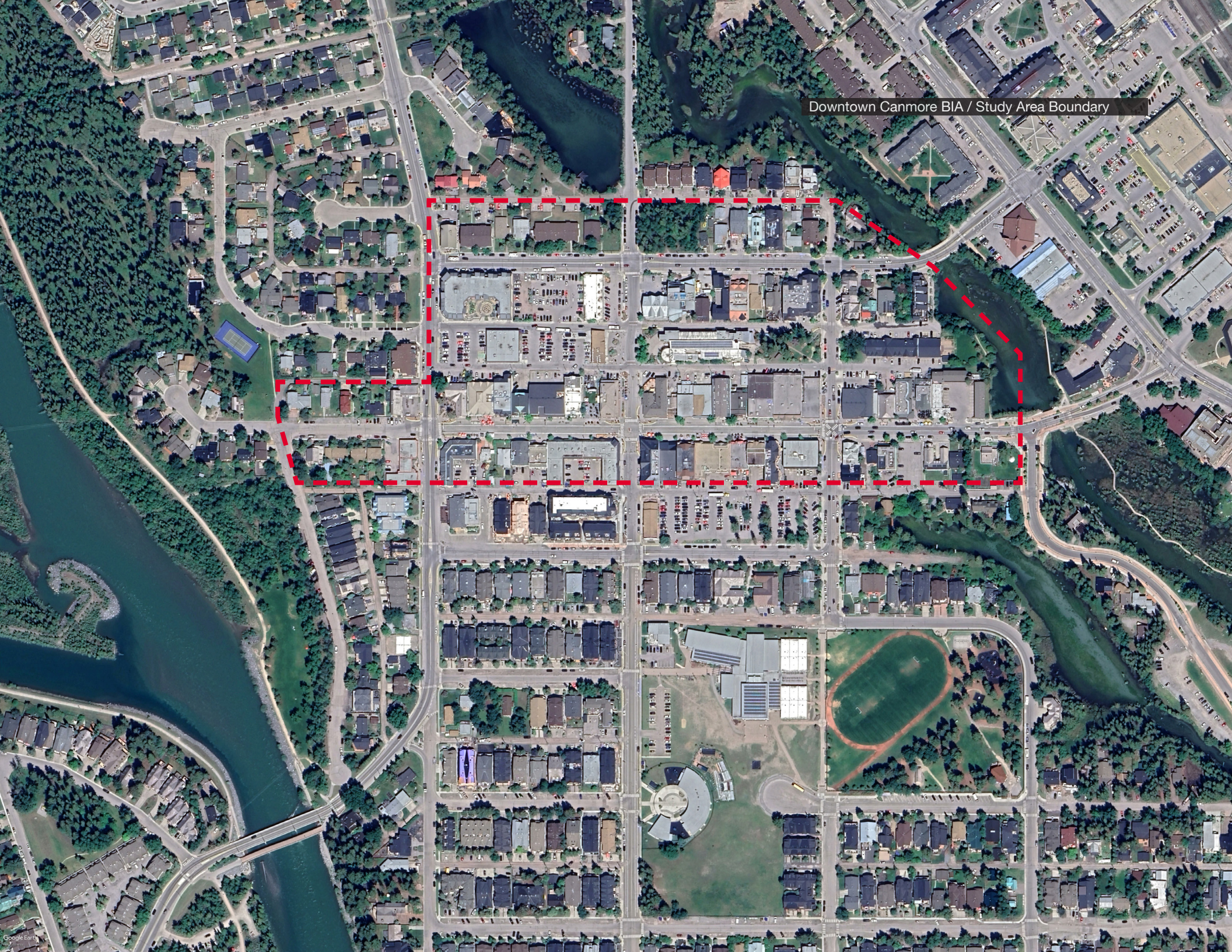
British Columbia  
Whistler Village Design Guidelines

Alberta  
Town of Banff Design Guidelines

<b>Streetscape</b>	<b>Banff</b>	<b>Queenstown</b>	<b>Innsbrook</b>	<b>Whistler</b>	<b>Blue Mountain</b>	<b>Nelson</b>	<b>Fernie</b>	<b>Boulder</b>	<b>Truckee</b>
Prioritize the pedestrian in the town centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Develop a range of street design that better balances the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles within the town centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Improve street hierachy	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Divide the streetscape into static, transition and movement zones to minimize conflicts	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Paving materials as a way to differentiate between street zones	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Lighting has to be adequate and to human scale	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Street furniture like benches and trash cans needs to provide uniformity with the surroundings	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trees/ street canopies can not obstruct views	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ensure visability of wayfinding signage	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

<b>Built Form</b>	<b>Banff</b>	<b>Queenstown</b>	<b>Innsbrook</b>	<b>Whistler</b>	<b>Blue Mountain</b>	<b>Nelson</b>	<b>Fernie</b>	<b>Boulder</b>	<b>Truckee</b>
For buildings extending over several lots, maintain original façade width rhythm	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Articulated skyline preferred compared to flat skyline	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Mostly three storey buildings with taller buildings allocated at key intersections.	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Setbacks follow the Zoning Plan of the City/ Town and/ or historical existing setbacks.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Materials for awning	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Secondary façade treatments based upon the treatment of the primary façade"	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Color: palette of earth tones, brick tones, and soft grays	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Materials considered for use as an exterior finish shall respect the nature and style of the original materials used on the façades of the prevailing historic and heritage buildings	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Flat roofs with internalized drain systems are the most appropriate	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Window: preserve and follow the number, pattern, size and scale of the ones on historic buildings	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No

Downtown Canmore BIA / Study Area Boundary





# Background and Morphology

## Introduction

Mountain towns have unique historical, economic, cultural, and geographical contexts that shape their urban form and character. By conducting an urban morphology and historical analysis, planners can gain a deep understanding of the town's evolution, historical landmarks, architectural styles, and cultural heritage. This understanding forms the basis for preserving and enhancing the town's distinctive identity and sense of place in future development.

Analyzing the morphology of existing urban areas allows planners to identify spatial patterns, land use trends, and development typologies that have shaped the town over time. By understanding how the town has grown and evolved, planners can anticipate future development pressures, identify areas for improvement, and guide future growth in a way that respects and builds upon existing patterns.

Many mountain towns have rich architectural heritage and historic districts that contribute to their unique character and charm. Through historical analysis, planners can identify significant heritage assets, cultural landscapes, and historic preservation opportunities. This information enables the formulation of design guidelines that prioritize the preservation, adaptive reuse, and sensitive integration of historic structures and features into future development plans.

The findings of urban morphology and historical analysis provide valuable insights into the spatial layout, scale, and architectural vocabulary that

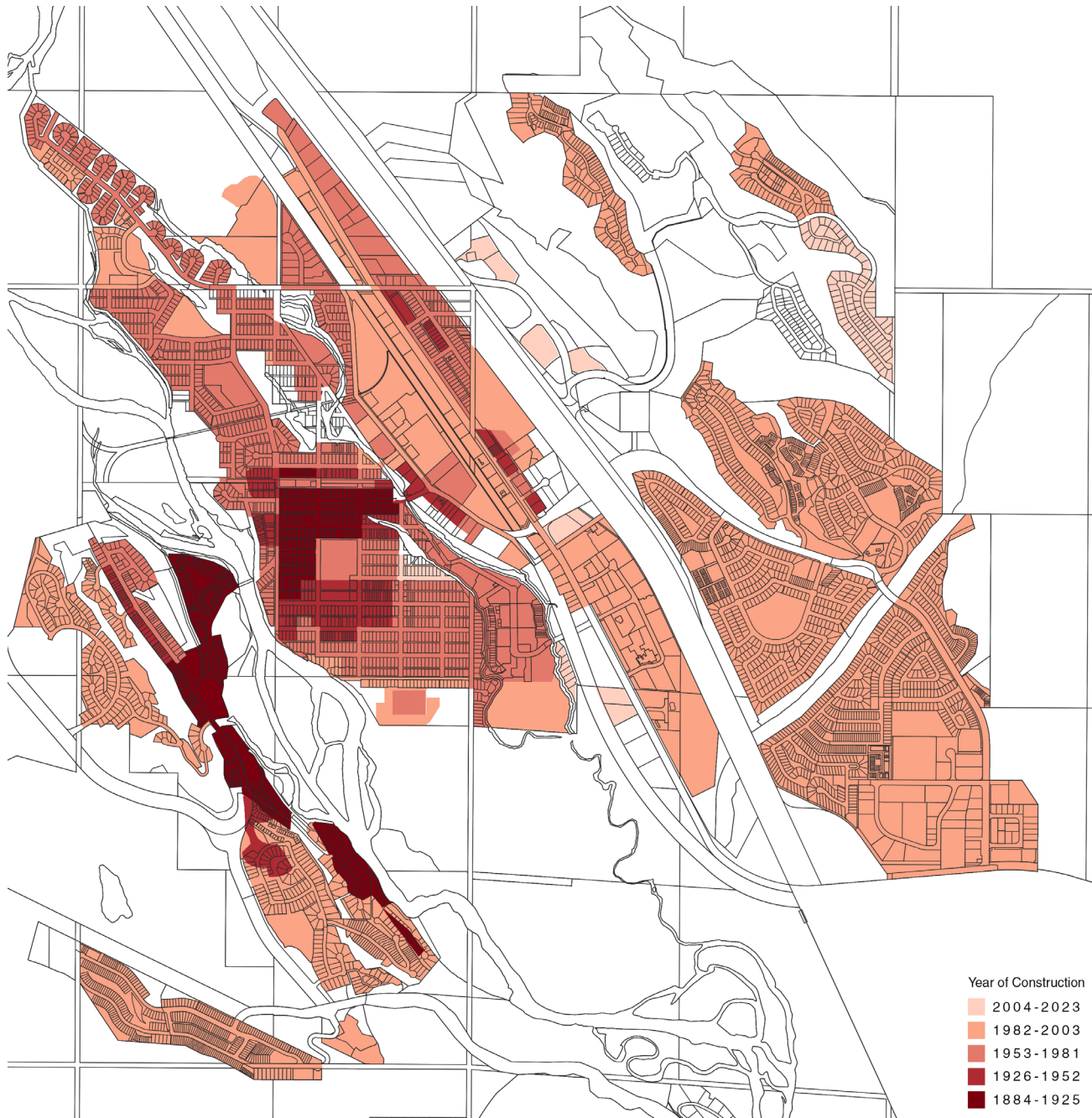
define the town's character. These insights inform the development of design principles and guidelines that guide future development in a manner that is respectful of Canmore's downtown historical context and conducive to creating a cohesive and visually appealing built environment.

## Historical Evolution

Established in 1884 alongside the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) as a railway and mining town, Canmore stands as the second-oldest site in the bow corridor. The discovery of coal in the same year spurred rapid growth, prompting Queen Victoria to grant a charter for coal extraction in 1886. Divided into Townside and Mineside, Canmore attracted miners seeking prosperous opportunities, leading to a population of 450 individuals by 1889.

In the early 1900s, the closure of neighboring mines prompted a migration of residents and structures to Canmore, resulting in the emergence of South Canmore as a residential district. Residential construction expanded across the town, with the government converting the golf course into a residential subdivision in 1961, attracting newcomers despite declining coal orders in the 1960s.

Canmore achieved official town status in October 1965, accompanied by infrastructure improvements. Although coal mining remained crucial



until the aftermath of World War II, the town's economy diversified, particularly with the rise of tourism and resort development in the 1970s, culminating in the closure of the last mine in 1979.

The announcement of Calgary hosting the 1988 Winter Olympics further transformed Canmore's trajectory, leading to significant developments such as the construction of the Nordic Center, which has become a world-renowned destination for cross-country skiing. By 2019, Canmore's population had surged to 15,745, and the 1990s saw further economic shifts, solidifying its status as a prominent service center and resort destination in the Canadian Rockies. Significant expansion in 1991 drove population growth and commercial activities, particularly in traditional commercial zones like Bow Valley Trail and Gateway areas.

Today Canmore is a thriving town with an established and growing local population, attracting tourists from regional, national and international destinations. The map on the left shows the different eras of development for the entirety of the town. The darker colour represents the older areas of the two with a very clear distinction between the Townside, east of the Bow River and the Mineside, west of the Bow River. The base map shows the existing parcels, and it is apparent how a typical grid block/parcel structure with characteristic laneways forms the downtown and its immediate context. This was the standard for land subdivision at the time, while more recent areas developed in a curvilinear block pattern with the inclusion of some cul-de-sac.

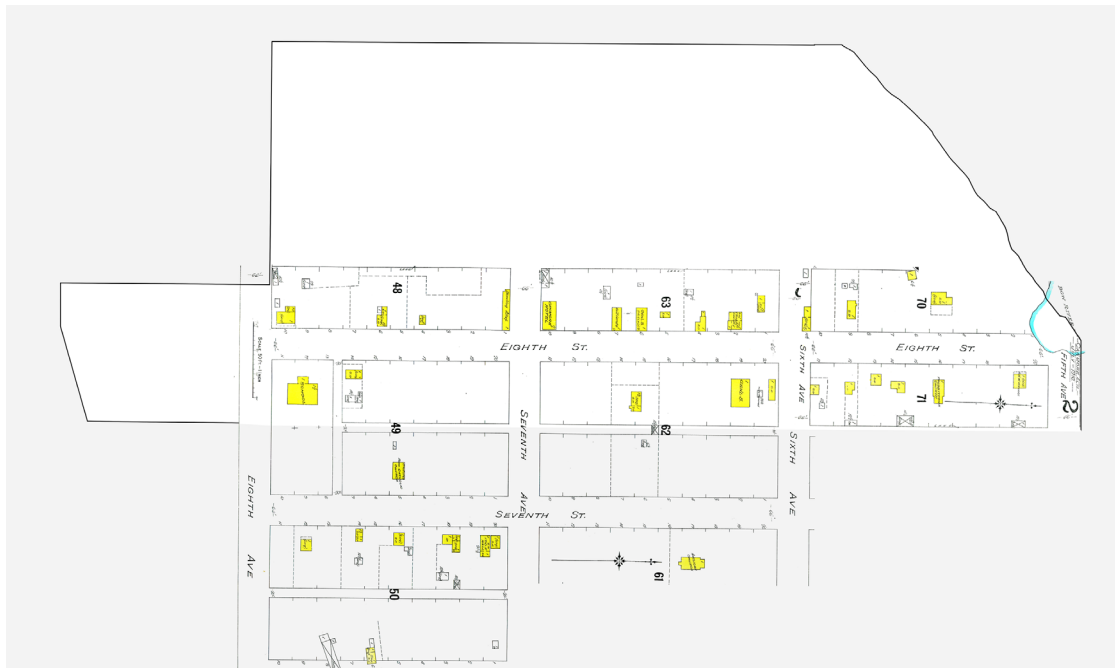
Another key observable feature in this map is the different parcel sizes

between the downtown and the commercial corridor along the railway and the TransCanada Highway. Large parcels tend to allow for different types of commercial buildings and establishments. The small parcels in downtown Canmore contribute to the small town's sense of place and the uniqueness of downtown's commercial offerings.

For the first few decades most of downtown development occurred along 8th Street, also known as Main Street. It included mainly commercial and institutional land uses. Today, Main Street continues to be mainly commercial, while 9th and 10th Streets host a diversity of land uses, including residential, services and hospitality.



View of 10th Street



## Historical Maps

The following set of maps and aerial photographs were curated from archival research and provide a chronological narrative of the history of development.

### Canmore 1884-1910

In the beginning, based on this fire insurance map, Downtown Canmore reveals a pattern of uneven development. The commercial corridor along 8th Street exhibits a relatively consistent construction rate, with approximately half of the lots developed. However, a stark contrast exists beyond this central axis. Here, vacant lots dominate the landscape, suggesting a very early stage of development and relative success. Intriguingly, some of the initial development efforts have been concentrated south of 8th Street.



[1] Presbyterian Church, Canmore, 1910. [2] McNulty Brothers General Store, Canmore, 1895. [3] Homestead dwelling, Canmore 1890s. [4] John S. Wilson home, Canmore, 1890. (Photos courtesy Glenbow Archives).



1

Presbyterian Church, Canmore



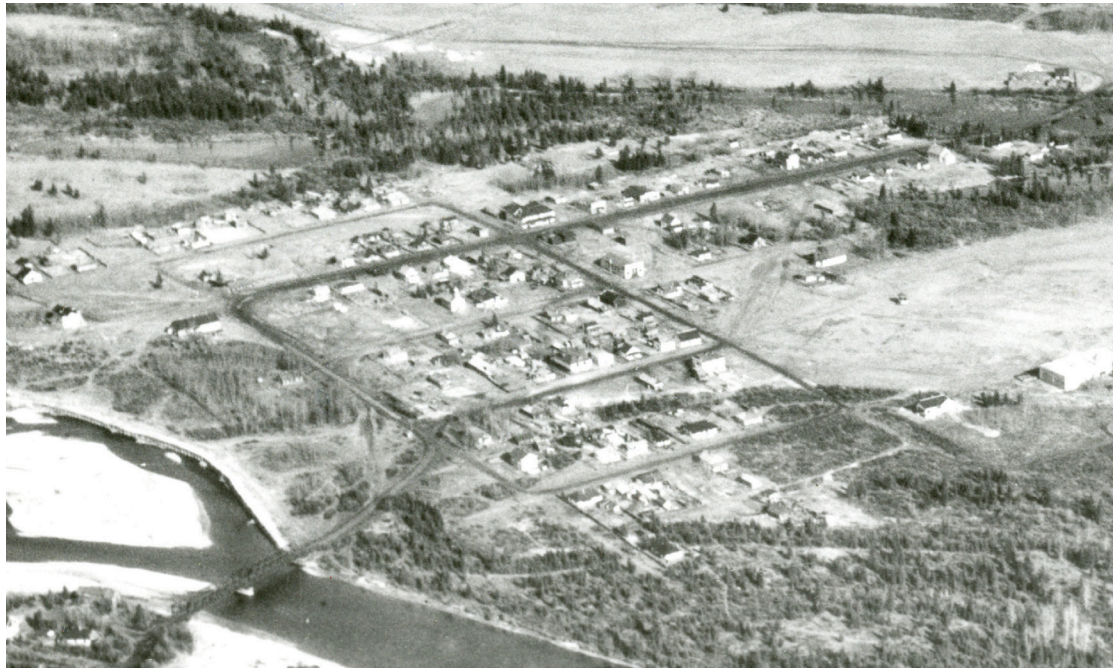
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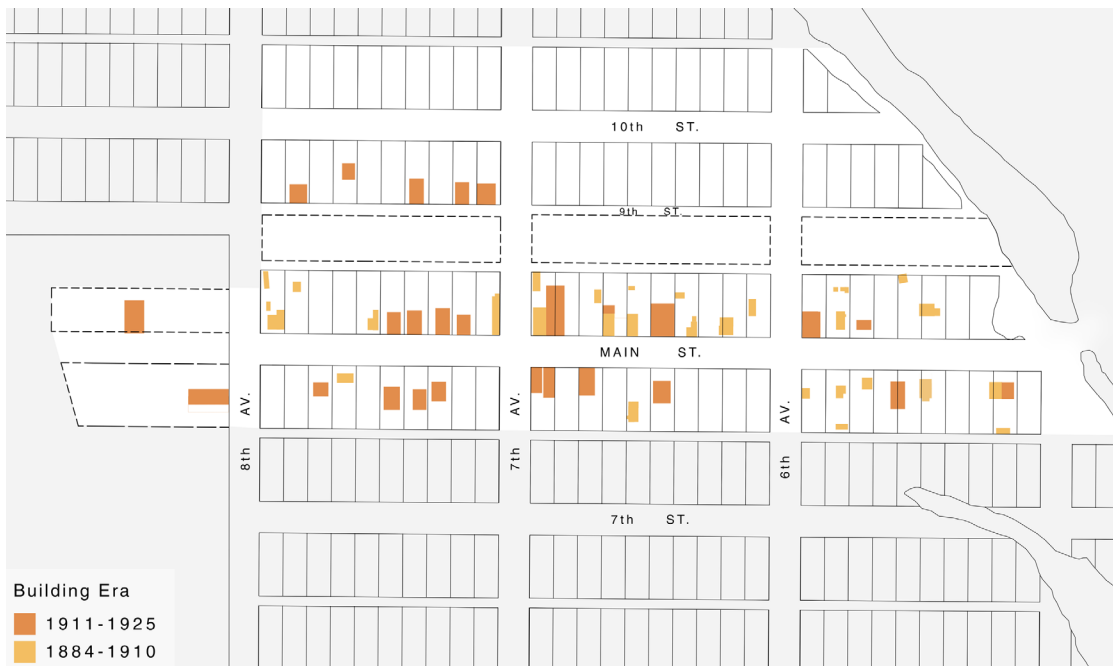
4



### Canmore 1911-1925

Despite a rise in occupied lots, 8th Street in Downtown Canmore exhibits a persistently low Lot Coverage Ratio (LCR). On 9th Street, several houses can now be observed. While new buildings have undoubtedly increased the proportion of developed land, the overall LCR remains low, suggesting a significant amount of vacant space persists. This reflects a slow-growing local economy in a time when mining was starting and was the main economic driver.

The picture shows one of the first floods in downtown Canmore in 1924. The photo is taken at the intersection of 8th Street and 7th Avenue.



[1] Bow River flood 1924, Canmore. [2] Canmore aerial view 1925. [3] Bird's-eye-view of Canmore, 1913-1919. (Photos courtesy Glenbow Archives).





## Canmore 1926-1952

A complete development pattern has emerged along 8th Street within the downtown core. All lots on this thoroughfare have been develop, with the establishment of storefront shopping environments featuring commercial units lining the sidewalks. This densification is reflected by a higher lot coverage ratio (LCR) for 8th Street. Meanwhile, the development pattern on Tenth Street exhibits a degree of spatial differentiation.

Dwelling units have been constructed on the north side, potentially indicating a zoning shift towards residential use in that specific area. Notably, these new dwellings boast a higher LCR compared to previous constructions, suggesting a more efficient utilization of land. This observed contrast between commercial and potentially mixed-use development on 8th Street versus residential development on Tenth Street is a pattern that still can be observed today.



[1] Home of Mr. & Mrs. Alf Smedley, Canmore 1939. [2] Canmore flood, 1920s. [3] View of Canmore 1926-1929. (Photos courtesy Glenbow Archives).





1



2



3



### Canmore 1953-1981

A significant redevelopment process appears to have revitalized a substantial portion of 8th Street within the downtown core. Roughly half of the existing units along this central corridor have been rebuilt, resulting in a high Lot Coverage Ratio (LCR). This densification suggests a potential shift toward a more commercially oriented streetscape. Interestingly, the western end of 8th Street, situated across from 8th Avenue, exhibits a primarily residential character.

The analysis reveals a high occupancy rate across the blocks on 9th and 10th Streets, with dwelling units constituting the dominant building type. Additionally, the presence of several sizable buildings with public functions constructed between 9th Street and 9th Avenue suggests an effort to integrate civic infrastructure into the downtown.



## Canmore 1982-2003

Over the years, the landscape of downtown has undergone significant transformations, particularly evident in the architectural evolution of its buildings and the development of its Main Street. Many of the buildings, especially those dating back to before the 1970s and 1980s, have undergone reconstruction efforts, resulting in an overall increase in the Lot Coverage Ratio (LCR).

This reconstruction has not only modernized the downtown's built form but has also contributed to densification and the optimization of land use. Additionally, the evolution of Main Street has been remarkable, gradually transforming into a cohesive and vibrant thoroughfare characterized by a continuous street wall facade with diverse storefront shops. This transformation reflects the dynamic growth and development of the town's commercial district, attracting both locals and visitors alike to its bustling and inviting atmosphere.

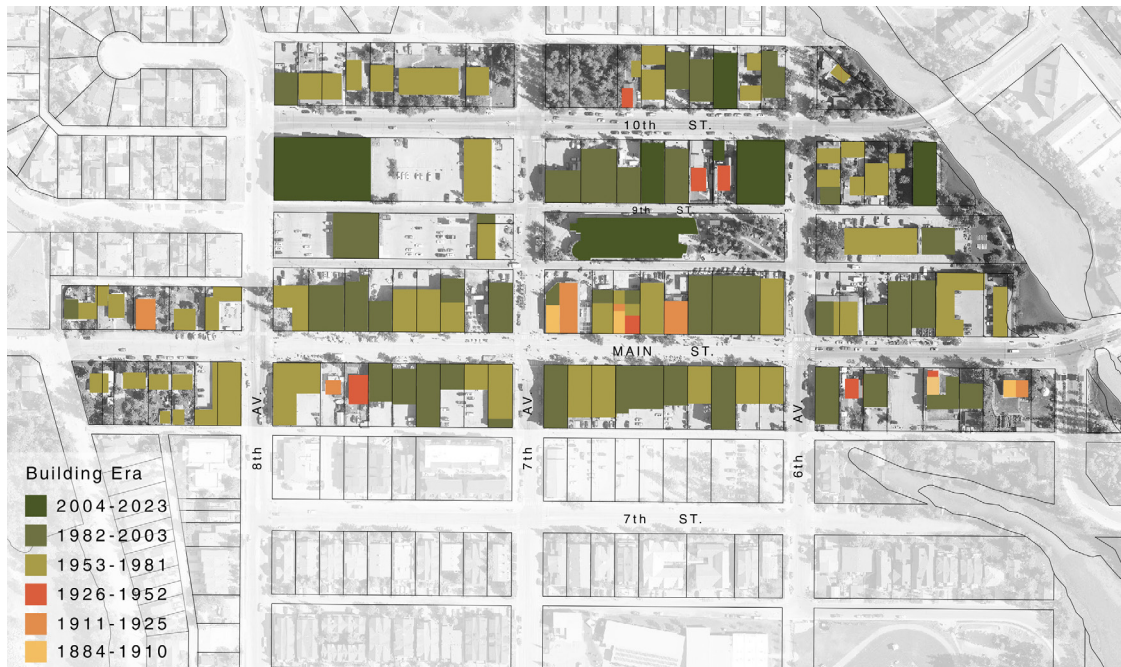




### Canmore 2003-2023

The downtown core of our town has seen significant enhancements with the integration of large-scale buildings, notably the Civic Centre and artPlace Canmore, strategically positioned between Ninth Street and Ninth Street West. These structures serve as focal points, adding to the architectural diversity and cultural vibrancy of the area.

New residential and mixed-use developments have emerged along 10th and 9th Streets, further enriching the urban fabric. These modern constructions are characterized by their high quality and thoughtful design, seamlessly blending into the existing streetscape while enhancing the overall public realm. As a result, they not only meet the needs of residents and businesses but also contribute positively to the aesthetic appeal and functionality of the downtown environment.





[1] Residential development on 10th Street, Canmore.  
[2] Mixed use development on 9th Street, Canmore. [3]  
Mainly commercial/retail development on 8th Street,  
Canmore.

## Land Use Evolution 1925

The land use evolution of the Downtown core reflects a harmonious blend of residential and commercial buildings, each contributing to the area's unique character. Traditionally, residential structures predominantly comprised single-family detached houses, contrasting with commercial constructions designed to accommodate a single business entity. However, the landscape began to diversify with the emergence of mixed-use buildings, seamlessly integrating both residential and commercial

functions. Main Street emerged as the epicentre of commercial activity, with businesses clustering in the central blocks, while residential buildings prevailed towards the west and east. Amidst this urban fabric, scattered institutional buildings on the south side of Main Street added further depth to the architectural diversity, contributing to the area's rich historical narrative and vibrant community atmosphere.



## Land Use Evolution 1981

Main Street experienced a significant surge in the number of businesses, establishing a well-established presence along Main Street. Newly constructed commercial units exhibited a notable increase in scale, with several accommodating multiple businesses within a single structure. Meanwhile, the remaining lots within the boundaries of downtown Canmore were predominantly occupied by residential buildings, reflecting the area's evolving urban fabric. Institutional constructions remained

relatively scarce within the downtown core. Notably, the establishment of a spacious municipal parking lot adjacent to Main Street marked the inception of the first public parking facility in Canmore, addressing the growing needs of residents and visitors alike for accessible parking infrastructure.





**COMMERCIAL**

- 10. Lodging (Canmore Hotel)
  - 24. Financial Service
  - 33. Food Service
  - 34. Retail & Food Services
  - 35. Retail, Health & Wellness Ctr
  - 36. Canmore Professional Ctr
  - 37. Professional Services
  - 38. Retail & Food Service  
Personal Care Services (2nd)
  - 39. Retail & Food Service
  - 40. Retail, Food Service & Gallery
  - 41. Galleries
  - 42. Retail & Food Service
  - 43. Retail  
Food Service (2nd)
  - 44. Retail, Recreational Service,  
Food Service & Postal Service
  - 45. Retail & Food Service  
Professional Service (2nd)
  - 46. Retail
  - 47. Retail
  - 48. Retail & Food Services
  - 49. Lodging
  - 51. Professional Service
  - 52. Retail  
Health & Wellness Ctr(2nd)
  - 53. Food Service  
Retail (basement)
  - 54. Retail & Food Service  
Professional Services (2nd)
  - 55. Retail  
Health & Wellness Ctr (2nd)
  - 56. Retail & Gallery
  - 57. Retail, Financial Service &  
Gallery  
Health & Wellness Ctr(2nd)
  - 58. Financial Service
  - 59. Food Service
  - 60. Retail & Food Service
  - 61. Retail
  - 62. Retail & Food Service
  - 63. Food Service
  - 64. Retail, Food Service & Gallery
  - 79. Professional Services  
Health & Wellness Ctr
  - 80. Retail, Food Services  
& Professional Services
  - 81. Retail
  - 82. Professional Services
  - 83. Food Service
  - 84. Lodging
  - 85. Retail & Professional Service
  - 86. Food Service  
Health & Wellness Ctr(2nd)
  - 87. Retail & Food Service  
Health & Wellness Ctr  
Professional Services (M & 2nd)  
Lodging (3rd)
  - 88. Food Service &  
Health & Wellness Ctr
  - 89. Food Service
  - 90. Lodging
  - 91. Food Service
  - 92. Professional Services
  - 93. Professional Services
  - 94. Retail & Food Service
  - 95. Professional Services
  - 96. Food Service
- RESIDENTIAL**
- 32. Medium-density Multiple-unit  
Residential Buildings
- INSTITUTIONAL**
- 1. NWMP Barracks
  - 2. Ralph Connor Church
  - 50. Canmore Guide & Scout Hall
  - 72. Canmore Seniors Association  
Canmore Creekside Garden  
Family Connection Centre  
Biosphere Institute
  - 73. Rotary Friendship Park
  - 74. Canmore Museum  
Canmore Civic Centre
  - 75. Friendship Park
  - 76. Canmore Visitor Centre

- 65. Retail, Food Service & Gallery
- 66. Retail & Food Services
- 67. Retail
- 68. Retail
- 69. Food Service
- 70. Food Service
- 71. Lodging



### **Land Use Evolution 2023**

The transformation of the downtown core into a predominantly commercial district is evident, with only a few remaining old residential structures interspersed among the bustling commercial establishments. Along 10th Street, a noticeable presence of mixed-use buildings characterizes the streetscape, embodying the evolving nature of urban development in the area with a significant residential component. Particularly striking is the prevalence of commercial units, many of which, including numerous newly constructed larger-scale buildings, now accommodate multiple businesses within their premises. This proliferation of commercial activity underscores the vibrant economic landscape of the downtown core, reflecting the area's role as a hub for business and commerce.

In the area between 9th Street and 9th Street West, a distinct pattern emerges, with three blocks designated for new institutional buildings. These institutional structures contribute to the diversification of land use within the downtown core, serving various community needs and functions. This allocation of land underscores the importance of balancing commercial development with the preservation of natural elements and community amenities, contributing to the overall livability and vibrancy of the downtown area.



## Current Conditions

### Downtown Canmore Historical Buildings in 2023

Canmore was established in 1884, and since then, it has experienced substantial growth. However, there are still a few buildings in the downtown core and its vicinity that date back to the town's earliest days. Understanding the history of these buildings is essential when planning for the redevelopment of Downtown Canmore.

#### Canmore NWMP Barracks

The Canmore NWMP Barracks, established in 1893, played a pivotal role in regulating the dynamic atmosphere of Canmore, Alberta. Initially requested by the president of the Canadian Anthracite Coal Company to address liquor-related issues, the barracks housed a small detachment responsible for patrols and maintaining order. It played a significant role during strikes, particularly in 1911. Decommissioned in 1929, the barracks served as a private residence until the late 1980s when it was acquired by the Town of Canmore. Designated as a Provincial Historic Site in 1990, it remains one of Alberta's few pre-1905 North West Mounted Police structures (Canmore Museum).

#### Ralph Connor's Presbyterian Church

In the early 1890s, Rev. Charles Gordon, a young missionary residing in the valley from 1890 to 1893, supervised the construction of a Presbyterian Church, which was completed in 1891. Rev. Charles Gordon, also known as Ralph Connor, served as the church's inaugural preacher before gaining worldwide acclaim as an author. After the church union in 1925, Ralph Connor's Presbyterian Church transitioned into the United

Church of Canada while maintaining its fundamental structure. Over time, the United Church underwent enhancements and improvements. Adjacent to the church was the manse, a cottage transported down the Bow from Georgetown. Today, the church remains a vital part of Canmore, serving its residents (Appleby, 1975).

#### The Canmore Miners' Union Hall

Founded in 1905, the first Miners' Union in Canmore spearheaded the development of the Union Hall. Construction on this significant community landmark began in 1910 and concluded in 1913. Throughout its existence spanning over a century, the Union Hall has served as a pivotal gathering place, symbolizing its lasting importance in the history of the community and its mining culture (Canmore Museum).

#### The Canmore Hotel

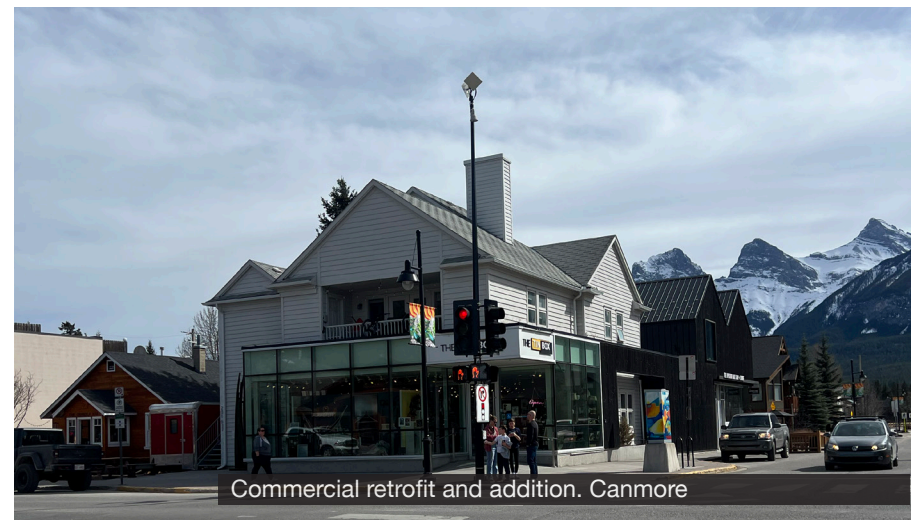
Originally owned by Count De Rambouville, a Frenchman, The Canmore Hotel, a sizable wooden structure erected on Main Street in 1890, changed ownership over time, first to Mr. Dave Williams, and later to Joe Schiscler. Throughout its existence, this historic establishment underwent numerous renovations and significant physical alterations, reflecting its diverse and sometimes tumultuous history. It faced a notable decline during the prohibition era, when it was offered for sale at a mere \$12,000, though this offer was ultimately declined. Despite the challenges it has faced, the hotel has continued to operate for over a century welcoming guests to Canmore (Appleby, 1975).

## Current Land Use Zones

The Town of Canmore Land Use Bylaw regulation includes provisions for all parcels. These regulations often dictate aspects such as permitted and discretionary uses, minimum lot size, setbacks from property lines, building height restrictions, parking requirements, and other design standards. Specific regulations may vary depending on the purpose of the specific land use district and development guidelines. Downtown comprises of five land use districts: Residential Two-Unit (R2), Residential Low Density (R2A), Town Centre (TC), Public Use (PD) and Direct Control (DC).

According to the Bylaw each district has the following purposes:

- Residential Two-Unit (R2): To provide for the residential development of Duplex Dwellings with the provision for Accessory.
- Residential Low Density (R2A): To provide for medium-density residential development, including Duplex Dwellings and Townhouses, as well as other compatible residential neighbourhood uses.
- Town Centre (TC): To provide for a broad range of commercial, entertainment, cultural, and residential uses in mixed-use buildings and to serve as a focal point for community business and civic activities.
- Public Use (PD): To provide for public, quasi-public and community uses and developments on lands owned or operated by the Town, not-for-profit community organizations, or Provincial or Federal governments.
- Direct Control (DC): This district's regulations are site-specific and vary from site to site.





R2: Residential Two-Unit  
 Maximum Height: 9.5 m  
 Maximum coverage: 45%  
 Land Use: Residential

R2A: Residential Low Density  
 Maximum Height: 9.5 m  
 Maximum coverage: 45%  
 Land Use: Low-density residential

TC: Town Centre District  
 Maximum Height: 11 m  
 Land Use: Ground floor retail / amenity with residential above

DC: Direct Control  
 This district's regulations are site-specific and vary from site to site.

PD: Public Use District  
 Maximum Height: 11 m  
 Land Use: Public building/facility, open space

## Shadow Studies

These shadow studies show the impact different heights have on the public realm and neighbouring buildings. While the current building height limit is 11m, taller buildings were modelled to better understand the impacts of additional density.

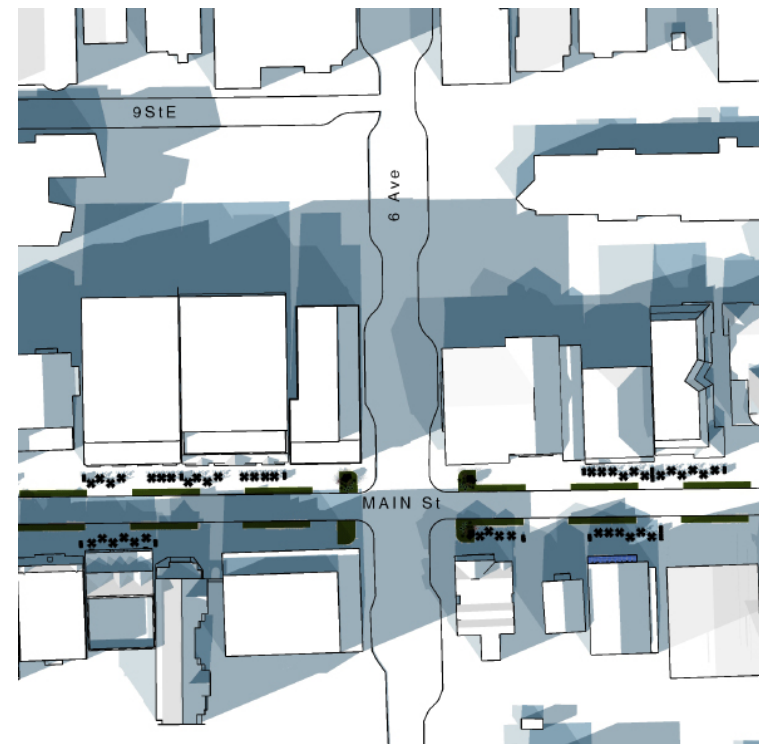
In summary, buildings standing at the height of 11 meters on the south side of Main Street cast fewer shadows on the public realm and neighbouring structures. This effect is further pronounced when buildings incorporate setbacks on their top floors.

### Shadows on June 21



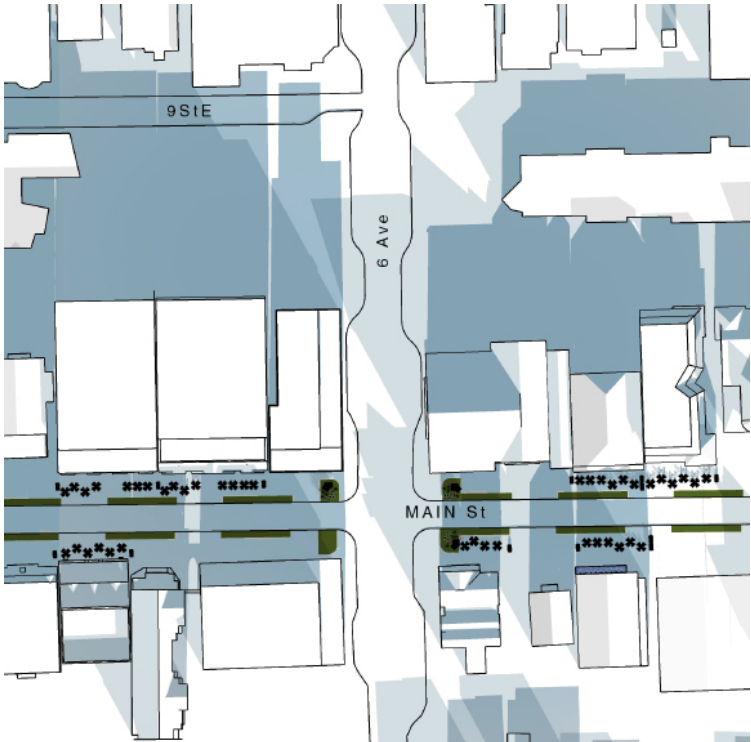
10 AM SHADOW  
12 PM SHADOW  
4 PM SHADOW

### Shadows on Mar/Sep. 21



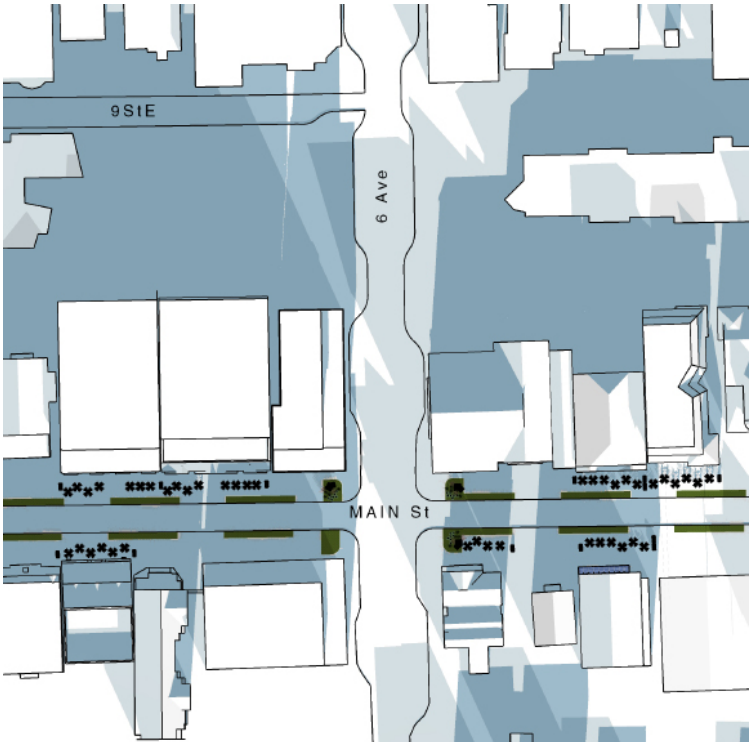
10 AM SHADOW  
12 PM SHADOW  
4 PM SHADOW

Shadows on Jan/Nov 21



- 10 AM SHADOW
- 12 PM SHADOW
- 4 PM SHADOW

Shadows on December 21



- 10 AM SHADOW
- 12 PM SHADOW
- 4 PM SHADOW





# Community Engagement

## Introduction

The community engagement process comprised a series of focus groups and an open house event. During the focus groups, members of the Downtown Canmore Business Improvement Area (BIA) were tasked with evaluating various scenarios concerning the built form and streetscape elements.

These scenarios were derived from the best practices research and encompassed key streetscape features such as lighting, patios, signage, landscaping, street dimensions, and pavement, as well as building form aspects like scale, materials and colors, land use, permeability, and roofline. The overarching goal of the survey was to pinpoint the essential streetscape and built form features contributing to the identity and character of downtown. To achieve this, a visual preference survey was conducted through both in-person focus groups and online platforms.

Participants were presented with a range of virtual reality images depicting diverse built environments and were prompted to express their preferences while assessing the significance of each element to downtown's essence. The survey garnered a total of 50 responses, from which subsequent results and insights were derived.

The following pages show the main findings of the focus groups.



### 1. Street pavement

Which photo contributes more to the character of Downtown Canmore?  
(You may choose up to two answers.)

Current - Solid Pavement



Option 1 - Rock material/texture



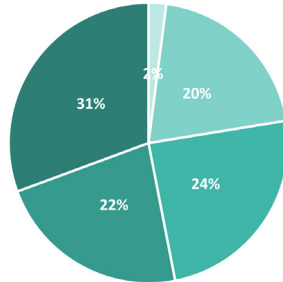
Option 2 - Pavers material/texture



The profile of participants indicates a diverse sample comprising both long-standing and new members of the community.

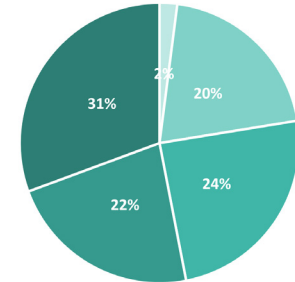
Year of Birth

20-29 yo (1993-2002)	2%	1
30-39 yo (1983-1992)	20%	10
40-49 yo (1973-1982)	24%	12
50-59 yo (1963-1972)	22%	11
60-69 yo (1953-1962)	31%	15
<b>Total</b>		<b>49</b>



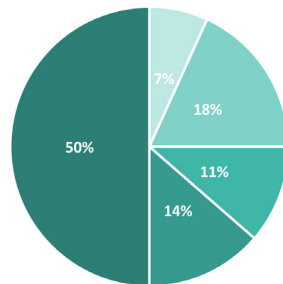
Year of Birth

20-29 yo (1993-2002)	2%	1
30-39 yo (1983-1992)	20%	10
40-49 yo (1973-1982)	24%	12
50-59 yo (1963-1972)	22%	11
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<b>Total</b>		<b>49</b>



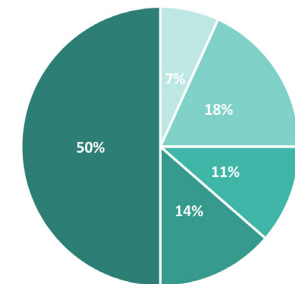
How long have you lived in Canmore?

0-5 y	7%	3
6-10 y	18%	8
11- 15 y	11%	5
16-20 y	14%	6
20+	50%	22
<b>Total</b>		<b>44</b>



How long have you lived in Canmore?

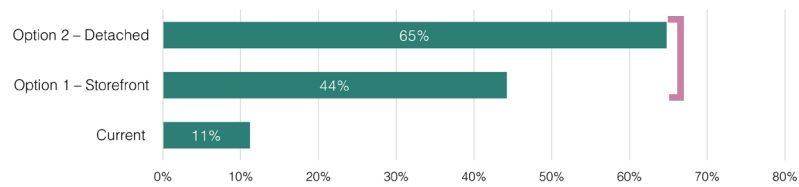
0-5 y	7%	3
6-10 y	18%	8
11- 15 y	11%	5
16-20 y	14%	6
20+	50%	22
<b>Total</b>		<b>44</b>



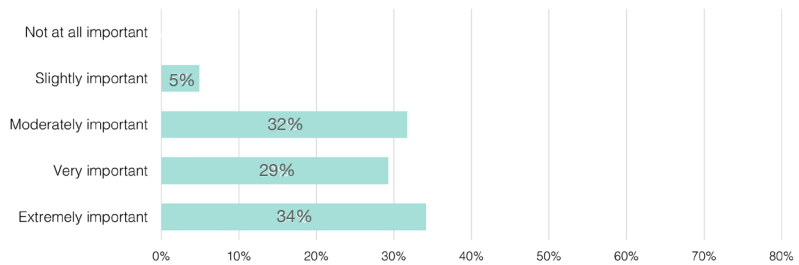
## Focus Groups Summary. Streetscape elements

### Patios

Which photo contributes more to the character of Downtown Canmore?  
\*Participants could choose two options

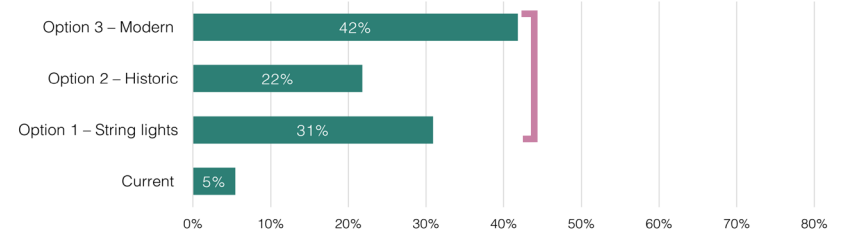


How important is this for the character of Downtown Canmore?

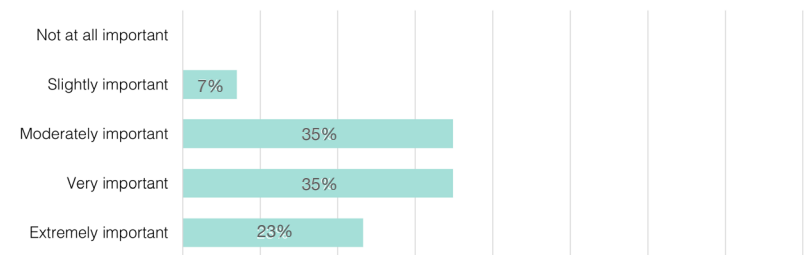


### Lighting

Which photo contributes more to the character of Downtown Canmore?  
\*Participants could choose two options



How important is this for the character of Downtown Canmore?

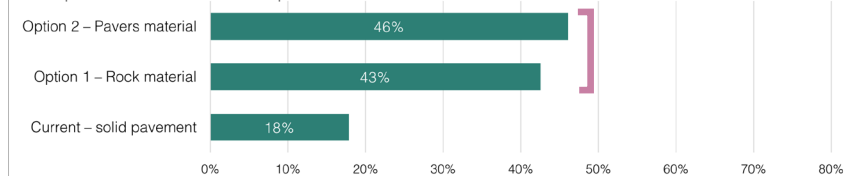


## Focus Groups Summary. Streetscape elements

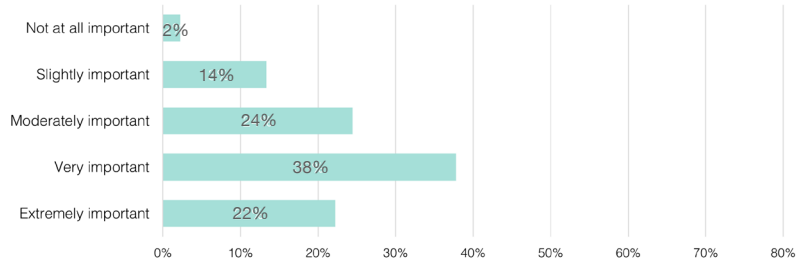
### Pavement

Which photo contributes more to the character of Downtown Canmore?

\*Participants could choose two options



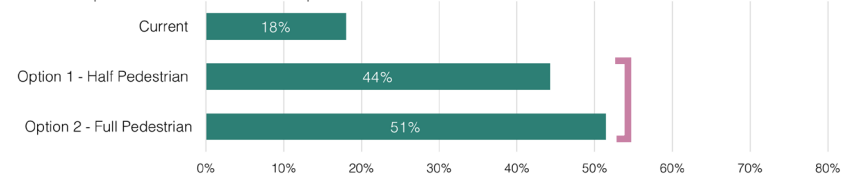
How important is this for the character of Downtown Canmore?



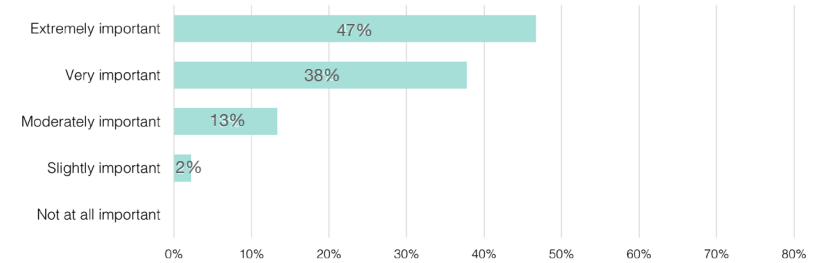
### Dimensions

Which photo contributes more to the character of Downtown Canmore?

\*Participants could choose two options



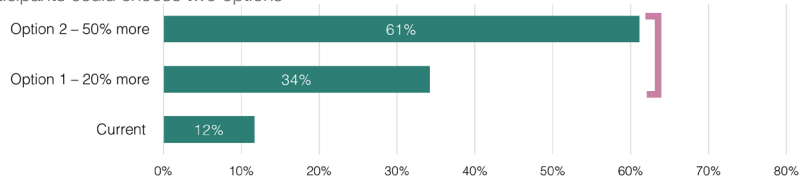
How important is this for the character of Downtown Canmore?



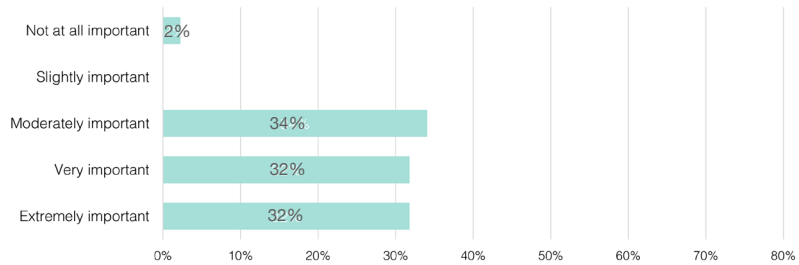
## Focus Groups Summary. Streetscape elements

### Landscaping

Which photo contributes more to the character of Downtown Canmore?  
 \*Participants could choose two options

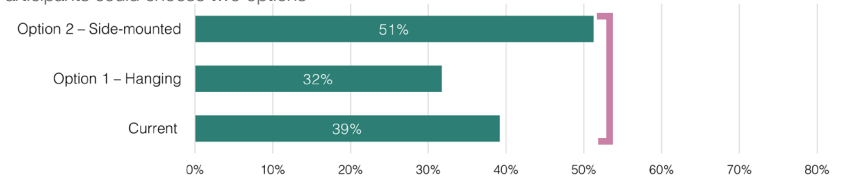


How important is this for the character of Downtown Canmore?

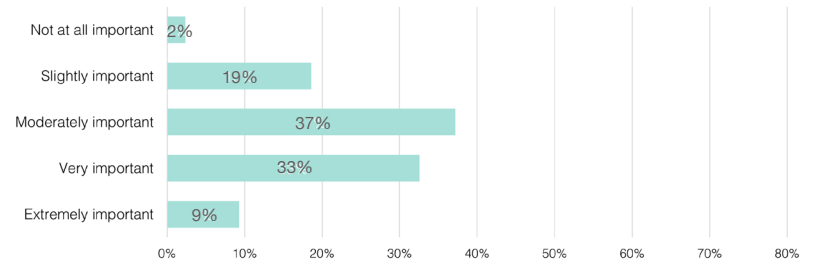


### Signage

Which photo contributes more to the character of Downtown Canmore?  
 \*Participants could choose two options



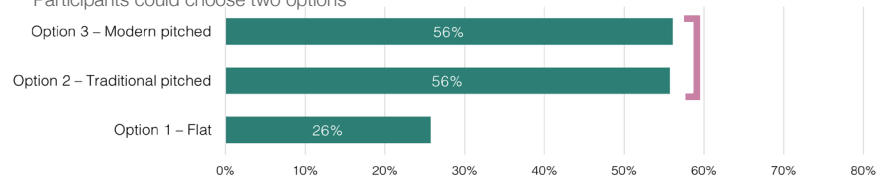
How important is this for the character of Downtown Canmore?



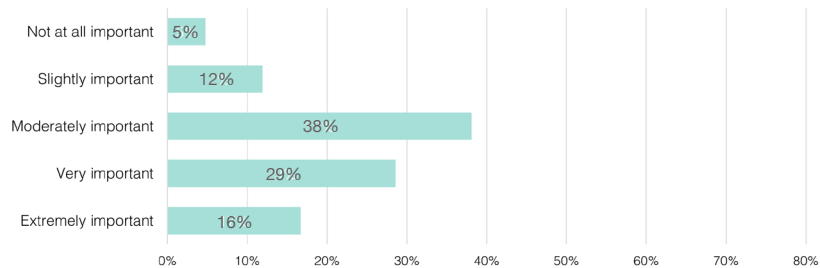
## Focus Groups Summary. Building elements

### Roofline

Which photo contributes more to the character of Downtown Canmore?  
\*Participants could choose two options

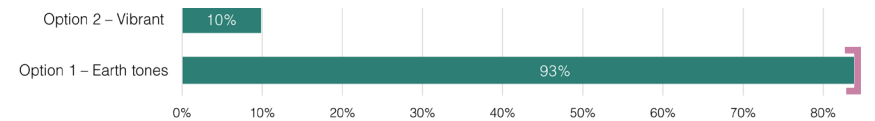


How important is this for the character of Downtown Canmore?

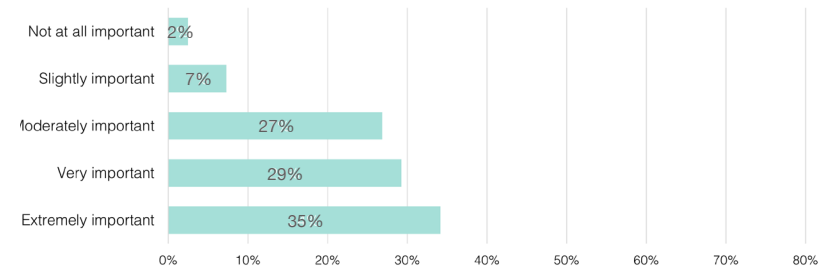


### Colour

Which photo contributes more to the character of Downtown Canmore?  
\*Participants could choose two options



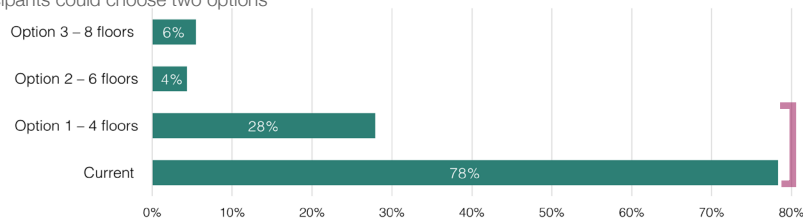
How important is this for the character of Downtown Canmore?



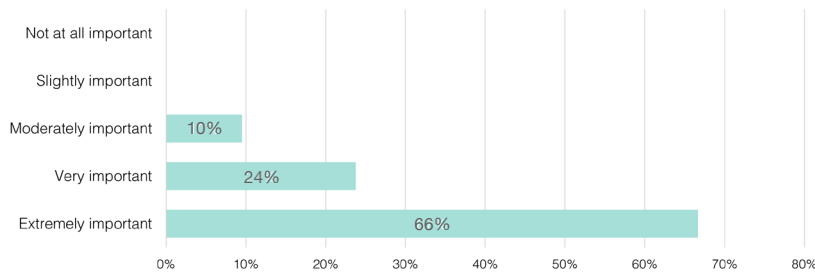
## Focus Groups Summary. Building elements

### Height

Which photo contributes more to the character of Downtown Canmore?  
\*Participants could choose two options

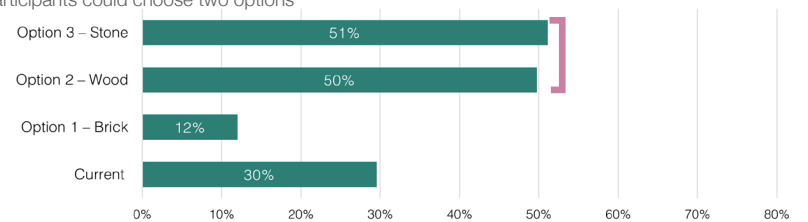


How important is this for the character of Downtown Canmore?

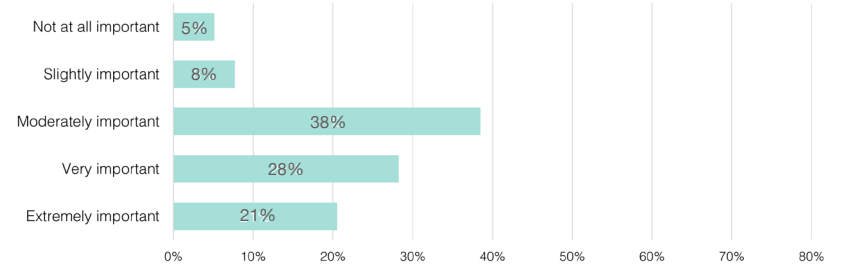


### Materials

Which photo contributes more to the character of Downtown Canmore?  
\*Participants could choose two options



How important is this for the character of Downtown Canmore?

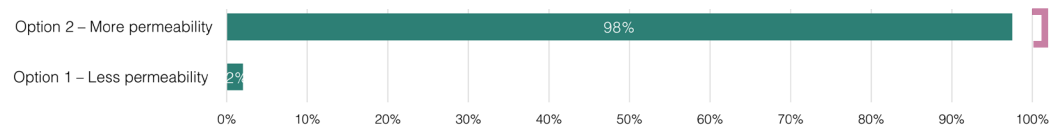


## Focus Groups Summary. Building elements

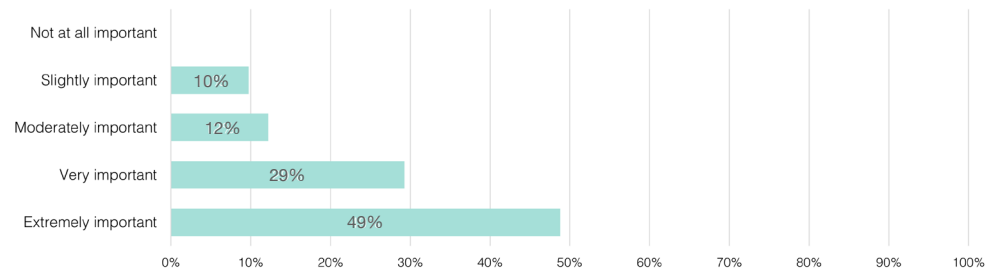
### Permeability

Which photo contributes more to the character of Downtown Canmore?

\*Participants could choose two options



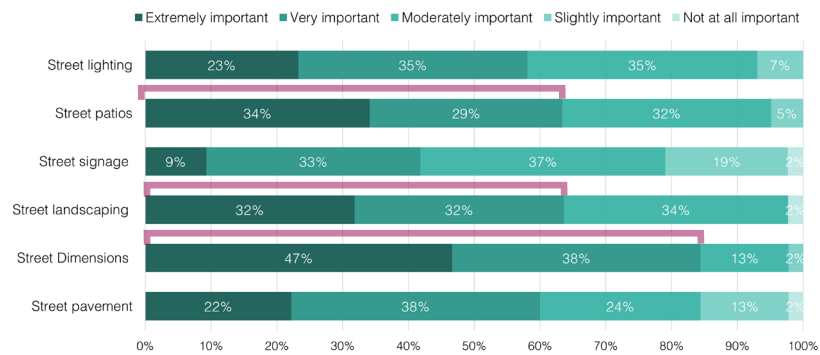
How important is this for the character of Downtown Canmore?



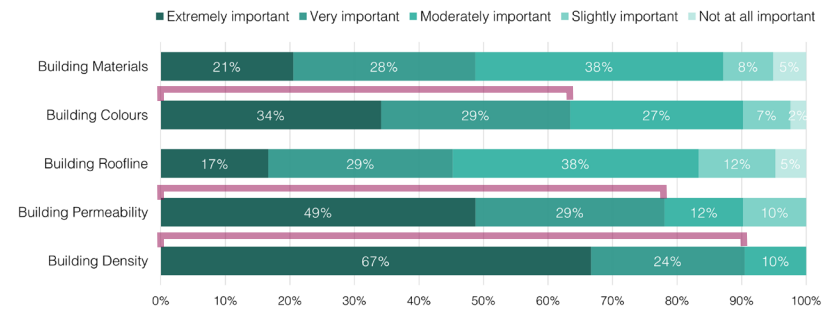


## Focus Groups Summary. Importance of streetscape and buildings

### Streetscape



### Buildings



Open House. VR Scenario



Geolocation: Canmore  
Date/Time: 5.March@2:40pm

## Virtual Reality Scenario

Based on the insights gathered from the focus groups, a detailed virtual reality (VR) model of the downtown area, with a particular emphasis on Main Street/8th Street, was crafted. The model was designed to include variations in building height, with some structures reaching the current maximum height of 11 metres while others were extended to one additional floor (14 meters) or two additional floors (17 meters). This deliberate variation aimed to gauge the perceived density from a pedestrian's viewpoint using the VR model, thereby validating the earlier findings of the focus groups regarding the density and height of buildings.

The scenario envisioned the removal of on-street parking to allocate additional space for landscaping, patios, and pedestrians. By eliminating on-street parking, the aim was to enhance the overall pedestrian experience and foster a more vibrant streetscape conducive to social interaction and leisure activities. Additionally, the model was geolocated, ensuring accuracy in its representation, with shadows projected to reflect the real-time conditions observed on March 5, at 2:40 pm. Material of buildings and streetscape were not included to not distract the participants from the more important aspects of the model. This attention to detail ensured that the VR model accurately mirrored the existing urban environment, providing stakeholders with a realistic and immersive platform to evaluate potential urban design interventions.





Input 2: Open House - February 2024

## Open House Results

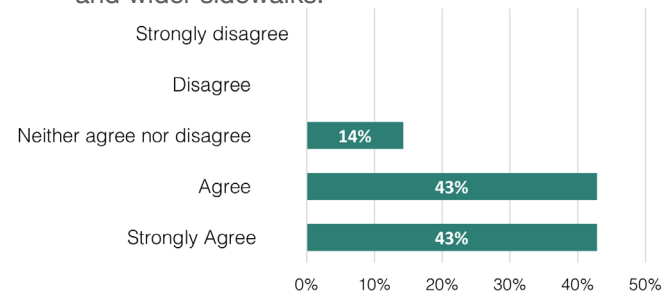
The open house, while not as heavily attended as the focus groups, still provided valuable insights into the community's preferences and priorities. Despite only 10 members of the Downtown Canmore BIA participating, the results obtained corroborated the findings unearthed during the focus groups, facilitating the formulation of actionable recommendations for urban design enhancements. At the open house, attendees were presented with the VR scenario in two formats: as a pre-recorded video and as a live interactive virtual reality model accessible through headsets. This immersive experience enabled participants to explore the proposed changes to the downtown area firsthand, fostering a deeper understanding and engagement with the proposed interventions.

During the discussions, participants expressed overwhelming support for initiatives aimed at enhancing the pedestrian experience, such as expanding patio space, widening sidewalks, and increasing tree cover and landscaping. There was strong agreement on the removal of street parking to create a more inviting and functional public realm. Attendees also voiced strong endorsement for architectural elements that resonate with the mountain town aesthetic, including pitched rooflines that evoke a sense of place and promote visual harmony with the surrounding natural landscape, as well as the high permeability of building facades at the street level. Additionally, there was a clear consensus among participants against the escalation of building density and heights, with a prevailing preference for maintaining adherence to existing height regulations. This

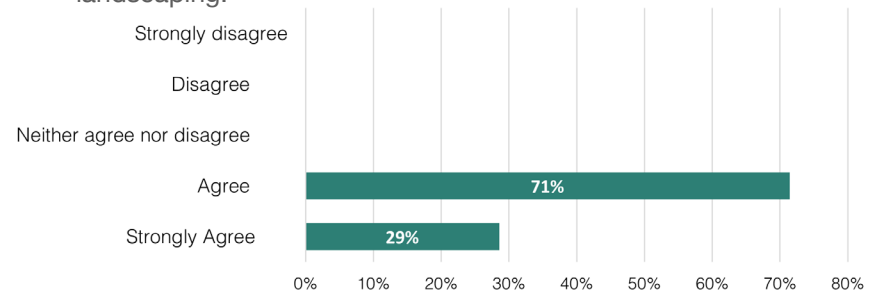
collective stance underscored a commitment to preserving the town's character and ensuring a harmonious balance between growth and heritage preservation.

### Open House Summary. **VR Scenario feedback**

Increased pedestrian area for additional patio space and wider sidewalks.

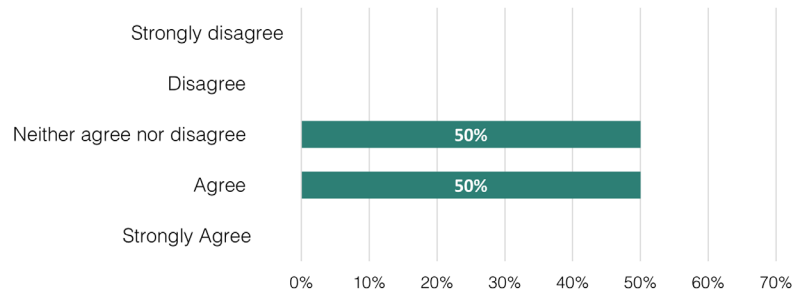


Increased space for additional street trees and landscaping.

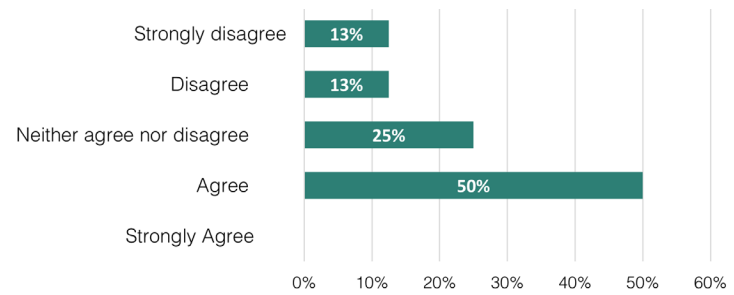


Open House Summary. **VR Scenario feedback**

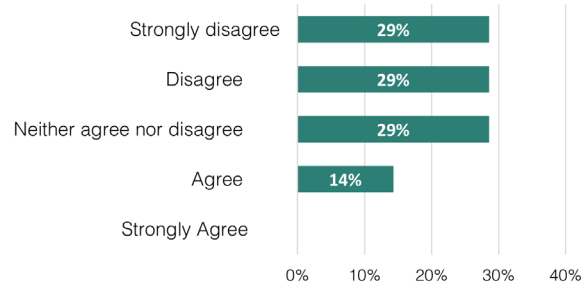
More pitched rooflines rather than flat roofs



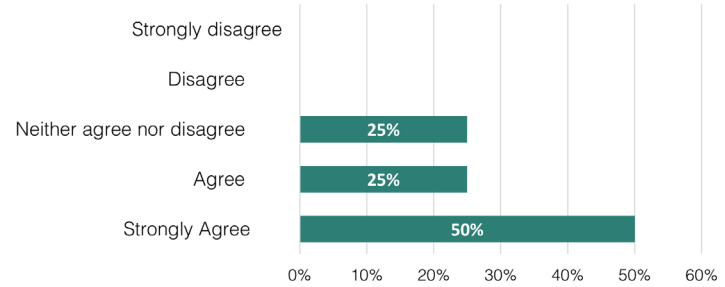
The height of buildings on the south side of the street is appropriate.



The height of buildings on the north side of the street is appropriate.

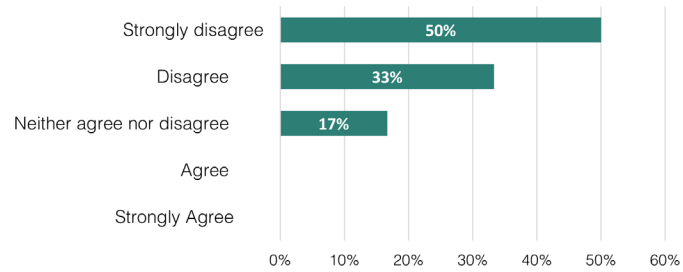


More rather than fewer windows and doors at street level.

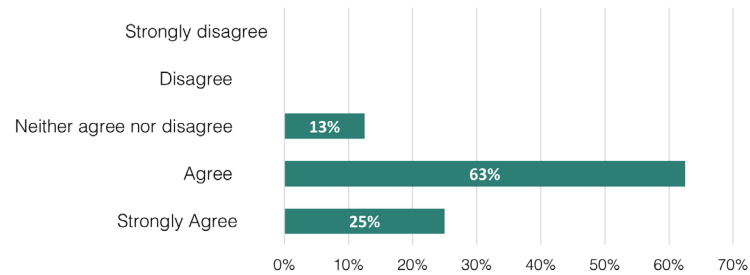


Open House Summary. **VR Scenario feedback**

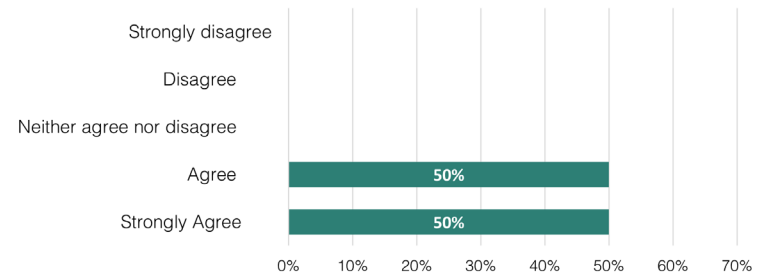
What do you think of the increased height of buildings one additional floor(3 m) on the South side of 8th Street and two additional floors (6 m) on the north side?



8th Street with increased pedestrian area but less on-street parking?



More commercial and retail rather than office spaces at street level.





Commercial retrofit and addition. Canmore



# Recommendations

## Introduction

Canmore's vibrant downtown is a key component of the town's identity. However, with growth on the horizon, it's crucial to find a balance that fosters economic development while preserving the unique character that makes downtown Canmore special. Based on the feedback provided by the members of Downtown Canmore BIA and the best practices research, the following recommendations aim to ensure flexibility, address town challenges, and maintain a strong sense of place.

A comprehensive set of recommendations has been formulated based on the study's findings, catering to both the broader downtown area and the specific context of Main Street/8th Street. Although the Town of Canmore has existing urban design and architectural guidelines in place, the study underscores the necessity of tailored guidelines specifically tailored to the downtown district, informed by the insights gleaned from this research and further public engagement efforts.

Divided into two main categories—streetscape and built form—the recommendations aim to address various aspects of urban design to enhance the downtown's aesthetic appeal, functionality, and sense of place. Streetscape-focused recommendations encompass initiatives aimed at improving the public realm, including enhancements to lighting, signage, landscaping, and pedestrian infrastructure. Specific attention is directed towards Main Street/8th Street, where interventions such as widened sidewalks, expanded patio spaces, and increased greenery can significantly enhance the overall streetscape experience.

On the other hand, built-form recommendations centre on architectural elements and building design considerations. These recommendations advocate for guidelines that promote architectural diversity, quality materials, and compatibility with the surrounding built environment. Additionally, recommendations may address building heights, setbacks, and massing to ensure a cohesive and visually appealing urban fabric. By delineating between the streetscape and built-form recommendations, the guidelines provide a comprehensive framework for guiding future development and revitalization efforts in the downtown area, fostering a sense of place and a cohesive urban environment that reflects the community's identity and aspirations.



Mountain bike racing event. 8th Street Canmore

## Streetscape: Dimensions

Canmore's vibrant downtown is a key component of the town's identity. Presently, the sidewalk space in the downtown area is insufficient to accommodate the needs of pedestrians. To address this issue, there is a pressing need to expand the available areas for outdoor seating, incorporating a variety of options ranging from traditional patios to publicly accessible seating arrangements with diverse configurations. This strategic expansion aims to counteract the trend of privatizing the public realm, ensuring that communal spaces remain accessible and inclusive to all members of the community.

In addition to expanding seating options, there is a growing demand for increased pedestrian space to facilitate the organization of seasonal events and the potential for full street closures during such occasions. By dedicating more space to pedestrians, the downtown area can better accommodate the influx of visitors during events and festivals, fostering a vibrant and dynamic atmosphere conducive to community engagement and social interaction.

Along Main Street, a proposed solution involves the removal of on-street parking to reclaim valuable space for the enhancement of the pedestrian public realm. This strategic reallocation of space aims to prioritize the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, creating a safer and more inviting environment for leisurely strolls, outdoor dining experiences, and recreational activities. Furthermore, the removal of on-street parking can contribute to a more aesthetically pleasing streetscape, allowing

for the integration of additional landscaping features, seating areas, and pedestrian amenities to enhance the overall quality of the public realm.

On 9th Street, the narrower section of the street presents an opportunity for implementing a shared-space configuration, mirroring the current configuration between 6th and 7th Avenues. This approach encourages a harmonious coexistence of various modes of transportation, prioritizing the safety and comfort of pedestrians while accommodating vehicular traffic. Meanwhile, along 10th Street, the focus will remain on maintaining vehicular traffic flow and street parking, with future plans to explore enhancements to the pedestrian space.

A redesign of 10th Street should consider wider sidewalks as well as opportunities for public seating, street trees and group landscaping. The materials, lighting and urban furniture should align and be cohesive with the design used along 8th and 9th Streets.

### *Seasonal Events in the Downtown.*

The Downtown area of Canmore presents an opportunity to enhance the city's cultural vibrancy and community engagement through the hosting of open-air seasonal events. While 8th Street currently serves as a venue for such occasions, it is recommended that a dedicated civic open space be developed in the heart of Downtown. This proposed space would take the form of a plaza, offering a large, flexible area suitable for various events, including festivals, markets, and performances.



The ideal location for this civic open space would be the parcel situated across 7th Avenue, adjacent to Canmore's Civic Centre. This strategic placement would provide easy accessibility and visibility, ensuring that the plaza becomes a focal point for community gatherings and activities, while 10th Street can host some of the activities while 10th Street can host some of the attractions. As an example the photo to the right shows the pedestrian street Herzog-Friedrich-Strasse, where a temporary structure was placed for a mountain bike race.

By establishing a dedicated civic open space in Downtown Canmore, the city can create a vibrant hub for social interaction, cultural expression, and economic vitality. The plaza would accommodate vendors, stands, and temporary structures, offering ample space for pedestrians to stroll and engage with the surrounding environment.

[1] Bear Street in Banff is a shared space street that prioritizes pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles. [2] Similarly, 9th Street in Canmore, vehicles and pedestrians partially share the space. [3] Sidewalk space at Banff Avenue in Banff has limited space for patios but sufficient space for pedestrians. [4] Herzog-Friedrich-Straße in Innsbruck, Austria, is a narrow pedestrian street that hosts seasonal events, like this World Cup bike race, supported by nearby plazas and parks.



## **Streetscape: Pavement**

Incorporating textured pavement crafted from locally sourced materials serves as a distinctive touch that enhances the unique character and sense of place of the downtown. While it's crucial to consider practical considerations like snow-clearing methods when selecting pavement materials, this shouldn't deter the exploration of patterns reminiscent of cobblestone or other textured surfaces.

Such designs can infuse the pedestrian environment with a sense of charm and authenticity, elevating the overall ambiance and contributing to a stronger sense of place. By opting for a distinct pavement material tailored specifically for pedestrian spaces, we can significantly elevate the quality of the public realm, fostering a more engaging and inviting streetscape.

## **Streetscape: Lighting**

Strive for efficient lighting practices to minimize light pollution and safeguard the pristine allure of the night sky, which holds immense significance in remote mountain landscapes. Illuminate the pedestrian realm judiciously, focusing on human-scale light features that enhance safety and ambiance without overwhelming the surroundings.

Embrace the concept of seasonal lighting schemes, such as string lights, to evoke a festive atmosphere during special occasions while maintaining harmony with the natural surroundings. Prioritize the

adoption of LED lighting technologies to ensure sustainability and reduce energy consumption, aligning with environmental objectives and promoting long-term ecological balance. By adhering to these principles, we can strike a delicate balance between illuminating urban spaces and preserving the intrinsic beauty of mountain landscapes under the night sky.

[1] Beach Street in Queenstown, New Zealand, is designed as a shared space with priority to pedestrians, string lighting, paver stones, and high-quality urban furniture, including multiple opportunities for public seating. [2] Paver stones are used in front of Canmore's Civic Centre and Information Centre on 7th Avenue. [3] Beach Street in Queenstown, New Zealand, uses paver stones and modern street lighting and includes local materials and plants as part of its design.



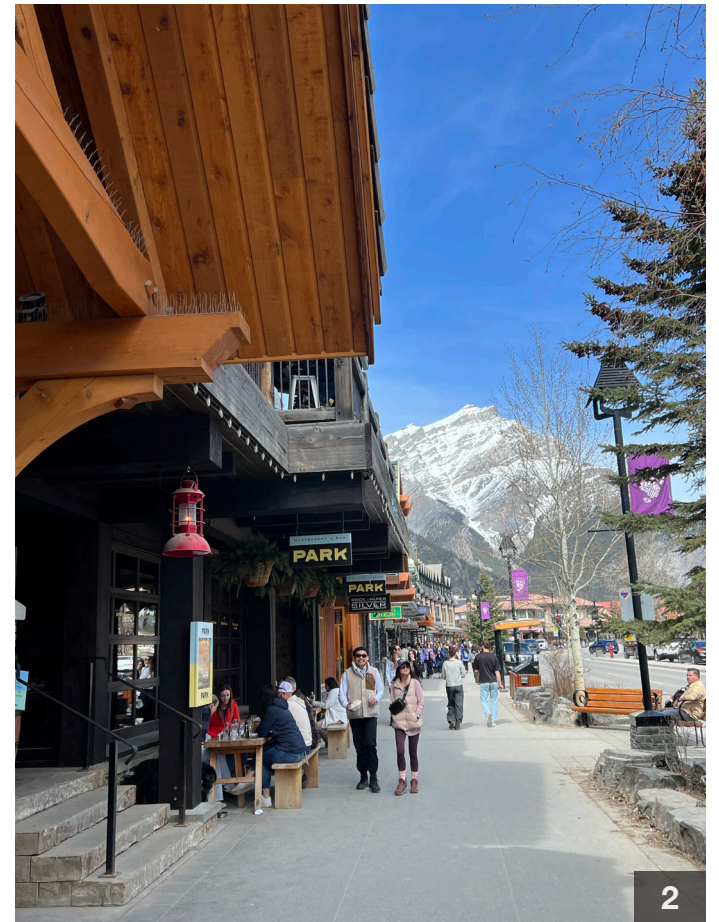
## **Streetscape: Patios**

Patios stand as quintessential amenities in the character of a mountain town, serving as coveted spaces for both residents and tourists to enjoy the scenic vistas while basking in the outdoor ambiance. The allure of sitting outside and immersing oneself in the natural beauty of the landscape is a significant draw for individuals seeking solace or socializing opportunities.

When considering the integration of patios into existing structures, detached patios emerge as the preferred choice for downtown Canmore current conditions, offering a seamless extension of indoor spaces while maximizing outdoor enjoyment. Conversely, in new construction projects, incorporating recessed patios within the building setback presents a potential solution to optimize space utilization while preserving the downtown aesthetic.

The proximity of patios to street level is key to fostering seamless interaction between pedestrians and patio-goers, promoting a vibrant and inclusive streetscape experience. It is important to avoid patios below or above street level. Addressing the spatial constraints between downtown buildings is essential to realize the full potential of outdoor patios as vibrant hubs of community engagement and relaxation.

[1] This patio is below the street level on Banff Ave. Banff does not contribute to a positive interaction with the sidewalk and the public realm; this should be avoided. [2] In some cases, patios could be located within the setback of buildings, like this patio on Banff Ave., Banff.



## Streetscape: Signage

To enhance the visual coherence and pedestrian experience within the downtown area, it is important to regulate signage to control size and prevent obstructions. While acknowledging the importance of individual business branding through signage, implementing standardized guidelines can ensure a harmonious streetscape aesthetic. Drawing inspiration from the well-established signage regulations in the Town of Banff serves as a valuable reference point for developing comprehensive guidelines tailored to the unique character of Canmore's downtown. Prioritizing subdued lighting for signage contributes to a tranquil nighttime ambiance, preserving the serene allure of the mountain landscape.

Incorporating awnings into new building designs emerges as a strategic recommendation, offering multifaceted benefits beyond signage opportunities. Awnings not only serve as an ideal canvas for business branding but also provide essential shelter and enhance the pedestrian experience, particularly during inclement weather conditions. Their versatility extends to offering protection from precipitation and snow during winter months, fostering a more inviting and comfortable environment for both residents and visitors alike. By seamlessly integrating awnings into architectural designs, Canmore's downtown area can achieve a cohesive and functional urban landscape that aligns with the town's mountain town identity while prioritizing pedestrian comfort and visual aesthetics.

### *Signage and Wayfinding*

Implementing a comprehensive wayfinding signage strategy is essential to facilitate navigation for both tourists and locals within the downtown area of Canmore. Such a strategy not only serves a practical purpose but also contributes to enhancing the overall sense of place and identity of the historic downtown. By strategically placing signage at key locations, visitors and residents can easily orient themselves and navigate the urban environment with confidence.

In addition to providing directional guidance, the wayfinding signage presents an opportunity to reinforce Canmore's rich heritage and cultural identity. Incorporating historic elements and local materials into the design of the signage pays homage to the town's past and adds a distinctive aesthetic charm to the downtown streetscape. By seamlessly blending heritage features with modern functionality, the signage strategy creates a cohesive visual language that resonates with the character of Canmore's historic core.

Gate-related features serve as iconic landmarks that welcome visitors and symbolize the entrance to the downtown area. These gateways play a crucial role in fostering a sense of arrival and strengthening the overall sense of place. By integrating gate-related features into the wayfinding signage strategy, Canmore can create memorable points of entry that leave a lasting impression on both visitors and residents alike.



[1] Examples of hanging signage on Banff Ave. Banff. [2] Example of a side-mounted sign on Banff Ave. Banff. [3] The size and colour of signage on Banff Ave. Banff is regulated to reach a balance of visibility and visual pollution.



## **Streetscape: Landscaping**

To elevate the overall experience and appeal of the public realm, it is essential to introduce a variety of public amenities that cater to the needs of residents and visitors alike. This entails installing high-quality public washrooms strategically positioned throughout the downtown area for convenient access. Additionally, incorporating water fountains serves as a refreshing feature, promoting hydration and providing a source of respite during warmer months. Accommodating cyclists with ample bike racks encourages sustainable transportation options and contributes to a more bike-friendly environment.

Implementing strategically placed trash cans helps maintain cleanliness and sanitation within the downtown district, ensuring a pleasant and welcoming atmosphere for all. Incorporating advertising pillars offers a platform for promoting local businesses and events, fostering community engagement and supporting economic vitality.

In addition to these amenities, integrating diverse landscaping features enhances the aesthetic appeal and ecological sustainability of the public realm. Utilizing native species of plants and locally sourced materials aligns with the town's environmental ethos and contributes to a sense of place and authenticity. Incorporating mountain materials or similar textures for pavement surfaces of sidewalks and streets adds to the character of the downtown area while reinforcing its mountain town identity.

### *Public Art*

The use of public art as one more element of streetscaping is recommended to enrich the public realm and present a unique opportunity for local artists. The development of a public art strategy would be a first step in identifying key locations and opportunities for art pieces. The BIA can take the lead in collaborating with local artists and the Town. Murals are another form of art that can be considered. A great example of a community-based art initiative is the Beltline Urban Murals Project in Calgary.

### *Water Feature Opportunity*

Street intersections along pedestrian sections of 8th Street present a unique opportunity for an interactive water feature that could be activated during the summer months. The example shown on the next page is from Zurich, Switzerland and is very popular with children and families during warm weather. The water feature is turned off during the fall and winter and is hardly perceived since it is seamlessly incorporated into the pavement design.



[1] Street intersections along 8th Street in Canmore's downtown present a unique opportunity for a water feature similar to this one in Zurich, Switzerland, where water jets shoot through and drain through the pavement. [2] The materials and plants used in Banff's new Bear Street redevelopment reflect local materials and indigenous plants. [3] Water fountains have been introduced in Banff with consideration for the winter season and subzero temperatures.



## Built Form: Density and Scale

The downtown area serves as a focal point for addressing the town's evolving needs and challenges, playing a pivotal role in shaping the community's future trajectory. While there is room for modest growth within the downtown core, it is imperative to uphold its inherent sense of place and identity. As the outskirts of the downtown district witness incremental commercial expansion, maintaining the downtown's unique character becomes increasingly crucial to its appeal as a vibrant and unique commercial hub.

Preserving the existing height limit of 11 meters is essential to safeguarding the downtown's aesthetic integrity. This limit encompasses structures of up to three storeys, with provisions for pitched roofs to maintain architectural continuity with the mountain town ambiance. Additionally, the possibility of extending to a fourth storey, with setbacks on the upper floor, warrants exploration, balancing the need for increased density with the imperative to preserve sightlines and minimize overshadowing of public spaces.

A comprehensive analysis of shadowing impacts and massing considerations is indispensable in informing urban planning decisions. Utilizing advanced modeling techniques, such as shadow studies, enables visualization of potential scenarios. By illustrating options that incorporate setbacks on upper floors to mitigate shadowing effects and preserve mountain views, planners can navigate the delicate balance between growth and preservation.



[1] While in some cases, it might be difficult to retain, the preservation of mountain views should be a primary concern when considering building heights. 8th Street, Canmore. [2] This image shows buildings of one, two and three stories in Banff Avenue. [3] When possible, the provision of rooftop patios should be encouraged to take advantage of a privileged view of the mountains at a higher elevation.



## Built Form: Material and Colours

Incorporating natural and locally sourced materials into the architectural detailing of buildings is integral to preserving the authentic character of a mountain town. Embracing materials like wood and masonry not only pays homage to the region's rugged landscape but also fosters a sense of harmony with the surrounding environment. Opting for earth tones further reinforces this connection, evoking the organic hues found in nature and imparting a warm, inviting ambiance to the streetscape.

At street level, the strategic use of natural materials on facades enhances the overall quality of the public realm and elevates the pedestrian experience. By integrating elements such as stone cladding or wooden accents, buildings establish a tactile connection with passersby, inviting interaction and fostering a sense of place. The combination of these materials against the backdrop of urban infrastructure adds visual interest and depth to the streetscape, creating a dynamic and engaging environment for residents and visitors alike. Modern interpretations and uses of these materials also contribute to the sense of place of a modern mountain town.



[1] The use of natural materials on buildings is encouraged, Banff Ave.  
[2] Detailing at the street level is encouraged to enrich the pedestrian experience, like this store entrance detail, Banff Ave. [3] Natural materials include wood, metal and masonry using local stones. [4] This is a great example of the use of local material in a modern addition-  
renovation commercial building on 6th Ave, Canmore.



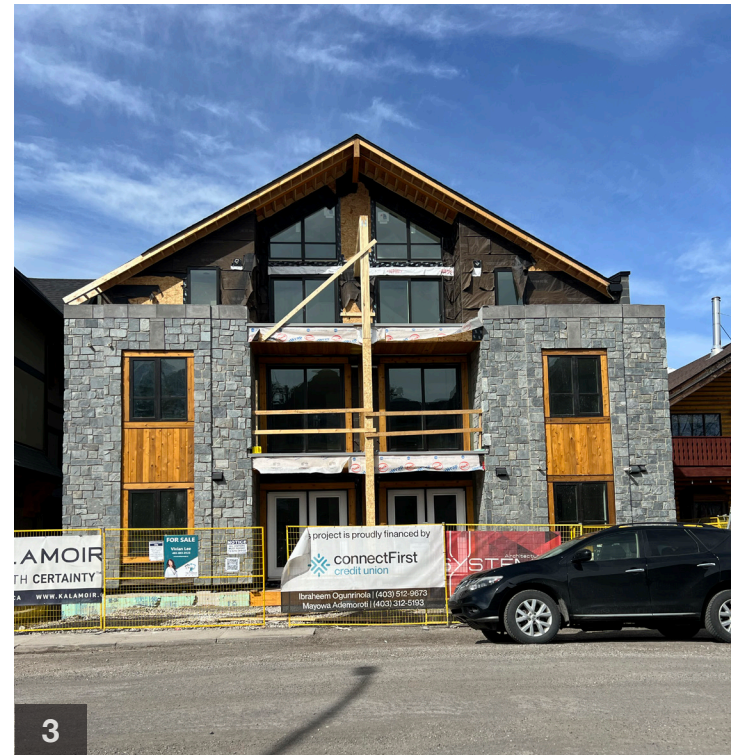
## **Built Form: Rooflines**

The roofline of buildings plays a significant role in shaping the overall character and sense of place within a mountain town. A preferred architectural feature often observed in such locales is the pitch roof, which not only embodies the traditional aesthetic of mountain communities but also evokes a sense of ruggedness and durability reminiscent of the surrounding natural landscape. In Canmore, modern interpretations of pitch roofs have emerged, seamlessly blending contemporary design elements with the timeless character of mountain architecture. These structures not only pay homage to the town's rich heritage but also contribute to a cohesive and authentic mountain town ambiance.

While pitch roofs remain a hallmark of Canmore's architectural identity, there is ample opportunity for further exploration and innovation in their design. Modern variations of pitch roofs offer a fresh perspective while still preserving the sense of place inherent to mountain towns. By embracing these contemporary interpretations, Canmore can continue to evolve while maintaining its distinctive character and appeal. In contrast, flat roofs, while functional in certain contexts, lack the visual interest and historical resonance associated with pitch roofs, thus detracting from the overall sense of place within the community.



[1] Various angles and styles of pitched roofs are recommended, combined with natural, local materials, Such Switzerland. [2] Pitched rooflines are preferred and contribute to the sense of place of a mountain town, 10th St. Canmore. [3] The angle of the pitched roof can vary; like these examples, it is preferable that it drains away from the sidewalks to prevent falling ice and snow.



## Built Form: Permeability and Land Use

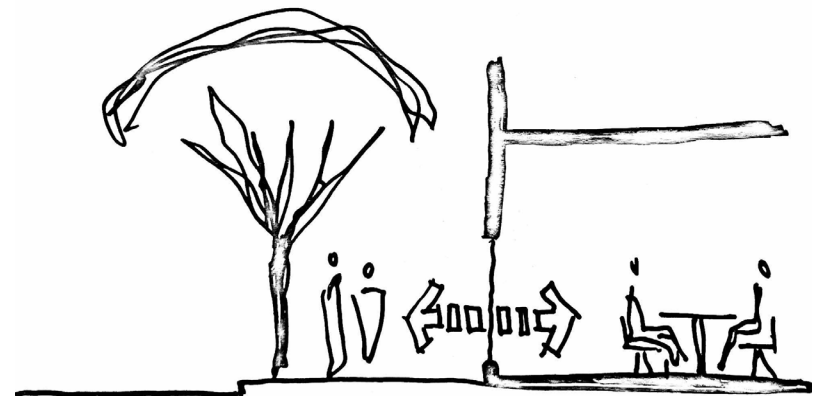
Ensuring a high degree of permeability at street level is crucial for fostering a sense of connectivity and vitality within the urban fabric. By creating seamless transitions between indoor and outdoor spaces, buildings can enhance the overall quality of the public realm, encouraging pedestrian activity and social interaction.

Prioritizing local permanent residency over transient hospitality uses can significantly bolster the economic sustainability of the community. As the local population grows, it will provide a solid customer base for neighborhood businesses, fostering a vibrant and walkable commercial environment.

To accommodate the evolving needs of the community, it's imperative to strike a balance between residential, commercial, and recreational land uses. While tourism undoubtedly plays a vital role in the local economy, efforts should be made to mitigate its impact on vehicular traffic by promoting walkable and cycling-friendly infrastructure. Leveraging town-owned parcels for affordable housing initiatives presents a promising opportunity to address housing affordability challenges. Establishing a development trust for town properties, akin to the University of Calgary Property Group's lease-based model, could facilitate the implementation of such initiatives.

In designing mixed-use developments, careful attention should be paid to the interaction between land uses and the public realm. Active frontages

at street level, characterized by engaging storefronts and pedestrian-oriented amenities, contribute to a vibrant and attractive streetscape. Conversely, land uses that do not engage with the public realm, such as certain office and service-oriented spaces, are best located away from street level to maintain the vitality of the urban environment. Additionally, while residential components add vitality to commercial areas, situating them at street level in main commercial zones may detract from the overall pedestrian experience and is therefore not recommended.



Building permeability, especially at street level, contributes to the quality of the public realm. The relationship of interior and exterior spaces enriches the pedestrian experience and creates a safer public realm. (Diagram, Alaniz Uribe, 2021).

[1] High permeability at the ground floor allows for land use spillage not only in the form of patios but also showcasing products, like this street in Baden, Switzerland. [2,3] A high building permeability at street level should be accompanied by ground-floor land uses that engage with the public and benefit from visual (windows) and physical (doors) permeability. Banff Ave.





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