

Downtown Commons Needs Assessment

Final Report

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Executive Summary

The establishment of micro-retail villages offering a mix of small shops and public space is a strategy employed in some communities around North America to support local entrepreneurs, increase visitor spending, and create more vibrant downtowns. The best Yukon example is the Carcross Commons, located 75 kilometres from the capital city of Whitehorse.

In Spring 2025, the City of Whitehorse ("the City") initiated a needs assessment to explore market need and support for such an initiative in Whitehorse. The "Downtown Commons" project set out to determine:

- Demand from local entrepreneurs for micro-retail spaces;
- Potential gaps in the commercial real estate market that a Commons could fill;
- How a Commons could complement existing downtown spaces, businesses, and visitor experiences;
- Levels of support from business community and industry associations;
- Potential partners and participants;
- Facility/site needs and potential development sites; and
- Other relevant success factors.

The project team undertook engagement with the business community – namely two surveys and interviews with 21 different organizations – to complement and bridge gaps from its secondary research and a cross-jurisdictional scan of five Commons-type developments from across Canada.

The team was unable to definitively conclude that there is strong demand for micro-retail spaces in Downtown Whitehorse. Its engagement results point to a potentially strong demand for smaller, affordable spaces for small businesses in general, many of them local-oriented service providers (rather than artisans and producers), who reported a lack of such spaces in Downtown. Expert informants reported that there is more need for commercial kitchens, office space, and artist/demonstration spaces. While data shows an overall decline in the Yukon retail sector, the representation of small producers and artisans in that sector has steadily grown; this is substantiated by a steady increase in Fireweed Market participating vendors over the past five years. However, stakeholders cautioned that Fireweed Market growth may not translate into demand for an ongoing opportunity at a Commons since many vendors are part-time and lack the capacity to produce or participate at the scale involved.

A Commons could potentially appeal to the growing number of visitors to the territory whose interest in local, unique Downtown attractions incorporating shopping and culinary experiences is backed up both by visitor research and the experts the team interviewed for this project. Some stakeholders felt that a Commons could complement the business ecosystem by providing exposure and opportunity to emerging entrepreneurs and artists who are not ready for or seeking a more conventional brick-and-mortar space. A Commons could potentially help address what the team heard characterized as a lack of activation and vibrancy in the Downtown outside of 9-5 weekday hours. Further, if sited along the waterfront, a Commons could help complete what some stakeholders felt was a still unfulfilled 25-year old vision for that part of Downtown.

The team's engagement found that levels of support for a potential Commons are highest within the tourism industry due to concerns about insufficient activities and attractions for visitors outside 9-5 weekday hours. Business-serving organizations predicted that their membership would be divided on the issue due to unfair competition; this was reinforced by concerns from Main Street area businesses about this needs assessment being underway. Other stakeholders were conditionally supportive, subject to a more detailed concept and solid business case with minimal reliance on external funding. A few stakeholders strongly opposed the idea based on it creating unfair competition, particularly with Main Street businesses and organizations already offering cultural programming in the Downtown.

The cross-jurisdictional scan showed that participants in Commons-developments tend to be smaller, local artisans and producers who create unique products; in some cases, businesses without an existing storefront are given priority for selection. The team's interviews largely backed this trend up as the preferred operating scenario for a Downtown Commons; however, a few stakeholders felt strongly that brick-and-mortar businesses needed to be given an opportunity to avoid unfair competition. While some stakeholders expressed doubts that many vendors had sufficient capacity to participate full-time in a Commons, strategies such as tiered opportunities, rotating placements, and a central cashier could help. Most of the case studies were operated by a local government or government-adjacent corporation; despite this, many stakeholders felt that a government may not be well suited to lead such a venture and identified the non-governmental organization (NGO) sector as the logical alternative. Most of the organizations that participated in this study indicated potential interest in supporting a Commons but felt they were not well suited to lead. By the end of the project, an informal coalition of partners had emerged as the potential champion and future driver for a Commons.

The cross-jurisdictional scan revealed a trend towards siting these types of developments in a central, walkable location accessible to tourists and locals, and using mobile structures – predominantly sea cans – to provide the retail space. The team's engagement pinpointed the waterfront and Main Street areas as the overwhelming favourites in terms of Downtown location but weather (particularly wind) along the waterfront is viewed as a major impediment to more temporary structures; some stakeholders suggested that incorporating the three heritage buildings in the Main/Front Street area – namely, White Pass & Yukon Route (WPYR) train station, Old Fire Hall, and Roundhouse – could better activate what some consider underutilized spaces, reduce the capital investment (and risk) of a Commons, and address weather challenges. While there are practical constraints to increased usage of the Roundhouse, the Old Fire Hall is well-positioned for increased summer usage and the Government of Yukon (which owns all three buildings) is already considering a different approach and has notified the longtime WPYR station tenants that their current office usage may be phased out in the medium-term.

The successes reported by the five examples studied point to some of the potential benefits that a Commons could offer, such as: transformation of underutilized land into well-loved public spaces; improved community profile with visitors and the tourism industry; and growth and empowerment of small entrepreneurs and artists. Engagement showed that the business community prioritized a variety of local products and vendors, events and programming, walkability, and great design and atmosphere as the pre-requisites to a successful Commons. The challenges shared by other markets also bear consideration by a prospective Commons: limited vendor capacity, parking, high maintenance costs, marketing to locals, and limited funding for programming.

Operating models vary across the five examples researched, but most emphasized that considerable organizational capacity will be required to manage a Commons and urged the City and/or partners to start small and grow the offer incrementally as they learn. During the final stakeholder workshop, the informal coalition mentioned above pitched a potentially viable operating concept inspired by the example of the Granville Island

Council and based around an arts and business community-led effort to incrementally and organically activate the three heritage buildings.

The concept's initiating step would involve Main Street area merchants working collectively to coordinate more programming and use of the Old Fire Hall in summer (a farmer's market complementary to the Fireweed Market was one idea) in conjunction with arts groups and other key players in the Main Street/waterfront area. Regardless of specifics, the focus in the beginning would be on coordination, communication, and partnerships. After the initial phase is proven, the government could potentially offer up use of the WPYR station through a competitive process, subject to the fulfillment of a government-directed objectives (e.g., public access, tourism benefit, entrepreneur opportunities). At this point, the grassroots coordination could transition to the establishment a formal trust governed by a Board of Directors with arts programming and retail experience and the flexibility to make the project viable through such measures as a commercial anchor tenant. In this scenario, governments would support through bylaw changes and leasing the space. Parking, public washrooms, and vandalism were identified as challenging issues where City leadership would be needed and highly welcomed.

The project team concludes that a grassroots, arts and business community-led effort to establish a Commons is better positioned to gain social license from the broader business community than any City-led effort. The coalition that has stepped forward to shepherd this concept further may lack the capacity to assume the level of coordination and engagement that could be required; the City could play a valuable supporting role, or continue to lead until the group is ready to do so. At a minimum, the City and YG should lead on due diligence for the heritage buildings involved and policy setting for their potential incorporation in a Commons concept.

In closing, the project team recommends that the City consider the following actions, organized by theme:

Supporting existing vendor, business and Downtown activation efforts

- Identify and implement Parks Branch staffing options to allow the Fireweed Market to extend its Farmer's Market operating hours to 8 or 9 pm;
- Investigate the condition of street trees on Main Street and work to remedy the situation;
- Explore ways to streamline and simplify patio and event permitting;

Addressing commercial space needs

- In collaboration with entrepreneur-serving organizations, consider the piloting and/or development of a program to offer grants, property tax relief, or other incentives to Downtown landlords to renovate vacant commercial units to provide spaces supportive of small entrepreneurs (e.g., smaller, affordable units for rent);

Supporting continued work on a viable Commons concept

- Share this final report with stakeholders who have participated in the project to date, potentially soliciting a list of those who wish to stay involved in some capacity;
- In partnership with YG, undertake building condition and structural assessments of the Wharf and WPYR station to identify suitability for inclusion in a Commons concept along with potential upgrades and costs; and
- Meet with the proponents of the trust concept to discuss how the City can potentially support their efforts, whether through coordination, engagement, feasibility research, or other tasks.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Project Background

The establishment of micro-retail villages offering a mix of small shops and public space is a strategy employed in some communities around North America to support local entrepreneurs, increase visitor spending, and create more vibrant downtowns. The best Yukon example is the Carcross Commons, located 75 kilometres from the capital city of Whitehorse.

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- Facility/site needs and potential development sites; and
- Other relevant success factors.

Groundswell Planning, in partnership with Good Thinking Professional Services, was hired to undertake the project on behalf of the City. The City's Economic Development Intern provided support with engagement results compilation and secondary research.

1.2 Report Methodology

1.2.1 Engagement Program

From the outset, the project team felt that the involvement of the local business community would be critical to bridging anticipated data gaps, determining how much "social license" there was for the project, and identifying success factors and potential partnerships. (Note that public input was viewed as less critical in this phase but important in a latter phase).

Business community engagement centered around two activities: online surveys and stakeholder interviews. Two online surveys were developed, one geared to potential vendors/tenants in a Commons, and the other to the tourism industry. The team also conducted structured interviews with a wide range of business

List of Participating Organizations

Association franco-yukonnaise
Da Daghay Development Corporation
Erikco Holdings
Fireweed Market
Horwood's Mall
Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre
Kwanlin Dün First Nation Economic Development
MacBride Museum
Main Street Working Group (WCC)
Northern Vision Development
Taku Sports Group
Tourism Industry Association of Yukon
Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce (WCC)
Wilderness Tourism Association of Yukon
Yukon Arts Centre
Yukon Arts Foundation
Yukon Built
Yukon Convention Bureau
Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture
Yukon First Nations Chamber of Commerce
Yukonstruct

and tourism community stakeholders and convened them for a workshop at the end of the project. A list of engagement activities, their duration, and participation is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Downtown Commons Needs Assessment engagement summary

Engagement Activity	Date	Participation
Survey • Potential vendors/tenants • Tourism industry	June 9-27, 2025	51 responses (vendors/tenants) 151 responses (tourism industry)
Stakeholder interviews	June 9 – July 25; November 2025	26 individuals/21 organizations/16 interviews
Stakeholder workshop	December 8, 2025	9 individuals/8 organizations

The complete results of engagement are captured in a comprehensive What We Heard report that is a companion to this final report. Key findings captured in the What We Heard report are included here to add context to the presentation and discussion of potential operating scenarios, as well as the team's conclusions and recommendations.

1.2.2 Cross-Jurisdictional Scan

A prospective Downtown Commons would ideally draw from the experiences of similar initiatives, learning both from their successes and challenges and adapting proven ideas to the unique context of Downtown Whitehorse. Under the direction of the consultant team, the City's Economic Development intern undertook a cross-jurisdictional scan of five examples from across Canada: Carcross Commons; Lax Süülda Container Market in Prince Rupert; Halifax Waterfront; Railyard Market in Campbell River; and Railyard Market in Langford. Representatives of each were sent a standard set of questions and followed up with as required. The complete results are included in Appendix A.

1.2.3 Stakeholder Workshop

On December 8th, 2025, stakeholder organizations who had been interviewed during the previous summer reconvened for a two-hour workshop. The consultant team presented the findings from its engagement and cross-jurisdictional scan and tasked participants with brainstorming options to address the issues that emerged as being particularly challenging during the summer engagement.

1.3 Report Limitations and Intended Use

A limited project budget required the consultant team to focus its efforts where they felt they could be most useful. While need and demand for a Commons was important to assess, the team felt that it was equally important to gauge support for a Commons in the broader business community due to the perceived high influence that social license would have on the project both practically and politically. This was particularly important given the mixed results the City had experienced with the Main Street Town Square project in the summers of 2023 and 2024. The resulting report presents a high-level scan of needs and the broader parameters for the potential operation of a Downtown Commons. More detailed feasibility and business planning work will be required before proceeding further.

2.0 Local Market Context

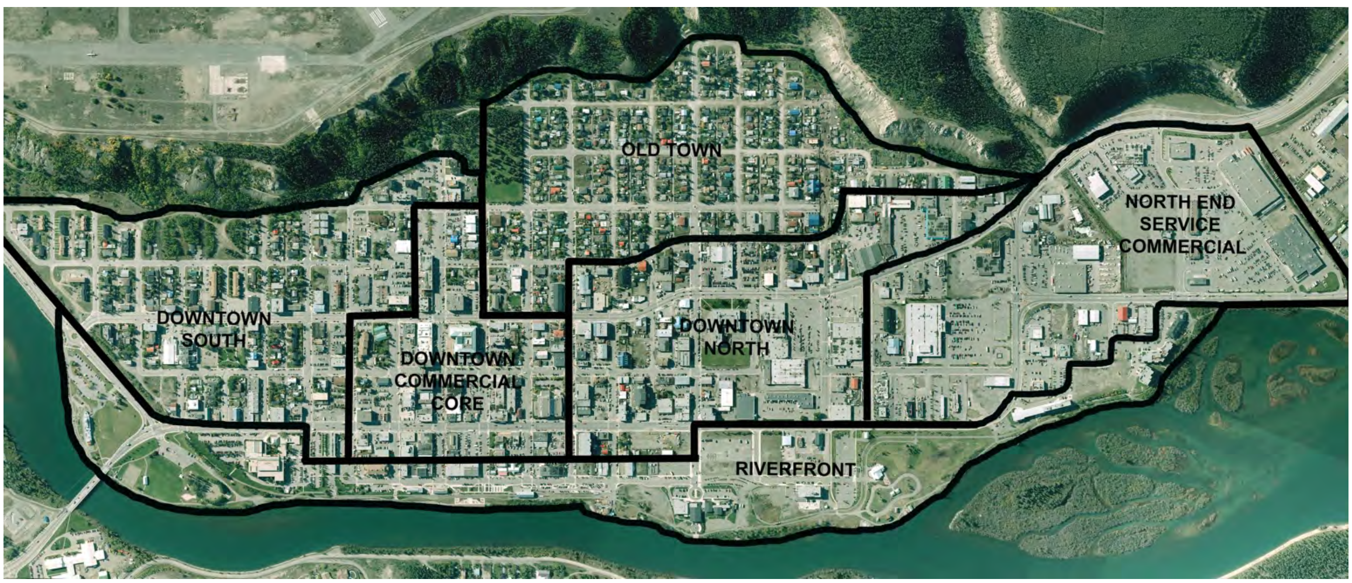
2.1 Downtown Commercial Landscape

2.1.1 Retail and Entertainment Uses

The 2016 Downtown Retail and Entertainment Strategy is the most recent comprehensive inventory of commercial spaces in Downtown Whitehorse. While almost a decade old, the inventory provides a quantitative baseline from which to examine patterns of commercial use – specifically retail and entertainment - that are of most relevance to a Downtown Commons.

The inventory delineated the Downtown area into five sub-areas: Downtown Commercial Core; Downtown North; Downtown South; North End Service Commercial; Old Town; and Riverfront. Please refer to Figure 1.

Figure 1. 2016 Downtown Retail and Entertainment Strategy Inventory Sub-Areas



The inventory also categorized commercial uses as one of the following: retail; service (entertainment); service (other); office – private sector; office – public/non-profit sector; and vacant. Note that the inventory summary is included in Appendix B.

The 2016 inventory found a total of 403,879 m^2 of commercial space in Downtown Whitehorse, with 35% (or 140,571 m^2) used for retail purposes and 8% (or 28,610 m^2) used for service (entertainment). In terms of representation by commercial floor area and units, the North End Service Commercial area is the clear leader, with a total of 83% of floor area and 38% of units dedicated to retail/service (entertainment). Downtown North and the Downtown Commercial Core are second and third by floor area at 41% and 26%, respectively, but the core has a higher unit representation (20% versus 18%). Old Town and Downtown South feature the lowest representation of retail/service (entertainment) uses, and the Riverfront is in the middle of the pack. Refer to Table 2.

Table 2. Representation of Retail and Service (Entertainment) Uses in Downtown by Sub-Area

2016 Downtown Retail and Entertainment Strategy Sub-Area	Commercial Floor Area Representation (% of all uses)			Commercial Unit Representation (% of all units)		
	Retail	Service (Entertainment)	Total	Restaurant/ Tavern	Specialty Retail	Total
Downtown Commercial Core	15	9	26	10	10	20
Downtown North	35	6	41	6	12	18
Downtown South	11	5	16	7	5	12
North End Service Commercial	77	6	83	18	20	38
Old Town	8	8	16	4	9	13
Riverfront	7	12	19	9	10	19

The cross-jurisdictional scan confirmed that specialty retail and restaurant/tavern uses are typically prominent in a Commons-type development. The 2016 inventory revealed that these uses are most concentrated in the Downtown Commercial Core, which has more than two times the density of the next highest density sub-area, Downtown North. The specialty retail and restaurant density of the Riverfront, North End Service Commercial, and Downtown South areas are less than one-fifth of the density of the Downtown Commercial Core; Old Town's density is less than one twenty-fifth.

Table 3. Density of Specialty Retail and Restaurant Units in Downtown by Sub-Area

2016 Downtown Retail and Entertainment Strategy Sub-Area	Area (m^2)	# of Commercial Units		Density (# units/m^2)
		Restaurant/ Tavern	Specialty Retail	
Downtown Commercial Core	180,000	24	25	0.00027
Downtown North	310,000	13	26	0.00013
Downtown South	350,000	6	4	0.00003
North End Service Commercial	360,000	9	10	0.00005
Old Town	320,000	2	1	0.00001
Riverfront	320,000	8	7	0.00005

Whether it is advantageous to site a Commons in an underserved area, therein creating a new attraction and more even distribution of retail/entertainment uses throughout the Downtown, or leverage existing nodes, will be discussed in later sections.

2.1.2 Availability of Smaller Retail Units

The current availability or abundance of smaller, ground-oriented commercial units is an indicator of potential need for the types of spaces that a Commons could potentially provide. The following summary is based on a high-level scan (versus detailed inventory) and is organized by the sub-areas used in the 2016 inventory. To differentiate, a micro unit is considered less than 100 ft^2, and a small unit between 100 and 500 ft^2[1].

- **Downtown Commercial Core** – This sub-area features the highest concentration of ground floor commercial units in the Downtown. Many of these units are located along Main Street; however, only a handful (between Front Street and 3rd Avenue or between 5th and 6th Avenues) would qualify as small units. Other commercial units are scattered around the periphery of the Main/Front Street area; along 3rd

[1] Micro-retail units are generally considered 500 ft^2 and smaller by the retail industry.

and 4th Avenues; and on Steele, Wood, and Elliott Streets. Here, there are an estimated dozen or small units.

- Downtown North – There are a few nodes of small (or slightly larger than small) units in the Lattin Building on 4th Avenue, Yukon Centre Mall, Yukon Inn Plaza, and a few commercial buildings along 3rd and 4th Avenues and Ogilvie Street.
- Downtown South – Many ground-floor commercial units are occupied by office-oriented or professional services uses in this sub-area and are larger in size. There are a few small units along 2nd and 4th Avenues and on side streets but there is no concentrated multi-unit retail node.
- North End Service Commercial – This sub-area is dominated by "big box" stores and larger commercial units. Notable commercial nodes featuring a few smaller (or slightly larger than small) units are the Chilkoot Centre and Waterfront Station.
- Old Town – This sub-area has the lowest number of commercial units in the Downtown. There are a few small units along 6th Avenue, on east-west oriented streets between 5th and 6th Avenues, and on the northern end closer to the clay cliffs.
- Riverfront – Horwood's Mall is the focal point for commercial units in this sub-area and features a few micro units and a half dozen or so small units. There is a handful of other stand-alone units along Front Street; these tend to be older, marginal buildings.

2.2 Micro/Small Commercial Unit Demand

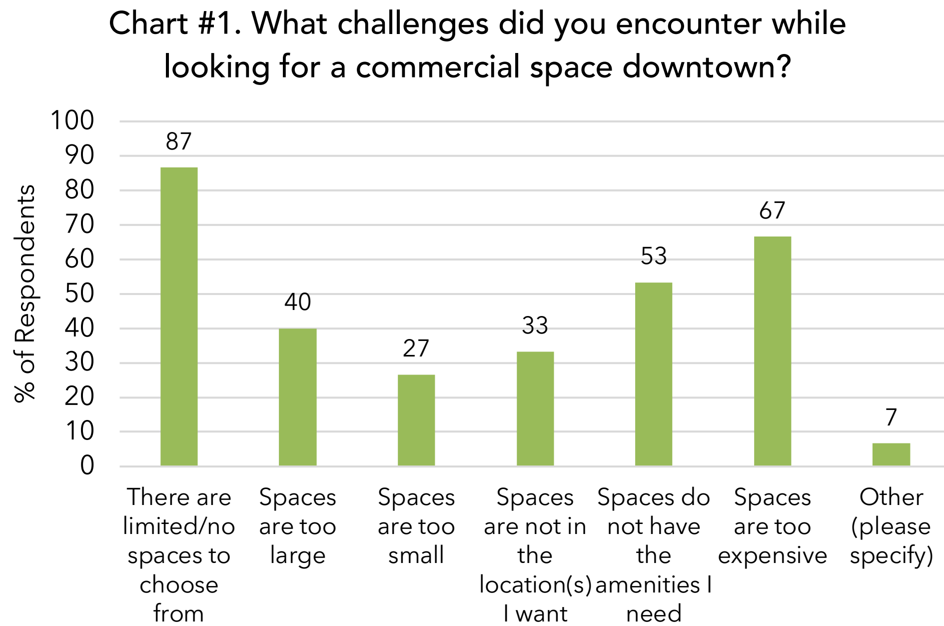
There is no central agency monitoring commercial rental rates or vacancy in Whitehorse (or Yukon); as such, the project team's assessment of demand for micro or small units relied primarily on the input it received from the business community during engagement.

The two surveys provided some useful insight on this topic. 78% of the vendor/tenant survey participants and 50% of the tourism industry survey participants who responded to the applicable question indicated potential or definite interest in renting a space in a Downtown Commons[2]. Of the former group, most respondents shared that they had been unable to secure a commercial space Downtown due to high costs or lack of available units in the desired size (refer to Chart #1). The potential tenant/vendor survey explored space needs in more detail, with the results showing a general preference for spaces 100 ft^2 or smaller.

Most of the stakeholders interviewed felt that there is demand from local businesses for the micro-spaces and increased market exposure that a Commons could potentially provide. Many cited the growth of the Fireweed Market over the past five years as clear evidence of demand, while a few pointed to the steady occupancy of smaller units at the Horwood's Mall – as well as the venue's track record of helping start-ups establish and expand into larger spaces – as proof of demand. Northern Vision Development shared that they receive many requests for pop-up sales booths at NVD Place – more than they can fulfill without compromising needed parking spaces.

[2] Almost 30% of respondents to both surveys skipped the question "Would you be interested in renting a space in a Downtown Commons if it were to proceed?"

Others offered a more nuanced assessment of demand. Horwood's Mall shared that they have steadily filled their smaller retail spaces but have never experienced a backlog of demand for them. The Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce felt that demand is high but not for permanent spaces with an ongoing commitment; it opined that many artisans prefer seasonal operation. Two entrepreneur-serving organizations (Yukonstruct and L'AFY) shared that the most significant demand from their clients/members is for a commercial kitchen for food entrepreneurs to use, noting that business owners are driving to other communities to meet this need. In addition, Yukonstruct shared that they are hearing demand for more large spaces and office spaces. Tourism and Culture shared that they are hearing a need for more arts demonstration and exhibition spaces with a retail component; this is reinforced by the record number of applicants reported by the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre for its Shakat artist residency program this year.



While many respondents to the potential vendor/tenant survey indicated interest in renting a space, a healthy proportion of them indicated being service providers – predominantly in the scientific, technical, and services sector – instead of producers and product sellers, the type of tenant more typically found in a Commons-type development.

2.3 Economic Indicators

Broader economic data provides some indirect indicators of potential market demand for commercial space in Downtown Whitehorse. The team's review of select data points revealed a mixed picture.

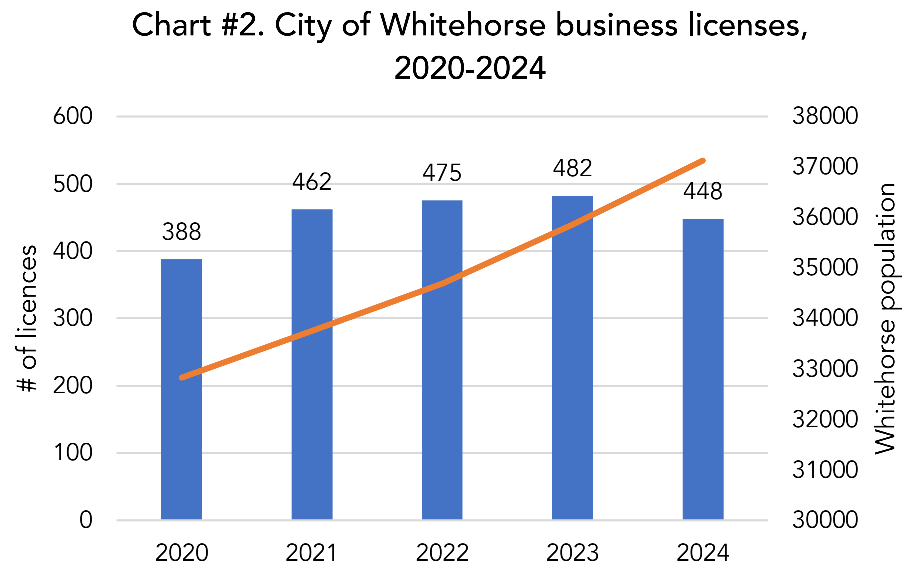
To start, the number of City business licenses has increased overall since 2020, but decreased between 2023 and 2024, with the total number of licenses (448) being lower than the 2021 levels. This decline contrasts with the strong population growth (ranging between 2 and 3.5%) recorded over that five-year period and may signal decreased demand for commercial spaces. Refer to Chart #2.

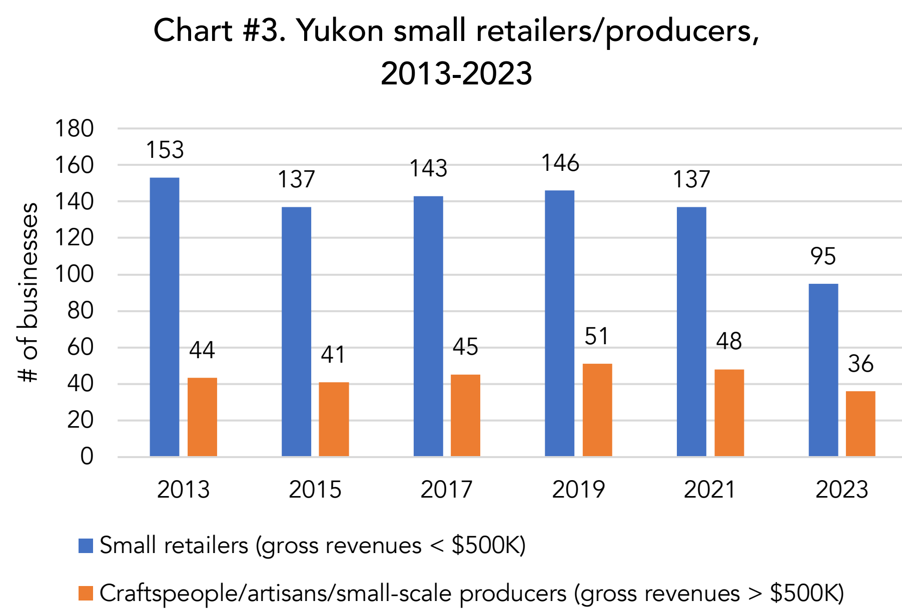
The number of small-scale retailers, producers, and artisans[3] in the territory declined over the 2013-2023 period. The decline is most significant for small retailers, which decreased from 153 in 2013 to 95 in 2023. The number of artisans and small-scale producers showed some growth between 2013 and 2019 but subsequently declined to a 10-year low of 36 in 2023. Refer to Chart #3.

[3] Gross annual revenues under $500,000. Source: Source: Yukon Business Survey (2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023)

While the overall number of small-scale retailers declined, the representation of specialty categories[4] in the Yukon retail sector steadily increased between 2013 and 2023. Both trends are likely linked to the increase in online retail sales over the same period, which disadvantaged retailers selling more generic products but favoured retailers selling more unique, specialty or locally made products. Refer to Chart #4.

Another useful measure of business activity relevant to a Commons is membership in the Fireweed Market Society, which hosts a weekly market in the summer months and the "12 Days of Christmas" market in December. The number of vendors has increased dramatically in both seasons over the past five years. The current summer market has a record 186 vendors participating, while the 2024 Christmas market saw a record 165 vendors and a waitlist of 10 vendors, representing growth of 121% and 56%, respectively. Refer to Chart #5.





[4] Categorized as "Office supplies, stationery and gift retailers", "Other miscellaneous store retailers", "Health and personal care retailers", "Jewellery, luggage and leather goods retailers". Source: Yukon Business Survey (2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023)

The available data suggests that while the broader retail sector is declining across the territory (and almost certainly in Whitehorse) the growth of specialty retail and small-scale producers and artisans could be fueling some demand for the types of spaces and vending opportunities that a Commons could offer.

Stakeholder interviews and workshop discussion revealed some of the nuance that could apply to this demand, however. They felt there is a clear distinction between vendors and businesses, with vendors being part-time with other income streams, and businesses being full-time, “both feet in.” Vendors were felt to lack the capacity to produce and/or sell product at a scale appropriate for wholesalers or an ongoing commercial opportunity, and not well suited to full-time participation in a Commons.

Chart #4. Representation of specialty retailers in Yukon retail sector, 2013-2023

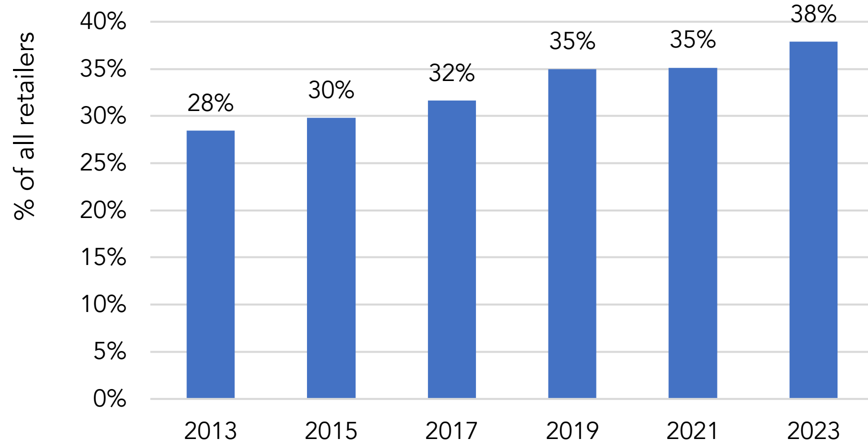
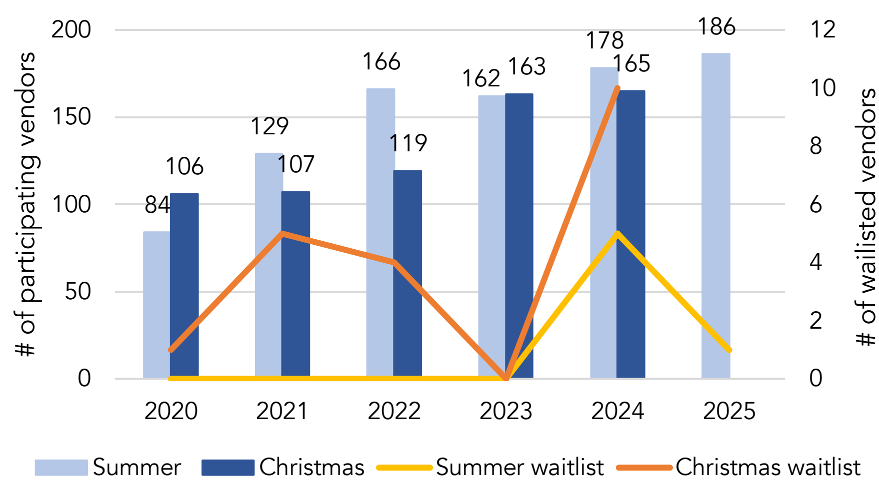


Chart #5. Fireweed Market vendor participation, 2020-2025

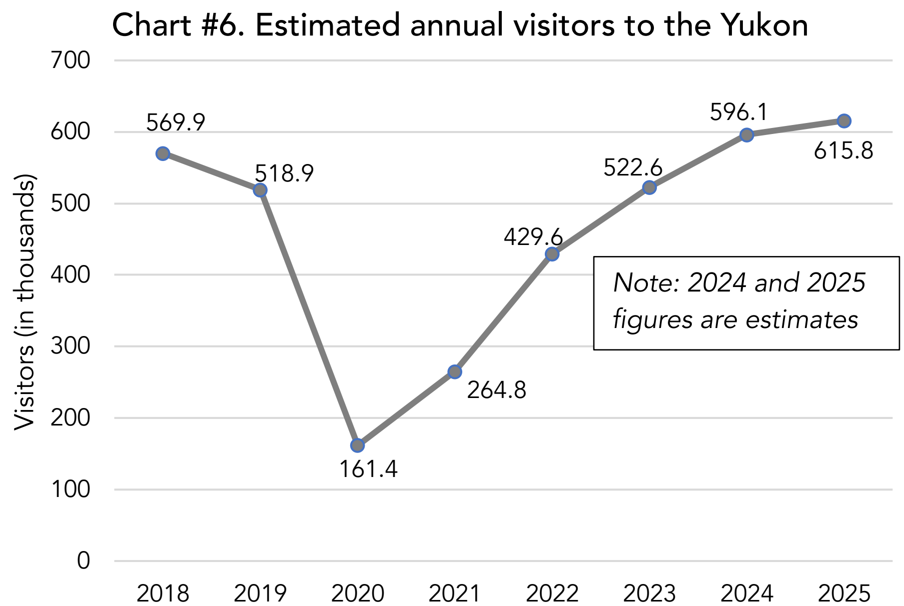


2.4 Tourism

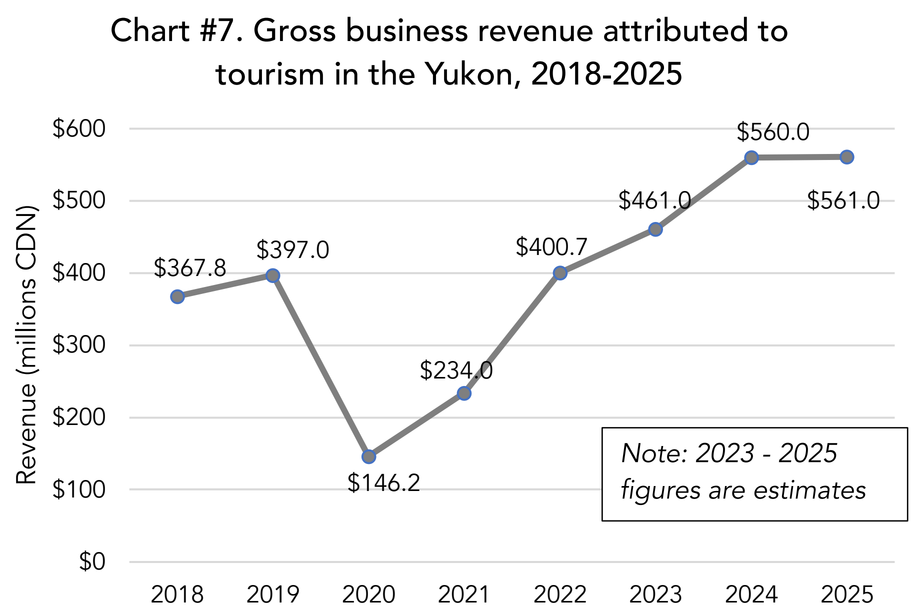
The cross-market analysis showed that tourists can be a critical market for Commons-type developments. The following section explores current tourism trends and indicators to better establish the potential role Yukon visitors could play in driving demand, or “need”, for a Downtown Commons.

2.4.1 Visitor and Visitor Spending Trends

The Yukon welcomed an estimated 596,100 visitors in 2024 and is on track to surpass 600,000 visitors in 2025. Both years surpass the previous high of 569,900 recorded in 2018. These numbers indicate a strong recovery from the severe drop in visitation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Refer to Chart #6.

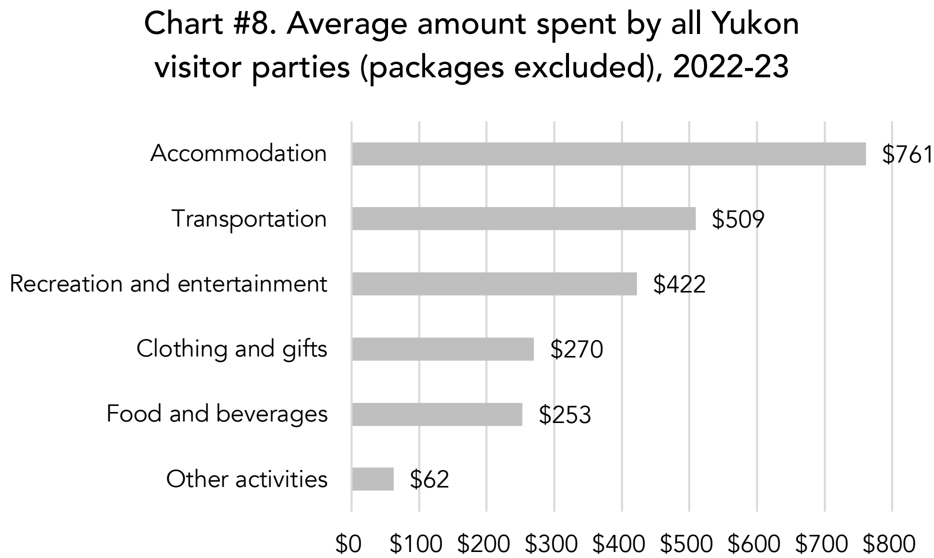


Gross business revenues attributed to tourism in the territory are tracked by the Yukon Business Survey administered by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics. The most recent Business Survey was administered for the 2022 calendar year. Revenues followed a similar trend to overall visitation: a significant COVID-related drop, followed by steady growth afterwards and record levels estimated for 2024 and 2025. Gross tourism-related revenues of $561 million dollars are projected for 2025. Refer to Chart #7.

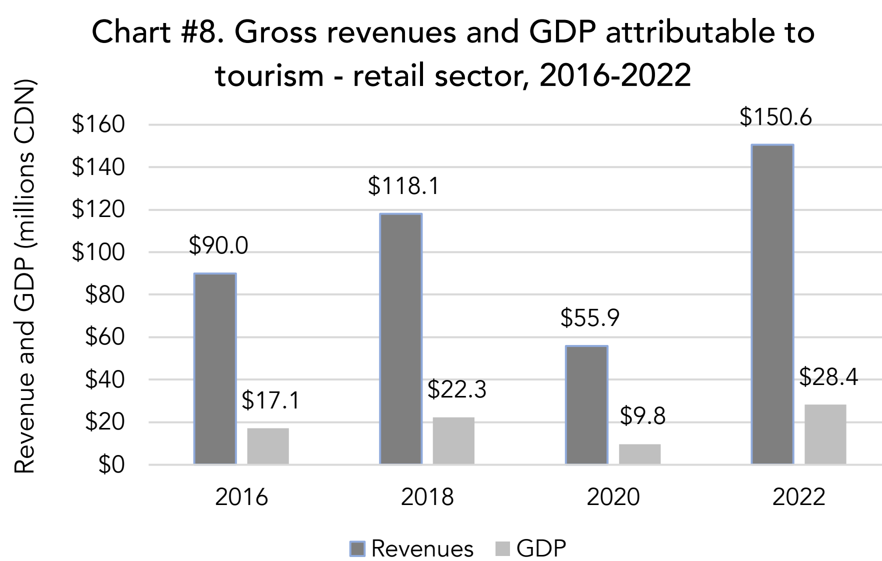


The Business Survey also shows that Retail Trade has received the largest share of tourism-attributed revenues of any industry sector since 2012. For example, gross revenues for the Retail Trade sector were $150.6 million in 2022, compared to $102.1 million for Accommodation and Food Services and $51.3 million for Transportation and Warehousing.

At the individual visitor level, the 2022-23 Yukon Visitor Exit Survey found that the average Yukon visitor party spent a combined $945 in Commons-relevant categories – recreation and entertainment, clothing and gifts, and food and beverages. Refer to Chart #8.



The share of tourism revenues and associated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) generated by the retail sector specifically shows a similar trajectory to tourism-related revenues overall. Retail sector revenues increased from $90 to $150.6 million between 2016 and 2022, while GDP grew from $17.1 to $28.4 million. Tourism-related GDP comprised almost 12% of territorial GDP in 2022. Refer to Chart #8.



Combined, these results show that this potential customer segment for a prospective Commons is both growing both in number and economic impact. The question of how a Commons-type experience could meet the preferences and expectations of this market is discussed in the next section.

2.4.2 Local Attractions and Experiences

Yukon's tourism marketing efforts centre around the territory's wilderness and array of natural attractions. Nonetheless, the 2022-23 Yukon Visitor Exit Survey (VES) shows that some visitors seek out more urban, potentially Commons-relevant activities during their stay in the Yukon. Historic sites, parks and buildings rank high with Yukon's key geographic visitor segments: United States, domestic, and international. Refer to Table 4.

Table 4. Ranking of Commons-Related Yukon Visitor Activities

Visitor Exit Survey Top 10 Activity	Ranking (by # of activities completed)		
	US visitors	Canadian visitors	Overseas visitors
Experience local cuisine	1	5	7
Visit a Visitor Information Centre	8	6	3
Visit a museum	7	7	4
Visit a historic site, park or building	4	3	2

(Source: 2022-23 Visitor Exit Survey)

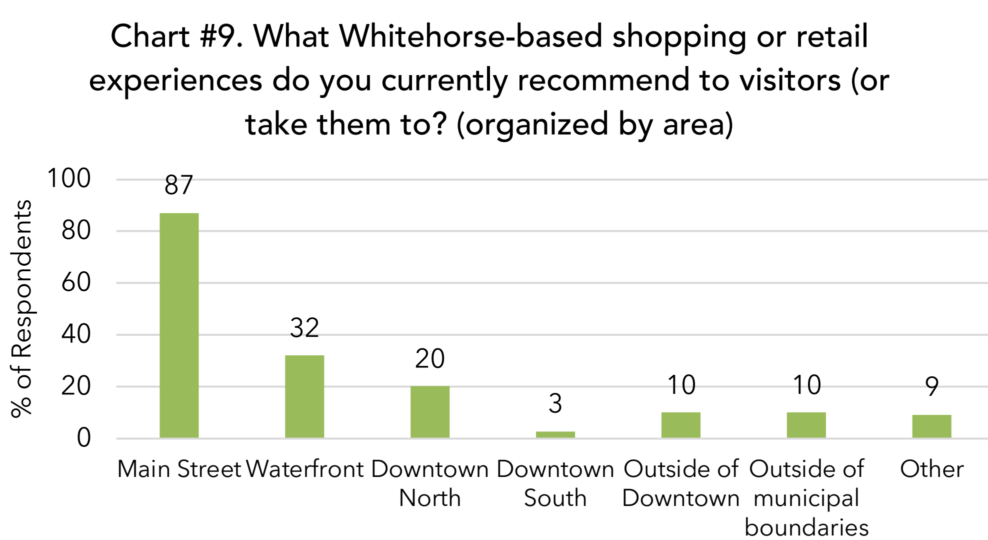
Tripadvisor's Top 20 "Best Things to Do" in Whitehorse visitors reinforces the importance of nature and the outdoors to visitors, with the Yukon Wildlife Preserve, Miles Canyon, and Emerald Lake all occupying spots in the Top 5. However, many of the spots are occupied by Downtown built attractions and local retail experiences. Refer to Table 5.

Table 5. Visitor Ranking of Downtown or Commons-Related Attractions

Rank	Attraction/Activity
4	MacBride Museum
7	S.S. Klondike
9	Visitor Information Centre
10	Yukon Brewing Company
12	North End Gallery
13	Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre
15	Woodcutter's Blanket Bar
16	Yukon Artists @ Work
18	Fireweed Farmers Market
20	Lumel Studios

(Source: TripAdvisor)

When asked about the importance of a local shopping/retail experience to Yukon visitors, 90% of tourism industry survey respondents rated it as 'very important' or 'moderately important'. They shared the shopping/experiences they recommend to visitors to Whitehorse, with the most recurring specific responses being Main Street, Horwood's Mall, and Fireweed Market. When responses were grouped by geographic area, Main Street emerged as the predominant choice (87%), followed by the waterfront (32%) and Downtown North (20%). Refer to Chart #9.



Quality and/or local products was by far the most common reason cited by survey respondents as rationale for their shopping recommendations, followed by proximity to other shops, availability of souvenirs, and quality food were also mentioned (in that order).

Stakeholder interviews provided further context for these results. Numerous interviewees spoke to a lack of activities and attractions for visitors Downtown during evenings and weekends. Another stakeholder commented that the problem of low Downtown activation is particularly significant during the summer, as a much higher percentage of winter visitors are participating in packaged tours and have a fuller agenda.

3.0 Operating Parameters

The project team intentionally left the question of how a Downtown Commons might operate to stakeholders and research to answer. The following section presents findings from the cross-market analysis and engagement as it pertains to the multiple operating dimensions that, combined, are the cornerstone of a potentially viable Commons concept. Under each section, findings are presented in the following order: "What We Learned' – findings from the cross-jurisdictional scan; and "What We Heard" – results from the project team's engagement activities. Additional background information, where pertinent, is presented under "What Else to Consider".

3.1 Vendors and Products

- *What We Learned*

Across the five examples included in the cross-market scan, the size of vendor communities varied. The Campbell River Railyard Market and Prince Rupert were the smallest at four and seven vendors, respectively, while the Halifax Waterfront features 46 vendors. Carcross and Langford each feature about 15 vendors.

Campbell River Rail Yard Market

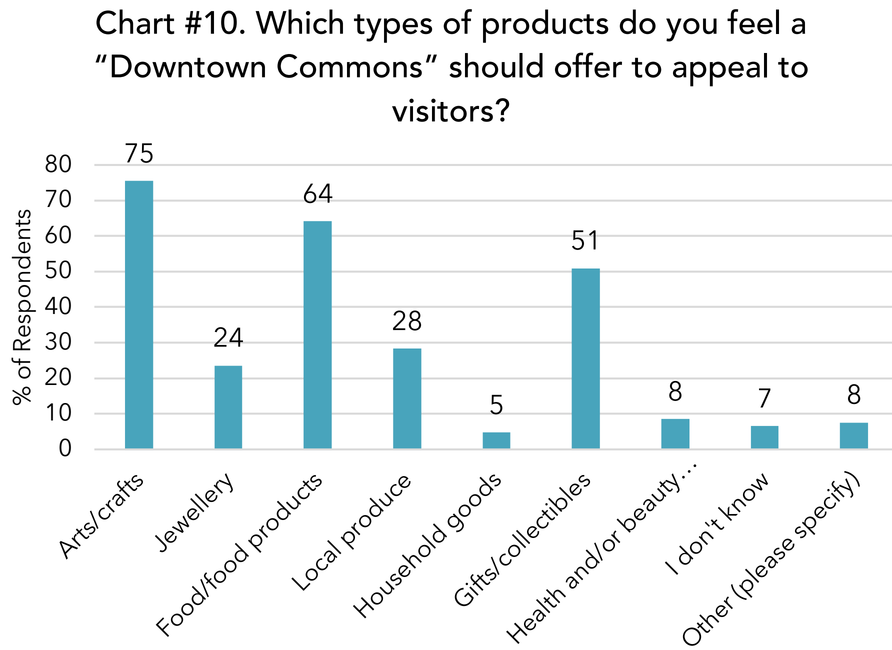
Almost all markets have an established application process, with preference given to businesses showcasing locally made and unique products. All three British Columbia examples confer a selection advantage to businesses without an existing storefront; that said, pop up opportunities are offered to brick-and-mortar businesses in Prince Rupert. Artisans can also rent market tables in Prince Rupert and Langford, and Carcross plans to offer a similar opportunity.

Most of the markets offer leases lasting either for an operating season (i.e. four to six months) or one year. Only the Campbell River Railyard Market and Carcross Commons offer longer lease opportunities (36 and 60 months, respectively); in the case of Carcross, this offer is limited to the buildings. Halifax also offers one-week, "pop up" opportunities to vendors (46 participate over the summer).

- *What We Heard*

Engagement results diverged on the matter of what types of products should be featured in a Commons, and by extension what types of vendors would participate. When asked to choose the types of products a Commons should offer to appeal to visitors, tourism industry respondents most frequently indicated arts/crafts (75%), food/food products (64%), and gifts/collectibles (51%). Refer to Chart #10 on the next page.

The question of "who" should be showcased at a Commons brought forth a wide diversity of input from stakeholders interviewed. Many envisioned a Commons catering to local producers/artisans and emerging businesses that offer unique, authentic products. A few others envisioned established local producers participating, perhaps as an add-on to their brick-and-mortar location or Fireweed Market booth. Contrasting ideas offered by a few interviewees included making the Commons broadly accessible to existing brick-and-mortar businesses (regardless of their product lines); incorporating an established larger business or two as anchor tenants who can subsidize artists; and solely dedicating a Commons to culture, with no products for sale.



Participants in the final workshop recommended the use of rotating vendor placements to keep the offer dynamic for the local market. They also felt that unfair competition could be reduced by making a Commons more of a business incubator space and making the retail component of a Commons more experience-focused – a place to rent kick sleds, or purchase boat or bus excursions, etc.

3.2 Location

- ***What We Learned***

All five examples are strategically located in proximity to existing shopping districts and/or visitor traffic flow. The Prince Rupert and Carcross markets are located adjacent to cruise ship passenger embarkment/disembarkment areas – the cruise ship terminal in the case of Lax Süülda and bus parking area for the Commons. The Langford and Campbell River markets are located close to downtown commercial areas and proximal to major transportation arteries. The Halifax Waterfront is in a busy, revitalized area of the Halifax harbour, near other seasonal businesses and convenient to both visitors and locals.

- ***What We Heard***

While respondents of both surveys showed support for both the waterfront and Main Street areas as potential locations, stakeholders overwhelmingly chose the waterfront – albeit different variations on the concept (Shipyards Park, linear with multiple nodes, etc.) Survey results also showed that local businesses felt that a busy, central, walkable location was a key ingredient to the success of a Commons. Better visibility and exposure to customers was also the primary motivating factor identified by potential vendors/tenant survey respondents who indicated interest in renting space at a Commons.

The issue of inclement weather (primarily wind) along the waterfront was repeatedly raised as a design challenge for a Commons. Many stakeholders suggested repurposing or adapting existing buildings for use in a Commons. The incorporation of the White Pass & Yukon Route (WPYR), Old Fire Hall, and Roundhouse buildings was suggested repeatedly. For further context, numerous stakeholders expressed that the waterfront in its current state has failed to fulfill its potential. Several cited the vision, and accompanying background work, of the Main Street Yukon Society and Yukon Arts Centre in the early 2000s to bring arts spaces to the waterfront. While there was appreciation for the restoration of historic buildings and construction of the waterfront wharf, some felt that these are "dead" spaces that require more activation and beautification efforts. The historic WPYR building was also brought up by a handful of interviewees as being mis-utilized with office space.

- ### *What Else to Consider*

Interviews were held with the Government of Yukon Cultural Services Branch, Yukon Arts Centre, and MacBride Museum to further explore the feasibility of utilizing the three Front Street/Main Street heritage buildings of particular interest to some stakeholders[5].

Old Fire Hall (above); lobby of White Pass & Yukon Route train station (below)

MacBride Museum shared that the Roundhouse's primary function as a storage and maintenance shed for the trolley imposes constraints, both spatial and temporal, on its use for programming. The building is uninsulated and has one public washroom, and the trolley occupies the southeast corner of the building outside of operating hours. MacBride itself has occasionally hosted events that worked around these constraints; for example, a Summer 2025 collaboration with Velvet Antler Productions saw dancers incorporate the trolley into their performance area. MacBride emphasized that, as a non-profit society operating on a limited budget, it would expect that the potential use of the Roundhouse would be attached to a solid business plan and resourced partners; donation of the space would be unlikely.

The Yukon Arts Centre (YAC) confirmed other stakeholders' observations that the Old Fire Hall is not frequently programmed during the summer months; the facility is busiest from December through to February with extended bookings for the Spruce Bog Christmas Market and Pivot Theatre Festival. YAC shared that the space is

[5] The Government of Yukon technically owns all three buildings but has issued a License of Occupation for the Old Fire Hall to the Yukon Arts Centre and the Roundhouse to MacBride Museum.

more challenging to program with its long rectangular layout; however, it works well for intimate shows of 80 people or less and is equipped with public washrooms and kitchen space. YAC is receptive to the idea of the facility being incorporated into a Commons concept and could potentially consider some in-kind use.

The WPYR train station has been used as office space by cultural and tourism organizations for many years now. Most of the tenants occupy the second floor; the lower floor houses only a few tenants, men's and women's washrooms, and a lobby space where train tickets can be purchased through a ticket window. Public use of the space is minimal currently.

The Government of Yukon (YG) Department of Highways and Public Works is the leasing authority for the building but works in partnership with the Department of Tourism and Culture to manage signature heritage buildings owned by YG. Current tenants of the train station have been notified that YG is reviewing current usage and approaches to tenancies. Tourism and Culture representatives shared that greater animation of the train station has been raised by various arts, culture and business organizations as a priority. Work is underway to consider and develop new approaches to leasing signature heritage buildings, and how such buildings could be managed to improve public access and appreciation of them.

White Pass & Yukon Route train station exterior (above);
3rd Avenue & Steele parking lot with food trucks (below)

The project team explored other potential locations along the waterfront and Main Street areas where existing on-street parking could be utilized, and little to no on-street parking would theoretically be lost[6]. One potential candidate is the City-owned parking lot at 3rd Avenue and Steele Street (just off Main Street). The space occupies about 40% of a city block and has historically been underutilized; as such, the City has allocated the use of the western and northern perimeter of the lot for the mobile food vendor program for the past five or so years. Given that the lot has no running water or washrooms, this option would likely require a significant investment in built infrastructure to provide even a minimal level of amenities required for ongoing use and visitation by vendors and/or the public.

[6] The loss of customer parking was the major objection of Main and Front Street businesses to the Main Street Town Square project. The project team assumed that a successful Commons would need to retain, or potentially add, parking spaces.

There are other vacant sites closer to the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre that offer good riverfront access and for which parking could potentially be accommodated; however, the team learned that are currently needed for off-street parking. Further, over the long-term, these sites are intended for profit-oriented, permanent development projects.

3.3 Space Design and Configuration

- ### *What We Learned*

The cross-jurisdictional scan showed a strong trend towards non-permanent, lower cost, moveable structures. Sea cans (in 10, 20, and 40-foot configurations) are the primary unit type for the three British Columbia markets and features in the Halifax market as well (its two nicknamed the "Pop Can" and "Coastal Can"). Market tents are also integrated into the Langford and Prince Rupert markets, and Carcross intends to offer the same for the 2026 season.

Simple chalet structures along the Halifax Waterfront

The Carcross Commons is the only example studied that incorporates permanent, insulated buildings; however, both it and Halifax feature numerous smaller, moveable structures – seven mobile trailers (about 100 ft^2) in the case of Carcross and 22 chalets (about 70 ft^2). The Halifax chalets feature a hinged awning that can open/close to customers.

Converted sea cans in Langford

The public space offer of the five case studies varies from simple landscaping (Campbell River) to more elaborate, designed areas that complement the retail offer and facilitate programming. Wood is a central design feature in the Carcross, Prince Rupert and Halifax examples, the former oriented around a decked central plaza, and the latter two adjoining existing wharf/dock infrastructure (Halifax also includes seating installed at the water's edge). Both Langford and Carcross markets include a covered gazebo, while Halifax and Carcross also offer playgrounds with thematic ties to the setting - nautical for the former and a locally situated Carcross/Tagish First Nation creation story for the latter. The cultural emphasis in the Carcross Commons public space is exemplified by the Tlingit art adorning the buildings and its five totem poles.

Mobile trailer units in Carcross

The City of Langford reported that adequate parking is an ongoing problem for its Railyard Market. Carcross/Tagish

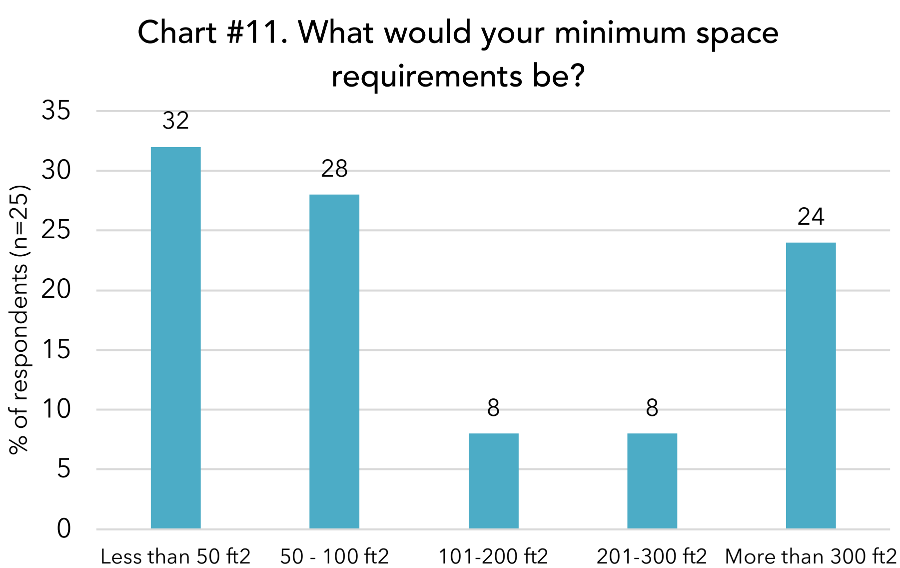
Gazebo at the Langford Railway Market (left); totems and Tlingit design representing the Gaanexteidí clan of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation at the Carcross Commons (above)

Limited Partnership strongly recommended consolidating operations into shared buildings or purchasing pre-modified small units that can be easily moved. Tourism Prince Rupert recommended including flexible space "on the side" to allow for pop-ups or different uses. Build Nova Scotia recommended pairing events and placemaking with the business opportunities to create a sense of place where people want to spend time.

- *What We Heard*

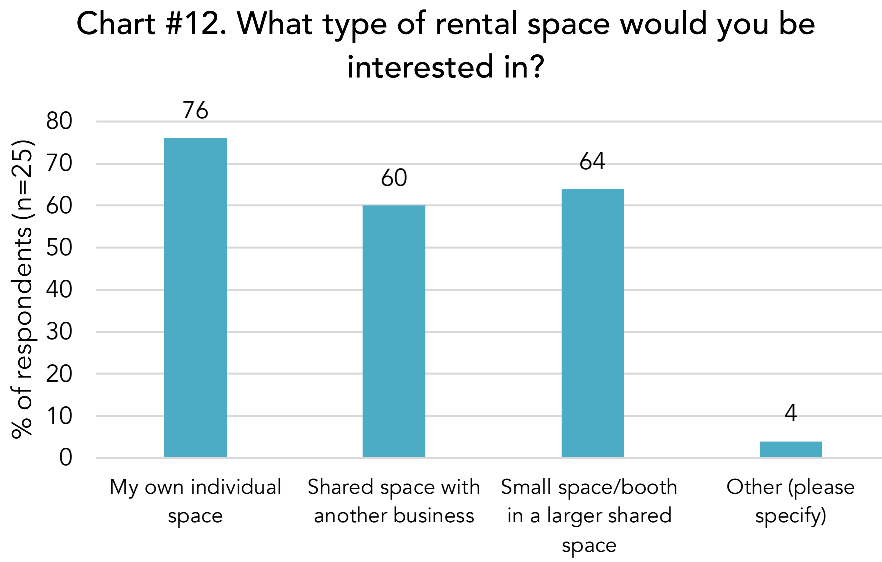
Respondents to the potential tenant/vendor survey showed a preference for small (or "micro") spaces as opposed to larger spaces. 32% of respondents need less than 50 ft^2, while 28% need between 50-100 ft^2. Interestingly, the next highest need was for units larger than 300 ft^2 (24%). Refer to Chart #11.

In terms of desired amenities at the Commons, interested respondents indicated the "Top 3" 'very important' amenities were power, wheelchair-access/accessibility, and running water.



While vendor/tenant survey respondents indicated a preference for individual units, a majority were also open to shared amenities or shared spaces if they were made available. Refer to Chart #12.

In addition, a considerable number of potential tenant/vendor survey participants (41%) expressed an interest in sharing staff with other vendors/tenants. These results show that vendors may be adaptable to a variety of configurations and even operating models.



The challenge of inclement weather – specifically wind, cold, and rain - was a recurring theme of the team's interviews and was closely interwoven with suggestions about space configuration. While numerous people suggested use of the three historic buildings, others were less prescriptive and suggested a covered or enclosed structure. Others felt that a Commons could consist of more temporary, moveable structures or spaces. The inclusion of both indoor and outdoor spaces, re-purposing or opening/closing spaces according to the season, good traffic flow to/from the outside/inside and between indoor spaces, seating and wide aisles were suggested. Several stakeholders felt that servicing could be relatively minimal – power, water, washrooms – and some recommended that a Commons be sized or scaled to avoid creating big, empty spaces lacking activation. Vendor-oriented amenities like a small storage area and a centralized cashier area were also suggested. Participants in the final workshop suggested a market hall, like the Granville Island public market.

3.4 Programming

- ***What We Learned***

Arts and community programming is embedded into the operating models of most of the five examples researched. According to Build Nova Scotia, the Halifax Waterfront is home to hundreds of events and community gatherings each year; however, the month-long Evergreen Festival in November/December – which involves the transformation of the area into a holiday village with lighting installations and fire tables - is probably the highest profile. The Langford market regularly features farmer's markets and events, most of which are run by the City events coordinator; however, the City is empowering vendors to run events by

Cabins decorated for the Halifax Evergreen Festival creating a template. Tourism Prince Rupert reported that Lax Süülda was geared towards tourists initially but over time has expanded to include community events such as Seafest, farmer's markets, and night bazaars featuring live programming and beer gardens.

Programming at the Carcross Commons typically consists of an official opening day that includes live music and dance performances by the local Dakhká Khwáan dancers. While not scheduled programming per se, occasional maintenance and community activities that occur around the Commons – such as repainting the totem poles and tanning of moose hides in the gazebo – are popular with visitors.

- *What We Heard*

The potential vendor/operator survey identified programming and events as the second-most important element critical to the success of the Commons (tied with variety of vendors); further, respondents said that events and activities was a key way a Commons could help entrepreneurs grow their business. Tourism industry respondents placed a similarly high importance on programming in their survey.

Repainting the totems at the Carcross Commons

Stakeholders generally agreed that a Commons needs to be more than just shopping with programming, activities and a vibrant atmosphere. A mix of attractions for different interests was repeatedly mentioned. Several emphasized the importance of creating the opportunity for memorable, first-hand experiences – whether through vendors sharing their stories with customers or incorporating a focal point (even a mascot!) for visitors to interact and take photos with. Others saw the potential for artist demonstration space and the opportunity to empower different artists through exposure and the design or decoration of Commons spaces. Some felt less strongly about the types of cultural experiences on offer and felt that general purpose learning/demonstration spaces, entertainment, and music were just as important.

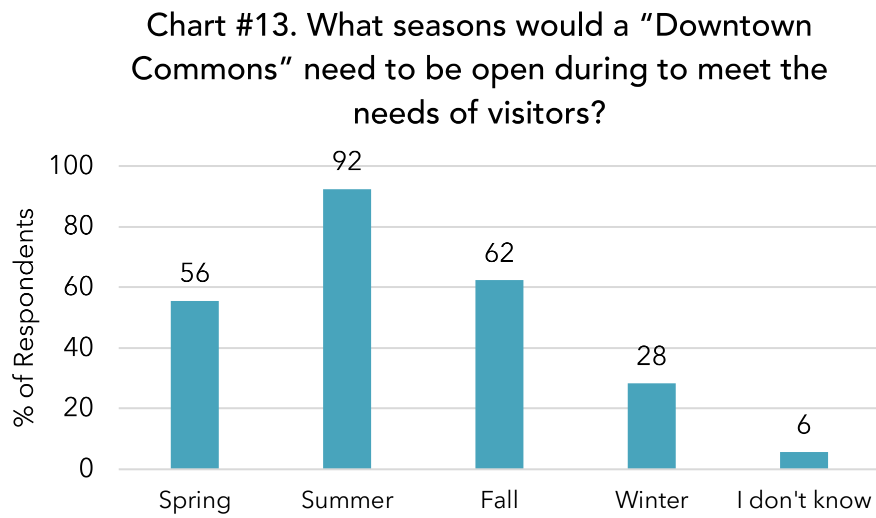
3.5 Operating Season and Hours

- *What We Learned*

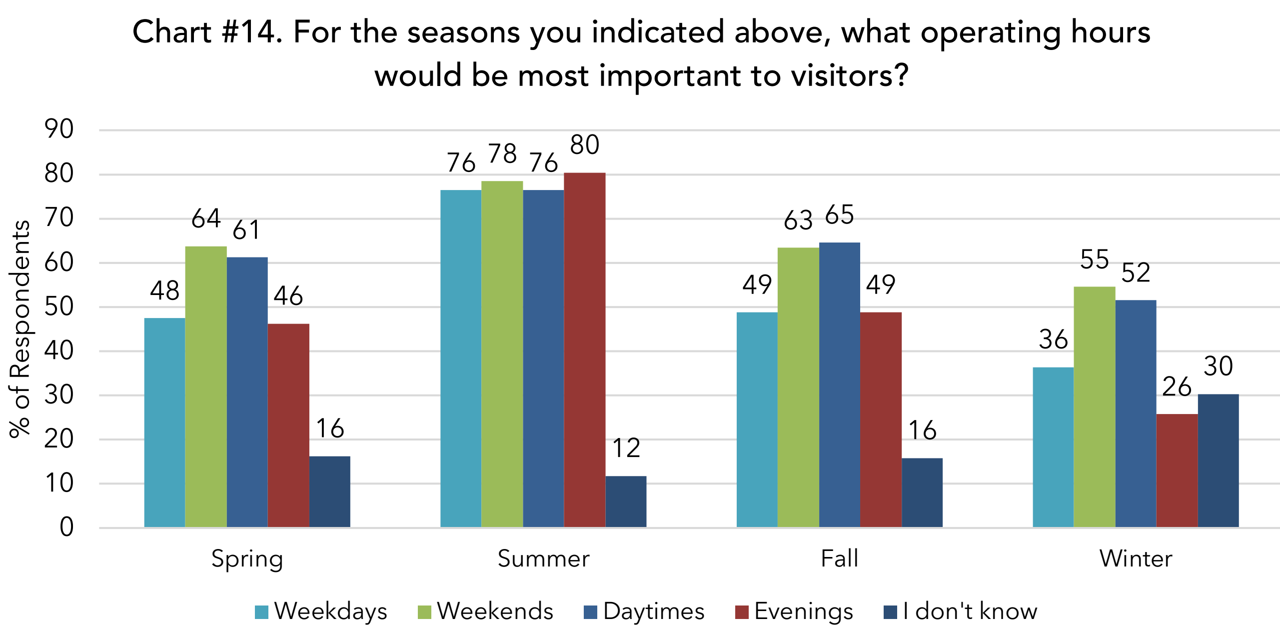
The approach to operating hours varies across case studies but generally is characterized by an attempt to balance consistency and reliability for customers with vendor flexibility and autonomy. The Langford Railyard Market requires set operating hours on weekends (11 am – 5 pm) and requires a minimum of five hours on Thursday and Friday; additional hours are left to the discretion of vendors, and some do stay open all week. Under its new policies, the Carcross Commons will require 8 hour/day, 7 days/week operations from most of its vendors during both peak and shoulder seasons. Winter operations are optional for building tenants, and some of the less prominent mobile and sea can unit vendors are afforded more flexibility (i.e., smaller minimum days and hours). The other examples did not share these details but Build Nova Scotia did mention that consistent and reliable hours are factored into its Halifax Waterfront vendor selection process.

- *What We Heard*

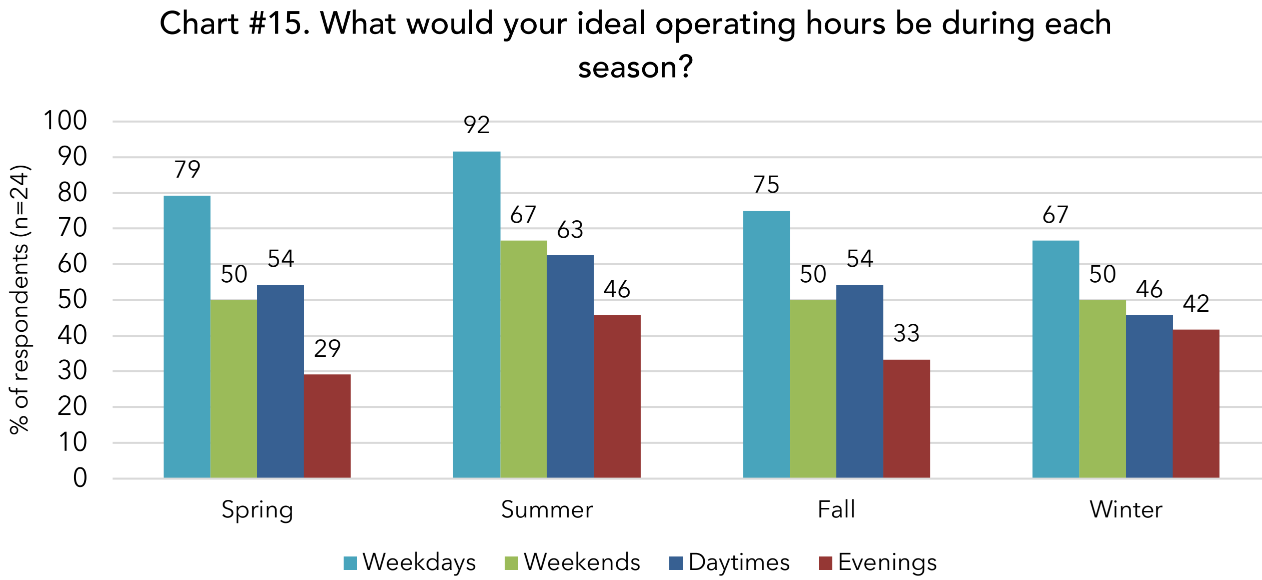
The subject of operating hours prompted some of the most interesting and divergent feedback received during engagement and revealed that this operating parameter may prove to be one of the most challenging to successfully pinpoint.



Tourism industry survey respondents rated the summer as the most important season for a Commons to operate, and winter as the least important. They also rated evenings as being the most important operating time during the summer season, slightly ahead of daytime, weekend, and weekday slots. Refer to Charts #13 and #14.



The results of the vendor/tenant survey and stakeholder interviews aligned somewhat with those of the tourism industry survey. Only 58% of potential vendors/tenants expressed an interest in winter operation; however, they also expressed a marked preference for weekdays and relative disinterest in evenings across all seasons (see Chart #15). Stakeholders generally felt that the vendors a Commons might attract would have limited capacity to participate year-round, or even full-time on a seasonal basis. They also expressed doubts that there was sufficient market demand for year-round operation, citing the seasonal fluctuations in Yukon visitation as rationale. One noted that a much higher proportion of winter visitors are guided compared to the summer; as



such, summer visitors have more time to fill with an experience like a Commons.

The issue of operating hours also came up in the context of how a Commons could complement, versus compete with, existing businesses. Some strongly encouraged the Commons to establish "off hours" – evenings and weekends in the summer or more sporadic or event-based in the other seasons – to accommodate visitor needs and avoid direct competition. The "when" was also tied to "where" for a few stakeholders who suggested that a Main Street location would only be suitable if it was open when other businesses are closed. The idea of off-peak operating hours was met with considerable skepticism by several interviewees with summer programming experience, who shared that tourists make up a small minority of attendees to evening events and the local demand in summer is only high enough to sustain one or two nights per week

3.6 Managing Entity

- ***What We Learned***

A government or government-adjacent organization initially developed and now operates most of the five case studies. In the case of the Vancouver Island markets, municipal governments took the lead. For Halifax and Carcross, a community-geared corporation assumed the leadership role. The notable exception is Lax Süülda, which is operated by Tourism Prince Rupert, a non-profit entity.

Operating models vary somewhat across the five examples, and in most cases, interviewees did not divulge many details. For Halifax and Carcross, management duties are shared across a team of staff already employed on other corporation-led projects. The Campbell River market is small enough to be managed as a project by one municipal staff person, whereas the larger Langford market requires about 50-75% of one staff person's time to manage vendors, organize events, and oversee maintenance and upkeep. Two summer students are employed to manage the Prince Rupert market.

- *What We Heard*

Some interviewees repeatedly cited the operating model of a Commons as being key to its success, with several using the expression "devil in the details". They cautioned that the capacity that would be required to organize and administer a Commons was significant. The organization with perhaps the most relevant experience, the Fireweed Market, shared that they have outgrown their volunteer and funding capacity as a non-profit organization and they have identified funding for the full-time, year-round coordinator they require.

Capacity was in part tied to a need for innovative, flexible management. For example, some felt that the operating model should accommodate smaller or more fledgling businesses through flexible arrangements such as time blocks or rotating schedules, or that different tiers of opportunity and commitment could be offered: leases of various lengths, pop-ups, or rotating spaces available with shorter operating hours, and more permanent spaces geared towards more established businesses that can maintain regular, longer operating hours. A centralized point of sale for vendor flexibility and security, as well as onsite staff to address complaints or problems in a timely manner, were mentioned repeatedly.

In contrast to what the project team learned from its case studies, most felt that a Commons needed a non-governmental organization (NGO) partner, with the most common suggestions being the Fireweed and Spruce Bog market societies. A handful of stakeholders envisioned a potential role for private sector partners, although one cautioned that their involvement couldn't add to their already stressed bottom lines. Another predicted that a private sector partner would be best equipped to innovate, secure partners, and run a Commons on a cost-recovery basis. Some stakeholders felt that governments aren't naturally equipped to make a Commons viable, with little business experience and limitations of a bureaucratic structure; however, these criticisms were tempered with the acknowledgement that the project may not be commercially viable for a private sector champion. There were suggestions that the City could provide support through facility maintenance or dedicated free parking, or waive development fees, property tax or overheads.

During the final stakeholder workshop, one breakout group pitched an operating model centering around an arts and business community-led effort to incrementally and organically activate the Main/Front Street heritage buildings. The initiating step would involve Main Street area merchants working collectively to coordinate more programming and use of the Old Fire Hall in summer in conjunction with arts groups and other key players in the area. After the initial phase is proven, the government could offer up use of the train station through a competitive, transparent public process and require the fulfillment of a government-directed objectives (e.g., public access, tourism benefit, entrepreneur opportunities). At this point, the grassroots coordination could transition to a formal trust governed by a Board of Directors with arts programming and retail experience. This group would have the flexibility to meet the government's mandate creatively and adaptively, including bringing in a commercial anchor tenant to make the project financially viable.

3.7 Financials and Funding

- *What We Learned*

A few of the case study interviewees were willing to share financial information. The City of Langford estimates annual operating costs of about $40,000-$50,000, while the smaller, simpler, and seasonal Prince Rupert market costs about $15,000-$20,000. The Carcross Commons operates at an estimated $20,000-$30,000 annual deficit, suggesting that operating costs exceed those of Langford. The choice of buildings and custom fabricated trailer units (versus sea cans) and associated maintenance burden may partially contribute to the higher costs.

Operating funding sources were not divulged by most interviewees either; however, the project team infers that most of these initiatives are funded by a combination of tenant rents and the managing entity itself, with external funding helping to cover elements such as programming and employment of summer students.

- *What We Heard*

Some stakeholder responses revealed a "chicken and egg" dynamic in which support may be contingent on whether a solid business case can be made for a Commons. Several felt strongly that the project must be self-sustaining and not reliant on ongoing public funding or existing arts programs for entertainment and programming. They felt the pre-requisite to support would require a clear vision for how it will happen, accompanied by more details on what the contribution from City, business community, and other partners is. Several others suggested that an infrastructure plan would be needed, along with a clear idea of the "opportunity cost" (i.e., projects or initiatives that may not proceed so that a Commons can instead).

Some attendees of the final stakeholder workshop felt that the absence of any kind of government subsidy for a Commons was unrealistic and inconsistent with how many valued community initiatives are sustained; rather, they suggested that clear objectives (and limits) be placed on subsidies or support provided. The adoption of a Granville Island model, in which anchor tenant market-based rents help to subsidize participating artists, was suggested.

3.8 Success Factors

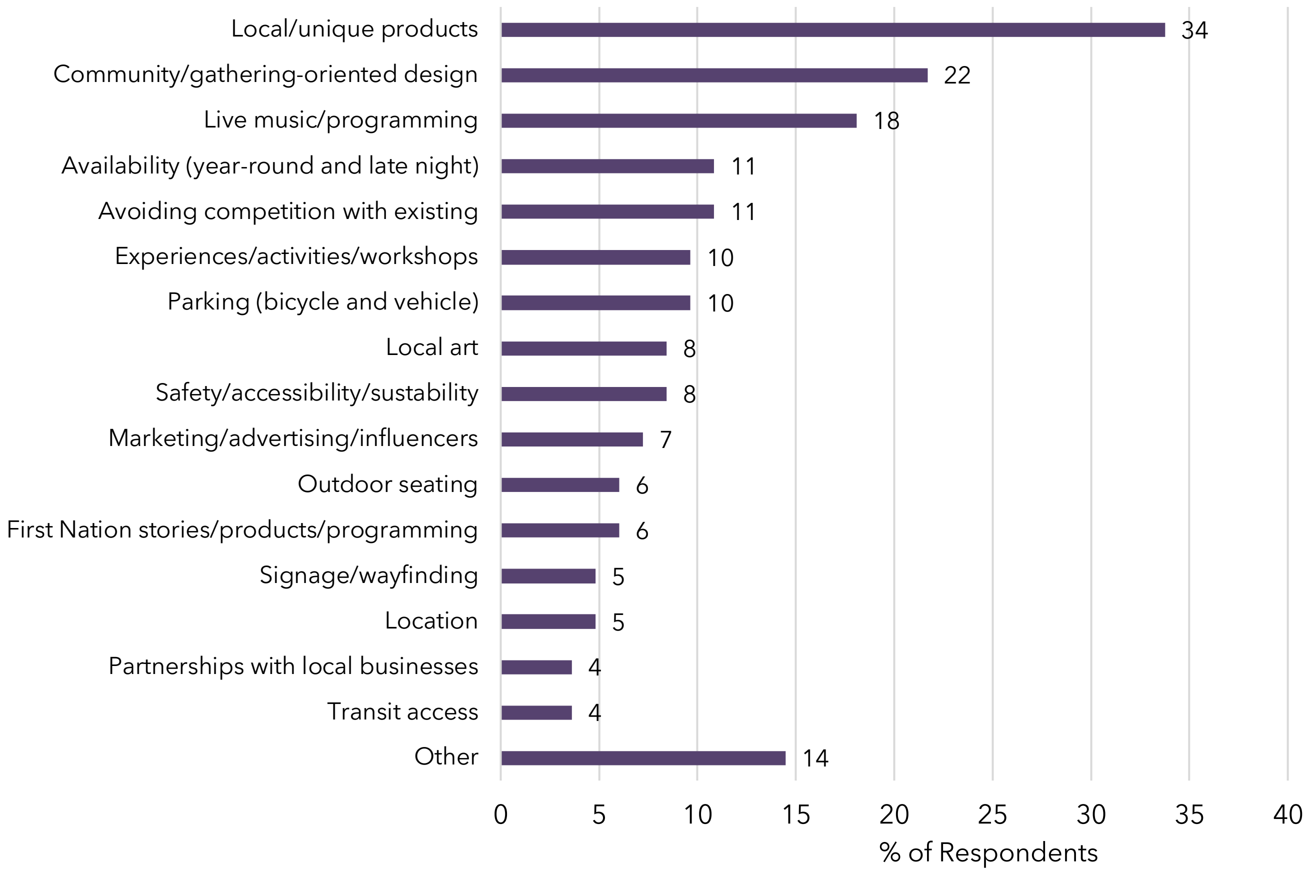
- *What We Learned*

The five case studies shared a variety of successes with the project team. The growth of artists and local entrepreneurs was a point of pride for Carcross and Langford. Langford also shared the empowerment and collaboration of small entrepreneurs as a big win. Both the Carcross and Halifax initiatives saw the successful transformation of underutilized or industrial lands into beautiful places that are appreciated by locals and visitors. A higher and more positive profile, for both the community and with the tourism industry, was shared as a key success for both Carcross and Langford.

- *What We Heard*

The views of survey respondents and stakeholders were strongly aligned on the key success elements for a Commons. Locally made or unique products and food options were the clear favourites, but programming and music and a vibrant atmosphere supported by places to gather and linger were mentioned repeatedly. Accessibility via parking and walking/cycling paths was considered important, as were arts and culture, both from a programming perspective and creating a memorable atmosphere and aesthetic. The results of the tourism industry survey (see Chart #16) are representative of the collective feedback received.

Chart #16. How could a Commons position itself as a "must visit" destination for visitors and contribute to a more vibrant downtown Whitehorse?



3.9 Challenges

- *What We Learned*

The challenges encountered by the five markets researched for the project vary considerably. Carcross Tagish Limited Partnership pointed to the high maintenance and repair costs resulting from the Commons adoption of multiple small trailer units and customization of sea cans. Langford shared that limited parking in the vicinity of the Railyard Market. Both organizations shared that funding arts and cultural programming is challenging due to limited provincial/territorial budgets for these. Tourism Prince Rupert reported that marketing and continuing to draw the locals now that the novelty of its market has faded is an ongoing challenge. The Carcross Commons has also experienced ongoing challenges with vendor capacity to maintain the operating hours required to create a consistent and high level of activation for all customers, particularly tour companies based in Skagway.

Interestingly, most of the five case studies reported that competition with brick-and-mortar businesses was not a major challenge for them. The City of Langford reported that the requirement for vendors to offer something unique helps to alleviate concerns about competition; further, the events held at the Rail Yard Market draws more foot traffic to other businesses in the area. The Carcross Commons created some uncertainty with the very small number of existing businesses but generally there has been a recognition of mutual benefit and little conflict. Build Nova Scotia reported receiving no opposition from the business community because the Halifax Waterfront focuses on short-term pop-up vendors who enhance the area rather than directly compete. Tourism Prince Rupert acknowledged there was initial resistance from the brick-and-mortar business community but it effectively made the case that cruise ship visitors were difficult to disperse to the downtown; perhaps more importantly, they offered these businesses an opportunity for pop ups.

- ### *What We Heard*

The surveys and stakeholder interviews revealed several potential challenges for a Downtown Commons, notably vendor capacity, market demand, and financial sustainability. Stakeholders were asked to weigh in on the issue of competition with existing brick-and-mortar businesses. Numerous interviewees predicted that a Commons would compete with existing businesses and be opposed by them. One organization shared that they had received letters from Main Street area merchants concerned about the potential for a Commons to offer subsidized rents and requesting that the City promote Downtown vitality without directly competing with them. The issue was raised numerous times in the surveys as well.

Most (but not all) interviewees viewed competition as an inevitable, even healthy, part of Whitehorse's evolution as a city and felt that opposition should be expected but not used as justification for inaction. Many felt that the current lack of Downtown vibrancy posed a greater threat to the existing business community than new competition. That said, some interviewees believed that a Commons needed to benefit both existing and new businesses. They spoke to the potential for a Commons to increase overall customer volume and foot traffic for everyone, create a vibrant Downtown where "stuff is going on everywhere", give Yukoners a sense of pride and place, and impart a "buzz" and positive "vibe".

Attendees of the final workshop were careful to differentiate between competition and subsidy, with the former viewed as healthy and the latter needing careful attention. they felt that Commons vendors needed to be incentivized to become self-sustaining, versus perpetual "grantpreneurs".

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

While the project team set out to try and pinpoint demand and support for a Commons, their results pointed to the difficulty of doing so for a complex project at a very preliminary conceptual stage in a dynamic Downtown business ecosystem with many players and interests. As several stakeholders put it, “the devil is in the details.” The following section outlines the key takeaways that the City and partners should draw from this project, and offers recommendations for next steps for the City.

4.1 Project Need

The Downtown Commons project was, first and foremost, about pinpointing the need (or demand) for small retail spaces to accommodate local entrepreneurs. The team’s review of the limited data available revealed a mixed picture of market demand: growing contribution of small producers and artisans to the retail sector and steady growth in tourism visitation and spending amid an overall decline in Whitehorse businesses and the Yukon retail sector overall. Perhaps the clearest indicator of growing need is the steady increase in vendors participating in the Fireweed Market’s summer and Christmas markets.

The team’s engagement activities offered more context through which to interpret the Fireweed Market data, however. Some stakeholders stressed the importance of differentiating between businesses and vendors, with the former being full-time, “both feet in” operations and latter being more part-time or seasonal, “one foot out”. They felt that the Fireweed Market growth indicates there is demand from vendors, many of whom lack the capacity (e.g., financial, time) to participate full-time in a Commons and/or create the necessary quantity of product.

Indeed, the engagement results point to need being more diverse and nuanced than the small producer/artisan tenant typically showcased in a Commons-like market. Stakeholders spoke to demand for commercial kitchen, office, and artist demonstration spaces. The results of the surveys revealed demand from local businesses seeking smaller, more affordable spaces in the Downtown; however, a high percentage of these are locally oriented service providers whose offer may not be compatible with what locals and tourists are seeking in a Commons experience. Some stakeholders felt the City, or other project champion, should undertake more comprehensive economic impact research to clearly demonstrate the need for and economic benefits of a Commons. Others suggested that more routine issues were equally worthy of City support and attention, including improved parking, Main Street beautification, patio and event permitting, and extended hours for the Thursday Fireweed Market.

There was stronger alignment around the need for a more enlivened, activated Downtown – and more narrowly, for a vibrant waterfront that more fully realizes the original vision underpinning its revitalization some 25 years ago. Some survey respondents and many stakeholders expressed a desire for more to do and see in the Downtown area outside of 9-5 weekday hours. Some described Whitehorse residents as craving more off-hours shopping and restaurant options, and tourism stakeholders shared that there are few activities and attractions available Downtown during evenings and weekends for visitors. However, stakeholders with off-hours programming experience expressed skepticism that this desire for vibrancy was sufficient to translate into the level of demand for shopping and programming needed to sustain ongoing Commons evening or weekend operations, even in the summer.

Without more in-depth feasibility investigation, the project team concludes that the City could be most impactful by working with the non-profit and private sectors to address the space needs identified by stakeholders during this exercise, while simultaneously providing support to the potential Commons champions that emerged during this project. The project team sees further opportunities for the City to directly or indirectly facilitate action on the range of "Commons-adjacent" needs that were also identified by business stakeholders.

4.2 Project Support

While distinct from actual need, the project team felt that social license from the business community were likely to have as much, if not more, of an influence on whether a Commons garners the political support that might be required for continued allocation of resources towards its development. The team relied entirely on engagement to explore this dimension of project feasibility.

Tourism stakeholders were the most optimistic in this regard, predicting that their membership would be strongly supportive of a Commons initiative. Business-serving organizations predicted that their membership would be split on the issue, with good execution and a clear demonstration of economic benefit being pre-requisites to higher levels of support. Other business stakeholders requested the inclusion of existing businesses or proof of a robust financial model that minimizes reliance on public funding or existing arts funding programs.

The project team concludes that, while there is clearly some support, the concept of a Downtown Commons carries potential risk for whichever entity moves it forward. It may be more strategic for the City to assume a supporting role and work with a project champion to thoughtfully address the key points of opposition through project design and continued engagement with the business community.

4.3 City Role and Partnerships

Stakeholders offered a wide range of viewpoints on the potential role for the City with respect to a Commons. Some urged the City to commit more to the project, while others felt strongly that the City needs to let the business community lead on such projects and focus more on supporting and filling gaps. A few suggested that the City provide strategic and visioning support to ensure that no one stakeholder interest would "hijack" it; once the direction and operating model are established, the concept could be handed over to others for execution.

As to their own interest in partnering in a Commons, stakeholder responses were mixed. Many organizations felt that they lacked sufficient capacity to get closely involved but offered to play a small role by engaging their members in further developing the concept or eventually helping to fill or even renting out incubator-oriented spaces. Some stakeholders were potentially open to future involvement but needed a more defined project and sustainable financial model before committing. Others declined outright. The informal coalition of project champions that emerged during the final stakeholder workshop indicated a willingness to commit the time and resources to pursue a Commons-type development, subject to the fulfillment of their own strategic objectives.

The project team concurs with the handful of stakeholders who originally commented that the Commons concept needed to adapt to the partners, not vice versa. Considerable time and effort will need to be dedicated to further planning and feasibility work for a Commons; project champions who are invested and committed are the logical successors to the City in its role as initiator of this project.

4.4 Project Implementation

Numerous interviewees commented that considerable planning and attention to detail will be required to successfully execute a Commons. There was general support for an incremental, gradual roll-out that would build slowly and allow existing businesses to plan and adapt with plenty of notice; a minority cautioned that critical mass and momentum were also important. Some of the individuals associated with the five case studies researched advised the City and/or partners to start small/simple and grow the opportunity as they learn and gain experience. Interviewees urged the City to continue its outreach work with key stakeholders, local businesses, and industry associations as the concept develops; this advice could still apply to the City in the event it assumes a supporting role if or when a Commons concept evolves further.

4.5 Operating Concepts to Consider

Over the course of multiple months and rounds of discussion, the project team worked to pinpoint one element that might serve as the anchor around which other operating details could fall into place. Where the Downtown Commons is concerned, the team asserts that location is that element – specifically, the heritage buildings and public spaces found at the intersection of Main and Front streets. Its rationale is as follows:

- There is strong support from the business community for a Main Street/waterfront location and continued revitalization and activation of the waterfront;
- The location satisfies the pre-requisite of a pedestrian-friendly, central location identified as a key ingredient to success during engagement;
- Unlike several of the case studies profiled, Whitehorse does not have an obvious catchment area for visitors as they move in and out of the Downtown. The Main Street and waterfront areas, with their proximity to the Visitor Information Centre, are well equipped to serve that function;
- There are no other obvious candidate sites in the Main Street/waterfront area to choose from at this time (except for the less desirable 3rd Avenue and Steele Street parking lot owned by the City);
- Some Downtown business stakeholders feel that the heritage buildings in the area – namely the WPYR train station, Old Fire Hall (OFH), and Roundhouse - are currently underutilized for public enjoyment and appreciation, while YG (the owner of the buildings) is already working on improvements in that regard;
- Key players in the Main/Front Street business community (anticipated to be a potential source of opposition) may be more supportive of a Commons concept if they feel it activates and brings more foot traffic to the Main Street area overall; and
- The incorporation and/or repurposing of existing infrastructure may reduce some of the financial risk inherent to a Commons and is potentially compatible with a gradual, incremental roll-out of the concept by its champions (i.e., using the OFH to "pilot" before committing resources to WPYR upgrades).

The project team offers two caveats to its recommendation to pursue this location for a potential Commons: the second floor of the WPYR station could be retained for office use, and the main floor entrances would need to be adapted to allow for better presence and flow-through to both Front Street and the waterfront.

Using this location as the "building block" for a Commons, the project team developed a suite of potential operating concepts gleaned from the results of its cross-market analysis and engagement for consideration by the City and project champions that have emerged. These concepts are **not mutually exclusive**; rather, multiple concepts could theoretically be pursued in tandem. Please refer to Table 5.

During the final stakeholder workshop, a potentially viable operating concept was pitched. Inspired by the example of the Granville Island Council, the concept centers around an arts and business community-led effort to incrementally and organically activate the waterfront and Front Street heritage buildings. The initiating step would involve Main Street area merchants working collectively to coordinate more programming and use of the Old Fire Hall in summer in conjunction with arts groups and other key players in the Main Street/waterfront area. This might include the piloting of a farmer's market opportunity on an evening that is complementary to the Fireweed Market. Regardless of specifics, the focus in the beginning would be on coordination, communication, and partnerships.

After the initial phase is proven, the government could potentially offer up use of the WPYR station through a competitive process, subject to the fulfillment of a government-directed objectives (e.g., public access, tourism benefit, entrepreneur opportunities). At this point, the grassroots coordination could transition to the establishment of a formal trust governed by a Board of Directors with arts programming and retail experience. This group would have the flexibility to meet the government's mandate creatively and adaptively through such measures as bringing in a commercial anchor tenant.

The proponents of this concept envisioned governments acting as facilitators through bylaw changes and space leasing. Parking, public washrooms, and vandalism were identified as challenging issues where City leadership would be needed and welcomed. They also suggested that a prospective trust would need to maintain a high standard but have the freedom to try, fail, and adapt – and, potentially, close - if the concept proves to be unviable after a few years.

The project team concludes that a grassroots business/arts community-led effort to establish a Commons is better positioned to gain social license from the broader business community than any City-led effort. Key individuals have stepped forward to shepherd this concept further but may lack the capacity to assume the level of coordination and engagement that could be required; the City could play a valuable supporting role or continue to lead until the group is ready to do so. At a minimum, the City and YG should lead on due diligence for the heritage buildings involved and policy setting for their potential incorporation in a Commons concept.

4.6 Recommendations and Next Steps

In closing, the project team recommends that the City consider the following actions, organized by theme:

Supporting existing vendor, business and Downtown activation efforts

- Identify and implement Parks Branch staffing options to allow the Fireweed Market to extend its Farmer's Market operating hours to 8 or 9 pm;
- Investigate the condition of street trees on Main Street and work to remedy the situation;
- Explore ways to streamline and simplify patio and event permitting;

Addressing commercial space needs

- In collaboration with entrepreneur-serving organizations, consider the piloting and/or development of a program to offer grants, property tax relief, or other incentives to Downtown landlords to renovate vacant commercial units to provide spaces supportive of small entrepreneurs (e.g., smaller, affordable units for rent);

Supporting continued work on a viable Commons concept

- Share this final report with stakeholders who have participated in the project to date, potentially soliciting a list of those who wish to stay involved in some capacity;
- In partnership with YG, undertake building condition and structural assessments of the Wharf and WPYR station to identify suitability for inclusion in a Commons concept along with potential upgrades and costs; and
- Meet with the proponents of the trust concept to discuss how the City can potentially support their efforts, whether through coordination, engagement, feasibility research, or other tasks.

Table 5. Potential Operating Concepts

Concept	Description	Location	Spatial Configuration	Target Vendors (and Customers)	Operating Season	Management	Notes/Comments
1	Outdoor vendor pop-ups & performances	Wharf	Modified sea cans or similar portable structures with power, sited to create spaces sheltered from wind for seating and events	Local producers and artisans; performers; food concession holders (winter events) (Locals and visitors)	Late spring/ summer/early fall with limited openings during winter for Main Street area events	Investments led by YG and City, units leased to a non-profit for booking	This concept is a means to wind-proof parts of this public space; wind modeling and wharf engineering assessment needed; rotating vendor spots
2	Local artist/artisan market hall	WPYR building (1st floor)	Open concept with vendor booths and central cashier	Local producers and artisans (Locals and visitors)	Late spring to mid-fall	Led by NGO	Rotating vendor spots could be offered
3	Commercial kitchen collective and demonstration space	WPYR building (1st floor)	Commercial kitchen and seating/retail space with central cashier	Local food/culinary producers (Locals and visitors could shop and participate in scheduled classes/ demonstrations)	Year-round	Led by NGO, a collective formed to provide access and a one-stop shop for Yukon food products	Entrepreneur-serving organizations would be logical partners for feasibility work; could adapt for future private sector restaurant/pub use
4	Experience centre (tickets for attractions, outdoor rentals)	WPYR building (1st floor)	Incorporating the traditional WPYR ticket window	Local tours and attractions, outdoor expeditors (Visitors)	Year-round	Could involve tourism NGOs	Needs careful differentiation to avoid redundancy with VIC offer
5	Main Street farmer's market	Old Fire Hall	Open concept with vendor booths and central cashier	Local producers and artisans (Locals and visitors)	Late spring to mid-fall	Led by NGO	Could be an extension of the Fireweed Market offered with an event
6	Co-working space for arts, culture, tourism sector workers	WPYR building (2nd floor)	Co-working space with hot desks, meeting space, boardroom	Arts, culture, and tourism sector workers could be eligible for access/use	Year-round	Led by NGO or tenant of 1st floor	This retains some of the existing use but expands access to more players
7	Performances and programming	OFH Roundhouse Wharf	Alternating use of spaces to suit programming	Local artists and performers (Locals and visitors)	As per main component of the concept	Led by same entity providing core offer, potential arts partners	Consider as an "add on" to a retail or experience offer; limited use of Roundhouse

List of Interviewees

Caroline Anderson	Tourism Industry Association of Yukon
Deb Bartlette	Fireweed Market Society
Edith Belanger	Association franco-yukonnaise
Silken Cinq-Mars	Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture
Patricia Cunning	MacBride Museum
Michael Hale	Northern Vision Development
Shayna Hammer	Yukonstruct
Keara Hlewka	Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce
Erik Hougen	Erikco Holdings
Kim Hougen	Erikco Holdings
Tanner Hougen	Yukon Built
Jack Kobayashi	Horwood's Mall
Eduardo Lafforgue	Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture
Heather Leduc	Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture
Tiffany Eckert-Maret	Da Daghay Development Corporation, Yukon First Nations Chamber of Commerce
Jennifer Meurer	Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture
Carolyn Moore	Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture
Alida Munro	Yukon Convention Bureau
Kalin Pallett	Wilderness Tourism Association of Yukon
Casey Prescott	Yukon Arts Centre
Jackueline Rodrigue	Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre
Andrei Samson	Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce
Greg Thompson	Kwanlin Dün First Nation Economic Development
Mary-Jane Warshawski	Main Street Working Group, Taku Sports Group, Yukon Arts Foundation
Suki Wellman	Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture
Anthony Zedda	Horwood's Mall

List of Workshop Participants

Deb Bartlette	Fireweed Market Society
Edith Belanger	Association franco-yukonnaise
Alex Bouchard	Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture
Patricia Cunning	MacBride Museum
Shayna Hammer	Yukonstruct
Jack Kobayashi	Horwood's Mall
Jennifer Meurer	Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture
Alida Munro	Yukon Convention Bureau
Mary-Jane Warshawski	Main Street Working Group, Taku Sports Group, Yukon Arts Foundation

APPENDIX A

Case Studies

Carcross Commons

Carcross Tagish Management Corporation

Objective/Inspiration: To create a vibrant hub of commercial activity to increase visitor spend and build the town's tourism offer. The major market opportunity was consistent cruise ship traffic during the summer in Skagway.

Location/Proximity to Other Attractions: The Commons is in the historic downtown of Carcross, close to the S.S. Tutshi memorial site, waterfront, and the parking lot where tour buses have traditionally parked.

Development and Operations: Carcross Tagish Limited Partnership (CTLP) initiated construction of the original four buildings and Visitor Information Centre (VIC) in 2012, joining the historic Skookum Jim House that had been restored and moved to the property beforehand. The land is leased from Government of Yukon (YG). Four CTLP staff dedicate a portion of their time to different aspects of Commons management (e.g., vendor administration, day-to-day operations, waste management). CTLP estimates there is a $20-$30,000 gap between annual rental revenues and operating expenses; this shortfall is covered internally.

Number of Tenants and Vendor Demand: There are 14 tenants now. CTLP brought in mobile trailer units in 2014, followed by two 40' sea cans in 2016 (see Challenges below). A restaurant building was privately built around 2017 on the Commons property under a land lease with CTLP. Since that time, demand has been steady but CTLP has never kept a waiting list; typically, new and departing vendors balance out.

Vendor Selection Process: To date, interested vendors have approached CTLP. CTLP is developing formal policies and procedures that will involve an application and selection process. Selection will prioritize Carcross/Tagish First Nation (CTFN) citizens, unique/local products, "fit" with existing tenants, and business track record.

Space Description/Configuration: The Commons consists of: six buildings (four vendor units, the VIC and Skookum Jim House); six "micro" trailer units oriented around a main plaza/boardwalk; six sea can units (within the two sea cans); and the privately owned restaurant building. With the incoming policy, new businesses will only have access to the trailer and sea can units and one-year leases; longer leases and buildings will be available to proven tenants only. Rents are set at $525/month for the micro units (six-month terms) and $735 for the buildings (12-month terms).

Other Features/Programming: The Game Mother playground and a timber framed gazebo were added several years after initial construction. The central plaza features a signature 40-foot totem pole carved by Keith Wolfe Smarch and there are three smaller poles near Skookum Jim House and the VIC. Interpretive panels showcase C/TFN culture and history and promote the trails on Montana Mountain. There is typically an opening weekend event with activities and performances but this is funding dependent and doesn't always occur. There is occasional use of the gazebo space by CTFN programs and community groups, as well as occasional requests from local performers to busk.

Target Market: Both Yukoners and tourists (independent and cruise ship). Depending on the business, Whitehorse/Yukon residents, cruise ship visitors, and independent visitors contribute differently to revenues; however, most current vendors report that cruise ship traffic contributes at least half of their revenues.

Brick-and-Mortar Business Community Response: The Carcross business community is very small and not organized per se. There was uncertainty but generally other businesses recognized the mutual benefit. CTLP has worked to build bridges with the other local businesses.

Successes and Challenges: Creating a beautiful, distinctive public space that Carcross residents can feel proud of and positively brands the community for both locals and tourists is perhaps the Commons' biggest success. The Commons has also fostered the growth and expansion of small businesses, as evidenced by a few standout examples. The Maple Rush started out in a small mobile vending unit, making its custom maple products off-site; after significant investment and renovations, 2025 saw the business move into one of the four retail buildings, where it now produces onsite and is being courted as a niche experience for winter tour groups. Tagish Rocks started out in the Commons in 2024 and expanded to include a year-round location in Horwood's Mall. Heather Dickson is a C/TFN citizen who started her business, Dickson Designs, out of a mobile unit and has since gone on to national recognition and partnerships with retailers like Manitobah. The other success is Caribou Crossing Coffee's creation of a small but faithful winter market of Whitehorse locals (and Yukon visitors) who visit Carcross Friday through Sunday in the early and later winter (the business closes between Christmas and Valentine's Day); this growing market could provide a springboard for other Commons businesses and draws more people out to events like seasonal markets and concerts at Haa Shagóon Hidi.

Alongside these successes, there have been many challenges. The configuration of the Commons as multiple stand-alone, small vending spaces undermines vendor efficiencies (such as sharing staff) and adds considerably to maintenance costs for CTLP; further, these units are cold in the shoulder seasons and uninhabitable during the winter season, limiting the opportunity for these vendors to take advantage of this growing market. The purchase, modification and installation of sea can units has been particularly problematic for CTLP. The choice of lower-height units (8'6") limited the amount of insulation that could be added and created a more constricted doorway. This, combined with excessive glazing on the west-facing (and customer-facing) side, made temperature regulation in the units very difficult. Water ingress and several seasons of closure due to COVID resulted in mould growth; currently four of the six units are used only for storage.

Another ongoing challenge is vendor capacity to maintain consistent opening hours. This undermines overall vibrancy of the Commons and confidence in a consistent visitor offer for Skagway tour operators. CTLP has found that very low rents exacerbated the situation, with some fledgling businesses not being as motivated to maintain a presence and recoup their costs. This relates to the final major challenge: cost recovery. CTLP has found very little support available for ongoing operations and programming and has found ways to self-fund; this option may not be available to a non-profit society.

***Words of Advice*:** Don't underestimate the amount of administration and management required to operate a Commons-type development. Where possible, consolidate operations into shared buildings. If using mobile trailer units, purchase them pre-modified to suit and ensure they are moveable with readily available equipment. Lastly, do not expect to achieve cost recovery without a stable third party funding source.

Lax Süülda Container Market

Tourism Prince Rupert

Objective/Inspiration: Lax Süülda offers regional small businesses and artisans the opportunity to showcase their products to international visitors. The market opportunity was consistent cruise ship traffic during the summer; Tourism Prince Rupert (TPR) was also trying to provide smaller vendors without storefronts affordable spaces to sell goods.

Location/Proximity to Other Attractions: Lax Süülda is located on the Atlin Promenade, next to the cruise ship terminal, restaurants, gallery, park, Prince Rupert Visitor Information Centre, and Museum of Northern British Columbia.

Development and Operations: TPR initiated and manages the project with help from the BC Destination Development Fund. Prince Rupert Port Authority donates land for the project so that TPR pays no rent. Operations cost $15,000-$20,000 per year for two summer students, annual pressure washing/painting, flowers, lighting, and sound system.

Number of Tenants and Vendor Demand: There are seven tenants (including those using tent space), with several artists sharing one container. It was difficult to fill spaces at first (businesses wanted proof of concept) and short-term leases were offered. Now units are easy to fill and popular with brick and mortar businesses for pop-ups.

Vendor Selection Process: There is an application form. Selection favours businesses from Northwest BC with few or no existing storefronts in other communities that offer a unique product from other offerings in area (direct-sale business representatives and global companies are ineligible). They open applications when a space is vacant.

Space Description/Configuration: Businesses can rent entire container units for one-year leases. TPR used to provide short-term leases but not anymore because the demand is really for long-term spaces.

Other Features/Programming: Artisans can also rent market tables ($30 plus tax per day on cruise ship days). The market is also used on special community days (e.g., Seafest). The market was originally geared towards tourists but over time has expanded to include additional market events such as night bazaars (includes live music programming) and farmers markets. Beer gardens are a new concept.

Target Market: Both tourists and locals. Originally the concept was geared for tourism, but the locals really like farmers markets and night bazaars.

Brick-and-Mortar Business Response: There was pushback initially but TPR tackled it by pointing out that it was hard to disperse the cruise traffic to the broader community. They also offered brick-and-mortar vendors an opportunity for pop-ups to help to alleviate any pushback from businesses.

Successes and Challenges: An unexpected success was a higher profile for TPR with the community and visitors and new campaigns through these connections. Challenges include marketing (drawing people out now that the "lustre" has worn off) and getting front line staff to communicate to people.

Words of Advice: Do community outreach surveys. See what people want more of - for Prince Rupert it was evening events that people could bring their families to. Include flexible space potentially to rent on the side which allows for pop-ups or different uses. Offer brick-and-mortar businesses pop-up opportunities.

Halifax Waterfront
Build Nova Scotia

Objective/Inspiration: The Halifax Waterfront: allows local makers, crafters, and small businesses the opportunity to use Build Nova Scotia (BNS) infrastructure in a manner that complements traditional business development processes; increases locally made and sourced retail service offerings for all those visiting the Halifax waterfront; and enhances visitor experiences.

Location/Proximity to Other Attractions: The Waterfront is located between Salt Yard (a seasonal business district) and Bishops Landing, near shops, the harbourfront, restaurants, and attractions.

Development and Operations/Budget: BNS (a Crown Corporation) introduced and runs the project with a large team of employees who work together to manage and maintain the facility, including marketing and communications, operations, event management, and project managers. No operating budget was provided.

Number of Tenants and Vendor Demand: The Evergreen Festival has 22 chalets filled by vendors for either one, two, or all four weeks of the festival. On average BNS host approximately 35 vendors over the four-week festival. The Pop Can and Coastal Can host one vendor each at a time for one week from mid-May to mid-October. On average BMS has 46 vendors over the season in the pop-up vending opportunity. Both opportunities are filled each year.

Vendor Selection Process: There is an application form for vendors to fill out. BNS will choose the vendors that best fill its criteria, which include ability to meet operator requirements, focus on Nova Scotia made products/services, unique product addition to Waterfront, and consistent/reliable hours. Potential operators are curated and scored as follows based on proposal: Strategic Alignment (30%), Business Concept (30%), Business Experience (30%), Added Value (10%).

Space Description/Configuration: 6.4m^2 chalets - seasonal, four-month (June-September) opportunities at $500/month + 4% of gross sales; and two 20-foot sea can pop-ups (one-week opportunities, $300/week + 5% of gross sales).

Other Features/Programming: The Halifax Waterfront hosts hundreds of events and community gatherings each year. Additionally, creative seating is installed at the water's edge to creates more of a sense of place. During Evergreen, NBS uses interactive lighting installations and fire tables to create a cozy and entertaining holiday village.

Target Market: Both projects aim to attract both visitors and locals with a focus on supporting local Nova Scotia vendors. Both opportunities are important to vendors and cater to different patrons depending on the time of year.

Brick-and-Mortar Business Response: There hasn't been opposition from the business community as the chalets and sea cans are short-term pop-up vendors who add to the overall waterfront offer rather than create competition.

Successes and Challenges: The biggest success is the positive development of the Halifax Waterfront over the past decade, taking it from an industrial port to a lively place for visitors and locals to live, work, and play.

Words of Advice: Start small, prove the concept, then grow the opportunity each year based on what you learned from the opportunity. Consider pairing events and placemaking with the business opportunities to create a sense of place where people want to spend time.

Rail Yard Market

City of Campbell River

Objective/Inspiration: To offer short-term, inexpensive locations for new entrepreneurs to start a business, scale-up, and eventually expand to brick and mortar locations.

Location/Proximity to Other Attractions: Located in Downtown Campbell River, near big box stores, art galleries, restaurants, and waterfront.

Development and Operations: The City initiated and manages the project with funding from Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program, Island Coastal Economic Trust, and the City itself. No operating budget was provided.

Number of Tenants and Vendor Demand: Four businesses.

Vendor Selection Process: There is a vendor application form. Selection favours businesses sourcing local products, businesses that have no/few existing storefronts, and those offering unique product to the area. A selection committee reviews applications as they are received and contacts shortlisted candidates. Applications are kept on hand for future unit availability as vacancies arise through the year.

Space Description/Configuration: Four repurposed 20-foot shipping containers that are offered for 12-36-month leases at $400 per month (plus $500 damage deposit, $150 business license, $300 for signage, locks, extinguishers). Containers have heating, ventilation, lighting, electrical outlets, windows, and French doors.

Other Features/Programming: None

Target Market: Both tourists and locals, but mainly locals.

Brick-and-Mortar Business Response: No response

Successes and Challenges: No response

Words of Advice: No response

Rail Yard Market
City of Langford

Objective/Inspiration: Provide a venue for local businesses which offer unique products to test business ideas without needing to find a brick-and-mortar location. The space along Station Avenue was a derelict parking lot, and arts and culture were felt to be lacking in the downtown core: converting the space to a market was a way to address both issues simultaneously.

Location/Proximity to Other Attractions: The market is located along the old railway in Downtown Langford, near Veterans Memorial Park, the local Legion, a downtown shopping mall, and multi-use path.

Development and Operations: City of Langford launched and operates the project with a 30-year land lease from Island Corridor Foundation (which owned the whole strip including the railroad track). One City staff person manages the Railyard (about 50-75% of their time) which includes vendor management and support, organizing events, and scheduling repairs and maintenance. The City estimates annual operating costs of $40,000-$45,000.

Number of Tenants and Vendor Demand: There are 13 retrofitted sea can units, one washroom and one food truck pad. Originally the 40 foot sea can was used as an art studio, but there wasn't a lot of interest so it was converted to an additional incubator space. All are full right now. Two artists are running out of the 10 foot units (these are mostly reserved for artists). Artists must demonstrate the work they do. There is decent turnover for artists on one-year leases.

Vendor Selection Process: Vendor application form. Selection favours businesses sourcing products locally, with no/few existing storefronts, and which offer unique product to the area. There are two streams for entry which have different rates: artists and businesses. Artists may apply to share a space. All applications are kept on hand for two years for any future availability.

Space Description/Configuration: Repurposed shipping containers of various sizes with one-year leases. 40' unit - $1000/month; 20' unit - $600/month; 10' unit - $300/month or $175/month for demonstrating artists. Vendors must provide $500 damage deposit, $100 business license, and $300 for signage, locks, extinguishers, etc. Vendors are required to be open 11am -4pm on Saturday and Sunday and for a minimum of five hours Thursday and Friday. Some vendors stay open all week.

Other Features/Programming: Market days. There is a gazebo (which was already in place but was modified to function as a stage for events and music) and washroom facility as well. There is an City events coordinator who organizes events that run out of the space (especially in the summer) to bring awareness. Vendors are also allowed to run events (e.g., market, arts festival) out of the space. They are required to get insurance, but the City is otherwise hands-off. The City is creating a template for these kinds of events.

Target Market: Both, most advertising is done among local-ish residents. In tourism advertising the Railyard Market is listed as a top place to visit in Langford.

Brick-and-Mortar Business Response: The City has not heard anything from the business community while the staff interviewed has been in the role. There is a screening question for applicants that asks them to explain how their offering interacts with existing Langford businesses. Assuring businesses that the vetting process accounts for competition and seeks to select vendors who offer unique products to the area helps to alleviate concerns. Big events draw a lot of foot traffic for local businesses. However, parking becomes very challenging with big events, which can cause friction with nearby establishments.

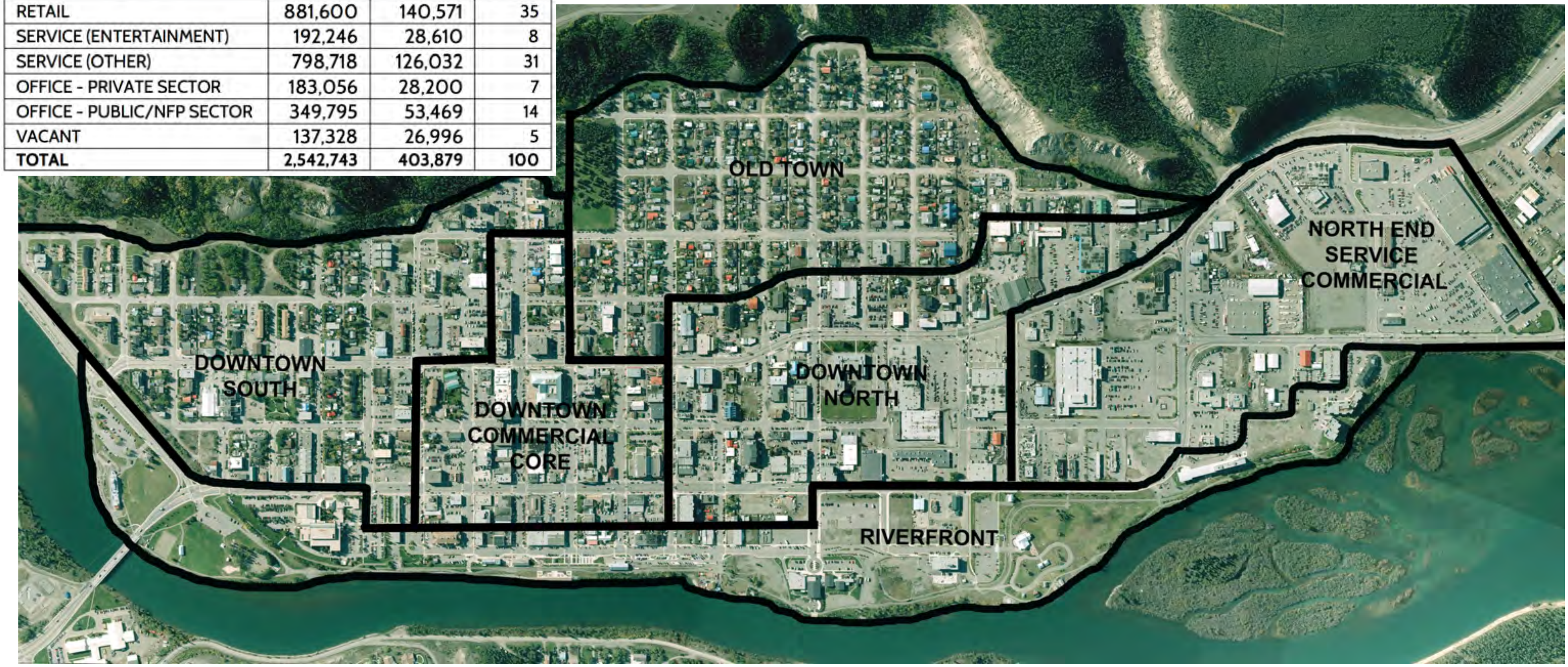
Successes and Challenges: Seeing businesses work together and collaborate is a big success. The Market acts as a 'support group' for new businesses for advertising, vending, crafting, etc. Vendors did this on their own, without explicit City support. Having a dedicated arts space in Langford has also been a big success. Parking is a challenge with big events and communication/coordination with local organisations/neighbours is key. Initially, there was no Code of Conduct and interactions with other vendors and the general public at times made the City (and the market) look bad. There is not a lot of support for arts programs provincially or federally.

Words of Advice: Flesh out your concept in terms of cost. Get in touch with local businesses. Having more people on board locally will ensure more success. It may not be necessary to do everything Langford has done (i.e., heating, electricity, washrooms) to foster business incubation. A simpler project could involve creating a space where artists and businesses can come and do what they do best. Dedicate a single staff member to manage the market, allocate a considerable budget. Such a development will require more time than you think.

APPENDIX B

2016 Downtown Commercial Use Inventory - Summary

DOWNTOWN WHITEHORSE - OVERALL			
COMMERCIAL USE	FT^2	M^2	% TOTAL
RETAIL	881,600	140,571	35
SERVICE (ENTERTAINMENT)	192,246	28,610	8
SERVICE (OTHER)	798,718	126,032	31
OFFICE - PRIVATE SECTOR	183,056	28,200	7
OFFICE - PUBLIC/NFP SECTOR	349,795	53,469	14
VACANT	137,328	26,996	5
TOTAL	**2,542,743**	**403,879**	**100**



DOWNTOWN SOUTH			
COMMERCIAL USE	FT^2	M^2	% TOTAL
RETAIL	24,125	2241	11
SERVICE (ENTERTAINMENT)	11,900	1106	5
SERVICE (OTHER)	99,751	9267	46
OFFICE - PRIVATE SECTOR	40,400	3753	19
OFFICE - PUBLIC/NFP SECTOR	35,000	3252	16
VACANT	5900	548	3
TOTAL	**217,076**	**20,167**	**100**

DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL CORE			
RETAIL	101,675	9446	15
SERVICE (ENTERTAINMENT)	65,050	6043	8
SERVICE (OTHER)	259,252	24085	38
OFFICE - PRIVATE SECTOR	70,950	6591	10
OFFICE - PUBLIC/NFP SECTOR	162,759	15,121	23
VACANT	34,400	3196	5
TOTAL	**694,086**	**64,483**	**100**

RIVERFRONT			
COMMERCIAL USE	FT^2	M^2	% TOTAL
RETAIL	13,123	1219	7
SERVICE (ENTERTAINMENT)	22,289	2071	12
SERVICE (OTHER)	85,494	7943	45
OFFICE - PRIVATE SECTOR	11,629	1080	6
OFFICE - PUBLIC/NFP SECTOR	41,564	3861	22
VACANT	14,717	1367	8
TOTAL	**188,816**	**17,542**	**100**

OLD TOWN			
RETAIL	4000	372	8
SERVICE (ENTERTAINMENT)	4000	372	8
SERVICE (OTHER)	34,125	3170	65
OFFICE - PRIVATE SECTOR	7250	674	14
OFFICE - PUBLIC/NFP SECTOR	875	81	2
VACANT	2500	232	5
TOTAL	**52,750**	**4901**	**100**

NORTH END SERVICE COMMERCIAL			
COMMERCIAL USE	FT^2	M^2	% TOTAL
RETAIL	461,807	42,903	77
SERVICE (ENTERTAINMENT)	38,277	3556	6
SERVICE (OTHER)	75,500	7014	13
OFFICE - PRIVATE SECTOR	0	0	0
OFFICE - PUBLIC/NFP SECTOR	10,625	987	2
VACANT	12,617	1172	2
TOTAL	**598,826**	**55,633**	**100**

DOWNTOWN NORTH			
RETAIL	276,870	25,722	35
SERVICE (ENTERTAINMENT)	43,230	4016	6
SERVICE (OTHER)	244,596	22,724	31
OFFICE - PRIVATE SECTOR	52,827	4908	7
OFFICE - PUBLIC/NFP SECTOR	98,972	9195	13
VACANT	67,194	6243	8
TOTAL	**791,189**	**73,504**	**100**