EVALUATING DOWNTOWN DESIGN:
A comparative assessment of Cornwall and Belleville, Ontario.

by

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A report submitted to the School of Urban and Regional Planning in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Urban and Regional Planning.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1– INTRODUCTION
The purpose of this report is to compare the physical design of four case study downtowns in Eastern Ontario. Kent Robertson’s principles provide a guiding framework discussed below. The dearth of literature in this area unfortunately means that there are no recognized tools for evaluating the physical design of small downtowns. Thus, this report employs a number of unrelated tools to comparatively evaluate the case studies. Following the presentation of these findings is a discussion of the implications for the successful revitalization of the case studies, as well as recommendations for improving their physical design. Finally, this report concludes with a consideration of the limitations of the methods used and suggestions for improving the method in future research.

2 – CASE SELECTION
Four case study downtowns were selected for this report, two from the City of Belleville and two from the City of Cornwall. These cities were selected because of their broad range of similarities, including population and development history. Belleville’s current downtown has a distinct appearance and a notably “Main Street” building typology, showing evidence of decline. The decline of Belleville’s downtown led to the development of the Downtown Belleville Master Plan (DBMP) in 2006. The DBMP received an award from the Canadian Institute of Planners the following year, recognizing it as an exemplar of downtown design. This professional recognition allows the DBMP to function as a benchmark against which to compare the other case studies.
Cornwall’s close relationship with Québec has resulted in the establishment of a strong French-Canadian presence in the city. The Francophone community was traditionally centered in the east of Cornwall, which led to the city’s current state of possessing two distinct downtowns, one called Le Village in the east end and the other called simply Downtown Cornwall. Each downtown also has its own Business Improvement Association (BIA), and these work closely with the city to encourage revitalization programs.

3 – METHODS

The comparative evaluation of the case study downtowns was informed by Robertson’s principles for successful downtowns, summarized below. Various tools were employed to evaluate each of the downtowns according to Robertson’s principles, summarized below, and then to compare them to one another on a five-point qualitative scale from “very good” to “very poor”. This analysis was conducted through site visits and supplemented by interviews with a senior planner from each city.

*Plan/Vision for downtown* – The plan should describe goals/objectives, streetscape guidelines, transportation and pedestrian considerations, design elements, site-specific projects, and linkages between primary downtowns within a city.

*Downtown heritage* – The number of downtown buildings with heritage designation.

*Link between downtown and waterfront* – The number and quality of linkages between the downtown and waterfront, if any.

*Pedestrian friendliness* – Kelly Clifton’s PEDS walkability survey.

*Design guidelines* – Jan Gehl’s physical design assessment tool for downtowns, examines scale, function, attractiveness, design, and building details.

*Distinctive sense of place* – Jack Nasar’s likability analysis, examines downtown for distinctiveness, five categories of likable features, building complexity, interrelationships between downtown buildings, and the overall structure and experience of the downtown.
4 – ANALYSIS

Robertson’s principles provided an effective guideline for the comparison of the case study downtowns. Data collection consisted of a document and policy review to examine any downtown plans adopted by the cities, followed by one visit to each downtown to conduct the necessary evaluations and take photographs as needed. The evaluation criteria and tools helped to identify the design strengths and weaknesses in the selected downtowns. The downtowns were then compared according to their treatment of each criteria or principle described by Robertson. The table below shows the relative performance of each downtown with respect to the given criteria.

*Table i-1–Comparison of Case Study Downtowns*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>DBMP</th>
<th>Downtown Belleville</th>
<th>Le Village</th>
<th>Downtown Cornwall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan/Vision for Downtown</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Heritage</td>
<td>⬤</td>
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<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterfront Linkage</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Friendliness</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Design</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likability</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The evaluation method was hindered by the wide array of tools that were employed, since these were not designed to address the peculiarities of small city downtowns. Since the tools were also designed to be employed individually, repetition arose when more than one tool required the evaluation of a given feature, such as downtown heritage. Conducting the analysis in January also affects the findings since it is common for downtowns to remove street furniture and other amenities during the winter, in addition to the poor weather conditions which can also influence the researcher’s perception.
5 – CONCLUSION

The DBMP was found to be the most representative of Robertson’s criteria for successful downtowns, as expected. Recommendations for improving the DBMP emphasized the need to expand on the implementation of the Plan’s vision and design guidelines. It was also recommended that infill development bridging the waterfront and downtown be of an appropriate building type, and that the range of appropriate building types be extended to better reflect the diversity of buildings currently present in Downtown Belleville. Finally, a set of enforceable design guidelines should be incorporated into the DBMP so as to ensure a degree of compliance with the Plan in the implementation stage.

Downtown Cornwall was found to be the next most effectively-designed downtown, performing very well in terms of its downtown plans, pedestrian friendliness, physical design, and likability. The recommendations for Downtown Cornwall are to update its Zoning By-Laws and compile previously published revitalization plans as well as the adoption of design guidelines which reflect the various historical periods currently represented by existing buildings. This may also lead to greater recognition of, and protection for, its built heritage.

Downtown Belleville excelled in its treatment of heritage and waterfront linkages, but failed to capitalize on the excellent vision presented in the DBMP or on its pedestrian friendliness. Recommendations for Belleville include the adoption and implementation of the DBMP, updating and refining its Zoning By-Laws, and ensuring that design guidelines revitalize building styles and elements that are at risk of being lost in Belleville’s downtown.

Le Village was found to be the poorest case study, performing poorly by comparison to the other case studies. It was found that Le Village possessed a large number of building types inappropriate for a downtown setting, and that the distribution of these buildings significantly hindered its performance. It is recommended that Le Village improve linkages to the waterfront by extending streetscape improvements to streets extending south of Montreal Road, as well as removing unnecessary elements from the streetscapes. Also, the adoption of a guiding vision or plan and design guidelines which can be enforced to some degree in conjunction with updated Zoning regulations would significantly improve the physical design of Le Village.

In terms of the methodology employed for this report, it is recommended that future researchers refine the variety of evaluation tools used by this study to better suit small city downtowns in North America. By improving on these tools and developing a means of effectively evaluating the physical design of small downtowns, researchers and planners will have a better means of assessing the design aspect of downtown revitalization programs.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to my supervisor, Dr. David Gordon for his guidance and patience this past year. I am grateful for the staff and my classmates at SURP are for their support and encouragement.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 – INTRODUCTION

Downtowns in North America have been struggling against decline brought about by increased suburbanization for decades (Burayidi, 2001a; Kalman, 1985b). This trend, which was strongly influenced by the promotion of urban renewal and modernization following the Second World War has been faced with a counter-movement, the push for downtown revitalization. An integral component of downtown revitalization is the physical design of the built space, since it plays a critical role in fostering the sense of attachment that provides the impetus for communities to support revitalization efforts. Extensive research has been done to explore the design and revitalization of downtowns in large, metropolitan cities. The body of literature exploring the concept of “Main Street” in small towns of a few thousand people is also well developed, but relatively little research has been published regarding the downtowns of small cities (Burayidi, 2001a). Within the limited literature on small city downtowns, there is also not a great deal of exploration of physical design with the exception of a few authors, most notably Kent Robertson (2001).

The purpose of this report is to expand on the literature on small cities by evaluating the physical design of four small city downtowns in Ontario with a comparative case study method. Various design evaluation tools will be employed to assess the case study downtowns’ progress towards meeting a set of principles identified in the literature as being essential to the success of downtown revitalization for small cities. Following the evaluation of the case studies will be a discussion exploring the implications of the evaluation, as well as making general recommendations for the downtowns. This conclusion will also discuss the methodology employed and its limitations, followed by suggested changes to the method for future researchers.

1.2 – RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Compare and contrast the four case study downtowns in terms of the six principles identified as being critical to small city downtown design - plan/vision, heritage, waterfront linkage, pedestrian-friendliness, design guidelines, and distinctive sense of place.

Kent Robertson (2001) identified six design principles that are present in successful, small city downtowns. These principles provide a framework within which to employ evaluation tools that explore different elements of physical design in the selected case studies, as described in Chapter Three. The evaluation will determine the extent to which the case studies meet
Robertson’s principles, which will then guide the discussion of design recommendations and suggestions for future research.

- **What characteristics do they share, and what elements are lacking entirely?**
  Identifying the commonalities and differences between the case study downtowns is a central aspect of the evaluation process. Given that this study employs a qualitative methodology, the only effective means of evaluating the case study downtowns is to compare them to one another. The examination of similarities and differences between the downtowns will strengthen the evaluation process and also provide guidance for future development of these areas.

- **How could these cities improve their downtown design?**
  Recommendations for improving the physical design of the case study downtowns will be discussed in the final chapter of this report. This discussion will be guided by the comparative design evaluations, so that the recommendations can be most appropriate for addressing the shortcomings of each downtown.

- **What are the implications of these design observations for the revitalization efforts of these cities?**
  The ultimate goal of this report is to contribute to the limited body of literature on small city downtown revitalization. To this end, the concluding chapter will also consider the progress of existing design improvement programs in the case study downtowns.

1.3 – **BACKGROUND**

1.3.1 Downtown Revitalization

Efforts to revitalize downtowns and “main streets” can be traced as far back as the 1950s (Dalibard, 1985), and urban planners and geographers have been debating the effectiveness of many different methods since then (Burayidi, 2001a). Faulk (2006) aptly sums up the literature on downtown revitalization as “descriptive and prescriptive”, meaning that it generally relies on descriptive case studies outlining the course of downtown revitalization in a given city. These case studies serve as a pool of data from which authors can derive principles or “prescriptions” for successful downtown revitalization. Faulk’s concise summary of the literature is consistent with my research, although some authors place more emphasis on describing a case study while others will forego the case study and instead simply discuss principles for successful downtown revitalization, while referring to examples discussed by other authors. Many of the authors referenced in this review follow the format described by Faulk (Burayidi, 2001a & 2001b; Faulk,
2006; Horne, 2001; Robertson, 1999; and Ramsey et al, 2007), meaning that they describe case studies of downtown revitalization and derive principles or suggestions that can be applied widely.

The majority of the literature discussing downtown revitalization in North America takes place, unsurprisingly, in an American context. Relatively few academic sources discuss the subject of downtown revitalization in Canadian cities, forcing authors such as Lauder (2010) and Ramsey et al (2007) to rely on the American literature for an in-depth discussion. The reason for this can be inferred from Filion et al’s (2004) research, which showed that only three out of the twenty-four mid-sized\(^1\) North American cities identified as having successful downtowns were in Canada. In the course of conducting this literature review, I encountered the same problem and have similarly found that American sources provide a valuable, in-depth look at downtown revitalization which is relevant to Canadian cities. Notwithstanding the social and governmental differences between Canadian and American cities (Goldberg & Mercer, 1986), downtowns perform the same functions, face the same threats and generally respond similarly in both countries, judging from Canadian examples of downtown revitalization (Ramsey et al, 2007; Lauder, 2010; Gravelle, 2009).

The more significant consideration is the difference between larger cities and small cities with a population of fifty thousand or less. Robertson discusses at length the importance of tailoring revitalization efforts to the needs of individual small cities (1999 & 2001). Various authors (Burayidi, 2001; Faulk, 2006; Ramsey et al, 2007) support Robertson’s position that revitalization strategies which succeed for large downtowns cannot be expected to produce similar results for small downtowns. In fact, successful strategies for one small downtown cannot be expected to work in other small downtowns (Burayidi, 2001b).

Robertson describes eight principles for the successful revitalization of small downtowns: (1) a strong public/private partnership; (2) an overarching vision; (3) downtowns should offer a range of activities; (4) capitalize on built heritage; (5) if there is a waterfront, ensure that it is connected to the downtown; (6) should be pedestrian-friendly; (7) establish design guidelines; and (8) recognize parking as a supporting, not a primary, function (2001). Not all of these principles apply to every small city downtown, but they do provide a framework for downtown revitalization programs and a means of understanding why a revitalization strategy might succeed or fail.

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\(^1\) Populations ranging from 100,000 to 500,000
1.3.2 Downtown revitalization and urban design

The importance of urban design as one aspect of downtown revitalization is discussed in a number of sources. Although much of the literature is focused on larger cities, I have made an effort to limit my sources to those specifically dealing with the downtowns of small cities, with a population of less than one hundred thousand people, or which discuss downtown urban design in theoretical terms appropriate to small cities. For example, Gordon Cullen’s (1961) concept of “Serial Vision”, which refers to the progression of views as one walks through a city, is an important consideration in urban design but is not entirely relevant to small downtowns which encompass a few blocks along a single street. On the other hand, Jones & Evans’ (2008) look at downtown revitalization in the UK is appropriate because they examine themes in urban design that transcend city size. Similarly, Pierre Filion et al’s (2004) research places smaller Canadian cities in a North American context, identifying qualities essential to successful downtowns in both Canada and the United States.

Sen and Bell (2001) argue that urban design can stimulate downtown revitalization, and Horne (2001), Robertson (2001) and Burayidi (2001a) extend the importance of urban design to small city downtowns. Horne writes about the role that streetscaping can play in making small downtowns more appealing to pedestrians, aesthetically and functionally. Robertson proposes that design guidelines might be effective as well because they help to preserve built heritage and maintain the sense of place which is vital to cultivating the cultural connection that a community has with its downtown. Expanding on the idea of downtowns as centres of local culture, Jones & Evans (2008) debate the role played by urban design and cultural regeneration in downtown revitalization, highlighting the importance of recognizing that built form is one of several important means of cultural expression in cities. A contrasting stance is taken by Bell & Jayne (2003), who take a more critical approach to evaluating urban design as a factor in the success of downtowns. They argue that existing data on the role of design in downtown revitalization is insufficient to draw reliable conclusions, largely because of the difficulty in separating the different agents of revitalization, such as economic and social factors.

1.3.3 Downtown revitalization and small cities

The discourse surrounding the visual character of downtowns, and those of small cities in particular, is peppered with references to the importance of identity, place and character. The same concepts are evident in literature discussing the appeal of “Main Street” and its importance to community identity (Holdsworth, 1985). The articles in Holdsworth provide an excellent, if
somewhat dated, exploration of what constitutes a Main Street, why it is important to small cities and towns and the early efforts to revitalize them in Canada. The design of Main Street is a central aspect of Francavaglia’s 1996 book, *Main Street Revisited*. Francavaglia looks at Main Streets as both real and imaginary places, and examines their defining characteristics both in reality and in fiction. His study helps to frame the importance of perception as a factor in determining what constitutes a successful Main Street, which links to the importance of visual character of downtoons as tools for revitalization. Finally, Filion et al (2004) also examine downtoons in somewhat larger cities, however they shared some of the challenges faced by this report in the insufficient treatment of smaller downtoons in the literature.

1.4 – REPORT OVERVIEW

The purpose of this report is to contribute to the limited literature on revitalization of small city downtoons by evaluating the physical design of downtown Main Streets in two small Ontario cities. The following chapter will expand on the four selected case study downtoons, providing an overview of the state of each city and their downtown revitalization efforts as well as discussing the rationale for their selection. The third chapter describes the methodology and evaluation tools utilized for this report. The tools are individually robust and well-established, but this report will be somewhat unique in employing them to collectively evaluate the selected case studies. Chapter four presents the findings of the evaluation tools in depth, ultimately ranking the downtoons based on their treatment of Robertson’s principles for successful downtoons. The fifth and final chapter discusses the findings in the context of small city downtown revitalization. In addition, chapter five also considers the limitations to the methods used and includes suggestions for refining the method in the future.
CHAPTER 2 – SETTING THE CONTEXT: CASE SELECTION

2.1 – INTRODUCTION
The comparative assessment that forms the basis of this report uses a total of four case study downtowns. These downtowns are located in two small Ontario cities, with two downtowns in each city. These cities, Belleville and Cornwall, are similar in size and possess downtowns that are distinctly identifiable areas, and which are also in decline. Both cities are similar in their economic base and in terms of their growth patterns, in addition to having locally significant waterfronts. Each city has implemented, to varying degrees, improvement strategies to reverse the decline of their downtowns, making them ideal candidates for a comparative assessment. The comparison of these four case studies also ensures that this study contains a degree of theoretical replication (Yin, 2009). Essentially, each case study functions as a separate experiment for the evaluation criteria described in the following chapter, and the selection of cases that are comparable across a number of core criteria enhances the reliability of this report’s findings.

The case studies themselves do not include the entirety of each downtown. Instead, the Main Street portion of the downtowns was selected, to simplify the process of comparing them to one another. Because of the way the downtown boundaries are set in Cornwall and Belleville, the inclusion of each downtown in its entirety would have diverted much of the attention of this study away from the primary subject of downtown Main Street design.

2.2 – BELLEVILLE: EXISTING DOWNTOWN & DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN
2.2.1 – Profile: Belleville
The City of Belleville is located at the interface between Eastern and Central Ontario, where the Moira River empties into the Bay of Quinte. According to the 2011 census, the city’s population is 49,454, having grown about 1.3% since 2006. The city’s economy was founded on timber, but that sector declined by the late nineteenth century, and was replaced by a varied industrial base supported by agriculture. Belleville’s growth has historically occurred in cycles of rapid growth separated by long periods of stability, and it appears to be nearing the end of a growth period.

2.2.2 – Downtown Belleville
Belleville’s downtown was selected as a case study for this report because it is a distinct downtown that is struggling to combat decline in a small city. Downtown Belleville is also
adjacent to a waterfront, which is a significant component of many small city downtowns (Robertson, 2001). Another reason for it being selected as a case study is that the downtown possesses a large number of historical buildings which can easily be seen during a walkabout of the area. Whether this downtown capitalizes on its heritage and waterfront components is an open question which will have significant ramifications for the downtown’s future success.

*Figure 2-1: Downtown Belleville Study Area*

The area of Belleville designated as “the Downtown” by the city includes the city’s traditional main street mixed use area and a number of adjacent streets. The area of the downtown that is being evaluated for this report, and which is referred to throughout as “Downtown Belleville” is a length of Front Street, bounded by Pinnacle Street in the north and Dundas Street East in the south. This mixed use area makes up the city’s Main Street area.
2.2.3 – Downtown Belleville Master Plan

Selection of the Downtown Belleville Master Plan (DBMP) was necessary after the selection of Downtown Belleville. The DBMP is a comprehensive plan for the revitalization of Downtown Belleville, which won an award from the Canadian Institute of Planners in 2007, making it an excellent benchmark against which to compare the other case studies. Since the DBMP has already been thoroughly scrutinized by experts and professionals in the field of urban planning and urban design, it should display superior qualities in the various assessment criteria used later in this report. More importantly, that the Plan describes a potential downtown that is significantly different from the current Downtown Belleville, particularly in terms of the area’s physical design.

2.2.4 – Belleville: Policy Context

Official Plan

Belleville’s Official Plan (OP) was last amended in 2002 and is currently undergoing a review and update. According to the OP, Downtown Belleville is intended as “a major focus of economic activity, […] a source of civic identity and pride, and […] a community landmark.” (OP, p.28) The OP details the types of uses which are conducive to its stated vision for the downtown as well as development policies which encourage beautification such as streetscape improvements and encouraging the adoption of attractive façades. The OP also addresses building height, setting a maximum of five storeys throughout the downtown with some exceptions. In particular, Belleville’s OP indicates that building heights “in the vicinity of City Hall” (OP, p.30) must be limited to maintain the visual impact of that building’s prominent clock tower. These policies reflect the city’s commitment to improving its downtown from a physical design standpoint.

Zoning By-Law

Belleville’s Zoning By-Law shows one zone dominating the downtown, zone C2-3. This zone is fairly typical of a downtown commercial zone, permitting a wide variety of commercial uses and upper-floor residences. The commercial zoning allows for the absence of yards and provides a maximum height of approximately three storeys. The C2-3 zone changes the height restriction to a minimum of three storeys and a maximum of four storeys, which is more appropriate for Downtown Belleville. The northern segment of the downtown is part of another zone, C2-6, which removes any height restriction, enabling the development of high-rise residential towers in this area. The Zoning By-Law pertaining to Downtown Belleville is fairly
typical of this type of regulation in Ontario, but it is notable that it does not provide a distinct “Central Business District” zone as might be expected in a historical downtown.

2.3 – CORNWALL: DOWNTOWN & LE VILLAGE
2.3.1 – Profile: Cornwall
The City of Cornwall is in Eastern Ontario, near the intersection of Ontario, Quebec and New York State. The city’s population at approximately 46,340 (2011) has grown by less than one percent since 2006. The city is bounded to the north by Highway 401 and to the south by the St. Lawrence River. Its economy has traditionally depended on manufacturing, but has recently expanded to include logistics, distribution and service sector employment. Similar to Belleville, Cornwall’s population has been subject to brief cycles of fast growth and longer periods of little growth or decline. It is evidently in a period of very limited growth, recovering from a relatively significant population decline which occurred around the year 2000. Unlike Belleville however, Cornwall has a distinct bilingual culture, which arose from the arrival of French industrial workers late in the nineteenth century. The influx of French-Canadians settled primarily in the east end of Cornwall, in the area known as Le Village, which developed its own identity as a result. The French quarter of Cornwall retained its close ties with Québec, and Montreal in particular, evident in the name of the street on which Le Village is centered, “Montreal Road.” It is this secondary area of development which led to Cornwall having two downtown cores.

2.3.2 – Downtown Cornwall
Cornwall’s downtown was selected because it is a readily identifiable area of Cornwall, and it possesses both a heritage element and proximity to a waterfront. Rather than including the entire Business Improvement Area (BIA) in the case study, the study area includes only four blocks of Pitt Street, from Fourth Street in the north to Water Street in the south. In addition, revitalization efforts have been undertaken in Cornwall at various times since the 1970s which have greatly affected the downtown. From the late 1970s to 1992, half of Pitt Street, from Second Street to Water Street, was closed to vehicular traffic and design improvements were made to the pedestrianized street. When the street was reopened to vehicles, it was redesigned to include a gentle curve as a traffic calming measure, and many of the design elements that had been placed in the vehicular right-of-way were relocated to the sidewalks. Further revitalization programs have been underway since 1999 with visioning projects and the implementation of numerous programs to promote and improve the downtown.
2.3.3 – Le Village

The other distinct downtown in Cornwall is Le Village, located roughly one kilometre east of Downtown. Unlike the other case studies, the downtown area of Le Village currently includes only one street, Montreal Road, which stretches for ten blocks. It is also the downtown located furthest from a waterfront and with little visible heritage character in comparison to the other two, based upon a preliminary walkthrough. The development of Le Village is closely tied to the local Francophone population, which was traditionally concentrated in the east end of Cornwall, particularly in the Le Village area. Despite the increased integration of French and English throughout Cornwall in the last few decades, there remains a high concentration of French-speaking people in and around Le Village, maintaining its identity as being distinct from that of Downtown Cornwall. Like Downtown Cornwall however, Le Village has been the site of grassroots revitalization programs and organizations. The revitalization efforts in Le Village have been more limited than those of Downtown, resulting in a consistent style of certain street elements, such as streetlights. The selection of Le Village as a case study occurred simultaneously with the selection of Downtown Cornwall. The presence of two downtowns in this small city presents a unique opportunity to compare and contrast two downtowns that have a great deal in common in terms of their home city, but which have evolved very differently.
2.3.4 – Cornwall: Policy Context

Official Plan

Cornwall’s OP was last updated in 2002 and is also in the process of being reviewed and updated. Section Nine of the OP outlines the city’s goals and policies with respect to “Visual Environment and Urban Design” (OP, p.123) in detail. The downtowns are identified as areas in which design improvements should be undertaken and encouraged by the city, and Section Nine provides details on the types of improvements to the built form that would be appropriate for Cornwall. Section Nine also allows the City of Cornwall to employ a Site Plan Approval process, through which staff can provide suggestions to developers regarding the design of buildings, especially in the Downtown and Le Village areas. The subsequent section of the OP, Section Ten, describes Cornwall’s goals and policies with respect to heritage resources. The city’s objectives in this regard are primarily to document and preserve built heritage throughout the city. Section Ten is ambiguous, however, with respect to the actions that are to be taken by the city to protect privately-owned heritage assets, which comprise most of the undesignated historical buildings in Le Village and Downtown.

Zoning By-Laws

Cornwall’s Zoning By-Law includes two sub-section which are relevant to this report, the “Central Business District” or “CBD” zone which applies to Downtown Cornwall and
“Commercial 70” or “Com 70” which applies to Le Village. The CBD zoning permits a wide range of uses complementary to the downtown, however it offers little to no guidance with respect to building dimensions. Setbacks and front yards are possibly the only physical features regulated in the zoning regulations. The Com 70 designation similarly only provides guidance for dimensions of yards, leaving design characteristics un-defined. Appropriate dimensions for building envelopes are not discussed for either the CBD or Com 70 zones, and there is thus no restriction against features such as parking lots adjacent to the main streets in either Downtown Cornwall or Le Village.

2.4 – CONCLUSION

The four case studies selected for this report are all distinct downtowns in small, Eastern Ontario cities. The case studies consist of the Main Street segments of their respective downtowns so as to ensure that the focus of this study is on areas with an identifiable and traditional downtown character. Thus, a single research methodology can be used to evaluate the case studies, generating results that have improved reliability.
CHAPTER 3 – METHODS

3.1 – INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters outlined the goals of this report and have provided some background into small city downtown revitalization and urban design. Details were given on the downtown revitalization efforts in four small downtowns in Ontario: two (Downtown and Le Village) in Cornwall and Belleville’s downtown at present and as outlined in that city’s Downtown Master Plan. These downtowns serve as comparative case studies and their designs are assessed and contrasted using criteria derived from principles of small city downtown revitalization and urban design, outlined in this chapter.

The literature on downtown revitalization is broad in scope, dealing with the causes of declining downtowns and the many methods and attempts at rejuvenation. Most of the literature concerning downtown revitalization in North America is focused on large American cities, Robertson (1999 & 2001), Burayidi (2001b), Klebba et al (2001), Faulk (2006), and Ramsey et al (2007) are among the few authors to discuss the unique problems faced by small city downtowns. Kent Robertson in particular shows up in many other discussions because of his expertise in small city downtown revitalization. Downtowns in small cities face the same difficulties, of competing with suburbs to attract commercial development, as larger cities but their small size makes them much less competitive (Robertson, 1999). Robertson argues that although small and large downtowns face similar problems, small downtowns are affected differently because they do not evolve in the same way that larger cities do. Small downtowns are more likely to keep historical buildings and a lower skyline, while traffic congestion and crime are not nearly as significant as they are in larger cities. Robertson (1999) asserts that, in comparison to their larger counterparts, small city downtowns are defined more by a sense of place than by major building projects, and they are more likely to have a single unified identity because they are too small to support diverse districts.

Klebba et al (2001) also argue that smaller downtowns have a smaller pool of resources with which to combat larger downtowns, they are effectively less resilient. While Klebba et al refer to small towns of ten thousand or less, there can be no doubt that small cities share the deficit of resources, particularly in relation to large cities.

Efforts to revitalize downtowns and “main streets” can be traced as far back as the 1950s (Dalibard, 1985), and urban planners and geographers have been debating the effectiveness of many different methods since then (Burayidi, 2001a). Faulk (2006) aptly sums up the literature...
on downtown revitalization as “descriptive and prescriptive”, meaning that it generally relies on
descriptive case studies outlining the course of downtown revitalization in a given city. These
case studies serve as a pool of data from which authors can derive principles or “prescriptions”
for successful downtown revitalization. Faulk’s concise summary of the literature is consistent
with my research, although some authors place more emphasis on describing a case study while
others forego the case study and instead simply discuss principles for successful downtown
revitalization, while referring to examples discussed by other authors. Many of the authors
referenced in this review follow the format described by Faulk (Burayidi, 2001a & 2001b; Faulk,
2006; Horne, 2001; Robertson, 1999; and Ramsey et al, 2007), meaning that they describe case
studies of downtown revitalization and derive principles or suggestions that can be applied
widely.

The discourse surrounding the visual character of downtowns, and those of small cities in
particular, is peppered with references to the importance of identity, place and character. The
same concepts are evident in literature discussing the appeal of “Main Street” and its importance
to community identity (Holdsworth, 1985). The articles in Holdsworth provide an excellent, if
somewhat dated, exploration of what constitutes a Main Street, why it is important to small cities
and towns and the early efforts to revitalize them in Canada. The design of Main Street is a
central aspect of Francavaglia’s 1996 book, *Main Street Revisited*. Francavaglia looks at Main
Street as both a real and imaginary place, and examines their defining characteristics, both in
reality and in fiction. His study helps to frame the importance of perception as a factor in
determining what constitutes a successful Main Street, which is tied to the importance of visual
character of downtowns as tools for revitalization.

Authors may disagree on the details of downtown decline, but they agree that the
migration of residents and commerce away from city centres and into the suburbs is responsible
to some degree and that downtown revitalization is an important means of countering that
decline. There is an increasing recognition that successful strategies must be customized to
individual cities. The role of urban design in the revitalization of small city downtowns is
recognized as being invaluable, but the extent of its importance is debated. Some authors value
its capacity to shape visual character which is integral to the identity of a city while others reason
that visual character is only one means of cultural expression. In either case, urban design is an
integral aspect of downtown revitalization, particularly in small cities whose downtowns rely
more on generating a sense of place to be successful.
3.2 – CASE SELECTION RATIONALE

Cornwall is unusual for a small city in that it has two distinct downtowns or “main streets”, each forming the basis of its own Business Improvement Area (BIA). The area referred to locally as “Downtown” is centered on the intersection of Pitt Street, which runs perpendicular to the St. Lawrence River, and Second Street which is a major east-west thoroughfare. The southern terminus of Pitt Street is at Water Street, which forms the northern boundary to a large waterfront park. Adjacent to the intersection of Pitt and Water Street is a successful shopping mall called Cornwall Square.

The other downtown, called “Le Village”, is approximately one kilometre east of the Downtown, extending for roughly ten blocks along Montreal Road (which becomes Water Street), parallel to the river. Montreal Road is a heavily used street by pedestrians and motorists at all times of the day and evening and, visually, is not very similar to the Downtown which is just one kilometre away.

Downtown revitalization has been attempted in Cornwall in the past, when the lower three blocks of Pitt Street were converted to a pedestrian mall in the late 1970s, and again when the street was re-opened to motorized traffic in 1992. These efforts saw the development of several styles and colour schemes for the street elements, as these accumulated as a result of the uncoordinated revitalization efforts. A separate initiative to revitalize Le Village was advanced by its BIA in cooperation with Groupe Renaissance Group (GRG), a committee of local business owners and citizens. The revitalization of Le Village originally followed a different scheme than that of Downtown, in that a consistent colour and style of street elements for Le Village was adopted and implemented by the city. With the help of organizations such as the Heart of the City (HOTC), the two downtowns are increasingly working together to pursue mutually beneficial programs of downtown revitalization.

Belleville was awarded the Canadian Institute of Planners’ Award for Excellence in Downtown Planning in 2007 for its Downtown Belleville Master Plan, developed by the Office for Urbanism. This Plan represents an example of excellent downtown design and its inclusion as a case study for assessment is intended to improve the generalizability and reliability of this report’s conclusions. It is expected that the award-winning Plan should receive a comparably better assessment than the existing downtown in Belleville using the evaluation criteria described above. This would strengthen the credibility of the criteria used, and make a comparison to the downtowns in Cornwall significantly more valid.
3.3 – ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

For the purposes of evaluating the efforts undertaken in the case study downtowns, five principles for successful revitalization discussed by Robertson were developed into evaluation criteria. The criteria that form the first segment of the evaluation are: (1) the plan or vision for downtown, (2) capitalizing on heritage, (3) linking downtown to the waterfront, (4) pedestrian-friendliness, and (5) establishing sympathetic design guidelines.2 These principles are not unique to Robertson’s research, but he is unique in discussing all of them collectively, and in detail. These principles contribute to establishing a sense of place, which is commonly cited as a vital aspect of small city downtown revitalization (Robertson, 1999; Burayidi, 2001; Faulk, 2006; Walker, 2009).

Jack Nasar’s method for determining urban likability expands on the five criteria derived from Robertson’s research, and allows for a more detailed exploration of the physical aspects of the downtown that contribute to a sense of place, which makes up the second segment of the evaluation. This was represented in this report through a likability analysis of the case study downtowns using Nasar’s criteria. This analysis provides a higher-level assessment of the visual elements contributing to sense of place in each downtown and improves the reliability of this report’s findings.

The case studies have been evaluated comparatively and qualitatively. The criteria used in this evaluation are not absolutes, in that they are not describing the urban design of the case studies in terms of being objectively good or bad. Rather, these criteria were used to evaluate the degree to which each case meets them relative to one another. In this way, this study thoroughly compares these downtowns, evaluating them only relative to one another. Therefore, it is possible to ascertain which downtowns are performing better than the others according to each criteria. It must be stressed that since this is not an absolute evaluation, it would be incorrect to claim that a downtown that is described as exceedingly superior to the others in one specific criteria is therefore an objectively good example for all small city downtowns (Yin, 2009).

The following table outlines these principles in detail. Each principle is associated with a related question or attribute which was assessed using appropriate evaluation criteria. In this way, it was possible to compare and contrast the physical design of the case study downtowns in Cornwall and Belleville.

---

2 The other three principles are public/private partnerships, multifunctionality and parking (Robertson, 2001)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles</th>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Evaluation Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plan/vision for downtown</strong></td>
<td>Is there a guiding vision or plan for downtown in the OP, Secondary Plans, etc.? Is it consistent across various plans?</td>
<td>Does the vision include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Streetscape guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Transportation and pedestrian dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Design elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Specific locations for desired projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Linkages between primary downtown locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Downtown heritage</strong></td>
<td>State of heritage conservation downtown</td>
<td>Percentage of buildings downtown with heritage designation/protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson (2001, p.15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Link between downtown and waterfront</strong></td>
<td>Describe the connectivity between downtown and the waterfront</td>
<td>Number and type of crosswalks, street width</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson (2001, p.16)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pedestrian friendliness</strong></td>
<td>Assess the walkability and transit access of downtown</td>
<td>PEDS walkability survey (Clifton et al, online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson (2001, p.17)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sen &amp; Bell (2001, pp.138-140)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design guidelines</strong></td>
<td>Assess the appropriateness of buildings to the downtown</td>
<td>S(Scale)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson (2001, p.18)</td>
<td></td>
<td>F(Function)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Trust Main Street Model - Design Principle</td>
<td></td>
<td>A(Attractiveness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>U(Design)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D(Details)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Gehl 1991, p.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distinctive sense of place</strong></td>
<td>Evaluate the imageability of downtown</td>
<td>Elements of likability:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson (1999, p.282)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Distinctiveness, Visibility, and Use/Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walker (2009, p.10)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Likable Features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Naturalness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Upkeep/civilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Openness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Historical significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Interrelationships, Context &amp; Contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Structure &amp; Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Nasar 1998, pp.59-79)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plan/vision for downtown

Robertson (2001) and Walker (2006) outline the criteria necessary for a successful small downtown plan, with which I have evaluated the plans for Cornwall and Belleville’s downtowns. These criteria are: clearly defined goals, objectives and/or priorities; transportation and pedestrian dimensions; design elements; streetscape guidelines; specific locations defined for projects; linkages between primary downtown locations. I have examined the cities’ Official Plans, Community Improvement Plans and other Secondary Plans to determine if there is a consistency across their treatment of the above criteria and briefly discussed whether these plans have been implemented. A semi-structured interview with planning staff has ensured that information on the implementation of downtown revitalization programs is up-to-date.

Downtown heritage

Efforts by a city and its citizens to protect historical buildings were measured by comparing the number of designated or otherwise protected historical buildings within the boundaries of the downtown to the approximate total number of buildings in the area. This percentage simply shows what effort the downtowns have undergone to protect their historical buildings, as well as providing a good approximation of the degree to which the communities feel that their built heritage requires protection (Robertson, 2001). Consideration is given to other means of heritage protection such as design guidelines and other built form regulations, as discussed below.

Link between downtown and the waterfront

A simple way of assessing the effectiveness of a downtown’s connection to the waterfront is by counting the number of access points between the two, as well as measuring the dimensions of any barriers and comparing these qualities. This was done for the three case studies with the help of GIS mapping and measuring tools. Cornwall is on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River, and Belleville sits where the Moira River empties into the Bay of Quinte, and both cities have extensive waterfront parks in close proximity to their downtowns.

Pedestrian Friendliness

A tool was needed to assess the pedestrian-friendliness of the downtowns. The Pedestrian Environment Data Scan (PEDS) walkability survey by Clifton et al (2004) was selected because
it is readily available, applies itself well to downtowns, and provides a simple and effective means of comparing pedestrian friendliness across different cities. I have conducted this survey in each of the case study downtowns.

**Design guidelines**

For this report, the design guidelines assessment considers the appropriateness of building type within the downtown. Gehl (1991, p.18) developed a tool for assessing building type which assigns grades for the overall scale, function, attractiveness, design, and details of buildings, from A+ (appropriate) to E- (inappropriate). Using this method, I have compared the building types in the three selected downtowns.

**Distinctive sense of place**

The final evaluation criterion was the overall sense of place that each downtown inspires. Building on Kevin Lynch’s survey methodology, Nasar (1998) describes elements useful for assessing the likability of urban spaces. These elements are listed in the preceding table as assessment criteria, and were used to evaluate the sense of place imparted by the built form of the case study downtowns. Although a survey would be the ideal method for exploring sense of place in the case study downtowns, it is a method that is beyond the means of this report. In lieu of a survey, I have conducted a comparative analysis of the visual character of the downtowns, discussing the differences between them with respect to Nasar’s likability criteria. The downtowns were compared and contrasted according to each criterion, so that a sample discussion would follow this format:

*Likable feature: Naturalness*. Examination of how each downtown addresses the criteria, followed by a discussion of which downtowns are more and less successful at meeting this criteria, and why.

**3.4 – LIKABILITY ANALYSIS PROTOCOL**

Each of the case study downtowns is comparatively evaluated according to the following categories, which correspond to Nasar’s likability elements:

1. Naturalness – the relative amount of visible greenspace and landscaping.
2. Upkeep/civilities – referring to the general state of cleanliness of the streets, the state of repair of the buildings, and visual clutter such as power lines and overabundance of signs.
3. Openness – the degree of enclosure from buildings and street elements, the presence of scenic views and vistas, and general view distance.

4. Historical significance – perception towards buildings throughout the downtown that possess some form of heritage protection or recognition

5. Order – consistency in building design and style, clear distinctions between building elements (e.g. doors as doors, windows as windows, etc.)

6. Complexity – diversity within the overall order (e.g. a number of buildings in a similar style but with noticeable differences)

3.5 – INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with two planning staff, one from each of the case study cities, using the following questions as a basis for discussion. These interviews are conducted subsequent to the analysis and are intended to explore the underlying causes of the current state of affairs in the downtowns. They will primarily inform the discussion and final recommendations.

Plan/Vision for Downtown

1. What is your impression of the implementation programs that the city has put in place to carry out the vision outlined in the plans for downtown?

Downtown Heritage

2. Would you say that conserving built heritage is an important aspect of the city’s downtown improvement strategy? Why or why not?

3. Can you speak to the city’s plans for the (near) future in this regard?

Link between Downtown and the Waterfront

4. In your opinion, is there an effective link for people to move back and forth between the downtown and waterfront? Why or why not?

Physical Design & Design Guidelines

5. Does the city employ and enforce specific controls on the size and style of building in the downtown beyond the zoning? What is the reasoning behind this – i.e. does the downtown have a certain character that these controls are intended to preserve?

6. Would you say that these controls are helping to maintain that character?

Distinctiveness, Visibility & Use/Significance

7. In your opinion, are there any particular landmarks or visual features about the downtown that make it stand out?
8. What makes this downtown distinct, in visual terms?

9. Can you think of anything missing from the downtown that you think should be there?

**Miscellaneous**

10. Please feel free to make any additional comments about the design of the downtown.

### 3.6 – **GENERALIZABILITY OF RESULTS**

Robert Yin (2009) discusses the important distinction between the generalizability of quantitative data compared to the qualitative results from a comparative case study, such as that employed in this report. Fortunately this study examines four case studies, one of which has been recognized as an objectively good example of downtown planning for a small city. This award-winning case was expected to receive a comparatively superior evaluation than its counterpart, the existing downtown in that city. If this assumption is supported by the study’s findings, then it could be concluded that this method is effective for this city. The application of these criteria in the other case study downtowns would further strengthen the method by increasing the number of cases in which it is applied, which is a critical component in testing the generalizability of evaluation criteria.

### 3.7 – **LIMITATIONS**

The use of only two cities for this study has consequences for the external validity and generalizability of the conclusions drawn from this report. Primarily, this means that the findings about the revitalization efforts in Cornwall and Belleville would not be generalizable to other small cities in Ontario, let alone the broader context, which limits this report’s external validity. Similarly, the reliance on a single set of derived evaluation criteria to comparatively assess the case studies further limits the generalizability of this study. The use of another set of criteria would be invaluable for comparing the downtowns as well as for comparing the methods used. This would ensure that the downtowns would be evaluated using the most effective, and generalizable, tools.

This report is further limited by the absence of this particular method from the literature. Since the evaluation criteria are derived from a number of different sources that have not been combined previously, this method’s reliability has not yet been tested. Although this study can be said to be contributing to the reliability of each criteria individually, its own reliability would benefit from being applied in future studies.
CHAPTER 4 – ANALYSIS

4.1 – INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to convey the findings collected from the fieldwork completed for this report. The criteria in Table 3-1 were used as a basis for this primarily qualitative analysis. Some of the criteria required limited quantitative evaluation, which was undertaken in a relative way, which is to say that the case studies were rated relative to one another, rather than against an absolute scale. Given the nature of the evaluation criteria, as well as time constraints faced by the researcher, these criteria were not applied to the entirety of each downtown. Instead, the Main Street or core of each downtown was identified and evaluated as a proxy for the entire downtown. Therefore, the terms “Main Street” and “downtown” are used interchangeably throughout this analysis. Finally, two senior planners were interviewed by telephone as part of this report, one from Cornwall and one from Belleville. The questions posed during these interviews can be found in Section 3.5 of the previous chapter. The goal of these interviews was to explore the underlying causes which have led to the current states of the case study downtowns, however they also helped to highlight the major themes which influence the implementation of revitalization efforts in these cities. Discussion of the results of these interviews is interspersed throughout this chapter in the appropriate sub-section.

Table 4-1: Case Study Boundaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study Downtown</th>
<th>Main Street Boundaries</th>
<th>Map</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Belleville Master Plan (DBMP) and Downtown Belleville</td>
<td>Front Street, from Pinnacle Street to Dundas Street East</td>
<td>(See Appendix A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Village, Cornwall</td>
<td>Montreal Road, from Marlborough Street to Alice Street</td>
<td>(See Appendix B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Cornwall</td>
<td>Pitt Street, from Fourth Street to Water Street</td>
<td>(See Appendix C)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 – PLAN/VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

Plans for the case study downtowns are being evaluated as to whether they meet the criteria defined by Robertson (2001) and Walker (2006) as essential elements of successful downtown plans. The results are summarized in Table 4-2, and are discussed in further detail below. The distinction between the DBMP and Downtown Belleville is emphasized by keeping these cases separate in the table despite the DBMP’s inclusion of plans for the latter. The discussion for Belleville’s downtown will highlight the gap between the existing downtown and the vision outlined in the DBMP.

The DBMP includes a vision with ten guiding principles (DBMP: Guiding Framework, p.4) for the entirety of the downtown, as well as complementary objectives for seven identified districts. One of these districts, dubbed “The Village”, includes the study area defined in Table 4-1, and it is the eight objectives for this area that are considered here as the plan for downtown. The vision outlined in the DBMP highlights the importance of maintaining the area’s heritage character, improving its pedestrian and cycling amenities, its connection to the waterfront, and the visual appeal of the buildings in the downtown. The DBMP further describes the actions required to bring the downtown in line with the vision it expresses.

The vision for Downtown Belleville laid out in the DBMP is intended to address shortcomings in the area’s design and function, and to capitalize on its opportunities. It is interesting that many of the components of the DBMP revolve around improving elements of Belleville’s downtown that are currently extant, but that are not realized to their full potential. For example, the downtown includes a small number of connections to the waterfront, and the DBMP recommends their improvement. On the other hand, the evident absence of streetscape guidelines in the development of the downtown means that there is a great need for this component in the DBMP. Overall, Downtown Belleville meets the second, third, fifth, and sixth criteria to a limited degree, while it falls short of the first and fourth criteria.

The gap between the DBMP and Downtown Belleville as it currently exists shows that having the best downtown plan is not much better than having no plan at all, if revitalization programs are not successfully and effectively implemented. While an implementation schedule is beyond the scope of this report, the interview with the Belleville planner revealed the important role that a unifying vision and related design guidelines can have for the implementation and successful revitalization of the case study downtowns.
### Table 4-2: Essential downtown plan criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Case Study Downtown</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Clearly defined goals, objectives, and/or priorities</td>
<td><strong>DBMP</strong></td>
<td>Key objectives and actions for downtown described</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtown Belleville</td>
<td>Extant in <strong>DBMP</strong>, but not consistent with current downtown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le Village, Cornwall</td>
<td>Four key objectives identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtown Cornwall</td>
<td>Various, outlined in the <em>Forrec Report</em> and <em>Community Improvement Plan</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Transportation and pedestrian dimensions</td>
<td><strong>DBMP</strong></td>
<td>New pedestrian bridge, emphasis on improving the pedestrian atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtown Belleville</td>
<td>Enhanced crosswalks extant, but in poor condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le Village, Cornwall</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtown Cornwall</td>
<td>Improve cycling infrastructure and pedestrian environment through streetscaping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Design elements</td>
<td><strong>DBMP</strong></td>
<td>Public art installations, guidelines for signage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtown Belleville</td>
<td>Antique-style pedestrian lighting, street elements a consistent colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le Village, Cornwall</td>
<td>Streetlight improvements, seasonal decorations, landscaping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtown Cornwall</td>
<td>Specified elements include streetlights, benches, waste receptacles, public art, street signs, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Streetscape guidelines</td>
<td><strong>DBMP</strong></td>
<td>Sidewalk landscaping, recommendations for preserving integrity of street walls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtown Belleville</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le Village, Cornwall</td>
<td>Beautification and physical improvements, maintenance and renewal of streetscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtown Cornwall</td>
<td><em>Streetscape Design Report</em> specifically addresses streetscape improvements outlined in <em>HOTC: The Project</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Specific locations defined for projects</td>
<td><strong>DBMP</strong></td>
<td>Gateways and heritage areas identified, City Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtown Belleville</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le Village, Cornwall</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtown Cornwall</td>
<td>Many specified in the <em>Forrec Report</em>, <em>HOTC: The Project</em>, and <em>Streetscape Design Report</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Linkages between primary downtown locations</td>
<td><strong>DBMP</strong></td>
<td>New pedestrian bridge across the river, improved connections to the river and to adjacent parallel street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtown Belleville</td>
<td>Existing pedestrian bridge, several connections to adjacent parallel street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le Village, Cornwall</td>
<td>Improved connections to the waterfront and Downtown Cornwall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtown Cornwall</td>
<td>Improved connections to the waterfront and Le Village</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Le Village in Cornwall has a dedicated BIA (Business Improvement Association) which developed a strategic plan for the neighbourhood in February of 2011. This plan consists of four key elements: beautification, parking, communications, and partnerships (HOTC, 2011). The first objective, beautification, is the most relevant to this report given that it pertains to the visual design of the downtown. Unfortunately, the plan does not describe its intentions for beautification beyond describing them as “streetscape improvements”. The report Heart of the City: The Project, provides some more detail on the specific streetscape elements alluded to in Le Village’s strategic plan, but it does not provide guidelines for the types of streetscape elements that would be best suited to the downtown.

The guiding vision for Downtown Cornwall has been outlined most comprehensively in The Revitalization Concept Report, also called the Forrec Report, as well as in the document titled Heart of the City: The Project. The Centretown Streetscape Design Report further elaborates on many of the streetscape improvements first recommended in the HOTC: The Project report. These reports document a vision for Downtown encourages design improvements such as making street lights more historical in appearance, guidelines for commercial signs, façade improvements, and strengthening the link to the waterfront as well as to Le Village. The greatest shortcoming is that the plans for Downtown Cornwall are divided between so many reports and studies (Revitalization Concept Report, Heart of the City: The Project, Centretown Streetscape Report), making it difficult to see a single guiding vision and an associated action plan for meeting that vision.

Table 4-3: Evaluation scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☺</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td>☺</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4.3 – DOWNTOWN HERITAGE

The DBMP recognizes the significance of heritage to Belleville’s downtown (Guiding Framework, p.45). The plan calls for height restrictions for new or infill development along Front Street which would not exceed the height of historical buildings present in the downtown. The plan has no provisions, however, for addressing the issue of two mid-rise apartment buildings in the downtown which are more than six times taller than the three-storey height restriction.
Belleville’s Main Street currently boasts five buildings with heritage designation under Ontario’s *Heritage Act*. The condition of these buildings is highly variable however, and perhaps reflects some shortcomings of existing legislation. For example, Belleville’s city hall is designated, as is a building housing a local branch of a major Canadian bank. As can be expected, the exteriors of these buildings are in excellent condition and show a distinct pride in the heritage architecture. Conversely, there is a large privately-owned building at the north end of Front Street, which is heritage designated, and its exterior is not very well maintained (City of Belleville, 2011). The historical character of the designated buildings is offset somewhat by the high frequency of aluminum siding along Front Street, which covers up stone and brick façades that would otherwise complement the heritage buildings.

A subsection of Belleville’s *OP* (s.7.4.1) outlines the city’s responsibilities with respect to encouraging and preserving built heritage throughout the city. This section indicates that new developments “should have regard for” (*OP*, p.90) major heritage features and buildings in the area as well as laying out policies with respect to the municipality’s responsibility to play a leading role in the preservation and restoration of heritage buildings. Belleville’s administration has indeed taken the initiative in the designation of numerous historical downtown buildings as well as encouraging the preservation of built heritage in Belleville’s downtown. In spite of the *OP*’s progressive disposition towards heritage conservation, however, there continues to be a high frequency of aluminum siding along Front Street, which covers up stone and brick façades that would otherwise complement the historical character of the downtown.

Section Ten of Cornwall’s *OP* includes numerous policies relating to the preservation of heritage buildings as well as to updating the functionality and infrastructure of historical buildings. This section divides the responsibility for heritage buildings in Cornwall between the city itself and the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (LACAC) now known as Heritage Cornwall. The LACAC describes two buildings which are heritage designated in Le Village. These buildings reflect an issue that arose in Belleville as well, namely that one of the buildings is owned by a major institution, in the case of Le Village that institution is a religious organization, and the other is privately owned. The designated church is clearly subject to regular maintenance, while the other building, a historical theatre which also acts as a landmark, is in an unfortunate state of repair. Efforts to improve the building’s façade are evident, but there is a clear imbalance in the care of heritage designated buildings in Le Village.
The heritage section of Cornwall’s OP applies equally to the Downtown study area, where it unfortunately does not appear to have been thoroughly implemented. The absence of any heritage-designated buildings along this stretch of Pitt Street is overshadowed by the presence of several historical buildings representing different architectural styles.

The OP indicates that a building should be considered for heritage designation, “whether it is a well preserved and representative example of a certain period in the development of the City or style of architecture” (OP, p.132). Although, according to Heritage Cornwall’s website, there are no buildings along Downtown’s Main Street that are designated under the Heritage Act, although a number of buildings elsewhere Downtown are so designated. This was an unexpected development, given the number of historical buildings in the downtown, including one with an original 1920s “art deco” façade, which may have the potential for designation, but which have not been. Many of these are being, or have been, restored in the recent past as well, demonstrating an effort to maintain the downtown’s built heritage despite the lack of official designation. Discussion with a senior planner in the city revealed that the shortage of historical buildings in the downtown was largely a result of the many fires that have plagued the city since its founding. These fires have resulted in the current state of the built form which is made up of a matrix of new and older buildings. In consequence, there is a perception that heritage designation would be inappropriate in the downtown.

4.4 – LINK BETWEEN DOWNTOWN & WATERFRONT

All of the case study downtowns are located within walking distance of a water body, Cornwall is on the St. Lawrence River, and the Main Street in Belleville runs parallel to the Moira River which is straddled by the rest of the city. According to Robertson (2001), the vital role that waterfronts can play in ensuring the success of a small city’s downtowns is dependent on the physical linkages between the two. For the purposes of this report, these connections were counted in each of the case study downtowns, and the results follow, along with a qualitative discussion of the connections themselves.
The DBMP proposes seven mid-block connections between Front Street and the waterfront (Guiding Framework, p.6). This planned downtown also differs from the existing downtown in that it includes a second pedestrian bridge over the river, which is also connected to the Main Street. A significant qualitative change in this plan is the replacement of the parking lot, described above, with buildings. Although this would reduce the amount of space connecting downtown and the waterfront, these buildings also serve to frame the connection by making the linkage a more interactive space. From an aesthetic perspective as well, well-designed buildings are a more fitting complement to a waterfront than an asphalt parking lot. This plan therefore demonstrates an improvement over the current downtown, in terms of the way it enhances the link between downtown and the waterfront.

At present, there are ten connections between Front Street, in Belleville’s downtown, and that city’s waterfront pathway. This number is somewhat misleading however, since most of these connections are interrupted by parking lots or roadways. The primary linkage, and the one that is most clearly intended as a connection to the waterfront, is composed of a lengthy and narrow alleyway linking Front Street to a pedestrian bridge that crosses the Moira River. This connection is a weakness at the south end of Front Street, where a large parking lot borders on the waterfront, increasing accessibility on the one hand, but countering any pleasant impression imparted by proximity to the river.
Cornwall’s Le Village area is the case study downtown that is furthest from its neighbouring waterfront. In many ways, it also possesses the least effective waterfront linkages, in that cross-streets generally do not lead directly to the waterfront or are not fully serviced with sidewalks. In recognition of this problem, signs have been placed to guide visitors towards the waterfront, an element not present in the other case study downtowns. Most likely this can be explained by the fact that there are fewer points in the Le Village area from which the waterfront is visible, compared to the other downtowns. Furthermore, the design elements along the Main Street are not continued or accented in any way by the side streets leading to the water, creating a sense of disconnection. The prospects in this case are positive however, given that a project to redevelop a historical waterfront mill into upper-scale condominiums is underway south of Le Village, and is very likely going to prompt changes in the design of the cross streets, improving this downtown’s waterfront connections.

Downtown Cornwall is unusual compared to the other case studies, in that it is perpendicular to the city’s waterfront. Thus, it can only have a maximum of two linkages to the waterfront, in the form of pedestrian crosswalks on each side of Pitt Street, crossing Water Street. The quality of those pedestrian crossings is therefore very significant. Currently, the crosswalks occur at an intersection with traffic lights, and with pedestrian-activated signals. Water Street however, is a busy thoroughfare with a median separating two lanes of traffic in each direction, as well as a left-turning lane. This is a significant problem for pedestrians attempting to cross the wide street in the short time allotted. On the positive side, the pathways in the waterfront park provide scenic and rapid accessibility to the waterfront trail.
4.5 – PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLINESS

The walkability of downtowns is an important factor in the success of downtowns. In order to assess this factor, the PEDS walkability survey tool (Clifton et al, 2004) was used and the results aggregated for each of the case study Main Streets. The results are presented in the following table and a brief discussion of the researcher’s impressions. The survey is divided into four sections: Environment, Pedestrian Facility, Road Attributes, and Walking/Cycling Environment, which are represented in the table along with a ranking based on the aggregated results.

Rather than evaluating the pedestrian friendliness of the DBMP itself, its pedestrian-oriented provisions have been compared to those of the other case studies. The DBMP excels at promoting pedestrian-oriented amenities such as enhanced crosswalks and mid-block connections which enhance the permeability of downtown streets. It also includes recommendations for streetscape improvements throughout the downtown which would include special paving, landscaping, a greater number of street trees, distinctive signage and lights, seating, and improved awnings (Guiding Framework, p.37). The DBMP notably does not promote cycling along Front Street, directing cycling routes to the waterfront and to an adjacent, parallel street to the east (Pinnacle Street), diverting cyclists away from the Main Street. This is certainly understandable, given the width of the Main Street, and it is a shortcoming that is present throughout the case studies. In order to mitigate this particular issue, the DBMP does recommend increasing the amount of bicycle parking in the downtown. The DBMP also recognizes breaks in the continuous street wall as opportunities for tasteful infill that would further improve the walkability of Downtown Belleville. Other elements of the walkability tool were not applied to this case study, however it is clear that the recommended improvements would elevate the Plan above Downtown Belleville, to an equal or slightly better rating than Downtown Cornwall.

Belleville’s downtown was found to be pedestrian-friendly in most respects. The most notable shortcomings in its pedestrian-friendliness occurring in the limited crossing aids, variable sidewalk width, absence of bicycle facilities, overall cleanliness, and the degree of enclosure at the extremities of the downtown. The lack of pedestrian control for the crossing lights is a notable shortcoming of the downtown traffic lights, which otherwise complement an effective network of crosswalks. A few areas in which the sidewalks were narrowed by street elements such as trees and lights further reduced Downtown Belleville’s assessment, as did the small
number of poorly maintained or damaged bicycle racks. The absence of cycling lanes as well was a shortcoming, forcing cyclists to share the two- to four-lane roadway with vehicles. Certainly the seasonal conditions contributed to the sense of cleanliness, but since litter is not unique to the winter, the season could not be held accountable for all of the cleanliness issues. Finally, the presence of parking lots adjacent to the sidewalk and the significant setback for the mid-rise apartment buildings lessened the comfortable sense of enclosure that is present for two blocks in the centre of downtown.

The pedestrian friendliness of Le Village received a poor evaluation, primarily as a result of the inconsistencies in its design, resulting in single detached houses along Montreal Road, variable sidewalk width, the presence of power lines, distance between crosswalks and limited pedestrian control of intersections, variable setbacks, and cleanliness. The presence of single detached houses in Le Village conflicts starkly with the commercial atmosphere of the neighbourhood, exacerbated by the generally poor conditions of the houses themselves. Sidewalk widths vary more in Le Village than in any of the other case studies, so that some segments have a great deal of space for pedestrians, while others have less than four feet where a narrow sidewalk is encroached upon by a power line or street light. The crosswalks in Le Village are also separated by significant distances in some cases, most likely because the area’s dual importance as a major through-way for commuters discourages traffic-calming measures such as an increased number of street lights. Another unfortunate feature in Le Village is that a number of buildings face the street at an angle, creating a triangular space in their foreyards which could be used for landscaping or perhaps seating, but which currently serves primarily to collect wind-strewn litter and waste, highlighting the area’s shortfalls in cleanliness. Le Village received the poorest assessment in terms of its pedestrian friendliness for the reasons stated, but of all the case study downtowns, it was the researcher’s impression that this downtown had the greatest amount of pedestrian activity during the site visit.
Downtown Cornwall displayed a consistent pedestrian atmosphere south of Third Street, with the northernmost block being the least friendly to pedestrian activity, largely as a result of the large building setbacks and incomplete street wall. Otherwise, Downtown Cornwall fell short in terms of having a parking lot adjacent to the street, a variable sense of enclosure in some segments, the absence of bicycle lanes, and some cleanliness issues. The southernmost block on Pitt Street includes a parking lot on one side of the street, and a parkette on the other, contrasting sharply with the comfortable two-to-three storey buildings immediately to the north. This gives the impression that one is leaving the downtown, despite that not being the case. Similarly, at the corner of Second and Pitt Streets is a large vacant lot surrounding by hoarding which has been transformed into a mural. This mural is greatly desirable to an empty lot, but it cannot relieve the sense of openness created at this corner, which is exacerbated by the height of the building opposite, which is a mid-rise office tower. Much like the other case studies, Downtown Cornwall does not include bicycle lanes along its Main Street perhaps because it also receives a significant amount of vehicular traffic. Pitt Street is also relatively narrow at less than ten metres wide, with a right-of-way of less than seventeen metres. In terms of its cleanliness, most of the downtown was found to be good, with the exception of a few concentrations of litter, as well as crumbling ledges on many of the concrete planters. Downtown Cornwall performed slightly better than Downtown Belleville for its pedestrian-friendliness.
4.6 – PHYSICAL DESIGN

The purpose of this section is to evaluate the current state of the buildings in the case study downtowns. In particular, the intention of this section is to examine the appropriateness of building types using a method developed by Jan Gehl (1991) which assigns a rating on a seven-point scale, ranging from A+ to E-, for five aspects of downtown buildings: their scale, function, attractiveness, design, and details. Each of these terms is used to refer to specific characteristics, where scale covers the relative size of units at grade, with smaller units receiving better evaluations than larger units. Function refers to the number of uses on a given block, favouring multiple uses and penalizing blocks with few uses. Attractiveness indicates the visual and physical permeability of façades, thus a block with more doors, open windows and transparent windows would receive a more favourable evaluation than a block with “blinded” façades and few or no public entrances. The fourth criterion, design, concerns the amount of relief in a façade, favouring a greater amount and variety in façades and penalizing uniform or otherwise featureless façades. Finally, buildings with greater level of small details were given better evaluations and those with few or no physical detailing received poor evaluations. For the purposes of this section, all of the buildings on one block were considered as one section or street wall, regardless of any discontinuities in the street wall itself resulting from alleyways, driveways, parking lots, etc. Some few exceptions to this overall rule apply, in cases with large blocks that could be divided into two or more blocks, each more comparable in size to the majority. It should be noted that few “A’s” were given overall, largely in light of the strict guidelines for this high grade.

This analysis has been applied to the DBMP somewhat differently than with the other case studies, primarily because the DBMP does not include designs of the façades for each building along Front Street. This case does identify styles of building that would be most appropriate for infill development in the downtown, specifically buildings that reflect the stylistic patterns of the existing built form. In addition, the DBMP indicates preferred locations for infill development along Front Street, as indicated previously, which would help to create a consistent street wall in areas where this is not currently the case. Its guidelines for the built form are detailed and context-specific, so that buildings across from city hall should be oriented towards both the street and waterfront, whereas infill along Front Street should have their façade elements horizontally-aligned with those of their neighbours. The building design guidelines clearly represent an improvement over the existing downtown, and although no relative grade
can be assigned, it would not be unjust to rank the *DBMP* as one of the better examples of design guidelines in this study.

Belleville’s downtown received an average assessment, with a majority of “C” or “average” ratings. The blocks in this downtown were assigned numbers from “1” to “10” to identify them, and will be referred to by their designated numbers, throughout (see Appendix D), with odd-numbered blocks located on the east side and even numbers on the west side. The first block, located between Pinnacle Street and Victoria Avenue, received an “average” rating, however there were notable distinctions within this block. The northern- and southernmost street walls were markedly more appealing than the buildings in the centre of the block. The long block across from Block One is by far the longest in Downtown Belleville, stretching north from Pinnacle Street south to Bridge Street, and it has been divided into three segments (numbered Two, Four and Six, respectively). The second block, which is at the northern boundary of Downtown Belleville, achieved an above average rating because it includes a short street wall with several one- to two-storey commercial buildings. As for Block Three, the block between Victoria Avenue and Campbell street, it becomes increasingly less appealing as one travels south, primarily because this portion of the block includes a parking lot and an unattached building. The apartment buildings of Block Four have a negative impact on the downtown and received a poor evaluation. The fifth block, between Campbell Street and Bridge Street, was found to be very good, since it consists of an unbroken street wall with a number of different building styles represented, as well as a real mix of uses. The sixth block is in the downtown core and received a very good assessment for its downtown-friendly character.
Superficially, the seventh block which runs from Bridge Street to Market Street, is quite similar to the third in that it includes a street wall with several building types, however it received a somewhat lower rating because the buildings’ more modern architecture is inherently penalized by this particular tool. Additionally, the façades of the buildings were much less permeable than the previous block, contributing to its poorer evaluation. The eighth and tenth segments are part of another long, continuous block which runs from Bridge Street to Dundas Street, which has been divided into two segments, each roughly equivalent to a typical Downtown Belleville block. The eighth block includes a cluster of buildings which clearly mark the limit of the downtown fabric on this side of Front Street. The ninth block is between Market Street and Dundas Street, and it was found to be very poor, despite the presence of Belleville’s city hall. Block Nine includes a number of buildings which are quite attractive on their own merits, but they are all spaced so far apart that there is no real enclosure, and the downtown fabric is quite clearly not as evident in this area as it is in some of the other blocks. Block Ten consists of parking lots and isolated buildings, one of which is set back significantly from the sidewalk, and it received an evaluation slightly lower than the eighth block.

Of the case study downtowns, Le Village achieved the poorest assessment, primarily because of the relatively low diversity in façade design in this downtown and the large incidence of non-Main Street type buildings, such as single-detached houses. Le Village was evaluated from west to east and north to south along Montreal Road (see Appendix E), and the blocks were numbered with the odd numbers on the north side of the road. The first and third blocks were rated similarly, in the average range. The first block, between Marlborough Street and Lawrence Avenue, consists of only four buildings, mostly modern in architecture and with few entrances. The second block in Le Village was assessed as poor. It is somewhat smaller than Block One, spanning only the space between Marlborough Street and Albert Street, and is dominated by a vacant lot, partly used for parking, adjacent to a single low-rise building with a very plain façade and a single public entrance. Additional consideration was given to this block because it forms half of the western gateway to Le Village, and it simply lacks any compelling visual character. The third block includes a large parking lot, and a single-detached house in addition to various small commercial buildings, including the Port Theatre which will be discussed in further detail below. The fourth block, between Albert Street and Arthur Street, was given a relatively good assessment given that it is composed of an almost unbroken row of low-rise, mixed use buildings with a wide variety of façade treatments. At one point the street wall is broken to accommodate a
small parking lot, but it is largely shielded from view by adjacent buildings and the curvature of the street.

The fifth and seventh block segments are part of the long block which stretches from Baldwin Avenue to McConnell Avenue (see above). Block Five is made up of two distinct segments, the first includes small, simply designed commercial establishments and single detached houses, and the second is a historic church set back from the street on a landscaped lawn. Block Six was considered very poor given that it is dominated by a ten-storey apartment complex, with a setback, as well as two other unattached, single-storey commercial buildings. The negative visual impact of the apartment complex is slightly mitigated by the inclusion of a large mural on its street-facing, but this element cannot completely compensate for the building’s presence. The seventh block includes a parking lot and some unusual commercial buildings. The fifth and seventh blocks received very poor evaluations because of their inconsistent character, and since the nature of much of these buildings is in conflict with a pedestrian-oriented downtown. Much of Block Eight, which runs from Edward Street to McConnell Avenue, is quite good, with a continuous row of mixed use buildings, however at its east corner is a small coffee shop with a significant setback from the street to accommodate a drive-thru which exits onto a street perpendicular to Montreal Road. The ninth block was given the best evaluation in this downtown despite being dominated by a single three-storey building which fills the space between McConnell Avenue and Prince Arthur Street, because it presents a continuous street
wall with diverse storefronts and a great deal of permeability. Blocks Ten, Twelve and Fourteen are all very similar in that they include some improved façades, but also are composed largely of detached buildings. These three blocks therefore received poor evaluations, given that the negative influence from the detached buildings more than counterbalanced the benefit of the façade improvements. Between Prince Arthur Street and Louisa Street is Block Eleven, which includes a store with barred windows, a parking lot and a pair of single-detached houses. These features conflict very strongly with the area’s downtown feel, and therefore the eleventh block earned the worst assessment in Le Village. Block Thirteen is similarly in conflict with the downtown aesthetic because it also contains a single detached house, and some commercial units are set back from the sidewalk at an oblique angle.

Downtown Cornwall received the best overall evaluation out of the existing downtowns, but only by a small margin. Cornwall’s downtown begins at Fourth Street and Pitt Street (see Appendix F), continuing south to Water Street, with the blocks being assigned even numbers on the east side and odd numbers on the west side. The style and types of buildings do not function especially well as a downtown space in the first block, from Fourth Street to Third Street, which is comprised of institutional buildings set well back from Pitt Street. The second block’s northern half is taken up by one long building which is not oriented towards Pitt Street, while its southern half consists of a number of separated commercial buildings with different styles and façades. The third and fifth blocks, which run from Third Street to First Street, were found to be very good, with their almost continuous street walls broken only by landscaped parkettes on the third block as well as Second Street itself. The buildings in these blocks contribute to a sense of enclosure of the street, and their varied designs and façades create a distinct visual appearance which is consistent with small city downtowns. The fourth block is split by a landscaped driveway which leads to a centre block parking lot. Otherwise, most of the buildings are not set back and they also form an unbroken street wall which ends at a large vacant lot at the corner of Pitt and Second Streets. Although empty, this lot is currently surrounded by hoarding which has been used as a canvas for a large mural, which significantly mitigates the negative impression caused by having a vacant lot at such a significant downtown intersection.
The sixth block is split by two small parkettes, which contributed to its positive assessment. The diversity of façades and two- to three-storey buildings produce a vertical effect which helps to give this block a sense of enclosure when combined with the buildings across the street. The seventh block, which links First Street to Water Street, is similar to the second block, in that it is made up of two separate sections, the northern section includes a number of buildings, separated but still close enough that they can be said to contribute to a street wall, however the southern section is made up of one large building which houses county offices. A portion of this building is set back from Pitt Street and the view from the street is dominated by a cement wall and reflective windows. Finally, the eighth block was considered to be very poor because it is dominated by Cornwall’s downtown mall, Cornwall Square, which was essentially designed for a suburban area prior to its location being set as the city’s downtown. The northern part of the block is composed of a passive parkettes, with grass, benches, trees and a path leading to the mall. The southern half however, is almost a continual wall of brick with little to no setback from the sidewalk. The only entrance to the mall on this wall is sealed and is marked as an emergency exit only. Efforts to improve this block’s effect on the downtown notwithstanding, this block received the poorest evaluation by far in either of Cornwall’s downtowns.
The case study downtowns shared a pattern of inconsistent physical design, driven in part by the development patterns in these cities. The planners from each city also discussed the importance of momentum among business and land owners in the design aspect of downtown revitalization efforts. Unfortunately, in the long term there is a marked decrease in momentum as the number of business owners that have not taken advantage of incentive programs declines, leaving only those that do not have the motivation or resources to take part in façade or design improvement schemes. The buildings owned by these holdouts are conspicuous in the downtowns, and serve as disincentives for other business owners. The impression gained by business owners from the non-participation of their colleagues, is that their own participation in façade improvement programs, for example, is ineffective so long as downtown improvement efforts are not universally adopted.

4.7 – LIKABILITY ANALYSIS

The likability analysis follows a slightly different format than the previous criteria. Following are six criteria considered to be vital to the likability of downtowns. This analysis takes the form of a qualitative discussion for each of the elements, comparing the researcher’s perception of each between the case studies, summarized in Table 4-3. In addition, representative photographs are presented to support the analysis and to substantiate the claims being made.
4.7.1 – Naturalness

The perceived value of greenspace in the case study downtowns is evident in the universal use of natural elements, such as trees and planters in the streetscape. Among the improvements to the streetscape of Downtown Belleville are provisions for increasing the amount of tree cover as well as landscaping along Front Street, particularly at intersections that could be “bumped out” (Guiding Framework) as well as converting some of the parking lot space across from city hall into park space. The existing streetscape in Downtown Belleville is well supplied with trees on both sides of the roadway, provoking a strong sense of natural enclosure when the trees are in full bloom. Its sidewalks are also enhanced with planters filled with seasonal plants, contributing to the literal greening of the streetscape.

Cornwall’s Le Village similarly includes a significant number of trees along its streetscapes. Similar to Downtown Belleville as well, since the trees were an addition that followed the initial development of the right-of-way, there are a number of areas in which the trees encroach into the pedestrian walking space. This is more so the case in Le Village than in Belleville, since the trees are more mature and therefore possess thicker trunks.

Downtown Cornwall also includes trees and planters in the streetscape, much like the other cases studied, and it is also complemented by a number of small parkettes at various points. It is evident then, that each of the downtowns possesses a comparable degree of naturalness in terms of street trees and other plantings. The only current downtowns that supplement these features with green parks or parkettes is Downtown Cornwall, although the DBMP also proposes similar features for Belleville, thus these two cases provide more natural features than the other downtowns.

*Table 4-4: Naturalness*

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<thead>
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<th>DBMP</th>
<th>Downtown Belleville</th>
<th>Le Village</th>
<th>Downtown Cornwall</th>
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4.7.2 – Upkeep/Civilities

The state of repair of streets and buildings, as well as the presence of power lines or overabundance of signs are all components of this category. The DBMP provides little clarification on these particular characteristics, although it does indicate that street signs should be replaced to allow for signage with a more distinctly historical character. Downtown Belleville
is not plagued by an overabundance of street signs, power lines or any other visual clutter in that sense. There are a number of buildings with prominent condition issues, primarily at either end of the downtown, or in other words, at the gateways. This presents a problem in that it creates a negative first impression for visitors arriving in the downtown.

Le Village is, unfortunately, the best example of a poorly maintained downtown as described by Nasar. Montreal Road is lined by power lines along the south side, a large number of redundant street signs can also be seen competing with one another for attention and several buildings are in terrible states of repair, particularly their façades.

Finally, Downtown Cornwall is also oversupplied with street signs and other unnecessary elements crowding the streetscape, such as flagpoles. Very few buildings visible along Pitt Street can be said to be in poor states of repair, on the contrary many of the building façades are evidently new or recently refreshed. It should be noted that this subsection is primarily to emphasize shortcomings in terms of upkeep and civilities, rather than dwelling on the successes in these areas between the downtowns.

Overall, none of the downtowns stands out as an exceptionally good example, however Le Village is clearly a model for why this criterion should not be neglected.

*Table 4-5: Upkeep/civilities*

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<tr>
<th>DBMP</th>
<th>Downtown Belleville</th>
<th>Le Village</th>
<th>Downtown Cornwall</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Le Village, clutter in the streetscape" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Le Village, clutter in the streetscape" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Le Village, poor building condition" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Le Village, poor building condition" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.7.3 – Openness

Openness in this sense refers to view distances, the sense of enclosure and scenic views in the case studies. The DBMP highlights the need to maintain enclosure by setting minimum and maximum building heights, which are comparable to the existing buildings in Belleville’s downtown, typically no more than three or four storeys. As indicated, the buildings and trees in Belleville produce an effective sense of enclosure for most of the downtown, exceptions being where buildings are set back from the road and where parking lots front onto the sidewalk. Interestingly, a free-standing arcade on the side of the street opposite city hall helps to mitigate the openness caused by the presence of a large parking lot. This parking lot, incidentally, also detracts from the view of the Moira River by offering an unattractive foreground to an otherwise attractive vista. The alleyways leading to the waterfront pathway also do not capitalize on their potential because they are simply too narrow to frame views of the river. In terms of view distances along Front Street, these are quite good in that the distances are long enough that one can see most of the length of the street, and there are viewpoints at both the north end (apartment buildings) and south end (city hall’s clock tower) of the street.
The buildings in Le Village are quite low, no more than three storeys, which produces some enclosure which is complemented by the street trees. This enclosure is broken as one travels eastward into the downtown, by a church that is set back far from the road as well as buildings which front the street at an angle. Le Village is largely one straight stretch of road, with a single sharp bend marked by a historically designated building, the Port Theatre. The marquee sign acts as the only noticeable view terminus in the downtown, which otherwise is not enclosed at its extremities. Although built parallel to the St. Lawrence River, there are also very limited viewpoints from which to see the waterway, which is a missed opportunity.

Downtown Cornwall is lined by buildings ranging from two to four storeys, with a few single storey buildings and one relatively high-rise office building. In combination with the street trees, this creates an enclosing effect similar to that in the other case study downtowns. Its north end is not capped in any way, but its southern view shed, which is dominated by a waterfront park, is marked with a historic clock tower that was placed to serve this particular function.

This subcategory is another which has no clearly superior downtown, although it would seem that Downtown Cornwall has the advantage with its consistent enclosure and effective framing of the southern view shed. Downtown Belleville shows signs of efforts to improve the enclosure effect, particularly at the southernmost parking lot across from City Hall, as well as with landscaping at the high-rise apartment buildings in its northern end. Le Village fails to capitalize on its potential, which is why it was assessed as the poorest case study in this regard.
Table 4-6: Openness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DBMP</th>
<th>Downtown Belleville</th>
<th>Le Village</th>
<th>Downtown Cornwall</th>
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<tr>
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4.7.4 – Historical Significance

The heritage aspect of downtowns has already been discussed in this analysis, and it does not bear repeating. Nasar (1998) also discusses, however, the perception of historical buildings in a downtown, and how that characteristic affects the imageability and memorability of a feature such as a prominent landmark. Following this line of reasoning, the major landmarks in each downtown will be assessed according to their apparent historical character. In the DBMP, new landmarks are proposed at the north and south extremities of the downtown, in the form of taller buildings with articulated top floors (Guiding Framework, p.51). The DBMP specifies however, that views of the historic city hall should be preserved and enhanced. Given that the other major landmark in Belleville’s downtown, the pair of high-rise apartment buildings, is not affected by the DBMP, there is little change in terms of historical significance between the DBMP and Downtown Belleville.

In Le Village the most visible landmarks from the street are the historic theatre, which is in poor condition, and a modern high-rise apartment building. Neither of these buildings presents much appreciation for historical character. Contrast this with a potential landmark in the form of a historical church which is well maintained is only visible when standing on the sidewalk in front of it, because it is obstructed by trees.

The most visible landmarks in Downtown Cornwall are a mid-rise office tower with a distinct, if modern appearance, and a non-functional but historic clock tower which has been relocated to the waterfront park. The office building has little historical significance from an imageability perspective, but the clock-tower, which is visible to the south-bound traffic along Pitt Street, previously adorned the community’s post office which was demolished to make room for the mid-rise office building.

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3 In fact, the clock tower itself is a reconstruction which closely mimics the appearance of the original clock tower. The clock itself, however, did previously adorn the post office’s clock tower and is a historical artifact.
The inclusion of the clock tower as a landmark for the downtown in this way demonstrates an explicit recognition of its historic character, much like the deliberate preservation of Belleville’s city hall in the DBMP and in Downtown Belleville today. Thus, while three downtowns distinctly emphasize historically significant landmarks, the other case study, Le Village, falls short in this element.

Table 4-7: Historical Significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DBMP</th>
<th>Downtown Belleville</th>
<th>Le Village</th>
<th>Downtown Cornwall</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

4.7.5 – Order

Order, in this sense, refers to the consistency in the style of buildings, with building elements such as windows and doors being clearly distinguished. In this category, the DBMP differs significantly from Belleville’s existing downtown, in that the plan proposes a consistent building style throughout the downtown, which would be a significant change from present conditions. Building styles in Downtown Belleville vary significantly, even attached buildings can possess façades with significantly different styles. Most of the more historical-styles clearly distinguish the various building elements, whereas buildings with a more modern style tend to mask doors by blending them with windows, or in one prominent case, mask windows by surrounding them with a dark aluminum façade.
In Le Village, most of the modern buildings possess easily identifiable building elements, averting a shortcoming present in Belleville’s downtown. Most of the buildings in Le Village display a modern type of architecture with little detailing, and yet, especially at the west end, the styles of buildings are markedly different relative to one another.

The dominant building styles in Downtown Cornwall however are clearly more historical, predating the Second World War for the most part. There are of course some more modern additions, but by and large new buildings are treated with façades which complement, rather than mimic, the existing building styles. Similarly, there are very few instances where building elements could be confused with one another, or hidden altogether by the style of buildings.

In this category then, the DBMP stands out as having the most apparent consistency of building styles, followed closely by Downtown Cornwall. Both Downtown Belleville and Le Village display a dominant, but inconsistent, modern style of building. In Belleville, the details on these buildings are poorly emphasized, whereas in Le Village there are a wide variety of modern building styles, many of which possess few detailing elements, resulting in an average to poor assessment for these latter two cases.

*Table 4-8: Order*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DBMP</th>
<th>Downtown Belleville</th>
<th>Le Village</th>
<th>Downtown Cornwall</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
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<td>![Symbol]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 - 25
4.7.6 – Complexity

Diversity within building styles is the subject of this final subsection on likability. Internal diversity is of course dependent on there being a noticeably consistent building style in the case study downtowns, as discussed above. The DBMP promoted the most consistent style of architecture of the case study downtowns, recommending that buildings display similar building elements, such as grouping windows, doors, rooflines, etc. into similar horizontal bands on the streetscape. While this is an effective means of providing guidelines for building design, it cannot adequately show how a building could be distinct in appearance from the guideline while still falling with the design parameters. In the case of Downtown Belleville, there is limited variation within the types of styles present. This is particularly the case with the historical buildings, which include a number of distinct styles that clearly stand out from the typical image of historical downtown buildings.

Internal diversity is also evident in Le Village, which includes a wide variety of modern buildings which, although superficially similar, actually display diverse styles. Downtown Cornwall is also fortunate to represent a fairly wide range in the types of historical building styles present, including a diverse mix of limestone and brick construction. Even the modern buildings in Downtown Cornwall are noticeably different from each other, for the most part, making this perhaps the best example of Nasar’s conception of “complexity” among the case studies.
Table 4-9: Complexity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DBMP</th>
<th>Downtown Belleville</th>
<th>Le Village</th>
<th>Downtown Cornwall</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☰</td>
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</table>

4.7.7 – Implications of Likability Analysis

A likability analysis such as the one described above can serve as a proxy for a detailed, and lengthy, Lynchian process of deriving cognitive maps from residents. What can be seen summarized in Table 4-3 is that Downtown Cornwall surpasses the other case studies in its treatment of qualities that are widely representative of popular preferences in downtowns (Nasar, 1998 p.62). Conversely, Le Village appears to fall far short in comparison to the other case studies, meaning that it will require a greater effort to be brought up to the same level as the most appealing downtown. This analysis can also be beneficial in directing revitalization programs by highlighting which aspects of the case study downtowns are in greater need of revitalization.

Further, the planners for the case study downtowns each referred to the cities’ lack of enforceable and comprehensive design guidelines for their downtowns. The design controls that they are able to exercise are limited by dated Zoning By-Laws and a very limited amount of site plan control in Cornwall, where non-binding suggestions can be made to developers. This inability to enforce design guidelines is a significant impairment to the implementation of revitalization efforts and to improving the likability of these downtowns. The case study cities are also reluctant to force participation from business owners, for fear of driving away significant tenants. Private sector involvement is critical to the successful revitalization of the downtown, and the planners discussed that the success of these programs was highly dependent on consensus-building. Likability analyses, such as this one, can contribute to revitalization efforts by helping to develop a consensus as to the features of a downtown which a community wishes to maintain as well as those issues which it would like to see addressed. The features identified in the likability analysis can then be further developed through binding design guidelines and incorporated in the comprehensive plans for the case study downtowns.
Each of the sub-sections above required a separate analysis tool, and it is evident that there is significant overlap between the different tools. For example, building form is the primary component of the design guidelines analysis, and it is significant as well to the pedestrian-friendliness of a downtown as well as to its likability. This overlap highlights the need for a single, comprehensive tool for evaluating downtown urban design. Further, most of the tools are calibrated to evaluate other types of downtown. For example, the design guideline assessment mechanism is oriented towards downtowns in northern European cities, while the walkability survey broadly covers almost any urban or suburban environment, without necessarily addressing the nuances of different urban transects.

A significant shortcoming of this report is that the analysis was undertaken during the month of January, on cold days with varying degrees of cloud cover, although fortunately without snowfall. The weather conditions were exacerbated by seasonal road maintenance such as road salt and sand, which masks attractive paving features such as interlocking brick patterns, as well as coating much of the sidewalks with a great deal of dirt. At this time of year, it is also common for downtowns to remove amenities such as benches and to reduce the number of garbage cans, which can adversely affect counts of these types of street elements. In this case, the researcher chose to ignore the absence of benches and garbage bins during the pedestrian-friendliness survey for this reason.
4.9 – SUMMARY

The multiple methods employed to conduct this analysis have succeeded in highlighting many of the strengths and weaknesses present in the designs of the four case study downtowns. In addition, it is possible to rank them, roughly, in comparison to one another according to each of the design criteria described, as can be seen on the following table. The final rankings in this table show that the DBMP would produce the best downtown if its recommendations were all implemented. The primacy of the DBMP could be expected given that it was selected in part because of it is an award-winning example which can serve as a benchmark for the other downtowns. The runner up was Downtown Cornwall, followed closely by Downtown Belleville while Le Village received the poorest evaluation.

Table 4-11: Comparison of Case Study Downtowns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>DBMP</th>
<th>Downtown Belleville</th>
<th>Le Village</th>
<th>Downtown Cornwall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan/Vision for Downtown</td>
<td>★★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Heritage</td>
<td>★★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterfront Linkage</td>
<td>★★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Friendliness</td>
<td>★★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Design</td>
<td>★★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likability</td>
<td>★★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>★★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS & DISCUSSION

5.1 – INTRODUCTION

The aim of the previous chapter was to evaluate the physical design of four small city downtowns in Ontario, based on their treatment of six principles derived from the literature, primarily from the work of Kent Robertson. The analysis made use of several evaluation tools to compare the design of the case studies according to Robertson’s principles. It is evident that the evaluation methodology favours the Downtown Belleville Master Plan (DBMP) as the best downtown design among the case studies assessed. Downtown Cornwall and Downtown Belleville were found to be very similar, although Downtown Cornwall achieved a higher ranking because it received more “Very Good” assessments than Downtown Belleville. Le Village received the lowest overall ranking, with the most “Very Poor” assessments.

This chapter explores the results of the analysis, highlighting the areas in which each downtown would benefit most from a concerted improvement effort. This discussion highlights the themes which arose during interviews with senior planners from the case study cities, and their implications for the revitalization of the case study downtowns. Recommendations will be presented for each downtown, targeting the aspects which are in the greatest need of improvement. The implementation of recommendations is left up to the respective downtowns, however some strategies are raised and discussed briefly. Finally, this chapter concludes with an examination of the limitations to this report’s methodology and suggestions for future research.

5.2 – DISCUSSION

5.2.1 Discussion

The DBMP was expected to be the leader among the case studies, given that it has been recognized as an exemplar of downtown planning by the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP). As anticipated, the DBMP was given the highest rank of the four case study downtowns, which suggests that it can be used as a general benchmark against which to contrast the other case studies.

Downtown Belleville was found to excel in terms of its recognition of built heritage and waterfront linkages, but its pedestrian friendliness was lacking, as was its implementation of any sort of plan or vision prior to the DBMP. Belleville’s planner indicated that this was a result of the fact that the plan had not yet been adopted by city council, which meant that while ideas from the DBMP could inform policy-making, the Plan cannot officially be used as a framework by staff when developing policies for the downtown (Belleville Planner, personal communication).
The waterfront linkages were identified by the planner as a major criticism of Downtown Belleville, referring to the narrow alleyways linking the street to the waterfront pathway. The planner’s observation is no doubt a qualitative assessment, which agrees with this report’s analysis in that the linkages are not necessarily being capitalized upon.

Le Village received the poorest assessment in the greatest number of categories, including its waterfront linkage, the overall physical design of the existing buildings, and its likability. Perhaps the most notable drawback in terms of the likability of Le Village is that it did not excel in any one area, while its physical design is held back by the area’s inclusion of several blocks composed of buildings which do not meet the typical appearance standards of downtown Main Streets.

Downtown Cornwall showed itself as being a relatively good example of downtown design, receiving the poorest evaluation for its recognition of downtown heritage, but excelling in its likability, vision and physical design. Downtown Cornwall was therefore ranked above Downtown Belleville, but it is important to note that the two downtowns are very close to one another in this ranking.

5.2.2 Lessons Learned

The lessons learned from this report can be divided into two categories, those pertaining to the design of the case study downtowns, and those relating to the methodology, which is discussed further below. Ideally, each case study will be able to apply the findings of this study to better identify the areas in which the downtowns are excelling, and those in which they require more improvement. This in turn will contribute to the downtown revitalization efforts of the case study cities.

5.2.3 Implications

The successful revitalization of small city downtowns is typically driven by collaborative efforts between city staff, political leaders, and local business and land owners (Burayidi, 2001). The senior planners from Cornwall and Belleville each emphasized the difficulties their downtowns face in the implementation of revitalization strategies, resulting from the poor cohesion between these parties. Both planners also identified the long term problems they face as a result of diminishing returns among local business and land owners. In each of the existing case study downtowns, financial incentives were eagerly embraced early on by a small number of business owners. Over the course of several years, all of the business owners that had the resources or intention of contributing to downtown improvement had invested what they could to
that end, leaving only those businesses without the resources or motivation to improve their downtown presence. The Belleville planner described this as the problem of “having a carrot but no stick”, referring to the limitation of these cities’ dependence on incentive programs without enforceable built-form regulations. This is not to say that ongoing efforts by organizations such as Cornwall’s Heart of the City (HOTC), or Belleville’s Downtown Task Force (DTF) are doomed to failure. The HOTC is striving to build consensus among local business owners and the city to reduce the impact of those landowners who do not contribute to revitalization efforts, and it is evident that they have a longer way to go in Le Village than in the Downtown. The areas of improvement identified by the analysis are largely a result of the shortcomings of incentive programs which are not supported by regulation. However, Emily Talen (1996) argues that while shortcomings in the uptake of planning policies are often considered to be a failing of community involvement, they can also be caused by inadequate policy, which is at least partly supported by the analysis presented in this report. Gordon (1997) further discusses the risks of insufficient follow-through of long-term redevelopment projects and the realities of changing urban political climates. Thus, the successful revitalization of the case study downtowns in the long term will require flexibility in the financial programs made available to business owners, as well as the continued strengthening of political relationships between the major stakeholders.

The Official Plan of a city is intended to provide guidance for that city’s development, and it is one of several tools which contribute to downtown improvement strategies. Other common tools include Community Improvement Plans (CIPs), Business Improvement Areas/Associations (BIAs), urban design guidelines, Site Plan Control, heritage designation, and even detailed Zoning By-Laws. In the case of Belleville and Cornwall, the OP’s indicate the city’s intentions to conserve heritage buildings and improve design, and describe some passive actions which can be carried out with respect to improving the physical design of their downtowns. In both cities, the soft language of the OPs has forced BIAs to take the initiative and push their respective municipalities to develop CIPs. These CIPs in turn provide more financial and conceptual resources for downtown landowners to contribute to downtown improvement. Neither city has yet developed detailed and enforceable urban design guidelines, although they both exercise some degree of Site Plan Control to discourage unsympathetic development, with varied degrees of success. It is also evident that Belleville has taken a more proactive role than Cornwall in terms of seeking out and designating heritage buildings in its historic downtown. Cornwall may be at a disadvantage in this regard because it has lost numerous historic buildings
to fire and misguided urban renewal strategies of the past, although this does not wholly justify
the misapplication of heritage policies. Further, both Belleville and Cornwall are saddled with
dated Zoning By-Laws which fail to capitalize on the ability of this type of regulation to
influence and regulate built form. Zoning By-Laws may not have authority to regulate building
design, but they can be used to fully describe appropriate building envelopes, and this is a critical
way in which zoning can benefit downtown improvement.

5.3 – RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 Downtown Belleville Master Plan

The only area identified as needing improvement for the DBMP is its likability, and more
particularly its treatment of upkeep, openness and the complexity of its physical design. In terms
of upkeep, the DBMP simply fails to discuss the need to repair buildings, beyond façade
improvement, in Belleville’s downtown which are in states of disrepair. The treatment of
openness in the DBMP represents an improvement over the current downtown in that it fills gaps
created by parking lots, but instead of capitalizing on spaces such as the parking lot across from
City Hall to frame its connection to the waterfront, for example, the DBMP proposes new
construction. The DBMP’s promotion of a single building style is considered a fairly negative
feature according to Nasar’s likability criteria, since it takes away from the diversity of the
downtown. In light of these drawbacks, the recommendations for the improvement of the DBMP
are:

1) To update and formally adopt the DBMP, since it has not yet been adopted by the
City of Belleville. Belleville could also choose to only adopt certain sections of the
DBMP, such as those pertaining only to the area of Downtown Belleville identified
therein as “The Village”.

2) To describe incentives for the physical improvement of the publicly visible exterior of
buildings.

3) To consider alternatives to new buildings construction on the parking lot across from
City Hall, to capitalize on this unique opportunity to create an attractive downtown
open space.

4) To describe a wider variety of building styles in the downtown, representative of the
varied heritage-designated styles which are currently extant.

5) To establish flexible, but enforceable design guidelines for the downtown and to
support implementation with financial incentives.
5.3.2 Downtown Belleville

Downtown Belleville received poor assessments for its implementation, to date, of the vision described in the DBMP as well as for its pedestrian-friendliness, while it displayed average conditions for its physical design and likability. In terms of the physical design of Belleville’s downtown, the evaluation found that the area suffered as a result of the relatively poor appearance of four blocks, which would benefit from a greater degree of focused attention. Downtown Belleville received a very poor assessment to its complexity of form, which negatively affected its performance in the likability analysis. Concentrated efforts at improving these shortcomings with the following recommendations would have a positive influence on Downtown Belleville:

1) To adopt the sections of the DBMP which are relevant to the area of Downtown Belleville identified in this report, including the recommended amendments to the DBMP listed above.
2) To ensure that design guidelines prioritize the elements of historical architecture present in Downtown Belleville, and perhaps revitalize styles that are at risk of being eliminated. For example, the Belleville planner indicated that a distinct arched window style, with two panes over two panes, which is being replaced with a more contemporary aesthetic.
3) To explore policies that would facilitate the replacement of less visually-appealing façades, such as those composed of aluminum siding, with façades that better complement Downtown Belleville’s heritage.
4) To update the Zoning By-Law to include more detailed descriptions of the building envelope permissible in Downtown Belleville, in particular to prevent the development of more high-rise residential buildings.
5) To make its Official Plan and Zoning By-Law available to the public at no cost, such as by posting these important documents to the city’s website. Improving the accessibility of these documents fosters a more informed population of residents and downtown landowners as to the city’s short- and long-term objectives for Downtown Belleville.

5.3.3 Le Village

Unfortunately, Le Village received the poorest assessment in several areas, primarily its waterfront linkage, physical design and its likability. The waterfront linkage is severely impeded
by the development south of this downtown, a fact highlighted by Cornwall’s planner, as well as Montreal Road’s distance from the waterfront. It is possible, however, that improvements to the streets connecting Le Village and the waterfront will improve the linkage. The physical design of Le Village is most likely the greatest hurdle for this downtown to overcome, given that an overwhelming majority of the blocks in this downtown were given assessments of “average” or poorer. Improvements to the design of Le Village would certainly improve its likability, although recommendations for specific elements of likability are included here as well:

1) To include the streets connecting Le Village and the waterfront in any design improvement program, so as to maintain the connection between this downtown and the extensive waterfront trail in Cornwall.

2) To establish enforceable design guidelines which would provide a mechanism by which the design of the downtown would gradually improve over time as buildings are replaced. These guidelines should be appropriate to Le Village and should be drafted and included with the plans for this downtown.

3) To remove unnecessary and cluttering streetscape elements, such as power lines and redundant street signs.

4) To clearly and consistently express the vision and plans for Le Village in an official document prepared by local business owners and the city. This document could include a similar comprehensive master plan for Downtown Cornwall, so that all of the city’s downtown plans and guidelines would be compiled into a single document.

5) To update the Zoning By-Law to include more detailed descriptions of the building envelope permissible in Le Village, particularly in order to prevent the development of parking lots adjacent to Montreal Road.

6) To explore the architectural history of Le Village in order to identify characteristics which were typical of buildings in this downtown, and to incorporate these elements into design guidelines.

5.3.4 Downtown Cornwall

The findings indicate that Downtown Cornwall is lagging behind the other case studies primarily in terms of its recognition of the existing heritage features. Notwithstanding the loss of a significant portion of the downtown’s heritage architecture to fire, many of the remaining buildings in Downtown Cornwall possess a historical character that are complemented by
improved façades on newer buildings. This report makes two recommendations to the City of Cornwall regarding Downtown Cornwall:

1) To establish a set of design guidelines which reflect the varied historical periods present in Downtown Cornwall. This would not prevent new developments from having fresh and unique designs, but it would give the city greater power to ensure that new buildings would complement the existing built form of the downtown.

2) The plan and vision for Downtown Cornwall are expressed in numerous documents which have been developed over the past ten years. The city and local BIAs and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should compile all of these previous efforts into a single, comprehensive master plan for Downtown Cornwall and Le Village, which would trim the elements of previous plans which are deemed inappropriate as well as providing an opportunity to update those plans to reflect the progress in the downtown.

3) To update the Zoning By-Law to include more detailed descriptions of the building envelope permissible in Downtown Cornwall, particularly in order to prevent the development of parking lots adjacent to Pitt Street.

4) To examine the feasibility of obtaining heritage designation for more buildings in Downtown Cornwall, or possibly even establishing the lower end of Pitt Street as a heritage district, in order to celebrate the built heritage of this area and to further discourage the development of unsympathetic features or building styles.

5.4 – LIMITATIONS

5.4.1 Limitations

The limited literature in the area of small city downtown design represents a gap in the urban design literature. Kent Robertson’s research provides a valuable guiding framework for small cities, but it has not yet been thoroughly challenged, resulting in the underrepresentation of different perspectives in this field. Regardless of its shortcomings, it offered a framework for this report, and thus both its strengths and weaknesses are reflected by this research.

A significant drawback to the methodology of this report is its usage of a number of different design assessment tools, which was necessary due to the absence of a comprehensive tool for the evaluation of downtown urban design. These tools specifically included the PEDS walkability tool and Jan Gehl’s physical design assessment scheme. Jack Nasar’s likability surveys heavily influenced the likability assessment employed in this report, which sought to
convert his survey method into a visual evaluation tool usable by an independent researcher. The tools employed were not intended by their developers to be used together, and overlapped in their consideration of certain aspects of downtown design, such as heritage and architectural elements, while neglecting other components of Robertson’s principles such as waterfront linkages.

Finally, the absence of tools specifically intended for the evaluation of heritage recognition and waterfront linkages is problematic. The researcher attempted to employ simple methods to assess these components of downtown design, by examining the number of heritage buildings and considering the physical condition of waterfront connections, respectively. Both of these assessment tools were ad hoc, and although described in detail, their remain to be critiqued by experts in the field of urban design.

5.4.2 Suggested Method Improvements

The design assessment tools used throughout this report were not calibrated for small city downtowns in Canada. Gehl’s design evaluation tool, for example, is geared towards downtowns in European cities. Gehl’s qualitative assessment tool is effective but should be calibrated to downtowns for cities of different size and in different regions to accommodate variations in built form preference.

The PEDS walkability tool rates pedestrian-friendliness in areas that are primarily residential and suburban. Calibrating the PEDS tool for downtown analysis would require some reformattting of existing sections to better represent urban downtowns. For example, “Section A: Environment” includes a breakdown of the different land uses in a given segment and presents some detail for residential types, but provides very little detail for the primarily commercial and office environment of the downtown.

The likability tool based on Nasar’s research provided the most effective means of examining the design of the case study downtowns, and would therefore provide an excellent foundation for a comprehensive design evaluation tool for small city downtowns. The six core principles of likability\(^4\) overlap somewhat with Robertson’s criteria\(^5\) for successful downtowns, particularly with respect to heritage and physical design.

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\(^4\) Naturalness, Upkeep/civilities, Openness, Historical significance, Order, Complexity

\(^5\) Plan/Vision, Heritage, Waterfront linkage, Pedestrian friendliness, Physical design, Overall appeal/Likability
5.5 – DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There exists a gap in the literature with respect to the design assessment of small city downtowns in North America, and especially in Canada. The development of an effective and comprehensive tool for qualitative design assessment would provide a useful means for small municipalities in the process of developing downtown revitalization programs to identify the areas of their downtowns that are most in need of improvement. Such a tool would also include a wide array of recommended courses of action for addressing the identified problems. This toolkit should also be a living document growing as it is used. Communities could contribute to it by including their custom-tailored revitalization strategies as well as the unique problems that they faced with their downtowns. In this way, a small city downtown design assessment tool could be adapted to address the wide array of issues faced by downtowns throughout North America and Canada.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: DOWNTOWN BELLEVILLE STUDY AREA
APPENDIX B: LE VILLAGE STUDY AREA
APPENDIX C: DOWNTOWN CORNWALL STUDY AREA
## APPENDIX D: DOWNTOWN BELLEVILLE PHYSICAL DESIGN EVALUATION

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