



CITY OF ST. ALBERT ADMINISTRATIVE BACKGROUNDER

TITLE: DOWNTOWN VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY RESULTS

Downtown Visual Preference Survey Results - Public

The Downtown Visual Preference Survey was conducted by the Planning Branch through the City website between July 1 and July 31, 2016. We received 414 responses from the public - a high response rate indicating a strong interest to participate in the implementation of the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan (DARP).

Survey results provide an opportunity to derive important themes and conclusions that will be used to inform the Downtown Redevelopment Implementation Strategy and Downtown Parking Strategy, currently underway.

Report Date: September 26, 2016
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Council Planning Advisory Notice

Developer: n/a

Consultant: n/a

Address: n/a

Project description	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Attachment
<p>Downtown Visual Preference Survey Results - Public</p> <p>The Downtown Visual Preference Survey was conducted by the Planning Branch through the City website between July 1 and July 31, 2016. We received 414 responses from the public - a high response rate indicating a strong interest to participate in the implementation of the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan (DARP). An identical survey was also conducted separately for internal city staff, which received 57 responses.</p> <p><i>Purpose</i></p> <p>The intent of the survey was to gather quantitative and qualitative data to better understand how different types of urban spaces are perceived and to prioritize elements of a successful Downtown. The results of the survey will inform the Downtown Redevelopment Implementation Strategy and Downtown Parking Strategy.</p> <p><i>Methodology and Select Public Results</i></p> <p>Respondents were asked to state how they use Downtown most (work, resident, business owner, frequent visitor, etc.). The majority of respondents frequently or occasionally visit Downtown.</p> <p>Respondents were also asked to prioritize 7 different outcomes the revitalization of the Downtown aims to achieve.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The top priorities for respondents were: “having things to do downtown” and “supporting local businesses”. • Close behind were “walkability” and “Public Spaces”. • Surprisingly, “short and long term parking solutions” and “improving the tax base” were the lowest priorities for respondents. <p>Respondents were then asked to rate a series of images showcasing different examples of urban spaces on a scale of 3 to -3, with 3 being the most appealing and -3 being the least. Images were grouped into different categories: building styles, parking options, streetscapes, and public spaces. Some of the images included local examples from nearby municipalities, while others illustrated international examples of innovative and trendsetting urban</p>	

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spaces. This section of the survey provided opportunity to derive important themes and conclusions from the results. A complete look at the survey results are provided as Attachment 1.

Expected Project Timelines	Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The survey is now complete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey results will inform the Downtown Redevelopment Implementation Strategy and the Downtown Parking Strategy that will be presented to Council in Q4, 2016.

Key messages for public	
<p>The Downtown Visual Preference Survey was a success with 414 responses from the public. Responses identified priorities and preferences for our revitalizing Downtown neighbourhood. Survey results provided opportunity to derive important themes and conclusions that will be used to inform the Downtown Redevelopment Implementation Strategy and Downtown Parking Strategy, currently underway.</p>	
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ATTACHMENT 1 – VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY RESULTS

Respondents were asked to rate examples of Downtown spaces. While these ratings were objective in nature, there are some relevant observations that can be made from the aggregated data.

Observations are listed in the table below. The average weighted values of the subject are shown in **green** for an appealing rating or **red** for non-appealing.

The average weighted values were determined by calculating the frequency of each rating selection (-3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3) and averaging these totals.

Urban Form/Style	Appealing (High rating)	Not Appealing (Low rating)
Building Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Storey buildings (1.92) 6 Storey buildings (1.52) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-rises; over 10 stories (-1.52, -0.54) One storey retail (-0.71)
Building Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contemporary, mixed-use buildings (brick, glass, pitched roof, stone features) (1.73, 1.00) Traditional, mixed-use buildings (colourful/contrasting facades, decorative entrances/windows) (1.89, 1.73) Multi-level buildings with setbacks between levels (1.39, 0.67) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modern buildings, (steel, glass, uniform panels, modular design) (-0.19, -0.11)
Public Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spaces with a balance of green and paved elements (1.56, 0.86) Spaces which provided opportunity for recreational activities and active transportation (cycling, running, etc.) (1.56), opposed to spaces that simply provided seating. (0.48) The spray park (0.95) and skating rink (1.62) Winter activities and public art (0.91) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public spaces that were mostly or entirely paved (-0.33)
Landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Images with street trees (2.02, 1.03) The high-rise with street trees, received a substantially higher rating than the low-rise (3 storeys) without street trees Medians with landscaping received a very high rating (1.43) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Images without street trees along the boulevards (-0.78, -1.85)

Streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian-only streets without vehicular access (2.19, 2.10) or limited access (0.94) • Streets with a defined separation (landscaped boulevard) between cyclists and cars (1.57) • Narrow streets were slightly preferred over wide streets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streets with cycling lanes on the public roadway(-0.68)
Parking Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking lots with high quality landscaping received the highest rating (2.15) • Smaller integrated parking lots (1.04) were preferred over large surface lots (0.06) (However, note: the survey was based on aesthetics, not function or capacity) • Modern parking garages with a high standard in architecture (1.22), including those built into a mixed use façade (0.87) • Parallel parking (0.67) verses angled parking (0.64)received very similar ratings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpaved parking lots without adequate drainage (-2.31) •

Additional Note: While high-rises received very low ratings, the street view perspective of a three story podium (bottom floors of a high-rise), with a setback tower on top that is not visible from the street view, received an exceptionally high score. (Image 16B – 1.38)

Visual Preference Rating Images and Results

The average weighted values for each image are listed in the white boxes. The public survey results are presented in the larger box in green or red, while the internal results are listed in the smaller box in black.

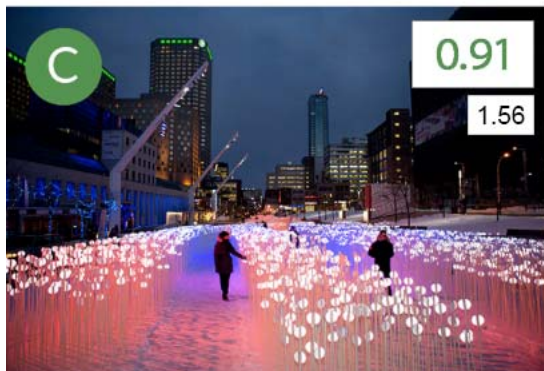
Building Height



Public Space 1



Public Space 2



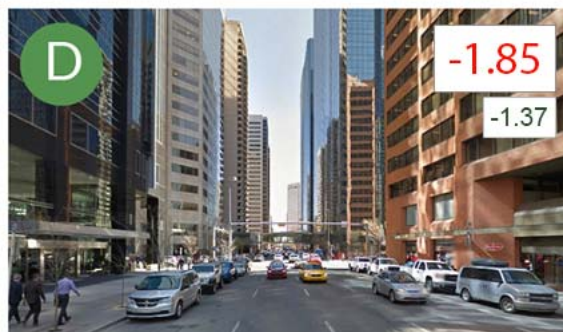
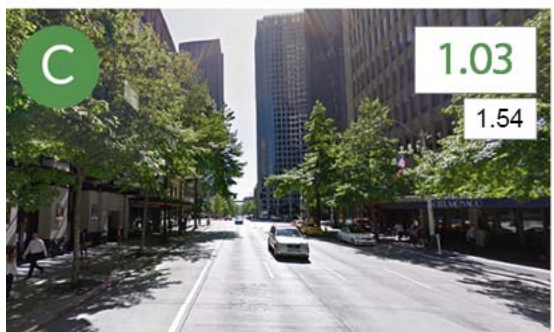
Building Style 1



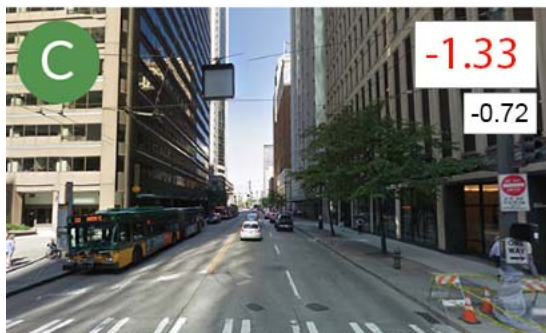
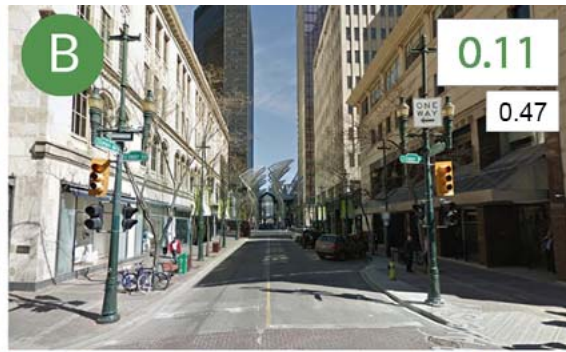
Building Style 2



Streetscape 1



Streetscape 2



Integrated Street



Parking Options 1



Parking Options 2



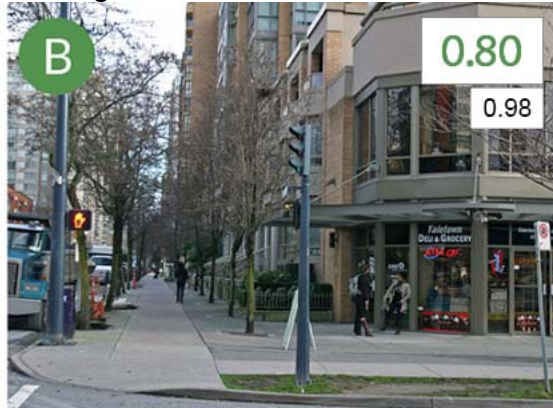
Parking Options (Street)



Streetscape Design

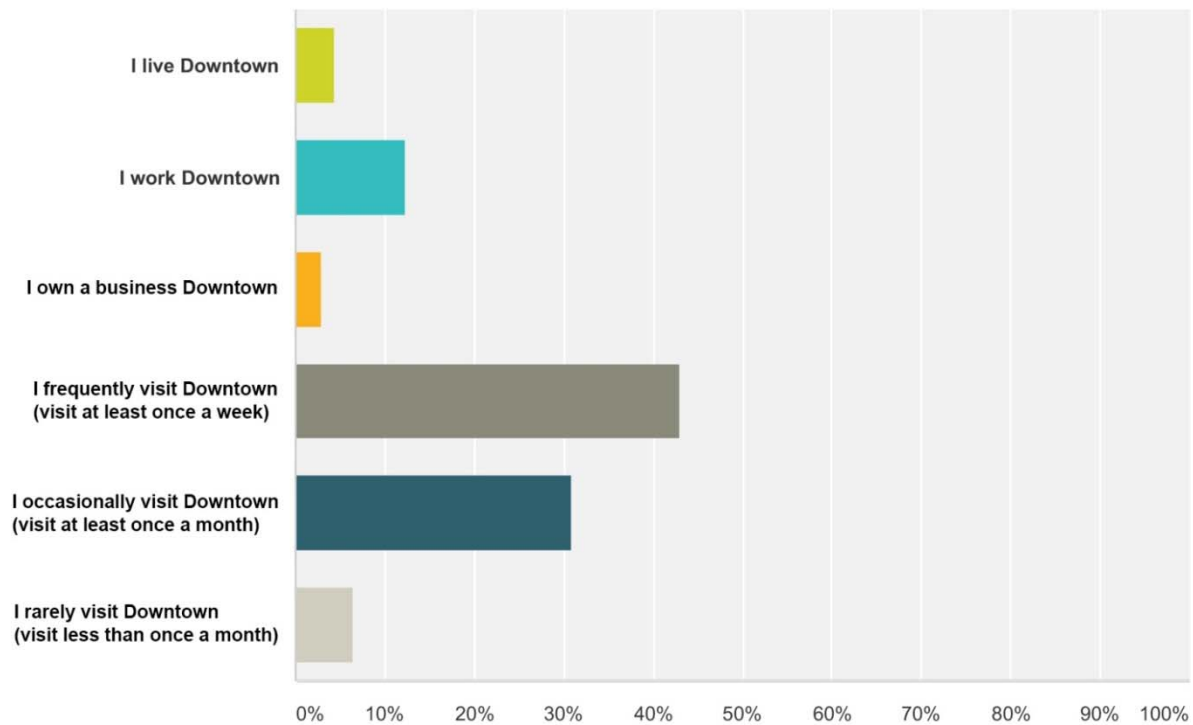


Mixed-use Commercial and Residential Buildings

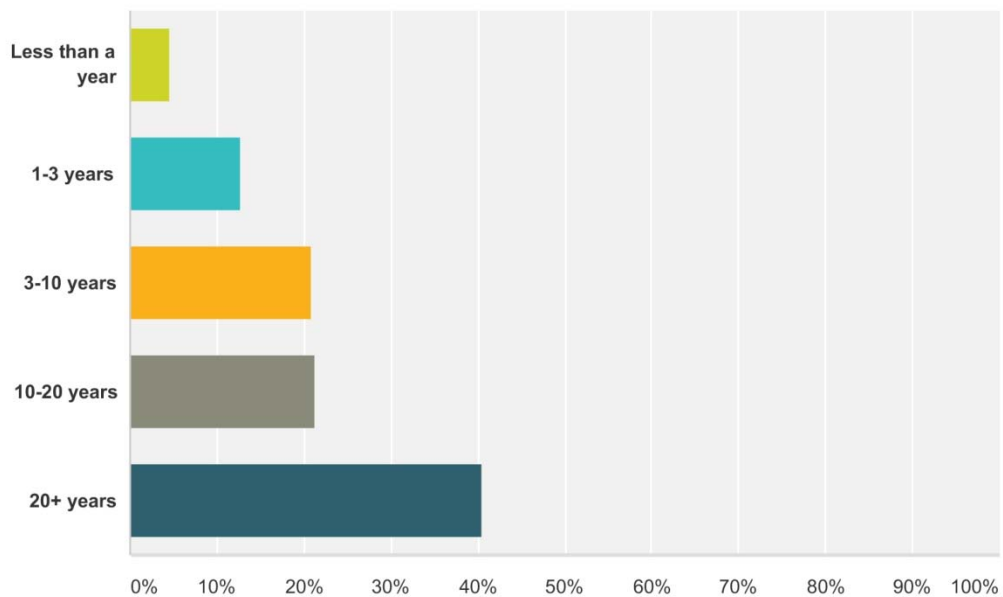


Visual Preference Survey - Public

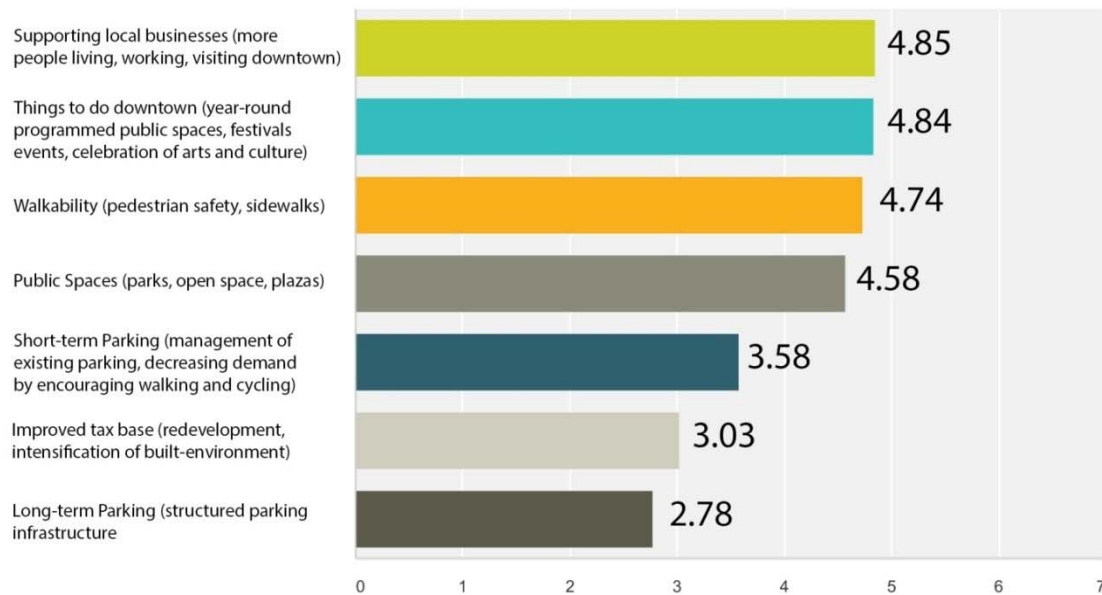
Which of the following best describes you?



How long have you lived in St. Albert?



*Please rate the Redevelopment Principle.
(A higher total indicates a greater importance)*



Visual Preference Survey – Internal Results

In addition to the public Visual Preference Survey, an internal survey was concurrently performed, which received 57 responses. The internal survey was identical to the public survey, except for the addition of a question confirming the specific department the respondent belongs to.

A comparison of the public and internal survey results indicates that City staff share a very similar visual preference as the general public. The data revealed that there were no polarizing differences between preferences, and in almost every case, what was believed to be appealing to the public was also appealing to City staff. The importance of different redevelopment elements was also similar, with only one significant difference being that City staff felt that long-term parking solutions were more important than the public did (see list below). The similarities in these responses suggests a mutual understanding of what types of urban development are considered visually appealing, which may be valuable when exploring some of the sensitivities relating to Downtown development in the future.

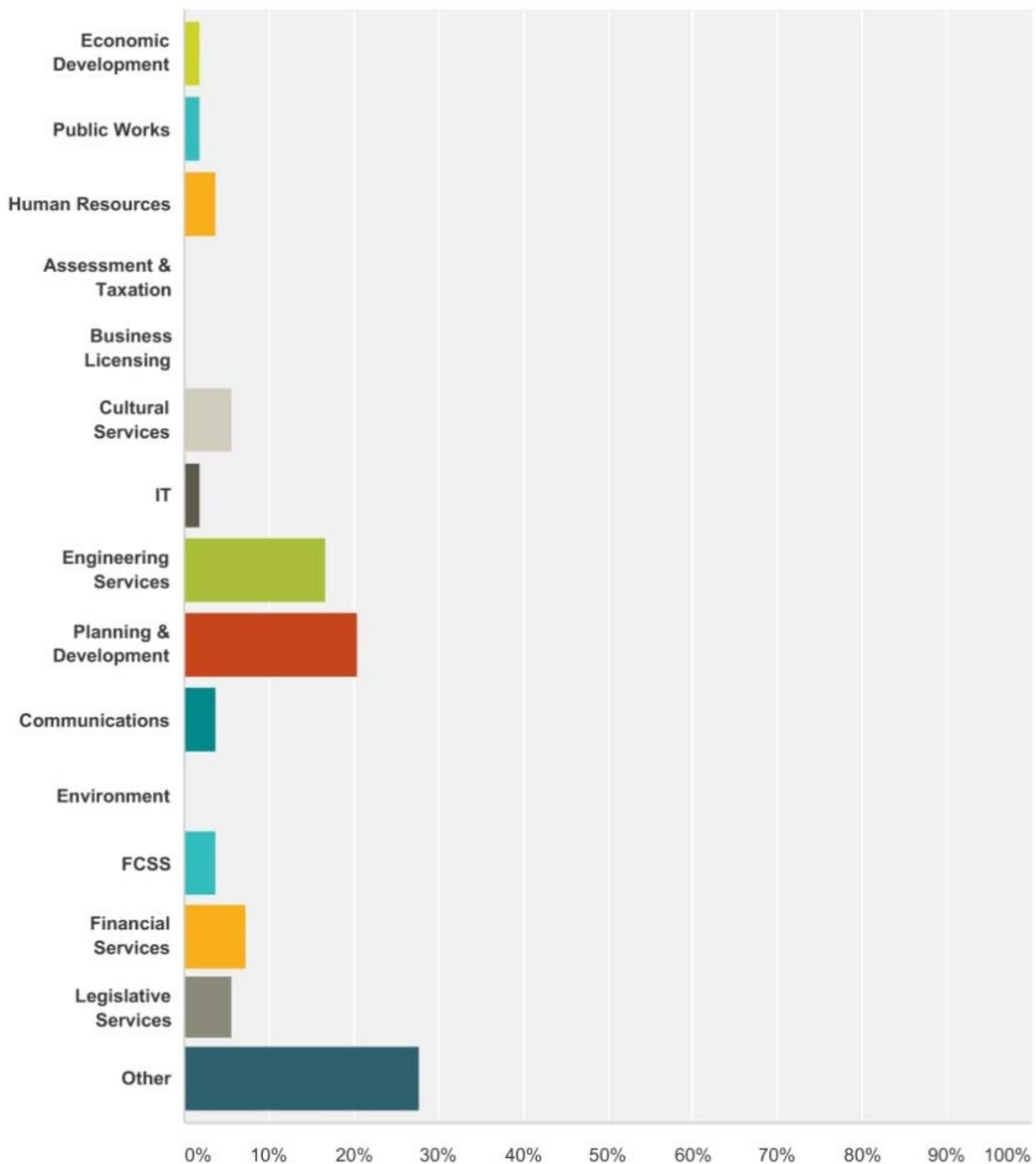
When comparing the internal survey results to the public, the differences revealed that City staff:

- Are slightly more favourable towards
 - high-rise development
 - one-storey retail development
- Put greater importance on long-term (structured) parking solutions

Note: These findings are not representative of the professional opinions of Administration, but simply observations made based on the comparative results between respondents to the public survey and respondents to the internal survey.

Visual Preference Survey – Internal Results

What department do you work for?



*Please rate the Redevelopment Principles
(A higher total indicates a greater importance)*

