

CONVERSATION STARTER: COMMERCIAL LAND USE



BACKGROUND

A wide array of commercial businesses are located within Kamloops, serving the needs of local residents as well as tourists. The City has seen expansion of various commercial nodes over time. In the late 1990's, the Southwest Sector of the city evolved rapidly into a regional shopping centre and saw the City's first big box retailers. Shoppers from throughout the Thompson-Nicola Regional District and the South Cariboo travel to Kamloops for their shopping needs.

There are three major Town Centres within the City: City Centre, North Shore Town Centre, and Tranquille Commercial District. Each town centre functions as a high activity, high density, major focal point for the City and includes opportunities to live, work, and play within the centre.

CURRENT TRENDS

- Continued expansion and redevelopment of the Southwest sector.
- Vacancy rates slightly higher than past years (5.85% at third quarter of 2013)
- Labour force in Kamloops dependent on commercial and industrial
- Growth of internet based businesses that do not need commercial lands to operate
- Growth and investment in local independent businesses
- Big box stores on arterial highways encouraging reliance on cars
- Mobile licenses and technology allow businesses to work from home or on the go

WHAT DOES KAMPLAN 2004 SAY?

- Encourage efficient utilization of existing lands and infrastructure prior to outward expansion
- Encourage a high standard of development to enhance the urban environment
- Establish an orderly framework for guiding commercial activity
- Encourage innovation and quality in design and development
- Provide sufficient locational opportunities for commercial enterprises
- Establish a strong, diversified commercial base to provide employment and a high level of service to residents and visitors
- Discourage further 'strip mall' development along arterials or highway routes
- Support the establishment of neighbourhood centres which serve local needs and encourage mixed use development in these areas

WHAT DOES THE SUSTAINABLE KAMLOOPS PLAN SAY?

- Review projected demand for commercial land and assess the potential to meet some of this demand within existing vacant spaces and developed land
- Explore the potential of using vacant commercial land/buildings for residential, where appropriate
- Ensure appropriate commercial activities are located within all City Neighbourhoods to provide for frequent neighbourhood needs (such as convenience stores)

CURRENT CHALLENGES

- Parking concerns for customers and employees in the Central Business District
- Continued threats of office depletion in traditional areas
- Higher commercial vacancies due to internet and home-based businesses
- Prescriptive permitted uses in current Zoning Bylaw
- Influx of big box stores competing with smaller mom and pop businesses
- An aging demographic means a number of companies will change hands within the coming years. Are there enough people available with the required resources to take over a business?
- Vacant sites due to previous contamination (too expensive to clean-up)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Continued development of diverse neighbourhoods that provide a range of uses (housing, businesses, shops, and public institutions) within close proximity to promote walking, community interaction, civic engagement, and economic activity
- Review and adopt a broader definition of commercial land use that is less restrictive from one commercial zone to another; create a policy that encourages flexible zoning
- Encourage the continued support of locally owned businesses. The success of local business creates strong communities, keeps dollars in the local economy, and requires little infrastructure compared to big box stores and strip malls
- Continue to work with Business Improvement Associations
- Develop a new parkade in the City Centre to support retail and office spaces as well as institutional and cultural functions, and convention and hospitality industries
- Clean up and redevelop brownfield sites for mixed use residential/commercial where zoning permits
- Revitalize and beautify commercial neighbourhoods
- Develop City-wide industrial and commercial Development Permit Areas to guide the form and character of new development

KAMPLAN (2004) SUCCESS STORIES

- Downtown and North Shore streetscape improvements
- New shopping centres: Summit Shopping Centre and Cityview Centre
- Rebuilding Lansdowne Village to continue concentrating intensive commercial in the City Centre
- Constructed Sandman Hotel and Suites and associated restaurants in the Central Business District to take advantage of the opportunities created by the downtown core and proximity to Riverside Park
- Adopted plans with commercial components:
 - City Centre Plan (2005)
 - Aberdeen Area Plan (2008)
 - North Shore Neighbourhood Plan (2008)

SUMMARY

Shopping Centres, Neighbourhood Centres and Area Commercial nodes are important to enhance the urban environment and to meet the needs of Kamloops citizens. The City aims to incorporate mixed-use development and promote policy and guidance for development concerns such as landscaping, streetscapes, signage, façade design and building height and mass.

Technology and vehicle reliance will continue to shape the face of commercialism, therefore it is important to understand how these changes may impact traffic demands, intensification, and even vacancies in years to come, and manage the need for development in a flexible manner.

Did you know? 12.9% of our labour force is employed in the retail sector.