



BACKGROUND ANALYSIS SUMMARY REPORT

MACKENZIE DOWNTOWN VISION & ACTION PLAN | DISTRICT OF MACKENZIE

APRIL 2022

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OVERVIEW

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Downtown Mackenzie Vision and Action Plan process involves three primary phases:

1. Startup and background analysis;
2. Community consultation; and
3. Plan development.

See the diagram to the right for an overview of the key milestones in the process.

This report is a summary of the project team's Background Analysis.

BACKGROUND ANALYSES

The Background Analysis consisted of the following:

First, we undertook a review of existing policies, plans, documents, and related reports from the District. This provided a better understanding of [a] the overall project rationale and intent and [b] the policy directions that inform the Downtown Vision and Action Plan as well as the policy framework that the Plan will be integrated into.

Second, we conducted a set of technical analyses of the study area across three broad disciplines – planning and urban design; transportation and traffic; and landscape architecture. The main outcomes of these analyses are highlighted in the diagrams and maps in this report

And, finally, we integrated and layered the various technical outcomes in order to identify key issues, opportunities, core themes, and the needed areas of exploration to address during the community consultation phase.

PROCESS OVERVIEW

The below illustrates the key milestones to the project.



BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

April - Project Team

Technical analyses of existing conditions to identify challenges and opportunities and outline a policy framework to inform the project. Outcomes will inform the content of the Ideas Fair, Pop Ups, and online discussions.



IDEAS FAIR

May/June - Public

An interactive consultation event to harvest public feedback and generate high-level directions and big ideas for the future of downtown Mackenzie.



WORKSHOP & INTERVIEWS

May/June - Stakeholders

An intensive workshop will be used to refine high-level directions into possible scenarios, designs, and actions. Targeted interviews will then be used to fill any information gaps. From there, a set of key elements and scenarios will be developed for use at the Public Gallery.



POP-UPS & ONLINE DISCUSSION

May/June - Public

Pop up events in the mall, along with online discussions, will extend the reach of the Ideas Fair to the wider community. Directions from the public will form the base on which the stakeholder workshop is built.



PUBLIC GALLERY & SURVEY

July - Public

A second public event (held digitally) and corresponding online survey will allow residents to share feedback and comment on the scenarios and directions generated from the workshop and Ideas Fair. The Project Team will then synthesize the public input and begin to develop a draft Plan.



OPEN HOUSE (DRAFT PLAN)

August/September - Public

The draft Downtown Vision and Action Plan will be presented for public comment at a (digital or in-person) Open House and corresponding online engagement. A final draft will then be iteratively refined with staff.



COUNCIL PRESENTATION

Fall - Public

The final Downtown Vision and Action Plan will be presented to Council at a public meeting.

EXISTING CONDITIONS GALLERY



Looking north along Mackenzie Blvd. at Little Cloudmaker Rd.



Looking north along Mackenzie Blvd. at the Tree Crusher.



New Fire Hall on Fraser Blvd. and Centennial Dr.



Alexander Mackenzie Mall.



Corner of Centennial Dr. and Skeena Dr.



Evergreen Mall (left) and Town Centre Mall (right).



KL 59 Mall.



Market Park on corner of Mackenzie Blvd and Centennial Dr.



Outside of the Mackenzie Recreation Centre and Library.

PLANNING & DESIGN ANALYSIS

POLICY ANALYSIS

The Mackenzie Downtown Vision and Action Plan is guided and informed by a number of District documents (e.g., Zoning Bylaw, Community Economic Development Strategy). In particular, the Official Community Plan (OCP) provides an important foundation on which this Plan can be built. It is important to acknowledge the significant, recent work that the District has undertaken to create a robust policy framework in which this plan will exist, such as the Community Economic Development Plan and Tourism Plan.

KEY OCP POLICY DIRECTIONS

Key guiding policy directions – which will inform the creation of this plan – include the following:

- Creating an attractive and vibrant town centre where residents can access shopping, entertainment, and community services
- Focusing new commercial and mixed-use developments in the downtown core by developing readily available or vacant land
- Allowing a greater mix of uses in the town centre including live-work and multi-family residential
- Limiting uses in the downtown core that are better suited to other areas such as service- commercial
- Improving streets, walkways and public spaces in the downtown core through aesthetic and functional investments
- Encouraging human-scaled streets and buildings, and active public spaces; and Fostering revitalization of the Downtown Core through incentive programs
- Seek opportunities to engage local First Nation governments in the District's initiatives to create a shared long-term economic vision and set of strategies for the area as a whole
- Work with current and potential local businesses to identify and act on strategies to improve the business environment in Mackenzie

OTHER PLANS

Other relevant plans and their directions for the downtown include the following:

Mackenzie 2.0 Community Economic Development Strategy

- Downtown Core revitalization
 - » Promote creative uses of gathering spaces and underutilized/empty buildings and lots
 - » Develop an improved, cohesive downtown Mackenzie look and feel through incentivizing public art, storefront beautification, hardscaping, and landscaping
 - » Encourage multi-modal transportation to and within the Downtown Core and provide supporting infrastructure

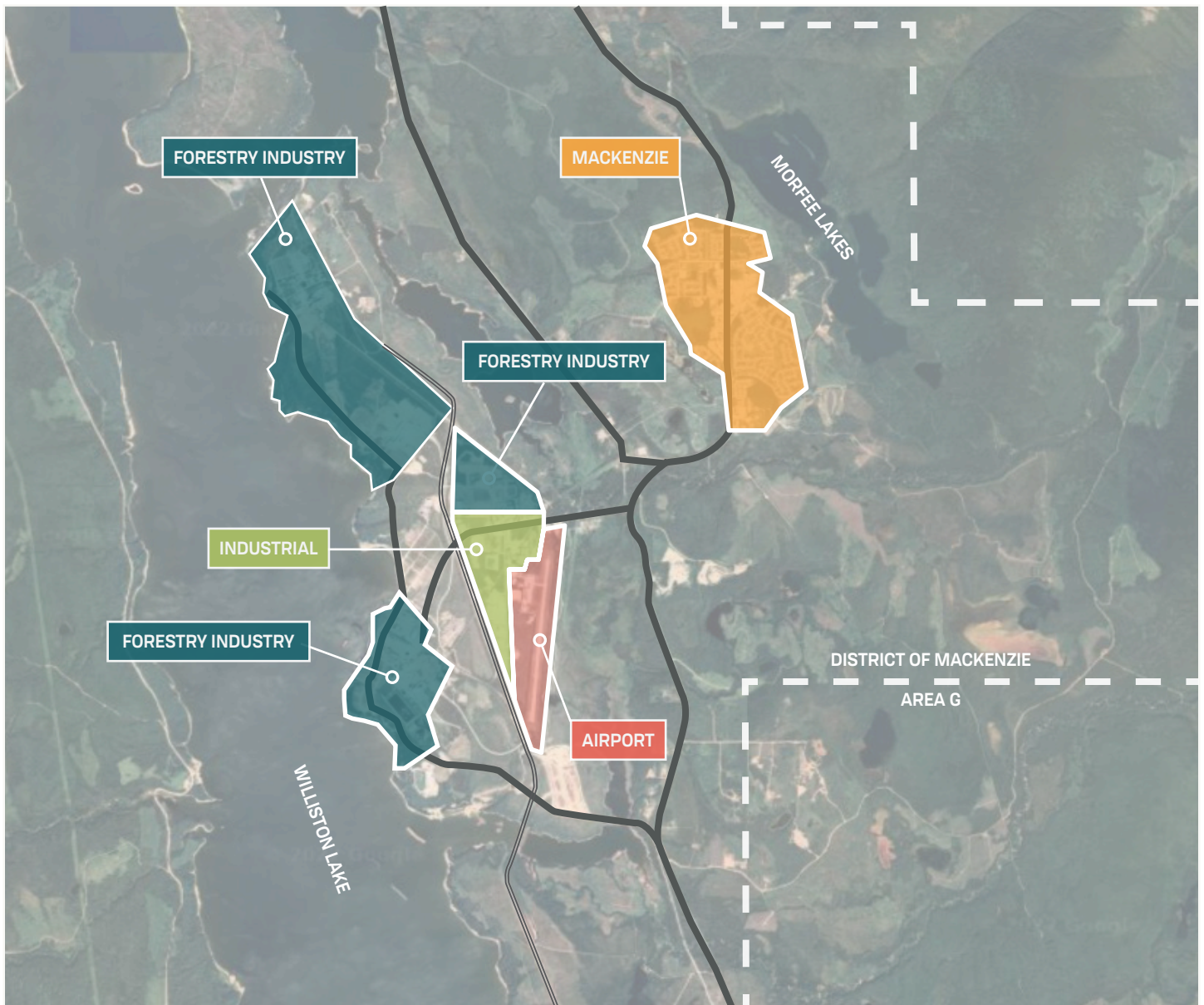
2021- 2026 Tourism Plan (2021)

- Create a new exciting Tourism District in downtown Mackenzie

Council Strategic Priorities 2021-2025 (2021)

- Goals
 - » Mackenzie is recognized for its attractiveness, streetscape and overall appeal to residents and visitors
 - » Mackenzie's commercial sector is growing and diversifying

DISTRICT CONTEXT



The District of Mackenzie includes several key areas, including the town site (including downtown), airport, and key industrial and mill sites. The nearby mills are currently closed, and industrial services dominate the surrounding landscape. While the closing of some local mills has resulted in economic hardship and decline of population of Mackenzie, the town is experiencing renewed migration based upon nearby recreational opportunities.

In this context, the Downtown Vision and Action Plan needs to identify and respond to the roles, functions, and relationships of Mackenzie in the wider District context. Mackenzie is the retail hub for the surrounding residential and rural areas as well as the civic core and residential centre. This will be further explored through community consultation and subsequent analysis.

DOWNTOWN CONTEXT



Downtown Mackenzie is most clearly defined by a focused retail core in relation to surrounding civic, park, and residential uses. Key 'landmark' sites include the Mackenzie Mall, the Recreation Centre, Health Clinic, Fire Hall, and the new Market Park.

A key task of the Downtown Vision and Action Plan is to clearly-define Mackenzie's downtown, as the actual or envisioned downtown may not align with the current policy direction for the "Downtown Core" (as shown above).

As a result, the Downtown Vision and Action plan will focus on the general Downtown Core, as defined in the OCP, but will also address the wider study area where appropriate and explore the need for amending existing land use boundaries and designations.

OCP LAND USE DESIGNATION

In the OCP, the downtown is primarily designated as Core Downtown, envisioning uses such as:

- Smaller-scale and pedestrian-oriented retail uses and services
- Professional businesses and offices
- Civic and institutional uses
- Culture and recreational facilities
- Restaurants, entertainment facilities, and hotels
- Mixed commercial and residential buildings
- Flex-use and live-work spaces
- Multi-family housing
- Public parks or plazas

Adjacent designations in the study area include Public Institutions (e.g., Fire Hall and Recreation Centre), Commercial Service, Parks and Schools, Natural Environment, and Residential uses.

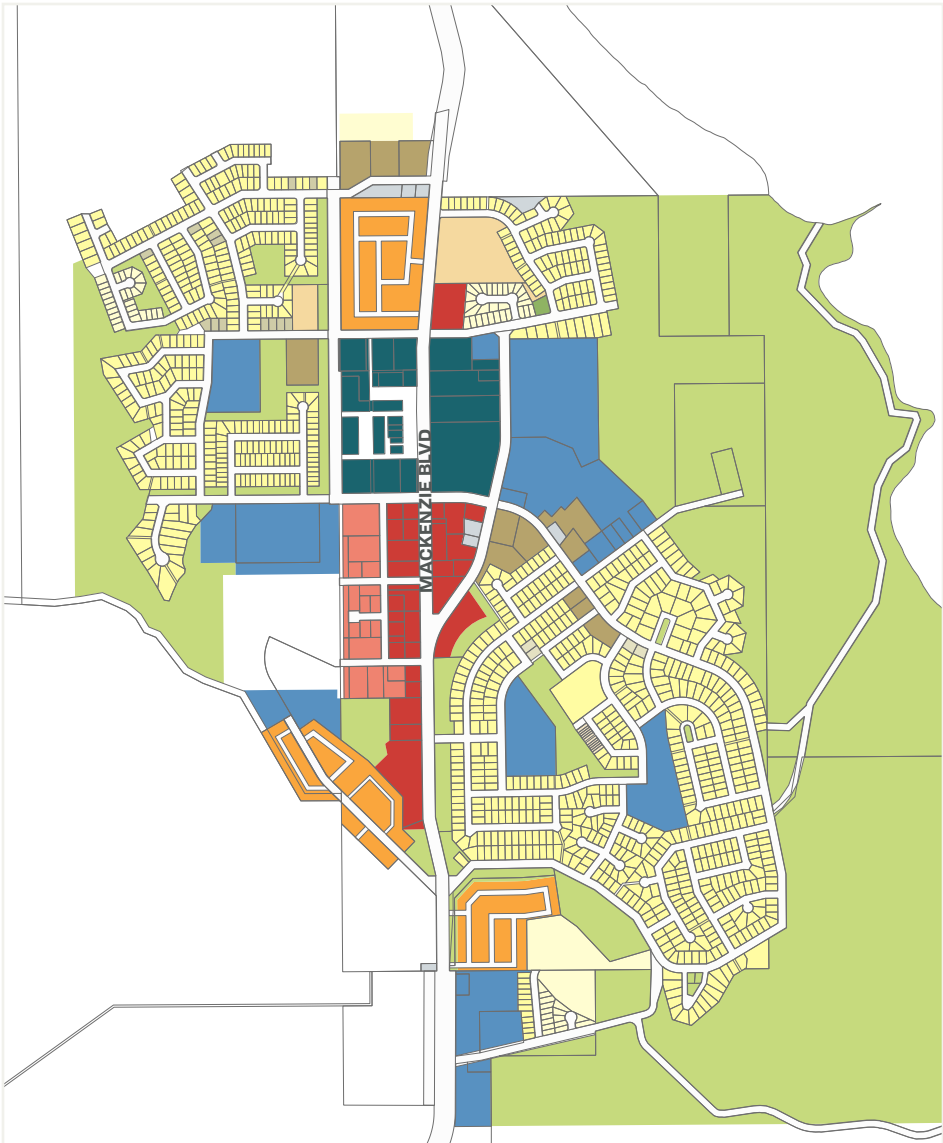


■ CD - Core Downtown	■ PI - Public Institution
■ CS - Commercial Service	■ PS - Parks and Schools
■ RM - MF Residential	■ PG - Public Greenbelt
■ RS-R Residential Reserve	■ PW - Public Watershed
■ RR - Rural Residential	■ NE - Natural Environment
■ RS - Single Family Residential	

ZONING MAP

In the Zoning Bylaw, the Downtown Core is zoned Comprehensive Development and uses are largely consistent with the Downtown Core OCP Designation. However, there are minimum parcel size limitations for subdivision, and a minimum setback of 13.7m from Mackenzie Boulevard, which may impact and be inconsistent with the future vision for the downtown.

Adjacent zones in the study area include General Commercial, Service Commercial, Institutional, and various residential zones from Single-family to Multi-family.



- | | |
|--|--|
|  A1 - Outdoor Rec & Agr. |  R2 - Two-Family |
|  C1 - General Commercial |  R3 - Compact Residential |
|  C2 - Service Commercial |  RM1 - MF 1 |
|  CD1 - Comprehensive Dev. |  RM2 - MF2 |
|  P1 - Institutional |  RM3 - MF3 |
|  P2 - Parks & Open Space |  RM4 - Mobile Home |
|  R1 - Single Family | |

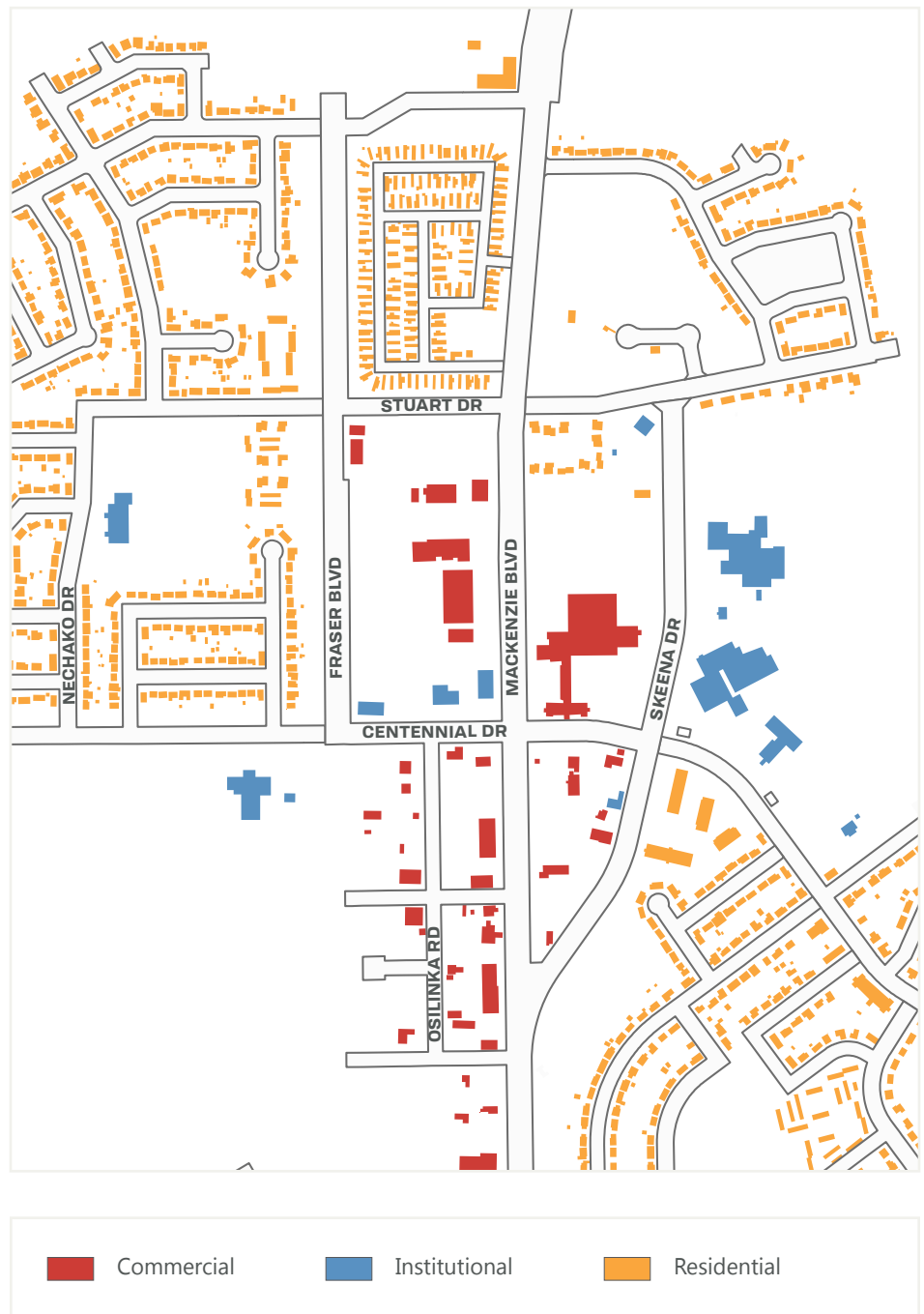
FIGURE GROUND



The development pattern of the study area is characterized by large footprint commercial buildings with limited street frontage, and a quick transition from commercial core to single family housing. The large block structure of downtown is also dominated by large open spaces, including underutilized sites and parking lots, in relation to physical buildings.

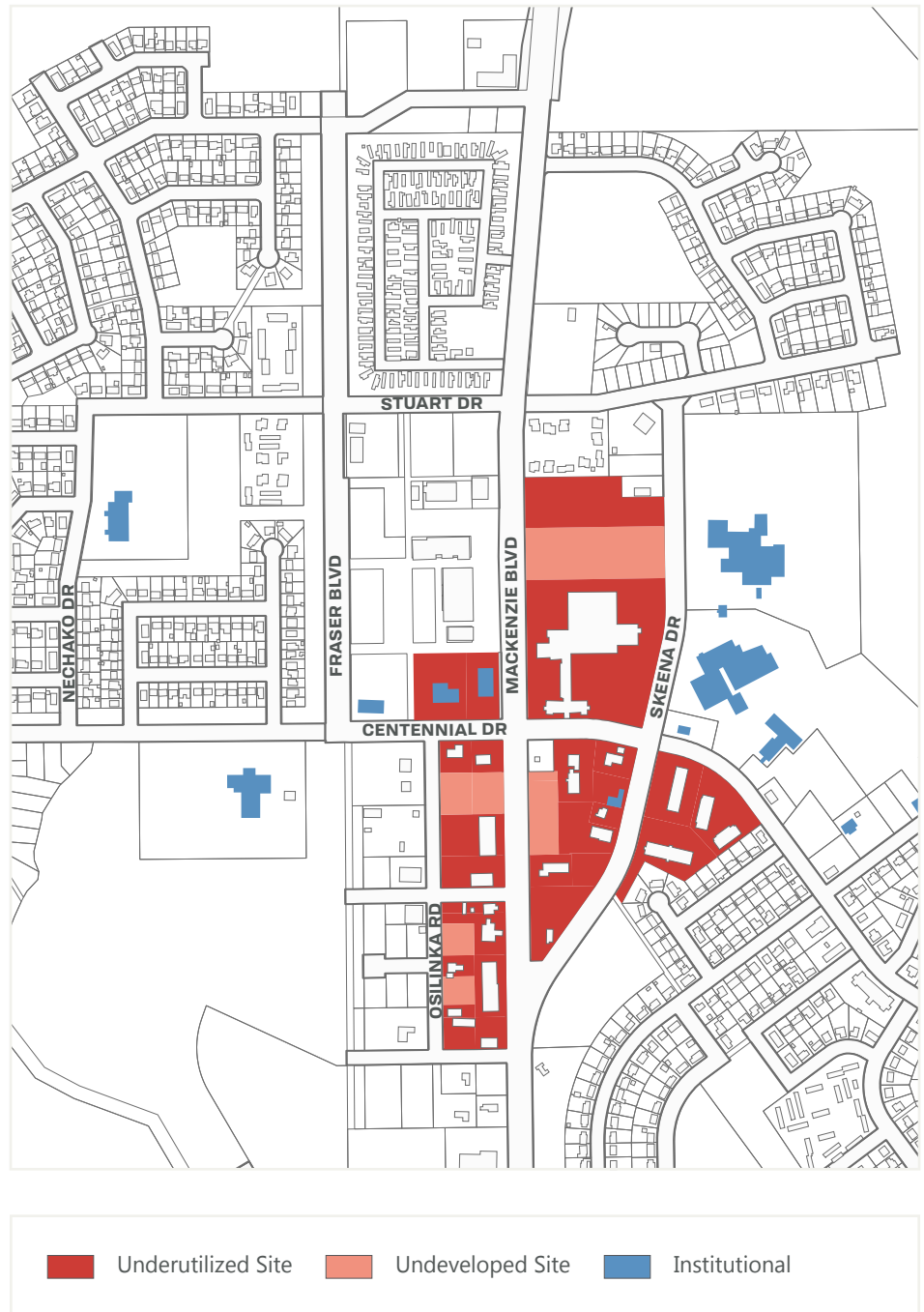
CURRENT LAND USE

The existing land use pattern of the study area is characterized by predominantly low-density residential with a clear commercial core, along with some civic uses such as Schools, Churches, Recreation Centre, and Health Clinic.



UNDERUTILIZED LAND

The downtown core is significantly underutilized, relative to OCP policy, zoning, and community goals (e.g., a mix of housing). The core is predominantly characterized by single-storey, single-use (retail/commercial) buildings with large land areas dedicated to surface parking and vehicular circulation. Additionally, there are several sites within the core that have no development at all. As a result, there are a series of underutilized sites that do not support a vibrant downtown core.

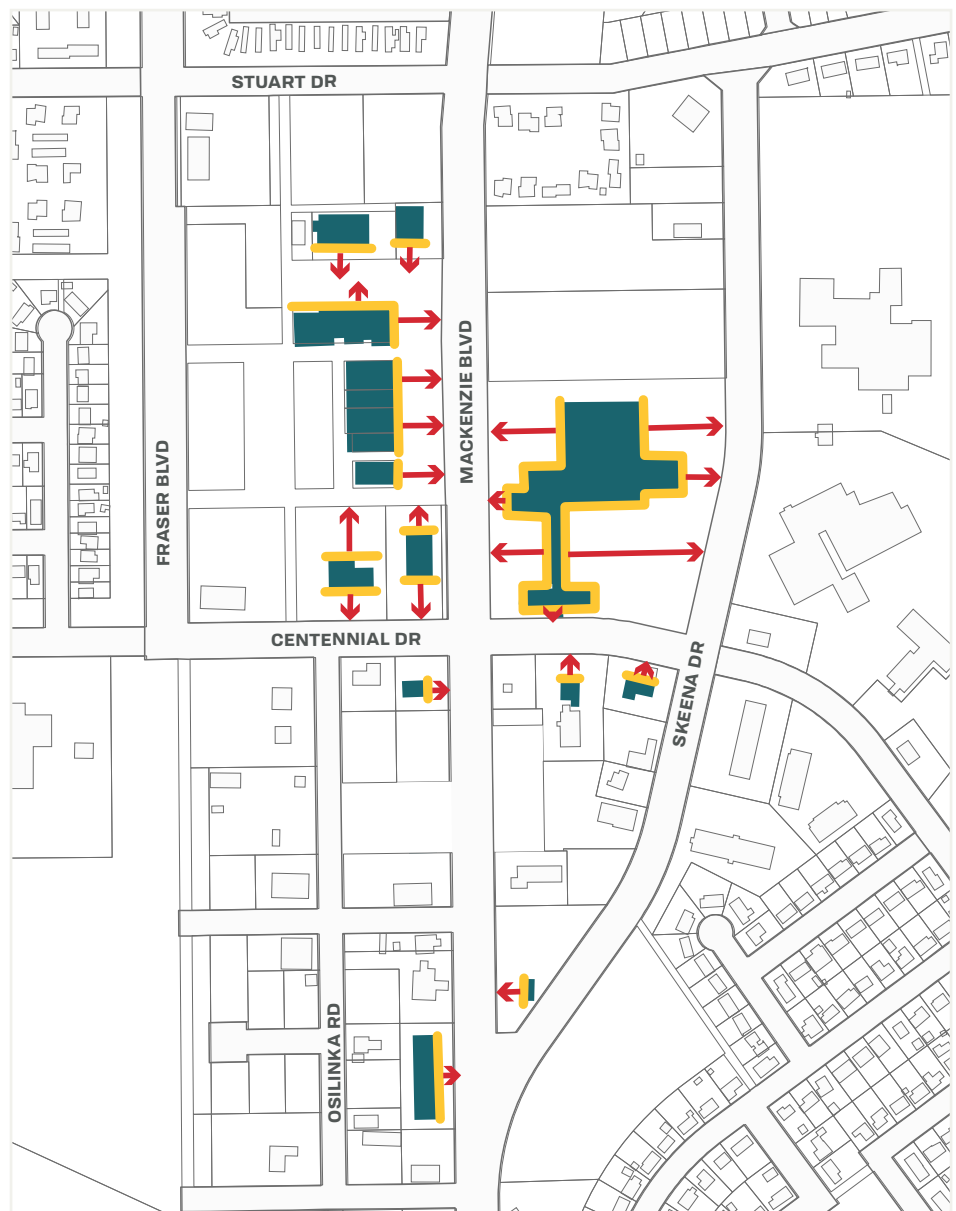


The downtown is characterized by an abundance of surface parking and vehicle circulation and large nearby public green spaces. Market Park on the corner of Centennial and Mackenzie, the proposed Bike Park north of the Mall, and the Recreation Centre and Library are significant public gathering spaces.



(IN)ACTIVE STREETSCAPES

The downtown lacks high quality streetscapes and pedestrian oriented design (e.g., landscaping, sidewalks, seating, buffers to traffic, on-street parking, street trees). Many of the commercial buildings are oriented towards an internal circulation lane or parking lot and buildings that do front primary streets are set back significantly. This creates large open spaces adjacent to wide streets, resulting in a lack of pedestrian comfort, safety, and interest, as well as a lack of streetscape "texture" and vitality.



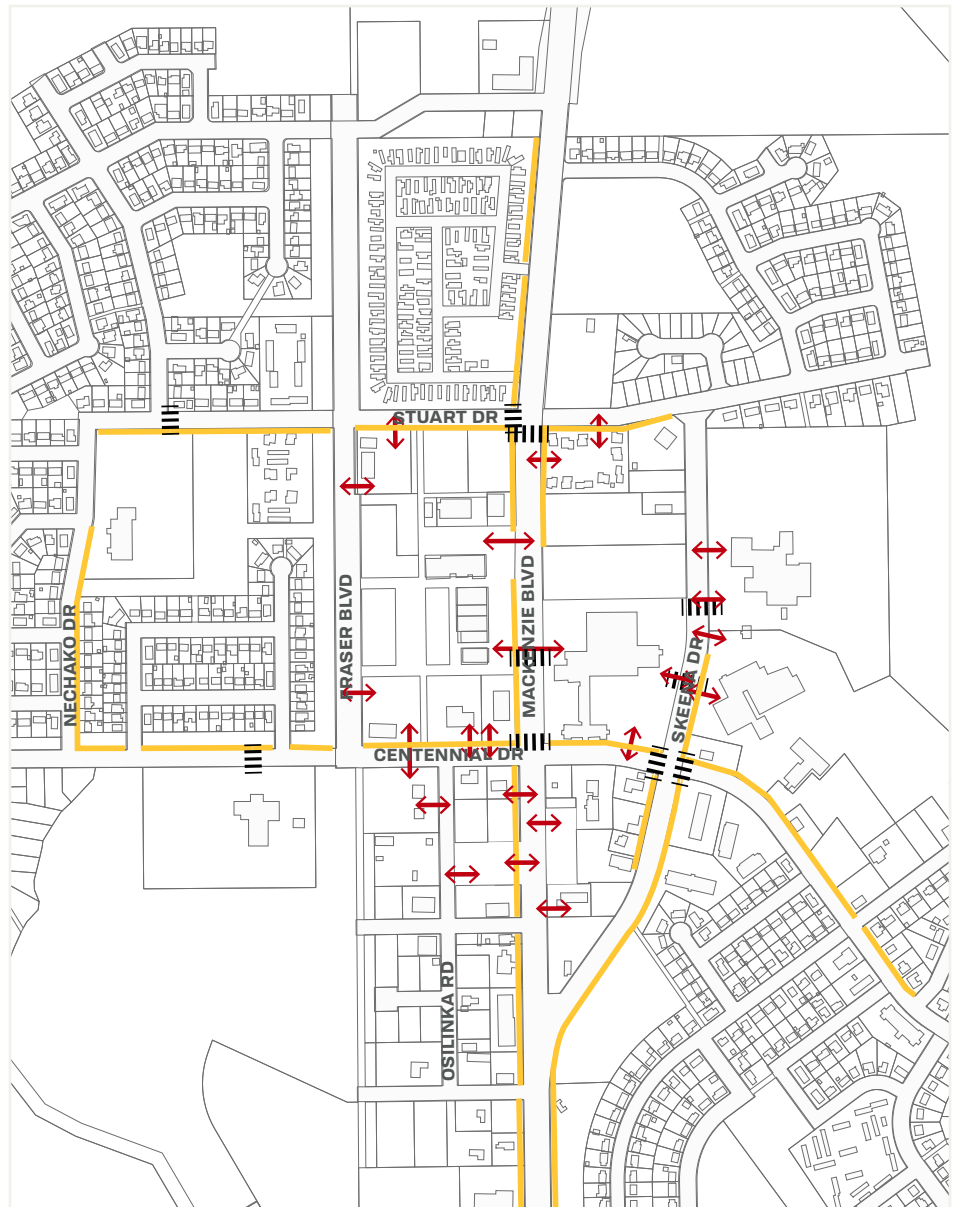
Building Frontage



Frontage Direction & Distance

WALKABILITY

In addition to the lack of active building frontages, downtown streetscapes have barriers to pedestrian comfort and safety, including driveway crossings (along sidewalks) in close proximity to pedestrian crossings. Some segments of sidewalks are completely missing, and the sidewalks that do exist are generally narrow. Additionally, there are few pedestrian crossings, and the ones that do exist lack pedestrian signals or similar safety features.



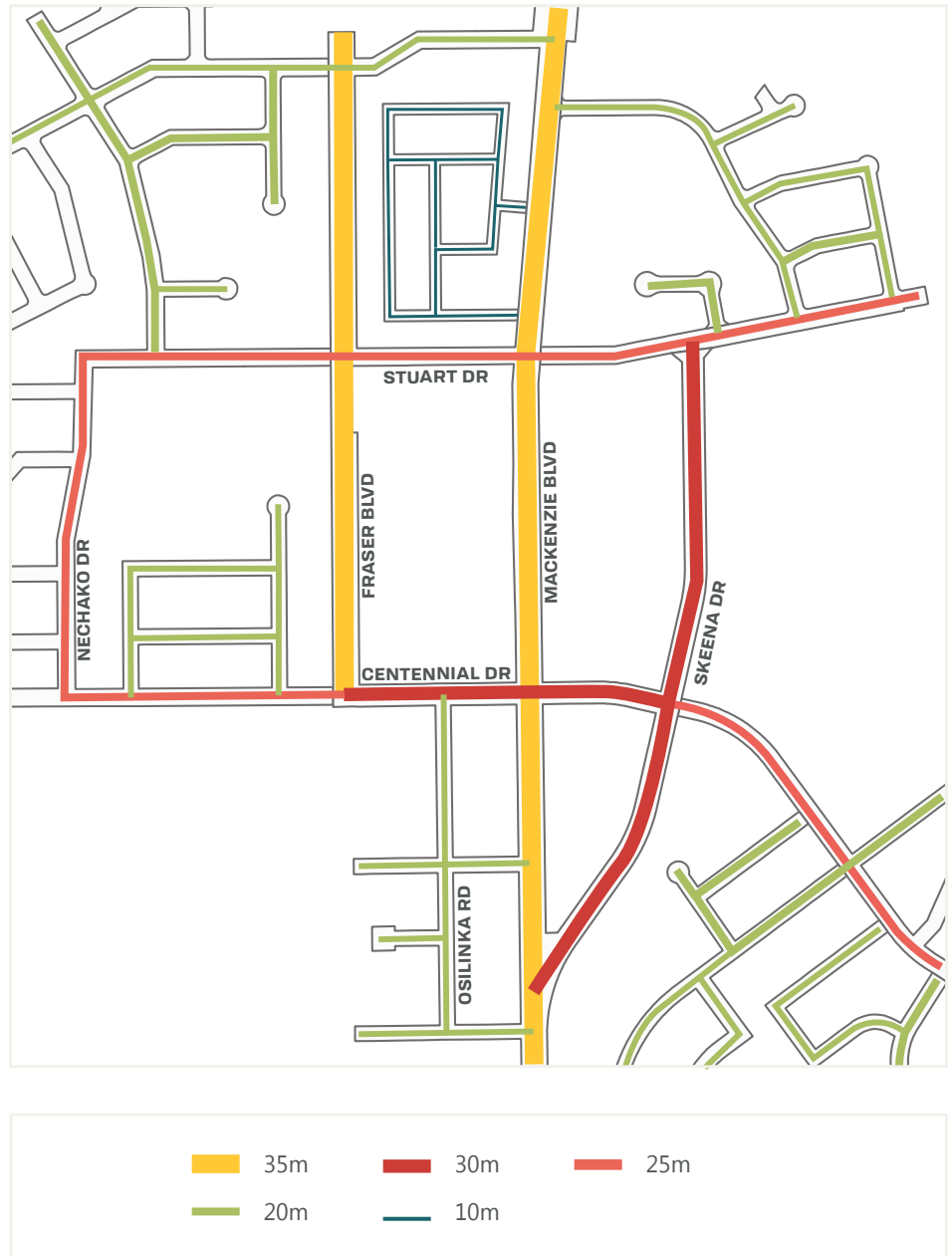
— Sidewalks ↔ Vehicle Crossings ||||| Pedestrian Crossings

TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

STREET NETWORK

The street network orientation of the downtown is generally north to south and east to west. Residential areas outside the core are characterized by non-linear streets and cul de sacs, which can be a barrier to pedestrian mobility without pedestrian paths for more direct connections.

Road right of ways in the core are uncharacteristically wide for a downtown. This typically results in faster vehicular travel speeds and increase pedestrian crossing distances. Additionally, this has a number of affects on the look and feel of the downtown for all users, by [a] eliminating a “sense of enclosure”, [b] placing pedestrian immediately adjacent to higher speed traffic, and [c] occupying particularly high-value land for vehicular movements.

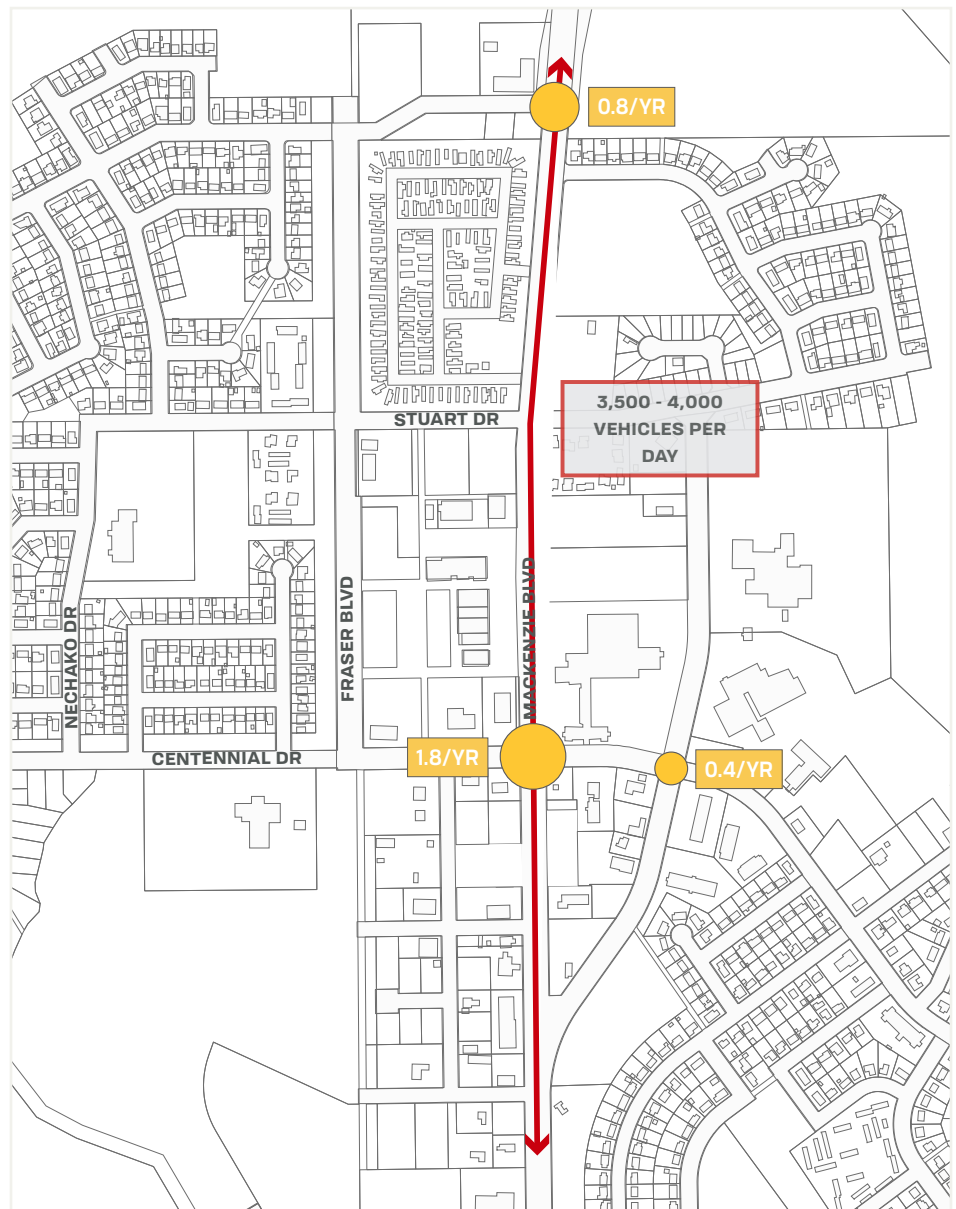


TRAFFIC VOLUME & SAFETY

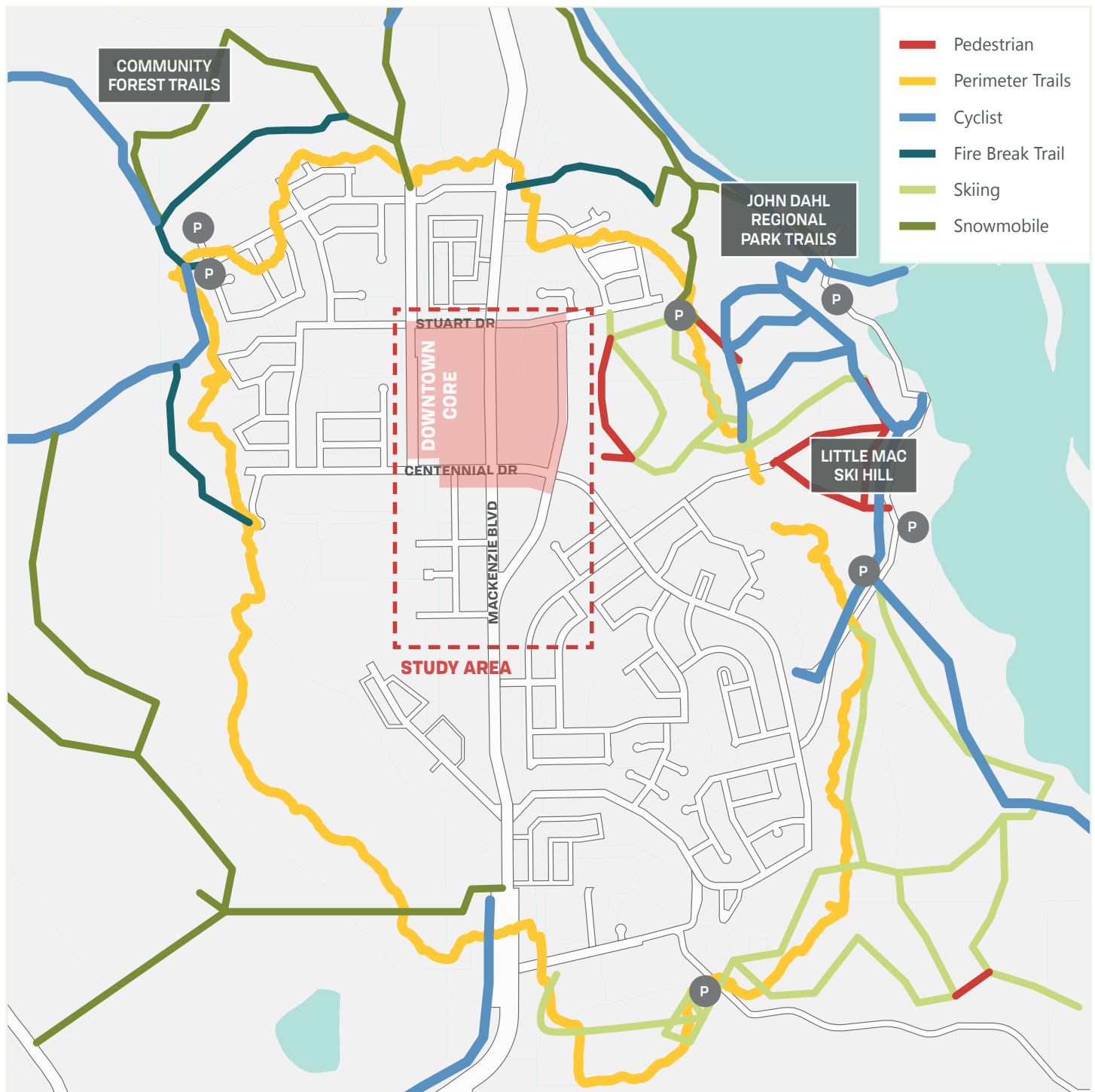
According to estimated traffic data (based on 2011-2014 figures) there are an estimated 3,500 - 4,000 vehicles per day that travel along Mackenzie Boulevard.

ICBC makes collision stats available for the past five years (2016-2020). A summary of locations in the downtown core with multiple collisions (i.e., more than one) is as follows:

1. Centennial Dr / Mackenzie Blvd.
9 collisions, 1.8/yr
2. Mackenzie Blvd. / McIntyre Dr.
4 collisions, 0.8/yr
3. Centennial Dr. / Skeena Dr.
2 collisions, 0.4/yr
4. Crysedale Dr. / Pioneer St.
2 collisions, 0.4/yr

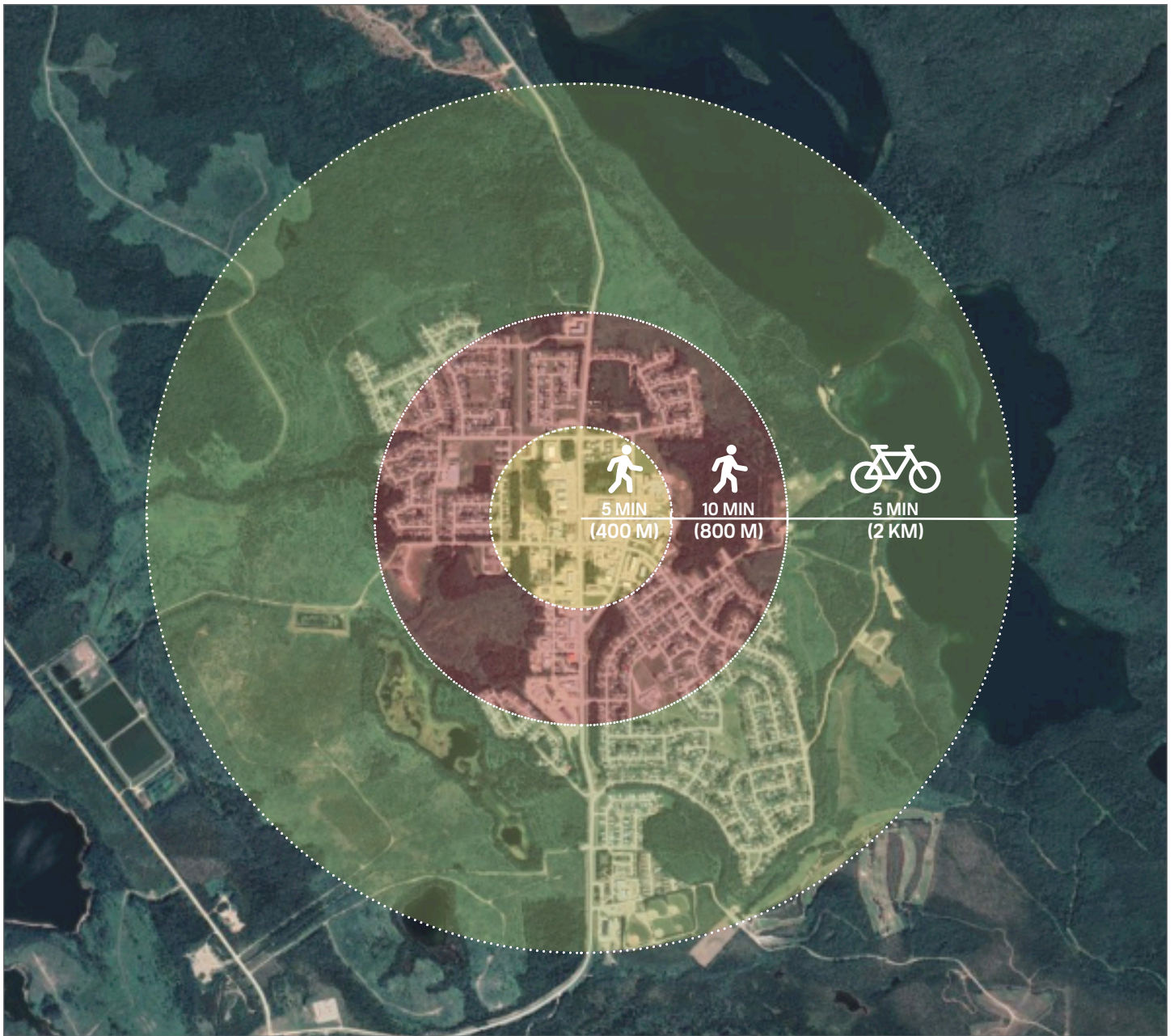


RECREATIONAL TRAILS



Many recreational trails exist outside of downtown of Mackenzie. However, there is a lack of active transportation amenities (e.g., bike lanes, trails) within the downtown to reach these recreational opportunities.

WALKING/CYCLING DISTANCES



The diagram above shows the relatively compact structure of Mackenzie, with a variety of destinations, services, and amenities within a 5- or 10-minute walk, and most of the recreation trails can be reached within a 5-minute bike ride.

The District has applied for funding for an Active Transportation Plan that is intended to identify key walking and cycling issues and present a plan to improve active transportation throughout Mackenzie. Directions from the Active Transportation Plan are likely to include improvements for the downtown core and surrounding area, and address sidewalks, trail, and cycling facilities.

TRANSPORTATION CONDITIONS GALLERY



Sidewalk along Mackenzie Blvd.



Crossing at corner of Mackenzie Blvd. and Centennial Dr.



Sidewalk and driveway in front of Alexander Mackenzie Hotel.



Sidewalk along Centennial Dr.



Crosswalk and sidewalk along Mackenzie Blvd. looking north.



Mid-block crossing along Mackenzie Blvd. between east and west Mall.



Parking lot and crossing outside of west Mall.



Skeena and Stuart Dr.



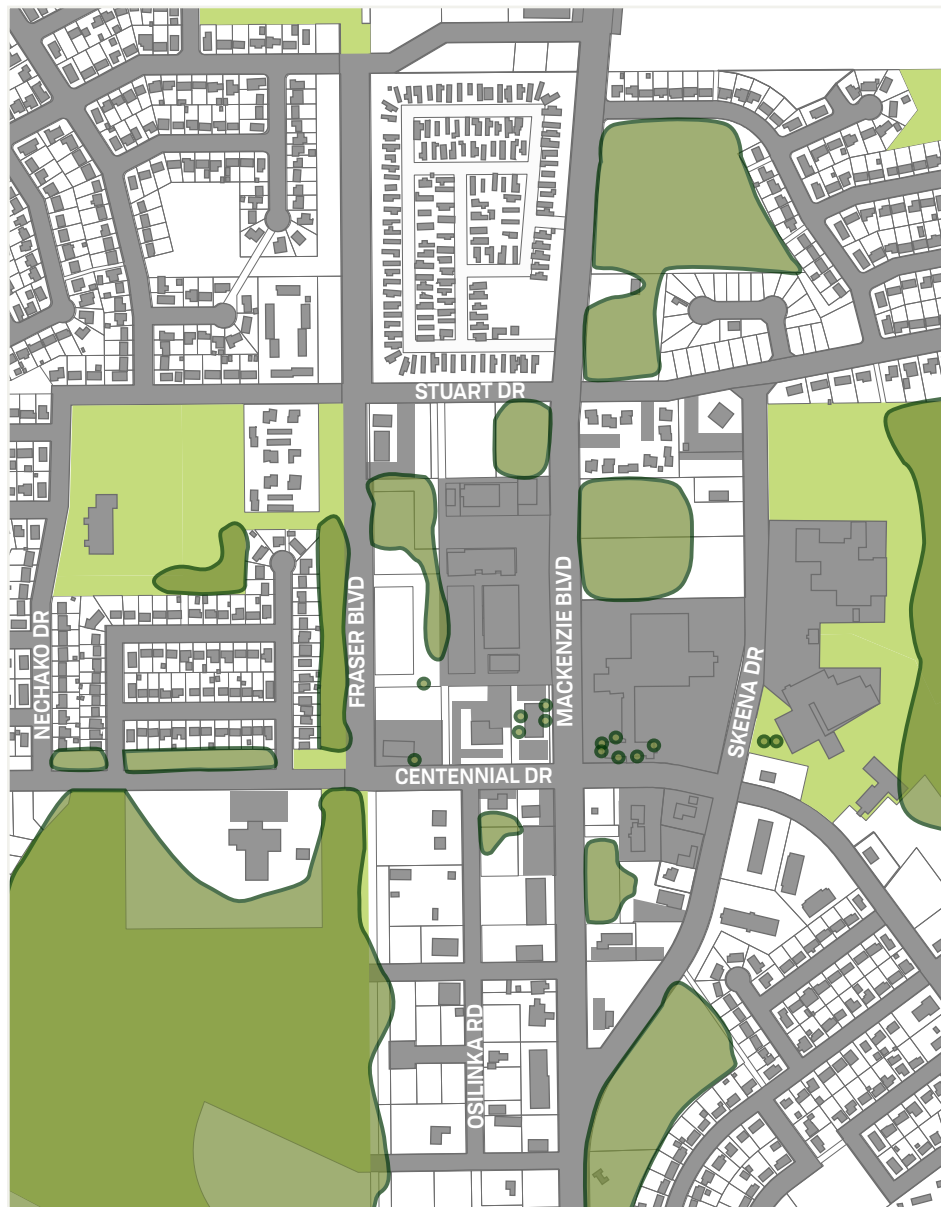
Market Park.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

DOWNTOWN TREE CANOPY & IMPERVIOUS SURFACES

Much of the downtown core consists of impervious surfaces and rooftops. Few greenspaces exist within the downtown core for people to enjoy – or for habitat creation, stormwater management, etc.

Many jurisdictions are taking steps to increase their urban forests, as urban canopy cover has been shown to improve the health of residents, enhance biological function, decrease crime, enhance real estate values, and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Importantly for this project, urban trees also help to create attractive, comfortable streetscapes and public spaces. While there does exist a healthy tree canopy in or near downtown, most of it is locked away on private property or underdeveloped sites – or larger park areas outside of the downtown. In the downtown, few trees exist on public or private properties that are regularly utilized by the public.



■ Impervious Surface 🌳 Tree Canopy ■ Park

TOPOGRAPHY

Downtown Mackenzie is relatively flat, and lies at an elevation of around 770m. Generally there is a slight slope from northeast (780m) to southwest (765m). This topography is well-suited for future development, and the slight slope lends itself well to views of Williston Lake and the surrounding valley.



NEXT STEPS

The data collected and related findings of this background study will inform the remaining project process, serving as important baseline information on which to build the Downtown Vision and Action Plan.

The next step in the process is Community Consultation, in which the outcomes of this report will directly inform the engagement materials for the upcoming Public Ideas Fair and Stakeholder Workshop, which are scheduled for late-May, respectively.

Please, visit the project webpage to stay up to date on the latest news, events, and online engagement opportunities:





Prepared for:



Prepared by:

