Smart Growth and Parking: An Analysis of Downtown Revitalization in Mid-Sized Cities

by

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis,

including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

The post-WWII period saw significant suburban expansion in North American cities. This push outward utilized the abundant available land to satisfy the demand for housing, and saw the rise in use of the personal automobile. This suburbanization resulted in the deterioration of many downtowns in mid-sized municipalities, which are now using smart growth principles to revitalize their cores, with the goals of infill development, intensification, increased transit, decreased automobile use, and pedestrian-friendly environments.

Balancing the competing goals of attracting more people downtown and making it accessible for car-dependent residents raises important questions around how cities should plan for parking. This study uses three case cities, Kitchener, Kingston and St. Catharines to help answer its central research question: what is the role of parking in downtown revitalization in mid-sized cities?

The findings of this study point to several issues that mid-size municipalities should consider when planning for parking during downtown revitalization. They should a) own or control as many of the parking assets as possible in order to be well-positioned to implement parking and other planning goals; b) align revitalization programs and goals across the municipality to avoid conflicting objectives; c) focus on transportation demand management policies that will help shift the modal split and provide viable alternatives; d) foster the creation of strong central business districts, including after-hours attractions; and e) consider maximum instead of minimum parking requirements in downtowns to avoid oversupply.

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Chapter 1- Introduction

1.1 The Problem

The post-WWII period saw tremendous outward growth in North American cities. The demand for housing, abundance of available land, expansion of roads and highways, and prevalence of the personal automobile, created a perfect storm that saw extension of cities outwards and the development of low-density suburbs. This dispersed city form satisfied the demand for housing with large lots and rural-like settings, and resulted in the movement of services outwards from the city-centre (Bunting & Filion, 1999). In mid-sized cities, those with populations between 100,000 and 500,000, this retreat to the suburbs emptied downtowns because the demand for services was largely met in the suburbs, and city cores no longer had the central employment and services to attract people downtown (Robertson, 1999). The resulting deterioration of downtowns and the push for redevelopment has been a concern ever since.

Smart growth is a response to sprawling suburban expansion, and promotes infill development, intensification, increased transit, decreased automobile use and parking, and pedestrian-friendly environments. Many cities saw the decline of their urban centres during the post-war period, and now seek to redevelop their cores using smart growth principles. Successful implementation of smart growth principles in the downtowns of mid-sized cities means marrying these intensification principles with the existing built-out suburban environment prevalent in them. The push for mass transit in mid-sized cities exists, but getting it out to the inaccessible suburbs is difficult and expensive. Creating healthy,

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walkable, transit-oriented downtowns and reducing car use appears to be at odds with abundant available parking. However, the existing car-dependant nature of mid-sized cities cannot be ignored.

Many studies have analyzed smart growth policies in large metropolitan centres, but few have examined mid-sized cities (see Filion & Bunting, 1993; Robertson, 1999). Downtown revitalization efforts in these places have unique challenges, including the absence of strong core business districts, high automobile dependence, and lack of cost-effective and accessible mass transit. This study seeks to fill the research gap by studying the role of parking in downtown revitalization of mid-sized cities that embrace smart growth principles.

1.2 Research Question

With these challenges at hand, the important question of how to plan for parking arises. Cities must balance the competing goals of downtown revitalization, being to attract more people downtown and make it convenient and easy for them to get there. The purpose of this study is to understand the various approaches that mid-sized cities have taken to parking during downtown revitalization efforts, and to examine their effects. Its central research question is: **what is the role of parking in downtown revitalization in mid-sized cities?** It will seek to understand how cities approached the issue of downtown parking, how they envisioned it would work, whether it was successful and/or as intended, and look for lessons from their experiences.

1.3 Purpose Statement

This study examines three Ontario municipalities with populations between 100,000 and 500,000 that have undergone downtown revitalization in the last 15 years. These cities are Kingston, Kitchener, and St. Catharines. It involves semi-structured interviews with civic leaders, including local public servants, and other relevant stakeholders, such as local business leaders, and Business Improvement Areas (BIAs). It also involves document analysis to triangulate the interview results. This includes Census data, local planning and policy documents, provincial and local legislative materials, local archival information, as well as newspapers and websites. This will be detailed further in the methods section.

1.4 Academic Contribution

This study fills gaps in the literature by examining downtown revitalizations in mid-sized cities and the role of parking in them – neither of which has received significant attention to date. Robertson (1999) notes that scholarly studies focus largely on downtown revitalizations in large cities (p. 270). However, the unique characteristics and circumstances of mid-sized cities complicate the application of smart growth principles (see Filion et al., 2004). In particular, high automobile dependence and relative ease of access to amenities might lock-in existing suburban settlement patterns and compromise the success of intensification efforts predicated on limiting parking in favour of improved public transit access. While concern about the impact of competing, low-cost suburban parking on downtowns is reflected in the literature (see Voith, 1998), few studies have considered the

effects of parking policies on downtown revitalization aside from specific issues around pricing.

1.5 Thesis Outline

This thesis begins with a review of the literature focusing on smart growth planning principles, the application of smart growth principles in mid-sized cities, downtown revitalization in mid-sized cities, the role of parking in downtown revitalization, types of parking, as well as parking governance. It then describes the theoretical framework, and research methods, including the case selection, data collection, and method of analysis. The case study chapters follow. The final two chapters include a discussion and summary of the findings with linkages to the literature on smart growth, as well as recommendations and identification of future research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Smart Growth Planning Principles

The literature on smart growth is vast, and although its concepts are often focused on large metropolitan centres, they have become ubiquitous in discussions of urban renewal in many North American cities. These concepts generally include intensification, walkability, mixed-use, sustainability, and increased transit use with decreased dependence on cars (see Knaap & Talen, 2005; Downs, 2005; Neuman, 2005; Filion, 2009). Although widely discussed and embraced by planners, smart growth does have its critics – those who see significant barriers to successful implementation.

Arguments for the use of smart growth principles come from planners, environmentalists, policy-makers, and developers. Proponents say that these smart growth principles create a sense of community, and contribute to healthy lifestyles by enhancing walkability and environmental sustainability (see Resnik, 2010). They also promote the preservation of green space, especially at a time when many metropolitan centres are running out of developable greenfield land (see Porter, 1999). Smart growth also promotes increased transit and decreased car use (see Filion, 2009), and the creation of affordable housing due to increased density and more compact housing (see Filion et al., 2004; Downs, 2005). It is difficult to argue against any of these principles, which is why they are so common in planning practice. However, there do exist some arguments against smart growth.

Those generally not in favour of smart growth usually represent special interests, for example those developers who make money off of dispersed form, as well as car manufacturers (see Knaap and Talen, 2005; Downs, 2005). Others argue that these new types of development, instead of creating diverse communities, actually result in homogeneity, can actually raise housing prices through gentrification, and have a difficult time attracting the right blend of services to create mixed-use environments (see Landecker, 1996; Song, 2005). Regardless of the critics, smart growth is likely to play some role in much of future urban development in Canada.

2.2 Smart Growth in Mid-Sized Cities

While having similar smart growth goals to their larger metropolitan counterparts, smaller North American cities face a unique set of challenges. These mid-sized cities are overwhelmingly suburban in nature due to their historical development, have high rates of personal automobile use, and are often more difficult to serve with transit (see Filion, 2003).

Those who live in these suburban places seem to enjoy the lifestyle, as can be seen by the continued outward expansion of the suburbs and the sustained demand for single-family housing. This is supported by the continuing market supply of suburban housing choices, despite the prevailing sustainable planning doctrine and related legislation (see Ontario, 2006). Living in the suburbs means accepting some of the disadvantages that come along with it, including lack of mixed-use, car dependence, increased commuting time, and lack of transit (see Filion, 2003; Handy, 2005). Changing behaviours and desires of the population in these mid-sized cities could prove to be very difficult (Filion, 2003). The existing built out

suburban environment is difficult to intensify without drastic measures, and in some cases, these mid-sized cities have enough demand to continue pushing this dispersed form further out toward their boundaries.

2.3 Downtown Revitalization in Mid-Sized Cities

Revitalizing downtown cores has been a popular undertaking by many North American cities over the last few decades. The outward expansion of services into the suburbs meant that there was less demand for services in city cores, and as a result, developers spent much of their focus on cheaper greenfield suburban development (Robertson, 1999). This is especially true in mid-sized cities, where suburbanization often resulted in the degradation of the core, as well as downtowns becoming largely "9-5" places (Leinberger, 2005). The effects of redevelopment undertakings in large metropolitan centres have received significant attention in the literature, but small and mid-sized cities have been neglected (see Bunting & Filion, 1999; Filion et al., 2004; Robertson, 2007).

Cities with populations between 100,000 and 500,000 have different concerns for downtown revitalization than both their smaller and larger counterparts. Smaller cities and towns are usually concerned with main street revitalization, and larger cities often have more assets to draw people downtown (Filion et al., 2004). Downtowns in mid-sized cities often have distinctive circumstances, including lack of strong central business districts (CBDs), less employment and retail, fewer large and unique attractions, such as sports stadiums and theatres, as well as an absence of good public transit (Filion et al., 2004).

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Downtown revitalization is not a new phenomenon; it has been attempted in the past. Filion et al. (2004) describe several phases of redevelopment efforts, starting in the 1950s and 1960s with the widening of roads to accommodate cars; the late 50s to early 80s with the razing of dilapidated buildings in favour of large shopping centres, and more recently, the use of smart growth strategies for increased intensification and walkability (p. 328). Previous planning paradigms were rooted in what was believed to be good planning at the time. Similarly, smart growth is a movement rooted in the prevailing beliefs of today, and seeks, as previous efforts did, to provide the best possible planning outcomes.

Although not widely covered, there have been some studies of the downtowns of mid-sized cities. Filion et al. (2004) undertook a study of the health of mid-sized downtowns in North America, and found that successful downtowns overwhelmingly share many of the following characteristics: 1) they have a college or university campus; 2) they are a provincial (state) or national capital; 3) they have a unique and important history; and/or 4) they have significant tourism (p. 328). Where these features do not exist, downtown revitalization proves to be more difficult, although not impossible. Leinberger (2005) developed a list of steps for successful downtown revitalization, including visioning, planning, public/private partnerships, and creating strong office and residential spaces. But these alone cannot guarantee success, especially in mid-sized cities.

Although facing a unique set of challenges, mid-sized cities are using smart growth principles in downtown revitalization to reduce car use, create pedestrian-friendly

environments, and attract people downtown. While studying small city downtowns,

Robertson (2007) noted that:

> Most cities understand that issues related to accessibility and parking play a
> major role in determining the viability of the downtown. Therefore, it was
> somewhat surprising that transportation-related strategies such as parking
> facilities, traffic circulation changes, transit improvements, and pedestrian
> malls did not rank very high compared to other revitalization strategies. (p.
> 279).

This important part of downtown design, parking, is scantly covered in the smart growth

literature or in discussions about downtown revitalization.

2.4 The Role of Parking in Downtown Revitalization

If the goal of downtown revitalization is to create thriving spaces that are welcoming

to pedestrians, and exciting and unique places to visit, then consideration must be given to

how to get people to the downtown core from the suburbs, or how to get more people to live

closer to the core. Voith (1998) argues that when stronger and more attractive CBDs exist, it

will create a higher demand for use and also for parking. He goes on to explain that

"[e]ffective parking policies…must strike a balance between convenient parking and

maintenance of the dense urban fabric that makes the CBD unique" (Voith, 1998, p. 4). So

how do cities plan for parking in downtowns?

Municipal governments have been creating policies about parking in downtowns for

decades. The most common type of policy intervention is the use of minimum parking

requirements for development. This ensures that developers provide a minimum number of parking spaces to accommodate the residential and commercial demand due to their development. Some argue that these minimum requirements have actually increased the cost of housing, and perpetuated the use of the car (see Shoup, 1997; Voith, 1998; Millard-Ball, 2002; Weinberger, R., et al., 2010). Shoup points out that, "[p]eople want cars, and they need to park them somewhere. Minimum parking requirements would not have flourished if citizens, developers, and politicians had rejected them" (Shoup, 1997, p. 12). It has also been noted that "[m]inimum parking regulations impose major societal costs and undermine efforts to create balanced, sustainable transportation systems… [they] create a cycle that encourages transportation by private automobile, and, in turn, influences public authorities to require more parking" (Weinberger, R., et al, 2010, p. 29).

Some cities have gone the opposite direction and regulated maximum parking requirements to limit the number of parking spaces, in hopes of changing people's attitudes and behaviours (Millard-Ball, 2002). This is more common in larger cities that have higher modal splits that can support more viable alternatives to the personal automobile, most significantly transit. According to Weinberger et al. (2010):

> The most rational approach to setting maximums is to pre-determine the desired levels of access by different modes and ensure adequate facilities for each. If high auto access is desired, large amounts of parking should be in place. If high transit access is preferred, more transit capacity and less parking should be made available, likewise for bicycle and pedestrian access. Parking

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provided in excess of the desired levels of auto access will likely impede the

mode split goals (p. 44).

Millard-Ball (2002) argues that municipalities should leave parking to the developers, which

would establish more effective, market-driven parking. The literature is clearly divided on

minimum and maximum parking requirements, but it is important to note that parking

policies should not be stagnant – as the goals, patterns, and behaviours change, so should

related policies.

Another issue with downtown parking is pricing. Some municipalities offer free

parking in their downtowns to attract people to the core. Other municipalities charge for

parking, and generate revenue from it. Charging for parking creates the need for payment

infrastructure, which is an added expense for municipalities. Some cities own and operate

their own downtown parking lots, and are able to control supply and make profits (see Voith,

1998). There needs to be balanced pricing – if it is too expensive, people will not use it, and

therefore may not visit downtowns (Voith, 1998). Shoup (1997) points out that most car

trips across municipalities involve free parking – especially outside of the core where most

trips are taken. He also argues that free parking in cities has led to an increase in car

ownership and use (Shoup, 1997). Arnott (2006) describes the tension between free parking

and drawing people to the downtown:

Downtown merchants lobby the city to keep meter rates low, in the belief that

raising on-street parking fees would drive downtown shoppers to suburban

shopping centers, presumably not realizing that the reduction in downtown

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congestion per se from doing so would encourage downtown shopping more

than the on-street parking fee increase would discourage it (p. 465).

Blais (2010) argues that parking should be unbundled from the costs of facilities,

rents and goods which hide the costs of "free" parking by increasing the costs of

goods and services to everyone. Unbundling parking by directly charging costs to the

users of those spaces could also result in some spinoff effects, including reducing the

cost of rents and goods for everyone, and the potential to adjust behaviours, including

driving less. Parking pricing needs to be carefully considered and managed, which is

challenging given that many different needs and interests need to be balanced all at

the same time.

Where congestion is a significant factor in large cities, it is less of a concern in

mid-sized ones. Since much of the employment and retail is dispersed in these

suburban places, it means that many trips are to destinations other than the core –

which makes congestion much less of a factor (see Bunting & Filion, 1999). In larger

cities, reduced availability or high cost of parking will drive more people to take

public transit (Millard-Ball, 2002), however, in mid-sized cities, the necessary transit

infrastructure is often neither accessible nor affordable because of dispersion. Filion

(2003) states that, "[t]he combined effect of low density and of a dispersal of origins

and destinations makes it impossible to operate quality transit services" (p. 57).

Similarly, Voith (1998) notes that cars are needed to get people without transit to the

core.

Another, and possibly more productive, consideration that should be given to parking in cities is design. Surface parking is in conflict with the principles of smart growth, but it is also inexpensive. Structured parking – either above or below ground – is far more expensive to build, however is better aligned with smart growth principles as you can fit more cars in a particular area, and can also build things around and on top of it (see Filion, 2003; Table 1). Shoup (1997) argues that more attention should be given to the quality of parking rather than to the quantity – meaning that the focus should be on accessibility, setbacks, curbs, and visual and environmental factors, rather than the number of spaces (p. 16). Arnott (2006) notes that:

> [B]ecause parking garages are such particular structures, it is cheaper to construct one building that is exclusively devoted to parking and other buildings that are devoted to non-parking uses than to construct buildings with some of the space allocated to parking. Garage construction costs would probably be quite modest if the ground floor of a building were allocated to parking, but this space is especially valuable in retail use (p. 459).

Creating better parking facilities which incorporate smart growth principles including mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly, intensification, may be an ideal solution for downtown revitalization, yet are expensive to build.

Table 1 - Typical Parking Facility Financial Costs (2005 dollars)

Type of facility	Land costs	Land costs	Construction costs	O&M costs	Annual Cost	Monthly cost
	Per acre	Per space	Per space	Annual, per space	Annual, per space	Monthly, per space
Suburban, on-street	$50,000	$200	$2,000	$200	$408	$34
Suburban, surface, free land	$0	$0	$2,000	$200	$389	$32
Suburban, surface	$50,000	$455	$2,000	$200	$432	$36
Suburban, 2-level structure	$50,000	$227	$10,000	$300	$1,265	$105
Urban, on-street	$250,000	$1,000	$3,000	$200	$578	$48
Urban, surface	$250,000	$2,083	$3,000	$300	$780	$65
Urban, 3-level structure	$250,000	$694	$12,000	$400	$1,598	$133
Urban, underground	$250,000	$0	$20,000	$400	$2,288	$191
CBD, surface	$2,000,000	$15,385	$3,000	$300	$2,035	$170
CBD, 4-level structure	$2,000,000	$3,846	$15,000	$400	$2,179	$182
CBD, underground	$2,000,000	$0	$25,000	$500	$2,645	$220

(Assumes 7% annual interest rate amortized over 20 years) (Source: Litman, 2016, p. 10)

Cities must also consider policies and regulations for two distinct, but interrelated, types of parking in CBDs – on-street, curbside parking, and off-street lots and garages for public use. Weinberger, et al. (2010) note that "[t]here is a universal consensus among U.S. transportation planners that curbside parking on commercial streets is best used by short-time parkers, including: delivery and service vehicles and short-term visitors, often shoppers" (p. 24). Strategies to manage on-street parking include either increasing supply, which is in conflict with many smart growth and TDM strategies, or by decreasing demand. The tools available to decrease demand for on-street parking include restricting spaces to certain users

or uses (i.e. loading zones, accessible parking), metering, time limits, and bans (see Weinberger, R., et al., 2010). It is also noted that "[p]arking shortages are frequently perceived when the curb is full yet nearby off-street commercial lots may be well below capacity" (Weinberger, et al., 2010, p. 24). Gragera & Albalate (2016) note that "[i]f curbside parking is underpriced, it tends to be congested, slow down through traffic, and cause underutilization of public garages" (p. 160). It is clear that policy changes affecting the parking supply and demand must take into consideration the impact that on-street and off-street parking have on each other.

There are also differences in policy-making when it comes to the treatment of long-term versus short-term parkers. Gragera & Albalate (2016) note that:

> ... occasional parkers really can reduce their parking duration, park elsewhere, shift mode or desist from traveling. In contrast, subscribers are unlikely to change parking duration, avoid traveling or change transport mode as their trip is very frequent and probably highly constrained, leaving only a change in parking location as a feasible option (p. 165).

By moving long-term commuter parking to the outer edges of the downtown, it theoretically leaves more space in the prime core areas for short-term parking. Since travel for short-term parkers is more flexible or discretionary, policies must consider effects on both sets of users in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for the downtown.

A related issue affecting downtown parking is ownership and control over parking assets. On-street parking is normally publicly owned as part of the curbside, but off-street

parking is often a mix of public and private parking. Off-street parking can further be

divided into uses – those adjacent to businesses primarily used by employees and customers,

and general use lots and garages, usually with payment structures based on length of

occupancy. Some argue that in order to achieve the best parking outcomes, parking assets in

the downtown should be owned or controlled by the public sector (see Gragera & Albalate,

2016; Weinberger, R., et al., 2010). Gragera & Albalate (2016) argue that curbside parking

prices should be set at a higher rate than parking garages in order to balance out the system,

and that "[a]ll this stresses that the public authority should integrate curbside and garage

parking into a single-market regulation approach, to overcome distortions and achieve

efficiency" (p. 161). Weinberger, R., et al. (2010) further note that:

> The goal of private garage owners is to maximize profit. Because demand for
>
> short-term parking is less elastic than everyday commuter parking, private
>
> garages make much of their profit by charging very high rates for the first
>
> hour… Unless curbside meters are comparably priced which occurs more
>
> frequently when the curbside and off-street is managed jointly… these high
>
> first hour prices increase demand for curb parking, and add to cruising and
>
> double parking (p. 33).

This balancing act becomes increasingly difficult when much of the off-street parking is

controlled by the private sector.

Although interesting points, one thing that cannot be denied is that mid-sized cities

with high car dependence will require some sort of accommodation for automobiles while

visiting downtown. Due to the interdependency of both parking and revitalization-related

factors, finding the right balance to achieve the best possible outcomes is very challenging.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

This is a qualitative study involving three cases. In this context, a conceptual lens is

useful in framing the problem – parking – and providing the context from which to derive

questions, and provide analysis (Creswell, 2009, p. 62). In this case, smart growth provides

the best possible lens from which to examine downtown redevelopment in that it

encompasses the current prevailing thinking of planning practice, trends in provincial

planning legislation (see Ontario, 2006), and covers many of the key challenges facing

downtown redevelopment. There is no single accepted definition of smart growth, but it is

widely understood to share the following planning principles: compact, infill development,

increased densities, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly, increased public transit, decreased

automobile use, and community revitalization (Downs, 2005, p. 368).

This study aims to understand the relationship between these smart growth principles

and downtown parking. It seeks to examine several smart growth principles to see how

parking policies and smart growth co-exist, focusing primarily on the concepts of

walkability, increased transit, reduced car use and intensification.

Several assumptions are made in order to apply the smart growth conceptual lens to

this study. First, it assumes that the cities in the study population are using some of these

smart growth principles in current planning practice. This means that they have embraced

the concepts, even if they are not calling it "smart growth". This assumption is based on the

belief that smart growth is widely accepted as current planning best practice. Secondly, it assumes that having a strong downtown core is a good thing. Thirdly, it assumes that cities do actually plan for parking in some way, even if it means the status quo or that it plays little role. Lastly, it is assumed that this lens is the best one to use to analyze downtown revitalization in the current context.

Conversely, this study does not assume that smart growth is good, or is the solution to problems facing mid-sized cities. In fact, the purpose of this study is, in part, to challenge some of the assumptions of smart growth principles and their applicability to mid-sized cities that do not have many of the important features that make for successful smart growth implementation, as discussed earlier (e.g. transit, density, strong CBDs). The successful implementation of smart growth principles means that planners must work within the existing context – cities are not being built from scratch. This study seeks to understand how to successfully apply smart growth principles during downtown revitalization in mid-sized cities while accommodating (and attracting) the typical suburban dweller with (or without) their personal automobile.

Chapter 3 - Research Methods

This study focuses on municipal parking policy, and includes two steps: a comprehensive review of local policy documents, followed by interviews with local officials. The policy review is a detailed examination of relevant local documents to provide information around how cities are approaching parking issues from a policy perspective. This analysis is then supplemented by interviews with local officials to add additional relevant information, and to offer opinions about how these policies came about and whether they are working as intended. This study's focus is not on the actual physical form of these downtowns nor on the actual number of parking spaces.

This study draws on findings from case studies of three cities to provide an overview of parking issues in mid-sized municipalities in Ontario. It is a small-N study, which uses non-probability sampling for both case and participant selection. This study is exploratory in nature, and does not seek to test specific theories or hypotheses, but rather seeks to observe and draw some generalizations from diverse cases (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This section describes the study location, case selection, data collection and interpretation.

3.1 Study Location

This study defines a mid-sized city as a municipality with a population between 100,000 and 500,000. It uses the Canadian Census to assess population size. This population range was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, it coincides with the definition used in another study of mid-sized city downtowns (see Filion et al., 2004). Secondly, cities over

500,000 people start to become places that can support many of the core services that change

downtown dynamics, including large attractions, increased supply and use of transit, and

strong CBDs. Thirdly, cities under 100,000 in population are more likely to have smaller

downtowns, and are less likely to be able to employ some of the smart growth principles

being examined in this study.

Table 2 – Ontario Mid-Sized Municipalities, 2016 Census

Municipality	2011 Population	2016 Population	Percent Change
Chatham-Kent	103671	101647	-1.95%
Waterloo	98780	104986	6.28%
Thunder Bay	108359	107909	-0.42%
Milton	84362	110128	30.54%
Ajax	109600	119677	9.19%
Kingston	123363	123798	0.35%
Whitby	122022	128377	5.21%
Cambridge	126748	129920	2.50%
Guelph	121288	131794	8.66%
St. Catharines	131400	133113	1.30%
Barrie	136063	141434	3.95%
Oshawa	149607	159458	6.58%
Greater Sudbury	160274	161531	0.78%
Burlington	175779	183314	4.29%
Oakville	182520	193832	6.20%
Richmond Hill	185541	195022	5.11%
Windsor	210891	217188	2.99%
Kitchener	219153	233222	6.42%
Vaughan	288301	306233	6.22%
Markham	301709	328966	9.03%
London	366151	383822	4.83%

The selection of cases is limited to the province of Ontario for three main reasons.

Firstly, choosing cities from the same territorial jurisdiction aids comparison in that they

share common legislation, similar histories in terms of settlement and development, and are

more likely to have undergone similar planning interventions in the past. Secondly, as of 2016, Ontario has twenty-one municipalities with populations that fall between 100,000 and 500,000, which creates a large enough study population to be able to select diverse cases (see Table 2). And lastly, as a resident of Ontario, I am familiar with the province, and being located close to the study cities allows me greater access to resources.

3.2 Case Selection

As stated previously, the entire study population of cities with populations between 100,000 and 500,000 in Ontario is twenty-one. These are individual municipal populations, not Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs). Of these twenty-one, twelve are deemed to be stand-alone municipalities that are not suburban municipalities that form part of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) metropolitan region. This distinction is important because the former are more likely to have a historical downtown, have followed a more traditional development pattern with a dense core area surrounded by lower density suburban areas, and are less likely to be a commuter city (see Robertson, 1999). Many GTA suburban cities are also undergoing downtown revitalization, but the challenges they face are different because they are often creating an urban core from scratch (see Mississauga, 2010).

Three cases were selected because they represent a quarter of the study population of twelve stand-alone municipalities. The case study selection strategy is a diverse case method, where the objective is to "[achieve] maximum variance along relevant dimensions" (Seawright and Gerring, 2008, p. 300). Three is also a preferred number because it allows a

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selection of cases along a continuum of mature to evolving in terms of downtown

revitalization, with one somewhere in-between.

This study uses targeted sampling to select the three case cities. Random sampling in

this small-N study would be inappropriate, because randomly selected cities may not

represent the greatest amount of information to help answer the research questions

(Flyvbjerg, 2006). The benefit of targeted sampling for case selection is that it allows me to

choose those cases that are most relevant to my research (Newing et al., 2011, p. 73).

The three municipalities selected for comparison are Kingston, Kitchener, and St.

Catharines. When it comes to downtown revitalization success, each was assumed to fall

along different points on the continuum based on both documentary evidence and personal

observation, with Kingston being heavily documented in the literature as being quite mature

in its efforts (see Filion et al., 2004), St. Catharines thought to be somewhere in the middle

given its relatively short, but recently ambitious history of downtown redevelopment, and

Kitchener thought to be evolving, with its long history and mixed-success with downtown

revitalization projects but significant recent momentum (see Filion & Bunting, 1993). These

three cities share many important similarities, including historical core and suburban

development, the percentage of dwellings that are single detached houses, the percentage of

the working population that drives to work, and average housing prices (Statistics Canada,

2016).

While the diverse case method was selected in order to provide variation among the

cases, it was not without its challenges. Trying to determine the relative success of cities'

downtown revitalization efforts in advance of the study was difficult, especially since mid-sized cities are relatively understudied, and are rarely, if ever, ranked in terms of outcomes. What this means is that assumptions made at the time of case selection may not hold true throughout the study period, especially if the cases are actively undergoing revitalization, as was the case in this study.

3.3 Data Collection

There are three steps to the data collection process: (1) collecting documents which explain the local context, (2) completing interviews, and (3) revisiting document evidence. Collecting the data in this way is logical in that it first provides a foundation about the local case study context, providing a fuller picture when going into interviews with local officials, and establish some baseline knowledge about the study area. Revisiting the documents after the interviews helps fill in the gaps identified during the interviews, and to establish linkages between findings.

3.3.1 Document Research

This study involves a comprehensive review of relevant local documents, including planning policies like Official Plans, Community Improvement Plans, Zoning By-laws, as well as other relevant transportation, economic development and culture documents to provide a comprehensive picture of factors affecting parking in downtowns. This analysis also includes, where possible, a discussion of the historical parking policy landscape to add additional context for the current state. Information is accessed by visiting local archives and

municipal websites. Census data is used to compare some geographic and demographic data of each City, along with local planning data when available.

3.3.2 Interviews

The qualitative method selected for this study is semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are preferred to structured and unstructured because it allows me to develop a frame for the questions so that there is consistency across interviews, and at the same time allows the flexibility to follow-up on new and interesting information, or probe certain responses. It involved interviews with two to five local officials and stakeholders in each of the case cities. Interviews ranged from 30 to 60 minutes in length. Interviews were conducted in person or by phone. Copies of the interview questions were provided in advance in order to allow interviewees to prepare for the interview.

Interviewees were selected using a targeted sampling method which has the benefit of allowing me to select those that are most relevant to the study (Newing et al., 2011), including local officials and planners, and BIA staff. Since the case cities are relatively small, and the topic crosses typical municipal departmental mandates, there were only a few people in each place with enough background on the subject matter to be able to speak to the study's questions. These respondents include those with the most expertise on the issues related to downtown revitalization and parking in each of their cities.

Finding candidates for interviews proved quite challenging in some places. Much of this stems from the fact that in two of the case cities, Kitchener and Kingston, there is no single downtown revitalization document or plan to speak to. In both of these cities, the

officials interviewed had a broad understanding of downtown revitalization and the

associated parking issues, and were able to speak to the related planning and economic

development aspects of both.

Table 3 – Study respondents

Interview Code	City	Job Title	Organization
Interview A	St. Catharines	Executive Director	St. Catharines Downtown Association
Interview B (5 interviewees)	St. Catharines	Manager of Transportation, Economic Development Officer, Billing Manager, Urban Design Planner, Downtown Development Officer	City of St. Catharines
Interview C	Kitchener	Manager, Downtown Development	City of Kitchener
Interview D	Kitchener	Manager, Community Relations	Downtown Kitchener Business Improvement Area
Interview E	Kingston	Director, Transportation Services	City of Kingston
Interview F	Kingston	Managing Director	Downtown Kingston BIA
Interview G (2 interviewees, 1 previously interviewed – Interview C)	Kitchener	Executive Director, Economic Development, Economic Development Analyst	City of Kitchener

The interview questions were designed to answer the study's research question. The

questionnaire included six questions:

1. Can you describe the downtown revitalization process in your municipality?

2. What was your approach to parking during the revitalization process?

3. How important is parking relative to other factors in your downtown revitalization?

4. What were the outcomes of your parking strategy, and were they as intended?

5. What feedback have you received from the community about the revitalization process in general, and parking in particular?

6. If you were doing it again, what would you do differently?

3.3.3 Interpretation of Data

Interpretation of the results follow Creswell's (2008) research design for qualitative studies, and involves the following steps: gathering the data, reading and understanding it, coding it along themes, developing a narrative, and finally interpretation and dissemination. It is important that interview results are checked for internal validity by comparing interview results with document evidence for consistency. Creswell (2008) argues that this is important to ensure that the results you get from qualitative methods is accurate, by triangulating interview results with other document evidence and interviews. It is also important to check for external validity to ensure that the observed results are directly attributable to what is being asked and measured (Creswell, 2008).

In theory, the triangulation of interview results with the document evidence is logical, however, it becomes clear in this study that because the body of documentation related to parking in mid-sized cities is relatively small, often the only source for the information about local parking policy and its effects could be gathered through interviews. This made triangulation more challenging in some areas.

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Chapter 4 – Kitchener

4.1 Overview

The City of Kitchener is located in southern Ontario, approximately 150 kilometres west of Toronto, inside in the Greater Golden Horseshoe provincial planning area. Kitchener was founded in the early 1800s, has a strong manufacturing history, and is the location of the Waterloo Regional government headquarters.

Kitchener is a lower-tier municipality in the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, which also encompasses the City of Waterloo, the City of Cambridge, and the townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich. Because of this two-tier structure, Kitchener's local plans must also conform to the regional plans. Also, since Kitchener is part of the greater golden horseshoe, it must meet the standards set by that provincial planning legislation, in addition to other Acts that apply to all municipalities in the province.

The 2016 census population for the City of Kitchener is 233,222 which represents a 6% increase over the 2011 population. As of 2016, the percentage of private dwellings that are single-detached houses was almost 49%, remaining almost unchanged from 2006.

In terms of commuting, the percentage of those who drive to work has increased to 80% in 2016 from 70% in 2006, with an average commuting time around 23 minutes. The percentage of those who take transit to work is 7.3%, with walking and biking representing about 6% (Statistics Canada, 2016).

As of 2019, there are 3114 parking spaces in City-owned lots in downtown Kitchener, with additional privately-owned spaces available for office and customer use as well. There

are 363 free curbside parking spaces in the downtown, as well as 103 metered spaces. As of

2018, there are approximately 15,300 employees in the downtown core, up from 12,300 in

2010. The downtown resident population has grown from 3852 in 2010 to 4847 in 2018,

with an additional 2774 units in the development pipeline (Interview G, personal

communication, July 12, 2019).

4.2 History of downtown redevelopment

Downtown Kitchener has a long history, with a traditional early North-American

development pattern, much of which still exists today. According to Sikora (1988),

Kitchener's downtown saw steady growth between 1840 and 1912 due largely to industrial

expansion, but by the late 1950s had deteriorated significantly (pp. 122-123). At the same

time, suburban shopping was rapidly expanding, which was seen as a direct threat to

downtown merchants (Sikora, 1988).

According to a 2002 Kitchener downtown strategic plan, several factors have

influenced the evolution of downtowns, such as industry moving into business parks, the

popularity of the car reducing distance barriers, people's preference for shopping malls, and

housing being built away from the core (City of Kitchener, 2003, p. 2). It has also been

suggested that the boom and bust cycles of the core correlates with the number of 18-25 year

old's in the City (Interview C, personal communication, June 23, 2016). These factors have

led planners since the 1960s to try and find ways to draw people back downtown under

challenging circumstances.

Given the declining state of the downtown since the late 1950s, there have been

efforts to revitalize the downtown consistently since the mid-1960s. Most of these plans all

share similar themes and goals, and have overlapped, shifted, and morphed over time in

response to politics, the economy and population trends. They have also varied in scale,

between modest and grand.

4.2.1 Revitalization plans in the 1960s

The 1960s was an ambitious decade for downtown renewal plans in Kitchener. One

major study generated at this time was "The Plan… Downtown Kitchener" developed by the

Kitchener Urban Renewal Committee, and along with related economic and land-use

analyses, served as the basis for the downtown renewal plans for the next decade (City of

Kitchener, 1965). The plan contained recommendations for the downtown that would create

more pedestrian-friendly spaces, parks, landscaping, new traffic management measures

including a ring-road on the perimeter and one-ways in the core, adequate off-street parking,

investment in a new civic centre, and office and residential buildings on the periphery (City

of Kitchener, 1965, p. 6).

According to the plan, "[p]erhaps the single most important determinant of the area

shape of the modern downtown is the comparative availability of parking" (City of

Kitchener, 1965, p. 21). Several important observations about parking at this time were

identified, including that people will walk about five-hundred feet on average from their cars

to their destinations, and that 37% of land in the Kitchener CBD is devoted to parking and

60% to the automobile in total, yet people still view parking as inconvenient (City of Kitchener, 1965, pp. 21-22).

The study also reviewed the different parking types and needs in the downtown core, including workforce, casual, residential, visitors (hotel guests), and storage. Much of the concern of revitalization plans is around the availability and planning for casual parking, as it is seen to be a significant factor in attracting people downtown. It observed that although there is lots of parking capacity, it is not located where people want to be, and is too far away from destinations to be useful (City of Kitchener, 1965). It also cites that downtown Kitchener has a ratio of 2.2 parking spaces per one-thousand square feet of retail, whereas suburban shopping malls average 7 per one-thousand square feet (City of Kitchener, 1965, p. 50).

Land-use issues were raised as a concern at this time as well, as competing interests across the region affected the revitalization of the core. The plan recommended that efforts be undertaken to direct large developments back downtown, however this was happening at the same time as rapid suburban expansion, resulting in competing land-use and political goals (City of Kitchener, 1965).

These ambitious plans enjoyed a high-level of support in Kitchener, including from local businesses, the chamber of commerce, planners and Council (Filion & Bunting, 1993, p. 8). However, Filion and Bunting (1993) observe that:

…apart from road improvements and additional parking space, few concrete

changes took place… at the end of the decade the [central business district] was

in a worse state than ten years earlier because of both declining economic activity

caused by competition from new suburban shopping centres, and building decay

resulting from limited upkeep in the anticipation of urban renewal programs (p.

8).

This lack of progress amid competing priorities becomes a theme across the many

redevelopment initiatives to come in Kitchener.

4.2.2 Revitalization in the 1970s

The 1970s saw the implementation of some of the plans developed in the 1960s, with

adjustments made for changing levels of investment from senior levels of government

(Sikora, 1988). These changes included improvements to perimeter roads, underground

services, the purchase of land, development of the civic centre, and increased hotel and

business investment (Sikora, 1988). Also during this time, the Market Square complex was

completed as part of the anchor mall strategy, and there was significant retail expansion

although vacancy rates remained high outside of the malls (Sikora, 1988). Implementation of

one-way roads and street beautification projects were underway, and transit ridership

declined (Sikora, 1988).

With the reduction in public funds available for redevelopment, the City entered into

a controversial large-scale redevelopment project with Oxlea developers. The project

included a shopping mall, farmers' market, office development and parking garage, but failed

to generate the full anticipated spin-offs initially envisioned (Filion & Bunting, 1993, p. 9).

Sikora (1988) conducted a survey in the early 1980s about consumer behaviour following revitalization, which generated some interesting insights about public opinion of these efforts. Some of the most relevant findings include that of all of the land-uses surveyed, only parking received a negative rating by more than 50% of respondents (Sikora, 1988, pp. 130-131). In terms of what draws people downtown, in order of significance are better and more specialized shopping; professional, entertainment and public services; attractiveness and leisure; and proximity to work (Sikora, 1988, p. 133). Of the reasons not to go downtown, the most significant are availability and cost of parking; inconvenience; and weather (Sikora, 1988, p. 133). It is unclear whether this feedback was incorporated into future revitalization efforts.

4.2.3 Revitalization in the 1980s

The City's 1987 Downtown Revitalization Plan outlined several strategies that would contribute to a stronger core: an increase in housing and employment to help stabilize the retail market; strong cultural and events programs to entice people downtown; and building a reputation as safe environment (City of Kitchener, 1987). The plan also recognized that the appearance of the downtown is lacking, parking is an issue, that families use cars to get around, and that sufficient parking is critical to bolster revitalization (City of Kitchener, 1987).

The City's Zoning By-law also created barriers to redevelopment on two major fronts. The first was that the zoning by-law did not allow for residential expansion in the central business district for many years, however the City's 1987 plan recognized that an

increase in residential units in the core is key to successful revitalization (City of Kitchener, 1987, pp. 8-9). The second issue related to zoning was that the by-law imposed no minimum parking requirements on development, which is a common practice in many jurisdictions (City of Kitchener, 1987, pp. 21-22). The plan included recommendations to partner with private developers to increase parking capacity with other land uses, including underground garages (City of Kitchener, 1987, p. 21).

This period saw many of the redevelopment plans fail to come to fruition. Filion and Bunting (1993) note that Council's simultaneous support for both downtown development and suburban retail development significantly contributed to CBD decline (p. 12). This coupled with unfavourable market conditions, local political autonomy being challenged by conflicting priorities of other orders of government, and the shifting local politics, including the implementation of a new ward system and the associated rise of local neighbourhood group influence, meant that many of these plans did not get the support needed for implementation (Filion & Bunting, 1993).

4.2.4 1990s-2000s

The 1990s and early 2000s saw a decline in interest and investment in Kitchener's core. It was reported that "[b]y 1995 city council had little to show for three decades of efforts to revive the downtown" (Outhit, 2001, p. C01). However, the City established a task force in 1995 which consulted with residents and local businesses on how to spend a $2.6 million capital budget, with "[b]etter roads, better parking, better looking buildings" identified as the top priorities (Aagaard, 1995, p. A1).

During this period, the City of Kitchener adopted a Brownfield Remediation

Community Improvement plan which recognized that, "[b]rownfield sites pose financial

challenges to remediation and redevelopment. In many cases, the cost of remediation

effectively deters private sector redevelopment of these brownfield opportunities" (City of

Kitchener, 2008). This plan brings together the City and the Region of Waterloo's

brownfields financial incentives pilot program to reduce the costs of development on these

sites, and the province's Brownfields Financial Tax Incentive Program to provide property

tax assistance.

The City of Kitchener developed a Downtown Kitchener Strategic Plan for 2005-

2007, which was released in three volumes. The plan describes the investment of over $80

million in downtown Kitchener from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, including plans for

the addition of 1000 housing units, increased office occupancy rates, more than 100

restaurants, and 400,000 annual visitors (City of Kitchener, 2002). The plan recognizes the

strategic and historical importance of the downtown, and the key role that drawing people

back to the core will have on the success of redevelopment, with the goal to "continue to

advance and nurture downtown as a place for people - a place where people live, work, learn

and visit" (City of Kitchener, 2003, p. 4).

Revitalization tactics outlined include increasing activities to draw people downtown,

growing institutional and educational sectors, intensifying downtown residential, and

building support for community projects and hubs (City of Kitchener, 2003). This plan was a

more modest approach to revitalization than previous plans, with objectives explicitly scaled

appropriately so that they are achievable, given that large scale visionary plans were deemed "difficult to implement, and rarely successful" based on previous revitalization attempts (City of Kitchener, 2004, p. 2).

The issue of parking was largely absent from the 2005-2007 plan, other than encouraging the continuing study of parking, and promoting urban design guidelines that see parking located at the rear of buildings, underground, or in garages. Also during this time, planning for light-rail transit was underway, increasing calls for the City to adopt more restrictive long-term parking policies to encourage transit use (Pender, 2005). This debate heated up as the City was considering building two new parking garages, the argument for which was that the transit was still at least decade away from implementation (Pender, 2005, p. B9). It becomes clear at this time that smart growth principles are influencing downtown revitalization planning given the emphasis on residential intensification, and the goal of reducing car dependency.

4.3 Recent development initiatives (2010 - 2019)

The City of Kitchener has many initiatives underway, either directly or indirectly related to downtown revitalization. The issue of downtown parking is addressed by many of them, which means that related parking strategies are spread across these various initiatives. It is also important to understand the complexities of the local planning context, since local plans also need to align with, in Kitchener's case, regional planning and transportation initiatives as well as the provincial growth strategy.

All of these recent initiatives point to Council's ongoing commitment to revitalization of the downtown. They also reveal the tensions that exist while balancing various land-use planning and transportation goals, including responsible growth and revitalization, better roads and multi-modal transportation, and so on.

As part of Kitchener's strategic plan review, the City engaged Environics to undertake Kitchener Community Engagement Research, which involved telephone surveys with over 1000 Kitchener residents (City of Kitchener, 2014a). Top priorities identified include "maintenance and safety of roads, preserving green spaces, building infrastructure to support population growth, making downtown safer and providing adequate parking" (City of Kitchener, 2014a, p. 4). Of the 10 strategic priorities identified, "developing downtown" ranked seventh in terms of top priority (City of Kitchener, 2014a, p. 8). It also noted that "ensuring adequate parking" is second only to "improving safety" in the list of top priorities for downtown Kitchener (City of Kitchener, 2014a, p. 13). In terms of growth management initiatives, it noted that "creating walkable, self-contained communities appears lower on the priority list is, in part, likely a reflection that such communities are not a traditional feature of cities like Kitchener" (City of Kitchener, 2014a, p. 12).

The City of Kitchener's Downtown Kitchener Community Improvement Plan's major focus is on "encouraging the development and redevelopment of privately held lands in the Downtown" (City of Kitchener, 2014b, p. 8). This Community Improvement Plan details several initiatives, all to be funded from City capital funds. These include tax incentives for redevelopment, funding for feasibility studies for adaptive re-use, exemptions from certain

fees, and grants for facade improvements and business startups (City of Kitchener, 2014b). It

is unclear how successful these initiatives have been, and it has been noted that unless there

is a market for these types of projects, these incentives are not going to be enough to

encourage downtown revitalization (Interview C, personal communication, June 23, 2016).

The Kitchener Integrated Transportation Master Plan aims to create "a transportation

system that reduces dependence on the private automobile in Kitchener by 2031" (City of

Kitchener, 2013, p. 5). At the same time, it recognizes the reality that Kitchener will still rely

heavily on the personal automobile into the future. This plan addresses complete streets

principles, modal integration, demand management, and parking supply and management. It

also includes a discussion of a parking enterprise model.

The City of Kitchener's Transportation Demand Management Plan covers,

"[a] wide range of policies, programs, services, and products that affect whether, why, when,

where, and how people travel" (City of Kitchener, 2010, p. 3). It aims to reduce parking

demand in the downtown by promoting alternative modes, reducing the reliance on single

occupancy vehicles, and includes incentive programs for people to choose alternative

transportation methods, including discounted transit passes, carpooling, car share, safe ride

home, and teleworking (City of Kitchener, 2010). It also notes that "[t]he implementation of

successful TDM strategies in the City of Kitchener will contribute to improved air quality,

reduced greenhouse gas emissions, reduced parking demand, and improved public health"

(City of Kitchener, 2010, p. 3). According to the plan, the TDM program funding will come

from implementing the City's Parking Enterprise (City of Kitchener, 2010, p. 26).

A survey conducted as part of the TDM plan noted that downtown parking is a significant issue, and that the personal automobile is the most convenient mode for accessing the downtown (City of Kitchener, 2010). It also found that about 76% of workers in the downtown drive to work alone; 31% say that transit is not an option; 36% say that carpooling is not an option; and 52% say that biking is not an option (City of Kitchener, 2010, pp. 7-9).

The City's Long-Term Parking Strategy (2011a) focuses largely on parking demand during business hours, and recognizes that Kitchener is, and will likely continue to be, very car dependant, and that the lack of a significant congestion problem will likely see transit usage closer to the minimum projections as opposed to the maximum once the LRT is in place. The plan seeks ways to entice people to use alternate modes, reduce the surface parking lots to redevelop them for higher-density development, and look at ways to shift the burden for building parking to the private sector, while ensuring that there is sufficient short-term parking, and that office rents remain competitive (City of Kitchener, 2011a). It also analyzes influences on commuting behaviour, with residential development, price of gas, price of parking, and convenience of rapid transit being the most important factors (City of Kitchener, 2011a).

The City of Kitchener undertook a Parking Organizational Review which recommended a Parking Enterprise model for management of the City's parking assets (City of Kitchener, 2011b). The three alternatives examined included keeping the current in-house, tax supported model; an enterprise model with parking operations consolidated under a City division but fully self-funded; or the parking authority model where an arms-length

agency would have full control over parking functions (City of Kitchener, 2011b). The enterprise model was recommended because it achieves the goals of maintaining direct Council control over pricing, and can be linked up with other transportation initiatives, especially the Transportation Demand Management and the Cycling Master Plan, while providing a sustainable business approach that does not compete for City resources (City of Kitchener, 2011b).

An economic development strategy, Shape DTK 2020, contains three priorities for the downtown, including increasing the number and quality of local businesses in the core, creating a place where dynamic experiences can happen 24/7, and providing a collaborative, authentic, and caring community that not only draws people downtown, but keeps them engaged in the core community (Downtown Kitchener Business Improvement Area, 2019). The values, priorities, and associated actions listed in this visioning document point to the continued pursuit of a dynamic, welcoming, integrated core, which attracts many different users to the downtown, day and night.

The City's new zoning by-law eliminated the minimum parking requirements for residential development, including visitor spaces (City of Kitchener, 2019). There are also no minimum parking requirements for small scale office and businesses, but minimums still exist for large office buildings in excess of 4000 square metres. These changes are consistent with the City's other efforts to increase residential and office development in the core, and to reduce car dependence, and the downtown parking stock as well.

4.4 Approach to parking during revitalization

The City of Kitchener has given a lot of attention to the issue of parking during recent revitalization efforts, as evidenced by the strategies outlined above. For the purposes of this analysis, the revitalization period referred to here is 2010-2019, however it is important to note since the first two interviews were completed in 2016, it is very likely that some more recent efforts happening in downtown Kitchener have not been fully captured here.

The Region of Waterloo embarked on an ambitious rapid transit expansion plan, which includes a 19 kilometre Light Rail Transit (LRT) route with 16 stops connecting the City of Waterloo with the City of Kitchener, which entered service in 2019 (Region of Waterloo, 2016). The rapid transit plan is built on principles to support sustainable growth in the region over the next few decades, countering the sprawl growth pattern with intensification, reducing car dependence, and protecting the environment (Region of Waterloo, 2016).

Early assumptions were made about the effect that the LRT would have on travel patterns in downtown Kitchener, including that it would significantly reduce the dependence on the personal automobile. However, believing that the ridership projections were likely high, the City developed a parking model to anticipate future parking demand (Interview C, personal communication, June 23, 2016). This model determined that there are four main factors that influence driving behaviour and parking demand based on employment growth projections. The first factor is residential growth in the downtown, where for every 100 new residential units in the core, the demand for parking spaces would decrease by 27 (Interview

C, personal communication, June 23, 2016). The second factor is the price of gas, where "for every $.05 increase in the price of gas over $1.00 people will choose to drive less", however advances in auto technology, including more fuel efficient vehicles, may reduce some of this pressure (Interview C, personal communication, June 23, 2016). The third factor is price of parking, where every 3% increase in the price of a monthly pass reduces demand by 5% (Interview C, personal communication, June 23, 2016). The last major factor in this model was living in proximity to rapid transit, however only about 23% of downtown workers would live within walking distance to the planned LRT (Interview C, personal communication, June 23, 2016).

Based on this parking model, the City has been strategically increasing daytime long-term parking rates over a 5-year period (Interview C, personal communication, June 23, 2016). It was seen by some as a "cash grab" by the City, however, it was used to motivate people to change behaviour where "money was seen to be more compelling than morals" (Interview C, personal communication, June 23, 2016). The demand for parking in the downtown is still strong, with demand only tapering off recently, as planned (Interview C, personal communication, June 23, 2016).

The Downtown Kitchener BIA successfully lobbied the City for two-hour free parking downtown during the LRT construction period (Interview D, personal communication, August 31, 2016). It is widely understood that businesses want convenient access to parking for their customers, however, visitor parking is just one factor that determines visits, along with compelling services and streetscapes (Interview D, personal

communication, August 31, 2016). Much of the City's strategic focus has been on employee

parking, and less on visitor parking, indicating that visitor parking is seen as less of an issue

than long-term parking. This is surprising given the community consultation results which

point to parking being a significant concern for visitors to the downtown (City of Kitchener,

2014b).

It is clear that reducing car dependence, and therefore the demand on parking, is part

of a larger push to encourage people to choose alternative modes of transportation across the

city. Many of the Transportation Demand Management strategies are directly linked to

supporting a more dynamic downtown, and encouraging more sustainable commuting

including carpooling, telework and support for active modes (City of Kitchener, 2010). The

City adopted a new zoning by-law in 2019, and it was noted that "[a] lot of the initiatives that

came out of the TDM strategy have been implemented through the new regulations in the

zoning by-law" while other, more difficult to regulate strategies, are left to the employers to

implement (Interview G, personal communication, July 12, 2019).

Another approach to downtown parking is the actual type of parking the City is

investing in. The City of Kitchener is making efforts to reduce the amount of surface parking

lots in favour of parking garages. Given the current provincial and regional planning

framework, surface parking lots have been identified as prime sites for intensification (City

of Kitchener, 2011a). Investments in parking structures in the downtown core allows the

City to meet several different goals, including providing enough parking to meet demand,

creating opportunities for intensification, as well as contributing to the aesthetic of the built

environment aligned with the City's urban design guidelines (City of Kitchener, 2011a). However, this type of parking is a significant investment at approximately $32,000 to $58,000 per space (City of Kitchener, 2011a).

The significant increase in residential development in the core in recent years, and the associated changes to the minimum parking requirements in the zoning by-law, is consistent with smart growth planning principles as well. Efforts have been made to unbundle the parking in an effort to try and reduce the number of allocated spaces per unit, and make parking spaces available for non-building residents during the daytime (Interview G, personal communication, July 12, 2019). This type of approach aims to see parking facilities being more fully utilized 24/7, and reduce the demand for additional public parking structures.

Another important aspect of these downtown revitalization efforts is the shift in morality and public opinion in support of smart growth principles like intensification, multi-modal transportation, and environmental sustainability. The new energy in the downtown appears to be attracting more businesses and employees that place a higher value on the environment, which should in turn help the City advance its sustainability goals, including reducing the use of automobiles (Interview C, personal communication, June 23, 2016).

4.5 Importance of parking relative to other factors

The issue of downtown parking seems to be interrelated with all of the redevelopment initiatives underway in Kitchener. Tension exists between the desire for free parking from the local businesses and patrons, with the need to charge for parking to pay for expensive infrastructure like garages, and trying to change behaviour through policy.

From the public's perspective, daytime parking is an important issue, with about 72% of downtown employees travelling to work by car, and most of the City's energy around parking policies is spent on this particular segment. This may also support the feeling that downtown Kitchener is largely a "9-5" place (Interview C, personal communication, June 23, 2016). Survey results suggest that the public is less interested in redeveloping the downtown compared to other City priorities, although downtown parking is a significant issue for people when asked specifically about the downtown (City of Kitchener 2014b).

It is clear that the City wants people to come downtown, and that reducing traffic and parking barriers are important, but so is ensuring that there are high-quality services and an appealing urban aesthetic (Interview C, personal communication, June 23, 2016).

4.6 Revitalization outcomes related to parking

It is too soon to tell what the outcomes are related to parking policies in downtown Kitchener. The City has been effective at using pricing to control the demand for employee parking in the core, but in recent years, has paid less attention to the issue of short-term parking.

Another disruptive factor is the LRT. There is little doubt that it will have an effect on travel patterns, parking demand, and development and intensification of the downtown, but only time will tell how much. The City's goals of having more people live and work downtown will change the dynamic even further.

4.7 Conclusion

All of these initiatives rely on a fundamental shift in thinking, as the smart growth planning framework itself can only take it so far. Until residents get on board with the sustainability agenda, including openness to living in denser communities closer to where they work, these initiatives can only be partially successful. There is a feeling that this shift is already happening, and that the next few years will be very telling in terms of changing views (Interview D, personal communication, August 31, 2016). One final observation is that "there are those that want an urban environment, but have suburban expectations around availability and price of parking, which I don't think will ever go away" (Interview G, personal communication, July 12, 2019).

Regardless of the approach to parking, Kitchener appears to be successful at attracting employers and businesses to the core, and creating a place where people want to live and visit (Interview C, personal communication, June 23, 2016). The significant increase in the number of residential units in the core over the next few years will further change the face and feel of the downtown.

Chapter 5 – St. Catharines

5.1 Overview

The City of St. Catharines is located on the south shore of Lake Ontario at the entrance to the Welland Canal, and is part of the Greater Golden Horseshoe provincial planning area. It is a historical City incorporated in the mid-1800s, with a traditional downtown, and strong manufacturing and industrial roots. It is also home to Brock University.

St. Catharines is a lower-tier municipality and the administrative centre and designated urban growth area of the Niagara Regional Municipality, which also includes Fort Erie, Grimsby, Lincoln, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls, Pelham, Port Colborne, Thorold, Wainfleet, Welland and West Lincoln. Also, like the City of Kitchener, St. Catharines is part of the greater golden horseshoe, and therefore must conform to the policies and standards set by that provincial planning legislation, in addition to other municipal legislation in the province.

The 2016 census population for the City of St. Catharines is 133,113 which represents only a 1.3% increase over the 2011 population. As of 2016, the percentage of private dwellings that are single-detached houses is about 56% which is a decrease from 58% in 2006.

In terms of commuting, the percentage of those who drive to work is almost 81% in 2016 up from 78% in 2006, with an average commute length of just over 21 minutes. Only

about 4% of people use transit to get to work, with just over 7% walking or cycling (Canada Census 2016).

As of 2017, there were 3911 parking spaces in downtown St. Catharines, composed of 1870 in City-owned lots, 1034 on-street spaces, and 1007 in privately-owned lots (City of St. Catharines, 2017). As of 2008, there were approximately 9800 employees in the downtown core, with a projection of a modest increase of 400 jobs by 2026 (City of St. Catharines, 2008). The downtown resident population has grown 3.8% from 3329 in 2011 to 3455 in 2016 (Census Canada, 2016).

5.2 History of downtown redevelopment

Much of the documentation addressing downtown revitalization in St. Catharines points to the same patterns as were faced by other mid-sized municipalities since the 1950s, mostly related to increased suburban expansion in the post-war period. It is noted that "the downtown has a unique setting with a rich architectural heritage dating back to the 19th century. Investments in streetscaping ... have resulted in a pleasing urban landscape on primary arteries" (City of St. Catharines, 2007, p. 10). Downtown St. Catharines is still considered the historical and cultural centre of the city, with ongoing investments in redevelopment since the 1960s, including partnering with other levels of government to leverage funding as it became available (City of St. Catharines, 2007).

As opposed to trying to recreate the downtown that was, much of the recent redevelopment effort in St. Catharines focused on diversifying the core. The City has recognized that "[t]o be successful, the downtown should evolve from the retail hub that it

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was 50 years ago to a balanced area that provides opportunity for specialty retailing, office employment, cultural facilities and housing" (City of St. Catharines, 2007, p. 8). This approach is evident throughout most of the redevelopment plans since these efforts began.

Revitalization efforts became more mature in the 1990s and onward, as many strategies were developed, task forces and committees established, and consultation efforts increased. The creation of the St. Catharines Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan in 2008, combined with fortunate timing, allowed the implementation of many key redevelopment efforts that have been successful at reenergizing the downtown.

The role of parking in downtown revitalization in St. Catharines is a key component of many of the plans and reports on this topic since the 1990s. Although it is consistently recognized by the public, staff and Council as important to the success of downtown revitalization efforts, it has not been consistently addressed during implementation.

The historical review of downtown revitalization for the City of St. Catharines is comparatively short. This is in large part due to the fact that the downtown interventions were very small and sporadic in scale in St. Catharines until the late 1990s, in contrast to Kitchener which has had a much longer and sustained involvement in downtown revitalization.

5.2.1 Downtown revitalization in the 1970s - 2000s

The 1970s and 1980s saw increased focus on neighbourhood, housing, and municipal service improvement projects in the downtown. These projects utilized the many available federal and provincial funding programs, such as Neighbourhood Improvement Plans;

Ontario Neighbourhood Improvement Program; Program for Renewal, Improvement, Development, and Economic Revitalization; Ontario Home Renewal Program, among others, providing funding for rehabilitation projects (City of St. Catharines, 2003).

The City of St. Catharines completed a broad redevelopment strategy for the downtown in the mid-1980s, and "also initiated a 'load program' to encourage the conversion of vacant and underutilized commercial space to residential use. These initiatives resulted in varying degrees of success" (City of St. Catharines, 2007, pp. 3-4). These early efforts show that building and site redevelopment, including increasing residential capacity in the downtown have clearly been long-standing concerns and priorities.

The City's Comprehensive Development Strategy (2002) has three main categories related to business services sector expansion, residential intensification, and traffic control and management, including parking. As this strategy was authored by the Economic Development and Tourism Services Department, most of the recommendations are related to the expansion of the local economy, specifically the high-tech sector, with a view to linking with other City priorities, including providing the services (i.e. hydro, fibre optics) required to support this sector (City of St. Catharines, 2002). It claims that strengthening the knowledge-based economy would help create a new energy in the downtown, and draw more business to the core (City of St. Catharines, 2002).

The City of St. Catharines adopted a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) in 2004, which outlined strategies for the downtown and two other designated areas. The objective of the Community Improvement Plan is to increase investment in public and private lands in the

downtown, and encourage partnerships on development and redevelopment efforts, while incorporating smart growth principles to improve existing neighbourhoods.

The CIP explained that "[i]t is by way of a Community Improvement Plan, approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, that a municipality can offer financial assistance to private property owners in order to encourage private sector rehabilitation activities that are identified as community priorities" (City of St. Catharines, 2004, np.). The CIP also recommended the establishment of grant programs to offset costs related to residential conversion and development, as well as facade improvements, and also included options for tax increment financing, and refunds of certain permit fees (City of St. Catharines, 2004).

Some of the major issues identified for the downtown area included increasing residential development, fixing the one-way traffic system, diversifying the types of businesses, and beautification of public spaces. It suggested that "[e]xpanding the residential population base is seen as the crucial factor in revitalizing the Downtown" (City of St. Catharines, 2004, np.). This would create a "24/7" market which would increase demand for a variety of services and create a more welcoming and safe downtown.

The issue of parking is categorized under "municipal initiatives" for the downtown. It notes that "[t]he parking system is at or near capacity and this situation will only be exacerbated if the residential parking requirement is eliminated. In addition, employers who need to provide employee parking may choose to locate elsewhere" (City of St. Catharines, 2004, np.). The CIP calls for the municipality to undertake a variety of

actions related to parking, including removing the zoning requirement for parking in residential development to stimulate housing growth, develop a parking master plan, and create a strategy around surface parking lots to enhance the urban esthetic (City of St. Catharines, 2004). Interestingly, even though parking is identified as an issue to be addressed, the remedy (i.e. mandating more parking) is specifically excluded because it competes with other priorities (i.e. increasing the housing supply) by making development more expensive.

The Transportation and Environmental Services Department presented the Downtown Parking Study Recommended Strategy in March 2006. It states that "… it is safe to assume that the Downtown parking system will not be able to accommodate future demand unless the existing supply is maintained or increased" (City of St. Catharines, 2006, np.). The 2006 Downtown Parking Study also recognizes that parking is directly related to the success of the downtown, including its role in enhancing the urban fabric. It states that "[t] he demolition of existing buildings and the assembly of land for parking purposes do not complement Council's support for residential intensification, in-fill developments or Regional/Provincial Smart Growth policies" (City of St. Catharines, 2006, np.).

The study assesses several options for parking, including maintaining existing, rebuilding garages and expanding spaces, or leaving it to the private sector. It notes that "[a] reduction in supply, although the cheapest and easiest solution, would not serve the Downtown well and would put a tremendous strain on the economic viability of the area" (City of St. Catharines, 2006, np.). It also recognized that the private sector would not build

garages because they are not economically viable, which would increase the likelihood of surface lots, which are in conflict with the City's smart growth goals. It also noted the existence of pressures to sell off public and private land for development, but also that "[a]s the availability of parking plays a major role in the economic viability of a traditional Downtown, selecting a strategy that focuses on reducing the overall parking supply or exiting the parking business altogether should not be considered" (City of St. Catharines, 2006, np.). This study also recognized that the parking supply would still operate in a deficit for many years, but that recommendations around parking rate increases should only be made once Council chooses a direction on development.

In 2007, the City of St. Catharines held a strategic planning session, and identified downtown revitalization as one of its five strategic priorities. In response to this strategic direction, staff presented a discussion paper called Creating a Vibrant Downtown (2007) which called for a comprehensive strategy for downtown revitalization building on existing strategies and initiatives planned or underway.

The discussion paper outlined seven key components necessary to create a vibrant downtown, including ease of access and movement, safety, business development, civic attractions, centralization of services, residential development and visual quality. It builds on previous themes focusing on residential development, noting that it "...results in regular usage of the downtown, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year" (City of St. Catharines, 2007, p. 10).

This discussion paper also covers issues related to parking, linking back to previous reports that say that parking and traffic are seen as deterrents to coming downtown, regardless of whether the problems are perception or reality (City of St. Catharines, 2007). It also anticipates that long-term trends will see a reduction in the use of the personal automobile due to rising fuel costs and concerns about climate change, and that "...cities around the world have been looking to alternative modes of transportation such as public transit, cycling and walking to alleviate congestion and improve access in and around the urban centre" (City of St. Catharines, 2007, p. 6).

The paper also discusses the need to invest in other modes, like transit, cycling and walking, including the creation of incentive programs for downtown employers to promote alternate modes (City of St. Catharines, 2007). It notes that, "[o]ver the long-term, this approach will alleviate demand for parking, and contribute to overall physical and environmental quality in the City" (City of St. Catharines, 2007, p. 6). It also makes the link between parking and increased community safety, noting that "in the future, the City may wish to consider replacing surface parking and other vacant areas to promote uses that maximize street-level activity" (City of St. Catharines, 2007, p. 7).

Overall, there is significant overlap in the goals and priorities of all of the downtown redevelopment plans, which became more explicitly linked to smart growth planning principles after the provincial growth strategy came into effect. Regardless, the principles of intensification, redevelopment, and multi-modal transportation existed throughout these documents even before they were labelled smart growth.

5.2.2 Recent development efforts (2008-2017)

The roadmap for St. Catharines' recent redevelopment efforts is the 2008 Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan (DCCMP). It is a very detailed study and plan for the downtown which covers the existing context, the key themes guiding downtown growth, and specific strategies and deliverables, all linked back to the provincial growth policies. This plan, like others before it, recognizes the need to shift the focus of the downtown from its traditional roots to its new contemporary role. It was noted that "historically, the reason people came downtown was to do shopping... that's not really its function anymore" and that the plan aims to "bring people downtown for things other than jobs and shopping" (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

The provincial Places to Grow planning legislation identifies downtown St. Catharines as an Urban Growth Centre, requiring certain residential and employment density targets, along with other smart growth goals including intensification, and encouragement of multi-modal transportation policies (City of St. Catharines, 2008, p. 34). It is also the only urban growth area identified in the entire Niagara Region, making it a priority for not just the City, but the Region as well. Niagara Region's Official Plan focuses on employment and tourism growth, as well as residential intensification, both of which are prioritized in the DCCMP (City of St. Catharines, 2008). This policy and legislative alignment is important not just for compliance, but in terms of synchronization of investment priorities as well.

The high-level objectives of the DCCMP are to "create a safe and attractive Downtown that both will attract investment and tourists; redefine the Downtown as a

desirable place to live, shop and do business; and encourage people to walk through the Downtown, day and night" (City of St. Catharines, 2008, p. i). The plan is extremely comprehensive, and includes short, medium and long-term goals and priorities, in addition to site-specific recommendations for development, as well as details about pedestrian, cycling, and transportation linkages and networks (City of St. Catharines, 2008). It also includes some guiding principles for governance, including creating dedicated resources to ensure the plan's success, and outlines who should be involved and consulted along the way (City of St. Catharines, 2008).

The DCCMP recognizes the evolution of uses in the downtown. It states that "[r]ather than competing with the suburban mall, the Downtown needs to capitalize on its eclectic retail base, cultural heritage, built form, and community and civic stock to lend itself a competitive edge over the typical mall" (City of St. Catharines, 2008, p. 47). The downtown has a strong daytime population, with a large number of municipal, regional and provincial government offices, as well as some smaller companies and corporate satellite offices, but lacks a large corporate presence (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

Having the detailed plan, coupled with fortunate timing in terms of recession-related investment from other governments, meant that much of what was planned for in the DCCMP was actually delivered. The Meridian Centre, an arena with over 5000 seats, and home to the Ontario Hockey League Niagara IceDogs, funded primarily by the City, was built on what was a large surface parking lot (Interview B, personal communication, August

18, 2016). A new performing arts centre was built, with multiple performance spaces over 95,000 square feet, paid for with funds from the federal, provincial and municipal governments. The new Brock University School of Fine and Performing Arts was also built downtown, and was a joint project of the federal government and Brock University (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

The redevelopment of the Carlisle Parking Garage, including ground level retail space, was identified in the DCCMP as key to ensuring adequate parking supply in the downtown, and was funded jointly by the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government. The City also undertook other infrastructure projects and improvements, including the construction of a new bridge, and the conversion of the one-way street system (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016). It was noted that the conversion of the street system has been "very successful" and that the extension of the Niagara Wine Route through downtown St. Catharines "wouldn't come unless there was two-way traffic" (Interview A, personal communication, May 6, 2014). The downtown has also seen an increase in the number of housing units, as well as in the number of restaurants (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

The City's 2017 Downtown Parking Study determined that there is more than sufficient supply to meet current demand, and that this will likely remain the case until 2036. There is one zone in the downtown that is slated for significant residential and employment growth during the next 20 years, and the report recommends that the parking in this area be monitored (City of St. Catharines, 2017, pp. 21-22). The study recommended that the City

make inflationary adjustments to the parking rates, and reduce the free parking time limit from three hours to two hours in order to create more availability in the most highly-used spaces (City of St. Catharines, 2017). Another recommendation was to move the free parking from starting at 6:00 pm on weekdays to 9:00 pm to generate additional revenues. It also suggested that the City make more of an effort on TDM measures, including carpooling incentives, cycling infrastructure, and increased transit use (City of St. Catharines, 2017).

5.3 Approach to parking during revitalization

The DCCMP calls for a balance between parking policies that ensured that people could find a space, with the smart growth ideals of reduced dependence on the personal automobile, and the removal and redevelopment of surface parking lots. It notes that "[t]here is a delicate balance between how much increased parking can be supplied by new development and attracting such development" (City of St. Catharines, 2008, p. 59).

The DCCMP analyzes the as-is state of parking in the downtown. It notes that "...the majority of the City's 600 on-street meter spaces are typically always occupied. The 'core demand' area of the City… is typically operating above 85 percent parking capacity which makes it extremely difficult for users to find convenient parking in a timely manner" (City of St. Catharines, 2008, p. 30). The DCCMP calls for rebuilding the Carlisle Garage to include not just more parking spaces, but also ground level retail. Even though parking garages create a lot of capacity on a condensed footprint, "there's a sense that people don't like parking garages" (Interview A, personal communication, May 6, 2014).

The DCCMP states that "[o]verall, the Downtown parking system will not be able to accommodate future parking demand unless the existing supply is maintained or preferably increased. A reduction in parking supply will put a tremendous strain on the economic viability of the Downtown" (City of St. Catharines, 2008, p. 31). However, in terms of actual deliverables, "[w]hile we were investing in these [new] facilities we were de-investing in parking" (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

What was called for in terms of parking in the DCCMP is, in some major ways, not what happened during implementation. It was noted that "[t]he approach to parking is that a lot of it has been taken away as part of the revitalization. For example, the Meridian Centre sits on what was a very large permit parking lot" (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016). It was observed that "[o]n street, high-turnover [parking] hasn't changed too much - lost a little bit of that through development - but been a lot less substantial than the [loss of] longer-term permit parking" (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

The City's parking study found that even with this reduction in the number of parking spaces in the downtown, there is still enough supply to accommodate the demand, however the spaces may not be located directly adjacent to people's final destination as some may prefer (City of St. Catharines, 2017). It was observed that this approach to parking has received mixed reactions and that it "[f]orced a lot of foot traffic in the downtown...they can't park on site so they have to park within the downtown elsewhere which then created the need for them to walk" which created spin-off effects resulting in increased pedestrian activity

around restaurants, and likely in some private investment in facade improvements as well (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

5.4 Importance of parking relative to other factors

There are consistent themes in all of the downtown redevelopment initiatives in St. Catharines around parking, in that it is perceived as an area of concern to residents, and seen as a key factor in success of these efforts. It is interesting, however, that when the major development efforts were being implemented, the issue of parking played a "significantly unimportant" role (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

The City removed the requirement for providing parking in the downtown as part of commercial and residential development. This is seen as favourable to fostering development, but at the expense of convenient parking. The Official Plan also prohibits new single-purpose surface parking in the downtown, meaning that developers can "put parking in as part of development; if you put up a hotel you can add the associated parking, but you can't tear down a building to put in a parking lot" (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

Although reducing parking in the downtown is seen as a more efficient use of land, and more attractive and affordable for development, there is also a sense that it is more difficult for those who own buildings to find parking in the downtown (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016). The DCCMP notes that "[d]espite the Downtown's current lower office rental rates in comparison to outlying suburban areas, there is a trend for

new businesses and tenants to locate outside the Downtown in order to have convenient parking" (City of St. Catharines, 2008, p. 59).

Despite various parking studies, and strategies and recommendations outlined in the DCCMP, when it comes to implementation there was not much of a "parking strategy" outside of what was contained in the Official Plan and Zoning By-law (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016). It was noted that "now that we have the plan in place, it is a good time to look at the parking strategy in the new context" (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

5.5 Revitalization outcomes related to parking

There is the sense that "[a] majority of people are happy with what is going on… and that there's a positive turnaround [in the downtown]" (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016). Even though some parking spaces were lost as a result of redevelopment, there is a sense that the positive effects outweigh the negative ones when it comes to parking. It was noted that "[w]e got rid of the long-term parking but look at what we gained for it… the foot traffic and there's been a lot of spin-off" (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

A 2016 survey of 300 St. Catharines residents about downtown revitalization revealed some interesting findings, including that "...about 80 percent of St. Catharines residents do not attend live performances or sports events more than "once in a while". It is surprising, therefore, that a majority was fully in favour of the downtown revitalization projects that had little impact on their own lives" (Ripmeester, 2016, p. 2). The study also found that

"[p]articipants who supported the projects were confident that these new facilities would renew interest in the downtown among both residents and visitors" (Ripmeester, 2016, p. 3). The survey also found that ranked among other priorities, 13.9% of respondents thought that better parking would improve the downtown, which is not significantly high considering that at almost equal weight were several other suggestions including "family friendly" and "better entertainment" (Ripmeester, 2016, p. 3).

It is also interesting to note that parking prices do not seem to play a significant role in downtown revitalization. There has been no change in the parking rates in downtown St. Catharines, which are generally $1.50 an hour throughout the downtown, with monthly rates at $81.50 (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016). Although the idea of free parking in the core is contemplated by some stakeholders, there is a "[s]ense that there's good affordable parking in the downtown" and that creating free parking "would not solve any problems" (Interview A, personal communication, May 6, 2014). It has been found that "[f]ree parking is usually detrimental to retail since it leads to a decrease in parking opportunities for customers" (City of St. Catharines, 2016, np). The 2016 parking study recommended a slight inflationary increase to the parking rates (City of St. Catharines, 2016).

Much of the concern with parking can be attributed to behavioural changes. The challenges were described as "[c]ultural changes, going from being able to park at a plaza where ever you want in front of the store you want to go to, to having to go and look for your parking space and maybe walk a little bit to your destination" and that "some people are used

to that old way of doing things" and there is an adjustment needed in terms of expectations around increased walking distance (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

As part of the City's 2016 downtown parking review, it was recommended that "[e]fforts should be targeted towards improving the efficiency of current operations rather than expanding the parking supply" (City of St. Catharines, 2016, np). Also significantly, it was noted that "[t]he existing parking supply is anticipated to be sufficient to accommodate the projected parking demand for 2036 since the parking system will not exceed 85% occupancy threshold, based on our projection analysis" (City of St. Catharines, 2016, np.). There are also recommendations around transportation demand management (TDM), especially during special events where there is a larger perceived issue with parking. These recommendations include multimodal strategies, ride-matching, increased transit or shuttle service, and better pedestrian signage (City of St. Catharines, 2016).

5.6 Conclusion

In many ways, the timing was right for implementing the Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan, as the 2008 recession fostered investment in capital projects by both federal and provincial levels of government. Luckily for the City of St. Catharines, it had a "plan in the hopper ready to go" and a supportive Council ready to move forward on the large redevelopment pieces (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

There is a clear sense that things in downtown St. Catharines are changing, including that more people are moving downtown (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016). There has also been a change in the nightlife in the downtown in that "[i]t used to be

that after 5 o'clock it was a ghost town in downtown St. Catharines… and now, especially during the school year, weeknights are quite vibrant" including a shift from "mostly bars and clubs catering to the student population to restaurants, more families" (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

It is likely too soon to tell what the long-term effects of these redevelopment initiatives are. Signs point to success on several fronts, including creating large venues in the downtown attracting people to the core, as well as spin-off businesses. The issue of parking is less clear. Public opinion seems to suggest that downtown parking is still a concern, but there is also evidence that there is plenty of parking to meet the demand. A key factor in the success will be the ability to change public perception about what is reasonable in terms of parking, which is neither easy nor fast.

Chapter 6 – Kingston

6.1 Overview

The City of Kingston is located in eastern Ontario, about 250 kilometres east of Toronto on the shore of Lake Ontario. It is an old City with a traditional development pattern and historical downtown, and was incorporated in the mid-1800s. It is home to Queen's University and the Royal Military College of Canada.

Kingston is a single-tier municipality, which was amalgamated with two adjacent townships in 1998. Kingston falls outside of the Greater Golden Horseshoe provincial planning area, and is not subject to the growth plan rules set out in the Places to Grow Act. Regardless, the province has issued growth guidelines in the Provincial Policy Statement (Ontario, 2014), and the City has set its own ambitious sustainable growth targets that align with the principles of smart growth as well (City of Kingston, 2004b).

The 2016 census population of the City of Kingston is 123,798, representing only a 0.4% increase over the 2011 population. Single-detached dwellings account for about 50% of all private dwellings, which has held steady since 2011.

According to the 2016 census, the percentage of those who drive to work has increased to 72% in 2016 from 69% in 2011. It is also interesting to note that although the number of drivers has increased, so has the number of commuters using transit, increasing to 8% from 5%.

As of 2019, there are 2481 parking spaces in City-owned lots, and 1835 of on-street spaces in downtown Kingston, which does not include privately-owned spaces available for office and customer use as well. According to the Downtown Kingston BIA, in 2014, there were approximately 22,322 employees in the downtown core, and the resident population was approximately 10,643.

6.2 History of downtown redevelopment

Downtown City of Kingston is in good shape compared to many of its Ontario mid-sized city counterparts in that it has an existing strong, diversified core, and has maintained much of its historical charm and character. It is an enviable situation where "[a] well-developed core of specialty and high-end stores, restaurant services and entertainment venues, as well as, the continued efforts of business and property owners, the City and BIA to maintain a visually attractive downtown area, all contribute to downtown Kingston's vitality" (City of Kingston, 2004a, p. 34).

Some downtown redevelopment efforts have taken place in the post-war period, many with the aim of maintaining the historical character and enhancing the downtown's connection to the waterfront. It has been noted that "Kingston is one of only a few smaller cities in North America that have sustained a successful downtown in the face of suburbanization and relocation of much commercial activity to the edges of its urban area" with the university, large public employers, strong retail, historical preservation, and livable residential neighbourhoods nearby contributing to its success (City of Kingston, 2010, p. 50).

The issue of parking is addressed in many documents related to downtown revitalization in the post-war period. The approach has been, for the most part, a balanced one, with the City noting that "[e]ven though there is a paradigm shift occurring in municipal parking away from providing as much parking as possible, the downtown must still maintain a balance between parking supply and demand. If the supply is reduced to the point where demand cannot be satisfied, actions should be taken to re-establish the balance" (City of Kingston, 2007, p. 11).

6.2.1 Early redevelopment efforts

The 1960 comprehensive planning study looked at the City as a whole, focusing on building uses, the issues of sanitation and overcrowding, and contains specific recommendations for four special areas, including the central area (City of Kingston, 1960). For the central area, several issues are raised, including that "[t]he general structure of the downtown has not kept pace with the rapid growth and technological changes of today… [c]ar parking for downtown workers and shoppers has become increasingly difficult, and traffic flows have been affected greatly by too much on-street parking" (City of Kingston, 1960, p. 76). It also notes that "[a]dequate off-street parking and relief of traffic congestion are of course basic to the efficient functioning and restoration of the central area. The City has taken positive steps in acquiring land for car parks which are operated by the City Parking Authority" (City of Kingston, 1960, p. 33).

The 1960 study recognizes that there is existing strength in the core, even with the commercial transformation underway due to suburbanization. It highlights that "Kingston is

one of the few older cities in which it is still possible for families of all kinds to live downtown. In fact there are not many modern suburbs to equal the quality and character of the Old Sydenham Ward… [i]t is typical of all that is best in Kingston" (City of Kingston, 1960, p. 7). It warns that "[t]here is a danger, however, that buildings which are of great architectural or historical value may also be destroyed not of necessity but because of thoughtlessness. Kingston has taken steps to preserve such buildings since they form such an important element in the general character and appearance of the City" (City of Kingston, 1960, p. 36). There appears to be some conflict with these sentiments throughout the plan, as future-state drawings of the downtown depict the removal of many buildings to significantly increase the off-street parking capacity in the downtown.

There do not appear to be many other large-scale, comprehensive redevelopment plans for the downtown until the early 2000s. A Waterfront Master Plan was developed in 1984 (Downtown Kingston, 2013), and there were also other small efforts and projects, including some to increase parking in the downtown (Interview F, personal communication, March 15, 2018).

6.2.2 Recent redevelopment initiatives (2004-2017)

The basis for much of the recent redevelopment efforts in downtown Kingston is the Downtown Action Plan (2004). The Downtown Action Plan was developed in response to the need for significant utility infrastructure replacement in the downtown (City of Kingston, 2004a). It intends to utilize the opportunity created by major road reconstruction to improve the urban realm. It contains plans for each distinct part of the downtown, including parks and

open spaces, with detailed recommendations about streetscape improvements, and defines materials and elements that complement existing character while supporting current uses and priorities (City of Kingston, 2004a). This plan contains very few recommendations related to parking other than materials and treatments for existing on-street parking spaces. However, the large scale and significant time commitment to this project has allowed other complementary initiatives to be built upon it.

The City of Kingston's Urban Growth Strategy (2004) is a long-term guide for development across the entire urban boundary. It addresses the core business district only minimally, noting that the downtown is strong, and should continue to be the focus of commercial development, and that "[a]dditional strategically located residential development would further support the downtown businesses and services" (City of Kingston, 2004b, p. 18). It also points to the importance of smart growth planning principles, and states that "[i]nfilling and redevelopment are fundamental components of the Urban Growth Strategy (City of Kingston, 2004b, p. 19).

The Core Area Transportation Review (2007) is a very detailed plan for parking, traffic, transit, cycling and walking strategies in the short- and long-term. It recognizes that adequate parking is an important aspect of a successful downtown, and while it acknowledges the shift towards transportation demand management, it also recognizes the need for parking to remain at current levels. It notes that "Kingston is also in a favourable position with respect to parking supply in that neither public parking or private parking is over-supplied – a situation that can detract from urban design, the pedestrian environment

and transit ridership" (City of Kingston, 2007, p. 16). It also points out that the City is in a strong position in that it "controls a large portion of the total [parking] supply, and can therefore affect policies with respect to usage, allocation and pricing" (City of Kingston, 2007, p. 2).

Many of the short-term strategies in the Core Area Transportation Review are related to ensuring the continuing adequate supply of parking. Ten of the 17 short-term recommendations are directly related to parking, including reviewing minimum parking standards, reducing space dimensions, parking rate adjustments, and the creation or expansion of certain lots and garages (City of Kingston, 2007). Other short-term recommendations include increased transit frequency, and upgraded walking and cycling facilities (City of Kingston, 2007). It also recognizes that although there are important long-term goals for increasing use of alternate modes, that "… achieving this new direction will take time, and in the meantime it is unreasonable to expect that the Kingston public will support significant changes in transportation planning that would penalize use of the private automobile" (City of Kingston, 2007, p. 1).

In 2011, staff presented a discussion paper to the City's Environment, Infrastructure, and Transportation Policies Committee to kick-off the development of an updated parking strategy, focused on parking management (City of Kingston, 2011). It observes that, "[it] is necessary to develop a parking strategy that is integrated with the public transit strategy, traffic pattern planning, cycling network planning, operations and enforcement to enhance access to the downtown, while at the same time promoting alternate transportation options to

help reduce the demand for parking in the downtown area" in addition to supporting economic development goals (City of Kingston, 2011, Exhibit A p. 4).

The discussion paper makes some important observations about the effect that negative perceptions about parking can have on the downtown, noting that:

> Piecemealed parking policies and regulations contribute to parking problems that can upset residents and merchants and irritate persons trying to access downtown services and attractions… Establishing appropriate policies, programs and incentives, that influence paring behaviour, will have a positive impact on inventory availability. This will help counter the negative perception that there is a lack of readily available parking in the downtown, and can help defer the need for investing in new parking infrastructure (City of Kingston, 2011, Exhibit A pp. 2-3).

These principles recognize the need to look at the strategic integration of all aspects of parking, instead of focusing solely on the infrastructure and supply issues, or planning in isolation from other transportation and sustainable planning initiatives.

The 2013-2015 Parking Work Plan presented to Kingston City Council in 2013 stemmed from the parking strategy discussion paper, focusing on the creation of a strategic parking strategy and ensuring policy alignment with other key priorities. Its objectives are to deliver parking services that are integrated with the City's other transportation strategies, optimize the parking supply while managing the demand, all with a user-centred approach (City of Kingston, 2013).

The City's Culture Plan (2010) links investment in culture with the City's other objectives, including sustainability, strengthening neighbourhoods and economic development, and calls for City departments to apply a culture lens to other city building initiatives. It notes that "[t]he downtown is… where many significant cultural investments have been made in the last decade, including the building of the K-Rock Centre, the redevelopment of Springer Market Square and the revitalization of the Grand Theatre. It is an emerging entertainment district with over 700 businesses and approximately 100 bars and restaurants, many offering live entertainment" (City of Kingston, 2010, p. 50). There are two recommendations specifically related to the downtown, one calling for limits on commercial development outside the core to help maintain strong downtown retail climate, and the second calling for "strengthening and revitalization of neighbourhoods adjacent to the downtown as a way of supporting cultural vitality" (City of Kingston, 2010, p. 51).

The City's Transportation Master Plan (2015) was an update to its previous plan adopted by City Council in 2004. It is a long-term, strategic plan to help shape Kingston's transportation system over the next twenty years (City of Kingston, 2015). The plan establishes ambitious goals around transportation demand management, transit growth, all with the aim of reducing future investments in road and parking infrastructure to help meet the City's sustainability targets (City of Kingston, 2015).

The plan recognizes that, "[s]ince 2008, approximately 131 kilometres of cycling infrastructure has been added to City roads. To encourage more walking trips, approximately 74 kilometres of new sidewalks have been installed along with 50 street benches" (City of

Kingston, 2015, p. iii). It also reports on the success of the City's major investment in

transit, noting that "Kingston Transit has experienced steady growth in transit ridership in

recent years, from approximately 2.5 million trips in 2002 to 4.2 million trips in 2014, an

increase of approximately 5.7% per year" (City of Kingston, 2015, p. iv).

The City's Official Plan (2017) contains several important goals and principles

including increasing urban development, as well as infill and brownfield development, while

limiting urban expansion or rural development. It also outlines that the growth of the city

will be consistent with smart growth principles, in support of building a sustainable

community, and limiting the dependence on the personal automobile. In terms of parking, it

states that "[i]t is the intention of this Plan to encourage a balance between providing

sufficient parking to address existing or future requirements, and not oversupplying parking

to the detriment of public transit usage or active transportation" (City of Kingston, 2017b, p.

290).

In accordance with the Planning Act, the City established a Brownfields Community

Improvement Plan (CIP) in order to "facilitate the implementation of the City of Kingston's

Brownfields Redevelopment Strategy and to provide financial incentives to encourage

private sector investment in the rehabilitation and redevelopment of Brownfield Sites in the

approved Community Improvement Project Areas" (City of Kingston, 2017a, p. 1). This is

the City's second Brownfields CIP since 2004, and notes that "[u]tilizing core areas of the

City for development, redevelopment and infill projects helps to mitigate the pressure to

expand the urban boundary" (City of Kingston, 2017a, p. 2). One of the specific goals of the

CIP is to revitalize the downtown, as well as achieve high-level benefits including "...
increased tax revenues, neighbourhood revitalization, employment, improved health and
safety, new business and housing opportunities and reduced environmental risks" (City of
Kingston, 2017a, p. 8).

6.3 Approach to parking during revitalization

Kingston has taken a balanced approach to the issue of parking throughout all of its
redevelopment initiatives. Successful parking strategies are seen as an aid to successful
revitalization of the core.

There is an acknowledgement that there will always be a reliance on the personal
automobile in Kingston, as there is "huge acreage with very little density so the automobile,
for most people, is the way to get around" (Interview F, personal communication, March 15,
2018). The approach to parking has been a holistic one, in that "recognizing that on-street
parking is an important component for customers and clients… we would look at parking and
where it was placed overall in the hierarchy of what we wanted to do on that street" including
creating space for pedestrians and cyclists, while ensuring that the downtown's commercial
functions could continue as well (Interview E, personal communication, March 16, 2018).

Consultation with stakeholders has shown that there are significant concerns that the
growth and redevelopment in the downtown core will come at the cost of reduction of
convenient parking (City of Kington, 2007). It is noted that "[w]hen you get down to the
nuts and bolts of parking, there's always that inherent worry that all of the on-street parking
would disappear or be removed, but also that some of the off-street parking locations would

disappear or be repurposed as well" (Interview E, personal communication, March 16, 2018).

To address these concerns, it was important to ensure that the approach to parking was incremental in nature. This incremental approach "has allowed people to see the difference between before and after and they recognize that they like the look and feel of the after" (Interview E, personal communication, March 16, 2018). For example, even though there was "an overall reduction in the available parking that was provided on Princess Street and the side streets" the incremental nature of this change meant that people could gradually get used to the idea, and adjust their expectations and travel patterns accordingly (Interview E, personal communication, March 16, 2018).

The City of Kingston is in a strong position to be able to bring a holistic approach to redevelopment in part because it controls most of the parking in the core. It is noted that "… what [the control over parking] allowed us to do is in tandem with certain changes that were happening along the on-street areas, we adjusted our parking policies within the lots. We started to move the long-term parkers further out so that we could continue to provide some short-term off-street parking as well to support that commercial and client focus" (Interview E, personal communication, March 16, 2018). Other parking changes included creating commercial loading zones, pick-up and drop-off areas, and accessible parking areas while removing five-minute parking zones and free parking areas, all in conjunction with TDM strategies that would "eventually move [people] onto an alternative mode – walking or cycling if that was viable for them, or onto transit" (Interview E, personal communication, March 16, 2018).

At the same time as the City was moving long-term parkers to the periphery of the

downtown and increasing rates, it was making major investments in transit service in the

core. Since 2010, there has been a "major investment in the City's transit network and

service frequency, including the addition of express routes designed to essentially replace the

need for a commuter who is working in the downtown [to drive], in order to make transit a

real viable option for them" (Interview E, personal communication, March 16, 2018). The

investment in transit was significant, increasing to a seven to ten-minute frequency during

peak hours, with an increase in ridership from 3.8 million people in 2010, to over 6 million in

2017. These policies essentially meant that "you can ride transit, and [there are] great

options for you to ride transit, or you can park further away and pay more" (Interview E,

personal communication, March 16, 2018).

The City also moved away from providing on-site parking at some of its major sites,

including the K-Rock Centre, noting that "if you put a parking garage with an anchor it just

becomes single service" (Interview F, personal communication, March 15, 2018). The

approach to parking at the K-Rock Centre was intentional, with the recognition that "75% or

85% of all the activity is going to be in the evening. [There is plenty] of available parking in

the evening and we want them to have to park a seven or eight-minute walk distance so that

they walk by pubs and shops" noting that this approach "works perfectly" (Interview F,

personal communication, March 15, 2018).

It has also been recognized that the ongoing approach to parking is dynamic and

evolving "… not [just] something you look at every five years and then check to see where

you are at. We actively manage our parking supply and strategies… in order to support what we need to do in the downtown" (Interview E, personal communication, March 16, 2018). Even though this approach promotes flexibility, there is still a need to set specific goals and targets so that parking in planned in a thoughtful, long-term way.

6.4 Importance of parking relative to other factors

In terms of importance of parking compared to other smart growth redevelopment priorities, it is acknowledged that "parking is very important… we grew the understanding of the policy and strategy that we were employing with residents, businesses, politicians… it was a gradual, incremental change over ten years to ensure that we could move toward our end goal" (Interview E, personal communication, March 16, 2018). The provision of parking is an important service provided by the City, but it is also recognized "how strategic an asset all parking – on-street and off-street – is, and we manage it accordingly. We do not see it solely as a revenue generating tool for the City; it's a strategic asset that we use to manage how the downtown is functioning" (Interview E, personal communication, March 16, 2018).

It is also important that parking be considered in conjunction with other redevelopment initiatives including brownfield and other residential and commercial development opportunities. Proper parking planning ensures that short-term and long-term needs are considered and planned for, to avoid "turning away a development because [of the need] to keep that parking supply' (Interview E, personal communication, March 16, 2018). It was noted that the City is "managing [the] supply very closely to ensure that we have

options so that if there are development opportunities that come in, parking is not the reason [to not] move forward on that" (Interview E, personal communication, March 16, 2018).

6.5 Revitalization outcomes related to parking

There is a sense that the public and downtown businesses are content with the approach to parking in the downtown, it being noted that "we think it's a success that we don't hear much about parking anymore" (Interview F, personal communication, March 15, 2018). It has also been stated that "[o]ur approach in the on-street parking, off-street parking, and transit has been relatively well received by the local business groups, and certainly people will grumble about paying more for parking but there's also an understanding of why we are doing what we are doing" with an increased understanding that these changes are not primarily about revenue generation (Interview E, personal communication, March 16, 2018).

In addition to the City's significant investments in improving downtown infrastructure, there has been "many times that [investment] by the private sector – every building has been renovated at some point… and all the second, third and fourth floors have been converted to residential… we have some of the some of the highest rents in the province and lowest vacancies" (Interview F, personal communication, March 15, 2018). This coincides with "banner tourism years" and an increase in the number of businesses, especially restaurants, in the downtown (Interview F, personal communication, March 15, 2018).

Another success factor is that the amount of time people spend downtown has increased. It was noted that even though the vast majority of visits to the downtown are by

car "...what we have done successfully [is that] most visits now are for a two-hour time period… whereas 30 years ago everyone wanted to park in front of the store they wanted to go into… 15 minute parcel pick-up was everywhere" with narrow sidewalks, and many surface parking lots (Interview F, personal communication, March 15, 2018).

6.6 Conclusion

Kingston has struck a balance between implementation of smart growth principles, while still providing sufficient parking in the downtown core. The City has set ambitious targets for sustainable growth, while at the same time recognizing that for the downtown to be successful, people need to be able to get there and spend as much time there as possible. Instead of treating parking as an impediment to sustainable and smart growth, the City has approached it as a strategic asset, using it in conjunction with other TDM and community building initiatives to create a vibrant downtown.

Although the downtown revitalization initiatives exist in separate policies and strategies, much effort has been made to link related policies together. Even without an overarching plan for parking, most of these revitalization initiatives are consistent with each other, and complementary in their goals.

Chapter 7 – Discussion

This chapter draws linkages between the principles outlined in the literature, and the findings in the case study chapters. This includes how these cities have embraced the concept of smart growth, what that looks like in the mid-sized city context, and what that means for downtown revitalization and parking.

7.1 Smart growth planning principles in practice

It is quite clear that all of the case study cities have embraced smart growth planning principles in their planning since the early 2000s. The concepts of urban intensification, walkability, mixed-use, sustainability, increased transit usage, and decreased automobile use are explicitly woven through much of the planning documentation cited in this study. In the case of both Kitchener and St. Catharines, this coincides with the implementation of the provincial growth plan, where both cities fall in the greater golden horseshoe planning area (see City of Kitchener, 2002; City of St. Catharines, 2002; City of St. Catharines, 2004). However, this is also the case in Kingston, which explicitly reinforces smart growth planning principles as early as 2004, even though the city is not in the provincial growth area (see Kingston 2004). This points to smart growth's pervasive influence on planning in Ontario municipalities.

7.2 Smart growth in mid-sized cities

The challenges facing mid-sized cities while implementing smart growth initiatives include the existing suburban built form, significant reliance on the personal automobile,

challenges in implementing successful transit systems, and combating the prevailing lifestyle choices that citizens of mid-sized cities are accustomed to. Each of the case study chapters have highlighted these challenges, and each City is taking its own approach to address these issues.

In Kitchener, it was reported that smart growth initiatives are not high on the public's priority list, likely because intensification, walkability, and transit are not common enticements for many who choose to live in mid-sized cities (City of Kitchener, 2014a). Regardless, such smart growth principles are prevalent in the planning language and strategies over the last decade (see Kitchener, 2010; Kitchener, 2013).

St. Catharines, as the only designated urban growth area in the Niagara Region, uses smart growth principles across various City initiatives, including prioritization of walkability, residential and commercial intensification, and multi-modal transportation (see City of St. Catharines, 2008). Most of the discussion about smart growth is related to downtown initiatives, leaving the suburbs to continue to remain in their current form.

Kingston has many initiatives that incorporate smart growth planning principles, including ambitious targets for infill development, transit expansion, and investment in multi-modal transportation, including new sidewalks and bike infrastructure (see Kingston, 2004b). The City's Official Plan specifically addresses smart growth planning principles, and speaks to limiting suburban and rural development and expansion (City of Kingston, 2017b).

In all three cases, there is a recognition that there will likely always be a need for the personal automobile, that the suburban form will continue to exist, and that many of the smart growth principles can only be applied in limited ways in these mid-sized, heavily suburbanized places, which is consistent with the findings in other studies (see Filion, 2003; Hardy, 2005). This, however, has not stopped these cities from using smart growth as the basis for responsible, sustainable planning and development, especially in the downtown core. All three cities have also not let the prevalence of the personal automobile deter them from setting ambitious TDM plans to reduce car use, or enticing people to try alternative modes.

7.3 Downtown revitalization in mid-sized cities

Common success factors for downtown revitalization identified by Filion et al. (2004), include pedestrian-friendly built environments, a university or college campus, national or regional capital, unique history and/or significant tourism. None of the case studies falls into all categories.

The downtown that has the fewest of these factors is Kitchener. While Kitchener has been able to attract some small satellite campuses to its downtown, there is no significant university or college presence there. While there may not be many extensive effects on the downtown from the satellite campuses, there is evidence that there are considerable spillover effects of the two large university campuses located in the adjacent City of Waterloo in terms of graduates establishing and working at local high-tech firms, as well as co-op student placements (Bramwell, et al., 2008). Kitchener is not a provincial capital, although the

Region of Waterloo government headquarters is located in there. Uniqueness of history or significant tourism to attract people to downtown Kitchener appears to be mainly focused on local downtown festivals and events. The fact that most of the redevelopment efforts examined focus on largely "9-5" issues also seems to indicate that attracting casual users to the downtown has not been its main focus, although this is changing rapidly.

As part of its recent redevelopment efforts, St. Catharines created many new attractions in the core to draw people downtown, including a new arena, performing arts centre, as well as the addition of the Niagara wine route through the core. Although St. Catharines is home to Brock University, the university is not located downtown. However, Brock located its new School of Performing Arts and Culture in the downtown, and there is evidence that the nearby student population plays a role in the vitality of the downtown. More attention has been paid to creating pedestrian-friendly environments, by redeveloping surface parking lots, and making investments in street facades and friendlier street networks. St. Catharines is the location of the Niagara Region's headquarters, and is the only designated growth area in the Niagara region. This does not result in significant tourism, necessarily. According to the criteria established by Filion et al. (2004), St. Catharines has been doing relatively well given the number of success factors it has.

Kingston has a large university campus adjacent to its downtown, which is credited for much of the city's success in maintaining a vibrant core. Over the years, Kingston has done a lot to maintain and enhance the historical nature and charm of the downtown, which has resulted in a much more pedestrian-friendly environment than many of its mid-sized city

counterparts. The addition of the new arena, the redevelopment of the Grand Theatre, and the revitalization of the market square have all contributed to increasing the traffic in the downtown core. All of these factors place Kingston in a strong position to create and maintain a strong downtown.

There are common themes related to downtown redevelopment across all cases. A key one is the tension between creating attractive downtowns to draw investment and businesses to the core, which is in direct competition with development of cheap, greenfield suburban land. All three cities have struggled with these competing priorities.

7.4 Role of parking during revitalization

The literature focuses on several factors related to parking during downtown revitalization, including strong CBDs to create demand, minimum and maximum parking requirements for development, parking pricing, congestion and transit, types of parking, and the ownership and control over parking assets. All of these factors play into the supply and demand of parking, and getting the right mix is key to ensuring that people want to go downtown, can get there easily, and stay as long as possible to make the best of the investment.

7.4.1 Strong central business district attractions

The literature indicates that a key component to successful downtowns is central business districts with strong services and attractions to draw people downtown. The vitality of downtown in mid-sized cities with high automobile dependence is directly related to the

demand for parking, and how much people are willing to search for and pay for it (see Voith, 1998). All three cities have undertaken efforts to make their downtowns more visually appealing, investing in streetscape improvements, and reducing the amount of surface parking.

Both St. Catharines and Kingston have made strategic investments in facilities to attract people downtown after hours, which has created a whole new market and increased nighttime foot traffic in the core, with spinoff effects in terms of new restaurants and other businesses. Although Kitchener has been quite successful at attracting new businesses to the core, much of that investment has been for the daytime segment. Kitchener appears to have placed less effort and investment in new facilities or attractions that would draw people downtown outside of business hours, which may have an effect on the vitality of the downtown after work.

7.4.2 Minimum and maximum parking for development

The literature is clearly divided on the issue of minimum and maximum parking requirements for development. Although minimum parking requirements are common in many places, many argue that the negative externalities of such an approach, including encouraging the continued prevalence of the personal automobile, should caution against this type of tactic (see Shoup, 1997; Millard-Ball, 2002). Consistent with the findings in the literature, each of the case cities in this study has had minimum parking requirements in their zoning by-laws at some point, although they are all moving away from these in some form.

Kitchener for many years had no minimum parking requirement for development, and also prohibited residential development in the core (Interview C, personal communication, June 23, 2016). However, the City's long-standing zoning by-law dated back to 1985 and required some minimum parking for development in the downtown (City of Kitchener, 1985). The City's new zoning by-law, currently under appeal, does eliminate much of the minimum parking standards for development in the core, and established some maximums (City of Kitchener, 2019).

St. Catharines' zoning-by-law has minimum parking requirements as well, but also has exemption to the requirement for downtown development (City of St. Catharines, 2013). The goal of this exemption is to increase investment in the core, and has been put into practice with recent developments (Interview B, personal communication, August 18, 2016).

Kingston's downtown area zoning by-law set out minimum parking requirements for each type of dwelling, including specific requirements for the downtown (City of Kingston, 1996). However, the K-Rock Centre development was built without on-site parking intentionally to help contribute to other downtown revitalization goals, and in light of the fact that there was already sufficient supply in the evening hours to support the centre (Interview E, personal communication, March 16, 2018). It will be interesting to see if Kingston changes or creates exemptions to the minimum parking requirements in a future zoning by-law given the success of the arena experiment, and evidence from other mid-sized cities.

7.4.3 Pricing

Getting the pricing of parking correct in the core downtown area is one of the key factors in not only drawing people downtown, but also affects how much time is spent looking for parking, how long people park for, and how far people are willing to walk from their parking spot to their destination (see Voith, 2998; Shoup, 1997). Parking rates also differ between daytime commuter parking and short-term casual parking.

None of the case cities provides free parking in the core, except Kitchener which has implemented free two-hour parking during construction of the LRT. Although not free, all three cities provide relatively inexpensive short-term parking rates, and all have significant usage of these spots, especially curbside.

Kitchener and Kingston have both made significant change to the pricing for commuter parking to support TDM goals. Both have made incremental changes over several years to the long-term parking rates in the hopes of changing commuter behavior, including enticing people to move to alternative modes. In Kingston, this was done at the same time as the significant investment in transit, and in Kitchener in advance of the arrival of the LRT. In Kingston, commuter parking was moved further out to the periphery of the core to make transit an even more attractive option.

7.4.4 Congestion and modal split

In large cities, congestion to and from the core can help motivate people to seek alternative modes. In mid-sized cities, the dispersed form makes congestion less significant, and makes it very difficult and expensive to provide viable transit options (see Bunting &

Filion, 1999). Since congestion is not so much the driver, sustainability is often the stated goal, along with the aim to reduce expensive street and parking infrastructure investment in the future.

In all three cities, there is significant reliance on the personal automobile to get to and from work, and those numbers do not seem to be going down (see Canada Census, 2016). The average commuting times are relatively low. All three cities have conceded that the personal automobile will continue to be the way most people get around the city, however, this has not stopped them from trying to change behavior in favour of more sustainable modes.

Both Kitchener and Kingston have made significant investments in TDM strategies, most significantly investing in transit services. While the uptake in transit trips has grown significantly in Kingston, it is yet to be determined in Kitchener. St. Catharines has also invested in TDM strategies, including new bike infrastructure, sidewalk improvements, and new bus routing, but is overall not a significant priority. In all likelihood, the best any of these places can hope for is a few percentage points change in commuting behaviour.

7.4.5 Type of parking

Surface parking lots are in direct contrast with the principles of smart growth, as they take up a large footprint that could otherwise be used for intensification. Consistent with the principles in the literature, all three cities have made investments in parking garages and at the same time have reduced the number of surface lots through redevelopment and intensification projects (see Arnott, 2006; Shoup, 1997; Filion, 2003).

In all three cases, downtown revitalization resulted in some loss of on-street parking spaces, which are seen as the most desirable spaces in the system. All have indicated that there is a perception that people do not like parking garages, both for safety reasons as well as their lack to adjacency to people's final destinations, and also acknowledge that public opinion around these issues needs to shift.

7.4.6 Ownership of parking assets in the downtown

The benefits of an integrated parking system within a downtown are many, including linking parking to other TDM strategies, and pricing to control supply and demand of on-street and off-street parking as a single system. It also allows for strategic investments in parking infrastructure that is not necessarily profitable in the sort-term (i.e. parking garages) but that supports other sustainability initiatives (i.e. fewer surface lots) (see Weinberger, R. et al., 2010; Gragera & Alabalate, 2016).

All three cities control a significant amount of the parking supply in their downtowns, with Kingston having the most parking under City ownership. In all three cases, responsibility for parking falls under a City division. Kitchener has studied different models of parking governance, recommending a parking enterprise model giving the City control over pricing and policy alignment, while supporting a business model reliant on own-source revenues instead of the property tax base.

7.5 Conclusion

This study seeks to explain the role of parking in downtown revitalization in mid-sized cities. It is clear through the case study findings that this is a complicated question, especially when approached through the lens of smart growth.

Parking policy in mid-sized cities is at odds with smart growth in many ways. The dispersed form of these municipalities makes them challenging candidates for many smart growth initiatives, and yet, these case studies have shown that the goals of smart growth are woven throughout many local policies. The fact that this study is focused on downtown cores means that there is a better chance of smart growth principles being implemented, because downtowns by their nature are significantly more dense and diverse than the surrounding areas.

It is clear that all three case cities have confronted similar issues around downtown parking. On the one hand, they are using smart growth planning principles to reduce surface parking to make room for development and intensification, and increase pedestrian activity, while on the other hand still need to ensure that people will come downtown and be able to park, given that the main mode of transportation is the personal automobile. This tension of making downtown places that people want to visit and allowing them convenient access to that downtown is something all have attempted to address.

Successful downtown parking policies in these places means also making the best of the local context. This involves working with the existing form, and incrementally changing

it into a more sustainable, walkable, interesting space, while still making room for people to drive and park, in addition to providing viable alternative transportation modes.

Of the three cases in this study, Kingston has been the most successful at finding a balance between these competing priorities. Kingston has taken a thoughtful but realistic approach to planning for parking in the downtown. This is largely aided by the fact that the City controls most of the parking supply, and therefore can govern it systematically to its own advantage. The recognition that over-supply is as dangerous to the vitality of the downtown as undersupply means that much ongoing effort is made to ensure that the proper balance is there, and that it is aligned with all related development, TDM, and transit priorities as well. Kingston's policies are the most coordinated of all of the case studies, which likely plays significantly into its success.

St. Catharines seems to have many successes in terms of downtown parking, but somewhat by accident. It reduced much of its surface parking in the downtown through development, knowing that parking would be less convenient, and not being too concerned about it. St. Catharines also likely benefited from an overabundance of parking before the DCCMP was implemented, meaning that the parking supply lost because of development did not have an overall impact on the vitality of the downtown, as there is still enough parking supply to meet demand through 2036 (see St. Catharines, 2016). A takeaway from this approach is that if you build interesting places that people want to visit, they will park further away and walk a longer distance to get to them – even if they resent doing so – although there are likely limits on an acceptable distance. Also, like Kingston, St. Catharines had

success in removing on-site parking from new attractions, with positive spin-off effects for the rest of the downtown.

Although Kitchener has experienced mixed success with downtown revitalization for many decades, there seems to be some promising developments on the horizon. Only time will tell how successful the recent investment and interest in downtown living and the LRT will be for the core. Kitchener has done a good job of attracting new energy to the downtown in terms of businesses, but could look to St. Catharines and Kingston as examples where additional investments in after-hours attractions has increased the vitality of the downtown at night.

The tension between smart growth ideals and parking-related policy implementation in mid-sized city downtowns is apparent across the cases. Common struggles with diversifying cores include difficulty creating more residential units downtown, and making transit a real viable option. There are smart growth-related successes in these places as well. These include more attention being paid to the pedestrian realm, investments made in TDM initiatives, as well as intensification and brownfield redevelopment.

Chapter 8 – Recommendations

There are many recommendations to be drawn from the case studies related to successful downtown revitalization outcomes and parking policies. The discussion chapter demonstrates the connection between the literature and what is being borne out in practice, but in order to fully answer the research question – what is the role of parking in downtown revitalization in mid-sized cities – it is important to highlight key success factors, as well as areas for further research.

8.1 Downtown revitalization recommendations related to parking

The first recommendation relates to the idea of ownership of parking assets. The Kingston case makes an especially compelling argument that the more the City has ownership and control over parking assets in a downtown, the easier it becomes to not only make good policy across the parking network, but also to link those policies with other revitalization strategies, including TDM, intensification, walkability, and so on. This is also consistent with findings from other studies on the benefits of centralized parking asset ownership (see Gragera & Albalate, 2016; Weinberger, R., et al., 2010).

Secondly, traffic demand management policies are an important part of the downtown revitalization puzzle. Uptake of these types of initiatives may be lower than optimal, but they are important nonetheless. Even though some studies have pointed to the difficulty in shifting the modal split in mid-sized cities (see Bunting & Filion, 1999; Filion, 2003), without making these types of investments, there is very little enticement for people to

change their travel behaviour. Cities should not be discouraged by the slow uptake

demonstrated in these cases, especially if sustainability is the goal – every car counts.

A major success factor demonstrated by both St. Catharines and Kingston is

significant investment in attractions and services that draw people downtown after hours. In

both these cases this includes sports, entertainment and arts infrastructure. This is also

consistent with other studies that point to strengthening CBDs to draw people downtown (see

Voith, 1998; Filion et al., 2004; Leinberger, 2005). Increasing business-hour development in

the core is important, but in order to have success on a "24-7" scale, you need both daytime

and nighttime traffic in the downtown. By having demand spread out throughout the day,

one can better utilize the parking supply as well.

Municipalities should examine the use of minimum parking requirements for

development, and instead look at the potential implications of having maximum parking

requirements. The literature describes that minimum parking requirements can have negative

spinoff effects, including over-supply, increase cost of development, and supporting the

continued prevalence of the personal automobile (see Shoup, 1997; Voith, 1998; Millard-

Ball, 2002). In all three cases, there is enough parking available in the core to meet future

demand, which means that forcing new developments to include on-site parking would create

surplus in the system. It has also been demonstrated in these cases that removing the on-site

parking requirement for major development projects can have significant positive spin-off

effects – by forcing people to walk further to their destination, you create additional markets,

especially for new restaurants and shops.

Lastly, there needs to be alignment of all downtown revitalization initiatives. This may seem obvious, but many of the services impacted by downtown revitalization initiatives are usually spread across many different City divisions, so it becomes very important to ensure that their competing demands are recognized, and controlled where appropriate.

8.2 Areas for further research

Smart growth principles also include living closer to where you work. This is much more common in larger urban cities, and pretty rare in mid-sized ones. Each of the case cities are aiming to create more residential units in the core, but none have been particularly ambitious in their plans, except for Kitchener in recent years. Having more people live downtown creates a "24-7" market, which in turn helps increase the vitality of the core, and creates a demand for a wide variety of services. This would also help alleviate some of the commuting pressure. Being able to draw people to live downtown is a challenge for mid-sized cities – people want to live where services are, and services locate where people live. There is great potential in this area.

This study briefly touched upon the provision of transit in mid-sized cities. There has been some success in Kingston in terms of ridership growth, but it came at a huge cost to the public. The LRT project in Kitchener-Waterloo is the first of its kind in Ontario, and will serve as a case study for other mid-sized municipalities when planning for higher order transit. Other places, like London, Ontario, have been debating rapid transit as well, with bus rapid transit being a touted approach. There will be plenty of really good data available over the next few years, which will be useful to other cities as transit plans progress.

This study focused on smart growth in the downtown core, but another important question about this planning paradigm is its potential influence on the suburban realm. This study did not look at the planning policies in the broader city context, but given the intensification goals in provincial legislation, and the scarcity of greenfield land, this is an interesting potential area of study. Transforming the suburbs – is it even possible?

Another lens which could be applied to this question of downtown parking is a political one. There has been some evidence in the cases that municipal Councils in mid-sized cities are struggling with the competing priorities in terms of development in downtown versus the suburbs, and the effects they have on each other. Understanding planning, development, and parking from a political perspective may shed some additional light on why things have unfolded the way they have, and provide useful insight for future efforts.

Probably most importantly, this study has shown that smart growth has a lot of potential in theory, and some in practice as well. One of the fundamental issues for success in many of these initiatives is shifting the mindsets of people in what they want their cities to be. There is still significant demand for the suburban lifestyle, despite the sustainability challenges that are quite apparent. In order for this planning paradigm to be truly successful outside of large centres, there will need to be a fundamental shift in public opinion. This is not an easy task, but these cases have demonstrated that this shift is already underway, even if slowly.

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