



Vision Centre-ville

Preliminary summary
November 6, 2020

Context

In recent years, there have been a number of efforts to revitalize Waterloo's town centre.

- From 2014 - 2017, Waterloo organized a revitalization campaign entitled 'Rues principales' and certain actions were taken, mostly in terms of urban design, beautification and dynamism.
- 2018 saw essential steps for positioning with our partner networks, as well as in promotions with our regional allies; this notably brought increased visitors in the summer months.
- In 2019, economic development was structured and resourced to support diligent communication and development, for example:
 - creation of a database of over 250 local businesses and entrepreneurs ;
 - the realization of a commercial results report.

This year

In 2020, the Town of Waterloo took the following actions:

- Launch of the *Politique d'Investissement en Développement Économique et Entrepreneurial* (IDÉE), to provide support for startup, implementation and development of new businesses and skills for entrepreneurs.
- Creation of a lasting fund to help finance associated projects, notably associated with the *Politique IDÉE*, for example.
- Revision of the tax credit program to apply it across the entire territory.
- Launch of phase 2 for the revitalization of the town centre : the *Vision Centre-ville* project.

Vision Centre-ville

Following the previous initiatives, the *Vision centre-ville* project was born, thanks to a financial contribution of \$60,000 from the MRC Haute-Yamaska's community development fund.



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Goal

To promote growth, vitality and economic diversification by improving the commercial and residential offer within a built environment that is high quality, original and authentic, while keeping in mind the socio-economic challenges.

Themes to orient reflection and discussion

Improvement of the built environment

Vitality

Entrepreneurship

Diagnosis

Analysis of preliminary meetings and documentation have led us to identify the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- The many services present in the town centre and surrounding area .
- The traces of history in the architecture and urban morphology.
- The public spaces and animation in the town centre, especially in the summer.
- Unique natural surroundings (lake, river and mature trees).
- Regulations, incentive programs and development procedures.

Weaknesses

- The old and poorly-maintained built environment.
- Main street (Foster): combination of thoroughfare (secondary provincial road) and town centre, place for town vitality.
- Commercial de-vitalization.
- New buildings that are not harmonious with the existing architectural palette.
- The lack of access to the river.

Diagnosis

Analysis of preliminary meetings and documentation have led us to identify the following opportunities and challenges:

Opportunities

- Highlighting the town's natural attributes.
- A distinct identity as a focal point.
- High traffic (due to its location on major roads and to tourism).
- Active transportation.
- The development of the town in general (population growth).

Challenges

- The cost associated with the requalification of the built environment.
- The difficulty to intervene in the private sphere .
- The future of Foster street as strictly an artery for regional transportation.
- The lack of cohesion in local business signage.

Premises

The process to date has led to the identification of 9 broad objectives, and helped outline the preliminary steps to be taken. You can read the summary on the next few pages.

For each of the objectives, the following premises need to be considered:

- The Town is a stakeholder in the process and will aim to work in partnership with the community.
- Tools and resources will be put into place in order to inform, educate and involve citizens, landlords, organizations and the business community as well as our regional partners.
- At the end of the process, a timeline will be made, taking into account transversality and exchange, and to ensure a coherent, integrated and lasting result.
- The action plan will maintain a certain flexibility, in order to adapt to change and emerging ideas, as well as the available human, financial and technical resources.
- Elements such as budgets, funding research, success indicators, oversight and control are inherent in any process of project management.

1. Regulate property development to improve the preservation, maintenance and value of architectural heritage

The built environment of the centre of town is a priority. A number of actions are necessary in order to better understand the challenges and to define the goals for the physical and esthetic improvement of the buildings located there. The strategy must be driven by clarity in its goals, and shared by the town administration as well as its citizens.

Steps to realization (actions):

1. Create a companion guide for property owners.
2. Evaluate the most promising projects for the town centre.
3. Evaluate the necessary means to realize the projects, along with property owners and contractors.
4. Work alongside developers and promoters.

2. Update and improve incentive programs, planning tools and regulations

Two types of actions will be proposed, to ensure results: incentive and prescriptive. There is a variety of existing grant programs and pertinent municipal regulations; it is the town's responsibility to keep them up to date, and change them where necessary to best respond to the vision and needs.

Steps to realization (actions):

1. Update the planning tools such as the urban planning documents and by-laws, the PIIA (*Plan d'Implantation et d'Intégration Architectural*) and the PPU (*programme particulier d'urbanisme*).
2. Evaluate applications for permits and funding, as well as their contribution the built environment of the town centre.
3. Make adjustments and improvements to the existing programs, according to the town's goals and resources.
4. Review the town by-laws to ensure they are best adapted to the goals for the town centre and that they are understood by the property owners.

3. Develop a strategy to commemorate the past

There is marked interest in Waterloo's history, and the enthusiasm we have seen for the heritage tour from citizens and tourists is a great example. It is true that Waterloo's identity is deeply rooted in its heritage.

Steps to realization (actions):

1. Define a vision for a cultural policy.
2. Proceed with an inventory of the initiatives on our territory that already exist or in development, and include them in the commemoration strategy.
3. Define an action plan with short, mid- and long-term goals.

4. Promote artistic interventions to bring activities to the centre of town

Artistic interventions in urban public spaces provide animation, highlight the identity and history of the community, as well as placing culture at the forefront and encouraging our local and regional artists.

Steps to realization (actions):

1. Define a vision for a cultural policy.
2. Proceed with an inventory of the initiatives on our territory that already exist or in development, and include them in the strategy for artistic intervention.
3. Define an action plan with short, mid- and long-term goals.

5. Develop a project incubator program

In keeping with our goal to position Waterloo as an innovative town, one that is well-adapted to the emergence of new projects and businesses, we need to implement a structure that will support this. This type of project is often referred to as an 'incubator,' where different strategies are used to support the growth of new initiatives from residents as well as external businesses.

Steps to realization (actions):

1. Define a vision for the orientation the incubator needs to have.
2. Develop its organizational, financial, architectural and collective structure.
3. Implement the structure, which will foster the development of many innovative initiatives.
4. Define an action plan with short, mid- and long-term goals.

6. Implement a 'greening' strategy

The presence of the river, its banks, the parks and public spaces and mature trees are exceptional natural assets for the town centre. This is already a major asset for the town, it would be great to make it a main pillar. Nature spaces provide many beneficial services to the ecosystem, to human health and quality of life, while reducing public spending.

Steps to realization (actions):

1. Evaluate the health of our mature trees.
2. Define an action plan for the greening of the town centre.
3. Develop ways to foster, support and promote the actions.

7. Develop urban gardening initiatives in the town centre

Urban agriculture is now more than ever considered to be an excellent opportunity to increase food security, reinforce a sense of community, make urban spaces greener and encourage learning and knowledge transfer.

Steps to realization (actions):

1. Form an urban agriculture committee in order to pool resources and get a good view of the needs and aspirations.
2. Make an action plan, defining the ways to develop and promote urban agriculture in the town centre.

8. Create public recreational spaces that link the town centre with the river

The river that runs through Waterloo's town centre is an undeniable element in the quality of life of its residents as well as a tourist attraction. However, access to this waterfront is insufficient and the river isn't as visible as it could be, in the town. This is why we need to increase connectivity between the river and the town centre with a variety of strategies, and not simply reproduce elements that exist already.

Steps to realization (actions):

1. Develop a strategy for development and connect the river to the town, in harmony with the existing infrastructure and development.
2. Develop strategies to accompany owners of riverside property.
3. Realize the projects once they have been approved.

9. Adapt the infrastructure on Foster street to its vocation of town centre as well as thoroughfare

The current layout of Foster street responds to the needs of drivers, but not very well to the needs of the residents and visitors who use it for active transportation to go to work, do their shopping, just go for a stroll or any other activity suitable to a town centre. It will be crucial to work to regain a better balance, by including structures that will preserve the safety and wellness of our pedestrians and cyclists.

Steps towards realization (actions):

1. Evaluate the possible actions towards the improvement of the overall ambience: overhead wires, vegetation, lighting, street furniture, sidewalks, crosswalks, parking, signage, etc.
2. Establish a plan of action to improve infrastructure and layout, to promote active transportation in the town centre.

What do we do next?

From now to the end of 2020

- Collect your comments.
- Collect your ideas and suggestions for improvement
- Establish a realistic timeline, taking into account the available resources (human, technical and financial).

Starting in 2021

- Start the realization of projects and actions with local organizations and committees as well as internal and external participants.

