

Petrolia Downtown Revitalization Project Summary Reporting 2022

Downtown Revitalization

The Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership and leading community members from the Town of Petrolia have gathered into a committee to explore the challenges and opportunities for our unique downtown.

This project aims to strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem to attract businesses to downtown Petrolia as well as to help existing businesses thrive. This will include creating enjoyable public streets and spaces and, as a result, provide employment and living opportunities. These beginning phases will consist of updating the local business inventories, conducting surveys of the residents, business owners, and customers of the downtown, and hosting community engagement events.

The Committee

Leena Bourne, Downtown Revitalization Coordinator, Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership

Laurissa Ellsworth, Director of Marketing, Arts and Communications, Town of Petrolia

Thera Wagner, Marketing and Special Events Associate, Town of Petrolia

Denise Thibeault, Business Liaison for the Town of Petrolia

The Vision

1. Retention
 - a. Retaining current business owners in Petrolia's downtown core is essential to the future of the municipality. Speaking with current occupants and

understanding their needs helps us understand what their future, and Petrolia’s future, could bring.

2. Succession

- b. Our current downtown occupants have strong business and customers bases, but we know that in years to come they may move on. Helping our business owners with individual succession planning for their future can avoid having gaps in Petrolia’s downtown. In addition, our municipality can create succession planning for the whole of the downtown.

3. Beautification

- c. Maintaining the appearance of Petrolia’s downtown core has always been a high priority. A focus of this downtown revitalization project will be to help the vacant storefronts maintain and upgrade their façades and for prospective store owners to find a business to occupy in downtown Petrolia.

Census of Petrolia

Population (as of 2021):	6,013
Households (as of 2021):	2,460
Median Income (as of 2020):	\$43,000
First Language French (as of 2021):	65 respondents
First Language a non-official language (as of 2021):	170 respondents
Indigenous Identity (as of 2021):	215 respondents

Business Mix Analysis

The Downtown Revitalization Project completed a business mix analysis of Petrolia’s business district, to better understand our economy. This was done by updating the entire business directory. The updated business directory can be found here:

<https://www.sarnialambton.on.ca/business>

Business Types in the Downtown	Number of Businesses	Percent in Downtown
Retail	36	32%
Service	41	36%
Public Service	4	4%
Restaurants and Entertainment Purchase	23	20%
Vacant	9	8%

Business Owner Survey

- 53 surveys respondent's total: 49% of downtown businesses in Petrolia
- 29 survey results suggested businesses existing – including retiring, selling, and starting succession planning
- Over 80% of survey respondents knew of the Petrolia Business Association but not interested in attending meetings
- Over half of survey respondents did not ever consider another location for their business

Market Trade Analysis

Downtown Market Analysis provides communities with information about local market conditions and opportunities so that they can develop effective strategies for community revitalization. Determining the size and demographic characteristics of a community's trade area is a critical component of the analysis. This trade area analysis provides information about local consumer demand and demographic characteristics. This information can be used to:

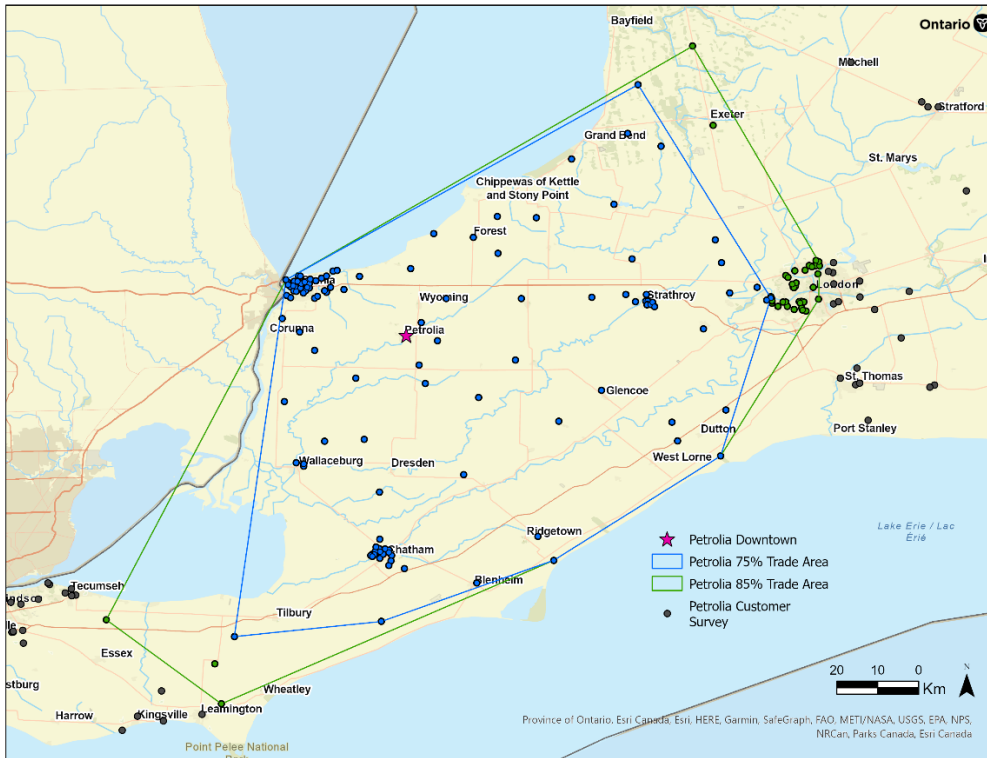
- Learn the characteristics and buying habits of consumers in the trade area;
- Determine the most appropriate consumer groups to target; and,
- Enable assessment of the types of businesses, merchandise sold, and services offered.

A trade area is the geographic area in which the majority of customers for the business district reside. Once the size of the trade area is determined, the number of potential customers that may patronize businesses in the district can be estimated. Knowing the trade area also sets the geographic parameters for obtaining demographic and lifestyle information. This information provides insights into the people who live in the trade area and enables the assessment of consumer demand for local products and services. A trade area's size and shape can be influenced by many different factors, including:

- The size or attractiveness of the supply point
- The number, location and relative attractiveness of competing stores
- Accessibility to the store (in terms of ease of travel to the store against physical and man-made barriers that impede access)

- The relative geographical distribution of persons with a profile which is known to be predisposed to patronize this type of market

Furthermore, both the size and shape of trade areas are greatly influenced by the distance customers are willing to travel.



Given a retail market of a particular population size the natural question is what types of establishments can it support. While several factors contribute to the vitality of the local retail market, the most fundamental factor is the relative size of the market in terms of potential customers.

The Market Threshold Analysis provides information on the types of businesses that exist in your trade area and the theoretical ability for the trade area to support that type of business.

Strengths of a Threshold Analysis:

- This is a resource which can be used to help identify potential business opportunities.
- Market threshold estimates may help an entrepreneur think through the market potential of his or her business idea.
- Market threshold analysis helps frame the basic marketing question: can a community of a given size support a particular type of establishment?

Limitations of a Threshold Analysis:

- The number of businesses does not account for size.
- The analysis is focused on the demographics of the trade area, not the downtown. Further, the number of businesses in the community takes into account all businesses in the community, not just the downtown.

Population	Petrolia's Trade Area
2016 Census	274,715
2021 Population estimate	282,125
Land Area, km ²	12.46
Persons per km ²	482.6
Dwellings per km ²	2,524

Population Projections	Petrolia's Trade Area	Sarnia Lambton Region	Ontario
Total Population			
2016 Census*	274,715	126,051	13,875,394
2021 estimated	282,125	128,634	14,889,127
2024 projected	285,030	129,359	15,516,022

2026 projected	287,786	130,203	15,991,843
2031 projected	294,086	131,964	17,211,219

Top 10 potential businesses our trade area could support, according to the 2022 threshold analysis:

1. Soybean Farming
2. Grain Farming
3. Crop Farming
4. misc general stores
5. Personal and commercial baking industry
6. Offices of all other health practitioners
7. Grant making and giving services
8. other specialty food stores
9. services to buildings and dwellings
10. Beer, wine, and liquor stores

Resident Survey

- 366 surveys respondent's total: 16% of population of Petrolia, minimum sample size 330
- Majority of respondents said stores are not open hours they want to shop but they sell goods/services they want
- Overall look/feel of the downtown is excellent
- Traffic, parking, and accessibility needs improvement

LCCVI Survey

Purpose:

This survey was created to gather information from students ages 13-18 about their habits in the downtown area during school hours, particularly lunchtime.

Conclusions:

- 64 respondents of approximately 700 LCCVI students (9.14% of student population)
- If 64 students are visiting downtown each week, and spending \$30.00 a week, that is suggesting \$1920.00 entering the downtown
- If we can assume ½ of the student body goes out for lunch, approximately 350 students, and they are paying \$30.00 a week, that is now \$10,500.00 entering the downtown each week of the school year.
- Supposing a 25-week school year, this would bring \$262,500.00 to Petrolia's downtown each school year.

First Impressions Community Exchange

A group of like-minded volunteers from a neighbouring community spent a day in downtown Petrolia. The following information was gathered about their first impressions of the downtown.

Five positive features about downtown Petrolia:

1. Victoria Playhouse brings a lot of traffic.
2. The downtown has passionate business owners.
3. Conveniently located Municipal office just off the main street.
4. Very clean streets, parks and sidewalks. It is obvious there is a lot of community pride.
5. Unique and diverse small businesses

Three potential opportunities for downtown Petrolia:

1. Bridgeview Park could be developed more
2. Petrolia has little nightlife. Another bar or late-night café would be great for VPP patrons of the evening show or residents on a Friday night.
3. The slogan and branding were not clear to someone coming into Town. This could potentially be of great use for tourists coming through.

Five biggest challenges facing the downtown Petrolia:

1. Most of the businesses have accessibility problems.
2. The vacant store fronts can be an eyesore for both residents and tourists.

3. Crosswalks and traffic are noted to be dangerous by residents. The same with the speed limit downtown.
4. There is an apparent lack of public transportation and cycling lanes, but there seems to be enough people on the street to accommodate.
5. Residents repeatedly noted a lack of things for young people to do, and thus resulting in an increase in drug use.

Community Engagement Sessions

- 12 participants between 2 workshops engaged in a consultation session facilitated by Helen Lomax. Participants represented a broad spectrum of backgrounds, including businesses, service clubs, and municipal government.
- The workshop's purpose was to solicit valuable input from key stakeholders to ensure that Petrolia's downtown remains strong and vibrant.
- Areas of focus for improvement include:
 - A formal BIA
 - Increase business operating hours
 - Marketing for businesses
 - Fill vacant store fronts
 - Better traffic control and parking

Big Lucky Weekend

- Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership hosted a local weekend event in downtown Petrolia from March 16-19, 2023. This event was hosted in the last weekend of the March Break for school aged children, which made the turn out enjoyable for everyone.
- This event promoted shopping local and celebrating the upcoming Downtown Revitalization for Petrolia. Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership was able to boost the business of the downtown that weekend using local radio and newspaper ads but would recommend more of a social media presence in future years.
- The event was open to all downtown businesses to participate, and those participating had a window display to let patrons know to visit.

- The budget for this event was approximately \$10,000.00 with DR funding. Purchases totaled \$9,910.82; this total is not expected to be repeated in following events so the prize pool.
- The scavenger hunt was open to all from March 16, 2023, until Sunday March 19th. The main event day was Saturday March 18th 2023, which included the adult ballots, as well as entertainment that ran from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m., and include balloon twisting, face painting, and live entertainment. Radio remote started at 9 a.m. and continued until 1 p.m.
- This event saw a great turnout of families, focused on young children. In future years, more focus can be put towards advertising young adults and adults without children. Many patrons did not realize there were prizes for adults until after they had arrived.

Petrolia 150 Strategic Planning Meeting

The Downtown Revitalization project hosted the Petrolia business community for a strategic planning session to determine the best practices for Petrolia’s 150th anniversary in 2024. Facilitator Bryan Boyle concluded the following:

Participants identified many merits that exist for Petrolia 150. Those merits have been grouped into the following themes and prioritized as to which are most important on which to build.

Rank	Merits
1 st	Effective Marketing
2 nd	Historical Significance
3 rd	Tourism Destination
4 th	Something for Everyone
5 th	Shop Diversity
6 th	Physical Assets
7 th	Cooperative and Generous Community.

The members also identified some challenges that exist for Petrolia 150. The themes related to challenged were prioritized as to which are more critical to address.

Rank	Challenges
1 st	Lack of infrastructure
2 nd	Intense Competition
3 rd	Operational Issues
4 th	Demographics
5 th	Price Increase
6 th	Environmental Challenges

There are many actions that could help to ensure that the upcoming Petrolia 150 promotions will be vibrant and meet the needs of business owners, staff, customers and the community. These actions should build on the merits, reduce or eliminate the challenges, all the while keeping in mind our desired outcomes. The actions were grouped and prioritized.

Rank	Challenges
1 st	Enhance Marketing
2 nd	Cooperate and Support Each Other
3 rd	Create Exciting Events
4 th	Enhance Infrastructure
5 th	Create Inclusive Open Spaces
6 th	Improve Transportation Opportunities
7 th	Address Operational Issues

Desired Outcomes

Participants were asked, “How will we know that we “got it right” with a successful approach to the upcoming Petrolia 150 promotions?”

Desired Outcomes
Increase in Visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of outside tourists increase • New customers from outside Petrolia • Increase in guests

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing new faces • New people coming to experience the local stores • Repeat customers
<p>Positive Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive feedback (x2) • Customer feedback • Positive feedback of businesses supporting other businesses • Appreciation of local supper • People in town show more appreciation of the local events • Significant local buy-in • Increased level of community and pride
<p>Financial Gains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased sales • 20% increase in sales
<p>Improved Communication and Promotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong knowledge of events prior to them happening • Community preparedness
<p>Effective Approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses brought together • Main street closed for events with people walking the streets and visiting stores • Family friendly events

The individual merits used to generate the themes on the table above are shown below.

1. Effective Marketing

- Open to grow customer base
- Use all advertising outlets
- Advertising over a large area
- Opportunity to hear people's opinions
- Grow customer base

2. Historical Significance

- Heritage (x2)
- Unique historical attractions
- Unique history
- Opportunity to teach about Petrolia and its history

3. Tourist Destination

- Proximity to large markets
- Great day trip destination
- Tourist downtown
- Identified Highway 402 exit

4. Something for Everyone

- Family-oriented
- Generate excitement for everyone
- Everything to be a big community with a small-town touch

5. Shop Diversity

- Opportunity to showcase unique shops
- Variety
- Boutique style shopping
- Appealing size of town shopping area
- Local beer

6. Physical Assets

- Ample free parking
- Parking in downtown
- Victoria Playhouse Petrolia
- Transportation
- Hours of business operation
- Accommodations
- Tourist attractions
- Great green space
- Golf course

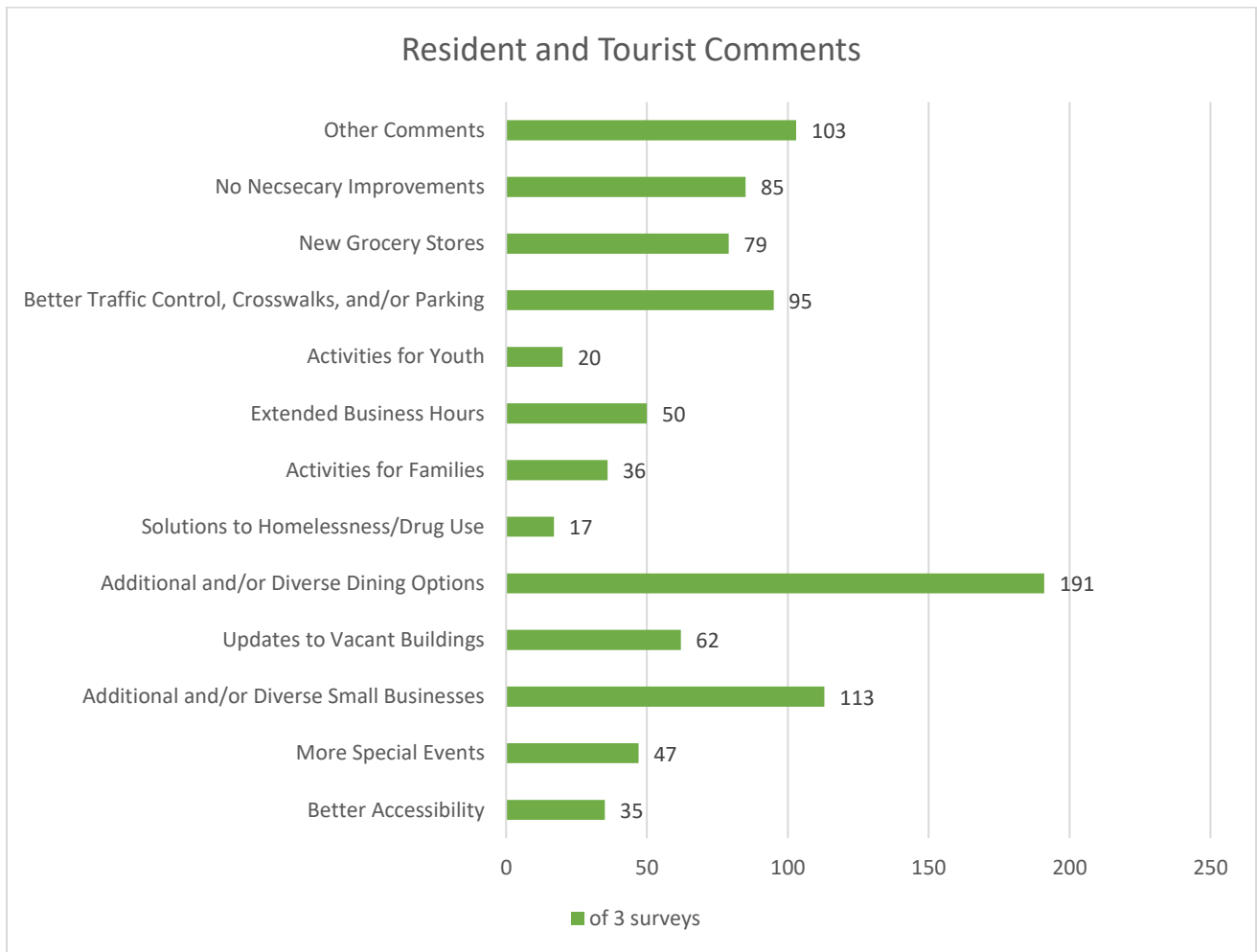
7. Cooperative and Generous Community

- Friendly and caring business staff

- Businesses working together
- Showing and promoting what we have to offer

Public Comments

The following chart depicts a summary of what the residents and tourists of Petrolia think could be positive additions to the downtown. This information was gathered from the resident survey, customer origin survey, and Victoria Playhouse survey.



Conclusive Data Points from the Project

Better Dining

- Public Comments, community engagement sessions, LCCVI survey

More Small Business/Retail

- Public comments, community engagement sessions

Better Store Hours

- Public comments, resident survey, FICE

Pedestrian Safety

- Community engagement sessions, FICE, LCCVI survey

Accessibility Improvements

- FICE, business owner survey, resident survey

Fill Store Vacancies

- Community engagement sessions, resident survey, FICE

Under 35 Activities

- Community engagement sessions, FICE

Green Space Seating

- LCCVI survey

Succession Planning

- Business owner survey

Planning Improvement Projects

- Business Owner survey

Appendices

Business Mix Analysis

Business Owners Survey Report

Resident Survey Report

Market Data Analysis

First Impressions Community Exchange

LCCVI Survey Results

Big Lucky Weekend Downtown Promotion

Petrolia 150 Strategic Planning Meeting

Community Engagement Sessions

For more information and appendices, please email reception@sarnialambton.on.ca