

*Bear Street Looking North – Downtown Enhancement Concept Plan (1992)*

## Shared Streets: A Case Study of Bear Street in Banff, Alberta

By: Kiersten McDonald

A project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT in the School of Public  
Administration

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UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

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In Banff, Alberta**

By

Kiersten McDonald  
B.A., Carleton University, 2016  
B.A., University of Manitoba, 2019

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University of Victoria

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## **Defense Committee**

Supervisor: Dr. Tamara Krawchenko  
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria

Second Reader: Dr. Sarah Marie Wiebe  
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria

Chair: Robert Lapper  
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria

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Thank you to all the many people who participated in this study. The business owners on Bear Street, the elected officials, and the Town of Banff members of administration, your generous and candid interviews are the beating heart of this research.

To Andrew, who now knows more about shared streets than he ever wanted to and never wavered in his willingness to learn more. Thank you.

“At a party, a good host greets people, makes them feel welcome, makes connections between people and animates the group. The host prepares the space, creates a welcoming environment and sets the stage for social interaction. A good street can do the same”

(Iacofano & Malhotra, 2019, p. 88).



## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

This master's project examines the process of redeveloping a street into a shared street from the perspective of three key participant groups. This case study of Bear Street in Banff, Alberta, highlights the experiences of elected officials, Bear Street business owners, and members of Town of Banff administration who were all connected to or impacted by the project.

### **Methodology and Methods**

This study is a multi-method case study that utilizes desk research, semi-structured interviews and a literature review focusing on the implementation of shared streets initiatives. Interviews were thematically coded using NVivo.

### **Key Findings**

Key findings of this study show that the three participant groups held the socio-economic and business impact theme and the design, policy, and governance theme as the top thematic bundles. The most prevalent themes among the business owner group were the socio-economic and business impact theme, followed by the urban design, policy and governance, and then social well-being and community experience themes. The top themes for the elected official group were socio-economic and business impact theme, followed by the urban design, policy & governance, and then urban resilience and adaptability. The most prevalent themes among the administration group were urban design, policy and governance, followed by socio-economic and business impacts, then urban resilience and adaptability. These various themes and the codes within them indicate the main concerns, challenges, and priorities for each participant group.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The Town of Banff, nestled within the boundaries of a Canadian national park (see Figures 1 & 2), stands as a unique municipality shaped by a distinctive legislative and administrative framework. Since its incorporation in 1990, Banff has operated under a multi-jurisdictional system, balancing the oversight of Parks Canada and the Province of Alberta. Home to approximately 8,000 permanent residents, Banff's population swells dramatically each year, welcoming over four million visitors annually and experiencing daily influxes of over 40,000 people during peak summer months (Statistics Canada, 2022). This extraordinary ratio of visitors to residents places immense pressure on the town's infrastructure, services, and public spaces, creating a dynamic tension between the needs of locals and the demands of tourism. The 1989 Town of Banff Incorporation Agreement (Government of Canada & Government of Alberta, 1989) and subsequent legislative acts, such as the 2000 National Parks Act, have set clear boundaries and commercial limits for the town, further constraining its ability to physically expand or adapt through traditional means. Consequently, Banff's municipal administration has been compelled to seek innovative solutions to manage growth, maintain livability, and support the local economy, which is almost entirely dependent on tourism.

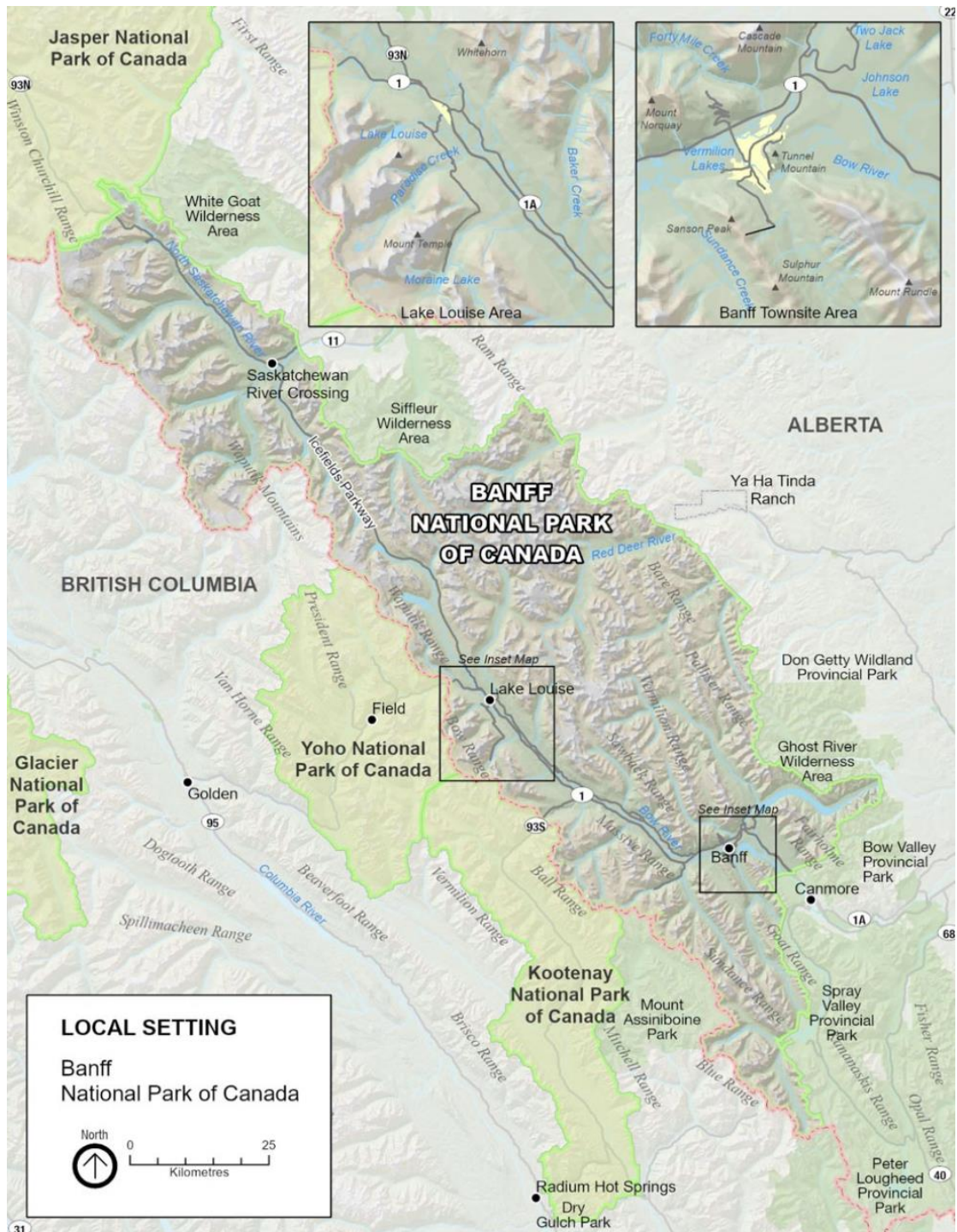
**Figure 1**

*Town of Banff*



Source: *Banff & Lake Louise Tourism*, Figure, Town of Banff, n.d.-a. Retrieved from <https://www.banfflakelouise.com/business/banff-town-hall>.

**Figure 2**  
*Banff National Park*



Source: *Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan* (p. 3), by Banff National Park of Canada, 2022. Copyright 2022 by Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada.

One of the most significant challenges Banff faces is the management of transportation and public space in the context of rising visitor numbers and limited physical capacity. The

town's road network, designed to accommodate a maximum of 24,000 private vehicles per day, regularly reaches its operational limits during the busy season (Town of Banff, n.d.). Despite repeated calls for infrastructure solutions, such as intercept parking lots and a passenger rail connection to Calgary, these options remain unrealized, leaving the town to address congestion and mobility within its existing footprint. The 2012 Transportation Master Plan (Bunt & Associates Engineering, 2013) laid the groundwork for a series of interventions aimed at mitigating these pressures. One of them is the redevelopment of Bear Street into a shared street—a concept that prioritizes pedestrians while accommodating other modes of travel in a reimagined public realm.

The process of redefining Bear Street was iterative and adaptive, beginning with a series of summer “woonerf” trials from 2015 to 2019 (Town of Banff, n.d.-b). These trials, supported by council decisions and annual budget allocations, tested various configurations of physical barriers, platforms, and decorative elements to guide the movement of vehicles and pedestrians. Each year, Town administration adjusted the design in response to observed successes and shortcomings, gradually building a case for permanent transformation. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 introduced new imperatives for rethinking public space, as communities across Canada sought ways to facilitate social distancing and support local businesses. In Banff, the pandemic's impact was both acute and transformative: the collapse of tourism devastated the local economy, but also created a rare window of opportunity for substantial infrastructure work with minimal disruption to normal activity. Recognizing this, Banff Town Council voted to proceed with the full redevelopment of Bear Street, resulting in the pedestrian-priority shared street that exists today.

### **Woonerf Trials**

The woonerf trials took place over five summers beginning in 2015. These trials used wooden platforms and decorative elements to help visitors to the street imagine what a redesigned street could look like. Wooden platforms served as patio seating to local businesses and created a calmer flow to the street that slowed traffic, encouraging pedestrian prioritization. Figure 3 displays a summer woonerf trial.

### Figure 3

#### *Woonerf Trial*



Source: *Request for Direction. Subject: Bear Street Shared Street Concept* (p. 2, Agenda #7.2), by D. Enns, 2019b. Copyright 2019 by Town of Banff. <sup>1</sup>

At the heart of the Bear Street Project lies the concept of the “shared street”—a design approach that intentionally blurs the traditional separation between pedestrian and vehicular domains (Dunn, 2013; Jiang et al., 2018). In this model, the street is reconfigured to give clear priority to pedestrians, slowing vehicle movement, and fostering a more inclusive, vibrant, and flexible public space (Karndacharuk et al., 2014). The terminology varies—woonerf, living street, shared street—but the underlying principle remains the same: to reorder the hierarchy of street users in favour of people on foot, while still permitting carefully managed access for vehicles. In Banff’s case, the shared street model was tailored to the town’s unique context, with the explicit goal of enhancing the visitor experience, supporting local businesses, and improving the quality of life for residents (see Figure 4).

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <https://banff.ca/DocumentCenter/View/6301>

## Figure 4

### *Bear Street Shared Street*



Source: *Bear Street Shared Street* (first graphic), by Town of Banff, n.d.-b. Copyright 2021 by Town of Banff. <sup>2</sup>

A complex interplay of interests, identities, and perspectives shaped the redevelopment of Bear Street. The question of “who is a local” emerged as a recurring theme, reflecting the diverse and sometimes contested senses of belonging within the community. For some, local status is defined by birthplace and long-term residency; for others, it is a matter of commitment and participation, regardless of origin. Local perspectives on tourism development can differ from locals who are newer to town versus locals who have lived in town longer (Um & Crompton, 1987). These distinctions influence attitudes toward change, with some residents expressing skepticism or resistance to initiatives perceived as catering primarily to tourists. Meanwhile, business owners and municipal officials, who are directly responsible for the economic vitality and governance of the town, often view redevelopment as a necessary adaptation to evolving realities (Ellis, 2019). The Bear Street project thus became a focal point for broader debates about identity, inclusion, and the future direction of the community.

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<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from <https://banff.ca/969/Bear-Street-Shared-Street>

This study illuminates the challenges and opportunities associated with redeveloping a street into a shared street, drawing on the experiences and insights of three key stakeholder groups: (a) municipal elected officials, (b) members of the municipal administration, and (c) business owners along Bear Street. As a relatively new initiative, there is no established literature on this case study. These groups were selected for their direct involvement in and influence over the project. Municipal administration staff, drawn from planning, communications, and engineering departments, provided technical expertise and project management. Business owners, whose livelihoods depend on the street's success, offered practical perspectives on the day-to-day impacts of the changes. Elected officials, responsible for setting policy and approving budgets, navigated the competing demands of constituents and the broader public interest.

The research employed a multi-methods approach, combining semi-structured interviews and a review of relevant literature. Interviews were conducted with members of each participant group, using purposive sampling to ensure representation of those most closely engaged with the project. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts allowed for the identification of common themes, challenges, and successes as perceived by different stakeholders. Background research, focusing on Town of Banff decision documents and local newspaper coverage, provided additional context and insight into the public discourse and policy-making process. This methodological approach enhanced the reliability and depth of the findings, while acknowledging the limitations inherent in a single-case study.

The central research questions were:

- What are the challenges associated with redeveloping a street into a shared street from the perspectives of municipal elected officials, members of municipal administration, and business owners along Bear Street?
- How did these key stakeholder groups experience and perceive the conception, implementation, and outcomes of the Bear Street Shared Street project?
- What lessons can be drawn from the Bear Street redevelopment process that may inform similar initiatives in other communities, particularly regarding urban resilience, economic impacts, urban design, and community experience?

The significance of this research extends beyond the specific context of Banff. As communities across Canada and internationally grapple with the pressures of urbanization,

downtown revitalization, tourism, and sustainability, the lessons learned from the Bear Street redevelopment offer valuable guidance for future projects. The study highlights the importance of inclusive planning, adaptive management, and clear communication in navigating the complexities of shared space initiatives. It also underscores the need to balance economic, social, and environmental objectives in the pursuit of resilient, livable communities. By examining the process and outcomes of the Bear Street transformation, this report contributes to a growing body of knowledge on the role of the built environment in shaping community experience and urban resilience.

The report is organized to provide a comprehensive account of the Bear Street shared street initiative. It begins with a literature review situating the project within broader debates on urban design and planning practices. The methods and methodology section details the research design, data collection, and analytical strategies employed. Key findings are presented and analyzed, drawing out the main themes and points of contention identified by participants. The discussion situates these findings in relation to existing scholarship and practical considerations, while the recommendations offer actionable insights for policymakers, planners, and community leaders. The conclusion reflects on the broader implications of the study and suggests directions for future research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The rapid transformation of urban spaces has brought renewed attention to the way streets are planned and experienced in contemporary cities. In the context of Canadian urban development, approaches to street and community design have evolved in response to shifting societal needs, challenges of suburban sprawl, and demands for increased walkability and sustainability. This literature review examines the emergence and significance of shared streets—an innovative planning concept that blurs the traditional boundaries between pedestrian and vehicular realms—within broader frameworks of community planning, participatory processes, and urban design theory. Through a survey of key planning paradigms such as the garden city movement, new urbanism, and recent participatory trends, this review situates the concept of shared streets in both historical and contemporary contexts. Particular focus is given to how shared streets intersect with issues of social justice, placemaking, and sustainability. By synthesizing these diverse streams of literature, the review underscores the complex interplay between policy, design, and community experience that shapes the redevelopment of public streets and the pursuit of more vibrant, inclusive, and resilient communities.

Recent literature has emphasized that shared streets most commonly emerge in areas with notable space constraints, where the built fabric limits conventional street and traffic solutions. This is particularly evident in European contexts like the Netherlands, where dense urban form and limited space have fostered the popularity and practicality of shared street models, in contrast to communities where sprawling development prevails and space is not at a premium. Moreover, the role of the built environment in shaping people's quality of life is clear: There is a direct and intimate connection between urban form and residents' overall well-being. The literature on shared streets is situated within the wider field of community planning, highlighting the necessity of considering broader planning philosophies and histories. To provide a comprehensive context for the emergence of shared streets in Canada, this literature review begins by discussing the major planning concepts that have shaped the nation's urban landscapes.

Literature was searched via the University of Victoria online library database and Google Scholar with the following search terms: “shared streets”, “living streets”, “woonerf”, “pedestrian priority streets”, “roadway redevelopment”, and “walkability.” Additional linked literature was included (i.e., snowball search).

## **Introduction to the Planning Approaches that Have Shaped Canada**

Canadian cities and towns have been profoundly influenced by a succession of planning approaches, each reflecting changing societal values and priorities. Two foundational concepts, **the garden city and garden suburb**, laid the groundwork for the post-war suburban landscapes that came to define much of Canada's urban growth. Introduced by Ebenezer Howard, the garden city model envisioned carefully planned communities that blended access to the countryside with a strong sense of local identity (Grant, 2006, p. 65). This approach found resonance in Canada, where suburban developments featured distinctive curving streets, ample parkland, and a focus on residential tranquillity.

Over time, however, the proliferation of garden suburbs contributed to widespread suburban sprawl, fuelled by land use policies that prioritized low densities, car ownership, and the separation of residential, commercial, and industrial uses. These planning decisions not only shaped travel behaviour—making private vehicle use a necessity—but also made walkability and public transit difficult to achieve in many Canadian communities.

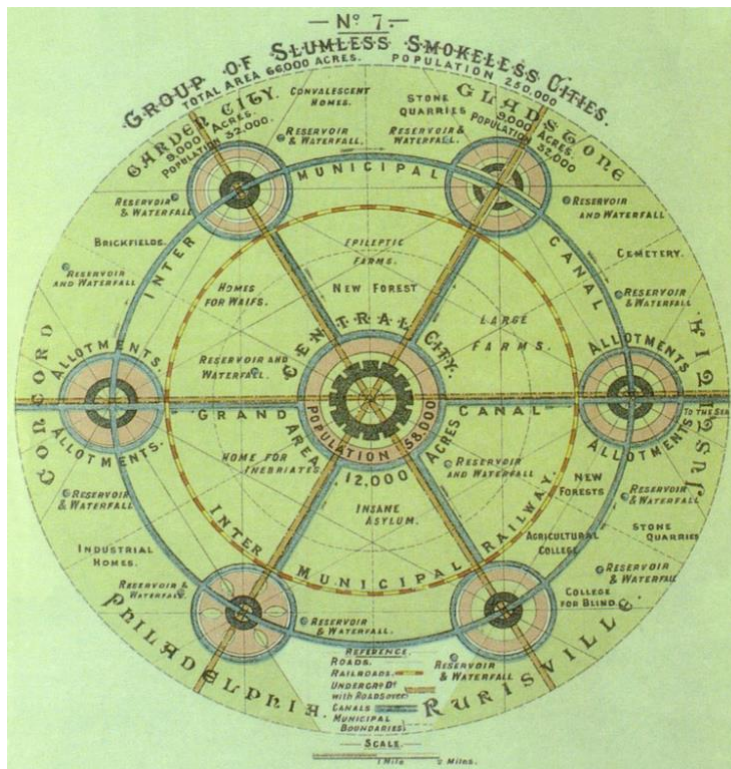
By the late twentieth century, critiques of sprawl and the adverse effects of automobile dependency led to the rise of new urbanism. This movement advocated for more compact, mixed-use, and walkable neighbourhoods, emphasizing connectivity, diversity of housing, and vibrant civic spaces. New urbanist principles sought to reclaim the social and environmental benefits of historical towns while offering practical solutions to issues of sustainability and liveability in contemporary cities.

Together, these approaches formed the historical context for current debates over urban form in Canada, including renewed interest in concepts such as the 15-minute city and shared streets. These emerging trends reflect a growing desire to create neighbourhoods that are not only functionally efficient but also socially cohesive and environmentally responsible.

### ***Planning Approach 1: Post-War Canadian Planning and the Push for the Garden Suburb***

The garden city approach to planning was introduced by Ebenezer Howard at the beginning of the 20th century in England (Grant, 2006). Its influence is felt in Canada's garden suburbs. The garden city refers to clusters of communities planned to incorporate the countryside and have a sense of community. These clusters were removed from the city itself and connected to one another by roads.

**Figure 5**  
*The Garden City Layout*



Garden City Layout by Ebenezer Howard, 1898, Arch Daily <sup>3</sup>

The garden city movement laid the groundwork for the garden suburb approach by introducing the idea of planned communities that harmoniously integrate green spaces, residential areas, and a strong sense of community. While garden cities were envisioned as self-sufficient towns separated from major urban centres and surrounded by greenbelts, garden suburbs adapted these ideals to the outskirts of existing cities, focusing primarily on residential life. The design principles—such as curving streets, abundant parks, and a prioritization of well-being—were inherited directly from the garden city philosophy. However, unlike the balanced, economically independent vision of garden cities, garden suburbs became largely commuter communities reliant on nearby cities for employment and services. Thus, garden suburbs represent a pragmatic and widely adopted modification of the garden city vision, making its core environmental and social ideals more accessible by integrating them into the natural expansion of cities rather than entirely new settlements.

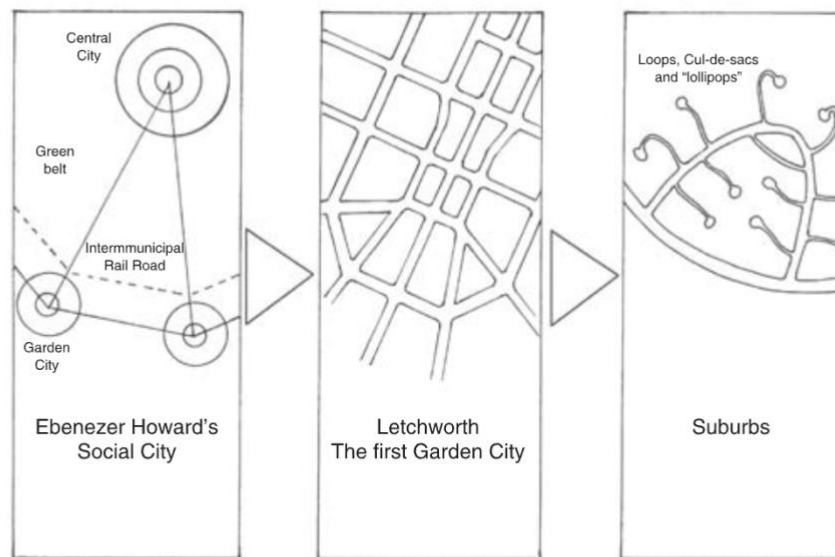
<sup>3</sup> (<https://www.archdaily.com/961275/what-are-garden-cities>). In the public domain.

From World War Two until the early 1990s, Canadian planning was done in the garden city style (Grant, 2018, p. 192). In the post-war period, Canada has seen suburban growth as an explicit planning strategy. Grant (2003) noted, “The 1950s and 1960s brought rational comprehensive planning to Canada. Many communities prepared master plans. Cities adopted land use regulations, often following guidelines established by CMHC” (p. 236). These garden suburbs, in which people own multiple cars per family and commute to their daily destinations like work, shopping, school, and social events, encourage sprawl and car use, thus inherently promoting sprawl. Suburban sprawl has been enforced by policy choices at different levels of government. Municipalities control zoning regulations like minimum lot sizes, allowable building use, parking requirements, and height limitations (Lewyn, 2012, p. 104). These kinds of municipal policies deterred density and promoted sprawl. With fewer housing options close to the town centre, families opted to live farther away from city centres in new suburban communities.

These sprawling communities relied on retail centres with large parking lots for goods, thereby discouraging pedestrianism and increasing reliance on cars (Belshaw, 2016). Provincial and Federal contribution levels for projects like public transit and highway building highlighted the lack of support for mass transit and the overt support for personal vehicle use. There was a clear connection between urban sprawl and car use (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018). Without a well-connected, well-funded public transit system and daily destinations displaced from a walkable distance, car culture has become a keystone in many Canadian communities. Importantly, while governments have promoted the garden suburb and sprawl, consumer preference plays a role in Canadian suburbs.

## Figure 6

### *Garden Suburb*



**Figure 2.1 The garden city reduced**

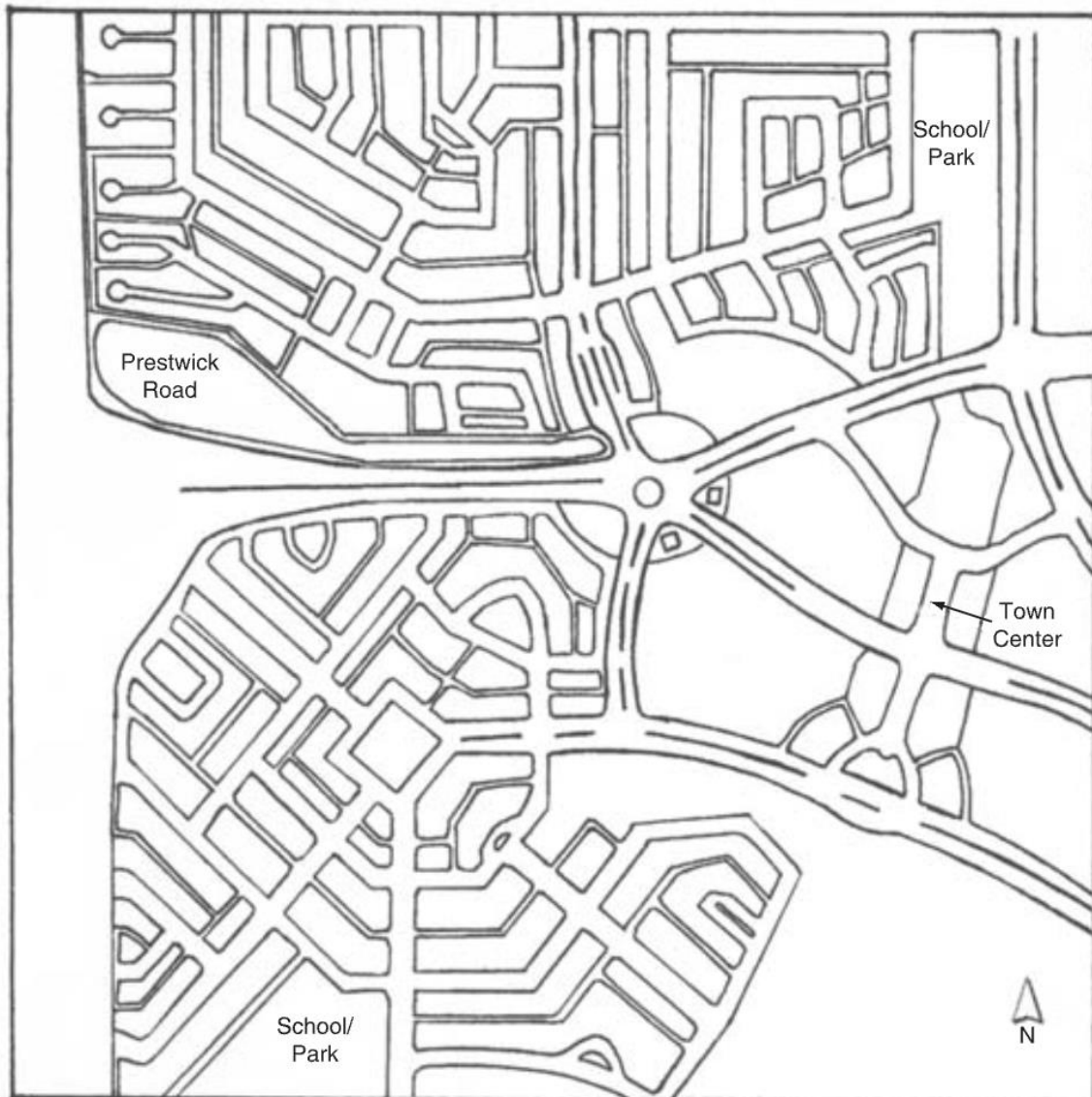
The garden city (panel 1) offered a conceptual model of the social city: equitable, connected, contained. In building Letchworth (panel 2), the designers compromised on the social objectives. (Only the town centre is shown.) Through time, the concept was reduced to isolated pods of cul-de-sacs and loops (panel 3).

Source: *Planning the Good Community* (p. 39), by J. Grant, 2006, Routledge.

### ***Planning Approach 2: New Urbanism as a Reaction to Sprawl***

The garden city movement and new urbanism are closely linked through their shared emphasis on creating healthier, more sustainable, and community-oriented urban environments. While the original garden city vision influenced the design of suburbs and new towns, its foundational ideas—compact neighbourhoods, walkable streets, strong sense of place, and ecological integration—have directly inspired the principles of new urbanism. Emerging as a reaction to suburban sprawl and car-dependent development, new urbanism adapted and updated many of Howard's ideals, advocating for higher density, mixed-use developments, vibrant public spaces, and a focus on sustainability. The legacy of the garden city movement can be seen in the way new urbanism seeks to restore human-scale urban environments and build neighbourhoods that are both functional and socially engaging, underscoring the enduring influence of Howard's vision on contemporary urban planning, such as Grant's (2006) Mackenzie Towne in Calgary site plan (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7**  
*New Urbanism*



Source: *Planning the Good Community* (p. 158), by J. Grant, 2006, Routledge.

New Urbanism gained momentum in Canada in the 1990s (Grant, 2006, p. 156) as a response to the challenges that the garden city style of planning highlighted. “[New Urbanism] advocated well-connected street systems (modified grid layout), narrow lots, high design standards, high density, mixed-use civic centers, a mix of housing types and tenures, and pedestrian- and transit-friendly design” (Grant, 2003, p. 238). After decades of garden suburbs dominating the Canadian planning landscape, concerns about sprawl, sustainability, walkability, cost, and car culture led to a shift in planning priorities. New urbanism was

linked to sustainability due to its similar goals (Grant, 2006, p. 161). Planners and policymakers began “preparing policies and plans advocating compact new development with mixed uses, mixed housing types, and walkable streets” (Grant, 2018, p. 192).

Public acceptance of New Urbanism varied throughout Canada. New Urbanist approaches were better received in cities like Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary, which had high growth rates. They were less well-received in slow-growing communities like Winnipeg. Calgary, Alberta was one of two major new urban sites in Canada with Mackenzie Towne (Grant, 2003, p. 245).

The idea of shared streets has many similarities with the New Urbanist approach to planning. Interest in shared streets is gaining in interest in Canadian cities, both as a form of more sustainable planning, but also as an economic driver and central to a community’s attractiveness and even social cohesion.

Recently, a concept with roots in New Urbanism has gained attention: the 15-minute city. The concept behind this approach is that everything a person needs in their daily life should be within a 15-minute walk or bike ride. During the COVID-19 pandemic, conspiracy theories surrounding this concept took hold over social media (Glover, 2025).

### **Participatory Planning and Community Consensus**

Parallel to the shift from the garden city approach to the new urbanism approach is the emergence of participatory planning. Participatory planning is a bottom-up approach to the planning process, different from the top-down approach of decades past. The participatory approach to planning includes “public hearings, public meetings, focus groups and surveys” (Laurian, 2009, paragraph 47). Members of the community are given the opportunity to be included in the process of plan-drafting and decision-making. Community members’ input is sought in the hopes that it “will improve the quality of decisions, as well as their legitimacy, implementation and outcomes, while simultaneously generating additional benefits, such as social learning, social capital and empowerment” (paragraph 47).

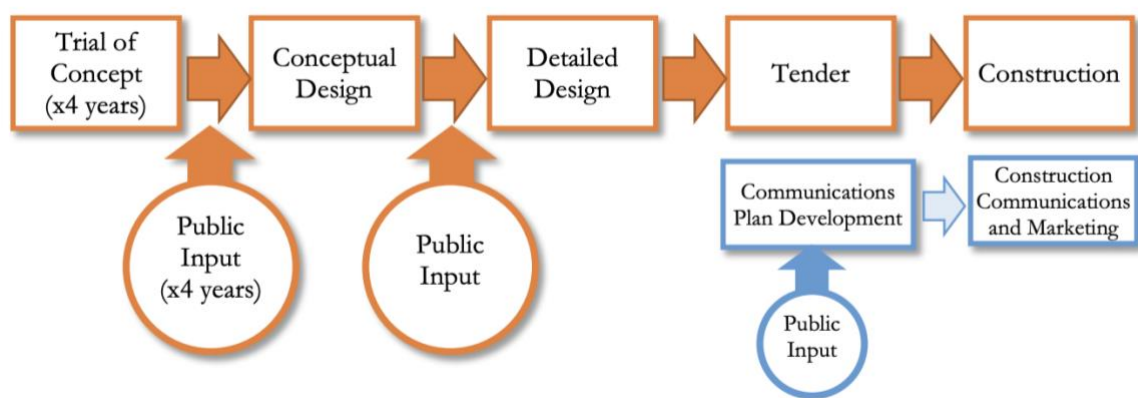
The Town of Banff, when undertaking transformative planning projects, holds public hearings, conducts surveys, creates trials, hosts open houses, engages with working groups, and receives written and verbal submissions from residents. This is in line with what is

becoming more and more normalized in the planning processes in the name of providing opportunities for public participation and scrutiny (Laurian, 2009).

Enns (2019a) submitted a report to the Town of Banff, which updated the Council as to the process used in developing the Bear Street Shared Street project (see Figure 8). This diagram shows a simplified outline of the many public input opportunities, indicating that a participatory planning approach was utilized.

**Figure 8**

*Design Process: The Bear Street Shared Street Project Path*



Source: *Bear Street Shared Street Update* (p. 2), by D. Enns, 2019, Copyright Town of Banff, 2019. <sup>4</sup>

Participatory planning has unique challenges. The concept of trust in a municipality's planners or administration was noted by Laurian (2009) with challenges presented to gaining trust and thereby encouraging participation in the public planning process. The politicization of planning was noted by Niitamo (2024) in hampering what some consider to be politically sensitive projects, like those promoting walkability and limiting car use.

Layered onto participatory planning is the tension between residents and tourists in tourist communities. The Town of Banff's economy is based almost entirely on tourism.

Development and tourism are linked in that how the Town is planned must accommodate residents while also acting as a tourist draw. Residents' perception of tourism may vary

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved from [https://banff.ca/DocumentCenter/View/10074/Bear\\_Street\\_Shared\\_Street\\_Update](https://banff.ca/DocumentCenter/View/10074/Bear_Street_Shared_Street_Update)

depending on how long a resident has been a local (Um & Crompton, 1987). Pizam (1978) studied residents of Cape Cod and found a correlation between the more tourism in an area, the more residents viewed tourism and tourists negatively, but when a person's livelihood was dependent on tourism, they had a more favourable view of tourism. This study is especially of note in a town like Banff, in which the Need to Reside ensures most residents rely on the main economic driver—tourism. Banff is relatively more open to tourism development than its nearby neighbours of Canmore and Golden (Hu et al., 2022).

### ***Shared Streets within the Broader Planning Conversation***

The concept of shared streets in Canada is part of a broader movement for more walkable and dynamic communities. As noted in the section Participatory Planning and Community Consensus, new urbanism, which became popular in the 1990s, is linked to sustainable concepts.

Shared streets were formally introduced into the consciousness of the Government of the United Kingdom in the 1960s by Colin Buchanan's report, *Traffic in Towns* (Buchanan, 1963). This concept was not embraced by the British Government and was better received in the Netherlands (Ben-Joseph, 1995)

*Traffic in Towns* (Buchanan, 1963) presented methods through which to manage the traffic that car culture was imposing on towns and cities. The British Government did embrace the recommendation put forward to separate car traffic and people, the antithesis of a shared street (Hamilton-Baillie, 2008) Shared streets were formalized in the Netherlands in 1976 and labelled as a woonerfs (Hamilton-Baillie, 2008) translating to living street.

The specific design features of a shared street distinguish it from a regular street. As noted by Ben-Joseph (1995, p. 507), these features include:

- It is a residential, public space.
- Through traffic is discouraged.
- Paved space is shared by pedestrians and cars, with pedestrians having priority over the entire street.
- Walking and playing are allowed everywhere.
- It can be a single street, a square (or other form), or a combination of connected spaces.
- Its entrances are clearly marked.
- There are no conventional, straight stretches of pavement with raised curbs, and pavement (carriage way) and sidewalk (footway) are not rigidly demarcated.

- Car speed and movement are restricted by physical barriers, and by deviations, bends, and undulations.
- Residents have auto access to dwelling fronts.
- The area has extensive landscaping.
- The area has street furnishings.

The point of the street is not to be a thoroughfare for cars and cars only; it is to be a community gathering place for people. This perspective is reflected by Appleyard (1980) that a street is a place for people to come together and interact. Aut Karndacharuk, a researcher and senior Manager of traffic engineering at Transport New South Wales, has written extensively about shared streets and safety. Karndacharuk et al. (2014, para. 19) noted the main points for a shared street as follows:

- Pedestrians have priority to use the full width of the road while drivers are urged not to drive faster than walking speeds.
- There is little demarcation between carriageway and footpath. The entire width is often constructed in a continuous surface with special pavers.
- Through vehicular traffic is discouraged. Vehicle speeds and flows are restricted by street design (e.g. horizontal curves and the location of bollards and parking spaces).
- There are streetscape elements to encourage users to stay within the space.
- The access points to the residential shared street area are clearly marked.

Shared streets are unique in their design and differ from other approaches like calmed streets. Calmed streets have physical design elements that slow traffic movement. On a calmed street, vehicles and pedestrians are completely separated. A shared street integrates vehicle and non-vehicle users.

Criticisms of the shared street design include a disjointed approach to promoting active transportation. Without a complete network of bike-friendly and walkable spaces; active transportation cannot be fully embraced by community members.

### ***Systems Thinking Approach to Planning***

Integrated planning is a leading practice and a goal. Shared streets are of interest to a variety of different disciplines. In the creation of a shared street, a variety of disciplines work together to accomplish the goal. Engineers, planners, communications professionals, and elected officials all work together to achieve the goal.

The literature on shared streets spanned many different theoretical frameworks and professions. The discussion around shared streets touched on placemaking and authenticity, tactical urbanism, environmental psychology, transportation engineering, and social justice.

### **Community/Urban Planning**

Shared Streets contribute to a variety of community planning aspects and related fields. These planning aspects are reflected in placemaking, tactical urbanism, sustainability, social interaction. Related fields are environmental psychology and transportation engineering.

#### ***Placemaking and Authenticity***

Planners have long been concerned with creating spaces with a sense of place. Placemaking involves the coordination of multiple approaches to improve a space by taking into account the perspectives and desires of the people who live, work, and use a space (Madden, 2011).

Closely linked to a sense of place is the concept of authenticity in urban design. Authenticity is a sensory as well as an emotional construct, but also a social construct that Zukin defined as “the look and the feel of a place as well as the social connectedness that place inspires” (Zukin, 2010, as cited in Mehta, 2018, p. 220)

#### ***Environmental Psychology***

Redevelopment and development in communities have also been examined in the environmental psychology field. The attachment that many community members feel toward their environment may affect their viewpoints on changes to their landscape. As Manzo and Perkins (2006) noted:

Proposed development projects can be perceived by some community members as a threat to place attachments because they will change the physical fabric of the neighborhood. Those who feel their relationships to their community places are threatened by redevelopment may consequently resist a proposal regardless of its potential value. (p. 337)

Additionally, Silberstein and Maser (2016) added to this discussion in stating:

Community is rooted in a sense of place, where people live in a reciprocal relationship with their landscape. As such, a community is not simply a static place within a static landscape but rather a lively, ever-changing, interactive, and

interdependent system of biophysical relationships—both social and environmental.  
(p. 49)

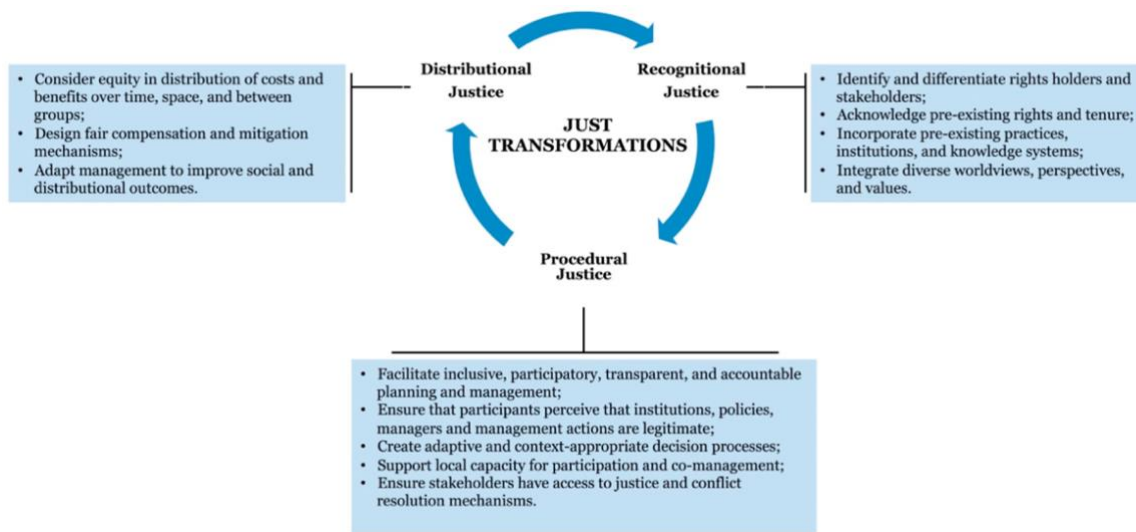
The urban planning and environmental psychology concepts must be taken into account when discussing the redevelopment of streets into shared streets because the sense of place can be understood as a driver for change, while the attachment community members hold to their built environment can be understood as a force of resistance to change.

### **Social Justice**

The micro and macro political scales through which we experience our built environments show that the movement of some is at the expense of others (Bissell, 2016). On a macro-political scale, how we move through our cities and towns, whether it be in a private vehicle, public transportation, or other method, is a result of policy decisions. On a micro-political scale, as individuals navigating the streetscape and the interactions we have with vehicles, people, or the built environment impact us daily (Bissell, 2016).

“When deliberate transformations to environmental sustainability are enacted, there will inevitable social consequences both positive and negative relative to the status quo” (Bennett et al., 2019, para. 2). Bennett et al. (2019) argued that three types of justice need to be taken into account when entities transition to environmental sustainability. These are (a) distributional justice, (b) recognitional justice, and (c) procedural justice (see Figure 9). Recognitional justice refers to “the identification of all interest groups and rights holders who are present in an area and who might be implicated by a sustainability initiative” (para. 17). Procedural justice is the process and procedures through which change is implemented. Distributional justice refers to how different groups will be impacted by the sustainability change, both for the better and for the worse.

**Figure 9**  
*Social Justice*



Source: Just Transformations to Sustainability, by Bennet et al., 2019, *Sustainability*, 11(14), Figure 2. Copyright 2019.<sup>5</sup>

Within a municipality, a variety of professionals work to redevelop a street. It is, however, planners who are at the forefront of working with the community in a participatory planning environment. Trust between the public and local government, therefore, plays a role in community buy-in to new projects:

Since planning is inherently spatial, plan making and implementation occur in neighborhoods, towns and regions, involving actors embedded in thick local networks of social and professional relations. Initial interpersonal trust and systemic trust are preconditions to engaging stakeholders in collaborative processes. During the process, trust facilitates cooperation and in turn trust can increase through successful cooperation. This positive feedback loop can sustain collaboration over time. (Laurian, 2009, para. 27)

<sup>5</sup> Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11143881>

## **Chapter Summary**

Communities in Canada have been influenced by planning approaches like the garden suburb and new urbanism. In recent years, participatory planning and collaborative consensus-building have become increasingly central to how planners facilitate local change.

Concurrently, the emergence of shared streets in Canadian cities reflects these evolving approaches to urban design and community engagement. As this initiative gains traction, there is a growing need for literature that examines its practical implementation and implications for contemporary urbanism. This project responds to that need by contributing new insights into these developments.

### **Methods and Methodology**

This study is a multi-method case study that utilizes desk research, semi-structured interviews and a literature review (presented in Chapter 2), focusing on the implementation of shared streets initiatives. Case studies are in-depth studies of the case under consideration (Hamel et al., 1993). Different approaches to case studies include participant observation, as pioneered by field studies of participants in their environments, pioneered by La Play, and finally the Chicago School approach, which gives weight to individuals' perspectives of the case (Hamel et al., 1993). By using semi-structured interviews, my case study most closely resembled the Chicago School approach.

#### ***Desk Research***

The background research for this study was undertaken to understand the local context, decision-making processes, and planning principles shaping the Bear Street Shared Street project in Banff. Shared streets are a relatively new urban design approach in Canada, blending pedestrian and vehicular use to create more inclusive and flexible public spaces. Investigating how these ideas were translated into local policy and practice required an examination of the documentary record surrounding the project. Background research on the Bear Street Shared Street project was conducted by reading council requests for decisions, meeting minutes, and local newspaper articles. The background documents provided a picture of the viewpoints of decision makers and impacted community members during this project's journey. Understanding the Town of Banff documents bridged the theoretical planning concepts with the outcomes by looking at how they have been written about for elected officials and community members. "In this sense, policy documents can also be understood as intellectual machinery that serves to transform abstract ideas into the realm of political calculation and action" (Moe & Karppinen, 2012, p. 182).

This background reading is important in this research for two reasons. The first, Town of Banff Request for Decision documents, shed light on the information that was made available to decision-makers as they voted on the stages of the Bear Street initiative. As Moe and Karppinen (2012) described, this can shed light on the "value-laden assumptions behind policy-making" (p. 187). Second, the local newspaper articles shed light on the progression of the information easily available to the public through the free local printed newspaper articles

on the Bear Street initiative throughout its phases. These background documents brought understanding of the main actors, the public opinion, and the challenges and compromises made along the way. Interview questions were informed by this information and enabled the semi-structured interview format in which follow-up questions or conversation pathways could be knowledgeably undertaken.

### ***Semi-Structured Interviews***

Research interviews involve direct, often in-depth, conversations between a researcher and participants to explore their experiences, perceptions, and insights on a particular topic. In this study, semi-structured interviews were used, which means that while the interviewer followed a predetermined set of thematic questions, there was flexibility to adapt the phrasing, order, and follow-up questions based on the flow of conversation and the participant's responses. This approach allowed for a balance between consistency across interviews and the opportunity to probe deeper into issues that emerged organically, making it especially effective for understanding complex social phenomena and capturing nuanced perspectives.

The semi-structured interview method is particularly valuable when the research aims to gather rich, detailed information that cannot be easily obtained through structured surveys or questionnaires. The interviewer prepares a guide or framework of key topics but encourages open-ended responses, enabling participants to elaborate on their experiences and viewpoints in their own words. This conversational style helps build rapport and trust, which can lead to more candid and insightful answers. It also allows the researcher to clarify questions, probe for more detail, and adapt to the unique context of each interview, thus enhancing the depth and quality of the data collected.

In this study, purposive sampling was used to select participants from three key groups: (a) municipal administration staff, (b) Bear Street business owners, and (c) current or former Town of Banff councillors (see Table 1). Each group was chosen for its direct involvement in or influence over the Bear Street redevelopment project.

- Participant Group #1–Town of Banff Administrative Staff: Participants selected for this group were chosen from the Bear Street Planning Team. These staff members are chosen from different departments within the Town's organization, including planning, communications, and engineering. I interviewed 3 members of the administration, the

smallest sampling out of all three groups. The invitation to administrative staff is presented in Appendix A. Questions for this group are found in Appendix B.

- Participant Group #2–Bear Street Business Owners: Participants selected from this group were business owners with direct access to Bear Street. I dropped off letters to all Bear Street businesses asking for an interview (see Appendix C) and followed up once more in person at the business (see Appendix D). I asked for emails at the business and emailed any business whose email I had; I electronically requested an interview and followed up once. I interviewed all Bear Street business owners or managers who responded to my request for an interview. In total, 6 Bear Street business owners were interviewed. This was the second largest participant group. Questions for this group are found in Appendix E.
- Participant Group #3–Current and Past Members of Banff Town Council: All current members of the Town of Banff Council and members from the last council were asked to participate (see Appendix F). Participants were asked over email with an initial request and two follow-ups. I interviewed all current and former councillors who responded. In total, 8 current or former members of the council were interviewed. This was the largest participant group. Questions for this group are found in Appendix G.

**Table 1**

*List of Participants*

Participant Group	# of Participant	Description Focus
Town of Banff Administrative Staff	3	Bear Street Planning Team (planning, communications, engineering)
Bear Street Business Owner	6	Direct access to Bear Street
Elected Official	8	Current or former council member

The requested time commitment of each participant was 30–45 minutes. The semi-structured nature of the interviews enabled those wanting to discuss the topic for a longer period of time to do so. Questions were designed to create conversation and guide the flow of the interview. Silberman and Patterson describe the questions of a semi-structured interview as something that “should be used as a general roadmap to guide conversation, but researchers should adjust them in response to the flow of conversation and diverge from planned questions when

presented with emergent themes that are relevant to a study. This is the essence of semi-structured interviewing. It is focused, but flexible” (2022, p. 70).

The recorded interviews were then transcribed and thematically analyzed. Identifying the themes within each participant interview allowed me to shed light on the commonalities and differences between the participant groups and the common challenges and successes of this concept as seen by each participant group. Participants were asked to reflect on the shared street concept during its initial discussion and summer trials, the construction process, and the finished product.

The theoretical orientation of the study is interpretive. “Interpretive research designs...do not set out to test key concepts defined before the research has begun. If they are interested in studying a particular concept (e.g., work practices, violence) or role (school principal, mid-level manager), they will have developed a sense of how those concepts or roles are discussed in the established, research-relevant literature” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 18) The interpretive orientation was appropriate because it created space for understanding the perspectives of the different actors involved in this research. The process also pointed to the interrelationships between different actors and the built environment around them. The interpretive approach is useful in that it allows the research gathered to be flexible and flow in directions that the participants of the study push it in. “Its credibility measures are not theoretical in nature but more oriented to the authenticity, clarity, responsiveness and integrity of the enterprise” (Thorne, 2025, p. 251).

The interview transcriptions were thematically analyzed to assess the main sentiments from participants regarding the process of the Bear Street redevelopment. Inductive coding was used to pull themes from the interview transcriptions through Nvivo. These themes were then grouped into related thematic bundles. The codes grouped within five key themes (see Table 2).

**Table 2**  
*Themes and Codes*

Theme	Codes
Urban Resilience and Adaptability	Adaptability, Uncertainty, Impact of COVID, Shift in Street Use, Need to Redevelop
Socio-Economic & Business Impacts	Business Impact, Construction, Cost, Impacts of Redevelopment, Parking, Traffic Concern

Urban Design, Policy, & Governance	Design, Policy, Recommendations for the Future, Political Courage, Communications, Difference From End Result
Environmental Stewardship & Public Space	Environmental Stewardship, Pedestrianization, Sense of place
Social Well-Being & Community Experience	Angst, Sense of Empathy, Initial Awareness

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### ***Limitations***

The interviews for this study were conducted in 2023, nearly two years after the completion of the Bear Street redevelopment and following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions and travel bans. This timing is significant for the reliability, timeliness, and validity of the data. On one hand, the return of visitors and the resumption of business operations provided participants with recent, relevant experiences to draw upon, supporting the timeliness and contextual relevance of their responses. However, the close overlap between the end of pandemic restrictions and the completion of the redevelopment complicated the validity of attributing increased street activity solely to the street project, as it is difficult to disentangle the effects of the redevelopment from the broader impacts of reopening after the pandemic. This temporal ambiguity may limit the reliability of conclusions regarding causality, as participants’ perceptions of what drove the resurgence in visitors and customers could be influenced by multiple, overlapping factors.

Another factor impacting validity is the composition of the participant groups. The study draws on the perspectives of administrative staff, business owners, and elected officials—engaged stakeholders who played active roles in the redevelopment process. This is a strength, as these groups were well-positioned to comment on project conception, implementation, and outcomes. However, the exclusion of local residents who are neither business owners nor officials was a notable weakness. Their absence means the data may not fully capture the range of community sentiment, particularly given subsequent controversy over a nearby pedestrian zone, where some residents voiced concerns about traffic, emergency evacuation, and personal inconvenience. Despite official data showing improved traffic wait times and assurances about emergency planning, opposition persisted, leading to a petition and a vote of the electorate. This vote ultimately ended the Banff Avenue pedestrian zone. This suggests that the interviewed groups may be more supportive of pedestrianization

initiatives than the broader community, potentially introducing bias and limiting the validity of the findings for generalizing to all residents.

While the interviews provide timely insights from key decision-makers and impacted business owners, the reliability and validity of the data are affected by the timing of the research and the participant selection. The findings should be interpreted with an awareness of these limitations, particularly regarding the attribution of outcomes and the representation of community-wide perspectives.

### **Chapter Summary**

This multi-method case study employs desk research, semi-structured interviews and a literature review to analyze the process of redeveloping a street into a shared street. The theoretical interpretation of the study was interpretive. Limitations on the study include the selection of the key participant groups, and the timing of the street redevelopment coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Chapter 4: Findings

The semi-structured interviews took place from April 2023 to September 2023. The 17 interviews were recorded and then transcribed through NVivo. The transcribed interviews led to common themes being identified through codes. Full quotations are included in the findings to ensure that the essence of what the participant wanted to communicate is included in this research. The themes and related codes are as follows:

Theme 1: **Urban Resilience and Adaptability**. The codes grouped into this theme include Adaptability, Uncertainty, Impact of COVID, Shift in Street Use, and Need to Redevelop

Theme 2: **Socio-Economic & Business Impacts**. The codes grouped into this theme include Business Impact, Construction Cost, Impacts of Redevelopment, Parking, and Traffic Concern

Theme 3: **Urban Design, Policy & Governance**. The codes grouped into this theme include Design, Policy, Recommendations for the Future, Political Courage, Communications, and Difference from End Result

Theme 4: **Environmental Stewardship & Public Space**. The codes grouped into this theme include Environmental Stewardship, Pedestrianization, and Sense of Place

Theme 5: **Social Wellbeing & Community Experience**. The codes grouped into this theme include Angst, Sense of Empathy, and Initial Awareness

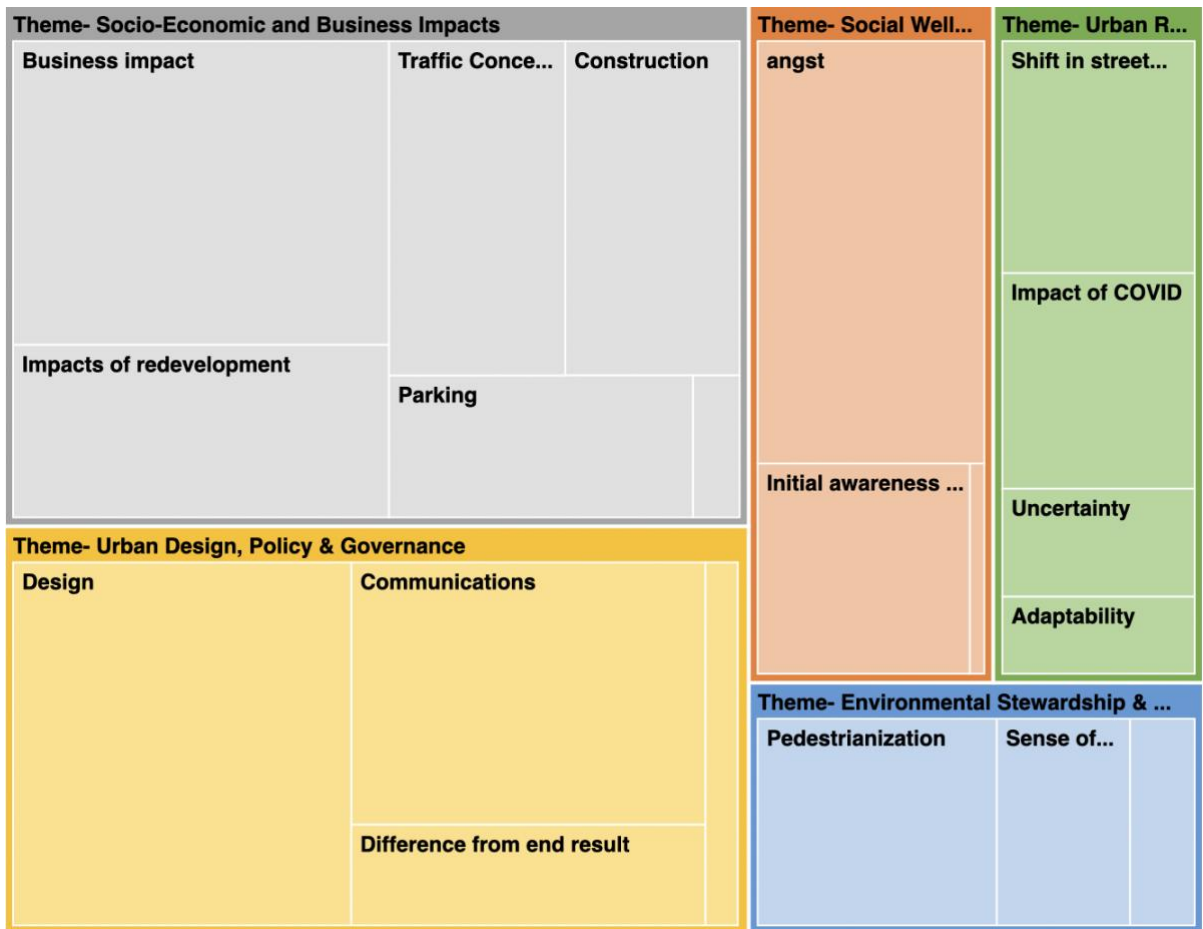
### **Bear Street Business Owner Participant Group**

In total, 6 Bear Street Business Owners were interviewed. The top theme for this participant group was Socio-Economic and Business Impacts (see Figure 10). The Hierarchy Chart is the result of identifying themes within each participant group's interview transcriptions and running these thematic codes through Nvivo. The resulting hierarchy chart shows a visual representation of the most common themes displayed as the largest grouping.

The Word Cloud (see Figure 11) emphasizes the common words in each participant group's transcriptions without regard to the thematic codes. Including this visual representation conveys the most commonly occurring words and gives the reader a broader view of the research.

**Figure 10**

*Hierarchy Chart Based on Business Owners' Data Input*





People, they're willing to sit in minus 30 on a patio for the experience of sitting in minus 30 to patio in Banff and it may be snowing or it's perfect or it's so cold. So, they're much more inclined to do that here so it made sense. So, when I saw the first kind of, you know, beginning samples of it, I'm like, Oh, perfect. (Business Owner 6)

The implementation of the trial patios was in place of parking. Some businesses lamented the loss of parking during these trials and felt it had a negative impact.

I would have just left it as a normal street, for now. Just because we don't know what the future use is going to be. I mean, the town back was correct about that. We don't know what future use is going to be, but it just seems like it was so rushed. (Business Owner 5)

### ***Construction***

Moving forward with construction during COVID was positively viewed by 5 of the 6 Business Owners.

“It just so happened to be the perfect timing with everything that was going down. Like there were no tourists, anyway. So, I was kind of like, okay, well, all my competitors are here, anyway. So, we're all going to be getting hit the same way. But I always knew and felt that it was obviously and always going to be better in the long run for sure. It was. We just had to like go with it. (Business Owner 2)

Those who viewed the move positively noted that provincial and federal financial supports in place helped to support them during the challenging economic times and that construction taking place after COVID restrictions were lifted would interfere with their ability to recover.

“I was on the zoom when it was decided that it would happen during Covid, which I think was wise, because the COVID funding was essentially what got us through; we would not have survived. We would have been back into trouble. But that definitely helped us with, and so sort of bizarre and serendipitous timing. But that definitely helped us” (Business Owner 3).

The one business that did not agree with moving forward with the street redevelopment during COVID believed that the street should have remained as it was indefinitely.

“Why are we choosing Bear Street for this? And actually the answer I got from administration is in our incorporation agreement from 1990 it says that we are going to pedestrianize Bear Street. I think it was the incorporation. [Kiersten interjected to note it was the transportation masterplan] So they were they’re using this. Master plan from the 90s to base their decision, which is ridiculous because nobody could have predicted what Banff would look like now. I mean, today, because nobody could have predicted what that would look like now. I mean, today I’m sure people projected what back would look like now.” (Business Owner 5)

Business Owners agreed that the construction phase of the redevelopment hurt their businesses. Even businesses that were proponents of the project noted the tremendously negative impact. Business Owner 1 stated that the construction was “100% negative all day long, twice on Tuesday. It was choke worthy what it did to sales. It was like, we’ll never see a more challenging moment in time. But the construction was an absolute stranglehold.”

A common complaint among business owners was the level of communication regarding what construction would impact on certain days. Some businesses would arrive at their location to find that construction had made their business inaccessible, contrary to the schedule as communicated by the Town of Banff. This is a challenge that was noted in all participant groups. The Elected Official and Member of Administration participant groups identified the communication breakdown causing this issue to be located between the construction company and the Town of Banff members of Administration. Business Owners praised the Bear Street Ambassadors, who were contract employees of the Town of Banff, hired to walk along Bear Street, guide people to businesses, and liaise with business owners to communicate information to and from the Town of Banff.

### ***Impact of Redevelopment***

Of the 6 Business Owners interviewed, 4 believe that the redeveloped street had a positive impact on their business. All 6 agreed that there are more people on the street than prior to

redevelopment. Two businesses did not believe that more people on the street impacted their business positively, noting that while more people may frequent their respective stores, this did not translate into more purchases.

I would have just left it as a normal street, for now. Just because we don't know what the future use is going to be. I mean, the town back was correct about that. We don't know what future use is going to be, but it just seems like it was so rushed. (Business Owner 5)

Business Owner 3 indicated that more people are browsing in their space and not purchasing, which has negatively impacted their ability to conduct the necessary paperwork for their business. The other four businesses believed that the busier street led to positive business impacts. Furthermore, these businesses believed that the street redevelopment had an overall positive impact on the community. Business Owner 1 stated, "It's been like amazing. It's totally transformed the commercial district of Banff. it's just changed the way everybody moves around."

### ***Traffic Concerns and Parking***

There is a clear overlap between the businesses that do not believe redevelopment had a positive impact on their business and the businesses concerned about the traffic and the perceived lack of parking. Prior to construction, Council amended the number of parking spots on the street to reflect the Business Owners' concerns. Business Owner 5 indicated that they did not believe the increased parking approved by Council addressed their concerns. "I think we got one parking spot, 2 parking spots maybe. It wasn't much. It wasn't much" (Business Owner 5)

Other Business Owners noted that the decrease in parking correlated to the increase in pedestrianization. However, a complete pedestrianization of the street was not realistic at this time.

It can never be just a complete pedestrian zone. You have to have that level of parking. People do have to run a business. But I would say, that's probably the biggest thing for people. There's a lot of people sitting there and enjoying the sun, and everything that's part of this. last year was a good year. There's a lot more events on the street than there was before, and those closures still have an impact. But you know you just live with it. (Business owner 3)

## *Communications*

Each of the Business Owners was asked if they remembered when they first heard about the Bear Street redevelopment project. Answers varied widely, from Business Owner 1 understanding that it was mentioned in Council budgets since the trials began to Business Owners 3 and 5 remembering that they were told about the redevelopment project after construction had been approved. These ranges in understanding about the project were closely linked to individual Business Owners' satisfaction with the level of communication from Town Hall. Business Owner 1 stated on communication during construction: "Did I love what was being communicated? Not all the time, but it was communicated. There were weekly email communications. There were constant walk-bys, walk-throughs."

Business Owner 3 stated:

The one aspect that I got frustrated with was the fact that so we were trying to run a business at the same time as trying to figure out what was going to be happening and what questions should we be asking. as opposed to you know, they're being a more open, transparent amount of information, and maybe they have provided everything that they should have. But you also, because of the atmosphere that had developed there, you weren't quite sure whether that would be the case. And so there was always a worry that there was something you were missing. That should be discussed, because it's all of a sudden, you're gonna be very surprised. And so, I think the initial reluctance to consult very much set a tone, and it wasn't very good.

Business Owner 4 highlighted the impact of the Bear Street Ambassadors:

There was a very decent amount of communication, especially with the town hall contact. (Ambassador) was our main point of contact during all this. I think she was a really great listener and passing along our concerns, but you know there's only so much she can do. When we had a concern, we felt it was going to be heard and addressed.

In reference to other businesses having negative views on the level of communication, Business Owner 6 stated,

The Town of Banff was fairly transparent, and as much as you chose to be involved, you could be involved. They had weekly meetings they had weekly update meetings.

[Director of Communications], I didn't know him initially, did an incredible job of engagement and making sure that everybody felt heard and seen who chose to be heard. You know people complained, or I heard some things, but I would never see them at meetings. They made it available if you chose to be there. . . . We also have like a responsibility for businesses to find out what is happening, and I think the Town did the best they possibly could with as many varied owners and investments and stakeholders.

Business Owner 5 referenced negative interactions with members of the Town of Banff:

At one point, administration did say to me, they're like, "Well, we're not designing this street around what businesses are already here because you know businesses come in and go." and the way they worded it, almost implied that, you know, you're gonna be out in a few years because you're not gonna be able to survive because we're not building this to you, which is a little rude.

Negative perceptions on communication were tied to Business Owners sense of trust toward members of Town of Banff Administration and Council.

### ***Design***

The summer woonerf trials tested potential street design and took place for five years prior to redevelopment. Some Business Owners remarked on their feelings of excitement and hope sparked by the summer trials. Business Owner 6 stated,

Bear Street has always been kind of like this rogue sibling. So it was really exciting to see the Town acknowledge that needs to be activated, it needs to be addressed. It needs to be activated. It needs to be bettered.

The concept of Bear Street being termed a rogue sibling to Banff Ave was reflected in the Elected Official participant group, where the term "ugly sister" was used to describe the differences between these two streets.

Some Business Owners noted positive views of the trials. Business Owner 2 recalled that effort was placed in activating the street with festivals and music. While the trials used decking, planters, and railings to help people imagine the possible result of the redesigned street, Business Owners did notice that the clear intermingling of cars and people was not

able to be fully trialed. Business Owner 6 stated, “It felt very temporary. The essence of what they were trying to do, though, was there.”

Two of the Business Owners stated that it was unclear that redevelopment was the goal of the trials. Business Owner 5 stated,

They were doing 5 years of the woonerf trial, which was actually nothing like it looks like now. It was just walkways that were going around a lot of places where they wanted to put patios, but you were still separated as a person walking—the pedestrian—you were still separated from the traffic.”

Business Owner 3 stated,

They were good in the fact that they provided a focal point for people to hear about Bear Street. They were drastically different than what actually happened, and so that was bothersome, because then you start to go. “Okay, what else do they have up their sleeve? What aren’t they telling us?” that sort of thing.

These contrasting views were reflected by Administration Official 1:

When we did the trial, we were very cautious in terms of design, so we made sure that it was railings on sidewalks. So this idea of a permeable street wasn’t tested to its full effect. So by and large, pedestrians stayed where pedestrians felt comfortable, which was within our railed environments. Railed off from the street.

Business Owner 5 held a negative view on the trials and the end result of the street.

There’s obviously a side that really enjoys it. I mean, the hospitality industry loves it. So they were very much pushing for the street, but I think even then, they weren’t excited about how it was designed. It seems like it could have been better. The whole design could have been better, but we were never asked for input. On the design like Administration never came to any of us. We live and breathe Bear Street. My business has been there for 15 years. A lot of those other businesses have been there for many years. So why not come around and ask and see what we think because we have the best idea of how this street operates (Business Owner 5).

One Business Owner expressed an appetite for signage on the street to tell the story of Bear Street. Visitors to the street wouldn't know about the history or special aspects of the street, including the soil cells.

It would be super cool to have signage on here now. Saying this is what it used to look like, this is what it looks like now, and this is why this is how. I feel like that's one thing that is lacking. We don't know where we are. We don't know how important this is. If you and I were just getting off a plane from the Netherlands, we'd be like "what, did this look different two years ago?" I think it's such an interesting story (Business Owner 6).

### ***Shift in Street Use***

While this theme was the fourth listed on the hierarchy chart (see Figure 10), it is worth noting. Currently, there is a wide variety of businesses on the street, including medical offices. In each participant group interviewed, references to the movement of certain businesses were made. Multiple interviewees noted that the medical offices might find a better location with more accessible rental options in another location nearer to the hospital. A hardware store located on Bear Street was referenced multiple times as a business that could be better suited for a location within the industrial compound, which is located in a location removed from tourist activity and local foot traffic. Prior to the redevelopment of the street and currently, Bear Street has been home to multiple art galleries, restaurants, and a movie theatre. The concept that Bear Street could become an arts and culture district was noted in both the Business Owner and Elected Official participant groups.

Business Owners 1 and 6 both stated that they would like to see more done for winter animation of the street. Business Owner 1 noted that COVID changed how people want to interact with the outdoor spaces in winter; eating outside is now something more people want to do. Business Owner 6 stated that people will want to eat outside in Banff simply for the experience of eating outside and enjoying the views of this iconic place.

### ***Trust***

The concept of trust from Business Owners towards Members of Administration was highlighted by two participants. This concept can be closely linked to communication and design. One Business Owner felt that the level of communication could have been better and

noted that they felt as though Administration was concealing things from Business Owners. Another Business Owner felt that the difference between the look of the woonerf summer trials and the redevelopment design indicated that Administration was not to be trusted.

[The trials] were drastically different than what actually happened, and so that was bothersome, because then you start to go “Okay, what else do they have up their sleeve? What aren’t they telling us?” that sort of thing. (Business Owner 3)

In response to feeling heard from Administration or Elected Officials, Business Owner 5 stated “It was easy to talk to them in that it was easy to get in touch with them and start the conversation. But as far as actually having a productive conversation, no.”

Some Business Owners sense of who was responsible for actions contrasted. Business Owner 5 stated that “it doesn’t seem like Council’s running a show, it seems like administration is running the show.” Whereas Business Owner 6 stated,

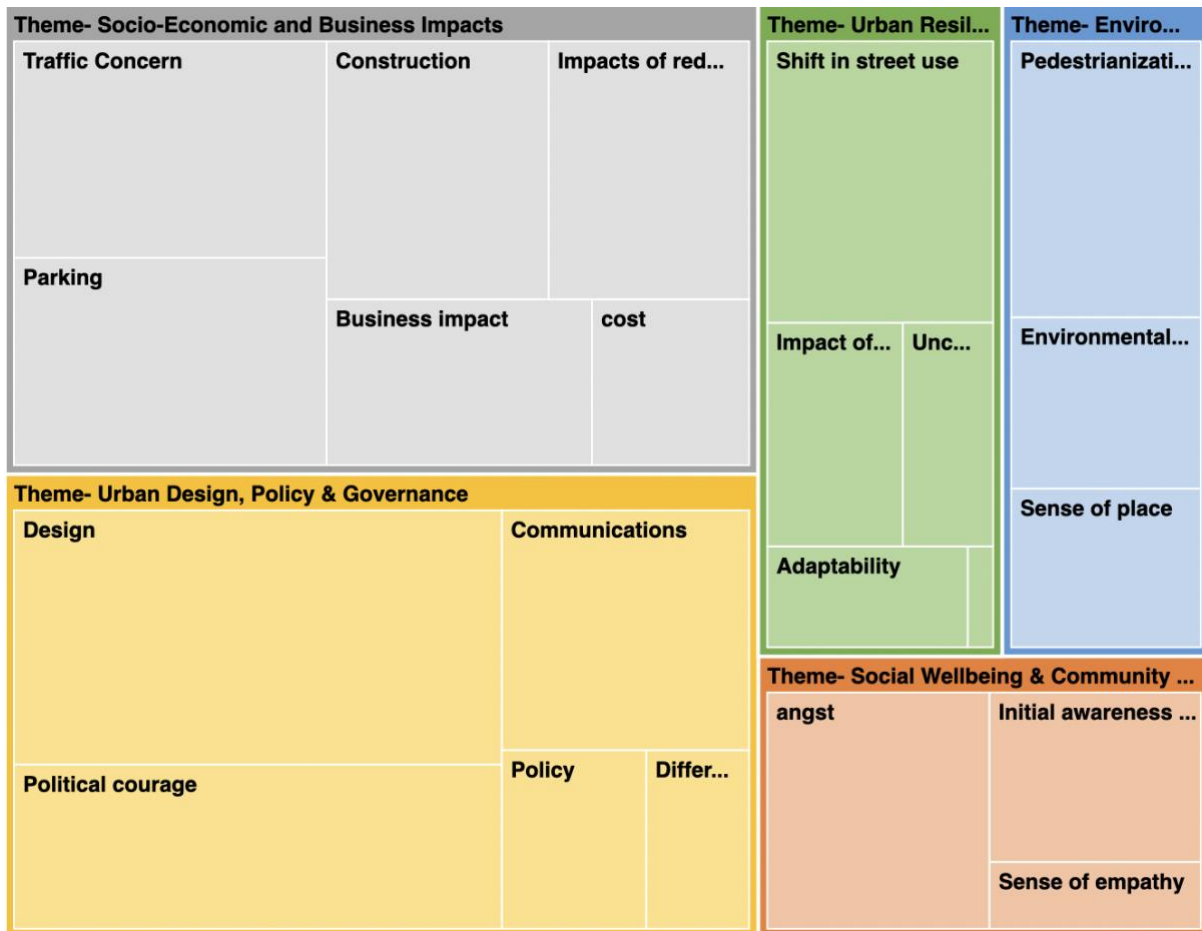
You know, I think councils, in a lot of small towns there’s a kind of a sense of removal and because they’re admin and so in front of them. This one has a very active, very, accountable admin. Which is great. But I do find that that sort of takes the heat off and makes it like don’t talk to me, talk to the person in charge of that (admin). (Business Owner 6)

### **Elected Official Participant Group**

In total, 8 current or former elected officials were interviewed. This represents the largest participant group. The themes identified from their input are reflected in Figure 12. A word cloud was also developed to reflect the prominent words from their interviews (see Figure 13).

**Figure 12**

*Hierarchy Chart Based on Elected Official Participant Input*





Two elected officials believed the project could have waited. One Elected Official noted the need for intercept parking to allow for the street to become fully pedestrianized. Another believed that local businesses would fare better by waiting until the COVID restrictions had ended and business returned to normal levels.

The choice to move ahead with the redevelopment of Bear Street during COVID was made by the Banff Town Council. Among the factors that Council took into consideration was the negative impact that the COVID restrictions had on the local economy, which was based almost entirely on tourism.

Elected Official 1 stated,

I always said Bear Street was the unsung hero of the pandemic. First of all, there's a pandemic, and we went from, you know, 100% employment to 85% employment overnight. So, our economy just completely crashed like devastating. Then, you know, further, we dug up this road and really impacted people's lives, people's businesses, and you try to say in that time like, "Look at the big vision like this is going to be well worth it. I promise you this is going to be worth it. This is going to be what the next time we've got a pandemic-type situation in terms of economic downturn, this type of investment in this street will be what attracts people to come here." But it's very hard for people to see that far and that big when they're just trying to get through the day.

While the majority of the Elected Officials interviewed were strongly in favour of moving forward with the project during COVID, one held the opposite view. Elected Official 4, in contrast to other Elected Officials, worried that the construction during an already challenging economic time would act as a double whammy to hurt businesses even further. Their opinion was that businesses should have an opportunity to recover, and then for construction to be considered to allow a better chance of success. This opinion was in contrast to most other interviewees in all participant groups, who noted that coming out of the pandemic and then having to make it through construction would be severely detrimental. Elected Official 6 believed that although COVID was the opportune time to complete the project, the street should not be redeveloped until an intercept parking lot and mass transit from Calgary have been implemented. "We jumped into it because this was a good opportunity to get it done. Not that we were ready for it, because I still don't think we're ready for it."

As in all participant groups, a communication challenge during the construction phase was highlighted during the interviews with Elected Officials. Elected Official 8 noted,

I think, the construction company over-promised and was under-delivering, and I think that administration in their communicating with council absolutely over-promised and under-delivered. I believe they said exactly what they thought Council wanted to hear in terms of timelines, and there was no way those timelines were going to be met. not a chance.

### *Communication*

Overall, the Elected Officials had a positive view of the communication from the Town of Banff to members of the public regarding the implementation and construction of the shared street project. Some noted the challenges associated with communicating changes to busy residents was similar to the Administrative Official participant group; a sense of empathy for Business Owners existed in many interviews.

Many of the Elected Official participant group pointed to the trials as a fundamental source for informing the public of the intended redevelopment: “When you call something a trial, it generally means you are trying for a reason” (Elected Official 7).

Elected Official 1 noted that this is the most extensive public consultation that the Town of Banff has conducted.

“This would have been the most heavy public-engagement we’ve ever done on anything in the town of Banff history ever. Period, because we had, I think it was, 5 summers of the trial. And then we had various types of consultation. I remember the teams set up in the Bear Street Mall. It’s the Mall on the right-hand side, and it had diagrams and people can move the cars and everything.”

This was reflected by Elected Official 3 who stated,

Could we [have] done anything differently in order to show the streetscape? It was so comprehensive. Our multi-year, trial or pre-construction conversations, you know, with businesses, with the broader community, with open houses, with, you know, a

weekly newsletters, a person hired as the point person, you know, half a million dollar communication budget, like there was just so much.

Elected Officials, touching on the challenge of communicating community changes to the public, noted there are various factors that inhibit public understanding of initiatives.

Members of the public will be most attentive to issues that directly impact them, especially once the impact is made clear: “Typically, in my experience with communication, people will only pay attention when it affects them personally” (Elected Official 2).

Elected Officials also noted that a vocal minority can affect sentiments from the public being communicated to Council:

Banff is a really interesting community around these things because we know there are a lot of people who are very vocal about their opposition to these things, but I don’t know if they are the majority. I think the majority of residents support the things we do and support these concepts, and the reason I say that is because the people who are on Council—the incumbents—do well in this town.” (Elected Official 2).

Elected Official 7 stated,

It's hard to decipher between whether people knew it and they just didn't agree with it, or whether they didn't, you know, suggest that they didn't know of. When you call something a trial, it generally means you are trying for a reason.

### ***Design***

All Elected Officials referenced the necessary work of reconstructing the street. The underground infrastructure needed to be redone; however, some Elected Officials noted that the look of the street did not fit in with the overall look of other spaces within Banff. Elected Official 8 referred to the street as Banff Ave’s ugly sister with mismatched light posts and a lack of cohesive design elements: “So it was like a shit storm of design and leftovers. It was so neglected. It was so awful. It was really crappy.” (Elected Official 8).

The street redesign removed on-street parking. Elected Official 1 stated, “I think it takes a lot of political will to try to claw back public space that we’ve just freely handed over, for I don’t know 80 years, to big auto.”

Look at all of our street parking, especially residential neighborhoods. It’s dedicated to housing the car. It’s housing one person’s private vehicle, or maybe multiple

private vehicles. When that could be a bike lane that could be wider sidewalks for strollers that could be. It's babysitting a car. So you know I think it takes a lot of political will to design without cars. (Elected Official 1)

### ***Trees and Parking***

The number of trees included in the design of the street was reduced in response to business owner concerns. Despite the choice to reduce the trees to appease business owners, Elected Official 6 noted that the street would be more attractive if the number of trees were increased. Without the trees, they believe that the street looks grey and dull.

Elected Official 2 stated,

Interestingly enough, the trees, the location of the trees, the number of trees was probably the most contentious which I find really interesting because to me they're just a no-brainer. Where the contentious part came in was the location of them particularly at the end of the street where they were going to block signs and block the visual impact because you couldn't see them. But for me, I remember there was a big discussion about cutting back the trees because we didn't want to clutter it with trees and I thought that was the contrary. I thought the more trees the better, and I still do.

A concept repeated in each participant group was the complete pedestrianization of the street. Overall, the Elected Official participant group commented that while a fully pedestrianized street would be great, that cannot happen. Elected Official 1 noted that there is no public will for Bear Street to become fully pedestrianized. Others pointed to the underground parking lot entrances, surface parking lot, and business demand for vehicles to park nearby. The concepts of pedestrianization and parking on the street are inherently interwoven. Parking and cars on the street are seen as a necessity. Elected Officials referenced the existing parkades, the business desire for nearby parking, and the lack of public will for a completely pedestrianized space. Elected Official 1 stated, "I think it takes a lot of political will to try to claw back public space that we've just freely handed over, for I don't know 80 years, to big auto." Per Elected Official 6, "It'd be nice if they could take out that surface parking lot and create a green space, but that's limiting parking, and people are gonna go ballistic." Elected Official 6 added to this point in stating, "that's where the identity of Bear Street doesn't exist. It's not a shared street. It doesn't know what it is." The surface parking lot, drawing cars into the space,

was noted by all participant groups. Some Elected Officials noted it may make more sense as a community space or park; however, a lack of public will exists for that change to take place. “If you're going to do it right probably the number one thing I would do is get rid of that surface parking lot and make it a park. But that’s not going to fly” (Elected Official 6). Elected Official 1 believed that the sentiment towards parking could evolve, stating,

Maybe you have this conversation 50 years, and my hope is that within a national park community, yeah, you have a real conversation about reliance on vehicles, and that we shouldn’t be right. I mean, we’re surrounded by forests. I think, like I said once the street got going in earnest. That was a comment from residents, for sure. Why cars here at all? So, you know, I think slowly over time. I mean my dream would be that either becomes, or you know, green space. We could put brand new library there like something other than cars.

Elected Official 3 stated, “In the summer, it’s really more like a pedestrian zone, but in the winter, it’s a pretty roadway.” This sentiment that more can be done to animate the street in the winter was shared by Business Owners 1 and 6, who indicated that they would like to see permanent patio infrastructure constructed for the winter months and more efforts made to animate the street.

### ***Trials***

Elected Officials overall had positive views on the trials. One elected official referred to the trials and subsequent redesign of the street as a “gift of space” for businesses in a space-constrained area, specifically highlighting the patios. Although the trials showcased a shared street, Elected Officials noted that cars and pedestrians were still separated; however, the idea of what it could be did come across. Despite the overall positive views of the trials, one Elected Official raised concerns that the winter snow clearing for the redesign could not have been trialed. This unavoidable challenge meant that Council could not understand how the snow clearing would impact or damage the bricks on the street.

As the trials continued, Elected Official 1 noted that other streets in close proximity expressed a desire to see similar things happening on their streets. “But then guess who we heard from, Wolf Street, and Caribou Street, hey? What about us? What are those patios? Those are popular. Those are full” (Elected Official 1)

## *Impacts of Redesign*

Almost all Elected Officials viewed design elements like the soil cells as a positive and important element. This participant group, along with members of the Administration group referenced Banff's role as a national park community as one in which decisions must be made as stewards of the environment.

One Elected Official noted the difference in the street during the summer and winter months, noting that "in the summer it's really more like a pedestrian zone, but in the winter, it's a pretty roadway" (Elected Official 3).

Many Elected Officials noted that the street redesign could lead to a changeover in businesses on the street in the future. The types of businesses that were commonly seen as ones that could move were public service businesses like dentists' and doctors' offices. One residential staff accommodation building was highlighted as one that made sense prior to reconstruction, when the entire street had more of a residential feel. As a shared street, that residential building seems out of place. Certain retail stores were also pointed to as ones that could find a more suitable home in the industrial yard. Within this participant group, there was agreement that the businesses that would thrive going forward would be related to food and beverage and those that were positively impacted by foot traffic, as some retail stores can be. Elected Official 6 noted,

I think you'll see a decrease in retail and an increase in food and beverage. I think it's meant for food and beverage. You sit outside. I think the biggest well, the businesses that are benefiting the most are food and beverage, and I think that will continue.

Many Elected Officials noted that the streetscape has become a draw for people.

Elected Official 1 stated,

It created that space where you could talk if you bumped into each other, and it's showing that a road doesn't have to be a road, it can be a gathering space for people. And it's so cool. So, I think that helps foster community development I think it fosters social inclusivity. It's equitable, it's free to go outside. You know you don't have to be sitting on a patio.

This is reflected in Elected official 2's statement on their hope for the street.

My thought from day one is that we have to make Bear Street a destination in itself.

We have to make Bear Street a place where if you're downtown, "it's let's go to Bear Street, because it's this kind of experience". It was not that way before. This street had old sidewalks, it was lined end to end with parked cars, it wasn't a very good experience. We've made it what we always wanted it to be the meeting place.

Elected Official 4 stated,

There's lots of benefits I can see. I like walking down there. I think it picked up the number of foot traffic on the street. I think it does favor to changing our perspective on vehicle usage, because here we are with this one earth. But now we've advantaged some businesses at the disadvantage of others, and I don't know how we can work that out, ie the others being reliant on parking etc.

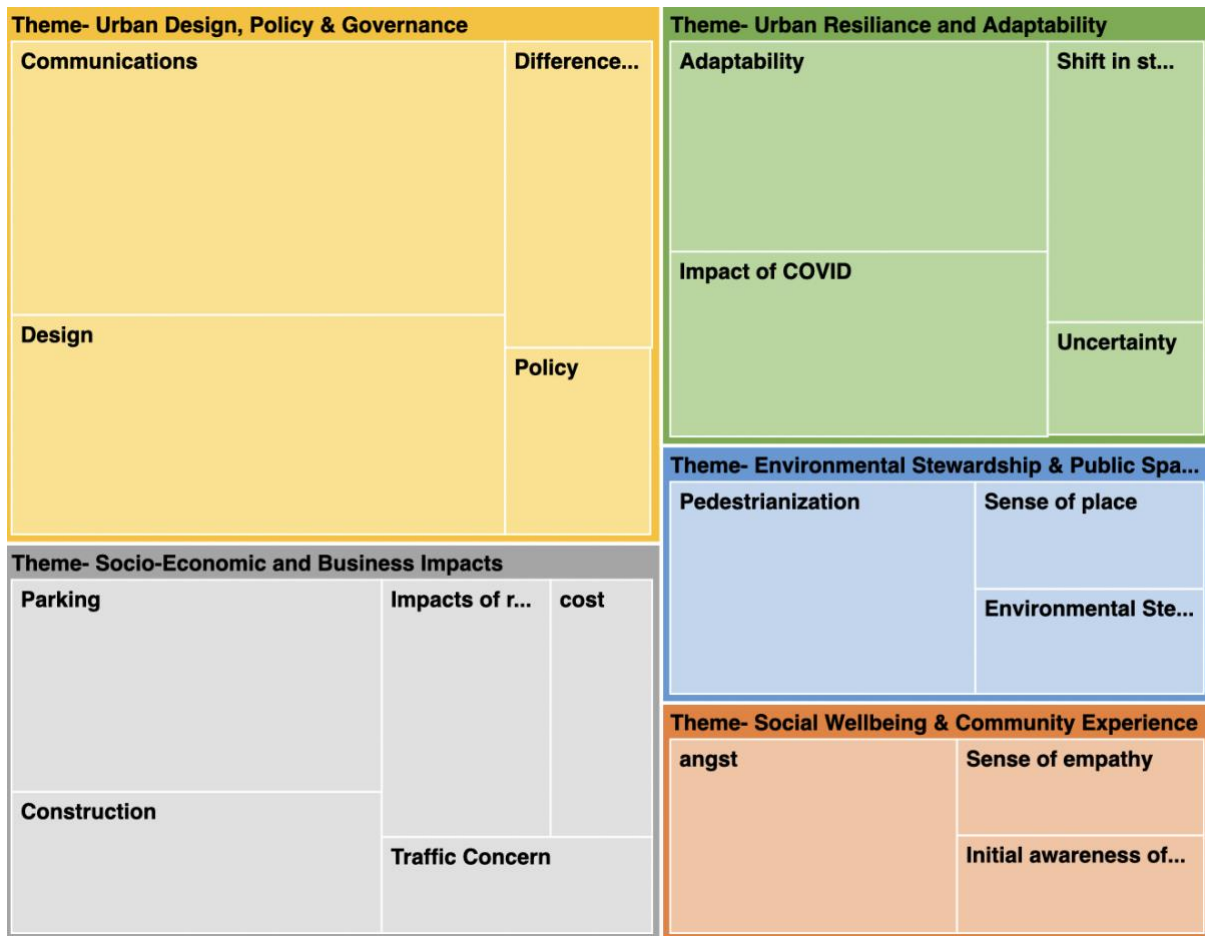
Multiple Elected Officials referenced the energy of the street, the vibe, being more lively and inviting, with overall positive views on the end design. All Elected Officials agreed that the street redesign has brought more people to the street.

### **Administration Participant Group**

Three members of the Town of Banff Administration were interviewed. This represents the smallest participant group interviewed. The top theme for this participant group was Urban Design, Policy, and Governance. The codes attributed to this group are communications, design, difference from the end result, and policy. The themes identified from their input are reflected in Figure 14. A word cloud was also developed to reflect the prominent words from their interviews (see Figure 15).

**Figure 14**

*Hierarchy Chart Based on Administration Participant Group Input*





from person to person, and as much as a municipality can give out information, there has to be a reciprocal desire to learn as well.”

Admin Official 1 further stated,

In this town, apathy is never an issue in Banff in terms of land use planning and people always want to learn more. It’s just challenging to be able to meet those demands takes a lot of resources. At some point, you have to prioritize resources; that’s what Councils do (Admin Official 1).

### ***Communication and Construction Challenges***

Members of the Administration group noted that challenges with construction were impactful. A beginning piece of this challenge was attributed to Council waffling on their decision to move forward, which resulted in the construction company taking on another contract, holding up their labour. There was also a communication challenge between the construction company and administration, which trickled down to challenges between the Administration communicating construction timelines and the days of closures to businesses. Admin Official 3 stated that this was “heartbreaking” and that at times, the schedule set and sent to business owners whose business would be impacted on a certain day was not adhered to. Interwoven in these construction challenges was a clear sense of empathy from all Admin Officials interviewed. Admin Official 1 said,

It’s a very personal connection between business and resident. And often indistinguishable from one another. You think about a store, and you understand that those people are either your neighbours, your friends, the parents of your child’s schoolmates. So that makes it less easy to detach yourself from the cold impacts of the construction, which are real. That’s something that I always try to emphasize when we talk about construction mitigation. This isn’t just some business. These are human beings, people that live in our community that we need to be considerate of and compassionate for.

Admin Officials 2 and 3 both agreed that administration could have been more clear in the level of disruption that would be caused by construction. Admin Official 3 noted,

I wish that we'd done a more rigorous job of explaining exactly how awful it was going to be. I feel that we said, "We're going to do everything we can for you," which is true. We did, but folks, for whatever reason or for the reason that we didn't explain it enough, took that to mean that disruption is going to be minimal, and that was never going to be the case. "We're going to do everything we can for you" means a different thing in the Middle Ages for surgery than it does now. We should have said, "It's going to be awful, get ready. We're going to do everything we can, but you need to be ready to lose lots of money and suffer door closures, and it's going to be really, really horrible." Then folks can be pleasantly surprised when it's not quite as bad.

Per Admin Official 3,

The biggest thing was managing expectations about the disruption. Would have done that completely different. If I had known that some of the things that we said, like I thought very realistic saying you can't close access to a front door of a business without 48 h notice—I thought that was a reasonable expectation, and they [construction company] failed on that several times.

### ***Parking***

Admin Official 2 stated, "If it were possible, we would get rid of all the parking, but you know, unfortunately, we're gonna almost need vehicles on that street for the next 100 years or so because of the parkades that are on there." The number of parking spots was hotly discussed by Business Owners along Bear Street during the public input portion of the design. Some businesses believed that reducing the number of stalls would negatively impact their business.

### ***Design***

The woonerf trials taking place in the years before the redesign were intended to showcase what the street could become. Admin Official 1 noted the political will necessary to approve the spending for the decking trials. These trials took parking spaces and placed patios in the street to create a winding woonerf-style roadway:

We found that there wasn't traffic chaos. A lot of people predicted chaos. I don't know how many we displaced, maybe 30 or 50 stalls during those trials. That was okay. The world kept going. Those cars found a place to park, and I think it helped to

mitigate some of the hysteria that might have existed around this and the kind of downtown parking it would create. (Admin Official 1)

When we did the trials, we were very cautious in terms of design, so we made sure that there were railings on the sidewalks. So, this idea of a permeable street wasn't tested to its full effect. So by and large, pedestrians stayed where pedestrians felt comfortable, which was within our railed environments, railed off from the street. (Admin Official 1)

All members in this participant group agreed that the street redesign has drawn more people to Bear Street. The design was intended to create a space that could be shared among all users with the priority given to pedestrians. Upon completion of the project, members of the administration noted that the result showcased a success in that regard immediately upon construction:

As soon as it was done, people were occupying the space in the ways that we wanted them to. They were sitting on benches, they were on bikes, they were walking across the street. It was intuitive, and when you design a street and you go through the design process on paper, you're trying to anticipate. What's gonna happen? But you're never really certain with public space. You know, with this one, we designed a street that is meant to be pedestrian-rich, where a lot of people can move across the street and take a sense of ownership over the street, and Day one, people walked right down the middle of the street, and that was it. (Admin Official 1)

Admin Official 2 also noted,

People spend more time on Bear Street than they ever did before because they linger, and they go to restaurants, and they enjoy the street in a way they never did before because it was just a sea of asphalt."

Admin Official 1 observed that: "There's these other sorts of intangible benefits of increased social connection, so that when you're on Bear Street, I see someone, a neighbour just sitting on a patio or a public bench, and I go and talk to them."

Referring to the design, Admin Official 2 noted,

The quality and attention to detail was so high. I would argue in that case, we probably went too far. We spent an awful lot of time and energy buying more rocks

than needed, cutting them down to size, fitting them all into the shapes, and I would say that most people wouldn't know the difference between the rocks on Banff Ave and the rocks on Bear Street. The rocks on Banff Ave took a tenth of the time to place than the rocks on Bear Street.

### ***Changeover in Businesses***

Admin Officials agreed that over time, there could be a change in the types of businesses on the street. Admin Official 2 observed that:

The rent will be based upon the revenue that the highest and best use. A restaurant will make a lot more than a hardware store or a dentist would. There are ground-floor businesses that are services and supply in nature that are likely to disappear as time goes on.

On this topic, Admin Official 3 stated,

You know, you can make a lot more money out of a square foot serving beer and alcohol than you can as a dentist, believe it or not. So that's what will drive it- the landowners or the private property owners, but I don't know if necessarily the redevelopment of the street will do that or it's a natural evolution.

### **Chapter Summary**

The three participant groups in this study referenced Socio-economic and Business impacts and Urban Design, Policy, and Governance and their top themes. Members of the Business Owner participant group and the Elected Official participant group held similar top concerns that could be grouped into the same thematic bundle. Members of Administration differed in their top concerns, resulting in their top thematic bundle as Urban Design, Policy, and Governance.

## **Chapter 4: Discussion and Analysis**

### **1. Introduction**

This chapter analyses the challenges and opportunities associated with redeveloping a street into a shared street, drawing on the experiences and insights of three key stakeholder groups: (a) municipal elected officials, (b) members of the municipal administration, and (c) business owners along Bear Street.

### **2. Synthesis of Major Findings in Light of Literature**

#### **Stakeholder Perspectives and Key Themes**

The three participant groups each highlighted concerns related to their stakeholder group. Socio-economic and business impacts were the top themes for both the Elected Official participant group and the Business Owner participant group. The top theme for the Administrative Official group was urban design, policy & governance.

#### **Shared Streets Outcomes**

Bear Street Shared Street displays some of the key aspects of what a shared street is, according to Ben-Joseph (1995, p. 507) including:

- “Paved space is shared by pedestrians and cars, with pedestrians having priority over the entire street.
- Walking and playing are allowed everywhere.
- It can be a single street, a square (or other form), or a combination of connected spaces.
- Its entrances are clearly marked.
- There are no conventional, straight stretches of pavement with raised curbs, and pavement (carriage way) and sidewalk (footway) are not rigidly demarcated.
- Car speed and movement are restricted by physical barriers, and by deviations, bends, and undulations.
- The area has extensive landscaping.
- The area has street furnishings”

One of the most notable outcomes of the shared street is the number of people who visit the street. Bear Street, as a redesigned shared street, has pulled people from the crowded Banff Avenue to this parallel street. Karndacharuk et al. noted that one of the main priorities for a shared street is to have “streetscape elements to encourage users to stay within the space” (2014, para. 19).

It is a street on which pedestrians and those using active transportation are welcome to use the length and width of the street just as cars are. This mixed-use approach to recreating the roadway has made pedestrians more comfortable on the street at the expense of vehicles, slowing down traffic.

Nearly all participants believed that proceeding with the project during the COVID-19 pandemic was the correct decision. Some Business Owners referenced that the government COVID subsidies were impactful during this time. Although COVID had impacted the number of customers in town or on the street, many businesses still noted a negative impact on their business during construction.

Long-term consequences to the street redesign were noted by all participant groups. Each group speculated that a changeover in businesses on the street would be a consequence of the street redesign. Business Owners, Members of Administration, and Elected Officials all noted that restaurants and visitor-serving businesses are well-suited to the redesigned street. The businesses that could change over include services like doctors, dentists, lawyer offices and a hardware store.

Each participant group noted that vehicles are a necessity on the street due to the existing vehicle and parking constraints. Without a passenger rail from the city of Calgary to the town of Banff to bring tourists, the primary mode of transportation for visitors to the town is private vehicles. Bear Street is home to multiple parking lots, including a surface parking lot located at the centre of the street. Some businesses believe that parking near their location is essential for business success. Vehicle access was seen as a necessity even by those who wished it could be a pedestrian street.

The soil cells were important to almost all participants. Many noted that environmental initiatives like that were very important and a point of pride. So much so that a Business Owner suggested that the town should implement signage on the street outlining what it used to look like and what the soil cells do.

## **Communication and Participation**

The majority of participants in each group perceived the level of communication to be sufficient. Elected Officials and Members of Administration noted the length of which public

input on the Bear Street Shared Street project was fostered and accepted. Most of the Business Owners appreciated the level of communication and felt there were many opportunities to be heard both formally and informally. Two of the 6 Business Owners found the level of communication to be lacking and noted a feeling of mistrust towards Administration that began with communications on the project.

Most Members of Administration believe that the level of communication from Administration to Elected Officials and the public was well done. One Elected Official believed that Administration did not reveal the full extent of how badly the construction would impact businesses

Many business owners felt that the level of communication from the Town of Banff Members of Administration was sufficient and clear. Two felt that the communication was not enough and highlighted that their perceived lack of communication led them to mistrust Members of Administration. One Business Owner stated that the redevelopment impacted who they would vote for in the next election. The concept of trust can be viewed as a positive feedback loop wherein a positive experience can garner trust and lead to further trust between groups as described by Laurian (2009, para. 27).

### **Participatory Planning**

The Bear Street Shared Street project can be described as a project executed through participatory planning. Laurian (2009) describes key aspects of participatory planning to be “public hearings, public meetings, focus groups and surveys” (Paragraph 47), which were elements implemented by the Town of Banff. The summer woonerf trials were overt and repeated opportunities through which the public became involved in the planning process. This opportunity for people to walk the street with design features, helping to imagine how a redesigned street could flow, enabled the public to analyze positive and negative outcomes. While a small minority of the businesses did not feel as though the existence of the summer trials clearly communicated the end goal of redeveloping the street, most did believe that the end goal was made clear. Elected Officials and Members of Administration both felt as though the woonerf trials were clear in their goal and were successful year after year, with one elected official noting that businesses on nearby streets asked for similar trials to be installed. In addition to the woonerf trials, the Town of Banff held open houses for the public, created working groups, and invited public input at council meetings. These all contributed to the

participatory planning method utilized to create this project. The Town of Banff was consistently putting forward information regarding the project and creating opportunities for public input. Regardless of opportunities, some noted that a busy schedule impeded the ability to fully engage. “Planners' and lay citizens' personal propensity to trust varies with the level of information they have and their stakes in the issue at hand.” (Laurian, 2009)

## **Trust**

Throughout discussions on communication with participants, the concept of trust arose. The majority of Councillors felt trust toward members of Administration, with only one believing that Council was being told what they wanted to hear. A larger fraction point of trust was from Business Owners to Members of Administration. Laurian (2009) describes a positive feedback loop. This feedback loop was evident for the participants who described negative interactions regarding communication on the project. Once a participant had experienced what they considered to be a negative interaction, they identified other interactions as negative and a loss of trust.

Members of Administration are the group of participants who were most commonly referenced regarding points of discontent by Elected Officials and Business Owners. Laurian (2009, para 15) notes,

“Since public trust in a system is strongly affected by citizens' experiences at access points, planners are in a position to build public trust in local land management and development processes through their facework. On the other hand, when non-experts have poor experiences at access points, they may become resigned, cynical or disengage from the system, meaning that poor experiences with planners can have ramifications beyond the specific planning process at hand” (Laurian, 2009, para 15).

One Business Owner described feelings of toxicity when attempting to participate in engagement with the Town. They had experiences they considered negative early on in the redevelopment process, which led to a confirmation bias. Laurian (2009) describes this confirmation bias in dealing with planners when there is a history of distrust, people are likely to believe information that confirms they are right to distrust over new information that contradicts that. People’s past experience with the town heavily influences how they perceive the town’s actions. Cattapan et al. (2020) note that in conducting engagement, there can be a lop-sided nature to public engagement when there is a power divide. Those who are

researching are asking their questions through a particular lens and may not be able to fully understand the power divide dynamic (2020, p. 239).

### **Shift from car culture to new urbanist design principles:**

The redesign of Bear Street from a car-focused street to a pedestrian-priority street follows a similar pattern to communities across Canada. The redevelopment of our public spaces into more walkable, vibrant public spaces that revitalize our communities. The Bear Street Shared Street project holds commonalities with New Urbanist concepts in planning. “The principles of New Urbanism promote walkability, creating urban patterns that support the needs of pedestrians” (Cysek-Pawlak & Pabich, 2020, para. 1).

### **Social Justice: Who is the street for?**

Each of the participant groups commented on the future business evolution of the street. Businesses that “made sense” on Bear Street before redevelopment might not fit into place as a shared street. The businesses commonly noted include medical offices like dentists, doctors’ offices, and some retail stores like hardware supply. Participants suggested the movement of these businesses to like places in town. Medical offices to an area near the hospital and hardware store to the industrial yard. The concept of moving like with like was also noted by some participants noting that Bear Street could become an arts and culture district where restaurants and art galleries could flourish. This movement of businesses on the street is in line with Bissell (2016), noting that the movement of some comes at the expense of others. This concept applies equally to transportation on the street. The prioritization of pedestrians comes at the expense of vehicles on the street. Almost all participants in the three groups noted that more people now spend time on the street. While two business owners commented that their business did not reflect an increase in sales, they did agree that there were more people on the street than before the redevelopment. There is a clear correlation between business owners who feel that their business benefits from the redevelopment and those who appreciate the increase in street users.

## **4. Lessons Learned and Policy Implications**

The summer woonerf trials allowed each participant group to view potential redesign elements. A limitation noted by each group is that the trials were unable to expertly mimic the end result

of a shared street design because people and vehicles were confined to their respective spaces. However, each of these summer woonerf trials gave those experiencing the street the opportunity to visualize a potential re-design and provide input on street design elements.

During the redesign period, parking became a contested topic. The resulting street parking received mixed reviews by the Elected Officials and Business Owner participant groups, with some pleased by the end result and others wishing there were less of it. The amount of on-street parking was a decision made by council. It is more than originally planned and can be seen as a reaction to demand from some Business Owners.

Vehicles on the street were seen by many as a necessity, even among those who commented that the street would be better as a clear pedestrian zone. The existing logistical constraints of the surface and underground parking lots are an obstacle that Administration worked around. A shared street design was viewed by nearly all participants as a good solution to work around existing logistical constraints.

Noted among members of Administration was a regret about communicating the challenges of construction to Business Owners. This participant group noted that communicating clearly and fully how hard construction would be for business owners would have been beneficial for business owners. That lack of clear communication meant that some did not fully grasp the real challenges their businesses would be undergoing.

## **5. Study Limitations**

A limitation of this study is the timing of the project and the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. Bear Street post-redevelopment is a street with a higher number of visitors than it was pre-redevelopment. However, it must be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic drastically reduced the number of visitors to the town of Banff. The lifting of travel restrictions coincided with the completion of the shared street.

A second limitation of this study is the participant groups that were interviewed. Business Owners, Members of Administration, and Elected Officials were the key stakeholder groups for this study. Each of these groups has an interest in creating an experience for visitors and guests (as well as members of the community). Tourism is the only economic driver in the

town of Banff, which has a mandate to serve as a hub for visitors to Banff National Park. Elected Officials are responsible for decision-making that serves the needs of the community while taking into account the needs of the visitor population. Members of Administration, similarly, must advise council on projects that benefit residents as well as the visiting population. Business Owners in the town of Banff benefit from increased visitor populations. Each of the participant groups may have a bias towards being supportive of a street redevelopment project.

Residents of the town of Banff were not interviewed. In the summer of 2024, residents of the town of Banff created a petition to end a summer pedestrian zone on Banff Avenue that was initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Residents of Banff voted to end this summer initiative and to always allow cars access to the road. This issue may indicate that Banff residents have different views on pedestrian oriented projects than do members of Council, Administration, and Business Owners.

## **6. Directions for Future Research**

As noted in the limitations section, residents of Banff were not interviewed for this study. An area for future research could be a study that focuses on the experiences of residents during a street redevelopment.

Replicating this study in a non-tourism-based town could reflect results that closely align with the views of the public as members of the public would make up the entire population to which Elected Officials, Members of Administration, and Business Owners respond to, unlike in tourism towns in which the tourist population plays a major role.

A long-term study on the types of existing businesses that leave the shared street and new businesses that open would be beneficial to analyze the long-term economic impacts of a shared street.

## **7. Conclusions**

Analyzing the redevelopment of Bear Street from the perspective of the three participant groups sheds light on the focal points of the redesign. The design process spanned from the beginning of the woonerf trials to the Council table, in which design elements were modified and approved. Public engagement took place at every step along the way. A fracture point among participants was the construction process, which dovetailed with communications and

perceptions of trust. The usage of the street has shifted and created a new kind of space. Ultimately, the redesign led to an increase in the number of people visiting the street, achieving an initial goal.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

“At a party, a good host greets people, makes them feel welcome, makes connections between people and animates the group. The host prepares the space, creates a welcoming environment and sets the stage for social interaction. A good street can do the same” (Iacofano & Malhotra, 2019, p. 88).

This research set out to shine a light on the challenges and outcomes of redesigning a street into a shared street from the perspectives of elected officials, members of administration, and business owners. Each participant group highlighted the top points of interest from their point of view in the street redevelopment. Together, these thematic bundles showcase important viewpoints or fracture points in the redevelopment process.

The Town of Banff undertook participatory planning to engage with community members in the process of redesigning Bear Street into a shared street. The process of redesigning Bear Street began with a recommendation in the Transportation Master plan. This kernel of an idea was then put into motion by Council allocating budget for woonerf trials before ultimately moving ahead with the street redevelopment. Accessible public input at each step of the way sought community consent and design approval.

Canadian planning has evolved from the garden-city style to concepts that embrace walkability and sustainability. Shared streets offer municipalities a compromise for space that includes cars while prioritizing pedestrians. The redesigned Bear Street draws more people to it than it did previously. It has become a destination in itself and created a new style of street that will encourage businesses along it to evolve.

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## Appendix A: Invitation to Administrators

**\*\* This is NOT a Town of Banff initiative. Participation is entirely voluntary. \*\***

Hello,

I am conducting research as part of my thesis for my Master's in Community Development (School of Public Administration, University of Victoria) on "Assessing the Politics and Outcomes of Shared Streets: A Case Study of Bear Street, Banff, Alberta."

Would you like to participate in one Zoom or in-person interview during the month of August? This interview would be semi-structured and would take approximately 30 minutes of your time. I would like to hear your perspective as a member of administration on the redevelopment of Bear Street and how it has impacted the Town of Banff. My thesis will list findings by participant group, not individual names.

Please respond to this email ([Kierstenm100@gmail.com](mailto:Kierstenm100@gmail.com)) if you want to participate in this research.

If you are available to participate, I will follow up with an informed consent form for your review and signature before the start of the interview. If you would not like to participate, feel free to respond "not interested" to this email.

This work is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tamara Krawchenko (Assistant Professor, UVic) and has received ethics clearance.

Thank you for considering this request. I welcome any questions about the study and research process.

Sincerely,

Kiersten McDonald

Master of Arts in Community Development Student, University of Victoria

[\[email address\]](#) | HSD326 | [\[phone #\]](#)

Advisor:

Tamara Krawchenko | PHD

Assistant Professor

School of Public Administration, University of Victoria

[\[email address\]](#) | HSD326 | [\[phone #\]](#)

## **Appendix B: Administration Interview Questions**

### **Concept**

- Can you think back to the initial discussions on the Bear Street redevelopment? Were you initially supportive, unsupportive, or neutral of the Bear Street Shared Street project?
- If you can remember, how were the initial formal/ informal discussions with Councillor received? Did you feel that the concept was understood?
- How were the initial discussions with Bear Street Business owners? Did you feel that the concept was understood?
- What did you think about the summer trials? How did you communicate the long-term goal of the summer trials to Banffites? Do you think it was clear?
- During the trial phase, did you feel that you had a sense of how the public felt about permanently redeveloping the street? How was that impression made on you? Were the people you heard from supportive, not supportive, or neutral?

### **Construction**

- Were you an advocate for Council moving forward with this project when they did? Why?
- What would you say was the Town of Banff's goal(s) in implementing this project?
- What were your thoughts on the construction process? Length of time/ interruption to routine/ general comments or concerns
- This project began in 2020 and was completed in July 2021. Do you have any comments on the timing of the project?
- What are your thoughts on how the redevelopment impacted Bear Street Business owners?
- Did the result reflect what you presented to Council and members of the public? Are there construction elements you would have changed? I.e design patterns/ stone locations or types/ trees/ lack of curbs, parking, etc.
- Underneath the street are soil cells that allow trees to grow with a larger root system and filter storm run-off. This is different from many streets all over other municipalities. Is this something that as an administrative leader, matters to you? Are you neutral to it?
- Do you have any comments on the cost of the project?

### **Final product**

- Did you notice a shift in what the street was being used for? (transportation, a place to gather, to tourist destination? etc) Or was it the same as before the redevelopment?
- Would you say that since construction has been completed, there are more people coming to Bear Street/ same amount of people/ fewer people?
- What did you think of the design? Do you find it inviting? Not inviting? Or the same as before redevelopment?

### **Medium and Long-Term Impacts**

- Do you believe that businesses on Bear Street were positively, negatively, or not impacted by the redevelopment of Bear Street?
- What do you think the immediate impacts on the community have been? What about longer-term impacts?
- What do you think the immediate impacts on the local economy have been? What about longer-term impacts?

### **Communication with Business Owners and Council**

- How did you communicate information about Bear Street to Councillors/ Business owners? (through council, emails, workshops sessions?)
- Do you believe the amount of communication from Administration to be the right amount, too little, or too much?
- Would you say that Business owners and Councillors were able to ask questions and provide feedback when discussing bear street with Town Administration? Did you feel that Admin understood their opinions and considered their feedback?

### **Political Acceptability**

- At any point in the redevelopment process (trial, construction, result) did you feel that this project impacted your position with the Town of Banff? If so, at which point?
- At any point in the redevelopment process, did you feel that this project impacted public perception of your role with the Town?
- Did this project impact your working or personal relationships with Bear Street Business Owners? With Councillors? With Staff?
- Did you feel like Council understood the project when you presented the concept to them? How did you interpret some of their concerns?

## **Recommendations**

- Is there anything that you wish had been done differently during the trials, construction, or after completion of the project?
- Would you recommend another shared street concept anywhere else in Banff? In other municipalities? Why?
- Do you have any recommendations for other municipalities looking to undertake this kind of project?
- Are there any topics you want to discuss that I haven't asked about?

## Appendix C: Invitation to Bear Street Business Owners

Requesting your participation in a research study

Hello,

I am conducting research as part of my thesis for my Master's in Community Development (School of Public Administration, University of Victoria) on "Assessing the Politics and Outcomes of Shared Streets: A Case Study of Bear Street, Banff, Alberta." I am writing to request your participation in this study as a business owner on Bear Street.

I would like to know if you are willing to participate in one zoom or in-person interview sometime from April 10, 2023, to April 30, 2023. This interview would be semi-structured and would take approximately 30 minutes of your time. I would be happy to work around your schedule. I want to hear your perspective on the redevelopment of Bear Street and how it has impacted the Town of Banff. Questions will focus on your experience with the street before redevelopment, during construction, and as the street exists now.

I am a local who lives and works in Banff. I would be grateful to include your perspective in my research.

Please email ([email](#) address), text, or call (phone #) if you want to participate in this research.

If you are available to participate, I will follow up with a consent form for your review and signature prior to the start of the interview. This work is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tamara Krawchenko (Assistant Professor, UVic) and has received ethics clearance.

Thank you for considering this request. I welcome any questions about the study and research process.

Sincerely,

Kiersten McDonald  
Master of Arts in Community Development Student, University of Victoria  
[\[email\]](#) address] | HSD326 | [phone #]

Advisor:  
Tamara Krawchenko | PHD  
Assistant Professor  
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria  
[\[email\]](#) address] | HSD326 | [phone #]

## Appendix D: Follow-up Message to Bear Street Business Owners

Good afternoon,

I wanted to follow up on a letter I dropped off to your business over the weekend.

I am conducting research as part of my thesis for my Master's in Community Development (School of Public Administration, University of Victoria) on "**Assessing the Politics and Outcomes of Shared Streets: A Case Study of Bear Street, Banff, Alberta.**"

Would you like to participate in one Zoom or in-person interview anytime from April 11, 2023, to April 30, 2023? This interview would be semi-structured and would take approximately 30 minutes of your time. I would be happy to work around your schedule. I want to hear your perspective on the redevelopment of Bear Street and how it has impacted the Town of Banff.

I am a local who lives and works in Banff. I would be grateful to include your perspective in my research. Please respond to this email ([Kierstenm100@gmail.com](mailto:Kierstenm100@gmail.com)), text, or call (204-698-7850) if you want to participate in this research. If you would not like to participate, feel free to respond that you are not interested. I will send one more follow-up email if you are unable to respond.

This work is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tamara Krawchenko (Assistant Professor, UVic) and has received ethics clearance.

I welcome any questions about the study and research process.

Sincerely,

Kiersten McDonald  
Master of Arts in Community Development Student, University of Victoria  
[\[email address\]](#) | HSD326 | [\[phone #\]](#)

Advisor:  
Tamara Krawchenko | PHD  
Assistant Professor  
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria  
[\[email address\]](#) | HSD326 | [\[phone #\]](#)

## **Appendix E: Business Owner Interview Questions**

### **Trials**

- How did you first find out about the Bear Street project?
- Were you initially supportive, unsupportive, or neutral of the Bear Street Shared Street project?
- What did you think about the summer trials? Was redevelopment made clear during the trials?
- How did the street look to you? Were the structures positioned in a way that reflects the end result? Were there signs to make clear what was happening?

### **Construction**

- What were your thoughts on the construction process? Length of time/ interruption to routine/ general comments or concerns
- This project began in 2020 and was completed in July of 2021. Do you have any comments on the timing of the project?
- Did the result reflect what you believed it would look like? Are there construction elements you would have changed? I.e design patterns/ stone locations or types/ trees/ lack of curbs etc.
- Underneath the street are soil cells that allow trees to grow with a larger root system and filter storm run-off. Is this something that as a business owner matters to you? Are you neutral to it?

### **Final product**

- Did you notice a shift in what the street was being used for? Or was it the same?
- Would you say that since construction has been completed, there are more people coming to Bear Street/ same amount of people/ fewer people?
- What did you think of the design? Do you find it inviting? Not inviting? Or the same as before redevelopment?

### **Communication with Administration**

- Did town employees reach out to your business at any point in the Bear Street project- trials/construction/result? What kind of communication did they use? In person/ email/ letters/ etc.
- Did you have access to provide input to Town employees? Did you feel that your comments/ opinions were understood and heard?

### **Communication with Elected Officials**

- Did elected officials reach out to your business at any point in the Bear Street Project? If so, how?
- Did you have the opportunity to share your opinion with elected officials? How did you connect with elected officials? How many times?
- Did you feel that elected officials understood and heard your opinions, did not understand and hear your opinions, or were neutral to your opinions?

### **General Communications**

- Did you use any other methods to share your opinion on Bear Street? These can include writing letters to the editor, social media posts, discussing with neighbours on Bear Street, etc.

### **Impact on business**

- Were your businesses affected by the summer trails? How so?
- Were your businesses impacted by the construction process? How so?
- Would you say that your business has been positively, negatively, or neutrally affected by the completion of the Bear Street project?

### **Recommendations**

- Is there anything that you wish had been done differently during the trials, construction, or after completion of the project?
- Would you recommend another shared street concept anywhere else in Banff? In other municipalities? Why?
- Do you have any recommendations for other municipalities looking to undertake this kind of project?
- Are there any topics you want to discuss that I haven't asked about?

## Appendix F: Invitation to Elected Officials

### Requesting your participation in a research study

**\*\* This is NOT a Town of Banff initiative. You are NOT obligated to participate. Participation is entirely voluntary. \*\***

Good afternoon, Councillors.

I am conducting research as part of my thesis for my Master's in Community Development (School of Public Administration, University of Victoria) on "Assessing the Politics and Outcomes of Shared Streets: A Case Study of Bear Street, Banff, Alberta." I am writing to request your participation in this study as an elected official in Banff.

Would you like to participate in one Zoom or in-person interview sometime from April 17, 2023, to May 15, 2023? This interview would be semi-structured and would take approximately 30 minutes of your time. I want to hear your perspective on the redevelopment of Bear Street and how it has impacted the Town of Banff. My thesis will list interview responses by participant group (elected officials) and not by individual names.

Please respond to this email ([Kierstenm100@gmail.com](mailto:Kierstenm100@gmail.com)) if you want to participate in this research.

If you are available to participate, I will follow up with an informed consent form for your review and signature prior to the start of the interview. If you would not like to participate, feel free to respond "not interested" to this email. You will receive two follow-up emails if no response is received.

This work is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tamara Krawchenko (Assistant Professor, UVic) and has received ethics clearance.

Thank you for considering this request. I welcome any questions about the study and research process.

Sincerely,

Kiersten McDonald  
Master of Arts in Community Development Student, University of Victoria  
[\[email address\]](#) | HSD326 | [\[phone #\]](#)

Advisor:  
Tamara Krawchenko | PHD  
Assistant Professor  
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria  
[\[email address\]](#) | HSD326 | [\[phone #\]](#)

## **Appendix G: Elected Official Interview Questions**

### **Concept**

- How did you first find out about the Bear Street project?
- Were you initially supportive, unsupportive, or neutral of the Bear Street Shared Street project?
- What did you think about the summer trials? Was the redevelopment goal made clear during the trial decision-making process?
- Before Council decided to proceed with the redevelopment project, what were some comments/ arguments from your fellow councillors? From Administration?
- During the trail phase, did you have a sense of how the public felt about permanently redeveloping the street? Were the people you heard from supportive, not supportive, or neutral?

### **Construction**

- What were your reasons for voting to move forward with this project?
- What would you say was Council's goal(s) in implementing this project?
- What were your thoughts on the construction process? Length of time/ interruption to routine/ general comments or concerns
- This project began in 2020 and was completed in July 2021. Do you have any comments on the timing of the project?
- Did the result reflect what you believed it would look like? Are there construction elements you would have changed? I.e design patterns/ stone locations or types/ trees/ lack of curbs, parking, etc.
- Underneath the street are soil cells that allow trees to grow with a larger root system and filter storm run-off. This is different than many streets all over other municipalities. Is this something that as an elected official, matters to you? Are you neutral to it?
- Do you have any comments on the cost of the project?

### **Final product**

- Did you notice a shift in what the street was being used for? (transportation, a place to gather, to tourist destination? etc) Or was it the same as before the redevelopment?

- Would you say that since construction has been completed, there are more people coming to Bear Street/ same amount of people/ fewer people?
- What did you think of the design? Do you find it inviting? Not inviting? Or the same as before redevelopment?

### **Communication with Administration**

- How did Administration communicate information about Bear Street to you? (through council, emails, workshops sessions?)
- Did you find the amount of communication from Administration to be the right amount, too little, or too much?
- Were you able to ask questions and provide feedback when discussing bear street with Town Administration? Did you feel that your opinions were understood and heard?

### **General Communications**

- Did Banffites reach out to you regarding the redevelopment of Bear Street? If so, how? Were those who reached out to you for it, against it, or neutral to it?
- Did you have the opportunity to share your opinion with people who reached out? How did you connect with Banffites? Were you able to address comments or concerns from the public in Council?
- Did you use any other methods to share your opinion on Bear Street? These can include writing letters to the editor, social media posts, discussing with Banffites in person, etc.

### **Political Acceptability**

- At any point in the redevelopment process (trial, construction, result) did you feel that this project impacted your chances of re-election? If so, with which demographic?
- At any point in the redevelopment process, would you say that your likelihood of increasing your vote count increased, decreased, or remained the same?
- Do you think any of your fellow councillors felt that this project impacted their chances of re-election? In your opinion, did any of your fellow councillors try to use this project to score political points? If so, were they for or against it or neutral?

### **Medium and Long-Term Impacts**

- Do you believe that businesses on Bear Street were positively, negatively, or not impacted by the redevelopment of Bear Street?
- What do you think the immediate impacts on the community have been? What about longer-term impacts?

- What do you think the immediate impacts on the local economy have been? What about longer-term impacts?

### **Recommendations**

- Is there anything that you wish had been done differently during the trials, construction, or after completion of the project?
- Would you recommend another shared street concept anywhere else in Banff? In other municipalities? Why?
- Do you have any recommendations for other municipalities looking to undertake this kind of project?
- Are there any topics you want to discuss that I haven't asked about?

