Towards Vibrancy: Overcoming Path Dependence to Revitalize Traditional Retail Areas in Edmonton

by

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Abstract

Like many North American cities, the retail environment in Edmonton, Alberta has experienced significant change since the early 1900s. Before World War II, traditional retail forms in central areas and main streets were accessible on foot and by streetcar lines. These areas provided residents with proximal access to goods and services and enabled spaces of social interaction, or street life, to thrive. Post-war municipal policies guided Edmonton forward on a path of modernist development that encouraged rapid suburbanization and automobile-centric retail innovations, particularly shopping centres. As trends of neoliberal deregulation emerged in the 1970s and 80s, developers successfully evaded municipal policies and received permissions to build more extreme suburban forms of automobile-dependent retail – mega-malls (e.g., West Edmonton Mall), big-box retail, and power centres. The post-war suburban shift, the rise of automobile-dependence, and new forms of retail challenged traditional retail areas in central areas and main streets, contributing to the decay of these formerly walkable and social landscapes.

Since the 1990s, the City of Edmonton has adopted a number of sustainability-related policies and initiatives that aim to revitalize traditional retail areas. These have seen only limited success as much of the urban core and main streets continue to struggle with urban decay, vacancy, and a lack of vitality. Using a qualitative case study approach involving interviews with key informants, this research identifies a number of path dependent characteristics that have created obstacles to revitalization efforts, most readily seen in the hard-to-change bureaucratic tendencies (i.e., siloes and hierarchies) of the municipality. Bureaucracy is found to limit the abilities of revitalization agents (e.g., City revitalization staff, retailers, businesses, and developers) to affect change, by creating challenges in coordination and cohesiveness (both in policy and process) within the organization.

Neighbourhood scale factors have also created related barriers. Property owner negligence and speculation produce derelict buildings and high vacancies, the effects of

which can spillover to surrounding neighbourhoods and prolong urban decay. Socially-embedded characteristics related to auto-dependence – i.e., automobility – can bias the development industry towards creating suburban commercial forms to attract driving consumers; these are sometimes replicated in central areas intended for improved walkability, transit-use, and placemaking. NIMBY opposition to retail shops and mixed use development near residential neighbourhoods can help to sustain outdated city policies such as minimum parking requirements, which incentivize suburban development by adding major costs to businesses and developers in more spatially-constrained areas.

Overall, this research emphasizes that revitalization efforts must contend with a confluence of challenges, some of which are formed in governance and others which exist in less formal structures of society. While the City of Edmonton has shown limited signs of progress by creating several programs that aim to address revitalization from the bottom-up (e.g., the Corner Store Program), becoming a city with denser, more walkable, and more social retail forms will require overcoming entrenched processes and policies. To eliminate incentives to develop auto-dependent retail and successfully promote walkable retail areas, policies and implementation strategies must be more effectively combined.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Ranon Stephen Soans. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Mature Neighbourhood Retail Vibrancy Research Project", No. Pro00060459, November 10, 2015.

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List of Abbreviations

BIA – Business Improvement Area

BID – Business Improvement District

BRZ – Business Revitalization Zone

CDC – Community Development Corporation

CSP – Corner Store Program

DIP – Development Incentive Program

FAR – Floor Area Ratio

FIP – Façade Improvement Program

MDP – Municipal Development Plan

MNO – Mature Neighbourhood Overlay

MPR – Minimum Parking Requirement

NIMBY – Not-In-My-Backyard

POC – Point of Contact

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The terms *revitalization, renewal,* and *regeneration* all look to the past, signifying a return to a former state of vitality. Given the complex and ongoing nature of technological, cultural, and societal changes, shaping and reshaping how people and societies live, these terms are perhaps, in the urban sense, futile. While an authentic re-creation of urban spaces of the past cannot be done, shifting to a new state that accommodates desirable historic elements may be plausible. North American cities have undertaken efforts to revitalize, renew, and regenerate central areas since urban decay grew in prominence in the 1960s. There have been varying degrees of success and failure in restoring vitality in these urban spaces, with a confluence of technological, cultural, and societal factors encouraging and constraining their effectiveness. This thesis examines barriers to the 'revitalization' of traditional retail areas in Edmonton, wary that change is an inevitable and necessary part of urban existence.

1.1 Urban Retail

Places for the exchange of goods and services have always been essential components of cities. From the ancient agora, forum, and bazaar, to the central marketplace, main street and plaza, retail has been not only a site for private consumption, but a valuable space of gathering and social interaction in communities and cities throughout the world (Dobson, 2015; Francis, Giles-Corti, Wood, & Knuiman, 2012; Gumpert & Drucker, 1992; Jacobs, 1961; Oldenburg, 1989). A city's retail system includes its retail forms, functions, and geographic distributions. These systems can be considered to be functioning strongly if they simulateneously enable private exchanges to occur in an efficient manner and offer an array of non-consumption functions that benefit the public good, including "contributing to neighbourhood sustainability, generating a unique sense of place, ensuring access to goods and services for a diverse population, and supporting environmentally sustainable and healthier lifestyles" (Rao & Summers, 2016, p. 98).

Retail systems are dynamic for reasons such as global and local economic trends and consumer preferences and behaviours that favour particular retail forms or locations (Borchert, 1998). Technological, cultural, and social progressions can also induce retail transformations, as seen by the emergence of online retailing and its effects on bricks-and-mortar retail (Jones & Livingstone, 2018). At the same time, retail systems in cities are also guided (and constrained) by land use planning that provides a particular path for localities (Borchert, 1998; Carmona, 2015; Dawson, 1988; Dobson, 2015). A

combination of all of the above factors was evident in the mass suburbanization of the post-World War II period, which transitioned urban and retail geographies into dispersed and automobile-dependent forms and represented a profound change on life in cities (Handy, 1993; Merriman, 2009).

1.1.1 The Decline of Traditional Retail

To examine contemporary urban revitalization, it is first necessary to understand what existed prior to today. With increased mobilities brought about by the introduction of electric streetcar systems in North American cities from the late 19th century, retail centralized in downtowns and became prosperous, led by department stores that provided a wide array of mass-produced goods and services (Robertson, 1997). Commercial main streets along streetcar lines, too, were successful as they offered a variety of convenience goods and other highly specialized services, and small shops were distributed through neighbourhoods (Alexander & Akehurst, 1999; Rao & Summers, 2016). Main streets of this time are remembered as a 'communal hub' consisting of local businesses, in which one might bump into and socialize with neighbours or friends (Carmona, 2015; Griffiths, Vaughan, Haklay, & Jones, 2008). The successes of these retail forms were not, however, long-lasting. While the effectiveness commercial main streets and downtowns peaked in the 1920s, they began their decline shortly thereafter, which accelerated in the 1950s after the end of World War II (Robertson, 1997).

A vital reason for the decline of these 'traditional' retail formats was the dominance of the automobile after 1945 and its decentralizing effect on urban spatial organization. The indoor shopping mall, a new product of the era, proliferated in North American cities and out-competed traditional retail areas to attract consumers. The mall was able to provide this competition for numerous reasons including, most forcefully, its appeal to the growing suburban consumer base (Gibbs, 2012; Jacobs, 1961; Levy, 2011; Robertson, 1997). Shopping malls had large and free parking lots, provided weather protection, were linked to suburban neighbourhoods by growing high-speed freeway systems, and allowed people to avoid the congestion and perceived social disorder of downtown. A rising culture of mass-consumption deepened the appeal of the mall, as well as post-war strength in economic and land development markets, and city planning supported this form of development. Malls were privately owned and could be managed as a whole to optimize retail success by creating an appropriate retail mix. Accordingly, many central department stores followed consumers to the suburbs and became anchor stores within shopping malls. This trend, combined with the loss of central residential populations to the suburbs, led to lost vitality and physical deterioration in downtown and main street commercial areas (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2010; Loukaitou-Sideris, 2000; Rao & Summers, 2016; Sutton, 2010).

While indoor malls provided spaces for personal interactions, leisure, and commerce, their contribution to the public good was limited. Gumpert and Drucker (1992) write that in the shopping mall, "transaction eclipses interaction" (p. 189). The privatized nature of mall space, along with a lack of integration with surrounding neighbourhoods due to car-oriented and internalized design, meant that its social function was subordinated to a rising focus on private exchange. Downtowns and streets lost vitality and their ability to provide non-commercial public benefits, and these functions were not entirely replaced by indoor shopping malls.

Public good functions were even less apparent in subsequent retail innovations. In the 1980s, cities gave developers more power to create large format or big box retail, which sometimes agglomerated into larger power centres at the suburban fringe (Hahn, 2000). Strip malls at the edge of neighbourhoods also replaced neighbourhood centres as the retail system became even more focused on the efficiency of the market exchange process (Rao & Summers, 2016). These newer forms of retail were cheaper and easier to develop and operate, provided larger retail floorspaces, and abundant parking (S. Brown, 1991; Dawson, 1988; Hahn, 2000). They offered little to no integration with surrounding neighbourhoods, with very limited pedestrian or public transportation access, and few public spaces. Indeed, these environments are often critiqued as placeless and generic, with cookie-cutter designs intended to save costs.

Beginning in the late 1990s and escalating as internet accessibility has grown, online retailing has also begun contributing to changes in retail systems, though the overall impacts on retail hierarchies and real estate remains difficult to foresee (Jones & Livingstone, 2018). Online retailing is now used by many types and sizes of retailers across many sectors, from online-specific international corporations such as Amazon and eBay, to national chains, and even local shops. Jones and Livingstone contend that as the prominence and market share of online sales continues to grow, there is now "an apparent industry consensus that online sales will lead to a substantial decline in retail space, only the scale of the predictions vary" (p. 54). Physical shops often remain an essential part of the sales process for retailers focused on online sales (mainly for showing off products and improving brand prominence), but small businesses can be slow or less effective in creating online shops and can fall behind corporate retailers. In these ways, similar to other recent retail innovations, online sales have been primarily focused on improving market and consumer efficiencies and may subordinate some of the public good functions of retail, especially as private exchanges can occur without consumers even venturing outside of their households.

1.1.2 Retail Revitalization Strategies and Challenges

Since the 1960s, most mid- to large-sized cities in North America have attempted to restore or retain vitality in traditional retail areas. A variety of strategies has been used, with varying degrees of success and failure. Robertson (1997) suggests that there are four primary downtown retail redevelopment strategies in North American cities: pedestrian malls, festival marketplaces, downtown indoor shopping centres, and mixed use centres (see Table 1.1). He also outlines five other still widely used but less-prominent strategies: historic preservation, main street programs, skywalks, central retail management, and the corporate centre approach (see Table 1.2). Several other contemporary planning strategies, which aim to better integrate land use and transportation, also seek the revitalization of traditional retail areas; these include Transit Oriented Development (TOD), The New Urbanism, Complete Street Programs, and walkability improvements (for example, Cervero, Ferrell, & Murphy, 2002; Duany & Playter-Zyberk, 1992; Fernandes & Chamusca, 2014).

Table 1.1: Large-Scale Downtown Retail Redevelopment Strategies (Robertson, 1997)

Strategy	Description
Pedestrian Mall	Redesigning several blocks of a commercial street to be pedestrian-priority or pedestrian-exclusive, to give shoppers similar feelings of safety as felt in indoor shopping malls.
Festival Marketplace	Creating a marketplace by undertaking the adaptive reuse of old buildings (often warehouses or industrial buildings on waterfronts) and filling them with local shops, restaurants, and entertainment, trying to create a sense of place tied to the history of the location.
Downtown Indoor Shopping Centre	Developing a weather-protected shopping centre at the city centre, reflecting the model, management, and retail mix of the suburban mall in a more vertical format.
Mixed Use Centre	Developing a site that places hotels, businesses, restaurants, entertainment venues, other commercial uses, and retailers in close proximity so that they can be mutually supportive.

Table 1.2: Other Retail Redevelopment Approaches (Robertson, 1997)

Strategy	Description
Historic Preservation	Undertaking the renovation and adaptive reuse of older underutilised buildings in downtown districts, mainly to house residences and offices, but also visible commercial uses such as local boutiques and food and drink establishments.
Main Street Programs	A four-pronged approach to revive and protect core commercial streets: 1) implementing higher level management to coordinate stakeholders, 2) improving or maintaining design (often historic), 3) marketing and promotion, and 4) and economic restructuring and diversification.
Skywalks	Also known as grade-separated pedestrian networks or pedways, developing climate-controlled pedestrian networks between office buildings, places with shops and services, and other downtown buildings, usually crossing above the street-level.

Centralized Retail Management	Creating an agreement between enterprises that uses techniques of shopping mall management to coordinate, promote, market, secure, standardize design standards, and maintain a retail area.
Corporate Centre Approach	An attempt to turn a downtown into the administrative and professional centre of the city, integrating retail and restaurants in close proximity.

Revitalization strategies like these are typically planned and implemented using top-down mechanisms and tend to aim for rapid transformational change. They have been attempted in many cities across the world but none has emerged as a panacea for decline in traditional retail areas (Robertson, 1997). Pedestrian malls, for instance, have helped to create safer spaces for pedestrians – but are held back because they cannot provide various other benefits of indoor shopping malls such as weather protection, abundant parking, and organized management to optimize retail mix. Festival marketplaces have helped attract sightseeing tourists making small purchases – but are often not financially viable because they fail to provide day-to-day goods that local residents purchase. Downtown indoor shopping centres and mixed use centres have shown the ability to achieve financial prosperity – but the commerce they generate is mostly internalized and does not spill over to nearby streets needing revival. Similarly, skywalks – often connected to downtown malls – have been critiqued for internalizing pedestrians and retail, leaving streets vacant of people and with blank walls (Cui, Allan, & Lin, 2013). Moreover, being somewhat prescriptive, these approaches have sometimes struggled to account for local conditions experienced by residents, retailers, property owners, consumers, and other users of the space.

The rights and relationships associated with real property ownership can also present obstacles to revitalization (Goldstein, Jensen, & Reiskin, 2001; Imrie & Thomas, 1993; Leinberger, 2005). Typical municipal-led revitalization efforts aim for improvements in both the public and private realms; this refers to land parcels and buildings in both public and private ownership. In the public realm, physical changes can be completed in a relatively straightforward manner (irrespective of their effectiveness), provided sufficient funds are available. These changes may include improvements to pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, mass-transportation, the streetscape, and public art. Investments in these types of public infrastructure may help an area achieve goals such as improved walkability, attractiveness, and safety, but this approach is usually not sufficient in and of itself to achieve other revitalization goals such as placemaking, attracting new private development or retail, and encouraging greater citizen usage. To achieve these ends, governments must work collaboratively with private actors, such as developers, property owners, and businesses.

Collaboration is essential, because how private owners choose to use their properties has an effect on nearby land uses and users (Goldstein et al., 2001; Leinberger, 2005). In other words, use of property rights creates externalities or spillover effects for other actors, both private and public. For instance, when signs of urban decay such as vacant buildings and land, broken windows, graffiti, peeling paint, or other disrepair is left unattended, other property owners may also stop investing in repairs and maintenance of their properties, in order to limit their losses. Developing or starting businesses in the area can also become seen as a risky and undesirable venture. In addition, new developments that are not sensitive to community contexts may compromise neighbourhood character, spur gentrification, or pose other challenges faced by nearby property owners. In this way, the private ownership of buildings and land cannot be viewed as isolated, but as part of a complex framework of interrelations. Understanding and addressing these relationships is an essential part of effective revitalization processes.

To help combat issues like these, strategies that are more bottom-up in nature, with greater community involvement and more regard for local conditions, have come into prominence (Gittell & Wilder, 1999; Grossman, 2008; Sutton, 2010). These include Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). CDCs are flexible non-profit organizations that engage in a variety of activities to uplift struggling communities. Gittel and Wilder (1999) note that they "run the gamut from physical development to social service delivery" (p. 342), depending on local needs. CDCs often develop affordable housing, but they may also attempt to stimulate local economic development in various ways such as by creating spaces for business incubation, by supporting small businesses (including through lending), and by providing workforce training. BIDs are hybrid public-private non-profit organizations that undertake an assortment of activities in specified areas, with the intention of spurring local economic development (Briffault, 1999; Mitchell, 2008). Their activities can include marketing and promotion, security, festivals and events, providing business support and education, and advocating business needs to the government. BIDs are flexible in choosing which programs and services they undertake, deciding based on the contextual needs of their area. Businesses within BIDs (and sometimes property owners) are subject to an additional levy by the municipal government, and the collected money is returned to the BID organization to fund its operation. Inclusion as paying members can give business and property owners greater incentive to participate in the operation of the BID and take advantage of its programs.

Also from a bottom-up perspective, individual businesses can contribute to revitalization efforts by opening shops or services in vacant or underserved areas, providing important goods and services to communities (which can reciprocate support

back to businesses), and by developing gathering places, third-places, or places of interest and meaning. In turn, well-functioning main streets or neighbourhood shops and services can produce positive spillover effects on communities. They can help improve narratives about a formerly depressed area, making it more attractive for consumers, motivating nearby businesses to improve their shops to better serve the community, creating incentives for property owners to improve or sell neglected or vacant land and buildings (by helping improve the market), and in doing so, incentivising new businesses to locate nearby.

1.2 Retail Context in Edmonton

Figure 1.1: *Active commercial streets in Edmonton in the early 1900s, showing a mix of pedestrians, streetcars, horsecars, and several automobiles. Clockwise from top left: Namayo Avenue (97 St) in 1911; First Street (101 St) in 1914; Whyte Avenue in 1910; and Jasper Avenue between 1910-1920.*

Sources: (Peel's Prairie Provinces, 2018b, 2018d, 2018a, 2018c)

1.2.1 Early 20th Century

Edmonton's development patterns in the 20th century generally reflect the transformations to retail and urban spaces throughout North America. In 1908, Edmonton's first electric streetcar lines opened, connecting central areas and streetcar suburbs, as well as Edmonton with Strathcona (which were amalgamated in 1912) (Edmonton Radial Railway Society, 2018; Olson, 2013). By 1930, all major routes were constructed, and these played a large role in elevating Edmonton's main streets and downtown into vibrant commercial retail areas with added pedestrian activity into the

1950s (Figure 1.1). Main streets such as 124th Street, Whyte Avenue, and Jasper Avenue were spaces of trade, social life, and transportation with street-level independent shops, including grocers, corner stores, drug stores, confectionaries, and speciality retailers (Herzog, 2015, 2016b; Scott, 2014a), as well as theatres, banks, hotels, and residences (Herzog, 2014a, 2014b; *Strathcona: Historical Walking & Driving or Biking Tour*, 2018). Downtown Edmonton had small retailers too, but was known for its large department stores, such as Ramsey's, Eaton's, The Bay, and Woodward's, which emerged between the late-19th and mid-20th centuries to provide a wide range of products and durable goods (Herzog, 2016a; *Historical Walking Tours of Downtown Edmonton*, 2018; Vlieg, 2015; Zdeb, 2014). City Market, which opened in 1903, was also an integral downtown place of gathering, commerce, and entertainment hosting vendors with local goods, farm products, and other groceries (Merrett, 2001; Scott, 2014b)[1].

1.2.2 Post-World War II

With large population growth from the return of soldiers shortly after World War II, the subsequent baby boom, and the discovery of oil in the region, Edmonton began planning for urban expansion, hiring its first planners (from England, including the city's first planner in 1949, Noel Dant). These planners implemented dominant planning mechanisms of the time, including modernist and rational-comprehensive approaches that emphasized efficiency and land use segregation (Murray, 2013; Rao & Summers, 2016). Despite high levels of ridership[2], the streetcars which had been instrumental in early 1900s retail success were entirely phased out by 1951, substituted by trolleybuses and growing private ownership of motor vehicles. Edmonton's new planners brought retail planning into practice in Edmonton as they began to design community-level retail hierarchies through the 1950s; in the city's first comprehensive plan, the *General Plan* of 1967, a complete planned retail hierarchy[3] was established (see Figure 1.2) (City of Edmonton, 1967; Rao & Summers, 2016).

The *General Plan* regarded main streets and corner stores as inefficient, considering insufficient parking, long walks to shops, and signs of urban decay to be deterrents to use. New main streets were not planned for; however, a strategy to revitalize existing main streets experiencing decay was included, which recommended

[1] City Market, originally an all-week market (although it was busiest on Saturdays), was located on the central Market Square site that is now the Stanley A. Milner Library. It was relocated in the 1960s to 97 Street for the construction of the library. Since 2004, the market has been located on 104 Street, and since 2011, it has moved to the inside of City Hall during the winter months. The market now only opens on Saturdays.
[2] 34 million rides were recorded on Edmonton streetcars in 1945 (Edmonton Radial Railway Society, 2018).
[3] See Section 2.1.2.6 for more information on retail hierarchies.

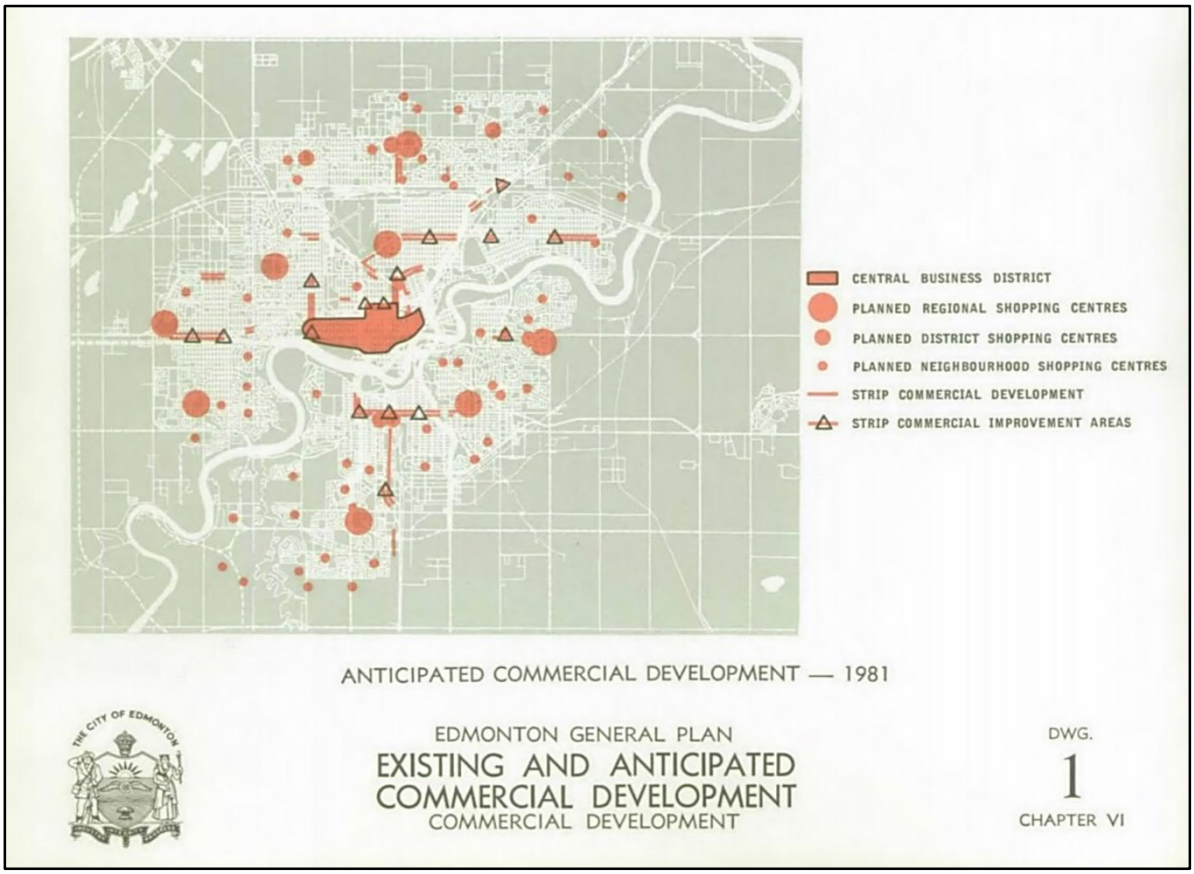

Figure 1.2: *The planned retail hierarchy in Edmonton's 1967 General Plan.*

Source: (City of Edmonton, 1967)

the addition of off-street parking, weather protection, the clustering of shops (including department stores) near the centre of the street, and increased residential densities in adjacent neighbourhoods to greaten the market potential. Accordingly, the City planned to redevelop a decaying Whyte Avenue with 'mall based developments'. In response, residents, property owners, and businesses unified to form the Old Strathcona Foundation which helped to protect the area from redevelopment and freeway construction, and to instead spur its revitalization (Rao & Summers, 2016).

Edmonton's planned retail hierarchy heavily promoted the development of new modern shopping centres (or indoor shopping malls). It was spatially organized to serve anticipated growing populations across the city, with centres located along arterial roadways, and including ample off-street parking for the improved convenience and efficiency for drivers[4]. From the mid-1950s to -70s, shopping centres of this nature were developed across Edmonton.

[4] It was intended for *regional shopping centres* to serve major population segments and provide time-saving advantages to consumers by hosting a large mix of shops and services. *District shopping centres* would serve three or four neighbourhoods and often include a large supermarket as an anchor (another retail innovation of the time). *Neighbourhood shopping centres* were

However, as explained by Rao and Summers (2016), it soon became clear that many elements of Edmonton's retail hierarchy could not be achieved, leading to plans being adjusted or discarded. While planning trends included a sharpened focus on achieving market efficiencies, Edmonton's plan retained interest in important public functions of retail, for instance, in their capacity to create spaces for community interaction. However, these interests did not last long as utilitarian or no-frills attitudes towards development arose from both public consultation and city economists, leading ideas like the inclusion of multi-modal transportation options to shopping centres to be discarded. Furthermore, despite the city core being considered the dominant commercial area in the *General Plan*, and even with recognition that the area needed protection from impending decentralization (City of Edmonton, 1967), a major downtown decline occurred in the 1970s (Rao & Summers, 2016). Due to the added competition and draw of suburban shopping centres, as well as the demolition of historical 'character' downtown buildings to make way for modern skyscrapers, many small retailers left downtown for the suburbs.

In this context, Edmonton set out to protect its downtown core by combining two downtown retail revitalization strategies: the indoor pedestrian shopping centre and the skywalk system. In 1974, the downtown mall known as Edmonton Centre opened adjacent to Churchill Square and internalized various stores including the downtown Woodward's (Zdeb, 2014). Attached to the mall on the second-floor were the first connections of the Edmonton Pedway system, which allowed for climate-controlled pedestrian circulation between several office buildings, a hotel, and a parking garage[5]. However, as recognized in 1981 by the Edmonton Social Planning Committee in their work on a Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan, indoor shopping centres and pedways also neglected certain public benefits of earlier retail formats. They wrote:

> The private nature of the pedway system means that public access is limited to retail store hours, resulting in a city that is "locked up" evenings and Sundays. Clearly, such as a condition is not compatible with a diverse "people oriented environment". (Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1981, p. 4)

1.2.3 Late 20th Century

By the 1980s, the City of Edmonton's formerly stringent retail planning policies began to dismantle. The primacy of the core in the retail hierarchy was significantly challenged, with creation of over 500 stores in suburban shopping centres between September 1981 and March 1982 and the emptying of downtown buildings (Leo, 1995; Rao & Summers,

intended to be smaller, including convenience goods and specialized services (including small grocery stores and drugstores).

[5] By the mid-1980s, the pedway network developed much further to connect underground LRT stations and many other buildings, both old and newly constructed in the city centre.

2016). Leo (1995) asserts that because of poor economic conditions and the widespread "perception that Edmonton needed a quicker, easier development approvals process to attract interest in the inner city" (p.9), corporations quickly seized more development control from the City of Edmonton, which became increasingly susceptible to developer manipulation. This deregulatory trend led to "a de facto collapse of active retail planning in the 1980s" (Rao & Summers, 2016, p. 100). With fewer development restrictions, corporations could design retail that prioritized market interests with little attention to public community benefits.

This shifting retail priority was signified by the development of West Edmonton Mall (WEM), the world's largest shopping mall until 2004 (Figure 1.3). The Triple Five Corporation's first proposal for WEM came in 1973, but planners recommended its rejection as it "significantly violated the General Plan and West Jasper Place Plan… would jeopardize the sustainability of the planned town centre development for the area (Callingwood) as well as the entire concept of municipal planning in Edmonton" (Rao & Summers, 2016, p. 100). Leo (1995) argues that Triple Five used a manipulative 'bait and switch' tactic in order to acquire the rezoning and approvals for Phase I of WEM in 1980 (completed in 1981). While originally agreeing to offset WEM's competitive advantage by developing the downtown Eaton Centre[6], shortly after the City approved WEM, Triple Five coerced City Council into providing millions of dollars of concessions for the Eaton Centre, saying that their investment would otherwise be cancelled. Just nine months later, the Eaton Centre development was nevertheless halted with the City still obligated to foot the concessions bill. Triple Five reused this tactic several times in the following years, proposing even grander versions of the Eaton Centre to help acquire approvals for Phases II and III of WEM (completed in 1983 and 1985), and then not following through with Eaton Centre development. The developer ultimately produced a scaled-back version of the Eaton Centre in 1987, which struggled until 1999 when it was bought by Oxford Properties and connected to Edmonton Centre to create what is now known as Edmonton City Centre. The three phases of West Edmonton Mall grew to over 3 million ft^2 in Gross Leasable Area[7], and began to dominate the retail market by drawing customers from throughout the region (Rao & Summers, 2016).

With planners and retail policies were losing their influence in Edmonton in the 1980s and 90s, arterial big box retail (unaccounted in the retail hierarchy) and strip malls (substituting for neighbourhood centres) were readily approved by City Council (Rao & Summers, 2016). This included large-scale power centres at the outskirts of the

[6] The Eaton Centre development was to be a downtown mixed use centre with an indoor mall, office towers, recreation centre, and rooftop restaurant and gardens, and residences, intended to help revitalize Edmonton's core (Leo, 1995).

[7] Edmonton's largest regional shopping centres were allowed a maximum Gross Leasable Area of 1 million ft^2, which WEM more than tripled by 1985.

city, most notably South Edmonton Common (Figure 1.3), the "largest open air retail centre in North America at the time" (Rao & Summers, 2016, p. 100). Despite how strictly the principles of retail planning had been applied as recently as the 1970s, references to retail planning in comprehensive plans of the 1980s and 90s were fading, and by the 1998 Municipal Development Plan, "retail planning was no longer addressed in any significant way" (Rao & Summers, 2016, p. 100; City of Edmonton, 1998).

Following trends through North America, Edmonton's big box, strip mall, and power centre retail forms have provided little semblance of public good functions and contributed to retail decay in older areas.

Figure 1.3: *West Edmonton Mall (left) – the largest mall in the world until 2004; and South Edmonton Common (right), a power centre containing over 2.3 million ft^2 of retail space.*

Sources: ("West Edmonton Mall," 2016; Young, 2008)

1.2.4 Contemporary Revitalization Efforts

Since the turn of the century, planning policies at the City of Edmonton have expressed renewed interest in revitalizing traditional retail areas, most notably in the 2010 Municipal Development Plan, *The Way We Grow* (City of Edmonton, 2010b). To attempt revitalization, an array of initiatives across various administrative departments has been created. The most relevant of these include the Business Improvement Areas[8] (BIAs, synonymous with the BIDs described earlier), Complete Streets Guidelines, the Corner Store Program (CSP), Development Incentive Program (DIP), Façade Improvement Program (FIP), a Main Street Guideline, Neighbourhood Revitalization, Nodes and Corridors Planning (including Transit Oriented Development Guidelines and Area and

[8] During the research process, the province of Alberta renamed *Business Revitalization Zones* (BRZs) as *Business Improvement Areas* (BIAs) to align with the naming tradition across most of Canada. Accordingly, the term BIA is used throughout this thesis and replaces BRZ, including within interview data.

Corridor Plans), and Open Window. These are described in Table 1.3 and are referred to as 'revitalization programs' throughout this thesis.

Despite these significant municipal investments in revitalization, traditional retail areas such as Whyte Avenue, Jasper Avenue, and the city centre have struggled to revitalize, overcome decay, and attract pedestrian-consumers to their streets. This is likely due to a confluence of factors, including stiff competition from existing shopping centres, West Edmonton Mall, big box retail, power centres, and now online retailing. This research hypothesizes that path dependent planning policies and processes, in other words, those that are outdated and struggle to adapt to fit contemporary planning intentions, also provide barriers to revitalization.

Table 1.3: City of Edmonton Initiatives Towards Retail Revitalization

Initiative	**Relevant Details**	
Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) (City of Edmonton, 2010a)	***Purpose:*** - To revitalize, maintain, develop, and promote a business area to improve its retail and commercial economic vitality.	***Actions:*** The Downtown Business Association was the first BIA established in 1985. There are now 13 BIAs: - 124 Street and Area - Alberta Avenue - Beverly - Chinatown - Downtown - French Quarter - Fort Road and Area - Crossroads (formerly Inglewood) - Kingsway - North Edge - Northwest Industrial - Old Strathcona - Stony Plan Road and Area
	Mechanisms: - Created upon request of a business community with approval from City Council and administrative support. - Managed by an executive director and staff who lead a volunteer board of local residents, businesses, property owners, city councillors, and others. - Supported financially through a City levy on each business in the area, with funds directed entirely for BIA use.	
Complete Streets Guidelines (City of Edmonton, 2013)	***Purpose:*** - To strategize for future road (re)development that encourages streets that are safe, attractive, comfortable, and welcoming of all users, including special consideration for pedestrians.	***Actions:*** - Established in 2013
	Mechanisms: - Presents options for street design with strong multi-modal transportation, including safe and desirable pedestrian, cyclist, and transit connections.	
	Purpose:	***Actions:***

Corner Store Program (CSP) (City of Edmonton, 2014c)	- To revitalize neighbourhood shopping nodes in mature neighbourhoods in order to benefit the local community. ***Mechanisms:*** - Guides businesses in improving strategies, undertaking market analyses, and marketing, and providing ongoing business support. - Encourages business and property owners to renovate their buildings and to take advantage of the FIP and DIP, to which they have access. - City invests up to $250,000/site to improve the surrounding streetscape and public space.	- In 2010, three neighbourhood commercial nodes were selected as pilot sites: Newton, Elmwood, and Ritchie. - Work on pilot sites began in 2015. - By 2017, five more sites were approved for which plans are in development.
Development Incentive Program (DIP) (City of Edmonton, 2014a; Office of the City Auditor, 2017)	***Purpose:*** - To encourage property owners to develop higher density residential and/or commercial buildings in order to contribute to the revitalization of main street commercial areas. ***Mechanisms:*** - Provides financial incentives to property owners to invest in (re)development, or conversion of properties into mixed use or commercial storefront properties. Grants cover up to: - 50% of construction costs up to $20,000 for retail and commercial business interior improvements on sites vacant at least 6 months. - 10% of construction costs up to $50,000 for new commercial developments of 2+ storeys with storefront commercial space. - $12,000/new dwelling for mixed use development (up to 36 dwellings). - $7000/new dwelling for multi-unit residential developments (10-36 dwellings).	***Actions:*** - Available since 2010 to properties in BIAs. - Since 2015, also available to properties involved in the CSP. - By January 2017, over $600,000 in grants awarded to 22 sites.
Façade Improvement Program (FIP) (City of Edmonton, 2017a; Office of the City Auditor, 2017)	***Purpose:*** - To encourage commercial building owners to renovate façades and storefronts in order to create more enticing and marketable streets for walking and shopping, as well as for attracting and retaining tenants. ***Mechanisms:***	***Actions:*** - Available since 2000 to properties in BIAs. - Since 2015, also available to properties involved in the CSP. - By January 2017, over $4.8 million in grants awarded to 158 sites.

	- Provides matching grants to property owners for façade renovations incorporating City design guidelines. Grants cover up to 50% of construction costs, with maximums of: - $30,000 for typical buildings; - $60,000 for corner buildings with at least two street facing façades.	
Main Streets Guideline (City of Edmonton, 2018c; Stantec Consulting Ltd., 2016)	***Purpose:*** - To guide the planning, design, and operation of main streets while recognizing their importance as important community spaces. ***Mechanisms:*** - Presents options to improve the transportation experience, following Complete Streets Guidelines (particularly for pedestrians). - Prioritizes main streets as important community places with ties to business and community revitalization. - Supports street-oriented land uses. - Supports enhanced design and maintenance standards.	***Actions:*** - Established in 2015. - In 2017, the "Main Streets Overlay" was added to Zoning Bylaw 12800 to support high quality, pedestrian-oriented development along main streets, with refined regulations for urban design, setbacks, stepbacks, mixed use development, driveway access, and parking requirement reductions.
Neighbourhood Revitalization (City of Edmonton, 2012a, 2017b, 2018g, 2018d, 2018a)	***Purpose:*** - To facilitate the revitalization of selected mature neighbourhoods and improve their quality of life. - Targets improvements in economic, social, and environmental community sustainability; local economic development and support of vibrant main streets; improving urban design and creating accessible public spaces; and raising levels of safety, innovation, and community connections and engagement. ***Mechanisms:*** - Identifies goals and designs plans in collaboration with committees of neighbourhood residents, businesses, and organizations. - Revitalization Team facilitates the process and coordinates with other departments when needed. - Some strategies are mainly community-oriented, such as promoting local public art and building beautification.	***Actions:*** - In 2005, the 118th Avenue Initiative was the first site, with streetscaping and urban design improvements complete in 2008. - In 2012, $45 million was allotted for streetscaping and improving urban design at other sites (McCauley, Queen Mary Park/Central McDougall, and Jasper Place). - Stony Plain Road (Jasper Place) finished construction in 2014, and McCauley will finish in 2018.

	- Some strategies require large capital investment by the City, such as streetscaping. - Provides matching grants of up to $20,000 to support goals of neighbourhood revitalization.	
Nodes and Corridors Planning (City of Edmonton, 2012b, 2018f)	***Purpose:*** - To implement mixed use development around current and future transit stations, centers, and destination streets, while enabling walkability and transit access to a variety of goods, services, and activities. ***Mechanisms:*** - Guidelines for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) that propose the integration of transportation, land use, and development by concentrating housing, shopping, and employment along a network of walkable and bikeable streets within a five-minute walk from transit stations. - Specific Area and Corridor Plans intended to help generate pedestrian activity and transit-access in important commercial streets and nodes.	***Actions:*** TOD Guidelines and policy approved in 2012. Two TOD sites being implemented today: - McKernan-Belgravia - Stadium Station Five Area and Corridor Plans are being developed: - 101 Avenue Corridor Study - Envision 109 - Imagine Jasper Ave - Norwood Boulevard Corridor Study - planWhyte Five Area and Corridor plans are being implemented: - 104 Avenue Corridor Plan - Blatchford - Jasper Place Redevelopment Plan - Mill Woods Station Area Redevelopment Plan - Fort Road's Station Pointe
Open Window (City of Edmonton, 2018c)	***Purpose:*** - To support small independent businesses in getting started. ***Mechanisms:*** - Provides businesses one-on-one support with City staff to assist with understanding and obtaining business licenses, development permits, and building permits. - Provides other supports as needed including help explore location options.	***Actions:*** - Established in 2016.

1.3 Research Question and Objectives

Edmonton's current and long-term planning targets a transition towards a more compact, sustainable, and walkable city with vibrant urban areas. This research project aims to answer the following question: Does path dependence affect the revitalization of commercial retail areas in the mature neighbourhoods of Edmonton, Alberta? If so, how? To answer this question, two research objectives are addressed:

1. To identify and evaluate barriers to revitalizing mature neighbourhood retail areas, as experienced at the neighbourhood scale.
2. To identify and evaluate barriers to revitalizing mature neighbourhood retail areas, found in policies and practices at the local government scale.

The retail environment is shaped by forces and processes operating and interrelating at many scales, from global flows of capital and regional trends and norms within North America, down to neighbourhood-level factors like residential composition and socio-economic status. This project investigates the retail system, seeking to better understand factors that affect the organization and forms of retail in Edmonton. To achieve this, research objectives specifically focus on two scales, namely the neighbourhood scale and the local government scale. The neighbourhood scale is where actors such as businesses, property owners, local organizations, communities, and the real estate industry interact, with reference to specific places and with local government policies that apply to them. This offers a 'ground-level' perspective. The local government scale refers to policies and actions of the municipal government. These are important because the City of Edmonton has a direct interest in the retail landscape, has a suite of policies and programs intended to help revitalize mature areas (see Table 1.3), and has jurisdiction over land use and development. It is important to not view these scales as entirely separate; on the contrary, they closely interconnected. For instance, real estate developments affect specific neighbourhoods and communities but are bounded by an array of policies at both the municipal and provincial levels. Moreover, interest rates set at the federal level alter the cost of repaying loans and affect decisions to undertake developments. Undoubtedly, scales cannot be demarcated by neat boundaries and they necessarily overlap throughout this thesis.

1.4 Thesis Overview

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. The current chapter provides necessary background information about retail change and revitalization, including a description of contemporary initiatives in Edmonton. Chapter 2 reviews existing literature regarding evolutions in urban space, focusing on the rise and effect of modernist planning and

different forms and spatial organizations of retail through time. It also introduces path dependence and automobility – concepts that are central to the subsequent analysis. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology used to undertake this thesis, covering the particular case study approach and outlining methods of data collection and analysis. Results focused on the neighbourhood scale (Objective 1) are presented in Chapter 4. It includes discussion of the value provided to communities by local independent businesses, as well as challenges associated with decayed properties, increasing residential density, and the practices of retailers. In Chapter 5, results regarding policies and practices at the local government scale are explored (Objective 2). This includes discussing the effect of bureaucratic structures and embedded regulatory mechanisms on city employees and neighbourhood scale actors such as retailers, businesses, and individuals in the development industry. In Chapter 6, results are examined as a whole by returning to concepts such as path dependence, automobility, and property relations. Chapter 7 concludes the thesis and addresses policy implications and contributions to the fields of urban planning and retail geography.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Evolutions in Urban Space and Retail

During the mid-20th century, significant changes occurred in the forms and locations of retail developments in North America. The major changes of the past century were due to a series of philosophical and historical factors that eventually coalesced as modernist development, most significantly in the years after World War II (Aoki, 1992; J. Brown, 2005; Irving, 1993; Sutcliffe, 1980; Ward, 2002). Notably, modernism contributed to the decentralization of retail, away from urban cores and into neighbourhoods and suburban locations. Further, it contributed to an increased emphasis on efficiency and rationality that favoured newly designed large formats of suburban retail. The first part of the literature review discusses modernism, including its philosophical and historical underpinnings from the Age of Enlightenment until the years after the Second World War. The modernist trend in planning of the 20th-century is then discussed, including an explanation of retail hierarchies and the shift to neoliberalism.

2.1.1 Modernism in Urban Planning

Patsy Healey argues that the planning tradition "oscillates in its emphases between a radical, transformative intention, and a role in maintaining the way cities function and governance works" (2012, p. 215). This statement is critical to understanding the reasoning behind paradigm shifts in urban planning discourses. She adds that those who have led transformative efforts in planning "often feel themselves operating within a complex and often uncomfortable, political and economic context, within which room for transformative manoeuvre seems slight" (Healey, 2012, p. 215). Modernity in urban planning, while now often critiqued as a relatively stagnant and undesirable remnant of the previous century, first entered as a transformative and well-intentioned effort at change. Understanding the influences leading to modernism is critical to understanding how the 20th-century city was developed.

2.1.1.1 Preconditions for 20th Century Modernist City Design

Modernism most clearly appears in functionalist, suburban, and auto-oriented environments created in the 20th-century, but its roots are deeper. While modernity in the mid-20th-century is largely considered an urban occurrence, the pathway to modernity was a factor of philosophical, historical and social contexts dating back to the 18th-century (Irving, 1993) with further linkages to the earlier renaissance and the classical periods. The beginning of the 'Enlightenment' period – a significant philosophical shift that challenged traditional power structures in society of the time – has been

identified by many as the start of the period of modernity (Healey, 2012; Irving, 1993; Ward, 2002).

Irving describes the period of modernity as "one of unending progress through technical rationality towards individual and social emancipation" (Irving, 1993, p. 475). Two converging phenomena enabled this process. First, the desire to break free from feudalism and monarchical societies was a key motivation (Healey, 2012; Sutcliffe, 1980). Paired with a fight for the liberal rights of the individual and their freedoms to live in a more democratic society, this was a discourse that regarded land ownership and private profits as important for the future[9]. Further, prominent thinkers of the time began emphasizing the value of scientific knowledge and shifting away from the religion. Indeed, a significant outcome of this new-found modernity was the weight placed on both scientific information and instrumental rationality[10] (Healey, 2012). The summation of these factors became apparent during the Industrial Revolution.

The Industrial Revolution, born of scientific advancement and desires for corporate profit-making, led to significant blight in cities. New social consequences emerged as the working class was exploited and lived in poor conditions, often cramped and adjacent to heavily polluting factories. Healey describes the political, economic, and social processes of the time as a complex combination of "positive advances in terms of wealth generation and the spread of benefits combined with gross social inequalities, systematic exclusions (of class, gender, ethnicity and race), environmental pollution and periodic collapse in market processes" (2012, p. 215). At this juncture, it became highly desirable to manage urban areas and plan for the future to help avoid volatilities created by the industrial economy and associated political order. Scientific knowledge and instrumental rationality became crucial elements to guide such decision making.

In the urban context, these factors eventually metamorphosed into several prominent and influential urban movements that initiated the creation of modern urban planning. Related to this emergence is the notion of the *utopia*. Idealistic thinking and the conceptions of creating ideal societies or places have been woven for centuries (Neville-Sington & Sington, 1993; Segal, 2012). In 1516, Thomas More illustrated the image of an idealized and hypothetical island-state, with meticulous planning and hegemonic codes of conduct to ensure orderliness, and coined the term 'utopia' to describe it (More, 1965). Within the philosophies of modernity, the formation of utopic idealisations or plans for cities became common amongst urban thinkers and architects of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The modernist fascination with scientific

[9] Accordingly, Ward recognizes that the informal types of planning that occurred at or before this time "was the work of kings, princes, prelates, aristocrats or oligarchies, each powerful enough to define the urban order" (2002, p. 11).
[10] Instrumental rationality refers to using *means* to achieve *ends* (Healey, 2012); in other words, it refers to how processes could be optimized to best achieve desirable outcomes.

planning allowed for a more systematic and determined method through which conceptualizations of ideal societies could be created, in the urban context.

Modernist urban utopias sought not only perfection in architectural design but also greater functionality in urban development (Healey, 2012). Two particularly influential urban philosophers of this era were the Englishman Ebenezer Howard, with his *Garden City* in the late 19th-century[11], and the Swiss-French Le Corbusier, with *Ville Radieuse* (Radiant City) designed in 1930[12] (Fishman, 1977). While these innovators had significantly different ideas of what the urban future ought to look like, they were bonded by underlying modernist philosophies that science and innovation could be used practically and functionally to achieve better outcomes. Accordingly, Howard and Le Corbusier each envisioned their utopias as master plans of radical urban change with the power to achieve social reform and positively impact well-being (Fishman, 1977). Each of their plans placed value on a carefully organised urban form, designed for functional purposes. Acting responsively to the urban blights of the last century, both visionaries prioritised the spatial separation of industry and living space.

2.1.1.2 Pre-World War II: Urban Modernism

Urban visionaries popularized the idea that cities could be managed by using functionality and rationality to find highly desirable solutions. Prominent examples in the United States in the early 1900s included the City Beautiful and the Garden City movements (Ward, 2002). Some of the early related work in the United States was conducted by the Committee on the Congestion of Population and Benjamin C. Marsh, who studied European land use zoning and methods of comprehensive or master planning for implementation in the United States (Ward, 2002). A key element of the City Beautiful movement was the momentous 1909 Plan of Chicago by Daniel Burnham:

> It was notable for several reasons. Its scale alone, covering the whole metropolitan area, was unparalleled. It was also comprehensive in its coverage of

[11] Ebenezer Howard's Garden City concept was designed for 30,000 people to live harmoniously with the purposeful and convenient placement of every building. This included the relegation of industrial uses apart from residential areas and the inclusion of a green belt within the city. Its purpose was to maximize utility for urban dwellers in every way possible using strictly planned spatial requirements and programs for social well-being. Scaled-back renditions of garden cities were built, such as Letchworth Garden City and Welwyn Garden City both in Hertfordshire, England. (Fishman, 1977).

[12] With Ville Radieuse, Le Corbusier envisioned a functional city, strictly planned with tall towers for residential accommodation networked by superhighways aimed at increasing mobility. Large greenspaces would also be left between buildings and roads so that the city would not feel congested. To some extent, tall towers and superhighways have been realized in the contemporary world, but Le Corbusier's visions for greenspaces and improvements in social well-being have arguably not been (Fishman, 1977). Le Corbusier's role in modernism was significant, as he helped to found the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), or the International Congresses of Modern Architecture.

> functional as well as aesthetic aspects, innovative in its technical aspects and stunning in its presentation. (Ward, 2002, p. 72)

The Plan of Chicago was highly influential and was used as a formula for urban development elsewhere in North America (Levy, 2011). The purpose of planning in the 20th-century became "to build a functionally rational city for economic and social life" (Healey, 2012, p. 212), although elements of beauty and romanticism still existed until they were ousted by Le Corbusier, CIAM, Robert Moses, and other strong proponents of modernism. Comprehensive planning methods, which had been tested by those like Howard, came to the forefront of North American city planning. As with Burnham's Plan of Chicago, comprehensive plans were intended to be large-scale, overarching plans representing a collective vision of a city's future in all possible aspects. Taylor (1998) provides a critique of this approach to planning, explaining that despite the broad scope, the quantitative expertise, and the precise engineering and planning that was included, concerns for *implementation* were never a key factor in comprehensive planning. Consequently, many components of comprehensive plans were never realised as they remained overly idealistic; the creators of comprehensive plans attempted to engineer their way to utopian cities, but neglected many of the social complexities already present in urban areas.

This beginning of comprehensive planning was coupled with the introduction of formalised practical planning tools, particularly zoning, which regulated the locations of buildings based on their purposes (Levy, 2011). Zoning was created as a mechanism for segregating incompatible land uses, such as industrial factories and residential housing, and carefully controlling the overall spatial organization of cities. It was also used to protect urban centres from new residential development that would exacerbate congestion, particularly in commercial areas. Scholars, including the highly influential Jane Jacobs (1961), criticized zoning because the segregation of land uses contributed to the creation of mono-functional and sprawling urban environments, as well as inner city decline. Jacobs argued that zoning conflicted with the creation of vibrant and thriving neighbourhoods because vibrancy was moulded in dense communities with a mix of uses, including residential, commercial, retail, and services. Zoning, a functionalist tool, failed to account for social factors such as local sense of place and community culture, but persisted and continues to be a common planning tool today.

Another significant contributor of the time was New York planner Clarence Perry who, with his *neighbourhood unit*, proposed the creation of geographically-bounded communities including schools, shops, and other services to serve local residents, designed around auto-oriented transportation to external destinations (Aoki, 1992). Both for safety and efficiency, one of Perry's major contributions was the introduction of the hierarchical transportation system within the growing network of roads that connected

and constituted the modern city. This system separated neighbourhoods and pedestrians from arterial roads and freeways, and used smaller street systems to facilitate internal neighbourhood traffic (Handy, 1993). At this time, the emergence of automobile dominance was becoming an issue of vital importance in planning. Planners such as Robert Moses responded rapidly to the increasing prominence of the car, planning for efficient high-speed freeway development and more functional city layouts that could serve a new and 'inevitable' form of travel (Ward, 2002).

Urban planning rose in influence in the years following the Second World War (Levy, 2011; Ward, 2002). These years were marked by the peak of rationality and modernism in urban development. The emphasis and depth of planning of municipalities grew significantly, stimulated by suburbanization and newfound economic prosperity (Levy, 2011). The desire for consumer goods in a more prosperous time and the baby boom helped build a demand for suburban living in North America; suburban living was also supplied and incentivized by favourable mortgage policies and policies that promoted auto-orientation in the built form of cities (Filion, 2012; Taylor, 1998).

Urban visionaries such as Le Corbusier, Clarence Perry and Robert Moses had recognised decades earlier that separating both pedestrians and residential homes away from freeways and other land uses could be beneficial to safety as well as provide a greater level of efficiency for vehicle traffic. This reliance on the road was also a key factor in suburbanization. Heavily designed, ordered, homogenous landscapes were created, as land uses became more segregated. Mono-functional zones were developed as "[i]t was possible for structuring activities (employment, retailing, and services) to opt for a variety of locations with good highway or arterial connections; hence their dispersion throughout the suburban landscape" (Filion, 2012, p. 102).

In this time, comprehensive planning approaches had became almost universally adopted across North America; based on modernist principles, it is often referred to as 'rational comprehensive planning'. It involved heavy reliance on experts in planning and engineering to undertake quantitative analyses to find optimal solutions that could be used to comprehensively plan entire communities (Hudson, Galloway, & Kaufman, 1979).

While the physical and rational development of cities had become paramount in post-war planning, it was often criticised for being deterministic in assuming that the physical development of places could correlate to social development. Rather than being a democratic decision-making process with citizen consultation, comprehensive planning is criticized for being a top-down, idealistic, and expert-driven search for organisation, efficiency, and functionality (Taylor, 1998). Jane Jacobs criticised this approch to planning for its oversimplification of human and social needs, wherein the values of mixed and eclectic communities were lost (Jacobs, 1961; Taylor, 1998). Nonetheless,

comprehensive plans became widespread in North America following World War I, and have remained a common tool in planning ever since (Levy, 2011; Ward, 2002). While the creation of large-scale and fairly idealistic comprehensive plans continues today, many cities have moved towards greater levels of public involvement in policy creation.

Modernism also contributed to the widespread growth of large administrative bodies in governments, with improved abilities to handle a greater range of tasks by dividing them amongst separate sub-structures or departments with related technocratic expertise (e.g., Departments of Transportation Engineering or Social Planning) (Gunn, 2010; Healey, 2012; Taylor, 1998). This *bureaucracy* was a significant feature of the modernist era. Government bureaucracies are still seen today and have been regularly criticized for being slow and inefficient, with hierarchical systems of procedures that require layers of formal authorisations from different bureaucratic units (i.e., red tape) (see Brewer & Walker, 2010; Chaskin, 2005; Considine, Lewis, & Alexander, 2009; Dahl, 1947; Olsen, 2006; Sørensen & Torfing, 2012; Van Assche et al., 2017; Verwijnen, 1998).

Bureaucrats may have little capacity to act beyond their job descriptions, or outside of their technocratic specializations, instead passing on portions of work to other units in the organization. Bureaucrats who are engaged in work with specific communities and possess contextual knowledge may be underrepresented during decision-making processes. The complexities of a bureaucracy's internal systems may also create struggles for external stakeholders: for example, in establishing lines of communication with appropriate individuals. Moreover, a member of a bureaucratic municipality may easily choose to pass on the concern of a community member to another department rather than address it; although they may be capable of assisting the community member, the issue does not fall under their exact umbrella of responsibilities, so they may easily the concern to someone else (who may then do the same).

This historical background for modernism is valuable in understanding the changes that occurred to retail in the 20th-century, as philosophy and outcomes in planning are highly interrelated (Levy, 2011). The changes in planning for retail in the 20th-century were influenced by modernist urban trends such as rational comprehensive planning, particularly in the era after World War II.

2.1.2 Retail Change

Spaces for the trade of goods and services continually adapt to reflect economic structures and societal needs present in different periods of time. Accordingly, various trends in the retail environments of North American cities of the last several centuries have reflected influences from earlier retail forms and elements of modernity.

Developments since the 1800s have led to a number of visible and monumental changes in the way retail spaces have been created and consumed. Notable creations of the 19th and 20th centuries included inner-city department stores, shopping streets served with streetcar lines (leading to streetcar suburbs), suburban shopping centres, mega-malls, lifestyle centres, and most recently, big-box power centres. To understand these relatively recent innovations, we can look to their historical antecedents; the bazaar of the Middle East and the arcade of the West. Critically, however, the innovations that followed World War II, such as planned retail hierarchies with suburban shopping centres, were created through scientifically determined modernist processes.

2.1.2.1 The Importance of the Public Good

Changes in retail formats of the 20th century altered the way that retail operates within cities. *Private exchange functions* and *public good functions* represent a dichotomy of the functions of retail that became imbalanced in this era (Rao & Summers, 2016). The private exchange of goods is the underlying market function of retail – to serve both buyers and sellers in marketplaces through trade. Public good functions represent non-market factors that may benefit a population on a collective basis.

In broad terms, modernist planning of the mid-twentieth century continued to place value on the public space functions of retail. However, the growth of neoliberal philosophies from the 1970s onwards led to a rapid transition towards ultra-efficient shopping forms that emphasized profit-making and market-functions for retailers and neglected most of the public space functions of retail. These neoliberal influences can be observed in the massive retail power centres of USA and Canada that have very few non-market amenities and present great competition to older retail forms with better public space elements. Using the lens of the public good and private exchange functions to examine the changes in the retail environment over the last several centuries can provide valuable insight into understanding the impact that each of the following innovations has had on its surrounding urban environment.

2.1.2.2 Bazaars

Developed by Islamic cultures of the Middle East, the bazaar has existed for centuries and represents an early form of urban marketplace that has shown permanency and salience. Although the history of bazaars is complex and differs through its various renditions, they typically serve as the main places of retail trade in Middle Eastern cities. They are privately owned and operated, with numerous vendors strictly organized into locations based on the goods they sell. Historically found where alleys and streets between residences converge, Geist describes the locations of bazaars as "the centre of collective life" that include other adjacent amenities such as the resting places for

caravans (known as the *chan*), mosques, schools, and other institutions (Geist, 1985, p. 5). Bazaars are always enclosed to protect from harsh weather elements, which is an architectural feature that later appeared in arcades and shopping malls. However, bazaars differ from other marketplaces in several ways. They are part of the roadway system and so accessible to people, animals, and carts. There is generally no single central market area in these cities, but instead, bazaars exist in more organically determined locations and are the *only* locations for marketplace retail trade.

2.1.2.3 Arcades

The arcade was an influential precursor to the indoor shopping mall. First created in the early 19th-century in European cities like Paris, the arcade (also known by many other names including the galleria, colonnade, and passage) is an entirely pedestrian indoor shopping street that used architectural advancements to create a glass skylight for enclosure, but retains the facades and look of an outdoor street (Geist, 1985). Like the bazaar, the arcade is a form of indoor public space that is actually privately owned and operated. In certain renditions, the arcade included not only shopping, but also upper floor residences. The arcade has been heavily analyzed since its inception. Most influentially, the philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) is known for his unfinished *Passagenwerk* or Arcades Project, that includes allusions of the arcade as a signifier of modernity in France (Buck-Morss, 1989).

The creation of the arcade was not sudden; developments such as the internalization of walkways and shopping areas had long been occurring in Western nations and ultimately presented models through which the arcade could be created (Geist, 1985). Chester Rows in England is a prominent example that dates back as early as the 13th century (Grenville, 1990); this shopping area pioneered the use of set-back shops on the bottom floors of buildings, such that walking space could be covered by the floors above. It remains a key shopping area and tourist attraction in Chester today.

2.1.2.4 Inner-City Department Stores

In the 19th-century, attempts to increase the scale and scope of retailers, which had been mainly small and scattered through neighbourhoods, led to the early creation of large department stores both in North America and Western Europe (Benson, 1992; Shaw, 1992). In the 1920s and 30s, British retailers began renting counters to sellers with different types of goods in one large store (this took influence from British versions of the bazaar that existed in the 18th and 19th-centuries) (Shaw, 1992). Around the 1850s, several large stores, separated into different departments of durable goods such as women's clothing or toys and books, were created throughout London. These and others grew rapidly in the following decades, increasing the challenges to smaller and

now antiquated shopping areas, as shoppers tended to favour the larger, more modern department stores (Shaw, 1992).

Numerous similar department stores opened in Canada from the mid-19th century onwards, and their success grew monumentally in the 1880s onwards (Benson, 1992). Prominent renditions included Woodward's, Eaton's, Simpson's, and The Bay. Part of their success grew from the proliferation of electric streetcar networks in the late-19th century, which allowed commuters from inner suburbs to travel easily and purchase a wide array of consumer goods in downtown locations.

2.1.2.5 Commercial Main Streets

Before the Second World War, some changes to traditional retail systems in North America had begun, such as the introduction of the earliest renditions of shopping malls and large downtown department stores. While the electric streetcar brought benefits to centrally-located department stores in Canadian cities, streetcar lines also brought benefits to other retail areas. Although retail remained prioritised in urban cores, suburban commercial main streets in streetcar suburbs became a part of the evolving retail hierarchy in cities (Alexander & Akehurst, 1999; Architectural Forum, 1943; Rao & Summers, 2016). A dispersal of small neighbourhood stores was also a part of this hierarchy.

As such, this spatial distribution of retailers was more readily determined by market forces like competition and the location of consumers than the more stringently planned retail development that would exist in the decades after WWII (Borchert, 1998). Large Pre-World War I retailers, particularly department stores, would rarely consider moving their businesses outside of urban centres (Longstreth, 1997). Trips to these areas could most easily be taken by streetcar line. Smaller businesses outside of urban cores would generally sell convenience goods (such as food) or be speciality shops that served more highly specified needs (Alexander & Akehurst, 1999). The convenience goods within neighbourhood stores were typically accessible on foot, while other goods on commercial corridors could be accessed either on foot or via streetcar lines that moved between different suburbs. Thus, walking or riding streetcars remained the typical forms of transport for shoppers (Alexander & Akehurst, 1999; Longstreth, 1997). As the century progressed, this urban retail system underwent significant alterations.

The influences of modernism in planning after the Second World War created numerous changes to urban form, particularly in the dispersion of retail developments. Modernist ideals of rationality and functionality became more prominent, leading to the greater segregation of land uses based on more scientifically-determined location choices. Comprehensive city plans and planning tools like zoning were used to undertake large-scale modernist changes, to regulate the locations of different destinations, and

ultimately to challenge the dominance of retail in the central areas of cities (Levy, 2011; Taylor, 1998).

2.1.2.6 Post-War Retail Planning

In the 1950s and 60s, a move from a traditionally unplanned and centralised hierarchy to a planned and ideally distributed hierarchy of retail forms occurred. This new retail hierarchy was used to determine the ideal location of retail forms throughout cities using functional mechanisms, and was often laid out in comprehensive plans (Borchert, 1998; S. Brown, 1991; Davies, 1984; Guy, 2007; Handy, 1993; Rao & Summers, 2016). Planned retail hierarchies were influenced by the earlier notable work of Walter Christaller (1933) whose *Die central Orte in Süddeutschland*, or Central Place Theory, provided a theoretical view on the organisation and distribution of human land uses. Central Place Theory was used to distinguish between the locations of services of higher and lower orders (Malczewski, 2009). Simply, this means that higher order land uses such as hospitals would be more sparsely spread out to serve larger populations, while lower order uses such as small bakeries would exist in greater abundance and would serve smaller groups of people. Building on Central Place Theory, Berry (1958) suggested a hierarchy of retail forms that could be spatially arranged throughout the city. It is well summarised by Cook (1974):

> Berry's classification of centres, to a large extent, is based on an intra-urban application of central place theory. This system comprises a hierarchy of centres involving convenience centres, neighbourhood business centres, community business centres, regional shopping centres, and the central business district. The lowest order centre, the convenience centre, usually consists of a grocer-drugstore combination and serves only a two or three block trade area. A neighbourhood centre might have a barber shop, beauty salon, drugstore, grocery or laundry. Community centres, in addition to neighbourhood activities, might contain a jeweller, florist, bakery, bank, variety or clothing store. Regional centres contain most of the functions of lower order centres but also department stores and shoe stores, photographers, hobby shops and other specialized establishments. The central business district is the highest order centre and provides the greatest variety of goods and services to the metropolitan area and beyond. (p. 116)

This era accordingly saw the introduction of regional and neighbourhood shopping centres in cities (Rao & Summers, 2016). The increase in automobile use was a large factor in the changing locations and retail forms in this period (Guy, 2007; Handy, 1993; Steinnes, 1982). Department stores and larger retail uses, which had previously been prominent in the cores of cities, began to develop in the suburban shopping centres that were encouraged retail hierarchies. Shopping centre developers were also able to take advantage of cheap land in which they could easily build large parking lots to satisfy the conveniences of drivers (Guy, 2007).

In the 1960s and 70s emerging suburban retail forms such as shopping malls, planned shopping centres, supermarkets, and megastores rapidly changed the types of competition in retail markets (Fernandes & Chamusca, 2014). These large indoor retail formats challenged the primacy of core areas as retail destinations (S. Brown, 1991; Fernandes & Chamusca, 2014; Guy, 2007; Handy, 1993; Rao & Summers, 2016; Steinnes, 1982). Suburban malls (effectively enclosed pedestrian streets with inward-facing stores, in many ways inspired by the arcades of the past) were highly accessible and convenient to consumers who wished to comparison shop and were in many cases able to outcompete retail locations both in city cores and central neighbourhoods (Handy, 1993). Malls began to develop with parking lots surrounding them on all four sides for the further convenience of driver-consumers. Not only could these retail forms be more efficient for driving consumers, they could also serve as one-stop shops hosting a variety of goods and services, in a form that was even more convenient than downtown department stores. These would also enable consumers to make fewer shopping trips, as a greater amount of goods or groceries could be purchased and transported in personal cars (Handy, 1993).

Suburban shopping malls came to dominate the North American retail landscape with rapidity. The success of malls aligned with the rise of automobiles and the obsession with order and comprehensive planning. Although the planners of retail hierarchies recognized the importance of retail areas as pedestrian friendly and accessible public centres, and sought to put these qualities within malls, they neglected to see the issues that came along with catering to the automobile. For instance, expansive surrounding parking lots and road infrastructure around malls began to necessitate driving and car ownership in order for households to access goods and services, rather than supporting a multitude of transportation options.

2.1.2.7 Neoliberalism in Planning

The growth of neoliberal philosophies in governance and planning beginning in the 1970s brought a *laissez-faire* or free market approach to retail planning that neglected the public good and non-market impacts of retail and prioritized profit-making for retailers and land developers (Aoki, 1992; S. Brown, 1991; Irving, 1993). Rao and Summers show that "the rise of new retail formats, market developments, urban decay, and significant shifts in planning approaches" inhibited the success of a fully realised retail hierarchy (2016, p. 97). By the 1980s, this drive for market efficiencies allowed for the creation and rise of new forms of retail that prioritized the private-exchange functions, such as big box retailers and power centres across North America. Despite not being accounted for in planned retail hierarchies, these retail innovations were created due to neoliberal demands for deregulation and the strong political power of retail developers.

In the 1980s, the success of shopping centres and malls diminished due to the closures and bankruptcies of struggling department stores, difficulties in acquiring anchors, increased competition from new retail formats and such as discounters, and the increasing costs of development (Hahn, 2000). The new retail format known as the big box, or large format retailer, was created in the early 1980s. These stores are separated from others by large parking lots and sit adjacent to large freeways so that they can be visible and provide efficient access to car users. Big boxes are usually large in nature (up to 200,000 ft^2), and disregard most exterior design elements, with many neglecting to have any windows except their glass doorways. Hahn (2000) delineates the types of big box retailers into Category Killers (retailers that fulfill most goods in a retail category, e.g., Staples, Home Depot), Discounters (e.g., Wal-Mart), Warehouse Clubs (e.g., Costco or Sam's Club), and other similar types. Owners of these properties are advantaged by the utilitarian simplicity and regularity of building design that allows for easy turnover, should a retailer fail or move out. When this occurs, another retailer may rapidly take up the tenancy without significant renovations or costs.

Although big box retailers began by locating along arterials, they began to agglomerate and turn into power centres in the mid-1980s (Hahn, 2000). These highly efficient centres are cheap and easy to plan and build compared to regional shopping centres. A key issue with these developments include a lack of amenities for walking; cars are often required even for travel between stores. Not only did these new retail formats exacerbate the challenges faced among other forms of retail, their strict emphasis on market efficiency meant that they had little to no elements of public space or urban design, even compared to traditional shopping malls.

In this decentralisation of urban retail, public good functions have been significantly challenged. The proliferation of malls and other large-format retail in suburban areas of cities have undoubtedly increased the diversity of products and services that particular consumers can acquire in a convenient fashion (Handy, 1993). However, a common consideration is that these new geographies lack a *sense of place*. Geographers such as Relph (1976) identified *placelessness* in inauthentic spaces of little meaning to people. The landscapes created by newer forms of suburban retail are often considered placeless, as parking lots and freeways surround them, they provide very little positive contribution to street vibrancy, they necessitate car travel for access, and they have few significant defining features that differentiate them from similar developments in different locations. They are more-or-less identical groupings of utilitarian boxes, surrounded by seas of asphalt. In contrast, areas that are considered to elicit a sense of place typically hold the qualities of meaning and authenticity (Relph, 1976). Retail developments that are better integreated with neighbourhoods are more likely to create a sense of community, promote active forms of transport, and provide

proximal access to goods and services. These are some of the traditional values that were common in retail before the 1970s.

2.1.2.8 Contemporary Planning Ideas

Despite the proliferation of these types of placeless retail landscapes in North America, since the time of Jane Jacobs in the 1960s, there have been efforts to recognise the value of public space in commercial areas. Recently, there have been trends in planning and geography that aim to reinvigorate some of these values, striving for greater walkability in more centralised locations of retail. This includes the recognition that the core areas of cities have historically provided more opportunities for vibrancy, walkability, and livability, but many fell into urban decay while cities rapidly suburbanized. This has resulted in a push to combat urban decay in these areas. The following are two related trends in contemporary planning that emerged towards the end of the 20th century and have sought to challenge the ongoing patterns of suburban development.

The New Urbanism, introduced and advocated for by Duany and Plater-Zyberk (1992), is often referred to as neo-traditional town planning or traditional neighbourhood design for its reintegration of mixed land uses into complete community designs. The neighbourhood design includes a pedestrian-oriented grid street pattern, attractive developments built at a human scale, and a town centre with a mix of amenities including retail shops that can service the local community (Duany & Plater-Zyberk, 1994; Fulton, 1996; Grant, 2009; Grant & Filion, 2015; Wheeler, 2003). It places greater emphasis on the public good functions of retail through the reintegration of shops into communities (Rao & Summers, 2016). These neighbourhoods can be created as more sustainable suburban developments or provide benefits to more central areas. The Congress for New Urbanism, founded in 1993, developed the *Charter for New Urbanism* which has helped to spread these ideas into many North American cities.

Transit oriented development (TOD), also promoted by New Urbanists, advocates for integrating a density of mixed land-uses, including retail developments, that fulfill the complete necessities of a community within walkable distances of transit stations (Cervero et al., 2002; Jabareen, 2006; Rao & Summers, 2016; Wheeler, 2003). This is meant to encourage the use of non-automobile transportation while including some of the efficiencies of the private automobile and presenting additional public good functions.

While these contemporary forms of development seek to create denser, connected and ultimately more sustainable environments that promote accessibility to retail outlets and locations that promote public good benefits, they are often difficult to achieve. Bean, Kearns, and Collins recognize that "while the issue of urban form is important, peoples' perceptions and prevalent cultural norms may well be more crucial

determinants of travel behaviour and neighbourhood sociability" (2008, p. 2830). Day (2003) identifies several challenges with trying to solve social problems with design changes (reminiscent of modernist planning). City councils, civil engineers, developers, land owners, businesses, homebuyers, and homeowners can all be resistant to change, creating pressures to propagate the norm of suburban, segregated development. Moreover, when design is successful in revitalizing public uses, it may encourage unintended outcomes like gentrification. Nevertheless, these contemporary ideals have seen some successes and may be able to provide a framework for a more sustainable urban future.

2.2 Automobility

Technological innovations since the nineteenth-century have accelerated human mobility through faster and more efficient forms of travel, ultimately increasing the human ability to overcome distance. Of these innovations, the most significant is the automobile, which has become entrenched in worldwide industries, institutions, and social systems. (Sheller & Urry, 2000). The invention and mass-production of automobiles in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries steered worldwide changes in personal travel and uses of urban and rural space. Today, there are more than a billion vehicles on the planet (Sperling & Gordon, 2009). If the basic function of the automobile in providing improvements to human mobility has been achieved in much of the world, its role in transforming social life ought to be recognized too. Auto-dominance around the world has contributed to extensive changes in cultures and socialities, in urban spatial organization, and in industrial and economic activity. It has also created challenges of environmental degradation, natural resource depletion, and impacts on biodiversity.

While the earliest confirmed successful self-propelled vehicle was created by Frenchman Nicholas-Joseph Cugnot in 1770 (a steam-powered vehicle which was also involved in the first automotive accident when it hit a wall, landing Cugnot in jail), it was not until 1884 that Frank and Charles Duryea gave birth to the automotive industry by selling the first petrol-powered buggy (Motavalli, 2000). Prompted by the production of the Ford Model T which debuted in 1908, an efficient assembly line manufacturing process led to the mass-production and mass-consumption of affordable vehicles that is still seen today. Mass production and mass-consumption of the automobile prompted significant changes in uses of urban space. Most notably, the urban street – previously multi-modal infrastructure that was also a place for meeting and socialization – was replaced by the road, almost universally considered a place exclusively for efficient and fast car travel.

The automobile has long provided a point of conflict in both urban and rural areas. The earliest users of automobiles were typically either wealthy enthusiasts looking

for the enjoyment of speed (often experienced in races) or those seeking the leisure to explore nature freely in a capacity not provided by trains (Ladd, 2008). Ladd describes how many people were put off by the vehicle noise created in the countryside and urban areas (which led to the widespread use of mufflers) or by the dangers that pedestrians and bystanders who were used to safely walking through (and on) the streets. Other disagreements in history that Ladd (2008) points out include the loss of safety for the pedestrian, *flâneur* (the casual urban stroller), other street users, and the loss of the romanticized countryside. To combat the fears of safety and to allow the automobile to roam more freely through road space, non-motorized traffic began to be segregated from roadways to inferior separate spaces such as sidewalks (Merriman, 2009). Over the last century, new types of roadways have been created (including the paving, painting, and signage of roads) to boost the efficiency and safety of car travel.

Since the 1960s and 1970s, the impacts of the automobile on communities, democratic processes and the global environment have been questioned, most notably by public protest movements (Merriman, 2009). Around this time, a shift away from the post-war modernist mindset was occurring; modernist thinking had subjected cities to increased levels of auto-dependence as freeways and suburban developments had been rapidly developed and promoted across the world (Relph, 1987). Criticisms of modernism arose as discussions of sustainable development grew, contributing to the widening of anti-car sentiment amongst activists.

Automobility has emerged in scholarly literature to help analyze and describe the various cultural, social, and institutional connections of the automobile that have helped it persist through time. These analyses include but look beyond the traditional car-focused understandings, which typically examined suburbanization and other impacts on material spatial arrangements related to the automobile; automobility includes the social, technological, institutional, and ideological aspects of modernity that are both related to the car and help strengthen society's grip on the automobile (Böhm, Jones, Land, & Paterson, 2006).

The automobile-related changes to human mobility, institutions and socialities are central to discussions of automobility. The car is a highly technological vehicle which can be operated by a single user and offers the ability to move oneself rapidly through the world with a flexible and highly personalized schedule. Sociologist John Urry describes automobility as a system involving "autonomous humans combined with machines with capacity for autonomous movement along paths, lanes, streets and routeways of one society after another" (2004, p. 26). However, he goes on to explain that the "key is not the 'car' as such but the system of these fluid interconnections" (Urry, 2004, p. 26) that has transformed social interactions.

This section reviews the concept of automobility, discussing the human spatio-temporal relationship with the automobile, physical and psychological experiences of the users of auto-space, and how the automobile has impacted the social world. The following section will connect automobility with *path dependence* in order to discuss its permanency.

2.2.1 Background

The concept of automobility is a framework of analysis for societal auto-dependence that favours a more holistic view than looking solely at the car and its easily observable impacts on built form. Automobility has developed over time to include a wide range of observations about human sociality and culture, natural and built environments, politics, industries, technological advancement, and human relationships with time and space (Merriman, 2009). The extensiveness and complexity of these varied connections and challenges have made automobility a deeply entrenched system, which makes moves towards lower dependence on the automobile difficult to achieve.

The term automobility (or auto-mobility) can be traced back as far as 1904 where it was used to describe independent motion in a patent for the 'electrically-propelled vehicle' (Thayer, 1904). The term has since been frequently refined. Adamson (1955) used auto-mobility consider the reasons for and impacts of suburbanization. U.S. Senator Harrison A. Williams, Jr. argued against the urban developer ideology of automobility, that the right to drive wherever and whenever was an inevitable and universal right (Williams, 1962). Freund and Martin (1993) radically shifted conversation of automobility towards the automobile's relation with the social world, linking it to discourses such as individualism and sexuality.

Sheller and Urry (2000) provided the most significant description and analysis of automobility as it is currently understood, arguing that automobility is comprised of six major components that enable the automobile to be dominant. First, automobiles are one of the most significant capitalist productions, involving many of the most prominent corporations and have historically transformed industrial production through Fordism and post-Fordism (they are the 'quintessential manufactured object'). Second, they are one of the most expensive goods purchased by consumers and elicit levels of status, provide an anthropomorphic connection for its owner, and enable automobile crimes that must go through the legal system. Third, they are complexly connected with both technical and social institutions including industrial production, roadways, retailing, hoteling, and urban planning. Fourth, they outrank public transportation modes and are the major system of flexible personal and family transportation. Fifth, they are a cultural symbol of mobility and 'the good life'. Finally, the production and use of automobiles and road

systems consumes tremendous amounts of natural resources and heavily impacts the environment through emissions and other byproducts.

While most automobility arguments present negative perspectives on the automobile, it should be noted that through the early to mid-1900s, automobiles were recognized as a tool to enable the modernization of cities while also providing much greater access to natural spaces and views than had previously existed, particularly in rural areas (Merriman, 2009). Indeed, to help create panoramic unobstructed views for drivers and passengers, the vision for the original autobahn disallowed billboards and roadside advertisements (Dimendberg, 1995).

2.2.2 Space and Time

The meanings of space and time have changed as technologies improving human mobility have progressed. Space and time are inseparable entities, particularly in geographical considerations. During the 19th century, human considerations of space and time began to shrink, as technologies such as the stagecoach (replacing horseback riding), bicycle (initially a toy, but effectively turned into a mode of local transport), and the democratization of rail transport helped progressively lower the 'friction of distance' and increase the speed in travelling from one location to another (Thrift, 1994).

However, it was technological advancements of the following century that most profoundly altered these spatiotemporalities. While the creation and expansion of the aircraft certainly improved human ability to travel through space and time, it was the widespread dissemination of the private car that likely had the most significant impacts on spatiotemporalities through improvements to personal mobility and flexibility (Sheller & Urry, 2000). The automobile afforded humans the ability to control their personal timetables "through the complex jugglings of time and space that car journeys both allow and necessitate" (Sheller & Urry, 2000, p. 743). Humans have since experienced the flexibility to quickly change the direction of trips, make unexpected stops, and to negate the importance of planned departure times. As Urry emphasizes, much of what we consider to be social life is enabled by these qualities:

> It is possible to leave late by car, to miss connections, to travel in a relatively time-less fashion. People find pleasure in travelling when they want to, along routes that they choose, finding new places unexpectedly, stopping for relatively open ended periods of time, and moving on when they desire. (Urry, 2006, p. 19)

However, the complex 'juggling' of time that becomes a part of human life also bears a coercive nature, as intense levels of flexibility are not only experienced but demanded in modernity (Featherstone, 2005; Sheller & Urry, 2000; Urry, 2006). While the railway had become a highly democratized and functional system of transportation, it remained relatively inflexible and passengers followed strict timetables in planning their

transportation. With the private automobile, elements such as traffic flow and the avoidance of rush hours impact the decisions and times of journeys (Beckmann, 2001). However, work and school schedules remain highly standardized, so with the increasing volumes of traffic over time, these decisions become more complex (Featherstone, 2005). Car travel includes increasingly greater unpredictability in scheduling, further enhanced by events such as accidents, construction, and traffic jams.

The dispersal of urban activities and built environments has further necessitated the flexibility that Sheller and Urry (2000) describe. As the built environment has been altered to fit the flexibilities and mobilities that the car provides, it has "'unbundled' those territorialities of home, work, business and leisure that have historically been closely integrated" (Sheller & Urry, 2000, p. 744). Along with suburban development and this unbundling of places, the urban environment has become more about the ability for the 'unrestricted' movement that the car provides than the place itself. Human activity is thereby more spread over space and time (Beckmann, 2001).

Harvey (1990) reasons that these factors have enabled a 'time-space compression' that has drastically changed the nature of human life in relation to increasing technologies of mobility. As Beckmann puts it, "[t]he time horizons of private and public decision making have shrunk because the acceleration of transport has made it increasingly possible to spread these decisions over an ever wider and fragmented space" (2001, p. 599). Virilio suggests that this 'acceleration' and the greater speed of life makes "everyone a passer-by, an alien, or a missing person" (as cited in Thrift, 1994, p. 221). This contributes to the loss of 'place' (as a site of meaning) and a general disconnection between the inside of the automobile, and that which is on the outside.

2.2.3 Inhabiting the Road: The Body and the Car

As the automobile's influence on the urban environment and social life has strengthened, the physical and psychological experiences of road users have been altered drastically (Featherstone, 2005; Sheller & Urry, 2000; Taylor, 2003; Urry, 2006). Taylor suggests that the aesthetic, sensory experiences of car users (drivers and passengers) and the non-car users (pedestrians, cyclists, bystanders) adjacent to road space are "the most salient aspect of people's experience of the external urban environment" (2003, p. 1610). Ladd (2008) describes the tension that existed between early automobile users and the previous users of the street, who struggled to adapt to the automobile and who valued the multi-modal forms of transportation that road space traditionally enabled. In contrast, in the modern automotive world road space is almost exclusively designated for automobiles.

2.2.3.1 Pedestrians and Cyclists

Pedestrians and cyclists are the road users that have faced the greatest marginalization due to automobility. The *flâneur* has been used as a theoretical framework through which urban experiences can be studied, expanding on the work of early 20th century scholar Walter Benjamin (Featherstone, 1998). Although initially associated with certain upper middle-class stereotypes, the *flâneur* more generally represents the unrushed walker, or stroller, simply existing to observe the environment he is in; it can be used in this context to provide the lens of the marginalized stroller in urban space. With the goal of creating a functional economic environment based largely upon automobility, the period of modernism accelerated the decline of the *flâneur* in favour of large, high-speed roads and a dispersed urban development (Featherstone, 1998). The decline of urban walking is socially consequential; drawing on the work of de Certeau (1984), Bean, Kearns, and Collins state that "walkers can add to the sociality as well as the character of a city simply by being there" (2008, p. 2834). This echoes the sentiments of Jane Jacobs (1961), who argued that pedestrians bring life to cities.

Beckmann notes that "[t]he modern city is slicked up into shopping areas, housing areas, leisure parks, business districts, and so forth. Human activities are no longer bundled…" (2001, p. 598). In the quest to create spaces fit for the automobile, pedestrians, cyclists, and other non-motorized urban users are subjected to auto-oriented urban spaces largely devoted to single land uses. In addition, the urban landscape now includes vast areas of land dedicated to parking, widened roads, large expressways, road signs, street lighting and other 'urban furniture' (Taylor, 2003). The resulting fragmentation of space and proliferating 'auto-scape' has infringed on the abilities of non-motorized travellers to move between locations (as distances have typically increased) and to do so safely. Similarly, the transit user experiences gaps in travel that may create feelings of danger and uncertainty, gaps that are not as regularly experienced among car users (Sheller & Urry, 2000).

Nigel Taylor (2003) compares the physical and psychological experiences of pedestrians and cyclists in comparison with those of car occupants. The journey through the city involves a variety of sights, smells, sounds, tactile sensations, kinesthetic sensations, and vicarious sensations (the sensations we notice in passing) (Taylor, 2003). Taylor explains that the experience of traffic in the city to the pedestrian or cyclist is a combined interplay of all experienced sensations; that is, walkers or cyclists see, hear, and smell traffic to various degrees, often dependent on the density of traffic and built form in the area. The excess of these sensations in heavily trafficked areas can create a number of discomforts (e.g. invasive traffic noise), which in part has contributed to a demand for suburban living. The kinesthetic sensations of those inside the car and outside the car are different too; pedestrians and bicyclists must use their own energy to

power their motion, suggesting that when more difficult travel conditions arise (e.g., uphill climbs, rainy weather, wind, etc.) attention may be directed more towards the energy provided than the physical motion. Taylor notes that the opposite is true as well – when motion is easier, more attention may be provided to the joys experienced from kinesthetic motion itself (2003).

Taylor refers to the cognitive aspects of human attention in the city as "our knowledge of what can happen to us if we do not look out, rather than the mere sensation of the presence of road traffic" (2003, p. 1619). In conjunction with the physical sensations we experience in real-time, cognitive aspects may provide us with pre-conceived notions and understandings that help shape our experiences in the city. Taylor (2003) describes four such discourses of city cognition. First, he alludes to the complex meanings attached to road signage that guide the infrequent or unfamiliar user through the city. Second, he refers to the nature of viewing automobiles not as moving people but moving machines. For pedestrians and cyclists, the far greater size, power, and speed of automobiles can create the feeling of being subordinate to the automobile, which discourages walking and cycling often due to the fear of being hit by a car. Next, he describes the risks faced by all road users due to the heavier and faster traffic of modernity, including cyclists who must be highly alert to traffic dangers, unless provided with segregated pathways. Young children and those with disabilities often face high levels of danger as they may be unaware or unable to protect themselves from the dangers of traffic. Lastly, he suggests that some of the desire to simply 'stop and stare' in the city has been lost, as people have become used to the more stimulating attention required to operate a vehicle in the city.

2.2.3.2 Drivers and Passengers

As the speed of travel of the automobile has risen, changes both to the vehicle's internal and external environments have often been guided by technological improvements geared to improve safety, ease of operation, and comfort for the driver or passengers. The automobile also serves as a space of interaction, living, resting, love-making, and fighting (with fighting including those in other vehicles) (Beckmann, 2001). The experiences of the car-inhabitant differ vastly from the often-subordinated pedestrian or cyclist. John Urry superbly expresses the increasing comfort levels experienced in the modern vehicle:

> Those who dwell within the car are able not only to prevent the smells and sounds of the road outside from entering the car but also to produce an environment in which a certain sociability can occur. Car-drivers control the social mix in their car just like homeowners control those visiting their home. The car has become a 'home-from-home', a place to perform business, romance, family, friendship, crime, fantasy and so on…The car-driver is surrounded by control

> systems that allow a simulation of the domestic environment, a home-from-home moving flexibly and riskily through strange and dangerous environments. (Urry, 2006, p. 27)

This separation from the external has expanded beyond just physical boundaries – it has become a psychological separation from the space being travelled through and the other entities within it. Taylor (2003) describes how this protection and disconnection of the outer from the inner facilitates frustration and road rage. To the skilled driver, the car becomes viewed as an extension of the body that, according to Thrift (2004), includes a very limited means of communication between drivers; drivers create personalized manoeuvres that may cause unexpected distress, frustration, and anger amongst others who can respond only with blinking lights and hand gestures. As drivers are typically headed to a determined destination, external things that impede their journey, such as pedestrians, cyclists, or other cars are often seen more as obstacles than human beings. Instances of road rage are extreme expressions of the associated frustrations.

Many sensations of the road are 'muted' to the car-inhabitant; in particular the sights, sounds, and smells of the urban environment that are experienced by the pedestrian or cyclist, are nearly non-existent to the driver and passenger (Freund & Martin, 1993; Taylor, 2003). For instance, the soundscape experienced by vehicle users is highly controlled – the sound of the road can be easily blocked out by the sound of the radio or conversation. Automobiles are climate-controlled and provide at least a partial escape from heat, cold, rain, snow, and other weather elements. As it happens, many of the prominent sights, sounds, and smells created by automobiles are imposed externally on the non-automobile users of the space. The view from the automobile provides a particular point of interest. Virilio describes how increasing speed allows for a more partial or skewed view of the external world (cited in Thrift, 1994). Taylor adds that a study by Appleyard et al. in 1964 found that "over half the objects seen by both drivers and passengers were either straight ahead or narrowly to the sides of the road and, further, their attention was (understandably) focused more on moving than stationary objects" (2003, p. 1617). In addition, many of the stationary objects witnessed exist primarily to facilitate automobile travel, such as street signs and traffic lights.

Thrift (1994, 2004) describes the increasing ergonomics within vehicles (such as of the window button being placed in the natural place where the hand lies) as an increasing hybridization of humans and automobiles. As he points out, "the governance of the car is no longer in the hands of the driver but is assisted by more and more technological add-ons…" (2004, p. 49). Many features of the vehicle have in turn come to replace the functions that humans would carry out. The increasing computerization of cars exemplifies this: not only can many vehicles automatically adjust to the settings of

the user upon ignition, cars can now assist drivers with staying in their driving lanes, changing lanes, parking, and emergency braking. The self-driving or automated car appears to be in the near-future, which is the culmination of such technologies; in this case, the human-automobile hybridization may become significantly skewed towards the automobile, with only the work of the human being the selection of various options offered by the vehicle (i.e., the destination, opening of windows, volume of the radio, etc.).

2.2.4 Sociality

The relation that the automobile has with the social world is a key contribution of the literature on automobility. The socialities of the automobile have been discussed by a number of scholars (Bean et al., 2008; Beckmann, 2001; Collins, Bean, & Kearns, 2009; Dowling, 2000; Freund & Martin, 1993; Sheller & Urry, 2000; Urry, 2006). The automobile has had resounding impacts on the mobility of humans, but the external challenges have fallen disproportionately on vulnerable demographic groups including women, minorities, the disabled, those too young to drive, and the poor (Bean et al., 2008). Transportation-related inequalities are commonly identified in geography literature (examples of such inequalities amongst children and women are discussed in this section); automobility has exacerbated these issues through the physical separation of spaces that has necessitated use of the automobile (Urry, 2004). The automobile is, of course, not a socially owned product – it provides 'freedom' only to those who are able to use it. For those unable to use the automobile, insurmountable difficulties may exist in overcoming stretched geographies. To others, use of the automobile has become both an important and necessary component of contemporary life.

2.2.5 Street Life, Sense of Place, Civil Society

The most visible social change associated with automobility can be observed at the street level. The previous discussions of the *flâneur* and the embodiment of the pedestrian apply to this discussion. It is clear that urban life is "increasingly experienced in the car" (Bean et al., 2008, p. 2836). The car-oriented changes that cities have undergone since the rapid expansion of auto-space have led to a marginalization of the pedestrian and a departure from 'place' into 'placelessness' or 'non-place' experienced in contemporary urbanity.

Place and non-place are concepts that have been readily discussed in the analysis of 20th century alterations to urban space (see Kunstler, 1993; Relph, 1976); non-place or placelessness generally describes locations that do not invoke feelings of significance or meaning. Bean et al. (2008) acknowledge that place and non-place are subjective and one does not exist exclusively without some elements of the other. However, spaces

geared towards the automobile are more readily recognized as non-places, and spaces intended for walkable urban environments are more readily recognized as inducing a sense of place. Within locations that invoke the sensations of place (such as pedestrian friendly streets), people are enabled to be social and can communicate with their own groups, strangers, bump into acquaintances, explore and sense the environment at leisure, and learn about the culture of the area (Sheller & Urry, 2000). However, automobility has challenged and profoundly undermined this type of sociality.

Sheller and Urry discuss the reconfiguration of civil society, or the 'modern urban social life' (2000). They say that civil society was once "seen as *attached* to the city, *located* in neighbourhoods and associational spaces, and *rooted* in places of dwelling. Mobility was a necessary feature of growth and modernization, but had to be stabilized by association and anchored within space" (2000, pp. 740–741). In contemporary Western society, civil society is instead rooted in mobility. Automobility can be characterized as democratic, in that it provides a means to fulfil the right to mobility, and enables other personal freedoms such as leisure (Sheller & Urry, 2000). The right to own and access vehicles and thereby be mobile can also be considered democratic, in that they are broadly available (at least to adults). Sheller and Urry (2000) reason that the democratic freedoms of automobility have enabled challenges to public space, so there is a "fundamental conflict between urban civility *and* democratized mobility" (2000, p. 742). Freund and Martin (1993) infer that the social disadvantages that automobiles impose on marginalized groups mean that "[d]espite the fact that auto-dominated transport is seen as democratic, in fact it disenfranchises many people" (1993, p. 45). However, it is important to note that widespread car ownership from the early 1900s did provide tremendous freedoms of mobility that had previously only been granted to the elite. However, the same trend soon enabled auto-oriented development that increased both distances between destinations and traffic to be navigated, removing many of the advantages of mobility that were being experienced (specifically, shorter travel times), as well as creating set of social disadvantages.

2.2.6 Family Socialities

Automobile-induced changes to flexibilities and spatiotemporalities have already been alluded to, and it is important to note that these changes have been experienced differently by different groups. Robyn Dowling (2000) provides the example of automobility influencing practices of motherhood, in the Australian context. Dowling highlights that the car has become more than a means of transportation to mothers – it has become a tool with which the lives of children can be managed. However, this type of management was not previously necessary. As Dowling notes, the suburban mother is coerced into the modern understanding of effective parenting that involves driving

children to and from formally planned activities in dispersed locations; this method of parenting is often seen as the way to provide the most opportunities to children, such as driving them to better schools. This is paired with the loss of informal neighbourhood play among children. The mother may only provide said opportunities if she can afford them (e.g., the expenses of organized sport) in addition to the expenses of the vehicle; she may also encounter time constraints, given the distances between activities (Dowling, 2000). Despite the current reliance on the vehicle for (particularly suburban) mothers, women have been historically marginalized from the experience of the automobile, in part due to a male-induced prejudice that women possess a 'technological incomprehension' that renders them incapable of driving (Featherstone, 2005). Featherstone also notes the unwarranted negative connotations that still exist around 'women drivers' (2005).

Children are readily marginalized by automobility. As urban form has adapted to suit the automobile, children have been removed from the street due to traffic safety fears, alongside other factors such as crimes (Bean et al., 2008). They therefore have far fewer opportunities for public experiences, particularly in Western societies (Collins et al., 2009). Children who do walk are often forced to navigate through traffic and roads (Bean et al., 2008). As Collins et al. (2009) add, a combination of social and cultural norms and built form inform the level of freedom given to children in travelling the city. They also find that children can receive the benefits of active transport and experience their local environment when they are able to walk to proximal primary schools. The increasing distance between destinations may also marginalize older children, who often need to be chauffeured or take a long public transit journey to move between locations.

2.3 Path Dependence

Path dependence describes phenomena in which decisions or processes are guided by or restricted to a pathway created by former processes or decisions (Arthur, 1989). Path dependence has been studied under many academic lenses to describe phenomena in sociology, history, economics, human geography, and political science (MacKinnon, 2008; Mahoney, 2000; Martin & Sunley, 2006; Pierson, 2000).

The roots of path dependence in economics mean that it is often described using processes that have locked society into the widespread and continual adoption of particular goods, services, or industries. For instance, a common example is the adoption of the QWERTY keyboard (David, 1985). QWERTY was adopted due to a set of small choices and conditions of the time that subordinated other keyboard layouts (including the more ergonomically efficient Dvorak keyboard). However, the increasing returns in producing QWERTY keyboards led to its eventual worldwide standardization, as processes became entrenched and expanded over time (Arthur, 1989, 1994).

The argument of increasing returns is common in path dependence literature and refers to the increasing costs of reversing a pathway or switching to another process as a particular pathway becomes more locked-in over time (MacKinnon, 2008; North, 1990). These high costs of change are born from the entrenchment of the pathway into not just economic processes like production, but other social and institutional processes as well. This leads path dependent processes to possess self-reinforcing qualities that encourages future decision-making to follow the same pathway.

Arthur (1994) describes the characteristics of increasing returns processes as unpredictable (as the existence of partly random events early in a process chain means accurate prediction of later results is unlikely), inflexible (early shifts from a pathway are easier than later shifts), non-ergodic (small early events are not negligible), and potentially path inefficient (foregone alternatives could possibly have been more efficient). In describing path dependence through the lens of political science, Pierson (2000) asserts that both large and small events can have significant consequences on a pathway, but that contingency is important. Simply put, the temporal order that events occur in helps shape the direction that a pathway takes (Mahoney, 2000). Similarly, Pierson (2000) also notes that critical junctures (or the branching points within pathways) are important elements in path dependence. Not only do certain events influence a pathway to take a certain form, there are a specific set of historical and institutional reasons they do so.

'Concept stretching' has occurred for path dependence (Pierson, 2000). In other words, the concept has increased in ambiguity as some scholars now use path dependence to describe pathways that do not exhibit self-reinforcing qualities. This altered conceptualization of path dependence is simply that former process or events have an effect upon later processes or events, without suggesting any difficulty in separating from the pathway. Simply put, increasing returns is removed from the equation. However as Pierson (2000) suggests, this may be problematic as understanding self-reinforcement is an important part of understanding how much of the social world works. This is a valuable part of the path dependence concept that should not be forgotten.

2.3.1 Path Dependence and Automobility

Automobility is understood by Urry and colleagues to have been born from path dependent processes since the initial production of automobiles in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Dennis & Urry, 2009; Urry, 2004). In the late 1800s, steam-powered cars presented the advantages of cleanliness and quietness, but Motavalli (2000) describes how steam-powered cars required large amounts of water and wood, and boiler explosions were commonly feared. Steam-power shortly fell out in favour of

electric-power. Henry Ford, the pioneer of Fordist production methods, even attempted to create an electric powered car using batteries created by Thomas Edison. However, the momentum of the internal combustion engine soon ousted both steam and electricity in favour of the gasoline-powered car, which had started in its rise to prominence when a gasoline car was one of two cars to enter a horseless vehicle competition in Chicago in 1896 (Urry, 2004). Path dependence recognizes that small events and conditions like these can have resounding and unpredictable impacts in the long run. While some of the factors contributing to the path dependence of automobility have been relatively small, others have been much larger - for instance, the large-scale and prominent urban renewal projects of Robert Moses in the 20th century, which included the building of large freeways through residential neighbourhoods in New York City (J. Brown, 2005).

Urry uses path dependence to suggest that automobility today "can be conceptualized as a self-organizing autopoietic, non-linear system that spreads world-wide, and includes cars, car-drivers, roads, petroleum supplies and many novel objects, technologies and signs" (2004, p. 27). Autopoiesis refers to the phenomena of self-production and self-maintenance, and aligns with the increasing returns common to path dependence. For instance, municipal zoning regulations for minimum parking requirements (MPRs) were initially intended to cure North American parking shortages from the 1930s onwards, but they have since created additional expenses and challenges for developers and businesses in urban areas, thereby biasing development to more auto-oriented suburban, often big-box retail locations (Shoup, 2017). Automobility is thereby further reinforced, as suburban development also lengthens journeys and necessitates travel by automobile, as other travel options are often unavailable or impractical. Additionally, while the widening of roadways may temporarily alleviate traffic flow issues, the added capacity creates incentive to develop adjacent land, ultimately resulting in greater traffic congestion (see 'induced demand' in Hymel, Small, & Dender, 2010). Therefore, the path dependent traits of automobility have been maintained and propagated by autopoietic qualities (Dennis & Urry, 2009; Urry, 2004).

Others contend that viewing automobility as a self-contained and all-encompassing autopoietic system (as Urry does) "underplays collective human agency in the production of automobility and [helps] to avoid the political questions about the shaping of the automobility 'system'" (Böhm et al., 2006, p. 5). Instead, these critics characterize automobility as a 'regime' that involves influence from external and powerful political and economic actors in maintaining or changing the status quo. According to Merriman, the "locked-in" auto-centric mobility patterns of individuals and families are not disputed, but heavily invested and powerful organizations like "OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries), the OPEC member nations, oil companies, and governments who set tax on fuel" (2009, p. 587) externally influence

automobility, likely to greater effect. Certainly, a multitude of actors and events have been essential in forming the complexity of automobility that has made it a nearly insurmountable phenomenon that has become increasingly pervasive through time.

2.3.1.1 Political and Administrative Path Dependencies

The political and administrative path dependencies of municipal governments can help explain how automobility manifests at the local scale. Path dependencies can exist within both the formal and informal institutions that municipalities engage with. For instance, flexibility in the formal creation of new policies may be limited by longstanding policy traditions. Informally, a government bureaucracy may be embedded with practices and cultures that are difficult to change. These path dependencies can constrain governments to follow processes or enact policies that represent outdated frames of thinking. In this case, even as challenges of auto-dependence are heavily researched and have been clear to policymakers for several decades, many policies and processes continue to push for forms of auto-oriented development.

In this way, automobility can be informed by the work of Pierson (2000), who notes some of the factors that help political pathways (such as policy frameworks) to persist. One noted challenge is achieving the collective action required in democracy to see change. Another is political institutions and policies which "encourage individuals and organizations to invest in specialized skills, deepen relationships with other individuals and organizations, and develop particular political and social identities" (Pierson, 2000, p. 259). This level of specialization increases both the attractiveness of remaining in the current institutional system and increases the cost of switching to new policies and new ways of thinking. The lack of profit-incentive in the public sector often means a lack of competition for efficiency, while the political goals, short time scales of political leaders, and typical 'status quo bias' of many political institutions encourages policy path dependence (2000, p. 257).

Sydow, Schreyögg, and Koch (2009) suggest similar organizational mechanisms of path dependence including what they call *Learning Effects*. These lead organizations to develop and use their current skills and practices, rather than analyzing them critically and looking for alternatives. Learning Effects may be one reason that municipalities and other political organizations have struggled to alter auto-centric policies, as maintaining or slightly altering the status quo in planning and development may prove easier than refreshing organizational ideologies altogether. For example, the rapid expansion of suburbia after World War II was accompanied by the adoption of modernist urban planning practices and planning departments in many municipalities. Consequently, regulatory development policies often favour suburban development rather than core

development. In this situation, it may be more favourable and cheaper to maintain the status quo rather than attempting to overturn a set of well-established practices.

Sydow et al. (2009) suggest that to understand the mechanisms that propagate organizational path dependence is the basis for overcoming it. This implies that if municipalities or political actors, first, can recognize path dependent policies related to automobility, and second, unravel the mechanisms that propagate the pathway, they may be able to break from their automobility-related path dependencies.

2.3.1.2 Breaking the Path of Automobility

Urry uses the idea of tipping points (popularized by Malcolm Gladwell) to suggest societal transformations that may be crucial in shifting society into a 'veritable new urbanity', many of which are contingent on technological advancements (2004). He suggests new fuel systems and lower weight car materials to reduce fuel consumption, smart-card technology to help pay for all transportation modes, increased de-privatization of cars through car-sharing, changes to transport policy that emphasize demand-reduction (which may include improvements to public transit, planning, and infrastructure for other transportation modes like walking and cycling), and complex computerized systems that can connect information from individual vehicles to the greater traffic system or reduce the need for travel due to mobile communications from the home. Merriman places more emphasis on the importance of political, social, and economic action and contends that "[a]n effective post-petrol-car society will only emerge through effective collaboration between governments, manufacturers, energy suppliers, transport planners, civil engineers, and motorists, with social scientists playing their part (including economists, sociologists, geographers, psychologists and anthropologists)" (2009, p. 587).

Changes to policies and practices are necessary in achieving a post-automobility world. However, obstacles to change exist when municipalities and other political organizations follow pathways that encourage manifestations of automobility at local scales. For instance, as previously mentioned, MPR policies have largely persisted through time despite the challenges they have caused to businesses and developers. Path dependence can illustrate how historically created policies and practices can become pervasive through time, by either being difficult to change or by laying a framework for the creation of new policies and practices.

2.4 Summary

This chapter reviewed literature on changes in ideologies and forms of urban space related to retail, by explaining how modernism and its fundamental focus on efficiency helped to reshape urban geographies towards auto-orientation in the post-war period. In

particular, modernist rational comprehensive planning led to the creation of retail hierarchies that helped decentralise retail development. Retail hierarchies were embedded with new larger retail formats such as shopping centres that were intended to improve efficiencies for retailers and consumers, particularly through the addition of large surrounding parking lots and the ability to one-stop shop. Shopping centres proliferated urban landscapes in the mid-20th century, providing many of the prescribed benefits, but also contributing to the decline of 'inefficient' traditional retail formats and their public spaces.

However, retail hierarchies were soon discarded as market forces, neoliberal and deregulatory governance led to the creation of physically massive and almost solely auto-dependent retail forms, such as megamalls, big box retail, and power centres starting in the 1980s. Generally located on the urban fringe or along arterial roads, these retail forms were derived from modernism, pushing similar efficiencies even further, but doing so with very little planning oversight and regard for the public good. Placeless and largely disconnected from communities and public life, these retail formats necessitated automobile use to a greater degree and further contributed to the detriment of traditional retail forms. Indeed, in this time, public good functions like vibrant public space were almost entirely lost in many cities.

The phenomenon of automobility was also discussed in this chapter. Automobility describes how tremendous changes in personal mobility, by way of the private automobile, have profoundly transformed societies worldwide. The system of interconnections that increased personal mobility both created and relies upon a dispersed urban form and expanded road networks. As a result, for many urban dwellers, the city and its streets are now seen as spaces for unrestricted motion and speed, rather than places of gathering and community to be experienced at a slower pace. Certainly, seeking balance between mobility and urban principles such as placemaking will continue as a crucial part of planning debates in the foreseeable future.

In this chapter, path dependence was also discussed. This describes a phenomenon in which a system of processes and actions become increasingly entrenched and difficult to disrupt or subvert. Here, automobility is reframed as a key example of a path dependent, autopoietic system, in which physical, political, and institutional factors that continue to reproduce auto dependency have become increasingly locked-in through time.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Qualitative Inquiry

In this research, a qualitative case study approach was used to examine the challenges faced in the revitalization of mature neighbourhood retail areas in Edmonton. Qualitative research is "directed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants by learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories" (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p. 3). This style of research is often primarily inductive, meaning that researchers work to find meaning as research progresses rather than prescribing to preexisting theories (Mayan, 2009). An inductive and intentionally flexible approach allows emerging topics of interest to be explored without constraining boundaries, presenting a fairly evolutionary research process. While two straightforward assumptions helped craft the objectives of this research project – first, that revitalization efforts faced challenges due to governance issues, and second, that path dependent societal traits were likely to be observed – maintaining flexibility enabled data collection and analysis to move within and beyond these abstractions and into the perceptions and experiences of key informants. In qualitative research, *key informants* are participants with specific expertise related to the issues being examined (Marshall, 1996). Drawing on their narratives allowed complex, rich, and context-specific data to be generated. This is a common trait of qualitative data, as research in this form is "not concerned with the control of particular variables within a setting but instead invite[s] context, complexity, and 'confounding variables'" (Mayan, 2009, p. 11).

3.2 Case Study Approach

As urban revitalization efforts are many-layered complex phenomena, a case study approach was deemed appropriate and workable for this research. Case study research aims to enlighten a deep and substantial understanding of a "specific, unique, bounded system"(Stake, 2005, p. 445) with a set of aligning traits. A key distinction from other research is that looking at particular a case allows for deep immersion by the researcher. As Cronin (2014) emphasizes, "although the number of cases may be small, or even one, the number of variables involved is large" (p. 20). Certainly, the boundaries of complex systems are not always clear – particularly in the social world – and useful context or information is often found outside the case; therefore, maintaining flexibility to explore beyond a system's boundaries can be valuable (Stake, 2005; Yin, 1994). The case study approach is thus suited to unravel situations with high degrees of complexity, in order to examine particular people, socio-cultural scenarios, events, or other

phenomena as accurately and fully as possible (Yap & Webber, 2013). Importantly, the case study is not an exact research method, but rather a research approach that frames a particular system as the topic of study (Mayan, 2009; Stake, 2005). Case studies are used in most contemporary academic disciplines, but most commonly in the social sciences (Yin, 2009). They are particularly relevant in geographical research because of their ability to "probe the soft tissue of meaning and to reveal central processes requires an intensive examination of a single or small number of cases" (Herbert, 2010, p. 75). Qualitative research is commonly used in human geography because of its capacity to "recognize the complexity of everyday reality, the multitude of influences that shape lived experience, and the importance of the spatial contexts of human interaction" (DeLyser, Herbert, Aitken, Crang, & McDowell, 2010, p. 6).

3.2.1 Case Selection and Justification

The case selected for this project was 'mature neighbourhoods of Edmonton'. Mature neighbourhoods were defined using the description in Edmonton's current Municipal Development Plan (MDP): "Edmonton's mature neighbourhoods are the neighbourhoods within the Mature Neighbourhood Overlay (MNO). These neighbourhoods are well-established and were effectively built out by 1970. These areas are primarily residential" (City of Edmonton, 2010b, p. 118). The MNO (Figure 3.1) is used in Edmonton's Zoning Bylaw to specify development regulations that pertain specifically to mature neighbourhoods, in order to control redevelopments and infill (key components of revitalization in Edmonton), so that they are sensitive to the existing urban environment. The case selection is justified by vision statements in the MDP (2010), that mature neighbourhoods are targeted for revitalization to help create a "compact, transit-oriented, livable, healthy and sustainable urban form for Edmonton" (p. 16) and to help manage urban growth. The MDP also envisions change in the current paradigm of retail provision, moving away from the development of primarily car-oriented malls, suburban big box retail, and power centres:

> A new direction for commercial development is needed to support a more sustainable development pattern… Future retail areas should be designed as transit oriented commercial development to incorporate greater accessibility, mixed uses, a higher standard of design, creation of public meeting places and activity centres and a more efficient use of land and infrastructure. (City of Edmonton, 2010, p. 55)

In support of these directions, the City approved a number of related policies through this MDP, the most relevant of which are listed in Table 3.1. Many of these policies relate to already existing or new City programs that seek to achieve policy goals (see Table 1.3).

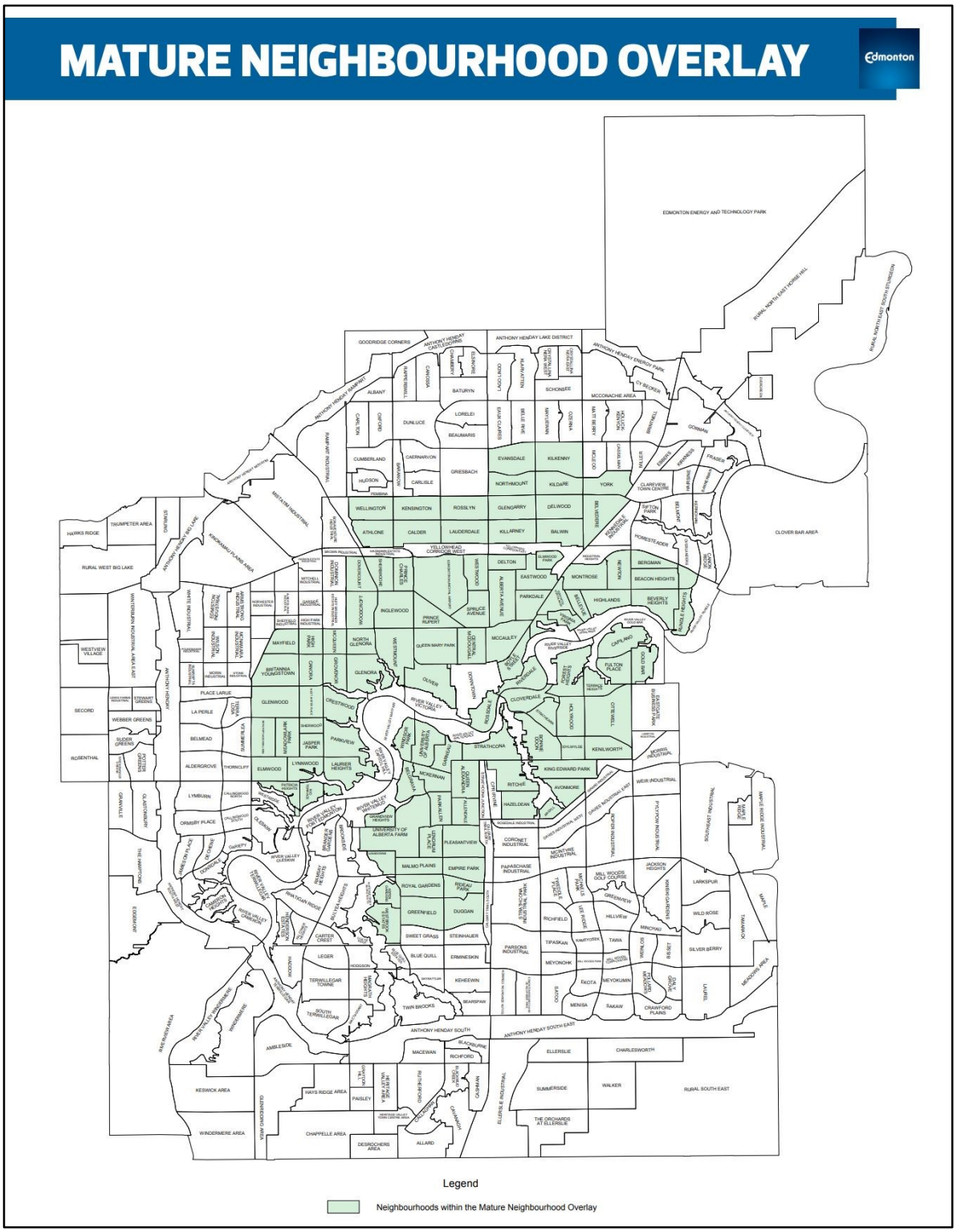

Figure 3.1: *Mature Neighbourhoods of Edmonton (highlighted).*

Source: (City of Edmonton, n.d.)

Table 3.1: Relevant MDP 2010 Policies Regarding Retail Revitalization. (City of Edmonton, 2010b)

Policy	Description
3.5.2.1	Support neighbourhood revitalization that contributes to the livability and adaptability of mature neighbourhoods.
4.2.1.1	Support neighbourhood revitalization, redevelopment and residential infill that contributes to the livability and adaptability of established neighbourhoods.
6.2.1	Develop sustainable, accessible and walkable retail and mixed use centres demonstrating high quality architecture and design.
6.2.1.6	Coordinate the redevelopment of older shopping centres and commercial strips with City investment in infrastructure
6.2.1.8	Support neighbourhood-oriented commercial corridors and local economic development initiatives through the Business Revitalization Zones [Business Improvement Areas].
6.2.1.10	Revitalize older commercial areas within existing neighbourhoods in association with the Great Neighbourhoods Initiative.
6.2.1.12	Support the revitalization of main street commercial areas in Business Revitalization Zone [Business Improvement Area] Enterprise Areas by encouraging property owners to invest in higher density retail and commercial and/or residential development.

A single case study approach was deemed appropriate because the intent of the study was to examine revitalization experiences in Edmonton's mature neighbourhoods in great depth. Herbert (2010, p. 75) writes that "[d]eep familiarity with a single case makes it easier to move continually between theoretical propositions and empirical findings; one can revise concepts in light of ongoing research, and redirect the research with evolving concepts." In order to address a common critique of the single case study – that this approach cannot provide generalizability – it is helpful to draw on a key work of economic geographer Bent Flyvberg, entitled "Five Misunderstandings about Case Study Research". Flyvbjerg (2006) contends that uncertainties about case study research have been diminishing as its usefulness in qualitative research has become better understood, and that single qualitative case studies can yield benefits that are not found in other approaches. For instance, he explains its usefulness in understanding complex social systems:

> Predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs. Concrete, context-dependent knowledge is, therefore, more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals. (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 224)

By this, Flyvbgerg suggests that while generalizability is certainly important in many forms of research, more detailed examinations of the social world require context, depth, and the identification of nuance which cannot be captured by catch-all theorems. He adds that case studies can be essential in developing sufficient knowledge about certain topics, even within research that is meant to be more generalizable, as the single case is the basis of deep, real-world learning. While wider research efforts are also important,

they may fail to understand the delicate nuances that in-depth casework and particular examples can generate. He writes:

> One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas "the force of example" is underestimated. (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 228)

Among several other benefits, Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that the narratives provided by participants are of great importance. A common case study critique is the challenge in simplifying findings; Flyvbjerg argues that narratives should not be overly simplified or summarized, for in these details lies important data that should be read 'in their entirety' (2006, p. 241). This research project follows this thinking, with the intention of engaging with the complexity of a particular situation shared in the narratives and experiences of participants.

A single case study is a fitting approach for this project because of the human elements involved in revitalization efforts, the complexity of decision-making and policy contexts, and the availability of a bounded system (mature neighbourhoods). It was chosen to allow the research to be applied and practical and to achieve the depth of analysis required to understand the challenges and opportunities associated with commercial revitalization in Edmonton. As an applied research project, the purpose included targeting particular issues and problems observed or experienced by government and industry informants in a detailed, context-specific way, such that practical recommendations could be generated – e.g. specific changes to municipal practices and policies. Simultaneously, this design was intended to provide a meaningful academic contribution.

This research did not involve a comprehensive study of how revitalization is unfolding in *every* mature neighbourhood, nor did seek to compare several specific neighbourhoods (i.e. case locations). Instead, flexibility was given to participants to discuss relevant experiences in any mature neighbourhood(s). This allowed for finer-grain elements to be sought, such as details about particular developments, retail nodes, and main streets as well as higher-level elements such as details about City revitalization programs, policies, and visions. The result was a depth of learning and richness of data regarding Edmonton's revitalization efforts.

3.2.2 Interview Design and Participant Recruitment

Data were generated through interviews with participants who worked in a capacity related to the process of mature neighbourhood revitalization. Interviews were semi-structured and were guided by the questions outlined in *Appendix A*, although additional

questions were also developed in light of the specific expertise and roles of individual participants. Semi-structured interviews follow the direction and questioning of the interviewer but are allowed to unfold conversationally, allowing for more in-depth explanations where needed, and the inclusion of other relevant information that the participant or interviewer wishes to explore (Wengraf, 2001). This means that interview questions did not always need to follow a designated order and new questions could be included when needed, as was done on most occasions.

Eligible participants included individuals in the land development industry, retailers, city planners, BIA directors, and other local agencies. As with most qualitative research, it was necessary to use a *purposeful* sampling data generation process, seeking participants who could provide the most relevant and impactful information (Mayan, 2009; Merriman, 2009; Morse, 1991; Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). As suggested by Mayan (2009), it is crucial for the researcher to adopt a purposeful approach to participant selection:

> Qualitative inquiry depends on samples that are selected purposefully… The researcher chooses individuals and contexts by asking: 'What kind of characteristics of individuals am I looking for?' 'Who can give me the most and the best information about my topic?' 'In which contexts will I be able to gather the most and best information about my topic?' The researcher then selects individuals (or other data sources) and contexts from which a great deal can be learned about the phenomenon. (pp. 61–62)

As such, selection criteria need to be developed to identify these individuals (Ritchie et al., 2003). Where participants come from several different contexts and fields, specific criteria would have to be created for each. Key informants at the City of Edmonton were identified and included because of their work in revitalization programs (Table 1.3). Key informants from the land development industry were selected either because of their professional knowledge of local retail development or because they had been involved in mature neighbourhood development projects. Similarly, directors of prominent BIAs were selected because of their specific knowledge of revitalization efforts in important areas.

The process of finding key informants was kept intentionally flexible, so that these participants could also helped identify others with important related knowledge. This is known as *snowball sampling* (Merriam, 2014; Ritchie et al., 2003) and several key informants in the development industry and City of Edmonton were identified and selected in this way. As the research process developed to identify specific revitalization issues in the real estate industry, such as financing and brokering commercial developments and businesses, several key informants in this industry were also found via snowball sampling. Participants at several local agencies were recruited because, while their work did not directly tie into revitalization programs of the City of Edmonton,

their work was closely related and required collaboration with the municipality. These agencies included those working to promote local tourism, urban economic growth, and the development of live-work spaces.

Retailers and businesses also had to fulfil specific selection criteria. These included being geographically located in mature areas targeted for revitalization as well as being locally owned and operated. Non-essential criteria included involvement in a BIA and any related City revitalization programs, such as the FIP. Several businesses were identified by the research team as particularly prominent in revitalization efforts, and they were successfully recruited.

Potential participants were approached via an introductory email, which included background on the project and an invitation to be interviewed. This was successful for most categories of participants, except retailers, most of whom replied that they did not have time. In response, a decision was made to approach retailers in-person at their place of business. This strategy was successful in attaining several interviews. In addition, several staff of the City of Edmonton and BIAs recommended speaking with particular retailers and businesses, and also suggested that we explicitly name them when requesting an interview so as to make the retailers and businesses more comfortable. This was also effective, as each of the suggested retailers became a willing participant. These participants were also approached in-person, again knowing that trying to schedule interviews ahead of time generally led to rejection.

This research was approved by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board. Consistent with the conditions of this approval, all participants were offered a written description of the research, and the option of a verbal description. In addition, all participants completed a written consent to participate form prior to the start of the interview.

3.2.3 Research Participants

Overall, 31 in-person interviews were conducted (see Table 3.2): five with City of Edmonton staff, five with BIA directors, eleven with retailers and businesses, four with land development firms, three with real estate industry professionals, and three with local agencies. This involved a total of 37 participants, as four interviews involved multiple informants from the same organizations. As suggested by Ritchie (2003), paired or triad interviews "can provide an opportunity for individual depth of focus but also allow participants to reflect on, and draw comparisons with, what they hear from others" (p. 37). In each paired or triad interview, the participant who was contacted for an interview asked to include one or two other individuals from their organization, because of the added perspectives their colleague(s) could provide. The conversations and joint reflections enabled by additional members helped provide greater depth to the collected

data. Each group participant was not labelled individually, as they were considered to be providing information together as one group. As such, these groups were each denoted with a single participant code including the letter "G" for group.

Table 3.2: List of Research Participants

Organization/Industry	Professional Role(s)	Code	Number of Participants
City of Edmonton	Revitalization Coordinator	CE-1	1
City of Edmonton	Program Coordinator	CE-2	1
City of Edmonton	Program Manager	CE-3	1
City of Edmonton	Program Manager	CE-4	1
City of Edmonton	Senior Planner	CE-5	1
BIA	Executive Director	BIA-1	1
BIA	Executive Director	BIA-2	1
BIA	Executive Director	BIA-3	1
BIA	Executive Director	BIA-4	1
BIA	Executive Director	BIA-5	1
Edmonton Business/Retailer	Owner	EB-1	1
Edmonton Business/Retailer	Owner	EB-2	1
Edmonton Business/Retailer	Owner	EB-3	1
Edmonton Business/Retailer	Owner	EB-4	1
Edmonton Business/Retailer	Manager; Manager	EB-G-5	2
Edmonton Business/Retailer	Manager	EB-6	1
Edmonton Business/Retailer	Owner	EB-7	1
Edmonton Business/Retailer	Owner	EB-8	1
Edmonton Business/Retailer	Owner	EB-9	1
Edmonton Business/Retailer	Owner	EB-10	1
Edmonton Business/Retailer	Owner	EB-11	1
Land Development Firm	President; Project Manager; Principal	DV-G-1	3
Land Development Firm	Principal/Planner	DV-2	1
Land Development Firm	Project Director	DV-3	1
Land Development Firm	Owner	DV-4	1
Real Estate Industry	Principal/Commercial Broker	RE-1	1
Real Estate Industry	Banker	RE-2	1
Real Estate Industry	Banker	RE-3	1
Local Agency	Development Manager; Manager; Vice President	LA-G-1	3
Local Agency	Executive Director; Project Director	LA-G-2	2
Local Agency	Vice President	LA-3	1
Note: *"G" in a participant code denotes a group interview.*			

Extensive and detailed interview notes were used to record interviews. For each interview, a research assistant was present to type notes, leaving the researcher to lead and focus on the conversation with the participant. Although audio recording can bring advantages such as providing verbatim quotes, there are several justifications for why a researcher may wish not to record interviews. First, recording may lead to "less candid responses" from participants, particularly regarding sensitive matters (Hayes &

Walsham, 2001, p. 268). Certain participants, despite their being provided with anonymity, may not be comfortable discussing sensitive or confidential issues if they know an audio record is being kept (Martensson & Lee, 2004). For example, in this research some participants were employees of the City of Edmonton, and they were being asked to critique their organization's practices. Similarly, local businesses who were not really in the public arena may not have felt comfortable speaking on-record. This consideration was further justified when several participants asked whether their interviews were to be recorded and were pleased to hear they were not. Walsham (1995) contends that "rough but extensive notes" can be taken during interviews instead of tape recording, as long as they are fully written-up shortly after the interview (p. 78). This is backed up by Stake (1995) who argues:

> Within a few hours of the interview, the researcher should prepare a written facsimile, with key ideas and episodes captured. For many researchers, the tape recorder is of little value unless ultimately an audio presentation is intended. Getting the exact words of the respondent is usually not very important, it is what they mean that is important. (p. 66).

The research assistant in this situation was able to take detailed and extensive notes and ask participants for clarification to ensure that the meaning was clear, even if the exact words were not recorded. Shortly after each interview, the research assistant ensured that notes were fully written up. These were promptly sent to the interviewer, who examined them to ensure that the meaning was clear and accurate. In the few cases where there was a discrepancy, albeit limited, participants were contacted via phone to clarify their provided statements. This process ensured that while interviews were not transcribed verbatim, the important ideas within were captured and verified. Non-verbatim quotes from this collected data are used in the results chapters to help 'enliven' the reported research by using *in vivo* terms (Tracy, 2013). Even if not an exact record, Tracy contends that these quotes identify "language comes from the field…rather than from the researcher's own disciplinary lexicon" (2013, p.119).

Interviews ranged from twenty minutes to two hours. Interviews with retailers were generally shorter than with representatives of other groups (usually less than one hour), due to the fact they were held in places-of-business with other demands. As a consequence, retailer interviews generally provided less information. In response, a larger number of retailers was included, to ensure sufficient data were collected. Interviews with participants from all other groups were typically between 90 minutes and two hours.

3.2.4 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using the qualitative "framework approach" outlined by Ritchie and

Spencer (2002) and performed with the help of NVivo 11 software. The Framework analytical method has been found effective for applied research and is intended to support 'actionable outcomes'. Framework is a systematic but flexible analytical process as it allows for "both jumping ahead and returning to rework earlier ideas" (2002, p. 310). This takes place within a five-stage process of Familiarization, Identifying a Thematic Framework, Indexing, Charting, and Mapping and Interpretation.

In this research, Framework was utilized as follows. The first stage, Familiarization, required becoming immersed in the data by carefully reading through interview transcripts several times and making notes in order to understand the range and diversity of the material. At this stage, the researcher was able to begin noting potential themes in the data and areas of interest. To identify a thematic framework, the second stage built upon emerging themes to create an overarching index into which data could be coded. The index was split into two main categories that followed the research objectives. The first regarded findings at the mature neighbourhood scale and the second regarded municipal practices. Within these categories, various themes and sub-themes were identified which followed both specific lines of questioning and recurring ideas in interview transcripts. The third stage involved using NVivo to code the data into identified index themes. This required careful analysis of all data in order to ensure that meanings were understood and properly categorized. Once all data was coded, the fourth stage, Charting, involved using NVivo to create two separate thematic charts, one for each of the main index categories. Tables were arranged with columns representing themes (and subthemes), and rows representing individual participants. Charting allowed data to be visualized as a whole, so that comparisons could be made across the data, and helped spark the writing of the results. The final stage, Mapping and Interpretation, involved carefully observing the charts and coded data to seek reasons for why results emerged as they did. In particular, this involved reconsidering the relevance of key concepts of this research such as automobility and path dependence, which are presented in the discussion. The process of data analysis was kept flexible; for example, while indexing the data, the researcher stepped back to identify new parts of the thematic framework as they became apparent. This is consistent with (and facilitated by) the Framework approach.

3.2.5 Rigour

Rigour in qualitative research can be attained through various strategies that help verify the findings and provide trustworthiness. This research incorporated several verification strategies that can help provide rigour (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Mayan, 2009). The researcher used *responsiveness* to be open to the data, allowing new ideas to emerge and to drop ideas that prove less important. For instance, automobility was presupposed

to be the leading challenge in this research; however, data supported this in fewer instances than was expected, and so automobility was reconfigured as one type of path dependence in this research, rather than the key theme. *Purposeful sampling*, as described above, was another way that rigour was sought. *Prolonged engagement* was also used, which involved spending sufficient time in the field to make observations. This was used on an ongoing basis, for example, when a City staff member involved in the CSP (who declined to be a participant), generously donated time to tour specific corner store sites and provide introductions to involved businesses and property owners. Data were also verified by including a variety of separate groups with differing relationships to revitalization. For instance, identifying areas of overlap in the accounts of city officials and local retailers allowed for greater confidence in the data. Ultimately, this research provided an in-depth look at mature neighbourhood revitalization in Edmonton, that aimed to identify an array of issues pertinent to this context.

Chapter 4 Results Part I: Municipal Scale Barriers

Creating and managing urban space is layered with the complexities of past decisions, present conditions, and future considerations. Intervening to create spatial or operational changes is challenging, as practices and complex values that guide decision-making may become strongly established in both government and society. Resulting path dependencies may contribute to the maintenance of the established or expected way of doing things even as intentions for change exist (see Section 2.3). As seen in this research, powerful barriers to change may emerge that must be overcome if desired improvements to urban form and practices are to be achieved.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the results of this research. These draw upon participant interviews to illuminate the challenges of revitalizing Edmonton's traditional retail and commercial areas. Chapter 4 describes challenges and opportunities related to retail and commercial tenants, property owners, and mature neighbourhoods as a whole (Objective 1). Chapter 5 more closely examines the City of Edmonton's revitalization efforts and governance practices, uncovering some observed impacts as well as challenges encountered (Objective 2). Overall, an assortment of barriers and opportunities are presented that prolong established practices, values, and urban form, even as a society places increasing priority on sustainable forms of urban development.

4.1 Mature Neighbourhood Experiences

4.1.1 Community Contributions: The Value of Local Independent Business

The relationship between local neighbourhood businesses and the local community emerged as an important theme in this research. It was found that mutually beneficial relationships between local businesses and the community may provide the foundation for local, context-specific, bottom-up revitalization at the level of the individual retailer, retail node, or neighbourhood. Participants emphasized that businesses can have meaningful impacts on the community, both within localized areas and across wider geographic regions. At times, great impacts are found in the promotion of a certain culture or subculture, such as when a niche music venue opens and caters to its community. The owner of a live music and entertainment venue provided such an example; his popular downtown location was expropriated for the construction of a transit line and his business relocated to a different mature neighbourhood in which he would have to create a different environment to be viable. As he explained:

> *What does [my business] bring? Live music or arts entertainment that is more underground. These venues need to be closer to the heart of downtown to access the more artsy clientele, but now that I've had to move, I'm going to focus on this neighbourhood. In this area, it's hard to find something for live*

> *entertainment, as there are very few places that have the same zoning as our previous location. Due to this and differences in location I can't really replicate the atmosphere of the old venue. So, I want it to really be a community-minded venue. I want to find artsy people. I want to make sure, for the sake of the community, that it's not as loud or obtrusive as the hookah bar that was there before. Alberta Ave is gentrifying and residents need a place to go, to socialize, to meet.* (EB-8)

Similarly, a developer wanting to build 'something really cool' in a struggling neighbourhood discussed how forging a relationship with the local community contributed to not only his development's local acceptance but helped determine what exactly he wanted to create. He explained:

> *I did loads of community outreach, which is what made it newsworthy. It also helped bring the community on board with the project… In the future, I want to create a community park on the other vacant piece of land, hopefully with a skating oval and a Transcend Coffee stall for people to warm up. A good summer space for festivals and markets. Also, we're creating a private room upstairs that groups will be able to use for charity work and fundraisers.* (DV-3)

Though the effect of these two businesses on the communities and cultures of their neighbourhoods remains to be seen, a particularly impactful business can certainly be a key resource in the revitalization of a community. As suggested by numerous participants and observations, an exemplar of such a business in Edmonton is the Duchess Bake shop on 124th Street. The combination of the Duchess' high quality product and strong relationships with neighbours and the local BIA allowed them to be a leader in the revitalization of 124th Street:

> *Places like the Duchess create a catalyst effect. They are a magnet for others wanting to be close to excitement. They don't increase local rents much, if at all, but ensure successful leasing. It is energizing to the neighbourhood because of the perceived value of the business. Together with the 124th Street Art Galleries, the place became conversational. These places shaped the conversation of what makes 124th Street valuable.* (RE-1)

Participants from locally-owned businesses were unanimous in showing interest in, and recognizing the value of, relationships with their local communities. The success of their businesses was contingent on their community relationships. One participant from a business that had been located on the same main street for almost 40 years attributed some of his success to the relationship that had grown between his company and the community. He explained that his community had transcended neighbourhood boundaries relationships to even include people from outside the Edmonton area:

> *Part of our success is due to being established and at this location for a long time. But, we don't spend a lot on advertising, maybe because of the concerts we do. We sponsor a music program on CKUA [radio station]. We like to put on local concerts. I have my own band which performs in local venues and [my son] and I also do shows. We also do music in plays with Métis dancers.* (EB-1)

Other business owners elaborated on their own similar values:

> *I think that every café or business I build needs to be distinctive. It would have been simpler if I rolled out [my original business] again and again at different locations, but this does not build community engagement, nor a customer base from within the community. The residents and customers didn't want a corporate store feel. They wanted brand engagement, a space unique to their community – that is, a building or business made for their community.* (EB-7)

> *When my father originally started the business, he wanted to create a gathering space like a piazza, similar to what you'd see in Italy. I eventually figured out what I loved about my job was helping and growing people – running the store was a great choice for me. Small businesses and these commercial areas are gathering places that bring a sense of community and a sense of pride. There is an inherent value.* (EB-10)

BIA directors also spoke of the important role that businesses played in the vibrancy and cultural diversity of their areas, through the promotion of cultural identities, creation of public gathering spaces, and the importance that community played in sustaining these areas. For example:

> *Businesses talk to each other, those that talk and interact with one another are more successful and have community protection. It also creates a sense of community and builds up the community… Our BIA values cultural diversity as it is a major part of our neighbourhood. Losing an area like this would lead to inability to promote Canadian values. The linguistic duality that we promote would be lost. This is only possible by being inclusive to all communities. The French community can do this. It can make a social and political statement to all Canadians. It can be started with a grassroots initiative… A BIA cannot work independently of its local neighbourhoods and communities, they are in sync. Build a strong local economy by creating a local sense of community.* (BIA-2)

> *[Vibrant retail areas] are culture and city building spaces in terms of public spaces and creating places where people can meet. They are sharing and creative places where people can exchange ideas. Cultural places, gathering spaces, community locations. Places like Whyte Avenue are not like a sanitized mall, where all they are trying to do is get something from you from an economic standpoint. Streets go back to when cities were first formed. They led to the exchange of ideas and culture, and these things grew organically. In contrast to a sanitized mall. On the street or neighbourhood you see something new every day, such as a busker or an old friend. It all comes back to culture and community.* (BIA-3)

City staff also identified the community contributions of local businesses and neighbourhood retail areas in spurring the revival of neighbourhoods, attracting younger generations, and providing benefits to the city's reputation and image. They also recognized the amenity value that local businesses offer to neighbouring residential areas: proximity and convenience to residents, which align with the City's investments and policies to create walkable neighbourhoods. The following statements from City staff highlight these points:

When businesses become empowered, they tend to create a movement themselves. You start to get anchors in a community, which in turn brings in more businesses and cascades development. This is starting to happen in my area… Small businesses make communities vibrant… Small businesses provide an immediate benefit to the surrounding residents. It improves the quality of life of individuals. These small businesses are usually accessible and help to promote walkability within the community. (CE-1)

In most neighbourhoods, people gave up on these small commercial areas. Some still have given up despite the general revival in perception that these places are important. The new generation has greater expectations of what retail looks like. People are committing to neighbourhoods like 118th [Avenue], with more people taking an interest in city planning and walkability than before. (CE-2)

Neighbourhood commercial areas, yes, they have value. Policy is leaning towards having our retail needs within walking distance. We need to be looking at how to make the purchase of a litre of milk affordable at a neighbourhood store and not detrimental to the store owner. (CE-5)

[These areas] are contributors to the city's reputation and image. To attract and retail talent, people who want to live in Edmonton, and spend outside dollars in Edmonton. BIAs are aspiring areas – gathering spaces where people experience what Edmonton is. You bring people from out of town here. There's value solely from a community perspective. It's part of who we are as a community. They provide links and places that people go through to go home. They can access services on their trips. (CE-3)

Other participants shared similar ideas regarding the importance of these places to neighbourhoods and the city as a whole. For instance, participants from local agencies described improvements to quality of life related to main streets and neighbourhood shops. They also identified these places as venues for public cultural gatherings and the development of a sense of community. For example:

These places expose visitors and residents to the different flavours of the city… These places improve quality of life. Our goal is to leverage the festivals and events we put on to create a help build a continual vibrancy in these places. Part of it is the human-scale relationship that is made possible… There is such a better lifestyle when you can walk to work and the community is better engaged in downtown places. Yet in suburbia it is harder to interact with people. Simple things like every community should have a grocery stores and coffee shops. (LA-G-1)

The value of a successful place comes from the fact that it makes humans feel safe and good about where they are. One example is Whyte Avenue with the arts regeneration. What the arts do is bring the human aspect back to communities. Artists move into a community when the economic situation is bad. Artists tend to go to lower income communities and they eventually make the community attractive. Events such as Arts on the Ave and Kaleidoscope create an energy from all the people at these events. It makes people want more of these events, or to have a similar event in their community. When artists bring a vibe or feeling to a community, it brings in more economic investment into the neighbourhood from municipalities. Neighbourhood businesses also benefit and thus more investment is added to communities. (LA-G-2)

Some felt that the relationships that places such as Whyte Avenue had with the community were changing as local independent retailers were being replaced by national chains or closing down and leaving vacancies, especially as rents rose. However, local retailers were seen to provide a passion for their local areas that chain stores could not and so the loss was seen as significant. For example:

> *Small business owners tend to live in the City and give back to the community. These owners also tend to care about the community more… Chain stores don't have a problem dealing with high rents and are slowly killing the area… This is why affordable rents are so important. As of now, small business can't afford the rents. Family-run shops that are still open on Whyte Ave are only able to stay open because they love what they do and are passionate about it. It's not as much about the money for them. Franchise owners aren't as passionate about the area. You want business owners that are local so that they are more invested and tied to the community… One must remember that there are so many factors that go into making a community a community.* (EB-G-5)

> *If independent stores were to disappear… stores like this open people up to new things, they may never have considered before.* (EB-6)

The pair from EB-G-5 explained the value of community to businesses by describing how local businesses could work together to support each other. They gave the following example:

> *There used to be little book stores all around Whyte, with their own niches. Now only seven out of twelve remain. The stores tended to work together and help each other out.* (EB-G-5)

One participant from EB-G-5 provided a pamphlet created in 2012 by this informal coalition of book store owners, titled *The Guide to Independent USED and NEW Book Sellers In and Around Old-Strathcona, Edmonton*. Though groups like these are rare within the city, the opportunities to work together with nearby competitors to grow in success is seen as a valuable aspect of local, independent businesses. These participants expressed sadness that five of the businesses in the pamphlet had been crossed-out, as they had gone out of business. To them, this diminished the character and sense of community in the neighbourhood, and the capacity of other book stores to succeed.

These findings illustrate strongly shared values for commercial retail areas that foster a sense of community with local independent businesses at the centre. There is a recognition of an interplay between different community actors, of which each can contribute in different ways to the successes of others, whether that may be a local community supporting independent business or independent business supporting vibrancy and sense of place in a community.

4.1.2 Urban Decay

The intentions for the revitalization of commercial retail areas in established neighbourhoods of Edmonton arose, in part, due to observations of urban decay by communities and the municipality. Not only can urban decay decimate a formerly flourishing community, it can also significantly undermine efforts to improve the urban condition through negative externalities. Urban decay can take the form of increased rates of crime, drugs, poverty and can be readily visible in the boarding up of homes and shops or proliferation of pawn shops, cash-loan style businesses, political offices and other low-rent seekers in a community. As Edmonton's suburban trend developed from the 1960s on, neighbourhoods and main streets within the core of the city and old suburbs began to face downward trends. Areas such as Whyte Avenue, 124th Street, and 118th Avenue began showing significant states of decay in this period. This decay has contributed to ongoing local stigma, based on perceptions of dangerous and undesirable spaces. This challenge has been felt by businesses in some of these areas, for example:

> *The image of 118th Ave is improving, but a lot of people figure it's still a mess… There is a stigma that 118th Avenue is still a bad area. People still have a stigma about having to come down to this area. There are still a few street people and addicts along 118th. They sometimes come into the store, which makes customers uncomfortable. These individuals will be asked to leave the store or will be followed around. But this is a problem that happens everywhere in the city. It's not an issue exclusive to 118th.* (EB-11)

> *We ended up putting steel bars on the windows. Before this, we had regular break-ins with instruments being smashed or stolen. The bars on the windows help, as we've only had one minor break-in since they were added… There are still prostitutes along the street [118thAvenue], but it's not as bad as before.* (EB-1)

> *There has been a change in the vibe of Whyte Avenue. When you walk around in the winter and drop into a store to warm up, you either find a lot of businesses are not open, or that many buildings are vacant. A lot of businesses have closed on Whyte Ave. Many of these were locally owned, quirky independent stores.* (EB-G-5)

Speaking with a city-wide perspective on the relationship between urban decay and tourism, one participant working in Edmonton's tourism sector explained the following:

> *For the vibrancy of the city, if you have too many neighbourhoods that are run down and tired, this is not a good image. If you have vibrant neighbourhoods, that is a good image to put out for the city…People visiting Edmonton feel that there is a lot of work to be done in the core.* (LA-3)

Although vibrancy itself may not always be in opposition to urban decay, as culturally diverse and unique displays of community ties are often observed in challenged locations, each of the above comments represents the issues that negative perceptions can bring. Perceptions of crime and disorder – remaining even after revitalization efforts

have taken place – may lead businesses, consumers, and investors to avoid areas such as these. As EB-11 noted, this type of crime and decay can be seen in various areas of the city, not just along places like 118th Avenue, but negative perceptions remain because of historical issues in this place. The addition of barred windows by EB-1 may certainly provide an ad-hoc solution to theft that protects the individual business in the short run, but may also contribute to the perception that an area is not safe and requires additional forms of security. Solutions like these remain patchwork in nature and neglect the overall problem of perceived and real security threats that exist in these areas.

The growth of businesses such as massage parlours and cash stores was discussed by some participants, who recognized the negative impacts that these outlets brought, but understood them as symptomatic of rather than reasons for decay. A participant working in the commercial brokering industry spoke about the evolution of these outlets as part of the cycle that neighbourhoods may go through. Most importantly, the participant alluded to the challenges of concentrated urban decay, when businesses like this cluster:

> *Massage parlours and cash stores have an obvious impact – they are part of the evolution of a neighbourhood. The 'undesirables' determine the patrons of an area. They want to be by similar businesses to draw in the same demographic. They become uncomfortable when nice things come in next to them – this isn't their neighbourhood anymore. Sometimes they can co-exist but not if they stand out, for example with big, blinking lights. For instance, above Corso 32 there is a massage parlour [a brothel], but it doesn't stand out.* (RE-1)

BIAs have played a role in combating signs of urban decay. Several BIA directors who were interviewed spoke about the changes in the type of people moving into their areas. For instance, BIA-1 spoke about the challenges brought about by the homeless population that was being driven into her area due, she perceived, to an increased police presence downtown, noting that she and other BIA directors have spent a lot of time working on related issues. For example:

> *There was a naked homeless man urinating on a hair salon. We spend so much effort trying to care for the homeless population, we also need to care for the small businesses. The [hair salon] owner could lose customers and end up on the street herself, so she had little regard for what happened to the man. She wouldn't care if she saw him dead in the parking lot. The businesses like these need improvements so that they can be welcoming for consumers.* (BIA-1)

> *We have an issue with vagrancy and youth crimes in the area. There have been increases in violence, breaking and entering. It has to do with a new breed of people moving into the area. It's not due to the youth shelter.* (BIA-2)

There was general consideration that while the City should be helping more in these areas, BIAs had a greater ability to deal with the problems as they were happening. BIA-1 brought together over 30 businesses to work towards solutions to homelessness issues

in their area, resulting in the donation of an ambulance to be used by Hope Mission, and a small education campaign on handling an issue when it arises. They also undertake monthly walkabouts to check for derelict buildings or graffiti, which 'the city only does once a year'. BIA-1 was impressed that BIAs were more proactive in combating urban decay than the City, whose measures she saw as overly reactive.

One City of Edmonton staff member involved in revitalization efforts in one of the city's most decayed neighbourhoods linked the challenges of achieving street vibrancy to urban decay in the area but framed the issue around poverty rather than solely its visible signs (e.g., derelict properties, graffiti, etc.). This participant asserted that challenging poverty was the way to create vibrancy in the area, but recognized the complexities and large scale of this problem. She explained:

> *I have the most difficult area to contend with. The area has 31 social agencies out of a population of 5,500. A quarter of these social agencies deal with mental health issues. For the issue of poverty, you can use influence and try to reduce the issue, but you can never eliminate these problems. We have tried to get transient individuals to use the housing we have available, but sometimes these individuals don't want to be a part of the system. Poverty is a big issue. People don't have to go hungry. For example, we can feed people through the food bank, but sometimes this method is not acceptable. In Ontario, they give out gift cards to allow less well-off individuals to purchase food products that they want. This approach is much more dignified than having to go to the food bank. We also have a lack of public washrooms in the area that would serve the transient population. Businesses also don't allow the transient population in.* (CE-1)

Several City staff members also spoke about urban decay issues and how the City worked to combat them. They suggested that the problems had little to do with a lack of effort and investment from the City, but rather that investments and efforts were needed in many places. She said:

> *Historically, these areas [BIAs] were dumpy neighbourhoods, so only the worst ones would get a huge revitalization project. It was important [in the recent budget] to ensure that not only the worst areas got resources and funding. In the 2015-2018 budget, there is money for places like 124th and Whyte Avenue which haven't gotten funding in the past because they were able to handle themselves effectively enough on their own.* (CE-2)

Regional shopping centres, heavily encouraged in Edmonton and many cities during the post-war period, have also experienced the impacts of decay as newer forms of retail emerged, such as power centres and e-commerce. While this is an alternative type of decay – as malls are privately-owned and internalized retail developments – they provided forms of pseudo-public space for some residents of surrounding neighbourhoods, and thus some public benefit. Their demise has meant losses to many of these neighbourhoods, as retailers closed or moved out often to suburban areas.

While most participants did not comment on regional shopping centre decay, one City staff member noted:

> *There is improvement at some scales, yes, but not at others. Our large-scale regional malls are far worse than other cities. We allowed regional malls to die and no one has paid attention to them yet. They have tried to reinvent themselves unsuccessfully. For example, Capilano Mall has tried to reinvent but has not served the neighbourhood, instead trying to hook in shoppers who would have gone to Sherwood Park instead. The interior and food court was dying but it was a major seniors gathering place. The mall got rid of these amenities for seniors and so they don't come there anymore. There should be a city planning role in that scale of commercial for this reason.* (CE-5)

A BIA director mirrored the comments of CE-2 in relation to his own district. He believed that the City stopped helping and funding his area for many years. He recalled a quote of Mayor Don Iveson who called his area and others in the same situation 'victims of their own success', as when moderate improvements were observed by the City, the funding of programs for the area was lowered. This meant that some of the progress that had been made on places like Whyte Avenue was not continued despite being insufficient and incomplete. As CE-2 noted, the recent renewal of investment signifies the City's recognition of the importance of not only investing into areas that are in the worst states of decay, but also neighbourhoods and main streets that have seen moderate improvements in order for them to continue to see progress.

4.1.3 Property Challenges

Some of the issues of urban decay such as high vacancies and empty lots were tied to the practices of land and building owners, their formal relationships with the state, and social relationships with their local community. While the ownership of private property often elicits a sense of formal exclusive rights over land, other responsibilities are typically more implicit, but remain extremely relevant. These include social responsibilities that are formalized through engagement with the state and law, such as the paying of taxes or compliance with zoning ordinances, and more informal responsibilities such as not causing external harms to neighbours (negative externalities) by allowing buildings or land to decay, or not using buildings for activities seen as undesirable by the community. These findings show that property relations between the state, landowners, tenants, the neighbourhood, the local BIA, and other businesses in the area have a significant effect on the ability of a neighbourhood to implement desired improvements and changes in places experiencing urban decay. Property owners who were disengaged from their buildings or parcels and neighbourhoods had negative impacts on revitalization efforts, while property owners interested in 'adding value to place' could be essential agents of change.

4.1.3.1 High Rents, Vacancy, and Neglect

Many participants perceived that property owners were contributing to urban decay and forestalling revitalization by failing to maintain their buildings, allowing retail spaces to remain vacant for long periods of time, or leaving land undeveloped. When asked what was required to make communities vibrant, one developer responded that blight could be a major inhibitor. An Edmonton retailer explained that their local business community was trying to work with the City to tackle the issue of vacant and neglected buildings, because of the spillover effects on the rest of their area. However, the City response to the issue had been limited. They said:

> *In communities, blight can be created with poor commercial areas. Sometimes you just have to knock it down. Sometimes you can build up commercial nodes and find tenants later. The worst thing to do is just sitting on crappy properties.* (DV-4)

> *By the Italian Centre, there are several small businesses with a landlord that doesn't want to improve the building or hire a security guard… We [the local business community] have come together and sent a letter to the City to get a list of vacant properties. We want to take on this issue ourselves, but we haven't gotten a response from the City.* (EB-10)

> *Property owners are sometimes the BIAs worst enemy. They won't sweep or shovel their sidewalk. Curb appeal is 70% of the reason for first-time customers to visit a store.* (BIA-3)

Other participants suggested related issues, including that businesses were facing overly high rents (imparted by property owners) in places such as Whyte Avenue, which led to many retail and commercial bays being vacant. This also created challenges for existing small businesses and boutiques in these areas who were forced to make cutbacks, move to different locations, or close down. As BIA-5 suggests below, this would also lead to an increased prevalence of chain stores instead of local businesses along main streets. For example:

> *There was a study done a few years ago that said Whyte Ave was the sixth most expensive rental rate of retail in Canada. In the past, the range was $15-60 per square foot, but there's less of a range now [it is now all highly-priced]. There's more of a push for chains to come in. We have to push hard for boutique stores to remain... rents will be going up further with the new developments.* (BIA-5)

> *The food service industry often gets ruined by building rents. It is a fixed cost that drains them. There is no room to budget or really negotiate down prices. In Edmonton, from 2008-2009 'til now there has been an egotistical form of rent rates. In Edmonton, it is not uncommon to be charged $30-40 a square foot per month for rent in a high-density area. Food service businesses want to keep their rent costs to under 10%. Yet many businesses in Edmonton have rent rates that tend to be double that number at 20%. So, businesses will often try to find a way to cut 10%. This leads to cuts to staffing, or reducing staff hours, increasing food*

prices, or compromising on ingredients and therefore compromising your brand. (EB-7)

We own our own building, so we don't have to worry about rents, but rents are very high for many others on Whyte. As of now, small businesses can't afford the rents. Property taxes are a huge amount of money to owners and these usually just trickle down into the rents for businesses. (EB-G-5)

Multiple participants attributed the high rents, associated vacancies, and unmaintained buildings, to property owners who were treating their buildings and land primarily as investments, waiting to either sell off or lease out spaces at higher rates (i.e., speculating). However, as RE-1 suggests below, there were also limited incentives for property owners with leased-up buildings to renovate and improve their appearance within their neighbourhoods, as improvements would likely only increase rents and property values marginally.

In addition, accessing the City's incentive programs, such as the FIP and DIP (described in Table 1.3 and discussed further in 4.1.1.3), required interest and investment from property owners. If property owners were detached from their neighbourhoods (some lived out of town), disinterested in change, unaware or disinterested in the City's incentive programs, or even unsure about the process or benefits of redevelopment, they were unlikely to undertake building improvements. These assertions highlight the critical informal relation between property owners, their tenants, surrounding neighbourhoods, and revitalization. While improved buildings and land may not lead to significant *private* benefits for property owners, neglected buildings and land can bring down the *collective* character and competitiveness of the area. In turn, there can be shared benefits of improving depressed buildings or land. The City recognizes this to some degree through the existence of programs such as the FIP, but has not sufficiently addressed the issue of engaging problem property owners to take advantage of them. As such, for the City to improve its understanding of and take steps to address this property tension will be critical to future successes of revitalization efforts. Participants said:

Property owners can choose to either improve a building or keep it leased as is. In making improvements there will be small uptakes in rents, not the doubling of rent or a big uptick. This means there may not be enough incentive to change. Improvements may mean moderate increase in value of property and may help ensure strong leases. (RE-1)

Property owners often don't live here. They are often out of the country and have agents. We need to come up with ideas that will help property owners improve their tenant mix or take advantage of Façade Improvement [Program]. Commercial property owners often don't see the impact that they have on BIAs. (BIA-4)

Property owners that are closer in proximity to the tenants are more willing to pay to improve their buildings. Keep these businesses involved to maintain an active dialogue for improvement programs, and improving the community. There are issues with the owners being in another city. They'll just hang up the phone if the BIA tries to contact them in some cases. (BIA-2)

A lot of the older neighbourhood strip malls that haven't been redeveloped are owned by people that have had it for 40 years. The person looks at this building as something that is generating close to market rents. But he isn't looking to maximize these assets through renovations or improvements to the property. Are some people considering the land value of the property or they considering the building's worth as an asset? The older owners don't know the redevelopment process, and they don't want to go to council and have to wait for a year to get things improved. (RE-2)

4.1.3.2 Skin in the Game

One proposed method of addressing the challenges of dereliction and vacancy was to impose higher taxes on the owners of these properties. Additional taxes, according to numerous participants, would encourage property owners to promptly fill their buildings with tenants rather than leaving them empty, and to develop, rehabilitate, or sell undeveloped land. However, taxation policy in Alberta's *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) that did not allow for this. For example:

We got a hold of Winnipeg, Toronto, and Calgary to see what they were doing with derelict buildings. Winnipeg has a bylaw for it. We met with Mandel [former Edmonton mayor] and others on it. We gave them information and brought it to executive committee and asked admin to look at it. They talked about it, but it died on the vine and [City Councillor] Walters brought this up again last year. When owners have to pay money, they have to pay attention – hit them in the pocket. (BIA-4)

You should give people an incentive to develop their land. Empty businesses should be taxed higher, motivating people to either sell or develop it. (EB-10)

We tax development, yet don't tax a lack of development, where land is left idle. We should tax lack of development. (BIA-3)

As a solution to the disconnect between some property owners, tenants, and their neighbourhoods, many participants suggested to start including property owners as paying members of BIAs. Only tenants, not property owners, were permitted to be levied by BIAs; some participants perceived that this contributed to the disinterest of property owners in local area improvements. Being a paying member of a BIA would bring more property owners to the table, give them 'skin in the game', and potentially grow their interest in contributing to the neighbourhoods. BIA-1 explained that a provincial review of the MGA was in progress, which could bring the ability to levy property owners and include them as BIA board members alongside tenants. Some participants explained the reasoning behind this idea:

> *Property owners should have the responsibility to fill all their bays, that is, by lowering the rents. Land owners care about the money. The business association should consider having a levy for land owners so that they get more involved.* (EB-9)
>
> *The solution is getting property owners involved. Getting them on the [BIA] board will be good, since they will have skin in the game. Having contact information of property owners for the BIA is good.* (BIA-3)
>
> *We need changes in the MGA where property owners are part of the BIA. Property owners need to be levied even if their property is vacant. If you levy the person with a vacant property they are more likely to get tenants. In turn, for the owners to get these tenants they will utilize City resources like façade programs. Bringing the property owners into the BIA is a Band-Aid but not a full solution. The owners of the derelict buildings should be a part of the BIA and put money into it, since it is not fair for other businesses to build up the value of these areas without building owners contributing.* (BIA-2)
>
> *You need to have a levy [on property owners] and have a planner to develop a strategic plan so that progress can be measured.* (CE-1)

As suggested, the MGA review involved considerations of levying BIA situated property owners, but the provincial government ultimately decided to not make any major changes to how BIAs operate.

4.1.3.3 Incentive Programs

Taxation and other punitive approaches to challenging vacancy and dereliction were generally opposed by those involved in real estate and development. These participants considered incentive programs, such as the FIP and DIP, to be more acceptable ways of making property owners more involved. These programs (described in Table 1.3) provide matching grant financial incentives for improvements to properties within BIAs or the CSP. Specifically, the FIP provides grants for improvements to building facades, and the DIP provides grants for redevelopments on underutilised sites, promoting commercial storefront and mixed use in particular. As described earlier (Section 4.1.3.1), some property owners would be unlikely to take advantage of these programs, because they were detached from their neighbourhoods, the incentives were not strong enough (limited increased property values and rents), or just generally disinterested. However, most participants found these programs to be a success. They said:

> *The City has good programs for façade and development incentive. The grants are great and easy to use. Incentives could help persuade landowners to work with land.* (DV-2)
>
> *The Façade Improvement Program is one program that has made a huge difference. In Chinatown this has made a huge difference in the community.* (CE-1)

The Façade Improvement Program and Development Incentive Program are both excellent. (BIA-1)

As you go down the street, there are so many stores that have utilised the Façade Improvement Program. The BIA still gets a few new businesses using it every year, it is ongoing. But, the development incentive was halted. There's no new funding. (BIA-3)

The City inventive to do façade improvements is an underappreciated incentive. It's a good attempt at working with properties and tenants to fix up buildings with a shared cost. (RE-1)

Critically, as noted above, these incentive programs operate on relatively small budgets and the DIP had run out of money during the time of interviews, requiring staff to go to City Council to request more. Limited funding is likely to be an ongoing constraint for these programs. In addition, these programs attempt to address problem properties by sharing the cost between the public (through tax dollars) and private owners. They can be considered an innovative solution, because, as discussed, the conditions of buildings can have externalities (both positive and negative) for surrounding areas. Without such incentives (and in the absence of punitive tax measures), it is likely that many decayed or vacant properties would remain so.

4.1.3.4 Adding Value to Place

Certain property owners and developers could be encouraged to invest in their buildings to help improve the community but needed to maintain profitability in doing so. DV-2 and DV-3 were both developers who placed importance on improving neighbourhood conditions and had taken advantage of City incentive programs in this way, but instances of this type of community-centric investment were uncommon. However, it was thought that these developments had the ability to spark significant neighbourhood improvements, especially when motivating similar improvements by other nearby property owners. Participants said:

As a developer, I get excited about adding value to a place. This is likely not going to change other for people who don't have the philosophy, without added incentive… We like to look for underutilized sites. If we can take buildings that aren't reaching their full potential, there's a potential for investment. We do an evaluation of the building and the surrounding area... We operate differently. We aren't afraid of getting things with hair on them or things that are unorthodox… We find existing buildings and retrofit them in ways that can add a lot to the neighbourhood. These established areas are way more resilient, so the location of our work is highly important. (DV-2)

Property owners don't take care always. Beljan Development, who did the Limelight Building on 124th Street, is different. They're doing work that fits the context of the neighbourhood. (CE-3)

DV-3 further illuminated the differences between typical developers and those interested in their affect on the surrounding neighbourhood. He was a first-time developer was planning to build a mixed use development in the middle of a community, on an unused piece of land he had purchased. Rather than focusing on this return on investment, he was interested in creating something valuable and unique for the area. He, importantly, suggested that "*The returns will be fine in the long-run as long as I manage to create something unique*". However, most developers or property owners would not share this frame of thinking because they wanted shorter-term projects with less expense, risk, and larger returns. In addition, RE-1 described several examples where property owners showed interest in their neighbourhoods and still managed to be financially successful. They said:

> *I don't consider myself a developer – more of someone trying to build something with character. I looked around the city for places to develop. Transcend loved the idea of moving out of their warehouse, so we teamed up. After a lot of searching, I found out about unused land in the Ritchie area. It's a brownfield that was reclaimed by the owners in the 1980s. I've spent time in Denver and Portland and really wanted to recreate the neighbourhood effect I saw there. Developers usually think about return on investment. I was looking at a longer-term view of the area. I don't want to be cheap in the short-term – I've invested a lot of money. The returns will be fine in the long-run as long as I manage to create something unique. People like the owners of the Mercer are really not about instant profit. That's why they've managed to create unique, urban-style businesses. It's about what you value: cash return versus building something really cool.* (DV-3)

> *The High Street area is an interesting development by a local entrepreneur, Bill Butler. He is not going to replace tenants with more valuable tenants, he's going to have a similar type of tenant always – the community has a relationship community with these businesses. He's not going to try to add value – not a lot more people are going to be living there nor are many more going to be driving through… Neighbourhood commercial can be done well… The Wheaton family initially bought Crestwood Centre with the Deluxe Burger Bar… The owners have a loyal relationship with the neighbourhood. At the Lynwood Centre by Beljan Development on 149th street, the previous owners didn't aspire for it to be better. Now it's being improved by better owners who have interest in the neighbourhood, although if you are already leased up you may only make a small percentage increase in rents after fixing up.* (RE-1)

4.1.3.5 Tenant Spaces

Another theme that emerged from the data was the gap between the demand for and supply of properties of an appropriate size for small businesses. A number of participants believed the overly-large size of commercial spaces that landlords were making available was a reason that businesses were not able to find spaces to locate within the city. It was suggested that the newer generation of businesses, held by younger entrepreneurs, were seeking smaller spaces with lower rents to locate their shop or service in, and that landlords were not yet adapting their buildings to suit this demand. As many

respondents thought, some property owners would rather wait on an empty commercial space than lower its lease rate or change its form, unless market vacancy rates went much higher. Certainly, this could further contribute to localized vacancy and decay by way of a negative externality. One business owner (EB-7, below) emphasized how a small number of businesses - those, such as himself, who were willing to take on a challenge - could find ways to work within very small spaces, which would also enable them to pay smaller leases. Yet, the market for such spaces was limited. For example:

> *There aren't enough spaces for small businesses within the city. Having small spaces would be good for start-ups, as rents are based on the square footage of a space.* (EB-G-5)

> *We need to start designing spaces so they can work for smaller things like coffee shops. The challenge of smaller tenants is that they don't need the 1500 square feet.* (DV-2)

> *It would take an 8-10% vacancy rate in the city for building owners to start putting up walls to make smaller spaces for businesses and lower rents. The current 4% vacancy rate is not high enough for them to do this. Only a small percentage of these owners are interested in creating these community places… Developers need to realize they can make more money renting places out then sitting on 10 to 12 thousand square feet of retail spaces… The property owners effectively pay the property tax which is now rolled together with the business tax. Ultimately, the leasee pays this tax.* (LA-G-1)

> *The space that we decided on getting was really unusual since it was only 195-square feet. Not many spaces that are available in the city are that size. There's not much interest from business owners for spaces this small. I looked at it as a challenge. It's harder to build a business in a 200-square foot space than a larger space because any errors would have a greater marginal impact on a smaller space than a larger one.* (EB-7)

4.1.4 Increasing Density

Some participants considered the density of nearby residential populations to be crucial to the success of retail and commercial areas. They believed that more residential density was necessary to reinvigorate Edmonton's main streets, by generating a greater mass of street users to support businesses in the area and contributing to a more social, walking-friendly environment. These participants included several land developers who suggested that insufficient local populations led to the creation of destinations rather than self-sustaining communities. In this situation, businesses depended on visitors to the area, rather than those living in close proximity. Whyte Avenue and 124th Street were the prominent examples of places considered to be destinations rather than self-sustaining, mixed use communities. Participants suggested that destinations would need to have certain anchor stores and potentially an overall theme in order to survive. The following quotes exemplify these findings:

> *Only a few [main streets] work because parking is difficult, it is hard to access, and there is not enough density to support it off walkable traffic alone… But people will go out of their way to park at the Duchess [on 124th Street].* (DV-G-1)

> *The commercial corridors need to be regional destinations to survive right now, so there is marketing going in that direction. 124th has become our higher-level food destination. 118th is trying but struggling to become an arts destination because there is no money in it.* (CE-5)

Others discussed that the design of some main streets in Edmonton was non-cohesive, as there were breaks in the retail wall in which other land uses such as free-standing apartments and houses sat. They suggested that these streets could not perform as very walkable and successful main streets, as the public would be more likely to drive to a particular pocket of businesses and leave, rather than being attracted to walk to other businesses further down the line. It was thought that more successful main streets would involve more fine-grained, continuous pedestrian experiences without unnecessary breaks. One BIA director spoke of a cluster of residential apartments that separated sections of his retail street. He explained:

> *There are many multi-residential facilities in existence or being developed, and developers need to understand the need to create more commercial space to support the larger density of people… We also don't want to abandon blocks in this district. I want to create a seamless experience* (BIA-2)

Main streets that function as destinations require the area to be designed for commuters. This, in the eyes of some participants, meant that there was an tension between the level of density and availability of parking. Several developers agreed that with the majority of main street users travelling to these areas by car, parking availability would have to be sufficient or the success of businesses along the strip could suffer. This sentiment happens to align with the cyclical concept of automobility, wherein auto-oriented infrastructure is necessitated by auto-oriented design of urban form and related societal practices. Participants added that denser residential environments would allow for greater business successes without as great a need for parking.

4.1.4.1 Mixed Use Development

Figure 4.1: *The large surface parking lot of the Brewery District.*

Source: Author.

Figure 4.2: *An example of raised pedestrian crosswalks at the Brewery District.*

Source: Author.

The development of Edmonton's new Brewery District provides an example of the tensions that can exist in creating mixed use spaces including retail, while trying to balance parking needs. Opening in 2016, the Brewery District was built upon the long-unused and historic Molson brewery site. This large commercial and retail development

in the Oliver neighbourhood is directly adjacent to Downtown. Being just a few blocks from the downtown core, the site appeared to be primed for a dense, mixed use development, in line with City of Edmonton intentions of using infill to densify core areas.

Instead, its design closely imitates aspects of suburban retail development, as opposed to being an urban, walkable, and mixed use environment (see, e.g., Simons, 2016). Stores are inward-facing, turned away from the street towards a large surface parking lot (Figure 4.1). There is an additional underground parking lot with double the number of stalls as the ground-level lot. Some amenities for pedestrians were included in the design, including sidewalk spaces for restaurants to have outdoor patios, large sidewalks, and raised crosswalks (Figure 4.2). However, the pedestrian infrastructure remained incomplete, as seen in certain spots where pedestrian connections end and the road infrastructure continues (Figure 4.3).

The trio from DV-G-1 said that it was not viable to develop a street facing, main street style development at the Brewery District, as the density of residents in the area would not be enough to support it. If residential densification is key to the commercial success mature neighbourhood areas, as suggested by some participants, mixed use development can be considered a potential solution. Mixed use development refers to the integration of several uses within a development or area, typically created in such a way that they can support one another. For example, mixed use buildings include upper-floor residences and commercial offices, with ground-level grocery stores, restaurants, stores, and other services. Such developments can provide elements of density and

Figure 4.3: *An example of a gap in pedestrian infrastructure at the Brewery District.*

Source: Author.

pedestrian orientation. Areas can also be considered to have a mix of uses, for example when communities include a variety of shops, services, and commercial businesses rather than solely residences. When questioned on mixed use developments, land developers agreed upon the potential benefits of such developments. For instance, saying:

> *Great streets are commercially focused – mixed with entertainment, attract people from different backgrounds.* (DV-2)

> *The flip side on mixed use is that the mix of office tenant, residents, and retail tenants all feed off of each other.* (DV-G-1)

Other participants echoed sentiments on the importance of developing mixed use developments in communities. Several BIA directors spoke at length about the mixed use developments that they had been promoting in their neighbourhoods, as did a local agency promoting the development of live-work spaces. However, it seems that much of the praise for mixed use development was based in planning theory rather than practice. Actually undertaking mixed use development in Edmonton was considered extremely difficult. Some of the challenges related to the policy framework, for example:

> *Mixed use zoning is currently inflexible. Developers want flexibility in the execution of it so that retail can be built in the upswing, and then residential during a different time. We don't want to have to do this all in one go... Planners are ideological in that the see mixed use as only residential and retail (retail on the main floor, with residential above). There needs to be flexibility.* (DV-4)

> *Easements, servicing, and building codes are all challenges. If one parking lot were to be under [the building], there would have to be an invisible line for different users. Regulations ask for service for water, power, etc. to go individually to each of the areas, it can't be shared… Mixed use is not set up to be simple to do. You need partners, capital, and patience, which is not always possible.* (DV-G-1)

Additional challenges were tied to market dynamics. The creation of such developments is generally determined primarily by the demand of potential tenants. As many participants suggested, residential tenants are typically very responsive to price changes (i.e., price elastic), meaning that the supply (or development) of these locations is inextricably tied to the demand at different price points and potential long-term profitability for the developer. The typical resident may search for affordable housing options in dense areas of the city, rather than high-quality, high-priced developments. Further, retail tenants may prefer to locate in freestanding stores as mixed use developments can provide certain restrictive elements. These phenomena were best explained by one developer:

> *Demand for residential in these areas is tied to the market. Larger stores (established or larger businesses) are wary of these mixed use developments.*

> *The cost of residential in these areas needs to be lower when compared to downtown. In more suburban locations, it is always a fight to the lowest dollar, and so developers need to be dialed in to the business model for residential, as people mostly care about $100 lower rent in these areas.* (DV-4)

Similar sentiments were reverberated by a city planner:

> *Planners don't always see the reality. We can't have that mixed use street with 6 storey towers everywhere – there isn't enough demand in the city for it, so we need to make sure we are focusing on what is necessary. Mixed use is a challenge. Are we prepared to plan for it and implement it?* (CE-5)

The functionality of mixed use developments was also brought into question by some involved in real estate and development. One developer noted the legal issues regarding responsibilities such as shovelling snow in front of ground-floor businesses and demarcating parking stalls and fire exits for different user groups. Some of these extra costs and challenges would land with the developer and eventually trickle down to building tenants. This participant said:

> *Mixed use is a challenge. Legally, for a building with a retail bottom, offices above, residences above, someone has to operate the building properly. Residential must [should] be condominiumized – selling or leasing space. Then [the building] becomes one corporation – all people with different goals will have to work together. Someone has to be responsible for the plaza, the concrete, etcetera. Property management must manage or it will fail. There are so many residents and they can say they don't want to take care of sidewalks… There are challenges in terms of private versus public accessibility – should there be separate parking for people in homes versus bar users? If people had to share stalls, they wouldn't buy it. Residential and commercial also couldn't have the same fire exits – you can't mix the two. Adding all of these up, there are additional costs. Young consumers can't pay for this so they go to the standalone condo buildings.* (DV-G-1)

The dynamics of promoting and development mixed use development are closely tied to the contexts of individual cities, neighbourhoods, and even individual streets. As such, when asked about the difference between other Canadian cities with greater amounts of mixed use development, DV-G-1 explained that Edmonton lags behind slightly as the 'dynamics are different'. Affirming earlier comments, Edmonton was said to be a little more challenging a place to develop mixed use because of its generally lower level of density. Calgary was a given example of where density allowed for a typically freestanding Canadian Tire department store to be developed on the second-floor of a building, on top of a grocer. Similarly, it was explained that while Whole Foods in Toronto may be able to locate downtown without parking, this was not possible in lower density situations. At the same time, it was noted that developing in denser cities was more complex as there was a larger number of stakeholders to work with. This participant believed that there were not a lot of mixed use *buildings* with street-level retail and residential condominiums above in Toronto (although these did exist in certain

areas), but rather a greater frequency of mixed use *neighbourhoods* with a variety of different amenities within walkable distances.

In Edmonton, numerous mixed use infill tower developments have received City Council approvals and begun their construction over the last few years. These include the Mezzo (one block off Whyte Avenue), South Park on Whyte, Emerald Tower (on Jasper Avenue), the MacLaren (on 124th Street), and several others. Each was designed with ground-level retail and commercial space, and residential dwellings above. Although it might be expected that attracting many developments of this type was a clear win for the City, which aligned with their infill and revitalization goals, and provided proof that they were overcoming barriers in policies and processes, these developments can be analyzed more critically.

In receiving approvals for each of these developments, each development agency argued for variances to increase building heights substantially. Their reported justifications were usually that without the addition of more floors to increase revenues, these developments would not be financially profitable enough to go ahead. Because of requests for extra height, these developments have been regularly critiqued by planners and others, who have argued that they fail to take local contexts into account.

In relation, several participants also discussed sensitive density – the notion of creating density but in a way that supports current neighbourhood context, such as through similar building heights and design features. For instance, when discussing approaches to making Whyte Avenue and 124th Street successful, one developer said the following:

> *Sensitive Density. We don't need more 25-storey buildings, but more moderate mid-rise that builds the pedestrian urban context. Regulating form and height… the infill gap is the hardest to fill. We need rowhousing and similar things, but people hate it so much. Why are people so against it?* (DV-2)

Certain traits that mixed use development can bring may be desirable to planners and developers, but Edmonton's current context provides barriers to its development. Edmonton has trended towards producing infill developments at opposite ends of a spectrum: at one end is the suburban-style, auto-oriented development within an urban area such as the Brewery District, and at the other is the tall mixed use tower such as new developments along Whyte Avenue (as is discussed later in Section 6.6.2). A gap remains in producing opportunities for mid-rise, medium density developments within mixed use neighbourhoods, similar to those described from Toronto.

4.1.5 Retailer Practices

Certain retailers and businesses have the ability to contribute to sense of community in a neighbourhood and help in combating urban decay. There are complex reasons as to

why some retailers and businesses flourish, others achieve a moderate level of success, and others struggle to keep their doors open. Reasons are varied, sometimes random and based on luck, but are based on a set of factors including the neighbourhoods and buildings they are located in, their finances and funding, the product or service they provide, business experience, skill, and ideas, and the type of support they receive from their municipality.

Concerning a central contemporary challenge for retailers, several participants discussed splintering relationships with consumers, suggesting that online shopping had stopped many from coming into their stores. To some, the importance of building or retaining consumer relationships was paramount to their success, as explained by the following respondents:

> *I don't receive any walk-in clientele from the neighbourhood. This may be because the previous owner had a bad reputation and I kept the name of the business.* (EB-3)

> *The key to running a successful business is that you need to be friendly to people and have good service.* (EB-1)

In another example, some also viewed the City's role in transportation planning, including parking and transit that served their areas, to contribute to the difficulty in attaining and retaining customers. Various comments were made by business owners, such as these:

> *There's no easy way for many people to get to downtown businesses in Edmonton. People go to shops that are convenient to access. People have trouble getting to businesses downtown due to poor LRT connections with many parts of the city. A person should be able to walk a block from their home to an LRT station. Parking also wouldn't be an issue with improved LRT connections. West Edmonton Mall didn't kill the downtown; it was city planning that did it. It is an issue of approving permits to build in the southwest, instead of pushing for infill. It pushes people to be car-centric.* (EB-2)

> *There is a challenge being located downtown. We have to pay for parking. We need to maintain a flow of customers. Parking is an issue for customers. The new e-park system is confusing for them. Some have gotten tickets due to confusion with the new system, or due to confusing or incorrect parking signs related to the new system.* (EB-6)

Retailers generally spoke of the increasing difficulty of owning and operating a business. The most significant challenge came from increasing competition due to big-box retailers and online shopping. Such challenges have been widely documented in academic literature and are not unique to the Edmonton context. More pertinent to this research is the capacity of brick-and-mortar independent businesses to respond to these challenges, via innovation and adaptation. One of these factors has already been explained – the ability of businesses to grow from within their communities to serve a

very localized and contextualized demand (Section 4.1.1). Discussion of this idea will now be expanded, along with other factors such as the value of market understanding and business education.

4.1.5.1 Innovations and Adaptations

Business owners described some of the innovations they had attempted, considered, or been encouraged to undertake through City programs. Some respondents believed that brick-and-mortar retailers would have to carefully adapt their product selection to serve specific niches in order to succeed. They explained the importance of identifying what goods they would be able to sell and stocking their shelves in this consideration, for example:

> *You've gotta innovate. Small businesses need to target smaller product niches that big stores don't want to touch because there's not a large enough profit for them. For example, it costs more for really good quality shoes, which many cannot afford to pay for. Small businesses need to find niches that are less competitive, or go where there is less money, instead of trying to compete with larger companies. Small businesses also need to sell better product than their competition. We try to do it. You see it in good coffee shops these days.* (EB-2)

> *There's now a shrinkage in the greeting card niche, which we used to specialize in. People would sometimes take pictures of the unique cards we had, but they wouldn't buy them. They looked for them online. We've had to change the whole aspect of our store. We want to be more unique, with more items that are all local. The pricing for local goods tends to be on par with international goods.* (EB-9)

> *Our business has been at its current location since 1947. It's grown and changed with the times to meet the demand for products that people are looking for. We've got a lot of unique products that you can't find anywhere else.* (EB-11)

Other than just changing their products to suit current demands, some retailers discussed how they adapted their strategies for advertising and branding to try to improve consumer awareness and sales. Based on interview data, independent business in Edmonton can be grouped into two main categories according to their willingness to engage in marketing and innovative practices, and the overall sophistication of their approaches. These divergent approaches are labelled *traditionalist* and *innovative*. Some business owners were genuine innovators that made creative changes without large intervention or guidance from the municipality or others. This is best exemplified by the branding strategy of a local entrepreneur:

> *We didn't actually need to take on another project. We took this one on for branding purposes. [The building] is an integral part of Edmonton's history which would have been erased if a group looking to preserve the location hadn't bought the property. The neighbourhood only exists due to the brickyard that was here. My associates and I bought a brick building, which was not designated a historic site. Anyone could have come in and torn it down. The building is zoned*

residential and commercial which made it a good business opportunity. We opened a café and store. (EB-7)

Several other business owners were not convinced that their new forms of advertising were having any impact. Their businesses were not new; rather, they had existed for at least 10 years (regardless of whether they were the original owner). They also had received advice from either a City of Edmonton program or their local BIA on improving their marketing strategies. Each of these businesses believed that that providing a strong product was paramount to a successful business, and the impacts of advertising were minimal. The term 'traditionalists' fits these businesses. For example:

For the first 25 years the shop was open, there wasn't really any advertising. It was just through word of mouth. Now we send out newsletters, emails, and have a website. I still believe that word of mouth is better than advertising. (EB-6)

We have a website to advertise ourselves. I don't think advertising really works. It's different if you have a chain of stores that would receive a greater benefit from advertising. Advertising is too expensive and is not a good bang for your buck. (EB-11)

4.1.5.2 Market Understanding and Business Acumen

City staff, local agencies, and BIAs who had experience working with independent business owners generally believed that members of the traditionalist business group often fail to market themselves and their products sufficiently, contributing to their lack of success. In addition, these actors considered many independent businesses to lack in their understanding of the retail markets they were serving or moving into and not following simple business practices. For example:

Some small owners have to blame themselves, have to be proactive. They have to open their business every day… Usually small businesses aren't sophisticated. They are so busy running their business and staying alive that they deal with whatever issue comes up at the time. They don't spend much time on problem management, although problems come up all the time… For a small business to open up anywhere, they really have to do market research. Lots of times they don't have the capabilities to do it. They should be able to tell their story in a page and a half…Marketing has the highest impact but small businesses do the smallest amount of research on it. They simply don't know how to market. They open their doors and expect people will come and support them. (BIA-4)

Businesses have gotten lazy in terms of product, marketing, customer service, due to the economic boom. Businesses used to just have to hang their shingle and people would come. (BIA-3)

Looking at a global scale, small independent retailers are the last ones to adopt changes. These retailers looking to survive on a small street are not just stuck within their four walls. They need to market to people and the demographic they serve outside of their four walls. They need to do online marketing. (LA-G-1)

> *It is important for businesses to not just stick their sign on the door and open for business. They have to have a story and create that sense of community. They can't be humble when telling that story. That is one of the nuances of Edmontonians; we don't get out there and shout about it. For example, the Duchess Bakery has a story; they need to show off how they have the best-baked goods in the world. Businesses can't just move into an area just because it's busy, they need to tell their story.* (LA-3)

Certain business owners – typically the innovators – considered the marketing and innovation issues to stem from a lack of business skills and market understanding. Part of the solution, these participants thought, lay in the growth of a stronger breed of businesses. These sentiments were shared by several of those in the real estate and land development industries, who sometimes avoided local independent businesses due to their propensity to lack business skills. Several participants commented that many small, independent business owners lacked a sense of the markets they were trying to sell into, which was a reason that investors or developers may not want to take a chance on them. These comments came with recognition that some independent businesses did, in fact, have the knowledge and abilities to succeed. The following comments provide examples:

> *The main reason why a store fails is that it sucks. After that, trade policies and city planning contribute to the store failing, but they aren't the main cause of the store going under.* (EB-2)

> *We would like to do a development with local independent businesses…but they don't always have the business skills. We have to look for people who have already proven themselves somehow. We can't afford to fail at all for the company's reputation or the longevity of the project.* (DV-G-1)

> *How do we achieve economic viability while having unique tenants? It comes down to them being good business owners. It's a headache having smaller tenants, but there's a value to it. We try to support these businesses as much as we can…Certain small independents have a catch to them – some of them can even make a back-alley work. But the stars have to align. Things happen for a reason. We can't predict and conscript how things will fill out.* (DV-2)

4.1.5.3 Education and Incubation

In improving business acumen and market understanding, particularly for small businesses, most BIAs pointed to their own role in business education. Despite being the most common users of City and BIA education programs, traditionalist businesses placed little value on them and maintained their trust in the methods they were more familiar with. BIA directors in particular considered it part of their role to help educate businesses on their market and advertising practices and had created various programs. Each BIA considered the educational programs they had run so far to have only had limited impacts as only a few businesses had become involved. Also important was the role of

the BIA in helping business learn about City programs. The following BIAs discussed their roles:

> *We can create a branding program as a way of getting more ads on the radio. We can tell businesses when they advertise, if they do, to say they are part of [our district]… It's a cheap way of getting their name out there… Social media is huge and making a better website.* (BIA-5)

> *I had the idea of hosting a business enterprise and economic development forum, to help hold onto businesses in our area… we are going to encourage as many small businesses as we can to come to the forum. Businesses are very busy though.* (BIA-4)

> *Training is critically important. We had [staff member] from the City for a meeting around the façade program. It resulted in stores like Certified Radio and two others signing on to the program. The only stores who signed onto the program were the ones who attended the meeting.* (BIA-2)

> *We provide marketing supports through the website – our primary marketing tool. We use our hired consultants to help with social media which is cost-effective and can provide quantitative info, to an extent. We've held social media seminars for businesses, though many businesses don't have social media. We don't use radio or TV anymore. If you want to use the right media, you have to spend and release content consistently. We initially started with community newsletters as marketing and then built out from there.* (BIA-3)

Encouraging business incubation was another approach that some participants discussed regarding the development of independent businesses in Edmonton. Business incubators are companies that provide help to up-and-coming entrepreneurs and businesses. They typically provide work spaces at a low cost, connections with potential partners in the industry, and help businesses grow their skillsets. Incubators can take various forms, including being either not-for-profit or for-profit corporations. Several participants spoke about the potential value of these to the business community, but also questioned their feasibility, for example:

> *Incubators can collect people with ideas and charge them low rent. In Victoria, they have tech nodes or centres. This was created due to these areas having low rents. If you have the creative class filling up these spaces, the group is more likely to put in money into the local community, like at restaurants. For-profit developers don't take advantage of these things.* (BIA-3)

> *You have to think about the time and effort involved in creating an incubator and if it is going to be a competitive not-for-profit. If you want it to do well, you need to pay someone $400,000 to run it. Which CEO of a non-profit would take only $40,000 a year and see the actual businesses they've helped rake in hundreds of thousands?* (EB-7)

One participant from LA-G-1 who had contributed to the creation of a business incubator in Edmonton spoke at length about the growing trend in business incubation at the time. She explained:

> *Yes, there is a value to creating incubator space in the city. Startup Edmonton is renting at a 95% rate right now. There is a demand for that type of space, being around other makers. Homestead, Unit B, and Startup are three big incubator spaces that are popping up. Vacancy Hall is also a good idea. Having something like this on the street level would be great. Having these places is great, but there is still risk adversity to trying out these places. Yet, in places like Australia, these types of development are everywhere.* (LA-G-1)

One of the participants from this group then spoke about the type of incubator space that she was working on creating in her current job. The most important impact that this space had, in her view, was the ability to connect different people with different ideas in the same space and building the opportunities for collaboration and further innovation. She explained:

> *I've been working on developing a maker space. We are doing it in the building which has been empty ever since the Sobeys left. We're getting all sorts of tools, machinery, 3D printers, and so on. If you want to create a product, this will be the place to do it. You won't have to sign leases to property or buy or rent expensive machinery that you'd have to otherwise. Edmonton is a blue-collar economy, but many of these people have trouble building products. So, by creating a maker space, you can get a metallurgist to talk with an industrial designer. The point is to collaborate and create these connections.* (LA-G-1)

Findings have shown that the difficulties in finding appropriate spaces at affordable prices is a barrier to the introduction of new businesses in the city (see Sections 4.1.3.1 and 4.1.3.4). While some considered the onus of providing more suitable spaces to lie solely with building owners, others considered the introduction of supports for pop-up shops to be a way of filling this gap. Pop-up shops are small temporary retail spaces which retailers can use to test the market, build their experience, and clientele. Pop-up shops can allow retailers to use an otherwise vacant retail space from just one day at a time, to several months. Several participants discussed the idea of promoting these throughout the city, particularly by using BIAs to do so. However, BIAs also recognized some challenges to hosting pop-ups, for example:

> *It's a great idea to have these pop-ups and let businesses open up for 30 days in a community to see if things work. It gives them a chance to see if things would work, and they won't go bankrupt if they don't succeed.* (LA-G-1)

> *Landlords are usually not interested in hosting pop-ups. Every now and then we get some from other popular streets. Maybe the BIA could own a pop-up shop, but it's not allowed right now unless we had the outright cash to do it. As a BIA, we aren't allowed to take out financing.* (BIA-5)

4.1.5.4 Financing and Brokering Obstacles

Financing plays an important role in how businesses, developments, and property improvements occur. This research found that the current business climate shared by lending agencies and the real estate industry creates biases towards 1) the funding of

established chain stores over local independents or new businesses, and 2) suburban developments over developments in the urban core. The essential factors that guide these processes are risk and uncertainty, which are predicted and analyzed by lenders such as banks. Risk refers to the chance that a company will experience financial losses or fail to make enough profit to pay back funds, while uncertainty refers to the chance that that suggested outcomes will not be achieved due to other often external factors (such as in larger financial markets).

Being able to express good management skills, positive past experiences, and a strong current financial state were considered important factors for acquiring business loans. However, as explained by participants, this automatically biases financers to invest in chain-style or national businesses with financial security, experience, and generally more reputable business strategies. Consequently, small independent businesses often struggle to attain the funding they need to get off the ground. Small businesses generally have a low level of available equity or capital, biasing financers against small independent businesses. Moreover, as also explained by some participants, larger experienced businesses were more sophisticated and likely to understand the worth of their investments. Some small businesses would be unable to understand what their return on investment could be. The following examples can apply to either land development or redevelopment projects or businesses loans. It was found that the same principles apply in each. As participants explained:

> *Having a bank covenant and positive past experiences have a lot to do with how small businesses are financed. The lender wants to look at who they are and what their experience is.* (DV-2)

> *When approving a loan, the key is the business' current financial statements – looking at where they are at financially...We're looking at past results and a set of projections for their future potential…Projections are always a best guess, though…We need to judge the clients on professionalism, experience, so what they bring to the table, personnel, and management of the company. So, what they say they can pull off and what they actually can. Businesses having available equity and capital are a critical consideration in a loan. What has the guy invested into the project already? Has he has put $2 million in already?… Knowing a business has enough in the game shows they're involved in the project. If things go South know they can usually pay things back...We look at return on cost. Big developers are less likely to move ahead on a building worth $15 million that will only make back $15 million. Smaller developers are more likely to make this mistake. Big developers tend to be more sophisticated and care about ROI [Return on Investment]. Things do have to make sense financially. Or in the other case a person that has a good idea but doesn't have the finances to back it up. We will back him if he has the net worth to back his loan up.* (RE-2)

> *Bank will look at a lease, say a ten-thousand square foot lease. They will lend big money on the Rexall's and RBCs, not the small donair shops and all… The next best bakery might get a shot but the bank will give it nothing. Subway will get it because the bank loves them.* (DV-G-1)

> *If you are an established company banks treat you better. Talk about loan-to-value, they get 80/20, meaning you put 20% of your own money down to 80% of the bank's money. This is not an even playing field, if you and your buddies go in you may only get a 60/40 ratio, 40% you and 60% the bank's money. Banks look at covenants, if you have a Walmart as a tenant it is looked at more favourably. Even if the Walmart goes under they will still pay out the lease. If you're dealing with infill and bringing in more mom and pop stores, if they go belly up they won't be available to pay the rest of their lease, as they've lost everything. The choice of tenants impacts if the bank will decide to invest in infill at these locations.* (DV-4)

As the example of Subway highlights, national chains or established businesses may already have relationships with banks, financers, and investors of different kinds. Though they may develop these relationships in time and as they achieve greater success, local independent businesses are initially less likely to get funding. Several participants emphasized the value of building these relationships with banks. For example:

> *I encourage people to talk to their banker and develop a good working relationship with them. This is the most important thing. Banks don't want businesses to go under – they need to have a balanced working relationship… There is often no choice for banks [when they have to shut down a business]. Sometimes there are solutions and owners have to work harder with bankers. Bankers also have to work harder with businesses...* (BIA-2)

> *There is value with creating a relationship with a bank. A deeper relationship with a bank is good, in particular having a good relationship with the banker. Bankers in the city tend to move around between banks. There are only 6 different banks in the city so bankers tend to know each other... A lot of their clients come through referrals, such as through accountants that call the bank to refer a reputable business that needs a loan…With smaller businesses there's a lot more hand holding. They're less sure of what information they need and what they need to show the bank. Hand holding doesn't necessarily mean they won't be given a bank loan but if they come in and ask very basic questions on loans that's a red flag.* (RE-2)

> *We are all about relationships. We don't just want to give out one loan to someone. We want to have an advisory relationship with them too.* (RE-3)

Other perspectives also emphasized further challenges for small independent or start-up businesses in acquiring financing. As noted earlier, one of these issues is that established businesses with experience simply bring more certainty to banks that loans will be paid back and less chance of breaking their leases. Some banks, such as the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC), as noted in the first quote below, may be more likely to finance small businesses, but many small businesses are not aware of options like these. For example:

> *It is almost impossible for a business owner to get financing for anything other than for a proven franchise and, even then you have to prove your value. The BDC bank is different, the one I use, they're more likely to give you financing. They are almost the start-up bank of choice; they charge higher interest then other banks. One of BDC's mandates is to transition your loan to a more*

traditional bank in time. This is in your best interest so you don't have pay their 8-9% interest rate forever. No one opening a restaurant will get financing walking into a CIBC. BDC is not something a lot of small businesses know about. Getting financed comes at a cost, but BDC has allowed me to do things I'd never have been able to do otherwise. (EB-7)

It is harder to finance a start-up company in this day and age… It's not unfair it's just a reality. Not everyone can own a business… From a finance perspective, there is a difference between a national tenant and a mom and pop store. Mom and pops are more likely to break their lease. There is a difference. It all comes down to the economics and smaller stores tend not to be able to afford $30 rents [per square foot] when compared to a larger store who can afford these rents… Banks really don't want the asset [the building if a company defaults on its loan]. They don't want the pain of owning this. They don't want to take over a building or take over construction. (RE-2)

Banks have a lot of red tape. TD only lends to about 5% of proposed mortgages. They were not very easy to work with. I was buying one of the cheapest commercial buildings you could but they did not want to finance my business. So, my mortgage broker worked hard to find me a decent mortgage rate. I ended up with a high interest rate on a 10-year term, which is not ideal, with 40% down. Banks disparage against small businesses. Cactus Club went up very quickly and was probably not even zoned for a restaurant. It's easier for a big business then a smaller owner. (EB-8)

Certain retailers and new areas are easier with banks. They can sign on right away and are ready to be there for 30 years. Individual businesses can't sign so fast. How can the bank wait for the next two years before the businesses start? (DV-G-1)

While these are significant challenges to the establishment of small independent businesses – a vital component of efforts to revitalize mature neighbourhoods – this was not due to malicious bias against them. Rather, it was the nature of small independent businesses to not be as financial stable or predictable as established or chain businesses. In turn, those financing businesses were simply protecting their own investments. With the apparently innate nature of small independent businesses to be unpredictable and risky, and the resulting funding barrier being deeply institutionalized, supporting and educating local businesses to improve their marketability to financers is seen as particularly important.

The process of tenant acquisition, or commercial and retail brokering, is found to create a similar bias towards national or chain-style developments over small independent businesses. Commercial and retail brokers are hired to represent property owners and advise on what should be done with their properties. They advise on many things, such as which tenants to take on, what revenue they can achieve, what the risk in investment or cost exposure is, how long it will take to find tenants, and the costs of making building improvements to achieve larger rents. They are also hired to represent tenants and find them appropriate spaces for their businesses to locate. Echoing the sentiments of participants speaking about the challenges in achieving loans, one

commercial real estate broker added that acquiring new businesses as tenants did not bring certainty of added value for property owners, and therefore the brokerage industry typically remained biased to bring in established businesses to properties wanting to improve themselves:

> *New businesses with localized owners have no covenant or tenant strength. Putting them into a building does not add value to real estate like an established business… When trying to put a new business into an older neighbourhood, people must be convinced that it is going to be any different than before. This may or may not be the case. Traffic and population remain relatively constant. What is going to make the new tenant successful in the long run, beyond the initial buzz? There aren't many examples of new commercial within mature neighbourhoods.* (RE-1)

The challenges for businesses related to financing and brokering are evidently not solely tied to core or mature areas of Edmonton. These are likely faced by businesses throughout the metro region, and those outside of Edmonton as well. However, the key realization is that there is value in promoting local independent small businesses as part of Edmonton's revitalization efforts, as discussed earlier in the chapter. As such, the barriers that these businesses encounter reduce the effectiveness of revitalization efforts, which are already laden with complications. Discovering ways to create better financing and brokering processes for independent local businesses in key revitalization areas is likely an important part of the solution.

4.2 Summary

Many factors have impacted revitalization efforts in core and mature areas of Edmonton. As shown, when the municipality, landowners, businesses, and the community find common ground, developments may occur that positively impact communities, providing benefits to each group. This was observed in situations where development intentions included working to benefit communities and create neighbourhood character, as seen in the actions of DV-3 and Beljan Development, rather than solely to achieve financial gains. However, when developer interests are put before community interests, the impact on local neighbourhoods may not be as positive, as seen in the Brewery District, or when land and building owners allowed buildings and lots to sit vacant. The potential negative effects of a developer's decision (or indecision) on neighbourhoods speaks to the complexity of property relations; these include social connections as well as legal requirements involving the state, building owners, land owners, tenants, and the surrounding community. Because successful revitalization of a commercial area necessarily includes multiple landowners and tenants, coordination between actors factors heavily into how efforts are implemented. A narrow view of property as the right to profit maximization is likely to be an impediment to such coordination.

Densifying residential areas in mature neighbourhoods was seen as essential to ensuring the viability of retail revitalization efforts in build a large enough supportive customer base. However, infill efforts necessary to achieve higher densities have faced large barriers. Developers considered some policy regulations to be overbearing and costly and tended to promote either small-scale residential infill development like lot-splitting or large towers, with a missing emphasis on medium density, mixed use development.

The challenges for many small retailers in innovating or adapting to newer retail markets has meant that, in many cases, larger suburban forms of retail as well as e-commerce continue to out-compete retail in mature areas. However, businesses with innovative strategies found some success, while improved forms of municipal or BIA-led business education may be able to help others. Similarly, while the success of independent retailers is considered key to revitalization efforts due to the potential strength of their community connection, independent retailers often encounter challenges in accessing finance, and retail brokers are more likely to seek out national chains. While many of these variables focus on forces among the community, businesses, developers, and landowners, the City of Edmonton's efforts to revitalize have also faced many internal challenges. These are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5 Results Part II: Governing Revitalization

Actions in the community, as shown in the previous chapter, are important factors in the processes of revitalization. Non-governmental or external stakeholders are significant actors in the *implementation* of government-led efforts, and their ability to affect change through 'informal' decisions and actions is partly determined by government policies, decisions, and actions ('formal' processes). These different actors comprise the structures and processes of *governance*, or "the making of collectively binding decisions in a community" (Van Assche et al., 2017, p. 2). External stakeholders may help form, interpret, and critique formal processes, take part in implementation actively or passively, and make changes to urban space by influencing government actions or undertaking their own initiatives within the formal framework. Working to understand the importance of this formal framework and the understandings of those tasked with those implementing formal policies and processes is of critical importance. In this chapter, the City of Edmonton's actions related to mature neighbourhood retail revitalization will be examined; these actions include both formal and informal processes.

This chapter attributes many of Edmonton's challenges in the revitalization of retail in mature neighbourhoods to the structure and processes of its public administration. It is found that the City has struggled to adapt from a technocratic, bureaucratic structure into one that can effectively empower community actors and frontline bureaucrats to effect neighbourhood-scale change. Given that municipalities may face implementation challenges that sometimes have less to do with specific policies or intentions and more to do with governance processes or bureaucracy, both staff of the City of Edmonton and external stakeholders were asked about their experiences in working for or with the administration. Collecting and analyzing data on relationships between community actors (developers, BIAs, businesses, property owners, etc.) and municipal bureaucrats involved in revitalization efforts, helped to identify barriers to revitalization. The City showed evidence of internal issues that challenged implementation of and coordination between revitalization programs and participants emphasized the need to streamline various processes. This research finds that for the City of Edmonton, a complicated and bureaucratic administration is a significant restraint, affecting both government-led and community-led revitalization efforts.

5.1 Internal Experiences in City Administration

5.1.1 Hierarchical Challenges

Staff of the City of Edmonton were asked to describe their experiences and observations regarding City-led revitalization projects. A key finding of this research was that

achieving success in these projects would require some practices of the municipality to be challenged and overturned. For instance, participants described challenges in receiving permissions to test new ideas, attributing resistance to upper levels of management. According to them, upper management consisted mainly of long-time City employees who were generally, as one participant said, 'old-world thinkers'. Though a hierarchical system is generally expected in large organizations, this has had the unintended consequence of leaving front-line revitalization program workers out of the decision-making process, despite their ability to provide a more informed and contextual assessment of actions to date and ongoing needs.

This hierachy is a significant internal constraint to revitalization efforts. The persistence of signs of urban decay and commercial vacancy in areas long targetted for City-led revitalization indicates that formal policy efforts have not been particularly successful in Edmonton. This may be attributed in part to continued 'old-world thinking', suggesting a form of path dependence that limits the City's flexibility and willingness to innovate. Recall that through much of the post-war period the City of Edmonton and many other municipalities primarily facilitated and subsidized suburban development, not inner-city (re)development. Physical dependencies in the built form of cities create difficulties in undertaking infill, brownfield, or greyfield inner-city development that are not faced in developing greenfield suburban neighbourhoods; greenfield areas have far fewer barriers, including less NIMBY (Not-In-My-Backyard) opposition. Therefore, revitalization is an inherently more complicated process for mature areas in cities than ongoing greenfield development at the urban-rural fringe. Following an inflexible and dependent pathway of public practices was shown to constrain the ability of front-line municipal actors to test new and innovative ideas that cater to revitalization goals rather than to the old framework of primarily-suburban development.

Some City participants suggested that front-line staff members simply needed a higher profile within the organization. According to these participants, the deeply engaged municipal actors who coordinated and managed revitalization programs were not high enough in the organizational hierarchy to enact the changes they saw fit, nor were they given enough capacity to implement their programs effectively. This lack of capacity was, in part, related to insufficient finances and staffing relative to the goals of their programs. Rather than being able to develop these programs further, these staff members often spent much of their time dealing with more administrative or operational work. It also meant taking part in work beyond their job descriptions, such as working closely with community businesses as no one else would. It became clear that these programs were simply not the priority of the municipality, and these jobs were given to low-level staff:

The system at the City is frustrating because it's a trickle-down system. They don't include people at the lower levels in the decision-making process. They should involve people that are on the front lines to be involved in decision-making… The City needs better strategic planning. Things shouldn't just trickle down from the top. This does not allow for a good flow of information and ideas. There are a few areas in the City that could use a complete overhaul. They need to get rid of old-world thinkers, some of whom are very officious. They need to find individuals who can relax a bit and give ground to good ideas. The City needs a newer vision, they need to get rid of the old guard and be more innovative… You need people that can see the benefits of change, forecast this change, and implement it. These people need to be in higher up positions [alluding to one particular person], positions of power so that change can be implemented. (CE-1)

There is a need for operations maintenance. This shouldn't be left to [the City's BIA staff member]. He needs to be facilitating governance, doing strategic planning and economic development rather than dealing with trash and lights. There is actually now a counterpart in Transportation [Department] to handle operations and maintenance [for BIAs]. (CE-2)

5.1.2 Working through Bureaucracy

Interestingly, the aforementioned front-line City staff showed a desire to be empowered through increased specialization (or greater bureaucratization) of tasks; this would relieve them of more mundane responsibilities, such as operations and maintenance, and enable them to spend more time developing and managing their programs. Rather than entirely absolving themselves from functional City tasks (which would likely be ineffective), through the rest of their interviews, these staff showed interest in continuing to be central figures who could use internal knowledge of the bureaucracy to guide community members and businesses to the right City staff when concerns regarding operations or maintenance arose. Front-line City staff considered increased specialization of roles to be a way of helping to streamline bureaucratic processes, while ultimately providing them more time to develop and manage their revitalization programs.

These City staff already spent large amounts of time trying to work through internal bureaucratic processes. They explained that being effective within this bureaucratic organization required finding methods of knowledge transfer and coordination between different people and groups. There were several examples of these staff working to inform people from other parts of the City administration about why their revitalization programs were important, and why they required broad support from City staff. For example:

A huge amount of my time goes to pushing parts of the bureaucracy… My normal course of business is creating cooperation with other parts of the City, so trying to get other people to step up to the plate or get their stuff together. I do a lot of internal PR such as trying to get people to understand that if a BIA contacts you it isn't an annoyance, but an opportunity to get something in the City to work better. It's important to raise the level of service to get support from citizens and

the City. The City is not currently good at doing things which help itself, partially because the mechanisms for this simply don't exist… Improved communication is important so City groups can be thinking the same way. (CE-2)

Probably half to two-thirds of my time is spent dealing with city bureaucracy… It is getting easier though [because the City is recognizing the problem]. For example, to prepare to move into the new building, our branch manager has set up hotelling sites in our current office [similar to the way new office spaces were designed]. Part of the purpose of the new building is to foster collaboration between people from different departments, and hotelling is a temporary space that lets you work in close proximity to others and have places for meeting with other groups. I also worked in Transportation [Department] for a bit and it helped me build some important relationships. (CE-4)

I spend a lot of time dealing with the City to get things done that could happen quicker. Probably 80% of my time is spent dealing with bureaucracy, trying to push certain people. I go to every meeting I can to try to advocate and show the importance [of his program]. I do 'Lunch and Learns' with different areas of Administration so BIA's can be better understood. But certain people are not looking to help with new programs. They have a lifestyle that they are okay with. They aren't looking for change and they're not looking for more work. (CE-3)

In the final comment, CE-3 returned to the idea of old-world thinking discussed previously. While some City revitalization staff were keen to push forward new programs and test new ideas, others in the bureaucracy were set in their ways and simply not interested in assisting, even when their support was often important to help these programs run effectively. This further emphasizes the point that some individuals running revitalization programs were not high enough in the City hierarchy to ensure that their programs were taken seriously by other members of the organization.

Nevertheless, some leaders of revitalization programs show traits similar to the innovator businesses discussed in the previous chapter. These two groups share the desires to seek the changes they need rather than accepting and using old and sometimes outdated practices. For instance, some independent businesses used methods to develop community-support to find success, rather than accepting the general dominance of chain stores and national brands. Similarly, revitalization program leaders worked to engage and educate other internal groups of the City through efforts like 'internal PR' and 'Lunch and Learns' to try and overcome the overarching challenges of bureaucracy. This sets these individuals apart from old-world thinkers; they go beyond the 'bare minimum' required for their job, and undertake creative forms of communication and relationship development to increase the impact of their work.

5.2 External Experiences with City Administration

5.2.1 Retailers and Businesses

Business ownership and locational choices are not entirely free market ventures, although they are sometimes characterised that way. Rather, they are subject to

governance structures that formalize key elements such as incorporation, business licensing, property rights and relations, rules and responsibilities, and taxes. The importance of these structures is such that a relationship with local government is highly beneficial for a business to succeed.

This research finds that the potential contributions of businesses to revitalization (such as in providing essential goods and services to communities, contributing to placemaking, and having positive spillover effects on surrounding areas) are affected by municipal policies and the type of collaboration exhibited with individual businesses and business communities. Specifically, the City of Edmonton bureaucracy creates certain barriers or hurdles to businesses and BIAs that make it hard or slow to receive necessary City permissions, services or communications. Some of the businesses that were interviewed had experienced challenges in working with the City of Edmonton, while others had not. Several well-established businesses that had not been engaged in business creation, grown, or otherwise changed very much in many years had not experienced challenges. These businesses were located in established neighbourhoods and had existed in their locations for decades. For example, they said:

> *Working with the city was perfect.* (EB-1)
>
> *We haven't had any issues working with the City of Edmonton.* (EB-2)
>
> *No problems with the City, but probably because we've been here for so long and had all our permits done a long time ago. But I can understand why working with that bureaucracy can be a problem for new businesses. The main issues would be around parking and permits.* (EB-11)

These businesses had fewer reasons to communicate with the City than new or growing businesses or else had the experience needed to work effectively with the City and to overcome any problems that did arise. Other participants also reported no issues when first asked, but when prompted to discuss work they had done with the City, they began describing bureaucratic encounters they had faced or seen other businesses go through.

One challenge that arose was the lengthy process that businesses face in opening, which often lasts from many months to several years. Opening a business requires many time-consuming processes, including acquiring financing, finding the right locations and signing leases, creating and implementing business plans, registering with the provincial government, and creating relationships to attain or produce the products or services offered. On top of these needs, businesses must acquire a development permit from the City to approve the use of their site, ensuring it complies with zoning regulations. They must additionally obtain a business license to ensure other legal compliances including with fire, health, and building regulations, as well as those specific to the nature of their business, such as regulations around alcohol sales or the sale of

second-hand goods. Most interviewed businesses considered the process to acquire development permits and business licenses to be too slow, elongated by too much red tape, making the overall process longer than it should be:

> *At each shop, we received help from the City. At [one location], we got help from the previous operator, who told us what they did when they were in the same situation. If you have all your ducks in a row, navigating the bureaucracy can be stress-free. But if anything is off, it can be a grind and a long drawn out process to navigate the bureaucracy. Right now, it takes 8-12 weeks for a building permit. This wait time is a challenge to some businesses, especially those who don't expect it. We are going through this process again, now. In order to get a development permit, it takes three months. So, you have to wait three months to start building, then it takes 12 months for construction, so you're at 15 months. Before that, you need to get all your plans done, which is another 1-2 months. Lastly, waiting for leases to go through legal takes another six months to a year to make that initial offer and get approved. This is a dismal 2.5-year process for small businesses.* (EB-7)

> *I didn't find working with the City too difficult. Instead of waiting and losing money and my financing, I wanted to talk to the boss or manager to get some of my problems dealt with. But I guess when I wanted to meet up to discuss the issues with my permits, it was a four- to six-week wait, which tied up my money and my time. It took ten weeks to get my development permit! Things at the bureaucracy move too slow. The building permit process is also slow.* (EB-8)

Participants recognized that many businesses did not have perfect information or abilities to navigate these processes. However, it was thought that City officials handling permits did not effectively and precisely help businesses when they had issues and were instead more likely to direct them to the City's website. However, the website was not helpful in answering the context-specific questions of businesses. In cases where development officers provided more individualized support, the process became easier for businesses (as EB-G-5 notes, below). As such, participants considered it important for the City to recognize that many small businesses required more individualized support, and that this was crucial in improving processes. For instance:

> *Any time there were problems with my permit, they directed me to the website with all the forms and regulations. The response time to my questions was a week, which was a waste of my time. There was only one person that actually helped me on location when I was applying for a permit, instead of just directing me to the website. This isn't the norm though.* (EB-8)

> *Business owners don't always have a good understanding of permits, zoning, and how to get a business license. There needs to be a better website. The current one is super confusing and convoluted. I opened up a small knitting business last year. I was lucky because the City helped me through the process. They sort of individualized the process for me. This needs to be a widespread practice at the City.* (EB-G-5)

5.2.2 Business Improvement Areas

While individual businesses identified challenges of working within bureaucratic structures, BIA directors generally provided even heavier criticisms of City processes. Part of the role of BIA directors was to help their businesses in handling City processes and issues and, as such, they frequently interacted with the City to represent the interests of their businesses and the overall area. The perspective of BIA directors was also slightly different than individual businesses, as they tended to look at the bigger picture rather than more specified issues faced by individual businesses (although they usually recognized these too). Naturally, BIAs located in mature areas were also seen to be more engaged in revitalization and understanding of the overall concept than some individual business, given that the primary purpose of their role was to help promote and improve entire business areas.

BIAs described the work they engaged in, particularly focusing on their interactions with the City. It was clear that, as with individual businesses, BIA relationships with the City were very important in achieving their goals; some BIAs had greater abilities to build a proper relationship with the City than others. One BIA implied that the City did a sufficient job at collaborating with BIAs, but that the City was not capable of fulfilling all the needs of businesses. Rather, BIAs were often required to provide supports to businesses that the City could not, especially in helping navigate bureaucratic challenges:

> *The City works very closely with the BIAs… We need to be partners, collaborate, and work cooperatively with all levels like businesses, the City, residents, and then the best possible solutions can occur. We should see a level of peace between all parties… The BIA seems to help meet needs that the City can't.* (BIA-1)

> *BIAs have to be the voice of the business area to the City. Businesses will not reach out to other businesses to share problems and experiences, mostly only to the BIA... Small businesses are frustrated with working through the bureaucracy at the City… Bureaucracy is not friendly to business owners. BIAs that are empowered are not another part of the bureaucracy but are advocates for businesses.* (BIA-2)

> *The City says they support businesses, but they do everything in their power to make it hard to start a business. BIAs get more complaints for sign permits or patio permits than anything else. Tiramisu [Café] wanted a patio and had to go directly to the mayor.* (BIA-3)

> *Sometimes the problem with BIAs is that they don't deal with the City too well. How you present yourself and find ways to relate to them is very important. If they want to be treated well, BIAs should get their annual reports in early to make their jobs easier. I get mine done months in advance.* (BIA-4)

5.2.2.1 Battling and Circumventing Bureaucracy

To prompt BIA participants to more deeply discuss their experiences in interacting with the City, most were asked how much of their time was occupied in working with the City rather than on the specific initiatives of their BIA (a prompt also used for some City staff). Rather than focusing strongly on marketing and making improvements to their areas, most BIAs seemed to dedicate large portions of their time to working or 'fighting' with the City to achieve various approvals. In fact, two BIAs said that they used half or more of their worktime in trying to navigate the City's complex bureaucracy. Each BIA participant provided at least one example of a time where they needed to circumvent City processes to ensure that a task would be completed in a reasonable amount of time. Some BIAs spent less time working with the City, and this was attributed to them regularly finding ways to circumvent City processes. Circumventing bureaucracy generally required connecting with individuals with more power to affect change than most City Administration staff – in many cases elected City councillors.

The following quotes show examples of BIAs finding the City's bureaucracy challenging and slow to navigate, which often negatively affected their ability to contribute to revitalization efforts. They also show BIAs explaining their circumvention of official but bureaucratic processes:

> *75% of my time is spent fighting with the City instead of [working on] development… bureaucracy and timing is terrible. It takes months to get things to happen. The process is always slow… Administration doesn't give information to City Council, so there is an issue of integrity.* (BIA-5)

> *I probably spend 50% of my job interacting with or dealing with the City... A lot of it is strategizing or finding ways to work around different problems. Everything in the City is a maze. For example, getting approval for the hanging baskets we put around the neighbourhood took way too long and was something the City didn't have a protocol for. We ended up having to communicate in long email chains for something that could have been done much more easily. In the end, I finally talked to Councillor Henderson who got the ball moving quickly. When dealing with the City, you deal with different crews or people, depending on what you're working on. The efficiency really depends on a City employee's experience; if someone with experience leaves their position, their replacement may not know the new requirements or criteria for a change…This results in a lot of wasted time… I understand the need for rules and regulations, but it's just the process you have to go through is too much. The City does not respect that you're an independent business and that any delay of a month or two months will hurt people's livelihoods.* (BIA-3)

> *Sometimes you just have to do things and then ask for the City's forgiveness later. We put up $5000 worth of Christmas bows without going through all the permissions and the City just had to work with it. One time, when a new restaurant was opening, the City didn't show up for a month to verify that an oven passed regulations. They couldn't open in that time. We had to get it done by using our connections and acting as a strong intermediary. We spoke with our councillor and other key people about the problem.* (BIA-1)

> *I contacted [City Councillors] Mike Nickel and Ben Henderson because I wanted to know their vision for the area. I told them they had a responsibility to support the BIA… The City of Edmonton decided they were going to dig a large hole by Certified Radio and approve the building of several nearby residential buildings right there. They said it was going to take 22-24 months to be done. Nearby shops would lose business. I talked to people from the City doing construction and inspection. They weren't willing to change the location of the hole and said "why would we?". I needed to talk to a higher echelon. I had trouble finding the right person. Eventually I called Ben and Mike because I needed a solution… I go directly to representatives at council. These people are there and will listen you…I tend to bypass middlemen and talk to people in power.* (BIA-2)

The above quotes from BIAs also suggest another bureaucratic challenge. Despite BIAs needing to interact with different parts of the City to handle various issues (such as the Transportation Department to deal with road construction issues), City groups and staff disconnected from BIAs and revitalization were not cognisant and sensitive to the complex needs of business areas. For instance, undertaking the lengthy construction project described by BIA-2 would likely accomplish a specific, functional upgrade that the City's Transportation Department had deemed necessary, but it would also cause significant interference to nearby businesses. As such, it is found that the City's bureaucratic structure created too much separation between different parts of administration, leading to a lack of cohesion between revitalization efforts and other City actions.

5.2.2.2 Adjusting City Operations

Part of the issue leading to BIAs circumventing official processes was that City staff tasked to work with BIAs and businesses often did not have enough power within the organization, nor the resources to provide what BIAs needed or to make necessary changes. These observations echoed what City staff said earlier about their own bureaucratic structures:

> *City advocates don't have enough power. They are bureaucrats who will maintain the bureaucracy.* (BIA-2)

> *The BIA people at the City should have more say. At times, senior people or city councillors had no recognition for BIAs. It is changing slowly but they still need more say.* (BIA-4)

Improving the capacities and power of these City staff is seen as an important step in fixing bureaucratic issues faced by different stakeholders. However, some BIAs suggested that certain municipal operations should either be taken out of the City's hands, as they could be performed more consistently and in a timelier manner by their BIA, or else a different process improvement would have to be found. BIAs believed they had a better chance at performing certain local scale operations more successfully than the City, with a better understanding of local needs and a more deeply vested interest in

the performance of their areas. One BIA gave two related examples. First, they explained that the City was in charge of watering the hanging flower pots and planters in their area, but this was not done effectively and the flowers tended to die. Well-cared for flowers were considered important in attracting consumers to the area in the summer months, but the City was proving unable to effectively administer their care: *So, there is a flower program. The City handles the watering. The flowers die*. (BIA-5)

Second, they considered rapid snow removal from sidewalks to be important in attracting customers to main streets in winter months. Property owners are responsible for clearing the sidewalks abutting their land within a two-day period. In practice, some clear their sidewalks quickly while others do not, resulting in inconsistently cleared paths that can be an unattractive, inconvenient, and even inaccessible to some consumers. This BIA suggested that if the City was put in charge of clearing snow in prominent walking areas (such as main streets or downtown), snow clearing would still take several days and the related impact on retail would continue. He suggested that the BIA could pay a contractor for rapid snow clearance and send the bill to the City afterwards, to ensure attractive and convenient consumer experiences even soon after snowfall. This BIA, like others, showed a lack of trust in the City to make good decisions and effectively operate programs that could help businesses and business areas:

> *The City just invested money for the initial streetscape then walked away. It's a constant battle with the City to follow the rules or for them to support the [BIA] issues… Things like snow removal, yes, we'd run it better. We could do it quickly and send them the bill… The City can't even get the streetlights on and can't do anything with the all money they have.* (BIA-5)

Similarly, other BIAs also suggested that certain operations were not being handled well by the City, and that changes of some sort were necessary. This, again, included operations that BIAs thought would be handled better at a more local scale. Both these participants identify the City's Transportation Department as section of City Administration causing certain problems:

> *We need to do anything to get things out of the City's hands because of the bureaucracy and culture in the City. The Transportation [Department] approaches infrastructure as a bare basic maintenance thing and they only care if something is serviceable. They only look at function, and have only very slowly moved to any recognition of aesthetics. It is necessary to change this mentality.* (BIA-3)

> *City council just created a new position to be responsive to the BIA from the Transportation side of things, but this is not good enough. We should increase the capacity of the BIA to intervene with licensing and permitting applications, when someone applies for a business or development permit the BIA wants to immediately* (BIA-2)

5.2.3 Development Policies and Processes

Another critical component of revitalization is land development and changes to built form. To achieve redevelopment and revitalization in mature city areas, it is necessary to compete with investment from the predominant contemporary forms of development in Edmonton, i.e., greenfield suburban developments such as power centres. This may involve municipal encouragement or investments in inner-city retail or mixed use redevelopments along main streets or in established neighbourhoods. However, this is a complex undertaking, as market forces and self-reinforcing practices may lean towards the status quo. As explained in this section, municipal bureaucracy does not typically directly influence industry decisions regarding the forms and locations of commercial developments; according to developers, decisions are more often based upon their market expertise, as well as land use policies such as zoning. In particular, minimum parking requirements (MPRs) are found to be a signficant issue.

5.2.3.1 Minimum Parking Requirements

Though evidence to this point has only shown several explicit ties to automobility, each instance has linked to the provision of parking and MPRs add to this discussion. In many cities, MPRs are used in zoning bylaws (in Edmonton, in Section 54.2) to regulate the minimum number of off-street vehicle parking spaces that new or altered developments are legally required to provide, determined by a building's use and floor area (City of Edmonton, 2018e; Shoup, 1999). MPRs can increase land costs for developers and businesses, promote the generation of surface parking lots in central areas, or else provide motivation to move to the suburbs where land is cheaper and less constrained.

Many participants stated that MPRs were barriers to revitalization efforts. Developers were not in favour of MPRs, seeing them as a type of policy intrusion that conflicted with their market knowledge. In other words, developers believed that people in their industry as well as tenant businesses were better positioned than generic municipal policy to determine the number of parking spaces they needed. This was particularly challenging when the number of stalls required was higher than what developers thought necessary, as it added significant costs and spatial requirements to constructing their developments. Indeed, as DV-3 emphasizes below, MPRs can generate the development of strip malls with surface parking lots. Others closely involved in the industry, involved in the financing and brokering of commercial real estate, shared similar viewpoints. These actors, particularly RE-1, thought that markets could better determine the amount of parking needed and that the City current procedures were a waste of time for everyone involved. These participants said:

For that project, more parking is underground, and it will cost $45,000 a stall for a tenant to own. Market-driven parking provision [such as this] is what needs to survive. The minimum parking requirement and City Hall should be less important. (DV-G-1)

The City is obsessed with parking. It is the number one thing they look at. The first and biggest barrier [with the City's development process] is parking. It drives the development of strip malls… The City asked for 27 parking spots. There were only 3 in the Gordon Price area nearby so it was improbable that that location would work out without major variances. (DV-3)

There needs to be a trust in the businesses knowing the market. We don't need drivers, rather the market should decide how many stalls to have. Yes, it's a big waste of time for the City, developers, businesses, and BIAs. (RE-1)

Businesses also echoed similar issues with MPRs, emphasizing that the required number of stalls did not align with their needs. EB-10, for instance, owned the parking lot adjacent to her business, but could not expand her business onto it because the lot fulfilled her MPR. In turn, EB-G-5 note that businesses with walking or transit-riding clientele were also required to fulfil MPRs, which imposed extra costs but no benefits. RE-2, a banker with experience in financing commercial developments and businesses, added that parking provision should be left to developers and property owners, rather than allowing the challenges to be downloaded to tenants. These participants said:

I cannot develop on the parking lots [next to my building] as there are minimum requirements for the number of parking stalls that my business must comply with. (EB-10)

Regarding minimum parking requirements, I just emailed the City about a parking issue for my other location. I am looking to expand and extend into the neighbouring space. I'll be required to provide more parking stalls due to the increasing size of the business… The City shouldn't care about parking requirements. (EB-7)

My [former business] did not comply with the regulations around the minimum number of required stalls, which was 180!... The parking requirements were ridiculous, as most of my customers don't drive… For [my new business], there's a minimum of 26 parking stalls required which I don't comply with yet. (EB-8)

Things like parking don't need to be such large issues because young, urban adults don't use or need cars as much. So, things such as parking regulations are hindrances to businesses whose main clientele walk or take transit… People are always complaining about parking and where to park. [We] are lucky because we have two free spaces in the back… No one comes to Whyte Avenue for parking. You come to Whyte to walk around. (EB-G-5)

If a coffee shop is a tenant and not the owner of the building, parking should be an issue for the owner not the tenant… A developer knows they'll have to provide a certain amount of stalls... (RE-2)

BIAs also recognized similar challenges with MPRs, but brought wider, neighbourhood scale perspectives. Both BIAs quoted below emphasized that parking can

be shared by businesses throughout an area, particularly because drivers can park farther away and walk to retailers. This, BIA-3 aptly pointed out, should not be an issue because it is something people already do in shopping malls. Shared parking strategies, if planned creatively, could also be appropriate for businesses whose patrons came at separate times of the day. They said:

> *We need to relax the amount of parking required for restaurants and commercial spaces. Businesses and parking are unrelated. I will park in front of one space and walk to another.* (BIA-2)

> *Parking is a massive perceptual issue. Parking is not that important. If the BIA competes in parking with the mall we will lose. Instead, businesses need to create a unique product to bring people in. We are working hard to make parking easier. We need to change individuals' perceptions around parking. When going to the mall, people still walk relatively far to get to the stores that they want to get to… Shared parking can reduce requirements for parking. Businesses and properties need to be more creative, as businesses will have different clientele at different times… The parking requirements are the highest in Canada.* (BIA-3)

Participants outside the development industry were also asked about their experiences with MPRs. For those who had relevant experience or knowledge, there was a general consensus that MPRs caused challenges to development in central areas of Edmonton. For example:

> *We have heard about MPRs and know this is an issue. I moved from New York and parking here is not an issue. It's just a misconception. We know the City is making a difference on this now. But, currently, if you're opening a restaurant, unless you're in a building with a grandfather clause, parking will be an issue. MEAT [a restaurant] ran into an issue with parking. There is a new generation of entrepreneurs that are well travelled and doing well with pushing back and opening these innovative places with less parking.* (LA-G-1)

> *I agree that parking is an issue. I've heard that for many restaurants parking becomes a problem. If we took away the requirements for parking it would encourage people to use transit to come downtown. The over-regulation of parking is an issue. We as a city have to look at the pedestrianization of areas like Old Strathcona... I would love to see Old Strathcona become more pedestrian, with more people out on the streets.* (LA-3)

City staff involved in revitalization also recognized issues caused by MPRs. Both participants quoted below attributed the City's struggles to shift away from these practices and policies to their Transportation Department, which pushed for parking studies and treated vehicle transportation efficiencies as more important than revitalization and placemaking. This signified more bureaucratic inconsistencies within the City of Edmonton. CE-5 also paralleled earlier BIA comments, speaking to the possibility of creating shared parking solutions in these areas:

> *Transportation still wants parking studies done by every business. Why don't we do a parking study for the whole thing beforehand? We're in the process of*

moving this forward now. We get pushback from the City, partially based on media and public perception. (CE-4)

Currently, a new corner store would not be approved in a neighbourhood. It wouldn't be able to deal with parking requirements, access issues, the scale it is at, and it doesn't fit with current perspective of how to plan neighbourhoods… The Transportation [Department] is a barrier, especially in the corridor context. There is a tension between corridor and place… The City needs to get into the business of providing shared parking in all BIAs, even in building lots or underground. City-owned and subsidized. (CE-5)

The preservation of MPRs in zoning is not, however, solely attributed to the Transportation Department; it is also related to tensions associated with property rights and NIMBY (Not-In-My-Backyard) opposition. A wide variety of participants pointed out that there was regular community opposition to commercial and business development near residential neighbourhoods. In particular, residents had issues with the parking of patrons and workers that spilled onto their streets, and some, according to BIA-2, said it was devaluing their properties. However, as participants pointed out, the street is a publicly-owned space, not owned by residents. They said:

Without MPRs someone may park in front of your house. Deal with it. The space doesn't belong to you. (DV-3)

A developer wants to build a residential condo tower, and I suggested he do a mixed use building. They redesigned the building to include commercial space. People in the community came to me with issues about parking due to the commercial space. People say it's devaluing their property… Citizens take ownership of public parking spaces. (BIA-2)

We are working to reduce the minimum number of required parking stalls, but residents get angry when clientele on 124th street use their stalls. (BIA-3).

Parking is a bit different downtown, as residents are more understanding that parking spaces in front of their homes may be used by clients of nearby businesses… The parking situation in [my shop's neighbourhood] is more delicate as it's in a residential area. We've printed signs for neighbours to say parking is reserved for residents and we've invited residents to the cafe for free meals and gift cards to ease the pain related to parking. Ultimately, the parking situation there is interesting as the parking spots along the road are technically public property. There have been residents that want to argue with the city to ban public parking but it hasn't gotten to that point there. For every person that is negatively impacted by parking, there are a larger number of individuals that are positively impacted. People have bought into this capitalist ideal that they are going home to their own oasis, which they bought due to it being a quiet neighbourhood. (EB-7)

In turn, some BIAs suggested that the problems with spillover parking arose because parking was free along residential streets; without a price on parking to curb demand, it would naturally be difficult to limit the number of people parking in these areas. The problem was mostly attributed to business employees who parked on residential streets during long shifts. Customers, on the other hand, were likely to stay

for a shorter period of time and were not as much of a problem. It was also suggested by BIA-5 that the revenues from a new parking price could fund local area improvements, to help warm local residents and companies to the idea. They said:

> *A residential parking program is important… Free parking in residential doesn't make any sense… Day permits need to be issued. Companies should pay for staff parking in residential areas. Take the money and then tell people that it is staying in the local economy.* (BIA-5)

> *Free parking is an issue. It's more of a problem with staff then patrons, as the staff will park their car for 8 hours. A small fee would be better to help turnover.* (BIA-3)

However, BIA-5 also suggested that putting a price on parking was unpopular among many users of the area. This revealed a deeper issue – that main streets and other central retail areas primarily catered to drivers because other options such as transit were not sufficiently developed. He added:

> *Is parking an issue? Parking is at 40% capacity, but people don't want to pay at all. Store owners and people on social media complain. But a big problem is that, with three million visitors a year, and still no proper LRT or public transit, the City hasn't made [our area] accessible without cars. We are trying to do it on our own.* (BIA-5)

This quote suggests that there is self-reinforcing nature in car-dependent urban form. Following this notion, because the transportation practices of many people in Edmonton have centred around driving (due to many reasons including freely available parking around many destinations and transit options remaining less convenient) there are motivations within the development industry to create designs catering to drivers. Indeed, several developers, who had mostly been involved in greenfield development, perceived that the success and even the vibrancy of new mature neighbourhood commercial developments and their tenants hinged upon the inclusion of large amounts of parking, higher than what was required by MPRs. In contrast to DV-2 and DV-3, they said:

> *Any form of retail is not adequate without parking, regardless of what the bylaw says. In the long term, 124th Street is not viable. Without parking it is screwed.* (DV-G-1)

> *The City bylaw for the minimum parking requirements is way below what developers actually need, so when the City relaxes their parking bylaw it doesn't matter to developers... If you undersize the amount parking stalls businesses fail. By the 142nd Street TD Bank and South of 95th Ave, Crestwood had an Urban Fare, a high-end grocery that failed. The reason for failure was due to parking. The store could not get enough people going in and out of the business... But a restaurant or surgeon that needs fewer turns can survive with fewer parking stalls. With the lack of an adequate number of parking stalls, you lose these large anchor tenants, impacting the vibrancy of the location.* (DV-4)

In turn, participants from banks involved in the financing of businesses and commercial developments noted that, as part of the due diligence process of approving loans, they were likely to assess whether businesses would be able to achieve their MPRs. Although it was generally assumed that businesses and developers would take care of parking on their own, if fulfilling or acquiring variances for MPRs proved to be difficult, banks would advise moving to easier and cheaper locations, likely in the suburbs.

> *Parking is one of those items that banks assume is taken care of. I've rarely heard of a company not getting a loan due to parking. Commercial real estate banking will assess the site and ask questions such as how is this is going to work only have room for 60 stalls, when you need 200? I wouldn't say that that parking has made or broken a deal before. It is more of a due diligence issue.* (RE-2)

> *Our expectation is that our clients are complying with all applicable regulations to business. If there is insufficient parking, it is more for the business to deal with [than the bank], but we will suggest they move if they can't deal with it.* (RE-3)

As has been shown, there is a significant connection between development choices and municipal policies, seen by the effects of MPRs embedded in the zoning bylaw. Bureacratic processes can help uphold outdated policies and practices such that they contradict revitalization efforts and core development. Many participants displayed significant concern for MPRs, a zoning instrument that is much more reflective of auto-oriented and sprawling developments than those that are dense and community-integrated.

5.2.3.2 Difficulties in Refining the Process

Businesses and developers can apply for variances when they cannot (or do not want to) achieve zoning requirements on a particular site. This often takes several months and outcomes are not guaranteed to satisfy requests; as a result, developers and businesses face uncertainty in this process. The bureaucracy and decision-makers at Edmonton's City Council have struggled to adapt policies and streamline variance processes to reflect collective visions of denser and revitalized mature areas. This is an example of path dependence in development policy and process that creates significant obstacles to revitalization.

Participants in the development industry were generally less frustrated by City bureaucracy than other groups. They were likely to use their industry knowledge, capacity, and experience to navigate typical bureaucratic processes, and were less affected by outdated zoning policies and development practices. Nevertheless, developers suggested that a more hands-off approach to land development by the City would be beneficial to mature neighbourhood development, particularly through easing

restrictive policies (some of these were also discussed in Section 4.1.4.1 related to mixed use development). These participants made it clear that while restrictive policies could be overcome through variances or appeals, the City took an overly long time to process and approve applications,. Rather than trying to improve bureaucratic processes – as some businesses and BIAs thought was important – developers tended to prefer creating greater flexibility in policies altogether. For example:

> *You'll get bureaucracy, that's just how things are. The issue is in dealing with small regulations that become a big deal. There is no recognition in the zoning bylaw [for the difference] between infill and greenfield development. It's tough for the City to keep up with development trends. Some safety-driven things make sense, but the City should take a more hands-off approach. It should be your problem as an owner, although some people do make stupid decisions… Places like 124 Street and Whyte Ave should have different ways of interpreting regulations… The system for appeals is also inefficient… Why did patios [regulations] have to be such an issue?... We could use performance-based zoning. Zoning should have more of an attention to form rather than just regulation… If you're not used to dealing with the city, if you don't know the process, it becomes frustrating.* (DV-2)

> *There is a disconnect in Edmonton. There isn't a good understanding of market dynamics at the policy level… For mixed use, there are not a lot of good policies… The City will have to help facilitate changes. The market doesn't favour difficult things. Policy is often more punitive rather than helpful. Even greenfield developments have been difficult at times with the City… If you're trying to sell a retailer [on being a tenant in your space] today, they won't be able to wait for you to sort out parking.* (DV-G-1)

> *Direct Control Zones[13] [DCs] are bad for the City. Coming up with DCs ties up too much of the City's time, and there is too much uncertainty for developers for these zones… The zoning bylaw is antiquated. There was an issue when I was building in a CB2 [zone], and I had a height regulation that was too low. I had to work with them to build a CB3 that had larger heights. There is a need to undertake measures to revamp the zoning bylaw. No one likes DCs.* (DV-4)

> *The City was very supportive to the [project], but zoning didn't work, so a variance was needed for the building. None of the good principles encouraged [by the City] like walkability would have happened if not for the variance.* (DV-3)

As such, while developments often require some municipal flexibility to improve the urban environment (DV-3 used the example of variances allowing for a site with greater walkability), the frequency with which such variances are required highlights the inflexible nature of the zoning bylaw itself. This inflexibility is mentioned by several developers, both in relation to the City needing to create expensive and time-consuming Direct Control Zones for properties that do not easily fit in current zoning (such as mixed

[13] This refers to a Site Specific Direct Control Provision (DC2), often known as a Planned Unit Development (PUD) in other jurisdictions. According to the City of Edmonton (2018b), "[t]his zone provides the opportunity for direct control over a specific proposed development where the proposed mix of uses or the development regulations cannot be accommodated in a standard zone." Most mixed use and high-density developments in Edmonton require a DC2, as standard zones generally do not accommodate for these.

use developments), and current policy focus on the *use* rather than *form* of buildings in zoning. As DV-G-1 in particular highlights, greater focus on the relation of buildings with streets could be found in regulating their form and appearance regardless of interior uses and changes. This would lessen the need for the City to be involved with certain decisions on, for example, parking for private buildings.

Developers noted another critical challenge in the approval process – that development officers were either not trained, instructed, or comfortable in using discretion to approve development, even if policies were outdated or irrelevant. This reflects a problem in the bureaucratic process and the prescribed role of development officers, rather than the performance of individual development officers. For these officers, embedded City practices meant that using discretion was a high-risk, low-reward scenario, because even if they recognized opportunities for urban improvements and greater alignment City revitalization initiatives, varying from policy could possibly lead to reprimands or threaten their job security while contributing little back to their career. In a quote below, DV-2 presents Floor Area Ratios (FARs) as another policy that had been subject to City inflexibility. FARs determine the aggregate maximum floor area of developments, based upon the size of the overall lot. FARs are not necessarily incongruent with dense urban development, but low or inflexible FARs can be a deterrent to development in areas targetted for greater density. These developers said:

> *There are not a lot of courageous development officers. Many of them are brand new and follow the rules as they are written, although a few do care and are willing to explore different ideas.* (DV-3)

> *We increased the amount of space in [our development], and this took us over the FAR, so the building didn't conform. A development officer isn't able to authorize a different FAR, so this had to go to an appeal. If internal spaces are being reworked, a development officer should be able to vary it. But, there are also not enough development officers willing to stick their neck out at the City.* (DV-2)

> *There is a lack of transfer of knowledge at the City between the older 50-60-year-old senior planners not teaching new grads who are being hired as development officers that the zoning bylaw does allow for some flexibility. You don't have to follow the zoning bylaw word-for-word.* (DV-4)

These findings indicate that the City was struggling to realign its practices to match contemporary revitalization goals due to bureaucratic constraints. In particular, City staff did not have the incentive to vary from the status quo or push for changes, and this was coupled with a lack of 'accountability' and 'sense of requirement' in the organization. For example:

> *On the policy side, there is no incentive [for the City] to take a chance. If something goes wrong, [they will] be punished, but not rewarded if they take risks.* (DV-G-1)

> *The issue with the City is that there are no targets, accountability or drive… There is no culture or sense of requirement to completing things. No one has to get things done fast. It's better not to do anything in case you make a mistake, you get in trouble… In the City of Edmonton, somewhere in the bureaucracy, there is something preventing change. It is hard to pinpoint what exactly that is. We always hear that the Transportation Department is the issue.* (DV-3)

5.2.4 Local Agencies and Bureaucracy

Participants representing local agencies also provided observations of bureaucratic barriers that were forestalling urban change. These agencies each worked in tandem with business communities of Edmonton and had engaged in the promotion and planning of developments or small businesses in mature neighbourhoods. They submitted that the City had the will to improve processes guiding revitalization, but that changes were inhibited by risk aversion and slowness. For instance, LA-G-2 spoke about a website that the City had planned to create that could more easily guide businesses through the necessary processes; however, this project had not been completed in several years and its ongoing status was uncertain as its staff member had been reassigned. For instance:

> *We've worked closely with the City on a number of zoning and bylaw issues. We've looked at zoning and bylaw issues that impeded arts development… We stressed to the City that not only the arts but small businesses should have a checklist or a to-do list to help individuals open these places. The City wanted to create a web structure to help small businesses through the use of a hierarchy of questions called a decision tree. It has yet to be made and they wanted it up by next summer. The person working on this project was reassigned… The reason why business owners and artists give up on development is due to the fact that City Administration takes too long to approve permits. This is why many artists go under the radar, as the city bureaucracy is too slow. These artists have limited funds so they need to make decision very quickly, yet with the City you have to wait months for permits and decisions.* (LA-G-2)

> *These changes take so long because of policy, bureaucracy, and ladders. The will is there, it just takes time. A lot of these problems come from the City being risk averse. But, that is changing, as the City is more willing to adopt or try out new and innovative ideas such as City Lab.* (LA-G-1)

5.3 Streamlining Bureaucracy

As discussed throughout this chapter, a path dependent bureaucratic system can significantly impede revitalization initiatives. The City of Edmonton's administration displayed related difficulties, which were faced both internally, by revitalization staff, and externally, by businesses, BIAs, and developers. For instance, revitalization staff were given little power and priority within the bureaucracy to push for changes or the adoption of innovative ideas (despite their in-depth, front-line revitalization knowledge). Siloed sections of the organization led to conflicting priorities and actions, especially between revitalization programs and the Transportation Department and development officers; this specifically relates to the preservation of, and challenges in acquiring

variances for, policies including MPRs which created barriers to the growth of mature area businesses. In addition, some businesses struggled to navigate City processes and they, along with developers, reported lengthy waits and red tape in obtaining required permits. Several small businesses also noted that they were directed to the City's website with 'forms and regulations' rather than provided with the support they were asking for. Instead of using their time effectively to focus on enhancement of their areas, BIA directors also spent large amounts of time navigating the bureaucratic maze to address various problems.

Considering challenges such as these, to improve revitalization efforts, many participants thought that finding ways to make the bureaucracy function more effectively was important. As discussed in Section 5.1.2, City revitalization staff were generally already attempting to improve connections and cohesion between different departments whose work related (directly or indirectly) to revitalization. They spent large amounts of their time trying to educate these groups on the importance of their programs and pushing them to change habits that were providing obstacles. Some of these staff – CE-3 being the foremost example – also acted as internal champions for mature retail areas and BIAs, trying to assist in streamlining bureaucratic processes for them and advocating for their needs. Although these staff often lacked the capacity and the power to make important changes or decisions, it was clear that they were contributing to progress within the organization. For example:

> *Internally, I've tried to be a bigger advocate for BIAs and commercial main streets. But, recognized names or directors get things done. I went to [Former Director], but all the city wants to say is no. They don't even want to look. But, things are improving. They should have a recognized person in Transportation solely for surface issues. And I should have a liaison with them.* (CE-3)

> *Business owners in Chinatown see the BIA differently than other groups. Other BIAs have better organizational skills, and can develop goals as well as functions. [CE-3] is starting to attend the Chinatown BIA meetings. He wants to put organizational strength into the group.* (CE-1)

> *The BIA movement was seen as a good enough measure because people expected many commercial districts to fail anyways. We got away with low standards in the past and the City got away with not doing a lot of things. There is support now because there are major champions such as [two BIA directors], and [CE-3], so progress that has been made.* (CE-2)

5.3.1 Point of Contact

Building on evidence that certain City staff could help external stakeholders navigate bureaucracy, as well as advocate for more cohesion between departments, an idea that emerged from early interviews and discussions was of creating a dedicated liaisons or *Point of Contact* (POC) roles. This notion was built on the reasoning that toppling bureaucratic structures altogether was not feasible, but that smaller changes aiming for

better communication with stakeholders and cohesion between departments could be particularly useful. It could free up large amounts of time for revitalization staff to focus on the governance and growth of their programs, instead of them being tied down in bureaucratic navigation and advocacy.

As such, participants were asked about the possibility of having a POC (or POC office) through which concerns related to mature area revitalization could be directed. Staff in this role could be a liaison to BIAs, businesses, and even developers who needed to contact the City for various reasons, for example when they had issues with permitting, achieving variances, or getting the attention of staff in the Transportation Department. Beyond being able to help these actors, this office would be intended to identify and work to address commonly reported issues across revitalization programs.

This idea received positive feedback from all participants with whom it was discussed. A POC could be a 'one-stop shop' to help people in achieving their tasks from start to end. To be effective in this role, it would require 'authority' within the organization to work through issues across departments. A POC could help 'coach' the City by pointing out areas of success and improvement. For example:

> *The City could use a project lead which has authority to help people reach end goal by working through all the issues with admin and EPCOR and all.* (DV-G-1)

> *A liaison or point of contact could be helpful. This would be a one-stop shop to getting problems dealt with.* (DV-2)

> *You need an entity to challenge the City on some of these issues, not just letting them ride the wave as they are part of the City organizations. In a way, they need to act as a coach to the City… to display things that are being done well, but also to highlight things that the City needs to improve on.* (LA-G-1)

A POC, said these BIA directors who supported the idea, could help to more quickly connect BIAs with the necessary staff in different departments when they faced challenges, as well as create a point of convergence between City programs where issues could be discussed together. They said:

> *The City will argue that this is what the BIA or [CE-3] is for, so that another point of contact is unnecessary. But I think it's a great idea. For the Transportation Department, having a Point of Contact where you don't have to go through ten different people is great.* (BIA-3)

> *That's sort of how BIA council got started. [One former director] was the sole person speaking up, and now we can bring up key issues as a group… City bureaucracy, all cities have this. But there are ways to streamline things. People need to get together and meet over issues. Having a Point of Contact is the right direction.* (BIA-4)

Business and retailer participants also generally agreed that a POC could be helpful to them in several ways. In particular, it could help in prioritizing the specific and

sensitive needs of businesses over residents seeking 'deck permits'. In particular, according to EB-10, a POC could reduce the time and effort businesses spent in navigating the bureaucracy, helping both guide and educate them through processes, and allowing them to 'focus on their strengths and what they like to do'. They said:

> *This would be helpful. Everyone's talking about densification, walkability, and building in mature neighbourhoods. All that talk is just talk. They need to look at what will actually lead to the greatest impact or change. When I look at a development and it goes to the planning department, I get treated the same as a person going in for a deck permit. One development officer will deal with the two very different kinds of permits. Having experts that are more specialized in a specific type of development, such as say just small business permits would be huge.* (EB-7)

> *It would be a huge help. When I first started, I didn't know about parking, or what use class he was in. A point of contact at the City would have helped with this… there should be a point of contact at the City dedicated to helping businesses around live music or the arts. If I had a point of contact for live music, especially around the time when [his business] was evicted. We were given 35 days to leave and I felt like I was running around with my head cut off. An advocate would have helped tell him what to do in this situation. Also, having the point of contact helping people start a small business, or to helping advertise these arts venues.* (EB-8)

> *Having a point of contact or one place at the City would be a good idea. Then you don't have to run around to complete different documents… There's a checklist of things to do for businesses and a point of contact at the City could be one. Making the process easier, allow a person to focus on their strengths and what they like to do.* (EB-10)

The POC was also proposed to City staff, who agreed that it could have merit in Edmonton. In particular, these participants said that a POC could help with small business navigation and that such ideas were not unheard of in other cities, including Calgary. Importantly, CE-1 said that the City was going through a restructuring process, because upper management wanted to improve efficiencies and effectiveness. She said that the will to change was evident, but this restructuring was likely doing little to help:

> *I'm supportive of that. I might be wrong, but I think Calgary has a system in place similar to this. They have a one-stop shop. The City helps a person through the entire process, from the start to finish. It helps with congruency and if Calgary can do that why can't we?... We need to have a proactive process, with a set criteria of steps… Having a point of contact can allow you to streamline services and restructure areas of service. We are currently restructuring… There is a strong desire from upper level management to restructure to allow for a greater degree of effectiveness and efficiency. But with the changes being made it doesn't feel like they are meeting these goals.* (CE-1)

> *Yes, it could be a helpful having point of contact for small business navigation through the City. Not only can the City give businesses options, they will follow his file to help. Small businesses don't know their options and they need the help often. In a way, Open Window should be able to help find where we can bend and flex from the business and land use perspective. There is a real possibility of*

using this to help with variances and other things. Finding out where touch points are could be very useful. (CE-4)

5.3.1.1 Open Window and Corner Store Program

Open Window was created to work in coordination with other programs promoting business improvement (specifically the FIP, DIP, and the also recently created Corner Store Program or CSP). Specifically, it was intended to help newly opening businesses to move quickly and efficiently through permitting processes, by working closely with a City staff member who could be both a guide and internal advocate. As a very new program, it was not possible to interview a business owner who had utilized it, but CE-4 provided a detailed description of the work being done and plans to move forward. In particular, she suggested that small businesses often needed hand-holding to get through processes:

> *We got to Open Window because of its ability to address issues at the City level. The big point that comes through from business owners is "It shouldn't be so difficult! Why am I having this issue?" The City has all of this published online, but the pace of innovation in small business is a little slower and they might need the help. With small business, they won't be doing this five times a year, so we will teach them the minimum they need to know and help them get through it. They likely only need to do it once ever... What we need to know is the key elements of what they want to do: What is their business and what do they do? What are their floorplans, usage, space, etcetera? We help with zoning… Small businesses need to be able to choose between option one or two. Open Window will slot things into the right place for you and make it happen. It is valuable to have someone who can talk business talk about why they need to operate the way they do and then connecting with building and land use people to make it fit. That way Open Window can handle the negotiations processes to make sure they are able to get what they need.* (CE-4)

As seen here, the Open Window seeks to directly intervene in bureaucratic processes and provide a clear path forward for small businesses. Importantly, it also seeks to use its office to advocate for bureaucratic or policy changes needed to improve business success. Although the program was still very small, only assisting several businesses so far, its creation suggested that some at the City – particularly those involved in front-line revitalization work with businesses – had recognized that a less bureaucratic and more streamlined and catered process for businesses may be a solution.

Similar assertions can be made about the City's CSP, a program that CE-4 was also working to develop. The CSP is a pilot program that was intended to identify corner stores that had experienced decay in mature neighbourhoods, and to invest not only in physical improvements to their buildings (guiding property owners through use of the DIP and FIP) and streetscapes (with up to $250,000 in City-funded improvements), but to also teach businesses (through personal training and online learning) how to organize their stores and improve their appearances, undertake market analyses, create sales

strategies and marketing, both traditional and online. In turn, this was intended to help educate businesses in how to contact the City through *311* (the City's system to report issues or request services). The CSP proved to be a strong response to a gap the City recognized in the knowledge and abilities of independent business owners. For instance:

> *There's a few key ideas for improving the situation for businesses. First, teaching businesses how to navigate through the process at the City. Teaching business how to use 311. By teaching business owners these skills, you can measure the progress you make. In many instances after working with the City, I have to tell people interested in opening a business not to get discouraged, as they often have to wait two years before they can open.* (CE-1)

> *[The CSP] offers knowledge development such as helping property owners understand what businesses to have on their property… We are looking at how businesses would like business support. Some look for help, and others don't want to show their books to the City. We train [businesses] on how to organize stores, do up sales, look what systems they have, and to take online learning and training.* (CE-4)

> *There is improvement at some scales, yes. The Corner Store Program is the most innovative so far.* (CE-5)

As with Open Window, the program was still in its infancy, and so speaking with business and property owners who had been involved was difficult. Relevant owners who *were* available for interviews (only two) suggested that the impacts of the CSP were still uncertain. Both noted that they were busier than before but were not fully certain whether it was due to the CSP or other factors. However, EB-4 in particular explained several positive contributions of the CSP. They said:

> *We haven't seen effects yet, only the signage and general transformation of the place. But, I guess, because of the new signage, people have been phoning in to book appointments more. Historically, I had always built my business off referrals.* (EB-3)

> *The place has gotten busier ever since. I don't know whether it's the renovations or not. There is more of a buzz and it is spoken about in community league meetings. People are driving by and seeing better things... When our signage was down during renos, [our new] social media helped show that we were still open… They took interior pictures which made the place look great.* (EB-4)

Finally, the CSP also showed a certain level of flexibility as a community-integrated initiative, as it was able to coordinate with DV-3, who was (as discussed in Section 4.1.1) an *innovator*-type developer who wanted to add value back into the community at a location across from a CSP pilot site. DV-3 appreciated this coordination but also added that the CSP program staff were low on the City hierarchy and struggled to affect change in the organization (reflecting findings in Section 5.1.1). He said:

> *[My site] is not officially a part of the program, but the two groups are able to work together well… The Corner Store People are helpful in advising but didn't have power to push anything yet as they're just a pilot program.* (DV-3)

5.4 Summary

The structures and processes of municipal governance have clear influences on revitalization efforts in Edmonton. As shown in this chapter, the effects of administrative bureaucracy have muted the efforts of City staff with front-line roles in revitalization to affect change and advocate for the needs of businesses, BIAs, and developers. These staff are situated low on the bureaucratic hierarchy, obstructed by old-world thinking in higher management, and divided from other groups whose roles have critical relevance to revitalization (such as development officers).

It was found that BIAs and City staff both spend large amounts of time trying to navigate these bureaucratic City structures, rather than concentrating on the performance and growth of their programs. Indeed, this was also true for businesses and developers who had to spend large amounts of time and effort in acquiring development and other permits. Some policies entrenched in both bylaw and City processes were found to not align with newer City visions for a walkable and dense urban environment. In particular, this included MPRs which mandated large parking lots and indirectly encouraged suburban development. In trying to attain variances for MPRs, some developers and businesses were forced into onerous bureaucratic processes.

Despite a variety of issues such as these, early signs of progress were seen. Using knowledge built from their close interactions with businesses, revitalization staff have pushed forward several programs that help to address bureaucratic issues. To be specific, the CSP and Open Window both aim to provide first-hand support to small businesses, specifically by streamlining City processes for them. Building on these programs, possible methods of streamlining bureaucracy were discussed, including creating a POC role through which various revitalization concerns could converge and be addressed. Undoubtedly, given the complexities involved in revitalization, to find and implement ways to challenge inhibiting features in governance is of critical importance.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.1 Returning to Modernism

From 1945 onwards, the increasing influence of modernism led to the adoption of rational-comprehensive approaches in planning that emphasized top-down and large-scale, government-driven city building. Modernity was rooted in a narrow conceptualization of society and came to emphasize the efficiency of certain functions over others. Things that were easily measurable or part of the market economy (such as the transportation efficiencies of roadways) were prioritized, while things that required nuanced understanding or were regarded as non-market goods (such as building community or placemaking), were marginalized or disregarded in decision-making.

Despite shifts in urban planning that have rejected top-down comprehensive planning and emphasized the importance of local communities in the planning process, modernism continues to influence governance and urban development (Aoki, 1992; Healey, 2012; Irving, 1993). Public administrations and other large formal organizations continue to arrange as bureaucracies, a significant feature of the modernist era, with many staff and departments filling a complex structural hierarchy, with the intention of carrying out a collective set of goals (Chaskin, 2005; Olsen, 2006). Fleischmann, Green, and Kwong (1991) showed evidence that having a larger bureaucracy may allow a city to adopt a greater number of economic development initiatives, including revitalization projects. However, they also found that bureaucracies may struggle to adapt to new initiatives because of inflexibilities embedded in organizational hierarchies (Fleischmann et al., 1991).

The findings of this research show that legacies of modernism have played a significant role in impeding the City of Edmonton's efforts to revitalize retail areas in mature and central neighbourhoods. Revitalization, a complex and nuanced undertaking, requires care for many hard-to-measure things, including the community-building impacts of small businesses and placemaking, and the self-reinforcing effects of urban decay and negligence. Bureaucratic structures often overlook these factors, instead prioritizing functional and more measurable tasks. Consequently, those undertaking revitalization programs can be forced to fight bureaucracy to achieve their ends and are situated low on the ladder of importance, rather than being a core part of the administrative body.

6.2 Overarching Revitalization Vision

Edmonton's revitalization efforts in mature neighbourhood retail areas have faced a range of obstacles. In formulating the original research objectives, it was expected that

certain challenges would emerge related to the City of Edmonton's actions, as is characteristic of city planning initiatives everywhere. However, following reflection on the participant interviews, a more fundamental and higher-level challenge became evident, in terms of the municipality's *vision* for mature neighbourhood retail revitalization. More accurately, the core problem was the *lack* of an overarching and centralizing guiding vision.

The issues that Edmonton faces are not as simple as solely having a deficiency of programs or funding (although funding does play a role). Various City of Edmonton programs have, in fact, recognized the importance of improving commercial retail success in mature neighbourhoods. What is missing is a system that enhances collaboration and cohesion within different revitalization programs, and between these programs and with other city groups that are indirectly involved. In the absence of an overarching vision for revitalization, some programs have been separated from others bureaucratically, and as a result, struggle to operate cohesively with each other and with other related parts of City Administration.

Certainly, solutions to the issues that Edmonton has faced are not as simple as designing a policy or set of guiding principles that all revitalization programs must follow, nor is it as simple as placing all revitalization staff within one bureaucratic section. Rather, challenges at the City-level are multi-faceted and related to the diverse experiences of the many external stakeholders operating in retail areas. These stakeholders include consumers of space and retail, owners of commercial and nearby residential properties, retail businesses and their representative BIAs, and development industry actors. Finding greater cohesion in vision and bureaucracy may help the City in finding more successes in revitalization efforts but is not a cure-all solution. There is, after all, no perfect way of undertaking revitalization, as complex contextual concerns necessarily lead to different needs in different places.

6.3 Bureaucratic Characteristics

The internal social and structural challenges of public administration and governance are well-examined in literature (see Section 2.1.1.2). Bureaucracies often move slowly and inefficiently because, to achieve even small ends, input and compliance is usually required from many different actors located in separate units throughout the organization. Because of the arduousness and slowness of working through red tape and complex, often siloed, hierarchical systems, the power or agency of individual or groups of bureaucrats to achieve goals or advocate for change can be significantly limited.

These concerns are echoed in the administration of revitalization efforts in Edmonton. Programs and initiatives related to revitalization in Edmonton were not created together under one umbrella; rather they emerged organically, as new City

Council directives were imparted, or as different needs were identified over time. As such, there has been no formal unifying force – that is, no single department, overarching policy, or vision – binding the revitalization programs and initiatives together. For instance, despite having highly related goals such as the improvement of retail along main streets, staff working on the BIA program and those in Nodes and Corridors Planning were situated in entirely separate sections of the administration, under separate management, organizational structures, and direction. Without a central vision drawing revitalization programs together, it is difficult for these units to build momentum, even when their work overlapped contextually or spatially. It also diminishes the ability of revitalization programs to address relevant issues together and engage in opportunities for shared learning.

In addition, several participants reported that revitalization staff had very limited power in the organization, as they were situated low on the organizational ladder (see Section 5.1.1). This not only caused internal issues but meant that when front-line City staff attempted to assist with external issues (such as particular BIA or business needs), their abilities were limited by hierarchy and bureaucracy. In addition, some revitalization staff perceived that old-world thinking trickled-down from upper management and inhibited their ability to test new or innovative ideas. It is argued that a stronger and more cohesive shared vision for revitalization efforts would help in elevating the power of front-line staff in the decision-making process, contributing to a more bottom-up, flexible, and effective approach.

6.3.1 Cross-Administration Relations

City staff such as development officers, transportation engineers and those involved in various types service delivery often have *indirect* but nonetheless important ties to the revitalization process. If we consider revitalization programs to generally lack formal coordination with each other, other departments were even more detached from revitalization. This lack of functional integration led to challenges for both external and internal actors.

For instance, developers spoke of the inflexibilities of city development officers who made variances from zoning very difficult for developers and businesses to achieve; this happened even when possible variances – such as lowering MPRs or increasing FARs – fitted with the City's intentions to densify and improve commercial success and walkability in a neighbourhood. This suggests two key issues. First, policies, most particularly parts of the zoning bylaw, had not been adjusted appropriately to fit the City's present intentions and related development (this is discussed in Section 6.5, below). Second, the role of development officers was treated more as one of fulfilling

functional bureaucratic tasks rather than one of undertaking complex and important tasks as part of planning and urban transformation processes.

For those in the development industry, this added the costs of time, both in battling administration and reworking plans, additional expenses, and uncertainty. Uncertainty can be the difference between a developer taking on a commercial or mixed use infill project and building a status quo suburban commercial development, where physical and financial restrictions are relatively minor. While developers expressed that there were some instances where development officers were flexible, most were not willing to 'stick their neck out'. This particular issue is not solely attributed to individual development officers, but also to the structures they work, which separate them from other departments. With little direction to support the policies and practices of other City groups, and only limited connections between them, the development officer role could easily impede projects of benefit to revitalizing neighbourhoods.

A similar issue was found with the City's Transportation Department. Many participants described this department as one of the key purveyors of an overly functionalist approach; more nuanced and complex city interests were regularly subverted to operations deemed more important by the department. Evidently, this is another remnant of a modernist and rational-comprehensive approach to city building. For instance, BIA-3 said, "*The Transportation [Department] approaches infrastructure as a bare basic maintenance thing and they only care if something is serviceable. They only look at function and have only very slowly moved to any recognition of aesthetics*".

Issues in coordinating with the Transportation Department were corroborated by many sources, including City staff. As one City staff member said "*There is a tension between corridor and place*" (CE-5), suggesting that the department placed high value on transportation efficiencies with little regard for other factors such as community building. Of the many issues uncovered, the most prominent was the department's insistence on parking studies and minimum parking requirements in neighbourhoods looking to develop a more walkable retail scene (further discussed in Section 6.5.2). Participants considered the Transportation Department to be heavily siloed, followers of an antiquated set of practices rigidly focused on the efficiency and function of transportation systems. Although these priorities can have value, they can also conflict with less quantifiable planning outcomes, such as placemaking and other 'soft' factors related to revitalization. With an abundance of power within City structures, the department was able to maintain its own practices and policies, regardless of their alignment with contemporary city goals.

As the results showed, revitalization staff generally attempted to build and improve informal relationships within the organization, particularly with staff in other revitalization programs, and even with others less involved, in order to help bridge gaps

between different units and to find ways to improve collaboration. Revitalization staff were most often highly aware of the bureaucratic issues that existed and worked to limit the effects on businesses and BIAs by acting as makeshift internal liaisons, pushing for changes where they could, and developing relationships with indirectly related parts of the administration. However, as recognized by some BIAs and City staff, revitalization staff were situated low on the bureaucratic hierarchy, and as a result their power to affect change was quite limited. As such, they ended up spending large amounts of time tied in bureaucracy, trying to advocate to other areas of the organization for the improvement of operations or maintenance tasks, such as streetlight repair or trash collection.

Because of the time spent working to fix operational issues, revitalization workers saw developing relationships with these indirectly related parts of the administration to be important but challenging. For example, CE-1 stated, "*My normal course of business is creating cooperation with other parts of the City*". Similarly, CE-3 also said, "*I do 'Lunch and Learns' with different areas of Administration so BIA's can be better understood*". However, City staff suggested that their efforts in improving collaboration had been generally unsuccessful, but rather that embedded practices in other City departments remained as significant bureaucratic hindrances.

In the literature, there is recognition that bureaucracy is not necessarily or inherently bad, but that it may perform strongly in many functional and repetitive tasks, such as handing out permits to build fences or organizing garbage pick-up, or in protecting organizations from legal and financial risks (Brewer & Walker, 2010; Considine et al., 2009; Olsen, 2006). Instead, it is more complex tasks such as the revitalization of retail areas in which bureaucracies may struggle, as these require adaptability, creativity, regard for context, and heavy community involvement (Peel & Parker, 2017). For reasons such as these, some scholars contend that restructuring or changing formal governance structures and challenging the status quo may contribute to better outcomes in planning (Peel & Parker, 2017; Van Assche et al., 2017; Verwijnen, 1998).

Indeed, in Edmonton, the provision of operations and maintenance seem to be handled reasonably successfully at the scale of the entire city. Generally, streetlights work, the grass is cut on public lands, snow is cleared from roads, and necessary repairs are completed. Tasks like these are undertaken in a bureaucratized manner, through a structured and many-layered system that balances priorities, budgets, efficiency, and safety – that is, a system grounded in modernist influences. Issues with safety and legal liability dimensions, such as malfunctioning traffic lights at major intersections, are usually dealt with rapidly. More complex and nuanced undertakings such as revitalization are not regarded in practice as primary functions of the municipality, nor are their effects

easily measurable. This means that when decorative street lights stop working on a main street – a concern reported by some BIAs – it can be months until the problem is remedied. However, a main street trying to improve or retain attractiveness may be more sensitive than other generic roadways to small issues like this that become backlogged on Administration's waiting list. In simplified terms, having these lights working properly could contribute to a first-time user's positive experience using a retail street at night; perhaps they could be left with a sense of place and a desire to return.

As also discussed (Section 5.2.2.1), to accomplish certain tasks that required support or compliance from the City, BIAs often had to circumvent bureaucracy and go directly to a City Councillor who had the authority to push things through more promptly. This circumvention of City processes shows a dysfunctionality in the relationships between BIAs, City Council, and City Administration. To provide context, under Alberta's 2017 *Municipal Government Act*, a city council may pass a bylaw to establish an area as a BIA and approve its board when it is requested by a group of businesses. Based on powers given to the municipality to manage BIAs, Edmonton's policy indicates that most communication between BIAs and City Council are intended to go through the City Manager (or their staff, the City Administration) (City of Edmonton, 2007). If processes are functioning well and communication between Administration and BIAs is effective, BIAs should not feel the need to regularly supersede official processes and speak directly to city councillors to have their voices heard. Although a savvy approach, this option is not available on a large scale, given the busy agendas of councillors, nor should it need to be used except in extreme circumstances. However, it is clear that both city councillors and BIAs have realized that direct communication helps in streamlining an otherwise complex and bureaucratic process, as councillors can use their influence to speed up processes or make sure that BIA concerns are recognized by City Administration.

An entrenched modernist and bureaucratic approach, therefore, can subvert the more nuanced needs of retail areas, and, as this research shows, lead BIAs and revitalization staff to spend extensive amounts of time and effort tied in bureaucracy. As such, an important and challenging goal may be for the City to place higher priority on less measurable but contextually significant problems. The first step in this approach is to alter the overall governance structure to integrate these groups better and align their work. For many obvious reasons, achieving a perfectly cohesive organizational structure is highly unlikely, but some small changes are likely to have positive impacts on revitalization efforts.

6.4 Progressive Steps in Bureaucracy

The research also identified some initial successes in overcoming bureaucratic challenges. As mentioned earlier, the staff from revitalization programs were generally well aware of bureaucratic issues, having experienced many of them first-hand. For instance, the City showed recognition that the BIA program was struggling to manage and redistribute the operational concerns of their sites; many of these operational concerns required coordination with the Transportation Department, and so the City created a position in the department to help BIAs deal with these issues. However, around the time interviews were conducted, a new City Manager began the processes of dissolving the entire Transportation Department, and working to integrate its staff into other departments such as city planning (Stolte, 2016). This is further evidence that City staff in prominent roles, along with City Council, had recognized issues with the department and had taken steps towards a more cohesive organizational structure. The overall impact of this change is also yet to be determined, but it is important to note that even with an organizational shakeup, staff who have long practised their discipline in a certain way may have difficulties in changing and may continue to create similar barriers.

The value of a more coordinated approach is highlighted by the successes of several closely related revitalization programs. In particular, the FIP and DIP have long been operated together in the same unit of the organization, often under the same management. Because accessing these programs requires land parcels or buildings to be located in BIAs, City staff for these programs were also required to work together. Although these programs still remain small with relatively limited funding, their proximity, knowledge, and collective momentum also helped in the creation of two pilot initiatives, that is, the CSP and the Open Window. These two newer programs are intended to help small businesses grow and thrive, and they were developed, at least in part, because the some of the challenges faced by small businesses had been recognized by an internal City network. This network – which will be referred to as the *business improvement cluster* – included staff for BIAs, as well as the FIP and DIP. As explained by one City participant:

> *We got to Open Window because of its ability to address issues at the City level. The big point that comes through from business owners is "It shouldn't be so difficult! Why am I having this issue?" The City has this all published online, but the pace of innovation in small business is a little slower and they might need the help. (CE-4)*

The overall success of the CSP and Open Window is also still uncertain as both are still relatively new, and few businesses who had been involved in the CSP were available for interview. Even with these limitations in mind, the creation of the programs

brings value to the idea of a more cohesive administrative organization. These programs also operate as a part of the business improvement cluster and have increased opportunities for shared learning and developing a unified direction. In turn, both programs can be commended for their more bottom-up approaches to the revitalization issue. The CSP works closely with the property owners and businesses of particular sites to combine business improvements, for example through providing market research and support, with city planning improvements such as streetscaping and promoting and guiding use of the FIP, which is also made available for these properties. While Open Window is not spatially tied to mature neighbourhoods only, it is rooted in the knowledge about small businesses generated within the business improvement cluster, as noted in the above quote.

The existence of the CSP, in particular, already had one significant effect in the development industry. One developer, DV-3, described his mixed use development on a brownfield site in the centre of Ritchie as a space envisioned to create a 'neighbourhood effect' with 'character' and 'uniqueness'. In this case, DV-3 was able to effectively coordinate with the CSP, which simultaneously planned the redevelopment of a small neighbourhood strip mall across the street. This collaboration allowed revitalization efforts to be compounded, with close integration between the development industry and government. The overall outcome includes several new amenities for a neighbourhood that has experienced decay, including a café, food market, and multiple small local shops. This example highlights how useful structures and processes of governance can help in creating relationships with community actors, to the benefit of particular neighbourhoods.

6.5 Major Policy Issues

6.5.1 Mixed Use Development

Participant interviews did not reveal a large number of specific policy barriers to revitalization. However, a few that did emerge were of critical importance. The majority of these problems regarded the inflexibilities of the zoning bylaw.

Zoning has been used across North America for the past century as a powerful legal tool in comprehensive planning, helping to shape the form of cities based on the segregation of land uses (see Section 2.1.1.2). Zoning has been heavily critiqued in scholarship, most notably by Jane Jacobs (1961), as a key producer of suburban sprawl, low-density mono-functional development, and inner-city decline (Grant, 2002; Hall, 2007; Wickersham, 2001). In particular, zoning contributed to the pervasiveness of single-family homes encompassing large swaths of land, separating communities from essential spaces of gathering and cultural and knowledge exchange; that is, places such

as the streets, sidewalks, and shops of neighbourhoods. Rooted in a functionalist and modernist approach, zoning oversimplified cites and failed to recognize that their complex inner-workings include social identities, relationships, diversity, place, and neighbourhood character.

In 2018, despite promoting mixed use development through various plans and programs, Edmonton's zoning bylaw still does not include a zone that effectively allows for the mix of commercial and residential development on one site. Although CB3, the Commercial Mixed Business Zone, is intended for medium intensity commercial uses with possibilities for upper floor housing, developers reported that it did not usually suit their needs and writing site specific Direct Control Zones (DC2s) was almost always necessary. Creating DC2s requires additional time and expense for developers, City staff who assist in its writing, and City Council who need to approve each individually. Developers considered this a challenging obstacle, DV-4 saying, "*Almost all commercial and mixed use projects need DCs*" and "*Direct Control Zones are bad for the City. Coming up with DCs ties up too much of the City's time, and there is too much uncertainty for developers for these zones*". Uncertainty for developers was over whether efforts and money would be wasted if City Council rejected the zone. As also mentioned earlier, if development officers were inflexible in their interpretation of the zoning bylaw, developers would have to work with the City to build new zones that fit their needs, and this would also tie up time for bureaucrats and developers, still with no certainty in approval.

6.5.2 Minimum Parking Requirements

The most prominent policy issue faced by businesses and developers were MPRs embedded in the zoning bylaw. Cities have used MPRs since as early as the 1930s (closely tied to the proliferation of private automobiles), mainly to ease parking congestion and prevent parking spillover into wider areas (Shoup, 2017). Critical scholarship on parking, led by Donald Shoup, highlights multiple issues with MPRs (Shoup, 1999, 2017). First, depending on the value of land, the development of off-street parking spaces is usually very costly to developers, building owners and tenants, but not to consumers who generally use it for free; this creates a disincentive to develop land or start a new business, particularly in central areas with higher land values. There is also an opportunity cost to not creating a more profitable or dense development on that land. Second, free parking also enables greater vehicle travel, where other more sustainable transportation modes may have been used instead; in turn, traffic congestion is increased, leading to higher time and fuel costs to other travellers, and costs imposed on society such as increased emissions. Accordingly, MPRs are a modernist and auto-oriented urban planning policy that impact central areas designed

for walking and transit by creating development uncertainty and help create bureaucratic barriers that push development elsewhere.

MPR issues such as these have been experienced by developers and businesses in mature neighbourhoods of Edmonton. The following example illustrates this issue. As per the Section 54.2 of the Edmonton Zoning Bylaw, at the time interviews were conducted, restaurant uses – including those in mature areas and on main streets – required 1 off-street parking space per 3.6m^2 of public space (dining space). For a medium-sized restaurant floor of 100m^2 (10 by 10 metres), this meant that about 28 off-street parking stalls were required. In result, the spatial area needed for parking was far more extensive than the area of the dining space itself, as 28 stalls would roughly require between 336m^2 and 448m^2, plus a driving lane[14]. As such, the impact of MPRs is disproportionally weighed on businesses trying to locate in mature areas, where land is constrained and expensive compared with suburban areas.

MPRs resultingly help to maintain and grow an auto-dependent built form, with developers and businesses incentivized to choose easier and cheaper options in suburban locations. In cases where businesses adhere to MPRs along main streets and mature areas, the walkable shopping environment may also be less attractive, with street-facing parking lots and buildings set back many meters, effectively turning areas of main streets into strip malls (Figure 6.1). Many businesses and developers along Edmonton's main streets have had to go through the MPR variance process to lower requirements and open their shops. However, as discussed, achieving a variance at the City of Edmonton can be an onerous process, thereby providing another incentive to locate where spatial and financial land constraints are less challenging.

Figure 6.1: *Strip mall style developments along Whyte Avenue, fronted by parking.*

Source: Author.

[14] For this example, a map area calculator tool (Daft Logic, 2018) was used to provide a rough estimate of the area of typical perpendicular parking stalls on an Edmonton main street. Of the 8 parking stalls tested on 124 Street (between 106 and 105 Avenue), each was roughly 12m^2 - 16m^2. As such, 28 of these stalls would take 336m^2 - 448m^2.

6.5.3 NIMBY and Public Participation

New commercial and mixed use development in established neighbourhoods often comes with significant community or NIMBY (Not-In-My-Backyard) opposition. Grant writes:

> Thus while many engineering and planning barriers to mix have fallen in recent years, and planners and local economic development authorities welcome mix, hesitation derives from cultures barriers that planners cannot easily overcome. People want security, predictability, and tranquillity in their environments. They fear mix. The success of zoning in the 20th century reflects that reality. (2002, p. 80)

Often, community opposition centres on fears of increased traffic congestion and parking demand that that may accompany a new development or businesses in a neighbourhood. In Edmonton, developers, businesses, and BIAs suggested that residents were wary of the customers and workers of businesses parking on the streets in front of their houses. However, many participants added that potentially overparked neighbourhoods were often more of a perception issue than reality. Residents also often showed concern for their property values lowering. NIMBY can be a powerful force, particularly because it may attract media attention or the ears of local city councillors. Indeed, some participants thought this had obstructed the City's progression towards policies more consistent with current goals, such as removing or lowering MPRs or creating a zone for mixed retail-residential buildings. As one City worker said: "*We get pushback from the City, partially based on media and public perception*" (CE-4).

It is contended that in Edmonton, this challenge is partly indicative of a public participation issue. Innes and Booher (2004) contend that failures like these are frequent, in part because typical engagement processes fail to enable genuine and inclusive participation, and allow polarized arguments, such as NIMBY, to take over. Instead, they suggest the use of collaborative approaches that allow all stakeholders to be informed, engage in constructive dialogue, each sharing and learning about each other's private interests, and working to influence decision-making together. One small example highlighting the benefit of a more collaborative approach was seen in Edmonton. The developer in Ritchie (DV-3), though perhaps unknowingly, used his personal and informal brand of collaborative planning. He explained that the extra time and effort he spent talking to the community in the planning process meant that he received ongoing feedback and, in result, community opposition to his development was limited.

Of course, it is important to note that some NIMBY concerns of a community may have merit. For various reasons, specific land uses may have incompatibilities. For example, the noise-related spillover effects from a new live entertainment venue may be concerning to residents in nearby houses.

6.6 Property Tensions

During the data analysis process, tensions associated with property ownership emerged as an important challenge for revitalization. As described earlier (see Section 1.2.4), scholarly arguments stress that property is not only a legal structure that protects the private rights of owners, but is also a social arrangement aimed to serve the collective interests of society. In particular, buildings or land parcels are usually privately owned and operated, but their uses inevitably create spillover effects or externalities. As such, there is necessarily a relationship between nearby buildings and land parcels, and indeed, areas as a whole. This relationship is not always recognized formally through legal structures, but can have substantial impacts, when private and collective interests collide. In this research, several property-related tensions were identified.

6.6.1 Dereliction and Speculation

As found in participant interviews and corroborated in literature, urban blight can be prolonged by property owners who leave buildings or land vacant, waiting for land values to rise before selling for greater returns (i.e., *speculating* on land), or in deferring maintenance to buildings and allowing signs of decay to be visible (e.g., disrepair, broken windows, peeling paint). As Goldstein et al., (2001) write, this can have a large effect on a community because "[l]and that is not cared for and misused alienates the local community, and creates safety threats… [and] provide[s] convenient venues for criminal activity" (p. 2). Additionally, revitalization aims to attract new investment and development, but most developers consider areas with blight and little to no recent development to be risky, meaning that blight can be allowed to endure by property owners (Leinberger, 2005).

This is particularly relevant when property is treated by owners solely as an investment, rather than part of a complex environment that affects and is affected by relationships with others in the community. When blight is sustained, real estate values of nearby parcels and buildings may also drop and depreciating 'assets' may receive even less investment in repairs or improvements. As such, when land or buildings remain decayed or unused, others nearby may also allow their assets to degrade. As appearance, services, amenities, safety, and property values diminish, so too does quality of life, which exacerbates the tendency for developers, businesses, and homeowners to avoid investing in the area. Importantly, the opposite is also true; when land or buildings are maintained or improved, incentives are created for other property owners nearby to do likewise.

Participants highlighted that similar property dynamics were present in Edmonton. For instance, they reported that rents along main streets, especially Whyte

Avenue, were too high, with rates set at unaffordable rates for small businesses. This, they said, contributed high vacancy rates in the area. This was attributed to property owners who were believed to look at their buildings as long-term investments and "[o]nly a small percentage of these owners [were] interested in creating community places" (LA-G-1). As such, property owners did not mind leaving buildings vacant for long periods of time, as long as high rent tenants would eventually fill them. This creates a bias towards chain stores, which are generally able to pay higher rents; the chain store bias, in turn, creates issues for the character and uniqueness of the neighbourhood, where small businesses had once thrived and were part of the local identity. A higher proportion of vacancies would also contribute to a less attractive retail street to consumers, potentially slowing business for other nearby retailers as well.

Additionally, many property owners were seen as detached from their sites and their tenants. They were difficult for BIAs to contact because they lived out of town or were not interested in talking to them, were generally disinterested in undertaking repairs and maintenance, and were reluctant to take advantage of City initiatives such as the FIP and DIP. To them, improvements did not generate a sufficient return on investment to be undertaken. By contrast, some other property owners understood how making use of city programs and aiming to create character developments benefited others in the area, even when faced with higher costs and risk. For instance, as CE-3 said: "*Property owners don't take care always. Beljan Development, who did the Limelight Building on 124th Street, is different. They're doing work that fits the context of the neighbourhood*". However, firms such as Beljan Development are the exception, not a typical representation of property owners and developers.

Given the reality of fragmented ownership in most urban contexts, it is critical to recognize that privately-owned lands and buildings are not entirely separate entities but are instead part of a complex framework of interrelations with other public and private actors with property rights in the area. Indeed, this interconnection is at the heart of understanding property as a relation. In this vein, and in opposition to how it is often erroneously interpreted, property is not solely a legal institution that enforces private rights to meet private interests; instead, property at its core is a social arrangement that serves collective interests. In turn, property ownership does not suggest that owners have the absolute right to do what they please with their lands and buildings, but that certain social responsibilities come with ownership, some legally enforced and others not. This suggests that for municipalities to undertake effective revitalization efforts, they should not only invest in public infrastructure but carefully consider how private property is managed, working to help break practices such as speculation and neglect and finding ways to attract investment and catalyse the local real estate market (Leinberger, 2005).

To do this, as discussed in the results, some participants saw it important to give property owners more 'skin in the game' by requiring them to become paying members of BIAs or taxing property owners who left their land parcels or buildings vacant, both requiring changes in the MGA. As mentioned, however, despite a review of the BIA levy, the provincial government opted for no changes. The province's MGA review states that "Stakeholders consider it important that property owners are involved in the BIA; however, BIAs should be driven by the business owners" (Government of Alberta, 2017). This means that BIAs may continue to find difficulties in engaging some building owners – who remain impacted by BIAs but are not paying members – to access funding and support for improvements through, for example, the City's FIP and DIP. The business-driven nature of a BIA is important but framing it in this way neglects the importance of the property relation between nearby owners and tenants – one that is key to promoting changes in the built environment of these areas. Around the same time, the provincial government proposed to allow municipalities to impose additional tax on derelict and vacant properties to incentivize their sale and redevelopment, but its outcome is still uncertain (Stolte, 2017). Approaches like these were critiqued by those in the development industry, who instead preferred the incentive-based methods to spur property owners to develop.

6.6.2 Density in Development

Another tension associated with property was in the density and form that new commercial and mixed use developments in mature neighbourhoods were taking. Increasing residential densities was considered by many participants to be essential in supporting business viability along main streets and other mature neighbourhood retail areas. Particularly for developments near Whyte Avenue, opposition to high-rise redevelopment has been based on the fact that buildings in the surrounding area are at a much smaller scale and the heritage feel of the area may be compromised.

It is suggested that there is a natural property-related tension between the private developers and planners; the developers play the role of profit maximizers, while planners are supposed to arbitrate what is in the public interest or public good. If the City limited the abilities of these developers to maximize profits through greater building heights, they would threaten to pull out of the development. Naturally then, for a municipality struggling to attract infill development, there was an incentive to allow these developments to occur, even if they were insensitive to community needs.

Critically, there is no absolute right to profit maximization awarded by private property ownership: the right to develop land is both constrained and enabled by public regulations, and to a certain extent by social relationships with other stakeholders (e.g., neighbouring residents, businesses, property owners, and users of nearby public space).

In theory, then, developers implementing changes in communities should be at least partly responsible for ensuring positive relationships with, and beneficial impacts for, the surrounding community. In reality, however, the formalized public relationships – such as zoning – weigh heavily on developer decision-making, while informal social relationships have less influence, despite heavy implications on surrounding communities. In the case of the high-rise developments, social relationships were subverted as developments were approved. In other words, the interests of nearby businesses and area users who wanted Whyte Avenue to maintain its heritage feel, to protect its culture and appeal, were defeated. At the municipal level, this is often how things are debated; little priority is given to crucial social relationships with the neighbourhood.

In the example of the Brewery District (presented in Section 4.1.4.1), DV-G-1, representing a large development firm with significant knowledge of Edmonton's real estate industry, suggested that a lack of nearby density was the reason that the site resembles a suburban commercial development. Density, they argued, was not sufficient in the area to support the commercial uses without a significant amount of on-site parking which resulted in the internal orientating of buildings to face the parking lot. However, there had been high potential to create a walkable, community-oriented, mixed use development on this site; it is located in the Oliver neighbourhood, the second most densely populated in Edmonton (TruHome Real Estate, 2018), which is directly adjacent to downtown. As a result, despite being a far different form of development than the aforementioned towers, very similar tensions were found between developers seeking profit maximization and the best practices for community development. In this case, the developer avoided the costlier or riskier approach of designing a walkable and higher density mixed use development, instead aiming to boost revenues by undertaking a status quo form of car-oriented development. While ensuring that the district could be profitable by enabling a large number of drivers to access the site, the benefits back to the local area were less than they could have been, particularly as walking connections were generally poorly designed (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). Following these examples, it is argued that significant deliberation should be given to how relationships within the community can be considered more deeply in the development process.

6.6.3 Neighbourhood Parking

The provision and use of parking presents a complex property rights issue. NIMBY concerns from residents about overloaded street parking in front of houses have, at least in part, led to the preservation of MPRs, causing numerous issues for business and property owners locating within or adjacent to residential neighbourhoods. This is consistent with informal (and legally inaccurate) understandings of residential property

ownership as encompassing a right to park on the street outside one's home (Blomley, 1998).

In this context, businesses and property owners are faced with the high costs of providing off-street parking, the bureaucracy of trying to attain variances, or the option of moving to less challenging suburban locations. All of these outcomes are contrary to revitalization efforts, which seek to promote business growth in central locations and create attractive and walkable streets fronted with fine-grain retail shops (and not surface parking lots). As powerful as the concerns of residents have been, it is critical to note that on-street parking spaces in front of residences are publicly owned, regardless of adjacent home ownership. The management of public space should aim to satisfy public interests above private interests; in this example, it can be argued that businesses provide valuable public amenities to nearby communities, and any spillover parking is a small consequence.

In any case, as contended by Shoup (2017), the removal of MPRs should be accompanied by the addition of a dynamic pricing model for parking in areas that may become more congested. In other words, during peak shopping hours, parking prices are raised to ensure that a small number of stalls always remains available so that cruising for parking does not become an issue; prices are lowered accordingly in off-peak hours. Shoup recognizes the political barriers of pricing residential street parking, and proposes, first, that parking for residents can remain free, and second, that all or some of the collected parking revenue can be given back to what he terms *parking benefit districts.* Operating similarly to BIAs, these districts could use funds to make improvements to their neighbourhoods so that there would be visible benefits of paid parking to locals. For instance, funds could be used to help improve bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian crossings, landscaping, storefronts and restaurant patios. Although this idea has only been adopted in a few cities and its effects remain understudied, it presents a potential solution to the property relations issue of parking, reducing the need for businesses to own off-street parking, allowing residents a free parking spot, and funding tangible urban improvements. One BIA participants suggested for this in Edmonton, saying "*Free parking in residential doesn't make any sense… Take the money and then tell people that it is staying in the local economy"* (BIA-5).

6.7 Progressive Steps in City Policy

Since interviews were conducted, several progressive policy measures for revitalization have been undertaken by the City of Edmonton. In April 2016, the City amended the zoning bylaw to lower off-street parking requirements for four commercial use classes: Bars and Neighbourhood Pubs, Nightclubs, Restaurants, and Speciality Food Services. These amendments were specifically applied to three prominent main street areas –

Whyte Avenue, Jasper Avenue, and 124 Street. The MPR changes are summarized in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: 2016 Amendment to MPRs for eating and drinking establishments

Area	Old MPR	New MPR	Exception
124 Street	1 stall/3.0m^2	1 stall/24.0m^2	If developments within these boundaries are up to 50 occupants or 60m^2, no off-street parking is required.
Jasper Avenue	1 stall/3.0m^2	1 stall/28.0m^2	
Whyte Avenue	1 stall/3.0m^2	1 stall/33.0m^2	
Note: MPRs are based upon floor area of publicly available space in these establishments. In other words, for a restaurant or shop, this refers to space that customers can access, and not areas restricted to employees.			

In September 2017, the City introduced the Main Streets Overlay. Overlays are an additional layer in the zoning bylaw that can be placed atop existing zones. The focus of the Main Streets Overlay, as stated in the bylaw, is to regulate pedestrian-oriented design improvements to help the success of commercial areas along main streets and around LRT stations and transit centres. As such, this overlay was designed to include all existing and developing main street areas in Edmonton, as well the areas around current and planned LRT stations and transit centres. This followed the reasoning of some participants, one of whom said: "*Places like 124 Street and Whyte Ave should have different ways of interpreting regulations*" (DV-2).

In part, the new overlay built upon the progress of the 2016 amendment by applying a similarly lowered MPR for eating and drinking establishments throughout all main streets and transit-oriented areas – 1 stall per 30m^2. Within the overlay, for many other non-residential uses including many forms of retail, MPRs were set to 1 stall per 100m^2 of floor area, representing reductions for most use classes. In addition, the overlay was intended to promote more visually appealing commercial streets, by creating new building design regulations including for maximum frontage widths (to support fine-grain retail), prohibiting new parking lots from abutting main streets, and requiring exterior façade finishes that complement the surrounding area.

Because these changes occurred after the interview process was completed, it is unclear how they have so far been received and how much success they have had. However, they clearly reflect greater recognition within the City of some of the complexities of revitalization, such as the challenges that an overemphasis on vehicle parking can have on businesses, developers, and urban form. It is argued, however, that these changes do not go far enough in addressing standing issues. For instance, though MPRs are heavily reduced along main streets and transit-oriented sites, they still remain, adding expenses for developers and businesses, including those hoping to attract users on foot or taking transit. Indeed, if attempting to achieve further variances on their MPR, these actors may continue to face bureaucratic barriers and time delays from the City of

Edmonton, particularly via development officers. Also, as earlier arguments from Shoup noted, MPRs lead to more constrained parking availability, and a dynamic pricing model could be implemented to help curb drivers from circulating for parking in adjacent residential areas. This has not been trialed in Edmonton. However, it is clear that these changes indicate some policy progress towards achieving revitalization goals.

6.8 Other Issues in Revitalization

Some challenges were identified that affected but were not necessarily exclusive to mature areas of Edmonton. These included specific challenges faced by local independent businesses and retailers. Literature on localism emphasizes how neighbourhood-scale retail can improve neighbourhood resilience and quality of life by providing opportunities for employment, offering goods and services that cater to specific and diverse populations, and facilitating the growth of local culture and diversity through food, music, art, and other mechanisms (Hess, 2009). A developed sense of community is a key contributor to the flourishing of neighbourhoods, by developing local resilience, sustainability, places of meaning, and places for social connection (see Duany & Playter-Zyberk, 1992; Jacobs, 1961; Kunstler, 1993; Relph, 1976).

As such, it is suggested that local independent businesses can help enhance these factors if they are economically sustainable and have strong ties to the community. While the economic success of commercial neighbourhoods sometimes hinges on the inclusion of national chains or restaurants providing a retail anchor that allows smaller businesses to succeed, vibrancy benefits may be provided to a greater degree by local independent businesses. For example, while a coffeehouse chain (e.g., Starbucks) may provide a draw to the area through name recognition and by being gathering space for community members, it may also produce a homogeneous or placeless design that is indistinguishable from other areas where it locates. As such, it may not foster localized interest and place value among the community (instead drawing in customers from a larger catchment area), nor contribute to local culture and diversity. Conversely, beyond being just a gathering space, a local independent coffeehouse may provide a uniqueness that adds to a sense of place in a community; residents may value the space for its contribution to the local milieu and make consumer choices to support the business. It is important to recognize that this argument requires context and nuance; it is based on general tendencies rather than incontrovertible truths (e.g. some Starbucks locations may provide distinct vibrancy benefits to a community).

In Edmonton, many participants recognized the impacts of local independent business in providing non-market value back to their communities, by helping to develop culture and sense of community, quality of life, places of gathering and meaning, improving the reputation of the city, and more resilient and connected neighbourhoods.

However, local retailers also faced significant barriers, such as high rents and real estate industry bias towards chain stores, both in bank financing and the brokering of commercial properties. The financing and brokering barriers did not exist because those involved on the industry side were prejudiced against small businesses; instead, these existed because small businesses provide less stability, security, and more risk in investment than established and chain businesses do. As was also found, although some small business had the innovator mindset, in many cases, small traditionalist businesses struggled to stay afloat because of a lack of market understanding, business acumen, and innovative practices.

Reframing some of these problems, many of the revitalization challenges discussed relate to failings of the public sector, but other important barriers are clearly rooted in the actions or failures of private industry and capitalist markets. The bureaucratic obstacles that businesses face are indeed secondary if they are unable to access the capital to start a business in the first instance. These constraints on market entry exist in tension with the underlying concepts of capitalist markets, which promote democratized entrepreneurship as opposed to the dominance of a smaller number of large corporations that control the majority of industries. Large banks and real estate corporations are powerful decision makers that lean towards established businesses and established connections in order to minimize their own and their client's risk and to maximize profits. Although this framework makes sense from a private perspective, little account is taken for the public good or the relation with communities, wherein many of the effects of real estate development and business are experienced. Moreover, the basic principles of free enterprise include taking on risk to achieve better overall outcomes, but such entrepreneurialism is limited by the present structures. These are, perhaps, deeper issues than can be solved by an individual municipal government, hence the potential solutions given in this paper are limited. Some novel methods of financing small businesses do exist, such as the BDC that finances small businesses in Canada, but the underlying issues remain.

BIAs suggested that their programs to help educate businesses – ensuring, for instance, that they followed best practices such as having consistent operating hours, store layouts, marketing, and took advantage of City grants – were having limited impact, as few businesses showed up to the workshops and programming they planned. Two City programs, the CSP and Open Window, had made strides in addressing these challenges. The CSP attempted to build close relationships and trust with business owners, working to help them with market research, shifting their practices to maintain relevancy, and accessing City grants. Open Window recognized the challenges faced by many businesses in navigating City bureaucracy in acquiring permits, offering support by helping to streamline the process and overcome obstacles. However, as mentioned,

these programs are only funded to operate on a very small scale, and have so far been offered to just a few corner stores and businesses. Expanding and refining programs such as these may help the City of Edmonton better understand how to address challenges faced by local independent businesses, particularly because they operate by building close relationships with those businesses.

Another solution proposed by participants was the creation of spaces for business incubation. Business incubators can help provide shared workspaces for early-stage businesses without requiring the signing of lengthy and expensive leases, as well as offering business training, supports, and external connections. As Theodorakopolous, Kakabadse, and McGowan (2014) show, assessing the impact of business incubation can be challenging; while some data (such as employment growth generated by incubator firms) can be collected, there are also various 'soft' factors (including the goals of individual businesses) that are more difficult to quantify. They find that effective management and monitoring of businesses is likely essential in cultivating their success. Participants in Edmonton suggested that finding appropriate management for business education may be difficult, but that shared spaces could be valuable. Although one participant listed three incubator spaces in Edmonton, only one was a true incubator – Startup Edmonton. Homestead Coworking and Unit B provided the incubator benefits of cheaper shared workspace but did not involve a program to help foster business success. It is suggested that future research looks into the effectiveness and possible growth of business incubation in Edmonton.

6.9 Reflections on Path Dependence and Automobility

Path dependence (reviewed in Section 2.3) is a scenario where current decision making and processes are constrained to particular pathways based on past decisions and processes (Arthur, 1994; MacKinnon, 2008). In other words, "legacies from the past … limit and enable decision making now" (Van Assche et al., 2017, p. 17). Pathways are self-reinforcing; that is, they become increasingly entrenched through time, as additional decisions continue to reflect and necessitate them. Automobility was identified as a key example of path dependence, in which the dominance and necessity of the automobile has become elevated through time as the built environment, as well as social and institutional systems have developed around it. It should be noted that path dependence is not innately bad, as even many beneficial systems can be characterised as path dependent. However, the challenge in breaking from entrenched pathways may be considerable. Organizational structures can produce internal path dependencies. For instance, *learning effects* may occur: as organizations invest and specialize in particular tasks, and as their expertise and these grows, they fail to reflect on their actions and

allow the performance of these tasks to continue, regardless of their efficacy (Sydow et al., 2009).

Overall, this research found that path dependence and automobility produced barriers to revitalization efforts in Edmonton. These concepts do not relate to every revitalization challenge, but their effects had some notable consequences. The bureaucracy, a system rooted in modernism, provides an entrenched obstacle to revitalization. First, it limits the power of City staff. This means that their ability to advocate for change and to learn and share insights into revitalization is restricted. Second, bureaucracy produces challenges in navigation for external actors such as businesses, developers, and BIAs. In order to achieve even simple tasks, these actors spend large amounts of time and effort trying to either navigate or circumvent bureaucracy. Third, in part because of the siloed nature of the City as an organization, there is a lack of cohesion between different groups with responsibilities for revitalization. For instance, development officers can be reluctant to grant variances for MPRs along main streets, despite a number of City initiatives that would be in support. Fourth, the Transportation Department, a group whose work was rigidly based in modernist understandings of functionality and efficiency, held back changes that required more nuanced perspectives.

Certain municipal policies also displayed path dependence, as they failed to align with newer city intentions. In particular, longstanding policies in the zoning bylaw for mixed use development and MPRs remained ingrained in the zoning bylaw, in conflict with goals to reduce surface parking, densify central areas, and create walkable retail streets. These issues also reflect automobility, particularly through the NIMBY opposition to MPR reductions and commercial uses situated near residences; this opposition reflects the perspectives of residents who are used to a low-density city characterized by land use separation and abundant (free) parking. Similarly, zoning policy for mixed use development was restrictive, in contrast to wider policy (such as in the MDP) that promoted this form of development, requiring developers to write site specific DC2 zones and then be approved by City Council. It is important to note here that recently the City of Edmonton has begun to take steps to challenge some of the path- and auto-dependent practices, in ways which may help to invigorate revitalization efforts. For instance, it has reduced MPRs in key pedestrian retail areas such as main streets and dissolved the problematic Transportation Department.

Finally, path dependence and related automobility helped create a development industry bias away from central areas, and towards suburban developments. Development requires relationships and interdependencies between developers, planners, financers, brokers, builders, and others. The relationships that a development firm has created through time can make a certain form of development, such as

suburban big box retail, easier and more efficient through time. For instance, because of their experience funding suburban commercial, and understanding of its risks and benefits, lenders often prefer to fund their status quo form of development only, and not undertake more risky and costly ventures in more central areas. In addition, development in central areas is disincentivized by City barriers that disproportionally affect developments in central areas, by greater uncertainties (due to factors such as NIMBY), and higher land costs.

A key finding of this research is that the above factors can also lead to development in a central area being designed with suburban features, such as large surface parking, single uses, and poor walkability. The key example of this is the Brewery District in the Oliver neighbourhood. The developers aimed for certainty, knowing that in Edmonton, the status quo for consumers is driving and this was most likely to help bring a solid return on investment. If medium or high density residential development had been mixed into the District, and pedestrian infrastructure and connectedness improved, the District may have been able to rely more on local residents to support business, rather than relying on driving customers from a larger area. This, however, would have required more effort and initial investment from the developer, to learn more and develop relations around this type of development, and would offer less certainty of success.

Overall, moving towards revitalization requires path dependencies, such as automobility and the bias towards suburban development, to be identified, understood, and challenged in both formal and informal processes of governance. However, *challenging* these path dependencies is not straightforward, as they are deeply embedded in structures of society. Pathways are difficult to leave precisely because they are built into the lives, perceptions, and socialities of citizens, the systems that guide real estate development and business, and the actions of the government.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

This thesis has examined efforts to revitalize retail areas in mature neighbourhoods of Edmonton, using a qualitative case study approach. The key finding is that to effectively revitalize, understanding and addressing complex relationships between a variety of actors and systems is necessary but challenging, as path dependence upholds bureaucratic practices, values efficiency over place, and incentivizes status quo development practices. Without a consistent vision and system to help bind together revitalization efforts, there is a lack of momentum and cohesiveness in policy and practice. This section provides an overview of the research, organized around its objectives.

7.1 Objective 1: To identify and evaluate barriers to revitalizing mature neighbourhood retail areas, as experienced at the neighbourhood scale.

The neighbourhood scale brings a 'ground-level' perspective to revitalization, offering learnings related to the actions (and interactions) of businesses, property owners, local organizations, communities, and the real estate industry. These actors share an appreciation for mature retail areas and local businesses, in terms of their ability to connect and give back to communities, provide places of meaning and culture, and deliver essential goods and services to neighbourhoods. They also share an awareness that establishing and maintaining vibrancy in mature neighbourhoods is a struggle, and that independent retailers often fail to innovate or adapt their practices to stay competitive.

Along main streets such as Whyte Avenue, the neglect and dereliction of land and buildings was upheld by commercial property owners who failed to invest in maintenance or upgrades, instead engaging in speculation. Similarly, building vacancy was increased by property owners who kept lease rates too high for small businesses, waiting for a higher paying tenant such as a national chain. Increasing residential densities in mature neighbourhoods was considered critical to the success of local retail, as was integrating infill sensitively into neighbourhood contexts. However, tall mixed use tower developments were becoming commonplace as developers pushed the City for increased heights to maximize profits. As such, tensions existed between private property owners seeking to maximize their personal benefits, and others in the area whom their decisions were affecting.

7.2 Objective 2: To identify and evaluate barriers to revitalizing mature neighbourhood retail areas, found in policies and practices at the local government scale.

Findings related to the local government scale regard the City of Edmonton's policies and processes, and their relation to retailers, BIAs, and the development industry. In particular, it was found that the City lacked an overarching vision that bound its revitalization programs together. The resulting lack of momentum meant that revitalization staff had little power to push for changes or advocate for businesses or BIAs within City structures, despite their front-line understandings of the issues faced in mature neighbourhoods. Importantly, bureaucratic characteristics hindered revitalization by requiring both City staff and external actors to spend time and effort navigating – or sometimes circumventing – bureaucracy to achieve even simple ends.

Entrenched policies, such as MPRs and restrictive zoning for mixed use development, did not align with City intentions for revitalization, forcing developers and businesses into the bureaucratic process. Policies such as these were maintained *by* a bureaucracy struggling to adapt, which included a siloed and powerful Transportation Department that prioritized transportation efficiencies above placemaking and community building. Nevertheless, as the research concluded, the City began to make strides to challenge entrenched practices and policies, first by dissolving the Transportation Department and integrating some of its staff into city planning units and, second, by starting to reduce minimum parking requirements around main streets and transit-oriented sites.

By way of its Corner Store and Open Window programs, the City had also recognized some of the issues that mature neighbourhood retailers faced and aimed to create close relationships with businesses like these. This would help in identifying and developing City knowledge about specific retail challenges, providing business support, and guiding business through City processes and in accessing City programs such as Façade Improvement. However, these programs remained limited in size and funding, and have only helped a small number of businesses and sites to date.

7.3 Recommendations

On the basis of this research, recommendations can be made to help refine the City of Edmonton's policies and process to enable revitalization to occur. However, the primary focus of this research was to identify *barriers* to revitalization, rather than solutions, and so further investigation into some recommendations may be required. Additionally, revitalization is complex in nature, both affecting and affected by many actors and systems, and is in a constant state of change. As such, no particular change can be a

panacea, but a confluence of relatively small changes may assist in addressing some of the contemporary challenges.

As considered at length (see Sections 5.1, 6.3, and 6.4), bureaucratic challenges within the City of Edmonton hinder revitalization. These include challenges for external actors, such as businesses, BIAs, and developers, as well as internal actors such as revitalization staff. Underpinning these issues was the lack of a central vision tying together revitalization programs and initiatives. Instead, they operated separately, with only informal connections between many groups, and limited ability to build momentum and gain priority within the larger City organization. In order to address issues such as these, the following recommendations are given.

First, the City of Edmonton should formally recognize each of its efforts that is closely connected to revitalization, bind them together with a unified and overarching vision, and restructure them into one unit within the organization. This would provide more specific and formal connections between staff in these departments, as well as helping to ensure greater consistency in policy and process. The potential benefits of this approach were observable in the business improvement cluster in which some small City initiatives, including the FIP and DIP, worked in concert, identified issues in the business community as well as City program deficiencies, and eventually helped in the creation of the CSP and Open Window initiatives to address some of these. If *all* groups with responsibility for revitalization were brought together in a single (larger) cluster, they would be able to engage more formally in the sharing of knowledge and ideas, and by acting collectively would be better able to advocate changes to higher City management. This recommendation does not seek to alter entrenched bureaucratic structures in significant ways, but instead presents a way of operating through them more successfully.

Second, the City should create a formal liaison position or office to help external actors navigate bureaucratic challenges. As noted in Sections 5.1.2 and 6.3.1, revitalization staff often act informally as liaisons for external actors, helping them to navigate complex bureaucratic hierarchies. In so doing, they are often operating outside their roles and taking large amounts of their time to advocate for the interests of BIAs and businesses. This Point of Contact idea emerged from interviews (see Section 5.3.1), and would build on Open Window, a program working to streamline permitting processes for small businesses, but with a wider purpose and at a larger scale. The POC should be situated in the combined revitalization unit, responding to a wide variety of issues faced in revitalization, and formally networked with other staff with relevant roles, such as development officers and transportation engineers. In turn, this would allow staff working on specific revitalization programs to spend their time building them and improving governance, rather than advocating for external needs within bureaucracy.

Beyond helping in external bureaucratic navigation, this role would also help identify common issues in City processes and policies, as reported by both external and internal actors, and to work with the collective revitalization group to address them. Indeed, a key intention of such a role would be to help identify where city policies were not aligning with overall revitalization visions (which this research found to be commonplace), and then working to address these. This role, as several participants recommended, should have sufficient bureaucratic power to push for change or effectively advocate for revitalization interests. Once again, this recommendation assumes that Edmonton's bureaucratic structures are likely remain in the near future, but that steps to streamline important processes can be taken.

Third, MRPs should be removed altogether and replaced with a dynamic pricing model for on-street parking, as proposed by Donald Shoup (2017). This research identified several policies that have created obstacles to revitalization, generally embedded in the zoning bylaw (see Sections 5.2.4 and 6.5). The most obstructive of these were MPRs. Though the City has taken steps to lower MPRs along main streets and at transit-oriented sites, this strategy (described in Section 6.6.3) would eliminate the legal necessity for businesses and developers to spend large amounts of money providing off-street parking. Instead, the costs of parking would be shifted onto drivers, the proliferation of large surface parking lots would be reduced, and the dynamic pricing system would allow a controlled level of parking on streets. This strategy is politically complex, given powerful NIMBY barriers and embedded auto-dependent practices.

Fourth, in addressing NIMBY opposition, including against new businesses and commercial developments in established neighbourhoods, it is suggested that the city investigates how collaborative public participation approaches can be used to support revitalization and infill (see Section 6.5.3). Collaborative approaches can help bring community members more deeply into planning decisions, by allowing them to engage in constructive dialogue directly with developers and businesses, so that each can share their concerns and feel more represented in the decision making process (Innes & Booher, 2004). Collaborative approaches are seen as a critical way of tackling problematic NIMBY-related property relations.

Fifth, and also concerning property tensions, finding methods to challenge vacant lots and buildings (speculation), as well as neglect and dereliction is important, particularly because of the spillover effects on surrounding areas (see Sections 4.1.3 and 6.6.1). Two potential 'skin in the game' solutions were proposed in the discussion: first, that BIAs require property owners to be paying members; and second, that the provincial government allow cities to create higher taxes on derelict and vacant properties to incentivise their development or sale. The former, as mentioned, was recently rejected by the provincial government and it was suggested that BIAs should be

driven by businesses not property owners, reflecting a misunderstanding of the importance of property owners in these environments. The ability to impose additional tax on owners of derelict and vacant sites is still uncertain. Although development industry actors preferred applying incentives to spur the development or sale of these sites, it was suggested by businesses and BIAs that some property owners were completely detached from these sites and disinterested in taking advantage of City initiatives such as the Façade Improvement and Development Incentive Programs. As such, it is recommended that the potential effects of BIA levies on property owners and taxes on derelict and vacant sites are carefully studied and modelled by the municipal government; if either or both emerges as advantageous to redeveloping mature commercial areas, then the City should apply pressure to the provincial government to allow these.

Sixth, finding ways to help local businesses to succeed is important in developing resilient and diverse communities that foster a sense of place and belonging (see Section 6.8). Small retailers often struggle in many ways: from innovation and marketing, to acquiring necessary permits and taking advantage of City programs, to attaining financing and finding appropriately-sized spaces at reasonable prices (see Section 4.1.5). Two City programs, Open Window and the Corner Store Program, have taken more bottom-up approaches to working with retailers to address some of these issues. It is recommended that the City expands and refines these programs, making them available to a large number of businesses and sites.

Seventh, the City should investigate creating an arms-length, government-funded business incubator. While some participants thought that business incubation would be difficult, because proper management and support for businesses is critical and would require expensive salaries, the City has the resources to fund such a program adequately and could justify this expenditure as in the public interest. Currently, business incubation is largely focused on growing new businesses in the technology sector in Edmonton, through Startup Edmonton. A new program should assist a broader range of local businesses in getting started and learning how to succeed once they graduate.

7.4 Reflections on Methodology

This project followed a qualitative case study approach, to examine challenges in revitalizing mature neighbourhood retail areas in Edmonton. Examining just a single case enabled a greater depth of investigation as well as flexibility in the research process (Herbert, 2010). For example, as the research uncovered unexpected challenges, such as financing issues faced by small retailers, it was possible to add new participants involved in the financing industry to verify the findings and expand learnings. In turn, the researcher was able to discuss a wide range of issues with a variety of participants

from the development industry, City planning, BIAs, and retailers. This allowed for the verification of some ideas across different groups but also illuminated a diversity of perspectives.

However, formulating the research around one particular case also means that this research is highly contingent on the local context; with greater depth can come less transferability. Many of the issues uncovered, particularly those related to specific City of Edmonton programs, are relevant primarily to Edmonton. This is not problematic, as greater depth enabled more practical applications of the findings, including the creation of specific recommendations for the City. That said, this research also connected back to wider concepts, such as path dependence, bureaucratic obstacles, entrenched policy, and complex property relations that broadly relate to understanding the dynamics of street-level retail in established neighbourhoods of cities, including their processes of revitalization. To cities with similar characteristics – for instance, with comparable urban growth patterns and revitalization intents – this research can potentially bear significance (Mayan, 2009).

One limitation was that revitalization efforts include a wide range of stakeholders, not all of whom could be engaged within the scope of the project. For instance, uncovering further detailed information about the inner workings of the City of Edmonton would require additional interviews with development officers, Transportation Department staff, upper management, and City Councillors. Similarly, neighbourhood residents were not included in the scope of this project. They would have offered valuable perspectives on issues such as NIMBY opposition, the value of local independent businesses to communities, and the perceived effects of revitalization on neighbourhoods. Additionally, City programs such as the CSP and Open Window were relatively new and small initiatives, and so there were few potential participants (i.e., retailers and property owners) who could provide first-hand perspectives on their actions and effectiveness. Finally, the design of this research did not involve quantitative inquiry, which could have utilised additional data about real estate markets, for instance, looking at the precise effects of MPRs on land development. Despite these limitations, this research design enabled an in-depth investigation into revitalization processes in Edmonton, because of its flexible process and inclusion of many key stakeholders.

7.5 Future Research Directions

Several important areas for future research were identified in this research. In particular, participants emphasized the importance of producing more flexibility in the zoning bylaw to help with the creation of mixed use development at the scale of both individual buildings and larger areas. Future research can seek out ways to make the current Edmonton zoning bylaw more flexible, in order to assist with commercial infill efforts.

Additionally, research can look at the possibility of applying methods that would significantly shift the current framework of zoning, such as form-based codes. Form-based codes refer to land development regulations which focus on building form rather than use. They have been proposed as a solution for curbing sprawl, creating urban environments with a sense of place, and providing a wider range of land uses in communities (Sitkowski & Ohm, 2006). Concerns about other policies related to mixed use development, such as building and fire codes, were also expressed through this research, but not in great depth. Further investigation into these specific policies would be valuable, including deeper examination into how they incentivize or disincentivize different forms of development in Edmonton.

Another vital area of future research regards the relationship between City-led revitalization initiatives and gentrification. The key issue here is that revitalized neighbourhoods may solve problems associated with neighbourhood decline but may also contribute to upsurges in housing costs and building leases, leading to the displacement of low-income residents and businesses (Grant, 2002). This dilemma merits serious consideration in specific communities that have been targeted for revitalization. Longitudinal studies would be especially valuable in determining if and how residential mix and demographics change as revitalization unfolds at the neighbourhood level. Identifying strategies to encourage (commercial) revitalization while also limiting (or preventing) gentrification-related residential displacement is also important.

This research also found that NIMBY concerns play a role in opposing new commercial developments or businesses near residential neighbourhoods. Public participation involving collaborative approaches such as consensus building more closely involve all stakeholders in decision-making processes (Innes & Booher, 1999). Such approaches can help in combating vehement opposition to change, as stakeholders may be and feel more involved in these processes. Further investigation should be done into the City of Edmonton's public engagement processes, to understand current practices, and identify whether more collaborative approaches could help to curb NIMBY concerns by engaging residents more effectively.

7.6 Contributions to the Field

Many studies have discussed pathways in urban governance and public administration (e.g., Assche, Beunen, & Duineveld, 2012) and path dependencies in regional economic development (e.g., Martin & Sunley, 2006), but to the best of the researcher's knowledge, none has clearly connected path dependence with the revitalization of central commercial areas. This research finds that adherence to particular pathways – in this context, practices and policies rooted in legacies of modernist city building – can create obstacles to achieving contemporary goals for revitalization. One vital practice is the

entrenchment of bureaucratic hierarchies and siloes, which can impede the abilities of individual revitalization agents (e.g., City staff, developers, and businesses) to affect change.

This research also contributes to a body of literature on property relations and regeneration. For example, this literature has discussed the challenges of redeveloping vacant land and derelict buildings (see Goldstein, Jensen, & Reiskin, 2001) and the relationships of property and the public sector in regenerating neighbourhoods (see Imrie & Thomas, 1993). It is found that speculative practices and neglect, and the resulting dereliction, vacancies, and signs of urban decay can have spillover effects that challenge revitalization at the neighbourhood scale. In turn, developers, property owners, or businesses who are attentive to neighbourhood contexts can provide places of value to local communities.

Another contribution of this research is to literature on automobility. This concept regards the influences of a self-reinforcing auto-dependent society (Merriman, 2009). It has richly demonstrated how both social and built structures have shifted due to auto-dominance and how an emphasis on unrestricted motion has fundamentally changed the human experience of cities, particularly at street level. In this research, automobility was reflected in city planning practices that placed greater importance on transportation efficiencies than nuanced community building actions such as placemaking. In addition, policies such as minimum parking requirements have reflected and reinforced auto-dominance, upheld both by entrenched transportation planning practices and NIMBY opposition to change. Systems related to real estate development can maintain biases toward status quo suburban development because of the additional uncertainties (e.g., NIMBY), costs in central areas, and existing observed consumer behaviour centred on driving.

Finally, this thesis aims to recognize complexity in the process of creating revitalized urban retail environments and neighbourhoods that are denser, more pedestrian friendly, resilient, and which encourage greater senses of place and community – ideas which are discussed widely in scholarship (e.g., Duany & Playter-Zyberk, 1992; Jacobs, 1961; Oldenburg, 1989). As shown, engrained practices in city building, development, and society can create significant obstacles to achieving these goals by creating biases towards the status quo, and to eradicate these is critical to achieving revitalization goals. While a considerable task, change can be initiated by smaller steps taken at the neighbourhood scale, or in the practices of city builders with the vision to push for change, which can build momentum and set a new pathway towards urbanity.

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Appendix A: Sample Semi-Structured Interview Questions

General Questions:

1. Have Edmonton's traditional commercial corridors changed over the years? In what ways? This includes places such as 124 Street, 118th Avenue, and Whyte Avenue. What is being done well? What is not being done well?
2. Are small or independent businesses valuable or relevant in the Edmonton context? Why or why not?
3. What challenges do small or independent businesses face in Edmonton?
4. Are existing small businesses, clusters of businesses, or commercial corridors in mature neighbourhoods affected by the development and expansion of large commercial shopping centres such as South Edmonton Common? If so, how?
5. Do small businesses face challenges when trying to locate or find success in mature areas of Edmonton? If so, what challenges? What are the pros and cons of locating in Greenfield developments instead?
6. Are there practices, policies, and regulations of the City of Edmonton that are creating challenges/opportunities for small or independent businesses? Is there a policy or practice bias towards/against larger chain-type developments?
7. If you consider changes necessary, what realistic methods should be taken to ensure small businesses remain viable in mature neighbourhoods?
8. Are you familiar with current city programs which relate to the revitalization of these areas (BIAs, Façade Programs, streetscaping, revitalization efforts, etc.)? If you are familiar, how is each respective program helpful/not helpful? Is it being used well in Edmonton? How can it be improved?
9. Do you know of any other potential tools a city can use to respond to these issues?
10. How important is a community level response in addressing these issues? How important is a municipal level response?

Specified questions for participants involved in commercial real estate or development:

1. What is the role of a _____ (commercial real estate broker, banker, developer, financier, etc.)? How does your relationship with tenants or property owners work?
2. What factors are considered in trying to match tenants to commercial occupancies?
3. Why might businesses choose to locate in Greenfield developments rather than mature neighbourhoods?

4. What challenges exist in locating tenants in mature neighbourhoods? For instance, are there any city regulations or practices that create barriers?
5. How important are heavily engaged property owners in maintaining or revitalizing mature commercial areas?
6. What would really make places like Whyte Avenue successful?
7. Is there an industry bias towards chain stores? If so, why?

Specified questions for participants from City of Edmonton Administration:

1. Which programs at the City of Edmonton do you consider valuable in helping to revitalize mature commercial areas?
2. Do you recognize any related administrative challenges which cause challenges internally or externally? Do these include any policies or practices that could be improved? If so, how?

Specified questions for retailers and businesses:

3. What are the largest challenges faced by your business and others around you?
4. Do you ever run into challenges in working with city bureaucracy? Are there challenges created by the city that you have faced?
5. Are there challenges in financing your business? Is there a bias towards more reputed chain stores?
6. What is your relationship like with the property owner of your location? How does this contribute to the success of the business and area?