



What we Heard Report

Downtown Neighbourhood - Traffic Impact Engagement Downtown Dike Construction
March, 2022

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Summary

After the presentation of the Downtown Dike on December 9, 2021, the Town of Drumheller and the Drumheller Resiliency and Flood Mitigation Office (DRFMO) prepared a short, logic-based survey to capture concerns regarding potential traffic implications due to the construction of the Downtown Dike. **This survey was available to residents from December 9, 2021 to January 20, 2022 (6 weeks), and captured 387 total responses, representing 4.6% of the population of Drumheller¹.**

Engagement was implemented primarily through an online survey hosted through Survey Monkey, with the option of participating with paper copies.

The survey was campaigned on all Town of Drumheller social media accounts, Drumheller.ca, all DRFMO social media accounts, floodreadiness.drumheller.ca, the Drumheller Mail and Stingray Radio. The survey was also available at the December 9, 2021 presentation and was both mentioned and shared at each presentation thereafter. The Town of Drumheller was reviewing existing sentiment in the area regarding the proposed changes. An important part of this process was to get feedback from residents who travel through the area, and to determine mitigation to concerns that may be explored in the future.

Upon completion of the survey, geographical tags were added to civic addresses to identify where respondents resided. These tags were created on the basis of districts in the Land Use Bylaw, as well as discretionarily based on the location of the Downtown Dike and residents in areas that would be directly impacted (where traffic could flow into, adjacent land owners, etc.). The included tags were:

- **Neighbourhood district:** 196
- **Impacted neighbours:** 105 respondents
- **Downtown district:** 25 respondents
- **Inconclusive:** 37
- **PO Boxes:** 17
- **Non-resident:** 7

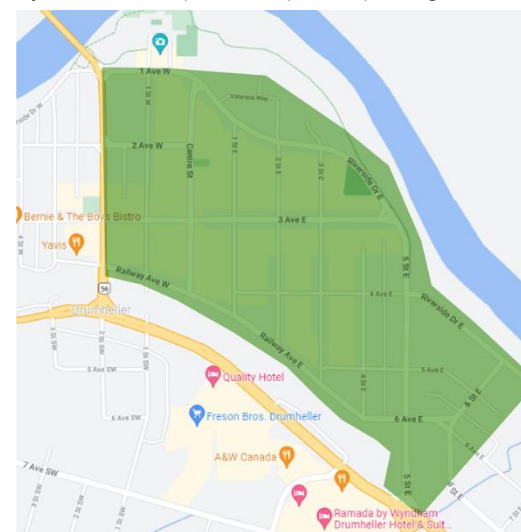


Figure 1 - Impacted neighbours & downtown district

¹ 2020 Population of Drumheller is 8,223 <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/drumheller/population/#/?from=2016&to=2020>

What we Asked

1. What is your civic address?
2. Are you a
 - a. Resident in the nearby neighbourhood (Downtown and Riverside)
 - b. Commuter (do not live in the area but use this route)
 - c. Downtown business owner
 - d. Other (please specify)
3. After reviewing the presentation of the Downtown Dike and the closure of the 3 Avenue East and Riverside Drive East connection, are you concerned about potential traffic changes?
4. What are you most concerned about regarding the road closures?
5. Do you see any potential positive impacts with the closure of the 3 Avenue East and Riverside Drive East connection?
6. If yes, what are they?

Who participated?

203 respondents are commuters that do not live in the area but use this route.

167 respondents are residents in the nearby neighbourhoods residing in Downtown and Riverside.

16 respondents are downtown business owners.

5 are volunteer fire fighters or emergency responders.

5 own property but do not live here.

What are they most concerned about?

334 or 86.3% of respondents, or 4% of the population, are concerned about potential traffic changes. Tags were added to the responses based on context, sentiment, and topic.

The included tags were:

- **Traffic Concerns:** 166 (54.61%)
- **Inconvenienced:** 136 (44.74%)
- **Emergency Response:** 77 (25.55%)
- **Infrastructure Concerns:** 74 (23.34%)
- **Tourism:** 52 (17.11%)
- **Inconclusive:** 26 (8.55%)
- **Safety:** 24 (7.89%)
- **Property Value:** 10 (3.29%)
- **Traffic Suggestion:** 9 (2.96%)
- **Neutral:** 1 (0.33%)

45 or 11.7% of respondents expressed zero concern.

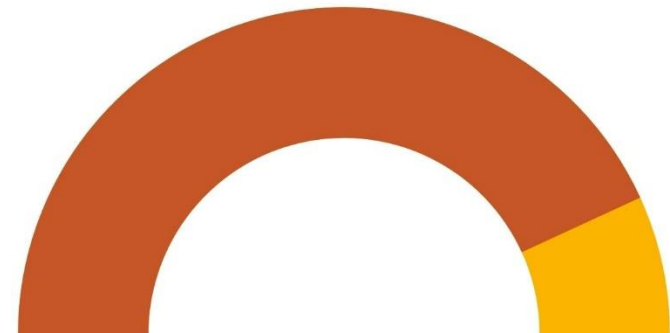


Figure 2 - Responses expressing concern in orange compared to respondents to do not see any concern

What are the impacted neighbours saying?

105 or 27.13% of respondents, or 1.27% of the population, are considered directly impacted based on their geographical location. Almost all (101) respondents are concerned about potential traffic changes. Tags were added to the responses based on context, sentiment, and topic.

The included tags were:

- **Traffic Concerns:** 50 (61.73%)
- **Infrastructure Concerns:** 25 (30.86%)
- **Inconvenienced:** 24 (29.63%)
- **Emergency Response:** 23 (28.40%)
- **Safety:** 13 (16.05%)
- **Tourism:** 11 (13.58%)
- **Inconclusive:** 8 (9.88%)
- **Property Value:** 7 (8.64%)
- **Traffic Suggestion:** 4 (4.94%)
- **Neutral:** 0

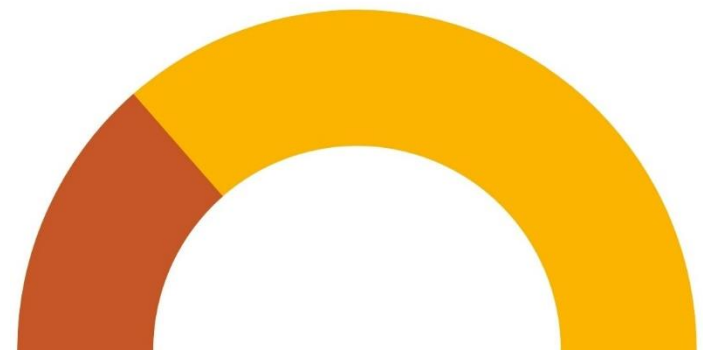


Figure 3 - Representation of Impacted Neighbours in orange

Looking on the bright side

81 or 18% of respondents or 0.98% of the population, believe there are potential positive impacts to the closure of 3 Ave East and Riverside Drive. 35 or 43.2% of these responses were from impacted neighbours.

Tags were added to the responses based on context, sentiment, and topic.

- Traffic Flow
- Greenspace
- Less Traffic/Speed
- Downtown
- Flood Mitigation
- Traffic Suggestion
- Property Value
- Fiscal Responsibility

285 or 74% of respondents² did not explore the opportunity to share potential positive impacts.

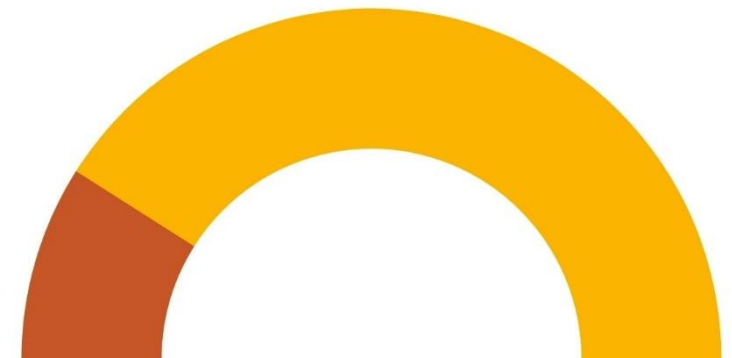


Figure 4 - Representation of positive impacts in orange

² 16 responses were insufficient

Resident Statements

- 141 participants included the phrase **traffic flow**
- 29 expressed the term **congestion**
- 38 mentioned the word **downtown**
- 44 responses included terms such as **reroute, alternate route, main route**

135 participants feel inconvenienced by this road closure.

Responses tagged as **inconvenienced** conveyed personal sentiment rather than safety or traffic concerns.

“From my area it is nice just to go along Riverside to go past the arena & then out onto the bridge to get to that side of town.”

“I as many have been using this route for over 45 years and now the town in the attempt to save money would consider inconveniencing the residents.”

“It’s a route that I use daily to drive to work.”

“I use this road frequently to bypass the major thoroughfares to the bridge and also to access the Drs clinics and the BCF.”

“How some will have to go out of their way to get to their homes or businesses.”

Of the 166 written answers expressing concerns around traffic, 29 responses included the phrase “congestion”

“This is a direct route for us to access our home. Redirecting us through downtown adds a significant amount of time onto our day and to where ever we are commuting too. Creates congestion along the residential streets downtown. A lot of these intersections are unsafe with big trees blocking visibility to proceed safely.”

“More congested traffic on the main roads for people finding new routes to get home.”

“I feel the highway will become even more congested than it is already during peak tourist times. We use this route almost every time we are running errands so that we don’t have to deal with oddly timed traffic lights.”

“Congestion of other routes with this one being closed. Have to drive way around places to get from clinic to businesses along highway 9 & 10. Less routes to use in emergencies.”

75 respondents expressed concerns surrounding emergency response.

26 responses included the word **time**, whether for emergency response services to get to their homes, scene of emergency or first responders arriving at their facility.

“With this closure, this will impact how emergency services responders to calls on the eastern side of town. During summer months this is a preferred route due to the reduced traffic. Time is very critical factor and response times will be impacted.”

“I’m a fire member and this change will greatly effect response time to the hall and the response for fire trucks to the south end of town due to only being one route that will be extra congested.”

“For first responders and emergency vehicles, this significantly impacts the length of time taken to respond to emergencies. While it may only seem like a few minutes extra, time is brain when it comes to a stroke and it is extremely important that these services have access to main roads.”

“Response time to and from the fire hall and no planning for where all the traffic will go that used to use Schumacher’s hill.”

74 answers had sentiment around infrastructure concerns.

“More traffic on streets that are not designed for the amount of traffic that these changes will cause. Streets are narrow as well.”

“Other roadways being unable to handle increased traffic flows”

“Traffic will be forced to neighborhoods and downtown and the main lights will get even busier if there is not another way to Bankview/Hillview/HWY 9/Riverside etc. The main lights on HWY 9 are already hugely backed up during the summer.”

“Your directing traffic from what was a free-flowing road down into residential. Are you planning on actually clearing residential roads in a timely manner to help accommodate for winter traffic?”

“The summer months are congested with so much traffic already - especially feeding into downtown (considering no left turn at the bridge). It’s yet another block of a major thoroughfare for residents. This will only result in congestion on the other smaller downtown side streets.”

“Concerned about traffic flow re-routing to the local streets (4 Street E, 4 Ave E, 5 Ave E, 3 Street E, 2 Street E). They are dimly lit, unmarked streets with young families who currently feel safe in the area. Concerned about property value/desirability if the areas see more vehicular traffic as they cut through. Large trailers cutting through the side streets from visitors; potential damage to vehicles from the on-street parking throughout the areas as well.”

53 responses mentioned tourism, visitors/tourists, or travel

“Would have increased confusion to visitors”

“Extra traffic through neighbor hood streets instead of the main drag. I use the back alley every day to access 5th street and head south for work. Tourists hauling large trailers and getting stuck in the cul-de-sac because they can't turn around.”

“Congested tourist traffic, which will deter me from going downtown.”

“Tourists and RV owners will be forced to use residential roads to get to the Tourist information centre. Our road is the main thoroughfare to get to and from downtown.”

“I feel the highway will become even more congested than it is already during peak tourist times. We use this route almost every time we are running errands so that we don't have to deal with oddly timed traffic lights”

“This is a major road for east residents and tourists coming from the south and east. It provides direct access to several businesses and tourist facilities. We don't need another bottleneck in the downtown area. We already have one coming off the south end of the bridge, and the heavy traffic on 2nd St. (Hi#9). Not to mention the congestion in the centre of Town with the narrow streets and diagonal parking.”

24 written responses expressed concern around safety

“congestion on side streets, more traffic for the families and the safety of the kids.”

“That traffic will migrate into the neighboring residential streets.”

“Some of the concerns that I have centre around the dimly lit and poorly marked streets. The demographic in these areas often includes children, and it can be concerning when the impacts are anticipated to be more traffic.”

“It is a major route around downtown. Residential streets will see increased traffic putting children at risk. This is a bad idea.”

“Increased volumes of traffic in all four seasons without suitable amendments to traffic control. Area wide traffic calming is in order; including but not limited to speed limit reductions (30km/h), raised crosswalks, and corner extensions are required throughout the areas North and South of 3rd Avenue, particularly those east of Center Street.”

“I am so concerned about what is going to happen on my street. Myself and a few neighbours have young kids, we have no near by park for kids to play at so they have to play in the front/back yard. The increased amount of traffic my neighbourhood would see would put these kids in danger. People already drive horribly fast on these roads, I could only imagine what

increased traffic would cause. Our streets are not big enough to handle the amount of traffic we would then see from tourists coming/going from downtown, or hockey fans going to/from the arena.”

10 responses were identified as concerns surrounding property and property values

“What this will do to our home value.”?

“Also, lets mention the potential de-valuation of said residential properties in the affected area as traffic issues become a greater and greater concern, especially if the Town succeeds in all its ED initiatives. Who wants to raise a family on a busy residential street?? Isn't part of the charm of living in a smaller community the ability to live a reasonably quiet street while the majority of the traffic uses alternate routes? Cutting off that thoroughfare may save money from a flood mitigation side but the cost may be far greater.”

“Will this [closure] lower my property value?”

“The effects of heavy equipment on my property and my home, my house was built in 1917. It is well maintained and structurally sound, but what will the ground in front of it be subjected to?”

Town of Drumheller Responds

How the Town plans to alleviate traffic concerns

A Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) is currently underway, which will assess where traffic impacts are occurring, propose potential mitigations and test mitigations with modelling.

Current suggestions so far include:

- Re-routing traffic to downtown via Railway Ave and Centre Street
- Changing the four way stop at Railway and 6th Ave
- Adding “Local Traffic” signage
- Changing Alberta Transportation signage to direct tourist traffic via Highway 9/56
- Adding a new roadway crossing at 6 Ave and the old railway embankment
- Moving summer festivals to the plaza to reduce the need for downtown road closure

How the Town of Drumheller supports resident’s concerns around emergency response

Once the TIA is complete, the Town will have a clear picture of any potential impacts to emergency response. This report will determine appropriate mitigation efforts that would need to be explored should the data support additional measures. There is currently no data to support any delays in emergency response.

Potential mitigation efforts include:

- Red light pre-emption devices,
- Adjusting stop sign locations

Addressing infrastructure concerns

The Town of Drumheller does not anticipate an increase in infrastructure maintenance or infrastructure costs due to this road closure. With the construction of the Downtown Dike, there will be two blocks of road removed from snow control and infrastructure maintenance. Guiding traffic onto highways will default to Alberta Transportation.

Both 5th Street and Riverside Drive are defined as residential streets, nor are they arterial or collector roads; concerns around moving vehicular traffic to other residential streets. The intention of Railway Ave East is to act as it’s intended behaviour; a collector road. This will guide traffic toward and through downtown, as indicated in the Downtown Area Revitalization Plan (DARP).

A resident letter identified concerns surrounding the sanitary water mains around the Downtown Dike footprint. This infrastructure is accounted for in the berm design, including a repair and replacement plan for affected areas.

The project's landscape architects and design engineers are working closely with local residents to address parking concerns.

Constructing a flood wall similar to Calgary's would cost over \$10M.

Tourist information

As a result of DARP and the DRFMO, Drumheller requires updates to wayfinding signage that have been neglected for several years. The Town of Drumheller will be working with Alberta Transportation, Travel Drumheller, the Drumheller and District Chamber of Commerce and other stakeholders to assist with the advertisement of traffic changes, wayfinding signage, highlighting free RV and vehicle parking, promoting the walkability of Drumheller and updating maps.

Safety

There are a number of mitigation efforts the Town of Drumheller will explore to ensure the safety of its residents:

- There are considerations to explore a 30km/h or 40km/h speed limit on residential roads.
- Bus routes will have to be adjusted in the areas and the Town will be working with those service providers.
- Routing traffic to highways will decrease traffic in residential zones
- Removing traffic from this neighbourhood will increase safety for children in the area.
- Increased patrols and enforcement may occur.

Information on property value

The construction of the Downtown Dike will be a key piece of infrastructure to protect downtown residents and their properties against damaging flood events. Having protection to a 100-year design flood for the downtown area will protect the value of properties and businesses into the future.

Exploring Traffic Suggestions

“Perhaps a new fire hall could be built at the 4-way stop at 6th Ave E and 5th St. E? That would be a very central location and could allow the big trucks better maneuverability.”

The Town of Drumheller does not have the capital to replace the current fire hall infrastructure.

“what you want to do will impact a lot of people living East of 5th Ave. maybe you should do a counter to get an idea of traffic volume”?

Traffic counting was completed in the summer of 2021; current studies are using Alberta Transportation data in combination with the data collected in 2021. The traffic volumes collected and reassigned to the network from the preliminary study will be reviewed and updated when needed using data from Alberta Transportation and reports provided by the Town, in particular the 2007 iTrans Transportation Study for the downtown of the Town of Drumheller. The Town has also invested in a program to monitor increased traffic volumes.

“The increase of traffic on 4th, 3rd and 2nd street east even if marked "local traffic". Suggestion of "1-way" streets in those locations affected to slow traffic flows.”

One-way streets can cause confusion and limit emergency access further. Installing one-way streets is not the best solution for the Drumheller Valley.

“Re-route traffic from the highway and riverside communities to Railway Ave E. Increase stop signs throughout the area to deter residents from using shortcuts. Could you increase the speed along Railway Ave E to help with commuters who may be unwilling to change their routes?”

Rerouting traffic to Railway Avenue is the preferred route as it is not a residential road, and leads to the downtown/commercial area. Increasing stop signs on residential roads can be determined once the TIA is complete. If the data suggests this to be helpful mitigation effort, the town will explore it. This is a common industry practice to mitigate traffic in areas. Increasing speed on Railway Avenue East would not be an option, the town would sooner decrease speed limits in residential areas than increase speed limits elsewhere.

“Can you put the road on top of the dyke?”

Construction of a road on top of the dike would require the dike to be built to a much higher standard in a few areas, including the fill, dike side slopes, roadway geometry, guardrails, etc. These standards would be required for vehicle loading and roadway considerations, which would significantly increase the cost of the dike; thus, this option was discounted. Constructing a road on top of the dike would also cause a significant impact on adjacent properties due to the footprint.