

## Temagami Downtown Revitalization Survey

Tredco High-Level Summary Report

**Prepared for:** Municipality of Temagami and Temagami Region Economic Development Corporation (TREDCO)

**Date:** January 2026

**Survey period:** November 2025 – January 2026

**Permanent population:** ~800 residents

### 1. Executive Summary

The Temagami Downtown Revitalization Survey gathered **exceptionally strong participation**, generating between **250 and 266 completed responses** across most questions. With a permanent population of approximately **800 residents**, this represents participation equivalent to **over 30% of the entire year-round population**, an extremely high response rate for municipal planning surveys.

Additionally, a substantial portion of respondents identified as **seasonal residents, business owners, and frequent visitors**, indicating the survey also successfully reached key external stakeholders who contribute significantly to the local economy.

#### Key headline findings:

- There is **overwhelming agreement** that downtown Temagami currently lacks sufficient business diversity and retail services.
- Residents and visitors strongly desire **more shops, restaurants, and year-round services**, particularly grocery and hardware and increased hours of operation.
- The downtown's **visual appeal and physical condition** are widely viewed as poor or fair.
- The **waterfront, natural setting, and walkability potential** remain valued assets.
- Highway 11 traffic and safety concerns significantly affect pedestrian experience and downtown connectivity.
- There is strong appetite for **events, festivals, waterfront activation, and cultural expression**, though opinions vary on public art and murals.
- Qualitative comments repeatedly express concern about **business closures, abandoned buildings, and declining vibrancy** — but also optimism that Temagami can reclaim its role as a destination if decisive action is taken.

### **Overall conclusion:**

The data presents a clear and unified message: the community is ready for downtown renewal, expects coordinated action, and is prepared to support investment, provided changes focus first on restoring core services, improving physical conditions, and creating reasons to stop, stay, and spend.

## **2. Survey Participation and Respondent Profile**

### **Connection to Temagami**

- 46% live in Temagami year-round.
- 38% are seasonal residents.
- 6% visit occasionally.
- 4% own businesses.
- Remaining respondents identified additional ties (former residents, family, First Nation members, incoming business owners).

### **Implication:**

The survey successfully captured both **permanent residents** and **economic stakeholders** (seasonal homeowners, tourists, investors). This broad input strengthens legitimacy for future planning and funding applications.

### **Length of connection**

- 39% have lived/worked in Temagami for **more than 20 years**.
- 19% do not live or work locally but remain connected.
- Only 1% are new (<1 year).

### **Implication:**

Responses largely reflect **deep institutional knowledge and lived experience**, not transient opinion. This increases reliability of trend identification.

### **Downtown visitation frequency**

- 31% visit downtown **daily**.
- 37% **weekly**.
- Only 16% rarely.

**Implication:**

Downtown remains a daily functional space for many residents, despite dissatisfaction, indicating strong baseline engagement to build upon.

**3. Current Strengths and Assets****Most valued downtown features**

- Parks, waterfront, and outdoor spaces – 58%
- Local stores – 45%
- Natural beauty – 41%
- Walkability – 41%
- Historical landmarks – 25%

**Key takeaway:**

The **natural and waterfront setting** remains Temagami's most valued downtown asset. This confirms alignment with tourism-driven revitalization strategies already under discussion.

Qualitative comments also highlight:

- The train station as a symbolic anchor.
- Fire tower and trail network as visitor attractions.
- The Saturday outdoor market as a successful activity driver.

**Implication:**

There is a strong foundation for **place-based, nature-linked, heritage-linked redevelopment**.

**4. Identified Problems and Gaps****Primary challenges**

- 91%: **Not enough stores or business diversity**
- 58%: Certain businesses should be open more hours
- 50%: Not enough things to do for fun

- 28%: No theme for storefronts
- 15%: Road/sidewalk condition concerns

### **Business and service losses repeatedly cited**

- Closure of grocery, hardware, bank, Busy Bee restaurant.
- Lack of year-round retail.
- Seasonal-only operating hours.
- Absence of basic traveler services (washrooms, garage, restaurants, banking).

### **Physical environment concerns**

- Abandoned and derelict buildings.
- Lack of greenery and beautification.
- Poor sidewalks and accessibility.
- Highway 11 traffic dominance and unsafe crossings.

### **Sentiment snapshot**

Many comments describe downtown as:

- “run down”
- “ghost town”
- “no reason to stop”
- “lost key businesses”
- “needs cleaning up”

### **Implication:**

The data confirms a **structural decline in core services** rather than a perception problem. Revitalization must therefore prioritize **core economic functionality**, not cosmetic improvements alone.

## **5. Desired Improvements and Future Vision**

### **Most requested improvements**

- More shops or restaurants – 90%

- Improved visual appeal – 58%
- Concession or café activity at waterfront – 50%
- Celebrating history and culture – 36%
- Streetscape improvements – 32%
- More waterfront seating and activities – 33%

#### **Desired new businesses**

- Restaurants / cafés – 88%
- Retail stores – 73%
- Grocery store – 61%
- Professional services – 48%
- Hotels/accommodations – 44%
- Hardware store (dominant in write-ins)

#### **Visit-more drivers**

- More shops/services/restaurants – 92%
- Events and festivals – 52%
- Better waterfront facilities – 31%
- Art and cultural displays – 23%

#### **Implication:**

The community is consistent:

**Restoring essential services + activating waterfront + programming events** form the three pillars of increased downtown usage.

### **6. Public Art and Cultural Expression**

- 67% support murals depending on theme or strongly support.
- 19% unsure.
- 14% opposed.

Suggested themes:

- Indigenous culture
- Grey Owl and canoe heritage
- Nature and lake imagery
- Local artists, Bear Island artists

Concerns:

- Must not replace core business renewal.
- Must be paired with maintenance.
- Should not distract drivers.

**Implication:**

Public art is seen as a **supporting enhancement**, not a standalone solution.

**7. Strategic Implications for the Municipality**

Based on survey results, the Municipality can reasonably assume:

1. **Legitimized mandate for action**  
Participation rates validate community readiness for revitalization investment and planning.
2. **Priority on core services first**  
Grocery, hardware, pharmacy, restaurant, mechanic and banking access are viewed as fundamental community infrastructure.
3. **Downtown as a gateway destination**  
Natural assets, waterfront, train station, fire tower and trails provide strong tourism anchors.
4. **Need for physical rehabilitation tools**  
Derelict buildings and vacant properties are now barriers to economic recovery and White Bear Trail improvements.
5. **Traffic and pedestrian safety as enabling infrastructure**  
Highway 11 crossing solutions and streetscape improvements are prerequisites for retail success.
6. **Events programming as early-win activation**  
Festivals and markets are low-capital, high-impact visitation drivers.

## **8. Strategic Implications for TREDCO and Economic Development**

The Economic Development Corporation can reasonably assume:

- 1. Market demand exists for new business types**  
Strong expressed demand for restaurants, retail, accommodations, experiential tourism, outdoor recreation services.
- 2. Seasonal and visitor economy remains vital**  
High participation by seasonal residents signals continued external spending potential.
- 3. Waterfront-linked tourism is the clearest growth path**  
Investment should prioritize lake access, trails, outfitting, cafés, accommodation clustering.
- 4. Business retention is as critical as attraction**  
Loss of hardware and grocery services severely damages ecosystem viability.
- 5. Coordinated branding opportunity**  
Recurrent suggestions of “Gateway to the North”, Indigenous heritage, canoe culture suggest coherent place branding potential.
- 6. Funding alignment potential**  
Survey evidence supports applications to provincial/federal rural development, tourism, main-street, and Northern Ontario funding streams.

## **9. Recommended Assumptions for Planning Purposes**

For practical planning and grant modeling, the following working assumptions are supported by survey evidence:

- **Core services restoration is prerequisite to private investment attraction.**
- **Waterfront activation will produce the fastest visible improvement in visitation.**
- **Event programming will increase downtown foot traffic within 12 months.**
- **Streetscape and safety improvements are necessary to enable retail growth.**
- **Cultural/heritage storytelling will strengthen destination branding.**
- **Seasonal residents remain a key spending demographic.**

- **Business incubation and façade improvement programs will be required to overcome market barriers.**

## **10. Next Steps**

### **For the Municipality:**

- Finalize the Community Improvement Plan once it has been updated
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- Prioritize streetscape, safety, and property condition tools.
- Initiate discussions on derelict property remediation.
- Explore infrastructure grants for waterfront and pedestrian improvements.
- Develop annual downtown events calendar.

### **For TREDCO:**

- Consult further with business, develop theme, seek funding for downtown renderings
- Launch business attraction and retention strategy.
- Package investment-ready waterfront and station-area sites.
- Pursue funding for market-ready pop-up retail and food vendors.
- Develop branding and visitor experience plan.
- Partner with Indigenous community on cultural tourism opportunities.

## **11. Closing Statement**

Few small communities achieve a participation rate exceeding 30% of their permanent population in planning surveys. This survey has done so, and in doing so has delivered a clear, consistent, and actionable message. The community wants its downtown back as a place of life, commerce, pride, and destination energy.

The data provides a strong evidence base to move decisively from discussion to implementation.