

# REPORT

## THE CENTRALIZATION OF SOCIAL NEED

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP STUDY:  
DOWNTOWN WINDSOR BUSINESS  
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

**SYDNEY CHAPADOS**

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University  
of Windsor

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**Partnership Organization:**

Downtown Windsor Business Improvement Association

**Grant Holder:**

Dr. Gerald Cradock

Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology

University of Windsor

[gcradock@uwindsor.ca](mailto:gcradock@uwindsor.ca)

**Intern:**

Sydney Chapados

M.A. Candidate

Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology

University of Windsor

[chapados@uwindsor.ca](mailto:chapados@uwindsor.ca)

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Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to Katie Facecchia and the MITACS team for providing me with resources and the research experience.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### PURPOSE

- Determine the location of social services in Windsor, ON
- Analyse the impact of the concentration of social services in the downtown core on surrounding businesses and residents
- If there is a negative impact, explore possible alternatives to the concentration of social services in the downtown core
- Analyse how Windsor's location of social services compares to other Ontarian cities with similar characteristics (i.e. population size, employment base, level of education, etc.)

### FINDINGS

- Social services are centered into the downtown with 40% located in the core due to historical affordable housing, accessible commuting, and proximity to other services
- While poverty is centralized in the core, these issues can also exist elsewhere. The centralization of services in the core limits access for those outside of the core. Satellite services are necessary.
- Downtown is suffering when it comes to the presence of prosocial institutions: restaurants, retail, beautification, entertainment, and green space, but revitalization is possible
- Centralizing services causes concern about the future, namely ghettoization, or hollowing out an area leaving behind pockets of marginalization
- Decentralizing services is not an option as it would severely limit access, furthering the problems of poverty and crisis
- Service-providers are starting to address some of the concerns regarding centralization by hiring nurses and other support staff to lighten the load of the public system, working with neighbours, and fostering relationships between service-providers
- Most, if not all, mid-sized cities in Ontario are facing the same problems regarding downtown decline, pockets of marginalization, and suburban sprawl

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Work with social services to create an inventory of services and how they can be accessed. This will facilitate accessing social services.

2. Continue to support the MOST Van pilot project. This is a decentralized service model that provides support and meets people where they are at. The MOST Van does not require people to centralize and convene in one single area of the city, but all can receive help using this model.
3. Fund nurses, social workers, or other professionals to make visits at residential social services to minimize service system usage.
4. Extend the transit system to make it more reliable for those going beyond the core. There are plans for a new Windsor Transit system that would enable people who rely on transit to access other areas of the city more easily.
5. Address the problem of urban sprawl through education and community advocacy. Irresponsible sprawling development is unsustainable because of increased commuting traffic and damage to infrastructure. Increasing population density will encourage and support local businesses.
6. Hold resident consults to encourage community communication and give those who live downtown a voice.
7. Conduct further research on revitalization strategies to encourage business back into the core.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This study attempts to address the general question of the relationship between the location of social service providers, service users, and the environment in the Downtown core of the City of Windsor. The principal objective of this project is to create data capable of describing how the geographic location of social services within the City affects the movement and location of service users. In particular, the researcher operated on the question: what effect does a concentration of services have on the character of the Downtown core? The central methodologies used were: systematic social observation (SSO), surveys of stakeholders, and mapping of shared interests in the downtown core using geolocation. Alternative approaches are suggested, as well as a comparison to another city of similar size.

## **ABOUT THE PARTNER**

The DWBIA represents 615+ businesses in the city centre as the leader in advocacy, infrastructure, development, and marketing, with the boundary spanning Ouellette Street to the riverfront, and Bruce Avenue to Glengarry

Avenue. The goal is to advocate for the interests of BIA members, to promote the city centre as a business and shopping area, and to make downtown Windsor safe and enjoyable for the community, offering various programs and services to aid businesses in the maintenance and beautification of their respective spaces. These programs include marketing, advertising and promotion, education and advocacy, communication and information, strategy and planning, business recruitment, and environmental safety and cleanliness. [www.downtownwindsor.ca](http://www.downtownwindsor.ca)



Photo: [downtownwindsor.ca](http://downtownwindsor.ca)

### **DEFINING THE PROBLEM:**

As a primarily automotive city, there has been a proliferation of social need in the City of Windsor and surrounding municipalities after General Motors closed their plant in 2008 and subsequent economic changes. The nature of the automotive industry itself can bring about stress and mental or physical health issues due to labor requirements and shift work.<sup>1</sup>

In order to address this social need, social services have historically been centered into the downtown core of the city and are continuing to expand. However, social services are unable to solve all the problems of poverty and economic crises. As a result, those who are destitute, in crisis, struggling with mental health concerns and addiction, or need assistance have been encouraged into the core and possibly displaced from their communities. This has led to a perceived concentration of people in need and/or crisis in the core, and a spillover effect of the social implications which accompany this clustering or centralization of need.

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<sup>1</sup> French & Zarkin 1999 Mental Health, Absenteeism, and Earnings at a Manufacturing Site

This study seeks to understand the above hypothesis, particularly, why people and services are centered into the core, and the effects that follow. This study is grounded in social geography following Dear & Wolf's *Landscapes of Despair* which traces back the history of the deinstitutionalization of social services. The service-dependent population was released into the general population without a replacement plan.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the majority of this population moved into city centers in order to access community care and services.<sup>3</sup> Both the location of social services and the location of the service-dependent population mutually reinforce each other. The problem is not linear, however, involves multiple factors including the affordability of housing, employment, accessibility of transit, among others. While the centralization of social services poses problems surrounding the visibility of poverty, decentralizing social services creates a different set of problems regarding accessibility. Instead of simply dispersing social services and furthering the web of access, other key areas can be addressed to improve the state of the downtown, both for residents and visitors.

Mid-size cities, like Windsor and Oshawa, face a unique set of economic and social issues compared to small towns, rural areas, or big cities. Unfortunately, research on mid-size cities is lacking.<sup>4</sup> Research on downtowns is also frequently grounded in American literature.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the unique challenges facing Canadian mid-sized cities are understudied. Gordon (2013) warns against using data and strategies driven from Toronto as rationale for strategies in mid-sized cities because the demographic, social and economic makeups are different. Strategies need to be created on a case-by-case basis in order to target specific or unique features of mid-sized cities.

However, what is identified about Ontario's mid-sized cities is that nearly all of them are facing the same problems: declining downtowns and growing suburbs.<sup>6</sup> The growth of new development into the suburbs on the edges of cities leaves behind a low-income population in the downtown alongside struggling institutions.<sup>7</sup> As conditions in large metropolitan areas become

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<sup>2</sup> Dear & Wolf 1987 *Landscapes of Despair*

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Lauder 2010 *Downtown Revitalization Strategies in Ontario's Mid-Sized Cities*

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Gordon 2013 *Leveraging Ontario's Urban Potential*

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

increasingly unaffordable and stressful, more people are moving into mid-sized cities. Housing price increases, full shelters and services, and increased traffic are just some of the problems facing these mid-sized cities.<sup>8</sup>

To this end, the study creates a map of intersecting interests – specifically, where are services located, where are the people who use them located, and what other interests share those locations? The study will then analyze for synergistic tendencies related to specific constellations of services, service users, and other environmental factors.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to study the relationship between social service providers, social service users and other shared features, the researcher conducted demographic data analysis from the 2016 Canada census, Systematic Social Observation (SSO), mapping using a geolocation program, interviews with stakeholders in the downtown, and an observational comparator visit to Oshawa.

### **Systematic Social Observation:**

Systematic Social Observation (SSO) provides a tool to observe and analyse neighbourhoods directly and systematically.<sup>9</sup> Instead of solely analyzing statistics and raw data, SSO allows the researcher to position themselves within the neighbourhood in question and directly observe phenomena as they occur.<sup>10</sup> Previous neighbourhood research has relied solely on subjective opinions from residents or other stakeholders.<sup>11</sup> However, these testimonies can be heavily influenced by the political climate.<sup>12</sup> While SSO cannot fully capture the essence of the downtown, it does provide a sort of “snapshot” to analyze items that were consistent about the downtown over the 6 weeks that it was observed. Combining SSO with census data and interviews with stakeholders allows the researcher to create a more holistic view of the environment in the downtown core.

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<sup>8</sup> Gordon 2013 Leveraging Ontario’s Urban Potential

<sup>9</sup> Parsons et al. 2010 Standard Observation of Neighbourhood Disorder: Does it work in Canada?

<sup>10</sup> Sampson & Raudenbush 1999 Neighbourhoods and Violent Crime

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Three areas (Downtown Center, Downtown Bus Terminal, Riverside) in Windsor were analyzed using Systematic Social Observation (SSO) over the course of a six-week period in June and July 2019. Observations were done early morning, afternoon, and evening. The researcher created a matrix that assessed the blocks for conditions of neglect, maintenance, aesthetics, safety, and makeup. The matrix was used to develop an understanding of the general character in the downtown alongside a middle-class comparator. Outlying phenomena were also noted.

### **Mapping:**

The mapping portion of the project was conducted using the program Maptive.<sup>13</sup> Maptive is a geolocation program that allows users to plot different areas of the city using markers. Social services, restaurants, retail, entertainment, and green space were mapped street by street using Maptive. These features were chosen because they have prosocial implications for their respective neighbourhoods.<sup>14</sup> Placing these prosocial features alongside the location of social services demonstrates how these locations are able to coexist. Using the maps, the researcher was able to analyse correlations and patterns that emerged regarding the location of these features. Alongside these maps, transit and real estate maps were taken directly from the City of Windsor website.<sup>15</sup>

### **Interviews:**

The researcher contacted the businesses and institutions represented by the DWBIA, along with social services both inside and outside of the downtown core for interview. There was an overwhelming sense of reluctance to participate in this project. Organizations expressed concern about what the data would be used for and if it could affect their funding. The political climate in Windsor creates a large methodological challenge for research, as social service providers are concerned about losing the funding they receive and protecting the marginalized groups they have a duty to protect. The organizations that did agree to participate were able to provide us with a solid understanding of what the organizations in Windsor-Essex do, how they operate, and what their impact is. Data from social service provider websites was accessed for those who declined an interview. The interviewers asked 10

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.maptive.com/>

<sup>14</sup> Lauder 2010 Downtown Revitalization Strategies in Ontario's Mid-Size Cities

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.citywindsor.ca/residents/planning/Plans-and-Community-Information/About-Windsor/Demographics/Pages/Demographics.aspx>

questions that touched on what they do, why they are located where they are, the centralization of services, liveable cities, and best outcome for service-users.

**MAPPING THE DOWNTOWN**

Below are maps of different institutions and businesses that share the space in Windsor. Some of these are prosocial, encouraging health, happiness, and prosperity within one’s place of living. The patterns of these locations demonstrate correlations within the downtown space, which will be analyzed further below.

**Restaurant Breakdown:**

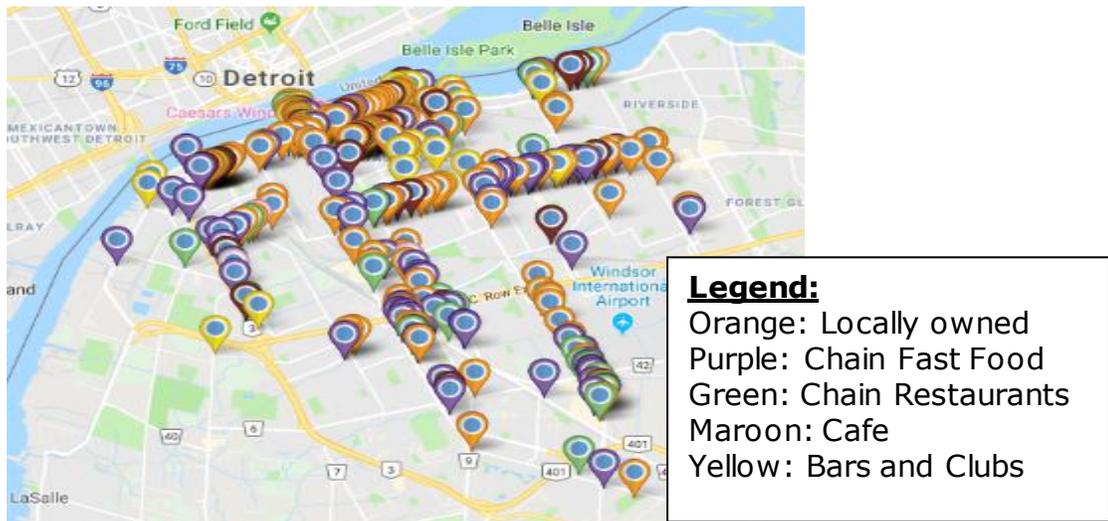


Figure 1: Restaurants in Windsor



Figure 2: Restaurants in Downtown Windsor

While there is a noticeable grouping of restaurants in the downtown core, many of these are bars or fast food (locally owned or other). The centering of fast food and other non-nutritious options into low-income communities can often be referred to as a “food swamp.” Food swamps have a variety of negative effects on residents’ well-being.<sup>16</sup> While everyone has to eat, options are limited causing people to rely on fast food and convenience stores for their meals. There is one grocery store downtown, however, for those with families or without cars, this can be a challenge to access. The Downtown Windsor Farmers Market works to remedy some of these negative effects, however, it only runs once a week during the summer months.

Alongside the negative health effects of centering fast food, the lack of seating within fast-food restaurants also creates a spillover effect.<sup>17</sup> When fast food restaurants fill, patrons are forced onto the street, sometimes creating large crowds of people. The spillover of people onto the street causes problems for cleanliness and safety.<sup>18</sup>

The core also presents a lack of fine-dining, cafes and bakeries which all have a prosocial attachment. Because of the intensive presence of bars and clubs, the crowd downtown is centered around these institutions, bringing a large, younger population into the downtown. Public intoxication is a concern that has been highlighted by residents in the past<sup>19</sup> and will only continue so long as the bars and clubs are centered so heavily in the town center. While bars have some prosocial effects such as providing a social space and community cohesion (similar to that of a cafe), the presence of alcohol, addiction and the rowdiness that follows public intoxication is a concern for residents, the cleanliness in the downtown, and safety.<sup>20</sup> When asked about the business environment in the downtown, one retail-shop owner responded:

“It’s not great right. It’s the bars right. They’re the problem. I’m not interested in going somewhere where everyone is drunk, yelling and fighting. The violence is getting worse. I’m not bringing my kids there. And as a business owner, I’ve seen the problems.

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<sup>16</sup> Qiu & Wang 2016 Neighbourhood Food Environments Revisited

<sup>17</sup> Bellmio 2003 Social and Physical Conditions in Windsor’s City Centre

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Wo 2014 Community Context of Crime

My cars been smashed, but really, no one is coming down here to shop. They come here to drink and that is it.”

The centering of bars and clubs brings about many concerns and is identified as a deterrent for families and businesses.

### Green Space:

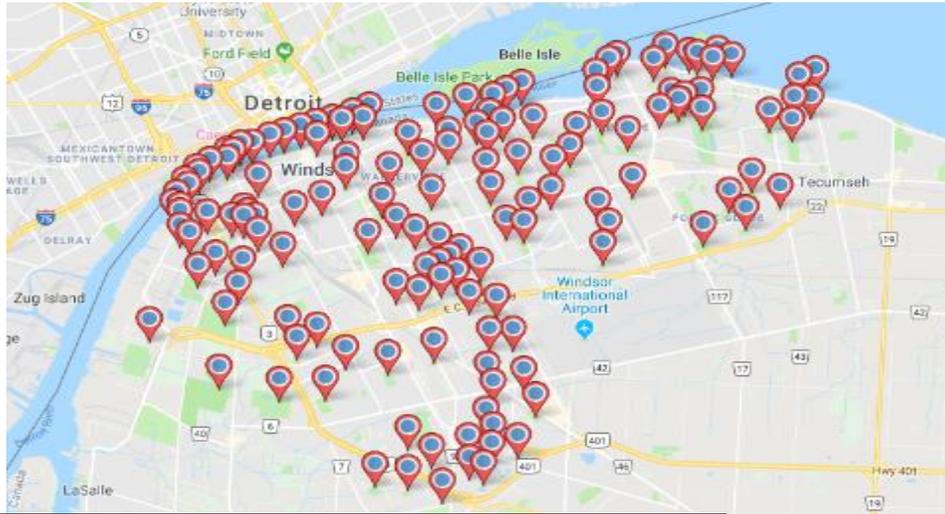


Figure 3: Green Space in Windsor

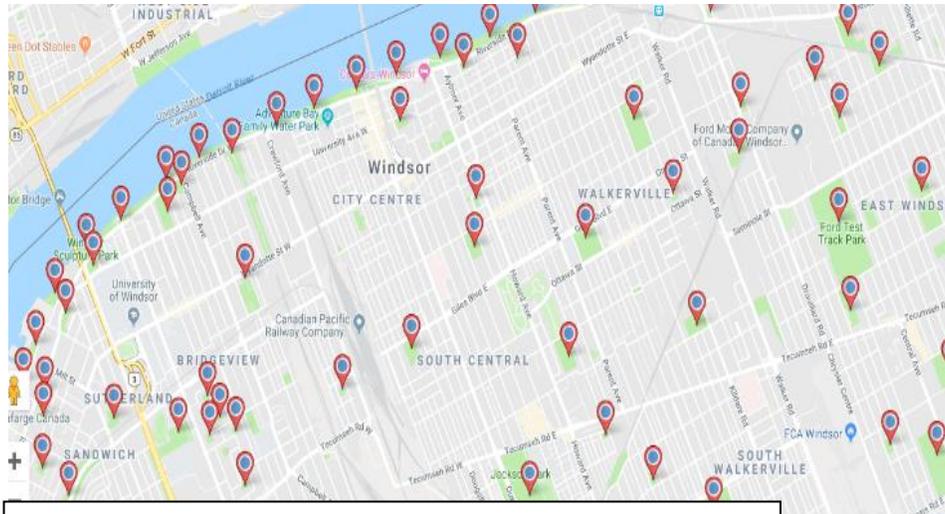


Figure 4: Green Space in Downtown Windsor

Urban lifestyles are frequently correlated with chronic stress, insufficient physical activity, and exposure to toxins.<sup>21</sup> Green space and parks can neutralize or remediate some of these problems by providing positive benefits such as psychological relaxation, stress alleviation, social cohesion, physical

<sup>21</sup> Bell et al. 2014 Green Space, Health and Well-Being

activity, and reduced exposure to toxins, noise, and heat.<sup>22</sup> Socially and economically disadvantaged populations generally live in areas with little to no green space causing adverse health effects.

Looking at the maps of Windsor above, there are many green areas in the city. However, these form a ring around the core, which is primarily urban and features no green space beyond the riverfront. Without access to green space, residents in the core do not benefit from the prosocial aspects it provides. Particularly, green space provides an opportunity to increase social cohesion and a sense of community. When asked about location, one service provider answered:

“We try to increase opportunities for the kids growing up in these areas. Why should a kid in the downtown have less of a childhood than one growing up in Lasalle? They shouldn’t. We try to meet in the parks but in the Winter there’s really no public space and no space for community”

This respondent highlights one of the problems facing the downtown core: there is no space for community. Having a strong sense of community provides a variety of benefits to the area. People are able to depend on each other for social support, safety, and resources. Without this space, people are more likely to go elsewhere to enjoy green space, and the people left in the downtown core do not benefit from the community or health effects that follow.

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<sup>22</sup> Bell et al. 2014 Green Space, Health and Well-Being

## Entertainment:



Figure 5: Entertainment in Windsor

Another prosocial feature that brings people into downtowns are entertainment. Whether this is in the form of sports, arts, or culture, entertainment can help bring people into the downtown in order to make it busier.<sup>23</sup> Looking at the map of Windsor above, entertainment is grouped around the University, the Core, and Walkerville. Sports provide physical and mental health benefits while reducing costs of healthcare and improving social capital. Arts have a similar effect, where music is positive for physical and mental health, and art in general helps improve communication skills, teamwork and a sense of self. Cultural participation improves residents' sense of community and security. When asked about what makes Windsor 'liveable,' one service provider commented:

"We have great arts and culture here. The symphony, the art gallery, local shows. But all the great things need to struggle to be seen and that's our shame. We need to work with all the great things that are already happening on the ground"

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<sup>23</sup> Gordon 2013 Leveraging Ontario's Urban Potential



Photo: Street Art in Windsor, Sydney Chapados, 2019

While arts and culture are somewhat centered into the core and can be developed further to encourage more participation, the primary location of Windsor's sporting events is the WFCU center on the outskirts of town near Tecumseh. The downtown can reap the benefits of arts and culture, however, will not receive the benefits of sporting events. Unfortunately, the downtown is primarily landlocked and will likely not see the introduction of a large sporting facility without massive construction. Working with local shows, people, and companies that want to champion our arts and culture will provide an opportunity to bring more people into the downtown.

### **Retail:**

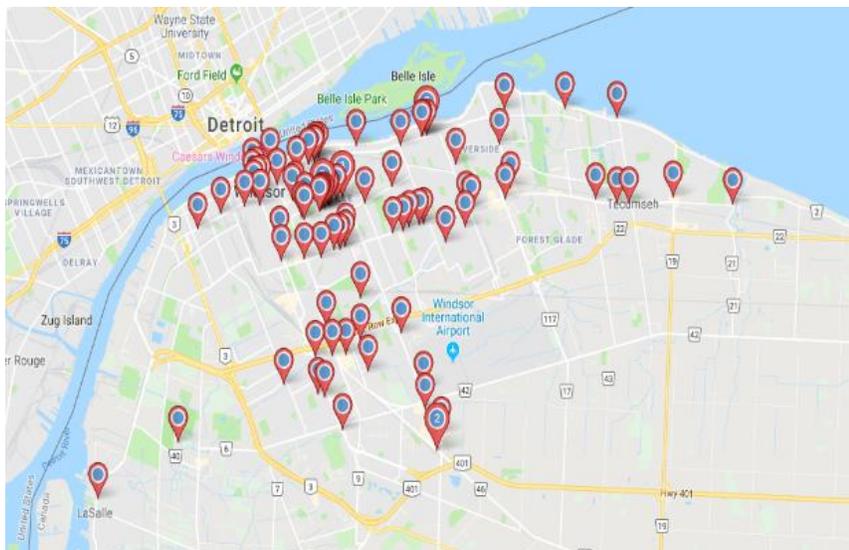


Figure 6: Retail in Windsor

Retail shops provide an entertaining activity for residents, local sustenance, and economic cycling. In Windsor, the retail is spread throughout the city without a specific district or area for shopping outside of the shopping malls. Devonshire Mall, Tecumseh Mall, and Windsor Crossings Outlet are all located a significant distance away from the core. There are a variety of reasons why people may choose to shop in a mall including: access to many different types of shops, convenient and free parking, food, and entertaining activities. However, having malls located away from the core means that those who are shopping are going away from the core to do so. Retail shops within the core or other areas of the city lose some of the traffic they would otherwise have.



Figure 7: Retail in Downtown Windsor

Previous research highlights that shops do best when they are near each other and when they are located near their consumers.<sup>24</sup> Suburban sprawl creates problems for shops located in the core because large populations are growing outside of and away from the core, and thus do their shopping elsewhere.<sup>25</sup> Some shops close while others suffer from a declining population. One area in the downtown that has potential is Pelissier and Maiden Lane. Because Maiden Lane is closed off to vehicles, pedestrians are able to walk around and enjoy all the area has to offer. From street art, to trendy breakfast places, salons, local shops and icecream parlours, visitors are able to walk from place to place easily. Continuing to work with this model will be effective in encouraging people into the core where they can walk safely and explore shops.

<sup>24</sup> Kickert & Rainer 2018 Critical Mass Matters

<sup>25</sup> Gordon 2013 Leveraging Ontario's Urban Potential



Photo: Maiden Lane in Downtown Windsor, Sydney Chapados, 2019

## Social Service Providers

Approximately 40% of Windsor's social service providers are centered into the core, alongside some of the low-income community in Windsor.



Figure 8: Social Services in Windsor

The social service providers in Windsor offer a variety of programs that aim to help individuals with daily tasks and life management. Some services are residential, where people stay for long or short periods of time. Other services are drop in or appointment based, revolving around meetings or other frameworks. Most of these services work on case management, that is, they help individuals get on their feet. Individuals and families can acquire counselling and psychotherapy, employment aid, legal aid, housing aid, medication and health services, palliative care, and general support. People may seek out services on their own, be referred from another institution, or be mandated by law.

The presence of social services and social service populations are not necessarily antisocial on their own, however, when combined with a lack of other prosocial features, there is no attractant into the core other than social services. This means that people are not going into the core to stimulate economic activity, but to seek help when it is needed. A causal relationship cannot be determined based on the maps provided. However, there is a correlation between where the social services are and where other prosocial features are not. Continuing to remove publicly funded institutions and areas with prosocial attachment will do a disservice to the livelihood of an already struggling downtown.

Strong downtowns have mixed-use space, economic activity, a growing population, and high quality of life indicators. Effective revitalization strategies include: major infrastructure construction, cultural and recreational amenities,

transportation and accessibility, urban design, BIA’s, and financial incentives.<sup>26</sup> All people need to have their needs met in the core, while ensuring a good quality of life and economic sustenance. Those accessing services, living in low-income housing, visiting the core from elsewhere, and students (to name a few) should all be able to access this space. Services and other businesses need to coexist because they are increasingly used by all.

**DEMOGRAPHICS COMPARED**

The demographics highlighted below are from the 2016 Canada census accessed via the City of Windsor website. While causal relationships cannot be determined based solely on demographics, these figures will help demonstrate the makeup of the downtown population.

**Income and Employment:**

While the City of Windsor has an average yearly household income (\$71,280) that is higher than the Canadian average (\$70,336), the downtown has a household income that is significantly lower (\$37,150). One explanation for this is that the households in the downtown are more likely to be made up of single people, small families, or couples. The average amount of people making up a household in the downtown is 1.7 compared to 2.3 for the rest of the city. A single income compared to a 2+ income household would yield a lower average. However, the average individual income is also lower. The households in the downtown are objectively lower-income than the average in the city. The average individual in the downtown is also making less than the average City of Windsor resident. Low-income people and families are more likely to live in the downtown core.

Windsor:<sup>27</sup>

Average Household Income: \$/year	71,280
Average Individual Income: \$/year	36,583

Downtown:<sup>28</sup>

Average Household Income: \$/year	37,150
Average Individual Income: \$/year	30,077

Looking at the breakdown of the employment rates in the city (see figure below), the overall city has an employment rate of 52% with 5% unemployed

<sup>26</sup> Lauder 2010 Downtown Revitalization Strategies in Ontario’s Mid-Size Cities

<sup>27</sup> Stats Can 2016

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

and 43% out of the workforce. The downtown, however, has an employment rate of only 37%. On average, there are more unemployed people or people out of the labour force centered in the downtown. Being out of the labour force refers to people who are economically inactive, meaning that they are neither working nor seeking work. There are a variety of reasons why one might be out of the labour force including: school, disability, illness, care of relatives or children, and retirement. While an unemployment rate of 5% appears low, it is not a clear reflection of the economic state of the city. It is not that there are more people in the core who are actively searching but cannot find work, but there are more chronically unemployed people who cannot work.

Windsor's Employment Rate:

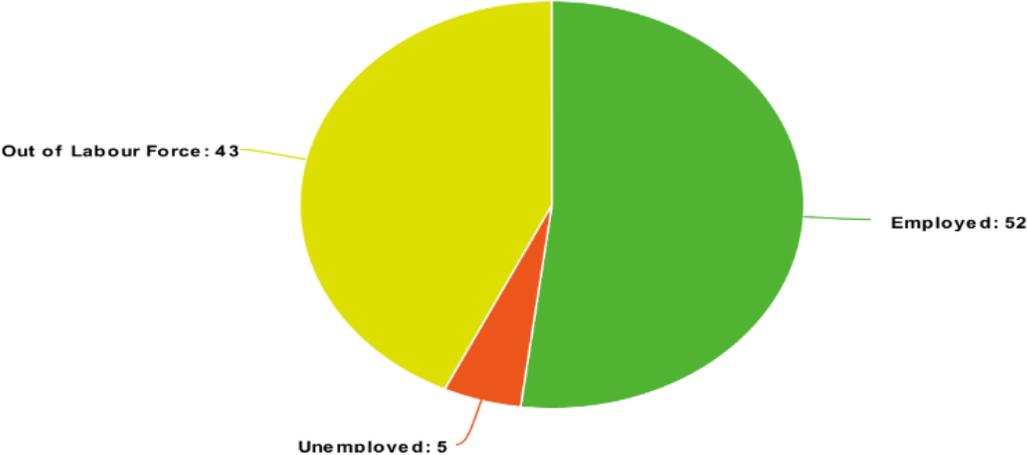


Figure 9: Employment Rate in Windsor, Stats Can 2016

Downtown Employment Rate:

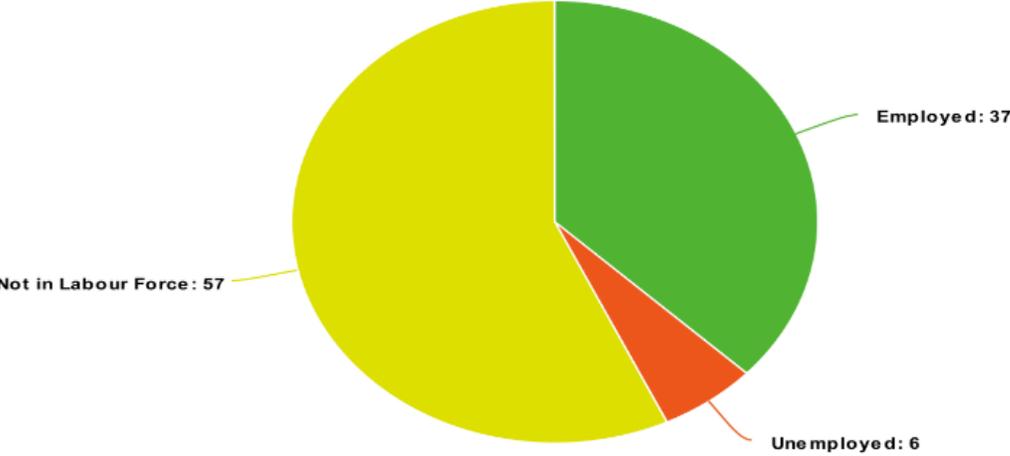


Figure 10: Employment Rate in Downtown Windsor, Stats Can

Another important consideration for employment is industry. Windsor has historically been the automotive capital of Canada, relying heavily on the

automotive industry for economic sustenance. Despite economic changes over the past decade, manufacturing is still the largest employment sector in the city (19%). The automotive sector is historically responsible for secure, full-time, union-backed, and high-paying jobs in the city. While working in manufacturing has its benefits, it also places large amounts of strain on its workers causing serious mental and physical health problems. While this may not be a direct cause of the social need in Windsor, it helps explain some of the problems facing the core.

Downtown residents are less likely to be employed in manufacturing. While it is still a high percentage (12%) it is matched by retail (12%) and closely followed by food and accommodation (11%). These sectors are not secure, high-paying, full-time jobs, but lean towards precarious, part-time, minimum wage, and insecure positions. It follows that some of the dominant employment sectors held by residents of the downtown are primarily precarious and low-paying reflecting the centering of low-income households in the core.

#### Windsor's Industrial Breakdown:<sup>29</sup>

All industry categories	98,065	96%
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	900	1%
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	180	0%
22 Utilities	360	0%
23 Construction	4,745	5%
31-33 Manufacturing	19,700	19%
41 Wholesale trade	2,480	2%
44-45 Retail trade	10,655	10%
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	4,495	4%
51 Information and cultural industries	1,270	1%
52 Finance and insurance	3,040	3%
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	1,440	1%
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	5,150	5%
55 Management of companies and enterprises	50	0%
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	5,490	5%
61 Educational services	7,080	7%
62 Health care and social assistance	12,005	12%
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	2,830	3%
72 Accommodation and food services	8,795	9%
81 Other services (except public administration)	4,155	4%
91 Public administration	3,360	3%

<sup>29</sup> Stats Can 2016

## Downtown's Industrial Breakdown:<sup>30</sup>

All industry categories	3,453	93%
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	97	3%
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	0	0%
22 Utilities	0	0%
23 Construction	119	3%
31-33 Manufacturing	450	12%
41 Wholesale trade	74	2%
44-45 Retail trade	446	12%
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	165	4%
51 Information and cultural industries	60	2%
52 Finance and insurance	125	3%
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	113	3%
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	143	4%
55 Management of companies and enterprises	0	0%
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	373	10%
61 Educational services	203	5%
62 Health care and social assistance	306	8%
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	95	3%
72 Accommodation and food services	410	11%
81 Other services (except public administration)	162	4%
91 Public administration	50	1%

## Housing:

Windsor's history is one of outward geographical expansions. Initially, Windsor's neighbourhoods were townships surrounding Sandwich Town: Windsor, Ford City, Riverside and Walker Town (now Walkerville). Over time, these townships

amalgamated into what is now known as the City of Windsor.<sup>31</sup> This history of amalgamation can partially explain some of the features of Windsor today. The distinctive neighbourhoods are remnants of the old villages and towns surrounding Windsor.

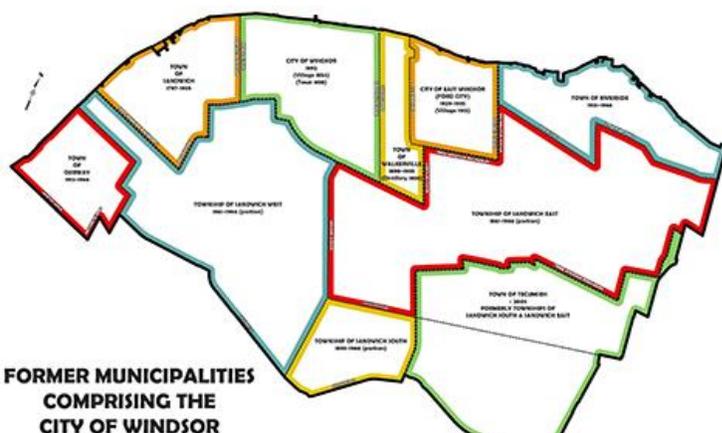


Figure 11: Amalgamation

<sup>30</sup> Stats Can 2016

<sup>31</sup> City of Windsor History

The oldest neighbourhoods face challenges as new, cleaner areas are developed outward, away from the City Center. In the 1960's, the population increased tremendously (in Windsor and Canada). Most of the occupied dwellings (41%) in Windsor were built during this time or just after. The construction of dwellings within the City Center and older neighbourhoods in Windsor have faced devaluation and are generally considered to be of low market-value.

While the city itself has an older stock of housing primarily created before the 1980's, the downtown faces the challenge of having mostly older homes. Only 3% of the dwellings were constructed in the 2000's.

Period of Construction:<sup>32</sup>

Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4	Ward 5
1960: 34%	1960: 52%	1960: 52%	1960: 77%	1960: 61%
1961-81: 21%	1961-81: 31%	1961-81:31%	1961-81:17%	1961-81:24%
1981-90: 4%	1981-90: 6%	1981-90: 9%	1981-90: 3%	1981-90: 5%
1991-00: 26%	1991-00: 6%	1991-00:5%	1991-00: 2%	1991-00: 7%
2001-05: 10%	2001-05: 2%	2001-05: 1%	2001-05: 0%	2001-05: 1%
2006-10: 2%	2006-10: 1%	2006-10: 1%	2006-10: 1%	2006-10: 1%
2011-16: 3%	2011-16: 0%	2011-16: 1%	2011-16: 1%	2011-16: 0%

Ward 6	Ward 7	Ward 8	Ward 9	Ward 10
1960: 40%	1960: 4%	1960: 27%	1960: 18%	1960: 27%
1961-81: 40%	1961-81:34%	1961-81:48%	1961-81:15%	1961-81:23%
1981-90: 6%	1981-90: 7%	1981-90: 13%	1981-90: 7%	1981-90: 9%
1991-00: 6%	1991-00: 15%	1991-00: 9%	1991-00: 27%	1991-00: 18%
2001-05: 5%	2001-05: 22%	2001-05: 2%	2001-05: 23%	2001-05: 13%
2006-10: 2%	2006-10: 10%	2006-10: 1%	2006-10: 6%	2006-10: 6%
2011-16: 1%	2011-16: 8%	2011-16: 0%	2011-16: 4%	2011-16: 4%

Looking at the map below<sup>33</sup>, a pattern becomes clear. As one moves away from the core, the housing becomes more expensive, newer and of better value. While the housing stock in the core could be devalued for a variety of reasons, the map demonstrates that affordable housing is centered into the core and surrounding neighbourhoods with older homes.

<sup>32</sup> Stats Can 2016

<sup>33</sup> Barry Lyons Consulting 2015

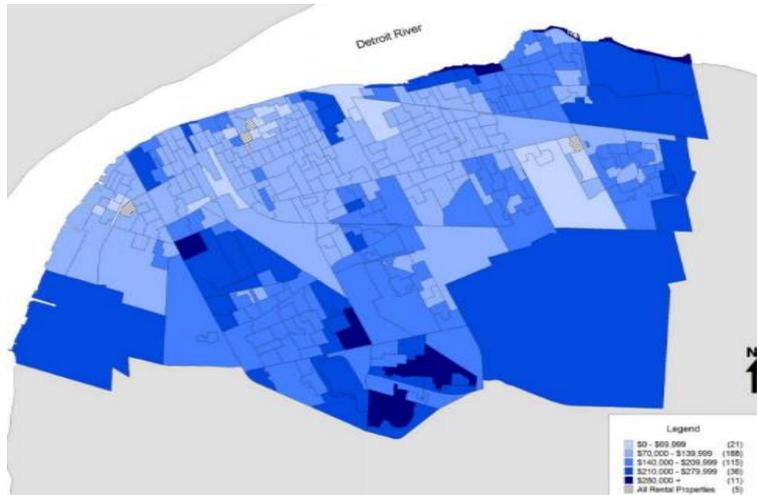


Figure 12: City of Windsor Market Value

Windsor has a relatively low cost of living and cheap housing market compared to most other cities in Canada.<sup>34</sup> The evolution from renting to home ownership is a viable possibility for most young families or couples in Windsor. In Windsor, 64% of dwellings are owned. However, in the downtown, only 30% of the dwellings are owned. This leaves 70% of the dwellings as rented with a higher concentration of apartment buildings. People who are single, enjoy condominium living, or who are unable to purchase a home are left without much option beyond the core and surrounding areas. Some of those who were interviewed highlighted that people who use their services are primarily single without family, and who rent their properties. There is a correlation between renting, low-income populations, and service-users.

Percent of Rental Properties per ward<sup>35</sup>:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8%	61%	70%	41%	37%	36%	12%	46%	10%	21%

<sup>34</sup> Canadian Real Estate Association

<sup>35</sup> Stats Can 2016

### Breakdown of downtown housing type:<sup>36</sup>

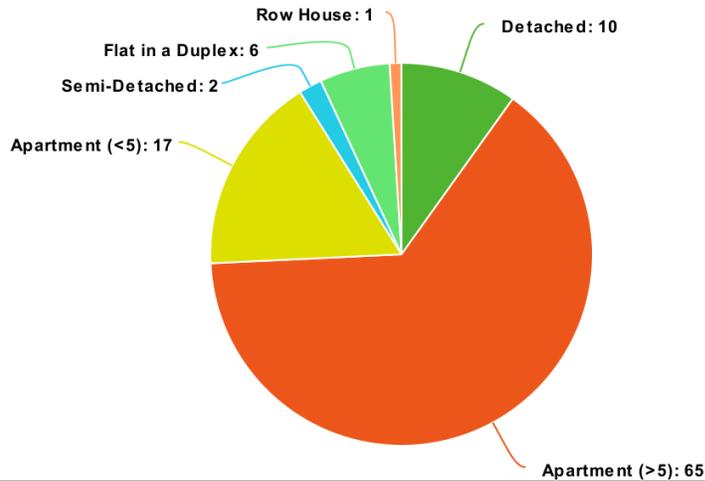


Figure 13: Housing Type in Downtown Windsor, Stats Can 2016

Alongside the problem of an older housing stock, population growth is occurring mostly in areas away from the urban center, a problem consistent across Canada’s midsize cities.<sup>37</sup> Suburban sprawl is both unsustainable and costly for the city. While new developments are being created elsewhere, areas of the core are being abandoned which causes business and other institutional closures. Both the economy and the environment suffer from this effect. Businesses are put under pressure when populations move away from the core due to a smaller client and customer base. These core businesses must rely on an ever-shrinking population for sustenance.

### **Commuting:**

Windsor has a low-density population, common with mid-size cities. While populations in the core are slightly denser, it is overall a low-density population. As a result, most people rely on vehicles to get around.

<sup>36</sup> Stats Can 2016

<sup>37</sup> Gordon 2013 Leveraging Ontario’s Urban Potential

Windsor's Commute (to work):

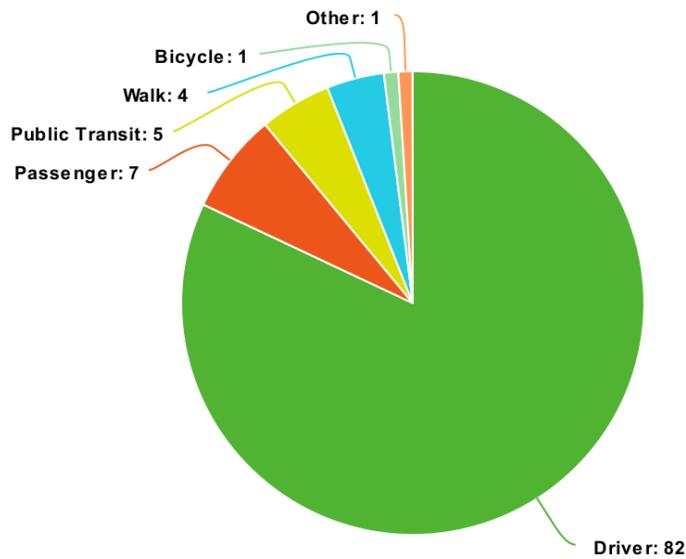


Figure 14: Commuting in Windsor, Stats Can 2016

Low density space combined with a mediocre transit system, lack of bike lanes, and narrow streets prevent people from using other forms of commute on a regular basis. Mass car usage is negative for both the environment in the city due to emissions, as well as damaging to infrastructure that extends far away from the city center. The amount of infrastructure required to support the suburban sprawl occurring in Windsor will continue to cost the city more.

According to "WalkScore," a tool used by real estate agents to determine how close amenities are to different neighbourhoods, Windsor is not a "walkable" city. Below is a breakdown of the different neighbourhoods and their scores.<sup>38</sup>

City Centre	Walk: 81 Transit: 57
South Central	Walk: 66 Transit: 47
Walkerville	Walk: 63 Transit: 44
University	Walk: 60 Transit: 46
Riverside	Walk: 54 Transit: 37
South Walkerville	Walk: 53 Transit: 39
Forest Glade	Walk: 52 Transit: 40

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.walkscore.com/CA-ON/Windsor>

Sandwich	Walk: 50 Transit: 38
Fontainbleu	Walk: 50 Transit: 38
East Windsor	Walk: 48 Transit: 39
Remington Park	Walk: 47 Transit: 34
South Windsor	Walk: 46 Transit: 31
South Cameron	Walk: 40 Transit: 32
Devonshire	Walk: 37 Transit: 32
Roseland	Walk: 31 Transit: 29
East Riverside	Walk: 28 Transit: 27
Sandwich South	Walk: 27 Transit: 14
Malden	Walk: 23 Transit: 24

As one gets further away from the core, the "WalkScores" lessen, meaning that people are more likely to rely on vehicle transportation out of sheer necessity to go about their daily tasks. Those who are without a car or prefer walking are better off living in the city center or surrounding areas.

Looking at the transit scores above, the pattern is similar for transit. Windsor's public transit system is limited by both its reach and run time.

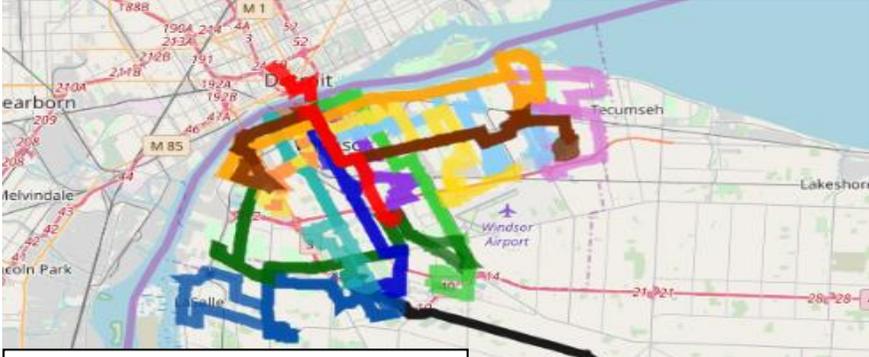


Figure 15: Transit System

While there are routes that go through the main arteries of the city, many areas are left in the grey. The routes that go through the core are both more frequent and run for longer periods of time. Routes that extend away from the core and main arteries end earlier and come less frequently. Below is a chart that correlates the above map with running times.<sup>39</sup> Again, for those who do

<sup>39</sup> Transit Windsor

not have a car or prefer to use public transit, the core and surrounding areas are more effective.

Route	Time between buses	Running Time
Lasalle 25 (light blue)	45 minutes	7am-7pm
Transway 1A (Red)	20 minutes	630am-12am
Transway 1C (Brown)	10 minutes	530am-145am
Crosstown 2 (Orange)	10 minutes	530am-130am
Central 3 (Yellow)	20 minutes	6am-7pm
3 West (Yellow)	Hourly	7am-1230am
Ottawa 4 (Baby Blue)	20 minutes	530am-130am
Dominion 5 (Turquoise)	20 minutes	6am-12am
Dougall 6 (Dark Blue)	40 minutes	6am-10pm
South Windsor 7 (Dark Green)	30 minutes	7am-7pm
Walkerville 8 (Light Green)	30 minutes	5am-11pm
Lauzon 10 (Light Purple)	35 minutes	630am-8pm
Parent 14 (Dark Purple)	40 minutes	7am-630pm

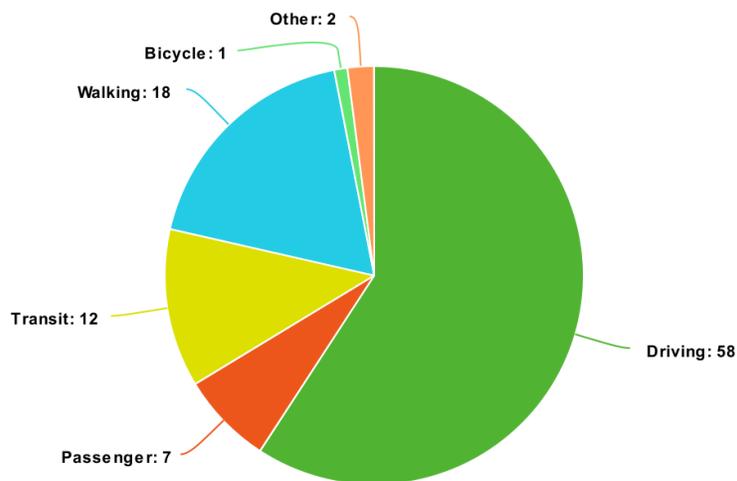


Figure 16: Commuting in Downtown Windsor, Stats Can 2016

## **Demographic Conclusions:**

While social services are centralized into the downtown core, the demographic breakdown of the downtown demonstrates that it is not a black-white picture. Low-income populations, unemployed or out of labour force populations, single people (or small families), affordable housing and renters, walking and transit are also centered into the downtown for a variety of reasons mentioned above. These are all groups of people highlighted by service-providers as using services frequently. It is not necessarily that the location of services brings people into the core, but the location of affordable housing, transit, and low-income populations are a factor in determining where social services locate.

### **INTERVIEW THEMES: ON CENTRALIZATION**

Social services choose their locations for a variety of reasons. Some, like Victoria Manor, have been located in the downtown for decades. Others, like the Transitional Stability Centre (TSC), have recently opened in order to respond to a clear need within the downtown. Regardless of when they opened, services centralize around a few common resources.

#### **Mobility:**

Of extreme importance to services is accessibility. In order for people to access services, they need to be able to get to them, enter the building, and get home. Because people accessing services may face a variety of structural barriers, it is important that services are accessible to all. As a result, it is necessary for services to be on the transit route. People without access to a car or who are low income rely on the transit system more than others. As discussed above, the current transit system is most reliable through the downtown core of Windsor. When asked how people commute to the service, one participant responded:

“Yeah, we use a place with a parking lot, but it’s almost always empty. Most people don’t have cars. People walk from all over, they ride their bikes, they take the bus. That’s why we’re in the downtown. We serve the downtown, we are from this neighbourhood, for this neighbourhood”

#### **Low-Income Areas:**

Service providers also highlight that in most cases they are located where they are needed. Clients choose Windsor because of its proximity to the American border, its agreeable climate, or affordability. Historically, downtown has been an affordable place to live and services opened where low-income populations were centered. When asked “Why downtown?” one participant noted:

“We get our funding because the downtown is a priority area- priority area meaning that there is a higher transient population here. More poverty, more substance use, more homelessness. These are needs we want to address”

Another participant notes that social services are not the problem in Windsor, but an increase in need due to economic changes:

“All I can say is, we’ve always been here. For the past century we have been here. We’ve always served the population in this area because this is where the need is. The problem is not more services, the problem is more people need services and can’t access them”

The services are where they have historically been located despite a few notable expansions into the downtown core. However, business closures, economic downturn, unemployment, sprawl, and other problems are creating new issues that the downtown needs to address.

### **Emergency Institutions and other Services:**

Alongside need, proximity to other institutions such as the hospital and the police station encourage services into the core. When asked about why they chose their location one participant responded:

“...to operate closely with the hospital. We work alongside them because our main goal is to divert from the ER. Some cases do require hospitalization so we can easily send people there if needed. The hospital can also refer people to us to help lighten their load too. Some things the hospital just isn’t set up for”

Many of the service providers highlighted that they aimed to take some pressure off publicly funded institutions like the hospital or criminal justice system. Transfers of patients between institutions is made more effective due to proximity. The plans to move the hospital towards a less dense area potentially have a drastic effect on social services and their ability to access treatment for their residents.

### **On Concerns:**

One participant highlights that neighbours are concerned about social services opening up near them. This can cause strife in neighbourhoods or cause people to move away. However, this participant was hopeful that through the correct management, neighbours will be able to coexist with essential services:

“Collocation is important and we’re starting to see it more. Of course, there will always be the “Not in my backyard” types but that’s on us too. We need to be respectful and clean, manage our problems, meet with the neighbours and work together. Attitudes are changing, so this is all hopeful”

The central thesis of this project aims to address whether the centralization of services exacerbates the problems of poverty. One participant addressed this directly:

“Do I like that there is more drug use and alcohol use in the core? Do I like that there’s more crime down here? No. But I do think that our guys are in a place where they can be challenged safely. And we’ll help them when they are”

This participant highlighted that while there are large concerns regarding the centralization of addiction and crisis, having social service providers in close proximity gives people who face these challenges an alternative space to address these issues. Decentralizing services can make them harder to access for core populations. Those who are challenged may not be able to access the help they need.

Another participant expressed concerns for clients. The goal of some social services is to have clients that eventually transition from support to independence. Placing everyone who uses services into a “service-group” could potentially limit one’s sense of self and create concerns about dependency. Exiting the social service world can be more challenging when it is such a large sector:

“We shouldn’t ghettoize everyone who has problems. People need to feel like part of a community not part of a service group. People need to be empowered.”

The creation of a service ghetto, or an area that is limited to social services and government institutions poses big problems for residents who need to access more than just services. Businesses and services need to coexist in order to increase client quality of life and ensure that all needs are met, both within and outside the service world. The largest concern about centralization that is continuously expressed is that the core will be hollowed out for services. When asked about collocation with other services, a participant noted:

“Service-users will wake up at a shelter, go to Tim Horton’s for breakfast. Go to the library to work on things, then go to a food bank. Notice what I’m saying.

We need businesses and we need services. We can't abandon either."

### **Remediating Concerns:**

While centralizing social services causes concerns about creating a neglected area of the city, service providers highlight that having relationships with other services is important for a variety of reasons. Service users face multiple barriers in day-to-day life and can have difficulty navigating the bureaucracy of social services. Coordinating client services can encourage follow up and can facilitate navigating the web of services:

"We already talk to each other. Most services require clients to be self-managing or self-starting. This can be very difficult for a variety of reasons. Having multiple points of contact can help client's complete programs and work through some of their stuff."

Services are implementing different programs to help manage some of the concerns about centralization by employing nurses, social workers, psychiatrists, and city workers on site to alleviate some of the drain that is placed on public institutions:

"When you have the most complicated cases that require the most support, it is almost necessary to have other services on staff. Some people won't or can't leave the building. My nurse, social worker, and psychiatrist help with that. We take strain off the ER and the healthcare system too."

Another participant discussed the importance of satellite locations alongside locations in the core to address problems that exist all over the city:

"These issues are not unique to the downtown, they can be found anywhere in the city. But they are centered downtown. There are pros to a one stop shop, but satellite offices are necessary. It's just as challenging to have everyone come to one central location"

Nearly every participant interviewed highlighted that mobile outreach is the most effective solution to the centralization of social services and growing social need. These services can reach out to clients and meet them where they are at:

"Mobile services that go where clients are is the only way forward. People don't always want to come into

the office, sometimes they can't, but sometimes they don't trust us because they have a history of being treated poorly"

In Windsor, the Mobile Outreach and Support Team (MOST) Van has been very successful and many believe this could be a model for the future. The MOST Van is made up of a trained driver, social worker and outreach worker. MOST offers assessment, basic material needs, and access to community services. Expanding the MOST program to other areas of the city can help decentralize services while maintaining connections with clients and people who need help.

## **COMPARATOR STUDY: OSHAWA**

Oshawa has a similar demographic and economic makeup as Windsor. As another mid-size city, the problems of downtown decline and suburban sprawl are consistent. After conducting a snapshot observation of Oshawa, walking through the downtown, visiting social services, and sitting in Memorial park, some similarities and differences were made clear.

### **Demographics<sup>40</sup>:**

Oshawa had a population of 159,458 people in the 2016 census but has been steadily growing since. The median household income is \$79,452 per year. Most homes are owned at 78%, with 43% being constructed before 1980. There's an employment rate of 60%. Industry is primarily manufacturing, construction, food, retail, health care.

Being close to the GTA, Oshawa has a more effective transit system that people can use to commute in and out of the city (Durham Region Transit, 2019). However, most people still drive (80%) in order to get to work.

### **Social Services and Social Need**

The social need in Oshawa is more advanced based upon the research observation. While the social services are similarly central to that of Windsor, there were groupings of visible drug use around needle drop bins. This was not seen at all during the observations in Windsor. Residents express concerns about bringing children into the core when drug use is so prevalent. One participant noted:

"I have young kids so, it's hard for me. I feel like worlds are colliding when I go into the park. My kids are curious, they want

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<sup>40</sup> Stats Can 2016

to ask questions and look around when they see people with needles. I have to keep them safe first and foremost”

One way to remediate this would be to have safe injection sites. People are using intravenous drugs around the needle drop for two reasons: 1) a place to safely dispose of needles, 2) there is no where else to go. If there was a place where people were comfortable using, the drug-use would be moved from the public park and into the safe-use site.

While Windsor’s drug problem may not be directly the same, it is important to consider the implications of forcing people to use on the street both for their own safety and that of others. Windsor can learn from the more advanced problems in other cities.

### **Gentrification**

One concern expressed repeatedly through the time spent in Oshawa was that of gentrification. People from Toronto are moving into Oshawa, driving up housing prices, and pushing out marginalized groups. Dispersing marginalized groups often means that they have no where to go, they cannot afford housing, and they cannot access the services they require, creating pockets of marginalization and social need throughout the city. Problems of poverty, addiction and crisis are furthered by reducing access to vital services and displacement from communities.

## **OBSERVATIONAL CONCLUSIONS**

The City of Windsor has faced a variety of economic challenges since General Motors left the city in 2008. As a result, there has been an increase in social need centered into different areas of the city. Windsor’s downtown is characterized by being of a lower-income, single population that is employed in manufacturing, food and retail. A high percentage of the downtown population is unemployed or out of the labour force altogether.

The physical character of the downtown is made up of bars, offices, social services, and apartment buildings alongside other institutions such as cheque-cashing outlets, pawn shops and smoke shops. There is a wide disparity between different parts of the city and the downtown, but also between different neighbourhoods within the downtown itself. The main street in the downtown (Ouellette) has recently undergone an extensive reparation project to introduce new street lights, benches, flower beds, and bus bays. Maiden Lane is another area that shows signs of maintenance and prosocial institutions such as a shop, a cafe and an icecream parlor. Other areas of downtown are absent of nearly all maintenance and aesthetic features. The Pelissier and Wyandotte block for example, is frequently littered with garbage and other items. Here, the street lights are rusted out and covered in graffiti. It is not uncommon to face poverty here.

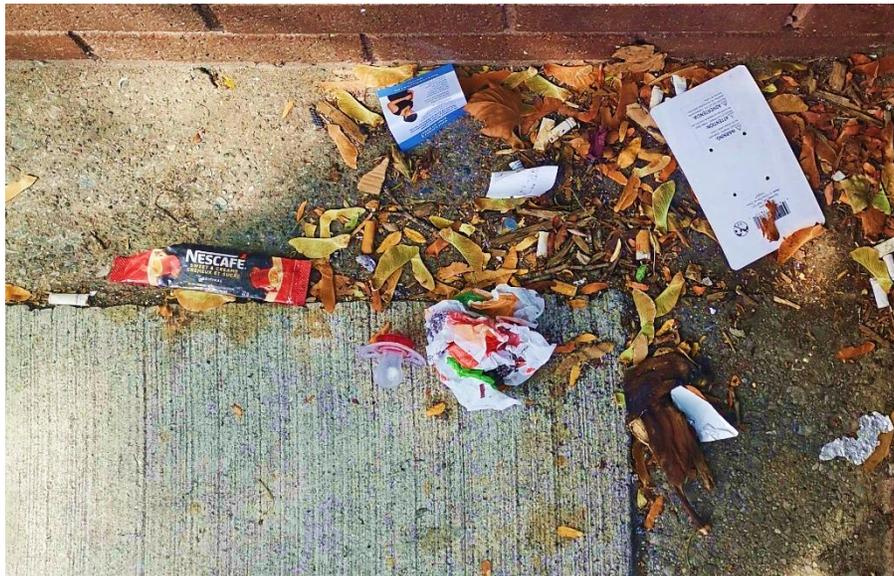


Photo: Litter on the ground, Wyandotte and Pelissier, Sydney Chapados 2019

While people do travel through downtown quite frequently, most people are headed towards their destination, whether it be a restaurant or for work. The problems of poverty, addiction, and mental illness are centered in the downtown which creates a sense of unease among others, despite the relatively low risks posed by these populations. Some streets are dominated by the presence of social services. In areas where businesses do not exist, the primary population that spends time on the street is service-users.



Photo: newly redone Ouellette Ave., Sydney Chapados, 2019

During the evening and into the night on weekends, the downtown becomes a place bustling with activity and a sense of unease. Bar culture brings young adults from all areas of the city into the core. Concerns about public disturbance and unrest are realized as public intoxication becomes common place.

A variety of prosocial buildings, institutions and items are missing from this area that are present in other areas of the city. The maps above demonstrate that retail, green space, and restaurants (cafe, fine-dining, bakeries) are absent. Entertainment is present in the downtown, however, the levels are insufficient to sustain economic activity.

The comparator block in Riverside (Pilette and Riverside) brings forward a different scene. Regardless of the time of day, groups of people are walking around the meticulously groomed gardens and park area. The riverfront, which involves a fountain, appears to attract people for walks and bike rides. During the day and evening, families with children spend time in the lawn or visit the icecream parlour. The parking here is generally full and overflow parking is provided down the street. While a variety of arguments could be made as to why this area is used more than parts of downtown, the primary differences noted through observation were: 1) presence of green space, 2)

presence of social space, 3) presence of prosocial businesses, 4) presence of aesthetic features (Gardens, plaques, landmarks).



Photo: Reaume Park, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/23056733@N05/7608219102/>

While the centralization of social services causes concern for some residents and businesses, services are centralized into the core because of affordability, transit, accessibility and proximity to other key institutions. Decentralizing the services could make them entirely inaccessible for those who need them. Both centralizing and decentralizing social services pose problems for the community and clients. However, services can coexist with other important institutions to encourage a liveable city for all.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations for this project are twofold: to continue to support services to make sure that everyone gets the care that they need efficiently, and to encourage businesses and other prosocial features back into the core to provide balance.

1. Work with social services to create an inventory of services and how they can be accessed. This will facilitate accessing social services.
2. Continue to support the MOST Van pilot project. This is a decentralized service model that provides support and meets people where they are at. The MOST Van does not require people to centralize and convene in one single area of the city, but all can receive help using this model.

3. Fund nurses, social workers, or other professionals to make visits at residential social services to minimize service system usage.
4. Extend the transit system to make it more reliable for those going beyond the core. There are plans for a new Windsor Transit system that would enable people who rely on transit to access other areas of the city more easily.
5. Address the problem of urban sprawl through education and community advocacy. Irresponsible sprawling development is unsustainable because of increased commuting traffic and damage to infrastructure. Increasing population density will encourage and support local businesses.
6. Hold resident consults to encourage community communication and give those who live downtown a voice.
7. Conduct further research on revitalization strategies to encourage business back into the core.