

MEMO

TO: Mayor Small and Members of Council

FROM: Jeff Bacon, Economic Development Officer

DATE: March 17, 2025

RE: Cooperation Between Businesses Regarding Hours – Strategic Priorities
“Points to Capture”

Businesses in Downtown Amherst do not operate with a unified schedule for hours of operation and each business determines its own. It's felt that if the business community could cooperate and offer extended and mutual operating hours it would increase their sales, allow customers more opportunities to shop, and would benefit our downtown.

Consulting with the Amherst Downtown Business Association (ADBA) Chairperson, some factors that may affect having unified operating hours were considered:

- Amherst's downtown business core is comprised of numerous types of institutions, services and retailers spread throughout the district. From one building to the next, the entity operating inside will vary. An insurance company, beside a hairdresser who's beside a bank, etc, breaks up the consistency of retailers and this spacing creates the perception of separation from each other.
- For the shopper, this separation could influence their sense of security, if evening hours are offered. Persons traveling from one business to the next would need to feel safe.
- If the business does not own the building, in some instances the building owner sets the hours of access to the building.
- Single owners who already operate during weekday hours may not be willing to work longer or have the staff to take their place.
- The benefits of being open extended or weekend hours may not benefit institutional, service or governmental organizations that exist in our downtown.

The ADBA Chairperson is interested in discussing with members their willingness to participate and solutions to these points. It was agreed that not all businesses may be able to make this adjustment but starting the conversation is the necessary first step to grow the idea.