

# Mobility monitor

## Transportation Data

Monitoring today,  
for tomorrow.

## This issue

## Population and jobs in downtown Calgary

June 2008  
Issue #26

### KEY FINDING

*The population of downtown Calgary is still behind the targets set out in the GoPlan, but since 2000 growth has been higher than historical trends.*

Since the GoPlan was adopted in 1995, The City has been encouraging more residential development in the downtown.

The projections used in the GoPlan anticipated a population of 15,500 by 2003. This population was reached in 2006, or only three years later than expected.

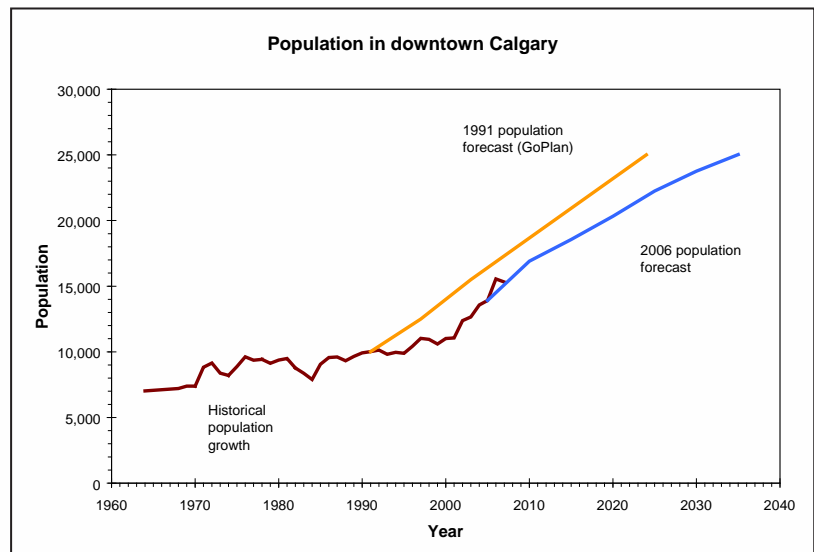
From 2000 to 2006 the population of the downtown grew by 4,530 people to 15,548. In contrast, from 1964 to 2000 the population grew by 3,919 to 11,018.

The downtown population is closely following the 2006 population forecast.

### What is the downtown?

In this Mobility Monitor the downtown is defined as the area bounded by the Bow River on the north, the Elbow River on the east, the CPR tracks on the south and 14th Street on the west.

The City has recently adopted the concept of the Centre City, which includes both the downtown and the area south of the downtown to 17th Avenue South. The original downtown is still a useful concept.



Source: Civic Census and Land Use Planning and Policy Economics and Geodemographics division

## KEY FINDING

**The number of jobs in downtown Calgary continues to grow rapidly and is now much higher than the target set out by the GoPlan for the year 2024.**

The 2006 forecast projected 121,000 jobs in the downtown in 2006. The 2006 Place of Work Survey found 138,500 jobs in the downtown or 17,300 more than estimated in the 2006 forecast. The job level of 138,500 was expected by 2012 in the 2006 forecast.

### Changing definitions

Tracking of the number of jobs in the downtown is complicated by a change in the definition of the number of jobs.

Prior to 2001 The City only counted the number of people living within the city limits who worked in the downtown. This data is shown in black on the chart. The 1991 job forecast for the GoPlan, shown in orange, used the old definition.

In 2001 The City changed the definition to include jobs held by people who live outside of city limits. In 2006 there were about 12,000 people from outside Calgary working downtown. The historical data using this method is shown in gray on the chart. The 2006 job forecast based on this new methodology is shown in blue.

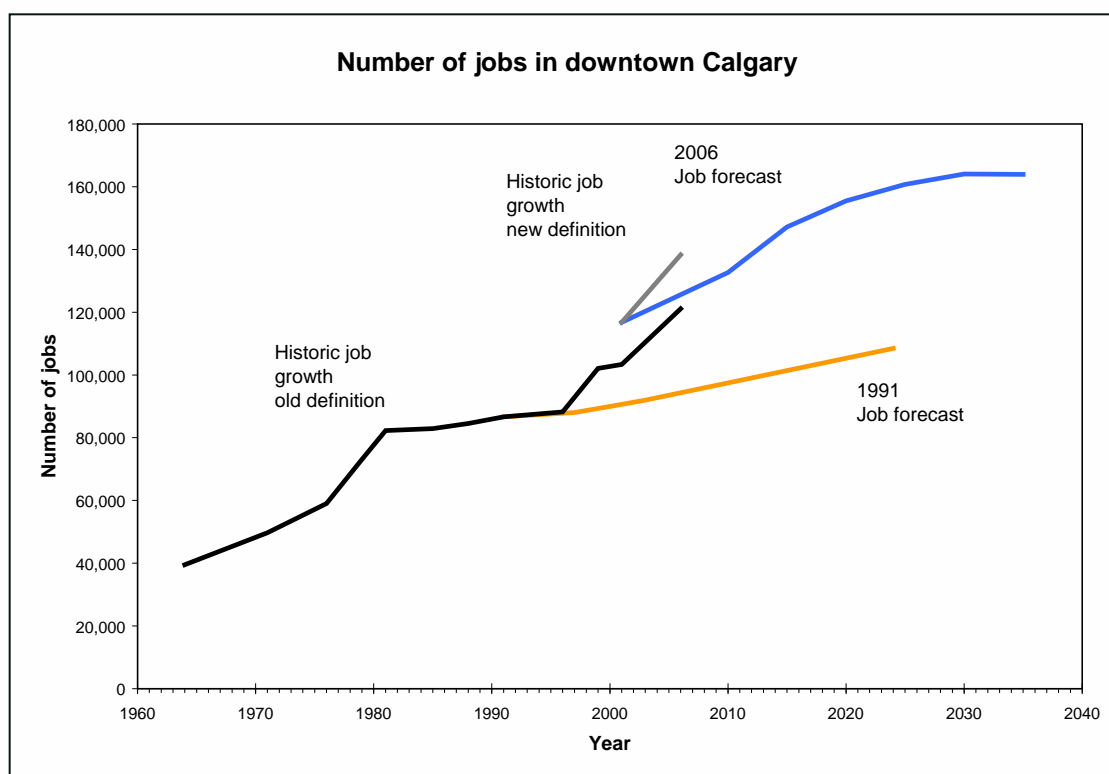
The forecast used for the GoPlan projected 108,500 jobs in the downtown in 2024. In 2006 the comparable number from the Civic Census Place of Work Survey was 121,000. The GoPlan forecast would have to be extended out to 2040 to reach this number of jobs.

### The forecasts

Corporate Economics & Geodemographics works on a five-year forecasting cycle tied to the Federal Census. The City produces a major forecast series every two or three years, with the next one expected in 2009.

The 2006 forecast was done in early 2006, before information from the 2006 Place of Work Survey was available, so it did not take into account information from the 2006 survey.

Information on jobs is available less frequently than information on population.



Source: Transportation Planning Forecasting division and Land Use Planning and Policy Economics and Geodemographics division

## KEY FINDING

**Calgary has the third highest downtown job density of major Canadian cities.**

In 2001 Calgary had a downtown job density of 34,721 jobs per square kilometre. This placed Calgary third behind Toronto and Montreal, but ahead of Ottawa, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Quebec City.

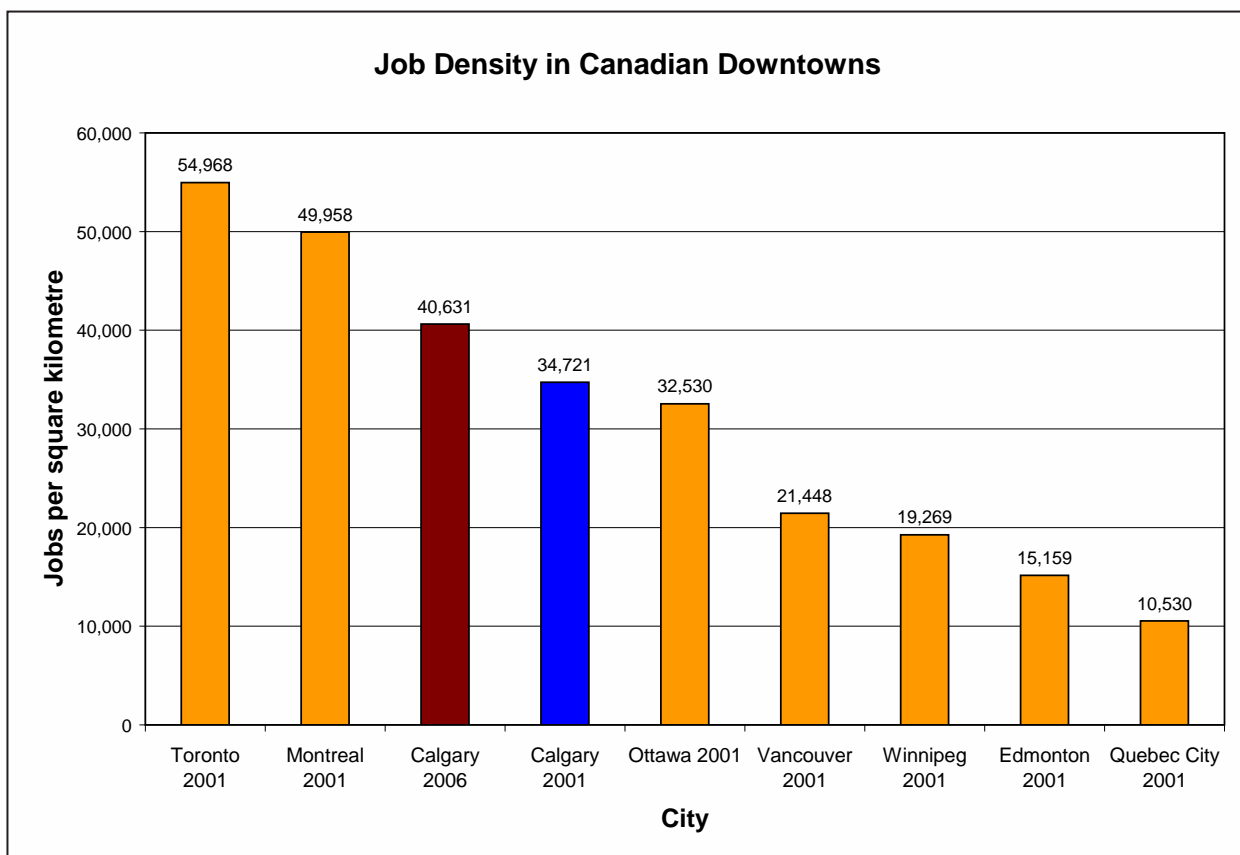
In 2006 Calgary's downtown density had increased to 40,631 jobs per square kilometre. Comparable numbers for other Canadian cities is not yet available.

On a world scale, Calgary's downtown is much less dense than the downtowns of some major world cities. In 1990 downtown Hong Kong had 179,000 jobs per square kilometre, Chicago had 93,000 and New York City had 84,000. At the other end of the scale Denver had 29,000 and Phoenix had 9,000. Calgary had 29,113 jobs per square kilometre in 1991.

The area of Calgary's downtown has not changed over the last 30 years. Therefore the trend in density is similar to the growth in downtown jobs.

### Why do we want more people living downtown?

Most people living downtown also work downtown reducing the demand for traffic into the downtown. People living downtown and working outside the downtown can take advantage of unused roadway capacity outbound in the morning and inbound in the evening.



Source: Calgary Civic Census and Transportation Association of Canada Urban Transportation Indicators

## Implications

The number of jobs in downtown Calgary has been growing faster than expected. This high growth rate shows the urgency to complete the Plan It Calgary project and deliver a new Municipal Development Plan and a new Calgary Transportation Plan.

Many decisions made on transportation service to the downtown were based on earlier forecasts that did not account for the higher than expected growth in downtown jobs. Some examples include:

- At the time of GoPlan the Eighth Avenue LRT tunnel was not expected to be built for well beyond 30 years. With the higher than expected growth, the level of jobs in the downtown needed to justify this project may be reached sooner than previously expected.
- The expansion of the LRT stations to 4-car operation was not expected to be needed for another 10 years, but higher growth may lead to this being done sooner.
- The construction of the West LRT line was not expected in the next 10 years, but this project has now been moved forward.
- The timing for the construction of the Southeast LRT line may need to be moved forward as well.

At the time the 2006 forecasts were done, the most recent information available on the number of jobs in the downtown was from the 2001 Place of Work Survey. Rapid changes in demographics increase the risk of high or critical impacts on forecasts. More frequent data collection would help mitigate this risk. Other sources of data may be available to track job growth in downtown Calgary.

The population of downtown Calgary has been growing faster in recent years, and this trend is expected to continue. This is a desirable trend, since it increases the number of downtown employees who can walk or cycle to work.

## The Mobility Monitor

The Mobility Monitor is part of the Ongoing Monitoring and Implementation Program (OMIP) for the Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP). The purpose of the Mobility Monitor is to report on strategic trends and events that affect the implementation of the CTP, and to recommend future actions. The Mobility Monitor is produced by the Transportation Data division of Transportation Planning.

## Recommendations

Continue to monitor and track demographic information in the downtown and the impact on travel demand.

Investigate other sources of information to track changes in the number of jobs, and consider increasing the frequency of place of work surveys to provide more timely information.

Consider incorporating the higher number of jobs downtown and other monitoring information into the decision making process to augment the forecasts.

Consider reviewing the plans and the timing of improvements for downtown transportation to see if changes are needed.

## Sources of Information

The historic population estimates are obtained from the City of Calgary Civic Census. This information is collected yearly.

Historical job estimates was provided by the Forecasting division, which collects this information every five years using a survey done as part of the Civic Census.

The population and job forecasts were provided by the Corporate Economics & Geodemographics division of the Land Use Planning and Policy business unit.

The downtown job densities were taken from the Transportation Association of Canada's Urban Transportation Indicators report and from the historical job numbers provided by Transportation Planning Forecasting division and Land Use Planning and Policy Economics and Geodemographics division.

Data for other City's was obtained from "An International Sourcebook of automobile Dependence in Cities: 1960-1990." By Kenworthy, Labe et al.

## How accurate and reliable are these data?

How concerned should you be by the potential for error in the data presented in The Mobility Monitor? The population is derived from the Civic Census which is a reliable source of information. The number of jobs is based on a survey of about 10% of the population, and therefore subject to some uncertainty. The number parking stalls in the downtown is based on an inventory, where all parking spaces are identified and counted.

It must be kept in mind that no one source of information can claim to be infallible. Consideration and appropriate weighting of other sources of information is to be encouraged before making decisions.