



*Photo Credit: Town of Peace River*

## A CONFLUENCE OF OPPORTUNITY

The Town of Peace River serves as a vital secondary regional service hub and the primary gateway to the Peace Country in Northwest Alberta. Supported by a stable economy driven by forestry, oil and gas, and agricultural support services, the Town provides a robust foundation for targeted retail business attraction.

The Town of Peace River is more than just a scenic valley community; it is the undisputed commercial capital of the Peace region. For retailers, the town represents a sweet spot and high-traffic hub with a captive audience and an economic resilience fueled by a diverse industrial base. Consumers travel from surrounding agricultural and industrial communities specifically to shop, dine, and access professional and technical services.

The community hosts a strong mix of branded national anchors and thriving boutiques, creating a retail ecosystem that balances “one-stop shopping” with unique local flair.

Major brands like Walmart, Canadian Tire, Freson’s, No Frills, The Brick, Dollarama and Boston Pizza recognize Peace River as an essential northern hub with consistent, customer traffic and reliable revenue.

Meanwhile, Peace River’s downtown is home to boutiques, specialty shops, cafe’s, restaurants, fitness centres and the region’s only cinema, which cater to a workforce with high discretionary income from the forestry, oil and gas, agricultural and healthcare sectors.



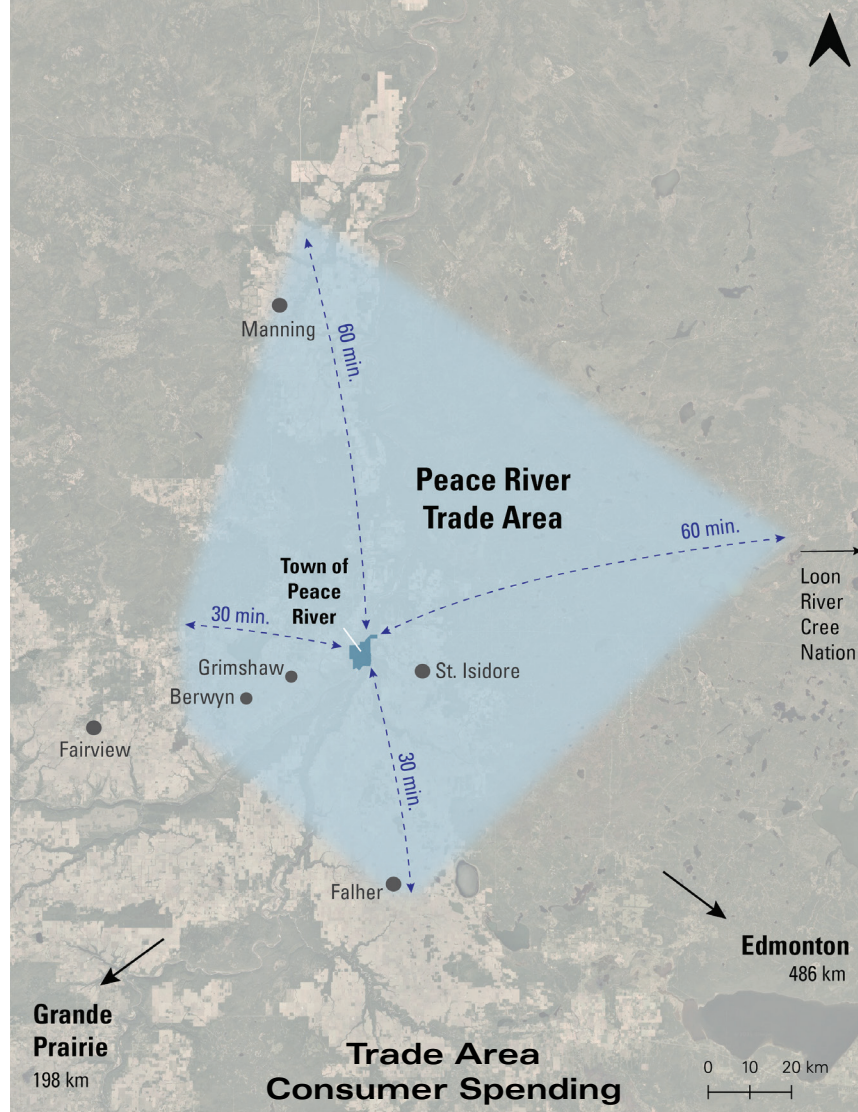
*Photo Credit: Tara Clark on Unsplash*

## THE TRADE AREA

Peace River's retail consumer trade area has a population conservatively estimated at just under 25,000 at the core of which are the 7,200 residents of the town. This trade area represents an established regional draw for consumer goods and services. Growth forecasts over the coming decade indicate the Trade Area population could approach 26,000 and beyond given recent announcements of major projects in the region.

The consumer base for Peace River extends well beyond its municipal boundaries, drawing residents from the Town of Grimshaw, County of Northern Lights, Town of Manning, Northern Sunrise County and Town of Falher. This consumer draw is validated by the significant amount of retail in the community (estimated at 800,000 sq. ft.) when measured against the town's population base. When figures like this exist, it clearly shows a healthy opportunity with the necessary locational site selection criteria for success.

Peace River's trade area has an annual retail spending estimated at \$437 million (2025) including traditional retail categories, as well as health care and automotive segments.



# \$437 million



**Grocery & Conveniences**

----- **\$89.8 m**

**Pharmacy**

----- **\$8.6 m**

**Personal Care & Services**

----- **\$44.2 m**



Photo Credit: Freson.com

## THE MARKET PROFILE

Peace River's commercial and retail market is organized into distinct nodes, each meeting specific consumer needs. The town maintains an inventory of approximately 800,000 sq. ft. of retail and service space spread across these distinct nodes. Most prominent for retail opportunities include:

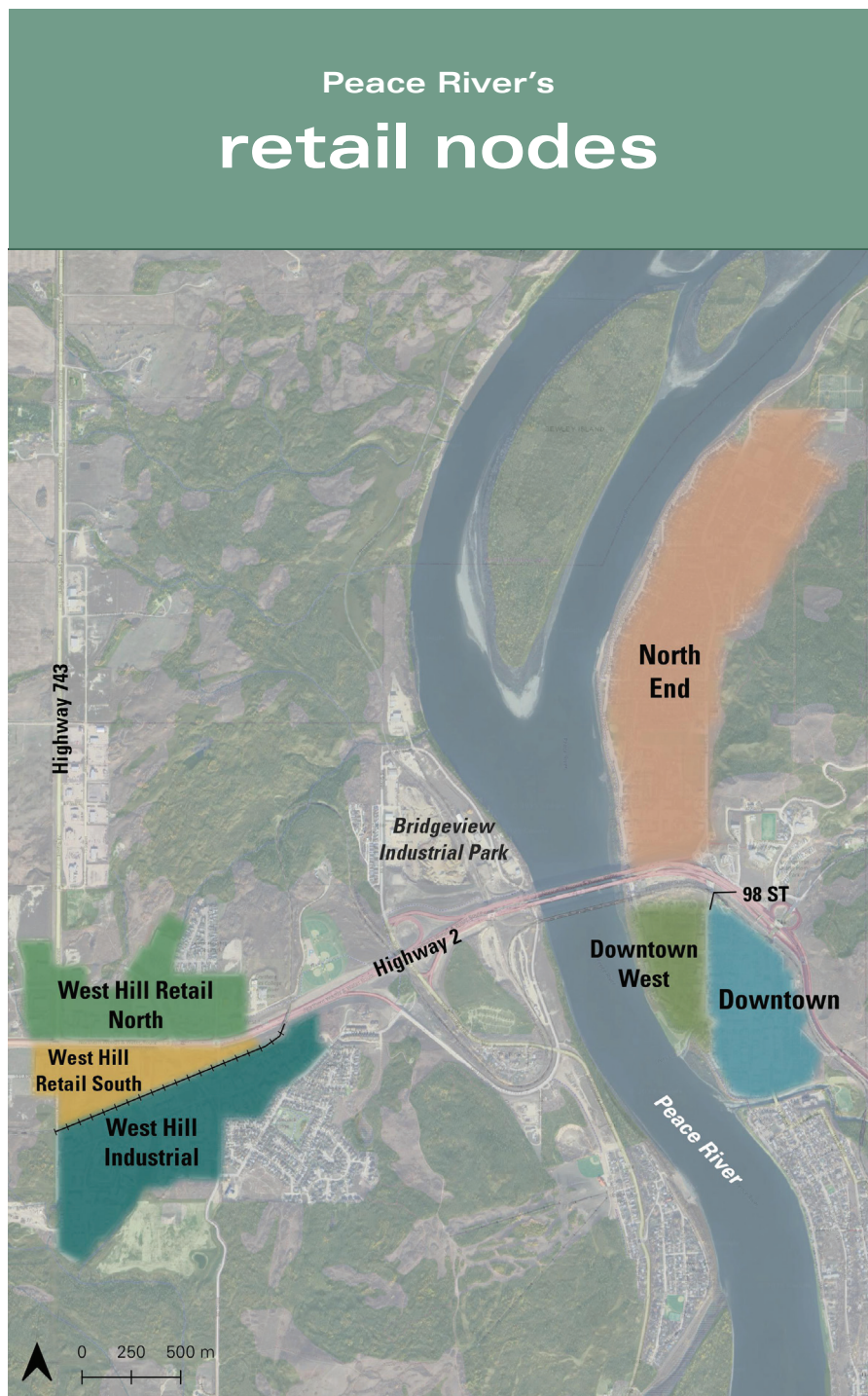
- **West Hill:** The primary destination for "Big Ticket" items along the Highway 2 corridor featuring larger format retail, quick-service restaurants, home furnishings, auto dealers and national anchor tenants with high traffic counts room for future new development.
- **Downtown:** The historic, walkable heart of the town, specializing in independent retail, boutique fashion, full-service branded and local restaurants and services with affordable streetfront lease rates and abundant on-street parking.
- **North End & West Hill Industrial:** Key areas for localized convenience and specialized automotive, industrial and technical services.

The West Hills North and South retail nodes are a significant focus of the Town's broader commercial attraction strategy, particularly for branded retailers in new and existing vacant spaces.

Conversely, the downtown offers strategic and affordable backfill and infill opportunities with small vacant lots and streetfront premises, compatible for cultivating and curating local independent retailers where cost structures (i.e. rent and operating costs) are tenant-friendly.

Top retail categories in terms of overall retail floorspace in the town are:

1. Grocery & Specialty Foods (182,324 sq. ft.)
2. Auto/RV/Motorsports Dealerships (85,106 sq. ft.)
3. Full Service Restaurants (71,275 sq. ft.)
4. Fashion, Footwear & Accessories (59,319 sq. ft.)
5. Personal Care & Services (56,098 sq. ft.)



## THE OPPORTUNITY

A 2026 Retail Gap Analysis revealed that Peace River “punches significantly above its weight” in market penetration. There is market demand for approximately 150,000 sq. ft. of new retail goods and services floorspace over the next decade, within which retail merchandise category gaps for prospective independent, franchised or national grocery & convenience retail businesses include:



Grocery & Conveniences: +/- 35,600 sq. ft.

Pharmacy: +/- 3,500 sq. ft.

Personal Care & Services: +/- 16,100 sq. ft.

## CONCLUSION

The Town of Peace River serves as a quintessential example of a regional secondary market that punches above its weight in terms of retail demand. Nestled within the Peace River Valley and surrounding plateaus, the municipality is the primary service hub for a vast catchment area in Northwest Alberta, catering to conservatively 25,000 residents within its immediate and extended trade area.

The retail market in Peace River is a beneficiary of the town’s regional positioning as an important node for forestry, oil and gas, and agricultural support services, which provide a stable economic foundation for commercial activity. This industrial activity translates into high consumer purchasing power, as evidenced by the town’s household incomes and strong retail composition.

The province and town’s focus on “connected transportation infrastructure”, specifically Highway 2 and Highway 35, reinforces the long-term value of prominent retail nodes like West Hill. As the “gateway” to the Peace Country, the West Hill node will undoubtedly continue to garner interest and command the healthy premiums for larger-scale branded retail and regional business services. For those requiring larger vehicle access or regional visibility, West Hill is ideal where base lease rates are commensurate with higher regional traffic volumes and high visibility.

Retailers looking to enter the Peace River market have multiple options for prioritizing location based on site needs and customer demographics. Service-based businesses such as salons, small offices and other technical trades will find the downtown and industrial area lease rates, and available streetfront and adjacent spaces accessible and cost-effective.

The Town is seeking businesses to join a community that is growing, investing, and looking toward the future.....Be part of that future.

## Contact:

Kariene Whittle | Economic Development Officer  
780.617.4683 | KWhittle@peaceriver.ca

