

DOWNTOWN COURTENAY PLAYBOOK: A PARTNERSHIP ACTION PLAN



AUGUST 2016

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Financial assistance for Courtenay's Downtown Revitalization process was provided by the Real Estate Foundation of BC.



We are grateful to Michael von Hausen and his design team for their dedication to our community and assistance with developing a vision for Downtown Courtenay.

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City of Courtenay

INTRODUCTION

The playbook is a product of the 2015 Downtown Forum and the 2016 Design Charrette. It summarizes the community vision for Downtown Courtenay created through the engagement process and the planning directions and actions for downtown revitalization. Recognizing there are many actions and partners necessary to enact meaningful and lasting change a playbook is an ideal document rather than a plan. It is a guiding document that outlines the planning vision, goals, principles, strategic tools, policies, and an implementation matrix to revitalize



Downtown Courtenay. It is meant to be a reference guide for all partners to identify actions and responsibilities as the community works together to inject new energy Downtown.

The ideas in the Playbook are the result of a strong effort and commitment by those who participated in the community workshops. The City would like to acknowledge those who participated in the process and who continue to show an interest in moving forward to create a great Downtown.

The playbook should be used as a living document with annual reviews and progress reports to Council. New action items will be added as necessary to achieve the goals and vision set by the community. It is important to note that some of the ideas are still broad in nature and have not yet been fully explored to determine the engineering and budget implications. However, they represent the vision of the community



and their further exploration will form a key part of the process going forward. While the playbook will guide work plans, the final decision to adopt new policy, amend current regulation or approve projects rests with Council.

Community Workshops

The Downtown Forum

October 26 – 28 at Native Sons Hall

A total of 147 members of the community participated

Objective

Identify opportunities and challenges that the downtown is facing

Questions to answer

1. What is special about Downtown Courtenay?
2. What is missing in the Downtown?
3. Describe your vision for Downtown Courtenay 2025.
4. What Strategies can we use to unlock the full potential of Downtown?



DOWNTOWN COURTENAY
Public Forum
 Tuesday, October 27

Share your ideas as a vision is developed for the future of the downtown core.

Drop-in feedback session:
 11:30 am to 2:00 pm
 This session at the Courtenay City Hall Council Chambers is for general public and businesses.

QUESTIONS?
 Development Services Department
 tel: 250-334-4441
 email: planning@courtenay.ca
 web: www.courtenay.ca/downtown

Community Discovery Workshop:
 6:00 pm - Registration
 6:30 pm - Public Presentation
 7:00 - 9:00 pm - Public Round Tables
 During this workshop at the Native Sons Hall lower level, downtown merchants, city council, staff, and members of the general public will work together on ideas to support a vibrant downtown.

 CITY OF COURTENAY Development Services | 250-334-4441 courtenay.ca/downtown follow us   

The Design Charrette

March 7 – 10, 2016 at Native Sons Hall. A total of 240 members of the community participated

Three Principles Emerged from the Forum

1. Create the Heart to Downtown
2. Improve the core streets
3. Make better connection to the Rivers

Six Charrette Themes Based on Forum Results

1. Downtown street grid improvements
2. Main meeting place in the downtown – Duncan Avenue “Commons”
3. Infill development opportunities and program
4. Park and trail connections in the downtown
5. Riverland district development opportunity
6. Neighbourhood residential intensification around the downtown core



Example illustration from Lethbridge, AB
 By Cal Strigley

Downtown Courtenay Revitalization Project
DOWNTOWN DREAMERS WANTED!

Join the City of Courtenay for a series of evenings to explore visual options for Downtown Courtenay. Illustrators will be on-hand to draw the ideas in small working group discussions. Ideas will be used to inform the ongoing Downtown Courtenay Revitalization Plan. The series of public meetings are referred to as a “Design Charrette”.

Meetings will be held at the Native Sons Hall (upper level) on the following days:

- Monday March 7, 5:30 – 9 pm
 Small working group discussions*
- Tuesday March 8, 6:30 – 8:30 pm
 Pop in to see the designers work in progress
- Thursday March 10, 5:30 – 8 pm
 Community presentation*



* Child minding available upon advanced request: email planning@courtenay.ca or call 250-334-4441 by Monday, February 29.

To keep up to date on the planning process, please join the Downtown email list by emailing planning@courtenay.ca or visit www.courtenay.ca/downtown
 See reverse for map of study area

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Downtown Forum Summary

The Downtown Forum was well attended by both business leaders and the general public. The event engaged community stakeholders to begin to shape the vision for the downtown; it used various tools including presentations, workshop discussions, a drop-in at City Hall, and interviews to discover some further issues and hidden opportunities in the Downtown and adjacent areas; it generated some preliminary discussions for strategic actions; and excited Council and the community about the possibilities for Downtown Courtenay.

During the Forum, standard questions were asked to discover key messages and themes for revitalization. The following is a brief summary of common themes identified in the questionnaires.

Questionnaires

1. What is special about Downtown Courtenay?
 - Speciality shops
 - Small town feeling/character
 - Walkable
 - Central and cultural amenities
 - History

2. What is missing in the Downtown?
 - Public open spaces
 - Residential uses
 - Balance between commercial and residential activities
 - Access to parks and greenway

3. Describe your vision for Downtown Courtenay 2025.
 - Be a vibrant place
 - Capitalize on natural beauty
 - Be a cultural hub
 - Be inclusive and diverse
 - Be more walkable

4. What Strategies can we use to unlock the full potential of Downtown?
 - Partnership, inclusion, & coordination
 - Densification (more mixed-use type of development)
 - Development Incentives
 - 5th Street Improvement
 - Better connection with Courtenay River or the parks/greenways
 - Wayfinding

Design Charrette Summary

During the Downtown Design Charrette that took place from March 7 - 10, 2016, a number of design, planning, and development opportunities were identified, building on the ideas and concepts generated in the earlier Downtown Forum in the fall of 2015. Three principal themes came forward strong and clear:

1. **Create the heart of Downtown;**
2. **Improve the core streets of 4th, 5th and 6th; and**
3. **Make better connections to the Rivers.**

In addition, there were a number of **site redevelopment opportunities** that were examined that included the Riverfront lands, the Palace Theatre site, the Thrifty's site, the lands behind the Old Safeway site, and the Kilpatrick site. These sites may not all have immediate redevelopment potential but they represent a number of short, medium or longer term opportunities to create a more diverse residential and mixed use land base in the greater downtown area. These are not the only sites with redevelopment potential but were selected as representative options. In the end, the intention is to create a more compact and vibrant downtown that permits aging in place and a diverse choice of housing from singles to young families and mature adults.

These themes further reinforced the earlier three bigger ideas from the Downtown Forum:

1. **Create a Greater Downtown:** Expand the core area of the Downtown to provide more development opportunities and bring more people downtown;
2. **Better Connect:** Create pedestrian and bicycle linkages to other parts of the City and Region through the further development of the Riverway, the Rotary Trail, and other pathways as part of a larger "greenway" system.
3. **Create a Complete Downtown:** Develop the downtown as a place where residents can live, work, and play within walking or biking distance of their home. In other words, the Downtown is a self-sufficient area that satisfies resident needs largely in one place.

Importance of a Visioning Process

Exploring the full breath of ideas is important in determining the potential of Courtenay's Downtown. Visioning explores many possible options for the future and reflects the merits of long-term thinking. The power of an illustrated vision can generate the excitement to embrace an idea even though it was thought of earlier as not feasible or supportable. Further, visioning illustrations allow us to see how public or private investments could relate to one another, reinforce one another or leverage the value of one another.

The visioning process is not an end but a beginning. It is a tool for on-going dialogue on how policies and proposals could be executed and it also allows different options to be tested.

The following three strategies place the vision process in the context of commitment, financial performance and readiness:

- **Exploring Full Potential without Commitment:** The Downtown Design Charrette explored potential ideas for the Downtown while not committing to any one idea until it is further reviewed and determined to be supported and feasible.
- **Financial Performance and Results:** These planning and design concepts are not simply about beautification or cosmetic improvements. These concepts explore fundamental downtown programming, form, and character with the intent to improve financial performance and a greater downtown sense of community and vibrancy for property owners, businesses, and the City of Courtenay community.
- **Development Ready Strategy:** The selection, feasibility, and timing of these ideas are important to set the stage for development and financing initiatives when they come. Courtenay's readiness, pending further provincial, federal, and/or development financial and other contributions, will set the Downtown in a position to realize its vision in shorter time.

DOWNTOWN COURTENAY VISION

Downtown Courtenay is the commercial, cultural, social, and culinary hub of the beautiful Comox Valley.

Nestled between the Comox Glacier, the Courtenay, Puntledge, and Tsolum Rivers, the Courtenay Estuary and the Salish Sea, Downtown Courtenay is unique and vibrant. It is the heart of our community, and a natural fit for special events and gatherings for both local residents and visitors. Welcoming a range of housing and lifestyle options will foster vitality and diversity, both day and night.

We will nurture and invest in our downtown through continuous improvement in the downtown core as well as the surrounding area.



This Vision Statement together with the five goals that follow set the framework for realizing a vibrant and diverse downtown. The vision statement is the over-arching aspirational statement of what Downtown Courtenay will be. The goals are the broad, general expressions of the aspirations of the community.

DOWNTOWN GOALS

The public process resulted in five strategic planning goals to guide the community through review and implementation of the downtown revitalization projects identified in the Playbook.

Organize for Success

Partnerships and integrated City work-programs are to be the foundation for revitalization efforts and be structured to promote successful working relationships.

Establish Downtown as the Community's Heart

With an explicit emphasis on creating attractive gathering place and public realm, downtown will feel like it is designed with people's comfort and enjoyment first.

Encourage More Downtown Residents

A diverse mix of housing and associated services is to be increased throughout the greater downtown area.

Make It Easier to Get to and Be Downtown

All modes of transportation are conveniently able to access, circulate, and park within the downtown.

Celebrate and Connect to the Rivers

Connections to, along and across the rivers are to be improved to ensure that nature and recreation are integrated into the downtown experience

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Through the engagement process three common themes emerged that form the foundation of the plan from which the goals and vision flowed. The following themes are the guiding principles or philosophy on which the action plan is based.

1. More People in a Greater Downtown Area

Expand the core area of the Downtown to provide more development opportunities and bring more people downtown.

2. A Connected Downtown

Provide easy access from all directions and by all modes of transportation.

3. A Complete Downtown

Create the heart of our community where a wide range of activities are occurring and provide residents with opportunities to shop, work, play, and learn for 24/7 in all seasons.

Each of these principles is described in further detail and includes a variety of actions that link them to the 5 goals. The actions are what the City and community must undertake to work toward achieving the vision for downtown. Details of the actions are outlined in Section 7 "Tools and Strategies".

1. More People in a Greater Downtown Area

This principle includes having more people living downtown in addition to drawing people from other areas to downtown.

Special Events

A strong downtown is a place where people expect to see many activities throughout the day and all year round. The community indicated during the workshops that our downtown is safe and clean, creating a welcoming environment for people. Accordingly, unlike some



5th Street Classic Car Show

other small to mid-size downtowns, there are no immediate actions required to create this sense of security. Downtown Courtenay remains the principal location for special events such as Market Days, Elevate the Arts, Comox Valley Classic Cruisers Car Show, the Farmers Market and Moonlight Madness.

An Action Plan item related to special events is improving *Special Event Coordination* to ensure downtown remains the venue for these events with partnerships and support from downtown merchants, the Downtown Courtenay Business Improvement Association (DCBIA), arts and culture groups and the general public. This action will help to achieve Goal 1.

Living in Downtown

Not unlike many downtowns it was identified during the community workshop that opportunity for downtown living is lacking. The consultation to date did not identify any apparent adversity to increased densities within the greater downtown area. Intensification should occur where opportunities arise but needs to incorporate guidelines to make sure proposals are respectful of the surrounding context and integrate appropriate transitions of height, use and form. This could be achieved by constructing a variety of higher density residential buildings such as apartments, townhouses, or lower density infill such as secondary suites and carriage houses. Infill housing options should consider needs for parks, open space, schools and other amenities necessary to accommodate a range of residents.

Action plan items related to downtown living include: consideration of a Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw, review of current zoning and regulatory policies related to infill development, and development permit guideline review. These actions will help to achieve Goals 2 and 3.

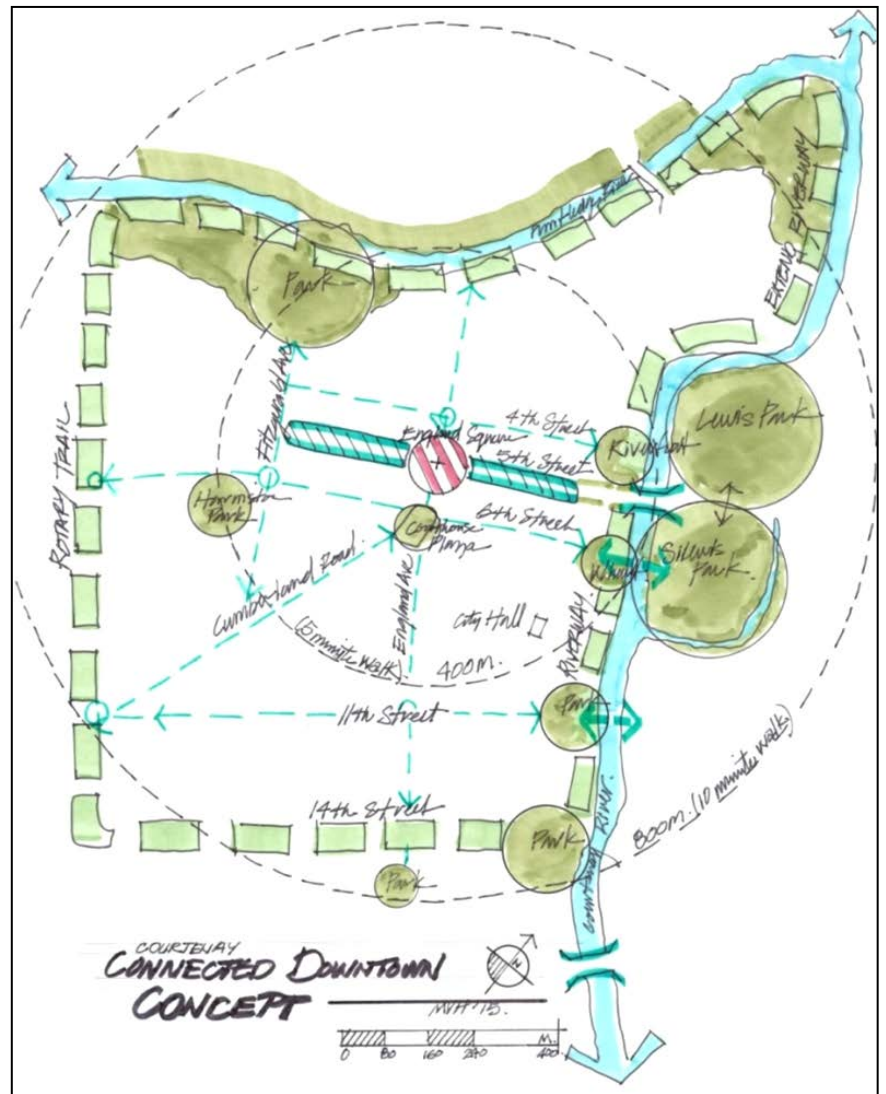


2. A Connected Downtown

Downtown Courtenay must be easily accessible from all directions and by all modes of transportation. The goal of a connected downtown is to easily get people downtown and foster a “park once and explore downtown” concept. To achieve this, walkability is critical and a “pedestrian first” strategy is a core priority for downtown. This means when considering transportation options the discussion should start with pedestrians in mind. The community also indicated a desire to increase the bicycle-friendliness of downtown so as to assist in increasing the modal share of this transportation option. Cars remain the primary mode of transportation to and from downtown. Accordingly, appropriate facilities for parking and directional signage for visitors to easily locate them are important.

The downtown core is well situated and compact. The adjacent diagram illustrates the 5 minute (400 metre) and 10 minute (800 metre) walking distance from the downtown core measured from the central area of England Avenue and 5th Street. If well-established connections with the public open spaces, plazas, and the River and parks around Downtown are created, visitors and users of the downtown will be encouraged to walk and bike reducing vehicle dependence and parking pressures.

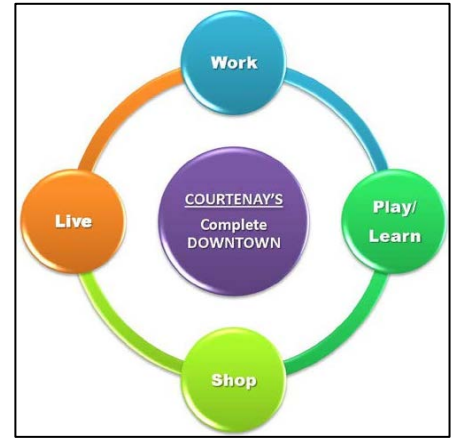
The Courtenay River was identified during consultation as an important asset in addition to a physical barrier to a greater downtown. Improving connections to, along and across the river are desired. Lewis and Simms Parks are important community attractors and connections across the river require improvement to facilitate the “Greater Downtown” concept. Pedestrian and cycling connections across 5th Street between Cliffe Avenue and the bridge were also identified as requiring improvement.



Key action items related to a connected downtown include: the 5th Street Complete Street project, Traffic and Parking studies, wayfinding strategies, greenway network plan and pedestrian river crossing improvements. These actions will help to achieve Goals 2, 4 and 5.

3. A Complete Downtown: Shop, Live, Work, Play, and Learn

To be successful Downtown Courtenay must be a complete downtown. That is, a self-sufficient place where people can shop, live, work, play and learn in one walkable area. The Complete Downtown's social fabric is connected to the cultural, recreational, and business fabric in one place.



Shopping Downtown

A concentration of small retail stores is identified as one of the unique and special features of the downtown. Downtown needs to feel like a cohesive unique experience from other shopping options in the Comox Valley.

Working Downtown

OCP policy supports a concentration of offices in and around downtown. There are already a number of professional offices and public



institutions such as City Hall, the Court House and library downtown. Office uses in the core area will continue to be supported. The Greater Downtown supports many employment opportunities that bring people to the downtown area each day. These include commercial uses in the Gateway Area from 17th Street to 11th Street and light industrial/service commercial uses along McPhee Avenue on the fringe of Downtown and across the river in the Puntledge Road area. Improving connections from these employment neighbourhoods to the downtown core will be considered as part of the "Connected Downtown".



Playbook action items that support shopping and working downtown include business attraction and retention strategies, public realm improvements, and a coordinated marketing program. These actions will help to achieve Goals 1 and 2.

Living in Downtown

Residential development and intensification opportunities within the Greater Downtown Area are encouraged through zoning bylaw review, development permit guideline review, and future OCP amendment.

Key action items are listed in Section 1.



Mixed Use at Corner of 4th Street and Fitzgerald Avenue



Looking Down 5th Street on Market Day

Playing/ Learning in Downtown

Playing downtown is a crucial element to the complete downtown. Play elements are those activities and events that draw people downtown beyond the living, shopping and working experiences. These activities include the traditional arts and culture activities such as the library, art gallery, museum and theater. Also included are social activities like eating and drinking and annual special events that draw people downtown. Parks are a significant component of the greater

downtown and in particular related to attracting residential development. Consideration will be given to adding park space for families through an overall review of park needs in the City.

Formal opportunities for learning downtown include career colleges and a public school. Downtown also offers many opportunities for more informal learning through programs at the library, the art gallery, museum and more. These learning opportunities will continue to be supported in the greater downtown area.

Playbook action items that support Playing Downtown include, Special Events Coordination, Sidewalk Patio Policy and a review of Parks and Open Space. These actions will help to achieve Goals 1, 2 and 3

CATALYST PROJECTS

Catalyst projects are transformational ideas for downtown to demonstrate City commitment, reinforce the community vision and stimulate future investment. These are “big ideas” that require further analysis including engineered design and costing. Where feasible their implementation will be contingent on future budgets, partnerships, and/or funding opportunities.

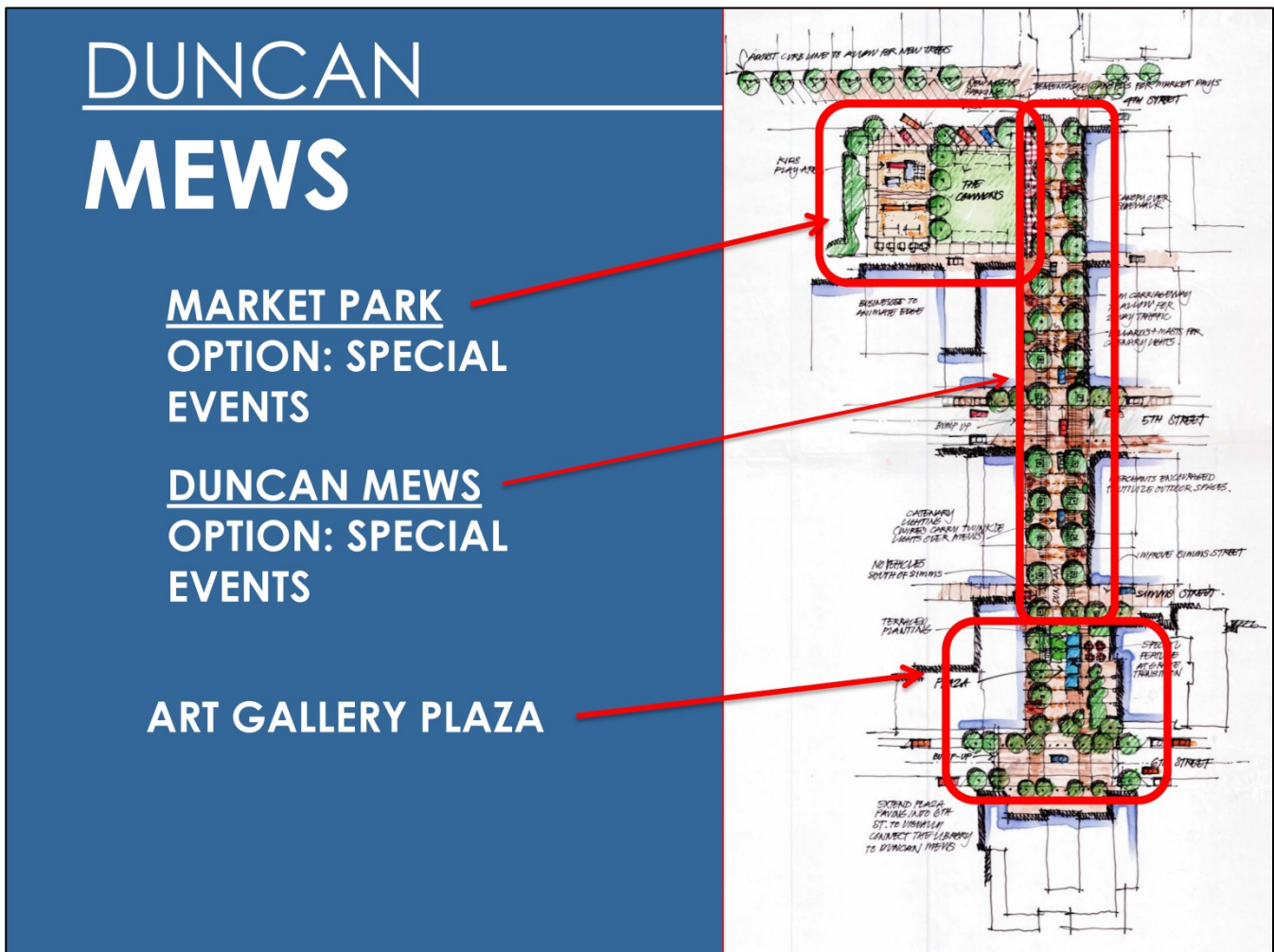
1. Create the Heart – Duncan Commons/Mews

Why is this essential?

Downtown Courtenay does not have an obvious landmark or a central place where special events occur or people can gather regularly. The goal is to create a “Heart” that anchors the downtown for social and cultural events.

What is the project?

Duncan Commons is centred on Duncan Avenue and splits the street into three areas: Art Gallery Plaza between Simms Lane and 6th Street; Duncan Mews between 4th Street and Simms Lane; and a “Market Park” at the corner of Duncan Avenue and 4th Street.



What will this project do?

The highlight of the project is the “Art Gallery Plaza”. It would provide a car-free zone equipped with a landscaped area. Duncan Avenue below the square would be redesigned with wider sidewalk and street trees. This pedestrian friendly north-south corridor within the “Heart of Downtown’ would be the new destination of our downtown.

What needs to be considered to make this happen?

- Consultation with stakeholders
- Finalize the concept plan
- Engineering analysis
- Feasibility and cost analysis
- Detail plan
- Budget approval



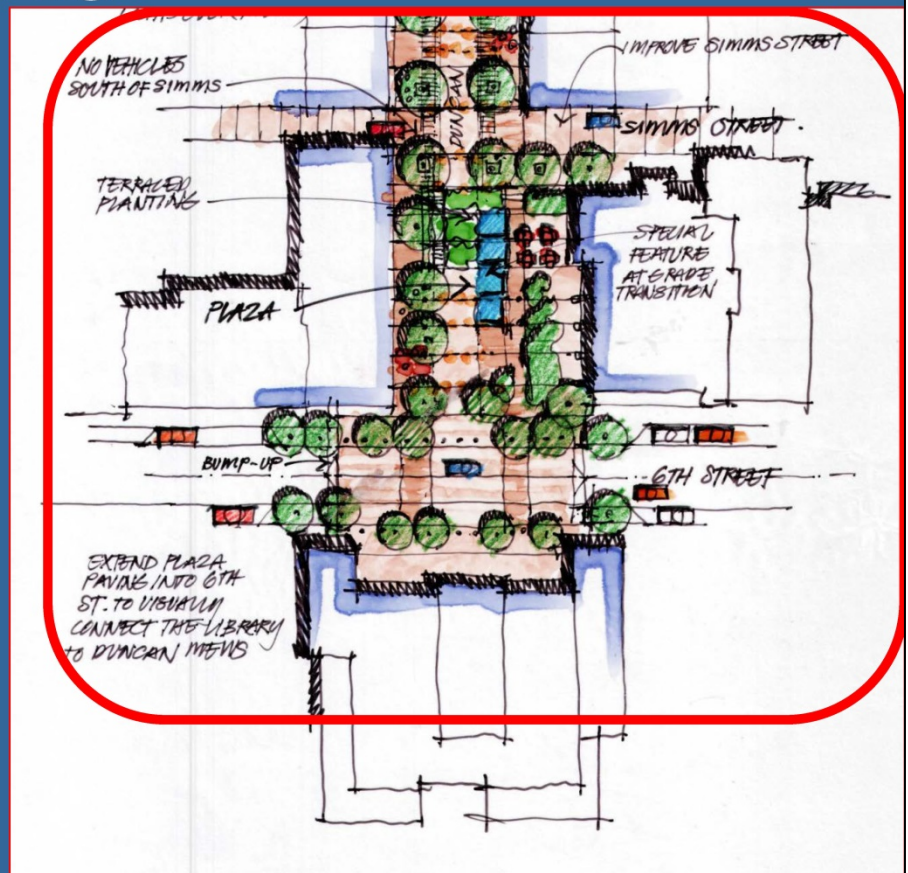
View up Duncan Avenue from 4th Street

Duncan Commons First

- Prioritizes “Duncan Commons” as one of the social and cultural “hearts” of the Downtown
- Takes advantage of the strategic central location in the heart of the downtown framed by the Library and Art Gallery
- Includes a green lawn flex-use area and kids play space that is tiered with the topography and closed to traffic and still provides a ramp for physically challenged individuals
- Develops a plaza at the south end that spills out into 6th Street and up to the edge of the library
- Provides the staging area for special events
- Considers the provision of a water feature for animation and white sound
- Uses topography changes to create interesting sub-zones
- Extends special treatment into Sims Lane and encourage further unique activities
- Anchors the downtown for social and cultural events with the balance of the block between 6th and 5th Streets easily closed to traffic during special events

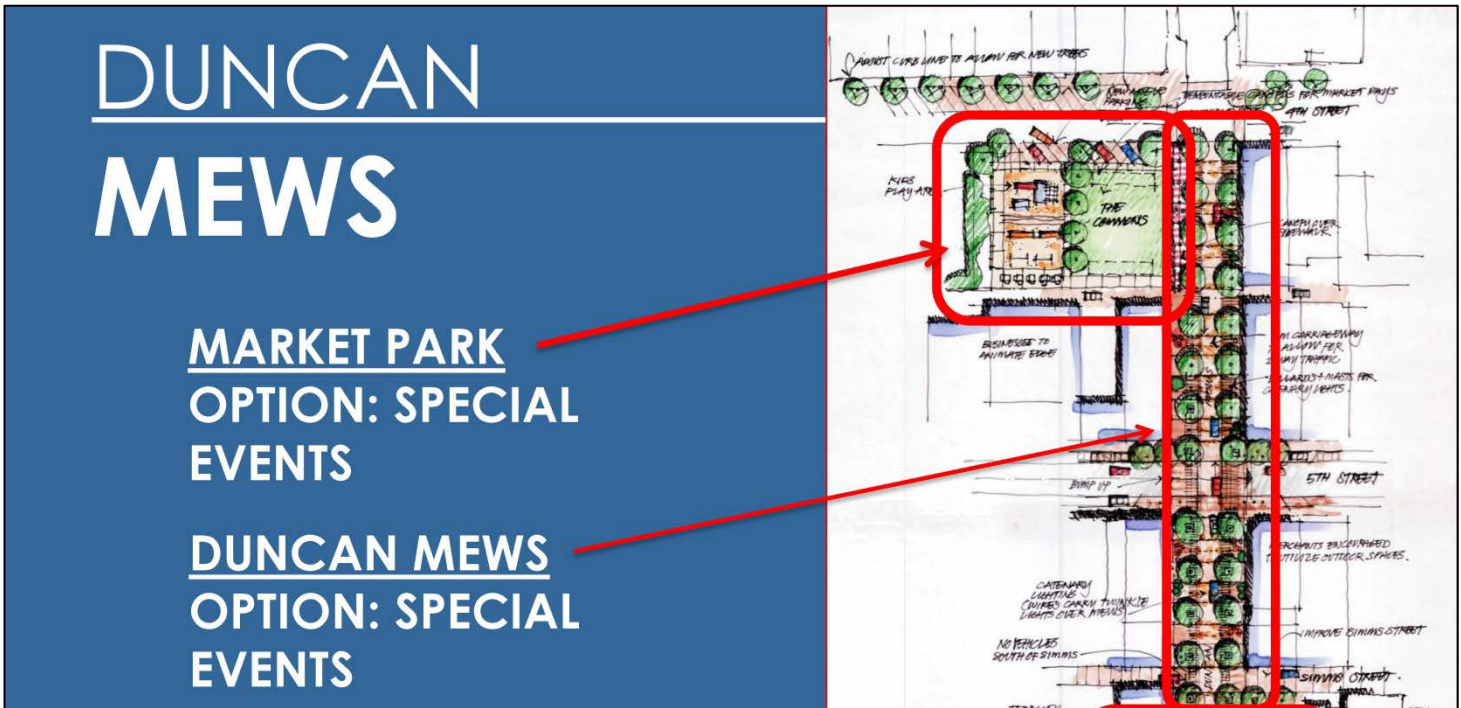
DUNCAN COMMONS

ART GALLERY PLAZA



Potential Duncan Mews: The extension of Duncan Commons

- Develops a “Woonerf” (living street) design (pedestrian priority)
- Limits vehicular movement to a 6.0 metre carriageway with one narrow lane each way
- Designs the mews with no curbs or “canted curbs” to define car area
- Adds bollards to define pedestrian and vehicle zones
- Introduces catenary lighting overhead
- Creates pedestrian scale features and furniture
- Adds special low impact lighting and special paving
- Encourages businesses to spill out and use the edges
- Provides spaces for activities - programmed and spontaneous – at different times of the day, month and year
- Introduces extended curbs at crossing intersections
- Adds potential for a “Market Park” at the north end adjoining 4th Street, but due to the priority of parking downtown, this space can remain a parking lot but may be a “flex lot” for use during special events downtown like a large outdoor farmer’s market and food fair.



2. Establish 4th/5th/6th Street Characters

Why is this essential?

Each street in downtown has a unique history and character, but it is not very well identified. Characterizing these streets would provide a strong sense of place to each street, and potentially to the downtown as a whole.

What is the project?

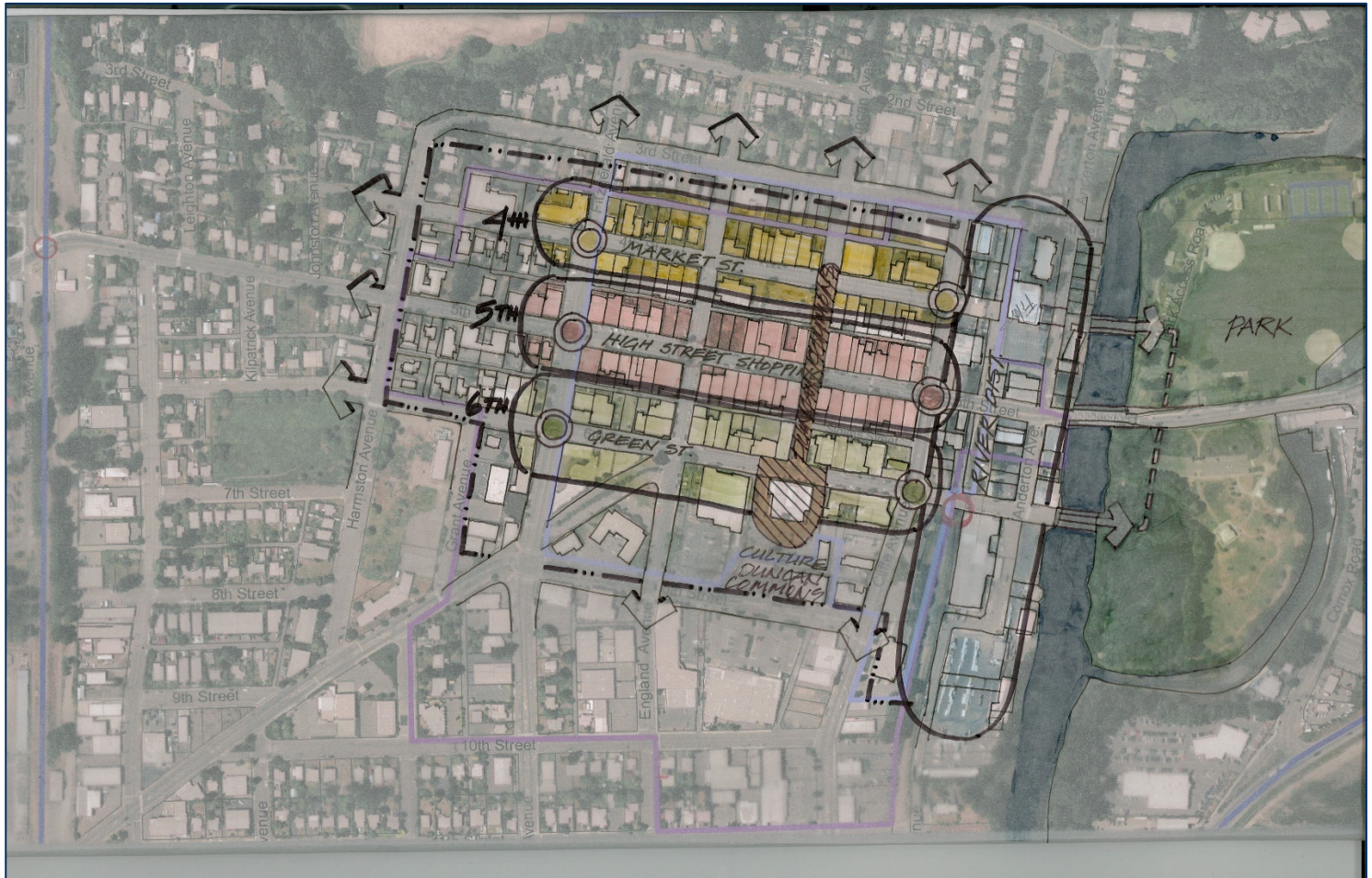
Formally or informally characterize the designated streets by name or theme. Promote the uniqueness of each street through events or advertisement, signage, art, special event space.

What will this project do?

Provide a strong identity for the streets.

What needs to be considered to make this happen?

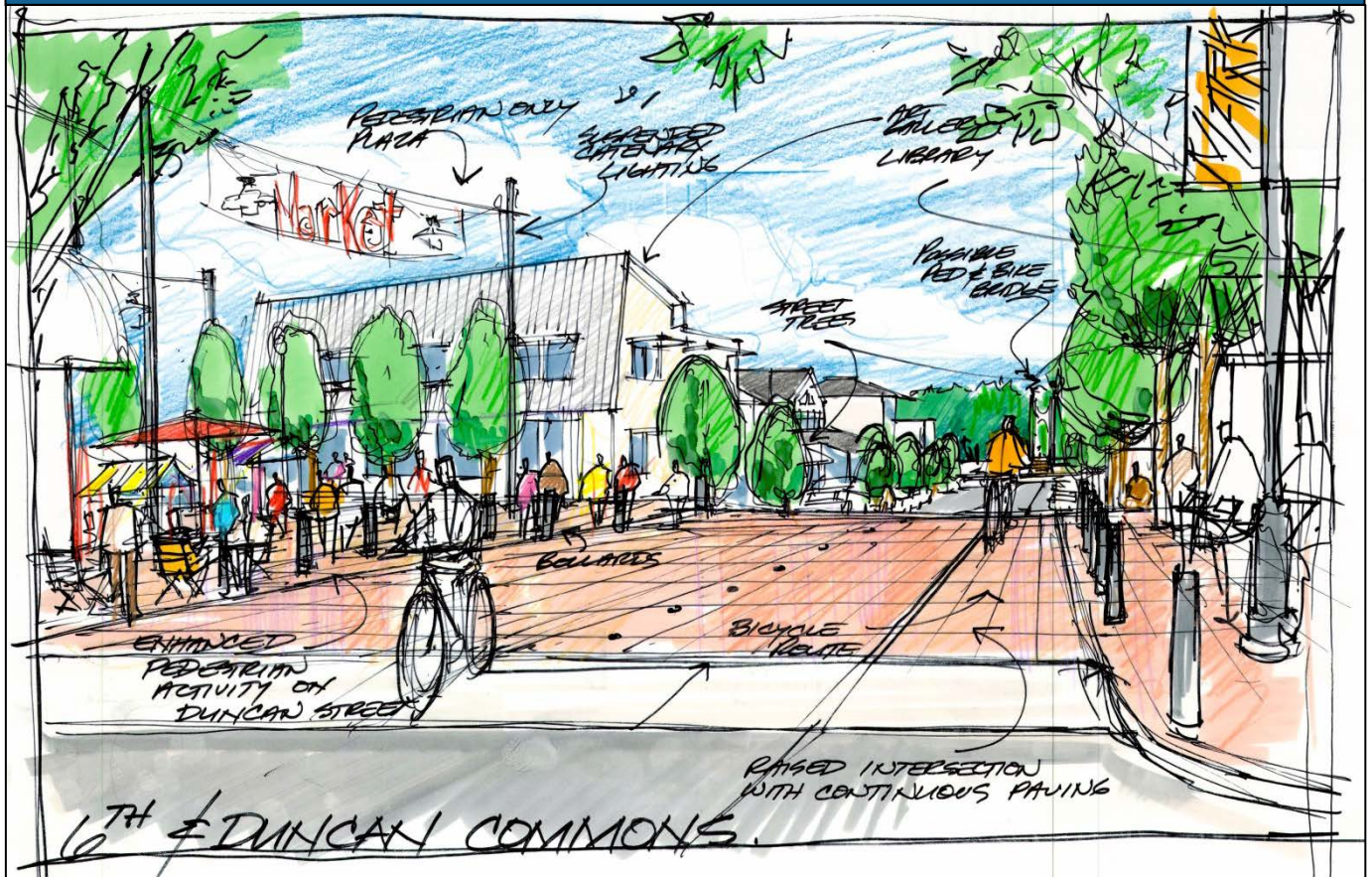
- Consultation with property/ business owners.
- Street specific design guidelines for both public realm and private space.
- Strong community support.



6th Street: The Green Street

- Connects at the west end with the 5th Street “Complete Street” pilot project (proposed relocation of bike lane from 5th to 6th Street at Harmston Avenue) and the Riverway pathway system at the east end near the Courtenay River
- Connects community services and public spaces (Library and Art Gallery at Duncan Avenue)
- Adds more trees and planting to truly green the street
- Creates a bicycle and walking friendly street with bicycle lanes and bicycle parking
- Adds plenty of seating
- Develops as one of the “Festival” streets with community art etc. at the Duncan Commons intersection (see below)

6th Street to River



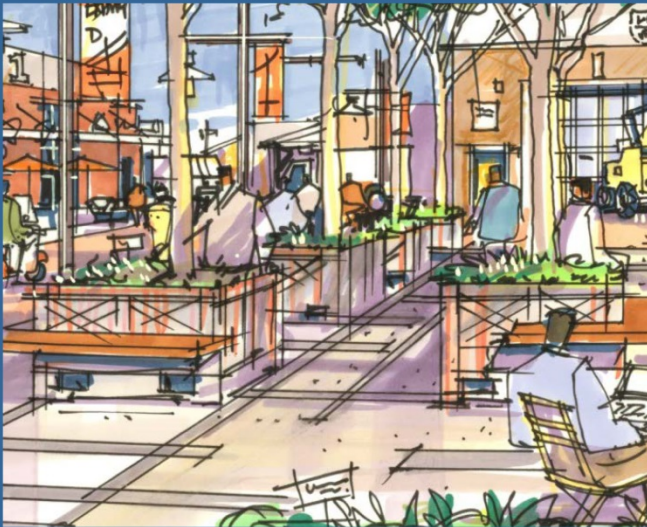
5th Street: The Shopping Street

- Create additional space for outdoor dining and product display (see image of potential “parking porch”)
- Adds unique seating groups for meetings and casual encounters
- Encourages special signage enhancements
- Increase street trees in flush grates-(no raised planters)
- Introduce continuous special paving between sidewalk and parking aisle
- Expand sidewalk space (no curb or rolled curb)
- Removes mid-block crossings
- Explore opportunity for “pop-up” shops to fill empty store fronts.



4th Street: The Market Street

- Encourages small food retailers
- Creates wider sidewalks for product display
- Encourages adjustable awnings for weather protection
- Provides option to be closed off for food festivals
- Celebrates the Comox Valley's food focus (banners etc.)
- Explore opportunity for "pop-up" shops to fill empty store fronts.



4th Market Street



3. Pedestrian connection to, along and across the River

Why is this essential?

Lewis Park and Simms Park are great community assets that attract a number of visitors and hosts many community events. There is a distinct disconnect however between downtown, the River and Parks. Similarly, the cycling and pedestrian connection north and south of the 5th Street Bridge along the Riverway is a challenge.

What is the project?

Complete the Riverway Pathway north of the 5th Street Bridge; Strengthen the link between the downtown and river at 4th Street; Improve pedestrian/cycling access across the river.

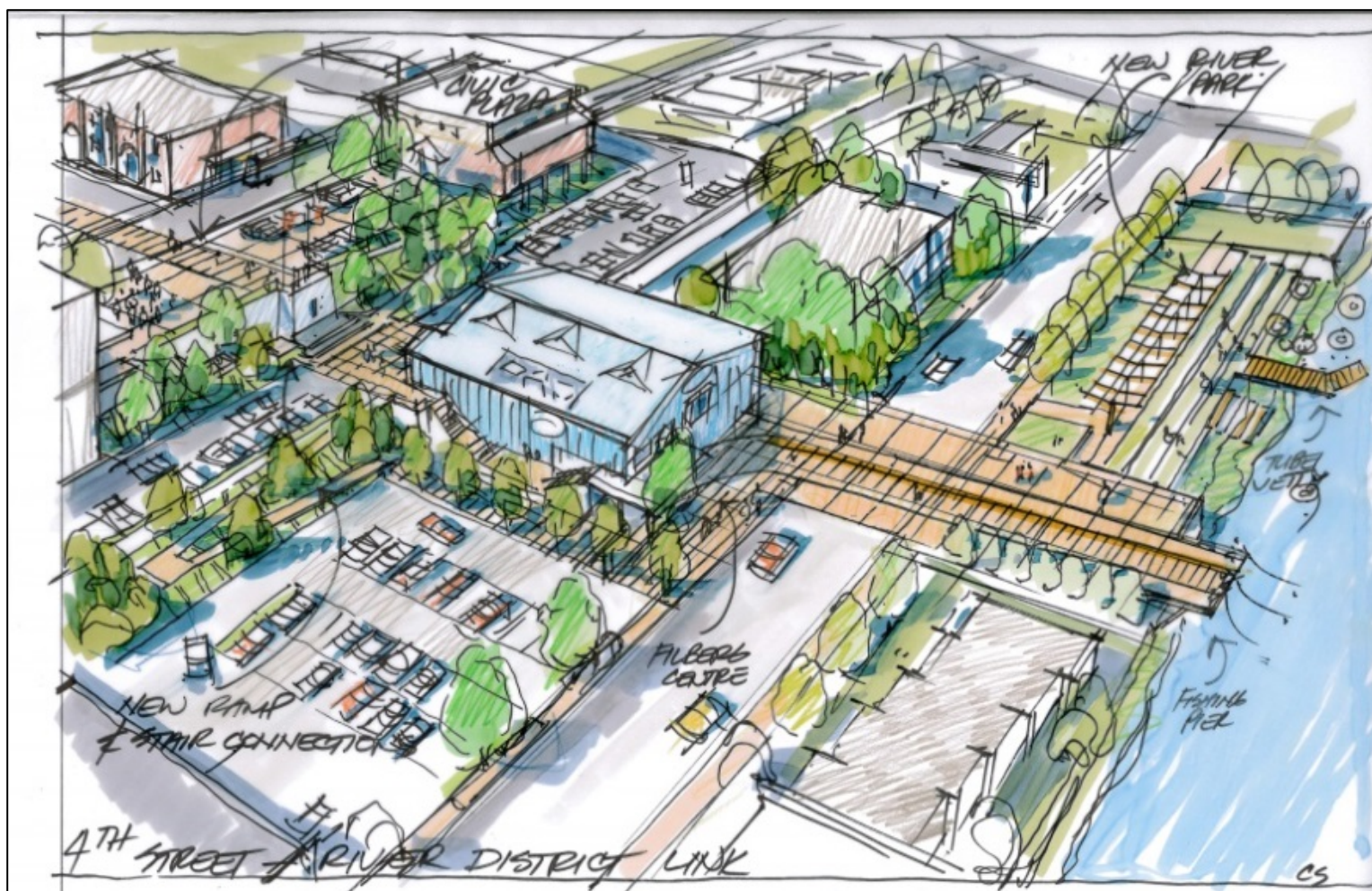


What will this project do?

- Revitalize riverfront area
- Establish better connectivity
- Create a new riverfront precinct
- Attract people toward natural zone
- Provide visual and physical connection

What needs to be considered to make this happen?

- Consultation with stakeholders
- Finalize the concept plan and location
- Engineering analysis
- Feasibility and cost analysis
- Detail plan
- Budget approval



4. Riverfront district between 5th and 6th

Why is this essential?

The Courtenay River is an important community asset with historical significance having cultural importance to the Pentlach and K'omoks First Nation, heritage value as an industrial site that helped downtown grow, social value as a recreational corridor running through the City and ecological value as aquatic habitat for many species. As Downtown grew this asset became increasingly disconnected. Improving connection to the river was a common theme during consultation and redevelopment of this block is seen as an opportunity to revive and activate the river connection.

What is the project?

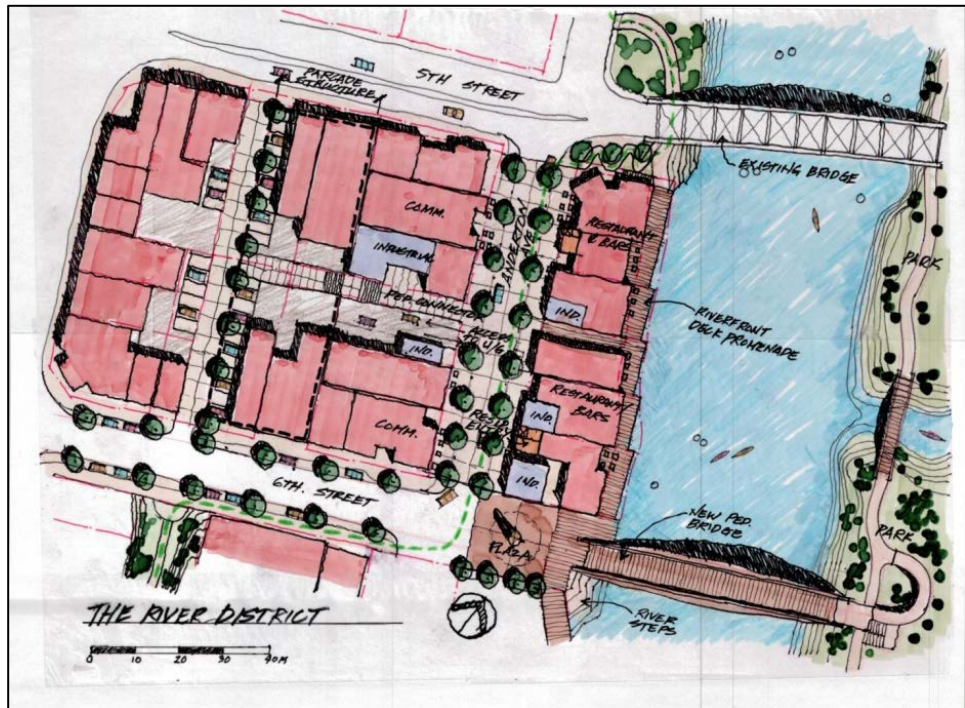
Provide a destination riverfront district with eco-tourism theme.
 Provide public riverfront edge
 Create an incremental 'ad-hoc' artisan/industrial character.
 Transform Anderton Avenue into a distinct industrial character street.

Proposed Uses: Restaurants, bars, hospitality, boutique hotel, live-work lofts, and commercial

Height: 3-4 storeys (stepped)

Parking: Remote parkade (uphill) street parking on 6th and uphill laneway

Density: 1.5-2.0 FSR

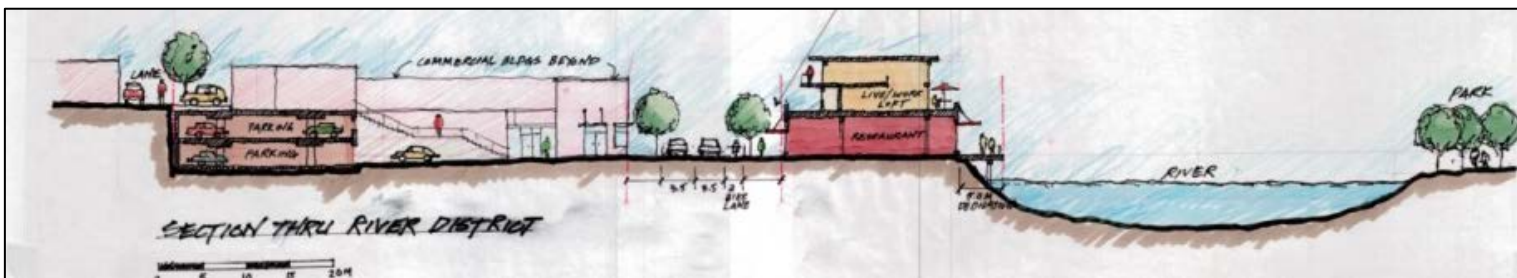


What will this project do?

- Revitalize riverfront area
- Establish better connectivity
- Create a new riverfront precinct
- Attract people toward natural zone

What needs to be considered to make this happen?

- Consultation with property owners and stakeholders
- Develop design guidelines and zoning
- Engineering analysis
- Detail plan
- Marketing of concept



5. Infill Housing

Why is this essential?

Currently the choice for downtown living is limited. More people living in the greater downtown area will provide more housing choice in the community and support downtown businesses by creating energy and business opportunities outside daytime hours. Redevelopment of vacant and underutilized lots to add density in varying housing typologies will create a thriving and stable downtown.

What is the project?

Explore zoning, incentive programs, design guidelines and housing forms that make use of underutilized properties.

What will this project do?

Provide a range of housing option for future downtown residents making use of existing infrastructure and provide a catalyst for future development.



What needs to be considered to make this happen?

- Develop an incentive program that assists residential development.
- Review and re-evaluate the current zoning and Development Permit Guidelines.
- Develop site specific design guidelines for key development sites.
- Explore financial feasibility of development options.
- Permit process assistance/prioritization.

KEY RE-DEVELOPMENT SITES

The following concepts explore suggested uses, densities and housing forms that will assist in filling the housing gap downtown. This section is not intended to imply that these are the only development opportunities in the Greater Downtown Area; rather they are used as *representative* underdeveloped sites. While the concepts take into account the surrounding land uses, building heights and forms, they are not intended to dictate the only options available. They do however provide guidance on acceptable forms of development and provide the basis to begin detailed site analysis and guidelines.

1. Palace Theatre Site

Concept:

Preserve 1 storey commercial character/massing of 5th Street.

Develop modest scale stepped massing

Optimizes prime corner site for public space

Introduces new housing typologies to core (live-work, small affordable rental) to attract young people.

Proposed Uses:

Live-work lofts, affordable rental units, commercial or public use at grade

No. of Units:

16 Residential units over 3-5 commercial retail units

Height:

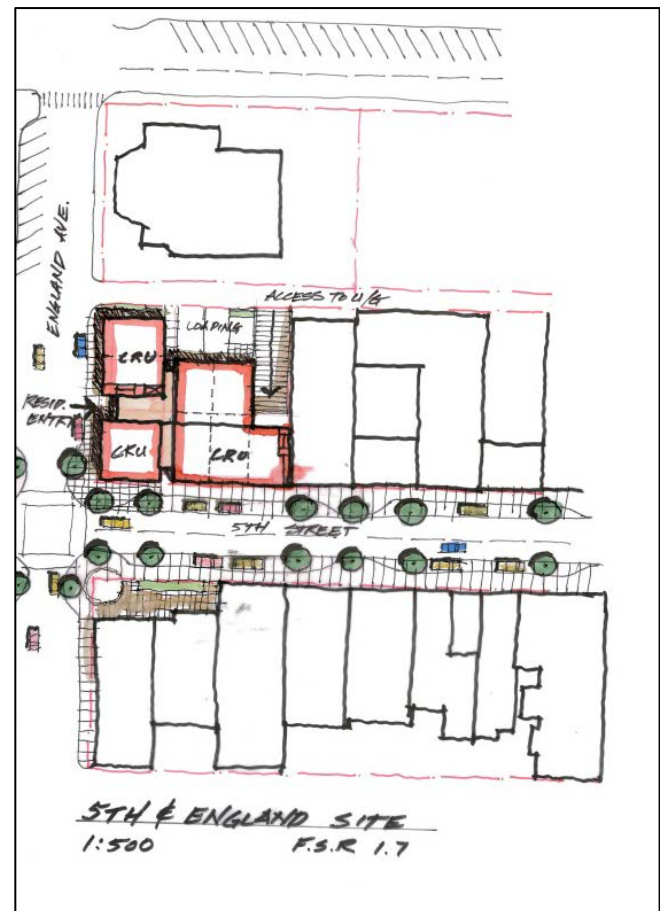
3 storeys (stepped above level 1)

Parking:

1-1.5 layers of underground parking (suggest parking relaxations for small sites in downtown core)

Density:

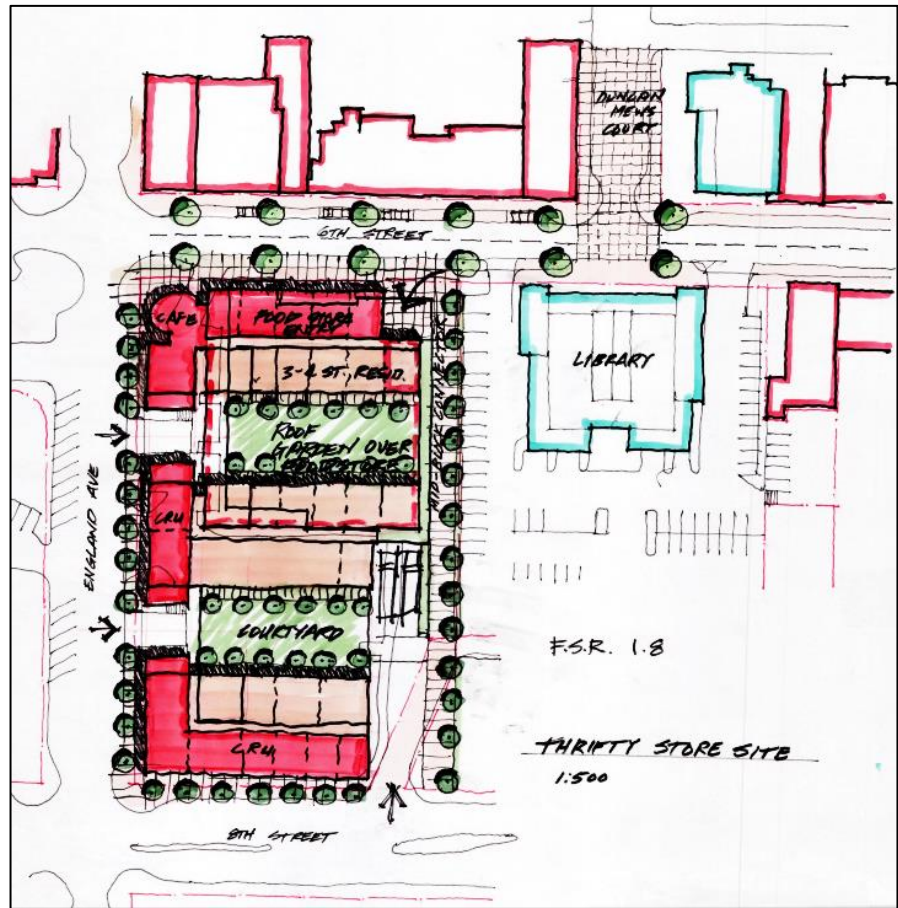
1.7 FSR



2. Thrifty's Site Redevelopment

Concept:

- Preserves the potential for a large food store anchor to be incorporated into a new mixed-use development
- Enhances 6th Street as 'green street' (bike lane, wider sidewalk, street trees etc)
- Introduces 'mid-block pedestrian connector' along current on-site laneway
- Breaks down 'super-block' into smaller mixed-use wings separated by courtyards
- Creates a commercial 'street wall' defining the edges of 6th Street, 8th Street, and England Avenue
- Reinforces Duncan Commons and Library forecourt with pocket plaza (on 6th Street) for entry to food store
- Steps massing between 1st and 2nd level, and at top floor of residential wings

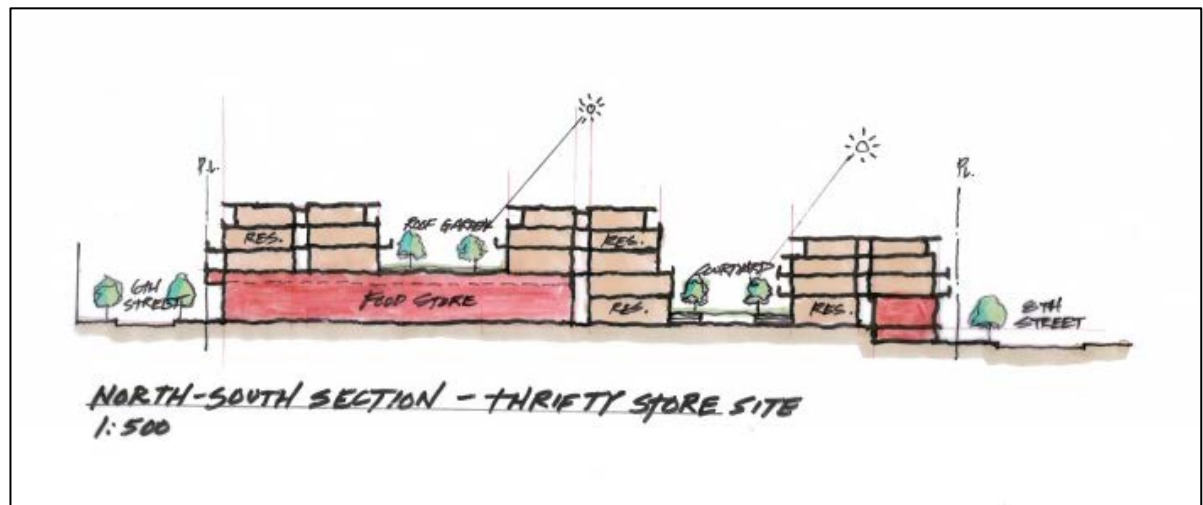


Proposed Uses:

Major food store, affordable rental housing or small strata units, commercial retail along streets

Height:

4-5 storeys (stepped)



Parking:

1.5-2 levels of commercial/residential parking. Maintain curbside street parking

Density:

2.0-2.5 FSR

3. 14th Street and England Avenue

Concept:

- Explores an 'aging-in-place' seniors housing complex for the site
- Offers a variety of independent to assisted living options for seniors
- Incorporates a small leisure park for seniors, children and surrounding residents
- Maintains a strong pedestrian connector between seniors complex and adjacent commercial village
- Strengthens Cliffe Avenue with commercial uses and street wall frontage (or seniors amenity spaces)
- Breaks down the large bulk massing of seniors building into smaller stepped wings
- Uses ground-oriented independent seniors duplexes to transition scale between existing single-family development and senior's housing

Proposed Uses: Independent living duplexes, assisted living seniors units, variety of seniors amenity spaces, leisure park, commercial uses along Cliffe Ave.

Height:

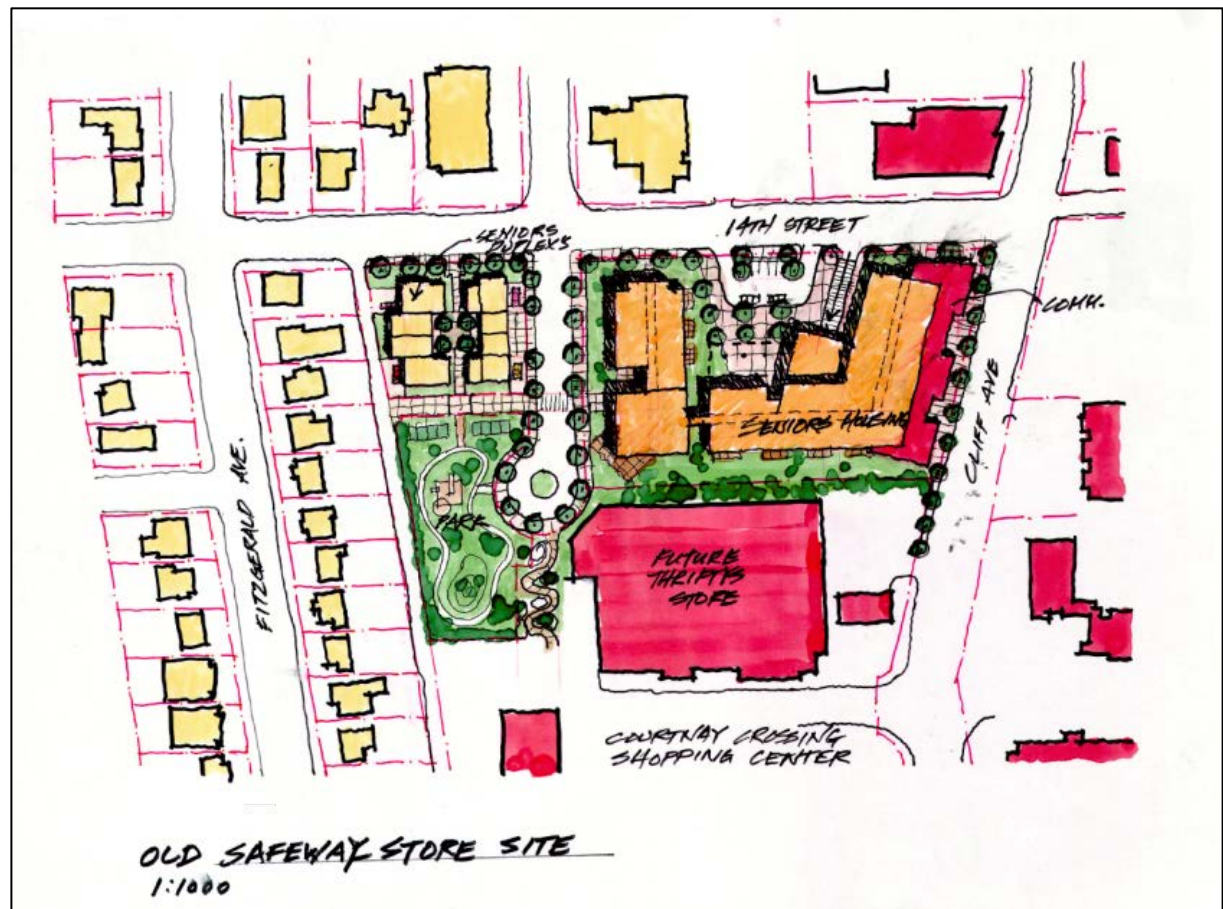
4 storeys
(stepped)

Parking:

1 level of
underground
parking.

Density:

2.0-2.25 FSR



4. Kilpatrick and 5th St Redevelopment

Concept:

- Explores small detached 'cluster courtyard housing' typology to broaden housing choice
- Emphasizes on small ground oriented homes to relate to existing scale of neighbourhood
- Introduces small laneway rental homes to enliven and pedestrianize the lane
- Preserves the large mature trees within the site
- Provides for a more clustered housing typology through shared courtyards, auto-court, and lane homes
- Enhances streets and lane with patios, landscaping, street trees, sidewalks etc

Proposed Uses: detached cluster homes, laneway rental homes (studio & 1 bedroom)

Height:

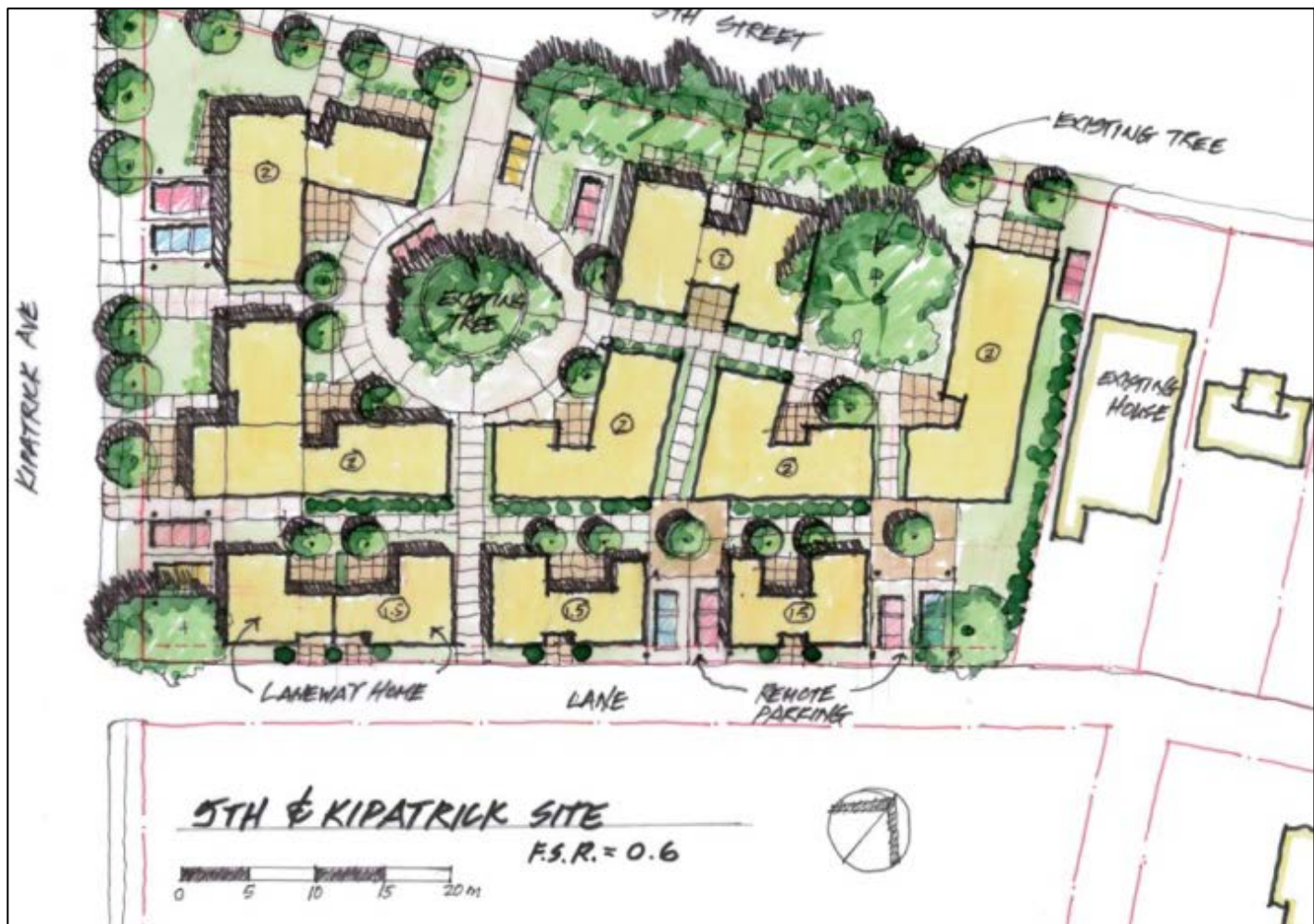
2 storeys

Parking:

1 car per home surface parking carports off lane and street

Density:

0.6-0.7 FSR



TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

The following section outlines specific tools and strategies that are required to achieve the goals of downtown revitalization. These are the **actions** that will be undertaken over the next few years. As outlined in the introduction this is a living document. While timelines are associated with each activity it is recognized that some tasks may be completed sooner than anticipated and others may take longer. Wherever possible, opportunities to leverage the work of other internal or external projects will be utilized.

Revitalization Tools and Strategies to Achieve Goal 1:

Organize for Success

Effective leadership and sufficient capacity is critical to achieve goals and objectives for future success in the Downtown. To this end, it is important to keep Downtown at the front of mind and engage City staff, businesses, the development sector and general community to create partnerships for positive change. The following table outlines the actions that will be undertaken to organize for success.

Action	Desired Outcome	Who	Time
1. Establish Internal Downtown Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an internal working group to ensure the Downtown projects are coordinated and take advantage of shared funding opportunities Evaluate Projects and make recommendations to Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Engineering Public Works Recreation & Culture 	2016
2. Downtown Revitalization Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint working group to shepherd implementation of Downtown Actions Make recommendations on projects Coordinate on-going public and stakeholder involvement in plan implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City DCBIA Chamber of Commerce Property Owners Members at Large 	2016
3. Establish a Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulate downtown development projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City 	2016
4. Develop Downtown Development Brochure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a brochure to promote downtown revitalization opportunities Outline Development Processes/Requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Communications 	2017
5. Develop a Communication Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website for Downtown Branding Shared Event Schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CVEDS Communications 	2017

Partnership (2016)

Creating working groups will be a key first step to begin the collaborative work of downtown revitalization. Two leadership groups will be formed to guide the process. First, an internal working group will be created to ensure coordination of City projects and leverage funding opportunities that benefit multiple projects and services. For instance, above ground aesthetic improvements may benefit from funding to upgrade underground services.



Secondly, there will be a broader task force that includes City staff in addition to stakeholder and community members. The goal of this task force will be to shepherd the implementation of the downtown actions outlined in this plan, make recommendations on projects, and coordinate both project specific sub committees and on-going public and stakeholder involvement.

Recognizing the importance of downtown coordination, the City will add the downtown portfolio to a single staff person to act as a leader and liaison with the working groups, developers, and stakeholders generally.

Financial Investment (2016)

Investment in downtown can take many forms and it is important that all options are explored as the City and Community organize for success. Specific actions related to financial investment that will be undertaken include the adoption of a revitalization tax incentive bylaw and the creation of a façade improvement grant program by the City. Additionally, the City will explore the feasibility of reducing fees and development cost charges for downtown development and fast-tracking development proposals downtown.

As catalyst projects proceed through detailed design and cost analysis the City will explore all options for funding their construction which will include seeking grants, use of gaming funds, developer amenity contributions and annual budgeting.

Communication/Marketing (2017)

While many actions are necessary to facilitate revitalization these actions and the opportunities they create must be well communicated. Accordingly, the City will work with the Comox Valley Economic Development Society to attract new investment downtown. This will involve branding the downtown and the creation of a downtown development brochure to outline the development opportunities and clearly communicate the development process and application requirements. These actions will be combined with a new website for “one stop” access to downtown information as part of a communication strategy.

Revitalization Tools and Strategies to Achieve Goal 2:

Establish Downtown as the Community's Heart

Downtown will be the 'Heart' of the community where social and cultural events are grounded. Downtown will have an explicit emphasis on public gathering places, beauty, views, practical wayfinding, and be of a pedestrian scale. Downtown will feel like it is designed with people's comfort and enjoyment first so as to attract all members of the community.

Action	Desired Outcome	Who	Time
1. Duncan Commons Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop detailed design Art Gallery Plaza First Duncan Mews Next Seek Grant/Partnership Opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subset of Downtown Revitalization Task Force Planning 	2016
2. Parks/Open Space Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore and identify opportunities to increase park space – seating areas, play park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreation and Culture Planning 	2017
3. Special Event Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with business community to understand impacts of special events on their success Create a special event program that is sensitive to impacts to business Appoint a special event champion Coordinate Event Scheduling Coordinate Event Permitting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCBIA City 	2017
4. Public Realm Design Guidelines	<p>Create standard design direction for public realm improvements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Street Design Street Furniture Parks Event Space Landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Engineering Public Works Community 	2017
5. Business Attraction/Retention Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy to attract new businesses and retain existing ones in the Greater Downtown Attract businesses that fit street themes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CVEDS DCBIA Chamber of Commerce Property Owners 	2017
6. Explore Design Options for 4 th , 5 th and 6 th Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with urban design team to develop guidelines for core streets to achieve desired character 4th Street – Market Street 5th Street – Shopping Street 6th Street – Green Street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning DCBIA Community 	2018
7. Heritage Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify buildings of historical significance and develop policies to protect them Ensure the historic “main street” feel is retained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage Advisory Committee Planning Community 	2016-2017

Gathering Places (2016/2017)

The planning process clearly identified the need to create a central gathering place or heart of downtown. Much interest surrounded the concept of an event space in front of the Art Gallery on

Duncan Avenue. The Duncan Commons concept was initiated by the business owners in the immediate area and has been supported by the Downtown Courtenay Business Improvement Association. While this grassroots group has done preliminary work and a concept design is included in the Catalyst Projects section above, further detailed analysis is required to examine the engineering, traffic, business and budgetary implications of creating this space.

To undertake this further analysis a working group will be formed to investigate the feasibility of “Duncan Commons” including the Art Gallery Plaza and the broader “Duncan Mews”. It is anticipated this group will be a subset of the Downtown Revitalization Task Force and should include City staff, business owners, DCBIA representation and members at large.

In addition to the Duncan Commons project the consultation process also identified a desire to create more park space downtown. Through the Parks Mater Planning process undertaken by the Recreation and Culture Department the City will explore opportunities to create a play park downtown or increase passive park spaces. Opportunities may include conversion of existing City owned properties or partnership with private or other public agencies such as the Court House lawn area.

Special Events Coordination (early 2017)

For Downtown to remain the heart of special events it is important that they are coordinated and consistent. A special event coordinator will be appointed to ensure that the impacts of these events on local business is well understood, that the events are scheduled to increase vibrancy and are sensitive to business concerns, and to coordinate permitting with the City.



Public Realm Design Guidelines (2017)

Creating a standard design direction for the public realm should set downtown apart from other areas of the City. Development of these guidelines will take into consideration street design, street furniture, public art, signage, lane design, and landscaping.

Business Attraction/Retention (2017)

During the consultation process it was identified that some existing business owners were nearing retirement and there were no definitive succession plans in place for the businesses to carry on or allow for a coordinated turn over in retail space. Building on the work of CVEDS, the development of a Business Attraction and Retention strategy to actively pursue businesses that will fill the gaps will reduce vacancies. In addition, the strategy will examine ways to help existing business remain profitable as a key economic driver of downtown. Furthermore the strategy will examine and recommend regulatory changes to policies that may create barriers to downtown business.

Heritage (2017)

Downtown Courtenay is the historic retail core of the city and 5th Street is identified in the City's Heritage Register. To ensure the historic open air, "main street" shopping experience highlighted by the pedestrian relationship of store fronts to the street and sidewalk remain, further heritage inventory and protection policies will be explored. Heritage values will continue to be celebrated in the public realm design guidelines and in public art.



View up 5th Street from Anderton Street. Photo: Courtenay & District Museum art_p90-16b

Design Option for 4th, 5th and 6th Streets (2018)

Further work to explore design option for the core downtown streets will take place with the goal of creating the following themes: 4th Street as a Market Street; 5th Street as a Shopping Street; and 6th Street as a Green Street. Each street will have a distinct character and every attempt will be made to direct businesses to organize by these themes. To improve the pedestrian realm of 5th Street consideration will be given to expanding the sidewalk into the existing parking areas to reduce the car dominance and make a more pleasant pedestrian realm.

Revitalization Tools and Strategies to Achieve Goal 3:

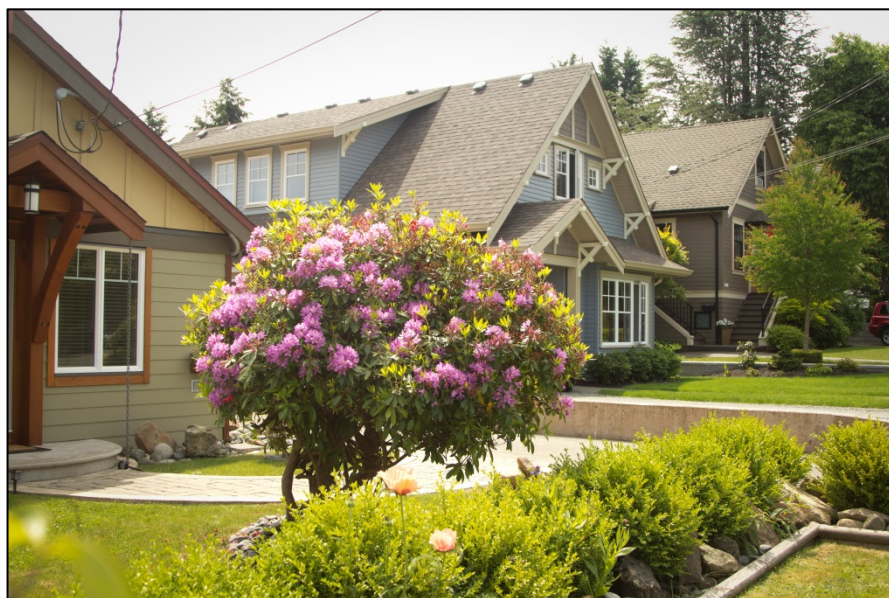
Encourage More Downtown Residents

A range of housing choices are provided throughout the Greater Downtown Area to encourage more people to live downtown. Higher density housing or mixed use developments are strongly encouraged.

Action	Desired Outcome	Who	Time
Infill Housing Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review zoning and policy related to housing options in the Greater Downtown Area Ensure infill development considers neighbourhood amenity needs Ensure infill development is of high quality design and fits with surrounding context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Community 	2016-2017
Incentive Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore programs to encourage development of new residential units in Greater Downtown including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced fees; Reduced taxes; Reduced permit processing times; Partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning 	2016

Infill Housing Study (2016-2017)

Housing in the Greater Downtown area is generally characterized by low density single family development. The Greater Downtown has recently seen limited infill including new homes, secondary residences and small multi-family projects. Consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy goal to infill Municipal Areas, further study of zoning, development guidelines and processes will be undertaken to examine opportunities to add residential density downtown. Urban design should promote high quality and context specific design that will encourage further private investment downtown.



Infill Housing Incentive Program (2016)

To parallel the infill housing study the City will explore opportunities for incentive programs that will encourage the development of more residential units downtown. These may include tax incentives, reduced development cost charges and fees, fast tracking applications, and partnerships to develop City owned properties.

Revitalization Tools and Strategies to Achieve Goal 4:

Make It Easier to Get to and Be Downtown

Making it easier for people to get to, park in and move around downtown by improving connections, wayfinding features, renewed streetscapes, and landmarks will strengthen the long term viability of Downtown Courtenay.

Action	Desired Outcome	Who	Time
Downtown Parking Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing quantity, location and type of parking available Downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Engineering Consultant 	2016
Establish a Transit Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review opportunities for a Transit Hub and ensure it remains downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CVRD City BC Transit 	2016-
Sidewalk Patio Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on the pilot program to develop formal policy including design guidelines Improve permitting process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning 	2017
5 th Street Complete Street Pilot Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and construct pilot project as a gateway to downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineering 	2017-2018
Traffic Master Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing traffic network for limitations and opportunities Explore impacts of proposed public and private development projects on network Develop multi-modal plan for routes to and in downtown to ensure efficient connections and movements for all modes of transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineering Planning Public Works 	2017 - 2018
Wayfinding Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop wayfinding signage that directs people to and around downtown. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Public Works Recreation and Culture 	2017

Parking Analysis (2016)

Throughout the engagement process anytime there was a discussion about parking two polar opinions emerged. While some claim parking is at an absolute premium others feel there is ample parking downtown. To gain an understanding of this issue the City will undertake a parking analysis to determine the existing quantity, location and type of parking available downtown. This will inform decision making around revitalization concepts that propose to reduce parking counts. Additionally, it will identify opportunities to ensure parking is sufficient, convenient, and well signed.

Transit (2016-2017)

Transit service is currently provided to downtown with an exchange located on Cliffe Avenue between 3rd and 4th Streets next to the museum. The service is outgrowing its needs at this location and a new exchange is required. Retaining the exchange in the downtown core is critical to a connected

downtown. The City will work with BC Transit and the Regional District through the Frequent Transit Network study to identify an appropriate hub downtown.

Sidewalk Patio Policy (2017)

The City issued six permits for sidewalk patios in 2016, 3 of those are in operation. Those associated with liquor services have been delayed by Provincial liquor licensing approvals. Those not requiring liquor licensing have been put into use. In 2017 the city will review this policy to improve the permitting process, examine conflicts with provincial liquor control standards and review the design guidelines. Sidewalk Patios are encouraged as a way to activate the street.

5th Street Complete Street Pilot Project (2017-2018)

In 2016 the City was awarded \$3.253 million in Federal Gas Tax funding to undertake street redesign that will replace underground utilities, enhance walking and cycling facilities and improve storm water infrastructures and the streetscape with new street trees and vegetation. This project will be completed in 2018.

Traffic Master Plan (2017-2018)

Traffic networks into and out of downtown should be efficient. A number of proposed projects will require consideration of traffic volumes and patterns to ensure unanticipated delays aren't created. Sidewalk connectivity and widths will be explored. Key intersections in need of improvement will be identified to improve pedestrian and cycling safety. This project will follow the overall City Traffic Master Plan to examine the downtown area more specifically.

Wayfinding (2017-2018)

Improving wayfinding signage that both directs people to downtown from key gateway locations and makes it easy to navigate downtown is critical. Working with the DCBIA, the City will develop a wayfinding strategy that includes thematic branding to make downtown stand out in the community. In conjunction with the goal to improve connections across the river wayfinding signage will be included in Simms and Lewis Park.

Revitalization Tools and Strategies to Achieve Goal 5:

Celebrate and Connect to the Rivers

The proximity to the natural environment and recreation opportunities within the Greater Downtown Area are valued. Improved connections to the parks across the Courtenay River and the greenway will add value to future downtown revitalization.

Action	Desired Outcome	Who	Time
River Crossing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to provide improved pedestrian and cycling connections across the river at 4th, 5th or 6th Streets in connection with a Greenway Plan Review cost implications of each option Make recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineering Recreation and Culture Planning 6th Street Bridge Steering Committee 	2017-2018
River Greenways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve connections to existing Condorsy trail along Anderton Road Explore opportunity to connect across Puntledge River and out to One Spot Trail Explore opportunity to create connection along Puntledge River to Rotary Rail with Trail Work in connection with Greenway Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreation and Culture Planning K'omoks First Nation Community 	2017-2018
Riverfront District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a new Riverfront District Develop design guidelines to inform redevelopment of lands between 5th and 6th Streets below Cliffe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Engineering Design Consultant Community 	2018-
4th Street to River Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore design concept to improve pedestrian connections from 4th Street to the river Connect through City lands at Filberg Centre to Anderton Park Improve Anderton Park access to River 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Recreation and Culture Design Consultant Engineering Community 	2018 -

River Crossing (2018)

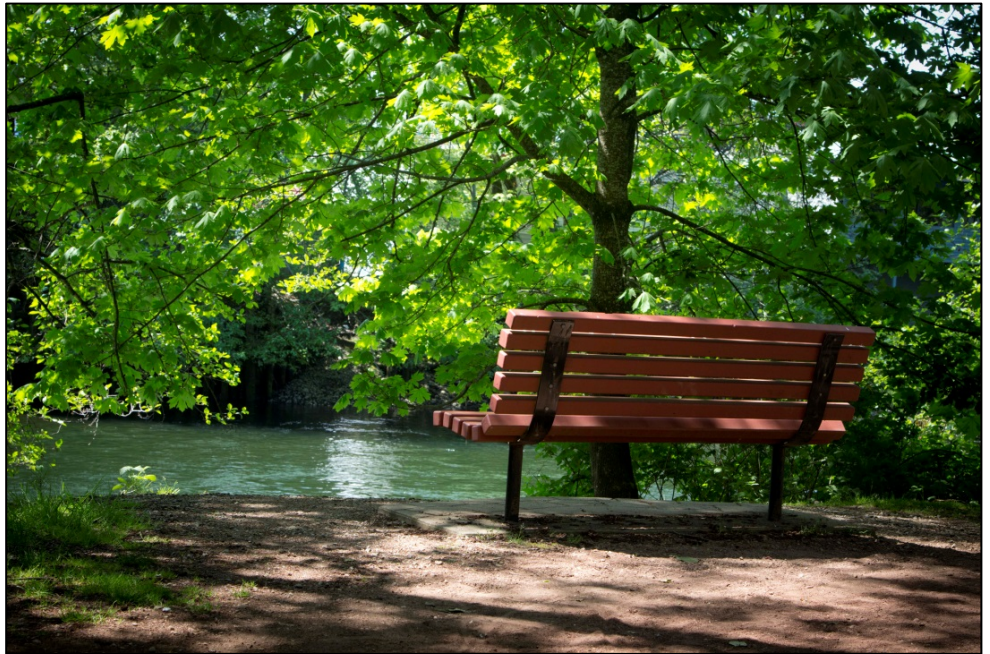
A common theme heard during the consultation process was the need to activate the river through improved access to it, along it, and across it. Improved pedestrian and cycling connections across the river to Simms and Lewis Park will create the opportunity to draw park users downtown. The City will further explore a river crossing at 6th street with the 6th



Street Bridge Steering Committee. Additionally, river crossings will be considered at 4th or 5th Street.

River Greenway (2018)

Gaps have been identified in the greenway network downtown. Identified opportunities to improve the network include connecting the Riverway trail across 5th Street to Anderton Avenue and along the river to the Condensory Trail. Further connections to the Rotary Rail with Trail will be explored both along the Puntledge River and within the Greater Downtown area. This project will be completed through the Parks Master Planning Process.



Riverfront District (2018-)

The Riverfront District is identified as the area generally between the Courtenay River and Cliffe Avenue. The area offers opportunity to improve access to the river and make the riverfront active. Ideas expressed during consultation included residential development, eco-tourism, and restaurant opportunities that connect people to the river. Further discussion and design work needs to explore floodplain, environmental and aesthetic values of this area to ensure high quality future development. Area specific development permit guidelines will be considered.

4th Street to River Connection (2018-)

The topography below Cliffe Avenue created the need for terracing of development between the river and the street. This terracing has resulted in large retaining walls creating a physical barrier to the river making pedestrian connects from the cenotaph area at 4th Street to Anderton Park challenging. This concept considers option to improve the connection and give greater access to the river. Design improvements to the entry of the Filberg Centre from the upper parking lot will be considered.