



## The Capital City's Main Street Continues to Evolve

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For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — Victoria's *Downtown Core Area Plan* highlights the importance of Downtown Victoria as a gateway for the movement of goods and people that support the local and regional economy, and contemplates the concentration of higher density and transit-supportive development within walking distance of the Douglas Street transit corridor. It also contemplates activities that bring people together and add vibrancy at a street level. The recent streetscape investments at the intersection of Yates and Douglas Streets adds to a long-term vision for downtown that is vibrant and active.

"These colourful streetscape improvements highlight Victoria's creativity and our innovative approach to adding new amenities and improving the public realm," said Mayor Lisa Helps. "Together, we are re-imagining Victoria's Main Street and celebrating the potential it holds for future development and population growth."

Fran Hobbis, Former Chair of the Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA) and Project Manager of the stART initiative on Douglas explained, "In early 2015, the DVBA brought together stakeholders along Douglas Street to discuss the street's future. Douglas Street is many people's first impression of Downtown Victoria and it was agreed to develop some concepts for revitalization of the public right-of-way. What you see is how some of the concepts play out in practice, in full colour and vitality, with something for almost everyone."

Starting as a bustling gravel main street in the heart of downtown, Douglas Street has long connected the provincial legislative buildings in the south to the residential neighbourhoods and then adjacent municipalities to the north. It is home to some of Victoria's oldest commercial buildings, and continues to act as a mainstay for regional transportation networks. Over the years it has established itself as a gateway into Victoria and has started to see a resurgence of new redevelopment and investment. This is demonstrated by the number of permits and the value of permits issued along the Douglas Street from the northern Victoria boundary to the southern end of the street.

With 10,000 new residents expected to live downtown by 2038, this population growth is already occurring with 1,000 new housing units having been approved between 2012 and 2015. Nearly half of those units (438) were approved in 2015 alone. 330 of these approved units are within one block of Douglas Street and \$352 million in construction value has been permitted in the same area, over the same period. Douglas Street plays an important role in where the density and growth will go, but also as a main transportation route in and out of the downtown and to the growing Region.

The importance of Douglas Street to the vibrancy of Downtown Victoria has long been a topic of discussion.

"Beginning with the first of two conferences organized in 2004 to address accumulating concerns at the time regarding the prevailing state and condition of our Downtown, our Society helped initiate a process designed to create a vision for the core area to the year 2020," said Ken Cloak of the Downtown Victoria 2020 Conference Society.

“Two significant initiatives that came forward from these community-based conferences were the rebirth of an advocate for the Downtown in the form of the Downtown Victoria Business Association, combined with an objective designed to encourage more permanent residents to populate the Downtown area thereby contributing to the vibrancy of our core area economy. As a result of the dedication and leadership of Ken Kelly and his organization, along with the market momentum that continues to encourage and establish new permanent residences in the form of higher rise condominium developments, our Downtown is improving dramatically moving forward to the year 2020. Our Downtown Victoria 2020 Conference Society is pleased to be a contributor and participant in what we hope will be an ongoing trend to beautify the Douglas Street Corridor.”

It was contemplated at the *Arriving at Douglas Street Charrette* led by the Downtown Victoria Business Association in 2015, that short-term interventions for Douglas Street would be proposed, those that could take place with relatively little planning and overhead are often of a temporary or event type installations. They allow for the testing of an idea before more permanent interventions are considered.

The streetscape improvements made at the Douglas and Yates Street intersection were installed in partnership, with the Downtown Victoria Business Association, the Downtown Victoria 2020 Conference Society, and the City of Victoria each contributing \$60,000.

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