

Wednesday, March 2, 2022 | For Immediate Release

What's Your Vision for Government Street?

VICTORIA, BC — Informed by the community's ideas about how to make Government Street one of the best streets in Canada, a draft new plan to redesign the street from the bottom up is now ready for public feedback.

"Community members shared what they value most about Government Street and what they would like to see improved," said Mayor Lisa Helps. "Making Government Street a people-priority street is a key action of the City's Strategic Plan and now it's time to tell us what you think – what have we got right, what have we missed?"

Government Street is one of Victoria's most iconic public spaces. At the same time, the streetscape hasn't changed in more than 50 years. Ageing street furniture, trees, traffic signals, sidewalk and road surfaces and a watermain will all require replacement over the coming years, providing an opportunity to refresh the streetscape.

"This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine Government Street for the future. We want this plan to support downtown businesses for the long-term by building on the success of the *Build Back Victoria* program, create more accessible and welcoming public spaces, and work with the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations to tell a more complete history of this land through cultural interpretation and economic development opportunities," added Mayor Helps.

The draft concept design proposes two new cultural plazas with landmarks to serve as gateways to the street – a Lekwungen plaza at Humboldt and a realignment of the Pandora intersection to create a new plaza for Chinatown, while improving circulation for all forms of travel.

Other aspects envisioned include expanded pedestrian areas, timed car-free zones and extending the character of Government Street north, between Yates and Pandora, maintaining two-way vehicle traffic. There are opportunities for public art and cultural interpretation, more accessible seating, lighting and landscaping and lots of space for restaurant patios and storefronts. Accessible parking, pick-up/drop-off areas and commercial loading zones continue to be available along the entire street.

While pedestrian areas would grow, this multimodal space would continue to accommodate bikes, pedicabs and horse-drawn carriages at all times and continue to provide a home to parades and special events.

Iconic to generations of residents, the Hornbeam trees that line the street are nearing the end of their life span. The City is developing a succession plan to introduce the next generation of trees to the street. Trees in poor health would be replaced over time with new trees.

Many groups have been involved to help guide the development of the Government Street Refresh draft concept design. A stakeholder working group with representatives from a broad diversity of organizations – including Government Street businesses and the Downtown Victoria Business Association – was formed to help guide the process, advise on engagement and provide input on the design.

The draft concept design has also been informed through meetings and workshops with Songhees and Esquimalt Nations representatives, and through presentations to City Advisory Committees. In addition, more than 700 residents took part in the first phase of the project, sharing their ideas in an online forum and survey.

Following this next round of input, the project team will refine the draft concept design in collaboration with the stakeholder working group, First Nations, representatives of the Chinese community, local businesses and others, before it is presented to City Council in late spring.

Changes considered as part of this long-term refresh will be aligned with the City’s annual infrastructure renewal and capital projects. Future private developments could also help fund some improvements.

Have Your Say

The community is invited to help shape the Government Street Refresh draft concept design to ensure this street continues to be a vibrant, historic and welcoming public space for all, over the next 50 years.

- Local businesses will receive an invitation to register on Eventbrite to participate in one of two virtual focus group discussions on **Tuesday, March 8**.
- The community is invited to participate in an online Open House, complete with a video, display boards and virtual facilitated presentations to learn more and ask questions on **Wednesday, March 9 at noon and again at 6 p.m.** Registration is not required.
- Take part in an online survey or provide feedback in an email to engage@victoria.ca with “Government Street Refresh” in the subject line, until March 20.

Learn more and have your say at engage.victoria.ca.

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