QUADRA VILLAGE

Part 1
Design Guidelines

A FULL STUDY REPORT, PREPARED BY URBAN ASPECTS CONSULTING GROUP LTD. AND CHRISTOPHER ROWE ARCHITECT INC. IS AVAILABLE FROM THE CITY PLANNING DIVISION.

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 12, 1998
GOALS

- To stimulate the redevelopment of the Quadra Village commercial centre into an interesting, attractive, and safe 'neighbourhood shopping area.
- To define a specific precinct as the Quadra Village in order to enhance community pride and increase business opportunities.

OVERALL CHARACTER AND IMAGE

The Hillside/Quadra intersection is one of the city's busiest. The presence of traffic through the area — important to the ongoing viability of area business — will continue to influence the character of the "village". A major challenge is channeling the ever-present flow of cars through a pedestrian-friendly streetscape. The streetscape will be defined by buildings which accommodate a range of uses from existing commercial to mixed use commercial/residential to live/work studios.

The bones of a vital neighbourhood already exist in the variety of shops, services, restaurants, and residences. A key objective of these guidelines is to tie them together coherently and ensure that new development enhances and repairs the streetscape and vitality of the neighbourhood.

Quadra Village should have a unique character, and not be simply a formulaic clone. The Quadra Village will be a village in the sense of a vital community with a clear identity, not a village in the sense of traditional building typology or aesthetics. These design guidelines acknowledge the busy setting and lively urban character of the existing neighbourhood. Rather than prescribe a decorative "theme", these guidelines are intended to encourage a sensitivity to the particularities of individual sites, to one's neighbours, and to the ongoing history of the neighbourhood.

Recognition of the neighbourhood's multicultural population will be one important way of developing Quadra Village's unique character. How this cultural diversity will be expressed will be up to the property and business owners, residents, architects and designers of the neighbourhood.

Urban Design

OBJECTIVES

- create an overall massing for the Quadra Village precinct which is consistent and harmonious, and maximizes economic return without compromising livability, neighbourliness, and access to light and open space.
- encourage infill development at a reasonable height, not tall buildings in the middle of generic open space or parking lots.
- ensure continuity of the street frontage and clear definition of the public realm of the street.
- encourage usable open space on the upper floors of mixed use or residential building
BUILDING HEIGHT
- the maximum allowable building height is 15.5m and four storeys.

SETBACKS AND BUILD-TO LINES
- A minimum of 75% of the main street frontage of a building must be built to a line 3 m back from the front yard lot line. The intent of this requirement is to define the commercial street and encourage maximum continuous frontage.
- Setbacks at the third and fourth floors are intended to maintain a comfortable pedestrian scale and create useful decks for residential use, while ensuring that the proportion of the street space is harmonious. Upper floor setbacks are minimums, not build-to lines, and may be interpreted liberally to create attractive and useful upper floor outdoor spaces.

BUILDING MASSING
The predominant massing type in the Village has been a one- or two-storey block drawn up tightly to the street property line, with occasional three storey blocks. This low massing is typical in other pedestrian-oriented neighbourhood commercial areas in Victoria (eg Cook Street Village and Oak Bay Village) and is a comfortable scale.
- Street frontage along the Quadra Street build-to line should continue to observe a one or two storey height.
- Third and fourth floors should step back from the commercial frontage to maintain sun access to the street and allow for residential decks.
- Step back from a one or two storey frontage along the lane. Keep the building scale low along the narrow lane.

The intersection of Quadra and Hillside is primarily notable only for the presence of a traffic light. There is no strong landmark indicating the intersection visible from a distance to motorists. As well, the entrance or extent of the Village area is not clearly defined or marked by any significant change in building character or form.
- Create landmark massing at the four corners of the Hillside/Quadra and Kings/Fifth intersections to indicate the extent of the main area of the Quadra Village. The upper floor setbacks are relaxed within 10m of the intersection to assist this objective.
- Consider higher mass right at the corner, with potential corner entrances.
- Create open space at the corners (either in front or under new buildings) to ease pedestrian flow around the corner and provide additional crush space for people waiting for traffic lights.
Pedestrian Environment

OBJECTIVES
- ensure safe and comfortable passage for pedestrians
- define a specific village precinct through the use of paving design and street furniture
- develop the public street as a place of social activity and interaction

SIDEWALK DESIGN
- Current sidewalks are minimal in width and often obstructed by telephone poles, utility fixtures and furniture, and occasionally by the few remaining street trees. The narrow width and absence of boulevard increases the pedestrian's sense of exposure to passing cars and negatively affects the perception of auto speed by pedestrians.
- Generous and safe sidewalk space is important when encouraging the development of an active shopping street.
  - Maintain and enhance current sidewalk width.
  - A minimum 1.5m of front yards must be a paved surface contiguous and compatible with the City sidewalk.
  - In the public right-of-way, actual space is more valuable than an elaborate or expensive surface. Design efforts should focus on increasing space.

PAVING MATERIALS
- Integrate public art with paving design.
- Use special paving techniques/materials for pedestrian crossings at intersections and driveway crossings.
- Mark the pedestrian realm/route with material/colour changes.
- Use textured paving to alert motorists to pedestrian areas/pedestrian right-of-way.

Plant trees to harmonize with building facade elements
- Consider placing trees on private sites to correspond and harmonize with building elements and rhythms (e.g., columns, bays, windows).
- All landscaping should follow good practice for creating "defensible space" – e.g., permit unobstructed views between knees and head.
- New design should follow CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) guidelines.
- Species selection should provide interest year-round, as well as enhancing biodiversity in the Village area.

SOFT LANDSCAPING
- Building owners are strongly encourage to plant City-approved street trees within their front yard setback area. Species and spacing should be consistent with other planting on the street and should be reviewed by City staff.
- Special tree species could be used to mark distinctive locations and intersections.
- Use groupings of trees to define and order adjacent open spaces. Plant material should help create edges and enclosure, visual focal points, or background to spaces and activity.

PLANTERS
- Planters can be a flexible manner of increasing green landscaping without costly modifications to city streets and sidewalks.
  - Use planters to define special sidewalk or commercial areas where sidewalk width permits.
  - Integrate seating in planter design.
  - Planters should be of good quality solid construction: e.g., precast concrete, brick, or well-finished and detailed wood. On private sites, planter shape should be related to adjacent architectural design and materials.
PEDESTRIAN PATHS
Develop a mid-block connection from the grounds of Blanshard Elementary School and the adjacent lane, and from Fifth Street, through to Quadra Street. Special public seating areas or activity nodes such as an information kiosk should be located along these routes.

LIGHTING
- Reduce height and decrease spacing of site and parking lot light fixtures to enhance pedestrian character of lighting.
- Metal halide or incandescent lamps are preferable to narrow spectrum sodium vapour or mercury lighting.

PUBLIC ART
- Integrate public art with design/fabrication of buildings, paving, street furniture, or lighting, rather than as monumental stand-alone objects.
- Use local history and personalities as theme; develop public art as visible trace of local memory. In general, encourage public art as a means of strengthening a connection to the ongoing life of the neighbourhood, rather than as simply a decorative "theme".
- Consider relating public art to local history (eg. historic businesses, homes, or residents) or especially the multicultural diversity of the neighbourhood.

SPECIAL AMENITIES
- A social gathering spot or focal point is a desirable and easily created amenity. Several benches, planters, a special paving treatment, special lighting are all that is needed. Incorporation of a vertical landmark should be considered. One potential location for such a place is within the brick parking lot at the northwest corner.
- Consider integrating public art with the design of this space.

A social focal point is a desirable community amenity

Architectural Design

BUILDING CHARACTER
The Quadra Village is an area where change and transition in building form and character has been the rule. There is no strong architectural character in place to guide new design and development. Rather than propose narrow stylistic rules, these guidelines anticipate a more free approach defined by a neighbourly responsiveness and sensitivity to human scale and activity.

BUILDING MATERIALS
In recognition of the transitional character and economic circumstances in the Village, there are no highly prescriptive guidelines for building materials. On the other hand, materials which are inappropriate to an urban, commercial context are strongly discouraged.
- Avoid residential-type materials on commercial buildings (e.g., vinyl siding, rough cedar siding).
- In mixed use projects, ensure commercial and residential components employ consistent, similar materials.
- Avoid replicating other more costly materials with inexpensive substitutes (e.g., stucco recreations of stone detailing)
- In general, materials should be durable, practical, and capable of "aging gracefully" without looking shoddy or worn out.
STREET-LEVEL FACADES, STOREFRONTS, ENTRANCES

- Avoid long unvaried stretches of frontage or repetitive storefront and sign modules. Allow for personalization and custom design of storefronts within larger buildings.
- Clarity: entrances should be clearly visible and directly accessible from the main street.
- Privacy transition: use porches, steps, or recesses to make a transition from the public realm of the sidewalk to the semi-private realm of residences.

AWNINGS

Awnings are a key component for enhancing the pedestrian experience (especially when it's raining), as well as developing streetscape continuity.
- Awning design should be guided by shelter needs first, signage or building identity needs second. Ensure that awnings do the job of diverting rain or shading from the sun, then ensure that signs are well-integrated.
- Large back-lit canopies are discouraged.
- Exposing well-designed structure can increase the visual interest of canopies.
- Integrate awning/canopy design carefully with building design.

SIGNS

Signage, with the exception of traffic signs, should be scaled for readability at slower speeds, rather than for highway speeds. Overscaled and oversimplified sign shape and graphics lead to a "coarsening" of the scale and feel of the Village. Spill from large areas of fluorescent-lit awnings and signs can degrade the quality of street lighting. This is a particularly important issue along Quadra Street, which will tend to be the focal point of the village environment.
- Well-designed signs make a significant contribution to the visual vibrancy and character of a commercial neighbourhood. A profusion of colourful text and images is expected in a commercial area and variety and complexity encourages passersby to slow down and pay attention.
- Neon signs are enjoying a justifiable resurgence in popularity for their quality of light and vibrant colours. Neon has been used in the Quadra Village in the past as the sign material of choice; consistent use of neon has the potential to make the Village a distinctive place in Victoria by night.
- Creative sign design can be an exciting and interesting substitute for expensive architectural finishes when construction budgets are limited, as well as supporting business objectives. These guidelines support a lively visual environment of well-designed and well-made signs.
- Consider special shapes, proportions, and orientations for signs to increase distinctiveness.
- Backlit fabric sign/awnings are not recommended.
- New pylon signs are not rec-
ommented.
• Hanging signs at right angles to commercial frontage are strongly encouraged.
• A wide variety of sign materials is encouraged, including neon (strongly encouraged), carved/sandblasted wood, individual cut steel or plastic letters, small back-lit signs without excessive light over-spill (i.e. light text on dark backgrounds).
• Variances to the City of Victoria sign bylaw may be considered for exceptional sign design.
• Ensure sign lighting is screened or directed to avoid shining into residential windows.

BUILDING DESIGN FOR CLIMATE RESPONSE
• Use passive shading devices and building orientation in preference to mechanical cooling systems.
• Employ overhangs and canopies for rain protection.

SERVICING AND UTILITIES
• Building loading and service areas should be located away from primary pedestrian areas or well screened and secured.
• Gas and electrical meters on building frontages should be screened, enclosed with grilles. Location and installation of meters etc should be carefully integrated into new building design.
• Underground wiring is desirable. The retrofit of underground power supply is strongly encouraged for building renovations.

SAFETY AND SECURITY
• The principles of "defensible space" and CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) should be considered in the design of entrances, parking lots, and both outdoor and indoor public/semi-public circulation.
• Ensure outdoor areas are overlooked by residential windows wherever possible.
• Use gates to secure enclosed and semi-enclosed parking areas and related entrances and stairwells.
• Continued mixed-use development is encouraged in order to create 24-hour resident presence and activity.

Streets and Transportation

PARKING AND LOADING
• While generous parking or loading areas in front of retail is convenient, it has a negative effect on the pedestrian environment and separates businesses from the street. New front yard parking is not allowed. If existing front yard parking is truly essential to business viability, ensure that it is designed, constructed, and landscaped to be attractive as an open pedestrian space (i.e. dual use) with good visible connections to the sidewalk.
• On-site parking must be located behind buildings or at least 12 m from the front yard lot line.
• Design to minimize intrusive effects of parking ramps with side and overhead screening and landscaping.
• Completely enclose or screen underbuilding parking lots; avoid a disconnection of building from the ground (e.g. big building on spindly columns).
• Where pedestrians must cross parking or vehicle areas use markings, bollards, material changes, etc to clearly indicate pedestrian routes. Pedestrian-priority surfaces should be paved with the same material as sidewalks.
• Break down large areas of pavement with scoring, patterning, joints, and material changes.
• All private paths and pedestrian areas shall be fully accessible for the handicapped.

TRANSIT
• Bus stops are major nodes of pedestrian activity – new business development should acknowledge this and capitalise on it.
• Special design of building frontage adjacent to bus stops.
• Develop retail frontage that allows bus users inside to monitor bus arrival (encourage passengers to visit retail while waiting for their bus).

BICYCLES
• Bicycle parking should be provided in new residential and commercial development. Racks should be located close to building entries in a secure and visible location. Consider integrating bicycle racks or rails into exterior building details. Racks should be carefully selected for utility and capacity.

Pavement, parking lots, and crossings should be carefully detailed.
Quadra Village Development Permit Area

Urban design recommendations

- Infill or develop lane frontage
- Mid-block paths
- The Roxy
- The Brick
- Kings Road
- Blanshard Community Centre
- Wark St Park
- Blanshard Elementary School

Additional area recommended for inclusion

Landmark massing at corners

Infill encouraged

Special crossing treatment and landmark massing at corners

Street and sidewalk upgrading

Mid-block paths