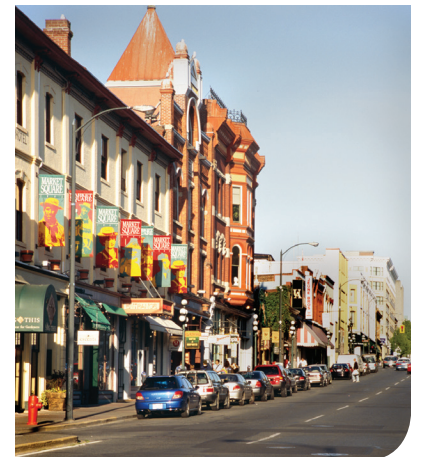




# Downtown Core Area Plan

SEPTEMBER 2011  
Updated: January 2026



# Territorial Acknowledgement

The City of Victoria is located on the homelands of the Songhees Nation and the Xwsepsum Nation

## vision

The Downtown Core Area will offer an array of vibrant urban neighbourhoods surrounding a thriving, pedestrian-friendly Downtown core. All people will benefit from a high quality public and private environment and a broad range of employment, housing, shopping, and recreational opportunities, all within a well-connected and attractive urban environment that embraces the Victoria Harbour, celebrates its heritage, Victoria's role as the Provincial Capital and provides a model for livable and sustainable urbanism.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	2
Introduction.....	5
Urban Structure.....	14
Districts.....	22
Density Framework.....	36
Transportation and Mobility.....	43
Urban Design.....	52
Heritage.....	81
Energy and Environment.....	85
Community Vitality.....	87
Implementation.....	9

This plan is implemented in part by the Downtown Core Design Guidelines (OCP Schedule 2B), which are intended to foster innovative, creative and unique design responses to individual site conditions, opportunities and constraints within the broader context of the design principles and goals established in this plan.

# executive summary



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Plan is called the “Downtown Core Area Plan” – a new name to reflect Victoria’s new reality and a new plan to envision and guide growth and development over the next 30 years. This Plan provides a benchmark for the Downtown Core Area’s economic health, quality and character of buildings and space and overall livability for its residents, businesses and visitors.

This Plan builds upon the success of previous planning initiatives and renews the vision for the Downtown as a special place through policy direction that provides strategic support and direction to foster an array of public, private and partnership-based actions to improve and maintain the Downtown Core Area as the Heart of the Region.

## BACKGROUND

From 1990 to 2010, planning in Downtown Victoria was primarily guided by the Downtown Victoria Plan, which was developed when Victoria’s Downtown was experiencing low population and economic growth.

The current DCAP was originally drafted in 2011. In recognition of population forecasts and the potential shortfall of land and development capacity within the Downtown neighbourhood at the time, this Plan introduced an expanded plan area with related policies to accommodate population and development growth over the next 30 years.

This Plan therefore applied to the Downtown neighbourhood and the immediately surrounding areas, referred to as the Downtown Core Area, which includes not only the Downtown neighbourhood but also the Rock Bay portion of the Burnside neighbourhood and parts of the North Park, Fairfield, Fernwood and James Bay

neighbourhoods.

It replaced the Downtown Victoria Plan (1990), the Harris Green Neighbourhood Plan (1995) and the Harris Green Charrette (1997) as the principal guide for planning decisions made by the City of Victoria within the broader Downtown Core Area. It serves as a local area plan for the Downtown Core Area.

The Downtown Core Area had a population of approximately 13,000 in 2021, which is an increase of approximately 3,550 or 38% compared to the 2016 population of approximately 9,450 for the same area.

This Plan has been updated over the years, most recently in 2025 to align with Victoria 2050, the updated Official Community Plan, reflecting:

- The City of Victoria’s Official Community Plan estimates the population of Victoria was approximately 94,900 in 2021 and will reach approximately 125,800 by 2041 and 142,000 by 2050.
- The Capital Regional District’s (CRD) Regional Growth Strategy estimates that the Capital Region’s population was approximately 392,100 in 2018 and will increase to approximately 478,500 by 2038.
- The Official Community Plan forecasts that Victoria will add between 19,000 and 40,000 new jobs by 2050 and provides direction for meeting the city’s employment land needs in and around the Downtown Core
- In alignment with the Regional Growth Strategy, the Official Community Plan also emphasizes the Downtown Core as the primary regional employment, business and cultural centre.

## PURPOSE

The Downtown Core Area Plan provides land use, physical development, transportation and mobility, vitality and sustainability policies and actions for the neighbourhoods that fall within the Downtown Core Area. It is intended both to guide and influence the physical, social, environmental and economic conditions of the area, and to ensure a sustainable and balanced approach to growth over the next 30 years.

The City will use this Plan to evaluate the impact and suitability of public and private projects and initiatives related to land use, development, infrastructure and transportation, and will review all private and public projects and initiatives for their ability to help achieve the Plan's vision and goals.

## KEY CHALLENGES

This Plan attempts to address a number of key challenges the Downtown Core Area will face over the next 30 years. These include:

- Ensuring the Downtown Core Area has enough residential and commercial space available to keep up with short- and long-term growth forecasts, without damage to the natural environment or the livability and quality of life in the Downtown Core Area.
- Remaining the primary centre for employment, tourism and culture within the Capital Region, and the preferred location for Provincial Government offices and services.
- Providing a mix of housing, services and facilities to encourage and support a socio-economically inclusive community.
- Maintaining the historic context of Old Town, Chinatown and the Harbour in balance with new development.
- Encouraging more owners of heritage buildings to rehabilitate and upgrade their properties.
- Fostering an urban core that is able to support a rapid transit system.
- Ensuring that new development complements both the existing architecture

and natural environment of the Downtown Core Area.

## KEY FEATURES

In response to these challenges, the Downtown Core Area Plan provides a framework for growth and development that balances urban design, transportation, community vitality and economic objectives. The key features that are contained in this Plan include:

### 1. DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

- Provides a new framework for land use, building height and density that supports a strategic balance between employment and residential development.
- Concentrates higher density development along the Douglas Street/Blanshard Street corridor to relieve development pressure within the historic Old Town Area, Chinatown and Victoria Harbour.

### 2. STRENGTHENED CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

- Expand the Central Business District (CBD) as the primary location for offices and other forms of commercial development.
- Supports the retention of commercial land within the CBD.

### 3. DENSITY FRAMEWORK

- Establishes a density framework for the Downtown Core Area that balances the need for increased density in some areas with the need to maintain livable communities.
- Restricts density in some areas to a pre-determined maximum density level, but appropriately accommodates growth in alignment with City policies and objectives, including for voluntary amenity contributions.

### 4. INCREASED HOUSING OPTIONS

- Accommodates and fosters a greater range of housing options throughout the Downtown Core Area by land use, urban design and transportation policies, including support for non-market housing.

### 5. PUBLIC AMENITIES

- Identifies strategies to acquire and develop specific key public amenities such as urban plazas, park spaces, Government Street Mall extension and the Harbour Pathway.

## 6. HERITAGE

- Introduces an additional financial incentive to support and encourage the seismic upgrading of heritage buildings within the Downtown.
- Explores the potential to expand the Heritage Tax Incentive Program within the Downtown Core Area and lengthen its term up to 15 years.

## 7. TRANSPORTATION

- Provides policies and action to support the integration of infrastructure and public realm improvements that support the use of alternate modes of travel including walking, cycling, transit and a future rapid transit system.
- Concentrates higher density and transit-supportive development within walking distance of the Douglas Street transit corridor
- Recognizes the importance of Downtown Victoria as a gateway for the movement of goods and people that support the local and regional economy.

## 8. ECONOMIC VITALITY

- Identifies the need to develop a local area plan for the Rock Bay District, with a focus on strengthening its function as a key employment centre, within an attractive urban setting.
- Supports the economic function and role of the working Harbour, while recognizing opportunities to improve public access to the waterfront.

## 9. LIVABILITY

- Identifies and supports the concept of improving vitality and livability within the Downtown Core Area through initiatives and strategies to create an attractive and functional public realm, well-designed and diverse built forms, a range of amenities to serve the daily needs of residents, businesses and visitors and an improved local economy.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The Downtown Core Area Plan is a 30-year Plan that is premised on the concerted effort and collaboration by both the public and private sectors. This Plan identifies a range of specific actions and initiatives to transform the Downtown Core Area and make this Plan a reality. It is anticipated that a detailed implementation and monitoring strategy will be developed and maintained.

# introduction

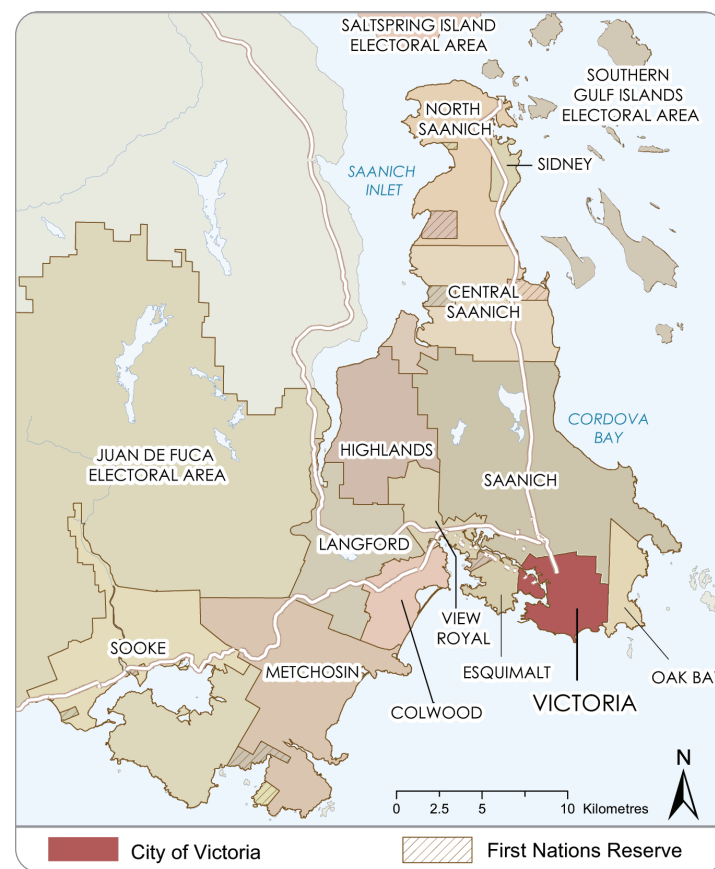
# 1



## INTRODUCTION

Since it was first established in 1843 as a trading post for the Hudson's Bay Company, Victoria has evolved into a Provincial capital city that is recognized across Canada and around the world for its tourism, education, heritage conservation, recreation, arts and culture and high quality of life. It is also renowned for its ability to retain both its character and its charm even while it continues to experience significant growth and development.

Victoria is the core city of the broader metropolitan Capital Region and its 12 additional municipalities and three electoral areas. (SEE MAP 1: THE REGION) The Downtown Core Area is the city's (and the region's) urban centre. Approximately 188 hectares (465 acres) in size, it is a mixed-use community that provides a blend of institutional, commercial, industrial and residential activities throughout a series of neighbourhoods. (SEE MAP 2: CITY-WIDE CONTEXT) The Downtown Core Area makes up the heart of the region's Metropolitan Core as described in the Capital Regional District's Regional Growth Strategy. Building upon its function as the region's primary centre for business, employment, culture, entertainment and tourism, the Downtown Core Area Plan lays out a vision, goals, policies and actions that will ensure Victoria remains a truly remarkable place to live, work and play well into the 21st century.



Map 1: The Region

## THIS PLAN

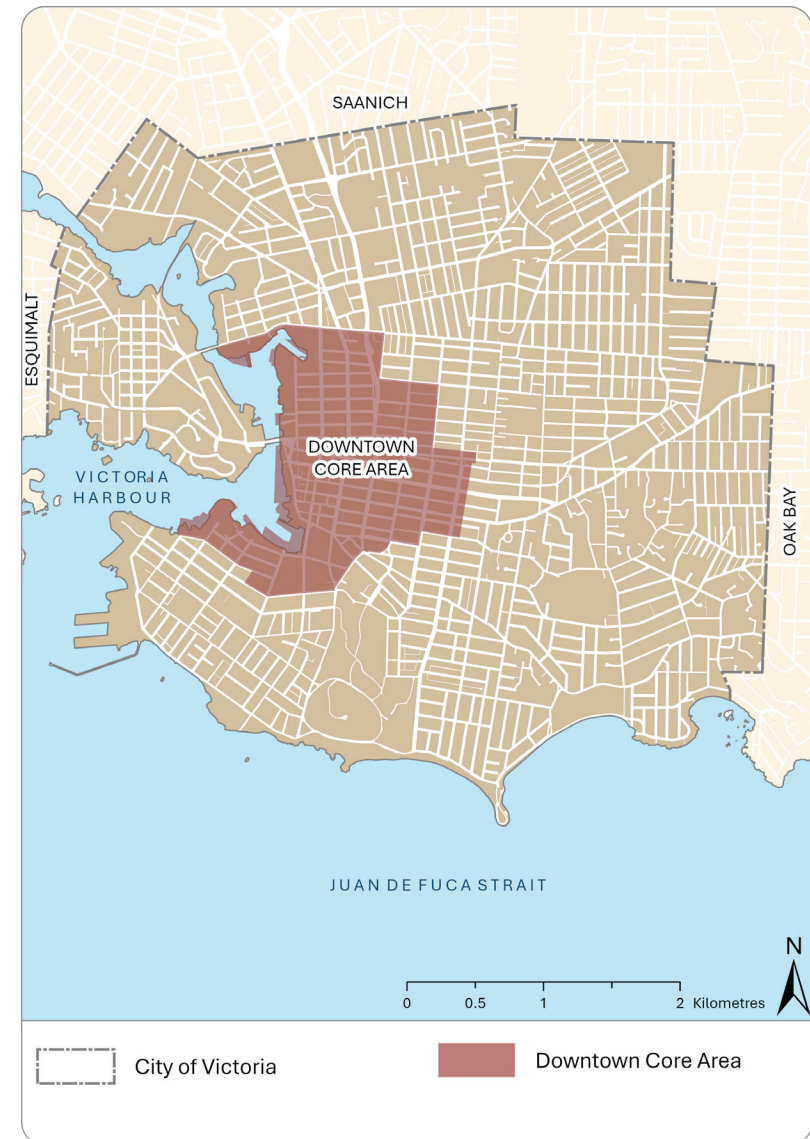
This Plan is called the “Downtown Core Area Plan” – a new name to reflect Victoria’s new urban reality.

Since 1990, planning in Downtown Victoria has been primarily guided by the Downtown Victoria Plan, which provided a general framework to shape the physical, economic and social form and function of downtown Victoria. When that plan was first developed, however, Victoria’s downtown was experiencing low population and economic growth. Today, in 2011, the situation is very different. Victoria has grown significantly in recent years, with steady growth expected to continue for at least the next two to three decades.

The Downtown neighbourhood alone will not be able to accommodate forecast population, employment and development. The inventory of vacant or under utilized land within the Downtown will continue to diminish over the next ten years to a level that will not be able to accommodate future demand. Challenges and opportunities that affect the Downtown neighbourhood also affect the broader Downtown Area and adjacent neighbourhoods as they too evolve to become more urban. Therefore, a more comprehensive approach to planning that considers the context, function, transitions and relationships among each neighbourhood is necessary.

This Plan applies to the Downtown Core Area, a broader area that includes not only the Downtown neighbourhood but also the Harris Green neighbourhood, the Rock Bay portion of the Burnside neighbourhood, and parts of the North Park, Fairfield, Fernwood and James Bay neighbourhoods. (SEE MAP 3: PLAN BOUNDARY AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

This Plan replaces the Downtown Victoria Plan (1990), the Harris Green Neighbourhood Plan (1995) and the Harris Green Charrette (1997) as the principal guide for planning decisions made by the City of Victoria within the Downtown Core Area, and it will serve to implement the policy direction for portions of the Urban Core as described in the new Official Community Plan.



Map 2: City-Wide Context

## PURPOSE

The Downtown Core Area Plan provides land use, physical development, transportation and mobility, vitality and sustainability policies and actions for the area that is located within the boundary of this Plan. (SEE MAP 3: PLAN BOUNDARY AND NEIGHBOURHOODS) These policies and actions are intended both to guide and influence the physical, social, environmental and economic conditions of the Area, and to ensure a sustainable and balanced approach to growth over the next 30 years.

The City will use this Plan in conjunction with other related policies, guidelines and regulations to evaluate the impact and suitability of public and private projects and initiatives related to land use, development, infrastructure and transportation, and will review all private and public projects and initiatives for their ability to help achieve the Plan's vision and goals.

The City will also use this Plan as a guide in preparing operating and capital budgets, defining department work programs and determining public improvements.

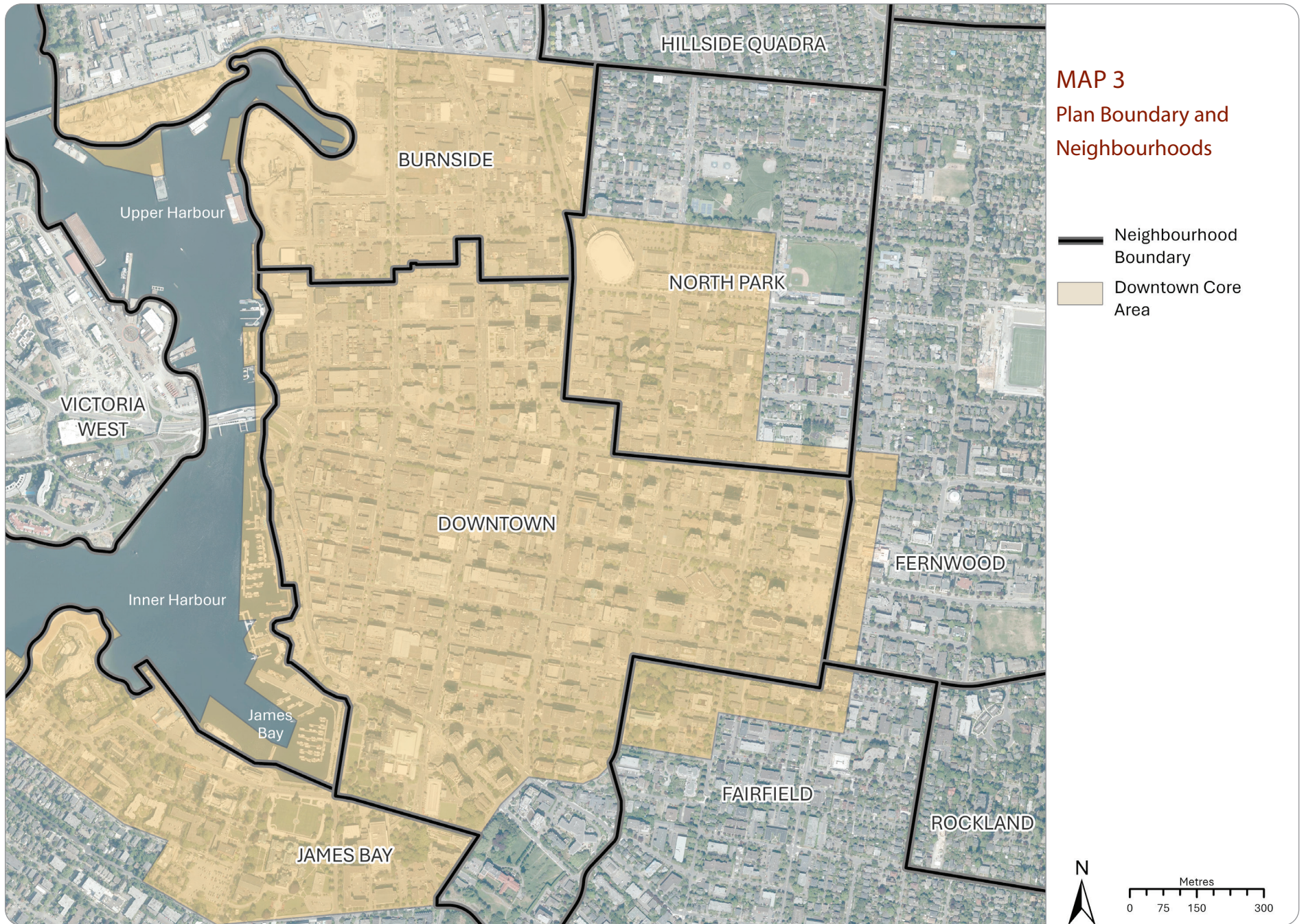
## DISTRICTS

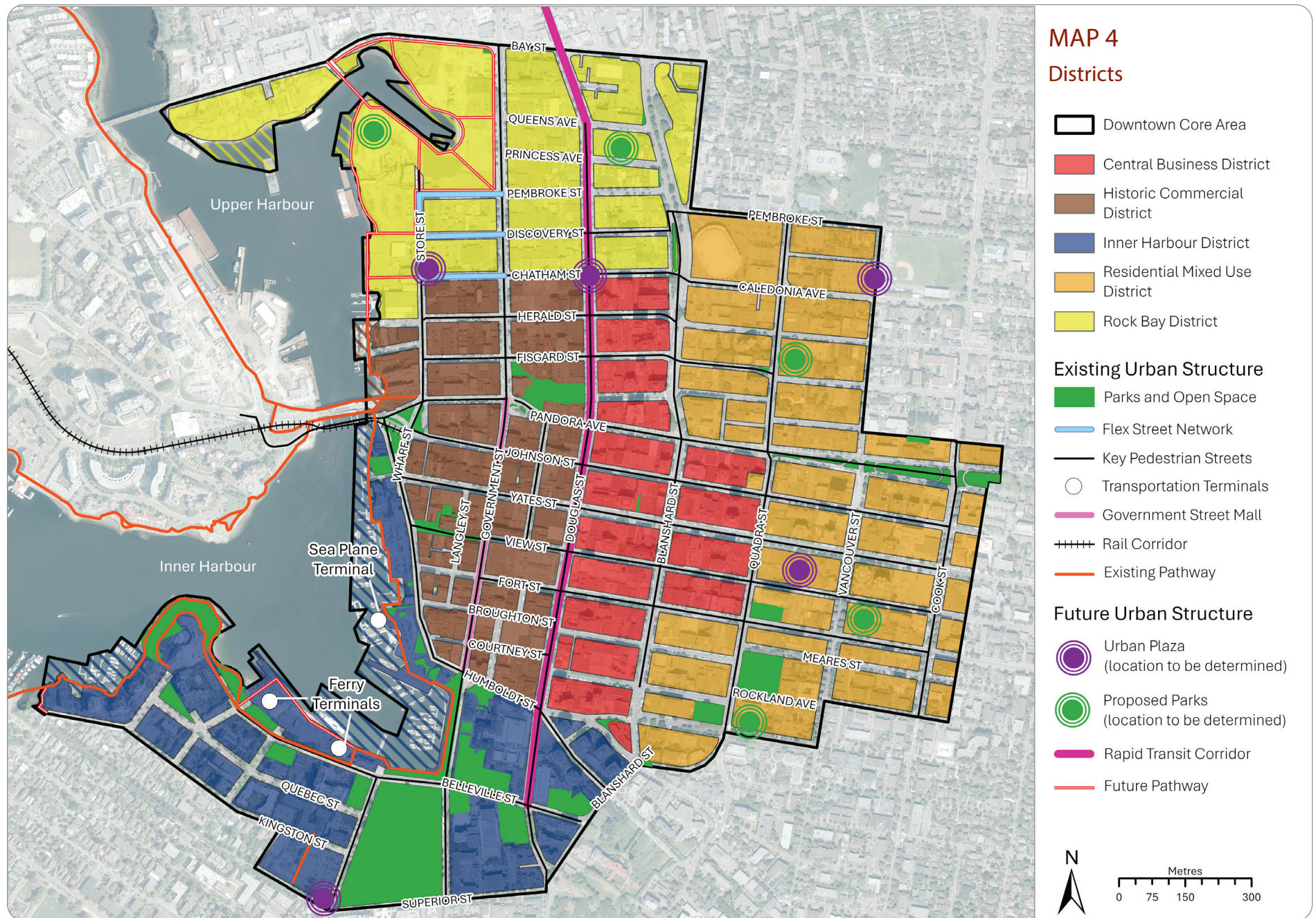
For the purposes of this Plan, the Downtown Core Area is divided into five districts:

- Central Business District
- Historic Commercial District
- Inner Harbour District
- Rock Bay District
- Residential Mixed-Use District.

(SEE MAP 4: DISTRICTS)

The new districts do not replace existing neighbourhoods and their names, boundaries or special character areas. Rather, they are a way to recognize that there are unique social, physical and environmental characteristics in certain parts of the Downtown Core Area that cut across neighbourhood boundaries and unite broader geographic areas.



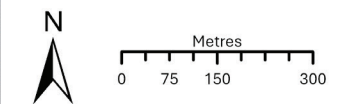


**MAP 4**  
Districts

- Downtown Core Area
- Central Business District
- Historic Commercial District
- Inner Harbour District
- Residential Mixed Use District
- Rock Bay District

- Existing Urban Structure**
- Parks and Open Space
  - Flex Street Network
  - Key Pedestrian Streets
  - Transportation Terminals
  - Government Street Mall
  - Rail Corridor
  - Existing Pathway

- Future Urban Structure**
- Urban Plaza (location to be determined)
  - Proposed Parks (location to be determined)
  - Rapid Transit Corridor
  - Future Pathway



## FOUNDATION

The Downtown Core Area Plan is based on:

- Forecasts of significant population growth for this region and Victoria over the next 30 years, and the corresponding effect that growth will have on demand for office, residential and other space.
- A vision and a series of Goals for a Downtown Core Area that reflect what the City of Victoria heard clearly from the people who live and work here through a number of community workshops: that all future growth and development must strengthen the city's character, respect its scale, and support sustainability.
- A set of assumptions about the physical, social and economic conditions (existing and required) that will influence the achievement of the Downtown Core Area Plan's vision and goals.

## FORECASTS

Recent forecasts related to demographics and growth provide the foundation for the range of topic areas and related policies and actions described in the Downtown Core Area Plan. Key findings for the Downtown Core Area include:

### POPULATION GROWTH

- Census data suggests the Downtown Core Area had a population of approximately 13,000 in 2021, which is an increase of approximately 3,550 or 38% compared to the 2016 population of approximately 9,450 for the same area.
- The City of Victoria's Official Community Plan estimates the population of Victoria was approximately 94,900 in 2021 and will reach approximately 125,800 by 2041 and 142,000 by 2050.
- The Capital Regional District's (CRD) Regional Growth Strategy estimates that the Capital Region's population was approximately 392,100 in 2018 and will increase to approximately 478,500 by 2038.

### EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

- The Official Community Plan forecasts that Victoria will add between 19,000 and 40,000 new jobs by 2050 and provides direction for meeting the city's employment land needs in and around the Downtown Core. In alignment with the Regional Growth Strategy, the Official Community Plan also emphasizes the Downtown Core as the primary regional employment, business and cultural centre.

## EMPLOYEES AND VISITORS

- Based on 2008 statistics, on a typical workday in that year, the Downtown Core Area welcomed about 33,800 employees as well as thousands of additional shoppers and visitors.

## VISION

The Downtown Core Area will offer an array of vibrant urban neighbourhoods surrounding a thriving, pedestrian-friendly Downtown core. All people will benefit from a high quality public and private environment and a broad range of employment, housing, shopping, and recreational opportunities, all within a well-connected and attractive urban environment that embraces the Victoria Harbour, celebrates its heritage, Victoria's role as the Provincial Capital and provides a model for livable and sustainable urbanism.

## GOALS

1. To retain Victoria's prominence as the capital of British Columbia and the Downtown Core Area's position as the Heart of the Region where people love to work, live and play by:
  - 1.1. Ensuring the Downtown Core Area has enough residential and employment space available to keep up with short- and long-term growth forecasts and remain the preferred location for Provincial Government offices, services and associated institutional buildings.
  - 1.2. Supporting the location of leisure, education, arts and cultural activities within the Downtown Core Area to both encourage greater local use and increase tourism and investment.
  - 1.3. Reinforcing the role of a transportation gateway and working Harbour as an essential part of Victoria's economic base.
  - 1.4. Developing a long-term retail strategy to confirm the economic importance of retail activity within the Downtown Core Area.
  - 1.5. Supporting the redevelopment of the Rock Bay District as a key employment centre.
  - 1.6. Providing a broad range of easy to access community services and public amenities, such as transit, pedestrian and cycle paths, retail, health and medical services, childcare facilities, playgrounds, schools and recreational facilities.
2. To contribute to the Downtown Core Area's rich sense of place by:
  - 2.1. Creating memorable streets and places that serve both to attract people and to benefit the community.
  - 2.2. Celebrating Victoria's architectural and cultural heritage at every opportunity.
  - 2.3. Ensuring that new development complements both the existing architecture and natural environment of the Downtown Core Area.
  - 2.4. Incorporating and linking public amenity spaces, such as open spaces, parks, plazas, pathways and the waterfront, throughout the Downtown Core Area.
3. To establish walking, cycling and public transit as the preferred modes of travel within the Downtown Core Area by:
  - 3.1. Establishing complementary land use and transportation policies, initiatives and infrastructure.
  - 3.2. Using Greenways to create attractive and safe transit/walking links throughout the Downtown Core Area.
  - 3.3. Providing safe and direct walking connections throughout the Downtown Core Area that also link public spaces, such as parks, plazas, open spaces and the waterfront.
  - 3.4. Concentrating higher density and transit-supportive new development within walking distance of the Douglas Street transit corridor.
4. To ensure excellence in building types and design within the Downtown Core Area by:
  - 4.1. Encouraging high quality architecture and diversity in the design of buildings and surrounding public areas.
  - 4.2. Recognizing historic buildings for their value and benefit to the Downtown Core Area, and encouraging their rehabilitation, seismic upgrading and integration with new development.
  - 4.3. Supporting context-sensitive developments that complement the existing Downtown Core Area through siting, orientation, massing, height, setbacks, materials and landscaping.
5. To offer a variety of housing options within the Downtown Core Area by:
  - 5.1. Developing diverse housing types and sizes to attract both individuals and families, including smaller units as well as rowhouses, townhouses and stacked townhouses.
  - 5.2. Continuing to encourage the conversion of upper storeys of Downtown heritage buildings to residential use with the financial incentives available through the City's Heritage Tax Incentive Program, and considering the idea of broadening the program's base within the Downtown Core Area.
  - 5.3. Supporting new residential development that integrates a blend of market and non-market housing.

6. To ensure the success of the Downtown Core Area Plan by:
  - 6.1. Monitoring, reviewing and updating the Downtown Core Area Plan and related policies and regulations in response to changing social, economic and physical conditions.
  - 6.2. Maintaining policy alignment between the Downtown Core Area Plan and all other related City policies, plans and regulations.
7. To exemplify environmental stewardship and ensure the Downtown Core Area evolves into an environmental showcase for the built, natural and social environments by:
  - 7.1. Encouraging new development and existing development to incorporate the use of green building technology, infrastructure and environmental design.
  - 7.2. Developing and integrating green building criteria and objectives into the approval process for both public and private development.
  - 7.3. Supporting public and private initiatives that result in the remediation of brownfield sites, especially along the Harbour.
  - 7.4. Wherever appropriate, encouraging the re-use and retrofit of existing buildings.

## ASSUMPTIONS

The Downtown Core Area Plan assumes that:

1. Annual population growth within the Downtown Core Area will continue to accommodate population and employment growth within the citywide and regional context and objectives of the City's Official Community Plan and the Capital Regional District's Regional Growth Strategy.
2. The Regional Growth Strategy will continue to support attaining a 40 per cent modal share of non-auto modes of transportation for trips to and within the Metropolitan Core by 2026.
3. The Downtown Core Area will continue to function as the largest employment centre in the region.
4. The City, BC Transit and the Province will continue to enhance and support transit services along Douglas Street through transit-supportive land use policies, activities and infrastructure.
5. The City will use the Plan to identify and prioritize capital projects within the Downtown Core Area as part of its financial planning, budgeting and

departmental work programs.

6. The City will initiate amendments to development standards, policies, processes and plans if required to implement and further refine the policies of the Downtown Core Area Plan.
7. The City will maintain consistency between the Downtown Core Area Plan and other policies and regulations to reflect the vision and goals of the Downtown Core Area Plan.
8. The Downtown Core Area will serve as the bulk of the Metropolitan Core in both the Regional Growth Strategy and the Official Community Plan.
9. The City will develop an Implementation Strategy/Action Plan for the Downtown Core Area Plan. The strategy will include a review of local development standards as well as a formal process to monitor and amend the Plan. It will also be used to identify requirements for developing the City's capital budget and departmental work programs.
10. The City will consider public-private partnerships as well as financial and regulatory tools such as development cost charges, density bonusing and tax incentives to help realize the Downtown Core Area Plan's vision and goals.

The City will review and re-evaluate the Plan if these Assumptions change significantly over time.

## ORGANIZATION

The Downtown Core Area Plan is divided into ten sections. It works in concert with and is in part implemented by the Downtown Core Design Guidelines. Each section of this plan including this Introduction, deal with a different aspect of the Plan and each provide both area-wide and District-specific policies and actions where applicable.

## URBAN STRUCTURE

Explains the key elements of urban structure (space, movement and building form) and establishes the importance of ensuring any future physical improvements to the urban structure serve to enhance and improve the Downtown Core Area's livability and quality of life.

## DISTRICTS

Describes the five Districts of the Downtown Core Area and provides policies and actions to not only preserve each District's unique character, but also to provide opportunities for improvement.

### DENSITY

Introduces a framework for guiding density throughout the Downtown Core Area that balances the need for increased density in some areas with the need to maintain livable communities. Also explains a new density bonus system, intended to support the provision of key public amenities, affordable housing, and provide financial support for the conservation of heritage properties.

### TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

Describes the need for sustainable transportation and mobility systems that give priority to pedestrians, cyclists and transit, and how those systems can be achieved.

### URBAN DESIGN

Explains the principles of successful urban design and how they should be applied to the Downtown Core Area's skyline, built forms, parks and open space and public realm.

### HERITAGE

Details the presence and reinforces the value and importance of heritage properties in the Downtown Core Area.

### ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Provides a policy framework for addressing various components of sustainability, including the natural environment, green buildings and infrastructure, and the transformation of the Rock Bay District into a key employment centre that incorporates sustainable planning, development and infrastructure.

### COMMUNITY VITALITY

Addresses the importance of economic vitality, housing, public amenities, arts and culture, recreation, entertainment, special events and social services in building truly complete communities.

### IMPLEMENTATION

Describes how the City will implement the physical improvements and the heritage, cultural, transportation and environmental initiatives, policies and actions described in this Plan.

### DOWNTOWN CORE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Provide detailed guidelines and supporting information for specific aspects of the Downtown Core Area – such as views, public realm improvements, and building design – that support the vision, goals, policies and actions contained in this Plan. See Victoria 2050, the City's Official Community Plan, Schedule 2B.

# urban structure

# 2



## INTRODUCTION

Urban structure is comprised of three elements:

1. Space is the underlying topography, the natural features and landscape of an area. Space influences the look and character of the districts and neighbourhoods, the parks and open spaces that exist upon the land base.
2. Movement is the system of roads, sidewalks, cycling lanes and pathways as well as the transportation infrastructure and services they accommodate.
3. Building form is the range of building types, as defined by their physical scale, mass, orientation and height, within an area. The interplay between building forms is what creates spaces, defines streets and influences a city's skyline. (SEE ILLUSTRATION 1 – URBAN STRUCTURE ELEMENTS)

The urban structure provides the foundation for the detailed design and planning of each element. Urban structure elements provide a framework to guide and influence the development of individual buildings, spaces or infrastructure. This Plan provides policies to ensure that the urban structure is well-planned and is able to provide the foundation for a livable urban community – a community that provides:

- A range of housing options;
- Services that meet people's daily needs;
- Transportation systems that connect neighbourhoods, parks and open spaces, other areas of the city and the broader region; and
- High quality and well-maintained public realm and private realm.

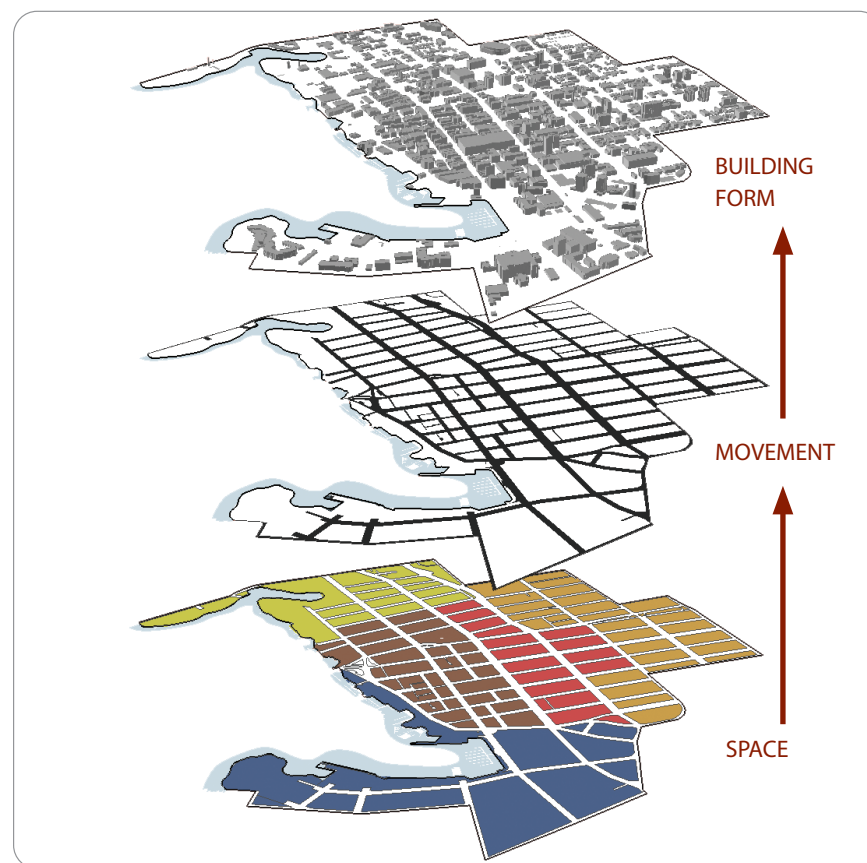


Illustration 1: Urban Structure Elements

## SPACE

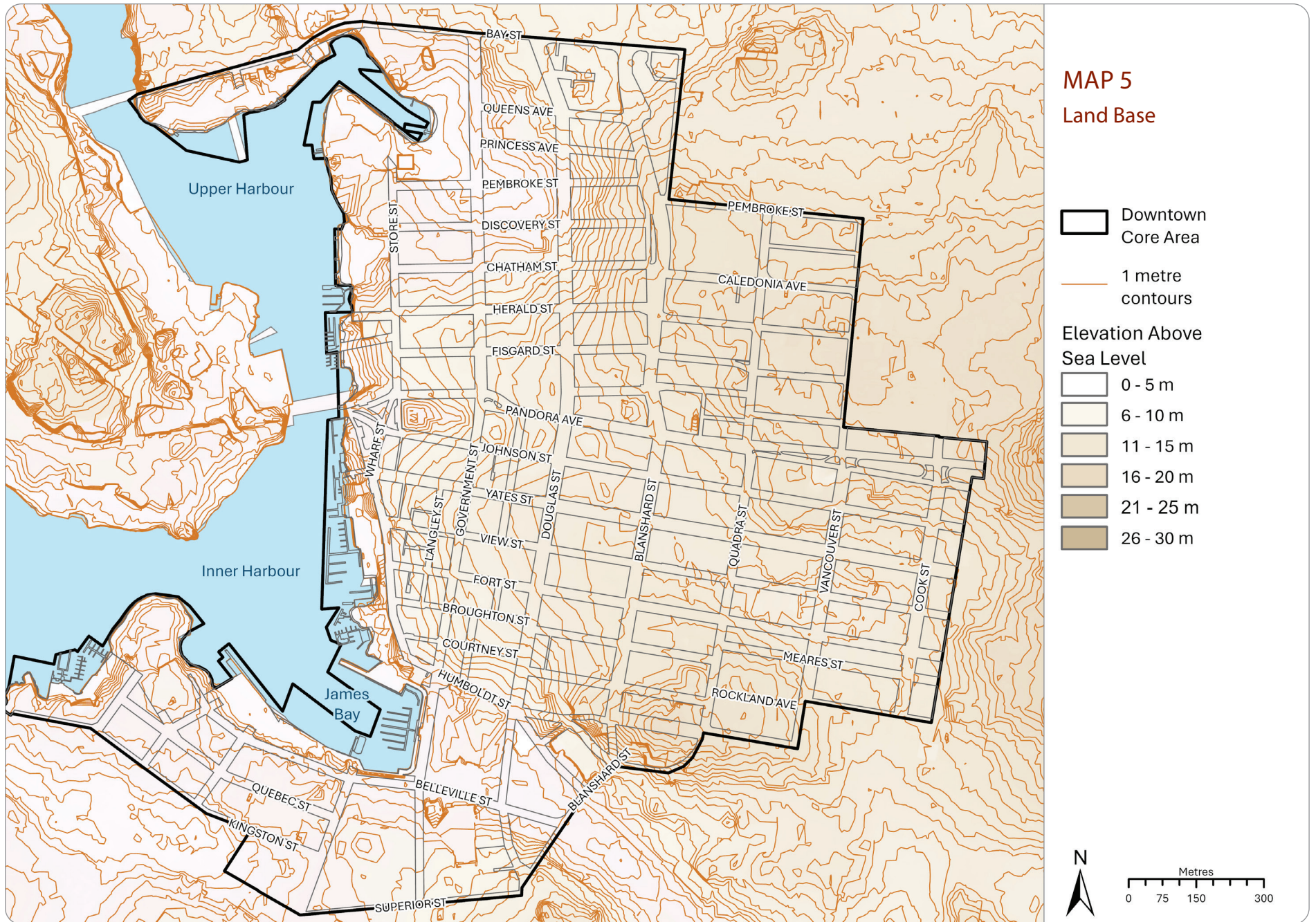
The Downtown Core Area is compact and walkable, covering approximately 188 hectares (465 acres). It gradually rises in elevation from the Inner Harbour towards Douglas Street and Blanshard Street; however, much of the central area is relatively level, with two lower basins around Rock Bay to the north and James Bay to the south. (SEE MAP 5: LAND BASE)

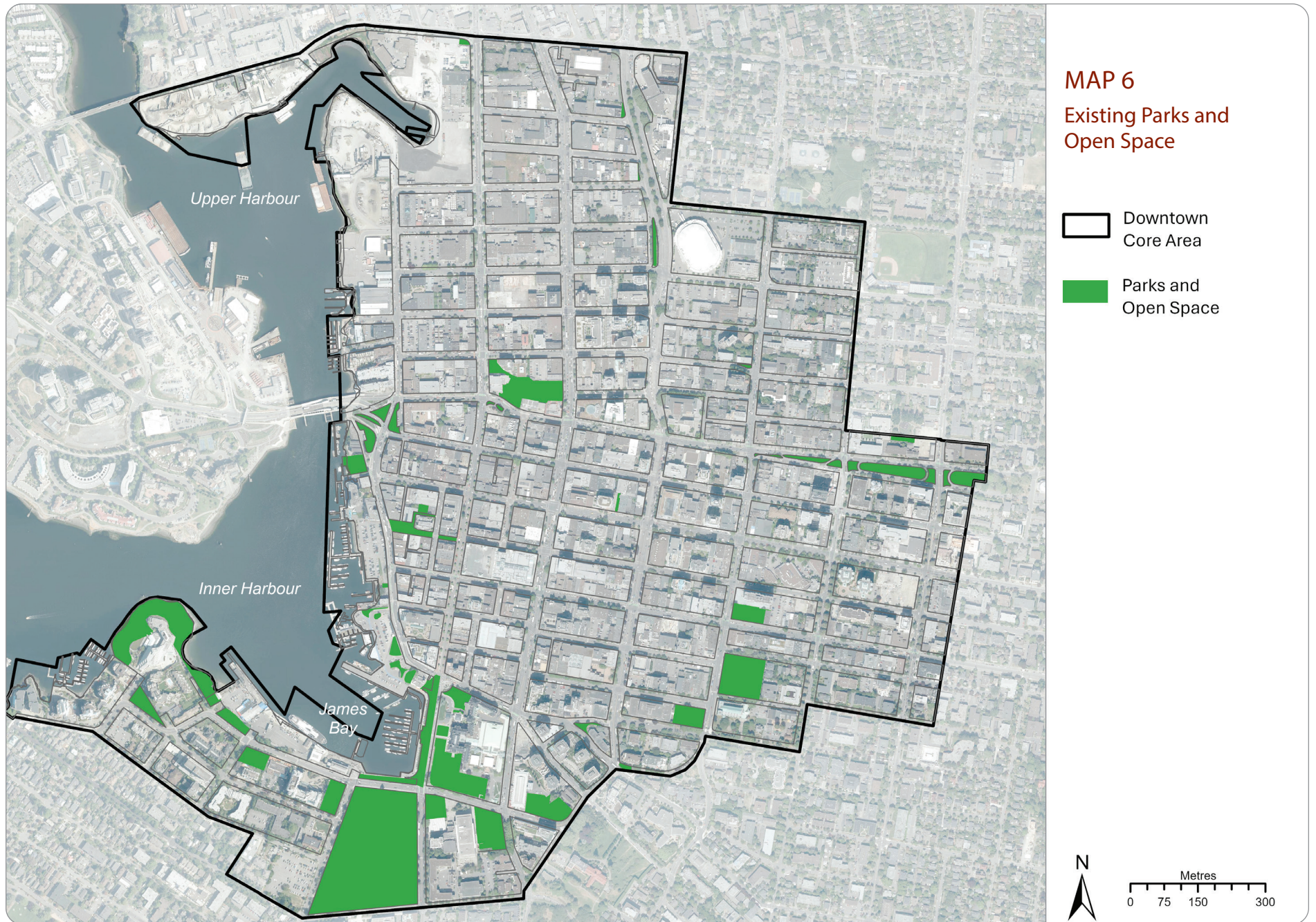
The neighbourhoods in the Downtown Core Area are predominantly mixed use, containing a range of commercial, institutional, residential, and industrial land uses and activities. Some neighbourhoods also contain special character areas that have design, architectural or historic significance. (SEE MAP 3: PLAN BOUNDARY AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

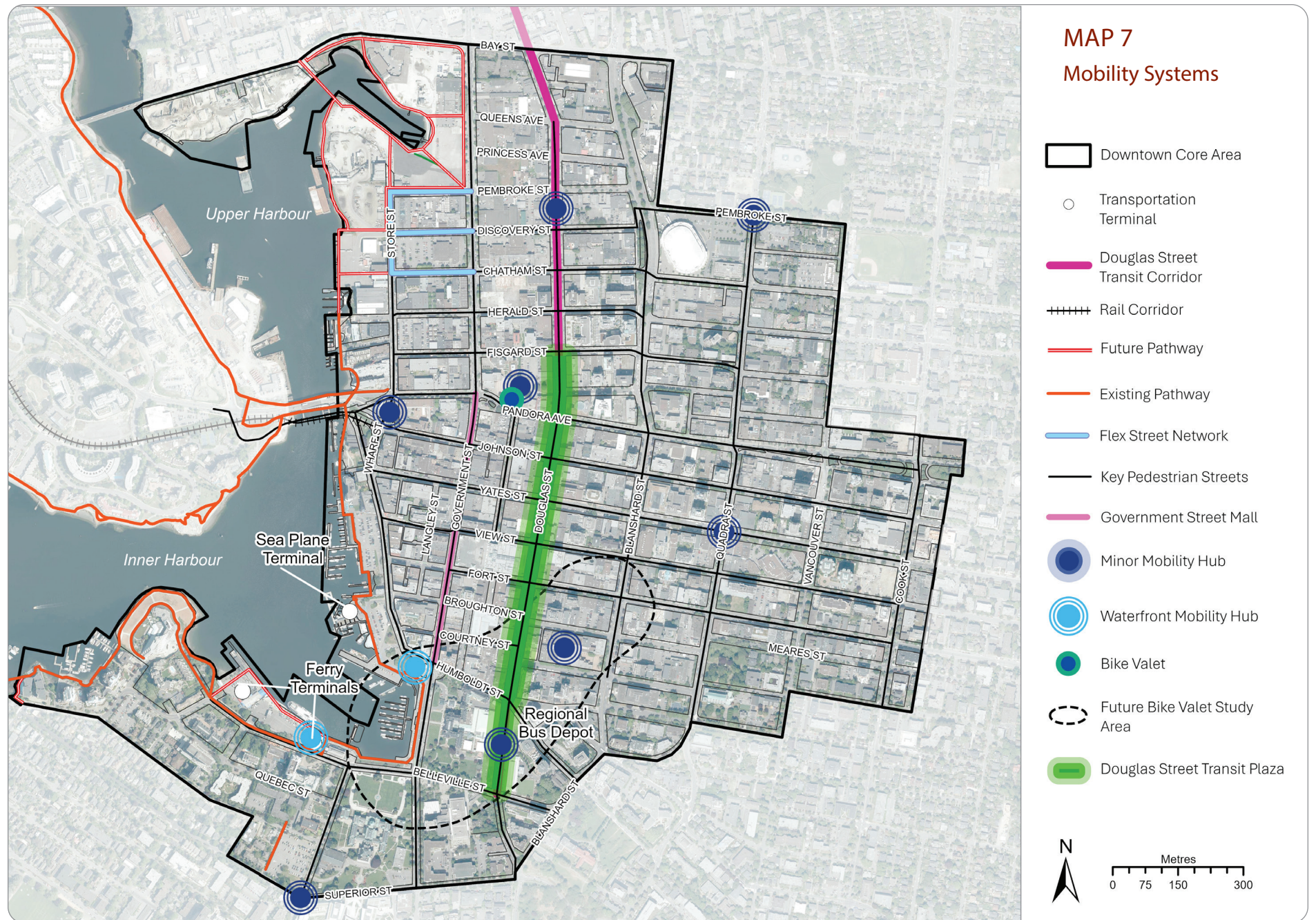
The Downtown Core Area is also defined by a variety of unique public parks and open spaces ranging from the intimate scale of Bastion Square to the large scale openness of the front lawn of the Parliament Building which serves as both a public open space and a place-defining characteristic of the Inner Harbour District. The Harbour Pathway (once complete) will provide a linear form of open space connecting much of the land along the Harbour. (SEE MAP 6: EXISTING PARKS AND OPEN SPACE)

## MOVEMENT

Primary downtown streets from a transportation perspective include Douglas Street, Blanshard Street, Bay Street, Cook Street and the portion of Quadra Street located north of Johnson Street. These streets provide key links between the Downtown Core Area and other surrounding areas of the city and the region. (SEE MAP 7: EXISTING MOVEMENT SYSTEMS)







## BUILDING FORM

The Downtown Core Area's distinctive urban form rises steadily eastward from the Inner Harbour and the blend of low scale, historic streetscapes and rehabilitated heritage buildings to a concentration of newer, higher density commercial and residential buildings in the Central Business District and in the Residential Mixed-Use District. This gradual rise in building form helps to shape the city's undulating skyline. (SEE ILLUSTRATION 2: BUILDING FORM)



Illustration 2: Building Form

## URBAN STRUCTURE – OBJECTIVES

To ensure the Downtown Core Area continues to be a livable urban community while it grows significantly over the next 30 years, the urban structure policies and actions seek to achieve the following objectives:

1. That the physical elements that define space, movement and building form serve to attract and retain residents, visitors and businesses.
2. That existing neighbourhoods and special character areas are recognized as intrinsic components of each District.
3. That support is provided to encourage the development of a range of building forms that respect and reflect the character of the Downtown Core Area and its neighbourhoods.
4. That the public realm of the Downtown Core Area is enhanced by the presence of active commercial uses, such as restaurants, retail stores and entertainment facilities.
5. That taller building forms are generally concentrated along the Douglas Street/Blanshard Street corridor and along the portion of Yates Street located between Douglas Street and Cook Street, as well as a blend of mid-rise and high-rise buildings in both the Rock Bay District and the Residential Mixed-Use District.
6. That the historic context of the Historical Commercial District is protected.
7. That new parks and open spaces are developed within the Rock Bay District and the Harris Green neighbourhoods.
8. That priority is given to pedestrians, cyclists and public transit in land use and transportation planning.
9. That transportation networks are integrated with neighbourhoods, provide optimal access and facilitate the delivery of goods and services. (SEE MAP 8: URBAN STRUCTURE CONCEPT)

## URBAN STRUCTURE – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1. Maintain lower scale buildings throughout the Historic Commercial District and along the waterfront to respect the lower scale context of the area, and gradually transition to taller buildings within the Central Business District.
- 2.2. Concentrate tall buildings between Douglas Street and Blanshard Street as well as along Yates Street east of Douglas Street.
- 2.3. Encourage the appropriate location of residential and commercial development to support the Downtown Core Area's current mixed-use character.

### LAND USE

- 2.4. Ensure land use and related activities complement and enhance the form and function of each District.

### CONNECTIVITY

- 2.5. Improve and enhance the physical public realm connections and transitions between Districts.
- 2.6. Improve connections for pedestrians and cyclists to public parks and open space through both design and maintenance.

**PARKS AND OPEN SPACES**

- 2.7. Support the development of additional public parks and open spaces to provide public amenity space within the Rock Bay District and the Residential Mixed-Use District.

**HARBOUR PATHWAY**

- 2.8. Complete the Harbour Pathway, including connections to the regional pathway network and the pedestrian network.

**VACANT LANDS**

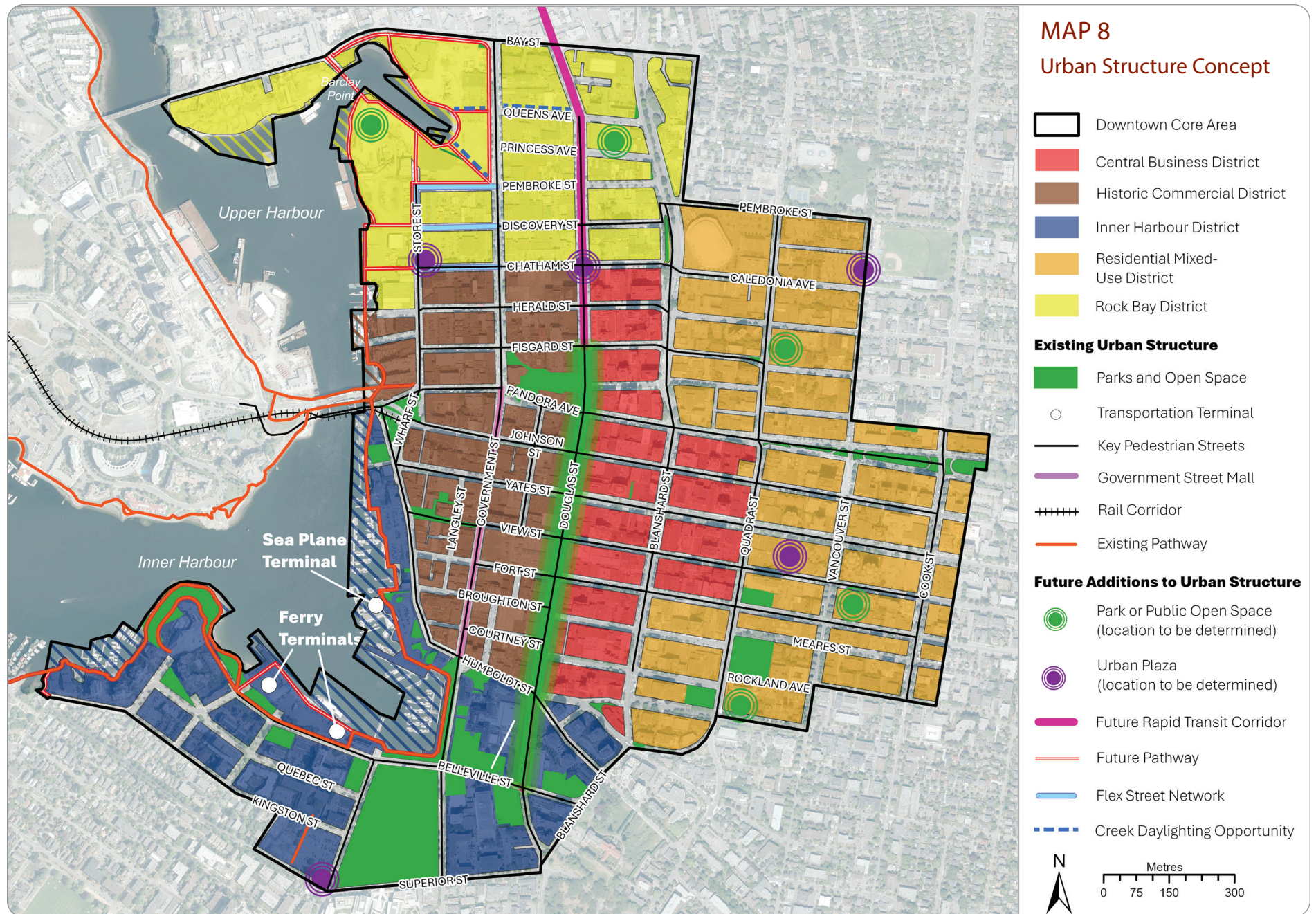
- 2.9. Support the redevelopment of vacant and under-developed sites, including surface parking lots, with more intensive uses that support the economic function of the Downtown Core Area.

**OFFICE DEVELOPMENT**

- 2.10. Support the development and location of higher density commercial buildings within the Central Business District.



Conceptual illustration of the Downtown Core Area including new development as a backdrop to the Historic Commercial District and the integration of the Harbour Pathway.



The Urban Structure Concept provides a summary of how existing and future urban structure elements will be organized within the Downtown Core Area.

## districts

## 3



## INTRODUCTION

The Downtown Core Area Plan establishes five Downtown Core Area Districts. As stated in the Introduction, these new Districts do not replace existing neighbourhood names, boundaries or special character areas. Rather, they are a way to recognize that there are unique social, physical and environmental characteristics in certain parts of the Downtown Core Area that cut across neighbourhood boundaries and unite broader geographic areas.

The policies and actions contained in this Section are intended to support each District's current function and general character, while also improving each District's public realm, parks and open spaces, infrastructure, building forms and transportation networks.

## CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

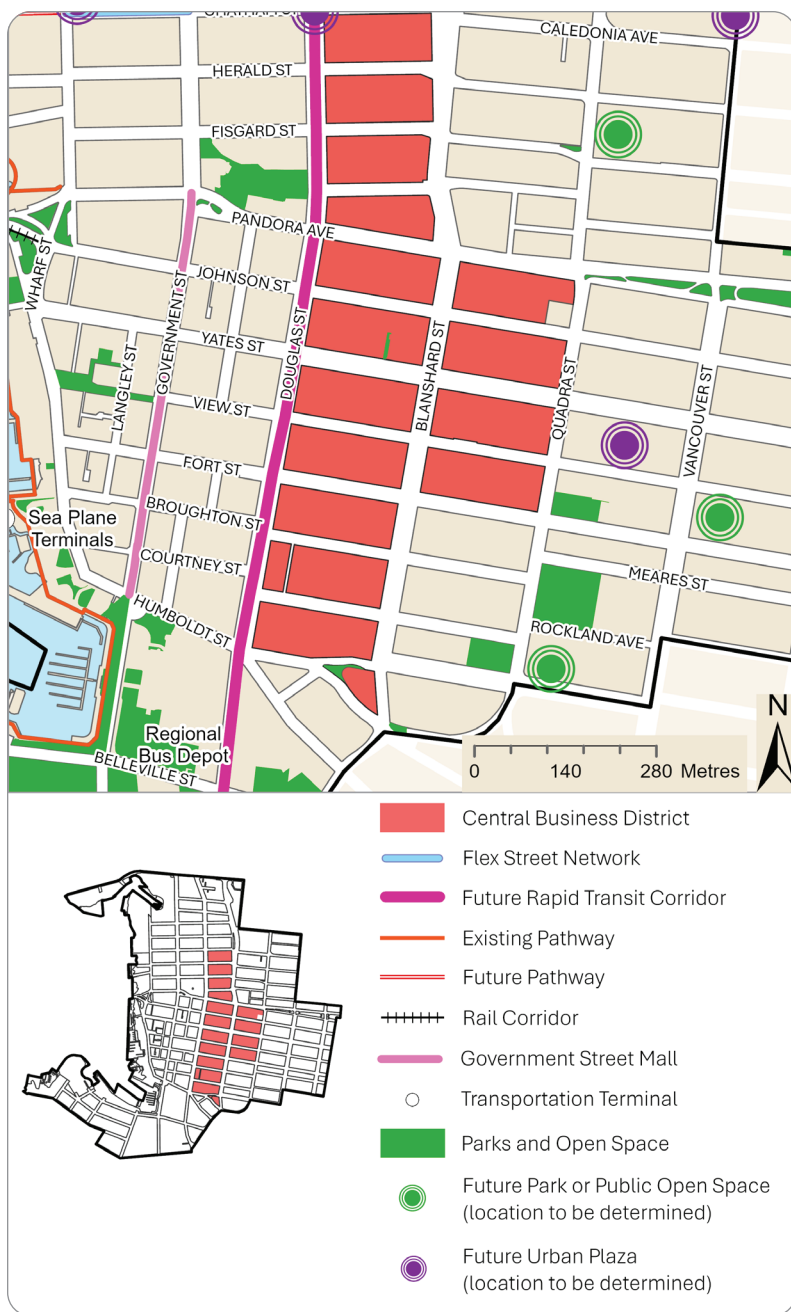
The Central Business District (CBD) is approximately 29.5 hectares (73.8 acres) in size and covers a 15-block area. Eleven blocks stretch northward from Burdett Avenue to Caledonia Avenue between Douglas Street and Blanshard Street; and four blocks are located between Blanshard Street and Quadra Street, bounded by Pandora Avenue to the north and Fort Street to the south. The CBD borders the Residential Mixed-Use District to the east, the Historic Commercial District to the west, the Rock Bay District to the north and the Inner Harbour District to the south. (SEE MAP 9: CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT)

The CBD is the main employment centre for Victoria and the Region as a whole. Its concentration of higher density office buildings helps to attract and retain a range of supporting commercial uses – such as restaurants, cafés, convenience stores, office supply stores, retail stores, hair salons and other personal service businesses, as well as major banks and other financial institutions – to provide the daily amenities and services required by the businesses, employees and residents within the CBD. Hotels also play a significant commercial role in the CBD, supported by the ferry, sea plane, bus and train terminals that are located within walking distance of the CBD.

## CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT – OBJECTIVES

The policies and actions for the Central Business District that are contained in this Plan collectively address the following objectives:

1. That the CBD remains economically healthy, is able to adapt to changing economic and market conditions and reinforces its long-term function as the primary employment centre for the city and the region.
2. That the CBD is able to provide a safe and welcoming environment, rich with amenities for workers, residents and visitors alike.
3. That the CBD is able to provide an adequate land base to primarily accommodate commercial and office development while it grows over the next 30 years.
4. That new development respects the scale, character and function of the CBD.



Map 9: Central Business District

## CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### LAND USE

- 3.1. Provide zoning within the CBD to accommodate a strong concentration of commercial employment uses, along with such complementary uses as multi-residential development, hotels, restaurants, public institutions, personal service businesses and retail stores.

### ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

- 3.2. Support new development that clearly reinforces and enhances the position of the CBD as the primary employment, commercial and cultural centre for the city and the region.
- 3.3. Ensure that the City of Victoria Economic Development Strategy includes policies and strategies that are focused on improving the economic resiliency of the CBD.

### HIGH-DENSITY DEVELOPMENT

- 3.4. Support high density commercial buildings within the CBD to make efficient use of infrastructure and to maintain compact building footprints.
- 3.5. Residential development should be restricted to a maximum density of 3:1 FSR (Floor Space Ratio) within the CBD to reinforce the CBD's function as an employment centre.
- 3.6. Focus higher density development along the Douglas Street/ Blanshard Street corridor and along Yates Street to support the density policies of this Plan.

### PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED ENVIRONMENT

- 3.7. Support and encourage pedestrian activity within the CBD by encouraging the provision of active commercial street-level uses where appropriate, and well-designed public realm improvements.
- 3.8. Design new developments within the CBD to include ground floor space that is capable of accommodating commercial uses.
- 3.9. Refer to the Downtown Public Realm Plan & Streetscape Standards to guide future streetscape improvements.
- 3.10. Provide well-designed public realm services and amenities to support commercial and residential development.

### CONNECTIVITY

- 3.11. Improve travel routes between the CBD and surrounding Districts by developing well-designed, clearly marked and safe pedestrian, cycling and transit networks.
- 3.12. Locate through-block walkways to provide strategic access through longer city blocks and meaningful connections with the Pedestrian Network as illustrated in Map 16. (SEE SECTION 5: TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY)

### TRANSIT SUPPORT

- 3.13. Support the use of transit by encouraging the location of high density transit-supportive uses such as commercial and residential mixed-use development within the Douglas Street/Blanshard Street corridor and along Yates Street.
- 3.14. Support the use of transit by encouraging street-level retail, restaurants, cafés, grocery stores, convenience stores and personal service businesses in new development along Douglas Street and Yates Street.

### NEW DEVELOPMENT

- 3.15. Amend the Zoning Regulation Bylaw to provide development standards for new commercial, residential and office developments that reflect the scale, density and context of the CBD.
- 3.16. Ensure the sensitive integration of new development with existing heritage properties along the 700 block of Yates Street and the 700 and 800 blocks of Fort Street.

### FORT STREET

- 3.17. Improve the physical condition of the public realm along Fort Street through public and private streetscape enhancements that encourage pedestrian activity and support retail.

### EDGE CONDITION

- 3.18. Ensure that designs for new buildings located along the edges of the CBD consider scale, orientation, setbacks, mass and building height to provide sensitive transitions to surrounding Districts.

### PARKING

- 3.19. Provide on-site parking for new developments as underground structured parking.
- 3.20. Consider opportunities to integrate publicly accessible short-term parking as part of new commercial developments where underground structured parking is provided on site.
- 3.21. Consider opportunities to increase the provision of publicly accessible short-term parking in order to meet the objectives of the City of Victoria Parking Strategy.

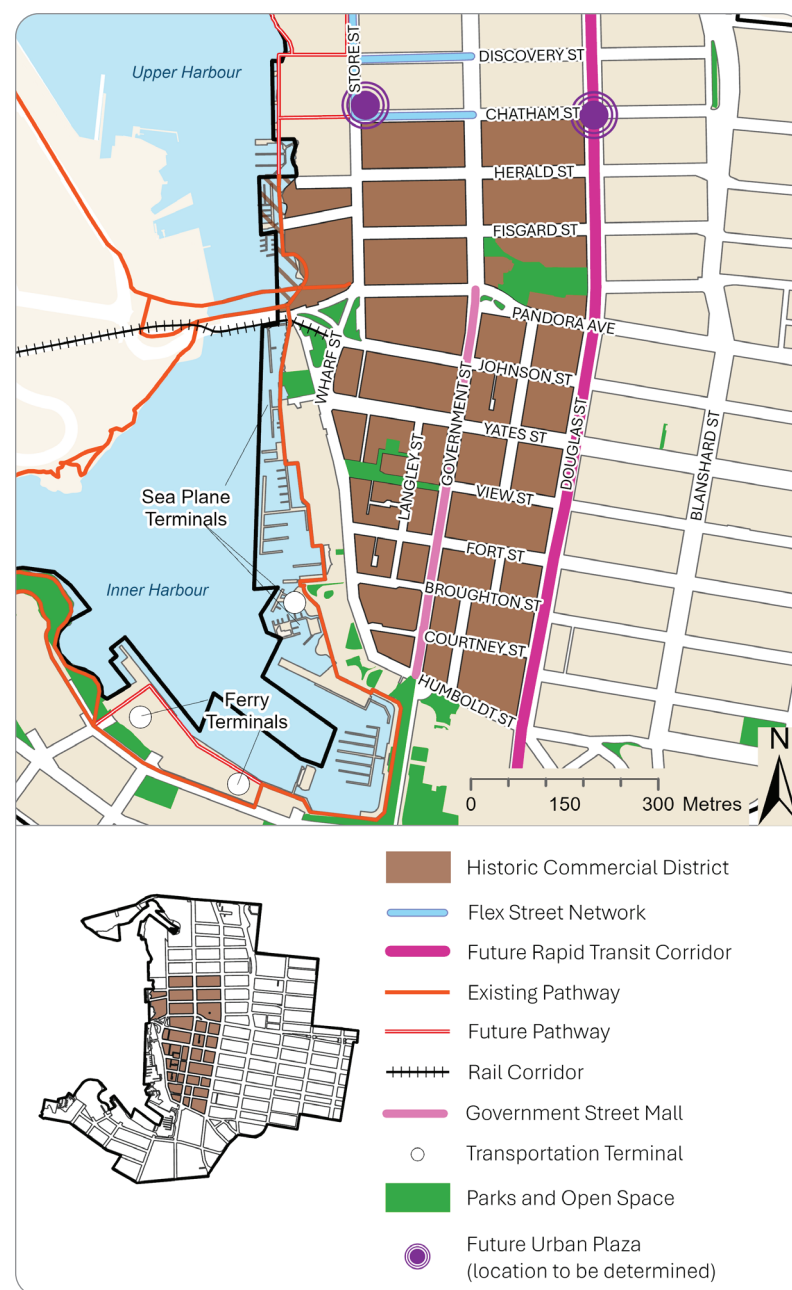
## HISTORIC COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

The Historic Commercial District (HCD) is approximately 23 hectares (57 acres) in size, and is bounded by Wharf Street and the waterfront on the west, Douglas Street on the east, Chatham Street on the north and Humboldt Street on the south. (SEE MAP 10: HISTORIC COMMERCIAL DISTRICT)

The HCD forms the primary hub for retail, entertainment and tourism within the Downtown Core Area. The concentration of rehabilitated heritage buildings and attractive streetscapes also serves to attract other uses and activities including offices, hotels, personal service businesses and arts and culture. The HCD includes the Old Town Area, a portion of the waterfront north of the Johnson Street Bridge and Chinatown – which Parks Canada named as a National Historic Site in 2002 to commemorate its status as Canada’s oldest intact and continuously active Chinatown. The HCD also contains a range of other character areas including Bastion Square, which is the oldest part of the city and original site of the Hudson’s Bay Fort Victoria in 1858, as well as Trounce Alley, Broad Street, Market Square and Centennial Square. One of the most prominent features in the HCD is the Government Street Mall, which currently stretches northward from Belleville Street to Yates Street and connects the Inner Harbour with the Old Town Area. Government Street Mall is characterized by its wide sidewalks and attractive streetscaping that complements the surrounding historic buildings and encourages pedestrian and cycling activity, while also accommodating general purpose vehicular traffic and commercial vehicles that provide deliveries and services to the surrounding businesses. The pedestrian-oriented design of the Government Street Mall along with the grid pattern of the local street network serves to maintain reduced speed levels for vehicles.

The HCD is characterized by a “saw-tooth” streetscape that generally rises and falls in height between one and five storeys, with articulated brick and stone facades, buildings located up to the public sidewalk and continuous street-level storefronts.

Ongoing revitalization efforts in the HCD over the past two decades have resulted in the rehabilitation of approximately 85 heritage buildings, upgrades to historic commercial storefronts, and a number of improvements to the public realm through streetscaping, public art and special events programming. These upgrades and improvements have drawn boutique hotels, specialty retail stores, cafés and restaurants to the area and with the help of the Bay Centre, a regional-scale shopping centre on Douglas Street with over 39,000 m<sup>2</sup> (420,000 ft<sup>2</sup>) of retail space – cemented the HCD’s place as a destination for tourism, shopping and entertainment.



Map 10: Historic Commercial District

## HISTORIC COMMERCIAL DISTRICT – OBJECTIVES

The policies and actions for the Historic Commercial District that are contained in this Plan collectively address the following objectives:

1. That the placemaking character of the HCD is retained and continues to contribute to Victoria's competitive advantage as a destination for retail, entertainment and tourism.
2. That programs, strategies and public and private initiatives for the revitalization of the HCD are maintained and supported.
3. That the HCD becomes a model for sensitive integration of new infill development and public realm improvements into the historic environment.
4. That the HCD is able to attract and accommodate growth in the tourism, retail, entertainment sectors.
5. That the compact, diverse, low-scale and small-lot character of the HCD is retained.
6. That the local population base is increased through the integration of residential dwellings on the upper storeys of existing buildings.

## HISTORIC COMMERCIAL DISTRICT – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### LAND USE

- 3.22. Provide zoning within the HCD that accommodates a diverse range of active commercial uses such as retail stores, cafés and restaurants, along with complementary uses such as multi-residential development, hotels, public institutions, tourist services and personal service businesses.

### ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

- 3.23. Ensure that economic development initiatives undertaken by the City of Victoria reinforce the function and character of the HCD as a destination for retail shopping, entertainment and tourism.

### COMMERCIAL AND RETAIL ACTIVITY

- 3.24. Locate active commercial uses such as retail stores, cafés, restaurants and other tourism and entertainment-related uses at the street level to encourage increased pedestrian activity and complement the public realm.
- 3.25. In addition to active commercial uses, consider the location of office use at the street level only where they are located directly adjacent to and have direct access to a lane, alley or through-block walkway.

## CENTENNIAL SQUARE

- 3.26. Maintain Centennial Square as a hub for civic activity and special events.
- 3.27. Ensure that any design or redevelopment initiatives for Centennial Square result in a more inviting, active and functional civic gathering space.
- 3.28. Give priority to public realm improvements that enhance connectivity between Centennial Square and surrounding streets.

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

- 3.29. Maintain design guidelines and development standards that support rehabilitation of existing heritage buildings and public realm improvements, and that ensure new development is integrated sensitively into the historic context of the HCD.
- 3.30. Continue to support policies, regulations and programs to protect heritage buildings and encourage their rehabilitation, seismic upgrade and re-use.
- 3.31. Retain the HCD's current compact, diverse, low-scale and small-lot character.
- 3.32. Explore the feasibility of extending the term length of the Heritage Tax Incentive Program up to 15 years to encourage the further rehabilitation and seismic upgrading of existing heritage buildings.

## RESIDENTIAL USES

- 3.33. Locate residential dwellings on the upper storeys to retain and accommodate more active commercial uses at the street level, except where residential dwellings are located directly adjacent to, and have direct access to a lane, alley or through-block walkway.

## PUBLIC REALM

- 3.34. Support and implement public realm improvements that are sensitive to the historic character of the HCD and which reflect the urban design objectives of this Plan.
- 3.35. Improve public wayfinding in the HCD through streetscape improvements that have a cohesive and consistent design.

### CONNECTIVITY

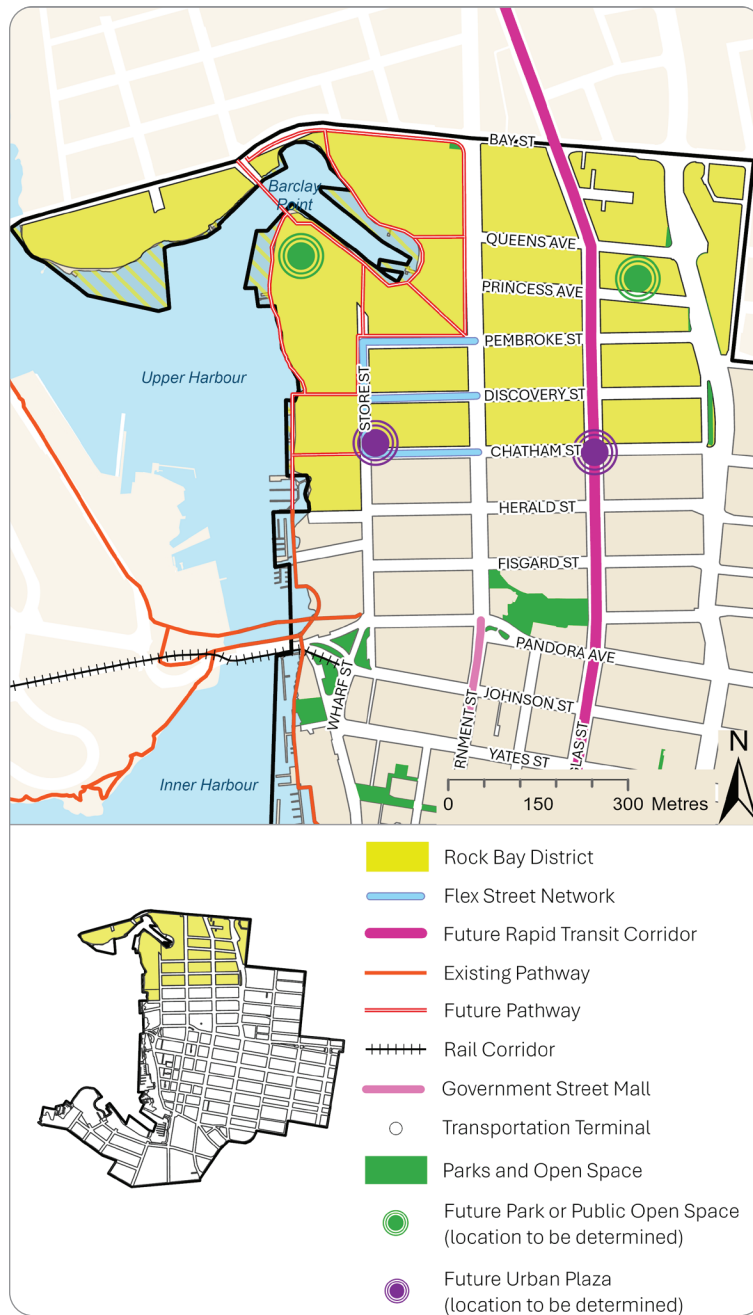
- 3.36. Establish strong Pedestrian and Cycling Networks through the area, with a priority on designated Greenways. (SEE SECTION 5: TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY)

### GOVERNMENT STREET

- 3.37. Develop and maintain Government Street as a Pedestrian Priority Street as identified in this plan, and in the Government Street Refresh and Concept Design.
- 3.38. Extend the retail and pedestrian-oriented character of Government Street northward from Yates Street to Pembroke Street through streetscaping and public realm improvements and appropriate land use to provide an attractive and lively environment that connects the Inner Harbour District through the Historic Commercial District to the Rock Bay District.

### PARKING

- 3.39. Continue to support the provision of short-term on-street parking to help maintain the HCD as a focus for active commercial uses including retailing and entertainment.
- 3.40. Ensure that the provision of long-term parking gives consideration to the economic function of the HCD, in balance with the Downtown Core Area Plan's transportation and mobility objectives and policies (SEE SECTION 5: TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY).



Map 11: Rock Bay District

## ROCK BAY DISTRICT

The Rock Bay District (RBD) is approximately 44 hectares (110 acres) in size and encompasses the northern part of the Downtown Core Area, including the waterfront area that runs from Herald Street to the Point Ellice (Bay Street) Bridge. It forms part of the Burnside neighbourhood, as far east as Dowler Place and Blanshard Street. (SEE MAP 11: ROCK BAY DISTRICT)

The RBD hosts both marine and non-marine related industrial and industrial-support activities along the waterfront and a blend of other industrial and commercial uses throughout the rest of the District in a mixture of older industrial and commercial buildings, including several heritage buildings. It has limited residential development located primarily between Douglas Street and Blanshard Street. The District also contains 3.1 hectare Matullia site that is owned by Songhees Nation and Xwsepsum Nation and is envisioned as an attractive employment hub that will support and foster Indigenous economic prosperity.

The District's history as an industrial area, in combination with limited redevelopment, has resulted in minimal upgrading to infrastructure and streetscaping which is evident through overhead utility wires and cables, discontinuous public sidewalks, minimal landscaping along building frontages and streets, limited on-street parking, undefined or informal parking areas between the street and private buildings, minimal pedestrian lighting and limited public park/open space.

The Rock Bay District, unlike the other Districts within the Downtown Core Area, has a significant amount of underdeveloped or vacant land that could accommodate future office, high-tech industries, and limited residential development in addition to its current industrial and commercial development.

In 2025, the City completed planning efforts for the Industry, Arts and Innovation (IAI) District area, culminating in an Action Plan that provides policy directions, strategies and actions to reinforce and strengthen the Rock Bay area immediately north of Downtown as an employment hub - envisioned as a focal point for employment, including technology, research and development, Indigenous economic prosperity and the arts.

## ROCK BAY DISTRICT – OBJECTIVES

The policies and actions for the Rock Bay District that are contained in this Plan, the Industry Arts and Innovation District Action Plan and the Official Community Plan collectively address the following objectives:

1. To guide the transformation of the RBD into a vibrant and diverse key employment centre and hub for arts and culture production
2. To improve the environmental conditions of the RBD through the integration of green and innovative infrastructure, site planning, uses and building technology.
3. To attract and maintain a range of commercial, industrial, high tech, research and development and arts and culture related businesses to locate within the RBD in order to provide a more diversified and resilient employment base.
4. To develop an employment-based environment that attracts new and emergent employment sectors such as high-tech and other related businesses.
5. To accommodate high density residential and commercial development within the Douglas Street/Blanshard Street Corridor where provided with light industrial and other employment uses.
6. To integrate a strong public transit network that supports the location of employment uses and activities.
7. To provide new publicly accessible parks, plazas or open spaces in and around RDB for the benefit of residents, businesses, employees and visitors alike.
8. To maintain and strengthen the economic function of the working Harbour within the Rock Bay District.

## ROCK BAY DISTRICT – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### FUTURE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- 3.41. Consider and evaluate new development and public realm improvements based on the City of Victoria policies including those described in this Plan, the Industry, Arts and Innovation District Action Plan, and the Official Community Plan.

### ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

- 3.42. Support the redevelopment of the RBD as an employment-focused area that provides a blend of industrial and industrial support services, high-tech, and arts and culture production, with an accompanying balance of commercial and limited residential development.
- 3.43. Explore the use of financial tools and programs to encourage and support the development of the Rock Bay District as an employment-focused area.

### WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

- 3.44. Ensure development regulations for waterfront properties includes standards and guidelines to mitigate the impact of industrial operations on the local marine environment.
- 3.45. Continue to support the location of marine-dependent industrial uses and activities along the waterfront portion of the RBD.

### RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

- 3.46. Locate residential and residential mixed-use development between Douglas Street and Blanshard Street where integrated with ground floor light industrial uses and additional employment, arts and/or culture uses above.
- 3.47. Ensure that residential development is located, designed and sited to mitigate any potentially negative effects on the general operation and function of adjacent employment activities.

### MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT

- 3.48. Provide active street-level commercial uses along Government Street and Douglas Street.

### TRANSIT SUPPORT

- 3.49. Support the location of higher-density development along Douglas Street to enhance Douglas Street as a rapid transit corridor.

### CONNECTIVITY

- 3.50. Ensure that all streets and sidewalks provide clear connections for pedestrians to travel between the RBD and the surrounding Districts.
- 3.51. Provide direct, safe, well-designed and strategically located pedestrian and cycling connections across Government Street and Douglas Street as well as to key destinations including parks, open spaces and recreational facilities.
- 3.52. Consider through-block laneways on larger development sites where feasible and appropriate to optimize delivery and access of goods/ services and bolster pedestrian activity with redevelopment of private property.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

- 3.53. Support upgrading of infrastructure services in the RBD as new development occurs to increase long-term capacity.
- 3.54. Ensure that infrastructure upgrades are informed by the City of Victoria infrastructure Master Plans and consider the integration of green infrastructure, where appropriate.
- 3.55. Support the use of best management practices to improve the quality and volume of stormwater discharge into the local marine environment.
- 3.56. Consider opportunities for daylighting historic creeks that flow into Rock Bay, as indicated in Map 8 and Map 27.

**EDGE CONDITIONS**

- 3.57. Ensure that designs for new buildings located along the edges of the RBD consider scale, orientation, setbacks, massing and building height to provide sensitive transitions to surrounding neighbourhoods and Districts.

**WATERFRONT**

- 3.58. Continue to support Songhees Nation and Xwsepsum Nation with the development of a long-range detailed master plan for the Matullia lands at Rock Bay.
- 3.59. Incorporate direct public pedestrian access to the Harbour as part of the site design for new development or redevelopment along the waterfront, except where it may negatively impact the general operation and function of adjacent employment activities that are dependent on direct marine access.

**PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM**

- 3.60. Support the development of a publicly accessible waterfront park, plaza or open space generally located near Barclay Point that provides direct connections with the Harbour Pathway.
- 3.61. Ensure parks and open spaces are well-designed, attractive, functional and integrated with the pedestrian network.
- 3.62. Integrate new parks and open space with the completed Harbour Pathway and with planned Linear Parks and Greenways.

- 3.63. Ensure all new public parks and open spaces meet the urban design objectives of this Plan.
- 3.64. Develop specific location and design details for new public parks and open spaces as part of the implementation of the Downtown Core Area Plan.
- 3.65. Develop public realm improvements for Flex Streets that support pedestrian comfort and celebration as well as business access and movement of goods, as identified in this plan.

**HERITAGE**

- 3.66. Undertake an inventory and evaluation of remaining historic industrial properties in the RBD as potential additions to the Heritage Register.
- 3.67. Support the rehabilitation and re-use of the RBD's remaining heritage properties to celebrate the District's industrial heritage.
- 3.68. Consider extending the Heritage Tax Incentive Program (T.I.P.) throughout the RBD and extend its term up to 15 years to support the adaptive re-use of industrial heritage properties.

**TRANSPORTATION**

- 3.69. Continue to recognize Douglas Street as a primary transit corridor through transit-supportive land use and development.
- 3.70. Support higher densities along Douglas/Blanshard Street corridor to improve viability of future rapid transit.
- 3.71. Ensure enhancements to the public realm do not adversely affect the operation or function of industrial and other employment activities in the RBD.



Map 12: Inner Harbour District

## INNER HARBOUR DISTRICT

The Inner Harbour District (IHD) is approximately 37 hectares (93 acres) in size and encompasses the waterfront lands located between the Johnson Street Bridge and Laurel Point. The IHD also includes portions of the Legislative Precinct lands in recognition of their proximity to the waterfront and the Inner Harbour. (SEE MAP 12: INNER HARBOUR DISTRICT)

The IHD is recognized both locally and internationally for its picturesque quality, vitality and character. Its waterfront setting attracts tourists, visitors and residents year round, and is noted for its:

- World-class Gateway to Victoria;
- Home to the Provincial Legislature within the historic Parliament Buildings;
- Scenic views across the Harbour;
- Pedestrian-friendly environment and high-quality streetscaping along Government Street and Belleville Street;
- Concentration of historic and modern landmark buildings include the Royal British Columbia Museum, the Provincial Parliament Building and its grounds, the Empress Hotel and the Inner Causeway, which has been designated a Heritage Conservation Area in the City of Victoria's Official Community Plan; and
- Prominent public and open spaces where a variety of major public ceremonial, celebratory and special events are held every year.

The IHD is centered on the working Harbour which includes a number of marine-related businesses and activities, including ferry and float plane terminals and mooring for private boats. These marine transportation options, combined with a regional bus depot and a nearby regional railway terminal, make the IHD a major transportation hub and gateway for the city.

The District is also home to a large number of Provincial Government offices and to commercial businesses that serve tourists and Provincial Government workers, such as hotels, retail stores and restaurants, but has limited residential development.

## INNER HARBOUR DISTRICT – OBJECTIVES

The policies and actions for the Inner Harbour District (IHD) that are contained in this Plan collectively address the following objectives:

1. To reinforce and support the location of Provincial Government offices.
2. To successfully maintain and strengthen the IHD as the focus for tourism, government, culture, heritage, and economic development.
3. To develop and maintain a cohesive, well-designed and vibrant waterfront area.
4. To create a more fluid and seamless extension of the public realm northward toward the Johnson Street bridge and beyond, toward the Rock Bay District.
5. To improve public access to the waterfront.
6. To maintain a working Harbour.

## INNER HARBOUR DISTRICT – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

- 3.72. Support the location and operation of marine-dependent activities along the IHD waterfront.
- 3.73. Maintain the IHD as a focus for tourism-related activities as well as Provincial Government office and business activities.
- 3.74. Ensure that new development within the IHD accommodates uses that contribute to the vitality and economic health of the area.

### HISTORIC CONTEXT

- 3.75. Support the protection and rehabilitation of heritage properties and ensure new infill development and improvements to the public realm are sensitively integrated into the historic environment.
- 3.76. Maintain key public views of the Inner Harbour to meet the urban design objectives of this Plan. (SEE SECTION 6: URBAN DESIGN)

### RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

- 3.77. Ensure residential dwellings are part of mixed-use development that includes active commercial uses at the street level.

## PUBLIC REALM

- 3.78. Support public realm improvements that meet the urban design objectives of this Plan.
- 3.79. Support public realm improvements that enhance the IHD's role as a gateway to the city for people arriving by sea plane, ferry, bus or train.
- 3.80. Support public realm improvements that result in improved wayfinding and connectivity between the IHD and the rest of the Downtown Core Area.
- 3.81. Encourage the addition of more active street-level businesses fronting onto Belleville Street as part of the potential redevelopment or upgrading of the Belleville Ferry Terminal.
- 3.82. Encourage the addition of active ground floor uses fronting onto Menzies Street to support a pedestrian-friendly environment between the waterfront and James Bay Village.
- 3.83. Encourage the development of a consistent streetscape treatment inviting pedestrians between the Inner Harbour, James Bay Village and the Dallas Waterfront along Menzies Street.
- 3.84. Encourage retention and development of public space near the intersection of Menzies Street and Superior Street as part of redevelopment. Continue to provide a location suitable for public markets, complementing the functions of nearby public spaces.

## TRANSPORTATION

- 3.85. Establish well-defined, safe and efficient Pedestrian and Cycling Networks, with a priority on developing and enhancing designated Greenways.
- 3.86. Support the continued operation of transportation terminals for ferries, sea planes and bus and their integration into other city mobility networks to support seamless transition between travel modes.
- 3.87. Seek to support enhanced local and regional water-based transit, integrating them into land-based mobility networks to enable the easy completion of journeys for travelers.
- 3.88. Seek to establish high-quality, sustainable public transit linking the downtown to Ogden Point and the Dallas Road waterfront, thereby enhancing access for James Bay residents and reducing the impacts of visitors on the James Bay neighbourhood.

**CONNECTIVITY**

- 3.89. Ensure that direct public pedestrian connections are available between the Harbour Pathway and Belleville Street and Wharf Street.
- 3.90. Support streetscape improvements that result in a more cohesive and uniform appearance along the length of Belleville Street and Government Street, and extending northward through the Historic Commercial District.
- 3.91. Consider opportunities for improving public access to the water that do not negatively affect the viability and functioning of the working Harbour.

**TOURISM**

- 3.92. Support the retention of existing and the development of new, tourist and visitor attractions and facilities in order to continue to support and increase the number of tourists and visitors to the IHD and surrounding area.
- 3.93. Support the development or establishment of new visitor attractions that serve to enhance the prominence of the IHD as a world-class destination.
- 3.94. Consider improvements to the wayfinding system to better inform visitors and tourists about key attractions and destinations throughout the Downtown Core Area, including those in the IHD.

**SHIP POINT AND WHARF STREET PARKING LOT**

- 3.95. Continue refinements to and phased implementation of the Ship Point Master Plan, prioritizing shoreline stabilization, improvements to the Harbour Pathway, and use of Ship Point for recreational, events and festival programming.
- 3.96. Ensure that the terms of reference for the master plan consider the following elements:
  - Project Stakeholders;
  - Desired uses;
  - Building designs;
  - Public realm improvements;
  - Pedestrian connectivity;
  - Public views;
  - Public access;

- Development standards;
- Public amenities;
- Economic development; and
- Implementation strategy.

- 3.97. Ensure that the master plan and redevelopment of the Ship Point and the Wharf Street parking lots support the objectives and policies of this Plan.

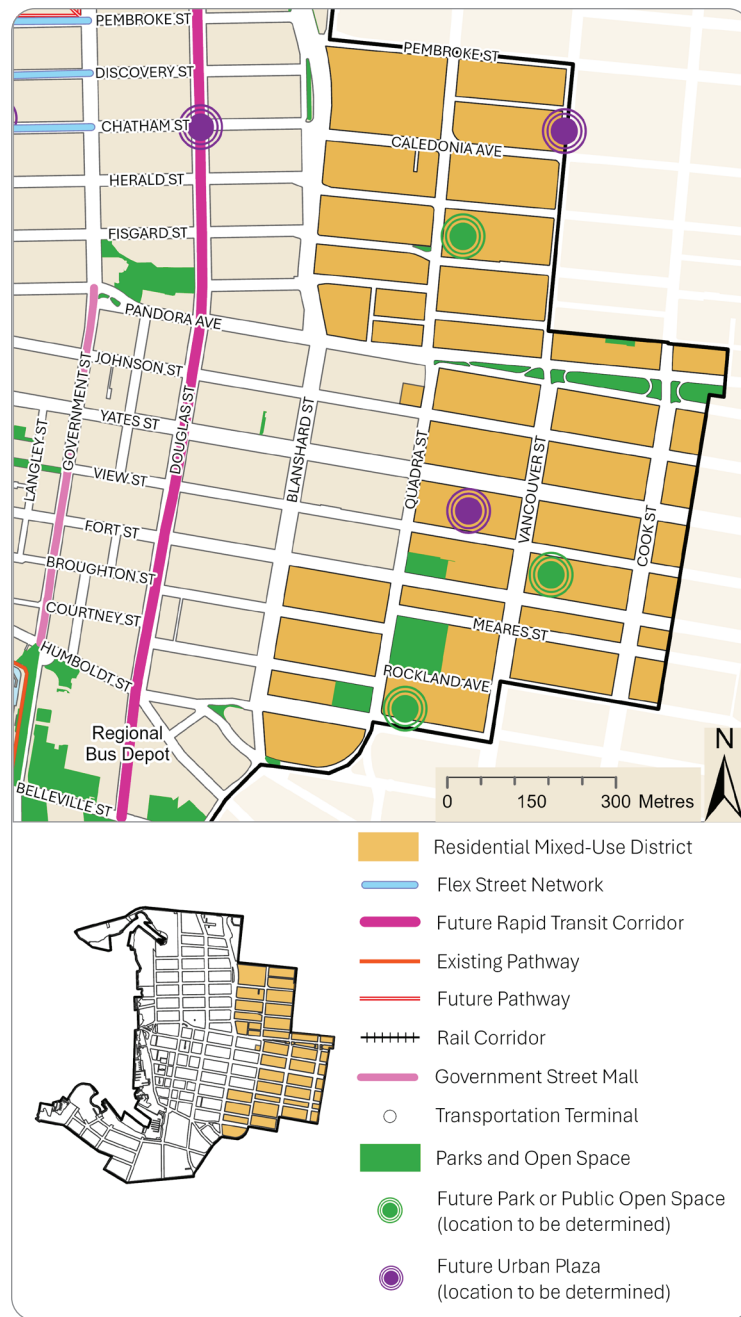
**RESIDENTIAL MIXED-USE DISTRICT**

The Residential Mixed-Use District (RMD) encompasses 53.6 hectares (130 acres), and contains portions of the North Park neighbourhood and a small portion of the Fairfield neighbourhood. Its general boundaries are Pembroke Street to the north, Meares Street to the south and Cook Street to the east between Meares and Mason Streets, while the small Fairfield portion is bounded by Blanshard Street to the west, Fort Street to the north, Quadra Street to the east and Rupert Terrace to the south. (SEE MAP 13: RESIDENTIAL MIXED-USE DISTRICT)

The RMD is the largest of all the Downtown Core Area districts and includes the majority of the residential land base for the area, with some under-utilized or vacant parcels still available. Because of the RMD's close proximity and direct connections with the Central Business District, it is today a mixed-use urban community, with a concentration of compact mid to high-density residential, mixed-use and commercial development. The District also contains several institutional, cultural and recreational facilities, including the Provincial Law Courts, the Royal Theatre, the YMCA and several historic churches.

Fort Street is a special character area corridor within the RMD. It is designated as a Heritage Conservation Area through the Official Community Plan and is recognized for its concentration of heritage properties with smaller scale commercial uses at street level, such as retail stores, restaurants and cafés, creating a lively and active shopping area.

Quadra Street is also a special character area, recognized as a cultural corridor containing a series of prominent heritage landmarks, cultural institutions, and places of worship in the RMD.



Map 13: Residential Mixed-Use District

## RESIDENTIAL MIXED-USE DISTRICT OBJECTIVES

The policies and actions for the Residential Mixed-Use District (RMD) that are contained in this Plan collectively address the following objectives:

1. To encourage multi-residential development appropriate to the context and function of each neighbourhood and reflects the differences in allowable building heights and density throughout the RMD, along with other land uses, public amenities and services that help to develop complete communities.
2. To ensure new residential development includes active street-level businesses where appropriate, to provide commercial services and activities and increase pedestrian activity within the public realm.
3. To accommodate the development of higher density commercial buildings along Blanshard Street, Pandora Avenue, Yates Street and Fort Street only, in order to keep the Central Business District as the primary focus for higher density commercial development.
4. To support keeping existing commercial uses, such as restaurants, grocery stores, medical clinics and personal service businesses, within the District to provide necessary services for the local community, but does not support auto-oriented uses that require large outside storage/display areas such as car lots.
5. Support the evolution of Quadra Street as a cultural corridor characterized by high-quality pedestrian realm and supporting the presence of diverse spaces for arts and culture as well as commerce.
6. Support further planning for the area between the Save-On Foods Memorial Arena and the Royal Athletic Park to support a destination for community and cultural events as part of the Quadra Cultural Corridor.

## RESIDENTIAL MIXED-USE DISTRICT – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER

- 3.98. Amend the City's Zoning, as required, to reflect the design objectives for residential development as described in this Plan.

### MIXED USE

- 3.99. Encourage active commercial, retail, arts and culture and community uses at street level along Blanshard Street, Yates Street, Fort Street, Quadra Street and Pandora Avenue to encourage increased pedestrian activity and improved vitality.

### INDUSTRY, ARTS AND CULTURE

- 3.100. Consider additional height or density on the east side of Quadra Street between Pandora Avenue and Pembroke Street, to encourage the creation, retention, and enhancement of arts and culture spaces.
- 3.101. Additional density along North Park Street east of Quadra Street should create ground-floor light industrial space as part of redevelopment, consistent with Rezoning and Development Policy Section 9: Industrial Uses outside of the Urban Industrial Reserve. This supports the neighbourhood's history of employment and desire to create opportunities for the development of business and the arts.

### TRANSIT SUPPORT

- 3.102. Support the location of higher density transit-supportive development along Yates Street.

### DENSITY

- 3.103. Develop new zoning for the RMD that includes density levels to accommodate mid-rise to high-rise residential, commercial or office development as described in this Plan.

### PUBLIC REALM

- 3.104. Ensure that all streets and sidewalks provide legible and well-designed public realm environments for pedestrians to travel between the RMD and surrounding Districts.

### INFRASTRUCTURE

- 3.105. Support the upgrading of infrastructure and utility services as new development occurs to increase long-term capacity.

## TRANSITIONS

- 3.106. Ensure that designs for new buildings and improvements to the public realm located along the edges of the RMD consider scale, orientation, setbacks, mass and building height to provide sensitive transitions to surrounding Districts.

## PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

- 3.107. Support the development of a neighbourhood park within the North Park neighbourhood as well as within the eastern part of Downtown.
- 3.108. Consider the provision of additional density in exchange for the development of an urban plaza, as part of a private development within the Harris Green commercial centre.
- 3.109. Ensure parks, plazas and open spaces are well-designed, attractive, functional and integrated with both the Pedestrian Network and Greenways.
- 3.110. Ensure all new parks, plazas and open spaces reflect the design guidelines set out in this Plan for public realm improvements.
- 3.111. Identify specific locations and detailed designs for new parks, plazas and open space as part of the implementation of this Plan.

## density framework

## 4



## INTRODUCTION

The Downtown Core Area contains a broad range of building forms within its relatively compact area. These building forms generally range from low-scale historic buildings along the waterfront and in the Historic Commercial District, to a greater concentration of newer high-rise buildings in the Central Business District. The City has helped to guide this variation and transition in building forms through design criteria and development standards, regarding building height, building setbacks, parcel coverage, and building density.

## DENSITY DEFINED

Building density, commonly referred to as Floor Space Ratio (FSR), is defined as the ratio between the total amount of gross floor area of a building and the area of the parcel upon which the building is located.

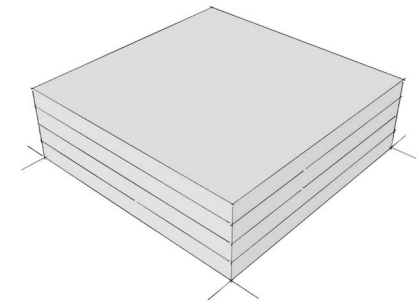
For example, if a new building is proposed on a 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> parcel of land zoned with a maximum density of 4:1 FSR, the maximum total combined floor area for the proposed building would be 20,000 m<sup>2</sup>, because this amount of combined floor area is equivalent to four times the size of the parcel. The proposed building could also be theoretically configured in a variety of ways, so long as the combined floor area does not exceed the 4:1 FSR maximum density.

(SEE ILLUSTRATION 3)

## ILLUSTRATION 3: DENSITY (4:1 FSR) EXPRESSED THROUGH BUILT FORM

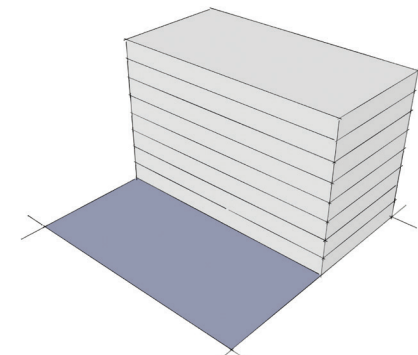
## Example 1

- 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> parcel
- 4:1 FSR maximum density
- 4 storey building
- 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> on each storey
- 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> Total Floor Area



## Example 2

- 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> parcel
- 4:1 FSR maximum density
- 8 storey building
- 2,500 m<sup>2</sup> on each storey
- 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> Total Floor Area



## DENSITY FRAMEWORK

This section guides the strategic distribution of density throughout the Downtown Core Area. Where significant increased growth and development is anticipated, primarily in the Central Business District and the Residential Mixed Use District, a range of potential commercial and residential densities is described and illustrated on Map 15: Core Growth Area.

Where rezoning applications are seeking a density beyond what is anticipated in the Density Framework (or the lower density within the range anticipated in the Core Growth Area), additional Voluntary Public Benefits to support the OCP's goals may be expected, commensurate with the scale, value and impact of the rezoning in accordance with City policy.

The priority public benefits identified for the Downtown Core Area at the time of the original approval of this plan include:

- Three new public parks
- Two new urban plazas
- Completion of the Harbour Pathway
- Various enhanced rapid transit stations along Douglas Street
- Public realm streetscape improvements along specific character streets and other public realm enhancements including minor open spaces and waterfront outlooks.

In addition to these public benefits, the retrofit, re-use and conservation of existing heritage buildings within the Downtown neighbourhood are also identified as integral components in retaining the attractive and unique historic streetscapes that are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike and that serve to enhance the public realm.

Similarly, arts, culture and community spaces are critical in supporting artistic, recreational and social needs of downtown residents, workers and visitors. They create economic opportunities and support the objective of maintaining the downtown as the cultural heart of the region. They serve the arts and culture economy, foster creativity, enhance social connection and help Victoria retain vibrant arts, cultural and non-profit sectors..

## OBJECTIVES

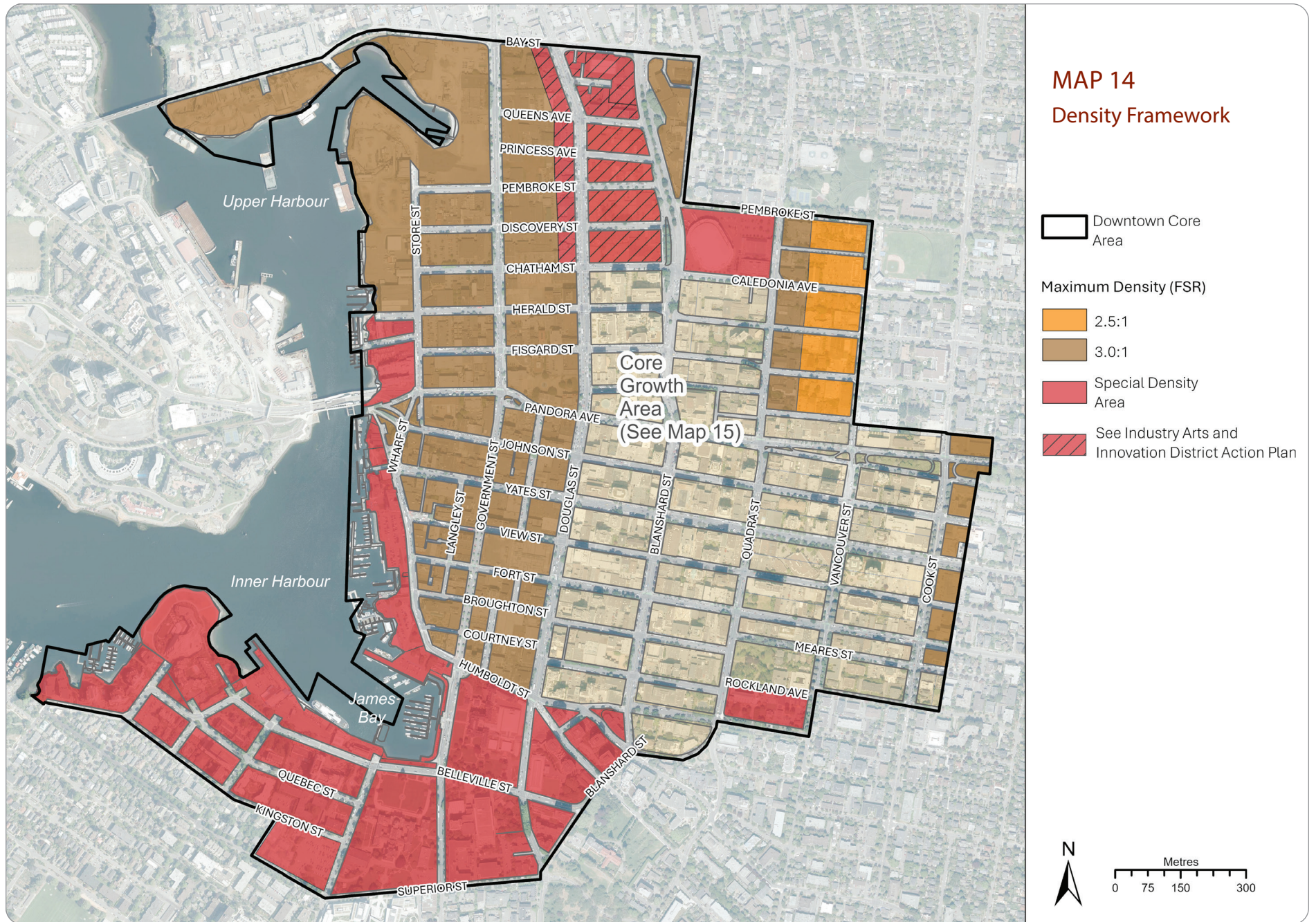
The density policies and actions in this section collectively address the following objectives:

1. That density levels respond to both existing and anticipated land uses, functions, building forms and the general physical context of each District.
2. That population and employment growth associated with increased density is supported by commensurate public benefits, aligned with City policies and bylaws..
3. That heritage properties – so important to the character and economic strength of Victoria – are retained and rehabilitated, in balance with new development.
4. That higher density development is accommodated and focused along primary transit corridors and within areas that already have a concentration of higher density buildings.
5. That the maximum building height policies specified in this Plan are supported.






## DENSITY FRAMEWORK POLICIES AND ACTIONS

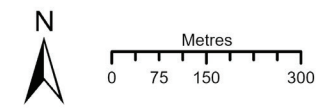
### FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1. Maintain a density framework for the Downtown Core Area that accommodates anticipated population and employment growth, considers preservation and enhancement of community, ecological and heritage assets and anticipates required public amenities associated with growth.
- 4.2. Continue to modernize the City's zoning to implement the goals and objectives of this plan, including consideration of density benefits regulations as appropriate.
- 4.3. Any increase to density through a rezoning application or through the provisions of the density bonus system described in this Plan are not supported for parcels where a building has been demolished without the prior approval of a Development Permit that demonstrates how the parcel or site is to be redeveloped.
- 4.4. Development proposals and future planning work should emphasize the following regardless of density: existing or desired character of each area; the availability of land with development potential within each area; each area's ability to accommodate increased density and growth in different built forms; and the need for specific public amenities and benefit.
  - 4.4.1. The Base and Maximum densities for eligible uses identified on Map 15 are non-cumulative if more than one eligible use is provided on the same parcel or development site



**MAP 14**  
Density Framework

-  Downtown Core Area
- Maximum Density (FSR)**
-  2.5:1
-  3.0:1
-  Special Density Area
-  See Industry Arts and Innovation District Action Plan



## UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES AND AREAS

- 4.5. Rezoning within the Special Density Area on Map 14 should consider the policies of this Plan along with the local historic context, public realm context and other relevant plans, policies and design guidelines, as well as the height guidance in this Plan.
- 4.6. Real property that is or was subject to a heritage designation bylaw or that is listed on the City of Victoria Heritage Register is may not be able to achieve the densities identified in this Plan.
- 4.7. Increases to density either through a rezoning application will not be supported for any parcel where a protected heritage property has been demolished or where the parcel contains a property that is subject to a legal covenant for the purpose of heritage conservation.
- 4.8. Rezoning of sites which include arts, culture or community spaces should consider the retention, replacement or renewal of these spaces consistent with the Rezoning and Development Policy, Section 8: Arts, Culture and Community Uses.
- 4.9. Along the east side of Quadra Street north of Mason Street, consider additional height and density above that identified in Map 14 in order to support the retention, enhancement or creation of arts and culture space within the Quadra Cultural Corridor, considering site context, principles of good urban design, and applicable development permit guidelines. (See also policies for the Residential Mixed Use District, Section 3.
- 4.10. Changes to the maximum density on any individual parcel located within the area labeled as Special Density Area on Map 14 must be approved through a rezoning process that considers the policies of this Plan along with the local historic context, public realm context and other relevant plans, policies and design guidelines.
- 4.11. Rezoning of sites which include arts, culture or community spaces should consider the retention, replacement or renewal of these spaces consistent with the Rezoning and Development Policy, Section 8: Arts, Culture and Community Uses.

## CORE GROWTH AREA

In the Core Growth Area, a range of densities may be considered where site conditions allow as identified in Map 15, in support of the broader policy objectives of this Plan. Additional density above the lower base density anticipated in Map 15 should consider ways to support the delivery of public benefits that are desired to support growth within the Downtown Core Area and that would otherwise be difficult for the municipality to provide.

## VISION FOR CORE GROWTH AREAS

### AREA A

This area Area A is generally the Central Business District (CBD) in addition to four blocks located between Douglas Street and Blanshard Street, north of Caledonia Avenue and south of Queens Street. Area A and contains the highest densities of the Downtown Core Area, due to the concentration of high-rise commercial and residential developments within the CBD and along the Douglas Street Transit Corridor. For the purpose of the density bonus system, Area A is illustrated as two sub areas including A-1 and A-2.

Area A Vision: To primarily accommodate higher density commercial developments within the Central Business District.

### AREA B (B-1 AND B-2)

This area consists of four blocks located in the North Park neighbourhood bordered by Pandora Avenue to the south, Caledonia Avenue to the north, Blanshard Street on the west and Quadra Street on the east. This small area has several underdeveloped and vacant sites with opportunities for moderate increases in density. For the purpose of the density framework, Area B is illustrated as two sub areas including B-1 and B-2.

Area B Vision: To accommodate higher density commercial and residential development along Blanshard Street, with medium density development in the rest of the area – consistent with the area's current character. The specified density levels in Area B also provide a sensitive transition to the surrounding areas.

### AREA C (C-1, C-2 AND C-3)

THIS area consists of approximately 12 blocks located within the Residential Mixed-Use District, running from Mason Street on the north, to Meares Street on the south, Quadra Street on the west and Cook Street on the east. Area C is adjacent to the Central Business District and is situated around the Yates Street transportation corridor, which features a number of mid-rise and high-rise residential and commercial developments. The area includes two blocks located along Pandora Avenue between Cook Street and Quadra Street that are part of the North Park neighbourhood, and is home to a small number of isolated but significant heritage properties. For the purpose of the density framework, Area C is illustrated as three sub-areas including C-1, C-2 and C-3.

Area C Vision: To further intensify the area with multi-residential development to accommodate population growth, while focusing higher density commercial development along Yates and Fort Streets.

## AREA D

This area consists of two blocks of the Residential Mixed- Use District within the Cathedral Hill Precinct, bounded by Blanshard Street, Fort Street, Quadra Street, and Courtney Street. It includes the Fort Street commercial area and interfaces with the historic Pioneer Square and Christchurch Cathedral, as well as the Law Courts.

Area D Vision: To support Fort Street as a pedestrian-friendly commercial main street, and to accommodate a mix of residential, commercial and mixed-use buildings that relate to and support the historic context, landmarks and open spaces of the Cathedral Hill Precinct.

## AREA E (E-1 AND E-2)

This area consists of several blocks overlapping with Fairfield Neighbourhood, in and adjacent to the Cathedral Hill Precinct and Meares Street. It includes a number of heritage-designated properties, particularly in the half-Block east of east of Pioneer Square (Area E-2). The half-block of Cook Street south of Meares Street functions as a small commercial village for the area.

Area E Vision: To support residential and mixed-use development that allows for downtown-adjacent housing transitioning to the scale of surrounding residential fabric areas, in ways which maintain heritage properties. The half-block of Cook Street south of Meares Street should contain active commercial ground-floor uses.

## PROVISION OF PUBLIC BENEFITS

- 4.12. Any rezoning application within the Downtown Core Area that is seeking an increase in density above the lower density anticipated in Map 15: Core Growth Area is expected to consider provision of voluntary public benefits or monetary contributions that support the policies and objectives of this Plan.
- 4.13. Any application for rezoning of a non-residential property to a zone containing residential use, within areas of the Downtown Core which anticipate such use, may also consider the provision of public benefits, consistent with the Rezoning and Development Policy, Part 4: Public Benefits. This policy recognizes the important role of employment spaces, including commercial, industrial, arts and culture, and tourist accommodation.
- 4.14. The provision of Public Benefits should be guided by the City's Rezoning and Development Policy, Part 4: Public Benefits.
- 4.15. Monetary contributions secured in this area should be directed to the Downtown Core Area Public Realm Improvement Fund (75%) and the Downtown Heritage Buildings Seismic Upgrade Fund (25%). Monetary contributions or other amenity contributions may also be considered at the discretion of Council in accordance with other City policies.
- 4.16. Monetary contributions should be calculated based on the City's Rezoning and Development Policy, Part 4: Public Benefits.

## HARRIS GREEN R-48 ZONE

- 4.17. The density framework and the proposed densities described in this Plan for area C-1, C-2 and C-3 do not apply to parcels that are zoned as R-48 Harris Green District or Mixed Use Residential – 1 Zone, unless the property owner seeks to rezone the property to a different zone.

## DOWNTOWN CORE AREA PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENT FUND

- 4.18. Maintain the Downtown Core Area Public Realm Improvement Fund to assist in funding various improvements that tangibly and visibly improve the physical condition, appearance and function- of the public realm and provide a public benefit to the overall surrounding area, such as:
  - 4.19.1. Redeveloping and enhancing streetscape designs within City rights-of-way along character streets identified in this Plan.
  - 4.19.2. Enhancing landscaping and public amenities along City rights-of-way or within public parks and open spaces including the development of minor open spaces and waterfront outlooks.
  - 4.19.3. Acquiring and developing three new public parks.
  - 4.19.4. Developing and enhancing the Harbour Pathway.
  - 4.19.5. Developing and enhancing rapid transit stations along Douglas Street.
  - 4.19.6. Developing two new urban plazas.
- 4.19. The City will create a list of eligible public realm improvement projects as funding priorities that will also be identified as a component of the Downtown Core Area Plan Implementation Strategy/Action Plan.
- 4.20. The City will explore additional funding sources or delivery mechanisms to foster the provision of public amenities within the Downtown Core Area.



**MAP 15**  
**Core Growth Area**

Location	Eligible Uses	Base Density (Non-Cumulative)	Maximum Density (Non-Cumulative)
A-1	commercial	4:1	6:1
	residential	3:1	3:1
	mixed use <sup>1,2,*</sup>	4:1	6:1

1. The base density for mixed use development is 4:1 FSR, of which the residential portion shall not exceed 3:1 FSR
2. The maximum density for mixed use development is 6:1 FSR, of which the residential portion shall not exceed 3:1 FSR

B-1	commercial	3:1	5:1
	residential	3:1	5:1
	mixed use <sup>3,4,*</sup>	3:1	5:1

3. The base density for mixed use development is 3:1 FSR
4. The maximum density for mixed use development is 5:1 FSR.

B-2	commercial	3:1	4.5:1
	residential	3:1	4.5:1
	mixed use <sup>5,6,*</sup>	3:1	4.5:1

5. The base density for mixed use development is 3:1 FSR
6. The maximum density for mixed use development is 4.5:1 FSR

C-1	commercial	3:1	5.5:1
	residential	3:1	5.5:1
	mixed use <sup>7,8,*</sup>	3:1	5.5:1

7. The base density for mixed use development is 3:1 FSR
8. The maximum density for mixed use development is 5.5:1 FSR

C-2	commercial	1:1	3:1
	residential	3:1	5.5:1
	mixed use <sup>9,10,*</sup>	3:1	5.5:1

9. The base density for mixed use development is 3:1 FSR, of which the commercial portion shall not exceed 1:1 FSR
10. The maximum density for mixed use development is 5.5:1 FSR, of which the commercial portion shall not exceed 3:1 FSR

C-3	commercial	1:1	1:1
	residential	3:1	5.5:1
	mixed use <sup>11,12,*</sup>	3:1	5.5:1

11. The base density for mixed use development is 3:1 FSR, of which the commercial portion shall not exceed 1:1 FSR
12. The maximum density for mixed use development is 5.5:1 FSR, of which the commercial portion shall not exceed 1:1 FSR

D	commercial	2:1	5:1
	residential	2:1	5:1
	mixed use <sup>13,*</sup>	2:1	5:1

13. The ground floor fronting onto Blanshard Street, Fort Street or Quadra Street should consist of commercial or other non-residential uses, with a focus on retail and other active uses in these areas located north of Broughton Street.

E-1	commercial	1.5:1	3:1
	residential	1.5:1	3:1
	mixed use <sup>14,*</sup>	1.5:1	3:1

14. The ground floor fronting onto Cook Street within a half-block south of Meares Street should consist of commercial or other non-residential uses, with a focus on retail and other active uses.

E-2	commercial	1.2:1	1.2:1
	residential	1.2:1	2.5:1
	mixed use	1.2:1	2.5:1

## DOWNTOWN HERITAGE BUILDINGS SEISMIC UPGRADE FUND

- 4.21. Maintain the Downtown Heritage Buildings Seismic Upgrade Fund to assist in funding a portion of the cost of seismic upgrading as part of the re-use, retrofit and conservation of eligible heritage buildings within the Downtown Neighbourhood.
- 4.22. Eligible heritage buildings must adhere to the following conditions:
  - 4.23.1. Be located within the Downtown Neighbourhood and identified on the City of Victoria Heritage Register.
  - 4.23.2. Complete the physical rehabilitation and seismic upgrading as stipulated within a Heritage Revitalization Agreement.
  - 4.23.3. Agree to be designated by a Municipal Heritage Designation Bylaw, if not already.
  - 4.23.4. Demonstrate the full and complete use of all other City of Victoria heritage financial incentives and programs.
- 4.23. The Downtown Heritage Buildings Seismic Upgrade Fund must not be used to replace other existing financial incentive programs for heritage property. Rather, this Fund should function as a supplement to other existing financial incentives, which together serve to improve the financial viability of undertaking the physical rehabilitation and seismic upgrading of remaining heritage buildings.

# transportation and mobility

# 5



## INTRODUCTION

In an urban centre such as Victoria, transportation and mobility include three primary networks:

- **Pedestrian Network:** The system of sidewalks, through-block walkways, street crossings and pathways that provide seamless and accessible connections for people to walk and roll around the city (the most basic form of movement).
- **Cycling Network:** The system of bicycle-friendly roads and pathways that provide safe and convenient connections for people to cycle to work, for recreation or for their daily needs.
- **Transit Network:** Includes both the local connections that help people move within the Downtown Core Area, as well as the connections into the larger regional transit network that help pedestrians and cyclists navigate longer distances around the city and into other parts of the region.

The Downtown Core Area today is distinguished for its walkability and array of pedestrian-friendly streets, alleys and unique through-block walkways. Being compact and relatively flat, the Downtown Core Area is also attractive to many cyclists for both commuting and recreation, and many thousands make daily use of the bus system provided by BC Transit.

Transportation and mobility within the Downtown Core Area is currently guided by Victoria's Sustainable Mobility Strategy, GoVictoria which outlines the City's vision for achieving clean, seamless, mobility options for everyone. Grounded

in the City's mobility values, GoVictoria identifies five policy positions to support and shape land use in the Downtown Core Area, including:

- Integrating land use and transportation
- Aligning our mobility networks
- Supporting multi-modal level of service
- Valuing our right-of-way
- Operating and maintaining our transportation assets

Related plans, policies, and strategies realizing the vision in GoVictoria and transportation priorities identified in the Official Community Plan, include:

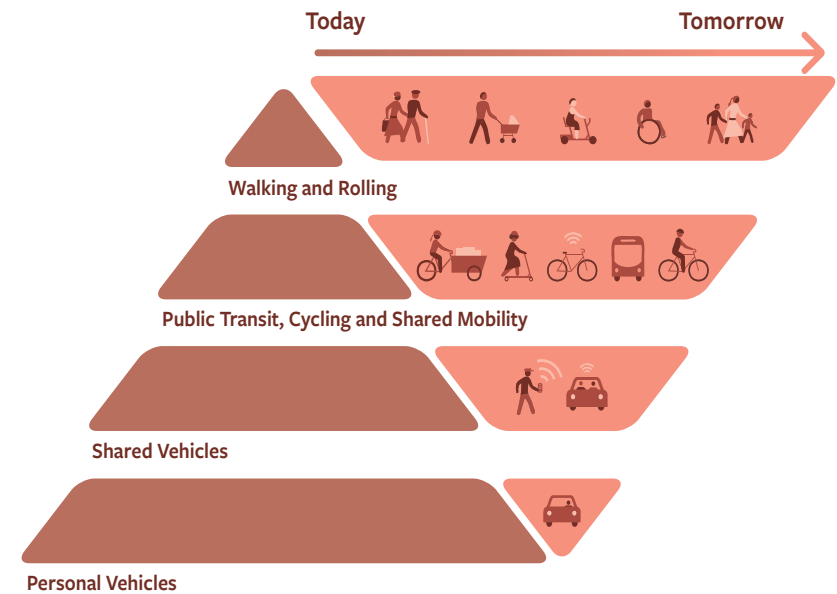
- The City of Victoria Accessibility Framework, which operationalizes accessibility to proactively remove and prevent barriers faced by individuals in our community.
- The Climate Leadership Plan, which includes strategies to reduce greenhouses gases and support a full transition to renewable energy powered transportation.
- The City of Victoria has several other strategies to guide investments in transportation and mobility, including the Victoria Harbour Pathway Plan that supports continuous public access to and along the waterfront, through the DCAP area.

## TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY – OBJECTIVES

To ensure the Downtown Core Area establishes long-term sustainable transportation and mobility systems that support economic vitality through the safe and efficient movement of goods and people, while it continues to grow significantly over the next 30 years, this Plan provides a range of policies and actions to collectively address the following objectives:

1. That the Personal Travel Mode Priority Diagram described in Illustration 5 provides the basis for transportation planning and related development within the Downtown Core Area.
2. That priority for walking, cycling and transit for personal mobility are reflected in both private and public development.
3. That complete transportation and mobility networks feature an appropriate range of facilities, infrastructure, and services for each transportation mode and consideration of the needs of commercial vehicles..
4. That investment in transit serves as a mechanism for improving the livability, sustainability and vitality of the Downtown Core Area.
5. That sustainable transportation systems are developed and continue to provide a direct benefit to residents, businesses and visitors.
6. That Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures are reflected in both public and private development.
7. That decision-making and investment in transportation and mobility infrastructure serve to support and enhance the local economy.
8. That all transportation and mobility systems are well designed, clean, efficient and safe.

Illustration 5: Personal Mobility Mode Priorities



## TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

To ensure the success of the three primary networks – Pedestrian, Cycling and Transit – this Plan also introduces a framework for Transportation Demand Management (TDM).

TDM is essentially the application of strategies that seek to change travel patterns or behaviour and reduce travel demand (primarily from single-occupancy vehicles), while giving priority or encouraging more sustainable modes of transport. The amount and type of available public and private parking is a key component of TDM and can determine the success or failure of TDM objectives.

The framework for TDM within the Downtown Core Area is intended to:

- Reduce vehicular demand on road infrastructure.
- Encourage commuter options through sustainable transportation infrastructure.
- Improve travel efficiency.
- Improve accessibility
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Improve air quality.
- Maintain on-street, short-term parking to support retail, restaurant and other local commercial uses.
- Manage public and private parking in balance with the overall vision for the Downtown Core Area.
- Support the other transportation and mobility priorities described in this Plan as well as those outlined by the CRD and other transportation agency partners.

On and off street parking management and TDM strategies should reflect Victoria's principles, travel mode priorities and value the curb in such a way to support community prosperity and business vitality.

## TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS

- 5.1. Adopt the Travel Mode Priorities (SEE ILLUSTRATION 5) as a guiding principle for the design of transportation and mobility networks and their components within the Downtown Core Area.
- 5.2. Continue to pursue grant opportunities and maintain budgets within the Capital Budget for funding ongoing physical improvements to the transportation and mobility networks.

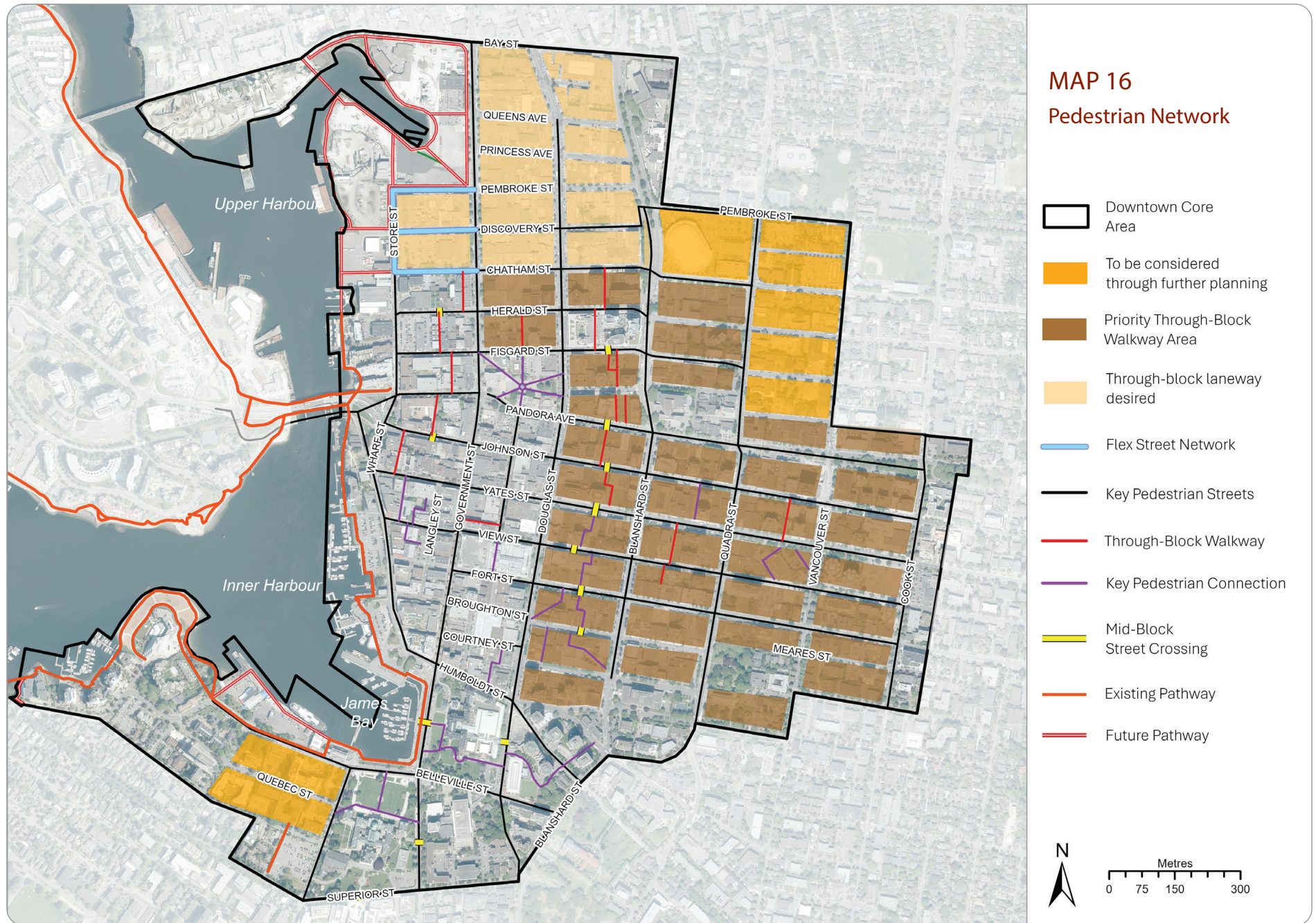
## POLICY DIRECTION

- 5.3. Incorporate the Travel Mode Priorities (SEE ILLUSTRATION 5) as a guiding principle for developing any other policies or master plans that may affect the Downtown Core Area.

## PEDESTRIAN NETWORK – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

- 5.4. Complete the pedestrian network connections as identified on Map 16 through well-designed streetscape improvements.
- 5.5. Coordinate public and private streetscape improvements that enhance the pedestrian environment and support the policies of this Plan and the Downtown Public Realm Plan and Streetscape Standards.
- 5.6. Integrate the pedestrian network with the Harbour Pathway to provide direct connections to parks, plazas, open spaces, public amenities and surrounding neighbourhoods.
- 5.7. Ensure that the redevelopment of the Wharf Street and Ship Point parking lots do not interrupt or impede the alignment of the Harbour Pathway.
- 5.8. Ensure that the design and improvement of the pedestrian network considers and integrates opportunities to improve access and movement for people with varying mobility needs.
- 5.9. Consider opportunities for providing safer pedestrian and cyclist crossings of major streets.
- 5.10. Support the evolution of a Flex Street network in the Rock Bay area to support industrial and economic functions, pedestrian comfort, and periodic events.



## SIDEWALK AND PATHWAY CONDITIONS

- 5.11. Continue to improve public sidewalk conditions through partnerships with private developers as opportunities arise.
- 5.12. Support the objectives of the City of Victoria Pedestrian Master Plan for improving sidewalk conditions, safety and design.
- 5.13. Establish an ongoing public realm budget and expenditure provision in the 20-year Capital Plan to be used for pedestrian-oriented public realm improvements and extension of the pedestrian network within the Downtown Core Area.

## LEGIBILITY AND WAYFINDING FOR PEDESTRIANS

- 5.14. Employ the City of Victoria Wayfinding Strategy. Improve wayfinding throughout the Downtown Core Area through public and private initiatives for further improving pedestrian orientation within the Downtown Core Area and to other surrounding locations and attractions.
- 5.15. Strengthen the visual character of the Downtown Core Area in accordance with the Downtown Public Realm Plan and Streetscape Standards.

## GOVERNMENT STREET

- 5.16. Extend the Government Street Mall from Yates Street northward to Pandora Avenue.
- 5.17. Develop a comprehensive streetscape plan for the extension of the Government Street Mall that focuses on improving the pedestrian and cycling environment and contains consistent furnishing elements and design principles throughout the entire length.
- 5.18. North of the Government Street Mall, continue a high quality, pedestrian-friendly public realm treatment along Government Street whose design responds to the context of Chinatown and the Rock Bay District. Incorporate Indigenous place features in the public realm, supporting the vision for the Matullia Lands. Establish links to the Rock Bay waterfront.
- 5.19. Support the location of active street-level commercial uses along Government Street to provide a dynamic and interesting environment between the Inner Harbour and the Rock Bay District.
- 5.20. Within the Rock Bay District, support active street-level light industrial uses, ancillary sales, and limited commercial uses as envisioned in the Industry, Arts and Innovation District Action Plan, to create a pedestrian-focussed “main street” for the Rock Bay District.

## HARBOUR PATHWAY

- 5.21. Develop the Harbour Pathway consistent with the Victoria Harbour Pathway Plan, with a focus on completing pedestrian missing links between the Inner Harbour Causeway and the Rock Bay District.
- 5.22. Encourage all new developments that are located directly adjacent to the Harbour Pathway to be designed to accommodate active commercial uses at the same grade level as the Harbour Pathway and have direct access from the Harbour Pathway.
- 5.23. Support the development of waterfront outlooks along the Harbour Pathway as illustrated in Map 27.

## PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND COMFORT

- 5.24. Continue to apply standards for streetscape designs and elements that improve the safety and comfort of pedestrians.
- 5.25. Ensure street furniture, utilities, outdoor seating and landscaping do not impede pedestrian flow on public sidewalks.
- 5.26. Consider the Sidewalk Width Guidelines contained in Appendix 1 of this Plan in the design of local streetscapes.
- 5.27. Improve the amount and design of pedestrian lighting, especially in areas that have higher concentrations of pedestrian activity.
- 5.28. Continue to incorporate universal access standards within the public realm to improve access for people with varying mobility needs.
- 5.29. Ensure that sidewalks are wide enough to support desired levels of activity and to maintain an adequate clear zone for pedestrian travel.
- 5.30. Provide improved street lighting throughout the pedestrian network that ensures adequate levels of night time illumination.
- 5.31. Provide enhanced pedestrian crossings near major transit stops and where the pedestrian network crosses major streets.

## FLEX STREETS

- 5.32. Design the Flex streets network to accommodate industrial and commercial activities including weekend markets, food trucks and public events.
- 5.33. Consider a curbless environment and access to services such as electrical and water to support flexible use of the networks.
- 5.34. Incorporate landscape for environmental benefits and pedestrian comfort.
- 5.35. The design of streets within the Flex Street network will vary depending on location and function in servicing industrial and commercial activities.

## THROUGH-BLOCK WALKWAYS AND LANEWAYS

### PURPOSE

Through-block walkways are a unique feature of the Downtown Core Area, which includes the narrow historic alleys in Chinatown and Old Town to more modern examples which have been constructed in more recent years. Through-block walkways provide a variety of functions which range from providing pedestrian connections through longer city blocks and through interior courtyards, to functioning as unique shopping and tourism destinations with their concentration of retail stores, restaurants and cafés. This Plan recognizes the potential for through-block walkways to provide a new dimension to the pedestrian experience that encourages a sense of discovery through opportunities for pedestrians to explore these uniquely designed, attractive and vibrant spaces.

Through-block laneways within the Rock Bay District provide strategic north-south connections through longer blocks and are intended to support off-street loading and ‘back of house’ access, pedestrian network connections and, where possible, opportunities for businesses to front onto the laneways to provide services and add interest and activation of the public realm. Vehicle access will be limited to select uses and prioritize loading. Higher quality materials and finishes including scored concrete, pavers or stamped asphalt, along with architectural and overhead lighting, will be encouraged to emphasize these areas as pedestrian friendly spaces.

The Downtown Core Area Plan seeks to complete the pedestrian network with the provision of strategically located through-block walkways based on the following key principles:

1. Provide public access and direct connectivity with the pedestrian network.
2. Provide mid block north-south access through the longer city blocks.
3. Incorporate urban design that identifies and enhances the unique character of each walkway and contributes to placemaking.
4. Provide intimately scaled pedestrian spaces that offer an alternative to the larger scale and character of conventional city streets.
5. Provide opportunities to accommodate niche retail and other active commercial uses.
6. Consider design solutions that reflect Crime Prevention Through Urban Design (CPTED) principles.
7. Consider partnerships with the private sector to provide through-block walkways in strategic locations.
8. Create through-block laneways within the Rock Bay District that support business access and opportunities for pedestrian connectivity.

## THROUGH-BLOCK WALKWAY POLICES AND ACTIONS

### LOCATION

- 5.36. Consider opportunities to redesign and replace key pedestrian connections with new through-block walkways within the Priority Through-Block Walkway Areas identified in Map 16.
- 5.37. Locate through-block walkways as close as possible to mid-block locations to achieve smaller city blocks (similar to those found in the Old Town Area), approximately 60–90 metres (200–300 feet) long.

### DESIGN

- 5.38. Ensure that the design of new through-block walkways consider and reflect the design criteria in the Downtown Core Design Guidelines.

### ACCESS

- 5.39. Ensure that access to new through-block walkways consider and reflect the design criteria described in the Downtown Core Design Guidelines.
- 5.40. Ensure maintenance agreements include detailed criteria for the operation and function of through-block walkways.

### IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.41. The City of Victoria may consider providing additional density, up to the respective maximum density levels identified in this Plan, to new developments that enter into an agreement as part of a rezoning application to design and construct a through-block walkway within the Priority Through-Block Walkway Areas identified on Map 16 that reflects the design criteria described in Downtown Core Design Guidelines.
- 5.42. Where a through-block walkway is not located on public land that is owned by the City of Victoria, a legal agreement is required to address the following criteria:
  - 5.36.1. The provision of year-round public access.
  - 5.36.2. A schedule of regular maintenance.
  - 5.36.3. Maintaining direct access to the passageway from adjacent commercial use.

## THROUGH-BLOCK LANEWAYS

- 5.43. Within the Rock Bay District, consider through-block laneways on larger development sites where feasible and appropriate to optimize delivery and access of goods/services and bolster pedestrian activity with redevelopment of private property.
- 5.44. Between Douglas Street and Blanshard Street in particular, where residential development may be anticipated in upper floors, laneways should provide for quality pedestrian environments.

## MID-BLOCK STREET CROSSINGS

- 5.45. Provide mid-block street crossings to offer safe pedestrian access and to support vitality on facing sidewalks.
- 5.46. Continue to close gaps in the pedestrian network with mid-block street crossings to connect through-block walkways.
- 5.47. Coordinate crossing design with provisions for parking, bicycle lanes and transit lanes to ensure pedestrian visibility and safety.
- 5.48. Establish a distinctive signage, street mapping and wayfinding system to increase recognition and use of the integrated mid-block street crossing and through-block walkway system.

## CYCLING NETWORK – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### CYCLING NETWORK

- 5.49. Complete the cycling network as outlined in GoVictoria and illustrated in the Official Community Plan, through bicycle-friendly street design standards, streetscaping and appropriate wayfinding improvements.
- 5.50. Establish cycling network routes that provide direct and efficient connections to adjacent neighbourhoods, major public destinations, Greenways and the regional pathway system, and the Capital Regional District's regional cycling network.
- 5.51. Improve the safety of bicycle street crossings with street crossing lights, dedicated bicycle lanes and signage where applicable.
- 5.52. Use public and private development opportunities to improve cycling safety and access.

## CYCLING SUPPORT

- 5.53. Encourage cycling through well-designed cycling-related amenities within new commercial and multi-residential developments.
- 5.54. Consider short and long term bicycle parking facilities in strategic public locations such as parks, plazas and parkades that serve as end of trip destinations, supported by publicly available staff secured bicycle parking in key downtown locations and for special events.
- 5.55. Review and update the City of Victoria Zoning Regulation Bylaw to ensure that bicycle parking requirements and standards for multi-residential development, office buildings and other commercial uses serve to encourage and accommodate cycling as an alternate mode of transportation.
- 5.56. Integrate an appropriate blend of both Short-term and Long-term bicycle parking within new office buildings, institutions and multi-residential developments to provide safe and convenient short-term and long-term bicycle parking.
- 5.57. Encourage additional bicycle parking and other cycling amenities, such as showers, change rooms and lockers, when reviewing and evaluating development applications for new office, commercial, multi-residential and industrial development, as a Transportation Demand Management mechanism to reduce the number of vehicle parking stalls required.
- 5.58. Ensure bicycle parking facilities are provided in accordance with the City's zoning bylaws and Bicycle Parking Strategy

## CYCLIST SAFETY AND COMFORT

- 5.59. Wherever possible, provide dedicated bike lanes that are identifiable through reflective street surface lane markings, coloured pavement or raised pavement markers.
- 5.60. Provide smooth road surfaces that are free of debris, potholes and other obstacles.
- 5.61. Provide improved street lighting throughout the mobility network that ensures adequate levels of night time illumination.
- 5.62. Continue to maintain the cycling network throughout the year with special attention to inspecting and repairing roadway and pathway surfaces, bikeway signs and amenities.

## BICYCLE FRIENDLY DESIGN STANDARDS

- 5.63. Coordinate public and private streetscape improvements to improve cycling safety and access.
- 5.64. Update bicycle parking requirements and guidelines to address design criteria for Short-term and Long-term bicycle parking, including shower and locker facilities, location of bicycle parking, surveillance and safety measures and convenience within the public and private realm.

## TRANSIT – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### TRANSIT CORRIDORS

- 5.65. Continue to require the location of transit-supportive land use and development along Douglas Street to support the establishment of BC Transit’s Rapid Transit Network within the Downtown Core Area as illustrated the transit network map in the Official Community Plan.
- 5.66. Consider land uses and activities along the frequent transit corridors as illustrated in the transit network map in the Official Community Plan encourage high levels of pedestrian activity and transit use, both inside and outside of the am/pm peak periods. Examples of transit-supportive uses include:
  - Offices
  - Medium- to high-density multi-residential development
  - Public and private schools and educational facilities
  - Retail
  - Restaurants
  - Personal services
  - Medical clinics
  - Entertainment, recreational and cultural facilities
  - Libraries
- 5.67. Increase density around major transit stops in association with high-quality transit shelters, stations, and associated amenities along primary transit corridors to accommodate higher density, transit-supportive development.

## PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS TO TRANSIT

- 5.68. Ensure pedestrian connections to transit corridors and transit stops are direct, safe, convenient, barrier-free, easily identifiable and navigable.
- 5.69. Ensure pedestrian networks provide safe, convenient, and accessible connections to transit corridors and transit stops.
- 5.70. Consider public realm design improvements that improve pedestrian flow around major transit stops and along primary transit corridors.

## DEVELOPMENT NEAR TRANSIT STOPS

- 5.71. Cluster buildings near major transit stops together to allow for convenient pedestrian access between buildings and to define the public realm.
- 5.72. Ensure buildings near major transit stops are designed to enhance the pedestrian environment by having doorways and windows oriented to the street.

## ALL-WEATHER BUILDING DESIGN

- 5.73. Consider transit stops integrated with the building where sidewalk widths are limited that provide protection from the weather and climate, such as seating integrated under building awnings while also ensuring the stops are well-designed, and easily identifiable.

## PARKING REQUIREMENTS NEAR TRANSIT

- 5.74. Consider reducing the number of required vehicle parking stalls for transit-supportive uses located adjacent to major transit stops and along the Douglas Street Rapid Transit network.
- 5.75. Locate vehicular parking at the rear of buildings or below grade where a development is positioned along a pedestrian network route that leads to a major transit stop or along a primary transit corridor.

## TRANSIT CIRCULATION

- 5.76. Support the establishment of demand-based transit service models that supplement the frequent and rapid transit network to provide improved transit access between key locations within the Downtown Core Area.

## PARKING REGULATIONS

- 5.77. Review and update parking requirements in the Zoning Regulation Bylaw to reflect and implement the TDM objectives described in this Plan.
- 5.78. Consider amending the Zoning Regulation Bylaw to incorporate maximum parking standards to restrict the number of on-site motor vehicle parking stalls that may be provided as part of new development in the Historic Commercial District and the Central Business District.
- 5.79. Consider opportunities for reducing the number of required motor vehicle parking stalls in high density, employment-intensive commercial uses, such as offices, in exchange for:
  - 5.71.1. Dedicated on-site car share or carpooling parking stalls.
  - 5.71.2. Additional and enhanced bicycle parking (e.g. electric and cargo bikes, maintenance facilities), shower and locker facilities for employees.
  - 5.71.3. Annual transit passes for employees.
  - 5.71.4. Locating transit-supportive uses within 400 metres of a major transit stops.
  - 5.71.5. Public EV charging stations.
  - 5.71.6. Other TDM programs/strategies that reduce on-site parking stalls and encourage alternate modes of transportation.

## ALTERNATE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

- 5.80. Prioritize and manage curbside space including on-street parking and loading according to the priorities outlined in GoVictoria.
- 5.81. Prohibit the development of new surface parking lots and single-purpose, above-grade parking structures.
- 5.82. Consider opportunities for integrating public short-term parking as a component of underground parking for high-density office buildings within the Central Business District.

## PARKING REVENUE

- 5.83. Use public parking revenue to fund public TDM initiatives, such as the development of network enhancements, EV charging stations, and bicycle parking.
- 5.84. Explore the establishment of a cash-in-lieu of parking system within portions of the Downtown Core Area that could be used to support alternate modes of transportation.

## FREIGHT AND GOODS MOVEMENT – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

Victoria's deep water harbour is a key strategic asset for the city and region, and will continue to play an important role in business development, transportation, and the facilitation of goods movement.

The harbour plays different roles within the Downtown Core Area. Within the Inner Harbour, there is a focus on the movement of goods and people, marine servicing, and tourism. For industrial businesses, primarily around the Upper Harbour and in the Rock Bay District, maintaining access to the deep-water harbour provides an additional option for the transportation of goods and raw materials into and out of the core of the region, reducing overall regional truck trips. Harbour access supports emerging industries such as the "Blue Economy."

Commercial truck and freight movement is key to the success for logistics needs of many businesses within the area and facilitates efficient movement of goods out to the rest of Vancouver Island.

## WORKING HARBOUR

- 5.85. Maintain and enhance access to the Working Harbour to support the movement of goods and people for current and future harbour-dependent businesses.
- 5.86. Seek to provide access to the harbour within the Rock Bay District for "Blue Economy" and other businesses that may not have a waterfront location.
- 5.87. Support convenient upland connections for waterfront businesses to enable freight to move by both barge and truck.

## FREIGHT AND GOODS MOVEMENT

- 5.88. Support diverse commercial and industrial activities through street designs that safely and efficiently accommodate trucks and larger commercial vehicles.

# urban design

# 6



## INTRODUCTION

Urban design is the deliberate effort of guiding and affecting physical form, space and built characteristics of an urban place in order to create places for people. Urban design is concerned with both the function and aesthetics of spaces and buildings. It addresses the connections among people and places, movement, city form, the natural environment and the built fabric. This Plan seeks to provide guidance to ensure that the Downtown Core Area continues to develop and provides a balance between economic viability and successful placemaking. The urban design policies and guidelines in this plan identify the importance of urban design at varying scales, from the overall shape of the city and the look of its skyline, to the form and placement of individual buildings, to details such as streetscape designs.

## URBAN DESIGN – DOWNTOWN CORE AREA

The Downtown Core Area has a well-defined identity as the heart of the Provincial Capital, focused on a beautiful Harbour, graced with a clustering of landmark historic and cultural buildings, and a network of streets that are walkable and built to a human scale.

Victoria is fortunate to have retained much of its 19th and early 20th century commercial core. Much of its picturesque quality stems from the variety, rich detailing, intimate scale and irregularity created by these historic buildings within its streetscape. The rich detailing of the Downtown Core is also complemented by its geographic setting and the surrounding landscape which includes its signature Inner Harbour, the Sooke hills and the Olympic Mountains.

## URBAN DESIGN – OBJECTIVES

The urban design policies and actions that are contained in this Plan seek to ensure that the Downtown Core Area's character and strength as an attractive, livable urban place continue to be enhanced while it grows significantly over the next 30 years. Collectively these policies and actions address the following objectives:

1. The natural setting of the city is considered with development and urban design initiatives.
2. Development and urban design initiatives support economic viability, sustainability and placemaking.
3. The qualities of the Downtown Core Area are enriched including its neighbourhoods and character areas by providing development that is appropriate to the building scale and its local setting.
4. The Downtown Core Area contains meaningful destinations that are connected and integrated with well-designed travel networks to encourage pedestrian activity.
5. Development and urban design initiatives are designed to address and respond to future changes in use, lifestyle, economy and demography.
6. The Downtown Core Area contains a diverse mix of building forms and public spaces.
7. The Downtown Core Area provides a blend of new infill development and rehabilitated heritage resources.

## URBAN DESIGN – STRATEGIES

In response to the urban design objectives for the Downtown Core Area, this Plan identifies a range of strategies to facilitate these objectives:

1. Enhancing the city's skyline through the concentration and careful design of taller buildings and increased density along the Douglas Street/Blanshard Street corridor and along Yates Street (Cross Town Concept).
2. Implementing the Core Design Guidelines, which are premised on reinforcing existing topography, city form and human scaled development, including recognition of the rise and transition of low-scale buildings that frame the historic waterfront to taller buildings within the Central Business District (Urban Amphitheatre Concept).
3. Protecting and enhancing key public views and vistas, including outward views from the Downtown Core Area and external views towards the Downtown Core Area that capture character-defining vistas, including views of prominent heritage landmarks.
4. Establishment of the Downtown Core Design Guidelines and an implementation framework that identifies partnership and funding opportunities for the development of key public amenities including:
  - Completing the Harbour Pathway
  - Extending the Government Street Mall
  - Revitalizing Centennial Square
  - Developing new parks and urban plazas in North Park, the Rock Bay District, James Bay and the eastern part of the Downtown.
  - Increasing the urban tree canopy and other landscape elements as a component of streetscape improvements.
5. Implementing design guidelines that address the importance of sensitive built forms through building height, scale, massing, setbacks, floor plate restrictions and street wall design.

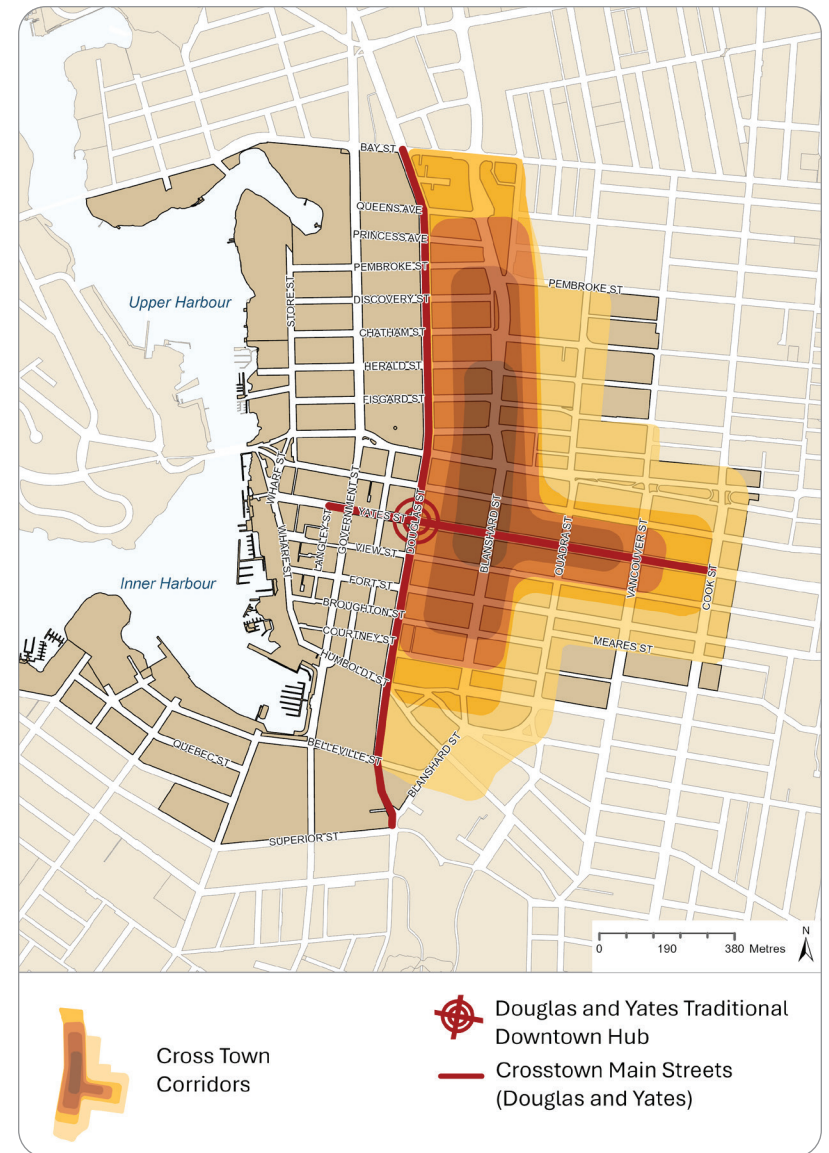


Urban design strategies can be used to create welcoming spaces and context sensitive buildings.

## CROSS TOWN CONCEPT

Under this Plan, new growth in the form of taller and denser buildings in the Downtown Core Area will be concentrated along the two intersecting corridors of Douglas Street/Blanshard Street and Yates Street (Cross Town Concept) in order to:

- Move pressure for new development away from the Historic Commercial District to areas that are able to accommodate increased development capacity.
- Better define Victoria's two traditional main streets as the axis of the Downtown Core Area and enhance the downtown skyline.
- Concentrate higher density, transit-supportive uses in close proximity to major transit corridors and in support of a rapid transit corridor along Douglas Street.
- Strengthen the eastern part of Downtown with a concentration of higher density residential and commercial uses centred on Yates Street.
- Support the provision of public amenities and public realm improvements along or near Douglas Street and Yates Street.
- Accommodate the expanding Central Business District within the two corridors. (SEE MAP 19: CROSS TOWN CONCEPT)



Map 19: Cross Town Concept

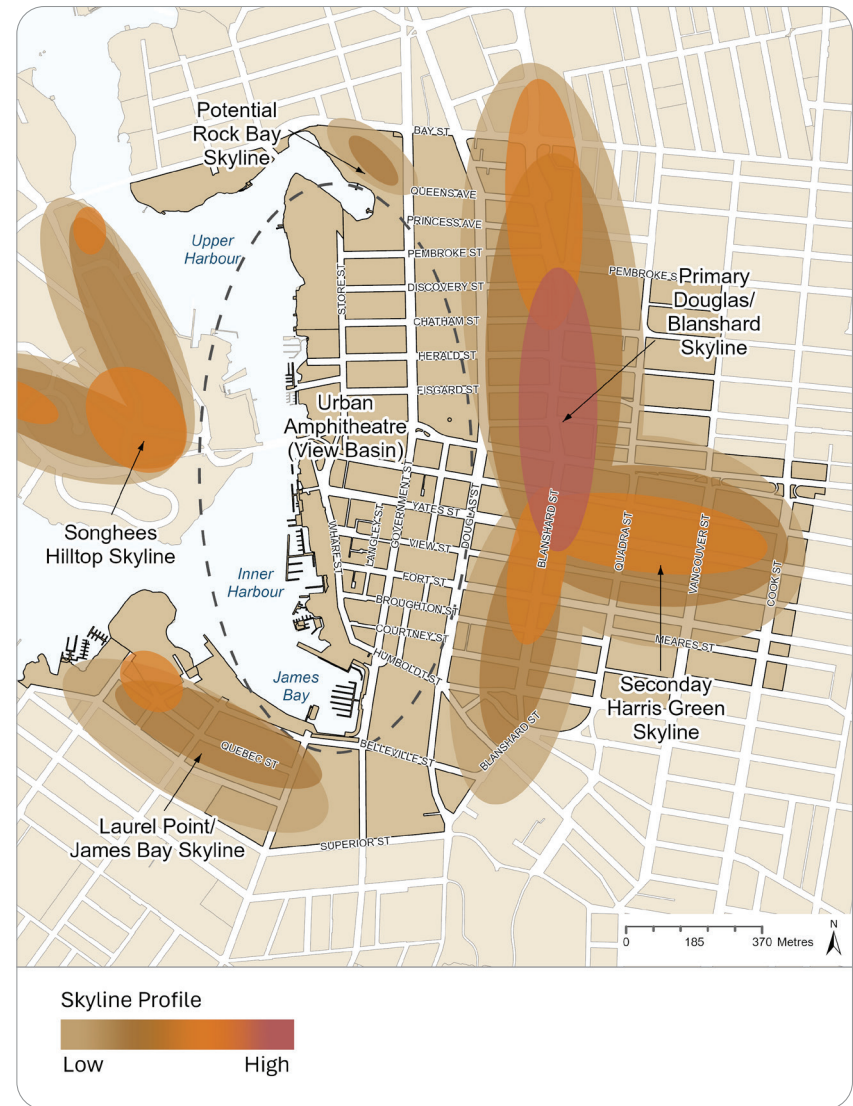
## URBAN AMPHITHEATRE CONCEPT

To build on the Downtown Core Area's geographic and historic urban setting, this Plan promotes a general urban form in the shape of an amphitheatre, stepping up from Victoria's open Harbour basin, where building height remains low near the Harbour but gradually increases further inland, with tall buildings at a distance from the Harbour, concentrated along Douglas and Yates Streets.

(SEE MAP 20: URBAN AMPITHEATRE CONCEPT)

This Urban Amphitheatre shape:

- Builds on the pattern of historical development in the Downtown Core Area by having growth tier up away from the Harbour.
- Reflects and emphasizes the natural, underlying hilly landscape and the rise of natural grades in several directions away from the water.
- Creates a series of backdrops with buildings along the waterfront as well as along higher elevations that also help to frame the Harbour.
- Supports the concentration of taller buildings in strategic locations to create a series of unique and varied skylines that frame the Harbour.



Map 20: Urban Amphitheatre Concept

## PUBLIC VIEW CORRIDORS – INTRODUCTION

Public view corridors play a significant role in defining the visual and aesthetic character of the Downtown Core Area by providing a blend of broad vistas and focused glimpses of the surrounding natural landscape, the overall city form, the skyline as well as landmark structures and buildings. In addition to functioning as character-defining features, view corridors also assist people to orient themselves within the Downtown Core Area to the surrounding area through visual cues.

The Downtown Core Area's immediacy to the Harbour is one of the most important and therefore common elements of its view corridors. Other key elements include the Olympic Mountains as well as some of the prominent historic landmark buildings such as the Parliament Building, the Empress Hotel and the City Hall (Clock Tower). It is anticipated that the general context of each view corridor will evolve over time as new development occurs throughout the Downtown Core Area as well as in distant locations.

The Downtown Core Area Plan identifies two distinct sets of key view corridors, both of which are based from specific public vantage points. The first set identifies views looking outwards from the Downtown Core Area (Public Outward Views), and the second set consists of distant panoramic views towards the Downtown Core Area (Public External Views). The Downtown Core Design Guidelines describe each view corridor in greater detail including the specific location of the view corridor, a photograph of the view corridor and the identification of the portion of the view corridor or view elements that should be preserved or considered in relation to adjacent development.

## VIEW CORRIDOR OBJECTIVES

The policies, actions and guidelines that are contained in this Plan for each view corridor collectively address the following objectives:

1. That significant character-defining view corridors are identified.
2. That design guidelines are provided for evaluating the placement, orientation, massing and overall design of new developments that are located along or within each view corridor and to ensure that new development is sensitive to the visual context of each view corridor and is designed and located to avoid obscuring views of key defining elements or detracting from the overall view.
3. That new developments serve to enhance and augment the visual and aesthetic character of each view corridor over time.



## EXTERNAL VIEWS

The external views illustrated in Maps 22, 23 and 24 profile a range of iconic public views looking towards the Downtown Core Area from across the Harbour. These external views are panoramic vistas that capture the building forms, character areas and landmarks for three distinct areas around the Inner Harbour. These include the area between the Johnson Street Bridge and Ship Point, the Inner Harbour Causeway, and the area between the CPR Steamship Terminal and Laurel Point.

### EXTERNAL VIEW – POLICIES

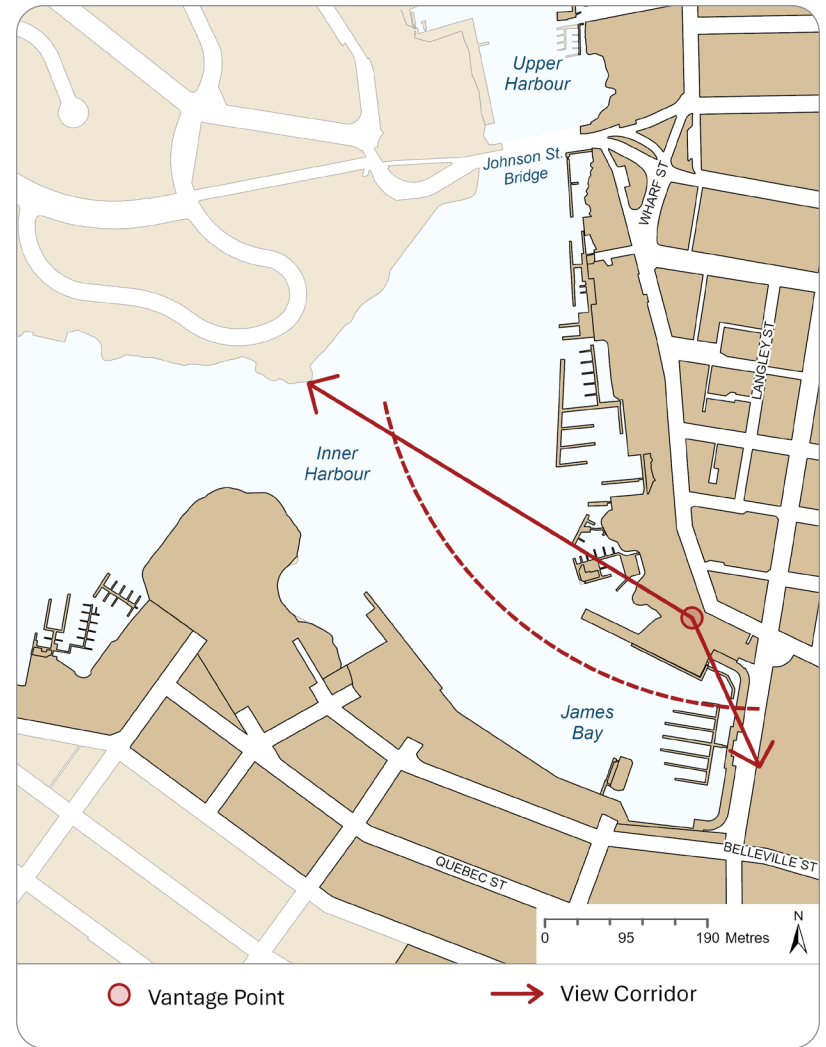
- 6.7. Evaluate development proposals that are located within the view corridors illustrated in Maps 22, 23 and 24 for consistency with the Downtown Core Design Guidelines.
- 6.8. Conserve views of the character-defining elements as seen from the respective public vantage locations described in the Downtown Core Design Guidelines.
- 6.9. Encourage design and siting of new developments that frame and enhance view corridors.
- 6.10. Ensure that new developments complement and respond to the surrounding context as defined by the topography, building spacing, building form, building height, roofline, massing, setbacks, orientation, facade rhythm, building materials and landscaping.
- 6.11. Ensure that additional design consideration is given to developments that are located directly adjacent to the waterfront to ensure that they complement and enhance the waterfront with sensitive and appropriate design solutions.
- 6.12. Encourage sensitive and appropriate illumination of building facades and architectural features in order to complement the night time views of the harbour without detracting from the lighting prominence of the Parliament Buildings and the Empress Hotel.
- 6.13. Consider the design and placement of streetscape improvements such as paving materials, street furniture, street lighting and landscaping in order to help enhance view corridors.
- 6.14. Protect views of the Empress Hotel, Parliament Buildings and CPR Steamship Terminal from the respective public vantage points as illustrated in the Downtown Core Design Guidelines.



Map 22: External View 1



Map 23: External View 2



Map 24: External View 3

## SKYLINE EVOLUTION

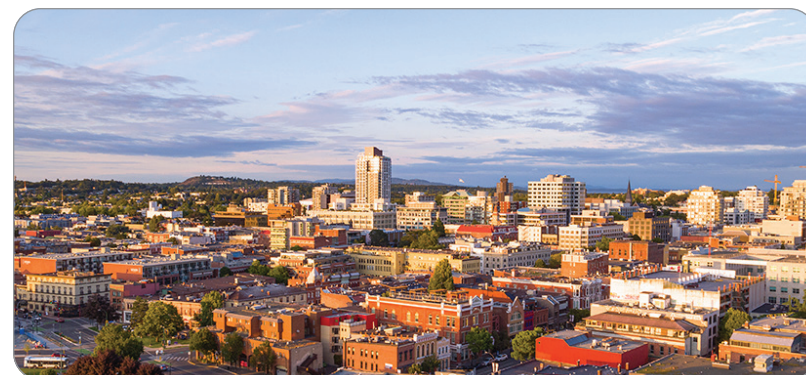
Victoria's existing skyline has been formed over time through the development and location of taller buildings within the Downtown. The skyline is further defined by varying building heights, roof top shapes, building profiles, proportions, texture, materials and colour. Together, these elements not only add to the visual interest of the skyline, but also serve to identify unique visual landmarks such as church spires, the City Hall Clock Tower or the clustering of taller buildings within the Central Business District. The rise in topography from the waterfront towards Douglas Street also provides the ability to emphasize the rich detail and roof top patterns of the Old Town in contrast to those of more modern buildings along Douglas Street and Yates Street.

It is anticipated that the skyline will continue to evolve as a result of new development and as influenced by the City's design guidelines and the policies contained in this Plan. This Plan supports the emergence of an undulating skyline that rises gradually from the north and south ends of the Downtown Core Area to an apex within the Central Business District reflecting the general hilly regional geographic setting of Victoria

The overall urban design and skyline policies and actions contained in this Plan collectively provide general guidance for the evaluation of tall buildings within the overall skyline and encourage sensitive building siting and design.

## SKYLINE POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 6.15. Evaluate the impact and influence of new development within the Downtown Core Area skyline from the public vantage point identified in Map 25.
- 6.16. Consider the location of buildings and related building heights that reinforce a skyline profile that rises gradually from the north and south ends of the Downtown Core Area to the area of tallest height within the Central Business District.
- 6.17. Consider the following criteria for tall buildings that are visible within the Downtown Core Area skyline:
  - 6.17.1. Visual impact within the existing skyline;
  - 6.17.2. Location and clustering in relation to other tall buildings;
  - 6.17.3. Massing, orientation, and expression of the shape of the base, the body, and the top of the building; and
  - 6.17.4. Use lighter colours including a palette of warm brick and soft pastel tones to lighten up the visual appearance of the skyline and complement the existing appearance.



Map 25: Downtown Skyline

## TERMINATED VISTAS – INTRODUCTION

A terminated vista is generally defined as the location at the end of an important sightline along a street that is enhanced through a building or landmark. One of the key ingredients to creating walkable and memorable streets is the ability to emphasize significant shifts in the street pattern through the deliberate placement and design of buildings and landmarks at these locations as well as along the length of sightlines. The street pattern in the Downtown Core Area provides opportunities to enhance the public realm through the termination of vistas and through the framing of each vista through the placement of appropriately scaled buildings and streetscape elements that contribute to a sense of enclosure and intimacy for the pedestrian.

Because of the visual prominence that these shifts in the street pattern create, urban design principles traditionally tend to encourage the placement of civic and institutional buildings such as churches, city halls, libraries and museums at these locations, in order to emphasize civic pride and to help terminate vistas with iconic and well-designed buildings. This general principle is evident in downtown Victoria and is reflected through both historic and modern buildings and in the location of landmarks and prominent public spaces.

As the Downtown Core Area continues to evolve, these unique street conditions with terminated vistas should be emphasized where opportunities exist. The enhancement of terminated vistas must be considered on a case-by-case basis in conjunction with the surrounding context, and with the related Terminated Vista guidelines contained in the Downtown Core Design Guidelines, which provide strategies and approaches for terminating and enhancing key vistas through buildings, landmarks or public realm improvements.



St. John the Divine Anglican Church in the background provides a terminated vista and landmark feature along Quadra Street.

## HERITAGE LANDMARK BUILDINGS

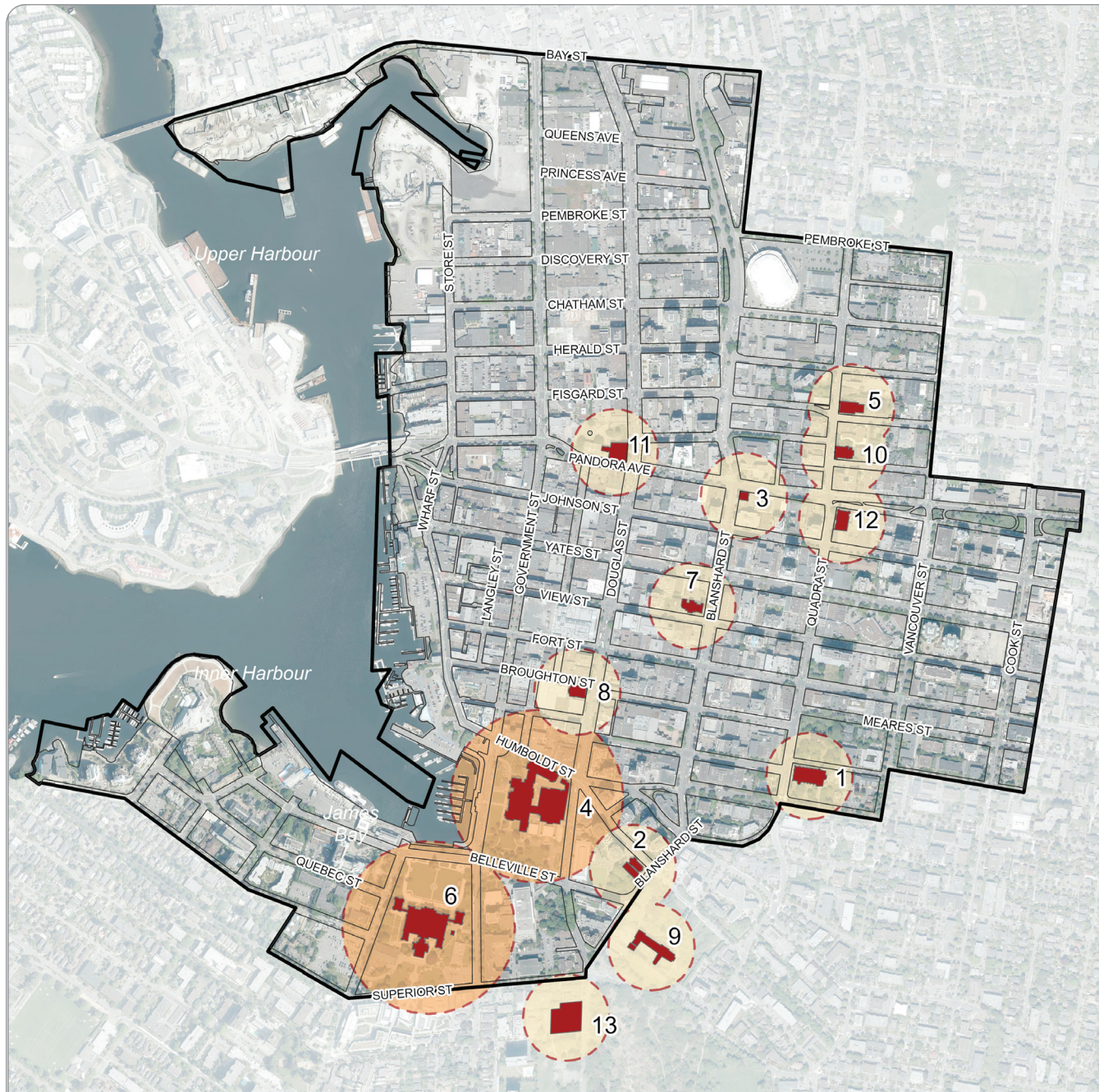
The Downtown Core Area includes a selection of visually significant heritage buildings that are generally recognized through Statements of Significance for their heritage values, architectural design, detail, scale and appearance which collectively, contribute to placemaking. These heritage buildings are also noted for their prominence as visual landmarks within local streetscapes, their ability to be commonly recognized and memorable, and for their overall contribution to the public realm. (SEE MAP 26: HERITAGE LANDMARK BUILDINGS)

## HERITAGE LANDMARK BUILDINGS POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 6.18. Give special design consideration to development applications located within a 90-metre radius of the heritage landmark buildings identified in Map 26, to ensure that the height, setbacks, siting and overall massing of proposed new buildings do not detract from or obscure the visual prominence and character-defining importance of these heritage landmark buildings.
- 6.19. Give special design consideration to development applications located within a 180-metre radius of the heritage landmark buildings identified in Map 26, to ensure that the height, setbacks, siting and overall massing of proposed new buildings do not detract from or obscure the visual prominence and character-defining importance of these heritage landmark buildings.
- 6.20. Development proposals that are located along or within the 90-metre and 180-metre heritage landmark building radii illustrated in Map 26 may be required to submit 3-D digital form models and photographic renderings in order to further evaluate the potential impact of the proposed development within the surrounding context and in relation to the prominent heritage landmark buildings.
- 6.21. Ensure that development proposals located within the 90-metre or 180-metre radii illustrated in Map 26, consider the character-defining elements and design guidelines described in the respective Statements of Significance and Development Permit Areas.







Example of how new development can be designed and sited to maintain public views and the visual prominence of heritage landmark buildings.



## MAP 26

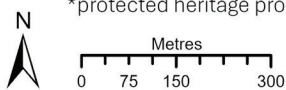
### Heritage Landmark Buildings

-  Downtown Core Area
-  Heritage Landmark
-  90m Landmark Radius
-  180m Landmark Radius

#### Heritage Landmark

1. Christ Church Cathedral\*  
911 Quadra Street
2. Church of Our Lord\*  
626 Blanshard Street
3. Congregation Emanu-el Synagogue\*  
1461 Blanshard Street
4. Empress Hotel\*  
700 Douglas Street
5. First Metropolitan United Church\*  
932 Balmoral Street
6. Parliament Buildings and Grounds  
501 Belleville Street
7. St. Andrew's Cathedral\*  
1202 Blanshard Street
8. St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church\*  
924 Douglas Street
9. St. Ann's Academy  
830 Academy Close
10. St. John the Divine Anglican Church\*  
930 Mason Street
11. Victoria City Hall\*  
1 Centennial Square
12. Victoria Conservatory of Music\*  
(Metropolitan United Church)  
07 Pandora Avenue
13. South Park Elementary School\*  
508 Douglas St

\*protected heritage property



## PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

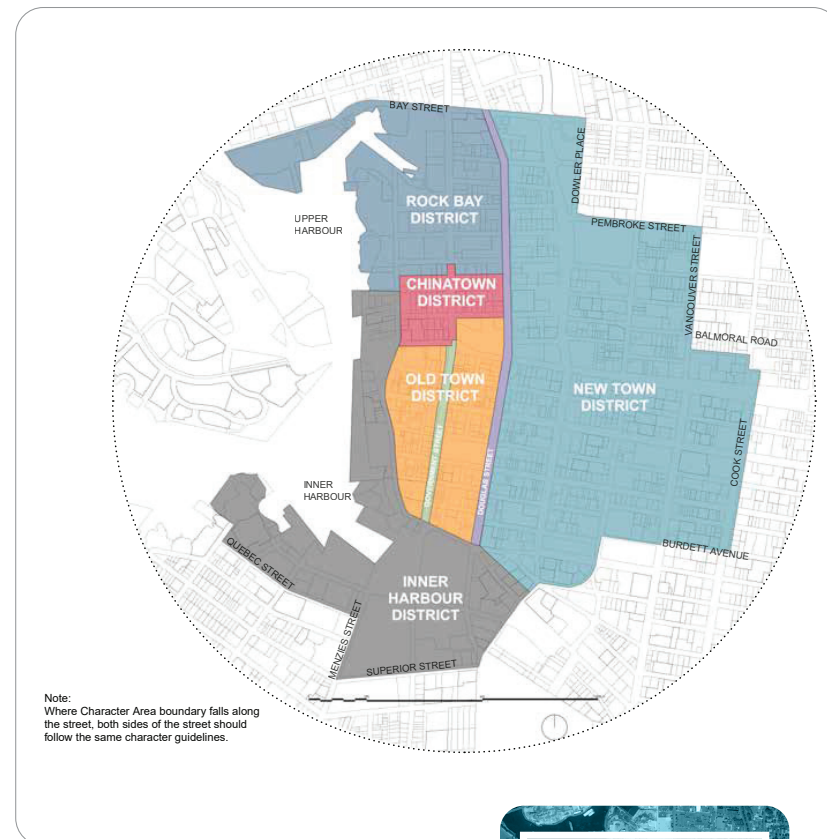
The public realm includes exterior spaces, linkages and the surrounding built form elements that are visually and physically accessible. Public realm components generally include parks and open spaces, plazas, streets, sidewalks, pathways, transportation hubs, gateways, waterfront areas, natural features, view corridors and the interface between these elements and surrounding buildings.

The overall quality, design and function of the public realm has a significant influence on the local quality of life within the urban environment. The public realm provides the places and spaces where people gather, meet, socialize, recreate, shop and work.

The public realm strategy described in this Plan provides a comprehensive and focused approach to build upon the Downtown Core Area's successful history of placemaking through public realm improvements that provide:

- Social and active spaces
- Versatile spaces that benefit all ages
- Meaningful and pedestrian-friendly connections
- Distinctive places that strengthen local identity
- High quality and attractive places
- Public amenities that are attractive and functional

The Downtown Public Realm Plan and Streetscape Standards provides a more detailed design framework based on the goals and objectives established in this section. The plan also includes guidelines, standards and specifications for Downtown Streetscapes, along with priority public realm improvements and a detailed catalogue of furnishings, materials and colours. In this way, the Downtown Public Realm Plan clarifies important requirements for public spaces, waterfront and street design to both public and private sector professionals engaged in the facilitation, design, approvals and implementation of public realm improvements and infrastructure.



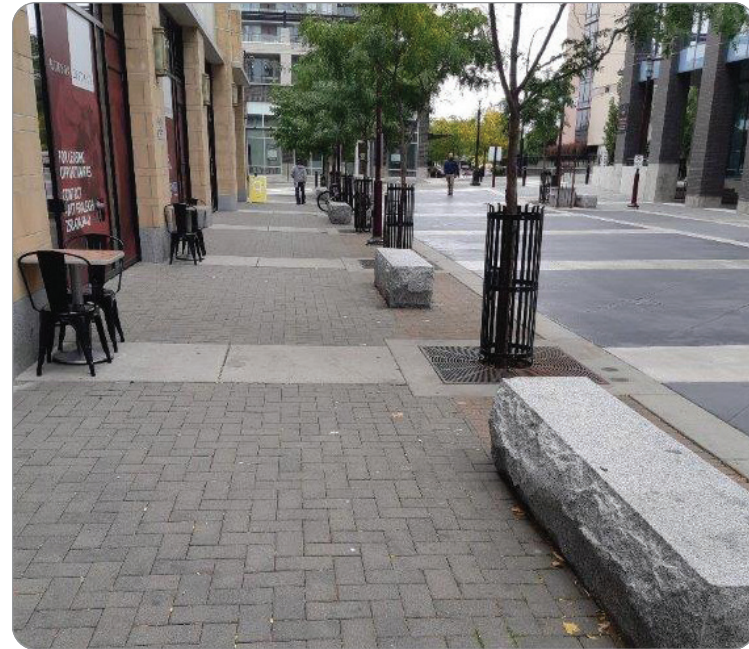
## STREETScape – OBJECTIVES

Collectively, the streets in the Downtown Core Area comprise the largest component of open space, and are one of the most important elements in shaping the public realm through their design and interface with adjacent buildings. The policies and actions for streetscapes contained in this Plan address the following objectives:

1. That the Downtown Core Area contains pedestrian-friendly streetscapes that are inviting and active.
2. That streetscapes are legible, attractive and strengthen local identity.
3. That streetscape improvements provide a physical environment that supports and benefits businesses.
4. That the urban tree canopy is enhanced with tree-lined streets.
5. That public amenities and streetscape improvements are appropriate for the function and character of each area.
6. That wider sidewalks are provided where possible.

## STREETScape – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 6.22. Ensure that any roadway improvements to the public right-of-way or any private development adjacent to public rights-of-way within the Downtown Core Area consider the Public Realm Street Typology illustrated in Map 31 and the Sidewalk Width Guidelines contained in Appendix 3.
- 6.23. Recognize that functional requirements, existing street dimensions and physical conditions may constrain achievement of the Sidewalk Width Guidelines in Appendix 3.
- 6.24. Review and update the City's zoning bylaws and other related technical design standards for compatibility with Sidewalk Width Guidelines contained in Appendix 3.



Carefully designed streetscapes are an important amenity for residents, visitors and businesses.

## PARKS, PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE

Parks, plazas and open spaces are important components of complete communities. These spaces exist in a variety of forms and offer a range of functions that respond to the surrounding context. Collectively, these spaces provide community identity, encourage social interaction and enhance community livability and health.

Forecasts for the Downtown Core Area anticipate approximately an additional 10,000 residents over the next 30 years, which will require the provision of additional parks and open spaces that are well designed, accommodate a range of passive and active activities, and contribute positively to the public realm. In response to this forecast growth, the Downtown Core Area Plan identifies the provision of a park or open space near Barclay Point in the Rock Bay District that will function as a public amenity due to its prominent waterfront location and connection to the Harbour Pathway. Smaller scale neighbourhood parks and green spaces are also identified for the North Park neighbourhood, the Rock Bay District and the eastern part of Downtown. In addition, strategically located urban plazas are envisioned to serve the north end and eastern part of Downtown and James Bay and Harris Green.

## PARKS, PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE – OBJECTIVES

The policies and actions for parks, plazas and open spaces collectively serve to address the following objectives:

1. That a network of parks, plazas and open spaces are located strategically to benefit residents, visitors and businesses within the Downtown Core Area.
2. That new parks, plazas and open space are provided in areas that are currently deficient and where increased growth is anticipated
3. That parks, plazas and open spaces are connected and integrated with the surrounding context.
4. That surrounding buildings give positive definition and frame parks, plazas and open spaces.
5. That parks, plazas and open spaces are provided through private development, public initiatives or through public/private partnerships.
6. That parks, plazas and open spaces are distributed within a five-minute (500 metres) walking time from each other.

## PARKS, PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### NEW PARKS, PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE

- 6.25. Enhance the Downtown Core Area with a system of parks, plazas and public open spaces as identified in Map 27, and described in this Plan.
- 6.26. Support the development of a publicly accessible waterfront park, plaza or open space generally located near Barclay Point that provides direct connections with the Harbour Pathway as identified in Map 27.
- 6.27. Establish two new neighbourhood parks, that are at least 0.5 hectares (1.2 acres) in size in the North Park neighbourhood and in the eastern part of the Downtown as identified in Map 27.
- 6.28. Establish a pocket park or green space within the Rock Bay District between Douglas Street and Blanshard Street, to provide everyday opportunities for recreation in the immediate vicinity of future housing and employment.
- 6.29. Formalize public green space as part of the heritage landscape of Christchurch Cathedral, as identified in Map 27.
- 6.30. Establish two new urban plazas as a component of private development that are generally 800 m<sup>2</sup> to 1200 m<sup>2</sup> in size to provide formal open space within the north end of Downtown along Douglas Street and within the Harris Green neighbourhood commercial centre as identified in Map 27.
- 6.31. Retain and formalize a plaza or green space near the intersection of Menzies Street and Superior Street as a component of new development, to provide opportunities for social gathering and public markets, complementing other open spaces in James Bay Neighbourhood, as identified in Map as identified in Map 27.

### LOCATION

- 6.32. Ensure that new parks, plazas and open space are located along prominent or active streets in order to contribute to street vitality and to improve their visibility.
- 6.33. Wherever possible, locate parks, plazas and open spaces on corner locations with a south to south/west exposure to maximize access to sunlight.
- 6.34. Consider locations for parks, plazas and open spaces that are within close proximity to major transit stations and interchanges, where possible.
- 6.35. Where possible, locate urban plazas within close proximity and with direct connections to key cultural, recreational or institutional facilities.

**CONNECTIVITY**

- 6.36. Ensure that parks, plazas and open spaces are directly adjacent to and provide direct access to the pedestrian network, cycling network or Greenways.
- 6.37. Where an urban plaza is not located on a corner site, consider a direct connection to a through-block walkway or a mid-block street crossing.

**WEATHER PROTECTION**

- 6.38. Incorporate weather protection elements such as canopies and awnings on building faces that are located directly adjacent to a park, plaza or open space.
- 6.39. Ensure that seating, play areas and other public amenities are located and designed to provide protection from the elements including wind and rain.

**DESIGN QUALITY**

- 6.40. Encourage the use of high quality finishing materials with detailed architectural quality.
- 6.41. Ensure that all new parks, plazas and open spaces are individually designed to reflect and complement the surrounding context and to provide a distinctive identity and character.
- 6.42. Ensure that the overall design, layout and materials result in attractive, identifiable and welcoming spaces.

**VISIBILITY AND ACCESS**

- 6.43. Plazas should be designed to provide a relatively flat central area with minimal grade change to encourage pedestrian flow and improve visual sightlines.
- 6.44. Where a plaza integrates terraced or stepped areas, locate these along the perimeter to provide views across the plaza.
- 6.45. Ensure that all parks, plazas and open spaces are designed to allow access and use by people with varying mobility needs.

**SAFETY**

- 6.46. Consider integrating the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles along with a range of other design elements to animate and improve the attractiveness, safety and usability all new parks, plazas and open spaces including:

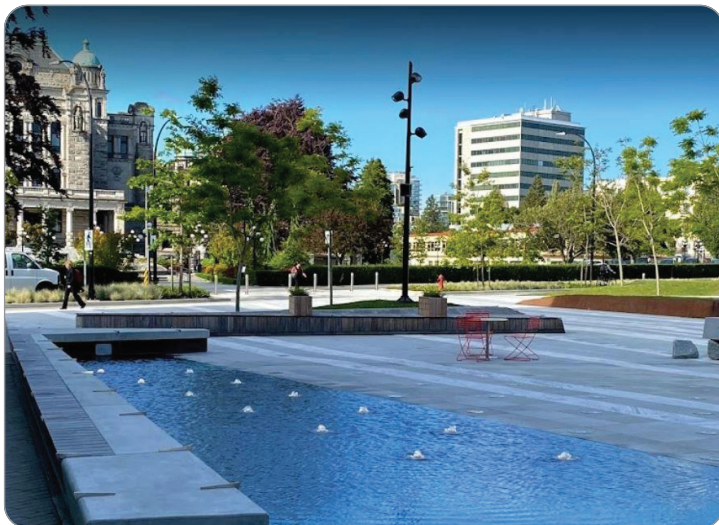
- 6.43.1. Entrances that are easily identifiable from the street level.
- 6.43.2. Clear sightlines.
- 6.43.3. Pedestrian-scale lighting.
- 6.43.4. Adjacent active commercial uses.
- 6.43.5. Well-designed landscaping that serves to demarcate public and private areas and avoids obscuring sightlines.
- 6.43.6. Integration of signs and pedestrian network maps to provide orientation to key destinations for pedestrians.

**ANIMATION**

- 6.47. Consider designs that integrate public amenities that are appropriate for the surrounding context and function of the park, plaza or open space.
- 6.48. Community parks should include the provision of sports fields, washrooms, playgrounds, parking areas, bicycle racks, walkways, seating and viewing areas.
- 6.49. Neighbourhood parks may include the provision of play equipment, sport courts, pathways, open grass, bicycle racks and seating.
- 6.50. Consider the use and design of unique public amenities to enhance the identity and character of parks, plazas and open spaces. Examples of unique public amenities include water features, public art, architecturally designed play equipment, public memorials, wayfinding signage, ornamental landscaping and lighting features.
- 6.51. Ensure that parks, plazas and open spaces are designed to accommodate a range of both passive and active uses and functions that are appropriate for the location, type and scale of space.
- 6.52. Ensure that the design of parks, plazas and open spaces considers the ability to accommodate special events, entertainment and community activities that are appropriate for the location, type and scale of space.
- 6.53. Support the programming of year-round and seasonal special events and activities in parks, plazas and open spaces.
- 6.54. Consider the provision of temporary leasable space within City-owned urban plazas that can be used to accommodate uses and activities that provide a direct benefit to the vitality of the plazas such as seasonal patio seating, seasonal markets or special events.

## URBAN PLAZA ACQUISITION

- 6.55. The City of Victoria may consider providing additional density, over and above the base level density, up to the maximum density level specified in this Plan, to new developments that enter into an agreement as a part of a rezoning application to construct an urban plaza within the strategic locations identified in Map 27 and that reflect the design criteria described in this Plan.



Example of a well designed urban plaza.

## MINOR PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

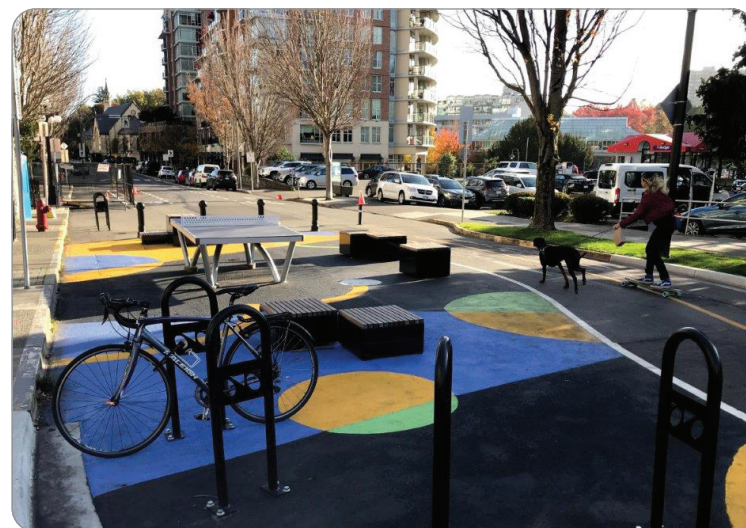
Minor Public Open Spaces refer to uniquely designed compact areas that are located on public land. These spaces are generally compact in size in order to allow for their development in a multitude of public locations. Minor open spaces are smaller and less prominent than plazas or parks, and are generally located strategically to enhance the surrounding public realm and to complement the adjacent uses and activities.

## LOCATION

- 6.56. Support the development of Minor Public Open Spaces, as a component of streetscape improvements where they are located on public land such as unused sections of road right-of-way, generally within the areas identified on Map 27.
- 6.57. Where possible, locate Minor Public Open Spaces adjacent to cultural, recreational or institutional facilities.

## DESIGN

- 6.58. Consider distinctive identity features such as special paving, landscaping, public art and water features.
- 6.59. Consider overall designs that complement the surrounding buildings and streetscapes.
- 6.60. Limit fencing, windscreens or planters, so that spaces will be perceived as accessible public areas and are integrated well with the pedestrian network.
- 6.61. Include landscaping to enrich spaces, in balance with intended uses and context.



Example of a Minor Open Space integrated into the streetscape.

## SAFETY

- 6.62. Consider Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to enhance safety and security.
- 6.63. Integrate strategically located and designed pedestrian scale lighting to enhance the visual appearance of the Minor Public Open Space and to improve security and safety.

## ACTIVITY

- 6.64. Consider designs that accommodate active uses such as outdoor seating, temporary markets, or programmed entertainment.

## WATERFRONT PUBLIC OUTLOOKS

Waterfront Public Outlooks include various compact spaces, located and designed for public vantage points along Victoria's Harbour and are generally linked by the Harbour Pathway.

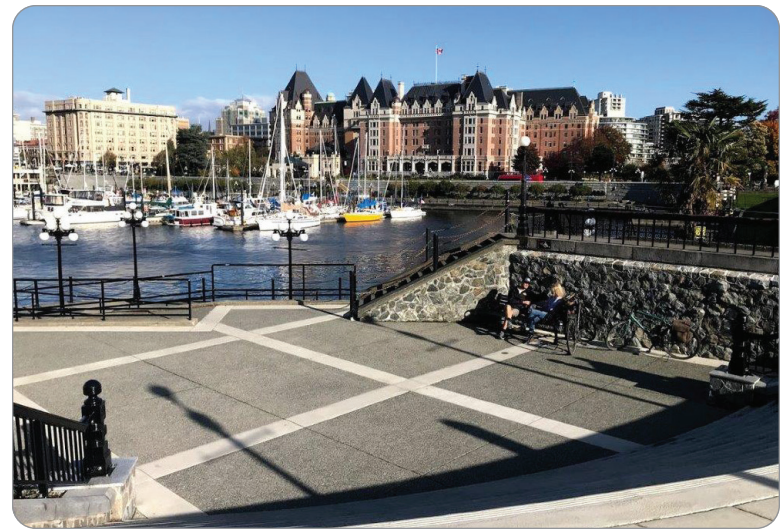
## WATERFRONT OUTLOOKS POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### LOCATION

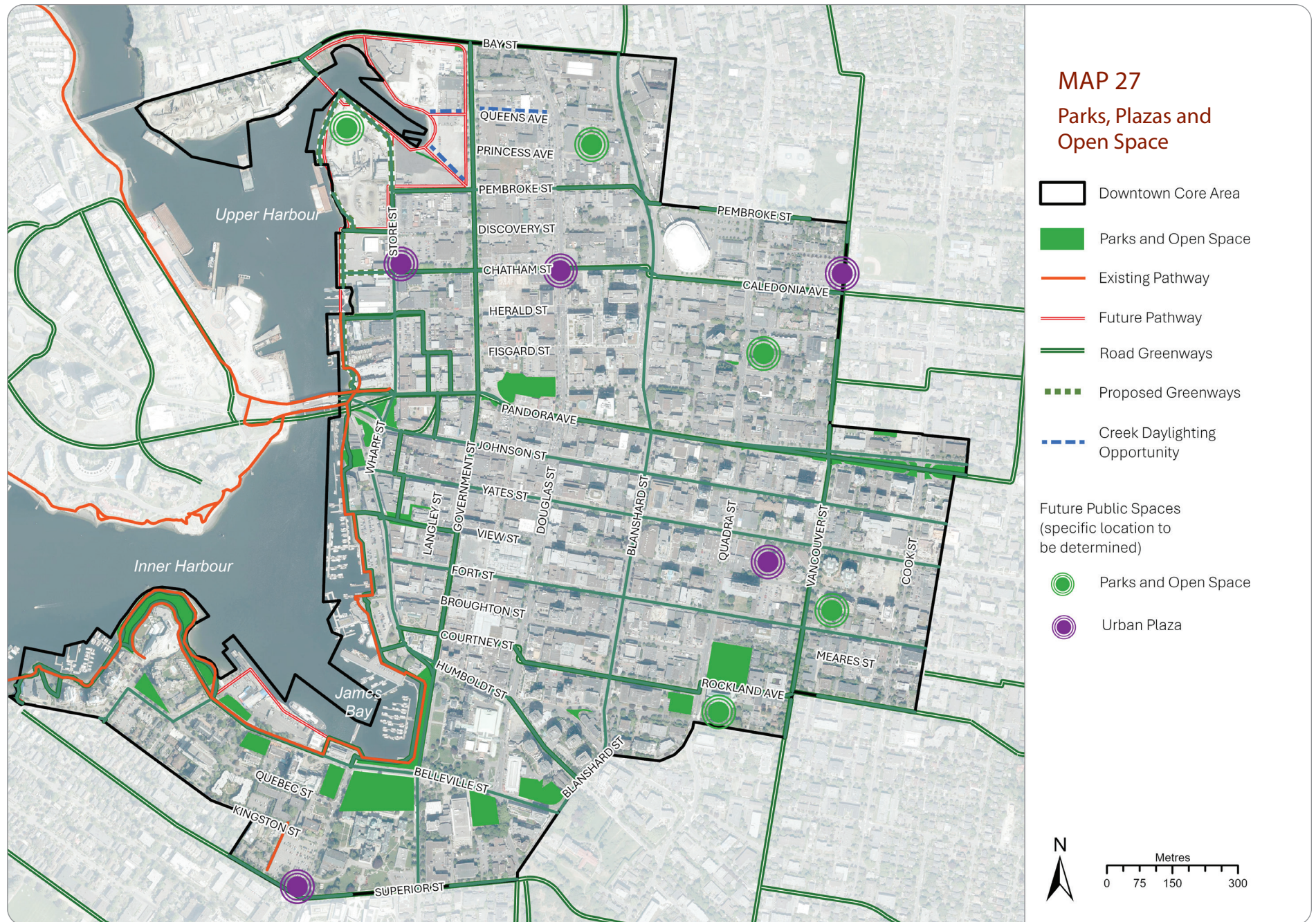
- 6.65. Incorporate publicly accessible Waterfront Public Outlooks, as components of redevelopment along the waterfront between Ship Point and Laurel Point as well as on the east and west side of the Johnson Street Bridge, and along the Harbour Pathway as illustrated in Map 27.

### DESIGN








- 6.66. Consider designs that take advantage of the views across the Harbour.
- 6.67. Consider Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to enhance safety and security.
- 6.68. Integrate strategically located and designed pedestrian scale lighting to enhance the visual appearance of the waterfront outlook and to improve security and safety.
- 6.69. Consider the development of Waterfront Outlooks on docks and wharves where they have direct connections to the Harbour Pathway and are publicly accessible.





Examples above of publicly accessible waterfront outlooks.

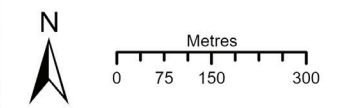


**MAP 27**  
Parks, Plazas and  
Open Space

-  Downtown Core Area
-  Parks and Open Space
-  Existing Pathway
-  Future Pathway
-  Road Greenways
-  Proposed Greenways
-  Creek Daylighting Opportunity

Future Public Spaces  
(specific location to  
be determined)

-  Parks and Open Space
-  Urban Plaza



## SPECIAL URBAN DESIGN AREAS

As part of achieving the objectives of the public realm strategy, several unique places are identified that present opportunities for physical improvements and design considerations to further enhance the public realm. These places vary in size and context from the formal setting of the Inner Harbour to the undeveloped lands around Rock Bay to the small scale design of the new pedestrian plaza space adjacent to the Victoria Conservatory of Music.

### INNER HARBOUR CAUSEWAY AREA

Most Victorians and visitors to the city identify the Inner Harbour generally as the area between Ship Point and the Coho Ferry Terminal. This area is one of the most commonly recognized locations in Victoria, primarily due to the waterfront setting and concentration of prominent landmark buildings including the Empress Hotel, the Parliament Buildings, the CPR Steamship Terminal and the Royal BC Museum. These buildings, along with a host of other hotels, tourist attractions, open spaces and distinctive streetscaping serve to reinforce the area's role as a gateway to the city, a location for special events and the focus of tourism and cultural activities.

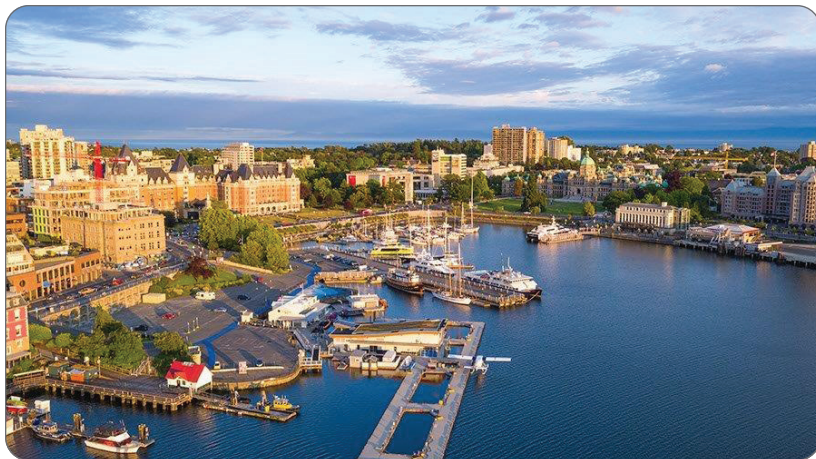
It is a responsibility for urban design initiatives to continue to recognize and respond appropriately to reinforce the unique character, built form, landmarks and primary functions of this area in an effort to maintain the Inner Harbour as Victoria's most iconic urban landscape.



Victoria's iconic Harbour Causeway attracts visitors and special events year-round.

## INNER HARBOUR – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 6.70. New development should not detract from or have negative impacts on the visual or historic integrity of the Inner Harbour.
- 6.71. Develop a detailed public realm improvement plan for the Inner Harbour which identifies specific opportunities for improving the pedestrian environment through:
- Sidewalk widening and repaving;
  - Distinctive paving materials and street improvements;
  - Provision for temporary alternate uses of streets, to act as pedestrian areas for large scale events; and
  - Human-scaled public amenities and improved public access to the water.
- 6.72. Support the location of major festivals, celebrations and special events within the Inner Harbour in order to provide them with a strong visual presence, an attractive and centralized location and the opportunity to support the local economy.
- 6.73. Support temporary street closures within the Inner Harbour where they are needed to accommodate major festivals or special events.



Aerial view of Inner Harbour area.



New developments should respond to the surrounding architectural context of the Inner Harbour as defined by street walls, facade rhythm and horizontal cornice lines.



Conceptual illustration of the original urban design principles (urban design geometries) for the Inner Harbour as they relate to the spatial placement of buildings focused on the prominence of the Parliament Building, Empress Hotel, and the CPR Steamship Terminal.

## CENTENNIAL SQUARE

As Victoria's central civic public space and home to leading civic, institutional and cultural facilities, Centennial Square should continue to be revitalized with active, pedestrian-generating uses at grade and beautified with new buildings, landscaping and public art that frame and better define the Square and respecting the existing character-defining elements.

### CENTENNIAL SQUARE – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

6.74. Continue to build upon revitalization policies and initiatives for Centennial Square that result in the following urban design objectives:

- 6.71.1. Emphasize the role and function of Centennial Square as a formal civic open space through appropriate design;
  - 6.71.2. Integrate design elements and public amenities that provide a direct benefit to people of all ages;
  - 6.71.3. Provide well-defined, prominent and direct pedestrian connections between the Square and the surrounding streets;
  - 6.71.4. Enhance public safety, natural surveillance and visibility;
  - 6.71.5. Accommodate a range of activities and special events;
  - 6.71.6. Accommodate comfortable space to encourage social interaction and passive activities; and
  - 6.71.7. Complement Spirit Square and the Spirit Stage behind the McPherson Theatre.
- 6.75. Integrate new civic uses such as a public library and the revitalization of City Hall into an overall design for the Square.
  - 6.76. Provide a blend of hard and soft landscaping as well as a safe and well-designed children's play area.
  - 6.77. Encourage surrounding buildings to include active commercial uses such as restaurants and cafés that have direct access from the Square as well as outdoor seating within the Square.
  - 6.78. Replace the existing public washrooms with new public washrooms that are secure, easily identifiable and accessible during daytime and nighttime, when redevelopment occurs.
  - 6.79. Promote and program a range of special events and public activities throughout the year.
  - 6.80. Ensure that the physical design and amenities encourage use of the Square during the day and evening in all seasons.

- 6.81. Redevelopment of the Centennial Square Parkade should result in public parking being located below grade with more active commercial and cultural uses located above grade.
- 6.82. Provide clear visual connections between the Centennial Square and surrounding streets.



Centennial Square hosts year-round special events and festivals.



Conceptual illustration of potential improvements to Centennial Square.

## BASTION SQUARE

Bastion Square, stretching between Wharf Street and Government Street, is the site of the original Fort Victoria, making it one of the most important heritage areas in Victoria. Through various revitalization efforts over the past few decades, Bastion Square has been designed and enhanced to function as a public square, surrounded by restaurants, retail stores, art galleries and offices. Bastion Square is also animated throughout the spring, summer and fall with special events including an artisans market. Although Bastion Square is well-recognized and offers an attractive setting, there remain several opportunities to further enhance the design of the Square including its integration with the surrounding context to improve vitality on the Square during daytime and night time.

### BASTION SQUARE – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 6.83. Consider the integration of additional public seating to take advantage of the views across the Inner Harbour.
- 6.84. Ensure that the master planning and redevelopment of the waterfront lands along the Wharf Street parking lot include the provision for a well-designed exterior pedestrian connection between the waterfront and Bastion Square.
- 6.85. Encourage surrounding buildings to include active commercial uses such as restaurants and cafés that have direct access from Bastion Square as well as outdoor seating within the Square.
- 6.86. Ensure that any public realm improvements or development directly adjacent to Bastion Square serve to enhance public safety, natural surveillance and visibility within the Square.
- 6.87. Consider the provision of public amenities and public realm improvements that encourage social interaction and passive activities within the Square.
- 6.88. Consider the provision of public washrooms that are secure, easily identifiable and accessible during daytime and night time.
- 6.89. Promote and program a range of special events and public activities throughout the year.
- 6.90. Ensure that the physical design and amenities within Bastion Square encourage positive activity during the day and evening in all seasons.
- 6.91. Develop a comprehensive urban design plan to identify specific strategies to better integrate Chancery Lane, Court Alley, Commercial Alley and Helmcken Alley as extensions of Bastion Square through public realm improvements.

- 6.92. Ensure any future redevelopment of the City-owned Yates Street Parkade provides a direct mid-block pedestrian connection to Bastion Square.



Public realm improvements should support Bastion Square as a focus for special events and public activities throughout the year.

## PANDORA GREEN

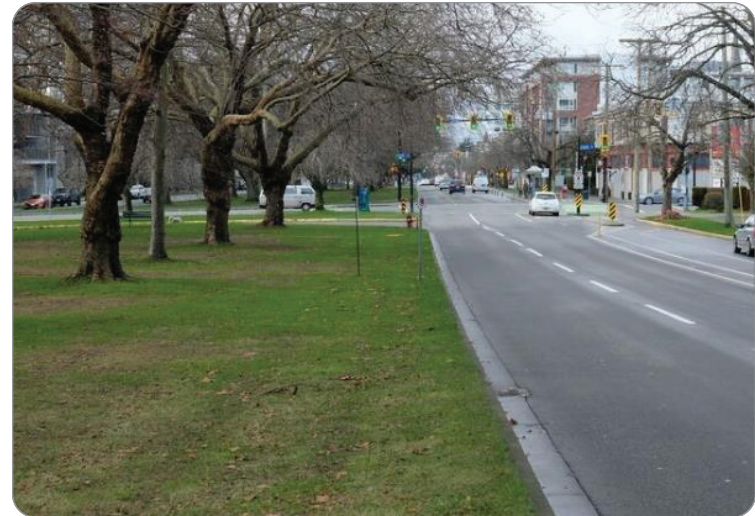
Pandora Green generally refers to the landscaped area located along the three blocks of Pandora Avenue between Quadra Street and Chambers Street. Greens are generally located within or adjacent to roadways and include medians, traffic islands, and major boulevards where the primary function is to provide character to the roadway and the adjacent area.

Pandora Green functions as a landscaped Gateway into the downtown and is anchored by the historic First Church of Christ Scientist on the east side and the Victoria Conservatory of Music on the west side. Although the entire Green is not located within the boundary of the Downtown Core Area, it is imperative that any urban design initiatives are evaluated in terms of their impact and benefit on the Green as a whole, regardless of its location between neighbourhood boundaries. The policies and actions described in this Plan seek to guide the transformation of this area into a memorable Green that is integrated with the surrounding buildings, provides opportunities for an attractive landscaped area and evolves into a well-used landscaped urban oasis for local residents and businesses.

## PANDORA GREEN – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 6.93. Develop a master plan for the overall redesign and revitalization of Pandora Green that maintains its functionality as a median while enhancing the public realm and results in the following urban design objectives:
- 6.90.1. Emphasizes the role and function of the Green as a formal landscaped gateway or entry into the Downtown through comprehensive design;
  - 6.90.2. Provides well-defined and direct pedestrian connections along the Green and across Pandora Avenue;
  - 6.90.3. Enhances public safety, natural surveillance and visibility;
  - 6.90.4. Accommodates openly visible space to encourage social interaction;
  - 6.90.5. Incorporates design elements, landscaping and public amenities that encourage the public use of the Green;
  - 6.90.6. Complements and encourages the growth of adjacent commercial and residential uses along Pandora Avenue; and
  - 6.90.7. Identifies a program of specific long-term and short-term public realm improvements.

- 6.94. Public realm improvements within the Green should consider the overall relationship and benefit to the entire Green.
- 6.95. Public realm improvements such as paving, lighting, landscaping and street furniture should have a consistent appearance throughout the length of the Green.
- 6.96. Ensure that Pandora Green is integrated and connected with the pedestrian network through the addition of new crosswalks to cross Cook, Vancouver and Quadra Streets.
- 6.97. Ensure that mature and replacement trees are managed to ensure that the formal tree-planting pattern is retained.
- 6.98. Repair damaged sidewalks with updated paving and accessibility features.
- 6.99. Provide well-designed and dedicated bike lanes along Pandora Avenue.
- 6.100. Accent the Green with seasonal planting and improved landscaping.
- 6.101. Ensure that new developments along Pandora Avenue serve to frame the area and are oriented toward the Green to provide natural surveillance.



Looking west along Pandora Green.

## GOVERNMENT STREET MALL

In its current form, the Government Street Mall is generally defined as the portion of Government Street between Humboldt Street and Yates Street. This Plan identifies its future extension northward to Pandora Avenue as a pedestrian-priority street. Its location through the Old Town Area serves as the primary focus for retail and tourism-related activities as well as special events. The human-scaled buildings along with the streetscape design help to attract businesses and visitors along this area.

In order to build upon the existing character of the Government Street Mall, the policies and actions described in this Plan support the northward extension of high-quality, pedestrian-friendly public realm treatment through Chinatown and the Rock Bay District, with complementary development and supportive land use that activates the street.

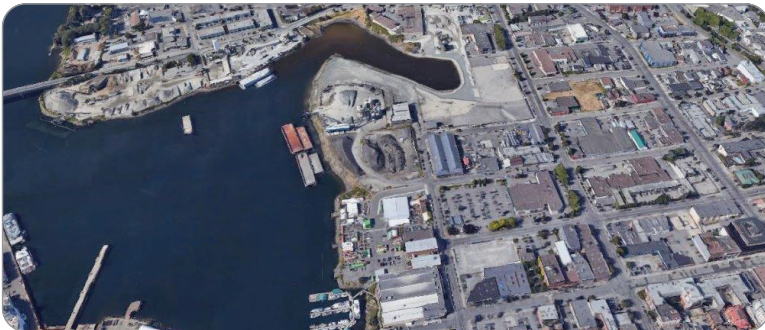
Within the Rock Bay District, Government Street is envisioned as a “main street” with pedestrian activity supported by street-level light industrial spaces and complementary arts, culture and retail uses. Streetscape design should support Indigenous-led placemaking consistent with the vision for the Matullia lands.

## GOVERNMENT STREET MALL – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 6.102. Implement the phased extension of the Government Street Refresh northwards, first to Centennial Square and Chinatown, with subsequent streetscape improvements to the Rock Bay District including a link with future waterfront public space at Rock Bay.
- 6.103. Maintain and improve public pedestrian access between the Government Street Mall and the Harbour Pathway at multiple locations throughout the entire length as they are both developed and extended northward, allowing for a variety of pedestrian circuits.
- 6.104. Ensure that the design of streetscape improvements to Belleville Street, the Inner Harbour Causeway and Government Street encourage a seamless pedestrian flow between these areas.
- 6.105. Consider public realm design options to provide priority to pedestrians, with supporting cycling, transit, delivery, parking and general purpose traffic consistent with Appendix 3.
- 6.106. Coordinate the upgrading of underground services to support future surrounding new development with the Mall extension.
- 6.107. Encourage the location of active commercial uses at the street level with direct access to Government Street.
- 6.108. Within the Rock Bay District, encourage pedestrian interest through the location of street-level small-format light industrial spaces which may feature ancillary sales, as well as complementary arts, culture and retail uses.
- 6.109. Within the Rock Bay District, design the public realm to support the vision for the Matullia lands, with Indigenous design features and support for daylighting of watercourses, in consultation with the Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations.
- 6.110. Avoid underground parkade entrances on Government Street where possible.
- 6.111. Provide infrastructure to support seasonal and special event closures.
- 6.112. Ensure street furnishings exhibit designs unique to the Mall.
- 6.113. Establish generous tree planting and green infrastructure features.
- 6.114. Work with partners to develop cost estimates, a staged implementation schedule, and funding mechanisms to undertake the Government Street Mall extension over time.
- 6.115. Develop, with partners, a program of active special uses and events with a seasonal orientation and tie in with commercial activities and public holidays.
- 6.116. Develop a partnership program to support building facade and storefront illumination to complement street lighting.
- 6.117. Undertake a refresh of streetscape furnishings and materials from Humboldt Street to Yates Street.
- 6.118. Develop a succession plan for replacing existing trees as required. Consider replacement tree species with canopies that have some transparency to allow opportunities to view adjacent heritage buildings or their character-defining elements.
- 6.119. Implement further pedestrian priority measures including consideration of temporary car-free zones, expanded patio spaces, wayfinding, additional seating and public art.
- 6.120. Collaborate with local Indigenous partners, to express Lekwungen culture, past, present, and future through streetscape design, tree and plant selections, cultural interpretation, and programming.
- 6.121. Explore opportunity to re-establish two-way vehicle and bicycle travel within a slow and shared street environment.



Looking south along Government Street.



Aerial view of Rock Bay area.

## ROCK BAY

Rock Bay is the formal name that refers to the water body along the Upper Harbour near Barclay Point. The lands adjacent to Rock Bay underwent one of the largest and complex environmental remediation projects in British Columbia from 2004 to 2016 for BC Hydro and Transport Canada. These lands are now owned jointly by Songhees Nation and Xwsepsum Nation who are undertaking a development planning process to transform these lands into a hub for light industrial activity along with supportive retail and amenities.

## ROCK BAY – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 6.122. Support the development of a publicly accessible waterfront park, plaza or public realm enhancement at Barclay Point that is also connected directly with the Harbour Pathway..
- 6.123. Public realm enhancements within Rock Bay should achieve the following outcomes:
  - Ecological shoreline restoration and distinctive treatment of the waterfront area;
  - Sidewalk widening;
  - Distinctive paving materials; and
  - Human-scale public amenities and improved public access to the water; and
  - Integration of heritage industrial buildings as a component of enhancing the public realm and defining the local character.
  - Water access by marine-dependent businesses.
- 6.124. Design streets, sidewalks, plazas, parks and marine facilities to support and reflect the area's identity as a centre for employment, arts and culture and Indigenous economic prosperity.
- 6.125. Consider opportunities for providing additional public access to the waterfront, where appropriate, as part of new development along the Rock Bay waterfront area.

## GATEWAYS – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 6.126. Design and develop urban gateways that signal and celebrate arrival to the Downtown Core Area, at the four general locations identified in Map 28.
- 6.127. Gateways should be located along primary roadways on City-owned land
- 6.128. Ensure gateways are individually designed to include landscaping, sculptural elements, fountains, lighting, or signage, or any combination of these elements.
- 6.129. Ensure gateways are designed to provide a visual reference for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.



Appropriately scaled public art can be used at gateway locations.



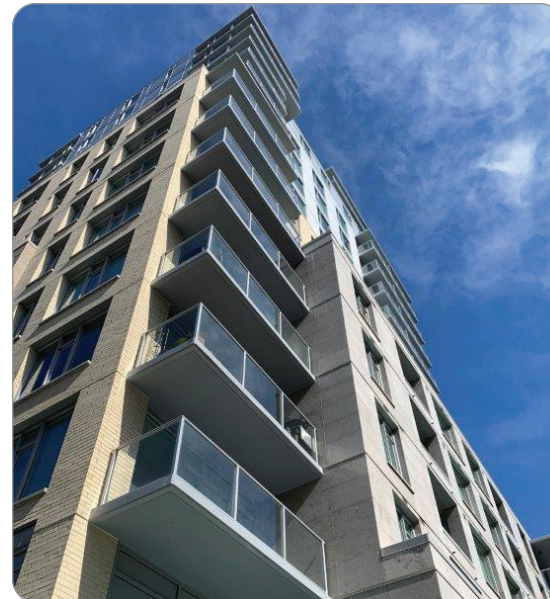
Map 28: Potential Gateway Locations

## BUILT FORM

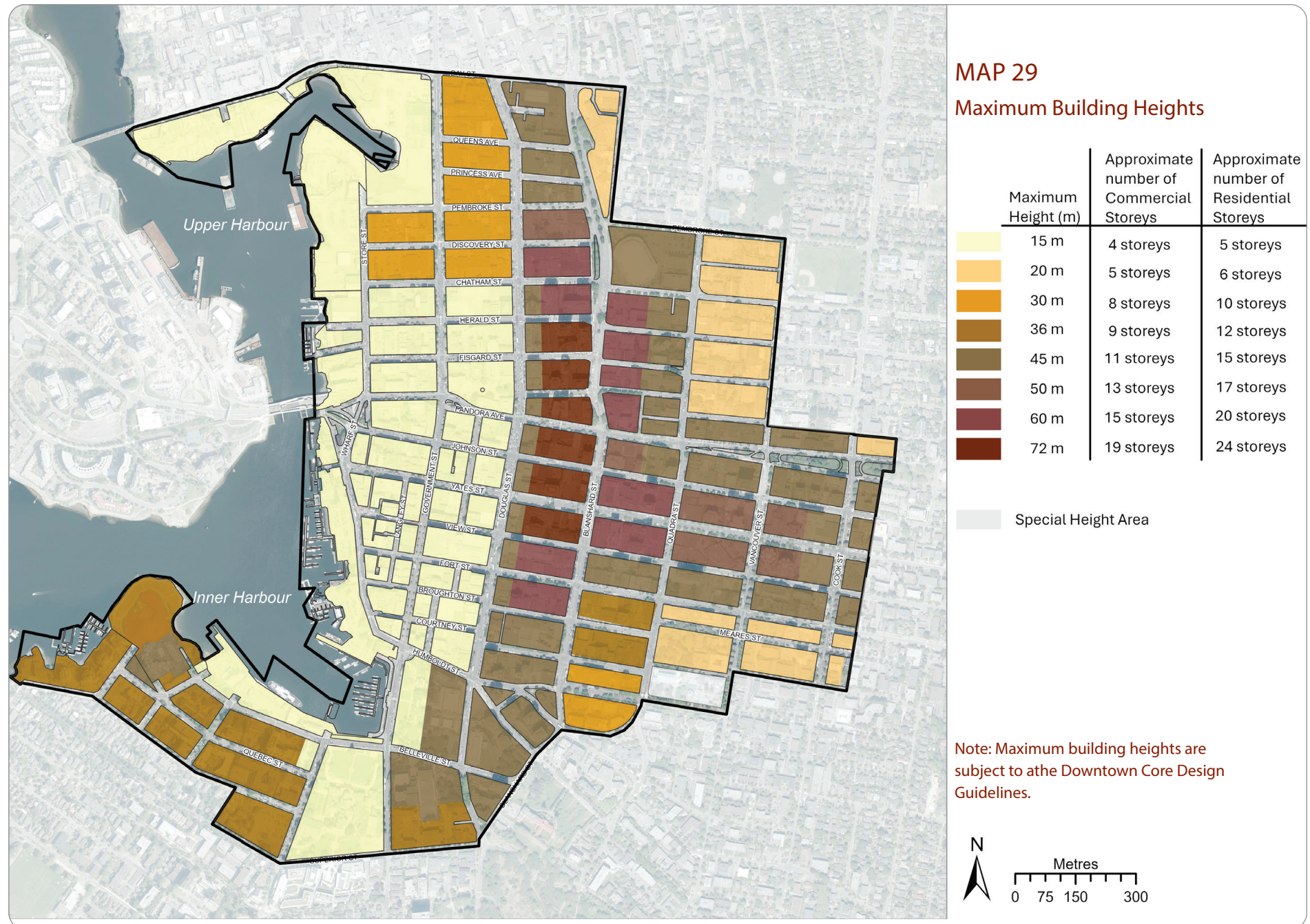
Built form refers to the physical shape, size, mass and design of individual buildings. It is important that the built form serves to complement the local context as well as provide a positive interface with the public realm and the space between individual buildings.

## BUILDING HEIGHT – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 6.130. Review and amend the Zoning Regulation Bylaw to reflect the maximum building heights consistent with the maximum building height limits described in Map 29.
- 6.131. Consider the maximum building heights described in Map 29 in the evaluation of rezoning applications.
- 6.132. Maintain lower building heights within the Historic Commercial District as well as along the waterfront in order to reflect the local topography.
- 6.133. Locate taller buildings primarily within the geographic setting of the Central Business District.
- 6.134. Consider additional height and density along the east side of Quadra Street in order to support the retention, enhancement or creation of arts and culture space within the Quadra Cultural Corridor, considering site context, principles of good urban design, and applicable development permit guidelines. (See also policies for the Residential Mixed Use District, Section 3).



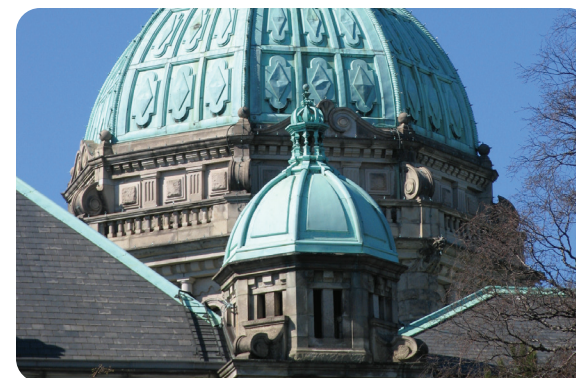
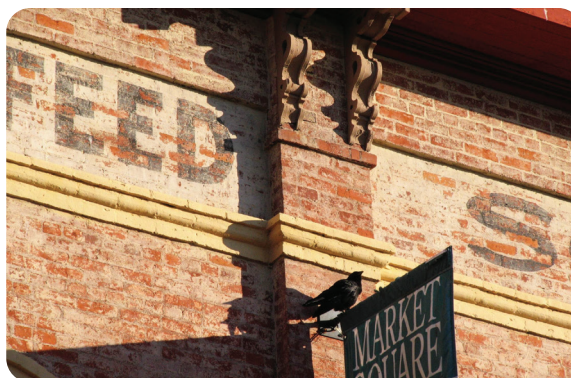
Building height and form should relate to the local context and advance the objectives of the Downtown Core Area Plan.



UPDATED: MAY 9, 2012

## heritage

## 7



## INTRODUCTION

Heritage conservation is about retaining places that matter to the community for physical qualities, and in relation to both collective memory and contemporary uses. Its purpose is to retain, protect and improve real property with aesthetic, historic, scientific, cultural, social or spiritual value, and heritage character, as a public benefit.

This Plan seeks to continue to strike a balance between heritage conservation and new development as the Downtown Core Area grows significantly over the next thirty years. Its heritage policies seek to provide guidance that builds on Victoria's achievements in heritage protection, sensitive infill and new additions. The Plan guides changes to the historic environment as a consideration in placemaking at varying scales, from Heritage Conservation Areas, to streetscapes and open spaces, to buildings and sites. Policies also identify incentives and community engagement to help conserve the heritage value of Downtown Core Area Districts.

## HERITAGE – DOWNTOWN CORE AREA

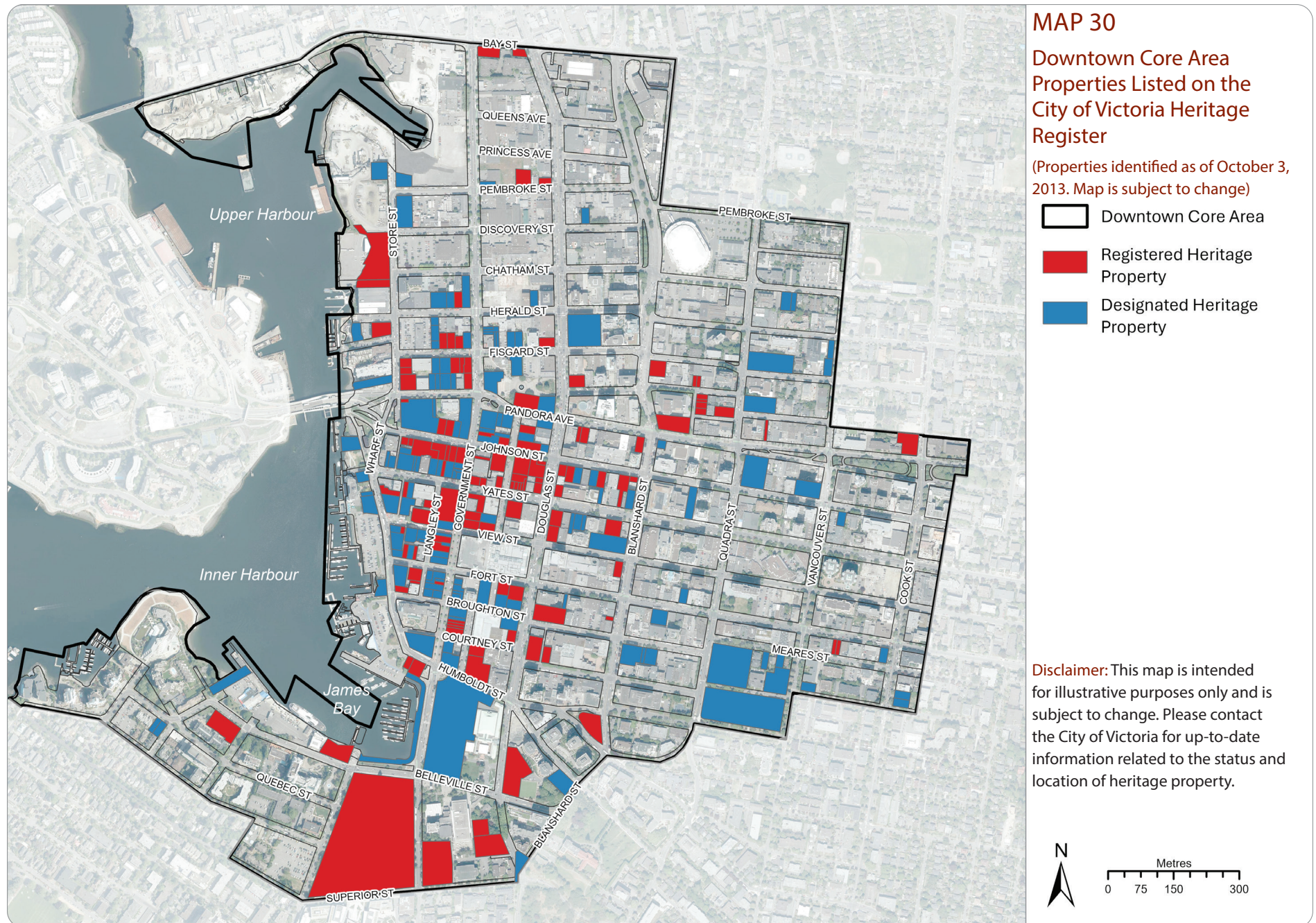
Much of the picturesque quality of Victoria is associated with its conservation areas and landmarks, some of which date from early colonial settlement. Since the 1970s, policies have encouraged new development in the Downtown Core Area through sensitive infill and new additions, while retaining and enhancing the heritage value and unique character of special places, such as Bastion Square, Centennial Square and Chinatown National Historic District.

The Downtown Core Area contains more than 200 heritage properties, including those identified as landmarks in this Plan such as the Provincial Parliament Buildings, Empress Hotel and Canadian Pacific Railway Steamship Terminal (SEE MAP 33). The Historic Commercial District is generally characterized by a “saw tooth” one-to-five storey skyline of Victorian and Edwardian architecture, which partially extends into the Inner Harbour District. Heritage is also a significant element of the character of the Central Business District and Residential Mixed-Use District, where there is a cluster of church spires on and near Quadra Street. The Rock Bay District contains the majority of the last remaining early industrial buildings.

## HERITAGE – OBJECTIVES

The heritage policies that are contained in this Plan seek to retain and enhance the presence and heritage value, character of areas, districts, streetscapes, open spaces, buildings, sites and features in the Downtown Core Area. Collectively these policies address the following objectives:

1. Retain, protect and improve real property with aesthetic, historic, scientific, cultural, social or spiritual value and heritage character as a benefit to the public.
2. Development and heritage conservation are balanced through sensitive new infill and property additions that respond to the heritage value and character of Downtown Core Area Districts.
3. Heritage conservation and urban design are integrated in streetscaping and open spaces in beautification, arts and cultural programming and public history initiatives.



4. Properties with heritage value are identified and selected for retention and protection through community engagement.
5. City of Victoria support for the conservation and celebration of properties with heritage value is maintained and enhanced.

### AREAS AND DISTRICTS – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 7.1. Refer to the applicable design guidelines in rezoning and permit review processes in Development Permit Areas and Heritage Conservation Areas, where these are regulated and controlled within the Downtown Core Area.
- 7.2. Continue to balance the demand for new development and heritage conservation in the Downtown Core Area.
- 7.3. Conserve heritage values of the Downtown Core Area and its character-defining elements, such as individual buildings, collections of buildings, streetscapes, structures and features.
- 7.4. Maintain, develop and enhance urban design guidelines for exterior alterations, new additions and infill development within Heritage Conservation Areas and, where relevant, Development Permit Areas, in the Downtown Core Area.
- 7.5. Produce and update, as required, Statements of Significance for Heritage Conservation Areas within the Downtown Core Area.
- 7.6. Continue to support zoning in the Historic Commercial District and Inner Harbour District that contributes to conservation of heritage values in these areas.
- 7.7. Continue to support the conversion of the upper storeys of heritage-designated property from non-residential uses to residential uses in strategic locations within the Downtown Core Area that serve to support the policies of this Plan.
- 7.8. Continue to support the rehabilitation of heritage-designated property that is non-residential such as office and hotel, in strategic locations within the Downtown Core Area that serve to support the policies of this Plan.
- 7.9. Retain some capacity for small-scale office use in the upper storeys of properties in the Historic Commercial District.
- 7.10. Continue to identify, protect and conserve heritage property and areas in the Residential Mixed-Use District, particularly the landmarks on and near Quadra Street, as identified in this Plan.
- 7.11. Identify, protect and conserve industrial heritage property in the Rock Bay District.

### STREETSCAPES AND OPEN SPACE – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 7.12. Maintain lower scale building forms along the waterfront adjacent to Store Street, Wharf Street, Government Street and Belleville Street, and in these locations support new development with form and character that enhances the heritage value of the Historic Commercial District.
- 7.13. Maintain and enhance the existing network of through-block walkways in the Historic Commercial District, with special consideration of the heritage value of public and public-private open spaces in the Chinatown National Historic District.
- 7.14. Enhance the place character of Downtown Core Area Districts by celebrating heritage through urban design features such as art, banners, street furniture, lighting and plantings.
- 7.15. Seek opportunities to acknowledge and integrate the culture, values and heritage of First Peoples in design and celebration of public space, particularly in the Historic Commercial District and the Inner Harbour District.
- 7.16. Work with diverse partners on public history projects through improvements on public lands, and private lands, such as plaques, banners, installations and interpretative displays.
- 7.17. Continue to support festivals, celebrations and special events at major open spaces in the Historic Commercial District and Inner Harbour District including Bastion Square, Centennial Square (Spirit Square) and along the waterfront.

### BUILDINGS AND SITES – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 7.18. Support new development that conserves and enhances the form, character and features of heritage property and areas, where controlled and regulated in the Downtown Core Area.
- 7.19. Give consideration to tools available under legislation to conserve heritage property in the Downtown Core Area, including, but not limited to heritage designation bylaws, heritage register listings, temporary protection, heritage alteration permits, heritage revitalization agreements, design guidelines and protection of views of heritage landmarks from public vantage points as identified in this Plan.
- 7.20. Continue to work with the private sector to identify, protect and conserve property and areas with heritage value in the Downtown Core Area.

- 7.21. Require a Heritage Conservation Plan, as appropriate, and heritage impact assessment, if relevant, where heritage alteration permits, heritage revitalization agreements or rezonings that involve a protected heritage property in the Downtown Core Area.
- 7.22. Encourage new development to avoid the demolition of a protected heritage property, or one or more of its facades, where the exterior alterations are assessed to significantly damage the heritage value of the property or an area, and where facade retention is feasible in conjunction with other policies for Downtown Core Area Districts in this Plan.
- 7.23. Increases to density either through a rezoning application or through the provisions of the density bonus system described in this Plan should not be supported for any parcel or site where a heritage property has been demolished.
- 7.24. Real property that is, or was, subject to a heritage designation bylaw or that is listed on the City of Victoria Heritage Register is ineligible for the density bonus provisions in this Plan.
- 7.25. Accumulate information about seismic conditions of all property with heritage value or character in the Downtown Core Area, particularly the landmarks identified in this Plan, and property in the Historic Commercial District and Inner Harbour District.
- 7.26. Encourage owners of property with heritage value or character in the Downtown Core Area, particularly landmarks or those in the Historic Commercial District and Inner Harbour District, to upgrade the seismic conditions of buildings and structures.
- 7.27. Evaluate the heritage value of public and private property in the Downtown Core Area, and propose new additions to the Heritage Register based on their significance.
- 7.28. Produce and update, as required, Statements of Significance for properties listed on the Heritage Register in the Downtown Core Area.

## HERITAGE INCENTIVES – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 7.29. Continue and enhance incentives for heritage conservation such as, tax incentives, parking variances and other zoning variances, where broadly consistent with the policies for each District of the Downtown Core Area that are provided in this Plan.
- 7.30. Maintain and develop financial incentives for building rehabilitation, particularly seismic upgrading, for eligible heritage-designated commercial, institutional, industrial and residential property in the Downtown Core Area.
- 7.31. Consider expanding the northern boundary of the eligibility area for heritage tax incentives to include the Rock Bay District, where the building rehabilitation does not involve the conversion of an existing use to a residential use.
- 7.32. Explore the financial impacts and overall feasibility of extending the duration of heritage tax incentives from a maximum of 10 years to a maximum of 15 years.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 7.33. Engage the public and private sectors including property owners, businesses, organizations, groups and citizens in the Downtown Core Area in local area plan studies to identify locations, buildings, structures and features with heritage value, and ways to conserve and celebrate them.
- 7.34. Continue to work with the public and private sectors, organizations, groups and citizens to celebrate Victoria's culture and heritage in public realm improvements and festivals and special events, particularly in the Historic Commercial District and Inner Harbour District.
- 7.35. Partner with the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations to acknowledge and integrate the culture, values and heritage of First Peoples in the Downtown Core Area, particularly in the Historic Commercial District and Inner Harbour District.

# energy and environment

# 8



## INTRODUCTION

A critical component of urban planning today is the management of growth and development in a manner that not only maintains and enhances the health of natural ecosystems, but also addresses key issues such as climate change and energy security, and contributes to the overall livability of the urban area. Planning efforts over the past decades have resulted in a Downtown Core Area that is compact, walkable and livable. However, the Downtown Core Area's ability to accommodate further urban intensification and population growth over the next 30 years is dependent on significant improvements to its infrastructure and overall livability, while at the same time ensuring that growth and development are managed carefully to mitigate any potential impact on the area's natural ecosystems and quality of life for residents, visitors and businesses.

## ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT – OBJECTIVES

The energy and environment policies and actions contained in this Plan collectively address the following objectives:

1. That natural systems are preserved and enhanced as the result of more environmentally sustainable land development and redevelopment, building design and transportation practices.
2. That the Rock Bay District is transformed into a key employment centre that serves as a local model for the integration of green infrastructure related to wastewater, storm water, energy generation and transmission, building design and technology.

3. That green spaces and the urban forest serve to improve the overall livability within the Downtown Core Area.

## ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### LAND DEVELOPMENT

- 8.1. Continue to encourage and support higher density development in locations that are within walking distance of frequent and rapid transit corridors within the Downtown Core Area's transit network.
- 8.2. Encourage the remediation of contaminated sites to accommodate new development and to improve on-site environmental conditions overall, where possible.
- 8.3. Encourage design and development practices that optimize energy and water efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- 8.4. Incorporate low impact development standards such as permeable surfaces, in the design of open spaces and building setbacks to reduce storm water flow.
- 8.5. Support adaptation and re-use of existing buildings where they result in improved building performance and support the overall land use and development policies of this Plan.
- 8.6. Encourage building designs that optimize active and passive solar gain.

- 8.7. Encourage the provision and maintenance of on-site facilities for recyclables, organic materials and general waste in new multi residential, commercial and industrial developments.

## TRANSPORTATION

- 8.8. Continue to support development and transportation systems that encourage alternate modes of transport.
- 8.9. Employ a range of Transportation Demand Management strategies in the Downtown Core Area.

## GREEN SPACES AND URBAN FOREST

- 8.10. Incorporate storm water management and urban forest management considerations into street redesign projects.
- 8.11. Encourage on-site development to increase the provision of green spaces, natural surfaces, trees, plants and streetscaping.
- 8.12. Encourage private and public development to expand and enhance on-site open space and landscaping to address storm water run-off.
- 8.13. Ensure City zoning regulations and design guidelines include landscaping standards that reduce overall water consumption and encourage native plants and trees.
- 8.14. Increase the overall urban tree canopy cover where possible in accordance with the goals, objectives and actions of the City's Parks and Open Spaces Masterplan and the Tree Protection Bylaw.
- 8.15. Encourage projects to incorporate opportunities for urban agriculture.

## ENERGY AND EMISSIONS

- 8.16. Explore methods to encourage and facilitate private and public development to include renewable district energy systems able to serve portions of the Downtown Core Area.

## WATER

- 8.17. Explore methods to encourage and facilitate the retention and re-use of stormwater on site.

## HARBOUR AREA

- 8.18. Explore opportunities in conjunction with waterfront public or private development to restore shoreline ecological conditions and enhance aquatic ecosystems.

## community vitality

## 9



## INTRODUCTION

Vitality in an urban setting is usually defined in three ways:

- Social vitality is a city's ability to make the people who live and work there feel like they belong to or are a part of a community or neighbourhood. This sense of belonging influences many aspects of urban life, including crime rates and community safety.
- Economic vitality is a city's ability to attract and retain businesses and the jobs they bring with them.
- Cultural vitality is a city's ability to provide a range of arts and cultural activities that people value and look for opportunities to become involved in, as active participants, viewers or supporters.
- The Downtown Core Area is the economic and cultural heart not just of the City of Victoria, but of the Capital Region as a whole.

It is the Provincial Capital and site of the Legislative Assembly. It houses the headquarters of many provincial ministries, agencies and Crown corporations. It has the region's largest concentration of employment and is a hub of transportation and commerce. It is home to major cultural institutions and entertainment facilities, and is the Region's primary tourist attraction. The Downtown Core Area also offers the greatest range of goods and services in the Region, with a local market of approximately 12,000 people living within one kilometre of City Hall. No other location in Greater Victoria provides more opportunity for face-to-face communication, interaction and exchange.

But despite these strengths, the Downtown Core Area faces a number of challenges. Homelessness, poverty and issues of social disorder have become entrenched in certain parts of the Downtown Core Area and have contributed to a growing sense of insecurity and despair. Affordable housing is limited. The Downtown Core Area's share of the regional office and retail market continues to decline as suburban communities offer more opportunity for their residents to shop and work closer to home. Established bus-based transit is nearing operational capacity in key high-volume corridors, including Douglas Street. Aging infrastructure and public facilities need to be upgraded or replaced to support future population growth, and the Downtown Core Area needs new attractions to enhance its place as a destination for visitors and tourism.

## COMMUNITY VITALITY OBJECTIVES

To help ensure the social, economic and cultural vitality of the Downtown Core Area as it grows over the next 30 years, the community vitality policies contained in this Plan attempt to build on the Area's significant strengths and to realize the opportunities new growth and development can offer. Collectively these policies address the following objectives:

1. That a broader range of housing options are developed within the Downtown Core Area to support a more diverse mix of households.
2. That initiatives to decrease homelessness and increase community safety and civility continue to be supported by both public and private initiatives.

3. That ideas for making the Downtown Core Area more attractive for residents, workers and visitors alike are supported through new or improved public amenities and recreational facilities, as well as expanded arts, cultural and learning options.
4. That the Downtown Core Area continues to diversify and strengthen its employment base and its provision of suitable office space.
5. That improved transit options continue to emerge both within the Downtown Core Area and across the Region.

## SOCIAL VITALITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

- 9.1. Support the development of non-market housing as the Downtown Core Area grows, working with provincial, regional, non-profit and industry partners and with targeted investments from the Victoria Housing Trust Fund.
- 9.2. Explore development standards such as reduced parking requirements, to encourage and facilitate the provision of smaller residential dwelling units in the 30 to 40 m<sup>2</sup> range in multi-residential development.

### HOMELESSNESS

- 9.3. Continue to support the work of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness.
- 9.4. Continue to work with community partners to secure emergency shelter for homeless people through the Greater Victoria Extreme Weather Protocol.

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- 9.5. Review and amend the Zoning Regulation Bylaw to establish requirements and standards for the provision of indoor and outdoor common areas and recreation space within multi-residential development in addition to the provision of ground-oriented housing such as townhouses at the base level of new higher density multi-residential developments.
- 9.6. Expand the use of heritage revitalization agreements and incentive programs to upgrade and revitalize heritage buildings for market and non-market housing.

## SAFETY AND CIVILITY

- 9.7. Establish a coordinated Graffiti Management Program, in partnership with the Victoria Police Department and business and community partners.
- 9.8. Review, update and extend City and partner downtown street-cleaning programs as the Downtown Core Area grows.
- 9.9. Work with the Victoria Police Department and community partners to improve personal safety, security of property and public order within the Downtown Core Area.

## PUBLIC SERVICES

- 9.10. Prepare and implement a strategy for the design, location, installation, maintenance and funding for the provision of new or upgraded full service public washrooms and drinking fountains within the Downtown Core Area.

## COMMUNITY SERVICES

- 9.11. Work with regional partners and senior levels of government to explore establishing secure funding that will permit social service providers to provide 24-hour service, seven days a week to the street community as appropriate.
- 9.12. Review the need for new community services and facilities on an ongoing basis, as part of the monitoring strategy for the Downtown Core Area Plan.
- 9.13. Engage with community partners to identify methods to encourage and facilitate the provision of childcare facilities within the Downtown Core Area in response to increased demand from the local workforce.

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- 9.14. Update the City of Victoria Emergency Management Plan to prepare for the challenges of an expanded, higher density Downtown Core Area.
- 9.15. Continue to support the seismic upgrading and rehabilitation of heritage buildings through heritage revitalization incentive programs.
- 9.16. Review and update the Zoning Regulation Bylaw to establish standards for providing on-site emergency preparedness facilities and equipment in new higher density commercial, residential and mixed use buildings.

## URBAN ANIMATION

- 9.17. Ensure that the development of outdoor café and dining areas on sidewalks, squares and plazas, are evaluated against all relevant City of Victoria, policies and regulations.
- 9.18. Maintain, review and extend seasonal lighting and decoration programs as appropriate and with partners as opportunities arise.
- 9.19. Support and facilitate the development of a year-round farmers' market within the Downtown Core Area, to animate the public and private realm and support local growers and food processors.
- 9.20. Review and update public space management policies and programs with partners to ensure they are consistent with this Plan.
- 9.21. Review and update management programs and supports for major public open spaces, such as Centennial Square, to ensure appropriate and ongoing year round events and activities.

## PUBLIC AMENITIES

- 9.22. New public amenities and public realm improvements within the Downtown Core Area should serve to meet the objectives and policies of this Plan.

## RECREATION

- 9.23. Review and update plans for enhancing primary recreation facilities in the Downtown Core Area.
- 9.24. Consider opportunities for providing new recreation facilities and services in the new parks proposed for the Rock Bay District, North Park and/or the eastern part of the Downtown, including appropriately scaled indoor facilities and recreational water access as appropriate.

## ENTERTAINMENT AND SPECIAL EVENTS

- 9.25. Establish a management strategy to support and enhance the downtown evening and late night economy that addresses:
  - 9.25.1. Initiatives to maintain downtown as the primary entertainment district for Greater Victoria.
  - 9.25.2. Initiatives to manage and mitigate issues of public disorder.
  - 9.25.3. Locational criteria and development standards for new entertainment-related uses.
  - 9.25.4. Strategies to encourage the provision of a broader range of entertainment venues for varying ages and interests.
  - 9.25.5. Interface conditions and strategies to mitigate conflict between residential development and bars, nightclubs and restaurants.

- 9.26. Continue to support special events, celebrations and festivals at major public open spaces – including Centennial Square, along the Inner Harbour waterfront and in other existing and proposed public open spaces – through programming and by providing on-site infrastructure and equipment.
- 9.27. Work with community partners to investigate the feasibility and need for a permanent and dedicated location for major outdoor events and festivals within the Downtown Core Area.

## ECONOMIC VITALITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### PROVINCIAL CAPITAL

- 9.28. Work with the Province to meet the long-term office space needs of ministries, agencies and Crown corporations, within transit accessible locations, in the expanded Central Business District and in the Inner Harbour District.
- 9.29. Work with the Province, the Provincial Capital Commission and the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority to develop – with an appropriate mix of provincial, civic, community and private development – currently vacant and underdeveloped public lands along the Inner Harbour, in accordance with the policies contained in this Plan.

### ACCESS

- 9.30. Work with BC Transit, the Ministry of Transportation, the Capital Regional District and other partners to establish regional rapid transit service between the Downtown Core Area, Saanich and the West Shore, with longer-term potential for rapid transit service to the Peninsula, Swartz Bay and the airport.
- 9.31. Work with BC Transit to implement the Rapid Transit Plan including the establishment of new routes, services, and related infrastructure.
- 9.32. Work with marine air companies and Transport Canada to ensure that efficient and convenient shore side air transport facilities continue to serve the Victoria Harbour Aerodrome, as lands along the Inner Harbour waterfront are redeveloped.
- 9.33. Support the development of a new and improved regional bus terminal in the Downtown Core Area.
- 9.34. Retain rail corridor access to the Downtown Core Area to ensure the long-term potential for commuter and regular inter-city passenger rail service that terminates Downtown.

- 9.35. Work with industry and community partners to develop a seamless network of wireless broadband service throughout the Downtown Core Area.

## OFFICE SECTOR

- 9.36. Update the Zoning Regulation Bylaw to expand the capacity of the Downtown Core Area, particularly the Central Business District, to accommodate new office development, consistent with the policies contained in this Plan.

## RETAIL TRADE

- 9.37. Update the Zoning Regulation Bylaw to accommodate new residential space – and increase the local consumer base – within the Downtown Core Area, consistent with the policies of this plan.
- 9.38. Work with partners to improve the frequency of public transit and level of service between the Downtown Core Area and potential customers in the rest of the Region.
- 9.39. Continue to work with public and private sector partners to provide a free circulating shuttle transit in the Downtown Core Area.
- 9.40. Participate with the Downtown Victoria Business Association, the Greater Victoria Development Agency and business and community partners to develop and implement a Downtown Retail Strategy.

## TOURISM

- 9.41. Design and implement a comprehensive wayfinding system, that uses prominently displayed maps, clear and consistent signage and other mechanisms to make it easy for visitors to find attractions within and adjacent to Downtown.
- 9.42. Continue to update and expand the range of walking tours, including tours using wireless delivery mechanisms.
- 9.43. Work with business, community and agency partners to develop a broader range of attractions in the Downtown Core Area, including those that cater to families with children.
- 9.44. Continue to expand the capacity of the Victoria Conference Centre to attract convention business through ongoing marketing programs and facility improvements.
- 9.45. Ensure that new hotels are located at appropriate and strategic locations where they can serve to support tourism, convention business and retail activities within the Downtown Core Area.

## INDUSTRY

- 9.46. Continue to support the working Harbour and marine industrial and transportation uses, consistent with the direction set out in the City of Victoria Harbour Plan.
- 9.47. Plan, develop and implement, as an immediate priority, a local area plan and related strategy to transform the Rock Bay District as a green employment centre.

## CULTURAL VITALITY POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### ARTS AND CULTURE

- 9.48. Work with community partners to retain and enhance existing cultural facilities, including the Victoria Conservatory of Music, the Greater Victoria Regional Library, the Maritime Museum, the Royal BC Museum and others.
- 9.49. Continue to provide support to community organizations that provide diverse cultural programming in private and institutional facilities, throughout the Downtown Core Area.
- 9.50. Continue to maintain and upgrade the Royal Theatre and the McPherson Playhouse as primary civic performance halls.
- 9.51. Work with the Royal BC Museum to ensure that future expansion plans contribute a signature, architecturally harmonious presence to the Inner Harbour precinct, as well as modernized facilities and enhanced public viewing galleries.
- 9.52. Work with community partners and senior levels of government to explore the feasibility of establishing and accommodating a prominent cultural facility in the Downtown Core Area.

### EDUCATION AND LEARNING

- 9.53. Engage with community partners including post-secondary education providers to explore the feasibility of establishing new facilities and uses within the Downtown Core Area that provide a multitude of learning opportunities.
- 9.54. Work with School District 61 to retain existing school facilities and lands in areas immediately adjacent to the Downtown Core Area, and to monitor the need for a new elementary school as the residential population increases.
- 9.55. Work with existing private schools to maintain their presence in the Downtown Core Area.
- 9.56. Work with Greater Victoria Public Library partners to encourage and facilitate the relocation of the Central Library from Broughton Street to a more centralized downtown location.

## implementation

## 10



The Downtown Core Area Plan is of great importance as it provides a framework for guiding growth and development over the next 30 years. The Downtown Core Area Plan therefore requires a detailed implementation and monitoring strategy to move forward on the Plan's vision and objectives.

Once the Plan is approved, the Implementation Strategy/Action Plan will be developed for Council's consideration. It would include components related to:

### 1. ROCK BAY LOCAL AREA PLAN

- Continue to implement the directions of the Industry, Arts and Innovation District Action Plan to support transforming the Rock Bay District into a key employment centre.

### 2. REGULATORY AND POLICY AMENDMENTS

- Review the Zoning Regulation Bylaw to update or develop new comprehensive development regulations (zones) to align and facilitate the policies and development concepts described in this Plan.

### 3. FINANCIAL STRATEGIES

- Develop financial strategies related to the capital planning and operational work programs.
- Identify potential funding sources, financial mechanisms and partnerships to support and implement the Plan's actions

### 4. COMMUNICATIONS

- Develop a comprehensive communications strategy for introducing the new

Downtown Core Area Plan with the Implementation Strategy/Action Plan to the general public, communities, industry, the business community and other related groups.

### 5. MONITORING AND REPORTING

- Develop a strategy for tracking and analyzing the overall implementation and success of the Plan.
- Develop a reporting strategy for providing periodic reports to Council – and to the public and other Plan stakeholders – on achievements, progress, emerging issues and development activity.

### 6. ENGAGEMENT AND MOBILIZATION

- Identify roles and responsibilities for the implementation and advancement of the Downtown Core Area Plan including internal and external stakeholders.

