



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

# Staff Report

**To:** Council

**File No.:** 1407-20

**From:** Acting Director of Development Services

**Date:** November 19, 2025

**Subject: Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan Phase 2 and Harmston Park Plan - What We Heard Reports**

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## PURPOSE:

For Council to receive for information the public and interest-holder engagement findings (What We Heard Reports) for the Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan Phase 2 engagement process (DVLAP) and the Harmston Park Plan in preparation for the next phase of public and interest-holder engagement for the DVLAP and to provide direction to the detailed planning process for the Harmston Park Plan.

## BACKGROUND:

Council received the Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan Communication Strategy at the October 23, 2024 regular meeting of Council and endorsed the plan. The communication strategy outlines three phases of communication and consultation. These phases are listed here along with a status of the communication and consultation activities:

- Phase 1: Planning Context & Design Foundations - *Completed*
  - Project Social Pinpoint webpage launched <https://engagemoxvalley.ca/courtenay-downtown-plan>.
  - Interest-holders and intergovernmental interviews of partners from the 2016 Downtown Courtenay Playbook.
  - Phase 1 What We Heard Report presented to Council at the February 12, 2025 regular meeting of Council.
  
- Phase 2: Key Directions & Concept Plan – *Completed*
  - Interest-holders and intergovernmental interactive workshop including presentation (held May 14, 2025 from 1-3 p.m.).
  - Public Open House including a 30-minute presentation (held May 14, 2025 from 4-7 p.m.)
  - Online survey (available three weeks between May 14 and June 4. Hard copies were made available upon request).
  - Virtual engagement via Social Pinpoint webpage including recorded presentation, all public open house story boards and updated FAQs based on common public questions posted online.
  - Phase 2 What We Heard Report presented to Council (current milestone).
  
- Phase 3: Refinement & Draft Plans – *Next Phase*
  - Public Open House (note that the original communications plan identifies that virtual engagement would occur instead of an Open House, however staff recommend that an in-person Open House be provided given the strong interest from the Phase 2 Open House).
  - Interest-holders and intergovernmental workshop.
  - Virtual engagement via Social Pinpoint webpage.
  - Phase 3 What We Heard Report presented to Council.

In addition to the DVLAP process outlined above, a separate but related capital project planning for Harmston Park is occurring concurrently to the DVLAP. Coordination of these two projects has allowed for efficiencies in consultation to occur and contextual information and draft policy direction from the downtown plan to inform specific ideas and needs for the Harmston Park plan and capital improvements. The Harmston Park Plan process includes the following milestones:

- Phase 1: Concept Design & Public and Interest-holder Engagement - *completed*
  - Project Social Pinpoint webpage launched <https://engagecomoxvalley.ca/harmston-park>
  - Interest-holders meetings.
  - Public Pop-Up in the Park.
- Phase 2: Detailed Park Planning – following adoption of DVLAP
  - Request for Proposals.
  - Development of a preferred Concept Plan based on Harmston Park Plan Interest-Holder Engagement received in Phase 1.
  - Survey for feedback on the Preferred Concept Plan.
  - Present Preferred Concept Plan to Council.
  - Detailed design of Phase 1 of the Preferred Concept Plan.
- Phase 3: Construction of Phase 1 of the Harmston Park improvements – 2027
  - Implementation of the Preferred Concept Plan is anticipated to be over several phases to align with funding availability.

Following previous reports and presentations to Council, this staff report outlines the results of the Phase 2 communications and consultation efforts related to the DVLAP process, including feedback from the Harmston Park concept planning initiative.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

Findings and information related to the full Local Area Plan (LAP) is presented first, followed by findings and information specific to the Harmston Park planning process.

#### **Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan – What We Heard**

The objectives of the DVLAP consultation in Phase 2 were to:

- Bring the community together to build excitement for the plan and encourage involvement in its development/implementation.
- Explore key concepts, trade-offs and design directions with community members and interest holders.
- Facilitate both in-person and virtual engagement opportunities to integrate feedback from a broad cross-section of the community and interests.

Phase 2 communications and consultation presented “Big Moves” for the Downtown planning area as a whole, as well as for each of the four planning districts (Riverfront, Downtown Core, Fitzgerald Corridor and Harmston Park<sup>1</sup>). Two dozen public house story boards were produced to draw attention to and ask specific

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<sup>1</sup> Note – Staff recommend changing the name of this district from “Harmston Park” to “Harmston” to be clearer on the park planning efforts in relation to the wider district and DVLAP planning efforts. While the existing documents and reports reference “Hamston Park” district, the language will be modified for future communications and documentation.

questions about opportunities, key directions and development options, policy and capital project concepts. These materials formed the basis of the public presentation at the Open House, the presentation and workshop with interest-holders and the online survey.

### **DVLAP Participation Rates**

The following participation rates demonstrate strong community interest in the DVLAP initiative and underscore the importance of offering diverse opportunities for feedback to ensure that all voices are heard and to create a comprehensive development plan that reflects the community's needs:

- 460 survey responses.
- 130 individuals attended the public open house.
- 22 individuals representing 10 organizations attended the interest-holder workshop session.
- 3,365 visitors accessed the project webpage between May and July and 10 questions posted to the Q&A panel.

### **DVLAP Key Findings**

Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan Phase 2 What We Heard Report (Attachment 1) contains detailed information on the findings from the community open house, public survey, written feedback, and interest-holder session as well as demographic profiles of survey participants.

A summary of these findings is presented below organized by what was heard for the DVLAP as a whole (Table 1) followed by more detailed direction for each planning district. Information is included on how Phase 3 DVLAP process will respond to the community input. Figure 1 includes the DVLAP boundaries as well as planning districts for reference.

*Figure 1: DVLAP plan boundaries and planning districts*



Table 1: Key findings for the Downtown as a whole and how the DVLAP will respond

Plan Theme	What We Heard	How the DVLAP will respond
<p><b>Balanced Growth</b></p>	<p>Strong support for more housing and density, especially to address affordability and inclusivity. Widespread emphasis on keeping development human-scale as residents prefer buildings under 4–6 storeys, especially near green or historic areas. This also includes measures to reduce potential vehicle congestion from increased density, such as adding more parking capacity in the downtown.</p>	<p>Courtenay’s Official Community Plan (OCP) is concurrently being reviewed to achieve provincial housing legislation requirements and revisions are scheduled to be adopted in Q1 2026. If approved the OCP update will direct additional base residential density, and density bonus allowances in exchange for affordable housing contributions, on a number of lands within growth centres outside the downtown to fall within 4-6 storeys.</p> <p>Additionally, the updated OCP will direct that future Local Area Plans (LAPs) be conducted in each growth centre in order to provide further detailed planning to include: residential densities and typologies, opportunity for use of density bonus zoning to incentivize affordable housing or inclusionary zoning to require, complementary land use needs, infrastructure constraints and needs, and details on form, character, pattern, placemaking and circulation for the area.</p> <p>Within the downtown, many zones currently permit up to 4 storeys. This DVLAP process will reflect community feedback to identify where in the downtown additional development is supportable and feasible including where changes to zoning including parking requirements are recommended.</p> <p>More detailed findings in the district-specific sections below support concentrating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• higher densities within the downtown core (away from 5<sup>th</sup> street) and Fitzgerald Avenue, and</li> <li>• permitting multi-residential and mixed-use development patterns that taper down to the Riverfront and Harmston districts and along existing lower density character neighbourhoods (Old Orchard).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Protected &amp; Expanded Green and Public Spaces</b></p>	<p>Participants emphasized the importance of accessible green space, natural areas, and community gathering places. There is strong interest in multifunctional public spaces including parks, plazas, markets,</p>	<p>An outcome of the DVLAP is a placemaking strategy that identifies strategic lands for placemaking activation (whether natural or urban areas and features) and more general guidelines on public art, street furnishings, wayfinding and landscaping. Specific outcomes will include directions on more regular 5<sup>th</sup> Street closures for markets and events (as requested by the Downtown Courtenay Business</p>

	and cultural venues that serve all ages and backgrounds.	Improvement Association) as well as a location for the Comox Valley Farmers Market. These initiatives are being reviewed in relation to the Courtenay Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Strategic Cultural Plan.
<b>Walkability &amp; Safe Mobility</b>	Participants want better pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, (particularly around the Riverfront), trail connectivity, and safe crossings. Accessibility and mobility for all users (especially children, seniors, and people with disabilities) was a consistent concern.	The OCP, City Strategic Transportation Plan, Cycling Plan, Transit Plan and capital and design programs for 6 <sup>th</sup> Street bridge and network improvements as well as numerous downtown intersection improvements, collectively lay a strong foundation to ensure active forms of transportation, transit and accessibility are invested in to balance modal split targets to more strongly support these modes. The feedback from the DVLAP community consultation will be used to inform refinements to downtown placemaking, parks access and these existing plans, policies and designs where appropriate. Opportunities for secure bike parking and one or more vehicular parkades within the plan area will be explored.
<b>Safety &amp; Inclusion</b>	Public safety (road-user safety and social well-being) was important, especially in areas with more crime concerns. There was a desire for public spaces to feel safe, inclusive, and welcoming for women, families, and marginalized groups.	Road user safety is actively being reviewed through the aforementioned transportation studies and capital improvements. Although this DVLAP primarily focuses on land use and built form, ongoing challenges related to complex social challenges in the Downtown area are consistently being raised. This important and valuable feedback is being shared with community partners and considered by City staff in relevant departments to help inform our community response to these complex social issues. By gathering data on criminal activities, staff aim to identify areas where crime rates are elevated compared to perceived risks, which will help inform communications and policy interventions. Additionally, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles will guide the design of future developments and public spaces.
<b>City Look &amp; Feel</b>	There's a strong desire to retain Courtenay's small-town charm, historic identity, and neighborhood feel. Development should reflect	Permitted development massing, scale and heights, placemaking <sup>2</sup> and public realm improvements that reflect Courtenay's valued character and desired image, and transportation options discussed above will all significantly inform how the downtown looks

<sup>2</sup> Placemaking is a term described by a variety of definitions. Here it is used to describe the process and outcome of transforming underused areas into vibrant, welcoming places by focusing on the experiences and needs of the community. Placemaking can take place at a variety of scales (e.g. street corner to full downtown plan area) and involve a variety of partners. Key elements to successful placemaking are including the values, vision and input of the community, focusing on human and social experiences within the spaces, and integrating physical design considerations such as uses and activities, access and linkages, comfort, image and character.

	diverse local culture and history, with interest in public art, heritage preservation, and community-led placemaking.	and feels. Additionally the DVLAP will examine design guidelines for new development and identify what heritage preservation tools are available and appropriate.
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**KEY FINDINGS**

This section outlines the various approaches explored for new housing and investments in the downtown area, presenting the community's feedback on these options and their potential impact. It details the community's preferences regarding density levels, preferred locations for new housing, and key concerns, providing invaluable insights to guide future development that aligns with residents' needs and aspirations.

**Density & Development**

The community was provided opportunity to rate and comment on three approaches to explore where new housing should go in the downtown. The level of density and height increases from Approach 1 - 3, forecasting different amounts of housing and residents in the downtown. (To view the information presented, visit page 6 of Attachment 3 - Phase 2 Public Open House presentation materials).

***What We Heard***

1. The higher levels of development approaches (Approach 2 - Housing Needs Focus and 3 - Room to Grow beyond 2041) were more highly supported options than the existing OCP (Approach 1), reinforcing the vision of a more urban Downtown with higher densities throughout most of the planning area.
2. The Fitzgerald Corridor was selected most frequently as a location for new housing followed by the Downtown Core.
3. While there is general support for increased housing, specific themes of concern and priority include:
  - a. Prioritizing affordability and diverse housing types (e.g., rentals, co-ops, townhomes).
  - b. Avoiding high-rises and overdevelopment, especially near the Riverfront and in the Downtown Core.
  - c. Infrastructure and livability must keep pace with growth through upgraded transit, green space delivery, and services before expanding density.
  - d. Desire to preserve small-town character while allowing for development, especially in areas well-connected by transit or already zoned for commercial use.

***How the DVLAP Will Respond***

More district and key parcel-specific site planning opportunities will be conducted and presented for Council and public input in Phase 3 including opportunities for public land.

OCP land economics analysis has indicated that downtown development faces financial barriers under current market conditions. Factors to evaluate will include financial feasibility of different development types, opportunities to incentivize affordable housing contributions through density bonus, pre-zoning to meet the Provincial Housing Target Order, evaluation of existing downtown revitalization tax exemption program and eligibility criteria, further zoning requirements that affect the viability of development (e.g. off-street underground parking requirements), development form and character guidelines that respond to the planning district vision, as well as requirements or incentives for other land uses such as commercial at grade to support street activation in key areas.

**District: Riverfront**

North of 5<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge questions were posed more generally about the vision for the area. South of the bridge two development concepts were presented for rating and feedback:

1. Concept 1 - Passive Public Waterfront: proposed a passive waterfront experience with trails, boardwalks, and seating along the river's edge. Included: townhomes forming the first row of buildings near the water, with front doors oriented toward the public walkway and waterfront. Larger residential buildings terraced up the slope behind, extending toward Cliffe Avenue.
2. Concept 2 - Active Urban Waterfront: proposed an active public riverside street lined with retail, restaurants, a linear park, cultural spaces, and recreation opportunities. Included: moving the existing Courtenay Riverway Trail behind City Hall to the river to make way for additional public land along the river, creating a generous public zone that supports both community use and riparian protection, taller apartments than concept 1 and including both local and destination-oriented mixed-uses and activities year-round.

To view images and information presented for this district, visit pages 9-11 of Attachment 3 - Phase 2 Public Open House presentation materials.

***What We Heard***

1. Riverfront North:
  - a. Strong public support for natural spaces and access to green space, trails, and riverfront walking paths, while preserving and enhancing wildlife habitat.
2. Riverfront South:
  - a. Desire for balance between public access and development around walkable, vibrant public spaces, but concerns about privatization and overdevelopment.
  - b. Higher preference for Concept 2 that favored mixed-use vibrancy and public activities around the waterfront.
  - c. Safety and inclusion concerns around crime, displacement, and maintaining accessible public space.
  - d. Cautious support for pedestrian bridge with concerns about cost, need, and safety implications of a new bridge. (Staff note that demolition of a number of City-owned buildings along the river and construction of the 6<sup>th</sup> street active transportation bridge had not commenced at the time of the DVLAP open house and survey and some respondents may have thought that those decisions were still to be made).

***How the DVLAP Will Respond***

Public input will inform ongoing riverbank flood mitigation and rehabilitation work being led through the City's Infrastructure and Environmental Engineering department.

Design direction provided through Concept 2 feedback will inform further land use, zoning, park dedication and trail re-alignment direction in DVLAP Phase 3 to propose a concept that includes a generous public and riparian setback from the river and a limited range of mixed uses to support a public riverfront destination as well as more detailed direction on the integration of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street bridge with the surrounding lands. Increased development and public activation can enhance public safety by providing more "eyes on the street" which would apply here where there are no evening uses in the riverfront south. The success of the

preferred concept hinges on a thorough understanding of geotechnical, archaeological, and environmental factors. Although the K'ómoks First Nation is invited to engage fully in the DVLAP process, special focus will be given to this district due to KFN's identification of areas with high archaeological potential and the cultural importance of the river.

**District: Downtown Core**

Respondents were asked to comment on the appropriate use and scale of development for 5<sup>th</sup> Street given its historical small-scale and vibrant small business character as well as specific questions related to public realm, green infrastructure and active transportation enhancements in the core including the proposal for a series of new plazas.

***What We Heard***

1. Mixed views on 5th Street closure with some wanting full pedestrianization for vibrancy and others concerned about accessibility and traffic flow. The DCBIA has indicated support for this concept to be explored further.
2. Desire for green, cultural, and social spaces to support plazas, art, events, and walkable design (Duncan Commons, Cultural Square and Courthouse Transit Plaza all supported).
3. Participants emphasized the need to address homelessness and ensure downtown remains inclusive and safe for all.

***How the DVLAP Will Respond***

Development massing, height, use and character within the downtown core will be addressed as part of the overall DVLAP process.

Phase 3 will include partnership discussions with DCBIA and CV Farmers Market on opportunities to pilot more market events within the 5<sup>th</sup> Street corridor to encourage pedestrian use. This will include flexible street design and utility requirements to support more events as well as direct more detailed study of a permanent 5<sup>th</sup> Street closure to vehicular traffic in coordination with the strategic transportation plan.

In recognition of the downtown core providing a cultural district function within in, further attention to arts and cultural opportunities will be explored. This will include project sheets identifying high level design considerations, infrastructure requirements and cost estimates for each of the identified public realm improvement proposals to inform more detailed capital planning following adoption of the DVLAP: Duncan Commons, Cultural Square and Courthouse Transit Plaza.

**District: Fitzgerald Corridor**

While a small district, the Fitzgerald Corridor was proposed to be elevated as a gateway to the downtown by including additional development densities, mix of uses, improving active transportation and streetscape within the corridor as well as a partial street closure between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> streets to create a pocket park.

***What We Heard***

1. Overall support for revitalization of the corridor as a gateway to downtown with more commercial and mixed-use development.

2. Feedback on safety highlighted issues around pedestrian safety and road-user conflicts, particularly at intersections like 5th Street and Fitzgerald Avenue. Concerns over nighttime safety, theft, crime and drug use also noted. While there was general support for more active transportation features, gathering spaces at intersections were questioned as to their suitability and safety.
3. While there was general support for more density there were also concerns about development being too large in this area, out of scale and possibly displacing existing uses.

### ***How the DVLAP Will Respond***

Development massing, height, use and character within the Fitzgerald Corridor will be addressed as part of the overall DVLAP process.

Further attention to traffic, active transportation and placemaking will require exploration in Phase 3 - including direction on the ultimate streetscape in coordination with the concurrent Strategic Transportation Plan.

### **District: Harmston**

Respondents were asked to comment on the vision of the Harmston district as a dynamic community hub, supported by enhanced park programming and infrastructure. Opportunities for higher-density housing and innovative uses for adjacent municipal lands, such as partial street closures that can further integrate the park into the community fabric, were presented. Two design concepts for the area to inform support for density and uses were presented for rating and feedback:

1. Concept 1 – Four Storey with Limited Commercial: Consistent four-storey building form around Harmston Park and along McPhee Avenue. Commercial uses proposed to be limited to buildings fronting the park and McPhee Avenue, encouraging some public use without making it a focus of the area. Added residential density to help animate the park and offer housing close to community amenities.
2. Concept 2 - Six Storey Mixed Use: Introduces six-storey mixed-use buildings surrounding Harmston Park. Ground floors would feature commercial uses throughout, activating the park edges and bringing shops and services closer to residents. More people living downtown through higher density options can support a wider range of amenities, helps build a stronger sense of community, and can reduce car-dependency when part of a mixed-use complete neighbourhood.

To view the information presented, visit pages 22 and 24 of Attachment 3 - Phase 2 Public Open House presentation materials.

### ***What We Heard***

1. There was a slight ratings preference for 6-storey mixed-use (Concept 2), but many revealed in their comments a preference for buildings under 4 storeys, integrating with existing character and ensuring affordability.
2. Strong support for community hub concept with Harmston Park's green space preserved and enhanced with programming like markets, events, and quiet recreation.
3. Desire for inclusivity and accessibility with an emphasis on affordable housing, diverse public use (e.g., cultural events, family spaces), and safe, accessible design.

***How the DVLAP Will Respond***

Development massing, height, use and character in the Harmston district will be addressed as part of the overall DVLAP process and will focus on particular design and development considerations including: mix of uses along McPhee Avenue to reflect the land use designation akin to Tin Town (focus on compatible light industrial employment uses), integration with the Island Corridor Foundation lands and concurrent visioning process, and leveraging of public lands within this district to support community priorities of affordable housing and cultural and amenity needs within a growing neighbourhood.

The analysis and public feedback to date indicates the need to classify Harmston Park as a community park, thus elevating its need for destination programming and community function. Details on the vision for Harmston Park is provided in the separate discussion section below.

**Harmston Park Plan**

The following section outlines key findings from community consultations and engagement activities designed to inform the development of a conceptual park plan for Harmston Park. This process aimed to address the community's need for park space in the downtown area, capturing diverse perspectives on park design, programming, and infrastructure while highlighting the aspirations of local residents and other contributors.

***What We Heard***

A conceptual park plan for Harmston Park is being developed alongside the DVLAP as a tangible outcome of the planning process to meet an existing identified community need for park space in the downtown. Community and interest-holder input received through the DVLAP process as well as a dedicated Harmston Park planning and engagement process will inform the final concept; feedback to date is presented here.

Following a DVLAP public open house and survey described above, Harmston Park Plan engagement included the following activities:

- A series of targeted focus group sessions in June 2025 organized around equity-priority groups, including: community social support services (adult-focused), cultural services and events, youth support services, and Indigenous community members. The City's Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission was also consulted.
- A wider community engagement Pop-Up in the Park event August 16, 2025. Attendees were invited to view display boards and visionary concept plans developed through the DVLAP process and a staff member was available, along with the communications consultant, to engage in a discussion and answer questions regarding the proposed park concept plans, vision and park amenities.
- A park-specific community survey (online and hard copy) from July 21, 2025, to August 25, 2025, to assess public support for the proposed Harmston Park concept plans as a community park independent of the adjacent land use and zoning discussion and to gather further input on desired park amenities and programming.

**Harmston Park Engagement Participation Rates**

The following data reflects the various community engagement activities undertaken to gather input for the Harmston Park Plan, illustrating the active participation of residents and stakeholders throughout the process:

- 460 survey responses on questions pertaining to the Harmston Park concept plan posed in the DVLAP survey.

- 137 survey responses through the Harmston Park Plan survey.
- 23 individuals representing 12 organizations attended the 4 equity-priority focus group sessions including the City's Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission.
- 70 participants attended the Pop-Up in the Park event.
- 391 visitors accessed the project webpage between July and August.

### **Harmston Park Key Findings**

A copy of the full Harmston Park Plan What We Heard summary report is attached to this report (Attachment 2), the highlights of which are summarized here across all the consultation methods. The report includes separate findings from each the survey, open house and interest-holder session.

### **Park Vision Statement:**

*“Design and develop Harmston Park as a dynamic community hub with opportunities for gathering and recreation, while enhancing the park’s natural and green spaces. As an important green space, Harmston Park will support a growing community with additional amenities and infrastructure, such as potential street closures, to accommodate local events and programming.”*

The above draft vision statement was provided with opportunity to indicate level of support and feedback. Most participants supported (90% were very or somewhat supportive) of the overall vision. Most common reasons for support include: more vibrant spaces that draw people to the area; the need for maintaining quiet natural green space; public safety for all park users, including children, families and pets; and finally, no changes to the existing park.

### **Park Programming**

The most preferred programming and park features from participants in the public survey included:

- Markets, concerts, and community events (73%)
- Playground and family-friendly amenities (71%)
- Quiet areas for informal recreation (70%)

Potential programming ideas from the surveys and pop-up included: public art, public washrooms, water fountain, community centre, nature-based playground, splash pads, a dirt track, more large trees for shade, and fire and drought-resistant plants.

### **Concept Feedback**

The same two concept drawings presented in the DVLAP engagement materials were presented in the Harmston Park Plan process with more detailed prompting to rate and provide feedback on the concepts.

#### **Concept 1: Community Park and Civic Plaza**

Shown in Figure 2, Concept 1 proposes:

- Closing Harmston Ave to vehicles (except emergency access)
- Creating a civic plaza for markets, concerts, and events
- Adding playground, community gardens, and open lawn
- Ground-floor commercial or community uses activate the space year-round

57% of participants were very supportive or somewhat supportive of Concept 1.

*Figure 2: Concept 1 - Community Park and Civic Plaza*



**Concept 2: Community Park**

Shown in Figure 3, Concept 2 proposes:

- Smaller plaza at 6th Street and Harmston Avenue as a main entry
- Passive park with playground, gardens, dog park, and open lawn
- Surrounding buildings include more commercial uses to animate the area

64% of participants were very support or somewhat supportive of Concept 2.

Figure 3: Concept 2 – Community Park



***Community Input on the Harmston Park Plan***

The survey, focus groups and pop up in the park sessions revealed several key themes reflecting the diverse needs and aspirations of community members.

**a) Equitable Access and Inclusive Park Features**

Several groups emphasized the need for accessible transportation and inclusive infrastructure, including accessible walking paths within and around the park, active transportation routes, transit connections, and adequate parking. Community and social organizations highlighted the importance of equitable access and inclusive features, such as seating designed for people of all abilities. Participants also raised the need for measures to support individuals who are unhoused and may use the park as a gathering or shelter space. Indigenous participants stressed the value of inclusive infrastructure, including play areas, nature-based play structures, and public washrooms.

There was strong interest in expanding playground amenities, for older youth. Additionally, participants underscored the importance of creating opportunities for multigenerational programming.

**b) Cultural and Community Gathering Spaces**

Groups consistently emphasized the need for spaces that foster cultural expression, community events, and social interaction. Suggested features included performance stages, food trucks, event areas, communal gathering spaces, outdoor cafés, land-based healing spaces for Indigenous practices, and community garden workshops. There was broad support for closing Harmston Avenue to enable these activities.

Indigenous participants highlighted the importance of creating areas for cultural visibility, such as gathering and performance spaces. Arts and culture representatives stressed the need for event-support infrastructure, including water and electrical access for vendors and performers, as well as adequate parking for visitors and large gatherings. Children and youth advocates called for more youth-focused spaces, particularly for underserved and 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, and recommended partnerships with local schools to help develop these spaces.

**c) Green and Natural Spaces**

Groups consistently stressed the importance of preserving natural areas, protecting existing trees, and adding more shaded spaces within the park. Suggestions included limiting hardscape to maintain green, permeable surfaces and retaining natural areas for Indigenous land-based healing practices.

There was strong support for keeping the community garden and its infrastructure intact, though some concerns were raised about potential conflicts, such as locating a dog park nearby. Participants also expressed interest in adding more recreational spaces, including playgrounds that incorporate natural elements and encourage unstructured play. Enhancing natural features to reduce noise and light pollution was also recommended.

**d) Integration with a Growing Neighbourhood**

Community and social groups emphasized the need for diverse housing options nearby and fair access to the park as the neighborhood grows. There was also a desire to preserve the existing neighborhood's character while accommodating growth. They also expressed concerns about

ensuring new park uses do not negatively affect surrounding residents, such as potential noise impacts.

Indigenous organizations raised questions about whether existing water infrastructure can support increased density around the park and downtown. Arts and culture participants highlighted the importance of creating public spaces that celebrate cultural identity and local heritage within a growing downtown core. Participants also expressed a desire for safety improvements to help support increased density, such as traffic calming and increased lighting.

## **Next steps**

### ***Phase 3 DVLAP***

The community and interest-holder engagement has provided clarity and direction on proposals with promise to include for further study and refinement in Phase 3 of the DVLAP process. Together with direction on Local Area Plan content recommendations from the concurrent OCP update findings, and as informed by Council direction, staff will work with the consultants on the scope for the third and final stage of the DVLAP process. Communications and engagement will include:

- Public Open House
- Interest-holders and intergovernmental workshop
- Virtual engagement via Social Pinpoint webpage
- Phase 3 What We Heard Report presented to Council

The DVLAP is projected to be complete by Q2 2026. This will follow closely the projected adoption date of the OCP (Q1) and will require an amendment to the OCP, and corresponding Public Hearing, in order to be adopted within it.

### ***Harmston Park Plan***

With the initial community engagement phase of the Harmston Park Planning now complete, the input will be used to refine the concept plans and associated policies of the DVLAP. Feedback from the Harmston Park Planning engagement process will inform a preferred concept plan, leading to a detailed design planning process for Harmston Park in 2026, following the completion of DVLAP.

Following Council's receipt of this What We Heard Report, the report will be posted and made available on the project website. Staff will consult K'ómoks First Nation about this project and seek their feedback on this project at an up-coming standing meeting.

## **POLICY ANALYSIS:**

- *Official Community Plan (OCP), 2022*
  - As a specific land use designation, development within the Downtown is guided by detailed vision and policies to inform the DVLAP (pages 59-63).
  - There is OCP policy support for the vision and programmatic themes identified for the Harmston Park Plan in the following chapters: Building and Landscapes, Parks and Recreation, and Social Infrastructure.

- *Downtown Courtenay Playbook, 2016*
  - Provides direction and inspiration for a number of proposals being explored for implementation in the DVLAP.
- *Parks and Recreation Masterplan (PRMP), 2019*
  - The proposed concept plans and proposed park programmatic themes align with design guidelines identified in section 3.2.1 of the PRMP.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

\$180,000 has been allocated for the DVLAP. Two of the three project phases are now complete with remaining funds of \$50,000. Additional funds of \$25,000 are proposed in the 2026 budget in order to complete Phase 3.

Project costs to support the development of the Harmston Park Plan are in the 2025 operating budget. The project costs to develop the detailed design and capital improvement costs for Harmston Park will be included the proposed 2026-2030 Capital Financial Plan.

**ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:**

This project is being delivered with a combination of staff resources from Development Services and external consultants (EKISTICS and MODUS). This project will include input and support from all city departments in the development, communication and implementation of the DVLAP.

The Harmston Park Plan is being led by the Recreation, Culture and Community Services Department with input from other internal departments with overlapping service areas.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:**

This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Buildings and Landscape - Develop a local area plan for Harmston Avenue Civic Precinct
- Buildings and Landscape - Implement Duncan Commons/Downtown Courtenay Playbook, 5th Street staging/phasing
- Buildings and Landscape - Review and update land use regulations and bylaws for consistency with OCP
- Buildings and Landscape - Update Zoning Bylaw - review maximum building heights
- Buildings and Landscape - Support investment and redevelopment in downtown core: Review and evaluate Downtown development incentives e.g. fast tracking/density bonuses/DCC
- Parks and Recreation - Optimize active public spaces to respond to density increases and increased park use

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

The Communications Strategy for DVLAP and the engagement activities for the Harmston Park Plan described above include a variety of engagement methods that fall within the inform, consult, involve and collaborate categories of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.

**OPTIONS:**

1. THAT Council receive the November 19 Staff Report “Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan Phase 2 – What We Heard Report” and “Harmston Park Plan – What We Heard Report” for information and direct staff to proceed with the next phase of public and interest-holder engagement.

2. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan Phase 2 What We Heard Report
2. Harmston Park Plan What We Heard Report
3. Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan Phase 2 Public Open House presentation materials

Prepared by: Nancy Gothard, RPP MCIP, Manager of Community and Sustainability Planning  
Joy Chan, Manager of Business Administration, Recreation, Culture and Community Services

Reviewed by: Susie Saunders, Director of Recreation, Culture and Community Services  
Kate O'Connell, Acting Director of Development Services

Concurrence: Geoff Garbutt, M.PI., MCIP, RPP, City Manager (CAO)



# City of Courtenay Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan

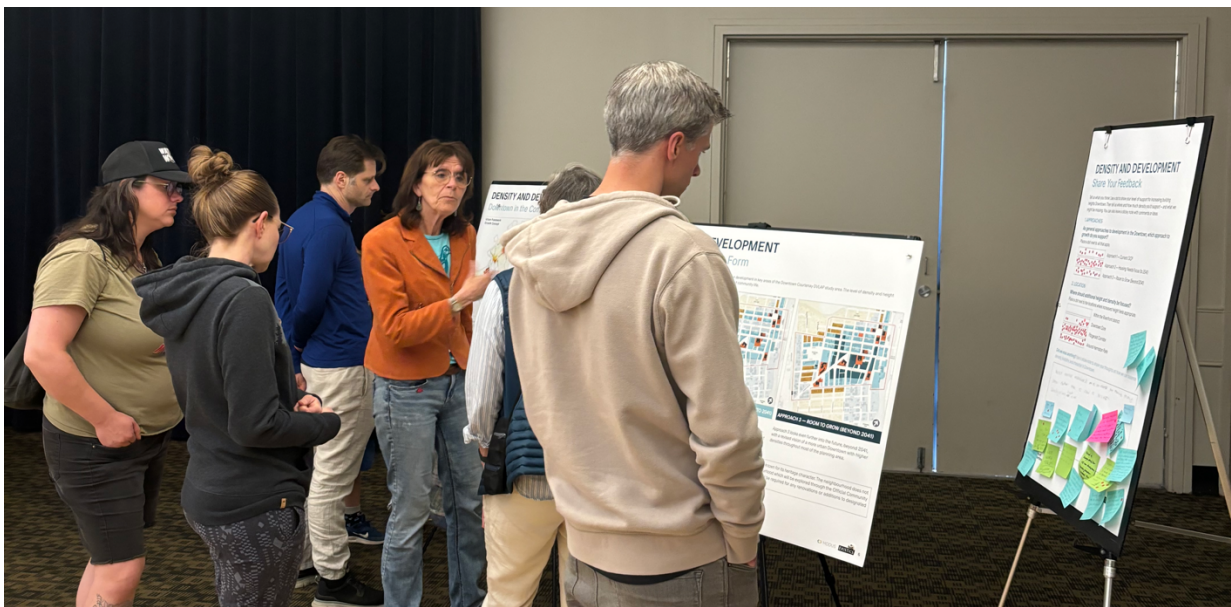
## Phase 2 What We Heard Report October 2025






PREPARED BY MODUS PLANNING DESIGN & ENGAGEMENT, INC. FOR THE CITY OF COURTENAY

## Public Engagement Snapshot

The City of Courtenay is developing a Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan (DVLAP) to provide a detailed understanding of the physical constraints and opportunities to support community development in the downtown. The planning area includes four key districts: Riverfront, Downtown Core, Fitzgerald Corridor, and Harmston Park. The Public engagement took place between May-June 2025. The input collected will help shape the draft DVLAP in Spring 2025. This report summarizes what was heard during this engagement period.



## WHAT WE DID

	<b>Community Survey</b>	<b>460</b> survey responses
	<b>Open House</b> (May 14, 4-7pm)	<b>Over 130</b> attendees
	<b>Interest-Holder Session</b> (May 14, 1-3pm)	<b>22</b> attendees <small>(representing <b>10 different industries</b> or types of groups)</small>

## WHAT WE HEARD (ALL DISTRICTS)

<b>Balanced Growth</b>	<p>There was strong support for more housing and density, especially to address affordability and inclusivity. Widespread emphasis on keeping development human-scale as residents prefer buildings under 4–6 storeys, especially near green or historic areas. This also includes measures to reduce potential vehicle congestion from increased density, such as adding more parking capacity in the downtown.</p>
<b>Protected &amp; Expanded Green and Public Spaces</b>	<p>Participants emphasized the importance of accessible green space, natural areas, and community gathering places. There is strong interest in multifunctional public spaces including parks, plazas, markets, and cultural venues that serve all ages and backgrounds.</p>
<b>Walkability &amp; Safe Mobility</b>	<p>Participants want better pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, (particularly around the Riverfront), trail connectivity, and safe crossings. Accessibility and mobility for all users (especially children, seniors, and people with disabilities) was a consistent concern.</p>
<b>Safety &amp; Inclusion</b>	<p>Public safety (road-user safety and social well-being) was important, especially in areas with more crime concerns. There was a desire for public spaces to feel safe, inclusive, and welcoming for women, families, and marginalized groups.</p>
<b>City Look &amp; Feel</b>	<p>There's a strong desire to retain Courtenay's small-town charm, historic identity, and neighborhood feel. Development should reflect local culture and history, with interest in public art, heritage preservation, and community-led placemaking.</p>

# Table of Contents

**Public Engagement Snapshot ..... 1**

**Table of Contents ..... 3**

**Introduction ..... 4**

    Project Background ..... 4

**Public Engagement ..... 5**

    What We Did ..... 5

    Who We Heard From ..... 6

    What We Heard ..... 7

**Next Steps ..... 30**

## Appendices

Appendix A: Public Survey

# Introduction

## Project Background

The City of Courtenay is evolving to meet the needs of a growing community and accommodate new residents and businesses through a comprehensive approach to land use and community planning in Downtown Courtenay.

Building upon the vision established by the Official Community Plan (OCP, 2022) and the Downtown Courtenay Playbook (2016), **the Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan (DVLAP)** will provide a detailed understanding of the physical constraints and opportunities to support community development in the downtown.

The DVLAP focuses on four districts—Riverfront, Downtown Core, Fitzgerald Corridor, and Harmston Park—each offering opportunities to improve public spaces, support housing, enhance transportation, and celebrate community identity.

By strategically guiding development, partnerships, and capital projects, the DVLAP will include actions to support residential and commercial growth, activation of civic spaces and programming, and more connection through downtown.

The Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan is being developed over three phases and will be shaped by feedback from public, interest-holder and K’ómoks First Nation engagement, design analysis, staff input, and Council direction.

The City has recently completed Phase 2, where the DVLAP project team shared draft concepts for community and interest-holder feedback. This input will inform the draft Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan.

## Purpose of Engagement

The purpose of engagement in this phase was to:


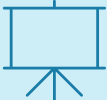

- Explore key concepts, trade-offs and design directions with community members and interest holders
- Bring the community together to build excitement for the plan and encourage involvement in its development/implementation
- Facilitate both in-person and virtual engagement opportunities to integrate feedback from a broad cross-section of the community and interests

**This report summarizes [what we did](#) and [what we heard](#) from public and interest-holder engagement sessions in Phase 2 of the DVLAP planning process.**

# Public Engagement

## What We Did

In May 2025, the City hosted a series of engagement activities to share the key proposed concepts for the Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan and seek feedback. The following activities are summarized below.

	<p><b>Public Survey</b></p>	<p>The community survey was available on the project website and in print form from May 14 to June 4 2025.</p>
<p>Public engagement participation from <a href="https://engagecomoxvalley.ca/courtenay-downtown-plan">engagecomoxvalley.ca/courtenay-downtown-plan</a>.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>460 engaged participants</b> submitted a survey (including 1 written copy, 2 emails)</li> <li>• <b>3,365 informed participants</b> visited the project page, contributed to a tool, or downloaded documents</li> <li>• <b>10 interested participants</b> asked a question via the Q&amp;A panel</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Open House</b> (Wednesday May 14, 4-7pm)</p>	<p>At the Florence Filberg Centre, the project team hosted an open house with a presentation starting at 5pm. Participants had the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share feedback on early design concepts for each planning district - Riverfront, Downtown Core, Fitzgerald Corridor, and Harmston Park.</li> <li>• Explore “Big Moves” for downtown through key directions and bold opportunities to enhance public spaces, mobility, housing, and community life.</li> <li>• Dive into concepts for density, placemaking, and circulation that will shape how people live, move, and connect.</li> <li>• Interact with engagement stations and boards to share priorities.</li> </ul>
<p>Over <b>130 people</b> attended.</p>		
	<p><b>Interest-Holder Session</b> (Wednesday May 14, 1-3pm)</p>	<p>Prior to the public open house, the project team facilitated an information session with interest-holders, including downtown community organizations and local businesses to present concept and share feedback via slido live polling program on draft concepts for each planning district.</p>
<p><b>22 people</b> attended. Groups represented included arts &amp; culture, downtown business &amp; industry, social services, downtown landowners, government, health &amp; essential services, Indigenous serving organizations, and education.</p>		

## Who We Heard From

We asked demographic questions as part of the survey to understand who we are reaching (and not reaching) through City engagement processes. The demographic results for the Courtenay Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan Survey (Spring 2025) are summarized below.

- *Relationship to City of Courtenay (resident, worker, visitor, etc.)*
  - 80% of respondents are Courtenay residents
  - 16% own or conduct business in Courtenay
- *Percent of respondents broken down by age categories*
  - Almost 50% of survey participants were between 35-54 years  
*In the City of Courtenay, approximately 23% of residents are in this age category (Statistics Canada).*
  - We heard the least from participants aged 0-24 (2%) and 75+ (3%)  
*In the City of Courtenay, approximately 23% of residents are 24 years or less and approximately 13% are 75 years or more (Statistics Canada).*
- *Percent of respondents broken down by how long they have ‘lived, played or learned’ in Courtenay*
  - Most survey participants (60%) have lived, worked, played or learned in Courtenay more than ten years
- *Percent of respondents by gender*
  - Survey participants who identify as women made up 54% of respondents and those who identify as men made up 38%  
*In the City of Courtenay, approximately 52% of residents identify as women and approximately 48% identify as men (Statistics Canada).*
- *Percent of respondents based on identification (Indigenous, racialized, person with disability, etc.)*
  - 10% of survey respondents are Indigenous
  - 6% identified as a racialized person
  - 17% have a disability
  - 23% identified as LGBTQIA2S
  - 6% are newcomers to Canada
  - 18% are from a low-income background
- *Percent of respondents who attended the public open house*
  - 12% of survey respondents attended the public open house

## What We Heard

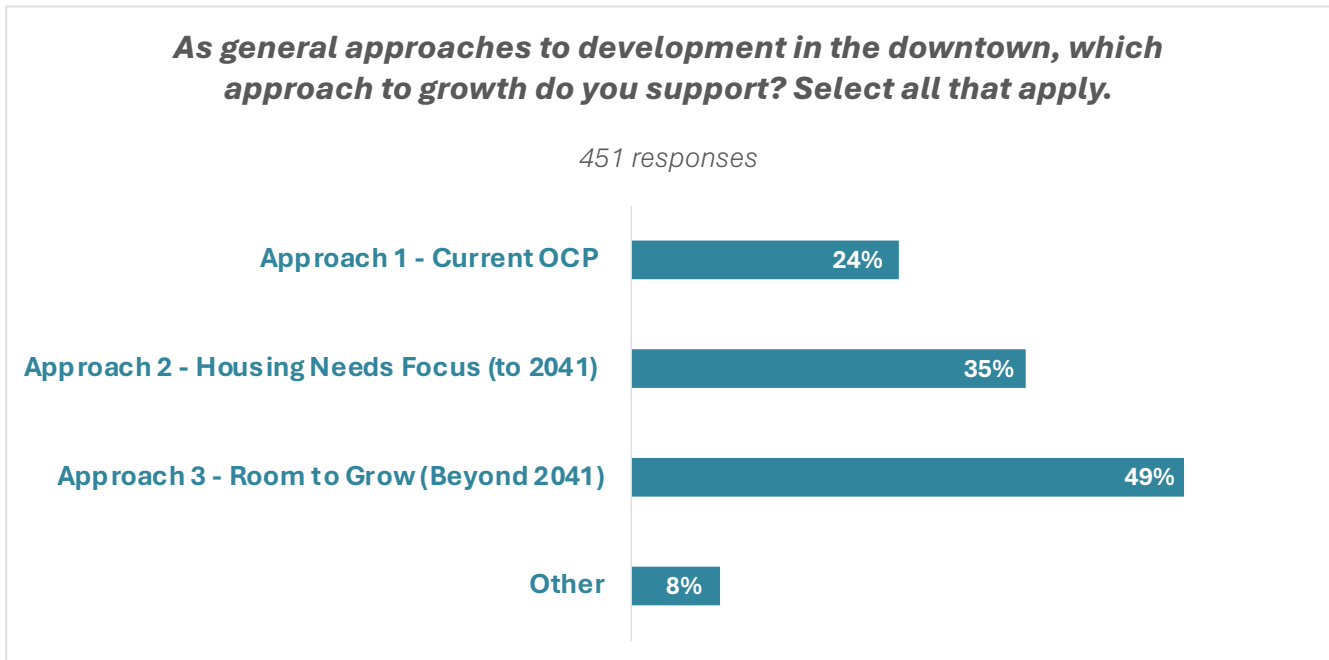
The following section summarizes what we heard during the community open house, public survey and written feedback, and interest-holder session. It is organized by district and engagement questions, including a summary of close-ended results and key themes from open-ended feedback.

### Downtown Density and Development

We asked the community for feedback on three approaches to help us explore opportunities for where new housing should go in the downtown. The level of density and height increases from Approach 1 - 3, forecasting different amounts of housing and residents in the downtown. We then asked where additional height and density should be focused.

- **Approach 1** follows most closely the vision established in the Official Community Plan in which low-rise buildings are along 5th Street and adjacent urban neighbourhood areas, and where mid- and high-rise buildings are considered for only select areas of the downtown.
- **Approach 2** would allow for more housing needs to be accommodated in the downtown, while still maintaining low-rise buildings along 5th Street and within the Riverside district south of the 5th Street Bridge.
- **Approach 3** looks even further into the future, beyond 2041, with a revised vision of a more urban downtown with higher densities throughout most of the planning area.

### Public Survey Results

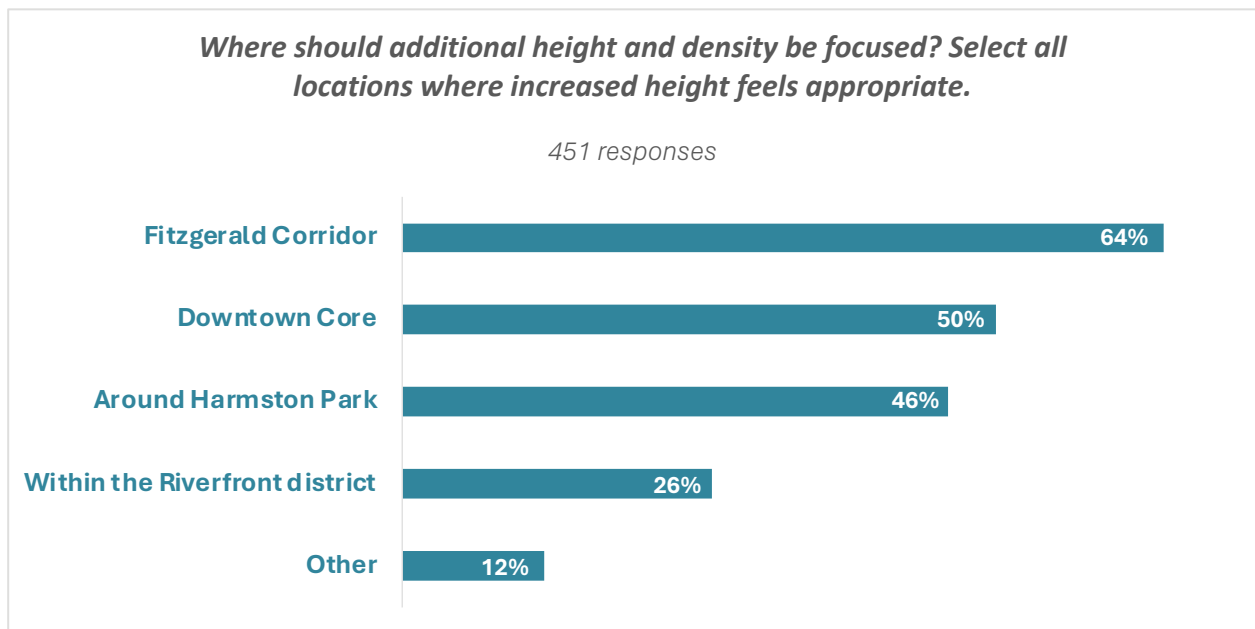


Common themes among the "other" responses (43) include concerns about overdevelopment and high-rise buildings, insufficient infrastructure and services to support growth, and a call for more thoughtful and balanced densification (e.g., infill, low-rise housing). Participants also mentioned the need to preserve neighborhood character and green space, consider affordability, and minimize environmental impacts.

**Open House Feedback.** Results from the Community Open House varied from the survey where “Approach 2- Housing Needs Focus (to 2041)” was most preferred by participants (30 selections), followed by ‘Approach 3’ (15) and ‘Approach 1’ (11).

**Where should growth be focused?**

**Public Survey Results**



‘Other’ responses (54) favored spreading growth throughout the city (especially along transit corridors and commercial zones like Cliffe Ave, Driftwood Mall, and Fitzgerald), avoiding high-rises and dense development in the downtown core and waterfront, protecting natural views and small-town character, and emphasizing the need for infrastructure and transit upgrades before allowing more development.

**Open House Feedback.** Fitzgerald Corridor was also selected most often by respondents from the Community Open House (40), followed by around Harmston Park (24), Downtown Core (12). There was no selection for within the Riverfront district.

**Additional Comments.** Participants from the open house and survey were asked if they have any additional comments or ideas for how we can balance density, livability, and character in Downtown Courtenay. The following themes were heard most often (n=259).

- **Transportation & Mobility**
  - Support for closing 5th Street to vehicle traffic and transform it into a fully pedestrian-friendly, walkable, and vibrant mixed-use public space (30)
  - Support for improved transit service, increased density with reduced car dependency to support a vibrant, accessible, and sustainable urban core (21)
  - Support for expanding protected bike lanes, improving pedestrian-friendly streets, adding traffic calming measures like roundabouts, and develop mixed-use, walkable downtown areas with convenient parking on the outskirts to reduce car dependency (14)
- **Public Amenities & Spaces**
  - Support for preserving and expanding green spaces, community gardens, and riverfront parks while enhancing transit and creating vibrant, people-focused outdoor gathering areas (48)
- **Housing Need**
  - Emphasis on the urgent need for affordable, diverse housing options, including small multiplexes, purpose-built rentals, and mixed-use developments while balancing modest density increases with livability, transit improvements, and protections against unaffordable high-rise overdevelopment (16)
- **Community Impacts of Growth**
  - Concerns about downtown safety, while preserving low-rise character, maintaining views, and ensuring that residential development does not displace businesses or compromise commercial vitality (15)
- **Economic Development**
  - Support for mixed use buildings, small businesses, retail, cafes, and restaurants downtown and along the riverfront; comments that having more population downtown would help businesses thrive (23)
- **Neighbourhood Character**
  - General desire to preserve existing neighbourhood character and culture, ensuring that development fits in with the surrounding neighbourhood and environment (48)
  - Support for removing business parking requirements to create vibrant, low-rise, community-focused spaces (17)

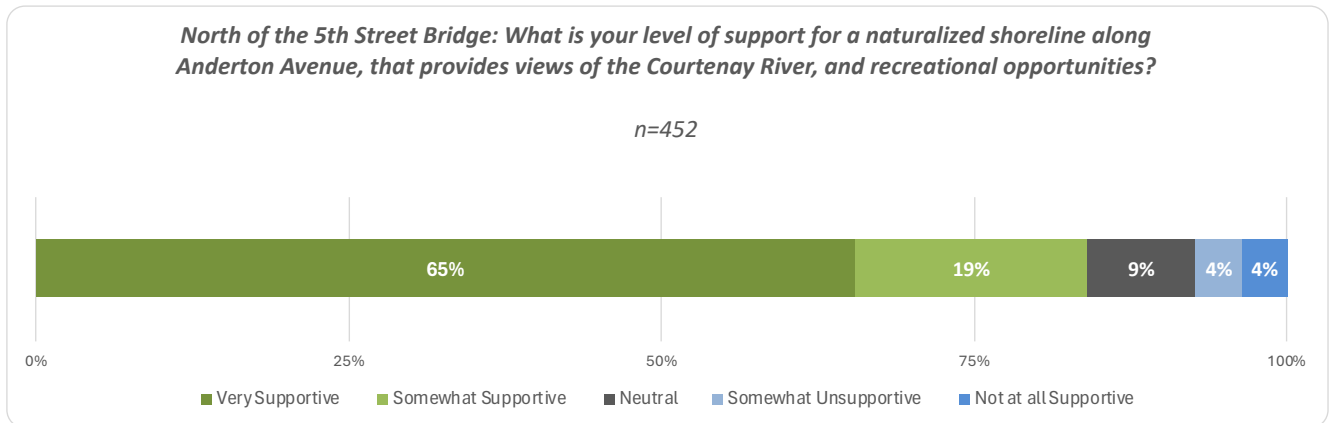
## Riverfront

**Proposed Approach:** To transform the Courtenay River Riverfront into a vibrant, accessible destination by:

- improving public access.
- enhancing recreational amenities.
- fostering development that integrates natural and cultural assets.
- activating underutilized spaces and implementing flood-resilient infrastructure.
- There are different opportunities and development concepts for areas north and south of the 5th Street bridge.

### Riverfront North

#### Public Survey Results



**Open House Feedback.** Open House participants expressed similar level of support with 30 selections of ‘very supportive’ and 4 selections for either ‘somewhat supportive’ or ‘neutral’.

#### Please tell us why. (n=297)

For the Riverfront North proposed approach, the themes we heard most often from public survey respondents and open house participants are summarized below.

#### General Support

- Desire for public gathering space with access to green space, natural area, and the river (164)
- Support for naturalizing the area to further benefit wildlife and habitats in the area (52)
- Value having a walking path along the river, suggestions to improve connectivity to the downtown (36)

#### General Concerns

- Concern with the proposed pedestrian bridge including the potential impact on traffic, the cost and who will use it (9)
- Would like to see more housing development in the area, while providing natural areas (7)

**Considerations**

- Consideration of how naturalizing the shoreline will impact existing residents and who will have access to the shoreline (9)
- Comments to ensure that access to and use of the shoreline walkways are safe and comfortable for public enjoyment (7)

**Riverfront South**

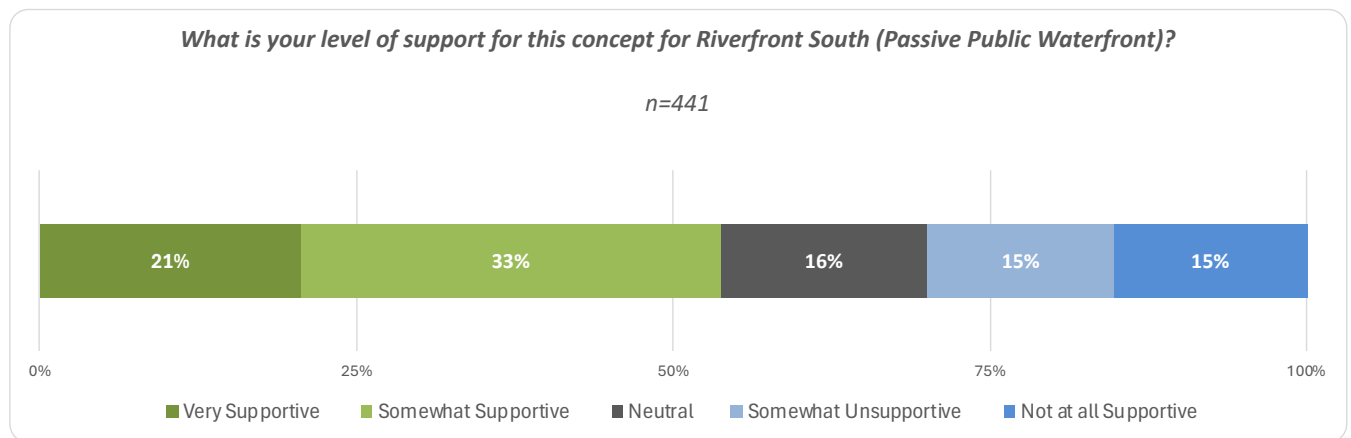
**Proposed Approach:** The City is exploring two concepts for Riverfront South. These concepts explore development ideas for the area south of the 5th Street Bridge, including the Central Builders site, the City Hall site, and adjacent parking lots.

**Concept One for Riverfront South - Passive Public Waterfront**

A passive waterfront experience with trails, boardwalks, and seating along the river’s edge. This includes:

- Townhomes form the first row of buildings, with front doors oriented toward the public walkway and waterfront.
- Larger residential buildings are terraced up the slope behind, extending toward Cliffe Avenue
- The Courtenay Riverway Trail connects to the riverfront in two locations, integrating with the public waterfront experience.
- The trail and riparian corridor extend north to the 6th Street Bridge and continue under the 5th Street Bridge along Anderton Avenue.

**Public Survey Results**



**Please tell us why** (n=241). For the ‘Riverfront South-Passive Public Waterfront’ proposed concept, the themes we heard most often from public survey respondents and open house participants are summarized below.

### General Support

- Support for creating more vibrant, walkable neighborhoods with mixed-use spaces, green areas, and public riverfront access, as long as building height and density remain moderate (35)
- General support for the concept, noting that anything done to improve its current state is welcomed (27)
- Support for a walkable, vehicle-free community with peaceful riverfront paths and natural green spaces (26)

### General Concerns

- Concerns about the proposed 6th Street pedestrian bridge due to its high cost, proximity to 5th St bridge, and concerns about public safety in the area (37).
- Concern that with private residences, it would be less accessible or welcomed to the public and need for more accessible, public riverfront space with limited residential development to preserve community areas (35).
- Concerns about overdevelopment of the riverside from to environmental risks, high costs, loss of public space, and a lack of affordable, accessible housing alternatives (14).

### Considerations

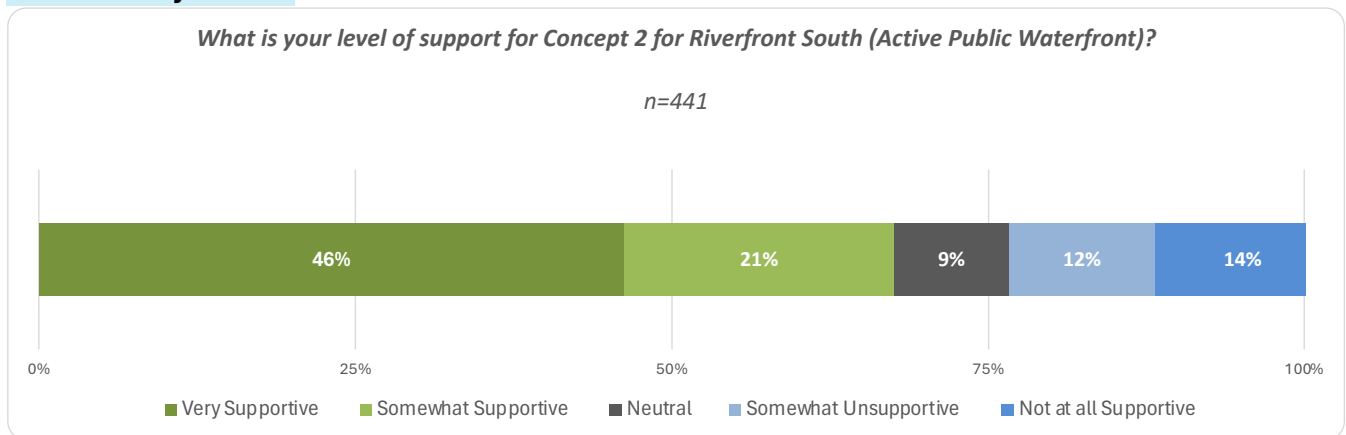
- Questions about how the perceived lack of safety and security would be addressed, prior to implementing plans (8)

**Concept Two for Riverfront South – Active Urban Waterfront with More Public Space**

An active public riverside street lined with retail, restaurants, a linear park, cultural spaces, and recreation opportunities. This would mean:

- The existing Courtenay Riverway Trail behind City Hall is moved to make way for additional land along the river, creating a generous public zone that supports both community use and riparian protection.
- Taller mixed-use apartments help shape a vibrant urban waterfront that complements the adjacent park and natural landscape, supporting both local and destination-oriented activities year-round.
- Courtenay is a prominent and accessible public waterfront destination.

**Public Survey Results**



**Please tell us why** (n=241). For the ‘Riverfront South-Active Public Waterfront’ proposed concept, the themes we heard most often from respondents are summarized below.

**General Support**

- Support having access to public space, the river, and green space, with suggestions to ensure that it will be maintained as public and not privatized (107)
- Mix of support for proposed density, some suggestions for lower density to maintain views (22)
- Support for improving access through walkability and active transportation (21)

**General Concerns**

- Concerns about adding a pedestrian bridge as an unneeded expense and potentially attract crime and drug use (20)
- Concern that the concept is too urban for the community and potentially have negative impacts on existing residents and businesses (18)
- Concern that the proposed density is too high for the area, leading to obstructive views and strain on infrastructure (13)

**Considerations**

- Ensure that public space will remain public space and not privatized (10)

**Open House Feedback.** Participants were asked about the elements of each Riverfront South concept that they support. The tables below summarize the feedback.

<i>Concept 1 – Passive Public Riverfront</i>	<i># of selections</i>
Boardwalks, trails, and seating along the river	48
A quieter, nature-focused experience	31
Townhomes fronting directly onto the river path (3 storeys)	1
Prioritizing low-intensity activities, views, and green space	12

<i>Concept 2 - Active Urban Riverfront</i>	<i># of selections</i>
A public riverfront street with shops and gathering space	17
Restaurants, retail, and cultural amenities near the water	31
4-6 storey mixed-use buildings with housing above	16
Active year-round destination for local and visitors	13

**Interest Holder Feedback.** During the interest-holder session, participants were asked what implications and impacts should be considered as part of the implementation of the proposed Riverfront concept and what is most important as we think about opportunities for the Riverfront.

Interest-holders emphasized the need for **equitable access, environmental stewardship, and integrated urban design** that connects people, nature, and downtown.

Additionally, the importance of **accessible green spaces, cultural venues, and mixed-use developments** (e.g., business below residential) that support a **vibrant, inclusive community** was clear.

There is broad support for **affordable and diverse housing**, especially alongside **public waterfront access**, while highlighting the need to address **safety**, especially for women and marginalized groups. Participants called for **strong connections to the recreational, cultural, and environmental uses of the river**—including swimming, tubing, paddle-up access, and **multi-generational gathering spaces**—particularly in **Riverfront South**, which is envisioned as a welcoming and **recreation-focused community anchor**.

However, **access challenges across Cliffe Avenue** are seen as a major barrier, and safe, intuitive pedestrian and cycling connections are a priority. There is also concern about the **environmental impact** of development near the river, with calls for **riparian protection, climate adaptation, and native planting**.

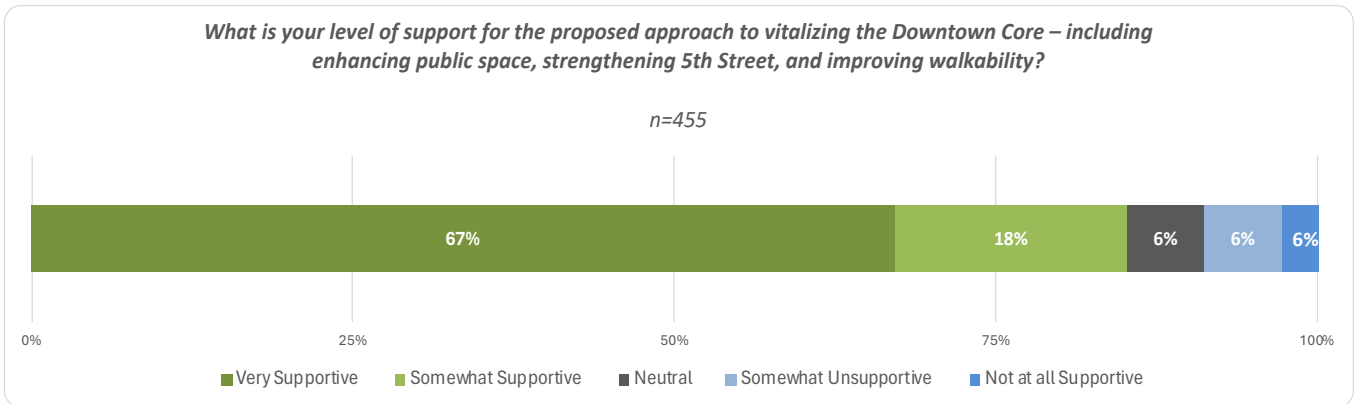
Interest-holders also want to see the area reflect **Indigenous cultural identity**, through **art, gathering spaces, and public programming**. There is overall strong support for ensuring the riverfront feels like a **natural extension of downtown**, helping Courtenay celebrate its identity as a **city on the river and ocean**.

**Downtown Core**

**Proposed Approach:** To vitalize the Downtown Core through:

- public realm enhancements.
- green space creation through greenways and multi-modal corridors.
- pedestrian-friendly infrastructure to prioritize the pedestrian environment experience and reduce vehicle dominance.
- spaces for public art, placemaking, and events to support downtown as a cultural hub.
- strengthened urban forest canopy preservation and heritage within Old Orchard.

**Public Survey Results**



**Open House Feedback.** Participants from the Open House also supported the overall direction of the Downtown Core with 36 selections of ‘very or somewhat supportive’, 1 selection for ‘neutral’ and 1 for ‘somewhat supportive’.

Participants were then asked their level of support for different place-making concepts within the Downtown Core, including:

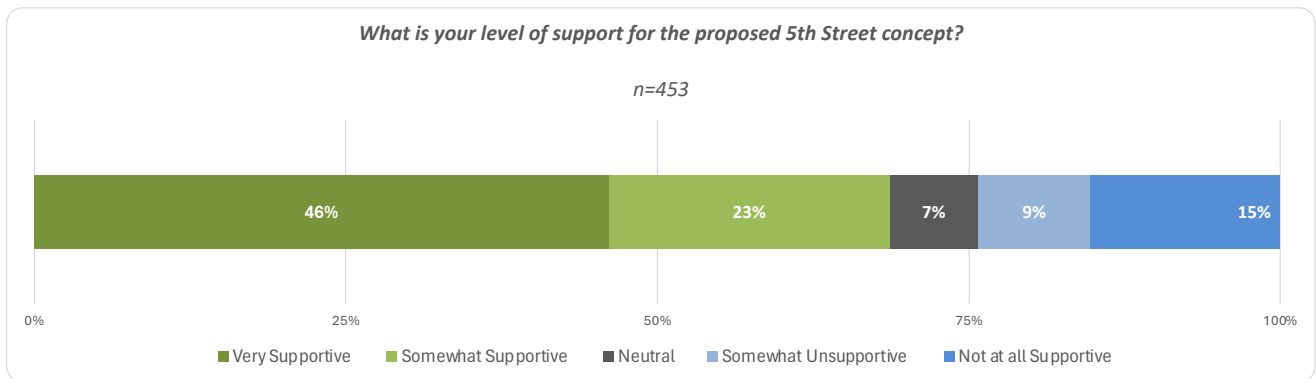
- 5<sup>th</sup> Street- the Heart of Downtown
- Duncan Common and Mews
- Cultural Square
- Courthouse Transit Plaza

**5<sup>th</sup> Street**

**Proposed Approach:** To make 5<sup>th</sup> Street a key destination with a walkable, small-scale commercial character by:

- considering locating regular temporary street markets on 5<sup>th</sup> Street (e.g., Farmer’s Market).
- permanently closing 5<sup>th</sup> Street to vehicle traffic.
- balancing new development with character preservation.
- supporting 6-storey mixed-use buildings with upper floors stepped back from the street

**Public Survey Results**



**Open House Feedback.** Participants were asked about the elements of the 5<sup>th</sup> Street concept that they support. The tables below summarize the feedback.

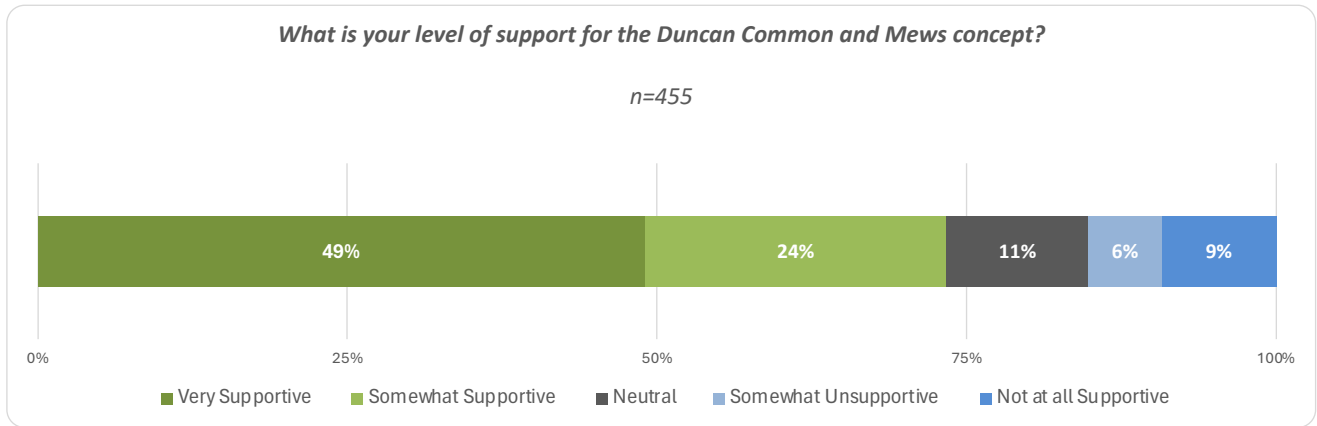
	# of selections
Consider locating a street market on 5th Street	7
Permanent closure of 5th Street to vehicular traffic	46
Maintain its small-scale, walkable, commercial charm	32
Balance new development with character preservation	30
6-storey mixed-use buildings with upper floor stepped back from the street	17

**Duncan Common and Mews**

**Proposed Approach:** To build on the OCP vision for a public gathering space at 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Duncan Avenue, including:

- a series of ‘outdoor rooms’ or terraces that function as an outdoor extension of the Art Gallery and Library
- a focus on art installations, sculptures, murals, and quiet reading spaces
- seating for individuals and small groups to read or socialize in a green urban setting

**Public Survey Results**



**Open House Feedback.** Participants were asked about the elements of the Duncan Common and Mews concept that they support. The tables below summarize the feedback.

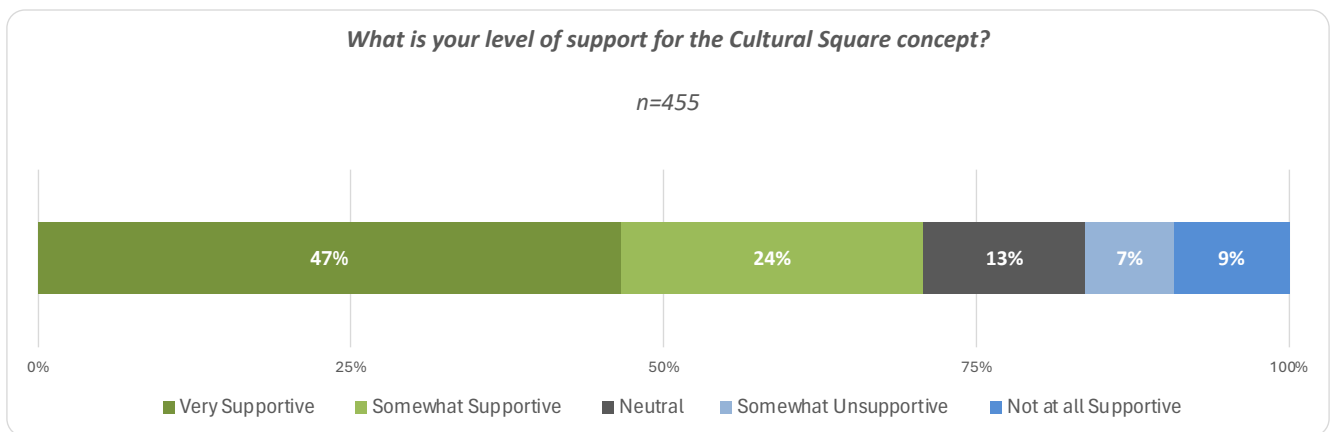
	# of selections
Terraced pocket park featuring art installations	7
Permanent seating and furniture to support socializing	18
Public art at opportunities - sculptures, murals, and creative features to animate the mews	10

## Cultural Square

**Proposed Approach:** The concept for the Cultural Square,

- establishes a meaningful anchor at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> Street.
- serves as a central gathering space in the cultural heart of downtown.
- highlights and celebrates local arts and culture.
- acts as a key pedestrian connection between downtown and the Riverfront.
- creates potential for a new public parking structure between the Filberg Centre and the Square to support downtown parking needs.

## Public Survey Results



**Open House Feedback.** Participants were asked about the elements of the Cultural Square concept that they support. The tables below summarize the feedback.

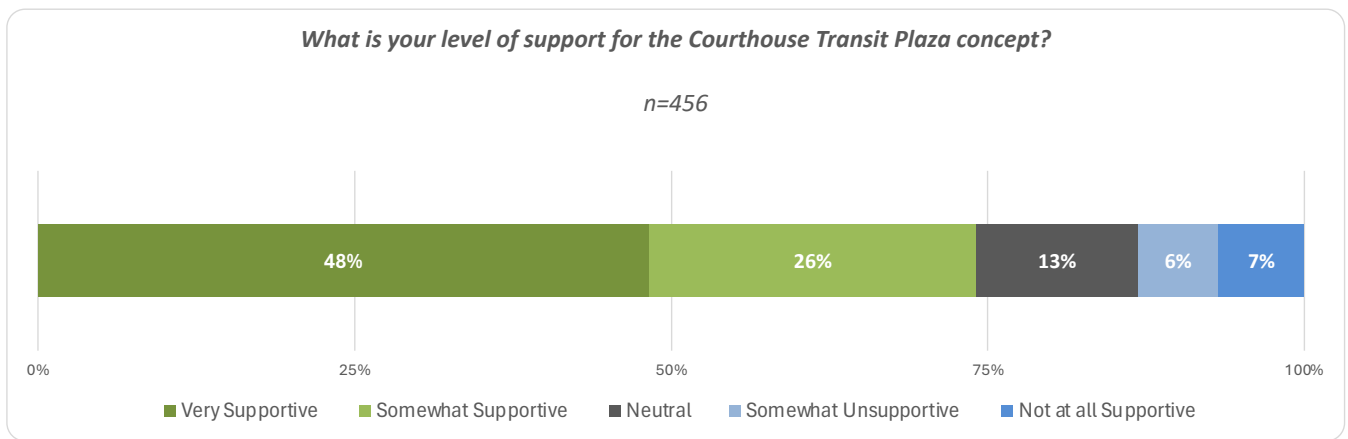
	<i># of selections</i>
A meaningful anchor at the end of 4th street	13
Central gathering space in Downtown's cultural core	23
Opportunity to highlight local arts and culture	12
Strong pedestrian connection from Downtown to the Riverfront experience	40

**Courthouse Transit Plaza**

**Proposed Approach:** The concept for the Courthouse Transit Plaza includes:

- a meaningful gathering space in front of the Courthouse (at the intersection of Cumberland Road, 6<sup>th</sup> Street, and England Avenue).
- a new bike and pedestrian pathway and enhanced green space by extending the Cumberland corridor.
- connection to the new plaza and transit loop.
- coordination and engagement with the provincial government to improve the open space.

**Public Survey Results**



**Open House Feedback.** Participants were asked about the elements of the Courthouse Transit Plaza concept that they support. The tables below summarize the feedback.

	<i># of selections</i>
Gathering space in front of the historic courthouse	15
A new cycling/pedestrian pathway along Cumberland Road	27

**Additional Comments.** Participants from the open house and survey were asked if they have any additional comments or ideas for how we can balance density, livability, and character in the Downtown Core. The following themes were heard most often (n=290).

#### **Mobility & Accessibility (142 mentions)**

- *Parking and Roads (85).* Strong interest for more parking in the Downtown and strategies to reduce vehicle congestion. Within these responses, there was some opposition to road closures.
- *Pedestrian Infrastructure (37).* Support for improving pedestrian infrastructure and use of roadways with some opposition towards the pedestrian bridge at 6th. Concern that 5th Street is already accessible to pedestrians, and that increase pedestrian would diminish accessibility for other road users, especially those with mobility constraint.
- *Cycling Infrastructure (20).* Mixed interest for the provision of more cycling infrastructure

#### **Safety (74 mentions)**

- Concern about the perceived safety of gathering places downtown. There was also some concern about the safety for road-users, specifically cyclists and pedestrians (37)
- Strongly concerned about the lack of solutions for the unhoused and a desire to resolve this challenge (37).

#### **5<sup>th</sup> Street Closure (61 mentions)**

- General opposition to closure of 5th street to vehicle access. Concern that this would lead to increased vehicle traffic on other streets and need to ensure accessibility for all road-users (31).
- General support for road closure, or partial closure, of 5th street to vehicle access to support the vibrancy of the area (30).
- Mixed opinions regarding the effect of streets closures on local businesses and ultimate need to support local businesses (13).

#### **Amenities & Services (41 mentions)**

- General support for more gathering-places and places to support events and arts and cultural programming. However, there were comments on the need to ensure spaces are safe, welcoming and accessible (24)
- General interest in improving and expanding greenspace and parks to help provide more gathering-place and attract visitors (15)

**Interest Holder Feedback.** During the interest-holder session, participants were asked what implications and impacts should be considered as part of the implementation of the proposed Downtown Core concept and what is most important as we think about opportunities for this district.

Interest-holders emphasized that the successful implementation of the Downtown Core concept requires careful attention to **maintaining and supporting existing social services**, especially for vulnerable populations, ensuring the downtown remains inclusive and accessible to all.

**Parking solutions** are also important as many participants called for a **parkade (such as behind the Florence Filberg Centre)** to relieve on-street parking pressures.

There is opportunity to enable more pedestrian-friendly spaces, including a **potential 5th Street closure** that could transform the area into a vibrant cultural and social hub.

Managing **traffic flow** is a major concern, with strong support for **diverting vehicle traffic away from 5th Street**, improved **transit and active transportation options**, and re-routing arterial traffic along 8th Street to reduce congestion.

**Higher-density, multi-story development** is generally favored for financial feasibility, but there is a strong desire for **design guidelines that protect sunlight, incorporate green spaces, and promote human-scale architecture**.

The integration of **green infrastructure**, including increased tree canopy, green/white roofs, and public art, is essential to enhance the downtown's character and climate readiness.

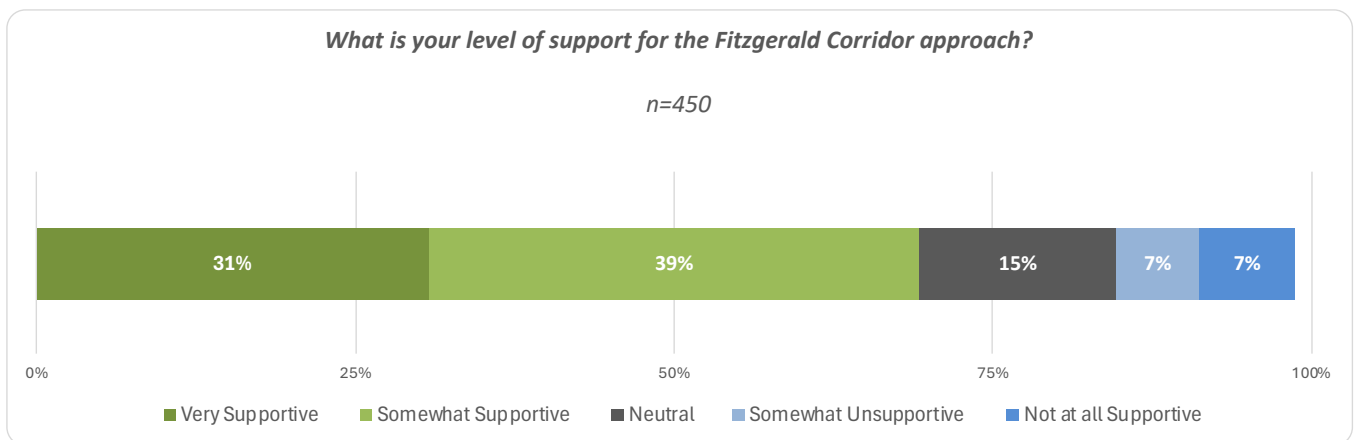
Additionally, respondents emphasized the need for **clear permitting processes** to encourage development, **affordable housing provisions**, and preservation of **heritage buildings**.

### Fitzgerald Corridor

**Proposed Approach:** To elevate Fitzgerald Avenue’s role as a ‘gateway’ to downtown by:

- Continuing active transportation upgrades and streetscape improvements.
- Encouraging additional commercial and mixed-use development.
- Building upon existing wayfinding signage programs to support navigation.
- Improving crossing opportunities to better connect downtown with Harmston Park.
- Exploring partial street closure between 3rd and 4th Streets to create a pocket park and public space.

### Public Survey Results



**Please tell us why.** For the Fitzgerald Corridor proposed concepts, the themes heard most often from respondents from the open house and public survey are summarized below (n=198).

#### General Support

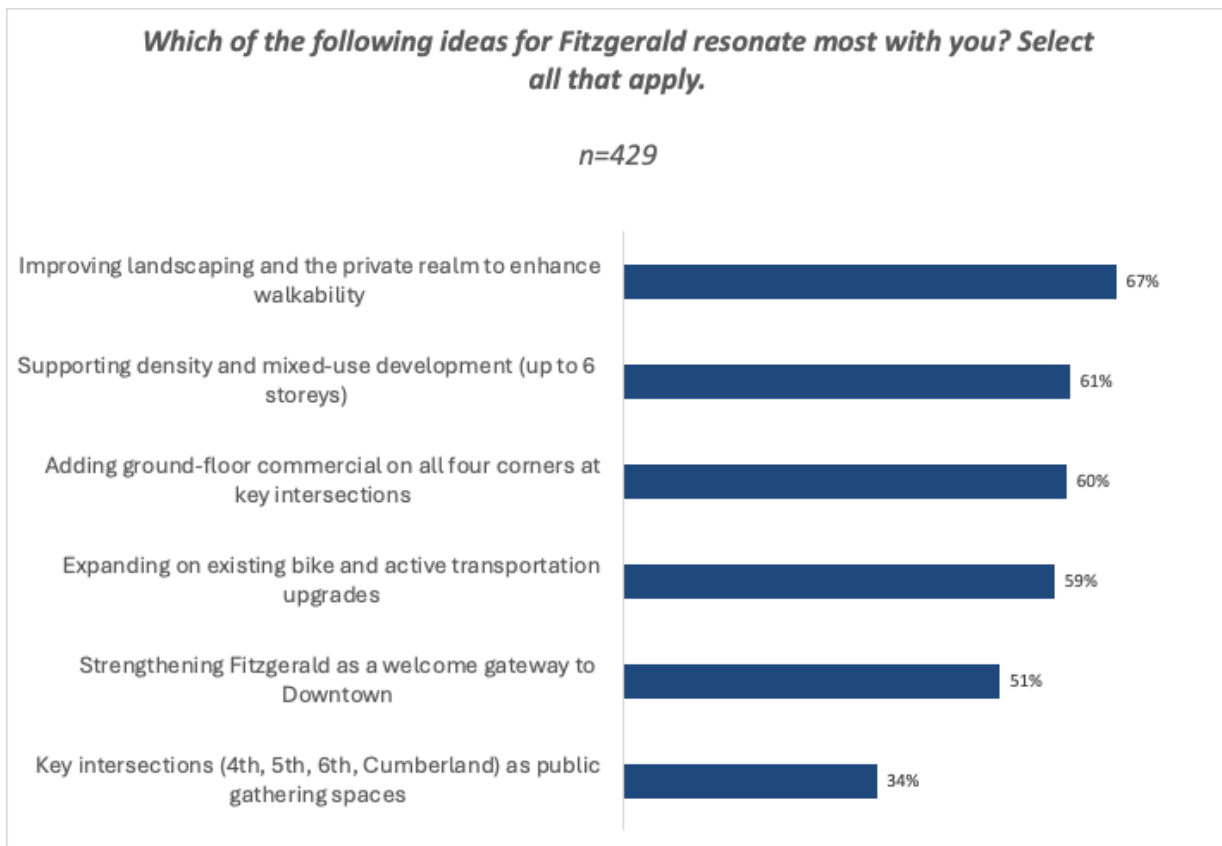
- Interest in more parking and traffic calming measures, improved road infrastructure, and vehicle accessibility. Suggestions to improve road usability and safety (e.g., roundabout or traffic light at 5th and Fitzgerald, fix turning lane from westbound 8th to southbound Fitzgerald) (55 mentions)
- Support for the proposed approach for Fitzgerald Avenue as an entrance and primary corridor to the Downtown (37 mentions)
- General desire to attract people coming into the downtown or visiting the area by supporting ways they get around (13 mentions)

#### General Concerns

- Concerns about nighttime safety, traffic and road-user safety, theft and crime, drug use. Generally, unsupportive of intersections as safe gathering-places (16 mentions)
- Concern with potential for displacement, and the risk of promoting large development in this district (with preference to focus development in other areas) (13 mentions)

**Considerations**

- Desire to improve walkability and active transportation throughout the area, including elevated cross walks, pedestrian barriers, and pedestrian focused development (27 mentions). However, there was some opinion that new active transportation infrastructure should be focused in other areas of the downtown, not Fitzgerald.
- Mixed feedback on bike lanes. Interest in connecting bike facilities and infrastructure and ensure bike lane safety (15 mentions)
- Increasing density was generally supported, however there was some interest in preserving historic downtown and limiting building height to under 6 storeys (12 mentions)



**Open House Feedback.** Feedback on the proposed Fitzgerald Corridor concept from the Open House was similar where 25 out of 26 selections were ‘somewhat supportive’ of the concept. Most concept ideas were equally supported (with 20-22 selections), except for ‘strengthening Fitzgerald as a welcome gateway to Downtown’ (11 selections) and ‘key intersections as public gathering spaces’ (12 selections).

**Interest Holder Feedback.** During the interest-holder session, participants were asked what implications and impacts should be considered as part of the implementation of the proposed

Fitzgerald Corridor concept and what is most important as we think about opportunities for this district.

Key considerations for the Fitzgerald Corridor emphasized by interest-holders include **safe and accessible pedestrian crossings**, supported by traffic calming measures like **roundabouts** (especially at 5th & Fitzgerald) and **island medians** to improve navigation and safety.

There is strong support for **maximum residential density** paired with **underground parking** to ease on-street parking demands. There is support for **mixed-use development** along the corridor that blends **commercial and retail spaces with housing**, enhancing vibrancy while requiring thoughtful planning for **parking, transit, and shuttle options**.

Improving **traffic flow and connectivity**, especially as an alternative to congested routes like Cliffe Avenue, is critical, along with creating safe pedestrian links between the north and south sides to foster a more **active and accessible urban corridor**.

The **5th and Fitzgerald intersection** is a key pressure point needing redesign to reduce peak-hour congestion. Enhancing the area's **aesthetic appeal, walkability, and gathering spaces** will help transform Fitzgerald from a traffic corridor into a welcoming and vibrant urban destination that supports local businesses and housing growth.

### Harmston Park

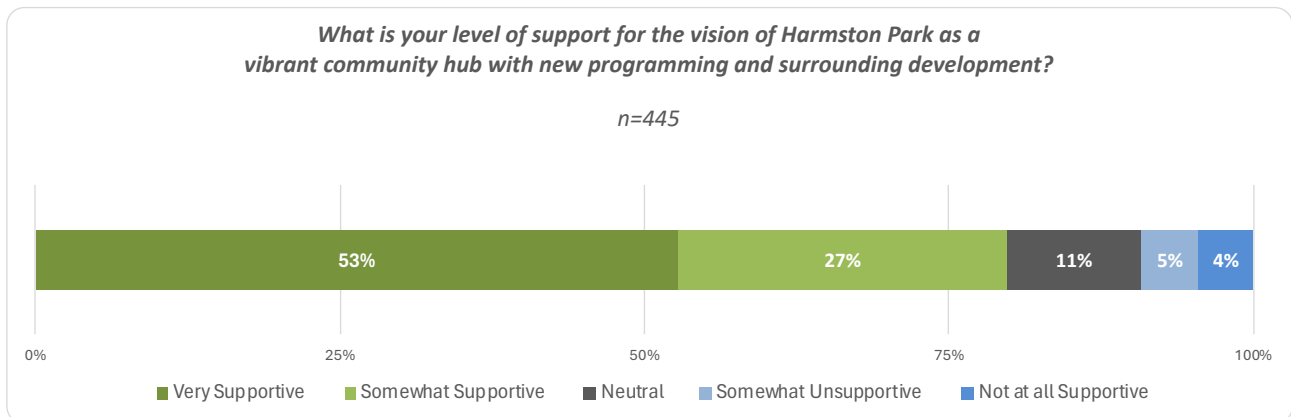
A separate planning process for Harmston Park is underway that includes additional opportunities for engagement. Visit the project webpage for more information:  
<https://engagecomoxvalley.ca/harmston-park>.

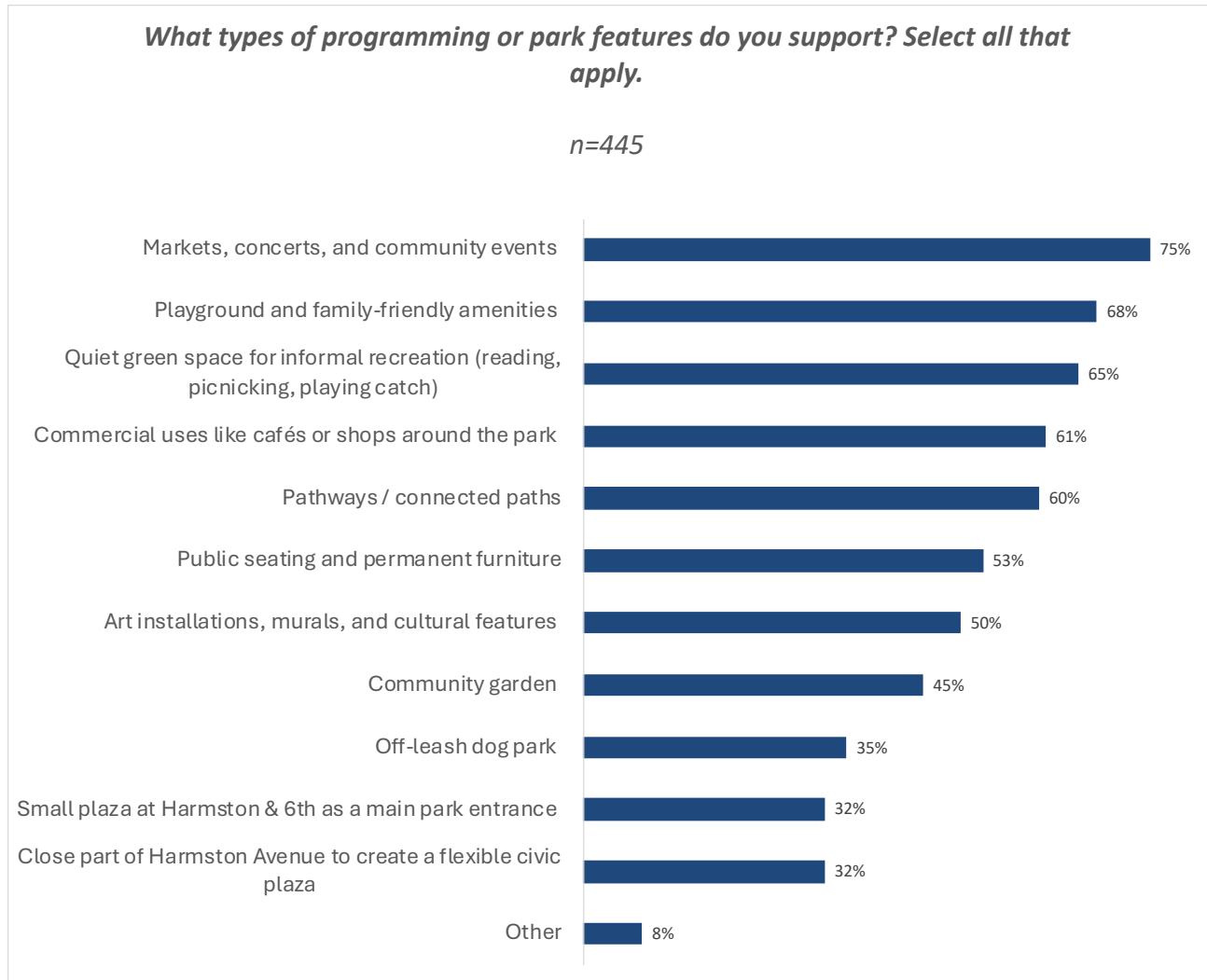
**Proposed Approach:** To design and develop Harmston Park as a dynamic community hub, supported by enhanced programming and infrastructure. Opportunities for higher-density housing and innovative uses for adjacent municipal lands, such as partial street closures, can further integrate the park into the community fabric.

Opportunities include:

- Detailed design and activation of Harmston Park.
- Introduce regular programming and events in the park.
- Enable infill residential and mixed-use development around the park.
- Enhance trail connections, including strengthening access to Rotary Trail and McPhee Meadows.
- Historic Train Station provides a placemaking opportunity with economic potential.

### Public Survey Results





**Open House Feedback.** Feedback on the proposed Harmston Park approach and programming from the Open House was similar where 28 out of 30 selections were ‘very supportive’ or ‘somewhat supportive’ of the vision. The most preferred programming or park features included:

- Markets, concerts, and community events (29 selections)
- Close part of Harmston Avenue to create a flexible civic plaza (22 selections)
- Quiet green spaces for informal recreation (reading, picnicking) (23 selections)

The City is considering two concepts to explore potential density approaches surrounding Harmston Park. Please note: The massing model illustrations show where added height and density could be supported—they do not represent the final built form.

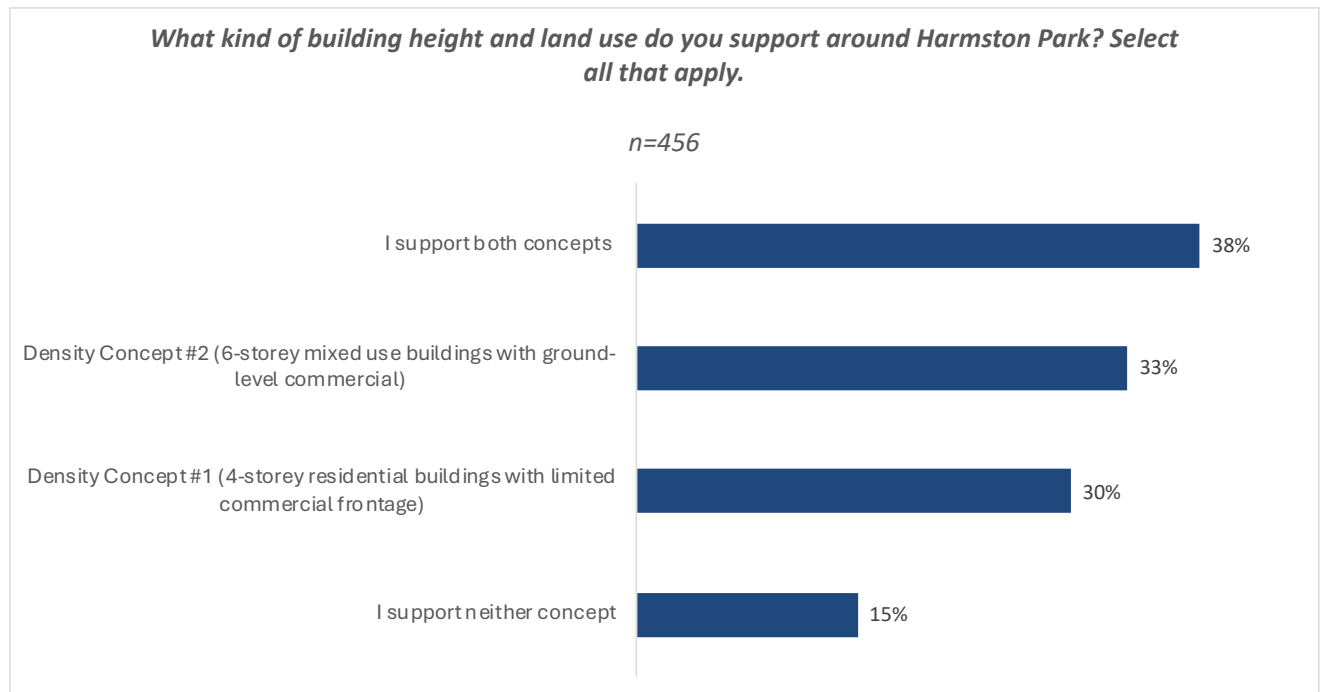
**Density Concept 1 – Four Storey with Limited Commercial**

This concept proposes a consistent four-storey building form around Harmston Park and along McPhee Avenue. Commercial uses would be limited to buildings fronting the park and McPhee Avenue, encouraging some public use without making it a focus of the area. The added residential density would help animate the park and offer housing close to community amenities.

**Density Concept 2 - Six Storey Mixed Use**

This concept introduces six-storey mixed-use buildings surrounding Harmston Park. Ground floors would feature commercial uses throughout, activating the park edges and bringing shops and services closer to residents. More people living downtown through higher density options can support a wider range of amenities, helps build a stronger sense of community, and can reduce car-dependency when part of a mixed-use complete neighbourhood.

**Public Survey Results**



**Open House Feedback.** Participants from the open house selected ‘Density Concept 2’ most frequently (21 selections), followed by ‘Density Concept 1’ (16 selections) and ‘I support both options’ (17 selections).

**Additional Comments.** Participants from both the open house and public survey were asked if they have any additional comments or considerations on the proposed approach to the lands surrounding Harmston Park. Below are the most common themes from the responses (n=198).

### Housing Need (78 mentions)

- Although there was support for the higher density concepts, there was also some general opposition to building heights over 4 storeys, with some comments suggesting a maximum of 4 storeys and preference for 1-3 storeys (39)
- General support for increased density in the downtown, with a variety of housing and building options (23)
- Need for a variety of affordable housing types including infill and townhouses, co-op housing, non-market housing, purpose-built rentals, shelters, low-income housing, tiny homes/small-scale village, housing for seniors and people with disabilities (16)

### Amenities & Services (46 mentions)

- Protection of existing greenspace in the park, as well as community gardens. There was interest in keeping the park as a gathering place, adding recreational spaces and a playground (30)
- Support for increased amenities in and around the park, as well as active transportation. Suggestions included a community arts centre, space to support pop-up concerts, community bulletin board, and bookable yoga community classes (14)
- Need for more schools and daycares (2)

### Mixed Use Development (33 mentions)

- Support for more commercial, mixed use space that benefited the downtown core, but mixed support for this type of development being located at Harmston Park
- Some concern that not enough commercial space currently existed to support Concept 2, but there was also sentiment that this concept could encourage commercial (e.g., convenience stores, restaurants, coffee shops, cafes, farmer's markets, museum)

### Mobility & Accessibility (32 mentions)

- Desire for increased parking, specifically off-street parking and traffic reduction (13)
- Reduce car dependency and increase density of residential, amenities and commercial uses to promote walkability and connected cycling infrastructure (5)
- Support for increased transit options to and through Courtenay (with some comments to restore the Island Rail corridor as a passenger train) (14)

### Neighbourhood Character (29 mentions)

- Concern that development in and around Harmston Park would negatively impact the existing neighbourhood charm and amount of sunlight. There were requests to create development that was unique, under 6 storeys, mixed use, but that also integrated well with the current form and surroundings of the park

**Interest-Holder Feedback.** During the interest-holder session, participants were asked what implications and impacts should be considered as part of the implementation of the proposed Harmston Park concept and what is most important as we think about opportunities for this district.

#### *Implications & Impacts*

- Interest-holders emphasized **affordable and accessible housing** as a top priority, with strong support for **higher-density development**, particularly around park spaces, balanced with thoughtful planning for families versus lower-occupancy residences.
- There is a clear emphasis on **public and green spaces**, including community gardens, shaded areas, and infrastructure to support events and everyday use.
- Respondents also stressed the importance of **social inclusion and equity**, calling for gender-neutral washrooms, Indigenous representation, and recognition of 2SLGBTQIA+ culture.
- While there is interest in **commercial integration**, particularly small-scale uses like cafés that activate public space, some caution was expressed about the DVLAP needing to maintain a **residential focus**.
- Considerations around **infrastructure and traffic flow**, including parking, road closures, and rerouting of pedestrian traffic, were seen as essential to ensuring safety, functionality, and long-term community benefit.

#### *Opportunities*

- As Harmston Park evolves, the most important opportunities identified by interest-holders center on creating a **welcoming, inclusive, and connected community space**.
- There is strong emphasis on **accessible and affordable housing**, including supportive options for seniors, alongside **affordable commercial and childcare spaces** to promote a “whole community” model.
- **Safety and accessibility** are seen as essential to ensure the park is usable and inviting for all. Respondents also envision **mixed-use development** that encourages **diverse residents and small businesses**, helping to build social connection and economic vitality.
- The integration of **green infrastructure and natural features**, including **more trees**, shaded areas, and covered event space, was widely supported.
- Cohesive planning to connect Harmston with other areas, specifically Simms and Riverside parks, via **safe pedestrian and cycling routes** with **adequate infrastructure and parking**, is viewed as critical to unify the downtown core and increase overall use.

## Next Steps

Feedback from this phase of engagement will inform the drafting of the Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan. The draft plan is expected to be complete and shared with City Council in Spring 2026. Another round of public and interest-holder engagement will follow to receive input on the draft plan.





# **APPENDIX A**

## Public Survey

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## As You Take This Survey

The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes.

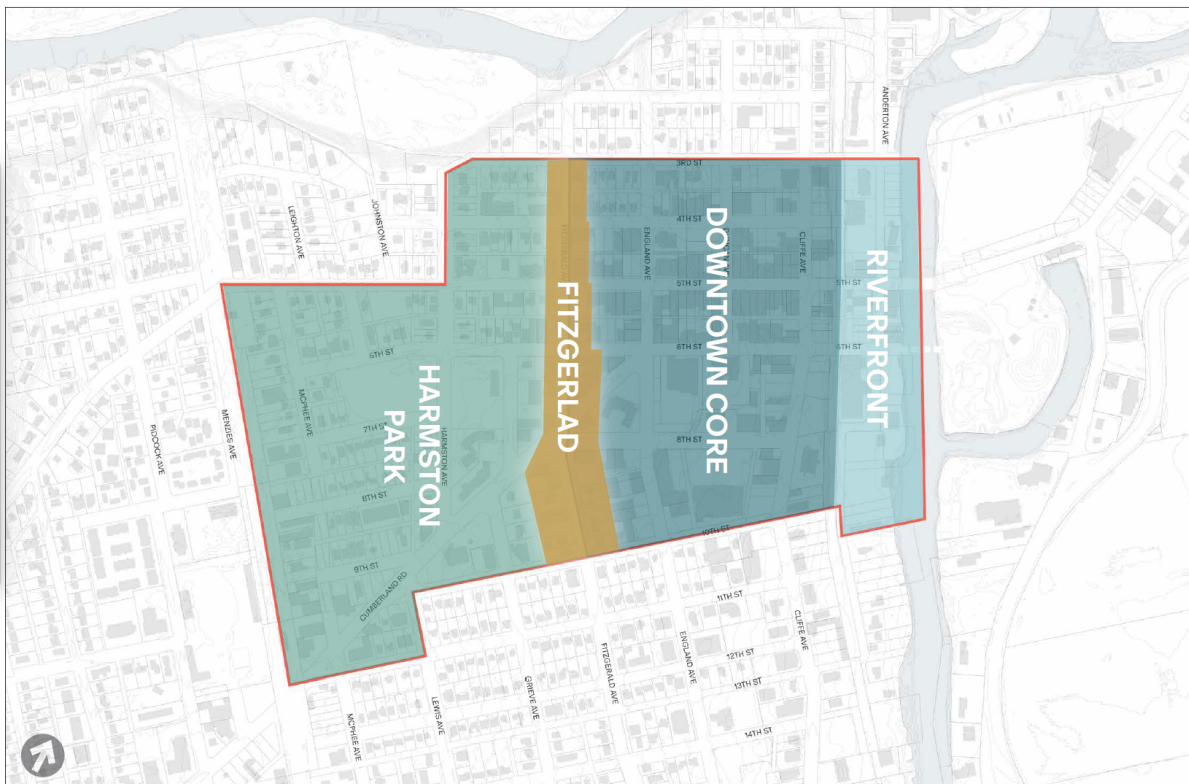
The open house boards will provide more detailed information on the [plan overview](#) and [concepts for each district](#).

Open House boards can be found in the Document Library on the project webpage: <https://engagecomoxvalley.ca/courtenay-downtown-plan>.

## Introduction

The City of Courtenay is crafting the Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan (DVLAP) to guide the future of Downtown Courtenay.

Building on the Official Community Plan (2022) and Downtown Courtenay Playbook (2016), we are working to create a more connected, inclusive, and vibrant Downtown—anchored in place, community, and culture. The DVLAP focuses on four districts—Riverfront, Downtown, Fitzgerald Corridor, and Harmston Park—each offering opportunities to improve public spaces, support housing, enhance transportation, and celebrate community identity.



## Privacy Statement

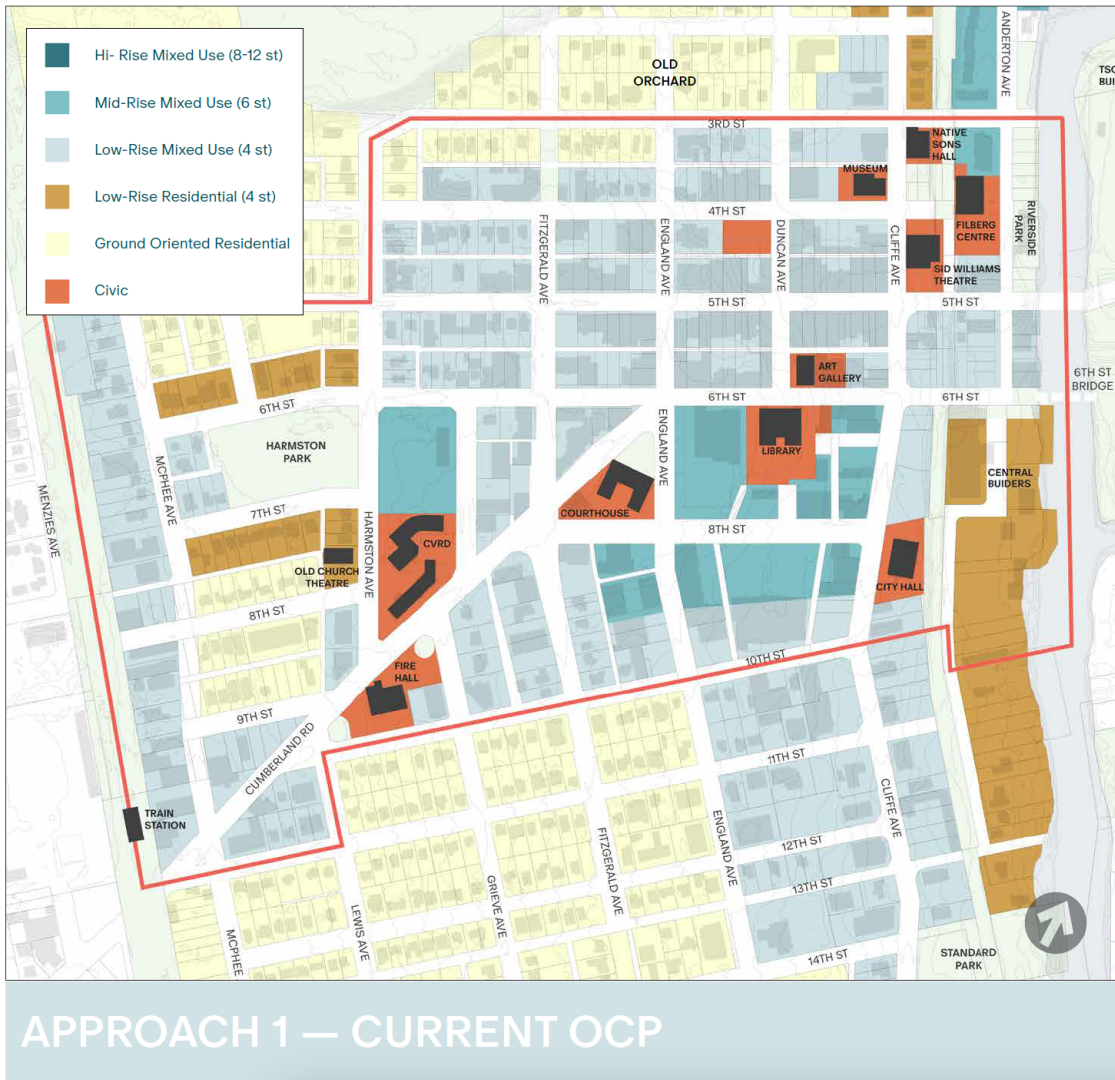
The personal information collected on this feedback form is collected in accordance with Section 26 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA) for the purpose of gathering public feedback for this project. Questions about the collection, use and disclosure of this information can be directed to the Manager of Community and Sustainability Planning at [planning@courtenay.ca](mailto:planning@courtenay.ca) or 250-703-4839.

## Density and Development

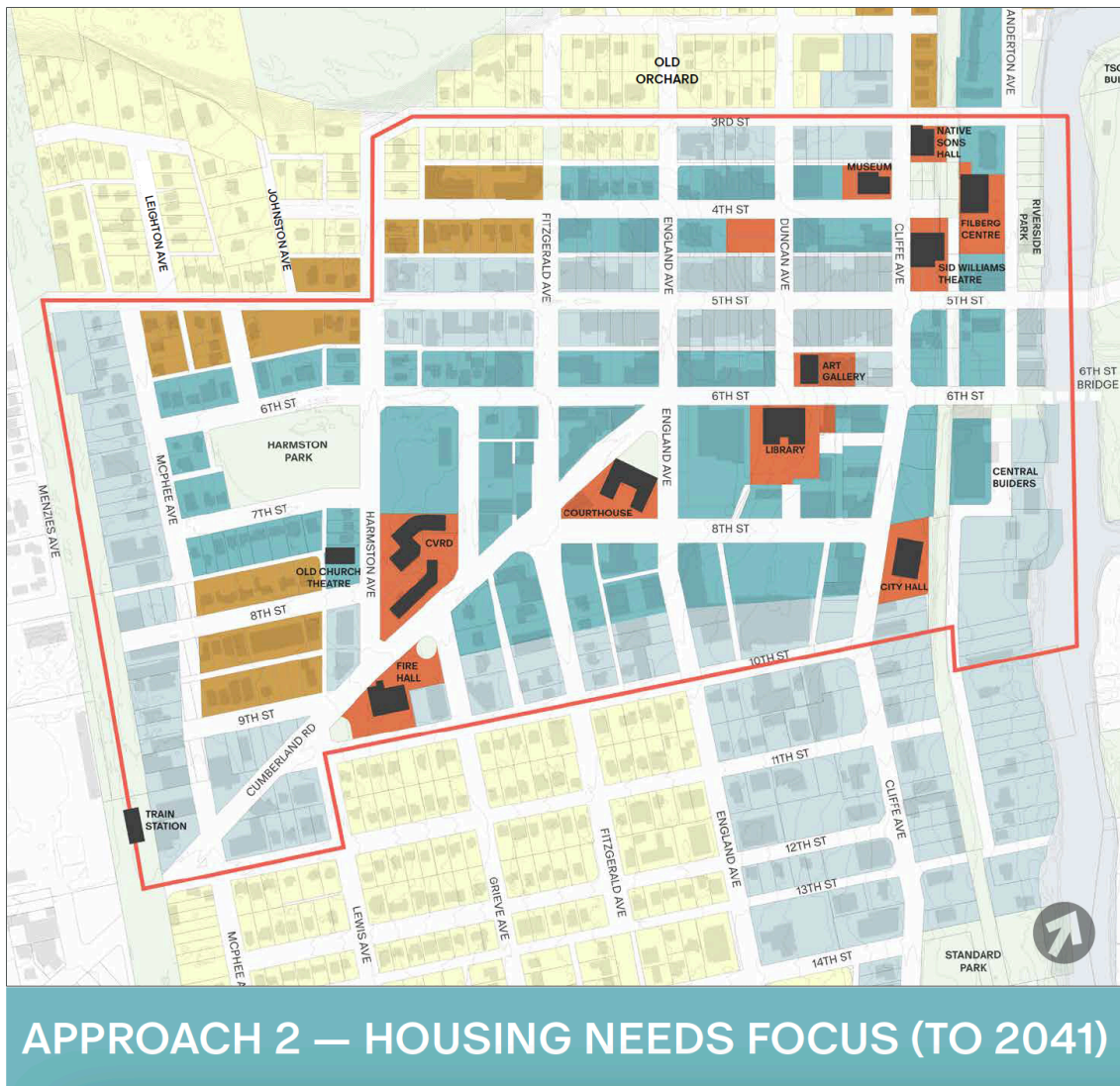
Courtenay’s most recent Housing Needs Report (2024) identifies that Courtenay could grow to a total population of 42,000 residents by 2041. This means that Courtenay will welcome approximately 13,000 additional people, and plan for an additional 8,350 homes by 2041.

**Within the Downtown this could mean 3,000 to 5,000 more people, and 1,500 to 2,500 additional homes by 2041.** The three approaches below help us explore opportunities for where new housing should go in the downtown. The level of density and height increases from Approach 1 - 3, forecasting different amounts of housing and residents in the downtown.

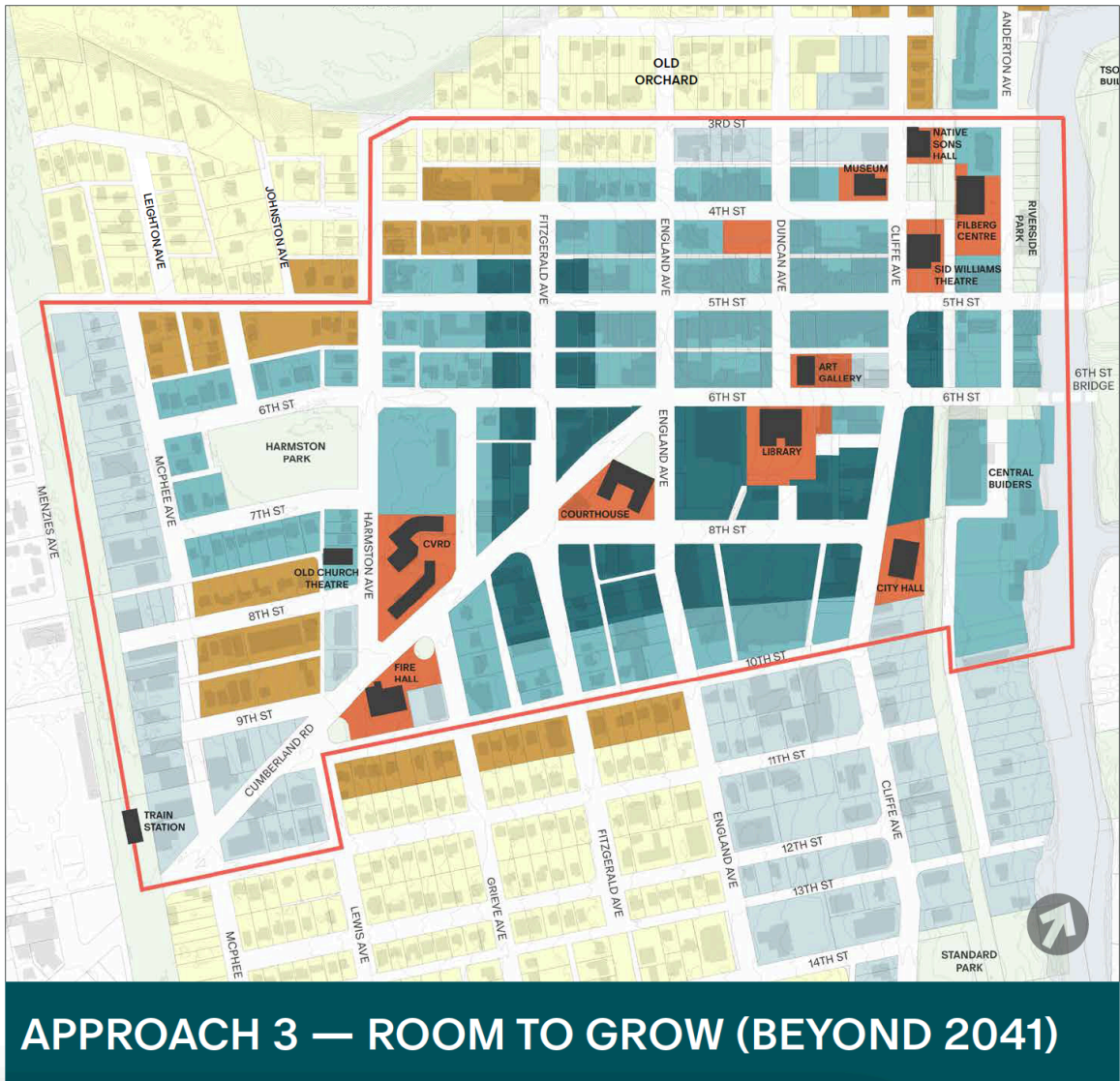
**Approach 1** follows most closely the vision established in the Official Community Plan in which low-rise buildings are along 5th Street and adjacent urban neighbourhood areas, and where mid- and high-rise buildings are considered for only select areas of the Downtown.



**Approach 2** would allow for more housing needs to be accommodated in the Downtown, while still maintaining low-rise buildings along 5th Street and within the Riverside district south of the 5th Street Bridge.



**Approach 3** looks even further into the future, beyond 2041, with a revised vision of a more urban Downtown with higher densities throughout most of the planning area.



01. As general approaches to development in the downtown, which approach to growth do you support? Select all that apply.

Select all that apply	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Approach 1 - Current OCP
<input type="checkbox"/>	Approach 2 - Housing Needs Focus (to 2041)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Approach 3 - Room to Grow (Beyond 2041)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

**02. Where should additional height and density be focused? Select all locations where increased height feels appropriate.**

Select all that apply
<input type="checkbox"/> Within the Riverfront district
<input type="checkbox"/> Downtown Core
<input type="checkbox"/> Fitzgerald Corridor
<input type="checkbox"/> Around Harmston Park
<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 50px; width: 100%;"></div>

**03. Do you have any additional comments or ideas for how we can balance density, livability, and character in Downtown Courtenay?**

## Riverfront

**Proposed Approach:** To transform the Courtenay River Riverfront into a vibrant, accessible destination by:

- improving public access
- enhancing recreational amenities
- fostering development that integrates natural and cultural assets
- activating underutilized spaces and implementing flood-resilient infrastructure.
- There are different opportunities and development concepts for areas north and south of the 5th Street bridge.

**04. North of the 5th Street Bridge: What is your level of support for a naturalized shoreline along Anderton Avenue, that provides views of the Courtenay River, and recreational opportunities?**

Select one answer only
<input type="radio"/> Very Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Neutral
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Unsupportive
<input type="radio"/> Not at all Supportive

**05. Please tell us why you selected this response.**

The City is exploring two concepts for Riverfront South. These concepts explore development ideas for the area south of the 5th Street Bridge, including the Central Builders site, the City Hall site, and adjacent parking lots.

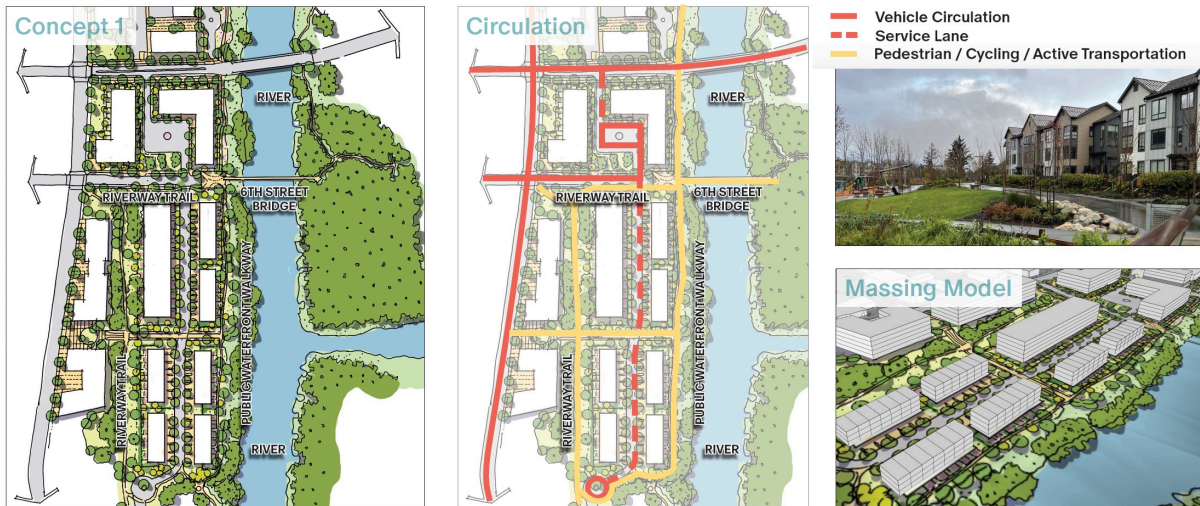
*Note that both concepts are restricted by a minimum 15m environmental waterfront setback.*

**Concept One for Riverfront South - Passive Public Waterfront**

A passive waterfront experience with trails, boardwalks, and seating along the river's edge. This includes:

- Townhomes form the first row of buildings, with front doors oriented toward the public walkway and waterfront
- Larger residential buildings are terraced up the slope behind, extending toward Cliffe Avenue
- The Courtenay Riverway Trail connects to the riverfront in two locations, integrating with the public waterfront experience.
- The trail and riparian corridor extend north to the 6th Street Bridge and continue under the 5th Street Bridge along Anderton Avenue.

**06. What is your level of support for this concept for Riverfront South (Passive Public Waterfront)?**



<b>Select one answer only</b>
<input type="radio"/> Very Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Neutral
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Unsupportive
<input type="radio"/> Not at all Supportive

**07. Please tell us why you selected this response.**

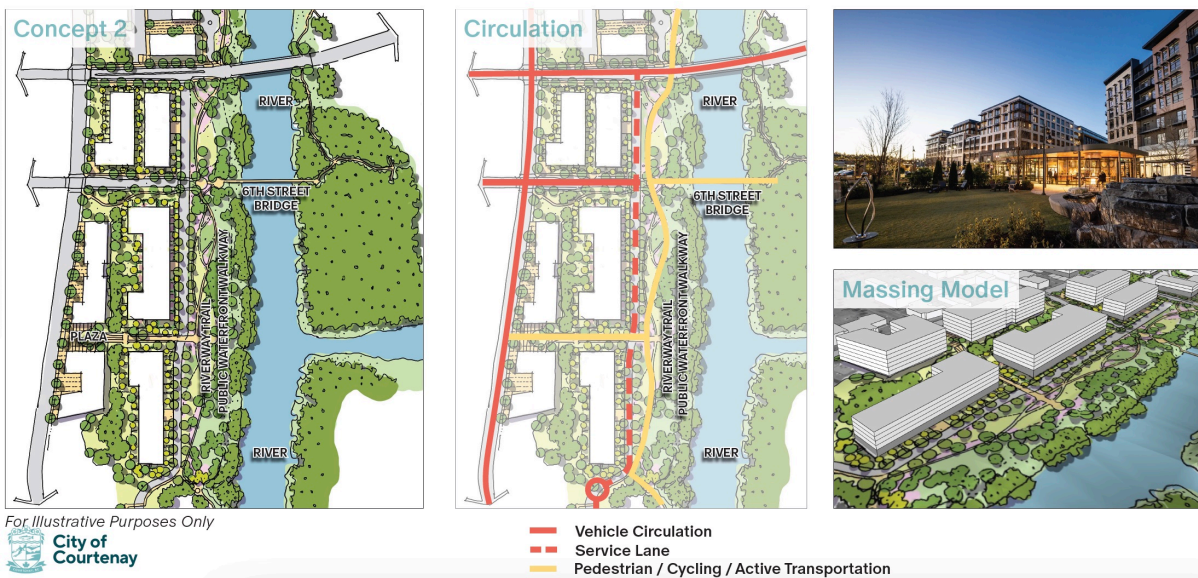
### Concept Two for Riverfront South- Active Urban Waterfront with More Public Space

An active public riverside street lined with retail, restaurants, a linear park, cultural spaces, and recreation opportunities.

This would mean:

- The existing Courtenay Riverway Trail behind City Hall is moved to make way for additional land along the river, creating a generous public zone that supports both community use and riparian protection.
- Taller mixed-use apartments help shape a vibrant urban waterfront that complements the adjacent park and natural landscape, supporting both local and destination-oriented activities year-round.
- Courtenay is a prominent and accessible public waterfront destination.

### 08. What is your level of support for this concept for Riverfront South (Active Urban Waterfront with More Public Space)?



<b>Select one answer only</b>
<input type="radio"/> Very Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Neutral
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Unsupportive
<input type="radio"/> Not at all Supportive

### 09. Please tell us why you selected this response.

## Downtown Core

**Proposed Approach:** To vitalize the Downtown Core through:

- public realm enhancements
- green space creation through greenways and multi-modal corridors
- pedestrian-friendly infrastructure to prioritize the pedestrian environment experience and reduce vehicle dominance
- spaces for public art, placemaking, and events to support Downtown as a cultural hub
- strengthened urban forest canopy
- preservation of heritage within Old Orchard

**10. What is your level of support for the proposed approach to vitalizing the Downtown Core – including enhancing public space, strengthening 5th Street, and improving walkability?**

Select one answer only
<input type="radio"/> Very Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Neutral
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Unsupportive
<input type="radio"/> Not at all Supportive

The next questions will ask for your feedback on different elements of the Downtown Core concept, including:

- 5th Street
- Duncan Common and Mews
- Cultural Square
- Courthouse Transit Plaza

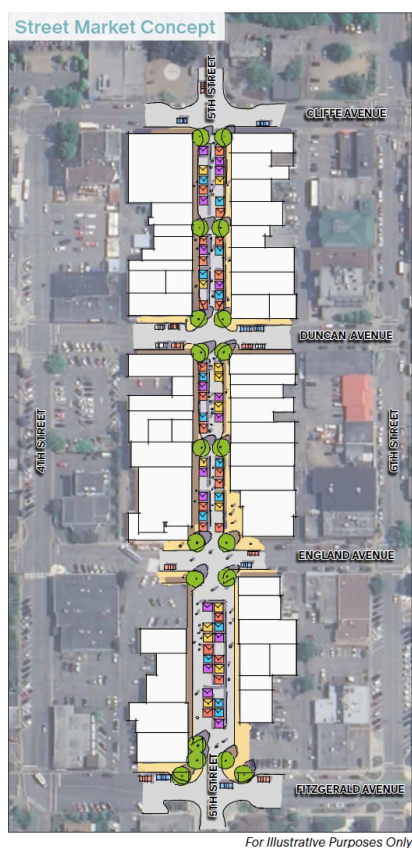
## 5th Street: The Heart of Downtown

5th Street is the centerpiece of the Downtown Courtenay experience — a key destination with a walkable, small-scale commercial character.

The proposed concept includes:

- Consider locating regular temporary street markets on 5th Street such as the weekly Farmers' Market.
- Permanent closure of 5th Street to vehicle traffic
- Balance new development with character preservation
- 6-storey mixed-use buildings with upper floors stepped back from the street

### 11. What is your level of support for the proposed 5th Street concept?



Select one answer only
<input type="radio"/> Very Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Neutral
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Unsupportive
<input type="radio"/> Not at all Supportive

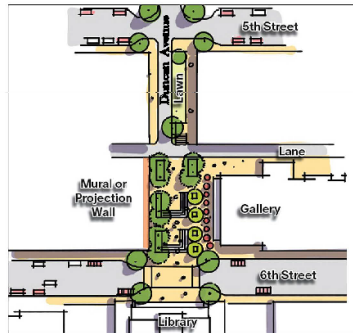
## Duncan Common and Mews

The concept for Duncan Common and Mews builds on the OCP vision for a public gathering space at 6th Street and Duncan Avenue.

The proposal includes:

- a series of ‘outdoor rooms’ or terraces that function as an outdoor extension of the Art Gallery and Library
- a focus on art installations, sculptures, murals, and quiet reading spaces
- seating for individuals and small groups to read or socialize in a green urban setting

### 12. What is your level of support for the Duncan Common and Mews concept?



Select one answer only

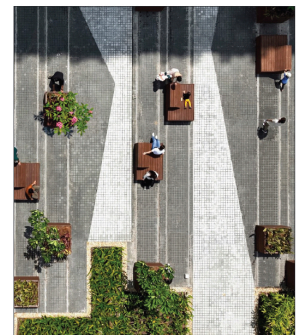
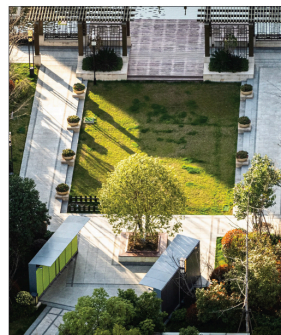
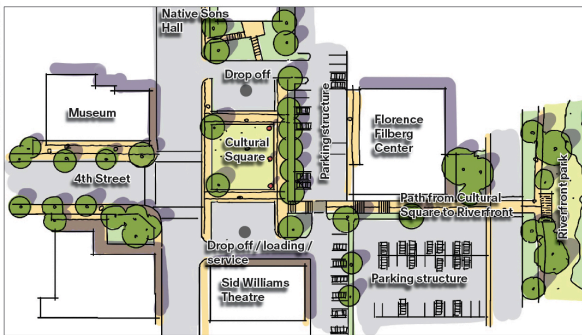
- Very Supportive
- Somewhat Supportive
- Neutral
- Somewhat Unsupportive
- Not at all Supportive

## Cultural Square

The concept for the Cultural Square:

- establishes a meaningful anchor at the end of 4th Street
- serves as a central gathering space in the cultural heart of Downtown.
- highlights and celebrates local arts and culture.
- acts as a key pedestrian connection between Downtown and the Riverfront
- creates potential for a new public parking structure between the Filberg Center and the Square to support downtown parking needs

### 13. What is your level of support for the Cultural Square concept?



Select one answer only
<input type="radio"/> Very Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Neutral
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Unsupportive
<input type="radio"/> Not at all Supportive

## Courthouse Transit Plaza

The concept for the Courthouse Transit Plaza includes:

- A meaningful gathering space in front of the Courthouse (at the intersection of Cumberland Road, 6th Street, and England Avenue).
- A new bike and pedestrian pathway and enhanced green space by extending the Cumberland corridor.
- Connection the new plaza and transit loop.
- Coordination and engagement with the provincial government to improve the open space.

### 14. What is your level of support for the Courthouse Transit Plaza concept?



Select one answer only

- Very Supportive
- Somewhat Supportive
- Neutral
- Somewhat Unsupportive
- Not at all Supportive

### 15. Do you have any additional on the proposed approach to the Downtown Core or concepts for the different elements?

## Fitzgerald Corridor

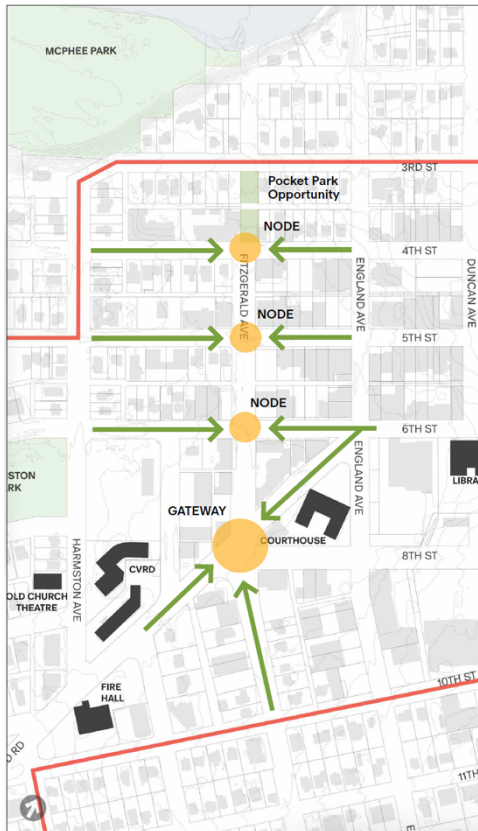
Proposed Approach: To elevate Fitzgerald Avenue's role as a 'gateway' to downtown by:

- Continuing active transportation upgrades and streetscape improvements.
- Encouraging additional commercial and mixed-use development.
- Building upon existing wayfinding signage programs to support navigation.
- Improving crossing opportunities to better connect Downtown with Harmston Park.
- Exploring partial street closure between 3rd and 4th Streets to create a pocket park and public space.

**16. Which of the following ideas for Fitzgerald resonate most with you?  
Select all that apply.**

Select all that apply
<input type="checkbox"/> Strengthening Fitzgerald as a welcome gateway to Downtown
<input type="checkbox"/> Key intersections (4th, 5th, 6th, Cumberland) as public gathering spaces
<input type="checkbox"/> Adding ground-floor commercial on all four corners at key intersections
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting density and mixed-use development (up to 6 storeys)
<input type="checkbox"/> Improving landscaping and the private realm to enhance walkability
<input type="checkbox"/> Expanding on existing bike and active transportation upgrades

**17. What is your level of support for the Fitzgerald Corridor approach?**



Select one answer only
<input type="radio"/> Very Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Neutral
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Unsupportive
<input type="radio"/> Not at all Supportive

**18. Please tell us why you selected this response.**

## Harmston Park

A separate planning process for Harmston Park is underway that will include additional opportunities for engagement. Visit the project webpage for more information: <https://engagecomoxvalley.ca/harmston-park>.

**Proposed Approach:** To design and develop Harmston Park as a dynamic community hub, supported by enhanced programming and infrastructure. Opportunities for higher-density housing and innovative uses for adjacent municipal lands, such as partial street closures, can further integrate the park into the community fabric.

Opportunities include:

- Detailed design and activation of Harmston Park.
- Introduce regular programming and events in the park.
- Enable infill residential and mixed-use development around the park.
- Enhance trail connections, including strengthening access to Rotary Trail and McPhee Meadows.
- Historic Train Station provides a placemaking opportunity with economic potential.

### 19. What is your level of support for the vision of Harmston Park as a vibrant community hub with new programming and surrounding development?

Select one answer only
<input type="radio"/> Very Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Supportive
<input type="radio"/> Neutral
<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Unsupportive
<input type="radio"/> Not at all Supportive

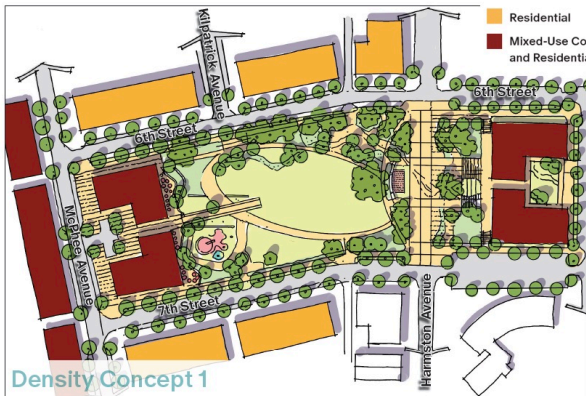
20. What types of programming or park features do you support? Select all that apply.

Select all that apply
<input type="checkbox"/> Close part of Harmston Avenue to create a flexible civic plaza
<input type="checkbox"/> Markets, concerts, and community events
<input type="checkbox"/> Playground and family-friendly amenities
<input type="checkbox"/> Small plaza at Harmston & 6th as a main park entrance
<input type="checkbox"/> Off-leash dog park
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial uses like cafés or shops around the park
<input type="checkbox"/> Art installations, murals, and cultural features
<input type="checkbox"/> Quiet green space for informal recreation (reading, picnicking, playing catch)
<input type="checkbox"/> Public seating and permanent furniture
<input type="checkbox"/> Community garden
<input type="checkbox"/> Pathways / connected paths
<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="text"/>

The City is considering two concepts to explore potential density approaches surrounding Harmston Park. Please note: The massing model illustrations show where added height and density could be supported—they do not represent the final built form.

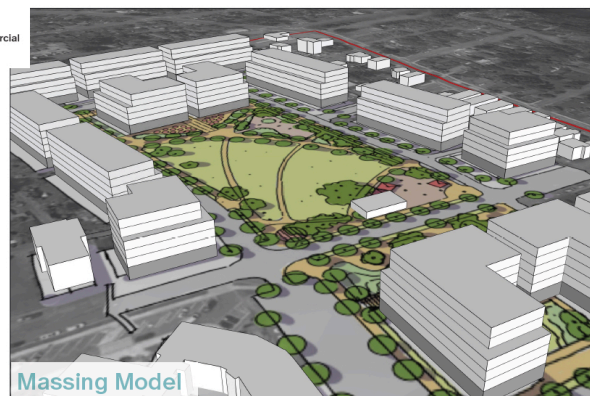
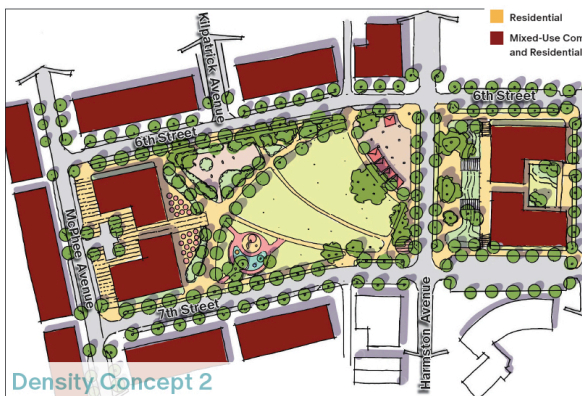
**Density Concept 1 - Four Storey with Limited Commercial**

This concept proposes a consistent four-storey building form around Harmston Park and along McPhee Avenue. Commercial uses would be limited to buildings fronting the park and McPhee Avenue, encouraging some public use without making it a focus of the area. The added residential density would help animate the park and offer housing close to community amenities.



**Density Concept 2 - Six Storey Mixed Use**

This concept introduces six-storey mixed-use buildings surrounding Harmston Park. Ground floors would feature commercial uses throughout, activating the park edges and bringing shops and services closer to residents. More people living downtown through higher density options can support a wider range of amenities, helps build a stronger sense of community, and can reduce car-dependency when part of a mixed use complete neighbourhood.



**21. What kind of building height and land use do you support around Harmston Park? Select all that apply.**

Select all that apply
<input type="checkbox"/> Density Concept #1: 4-storey residential buildings with limited commercial frontage
<input type="checkbox"/> Density Concept #2: 6-storey mixed-use buildings with ground-level commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> I support both concepts
<input type="checkbox"/> I support neither concept

**22. Do you have any additional comments or considerations on the proposed approach to the lands surrounding Harmston Park?**

## About You

It is important for the team to hear from Courtenay community members from all walks of life. Any demographic information you choose to share will be kept anonymous and will help us understand who is participating and what gaps exist so we can better reach out to any missing voices.

### 23. What is your relationship to the City of Courtenay? Please select all that apply.

Select all that apply
<input type="checkbox"/> Resident
<input type="checkbox"/> A worker who commutes into Courtenay
<input type="checkbox"/> Own or conduct business in Courtenay
<input type="checkbox"/> Attend school in Courtenay
<input type="checkbox"/> Visiting family, friends, recreation
<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="text"/>

### 24. What is your age?

Select one answer only
<input type="radio"/> 0-14
<input type="radio"/> 15-24
<input type="radio"/> 25-34
<input type="radio"/> 35-44
<input type="radio"/> 45-54
<input type="radio"/> 55-64
<input type="radio"/> 65-74
<input type="radio"/> 75+
<input type="radio"/> I prefer not to say

**25. How long have you lived, worked, played or learned in Courtenay?**

Select one answer only
<input type="radio"/> Less than one year
<input type="radio"/> Between one and three years
<input type="radio"/> Between four and six years
<input type="radio"/> Between seven and ten years
<input type="radio"/> More than ten years

**26. How do you identify your gender? Select all the apply.**

Select all that apply
<input type="checkbox"/> Woman
<input type="checkbox"/> Man
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-binary
<input type="checkbox"/> Transgender
<input type="checkbox"/> Two-spirit
<input type="checkbox"/> Genderqueer/genderfluid
<input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to say
<input type="checkbox"/> I prefer to self-describe: <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%; margin-top: 5px;"></div>

**27. Do you identify as a member of any of the following groups? (Select all that apply)**

Select all that apply
<input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous (e.g., First Nations, Métis, Inuit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Racialized person (e.g., Black, Asian, Latinx, Middle Eastern)
<input type="checkbox"/> Person with a disability
<input type="checkbox"/> LGBTQIA2S+ (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, Two-Spirit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Newcomer to Canada (e.g., immigrant, refugee)
<input type="checkbox"/> Person from a low-income background
<input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to say
<input type="checkbox"/> I prefer to self-describe:
<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

**28. Did you participate in the public open house on May 14?**

Select one answer only
<input type="radio"/> Yes, I did attend
<input type="radio"/> No, I did not attend
<input type="radio"/> Other
<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

## Thank You!

Your feedback will be considered along with further design analysis to develop a draft Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan.

Please sign up on the project webpage for updates and future engagement opportunities: [engagecomoxvalley.ca/courtenay-downtown-plan](https://engagecomoxvalley.ca/courtenay-downtown-plan).



**City of  
Courtenay**

# Harmston Park Plan What We Heard Report



**Summer 2025**

The City of Courtenay respectfully acknowledges that the lands to which this Plan applies are on the Unceded territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.

# Contents

- Introduction..... 1**
- Purpose of Engagement ..... 2**
- What We Did ..... 3**
- Who We Heard From ..... 5**
- What We Heard ..... 6**
  - Park Values and Opportunities..... 6
  - Park Vision..... 11
  - Park Design Concepts ..... 13
- Next Steps ..... 16**

# Introduction

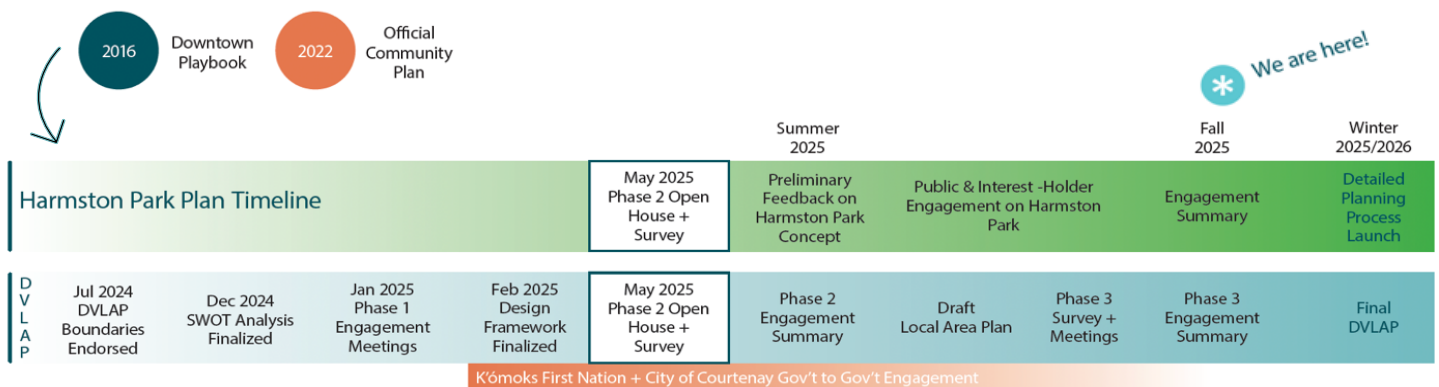
The City is working on a planning district concept and vision for the Harmston Park area as part of the broader Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan (DVLAP) currently underway, which will inform a more detailed future park design process.

Harmston Park is a 2.8 acre green space located on a former School District 71 site. The City took ownership of the property in 2016, recognizing its potential to help meet growing demand for parkland- especially with increased housing density and population growth.

The City’s Parks and Recreation Master Plan Implementation Strategy (2023) identifies the development of a Harmston Park Plan as a strategic priority. This work is being done as part of and concurrently with the DVLAP which includes four distinct planning districts: Riverfront, Downtown Core, Fitzgerald Corridor and Harmston Park.

Through the DVLAP planning process, and in consultation with the community, the Harmston Park district concept will:

- set a vision for the neighbourhood park reimaged as a community park
- explore ideas for programming and public space activation within the park
- consider opportunities for higher-density housing and innovative uses for adjacent municipal lands
- look to strengthen connections to nearby trails and city greenspace



To learn more about the Harmston Park Plan, visit <https://engagecomoxvalley.ca/harmston-park>.



As part of the Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan (DVLAP) engagement earlier this spring, community members had opportunities to share their thoughts on Harmston Park within the broader downtown planning process. The DVLAP presented two draft concept designs for the park, which served as the foundation for park-specific engagement.

Additional engagement was undertaken specifically for Harmston Park to ensure the community could share ideas and speak directly to park-related design elements, programming, and priorities.

Comments from the DVLAP survey related to Harmston Park programming and design have been integrated into this report, while feedback focused on land uses surrounding the park is included in a separate *DVLAP What We Heard Report*.

## Purpose of Engagement

The purpose of community engagement in this phase was to:

- Explore the overall vision for Harmston park, draft design concepts, and ideas for park programming with community members and interest holders;
- Bring the community together to build excitement for the plan and encourage involvement in the more detailed design process to come; and,
- Facilitate both in-person and virtual engagement opportunities to integrate feedback from a broad cross-section of the community and interests.

**This report summarizes *what we did* and *what we heard* from public and interest-holder engagement opportunities in May – August 2025 for the Harmston Park planning process.**



*Park Pop-Up, August 16*



**City of  
Courtenay**

## What We Did

In June-August 2025, the City hosted a series of engagement activities to seek feedback on the draft vision, concept plans, and programming ideas for Harmston Park. Activities are summarized below.

### Public Survey



The Harmston Park Plan survey was available on the project website and in print form from July 21 to August 25, 2025.

The survey aimed to assess public support for the proposed Harmston Park vision and concept plans as a community park independent of adjacent redevelopment and to gather further input on desired amenities and programming.

**137 participants** submitted a survey for the Harmston Park Plan.

### Engage Courtenay Project Webpage



Project background, updates, and public engagement opportunities were available on the project webpage: [engagecomoxvalley.ca/harmston-park](https://engagecomoxvalley.ca/harmston-park).

**391 informed participants** visited the project page or downloaded documents during the engagement period.

### Park Pop-Up



On Saturday, August 16<sup>th</sup>, the project team hosted a pop-up in Harmston Park from 10am-2pm. Participants were invited to view display boards and visionary concept plans developed through the DVLAP process, participate in interactive activities, and share their feedback on the draft concepts and programming ideas.

Over **70 people** attended the pop-up.

The event was promoted through a media release, on-site signage and posters, City facility postings, a social media campaign, and the Engage Courtenay platform.



## Park Focus Groups & Meetings



A series of four targeted focus group sessions were conducted in June 2025. These focus group sessions were organized around equity-priority groups, including community social support services (adult-focused), cultural services and events, youth support services, Indigenous community members. The team also met with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission.

**23 representatives** participated in the focus groups and meetings.



*Park Pop-Up, August 16*



## Who We Heard From

We asked demographic questions as part of the survey to understand who we are reaching through City engagement processes. The demographic results for the Courtenay Harmston Park Plan Survey (summer 2025) are summarized below.

- **Place of Residence:** Where survey participants live in relation to Harmston Park
  - 83% of participants live within the City of Courtenay:
    - 31% within a 5-minute walk to Harmston Park
    - 26% within a 10-minute walk to Harmston Park
    - 26% more than a 10-minute walk to Harmston Park
  - 13% of participants live in either the Town of Comox, the Village of Cumberland, or the Comox Valley Regional District
- **Age:** Percent of respondents broken down by age categories
  - Most of the survey participants were between 35-49 years of age (41%), or 50 years or older (37%)
  - 18% of participants were 25-34 years of age
  - We heard the least from participants aged 0-24 (1%)
- **Relationship to Courtenay:** Percent of respondents broken down by how long they have 'lived, played or learned' in Courtenay
  - Most survey participants (65%) have lived, worked, played or learned in Courtenay more than ten years
- **Gender:** Percent of respondents by gender identification
  - Survey participants who identify as women made up 64% of respondents and those who identify as men made up 23%
- **Identification:** Percent of respondents based on identification (Indigenous, racialized, person with disability, etc.)
  - 3% of survey respondents are Indigenous
  - 4% identified as a racialized person
  - 9% have a disability
  - 9% identified as LGBTQIA2S
  - 2% are newcomers to Canada
  - 7% are from a low-income background



## What We Heard

The following section summarizes what we heard during the park focus groups, community pop-up event in the park, and public survey.

### Park Values and Opportunities

#### From Park Focus Groups & Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Four focus group sessions and a meeting with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee were facilitated to understand key opportunities, community needs, and considerations for future changes to the park. The sessions were organized with equity-priority groups including representatives from community social support services (adult-focused), cultural services and events, youth support services, and Indigenous organizations. The sessions revealed several key themes reflecting the diverse needs and aspirations of community members.

#### Equitable Access and Inclusive Park Features

Many groups commented on the need to ensure the park accommodates different **modes of transportation** through **accessible walking paths or loops** through and around the park, active transportation, connections by **transit and parking availability**.

Community and social groups emphasized the importance of **equitable access** and accessible park features, such as **seating** for all abilities. Providing supports and measures for people who are unhoused and who may use the park to gather, or shelter was also brought forward by arts and culture participants. Indigenous organizations highlighted the value of inclusive infrastructure such as **play areas and public bathrooms**.

“ Harmston Park is currently an underused green space. It would be nice to have it develop to better serve the surrounding residents and in close proximity to the vibrant downtown core. ”



## Cultural and Community Gathering Spaces

A shared theme across groups was the importance of creating spaces for **cultural expression, public events, and social connection**. Ideas included performance stages, food trucks, space to host events, communal areas, outdoor cafés, community garden workshops. There was also general support for **closing off Harmston Avenue** to encourage these initiatives.

Indigenous participants encouraged opportunities to promote **cultural expression and visibility, such as gathering and performance areas**. Arts and culture participants expressed a need for infrastructure to support events (e.g. water/electrical access for vendors or entertainment). This includes consideration of **parking needs** for visitors and or large gatherings hosted in the park.

Children and youth providers highlighted the need for more **youth inspired spaces**, particularly for underserved and 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, and suggested collaborating and partnering with local schools to foster connection and the creation of these spaces.

## Green and Natural Spaces

Generally, groups emphasized the need to protect **natural spaces, existing trees**, and add more **shaded areas** to the park. This includes suggestions to minimize the amount of hardscape added to the park to preserve green and permeable surfaces. Community and social groups also suggested to retain natural spaces for **Indigenous land-based healing**.

Many groups held a strong desire to preserve the **community garden** and associated infrastructure. Some concerns were raised about potential conflicting uses, like placing a dog park near the community garden. The need for **more recreational spaces**, such as playground utilizing natural features and unstructured play, were also suggested.

“ It offers a peaceful, calm place to come and put a blanket down and sit in the shade or the sun and enjoy being in a quieter part of the city surrounded by family homes not businesses. ”



## Impacts from a Growing Neighbourhood

Community and social groups stressed the need for a **range of housing options nearby** and equitable access to the park as the neighbourhood grows. Groups also expressed interest in ensuring additional park uses do not negatively impact surrounding residents (i.e. such as noise considerations).

Indigenous organizations questioned whether existing **water infrastructure** had enough capacity to support increased density around the park and downtown. The arts and culture participants underscored the importance of public spaces that celebrate and reflect **cultural and local heritage** within a growing downtown.

“ I would like to see the residential feel to the neighborhood be maintained, with shared public spaces increased as it densifies. Maintaining tree canopy is also important for the downtown. ”



## From Park Pop-Up

Participants at the park pop-up valued Harmston Park as both a natural and recreational space.

Many commented on the need to preserve existing trees and greenspace, appreciating the quiet, unprogrammed park as the heart of the neighbourhood. Participants also valued the Park as an open, recreational space that allows their kids to play sports/games and provides a space for their dogs to run around.

**Opportunities** that resonated most with participants include:

- Adding a playground and/or nature-based play structures
- Maintaining the park as a community space where people can come and gather
- Establishing an off-leash dog park or space for dogs
- Providing public washrooms
- Preserving the community garden
- Ensuring public safety, including traffic calming measures
- Allowing daycares and mixed-use adjacent to Harmston Park

“ Expanded programming—such as markets, performances, workshops, and seasonal events—would draw people of all ages and backgrounds, creating regular opportunities for connection and cultural exchange. ”

**Other Considerations** for the future park design expressed by participants include:

- **Natural Features & Greenspace**
  - Noise mitigation and light pollution, as well as reducing the reliance on cement as measures to enhancing the Park's tranquility
  - Preservation and expansion of the community garden, trees and natural features



- **Safety & Accessibility**

- Public safety through enhanced lighting
- Desire to increase walkability.

- **Surrounding Development\***

- Mixed opinions on parking, with some highlighting the need for more parking while others were concerned that increased parking would increase development costs, decrease affordability, and displace homeowners.
- Maintained form and character of the existing neighbourhood with less support for taller forms of development

*\* This feedback will be shared and integrated as part of the DVLAP process as it refers to land use and development surrounding the park.*

- **Park Programming**

- Potential for more entertainment and arts programming
- Many respondents advocated for a dog park. However, it was stated that bylaws should be regularly enforced so that this use did not conflict with other park uses.
- Other recreational amenities, such as a mountain bike skills park or skate park for youth

- **Park Planning Process**

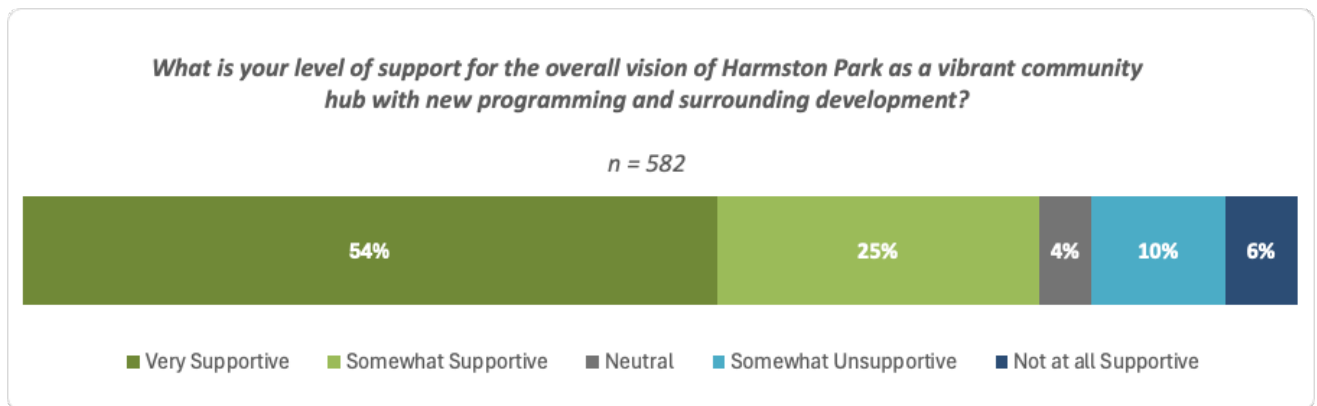
- Suggestion to consult with the K'ómoks First Nation
- Need for regular updates on the park planning and ensure it is community-driven process
- Concerns were expressed regarding the park being used for sheltering by individuals experiencing homelessness and how to plan the park with these concerns in mind



## Park Vision

In the **Harmston Park Plan survey and DVLAP survey**, participants were asked about their level of support for the proposed vision for Harmston Park:

*Design and develop Harmston Park as a dynamic community hub with opportunities for gathering and recreation, while enhancing the park's natural and green spaces. As an important green space, Harmston Park will support a growing community with additional amenities and infrastructure, such as potential street closures, to accommodate local events and programming.*



Most respondents were either very supportive or somewhat supportive of this vision (90%).

Participants were asked to 'tell us why' they selected their level of support.

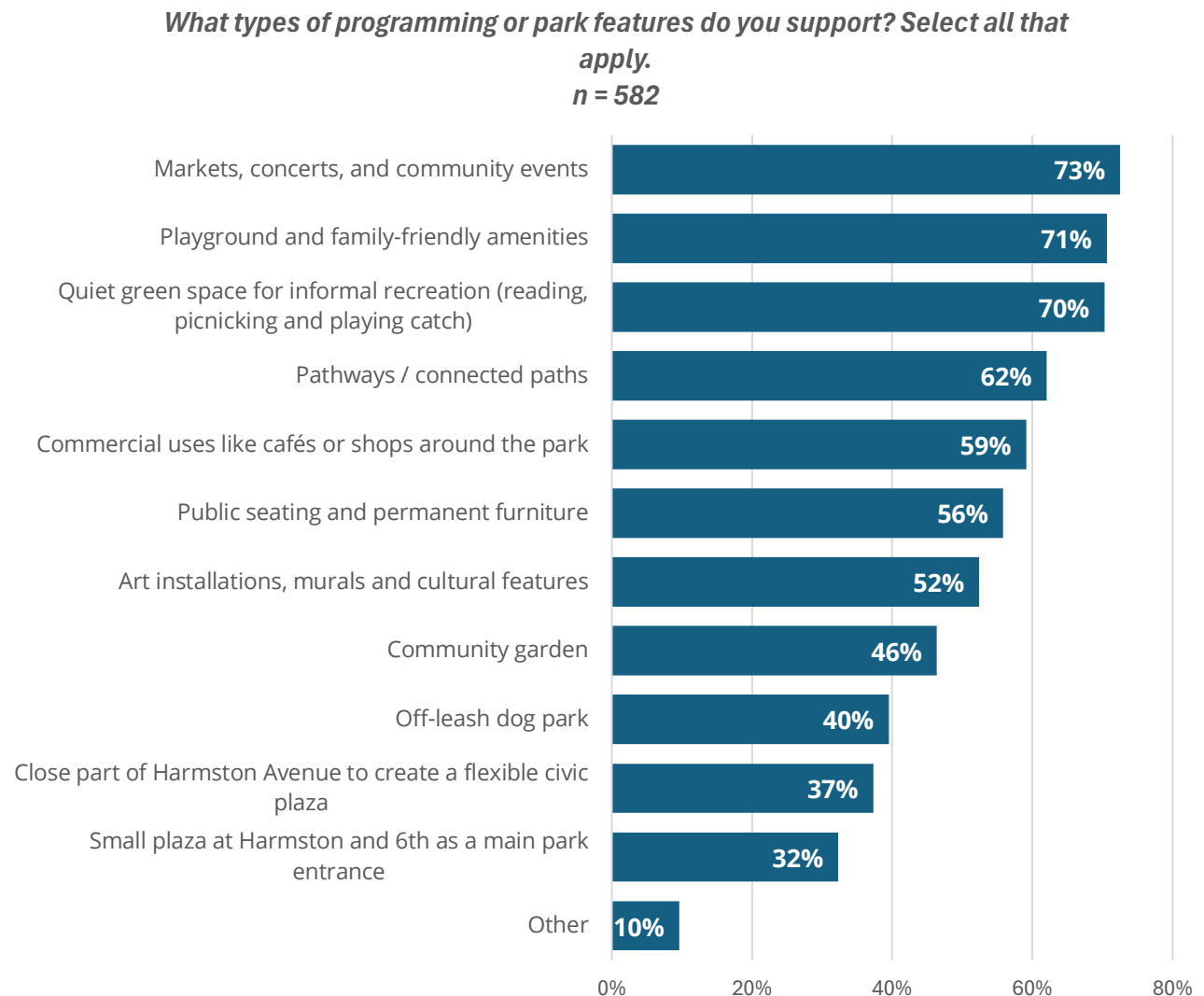
The following top themes emerged from responses:

- Support for more spaces that draw people to the area, creating a more vibrant space (31 comments)
- Need for preserving the quiet, natural green space at Harmston Park (25)
- Public safety for all park users and balance of needs, including children, families and pets (9)
- No changes to existing park (7)



## Park Programming

In the **Harmston Park Plan survey** and **DVLAP survey**, participants were asked about their level of support for the types of programming or park features they support.



Most respondents supported markets, concerts and community events (73%), playgrounds and family amenities (71%), and quiet green space for informal recreation (70%).

**'Other' ideas** for programming from the surveys and pop-up included: public art, public washrooms, water fountain, community centre, nature-based playground, splash pads, a dirt track, more large trees for shade, and fire and drought resistant plants.



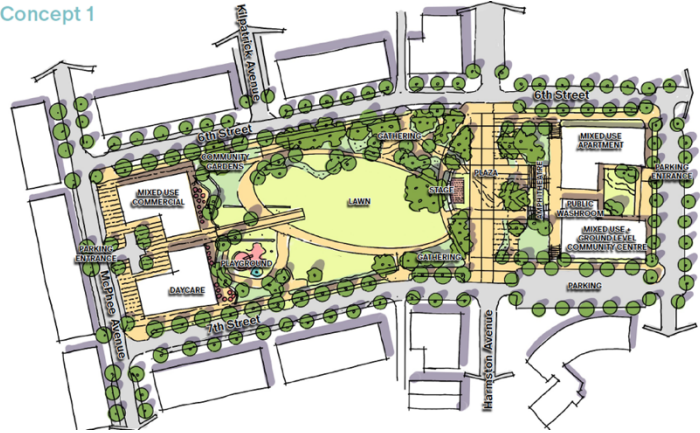
## Park Design Concepts

In the **Harmston Park Plan survey** participants were asked about their level of support for two proposed concepts for the park.

### Concept 1 - Community Park and Civic Plaza

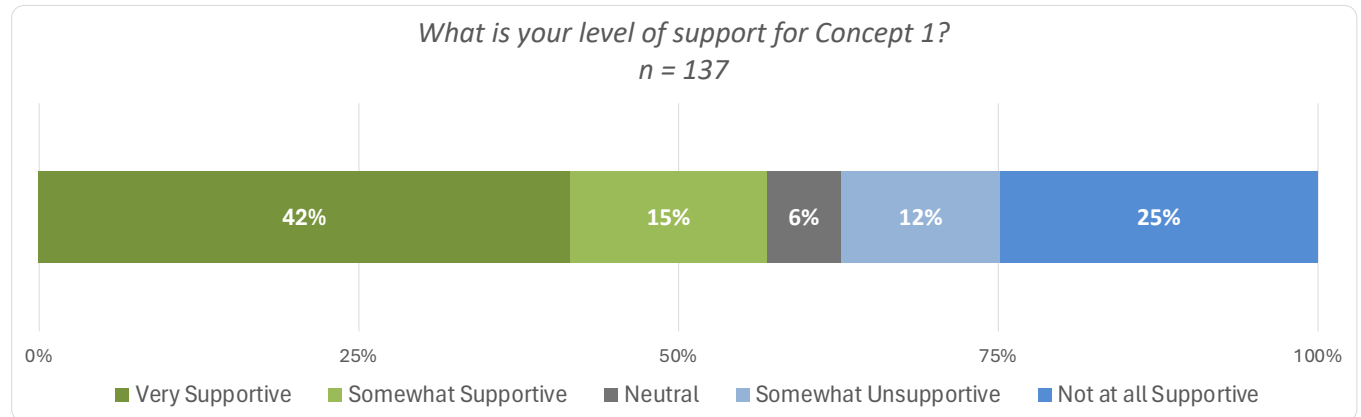
*This concept integrates Harmston Park with a new civic plaza by closing Harmston Avenue to vehicle traffic (except emergency access). The plaza would serve as a flexible public space for markets, concerts, and community events. The park would include a playground, community gardens, and an open lawn for informal recreation. Ground-level commercial or community uses in adjacent buildings could help activate the space throughout the year.*

Concept 1



What is your level of support for Concept 1?

n = 137

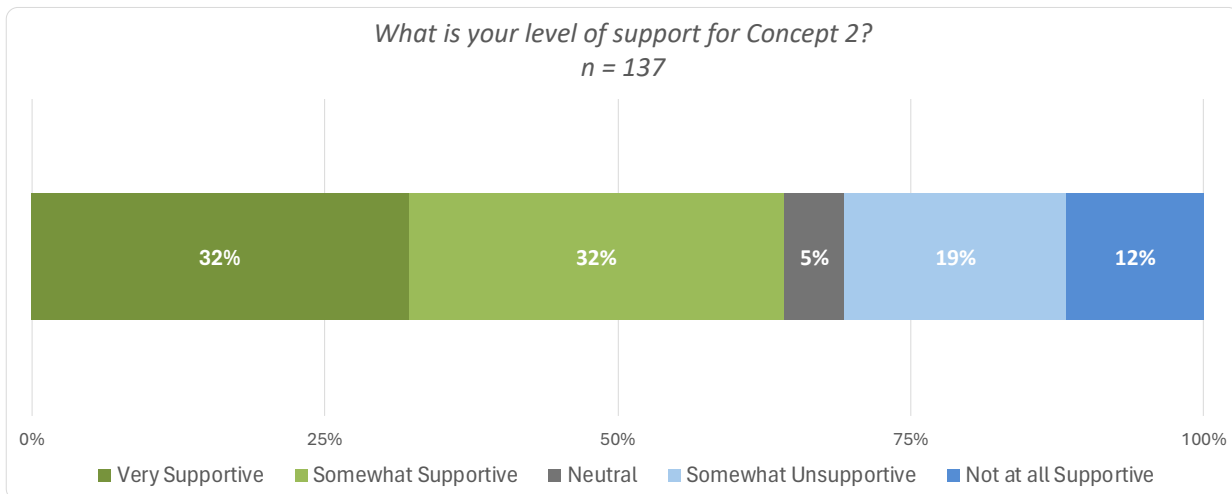


Level of support for Concept 1 of Harmston Park was mixed as 57% of participants were very supportive or somewhat supportive of the concept and 37% were somewhat unsupportive or not at all supportive.

### Concept 2 - Community Park

*This concept envisions a more passive park anchored by a smaller plaza at 6th Street and Harmston Avenue, serving as a main entry point. The park would feature a playground, community gardens, a dog park, and a large open lawn for informal use. Surrounding buildings would include more extensive commercial uses to help animate the area.*

Concept 2



Compared to Concept 1, there was slightly more support for Concept 2 of Harmston Park as 64% of participants were very supportive or somewhat supportive and 31% were somewhat unsupportive or not at all supportive.



Survey and pop-up participants were asked to 'tell us why' they selected their level of support for each concept. The following top themes emerged from comments on both concepts:

- Desire for a dog park, either leash or off-leash (58 comments).
- Need for public amenities such as a community plaza, public washrooms, benches, picnic tables, performance stage for events (56).
- Preservation of the quiet, natural greenspace at the park (45).
- Support for gathering spaces to draw people to the area and support public art and local artists to create a more vibrant space (40).
- Mixed opinions regarding the closure of Harmston Avenue. While some respondents stated how this closure could activate the area (31), others expressed concern over increased traffic along other routes and a lack of parking (20).
- Comments that the buildings and development within the concepts do not reflect or enhance the existing neighbourhood (29).
- Mix of comments on the inclusion of commercial space and economic development adjacent to the park. Concern with potential impacts upon the surrounding neighbourhood and that it may draw traffic away from downtown, where there is already enough commercial opportunity (25). Some were supportive of mixed use and added commercial spaces, including food trucks and cafes, and opportunity to bring more activity to the area (18).
- Desire for a playground and recreation space that could include areas for soccer, bocce ball, and other grass field sports (26).
- Importance of including a community garden in any design (23).

“ More people, more foot traffic and public amenities would be good for that part of town. I like the idea of having a closed street/place area that wouldn't adversely affect traffic or parking. ”



## Next Steps

Feedback from this phase of engagement will inform the detailed planning process for Harmston Park. This planning and design process is expected to launch in early 2026, following the completion of the Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan. This input will also be used to refine the concept designs and or park related policies as part of the Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan.



*Park Pop-Up, August 16*





# DOWNTOWN VITALIZATION LOCAL AREA PLAN

## Open House | May 14, 2025

### Welcome!

We're crafting the **Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan (DVLAP)** to guide the future of Downtown Courtenay. Building on the Official Community Plan (2022) and Downtown Courtenay Playbook (2016), we're working to create a more connected, inclusive, and vibrant Downtown—anchored in place, community, and culture. The DVLAP focuses on four districts—Riverfront, Downtown Core, Fitzgerald Corridor, and Harmston Park—each offering opportunities to improve public spaces, support housing, enhance transportation, and celebrate community identity.

### What You'll Find Today

Take a walk through the boards—explore emerging ideas and let us know what matters most to you. You'll find:

- Big Moves: Key directions and opportunities across Downtown
- Concepts for placemaking, density, and circulation
- Interactive stations to share your feedback and priorities

### How to Participate

- Share your ideas at each concept board
- Scan the QR Code to fill out a survey
- Speak with a staff member



### How to Stay Connected

[engagecomoxvalley.ca/courtenay-downtown-plan](https://engagecomoxvalley.ca/courtenay-downtown-plan)  
@cityofcourtenay

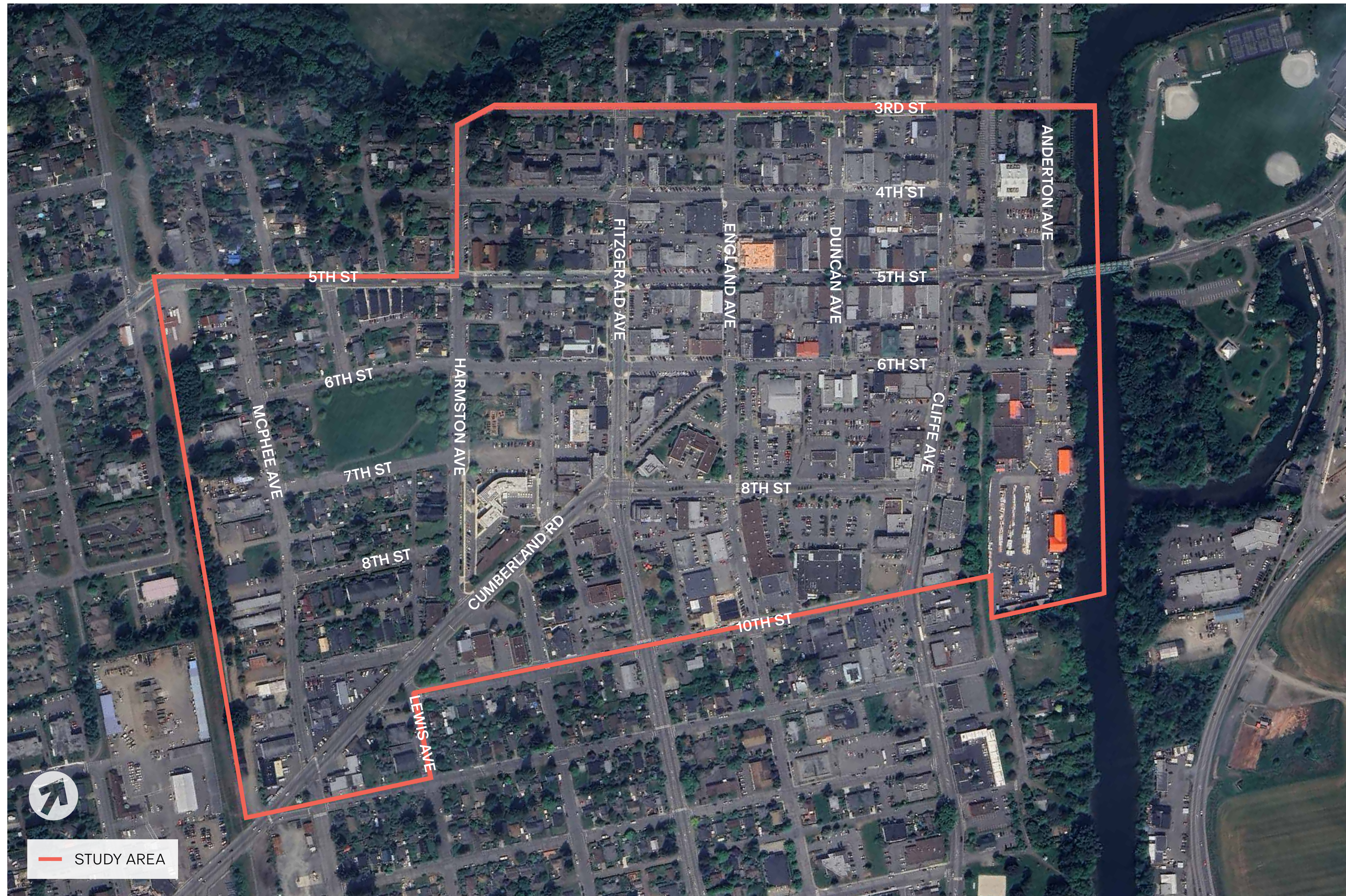


*The City of Courtenay respectfully acknowledges that the lands to which this Local Area Plan applies are on the Unceded territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.*



# WHAT WE'VE HEARD, WHAT WE'RE BUILDING ON

## Grounded in Plans and Feedback



### DVLAP Study Area

The boundaries of the DVLAP are informed by the OCP and Downtown Playbook. Bringing the boundaries of these two plans together allows for a planning process that comprehensively incorporates the high activity mixed-use Downtown Core with the surrounding lands that influence the history and future of the downtown.

Within the comprehensive planning area are opportunities to develop distinct planning districts: the Courtenay riverfront to the east, the Fitzgerald Avenue corridor on the edge of the core to the west, and Harmston Park neighbourhood beyond including industrial employment generators, significant municipal lands, public parkland and established residences.

### Timeline



### Why We're Here

The Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan (DVLAP) will help guide growth, public space improvements, and transportation changes in Courtenay's Downtown. It builds on previous planning, new opportunities, and what we've heard from the community.

### We're Building On...

#### Downtown Courtenay Playbook (2016)

- Defines character streets for 4th (Market), 5th (Shopping) and 6th (Green)
- Envisions Duncan Commons as a central public plaza
- Emphasizes riverfront connections, infill housing, and pedestrian experience.

#### Official Community Plan (2022)

- Supports more housing, diverse uses, and vibrant public space
- Improves physical and cultural connections to the river
- Recognizes the Downtown as a regional centre for public life

#### Parks & Recreation Master Plan (2019)

- Recommends improvements to urban parks, trail networks, and access to green space
- Reinforces the role of Downtown parks as key community gathering spaces

#### Strategic Cultural Plan (2025)

- Positions Downtown as the heart of arts and culture in the Comox Valley

### What We've Heard So Far

As a first step in the DVLAP engagement process, the City and MODUS met with key stakeholders in late 2024 and early 2025 to validate a draft SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the study area. These conversations highlighted local challenges and opportunities, refined the engagement strategy, and informed early design directions:

- Recognize the Cultural District as a Focal Point
- Bring People Downtown
- Enhance Greenspaces
- Support Housing Development & Local Businesses
- Utilize the Strength of Community Groups & Potential Partnerships
- Align with Other Plans and Strategies



# BIG MOVES

## Key Interventions for the DVLAP

### 1 Reimagine the Riverfront

Transform the Riverfront into a vibrant, accessible destination by improving public access, enhancing recreational amenities, and fostering development that integrates natural and cultural assets. This includes activating underutilized spaces and implementing flood-resilient infrastructure.

### 2 Strengthen the Downtown Core

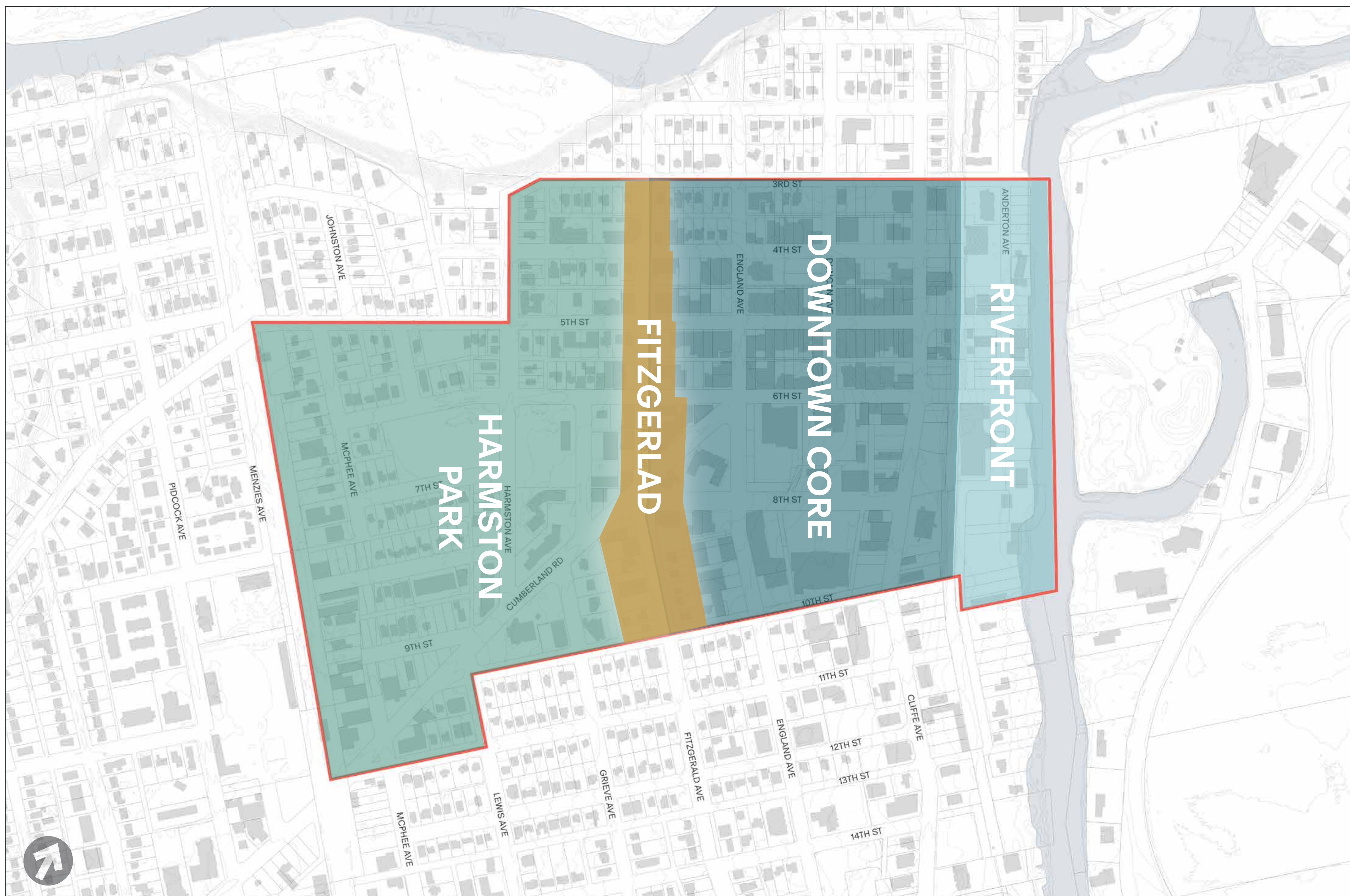
Vitalize the Downtown Core through public realm enhancements, green space creation, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. Celebrate Downtown as the cultural heart of the Comox Valley by supporting gathering spaces, creative placemaking, and connections to arts, heritage, and Indigenous expression.

### 3 Fitzgerald as a Key Connector

Elevate Fitzgerald Avenue's role as a key connector between districts with further streetscape improvements, active transportation infrastructure, and the promotion of mixed-use development. Establishing Fitzgerald as a welcoming gateway to Downtown will ensure it supports the broader vision for the area.

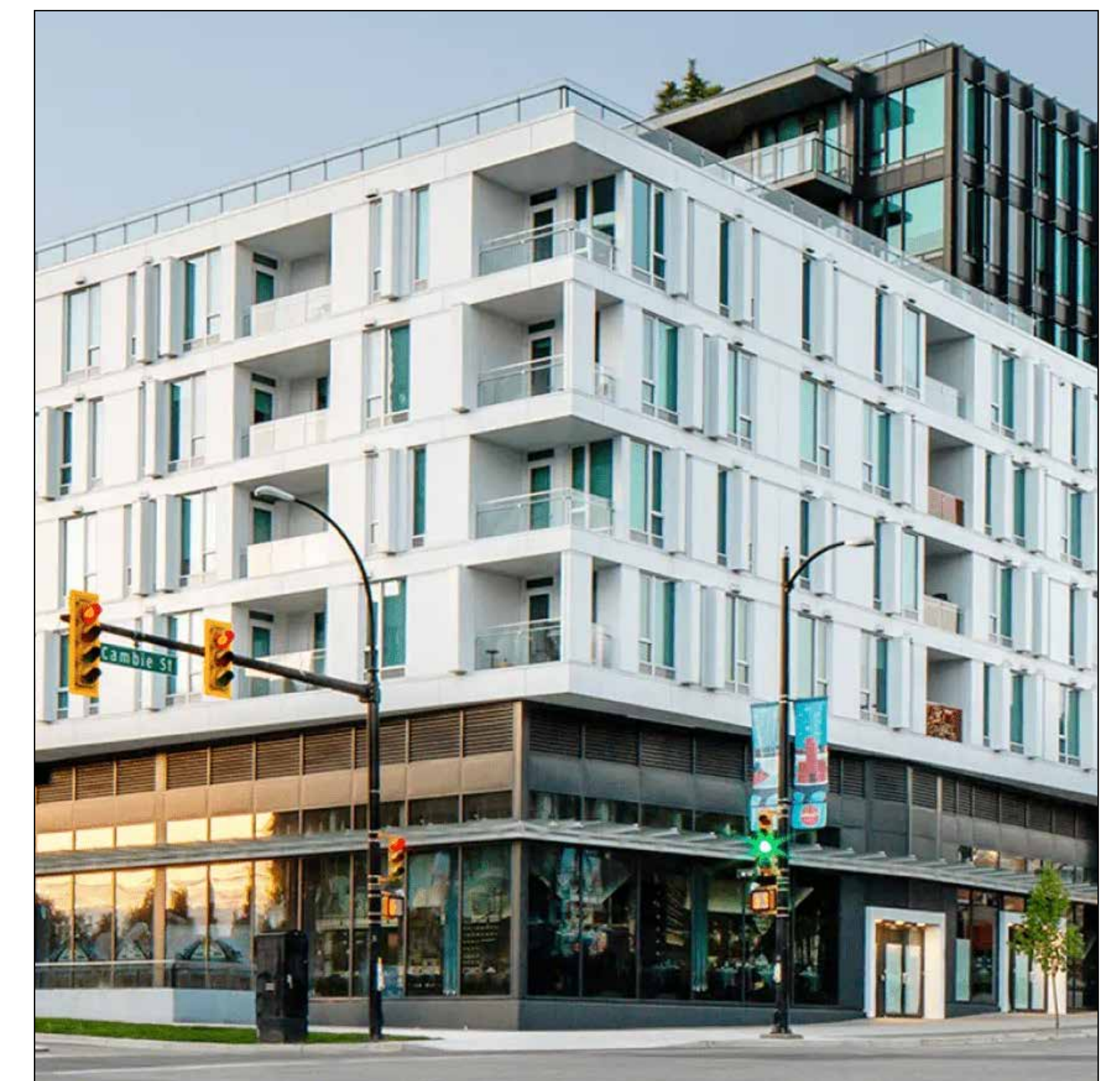
### 4 Activate Harmston Park

Design and develop Harmston Park as a dynamic community hub, supported by enhanced programming and infrastructure. Opportunities for higher-density housing and innovative uses for adjacent municipal lands, such as partial street closures, can further integrate the park into the community fabric.



The study area is organized into four planning districts—Riverfront, Downtown Core, Fitzgerald Corridor, and Harmston Park—each with distinct characteristics, opportunities, and potential for future growth. These districts

provide a framework for focused planning, development, and targeted improvements moving forward.



# GETTING AROUND DOWNTOWN

## Transportation, Cycling, and Parking Opportunities

### Context

Downtown Courtenay is growing and changing — and how people move around will change with it.

Historically, Downtown has been shaped by car-oriented streets and dispersed parking. As the City looks ahead, major investments are being made to improve walking, cycling, and transit options, while managing parking more strategically.

Strengthening connections and creating new choices for getting around Downtown will make it easier, safer, and more inviting for everyone — whether arriving by bus, bike, car, or on foot.

### 6th Street Multi-Modal Corridor and Active Transportation Bridge

6th Street is being contemplated as a key multi-modal corridor with a new two-way protected bike lane, making it safer and more accessible for cyclists. An active transportation bridge across Courtenay River will complete the connection, linking Downtown and significant parks and amenities across the river.



### Cycling Routes, Greenways, and Green Streets

Building on the existing cycling network and guided by the Transportation Master Plan (2019), the DVLAP will explore new and improved cycling routes, greenways and green streets that connect Downtown to surrounding neighbourhoods, parks, and key destinations.

### Parking Management

Future parking opportunities will explore mixed-use developments and structured parking options, informed by the Downtown Courtenay Parking Study (2024), to strategically balance the area's needs.

### Vehicle Access and Circulation

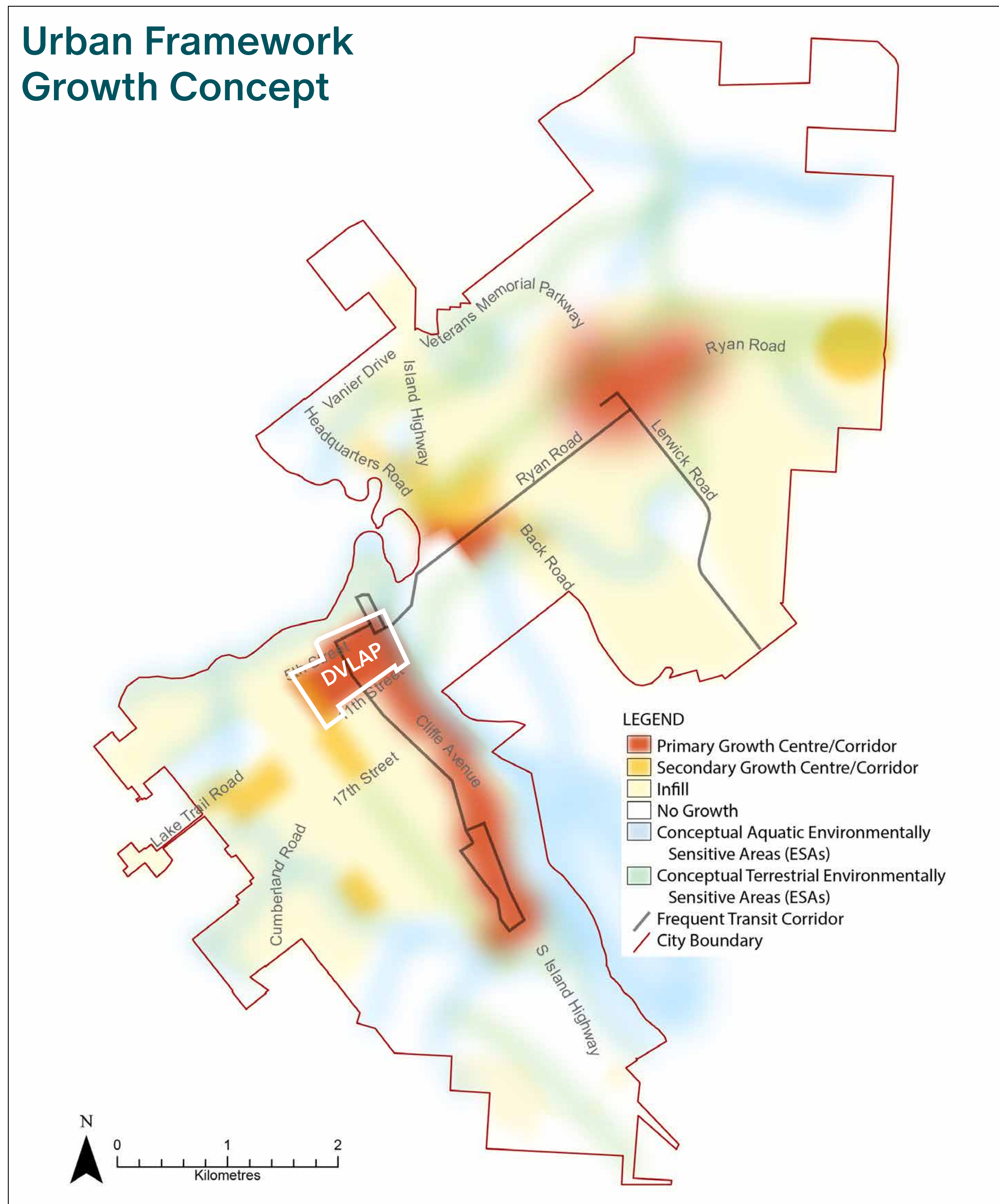
Vehicle access will remain important, with traffic focused along Cumberland Rd, 8th St, 17th St, and Cliffe Ave, as walking, cycling, and transit become stronger priorities.

### Future Transit Exchange

A new transit exchange is being built at England Avenue and 8th Street to create a central hub for regional and local bus connections.

# DENSITY AND DEVELOPMENT

## Downtown in the Context of the City



### Focused Growth in Courtenay

The City's Urban Framework Growth Concept identifies growth centres as areas where 70% of Courtenay's growth should occur. Developed with the community through the OCP consultation process, the growth concept emerged to address community goals of growing in a way that protects natural spaces, provides affordable housing and transportation choices, reduces greenhouse gas emissions and infrastructure costs and creates unique and vibrant neighbourhoods.

As the centre of town, the Downtown is intended to function as a location of significant growth to support its function as the local, city-wide and regional centre of cultural, civic, culinary, economic, and public life with the widest ranges of activities and attraction for residents and visitors, day and night, throughout the year. The recent Complete Communities Growth Assessment identified the Downtown as one of the most infrastructure-ready parts of the City for water and sanitary services, supporting development-readiness for growth.

### New Residents and Housing Needs

Courtenay's most recent Housing Needs Report (2024) identifies that Courtenay could grow to a total population of 42,000 by 2041. This means that Courtenay will welcome approximately 13,000 additional people, and plan for an additional 8,350 homes by 2041.

Within the Downtown this could mean 3,000 to 5,000 more people, and 1,500 to 2,500 additional homes by 2041. New homes will be a mix of ownership and rental, and of varying cost with special attention to below-market affordable housing options, special needs and supportive housing and housing for seniors and families.

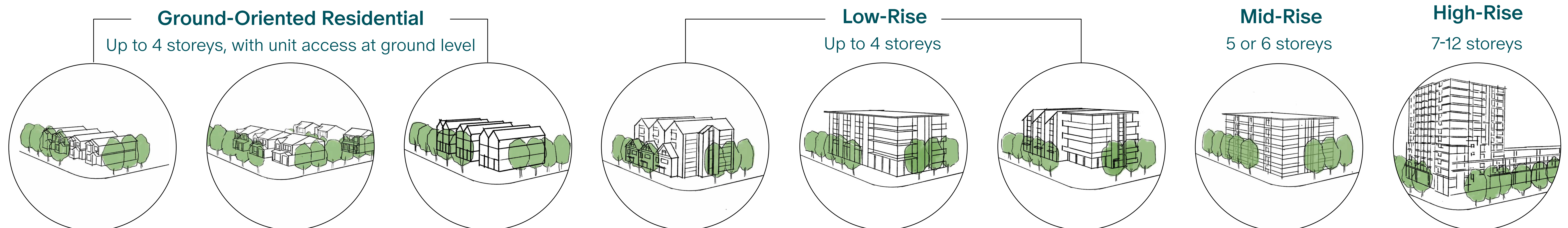
### Help Us Identify Where Growth Should Go!

Within the Density and Development Board, three approaches are provided to guide a discussion of where new development is appropriate. These approaches explore opportunities for increased density, height, and mixed-use development in key areas of the Downtown Courtenay DVLAP study area. The level of density and height increases from Approach 1 - 3, creating more options for housing, businesses, and community life.

### As You Think About Density Approaches, Please Consider the Following:

- The timeline for development and re-development is not known. Some development concepts will require land to be consolidated to accommodate larger development.
- A target range of 1,500 – 2,500 homes are used to guide the discussion, and is not a specific requirement.
- Growth that does not occur in the Downtown will have to be accommodated elsewhere such as the other growth centres, through neighbourhood infill or through possible City of Courtenay boundary extensions.

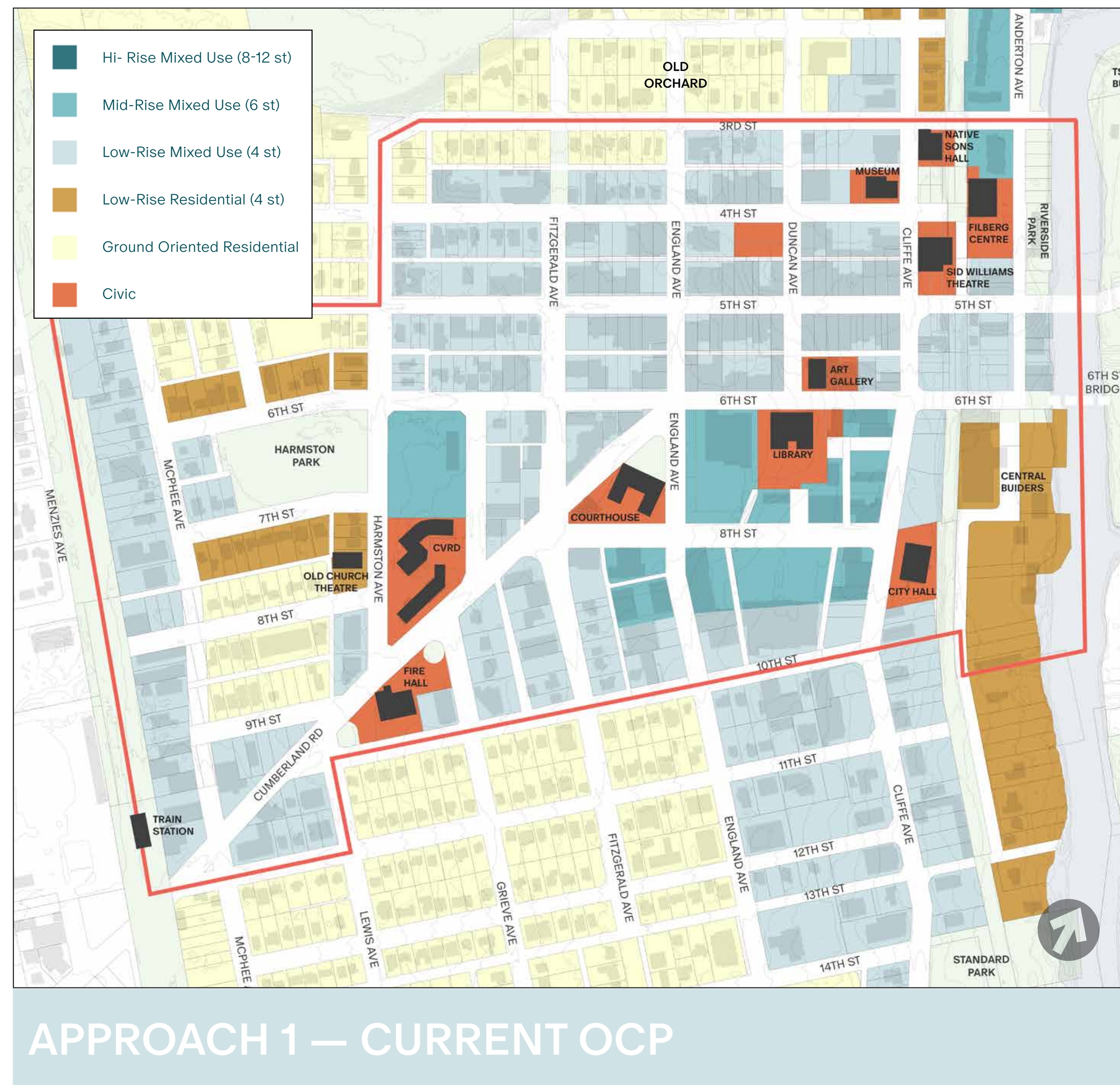
The icons below demonstrate potential building heights and forms, based on the OCP.



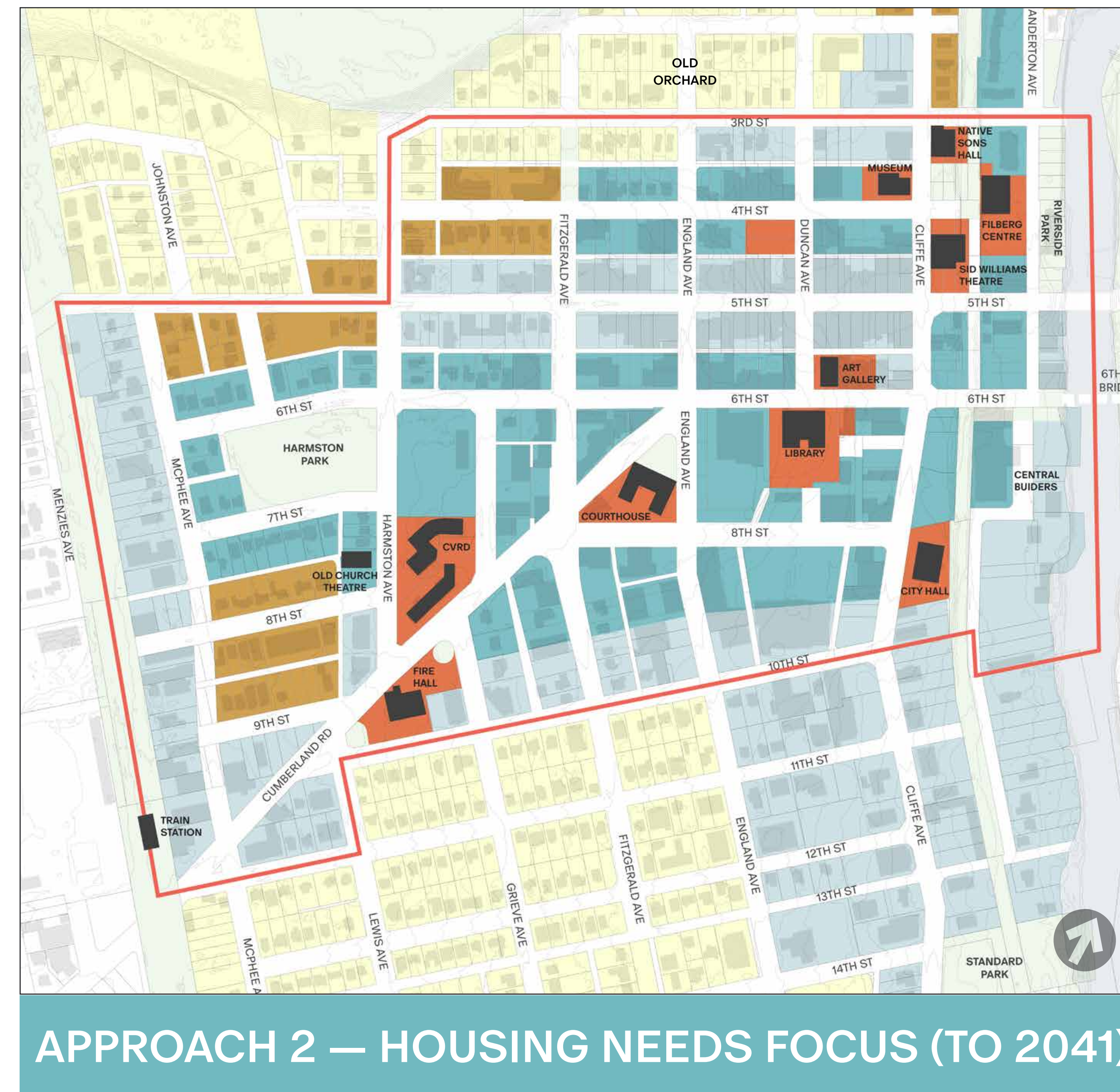
# DENSITY AND DEVELOPMENT

## Height, Scale, and Built Form

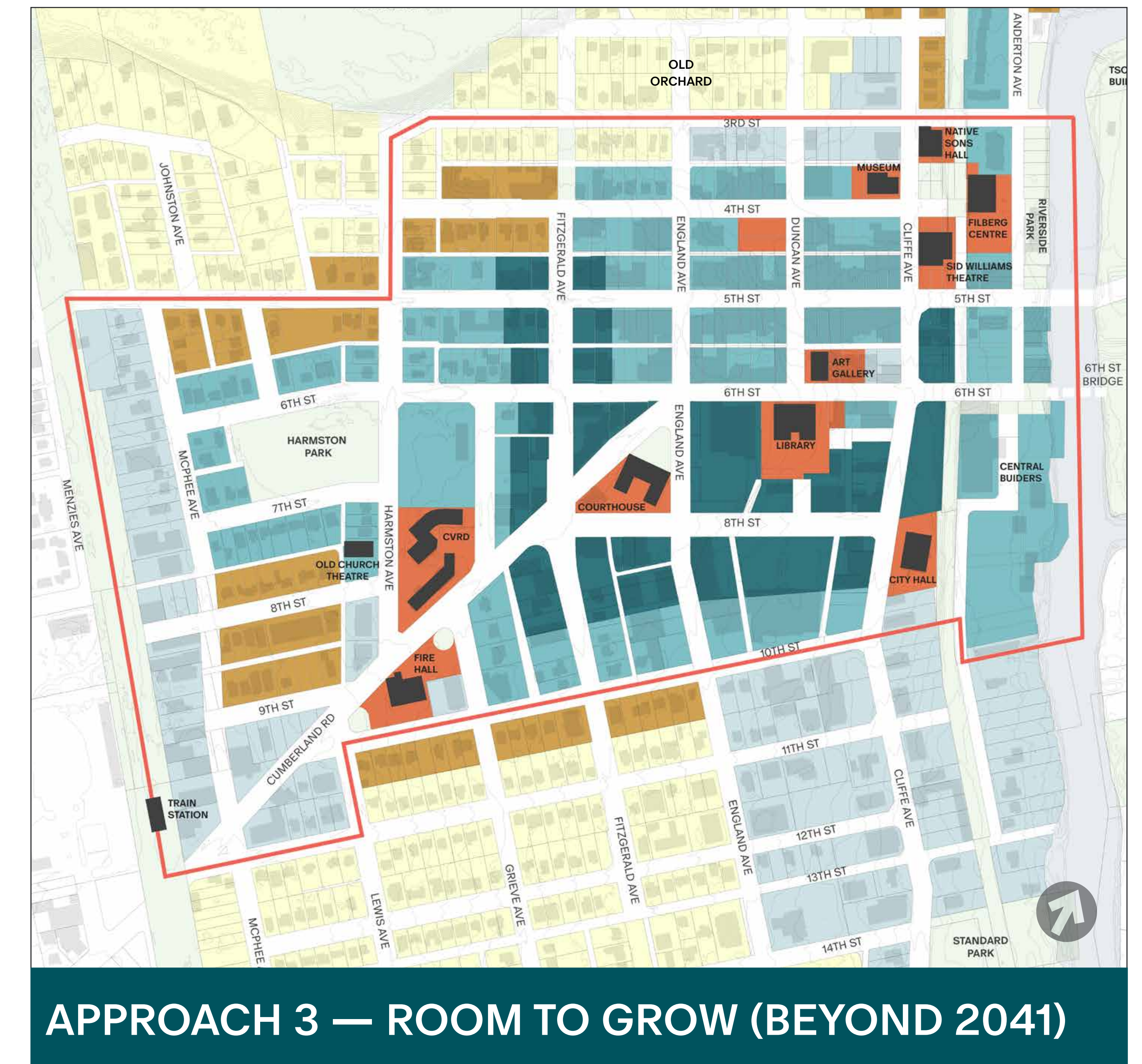
These approaches explore opportunities for increased density, height, and mixed-use development in key areas of the Downtown Courtenay DVLAP study area. The level of density and height increases from Approach 1 - 3, creating more opportunities for housing, businesses, and community life.



Approach 1 follows most closely the vision established in the Official Community Plan in which low-rise buildings are along 5th Street and adjacent urban neighbourhood areas, and where mid- and high-rise buildings are considered for only select areas of the Downtown.



Approach 2 would allow for more housing needs to be accommodated in the Downtown, while still maintaining low-rise buildings along 5th Street and within the Riverside district south of the 5th Street Bridge.



Approach 3 looks even further into the future, beyond 2041, with a revised vision of a more urban Downtown with higher densities throughout most of the planning area.

**Old Orchard Heritage Interface:** The Old Orchard neighbourhood has some of the oldest settler homes in Courtenay and is an area known for its heritage character. The neighbourhood does not have formal heritage protection status, however there is potential for official Heritage Conservation Area designation for the neighbourhood which will be explored through the Official Community Plan update process happening later this year. Heritage Conservation designation would mean that a Heritage Alteration Permit could be required for any renovations or additions to designated buildings.

# DENSITY AND DEVELOPMENT

## Share Your Feedback

Tell us what you think! Use a dot to show your level of support for increasing building heights Downtown. Then tell us where and how much density you'd support — and what we might be missing. You can also leave a sticky note with comments or ideas.

### 1. OVERALL DIRECTION

**What is your level of support for increasing building height and density in Downtown Courtenay to support local services, housing, and vibrancy?**

NOT AT ALL SUPPORTIVE	SOMEWHAT UNSUPPORTIVE	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT SUPPORTIVE	STRONGLY SUPPORTIVE
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

### 2. LOCATION

**Where should additional height and density be focused?**

Place a dot next to the locations where increased height feels appropriate.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Riverfront
<input type="checkbox"/>	Downtown Core
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fitzgerald Corridor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Harmston Park

**Did we miss anything?** Use a sticky note to share your thoughts on how we can balance density, livability, and character in Downtown.

# PLACEMAKING

## Parks, Plazas, and Public Space

### Context

Downtown Courtenay includes valued parks, plazas, and public spaces — but many are aging, underused, or ready for renewal. The DVLAP offers an opportunity to reimagine these spaces to better support residents, workers, visitors, and businesses.

Building on the **Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP, 2019)**, the plan will explore ways to activate public spaces as gathering places that reflect Courtenay's identity and support community life.

### Opportunities for New Parks

The PRMP highlights a lack of park space in the Downtown and recommends a new neighbourhood park in the Old Orchard area. It also identifies a need for improved trail connections along the riverfront and more recreational amenities and gathering places near the water. The DVLAP will consider these gaps and opportunities as part of a broader public space strategy.



### Strengthening Downtown Plazas

Several important Downtown plazas are being explored for potential improvements, including Duncan Commons and Mews, the Cultural Plaza between Native Sons Hall and Sid Williams Theatre, and the Courthouse Plaza. Enhancements could include new seating, landscaping, public art, lighting, and creating flexible spaces for community events.

Improvements to Riverside Park and the riverfront area will also be considered as part of broader placemaking strategies.

Upgraded plazas will help create a more comfortable, active Downtown experience and support local businesses.

### Street Market Options

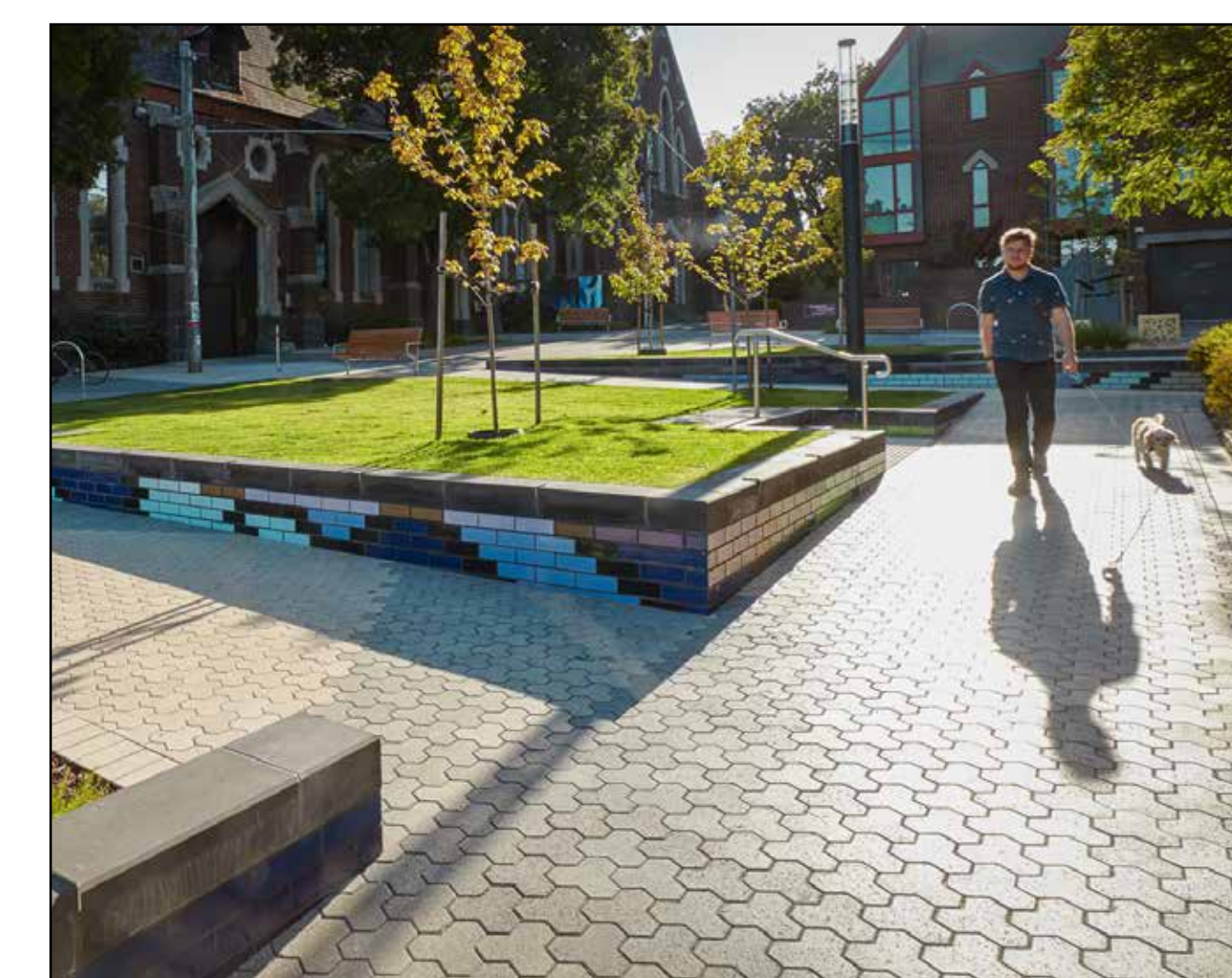
As part of the DVLAP, the City will explore options for a future Downtown location that supports the needs of street markets.

Potential locations being considered include 5th Street or a revitalized Harmston Park, offering better space, access, and visibility for vendors and visitors.



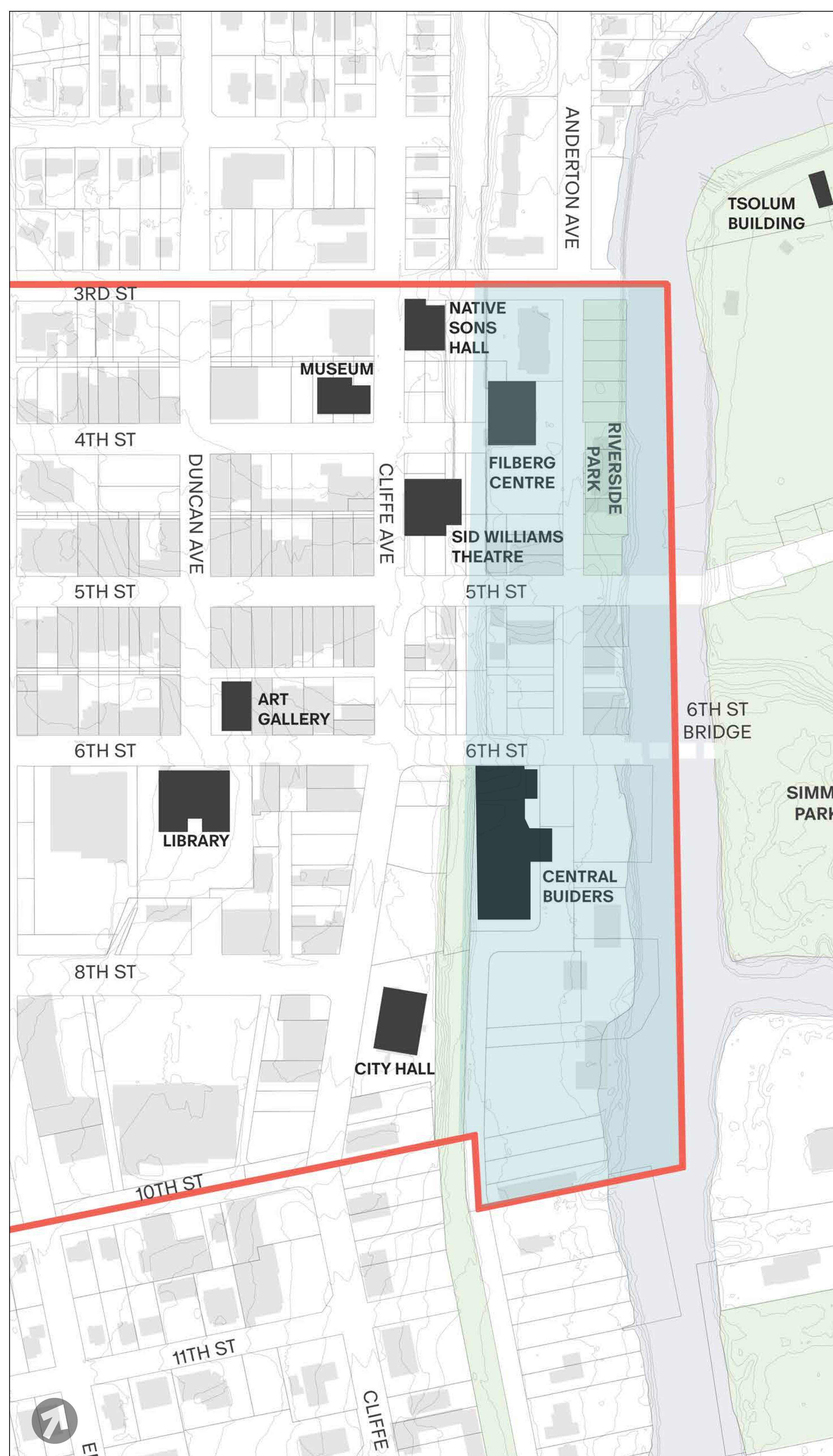
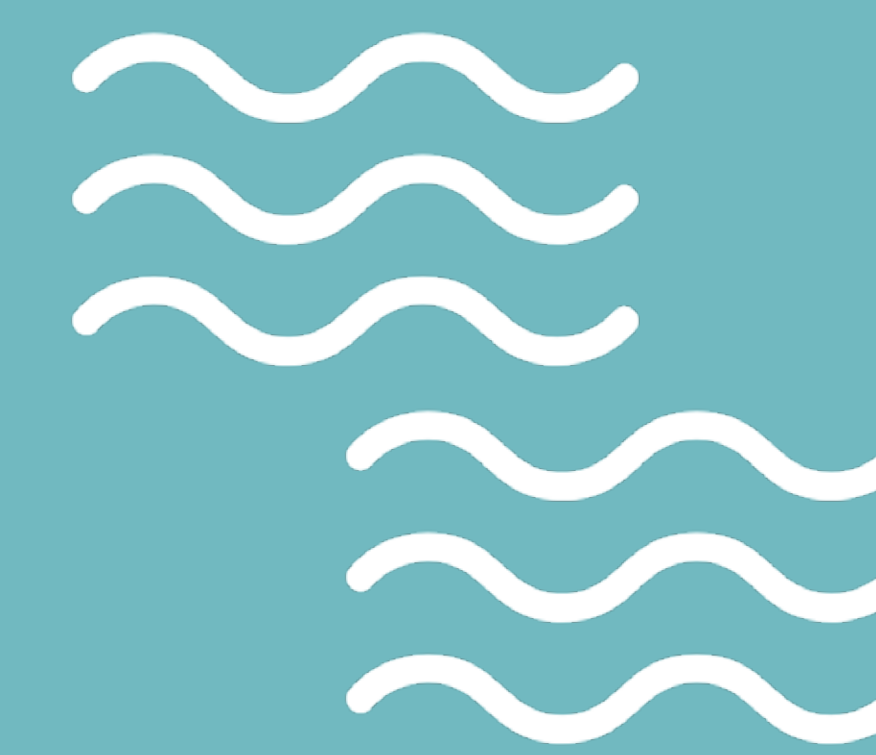
### Harmston Park

Harmston Park is a key public asset with potential to become a vibrant community destination. The DVLAP will explore design and programming to enhance its role as a welcoming, multi-use space.



# RIVERFRONT

## Context and Opportunities



### Big Move 1 Reimagine the Riverfront

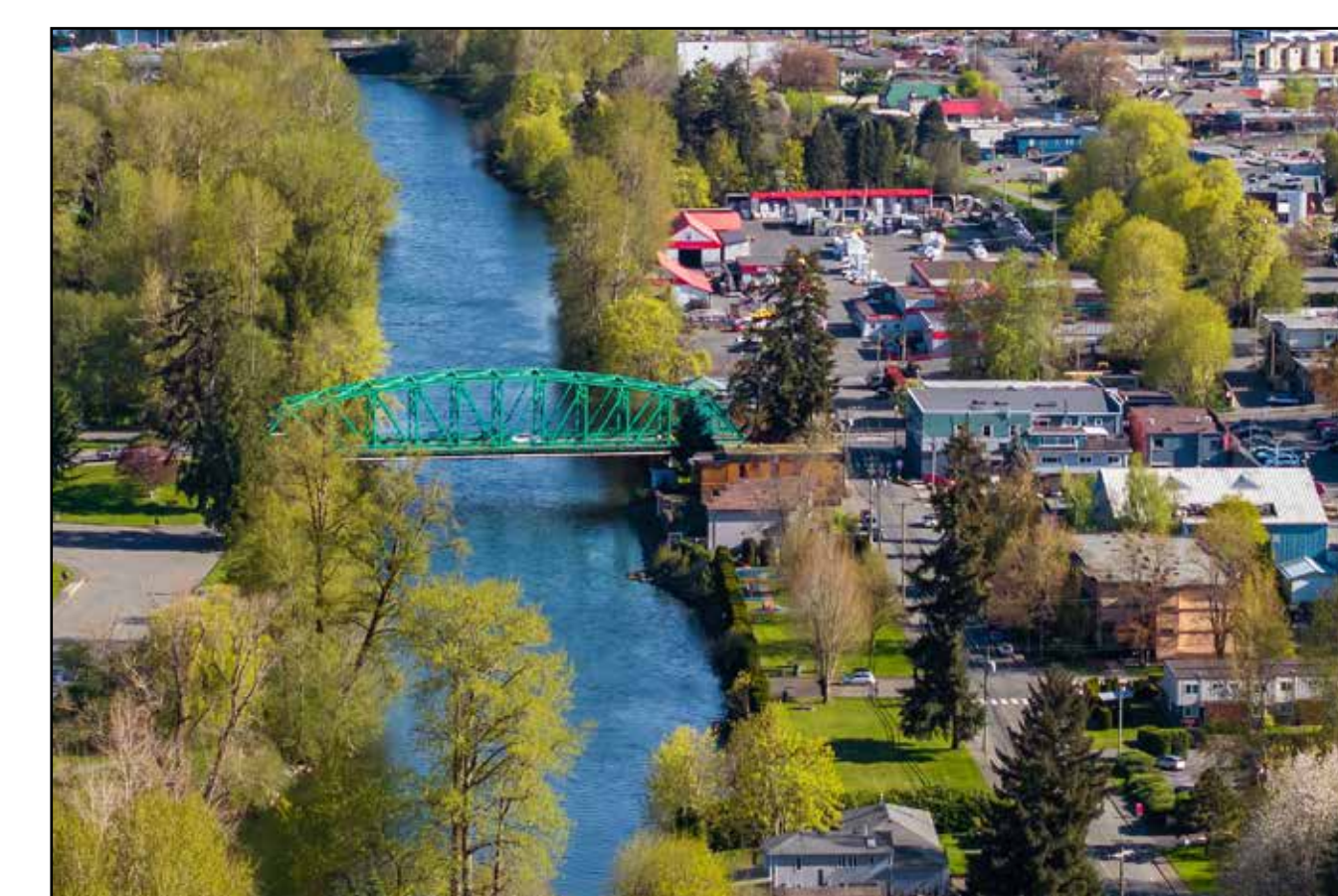
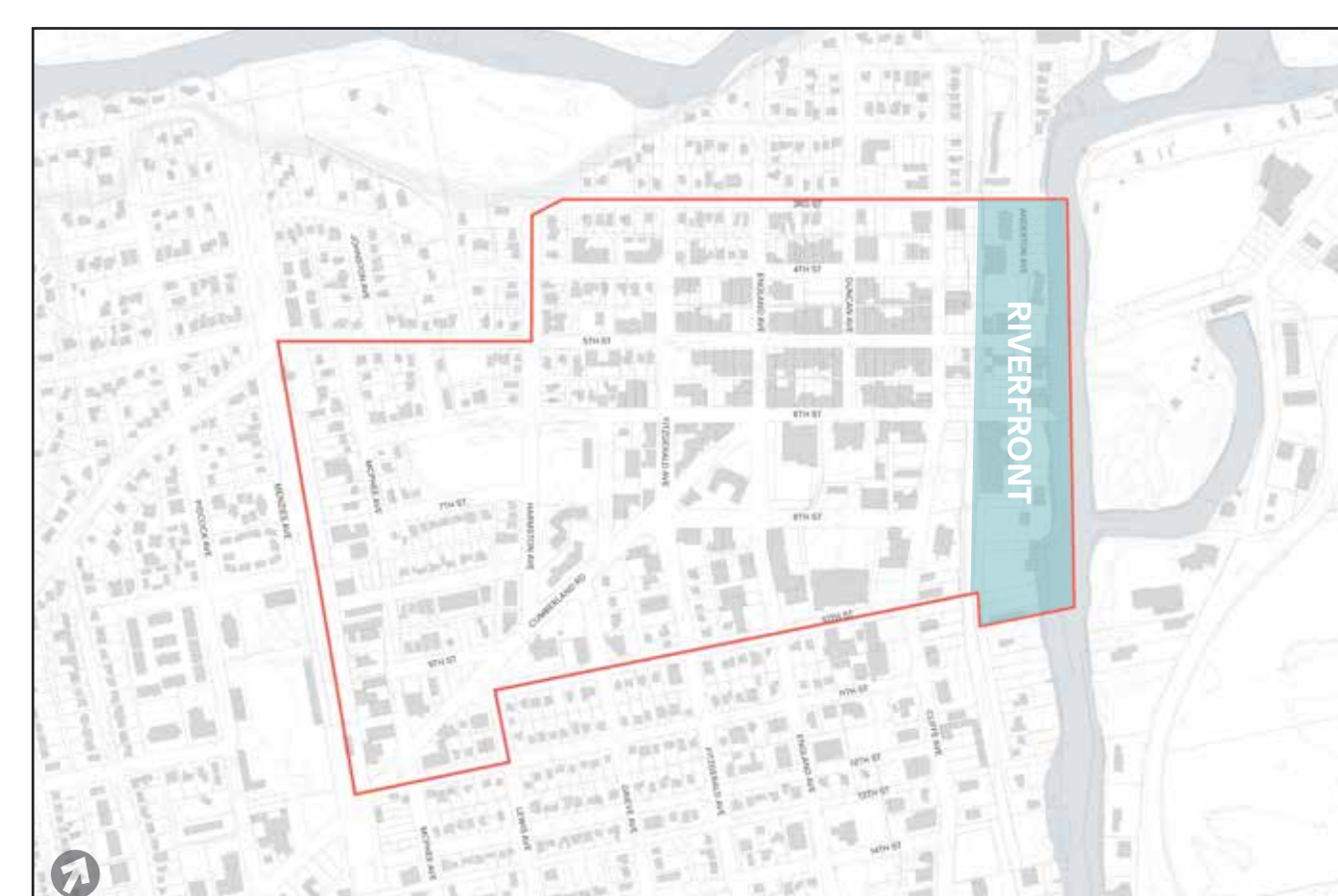
Transform the Riverfront into a vibrant, accessible destination by improving public access, enhancing recreational amenities, and fostering development that integrates natural and cultural assets. This includes activating underutilized spaces and implementing flood-resilient infrastructure.

#### Context

The Riverfront district contains properties along the Courtenay River's edge, with existing uses including parks, mixed-use development, apartments, and community facilities such as the Florence Filberg Centre. While scenic and well-connected via the Riverway Trail and 5th Street Bridge, the Riverfront faces challenges related to limited water access, steep grade changes, underutilized spaces, and ecological and archaeological sensitivities.

#### Existing OCP Policies

- Downtown Policy 6: Ensure more public and semi-public gathering spaces are incorporated into new developments.
- Downtown Policy 10: Improve physical and visual connections to, along, and across the rivers, integrating nature and recreation with the downtown.
- Downtown Policy 14: Seek opportunities to establish unique character districts such as riverfront, artisan, or live-work maker spaces for the lands between the Courtenay River and Cliffe Avenue.
- Develop a shoreline policy to conserve remaining natural shores, and restore armoured shorelines with green shore approaches to the maximum extent possible.



#### Opportunities North of the 5th Street Bridge

- Remove Anderton Dike Wall, naturalize the western bank of the Courtenay River, restore the riparian area, and accommodate recreational uses wherever possible.
- Provide pedestrian connections from Downtown to the River.
- Strengthen Indigenous visibility through arts and culture.

#### Opportunities South of the 5th Street Bridge

- Naturalize the western bank of the Courtenay River, restore the riparian area, and accommodate recreational uses wherever possible.
- Coordinate development potential across large land owners within the Riverfront district (Central Builders-owned lands and public lands).
- Activate underutilized commercial spaces along the waterfront.

#### Constraints

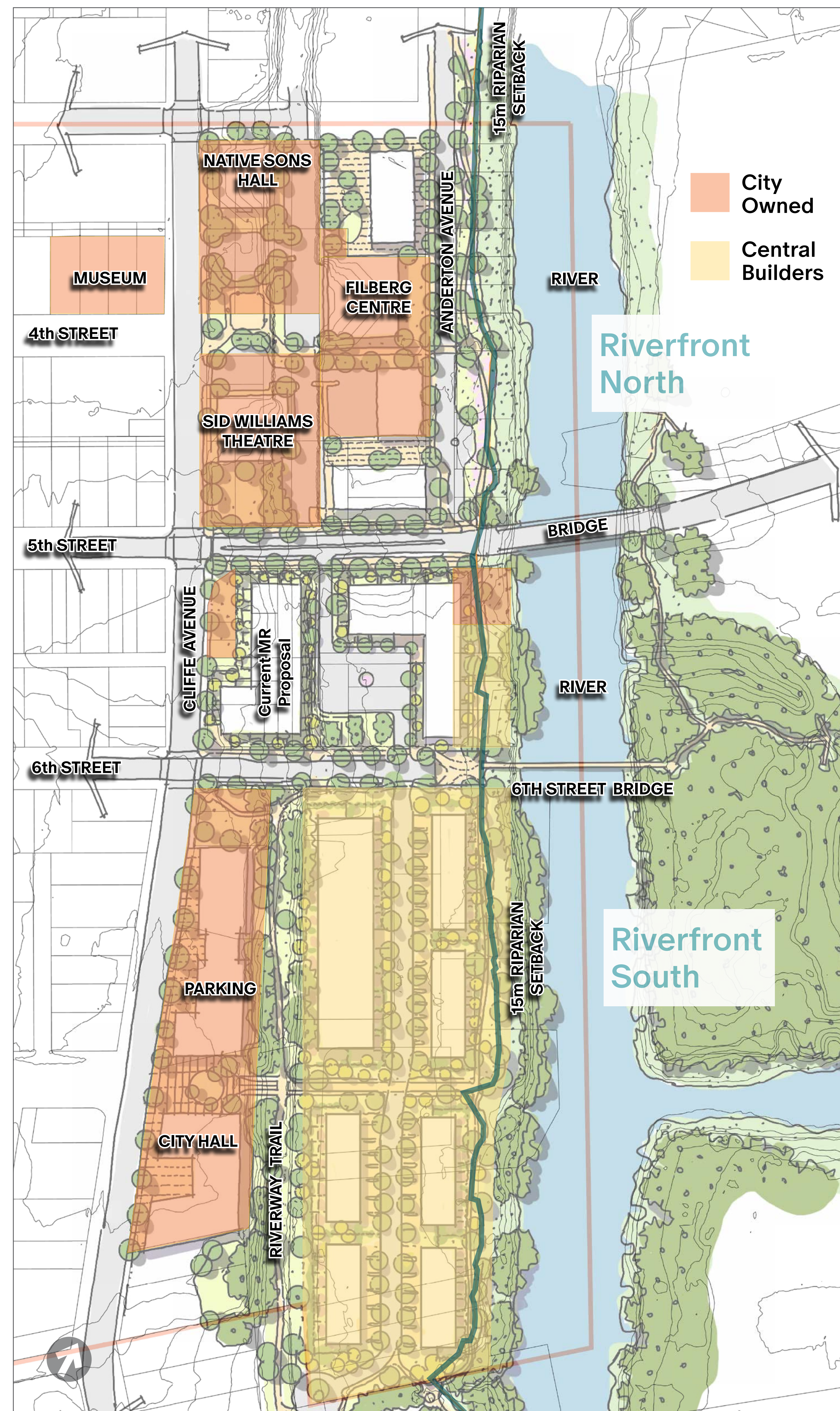
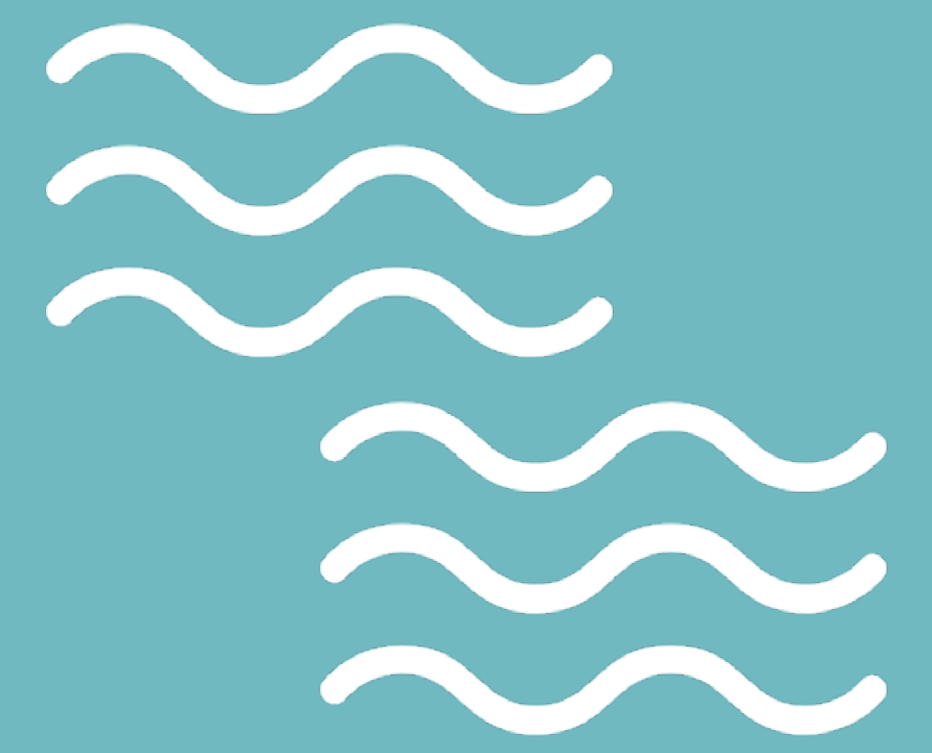
- Flood risk, land stability and current armoured condition of shoreline in a number of areas.
- High costs associated with infrastructure upgrades.
- Steep grade changes and soil conditions limiting direct river access.
- Busy traffic corridor (5th St & Cliffe Ave) acting as a barrier to Downtown connection.
- Existing infrastructure corridors may limit development layout and opportunity
- Area of high archaeological potential

#### Design Considerations

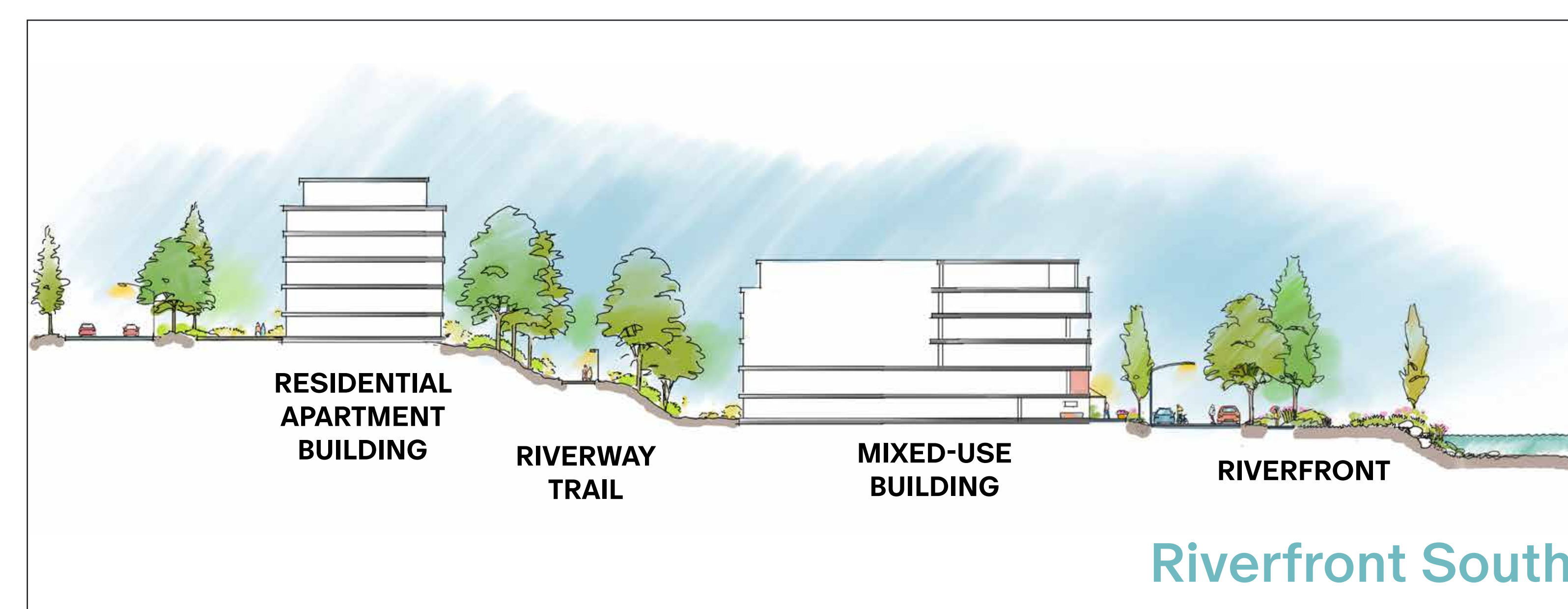
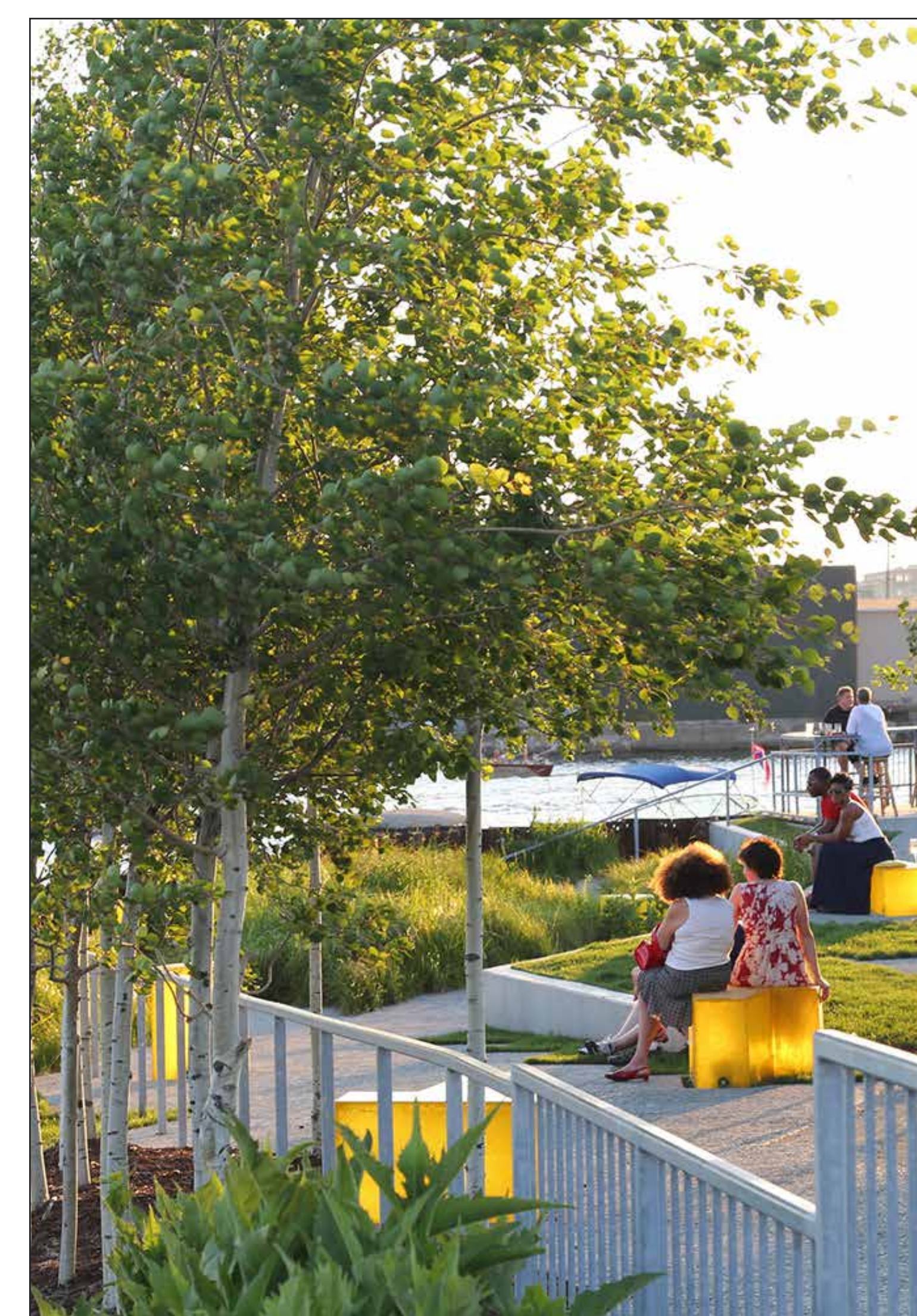
- From top of river bank to 15 metres: Protected or restored ecologically sensitive area. Limited public access.
- From top of river bank to 30 metres: Floodplain setback limiting fill and building development opportunities.
- Development within the floodplain: Must adhere to the Flood Construction Levels (FCL) to ensure development is designed with flooding in mind and to reduce risk to life and property.

# RIVERFRONT

## Reimagining Public Life Along the Water



For Illustrative Purposes Only



Placemaking is at the core of the riverfront vitalization—shaping the area not just as a corridor, but as a destination for community life, recreation, and cultural expression. The concepts shown here are early ideas to spark conversation. They explore how we might create meaningful spaces that connect people with the river and with each other. We want to hear your thoughts as we shape the vision together.

### Riverfront North

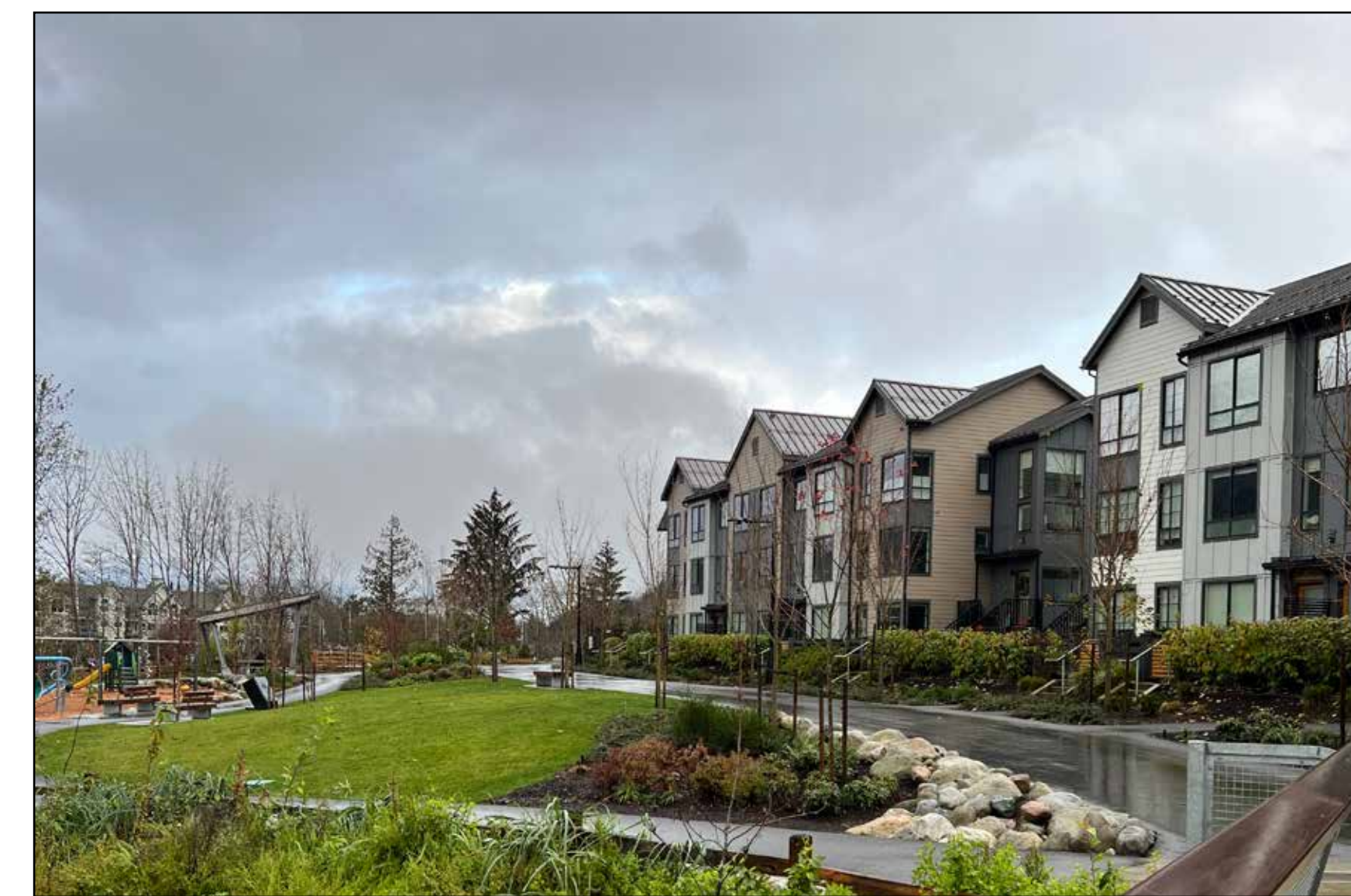
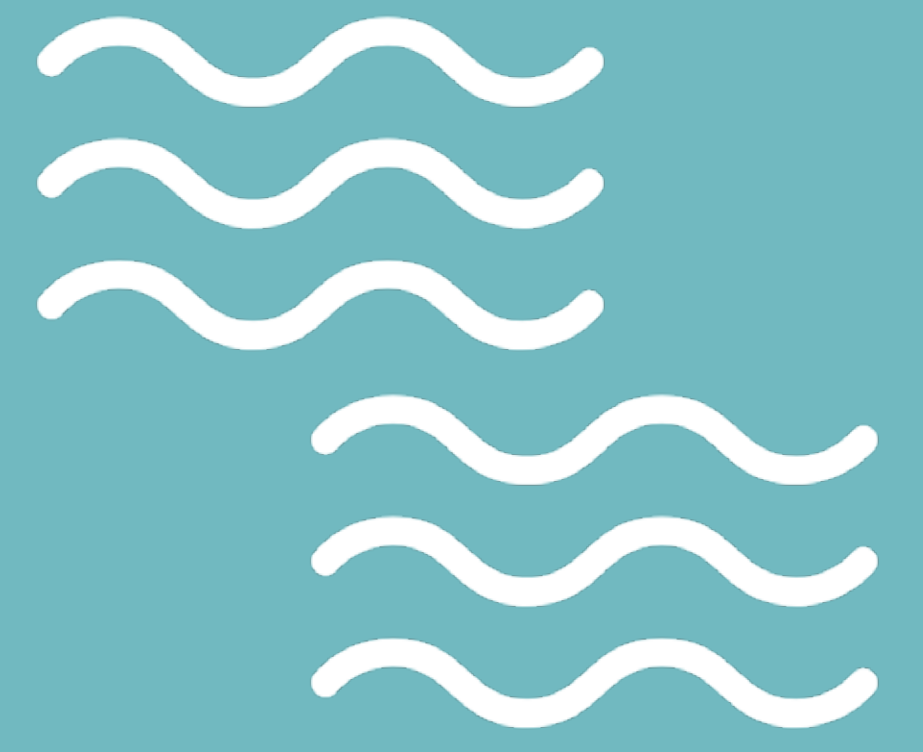
Flood protection and shoreline restoration activities are currently being explored along the north section of the Riverfront and will be presented in the future. With these priorities in mind, this area focuses on enhancing connectivity and recreation through pedestrian pathways, green spaces, and gathering areas. The concepts also aim to strengthen the relationship between the river and nearby neighbourhoods, offering spaces for both active and passive use.

### Riverfront South

The south section includes land owned by Central Builders and the City, allowing for potential coordinated redevelopment. Accounting for flood risk and riverbank restoration, planning here focuses on development in less sensitive areas. Concepts include mixed-use development with retail, cultural, and recreational amenities or a more residential approach with public parks and gathering spaces. Both aim to create a vibrant, urban waterfront that complements the natural setting.

# RIVERFRONT

## Concepts for Riverfront South



These two illustrations explore potential development concepts for the area south of the bridge, including the Central Builders site, the City Hall site, and adjacent parking lots.

*Note: All concepts are restricted by a minimum 15m riparian waterfront setback.*

### Concept 1 - Passive Public Waterfront

A passive waterfront experience featuring public trails, boardwalks, and seating areas along the river's edge. Townhomes form the first row of buildings, with front doors oriented toward the public walkway and waterfront. Larger residential buildings are terraced up the slope behind, extending toward Cliffe Avenue, creating a unique riverfront neighbourhood.

The Courtenay Riverway Trail connects to the riverfront in two locations, integrating with the public waterfront experience. The trail and riparian corridor extend north to the 6th Street Bridge and continue under the 5th Street Bridge along Anderton Avenue.



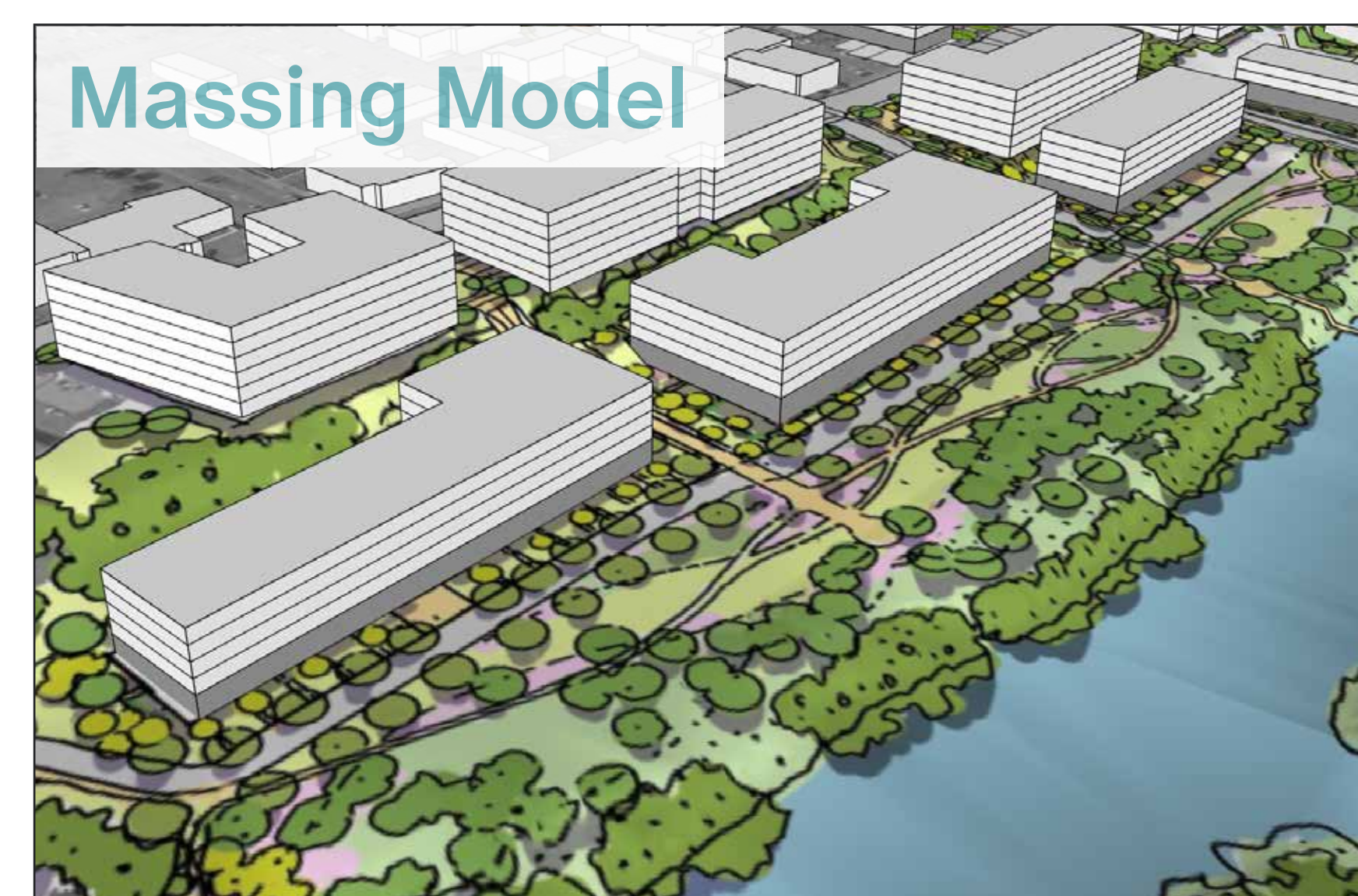
### Concept 2 - Active Urban Waterfront

An active public riverside street lined with retail, restaurants, a linear park, cultural spaces, and recreation opportunities.

The existing Courtenay Riverway Trail behind City Hall is realigned to make way for additional land along the river, creating a generous public zone that supports both community use and riparian protection.

Taller mixed-use apartments help shape a vibrant urban waterfront that complements the adjacent park and natural landscape, supporting both local and destination-oriented activities year-round.

This concept positions Courtenay to create a prominent and accessible public waterfront destination.



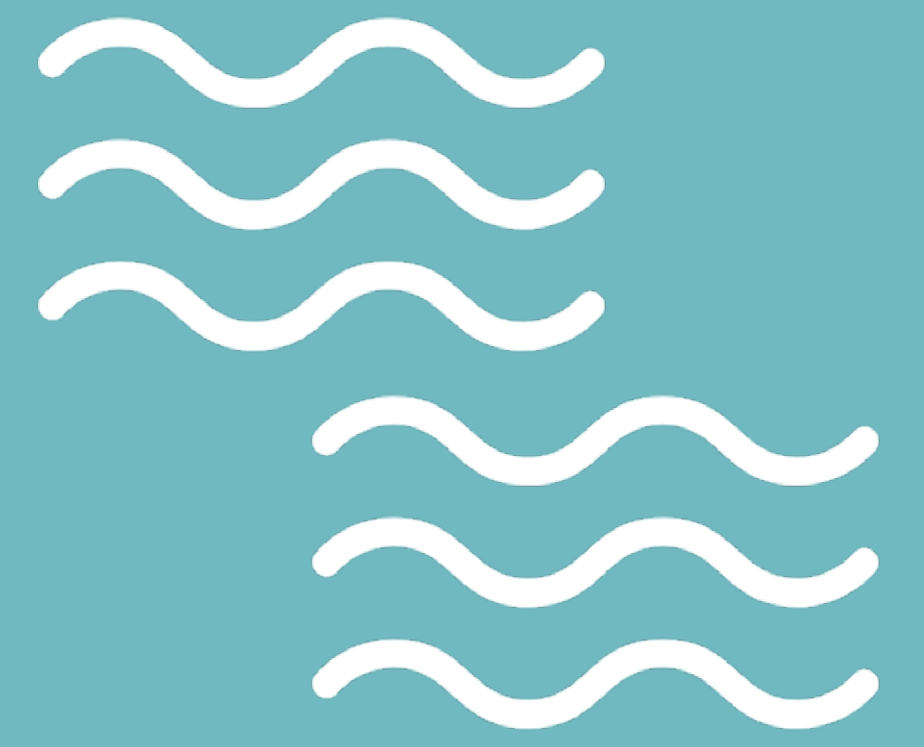
For Illustrative Purposes Only



- Vehicle Circulation
- Service Lane
- Pedestrian / Cycling / Active Transportation

# RIVERFRONT

## Share Your Feedback



Tell us what you think! Use a dot to share your level of support for the overall approach and which ideas resonate with you. You can also leave a sticky note with your suggestions.

### 1. OVERALL CONCEPT

What is your level of support for the overall approach to revitalizing the Riverfront as a public, mixed-use waterfront district?

NOT AT ALL SUPPORTIVE	SOMEWHAT UNSUPPORTIVE	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT SUPPORTIVE	VERY SUPPORTIVE
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 2. RIVERFRONT SOUTH

Which of the following ideas best reflect your vision for Riverfront South?

Place a dot next to all that resonate with you.

#### Concept 1 - Passive Public Riverfront

<input type="checkbox"/>	Boardwalks, trails, and seating along the river
<input type="checkbox"/>	A quieter, nature-focused experience
<input type="checkbox"/>	Townhomes fronting directly onto the river path (3 storeys)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prioritizing low-intensity activities, views, and green space

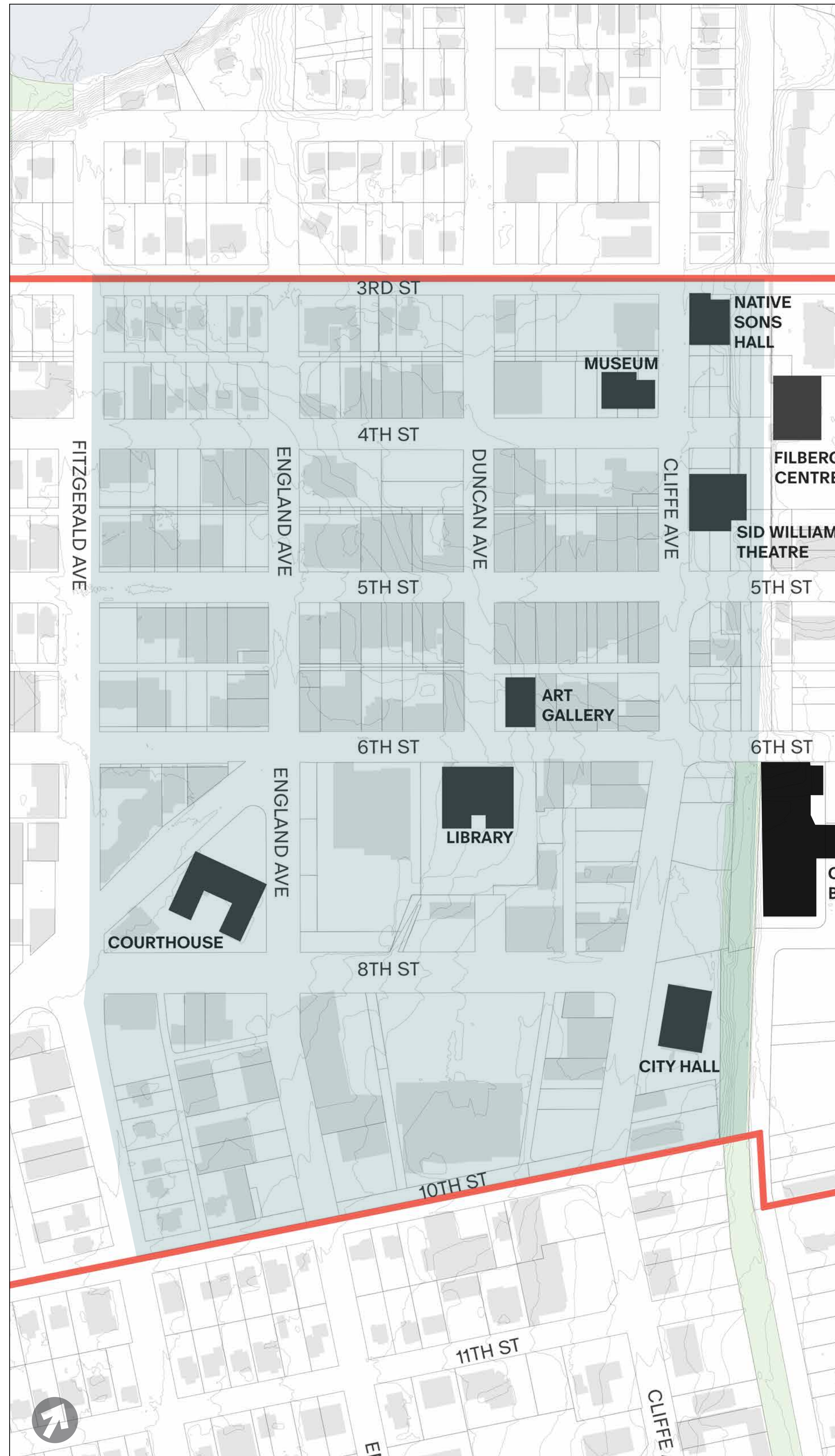
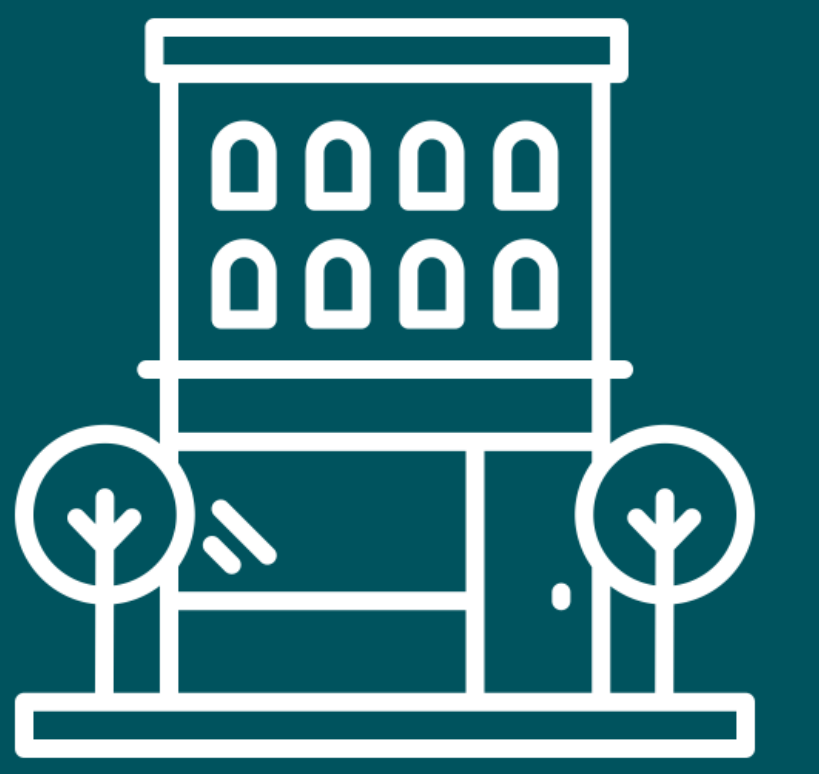
#### Concept 2 - Active Urban Riverfront

<input type="checkbox"/>	A public riverfront street with shops and gathering space
<input type="checkbox"/>	Restaurants, retail, and cultural amenities near the water
<input type="checkbox"/>	4-6 storey mixed-use buildings with housing above
<input type="checkbox"/>	Active year-round destination for locals and visitors

Other Ideas? Leave a sticky note with your thoughts or suggestions!

# DOWNTOWN CORE

## Context and Opportunities



### Big Move 2 Strengthen the Downtown Core

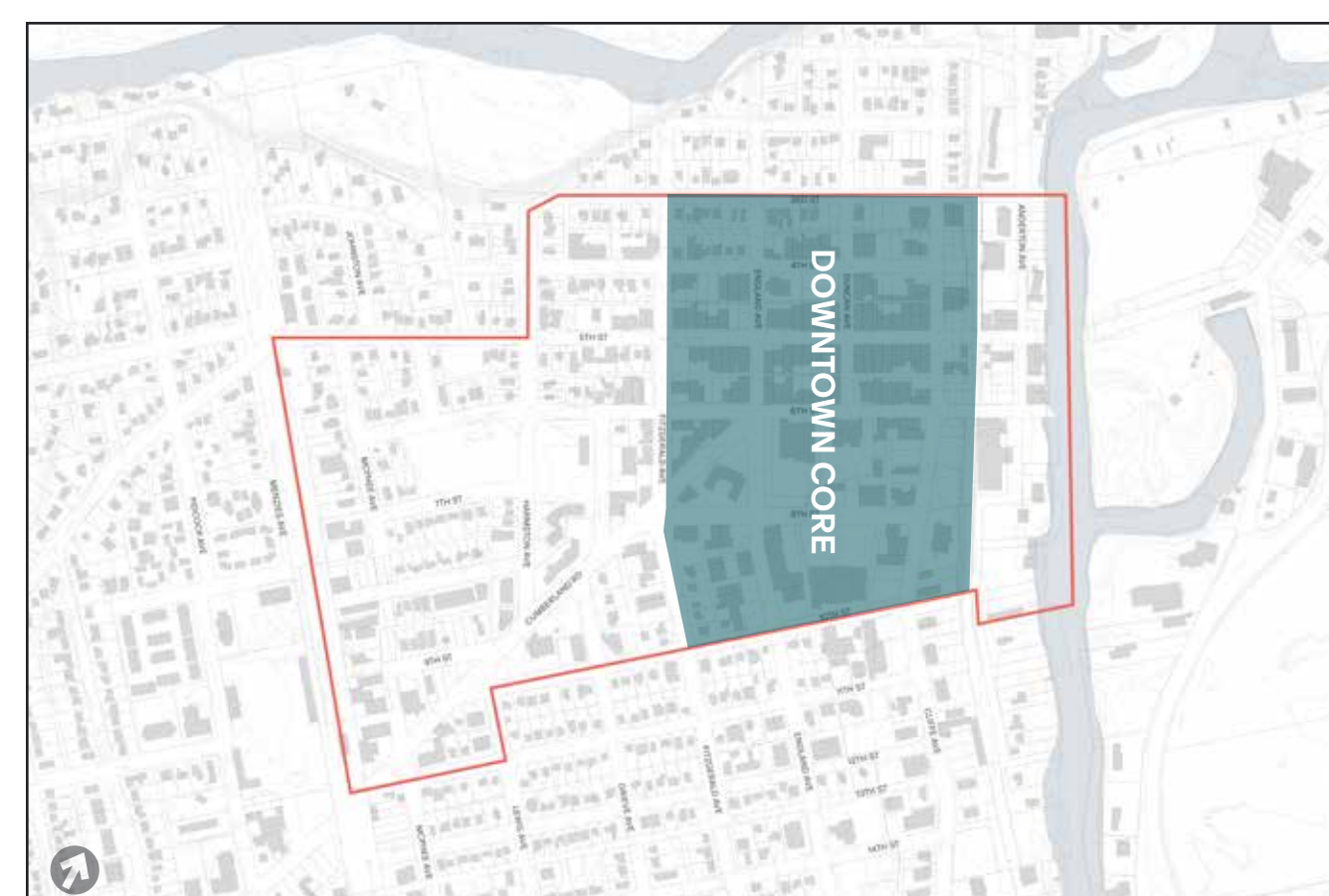
Vitalize the Downtown Core through public realm enhancements, green space creation, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. Celebrate Downtown as the cultural heart of the Comox Valley by supporting gathering spaces, creative placemaking, and connections to arts, heritage, and Indigenous expression.

#### Context

The Downtown Core is the most established district, anchored by cultural and civic institutions, small-scale commercial uses, and a strong grid urban form. Streets like 4th, 5th, and 6th have distinct identities. However, a lack of green space, aging infrastructure, and fragmented public spaces constrain Downtown's vibrancy.

#### Existing OCP Policies

- Downtown Policy 1: Continue to support a diverse range of land uses within the downtown including diversity of multi-residential housing choices, and small scale commercial uses.
- Downtown Policy 4: Require commercial uses at grade along 4th, 5th, and 6th Streets.
- Downtown Policy 12: Protect views from public open spaces, including streets and sidewalks, of identified public realm view corridors: Comox Glacier, Courtenay, Puntledge, and Tsolum Rivers, K'ómoks Estuary, and the Salish Sea.
- Downtown Policy 13: Work towards the vision of a public plaza as the public heart of the downtown.



- Arts, Culture, and Heritage Policy 7: Continue to support Downtown as the region's arts, culture, and heritage hub.
- Food Systems Policy 2: Secure a permanent, year-round site for the Comox Valley Farmers Market.
- Parks and Recreation Policy 2: Provide parkland and greenways in OCP-designated growth, mixed-use, high-density, and intensification areas through new development and redevelopment.

#### Opportunities

- Strengthen 4th, 5th, and 6th Street identities.
- Enhance the pedestrian environment and reduce vehicle dominance.
- Develop greenways and multi-modal corridors.
- Revitalize aging infrastructure and public spaces.
- Incorporate arts and culture through public art, placemaking, and events to support Downtown as a cultural hub.
- Increase permeability and strengthen the urban forest canopy.
- Strengthen heritage preservation within Old Orchard.

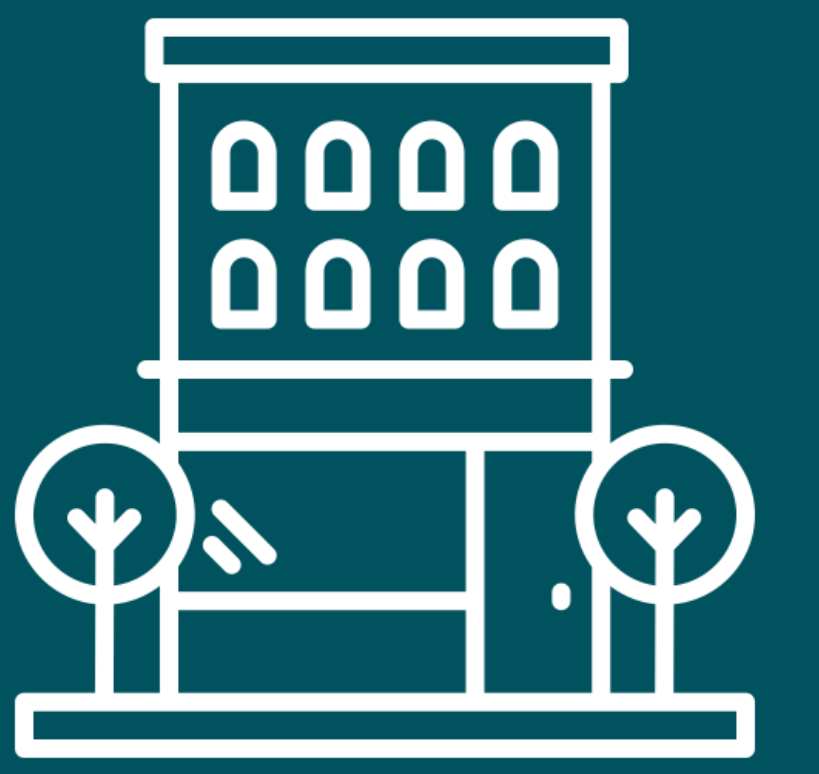
#### Constraints

- Limited green space, street trees and urban forest.
- Sloped topography limiting certain public space development (Duncan Commons area).
- Parking pressures and high vehicle presence along key streets.



# DOWNTOWN CORE

## 5th Street | Placemaking, Character, and Scale



### 5th Street: The Heart of Downtown

5th Street is the centerpiece of the Downtown Courtenay experience — a key destination with a walkable, small-scale commercial character. Its charm and human scale are major assets that help define Downtown's identity. However, there are opportunities to strengthen 5th Street to ensure it remains a vibrant and sustainable core for years to come.

### Current Zoning

Current Commercial One (C-1) zoning along the 5th Street corridor (between Anderton Avenue and Harmston Avenue) currently allows for the greatest mix of commercial, institutional, residential and community land uses within the City. Generally, the C-1 Zone:

- Permits building heights up to 13.5 m (~4 storeys),
- Requires no building setbacks (buildings may cover the full parcel),
- Requires one vehicle parking stall and 2.2 bike parking stalls per residential unit (to provide for residents and visitors).

### Form and Scale

Most buildings along 5th Street are currently two storeys in height. The OCP envisions 5th Street as a low-rise corridor, with buildings up to four storeys. The DVLAP presents an opportunity to revisit the appropriate massing and scale for this important street. Three potential approaches include:

- **Maintain existing conditions**, limiting most development to two storeys, with allowances for up to four storeys at key intersections (e.g., Palace Place at 5th Street and England Avenue). This would lower the maximum permitted height for most properties.
- **Permit up to four storeys** across all properties along 5th Street, allowing consistent redevelopment similar to Palace Place.
- **Allow up to six storeys**, with required setbacks above the fourth storey to minimize the visual impact from the street.



5th St Existing Conditions



5th St Current Zoning (4 Storeys)



5th St Potential (6 Storeys)



For Illustrative Purposes Only

### 5th Street Market Opportunities

As the heart of downtown, 5th Street provides opportunity to accommodate special events and more regular markets such as the weekly farmers market. This image provides a concept of what this may look like.

While shown here to be temporary, 5th Street could also be closed permanently to vehicle traffic to create a dedicated pedestrian-oriented street within the Downtown Core, enhancing placemaking opportunities in a significant way. This could include all of 5th Street between Cliffe Ave and Fitzgerald Ave, or shorter segments of 5th Street such as Cliffe Ave to England Ave. All options will require further traffic study.



# DOWNTOWN CORE

## Share Your Feedback



Tell us what you think! Use a dot to share your level of support for the overall direction for the Downtown Core, which ideas resonate with you, and what you'd like to see prioritized. You can also leave a sticky note with your suggestions.

### 1. OVERALL DIRECTION

What is your level of support for the proposed approach to vitalizing the Downtown Core – including enhancing public space, strengthening 5th Street, and improving walkability?

NOT AT ALL SUPPORTIVE	SOMEWHAT UNSUPPORTIVE	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT SUPPORTIVE	VERY SUPPORTIVE
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

### 2. 5TH STREET

Which of the following ideas for 5th Street resonate most with you?

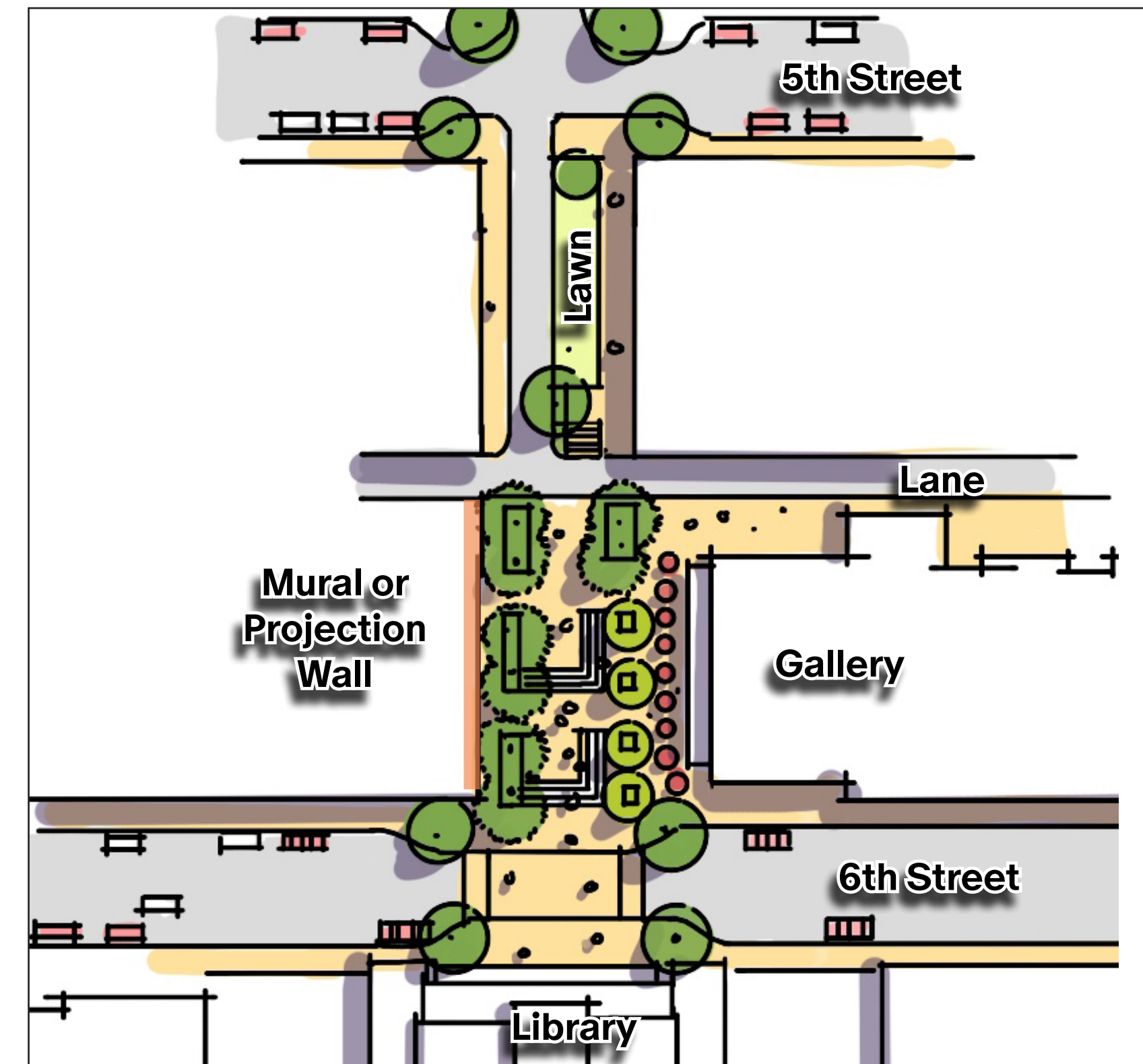
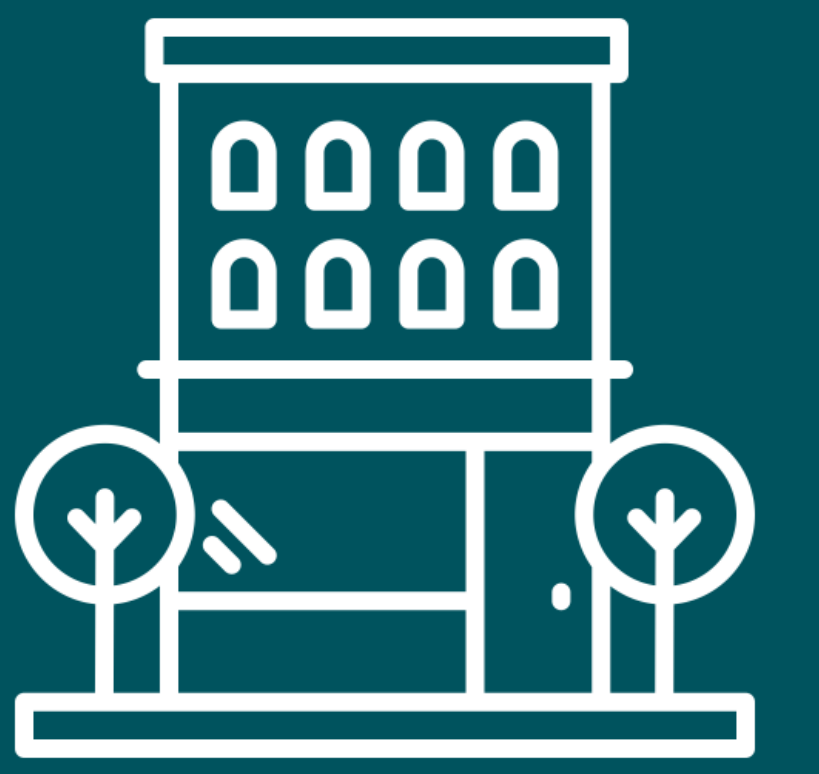
Place a dot next to all that resonate with you.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider locating a street market on 5th Street
<input type="checkbox"/>	Permanent closure of 5th Street to vehicular traffic
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintain its small-scale, walkable, commercial charm
<input type="checkbox"/>	Balance new development with character preservation
<input type="checkbox"/>	6-storey mixed-use buildings with upper floors stepped back from the street

**Other Ideas?** Leave a sticky note with your thoughts or suggestions!

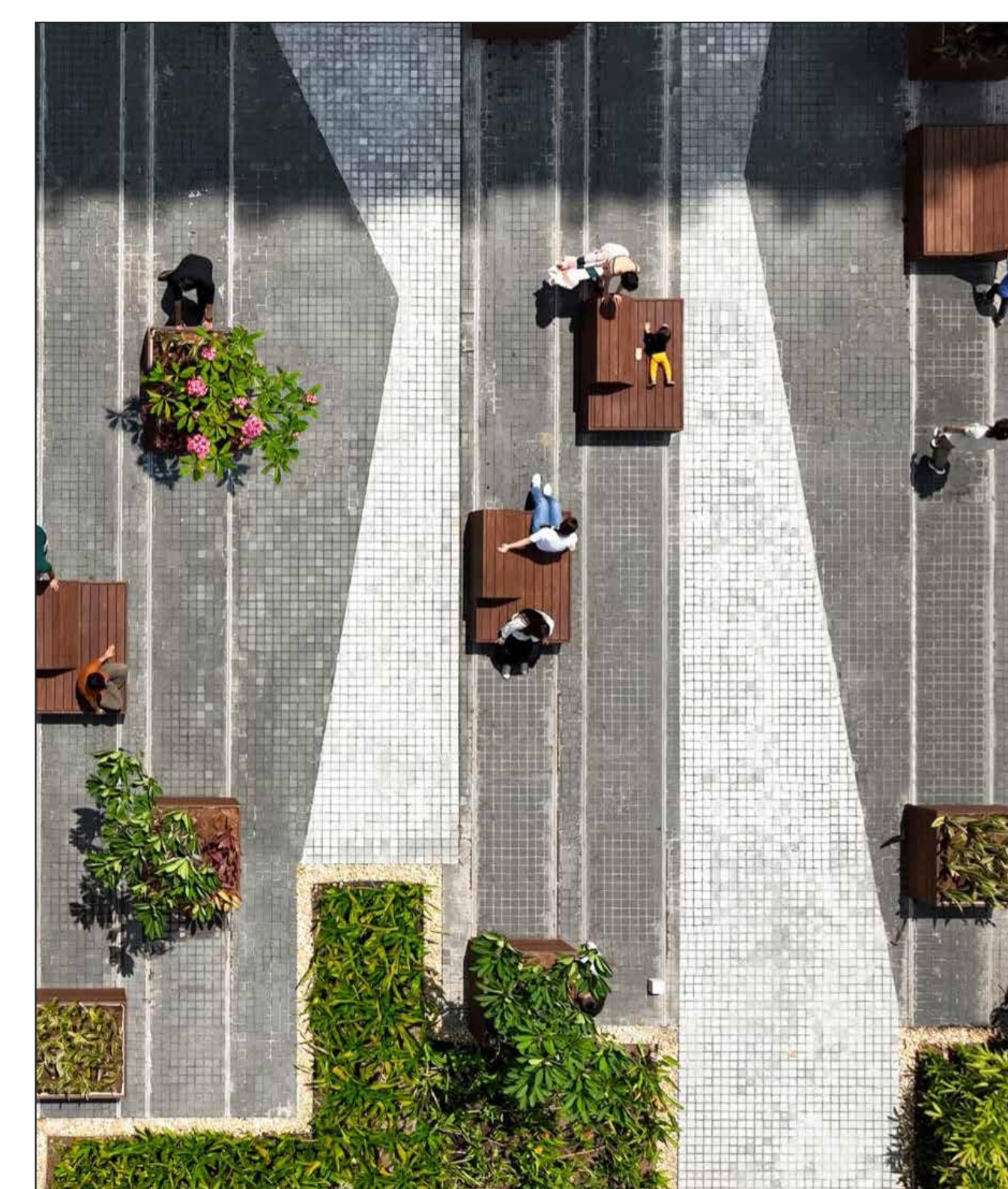
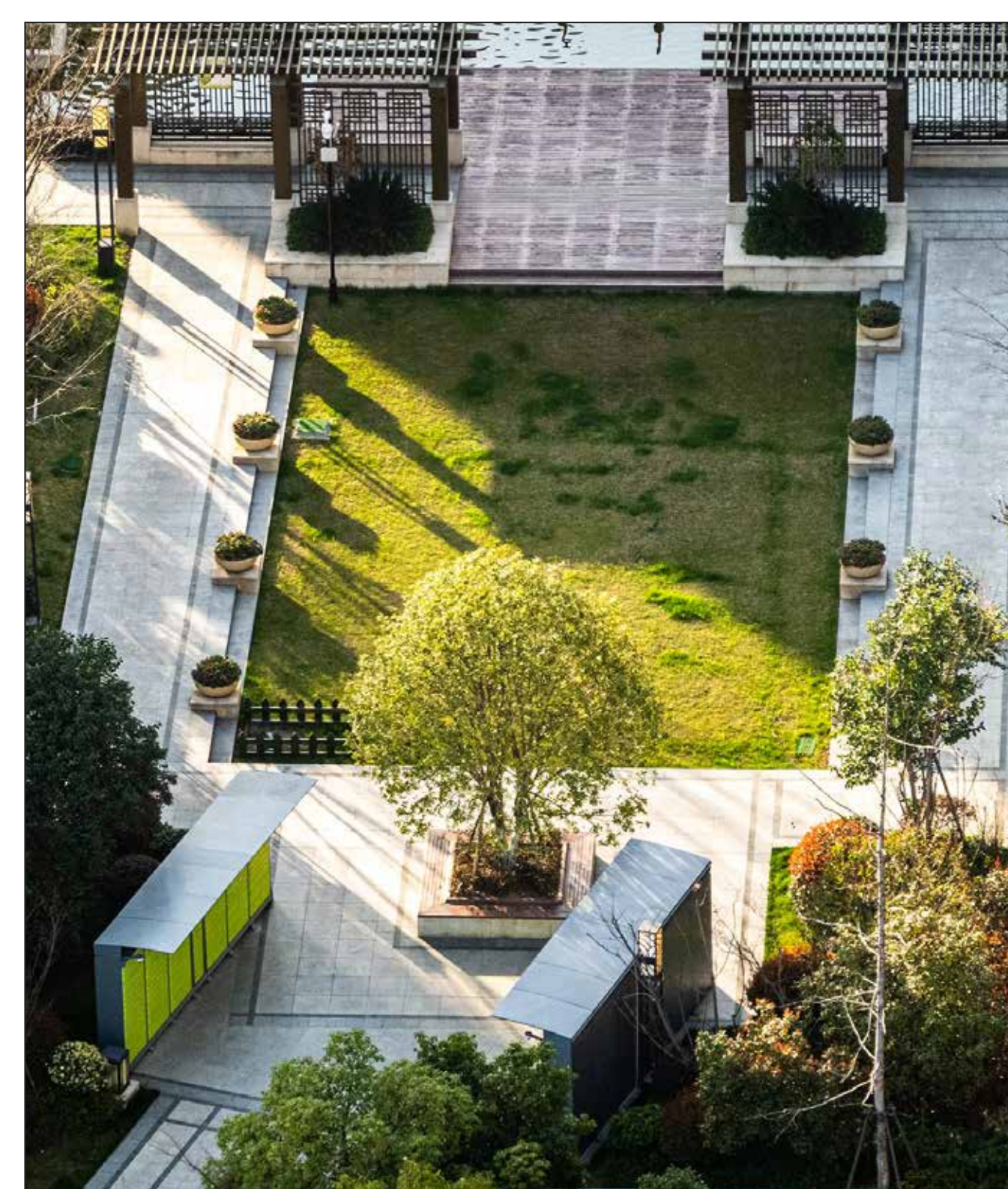
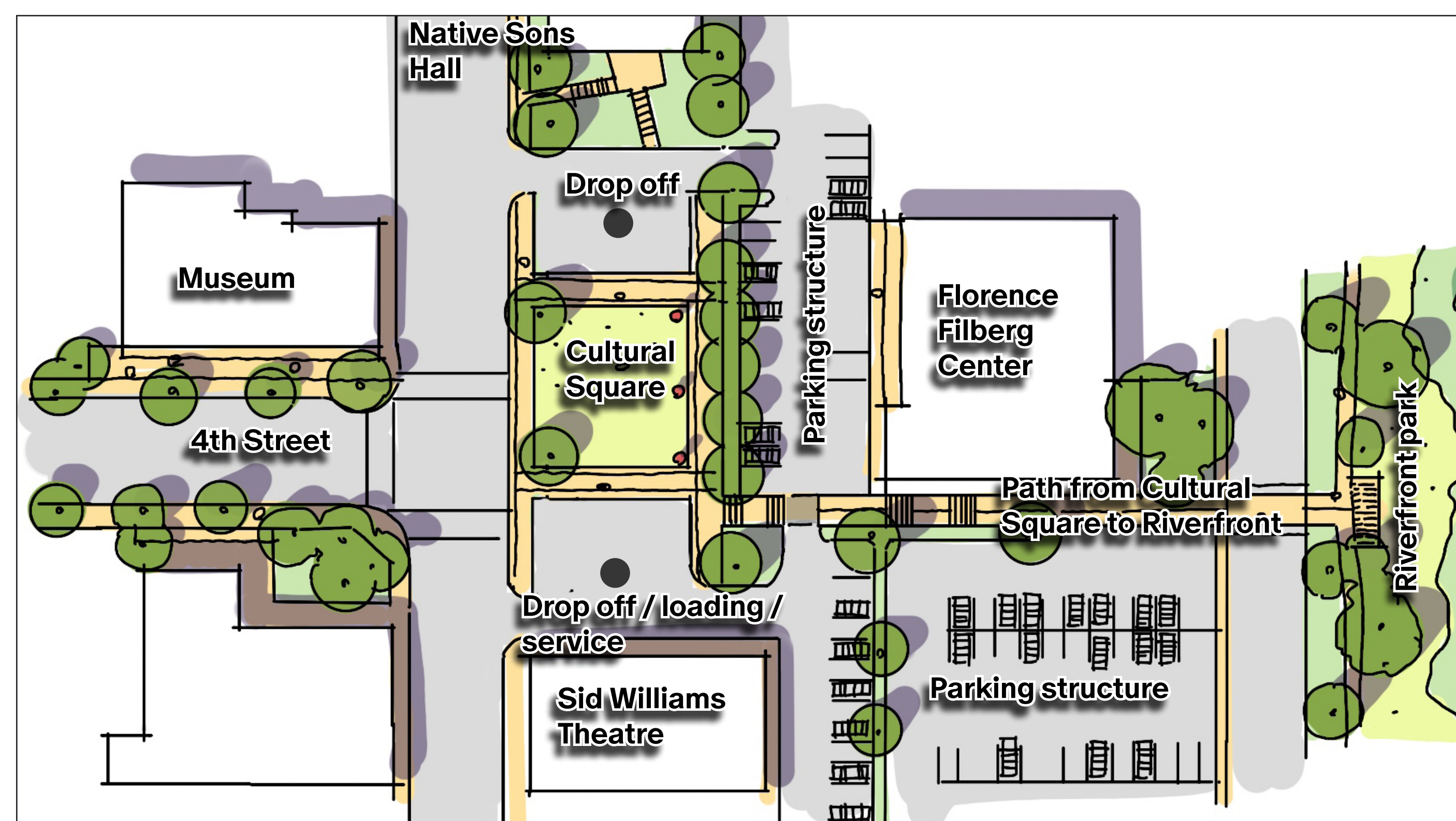
# DOWNTOWN CORE

## Public Spaces | Parks and Plazas



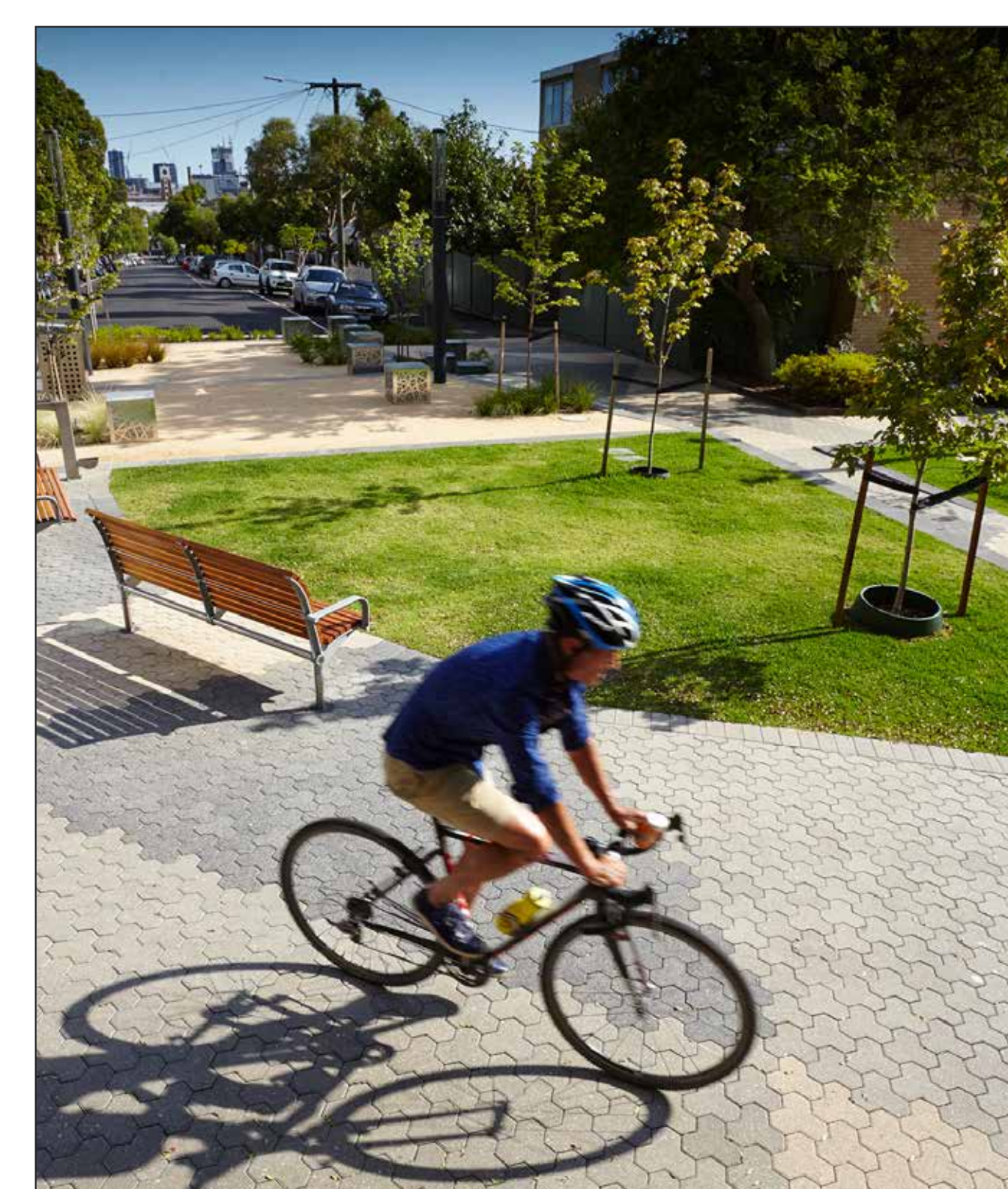
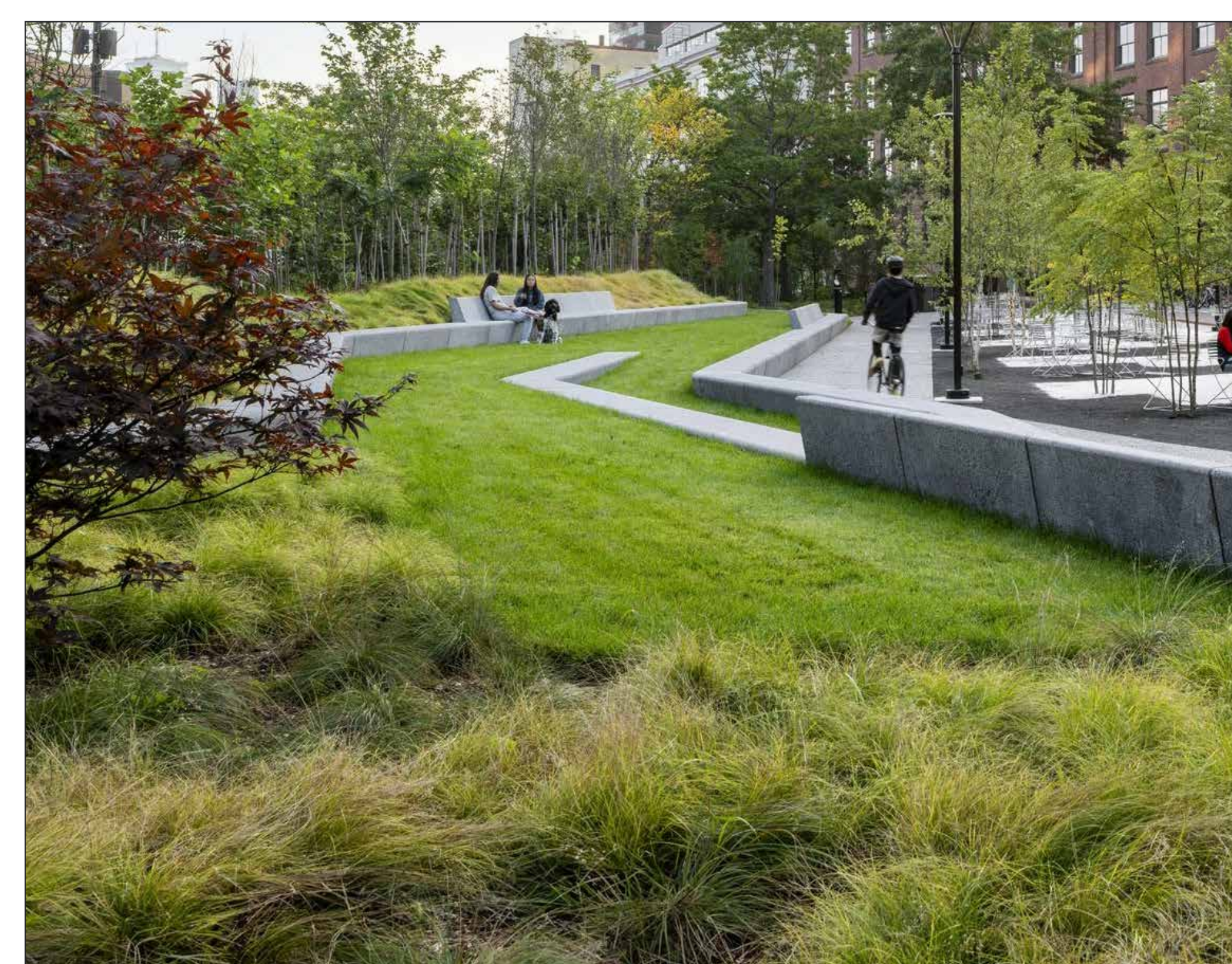
### Duncan Commons and Mews

- Builds on the Playbook's vision for a public gathering space at 6th Street and Duncan Avenue.
- Sloped site requires a stepped or terraced design approach
- Creates a series of 'outdoor rooms' or terraces.
- Functions as an outdoor extension of the Gallery and Library.
- Focus on art installations, sculptures, murals, and quiet reading spaces.
- Includes permanent furniture for individuals and small groups to read or socialize in a green urban setting.



### Cultural Square

- Establishes a meaningful eastern terminus to 4th Street.
- Serves as a focal gathering space in the cultural heart of Downtown.
- Highlights and celebrates local arts and culture.
- Acts as a key connection point between Downtown, the Cultural Square, and the new Riverfront experience.
- Potential for a new public parking structure between the Filberg Centre and the Square to support downtown parking needs, which could be delivered alongside the Square and Riverfront path improvements.



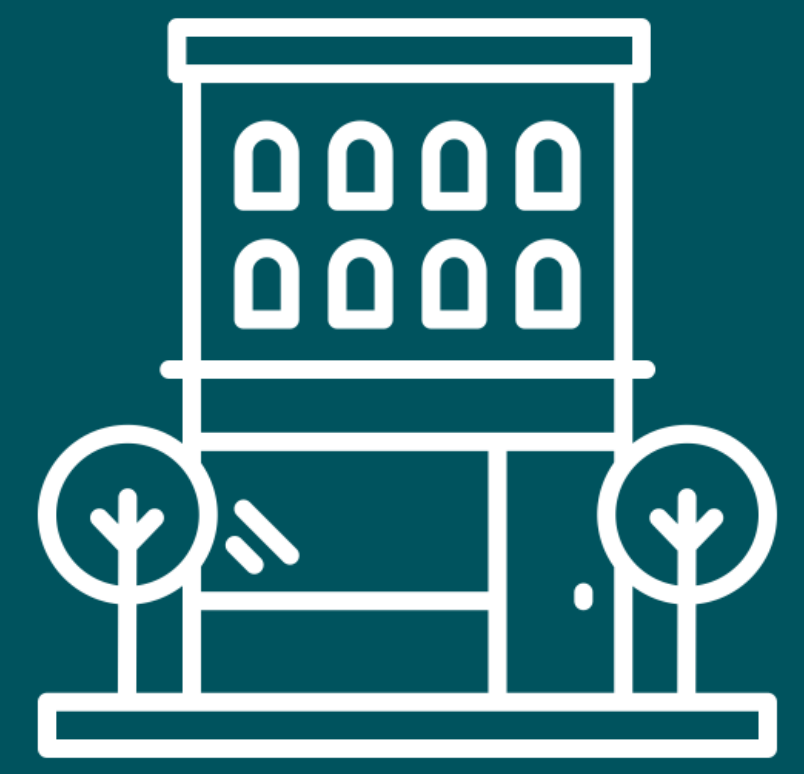
### Courthouse Transit Plaza

- Creates a meaningful gathering space in front of the Courthouse at the key junction of Cumberland Road, 6th Street, and England Avenue.
- Extends the Cumberland corridor with a new bike and pedestrian pathway and enhanced green space along the diagonal street.
- Connects directly to the new plaza and Transit Loop.
- Requires coordination and engagement with the Province to improve the open space.

For Illustrative Purposes Only

# DOWNTOWN CORE

## Share Your Feedback



### 3. PLAZAS

Which elements of the plaza concepts resonate most with you?

Place a dot next to all that resonate with you.

#### Duncan Commons and Mews

Terraced pocket park featuring art installations

Permanent seating and furniture to support socializing

Public art opportunities - sculptures, murals, and creative features to animate the Mews

#### Cultural Square

A meaningful anchor at the end of 4th Street

Central gathering space in Downtown's cultural core

Opportunity to highlight local arts and culture

Strong pedestrian connection from Downtown to the Riverfront experience

#### Courthouse Transit Plaza

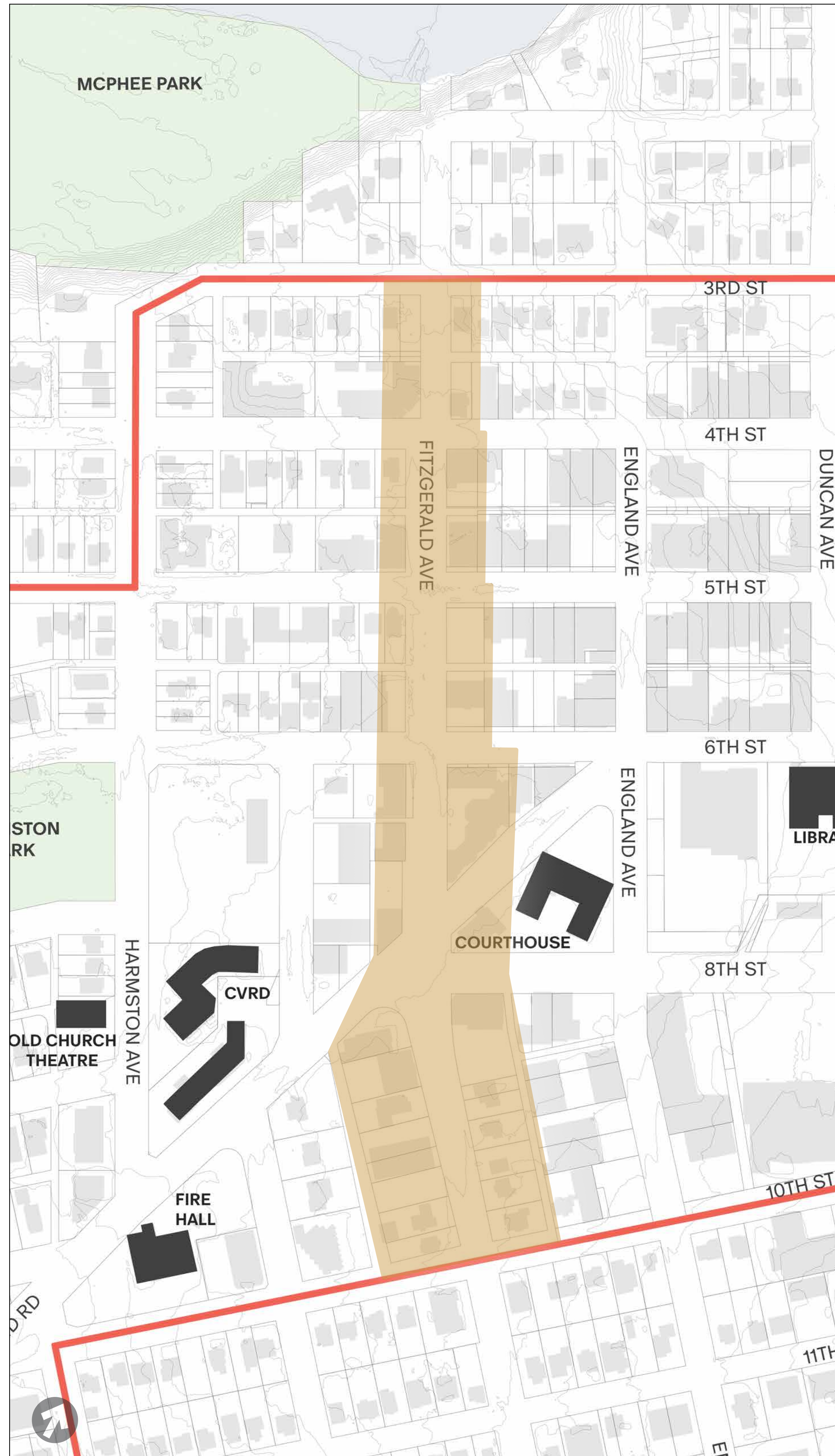
Gathering space in front of the historic courthouse

A new cycling/pedestrian pathway along Cumberland Road

Did we miss anything? Use a sticky note to share your ideas or concerns about the future of the Downtown Core.

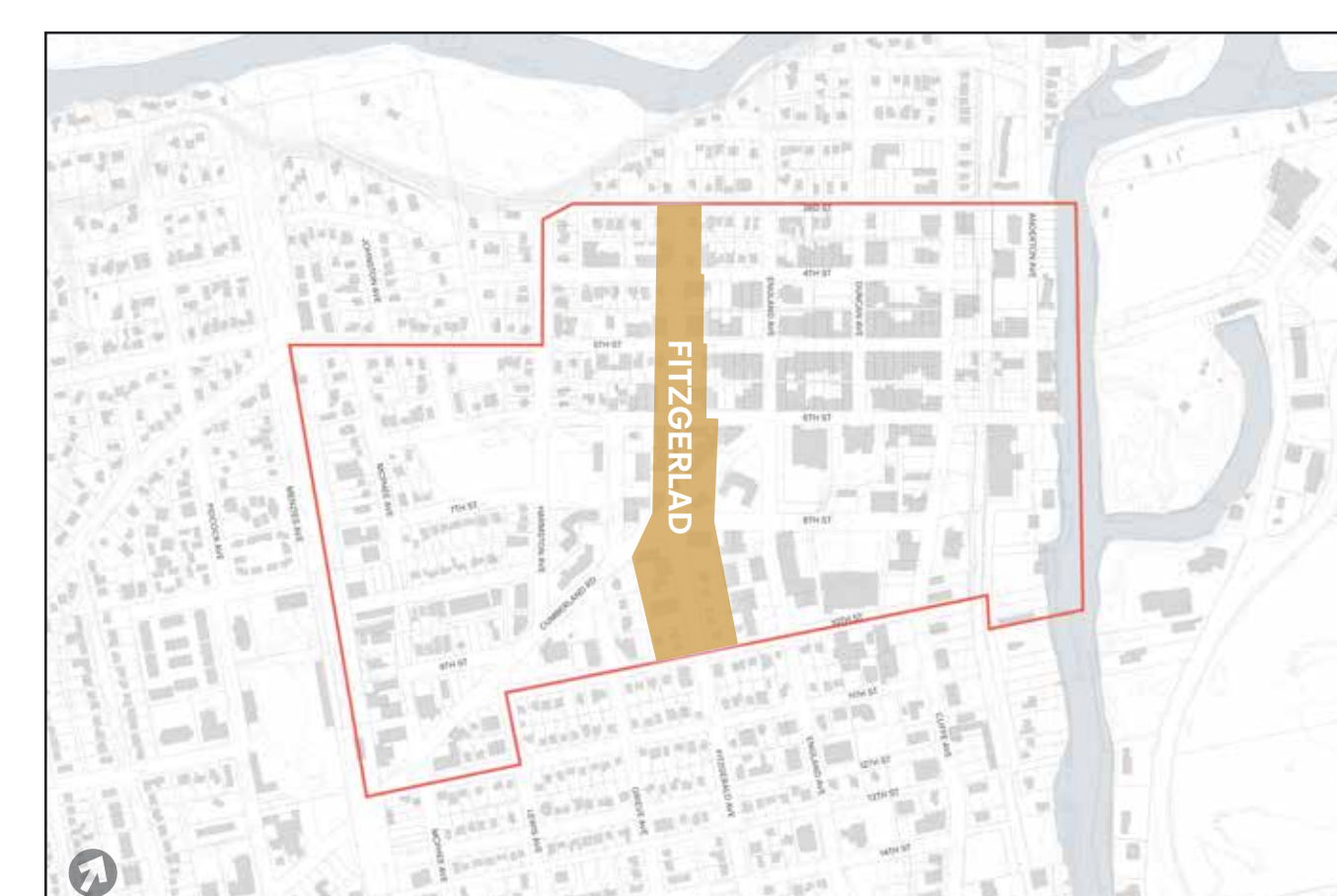
# FITZGERALD

## Context and Opportunities



### Big Move 3 Fitzgerald as a Key Connector

Elevate Fitzgerald Avenue's role as a key connector between districts with further streetscape improvements, active transportation infrastructure, and the promotion of mixed-use development. Establishing Fitzgerald Avenue as a welcoming gateway to Downtown will ensure it supports the broader vision for the area.



### Context

Fitzgerald Avenue acts as a key connector and a boundary between Downtown and Harmston Park. With a mix of commercial services, mixed-use buildings, and emerging active transportation upgrades, Fitzgerald has the potential to evolve as a more pedestrian-oriented and mixed-use corridor.

### Existing OCP Policies

- Downtown Policy 15: Establish and promote distinctive character designations for Downtown's key streets.
- Streets and Transportation Objective 2: Transportation investments prioritize walking, cycling, and transit.
- Streets and Transportation Policy 10: Supplement public amenity spaces within road rights of way in Downtown, Town, and Neighbourhood Centres by providing more places for people to gather.

### Opportunities

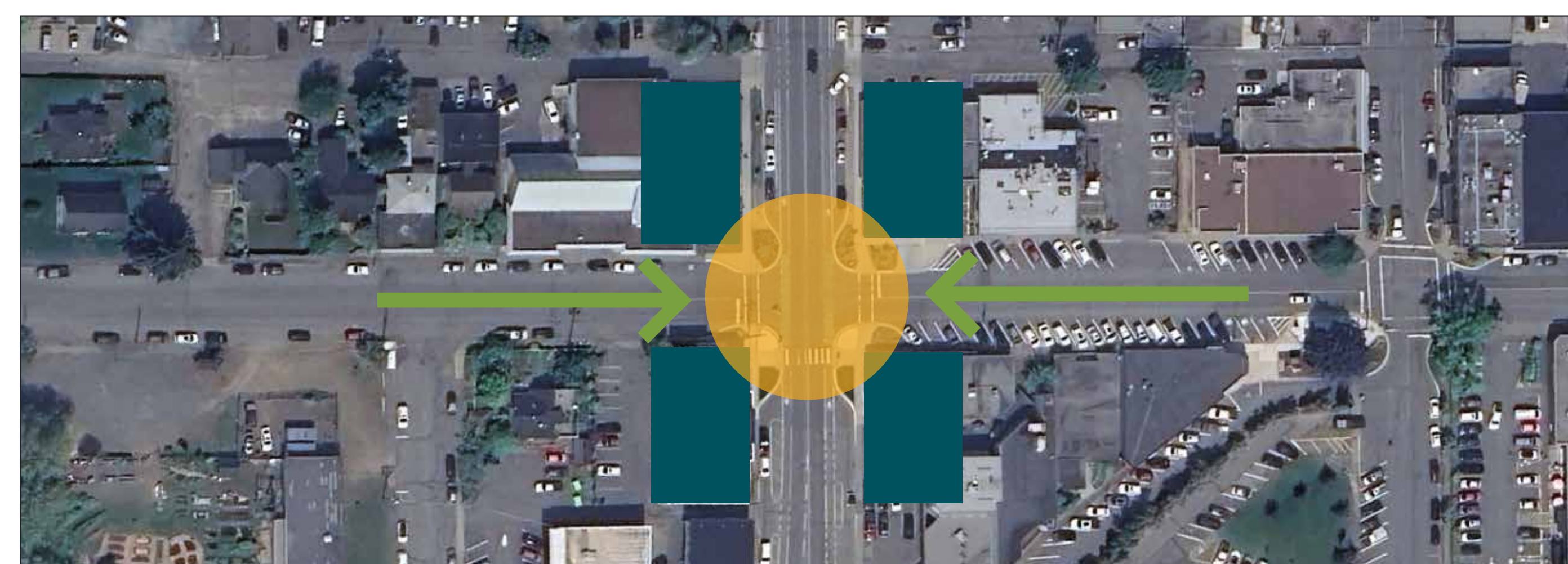
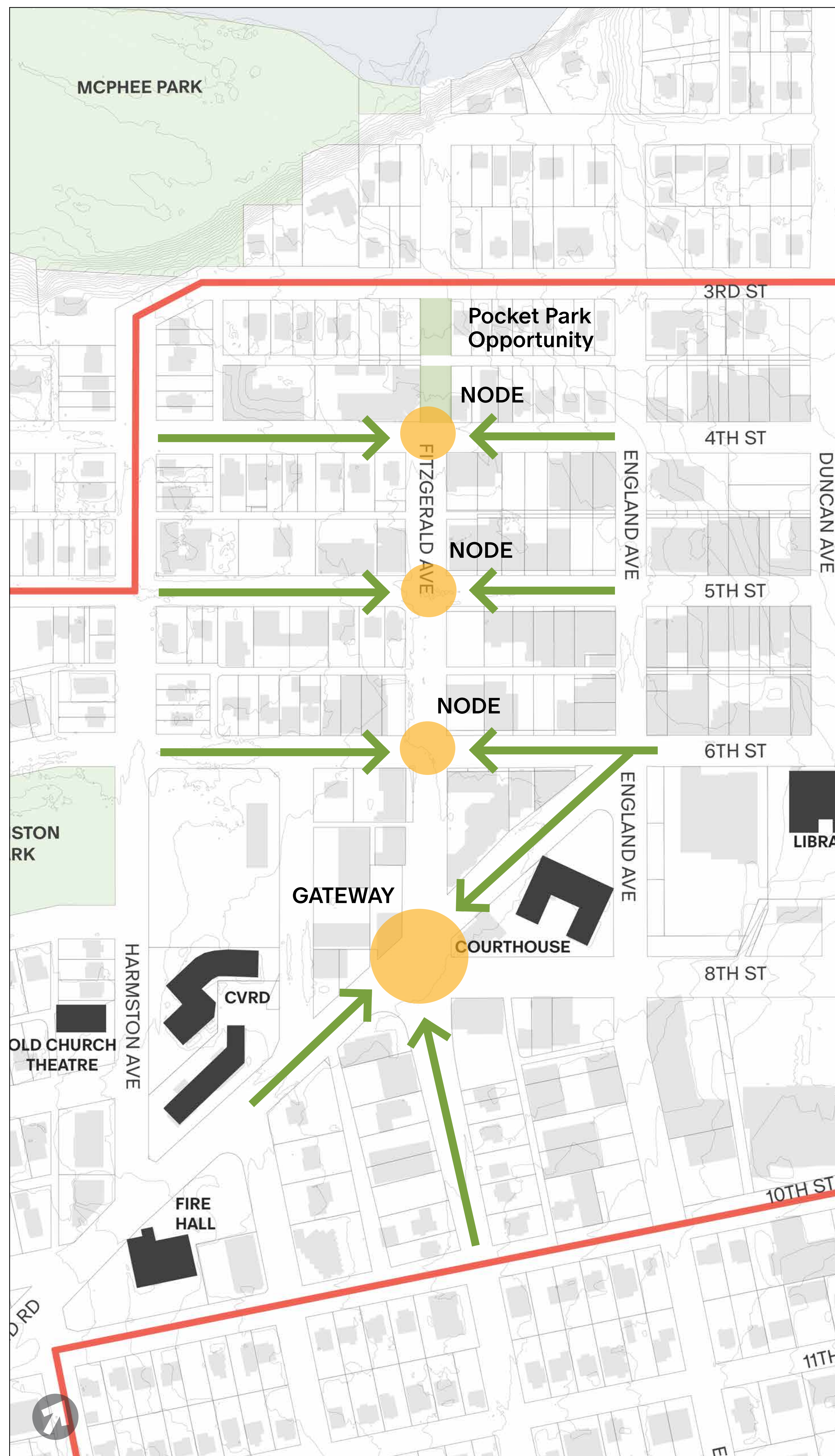
- Strengthen Fitzgerald as a 'gateway' to Downtown.
- Continue active transportation upgrades and streetscape improvements.
- Encourage additional commercial and mixed-use development.
- Build upon existing wayfinding programs to support navigation.
- Improve crossing opportunities to better connect Downtown with Harmston Park.
- Explore partial street closure between 3rd and 4th Streets to create a pocket park and public space.

### Constraints

- Potential traffic congestion as the city grows.
- Limited municipal ownership along Fitzgerald limiting public space improvements.
- Infrastructure upgrades needed to support increased activity.

# FITZGERALD

## A Key Corridor



### Fitzgerald Avenue: A Gateway and Gathering Corridor

Fitzgerald Avenue plays a vital role as a gateway and connector between Downtown and the Harmston Park District. While recent active transportation upgrades and defined bike lanes have improved mobility, the corridor's width and surrounding built form still give it the feel of a dividing line.

With its potential as a walkable, mixed-use corridor, Fitzgerald can evolve into a more welcoming, people-oriented space that supports movement and destination.

Key nodes or intersections, particularly at 4th, 5th, 6th Streets and Cumberland Road — present strong opportunities to unify adjacent districts as well as establish Fitzgerald's own unique identity.

Emerging design and development ideas include:

- Reinforcing intersections as nodes of activity and density.
- Focusing elevated density on Fitzgerald Avenue to support the Frequent Transit Network and increased transit ridership.
- Encouraging ground-floor commercial on all four corners.
- Utilizing the flat character of Fitzgerald to support commercial uses.
- Using built form to frame intersections as 'outdoor rooms'.
- Supporting density and mixed-use development at key nodes.
- Enhancing landscaping and private realm improvements to draw people along the corridor and through each node.

Together, these strategies could transform Fitzgerald from a dividing edge into an active spine — linking Downtown and Harmston Park through movement, placemaking, and street-level vibrancy.

# FITZGERALD

## Share Your Feedback



Tell us what you think! Use a dot to share your level of support with the overall direction for the Fitzgerald Corridor. Then share which design ideas resonate most with you and what else you'd like to see. You can also leave a sticky note with your comments or suggestions.

### 1. OVERALL DIRECTION

What is your level of support for the idea of Fitzgerald Avenue becoming a more active, walkable, and mixed-use corridor?

NOT AT ALL SUPPORTIVE	SOMEWHAT UNSUPPORTIVE	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT SUPPORTIVE	VERY SUPPORTIVE
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 2. IDEAS

Which of the following ideas for Fitzgerald resonate most with you?

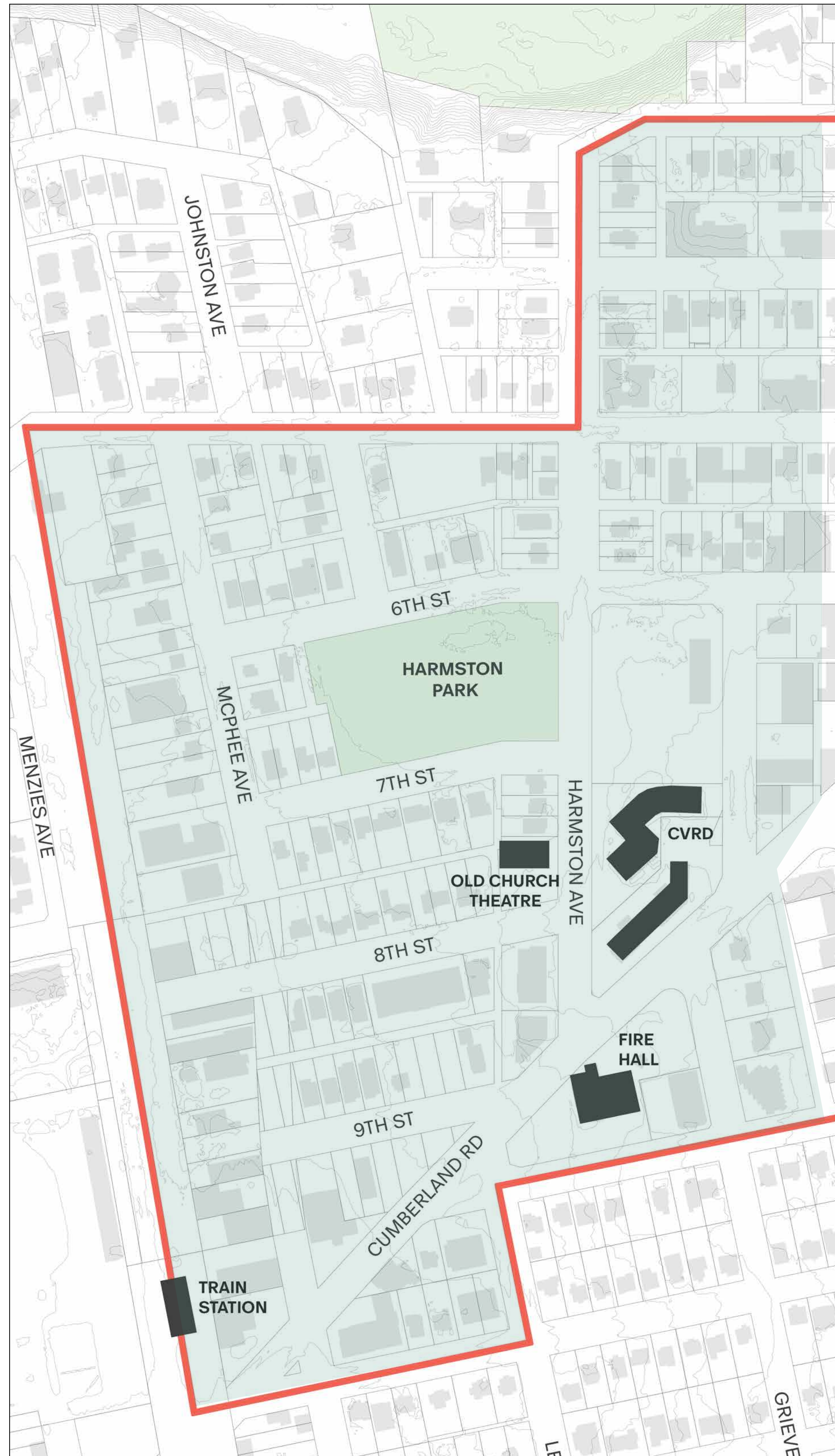
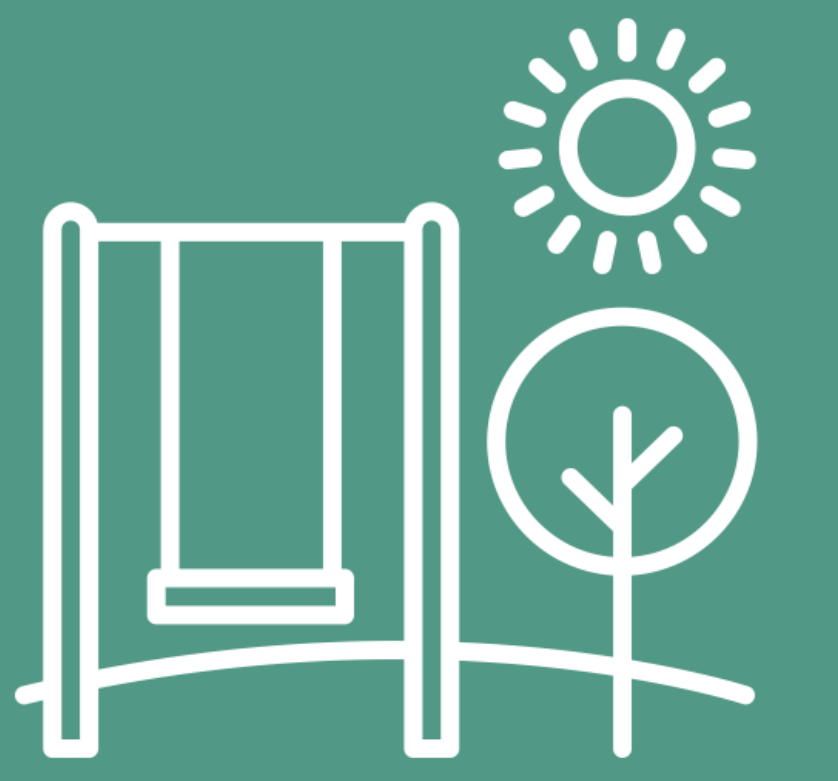
Place a dot next to all that resonate with you.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strengthening Fitzgerald as a welcome gateway to Downtown
<input type="checkbox"/>	Key intersections (4th, 5th, 6th, Cumberland) as public gathering spaces
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adding ground-floor commercial on all four corners at key intersections
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supporting density and mixed-use development (up to 6 storeys)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Improving landscaping and the private realm to enhance walkability
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expanding on existing bike and active transportation upgrades

**Other Ideas?** Use a sticky note to share ideas or concerns about the future of Fitzgerald Avenue.

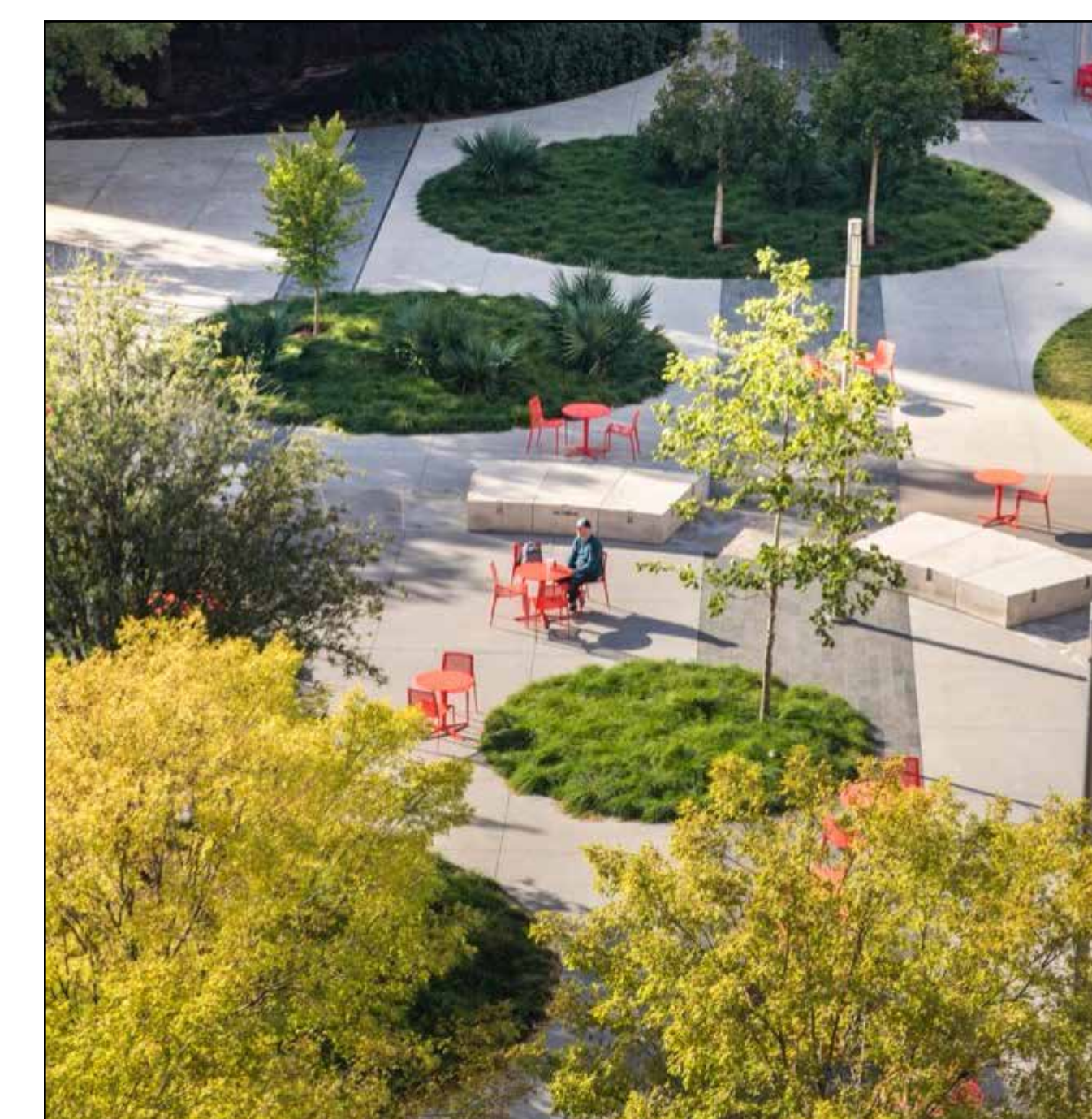
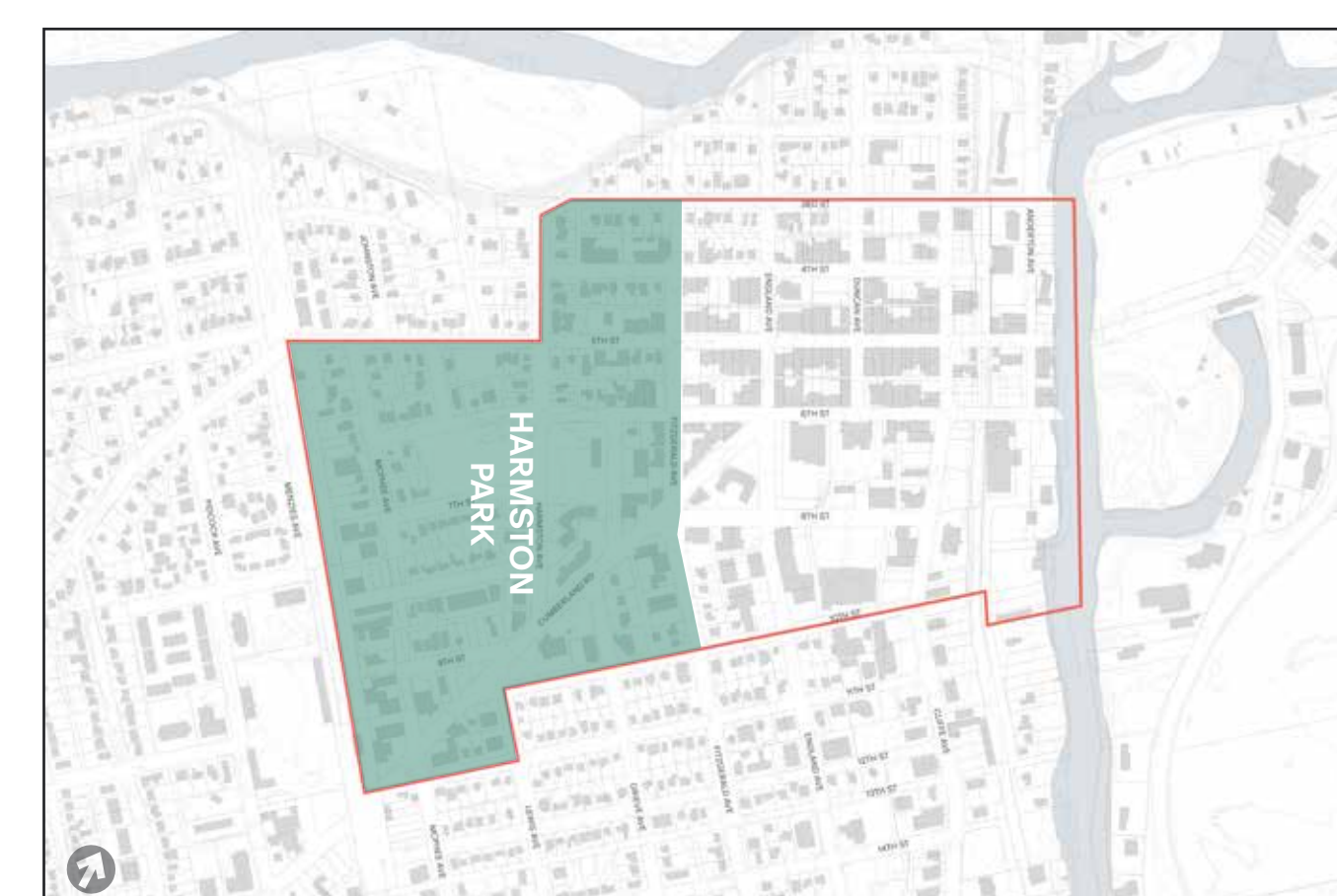
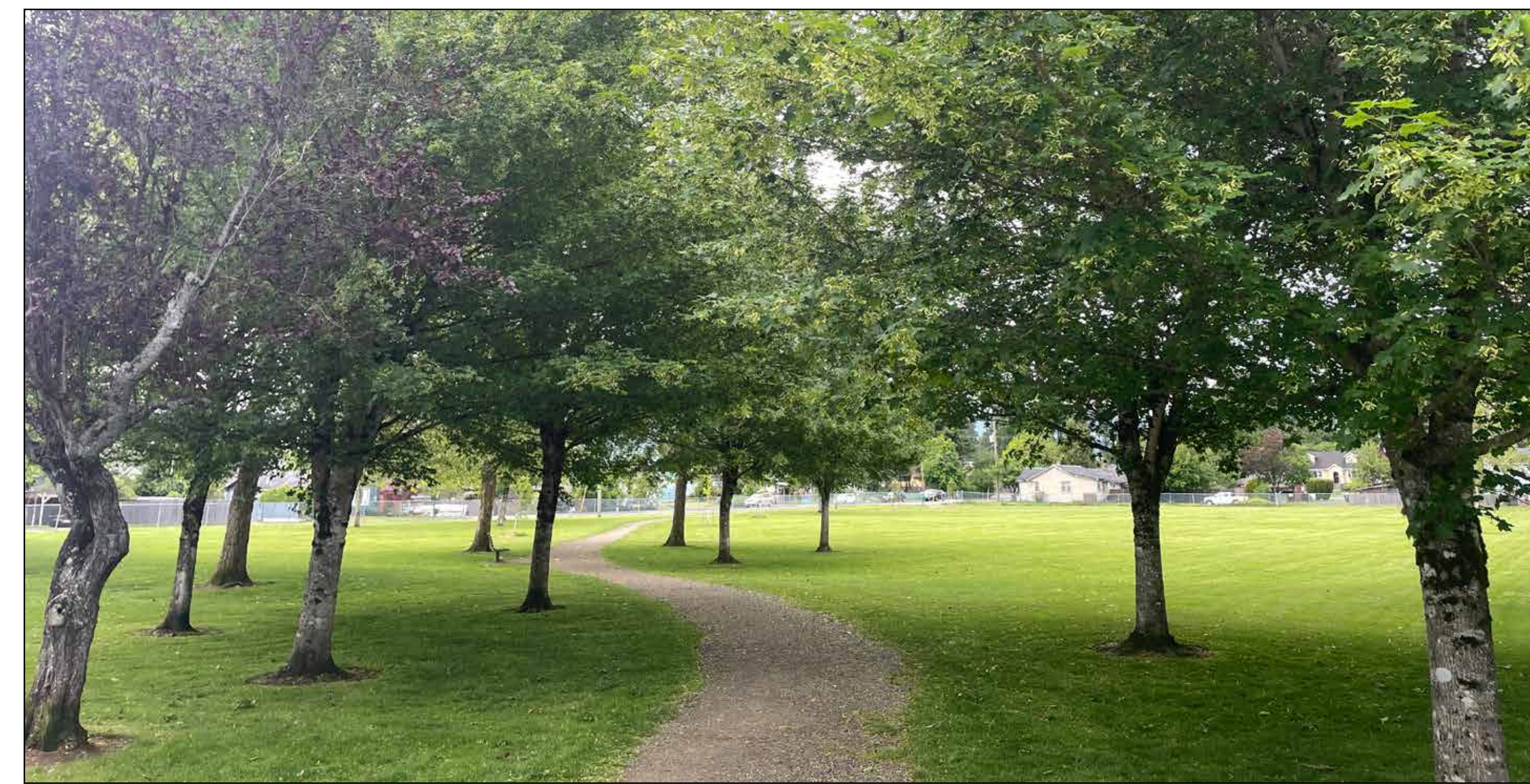
# HARMSTON PARK

## Context and Opportunities



### Big Move 4 Activate Harmston Park

Design and develop Harmston Park as a dynamic community hub, supported by enhanced programming and infrastructure. Opportunities for higher-density housing and innovative uses for adjacent municipal lands, such as partial street closures, can further integrate the park into the community fabric.



### Context

Harmston Park is a large green space surrounded by residential, institutional, and light industrial uses. While the area benefits from community assets like Share the Harvest Garden and regional government offices, it faces challenges such as underutilized industrial land and a park in need of activation.

### Existing OCP Policies

- Downtown Policy 8: Ensure compatibility of land uses between the downtown and adjacent urban residential neighbourhoods by providing transitional form, character, and densities.
- Harmston Park Policy 1(d): Neighbourhood park function including ideas such as, but not limited to, community gardens, dog park, children's playground.
- Harmston Park Policy 1(e): Consideration to the temporary or permanent closure of Harmston Avenue between 6th and 7th Streets.
- Parks and Recreation Master Plan: Identify amenities desired by the surrounding neighbourhood as a basis for planning.
- Strategic Cultural Plan Objective 3.1: Increase availability of accessible and affordable spaces for arts and culture.

### Opportunities

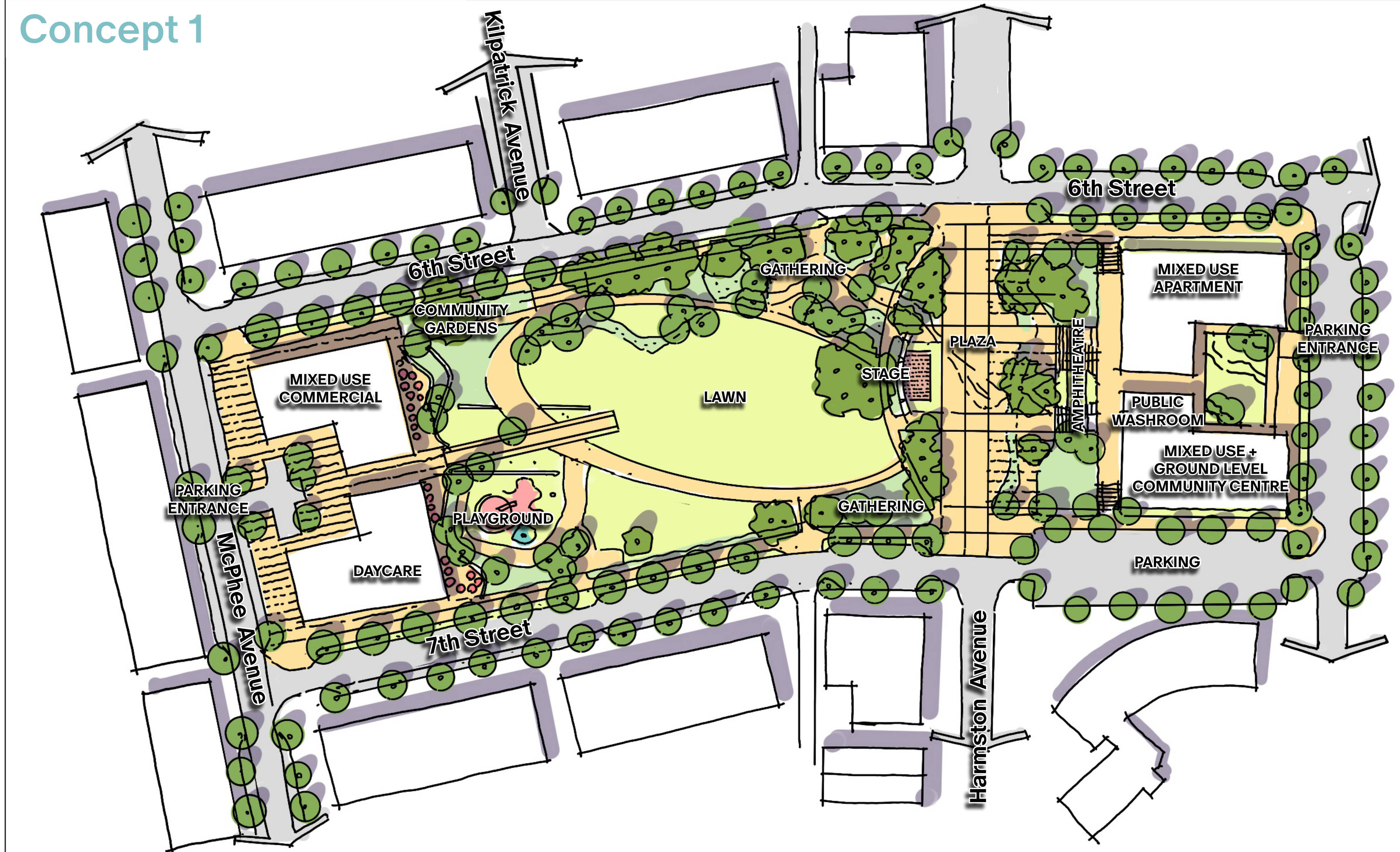
- Detailed design and activation of Harmston Park.
- Introduce regular programming and events in the park.
- Enable infill residential and mixed-use development around the park.
- Enhance trail connections, including strengthening access to Rotary Trail and McPhee Meadows.
- Historic Train Station provides a placemaking opportunity with economic potential.

### Constraints

- Perception of public safety issues near industrial areas.
- Privately-owned parcels could limit cohesive redevelopment.

# HARMSTON PARK

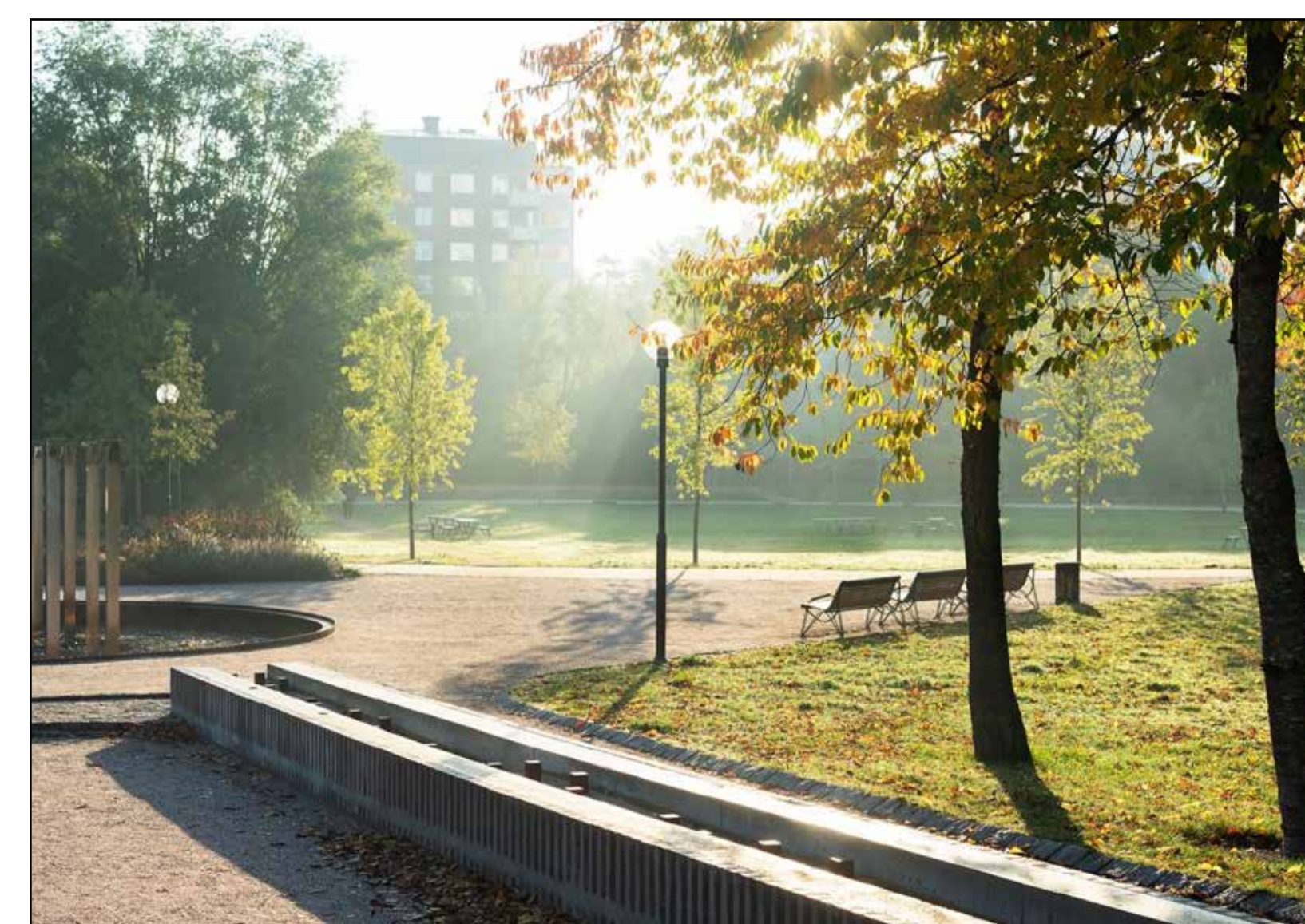
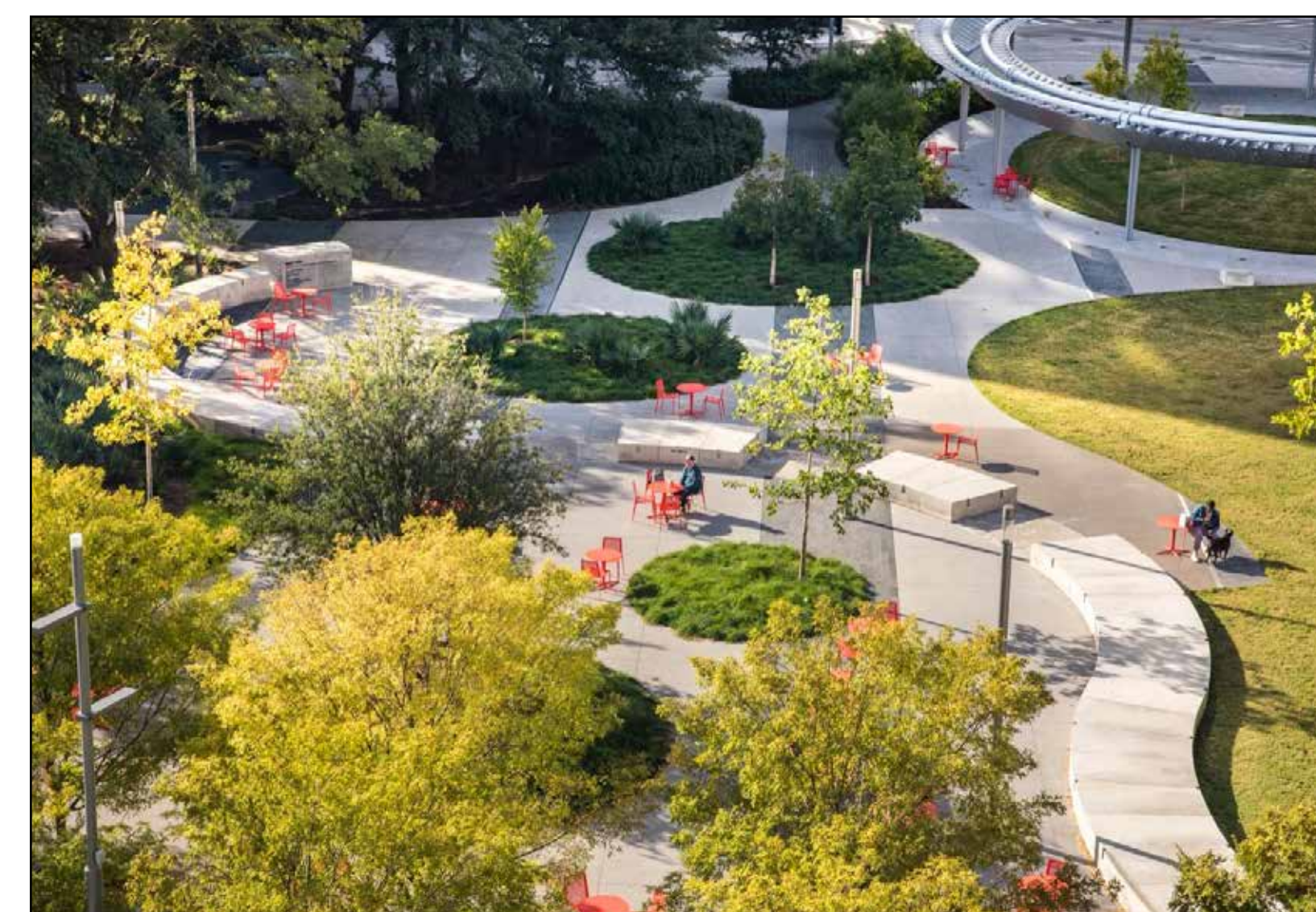
## Exploring Concepts and Park Features



For Illustrative Purpose Only



For Illustrative Purpose Only



These two concepts explore potential programming elements for Harmston Park.

### Concept 1 - Community Park and Civic Plaza

This concept integrates Harmston Park with a new civic plaza by closing Harmston Avenue to vehicle traffic (except emergency access). The plaza would serve as a flexible public space for markets, concerts, and community events.

The park would include a playground, community gardens, and an open lawn for informal recreation. Ground-level commercial or community uses in adjacent buildings could help activate the space throughout the year.

### Concept 2 - Community Park

This concept envisions a more passive park anchored by a smaller plaza at 6th Street and Harmston Avenue, serving as a main entry point.

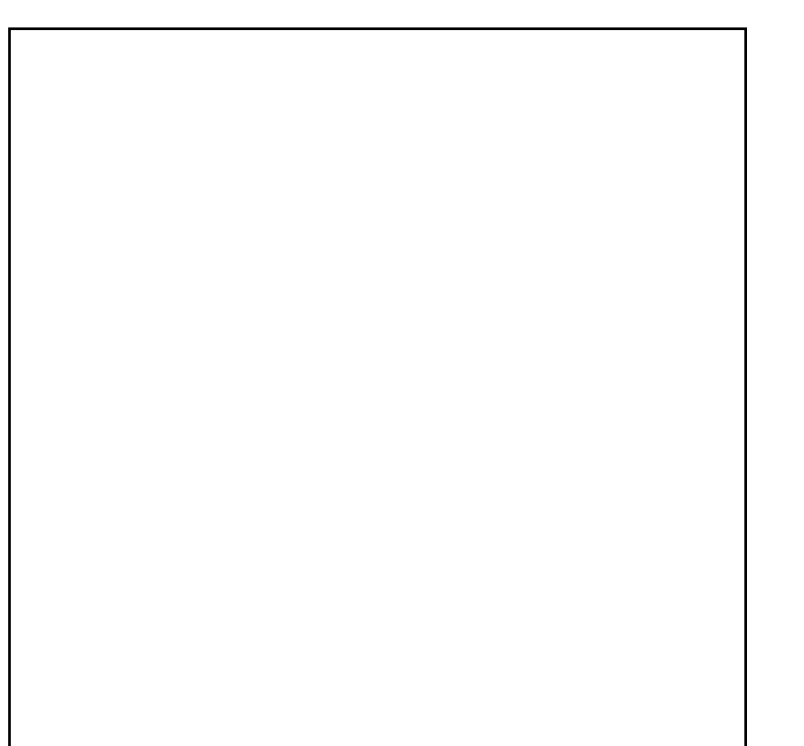
The park would feature a playground, community gardens, a dog park, and a large open lawn for informal use. Surrounding buildings would include more extensive commercial uses to help animate the area.

### Parking

Expanded parking opportunities include:

- Retaining public parking along 7th Street.
- Additional underground parking beneath new buildings between Harmston and Grant.
- New on-street parking surrounding Harmston Park.

Scan the QR code for further information and engagement opportunities specifically related to Harmston Park.



# HARMSTON PARK

## Share Your Feedback



Tell us what you think! Use a dot to show your level of support for the overall vision for Harmston Park. Then tell us which ideas you support for future programming and surrounding development. You can also leave a sticky note to share any additional ideas or concerns.

### 1. OVERALL DIRECTION

What is your level of support for the vision of Harmston Park as a vibrant community hub with new programming and surrounding development?

NOT AT ALL SUPPORTIVE	SOMEWHAT UNSUPPORTIVE	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT SUPPORTIVE	VERY SUPPORTIVE
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 2. PROGRAMMING

What types of programming or park features do you support?

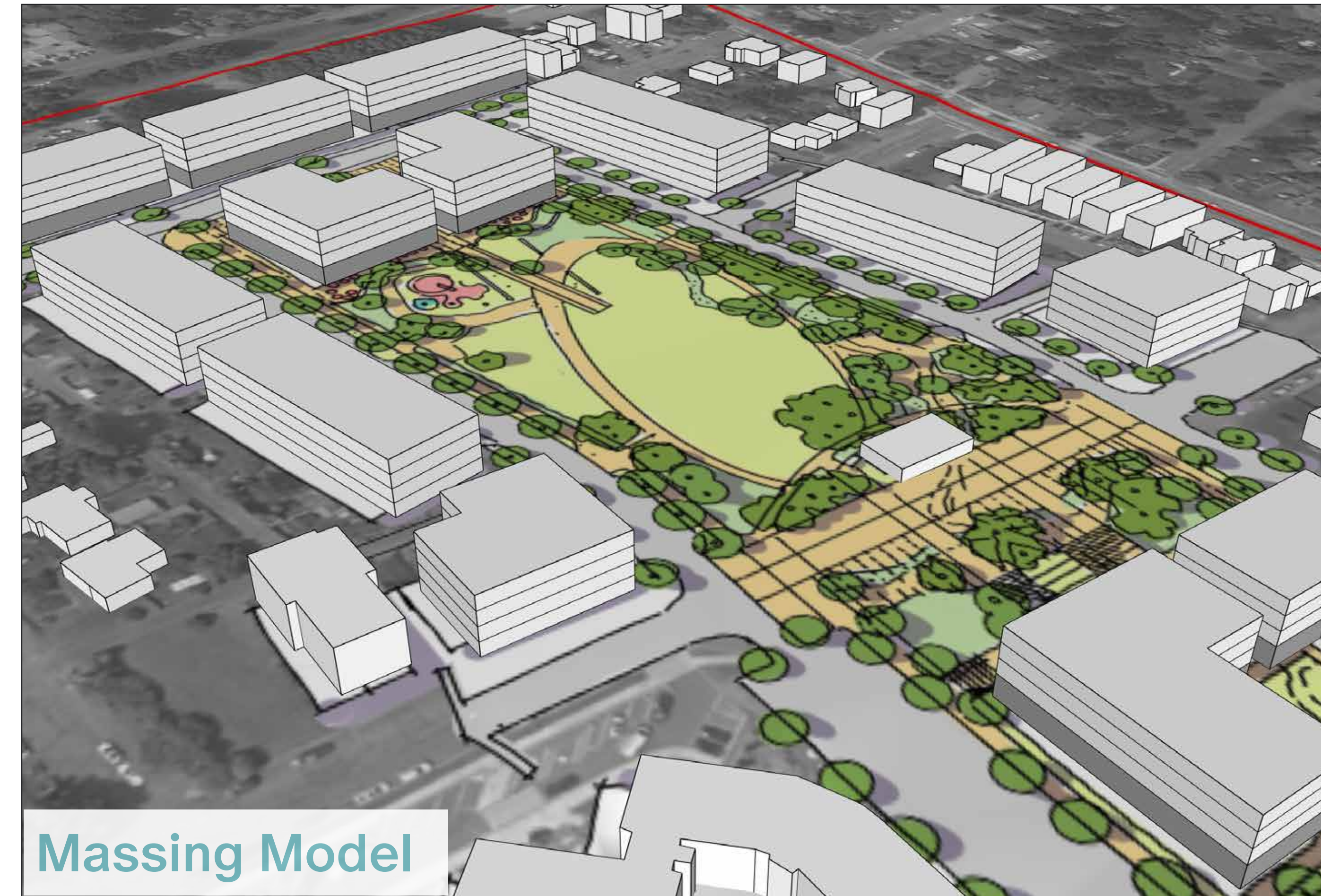
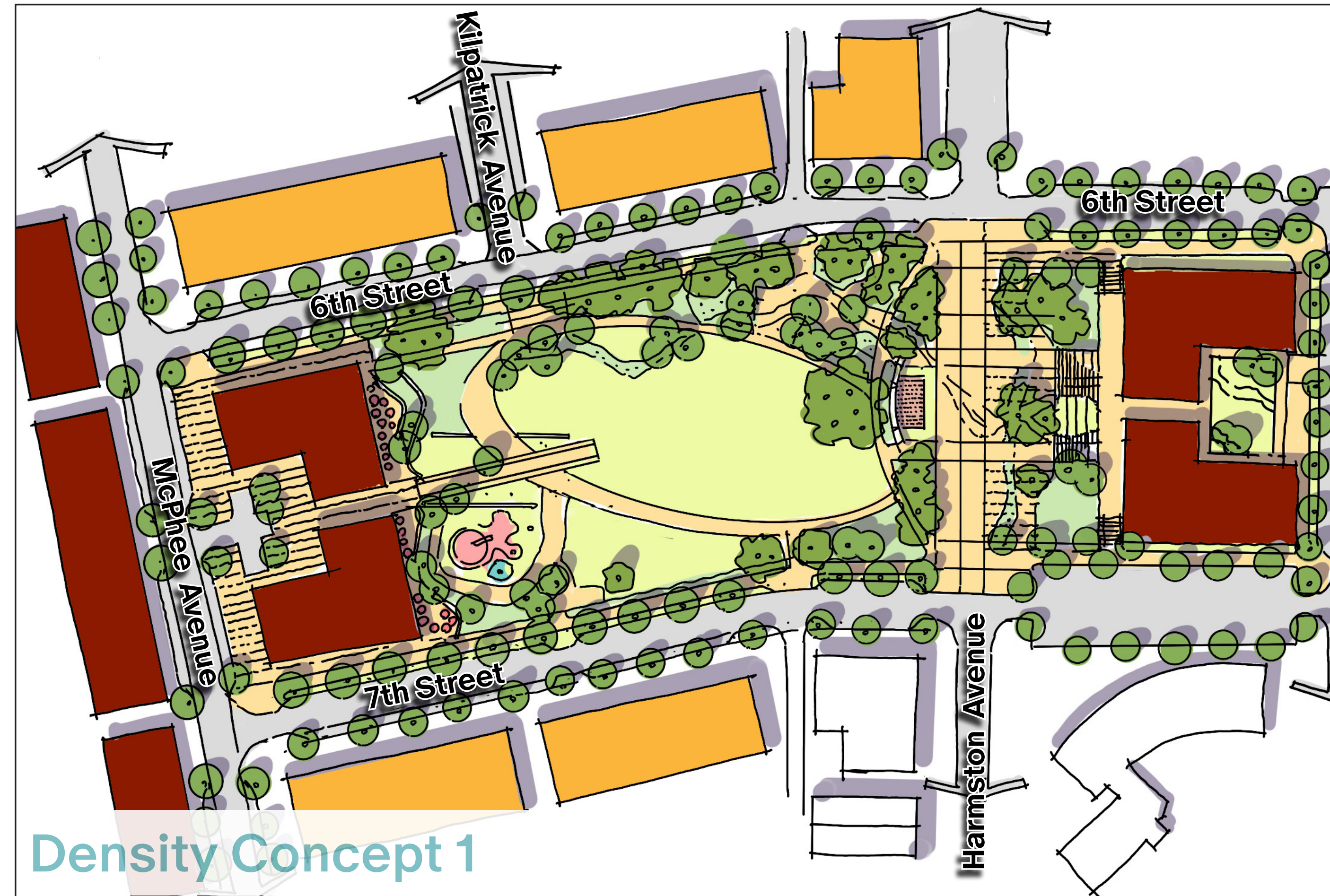
Place a dot next to the ones that resonate with you the most. Select all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Close part of Harmston Avenue to create a flexible civic plaza
<input type="checkbox"/>	Markets, concerts, and community events
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small plaza at Harmston & 6th as a main park entrance
<input type="checkbox"/>	Playground and family-friendly amenities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dog park or pet-friendly areas
<input type="checkbox"/>	Art installations, murals, and cultural features
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quiet green space for informal recreation (reading, picnicking)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commercial uses like cafés or shops around the park
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public seating and permanent furniture

Other Ideas? Leave a sticky note with your thoughts or suggestions!

# HARMSTON PARK

## Form and Scale

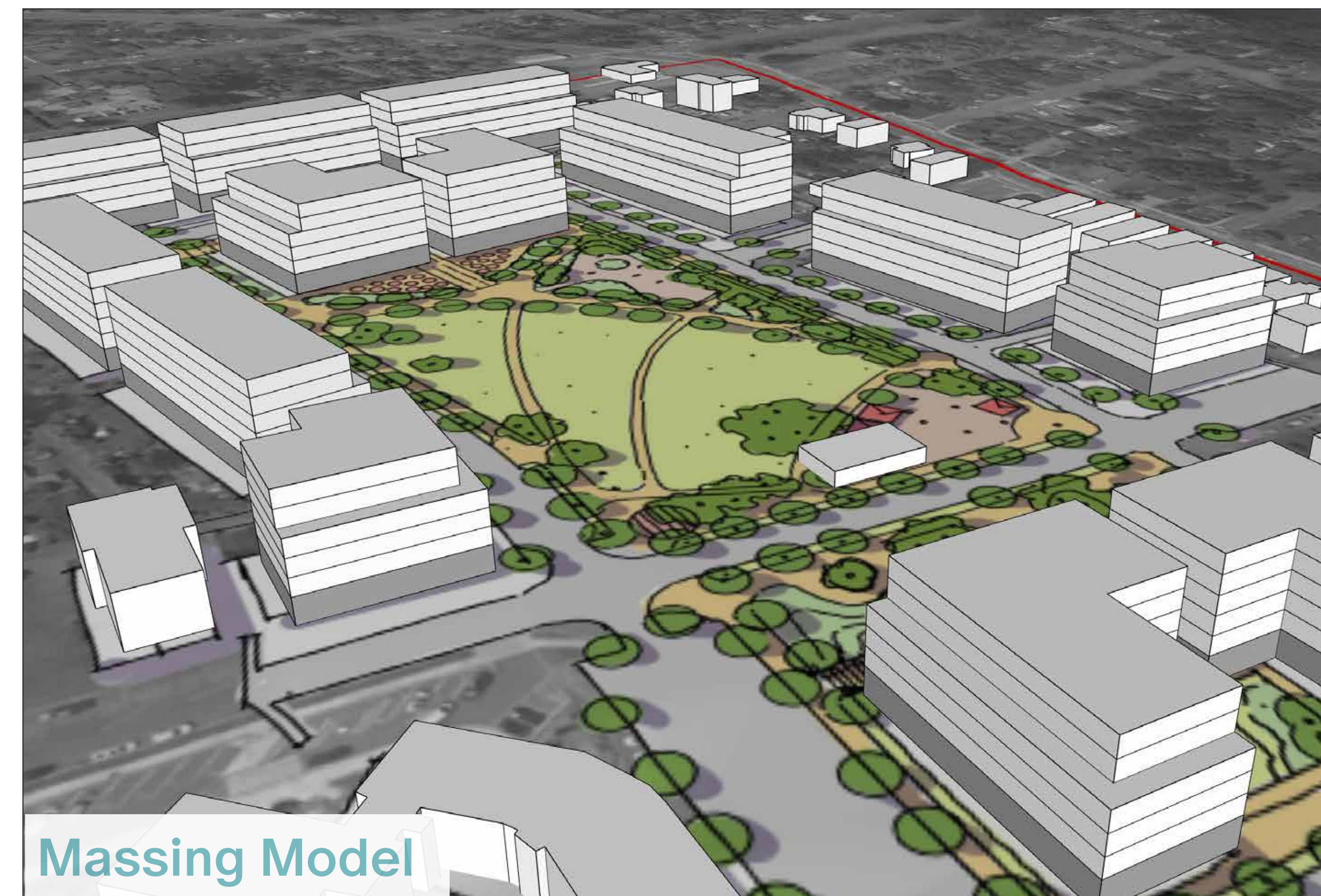
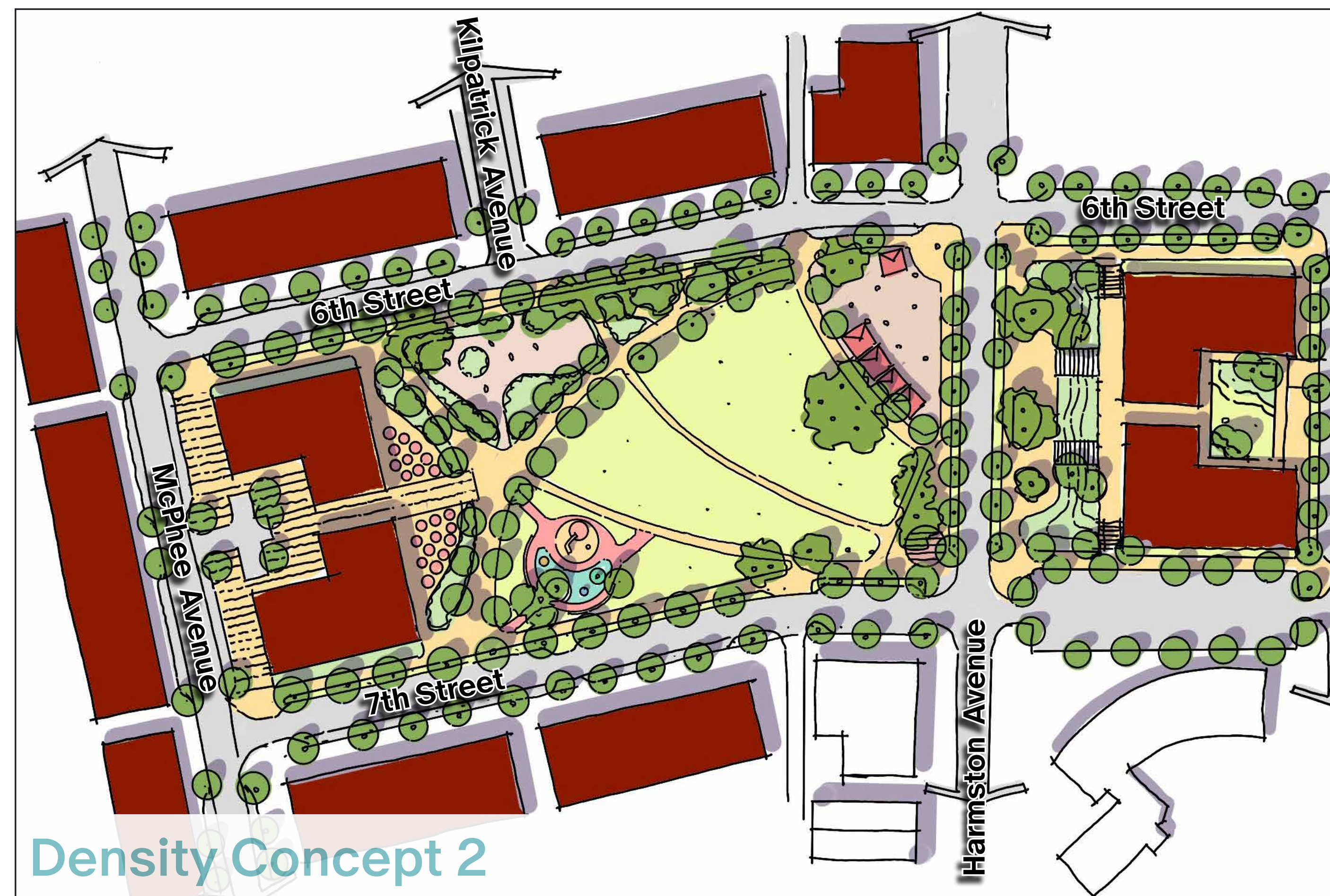


These two concepts explore potential density approaches surrounding Harmston Park.

### Density Concept 1 - Four Storeys with Limited Commercial

This concept proposes a consistent four-storey building form around Harmston Park and along McPhee Avenue.

Commercial uses would be limited to buildings fronting the park and McPhee Avenue, encouraging casual activation without overwhelming the area. The added residential density would help animate the park and offer housing close to valuable community amenities.



### Density Concept 2 - Six Storey Mixed Use

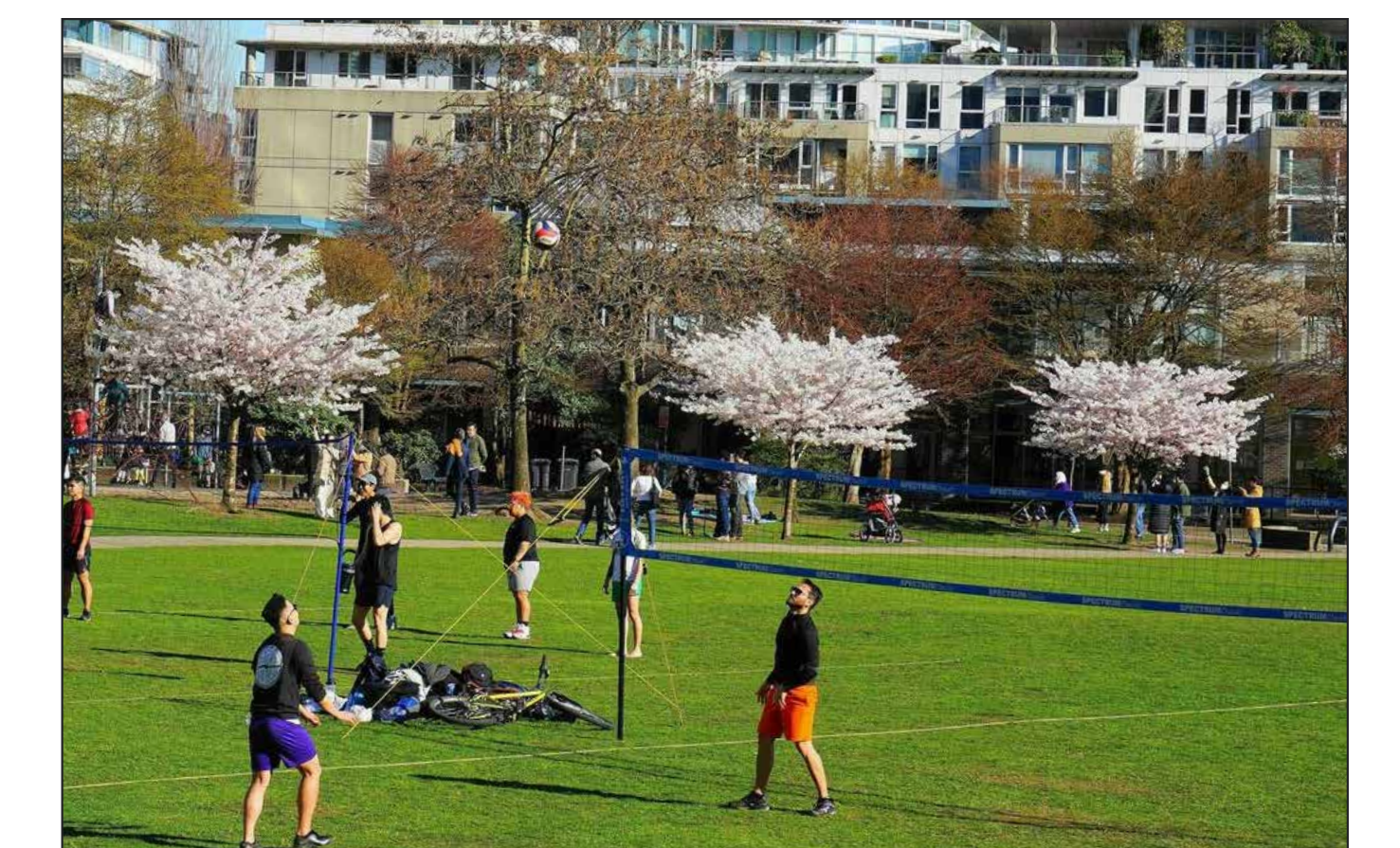
This concept introduces six-storey mixed-use buildings surrounding Harmston Park.

Ground floors would feature commercial uses throughout, activating the park edges and bringing shops and services closer to residents.

Higher density supports a wider range of amenities, helps build a stronger sense of community, and can reduce car-dependency when part of a mixed use complete neighbourhood

*Please note:* The massing model illustrations show where added height and density could be supported—they do not represent the final built form.

- Residential
- Mixed-Use Commercial and Residential



# HARMSTON PARK

## Share Your Feedback



### 3. FORM AND SCALE

**What kind of building height and land use do you support around Harmston Park?** Place a dot next to the statements you agree with.

Density Concept 1: 4-storey residential buildings with limited commercial frontage

Density Concept 2: 6-storey mixed-use buildings with ground-level commercial

I support both concepts

**What else should we consider?** Use a sticky note to share thoughts on programming, park design, or surrounding land use.

# WHAT'S AHEAD

## Next Steps for Downtown

We're still in the planning phase — and your input matters! Here's how to stay involved as we move forward with the Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan (DVLAP):

### How to Get Involved

- Scan the QR code to complete the survey online
- Visit: [engagecomoxvalley.ca/courtenay-downtown-plan](https://engagecomoxvalley.ca/courtenay-downtown-plan)
- Follow us @city of courtenay



### UPCOMING AND MAJOR PROJECTS WITHIN THE DVLAP AREA

Project	Start	Completion
Harmston Park Planning Process	Q2 2025	Q3 2025
Anderton Avenue Demolitions (Bridge Building, Cona Hostel, Anderton Arms)	Q2 2025	Q3 2025
Official Community Plan Update	Q2 2025	Q4 2025
McPhee Meadows Park	Ongoing	Q4 2025
BC Transit Exchange (8th St & England Ave)	Mid 2025	TBD
6th Street Active Transportation Bridge	Q3 2025	Q2 2026
Anderton Lift Station Replacement	Q3 2025	Q4 2026
Recent Development Approvals for Multi-Residential Homes at 11th St & Beckensell Ave and 4th St & England Ave	TBD	TBD

