

urban design

6



INTRODUCTION

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

URBAN DESIGN – DOWNTOWN CORE AREA

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

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

URBAN DESIGN – OBJECTIVES

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

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

URBAN DESIGN – STRATEGIES

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

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

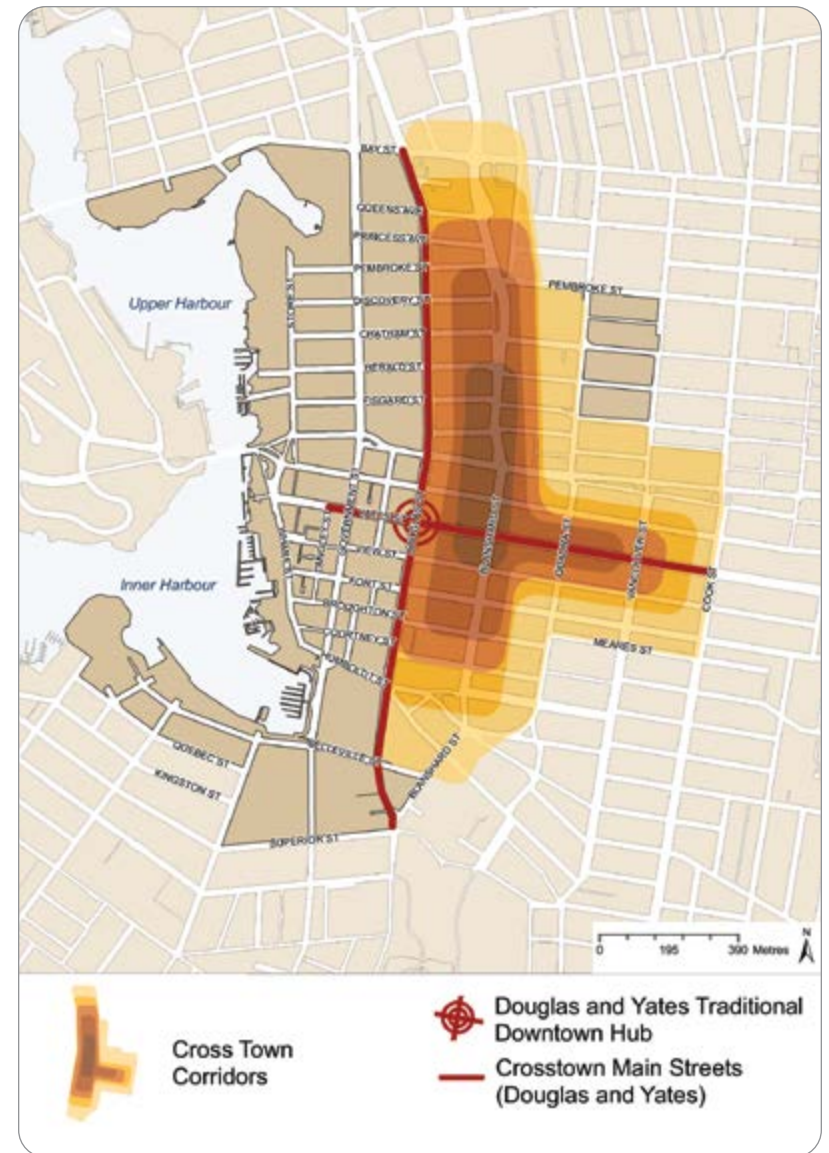


Urban design strategies can be used to create welcoming spaces and context sensitive buildings.

CROSS TOWN CONCEPT

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

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



Map 19: Cross Town Concept

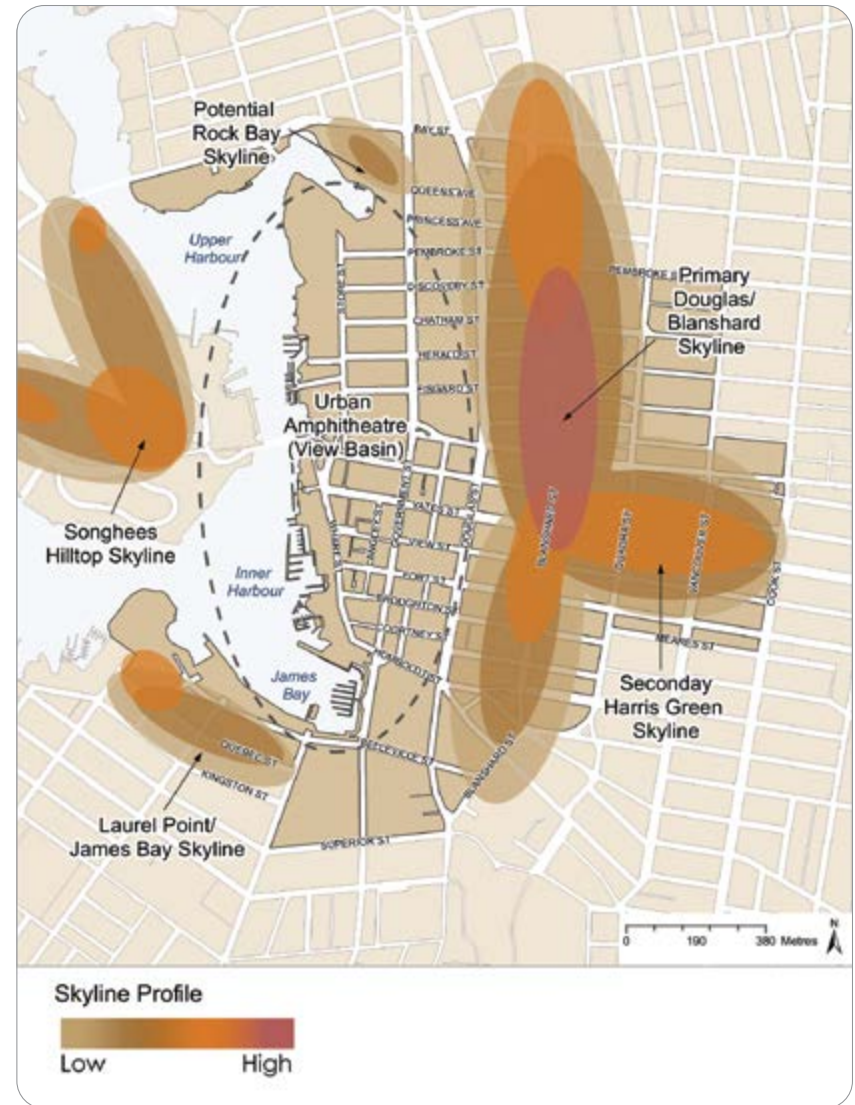
URBAN AMPHITHEATRE CONCEPT

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

(SEE MAP 20: URBAN AMPITHEATRE CONCEPT)

This Urban Amphitheatre shape:

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



Map 20: Urban Amphitheatre Concept

PUBLIC VIEW CORRIDORS – INTRODUCTION

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

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

The Downtown Core Area Plan identifies two distinct sets of key view corridors, both of which are based from specific public vantage points. The first set identifies views looking outwards from the Downtown Core Area (Public Outward Views), and the second set consists of distant panoramic views towards the Downtown Core Area (Public External Views). Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 describe each view corridor in greater detail including the specific location of the view corridor, a photograph of the view corridor and the identification of the portion of the view corridor or view elements that should be preserved or considered in relation to adjacent development.

VIEW CORRIDOR OBJECTIVES

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

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

PUBLIC OUTWARD VIEW – POLICIES

- 6.1. Conserve views of the character-defining elements as seen from the respective public vantage locations described in Appendix 1.
- 6.2. Evaluate development proposals that are located along or within the view corridors illustrated in Map 21 for consistency with the Outward View Guidelines contained in Appendix 1.
- 6.3. Encourage design and siting solutions with new developments that serve to frame and enhance view corridors.
- 6.4. Development proposals that are located along or within the view corridors illustrated in Map 21 may be required to submit 3-D digital form models and photographic renderings to further evaluate the potential impact of the proposed development within the context of the view corridor.
- 6.5. Review and update adjacent neighbourhood plans that are affected by Outward Views, to encourage the coordination of the Outward View policies and guidelines described in this Plan.
- 6.6. Consider the design and placement of streetscape improvements such as paving materials, street lighting, street furniture and landscaping in order to help enhance and frame view corridors.



Map 21: Outward Views

EXTERNAL VIEWS

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

EXTERNAL VIEW – POLICIES

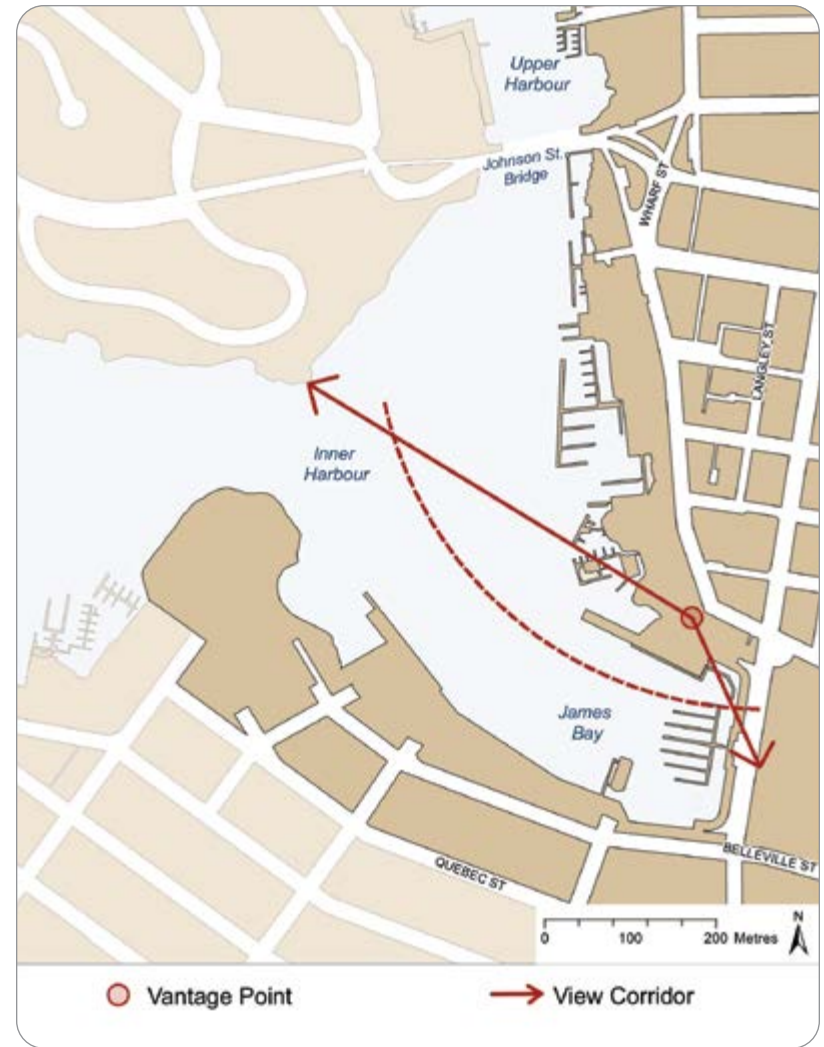
- 6.7. Evaluate development proposals that are located within the view corridors illustrated in Maps 22, 23 and 24 for consistency with the guidelines in Appendix 2.
- 6.8. Conserve views of the character-defining elements as seen from the respective public vantage locations described in Appendix 2.
- 6.9. Encourage design and siting of new developments that frame and enhance view corridors.
- 6.10. Ensure that new developments complement and respond to the surrounding context as defined by the topography, building spacing, building form, building height, roofline, massing, setbacks, orientation, facade rhythm, building materials and landscaping.
- 6.11. Ensure that additional design consideration is given to developments that are located directly adjacent to the waterfront to ensure that they complement and enhance the waterfront with sensitive and appropriate design solutions.
- 6.12. Encourage sensitive and appropriate illumination of building facades and architectural features in order to complement the night time views of the harbour without detracting from the lighting prominence of the Parliament Buildings and the Empress Hotel.
- 6.13. Consider the design and placement of streetscape improvements such as paving materials, street furniture, street lighting and landscaping in order to help enhance view corridors.
- 6.14. Protect views of the Empress Hotel, Parliament Buildings and CPR Steamship Terminal from the respective public vantage points as illustrated in Appendix 2.



Map 22: External View 1



Map 23: External View 2



Map 24: External View 3

SKYLINE EVOLUTION

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

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

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

SKYLINE POLICIES AND ACTIONS

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



Map 25: Downtown Skyline

TERMINATED VISTAS – INTRODUCTION

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

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

As the Downtown Core Area continues to evolve, these unique street conditions with terminated vistas should be emphasized where opportunities exist. The enhancement of terminated vistas must be considered on a case-by-case basis in conjunction with the surrounding context, and with the related Terminated Vista guidelines contained in Appendix 4 of this plan, which provide strategies and approaches for terminating and enhancing key vistas through buildings, landmarks or public realm improvements.



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

HERITAGE LANDMARK BUILDINGS

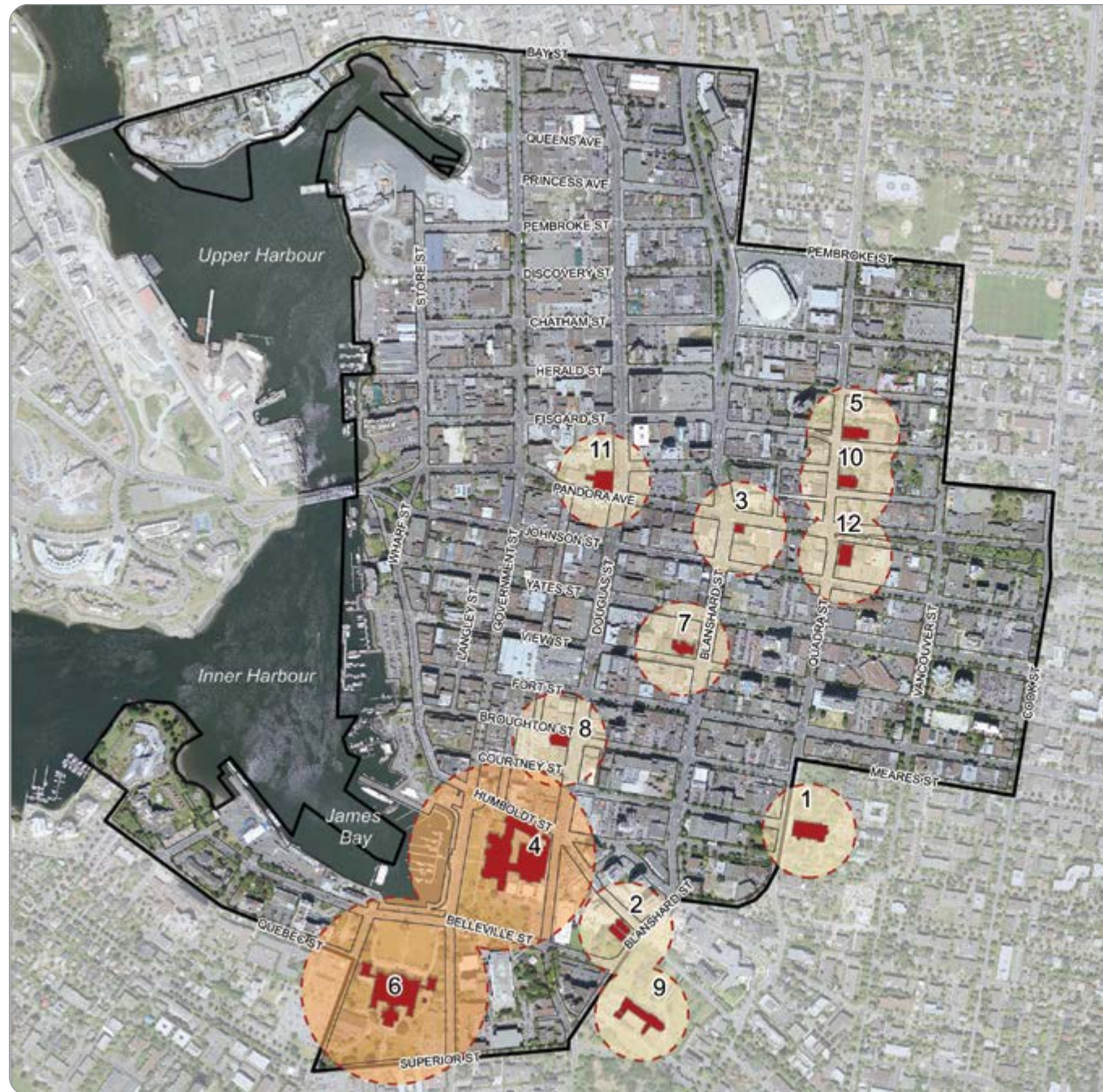
The Downtown Core Area includes a selection of visually significant heritage buildings that are generally recognized through Statements of Significance for their heritage values, architectural design, detail, scale and appearance which collectively, contribute to placemaking. These heritage buildings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

HERITAGE LANDMARK BUILDINGS POLICIES AND ACTIONS

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



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



MAP 26

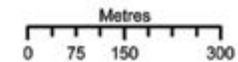
Heritage Landmark Buildings

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

Heritage Landmark

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

*protected heritage property



PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

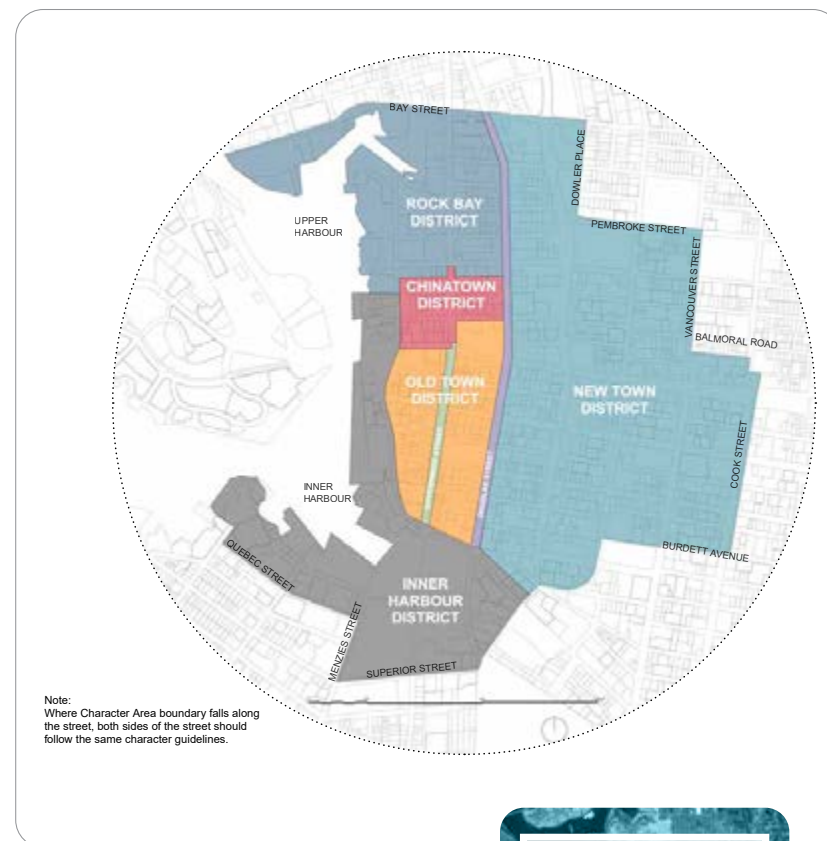
The public realm includes exterior spaces, linkages and the surrounding built form elements that are visually and physically accessible. Public realm components generally include parks and open spaces, plazas, streets, sidewalks, pathways, transportation hubs, gateways, waterfront areas, natural features,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

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

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

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

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



STREETSCAPE – OBJECTIVES

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

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

STREETSCAPE – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

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



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

PARKS, PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE

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

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

PARKS, PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE – OBJECTIVES

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

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

PARKS, PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

NEW PARKS, PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE

- 6.25. Enhance the Downtown Core Area with a system of parks, plazas and public open spaces as identified in Map 27, and described in this Plan.
- 6.26. Establish a new community park that is at least 2 hectares (5 acres) in size along the waterfront near Barclay Point that serves as a public amenity space for the various surrounding neighbourhoods and that includes a direct connection to the Harbour Pathway as identified in Map 27.
- 6.27. Establish two new neighbourhood parks, that are at least 0.5 hectares (1.2 acres) in size in the North Park neighbourhood and in the Harris Green neighbourhood as identified in Map 27.
- 6.28. Establish two new urban plazas as a component of private development that are generally 800 m² to 1200 m² in size to provide formal open space within the north end of Downtown along Douglas Street and within the Harris Green neighbourhood commercial centre as identified in Map 27.

LOCATION

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

CONNECTIVITY

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

WEATHER PROTECTION

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

DESIGN QUALITY

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

VISIBILITY AND ACCESS

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

SAFETY

- 6.43. Consider integrating the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles along with a range of other design elements to animate and improve the attractiveness, safety and usability all new parks, plazas and open spaces including:
 - 6.43.1. Entrances that are easily identifiable from the street level.
 - 6.43.2. Clear sightlines.
 - 6.43.3. Pedestrian-scale lighting.
 - 6.43.4. Adjacent active commercial uses.

6.43.5. Well-designed landscaping that serves to demarcate public and private areas and avoids obscuring sightlines.

6.43.6. Integration of signs and pedestrian network maps to provide orientation to key destinations for pedestrians.

ANIMATION

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

URBAN PLAZA ACQUISITION

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



Example of a well designed urban plaza.

MINOR PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

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

LOCATION

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

DESIGN

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



Example of a Minor Open Space integrated into the streetscape.

SAFETY

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

ACTIVITY

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

WATERFRONT PUBLIC OUTLOOKS

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

WATERFRONT OUTLOOKS POLICIES AND ACTIONS

LOCATION

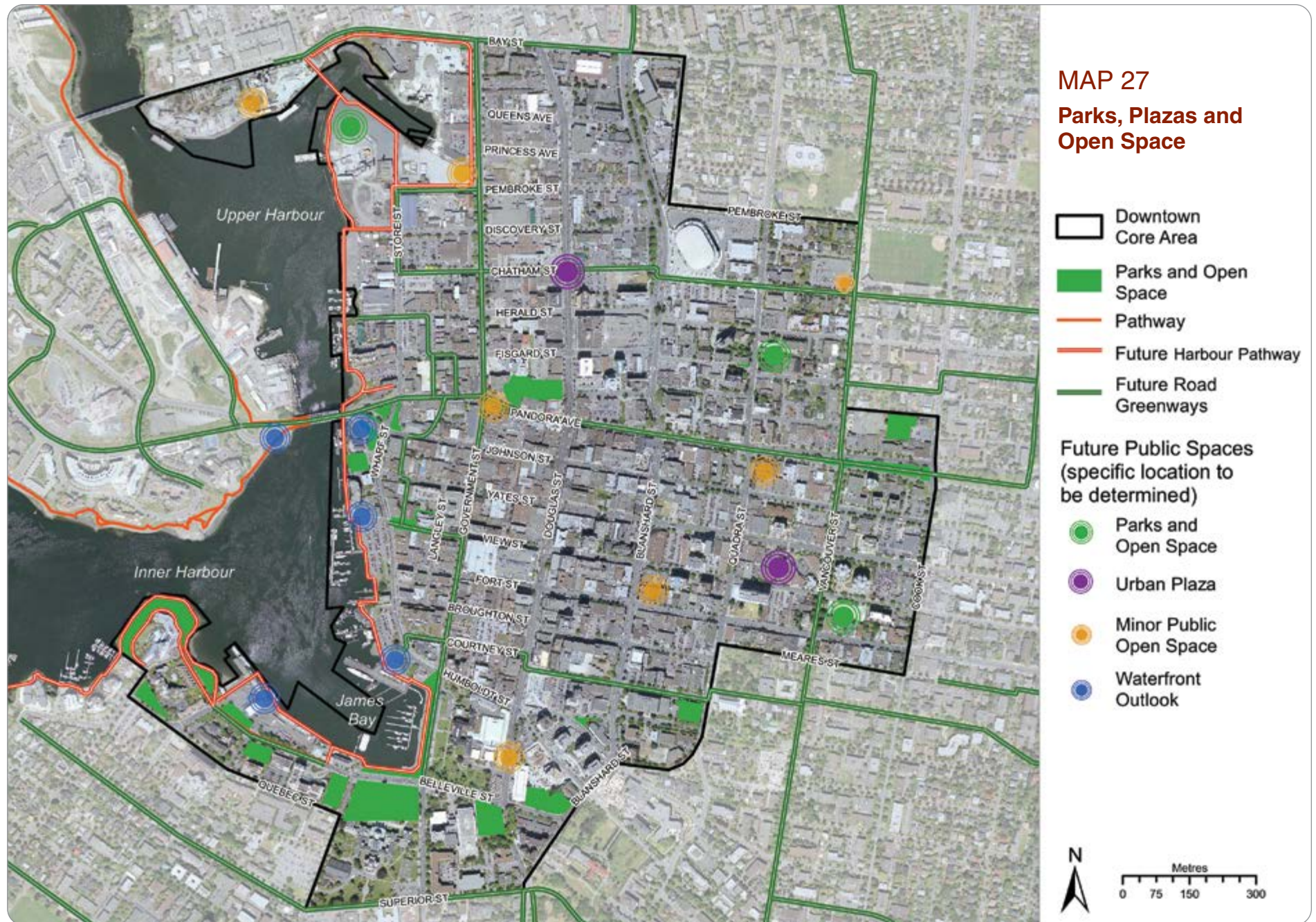
- 6.62. Incorporate publicly accessible Waterfront Public Outlooks, as components of redevelopment along the waterfront between Ship Point and Laurel Point as well as on the east and west side of the Johnson Street Bridge, and along the Harbour Pathway as illustrated in Map 27.

DESIGN

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



Examples above of publicly accessible waterfront outlooks.



SPECIAL URBAN DESIGN AREAS

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

INNER HARBOUR CAUSEWAY AREA

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

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



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

INNER HARBOUR – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

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



Aerial view of Inner Harbour area.



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



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

CENTENNIAL SQUARE

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

CENTENNIAL SQUARE – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

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

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



Centennial Square hosts year-round special events and festivals.



Conceptual illustration of potential improvements to Centennial Square.

BASTION SQUARE

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

BASTION SQUARE – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

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

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



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

PANDORA GREEN

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

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

PANDORA GREEN – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

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

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



Looking west along Pandora Green.

GOVERNMENT STREET MALL

In its current form, the Government Street Mall is generally defined as the portion of Government Street between Humboldt Street and Yates Street. This Plan identifies its future extension northward to Pembroke Street. Its location through the Old Town Area serves as the primary focus for retail and tourism-related activities as well as special events. The human-scaled buildings along with the streetscape design help to attract businesses and visitors along this area. In order to build upon the existing character of the Government Street Mall, the policies and actions described in this Plan support the northward extension of the Mall to the Rock Bay District through streetscape design, new development and supportive land use.

GOVERNMENT STREET MALL – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

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



Looking south along Government Street.

ROCK BAY

Rock Bay is the formal name that refers to the water body along the Upper Harbour near Barclay Point. In its current state, the lands adjacent to Rock Bay are in the midst of undergoing one of the most complex remediation projects in British Columbia. Rock Bay is identified in this Plan as a special urban design area due to its waterfront location, its proximity to the Rock Bay District which is identified as a major employment centre, as well as its role as a destination for the Harbour Pathway through a future waterfront community park.

The policies and actions in this Plan are intended to support the transformation of Rock Bay into an attractive employment centre that also supports residential opportunities, recreation, leisure and arts and culture.

ROCK BAY – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 6.117. Continue to identify opportunities to acquire waterfront land and develop a community park within the Rock Bay District through the direct purchase of land and through negotiation with private land owners.
- 6.118. Ensure that the community park is located and designed to provide direct connection and integration with the Harbour Pathway.
- 6.119. Design the community park to function as a public amenity for the surrounding communities as well as a city-wide destination due to its unique waterfront location and connection to the Harbour Pathway.
- 6.120. Develop a detailed public realm improvement plan for the Rock Bay District as part of the Rock Bay local area plan which addresses opportunities for:
 - Distinctive treatment of the waterfront area;
 - Sidewalk widening;
 - Distinctive paving materials; and
 - Human-scale public amenities and improved public access to the water; and
 - Integration of heritage industrial buildings as a component of enhancing the public realm and defining the local character.
 - Water access by marine-dependent businesses.

- 6.121. Design streets, sidewalks, plazas, parks and marine facilities to support and reflect the area's identity as an employment area.
- 6.122. New building design should integrate night lighting effects to enrich the visual presence of the Harbour.
- 6.123. Consider opportunities for providing additional public access to the waterfront, where appropriate, as part of new development along the Rock Bay waterfront area.



Aerial view of Rock Bay area.

GATEWAYS – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

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



Appropriately scaled public art can be used at gateway locations.



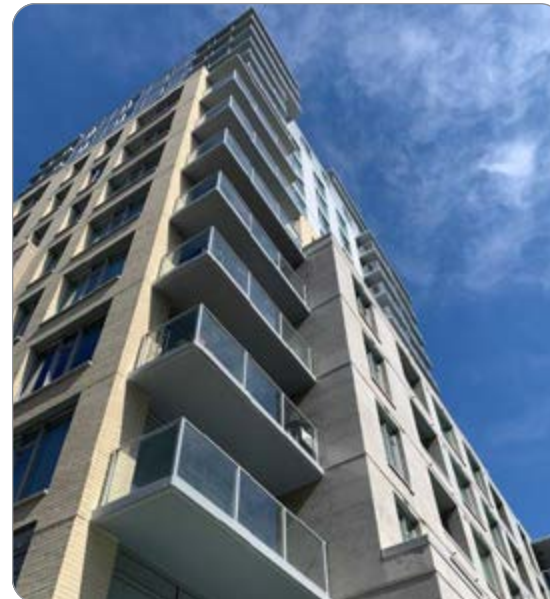
Map 28: Potential Gateway Locations

BUILT FORM

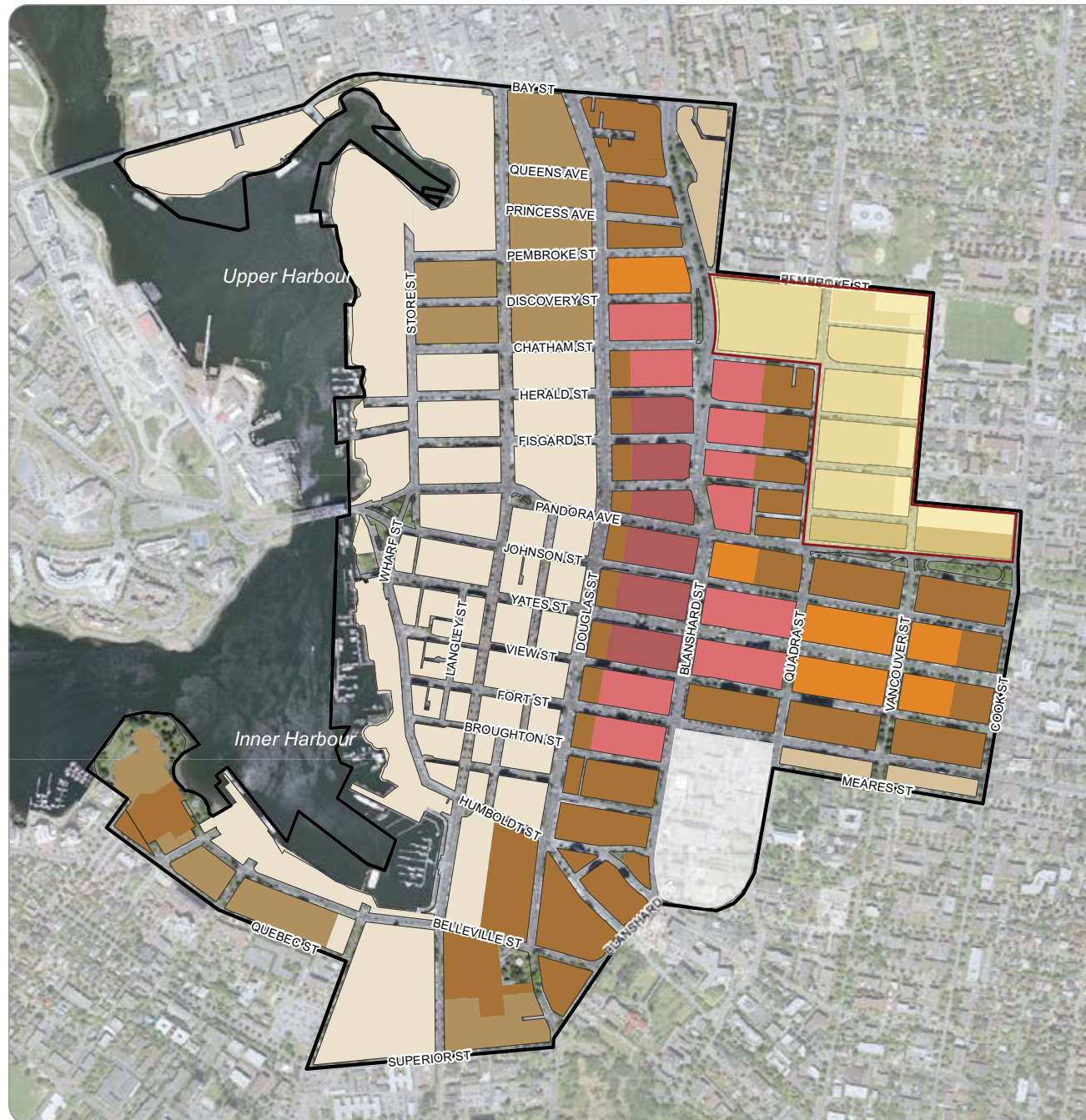
Built form refers to the physical shape, size, mass and design of individual buildings. It is important that the built form serves to complement the local context as well as provide a positive interface with the public realm and the space between individual buildings.

BUILDING HEIGHT – POLICIES AND ACTIONS

- 6.128. Review and amend the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw* to reflect the maximum building heights consistent with the maximum building height limits described in Map 29.
- 6.129. Consider the maximum building heights described in Map 29 in the evaluation of rezoning applications.
- 6.130. Maintain lower building heights within the Historic Commercial District as well as along the waterfront in order to reflect the local topography.
- 6.131. Locate taller buildings primarily within the geographic setting of the Central Business District.




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




UPDATED: MAY 9, 2012

MAP 29
Maximum Building Heights

Maximum Building Height	Approximate Number of Commerical Storeys	Approximate Number of Residential Storeys
72m	19	24
60m	15	20
50m	13	17
45m	11	15
30m	8	10
20m	5	6
15m	4	5

 See Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan (2019) for building height policies.

 See North Park Neighbourhood Plan (2022) for building height policies.

Note: Maximum building heights are subject to additional building design guidelines described in this Plan.

