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PARTICIPANT GUIDE

March 2016

DOWNTOWN COURTENAY Design Charrette

Dear Participant:

We are all excited about this Downtown Courtenay Design Charrette!

The goal of this Design Charrette is to develop design ideas for our great downtown.

The Downtown Design Charrette is the second step in our process that started in the fall of 2015 with the Courtenay Downtown Forum. Parts of the results of this forum were the development of draft downtown vision, goals, and strategies.

We invite you to comment on the vision, goals, and strategies as well as contribute your design ideas over the next four days.

Three events are available for you to participate; the first is the opportunity for the greatest input. All sessions will be held at the Native Sons Hall at 360 Cliffe Avenue adjacent to the Sid Williams Theatre in downtown Courtenay:

- 1. The Downtown Design Workshop will be held from 5:30 pm to 9:00 pm on Monday, March 7** (Small working group discussions);
- 2. The Community Drop-In will be held from 6:30 am to 8:30 pm on Tuesday, March 8** (Pop in to see the designers work in progress); and
- 3. The Community Design Ideas Presentation at 5:30 pm to 8:00 pm on March 10** (Community presentation).

Even if you cannot attend all of these events, you will be able to view the final presentation on our website and comment at: www.courtenay.ca/downtown. Please share this information with your networks.

On the following page, we have outlined a more detailed schedule and program of the design charrette over these days so that you know what will be planned for each of the community events. We look forward in your participation in shaping the future of Courtenay's greater downtown!

EVENT 1: The Downtown Design Workshop, from 5:30 pm to 9:00 pm on Monday, March 7:

5:30 Registration and Review of Materials

Task 1: Vision, Goals, and Strategies: Review the draft Downtown Vision, Goals, and Strategies and fill out the accompanying comment sheet. Take it home if you don't have time to complete it at the event or fill it out on-line at www.courtenay.ca/downtown

Task 2: Community Mapping: On the large map in the centre of the room, complete the following:

1. Place a **blue dot where you live**;
2. Then place **up to five green dots** on **places you like** in the downtown;
3. Then place **up to five red dots** on **places that can be improved**;
4. Finally, **one large yellow dot** that marks the **"Heart of Downtown."**

6:00 Introductions

6:30 Group Discussions (choice of six themes)

Registrants will choose *one of six themes* in the downtown design:

1. Downtown street grid improvements
2. Main meeting place in the downtown – Duncan Avenue "Commons"
3. Development site opportunities and program – various sites
4. Park and trail connections in the downtown
5. Riverland district development opportunity
6. Neighbourhood residential intensification around the downtown core

Answer the following questions, focused on your theme:

- i. Define three primary goals for the design theme;
- ii. Locate the most important area areas on the map that are critical to achieving the above goals;
- iii. Come up with design, programming and/or development ideas for the identified areas;
- iv. What implementation ideas do you have to help make this idea a reality? Are there funding options, partnerships or certain stakeholders who could lead this?

7:30 Group Presentation

9:00 Adjournment

EVENT 2: The Community Drop-In will be held from 6:30 am to 8:30 pm on Tuesday, March 8

- 6:30 Registration and Review of Materials (Vision and Community Mapping, and Initial Design Ideas)
- 7:00 Overview of progress and development of ideas
- 7:30 Individual review with design team and city staff
- 8:30 Adjournment

EVENT 3: The Community Design Ideas Presentation at 5:30 pm to 8:00 pm on Thursday, March 10.

- 5:30 Registration and Review of Materials (Vision and Community Mapping)
- 6:00 Presentation
- 7:00 Questions and Discussion
- 8:00 Adjournment

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YOU are invited to edit and comment on the following Vision, Goals and Strategies to improve your downtown!

The improvement of Downtown Courtenay is City Council's top priority identified in their Strategic Plan. Council specifically requested the development of a vision, goals and specific strategies as a framework to improve the Downtown.

The following pages contain preliminary draft vision and goals for Downtown Courtenay and are a result of the first phase of community engagement (fall 2015) that included a series of workshops, interviews, and public events. A range of strategies will be identified through other consultation opportunities to create a comprehensive and action-oriented plan. Stay tuned for future consultation opportunities!

Please review the attached following **Vision** and **Goals** and respond to the questions presented in the **Comment Sheet**.

Downtown Courtenay VISION STATEMENT

What would YOU add, remove or edit?

Downtown Courtenay is the diverse and vibrant heart of the City and the Comox Valley, connected to the surrounding ocean, rivers and mountains.

As the social and cultural heart of the greater Courtenay community, the downtown will be the centre of special events and gatherings. It will be inviting to both locals and visitors.

The downtown will be pedestrian and bicycle friendly with easy and safe ways of moving around, convenient parking, and access to transit.

The downtown will include a diversity of housing types and lifestyles for all ages, contributing to its vitality both during the day and the evenings.

Improvements will focus on the downtown core area but will also include the "greater" downtown area. Fostering further commercial and residential development will support the vibrancy and expansion of retail, commercial, residential, and institutional uses in the downtown core area.

VISION ELEMENTS

There are **3 key foundational Vision elements** that are important to its immediate and long term success:

1. More people in a Greater Downtown Area: Organized by character and functional Districts
2. A connected Downtown: Easy access and pedestrians first
3. A complete Downtown: Shop, live, work, play and learn

Each element is described in more detail below.

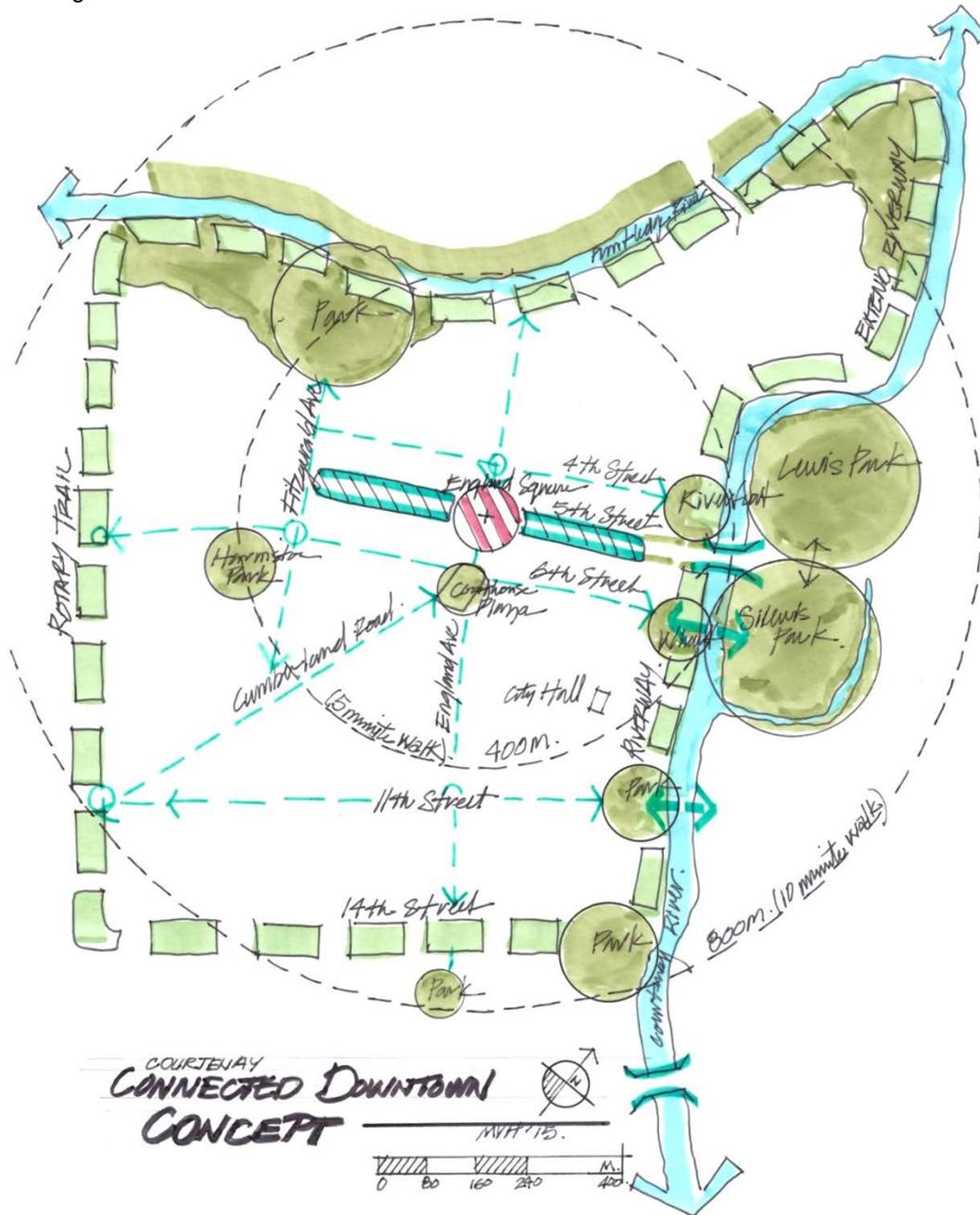
1. More people in a Greater Downtown Area, organized by character and functional Districts

More people in the downtown means more activity and more business. The “greater” downtown area is divided into seven districts to distinguish unique characteristics and compatible residential uses. These districts will be part of the “**Greater Downtown**” intensification strategy that may include apartments, townhouses, suites, and other types of lot infill units and lane housing where appropriate. This strategy also includes Lewis and Simms Parks and the riverfront lands as part of this greater vision for the downtown. The accompanying **Downtown Districts Concept** divides the “Greater” Downtown into seven character and land use districts as follows: Downtown Core, Downtown Gateway, Downtown West, Riverside/Old Orchard, Riverlands, Parklands, and Business/Light Industrial.



2. A Connected Downtown: Easy Access and Pedestrian First

A “pedestrian first” vision element is a core priority for a more walkable and accessible downtown with a unique look, feel and experience than other areas of the City. Coupled with this priority is a bicycle-friendly downtown to encourage more individuals and families to come downtown by bicycle. Free parking, easy access, and clear signage will further help a “park once and stay the whole day” strategy. The accompanying **Connected Downtown Concept** begins to connect the public open spaces, plazas, and parks together in an amenity network in and around the Downtown. Combining the potential of the Downtown Districts Plan and the Connected Downtown Concept, people will want to walk and bike and leave their car at home or possibly become “car-less”. Note that the plan illustrates the 5 minute (400 metre) and 10 minute (800 metre) walking distance from the downtown core area measured from the central area of England Avenue and 5th Street.

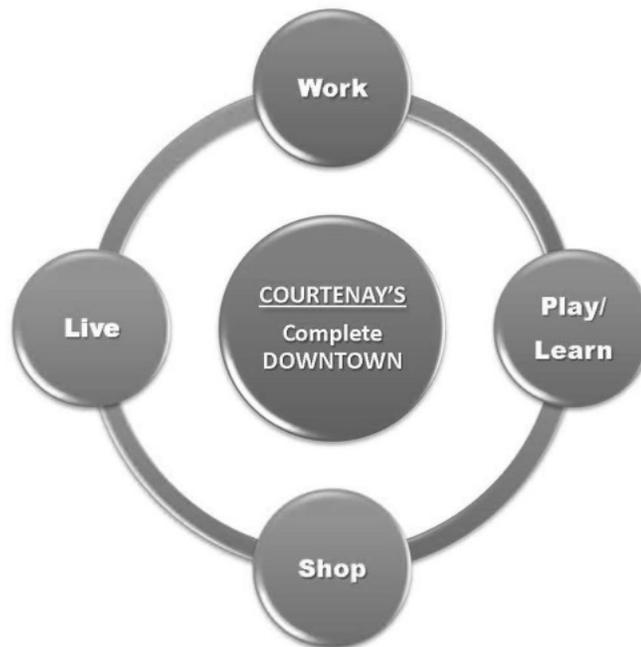


3. A Complete Downtown: Shop, Live, Work, Play, and Learn

The sum total of housing intensification, more and diverse commercial uses, civic and social institutions, in a “connected” and walkable downtown equals a “complete downtown”. Although there will remain some greater Courtenay and Comox Valley services that will be required outside of the downtown, residents will be able to live, work, play, learn, and shop within a five to ten minute walking distance of their home. The following ideas to make Courtenay’s Downtown more complete came partially from the 20 Downtown Health Action Tool Assessment (DHATA) indicators analysis and other discussions at the Forum workshops and resulting surveys in the fall of 2015. The gaps in the downtown may include:

1. Focal point or public “Heart” in the downtown;
2. Year round public market square;
3. Redevelopment of underutilized land parcels;
4. Residential intensification in and close to the downtown;
5. Connecting with the Courtenay River;
6. Active redevelopment of the riverfront especially adjoining downtown;
7. More outdoor cafes and pocket park areas;
8. Pedestrian bridge to parks east of the river;
9. Boutique hotel;
10. Public washrooms;
11. Public art program;
12. Downtown park with a playground for families;
13. Biking and walking trails to downtown;
14. Night market on 5th Street;
15. Street upgrades to include a bike lane;
16. Gateways to the downtown with a distinct local signature; and
17. Wayfinding program that clearly delineates public parking and points of interest.

The **Complete Downtown’s** social fabric is connected to the cultural, recreational, and business fabric not in dislocated places but in one place, as the accompanying diagram illustrates.



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The following goals and strategies reflect the Vision for Downtown Courtenay and are informed by what we heard from the previous consultation sessions. **You are invited to comment on the listed goals and strategies in the tables below! There is also space in the Comment Sheet on the final page of this package to make comments.**

Background: There are twenty core indicators that indicate a healthy and vibrant Downtown. In the previous consultation sessions, participants identified which of these twenty indicators are strong, where improvement is needed and where we are doing OK. This information, along with other consultation input, helps to inform the goals. Here is a summary of what participants had to say:

Downtown Courtenay is strong in:

- Public facilities and institutional indoor meeting places
- Arts, culture and activity programming
- Civic (facilities and programs) presence
- Meeting the needs of locals, while being attractive to tourists (e.g. not only a tourist town).
- Uniqueness and identity
- Parking

Downtown Courtenay needs improvement in:

- 'Heart' as in a clearly identifiable, central meeting place
- Wayfinding
- Landmarks and entrances
- Effective marketing
- Vacancy rates, sales per square foot of retail space, and extended retail hours

Downtown Courtenay is doing ok in:

- Sufficient outdoor meeting places
- Pedestrian activity
- Safety and accessibility for pedestrians
- Development and improvement incentives
- Building unity and continuous design elements
- Primary leadership organization capacity
- Coordinator capacity
- Collaborative partnerships

Identifying clear goals and strategies are especially important for Council and staff as they address the complexities of the Downtown's overall design and its various component parts. The list below is a beginning and can be expanded through the process. Please have your say!

The goals and strategies will be prioritized and resources identified with the community and Council at future consultation events.

Goals and Strategies related to: TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

GOAL 1: Easy to find and navigate: Improve wayfinding, entrances, orienting landmarks and signage at strategic locations in the Valley and within the Greater Downtown Area using a logical progression of 'signage disclosure'

Possible strategies include:

- a. Identify "Gateways" and core orienting landmarks.
- b. Develop "Gateway" signage and branding at gateways to downtown.
- c. Develop wayfinding plan with improved signage and technology for orientation and information.
- d. Explore use of different street sign character 'blades' to signal when entering the downtown.

Your comments:

GOAL 2: People oriented design: Create an all year round accessible, walkable, and bicycle friendly Greater Downtown area with connections within the Downtown Core and greater community

Possible strategies include:

- a. Develop plazas and outdoor public amenities to support outdoor use and social interaction in our mild climate.
- b. Improve the sidewalk connectivity and widths for pedestrians in both the core area and the identified gateway areas. Ensure they are accessible.
- c. Complete the Riverway loop in the downtown beyond 6th Street and connect the Riverway loop with the Railway Rotary Trail.
- d. Examine the multi-way routes and bicycle options on 4th and 6th Streets as part of the City's upcoming Cycling Network Plan. Establish connectivity to and through the downtown.
- e. Develop a detailed "Public Realm" Plan for Downtown which includes a clarity on the types of infrastructures for different types of public spaces (e.g. lighting, landscaping, seating, signage, public art).

Your comments:

GOAL 3: Effective traffic circulation: Improve vehicular circulation, transit, and parking in the Downtown

Possible strategies include:

- a. Complete the Complete Street project on upper 5th Street as a pilot project. Learn from the experience for future projects.
- b. Identify and develop a transit hub for buses in the Downtown Core area, with partner organizations.
- c. Provide adequate transit access and shelters in the Downtown. Identify where needed.
- d. Ensure parking is convenient, and well-signed to show parking areas beyond the main downtown streets.

Your comments:

GOAL 4: Nature and recreation as part of the Downtown: Improve connections to the parks across the Courtenay River

Possible strategies include:

- a. Continue to explore and support a pedestrian bridge crossing at 6th Street or elsewhere to the Parks across the Courtenay River.
- b. Highlight the recreational opportunities in the downtown branding, marking and signage. Highlight the downtown services in the recreational facilities.

Your comments:

Goals and Strategies related to: LAND USE, DESIGN AND ECONOMIC VITALITY

GOAL 5: More people living downtown: Increase housing throughout the Greater Downtown Area with higher density concentrated near the core

Possible strategies include:

- a. Identify infill possibilities to intensify residential land uses in the “Greater” Downtown areas.
- b. Develop incentive programs to promote infill development, including the City playing a role in potential partnership opportunities.
- c. Consider marketing efforts to promote the benefits of downtown, central living.

Your comments:

GOAL 6: More reasons to be Downtown: Encourage more mixed land uses where possible and appropriate. Ensure a well-rounded provision of shops and services, retain and expand office and professional uses as well as specialty retail and attract more restaurants, cafes, and services

Possible strategies include:

- a. Identify which uses are missing from the Downtown, which are in demand, to promote market investment of these uses.
- b. Use the ‘Downtown Districts’ concept to provide clarity of theme and servicing clusters for each area.
- c. Develop incentive programs to promote mixed use development.
- d. Consider a business retention and expansion strategy for Downtown Courtenay.
- e. Support BIA efforts in Downtown improvement initiatives.

- f. Market the Downtown further as “Courtenay’s Heart” or “the Heart of the Comox Valley” (develop fresh brand, logo if appropriate).

Your comments:

GOAL 7: High quality design: Maintain areas of high quality design, and identify areas for design improvements.

Possible strategies include:

- a. Review the existing Downtown Development Permit design guidelines to ensure that they meet the desired aesthetic for new private development in the Downtown.
- b. Establish public realm design guidelines to create a compatible and unified attractive image between public and private development.

Your comments:

Goals and Strategies related to: COMMUNITY IDENTITY, CULTURE AND CAPACITY

GOAL 8: A vibrant community ‘Heart’: Invest in the Downtown as the community “Heart” and cultural centre with physical spaces, activities and programs

Possible strategies include:

- a. Create a permanent gathering place in the Downtown Core – examine “Duncan Commons” proposal further as a possible project.
- b. Introduce a neighbourhood park in the core area and prioritize park improvements and connectivity in the core area, with an emphasis on the needs of young families, youth and seniors.
- c. Incorporate this branding into existing Comox Valley marketing initiatives.

Your comments:

GOAL 9: Honor our heritage: Vitalize the historic character and natural beauty of the Downtown Core area

Possible strategies include:

- a. Identify the buildings, blocks and districts for retention and conservation.
- b. Create policies to protect buildings and landscapes of historical significance.
- c. Identify partnership opportunities for working with existing heritage oriented groups (Museum, Art Gallery, Heritage Committee).
- d. Create an historic walk and tours that include key sites in the Downtown. Consider a free “shuttle” in the summer to tell the stories of the town and connect the Downtown

businesses.

Your comments:

GOAL 10: An accommodating place for celebrations and events: Expand and coordinate activities and festivals in the Downtown

Possible strategies include:

- a. Develop an “Events” streetscape on 5th Street that designs the street for closure and accommodates special events days and nights (e.g., Entertainment Setting for Street Theatre, a Night Market, and Summer Nights “Walk-In” Movies).
- b. Increase efficiency in the role of the City in supporting community event initiatives.
- c. Create central place for year-round Farmer’s Market Downtown.

Your comments:

GOAL 11: Effective leadership and sufficient capacity: Determine a partnership-oriented action framework to get the plan implemented

Possible strategies include:

- a. Explore partnership structure options for a cross-sectoral ‘team’ to steward the implementation of the plan.
- b. Ensure that coordination of programs occurs with emphasis on: CV Economic Development Employment Lands research to coordinate business and retention strategies; the Comox Valley Art Gallery ‘Cultural Asset Mapping’ initiative; and within City departments on streets, parks and other public realm projects.
- c. Develop a mechanism for allowing for on-going public and partner participation and collaboration in the monitoring and implementation of the plan.

Your comments:

Please remove this page and submit to City of Courtenay (at one of the events, in person at City Hall (830 Cliffe Ave), or scan to planning@courtenay.ca)

Downtown Courtenay Design Charrette

COMMENT SHEET

1. Thinking of the Vision Statement and the 3 Vision Elements, what would you add or delete from the VISION? (see Page 3)

2. What would you add or delete from the GOALS? (use this space to identify top priorities. Use the tables on the preceding pages to outline details).

3. What **STRATEGIES** do you think could work to achieve the **GOALS**? (again, use this space for top priorities. Use the tables on the preceding pages to outline details).

4. Other Comments?

For the City of Courtenay to keep you informed (Optional, and information will not be shared)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Thank you very much for your participation!