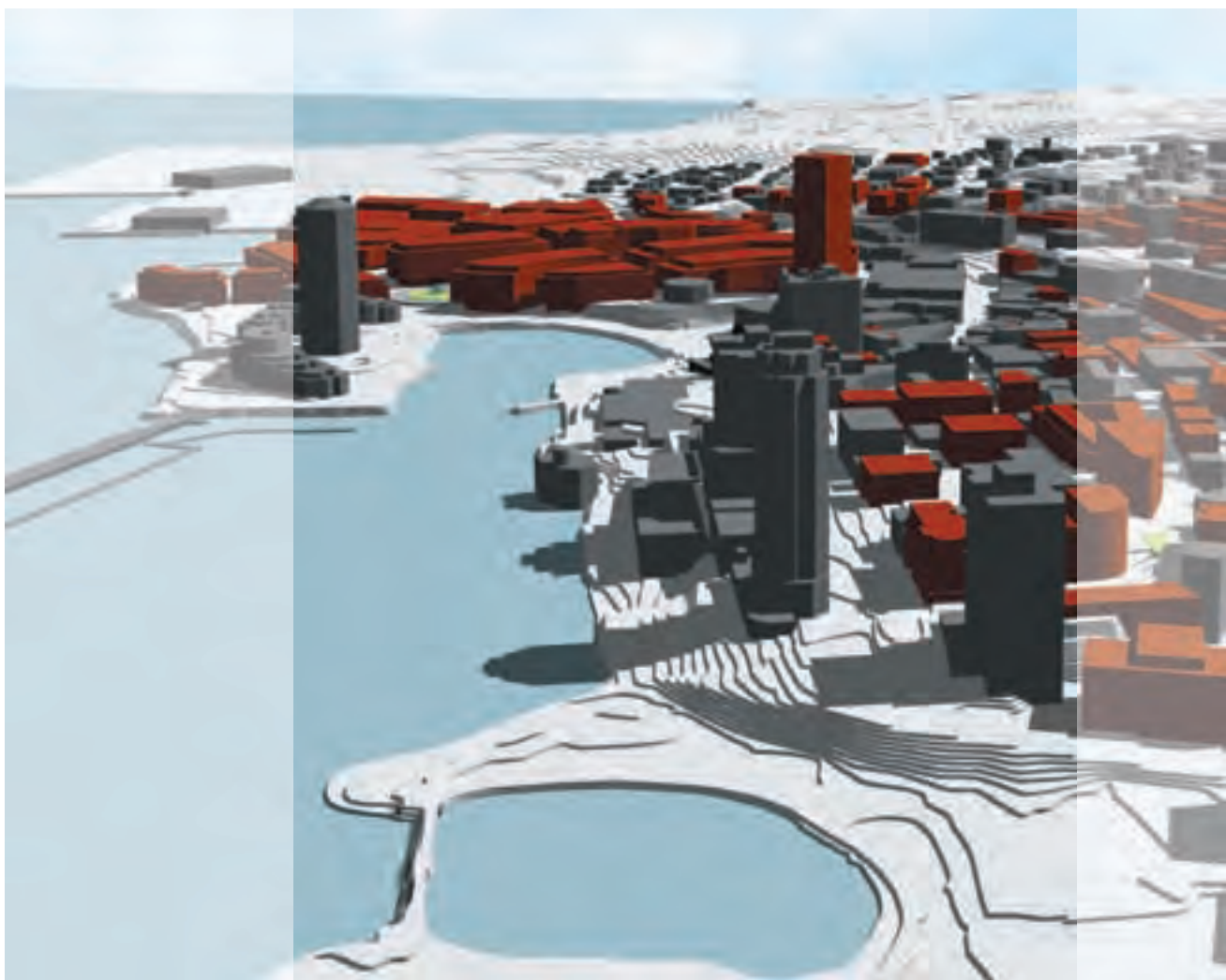




C I T Y O F N A N A I M O

DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN AND GUIDELINES

March 10, 2008



produced by D'Ambrosio architecture + urbanism and Citizen Plan in cooperation with the Nanaimo Planning Department

PRECINCTS / URBAN DESIGN PLAN STUDY AREAS



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FORWARD

“The urban renaissance will be stimulated by re-establishing the quality of urban design and architecture as part of our everyday urban culture, by establishing a new vision for urban regeneration founded on the principles of design excellence, social well-being and environmental responsibility within a viable economic legislative framework.”

Towards an Urban Renaissance - Urban Task Force of England & Wales

General

This document is intended to provide overall guidance for the high quality future redevelopment of private sites, public lands and urban infrastructure in downtown Nanaimo. It is not intended to be comprehensive with respect to all technical and design aspects of redevelopment. This plan is intended to provide conceptual continuity with existing guideline documents. Specific elements such as transportation networks and heritage buildings that will contribute to the positive redevelopment of Downtown Nanaimo are covered in other planning documents.

Character and Identity

The Urban Design Plan and Guidelines are predicated on the principle that the qualities and character of Nanaimo’s various precincts cannot be expected to be established solely through urban design. Authentic and enduring precincts tend to emerge from the outward expression and the patterns of use of the residents and users of the streets, spaces and buildings. The character of a place can be nurtured by allowing and supporting community initiatives and activities through civic assistance and support.

The role that urban design plays in establishing character areas lies in good detailed design that improves the setting for community activity. Urban design strategies that support a unique sense of place for the downtown, its neighbourhoods, its streets, or the façades of its buildings include the following:

1. The alignment of building front facades with each other along public rights-of-way and public open space.
2. The composition of building heights with consideration given to shadowing, view, landmarking and the location of one building relative to another.
3. The articulation of the ground or street-level of buildings to allow for access, visibility of internal activity, spilling out of activities, and appropriate pedestrian amenities such as weather protection, lighting and seating.
4. The adaptability of the ground floor to varied uses, over time, that are conducive to passive or active public interaction.
5. The provision and spatial definition of adequate types and sizes of public space with distinguished or unique expressions, including well-designed lighting, seating, landscaping and other amenities. Appropriate locations for these expressions include:
 - street intersections;
 - buildings at corners;
 - entrance locations of mid-block walkways and lanes; and
 - unique locations of particularly high or low topography.

Architectural Heritage

It is important to remember that the design of new buildings and spaces in a context of historic buildings and streets should respect but not necessarily imitate the architecture of previous times. The salient features described above (street alignment, corners, relative height, proportion and other architectural aspects) are discussed in the Urban Design Guidelines section of this document.

These guidelines promote the premise that, while giving careful consideration to legitimate historic architectural and urban design context, an original and contemporary expression is both desirable and necessary. Municipal authorities should encourage and support the development of unique regional cultural expression, giving contemporary city builders the same opportunity that allowed the much cherished historic buildings and neighbourhood

A number of documents have been produced by the City of Nanaimo that provide guidance and direction with respect to the restoration and redevelopment of existing heritage buildings, historic streetscapes, signage and numerous other urban elements of heritage value. Heritage buildings are important to Nanaimo's history and character. The Downtown Urban Design Plan supports the Nanaimo Heritage Building Design Guidelines with respect to refurbishing and redeveloping heritage buildings. That document is available through the City of Nanaimo and can be used in conjunction with this Downtown Urban Design Plan when considering heritage building restoration and redevelopment as well as heritage street redevelopment.

Zoning

Existing City of Nanaimo land use zoning includes some building heights, setbacks and other regulations that are different from those illustrated in the Downtown Urban Design Plan. Therefore, this document contains recommendations for possible variances to aspects of a number of existing zoning designations. In these cases consultation with the City's Planning Department will be required and dependent on demonstrating whether zoning variances result in improved architecture and urban design.

Illustrations

Images of possible future architecture and streetscapes are presented throughout this document. They are illustrative of design precedents, concepts and approaches and are not intended to be taken literally by users of this manual. The images are provided as examples of appropriate contemporary interpretations of the Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines. Street trees illustrated in this document are generic symbols to suggest generally recommended locations within the street ROW and are not intended to denote tree / plant type or exact location.

Photographs, drawings and other graphic material contained in this document vary in age and will become dated over time. The reader is reminded that field confirmation of these may be required prior to planning and design of projects.

Street Network

Transportation network plans and roadway engineering designs that have been adopted by the City of Nanaimo, or have been approved for implementation, may or may not be in agreement with those illustrated in this urban design plan. In areas where there is discrepancy between a roadway design illustrated in this plan and that of other documentation by the City, resolution must be sought from the appropriate department of the City of Nanaimo. Transit networks will have to be designed to adapt to any changes in the street rights-of-way initiated by this plan.

First Edition

This, the first edition of the Downtown Urban Design Plan, is intended as an adaptable 'living' document. It will be regularly reviewed and updated as downtown Nanaimo evolves and develops and new editions will be released.

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REPORT KEY - How to Use this Report

This report consists of an Urban Design Plan and a set of Design Guidelines. The Urban Design Plan builds on the history of Nanaimo's urban form. The urban design principles and objectives in this report are applied to the existing urban fabric (see Aerial Photo) to create the Urban Design Plan. This plan has divided Downtown Nanaimo into eleven study areas, approximating the City's identified precincts that were developed as part of the 2002 Downtown Nanaimo Plan. Two of the precincts have not been included in this plan, as they are identified as 'Future Study Areas'. The urban design for each study area (A through K) is illustrated with a two page spread, a sample of which is shown below with annotations. Terminal Avenue is presented separately as a development concept, due in part to the important role this corridor plays to the overall urban design of the Downtown. This report also includes a number of sub-plans: an Open Space Network; Street Design principles and strategies; and an analysis of downtown's View Corridors. The report concludes with a set of Urban Design Guidelines, Design Guidelines for Tall Buildings, and Examples of Submission Requirements for Development Permit and Rezoning Applications.

Description

Bounding streets of the area, with brief description including dominate characteristics, present state of urban design and current zoning.

Context Plan

A section of downtown, at 1:5000 scale, illustrating study area bounded by the red box. Precinct areas are labeled and in colour.

Urban Design Strategies

Recommended strategies for each area, identified by number on the plan below.

Urban Design Plan

Portion of the comprehensive Urban Design Plan (area of context plan in red box above). Black represents existing buildings, red represents future buildings.

Street Section Location

Photograph Location

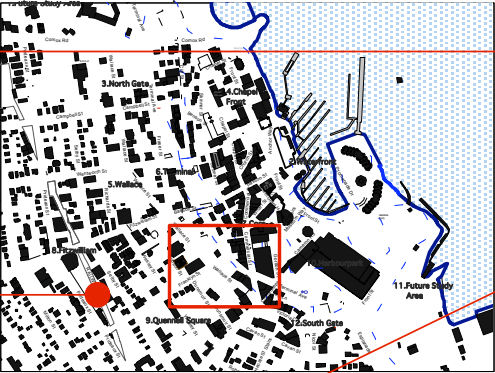
Urban Design Strategy

Important View

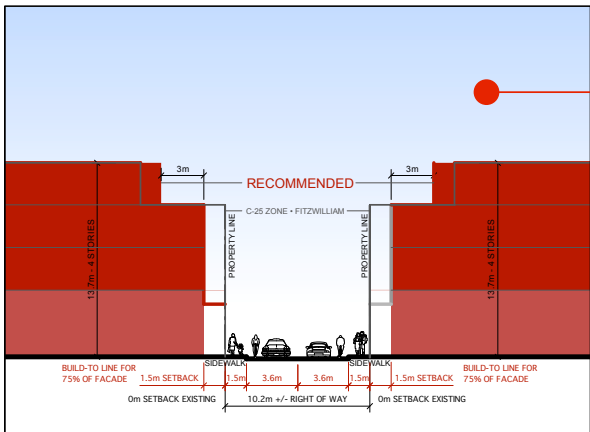
Aerial Photo

A portion of the overall aerial photo showing the relevant study area.

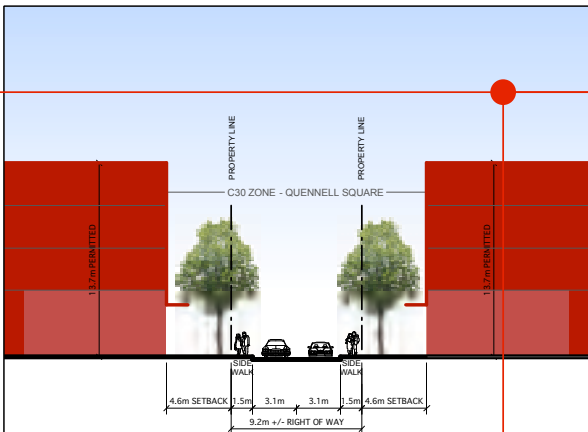
H. CITY HALL / CORE



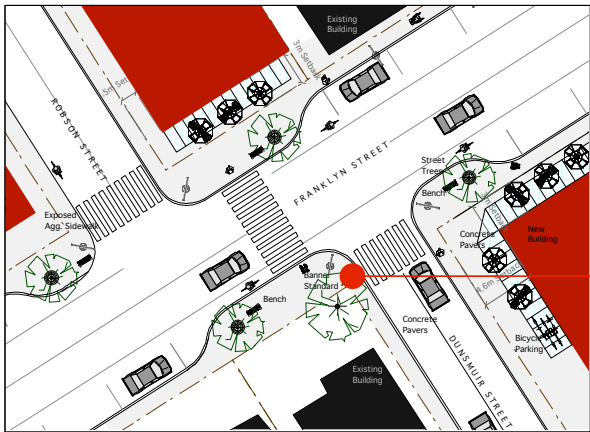
CONTEXT PLAN SCALE 1:16000



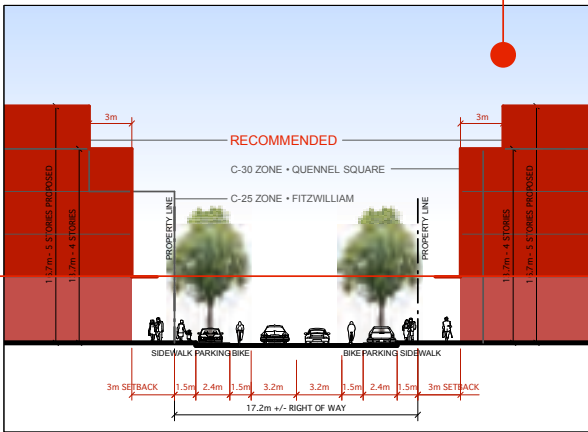
A-A ROBSON STREET SECTION SCALE 1:400



B-B DUNSMUIR STREET SECTION SCALE 1:400



CONCEPT PLAN SCALE 1:500



C-C FRANKLYN STREET SECTION SCALE 1:400

Street Sections

Key locations, as indicated on the Urban Design Plan, show an illustrated street section for the ROW*, with proposed design of sidewalks, on-street parking, bicycle and drive lanes as well as landscaped areas. Recommended massing (red) and existing zoning envelopes (grey outline) are illustrated. Light red colour indicates semi-private spaces (ie. retail).

*ROW = right-of-way - publicly owned land, width from front property line of one lot to front property of the lot directly across the street.

Detail Design Plan

A section of the Urban Design Plan at 1:500 scale illustrating street furniture, lighting, signage, landscaping and circulation for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.

URBAN DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR THIS STUDY AREA

The Core area has a unique meandering street pattern with narrow roads and narrow properties and an impressive stock of historic buildings. These buildings form continuous shop fronts and a human-scale street. New buildings should closely align their frontages to those of the existing buildings and even to the line of former historic buildings now demolished.

A key consideration includes architectural integration of awnings and canopies that extend over the public realm (1.5 metres minimum) to provide covered public sidewalks

HISTORY OF NANAIMO’S URBAN FORM



NANAIMO BASTION 1900’s Photo Credit: Nanaimo Community Archives

Historical Significance of Nanaimo’s Downtown Core

Downtown Nanaimo has a distinct character, based on special heritage values. The Downtown Core and the Fitzwilliam Street corridor hold the city’s most significant concentration of commercial and historic resources. These areas reflect the historical development patterns of the city’s growth and correspond to the earliest settled areas, centred on the harbour and the “Old City Neighbourhood”. More over, these areas reflect the prominent role played by the city’s early merchant community in the economic, political and social growth of both the City of Nanaimo and the emerging Province of British Columbia. The surviving building stock is a wonderful architectural legacy as well as a tangible link to Nanaimo’s early history.



Maps Credit: Nanaimo Community Archives



COMMERCIAL STREET 1940’s Photo Credit: Nanaimo Community Archives

The Downtown Core is historically significant because it contains the remnants of one of British Columbia’s earliest town plans. Developed in 1862 by the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company, the plan is based on a series of streets that radiate from a focal point in the Nanaimo Harbour and resembles a European city centre, complete with public squares, broad main streets and narrow side streets that result in a variety of block sizes and shapes. Of the eight green spaces shown on the original plan, five still remain. Although later infill projects, especially in areas previously under water, have altered the original plan configuration, it remains substantially intact.

The Downtown Core contains significant historical streetscapes including Commercial

Heritage Values

The Downtown Core speaks to Nanaimo’s historic role as British Columbia’s first modern industrial city. By the early 1850s, coal was being exported. Increasingly sophisticated transportation systems and mining methods were developed over the next decades. Concomitantly, the town’s population grew to meet the employment needs of the mining industry. By the turn of the 20th Century, Nanaimo was one of the province’s largest cities and its economy was still based almost entirely on coal mining. Although played out by the mid-20th century, Nanaimo’s mining industry left a legacy of technological innovation, labour controversy, and a transformed landscape.



DOWNTOWN 1940s

Photo Credit: Nanaimo Community Archives

The Downtown Core contains the largest concentration of historic buildings. Every historical period and use is represented in the building stock, ranging from the earliest pioneer settlement (e.g. Bastion), to the early and late Victorian eras (e.g. Johnston’s Hardware and the Earl Block respectively), to the Edwardian period (e.g. Hirst Block), to the modern era before and after the Second World War (e.g. Eagle’s Hall and City Hall respectively). Over time, this variety of architectural styles has been shaped into a coherent area of visual interest that, in essence, embodies the city’s history.



1891- Original Plan - Terminal is a tidal ravine.



1928 - Harbour infill & development extends



1997 - Lubbock Square eroded after 1960’s.





REPRESENTATIVE HERITAGE STYLES

Pioneer (pre-1880)

Bastion - 42
Nanaimo's oldest building, built between 1853-1855, is the only known remaining freestanding tower built by the Hudson's Bay Company. It is a unique example of a defence fortification built by a company that played a major role in Canadian history. The Bastion's unusual octagonal shape and high visibility from both land and sea make it Nanaimo's premier landmark.

Nanaimo Pioneer Bakery/Johnson's Hardware - 49
A very rare surviving example of the predominant form of commercial architecture in Nanaimo until the turn of the 20th century. Carpenter or owner built, these wood framed and clad, false-fronted boomtown buildings appear more substantial and provide a convenient area for signage.



Victorian (pre-1900)

Earl Block - 9
The only surviving example of the many Victorian Italianate style buildings that predominated this downtown intersection by the late 19th century. Built in 1888 this highly detailed brick building speaks to the mood of prosperity and possibility prevalent at the time.

Occidental Hotel - 33
A gateway building located at a prominent intersection, the building marks the western entrance to one of Nanaimo's oldest commercial areas. The angled corner entry mirrors the entry of the building directly across the street and creates a visual funnel, reinforcing the impression of entering a new and distinct space.





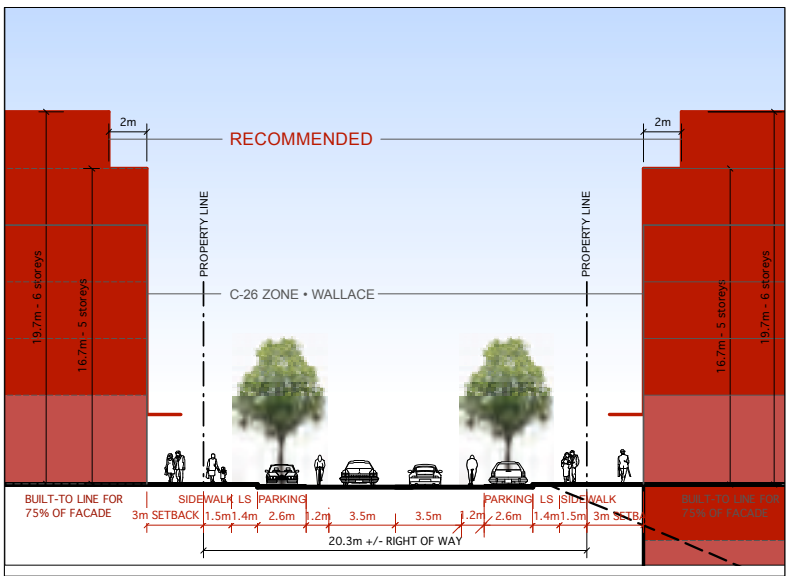
For redevelopment of heritage buildings please see the Nanaimo Heritage Building Design Guidelines. Additional information regarding heritage building conservation can be found in the "Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada" by Parks Canada.

SIGNIFICANT DOWNTOWN HERITAGE BUILDINGS

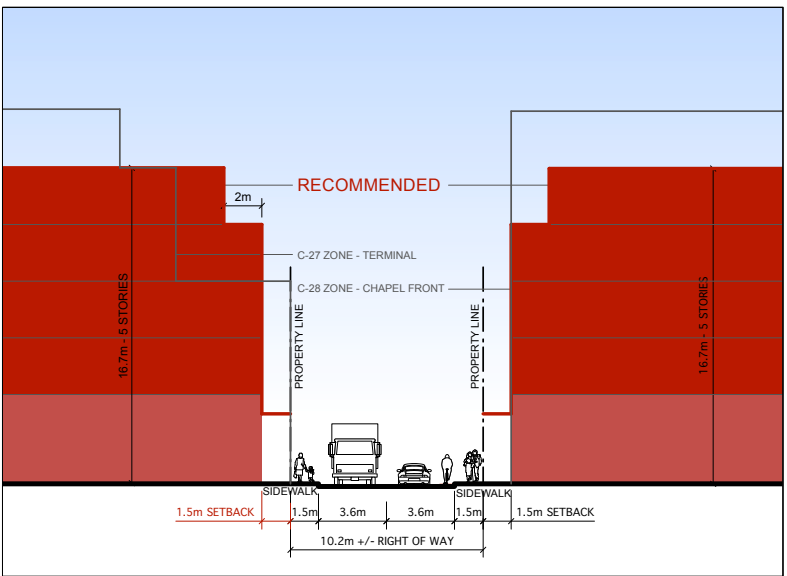
1. B.C. Telephone Exchange (70-76 Bastion Street)
2. Commercial Hotel (121 Bastion Street)
3. Eagle's Hall (133-141 Bastion Street)
4. Rowbottom Residence/Miner's Cottage (100 Cameron Road)
5. Provincial Liquor Store (25 Cavan Street)
6. Christian Science Society Building (20 Chapel Street)
7. Shaw Residence (41 Chapel Street)
8. St. Paul's Anglican Church and Hall (100 Chapel Street)
9. Earl Block/Grassick's (2-4 Church Street)
10. Great National Land Building (5-17 Church Street)
11. Jean Burns Building (6-10 Commercial Street)
12. Nanaimo-Duncan Utilities/B.C. Hydro Building (13 Commercial St)
13. Nash Hardware (19 Commercial Street)
14. Caldwell Block (35 Commercial Street)
15. Hall Block (37-45 Commercial Street)
16. Rogers Block (83-87 Commercial Street)
17. Hirst/Dakin Blockc (93-99 Commercial Street)
18. Ashlar Lodge/Masonic Temple (101 Commercial Street)
19. Gusola Block (120 Commercial Street)
20. Parkin Block (143-155 Commercial Street)
21. A.R. Johnston & Co. Grocers (172-174 Commercial Street)
22. Halse Block (200-206 Commercial Street)
23. Modern Café (221 Commercial Street)
24. Free Press Building (223 Commercial Street)
25. Ranger's Shoes (306-314 Fitzwilliam Street)
26. St. Andrew's United Church (315 Fitzwilliam Street)
27. S&W Apartments (403-409 Fitzwilliam Street)
28. Mitchell's Market (411 Fitzwilliam Street)
29. T&B Apartments (413-417 Fitzwilliam Street)
30. Zorkin Building/Adirim's Junk Store (418 Fitzwilliam Street)
31. Angell's Trading (426 Fitzwilliam Street)
32. Central Dairy (428 Fitzwilliam Street)
33. Occidental Hotel (432 Fitzwilliam Street)
34. Rawlinson & Glaholm Grocers (437 Fitzwilliam Street)
35. Vancouver Island Regional Library (580 Fitzwilliam Street)
36. Harris Residence (375 Franklyn Street)
37. Franklyn Street Gymnasium (421 Franklyn Street)
38. Globe Hotel (25 Front Street)
39. Tom Brown's Auto Body (28 Front Street)
40. Nan

OPEN SPACE

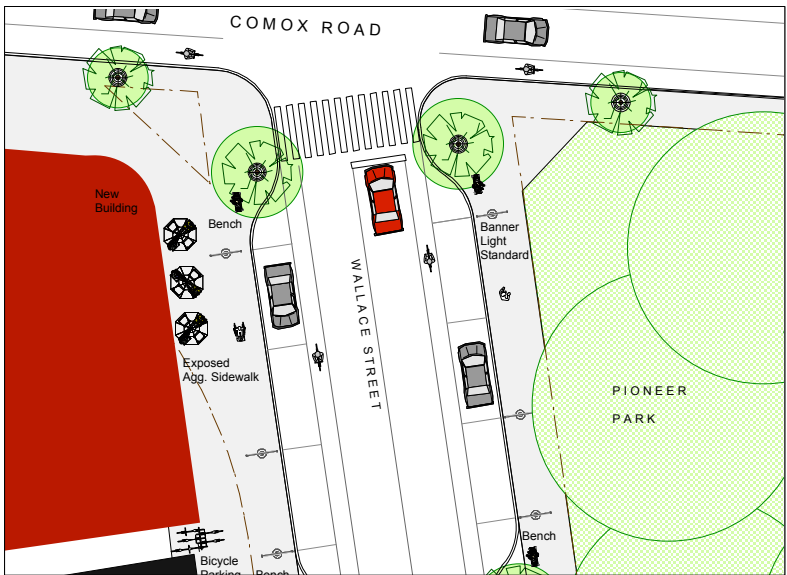




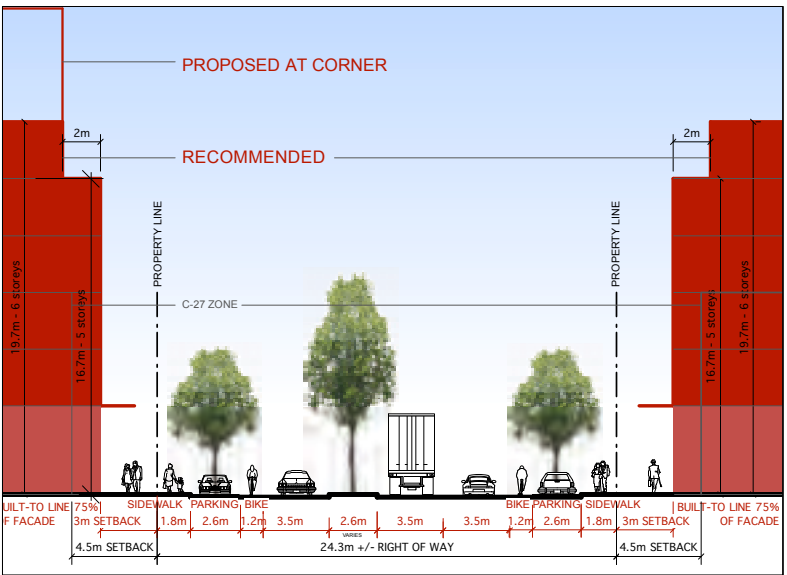
A-A WALLACE STREET SECTION SCALE 1:400



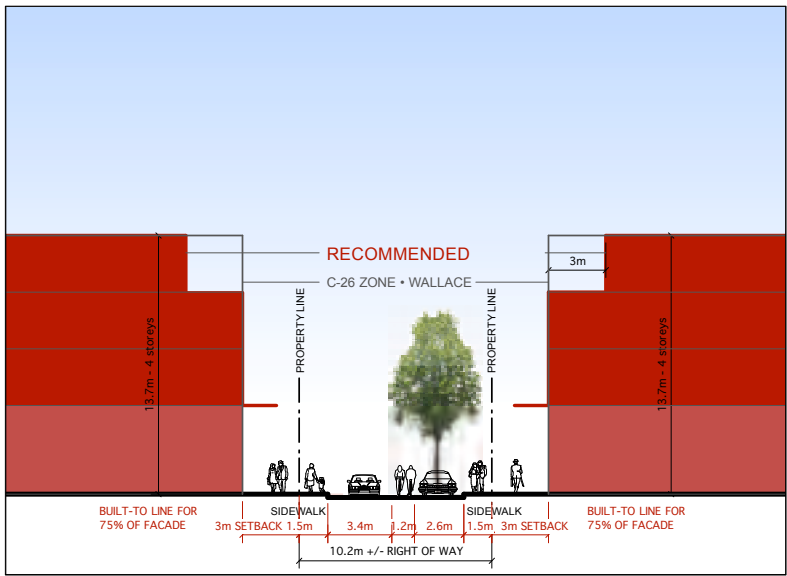
B-B CLIFF STREET SECTION SCALE 1:400



CONCEPT PLAN SCALE 1:500



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