

FRAMING THE FUTURE

Nanaimo South Downtown Waterfront TECHNICAL REPORT
December 2013



SOUTH DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT INITIATIVE COMMITTEE

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Consultant support provided by CitySpaces Consulting Ltd. 

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INTRODUCTION

The Nanaimo South Downtown Waterfront Initiative is a long-term, high-level consultation and visioning process for a 59-hectare (146 acres) study area along Nanaimo's South Downtown waterfront.



The area is bounded by the Snuneymuxw First Nation to the south, the Esplanade and Front Street to the west, and Cameron Island to the North, with the eastern boundary extending into Nanaimo Harbour.

Spanning a six-month process, the Initiative involved:

- Reviewing extensive background materials;
- Meeting and consulting with stakeholders;
- Conducting public input events; and
- Carrying out a Design Charrette.

This report summarizes the Initiative's process, undertaken from July to December 2013.

Together, this report and the accompanying *FRAMING THE FUTURE: Vision & Guiding Principles Report* solidify a shared vision and guiding principles to inform and shape future planning processes and decisions for this important waterfront asset.

◀ South Downtown Initiative Study Area



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SOUTH DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT INITIATIVE

The South Downtown Waterfront Initiative Study Area comprises a variety of industrial and commercial uses, as well as encumbrances, rights-of-way, multiple ownerships, and jurisdictions. Ownership of the area is represented by:

- The City of Nanaimo;
- The Nanaimo Port Authority;
- The Province of British Columbia;
- The Snuneymuxw First Nation*, and
- The Canadian Pacific Railway.

While the Initiative will not result in a regulatory document, it will provide *guiding principles* and an *overall vision* as resources for future planning processes. This resource aims to serve all jurisdictions and ownerships.

The *vision* and *guiding principles* take into account existing plans, including the City of Nanaimo's 2002 *Downtown Plan* and 2012 *Strategic Plan*, the 2008 Nanaimo Port Authority *Land Use Plan*, and the purchase agreement between the City and the Canadian Pacific Railway.

In April 2013, a variety of groups were invited to form the Committee leading this Initiative. These groups included Snuneymuxw First Nation, the Nanaimo Port Authority, the Downtown Nanaimo Business Improvement Association, the Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation, the South End Community Association, the Nanaimo Advisory Planning Committee, Vancouver Island University, the Regional District of Nanaimo, and two at-large community representatives.

The Committee was tasked with providing independent leadership and direction throughout the planning process, including identifying opportunities and constraints, conducting public engagement and consultation activities, liaising with stakeholders, and carrying out a design charrette.

An initial Committee task was to retain a consultant to assist with the Initiative's objectives. Following a competitive process, CitySpaces Consulting Ltd. was selected.

**Snuneymuxw First Nation decided not to participate in the Committee, but all minutes and agendas were forwarded to the First Nation.*



JUN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee formed; roles, scope & mandate determined • Relevant materials and plans reviewed • Presentations related to ownerships and tenancies, Downtown Plan, South End Neighbourhood Plan, and transportation (RDN) 	✓
JUL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications & Engagement Strategy confirmed • Presentation: transportation (City of Nanaimo) 	✓
AUG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking tour of the Study Area • Framing Principles workshop 	✓
SEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic & environmental situation workshop • Presentations: Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation, & Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development (Preparing for Climate Change) • Sea to land transportation workshop – presentations by Seaspan, Southern Rail, Island Corridor Foundation & Canadian Pacific Rail • Launch of website 	✓
OCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harbour Fair Event • Land to Land Transportation Workshop – presentations by Regional District of Nanaimo, BC Transit, City of Nanaimo, Ministry of Transportation/Infrastructure, Transport Canada 	✓
NOV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual external stakeholder meetings • Visioning report preparation • Public lecture: “Exploring Waterfront Development” – Larry Beasley, FCIP & Member of Order of Canada • Ideas Forum • Design Charrette 	✓
DEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visioning report review • Visioning report completed 	✓

BACKGROUND

The *vision* and *guiding principles* take into account existing plans, including the City of Nanaimo's 2002 *Downtown Plan* and 2012 *Strategic Plan*, the 2008 Nanaimo Port Authority *Land Use Plan*, and the purchase agreement with Canadian Pacific Rail. From June to December 2013, the South Downtown Waterfront Committee met bi-weekly to discuss and review the background materials. The following relevant plans and reports were part of that review:

- *South End Neighbourhood Plan*, 2010
- *Nanaimo Downtown Plan* (Reference Document), 2002
- *Nanaimo Port Authority Land Use Plan*, 2008
- *planNanaimo*, Official Community Plan, 2008
- *Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines*
- *Transportation Plan for the Assembly Wharf*

The City of Nanaimo provided speakers and resources to share this information. A summary of these meetings and reports, as they relate to the Study Area, are provided in the Appendix.

A *land ownership* briefing was also provided by the City to clarify the multiple jurisdictions, encumbrances, and activities on the site.

In addition to the background briefings, speakers representing certain stakeholders presented information at the bi-weekly meetings. To learn about the transportation context for the Study Area, speakers from the City of Nanaimo, the Regional District of Nanaimo, and BC Transit provided information about local and regional transportation planning. Other stakeholders included the Nanaimo Port Authority, who provided a presentation on its land use plans, restrictions, and current uses.

A socio-economic view of the site was provided by the Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation (NEDC), using its recent research on economic indicators for Nanaimo and the region.

The Island Corridor Foundation, and its operator, Southern Rail, shared information about future plans with Seaspan. These three stakeholders occupy the majority of lands owned by the City of Nanaimo, and are responsible for a large percentage of the industrial activity on the site.

At subsequent meetings, the Committee heard from the author of climate change preparation guide, created by the Province to assist in planning for climate change resiliency.

Lastly, the South End Community Association presented an overview of its *South End Neighbourhood Plan*.

HISTORY

Since time immemorial, the waterfront was an important area for the Snuneymuxw people. It was a key site for fishing, harvesting sea food, and celebrating cultural activities, as well as a meeting place for their people, and a place for cultural renewal.

The Douglas Treaty of 1854 established the relationship between the Snuneymuxw First Nation and Colonial authorities (later the Federal and Provincial governments), which includes the Study Area. *The Treaty was a reconciliation between the Crown and the Snuneymuxw – a key promise of which was Crown recognition and confirmation for Snuneymuxw to continue the dynamic society, culture, and economy, which they had developed over countless generations, on the lands and waters, which had always been their foundation (www.snuneymuxw.ca/nation/history/treaty-1854).*

Nanaimo Harbour has played a large role in the development of the city from the arrival of the first coal ships, to the ferries connecting with the mainland, and other island points. Three islands, Protection, Newcastle and Gabriola, protect the sheltered deep-sea harbour. Over the years, docking facilities were developed for freight and passenger ferries, leaving the community easy access for boating and sailing. In the early days it was not unusual to see sailing ships from around the Pacific waiting in the harbour to take on coal.

The rich coalfields of Nanaimo provided a resource that maintained the young Colony of Vancouver Island. Almost all the coal produced was destined for San Francisco; from fifty percent to seventy-five percent went to the United States.

In 1884, the status of Nanaimo's port was upgraded by an Order-in-Council. "Nanaimo, under the survey of the Collector of Customs at the Port of Victoria, was constituted an independent Port of Entry, from and after the first day of August 1884."

Ferries to the mainland, and other points on the island, have called into Nanaimo since the early days of development. The first was the HBC fleet that joined the Pioneer Line to form the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company. The Union Steamship Company started calling in 1890. The first ferry to carry cars was the Joan; she crossed the Strait of Georgia in 1907 with two cars lashed to her foredeck.

Little thought had been given to the ownership of Nanaimo Harbour, or land under the sea, until 1924, when the Province of British Columbia signed the *Six Harbours Agreement* with Canada, allocating only a portion to the federal government.

The harbour was Nanaimo's prize asset, although it was managed by the federal government. In 1935, City officials felt it was not being totally utilized; there was a need for a lumber loading wharf, as forestry had taken on new importance. Oil had replaced coal as the fuel of choice. Many mines had closed, so the building of the Dominion Assembly Wharf was of major importance. As expected, the wharf was a huge success, and before long it had to be enlarged to accommodate increased lumber exports.

In 1938, Mayor Victor Harrison lobbied the federal government about the opportunities for the city as a suitable place for the landing of air and seaplanes. He added that the city had waterfront property that would be suitable for water landings. This was the land on which the civic arena was eventually built. Before long the Second World War erupted, and soldiers began arriving by ferry to take up residence at Camp Nanaimo. The war years also renewed the city's shipbuilding industry with the contract to build minesweepers and supply vessels.

The CPR added a new face to the harbour when it built a new transportation terminal at Cameron Island to handle road, rail and water traffic, and the Vancouver Island Coach Lines service in 1949.

Management for the harbour rested with the Department of Transport in Ottawa until 1960, when permission was granted to form the Nanaimo Harbour Commission (NHC). Within a period of twelve years, a third berth to the assembly wharf and a warehouse had been added, and improvements completed to the commercial inlet basin. The Assembly Wharf got a new tenant in 1978, the Mayo Forest Products Ltd. sawmill.

The Seaplane Terminal opened on July 30, 1985, with docking space for up to twelve aircraft. Float planes had been servicing Nanaimo since 1965 when Air West Airlines began calling in on a regular basis. In 1973, the airline had ten direct flights between the city and Vancouver each day. The number of passenger seaplanes serving the Port of Nanaimo grew as the popularity of the downtown-to-downtown flight increased.

In 1988, the NHC purchased Cameron Island, the former Shell Oil property on Stewart Avenue with the intent to resell both for development, and see utilization of the adjacent water lots. In the fall of 1989, Bosa Development Corp unveiled the \$60-million project for a 22-storey condominium tower as the focal point for a European seaside-style project. Bosa had just purchased Cameron Island from the NHC.

In January 1981, there were five lumber mills within the harbour area processing their product through the port, plus MacMillan Bloedel's Harmac operation shipping lumber, wood chips and pulp over its own docks. Mayo Forest Products and Pacific Forest Products mills nearby added significantly to shipping. The Doman mill at Duke Point, in operation less than a year, was about to add another shift. Everything about the forest industry looked rosy, and that meant financial stability for the port.

A year later there was a downturn in the forest industry. Pulp shipments suffered from a very depressed market, and there were waterfront labour problems that included a long period of work slowdown plus a complete shutdown.

In December 1985 a \$2.8 million project was announced for Stewart Avenue on Newcastle Channel. The project was modeled on the style of Vancouver's Granville island market. Opening day was June 14, 1986.

On October 2, 1988 the NHC proudly opened the Harbourside Walkway; this final section permitted pedestrians to walk all the way from the downtown inner harbour to Brechin Point. Plans

unveiled in February 1992 to construct a waterfront plaza on the land and foreshore located between the Seaplane Terminal and the Commercial Inlet Basin in downtown Nanaimo. Completed a year later, on October 30, at a cost of \$6.6 million, the Pioneer Waterfront Plaza provided a public area and viewing platform overlooking the historic waterfront, with some commercial area, two levels of underground parking, and the existing walkway re-established as a pedestrian route along the water's edge. The City of Nanaimo provided the land and operated and maintained the plaza and public parking, while the lower parking area was operated and maintained by the NHC.

Today the Port on Nanaimo is the largest public cargo port on Vancouver Island. Lumber shipments to Asia have dropped significantly and the Port Authority is looking for ways to diversify and develop new opportunities.

Port Authority-owned and operated facilities include the 37-acre Assembly Wharf of storage areas, warehouses, a mill, a dry dock and three deep sea berths. The Authority also owns and operates the Pioneer Waterfront Plaza, which provides 170 parking spaces and contains popular retail outlets on the waterfront walkway. The top of the plaza provides more than one half acre of public open space that is also used for the firing of the Bastion gun¹.

"In 2008, the Port Authority received \$5 million from the Province of B.C., and the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET) provided an addition of \$3.5 million," says Dumas. "The Federal Government contributed \$8.5 million through the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund and the NPA added \$5 million from its reserves for a budget of \$22 million." Construction began in August 2010 on a floating dock, and construction of the terminal building was finished in record time – from May 2010 to May 2011."²

¹Excerpt from *Nanaimo Port Authority Land Use Plan 2008*.

²Excerpts from *A Place in Time: Nanaimo Chronicles* (Jan Peterson, Nanaimo Museum, 2008).

FRAMING PRINCIPLES

The Committee held an extended meeting in August to discuss *framing principles* for the Initiative. As a precursor to the eventual *guiding principles*, the *framing principles* were developed early in the process to provide guidance for public engagement activities. These principles were also meant to help explain some of the challenges and complexities of the site. At subsequent meetings, the principles were reviewed, and refined in response to stakeholder and public input.

The August session was graphically facilitated, and the resulting *framing principles* are presented at right.





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PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

“We’ve got an opportunity here, with the addition of this 25 acres that we’ll own and the other lands adjacent to it, to make them really exciting people places,” said Councillor Bill McKay. “I’d really like to see us include a conversation with...our stakeholders to really make this the jewel in our crown.”

Public engagement is critical to the success of the Initiative. The Committee recognizes that the enduring power of the *vision* and the *guiding principles* will come from the understanding, involvement, and support Nanaimo residents and businesses.

Initiative Website

In early September, the Committee created a website to share information, and encourage community input. The website has been continuously updated with Committee minutes, agendas and presentations, as well as links to reports and background materials.

Social media outlets were also used to raise awareness of the Initiative, and to help spread information. Use of Facebook® and Twitter® were key to actively engaging participation at community events, and provided a convenient way to report out on input received in timely manner.

Website Survey

Between September to December 2013, 47 responses were received through an online survey. Many of the themes generated from the survey were similar to those received at the Harbour Fair event (see following pages). Verbatim input from the survey is available in the Appendix.

SUPPORT FOR A WORKING HARBOUR

- Maintain a working harbour, but make it safe for public access and clean it up;
- Celebrate and emphasize the historical and current working aspects of the area in parks, public art; and architecture;
- Concentrate the industrial uses at the area’s south end.



SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC ACCESS AND ACTIVITY

- Improve public access with walkways, bike paths and green spaces;
- Support for an integrated transportation hub;
- Include active retail, such as cafés, restaurants, and a market – Granville Island was frequently referenced;
- Support for a fast ferry to Vancouver;
- Support for a boat launch and moorage opportunities.

SUPPORT FOR CULTURAL AND RESIDENTIAL USES

- Include museums and galleries, as a way to celebrate and recognize the heritage of the area, and importantly, First Nations history.
- Include residential as important to make everything else successful.

OPPOSITION TO:

- A multiplex in this area – 3 to 1 ratio against a multiplex;
- More parking in the area, as Downtown has a large supply of parking; and
- High-rise residential.

Harbour Fair

Despite cloudy, cool weather, more than 300 residents attended Harbour Fair (October 5, 2013). Attendees toured the area, learned about the existing activities, and shared their ideas for the site via a number of formats.

The feedback from the Fair's survey and engagement activities expressed common themes similar to those from the website survey. More detail is provided in the Appendix.

SUPPORT FOR A WORKING HARBOUR

- Maintain the area as a working harbour; and
- Clean-up the site, including removal of pallet storage.

SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC ACCESS AND ACTIVITY

- Add more green space, civic space, and public access to the waterfront;
- Include walking and cycling paths;
- Encourage commercial uses, including offices, shopping, cafés, coffee roasting, restaurants; and
- Support for an integrated transportation hub.

LITTLE OR LIMITED SUPPORT FOR:

- Building a multi-plex in this area.

“Exploring Waterfront Development”

Internationally respected urban planner, and former Co-Director of the City of Vancouver’s Planning Department, Larry Beasley, gave an engaging presentation to 200+ people at Shaw Auditorium on November 12, 2013. His talk was the first activity in a week-long series of public engagement events. Through a series of visual images and world-wide examples, Dr. Beasley aimed to broaden the audience’s perspective for envisioning the future of Nanaimo’s waterfront.

Dr. Beasley highlighted the need to focus on high quality planning and design to ensure context informed development programming, and to recognize that Nanaimo should craft a plan suited to its needs. He noted that the creation of a high quality waterfront site could attract investment, and demand for residential development.



Ideas Forum

On November 13, 2013, an Ideas Forum was attended by more than 80 people. Facilitated by Vancouver Island University, this event was held in a “world café” format, where tables were labeled with topic areas, and participants led discussions at each location, switching tables every 15 minutes.

The topic areas at the Ideas Forum were:

- Working Harbour;
- Boundaries and Edges;
- Residential;
- Parks and Open Spaces;
- Transportation and Connectivity;
- Economic Activities;
- Mix of Uses; and
- Wild Card – a conversation where participants could raise any topics not represented at the other tables.

A summary of the discussions held at each table is presented in the following pages. The notes taken from the Ideas Forum are included in the Appendix.

WORKING HARBOUR

The discussion around the *Working Harbour Table* centered on participants' understanding of the area, ideas around what a working harbour means, and the identification of issues and opportunities.

- Condensing industrial uses of the harbour together, so that larger areas could be developed;
- Having aspects of the working harbour move off site to more appropriate locations;
- Providing a working harbour that can adapt, and evolve with the economy toward new industrial uses, and perhaps lighter industrial activity;
- Considering the growing market in food production as an opportunity for food industrial uses;
- Maintaining the working harbour as a working harbour, as this was seen to be important for the economy, and also for Nanaimo's identity;
- Providing live-work opportunities, along with improved community access; and
- Minimizing the conflicts, and softening the physical relationships between public access and industrial activities.

BOUNDARIES AND EDGES

Themes arising from the discussion around this table included:

- The potential for towers to create a visual boundary to and through the site. A clear preference for low- to mid-rise buildings was expressed;
- A desire to see the site boundaries be more organic, with harbour activities spilling into town, and the town into the harbour;
- Parking lots and expanses of pavement were viewed as a boundary to access the area;
- The existing hard boundaries on site, and lack of access were viewed negatively; and
- A salient desire for access to the waterfront edge.

RESIDENTIAL

Having residential uses on site was seen as critical for making all other on-site uses successful. The most salient concepts under this heading were:

- Having residential uses invigorate this site and Downtown Nanaimo;
- Providing access for existing residential areas to the site;
- Finding an appropriate mix of residential and non-residential activities, so as not to compete with adjacent neighbourhoods as they undergo revitalization;
- Creating residential opportunities that meet residential wants;

- Supporting a variety of lifestyles and living choices;
- Providing residential, and complementary land uses, that support families; and
- Targeting an appropriate level of density.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Providing parks and open space was viewed as a way of gaining access to the harbour for the wider community. Some thematic topics from these discussions were:

- Utilizing the waterfront as a public park or greenspace;
- Introducing more trees, more green space, and soft landscaping to beautify the area;
- Providing well integrated, and contemporary design for parks and open spaces; and
- Capitalizing on the waterfront access this site can provide for the wider community, and Nanaimo as a whole.

TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

As land uses often follow transportation patterns, providing a full suite of transportation options was often discussed. This led into considering the area as a transportation hub for Nanaimo. The thematic outcomes included:

- Planning primarily for the pedestrian, and ensuring the site is walkable;
- Creating an integrated transportation hub that includes, and connects, to all other modes of transportation;

- Keeping vehicular traffic to the periphery of the site, and not have it travel through the middle of the area;
- Improving the connections to Downtown, and the South End neighbourhood; and
- Providing more than one access point into the area.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

A clear appreciation for the economic asset provided by the harbour was evident throughout the *Economic Activities'* discussions. Recognizing the need to accommodate the evolution of the site through flexible planning, themes generated included:

- Building on the opportunity provided by the cruise ship terminal;
- Providing for the high-tech and knowledge-based industries already in Nanaimo, and likely coming in the future;
- Providing active commercial space;
- Creating a green industry incubator;
- Moving away from heavy industry towards light industry;
- Enhancing and celebrating what already exists; and
- Creating a market.

MIX OF USES

The clear theme within the *Mix of Uses* discussion was to introduce a far greater mix on the site. The concept of a *complete community* captures the sentiment from this discussion:

- Ensuring the vision meets the needs of the very young to the very old;
- Adopting design guidelines to mandate a mix of uses;
- Targeting a vision to ensure the greatest mix of uses to accommodate the greatest diversity of groups;
- Creating a mix of uses that is flexible and adaptable to the future;
- Capturing the unique elements of Nanaimo in the mix; and
- Providing a mix of uses that sustain a vibrancy on the site, seven days a week, 16 hours a day.



WILD CARD

The *Wild Card* table provided an opportunity for participants to share ideas, and discuss topics not covered at the other tables. The themes that came from this discussion were:

- Utilizing and learning from the examples of Granville Island, Fremont (Seattle), and High Line (New York);
- Showcasing the new Nanaimo, and Nanaimo's uniqueness, character, and authenticity;
- Anticipating and planning for climate change/adaptation;
- Emphasizing the gateway aspect of the site, both as a gateway to Nanaimo, and to Vancouver Island; and
- Considering hotels, performance spaces, university uses, and other civic land uses.



Stakeholder Interviews

In addition to the other forms of public engagement, the consultants spoke individually with a number of external stakeholders. Overall, their feedback reflected a keen interest in the future of the area, and a willingness to engage in an ongoing dialogue. In no particular order, the responses from the stakeholders are set out below.

OWN OR LEASE LAND IN THE AREA

- **BC Ferries** is committed to the operation of its ferry service between Nanaimo and Gabriola Island, and has no plans to relocate the Nanaimo terminal.
- **Southern Rail** is examining the viability of a passenger rail service between Victoria and Courtney. The company is also looking to expand its trans-loading facilities, and would like to do this within the study area.
- The **Island Corridor Foundation** is promoting passenger rail, and also has a mandate to extend the trail network alongside its corridor.
- **Seaspan** is looking to move its rubber tire and trucking operation to Duke Point in the near future. Representatives also emphasized that the rail barge connected to the existing tracks is the only rail connection to the mainland, and that Seaspan intends to continue using this connection for the foreseeable future.

OTHER INTERESTED STAKEHOLDERS

- The **Nanaimo Estuary Management Plan Committee** emphasized the importance of the estuary, and wanted to see a vision that is a best case example of coexistence among industry, environmental protection, residential, and commercial lands.
- **Western Forest Products (WFP)** wants to use the Initiative to coincide with its long-term plans. WFP also emphasized the need for understanding, consideration, and dialogue when it comes to industrial and residential land use mixes. Additionally, WFP highlighted the increased resources required to manage the dialogue, and to address concerns with industrial/residential land use mixes. WFP is eager to reintroduce itself as a member of the community, as well as to again provide opportunities for the community to get to know what the company does. WFP also expressed some caution with regard to bringing more mixed uses closer to, and onto the site.
- The **Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce** was supportive of the planning and visioning process, and committed to seeking out synergies between the outcomes of the Initiative, and its plans and work in the community.

- **First Capital Reality (Port Place Mall)** shared its plans for the future of its land holdings, and is interested to see the outcomes of the Initiative, and to look for shared opportunities.
- The **Protection Island Neighbourhood Association** listed three areas of interest for the Initiative. These were, firstly, to consider guaranteed water access at the study area for Nanaimo's only island neighbourhood. Next, Protection Islanders were looking for opportunities for economic and social participation on the study area. Lastly, parking and bicycle storage infrastructure was an important addition to the vision.



- The **Gabriola Island Community** expressed concerns about the idea of relocating the ferry terminal, including:
 - The cultural/community impact of splitting ferry traffic, which is an important venue for community connection;
 - The extra fuel, mileage and time to drive from either Duke Point, or Departure Bay, compared to the central downtown location;
 - The lack of nearby amenities at other locations;
 - The loss of Gabriola Island resident and tourist business to Downtown Nanaimo;
 - The complications to ferry scheduling, especially if it there were mix of private and BC Ferries' systems; and
 - Historic connections between Downtown Nanaimo and Gabriola Island.

Further study might document if there are demonstrable benefits to Gabriola Islanders in terms of increased ferry service and/or decreased costs.

4

DESIGN CHARRETTE

A design charrette was held November 14 to 16, 2013, involving 34 participants, who were divided into four groups to prepare independent visions. The Committee Chair facilitated the charrette, with the assistance of two design/planning firms, Golder Associates Ltd. and CitySpaces Consulting Ltd.

In addition to the Committee's members, 10 community residents were chosen to participate in the charrette. They were selected through a website application process, and subsequent review by the two Committee community members, assisted by a highly regarded Nanaimo citizen. Representatives from Canadian Pacific Railway, Island Ferry Services Ltd., First Capital Realty, and Seaspan also participated. A list of charrette participants and facilitators is provided in the Appendix.

The charrette resulted in four distinct visions for the study area, each anticipating various future development scenarios. For each of the visions, phasing opportunities were also generated, as well as a detailed plan, elaborating on one of the visions.

Context

An in-depth presentation on the charrette's first evening provided a review of the planning context, ownership and rights-of-way, stakeholder plans, climate change implications, and socio-economic conditions. Following this, the charrette facilitators led each group through a review of the physical context of the site.

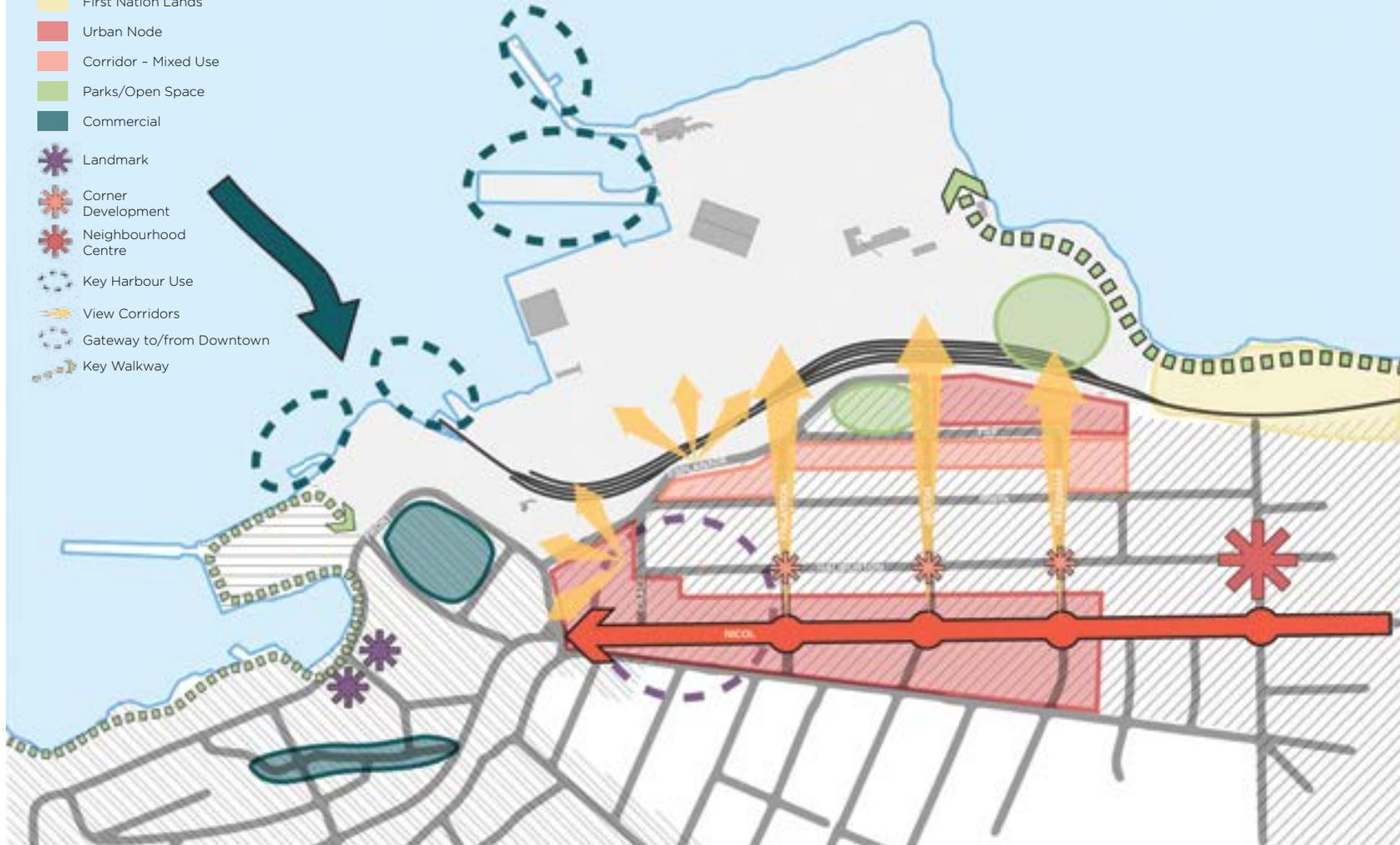
Key elements of the physical context review included:

- Adjacent transportation network/patterns (roads, paths, waterways, docks, etc.);
- Adjacent land uses;
- View corridors;
- Topography; and
- Building sizes.



DESIGN CHARRETTE CONTEXT

- First Nation Lands
- Urban Node
- Corridor - Mixed Use
- Parks/Open Space
- Commercial
- Landmark
- Corner Development
- Neighbourhood Centre
- Key Harbour Use
- View Corridors
- Gateway to/from Downtown
- Key Walkway



Program

Existing site uses, future plans of current site ownership, and public input received all provided the majority of programmatic elements under consideration. Each group wrestled with this diverse program to arrive at their alternative visions. The key programmatic elements were:

- Site access (walkways, roads, harbours, docks)
- Green space/public space
- Integrated transportation hub
- Train tracks
- Existing land uses
- Additional land uses, including residential, commercial, light industrial, and community
- Fast ferry (a late addition)
- Multi-plex
- Parking
- Gabriola Island ferry
- Seaplanes

Charrette participants were provided with scaled game pieces for many of the programmatic elements to play with and place on the site maps. The resulting visions included some, if not all, of the programmatic elements, but how the elements were implemented among the visions varied.



VISION 1

This view illustrated a long term vision, with the majority of the study area built out. The working harbour area was reduced to the area around the existing active docks, with industry focused in the north, and recreation focused in the south. A shift toward knowledge-based industries, as well as light industrial, and research and development comprised the definition of *working harbour*. Parks, open-spaces, and greenways were provided throughout, and residential uses were introduced.

This vision provided a number of guiding principles, including creating a resilient, flexible family-friendly vision. An intent of Vision 1 was to enhance the existing Downtown, and not compete with it. Cultural, social, economic, and environmental connections were important, and so was providing marine and shoreline ecological restoration through a *Green Shores* approach¹.

¹ *The Green Shores approach aims to minimize impacts of planned developments, and to restore coastal ecosystem functions, while recognizing the natural features and functions of coastal ecosystems.*

VISION 1

LEGEND

- Working Harbour
- R & D/Clean Industrial
- Knowledge/Institution
- Live/Work
- Active/Neighbourhood Commercial
- Transportation
- Residential
- Parks & Open Space
- Community Use



- LAND USE**
- Key marine industrial - "active harbour"
 - Residential - mid-high, 2-4 stories
 - Market - public marina focus
 - Parks & Open Space - multi-purpose
 - "Active" commercial - cafes, pubs, restaurants
 - Live/Work
 - Affordable housing
 - Office, tech
 - Knowledge-based industry
 - "Complete" community
 - Family services/daycare

- WATER USE**
- Transportation of people and goods
 - Marine industrial - north
 - Recreational water use - south
 - Ecological restoration - seagrass

- MOBILITY PROGRAMME**
- Bus transit - local & intercity
 - Fast ferries
 - Cycling, pedestrian
 - Multi-modal hubs
 - First zones
 - Gabriola ferries
 - Car sharing/rental
 - Industrial traffic
 - Water taxi
 - Barge traffic

- GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**
- Waterfront walkways/green shores
 - Waste water/town water management
 - LEED® development, green roofs/walls
 - Community gardens/food gardens
 - Energy - solar/wind
 - Shading - urban forestry
 - Attaining "green" benchmark of future
 - Eco-marine recreation
 - "Best of the best"

VISION 2

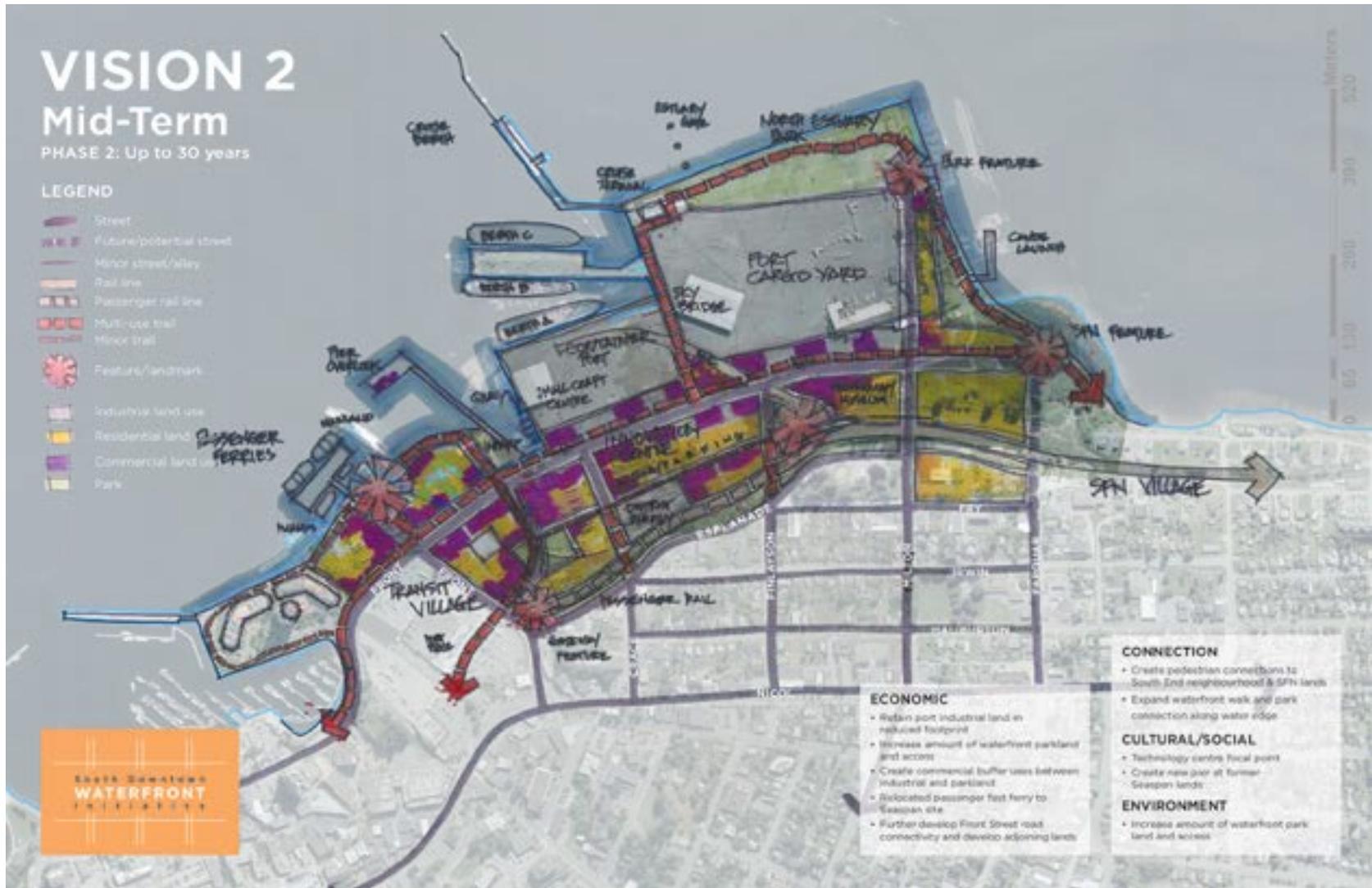
The second vision provided a phased approach from short to long-term, with 15, 30, and 40-year time frames.

The short- and mid-term vision layouts were largely similar, but land uses shifted from a temporary parking and industrial focus in the short-term to introducing more mixed uses in the mid-term.

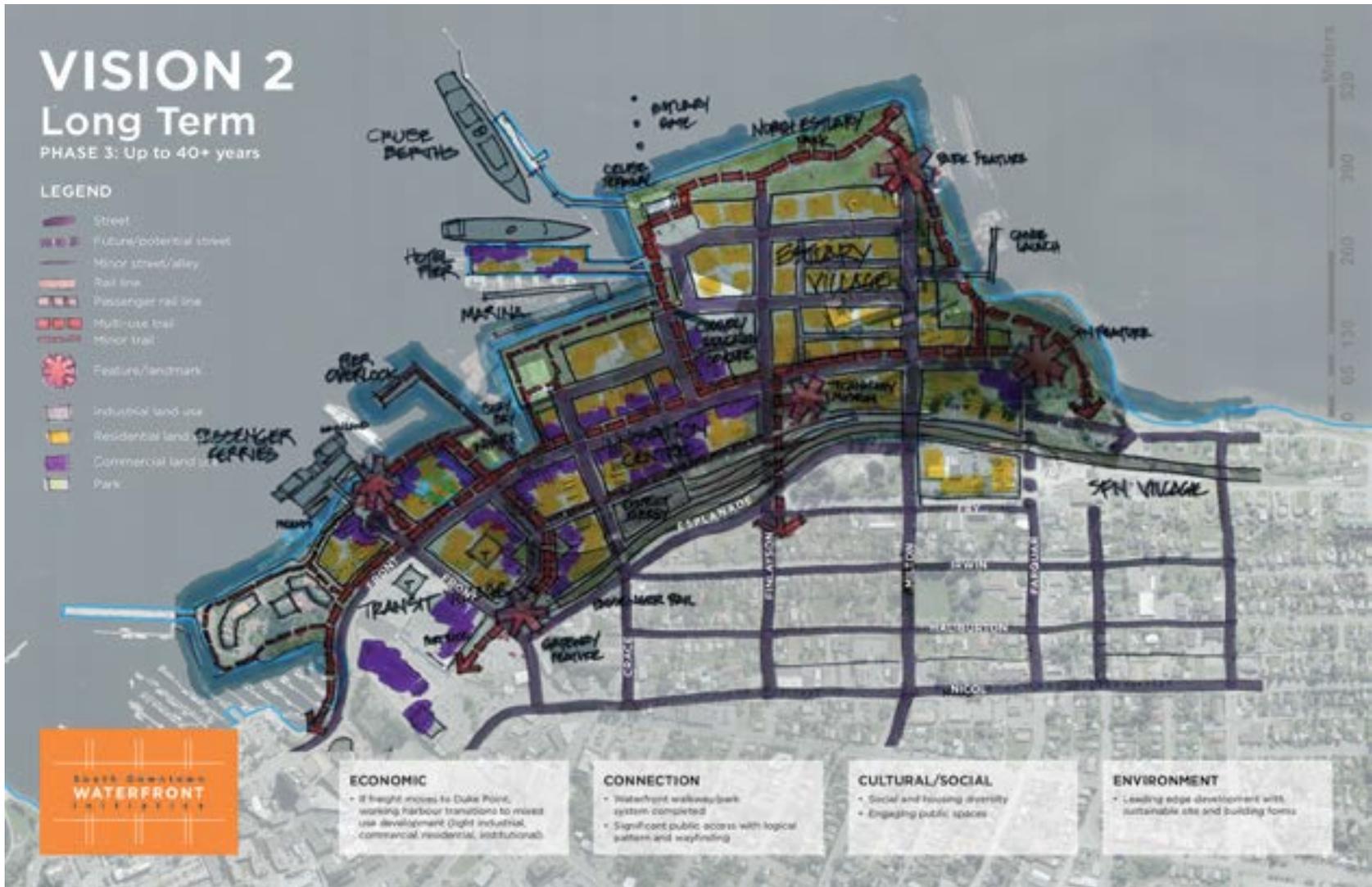
The long-term vision showed the site built out, the road and path networks completed, the majority of existing working harbour uses relocated off-site, and a shift to a mixed use (light industrial, commercial, residential, institutional) development. Notably in this vision, the harbour between the existing Seaspan Ferry and the northern boundary of the NPA land was filled to enlarge the land area available for development.



PHASE 1: Up to 15 years



PHASE 2: Up to 30 years



PHASE 3: Up to 40 years

VISION 3

The third vision provided a two-phased approach. The short-term vision maintained a large portion of the existing working harbour activities. However, the southern half of the Port Authority lands saw marine-based, industrial activities introduced. The short term vision assumed BC Ferries relocated its vehicle service off-site, but retained the passenger service. The other key element for this vision was the redevelopment of the trestle bridge.

The long-term vision fully developed out the site. A transition from the current working harbour activities to more light industrial and technology-based was envisioned.

VISION 3 Long-Term

LEGEND

-  Commercial
-  Mixed Use
-  Residential
-  Tech/light industrial
-  Social/cultural
-  Park/open space
-  Greenway connections
-  Views
-  Lands to be transferred



ASSUMPTIONS

- Passenger rail excursion
- Deep sea/containers to Duke Point, heavy port activities removed
- Western Forest Products relocated
- BC Ferry vehicular traffic to Duke Point, foot traffic remains at harbour
- Focus harbour on transportation modal hub

ECONOMIC

- Working harbour, high-tech zone, infrastructure

CONNECTION

- Industrial/light industrial/commercial

ENVIRONMENT

- Brownfield - green
- Depends on phasing & development

CULTURAL

- Waterfront access is satisfied
- Multiple social/cultural options





VISION 4

The fourth vision provided a long-term vision, as well as a detailed land use plan at 1:500 scale. The focus of this vision was to maintain the majority of existing working harbour functions, while at the same time, introducing greater public, commercial, light-industrial, and knowledge-based land uses. The new land uses focused on utilizing areas out of the Port Authority's jurisdiction, and the 1:500 plan demonstrated the potential of the area under City ownership.

While this vision did introduce residential land uses, there was a clear focus on commercial, economic, and public land uses. Here, the intent was to differentiate land uses from Downtown – to provide complementary land uses, and not to compete with the potential of the South End Neighbourhood for rejuvenation. The definition of the *complete community* in this vision extended beyond the study area boundaries to include Downtown and the South End Neighbourhood.

VISION 4

LEGEND

- Live/work
- Industrial/commercial
- High density residential
- Social/cultural
- Greenway
- Retail/commercial
- Technology centre
- Community centre
- Landmark



- ### BIG MOVES
- Improved truck access to the south
 - Extended road network and relocated rail access
 - Access to cruise ship terminal
 - Relocated railway
 - Relocated Gabriola ferry terminal

- ### CONNECTIVITY
- Extend the waterfront walkway
 - Provide a new waterfront recreational greenbelt
 - Complete the road network grid
 - Integrate the transit hub with multi-modal transportation options
- ### ENVIRONMENT
- Provide habitat creation/restoration along the southern edge
 - Provide a greenway network
 - Accommodate advanced storm water management into site features
 - Provide enhanced active transportation network

- ### ECONOMIC
- Support existing port functions
 - Improve development potential
 - Concentrated uses to increase land value
 - Provide complementary adjacent uses
- ### SOCIAL/CULTURAL
- Maintain and celebrate "blue collar" identity
 - Involve SFN to celebrate First Nations culture
 - Provide public space, pathways and green space
 - Increase public amenities and provide a community centre

SOUTH DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT INITIATIVE



5

OUTCOMES

Each vision responded differently to the programmatic and contextual parameters of the Study Area. Depending on what decisions are taken in the future, and in what order, the variety of visions provide a set of cohesive plans to guide development. Similarly, aspects of each vision can be combined with other visions to proactively respond to any number of future scenarios.

Some groups provided a phased approach to achieving longer term visions, while other's long term visions resembled aspects of these phases. In every case, the visions can respond and provide a plan for different future eventualities.

This section summarizes the commonalities between the visions, and provides an overview of the themes developed from the charrette.

Common aspects amongst the visions include:

- How site access was achieved from a multi-modal perspective;
- How each vision dealt with existing site uses;
- Where and how open spaces were provided;
- What types of uses were introduced; and
- How certain key programmatic elements were handled (multi-plex, transit hub, and ferries).



Site Access

ROADS

The following images illustrate how each vision, and the phases within each vision, planned for road access to the site. Extending Front Street through the Study Area was consistent in all visions. Similarly, each vision identified more than one access in and out of the site.

The road patterns typically extended the existing city block grid structure into the site. The extent to which the roads entered the site depended on phasing, and the amount of existing working harbour area maintained in each vision.

The early phases from Visions 2 and 3 are similar to Vision 4, and an assumed first phase for Vision 1 would also be congruent.

Each vision either provided in graphic format, or in text, a full spectrum of transportation options that included:

- Bus transit - local & inter-city
- Fast passenger ferry
- Cycling and pedestrian infrastructure
- Gabriola Island ferry
- Car sharing/rental
- Industrial traffic provisions
- Water taxi
- Industrial wharves
- Cruise ship docking
- Passenger rail
- Public boat launch/landing



**VISION 2
Short-Term**



**VISION 2
Long-Term**



**VISION 3
Long-Term**



VISION 4



Exceptions to the suite of mobility options provided in each vision were provisions for seaplanes in Visions 1 and 3 (long-term). Likewise, industrial rail was only provided for in Vision 4, and in the short/mid-term in Visions 2 and 3. The other exception for mobility options was the provision for a Gabriola Island vehicle ferry in Vision 1. All other visions shifted the vehicle connection to Gabriola Island off-site, and provided for a passenger connection only.

PATHS

All visions identified a major public walkway along the waterfront, extending the seawall walkway that currently ends at Cameron Island. The extent of this envisioned walkway differed depending on the area of existing working harbour maintained in each vision. Visions 1 and 4, as well as short-term Visions 2 and 3 all identified the walkway along the entire water frontage, with the exception of the area around the assembly wharves, known as piers A,B, and C, and the cruise ship wharf.

Long-term Visions 2 and 3 identified the walkway along the entire water frontage. Smaller internal walkways were also identified, with pedestrian connections throughout, and each vision utilized the Front Street extension through the site as an additional key walkway. Vision 1 also provided a wide greenway along the existing rail corridor.



VISION 2
Short-Term



VISION 2
Long-Term



VISION 3
Long-Term



VISION 4



TRUCK ROUTES

All visions anticipated truck traffic entering and exiting the Study Area from different locations. Vision 1 utilized the existing route, via an access point onto Front Street from the Seaspan property, and directed traffic onto Nicol from there. Vision 2 saw the main truck route via Milton from a proposed future road connection. Vision 3 utilized Finlayson, and Vision 4 used Farquhar. The intent of Visions 2, 3, and 4 was clearly to move heavy truck traffic away from the site connection to Downtown. However, this results in traffic running into the South End Neighbourhood, which is contradictory to the South End Neighbourhood Plan. *(Note: The Committee agreed and noted in the subsequent Principles that heavy truck traffic should not disrupt the South End Neighbourhood).*

PORT WAY VIADUCT

The Port Way Viaduct is a timber trestle bridge connecting Esplanade Street to Nanaimo's assembly wharf area and cruise ship terminal. This bridge recently underwent a structural study, which concluded that it is nearing the end of its serviceable lifespan.

All visions and phases saw the bridge decommissioned, with the exception of Vision 3, which saw an opportunity to replace the structure with feature that maintained a connection into the Study Area.



Existing Site Uses

WORKING HARBOUR DEFINITION

Definitions for the *working harbour* differed in each vision. While some maintained it largely as it is today, all saw the future of the working harbour without the Western Forest Products mill at the south end. In the majority of the visions, the working harbour was defined as moving towards a light industrial activity, research and development, and knowledge-based/high-tech area.

The working harbour was consistently recognized as a key economic asset to the city, and every vision aimed at flexibly accommodating the evolution of this asset.



TRAIN TRACKS

Existing tracks, running parallel to Esplanade, see active use moving freight between Duncan and Courtney, and delivering cargo to the mainland via the ferry wharf. The tracks also separate the Study Area from the rest of Nanaimo. How each group envisioned the future of the tracks, and their uses largely informed the resulting visions. Among all four visions, the future of the tracks was considered quite differently.

- Vision 1 identified the tracks relocated off-site, but maintained the corridor as a trail and green-space.
- Vision 2, in the short- and mid-term, moved the tracks to the NPA lands, and left a single passenger line extending to Front Street. In the long-term, Vision 2 has the only passenger rail stub remaining.
- In the short-term, Vision 3 maintained the tracks as they are now, including the rail link to the Seaspans Ferry. However, the widest portion of the tracks (the rail yard) was relocated south. Only passenger rail was envisioned in the long-term for Vision 3, terminating at the extension of Finlayson Street.
- Vision 4 maintained the current activities on the tracks, but moved the entire operation onto the NPA lands.



Green and Open Spaces

A consistent theme among the visions was the consideration of green and open spaces. The south and east boundaries of the Study Area were identified as park or green-space. Similarly, the only existing green area on the plan was also consistently identified as park. Smaller, pocket parks varied among the visions, and are best interpreted on the plan below.



Land Uses Introduced

A theme throughout the visions was to create a *complete community*, and to complete existing communities. Complete communities are places that offer and support a variety of lifestyle choices, providing opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to live, work, shop, learn, and play in close proximity to one another. The common land use elements among the visions were:

- Light/clean industrial
- Knowledge-based industry (Innovation Centre, technology hub)
- Key marine industrial – “active harbour”
- Residential 2 to 6 storeys
- Market with public, marine focus
- Parks and open space
- Culture and arts spaces, multi-purpose
- *Active* commercial – cafés, pubs, restaurants
- Live/work arrangements
- Family services/daycare/community centre
- Affordable housing
- Office, technology

Key Programmatic Elements

FERRY SERVICE

Three key variables for docks and ferries were considered in each vision:

- Gabriola Island ferry;
- Fast passenger ferry; and
- Passenger ferry parking

The consistent theme among the visions was to combine both a proposed fast ferry, and the Gabriola Island ferry in the same location. This was proposed either near the existing Gabriola Island terminal, or near the former Gadd Marine site. Notably, vehicle service to Gabriola Island was absent in the majority of the visions. One vision did, however, make provisions for continued vehicle ferry service to Gabriola, located on Port Authority land.

Each vision also considered parking for the fast ferry, which would most typically be located near Crace Street. This location takes advantage of the elevation change to hide the parking from view.

Another option for a combined ferry service utilized the infrastructure at the cruise ship facility.

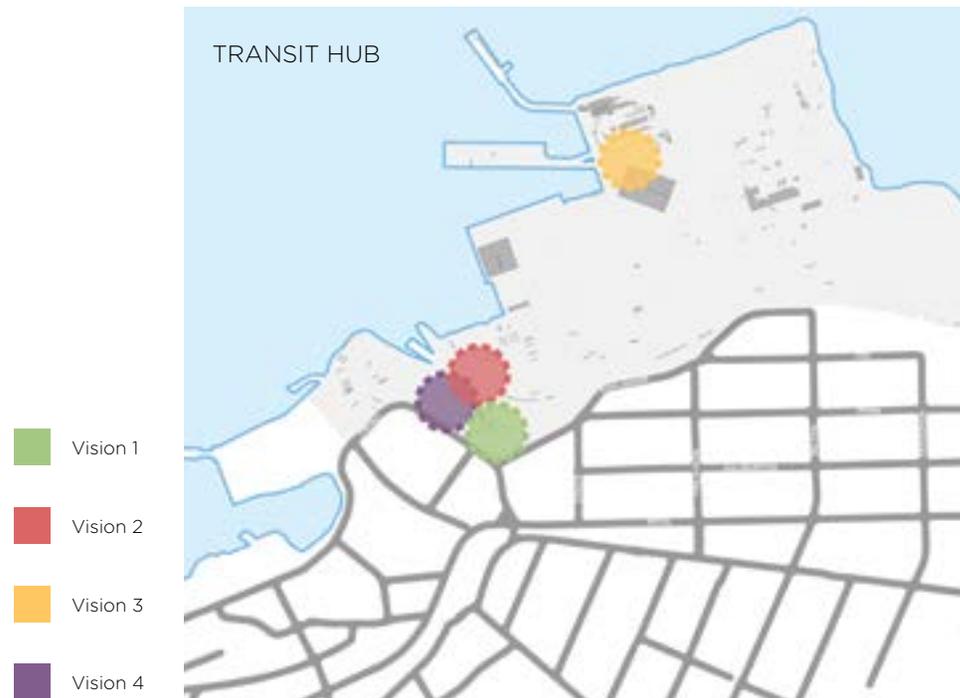
MULTI-PLEX

Each group was tasked with considering a multi-plex for the site, and was provided with a scaled replica of an existing 5,000 seat facility. A multi-plex addition to the city has been a topic of discussion for some time, and the charrette provided an opportunity to explore this topic.

In the charrette exercise, however, none of the final visions included a multi-plex.

INTEGRATED TRANSPORTATION HUB

A joint interest between the City and the Regional District of Nanaimo involved reserving a portion of the newly purchased City of Nanaimo land for a future integrated transportation hub. Because of the potential for a transit hub in the Study Area, participants were asked to consider this. The hub was most consistently located at the north end of the site, in most cases adjacent to the Gabriola ferry. Visions 3's long term projection, however, saw the hub next to the existing cruise ship terminal, as this group anticipated service to future uses and synergies with tourist transportation.



Discussion Points

With each vision, potential future dilemmas were identified, and wrestled with by charrette participants. The following points summarize these decision factors:

- Balancing public versus private uses;
- Resolving safe and equitable industrial land use vs. non-industrial land use;
- Finding the right balance of land uses to best achieve the principles;
- Planning with flexibility for an unknown future (i.e., creating deeper blocks in areas that may see future densification, providing rear laneways or parking for buildings with larger footprints);
- Maintaining a vision that puts people and pedestrians first – people are key to energizing an area, either working or living there, and preferably both;
- Reducing the impact of goods movement from *living areas*; and
- Providing transportation and residential choices.

Phasing

While some visions provided a visual phased approach, others provided guidance through text. The consistent approach to phasing generally started at the north end and moved to the south end of the site. The transit hub was included in early phases, and so too was the extension of Front Street.

How Seaspan's rail ferry was considered greatly influenced the phasing plans. If this ferry connection was moved, development could be phased in a sequential flow, from north to south. One vision saw the corridor maintained, with the option to green the area as the realization of the long-term vision.

The future of the mill also largely influences how the green networks and paths are introduced into the site.

Common Themes Summary | VISION KEY VARIABLES ANALYSIS

VARIABLES	VISION 1	VISION 2 SHORT/MID-TERM	VISION 2 LONG-TERM	VISION 3 SHORT-TERM	VISION 3 LONG-TERM	VISION 4
FRONT STREET	Extended through Study Area	Extended through Study Area	Extended through Study Area	Extended through Study Area	Extended through Study Area	Extended through Study Area
TRAIN TRACKS (location/width/transload)	Relocated off Study Area with corridor remaining	Moved east to NPA lands, west of warehouse at Pier A (with passenger rail stub on existing alignment)	Relocated off Study Area with passenger rail stub only	Same location as existing tracks, but transload area moved south to Milton terminus	Relocated off Study Area with passenger rail only, ending at Finlayson terminus	Moved east to NPA lands, west of warehouse at Pier A (with passenger rail on proposed alignment)
SEASPAN FERRY TERMINAL	Relocated off Study Area	Moved east to NPA lands, west of warehouse at Pier A	Relocated off Study Area	Same as existing	Relocated off Study Area	Moved east to NPA lands, west of warehouse at Pier A
NPA LANDS	Transitioned into mostly light industrial, high-tech, knowledge-based activities. Main existing wharf maintained	Same as existing with commercial at west edge along Front St. extension	Transitioned into mostly light industrial, high-tech, knowledge-based activities	Halved at Finlayson with south area converted to marine-based warehouse, commercial, educational	Transitioned into mostly light industrial, high-tech, knowledge-based activities	Largely intact with rail corridor now located on NPA lands
WESTERN FOREST PRODUCTS MILL	Relocated off Study Area	Relocated off Study Area	Relocated off Study Area	Relocated off Study Area	Relocated off Study Area	Relocated off Study Area
KEY WALKWAYS	Complete minus interior pier area with connection midway in NPA lands	Complete minus interior pier area with connection midway in NPA lands	Complete along entire waterfront	Complete minus interior pier area with connection midway in NPA lands	Complete along entire waterfront	Complete minus interior pier area with connection at southern boundary of NPA lands
WORKING HARBOUR DEFINITION	Largely shifted toward light industry/technology, knowledge-based activities	Same as existing with technology & light industry uses progressively introduced	Largely shifted toward light industry/technology, knowledge-based activities	Same as existing with technology & light industry uses progressively introduced	Largely shifted toward light industry/technology, knowledge-based activities	Same as existing with technology & light industry uses progressively introduced
MULTI-PLEX	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
FAST FERRY TERMINAL	At Seaspans ferry ramp	At Gabriola ferry location	At Gabriola ferry location	At Gadd Marine location	At cruise ship terminal	At Seaspans ferry ramp

Consistent
 Consistent, with exceptions
 Somewhat Consistent
 Less Consistent
 Exceptions

VARIABLES	VISION 1	VISION 2 SHORT/MID-TERM	VISION 2 LONG-TERM	VISION 3 SHORT-TERM	VISION 3 LONG-TERM	VISION 4
FAST FERRY PARKING	At Crace St.	Midway along Front St. extension, west of NPA lands	Not identified	At pallet area	At cruise ship terminal	At Crace St.
GABRIOLA ISLAND FERRY	Moved to NPA lands, includes vehicles	Passenger ferry only at existing ferry berth	Passenger ferry only at existing ferry berth	At Gadd Marine location, passenger only	At cruise ship terminal	Passenger ferry only, beside Seaspan barge ramp
ROAD CONNECTIONS	Complete grid into site, with more than two-entry/exit points	Partial grid into site with more than two entry/exit points	Complete grid into site, with more than two-entry/exit points	Partial grid into site with more than two entry/exit points	Complete grid into site, with more than two-entry/exit points	Partial grid into site with more than two entry/exit points
GREEN & OPEN SPACES	At south & east waterfront edge, Seaspan barge ramp, & along Front St. AND on rail corridor/banana lot	At south & east waterfront edge, Seaspan barge ramp, & along Front St.	At south & east waterfront edge, Seaspan barge ramp, & along Front St. AND Central	At south & east waterfront edge, Seaspan barge ramp, & along Front St. AND at banana lot	At south & east waterfront edge, Seaspan barge ramp, & along Front St. AND Central & banana lot	At south & east waterfront edge, Seaspan barge ramp, & along Front St. AND Central & banana lot
LAND USES INTRODUCED	Clean industrial, R&D, knowledge, institutional, live/work, residential, community, commercial, hotel, civic	Residential, commercial, innovation centre, technology museum, existing industry, district energy	Residential, commercial, innovation centre, technology museum, existing industry, district energy, culture, education, complete village	Commercial, mixed use, residential, technology, light industry, social cultural, recreation centre, affordable housing	Commercial, mixed use, residential, technology, light industry, social cultural, recreation centre, affordable housing, hotel, performance space	Live/work, retail commercial, high density residential, light industry, community centre, children's skate park, technology hub
INTEGRATED TRANSPORTATION HUB	At pallet area	At north Front St.	At north Front St.	At north Front St.	At cruise ship terminal	At north Front St.
TRUCK TRAFFIC ROUTE	Out at Esplanade & Nicol	Out at Milton	Out at Milton	Out at Finlayson	Out at Finlayson	Out at Farquhar
PORT WAY VIADUCT	Decommissioned	Decommissioned	Decommissioned	Replaced as signature feature	Replaced as signature feature	Decommissioned
SEAPLANES	Supported - not located	n/a	n/a	n/a	Off Pier A	n/a

Consistent
 Consistent, with exceptions
 Somewhat Consistent
 Less Consistent
 Exceptions

Key Variables Summary

VARIABLES	TOTAL CONSISTENCY	STRONG CONSISTENCY
FRONT STREET	Extended through Study Area	Extended through Study Area
TRAIN TRACKS (location/width/transload)	Relocated off Study Area with passenger rail stub only	Moved east to NPA lands, west of warehouse at Pier A
SEASPAN FERRY TERMINAL	Relocated off Study Area	Moved east to NPA lands, west of warehouse at Pier A
WESTERN FOREST PRODUCTS MILL	Relocated off Study Area	Relocated off Study Area
KEY WALKWAYS	Complete minus interior pier area with connection midway in NPA lands	Complete along entire waterfront
WORKING HARBOUR DEFINITION	Largely shifted toward light industry/ technology, knowledge-based activities	Same as existing with technology & light industry uses progressively introduced
MULTI-PLEX	n/a	n/a
FAST FERRY TERMINAL	Beside Seaspan ferry ramp	At Gabriola Island ferry location
FAST FERRY PARKING	At Crace St.	
GABRIOLA ISLAND FERRY	Passenger ferry only at existing ferry terminal	Passenger ferry only beside Seaspan barge ramp
ROAD CONNECTIONS	Complete grid into site, with more than two entry/exit points	Partial grid into site, with more than two entry/exit points
GREEN & OPEN SPACES	At south & east waterfront edge, Seaspan barge ramp, & along Front St.	Central, at key lookout areas, & around Gadd Marine site
INTEGRATED TRANSPORTATION HUB	At north Front St.	At pallet area
PORT WAY VIADUCT	Decommissioned	

Consistent
 Consistent, with exceptions
 Somewhat Consistent
 Less Consistent
 Exceptions