

# Official Community Plan Urban Design Discussion Paper

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. DEFINING URBAN DESIGN .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. ACHIEVING THE GOALS OF THE VICTORIA SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5. REVIEW OF URBAN DESIGN LEGAL TOOLS .....</b>	<b>7</b>
5.1. Official Community Plan .....	7
5.2. Development Permits .....	7
5.3. Heritage Conservation .....	9
5.4. Zoning, Parking and Other and Development Regulation .....	10
5.5. Phased Development Agreements .....	11
5.6. Development Agreements, Statutory Rights-of-Way and Covenants .....	11
5.7. Public Places and Other Regulation Under the Community Charter .....	12
<b>6. REVIEW OF OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN, 1995 .....</b>	<b>12</b>
6.1. Current Content .....	13
6.2. Analysis of Current Content .....	15
<b>7. CASE STUDIES .....</b>	<b>17</b>
7.1. San Francisco .....	18
7.2. Toronto .....	22
7.3. Edinburgh .....	24
<b>8. INVENTORY OF EXISTING URBAN DESIGN ELEMENTS .....</b>	<b>28</b>
8.1. Methodology .....	28
8.2. Synthesis .....	30
8.3. SWOT of Neighbourhoods .....	33
<b>9. LESSONS LEARNED .....</b>	<b>57</b>
9.1. Lessons Learned from the OCP, 1995 Analysis .....	57
9.2. Lessons Learned from the Case Studies Review .....	58
9.3. Lessons Learned from the SWOT Analysis .....	59
9.4. Conclusion .....	63

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this discussion paper is to present urban design research and analysis as part of updating Victoria's Official Community Plan (OCP). Urban design is concerned with the human-made environment. It can be defined as a discipline that is dedicated to the relationships among the fields of urban planning, architecture and landscape architecture. The concerns of urban design range from a broad level, such as the layout of entire cities, to particular aspects of designed environments such as architectural detailing, landscaping and street furniture.

The discussion paper examines how urban design can advance the goals of the Victoria Sustainability Framework (VSF). While urban design is not specifically listed as a key theme, it is related to many of the broad themes including *ecological integrity, resiliency, economic vitality* and *livability and social well-being*, and can assist in achieving goals associated with each of these themes.

The current OCP, 1995, designates portions of the city within Development Permit Areas (DPA) and Heritage Conservation Areas (HCA) to permit design control. When applications for development permits and heritage alteration permits are submitted to the City, the OCP is used to evaluate urban design and heritage aspects of development proposals. As part of this research, a review of the urban design content of the 1995 OCP was undertaken to gain an understanding of the current policy framework, consider if the existing content is achieving the urban design objectives and to determine if there are any aspects that can be improved in developing an updated OCP.

In considering the existing DPAs, it was found that some parts of the city, particularly major arterial roads with flanking commercial uses, could benefit from design controls and could be potential candidates for designation of new development permit areas. It was also observed that some areas already designated for control of 'form and character' which permits generalized design control, could benefit from greater design control. A legislative review of the urban design tools available to local governments revealed that design guidelines are an important component of DPA designations, and therefore should be reviewed to ensure Victoria's urban design goals and objectives are being realized. Finally, the current OCP has not designated areas of the city as DPAs for energy and water conservation, or reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, which are recent powers that have been introduced into the *Local Government Act*. There are opportunities as part of the OCP update process to consider DPAs for these purposes to help achieve the goals of the VSF, acknowledging that the new powers are limited to exterior aspects of urban design that cannot override BC Building Code or other Provincial authority.

The urban design research undertaken for this discussion paper also included a review of urban design policy documents using three communities as case study examples. The case study examples selected were: 1) San Francisco, USA; 2) Toronto, Canada; and 3) Edinburgh, Scotland. These cities were selected as they each had guiding policy documents dealing with urban design policy at a city-wide plan level, and provided a cross-section of Canadian, American, and European examples. Each respective urban design policy frameworks were informative for the Victoria context: San Francisco, a Pacific west coast city similar to Victoria in climate, age and historic character; Toronto,

well-regarded for diverse neighbourhoods and noteworthy for highly-integrated transit systems; and Edinburgh, like Victoria, a moderately sized regional capital with a distinctive geographic context, historic character and fabric. Each city's plan provided useful urban design topic areas and policy content that Victoria can learn from. A number of similar significant issues are identified in each city's plan, such as relating both urban conservation and urban evolution to the natural landscape, the history, and the existing urban patterns of communities. All plans were concerned with using urban design as a tool to highlight and build upon the unique elements of each city.

In order to gain an understanding of existing urban design conditions throughout Victoria, staff conducted a city-wide environmental scan which included a determination of urban design strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis). The information was analyzed by categorizing the observations into urban design elements, plotting the elements on maps to reveal patterns, and considering the qualities of the elements.

The urban design elements were categorized based on the principles within Kevin Lynch's book, *The Image of the City*, 1960. Lynch, an American urban planner and professor at MIT, considered the visual quality of cities by studying the physical characteristics that citizens observe. The book focuses on the concept of "legibility", or how easily a city's physical elements can be recognized and organized into a coherent pattern. Lynch contends that legibility is crucial in the city setting, and that the concept of legibility can be used in the future planning of cities. Lynch identifies five elements as fundamental components of a city: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. These elements were observed throughout Victoria.

The city-wide environmental scan work was concluded with a reflection on common neighbourhood impressions, and the observed urban design elements revealed common patterns as follows:

- Victoria's geographic setting influences urban design;
- landmarks assist in orientation, creation of identity and sense of place;
- the street system organizes the city into sub-areas, creates potential for nodes of activity and/or gateways at intensive intersections and where different street patterns converge;
- quality pedestrian and cycling linkages were observed within neighbourhoods but could be improved to further enhance the overall system and encourage use which is important in achieving VSF goals related to the theme of ecological integrity;
- the built form represents many architectural eras that contribute to overall character, with some areas of the city containing a collection of buildings that result in character precincts.

The urban design policy content that was common among the case study cities of San Francisco, Toronto and Edinburgh and the urban design elements which were observed as part of the city-wide environmental scan, may offer urban design topic areas for the public to explore as part of the new OCP update. Urban design enhancements can also contribute to the fulfilment of the VSF goals. It is intended that through a contemplation of the VSF structure, an assessment of Victoria's approach to urban design, a consideration of diverse civic approaches, and an exploration of existing city conditions that an informed basis has been established for contemplation of the role of urban design in Victoria's future evolution.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this discussion paper is to present urban design research and analysis as part of updating Victoria's Official Community Plan (OCP), and discuss how urban design can advance the goals of the Victoria Sustainability Framework (VSF).

The study will involve:

- a discussion of how urban design is linked to sustainability as it is related to the key themes of the VSF, including livability and social well-being, ecological integrity, resiliency and economic vitality;
- a review of British Columbia legislation to provide an understanding of the available legislative powers to deal with urban design matters;
- a review and analysis of urban design content in the current OCP, focused on existing Development Permit Areas;
- an examination of urban design policy at a city-wide plan level using three case study cities as examples. The discussion paper will report on the three cities' approaches to integrating urban design policy into city-wide plans and review urban design policy topics, themes and content to learning from other approaches to urban design policy;
- an inventory of Victoria's existing urban design fabric to provide an understanding of Victoria's urban design strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), using an environmental scan and SWOT methodology;
- a concluding summary of lessons learned based on a synthesis of all research including the identification of urban design topic areas to be considered during the Phase II public consultation component of the OCP update process.

## **3. DEFINING URBAN DESIGN**

Urban design is concerned with the human-made environment. It can be defined as a discipline that is dedicated to the relationships among the fields of urban planning, architecture and landscape architecture. It seeks to add aesthetic dimensions to the pragmatic and functional aspects of cities and communities, and aims to resolve multiple issues in an integrated manner. The concerns of urban design range from a broad level, such as the layout of entire cities, to particular aspects of designed environments such as architectural detailing, landscaping and street furniture.

A number of topics are often common applications for urban design. This list is not exhaustive, but demonstrates the range of urban design concerns from broad to specific, including:

- Comprehensive urban form;
- Integration of city growth and natural setting;
- Stewardship of public views and vantage points;
- Planning and design of the public realm including open space, plazas, streets and pathways;
- Animation (design to stimulate public activity);
- Built form, building siting and spatial relationships between buildings;

- Legibility and wayfinding;
- Aesthetic considerations for public works;
- Design of detailed urban elements such as paving patterns, landscaping, lighting, street furniture and infrastructure;
- Consideration for public art.

#### **4. ACHIEVING THE GOALS OF THE VICTORIA SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK**

Urban design plays a role in achieving the goals listed in the Victoria Sustainability Framework (VSF). While urban design is not specifically listed as a key theme of the VSF, it is related to many of the broad themes, including *ecological integrity*, *resiliency*, *economic vitality* and *livability and social well-being*.

Urban design can contribute to the achievement of many VSF goals. The goals of *ecological integrity* are to achieve a compact, human-oriented development pattern that uses land efficiently; the provision of public and private greenspaces; durable and sustainable materials; and buildings that are energy efficient, produce few greenhouse gases and have good air quality for occupants.

*Resiliency* is another key theme of the VSF that is affected by urban design, particularly the sub-theme of safety. A goal for Victoria is to be a safe city where everyone feels secure in public. The goals of *economic vitality* are that Victoria's downtown and harbour be a prominent centre for business, government, arts and culture, and that Victoria be a premier international tourism destination and the gateway to Vancouver Island. Successful urban design can help to support these economic goals.

Another key theme of the VSF is *livability and social well-being*, defined as the socio-cultural dimension of a community that sustains quality of life, celebrates self and community, and addresses human health, security and overall well-being. The goals of this theme are the achievement of a supportive, inviting pedestrian realm; an active community where everyone enjoys convenient access to community parks, open spaces, facilities, amenities and programs; connected communities with diverse opportunities for social interaction; and a cultural and natural heritage that is protected and celebrated.

As in the VSF, livability in particular is often described as a basic objective of urban design for Victoria. Building on the broad definition of livability provided in the VSF, a livable city from an urban design perspective may be defined as an environment that facilitates amiability, neighbourliness, hospitality, popularity, aesthetic pleasure, as well as privacy and security. Livability can be seen as a summation of the humanistic aspirations of urban design. Urban design affects all of the noted VSF themes and can assist in achieving these goals.

## **5. REVIEW OF URBAN DESIGN LEGAL TOOLS**

The purpose of this section is to provide a summary of the legislative tools that may help achieve urban design goals and objectives through the legislative powers within the *Local Government Act* (LGA), *Community Charter* (CC), and *Land Title Act* (LTA). The City of Victoria can manage urban design matters through the following legal “tools”:

1. Official Community Plans
2. Development Permits
3. Heritage Conservation
4. Zoning, Parking and other Development Regulation
5. Phased Development Agreements
6. Development Agreements, Statutory Rights-of-Way and Covenants
7. Public Places and other Regulation under the CC

### **5.1. Official Community Plan:**

The Official Community Plan (OCP) is a proactive planning tool that describes the long-term vision for the community. It may include objectives specific to urban design matters, in the broadest sense of the term, and policies that will achieve these goals. The objectives and policies will guide Council’s decisions about urban design matters and will be used to evaluate applications involving zoning amendments, development variance permit applications, and development permits.

### **5.2. Development Permits:**

The LGA gives local governments in British Columbia power to designate Development Permit Areas (DPA) to allow additional controls in designated areas of the community. DPAs can be used to help guide development for one or more of the following purposes under LGA s.919.1(1):

- (a) protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity;
- (b) protection of development from hazardous conditions;
- (c) protection of farming;
- (d) revitalization of an area in which a commercial use is permitted;
- (e) establishment of objectives for the form and character of intensive residential development;
- (f) establishment of objectives for the form and character of commercial, industrial or multi-family residential development;
- (g) in relation to an area in a resort region, establishment of objectives for the form and character of development in the resort region;
- (h) establishment of objectives to promote energy conservation;
- (i) establishment of objectives to promote water conservation;
- (j) establishment of objectives to promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Of the above-listed purposes, those that relate to urban design include LGA s.919.1(1) (d), (e), (f), (g), (h), (i) and (j). Item (g) is not applicable to the City of Victoria, which does not have a resort region. The extent of the urban design controls are set out in the LGA, with some areas capable of detailed control and others only for general character matters.

### **5.2.1. How Development Permits Work**

DPA's can be designated for the above-noted purposes. If an area is designated a DPA, the LGA requires that it describe the purpose of the designation, and the special conditions or objectives that justify the designation. It must also specify guidelines that will address the special conditions and achieve the objectives. The guidelines can be listed within the OCP or within a zoning bylaw. The City of Victoria currently uses its existing OCP to enable designation of DPA's. The OCP may specify conditions or exemptions under which a development permit would not be required.

In accordance with the LGA, if a parcel of land is within a designated DPA, land must not be subdivided, and the construction, addition or alteration of buildings must not be started unless a development permit is issued (or unless the DPA allows an exemption to apply). For areas designated under LGA s.919.1(1)(a) natural environment or (b) hazards, land must not be altered, and for designations under LGA s.919.1(1)(d),(h),(i) or (j), building or other structures must not be altered, again unless a permit is issued or exemption applies.

If a development permit application is consistent with the guidelines prescribed within the OCP, a development permit is issued. Thus, the guidelines that are provided within the OCP are an important component of DPA designations. Urban design guideline content must be carefully considered and worded to ensure the special conditions that justified the designation are addressed and the objectives are achieved.

Development permits can be an effective tool in dealing with urban design matters as land must be developed strictly in accordance with the permit that the local government issues, and the permit is binding on both the local government as well as on the holder of the permit. Financial security can also be required of a property owner with respect to landscaping, unsafe conditions and the natural environment. When a development permit is issued by the local government, a notation on the title of the land is placed at the provincial Land Title Office.

### **5.2.2. Form and Character and other Urban Design Controls**

There are two types of urban design-related DPA's: 1) those that allow local government to control *form and character*, mostly at a general level and 2) those that allow local government control of the particulars of *exterior design, finishes and landscaping*. DPA's designated under LGA s.919.1(1)(f), for *form and character* of multifamily residential, commercial and industrial developments, give local governments control over design, generally at a broad level. Development permit requirements can relate to the "character" of the development, including siting, form, landscaping, exterior design and finish of building and other structures, however, the latter three are in relation to the

general character of the development only. It does not empower local governments to control the particulars of the landscaping or of the exterior design and finish of buildings and other structures.

DPA's for *exterior design, finishes and landscaping* give local governments the greatest level of control over design details. This level of control is permitted for areas designated for revitalization of an area in which a commercial use is permitted (LGA s.919.1(1)(d)); form and character of intensive residential development (e); and form and character of resort region (g) (which is not applicable to Victoria). These types of DPA's may include requirements respecting the character of the development, as above but are not limited to "general character" and therefore there can be regulation over the particulars of landscaping and the siting, form, exterior design and finish of buildings and other structures.

Recently, the LGA expanded development permit powers for the purpose of establishing objectives to promote energy conservation (LGA s.919.1(1)(h)), water conservation (i) and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (j). These may include urban design requirements respecting landscaping, siting of buildings and other structures, form and exterior design of buildings and other structures, specific features in the development, and machinery, equipment and systems external to buildings and other structures in order to provide for energy and water conservation and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. These new powers do not allow local governments to regulate interior work and alter building code which is Provincial authority, so there are limitations with respect to these new powers. Victoria's current OCP does not designate DPA's for these purposes.

Development permits may also vary or supplement zoning bylaw regulations as long as the regulations do not deal with land use or density. The zoning bylaw regulations that may be varied can affect urban design, such as building siting, building height, amount of open space, parking requirements, and so on, as discussed below.

### **5.3. Heritage Conservation**

The LGA gives local governments in British Columbia powers for heritage conservation, including the authority to designate Heritage Conservation Areas (HCAs).

HCAs allow protection of areas with heritage character from the impacts of alterations or additions to designated heritage buildings or impacts from new development. Like a DPA, if a HCA is designated, the OCP must describe the special features or characteristics that justify the designation, and state the objectives of the designation. The OCP may also: specify conditions under which a heritage alteration permit would not be required, which may be different for different properties or classes of properties; include a schedule listing buildings, structures, land or features within the HCA that are to be protected heritage property; and may identify features or characteristics that contribute to the heritage value or heritage character of the areas.

If an OCP designates a HCA, a person must not subdivide land within the area, start the construction of a building or structure or an addition to an existing building or structure within the area, alter a building, structure or land within the area, or alter a feature that is

protected heritage property, unless a heritage alteration permit authorizing the action has been issued by the local government or unless an exemption is provided in the OCP.

In addition there are other heritage conservation provisions in the LGA (including heritage designation, heritage revitalization agreements and temporary protection powers) that are legal tools a local government can use to protect and control heritage properties and buildings, many of which contribute to the urban design of a community.

#### **5.4. Zoning, Parking and Other and Development Regulation:**

A zoning bylaw is a regulatory tool that implements the broad goals, objectives and policies within the OCP at a site-specific level. Zoning regulations that affect urban design are those related to the size, dimensions and placement of buildings and structures on a property including setbacks from property lines, building height, size of signage and height of fences as well as the shape, dimensions and area of lots created by subdivision. Zoning affects urban design at a broad level, however, the regulations cannot deal with the design details, the control of which must be supplemented by other legal tools.

A zoning bylaw can also affect urban design by requiring urban design-related amenities. This type of zone, often referred to as amenity zoning, may establish different density regulations for a zone. The LGA permits amenity zoning to have a base density that is generally applicable for the zone and bonus density that entitles an owner to higher density if conditions listed in the zone are met. The LGA states in Section 904(2) that the conditions listed may be “conservation or provision of amenities, including the number, kind and extent of amenities.” These can be related to urban design, for example, the provision of public plazas, walkways, parks, public art or an amenity that is provided specifically to support or mitigate the effects of introducing higher density into an area.

Other development regulations that supplement the basic zoning authority are often included in a zoning bylaw, but may also be found in separate bylaws. These also influence urban design at a broad level, with some opportunity for site-specific and detailed considerations. For example:

- off-street parking and loading requirements (LGA s.906) can deal with design standards for such spaces including standards respecting the size, surfacing, lighting and numbering of the spaces;
- run-off control requirements can influence urban design by establishing maximum percentages for areas of private property to be covered by impermeable surface materials and can impose requirements on landowners who have paved areas or roof areas to address surface runoff and storm water;
- signage regulation authority (LGA s.908) can address the number, size, type, form, appearance and location of signs;
- landscaping and screening requirements and standards can be used to mask or separate land uses (LGA s.909).

## **5.5. Phased Development Agreements**

A phased development agreement is a voluntary agreement between a property owner/developer and a local government, the effect of which is that subsequent zoning amendments are not applicable, except in limited circumstances, to the property while the agreement is in effect (LGA s.905.1-905-5). In exchange for such zoning protection to the developer, the local government can receive benefits. These can relate to urban design matters on a broad and specific level, including for example, the inclusion of specific features in the development, the provision of amenities and the registration of covenants under section 219 of the LTA (discussed below).

## **5.6. Development Agreements, Statutory Rights-of-Way and Covenants**

Development agreements can be useful for articulating and securing detailed aspects of commitments related to zoning, amenities and other development requirements and restrictions. For example, if the amenities are to be provided or installed during construction stage, or if maintenance of the amenity is required in perpetuity, a legal agreement can be an effective tool to deal with details that occur following rezoning and development permit processes.

These are often linked to use, building, and/or subdivision restrictions and requirements and therefore can be registered as a covenant on title under section 219 of the LTA. Covenants can directly deal with building specifics more than zoning and many development permit powers, and in a broader fashion than the building regulation power under the CC (which is a concurrent authority power with the Province). Specific to covenants, the LTA also has a broad definition of “amenity” in section 219(5) which “include[s] any natural, historical, heritage, cultural, scientific, architectural, environmental, wildlife or plant life value relating to the land that is subject to the covenant.” A covenant may be of a negative or positive nature and may include a provision that land or a specified amenity may be protected, preserved, conserved, maintained, enhanced, restored or kept in its natural or existing state in accordance with the covenant and to the extent provided in the covenant.

Statutory Rights-of-Way (SRW) are an effective legal tool to ensure public access over urban design amenities, such as plazas and walkways when provided on privately-owned land. A SRW over a specified area can also be an amenity required in amenity zoning in order to qualify for bonus density.

Covenants and SRWs require the consent of the property owner against which they are to be registered in the Land Title Office, but once registered they run with the land and are binding on future property owners.

## **5.7. Public Places and Other Regulation under the Community Charter**

Section 8 of the CC provides local governments with broad regulatory authority in a number of areas, but subsection 8(7)(c) emphasizes that these powers may not be used to do anything that is already specifically authorized under Part 26 [Planning and Land Use Management] or Part 27 [Heritage Conservation] of the LGA.

Urban design matters could particularly be influenced under the authority to regulate, prohibit and impose requirements in relation to “public places” (CC s.8(3)(b)). This is not a mandatory requirement for OCPs, but guiding principles regarding the design of public places such as streets, sidewalks and plazas can be included. To a lesser extent, there is also authority in relation to “trees” (CC s.8(3)(c)), and “buildings and other structures” but the latter is significantly restricted by other sections of the CC (s.53) and buildings are an area of concurrent authority with the Province (for example, the BC Building Code), and therefore Provincial permission is required for any direct control on building construction and standards.

## **6. REVIEW OF OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN, 1995**

The current OCP, 1995 is used to evaluate aspects of proposals related to urban design and heritage issues when applications for development permits and heritage alteration permits are submitted to the City. When an application is received, staff refer to Schedule B of the OCP which details all designated DPAs and HCAs throughout the city, to determine within which specific DPA or HCA the subject property is designated. The objectives of the designation and the design guidelines in place to achieve the objectives are reviewed. Staff evaluate proposals using the design guidelines and deem whether or not the proposal is consistent with the guidelines. City staff formulate recommendations resulting from the analysis and provide advice to Council for consideration of whether or not the development permit or heritage alteration permit should be issued.

The purpose of reviewing the urban design content of the 1995 OCP is to gain an understanding of the current policy framework, consider if the existing content is achieving the stated urban design objectives and to determine if there are any aspects that can be improved in developing an updated OCP.

The 1995 OCP primarily addresses urban design matters in Schedule B, which includes a compilation of all designated DPAs and HCAs throughout the City. The review was therefore focused on Schedule B, describing the structure and content of DPAs and HCAs. The analysis focused on the sections that are critical in controlling urban design outcomes, specifically the level of design control, objectives of the designation, the applicable guidelines and their clarity, and the appropriateness of excluding the requirement for development permit applications in specific situations.



These DPAs and HCAs are used to help guide general form and character; more detailed exterior design, finishes and landscaping; heritage conservation; and protection of the natural environment.

The DPAs are generally structured into five sections. The first section consists of a purpose statement to clarify the reason for designation of the DPA pursuant to one or more of the purposes listed in Section 919.1 of the LGA. Following the purpose statement, the objectives of the designation are provided as required by legislation. The third section consists of listed design guidelines and neighbourhood plan documents that contain urban design policy which apply to the DPA to achieve the objectives. Most of the DPAs contain a fourth section consisting of a statement about the hierarchy of City of Victoria policy documents in the event of conflicting policies, and finally, a map is provided showing the area subject to the designation.

As discussed within Section 4, Review of Urban Design Legal Tools, the LGA permits designation of two types of DPAs with respect to level of design control: *form and character* or *exterior design, finishes and landscaping*. DPAs that are designated for *form and character* only are:

- DPA 3, James Bay and Outer Harbour
- DPA 4, Songhees and Lime Point
- DPA 6, Bay, Government and Douglas
- DPA 7, Blanshard North
- DPA 18, Shelbourne
- DPA 24, Garbally
- DPA 25, Burnside
- DPA 27, East Fort Street
- DPA 30, Fairfield
- DPA 34, Cathedral Hill Precinct

With the exception of DPA 29, Victoria Arm - Gorge Waterway which is designated for protection of natural environment, all other DPAs are designated for control of *exterior design, finishes and landscaping*.

Some DPAs have the added protection of HCA designation. This is to ensure that new development is compatible with surrounding heritage buildings and does not erode the character of the heritage context. These are:

- DPA 1 (Heritage Conservation), Old Town and Chinatown
- DPA 2 (Heritage Conservation), Inner Harbour and Lower Douglas
- DPA 8 (Heritage Conservation), Harris Green and North Park
- DPA 9 (Heritage Conservation), 700 Block Yates
- DPA 10 (Heritage Conservation), Lower Fort Street
- DPA 11 (Heritage Conservation), Upper Fort Street
- DPA 15 (Heritage Conservation), Downtown
- DPA 33 (Heritage Conservation), Fernwood Village

Some DPAs permit exclusions which describe special circumstances where a Development Permit application would not be necessary. This is permitted by the LGA.

Most of the DPAs within the OCP do not permit exclusions, with the exception of the following noted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Development Permit Area Exclusions

Development Permit Area	Exclusions
DPA 3, James Bay and Outer Harbour	Single family dwellings and duplexes
DPA 4, Songhees and Lime Point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects with a construction value of less than \$200,000 in the Alston-Tyee-Bay area;</li> <li>• Industrial uses west of Lime Bay</li> <li>• Single family dwellings and duplexes</li> </ul>
DPA 17, Hillside	Projects with a construction value less than \$200,000
DPA 18, Shelbourne	Projects with a construction value less than \$200,000
DPA 29, Victoria Arm – Gorge Waterway (designated for environmental protection)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installation of paths</li> <li>• Removal of non-native plant species</li> <li>• New construction beyond a prescribed area from the high water mark</li> <li>• Repairs to lawful existing structures</li> <li>• Fence installation in specific circumstances</li> </ul>
DPA 34, Cathedral Hill Precinct	Projects with a construction value less than \$50,000

## 6.2. Analysis of Current Content

### 6.2.1. Form and Character DPAs

It is important to consider if DPAs for form and character provide enough design control to achieve the stated objectives. Many of the DPAs that are designated for *form and character* are areas primarily characterized by multi-family residential and industrial

areas, thus this level of control is in accordance with powers granted by the LGA. However, a few DPAs that are only designated for *form and character* are major commercial streets in the city that may benefit from revitalization. In particular, DPA 7, Blanshard Street North which applies to properties along the Blanshard Street corridor stretching from Pembroke Street to Tolmie Avenue; the north portion of DPA 18, Shelbourne that covers the south intersection of Shelbourne and Hillside Avenue; and DPA 27, Fort Street East, which applies to properties along the Fort Street corridor stretching from the intersection of Pandora and Oak Bay Avenues to Foul Bay Road are only designated for control of *form and character*. These areas are primarily commercial and are major corridors in and out of the City, so consideration should be given to whether *form and character* is sufficient to achieve the stated objectives given that Council cannot consider the particulars of exterior design, finishes and landscaping.

Further, there are major commercial corridors in the city that are not within a designated DPA, for example, Burnside Road East (with the exception of one property on Burnside Road that is designated for *form and character*) and Gorge Road East.

### **6.2.2. Achievement of Objectives**

It is necessary to determine if the design guidelines are achieving the specified objectives. There are 34 sets of design guidelines with many of the DPAs being subject to more than one set of design guidelines. Some design guideline documents provide general design direction and tend to apply to large portions of the City, and other design guideline documents are more detailed and prescriptive, applying to specific sites or areas. Guidelines specific to particular areas or individual sites have been effective in achieving urban design goals, for example the *Selkirk Urban Design Manual* and *Design Guidelines for the Dockside Area*.

Other general design guidelines documents that apply to many DPAs may benefit from reviews to determine if the goals and objectives are being achieved. For example, an objective in DPA 7, Blanshard Street North is to protect high-quality views by limitations of building height and siting. The guidelines to help achieve the objectives are those provided in the general design guideline document *Advisory Design Guidelines for Buildings, Signs and Awnings*, which does not address view protection. This document does not contain guidelines specific to exterior finishes, other than defining the term “materials”, yet the document is used extensively for DPAs designated for exterior design, finishes and landscaping. Additional guidelines may need to be added in order to achieve the listed objectives.

DPA 26, used for duplexes and properties that have been rezoned as “small lots” has been effective in ensuring infill development in established residential areas occurs in a sensitive manner to fit with the existing urban design context and not negatively impact neighbours. The small lot design guidelines have been effective in achieving the goals and objectives of DPA 26.

### **6.2.3. Suitability of Exclusions**

It is assumed that the rationale for excluding projects of a value less than \$200,000 (and in one case less than \$50,000) is to encourage improvements by not requiring a landowner to undertake an application process, to lessen the volume of development permit applications that the City reviews, or that projects less than the prescribed values were deemed not to be detrimental to the public interest with respect to design control. However, minor amendments that may cost less than the prescribed amounts, such as proposals for new signage, awnings, fencing, landscaping and replacement of exterior building materials can affect character, have an impact on the adjacent public realm and may have impacts to the broader context.

### **6.2.4. Clarity of Guideline Application**

The legislative review discussed the importance of carefully worded design guidelines to ensure objectives are achieved. It is also important that the DPAs are clear with respect to design guideline application. Design guidelines and policy documents are listed as applicable to the entire DPA, but the DPAs generally do not specify if some design guidelines documents apply to some properties only, or if they apply to the entire area. This clarity is important for DPAs that span more than one neighbourhood, and have more than one design guideline document applicable.

For example, DPA 8, Harris Green and North Park, spans three neighbourhoods: Harris Green, North Park and a small portion of Downtown. It lists the *Harris Green Neighbourhood Plan* and *Harris Green Charrette* documents as well as the *North Park Local Plan*, but the *Downtown Victoria Plan, 1990* is not listed. It is also not clear for DPAs that are also HCAs, if the *Standards and Guidelines for Conservation of Historic Places* apply to properties with heritage designation or properties listed on the heritage register only, or if the document is recommended to be applied to properties without heritage value, but which have an impact on the heritage context. Clarifying statements about how the guidelines are applied would be beneficial.

## **7. CASE STUDIES**

The urban design research included a review of urban design policy documents at a city-wide plan level using three communities as case study examples. This section will summarize that review and will present other jurisdictions' approaches to integrating urban design policy into city-wide plans as well as identification of urban design policy topics, themes and content.

Victoria often looks to other west coast Canadian and American cities to learn from and stay informed about other jurisdictions' planning issues and solutions, including Vancouver, BC; Seattle, Washington; and Portland, Oregon. These cities were not chosen as case study examples given that Seattle is undertaking a major comprehensive plan update (started in 2009 for completion in 2011), and Portland is also going through an OCP update process given its latest plan is the 1980 "Portland Plan".

Vancouver was not selected as a case study given that it deals with urban design matters through general and area-specific design guidelines that are stand-alone documents not incorporated into a city-wide plan. The design guidelines are also at a detailed level given their application to specific areas, rather than broad urban design policy.

The case study examples that were selected were: 1) San Francisco, USA; 2) Toronto, Canada; and 3) Edinburgh, Scotland. These cities were selected as they comprised the few examples that dealt with urban design policy at a city-wide plan level. Other jurisdictions, including Vancouver, deal with urban design matters through design guidelines that are area or site-specific, but do not have city-wide urban design policy.

The three case study examples are cities that have much greater populations than Victoria, however, they also share similarities. San Francisco is a Pacific west coast city like Victoria and is similar in climate, age and historic character. Toronto is well-known for the flourishing health of its neighbourhoods that are diverse in character, possess vitality and is a city noteworthy for its highly-integrated transit systems. Edinburgh, like Victoria, is a regional capital, moderately sized with a distinctive geographic setting, historic character and fabric. It was valuable to review not just other Canadian cities, but to provide a cross-section that included American and European examples. While each of the case studies are distinct cities, the respective urban design policy frameworks contain common urban design principles and policy content that may be informative for the Victoria context.

## **7.1. San Francisco**

The *San Francisco General Plan* is a city-wide plan structured into three parts. Part I contains broad themes referred to as “elements”. One of the elements - the Urban Design Element - was enacted in 1986. Part I includes objectives and policies for all elements, including the Urban Design Element. Part II contains more detailed area plans for neighbourhoods throughout San Francisco. Part III provides land use policies including city-wide policies for recreation and open space. The Plan elements were each enacted at different times, and the Urban Design Element in particular was enacted in 1986.

The Plan Element: Urban Design is structured into four topic areas:

- City Pattern
- Conservation
- Major New Development
- Neighbourhood Environment

Each of the four topic areas contain a review and definition of essential human needs specific to the respective topic area, an overall objective towards meeting the human needs, fundamental principles reflecting the needs, and a series of policies necessary to achieve the overall objectives and provide continued guidance. Illustrations of the principles and policies are also provided.

### **7.1.1. City Pattern**

This topic area begins by defining the human need with respect to city pattern, which can be summarized as the existence of an agreeable, visual pattern composed of the natural base upon which the city rests, together with development. The pattern is comprised of water, hills and ridges, open spaces and landscaped areas, streets and roadways, buildings and structures.

The fundamental objective is to emphasize the characteristic pattern which gives the city and its neighbourhoods an image, sense of purpose and a means of orientation. To achieve the objective and provide ongoing guidance, 11 policies are provided under the subcategories of image and character; organization and sense of purpose; and orientation for travel as follows:

- Recognize and protect major views in the city, with particular attention to those of open space and water.
- Recognize, protect and reinforce the existing street pattern, especially as it is related to topography.
- Recognize that buildings, when seen together, produce a total effect that characterizes the city and its districts.
- Protect and promote large-scale landscaping and open space that define districts and topography.
- Emphasize the special nature of each district through distinctive landscaping and other features.
- Make centres of activity more prominent through design of street features and by other means.
- Recognize the natural boundaries of districts, and promote connections between districts.
- Increase the visibility of major destination areas and other points for orientation.
- Increase the clarity of routes for travellers.
- Indicate the purpose of streets by means of a city-wide plan for street landscaping.
- Indicate the purposes of streets by means of a city-wide plan for street lighting.

### **7.1.2. Conservation**

This topic area deals with conservation of existing urban design features and natural areas. This is in response to the human need for a feeling of continuity over time within an intensely urban environment, and to provide a sense of relief from the crowding and stress of urban life.

As the city grows, conservation of features that are old and irreplaceable is a measure of human achievement. The old should not be replaced without consideration that what is to be new should be better. Historic buildings provide a richness of character, texture and human scale that is unlikely to be repeated often in new development. There are developed areas which have a special character worthy of preservation. Streets are deemed important from a conservation perspective as they make visible the city's outstanding features and its points of orientation. Conservation of natural areas also

acknowledge human needs in providing rest, quiet, escape from the city's pace, and provide relief from built-up confinements.

The objective of this topic area is conservation of resources, which provides a sense of nature, continuity with the past, and freedom from overcrowding. To achieve this objective, 17 principles of conservation are provided, with illustrations, and describe measurable and critical urban design relationships for conservation. The Plan lists policies under the subcategories of natural areas, richness of past development, and street space to achieve the objective as follows:

- Preserve in their natural state the few remaining areas that have not been developed by man.
- Limit improvements in other open spaces having an established sense of nature to those that are necessary, and unlikely to detract from the primary values of the open space.
- Avoid encroachments on San Francisco Bay that would be inconsistent with the Bay Plan or the needs of the city's residents.
- Preserve notable landmarks and areas of historic, architectural or aesthetic value, and promote the preservation of other buildings and features that provide continuity with past development.
- Use care in remodelling of older buildings in order to enhance rather than weaken the original character of such buildings.
- Respect the character of older development nearby in the design of new buildings.
- Recognize and protect outstanding and unique areas that contribute in an extraordinary degree to San Francisco's visual form and character.
- Maintain a strong presumption against the giving up of street areas for private ownership or use, or for construction of public buildings.
- Review proposals for the giving up of street areas in terms of all the public values that street affords.
- Permit release of street areas, where such release is warranted, only in the least extensive and least permanent manner appropriate to each case.

### **7.1.3. Major New Development**

New development should be sensitive to the city's essential qualities, and therefore, the scale of new development is fundamental to addressing human needs. Human need requires that new development achieve balance and compatibility with the established urban form. This is to be achieved through appropriate scale. Appropriate scale comprises a height that is consistent with the overall pattern of the land and of the skyline, building bulk that is not overwhelming, and an overall appearance that is complementary to other components within the established context.

The objective is moderation of major new development to complement the city pattern, the resources to be conserved, and the neighbourhood environment. There are 18 fundamental principles summarized in a table for major new development, including photographs and diagrams of the principles. Guiding policies under the subcategories of visual harmony, height and bulk, and large land areas are provided as follows:

- Promote harmony in the visual relationships and transitions between new and older buildings.
- Avoid extreme contrasts in colour, shape and other characteristics which will cause new buildings to stand out in excess of their public importance.
- Promote efforts to achieve high quality of design for buildings to be constructed at prominent locations.
- Promote building forms that will respect and improve the integrity of open spaces and other public areas.
- Relate the height of buildings to important attributes of the city pattern and to the height and character of existing development.
- Relate the bulk of buildings to the prevailing scale of development to avoid an overwhelming or dominating appearance in new construction.
- Recognize the special urban design problems posed in development of large properties.
- Discourage accumulation and development of large properties, unless such development is carefully designed with respect to its impact upon the surrounding area and upon the city.
- Encourage a continuing awareness of the long-term effects of growth upon the physical form of the city.

#### **7.1.4. Neighbourhood Environment**

The topic area of neighbourhood environment defines human need from an urban design perspective, as having a tolerable and comfortable living environment, safe and free from stress, and that the elements that make up such an environment be easily described.

There is a human need for open space and recreational space that is close by and visible, with a feeling of nature and a variety of facilities for all age groups. Planting in streets and yards, continuous building facades and generous sidewalks contribute to neighbourhood amenity.

Neighbourhood environment concerns tend to focus on traffic issues and the quality of neighbourhood maintenance. Freedom from the clutter of open parking lots, large signs and overhead wires also have an impact on whether a neighbourhood has an agreeable living environment.

The objective of this topic area is improvement of the neighbourhood environment to increase personal safety, comfort, pride and opportunity. A table in the San Francisco Plan provides 31 fundamental principles for neighbourhood environment, some with diagrams and photographs. Policy statements under the subcategories of health and safety, feeling of neighbourhood, opportunity for recreation, and visual amenity, are provided as follows:

- Protect residential areas from the noise, pollution and physical danger of excessive traffic.
- Provide buffering for residential properties when heavy traffic cannot be avoided.
- Provide adequate lighting in public areas.
- Design walkways and parking facilities to minimize danger to pedestrians.

- Provide adequate maintenance for public areas.
- Emphasize the importance of local centres providing commercial and government services.
- Encourage and assist in voluntary programs for neighbourhood improvement.
- Provide convenient access to a variety of recreation opportunities.
- Maximize the use of recreation areas for recreational purposes.
- Encourage or require the provision of recreation space in private development.
- Make use of street space and other unused public areas for recreation, particularly in dense neighbourhoods, such as those close to downtown, where land for traditional open spaces is more difficult to assemble.
- Install, promote and maintain landscaping in public and private areas.
- Improve pedestrian areas by providing human scale and interest.
- Remove and obscure distracting and cluttering elements.
- Protect the livability and character of residential properties from the intrusion of incompatible new buildings.

The *San Francisco General Plan*, Plan Element: Urban Design concludes with a statement about the future, in particular, that the plan is intended to reflect people's needs and improve the physical makeup of the city.

## **7.2. Toronto**

The *Toronto Official Plan, 2007* deals with urban design in Chapter Three: Building a Successful City. This chapter categorizes urban design matters into two sections: 1) the built environment; and 2) the human environment.

### **7.2.1. The Built Environment**

The section on built environment focuses on the public realm, general built form, built form specific to tall buildings, public art and heritage resources.

The public realm subsection lists policies that guide the following topics:

- excellence in architecture, landscape and urban design;
- consideration of development (particularly building height and massing), adjacent to valleys and ravines to protect views and vistas;
- encouragement of a comprehensive open space network;
- city streets acknowledged as significant public open space and designed to perform diverse roles;
- sidewalk and boulevard design for pedestrians;
- maintaining the road grid as a major organizing element;
- public views of natural or human-made features to be preserved and improved along scenic routes, and created within public works and private development;
- public buildings to be located and designed on prominent, visible and accessible sites to promote their status;
- design measures for pedestrian safety and security;

- interior shopping malls, walkways and private mid-block connections to be designed to complement but not replace the role of the street as the main place for pedestrian activity;
- design criteria for new streets and city blocks; and
- locational criteria for new parks and open spaces.

The built form subsection lists policies that guide new development:

- new development to fit with existing or planned context and support adjacent streets, parks and open spaces;
- criteria for locating and organizing vehicle parking, access, service areas and utilities to minimize impacts;
- criteria for building massing to limit impact to and define edges of streets, parks and open spaces;
- criteria to guide how new development will provide amenity for adjacent streets and open spaces to make the areas more attractive, interesting, comfortable and functional for pedestrians;
- significant new multi-unit residential development will provide indoor and outdoor amenity space for residents of the new development.

The built form subsection specific to tall buildings acknowledges that tall buildings come with greater civic responsibilities and obligations than other buildings. Appropriate location is critical, as poorly located tall buildings can have a negative impact on the public realm by overwhelming adjacent areas, blocking sunlight and views of the sky, creating uncomfortable wind conditions, and potentially adding to traffic congestion. This subsection of the plan lists criteria for tall buildings that address the following:

- tall buildings should be designed to consist of a base that provides definition of and is appropriate to the scale of adjacent streets, parks and open spaces; a middle (shaft); and top that contributes to the skyline character;
- tall building proposals are to demonstrate consistency with other urban design principles within the plan, contribute to and reinforce overall city structure, relate to the existing or planned context, consider the relationship with topography and other tall buildings, and provide high quality, usable, publicly accessible open space.

The public art subsection includes one policy that encourages adoption of a public art master plan, implementation of the public art master plan through promotion of the Toronto Public Art Reserve Fund, actively soliciting gifts of cash and in-kind, encouraging public art on city property and dedicating one percent of capital budget of major municipal buildings and structures to public art, and encouraging the inclusion of public art in significant private sector developments.

The heritage resources subsection contains policies as follows:

- conserve heritage resources by listing properties on a heritage inventory, designating properties and entering into conservation agreements; and designate areas that have a concentration of heritage resources;
- create public incentives to encourage heritage conservation;
- conserve and maintain City-owned heritage resources;

- mitigate impacts of public works in the vicinity of heritage resources;
- secure heritage easement agreements for public access to areas with heritage value when a city owned heritage property is sold or leased;
- grant additional density for properties containing a heritage building and new development provided the proposal includes conservation of the heritage resource through designation (entire building, not facadism); the additional density does not exceed the floor area of the heritage building being retained; designation bylaws are enacted at the same time as approval for the entire development; and the development is consistent with heritage conservation principles;
- conserve heritage landscapes and historic cemeteries;
- inventory archaeological sites through an archaeological master plan;
- commemorate lost historical sites and archive documentation of removed heritage resources;
- prepare and adopt a heritage management plan.

### **7.2.2. The Human Environment**

The human environment deals with housing, community services and facilities, and parks and open spaces. For the purpose of examining topics related to urban design, the overview of this subsection was limited to parks and open space. The parks and open space policies address the following topics:

- Maintaining, enhancing and expanding the system by adding new parks in growth areas; designing for user comfort, safety, accessibility and year-round use; protecting access and developing linkages and using private open space and recreation facilities to supplement city parks, facilities and amenities;
- Developing parkland acquisition strategies including cash in lieu of parkland and identifying park planning areas;
- Mitigate impacts of development from adjacent properties on parks and open spaces, including shadows, noise, traffic and wind conditions;
- Parkland dedication for all development on a percentage basis (5% for residential development and 2% for all other uses) and an alternative parkland dedication rate for large developments;
- Off-site parkland dedication where on-site parkland dedication is not feasible;
- Locational and configuration criteria for parkland to be conveyed.

### **7.3. Edinburgh**

*The Edinburgh Standards for Urban Design, 2003*, document does not attempt to cover every issue but concentrates on those aspects which are of particular importance to Edinburgh and make it distinctive. Significant urban design themes in the plan are: community safety, accessibility, sustainability, quality of life and protecting the heritage legacy.

The document is organized into a hierarchy of urban design principles that comprise the following chapters:

- City-wide dimension
- Local Area dimension
- Site/Street dimension
- Public Realm dimension

### **7.3.1. City-Wide Dimension**

Integrate new development and contribute to distinctiveness:

The key principle of this subsection is to recognize the role of the site within the urban structure, integrate major new proposals into the city structure and ensure that new developments emphasize, retail or enhance the city's identity. This is to be achieved by ensuring that major or significant proposals be considered in the citywide context, that proposals should protect and enhance the image of the city, and that proposals should not cause unsympathetic change.

City-wide views and context:

The key principles of this subsection are to protect and enhance views to and from established landmarks, hills, and skylines; recognize distinctive urban zones, layers or built form; and maintain strategic views from major access routes and public vantage points.

This is to be achieved by ensuring that new development integrate with its wider surroundings and be in harmony with existing general height; reinforce the skyline and views; respect the topography; ensure that proposed buildings that will be visible from higher points maintain or enhance existing massing, articulation and interesting roof patterns; ensure that low rise buildings adjacent to higher neighbours provide attractive roofscapes, and ensure proposals visually affecting Edinburgh's hills require detailed scrutiny through urban design analysis and exhibit architectural excellence.

Define city edges:

The key principle of this subsection is that city edges and settings can be improved through appropriate new development to provide integration and visual continuity from urban to rural areas. This is to be achieved by ensuring proposals are examined for possible contribution to definition of edges, to integrate new and existing development at the city edges in order to provide continuity, and underline contrast and distinction between urban and rural character.

Aim to improve image and legibility:

The key principle of this subsection is to enhance the appearance and maintain the complex and varied character of arterial routes. This is to be achieved through quality gateways and arterial routes, and ensure strategic views are maintained to protect the city image and legibility.

Strengthen and extend the network of green and civic spaces:

The key principle of this subsection is to continue to maximize opportunities to enhance and extend links to individual spaces and the open space network in the city. This is to be achieved by considering outdoor space as a means of integrating and linking

development to provide a shared community focus, and minimizing the loss of public access to outdoor areas, recreation and natural areas with biodiversity.

### **7.3.2. Local Area Dimension**

Lively and attractive local places:

The key principles of this subsection are that urban design create a sense of place and integration with the local context; provide places which are attractive, mixed use, with a variety of form and choice; integrate with public transport, prioritize pedestrian and cycle movement, and new development be sensitive to human scale.

Reinforce local identity:

The key principles of this subsection are that significant proposals should be accompanied by a contextual analysis; new buildings should not be higher nor of greater mass than adjacent existing development unless there are special townscape reasons; and needs and opportunities be identified to improve the components of urban design, form, space and activities.

Make distinctive urban form:

The key principles of this subsection are that early pre-application discussions with staff are encouraged and crucial for the development of larger or sensitive sites; master plans be developed for larger, mixed-use sites; a mix of uses and building forms be encouraged; and activities, development and spaces be combined to create distinctive urban form.

Make coherent layouts:

The key principles of this subsection are that proposals should relate to surrounding structures and address adjacent development form and character; and that street pattern and block grain (details) be established; and perimeter blocks be used to create an attractive public realm and promote diversity.

### **7.3.3. Site/Street Dimension**

Reinforce character:

The key principle of this subsection is to establish key elements to ensure fit with surroundings. This is to be achieved by proposals acknowledging local, natural and built features; having respect for and reflecting local proportions and parcel sizes, being consistent in the detailed design to all elevations, and using high quality local materials.

Promote pedestrian access:

The key principle of this subsection is that developments should connect with, extend or improve the local street structure. This is to be achieved by reinforcing a new or existing street structure, providing a choice of routes that maximize connectivity and linkages, and ensuring that street structure is clearly understood.

Value open space:

The key principle of this subsection is that new development should enhance existing and provide new open space. This is to be achieved by ensuring that an open space

amenity is both legible and useable for recreation; integrating new and existing development at the boundaries of open space; relating and connecting new developments to existing street layout and built form; integrating the site's landscape and natural features; and ensuring that civic spaces encourage activity.

Integrate car parking:

The key principle of this subsection is integrating parking into a development without allowing it to dominate the development, the street scene, or adjacent developments. This is to be achieved by ensuring a balanced approach to parking; that parking is sufficient to cater to contemporary needs; that it is conveniently located close to destinations; that there is limited visual intrusion through the use of landscaping and quality materials; and that parking is safe and secure.

#### **7.3.4. Public Realm Dimension**

The outside room that everyone experiences:

The key principle of this subsection is that new public spaces be created wherever possible, and the design and management be given as much care and attention as the buildings which enclose them. This is to be achieved by determining the appropriate balance between pedestrian and vehicular traffic; that public spaces provide a focus for pedestrian routes which should be accessible, safe and comfortable; and that public spaces should have varied activities to attract people.

Enclose public spaces:

The key principle of this subsection is that buildings should give positive definition and enclosure to the shape and function of public space encouraging a range of activities to take place. This is to be achieved by : providing a welcoming space that contains activity, is safe and acknowledges its local circumstances; continues or creates a strong building line that addresses public spaces, where setbacks occur from the building line ensure that useable space is created; and defines spaces by establishing a suitable ratio between the width of the space and its enclosing buildings, and/or through tree canopy enclosure.

Materials and street furniture in the public realm:

The key principle of this subsection is to ensure high quality streetscape design, street furniture and materials in the renewal or provision of the public realm. Street furniture should be located sensitively in relation to vistas and elevations of buildings, and should avoid becoming street clutter. This is to be achieved by keeping the design of street and footways simple and use appropriate materials to fit local character, remove superfluous street signs and keep new signs to a minimum, and use street furniture to help create and delineate the public realm.

*The Edinburgh Standards for Urban Design* document ends with one page summaries for each of the four chapters: city-wide dimension, local area dimension, site/street dimension, public realm dimension. Each summary page reiterates and condenses all policies on each topic, providing for a convenient and user-friendly document.

## **8. INVENTORY OF EXISTING URBAN DESIGN ELEMENTS**

### **8.1. Methodology**

In conducting urban design research to support preparation of a new OCP, it is important to have an understanding of existing urban design conditions throughout the City. Staff conducted an environmental scan, which included a SWOT analysis, determining urban design strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). This analysis included walking through neighbourhoods to observe existing urban design conditions, and collecting information by taking photographs and noting observations. The information was analyzed by categorizing the observations into urban design elements, plotting the elements on maps, and considering the qualities of the elements.

The urban design elements were categorized based on the principles within Kevin Lynch's book, The Image of the City, 1960. Lynch was an American urban planner and professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Lynch's book, studied by generations of urban planning and architecture academics, considers the visual quality of cities by studying the physical characteristics that citizens observe. The book focuses on the concept of "legibility", or how easily a city's physical elements can be recognized and organized into a coherent pattern. Lynch contends that legibility is crucial in the city setting, and that the concept of legibility can be used in the future planning of cities.

Lynch identifies five elements as fundamental components of a city: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. The five elements, definitions and diagrams on the following page are sourced from Kevin Lynch, The Image of the City, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1960:

- **Paths** are channels along which the observer moves. Paths may include streets, walkways, transit lines, canals, railroads. They are predominant elements of the city. Along paths, other environmental elements are arranged and related.



- **Edges** are linear elements not used or considered as paths by the observer. They are boundaries between two phases or linear breaks in continuity, such as shores, railroad cuts, edges of development, walls. They may be barriers or penetrable and may close one region off from another.



- **Districts** are the medium-to-large sections of the city which the observer mentally enters "inside of" and which are recognizable as having some common, identifying character.



- **Nodes** are points; the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter and which are the intensive centres of activity. They may be junctions, places of a break in transportation, a crossing or convergence of paths, moments of shift from one structure to another, or concentrations. Examples may be a street-corner hangout or an enclosed square. Nodes may be the focus of a district. They may be called cores.



- **Landmarks** are a point-reference. They can be a singling out of one element from a host of possibilities. Some landmarks are distant and typically seen from many angles and distances. Some landmarks are primarily local, being visible only in restricted localities and from certain approaches.



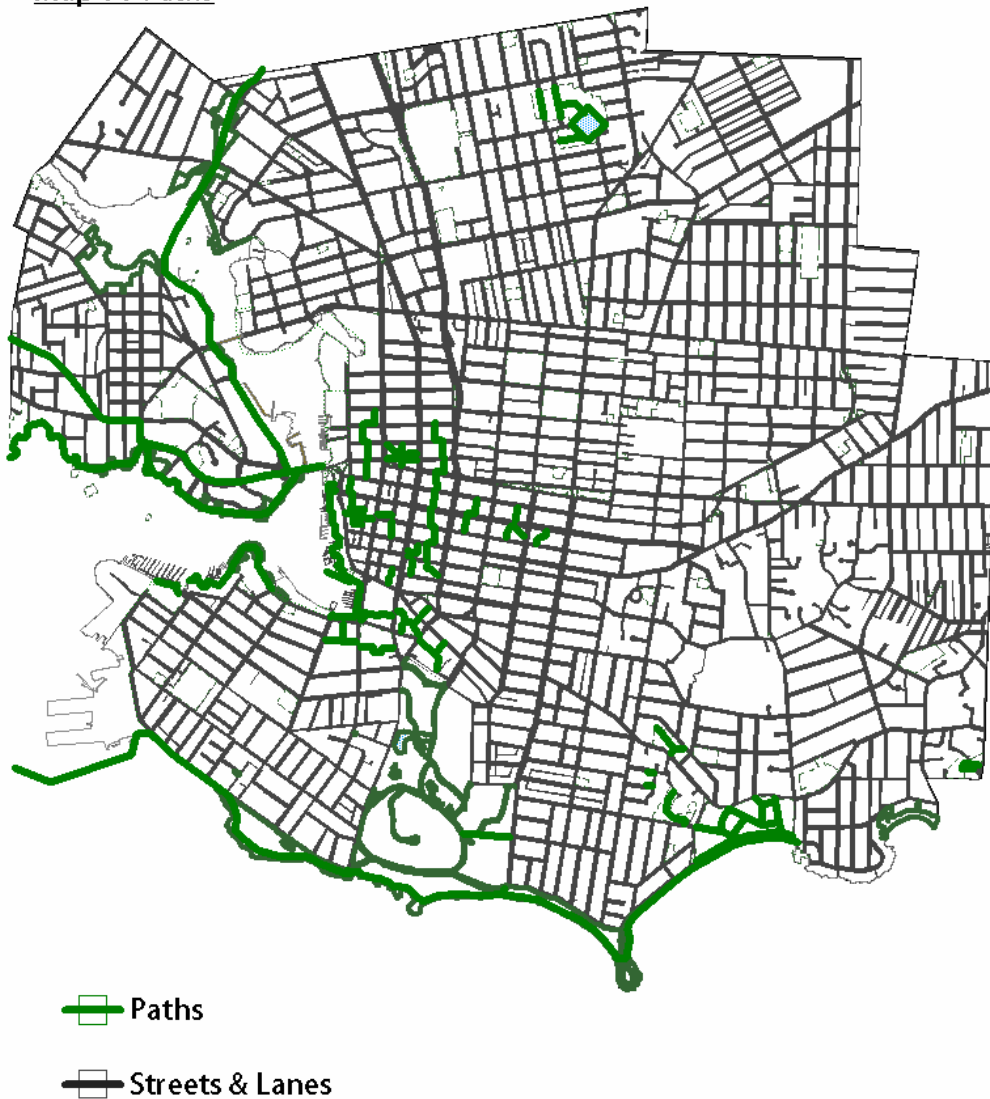
## 8.2. Synthesis

These urban design elements were observed and indicated on three maps. All five elements are interrelated and affect one another; however, it was necessary to illustrate them separately to ensure the maps are legible.

Map 1 indicates paths which were singled out on one map given that it is the most predominant element of a city, including all roads, lanes, sidewalks, and existing pedestrian paths and trails.

### Inventory of Existing Urban Design Elements

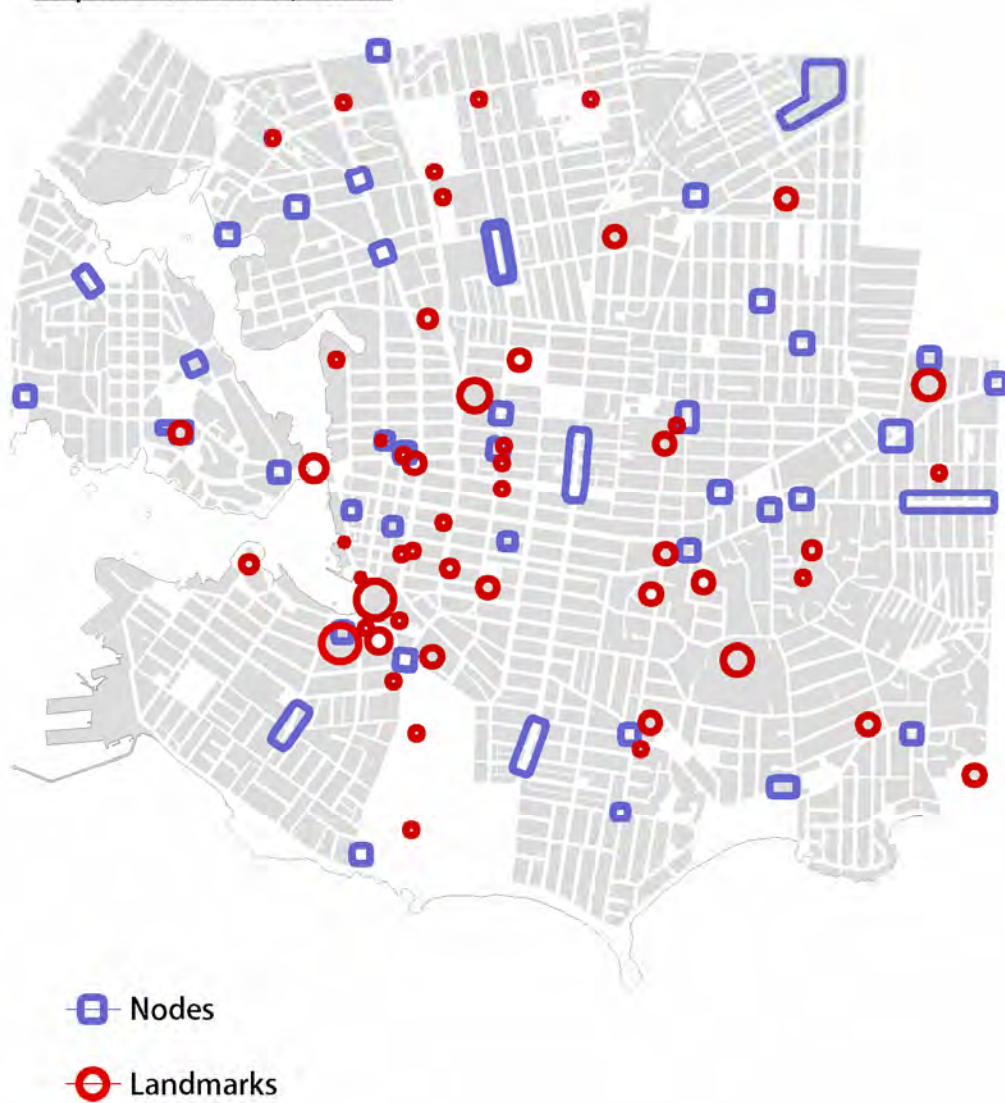
Map 1 : Paths



Map 2 includes nodes and landmarks. Landmarks were sometimes associated with nodes and visible from within nodes, given their nature as junctions of intensive activity.

## Inventory of Existing Urban Design Elements

Map 2: Landmarks, Nodes



Map 3 includes edges and districts. These were grouped together as districts are often defined by edges. Lynch defined edges as contrary to paths and not used by an observer.

## Inventory of Existing Urban Design Elements

Map 3 : Edges, Districts



It was found during the environmental scan that some high traffic arterial streets functioned as edges. While a pedestrian could travel along such a street, the spatial impact of the street and its function as a high traffic corridor had the effect of breaking up the continuity of neighbourhood areas and segregating one area from another, often into different districts. These streets did not always behave as edges along their full length. At some locations, flanking built forms, continuous tree canopies and other urban design features enclosed portions of streets so they were experienced as destinations or nodes. For example, Quadra Street behaves as an edge through the northern parts of the city, but does not present itself as an edge within Quadra Village, along its portions through the core area neighbourhoods of North Park and Harris Green, or in the south portion of

the city ending at Beacon Hill Park. This is due to the unifying streetscape design of Quadra Village, continuous buildings flanking the street throughout the central neighbourhoods, and the tree canopies and lower traffic volumes as Quadra Street approaches Beacon Hill Park. In these and other instances, the lines representing edges in Map 3 end where streets no longer presented themselves as edges.

### 8.3. SWOT of Neighbourhoods

Following the city-wide environmental scan, staff considered the observations and identified strengths and weaknesses for each neighbourhood. Determinations of strengths and weaknesses were based upon perceptions as experienced urban design professionals, and Lynch's principles of how citizens recognize urban design elements as they experience the city were kept in mind. Next, staff identified opportunities to improve upon the weaknesses and listed potential threats to the strengths. These were identified for each neighbourhood as follows:

#### 8.3.1. Burnside Neighbourhood

##### Strengths:

Galloping Goose Trail



Selkirk Waterfront



- Design of Selkirk waterfront development including architectural form and scale, streetscape design, pathway design and public access to waterfront
- Views of Downtown skyline, Inner Harbour, Selkirk Waterway
- Pedestrian and cycling links including Galloping Goose Trail, Cecelia Park path and Selkirk linkages
- Murals on buildings within Bay Street industrial area between Bridge and Government Streets
- Public art at Burnside Gorge Community Centre

### Weaknesses:

Burnside Road East



2950 Douglas Street



- High traffic corridors segregate neighbourhood and create divisive edge conditions
- Vehicle-dominated streetscape design of major arterial streets
- Pathway linkages do not connect throughout entire neighbourhoods and beyond
- Lack of a cohesive and comprehensive neighbourhood centre
- Small amount of public art

### Opportunities:

- Improve pathway linkages between community facilities within neighbourhood
- Build on linkages out of Selkirk, through Rock Bay to Downtown
- Improve streetscape design of major arterial roads and edge conditions along Douglas Street, Gorge Road East, Burnside Road and Bay Street
- Create a complete neighbourhood centre where existing community facilities, commercial development and linkages are located
- Improve public access to the Gorge waterfront west of the Selkirk development and south of Gorge Road
- Protect the Federal Armoury building at 715 Bay Street which has commemorative status as a National Historic Site by including it on the Heritage Register

### Threats:

- Siting, bulk and height of future development near the waterfront could threaten views of waterways and Downtown skyline if not carefully considered
- The Federal Armoury building needs seismic upgrading in the event of an earthquake

### 8.3.2. Downtown

#### Strengths:

Bastion Square



Government Street



Inner Harbour Causeway



Broad Street

- The compact size of Downtown encourages pedestrian movement, and is further divided into smaller character districts that have unique identities, including the Inner Harbour, Old Town and Chinatown
- Building height corresponds with topography of Downtown, with low-rise building forms along the harbour, building height increasing further inland with tallest forms throughout the blocks between Douglas and Blanshard Streets creating a layered skyline and maximizing views toward the water
- A series of “greatly distinctive” streets including: Government Street (between Belleville and Fisgard Streets), Broad Street, lower Johnson Street (between Wharf and Government Streets) and lower Fisgard Street (in Chinatown between Store and Government Streets). All these streets share common qualities that result in high quality urban design, including: land uses at ground level that generate activity, human scale buildings proportionate to street width that define the street corridor, continuous streetwall with entrances and shop windows to provide interest and animation, rich architectural detailing, traffic-calming features, some sidewalk widths that exceed minimum standards to accommodate pedestrian volumes, and each possessing a unique identity that creates a sense of place

- Abundance of landmarks including the Empress Hotel, Tourist Information Centre, Custom House, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church bell tower, St. Andrew's Cathedral spire, City Hall clock tower, Spirit Poles in Centennial Square, and the Johnson Street bridge
- Public access to waterfront at Inner Harbour Causeway and along Harbour pathway to Reeson Park
- Predominance of landmarks emphasized by spatial qualities of Inner Harbour and where the street grid is irregular with street heads and bends

Weaknesses:

Grade Change and Stair Design, Douglas Street



Rotherham Plaza



Parkade Wall, Penwell Street



Surface Parking Lot, Broughton Street

- Sloping topography creates design challenges at grade. Design of grade changes at sidewalk interface critical to pedestrian movement, and may discourage pedestrians from entering commercial spaces or plazas.
- Some occurrences of blank walls deaden streets, for example, the rear of the Odeon Theatre along the 700 block of Johnson Street and the parkade structure at the rear of the Executive House Hotel along Penwell Street.
- Rotherham Plaza underused due to sunken design, lack of flanking land uses to activate the plaza and the presence of blank walls due to parkade structure and office building design.
- Abundance of surface parking lots concentrated along the waterfront, Broughton Street and north of Fisgard Street.
- Public art is sporadic and could be much more extensive.

Opportunities:

- Langley Street has the foundations of a pedestrian-oriented street given its intimate character. This is attributed to flanking human-scaled buildings and low traffic volumes, as it is a short street running between Yates and Broughton Streets. There may be opportunities to build on these qualities through urban design elements in combination with active land uses fronting the street.
- Centennial Square may benefit from land uses flanking the square that generate activity and bring people to the square at different times of day and night. There may be opportunity for any redevelopment to be oriented towards the square.
- Extend Harbour Pathway north beyond Reesen Park.

Threats:

- Infill development may have an impact on the Inner Harbour, Old Town and Chinatown districts as well as landmarks
- Siting of tall, bulky buildings near the waterfront may obstruct or compromise general public views around the harbour.

**8.3.3. Fairfield Neighbourhood**

Strengths:

Durban Avenue



Richardson Street



Birch Street Trees



Dallas Road

- Views of waterfront, Olympic mountains and Government House
- Continuous public access along waterfront
- Abundance of parks and open space (Beacon Hill Park, Clover Point Park, Moss Rock and various mid-sized parks and school grounds)
- Edge conditions that help define the public realm including: Juan de Fuca Strait shoreline; generally consistent building facades along Dallas Road marking a change in land use from residential to park space; treed edge of Beacon Hill Park along Cook Street; rock wall of Government House property along Richardson Street; Moss Rock edge along May Street between Memorial Crescent and Joseph Street
- Concentration of commercial and community use create active nodes at Cook Street Village, “Five Points” intersection of Fairfield Road, Oscar and Moss Streets, and intersection of Moss and May Streets
- Consistent pattern of detached dwelling forms with common architectural elements like pitched roofs, front porches and stairs that contribute to neighbourhood character
- Blocks with back lanes in the central portion of the neighbourhood result in an urban form and streetscape that is not vehicle-dominated (garages and parking spaces located off back lanes)
- Landscaped boulevards and some landscaped medians incorporated into pedestrian crossings (Richardson Street at Lotbiniere Avenue)

Weaknesses:

Meares Street



Fairfield Plaza



- Blocks with dual frontage along both Fort and Meares Street have a negative impact on Meares Street which is treated as the rear of the properties. The urban form characterized by buildings and dwellings that turn their back to Meares Street, dominated by parking lots, garages and driveway entrances result in a deadened streetscape
- Site planning of Fairfield Plaza commercial centre is of a vehicle-dominated design resulting from extensive front yard surface parking lot
- Scant public art, water features, or localized streetscape details

Opportunities:

- Encourage urban design that addresses Meares Street buildings

- Future redevelopment of Fairfield Plaza commercial buildings should encourage siting up to sidewalk edge with rear yard parking for design that is not vehicle-dominated (but still respectful of adjoining residential uses)
- Intensification of existing commercial nodes

Threats:

- Views of landmark Government House may be affected from some viewpoints within the public realm if zoning rights are maximized (redevelopment of single-storey dwellings to two storeys permitted in zoning)
- Replacement of dwellings as they reach the senior years of their life span may erode character areas where common architectural patterns exist (one storey dwellings with California bungalow-style porticos along Durban Street, post-war dwellings on the 400 block of Stannard Avenue)

**8.3.4. Fernwood Neighbourhood**

Strengths:



- Belfry Theatre landmark at 1291 Gladstone Avenue marks neighbourhood centre
- Fernwood Village neighbourhood centre/commercial node well defined by proportion of building height to street width, and of a human-scale

- Commercial node with cohesive design on both sides of street along upper Cook Street (north of Pandora Avenue and south of Mason Street) spanning Fernwood and North Park neighbourhoods
- Stadacona Centre commercial node that addresses both Fort Street and Pandora Avenue
- Landscaped traffic circles along Denman Street at Belmont Avenue, Forbes and Shakespeare Streets slow traffic and provide design interest to streetscape
- Adequate amount of parks and green space
- Artwork/murals on public works (vehicle guard rails, telephone poles) to represent arts and culture within the neighbourhood and provide a sense of place
- Collection of single-family dwellings with heritage significance throughout the neighbourhood core

Weaknesses:

- Lack of cohesive design for portions of Cook Street south of Pandora Avenue and north of Fort Street (spanning Fernwood and the Harris Green neighbourhoods)
- High traffic of Bay Street creates an edge within the neighbourhood, segregating blocks between Bay Street and Haultain Avenue

Opportunities:

- Given the small size of the neighbourhood centre, there may opportunity to expand south for additional uses to serve neighbourhood and for improved linkage with existing community facilities to the south (Victoria Senior Secondary School grounds)
- Build upon commercial portion of Cook Street south of Pandora Avenue for more cohesive design with adjacent Harris Green neighbourhood. The width of Cook Street can absorb additional building height along flanking properties for improved definition of Cook Street corridor

Threats:

- Intensification of neighbourhood centre could have a visual impact on the Belfry Theatre landmark
- Replacement of dwellings with heritage significance in areas where they predominate could erode character of Fernwood
- The location of the neighbourhood between Downtown and outlying areas may foster increased traffic volumes or speeds

### 8.3.5. Gonzales Neighbourhood

#### Strengths:

View from Crescent Road



Stone Walls



- Gonzales Observatory in Gonzales Hill Regional Park is a neighbourhood landmark and visible from many vantage points within and outside of the neighbourhood
- Gonzales Hill Regional Park and Gonzales Bay are prominent natural amenities
- Views of Victoria, Greater Victoria, Juan de Fuca Straight and Olympic Mountains from Gonzales Hill Regional Park
- Low stone walls along front property lines throughout neighbourhood acknowledge rock landscape topography, provide neighbourhood character and identity, and differentiate public space from private space through edge condition
- Public access and views to water through public Right-of-Ways along Crescent Road and Hollywood Crescent
- Buildings overlooking water are terraced as the topography rises, resulting in a pattern of layered dwellings
- Portions of neighbourhood are quiet enclaves

#### Weaknesses:

Beach Access from Crescent Road and Adjacent Private Yards



- Waterfront may appear privatized by the presence of flanking residential dwellings along Crescent Road and private rear yards
- Lack of coherent design vision for Oak Bay Avenue commercial node/corridor that spans Gonzales and South Jubilee neighbourhoods
- Scant public community art, water features, or localized streetscape details

Opportunities:

- Improve public wayfinding to Gonzales Bay and distinguish public space from private yards along the waterfront
- Intensify portion of Oak Bay Avenue corridor as a commercial node with a cohesive design for both sides of the street (as the north side is in the South Jubilee neighbourhood)
- Consider special urban design features along Fort Street to signify its role as the original regional roadway for Victoria
- Consider special urban design features to signify a gateway into the City of Victoria when travelling west from the adjacent Municipality of Oak Bay. Potential locations would be Crescent Road given it forms part of the scenic drive between the two municipalities, the Fairfield Road crossing to Oak Bay at its Gonzales Hill crest, and Oak Bay Avenue being a secondary arterial route into the City

Threats:

- Potential pressure for future development in south portion of neighbourhood to achieve higher and larger building forms to maximize private water views

**8.3.6. Harris Green Neighbourhood**

Strengths:



- Diverse mix of building forms
- Heritage and contemporary landmarks include the Victoria Conservatory of Music and the Mosaic buildings respectively
- Each street in the neighbourhood has a unique, identifying character

- Fort Street (Antique Row) node designed at a human scale attributed to buildings ranging from low to medium heights that are built to the street, commercial shop windows, wide sidewalks, and signage designed and placed for pedestrian view
- Plum trees along View Street create special streetscape when in bloom
- Wide landscaped boulevards along Vancouver Street

Weaknesses:

Blank Parkade Structure Walls



Surface Parking Lots



Overhead Wiring



Regent Towers Walkway: Private or Public?

- Blank walls of View Towers parkade structure along Quadra and View Streets deaden the streets
- Abundance of surface parking lots and front yard commercial parking leave voids in the streetscape and does not enhance the pedestrian experience along sidewalks
- Overhead wiring creates visual clutter
- Regent's Park grounds do not distinguish semi-private space from public space resulting in confusion for users, particularly use of the mid-block walkway through the site
- Existing mid-block walkways in the 800 block of Johnson Street and the 900 blocks of Yates and Johnson Streets that have become gated over the years due to lack of active land uses, "eyes" on the street and designs that ensure uninterrupted sightlines through walkways
- Scant public community art, water features, or localized streetscape details.

- Lack of public park space

Opportunities:

- Establish design guidelines that discourage front yard parking and foster more attractive parking layouts
- Require that overhead wiring be relocated underground as properties redevelop
- Discourage the “tower in the park” building typology in high density areas as it results in lack of clarity about who the landscaped open space is intended for (residents vs. public), and instead encourage internal semi-private landscaped courtyards within developments
- Establish design guidelines for mid-block walkways
- Enhance Pandora Green as public park space

Threats:

- Ensure infill development does have a negative impact on the character of Fort Street Antique Row

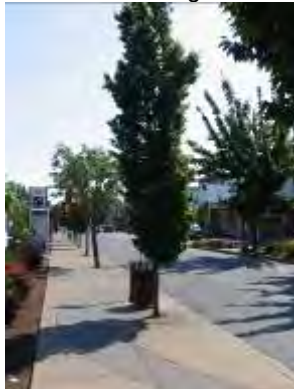
**8.3.7. Hillside/Quadra Neighbourhood**

Strengths:

Finlayson Avenue



Quadra Village



Pathway to Reed Street



Collection of Post-War Dwellings, Rutledge Street



Topaz Park Entrance

- Views from Summit Park and Smith’s Hill Reservoir of Mount Tolmie, Downtown skyline, and North Park landmarks (church steeples)
- Views from Vista Heights of the Armoury, Victoria West skyline and portions of the Inner Harbour
- Quadra Village commercial corridor between Hillside Avenue and Kings Road
- Small commercial node on Quadra Street at Tolmie Avenue
- Concentration of sports fields and recreational lands east of Blanshard Street, south of Finlayson Avenue and north of Bay Street (including Topaz Park, S.J. Willis Educational Centre, and University Canada West/formerly Blanshard Elementary fields)

Weaknesses:

Tolmie Avenue



Blanshard Street at Finlayson Avenue



- Lack of consistent building form along Tolmie Avenue, which forms the boundary between the City of Victoria and the Municipality of Saanich. The north side of Tolmie Avenue, within Saanich, features three to four storey building forms. The south side of the street, within Victoria, features Victoria’s lowest density being furthest from the core area, in the form of single-family dwellings
- High traffic and width of Blanshard Street corridor creates an edge
- Little public art, water features, or localized streetscape details.

Opportunities:

- Consider building form and scale on the south side of Tolmie Avenue to correspond with north side for a cohesive streetscape
- Consider design improvements to Blanshard Street to mitigate edge conditions
- Concentration of recreational lands may be appropriate for some larger festivals that cannot be accommodated in the core area
- Improve pedestrian and cycling connections to Downtown and other neighbourhoods

Threats:

- Potential pressure for future infill development in north portion of neighbourhood (Vista Heights area) to achieve higher dwelling forms to maximize south views

### 8.3.8. James Bay Neighbourhood

#### Strengths:

Harbour Pathway



Traffic Calming on Avalon Road



Avalon Road Heritage Homes



Buildings Define Menzies Street

- Views of waterfront, Olympic mountains, Inner Harbour, Legislative dome
- Continuous public access along waterfront (with the exception of the Federal lands)
- Abundance of parks and open space
- Streets that are narrow (e.g. Toronto and Simcoe Streets) naturally slow traffic, are well defined by street walls and are human scale
- Collection of dwellings with heritage significance along Avalon Road and in other locations
- James Bay Village node including continuous scale and streetwall that defines the east edge of the village along Menzies Street
- Geographic location creates enclaves within the neighbourhood that are protected from traffic

Weaknesses:

Michigan Avenue Surface Parking Lots



- Surface parking lots west and south of BC Legislature grounds
- Streets that are excessively wide (e.g. Rithet and St. Lawrence Streets) encourage increased traffic speed, are ill-defined and not human-scale
- Little public art, water features, or localized streetscape details

Opportunities:

- Wider streets can be better defined, either through building height along the streetwall, wider sidewalks with treed boulevards or landscaped medians for improved definition/enclosure, or to add human-scaled elements and spatial interest

Threats:

- Scale of future development along waterfront should be carefully considered to prevent negative impact to waterfront context

**8.3.9. North and South Jubilee Neighbourhoods**

Strengths:

Shelbourne Street Trees



Pedestrian Pathways to Shelbourne Street





Leighton Road Landscaped Bulbs



Richmond Road, Birch and Fort Street Intersection

- London Plane trees consistently planted along Shelbourne Street boulevards define the street corridor and create a streetscape character unique to the Jubilee neighbourhoods
- Dead end streets east of Shelbourne Street calm vehicle traffic by discouraging traffic generated by Royal Jubilee Hospital from having an impact on nearby residential streets and create quiet enclaves. Design of the dead ends are in the form of landscaped paths for pedestrians only. These include: Carrick, Adanac and Emerson Streets. Albert Avenue also has a dead end at Richmond Road with a pedestrian path linkage
- Commercial nodes along Fort Street at Foul Bay Road and Richmond Road intersections
- Irregular street pattern and triangular lot at the intersection of Richmond Road, Birch and Fort Streets visually emphasizes Turner's News modernist building
- Landscaped bulbs at pedestrian crossings and other portions along Leighton Road create a pedestrian scale streetscape and calm traffic by narrowing street to one traffic lane

Weaknesses:

Oak Bay Avenue



Fort Street and Richmond Avenue Intersection



- Low quality urban design along Oak Bay Avenue commercial node/corridor

- Unattractive designs of major intersections: Fort Street at Oak Bay Avenue, Fort Street at Richmond Avenue, Fort Street at Foul Bay Road, and Oak Bay Avenue at Foul Bay Road.
- Royal Jubilee Hospital campus functions as a small institutional district with its own formal entrance and edge conditions. The border of the district is designed for vehicle access and parking, and is not of a form or design that offers visual screening or pedestrian interest and activity along Fort and Richmond Streets
- Scant public art, water features, or localized streetscape details.

Opportunities:

- Expansion of neighbourhood commercial node to include Turner’s News building at Fort Street, Birch Street and Richmond Road as focal point
- Improved streetscaping and signage
- Consider design features such as special landscaping, street lighting, or public art to accent the “Dardanelles” (intersections of Fort Street at Yates Street and Oak Bay Avenues)

Threats:

- Future replacement of London Plane trees when they reach the end of life span with other tree species may have an impact on the unique streetscape character of Shelbourne Street

**8.3.10. North Park Neighbourhood**

Strengths:

Palladian Building at a Street Head



Quadra Street Landmarks





Central Park



Princess Avenue Plum Trees

- Consistent street grid with the exception of a slight off-set of Mason Street permitting streethead views of the heritage-designated Palladian building on Quadra Street
- Pandora Avenue embodies some City Beautiful urban design principles, resulting in a formal street axis leading into downtown Victoria
- Collection of parks and recreational spaces in centre of the neighbourhood, including Central Park, Crystal Pool and Royal Athletic Park
- Church spires along Quadra Street are neighbourhood landmarks visible from surrounding neighbourhoods
- Species of boulevard trees consistent along length of blocks. Some blocks feature different tree species than other blocks

Weaknesses:

Dowler Place Edge Condition



- High traffic streets create edge conditions, including Bay Street, portions of Cook Street between Bay and North Park Streets and Blanshard Street
- Island Farms industrial plant creates edge condition along Dowler Place
- Under-expressed pedestrian and cycling connections to Downtown and other neighbourhoods
- Limited public art, water features, or localized streetscape details.

Opportunities:

- Improved pedestrian connections
- Improved greenway enhancements

Threats:

- Pressure to develop surface parking lots given neighbourhood's proximity to Downtown
- Demolition pressures on existing residential fabric
- The location of the neighbourhood between Downtown and outlying areas may facilitate increased traffic volumes or speeds

**8.3.11. Oaklands Neighbourhood**

Strengths:

View of Craigdarroch Castle



Kings Road Landscaped Traffic Circles



Landscaped Screening of Hillside Mall Parking Lot



Haultain Corners Node

- Rise in topography allows views to the south of Olympic Mountains and Craigdarroch Castle from Avebury Avenue at Kings Road
- Landscaped traffic circles along Kings Road at Belmont Avenue, Scott Street and Myrtle Avenue slow traffic and provide design interest to streetscape
- Tree lined boulevards with oak tree species along some streets within higher elevations provide a sense of place to the neighbourhood and reflects the

rocky outcrop topography with Gary Oak tree copses still evident in the neighbourhood

- Landscaped screening along North Dairy Avenue and Shakespeare Street visually screens Hillside Mall surface parking lot from adjacent residential development
- Seven residential city blocks west of Hillside Mall have back lanes resulting in an urban form and streetscape that is not vehicle-dominated (garages and parking spaces located off back lanes)
- Small commercial nodes at Haultain Corners (Haultain Street at Belmont Avenue) and Hillside Avenue at Cedar Hill Road
- Absence of sidewalks and curbs along Kings Road result in a rural character (this can be both a strength and a weakness)

#### Weaknesses:

Hillside Mall Surface Parking Layout



Kings Road



- Vehicle-dominated streetscape design of Hillside Avenue as well as portions of Shelbourne Street and North Dairy Road that border Hillside Mall
- Hillside Avenue high traffic corridor segregates neighbourhood and creates edge conditions
- Absence of sidewalks along Kings Road may create ambiguous boundaries between the public and private realms, as well as the pedestrian realm which may result in conflict with vehicles/cyclists if pedestrians choose to use the road
- Limited public art, water features, or localized streetscape details

#### Opportunities:

- Build upon commercial nodes at Haultain Corners and Hillside Avenue at Cedar Hill Road with human scale commercial forms and pedestrian-oriented streetscapes
- Potential garden suites for residential blocks with back lanes

#### Threats:

- Increased traffic flows may impact quieter areas of neighbourhood
- Connections for a complete pedestrian network are underdeveloped

- Pedestrian crossings of major roadways, particularly Hillside Avenue and sections of Cook Street may be inadequate for increased population
- Bicycle route network is not always well expressed, may not effectively serve increasing bicycle use

### 8.3.12. Rockland Neighbourhood

#### Strengths:

Water Tower



Despard Avenue Rural Character



Mansion and Garden Character

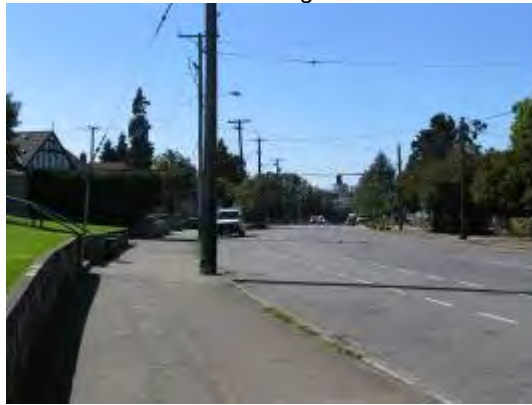


Rock Walls Define Front Yards

- Higher topography affords views of the city and landmarks
- Collection of cultural facilities, including the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Langham Court Theatre, and Craigdarroch Castle
- Collection of landmarks including Craigdarroch Castle, Government House, Water Tower and Camosack Manor
- Strong neighbourhood identity, characterized by collection of mansions, large lot sizes with extensive gardens, and rock walls that define private front yards acknowledging the rocky topography of the neighbourhood
- Absence of sidewalks and curbs along Despard Avenue result in a rural character and may be an indicator of low traffic volumes
- Significant tree canopy

### Weaknesses:

Proportion of Building Height to  
Street Width along Fort Street



- Building height along some portions of Fort Street not proportional to street width, resulting in lack of definition of the Fort Street corridor
- Lack of mature street trees on stretches of Fort Street
- Absence of sidewalks along Despard Avenue may result in conflict between vehicles/cyclists and pedestrians
- Limited public art, water features, or localized streetscape details

### Opportunities:

- Continued reuse and conversion of mansions into multi-family residential units
- Consider cohesive building forms and streetscape design of major arterial roads including Fort Street and Oak Bay Avenue

### Threats:

- Potential subdivision of large lots may have an impact on character of neighbourhood
- Siting, bulk and height of future development on higher ground could have an impact on public views from within and outside of Rockland

### 8.3.13. Victoria West Neighbourhood

#### Strengths:

Westsong Walkway



Galloping Goose Trail at Railyards Development



Examples of Architectural Diversity: Craigflower Road and the Shuttters Development, Songhees

- Views of Inner Harbour, Olympic Mountains, Victoria Arm/Selkirk waters, Downtown skyline, James Bay, Mount Tolmie
- Continuous public access along waterfront
- Abundance of parks, open space and trails
- Johnson Street bridge a gateway, landmark and linkage to neighbourhood and beyond
- Diversity in architectural forms and styles
- Public art (spindle whorls and totem pole at Songhees Point, public art along Tyee Road at Dockside development)

Weaknesses:

Esquimalt Road



Paul Kane Place



Catherine and Bay Street Intersection

- High traffic corridors segregate neighbourhood and create edge conditions when traffic volumes are heavy and spatial voids when traffic is less frequent, including Craigflower Road, Esquimalt Road, Bay Street and Dominion Road
- Some major arterial streetscapes are of a vehicle-dominated design
- Esquimalt Road lacks active land uses along some portions of the street, buildings that do not address the street in some locations and irregular lighting
- Ample width of Cooperage Place and Paul Kane Place streets permits view corridors to the harbour, but may be out of proportion with flanking building height and streetscape design

Opportunities:

- E&N railway and trail may become an important linkage
- Where the E&N railway crosses streets including Wilson Street, Tye Road and Esquimalt Road at two locations, adjacent parcels result in irregular, severed shapes which may facilitate unique architecture
- Proximity of busy intersections (Catherine, Dundas and Bay Streets and Esquimalt Road and Catherine Street) may be appropriate for a future mixed use node with traffic-calming design features

- Consider wider sidewalks and landscaped boulevards to mitigate excessively wide street and accommodate public within Cooperage Place and Paul Kane Place view corridors
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to Downtown as part of upgrade or replacement of Johnson Street bridge

Threats:

- Potential pressure for future development throughout neighbourhood to achieve higher and larger building forms to maximize private water views

## **9. LESSONS LEARNED**

In concluding the discussion paper, there are lessons that can be learned from the research undertaken and many common urban design themes and topics that can help guide the review and update of the OCP.

### **9.1. Lessons Learned from the OCP, 1995 Analysis**

The review of the urban design content within the current OCP, 1995, focusing on the DPAs within Schedule B, helped gain an understanding of the current policy framework and identified potential gaps in the framework. The following points summarize DPA aspects that may be improved in developing an updated OCP:

**a) *Potential New Areas Suitable for Design Control***

There are areas throughout the city that are currently not designated for any design control, particularly major arterial roads flanked by commercial land uses. There are opportunities to consider designation for revitalization of areas in which commercial use is permitted as part of the OCP update to improve these areas through Council control of exterior design, finishes and landscaping.

**b) *Potential Areas for Greater Design Control***

There are DPAs that are designated for “form and character” only. Consideration may be given to whether “form and character” is a sufficient level of design control for some areas, such as portions of the Inner and Outer Harbour areas. If these areas have commercial land uses present, they could be considered for higher design control.

**c) *Importance of Design Guidelines in Achieving Urban Design Goals***

The City has a number of design guideline documents that apply to respective DPAs that are referenced in and supplementary to the OCP. A legislative review of the urban design tools available to local governments revealed that design guideline content is an important component of DPA designations. Therefore, a review of design guideline documents for each DPA could be considered to ensure that Victoria’s urban design goals and objectives are being realized.

**d) *Potential Broader Use of DPA Exclusions***

DPA exclusions are an opportunity to waive the need for a development permit application if there are circumstances where certain changes will not compromise the public interest with respect to urban design, for example, replacing exterior materials that have ended their life span with the same material. A review of existing exclusions to ensure that design control that is needed is not lost, while considering appropriate new exclusions may be beneficial.

**e) *Use of new Development Permit Powers for Sustainability Objectives***

The legislative review revealed that new powers in the LGA allow local governments to designate DPAs for sustainability, including energy conservation, water conservation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The current OCP, 1995 does not contain DPAs for these purposes, so there are opportunities to consider this as part of the OCP update, acknowledging that these new DPAs only provide limited powers to exterior aspects of urban design, and cannot override BC Building Code or other Provincial authority. However, it may be a useful tool towards achieving the objectives of the VSF.

## **9.2. Lessons Learned from the Case Studies Review**

The reviews of the urban design policy frameworks for San Francisco, Toronto and Edinburgh revealed common principles and policy content resulting in three different and diverse cities. The following summarize the common aspects of the three case studies:

**a) *Urban Design Policy that Addresses Livability***

All three plans included urban design topic areas and policies about essential human needs which may be synonymous with the concept of livability. San Francisco in particular linked all urban design topic areas to addressing essential human needs; Toronto discussed the importance of parks and open spaces to human needs; and Edinburgh highlighted the value of open space, pedestrian priority in urban design, the distinction between urban and rural, extending the network of green spaces and the public realm in general as an outside room.

**b) *Geographic Setting Influences Urban Design***

All three plans acknowledged the importance of geographic setting, its influence on urban design and the potential for it to provide a sense of place. A main topic of the San Francisco plan was that laying a city pattern on a natural base creates characteristic patterns and gives a city its image. This acknowledges the urban design principles in Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City*. Toronto highlighted the importance of the built form considering topography changes such as ravines and valleys. Edinburgh presented a distinctive urban form as a key theme, related to geographic context through protection and enhancement of views to and from hills, as well as views of landmarks and the skyline.

**c) *Urban Design Includes Heritage Conservation***

All three plans included heritage conservation as a sub-theme of urban design, rather than addressing heritage and urban design as separate topics. San Francisco in particular expanded upon the topic of conservation to include natural areas as well as heritage. Conservation of heritage provides continuity with the past, a human

scale, and an architectural richness and texture within the built environment that new development is not able to achieve. Conservation of natural areas provide rest, quiet, escape and relief from confinement in high density areas. This topic area addresses livability in both natural and built environments in all plans.

**d) Contextual Development**

All three plans discuss the need for new development to be contextual, balanced and compatible with established form. Toronto takes it one step further by guiding new development to fit with both the existing and planned contexts that are envisioned in the future. Edinburgh discusses that new development be integrated into the existing context to contribute to distinctiveness.

**e) Importance of Streets to the Public Realm**

All three plans highlighted the role and design of the street as important to the public realm. The San Francisco Plan valued streets as they make the city's outstanding features visible, and stated that streets within neighbourhoods should be well planted and free of clutter like overhead wiring. Toronto acknowledged the street pattern as the organizing element and as significant public open space with diverse roles. The Edinburgh Urban Design Manual discussed maximizing connectivity and linkages, ensuring that street structure is clearly understood and that the public realm, including streets, acts as an outside room.

### **9.3. Lessons Learned from the SWOT Analysis**

The city-wide environmental scan work was concluded with a reflection on common neighbourhood impressions, and the observed urban design elements annotated on Maps 1-3 revealed common patterns. These are summarized as follows:

**a) Geographic Setting Influences Urban Design**

Victoria's natural setting provides an underlay for the city form. The micro-geographic diversity of terrain and plant life, influenced by ocean, forest, and garden conditions, establishes subtle changes in context and micro-climate throughout the city.

The geographic setting provides opportunities for public views in public places, which are most prominent at higher elevations, but also at edges, and along streets and paths influenced by sloping geography. There are also views of the human-made environment like the city skyline, or roofscapes as seen from higher terrain or prominent geographic vantages. Public vistas are important to the character and quality of Victoria.

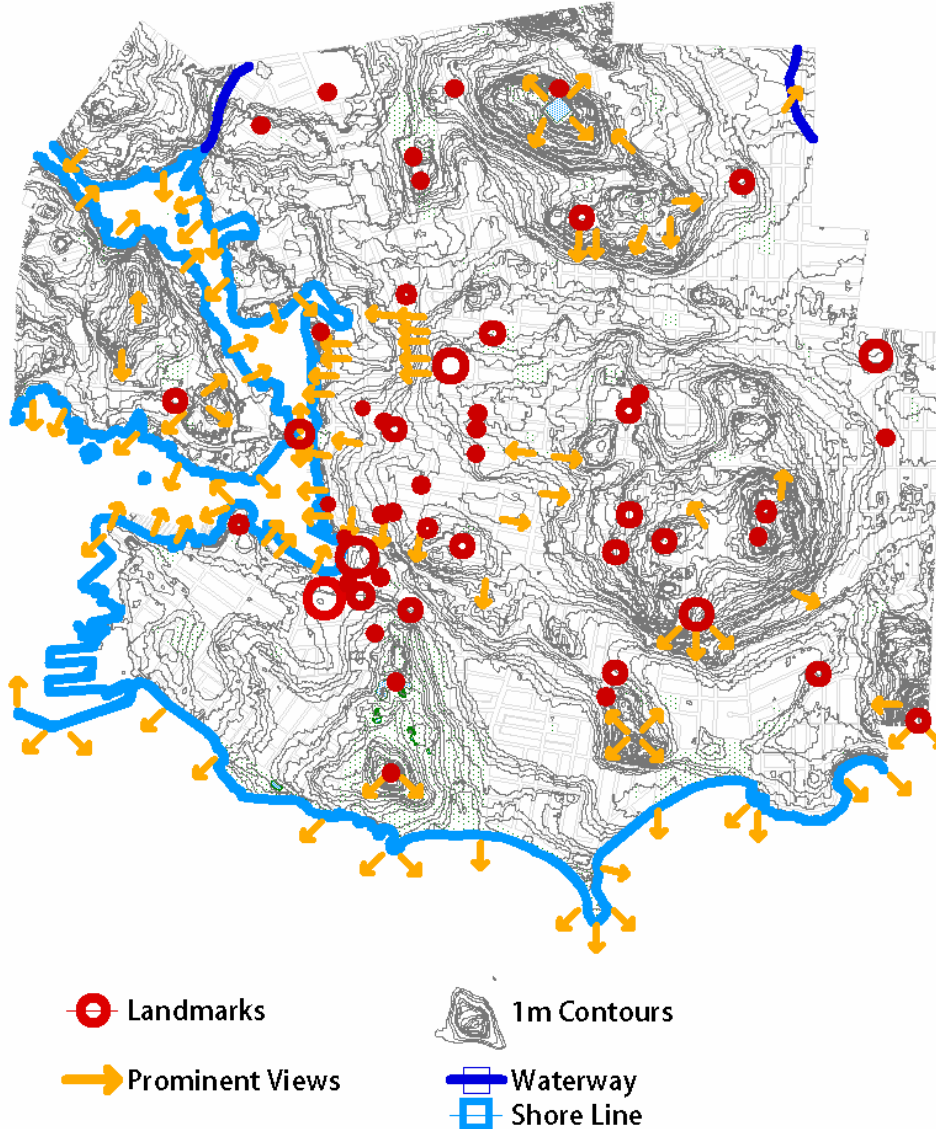
**b) Landmarks for Orientation, Identity and Sense of Place**

Prominent landmarks help to give orientation and a sense of identity to many neighbourhoods, such as Government House, the old Rockland water tower, and the cluster of churches along Quadra Street. Not all neighbourhoods have landmark features, but have significant visual anchors such as Victoria High School and Southpark School. Landmarks commonly occur in higher geographic locations or when sited in open areas, particularly when combined with architectural distinction and height, functioning as wayfinding markers to help provide legibility, to contribute to neighbourhood identity and to provide a sense of place.

The following Map 4 reveals how geographic setting influences urban design respecting the opportunity for views and the visibility of landmarks:

### Lessons Learned

Map 4: Geographic Features, Landmarks, Prominent Views



#### **c) *The Street System as the Organizing Element***

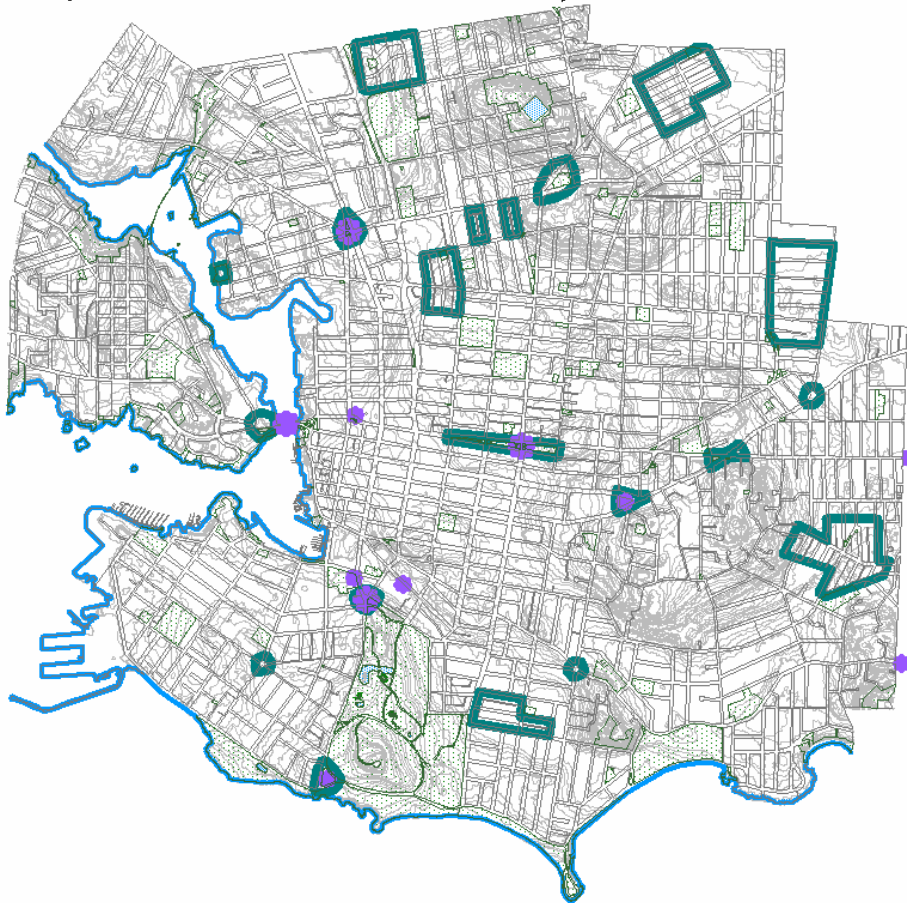
The street system of Victoria relates to both its geographic setting and to a gradual development over a century and a half. Neighbourhood street patterns are diverse, including typical grid patterns in some areas, as well as irregular patterns reflecting: historic pathways of First Nations people, cattle trails of the pioneer era, the horse cart and steam ship commercial lanes of the Victorian era, carriage and street-car line layouts of the early twentieth century and the private car-oriented cul-de-sac subdivisions of the mid-twentieth century.

Victoria’s street pattern reflects the influences of over one hundred years of history of urban planning theory and trends, including trading fort waterfront and palisade oriented lanes, to late Victorian commercial streets and alleys, to Edwardian Garden City grid blocks, to early twentieth century garage lanes, to mid-century cul-de-sacs, to early twenty-first century bike lanes and walking trails.

It was also observed that the points at which different street patterns come together create unusual intersections, such as the two “Dardanelles” at the Fort Street and Yates Street intersection, and the Fort Street and Oak Bay Avenue intersection. Intensive intersections where streets converge into “five points” at a few locations throughout the city exhibit the qualities that have the potential of major nodes or gateways.

**Lessons Learned**

**Map 5 : Distinctive Street Features, Gateways**



-  Distinctive Street Features
-  Gateways - in-place
-  - prospective
-  1m Contours

High volume traffic corridors sometimes act as edges that segregate some areas from others throughout many neighbourhoods - due to traffic volumes, excessive

width, lack of building or tree canopy definition, lack of cohesive design or the absence of streetscaping elements to fill in the spatial void of the corridor.

**d) Gateways**

At a city-wide level, there is only limited expression of gateways. Gateways marking the Downtown core area of the city, and gateways marking the arrival and departure from Victoria to adjacent municipalities are not well enunciated.


**e) Neighbourhood Enclaves**

The pattern of arterial, primary and secondary collector roads acting as edges to subdivide neighbourhoods, sets up an irregular cellular pattern of various sized “character areas” distributed throughout the city. These areas (some with commercial, light industrial, or institutional use; some with a variety of mixed uses; and many with exclusive residential occupancy) are often experienced as enclaves within the City, or within neighbourhoods. In many cases these enclaves have relatively little traffic penetration, and are accordingly quite quiet or tranquil.

**Lessons Learned**

**Map 6: Neighbourhood Enclaves**



 Neighbourhood Enclaves

**f) The Built Form**

Victoria contains many eras and forms of residential, commercial and institutional buildings that contribute to the overall character of the built environment. In Victoria there is a rich array of building typologies including single family and multi-family residences of a great variety of scales and designs, as well as small, medium and

large commercial and institutional buildings. Some residential districts and commercial areas are reflective of the late nineteenth century, and some of each decade of the twentieth century. Residential garden landscaping and associated ornamental or imported trees of a great variety of degrees of maturity also reflect the diversity of eras encompassed within the City's neighbourhoods. Moving around the City, it is possible to enjoy a diversity of precincts, some evoking the character of life one hundred years past, some recalling the 1920s, and some of post-war suburbia of the 1950s-1960s. A handful of locations, such as the Selkirk, the Railyards, and the Dockside projects express the evolving urbanism of the turn of the twenty-first century.

**g) *Linkages and Connectivity***

Quality pedestrian and cycling linkages were observed throughout Victoria in the form of pathways, bikeways and well-recognized pedestrian routes. However the marking of these routes with signage, street lanes, and lighting and landscape cues seemed sporadic and yet-to-be-completed. Similarly, the expression of the Greenways intended to provide linkages throughout the City also seems to await evolution. It was observed that some neighbourhood linkages did not continue strongly beyond adjacent neighbourhoods, with few clearly expressed linkages to Downtown. It was observed that many linkages could be improved to further enhance the overall system and encourage use. It was also noted that the points at which paths intersect at locations in proximity to structures of significance, provide the potential for future nodes.

**h) *Streetscaping and Public Art***

Neighbourhood identity can be achieved through landmark features, but also by emphasizing the individualistic elements of neighbourhoods such as domestic character, parks and greenspace, pathway systems, and popular village areas. The distinctiveness of districts can be enhanced with accent details such as areas of special streetscaping. On a city-wide basis the presence of public art is relatively sparse throughout Victoria. Diverse and plentiful public art can help to enunciate neighbourhood identity and vitality.

## **9.4. Conclusion**

The urban design policy content that was common among the case study cities of San Francisco, Toronto and Edinburgh and the urban design elements which were observed as part of the city-wide environmental scan, may offer urban design topic areas for exploration as part of the new OCP update.

The public is encouraged to consider this discussion paper, experience Victoria with these urban design principles and topic areas in mind, and ponder the following questions:

- What do you consider good urban design?
- How can urban design improve your quality of life?
- What improvements would you like to see in your neighbourhood?
- Are there particular urban design elements that seem under-expressed in specific neighbourhoods?

- How can urban design contribute to sustainability?

These questions and other urban design topic areas may be explored during the public consultation phase of the OCP update. Urban design enhancements can also contribute to the fulfilment of the VSF goals, as related to the key themes of *livability and social well being, ecological integrity, resiliency and economic vitality*, as urban design plays a role in all these themes.

Finally, the array of urban design elements that help to form the anatomy of Victoria can provide a broad context for contemplating, analyzing and appreciating a unique city, and also offer an interesting and useful platform for looking ahead to consider the City's challenges and prospects in the years to come.



