

TOWN OF HUNTSVILLE

Downtown Community Improvement Plan

September, 2010



The **Planning** Partnership



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Town of Huntsville

Downtown Community Improvement Plan

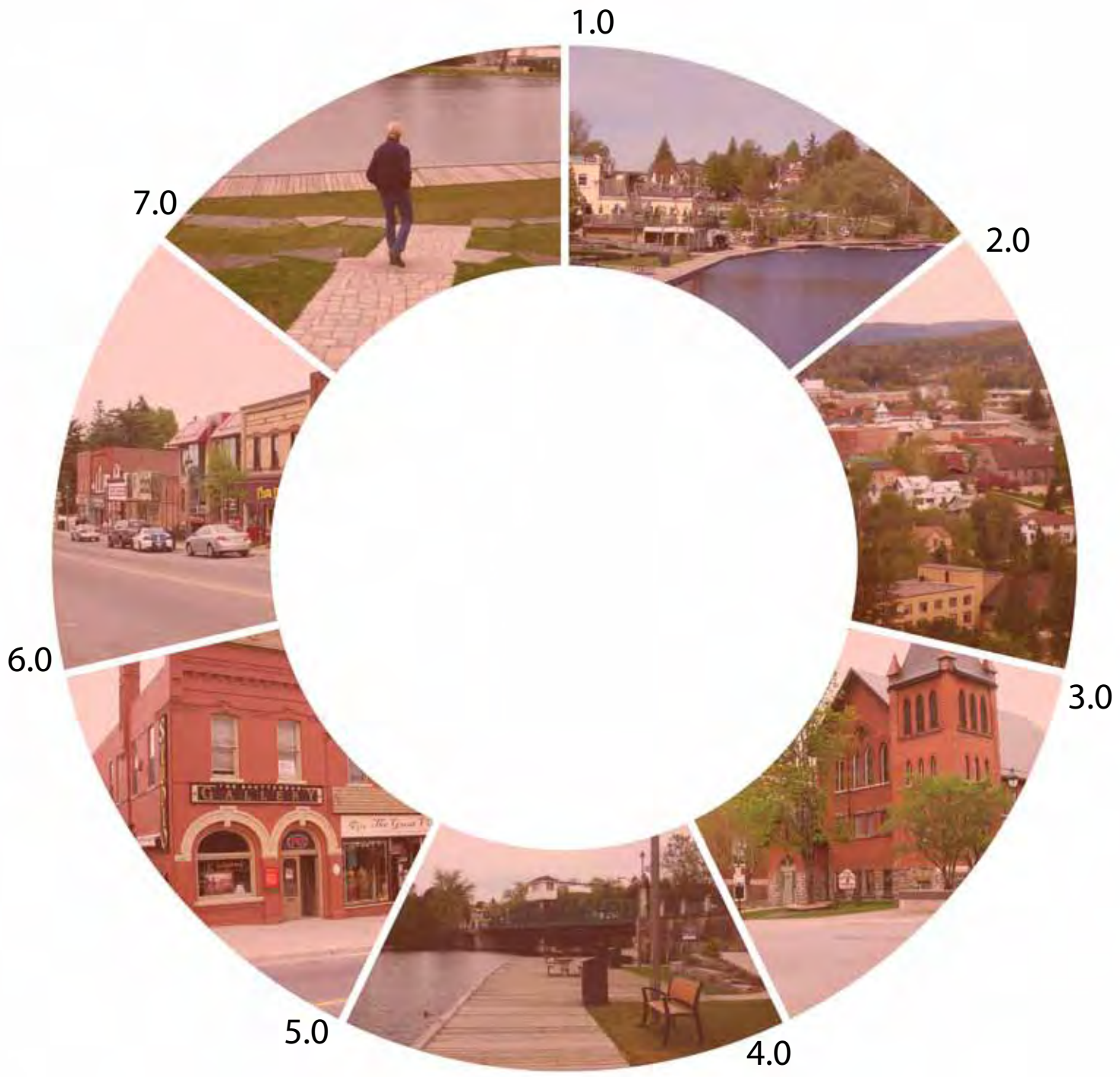


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Summary

The Downtown Huntsville Community Improvement Plan is intended to articulate the long term vision for Downtown Huntsville and to establish a comprehensive strategy for implementation. The Town has been receiving regular inquiries with regard to redevelopment of properties in Downtown Huntsville. Parking, the provision of affordable housing and the future of the Empire Hotel have been issues that require special attention prior to moving forward on individual plans. While the Official Plan includes general policies, the Town requires comprehensive guidelines for redevelopment. In addition, the Town requires policies regarding financial incentives to encourage the rehabilitation and improvement to private lands, as well as policies to encourage public/private partnerships.

An Interim Control Bylaw was passed in March 2010 for the Empire Hotel site. The intent was to allow a review of land use policies and Zoning By-law provisions to ensure the most appropriate redevelopment for these lands.

The Community Improvement Plan was prepared through an open and collaborative planning process. The consulting team set up a temporary design studio in Partner's Hall on May 11, 12 and 13 during which the community was invited to participate in downtown walks, one-on-one meetings, focus group meetings, open houses, presentations and workshops. The entire three-day workshop was open to the public at all times. The community was also invited to attend an information session on September 22, 2010 where the team presented the draft Community Improvement Plan.

The Community Improvement Plan sets out the design framework that locates green spaces and other urban open spaces, enhanced streetscapes, pedestrian connections, building edges, landmark and corner sites and gateways. A Demonstration Plan illustrates one scenario for the ultimate build out of the directions included on the Framework Plan. The Community Improvement Plan includes recommendations for streetscape improvements and design strategies for several focus areas: River Mill Park, Kent Square and the Empire Hotel.

General facade guidelines and urban design guidelines provide direction for property owners who are considering infill and intensification. They also provide a guide for Town staff when evaluating applications. The guidelines aim to maintain and reinforce the small town and human scaled character of Downtown Huntsville as defined by the buildings that line the street edge and the rhythm of narrow storefront.

The Community Improvement Plan identifies a number of grant and loan programs that promote redevelopment. The details of each program (such as eligible improvements, terms and conditions) will be determined once Council confirms the available funds for the programs.

A number of priority actions were identified:

- adopt this Community Improvement Plan as the framework for amending the Official Plan policies and Zoning By-law;*
- initiate detailed design of streetscape improvements to Main and Minerva Streets;*
- facilitate and promote redevelopment by assisting landowners with planning approvals to implement a streamlined approvals process;*
- continue to enforce property standards by-laws, require compliance with existing rules and regulations;*
- confirm the details of the funding programs and provide financial incentives to the private sector that help obviate the costs of redevelopment and other issues that make the financial feasibility of redevelopment difficult to achieve;*
- continue to evolve River Mill Park by upgrading the parking lot as a multi use*

parking plaza and initiating detailed design of the Market Square Arcade. The Town should form a special working group with property owners of Main Street buildings that back onto River Mill Park to establish methods of coordinating parking and service to enable the transformation of uses that front, face and feature the park and River;

- *initiate detailed design of Kent Square;*
- *initiate detailed design to close the north segment of River Street to create the River Walk promenade;*
- *enhance the mid block pedestrian connections; and,*
- *form a special working group with representatives from the Library and Arts Community to determine possibilities for programming space in the Empire Square redevelopment.*



Study Area



Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Community Improvement Plan

The Community Improvement Plan is intended to articulate the long term vision for Downtown Huntsville and to establish a comprehensive strategy for implementation. The Town has been receiving regular inquiries with regard to redevelopment of properties in Downtown Huntsville. Parking, the provision of affordable housing and the future of the Empire Hotel have been issues that require special attention prior to moving forward on individual plans. While the Official Plan includes general policies, the Town requires comprehensive guidelines for redevelopment. In addition, the Town requires policies regarding financial incentives to encourage the rehabilitation and improvement to private lands, as well as policies to encourage public/private partnerships.

Downtown Huntsville was selected for a Community Improvement Plan because it includes:

- Main street buildings that could benefit from funding programs to assist with facade improvement;
- buildings that back onto River Mill Park that could be adapted to provide an appealing face to the Park and waterfront;
- the site of the Empire Hotel that was seriously damaged in a fire, providing a key opportunity for redevelopment that can anchor this area of Downtown Huntsville;
- the potential to fill in the gaps in the continuity of buildings Downtown - to fill in the "missing teeth";
- the Municipal Library, where options for enhancement are being considered;
- the potential for intensification of existing buildings, particularly with residential uses; and,
- streetscape conditions that are in need of updating.

The boundaries of the Community Improvement Plan are indicated on the map on the facing page and include the areas generally bounded on the north by Caroline Street West and East and the north edge of River Mill Park, on the south by Minerva Street East and High Street, on the west by Lorne Street South and on the east by River Street. This area also corresponds to the boundaries of the Downtown Huntsville BIA.

An Interim Control Bylaw was passed in March 2010 for the Empire Hotel site - the block bounded by Main Street, Minerva Street, Centre Street and West Street, and well as the northern half of the block bounded by Minerva Street, Mary Street, Centre Street and West Street. The intent was to allow a review of land use policies and Zoning By-law provisions to ensure the most appropriate redevelopment for these lands.

This Community Improvement Plan describes the vision for Downtown Huntsville, direction for key sites and projects and comprehensive design guidelines. It provides the framework to update Official Plan policies with respect to the *Central Business District* and provisions in the Zoning By-law that will enable removal of the Interim Control By-law.

The Community Improvement Plan is organized to describe:

- the existing context;
- guiding principles;
- the urban design framework;
- key sites and projects;
- facade improvement guidelines;
- urban design guidelines;
- priority actions; and,
- programs for implementation.

1.2 Consultation Process

The Downtown Community Improvement Plan was prepared within the framework of an open and collaborative consultation program. In the initial stage of the project the consulting team set up a temporary design studio in the Civic Centre for three days on May 11, 12 and 13, 2010. The three day workshop included:

- a downtown walk with the consulting team to discuss site specific issues and opportunities for change;
- focused meetings with key groups, such as the BIA;
- one-on-one meetings;
- meetings with staff;
- open house; and,
- presentations.

The workshop enabled the team to prepare the framework of recommendations while working in the community with all those who were interested in participating. While the agenda included specific times for meetings, the workshop was always open to anyone who wanted to drop in to review the team's work in progress.

The community was also invited to attend an information session on September 22, 2010 where the team presented the draft Community Improvement Plan. The final Downtown Huntsville Community Improvement Plan has been amended to ensure the following comments received during the information session were addressed:

- make a pedestrian connection under the Main Street bridge;
- terrace the landscape from River Street to the River;
- ensure streetscape improvements accommodate truck turning at the difficult intersection of Brunel and Main Street;
- provide opportunities for green roofs;
- ensure streetscape improvements accommodate winter maintenance;
- need facilities to encourage winter use in parks;

- depending on height of the Empire block development, it could accommodate most of the demand for intensification in Huntsville, as opposed to spreading infill across 2-3 storey buildings;
- need to accommodate bicycles;
- too much truck traffic on Main Street; and,
- clarify the provision for parking when surface lots are redeveloped.

1.3 Background Documents

Many documents were reviewed as background to the preparation of the Downtown Community Improvement Plan, including:

- Community Master Plan, June 2008
- Community Improvement Plan, September 2003
- Create Huntsville Strategic Plan, September 2003
- Official Plan
- Zoning By-law
- Cultural Hub, Public Gallery and Art Space proposal
- Draft Unity Plan: Huntsville's Guide to a Sustainable Future, 2010
- Urban Design Guidelines for Commercial Areas, November 2002
- Huntsville Sign By-law 2009
- Draft Vision for a new Huntsville Public Library, April 2010



2.0

Existing Context

2.1 Context

The Study Area is located in the centre of Huntsville, comprising the community’s historic downtown. The Study Area is easily accessed from the highways with connections at Main Street West, West Street and King William Street. Brunel Road provides a link to the recently completed Canada Summit Centre, University of Waterloo Research Centre and Conroy Park (new facilities for soccer, tennis and track) south of the Study Area.



Context of the Study Area in the Town

2.2 Planning Framework

Land Use

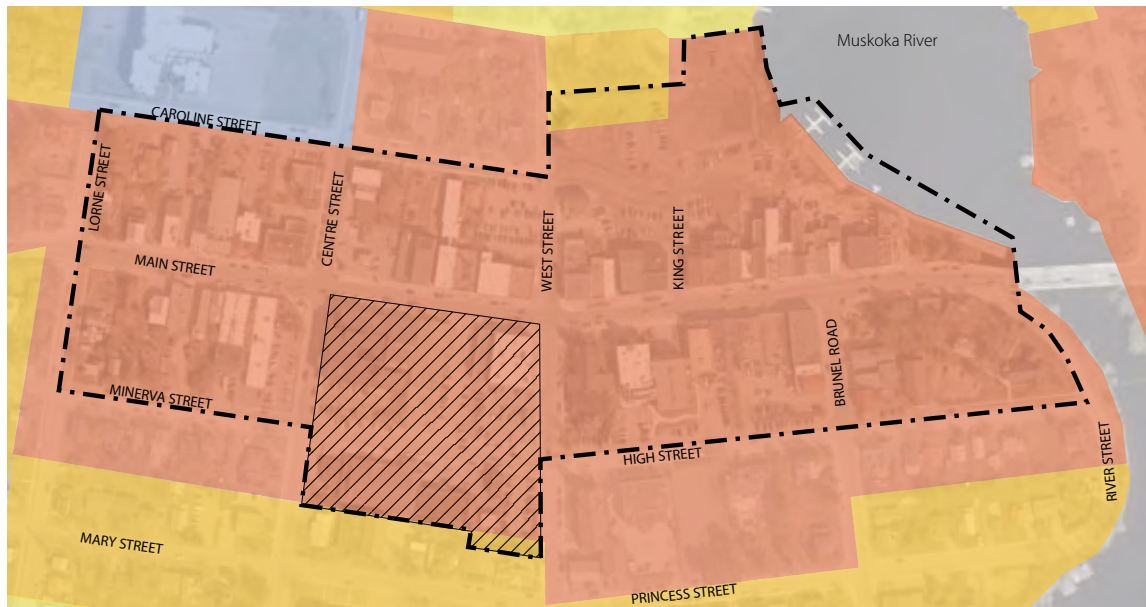
Existing land use in the Study Area is predominantly mixed use in character. Single-use residential and commercial buildings also exist, as do institutional uses (including the Town Hall, Library, Post Office and several churches), and open space.

The Official Plan designates virtually the entire Study Area as “Central Business District” (which is associated with mixed uses). Policies already provide good direction with respect to:

- the need for a variety of retail, office, institutional and cultural uses;
- enhancing the diverse character areas in the Central Business District;
- coordinating development with streetscape and facades with a view to preserving or enhancing the appearance of the heritage area;
- development and redevelopment of properties to physically enhance the Central Business District for pedestrian use;
- establishing an integrated pedestrian walkway and open space system;
- consistency of building setbacks;
- no front yard parking; and,
- strategic location of private and public off-street parking.

Lands located along the boundary of the Central Business District are recognized for their function as transition zones between commercial and residential areas, allowing for the gradual and natural expansion of the Central Business District. These policies already provide direction for redevelopment envisioned on Minerva, High and Caroline Street:

- the conversion of single detached residential uses to multiple unit residential or commercial uses, providing that the overall appearance and character of the neighbourhood is maintained;
- appropriate uses including residential and small scale commercial, administration or institutional uses such as offices, personal service and specialty commercial;
- higher density residential uses.



Official Plan Land Use

- Central Business District
- Residential
- Residential Multiple
- Institutional
- Study Area
- Interim Control Bylaw

2003 Community Improvement Plan

The Town's 2003 Community Improvement Plan included Downtown Huntsville as one of three distinct areas. The Plan was based on objectives to encourage the continued vitality and economic viability of the core, stimulate new investment, encourage consistency in urban design and signage, create an attractive image of the Town, reinforce the commercial core as a focus for the Town, and improve connections to provide incentives for rehabilitation on Main Street. That Plan identified Community Incentive Programs for planning and design, building facade improvements, improved signage, landscaping and property improvement, application fees, property tax and heritage buildings. It also identified public works projects such as street lighting on Main Street from Lorne to John Streets and along the waterfront, streetscape improvements, reconstruction of Muskoka Road 3, the waterfront trail and development of the park on the former Planing Mills lands. These public works projects have been implemented.

Zoning Bylaw

The Zoning Bylaw designates most of the Study Area “C2” (Commercial, but permitting mixed use). The remaining lands are designated “R1,” “R2,” (Residential) “IN” (Institutional) and “OS” (Open Space).

The following uses are permitted:

- adult entertainment establishment
- artisan’s studio
- bar
- cinema or movie theatre
- contractor’s establishment
- DSTM retail store
- education institution
- financial establishment
- food store
- garden centre
- health services
- heavy equipment rentals
- home improvement centre
- laundromat/dry cleaners (if it exists at the time of passing the By-law)
- market
- marina
- motor vehicle dealership
- motor vehicle service station
- motor vehicle washing establishment
- nursing home
- personal service establishment
- place of assembly
- private park
- recreational establishment
- residential care facility
- restaurant
- retail store
- service establishment
- tourist establishment
- tourist home
- transportation services
- variety and convenience store
- veterinary clinic

The following uses are not permitted:

- kennel
- motor vehicle body shop
- institutional tourist establishment
- self storage facility
- shopping centre
- tourist camping establishment

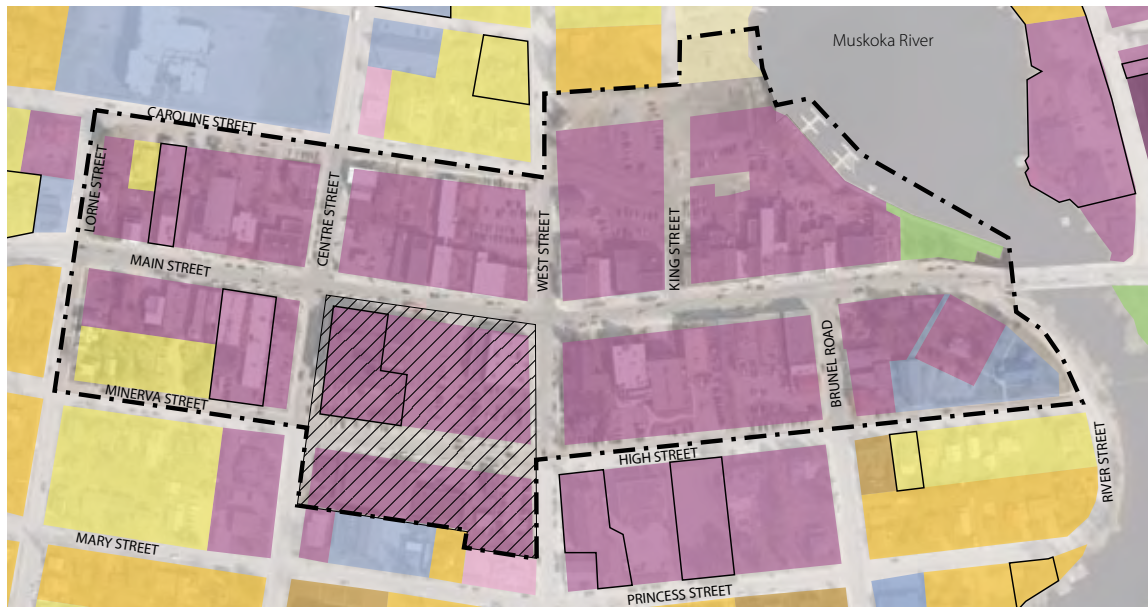
Dwelling units are only permitted as accessory on the second or above floors on commercially zones lands up to a maximum of 1 dwelling unit for each 167 sq. m of lot area. This will have to be amended to accommodate development envisioned in the Demonstration Concept Plan.

The Zoning Bylaw currently has the following standards for C2 lands:

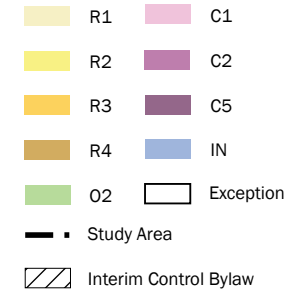
- no requirement for a side yard, rear yard or front yard;
- 100% lot coverage providing all parking and landscape requirements are met;
- 7m lot frontage;
- 230 sq. m lot area;
- 11 m building height (approximately 3 storeys); and,
- 5% minimum landscape area.

The standards for the C2 zone will have to be amended to accommodate residential uses and increased density to help support a vibrant mixed use Downtown.

The table on the facing page summarizes some of the current requirements for parking in the Zoning Bylaw for uses in the C2 designation. It will be important to balance the supply of parking in concert with redevelopment through a comprehensive approach. The heritage assets and fine grained road and pattern of property ownership make it difficult to provide adequate on-site parking in all cases. The valuable role that parking plays in a strong downtown is not questioned. The whole pool of available parking - on street, off street, private and public - needs to be considered as a shared resource when reconsidering these parking standards to encourage redevelopment in Downtown Huntsville.



Zoning



USE

PARKING SPACE

street townhouses	2/unit
multiple dwelling/apartment	1.5/unit
dwelling unit in a commercial building	1/unit
residential care facility/seniors/retirement	1 unit or room plus 1/100 sq.m of used for medical
institutional/places of assembly/cinema/theatre	1/25 sq.m of GFA or one/4 seats, whichever is more
health services	1/25 sq.m of GFA or one/4 seats, whichever is more
restaurant	1/5 people that can be accommodated at one time; no extra parking req/d for outdoor patio
retail	1/25 sq.m of GFA plus 1/50 sq.m of storage area
office/financial institution	1/28 sq.m of GFA

Interim Control By-law

The Town passed an Interim Control By-law for the Empire Hotel site and lands on the south side of Minerva Street. The purpose is to enable the completion of a study with respect to land use planning policies and Zoning By-law provisions to ensure the appropriate redevelopment of the lands. The Zoning Bylaw currently has the following parking provisions for some of the key permitted uses in the C2 designation.

Built Form

The prevailing built form along Main Street is characterized as primarily one to three-storey, flat-roofed structures with storefronts at grade, and apartments or offices located above. The buildings have little or no setback from the right-of-way. Away from Main Street, one to three storey house forms are predominant. These buildings typically have sloped roofs and are set back varying distances from the right-of-way.

The Study Area's tallest building is located on Centre Street, immediately south of Main Street. With high floor to ceiling heights, the building is in the order of 20 m in height, although it only has 4 storeys along Centre Street. It was seriously damaged in the Empire Hotel fire and is anticipated to be redeveloped. In addition to the more typical buildings, the Study Area includes a number of unique structures such as churches and public buildings.

The maps on the facing page are an assessment of the quality of buildings in the study area and the corresponding redevelopment potential.

An inventory of the building stock in the Study Area was undertaken to assess the level of quality with respect to positively contributing to the streetscape and built character of Downtown Huntsville. Specifically, facades were examined to assess aspects such as authenticity of the architectural style, quality of alternations to original buildings, quality of the storefronts, signage character, as well as general upkeep and maintenance. This assessment is especially helpful for prioritizing and directing municipal initiatives such as a façade improvement program or for heritage grants. The assessment identified the following three categories:

○ **Landmark Quality** buildings are in good condition and possess landmark qualities due to their distinct architecture, visual prominence and in most cases historic significance. These buildings are immediately identifiable and are generally associated with institutional uses such as churches and public buildings. They are priorities for protection and maintenance, as well as being candidates for heritage designation, if they do not already hold this status.

○ **Good Quality** buildings are in good condition and contribute positively to the Downtown environment. This quality may be due to either

being well maintained over the years or the result of renovations in a manner respectful to the original façade and/or improving upon it. Characteristics include high quality materials such as brick, stone and wood; transparent and animated storefronts, high quality door and window treatments, traditional high quality signage and other design details such as cornice lines, window shutters and awnings. Some of these buildings may have heritage significance and ought to be listed or designated to ensure future changes are respectful of any historic elements.

○ Buildings in the **Opportunity for Improvement** category may or may not be in good condition, but in some way detract from the quality of the streetscape and the Downtown experience. This may be due to neglect or damage, designs not in keeping with the character of the area, unappealing storefronts, blank walls, brash signage, or façade treatments of poor design or material quality (such as stucco or corrugated steel siding) that may also be concealing original high quality façades. These buildings are identified as priorities for directing improvements.

An inventory of the properties in the Study Area was undertaken to assess the potential for short, medium and long-term development or redevelopment. Although not intended to identify with certainty or even require that development occur in these locations, this analysis helps to reveal potential sites for infill, logical patterns for property consolidation, as well as sites with existing buildings that may have attributes worth retaining if ever redeveloped.

○ **Short Term** sites are currently vacant or unused and are candidates for immediate to short-term development opportunities.

○ **Medium Term** sites are currently under-used, such as one-storey commercial buildings, houses, and large areas devoted to private surface parking lots.

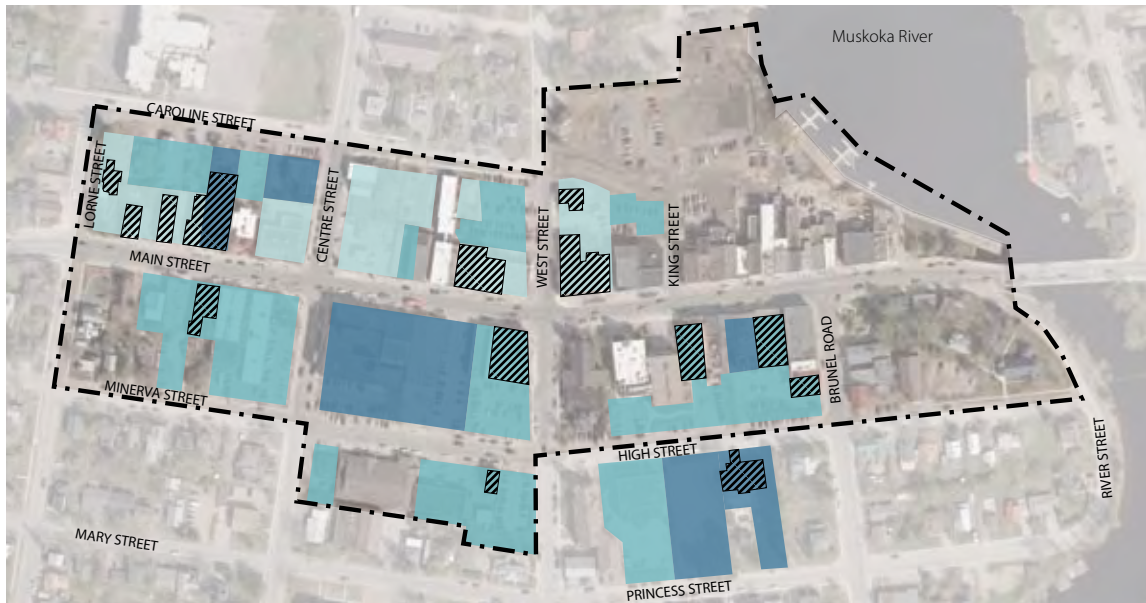
○ **Long-Term** sites contain more significant buildings and/or uses but are not of an optimum built form quality. They may be potential long-term redevelopment sites given their strategic locations and under the right conditions.

○ **Building of Interest** sites are identified for potential development and contain buildings that also potentially have merit for retention because of evidence of heritage value. This value should be determined with further study. Where heritage value is confirmed, those defining aspects should be retained and integrated into any potential development on that site.



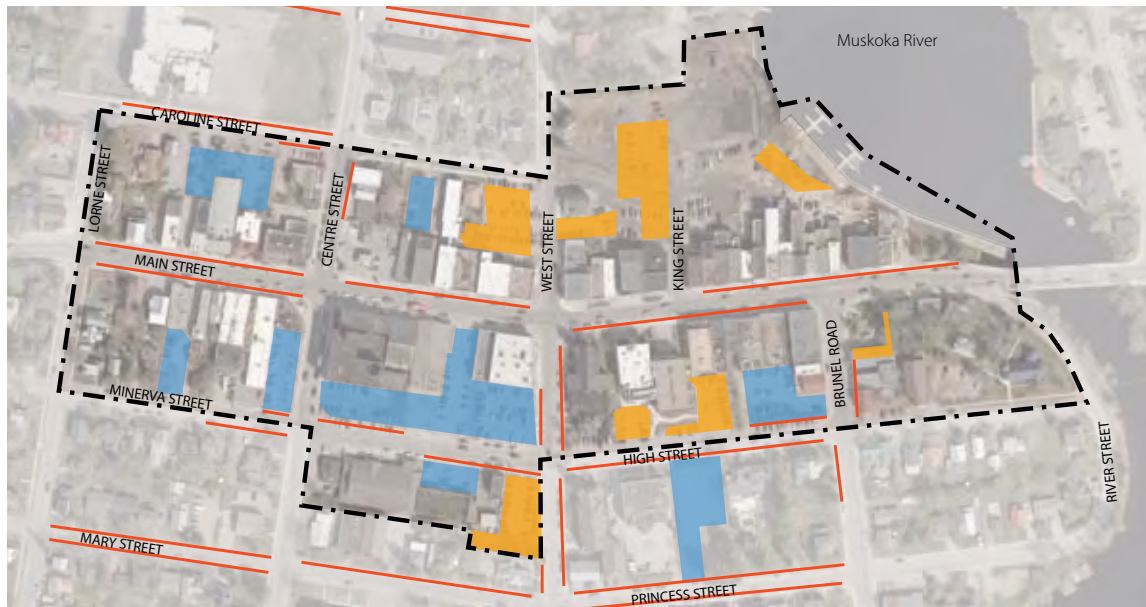
Building Quality

- Landmark Quality
- Good Quality
- Opportunity for Improvement
- Study Area



Development Potential

- Short Term
- Medium Term
- Long Term
- Building of Interest
- Study Area



Parking

- Public On-Street Parking
- Public Off-Street Parking
- Private Off-Street Parking
- Study Area

2.3 Streets and Parking

Streets

Streets are essentially arranged in a modified grid pattern. This pattern is distinguished by an angular shift at West Street. The shift, in combination with accommodations for sloping topography on each side of the Study Area, has given Main Street a unique, winding character. A relatively steep slope downward toward the water also contributes to the character of streets in the Study Area.

The higher-level arterial streets are Main Street (District Road 3) and Brunel Road (District Road 2). All other streets are local. Centre Street divides Huntsville, and streets are suffixed “East” and “West” on each side of it. All streets have two lanes of traffic and are two-way, with the exception of River Street which is one way north from High Street to Main Street.

The quality of the streetscapes varies across the Downtown. While streetscaping efforts are evident on Main Street, primarily through landscaping, pedestrian lighting and furnishings, all other streets generally lack pedestrian amenities or design features. Most streets lack continuous tree planting or landscaping, demarcated crosswalks, and furnishings.

Parking

On-Street Public Parking is located throughout in the Study Area: Main, Caroline, Minerva, Mary, High, Princess, Centre and West Streets and Brunel Road. On-street parking lanes are demarcated with painted lines but the overall visual impact is of oversized roadways.

Eight off-street public parking areas of varying size are located in the Study Area. The most substantial parking area is grouped around the intersection of Queen and King Streets. Another large parking area is at Queen and West Streets.

There are eight private parking lots serving downtown Huntsville businesses. The most substantial private parking area is located on Minerva Street, spanning the entire block between Centre and West streets. Other significant private parking areas are located on Caroline and High Streets.

Surface parking lots appear as expansive asphalt areas that are exposed to the streets, which are visually unappealing gaps in the streetscape.



Parks, Community Facilities and Heritage

- Park
- Community/Government Facilities
- Official Plan Designated Built Heritage
- Significant Heritage Buildings
- Study Area

2.4 Parks, Community Facilities and Heritage

Four public parks are located in the Study Area, in addition to a number of significant green spaces associated with the Huntsville Public School, Trinity United Church and the All Saints' Anglican Church.

River Mill Park is the largest public park in the Downtown and is located north of Queen Street on the Muskoka River. This recently constructed public space sits on the former mill site and provides the Downtown with a significant gathering space and publicly accessible waterfront. The park currently lacks a well-defined urban edge, is disconnected from the Town Dock Park and is exposed to the rear of buildings fronting on Main Street.

The Town Dock Park is a relatively new and well-designed space that includes landscaped areas and a boat docking area that also functions like a boardwalk on the riverfront.

The Civic Centre includes a modest forecourt on Main Street that provides for a pleasant paved and landscaped area, as well as seating.



River Mill Park



Trinity United Church



All Saints Anglican Church



Town Dock

Kent Park is located at the key intersection of Main Street and Brunel Road. Although well landscaped and contains an information centre, it appears to be under utilized given its strategic location. This may be a result of its minimal programming and lack of interface with the adjacent buildings.

Being the core of Huntsville, the Study Area naturally contains a number of community or government facilities. These include the Huntsville Town Hall, the Huntsville Library, the Post Office, as well as Trinity United Church and All Saints' Anglican Church.

The Huntsville Library has explored options for expansion. Their assessment addresses the following needs:

- a more welcoming street presence;
- study and work areas;
- comfortable seating;
- space to create;
- space to display;
- meeting space; and,
- support space.

Their initial ideas have explored the idea of a new library housed in a new building that could also include retail and housing.

Immediately beyond the Study Area boundaries are Huntsville Public School, the Huntsville Curling Club, as well as St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, St. Mary's Catholic Roman Church and the Salvation Army Church.

The Town Hall and a building that formerly housed *The Forester* (a storefront on Main Street) are the only heritage-protected buildings in the Study area. Not far beyond its boundaries, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Hart House and the Bandshell are also protected. It is highly probable that there are other buildings in the Study Area that have heritage significance, but have not yet been identified.

3.0

Guiding Principles

The six principles of the Community Improvement Plan are broad, yet tangible objectives for shaping future growth in a manner that is compatible with the character and qualities of Downtown Huntsville.



Mixed use infill development in downtown Brantford

Living Downtown

A key principle of the Community Improvement Plan is to provide more housing downtown in higher density forms of both rental and ownership. A permanent population of residents is imperative to support the shops and services in the area in all times and seasons, to create a vibrant street life and to ensure safe streets and spaces. It also ensures that Huntsville will become a community in which people can remain throughout the stages of their lives.

Pedestrians First

Beautiful, well-designed and safe streets will invite people to explore the shops, restaurants and services of Downtown Huntsville. Convenient parking, well marked pedestrian routes and appealing streetscapes will nurture the culture of walking in Downtown Huntsville. This does not imply that traffic is not also to critical to the success of Downtown. It keeps it alive 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The key is a balanced environment with slow moving traffic, through a pedestrian focused environment.



Destinations as Anchors

While Downtown Huntsville is a destination in itself, there are also a number of specific facilities and features that function as attractions for visitors and residents. A key principle of the Community Improvement Plan is to enhance and reinforce existing destinations such as River Mill Park, Town Dock Park, the library, Civic Centre and the Algonquin Theatre as well as to create new attractions.



Beautiful Downtown

A town designed with beautiful civic spaces, parks, streets, buildings will generate civic pride, create economic value and create a lasting impression for visitors. A key principle is to provide



the planning framework, guidelines and tools to help create beautiful buildings and spaces.

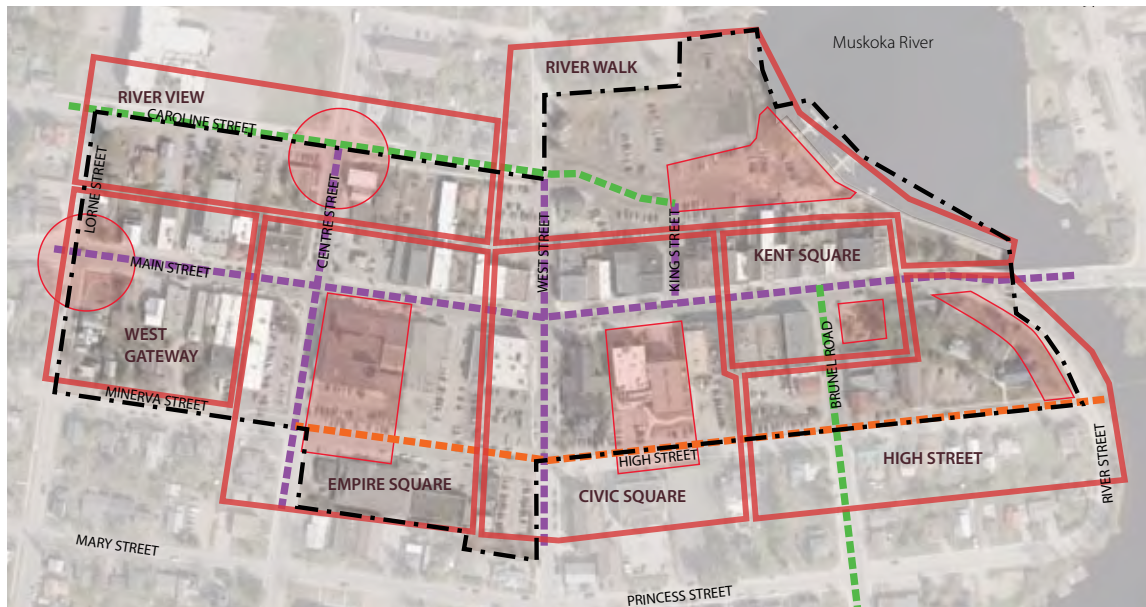
Hub for Arts and Culture

Huntsville is recognized as a centre for arts and culture. With the recently completed Algonquin Theatre, the town hosts many performances every year. The Study Area is also the location of several festivals, including Art in the Park, and the Festival of the Arts, Concerts on the Dock and the Jazz Festival. There are several art galleries in the Study Area and shops where creative works are sold. A key principle of the Community Improvement Plan is to support and strengthen Downtown Huntsville as a hub for arts and culture.

Connected

The rest of the town and especially the surrounding neighbourhoods are the lifeblood of the Downtown. Reinforcing visual and physical connectivity to these areas and encouraging people to come Downtown more often by foot, bike or boat is a key principle. Wayfinding strategies, connected trails and splendid streetscapes can also serve to better link and leverage the Downtown with other near by destinations such as the Summit Centre and University of Waterloo Research Centre.





Character and Anchor Areas

- Character Area
- Anchors
- Retail Street
- Cultural Common
- Green Promenade Street
- Study Area

3.1 Character Areas and Streets

Defining Character Areas helps to understand the Downtown as being comprised of several distinct parts that may have differing functions and characteristics, but that complement each other to create the Downtown experience. As different areas vary in their strengths, weaknesses and potential, Character Areas also serve to guide decisions accordingly. Character Areas were identified based on an assessment of the area's land use and form and the character of buildings and open spaces. Seven Character Areas were defined:

- River View
- River Walk
- West Gateway
- Empire Square
- Civic Square
- High Street
- Kent Park

Each of these Character Areas may include existing or potential focus areas that serve to provide the Downtown with a collection of destination anchors to stimulate pedestrian circulation throughout the area. Furthermore, the Character Areas and their anchors are linked together by Character Streets that are designated for specific uses or treatments according to their potential.

The following is a summary description of the features and conditions in each Character Area and the key opportunities for enhancement.

River View

- defined by the unfettered views to the Muskoka River and Hunters Bay
- the location of Huntsville Public School and St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church
- only a few street-facing houses, with the remaining frontage dominated by the rear yards of buildings that face Main Street
- the objectives for this Character Area are to enhance the streetscape to help to define the edge of the parking, loading and service areas on the south side of the street and to enhance the Centre and Caroline Street intersection

- in addition, a key objective is to enhance the bus pick up and drop off functions at the Public School

River Walk

- this Character Area is defined by and focused on the recently completed River Mill Park and water's edge along the Muskoka River
- the Area also includes the rear facades of the Main Street buildings.
- the objective for this Character Area is to continue to create River Mill Park and, in particular, to complete the resolution of the water's edge and to enhance the redevelopment of the rear facades to provide an appealing and active face to the Park

West Gateway

- the West Gateway defines the entrance to Downtown Huntsville from Lorne Street where there is a long view down the hill
- the street wall created by the facade of buildings is not as consistent on this part of Main Street as it is east of Centre Street
- buildings are located with variable setbacks and are variable in terms of form and quality
- the objective for this Character Area is to enhance the streetscape and to enhance the building character by filling in the "gaps"
- another objective is to strengthen the gateway to Downtown Huntsville which is the focus for this Area

Empire Square

- this Character Area is defined by and focused on the Empire Block and the adjoining buildings
- the Area includes the four corners at the intersection with Centre Street, including the gas station
- the Huntsville Library on Minerva Street is also included in this Character Area
- an objective for this Area is to enhance the visual prominence of this important intersection and to encourage the appropriate redevelopment of the Empire Hotel with buildings that complement the character and form of Downtown Huntsville, while serving as a catalyst for revitalizing the western part of Downtown



North west corner of Main and Centre Streets



Empire Block - South east corner of Main and Centre Streets



South west corner of Main and Centre Streets



North east corner of Main and Centre Streets

- another objective is to provide pedestrian mid-block connections and public space in the redevelopment of the block to ensure a link to Minerva and the library and other facilities located on this street.

Civic Square

- this Character Area is defined by and focused on the Civic Centre, the municipal offices and the Algonquin Theatre
- it includes Trinity United Church and businesses on Main Street
- this Area exhibits some of the best qualities of Downtown Huntsville with landmark buildings, and beautiful two storey buildings with ground floor retail and upper floors of residential or office uses
- an objective for this Area is to continue to reinforce the function of the Civic Centre as a key destination in Huntsville
- this Area also has some buildings that are out of character with the majority of buildings in this block
- an objective for this Area is to reinforce and leverage the heritage building character of this segment of Main Street through facade and urban design guidelines that will direct modest change
- there are infill and development opportunities on High Street
- there is an opportunity to provide flexible sidewalk space to accommodate spill-over activity from retail uses in the form of outdoor display space or small patios
- another objective is to enhance the streetscape, while still providing on-street parking



Main Street at King Street



High Street

- the High Street Character Area is located at the east end of High Street and includes River Street
- this Area includes All Saints' Anglican Church with single detached houses on the south side, facing the church grounds
- High Street has a steep grade at the intersection with Brunel Road
- River Street is a one way street from Minerva to Main Street
- an objective for this Area is to enhance the connection to the River and to Main Street
- there is a tremendous opportunity to create a public space and focus for this Area on River Street by closing the section between Brunel and Main to traffic.



River Street north of High Street



High Street

Kent Square

- the Kent Square Character Area is defined by and focused on the parkette at the corner of Brunel Road and Main Street
- the parkette is currently under used and there is an opportunity to have abutting buildings and uses front, face and feature the parkette and Main Street
- the parkette has a landscape that visually conceals parts of the space undermining its safety
- there is an opportunity to reconsider parking and access along the interior edge of the parkette in favour of having adjacent buildings create doors and activity that enhances park use and takes advantage of the amenity of being next to a park



Main Street, east of Brunel Road



Kent Park

Character Streets

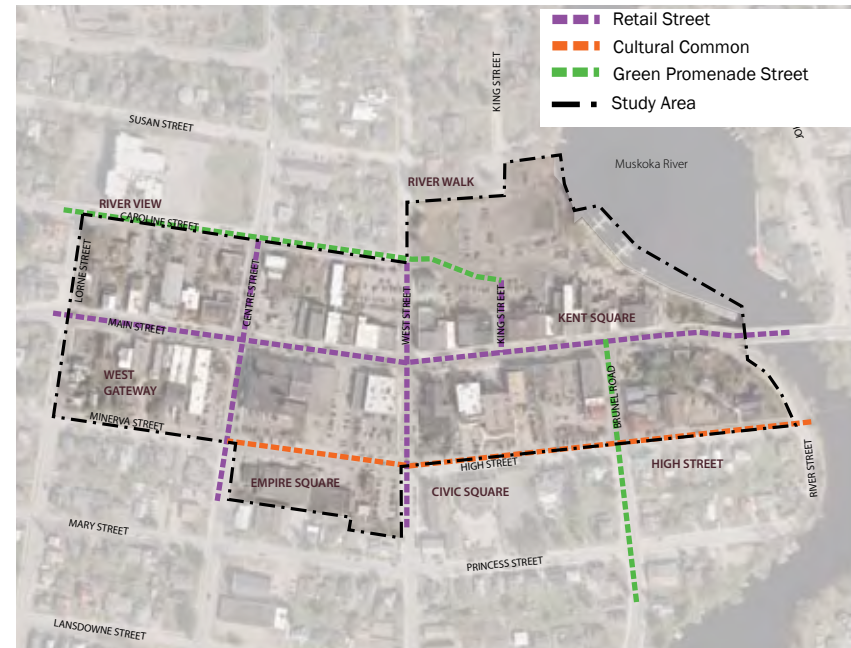
There are three key Character Streets identified for the Downtown:

Retail Streets include Main Street, Centre Street, West Street and King Street where continuous at-grade retail should be required or encouraged, supported by streetscapes that include broad sidewalks, sidewalk cafes, places to sit, and continuous street trees.

Cultural Streets include the corridor comprised of Minerva Street and High Street that links a number of key public destinations. It is a logical location for additional cultural attractions supported by a distinctive streetscape that includes unique paving, lighting and signage within a campus-like treed and landscaped setting.

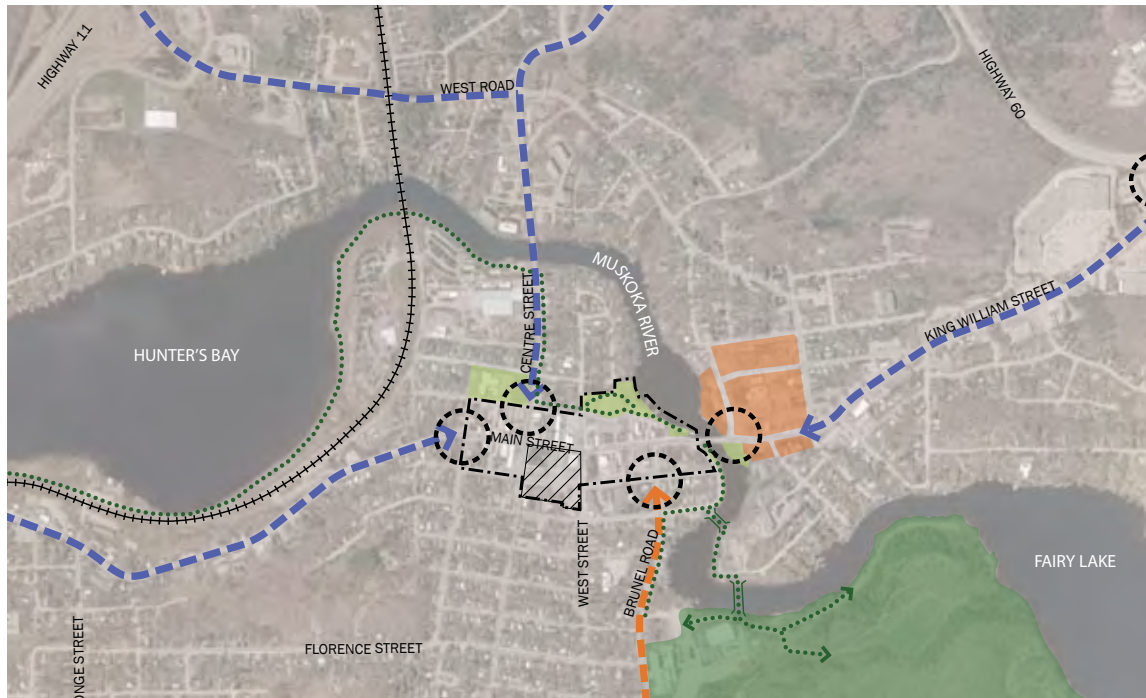
Green Promenade Streets include streets that are more residential in character but that also serve as important potential pedestrian links to, or through, the Downtown. They should be reinforced through an enhanced sidewalk treatment, unique signage and where possible a double row of trees. These streets include Caroline Street and Queen Street as a key link to the Muskoka River and Hunters Bay; Lorne Street as a link to Main Street and Huntsville Public School; and Brunel Road as the key link to the Summit Centre, University of Waterloo Research Centre and adjacent community and recreational uses.

Character Streets



4.0

Urban Design Framework



Context Urban Design Framework



The urban design framework for the Community Improvement Plan was developed during the three-day workshop in Huntsville. The framework reflects the intent to protect the defining qualities of Downtown Huntsville and to identify and demonstrate the opportunities for change. The Demonstration Concept Plan on the facing page is a compilation of the key initiatives that were explored during the workshop. This chapter describes the design framework according to:

- the relation to town-wide initiatives;
- the over arching urban design structure;
- streetscape improvements; and,
- key initiatives.

The Downtown Huntsville Community Improvement Area is central to the town and an important destination from all directions. Several recently completed projects serve as critical building blocks to the ongoing enhancement of Downtown Huntsville. The Town recently completed streetscape improvements on District Road 3/Main Street/King William Road, created the urban square on Main Street at the entrance to the Civic Centre, acquired the Huntsville Planing Mills property, created River Mill Park and partnered in the creation of the Trans Canada trail along Hunter's Bay to and beyond the train station.

The Summit Campus was created in preparation for the 2010 G8 Summit. Major renovations to the Town's arena and community centre were completed in advance of the G8. The Canada Summit Centre created a new façade for the Centennial Centre, as well as an impressive entry way and lobby, improvements to the pool area and the addition of a new Olympic



size multi use arena. In the fall of 2010, the facility will add a full time café, a fitness facility as well as multi-use spaces. In addition, the Active Living Centre is slated for a late fall completion, which will be constructed on the east side of the centre and feature a large facility for seniors, youth organizations as well as a main floor banquet facility.

The University of Waterloo, in partnership with the Town of Huntsville and the federal government, created world-class research and learning facility for environmental and ecological sustainability. The UW Summit Centre for the Environment will deliver undergraduate and graduate courses in such areas as ecosystem resilience, strategic environmental assessment, sustainable tourism, environmental planning and green business. Endeavors undertaken at the Centre will include research, teaching, training and conferences. The centre will service students, government agencies, universities, consultants and non-governmental organizations. Up to 3,000 researchers and students will use the facility annually.

A new soccer facility was also recently completed in the Summit Campus, further solidifying the importance of this area as a recreational, educational, cultural and research hub.

Continued improvements to key streetscapes, gateways treatments and enhanced trail connections can help to further reinforce the importance of the Downtown while enhancing connectivity to the surrounding areas. Furthermore, Brunel Road presents a tremendous opportunity to create a 'ceremonial promenade' to visually and physically link the Downtown to the nearby Summit Campus, while creating a splendid environment for walking and cycling between them.

4.1 Urban Design Structure

The Urban Design Structure Plan defines an overarching framework for guiding future development and public realm improvements in Downtown Huntsville. The primary objective is to reinforce the area's defining built character, and to ensure that new development responds to civic design opportunities and contributes to a coherent, integrated and appealing Downtown. As changes in the Downtown will occur incrementally and over the long-term, the Urban Design Structure Plan serves to coordinate municipal decision-making and provide predictability with respect to important characteristics that development ought to consider according to the unique attributes of the site and street character.

The following describes the key elements of the Urban Design Structure Plan. These elements are also consistent with, and supported by, the design guidelines contained in this report.



Green Space

- Downtown Huntsville has a number of publicly accessible Green Spaces associated with parks and public uses such as churches and schools.
- Green Spaces work in concert with Streetscapes and hardscape Plazas to create a network of public open spaces and amenities.
- To better balance the distribution of Green Space, a new potential site may be considered in association with the redevelopment of the Empire Hotel block.
- Green Spaces are intended to provide both passive and active spaces for leisure, recreation and community gatherings and to give visual respite



Hardscape Plaza

- Hardscape Plazas are multi-purpose, distinctively paved spaces that are often associated with highly active and animated uses or important civic functions.
- These spaces can accommodate high volumes of pedestrian traffic and are most suitable for major events, festivals and outdoor markets.
- In some cases these spaces design integrate roadways, surface parking and servicing areas so that when an event is held and closed off to vehicular traffic, they have the visual appearance of a European-inspired plaza.

- Hardscape Plazas are characterized by distinctive paving treatments and may include trees, landscaped areas and pedestrian amenities such as seating. The following Hardscape Plazas are identified for the Downtown:

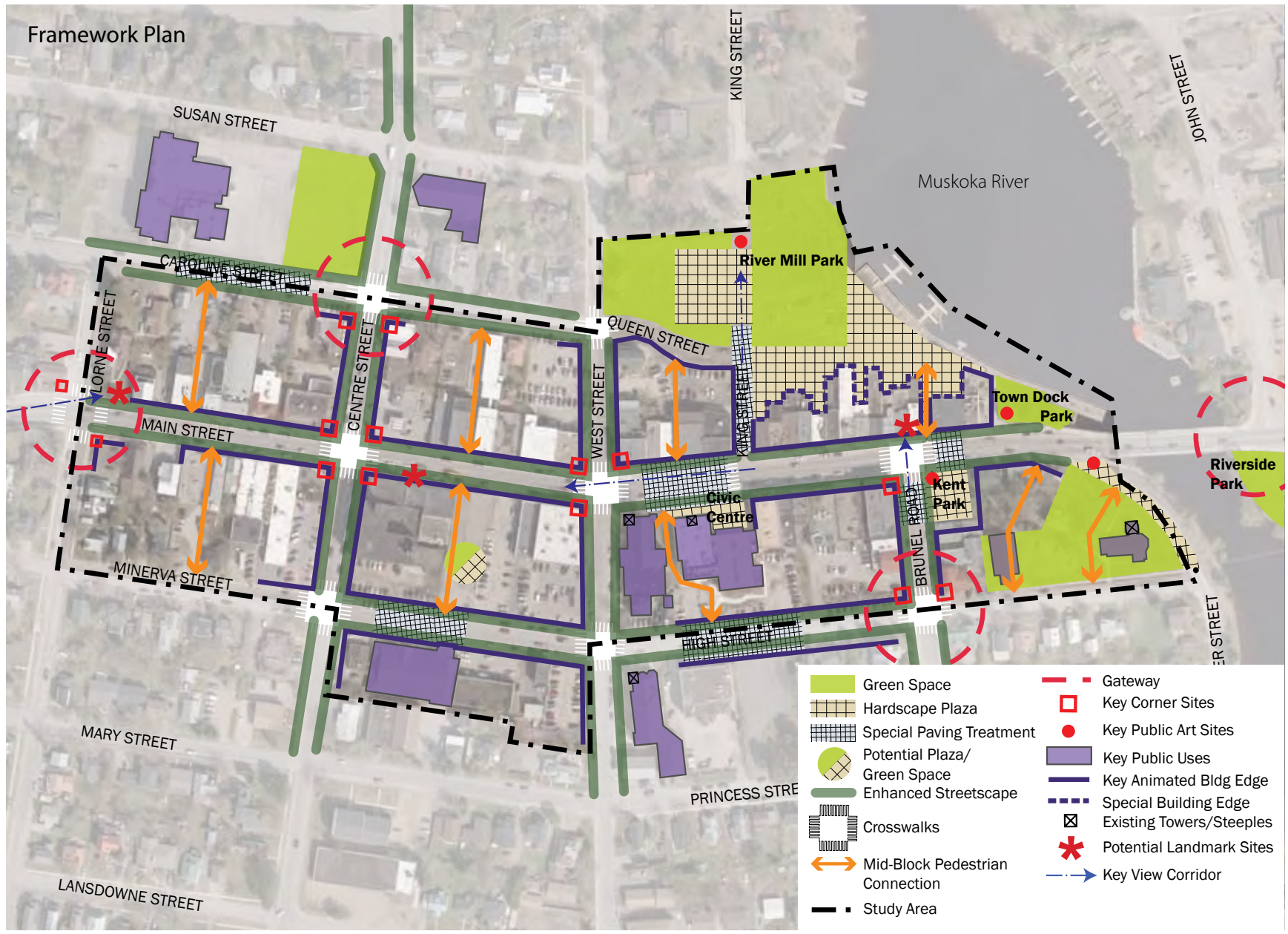
- The existing forecourt plaza at the entrance to the Civic Centre
- Kent Park transformed into a vibrant 'urban square' and east anchor to Main Street
- The closure of the north segment of River Street to create an urban promenade overlooking the river and potential site for events; include a pedestrian link under the bridge and relocate the trail to the closed River Street, terrace the slope and landscape the edge of the Church green
- Consolidate the existing asphalt areas at the foot of Queen Street and adjacent to the river to create a 'market square' feature
- Pave the existing parking lot in River Mill Park so as to enhance its appearance and to serve as a more appealing setting for occasional special events
- A potential Hardscape Plaza associated with the redevelopment of the Empire Hotel block



Enhanced Streetscapes

- Streetscapes are the most important aspects for shaping and defining the character of the built environment and its impression on residents and visitors.
- Given that the culture of walking is so fundamental to achieving a successful downtown retail environment, a shift in conventional thinking about street design must take place, which favours the pedestrian experience over efficient traffic movement.
- All streetscapes in the Downtown are identified for enhancements that should at a minimum include:
 - Continuous sidewalks on both sides of all streets
 - Widening sidewalks on retail streets to accommodate greater pedestrian traffic and sidewalk cafes
 - Minimizing travel lanes and turning radii to calm traffic speeds
 - Continuous street trees spaced no more than 6.0 metres apart to provide green amenity and shade
 - On-street parking distinguished through special pavers
 - Bumping out corners at intersection to minimize crossing distances
 - Coordinated and unified design vocabulary for street furnishings, lighting, trash receptacles, bike storage, street signage and paving treatments
 - Adequate pedestrian level lighting
 - Landscaping and flower planting for all seasons
 - Main Street and Minerva/High Street are unique streetscapes for which additional design direction is provided below in Section 4.3

Framework Plan



Special Paving Treatment

- In addition to the Hardscape Plazas, a number of sites on streets are identified for special hard surface treatments as a means of enhancing visual and physical connections to important Downtown destinations.
- As these areas also experience or anticipate significant pedestrian traffic, the special surface treatment is also meant to serve as a traffic calming measure through features such as cobble stones and/or raised surfaces that signal drivers to slow down.
- Locations on streets identified for special surface treatments (as a means of distinguishing these areas from the asphalt travel portion of the road) include:
 - King Street as the main pedestrian link between Main Street/Civic Centre and River Mill Park.
 - Main Street in front of the Civic Centre where mid-block crossing to access King Street often occurs.
 - Main Street and Brunel Road where they flank Kent Square to visually enhance the setting of this future revitalized plaza and key pedestrian destination.
 - High Street at the rear of the Civic Centre and associated with a mid-block pedestrian connection to enhance the linkage between this key public function and the future 'cultural corridor'.
 - Minerva Street in front of the library and to enhance the link to the future redevelopment of the Empire Hotel block and its potential mid-block pedestrian connection and public spaces.
 - Caroline Street near the entrance of the Huntsville Public School so as to calm traffic where the street seconds as a student pick-up and drop-off area

Crosswalks

- Given the importance of pedestrian comfort, convenience and safety to the Downtown experience, all intersections are identified for clearly marked and articulated crosswalks.
- As not all intersections are signalized, crosswalks along with signage will signal drivers to slow down and pass cautiously through the intersection.
- Crosswalks can be articulated with conventional painted 'zebra' stripes or with distinctive paving.

Mid Block Pedestrian Connection

- Existing and potential mid block pedestrian connections are identified and occur in most blocks in the Downtown.
- Mid block pedestrian connections enhance the Downtown experience and can stimulate further pedestrian circulation by providing a convenient, finer grained network for walking.
- On either public or private property, these connections should ensure pedestrian appeal, comfort and safety by being adequately scaled, well lit, clearly marked and visible and, as much as possible, fronted by animated uses such as shops.

Gateway

- The primary access points into Downtown Huntsville are identified as Gateways.
- These sites present the opportunity to enhance orientation and civic pride by providing a celebrated sense of entry through distinctive landscaping, signage, public art and/or architecture.
- The Urban Design Structure Plan identifies four key gateways:
 - Main Street at Lorne Street
 - Centre Street at Caroline Street
 - Brunel Road at High Street
 - The east side of the Main Street bridge over the Muskoka River

Key Public Art Sites

- Downtown Huntsville is well known for its wall murals reflecting paintings of the Group of Seven, and the Urban Design Structure Plan builds on this collection by identifying additional strategic locations for major public art installations.
- These sites generally correspond to highly visible locations on public lands, including the terminus of view corridors, at gateways, on prominent corners, or in public spaces.
- Public art in these locations as well as others provides an opportunity to celebrate and showcase local arts and culture; creates a unique 'sense of place' and identity for Downtown Huntsville; serves as landmarks to orient visitors; and, enhances the quality and experience of the public realm.

Key Corner Sites

- Key Corner Sites correspond to key intersections and Gateways where there is an opportunity for the massing and architectural treatment of buildings to visually reinforce the civic importance of their location in the Downtown.
- Articulating corners in unique ways also helps to orient visitors and can draw pedestrian traffic across the Downtown by providing

visual interest.

- Where alterations, additions or redevelopment occurs in these locations, attention should be given to ensuring prominent architectural features, uses oriented to the corner and/or both frontage, and the highest possible material quality.

Potential Landmark Sites

- Potential Landmark Sites are those that are strategically located at the end of key view corridors through and into the Downtown.
- These sites offer an extraordinary opportunity for architectural landmarks that can be visible from great distances and can add to Downtown Huntsville's distinct identity.
- As with Key Corner Sites, Potential Landmark Sites also help to orient visitors and draw pedestrian traffic across the Downtown by providing visual interest.
- Where alterations, additions or redevelopment occurs in these locations, special attention should be given to ensuring the highest possible architectural and material quality, including prominent visual features, such as distinctive roof lines, spires or turrets.

Key Animated Building Edge

- The charm and appeal of Main Street is in large part due to the continuity and animation of the street wall, as defined by a continuous built edge with consistent setbacks and a fine-grained rhythm of narrow shop fronts.
- This consistent condition, punctuated by grand public buildings that setback from the street is a defining characteristic of Downtown Huntsville that should be protected and reinforced where new developments occur.
- The Urban Design Structure Plan identifies the existing Animated Buildings Edges as well as other frontages where this condition should be extended, the only exceptions being new public buildings.
- Vacant sites, blank walls, at-grade residential or at-grade office uses are discouraged on these frontages, and encouraged to be altered where such conditions currently exist.

Special Building Edge

- Special Building Edges corresponds to the rear condition of a row of buildings that front onto Main Street, but that also 'front' onto the

riverfront and River Mill Park.

- Given the visual prominence of these building edges and their potential for viable commercial frontages with the creation of the 'Market Square', façade improvements and adaptive reuse should be strongly encouraged.
- Unlike the consistent building frontages elsewhere in the Downtown, a more organic urban character can distinguish this area, offering an eclectic and multiple levelled mix of shops, galleries, studios, restaurants and patios.
- This strategy would enhance the animation and allow for enhanced social interaction by having more eyes on the park and riverfront in all hours and seasons, as well as potentially offering alternative and more affordable spaces for start-up businesses or artists.

Precedents



Key corner sites have distinctive architectural treatments



Mid block pedestrian connections should be safe, comfortable and convenient



Example of a landmark building located at the end of a view corridor

4.2 Streetscape

A comprehensive streetscape strategy defines and considers all the elements that together create the quality and character of the “room”. The “room” contains the street and includes sidewalks, trees and other plant material, lighting, furnishing and signage.

General objectives that apply to all streets in Downtown Huntsville are:

- trees should be planted no more than 8m apart, and with a minimum of 1.5m between the trunk and the curb
- all streets should have sidewalks on both sides, a min. of 1.5 m
- streetscape improvements should integrate lighting, furnishings, newspaper boxes, trash bins, signage and bike storage with a unified design vocabulary

Main Street

Main Street is lined with buildings that have minimal to no setback from the street, shops on the ground floor, residential or office uses on upper storeys. It demonstrates the best qualities of a “main street”: buildings are in scale with the width of the street, there is a variety of animated uses and attractions, there is on-street parking and only one lane of traffic in each direction.

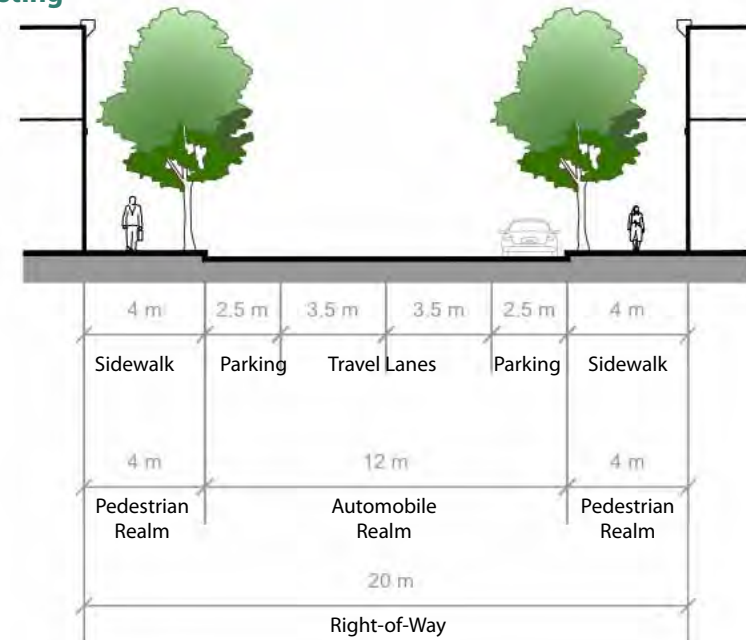
The Town has implemented streetscape improvements over the last 20 years, including new lighting, street trees and furnishings. The challenge that remains is to build in flexibility that can respond to need and/or seasonal fluctuations. Specifically, the sidewalk should be easily and seamlessly expanded where needed to accommodate sidewalks cafes or occasional events and festivals, while not permanently taking away on-street parking.



To provide functional flexibility, as well as the sense of a narrowed roadway and expanded pedestrian realm, it is proposed that Main Street be altered to:

- Raise and integrate with the sidewalk the segments of Main Street dedicated for on-street parking to now be delineated from the sidewalk by movable bollards.
- Provide rolling curbs for enhanced accessibility and to enable cars to easily mount the raised on-street parking areas.
- Provide for a grid of locations to affix the bollard to enable a wide variety of configurations that can respond to occasional or seasonal needs for

Existing



Precedents

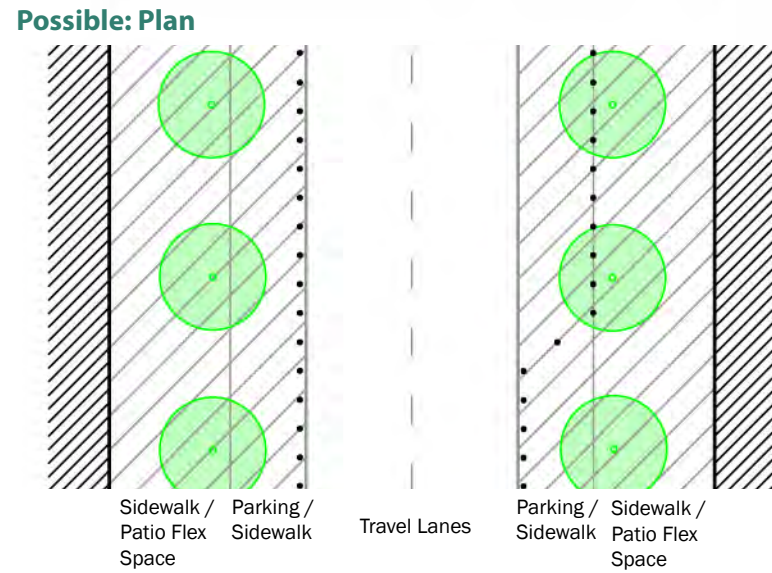
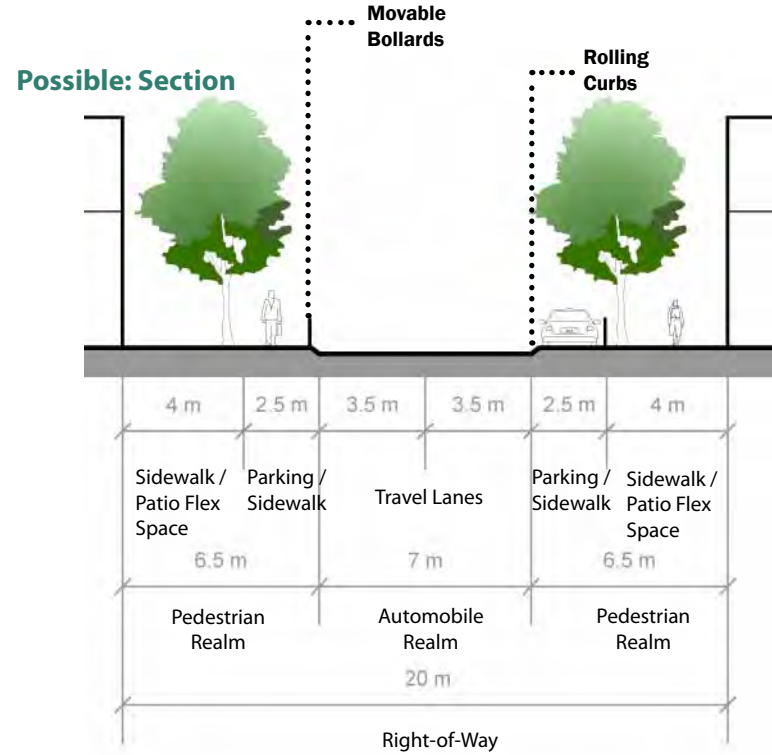


recent streetscape improvements in downtown Kitchener



recent streetscape improvements in Unionville

The success of the Downtown streets is a result of the fine balance in accommodating all modes of travel: pedestrians, cars and cyclists. Trucks use Main Street as a primary travel route. Alternative truck routes should be explored to determine if there is a viable option to Main Street.



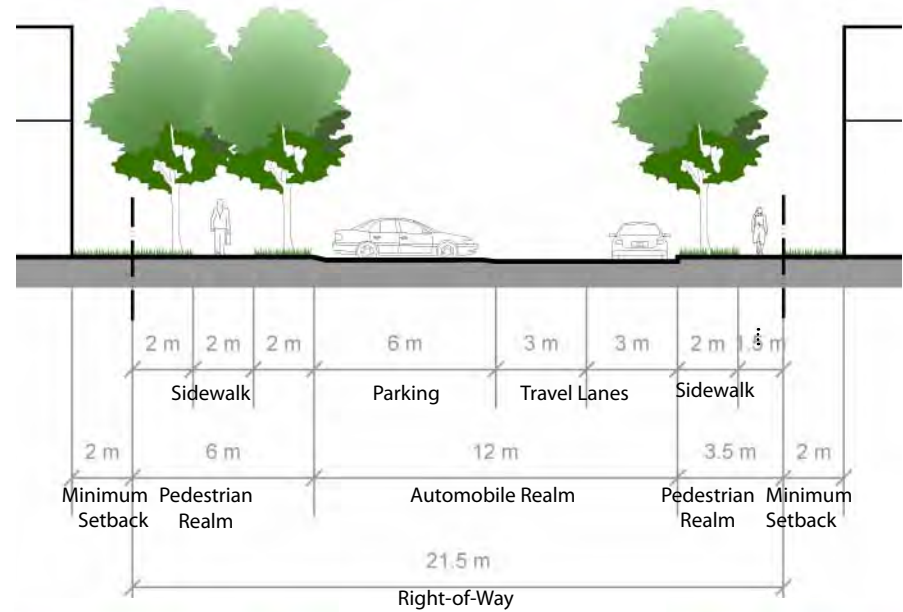
Minerva/High Street

Building on the existing and potential public and cultural uses along Minerva and High Streets, there is an opportunity to define and reinforce a 'Cultural Corridor' along the south end of the Downtown. Accordingly, these Cultural Streets should be designed to enhance and make legible this unique setting. At the same time, this corridor provides a significant Downtown parking supply in proximity to Main Street. To create an enhanced pedestrian environment and cultural setting, while retaining parking capacity, it is proposed that Minerva and High Streets be altered to:

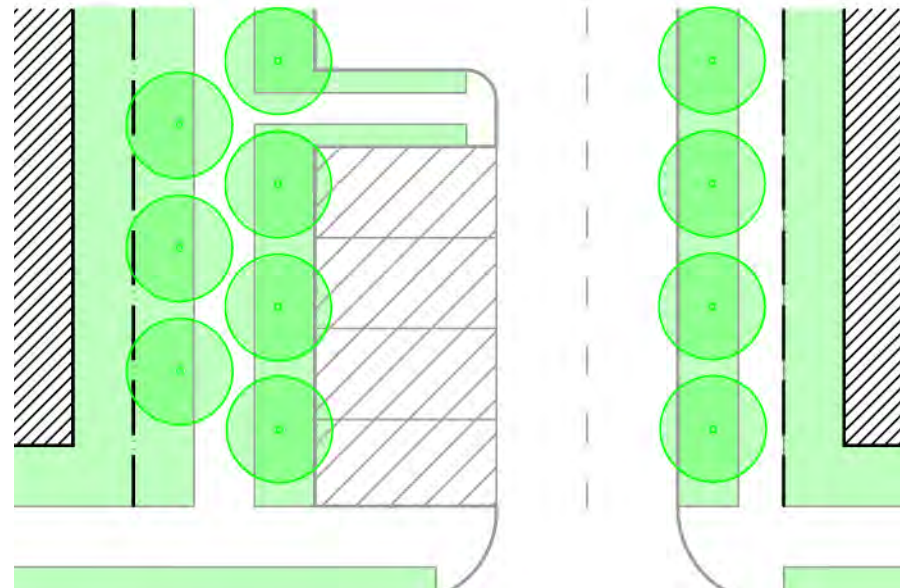
- Require all new buildings to provide a minimum 2.0 metre front yard setback to increase the landscaped areas and further distinguish the streetscape.
- Realign the roadway to the south to enable the north side to accommodate perpendicular parking and a promenade condition comprised of a broad sidewalk and double row of street trees.
- Mitigate the visual impact of the perpendicular parking area using special pavers to distinguish the area from the asphalt travel lanes, punctuated by landscaped 'breaks' that are spaced four parking stalls apart.
- Examine the feasibility of placing the overhead wires underground to accommodate intensification.



Possible: Section



Possible: Plan





Special pavers along the street to denote on-street parking in Québec City

4.3 Focus Areas Design Strategies

River Walk and Market

The Town purchased several properties north of Main Street with the intention of creating public space with access to the water's edge. River Mill Park provides a direct connection to Town Dock Park, affording residents and visitors with a wonderful waterfront amenity. River Mill Park includes a very well used children's play structure, and an open lawn area used to stage major events and celebrations. Parking is also provided at the foot of King Street.

This Town initiative has not only established a publicly accessible waterfront park, it has also set the groundwork for catalyzing the revitalization of the surrounding properties to create an exciting hub of new activities that can synergize with River Mill Park. To realize this area's full potential, a number of initiatives and interventions are suggested, including:

- The integration of the parking and roadway east of King Street into a Market Square that can be occasionally closed off to vehicular traffic to accommodate markets, fairs and other festivals and events in the winter, spring and fall.
- The introduction of the Market Square Arcade, which is a covered colonnaded structure that serves to frame the park, visually unify the rear of the building that front onto Main Street, provide a sheltered area for market stalls, and provide a visual terminus feature and waterfront gateway for Queen Street.
- The planting of a significant number of trees to delineate the different programs of the area as well as frame views.
- A community garden and naturalized waterfront edge.
- The transformation of the surfacing parking lot into a multiuse space through a distinctive paving treatment.
- Enhanced connections to Main Street by transforming King Street into a pedestrian-priority promenade terminating on a public art installation, and new and enhanced mid-block pedestrian connections.
- The framing of the park with animated uses by adapting of the rear of buildings and introducing infill mixed-use developments.
- The introduction of skating in the Park to enhance winter use.
- The introduction of bike racks throughout the Park.
- A possible stage/gazebo as a setting for outdoor events.



Precedent - Granville Market Vancouver



view along Queen St. to Muskoka River



Potential with Market Square and adapted rear façades

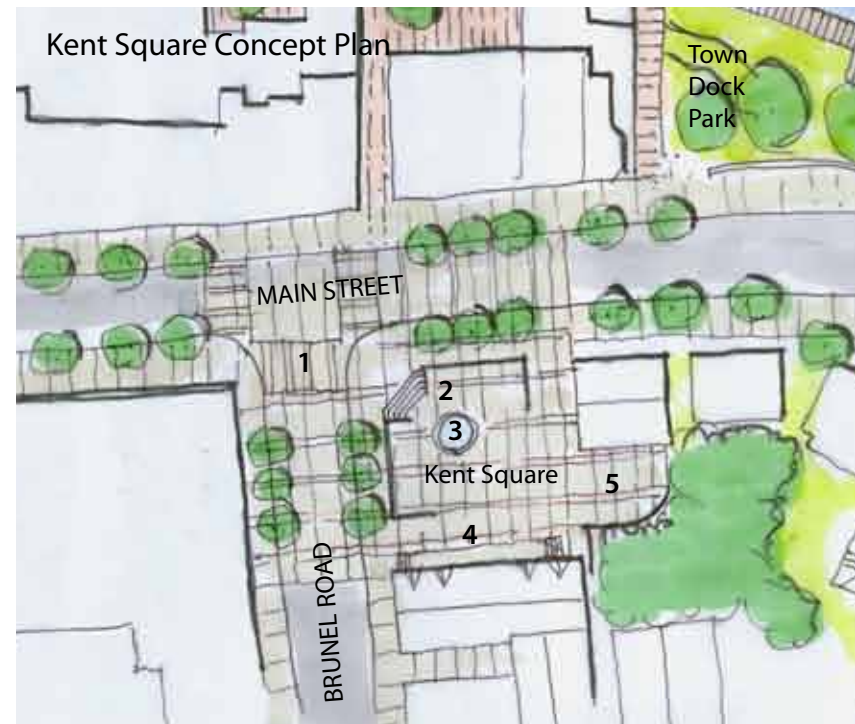


1. Playground
2. Multi-use parking plaza
3. Pedestrian trail
4. Community garden
5. Community event space/green
6. Naturalized shoreline + link to dock
7. Market square arcade
8. Market Square
9. Adapted facades
10. Infill mix-use building with parking in structure
11. Key public art site
12. King St. promenade
13. View terminus roof treatment
14. Enhanced mid-block connections

Kent Square

Kent Park was created on the site of a former gas station. It is ideally located to provide an open space amenity and anchor for the east side of Downtown Huntsville and at a key intersection. However, the true potential for creating an attraction and synergies with adjacent uses has not been realized due to its 'rural' and passive design approach. The coniferous planting visually obscure large areas, and the driving lane and parking prohibit adjacent properties from interfacing and animating the park's edges.

Precedents



1. Enhanced crosswalk and paving
2. Raised plaza
3. Fountain with integrated seating
4. Readapted facade to enable outdoor cafe
5. outdoor cafe in existing paved yard



The transformation of the park begins by renaming it to Kent 'Square', evoking its potential as a key gathering space and vibrant downtown anchor. Key design recommendations include:

- Levelling the space by creating a raised plaza centred on a fountain that is also a public art installation.
- The plaza is formally accessed by a set of broad stairs oriented to the intersection. Full accessibility is enabled along the lanes along the building fronts.
- The low retaining wall integrates continuous seating and lighting at both the street and plaza levels.
- Paving treatments extend into the street to enhance the prominence of the square and highlight the importance of this intersection in the Downtown.
- Adjacent properties are readapted to create positive frontages with access onto the square and outdoor café seating.



*Special pavers extends across the street.
City Hall, King Street, Kitchener*



Urban Squares

Empire Square

Empire Square is strategically located to act as a focal point for the Downtown and to serve as a catalyst for the revitalization of the less successful western blocks. The Empire Hotel site provides an important link to the past and is of a scale that will allow for a major new development to occur. When combined with the adjacent site to the east, the potential to create a new mixed-use anchor for the downtown is clearly evident.

A number of options for redevelopment of the block were explored in the workshop, demonstrating a variety of potential outcomes that all serve to meet the principles and objectives of this plan. In all of the development options explored, mid-block pedestrian connections and public spaces were provided and connections and interfaces with the library and Minerva Street were enhanced. The design responded to the view terminus on Main Street, the historic Eatons store was retained, and parking was provided below grade. The five options explored include:

1. Civic Use Option

This option is structured around a new civic space centrally located on Main Street. The buildings can be phased over time with the Empire Hotel site being the first step in the process. This concept illustrates a mixed-use building on the west (Hotel Site) with retail on the ground floor looking out onto the square, a possible civic building framing the square on the south and a boutique hotel on the remaining portion of the site at the corner of Minerva Street and West Street.

2. Mid-Block Connecting Option

The second option provides the same phasing with the Empire Hotel site being the first to develop. Once again, the concept illustrates a mixed-use building on that site with below grade parking. A second phase occurs on the east side of the site surrounding the old Eatons store. The open space concept for this option is based on generating a common linear space linking Main Street to Minerva Street and the library. This reinforces the sense of Minerva Street as a cultural promenade with direct connection to the heart of the downtown. Two semi-private courtyards on either side of the linear green space can serve as access to residential lobbies or intimate commercial spaces.

3. Townhouse Option

The third option provides a mixed-use block along Main Street. The Empire Hotel site is developed in a manner similar to the second option with retail on the ground floor along the streets and residential units facing an interior courtyard. The distinction between this option and options 1 & 2 is the provision of townhouses on the rest of the site. The proposed development would provide back-to-back townhouse units framing an interior private courtyard. On Main Street, the units could be live-work to enable a diversified retail environment.

4. Library Square Option

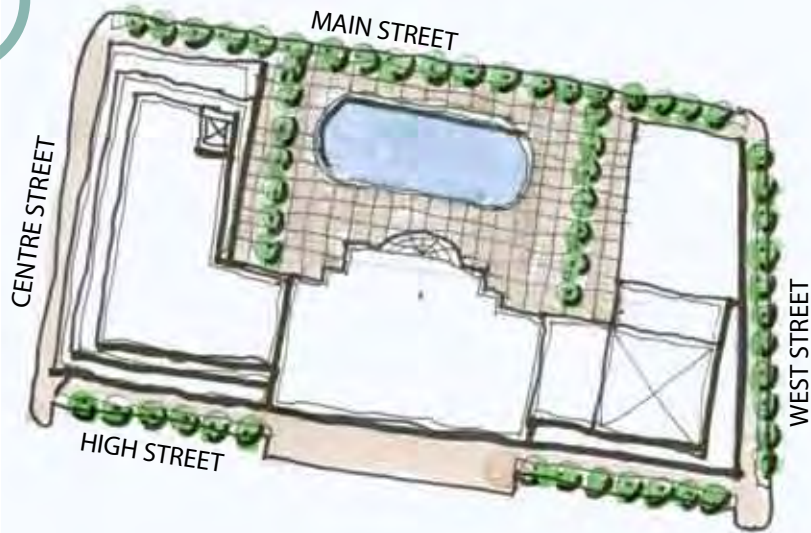
The fourth option is illustrated in the Demonstration Concept Plan. This option is similar to option 1 with respect to providing a central civic space, except in this case it fronts onto Minerva Street resulting in an enhanced connection and setting for the library across the street. Infill along Main Street reinforces the built character and continuous retail environment. A central portal opening from Main Street leads into the library square, which is also anchored by semi-private courtyards.

5. Mews & Courtyards Option

The fifth option is a demonstration of how density can be maximized on the block, while fitting into the local context and providing for public realm benefits and enhancements. The Hotel site is developed in a manner similar to the other options. The centre of the block is developed with a 'T' shaped footprint, where the frontage on Main Street remains at 3 storeys stepping up to a 7-storey component that is oriented perpendicular to Main and Minerva Streets. The configuration directs the larger scaled building to the centre of the block and in an orientation that minimizes its visual impact from the streets. With the development of the balance of the block, a series of mews and courtyards wind through the site, providing for potentially intimate and charming connections and commercial areas.

1

Civic Use



Precedent - building wraps the corner with a special architectural feature

2

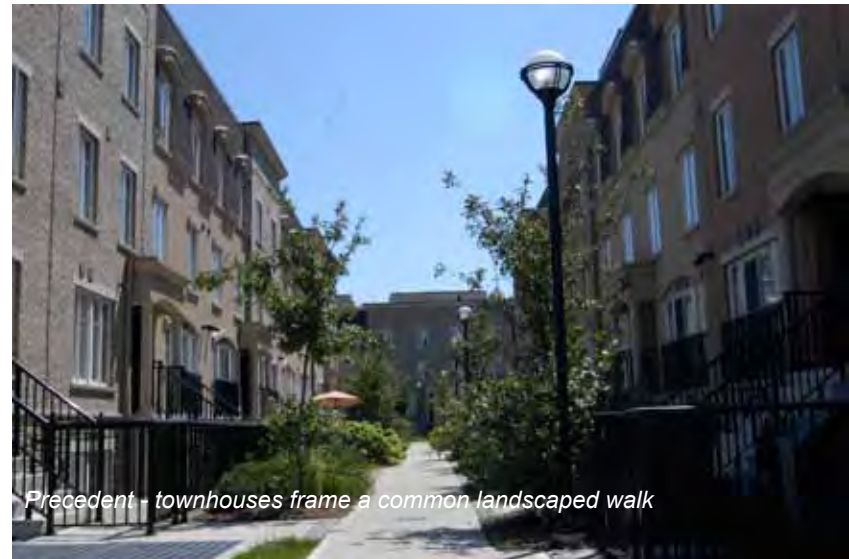
Mid-Block Linear Park



Precedent - building frames an urban courtyard

3

Townhouses



4

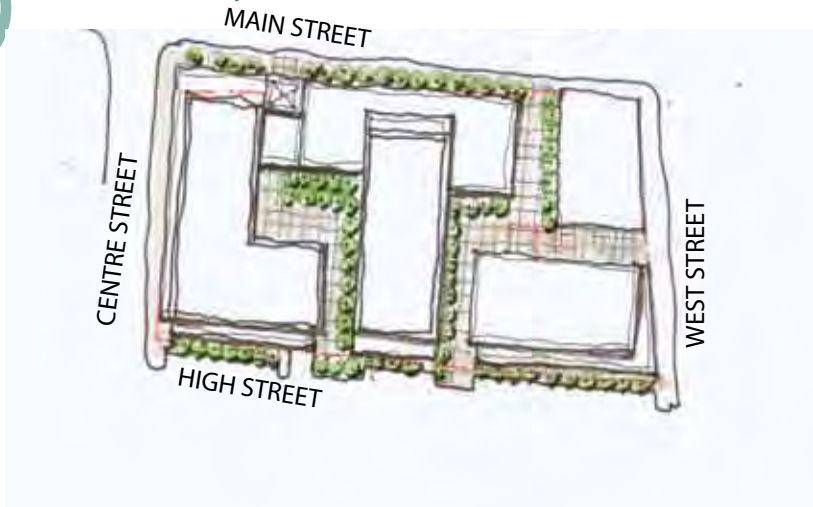
Library Square



Precedents - mixed use buildings frame urban open space

5

Mews & Courtyards



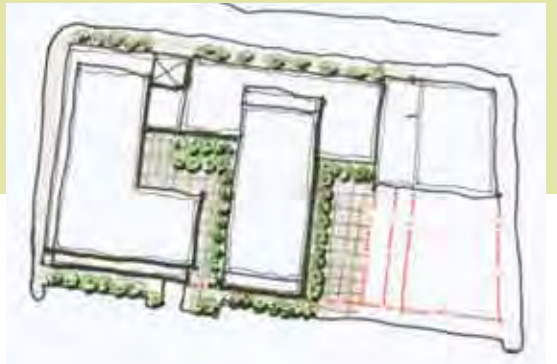
Phase 1

- 3-7 Storeys, Mixed Use
- 1300m², Retail/Commercial
- 80 Units
- 70 Parking Spaces/Level



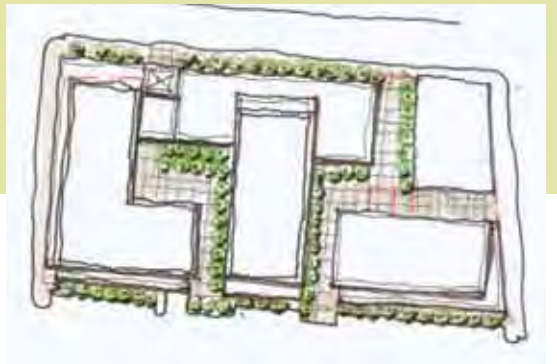
Phase 2

- 3-7 Storeys, Mixed Use
- 750m² Retail/Commercial
- 60-70 Units
- 80 Parking Spaces/Level



Phase 3

- 6 Storeys
- 50 Units
- 40 Parking Spaces/Level



Precedent - 6-storey infill development with step backs in the village core of Richmond Hill

An important consideration in all of the options is the ability to phase the development over a number of years. A demonstration of the phasing of this option is illustrated, indicating the development yielded and the corresponding parking that would be provided below grade at each phase.

5.0

General Façade Guidelines

Façades are one of the most significant elements of Huntsville's Downtown. They are the 'first impression' given by Downtown businesses to patrons and visitors, and collectively shape the character of the Study Area. It is of great importance that the Community Improvement Plan assist landowners and developers with building the best possible façades, or improving those that already exist.

In Downtown Huntsville, and especially on Main Street, building façade guidelines should:

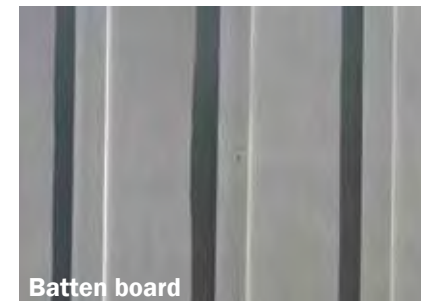
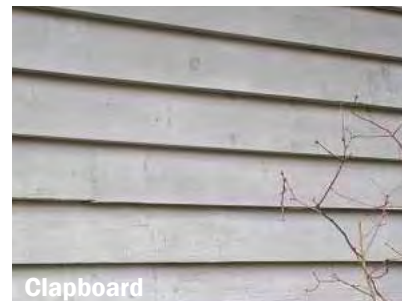
- ensure a sense of stylistic unity;
- respect the historic Main Street façade conventions of Downtown Huntsville; and,
- allow for creativity and innovation in individual buildings.

The following guidelines are informed by the extensive 1986 *Commercial Area Façade Improvement Study*. They apply only to commercial or mixed-use buildings within the Study Area.

5.1 Materials

Much of Downtown Huntsville's historic character comes from the preservation and continued use of traditional cladding materials. Appropriate façade cladding materials to ensure the continuation of this character include:

- brick
- clapboard
- batten board
- stone



Façades may be either made from a single cladding material, or two, with a different material used on the first storey. In the case of the latter, the material should be applied uniformly across the entire first storey façade, including base panels, pilasters and areas above and beside the shop window. First storey façades should be primarily glazed.

Common materials to be avoided in façades include vinyl or aluminum siding, shingles (wood or asphalt), precast concrete or glass (if used as a curtain wall). Stucco is no longer recommended due to difficulties with its maintenance and the lack of historic application in Huntsville. Wood is discouraged, in favour of brick or stone.



5.2 Colours and Painting

Closely related to the range of preferred façade materials is that of colour. Red brick tones strongly characterize the facades of buildings in the historic Downtown area, especially above the first storey.

Guidelines for colours and painting include:

- Brick and stone facades should be left unpainted to reveal the natural colours of the materials. Efforts should be undertaken to remove paint from presently painted brick or stone facades.
- Wooden or other facades should be painted in 'earth tone' colours, including white, beige, brown, red-brown and grey. These colours closely approximate those of the exposed brick or stone.
- Upper cornices and window trims, if not made of brick or stone, should be painted in light colours only, including white, pale grey and pale beige. This will highlight and contrast them against the darker building facades.
- The first storey of facades may be painted in a wider range of colours, in order to express the tastes and themes of individual shops. These colours may include pale yellows, reds, blues and greens.



5.3 Cornices

Cornices add a sense of completion and historic ornamentation to storefront buildings. Many older buildings in Downtown Huntsville have had their cornices removed, while newer ones have in some cases been built without cornices. While developing greater unity in cornices should be the goal, this is challenged somewhat by the steep slope of Huntsville's Main Street, which results in varying roof heights.

Guidelines for cornices include:

- Adjacent buildings of the same height should have a single, unified cornice treatment.
- Where buildings of slightly different height are adjacent to one another, the use of a false front extension on the shorter building can allow them to share a single cornice.
- Cornices should be constructed out of wood, pressed metal or stone.
- As previously stated, cornices should be of a light colour.

5.4 Signage and Awnings

The guidelines for signage and awnings outlined in the 2009 document *Huntsville Signage Guidelines* should be applied in the Community Improvement Plan area.

6.0

General Urban Design Guidelines

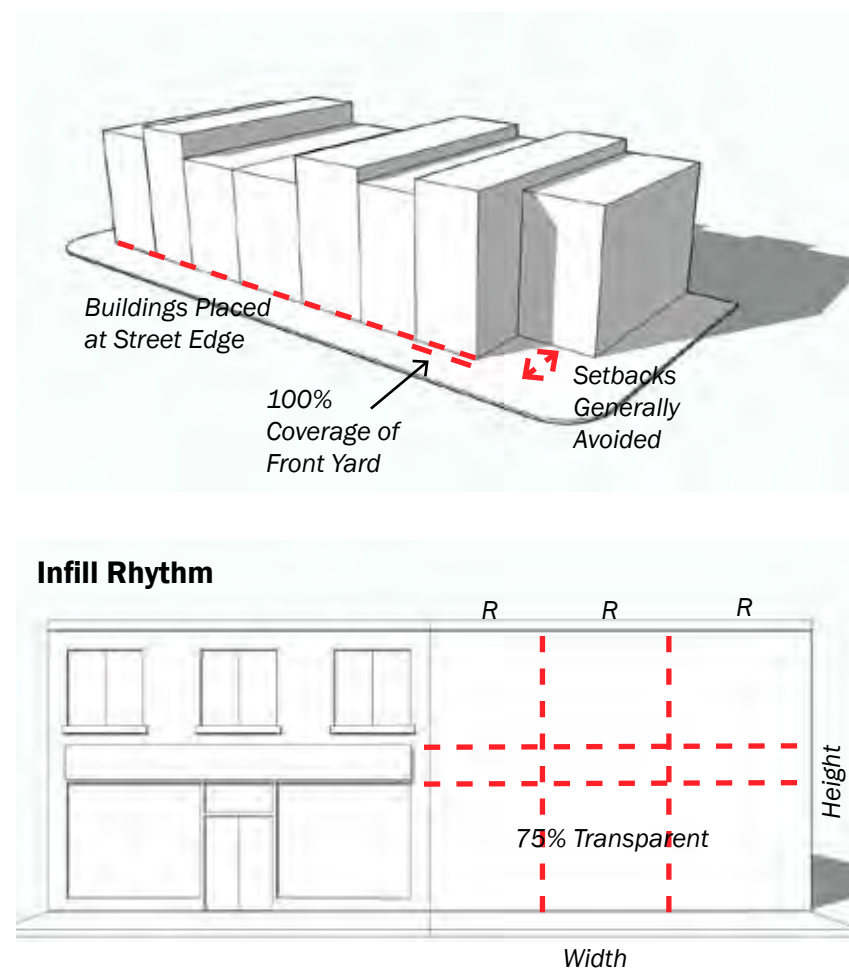
The purpose of these Design Guidelines is to provide design guidance for infill and intensification in Downtown Huntsville. The design objectives for new developments is primarily to maintain and reinforce the 'small town' and 'human-scaled' character of the area, as defined by the low-rise buildings at the street edge and continuous rhythm of narrow storefronts.

While these guidelines are meant to provide design standards and benchmarks for development, they are also meant to provide flexibility within certain parameters, to encourage distinction, variety and creative architectural and design responses.

6.1 Orientation and Placement

The orientation and placement of buildings along the street helps to clearly define the public realm and enhance the pedestrian environment by providing visual animation and a sense of enclosure. Downtown Huntsville's traditional urban pattern is of buildings aligned parallel with the street.

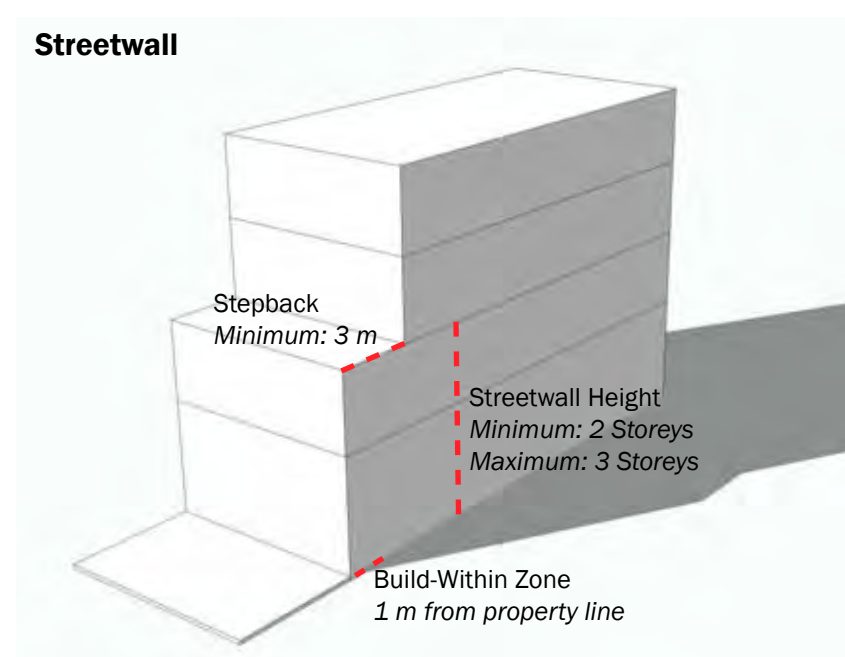
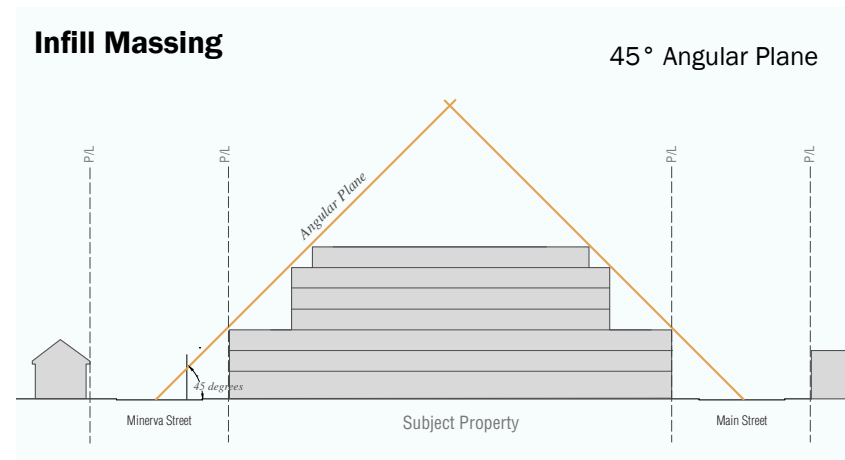
1. All buildings should orient to and address the street with clearly defined entry points that are fully accessible from the sidewalk.
2. Buildings should be placed at or close to the street edge consistent with adjacent buildings.
3. Development of an entire block or at corner sites may provide greater setbacks to widen sidewalks without compromising the visual continuity of the streetscape.
4. To discourage fragmentation of the street wall, 100% building coverage of the front-yard is required for buildings.
5. The facade of infill development should be articulated to reflect the rhythm of adjacent buildings.
6. The facade of the ground floor should be 75% transparent.



6.2 Building Height

The maximum height of buildings in Downtown Huntsville is generally 4 storeys. Angular planes apply to all new development in the Downtown Huntsville. The use of angular planes is recommended in conjunction with height and massing controls to define appropriate transitions to adjacent areas. Specifically, the angular plane is intended to define the extents of the development envelope to guide above-grade building step backs. New developments that are subject to the angular plane guidelines should be massed with good form within these envelopes.

1. New buildings should consider and respect the scale, material and massing of adjacent buildings.
2. Although 1-storey buildings exist, a minimum 2-storey and maximum of 3-storey street wall is required to ensure an appropriate enclosure to the street.
3. On large scale properties, buildings greater than 3 storeys may be appropriate subject to a minimum setback of 3.0m above the street wall and 45-degree angular planes
4. The massing of the building will be subject to 45-degree angular plane originating from the centre line of the street right-of-way as diagrammed on the right.
5. For the purposes of calculating height, the following floor to ceiling heights should be used:
 - ground floor 4.0 - 4.5 m,
 - upper floors of office 3.0 - 3.3 m
 - upper floors of residential 2.7 m - 3m

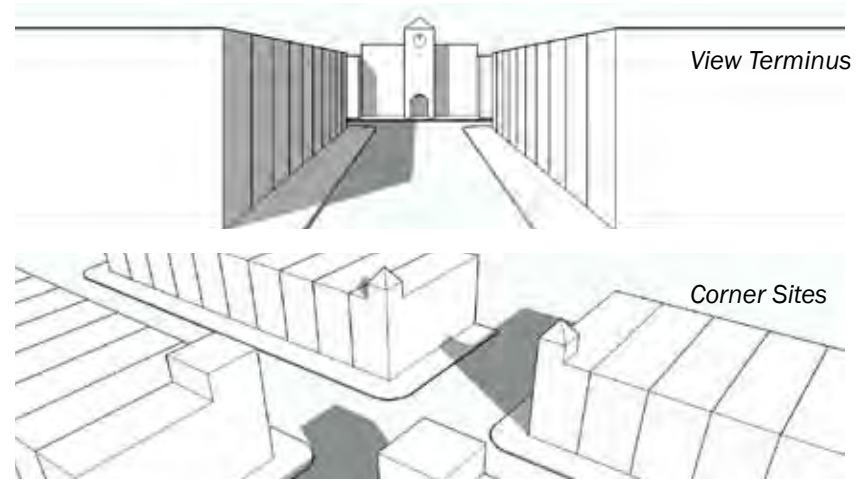




6.3 Heritage Integration

The Downtown Huntsville Community Improvement Plan provides direction for new development to complement, respect and enhance the existing heritage character of the area.

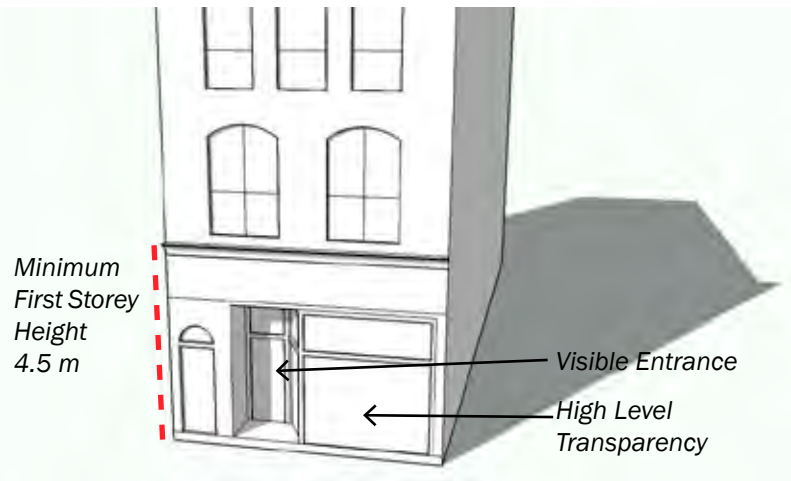
1. New buildings should be designed so that they do not appear to have been constructed earlier than they were.
2. New buildings should consider and respect the scale, material and massing of adjacent heritage significant buildings.
3. Modest setbacks of new buildings will be permitted in certain conditions where such placement will enhance the prominence of the adjacent heritage building, and provide an opportunity to create a benefit to a business (for example, a restaurant seating area).



6.4 Corner Sites & Terminus Treatment

Corner buildings have a greater visual prominence given that they front onto two streets and frame intersections. Corner buildings also potentially provide more than one entrance to different parts of a building and therefore provide special opportunities for the design and uses they contain. Similar to corner sites, buildings sited at the ends of streets that terminate a view are visually prominent. Buildings that terminate the views down a street are significant in the role they play orienting visitors to a place. Historically, landmark and key buildings such as churches were placed at these prominent locations.

1. To enhance the distinction and landmark quality of new buildings on corner or visual terminus sites, modest exceptions to step backs and height restrictions could be permitted to encourage massing and design that accentuate the visual prominence of the site – architectural elements can include tall slender elements such as spires and turrets.
2. Modest exceptions in setbacks could also be permitted to enhance views along side streets.
3. Uses should address both street frontages through entries or glazing.
4. Special attention should be made to the quality of the design and materials used to recognize the importance of new buildings on corner sites.
5. New development on terminus sites should align design features to the view axis which, in addition to tall architectural elements, can include aligned entries or portico openings.



6.5 Grade Level Design

Ensuring adequate grade level heights on the first floor will ensure the appropriate level of transparency, resulting in a heightened level of animation along the street. For commercial uses, in addition to animating the street through an adequate level of transparency, ensuring adequate grade level heights is also important for ensuring commercial uses have a visible presence on the street.

1. Grade level heights of no less than 4.5 metres for commercial and 4.0 metres for residential uses. Ensuring a minimum grade level height of 4.5 metres builds in adaptability by ensuring the commercial spaces can remain flexible as the area matures and evolves and business needs change.



6.6 Sidewalk Cafés

Sidewalk cafés add vitality to the street. By providing for sidewalk cafés, they become neighbourhood amenities, providing another form of interaction in urban areas.

1. Sidewalk cafés should be encouraged throughout Downtown Huntsville without encumbering pedestrian movement. Small sidewalk cafés generally require 1.4 metres for a single row of tables and chairs. Chapter 4 describes the streetscape suggestions for Main Street and the concept of a “flex zone” on the sidewalk to accommodate outdoor cafes.
2. A minimum sidewalk clearance of 1.5 metres should be provided.
3. Sidewalk cafés should be designed to contribute and integrate into the streetscape. Tall fencing or landscaping should be avoided. Material and landscaping choices should be of the highest possible quality.



6.7 Pedestrian Mid-Block Connections

1. Existing and proposed mid-block pedestrian connections should have high quality paving, landscaping, lighting.
2. Where possible, these connections should be framed by animated uses such as doorways and storefronts to enhance their use and safety.



6.8 Surface Parking Areas

The primary objective for the design and location of surface parking areas is to minimize their visibility and reduce potential conflicts with pedestrians. Parking is one of many elements that is needed for retail commercial areas to thrive. Surface parking areas serve this function and meet the demand in the interim, but as new developments occur, public parking should be accommodated in above or below grade structures.

1. Minimize the visibility of surface parking areas from the street by placing them to the side or to the rear of buildings.
2. Large expanses of surface parking should be broken up with buildings and landscaping to reduce their visual prominence. At least one tree for every 2 stalls is encouraged.
3. Directions to access these surface parking areas should be adequately signed, making them easily accessible for patrons.
4. Provide at least one active frontage containing a high proportion of clear glazing to building edges along the side or rear of the surface parking areas.
5. Ensure parking areas are adequately lit at night. Avoid light spill from these areas to adjacent residential areas.
6. Parking areas should be shared between adjoining facilities.
7. Provide multiple entry and exit points from streets to off-street surface parking to reduce congestion.
8. Use layout, vegetation and signage to make large areas of vehicular parking legible to drivers.



6.9 Above Grade Parking Facilities

Below grade parking is preferred. Above grade parking structures are permitted if site conditions preclude the cost effective development of below grade parking.

1. Parking entrances should be located along rear laneways or along secondary streets with less pedestrian traffic.
2. Where an above-grade parking facility fronts on a street, the ground-level frontage should incorporate retail, public or other active uses.
3. Above-grade parking structures should be designed in such a way that they reinforce the intended built form character and blend into the streetscape through façade treatments that conceals the parking levels and gives the visual appearance of a multi-storey building articulated with 'window' openings.
4. Above-grade parking structures should provide pedestrian amenities such as awnings, canopies and sheltered entrances.
5. High quality materials should be utilized that are compatible with other mixed-use buildings.
6. For all parking, stairways, elevators and entries should be clearly visible, well lit and easily accessible.
7. Signage and wayfinding should be integrated into the design of public parking structures, integrating public art and lighting of architectural features should also be considered. This will reinforce its unique identity and aid visitors in finding them upon arrival.



6.10 Loading & Servicing Areas

One of the primary objectives is to make certain that the functional requirements to support the retail and commercial uses do not conflict with creating a pleasing and inviting environment for pedestrians.

1. Locate service bays, site storage and access points for waste collection out of sight from public spaces, streets and residential areas. Use measures to provide buffers such as appropriate landscaping to reduce the visual impacts on adjoining sensitive uses.
2. Lighting of loading and storage areas should be designed so that there is no light that spills, glares or casts over adjacent uses.
3. To maximize space efficiencies, service and utility areas should be shared between different users within a single building, or, wherever possible, between different buildings.



6.11 Sustainable Design

Sustainable design can be defined as architecture and engineering that establishes the conservation of natural resources and systems as a primary consideration in the planning, design and construction process. Sustainable design enables urban systems to minimize their impact on the environment to create places that last. To achieve this goal, all proposed projects should strive for sustainable building practices in public as well as private development, and encompasses parks, streets and buildings.

The Town of Huntsville is completing the *Unity Plan: Huntsville's Guide to a Sustainable Future*. Goals for energy conservation, environmental protection, municipal operations and infrastructure and land use planning set the direction for sustainable design and development. The Plan's strategic direction and actions for each goal describe specific initiatives that support sustainable design. One progress indicator is LEED-certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) levels of sustainable design. In line with the sustainable strategies and LEED, opportunities exist to rehabilitate under used or deteriorating historic resources with new functions through adaptive reuse to strengthen the unique character of the area. As a principle of sustainability, new additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction should not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work should be differentiated from the old and should be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale,

height, proportion and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

A typical sustainable design standard to pursue is a LEED-CaGBC (Canada Green Building Council) certified, silver, gold or platinum. This requires all buildings achieve at least 50% of the available LEED credits for sustainable design.

1. New development should aim to achieve the LEED-CaGBC guidelines or alternative criteria.
2. Initiatives should be incorporated into the design of new development to reduce their environmental impact including recycling of waste material and water, efficient use of energy and water, mix of uses and higher densities that make better use of the existing land resources.
3. Low environmental impact materials should be used as much as possible in new developments. Sustainable building materials with low embodied energy, or materials that are easily recycled should be used where possible.
4. Maximize the microclimatic conditions of the site (e.g., solar access, wind, shade trees, etc) through the design of the site and buildings.
5. Consider incorporating green roofs in the design of new buildings to reduce solar gain (which contributes to the urban heat island effect) and to reduce run off and the quantity of water entering the storm drain system.
6. Existing buildings, wherever possible, should be reused, adapted or integrated into new projects to retain the architectural character of Downtown Huntsville.

7.0

Implementation

7.1 Priority Actions

A comprehensive revitalization strategy requires an integrated and coordinated plan of attack. To achieve all of the objectives of this Community Improvement Plan will take time and financial resources. Further, an array of activities will need to be carefully considered over time and as the area evolves - it may not be necessary to achieve all of the objectives and recommendations identified in this Community Improvement Plan in the short-term in order to realize a successful transformation of the Downtown Huntsville.

Downtown Huntsville has benefited from the significant public sector investment including the property purchase and construction of the new River Mill Park, Civic Centre and Algonquin Theatre, parking, streetscape improvements and Town Dock Park. These actions build momentum and confidence with private sector investors. The public sector has clearly established the environment for change. The municipality must continue to be the champion for change - an investor, facilitator, enforcer and administrator. The following 10 projects are the priorities for action:

- 1 Adopt this Community Improvement Plan as the framework for amending the Official Plan policies and Zoning By-law.
- 2 Initiate detailed design of streetscape improvements to Main and Minerva Streets.
- 3 Facilitate and promote redevelopment by assisting landowners with planning approvals to implement a streamlined approvals process.
- 4 Continue to enforce property standards by-laws, require compliance with existing rules and regulations.
- 5 Confirm the details of the funding programs and provide financial incentives to the private sector that help obviate the costs of

redevelopment and other issues that make the financial feasibility of redevelopment difficult to achieve.

- 6 Continue to evolve River Mill Park by upgrading the parking lot as a multi use parking plaza and initiating detailed design of the Market Square Arcade. The Town should form a special working group with property owners of Main Street buildings that back onto River Mill Park to establish methods of coordinating parking and service to enable the transformation of uses that front, face and feature the park and River.
- 7 Initiate detailed design of Kent Square.
- 8 Initiate detailed design to close the north segment of River Street to create the River Walk promenade.
- 9 Enhance the mid block pedestrian connections.
- 10 Form a special working group with representatives from the Library and Arts Community to determine possibilities for programming space in the Empire Square redevelopment.

7.2 Community Improvement Plan Programs

To promote the redevelopment of the Downtown Huntsville, this Community Improvement Plan includes eight key program components. Qualification for any of these programs will require an understanding by the Town that any change positively contributes to the image and function of the Downtown Huntsville and conformity to the vision and design guidelines identified in the Community Improvement Plan and the Official Plan of the Town of Huntsville. The programs include the following:

- Redevelopment Tax Rebate program – a program to provide grants that would offset increases in municipal taxes that are as a result of an increase in property assessment due to redevelopment;
- Planning and Development Fees Rebate Program – a program that provides rebates of various municipal application fees.

- Development Charge Exemption/Reduction Program – a program that waives or reduces development charges for appropriate forms of redevelopment;
- Municipal Property Acquisition/Rehabilitation Program – a program for the municipality to acquire and/or rehabilitate properties identified as having archaeological or historic merit, both directly or in partnership with other government agencies or the private sector;
- Façade Improvement Grant Program – a program to promote the sensitive design of existing building facades to enhance the existing image of the area;
- Landscape Improvement Grant Program – a program to promote the establishment of enhanced landscaping to improve the existing image of the area;
- Residential Loan or Grant Program - a program to promote improvements required to convert upper storeys to residential uses or construction of new residential units; and,
- Commercial Property Improvement Loan or Grant Program - a program that could compliment the Facade Improvement Grant Program to enhance rear entrances to encourage the adaptation of buildings backing onto River Mill Park.

In addition to these programs, there are a wide range of other planning and financial incentives that should be considered to promote redevelopment in the Downtown Huntsville. The review of the Zoning By-law could consider:

- permissive zoning, including as-of-right permission for increased height and density;
- alternative parking requirements, or reduced cash-in-lieu of parking requirements;
- alternative parkland requirements, or reduced cash-in-lieu of parkland requirement; and/or,
- realty tax arrears cancellation.

Details of the Programs

Redevelopment Tax Rebate Program

○ Program Description

The Redevelopment Tax Rebate Program is intended to provide financial relief in the form of tax rebates to property owners who undertake redevelopment

of their properties in the Downtown Huntsville. This program mitigates the large tax increase that results when a property is redeveloped with a higher value land use/project. However, the program would not exempt property owners from an increase/decrease in municipal taxes due to a general tax rate increase/decrease, or a change in assessment for any other reason.

In order to minimize cost and financial risk to the Town, this program can be structured as a “pay-as-you-go” program – where the property owner/developer first pays the total taxes owning annually, and then receives a grant from the Town based upon the incremental increase in taxes that results from the redevelopment project.

The Redevelopment Tax Rebate Program will commence on or after the date of approval of the Community Improvement Plan, and should be available for a period of approximately ten years. Grant applications will not be accepted after the identified time period, but grants that have been approved will continue to be paid out according to the details of each individual agreement.

The Redevelopment Tax Rebate will equal 100 percent of the increase in the municipal portion of property taxes. The remaining 20 percent of the increase in the municipal portion of property taxes will be dedicated to the Municipal Property Acquisition/Rehabilitation Program.

The amount of municipal taxes (“base tax”) will be determined before commencement of the project as the time when a Redevelopment Tax Rebate Application is submitted. The increase in the municipal portion of real property taxes (or “municipal tax increment”) will be calculated as the difference between the base rate and the amount of municipal taxes levied as a result of re-valuation by the Property Assessment Office following project completion. The municipal tax increment will be used to fund the Redevelopment Tax Rebate.

As early as possible in the development approvals process, a property owner would register their intent to participate in the Redevelopment Tax Rebate Program by filling an application with the Town. The application will then be evaluated by a staff committee that will be responsible for evaluating and recommending applications for approval based on the program requirements specified in the Community Improvement Plan.

All Redevelopment Tax Rebate Applications and implementing agreements must be approved by Council. Based on that approval, the staff committee will then negotiate the required implementing agreements with the applicants. The implementing agreement will specify the terms of the tax rebate, such as the total amount of the rebate, the duration of rebate, the owner's obligations should the owner default on the Agreement, and any other requirements specified by the Town.

The Town will review the redevelopment proposal, suggest modifications, consult the Property Assessment Office as necessary regarding an estimated post-project re-valuation) and determine an estimated rebate amount.

○ Program Requirements

All owners of properties within the Community Improvement Plan area are eligible to apply for funding under this program, subject to the following requirements, and availability of funding as approved by Council:

- any property owner wishing to be considered for a grant under this program must complete and submit a Redevelopment Tax Rebate Application Form to the Town prior to the commencement of any works and prior to application or building permit;
- as a condition of the grant application, the Town may require the applicant to submit a report from the planning department indicating the proposal's conformity with the Downtown Huntsville Community Improvement Plan; and,
- The property shall be redeveloped such that the amount of work undertaken is sufficient to result in an increased re-valuation by the Property Assessment Office and further, the total value of the tax rebate provided under this program shall not exceed the total value of work done under eligible program costs;
- Eligible program costs include the costs of:
 - site preparation including construction/improvement of on-site public works; and,
 - demolition;
- actual costs for any or all of the eligible items may be subject to independent audit, at the expense of the property owner;

- all property owners participating in this program will be required to enter into a Redevelopment Agreement with the Town, which will specify the terms of the tax rebate. All Redevelopment Tax Rebate Applications and implementing agreements must be approved by Town Council;
- the subject property shall not be in a position of tax arrears. All taxes owing shall be paid or cancelled, prior to the disbursement of any tax rebate money; and,
- all redevelopment proposals will conform to all applicable Town policies and procedures.

Planning and Development Fees Rebate Program

○ Program Description

The intent of this program is to stimulate new investment in the Downtown Huntsville through provision of a grant/rebate to offset the cost of specific planning and development fees.

The rebate will apply to most municipal fees for planning and development applications (except for the building permit fee itself). The rebate of these fees will be paid to the property owner, regardless of who pays the fee. All property owners within the Community Improvement Plan area will be eligible for program participation, subject to program requirements. Payment of fees will be required by the Town at the application stage for planning approvals(s) and demolition permits. Upon final inspection of the completed and occupied project, a rebate will be provided in an amount equal to all eligible fees collected from a property owner.

This program does not apply to any performance or maintenance guarantees (i.e., letters of credit) posted by the proponent, required professional studies, or expenses, including incurred by the applicant because of the Town's participation at the Ontario Municipal Board or Court proceedings.

○ Program Requirements

All owners of properties within the Downtown Huntsville are eligible for grants equivalent to the amount of qualifying planning and development fees under this program, subject to the following requirements, and availability of funding as approved by Council:

- Only fees paid for the following types of applications are eligible:
 - Official Plan Amendment;
 - Zoning By-law Amendment;
 - Minor Variance;
 - Site Plan Application;
 - Demolition Permit; and/or,
 - Building Inspection Fee.
- To be eligible, the redevelopment proposal must conform with the goals, objectives and policies of the Official Plan and the urban design guidelines included within the Downtown Huntsville Community Improvement Plan; and,
- the subject property shall not be in a position of tax arrears. All taxes owing shall be paid or cancelled, prior to the disbursement of any fee-related grant/rebate.

Redevelopment Charge Exemption/Reduction Program

○ Program Description

The Development Charges Exemption/Reduction Program will be designed specifically to encourage redevelopment activity in the Downtown Huntsville. This program requires changes to the Development Charges By-law. Its implementation does not require that it be included within a Community Improvement Plan.

The Development Charge Exemption/Reduction Program will offer development charge exemptions/reductions for all appropriate redevelopment proposals within the Community Improvement Plan area. Property owners will automatically be eligible for this program subject to the program requirements as set out below, which will be written into the implementing by-law. Separate application for the exemption/reduction at the time of the issuance of a building permit will not be required.

○ Program Requirements

All owners of properties within the Community Improvement Plan area are eligible for development charge exemptions/reductions under this program, subject to the following requirements:

- to be eligible, the redevelopment proposal must conform with the goals, objectives and policies of the Official Plan and the urban design guidelines included within the Downtown Huntsville Community Improvement Plan; and,
- the subject property shall not be in a position of tax arrears. All taxes owing shall be paid or cancelled, prior to the exemption of development charges.

Property Acquisition, Investment and Partnership Program

○ Program Description

Once a Community Improvement Project Area has been designated and a Community Improvement Plan is approved, the Town of Huntsville may:

- acquire, hold, clear, grade or otherwise prepare land for community improvement.
- construct, repair, rehabilitate or improve buildings on land acquired or held by it in conformity with the community improvement plan; and,
- sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of any land and buildings acquired or held by it in conformity with the Community Improvement Plan.

In order to promote the long-term revitalization of the Downtown Huntsville, it may be necessary for the Town to take a more active role in redeveloping properties that come into its possession. This may involve the acquisition of properties through tax arrears, the outright purchase of certain key strategic redevelopment parcels and/or participation in public/private partnerships to clean and redevelop brownfield properties.

This program can be funded from the 20 percent of the tax increment that is retained by the Town as a result if properties participating in the Redevelopment Tax Rebate Program, and other monies as allocated by Council.

Façade Improvement Grant Program

Program Description

The intent of this program is to provide existing building owners/business operators with a financial incentive to improve the appearance of existing building facades (including rear and side facades) These grants will be up to \$5,000.00 or 50 percent of the cost of the renovation, whichever is less. An annual limit on expenditures on these grants will be set at \$50,000.00, subject to approval by Council.

All applications for this grant program will be considered subject to the availability of funding. Program eligibility will be determined by the staff committee, in consultation with the Executive Committee of the Downtown Huntsville Business Improvement Area.

Grants approved under this program would be provided to property owners/business operators following the submission of the final invoices for the renovation work completed, indicating that suppliers/contractors have been paid in full.

As an option, the program could be administered as a loan program . The City of Oshawa has a Façade Improvement Loan Program where they offer up to \$15,000 per municipal address.

Program Requirements

All building owners/business operators who are members in good standing of the Downtown Huntsville Business Improvement Area are eligible to apply for funding under this grant program, subject to the following requirements, and the availability of funding as approved by Council:

- any property owner/business operator wishing to be considered for a grant under this program must complete and submit a Façade Improvement Grant Application Form to the Town, including a design concept and colour scheme, prior to the start of the project;
- business operators are eligible to apply for a Façade Improvement Grant only if they can provide written consent to conduct the improvements from the owner of the property;

- the façade improvement must conform to design guidelines approved by the Town; and,
- the subject property shall not be in a position of tax arrears. All taxes owing shall be paid or cancelled, prior to the disbursement of any grant money.

Landscape Improvement Grant Program

Program Description

The intent of this program is to provide existing building owners with a financial incentive to improvement the appearance of existing landscapes within the Downtown Huntsville. These grants will be up to \$2,000.00, or 50 percent of the cost of the renovation, whichever is less. An annual limit on expenditures on these grants will be set at \$20,000.00, subject to approval by Council.

All applications for this grant program, will be considered subject to the availability of funding. Program eligibility will be determined by the staff committee.

Grants approved under this program would be provided to property owners following the submission of the final invoices for the landscape work completed, indicating hat suppliers/contractors have been paid in full.

Program Requirements

All building owners who are located within the Community Improvement Plan area are eligible to apply for funding under the grant program, subject to the following requirements, and the availability of funding as approved by Council:

- Any property owner wishing to be considered for a grant under this program must complete and submit for Town approval a Landscape Improvement Grant Application Form to the Town, including a Landscape design concept, prior to the start of the project;
- The landscape improvement must conform to design guidelines approved by the Town; and,
- The subject property shall not be in a position of tax arrears. All taxes owing shall be paid or cancelled, prior to the disbursement of any grant money.

Residential Loan or Grant Program

The intent of this program is to assist property owners with the financing of building improvements required to convert upper storeys to residential uses or construction of new units via building additions. The City of Oshawa's program offers a loan covering 100% of the eligible work per building to a maximum of \$25,000 per building. The City of Hamilton's program offers a maximum loan of \$10,000 per dwelling unit to a maximum of \$200,000 per property. The City of Hamilton also has a Multi Residential Property Investment Program. It was developed as a catalyst for stimulating residential development in Downtown Hamilton. Their program provides financial assistance for projects resulting in predominantly residential development through renovations or new infill development. The City offers a maximum loan of 25% of the "Cost to Construct Budget".

Programs to encourage residential development in Downtown Huntsville are particularly important to encourage the provision of a mix of housing types, tenures and affordability. The eligibility criteria and terms of a loan or grant program could be detailed when Council determines the available funds for such a program.

Commercial Property Improvement Loan or Grant Program

The City of Hamilton's Commercial Property Improvement Grant Program is intended to improve the appearance of commercial properties. A program such as this would be particularly appropriate to encourage the adaptation of buildings that back onto River Mill Park. In Hamilton, eligible improvements include enhancement to rear entrances, facades, brick repairs, lighting, doors and interior improvement to new entrances areas. Their program has a special arts component to encourage "artfully designed" facade improvement or art pieces placed on private property that can be viewed by the public. Hamilton offers a matching grant based on frontage from \$10,000 to \$25,000 with additional funds available for corner properties. The City of Sarnia has a Downtown Building and Facade Improvement Loan Program. They offer up to \$20,000 per building for facade restoration, and improvements to windows, doors, signage, lighting, awnings, entrances, the roof, and upgrading of heating, plumbing, air conditioning and electrical service.

The eligibility criteria and terms of the loan or grant programs for Downtown Huntsville will be detailed when Council determines the available funds for the programs. When the programs are established, It will also be important to market their availability to business owners to encourage improvement to properties.

