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Council Oct 23/17



The Corporation of the District of Saanich

Report

To: Mayor and Council
From: Sharon Hvozdzanski, Director of Planning
Date: September 20, 2017
Subject: Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan - Council Check-in
File: 2310-20

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorse the Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan - Plan Framework Report included as Attachment A.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to:

- Present to Council a summary of the process to date as well as the preliminary directions in the Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan – Plan Framework Report; and
- Seek endorsement of the Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan Framework Report (Attachment A).

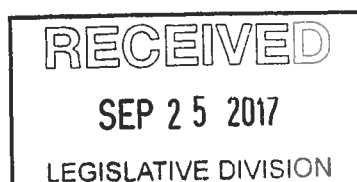
DISCUSSION

Background

At the September 14, 2015 Committee of the Whole meeting, Council endorsed a Terms of Reference for the Uptown-Douglas Corridor (UDC) Plan. The Terms of Reference outlines how the UDC Plan will be developed, including identifying the planning process, key milestones, and deliverables. Included in the Terms of Reference is a Council check-in at the end of Phase 3 to provide an update on the project and seek Council direction to proceed with preparing a draft Plan.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference, staff have been moving forward to develop the Plan. The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement of the Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan – Plan Framework Report (see Attachment A) in order to continue developing concepts and draft the Plan.

Development of the Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan is occurring in six phases over a 30 month timeline and has included a significant amount of public engagement to date. The Council check-in marks the completion of Phase 3. Should Council endorse the Plan Framework Report, staff will prepare the draft Plan. The draft Plan would then be subject to public review in late 2017 or early 2018. The overall process and timeline is identified in Figure 1.



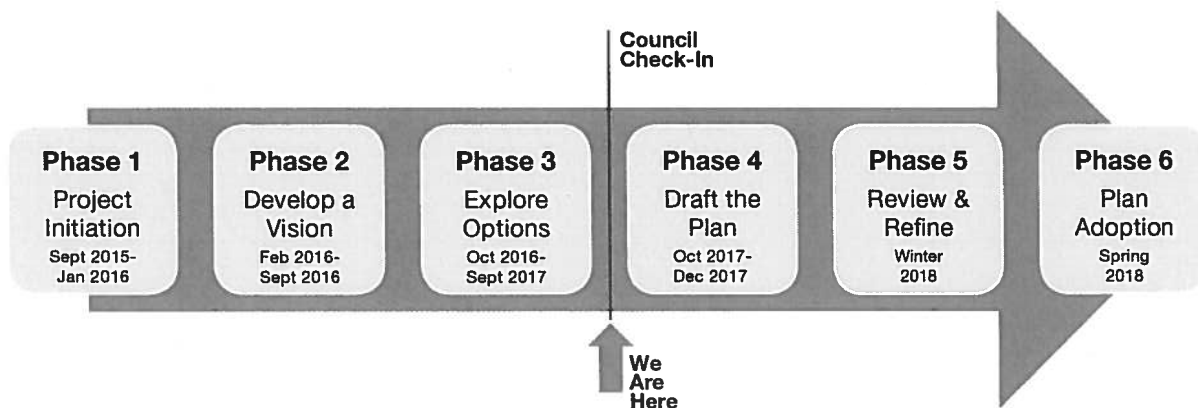


Figure 1: Uptown-Douglas Corridor Process Timeline

The attached Public Engagement Summary provides more detail on the public engagement elements of the project completed to date (see Attachment B). Highlights of the first three project phases include the following:

Phase 1 – Project Initiation

The Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan officially started after Council endorsed the revised Terms of Reference in September 2015. Work in this phase included the preparation of a significant amount of background materials, statistics, and analysis of current conditions. Key highlights included:

- Establishment of a 16 member project Advisory Committee (representation as per project Terms of Reference);
- Hiring of a consultant team to assist with Plan development;
- Completion of the Baseline Conditions Report; and
- Development of the Public Engagement Strategy (with input and guidance from the Advisory Committee).

Phase 2 – Develop a Vision

Significant public consultation was undertaken in May and June 2016 to engage stakeholders and the public about issues and opportunities and to involve them in the development of a vision and set of community values. Engagement activities included an online survey, weekly poll questions, small-group discussions, and pop-up events located throughout the study area. Key highlights included:

- Engagement and consultation with approximately 2,500 people, with approximately 900 pieces of feedback received;
- Identification of community issues and opportunities;
- Development of Plan Vision; and
- Development of Community Values.

Phase 3 – Explore Options

The purpose of Phase 3 was to explore ideas and develop a framework for which policy could be based. Work in this phase included engaging and consulting with approximately 760 people from January to May 2017 in order to develop ideas and concepts as well as to report out and receive feedback on the ideas and concepts that were forming.

Highlights of the engagement included two Saanich Talks events attended by approximately 200 people and a three day Community Design Workshop involving approximately 100 participants. The Community Design Workshop allowed participants to be involved in refining the structural and big moves and co-creating concept layers and preliminary policy directions.

Since the Community Design Workshop, staff have sought input on the structural and big moves and concept layers through a variety of public engagement activities including:

- Online virtual open house and survey (290 surveys received);
- Public open house (approximately 100 participants);
- Invitational business owner open house and invitational landowner luncheon (approximately 100 participants);
- Presentations to Council Committees, Community Associations, and Saanich Community Association Network;
- Working sessions with the project Advisory Committee;
- Meetings with Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) representatives to discuss ideas regarding the potential changes to Vernon Avenue and Blanshard Street; and
- Meetings with BC Transit staff to discuss the transit hub and other transit related directions.

In May 2017, the public survey closed with 290 responses received. The survey was developed to seek feedback on the concept layers and emerging directions that had been developed at the Workshop. Overall, feedback indicated general support for the ideas that have been developed to date. Comments received from the events also highlighted areas where further work needs to be done to develop policy that responds to community concerns and interests.

Plan Framework Report

The purpose of the Plan Framework Report (see Attachment A) is to provide information to Council regarding the development of the Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan. The Plan Framework Report highlights preliminary directions and concepts that will form the basis of the draft Plan. Council approval of the Plan Framework Report will provide staff with the necessary direction and guidance to proceed with creating a draft Plan. More information about the details of the public engagement completed to date can be found in the Public Engagement Summary (see Attachment B).

The Plan Framework Report's content was developed through planning staff working extensively with the project Advisory Committee, stakeholders, and the public to develop ideas, concepts, and preliminary policy directions. Staff are currently seeking Council endorsement on the work completed to date in order to move forward with drafting the Plan. It should be noted that many of the directions in the Plan Framework Report are high level and will require more analysis and stakeholder engagement to arrive at policy that could be included in the Plan.

The Plan Framework Report includes the following:

- Vision;
- Community Values;
- Structural and Big Moves;
- Preliminary Policy Directions;
- Green, Mobility, and Land Use Concept Layers; and
- Land Use Objectives.

The purpose of this section of the report is to provide an overview of the content in the Plan Framework Report.

1. Vision

The primary goal of Phase 2 was to complete a public engagement process to develop a Vision and set of Community Values. Based on the input collected from the public, the project Advisory Committee and stakeholders, the following vision for the Plan was developed:

The Uptown-Douglas Corridor area welcomes a diversity of people to live, work and explore in this vibrant, accessible community – a showcase of urban sustainability. Gathering places and destinations in the Corridor are green, safe, and connected by walking, cycling, transit, and vehicle mobility.

2. Community Values

The public input received in 2016 was also used to develop a set of Community Values in direct collaboration with the Advisory Committee. The Community Values are a cornerstone in guiding the development of the Plan and will continue to inform policy as the Plan is being drafted. The seven Community Values are as follows:

- **Increase public safety** – Trails, streets, buildings, and public spaces are designed so residents and users are safe to live, work, and explore.
- **Encourage active lifestyles** – Active lifestyles and active transportation modes are promoted through urban design, creating and connecting destinations, and enhancing walking and biking routes.
- **Build community** – Thoughtful place-making and engagement welcomes residents, businesses, and visitors and enhances the sense of community in the Uptown-Douglas Corridor area for all abilities, ages, and stages of life.
- **Enhance the natural environment** – A conscious shift is made from grey to green to enhance and protect the natural environment and improve livability.
- **Foster economic vitality** – Support economic investment and development that fosters a range of business and employment opportunities.
- **Integrate mobility** – Multi-modal infrastructure is developed to connect people and places.
- **Support complete communities** – A range of housing options are accommodated close to services, amenities, employment, and recreational opportunities.

3. Structural and Big Moves

Through several sessions with the project Advisory Committee, staff, and the consulting team, input that was received from public consultation in 2016 was further developed into a set of Structural and Big Moves for the Uptown-Douglas Corridor area. The Structural and Big Moves articulate major changes and directions that are central to achieving the Plan vision and objectives. The Structural and Big Moves were created to assist with community discussions at the Community Design Workshop held in January 2017.

The purpose of the Community Design Workshop was to review, test and refine the Structural and Big moves as well as receive new ideas to inform the development of the Plan. The comments and ideas from the Community Design Workshop were used to further refine the Moves and to begin to develop some preliminary policy directions. The eleven Structural and Big Moves are highlighted below, with more detail provided in the Plan Framework Report:

- **Put Pedestrians First**
Develop an exceptional pedestrian realm and safe, people-friendly connections; enhance east-west movement and build on the Galloping Goose and Lochside Trails.
- **Create a Central Landmark Transit Hub**
Develop the regional transit hub that creates convenient connections for all modes, encourages redevelopment, highlights regional cycling connections, and reinforces pedestrian first priority.
- **Accelerate Rapid Transit Implementation on Douglas Street**
Support more compact transit-oriented development in coordination with the transit hub that increases housing and business options, enhances the pedestrian realm, and accelerates the evolution to rapid transit on Douglas Street.
- **Create a Network of Active and Engaging Public Places**
Develop/create a series of plaza spaces/parkettes/pocket parks/streetscape redesigns highlighted by a central civic space.
- **Lead Growth with Residential**
Encourage growth in the core area with a mix of compact multiple dwelling residential units to bring more people into the central area throughout the day and activate the street with retail and service commercial where appropriate to service this growing population.
- **Conserve Light Industrial**
Retain the light industrial uses west of the Galloping Goose Trail and enhance this area with street improvements and mixed use where appropriate to keep local employment and expand opportunities.
- **Attract More Diverse and Pedestrian-Oriented Commercial**
Support existing commercial business and expand street-oriented uses in specific areas to reinforce pedestrian corridors.
- **Transform Oak Street into a Neighbourhood Street**
Design and zone Oak Street as the central high street integrating transit, bikes, a pedestrian promenade, and amenities along with active and engaging mixed-use buildings framing the street.
- **Develop a Compact Urban Core**
Foster land use change that increases residential and employment opportunities and positions the area as the heart of Saanich.
- **Convert Grey to Green**
Develop the area as a showcase of urban sustainability through enhancing nature and integrating green infrastructure and green buildings.
- **Transform Blanshard Street and Vernon Avenue into Complete Streets**
Transition Blanshard Street and Vernon Avenue into pedestrian-oriented urban arterial streets.

Exploration of a Re-Design of Vernon Avenue and Blanshard Street

There has been a high level of interest from the public, landowners, and stakeholders to examine options to improve connectivity and access in the Uptown-Douglas Corridor area and reduce the dominance of motor vehicles. As a result of discussions from stakeholders and the public, the idea to re-design the Vernon-Blanshard couplet was discussed at the Community Design Workshop and a potential additional Big Move was identified:

Explore a Re-Design of the Vernon-Blanshard Couplet: Transition Blanshard Street to a two-way street and transform Vernon Avenue to a pedestrian oriented neighbourhood street.

The idea was to include a re-design and expansion of Blanshard Street in order to accommodate two-way traffic as part of a complete street design reflective of its role as an urban arterial street. As a result, Vernon Avenue could be downgraded to a neighbourhood street that prioritizes local access, a high quality public realm, and pedestrian and cyclist mobility. As Blanshard Street and Vernon Avenue (as well as Ravine Way and Douglas Street) are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI), it is critical that staff work closely with MoTI to develop any changes that may be proposed in the future.

In order to better understand the implications of this potential change, staff undertook a technical review that included meetings with MoTI, detailed traffic network modeling and an assessment of impacts to private property. MoTI expressed openness to considering the idea, provided travel times could be maintained or improved. To test the idea, detailed traffic network modeling was undertaken. The modeling indicated that changes, including a significantly expanded cross-section on Blanshard Street, would result in significant increases in travel times. Additionally, network modeling indicated that east-west routes would be impacted and result in increased congestion at major intersections.

Furthermore, Blanshard Street would have to be significantly expanded to include space for two-way traffic as well as wide urban-standard sidewalks, protected bike lanes, and landscaped boulevards. The results of the technical review indicated that this would create significant impacts to private property and potentially limit future development opportunities. Additionally, it may be difficult for a road of this size to achieve the desired outcomes of improved pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, and a high quality public realm.

In order to honour the input from the public, direction to explore a new design for both Blanshard Street and Vernon Avenue, in their existing locations, is suggested. Staff are proposing changes to the 11th Big Move from what is noted above to better reflect the technical realities:

Transform Blanshard Street and Vernon Avenue into Complete Streets:
Transition Blanshard Street and Vernon Avenue into a pedestrian-oriented, urban-arterial street.

This direction would allow for a transition of these streets into pedestrian-oriented, urban-arterials that would prioritize local access, high quality public realm, and improved pedestrian and cyclist mobility with reduced impacts to private property. Staff would continue to work with MoTI to develop concepts for inclusion in the draft Plan.

4. Preliminary Policy Directions

As a result of input received from the Community Design Workshop and other public engagement events, preliminary policy directions began to emerge (see Attachment A). These high-level ideas will be used together with the Structural and Big Moves and public input received to date to guide policy development in the draft plan in Phase 4. In the Plan Framework Report, the preliminary policy directions are organized under the Structural and Big Moves.

5. Concept Layers

As noted previously, one of the goals of the Community Design Workshop was to explore key concepts and potential Structural and Big Moves. Building on the Vision, Community Values, and the Structural and Big Moves, participants worked together to develop concept layers organized around three themes: Green Layer; Mobility Layer; and Land Use Layer. Details can be found in the Plan Framework Report (see Attachment A). The concept layers (see Figure 2)

provide a visual representation of how some of the Structural and Big Moves begin to play out spatially.

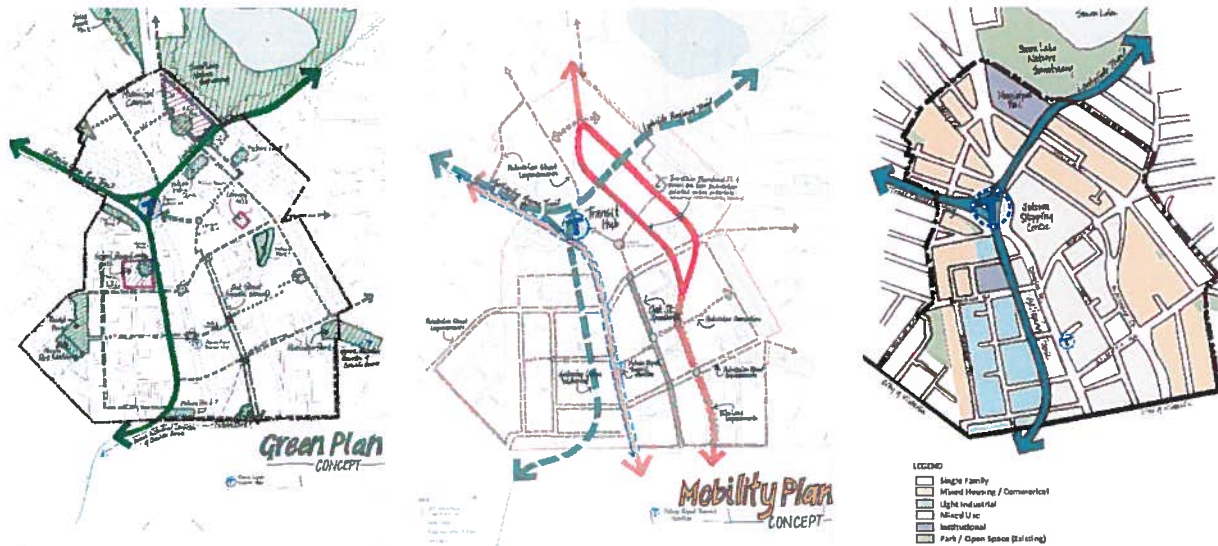


Figure 2: Concept Layers (Provided for context, see Attachment A for large copies)

6. Land Use Objectives

Land use objectives have been developed for both the Uptown-Douglas Corridor area in general and for six sub-areas. The objectives are based on initial public input and analysis and will be further refined and explored as part of the Plan drafting process. These objectives signal the overall intent of the Plan and will be used to guide the development of more detailed land use policy. The general land use objectives are as follows:

- Lead growth with residential;
- Retain the area's role as a primary employment centre;
- Transition height and density from the area core to established neighbourhoods;
- Support the implementation of rapid transit on Douglas Street with a greater concentration of residents and jobs within walking distance;
- Ensure all new buildings are pedestrian-oriented and enhance streetscape conditions;
- Improve area connectivity and break up super-blocks; and
- Ensure each precinct/neighbourhood has sufficient public open space to provide recreation opportunities within close walking distance

In order to further develop land use objectives, the Uptown-Douglas Corridor has been divided into six sub-areas:

- Douglas – Oak Spine;
- Tennyson Industrial Quarter;
- Rudd Neighbourhood;
- Rutledge Neighbourhood;
- Transit Hub/Mt. View Neighbourhood; and
- Vernon Neighbourhood.

Details on sub-area land use objectives can be found in the Plan Framework Report (see Attachment A).

ALTERNATIVES

A. Uptown Douglas Corridor Plan Framework

1. That Council endorse the Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan – Plan Framework Report.
(Recommended)

Council endorsement of the Plan Framework Report would achieve a significant milestone in the project and provide clarity on content that would be included in a draft Plan. The Plan Framework Report contains the key concepts and structure that will be used to build a draft Plan. Council approval would signal general support for the concepts and enable staff to further develop and elaborate upon the preliminary directions developed with the public to create a comprehensive draft Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan.

2. That Council provide alternate direction on additional work or changes they would like staff to undertake.

Should Council wish, they could direct staff to review and revise components of the Plan Framework Report. This work could include staff conducting further analysis or public engagement on specific issues and then bringing back a revised Plan Framework Report for Council's consideration. This alternative would have implications for overall project timelines and potentially the project budget, depending on the type of analysis requested.

Alternatively, Council could endorse the Plan Framework Report, but in their motion highlight a specific area or direction that they would like staff to further explore/include in the development of a draft Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific funding implications associated with endorsing the Plan Framework Report, as the project is proceeding in accordance with the initial budget and project Terms of Reference. Funds have been allocated within the project budget to complete future phases.

Should Council decide not to endorse the Plan Framework Report and/or provide an alternate direction or suggest changes, additional resources and/or funding may be required depending on the direction provided by Council.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The subject initiative forms part of the 2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan. No impact on the Strategic Plan is anticipated unless this project is significantly delayed. In that case, the ability to undertake new Strategic Plan initiatives would be temporarily impacted.

PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Official Community Plan

Endorsement of the Plan Framework Report will allow staff to begin drafting the Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan. When the Plan is completed it will result in greater clarity and specificity

around broader municipal-wide directions articulated in the Official Community Plan. As part of the future adoption process, the final Plan will be included as an Appendix of the Official Community Plan Bylaw.

Local Area Plans

The Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan boundary incorporates portions of three local areas. When the Plan is complete and has been adopted, it is recommended that the existing Local Area Plans for Saanich Core, Quadra, and Tillicum be updated to reflect the directions that have been developed. More information and recommendations as to how this could occur will be provided when the final Plan is presented to Council for adoption.

Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan

The Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan sets out to develop a plan for the area of Saanich that is anticipated to experience the greatest amount of change over the next 20 years. It represents an incredible opportunity to cement the area as a vibrant regional centre that implements the sustainability objectives of Saanich's Official Community Plan.

The process to date has yielded a comprehensive set of concepts and directions that collectively form the framework of a Plan. While the concepts need further development before inclusion in a draft Plan, they collectively articulate a bold new vision for how this area could evolve over the next couple decades. The changes have the potential to reshape the transportation network, catalyze the addition of thousands of new residents and jobs, and begin to create a place that people travel to instead of through.

Council endorsement of the Plan Framework Report would signal support for these concepts and enable staff to proceed with further community conversations that are required to create a final Plan.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report is to present to Council the Plan Framework Report which highlights preliminary directions and concepts that will form the basis of the Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan. Council approval of the Framework will provide staff with the necessary direction and guidance to proceed with creating a draft Plan.

The Plan Framework Report's content was developed through extensive consultation between Saanich staff, the project Advisory Committee, stakeholders, and the public in order to develop ideas, concepts, and preliminary policy directions. As policy directions are further developed, staff will continue to work with the community, including through a full public review of the draft Plan.

Staff are currently seeking Council endorsement on the work completed to date in order to move forward with drafting the Plan.

Prepared by: ShSaltzman
Shari Holmes-Saltzman
Senior Planner

Reviewed by: Cameron Scott
Cameron Scott
Manager of Community Planning

Approved by: Sharon Hvozdzanski
For Sharon Hvozdzanski
Director of Planning

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Attachments: Attachment A: Uptown – Douglas Corridor Plan – Plan Framework Report
Attachment B: Public Engagement Summary – Phases 1 - 3

cc: Paul Thorkelsson, Administrator

ADMINISTRATOR’S COMMENTS:

I endorse the recommendation from the Director of Planning.

Paul Thorkelsson
Paul Thorkelsson, Administrator

For