



## The Corporation of the District of Saanich

# Report

**To:** Mayor and Council  
**From:** Lindsay Chase, Director of Planning  
**Date:** March 3, 2026  
**Subject:** Uptown-Douglas Pre-Zoning & Network Design Project Implementation  
**File:** 2310 - 20

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### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Council receive the Uptown-Douglas Draft Zones and Network Design for information (Attachments A, B, C and D).
2. That Council direct staff to revise the Terms of Reference for the Uptown-Douglas Pre-Zoning and Network Design Project to present property owners, within the pre-zoning area, with an opportunity to opt in to the rezoning of their properties.
3. That Council direct staff to proceed to consultation on potential amendments to the Uptown-Douglas Plan that would:
  - a. extend the Core land use designation to include properties along Blanshard Street.
  - b. enable consideration of development up to 24-storeys along Blanshard Street and Douglas Street; and
  - c. lower the base building in the Urban Mixed-Use designation from eight storeys to six storeys.
4. That Council direct staff to proceed to consultation on the land use framework and network design presented within this Report.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this Report is to update Council on the progress of the Uptown-Douglas Pre-Zoning and Network Design Project, and seek Council direction on the following matters before proceeding to public consultation:

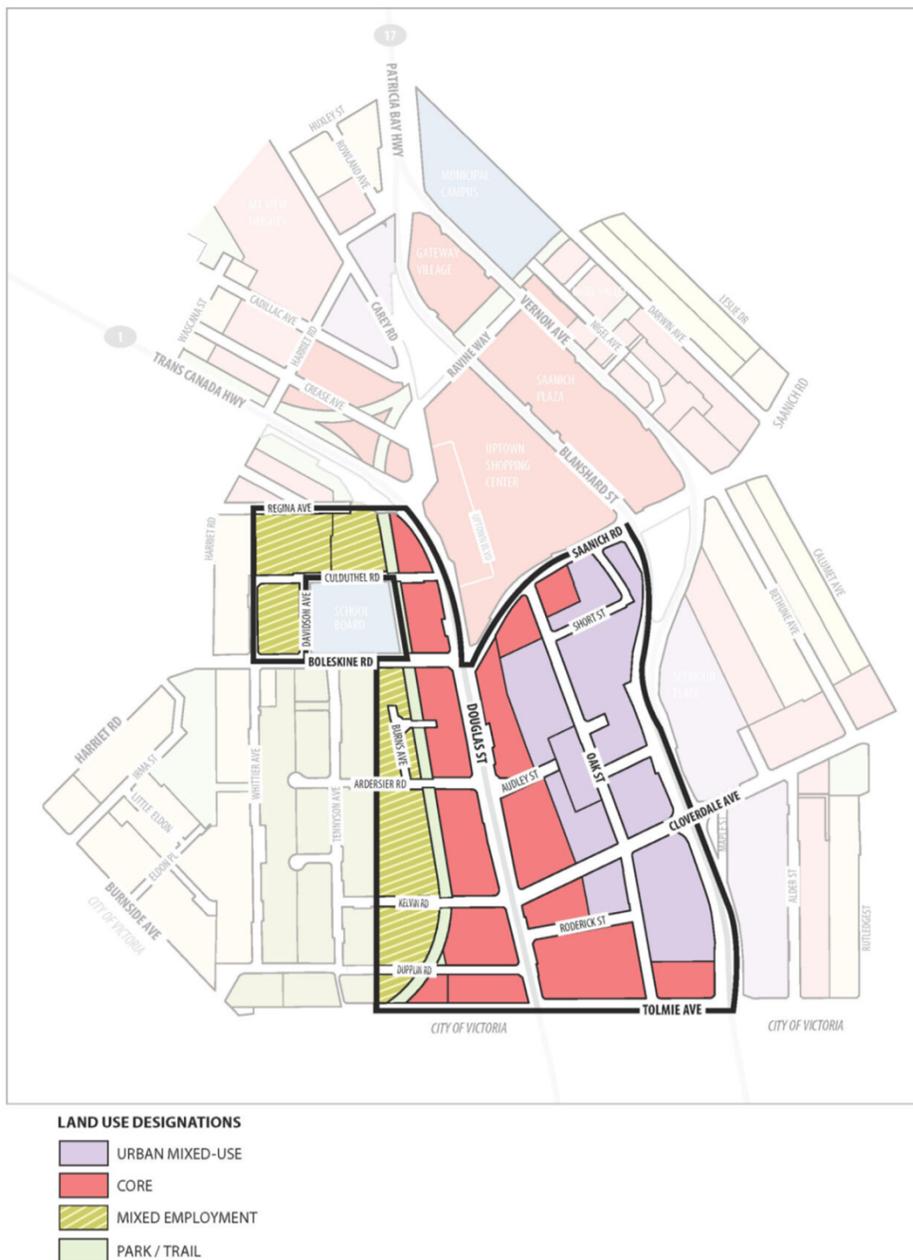
- A revised approach to pre-zoning that invites property owners to include their properties in the pre-zoning process rather than accept imposed new land use regulations without consideration of site-specific circumstances; and
- Potential amendments to the Uptown-Douglas Plan that would respond to results of technical and economic testing, with the goal of improving the viability / likelihood of potential new development.

## BACKGROUND

### Council Direction

The Uptown-Douglas Plan (UDP), adopted in February 2022, is a comprehensive land use and transportation document that establishes a vision and policies to transform the area into a mixed-use, walkable neighbourhood within the heart of the District of Saanich. The plan has an emphasis on housing diversity, active transportation, urban design, and climate change.

Council directed staff to undertake four key implementation items as part of the adoption of the Uptown-Douglas Plan (UDP). One of these implementation items, the pilot pre-zoning project, has evolved into the Uptown-Douglas Pre-Zoning and Network Design Project. It is the District of Saanich’s first pre-zoning which will focus on specific land use designations. Map 1 identifies the area being considered for this project.



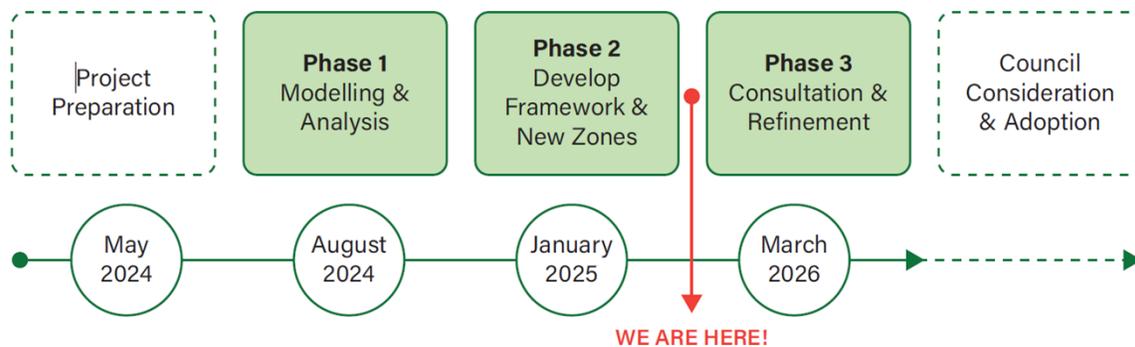
**Map 1: The Uptown-Douglas Pre-Zoning and Network Design Project area**

In April of 2024, Council endorsed a Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Uptown-Douglas Pre-Zoning and Network Design Project that includes the Urban Mixed-Use Residential, Mixed Employment, and the Core land use designations illustrated in Map 1. The ToR objectives are to secure desired land uses, built forms, and transportation elements by completing the following:

- A zoning framework with new zones to implement policies from Core, Urban Mixed-Use Residential, and Mixed Employment land use designations.
- A new key road network design, which includes dedication requirements, and frontage improvements to be contributed by development parcels.
- Pre-zoning of lands within the project area; and
- A structured density bonus zoning to capture public benefit amenities and affordable housing.

### Project Process and Update

The Uptown-Douglas Pre-Zoning and Network Design Project commenced in August 2024. The work involved a rigorous multi-disciplinary analysis of the technical aspects of zoning, multi-modal road transportation network design, future park details, private property impacts, and economic modelling. The complexity of the technical analysis and the timing of provincial guidance have delayed the consultation and refinement phase to early 2026 (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Project Timeline**

Work undertaken over the past year has delivered a draft package of interrelated elements which will collectively help to deliver the vision of the Uptown-Douglas Plan. The subsequent section of this report provides updates on the following elements of the Uptown-Douglas Pre-Zoning and Network Design Project:

- Draft Transportation Network Design: The proposed alignment and design of Oak Street and Audley Crossing
- Draft Zones
- Density Bonusing Framework
- Potential Amendments to the Uptown-Douglas Plan
- Pre-zoning Area

### Overview of Key Concepts

#### Pre-Zoning

Pre-zoning is a mechanism where a municipality can initiate a zoning change for a larger area to support the implementation of new area plans and the specific objectives and policies expressed in the plans. Pre-zoning eliminates the need for individual rezoning applications. All applications for redevelopment, even those in alignment with new zones, would still be subject to a Development Permit and the applicable portions of the Development Permit Area

Guidelines (2024). Pre-zoning the geographic area illustrated in Map 1 would align Zoning Bylaw, 2003, with the development potential expressed in the Uptown-Douglas Plan. Once complete, the pre-zoning would allow staff to process development applications that are consistent with the Uptown-Douglas Plan through a Development Permit. This differs from the District of Saanich’s current practice of rezoning individual development parcels based on applicant-initiated developments.

#### Density Bonus Zoning

Density Bonus Zoning allows density benefits for projects in exchange for specific benefits such as defined cash or in-kind contributions towards public benefit amenities, including affordable and supportive housing (*Local Government Act*, S. 482). A density bonus model is a voluntary system of exchange between local government and land developers. In this approach the zone is designed with different density levels and a developer can choose to:

- Develop to the permitted “base” density with no additional contribution required; or
- Build the additional “bonus” density or floor space in exchange for a defined contribution back to the community.

In June 2025, after the endorsement of the Terms of Reference, the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs published their updated Comprehensive Guidance on Inclusionary Zoning and Density Bonusing describing the financial feasibility matters that must be analyzed when developing or updating a density benefits bylaw. The work is required to meet new legislative requirements, specifically *Local Government Act*, S. 482.2.

#### Transportation Network Design

The area being considered for pre-zoning is intended to incorporate two major changes to the transportation network. The first item is the introduction of a new lane, Audley Crossing, between Douglas Street and Oak Street to facilitate access and loading and enable the improved functioning of the Douglas Street as a Rapid Transit Corridor and Oak Street as a neighborhood high street. The second is a re-design of Oak Street as a neighbourhood high street that prioritizes pedestrian activity.

To realize this transition and ensure public and private investments work towards clear and predictable standards, a network design is needed to solidify street alignments, widths, elements, and design features. This work also highlights dedication and frontage improvements required as redevelopment on private property proceeds, as well as the potential integration of future park space.

### **DRAFT TRANSPORTATION NETWORK DESIGN**

To facilitate a more streamlined development permit process, staff have worked to define the transportation network and servicing requirements, as well as opportunities for green spaces for the area where pre-zoning is a possibility. Watt Consulting Group was hired in August 2024 to develop street designs for Oak Street and the future laneway called Audley Crossing. Policy and the conceptual cross-sections in the Uptown-Douglas Plan were used as the starting points for the design. Further refinements were made based on a review of current policies and plans including the Official Community Plan (OCP), Active Transportation Plan, and Urban Forest Strategy, as well as an analysis of a variety of factors, including current and future traffic volumes, safety conditions, and projected increases in residential and commercial density.

With an understanding of the proposed alignment of Audley Crossing and the desired width of Oak Street, staff then proceeded to further develop the vision for Oak Street by:

1. Identifying properties or portions of properties that may be impacted to enable future construction of the Audley Crossing right of way.
2. Conceptualizing a design for Oak Street to enable it to meet its desired function as a pedestrian high street while ensuring access and circulation for all modes through the transportation network. The design includes a “shared street” on a portion of Oak Street, along with a full closure of Oak Street in a specific area to create space for a park.
3. Developing a potential configuration for an Oak and Audley Park, which is to be aligned with the terminus of Audley Street and includes a portion of the right of way of Oak Street, which would be closed; and
4. Conceptualizing key pedestrian and cyclist connections from Oak Street east to Douglas Street and west to Blanshard Street.

Attachments A and B include details of the network design and technical analysis.

### **Oak Street Design**

The Uptown-Douglas Plan highlights Oak Street as a centerpiece, critical to transition the area to a vibrant core. Oak Street will be a central high street, designed to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, trees, and amenities that intermingle with active and engaging mixed-use buildings along the street. Policy for Oak Street envisions changes that increase animation and pedestrian orientation, including through the addition of parks, plazas, patios, and active uses.

Based on policy and technical analysis, a design concept for Oak Street has been developed with a focus on people walking, cycling, and spending time in comfortable and lively public spaces (Figure 2). The road right-of-way would be 24 m in most places (Figure 3). Where the road becomes a shared street and/or is closed to traffic, it would be 20 m.

The proposed design recommends the closure of Oak Street at the terminus of Audley Street. The closed area within the right of way would be made into a park. Immediately north and south of the park would be a “shared street” that would include a winding road for vehicles and bicycles to share, as well as intermittent parking/loading bays, and ample space for pedestrians, plantings, and amenities such as seating along each side (Figure 4). The purpose of this design is to maintain access while creating a space that clearly has pedestrian priority.

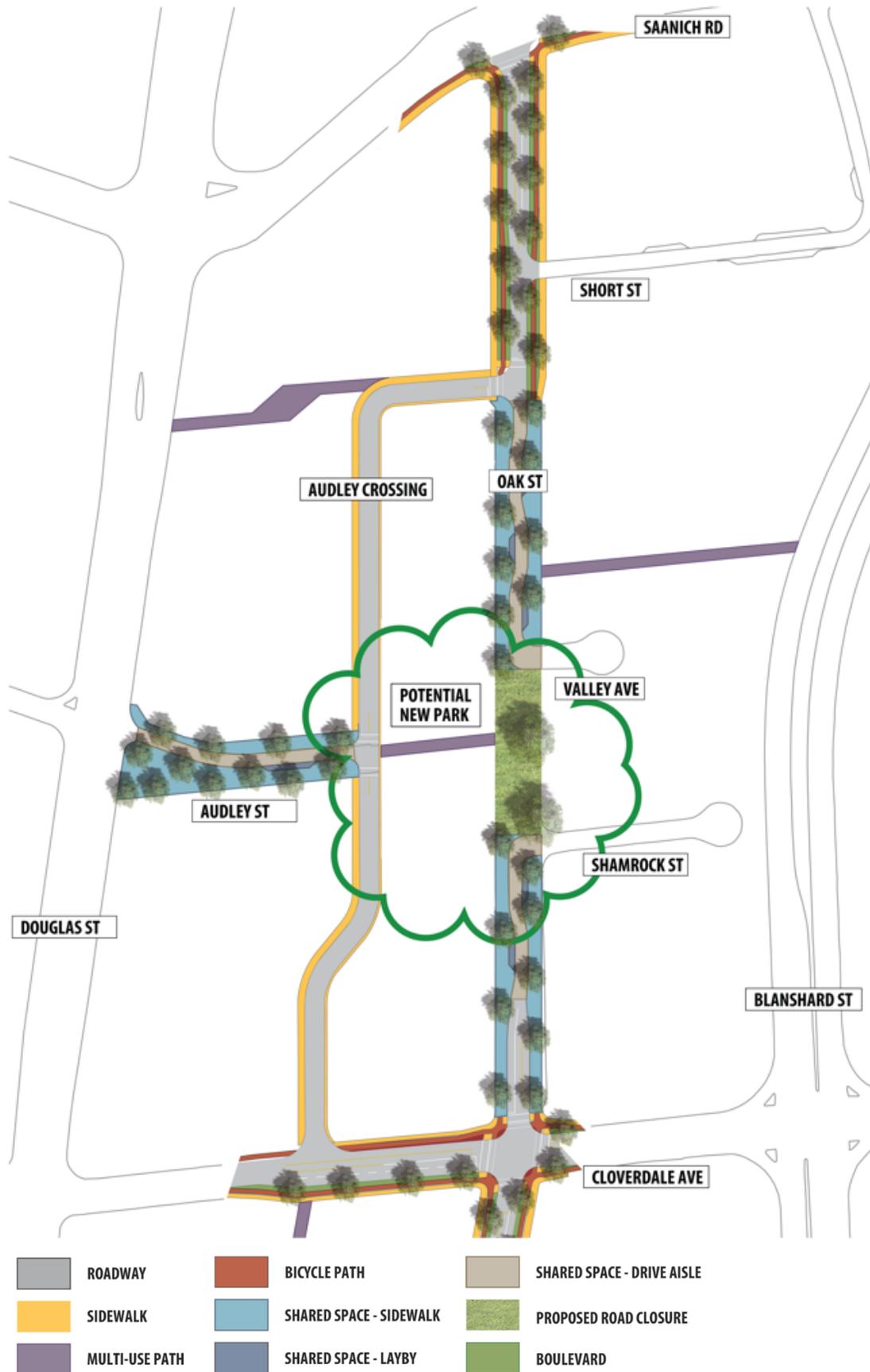


Figure 2: Oak Street Design Concept

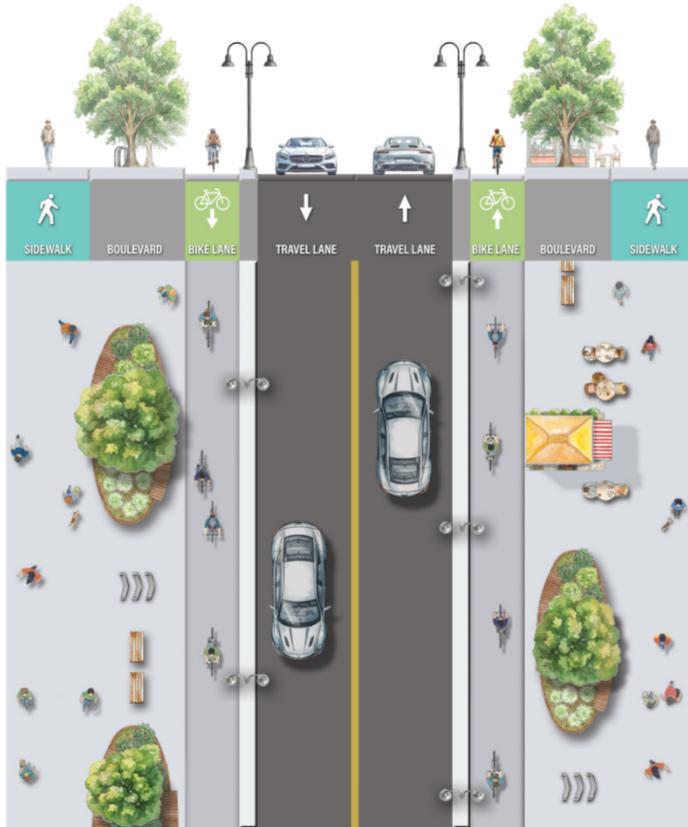


Figure 3: Standard Oak Street Section/Plan view, 24 m width

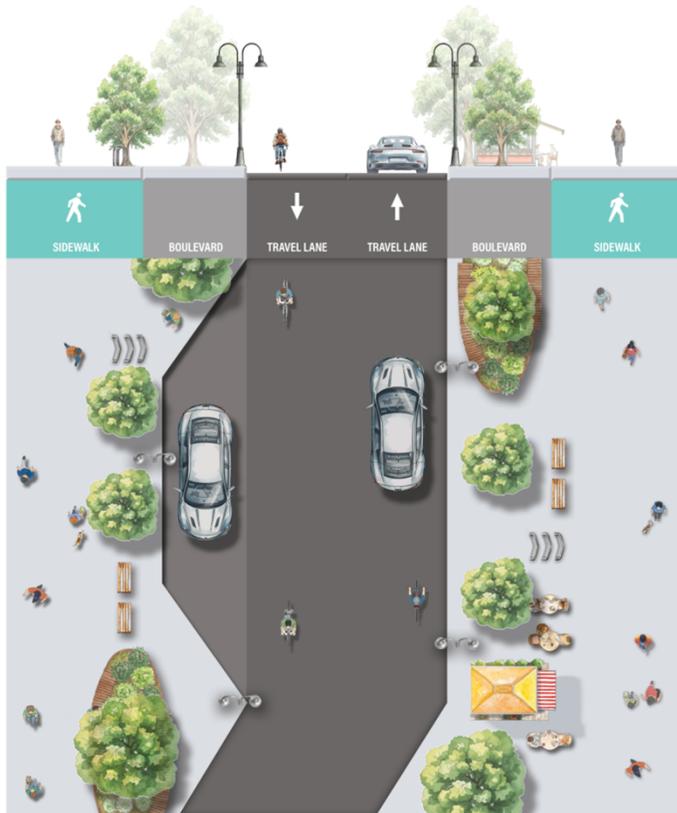
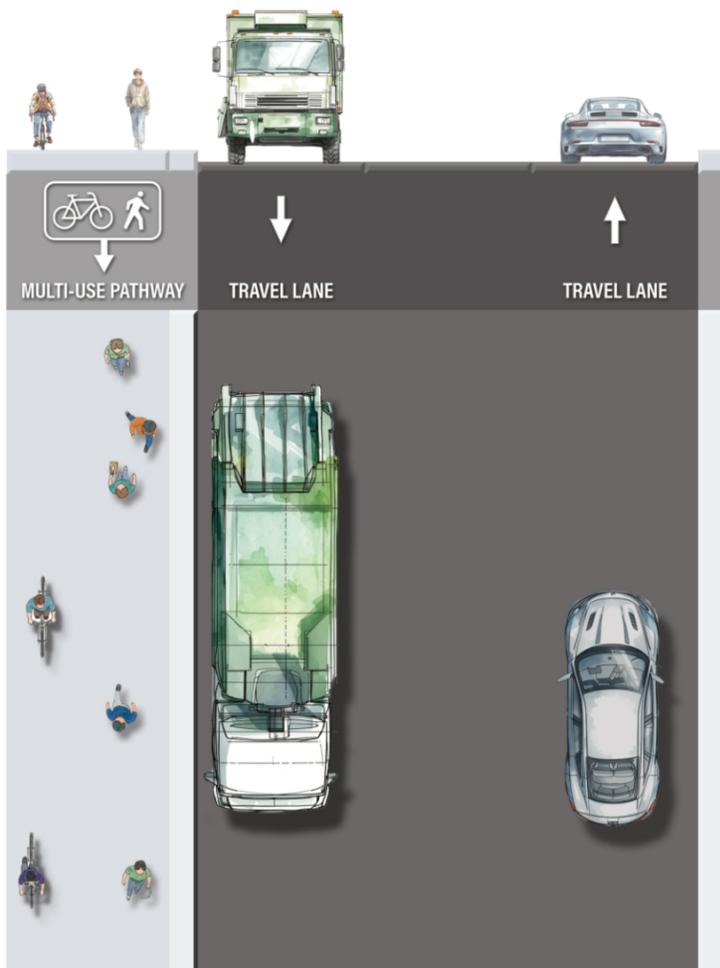


Figure 4: Shared Oak Street Section/Plan view, 20 m width

### Refinement of the Audley Crossing Lane

The proposed new lane, Audley Crossing, is identified conceptually in the Uptown-Douglas Plan. It's future alignment traverses private property and is intended to be implemented through the development process. The alignment of the proposed lane runs between and parallel to Oak Street and Douglas Street. At its north end, it starts south and west of Short Street. It then continues south across Cloverdale Avenue and Roderick Street and terminates at Tolmie Avenue (see Figure 2). The exact alignment of Audley Crossing, south of Audley Street, is yet to be determined and would be dependent on potential future property negotiations.

The proposed lane is 12.5 m wide and includes a shared travel lane and a multi-use pathway (MUP). A sidewalk and additional space for the MUP would be provided in statutory rights-of-way (Figure 5).



**Figure 5: Audley Lane Section/Plan, 12.5 m width**

The segment of laneway between Cloverdale Avenue and Roderick Street would be a multi-use pathway only, accessible only by pedestrians, cyclists, and people using wheeled devices. Staff determined that a laneway with vehicle access is not necessary between these two streets and that constructing the laneway would result in significant costs for Saanich and land dedications from private property owners. Figure 2 shows the proposed conceptual Audley Crossing alignment and the new multi-use pathways.

**Proposed Multi-Use Pathways**

Consistent with the pedestrian and cycling networks identified in the Uptown-Douglas Plan, the concept designs for Oak Street and Audley Crossing identify six, 5 m wide multi-use pathways (see Figure 2).

These multi-use pathways would be secured through statutory rights-of-way (SRW) agreements with property owners. They are important for network connectivity, and together they would make the Uptown-Douglas core area more accessible for pedestrians and cyclists. They would also ensure safe and convenient linkages between Douglas Street, where transit services exist, and Blanshard Street.

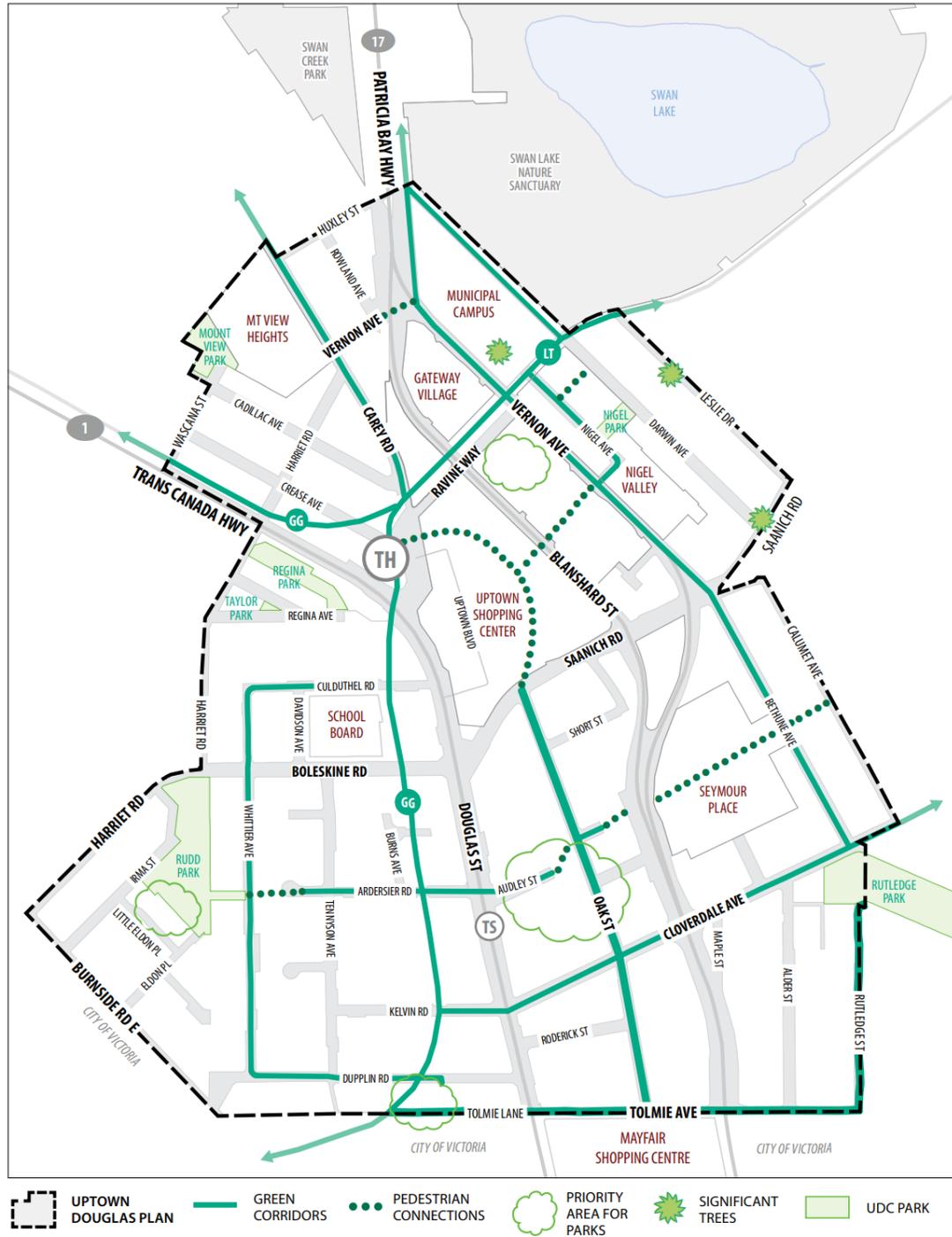
**Public Realm Design**

A distinctive public realm design would be developed to enhance Oak Street's unique identity as the District of Saanich's central high street. With the intent of creating a memorable and enjoyable public space, the public realm design would include:

- Public seating to facilitate gathering and enjoyment of public spaces
- Specialized lighting to denote Oak Street as the District of Saanich's "high street"
- Flexible areas between boulevard plantings that would allow for amenities such as patio seating, bike parking, waste and recycling receptacles, drinking fountains, misting stations or small commercial kiosks
- Public art at the sidewalk plazas
- Variable paving materials, colours and textures to differentiate spaces and create a rhythmic sidewalk pattern
- Oak Street specific boulevard plantings such as Garry Oaks, Red Oaks, Forest Green Oaks, and other large class shade trees

**Future Park Space**

In addition to the transportation and mobility network, parks play a critical role in the public spaces envisioned in the Uptown-Douglas core. The area is currently under-served by park space, and this shortfall will become more critical as the population grows within the Uptown Douglas Plan area. To address this shortfall, the Uptown-Douglas Plan identified locations for future parks including one at the terminus of Audley Street at Oak Street and one along Dupplin Road adjacent to the Galloping Goose Trail (Map 2).



**Map 2: UDP Map 4.2 Natural Areas and Green Corridors, Showing Future Priority Areas for Parks**

As part of the process to determine a future road design for Oak Street, it was realized that a partial closure of Oak Street would help to achieve mobility goals related to pedestrian prioritization, and also provide land that could serve as the nucleus for a future park space in a location that has been identified as priority for new park space in the Uptown-Douglas Plan. This is a unique opportunity to add much-needed park space in a way that uses existing municipal assets, reducing overall costs to the District. Overall, this would represent a tangible step towards implementing a key element that is essential to building a thriving neighbourhood.

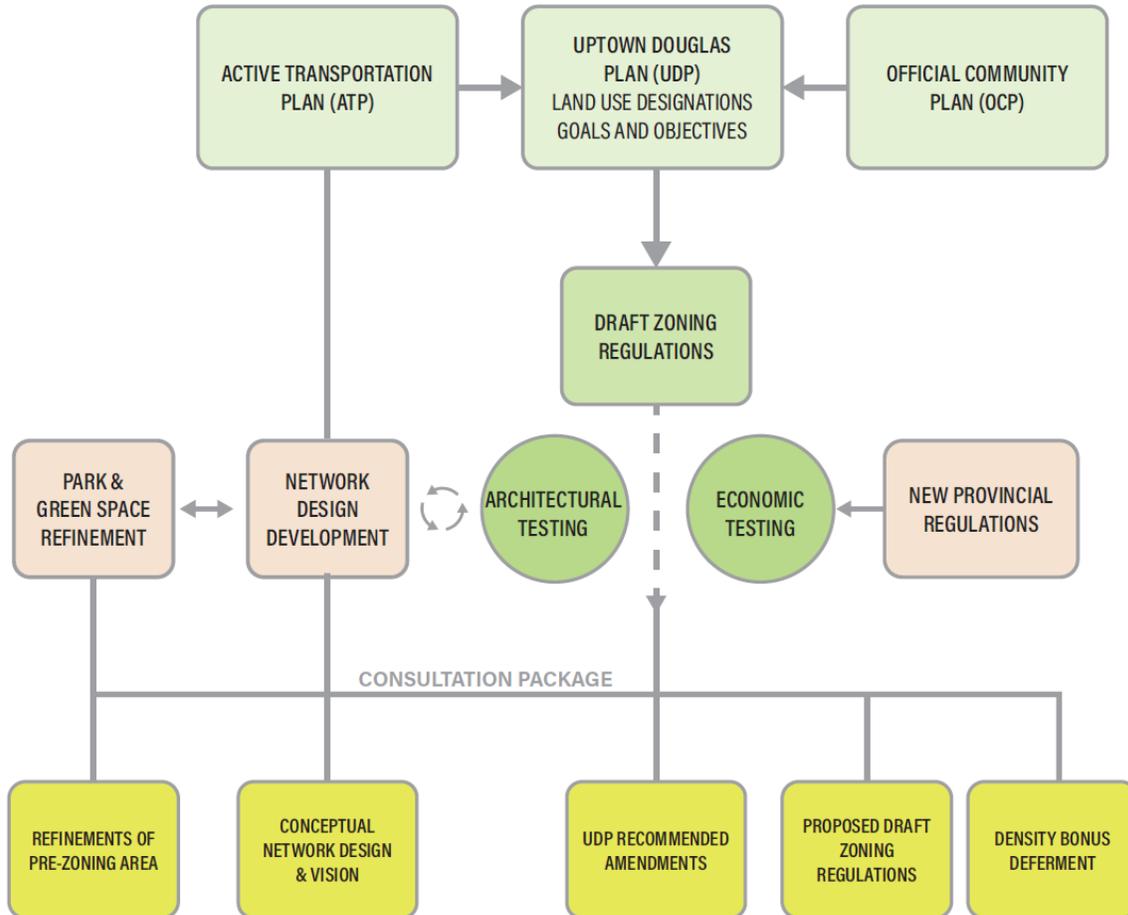
The Oak and Audley Park is intended to be an urban scale neighbourhood park which could include a lawn area, dog space, and/or play structures. Staff are recommending a phased approach for the development of Oak and Audley Park. The core of the park would consist of the closed portion of the Oak Street right of way and potentially adjacent properties that would be acquired through dedications at the time of development and/or as funds for park acquisition become available. The exact final configuration of the park is somewhat adaptable, acknowledging the uncertainty of park acquisition. The full buildout of the park would be targeted for an approximate area of 0.6 hectares.

The area near Dupplin Road, Tolmie Lane and the Galloping Goose Trail has also been identified as a location for a future potential neighbourhood park. Its location adjacent to the Galloping Goose Trail would be a worthwhile enhancement of this active transportation corridor creating a neighbourhood hub and gathering spot.

Potential locations for future park acquisitions are recommended to be excluded from the pre-zoning area. This exclusion helps to signal a desired future priority for these sites and would help to minimize the likelihood that new development would preclude future acquisition / negotiation opportunities.

## **DRAFT ZONES**

The development of draft Zoning Bylaw, 2003, regulations is intended to implement the policies and land use designations of the Uptown-Douglas Plan. Development of draft Zoning Bylaw, 2003, regulations aim to secure desired land uses and building forms that align with the long-term vision of the Uptown-Douglas Plan. The pre-zoning work takes the general policy direction of the UDP and undertakes the technical work to convert it to zoning regulations that can be applied to properties with the defined areas. Importantly, this work tests the economic and architectural feasibility of policy directions to ensure zoning parameters can reasonably achieve redevelopment. Figure 6 shows the various inputs into the development of zoning regulations, inter-relationship with network design and the products being proposed for public consultation. Elements of this chart are explained in this section.



**Figure 6: Draft Zone Development Flow Chart**

**Land Use Designations**

This section details the objectives and policies of the three Uptown-Douglas Plan (UDP) land use designations within the pre-zoning area and outlines key considerations for transitioning these designations to zoning.

Core Land Use Designation

The Core land use designation is within the Uptown Core as identified in the Official Community Plan (OCP). The Uptown Core is envisioned to become the centrally located heart of the District of Saanich with support for the highest levels of housing density, employment options and diversity of services and amenities.

The Uptown-Douglas Plan (UDP) supports mixed-use development in the Core land use designations with commercial required at grade along specified street frontages. The area is intended to be a significant employment and shopping destination with a variety of commercial and service uses.

The UDP presents building heights in storeys with a “base” and “max” identified for each land use designation with policy to generally not support developments which propose building heights that are significantly lower than base heights. The intent of this policy is to ensure that development in the area meets the intensity required to enhance the area’s position as the primary employment, commercial, and community hub, to provide the population to support transit initiatives and to avoid inconsistent streetscapes.

The Core land use designation allows for the highest heights in the district with consideration of up to 18 storeys throughout and limited consideration for development up to 24 storeys on specified sites or under certain conditions. Currently, none of the specified sites for 24 storeys are within the pre-zoning area. Other Core sites could be considered for 24 storey developments where it is demonstrated how the additional height would contribute to on-site open space, public realm improvements and demonstrates the application of good urban design specific to taller buildings, including massing skyline character and shadowing impacts. To advance the project, and in recognition of current economic conditions, staff drafted a new zone to permit 24 storey development on properties that have frontage along Douglas Street and Blanshard Street. The rationale for this recommendation will be further detailed within later portions of this Report for council consideration.

The Uptown-Douglas Plan (UDP) and Development Permit Area Guidelines envision a tower podium form of development with large floor plates at the base of the structure which allow for a variety of uses, including large format commercial and institutional uses, with narrow more compact residential tower forms above. This built form allows for high intensity development that can support a variety of uses, while limiting upper storey massing to:

- Maximize sunlight to sidewalks and treed boulevards;
- Allow visual access to the sky;
- Reduce overall massing impacts of high-density development; and
- Enhance skyline presentation.

#### The Urban Mixed-Use (UMU) Land Use Designation

The Urban Mixed-Use (UMU) land use designation is similar to the Core in terms of use but contemplates less intense development and is generally located along either side of Oak Street. Oak Street is intended to be the District of Saanich's "high street", lined with continuous, fine grained, active and engaging commercial uses. Oak Street links the Uptown Shopping Center to Mayfair Mall and is envisioned to be a "pedestrian first" promenade with public amenities.

The UMU has a base height of eight storeys and max height of 12 storeys. Through project development, staff have drafted a zone to permit a base height of six storeys for the lands designated UMU. The rationale for this proposed amendment is further detailed within the later portions of this Report.

The UMU land use designation requires commercial at grade on specified street frontages and envisions a three-storey mixed-use podium along Oak Street with upper residential storeys setback to maximize pedestrian comfort.

#### Mixed Employment (ME) Land Use Designation

The Mixed Employment land use area is within the Uptown Core as well as Industrial Lands as identified in the Official Community Plan (OCP). Industrial lands play an important role in service delivery and fueling the District of Saanich's economy. The OCP supports preserving the integrity of our industrial lands by:

- Improving efficiencies of industrial lands through supporting greater density and intensity of redevelopment;
- Supporting limited retail uses in industrial areas to meet the needs of the employment population; and
- Permitting accessory employment uses to industrial developments including office, commercial and community use.

The Uptown-Douglas area contains a significant portion of the District of Saanich's industrial land. The Uptown-Douglas Plan (UDP) emphasizes the importance of retaining industrial lands while recognizing movement away from traditional industrial forms. The Plan encourages multi-purpose forms which include a mix of uses. While a significant portion of the Uptown area is set aside exclusively for industrial use, the Mixed Employment designation looks to encourage properties, generally west of the Galloping Goose Trail, to maximize their employment and industrial function by permitting a broader range of uses.

The lands identified for Mixed Employment are intended for lower density development than that of the Core and Urban Mixed-Use (UMU) Land Use Designations. The development of mid-rise, six to eight-storey buildings which provide a mix of light industrial, commercial, and residential uses are encouraged. Consistent with the Official Community Plan (OCP), the UDP prioritizes the provision of industrial and employment uses at grade, while allowing for residential uses on upper storeys.

### **Technical Analysis**

Zoning regulations were drafted to reflect the policy intent of the three land use designations. These preliminary regulations were vetted through architectural and economic testing.

### Architectural Analysis

The District of Saanich retained Cascadia Architects Inc. to complete an architectural review of the proposed draft zones. The primary objective of the architectural testing was to complete massing studies of the proposed draft regulations to ensure development outcomes are consistent with the objectives of district policies and are feasible to construct. Draft regulations for the three-land use designations were tested on six sites within the pre-zoning area; anticipated land dedications were considered. The architectural analysis resulted in refinements to the zones that included revisions to the proposed density and setbacks and further consideration of the incorporation of 6 storey development within the pre-zoning area.

### Economic analysis

The District of Saanich retained Urban Systems Ltd. to prepare financial pro forma analyses for representative case studies to assess the viability of development in several locations across the district under different density conditions. Four sites were included from the Uptown-Douglas pre-zoning area, the Core designated area and up to 12 storeys in the UMU designated area.

The analysis noted that the proposed pre-zoning would lower carrying costs on land due to shorter development approval timelines and reduce soft costs related to the rezoning process itself. The economic analysis concluded that concrete high-rise and all mixed-use development scenarios within the Uptown-Douglas pre-zoning area were financially challenging under current conditions. In the future, feasibility for this scale of development could improve with reduced land values for development sites and/or stabilized construction costs.

### Density Bonus Framework

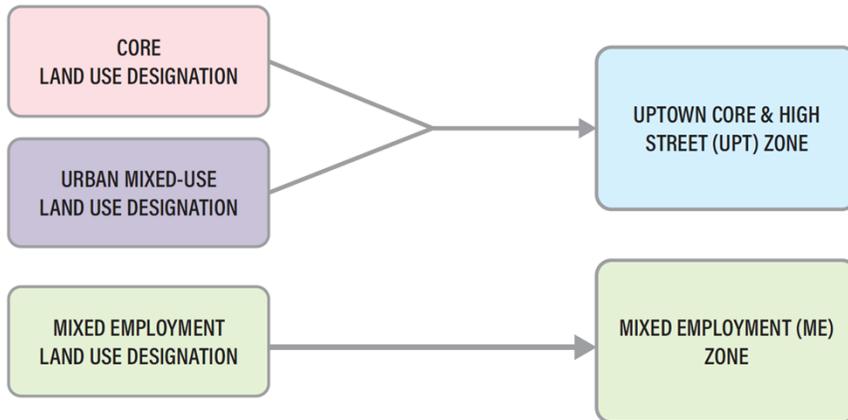
The economic analysis demonstrates that there is not sufficient capacity for implementation of bonus density zoning in the pre-zoning area at this time. Based on the economic analysis and in consideration of Provincial density bonus zoning requirements, staff cannot proceed with a Density Bonus Framework at this time.

The viability testing requires further due diligence to explore a workable density bonus framework aligned with legislative requirements (*Local Government Act*, S. 482). While employment of a density bonus framework must be deferred, the District proposes to utilize other tools such as floor space ratio (FSR) exclusions to incentivize district objectives in lieu of density bonusing. For example, the following elements are proposed to be excluded from FSR

to accommodate additional density: bike facilities, amenity space, employment space, and daycare. This is an item that could be revisited at a specified future date.

### Zoning Bylaw, 2003

The development of zoning regulations involved the conversion of three Uptown-Douglas Plan (UDP) land use designations within the pre-zoning area into two zones as indicated in Figure 7. Note that the Core and Urban Mixed-Use (UMU) land use designations are proposed to be combined into a single zone to address split designated parcels. To ensure UDP goals are implemented, special provisions are identified for properties fronting Oak Street.



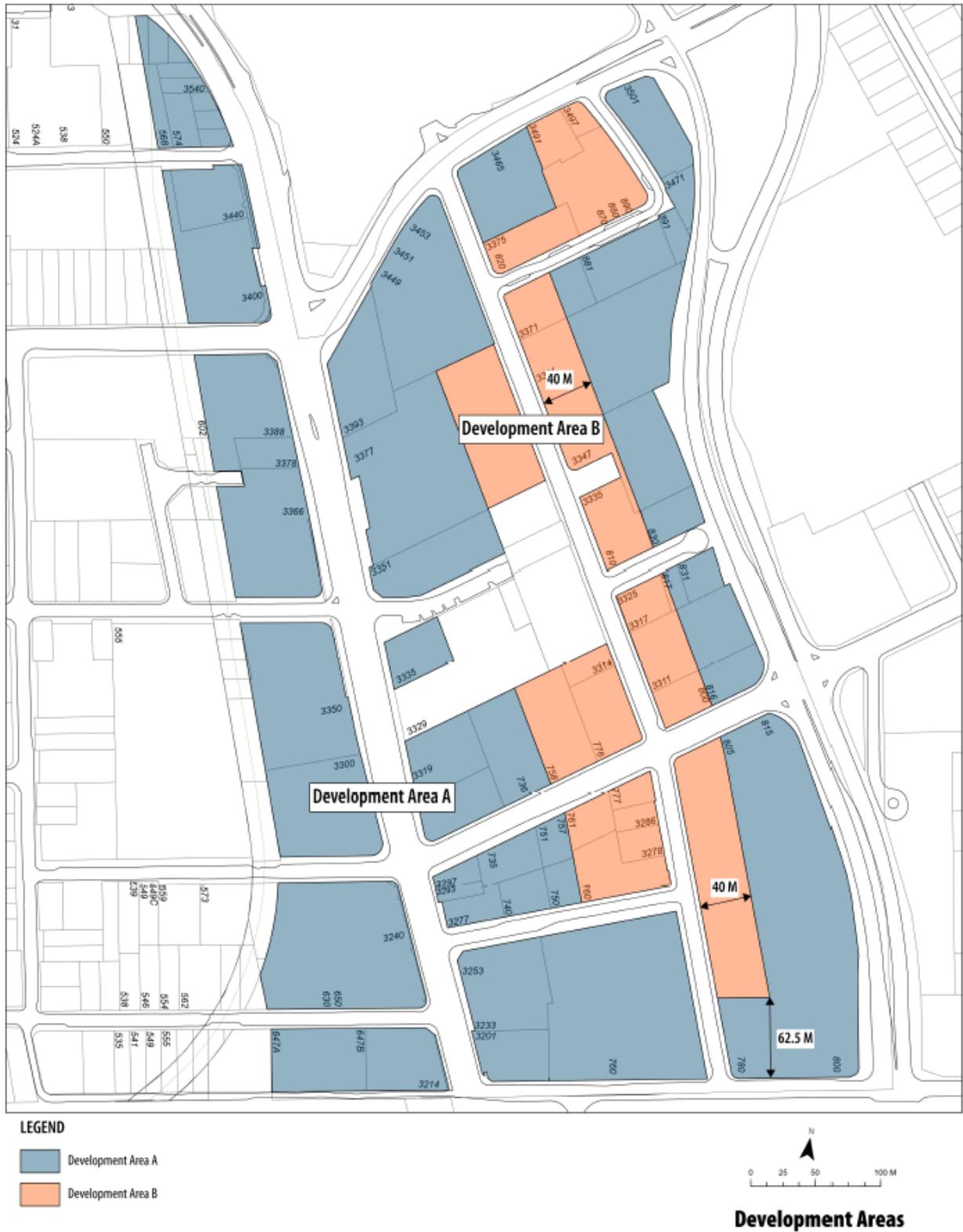
**Figure 7: Uptown-Douglas Plan Land Use Designations and Associated Proposed Zones**

Each draft zone defines the use, density, height, and siting of buildings and structures in alignment with the policy direction in the UDP. Draft zones are detailed in Attachments C & D and summarized below including their alignment with policy and related design guidelines.

#### Draft Uptown Core & High Street (UPT) Zone – Attachment C

As the general intent related to use and siting is consistent between the Core and UMU land use designations (LUD), the two areas (see Map 3) are proposed to be regulated through one zoning schedule, the Uptown Core & High Street Zone. The zone includes:

- General regulations which apply to the entirety of the area;
- Oak Street specific regulations;
- Development Area A, which is consistent with the Core LUD; and
- Development Area B, which is consistent with the UMU LUD.



**Map 3: Draft Uptown Core & High Street Zone, Development Areas**

The general regulations allow for a variety of commercial, institutional, and residential uses. Conditions of use have been added to ensure that future uses adhere to the policy objectives of the area. For example, an urban Vehicle Dealer is a permitted use conditional on it being wholly

contained within a structure that additionally provides residential uses. Commercial uses will be required along specified street frontages consistent within the Uptown-Douglas Plan (UDP).

Many of the proposed regulations are intended to put pedestrians first by enhancing the pedestrian experience of the area, including through:

- Setbacks based on use at grade and the nature of adjacent streets. Where a development fronts on to a major or “high volume” road such as Douglas Street and Blanshard Street, a greater setback would be required to ensure a comfortable pedestrian environment.
- Enhanced setbacks at all intersections, excluding Douglas Street and Blanshard Street, to create sidewalk plazas.
- Projection allowances to allow canopies and awnings to provide continuous weather protection along all street frontages.

As detailed in this Report, density bonus zoning is no longer being proposed through this work. The draft zone proposes to incentivize District of Saanich objectives through floor space ratio (FSR) exclusions. Exclusions are proposed for daycare, second-storey employment areas, cycling amenities and amenity areas.

Oak Street specific regulations are included in the draft zone to ensure pedestrian high street characteristics envisioned in the Uptown-Douglas Plan (UDP) are achieved. The draft regulations propose:

- To limit ground floor uses along Oak Street to active and engaging pedestrian-oriented commercial uses, such as entertainment venues, restaurants, neighbourhood public houses, and retail sales of goods.
- To ensure fine grained commercial by imposing a maximum width for a ground floor commercial frontage of 15 m; and
- To maximize pedestrian comfort by requiring a greater setback for the portion of the building above the maximum three-storey streetwall.

Development Area A (DA-A) would allow for the highest density and building heights consistent with the Core Land Use Designations (LUD). All general uses would be permitted in DA-A, with additional consideration for light industrial uses. This is a departure from use specific policies in the UDP but was seen to advance the area as an employment center and would be compatible with other proposed uses and the form of development.

DA-A is intended for a tower podium development form, with densities up to 6.5 FSR and heights up to 24 storeys, with a compatible zoning envelope defined through:

- Maximum streetwall heights defining the transition from podium to tower, consistent with the Uptown-Douglas Plan.
- Maximum building width, above the streetwall height, ensuring a point tower form; and
- Minimum building separation above the maximum street wall height, to allow daylight to penetrate to the public realm and to reduce privacy impacts between structures.

Development Area B (DA-B) allows for lower density mid-rise form of development, with densities up to 4.0 FSR and heights up to 12 storeys, with a compatible zoning envelope defined through:

- Maximum streetwall heights creating a consistent streetscape, in alignment with the Uptown-Douglas Plan; and

- Maximum building width, above the street wall height, to break up the massing of the residential upper storeys.

The draft zone proposes minimum building heights in both Development Areas to ensure future development is consistent with the expectations of the Official Community Plan (OCP) and UDP. The minimum building heights in the draft zones are generally consistent with the UDP base height policy, with the exception of the potential reduction of eight storeys to six storeys in DA-B.

#### Draft Mixed Employment (ME) Zone – Attachment D

The draft ME (Mixed Employment) Zone proposes commercial, industrial, institutional, and residential uses consistent with the Uptown-Douglas Plan (UDP). While it is acknowledged that purely residential development in the area would not align with UDP policies, existing multi-family and single-family residential developments within the area would continue to be a permitted use to avoid burdening those properties.

The Mixed Employment (ME) Zone allows for lower density mid-rise form of development, with densities up to 4.0 FSR and heights up to eight storeys. No minimum heights are proposed within this zone. To ensure the provision of industrial and other employment spaces the draft zone proposes a minimum of:

- 0.65 FSR for Industrial Uses; and
- 2.0 FSR for Employment uses (Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional uses combined).

The Zoning Bylaw, 2003, makes allowances for existing buildings that do not conform to the density provision of the bylaw to repair, alter, extend, and undertake other small works such that when complete the work would result in no further contravention than existed at the time the work commenced. This provision would allow existing small scale industrial developments in the area that do not meet the minimum density outlined above to maintain their structures or add additional employment or industrial area.

#### Future Administration of Draft Zones

Once complete, the pre-zoning would allow for developments to be processed as a Development Permit application. Applications would be approved through a Council decision. It is acknowledged that development of this complexity and intensity would require site specific considerations and not all development scenarios could be considered through these zoning regulations. Variances may be required to accommodate site conditions, such as locked out development parcels, mature tree retention, or sites with a significant slope. Consistent with the *Local Government Act*, variances can be considered for all regulations, except for use and density. Any variances would be reviewed and considered through the development review process and would be presented to Council for their consideration.

#### **Pre-zoning Area Refinements**

Through the rigorous multi-disciplinary analysis of the technical aspects of pre-zoning, network design, future park details, and private property impacts, staff are recommending removal of certain properties from the pre-zoning area. Table 1 identifies the rationales for the removals, while Map 4 identifies the properties proposed for exclusion.

The zoning of properties proposed to be removed from the pre-zoning would remain unchanged and all policies within the UDP would continue to support future development. The properties would retain their existing development rights under the current zoning regulations until implementation is facilitated by a future redevelopment process.

**Table 1: Properties proposed to be excluded from the pre-zoning area**

Property type	Rationale
Properties identified for potential future parks	Properties which have been identified for potential future park are proposed to be excluded from the pre-zoning area. These properties would retain all existing development rights until such time that the District of Saanich can pursue acquisition.
Properties identified for the implementation of Audley Crossing	Properties which have been identified as ideal for the implementation of Audley Crossing are proposed to be excluded from the pre-zoning area. These properties would retain all existing development rights.
Heritage designated property	The District of Saanich has identified a heritage asset for retention, and it would not be appropriate to include it in a pre-zoning area. This property would retain all existing development rights.
Properties partially within the pre-zoning area.	Properties that straddle the pre-zoning area boundary are proposed to be excluded from the pre-zoning, as it would result in a single parcel with two zones, a split zoned property, creates an administrative burden and could inadvertently create unintended hardship for the owner.



**Map 4: Revised Pre-Zoning Area**

## Proposed Uptown-Douglas Plan Land Use Designation Amendments

Work undertaken over the past year has highlighted aspects of the Uptown-Douglas Plan which require reconsideration to reflect current economic and legislative changes. Subsequent sections of this Report provide descriptions of the proposed amendments to the Uptown-Douglas Plan for council consideration.

### Changes to Maximum Building Heights

As envisioned in the Official Community Plan (OCP), achieving additional population and employment growth is key to realizing the Uptown-Douglas Plan. Changing economic conditions means that maximum height may need to be adjusted in strategic locations to ensure development can be viability constructed. Beyond the increased opportunities for housing, greater height flexibility can also improve the design possibilities by allowing for more variation in building forms. Towers can be less impactful to the public realm due to reduced shadowing impacts compared to 12 storey blockier buildings. Additional height and, thus, density, could reinforce the area as the District of Saanich’s downtown and primary employment hub.

Staff are recommending an exploration of expanding the Core designation to include Blanshard Street (see Map 5) and that major 24 storeys be supported on the two main streets of Douglas and Blanshard. As a wider street, Blanshard Street, like Douglas Street, provides opportunity for higher building heights that would be proportional to the road right of way. Lower density and greater setbacks adjacent to Oak Street would be required to achieve a pedestrian high street through the centre of the Uptown Douglas area, creating a valley which would be flanked by higher density developments (See Figure 8).

Staff are recommending that public discussion about changes to the Core designation to allow 24-storey development along Douglas Street and Blanshard Street be included in the upcoming consultation events about the Uptown-Douglas Plan area. Staff would prepare materials to facilitate discussion and feedback about 24-storey development along Douglas Street and Blanshard Street with other Core designated properties (not having Douglas Street and Blanshard Street frontage) to remain planned for a maximum of 18 storeys. The proposed land use designation map would be amended to (1) increase the Core area west of Audley Crossing due to the updated Audley Crossing alignment, and (2) add Core land use designation along the Blanshard frontage. See Figure 8: Massing Transition Sketch and Map 5: Proposed Revised Land Use Designations below to help convey the proposed height concept.

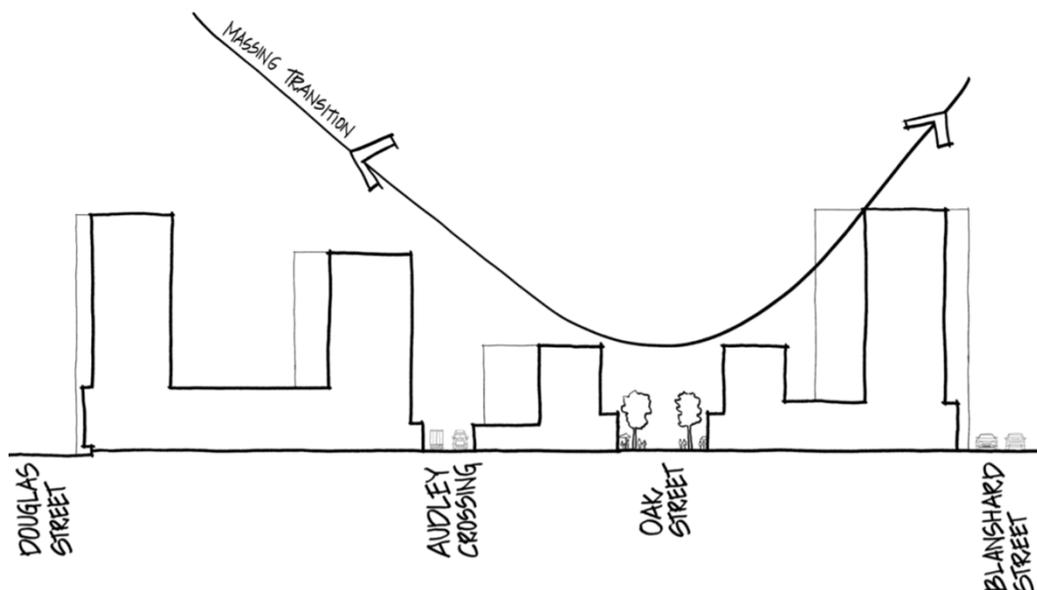
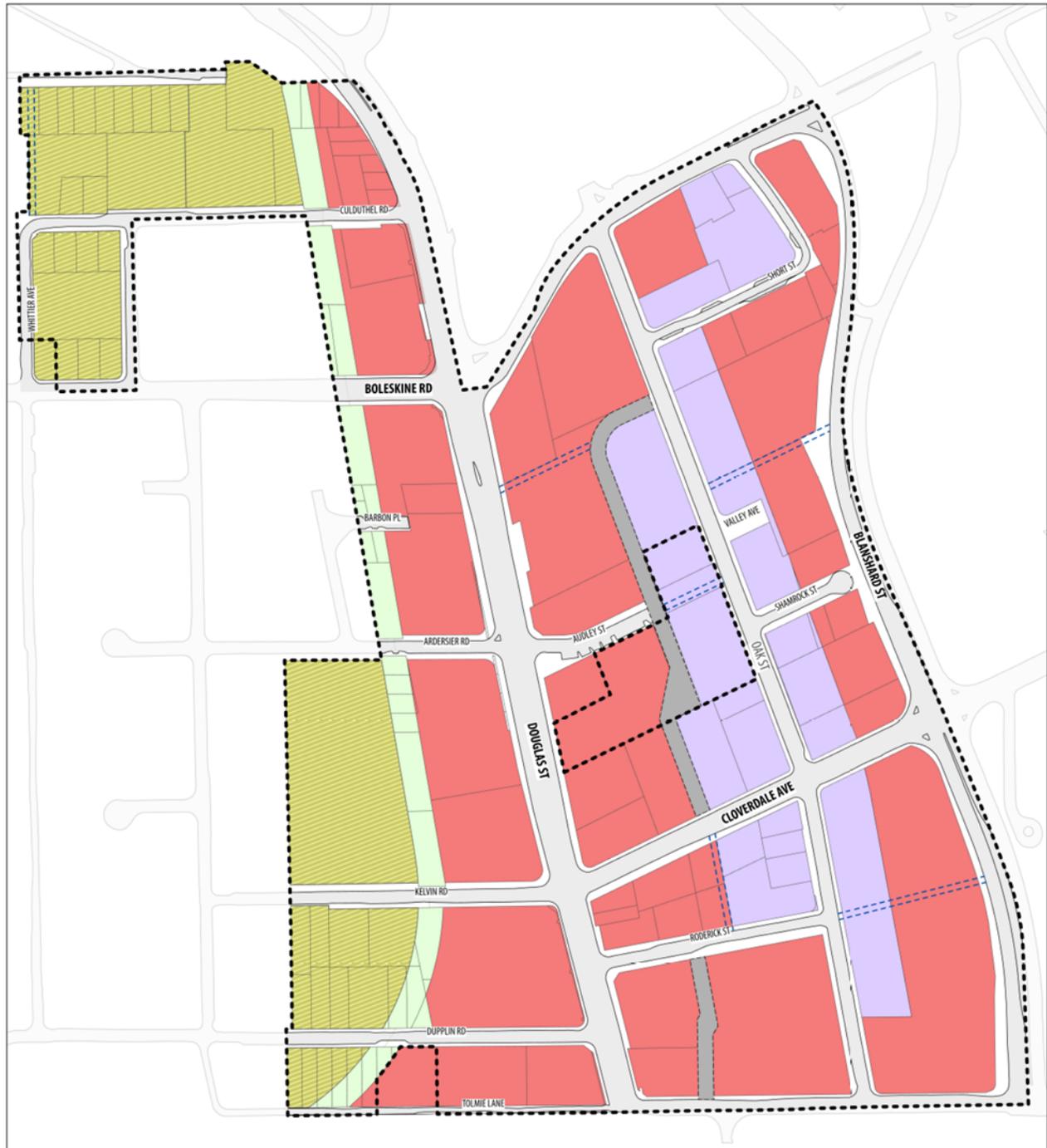
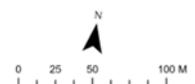


Figure 8: Massing Transition Sketch



**LEGEND**

- CORE
- URBAN MIXED-USE
- MIXED EMPLOYMENT
- TRAIL
- FUTURE AUDLEY CROSSING
- PRE-ZONING BOUNDARY
- MUP



**Land Use Designations**

**MAP 5: Proposed Revised Land Use Designation Map**

### Reduction to Building Height Minimum in the Urban Mixed-Use Designation

As previously stated within this Report, the economic analysis concluded that concrete high-rise development scenarios within the Uptown-Douglas pre-zoning area are challenged to be financially viable under current conditions. Under the BC Building Code, most wood frame buildings can only be a maximum of six storeys. Above six storeys, the vast majority of buildings are constructed with concrete. With the transition to concrete comes significant cost escalations related to building materials and per square foot costs, meaning that concrete buildings are often not viable construct unless they are in a high-rise tower format.

Currently the Urban Mixed-Use (UMU) designation has a minimum height of eight storeys, which generally precludes wood frame construction. While six storey wood frame development was not tested in this area, it is widely considered to be one of the most viable development scenarios. As a catalyst for future development, staff recommend proceeding to consultation with a proposed amendment to the UMU land use designation to allow for a base height of six storeys. This proposed amendment is aligned with the overall objective of maintaining lower densities along Oak Street to achieve a pedestrian high street through the centre of the Uptown-Douglas area, as demonstrated in Figure 2. This change would increase the likelihood of development and also deliver a significant quantity of new housing units to the area.

### **PRE-ZONING APPROACH**

As noted earlier in the Report, this is the first large scale pre-zoning project under the District of Saanich's new policy framework. Staff recognize the complexity of this area, the range of potential implications and the range of circumstances of different property owners. Pre-zoning may impact the market value of land, existing business operations, amenity capture possibilities, and, possibly, taxation of properties. While there are significant benefits to those property owners who envision redevelopment, there can also be other implications. Described below are some of the potential impacts.

#### Property values and taxation

The BC Assessment Authority establishes the assessed value of all properties in the province for taxation purposes. Assessors consider such factors as land use, location, original cost, and comparable sales. Pre-zoning generally increases the development potential of the affected lands. If the market activity demonstrates heightened demand and higher property values, assessed values will rise accordingly.

Property assessment determines how much individual owners pay within their property class. If property sales in the Uptown-Douglas area increase assessments more than in other commercial areas of Saanich, owners in Uptown-Douglas could see larger than average property tax increases.

#### Amenity Capture

The District of Saanich's Community Amenity Contribution (CAC) and Inclusionary Housing Policy provide a framework for the collection of voluntary in-kind and cash in-lieu contributions towards public benefit amenities. CACs are provided by developers through rezoning applications. Pre-zoning overrides the zoning process and eliminates the opportunity for the District of Saanich to collect CACs. A project is currently underway to develop an Amenity Cost Charges (ACC) Bylaw and program. If adopted, ACCs would enable the District of Saanich to collect fees for amenities at the time of application for subdivision or building permit. This would mitigate the impact of pre-zoning and the District of Saanich's inability to negotiate CACs through rezoning. The ACC Bylaw and program will be presented for Council's consideration in 2027.

### **Options for Implementing Pre-zoning**

Completion of architectural and economic modelling together with early outreach to some Uptown-Douglas property owners educated staff further on the complexities of mixed-use high density development. The area accommodates a wide range of commercial uses and long-standing business operations. Realization of Uptown-Douglas Plan aspirations will happen over many years, and the goal is to put the right tools in place to ensure development is facilitated when it is ready to proceed. There are three options to address pre-zoning property in the Uptown-Douglas area, and each pre-zoning option presents costs and benefits:

#### Option 1 - Blanket pre-zoning

As referenced in the Uptown-Douglas Pre-Zoning and Network Design Project Terms of Reference, the District of Saanich can proceed with pre-zoning the entire area. This would involve rezoning all properties within the revised pre-zoning area. Property owners would not have the discretion to not be involved in the pre-zoning. Should Council provide this direction, the next steps would be to:

- Proceed to public consultation with draft zones, network design and proposed plan amendments.
- Revise the plans to address comments and concerns from the public.
- Report back to Council with feedback and refinements for Council endorsement.
- Return to Council with full amendment package, which may include amendments to the Official Community Plan, Uptown-Douglas Plan, Zoning Bylaw, 2003, Servicing Bylaw and Design Permit Area Guidelines; and
- Schedule and proceed to public hearing on bylaw changes.

#### **Development application processing implications**

- Developments could be processed as a Development Permit with no rezoning application.
- Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) would not be negotiated or received. Costs could still be collected through existing Development Cost Charges (DCCs) or future Amenity Cost Charges (ACCs) at the building permit stage, and;
- Development Permit applications would proceed to Council for consideration.

#### Option 2 - Opt-in pre-zoning (RECOMMENDED)

Early due diligence analyzing the site and modelling financial viability revealed challenges with a blanket pre-zoning approach. First, some properties were identified that should be removed from the pre-zoning area and, second, some of the remaining properties have unique characteristics that were not initially anticipated, which may lend themselves to a more tailored rezoning process. Additionally, existing property owners may have unique business or personal circumstances where a pre-zoning could have negative impacts. Due to the scale and complexity of Uptown-Douglas development, a considerate response would be for the District of Saanich to invite property owners to 'opt-in' to the District pre-zoning process on their own accord. Should Council provide this direction, the next steps would be to:

- Draft a detailed procedure for property owners to 'opt-in' to the pre-zoning process;
- Proceed to public engagement with draft zones, network design and proposed plan amendments.
- Make refinements to address comments and concerns from consultation participants.
- Report back to Council with feedback and refinements including details on the 'opt-in' process for Council endorsement.
- Implement the formal 'opt-in' process, with a deadline to confirm participation.

- Return to Council with full amendment package, which may include amendments to the Official Community Plan, Uptown-Douglas Plan, Zoning Bylaw, 2003, Servicing Bylaw and Design Permit Area Guidelines.
- Schedule and proceed to public hearing on bylaw changes.

### **Development application processing implications**

- For properties that ‘opt-in to District of Saanich pre-zoning:
  - developments would be processed through a Development Permit. A rezoning would not be required.
  - Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) would not be negotiated or received. Costs could still be collected through existing Development Cost Charges (DCCs) or future Amenity Cost Charges (ACCs) at the building permit stage.
  - Development Permit applications would proceed to Council for consideration.
- For properties whose owners do not respond to the invitation to ‘opt-in’ to District of Saanich pre-zoning:
  - Rezoning and development permit applications would be required for future development.
  - Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) would be contributed and negotiated as part of the rezoning process. Any remaining required cost recovery would be collected through existing Development Cost Charges (DCCs) or future Amenity Cost Charges (ACCs) at the building permit stage.
  - Rezoning and Development Permit applications would proceed to Council for consideration. However, the process would be somewhat facilitated because the new draft zones would be ‘shelf ready’. This resource for future development in the area could be used by developers, the public, and staff to facilitate preparation and processing of development applications.

For a property owner, opting in to a pre-zoning process offers several benefits including increasing the development potential of their land without the cost of a rezoning process. Reduced timelines by moving directly to a development permit application lowers the carrying costs of the project. Community Amenity Contributions would be avoided, and there is greater certainty of development rights. Alternatively, property owners may choose not to participate in pre-zoning to avoid any impact on existing business operations. They may also fear a potential increase to their property taxes with rezoning, a situation that could be mitigated with adoption of an Uptown-Douglas Area Development Potential Tax Relief program for the District of Saanich.

### Option 3 – Shelf Ready Zoning

District of Saanich led pre-zoning can be abandoned in favor of property-owner-initiated rezoning. The completed Uptown-Douglas Area Plans, process, and zoning regulations would be “shelf ready” and used to expedite individual rezoning applications as they come forward by owners at their own expense. Should Council provide this direction, the next steps would be to:

- Proceed to public consultation with “shelf ready” draft zones, network design and proposed plan amendments.
- Prepare and present Council with required amendments to the Uptown-Douglas Plan, including Transit-Oriented Area policies, Audley Crossing alignment, and Oak Street design.
- Schedule and proceed to public hearing on bylaw changes.

- Finalize the draft zones so they would be “shelf ready” for public, applicant, and staff use but would not be included in the Zoning Bylaw, 2003.

This option leaves the zoning of all properties within the pre-zoning area unchanged. All properties within the pre-zoning area would continue to require a rezoning application to develop to the full potential of the Uptown-Douglas Plan. The likelihood of achieving the objectives of the Uptown-Douglas Plan would be uncertain as they would be negotiated on a parcel-by-parcel basis over time.

This option would create a Development Priority Area with pre-drafted zoning regulations for individual parcel rezoning applications. The conceptual street designs for Oak Street and Audley Crossing would be used to inform the future servicing requirements for the area. As much of the preparatory work for the zoning will have been completed, staff anticipate that processing timelines for rezoning and development permit applications within the area would be reduced. Additionally, this process would allow for negotiated land acquisition and Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) through the rezoning process.

## **PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

Should Council endorse the proposed approach staff would undertake engagement on draft zones, draft network design and potential amendments to the Uptown-Douglas Plan. It is anticipated that engagement would occur in Spring 2026.

Considering the complexity and technical nature of the project’s subject matter, the level of engagement for the project would be small-scale. The intent of the engagement would be focused on sharing the proposed network design concepts and draft zones, while also engaging on potential changes to the Uptown-Douglas Plan. Key objectives of engagement will be to build awareness, provide opportunities for input on proposed changes and ensure impacted property owners are engaged on proposed changes, potential implications and any concerns they may have. A mix of in-person and online engagement sessions would be considered, including but not limited to:

- Public information material dissemination, including through HelloSaanich.
- Landowner notification.
- Stakeholder meeting(s) and webinar(s).
- Online survey; and
- Engagement with Community Associations.

## **COUNCIL OPTIONS**

This Report presents three decision points to Council; Council must decide on:

- A. Whether to proceed to consultation on the network design and draft zones within this Report.
- B. Which of the pre-zoning implementation options, as detailed in the Options for Implementation section of the Report, to proceed with.
- C. Whether to proceed to consultation on the proposed amendments to the Uptown-Douglas Plan which include:

- Expanding the Core land use designation to include Blanshard Street and that 24 storeys be supported on the two main streets of Douglas and Blanshard; and
- Reducing the minimum height in the Urban Mixed-Use land use designation to six storeys.

### **Decision Point A: Draft Zones and Network Design**

Council Options for Decision Point A are:

1. That Council support the staff recommendation to proceed to consultation on the land use framework and network designs presented within this Report.
2. That Council reject the staff recommendation and direct staff to pause the Uptown-Douglas Pre-zoning and Network Design Project.
3. That Council provide direction on changes to specific elements of the land use framework and network designs presented within this report and proceed to consultation.
4. That Council provide alternative direction.

### **Decision Point B: Pre-Zoning Implementation**

Options for Decision Point B are outlined in the Options for Implementation section of this Report. Council Options are:

1. That Council support the staff recommendation to proceed with Option 2 to invite property owners to 'opt-in' to the District of Saanich pre-zoning process on their own accord.
2. That Council reject the staff recommendation and direct staff to proceed with an alternative option, either a full pre-zoning or shelf-ready zones as outlined as options in the Report.
3. That Council provide direction on changes to specific elements of a proposed implementation option.

### **Decision Point C: Amendments to Uptown-Douglas Plan**

Council Options for Decision Point C are:

1. That Council support the staff recommendation to proceed to consultation on the proposed amendments to the Uptown-Douglas Plan.
2. That Council reject the staff recommendation and direct staff to proceed to consultation with no proposed amendments to the Uptown-Douglas Plan.

If Council were to proceed with this option, staff would revise the draft zones to revert back to height designations contained in the current Uptown-Douglas Plan prior to consultation.

3. That Council provide direction on changes to proposed amendments to the Uptown-Douglas Plan and to proceed to consultation with revised amendments and draft zones.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no immediate financial implications related to the District of Saanich's Financial Plan.

There may be future financial implications for the development of Oak Street, Audley Crossing and the creation of new parks which could include funding for land acquisition and park development. These considerations would be further defined and presented to Council as required

## **STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

The progression of the Uptown-Douglas Pre-Zoning & Network Design Project implements a key Strategic Plan initiative through making land use decisions consistent with the objectives of the District of Saanich's community development plans in alignment with objective 3.2 of the 2023- 2027 Strategic Plan.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Uptown-Douglas Pre-Zoning and Network Design Project seeks to implement the Uptown-Douglas Plan's long-term vision for the area, act as a catalyst for redevelopment through pre-zoning, and provide clarity on how key road networks will be designed and implemented.

Work undertaken over the past year has delivered a draft consultation package which includes conceptual network design concepts and draft zoning regulations. Preliminary zoning regulations were vetted through a multi-disciplinary review. Through this work it became apparent that aspects of the Uptown-Douglas Plan require reconsideration to reflect current economic and legislative changes.

In addition to the conceptual network design concepts and draft zoning regulations, it is staff's recommendation to consult on proposed amendments to the Uptown-Douglas Plan which include:

- a proposed expansion of the Core land use designation to include Blanshard Street-fronting properties in addition to Douglas Street-fronting properties with broader consideration of 24 storey building heights; and
- a proposed reduction of the base building height in the Urban Mixed-Use (UMU) land use designation to six storeys.

These two proposed amendments would respond to current market conditions, increase housing opportunities and improve the design possibilities by allowing for more variation in building forms.

Through the project's development it became evident that due to the proposed developments intensity and complexity, the servicing requirements and possible financial implications, that imposing new land use regulations without consideration of site-specific circumstances may negatively impact long-standing business operations in the area. Consequently, staff recommend an alternative pre-zoning approach that presents property owners with an opportunity to have their properties pre-zoned by the District of Saanich.

This Report provides an overview of the work done to date and seeks Council direction prior to proceeding to public engagement. Should Council wish to progress the project, public and stakeholder engagement is anticipated to begin in Spring of 2026.

Prepared by: Gina Lyons, Senior Planner  
Megan Squires, Strategic Projects Manager

Reviewed by: Cameron Scott, Manager of Community Planning

Approved by: Lindsay Chase, Director of Planning  
Harley Machielse, Director of Engineering

Attachments: A: Preliminary Design Report  
B: Final Design Report  
C: Draft Uptown Core & High Street Zoning Schedule  
D: Draft Uptown Mixed Employment Zoning Schedule

**ADMINISTRATOR’S COMMENTS:**

I endorse the recommendation from the Director of Planning and the Director of Engineering.

Brent Reems, Chief Administrative Officer