

**Government  
Street  
Refresh.**



**Concept Vision Report** 06.2022





Prepared for the City of Victoria by Dialog



**DIALOG®**

With support from:



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**The City of Victoria is located on the homelands  
of the Esquimalt and Songhees people.**



# PART 1:

## Design Context

Government Street is an icon of Victoria's urban landscape that has not changed in over 50 years. This Concept Vision Report outlines a vision for Government Street (between Humboldt Street and Pandora Avenue) that will guide phased improvements in tandem with required infrastructure renewal, and implemented as part of annual operations and maintenance and capital planning. This report summarizes the integrated design and engagement process, key technical and background information, and the design vision and concept for the street.

### Project Purpose

Expanding the pedestrian priority of Government Street is one of Council's strategic priorities. The City recognizes that there are six reasons why now is the time to undergo this design process:

1. The Government Street streetscape, although successful, hasn't changed in more than 50 years. The street furniture and street trees, traffic signals and other streetscape elements are nearing the end of their life and will need replacement in the coming years.
2. The City wishes to support downtown businesses impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and build on the successes and broad community support for the Build Back Victoria program.
3. Accessibility improvements are needed to support people with disabilities as well as to encourage age-friendly public spaces to support children, youth and seniors.
4. The watermain underneath Government Street is planned for replacement in 2023/2024 and will require significant streetscape restoration opportunities.

5. Making Government Street a people-priority street is an action of the City's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan and other planning guiding documents.
6. Advancing reconciliation, including through place-making and public realm design in collaboration with our Indigenous partners is an important City goal

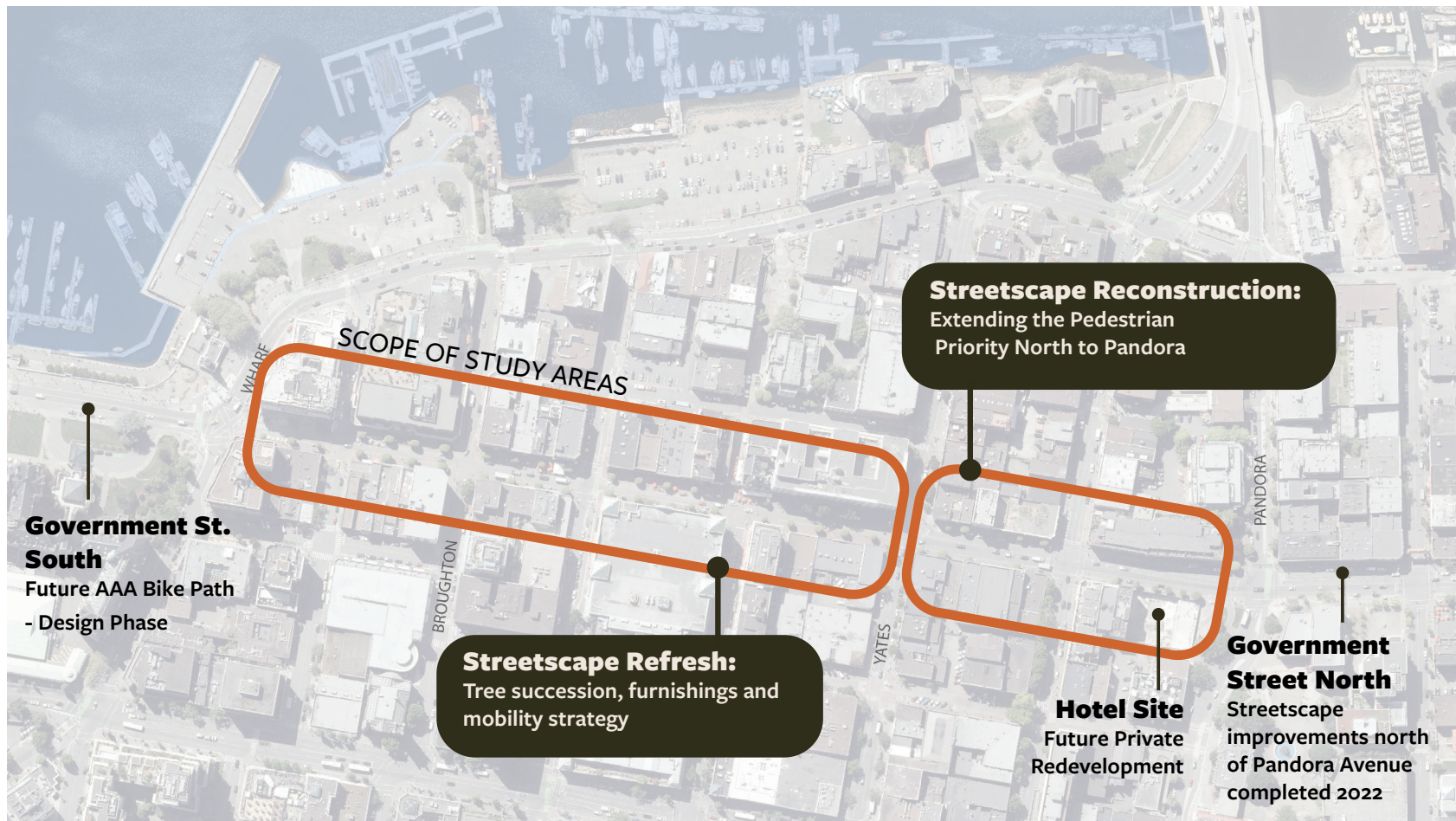
### Project Scope

This process includes the concept design for tree succession, furnishing and mobility for Government Street from Humbolt to Yates, and detailed design for streetscape reconstruction from Yates to Pandora.

### Projects within the Immediate Area

A number of initiatives that are planned or underway interface with the site. North of Pandora, to Gorge Road, the City has recently completed the AAA bike facilities along with underground infrastructure replacement, road paving and landscaping. The former hotel site at the corner of Government Street and Pandora including the plaza and public realm frontages is in planning and design phase. At the south end from Wharf to Belleville St, interim road safety improvements are planned in 2022/2023 with more comprehensive upgrades to follow in association with underground infrastructure replacement.





Project scope and projects within the immediate site context



## PROJECT PROCESS

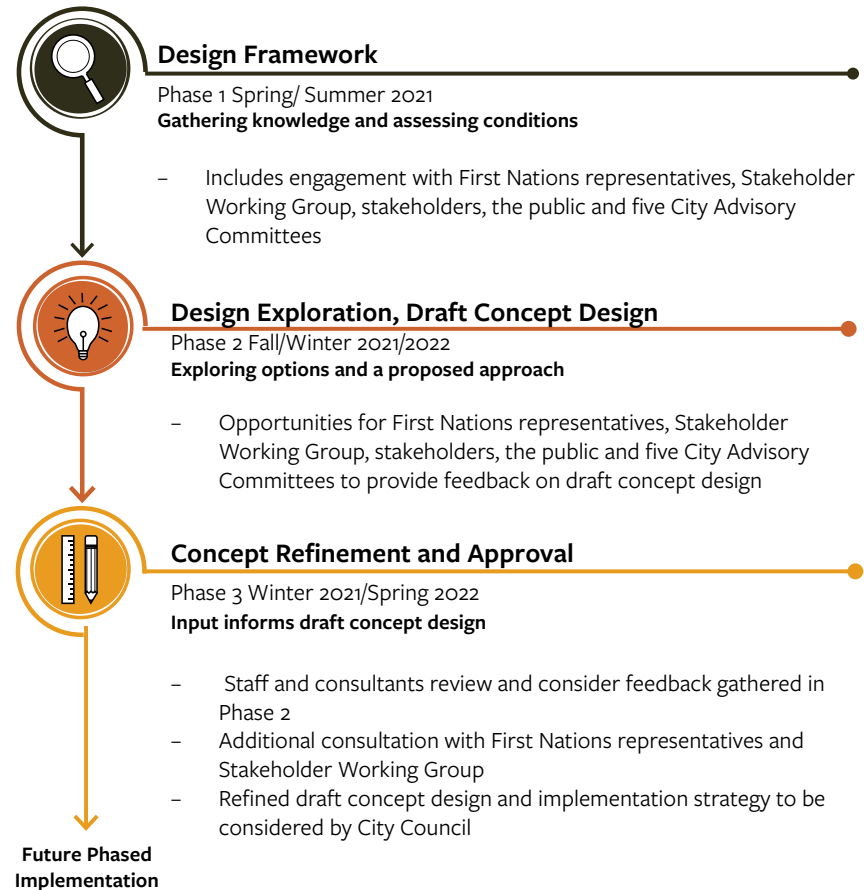
In June 2021 the City initiated the Government Street Refresh design process to develop a renewed vision, streetscape design, and implementation strategy for Government Street between Humboldt Street and Pandora Avenue. An integrated consultant led by Dialog Consultants and with extensive expertise in pedestrian priority environments and streetscape design was engaged to carry out the conceptual design and associated technical studies and support public and stakeholder engagement. If approved by Council, the resulting vision and design concept will guide future financial planning processes and phased implementation to align with planned infrastructure upgrades including the watermain replacement. The study scope included multi-modal circulation, streetscape improvements, along with considerations for programming and cultural interpretation, to support a pedestrian priority environment from Humboldt to Pandora Street in alignment with a number of City policies, initiatives and programs. This includes a refresh of streetscape elements from Humboldt Street to Yates Street, an extension of pedestrian priority treatments along Government Street through Old Town, and consideration of new plaza spaces at Pandora Street and Government Street.

The Government Street Refresh public engagement process followed the City's Engagement Framework, and included Inform, Consult, and Involve levels of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation. The process included extensive public and stakeholder engagement, including a separate stream with Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, at key stages throughout the three phase process.

The three phases were:

- Phase 1: Design Framework
- Phase 2: Design Exploration
- Phase 3: Concept Refinement and Approval

Subsequent phases will include more detailed design, costing and implementation as part of annual operations and maintenance programs and capital planning, and phased and integrated with planned infrastructure and transportation improvements within and adjacent to the study area. Future phases associated with detailed design and implementation will also include further information sharing and updates with key stakeholders and the directly affected businesses and residents.



## PROJECT INFLUENCES

The Concept Vision for Government Street has been influenced by site considerations, City of Victoria policies, early and on-going collaboration with our Indigenous partners, engagement and accessibility considerations. Key take-aways are presented for context within this report. For more detailed information, refer to the following documents:

- The Government Street Refresh Phase 1 Background Report which includes a policy review, mobility memo, civil infrastructure considerations, urban design analysis, a review of best practices, precedents and case studies.
- The Government Street Refresh Engagement Summary which includes a comprehensive list of activities and outcomes including: public, stakeholder, working group and partner engagement (Indigenous partners).
- Brief and Background on Disability and Business in Pedestrianization Initiatives which includes a review of best practices for pedestrianized environments.
- A tree succession memo which provides an overview of different strategies for tree succession as well as a comparison of the benefits and trade-offs of each approach and a decision matrix for tree replacement.
- A technical memo on lessons learned on Government Street from a civil engineering perspective.







## SITE CONSIDERATIONS AND OBJECTIVES

The following provides a high-level overview of the site considerations and objectives that influenced the Government Street Refresh process.



### ***Mobility***

Making Government Street a people priority street is one of Council's strategic goals. Government Street also functions as a downtown connector for people moving through the City by various modes of transportation. In June of 2021 a timed car free zone between Humboldt and View Street was initiated as part of the Build Back Victoria program. In order to balance mobility needs within the context of a people priority street, six objectives have been identified:

1. A people first approach. People are what will make Government Street successful, therefore pedestrians are placed at the forefront of thinking, including above all other modes, to establish Government Street as a pedestrian priority street.
2. Maintaining safe access and circulation for all modes while prioritizing the safety and comfort of pedestrians in a shared street environment.
3. Flexible and dynamic curbside uses. With the lack of laneways along Government Street, businesses rely on Government Street for loading and servicing. Businesses also rely on people visiting

and spending time on Government Street.

4. Remaining porous and flexible. Remaining porous relates to allowing for continued circulation across Government Street and surrounding streets. Flexible means providing opportunities for special events, seasonal transformation as well as responding to future trends and changes.
5. Inclusive. Government Street is a place that is welcoming to all groups, with a design that is accessible and informed by community collaboration.
6. Legible. This means comprehensible design and circulation from a user perspective. Concepts can be understood by all user groups.

### ***Site Heritage***

Government Street is located on the site of a camas meadow that was cultivated by the Lekwungen for centuries before the Hudson's Bay Company established a fort centering around what is now Bastion Square, with a palisade running along the sidewalk. The street has significant local, regional, and national value with largely continuous and intact heritage buildings and facades with connections to the development of Victoria as a diverse city that was and is home to many cultures and peoples. It traverses Old Town and Chinatown, where many buildings have architectural and cultural significance and contribute to the value, heritage, visual interest, and activity of the streetscape as a whole.

The following heritage objectives apply to Government Street:

1. Recognize and value components of the 1970s pedestrian mall treatment which have become character defining elements of Government Street. This includes globe lights, cluster lights, street trees with seasonal lighting and red brick pavers.
2. New additions or changes should maintain the essential form and integrity of the streetscape, such as the pattern and spacing of trees.
3. Make the new construction physically and visually compatible with the existing heritage elements of the streetscape.
4. Improve visibility of the heritage facades by selecting tree species that have transparency.
5. Establish opportunities for cultural interpretation within the streetscape, in order to expand the historic narrative of the street to include the Lekwungen and other cultures that have actively contributed to it.

## Urban Design

Government Street is itself a destination for locals and visitors alike, and a place of unique historical character and identity. The following urban design objectives have been identified for the study area:

- **Respond to the distinct character zones of Government Street.** The study area includes two distinct character zones from a retail perspective: the area south of View Street which is defined by a fine grained mix of tourist oriented shops and restaurants; and, the area north of View Street which is characterized by larger format locally serving retail. There is very little food and beverage amenities north of View Street. Consider opportunities to incorporate food and opportunities for additional retail along the street north of View.
- **Celebrate the southern gateway to Government Street.** Humboldt and Government street are the link between the Inner Harbour and downtown. Strategies could include establishing a plaza, wayfinding elements, a distinct public art installation, lighting, furnishings and more.
- **Expand Indigenous presence in the public realm.** Government Street acts as a connector between a rich open space network where Indigenous people have strong presence in Victoria's public realm, yet there is little representation of Indigenous people and culture along this important streetscape. Government Street can act as a thread connecting Thunderbird Park, the Inner Harbour, Commerce Canoe to Songhees Park.
- **Celebrate Bastion Square and Trounce Alley as a destination, landmark and cultural plaza.** Bastion Square and Trounce Alley are located at the heart of the study area. As destination landmarks with restaurant patios, these sites contribute to activation of Government Street. Views into Bastion Square should remain broad and open.
- **Recognize the potential to capture public space at Pandora and Government Street.** The south eastern corner of Pandora and Government Street is an underutilized space and one of the



The Destinations and Heat Map summarizes key observations shared by the Working Group in Phase 1.

few potential locations for a sunny plaza in the study area. The southeastern corner of Pandora provides an opportunity for public realm enhancements.

- **Reflect the Johnson Street Ravine.** This ravine was a natural barrier between Old Town and Chinatown. Informal Pedestrian bridges were later replaced with horse and vehicle bridges to be later filled in with the construction of Market Square and other nearby sites.
- **Re-consider the role of Government Street as a parade and protest route.** As the connection between City Hall and the Legislative Assembly Government Street currently plays an important role as a processional space for both celebration and protest.

## Street Trees

The dense canopy of the existing hornbeam trees along Government Street are character defining. Since they were introduced in the 1970's as part of the pedestrian mall, these trees are iconic to the street and its identity. The Government Street Refresh project is providing an opportunity to evaluate existing tree health and develop a succession plan to introduce the next generation of trees to the street. Tree replacement will happen over time. Urban forest planning in coordination with current and future infrastructure projects will allow the City to incrementally remove and replace dead and dying trees.



## Street tree objectives:

1. **Grow the urban forest.** Target 30% tree canopy cover for Government Street.
2. **Provide human comfort and interest.** Provide areas to sit in shade and visual interest along the street to emphasize the pedestrian priority of the street.
3. **Contribute to identity and cultural expression.** Use street trees species to contribute to the cultural interpretation of the street (use of native species) as well as the character and identity (trees with open canopy that provide dappled light and views of heritage facades).
4. **Contribute to stormwater, environmental and resiliency objectives.** Help to improve stormwater quality by growing the tree canopy and integrating rainwater management strategies with tree planting; and, improve resiliency by expanding species diversity for resiliency.
5. **Reduce conflicts.** Select tree species and site trees to reduce potential conflicts with emergency vehicle access; and, strive to mitigate conflicts with above and below ground infrastructure as much as possible to maximize tree growth, while providing the growing conditions for success.
6. **Contribute to the aesthetics of the street.** Apply a phasing approach for tree replacement that allows for the street to mature in a way that is attractive and contributes to the enjoyment and beauty of Government Street, while respecting the value that the existing tree canopy offers.

In addition to the tree succession strategy that is outlined in Part 2 of this document, the following technical inputs will inform the tree succession and planting strategy:

- Diamond Head urban forest study and recommendations
- Emergency vehicle access and fire safety requirements
- Location of and mitigation of conflicts with underground infrastructure
- Urban Forest Strategy
- Downtown Public Realm Plan





## ENGAGEMENT

Phase 1 of public engagement took place from June 22 to July 13, 2021. Engagement activities included an online survey and an opportunity for the public to share and vote on ideas on how to enhance Government Street as a people place. A Stakeholder Working Group of 23 members representing a range of community perspectives, Government Street businesses and organizations was created to advise on the draft concept design's development. Presentations were made to five City Advisory Committees. In addition, an inter-departmental staff team representing the City's Community Planning, Parks, Engineering and Public Works, and Engagement departments was formed to help guide the project.

The results of public, stakeholder and Indigenous engagement during Phase 1, together with relevant background and technical analysis, informed the development of a design framework including a set of design themes, goals and objectives.

During Phase 2, the community was invited to learn more about what was proposed for Government Street as part of the draft vision and concept design. Phase 2 included a virtual open house, along with a video and display boards presenting the draft vision posted on the project web page located on the project web page and shared through social media. People were invited to provide feedback by completing an online survey, sending their feedback by email, and participating in two business virtual focus group meetings and two virtual public presentations.

Additional virtual focus group meetings were held with business owners and operators, the Chinatown community, local event organizers, tourism operators, City of Victoria Youth Council, and the Downtown Residents Association. Virtual presentations were again made to the same five City Advisory Committees. In addition, an in-person pop-up engagement opportunity was hosted during the popular Saint Patrick's Day Family Festival.

Phase 3 included meetings with the Working Group and Songhees and Esquimalt Nation representatives to review public and stakeholder feedback and discuss refinements to the design concept.



## INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS

Phase 1 of Indigenous engagement involved Planning staff (and a staff member of the City Family to start) consulting directly with representatives of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. Meetings were held individually and jointly with the Nations to introduce the project and gather feedback on a set of design themes, goals and objectives for Government Street. An in-person Indigenous "Walkshop" was held on Government Street. Input from our First Nations partners helped inform the Government Street Refresh design framework and draft concept design.

During Phase 2 of Indigenous engagement, two virtual meetings were held with each Nation's representatives to introduce the draft concept design and obtain feedback. Staff also presented an overview of the draft concept design at a Songhees Nation community meeting. Based on the Nations' input and approval, staff developed a Government Street Refresh Lekwungen Survey that focused primarily on the design's proposed Lekwungen Plaza and Landmark near Humboldt Street. The survey was shared directly with members of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations online and included print surveys and displays set up at the Songhees Wellness Centre and the Esquimalt Nations Office.

The results of public, stakeholder and Indigenous engagement during Phase 2 were shared with the Stakeholder Working Group and other stakeholders to help inform the development of the refined concept design in Phase 3.





## PRECEDENTS AND BEST PRACTICES

Precedent and best practice research on pedestrian priority streets was carried out to inform the concept design. The research was conducted through number of means including interviews with other relevant municipalities such as Halifax with it's Argyle Street and Stephen Avenue in Calgary. It also included a broad academic research that focused on business vitality and impacts of pedestrianization of streets in Downtown as well as accessibility practices.

In addition, an extensive research was done to better understand the lessons learned from pedestrian malls in North America in general. Highlights are summarized below.

### ***Streetscape Best Practices***

The following five best practices for streetscapes and public realm are relevant to this project:

1. **Identity of Place:** Create public spaces with authentic character and identity.
2. **Diversity of Use:** Provide a mix of varied public spaces to support the diversity and uniqueness of the precincts and to meet the needs of current and future populations.
3. **Community Focus:** Ensure public spaces engage the local community and contribute to community health and wellbeing.
4. **Sustainability:** Design a public realm that improves environmental, material, financial and social sustainability.
5. **Accessibility:** Incorporate universally accessible design into the public realm to allow barrier-free access.
6. **Comfort and Safety:** Ensure the street is safe and comfortable for all users at all times.

### ***Best Practices for Pedestrian Focused Streets***

The following best practices and lessons learned from the research include:

1. Build on existing foot traffic. Successful malls aim to work better for the people who are already using the street rather than attempt to attract new people to the street.
2. Served a diverse range of activities, programs and people day and night rather than having a single focus of shopping.
3. Cause minimal disruption to the level of traffic on surrounding streets and allow for cross movement. Short rather than long blocks, like Government Street, helps.
4. Limit vehicular closures to a single or partial block, or to a timed and seasonal closure.
5. Keep the street well maintained and programmed. An agency that is responsible for their funding, maintenance, and program can help.
6. Balanced users are key: streets that prioritize pedestrians but don't fully exclude other users including bikes and vehicles are healthy and contribute to overall business vitality and street safety all year round.
7. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation to adapt to the changing economic landscape and peoples activity patterns.
8. Monitor healthy business diversity to support economic development and local focus.
9. Support convenient, comfortable, accessible and safe mobility options for accessing the street.
10. Design for a range of people with different disabilities.
11. Create environment with reduced crossing distances, reduced vehicle volumes and reduced speeds within the environment where everyone recognizes there is different activity and users.

### ***Protocols for sharing Indigenous knowledge in professional design practice - International Indigenous Design Charter***

The development of International Indigenous Design Charter involved research activity and community engagement around the world. The ongoing consultation process for this professional practice document was punctuated with its official launch at the World Design Summit Congress in Montreal, 2017.

The International Indigenous Design Charter can be used to help facilitate accurate and respectful representation of Indigenous knowledge in all disciplines of design and associated media. The role of the Charter is to assist design practitioners, design clients and the buyers of design, including governments, corporations, businesses and not-for-profit organizations, with guidelines to encourage best practice processes.

When working on projects involving the representation of Indigenous culture, design practitioners and buyers of design (non-Indigenous and Indigenous) are expected to adhere to the following ten points.

1. Indigenous led
2. Self-determined
3. Community specific
4. Deep listening
5. Indigenous knowledge
6. Shared knowledge (collaboration, co-creation, procurement)
7. Shared benefits
8. Impact of design
9. Legal and moral
10. Charter implementation





## CASE STUDIES

Following pages present case studies for pedestrian priority streets worldwide that provide great lessons and examples for Government Street.

### ***Yonge Tomorrow***

Location: Yonge Street, Downtown Toronto Canada

The focus of the Yonge Tomorrow project is to improve mobility and safety for all users in a busy, well-used downtown street. The project places particular emphasis on pedestrianization efforts and the expansion of public space. The design can be operated flexibly on a block-by-block and timed basis, accommodating the needs of different users (e.g.: pedestrians, cyclists and cars)



Conceptual rendering of Yonge-Dundas Square



Conceptual rendering of Yonge Street between Dundas Square and Shuter Street



Conceptual rendering of Yonge Street between College/Carlton and Gerrard Street



## ***King Street Transit Priority Corridor***

Location: King Street West, Downtown Toronto Canada

King Street is now a transit priority corridor that restricts through traffic and certain turning movements. The primary purpose of this project was to improve mobility for pedestrians, cyclists and TTC streetcars. The project also demonstrates ways that new public space can be created through the appropriation of things like parking spaces.



King Street pilot project



King Street Transit Priority Corridor

## ***Argyle and Grafton Street Streetscape Project***

Location: Argyle Street, Downtown Halifax Canada

The Argyle Street Streetscape project transformed a once cramped, narrow, two-way road into a more people-focused street, with expanded pedestrian and patio space as well as zones where vehicles are not permitted. The project balances mobility and design features on a "small" street-level scale, implementing universal access design features (e.g. flush curbs and tactile strips) together with shared space for all road users.



Argyle Street at night



## ***Bernard Avenue Revitalization***

Location: Bernard Avenue, Downtown Kelowna Canada

The Bernard Avenue Revitalization project transformed one of Kelowna's busiest and most desirable street destinations, improving and expanding pedestrian and public space. The project also included public art, patio extensions and expansion of green space and street trees. Universal access design features and on-street bike lane for cyclists were also incorporated. The City has continued to program Bernard Avenue as a "open streets" space, or a "car free" zone during busy summer months.



Patios along Bernard Avenue



Seating along Bernard Avenue

## ***Pedestrianization of New Road***

Location: New Road, Brighton UK

The New Road project demonstrates how a shared street space can be designed to safely accommodate all users, while also capitalizing on opportunities to provide enhanced pedestrian and public space. The street is designed to balance between pedestrian and vehicle flows, without restricting motorised vehicle access. Design options such as this minimize the need for complicated mobility and engineering designs that are associated with restricted vehicle access and turning movements.



New Road, Brighton UK



## ***Place des Arts / Quartiers des Spectacles***

Location: Esplanade Place des Arts / Rue St Catherine, Downtown Montreal Canada

The recently redeveloped Place de Arts sector in the heart of Downtown Montreal is a permeable and interconnected pedestrian priority / public space that has controlled car access. The sector also features public art, street furniture, event space and expanded green space / street trees. Rue St Catherine, a popular commercial /downtown street, was extended to better accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists. The project is one of the most successful examples of redesigning streets for people.



Place des Arts, Montréal



Interactive installation art, Quartier Des Spectacles

## ***Bloor Street Transformation***

Location: Bloor Street, Downtown Toronto Canada

The Bloor Street Transformation project revitalized the pedestrian realm between Yonge Street and Avenue Road, one of Toronto's signature retail avenues. Key improvements included sidewalk and public space extensions, public art and urban street furniture as well as street trees and flower / plant boxes. This project serves as a design-centric / streetscaping precedent for Government Street.



The Festival Walkway, Bloor Street





## POLICY DIRECTIONS

The policy framework for this design process is laid out in several key City of Victoria documents.

### **Council's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan**

Council has identified the creation of a 'people priority' Government Street with a complete transformation of the street between Humbolt and Yates to be completed by the end of 2022.

### **The Official Community Plan (2012)**

The 2012 OCP identifies two specific policies for Government Street:

- allow for an extension of one-way street to enable the extension of the Government Street Mall; and,
- extend the pedestrian corridor along Government Street Mall northward to Pembroke Street.

### **The Downtown Public Realm Plan (2019)**

The Downtown Public Realm Plan identifies Government Street as a key corridor which connects major citywide attractions and destinations, and provide key points of entry into the Downtown area as well as a primary retail corridor. Government Street is also identified as a Character Street, with the following associated strategies:

- Complete the Street (extend the pedestrian mall treatment between Wharf Street and Yates Street all the way to Pandora Street);
- Envision long-term change (curb-less shared street with multi-modal users freely moving through);
- Replace street trees and planters (replaces existing trees with dense canopy in planters with more transparent canopy trees that will allow the true heritage of Government Street to be more visible); and,
- Encourage sense of shared space (allow for temporary road closure to promote pedestrian environment and community building).

### **Visual Victoria (2019)**

The Public Realm Plan identified the following directions which emerged out of the integrated Visual Victoria planning process:

- Implementing a curb-less streetscape environment with a continuous ground plane and paving materials, and the separation of pedestrian from vehicular space using bollards, bench elements and other streetscape elements and furnishing. Together with temporary and seasonal traffic closures, this design will support the use of Government Street as a linear plaza, and an events and festivals space. This will also increase the use of the corridor a ceremonial street and parade route.
- Exploring the opportunity to incorporate more on-street parking within a shared streetscape environment similar to Broad Street for the existing section between Wharf Street and Yates Street.
- Exploring the opportunity to re-establish two way vehicle travel along Government Street through the Downtown.

### **Go Victoria (2020)**

The Sustainable Mobility Strategy established six key initiatives to achieve clean, seamless mobility in Victoria:

- Adopt Vision Zero to reduce accident frequency and severity by utilizing safeguarding design tactics and minimized speed.
- Transform Public Transit to create more rapid and frequent transit systems and drive increased public use.
- Accelerate Accessible and Active Transportation by investing in travel options which create safer, more sustainable and accessible travel systems.
- Shift to Zero Emissions by adopting road allocation incentives, transportation demand management and electrification infrastructure initiatives.
- Rethink the Curb to explore opportunities of curb space management which incentivize most efficient use.
- Harness Data and Technology to enhance the management and performance of mobility systems.
-

### **The Downtown Core Area Plan (2011)**

An extension of the Government Street Mall north to Pembroke Street is identified as one of the Public Amenity strategies of The Downtown Core Area Plan. This project is an important stepping stone in achieving this goal.

### **Urban Forest Master Plan (2013)**

The Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) provides guidance on the management and enhancement of treed environments throughout the city of Victoria. Of particular relevance to Government Street Refresh is the vision for “new spaces for trees and green infrastructure as a result of the community’s commitment to creating a more walkable and livable downtown area.”

### **Art in Public Places Policy**

The City may allocate up to one percent of an overall construction budget for civic capital projects towards funding art in public places. Funding as a part of the watermain replacement and streetscape improvements can be directed towards commissioning public art pieces for new plazas.

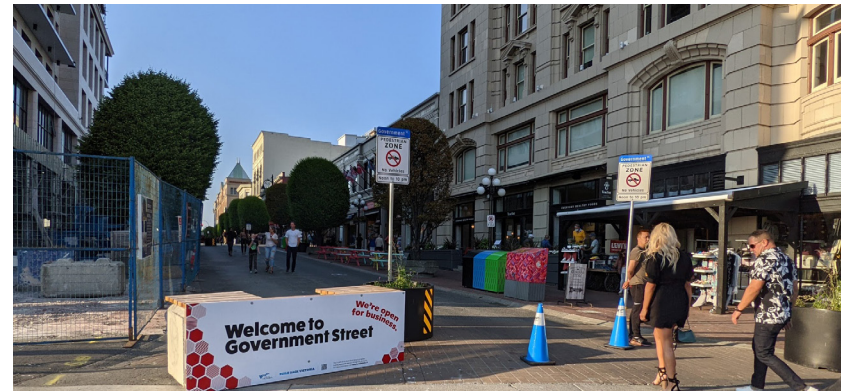
### **Thematic Framework**

To align the City of Victoria’s heritage program with a values-based approach, a city-wide thematic framework was developed to identify the key civic historic themes. This framework functions as a means to organize and define historical events, to identify representative historic places, and to place sites, persons, and events in an overall context. The following themes and subthemes are applicable to Government Street.

- Coastal Settlement (Indigenous’ Presence, City of Gardens and Landscapes)
- Gateway Economy (Frontier Boom Town, Global Tourism Destination, Historic Infrastructure)
- Capital City (Governing the West)
- Cultural Exchange (Architectural Expression)

### **Build Back Victoria Program**

The City has implemented initiatives to help support local businesses and the community through the COVID-19 pandemic. Along Government Street businesses created outdoor patio space and the City transformed the street into a pedestrian priority zone. People were generally supportive of the change to a pedestrian priority and types of programming and activities that were introduced. People would like to see that the materials and language of design be elevated.



Piloting of timed pedestrian only zones during Build Back Victoria



Custom picnic benches were designed and installed as a part of Build Back Victoria

## DESIGN FRAMEWORK

The Design Framework summarizes the design themes and objectives of Government Street. This framework provides the lens through which the concept design was developed and tested.

### DESIGN THEMES

### DESIGN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### RECONCILIATION



##### Narrative and Representation

- Shift the narrative of Government Street to include Indigenous heritage and history
- Opportunity to express Indigenous present and future
- Opportunities for Indigenous cultural activities and events
- Expression of Indigenous culture and art in streetscape elements, such as patterning, design of furnishings and infrastructure, materials, public art and plant selections.

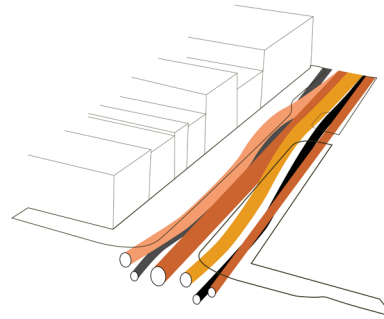
##### Inspire City Processes

- Create and implement a process that will act as a model for other City projects and processes

##### Economic Development

- Opportunities for Songhees, Esquimalt and urban Indigenous people to display and sell products.

#### INFRASTRUCTURE



##### Maintenance and Repairs

- Watermain Replacement
- Lighting standards and furnishing repair and maintenance
- Improved curb letdowns

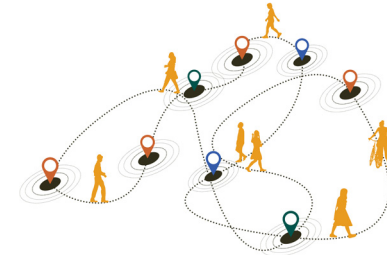
##### Succession Planning

- Opportunities for new trees in ground and in planters to replace the hornbeams as needed

##### Sustainability

- Opportunities for the integration of rainwater management
- Local, sustainable materials
- Build the urban tree canopy
- Encourage walking through improved pedestrian amenities
- Build on existing streetscape materials that are successful, rather than replace them (i.e. ground plane south of Yates).

#### SHOPPING AND BUSINESS DESTINATION



##### Support

- Retail High Street
- Tourism Destination
- Year Round
- Seasonal Market
- Pop-Up Shops
- Accommodation

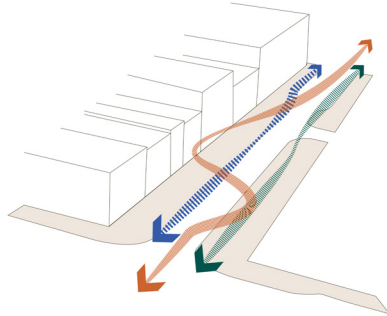
##### Expand

- Food and Beverage Opportunities
- Mobile Food Vendors
- Patios
- Year Round

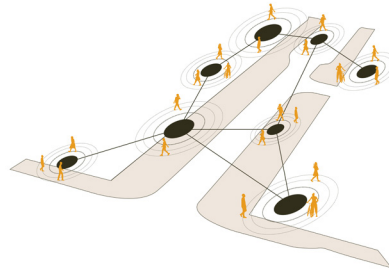
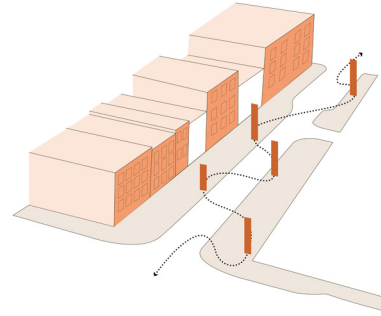
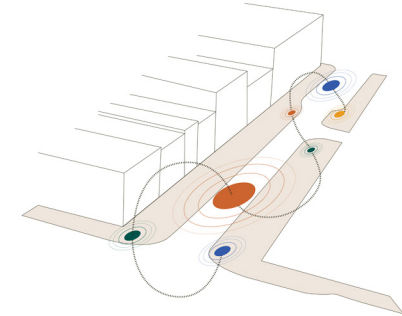
##### Enhance

- Servicing and Loading Access
- Retail Infrastructure
- Business Spill Over Space
- Wayfinding / Legibility

## DOWNTOWN SPINE



## PLACE FOR PEOPLE

ICONIC HERITAGE  
PRECINCTARTS, CULTURE  
AND EVENTS**Pedestrian Priority**

- Pedestrian Priority Intersections
- Width of Pedestrian Zones
- Amenities (seating, drinking fountains, waste receptacles etc.)

**Flexibility**

- Timed Closures
- Seasonal Closures
- Ability to Expand and Contract

**Multi-modal**

- Shared Space
- Two-Way Bike Movements
- Design for All Modes
- Low Speeds
- Tourist Serving Mobility

**Comfort and Beauty**

- Sun, Rain and Wind Protection
- Comfortable Seating
- Soft Edges and Green Areas
- Urban Rooms for Social Gathering
- Drinking Fountains and Restrooms

**Safe and Accessible**

- Barrier Free Universal Design
- Accessible Parking Along the Street
- Sidewalk Width
- Seating Frequency
- Lighting
- Wayfinding and Route Options
- Active Day and Night
- Emergency Vehicle Access

**Inclusive**

- Space for Small Businesses and Start Ups (i.e. Pop-up Market Stalls, Mobile Food Vendors, etc.)
- Design for All Ages
- Diverse Perspectives in Storytelling

**Heart of Old Town**

- Protect Views of Heritage Facades
- Protect Iconic Heritage Design Elements (i.e. globe lights, brick)
- Complementary Materials and Furnishings

**Distinct Streetscape**

- High Quality and Authentic Materials
- Timeless Materials and Furnishings
- Reflect Past in Design Language (i.e. location of the streetcar rails, Camus meadow, local ecology and context, etc.)

**Storytelling**

- Heritage within the Context of Indigenous Reconciliation
- Themes Reflecting City Values (i.e. Arts and Culture, Diversity and Difference, Welcoming City, Ecology, etc.)
- Recognize the historic ravine which defined the boundary between Old Town and Chinatown
- Recognized the past use of the land for camas growing and harvesting.

**Opportunities**

- Flex Spaces/Stages with Room for People to Gather
- Public Art - Immersive, Digital, durational
- Cultural Expression, Interpretation
- Art Objects / Sculptures
- Indigenous Public Art / Oral History / Storytelling

**Year Round**

- Events and Activities
- Parades and Protests
- Seasonal Markets
- Busking, Performative and Durational Arts

**Adaptability**

- Support flexibility
- Programmable Lighting, Electrical Connections
- Ability to Expand and Contract
- Seasonal and Timed Vehicle Closures





# PART 2:

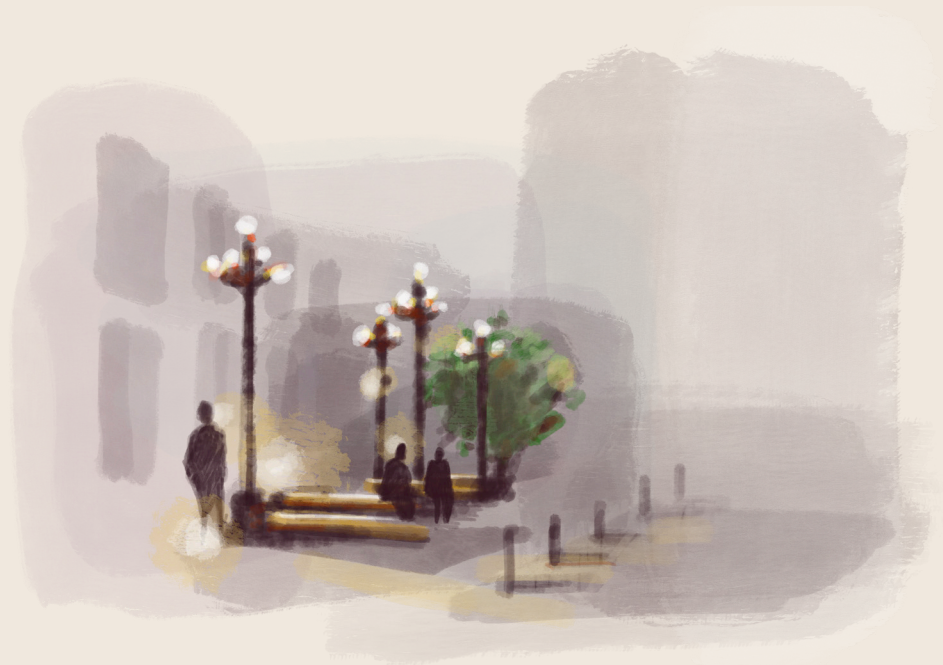
## Design Vision

### VISION STATEMENT

**Government Street is one of Canada's most iconic pedestrian priority retail streets and is an important part of Victoria's identity.** A shared street for locals and residents, Government Street reflects and adapts to the culture and values of Victorians. During quieter times, it is a preferred route for people walking through downtown thanks to the comfortable micro-climate, retail vibrancy and active sidewalks. It is where Victorians go to dine and people watch; to shop and meet friends; and to access services. Government Street is also an important civic space. Here, Victorians celebrate in the form of events taking place in the street; and, they become heard, through protests and demonstrations.

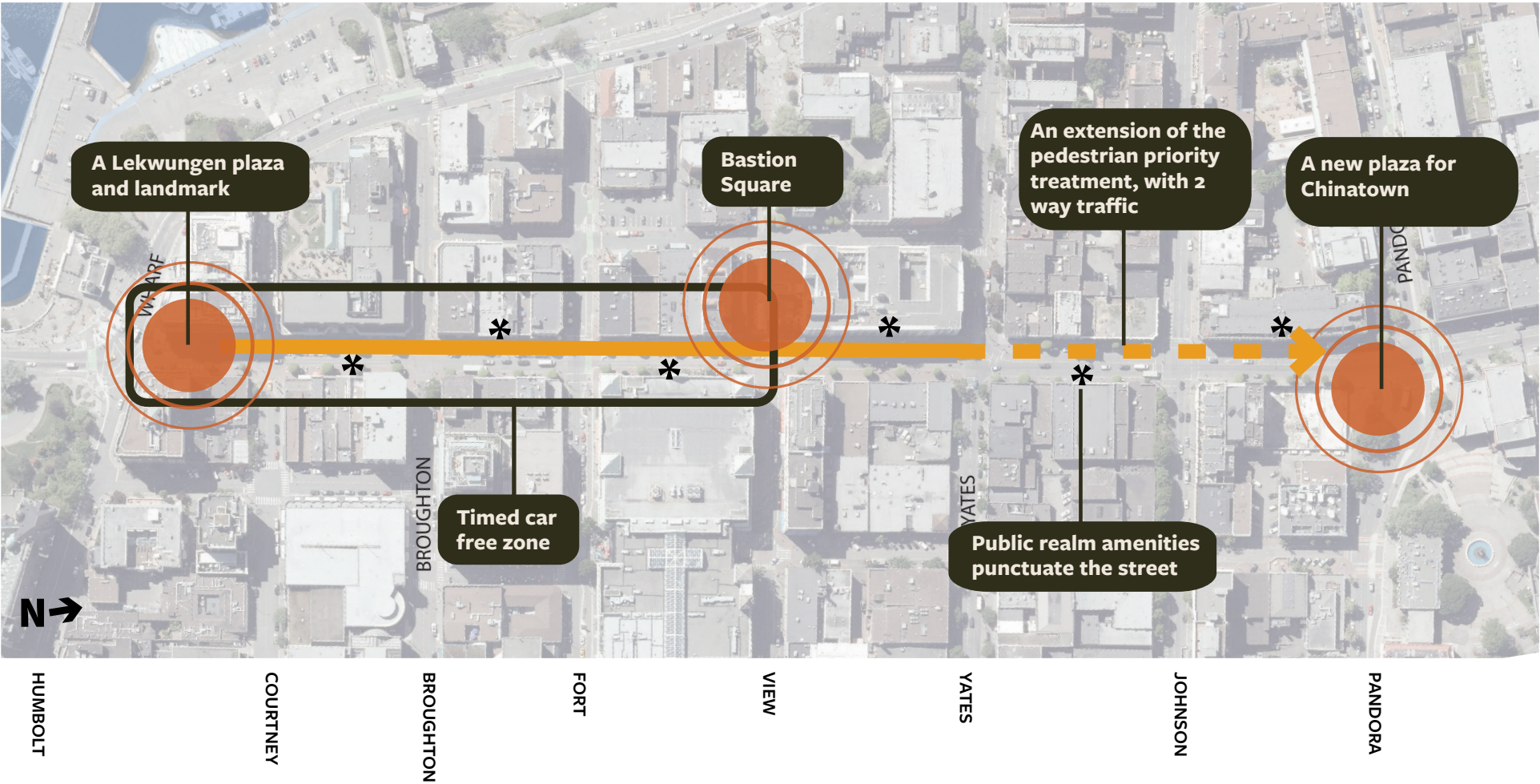
Government Street is place of beauty and comfort. The dynamic life of Government Street is set within the rich heritage character and context of Old Town. Materials, furnishings, tree and planting contribute to the high-quality streetscape design and sense of place. These elements speak to the core values of the City; they are sustainable, welcoming and inclusive. The accessible streetscape design, frequent seating areas, and conveniently located drop off areas allow people with limited mobility and people using mobility devices move with ease and joy along the streetscape.

Government Street is a place where diverse stories and perspectives are shared. Public art is thoughtfully integrated into the built environment. Artists and buskers activate Government Street with their music and craft. The stories shared through signage, public art, and naming reflect the diverse voices and history of Victoria.





CONCEPT DIAGRAM





**Two new plazas are envisioned at either end of the study area.** A Lekwungen plaza at the sound end from Humbolt to Courtney. This plaza expands Indigenous cultural representation and programming in downtown Victoria, and establishes a gateway to the Old Town from the Inner Harbour.

A new plaza for Chinatown on the south east corner of Pandora at Government Street. Through transformation of the intersection a large public space provides the opportunity to support a variety of cultural programs for Chinatown and to enhance the presence of Chinatown at the northern gateway to the study area.

**Government Street is punctuated with a series of public realm amenities and public space typologies.** In addition to the two new plazas which anchor the study area, the streetscape is punctuated by furnishings and spaces that lend themselves to a variety of experiences and programming. The presence of Bastion Square remains a key destination and component of the public realm.

**Expanded public realm and continued car-free times from Humbolt to View Street.** These design moves provide flexibility for seasonal transformation of the street. Extending the pedestrian zone in this area provides additional sidewalk space to improve pedestrian circulation and through movement, and opens up opportunities for new trees to be planted in ground.

**An extension of the pedestrian mall treatment north of Yates to Pandora.** This continues the character of Government Street with wider sidewalks, while maintaining a single lane of vehicle traffic in either direction. A variety of public space types are introduced to support the pedestrian priority treatment of this zone and to support diverse programming all along the street. This move knits together the fabric from Chinatown to the harbour, thereby inviting visitors to explore this important destination in Victoria as well.

## MOBILITY

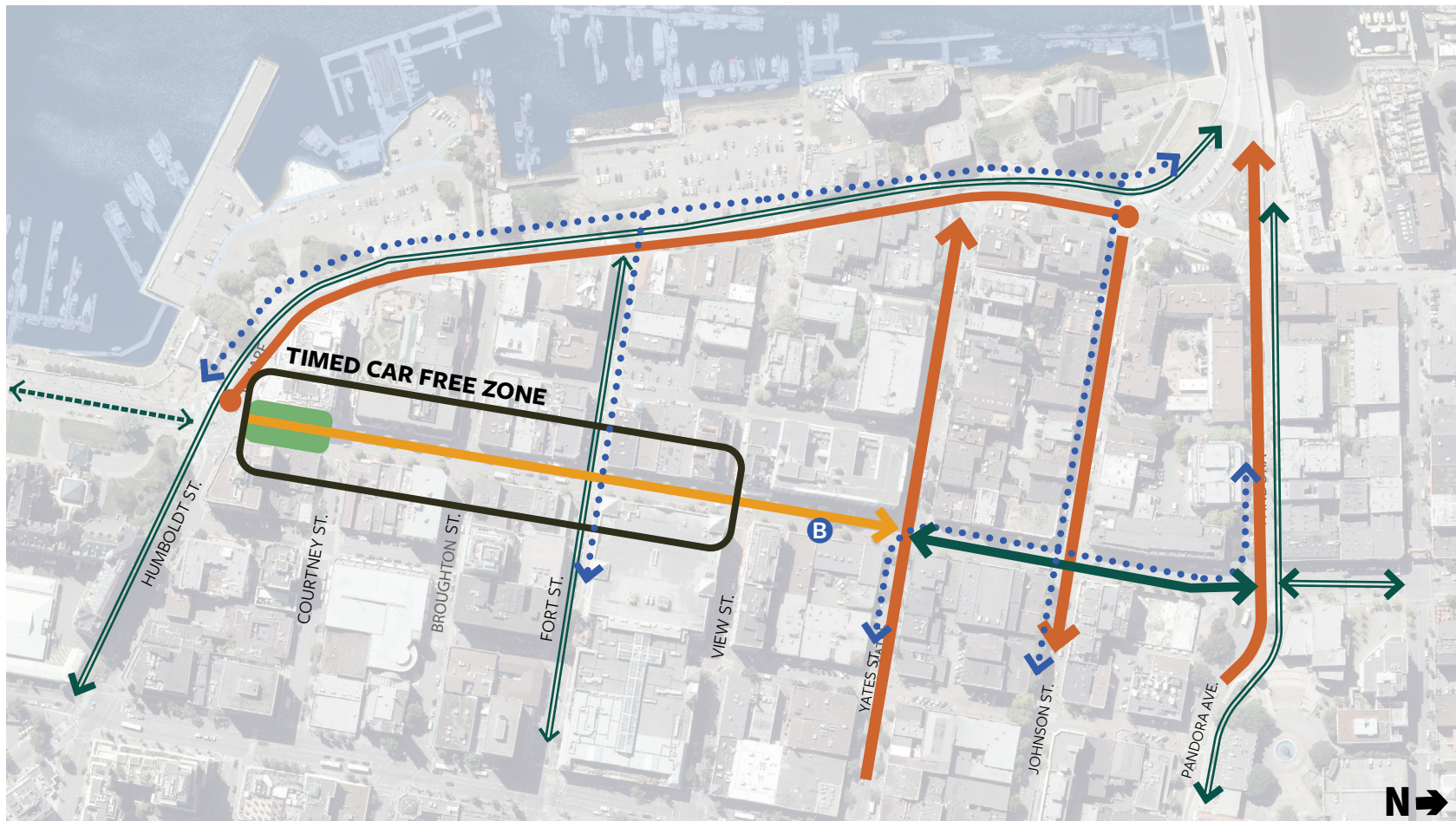
In June of 2020 a timed car free zone between Humboldt and View St. was initiated as part of the Build Back Victoria Program. A full closure to general purpose vehicles between Fort and View was also piloted for a period during the summer of 2021. Prior to this, Government Street acted as a two lane northbound thoroughfare and connector for vehicles traffic traveling from James Bay through downtown to the north and accessing the Johnston Street bridge. Vehicles traveling northbound through the downtown must now rely on alternate route options, such as Wharf Street, Douglas Street and Blanchard Street. Although this means that traffic circulation patterns have changed, it appears that the surrounding street network continues to adequately function, although it is difficult to definitively isolate the extent to which observed changes are due to the pandemic as opposed to being caused by the timed car free zone itself. At the same time, vehicle traffic patterns will continue to evolve and adapt as the downtown continues to densify, and as people choose to shift to alternative modes of transportation as the City continues to advance pedestrian priority and climate goals throughout the downtown and the City as a whole.









Removing the northbound thoroughfare function of Government Street through Old Town is an important aspect of emphasizing its pedestrian priority. At the same time, accommodating commercial vehicle access and deliveries, emergency vehicle access, convenient access to accessible parking, and vehicle access to businesses and nearby parkades, is important to business vitality, safety and access for people with disabilities.

Monitoring and evaluation of pedestrian priority measures implemented on Government Street as part of the Build Back Victoria Program have resulted in modifications and improvements as the street continues to adapt and evolve based on successes and lessons learned which, in turn, have informed the concept design support.

### **Summary of key mobility concept design directions**

- Expanded sidewalks throughout for people walking
- Strategies to welcome north-south bicycles in a shared use environment
- Accommodation of bus through movement from Johnson to Pandora
- Maintenance of bus through movement from Yates to Pandora
- Continue on-going relocation of Route 10 bus stop to Wharf or Douglas.
- Accommodate transit on Government Street north of Yates Street
- Continued one way northbound motorized vehicle movement on Government Street south of Yates
- Continued two way traffic on Government Street north of Yates
- Consideration for changes to circulation on key blocks
- Flex mobility zones for loading/servicing, drop off/pick up and emergency staging



- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|  Street Plaza and Gateway      |  Bus Route              |  Existing AAA Network |
|  One Way Vehicles (Northbound) |  Principle Vehicle Flow |  Future AAA Network   |
|  Two Way Vehicles              |  Tour Bus Stop          |  |



## Walking

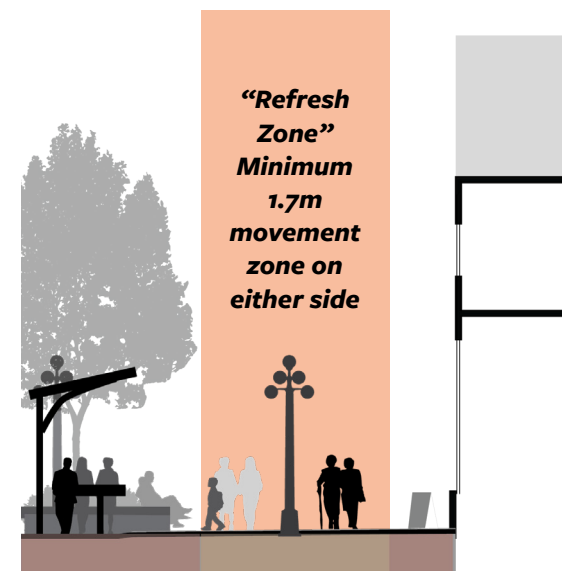
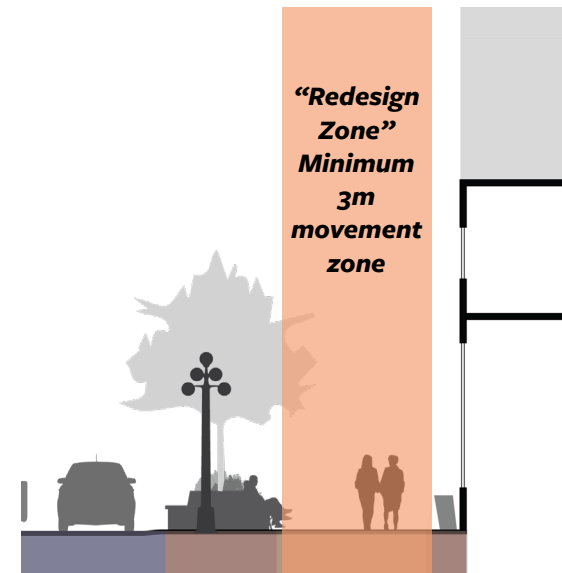
Government Street is an important space for pedestrians. Street-oriented businesses contribute to a constant stream of pedestrian activity in the area. Seasonal factors also influence walking on Government Street, with warmer temperatures bringing parades, protests, and additional cruise ship activity.

Existing space for pedestrians is not continuous on Government Street. While select blocks offer up to 7 meters for sidewalks, this allocation reduces to 4 meters or less between Yates Street and Pandora Avenue.

The design concept proposes an expansion of the pedestrian priority treatment of Government Street through widened sidewalks and pedestrian zone. A 3 metre wide minimum unobstructed pedestrian movement zone is achieved on the blocks north of Yates. South of Yates generally achieves a minimum 3 metre wide unobstructed pedestrian movement zone.

Due to design constraints in the 'Refresh Zone' some areas between Courtney and Yates will have a movement zone with 1.7 metres on each side of in sidewalk obstructions, such as existing light fixtures. This along with the creation of a coherent approach to restaurant patios and de-cluttering, will contribute to improving the accessibility of Government Street. The design constraints in this area are discussed in more detail in the concept design for the blocks from Courtney to Yates.

In addition to expanding the sidewalks, the timed car free zone from Humbolt to Yates, new furnishings, wayfinding signage, tree succession and planting contribute to making Government Street a welcoming pedestrian priority street.



## Cycling

Currently, bi-directional AAA cycling facilities are available on Pandora Avenue, Wharf Street, Fort Street, Vancouver Street and Government Street north of Pandora. Hence, facilities on Wharf Street are the only provision for protected or AAA north-south cyclist movements in downtown Victoria. With these nearby facilities accommodating commuter traffic and the majority of people traveling north-south by bicycle through the city on Wharf Street, Government Street acts as a place for people who are biking for leisure, making brief connections to the broad bike network, and who are visiting Government Street shops and retail as a destination.

The design concept welcomes people on bicycles in a shared environment. On the blocks from Humbolt to Yates, people riding bicycles in both north and southbound directions will share the lane with slow moving, north bound motor vehicle traffic. Signage for road users will clearly indicate that this is a shared space with low posted speed limits. During car free times, cyclists are welcome to travel in both north and southbound directions but must continue to yield to pedestrian activity in a shared use environment with no vehicle traffic.

On the blocks from Yates to Pandora, people riding bicycles share each travel lane with motorized vehicles heading in both north and south directions.

## Transit

While nearby Douglas Street acts as the city's principal transit corridor, Government Street does fulfill a role in Victoria's regional transportation system. Route 10 operates the length on Government Street in the study area for northbound travel with routes 14, 15, 24 and 25 operating in zones between Yates and Pandora.

There are two transit stops on Government Street: south of Broughton Street, and north of Yates Street. Timed closures through the Build Back Victoria program and construction have resulted in the rerouting of Route 10 to Wharf Street. The design concept proposes the continued rerouting of Route 10 to Wharf Street or Douglas Street. Government Street will still maintain transit bus movement for routes between Yates Street and Pandora.

## Emergency Vehicle Access and Staging

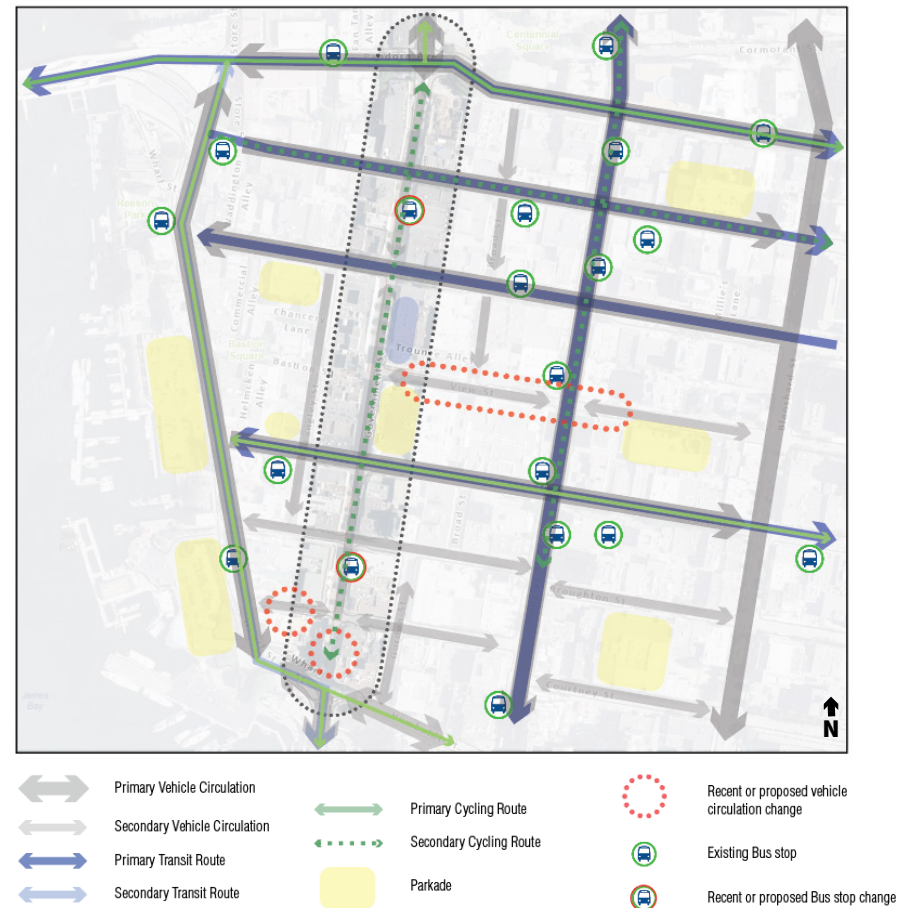
Lined with heritage buildings dating 100 years or older, and with many of them still requiring seismic and fire upgrades, providing sufficient access for fire trucks and accommodating their operational needs is a key input into the streetscape design. Input and feedback provided by the Fire Department informed the design concept, including in consideration of the provision, locations and dimensions of stationing areas for fire trucks and the compatibility of street tree locations and species with stationing areas and ladder requirements. Further input and direction from Fire Department staff will inform future more detailed design and construction stages of the process. Flex mobility zones presented on the following page have been identified on each block to provide for emergency staging.

## Motorised Traffic

While Government Street is an important roadway for coming into downtown and as a connector for James Bay residents, the overall network continues to function during closures. While we experience some congestion now, this is limited to peak travel times. It is also a lower volume street where travel is only permitted northbound. A timed car free zone was introduced in 2020 as a pilot and to support the Build Back Victoria program. This change has been generally received positively by the public and the surrounding street network continued to operate adequately. This approach will continue to have a role in achieving the pedestrian priority goals for the street.

Additional analysis of travel patterns along Government Street and other streets in Downtown Victoria using the StreetLight Insights platform was conducted. Although there are certain limitations associated with this dataset, it can provide insights into general changes in travel patterns, including comparisons with data from prior years. The analysis found that while vehicle volumes and patterns changed with the pandemic, data collected between 2019 and 2021 indicates that traffic volumes have not significantly changed on adjacent corridors with the introduction of measures on Government Street. The analysis further indicated that in the 1100 block, more pedestrians were visiting Government Street in July and August of 2021 than prior to the pandemic in 2019. At the same time, the same block on parallel streets to the east (Blanshard Street and Douglas Street) had pedestrian flows in 2021 that remained below pre-pandemic levels in 2019, although pedestrian flows on this block of Wharf Street in 2021 exceeded those seen in 2019.

Higher vehicle volumes are concentrated near the Johnson Street Bridge on Government Street, Pandora Avenue, Johnson Street, Yates Street, and Wharf Street. The immediately parallel routes to Government Street are somewhat constrained as Wharf Street, which serves as a truck route, has high volumes of traffic at peak times and Douglas Street remains an important street for both the transit system and commercial goods movement.



The design concept proposes time limited northbound traffic from Humboldt to Yates, with the opportunity to pilot a full closure at Humboldt to north bound vehicles and, non-restricted north and south bound traffic from Yates to Pandora. Lane widths throughout can be reduced to help slow traffic and provide more space dedicated to pedestrians.

Potential changes to circulation are contemplated as well, including a change from the existing one way vehicle movement to two way movement on Courtney (from Wharf to Government Street). Two options are proposed for the block of Government Street between Humboldt and Courtney. The first option considers a full closure to vehicles and the other considers maintaining this as a flexible zone with car free times. Refer to Lekwungen Cultural Plaza for more detail.

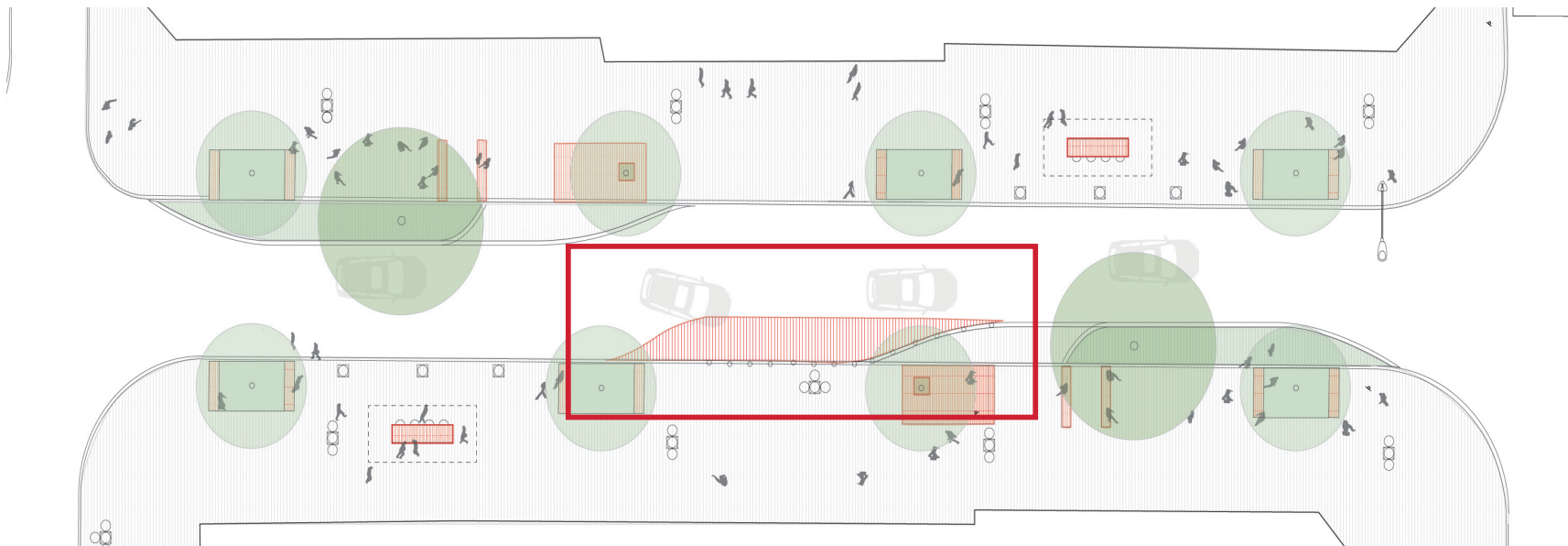
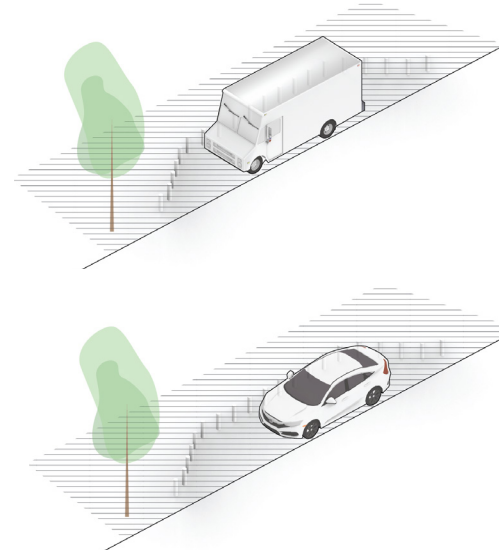


## Flex Mobility Zones

Due to the lack of laneways, space for loading and servicing is offered on street in designated truck loading / commercial loading zones, 20-minute meters, and passenger zones when actively loading and unloading.

As a result of the Build Back Victoria program access for loading / servicing along Government Street between Humboldt and Yates street is currently limited to the hours of 10pm until noon, with new commercial loading zones and accessible parking stalls available on and adjacent to Government Street.

The design concept maintains this approach to loading and servicing. Mid-block on each block is a designated loading and servicing zone which also functions as a emergency staging zone, and as a taxi or ride hail and pick up and drop off zone when the street is open to vehicles.



Diagrammatic plan showing one potential approach to providing mid-block mobility zones



## ACCESSIBILITY & UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Improved accessibility on Government Street is a key goal of this project and can relate to many facets of Government Street – the physical environment, programming, furnishings, and the experience overall. Best practices for shared streets and the application of universal design principles have informed the design concept. At the same time, universal design best practices, particularly for pedestrian priority multi-modal environments, are an evolving area of exploration and will continue to be explored and applied throughout design development and phased implementation. This will include ongoing involvement of accessibility expertise, including technical inputs and audits as part of design iteration, and involving people with lived experience.

### Goals

1. Design for a range of people with different disabilities
2. Create a barrier-free environment with frequent places to rest
3. Incorporate furnishings that are comfortable and welcoming

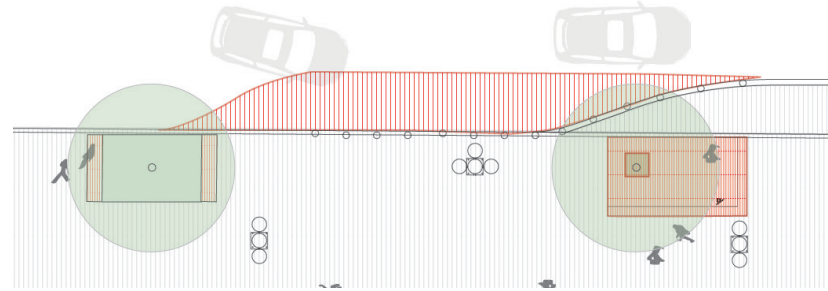
In addition to the goals noted above, the Hidden Mobility Disabilities Alliance Ltd. has identified the following best practices for accessibility and accommodation which will be addressed through this project.

1. Limit distance to be walked. This will be addressed through mobility zones and drop off areas.
2. Address terrain. Uneven terrain will be addressed at crosswalks and intersections.
3. Provide alternatives to standing and waiting. New furnishings will create places of rest.

## Strategies

### Mobility Zones

Mobility zones have been identified centrally on each block to allow for a variety of uses. The design will include passenger pick-up/drop-offs areas and accessible parking stalls on and adjacent to the corridor. These locations will be designed with a suitable curb ramp up to the adjacent sidewalk. The spaces will also apply best practices with regard to width to accommodate the mobility vehicle as well as sufficient exiting space.



### Unobstructed Movement Zone

Unobstructed movement zones will be achieved along the sidewalks throughout the study area. On the blocks north of Yates where there is a full redesign of the streetscape, new expanded sidewalks will provide an unobstructed movement zone free of furnishings, trees, signage, lighting and store front spaces. This will typically be 3 metres wide to allow space for people walking and rolling to pass.

Due to the limited transformation of the blocks south of Yates, existing lighting which is located in the middle of the sidewalks will remain in place. New trees in pots will replace the existing trees in their same location. In this area a minimum of 1.7 metres on both sides of centrally located furnishings will be established to allow people in wheelchairs to pass.

## Site Furnishings

Site furnishings will include elements such as back supports and arm rests, as well as seating of different heights, to accommodate seniors, children or others with limited balance or stability.



## Tactile Delineation

At this concept design stage, material changes and tactile markers have been identified as the primary tools for defining pedestrian zones as distinct from mobility zones.



## Barrier-Free Environment

Improvements will be made to crosswalks and corners. Any public spaces that are created will be barrier free, and amenities such as restrooms and drinking fountains will be accessible as well.

## Design Development

In the detail design phase, the City will undertake focused stakeholder engagement with people who have lived experience and will work with an accessibility consultant. The City will also continue to invite feedback from a diverse range of stakeholders.



## TREE SUCCESSION

The most common trees on Government Street are the European Hornbeam trees, introduced as part of the pedestrian mall construction in the late 1970's. These trees are planted within a constrained growing environment above ground in tree rings south of Yates, and in the ground north of Yates. The dense, low and round canopy creates a distinct pattern and character along the street.

Street tree succession and maintenance is a key component informing the design concept. A condition and site assessment carried out as part of the process found:

- Just over ½ of trees in planters and in ground within the study area are in constrained growing conditions and require repairs to site/ planting conditions (planters, soil volumes, tree grates, etc.) over the near term (0 – 5 years)
- Approximately 43 of the 63 trees along Government Street have a useful life expectancy of approximately 5 to 15 years, primarily due to the condition of the planting sites.
- UG infrastructure replacement including lateral connections will likely result in disruption to existing street trees.
- There is a complex network of underground infrastructure that makes in opportunities for in ground tree planting limited, and very challenging where there are opportunities.

Present day engineering requirements would preclude many of the tree planting practices from the 1970s which resulted in the trees that are present along Government Street today. The location of existing and planned future underground infrastructure preclude in ground street trees along much of the street based on established setback requirements from infrastructure. Challenges for retaining trees and for accommodating additional and replacement trees include the condition of the planter infrastructure, soil volume constraints and most significantly, the proximity of underground utilities along the street.

A set of design strategies to replace existing trees and integrate new trees within the complex and constrained growing environment along the street are proposed. The number and location of street trees would occur as part of the detailed design and phased implementation of the streetscape improvements. Strategies include:

- Phased replacement of existing trees in planters with new trees in planters and partially in ground in soil vaults to contain roots located over top of or adjacent to infrastructure.
- Maintain existing trees in ground where healthy and compatible with new streetscape alignment and layout.
- New large canopy trees in ground where identified infrastructure setbacks can be met.

## Overall Sequencing

### 3. Refresh Zone: Courtney to Yates

The intersection of Courtney will be addressed at the same time as the plaza redevelopment between Humbolt and Courtney.

### 2. Refresh Zone: Courtney to Yates

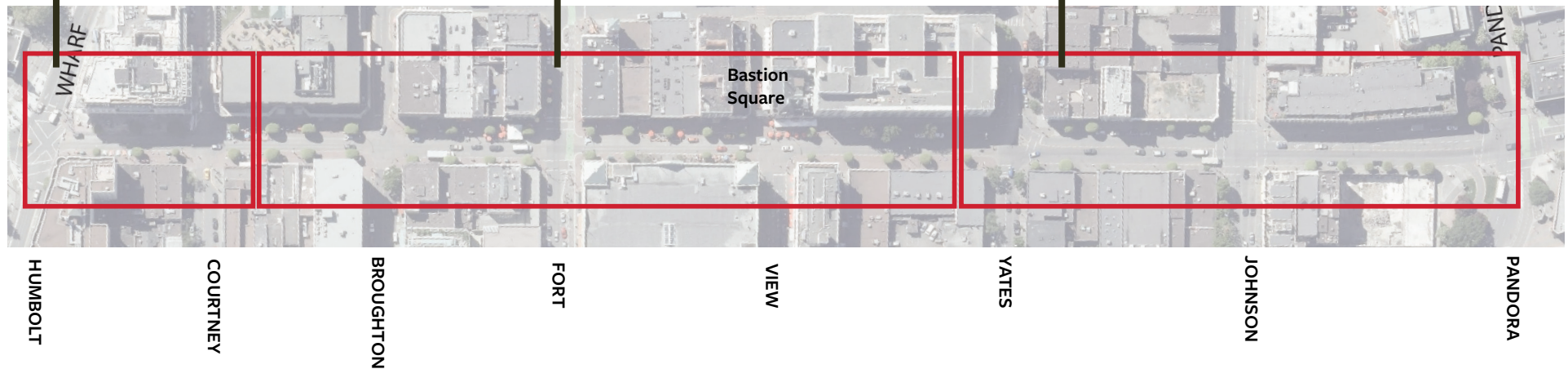
Trees within this portion of Government Street will be replaced incrementally over time. It is important the evolution is planned, thoughtful and intentional. The following page illustrates an approach for the incremental replacement of trees along Government Street, while also ensuring a coherent look and feel for the street as trees grow over time.

### 1. Redesign Zone: Yates to Pandora

This portion of Government Street will be constructed first, as a part of the watermain replacement.

A number of existing trees have been identified for retention along these blocks. New trees will be integrated as a part of reconstruction as well.

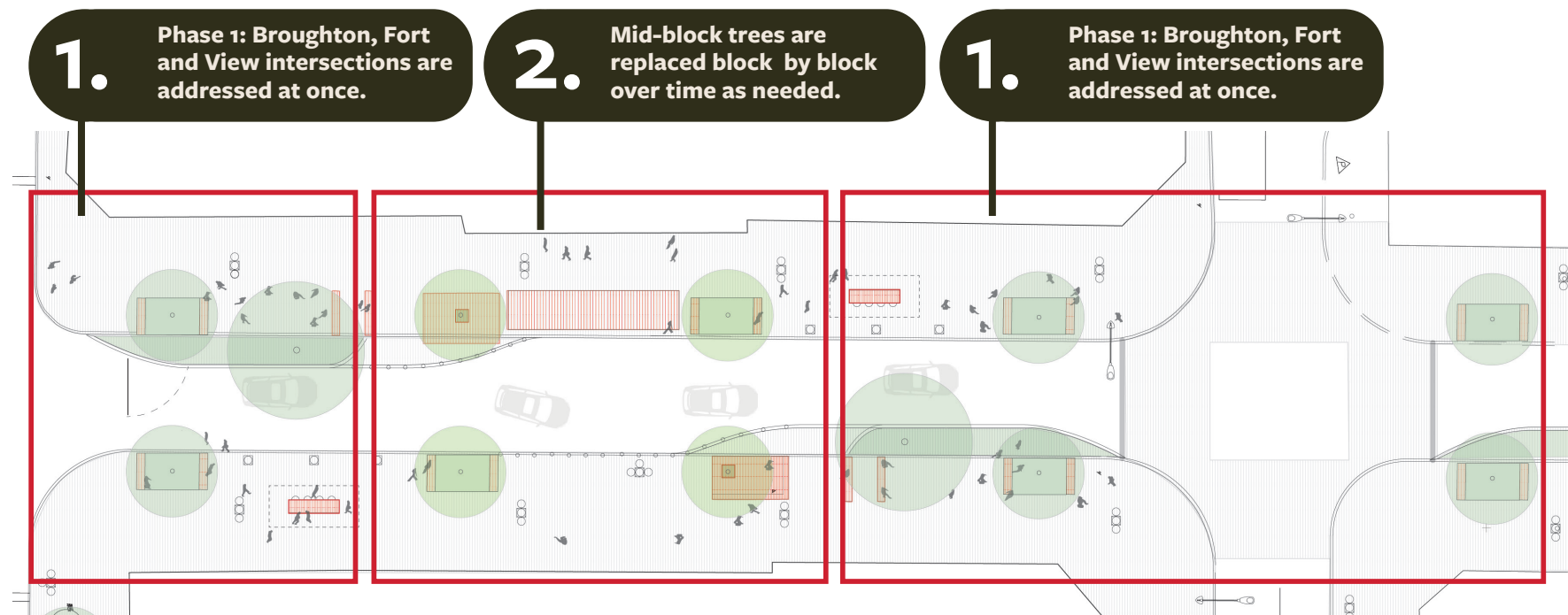
The intersection of Yates will be addressed as a part of the upgrades to the northern two blocks.



## Refresh Zone Sequencing

Within the Refresh Zone from Courtney to Yates, the following strategy has been identified for tree succession.

First, the intersections of Broughton, Fort and View are addressed together at once (the intersection of Courtney would be addressed along with the plaza to the south, and Yates with the northern two blocks). Then, mid-block trees are replaced, block by block as trees need replacement.



Diagrammatic plan for illustrative purposes only.



## Tree Species

Species recommendations reflect tree species with climate suitability, good life expectancy, and suitability for the planting scenario.

- *Quercus coccinea*, Scarlet oak
- *Zelkova serrata*, Japanese zelkova
- *Acer miyabei*, Miyabe's maple
- *Parottia persica*, Persian ironwood
- *Acer griseum*, paperbark maple

European hornbeams are not recommended as replacement species given that they currently block views and building facades and require annual shearing.

1.



*Acer griseum*, Paperbark Maple, mid-block with up-lighting

2.

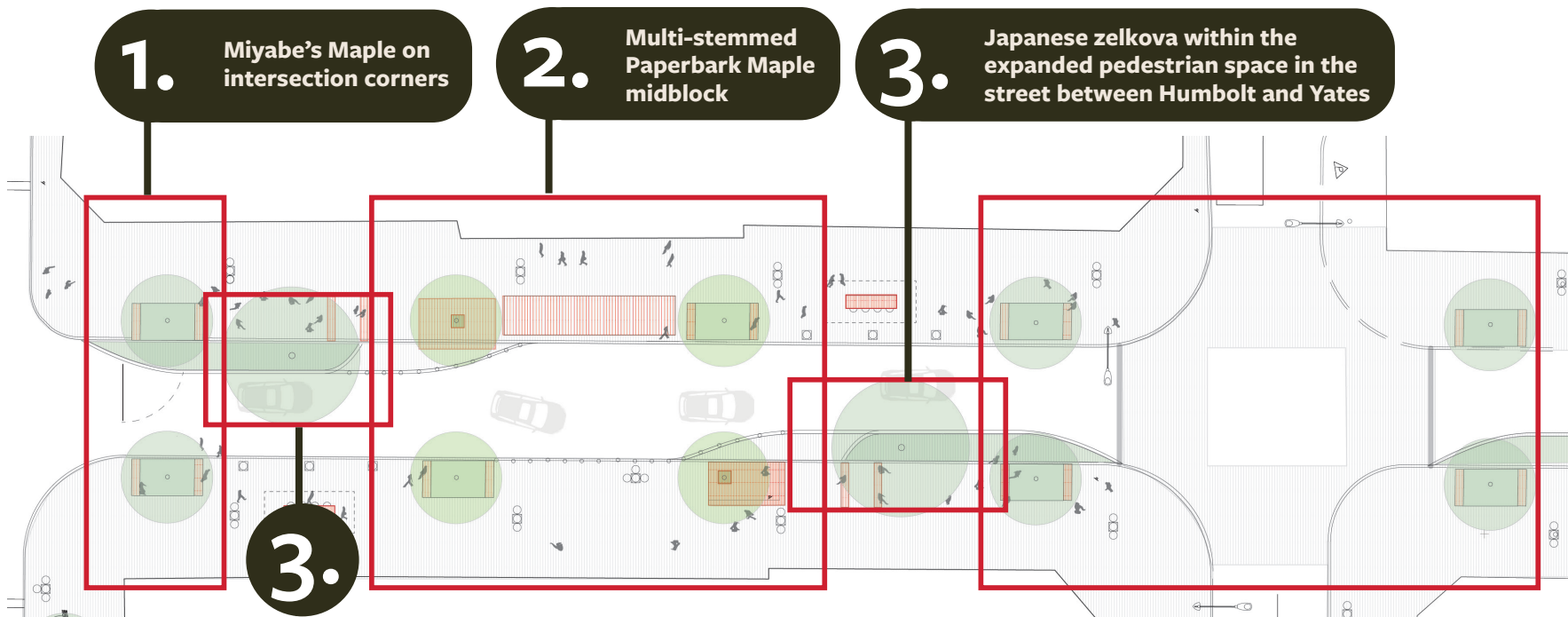


*Acer miyabei*, Miyabe's Maple, on street corners

3.



*Zelkova serrata*, Japanese Zelkova alternating east/west side of the street



Diagrammatic plan for illustrative purposes only.

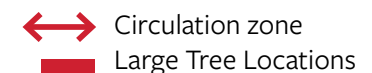
## Tree Pattern

Using at least three tree species for Government Street is recommended to help to provide urban biodiversity that will support environmental resiliency, provide visual interest as well as help with fire suppression needs. From a public realm perspective, different species each provide a unique spatial experience. It is important that the pattern that is established by the new trees responds to the formal heritage character of the streetscape.

Midblock trees will be smaller and ornamental in nature, preferably a multi-stemmed variety which could have uplighting to create a feeling of warmth and comfort. Trees framing intersections should be medium or large size. These trees anchor the street corners equally. This strategy also supports fire suppression with most room available at street intersection when needed.

With the expanded pedestrian zone from Humbolt to Yates there is also opportunity to establish large trees which provide contrast to the formal patterning of the trees along the sidewalks. These could either be located on the west side, where they help to frame the mobility zones, or alternate sides. If they alternate sides, then care should be given to place them on the opposite side of Bastion Square so that this space remains open and highly visible.

The preferred pattern for the placement of large trees in expanded public realm zones is illustrated below. Based on available information, this approach would be achievable using modified setbacks, soil cells, and tree root barriers. The city would have to advocate and prioritize this approach and collaborate with utility providers and select appropriate tree species.



## PROGRAMMING AND PUBLIC SPACE TYPES

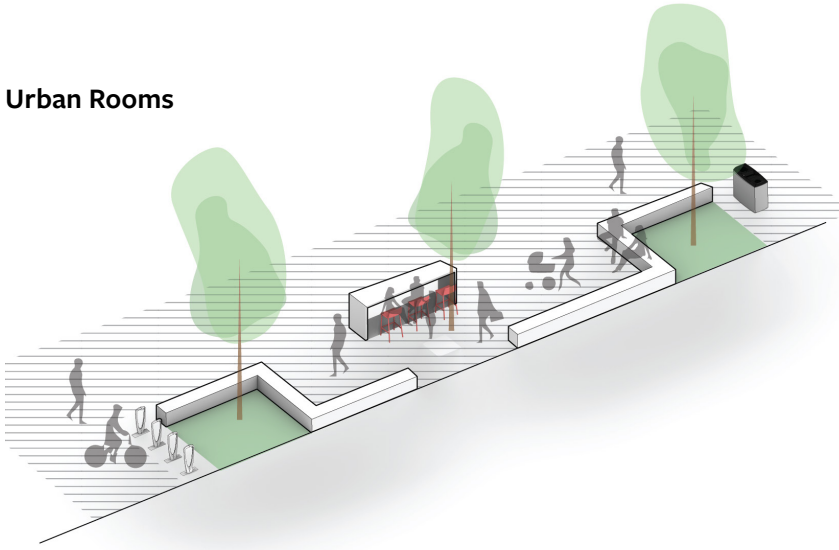
The Government Street public realm is one of Victoria's most active, vibrant, and high profile. It provides spaces to dine, gather, perform, protest, shop, celebrate, and move through. As part of the overall concept design approach considers both large events, and the articulation of small public rooms with distinct purposes and potential for activity.

- **Parades:** The Concept Vision is premised on the idea that parades are redirected to Douglas Street, and Government Street becomes the destination for parade supportive programming - for example, Government Street is a place to get hot apple cider and go shopping during the Santa Claus Parade, or to go after the Pride Parade to meet friends at a restaurant or outside for a picnic.
- **Street Events:** With timed closures possible on the blocks from Humbolt to Yates, Government Street has the potential to host street events such as festivals and other seasonal activities. Mid-block mobility zones could accommodate tents, with performances occurring within the expanded sidewalks.
- **Public Space Types:** In order to provide more flexibility and diversity to street users, and to achieve the objectives of the streetscape, a variety types of spaces are proposed for Government Street. These will help enhance and expand the use of the public space at different times of the day, different days of the week and in different seasons. Each type offers a diverse experience for uses, and can be layered into the design to create a holistic and rich streetscape for the City.

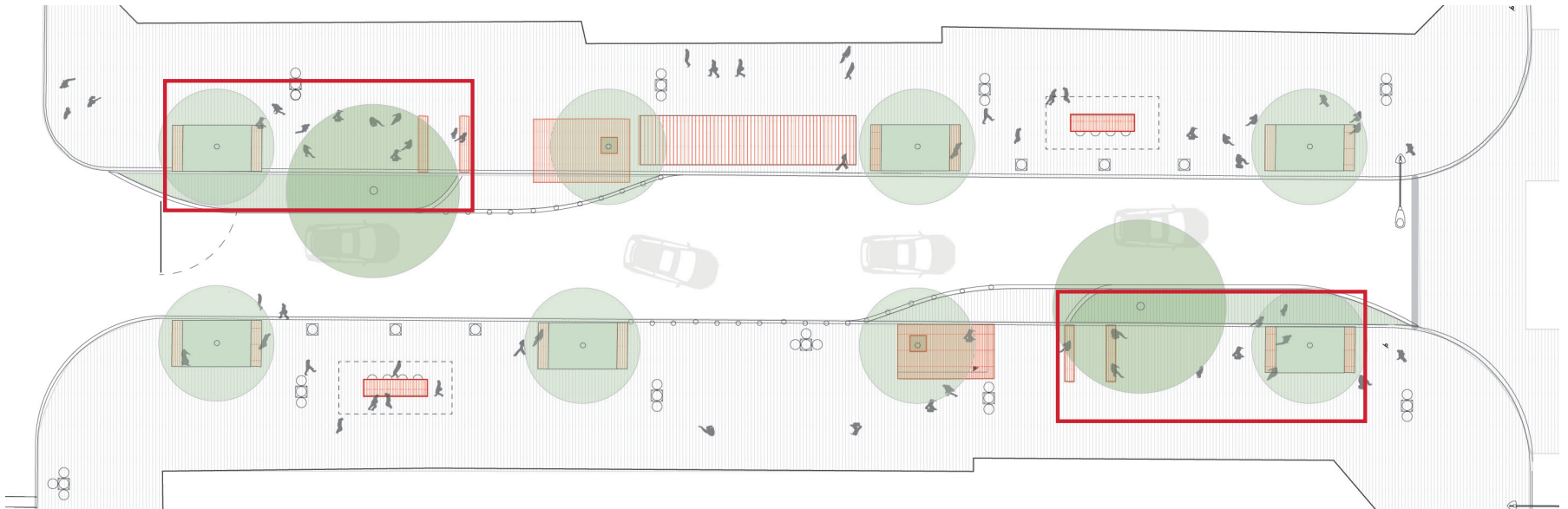




## Urban Rooms

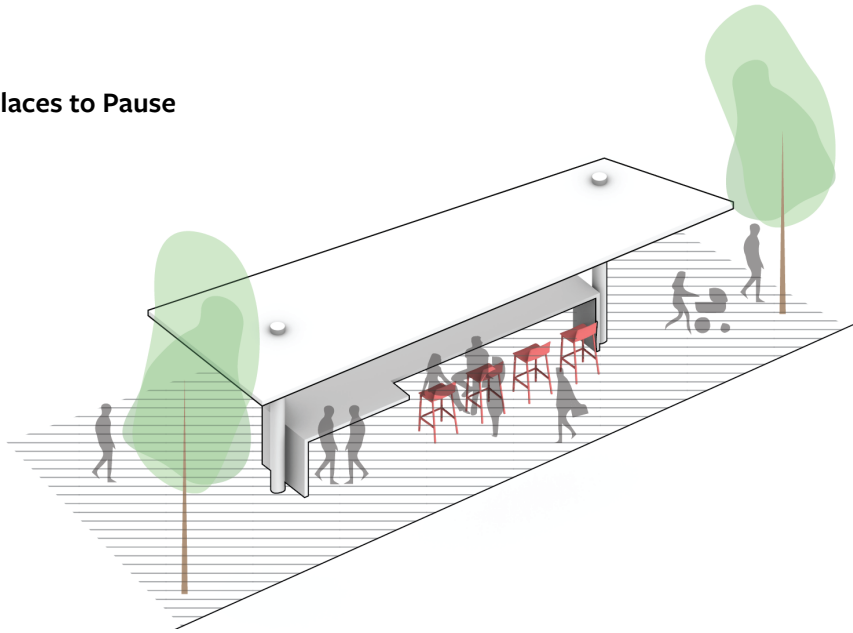


Urban Rooms offer spaces to gather, rest, picnic, relax and people watch. They include seating nooks, and can include clusters of movable tables and chairs, and provide areas of respite from the bustling streetscape. Unlike restaurant patios, these spaces are open to all without the need to purchase food or beverage.

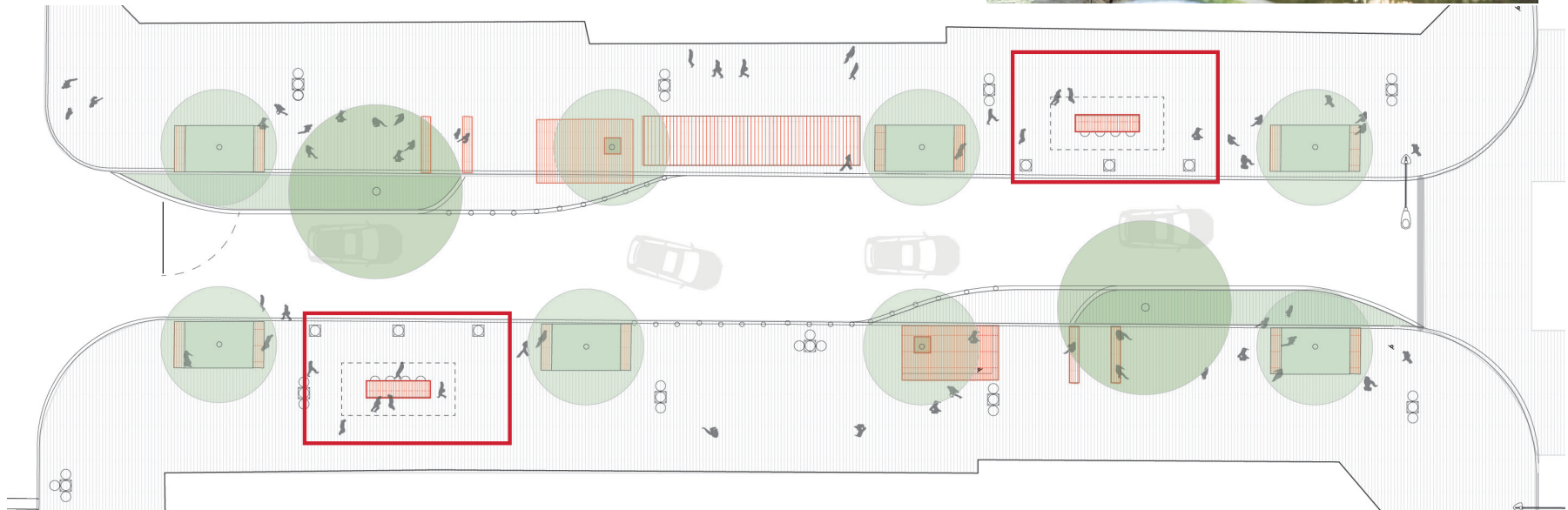


Diagrammatic plan showing one potential way that public space types could be deployed along a single block.

## Places to Pause



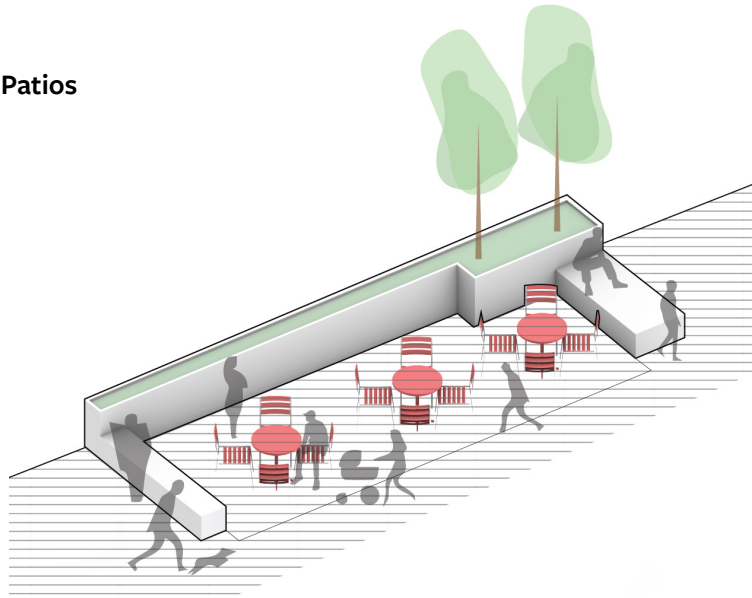
Places to Pause can be covered or uncovered. Bar height tables provide a places for people to stop and lean, or sit and linger. They can be located in line with existing light furnishings, or set in line with trees. When covered these provide a space to be protected from the rain. Access to electricity provide people with a place to connect a phone or other electronic device.



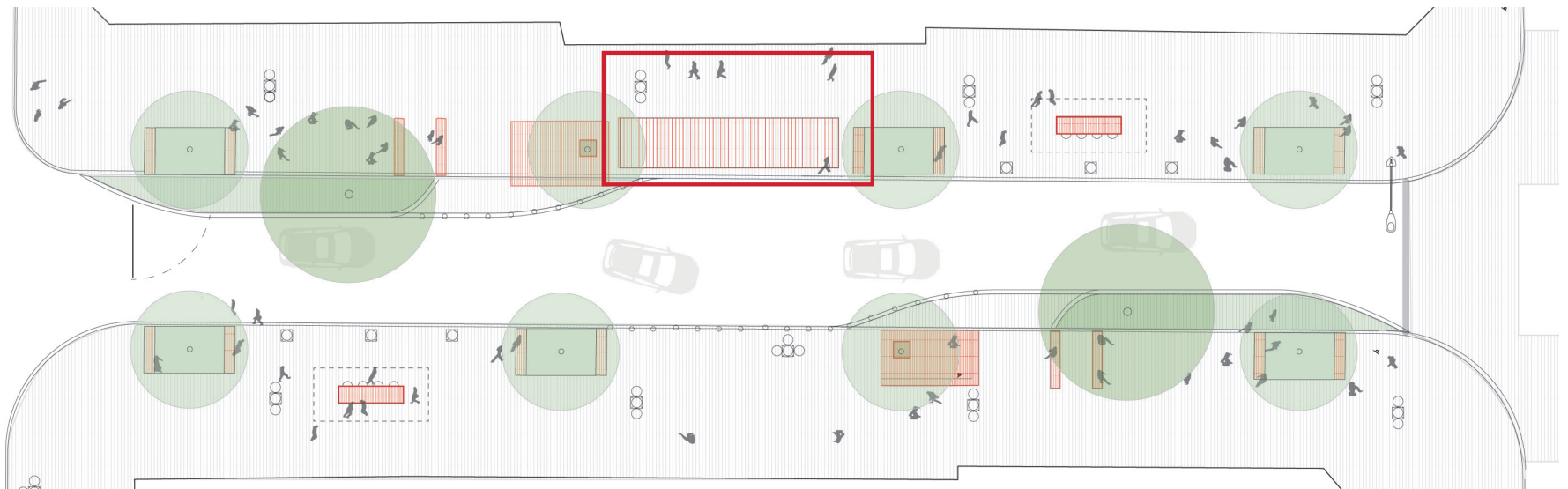
Diagrammatic plan showing one potential way that public space types could be deployed along a single block.



## Restaurant Patios



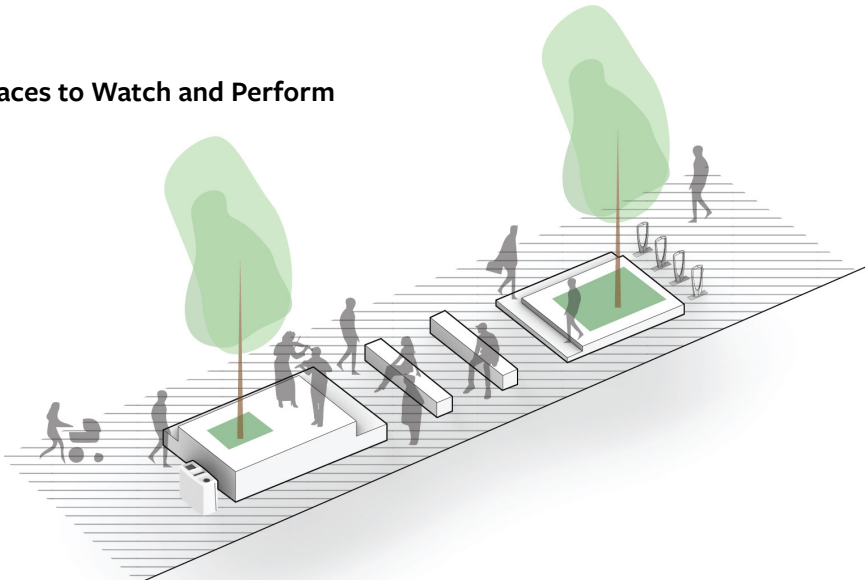
Restaurant patios are already a significant element of Government Street, and are integral to the vibrancy of the public realm. These spaces are typically seasonal, but the inclusion of cover and potentially heat can extend the window of activity significantly. Collaboration with business owners and design coherency of patios throughout the street is key to ensure that all public realm elements work together to enhance the overall pedestrian experience. Patio spaces would continue to be built and maintained by businesses, and will be required to use high quality materials, design and finishes.



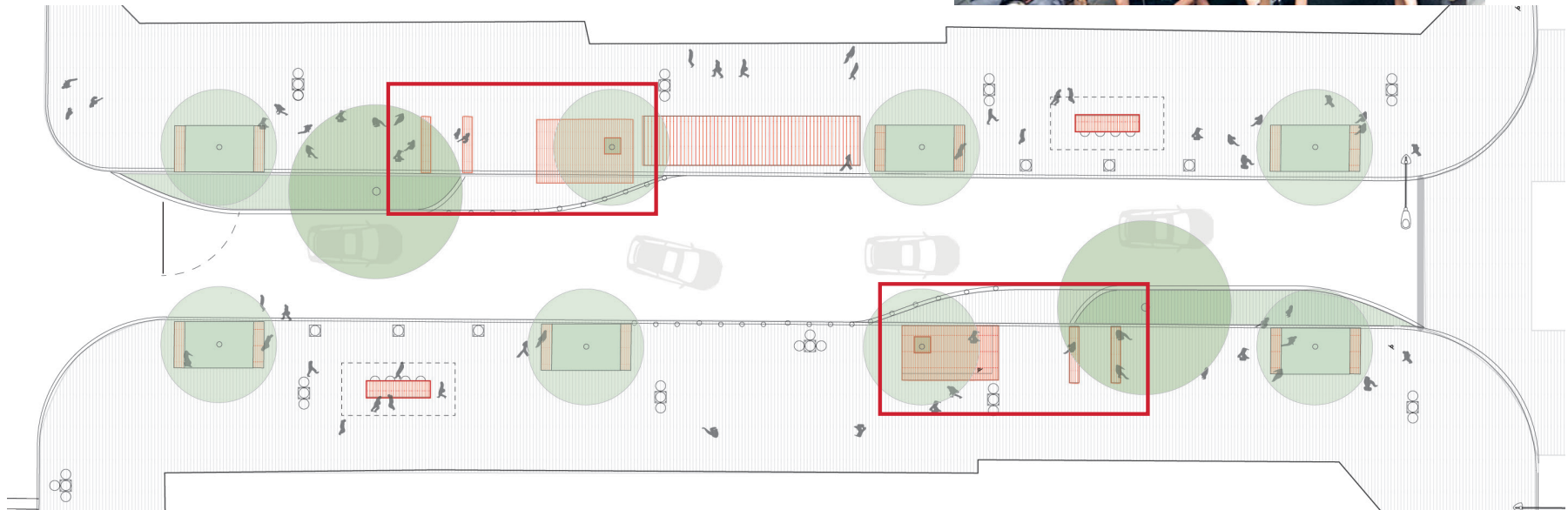
Diagrammatic plan showing one potential way that public space types could be deployed along a single block.



## Places to Watch and Perform



Performances, whether spontaneous or planned, are part of the activity that currently makes Government Street vibrant. Building upon this energy, spaces to play music, sing, or simply capture the public interest are important tools in the placemaking approach for the streetscape. These small and informal stages act as places to picnic when not being used for a performance.

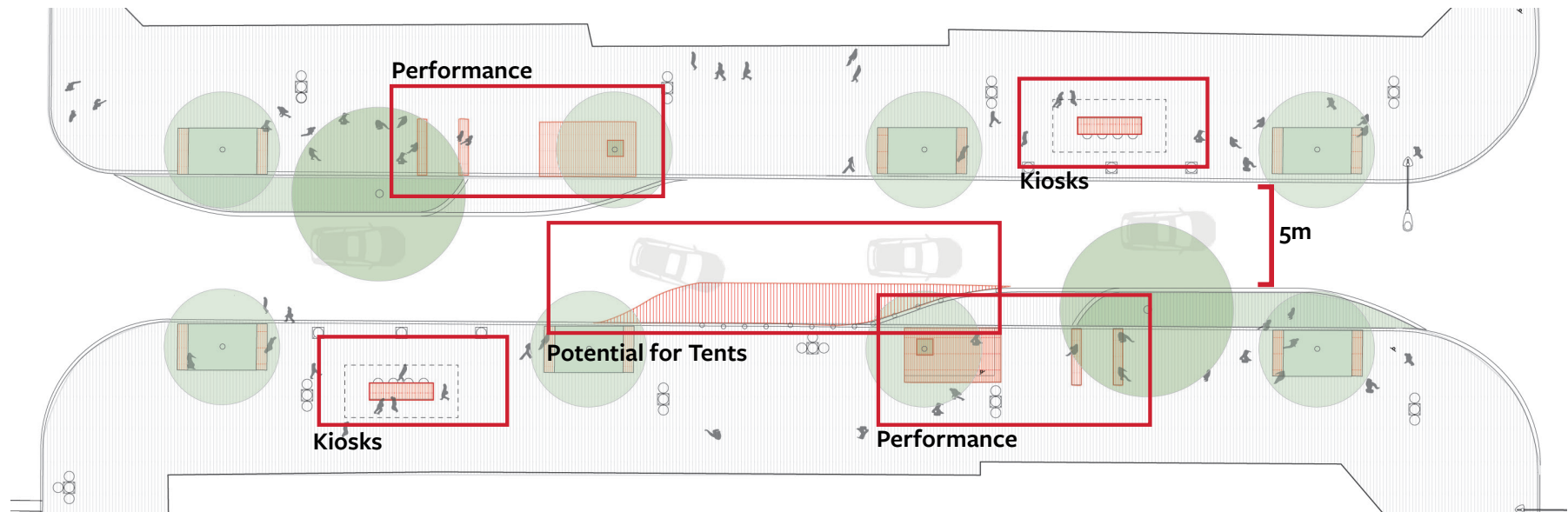


Diagrammatic plan showing one potential way that public space types could be deployed along a single block.

## Street Events

From Humbolt to View, Government Street has the potential to host street events in the timed car free zone.

The mid-block mobility zone on each block becomes a potential staging area for tents, games, food trucks and more. 'Places to Watch and Perform' can be programmed with live music, performance art or face painting. 'Places to Shop and Display' can be setup as kiosks for information or food and beverage, such as hot apple cider during a Christmas market.



Diagrammatic plan showing one potential way that public space types could be deployed along a single block.



# CULTURAL INTERPRETATION AND PUBLIC ART

## Cultural Interpretation

Government Street is situated in the heart of Victoria's Downtown, and acts as a pedestrian spine connecting to other significant public spaces, cultural sites and landmarks. Today, it is strongly defined by the collection of late nineteenth century commercial heritage buildings and their elaborate building facades and fine grain and sawtooth profile of the buildings, linking the Oldest Chinatown in Canada with the Empress hotel and the Inner Harbour. The architectural heritage, together with streetscape elements including brick pavers and the heritage cluster lights, and interpretative heritage elements, emphasize the colonial and early settlement history of the City. However, there is a significant lack of representation of Indigenous cultural heritage within this portion of Government Street through Old Town.

Expanding the narrative of Government Street, to educate and build better awareness about the Indigenous history and continued presence and stewardship of these lands by the Esquimalt and Songhees peoples, to tell the full story of this place, is one of the most important aspects of this project. This includes layering multiple storeys and histories of this place together, including the existing and cherished built architectural heritage, together with Lekwungen past, present and future. This requires cohesive yet complex and even challenging cultural interpretative piece, that seeks to expand and fix the narrative. This is not about replacing or removing heritage elements or even narratives, but expanding and fixing the narrative to include other stories, perspectives and histories. The City will continue to protect and express architectural heritage and history of the city as the approach to heritage conservation and interpretation are updated and adapted in the context of reconciliation. Collaboration with Esquimalt and Songhees representatives included partnering on a successful grant application to develop a cultural interpretative strategy for the street. It is envisioned that this work

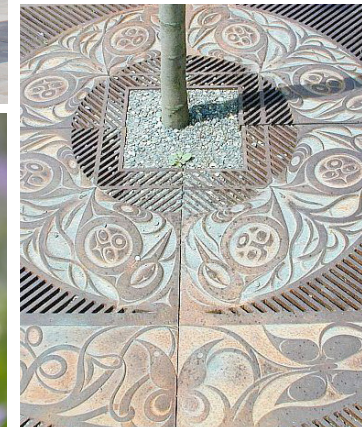


Photo by Aaron Cloward on Unsplash





would be led and directed by the Nations, with support and additional resources provided by the City. This strategy will include considerations for Indigenous public realm cultural heritage and programming. It will gather both tangible and intangible (living) cultural assets of Lekwungen people through a variety of outreach, engagement, and research activities to inform the strategy.

The strategy will outline opportunities for local Indigenous cultural representation in the public realm and streetscape in order to address the lack of representation of Indigenous cultural heritage in public space along six blocks of Government Street in the Old Town heritage district. The strategy will inform future more detailed streetscape design, programming and public art opportunities for the street. The expression of the cultural interpretation strategy in the physical environment is anticipated to include a diverse range of materials, tools and strategies - from everyday finishes such as benches, tree grates, lighting, and paving patterns to ephemeral elements such as planting, audio or light installations and including a variety and combination of public art, potentially including sculptural, digital, durational and performance based.

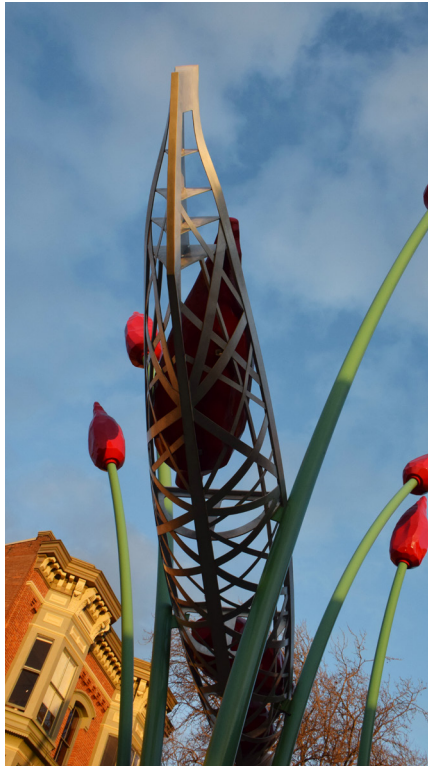
The process itself will help foster stronger ongoing working relationships between the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations and the City of Victoria. The Indigenous led and collaborative process has the potential to become a framework for future cultural heritage projects in other major planning and public space projects in the City.

In addition to working with Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, the City will continue to engage with the Chinatown Community when details are developed for the Chinatown Plaza at Pandora Avenue. Through this dialogue the City will ensure that the cultural interpretation, art, programming and design are shaped by and reflect the Chinatown Community.

## **Public Art**

Public art on Government Street could take many forms, from large sculptural installations that act as landmarks and wayfinding elements in one of the cultural plaza to ephemeral public art such as sound and light installations or performances which take place along the sidewalks, in small stages along the street, or within the roadway during timed closures. New plazas, public space rooms and expanded pedestrian areas will provide a variety of locations opportunities suitable for art installations.

Unlike elements of cultural interpretation, which could be incorporated into everyday infrastructure through the detailed design process for the streetscape, public art will follow the City of Victoria's public art process for retaining public artists and developing projects for the streetscape.

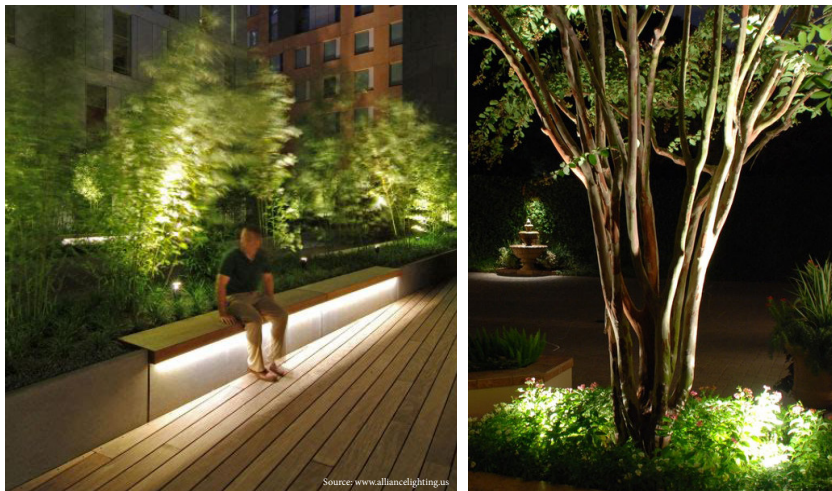


Public Art Precedents

## LIGHTING

Lighting is a wonderful tool to add warm, vibrancy, and character to a streetscape and its role for Government Street is important. Firstly, lighting needs to serve the public good; providing safe levels of illumination for pedestrian, cyclist, and vehicular traffic.

Additional lighting for character and context should be playful, striking, and strategic. The existing globe lights can be complemented by overhead catenary lighting which is ideal for patios and plazas with seating below, or in areas of narrow clearance between building faces. Colour as an accent can be a powerful tool to reinforce sense of place and unique character, and should be located in strategic areas of key focus.



Acer griseum, more commonly known as Paperbark Maple are proposed for the planters mid-block along the street. These multi-stemmed and ornamental species lend well to uplighting. Lighting can be integrated with seating as well to create a welcoming and warm glow.

Today, decorative lighting along Government Street includes a mixture of Heritage Cluster Globe lights in two types: circular and aligned. Trounce Alley includes catenary lighting. There are also custom heritage street light fixtures on Government Street and in the Inner Harbour. These would continue to be used up the corridor as far as Pandora Street.

Existing lighting will remain in place from Courtney to Yates. New lighting should complement the existing cluster globes, including single globe lighting where lighting is clustered, and with consideration for up-lighting on trees, and lighting integrated into furnishings.



Heritage Single Globe

Heritage Cluster Globe  
(circular)

Heritage Cluster Globe  
(aligned)



## SHRUB AND ORNAMENTAL PLANTING

Natural landscapes have always been a part of Victoria's identity, including rocky outcrops, swamps, creeks and shorelines. This also includes the distinctive Garry Oak meadows that are found throughout the tip of southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Camas fields were of particular importance to Indigenous people who cultivated a camas meadow on the lands which are now Government Street. They are characterized by grasses, low shrubs, and flowering Camas. Planting design is an opportunity to integrate this important history into the streetscape and to shift from higher maintenance, traditionally ornamental planting to something more natural looking, drought tolerant and lower maintenance.

Plantings should be generally low growing, with a defined canopy and ground plane but open mid-layer. The scheme is also drought tolerant, with a drier, meadow feel.

The colour palette of the garry oak meadows is one of purples, pinks, and yellows throughout a sea of greens with a hint of blue.

Colour Palette:

The colour palette of the garry oak meadows is one of purples, pinks, and yellows throughout a sea of greens with a hint of blue.



Performance Criteria:

- Consideration should be given to the watering requirements, with a preference for drought tolerance species.
- Seek a mix of species that provides flowers throughout the season.

Additional consultation will be conducted with the Indigenous and Chinese communities to allow for opportunity for cultural expression through planting along the street.

Create a matrix using two grasses that perform well and provide the basis of the planting scheme. One is 'cool season' and one 'warm.'



Autumn moor grass  
*Sesleria autumnalis*



Little bluestem  
*Schizachyrium scoparium*

To maintain structure throughout the season, each zone can be anchored with a low-growing shrub.



'Low Scape Mound' aronia  
*Aronia melanocarpa* 'Low Scape Mound'



Rhododendron 'Ramapo'  
Ramapo Rhododendron

Weave perennials/ bulbs to add colour throughout the season.



Common camas  
*Camassia quamash*



Thrift  
*Armeria maritima* 'Dusseldorf Pride'





Shrubs and ornamental planting are integrated into the new planters that help to expand the public realm.



1. Create a matrix of grasses
2. Anchor the space with a few low shrubs
3. Add flowering Camas throughout
4. Complement with other flowering species

Examples of Victoria's Garry Oak Ecosystems



## MATERIALS AND SITE FURNISHINGS

A standardized palette of site furnishings should be selected and may include elements such as benches, waste and recycling receptacles, bike racks, tree grates and tree guards, bollards, and planters. The intent of standardization is two fold; it creates a look and feel that is bespoke to Government Street and easily recognizable for visitors, and second; it simplifies the potentially phased implementation of the various blocks.

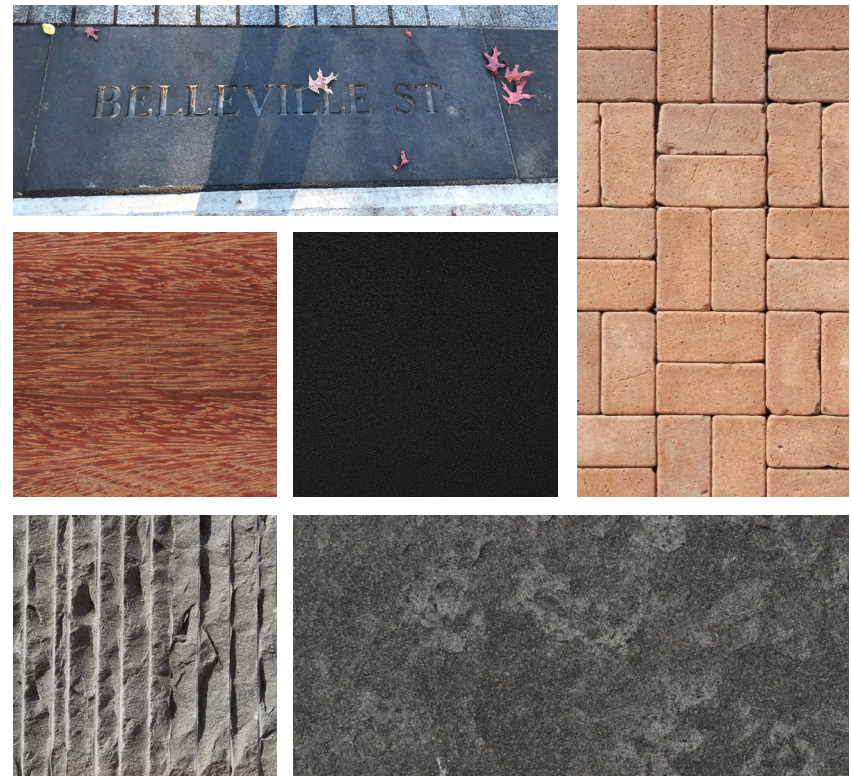
When selecting standard site furnishings, care needs to be taken; the elements want to be reflective of the character of Government Street and of a quality that is resilient to the climate of Victoria and the intensity of use of the streetscape.



The bicycle racks, bollards and single globe lights provide consistent material language with the portions of the exist streetscape that will remain in place and with the downtown furnishing palette.

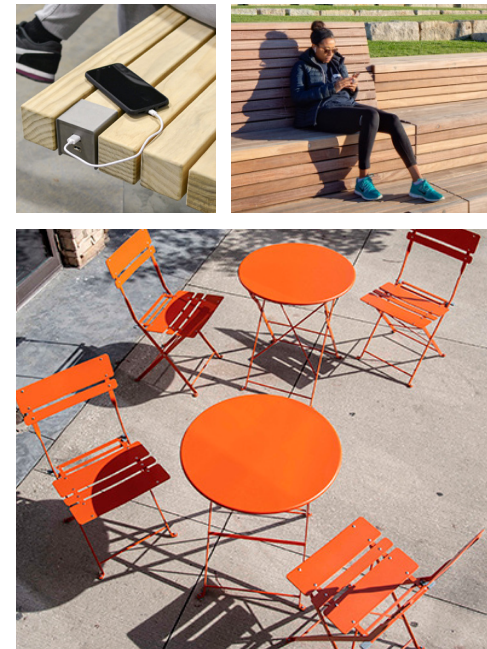
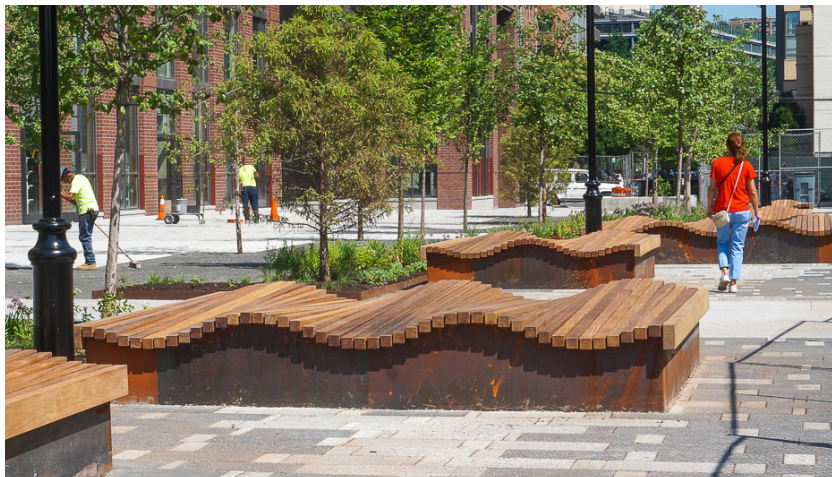
Material selection should emphasize quality, character, resiliency, and aesthetics. Building upon the pavers as a historical jumping off point, natural stone such as granite, decorative concrete, wood, and steel provide the quality and durability that will serve the city in the long run. Consider opportunities to create unique textures through different stone finishes.

Basalt banding with street names introduced by the DTPRP should be used at street corners when possible, adding interest and marking the intersections. They also provide an opportunity to integrate Lekwungen or Chinese language into the street.

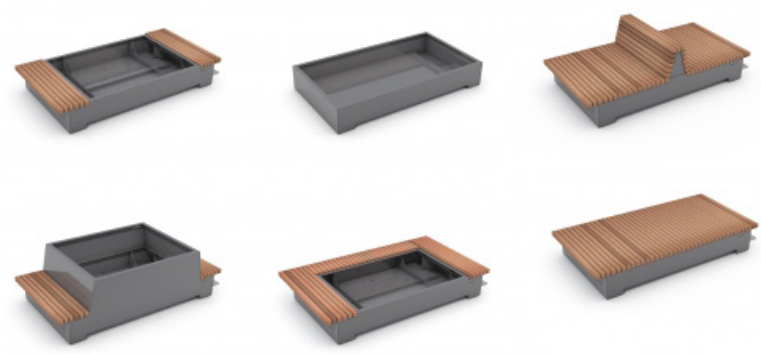




The standard approach to site materials would apply to the base case of street furnishings, and is not envisioned to restrict fun, tactile, and creative installations (similar to the red hexagons that were installed during Build Back Victoria). These playful elements are important, and can compliment the existing base case by adding colour, energy, and spontaneity to Government Street. For instance, movable tables and chairs are an ideal strategy to reinforce the temporary closure of the street without major investment in more permanent solutions. Colour and the integration of public art within the streetscape are also valuable placemaking tools that reinforce the distinct character sub-areas within the study area (i.e. Chinatown Plaza). Care should be given towards decluttering and ensuring a clear path of travel.



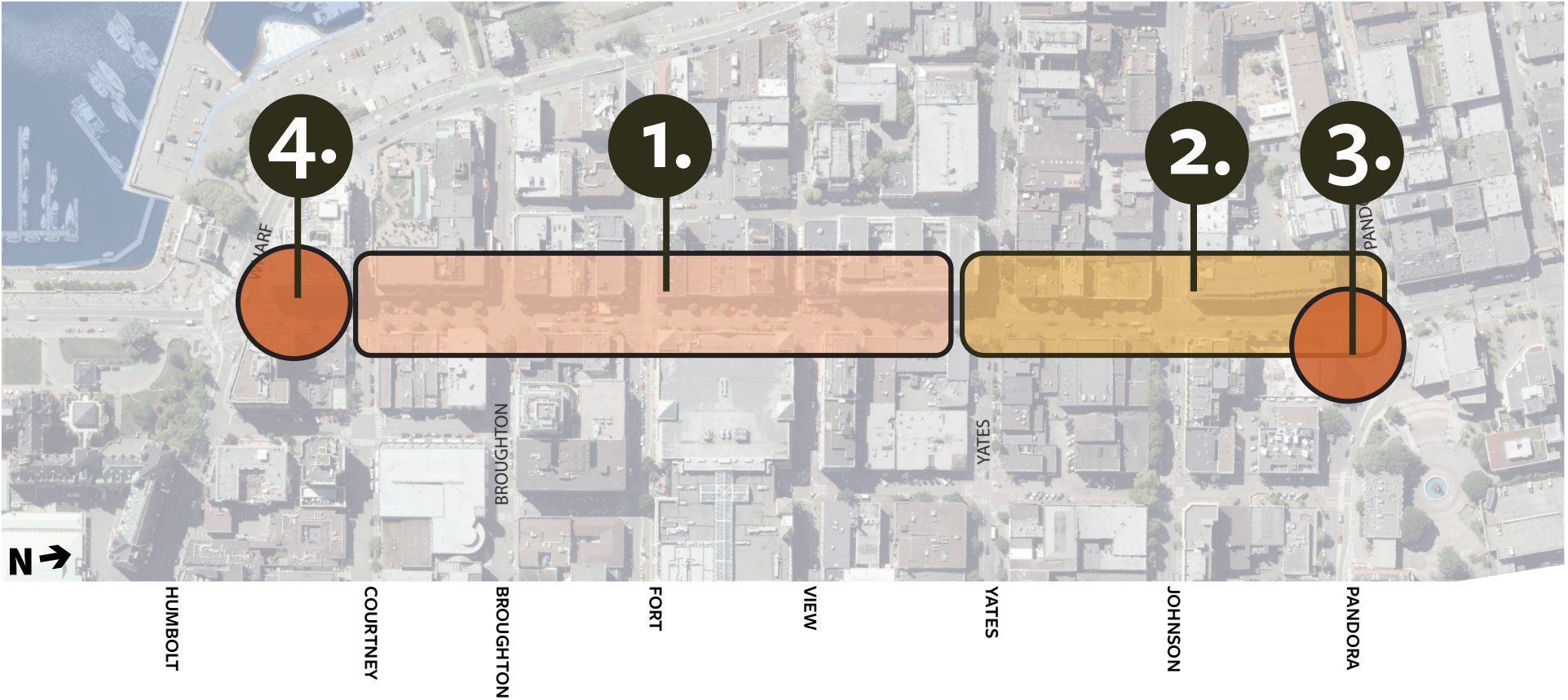
With standardized elements such as the light poles and waste receptacles having a simple and consistent colour palette, more playful elements such as art or installations will be allowed to shine. Benches with wood seating offer more comfort during the shoulder seasons, and should include options with arm rests and back rests to support an inclusive environment. Incorporating electrical outlets is also a way to provide contemporary amenities within this historic streetscape.



The location of the site furnishings and lighting is also important to create and curate a range of programming and gathering spaces or urban rooms and a safe and accessible public realm. Locations should not interfere with pedestrian traffic, but compliment and support it. Ideally, a clear path of travel for pedestrians is maintained at all times, with site furnishings located in a dedicated amenity zone outside of that path of travel. The approach to protect a clear path of travel also assists in de-cluttering the streetscape, and assists those with mobility and accessibility challenges in navigating the public realm.



DESIGN ZONES



- 1. Refresh Zone
- 2. Redesign Zone
- 3. Plaza for Chinatown
- 4. Lekwungen Cultural Plaza



## HUMBOLDT TO COURTNEY: LEKWUNGEN CULTURAL PLAZA

A Lekwungen cultural plaza and landmark are envisioned for Government Street between Humboldt and Courtney to recognize the Lekwungen People and celebrate the gateway between the Inner Harbour and Old Town.

As the southern most block of the study area, the block between Courtney and Humboldt links Old Town to the Inner Harbour, government (the Legislative Assembly) and tourism (the Empress Hotel and other destinations).

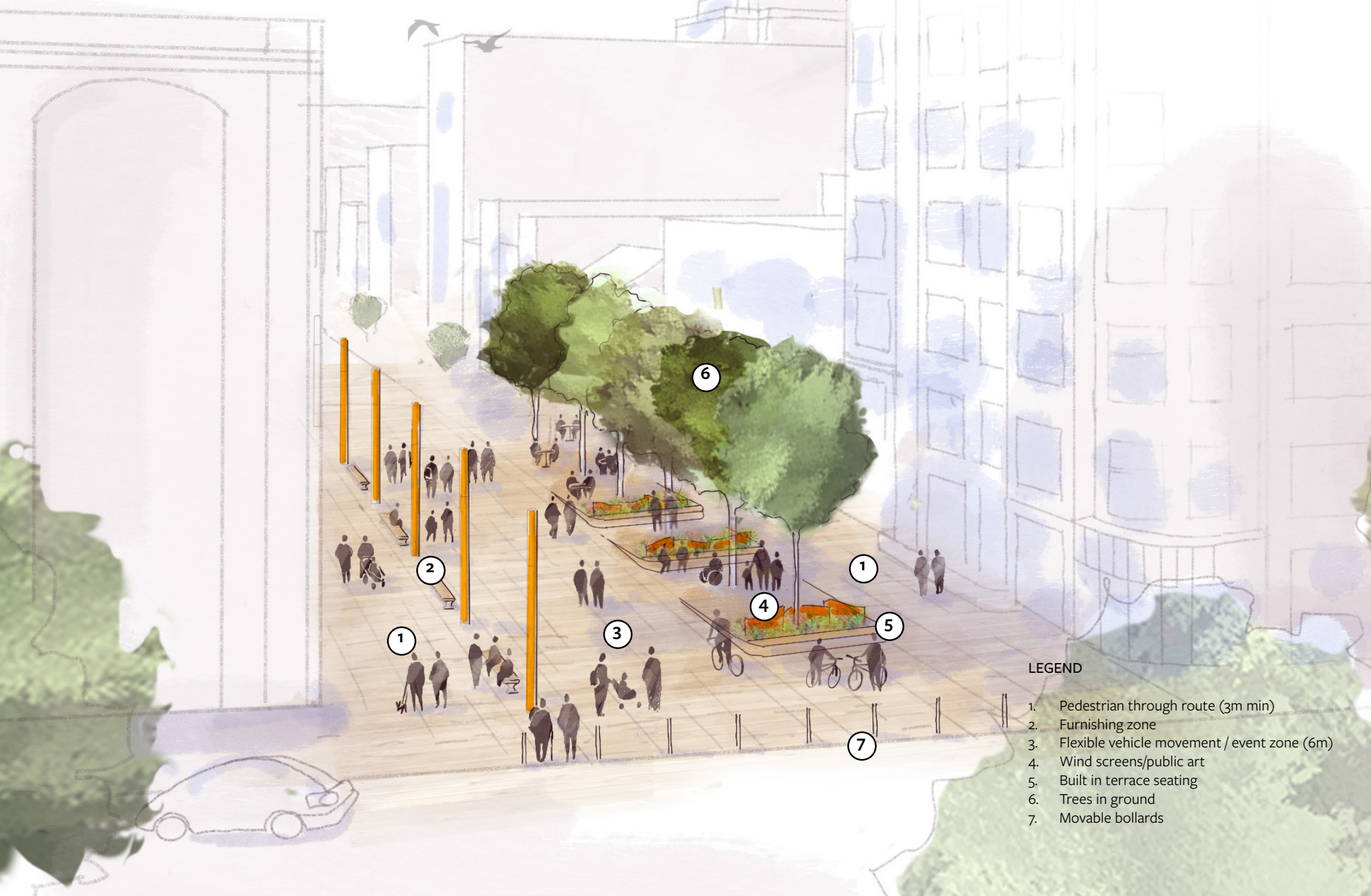
The nearby Information Centre and plaza on the south west corner of Humbolt and Government Street draw visitors toward this site. The transformation of this southern block into a cultural plaza and landmark further draws people towards this important gateway to Government Street.

Framed by formal architectural expression, this site takes on a distinctly intimate scale which is in contrast to the public spaces in and around the harbour with their broad and open views.

Two concept options have been identified for this block: one, with a full closure to vehicles, and another that allows for seasonal flexibility and timed closures. From a mobility perspective, this block acts as a valve to motorized vehicular movement. When closed, the number of vehicles using Government Street between Courtney and Yates would be significantly reduced. When open, Government Street would act as more of a through street.



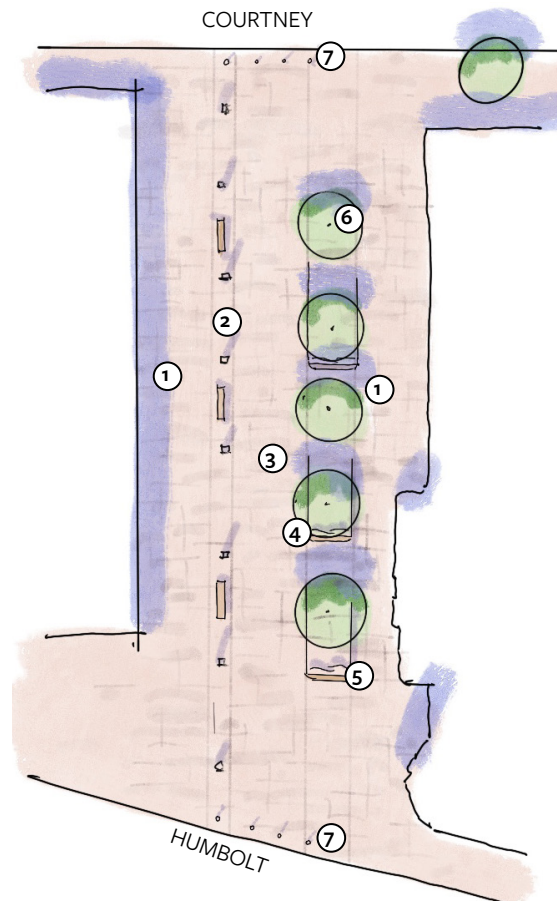
## LEKWUNGEN CULTURAL PLAZA - FLEXIBLE STREET CONCEPT



### LEGEND

1. Pedestrian through route (3m min)
2. Furnishing zone
3. Flexible vehicle movement / event zone (6m)
4. Wind screens/public art
5. Built in terrace seating
6. Trees in ground
7. Movable bollards

## LEKWUNGEN CULTURAL PLAZA - FLEXIBLE STREET CONCEPT



This concept is premised on the creation of a flexible space that can transform between a street with vehicle movement and a pedestrian only plaza.

Terraced seating and public space extend along the eastern side of the street, where there is an opportunity to plant trees in ground. Seating is terraced with views toward the Inner Harbour. Wind screens and tree canopy contribute to the creation of a comfortable micro-climate.

The materials and infrastructure, including the paving materials, seating, lighting and the wind screens provide an opportunity for cultural expression and integration with public art.

Along the western side of the street, a furnishing zone provides seating, waste receptacles, and bike racks. There is an opportunity to create custom lights in this zone to distinguish this block and its role as a Lekwungen cultural plaza.

Emergency access is maintained along the length of the block, with a 5m wide through lane. During timed closures, movable bollards indicate to vehicles that the street is closed allowing restaurants and movable seating to spill out into this space or for the space to be programmed with special events.

### LEGEND

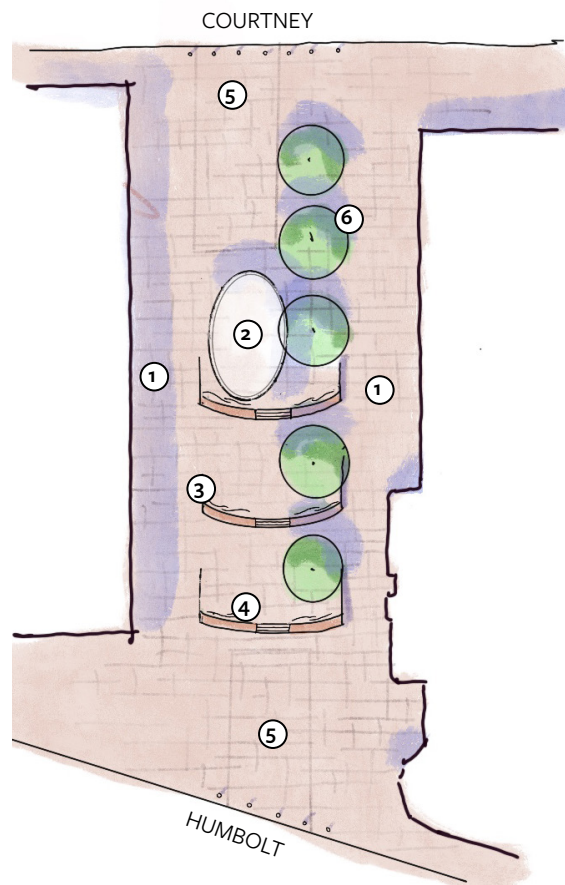
1. Pedestrian through route (3m min)
2. Furnishing zone
3. Flexible vehicle movement / event zone (6m)
4. Wind screens/public art
5. Built in terrace seating
6. Trees in ground
7. Movable bollards





1. Pedestrian through route (3m min)
2. Cultural pavilion
3. Wind screens/public art
4. Built in terrace seating
5. Emergency staging zone / removable bollards
6. Trees in ground

## LEKWUNGEN CULTURAL PLAZA - AMPHITHEATER CONCEPT



This concept is premised on a full transformation of this block of Government Street into a public plaza. Terraced seating and public spaces extend across the existing street to create an amphitheater with views toward the Inner Harbour.

A pavilion provides a central destination and programming space throughout all seasons. Wind screens and tree canopy contribute to the creation of a comfortable micro-climate.

The materials and infrastructure, including the pavilion, paving materials, seating, lighting and the wind screens provide an opportunity for cultural expression and integration with public art.

Fire staging space is maintained at both the northern and southern ends of the block.

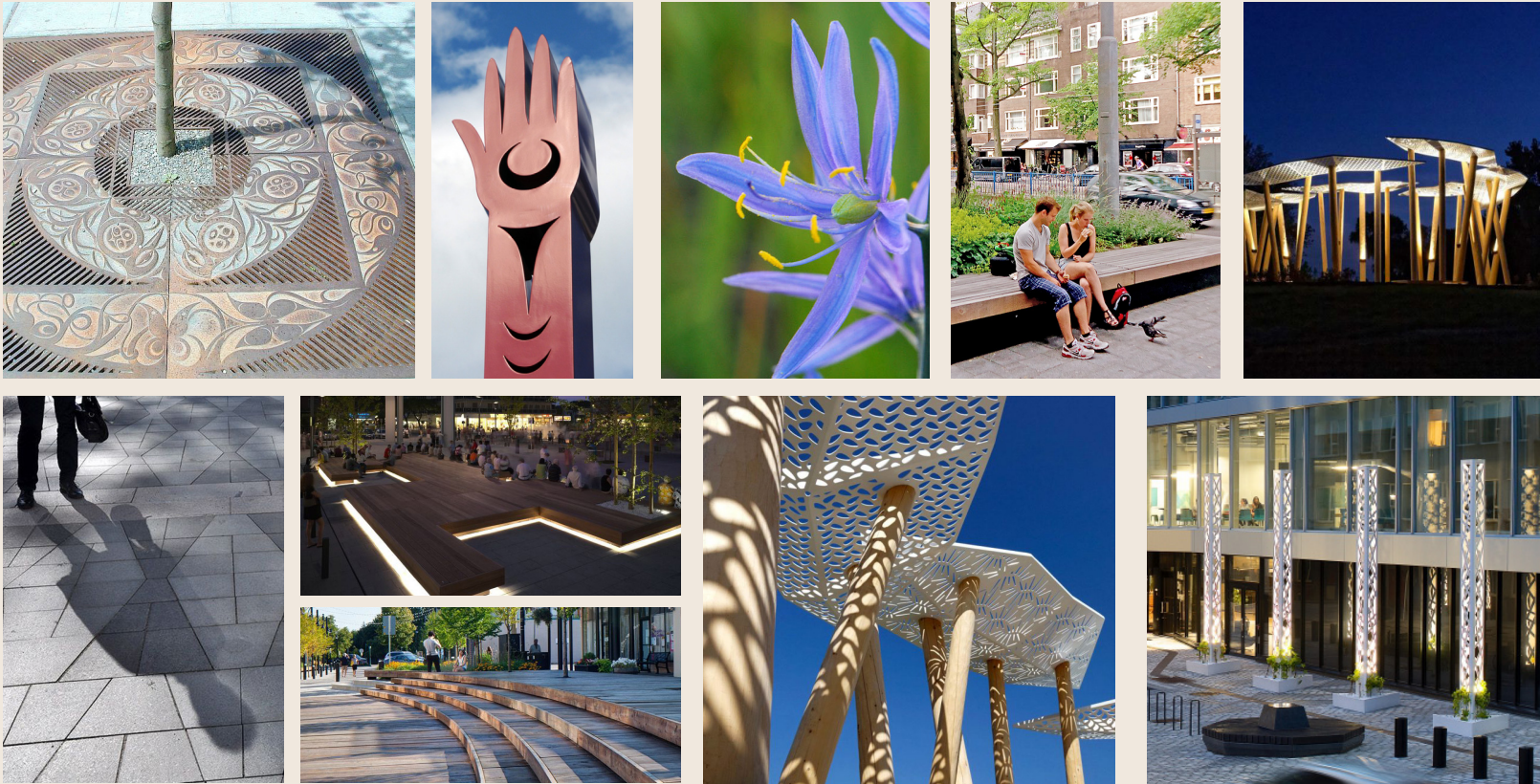
This concept is premised on the idea that Government Street would no longer function as a primary parade route, and instead it would support seasonal events and festivities in Downtown through complementary programming. Loading would happen north of Courtney or on adjacent downtown blocks.

### LEGEND

1. Pedestrian through route (3m min)
2. Cultural pavilion
3. Wind screens/public art
4. Built in terrace seating
5. Emergency staging zone / removable bollards
6. Trees in ground



## Materials and Cultural Interpretation



The plaza materials and finishes provide the canvas for conveying the cultural role of this plaza for the Lekwungen people.



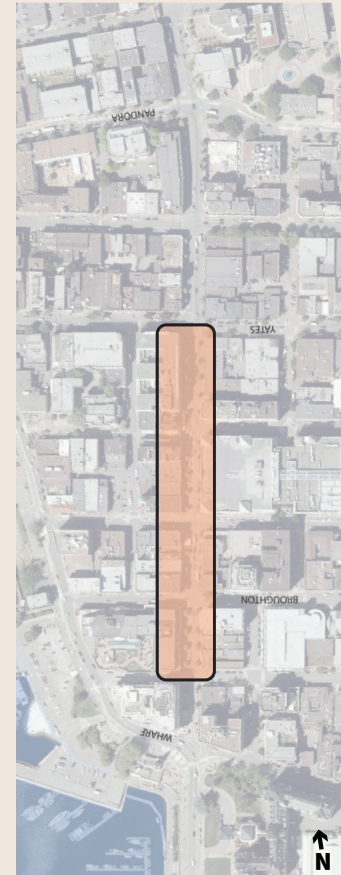
## COURTNEY TO YATES: REFRESH ZONE

From Courtney to Yates a refresh and infrastructure maintenance program is envisioned. This area would see an enhanced pedestrian experience, while maintaining commercial loading zones and timed vehicle access to the street.

A reduced travel lane width makes way for more public spaces and community programming. Within this expanded pedestrian zone trees planted in ground would contribute to place-making and the creation of comfortable micro-climates (in areas that are free from underground infrastructure).

The one way north travel lane is designed to be flexibly used as a timed car-free zone, while still welcoming bicycles, scooters, skateboards, and pedi-cabs. Physical barriers such as gate or removable bollards and signage define timed car-free periods. When open to vehicles and horse drawn carriages, speeds would be reduced through streetscape design and speed limits.

As upgrades are made along the street, existing curbs and let downs would be improved where they provide barriers to accessibility.

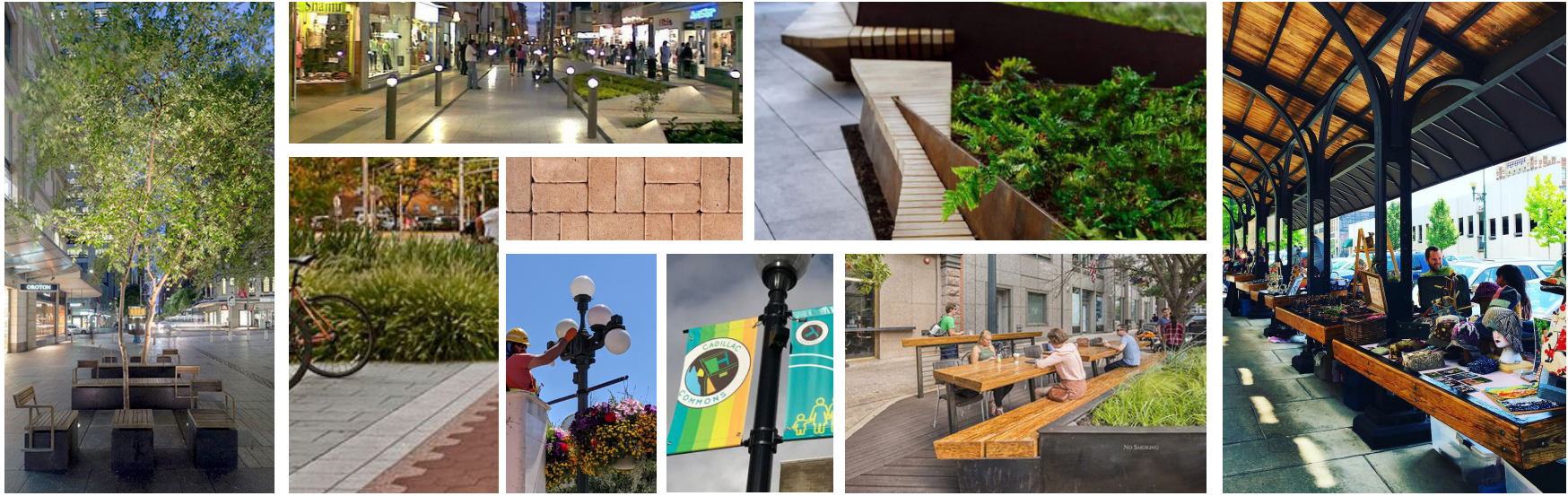




In the Refresh Zone existing trees in tree rings are replaced with trees in planters in the same place with seating integrated into the planters. New trees in ground anchor the end of each block. Existing sidewalk pavers remain in place.

1. Reduced travel lane and timed car-free zone
2. Expanded public space
3. Improved accessibility of existing sidewalks
4. New seating areas with trees in ground
5. Ornamental trees in planters where underground utilities are present

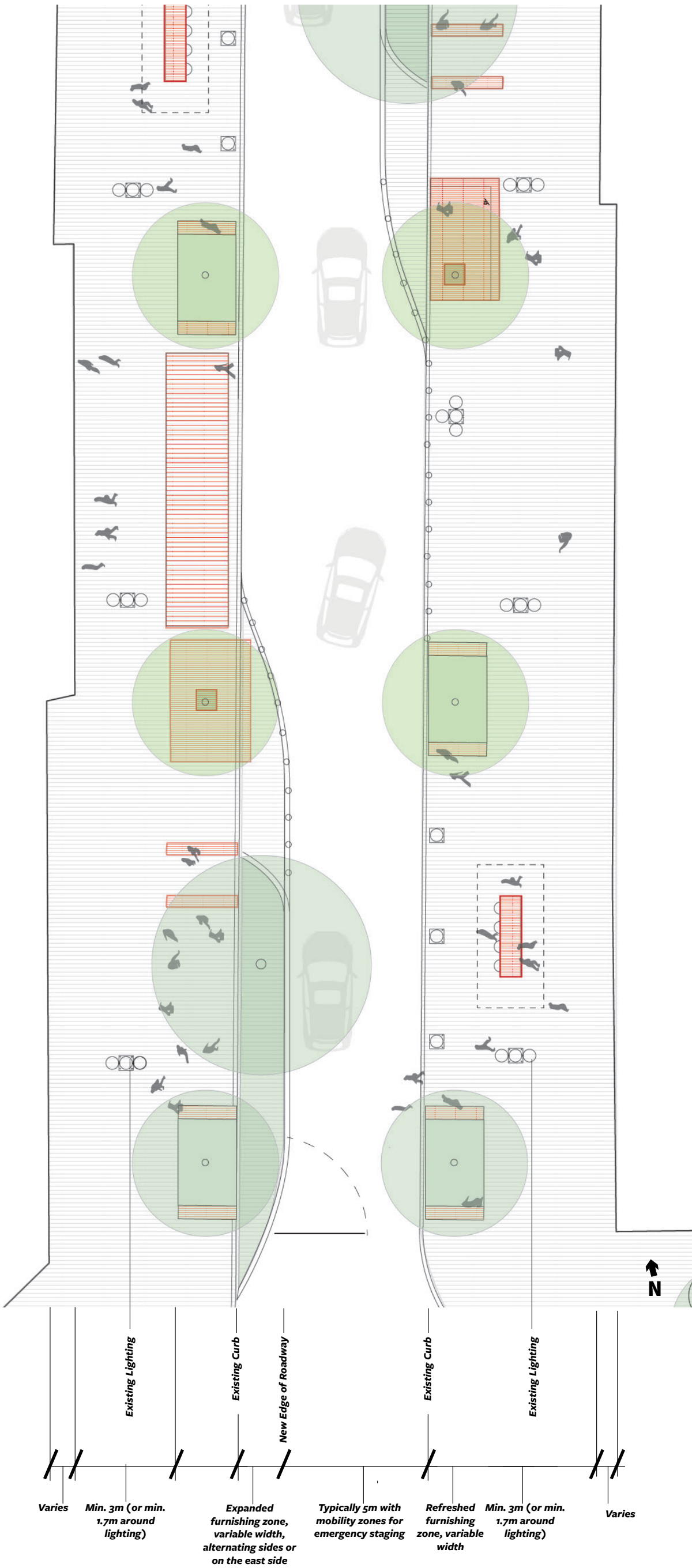




The materials and finishes will complement the existing streetscape of Government Street and will add to it by expanding on the narrative to include design elements that speak to the cultural diversity of the City of Victoria.



Highly conceptual diagrammatic plan for illustrative purposes.



YATES TO PANDORA: REDESIGN



The existing pedestrian experience from south of Yates is extended north to Pandora, while maintaining two-way vehicle access. Sidewalks are extended and the width dedicated to vehicle movement is reduced.

New street trees would be planted in ground where possible, and in the new expanded pedestrian space at the edge of the new curb. This would free up the sidewalk and establish a clear route of passage.

Drop-off/pick up areas, vehicle and bicycle parking and loading areas are incorporated along the street; and, new furnishings and a variety of public space types create a welcoming destination.

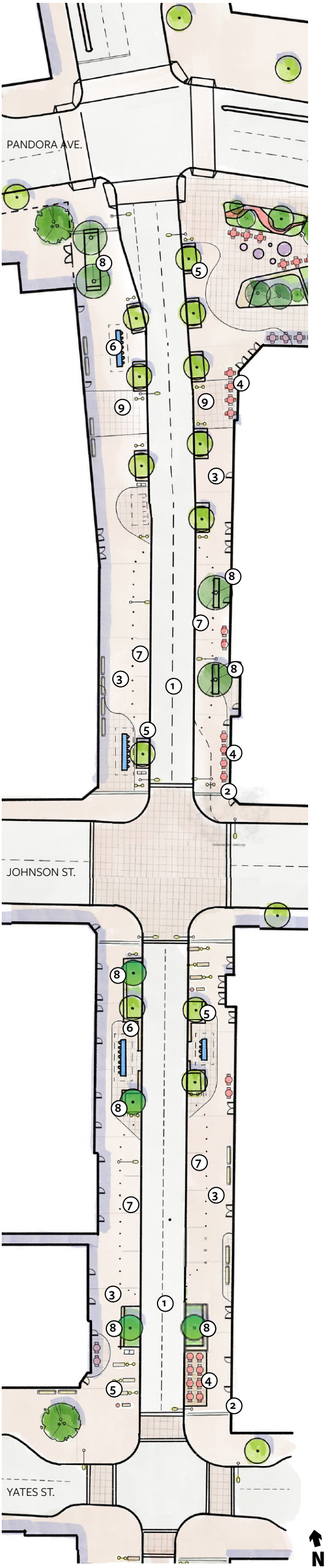
A design feature and landmark recognizes the historic creek and former boundary between Chinatown and Old Town.



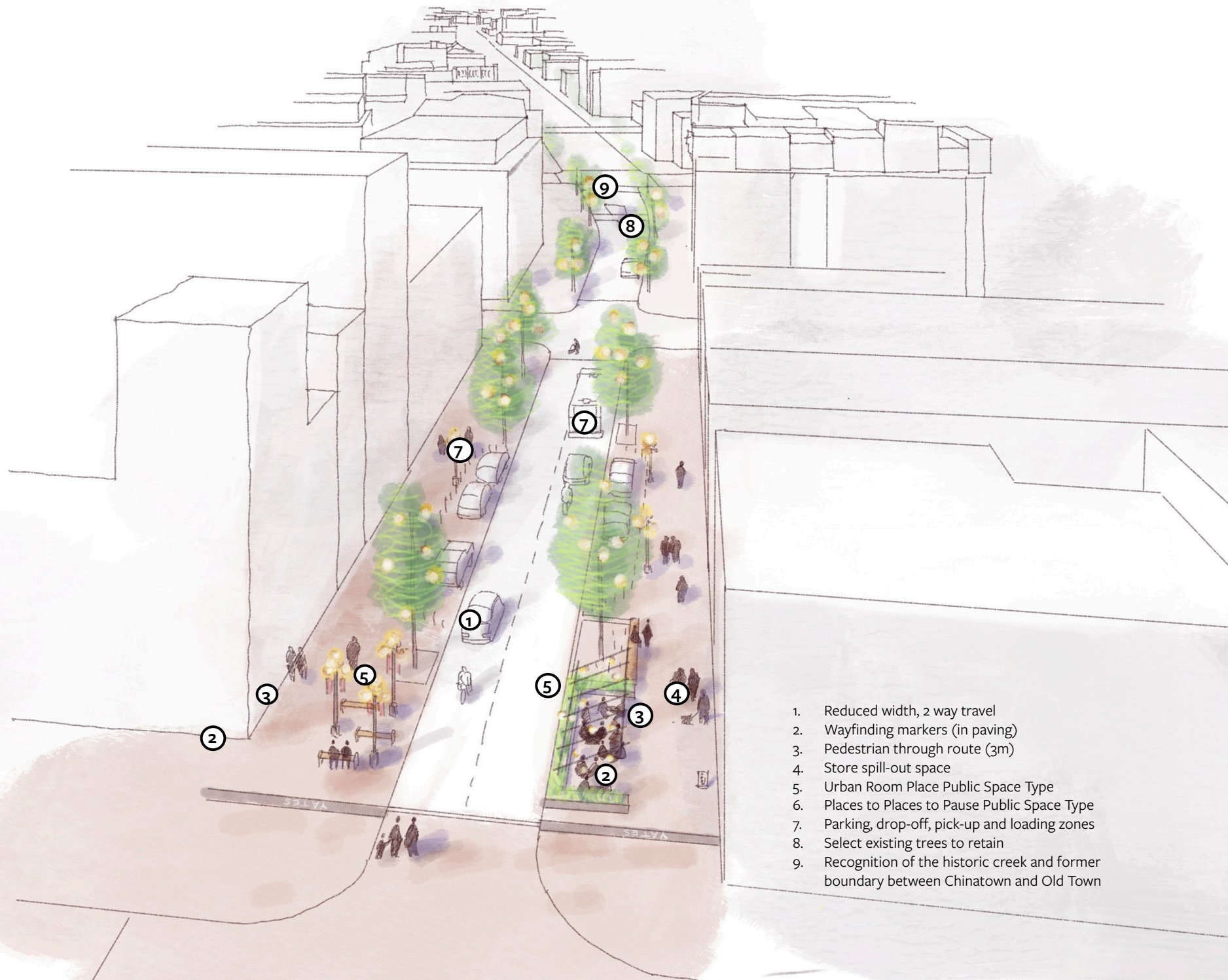
LEGEND

- 1. Reduced width, 2 way travel
- 2. Wayfinding markers (in paving)
- 3. Pedestrian through route (3m)
- 4. Store spill-out space
- 5. Urban Room Place Public Space Type
- 6. Places to Places to Pause Public Space Type
- 7. Parking, drop-off, pick-up and loading zones
- 8. Select existing trees to retain
- 9. Recognition of the historic creek and former boundary between Chinatown and Old Town

Note: This is an illustrative layout only with one of many possible scenarios of the design. Detailed design will inform the final street furniture and street tree locations based on the principles established during this concept design process.

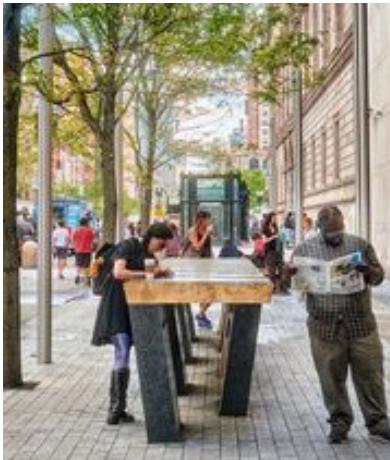
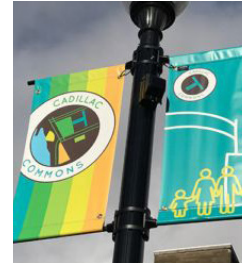
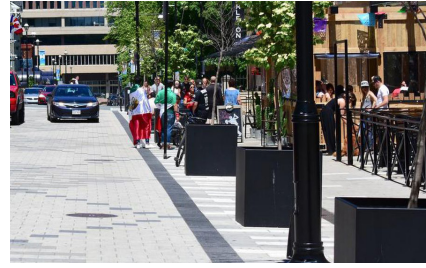






1. Reduced width, 2 way travel
2. Wayfinding markers (in paving)
3. Pedestrian through route (3m)
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7. Parking, drop-off, pick-up and loading zones
8. Select existing trees to retain
9. Recognition of the historic creek and former boundary between Chinatown and Old Town





Materials will complement the established character of Government Street, including red brick pavers in a basket weave pattern, and the use of wood seating and powder coated steel. The variety of seating types and orientations create dynamic spaces for stopping and resting or gathering.



## A PLAZA FOR CHINATOWN



The Government and Pandora intersection could be realigned to create a new public plaza for Chinatown, while improving circulation for all transportation modes. Through engagement with the Chinatown community a variety of programming could be considered in the detailed design phase. At this concept stage, the plaza is envisioned to frame the plaza through planted areas and to provide space for the adjacent retail to spill out and activate the plaza. A new public restroom and information kiosk, areas to sit and picnic and a play opportunity have been envisioned.

1. Areas to sit and dine
2. Opportunities to play
3. Areas for retail spill out
4. Public restroom and information kiosk
5. New tree canopy
6. Existing Tree Canopy

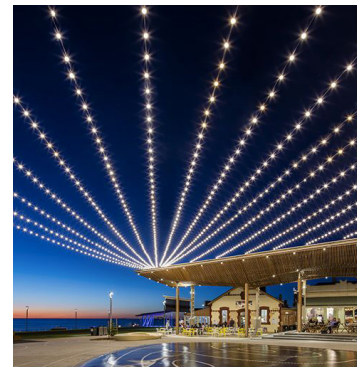




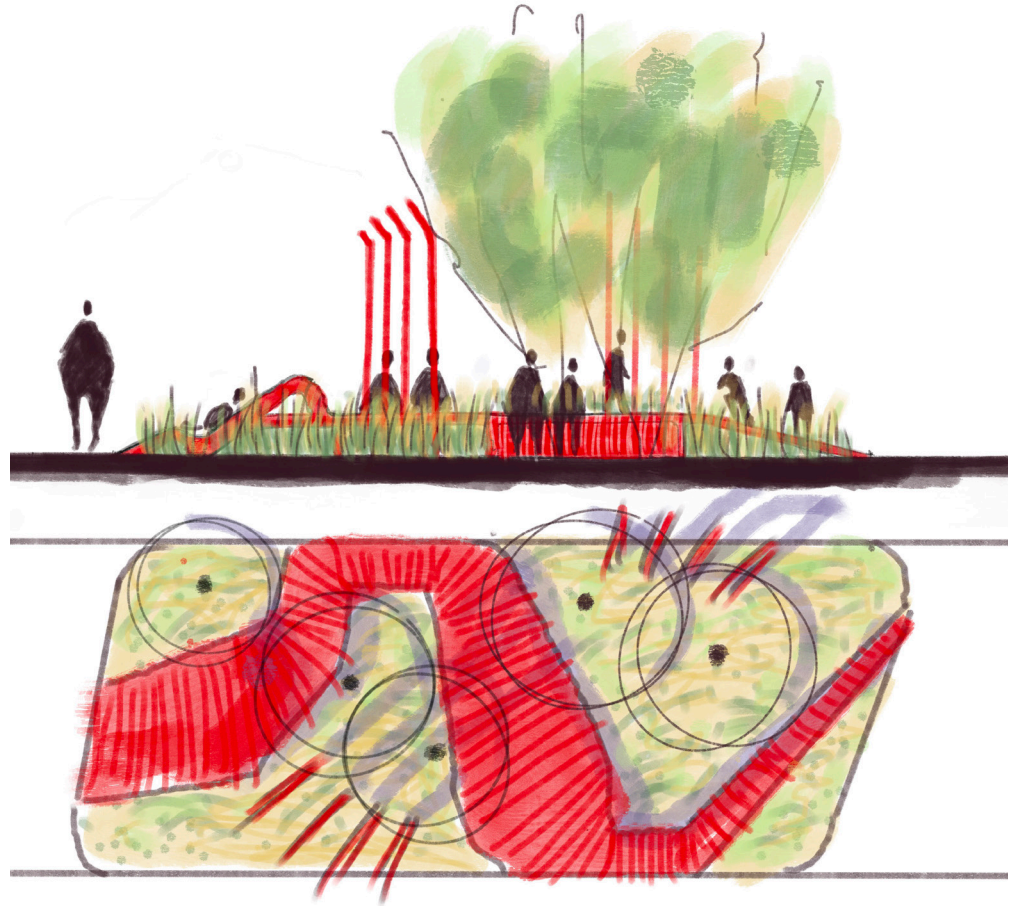
- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Areas to sit and dine      | 4. Public restroom and information kiosk |
| 2. Opportunities to play      | 5. New tree canopy                       |
| 3. Areas for retail spill out | 6. Existing Tree Canopy                  |



The materials and finishes of the plaza can build upon the established character of Chinatown, using red as a common colour. Playful forms can help to distinguish this site as a key destination where Chinatown and Old Town meet.







Consider opportunities for furnishings to become sculptural and playful elements.

## PHASING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Changes will take place in phases, over time to minimize construction impacts and align with the City's annual operations and maintenance programs and annual capital project planning.

With watermain upgrades prioritized from Yates to Pandora between 2023 and 2024 the northern two block of the study area, the “Redesign Zone”, is anticipated to be implemented first.

The nearby plaza for Chinatown at Pandora and Government Street would be realized in tandem with the redevelopment of the adjacent hotel site. The timeline of this is currently unknown.

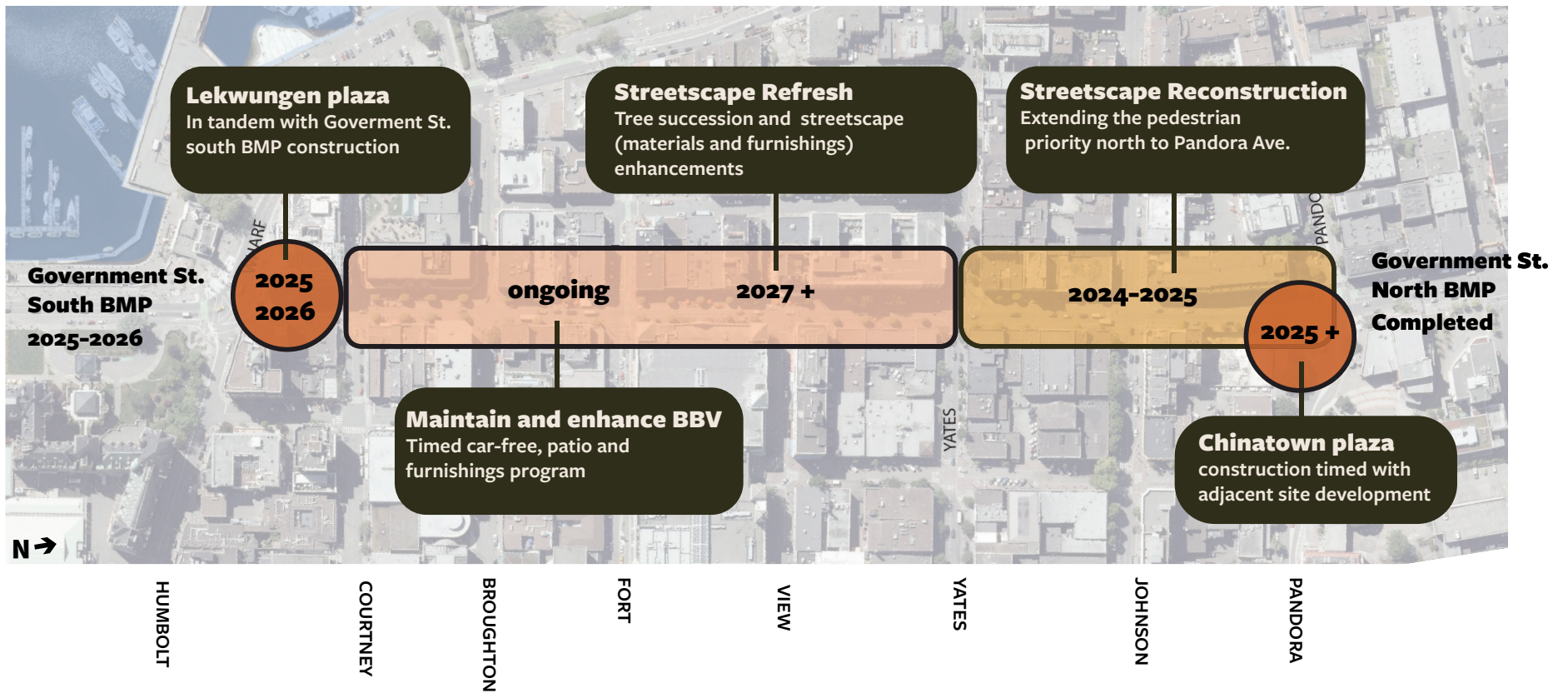
In the “Refresh Zone” between Courtney and Yates implementation will be incremental over time, guided by the need for infrastructure replacement with existing street tree health being a key consideration.

The timeline for the detailed design and construction of the Lekwungen plaza to the south is likely to be coordinated with other public realm efforts in the Inner Harbour.



A photo taken during the now completed construction of water main replacement and BMP network North of Pandora Ave.





## CONCLUSION

Government Street currently exists as an icon of Victoria's urban landscape. As a significant cultural site within the city, we approached this project understanding that the new design should reflect Government Street's history as an important cultural gathering space and recognize that a design refresh presents an opportunity for Government Street to embody how the city of Victoria hopes to evolve in the future.

Through this design vision, the City can build upon this cherished public space by re-connecting the Victoria community to its small businesses, creating accessible design which invites those of all abilities and ages to engage with the space, honoring Victoria's First Nations and Chinatown heritage, and creating a safe, people-priority space welcoming to all. By honouring the historic investments that have been made to Government Street and guiding the evolution of this valuable public space, Government Street can further accommodate the needs of the future.