

2022

CITY OF VICTORIA | Community Planning and Sustainable Development

Government Street Refresh

Concept Design Presentation

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE | July 14, 2022

Purpose

To present Council with a summary of the Government Street Refresh process and the resulting vision, design concept design and recommendations



Presentation Overview

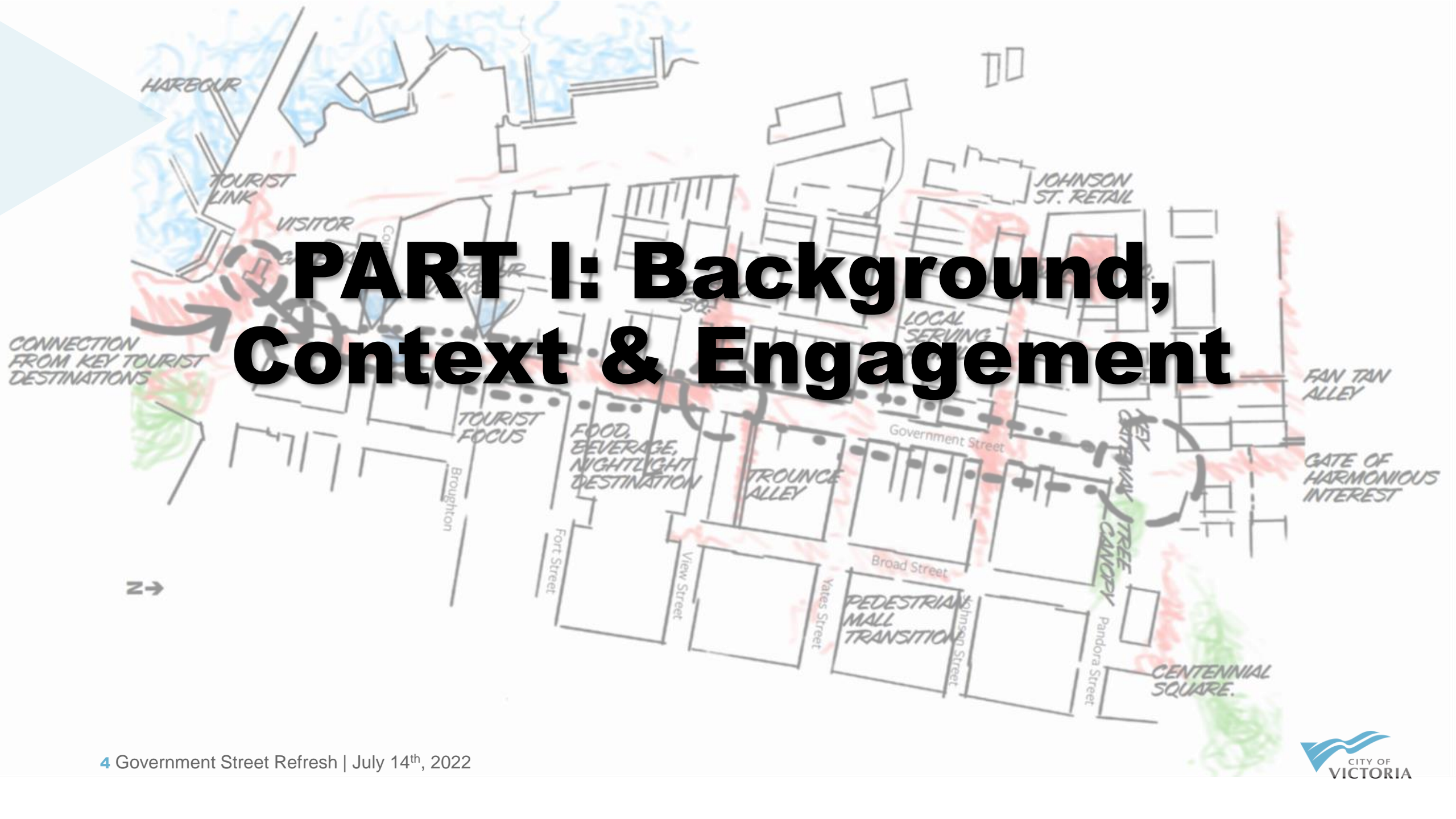
Part I:

- Background & Context;
- Process & Engagement

Part II:

- Vision & Design Concept;
- Feedback & Recommendations





A hand-drawn map of a city street grid, likely in Victoria, Australia. The map features several streets including Haregur, Visitor, Johnson St., Government Street, Broad Street, Fort Street, View Street, Yates Street, Johnson Street, Pandora Street, and Centennial Square. Key areas are highlighted in red and green. Labels include 'TOURIST LINK', 'VISITOR', 'TOURIST FOCUS', 'FOOD, BEVERAGE, NIGHTLIGHT DESTINATION', 'TROUGHCE ALLEY', 'LOCAL SERVING', 'JOHNSON ST. RETAIL', 'FAN TAN ALLEY', 'GATE OF HARMONIOUS INTEREST', 'CENTENNIAL SQUARE', 'PEDESTRIAN MALL TRANSITION', and 'TREE CANOPY'. A blue arrow points to 'CONNECTION FROM KEY TOURIST DESTINATIONS'. A north arrow is located in the bottom left corner.

PART I: Background, Context & Engagement

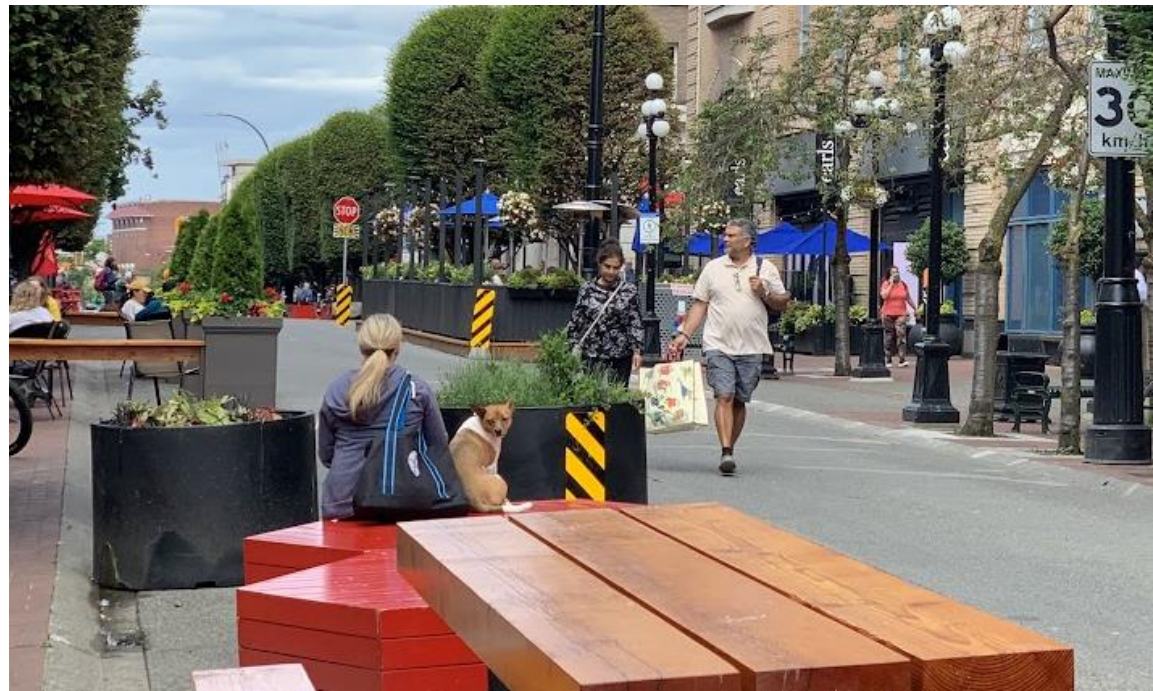
Background

- One of the City's most iconic streets - a signature destination for residents and visitors alike
- The heart of Old Town - a place of unique historical character
- A place of traditional use by the Songhees and Esquimalt People
- A reflection of City identity, community values

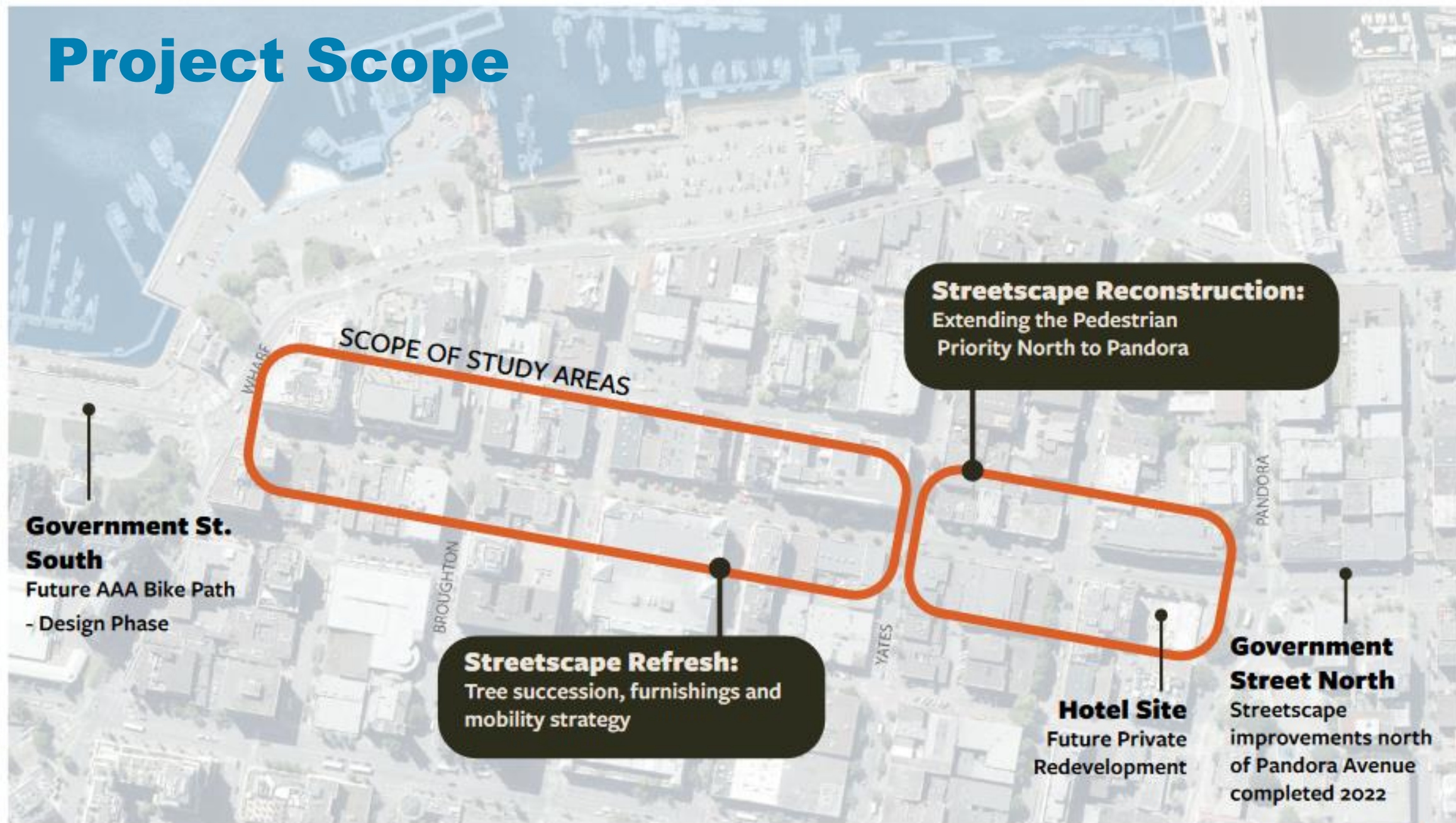


Background

- Build Back Victoria - a great foundation to build on
- Required infrastructure replacement - an opportunity to build the street back better
- Council Strategic Plan Action: a '*people priority Government Street*'
- OCP, DCAP: *extend 'Pedestrian Mall' through to Chinatown*
- A made in Victoria approach: building on the legacy and success of the street



Project Scope

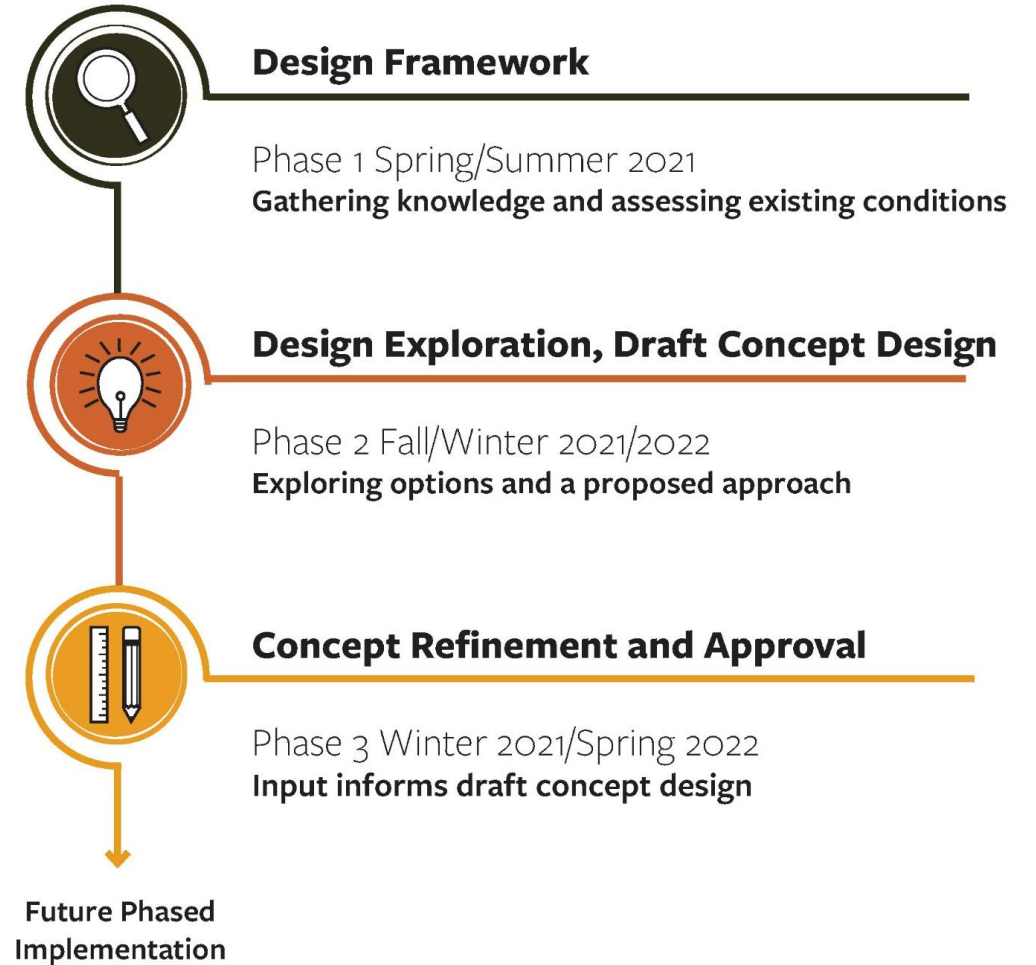


Project scope and projects within the immediate site context

The Process

- Occurred over three phases in three streams:
 1. Indigenous engagement with the Songhees Nation and the Esquimalt Nation
 2. Stakeholder and public engagement, including a Stakeholder Working Group
 3. Meetings with five City of Victoria Advisory Committees

Process diagram



Project Influences

Policy Framework

- Council's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan
- OCP (2012), DCAP (2022)
- Downtown Public Realm Plan (2019)
- Go Victoria (2019)
- Accessibility Framework (2020)
- Urban Forest Master Plan (2013)
- Art in Public Places Policy
- Equity Framework
- Build Back Victoria Program



Indigenous Partnerships & Reconciliation

- Identified as a priority project by Esquimalt Nation and Songhees Nation.
- An opportunity to educate about Indigenous past, present and future; to tell the full storey of this place; an opportunity to make the street more culturally safe and welcoming.



Indigenous Partnerships & Reconciliation

- Partnership on a successful grant application to develop a cultural interpretive strategy for the street
- Subsequent phases will include developing the cultural interpretative strategy in partnership with the Nations
- Advanced the working relationship between the City and the two Nations, a model to build on for future collaborations.



Public Engagement

- Diverse and comprehensive engagement
- Included a working group representing a broad spectrum of organizations and with strong business representation
- Included upfront and on-going collaboration with Songhees and Esquimalt Nations Partners
- Focus group and committee engagement provided more focused, technical and topic based input

Public Engagement at a Glance

Phase 1: June 22 to July 13, 2021
Phase 2: March 2 to 20, 2022
Phase 3: April to June 2022



2,249
Engagement
Contacts
(Surveys + People Engaged)



1,826
Completed
a survey
(2 surveys)

102
Participated in
Ideas Activity
(40 Ideas)



10
Presentations to
City Advisory
Committees



75
Participated in a
virtual workshop
(8 Workshops)

72
Engaged Visits
at Pop-up Tent



50
Provided
written
feedback

25
Stakeholder Working
Group Members
(3 Workshops)

Key Themes Informing the Concept Design

- Maintain/enhance and build on success of BBV
- Support business vitality
- Reduce role as vehicle thoroughfare to support pedestrian priority people place
- Embrace diverse cultural interpretation: beyond colonial heritage,
- Expand arts and culture including programming
- Prioritize implementation in the northern two blocks
- Value street trees; ensure new street trees are compatible



Technical Considerations

There are significant and complex technical considerations informing the concept design, including:

- Infrastructure renewal
- Street trees
- Vehicle circulation / emergency access
- Accessibility
- Programming, parades and events





PART II: Vision, Concept Design and Recommendations



Precedents & Best Practices

- Pedestrian priority/shared streets are a key ingredient for successful, diverse and livable downtowns:
 - Argyle St (Halifax)
 - Stephen Avenue (Calgary)
 - Yonge St (Toronto)
 - King St West (Toronto)
 - Bernard Avenue (Kelowna)
 - New Road (Brighton)
 - Many European and other examples
- These precedents provide valuable lessons that helped inform the vision and concept design



Precedents & Best Practices

- **Designing a vibrant street requires working through trade-offs and finding a balance – there is no secret recipe that can be applied universally**
- Build on existing foot traffic
- Flexibility in vehicle access
- Minimize disruptions to vehicle circulation on surrounding street network, allow for cross movements
- Serve a diverse range of activities, programs and people
- Pilot, monitor, evaluate, adapt
- Keep the street well maintained
- Provide healthy business diversity
- Design for a range of people with different disabilities,
- Support convenient, comfortable, accessible and safe mobility

The Vision

Government Street is one of Canada's most iconic pedestrian priority retail streets and is an important part of Victoria's identity.

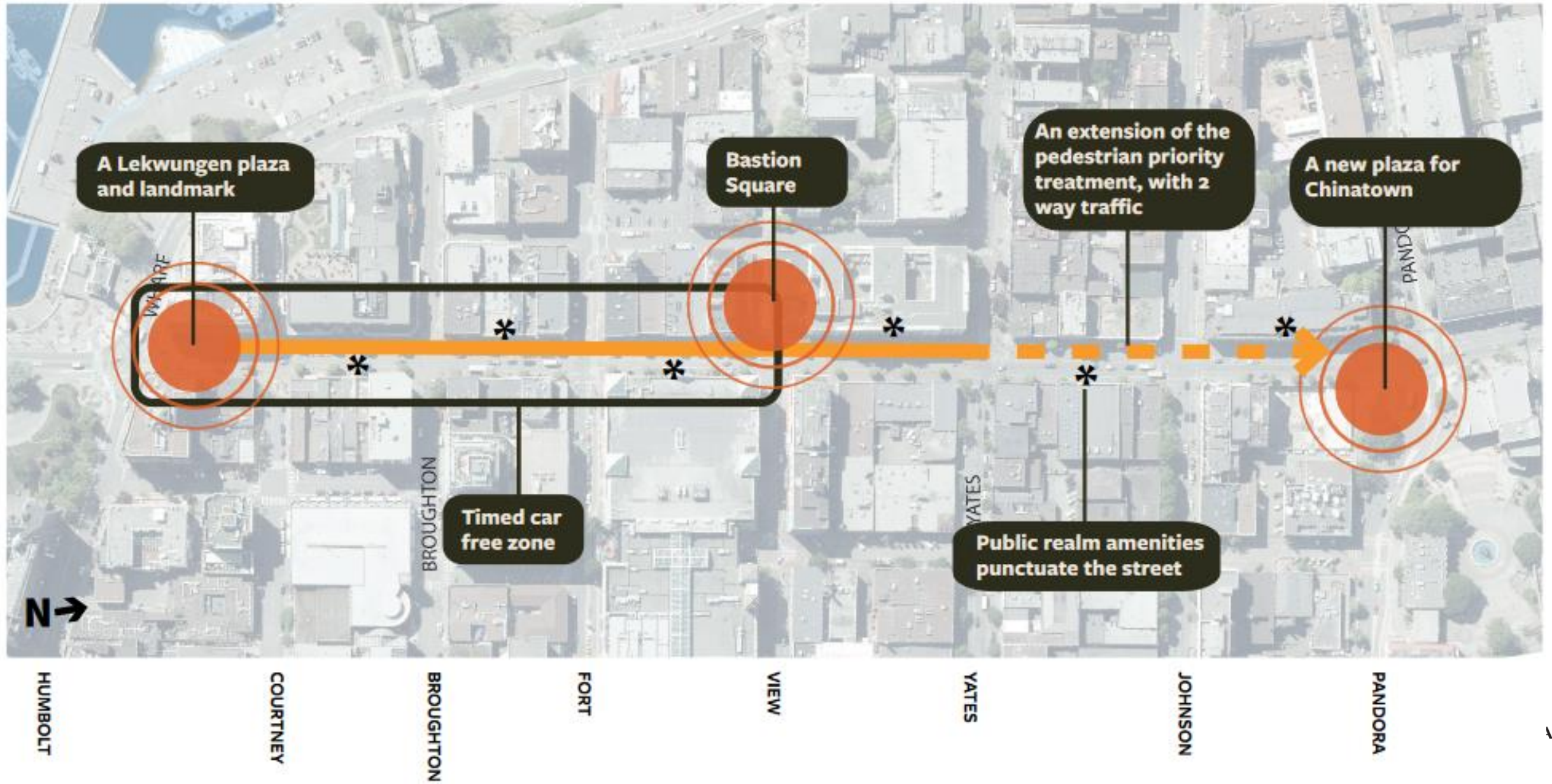
A shared street for locals and residents, Government Street reflects and adapts to the culture and values of Victorians. It is where Victorians go to dine, and people watch; to shop and meet friends;

Government Street is a place of beauty and comfort. Streetscape elements speak to the core values of the City; sustainable, welcoming and inclusive.

Government Street is a place where diverse stories are shared, reflecting the rich, layered and complex and history of Victoria.

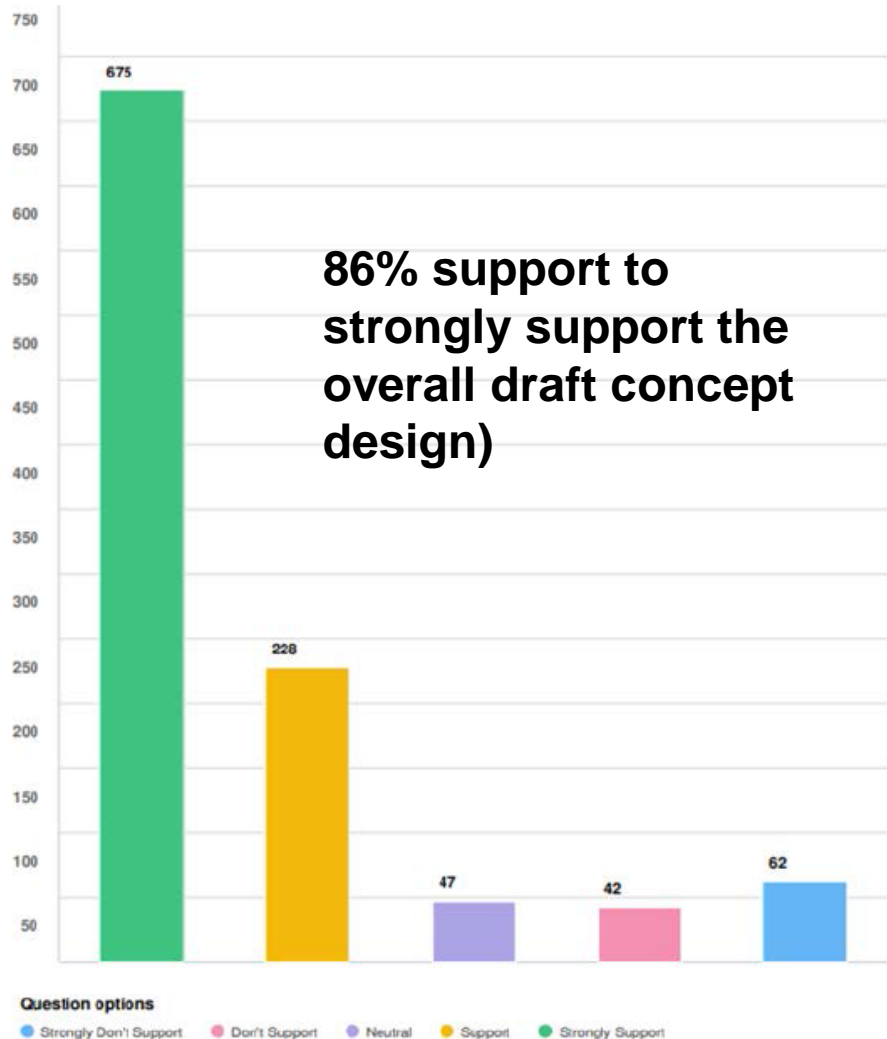


Concept Overview



Overall Concept - Engagement Highlights

Online Survey (1,054 respondents):

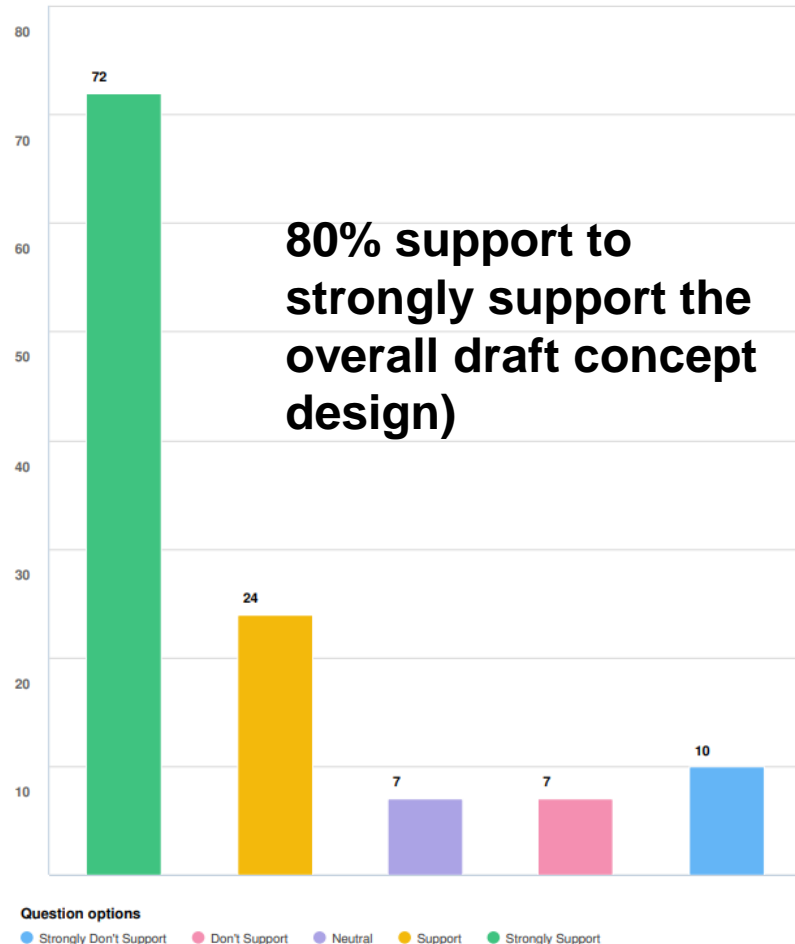


Key Feedback Themes

- welcoming, safe and accessible for all, year round/all weather
- Support business vitality (infrastructure, delivery, parking)
- Reclaim for pedestrians; maintain timed car-free
- Strong support for Indigenous art, programming economic opportunities
- Plan for cultural events and programming, outdoor performance, more public art, family friendly
- Permanent, high-quality outdoor patios; More public washrooms
- Keep accessibility top of mind in all facets of design

Overall Concept - Business Engagement

Online Survey (120 respondents: business owner/operator):

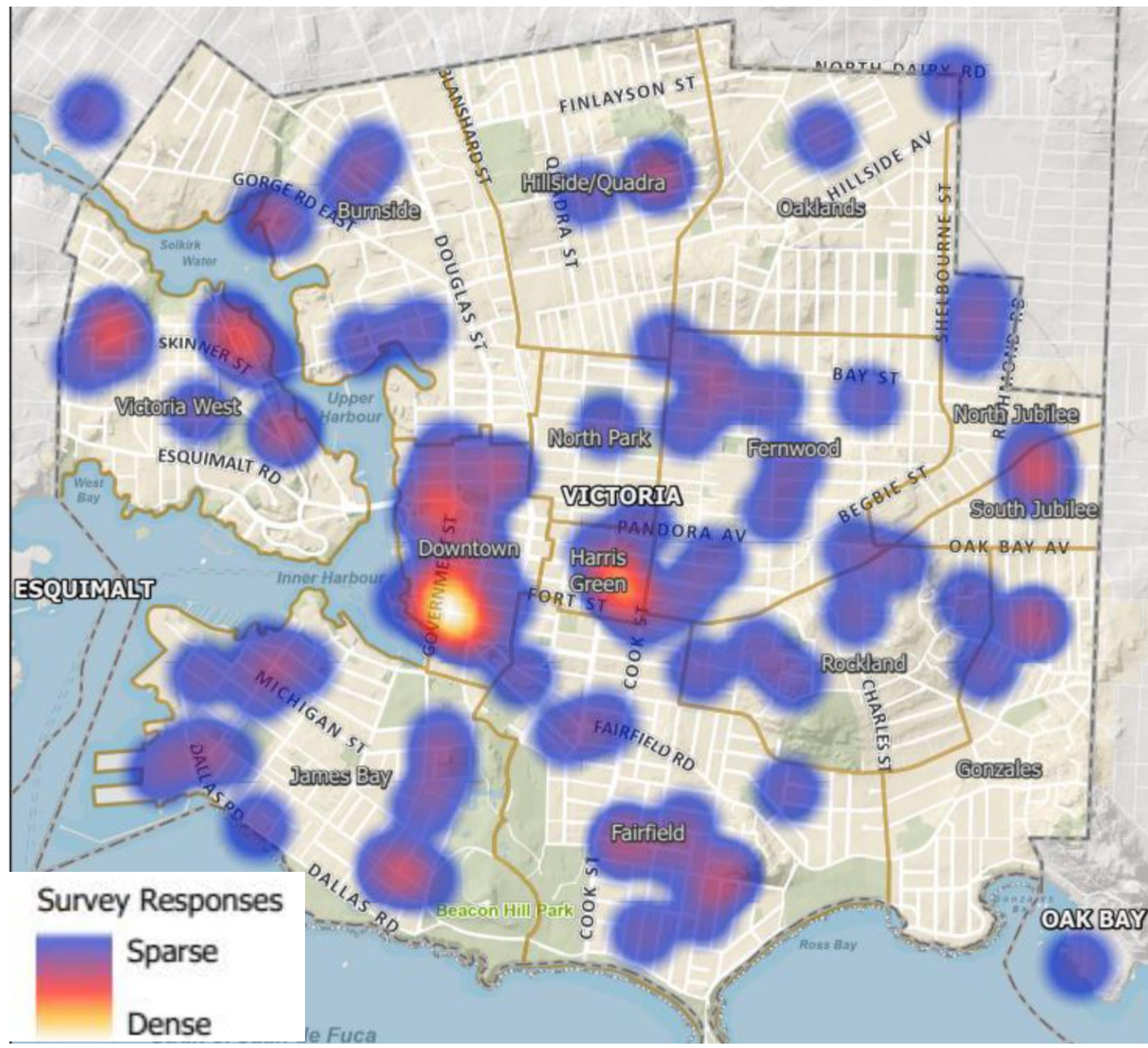


Strong support with considerations:

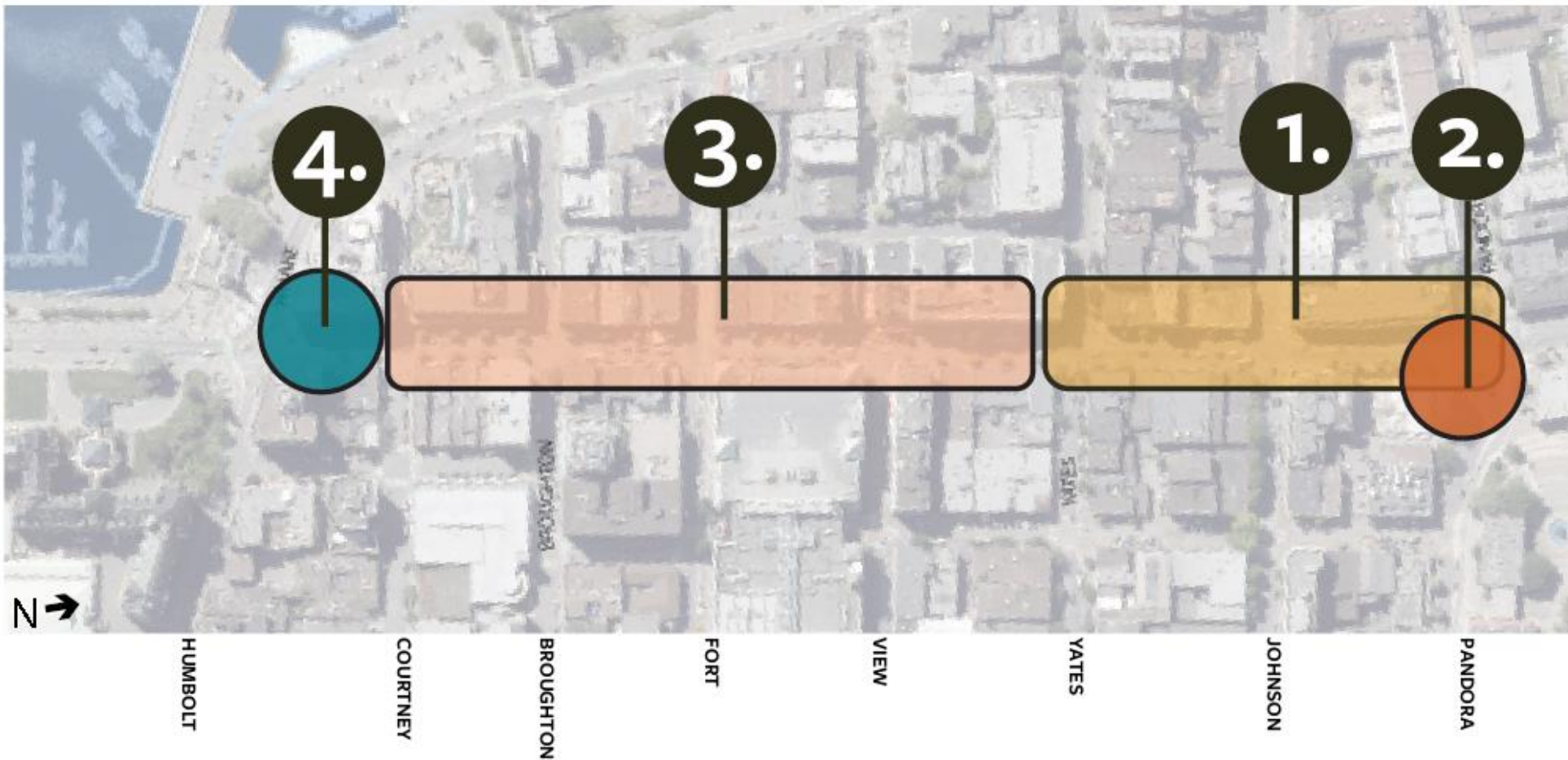
- **Storefront Competition:** Pop-up street retail creates unwanted competition for brick & mortar, tax paying businesses; Local Indigenous markets and non-competitive ok
- **Safety:** concerns about perceived negative activities and behaviors and business impacts
- **Delivery:** sometimes challenging for completing deliveries by noon
- **Traffic:** concern with congestion on surrounding street network; pedestrian awareness of cross traffic during timed car free periods
- **Tour bus stop location:** change form historic location/proximity to specific businesses
- **Construction Impacts**

Business Respondents - Heat Map

- Businesses located on Government Street, and particularly the south end, were well represented in the survey



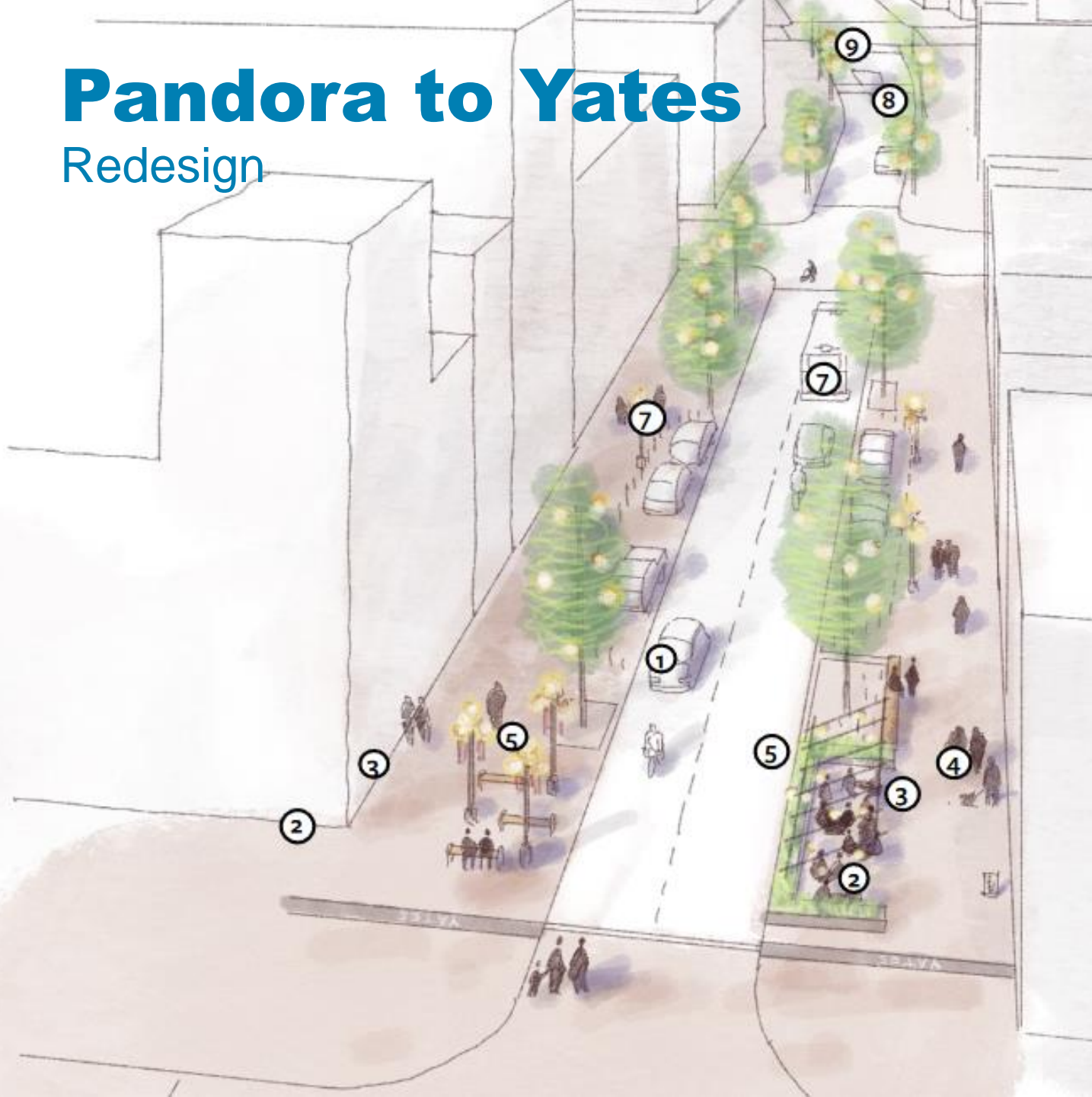
Design Zones



- Refresh Zone
- Redesign Zone
- Plaza for Chinatown
- Lekwungen Cultural Plaza

Pandora to Yates

Redesign



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

A Plaza for Chinatown

Pandora and Government

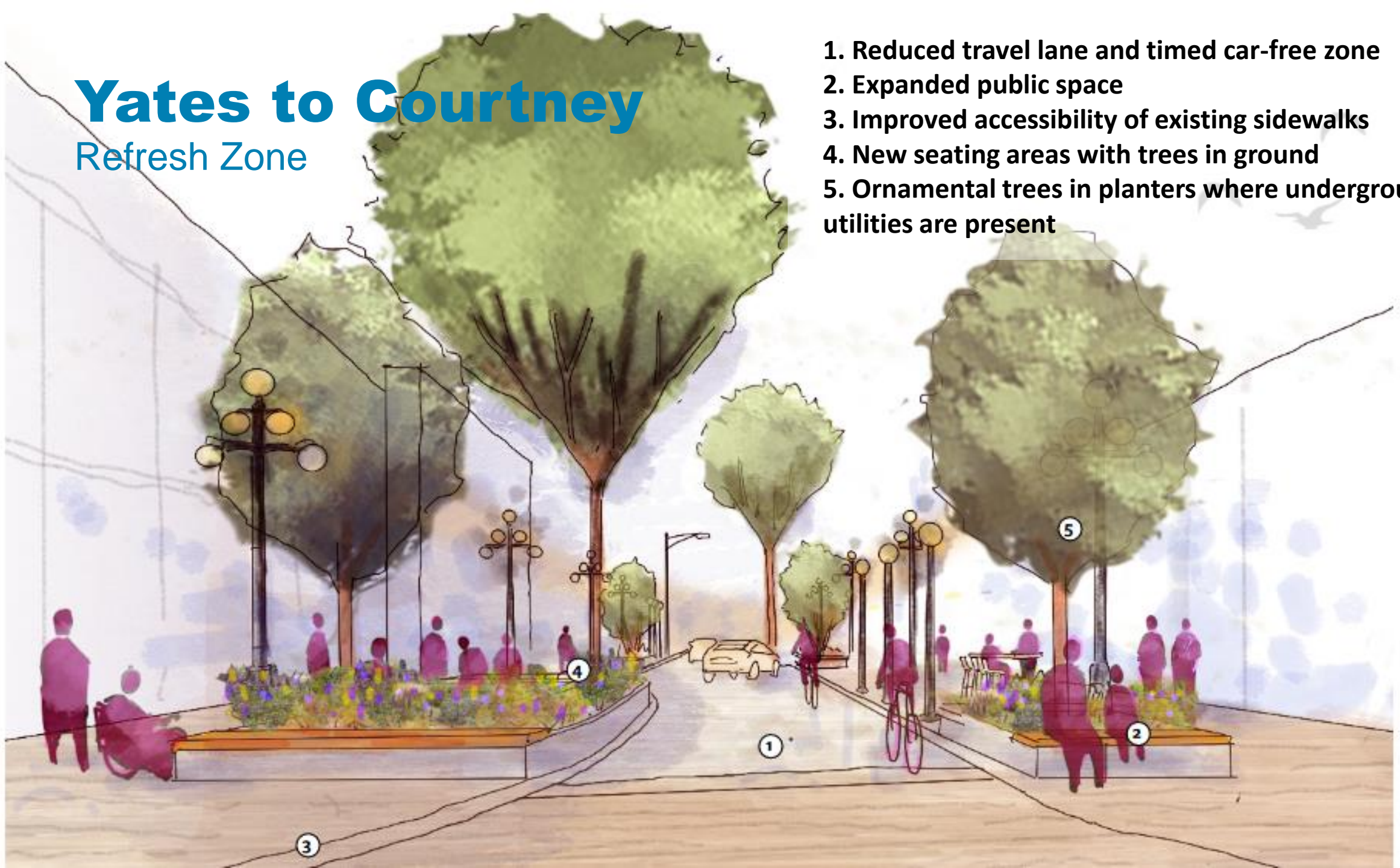
1. Areas to sit and dine
2. Opportunities to play
3. Areas for retail spill out
4. Public restroom and information kiosk
5. New tree canopy
6. Existing Tree Canopy



Yates to Courtney

Refresh Zone

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



Lekwungen Cultural Plaza (courtesy to Humboldt)

Flexible Street Concept



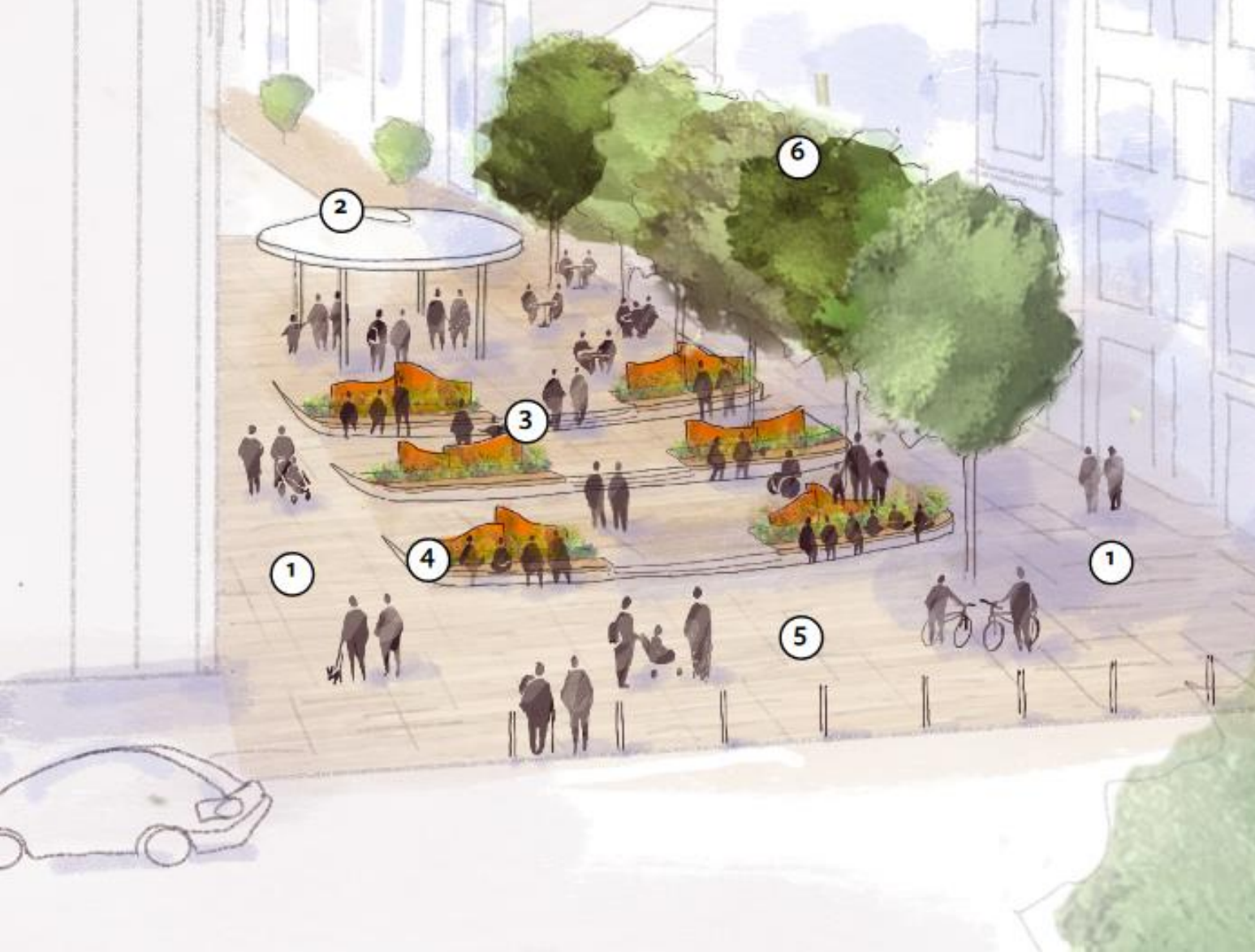
Key features:

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



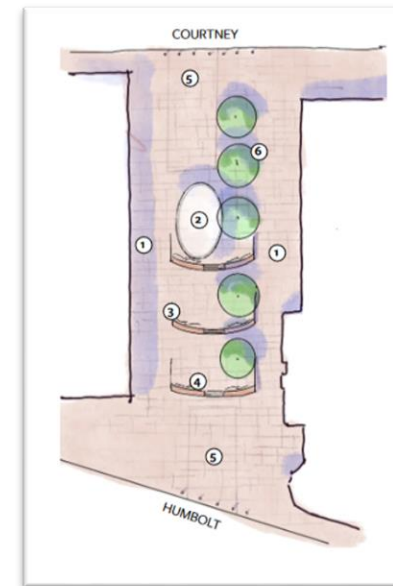
Lekwungen Cultural Plaza (Courtney to Humboldt)

Amphitheatre Concept – Road Closure



Key features:

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



Tree Succession

- A tree succession strategy was developed by Urban Forestry experts as part of the process
- Approximately 70% of trees along the street will require replacement within 15 years
- 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.
- Phased replacement with new trees in planters and partially in ground in soil vaults to manage infrastructure conflicts





Accessibility

- Unobstructed movement zones along the sidewalks
- Accessible furniture
- Tactile delineation
- Improvements to crosswalks and corners
- Mobility zones on each block to allow for a variety of uses
- 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



Activation & Programming

As part of the overall concept design, the approach considers both large events and the articulation of small public rooms with distinct purposes and potential for activity.

Cultural Interpretation

Telling the full story of this place

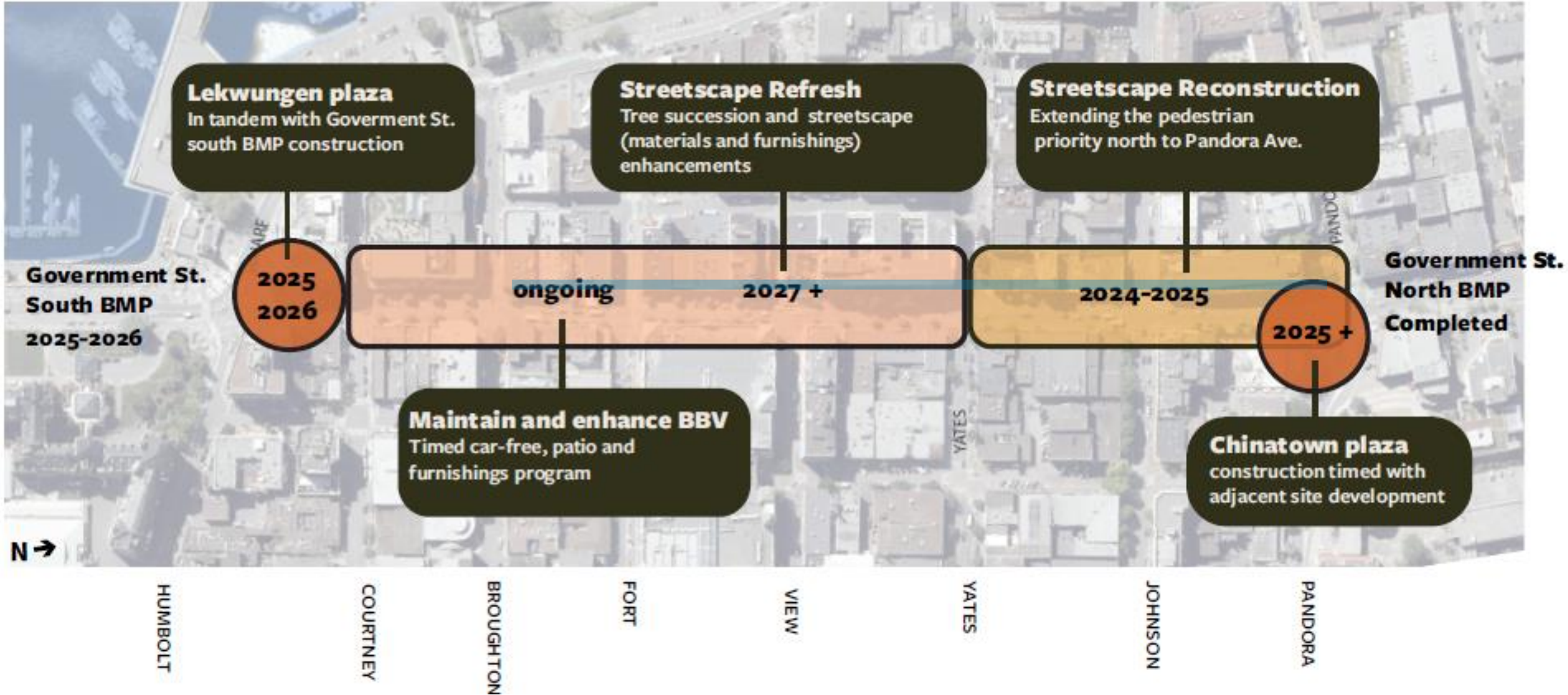


Mobility

- Continued transformation into a *vibrant and flexible people-priority street* that functions as a destination and people place
- Building on what's there – making it better
- Prioritizes placemaking and programming and supporting business vitality
- Facilitating access to Government Street with supporting circulation on surrounding street network



Phasing and Implementation



Conclusion

- Strongly supported vision and design concept implementing existing council direction and policy
- Opportunity to create a more inclusive and welcoming streetscape
- a successful legacy of successive placemaking and urban design that is unique to Victoria,
- a solid foundation for its continued evolution into one of North America's great pedestrian priority streets.
- Future financial planning is an opportunity for Council to provide further direction based on



Recommendations

1. Approve the Government Street Vision and Concept Design to guide future capital planning, detailed design, costing and phased implementation to align with planned infrastructure upgrades and anticipated land development projects from Humboldt Street to Pandora Avenue, and direct staff to incorporate design and construction costs into future financial plans.
2. Direct staff to maintain and improve pedestrian-priority treatments previously implemented through the Build Back Victoria program including street furniture and planters, patios, programming and timed car-free zones. As part of these efforts, pilot a full-time closure between Humboldt and Courtney Streets to inform detailed design and implementation.

