



## **Planning and Land Use Committee Report For the Meeting of January 28, 2016**

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**To:** Planning and Land Use Committee **Date:** January 19, 2016  
**From:** Jonathan Tinney, Director – Sustainable Planning & Community Development  
**Subject:** Update on Public Realm Concept Development and Engagement Materials for the Johnson Street Bridge

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council receive this report for information.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the report is to update Council on the outcomes of Johnson Street Bridge Public Realm workshop, provide an update on the pedestrian bridge, and outline recommended next steps for broader public input.

### **BACKGROUND**

At the August 20, 2015 Governance and Priorities Committee meeting, Council directed staff to proceed with public engagement on the urban design of the public realm areas around the Johnson Street Bridge in the fall of 2015 and report back to Council with a public realm design and corresponding budget options.

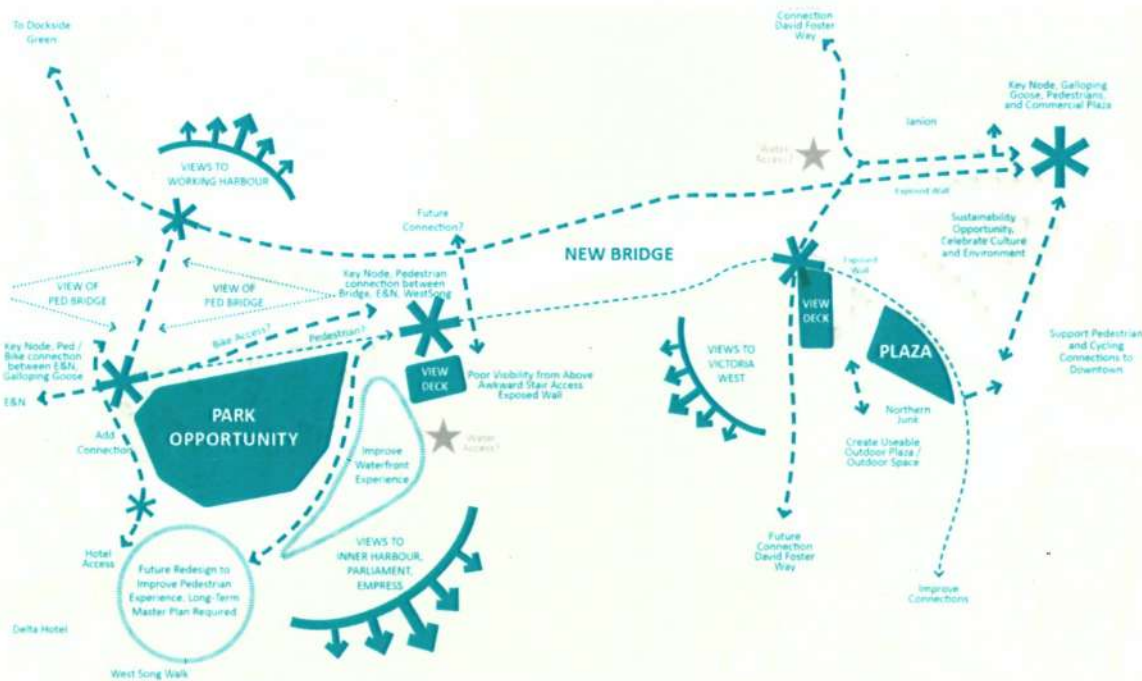
In October, the City hosted a design workshop involving more than 25 people representing stakeholder groups including the Downtown Residents Association, Victoria West Community Association, the Downtown Victoria Business Association, Reliance Properties, Merrick Architecture, members of the City's new Accessibility Task Force, the Delta and Swans hotels, Ralmax, members of Council, PCL, MMM, and staff.

After a walking tour of the bridge areas, participants worked together and developed drawings and supporting materials to address current design challenges as well as opportunities around use of space, connectivity, accessibility, and opportunities for art and placemaking. Input from the workshop was used to produce two different concept plans for re-envisioned designs of the public spaces.

### **ISSUES & ANALYSIS**

Both concepts build off themes previously identified through earlier engagement with the community in 2012 including a desire for enhanced walkability and cycling connections, improving overall accessibility, a desire to enhance opportunities to view the harbour, and opportunities to animate the spaces through community events, festivals, and entertainment. Both concepts introduce new ideas for how people will move through and enjoy the public spaces around the bridge area and take into consideration the new opportunities with the adjacent park space in the former s-curve area.

Participants identified opportunities and challenges in the public areas around the bridge site and developed a list of amenities to be considered for each of the spaces.



Suggested amenities include a desire for a small boat dock, arts and culture performance opportunities either during the day or in the evening, public washrooms, and public art including stand-alone pieces or art incorporated into furnishings or signage. Interpretive signage and viewing binoculars looking towards the Inner Harbour were also mentioned as desired amenities for the plaza areas. Participants also noted a desire to see plazas designed to offer flexible space for events and programming and to reflect a sense of place and history.



Much of the discussion also focussed on the opportunities to connect people with the waterfront and shoreline and also maximize viewing area opportunities. On the west side, the opportunity for terraced seating was seen as a solution to site grading and opportunity to provide seating for harbour viewing and waterfront programming. The importance of pathway connectivity in supporting people of all abilities, whether on foot, bike, or in a wheelchair was also discussed.

Funding strategies discussed included a phased approach to development of these spaces as well as opportunities such as the possibility memorial benches, community sponsored pavers or plaza spaces, leasing some space for commercial use such as a sidewalk café or food truck, and cost-sharing either construction or maintenance costs with adjacent developments. The potential for value engineering of options to support decreased capital and/or operating and maintenance costs was also discussed and considered in the development of conceptual options.

### South East Plaza

On the downtown side of the bridge, two distinctly different concepts developed for the south east plaza area based on suggestions from the group. Both revised options consider accessible connections from Wharf Street to the new bridge and future David Foster Harbour Pathway and also create more usable plaza space for people. New designs also consider integration with a proposed new development adjacent to the plaza area.



*Original Concept*



*New Concept A*





### *New Concept B*



### **North East Plaza**

Discussions surrounding the north east (Janion) plaza area recognized the limited size of the plaza area, its importance as a downtown hub of connectivity for people on foot and on bikes connecting to various downtown destinations and across the bridge to Victoria West and regional trails. The need to create a recognised trailhead or terminus for the multi-use trail was identified as was the need to create a natural separation for people who walk from people who bike. A desire for outdoor patio or café seating was seen as an opportunity for the space. As suggestions from the group were fairly consistent, only one revised rendering was developed, which is quite similar to the original contemplated design.

### *Original Concept*





## New Concept



### Western Bridgehead and S-Curve Lands

On the west side of the bridge, participants were invited to revisit design opportunities for the west plaza area as well as opportunities to integrate the space with opportunities in the former “s-curve” land areas. Approximately one acre of City right-of-way “s-curve” land will remain adjacent to the waterfront with the re-alignment of Esquimalt Road to the new bridge and consolidated boulevard areas. In October 2011, Council directed staff to designate the land as new City park space to be funded separately from the Johnson Street Bridge replacement project.

Discussions on the possibilities for these spaces looked at improved shoreline access including a boat or kayak dock, a small urban beach, as well as places to sit and view the harbour or waterfront programming. Terraced seating was seen as a solution to site grading and opportunity to provide more opportunities for seating and harbour viewing as well as to support programming and special events.

Workshop outputs also included some options that looked to include private development on a portion of the s-curve lands. While these lands are of a scale and location that would appear to have the potential as a site for new market development, these lands are also a containment site for contaminated soils generated from the bridge construction. As such the cost of removal and/or remediation of those soils would need to be weighed against any revenue generated from new development. Based on this this option was assessed preliminarily and was not found to be viable given the costs of remediation relative to potential land values.

*Original Concept*



*New Concept A*





### *New Concept B*



The revised concepts for the new public spaces have been reviewed by Engineering, Transportation, Planning, and Parks staff to advise on any technical challenges or constraints.

Recommended next steps include working with both the Downtown and Victoria West Community Associations to co-host an event with the broader public in February where the illustrations can be shared and the community can help identify the preferred designs or design elements for the public realm areas. Illustrations of the concepts will also be shared online with an opportunity for the public to provide online feedback.

Following this engagement session, staff will work with the consultant to undertake refinement of the preferred options along with preliminary costing and the development of a phasing and funding strategy for Council's consideration.

### **Pedestrian Bridge**

Another important aspect of the public realm is the pedestrian overpass that will be located on the west side of the bridge, connecting people who walk and cycle from the multi-use trail across Esquimalt Road and with the E&N Rail Trail connector and new park space on the south west side of the bridge.

While the indicative design contemplated a custom-designed structure for the bridge, a value engineering exercise for the project proposed an alternate approach to the pedestrian bridge that offered the possibility of reducing construction and maintenance costs and timeline for construction. A prefabricated steel structure was recommended by PCL and MMM and was accepted by staff involved in the project at that time.

The City asked that MMM provide a rendering of the revised bridge design and staff recommend that further design enhancements be considered so that the overall appearance of the pedestrian bridge integrates with surrounding public realm areas.



*Original Indicative Pedestrian Bridge Design*



*Proposed Pedestrian Bridge Concept A*



*Proposed Pedestrian Bridge Concept B*





Concept A references the nearby E&N rail bridge with rounded concrete end walls and considers the addition of twisted metal picket panels and a dark grey finish to the bridge to add an industrial architectural feel to the design.

Concept B also proposes a more modern finish with the addition of architectural concrete to the end walls to integrate the bridge into the surrounding area. This design includes brushed stainless cladding to the exterior create a sense of a gateway and subtly reference the new bridge design. LED accent lighting is also recommended.

As with the public realm options above these two concepts will be presented to the community through the engagement program for comment and a recommendation will be made to Council on the preferred aesthetic approach to the bridge when staff report back.

### **OPTIONS & IMPACTS**

Results of broader public input will be shared with Council along with cost estimates for the preferred public realm designs or elements and pedestrian bridge design identified by the community as soon as possible after the February engagement period. Staff will also recommend funding and phasing options for Council to consider. As mentioned to Council in the August 2015 GPC report on the public realm, there is currently not enough budget in the cash allowance to complete the original landscape and public realm plans.

Final landscape construction plans for the public realm areas would be completed by a landscape architect to apply a consistent look and feel across all public spaces in the areas around the bridge.

In keeping with our commitment to reduce the footprint of the construction area and see public areas returned to the public as they become available, landscaping for the boulevard areas west of Harbour Road and along the south end of Harbour Road, and on the eastern public space between Johnson Street and Wharf Street were recently completed. These areas were not contemplated in detail during the stakeholder workshop so work was able to proceed without further input. This is expected to make a positive difference to the businesses in the immediate area.



**CONCLUSION**

Results of public input will be shared with Council along with cost estimates for the preferred elements identified by the community as soon as possible after the February engagement period. Staff will also recommend funding options for Council to consider.

Engagement on proposed public realm options – Mid-February 2016

Design development, costing and refinement of preferred options – Early-March 2016

Report back to Council on preferred design, costing and phasing strategy – Mid-March 2016

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council receive this report for information.

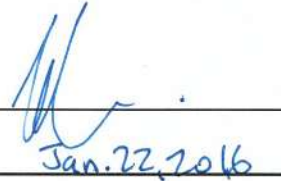
Respectfully submitted,



Jonathan Tinney  
Director of Sustainable Planning  
& Community Development

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Jan. 22, 2016