

Crossing Boundaries

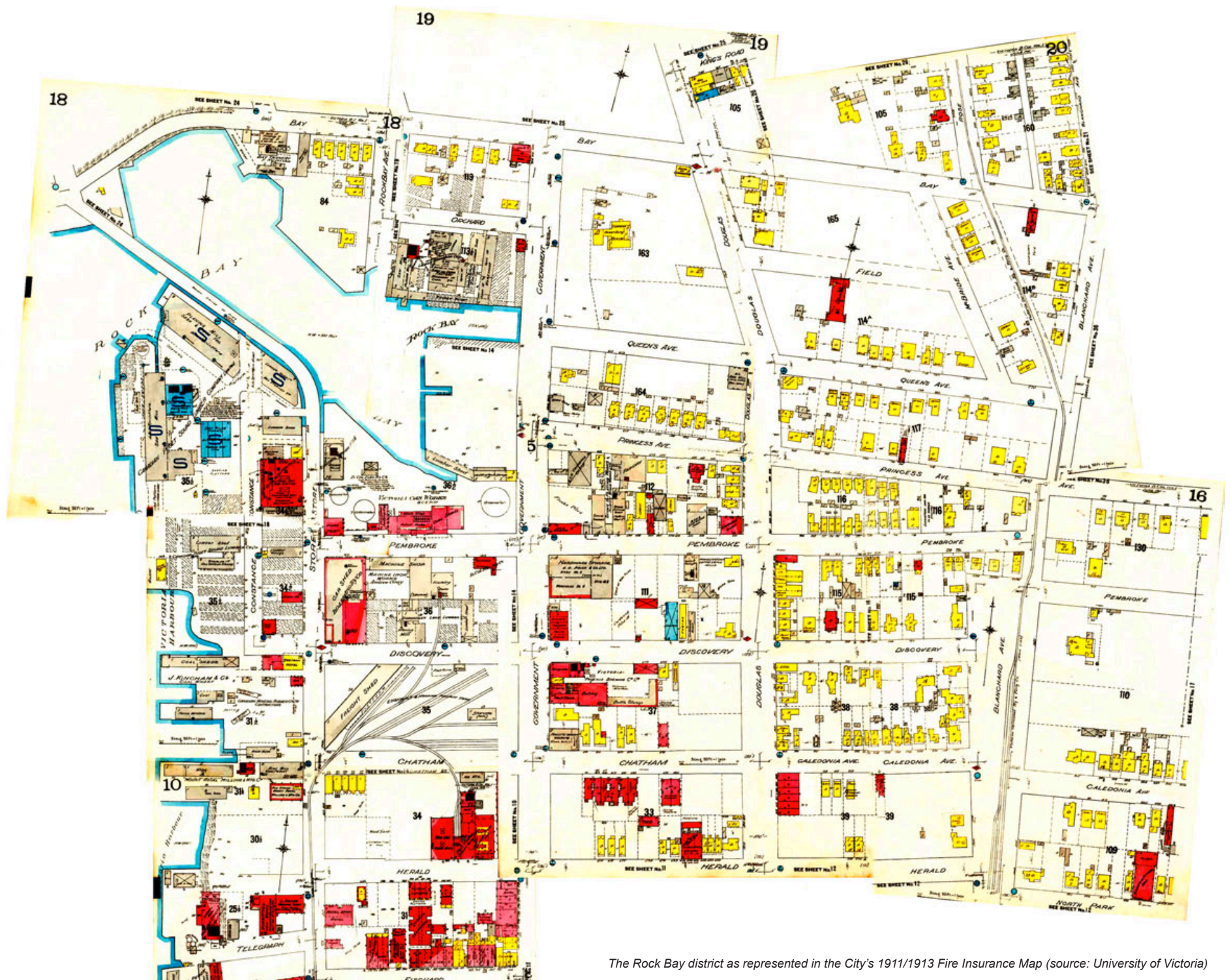
AN URBAN DESIGN PLAN for ROCK BAY

VICTORIA, B.C.



Produced by **D'AMBROSIO** architecture + urbanism and **NEW LANDMARKS**
following an urban design charrette held in June of 2011

This plan is a study of the past, an observation of the present and a glimpse of the future. It is part of a conversation about what needs to be done and how Victoria could, or should, accommodate growth while maintaining a healthy downtown for the region. From the results of this charrette, the conversation will expand to include those who own and use (or not) the almost 80 acres of urban land in the study area known as Rock Bay. It will also involve planning authorities, the development community and the citizens of Greater Victoria. This is a call for participation in the making of a better downtown and a better city.



The Rock Bay district as represented in the City's 1911/1913 Fire Insurance Map (source: University of Victoria)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The idea of a Rock Bay Charrette began with a conversation in early 2011 between architect Franc D'Ambrosio, Principal, D'Ambrosio Architecture + Urbanism, and Gene Miller, Principal, New Landmarks. Both had been initiators and collaborators in the Harris Green Charrette (1997) and both believed that an urban design exercise—engaging the tools and disciplines of architecture, urban planning, land economics, and real estate development—would stimulate conversation among stakeholders and the public about the great potential of Downtown's northern shoulder.

Preparations and research were undertaken throughout the spring, and the charrette was held June 24-26, 2011, at the DA+U studio.

Preceding the charrette, the City of Victoria was represented by its Director of Planning Services Deb Day, who presented research and outcomes of the 2011 Official Community Plan (OCP) and the Downtown Core Area Plan. The Victoria Real Estate Board was represented by Stephen Shea, CCIM, Chair of the Commercial Division, and Jim Bennett, Director, Government Relations. The Downtown Victoria Community Alliance (DV2020) was represented by its President, Ken Cloak. All four attended discussions during the three day period.

This report also acknowledges all of the involved colleagues and staff of D'Ambrosio Architecture + Urbanism: Bruce Greenway, Carrie Smart, Josh Harvey, Katherine Logan, Liam O'Brien, Mark Zupan, Matt Stanley, Megan Culham, Nathan Flach, Rob Nykolaishen, and Terry Kopeck.

We are also grateful to several planning professionals and related consultants whose contributions assisted the process. They are: Daniel Casey and Mike Skene of Boulevard Transportation Group (transportation overview), Scott Murdoch of Murdoch de Greef (ecological infrastructure and research), Sabine Georgy (model repair), Andrew Moyer of Ottavio Italian Bakery (public market consultation), Cara Segger (social history), and Neil Barman (research, photography, charrette logistics).

Finally, we express great appreciation to Chrystal Phan, M.A. Geography, for writing and editing much of this report and Julie Brown of DA+U, BArch, for the booklet layout, urban design & graphic design of the guidelines.

Our intention is to use this report and various architectural models and displays in presentations, submissions, and feedback sessions for property owners, business operators, area and community stakeholders, the development industry, and City of Victoria staff and interested councillors.

We hope the charrette, this report, and the stakeholder sessions serve to bring Rock Bay's potential and its critical relationship to downtown's future into greater focus.



SPONSOR AND SUPPORTER REMARKS

DV2020 Conference Society

Originally formed in 2003 as the Downtown Victoria Community Alliance (DVCA), this non-profit society was created to promote a dialogue amongst a range of stakeholders for the purpose of articulating a vision for Downtown Victoria looking forward to the year 2020. The objective was to promote a strategy, with the participation of public and private partners, that would see our Downtown become a vibrant, mixed-use residential area.

The DVCA subsequently raised funds from a number of sources to organize two visioning sessions at the Victoria Conference Centre: “The Successful Downtown” session, which was held in November of 2003, and the “Making The Future Happen” event which took place in March of 2004. A group of professionals from around North America attended the conferences and recommendations for action were published in subsequent reports, including: “Living Downtown: A Plan For The Future”.

Another significant benefit that came out of the visioning sessions was the formation of the Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA) which continues to thrive today in promoting the economic and social interests of the Downtown business community.

The results of the Rock Bay Charrette, endorsed and funded by the successor to the DVCA, the Downtown Victoria 2020 Conference Society, as well as the Victoria Real Estate Board, are contained in this Rock Bay Urban Design Plan. This document is meant as a discussion paper, designed to recognize and analyze the economic realities of the creation and implementation of a plan for the future development of this area, in support of our Downtown.

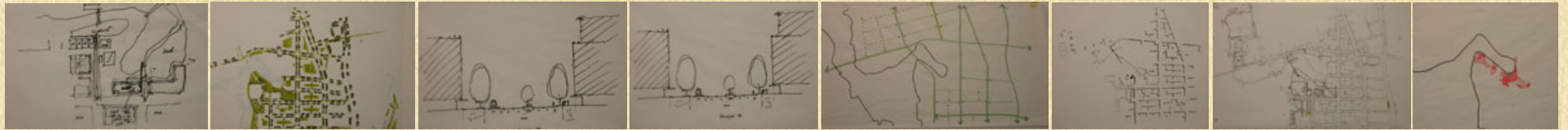
As such, we look forward to the participation of all stakeholders in Rock Bay in moving this planning process forward with the contribution of the City of Victoria staff and council.

- Ken Cloak, President, DV2020 Conference Society

Victoria Real Estate Board

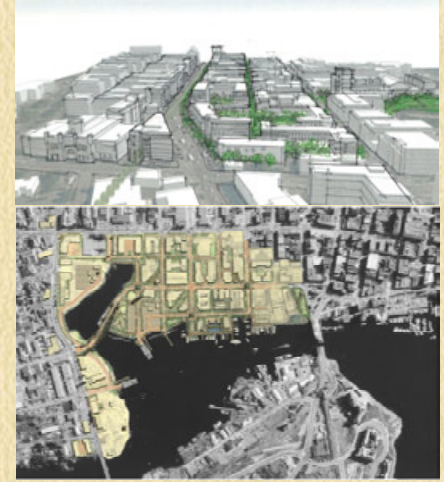
While it may be a stretch to imagine the City of Victoria’s Rock Bay area in the Year 2040 as the minds behind this charrette process would have us do, we can sense that this district has the potential to become a crown jewel for tomorrow’s urban dwellers. Several of us from the Victoria Real Estate Board’s Commercial Division had the opportunity to observe the process and results of the charrette. We came away recognizing that with proper planning it will be possible to achieve the combined visions of the various groups involved, all in the interest of positive community living and urban renewal. We believe this tired sector of our downtown core can maintain space for industry and commerce while creating new livable and thriving open spaces, ensuring a pedestrian-friendly walkable zone and adding much needed housing for our growing centre.

- Stephen Shea, 2011-2012 Chair, Victoria Real Estate Board Commercial Division



THE ROCK BAY CHARRETTE

To frame the charrette effort, we asked ourselves if there was a way to use current urban design, land use policy and economic tools to conceive a new expression of complete community—business and work; residential, family and community life; cultural and recreational activity; institutional presence—that might make the Rock Bay of 2040, let's say, an emergent contemporary version of its mixed-use identity from long ago.



INTRODUCTION

This report focuses on the redevelopment potential of Rock Bay, Victoria's northern shoulder. It is not an "official" report but a volunteer effort by its authors, New Landmarks and D'Ambrosio Architecture + Urbanism, supported by sponsors, the Downtown 2020 Conference Society and the Victoria Real Estate Board.

It confronts and responds to some essential urban design and economic development questions:

- Are our impressions of the area's land use compared to the real property-by-property makeup of Rock Bay one and the same thing, or are they very different realities?
- Can various uses – from light industrial to residential – be successfully integrated?
- In a region where new housing choices tend to avoid "adventurous" central area living, will it take a variety of housing types and high-level amenities to make Rock Bay redevelopment successful?
- Must Rock Bay redevelopment be considered a 'replacement strategy' for the migration of shopping/economic energy to the suburbs by both residents and daytime workers?

Such questions loom over the City of Victoria's future in a time of fierce inter-municipal competition for opportunity, employment benefits, and tax revenue. Even with such pressing concerns, we must acknowledge that this redevelopment is not a matter for tomorrow, but for today – for the very near future.

While this report contains significant amounts of background and technical material detailing the Rock Bay urban land context, and all of the content you would expect in a document tracking an urban design planning process, it is also meant to be read as a story of place.

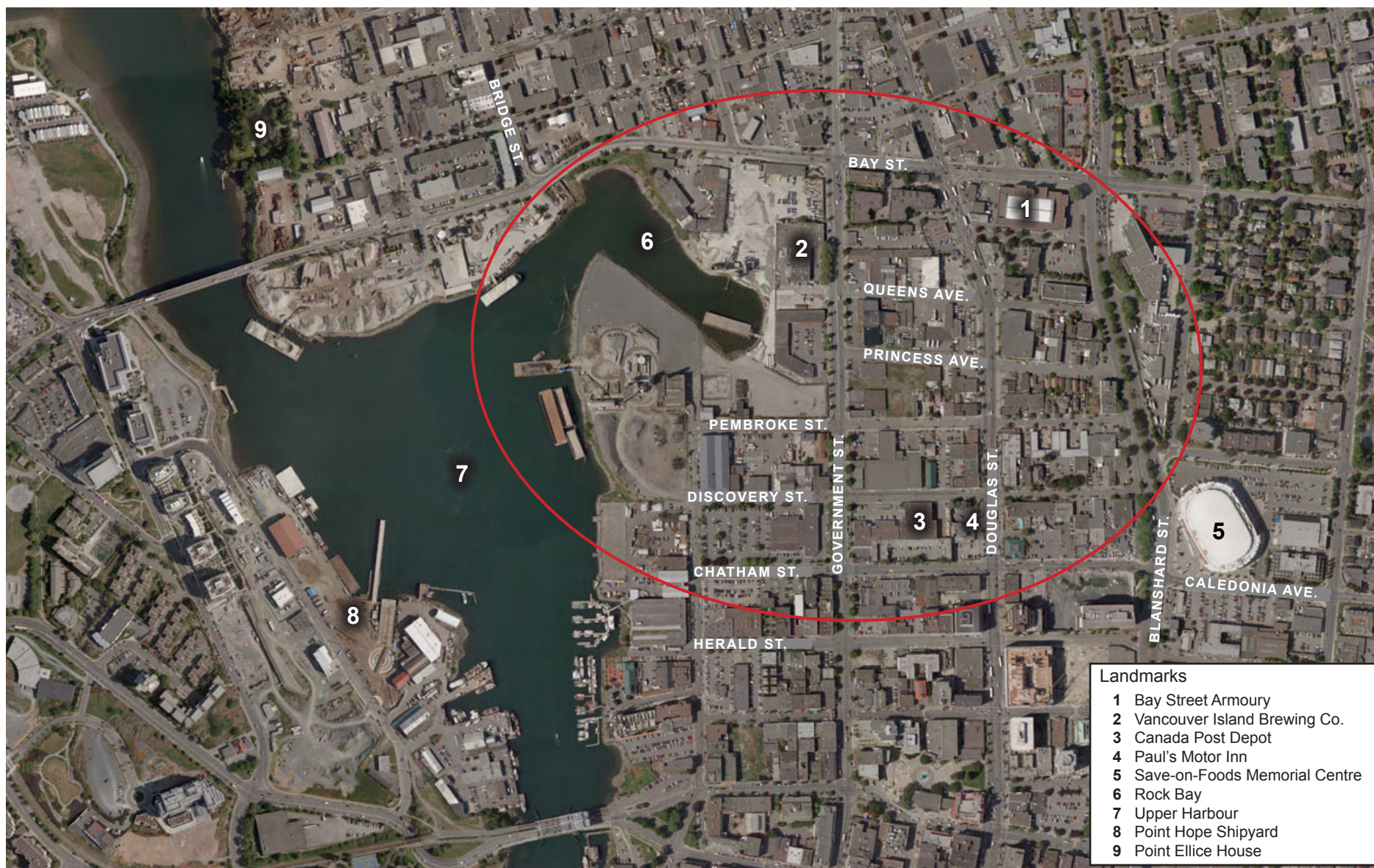
What do we mean by a story of place? We intend to acknowledge that Rock Bay has a history as well as a future. This will help all of the players and stakeholders to recognize the ways in which history informs the planning process.

We also want to emphasize that Victoria is a city that considers land use and redevelopment in its own unique context. There is strong appetite for place viewed through the lens of heritage and history. Consider, for example, the extraordinary care we take with our large collection of heritage buildings downtown, or with entire neighbourhoods of 100-year-old homes. Our city has a long and affectionate memory.

Happily, we're living in a time and place where the idea of integrating rather than separating has gained currency and legitimacy once again. This blending of activity is made easier, of course, by the absence of "smokestack" industries and similar industrial practices.

One conclusion of the charrette is that Rock Bay could continue to be home to a good percentage of the businesses already in place. It could also accommodate 4,000-5,000 new residents in a range of heights and densities (Portland's Pearl District might be a relevant example), and could certainly retain all of the existing construction/paving material production and handling in the area (most of which is along Bay Street and actually flanks the Rock Bay study area). Room could easily be made for offices, restaurants, services, and significant cultural infrastructure, along with new integrated urban transportation.

The sections that follow will help in understanding the context, current land use, and atmosphere of Rock Bay. It then outlines a possible future. Armed with this report, you are encouraged to spend a half-hour walking or driving its streets to form your own impressions and to refine your own sense of its potential.



- Landmarks**
- 1 Bay Street Armoury
 - 2 Vancouver Island Brewing Co.
 - 3 Canada Post Depot
 - 4 Paul's Motor Inn
 - 5 Save-on-Foods Memorial Centre
 - 6 Rock Bay
 - 7 Upper Harbour
 - 8 Point Hope Shipyard
 - 9 Point Ellice House

The subject area is currently within the boundaries of the Burnside-Gorge 'Neighbourhood' or 'District'. It takes its name from the inlet of water that was once the outfall of a creek drawing from the Oaklands area.



0m 50m 100m 200m



An overview down Douglas Street from Herald & Douglas

ROCK BAY DISTRICT

Victoria, B.C.

LOCATION + CONTEXT

Our study area in Rock Bay roughly consists of Chatham Street, the harbour edge, Bay Street and Blanshard Street. As with the initial outpost near the indigenous settlement of the Songhees, this district was part of a young, industrious Victoria. It is still possible to find significant remnants of that history, including a number of late 19th and early 20th century buildings adapted to contemporary use. And while it's no longer visible in most places, the original shoreline that greeted early settlers is hiding under blacktop, concrete and fill. A stream that at one time gathered waters from marshland in Fernwood and emptied into Rock Bay still exists, though the marshland is gone and the stream now runs in an underground culvert.

Uses + Perceptions

Rock Bay was an area of industry, urban infrastructure, and production, from the earliest chapters of the city. It was also home to people working or running businesses nearby. Reports from before 1900 indicate that at one time, more than 300 school-age children lived in Rock Bay, suggesting a significant residential population. While the area was home principally to working-class people, some of Victoria's economic and political 'aristocracy' also built stately homes along the

shore and elsewhere, principally in the vicinity of Bay Street, the Selkirk waterfront, and further along the Gorge waterway. The neighbourhood also sported the impressive and elaborate Centennial Methodist Church.

It is primarily the industrial elements of Rock Bay's history that shape general perception of the area today. Such an image is a dated one that more accurately defines the area north of Bay Street. Although the properties between Blanshard and Douglas and between Chatham and Bay are regulated by mostly industrial zoning, relatively little industrial activity occurs there. Some of the uses to which the area is actually put are manufacturing and product wholesaling, storage, building trade offices, workyards, truck parking, outfitting areas, auto repair and auto sales. The heavier industrial uses like forges and welding shops that used to be there are almost all gone, yet the public's mental image of the place is of its long-past heavy industrial heyday.

As far as we can tell without detailed research, many of the buildings are in poor condition, even those currently in use. It is readily apparent that no significant investment has been made in the area for some time. There are a number of small houses that have survived from the era when there were residential neighbourhoods throughout Rock Bay. Some of those houses have been converted into business offices



Looking South along the derelict shore of the bay



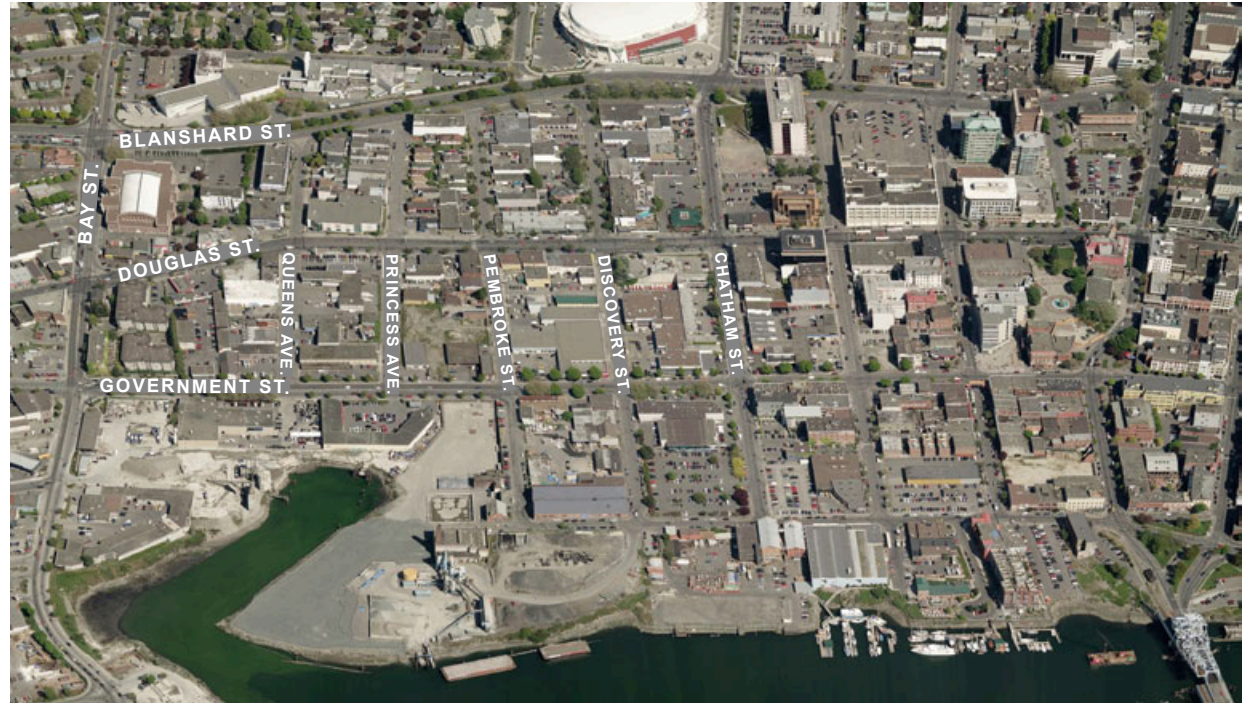
Capital Planing Mills - Courtesy of the BC Archives Collection



One of the concrete plants on the shore of Rock Bay



BC Hydro Site and the harbour at Rock Bay



Bird's eye view of the study area, looking East. The Johnson Street Bridge is visible at bottom right

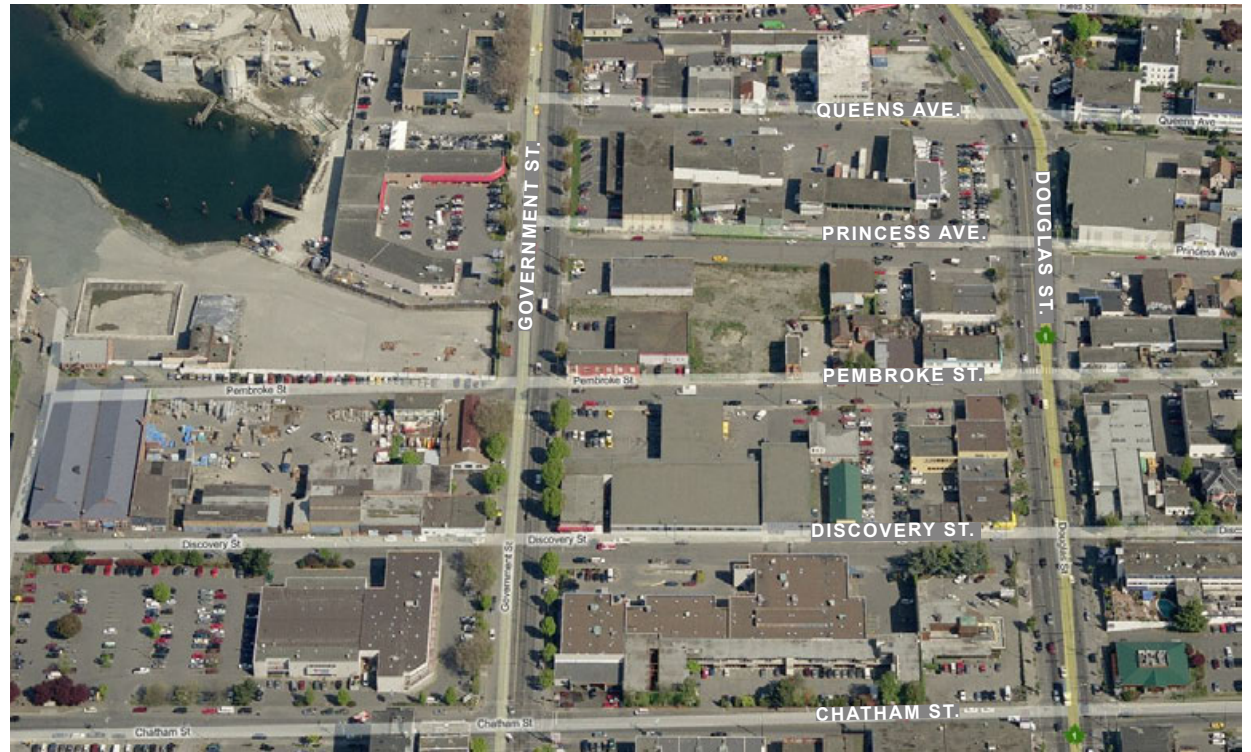


Rock Bay looking southeast towards downtown



Rock Bay, 1893

and a variety of other uses. In the block south-east of the Armoury at Blanshard and Bay Streets there is an old apartment building, and in the adjacent blocks are several hotels, storage and auto businesses, and houses. Some are multi-occupant, but really none of these blocks have coalesced into what could be called a residential neighbourhood. The uses here are typical of land between downtown and the shoulder areas. Streets have been expanded to accommodate automotive transportation needs, resulting in isolation and fragmentation of the blocks.



Fallow sites and parking lots occupy the space between scattered homes and businesses

A contemporary tour of Rock Bay promotes itself with this language:

Start in front of Victoria Gymnastics, 2051 Store Street near Pembroke Street. Explore this once-thriving industrial area, starting at the former electric streetcar barns, then passing the site of sawmills, the old Rock Bay Bridge, the Victoria Gasworks, the site of Roderick Finlayson's home and the stream that flowed past it, McCarter's Shingle Mill, tanneries, the old Rock Bay Saloon and many other sites of interest, now long gone. Ends near corner of Bay and Bridge St.

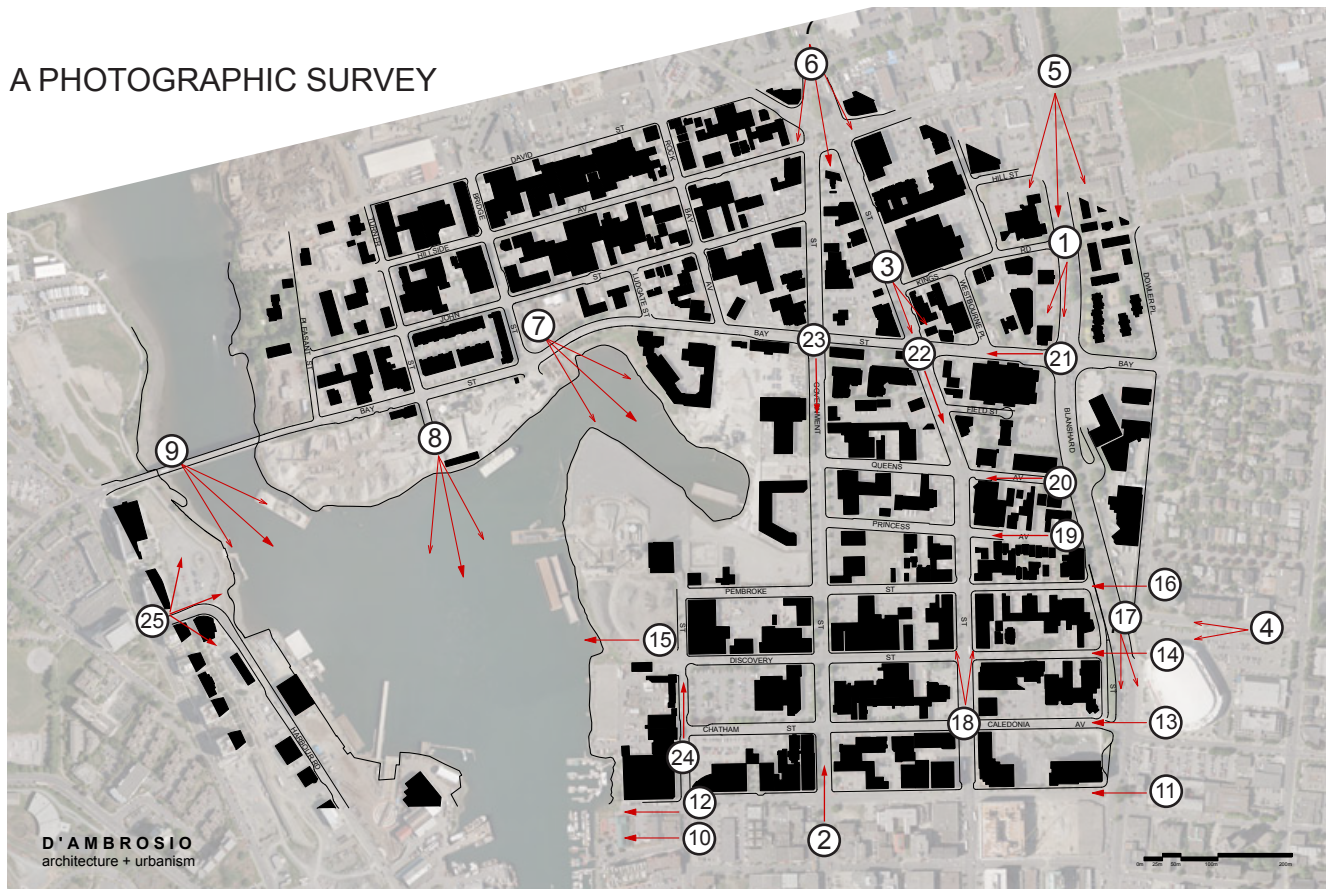


Smith Bros. foundry on Pembroke Street



A heritage building at the corner of Pembroke and Government

A PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY



As part of the preparation and research for undertaking the urban design of Rock Bay, a thorough visual survey was taken. These pages include photographs of views from key locations throughout the district. Most are of the public street rights-of-way and the buildings and spaces adjacent to and visible from these streets. The analysis clearly illustrates the sparse occupation of this substantial (approx. 72 acre) area of land. The feeling of fragmentation here is only accentuated by the area's close proximity to the bustling downtown core. This urban design initiative is a direct response to signs that the water's edge and the upland area is, by any metric, underdeveloped. The current visual appearance of Rock Bay is a clear indicator of the need for something positive and progressive to happen.





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CITY PLANNING POLICIES: Land Use (Zoning) and Property Value

Much of the zoning in the subject area relates to historic marine-related and industrial land use. This is based on the perception that such uses are still, or should be, predominately in effect.

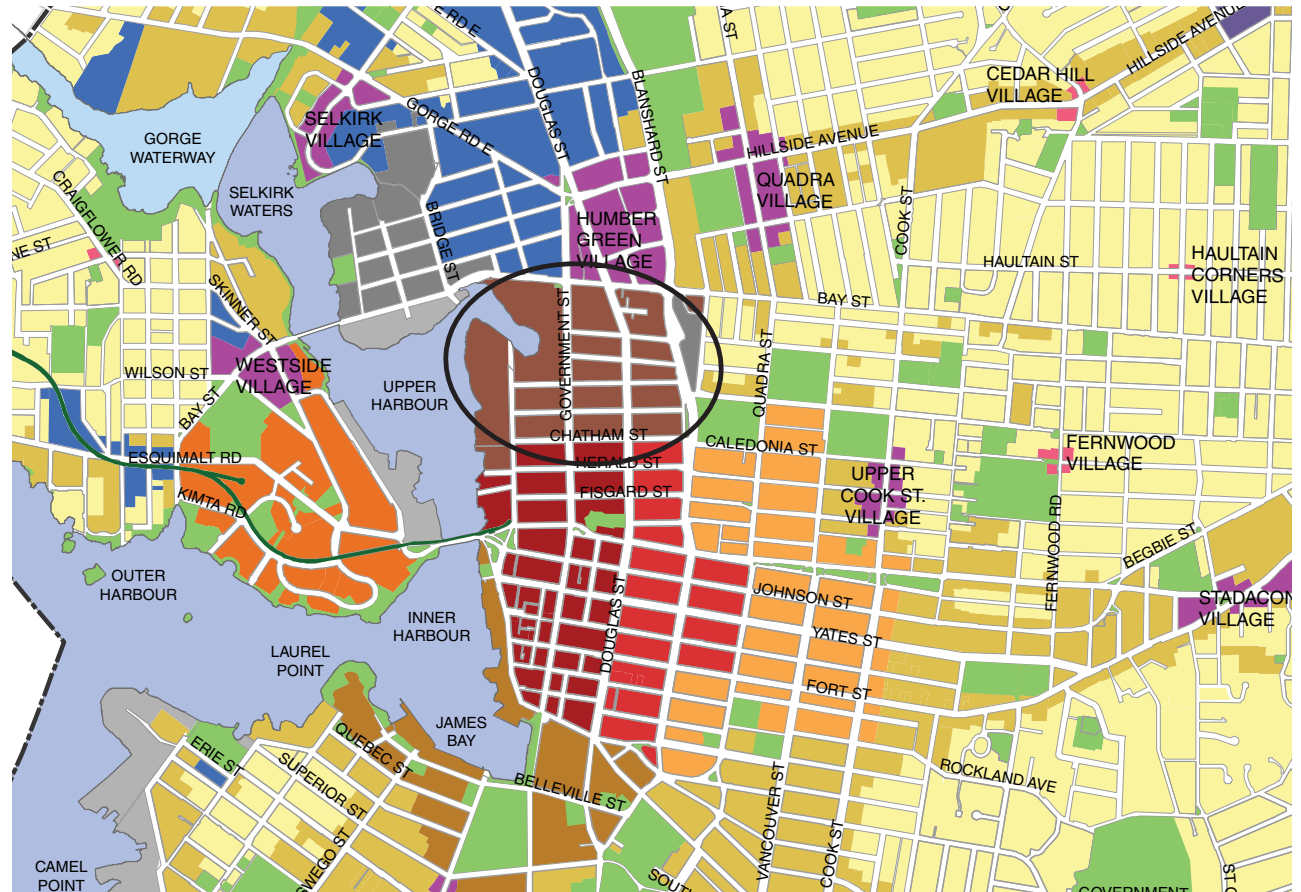
A hodge-podge of close to 20 different zones – a mixture of M (Industrial and Service), C (General Commercial), T (Transient Accommodation), and R (Multiple Dwelling), among others – currently characterizes, and governs, land use in this roughly 18-block area.

While the overall density here (built square footage compared to land square footage) may be very low, several properties are currently occupied by viable multi-storey structures.

General planning aspirations that have shaped zoning policies for the Rock Bay district consist of two official strategy documents: The City of Victoria's Downtown Core Area Plan (2011) and Draft Official Community Plan (2011). Both establish the City's intention of expanding the area's so-called 'employment' functions.

The City of Victoria's Downtown Core Area Plan recognizes the value of Rock Bay as a key employment district. It strategizes to protect commercial activities from competition with residential development and mitigate invasive issues stemming from proximity of conflicting uses. In addition to maintaining current marine and non-marine industry, industrial support, commercial activities, and community services, the plan also aims to attract and retain a diverse range of commercial, light industrial, office, and high-tech businesses to strengthen the district's economic base.

The Downtown Core Area Plan also aims to support the rehabilitation of heritage sites in Rock Bay by extending its Heritage Tax Incentive Program to up to 15 years. This is an effort to preserve and commemorate the



district's history and to help shape a distinct character for the future.

In its current Draft Official Community Plan, the City identifies seven broad land management objectives including "that Rock Bay develops as an area of intensive employment specialized in the incubation, growth and retention of advanced clean technology and green enterprise." Regardless of whether this is considered as a solid objective or an aspiration, we believe it needs a marketplace reality check before any policy accumulates around it.



Urban Place Designations Map from the City of Victoria Official Community Plan 2011 (DRAFT)

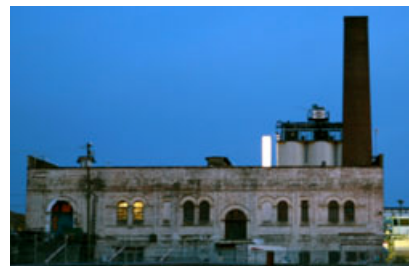
The Draft Official Community Plan also refers to the Rock Bay subject area (harbour to the west side of Blanshard, Chatham to the south side of Bay) and makes these land use recommendations:

- Buildings from 6 to 10 storeys in height.
- Buildings from 8 to 20 storeys in height, south of Bay Street between Douglas Street and Blanshard Street.
- Total floor space ratios up to approximately 3.0:1
- Total floor space ratios ranging from a base of 4.0:1 to a maximum of 6.0:1 for the area south of Queens Street between Douglas Street and Blanshard Street.
- Buildings set close to the street, wide sidewalks, street tree planting, and commercial at grade where appropriate.
- Green rainwater management features including rain gardens within the street right of way.
- Institutional and industrial campuses with common courtyards.
- Mix of predominantly industrial, light industrial, high technology, marine industrial, research and development, commercial, office, and complementary retail.
- Residential mixed-use, office, commercial, hotels and other visitor accommodation permitted between Douglas Street and Blanshard Street.
- Community services.

In a recent draft of the Downtown Core Area Plan, four of the blocks in the subject area – between Chatham and Queens, Douglas and Blanshard – are identified as being within the City’s so-called “bonus density area.” These blocks carry a base density of 3:1 and a maximum density of 5:1 if developed commercially, 3:1 if developed residentially. They are subject to value extraction from the bonus density “land lift” based on a percentage formula. We trust that any apparent inconsistencies as to maximum density will be resolved as the two documents are brought into alignment, although this mechanism remains controversial.



Figure Ground showing Registered Heritage buildings and sites (in red) in the Rock Bay Area



Industrial Heritage



Conversions and odd juxtapositions



The City of Victoria Downtown Core Area Plan's vision for the future

URBAN DESIGN VISION

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how Rock Bay can become an exemplar of urban design for the city. Thus far, in the absence of an urban design plan, the only gauge of land development has been direct monetary value, not the quality of life for inhabitants, nor the broader value to Victoria as a whole. This initiative, however, seeks a blending of public and private interests, using economic and cultural activity to enhance the entire city. By creating ample public space, a better transportation network, better utilities, and other relevant systems in the public domain, the viability of private development is improved, and economic and social vitality in both private and public realms can become self-sustaining. Good urban design always makes good sense for the economy, the environment, and society.



A vision of Rock Bay looking North along Government and Douglas Streets

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

As a summary of the philosophical basis for the urban design described in this project, the following have been adopted from various sources, including the Smart Growth movement. Adherence to these principles of development planning reflects a comprehensive approach to encouraging and accommodating population growth. This approach is believed to be both desirable and sustainable in the long term.



PRINCIPLE 1:
Each community is complete
A complete mix of land uses, building types, and accommodation for all kinds and ages of people.



PRINCIPLE 2:
Options and alternatives to the car are emphasized
Establish a hierarchy of streets, shared with pedestrians and cyclists, through a renewed urban fabric, served by local and regional public transportation.



PRINCIPLE 3:
Work in harmony with natural systems
Integrate Rock Bay infrastructure with the ecology, especially the watershed.



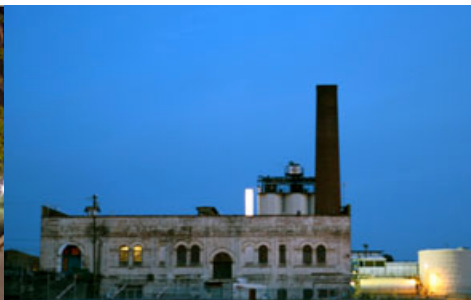
PRINCIPLE 4:
Buildings and infrastructure are greener, smarter and cheaper
Recalibrate the size and scale of streets throughout Rock Bay to be shared by all modes of transportation. Design all buildings and public structures to meet green building standards.



PRINCIPLE 5:
Housing that meets the needs of the whole community
Design for a broader mix of residential building types, creating truly heterogeneous and livable neighbourhoods.



PRINCIPLE 6:
Good jobs are close to home
Adhere to the City's mandate to attract employment to the area by fostering commercial, office, and non-invasive industrial and high-technology uses throughout the district.



PRINCIPLE 7:
The spirit of each community is honoured
Protect the current status of the waterfront as a working harbour and nurture the expression of uses, site characteristics and history.



PRINCIPLE 8:
Everyone has a voice
Stakeholders and members of the community must be consulted during planning & design phases of both public and private development.

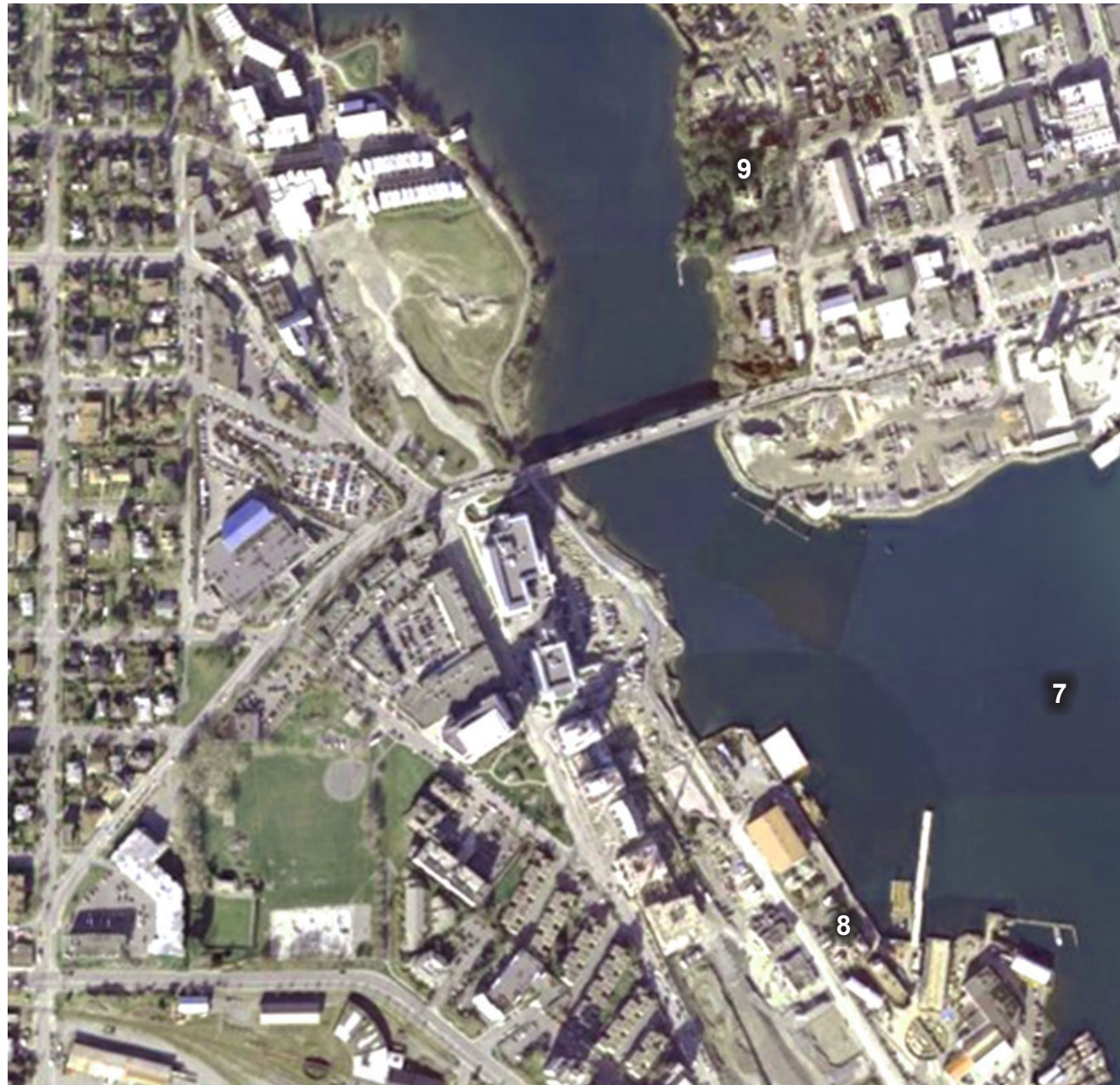
URBAN DESIGN PLAN

It is the premise of this initiative that a process of informed brain-storming is a good way to open the planning process for a district of the city that has great potential to make a positive change. The transition of use and proximities allows the city, as a construct of social habitation, to take forms that can be viable opportunities for the builders of the city. At the same time, desirable initiatives to accommodate and encourage population growth in and near the urban centre can occur. The urban design plan illustrated here and throughout this document is composed of ideas and explorations begun at a 3-day charrette, and elaborated later. It is meant neither to be definitive nor comprehensive. It is an amalgam and an interpretation. It represents one of many possible outcomes that could be produced by adherence to the spirit and concepts described.

This plan depicts building footprints composed as prototypical development of a variety of sites that make up a range of city block geometries. These configurations represent a range of densities and relationships of built-form to site open space. In conjunction with set-backs, build-to lines and an idealized open space network, this urban design plan is intended to illustrate viable and desirable development outcomes of the approach proposed. It is meant to be read in conjunction with the subsequent cross-sections and illustrations of street rights-of-way.

Legend

- 1 Bay Street Armoury
- 2 Vancouver Island Brewing Co.
- 3 Canada Post Depot
- 4 Paul's Motor Inn
- 5 Save-on-Foods Memorial Centre
- 6 Rock Bay
- 7 Upper Harbour
- 8 Point Hope Shipyard
- 9 Point Ellice House



0m 50m 100m 200m



1 minute walking distance (~80m)

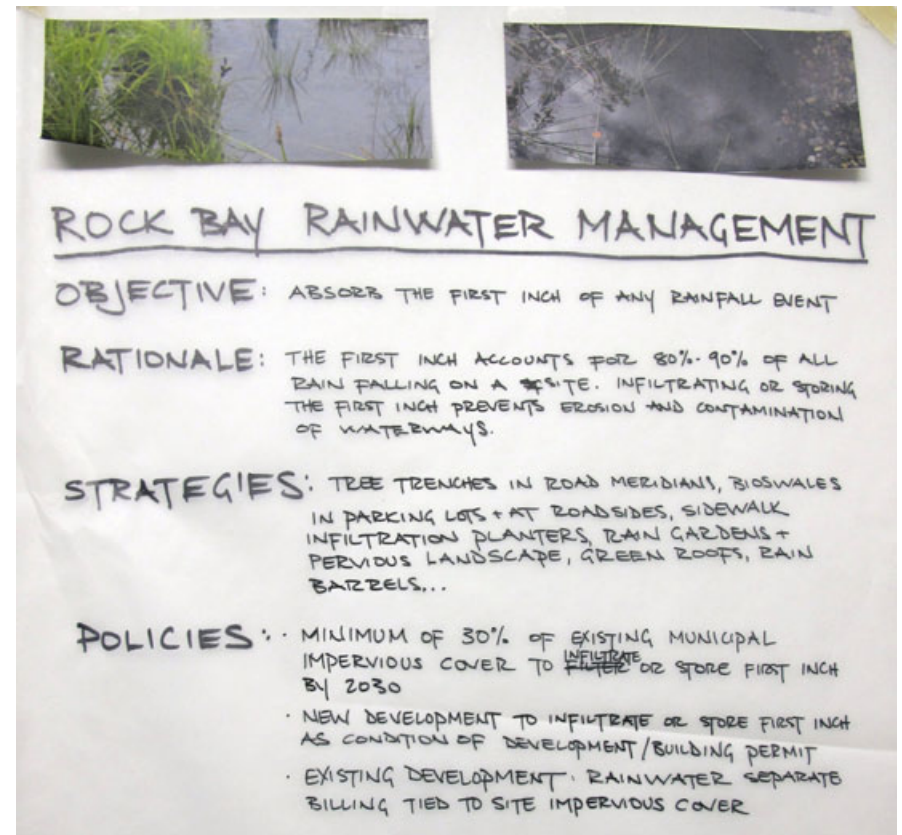
5 minute walking distance (~400m)

URBAN ECOLOGY AND PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Creating a strong symbiotic link to downtown Victoria and designing an aesthetic to improve Rock Bay's livability will help attract professionals and non-professionals to live and work in the area.

Critical to this task will be integrating a network of both green and hard-surfaced open spaces within Rock Bay, a network that will also form connections to the downtown core. Previous uses have left a dearth of good pedestrian and domestic space. This can be rectified through an incremental acquisition of property by the City of Victoria through statutory rights of way, purchase, and dedication applied to redevelopment projects on private property.

In this way, there can be an equitable assembly of both private and public components into an extensive network of pathways, walkways, cycle paths, parks, plazas, boulevards, and courtyards. In this urban design plan, the network has been envisioned as a branching structure informed by the topography, historic terrain, and ecology of the district. When viewed as the watershed of Bowker Creek and its tributaries, the Rock Bay district gives clues to how the human urban ecology can be reintegrated successfully, thereby enhancing the district environmentally and functionally.



False Creek District Energy Plant



Public amenity leads to civic pride and social benefit.



Dockside (phase one shown here) is a local example of intense redevelopment of derelict land. Its driving green agenda continues to be a challenge but will be worth it in the long run.



Design of urban ecology will distinguish Rock Bay as a 21st century neighbourhood.

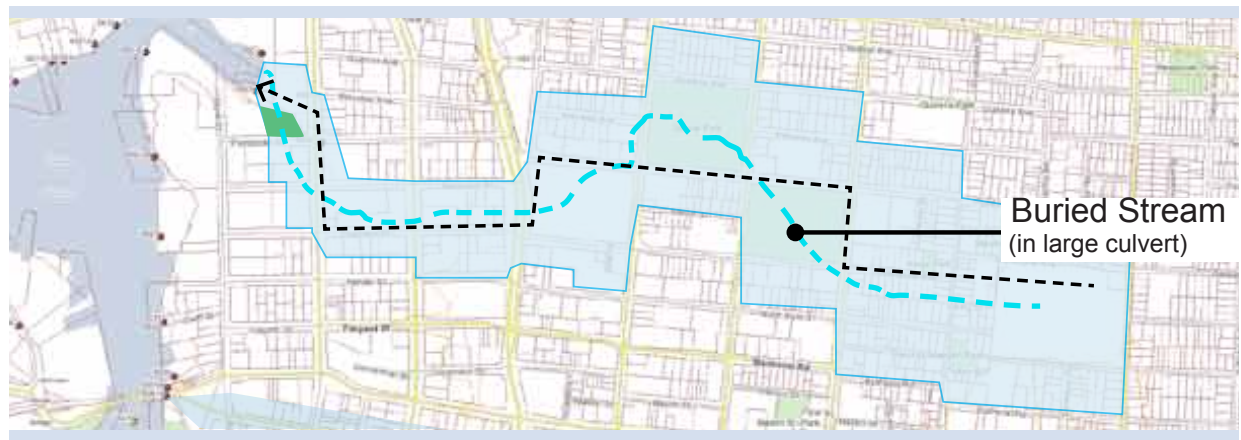
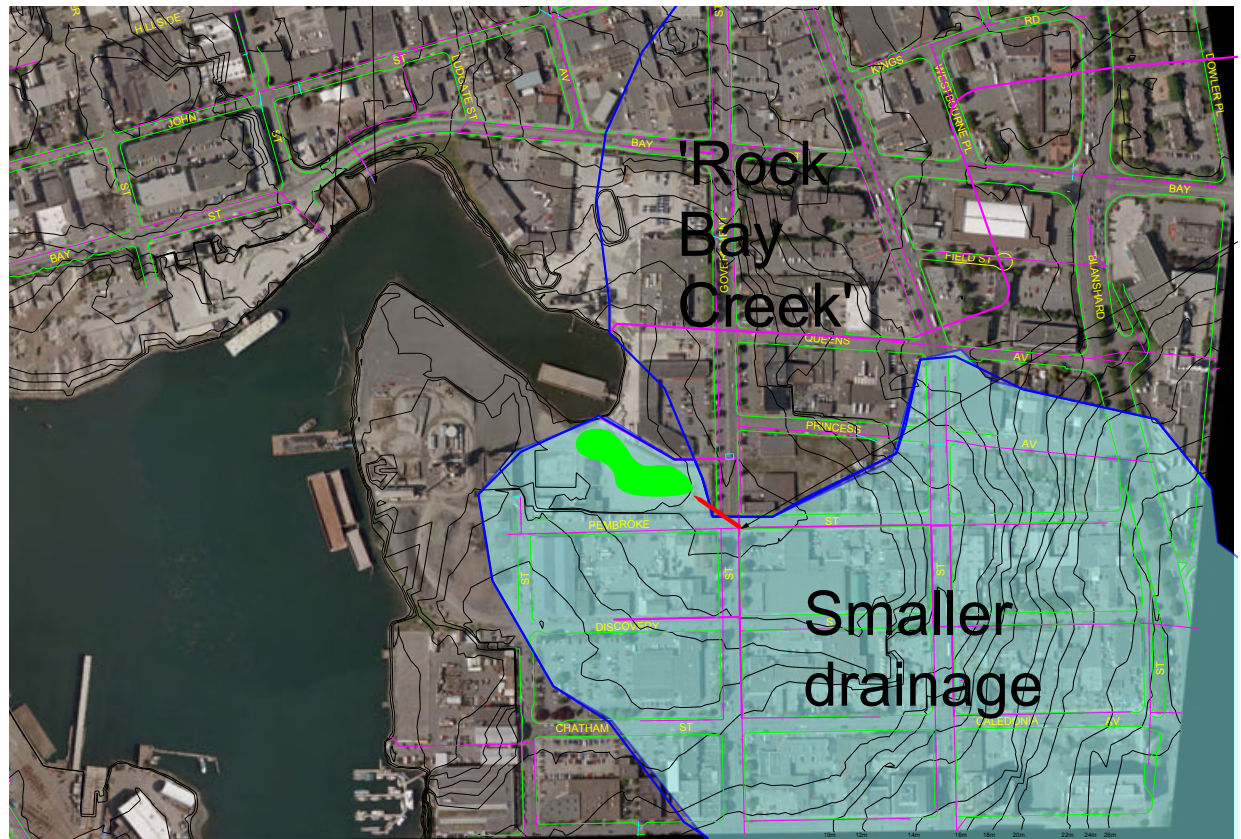
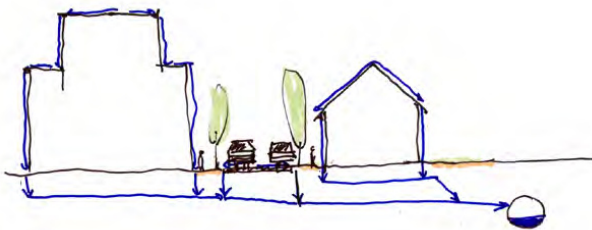
Redevelopment according to the precepts of an integrated urban ecology is one of the strategies that will result in a distinctive physical character for Rock Bay. By regulating building set-backs and build-to lines, streets can be widened to make room for public pedestrian greenways, pocket-parks, bicycle paths and other amenities without inhibiting the efficient functioning of other structures.

Transportation infrastructure and public utilities such as district energy generation, rainwater run-off management, and recycling services can also be integral to the design of public streets and private land developments.

The obstacle to achieving adequate open space networks lies in the fact that the City of Victoria owns little property outside of the rights of way. The Rock Bay district is already starting with a deficit of public space, and if it is to become a vibrant mixed-use district of pedestrian-scaled blocks and active neighborhoods, good urban fabric will have to be re-built.

Therefore mechanisms are needed by which the public agenda of good, green, and secure pedestrian networks are made part of private land development design. This raises critical questions:

- How can private wants and public needs be equitably met, and what is the currency to be used?
- How can the public authority compensate the private land-owner for dedicating or providing public access?





Proposed greenways, park spaces, and the Bowker Creek multi-use pathway

CONTAMINATION



Rock Bay looking south east towards downtown

The harbourfront area of Rock Bay has been prominent in the news this past decade due to issues of contamination and the financial difficulties that complicate remediation efforts.

Due to the area's industrial history, ground contamination has created financial disincentives to redevelopment. The use of the waterfront for coal gasification from the 1860s to the 1950s has left the soil, ground water, and sediment compromised by coal tar, as well as heavy metals including lead, mercury, ammonia, nitrogen sulphate, cyanide, PAHs, petrohydrocarbons and PCBs.¹

This history of contamination led the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency to perform an environmental assessment in early 2004. Remediation of the site came at a high cost, which fell to two properties: one owned by BC Hydro and the other leased out by Transport Canada. An agreement was established between the two agencies as well as the City of Victoria whereby the Ministry of Transportation would commit \$14.7 million and BC Hydro \$7.4 million to the remediation costs. The City of Victoria would create a stormwater management plan to address the contaminated water from two municipal outfalls that discharge into the Bay.² Stage one of the remediation project was contracted to Quantum

Group. Quantum disposed of approximately 7 million litres of groundwater contaminated with hydrocarbon and metals and approximately 70,000 tonnes of contaminated soil. They excavated and restored 40,000 tonnes of special waste hydrocarbon metal impacted soil. They also removed special waste wood to approximately 8 metres in depth along with 60,000 tonnes of non-special waste soil and materials.³ However, some materials still remain on site, and remediation efforts continue with a projected completion in late 2012. While the agreements between BC Hydro and Transport Canada expired in 2008, according to BC Hydro, efforts to re-open discussions towards the continued remediation of the site are in the works. Applications are in process with Environment Canada to obtain Certificates of Compliance covering BC Hydro property.⁴

The fact that Rock Bay Harbour is the most polluted harbour in Victoria. For over 100 years, untreated contaminated stormwater has drained into the bay from catchments running all the way from Jubilee hospital.⁵



(above and below) A former foundry site lies fallow





The former gas works facility is now undergoing extensive decontamination work

While the contamination poses minimal health risks to humans, it still exceeds allowable limits and inhibits most future activities. Further remediation activity will be necessary in order to fully redevelop the area, as not all properties in Rock Bay have received contamination testing. The issue, then, is how this increased cost to development will impact the future of the area.

Reference and further reading

- 1 http://www.federalcontaminatedsites.gc.ca/publications/action_agir/action_agir-eng.pdf
- 2 Transport Canada 2004 <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/mediaroom/releases-pac-2004-04-p002e-3287.htm>
- 3 For full list of remediation actions see Quantum Group: <http://www.quantumgroup.ca/excavation-shoring-and-soil-disposal.html>
- 4 http://www.bchydro.com/annual_report_2009/report_on_performance/climate_change_electricity_conservation/climate_change.html
- 5 <https://sites.google.com/site/rockbaycontamination/>

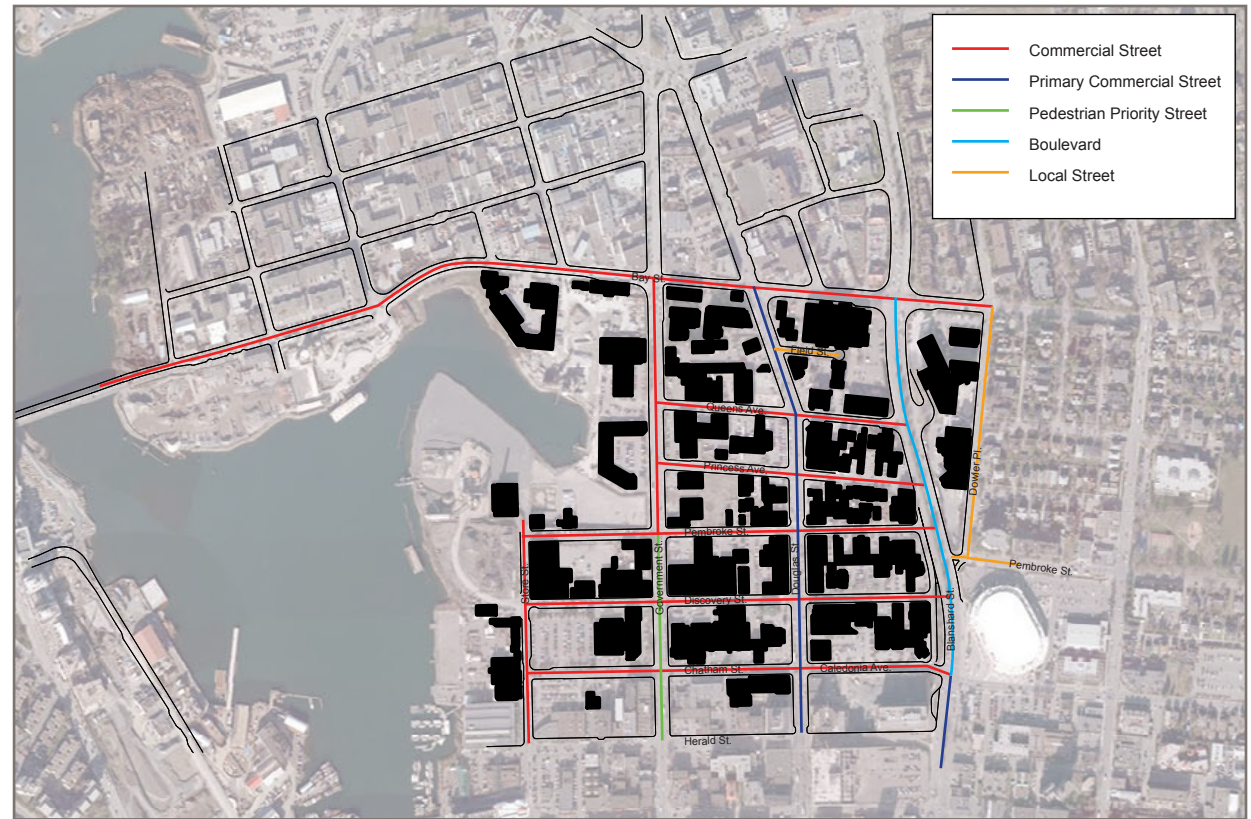


Town Plan of 1884 showing original Bay and cartesian street grid with lots

STREETS + PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

While this study does not include a conventional engineering approach to street design, it does promote the principle of shared streets and integration of public infrastructure with private development. Attention should be given to traffic flow, crossing safety, spatial definition, aesthetic beauty, and environmental sustainability. Circulation on, around, and through private properties must be thoughtfully integrated with the public rights of way. Driveway access, sidewalk connections, and dedicated open space adjoining private developments will allow full accessibility and design compatibility.

It is important to accommodate infrastructure within public rights of way. Approaches include burying electrical and communication cabling wherever possible, and integrating utilities and communications infrastructure with street furniture and similar amenities. A distinguishing characteristic of the Rock Bay district is its wide array of transportation infrastructure, including two highways, regional arterial roads, collector streets, minor roads, a partial cycling network, and a street-based pedestrian sidewalk system. Numerous informal cut-through pathways have also been suggested, making linkages through both public and private property.



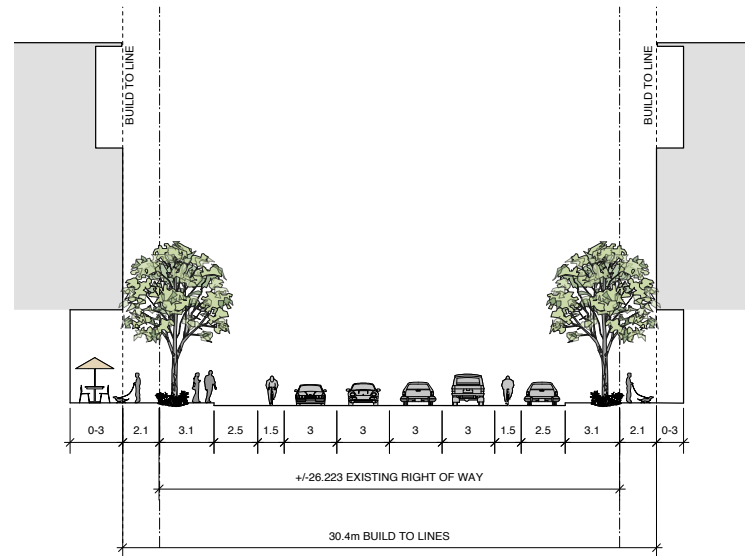
Street rights-of-way, open spaces and a circulation armature form an integrated network linking the Rock Bay District with the surrounding city. (City of Victoria Downtown Core Area Plan)



The proportions and geometries of the streets formed by buildings and landscape are crucial elements in the performance and the character of the place.

DOUGLAS STREET

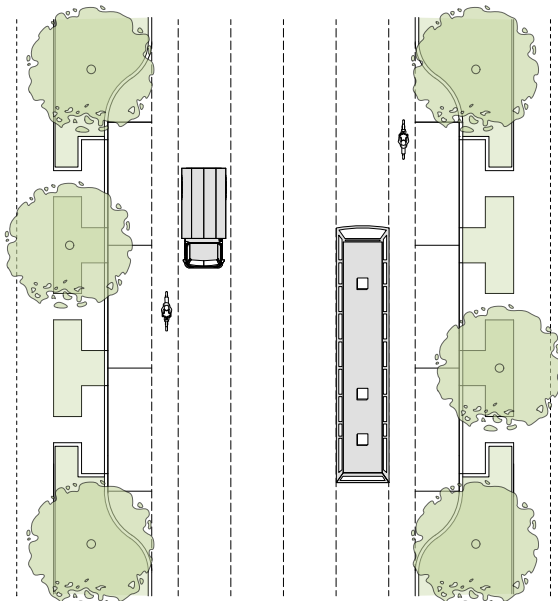
As a principal arterial route, the 26.2m wide Douglas Corridor will accommodate transit vehicles, parking, and bike lanes. The sidewalks will have extra width to allow for intensive pedestrian use, trees, green infrastructure, and public amenities.



Street Section through Douglas Street



View along future Douglas Street



Detail Plan of Douglas Street showing parking, bioswales and street trees

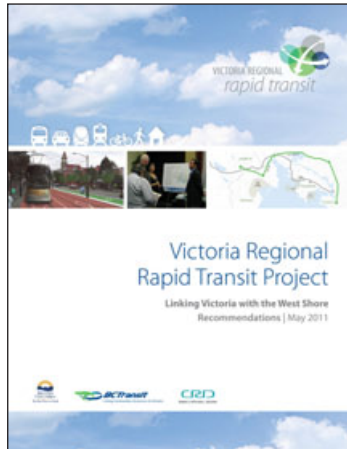


The integration of cycling lanes and planted bioswales at curbs allows the street to safely and effectively accommodate a variety of users and modes of transportation

DOUGLAS STREET TRANSIT CORRIDOR

The Victoria Regional Rapid Transit Project includes options for future public transport through Rock Bay to Downtown Victoria.

More information available at: <http://www.busonline.ca/vrrt/>

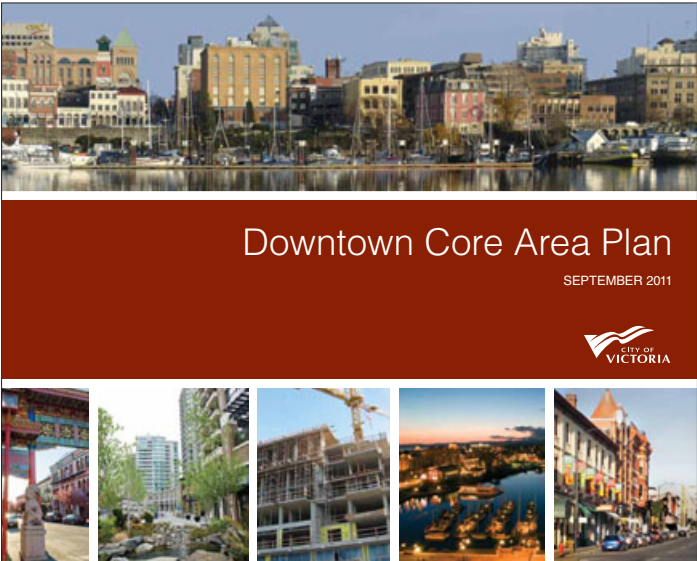


The Rock Bay Urban Design Plan includes a compatible vision with that of BC Transit, the CRD and the City. Although not definitive about the choice between LRT or Rapid Bus, the plan supports the corridor with designated lanes and a high level of service and quality infrastructure for public transit. This is seen as a fundamental requirement for the revitalization of downtown and the redevelopment of Rock Bay.

BLANSHARD STREET

The Downtown Core Area Plan includes current research and analysis of the options and impacts involved in reconfiguring the Blanshard right-of-way, as well as redesigning Douglas Street as the principal Public Transit Corridor to Downtown Victoria. Pertinent sections are reproduced here to acknowledge and support a possible future transportation infrastructure that would serve and augment the Rock Bay Urban Design Plan.

More information available at: http://www.victoria.ca/cityhall/departments_plnpln_downtown-core.shtml



APPENDIX FIVE: BUILDING AND STREET INTERFACE GUIDELINES

appendix 5 BUILDING AND STREET INTERFACE GUIDELINES

BOULEVARDS

Boulevards are generally characterized by higher levels of traffic movement at higher speeds than other streets, and serve as primary gateways into the Downtown Core Area from other locations within the city. Their gateway function is emphasized through street trees and landscaping along both sides. Land use along a boulevard typically includes high density commercial uses and larger, freestanding institutional uses or public parks and open space.

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APPENDIX FIVE: BUILDING AND STREET INTERFACE GUIDELINES

Primary Commercial Street (wide) - Section View

Primary Commercial Street (medium) - Plan View

Primary Commercial Street (wide) - Plan View

Conceptual illustration of Primary Commercial Streets
Note: All dimensions expressed in metres

32A City of Victoria | Downtown Core Area Plan | APPENDIX

APPENDIX FIVE: BUILDING AND STREET INTERFACE GUIDELINES

Boulevard (wide) - Section View

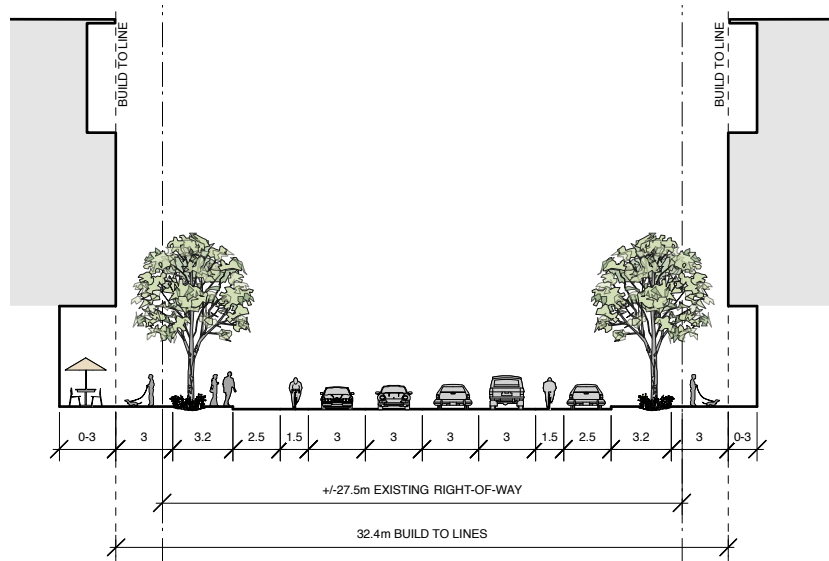
Boulevard - Plan View

Conceptual illustration of boulevard
Note: All dimensions expressed in metres

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GOVERNMENT STREET

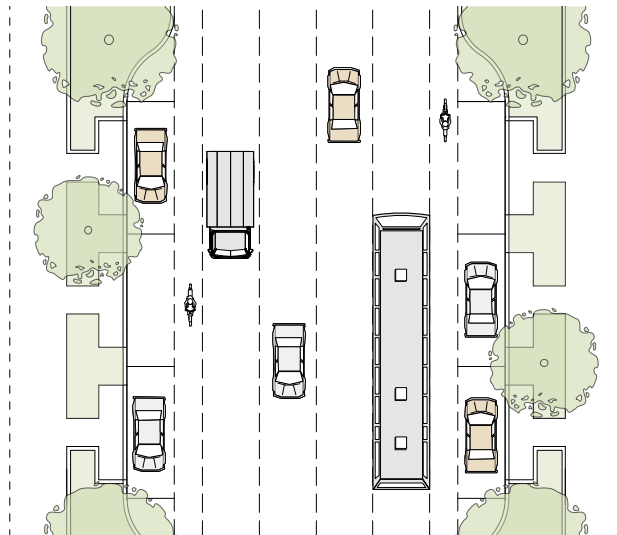
Within an approximate 27.5m right of way, Government Street would continue to have four drive lanes, bicycle lanes, street parking and street trees. Bioswales can be incorporated within a vegetated boulevard alongside the parallel parking. A “build to line” above the first floor is established to facilitate a continuous building edge while allowing flexibility along the ground floor.



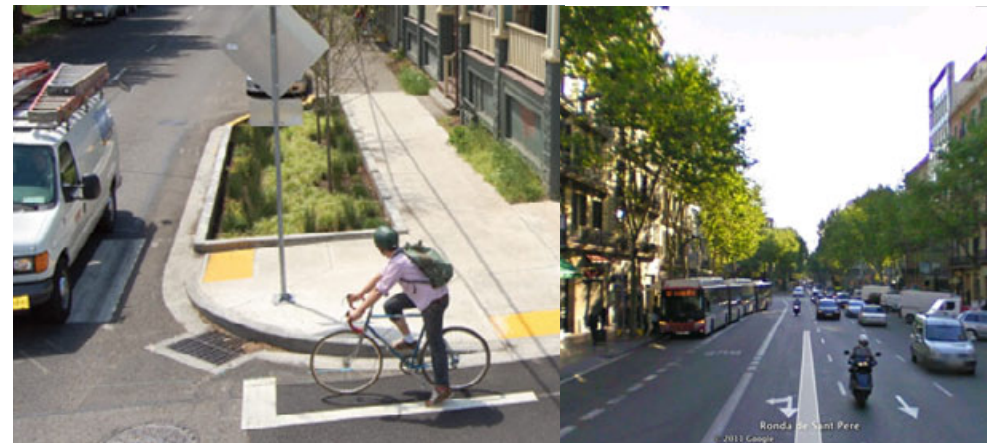
Street Section through Government Street



View North along future Government Street at Pembroke St.



Detail Plan of Government Street showing parking, bioswales and street trees



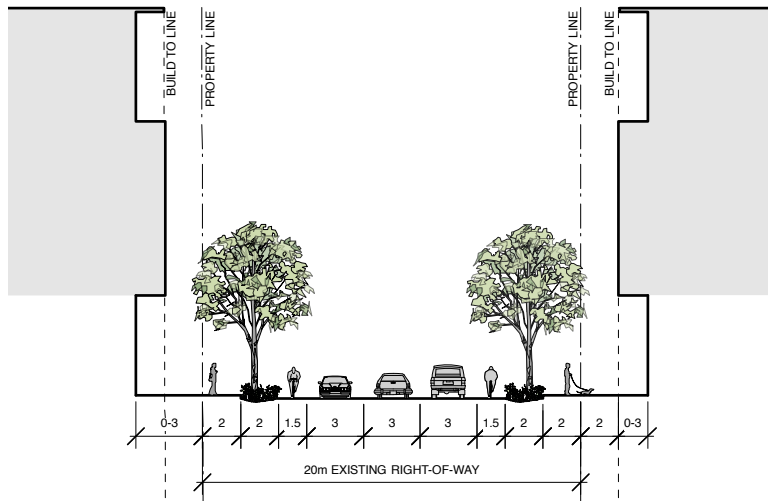
Bioswales acting as part of a stormwater management strategy provide visual relief from large expanses of paving

Trees help scale the space of the street and the buildings.

BAY STREET

Within the existing 20m right of way, Bay Street would have three driving lanes, bicycle lanes, and a vegetated strip containing trees and bioswales. A “build to line” above the first floor is established to facilitate a continuous building edge while allowing flexibility along the ground floor.

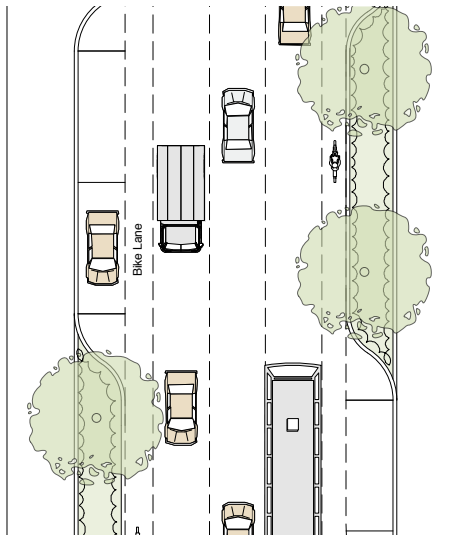
An expanded right-of-way of 23m would allow for the addition of street parking along one side of the road.



Street Section through Bay Street



Expansive intersections reduce negative impacts of taller buildings.



Detail Plan of Bay Street showing parking, bioswales and street trees

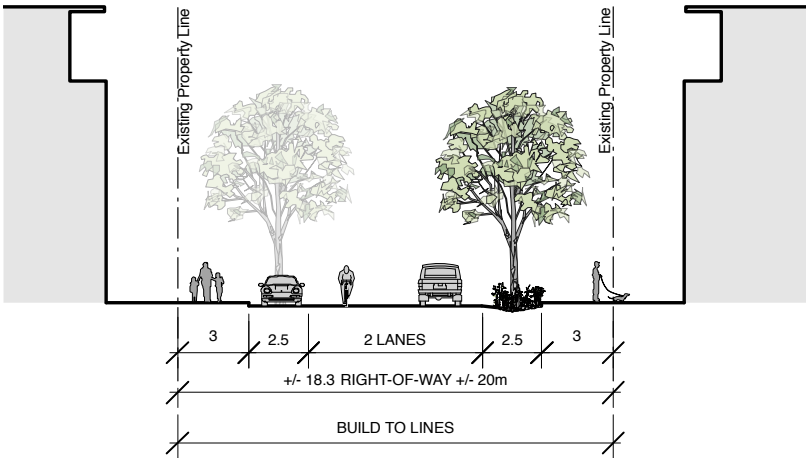


Wider streets for larger buildings and narrower ones for smaller-scaled buildings.

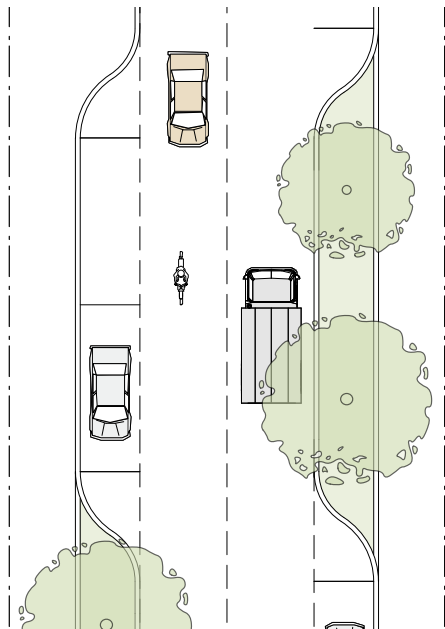
LOCAL STREETS

(Mostly East-West: Chatham St., Caledonia Ave., Discovery St., Pembroke St., Princess Ave., Queens Ave., Store St.)

Within an approximate 18.3m to 20m right of way, these streets are suggested to have two shared drive lanes, street parking and street trees. The distinguishing characteristic of these small scale streets are the bioswales which will capture and filter stormwater and increase the amount of vegetation within the public space. To accommodate street trees, parking and bioswales, all within this narrow right of way, the features will alternate back and forth on either side of the street.



Street Section through the mid block of a local street



Detail Plan of a local Street showing alternating parking and vegetation



Charrette sketch of future Pembroke St.



A mix of 3 to 6 storey residential buildings along a local street in Vancouver's West end

One of the most important and defining characteristics of the Rock Bay area could be that of landscaped streets. Environmentally functional and aesthetically beautiful, trees and plantings are a readily achievable early phase of redevelopment.



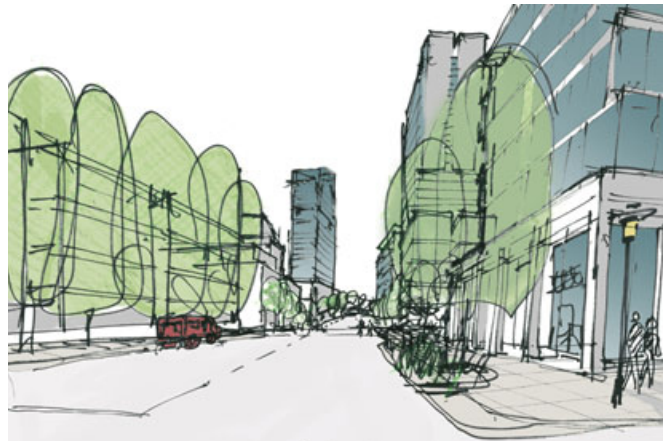
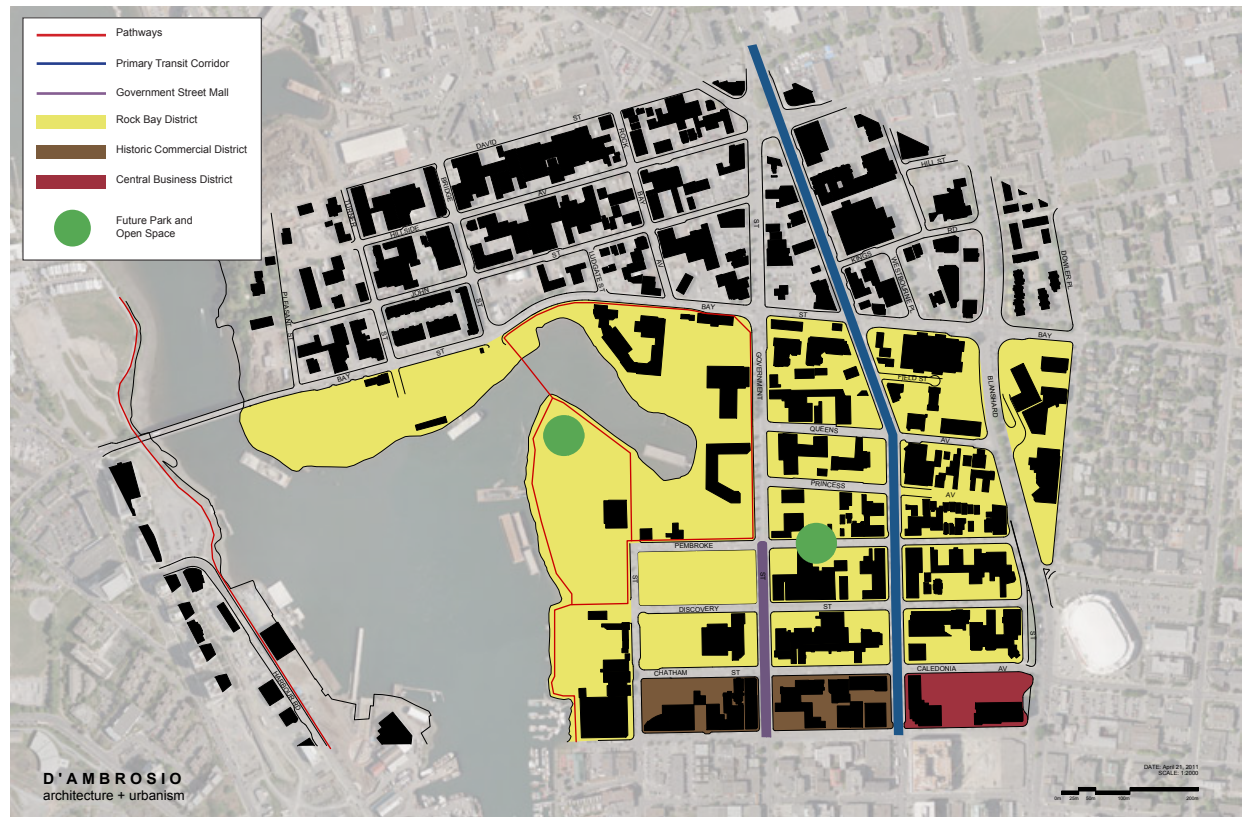
LAND USE

An important component of this urban design plan is understanding the concept of “mixed use.” In the context of Rock Bay this means significant amounts of light industrial, light manufacturing, service commercial, and marine commercial in both free-standing and vertically-mixed buildings. The mix will include a full range of multi-family residential uses in a variety of building types, including semi-detached, ground-oriented, and stacked townhouses, clustered and courtyard buildings, perimeter block buildings, mid-rises, and high-rises with mid-rise podiums.

Lot sizes will have to be modified to accommodate these building types through the incorporation of lanes, walkways, access driveways for shared underground parking, build-to lines, and thorough studies of circulation and shadow. All will be implemented with the road and open space network in mind in order to optimize living conditions, and accommodate those who may not want to live in high rise apartments but still want alternatives to single family houses.

In order to maintain the light industrial functions of the area, the residential and commercial potential of its key position as a “shoulder” to downtown Victoria must be maximized. Issues of proximity and compatibility must be carefully planned around the idea of “mixed use.” This will be a key element of the design guidelines and comprehensive development zoning envisioned for sites within Rock Bay.

Traffic segregation, buffering, vehicle types, volume, speed, and patterns of use will also be taken into account for both the general planning and the detailed design of every project.



The occasional high rise building will increase the overall density of the area and create opportunities for landmarking- both positive results of density transfers.



Pedestrian connections between buildings increase the permeability of the area and improve accessibility and safety.



LEGEND

- Mixed Use
- Townhouses
- Institutions
- Park

Proposed Detailed Land Use diagram



Compatibility issues can be mitigated through landscape, open space or physical separation between uses. For example, in the above illustration, residential uses could be located on the right and high tech industry or offices on the left.



A multi-use water's edge can allow for public access along with commercial enterprise.



Multiple uses, mixed vertically create a vibrant and positive complexity.

AESTHETICS: LOOK GOOD – FEEL GOOD

Social vitality in an urban space is dependent on its strategic mix of uses and density, as well as the psychological impressions and inspiration provided by its visual style. Architectural scale, composition, texture, colour, tectonics, and decoration impact the physical and cognitive accessibility of place and space.

Given that improving access, intensifying use, and nurturing social vitality in this area are key objectives, aesthetic elements are crucial to understanding this urban design plan. The development of contemporary concepts of expression, material, and structure must incorporate reference to the historic, cultural, social, technical, and artistic context of the place. In other words, the intent of the urban design guidelines is illustrated by the selective use of examples from other times and places.

Springing from the study of urban structure in the great western cities such as Paris, London, and New York, the plan for Rock Bay attempts to cross-fertilize these precedents with the contemporary and historic influences that shape the urban fabric of Victoria. This means that the block structure, scale, size, and geometry, in conjunction with building massing, height, proximity, and tectonics have been imagined in this document as hybrids between contemporary ideals and their historic forerunners.

This hybridization of typology is most prominent in the place between the public domain and the private building that forms it. The street façade and each of its individual components are human-scaled and of substantive materiality. If there is concrete, it will look like concrete, and if there is wood, it will look like wood. The oft-seen superficial imitation that is supposed to pass for contextual or historic architecture is recognized as illegitimate and inadequate. There will be no plaster trying to simulate stone, and no paint trying to simulate brickwork – this is not a Hollywood movie lot, but a genuine place.

Redevelopment of Rock Bay will provide a unique opportunity to imagine and design buildings and urban space for the future. Progressive, sustainable, authentic



The importance of public space, greenery and connectivity cannot be overstated. Robust construction, thoughtful planning and experiential delight must be the basic qualities of the public realm and its private interface.



Pearl District, Portland



Denny Regrade area, Seattle

Examples of redevelopment of transitional, underutilized and marginal urban areas exist in many cities.

and beautiful will be our watchwords for a new and improved city. The appearance of the buildings and streets in the illustrations of this plan promote these ideals of contemporary design. The sketches also represent the architectural variety and flexibility within the Rock Bay urban design plan as it evolves. We anticipate that a wide variety of architectural expression will result from the numerous hands and minds working to build the Rock Bay of the future.



Yaletown, Vancouver



Selkirk Waterfront, Victoria



Pearl District, Portland



CITY LIFE: PEOPLE IN PLACE

A social vision for Rock Bay might include a mix of activities at a density that will allow a critical mass of residential population. One of the benefits of densification is the encouragement of social mixing throughout the working population, which in turn supports downtown commerce and industry. It also increases the number of workplaces and services available to those who live in, or commute to, the downtown area. Rock Bay can be fully embraced by the economic zone of the downtown core. Like Harris Green, it should be distinct yet connected to the downtown core.

This is a significant departure from past characterizations of the Rock Bay district. It has mainly been perceived as a locale for light industrial, warehousing and marine support, and its north-south roads as nothing other than major traffic arteries. With little or no residential community or retail stakeholders, Rock Bay to date might well be described as one of the City's infrastructure and amenity bargains, from a land-cost perspective.

Let's take a moment to revisit a particular objective of the Draft Official Community Plan, to ensure *“that Rock Bay develops as an area of intensive employment specialized in the incubation, growth and retention of advanced clean technology and green enterprise,”* and that land uses including *“residential mixed-use, office, commercial”* be permitted at *“floor space ratios ranging from a base of 4.0:1 to a maximum of 6.0:1 for the area south of Queens Street between Douglas Street and Blanshard Street”* (and that other parts of the Rock Bay subject area are also likely to enjoy increased or improved densities, even though these have not been spelled out).

This objective clearly demands an urban design outcome similar to Victoria's Selkirk Waterfront Project, or Vulcan Real Estate's South Lake Union activity adjacent to downtown Seattle, or Portland's Pearl District, or Vancouver's False Creek/Eastside.



A mix of amenities and activities is critical in facilitating urban social vitality. Rock Bay area however, is amenity-poor; in fact, it is currently bereft of amenities. There are no parks, plazas or defined public spaces. No public art. Few or no trees. No landscaping or boulevard treatments. No cultural, institutional or community investment. Virtually no traffic calming or vehicular management. No pedestrian amenities.



Carefully designed open space allows denser housing.



False Creek, Vancouver - Green high density urban model

The kinds of people usually associated with the “*incubation, growth and retention of advanced clean technology and green enterprise*” are people who like street art and cultural amenities, good restaurants, galleries, bike racks, nearby jogging opportunities, interesting housing options, and good urban design in general.

These are some of the considerations that make us think that the fulfillment of development goals for Rock Bay will require the kind of intensive and comprehensive urban development program presented in this report.



South Lake Union, Seattle



A new market square in Spain

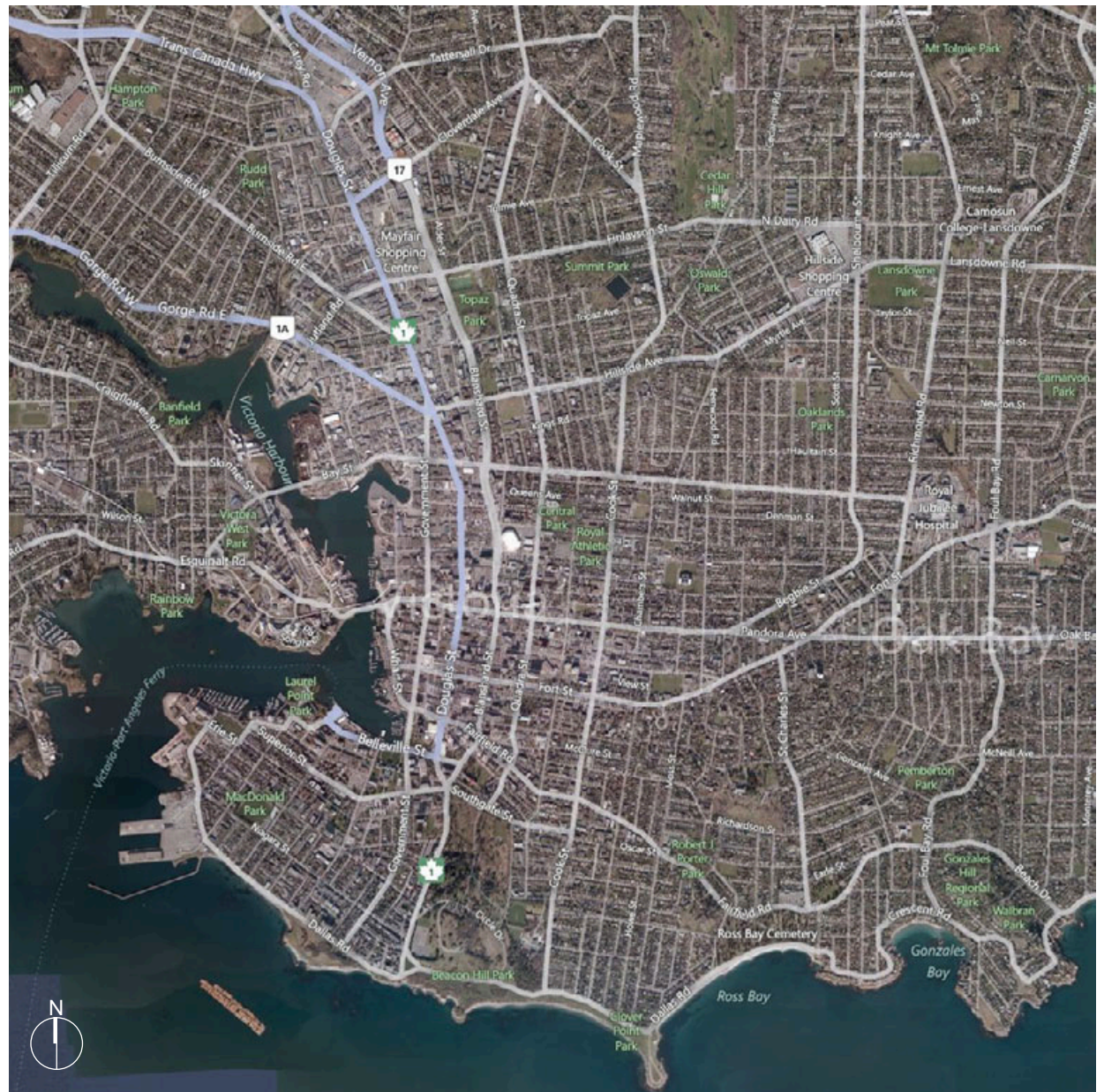


Bastion Square, Victoria, was a parking lot in a warehouse district

URBAN ECONOMICS: DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN THE COMING YEARS

The following topics are designed to address issues bearing on land economics, policy and regulation, and strategies for obtaining constructive urban development outcomes. The treatment represents an effort to reconcile regulatory culture and practice with the realities of the marketplace—not just development economics, but the larger reality of an option-rich, regionally competitive environment filled with choice for real estate investors, developers, lenders, homebuyers, businesses and employers.

This section describes a land economics strategy that can perhaps allow for the inevitably complicated negotiations to take place to realize a socially vibrant, economically vital Rock Bay that can add to the downtown core and have a true neighbourhood feel. We outline possible strategies and mechanisms for the use of density transfers and density increases as a currency between public and private to create an equitable system of exchange. This method could also address the issue of site remediation costs. More importantly, this strategy aims to directly tackle the issues that arise when good urban design meets with the particularities of contamination, zoning, politics, use, scale, proximity and compatibility that can normally become significant stumbling blocks to good design and sustainable urban growth.

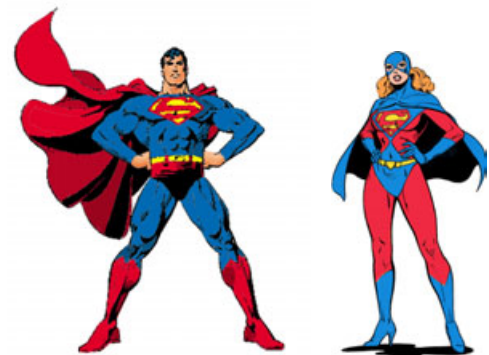


As a Provincial Capital and a regional centre, Victoria is made up of a complex mix of interdependent micro-economics.

(source: Bing Maps)

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

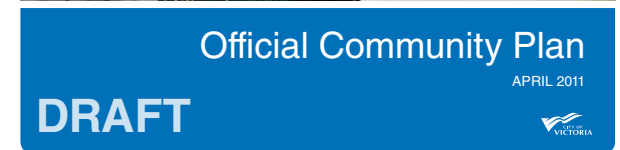
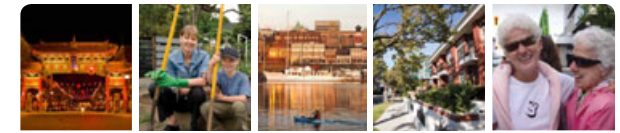
It's easy to conjure a mental image of the finished Rock Bay, to visualize street after street of new development. A formidable array of residential structures and busy offices. Lofts and tucked-away spaces for culture and creativity. Flourishing, efficient light-industrial operations integrated with newer uses. A cool, Whole-Foods-style supermarket, trendy shops, appealing pocket parks, treed streets, mid-block alleys and walkways, fountains, public art. All joined by nimble transit links to the downtown core, and paths leading pedestrians to recreational, cultural, and dining amenities. Overall, a gorgeous urban design success story.



Dedicated champions with superhero-like political courage will be required to make progress toward the Rock Bay imagined in this Urban Design Plan

But the conditions necessary to achieve such outcomes are always complex. Besides propitious market conditions, they call for:

- Laser-like clarity about goals and long-term public benefits
- Rigorous study and very sober analysis to establish/confirm that the basic market conditions—the 'fundamentals'—are in place or can be brought into place
- A review of similar projects in other cities, successful or otherwise
- A dedication to market knowledge and realities, and an understanding of what is possible in market terms, and in what time frame
- An urban planning vision, generally agreed-upon by all key stakeholders
- Clear and intelligent public policies, regulations, and incentives, subtly applied and skillfully delivered
- Short and long term certainty about the city's capacity to mount and sustain a financial partner role (i.e. infrastructure and other capital costs) in such an undertaking, recognizing that public way improvements can potentially run to \$500,000 per block (street block, not square block)
- A durable, dependable, explicit public-private collaboration to motivate and build confidence in property market investment (results will not come overnight)
- The political courage to see beyond slogans or flawed perceptions and to remain focused on the conditions and actions that will produce results
- An acknowledgement that property owners and developers need to manage risk and make a profit
- A dedicated champion/project manager within the city, supported by a mandate, the appropriate green-lighting mechanisms, and an internal culture of enthusiasm for the outcome



High quality streetscape as mixed-use green public space.

DO THE HOMEWORK

The City must engage in, and commit to continuing, research and study to ensure that all aspects of Rock Bay urban planning are rooted in market, land economic, and social realities, and to ensure resilience and adaptability as conditions change over time.

Policy needs to be tied to the hard realities of land values and development costs, and to a thorough, intuitive understanding of risk management from a private-sector perspective. It will be important at the outset to produce a kind of macroeconomics for Rock Bay redevelopment – that is, an economic framework in which long term economic outcomes and benefits can be clearly understood, and phased or staged public investments can be justified.

This would have to include active pursuit of development agencies, both private and public. The Vancouver Island Health Authority, the Capital Region Housing Corporation, the Capital Regional District, the Provincial Government, BC Transit, and other government and public corporations should be solicited.

Along with these and other public sources, private developers should be invited and enticed by valuable opportunities. In return, their investments will be catalysts to both private and public urban regeneration.



The Rock Bay Charette can be considered a citizen-initiated 'community circle' and a continuation of the OCP process.



INVESTMENT IN ROCK BAY

There are some fairly straightforward arguments for the need to invest in the redevelopment of Rock Bay:

- Population and economic energy (proliferation of shopping, services and jobs), is steadily migrating away from downtown and towards the suburbs
- The increasing sophistication of the suburban landscape means that most/all of downtown's economic (and even many of its cultural) amenities are duplicated in more convenient locations
- The above conditions are not likely to change
- The more people on the streets of downtown, the stronger the economics for downtown stores and services (and the better the social tone and public safety factor)
- The more robust the economy in and around downtown, the greater the direct economic benefit for the City of Victoria (taxes and surpluses leading to greater capacity to support public programs, make improvements, deliver amenities, etc)
- The best way to achieve the above is to significantly intensify the working and residential populations in and around downtown (augmented by a nimble mobility system), rather than wasting energy and resources in trying to woo disinterested and disinclined suburbanites, or simply gambling that the downtown economy will suddenly improve without intervention (Significantly, we don't hope or gamble in the area of emergency planning. We measure risks, we measure consequences, we invest and we prepare).



Suburban landscape feels like...



To some, urban, lively, feels right...



RESEARCH SUPPORTED RATIONALE

In spite of this logic, we are mindful that politically and financially sophisticated individuals in other cities (notably, in the US) have often produced equally compelling rationales for multi-hundred-million-dollar investments in stadiums, highway infrastructure, mobility systems and the like, which, when built, produced little or no multiplier, urban renewal or wheel-greasing economic or social benefit effects. The authors of this report acknowledge that, without research, it's hard to know if the arguments underlying Rock Bay redevelopment are supported by precedent in other cities.

Consequently, we urge city leadership to undertake thorough and credible research. The City has never truly studied downtown market activity in fine detail. How many people shop or spend money downtown? How do they get downtown? Where do they come from? What do they buy? How much do they spend? What are their demographic characteristics? These questions are not asked, so of course we do not have the answers. But such information is crucial to planning and decision-making. Take the Market on Yates. Does its clientele live and work within four square blocks? Twenty? A hundred? Answers to questions of this sort would be of inestimable help in urban development for Rock Bay, and would inform and sharpen the "policy investment."

We use the phrase "policy investment" thinking of Harris Green – the City's last effort to shore up downtown economics and population, now more than 15 years old. Any plan for Rock Bay would do well to study the Harris Green Plan (1995), its desired and predicted outcomes, and its outcomes in reality.

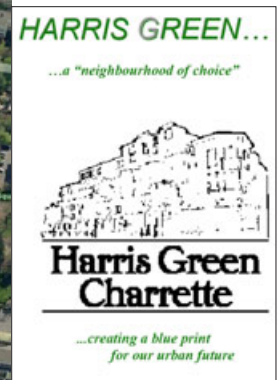
All of the above points to an obvious question that hovers over this report and, specifically, the issue of timing: market appetite. The transformation of Rock Bay as proposed in this report will require vast private sector capital investment ranging in the hundreds of millions, and even if the City can create favourable conditions at the policy and regulatory level, the private sector will need to consider Rock Bay development in the context of market opportunity and risk management.

The authors of this report are fully aware of this central issue. We put great emphasis on the need for research and have proposed, near the end of this report, the creation of a Rock Bay Development Corporation – a hybrid public/private sector entity – to bring professional rigour to the study of market viability. An appropriate first stage toward such an entity might be a panel or committee charged with evaluating the feasibility and scale of market opportunities in Rock Bay.

Rock Bay is not one uniform, homogenous place. It includes waterfront and harbourview property, low-intensity light industrial property, property adjacent to busy thoroughfares, and property on quiet and underused streets. There are sites with structures developed to their highest and best use, and sites that are now utilized entirely for surface parking or sit as bare, vacant land.



Harris Green neighbourhood



Government Street, Victoria



Market on Yates

New zoning, land use designations, policy, and public vision and public space investment in Rock Bay are themselves likely to impact land values, which the dynamics of the marketplace will refine.

We believe that the City may do well to take a very different, and more intentional, approach to Rock Bay redevelopment, featuring a much more explicit land use vision, more program detail regarding City public space improvement plans (i.e. the scope and timing of public investment), clearer messaging about urban design goals and expectations about building design standards, a streamlined development approval process, and generous zoning combined with strong disincentives for further re-zoning.

This won't cure all ills, but it may help to stabilize market expectations of land value. One of the major impediments to stable land transaction in Harris Green, an analogous area, has been a zoning cap of ten storeys and an implied density of about 3:1 playing against property owners' assumptions/beliefs that in reality a developer will have little or no trouble extracting 15 storeys and densities exceeding 5:1 from the City through the rezoning process.



Figure ground diagram showing potential building footprints

DENSITIES FOR VIABLE PROJECTS

What kind of density would be right for Rock Bay? The answer to this question follows on the answer to a more basic question: does the City consider new development in Rock Bay a crucial economic development priority and an urban development imperative?

Once again, Harris Green is an interesting case in point. The zoning associated with the Harris Green Area Plan is more than 15 years old. To date, under that zoning regime, there have been only eight projects completed (six residential, two office/commercial) within a crucial 14-block shoulder area immediately east of downtown, and perhaps another five currently contemplated or pending (subject either to development approval or to improvement in market conditions). Residential population in Harris Green has, at a guess, increased by no more than 50 people annually. While it is undetermined what factor or factors account for this very low level and slow pace of development, a lack of development industry certainty about market appetite in Harris Green must rank near the top. That is, Harris Green was never perceived by industry as a 'hot' market, and nothing was done by any private entity or public agency to alter this condition or perception.

A follow-up study could shed more light on what went wrong, but has not yet been undertaken. We can, however, make an educated guess as to the contributing factors:

- Prohibitive land pricing, driven by an unrealistic "gold rush" mentality among property owners
- Poor alignment (initially and/or subsequently) between zoning entitlements and market realities (fluctuating land and construction costs, changing price sensitivities on the buyer side, etc)
- Poor or uncoordinated marketing of opportunities and/or the City's vision;
- Uncertain or shifting messaging to industry about the City's commitment as a partner in the long-term transformation of Harris Green.

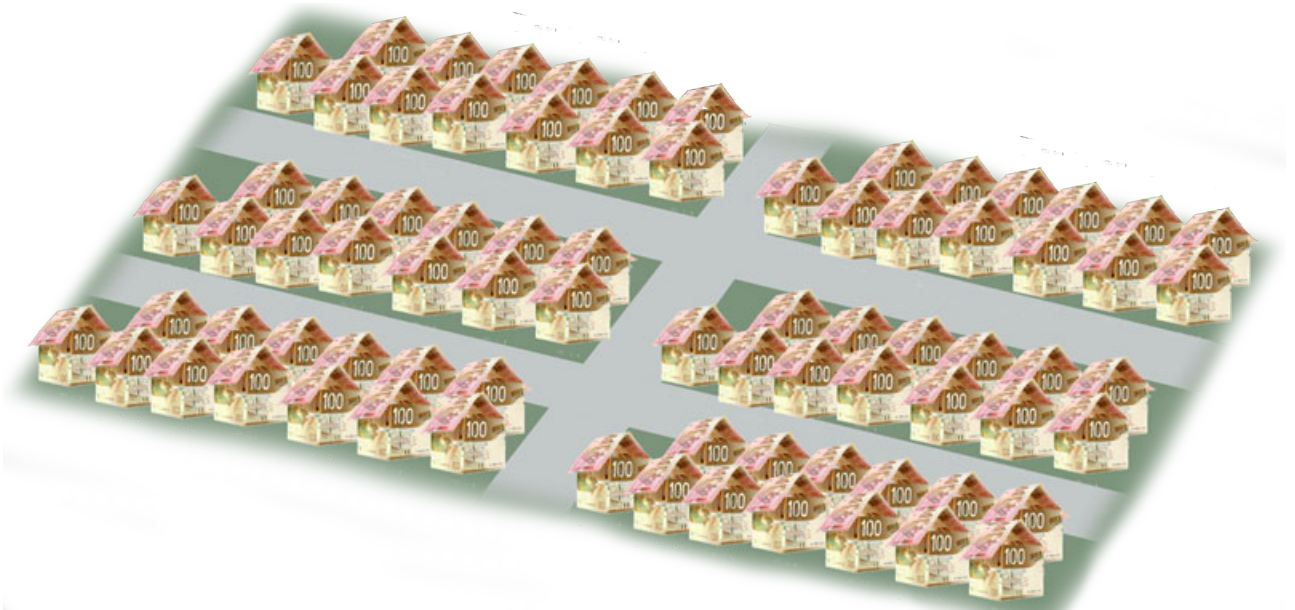
It is our belief that the concerns raised in this section should form the basis for study by the City, as they speak to a key question: can cities consciously create and influence markets and promote market opportunities? And, if the answer is yes, through what strategies and policies?



High densities and pleasant streets can be achieved through careful design



Harris Green neighbourhood – It's been a long time coming...



ROCK BAY WATERFRONT: An Alternate Strategy

The urban design presented in this document includes a public park on the northwest peninsula separating the Rock Bay inlet from the upper harbour (see plan on page 17). In order to create such a public amenity while maintaining suitable density for an urban area adjacent to downtown, a transfer of density is required. Our design proposes displacing density from the peninsula to the sites leading from Government and Pembroke Streets along the Bowker Creek pathway to Rock Bay inlet. An alternate strategy could involve spreading density over the peninsula and eliminating the large public park. As a result, building heights along Government and Pembroke Streets would decrease.



Original design with the peninsula as a large urban park



Alternate design with the peninsula developed



Original design: potential or market-driven level density is transferred from the peninsula to adjacent sites



Alternate design: density is spread evenly over the peninsula (if geotechnical conditions and proximities allow)

BONUS DENSITY CHARGE AND ITS ALTERNATIVES

Current and pending policies of the City tend to view density as a privilege, not a right... and as it is a privilege, the developer should pay for it.

While the City has come up with a less aggressive schedule for density bonus payment in the short term, the basic thinking hasn't changed--to maintain a financial disincentive for developers wanting to create greater residential or commercial square footage.

We ask: in the context of fierce regional competition for development benefits (homes, jobs, new business, new property taxes) isn't greater density exactly what the City would want to encourage?

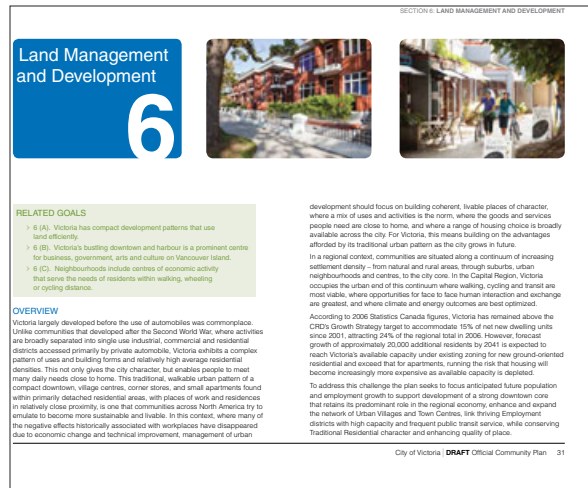
In addition, if our thesis is correct and the downtown economy requires considerable support from a 'home-grown' population of new residents and workers, wouldn't that make the case for achieving the maximum acceptable density from every development site?

In the special case of Rock Bay – which, in its current state, can hardly be described as Victoria's prime receiving area for private investment or developer risk-taking – is it possible to justify an artificial density cap simply to extract payment for additional density?

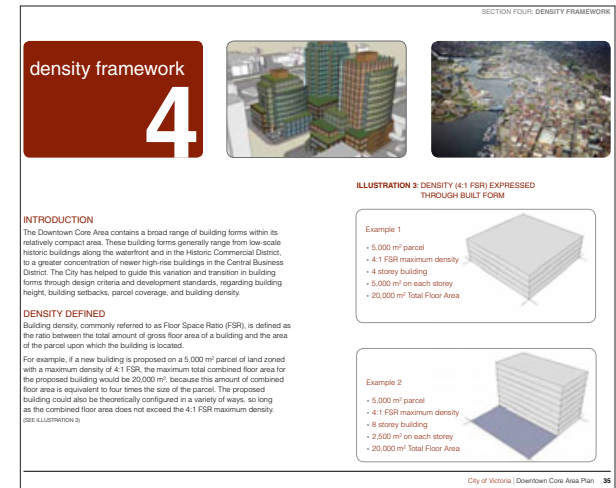
We encourage the City to consider the development potential of Rock Bay with these thoughts in mind. We submit that the City makes significant indirect investments in areas in and around downtown that it deems to be economically important to downtown's well-being. Thus, the basic idea and principles of strategic investment are well understood, locally.

In line with the above, we take the view that a uniform density of 5:1 as-of-right everywhere in the Rock Bay subject area and 6:1 between Douglas and Blanshard, south of Bay Street and north of Herald Street, would be appropriate.

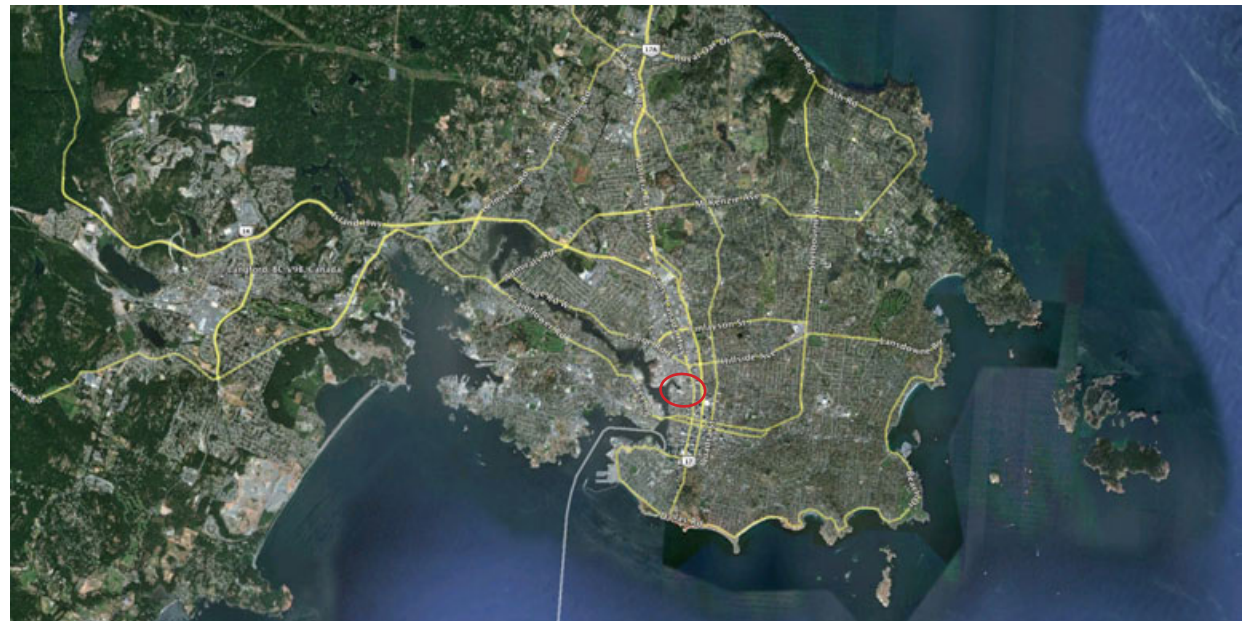
However we also recognize that many subject properties would not (or could not) be developed to such a density, and that the City's other regulatory and policy tools can successfully manage building form and character, along with development contribution to



Excerpt from the City of Victoria Draft Official Community Plan (OCP)



Excerpt from the City of Victoria Downtown Core Area Plan



Regional competition for new development has brought investment outside of the city

the public realm. There are different requirements for different building types – how they will form the public domain, open space, shadow effects, etc. These are matters beyond the simple view of land as density and monetary value. This is form-based growth, and it can result in a more viable and successful urban development.



Recent aerial photograph of Rock Bay and surrounding area

— STUDY AREA

A DENSITY BANK

The inability to successfully intersect private wants (financial success) and public wants (livable neighbourhoods) is a major reason that good urban design is rarely achieved, since building good city fabric doesn't necessarily promise an equality of reward. Creating a desirable mix of uses and residential building types can cause inequities in land values that become an obstacle to making good neighbourhoods. To avoid this obstacle, there have to be mechanisms in place that serve to balance value between property owners so that both collective and private goals can be achieved – this is a fundamental objective of proper urban design.

We recommend using development rights – such as density and other zoning parameters – as a kind of currency. This type of negotiation strategy allows for balanced and equitable development deals for all concerned. Properties in the Rock Bay subject area could be managed under a density bank or TDR (Transfer of Development Rights) program that would allow developers to treat unused density as a currency – subject, of course, to a variety of controls as to terms and conditions of approval, locations, maximums, etc, and with safeguards in place to prohibit outright abuse. Such a program could foster the best possible outcomes: more efficient land use, higher tax yields, and a more robust economy in and around downtown.



A coherent, sustainable and vibrant city district can only emerge from a flexible, responsive and resilient economic strategy supported by strong political will and committed, confident investment.

R.B.D.C.

The establishment of a “Rock Bay Development Co-operative” might be the way to facilitate these negotiations. Such an initiative should be led by the City of Victoria in conjunction with the development community to create mechanisms for evaluating land development potential and related financial dealings between landowners.

This land economics strategy could potentially provide a solution to the imbalance in development costs encountered when contaminated land must be remediated, or when there are compelling infrastructure or city-wide economic issues to address. Ideally, the success of the idea will be measured by both public and private metrics.



The Bay Street gateway from Vic west / Point Ellice bridge could express the unique character of Rock Bay's mix of industrial, commercial and residential uses.

CONTAMINATED SITES

A large part of Rock Bay's development inertia can be attributed to its legacy of contamination issues. This additional financial burden on development costs has resulted in numerous private sites lying fallow for an extended time. This, in addition to development speculation, has resulted in a patchwork of underdeveloped and derelict sites.

It is reasonable to suggest that not every parcel is contaminated, and that soil contamination based on prior industrial uses is likely not distributed equally across the entire subject area. With that in mind, virtually the entire subject area has a long history of varied industrial use. We will not have all the facts until each and every property parcel has been subjected to soil testing, each in their own good time.

Depending on the nature, extent and intensity of soil contamination, the costs of remediation can be significant. While it is tempting for a municipality to take the view that this is solely a market factor, the reality is that it also bears on the viability of land sale and development. Any special factor that may dampen either the potential or pace of redevelopment needs to be acknowledged and dealt with. At a bare minimum, such a factor is going to play into any financial calculation or scenario that the city is using to determine the scope and speed of public sector investment.

While it's not appropriate to offer soil contamination data for Rock Bay or tables and cost calculations in this report, we want to stress that soil remediation costs can have a serious impact on the feasibility of development. Since it is the view of this report that the City must think of the redevelopment of Rock Bay as a downtown economic development imperative, we believe that the City must identify a range of financially appropriate responses (incentives, density bonuses, density transfer rights, tax deferrals, reduction of fees and charges, on-site parking relaxations, etc), and bring these into play as circumstances warrant, so as not to allow contamination to inhibit redevelopment.



Diagram showing sites with suspected contamination issues

Legend

- Approximate lateral extent of soil and sediment exceeding Special Waste standards
- Approximate lateral extent of soil with PAH concentrations exceeding CSR/CL standards
- Sheetpile for structural support
- Sheetpile for foreshore support
- Temporary sheetpile barrier

Source: Golder Associates and other sources, subject to confirmation



False Creek, Vancouver: Redevelopment of former industrial lands is a complex endeavour requiring creative cooperation, compromise and vision



Sayward Sash and Door Factory - Courtesy of the BC Archives Collection



Remediation of the waterfront area that includes the BC Hydro site is ongoing



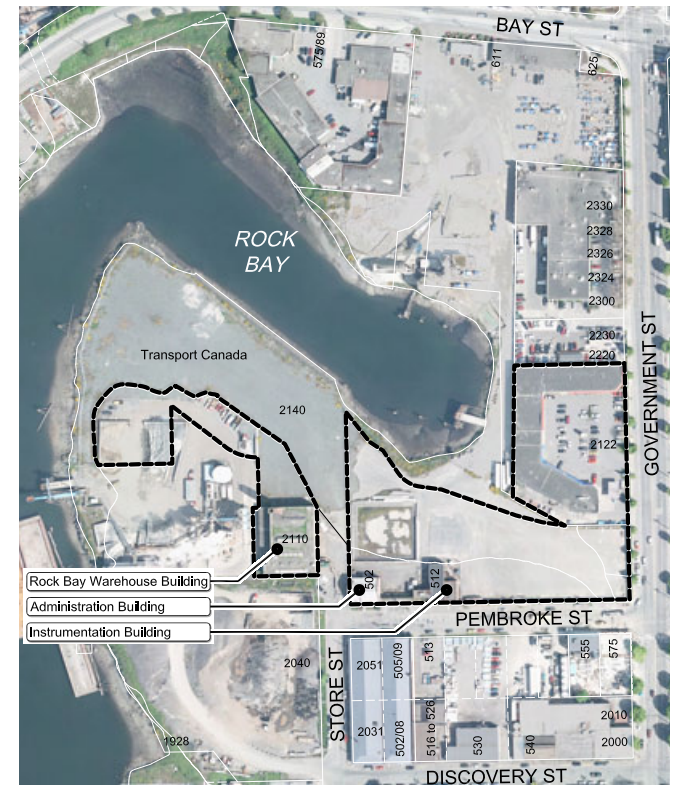
Contaminated former industrial sites cause significant delays to the redevelopment of entire city blocks

The negotiation between land owners brokered by a “Rock Bay Development Co-operative” could be a way to manage the cost of remediation of contaminated land. For some parties, at least, this could allow land use that would be viable with a less onerous level of remediation than that required for, say, residential development. If, for example, a contaminated site is ideally located for uses other than commercial or residential building, remediation could be achieved with less expense. This could then earn a rating that would allow use as park, open space, etc. That might be a way to achieve more than singular property development while allowing equitable values for most land.

On February 14, 2012 the City of Victoria Governance and Priorities Committee released a report concerning the state of environmental remediation of the BC Hydro properties fronting onto the Rock Bay inlet. The report, prepared by city planning staff, provides recommendations for three heritage-registered structures sitting on, or adjacent to, contaminated soil. Of the three structures in question, two – the Rock Bay Warehouse Building and Administration Building – are recommended for protection through heritage designation. The third – the Instrumentation Building – is claimed to have deteriorated beyond basic repair and “the demolition or removal of the Instrumentation Building is the only practical option

to ensure that BC Hydro is able to fully remediate this site due to the concentration, distribution and depth of contaminated soils directly below and surrounding the building.” In a letter issued by BC Hydro on January 9, 2012, the company “indicated a commitment to the complete remediation of its properties as well as a willingness to remediate portions of the Pembroke Street right-of-way that are adjacent to the BC Hydro property.”

Though the above indicates a continued commitment on the part of the City and BC Hydro toward remediation of contaminated sites in Rock Bay, the BC Hydro site constitutes only one of a series of contaminated sites in the area. Also, due to the complexities inherent in the remediation effort, particularly for sites located adjacent to municipally-protected heritage structures, the process will require a significant amount of time and resources.



Area map of BC Hydro property with buildings of heritage interest indicated (source: City of Victoria Governance & Priorities Committee Report, Feb. 14, 2012)

WHERE TO START

If the City were to look for some alternative to the expenditure of existing (and otherwise earmarked) funds, it might consider a strategy involving:

- A fully elaborated public space design blueprint, indicating detailed block-by-block and area-wide intentions with credible cost estimates for all items
- An analysis to determine if the total cost of outfitting Rock Bay with amenities divided by the maximum contemplated new square footage of development in Rock Bay represents a viable, manageable development cost—without the addition of another dollar in development cost charges
- A review of methods of amenity delivery (pocket parks, fountains, seating, etc.) via new development at little or no cost to the City (Humboldt Valley offers some suggestions)
- Study of the feasibility of expressing all conventional development costs and charges as developer upgrades to the public realm
- Study of the possibility of added density bonus in exchange for developer provision of agreed-to amenities
- Study of the possibility of property tax deferral for same
- Study of transferable density credits for same.



Looking west from Store Street at the bottom of Discovery Street



Looking west along Discovery Street between Douglas Street and Government Street



COLLABORATION: FACING FISCAL REALITIES IN THE LONG TERM

The City recognizes the need to increase residential and worker populations close to downtown as a viable strategy for sustaining the downtown economy and social balance. It may acknowledge that a Rock Bay urban design vision and an ambitious program of public space improvements is needed if the City hopes to attract development and lure a significant number of new workers and residents to Rock Bay.

Under such circumstances, the City might wish to study the option of turning the subject area into a development enterprise zone and inviting the formation of a Rock Bay Development Co-operative with a specific mandate and goals. Provided with the right tools and financial incentives, such a corporation, operating under a charter from the City but with substantial autonomy, might be the best (and the only) entity able to get the job done.

We use the phrase “Rock Bay Development Co-operative” simply to point toward some business entity or utility that would be able to use private sector protocols to achieve a public good.

There is extensive literature describing a variety of models for public/private collaborations. Such collaborations have been successfully undertaken at a variety of urban scales from project-specific to entire areas, and using a wide range of leadership, operating, and funding models.

If there is support for the kind of economic development and land use vision proposed in this report, we believe some public/private entity may be the best means of expediting and fulfilling this urban vision.

A first step toward the creation of such an entity could be a panel or commission consisting of public and private sector participants, charged with a year-long mandate to work out basic feasibility and to recommend an approach for a longer-term structure.



CONCLUSION

We would like to end this report by inviting the reader to return to the Urban Design Vision section, and to the later discussions of the policy and economic strategies required to make such a vision come true.

We encourage the reader to consider the recommendations of progressive steps sprinkled through the latter sections of this document and use them as conversation starters. Consider what is needed to ensure that Rock Bay can fulfill its potential as a technology-based job centre, a new mixed use neighbourhood, and a crucial economic support for our downtown.



A vision of Rock Bay in the future



