
Design Guide: Chase River Town Centre



City of Nanaimo
Official Community Plan Bylaw 6000.023

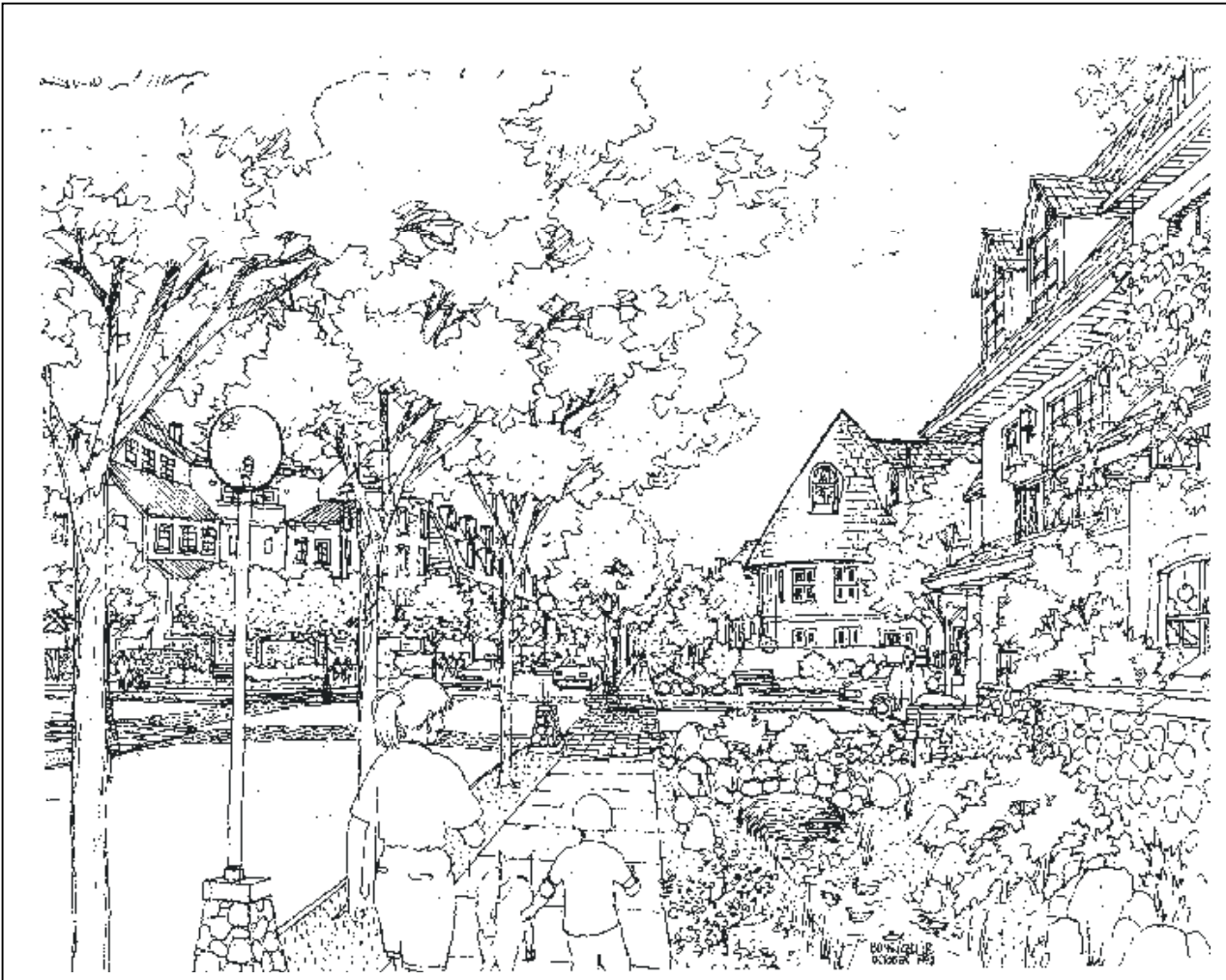
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1. Background

With the adoption of the City's Official Community Plan (OCP) in 1996, Council acknowledged that there would be a need for, and benefit in, developing Neighbourhood Plans. Where the OCP is general in nature, Neighbourhood Plans could address issues unique to each sub-area.

In 1999 Chase River residents successfully completed a Neighbourhood Plan. During the development of their plan, Chase River residents strongly conveyed their desire to retain their uniqueness within the greater community. In an effort to assist the Neighbourhood of Chase River maintain and enhance its distinct personality within the greater city, Council supported the development of specific design guidelines for their Town Centre.



Concept Drawing - Residential Precinct Looking North on Wexford Road

2. Purpose

The purpose of developing a Design Guide for the Chase River *Town Centre* is to assist area residents and the development community in creating a unique and relevant *Town Centre*.

The above statement begs the question, what is the purpose and value in creating a unique Town Centre?

The answer to this question is "good design is good business." A place or thing has more value when it is distinct from other places or things. Creating a unique *Town Centre* confers value, both economic and in terms of quality of life for residents.

To see the principle of "good design is good business" in action, you only need look at Downtown Victoria or Granville Island and West 10th in Vancouver.

In the case of Victoria, the small-scale pedestrian nature of the downtown has been maintained and enhanced. Building heights have been limited to ensure that sunshine reaches the street level. Pedestrian walkways have been developed through historic alleyways, and quality public open-space has been created from remnant areas between buildings. Colour and signage schemes have been devised to ensure a consistency in the Downtown core. The history of the area has been preserved and enhanced, clearly illustrated with the rebirth of China Town as a place to shop, work and live. In addition, a range and variety of quality living space has been constructed in the area to ensure a resident population that will support the commercial and cultural enterprises in the downtown.

The above-noted design considerations and others too numerous to mention, help make an urban environment unique and appealing. It is not an accident that downtown Victoria is a vibrant commercial district, is a major tourist destination, or that the downtown is seen as a desirable area to live.

It is important to note that good design doesn't just happen, it's planned. It is also important to note that creating an Urban Village in form only, will not be successful. Successful Urban Villages emerge out of existing neighbourhoods. Hence, it is critical to identify those things about the neighbourhood, which we value and want to preserve.

The *Chase River Town Centre Design Guidelines* attempt to identify the unique historical, cultural and geographical characteristics of the area, and use them as thematic principles with which to guide development.

3. Scope

While the City's *General Design Guidelines* will still apply throughout all of Nanaimo, a small number of additional guidelines will apply to the Chase River *Town Centre*.

The *Chase River Town Centre Design Guide* outlines a vision of how the area could look 20 - 30 years from now. It is acknowledged that some aspects of the guide may not be achieved. While the guide addresses issues such as building colour and materials, it is understood that such issues would be voluntary.

In regard to the *Mainstreet*, it is acknowledged that development may occur in a piecemeal manner over time. As such, the *Mainstreet* images in this document need to be viewed as one possible outcome over a time frame of 20-30 years. The only caveat to developing on the *Mainstreet* is that incremental development must not prohibit build-out per *Mainstreet* policies in this document and the *Official Community Plan*.

Obviously, architecture and development are dynamic fields. To write a rigid policy document that limits architects, designers and builders to one particular style or interpretation of that style, would result in the development of a *Town Centre* that is static and akin to a movie set or Disneyland . . . cute, but lacking a feeling of permanence, reality and reliance.

It is not the City's intent to prescribe any specific design solutions, **but rather encourage a diversity of imaginative solutions** to the considerations addressed in the guidelines.

This document does not address building massing or setbacks. Rather, the document outlines the Neighbourhood's vision for their area and elaborates on the details, which will work towards creating a unique *Town Centre*.

"The comfortable city and urban village are both built and experienced as a series of details, which may appear seamless and coherent, if things work well, but in fact were created over a lengthy period and by a variety of minds. Although a building may be very large, we perceive it detail by detail. An ordinary and banal structure can and will be transformed if the designer and builder have thought through the user's needs and reflect those needs in details...The creation of comfortable environments can be a rewarding endeavour, both financially and physically." David Sucher, "City Comforts"

In an effort to encourage and support quality design in the Chase River Town Centre, urban amenities and finer development details that go toward creating a unique and interesting *Town Centre* will be supported, in whole or in part, as the amenity contribution for rezonings.

The Chase River Town Centre Guidelines are broken into five (5) sections: thematic principles; application of principles; design landscaping details; site furnishings details; and paving details. Policies are located in two places within this document. Policies unique to the Chase River Town Centre are located in Section 6 of this document. General policies that will eventually be adopted into the City's revised General Design Guidelines can be found in this document's appendix. It is important to note that all of the above noted policies apply to development in the Chase River Town Centre.

Given that the Chase River Town Centre Guidelines mesh with a series of other policy documents, we have included a chart which outlines what design & land use polices are applicable for different types of development.

Table 1 - Policy Application in the Chase River Town Centre

	Mainstreet Precinct	Commercial Precinct	Residential Precinct
Official Community Plan Policies *	✓	✓	✓
Chase River Town Centre Design Guide	✓	✓	✓
General Development Permit Area Design Guidelines		✓	✓
Mainstreet Design Guidelines	✓		
Landscaping in City Streets	✓ (Consult Sections 7 - 9 of this document for design details)	✓ (Consult Sections 7 - 9 of this document for design details)	✓ (Consult Sections 7 - 9 of this document for design details)
Nanaimo Parkway Design Guidelines		✓ (Only if the subject property is adjacent to the Parkway)	✓ (Only if the subject property is adjacent to the Parkway)
Innovative Infill Design Guidelines			✓ (Only applies to tri-plexes and four-plexes)

(*) The OCP incorporates the policies of the Chase River Neighbourhood Plan

Note: The above table focuses on design related policy documents. This table is not an exhaustive list of policy documents that could affect development or property in the Chase River Town Centre.

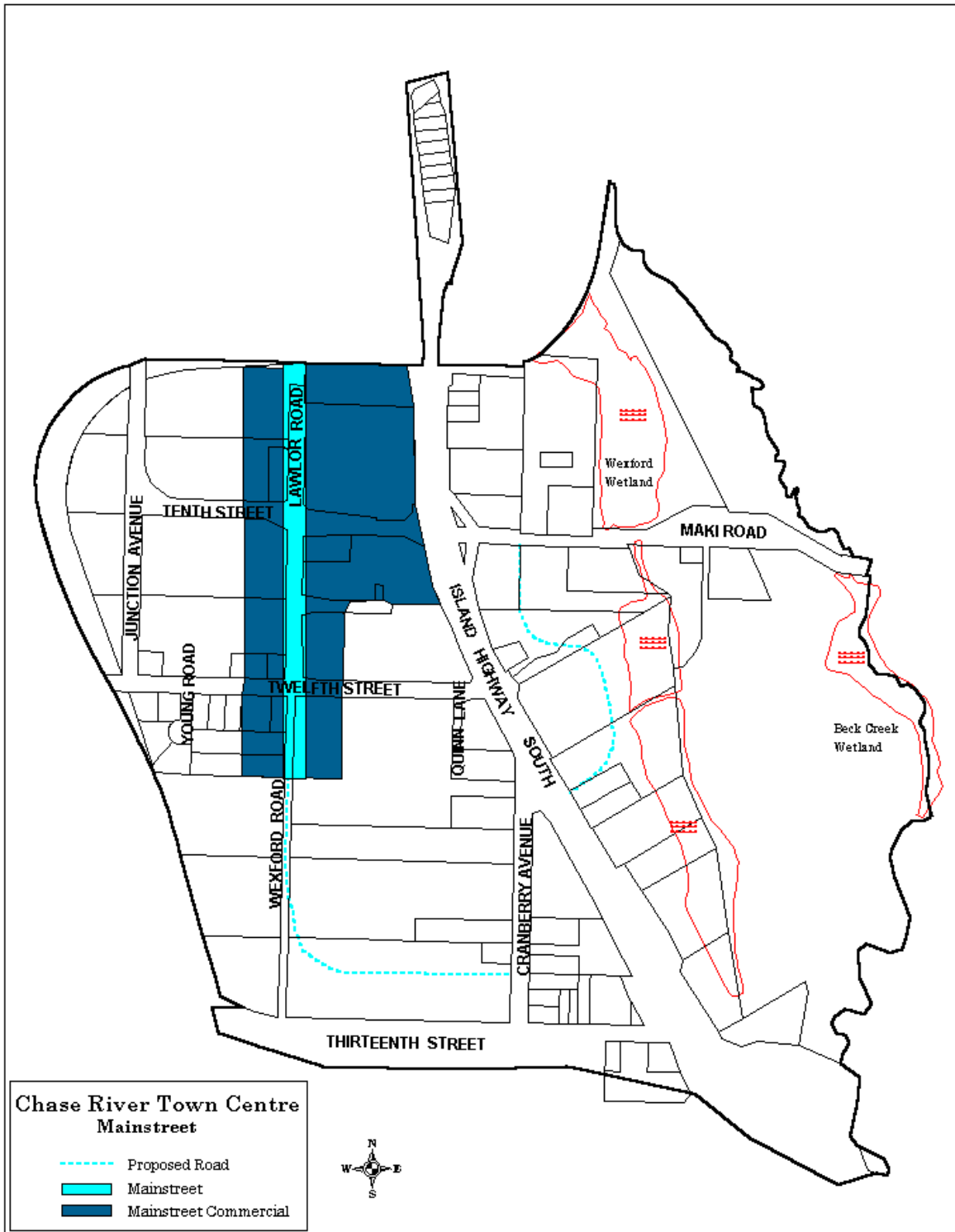
4. The Chase River Town Centre

The Chase River *Town Centre* covers an area of 86.8 hectares (214.4 acres) and is bound by the Parkway to the south, Beck Creek to the east, the E & N Railway to the north and west, with a dogleg area running up to Haliburton Street in the north.

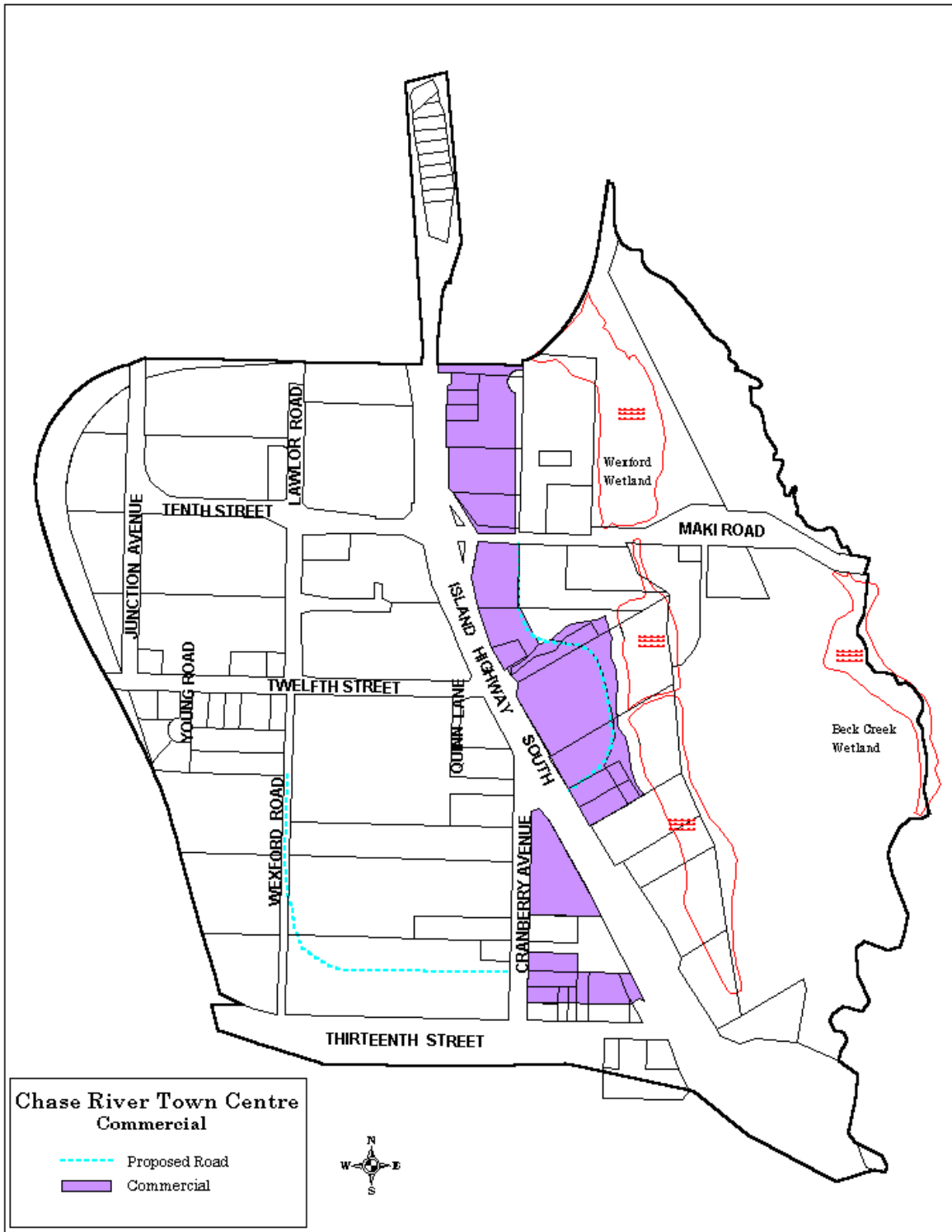
The lands to the west of the Trans Canada Highway make up the core district of the Town Centre, with Lawlor /Wexford Road as the *Mainstreet*. The majority of residential and pedestrian scale commercial activity is to be focused in this area, with larger scale commercial activity directed to the lands on the eastside of the Trans Canada Highway. Residential activity also takes place on the east- side of the Highway adjacent to Beck Creek.

The Town Centre is composed of three distinct precincts, namely Mainstreet (mixed use), Residential and Commercial. The design related policies that apply to each precinct are as outlined in Table 1, Section 3.

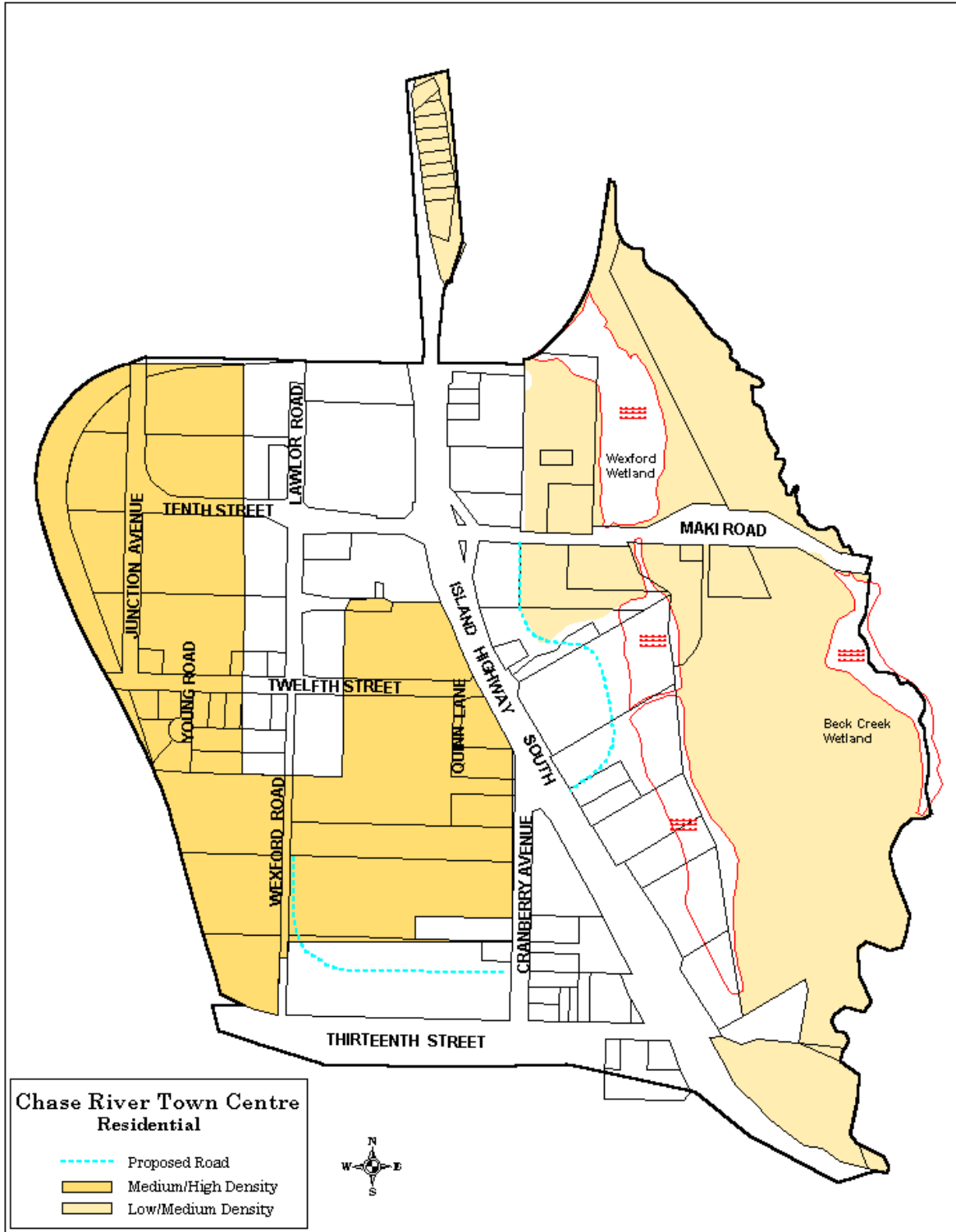
Plan 1 - Mainstreet Precinct



Plan 2 - Commercial Precinct



Plan 3 - Residential Precinct



5. Thematic Principles

The term *Thematic Principles* refers to the characteristics, which define a neighbourhood or community. Thematic principles are generally born of the history and/or culture of the area, and its geography.

As previously stated, successful Urban Villages emerge from cohesive neighbourhoods. Hence, it is important to acknowledge and foster both the subtle and overt characteristics, which have bound the neighbourhood together over time.

The characteristics or thematic principles of Chase River are as follows:

Historical

Chase River was predominantly a farming community. Remnants of Chase River's agrarian past can still be seen in the large lots and small farms of Cinnabar Valley and the Town Centre.

Three of the original farmhouses in Chase River are documented in the book “Columns, Cornices and Coal - The Heritage Resources of Nanaimo” (see Appendix A for an excerpt from this document).

The Heritage Section of the “Chase River Neighbourhood Plan” elaborates on the history of the area and notes buildings, sites and landscapes that are considered to be valuable to the culture of the neighbourhood. The “Chase River Neighbourhood Plan” also outlines means of preserving, enhancing and promoting the history of the area.



Botley Farm – Chase River

Cultural

Apart from aboriginal settlement, Finnish immigrants were the predominant settlers of Chase River in the last half of the 19th Century. They made their living by farming and by working in the coal mines and forests.

The family names noted on a 1901 Settlement map of the Chase River Town Centre, clearly illustrate the number of Finnish immigrants that resided in the area. In addition, the Nanaimo Cemetery index, which notes the location of the deceased's death and birth, again bears witness to the prevalence of Finnish settlers in Chase River.

Only one significant structure built by the Finnish Community has been documented, namely Finn Hall. In 1910 the Finnish settlers worked together to build a Community Centre, which was located at the site of the present Moose Hall (1356 Cranberry Avenue).



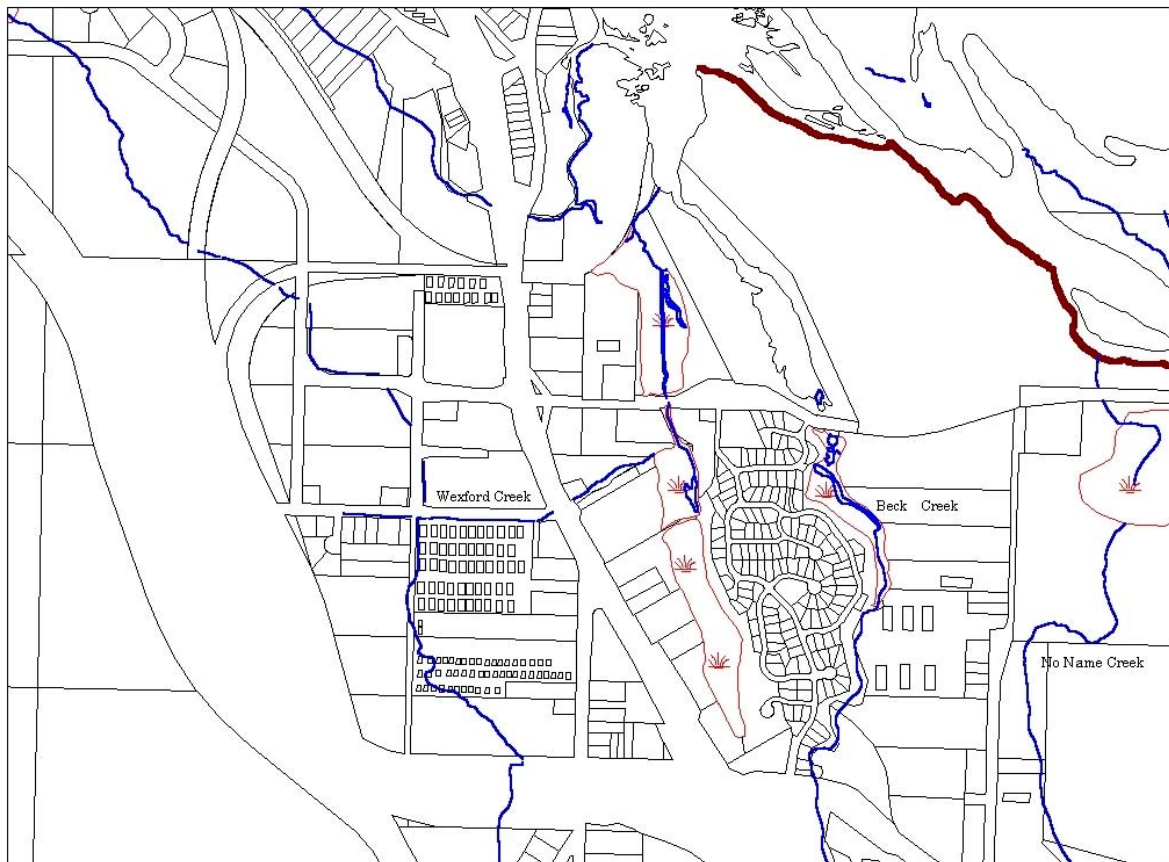
Finnish Comrades Hall (Finn Hall) - Finn Hall was located on the property where the current Moose Hall Lodge now stands (1356 Cranberry Avenue)

Geographical

The numerous watercourses that criss-cross the Chase River Neighbourhood are the most significant geographic features that bind this area together. The Town Centre alone is impacted by the Chase River, Wexford Creek and Beck Creek. In addition, the Town Centre is situated at the mouth of the Nanaimo River Estuary.

The watercourses which run through the Town Centre, and those situated in the greater neighbourhood (Richard's and No Name) and beyond are part of an important and valuable watershed. Protection and enhancement of these watercourses is to be a priority consideration.

The protection and enhancement of these watercourses and associated habitat are important to the health and livability of the Chase River Town Centre. These watercourses and their associated habitat add to the aesthetic value of the area and when sensitively incorporated into developments can result in significant economic benefit to landowners and developers.



Chase River Waterbodies and Wetlands

6. Application of Thematic Principles

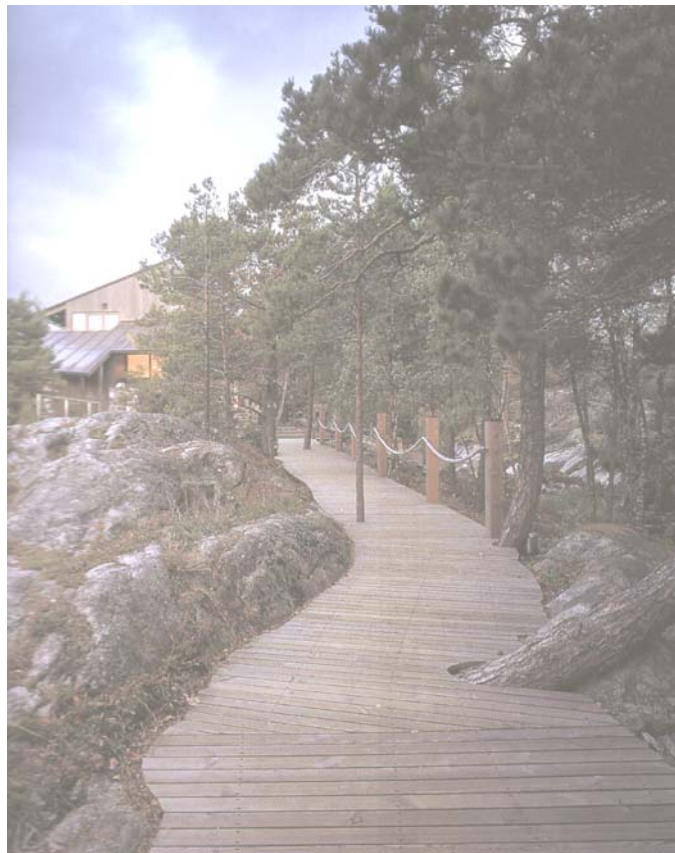
A. Landscape

Objective:

To enhance the sense of place and identity of the Town Centre by promoting the development of both hard and soft landscapes which protect and highlight the area's natural environment, and where possible reflect the area's Finnish and agrarian history.

Policy:

1. Views to the Nanaimo River estuary, the creeks and wetland that exist in the Town Centre and beyond, and the mountain that terminates the view looking south down Mainstreet, should be protected and capitalized on.
2. Protecting on-site stands of Douglas Fir and other conifers to help preserve the memory of the native vegetation, which originally covered the Town Centre, is strongly encouraged. If a conflict exists in regard to tree retention versus capitalizing on views to the estuary etc. (see policy A-1), tree retention is to take precedence.



Successful integration of built form with natural landscape.

3. New landscaping should include native plant species where appropriate.
4. If properties abutting the intersection of the Trans Canada Highway and Tenth Street are eventually redeveloped, they must replicate the landscaping found on the Northeast and Southeast corners of the intersection. The intention of this policy is to secure a cohesive planting scheme on all four corners of this intersection. See gateway section of the Chase River Neighbourhood Plan.
5. Open space should be primarily detailed in stone and/or textured concrete and incorporate a water feature and/or relevant public art, conveying the agrarian or Finnish history of the area.
6. Street furniture, lighting, and road right-of-ways should be developed per sections 7 through 9 of this document.

B. Building Siting & Form

Objective:

To enhance the sense of place and identity of the Town Centre by constructing developments that enhance the livability of the area, work with the topography and natural environment, and reflect the area's Finnish and agrarian history.

Policy:

1. Roofs are to be steeply pitched, and their massing broken up by the insertion of dormer windows.
2. Substantial building materials (e.g. rock, brick, and textured concrete) should be used on the first story of the façade in an effort to give the building a sense of permanence and a strong base.
3. Buildings must be detailed in a manner that subtly reflects the Finnish and/or agrarian history of the area.
4. The use of "natural" building materials such as stone, brick, wood, concrete, glass and metal is strongly encouraged.
5. Stucco should be used sparingly as an accent and in subdued colours.
6. The use of an earth based colour palate for the body of buildings, and the use of strong accent colours for architectural detailing, is strongly encouraged.



Mattick's Farm Redevelopment – Victoria, B.C.

C. Pedestrian Emphasis

Objective:

To enhance the sense of place and identity of the Town Centre by creating an efficient, pleasant and safe network of sidewalks and paths for pedestrians. The pedestrian network should link destination points with residential areas, while visually and physically buffering pedestrians from vehicles.

1. Pedestrian crossings and sidewalks must be developed per Section 9 of this document.

Examples:

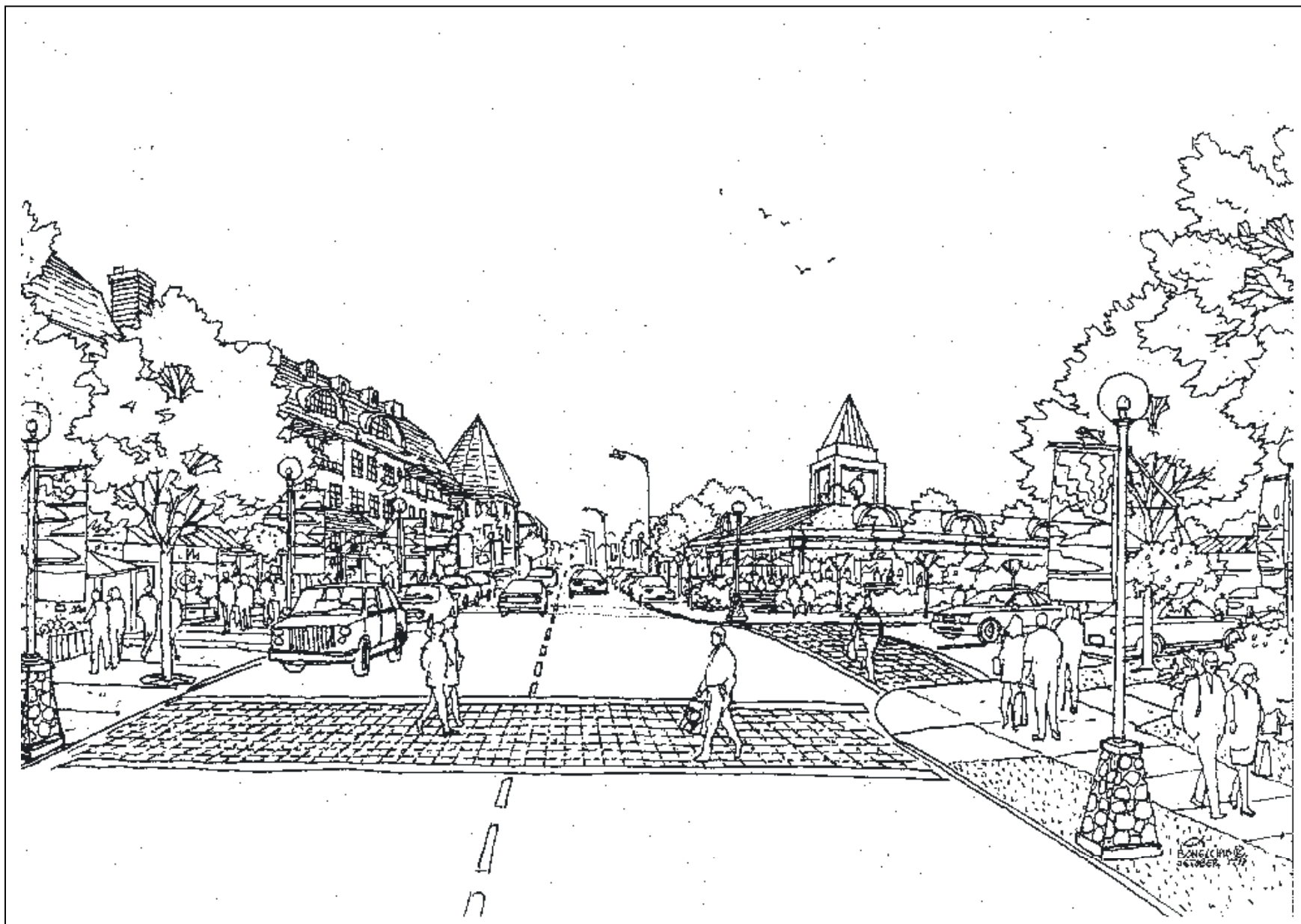
The following five (5) pages provide visual examples of how the thematic principles could be applied.



Conceptual Rendering No. 1 – Mainstreet Precinct Looking South on Lawlor Road



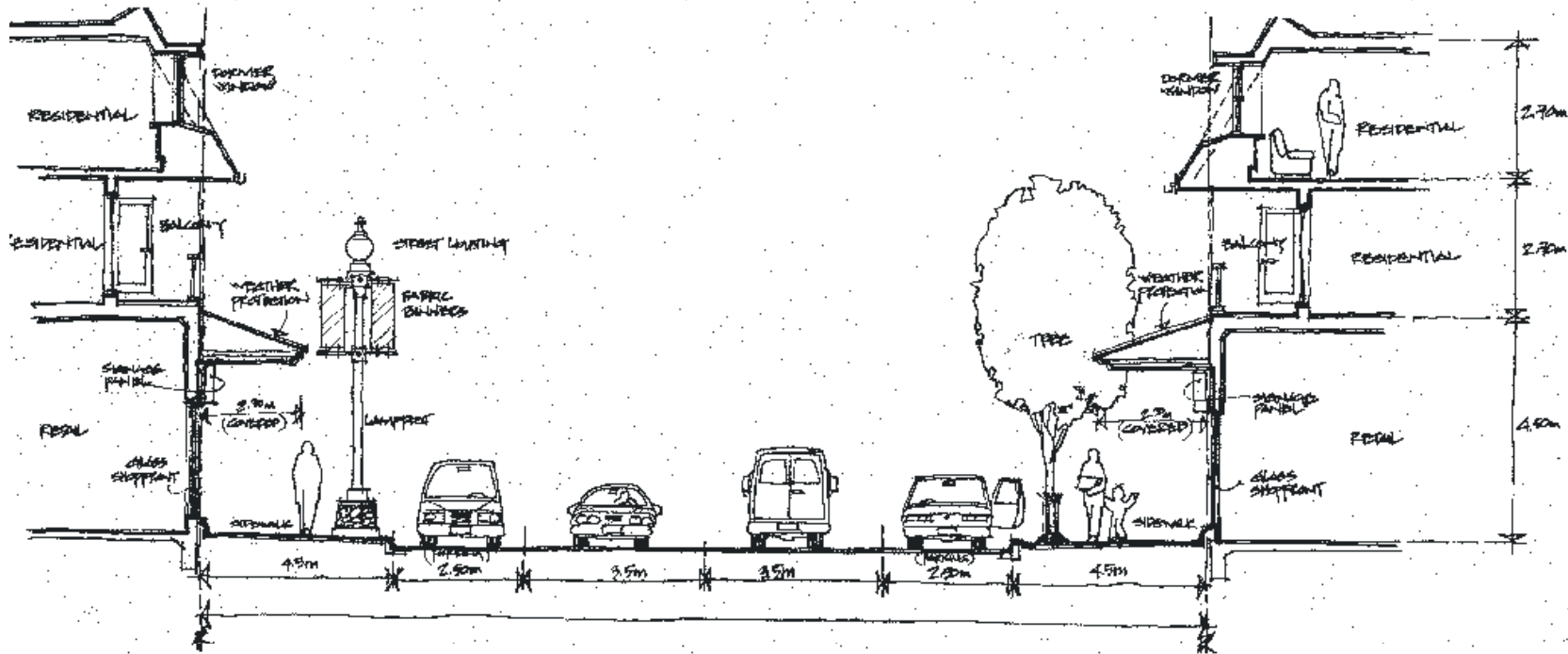
Conceptual Rendering No. 2 – Residential Precinct looking North on Wexford Road



Conceptual Rendering No. 3 – Mainstreet Precinct Looking North on Lawlor Road



Conceptual Elevation - Mainstreet



Conceptual Cross-section - Mainstreet

7. Landscaping Details

- Tree Planting in Pavement
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawings P-6 and P-7
- Tree Planting in Grass Boulevard
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards – Drawings P-1 and P-2
- Tree Guard
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.

8. Site Furnishing Details

- Ornamental Light Standard
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.
- Directional Signpost
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.
- Street Signage
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.
- Bollard with Light
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.
- Ornamental Fence
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.
- Bench with Back
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.
- Bench without Back
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.
- Litter Receptacle
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.
- Bike Rack
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.

(NOTE: Engineering Standards have yet to be amended. See Attachment A for draft drawings of above noted Site Furnishing Details.)

9. Paving Details

- Typical Road Right-of-Way (Commercial)
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.
- Typical Road Right-of-Way (Commercial)
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.
- Typical Corner (5 metre radius)
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.
- Typical Corner (7 metre radius)
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.
- Ornamental Paving (Sidewalk)
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.
- Ornamental Paving (Crosswalk)
See City of Nanaimo Engineering Standards - Drawing ____.

(NOTE: Engineering Standards have yet to be amended. See Attachment A for draft drawings of above noted Site Furnishing Details.)

10. Appendix

As noted in the body of this document, the policies noted below are general in nature and will eventually be incorporated into the City's General Design Guidelines. Until that time, these policies will remain attached to this document, and development in the Chase River Town Centre must take these policies into consideration.

A. Landscape

Objective:

To enhance a sense of place and identity by promoting the development of both hard and soft landscapes which protect and highlight the area's natural environment.

- Significant manipulation of a site's natural contours and topographic features is not permitted. If a conflict exists in regard to site manipulation versus capitalizing on views to the estuary etc (see policy A-1), efforts to minimize site manipulation is to take precedence.
- Preserving open space through the clustering of development is strongly encouraged.
- Retaining existing significant vegetation along roadways is required.
- Outdoor areas should be oriented to maximize solar gain and minimize the effects of the wind.
- Watercourses and other aquatic habitat must be integrated into adjacent developments through such means as the composition of architectural and landscape elements, location of windows and attached outdoors areas, and by offering accessways for pedestrians to, and along the water's edge.
- Parking must be screened from the street. Screening must be predominately in the form of soft landscaping, rather than strictly fencing.
- Plant materials or architecturally interesting fences should be used along sidewalks and walkways to define routes, buffer pedestrians from moving vehicles, screen parking areas, create gateways, and provide interest, colour and texture.

B. Building Siting & Form

Objective:

To enhance a sense of place and identity by constructing developments that enhance the livability of the area, work with the topography and natural environment.

- The ground floor of mixed-use developments must be built to the property line with parking behind the building. Ground floor setback variance will be

considered where the setback area is to be used for a public amenity such as outdoor seating for a restaurant.

- Commercial and residential developments are to be sited such that all parking is located to the rear, side, on top and/or beneath the building. Notwithstanding the above, drop off areas for residential developments and hotels/motels up to a maximum of five (5) visitor parking stalls are permissible within the front yard setback.
- The street facades of mixed-use buildings must be designed in a manner that differentiates the street level from the floors above. This acknowledges varying uses and allows treatment of the ground floor in a manner that is more scaled to pedestrians.
- The street facades of commercial buildings must be designed in a street friendly manner. Commercial buildings must orient the primary building entrance to the street and/or provide substantial glazing along such facades.
- Building windows and entrances must be architecturally well defined through massing, architectural elements, materials and/or colour.

C. Pedestrian Emphasis

Objective:

To enhance a sense of place and identity by creating an efficient, pleasant and safe network of sidewalks and paths for pedestrians. The pedestrian network should link destination points with residential areas, while visually and physically buffering pedestrians from vehicles.

- Pedestrian connections between points of interest and/or recreation sites are strongly encouraged.
- Safe, attractive and convenient pedestrian connections to building entrances are required.
- Well-defined pedestrian walkways must be provided in all parking lots. The walkways can be defined by a change in materials, colour and/or elevation.
- The development of comfortable places along pedestrian routes where people may stop, visit, meet and rest should be accommodated where possible.
- The development of pedestrian accesses to and along watercourses is strongly encouraged, when done in an environmentally sensitive manner.
- The provision of out-door seating adjacent to commercial and mixed-use developments is encouraged.
- Seating opportunities should be incorporated in the design of planters and retaining walls.
- Informal seating opportunities should be provided at viewing points and along pedestrian walkways.