



CHARRETTE SUMMARY

JOHNSTON ROAD
& Northport Commercial Area

OCTOBER 22-23, 2016



JOHNSTON ROAD & Northport Commercial Area



INTRODUCTION

PROJECT PURPOSE

Over recent months, the City has heard from a variety of community members and groups about improvement ideas for Johnston Road and the Northport Commercial Area. The aim of this project, the Johnston Road Design Charrette, is to bring together diverse stakeholders and the City to generate a cohesive vision and coordinated approach for recommendations, improvements, and investments in this area.

Johnston Road is the front door and first impression for the City of Port Alberni.

CHARRETTE OVERVIEW

- The charrette for Johnston Road and Northport Commercial Area was held over two days on Saturday-Sunday October 22-23 at the Barclay Hotel in Port Alberni.
- Invitations were sent out to over 200 community members including, but not limited to: local business owners, First Nations, City Council, City Staff, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, School District 70, Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce, Young Professionals of Alberni Valley, and other community organizations.
- **40** stakeholders participated over the 2-day process.
- The guiding framework for the charrette “Now? - Wow! - How?” is outlined in the following sentence and the graphic on the next page. The process started with understanding Johnston Road Today (Now?), then moved to establish a vision for Johnston Road in the future (Wow!), and finally looked into the details and priorities for how to achieve this vision (How?).



Charrette Team Members at the Barclay around the Green Working Group Table.

CHARRETTE PROCESS FRAMEWORK

NOW?

If you could change one thing about Johnston Road area today, what would it be?

WOW!

What is the experience we want people to have of Johnston Road?
What is the community vision that will guide change and investment in this area?
What are some examples or communities that we can draw inspiration from?

HOW?

What are the key topic areas or categories for change?
What are the potential projects?
What are the priorities within these potential projects?



Blue Working Group in Discussion



Charrette Working Group in Action

DAY 1:

- Day 1 began with a series of technical presentations by the consulting team to cover project background and to frame economic, planning and design context for the study area. There was also a presentation on principles for success and precedent examples of these principles for ideas and inspiration.
- **Session A "Now?":** All charrette participants, in plenary group
Discussion Question: "If you could change one thing about Johnston Road Area today, what would it be?"
- **Session B "Wow!":** Three break-out groups of charrette participants, each with a facilitator.
Guiding Question: "What is the experience we want people to have of Johnston Road?"
- **Session C "Wow!":** The third and last session of the day worked with the same three break-out groups as Session B.
Guiding Question: "What ideas will help us achieve our vision?", and "What goes where?"

DAY 2:

- Day 2 began with a presentation to welcome participants back and to energize the group with a 'Sunday Sunshine' case study example of community and economic success from a streetscape project similar to Johnston Road in Port Alberni.
- As a group, participants did a walk through tour and review of the ideas and outcomes generated on Day 1 to prepare for the Day 2 sessions.
- **Session D "How?":** The first new session of the day divided participants into two groups, each with facilitators. The session focus was to generate a refined concept and list of projects for 1. Upper and Mid Johnston Road, and 2. Lower Johnston Road (Northport). The themes that guided this session were: Circulation & Connections, Pedestrian Friendly, Pride of Place, and Thriving Local Economy.
- **Setting Priorities:** The project lists developed in Session D summarize the charrette concepts for the full study area (Upper, Middle and Lower Johnston), organized under three theme headings: Circulation & Connections, Pride of Place, and Thriving Local Economy. From the overall list of projects, each participant had the opportunity to cast (5) votes to illustrate their priorities (all votes could be cast for one item, or spread out among several).
- **Session E "How?":** The last session of the day focused the group in plenary on two things:
1. Generating a sub-list of projects that were low-cost and implementable in the short-term;
and 2. Generating some short-term actions and evaluation criteria for progressing the implementation of an entry sign.

JOHNSTON ROAD & Northport Commercial Area



STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

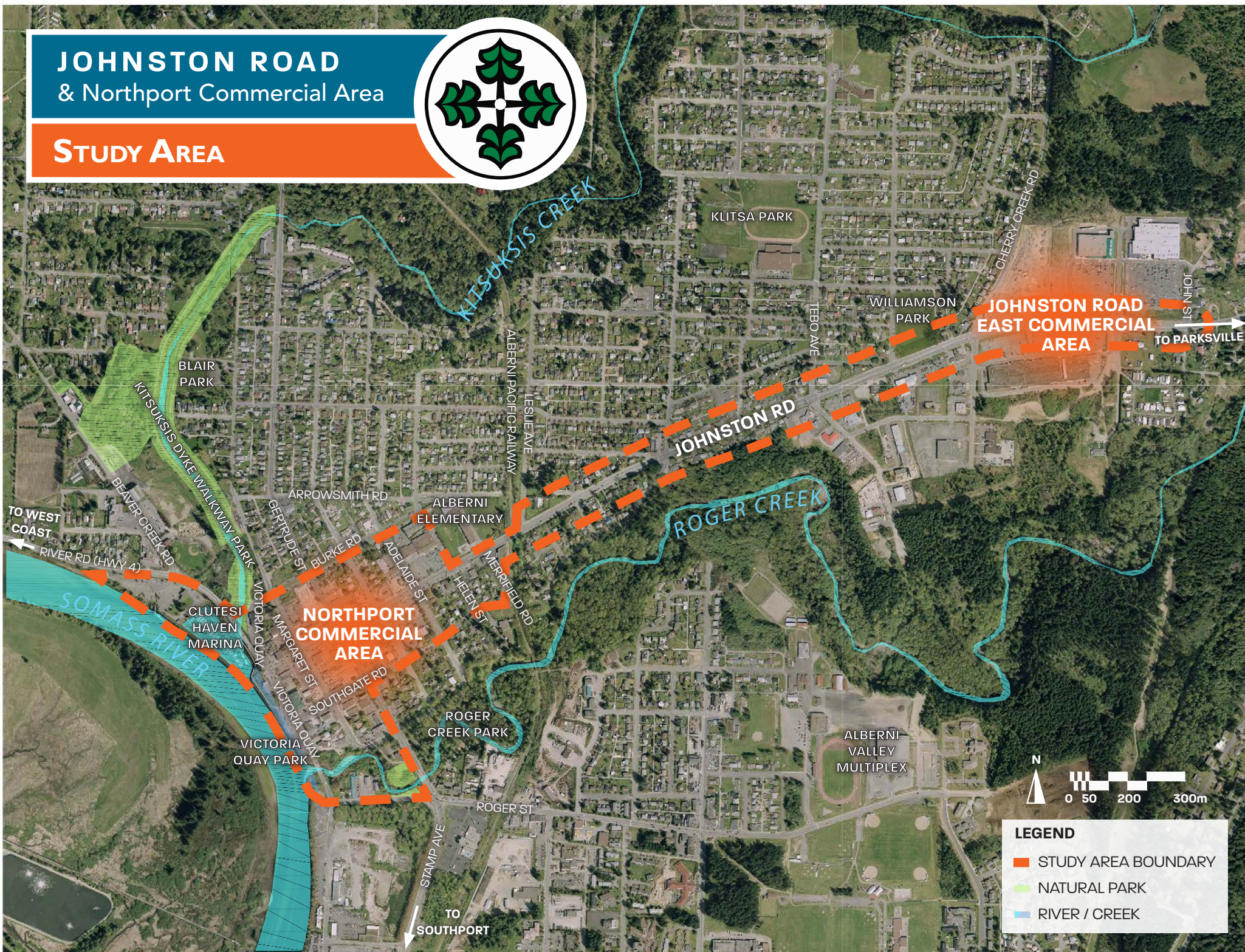
Study Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the eastern City limits (John Street) down to Victoria Quay and the waterfront.
Ownership / Jurisdiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highway / Route 4 is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI). In the City of Port Alberni, Highway 4 becomes Johnston Road.
Current Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Johnston Road current land use is commercial at either end and predominantly residential in the mid-section (along with Williamson Park and Alberni Elementary on the north side).
Northport Commercial Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The southwest end of Johnston Road by the waterfront is the Northport Commercial Area, the former Alberni Townsite's downtown. Northport is comprised predominantly of small-scale commercial retail units split between street-oriented and automobile-oriented buildings. The Northport area attracts tourism traffic, and also accommodates locally-oriented retail including hardware, grocery, furniture and car sales. Currently, Northport has some vacant buildings and lots.
Johnston Road East Commercial Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The northeast end of Johnston Road by the City limits is the Johnston Road East Commercial Area. This area is comprised predominantly of large-format commercial retail with parking lot frontages and automobile-focused access. Most of the recent development on Johnston Road has been in the Johnston Road East Commercial Area.



Johnston Road Today

JOHNSTON ROAD & Northport Commercial Area

STUDY AREA



LEGEND	
	STUDY AREA BOUNDARY
	NATURAL PARK
	RIVER / CREEK

SESSION SUMMARIES

SESSION A



If you could change one thing about Johnston Road area today, what would it be?

- **Session A "Now?":** This first session worked with all participants in one plenary group. This session focused on understanding the existing conditions, issues and challenges for Johnston Road today. Each person provided a brief personal introduction and shared their response to the discussion question above.

SESSION A - INPUT & RESPONSE SUMMARY

- Create a cohesive experience for Johnston Road from end to end
- Establish it as a place to stop for a duration (instead of a corridor to move through)
- Make it pedestrian friendly, where pedestrians and walkability are the focus
- Have a public meeting place suitable for all seasons in Northport/waterfront
- Create a waterfront gathering destination
- Create a place to spend time – with programming events like live music
- Build a destination for all ages at Williamson Park
- Establish it as a pristine atmosphere 365 days a year
- Remove overhead utility lines and poles
- Connect to the rest of the community through trails
- Introduce a centre median (e.g. Qualicum Beach Entry or Bowen Road Nanaimo)
- Increase street trees and presence of green
- Integrate/celebrate rain – sculptures where rainwater/stormwater are visible
- Create unique sculptures for all seasons
- Build an electronic sign at east entry to communicate what is happening in Port Alberni
- Create designated visitor parking / RV parking in Northport Area
- Improve parking and wayfinding signage
- Provide incentives for façade improvements for businesses with west coast or nautical theme
- Bylaw enforcement and development permit guidelines
- Create an atmosphere that appeals to the senses (smell of a bakery, sounds of music, etc.)
- Provide a physical connection across the river to the estuary upland
- Make it multi-modal (cars, bikes, walking, etc.)
- Improve parking management and traffic flow
- Bring People! Use the waterfront as a focus
- Create an art-focused destination (e.g. St. Jacobs Ontario)
- Provide annual planters / seating
- Add visual interest with paint and flowers

SESSION B - SUMMARY



What is the experience we want people to have of Johnston Road?

- **Session B “Wow!”:** The second session divided participants into three break-out groups, each with a facilitator. This session gathered big picture ideas for the future vision of the Johnston Road area. Each group discussed the guiding question “What is the experience we want people to have of Johnston Road?”. Break-out groups presented a summary of their discussion results back to the plenary group to identify areas of alignment, and areas of divergence.

SESSION B - INPUT & RESPONSE SUMMARY

- Strong first impression - “Have you seen Port Alberni lately? OMG!”
- Pride of place – clean, fresh, crisp, maintained
- Amazed & awe
- Family Friendly
- Outdoor lifestyle & community (place of outdoor adventure)
- Cohesive brand & flavour
- Authenticity – celebrate who we are
- Forward thinking – prosperity, community, culture
- Nice ambiance – interesting lighting, greenery
- Comfortable & picturesque – “Get out and take a picture!”
- Safe feeling and atmosphere
- Reason to stop
- “Wow” factor – exciting
- Welcoming and natural
- Memorable and Inspiring
- Attractive businesses – businesses and residents take pride in properties
- Clear and strong entry sequence
- Differentiated from other communities – unique
- High quality place to live
- Industrial heritage evolution to funky vibe
- Young people and energy
- Vibrant, diverse and unique
- Comfortable and interesting to walk around
- Continuous sidewalks, trees, etc.
- Showcase (front door to the city)
- Heritage and historic roots
- Bright and colourful
- Continuity / consistent sequence
- Landmarks
- Appealing to both residents and visitors
- Emphasize Johnston Road vista
- First Nations Culture
- Beautiful nature and wildlife access
- Strong waterfront identity
- Welcoming day or night and all seasons
- Interesting and comfortable for pedestrian shopping
- Slow vehicle speed
- Multiple points of interest in sequence
- Pique interest and curiosity of visitors early on the way in so that they can anticipate stopping
- Positive look and feel – visual interest to catch attention, and supporting elements beyond the surface

SESSION C



What ideas will help us achieve our vision?
What goes where?

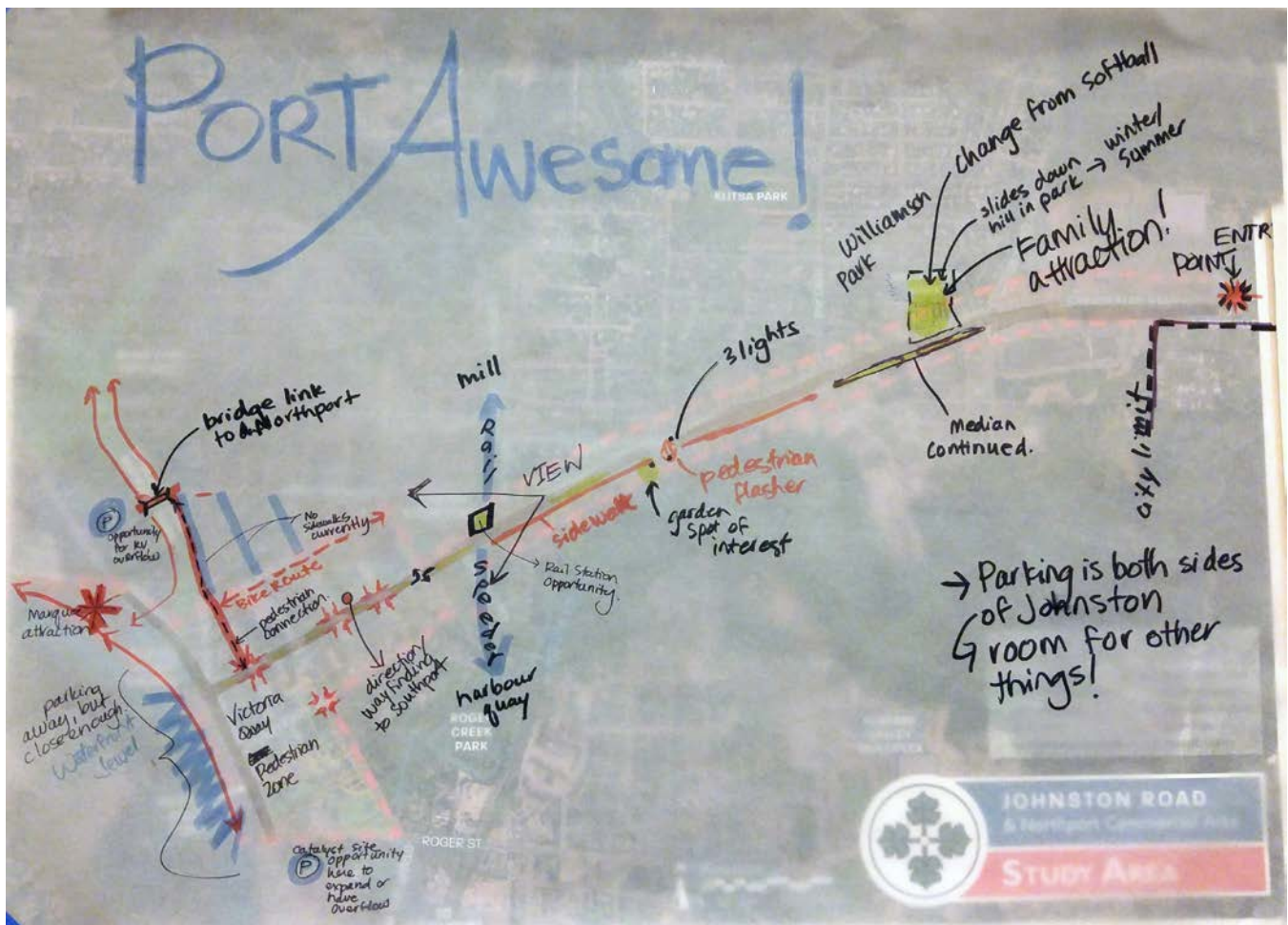
- **Session C “Wow!”:** The third and last session of the day worked with the same three break-out groups to generate and explore “What ideas will help us achieve our vision?”, and “What goes where?”. The three topic areas developed from the morning session guided this discussion: 1. Pride of Place, 2. Thriving Local Economy, and 3. Streetscape. Groups recorded ideas in sketches and writing and presented back to the plenary group

SESSION C: SUMMARY OF IDEAS CONSISTENT WITH ALL CHARRETTE GROUPS

- Create a strong entry point at east end of City to welcome and be first indication of arrival
- Continue median from Cherry Creek Road south to Northport to slow traffic and create atmosphere of City, not highway
- Create a Family Attraction at Williamson Park – change from softball field to exciting destination that is unique. Components like: adventure park, huge outdoor slides all-seasons, BMX/pump track, train, etc.
- Complete section of sidewalk on south side between railroad and Tebo Ave.
- Emphasize Johnston Street Vista coming down the hill
- Create a place of interest at rail crossing with a new rail platform at Johnston to connect speeder car down to Harbour Quay, or up to the Mill
- Just below rail crossing, use this space as the second clear indication of arrival to tourists (planting on slope, signage, etc.)
- Introduce signalized intersection at Helen Street (bottom of hill) for safe left turns
- Create traffic calming in Northport commercial area through curb extensions at intersections (Margaret St, Elizabeth St, Adelaide St, and Helen Street) and mid-block.
- Enhance pedestrian experience in Northport through addition of street furnishings, plantings, etc.
- Encourage a greater concentration of compatible businesses in Northport for a full-service shopping experience.
- Update zoning to encourage boutiques, specialty businesses and businesses that appeal to both residents and tourists.
- Victoria Quay Transformation as waterfront destination – remove parking and expand park space, trees, covered gathering area for picnics, etc.
- Marquee Attraction – on the Clutesi Haven Marina uplands, adjust parking accordingly
- Extend waterfront promenade north, and manage some vegetation so waterfront is visible
- Bikes to be accommodated on parallel routes, instead of on Johnston Road (loop around Burke Road, Helen Street, Southgate Road and Margaret Street).
- Create a wayfinding program that includes capturing:
 - Existing assets (e.g. McLean Mill, Farms)
 - Changing events/program info (e.g. electronic sign)
 - Parks and trails maps and info
 - Northport/waterfront area have frequent maps/kiosks for where you are, and for community bulletin boards to post current events.

GROUP 1 (BLUE GROUP): ("PORT AWESOME") SPECIFIC POINTS

- Waterfront Jewel – close blocks of Victoria Quay to create a pedestrian only zone and expanded park space. For access to the waterfront, establish parking lots south of Victoria Quay on edge of Catalyst Paper land, and on north side, by Kitsuksis Dyke.
- Establish a landmark look-out tower on waterfront edge that provides views of the estuary.
- As part of wayfinding program - At the waterfront create info panels for views of "What you're looking at", including natural features (mountains, river, sanctuary, etc.), community features, industry features.
- Provide designated pedestrian route connection from Kitsuksis Bridge crossing to Johnston Road (add sidewalks to side street connections where they do not exist)
- For Northport Businesses Form and Character – focus on west coast materials, timber, and stone (e.g. Sproat Lake landing, and Aaron's Financial Planning business recent upgrades). Encourage businesses to create outdoor seating areas.
- Use Johnston Road Hill from railroad tracks down into Northport to create rainwater feature in new median – salmon sculptures swimming upstream.
- At Ian Avenue, move the pedestrian crossing to the east side of Ian so that it is lit on both sides and replace the flasher to be a newer style that is more highly visible night or day.
- At the corner of Ian Avenue and Southgate, create a garden spot of interest at City property.



Group A - Concept Plan

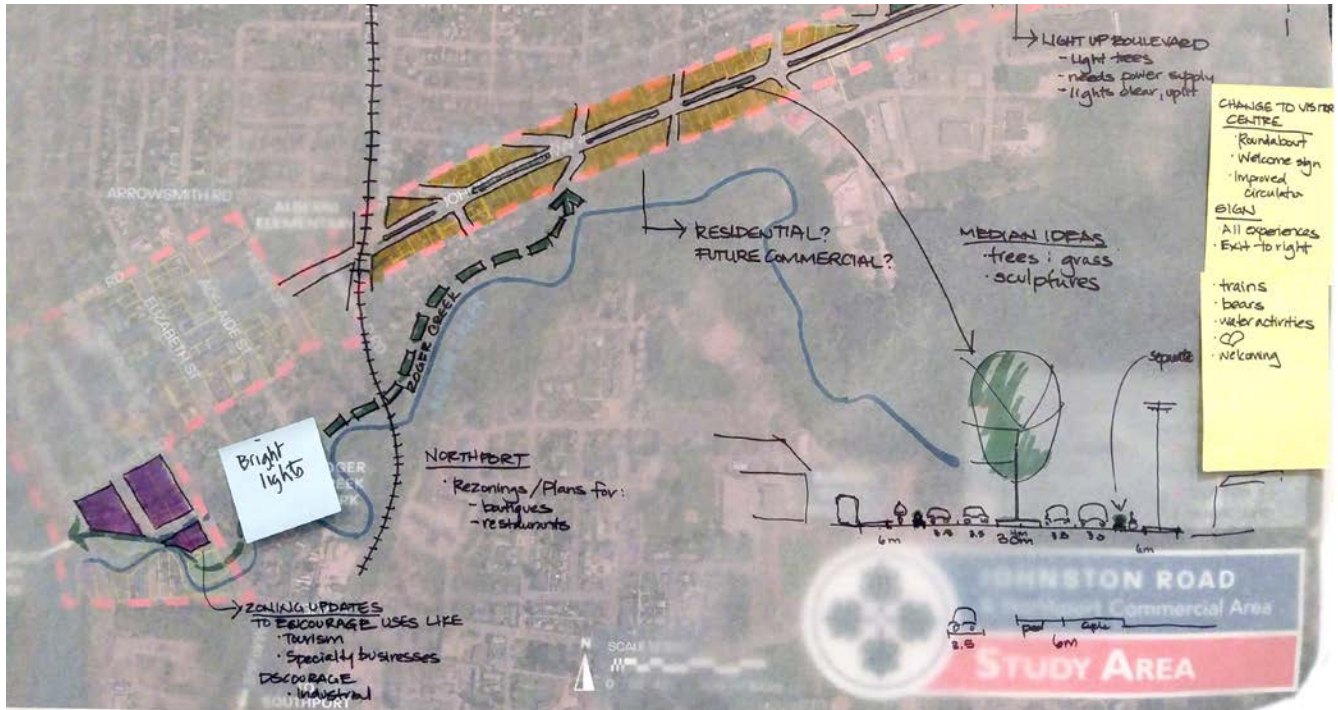
GROUP 2 (GREEN GROUP): SPECIFIC POINTS

- Convert the intersection at the foot of Johnston Road with Victoria Quay to a 1-lane roundabout.
- Designate RV parking areas on Johnston Road between Adelaide Street and Helen Street, and at Catalyst land to the south.
- At Brownfield site on corner of Adelaide Street, establish pop-up visitor centre that has anchor architecture for the area.
- Use a canopy of overhead LED lights in Northport for unique atmosphere that could change colour to celebrate different events through the year.
- Establish Districts for character – 'Northport District' from railroad tracks down to Victoria Quay, and then 'River District' along Victoria Quay.
- For road section between Tebo Avenue and Railroad tracks, have separated bike lanes in both directions, and then cyclists divert to parallel routes within Northport.



Group 2 - Northport Concept Plan

Group 2 - Mid & Upper Johnston Road Concept Plan (page 7 and 9)



GROUP 3 (RED GROUP): SPECIFIC POINTS

- Create programs for temporary side street closures for events like a sunset market "Market on Margaret". Create action to attract people.
- Re-structure side street excess width to make scale of streets smaller and include additional parking, designated RV parking, and special event space.
- Utilize brownfield site on Johnston Road (corner of Adelaide Street) for pop-up business opportunity (e.g. Christchurch Re:Start Mall that was established from shipping containers after the earthquake).

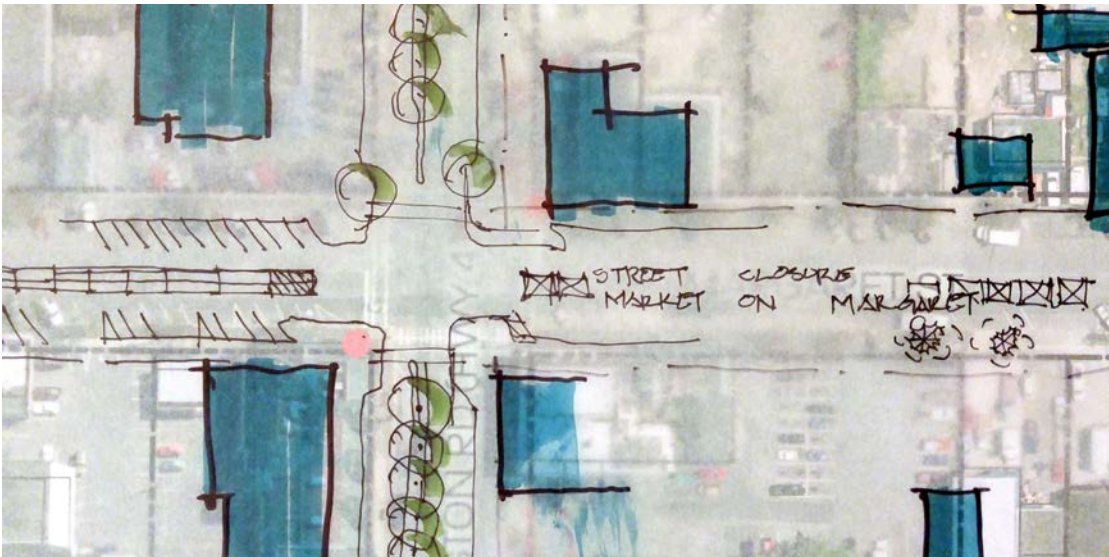


Group 3 - Precedent image from Christchurch shipping container Re:Start Mall

Group 3 (Red Group) - Concept Plan



Group 3 (Red Group) Plan Detail: proposed side street changes, parking, and special event closure



SESSION D

NOW?

WOW!

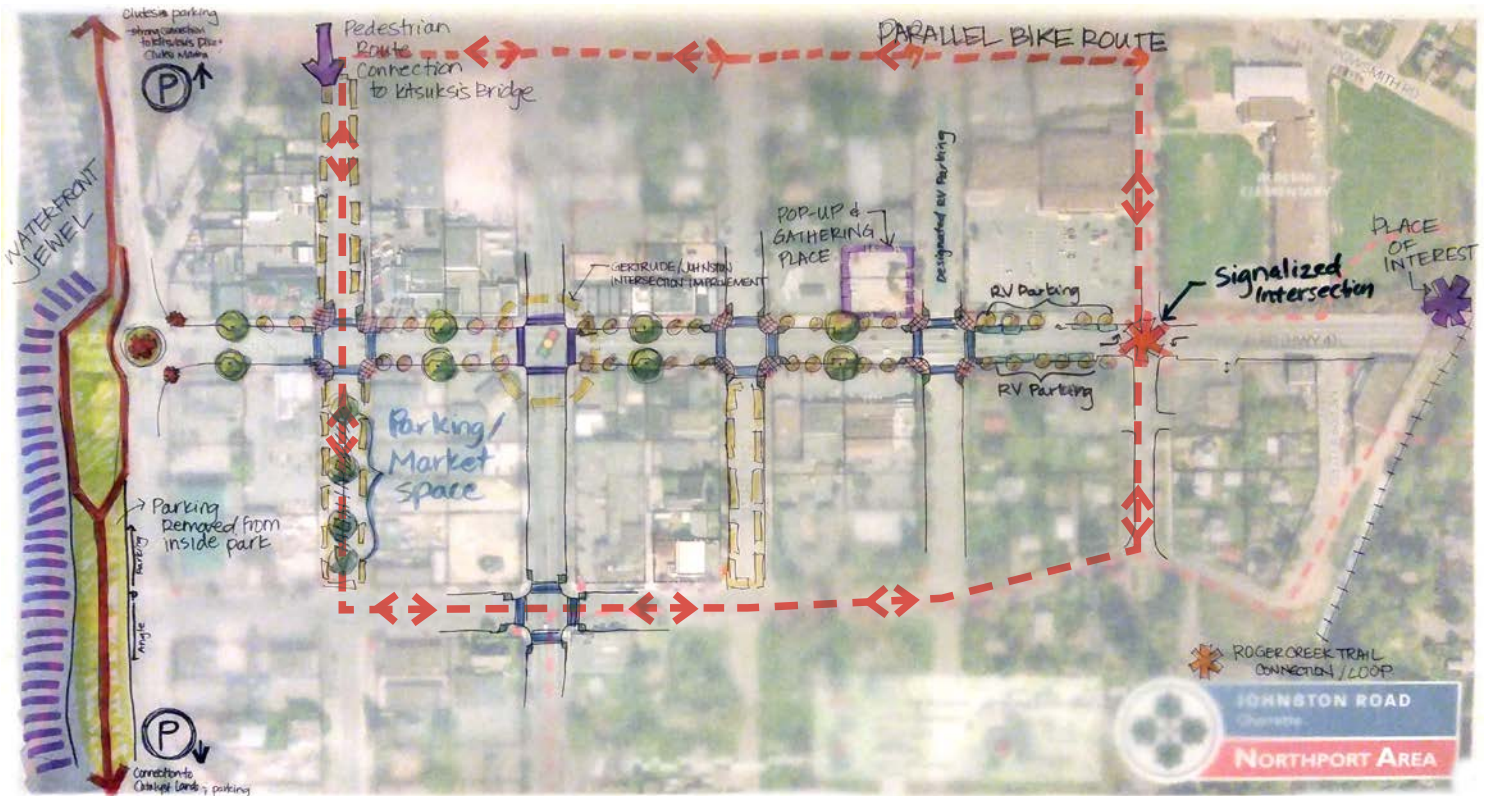
HOW?

What are the potential projects?
What are the priorities within these projects?

- **Session D "How?":** The first new session of the day divided participants into two groups, each with facilitators. The session focus was to generate a refined concept and list of projects for 1. Upper and Mid Johnston Road, and 2. Lower Johnston Road (Northport). The themes that guided this session were: Circulation & Connections, Pedestrian Friendly, Pride of Place, and Thriving Local Economy. Half-way through the activity, the participants switched tables and built on the materials generated by the group before them (for Upper/Mid or Lower Johnston Road, respectively). At the end of the session, the groups presented the final concepts in plenary.

SESSION D - GRAPHIC SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

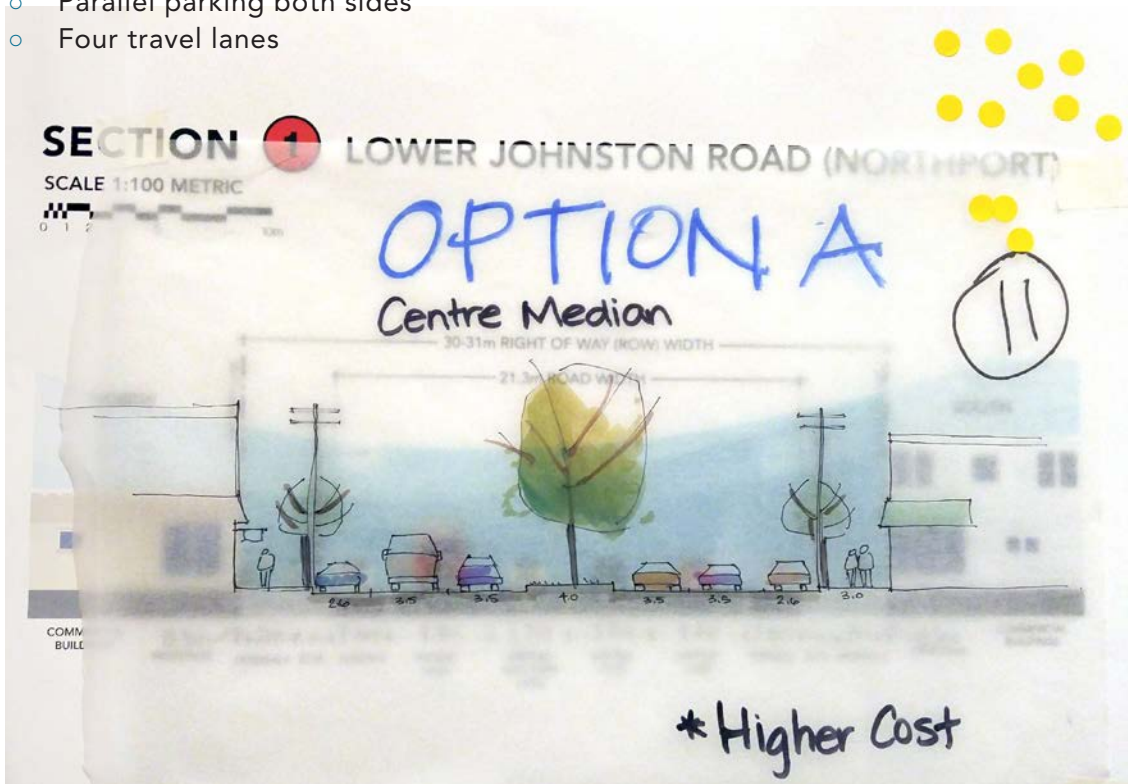
"WELCOME TO THE VALLEY OF AWESOME ADVENTURE"



Summary Concept Plan - Northport and Waterfront

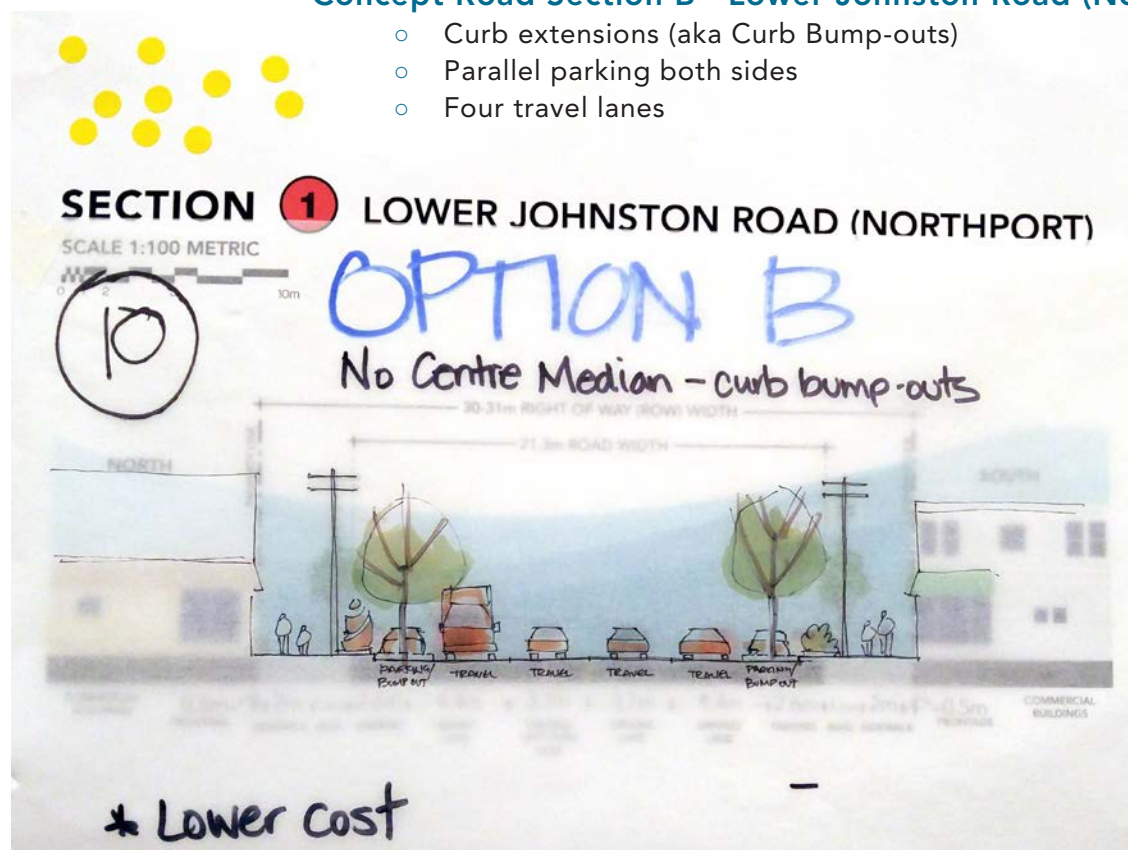
Concept Road Section A - Lower Johnston Road (Northport)

- Centre Median
- Parallel parking both sides
- Four travel lanes



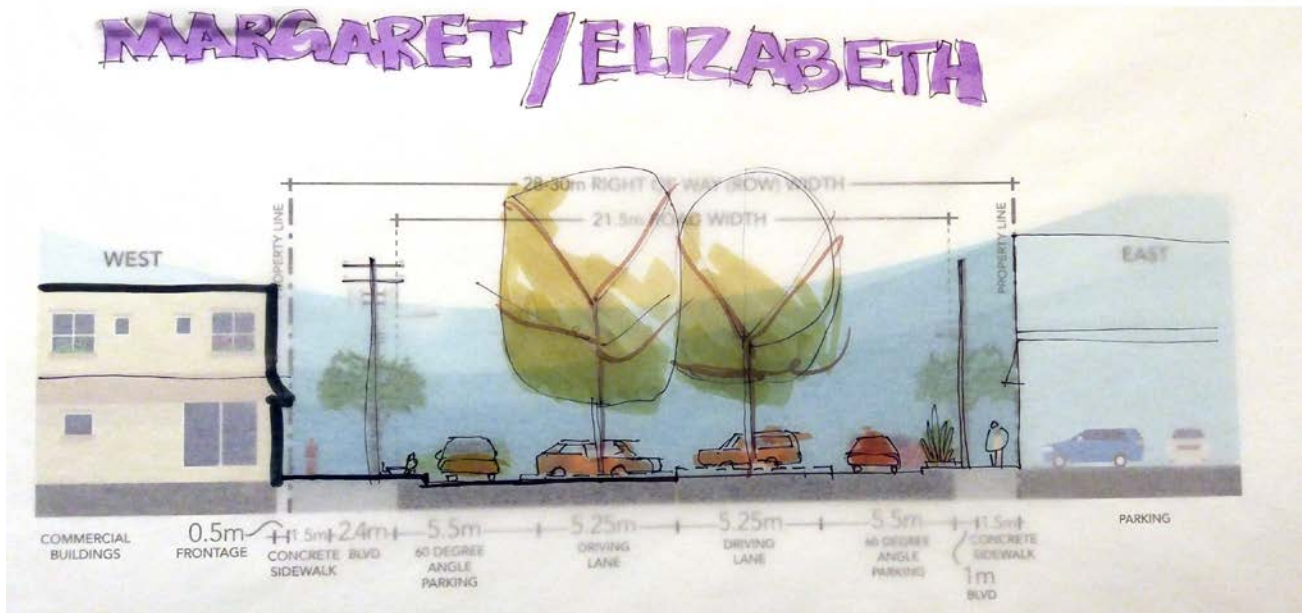
Concept Road Section B - Lower Johnston Road (Northport)

- Curb extensions (aka Curb Bump-outs)
- Parallel parking both sides
- Four travel lanes



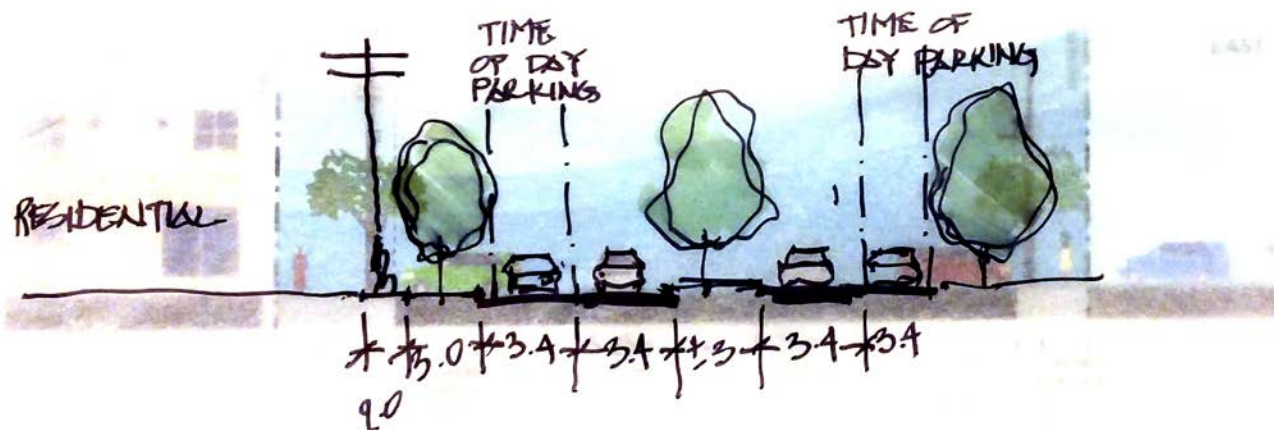
Concept Road Section C - Northport Side Street

- Traffic calming, reduce road width
- Angle Parking and tree planting centre of road
- Travel lanes adjacent to curb



Concept Road Section D - Johnston Road Hill

- In residential area
- Traffic calming centre median with tree canopy
- Time of day parking on road (not during peak morning or evening hours)
- "Processional"



SETTING PRIORITIES SUMMARY



What are the priorities within the recommended projects?

- **Setting Priorities:** The project lists developed in Session D summarize the charrette concepts for the full study area (Upper, Middle and Lower Johnston), organized under three theme headings: Circulation & Connections, Pride of Place, and Thriving Local Economy. From the overall list of projects, each participant had the opportunity to cast (5) votes to illustrate their priorities (all votes could be cast for one item, or spread out among several).

The numbers shown at left of list items below represent the number of priority votes that each item received from charrette participants (items with no number received no priority votes).

Circulation & Connections

- 9 - Johnston Road Traffic Calming in Northport – curb extensions, to shorten crossing distance
- 8 - New Streetscape From Cherry Creek to Railway Crossing including median, banners, painting lights black
- 6 - Side Street Improvements
 - Make Streets feel smaller!
 - Centre angle parking with Trees
 - Wider sidewalks
 - Potential event / market space
- 6 - Northport Trail Route Connections
 - Pedestrian and cyclist connection from Kitsuksis Park and Bridge to Northport (along side streets)
 - To Roger creek trail further north/east
 - To Roger Creek Park further south
 - Create a loop trail
- Gertrude / Johnston intersection improvements
- Parking Lot at Catalyst – for RV, overnight, etc.
- Helen Street Signalized Intersection
- Cyclists on Parallel route loop to Johnston Road in Northport Area
- Designate and Sign RV Parking Areas
- Long-term consideration for reduction to 2 lanes on Johnston Road
- Explore Idea of Roundabout at Victoria Quay Intersection
- Upgrade highway median at Visitor Centre
- Signage at Visitor Centre

Pride of Place

- 11** - Increased Street Trees & Green – in curb extensions at intersections and mid-blocks
- 8** - Victoria Quay Park Transformation
 - Remove parking (maintain a few spots for accessibility)
 - Trees
 - Gazebo / covered gathering spot
- 8** - Williamson Park family activity area and improved destination
- 8** - Wayfinding Signage Program – that links all parts of city
- 8** - Upgrade Lamp Posts to Black, Decorate Power Poles, and add lighting for safety and aesthetics
- 4** - New entry sign at location of ACRD (Regional District) sign
- 4** - Create Districts for Waterfront Area, Northport Area, etc. with local buy-in (not corridor, or gateway, but destinations)
- 3** - Planning bylaw revisions and design guidelines to encourage desirable / attractive development on Johnston Road
- 2** - Sidewalk Amenities - Place to site, planters, furnishings
- 1** - Add power/lights to medians in east commercial area (consider alternative power sources)
- 1** - Develop Arts Program and Installations in Northport (bears, wildlife, outdoor adventure, history, culture, etc.)
 - Band Stand
 - Wayfinding sign at Railroad Crossing, entering down view/hill into Northport
 - Alberni Elementary Improvements
 - Weather Protection – awnings, etc.

Thriving Local Economy

- 6** - Planning for Resilience – stormwater and infrastructure elements
- 2** - Attract Strong / Unique Anchor Tenant to Northport
- 2** - Create Pop-up Gathering Space on Brownfield Site in Northport
- 1** - Market on Margaret – seasonal programming

SESSION E SUMMARY



- **Session E "How?":** The last session of the day focused the group in plenary on two things:
 1. Generating a sub-list of projects that were low-cost and implementable in the short-term; and
 2. Generating some short-term actions and evaluation criteria for progressing the implementation of an entry sign.

What are some potential low-cost projects for change in the short-term?

Potential Short-term Projects:

- Lighting existing median at east Johnston Road
 - Investigate most cost effective and energy effective solution here (solar, or if highways allows hydro connection from one of the existing poles).
- Paint Lamp Standards
 - This was done recently in Uptown
- Clean up existing trees on Johnston (pruning etc.)
- Address right turn onto Gertrude on red light
 - Need to designate space for cars to be able to turn right on red
 - This could be painting no parallel parking zone for a setback from the intersection
- Beautify utility poles
- Investigate public art for cell phone tower
- Upgrades for planters
 - Add seasonal plantings / seasonal decor
 - Consider painting or different material for new planters
- Innovative ideas for additional parking
 - Specifically, ways to test this out with paint
 - Side street parking
 - Designated RV parking
- Explore short-term solutions for traffic calming
 - Before centre medians, intersection curb extensions, or mid-block curb-extensions may be possible, look to ways to calm traffic and bring in the scale of the wide road
 - Consider paint lines, temporary bollards, or planters
- Increase cleanliness and atmosphere of 'pristine'
 - Community clean-up walks
 - Recycling bins
 - More garbage receptacles
 - Clean-up empty lots
- Implement the Northport Trail Loop
 - Most segments of trails already exist
 - Need to be linked and to have trail markers and sign/map to show the loop
- Identify interim way to accommodate camping in the City
 - As an example, for occasional camping, other communities set-up pay-camping on sports or fair fields when not in use (already have washroom facilities)

- Introduce more lighting and lighting improvements throughout Johnston Road
 - Improve Christmas lighting approach for a better impact
 - Encourage LED lighting for any new initiatives
 - Offer to be a pilot project for LED lighting for ministry road lights (like is currently being piloted in Richmond)
- Test Market on Margaret (temporary road closure)

What are some guiding points and actions for implementing a welcome sign?

Actions for Entry Sign:

- Evaluate and remove existing signs that don't fit with the vision to move forward.
- Look to summit as location for the more general Welcome to the Alberni Valley sign.
- Address visual clutter (e.g. billboards).
- Confirm location for welcome sign to City (within City limits, or outside).
- Develop the "theme" for all signage - refer to branding recently developed by the Branding Committee.
- Review entry sign designs by considering the lists generated below for qualities/characteristics, themes, and materials.

Sign Qualities & Characteristics

- About a feeling - a richness, quality, more than about literal symbols
- Authentic to community character
- Reflect what the City of Port Alberni is becoming
- Simplicity
- Not a "Gateway" or a "Corridor" to go through, but a Place, a Destination

Themes for Consideration:

- First Nations culture
- Water (waterfront, salt water, fresh water, rivers, lakes, rainwater, fishing, etc.)
- Industrial heritage
- Local history
- Agriculture
- Beauty of Nature - mountains, forest, water, wildlife (bears, fish)
- "Spirit of Adventure" or Outdoor Adventure Lifestyle - fishing, kayaking, mountain biking, wildlife observation, trail riding, etc.
- Place Name:
 - Port Alberni has some negative connotations for some, but is the legal name of the City and has strong associations for search engine results etc.
 - Alberni Valley is used by some, but doesn't relate to water (port), or legal name for City/Regional District.

Materials for Consideration:

- Natural Materials - timber, stone, etc.
- Metal
- Beautification around the sign (lighting, landscaping)
- Way to communicate changing messaging/updates (e.g. LED electronic sign)



THANK
YOU!



To all of the
participants

