



STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA FOR WEDNESDAY APRIL 10, 2024

We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which we gather and work is on the Unceded Traditional Territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.

Meeting Location: Council Chambers, 1801B Beaufort Avenue, Comox

Call to Order: 5:00 p.m.

Adoption of the Agenda

1. DELEGATIONS:

- (2) a. [Chris Fields \(Rynic\): Economic Development and Downtown Action Plan](#)

2. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REPORT:

- (69) a. [Strategic Plan Scorecard Update](#)

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- a. [Council Handout on "New Apartment and Townhouse Zoning Regulations and Development Permit Area Guidelines"](#)

4. STAFF REPORTS: NIL

5. CORRESPONDENCE: NIL

ADJOURNMENT

CORPORATE OFFICER

COMOX DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT ACTION PLAN

Shaping a greater downtown destination by the sea



[REPORT Draft 3: April 4, 2024](#)

Acknowledgements

The Town of Comox respectfully acknowledges that we gather and work on the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.



We would like to thank all those who were involved in developing this action plan to renew the Downtown area. This plan is a road map to a thriving Downtown. Its success will be a collective effort.

Mayor and Council

Mayor Nicole Minions,
Councillors Maureen Swift, Dr. Jonathan Kerr, Chris Haslett, Ken Grant,
Jenn Meilleur, and Steve Blacklock

Town of Comox Staff

Chief Administrative Officer, Jordon Wall
Director of Development Services, Marvin Kamenz

Downtown Business In Action (BIA)

President, Peter Chambers
Board of Directors, Barbara Hansen, Kurt Reimer, Hugh Ruckman, Stuart Robinson, Cleo Tetrault, Bill Coltart,
Sharon Neville, and Cleon Rowel

Community Workshop Participants at the November Workshops, participants who completed the “Downtown Health” Survey, and others who completed the Economic Development Strategy survey.

This report was developed by:

MVH Urban Planning & Design, Rynic Solutions, and Watson Consultants
in association with the Comox Business In Action (BIA) and the Town of Comox.

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1.0 PRIORITY ACTIONS SUMMARY

This *Comox Downtown Enhancement Action Plan* is a plan for strategic actions. Each strategy builds on one another. Their sum is much greater than their individual actions. This action plan sets priorities for the downtown area. More and diverse businesses as well as residents close to the Downtown will help improve business and provide more services close to home. At the same time, better connections to and with the picturesque Marina waterfront and the lush green Golf Club will help create a “Greater Downtown” destination. This enhanced Downtown then truly reflects the fuller richness in the name Comox derived from the Salish People’s word “Koumuckthay”, meaning “Land of Plenty.”

Comox Downtown Vitalization has been one of the Town’s priorities and specified in the Strategic Plan since 2012. Increasing residential density in the Downtown was identified as a key aspect of the Downtown Vitalization more than a decade ago. Progress has been made. Available incentives encouraged mixed-use commercial and residential development to support and increase not only Downtown businesses, but also the area’s social and environmental vitality. The Town of Comox has set a clear priority for creating the Downtown Action Plan in their current Strategic Plan as illustrated below.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY
Economic Health
 We support a strong and vibrant business community to provide stability to our local economy.

AREAS OF FOCUS	PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORT THIS THEME
Downtown Vitality - We believe that a vibrant downtown is a key element of a proud connected community that creates connection, a sense of community and a sense of place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a Downtown Action Plan to guide future development and balance the need for growth vs. desire to maintain a small-town feel Support downtown beautification through flower beds and routine maintenance Provide enhanced development approvals support for downtown projects
Balancing Vibrancy & Stability - Create an environment for a robust and vibrant Comox economy by working with community organizations (BIA) to facilitate their success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and support local commercial into residential areas Support the BIA in their renewal and potential boundary expansion process Complete an Economic Development Strategy and Downtown Enhancement Action Plan
Comox Marina - The Comox Marina offers a unique opportunity for the growth of the marine tourism industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and provide occupancy to the Marine Services Building Provide marina space to encourage tourism and commercial activities

Council and Town staff meetings, along with community workshops in November 2023, actively engaged the community and leadership. In these workshops, participants explored the opportunities and challenges facing the downtown and contributed further ideas for action. As a result of our analysis, **Nine Big Moves (Actions)** and **nine strategies** form the core of this plan. The nine Actions follow, with the accompanying nine strategies in Section 4 of the plan to provide additional thinking, ideas, and reasons behind the multiple or single actions. The actions are tasks in the immediate (now), short, and medium term that create the actual success. The projects are not in priority order and can be implemented separately or together. No decisions have been made yet. These are opportunities to consider. They will collectively build momentum for continued success, more investment, and active participation. The circle of success will continue as more actions are added over the coming years.

COMOX DOWNTOWN NINE BIG MOVES (ACTIONS)

	Project Description	Responsibility	Timing/Funding
1.	<p>Organize for Success</p> <p>The downtown needs more support from various organizations in a group effort referred to as the Comox Downtown Action Partnership. The Comox Downtown Partnership would be a committed effort between the BIA, Town of Comox, the Marina businesses, and the Golf Club. In this way, all the interests are represented:</p> <p>Actions include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Invite broader membership by BIA and Town Council. Confirm action priorities. Affirm the commitment to timing, funding, and responsibilities. Implement plan. Use a report card on a 6-month basis to monitor and evaluate progress (see <i>Appendix A</i>). <p><i>(See Strategy 4.1, page 35 for further details).</i></p>	<p>Comox Downtown Action Partnership consisting of BIA, Town, Marina, and Golf Club. The CDAP will lead and coordinate interests and invite comments and further support from the community, special sponsors, the K'ómoks First Nations, the Province, and the Federal Government.</p>	<p>Immediate, short-, and medium-term actions.</p> <p>Local, Provincial, and Federal funding opportunities.</p> <p>The Town's resources are limited but private and greater public initiative and funding through the Province and the Federal Government could create joint funding opportunities (e.g., BC Tourism).</p>
2.	<p>Greater Downtown Destination Initiative</p> <p>Build a "Greater" Downtown by better connecting and developing the Marina and the Golf Course with the downtown.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a downtown hotel was the community's #1 Priority. There are none in the Town of Comox. Either encourage a developer to develop a boutique hotel or recruit a hotel chain. Without one, Comox is not a tourist destination but a pass-through. Making improved walking and biking connections is critical to a successful "destination" town with a variety of alternative experiences. Increase promotion of Comox as a destination that has seaside/park and golf/park resources downtown and all within a five-minute walk. Oceanside activities, shopping, dining, hiking, and golf create a multi-faceted destination. Define the Parking Strategy in the form of a <i>Parking Demand Strategy Study</i> to determine options as demand increases as a destination. <p><i>(See Strategy 4.2, page 36 for further details).</i></p>	<p>Comox Downtown Action Partnership consisting of BIA, Town, Marina, and Golf Club.</p> <p>The priority is to recruit or develop a hotel in the downtown which can act as a hub for destination activities and information.</p> <p>The BIA with the Marinas and Golf Club will coordinate greater promotion for a "Greater Destination."</p>	<p>Short Term: These are important hotel and promotional alternatives that can LINK to BC Tourism.</p>

	Project Description	Responsibility	Timing/Funding
<p>3.</p>	<p>Towne Square Meeting Place A top priority is to create a sizable meeting place in the downtown for celebration and festivities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm the location in the centre of town, preferably at the northwest corner of Comox Avenue and Port Augusta Street or adjacent to potential Civic Centre (see illustrations in sections 4.3 and 4.7). Combine the design with the memorial and a private development initiative like a hotel so it is safer with “eyes on the Square.” Imagine the Town Square could also include the intersection so the space could be enlarged during special celebrations. <p><i>(See Strategy 4.3 page 38 for further details).</i></p>	<p>Comox Downtown Action Partnership consisting of BIA, Town, Marina, and Golf Club.</p> <p>The new Town Square is a priority that should be pursued and supported with private interests including the former Lorne Hotel site and other potential opportunities.</p>	<p>Short Term: This priority should be examined in the centre of the Comox Downtown.</p> <p>It could be a jointly funded project (e.g., developing a hotel combined with the Town Square or adjacent to the potential Civic Centre) see sections 4.3 and 4.7 for details).</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Comox Avenue “Street Alive” Program Combine the Town Square development with the enhancement of Comox Avenue. The Town of Comox and business owners could consider the following to energize the street. Alternatively, or together,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> First, develop a more comprehensive events program that is on a weekly and monthly schedule. The intent is to create an active and interactive downtown that has continuous events year-round. From the peak of summer to Christmas and into the winter season there could be fish and farmers’ markets, Friday night markets, Christmas festivals, and marine events, to help extend limited business hours. Consider the portion in front of the Comox Centre Mall as a “flex street block” (to start) that could be temporarily closed for special events, markets, and festivals to make Comox Avenue more pedestrian. Support outside “parking patios”. Introduce corner extended “bulges” for traffic calming, safety, pedestrian, and add further street furniture as “conversation corners”. Extend sidewalk at the mid-block crossings between Ellis and Stewart Streets; and provide pedestrian activated signals, especially at the Greenway Crossing. <p><i>(See Strategy 4.4, page 40 for further details).</i></p>	<p>Comox Downtown Action Partnership with BIA as lead supported by Town.</p> <p>The “Flex Street” concept (illustrated in Penticton and Nelson and more recently in Hope, BC) is a great way to make part of Comox Avenue more pedestrian, more often, without affecting the normal traffic flow and requirements.</p>	<p>Short to Medium Term: Town of Comox with BIA and with other sponsors.</p>

	Project Description	Responsibility	Timing/Funding
5.	<p>Golf Course Public Recreational Asset The Golf Course was discussed as more of a park asset for the greater community. There could be some short to medium opportunities that could take advantage of the Golf course location in the centre of town and invite the public to enjoy the beautiful natural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Consider the development of trail loop around the outside of the golf course starting at Port Augusta Street. b. Consider a town park and parking lot at the south end of the golf course that would modify two golf holes but retain the integrity and use of the golf course. (see illustrations in the report) c. Consider extending Buena Vista Avenue through the southern edge of the golf course to improve traffic movement downtown and to the centre. <p><i>(See Strategy 4.5, page 48 for further details).</i></p>	<p>Comox Downtown Action Partnership consisting of BIA, Town, and Golf Club.</p> <p><i>*Note: These proposals need further discussion with the Golf Club before considering any actions.</i></p>	<p>Short Term: The Golf Club and the Town of Comox are the important players in funding any changes to the golf course.</p>
6.	<p>Marinas Areas and Waterfront There are several enhancements that could improve the marina area that also came up as priorities in the community discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Improve connections to the Seawall Walkway and signage from Marina Park. b. Improve the pedestrian connection to the extended pier beyond Fisherman’s Wharf. c. Extend the waterfront walkways and non-motorized boat launches along the waterfront east and west of the Marina. d. Redevelop the privately owned parcel west of Marina Park to combine commercial uses on the ground floor and residential uses above. (see Section 4.6 sketch of mixed use). e. Include a Harbour Air Terminal office or develop a permanent structure. <p><i>(See Strategy 4.6, page 50 for further details).</i></p>	<p>Comox Downtown Action Partnership consisting of BIA, Town, and Marina businesses.</p>	<p>Short Term to Medium Term: Town of Comox, private interests, provincial and Federal potential funding on infrastructure, buildings, and waterfront trails.</p>

	Project Description	Responsibility	Timing/Funding
<p>7.</p>	<p>The Civic Centre Concept The park and parking area across from the existing Town Hall on the north side of Beaufort Avenue has great redevelopment potential that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Redevelops the eastern part of the site as combined Civic Centre on the first floor with 3 storeys of residential units above, topped with a green roof. b. Parking would be maintained and expanded underneath taking advantage of the sloped site. c. The greenway pathway and public park would be maintained through the west part of the site with the potential of a Town Square enhancement in the park. <p><i>(See Strategy 4.7, page 54 for further details).</i></p>	<p>Town of Comox with joint venture partner to build the building.</p>	<p>Medium Term: Private joint venture funding.</p> <p>The Town could vend in the land as their contribution to the joint venture with associated physical space and potential revenue benefits determined based on the development proposal.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Residential Mixed - Use Intensification Continued intensification downtown is important to bring more pedestrians onto Comox Avenue, support local retail, shops, and services. The opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Densify the west end of Comox Avenue up to 4-6 storeys, west of Port Augusta Street. There are a few opportunities where older commercial buildings or residents immediately west of Port Augusta Street could be redeveloped with commercial uses on the first floor and residential uses above. b. Redevelop the Legion Hall where a joint venture with a developer could retain the Legion use on the ground floor with residences above. c. The central and west end of Beaufort Avenue south of Comox Avenue also has several opportunities illustrated by the Civic Centre potential development (as described in #7 above), the Town Hall Site, the Council Chamber’s site, and others. <p><i>(See Strategy 4.8, page 55 for further details).</i></p>	<p>Town of Comox with potential joint venture development partners (e.g., Legion Hall project).</p>	<p>Short to Medium Term: Depends on the redevelopment aspirations of private landowners, excepting public land owned by the Town of Comox.</p>

	Project Description	Responsibility	Timing/Funding
9.	<p>Business Retention & Recruitment Retain, expand, and recruit specific businesses that can complement and enrich the business mix. Extend open hours through coordinated efforts during existing and new special events like a new “Friday Night Market”. A more robust retail, pub, and restaurant mix is required in downtown to create a true shopping, food, and beverage street destination. The intent is to move from surviving to thriving and flourishing.</p> <p><i>(See Strategy 4.9, page 57 for further details).</i></p>	<p>Comox Downtown Action Partnership consisting of BIA lead, Town, and Marina businesses.</p>	<p>Short to Medium Term: Develop strategy to expand the downtown mix, extend the hours through coordinated special events , and create a more robust retail, restaurant, and pub mix in the downtown.</p>



There is incredible potential for connecting the downtown core with the waterfront and the golf course to create an outstanding adventure destination for all.

Framework Strategies to Guide the Actions and Further Inspirations

The following **nine strategies** form the thinking behind the **nine actions (Nine Big Moves)** and provide other inspiring ideas given longer term potential actions. All these strategies are described and illustrated further in **Section 4** of this report to provide real examples that have been executed elsewhere in British Columbia or in other places around the world. The substance of the Nine Big Moves is listed below again for further clarity:

1. **Organize for success with a broader but focused organization.**
2. **Transform Comox into a distinctive destination.**
3. **Enhance the heart of downtown by creating the Town Square.**
4. **Introduce a “Streets Alive” program to enliven Comox Avenue.**
5. **Recognize and enhance the golf course as a broader recreational asset.**
6. **Enrich the marina areas and the waterfront.**
7. **Create a new Civic Centre that mixes civic and residential uses.**
8. **Continue to intensify residential uses downtown.**
9. **Recruit and retain a diversity of businesses on Comox Avenue to increase the attraction and services as a destination.**

The value proposition lies at the core of why and whether people invest, relocate or visit. Getting to the “right” value proposition requires determining “why” we matter to potential investors, visitors, and those who may relocate...through their eyes, their perception, and their decision-making process.

There’s a world of choices. Why Comox? To answer this question well means there are selected competitive advantages in Comox. And there will also be challenges that need to be worked on to enhance value proposition. Hard truths elevate our ability to achieve the ambitious and exceptional by getting at the roots versus addressing symptoms. Fix root challenges and water flows downhill so to speak. Three core, hard truths are identified, for which solution generation would have significant positive multiplier effect on all other downtown enhancement initiatives.

Community leadership and **proper funding** are both critical to actions and success:

1. The recommended **Comox Downtown Action Partnership (CDAP)** consisting of representatives from the Town of Comox, BIA, Marinas, and Golf Club will collectively identify and coordinate resources that then can further stimulate community, business, and developers interests in the downtown.
2. **The need for a committed (part of) a Town staff position** such as a community development professional should help direct the implementation and help lead business interests and coordinate actions should also be considered.
3. **Various matching grant incentives** by both the Town of Comox and other sources, can provide potential seed funding for special programs that will encourage private investments including outdoor patios, and signage enhancements among others. The Province of British Columbia may also come into play with their recent *Complete Communities* funding program.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Purpose and Scope

The *Comox Downtown Enhancement Action Plan* is intended to guide decisions by the Town of Comox, the BIA, other private businesses, other non-profit organizations, and the community, for ten to fifteen years. The Marina waterfront and the Golf Club are also part of the “Greater Downtown Strategy.” This report provides a practical framework to move forward and solidify the downtown’s role as one of destinations in the Comox Valley.

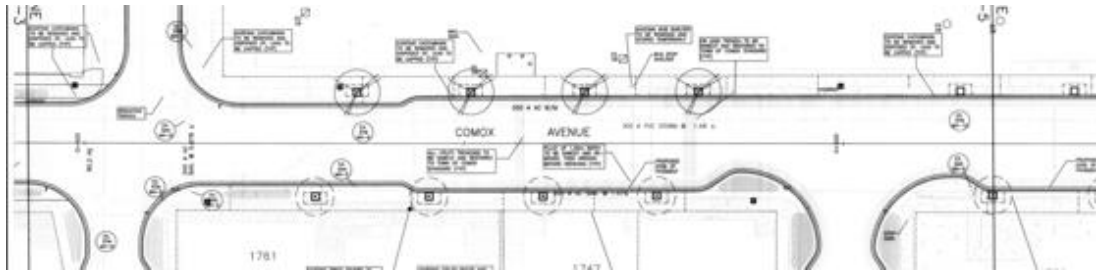


Previous Downtown Vitalization boundaries shown in grey at top.

2.2 Past Downtown Vitalization Efforts

Comox Avenue Beautification Program

A beautification program was completed in 2004/2005 by McElhanney Consulting Services and the Town of Comox for Comox Avenue from west of Church Street to east of Nordin Street in three phases.



Excerpt (above) from previous construction drawings for the Comox Avenue beautification program.

Comox Downtown Vitalization

Downtown vitalization been specified as one of the priorities in the *Town's Strategic Plan* since 2012. Increasing residential density in the downtown was identified as a key aspect of the *Downtown Vitalization*. A range of incentive tools were chosen to implement the Downtown Vitalization Program, and in June 2014 Council adopted several bylaws including Downtown Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw No. 1784. On June 2, 2021, Council resolved to stop the tax exemption component. Available incentives encourage mixed-use commercial and residential development to support and increase not only downtown businesses but also the area's social and environmental vitality.

The objectives of the *Downtown Vitalization* program were to increase the Town's economic, social, and environmental vitality by retaining and supporting existing businesses; attracting new community investments in the form of multi-family residential development; concentrating residential development within established areas with full municipal services; and, encouraging high-quality residential development, suitable for citizens "aging in place".

The downtown *Vitalization Program* did not rezone land and amend the Official Community Plan (OCP). A Development Permit is required for any new development in the Downtown Vitalization Area. Community consultation, rezoning, or a development variance permit may be required for developments over three storeys.

Past Incentives for Development Applications

Past incentives included priority processing, Building Permit fee reduction, and planning application fee rebates. OCP Section 2.1.3.3 (h), Downtown Comox Policies, supports a maximum of four storeys in height except in the case of sites with significant changes in grade. In addition, a higher height may be considered for the following, if satisfactory amenities are provided: redevelopment of the Comox Centre Mall site, the north-west corner of Comox Avenue and Port Augusta Street (former Lorne Hotel), and the south-west corner of Comox Avenue and Church Street (Comox Legion).

Community Amenities sought by the Town during rezoning include contribution to the Affordable Housing Fund, meeting or exceeding BC Energy Code Step 3, provision of adaptable units, mature tree protection, and additional sound attenuation for residential units within 35 metres of arterial and major collector roads as well as in proximity or on the waterfront.

Comox Business in Action (BIA), Society was incorporated on July 11, 2000. Their mission is to do the following:

“Within the Town of Comox, the BIA promotes trade, commerce and an enhanced business and social environment.”

The purpose of the Comox Business in Action (BIA) Society is:

1. To promote trade and commerce within the downtown core of the Town of Comox;
2. To sponsor, promote and organize special events to attract people to the downtown core of the Town of Comox; and
3. To create a more viable, accessible, business friendly atmosphere in the Town of Comox to attract new businesses.

The BIA and the Town of Comox have been whole-hearted supporters of the *Comox Downtown Enhancement Action Plan*.



The Town’s Strategic Plan recognized the Downtown as a priority driver in economic health, community wellness, and planning.

2.3 Goals and Principles

Goals: Form and function

1. Create enduring business vitality throughout the entire year including the downtown core, the Marina lands, and the Golf Club.
2. Improve surveillance measures so residents and visitors feel safer.
3. Make the downtown an even better social and cultural destination with local meaning with a significant town square or meeting place.
4. Organize the downtown community businesses and residents for success.
5. Develop physical improvements with the community, including attracting more than one hotel.

Principles

- **Welcome Visitors with Effective “Gateways”:** If they can’t find you, they will not come. Make Comox and the downtown core more visible and welcoming.
- **Focus on the Two-by-Two Downtown Core First:** Focus improvements where there are the most pedestrians – two blocks east to west and north to south of the centre (2x2 block focus), all within a 5-minute walk starting at the intersection of Comox Avenue and Port Augusta Street.
- **Create a “Pedestrian First” Downtown:** A series of short-term pedestrian and vehicular improvements are recommended to prioritize pedestrian safety, access, emphasis, and activity in the downtown.
- **Reinforce the Existing Character and Uses:** This Plan intends to protect and enhance the existing character areas of the downtown, encourage unique specialty locally owned retail, food, and beverage space, while expanding complementary support services, arts, and entertainment.
- **Connect with Important Adjoining Activities and Destinations:** As part of the pedestrian-first initiative, the downtown should improve safe connections and convenient pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections to the Marina area and the Golf Club.
- **Encourage Residential Redevelopment in and Around the Downtown:** Further residential redevelopment in medium density housing should be encouraged and is important in increasing activity in the downtown as a place to live, work, and play.
- **Target and Direct Right Growth:** Encourage quality development and protect the important features, character, uses, and buildings in the downtown to create a unique and outstanding place. Build on both the historic and contemporary areas of the downtown – respecting and improving both – create that unique place by the sea.

2.4 Four Key Success Factors

There are four fundamentals to Comox's Downtown success that, if not embedded in the plan framework and implementation, will not give rise to enduring and measured success.

- 1. Leadership.** This Downtown Plan needs a commitment from, Mayor, Council, and staff in tandem with the business community led by the BIA. As is the case in many small towns, there is little accountability as there is a small staff stretched to their limit with limited resources. At the same time, small businesses have limited resources, given competing needs. A central coordinator and organization with connected community partnerships are fundamental to enduring success. An "action plan" must be embedded into the Town of Comox and the BIA, with annual and multi-year targets, key public actions, funding commitments, responsible parties, and additional implementation strategies as alternative contingency planning. Simply put, private investment follows public commitment.
- 2. Downtown is a destination not just a Main Street.** In this case, the Marinas, the Golf Club, and the adjoining businesses transition areas, the residential neighbourhoods, should all help the downtown's success. Residents are local buyers and recreation destinations create potential spin-offs. Add the Marinas, Golf Club and the transitional service businesses on the edges and you have more buyers, jobs, and other demands for goods and services.
- 3. Downtown is the heart and core health of the Town of Comox.** One is connected to the other. Any investment in the downtown is an investment in the core of the Town of Comox. Infill and density are expected in our downtowns. The additional density and the corresponding increase in tax revenue help pay for services and amenities that residences need. We also tend to form impressions of place based on downtowns, which translated to investment and tourism dollars with significant potential for positive multiplier impact in the longer term. The new digital economy offers further opportunity, especially if seniors and young adults are looking for a temperate climate and recreation out their back door.
- 4. Walking-first place not a car-centric space.** Comox has a true 5-minute downtown (2x2 blocks). Residents and visitors can walk. People buy things - cars don't buy things. The next generation and seniors are looking for places to walk – attractive walks both quiet and active. The active Main Street and the quiet neighbourhood street should be all within a five to ten minutes' walk or bicycle ride from their homes. Great walking places realize greater revenues and appreciate over time. Strong place-making and place-keeping principles should, when properly designed and implemented, realize greater appreciation in well-defined environments versus the less controlled suburban environments where regulations can be less stringent and result in inconsistencies. Less predictability creates uncertainty for investment and real estate values.

So, a great downtown helps contribute to and build a valued community that in turn attracts stable businesses, residents, and visitors, and that in turn creates a tax base to support the community, its amenities, and services, and so continues the cycle of success.

3.0 WHAT WE DISCOVERED AND DISCUSSED

3.1 Public Engagement and Feedback

Two community workshops were held in November 2023 to review the status of the downtown and help develop a focused action plan that was developed and supported by the Comox community. There was broad participation from residents, businesses, and councillors over two well-attended sessions.



Community workshop discussions took place on November 6 and November 8, 2023.

Community Discovery Workshop #1, November 6, 2023

More than fifty residents and businesses attended the Monday, November 6, 2023 session at the Comox Golf Club from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm. Following a presentation on *Successful Downtowns* by Michael von Hausen, one of the consulting team members, the participants were asked to complete two tasks:

1. Outline the Opportunities and Constraints of the downtown; and
2. What are top priorities for an action plan for the downtown?

Eleven tables discussed these questions and then summarized them in a five-minute presentation to the overall participant group. Opportunities varied from improving parking and access to bringing a hotel downtown and completing the waterfront trail. Constraints included limited business hours to improving the mix of shops and businesses downtown as well as the lack of connection between the downtown and the waterfront. These and more are listed in *Appendix B*.

Following these discussions on opportunities and challenges, thirty-three potential BIG IDEA actions for the Downtown were discussed and presented. There were overlaps and common themes including improvements to Marina Park, the waterfront, the downtown core being more pedestrian-oriented, the Golf Course integration, and an authentic town square. The 33 ideas are listed below:

1. Pedestrian-only Main Street.
2. Town Hall above Golf Club house
3. Build seawall and walkways
4. Joint venture Legion property redevelopment
5. Optimize town-owned properties / best use - e.g., hotel/condo on former Town Hall site
6. New Official Community Plan (more investment-enabling)
7. Golf Club course conversion – to park & recreation
8. Better marina connectivity to downtown
9. Professionals limited to second floors and/or "professional building"
10. Walking/biking pathway connectivity to downtown
11. Vacant lot development - Port Augusta Street and Comox Avenue
12. Marine tourism (boaters, business)
13. Marketing
14. Visualize key development opportunities
15. Consistent hours of operation
16. More retail
17. Gathering place downtown
18. Densification
19. Hotel
20. Destination marina (economy/industry, connectivity, park activation)
21. Farmers/fish market
22. One-way streets
23. Barn on Lorne Hotel site
24. Diversified beach water access (e.g., kayak)
25. Golf Clubhouse to be mixed use
26. Daylight existing creeks
27. Active transportation links to golf course (an in it)
28. Be brave
29. Authentic town square
30. Downtown entertainment venue – evening
31. Unique public transit
32. Pedestrian Main Street that is flexible for closures during events, festivals, and markets
33. Multi-use holistic buildings (e.g. caretaker units).



Community workshop smaller group discussing actions.

Downtown Action Planning Community Workshop 2: Setting Priorities November 8, 2023

A second community workshop was organized on November 8, 2023, from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm at the Comox Golf Course again with the intention of determining priorities for the *Downtown Enhancement Action Plan*. Approximately twenty-seven residents and businesses attended the downtown action planning workshop.

Attendees were asked to each select their top 3 to 5 initiatives for purpose of further focusing priority actions. Note that ranking is an indication of what is more important relative to other action initiatives and does not necessarily determine the order of implementation.

The top 5 were then chosen from the participants' top 3 results to include those others that ranked in the top category of preference:

Top 5 Priorities

- 1) Hotel
- 2) Gathering Place – Town Square
- 3) Farmers and Fish Market
- 4) Seawall and Walkway
- 5) Destination Marina

Others that were discussed and prominent in the discussion:

- 6) Flex-Pedestrian Main Street (Comox Avenue)
- 7) Golf Course sharing
- 8) Marketing and organization
- 9) Vacant lot redevelopment
- 10) Gateways and parking strategy



Community workshop smaller group discussions finally prioritized actions into the top 5.

Downtown Health Assessment

As part of the November 8th workshop, participants completed the *Downtown Health Action Tool Assessment* (DHATA) that was a survey of the existing health of the Downtown and the associated strengths and weaknesses. Twenty-nine surveys were completed at the workshop. The DHATA Tool is not a scientific survey but a survey tool to obtain a sense of where Comox's downtown is strong and weak, so improvements can focus on the potential weaknesses.

Findings

- **Scoring Categories:** The general Downtown Health scores are categorized as follows: A "Weak Downtown" achieves a score of 50 or less; a "Medium Downtown" achieves a score of between 50 and 75; and a "Strong Downtown" achieves a score between 75 and 100 points.

- **Total Low-Medium Score Average:** The totals for 20 indicators were a **low of 31 and high of 91** out of a possible total of 100 points with the **average of 54.41**. This number indicates the low side of a "Medium Downtown." This number and resulting cross section of results also indicates that there are both strong points and weak downtown components. There are components that are just above average ("3") that can be raised to outstanding (at the "4" and "5") scoring levels with improvements.

- **Prominent Weaknesses (Opportunities):**
These elements ranked below "3" and could be improved:
 - There is no "Heart" meeting place downtown where residents and visitors can meet (ranked generally the lowest "1")
 - Arts, culture, activity programming
 - Pedestrian activity and connections
 - Lack of mix of uses and diversity
 - No extended hours
 - Lack of incentives
 - Local first and tourist second attractions
 - Landmarks and entrances
 - Parking and access

- **Prominent Strengths (Aspire to Greatness):**
These elements ranked in the "4" to "5" and should be noted as strengths to build on:
 - There are many outdoor meeting places including parks, waterfront areas, trails to meet (ranked generally a highest "5")
 - Clearly signed and easy to move around
 - A unique identity
 - Safety and accessibility for pedestrians first

3.2 Downtown Physical and Policy Analysis

Downtown Form and Function Definition and Opportunities

- **Comox's Commercial Main Street** is Comox Avenue from approximately Ellis Street on the western edge to Stewart Street on the east. The uses west of Ellis Street are primarily residential so there is no retail, shopping, and office beyond that point. Anderton Road is also a principal intersection that connects the north end of the Town of Comox. On the east end, the commercial uses also transition to residential uses. The three to four storey residential and commercial mixed use form and character is in place on several of the properties bordering Comox Avenue.



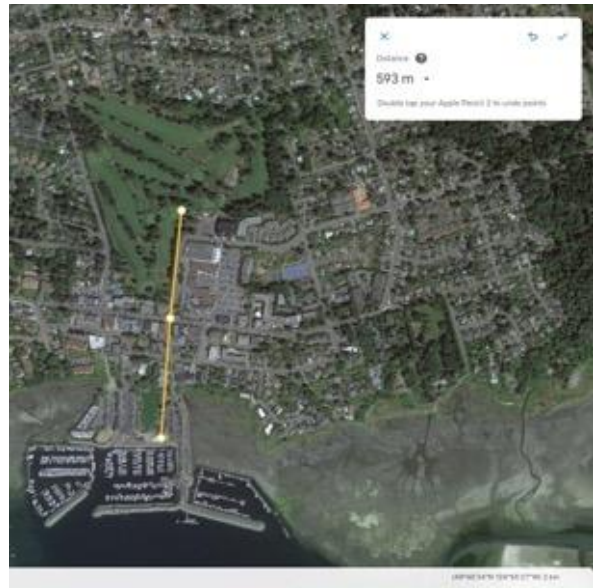
The downtown segment of Comox Avenue is approximately 800 metres or 400 metres from the centre of Town at the corner of Comox Avenue and Port August Street. It can be referred to as a 5-minute downtown, convenient and easy to walk east or west in the downtown core from its centre.

- **The Greater Downtown** consists of both the golf course north of Comox Avenue and the marinas' areas south of downtown. Together, these attractions and their associated amenities make for a "greater" downtown that has more variety and diversity for the whole family throughout the day.

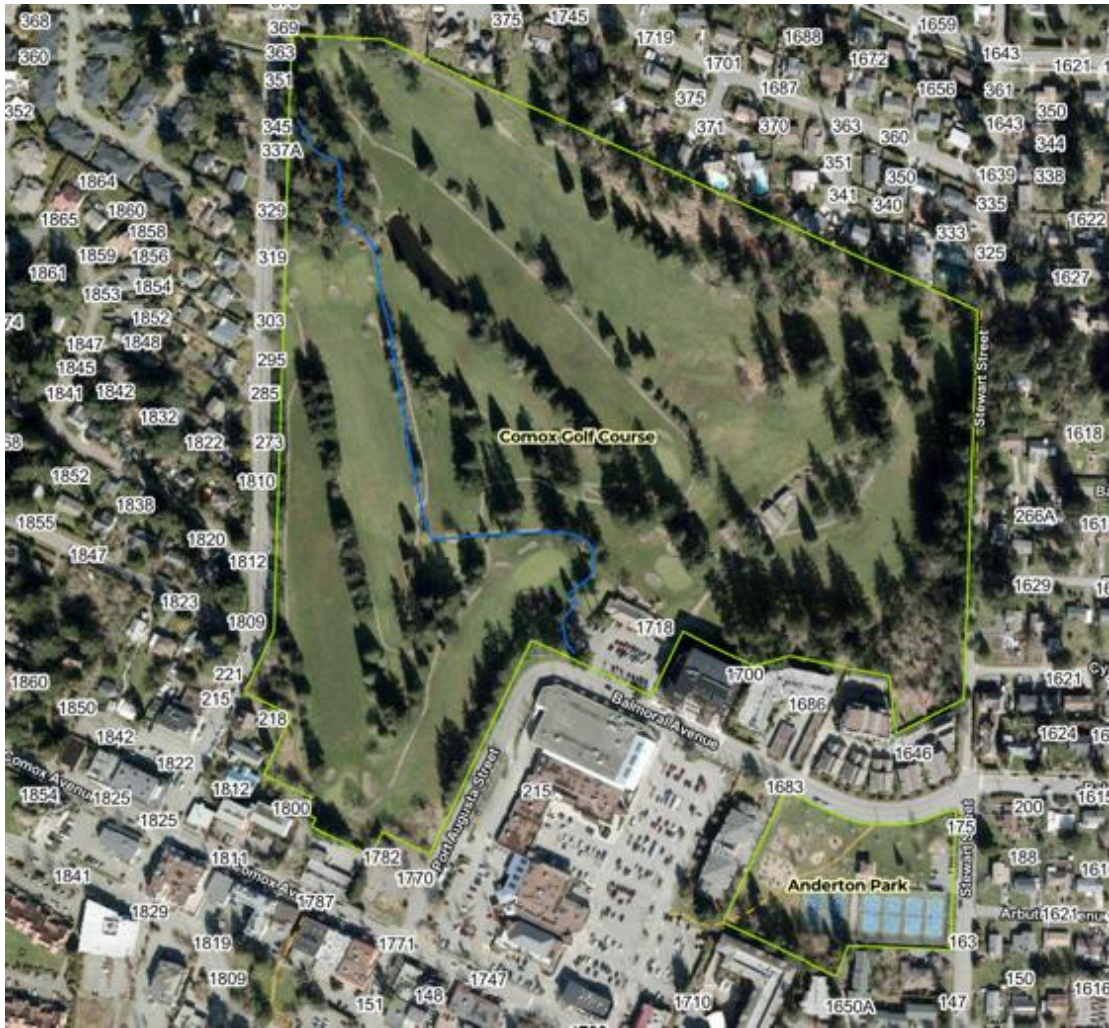


"Greater Downtown" Comox from Marina Park and the marinas to the Comox Golf Course.

- **The Centre of Town** is at the corner of Port Augusta Street and Comox Avenue. The off-set alignment of Port Augusta Street is an awkward access to the waterfront, but it is the only through access to the waterfront. The current Town Square on the northeast corner is understated, somewhat concealed from the Comox Centre Mall, and is not big enough for a town centre meeting place for the community. It may be a small pocket park for a rest and the annual Christmas Tree, but the space is not a real meeting or celebration place. It is just too small.
- **Comox Centre Mall** dominates the central north part of downtown Comox at the northeast corner of Comox Avenue and Port Augusta Street, extending north to the Golf Clubhouse on Balmoral Avenue and extending east, halfway down the block to Stewart Street. The Comox Centre features a variety of stores and offices including John's Your Independent Grocer, Rexall Drugstore, Dollarama, BC Liquor Store and CIBC, as well as fashion stores, professional services, pet care, and health services.



The “Greater Downtown” goes well beyond Comox Avenue (Main Street) and creates multiple destinations including the Golf Course, the four Marinas and Marina Park, as well as Anderton Park. These destinations are well within a 5- minute (400 metres) walk and create entirely different experiences for the whole family.



North Downtown: Comox Centre Mall, the Comox Golf Course, and Anderton Park

- **North Golf Club and Course** is an incredible green asset in the centre of town but it is not really open to the general population who does not play golf. Disc golf is the exception. Following with our community workshops in November 2023, there may be an opportunity to use part of the golf course for recreation as a park and develop a looped trail system along its outside edge without losing the integrity of the 9-hole golf course.
- **Anderton Park** is an active recreation asset just north of Comox Avenue. The park needs a better connection to the centre of town. The connection could be on the east side of the Comox Centre Mall and improvements along Balmoral Avenue and Stewart Street. The four tennis courts could be converted to the more popular pickle ball courts, especially for seniors.

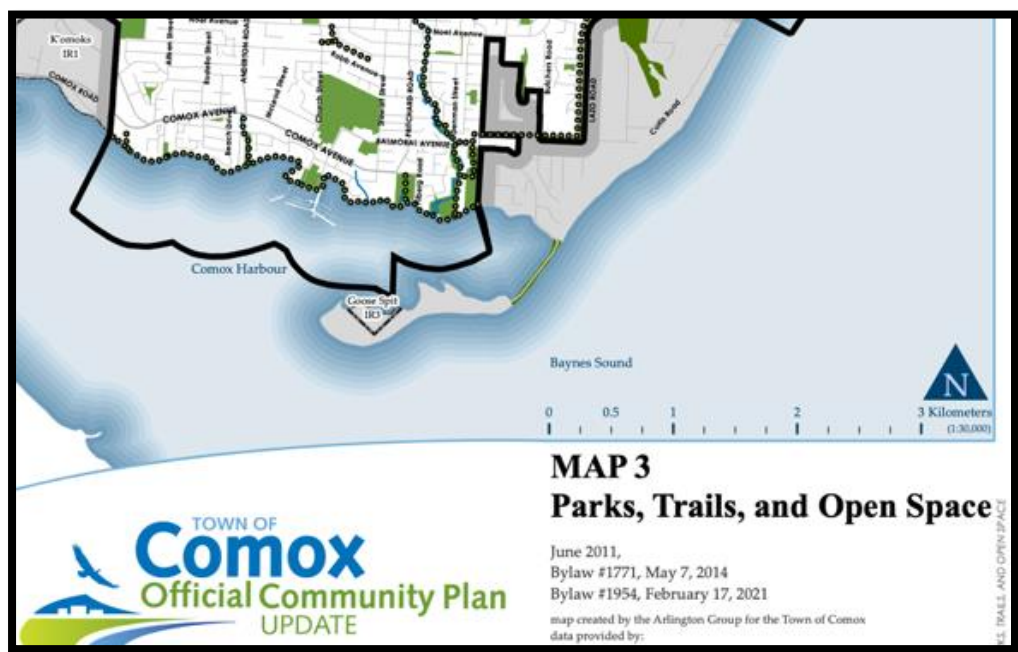
- **North Medium Density Residential Uses** fit appropriately adjoining the east and south side of the golf course and across the street from the local Anderton Park and Comox Centre. These residential buildings are a perfect fit surrounded by support services and recreation facilities.
- **Marinas and Marina Park** are the meeting places and recreational jewel at the waterfront. Four marinas provide mooring for up to 500 boats. The four marinas include the Comox Municipal Marina, Fisherman’s Wharf, Comox Valley Marina, and Gas ‘N Go Marina.

With the addition of the kid’s spray park and adequate parking, Marina Park is the meeting place for young families and waterfront sports seekers. The central green space and gazebo are great assets for flex-play and picnicking just a short distance to the seawall and Comox Fisherman’s Wharf. The challenges include improved walking connections to the Downtown and more supporting commercial uses and vendors along the waterfront.



Waterfront four Marinas and Marina Park

- **Marina Walkways** are wonderful assets, with the Beaufort Mountains shaping a distant picturesque backdrop. The walk out to the Marina Pier around the marina and the seawall walkway west around the residential community are memorable. In the longer term, the waterfront walkway could extend east to Goose Spit Park and west, with the cooperation of landowners and the Federal Government. It may be unrealistic in the short term, but rather in the longer term with the right cooperation and vision. These aspirations were partially reflected even in the 2011 Official Community Plan map (see below) illustrating *Parks, Trails and Open Space Features*. The challenge is that all these pathways and seawall walkways need to be connected and extended with safe pedestrian walking areas. Bicycle safety is also a challenge and should be addressed.

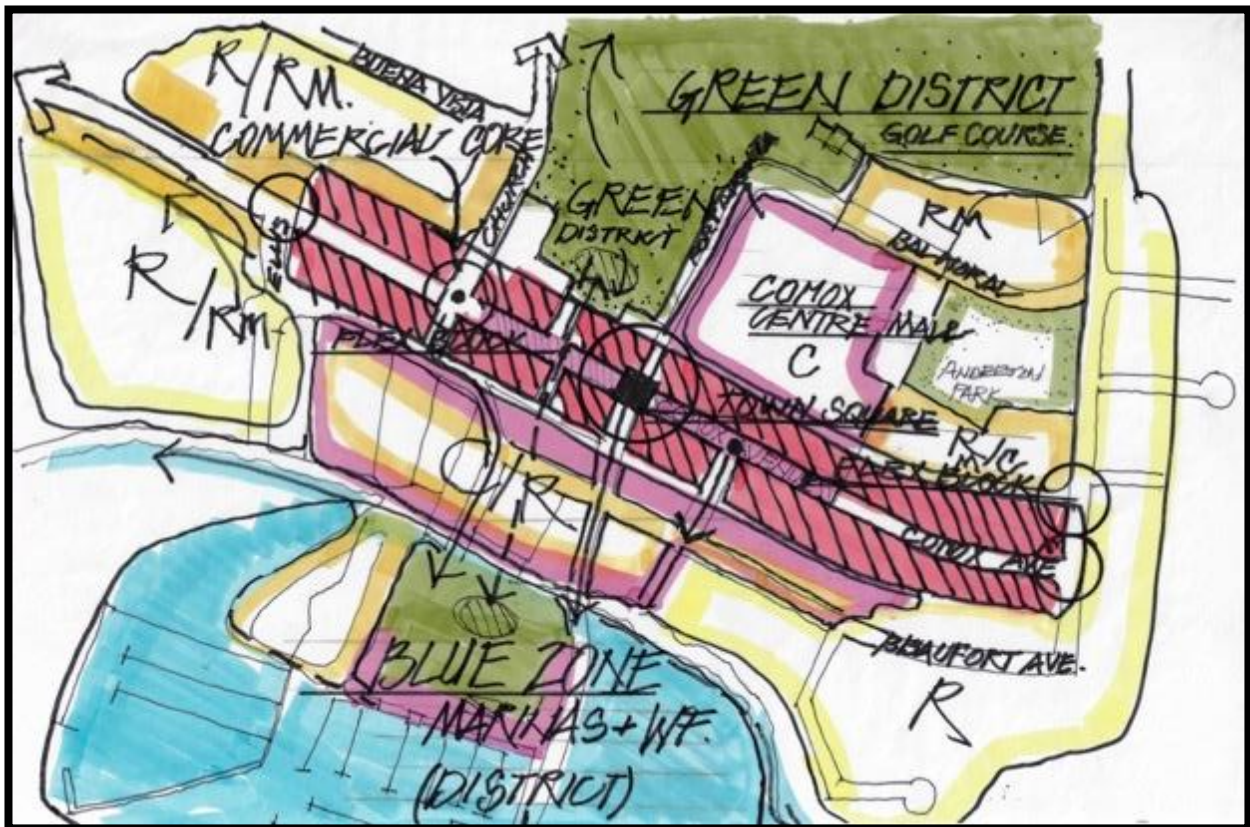


Excerpt, Comox Official Community Plan Update showing waterfront trails.

- **Mixed Use south area** is the area south of downtown between Marina Park and Comox Avenue. This area has potential for redevelopment and intensification as it is largely a mix of older structures and uses that can be repurposed for medium density residential uses.
- **Gateway Definitions** are an opportunity at both the west and east end of at the entrances along Comox Avenue. The gateway definition could start with signage and landscaping that blends in with the adjoining owner’s landscape. The issue may be ownership but defining the downtown entries in some way is essential.

The Downtown Enhancement Framework Plan

The following *Downtown Enhancement Framework Concept Plan* starts to highlight the importance of creating an enhanced destination where visitors can stay for a day or weekend as everything is within a convenient 5-minute walk. This is the “**Greater Downtown**” approach that links the enhanced “**Golf Course Park**” with the **Marina seaside amenities** in addition to **Main Street (Comox Avenue)**. It is a “park your vehicle once approach” in a clearly signed area and then shop, recreate, eat, or enjoy a beverage in this well-connected downtown. The **new meeting place is the Town Square area** at the intersection of Comox Avenue and Port Augusta Street. The Town Square is larger than the existing square and informs visitors of the great options with an **info kiosk** The Golf Course Park, the shopping on Main Street, the Marina and waterfront walkway are all within a 5-minute walk or bicycle ride.



Downtown Potential Enhancement Framework Plan

The Downtown Enhancement Framework Plan Primary Components

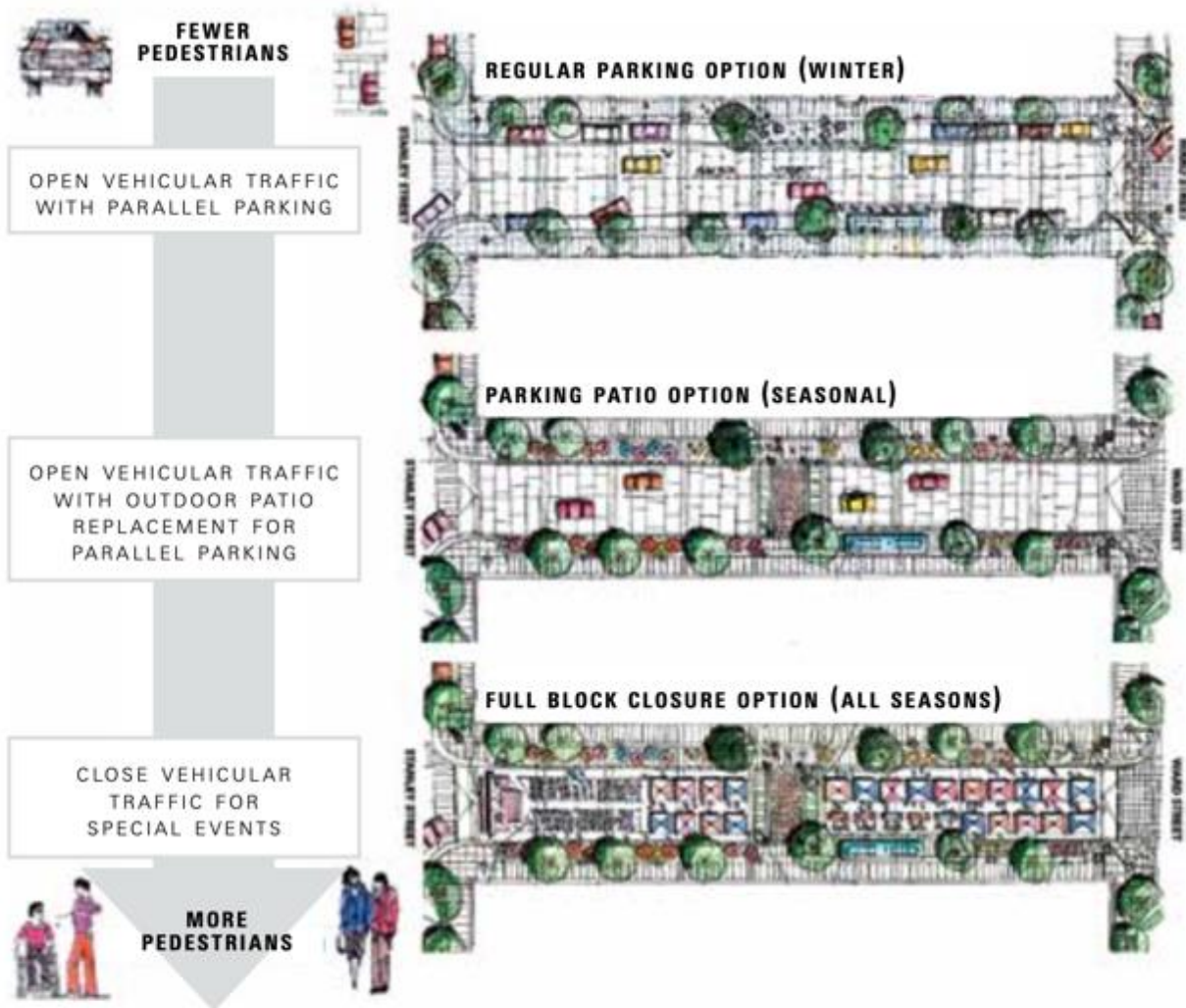
1. **The Town Square:** The downtown core area (red and cross-hatched) is highlighted by a Town Square “Heart” at the intersection of Port Augusta Street and Comox Avenue. The Town Square is symbolic as it can take several forms:
 - a. The Town Square could include a specially paved intersection that could have overhead (catenary lighting – like the concept for the main intersection in Nelson, BC.). The Town Square could also be on the proposed Civic Centre site across from the current Town Hall on the north side of Beaufort Avenue (*see sections 4.3 and 4.7 for further details*).

- b. The Town Square could also be coordinated with the development on the northwest corner of Augusta Street and Comox Avenue (on the former Lorne Hotel site) by extending the “Square” into a special meeting place enhanced by a seasonal information kiosk and First Nations public art pieces along with seating and colourful planting. These meeting areas would be supported by adjoining parking.
- c. A new boutique hotel could be integrated into this northwest corner site, replacing the former 133-year-old Lorne hotel that was destroyed by fire in 2011. This would be a prime location for a destination hotel. It could also border onto the golf course to have both an ocean and golf green view.
- d. A rich mix of local and tourist retail uses could extend along the ground floor of this hotel following a marine theme with hotel units above to a potential four to six stories stepped back from the street on its upper floors (*see illustration in section 4.3*).

2. **The Flex- Street:** A “Flex Street” would be Comox Avenue with temporary closure for special events like a weekend market or street festival (e.g., Penticton, Whistler, Hope, and Nelson). A one-way segment of Comox Avenue could be considered with angle parking, but experience has shown throughout North America that the street generally becomes less safe (faster speeds), reduces business, and makes access more difficult to businesses and residents.

The flex street concept, on the other hand, does not decrease traffic flow, increases the pedestrian space periodically, and creates a flexible option when needed (*see section 4.4 for further details and illustrations*).

- a. The flex street could begin with part of a block in front of the Comox Centre Mall with a group of vendors on weekends or a special street festival that brings the seaside theme to the centre of Town.
- b. The flex street could then expand with demand and be coordinated with appropriate water and electricity, if possible, for vendors. Food trucks can also complement and connect to activities at the waterfront.
- c. Increased residential density along Comox Avenue will bring more local shoppers to support the area and enhance the experience.
- d. Ultimately, Comox Avenue could become a pedestrian only core area maybe even once a week, on Saturday or Sunday like Penticton or Nelson, BC with an efficient conversion, especially during summer months and into the winter Christmas season.
- e. Comox Avenue, as noted in the community workshops, should enrich its offerings in retail, food and beverage options to create a more attractive destination.



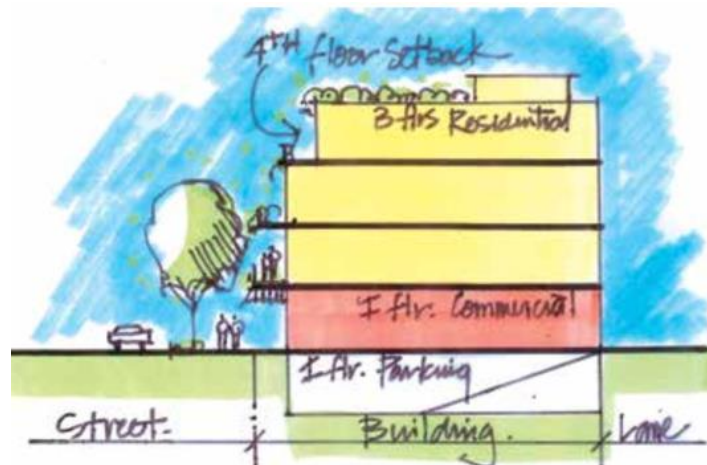
400 BLOCK, BAKER STREET, NELSON, B.C.

3. **The Blue Zone or Marina District:** As part of the “Greater Downtown Plan”, this area is better connected to the downtown core through enhanced sidewalks and greenways. The Blue Zone is enhanced with waterfront pathways with Marina Park as the main feature.
 - a. The buildings at the waterfront are more commercialized with various marine related businesses and activities.
 - b. The waterfront walkway is continuous around the marina and through the park with eventual extensions east and west to extend the seaside experience.
 - c. A safer and widened walkway along Port Augusta Street better connects Downtown, the Marina Area and the Golf Course.
 - d. More viewpoints and interpretative areas will further attract visitors and residents to the seaside where they will further appreciate the marine ecology, bird life, and

showcase the outstanding views of the Comox Valley. *(see sections 4.6 for further details).*

4. **The Green District (Golf Course Park):** This area is enhanced by a potential park at the south end combined with the town square and a looped trail around the entire golf course, while maintaining the integrity of the golf course use. These are all separate options that could be considered because of the community workshop discussions on November 6 and 8, 2023.
 - a. A looped trail could be considered on the outside edge of the golf course, leaving the golf course intact and opening the opportunities to explore the natural edges and enjoying viewing the golf game.
 - b. A small portion of the Golf Course at the south end (with a slight adjustment in golf holes) could create a central park downtown and a greater use for the general population complemented by public parking.
 - c. The extension east of Buena Vista Avenue could also be considered and would connect to Port Augusta Avenue for an additional vehicular connection in the downtown. *(see sections 4.5 for further details).*

5. **The Residential Intensification Areas:** The areas on Comox Avenue as well as especially south and northeast of the core should be considered for further intensification up to 4 to 6 storeys with amenity contributions for additional density (above 4 storeys is discretionary base on specific criteria).
 - a. The area northeast and of Comox Avenue surrounds Anderton Park, so any further intensification would have the park on its doorstep and shopping directly to the east. Most of this area is already intensified but some redevelopment could occur in time.
 - b. The area north of Comox Avenue and west of Port Augusta Street has significant redevelopment potential with commercial retail on the first floor and residential above.
 - c. The area south of Comox Avenue connecting to the waterfront Marina Park also has the opportunity of significant residential intensification, stepping down to the waterfront and affording outstanding views.



The downtown building concept is four to six storeys, commercial on the first floor and residential above.

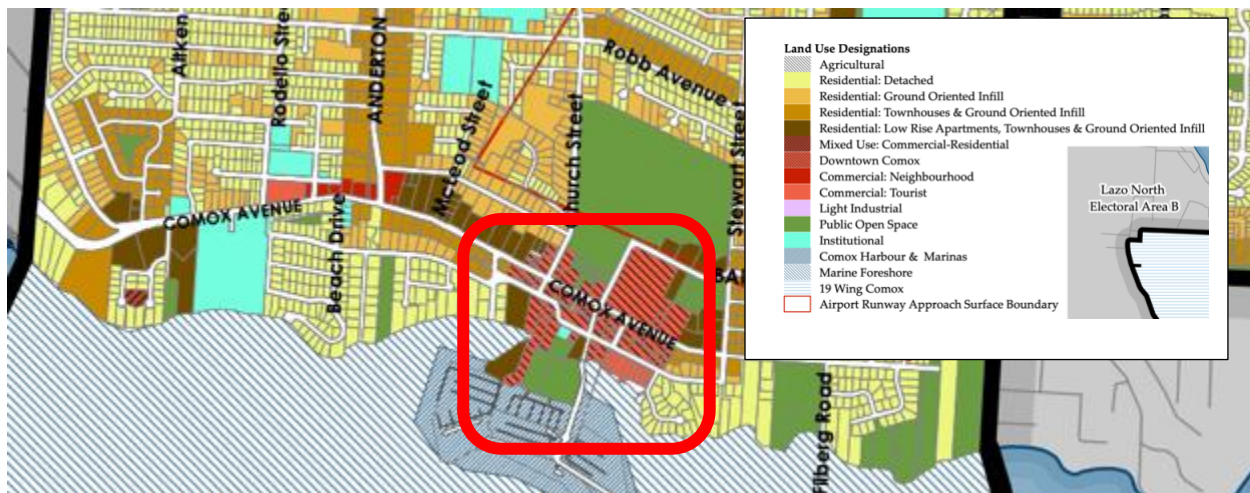
Downtown OCP and Zoning Bylaw Review + Parks Master Plan

Official Community Plan (IOCP)

The *Official Community Plan* (2011) has policies and appropriate land use designations (a specific *Downtown* designation) that support the downtown initiatives recommended in this study. From supporting mixed use and higher densities on Comox Avenue to providing mixed land use designations, the intentions are broadly supported. The policies are specific to the Downtown area and specific *Development Permit Area Guidelines* (section 2.1.3.3, DPA #1) further detail design guidelines for the area.

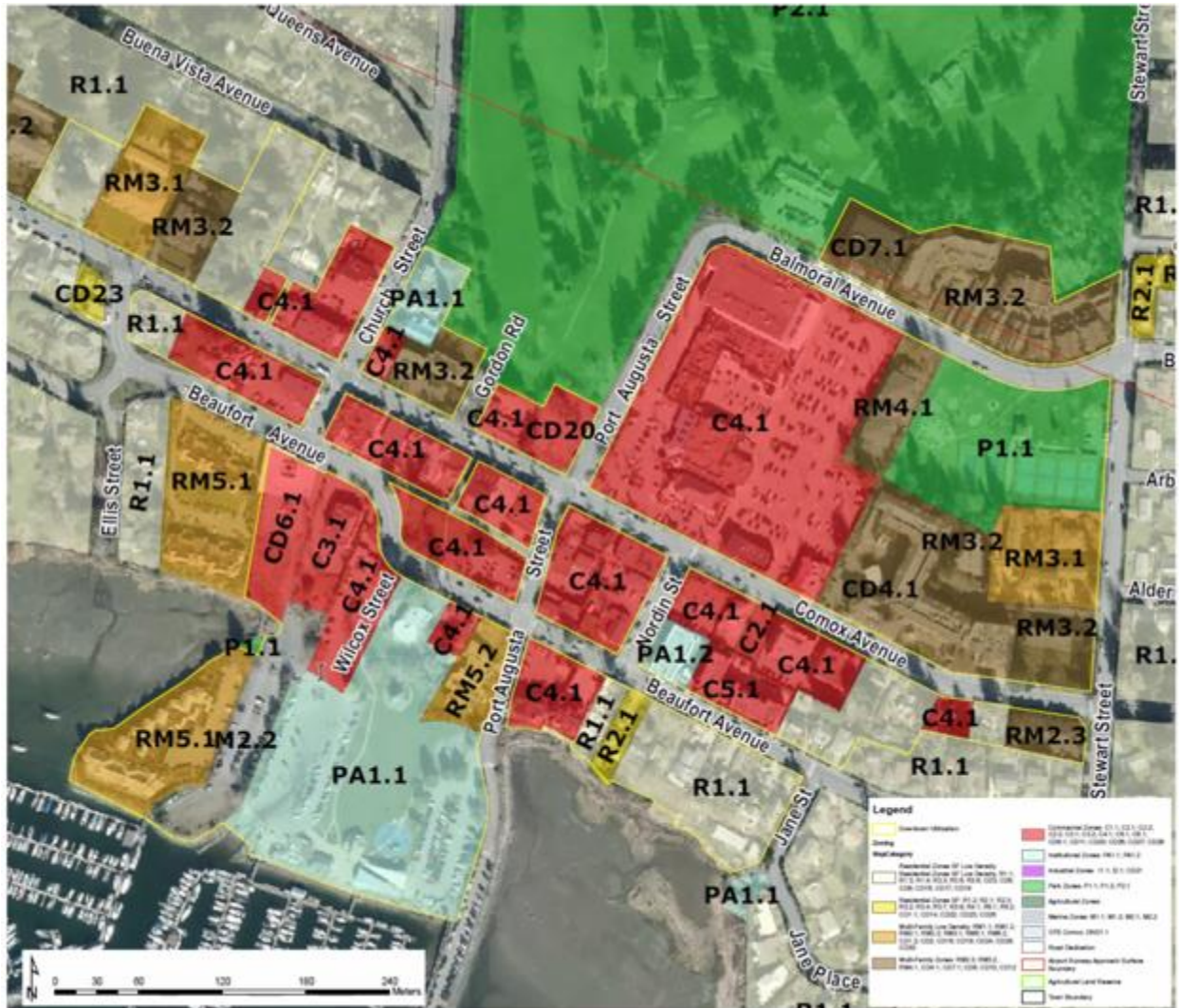
At the same time, the Official Community Plan is overdue for at least an update that brings the policies in line with current provincial policy and other regulations. Considerations in the Official Community Plan designations for the downtown could include:

1. **Higher Building and Densities:** Permitting higher density (up to 6 stories in the downtown) on more than a few select sites, under specific discretionary conditions, including such elements as form and character, stepping back on the upper stories, and transitions to adjoining properties, parking, and views.
2. **Amenity Contributions:** Considering being more specific on Amenity Contributions. Many municipalities are now specific on their Amenity Contribution based on land use on a square metre basis. The type of amenity is also specified in a broad set of categories and in kind contributions are considered depending on the site. The amenity contribution relates to the increase in residential density through a rezoning process. This approach is more specific and less discretionary.
3. **Reintroduce Incentives:** Consideration for mixed use and higher residential, especially hotel accommodations should be encouraged by amenity concessions, and compact timing of rezoning process, as well as Development Cost Charge reductions consideration.



Excerpt from OCP Designation Map

Downtown: Zoning Bylaw



Excerpt from Zoning Bylaw 1850, Schedule B

The Zoning Bylaw 1850 (adopted September 2, 2020, consolidated to March 1, 2023) should be reviewed to permit more flexibility in the uses in Downtown Comox to advance residential intensification and economic development. On first review, this should include the following:

- 1) Fill in the C4.1 gaps along Comox Avenue between Ellis Street and Stewart Street, subject to respecting the CD 4.1, RM2.2 and RM3.2 Zones that reflect higher density residential. Restrict office as a discretionary use to the second floors to encourage retail uses on the ground floor first. An active street is a successful street. Specify height in storeys – 4 to 6 stories in each zone.
- 2) Consider permitting commercial and residential uses C5.1 – Residential -Oriented Mixed Use on the property west of the Marina Park.
- 3) Permit commercial uses (specifically) retail and food/beverage in the PA1.1 zone along the waterfront.

- 4) Addition of creator, temporary/pop-up and manufacturing-related permitted uses to enable craft manufacturing activities that animate the downtown core (e.g., brewpub, craft sausages, fudge-making), or enables temporary enterprise structures on vacant lots. Example definitions are provided as follows:
- *Brewers and distillers – minor* means the brewing or distilling of alcoholic beverages or alcohol products with alcoholic content exceeding one (1) percent by volume. This product must be licensed under *the Liquor Control and Licensing Act*. The public tasting and retail sales of alcohol product is limited to that which is produced on-site. All processes, functions and mechanical equipment associated with the use must be contained indoors. The total area for production must be limited to a maximum gross floor area of 5000 m².
 - *Pop-up* means a Commercial Use that is temporarily located within an existing Building, temporary structure, or outdoors without significant or any modification to the Site. A pop-up use can include retail sales and service, food or beverage sales, artisan manufacturing by hand or with a limited level of automation, fitness instruction, outdoor theatre, or a combination of these uses provided all provincial health and safety regulations are adhered to and there is no impact beyond the Site. A pop-up use does not include Cannabis Retail, Livestock, or any service that is not same day.
 - *Art Gallery* – add as a permitted use.
 - *Custom indoor manufacturing* means development used for small scale on-site indoor production of goods by hand; manufacturing primarily involving the use of hand tools and provided such developments have fewer than 5 production employees. Typical uses include but are not limited to jeweller and denture.
- 5) Consideration of reduction or elimination of downtown and/or non-residential parking standards and parking in lieu payment requirement to better enable infill and revitalization business models that are currently deterred by parking standards that don't yield an adequate market ROI. Examples: City of Edmonton, Sandpoint (Idaho).

Parks Master Plan

The Parks Master Plan should consider the potential connections and park assets in the downtown area, considering the following:

- Connecting to and around the golf course with a potential loop trail.
- Connecting to and along the waterfront east and west of the marinas.
- A park and parking on the south edge of the golf course, associated with the potential redevelopment of the golf course as a more inclusive public recreation asset in the downtown.
- A Town Square on the northwest corner of Port Augusta Street and Comox Avenue.
- The connections to adjoining park space like Filberg Park and the Marina Park and Pier along the waterfront.

3.3 Emerging Common Themes

The following is a summary of the major themes and conclusions that emerged from the community engagement workshops, other community feedback, and site analysis:

1. **The Non-Destination Downtown:** Although, Comox has many memorable and unique place characteristics, the need to create and reinforce Comox as a destination is required.
2. **The “Greater Downtown”:** The Marinas, the Golf Course and Comox Avenue should be combined and connected as attractive destinations— making it a special destination in the Comox Valley, provincially, nationally, and internationally.
3. **Destination Hotels Necessary:** The Downtown needs one or two hotels. A destination needs places to stay overnight.
4. **Town Square Heart:** The Downtown needs a Town Square or adequately sized meeting place where the community meets and celebrates. This area could also include an information kiosk to inform visitors.
5. **Downtown Flex-Block (Street):** The existing street in front of the Comox Centre Mall could become a “special closure” segment for Comox Avenue to support special events and reinforce the idea of a pedestrian-focused downtown.
6. **Parking Management Strategy:** Comox Avenue requires a parking and access study to ensure that parking is easily accessed, parking signs are clear, and traffic is managed properly so it does not become jammed with car and more unsafe.
7. **Main Street Core Retail and Restaurants:** The Comox Avenue Main Street needs a further induction of local businesses to make it the destination it deserves in the form of restaurants, cafes and retail relating to various gaps in the retail area.
8. **Four Season Events and Special Social Media Use:** The downtown should have more and 4-season comprehensive events programming inside and outside. For example, Friday Night Markets with food trucks, an art walk, and a waterfront walk.
9. **Evening Special Lighting:** Expanded feature lighting (retaining the dark sky) could light up the downtown to improve safety and ambiance.
10. **Infill the Core and Edges:** Continue to encourage a diversity and choice of more compact multiple family residential units (rental and ownership) to attract more people into the downtown. There are good examples of mixed use that should be expanded.

4.0 DETAILED ENHANCEMENT STRATEGIES

4.1 Organize for Success

The suggested **Comox Downtown Action Partnership (CDAP)**, as mentioned earlier, will consist of the *BIA, Town of Comox, the Marina area businesses, and the Golf Club* to create a renewed and broader focus and priority around downtown, waterfront and the golf course. The CDAP will oversee and support the implementation of this *Downtown Enhancement Action Plan*.

This leadership strategy is the critical aspect of success that is largely overlooked in many cases in implementing a plan for action. The *Town of Comox* should commit a current or part of a future position to lead the action plan and associated projects. This position will help ensure that the action plan is implemented in accordance with timing, funding, and priority. An *Action Plan Progress Report* card should be used (See *Appendix A*) as a tool of reporting and accountability after six months and then every year once momentum and organization/funding are in place.

The greater Comox community should also be actively involved in the projects, whether it is in-kind or financial contributions, and should also be part of active involvement and consultation. The K'ómoks First Nation should also be consulted on the future of the Comox Downtown as it is part of their traditional territory.

There are several **tasks** that should be coordinated by the *Comox Downtown Action Partnership*:

1. **Invite** broader membership by **BIA and Town Council**.
2. **Confirm action priorities**.
3. **Commit** to timing, funding, and responsibilities.
4. **Implement plan**.
5. **Use a report card** on a 6-month basis to monitor and evaluate progress.

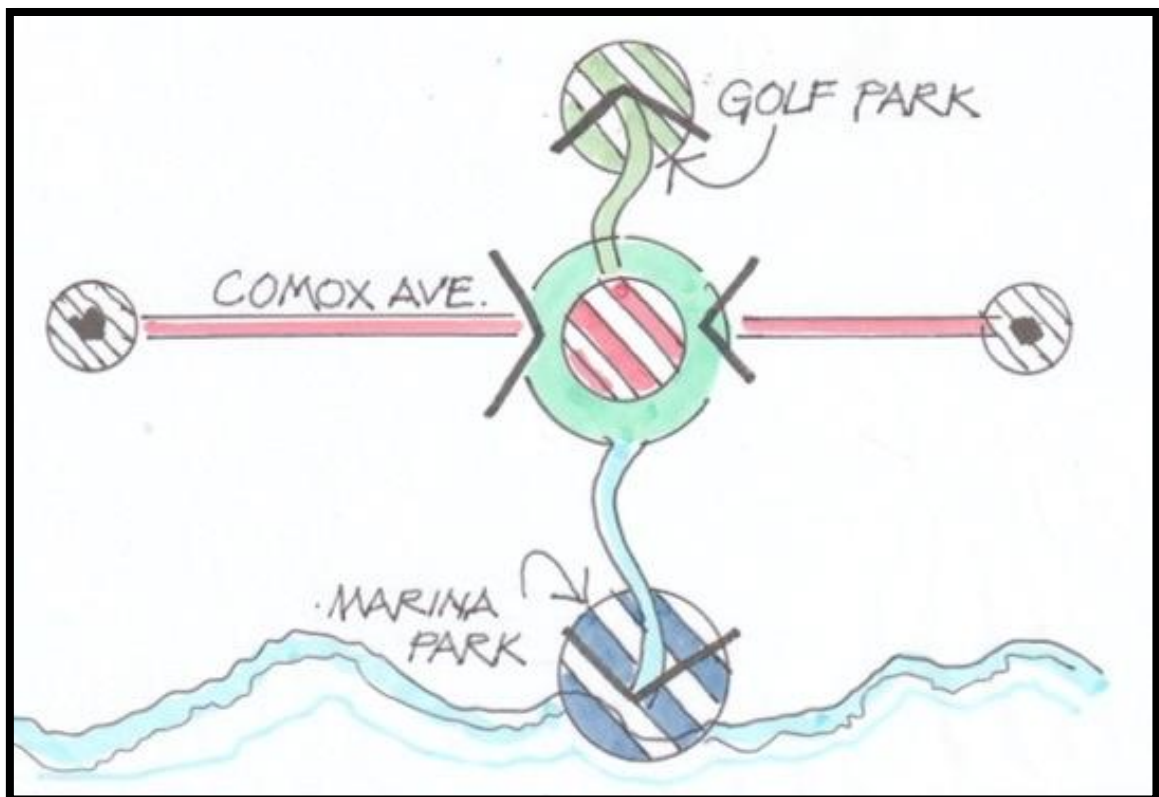


The Comox Downtown Action Partnership, the Community, and the K'ómoks First Nations will all be important in making substantial progress and creating momentum with the enhancements.

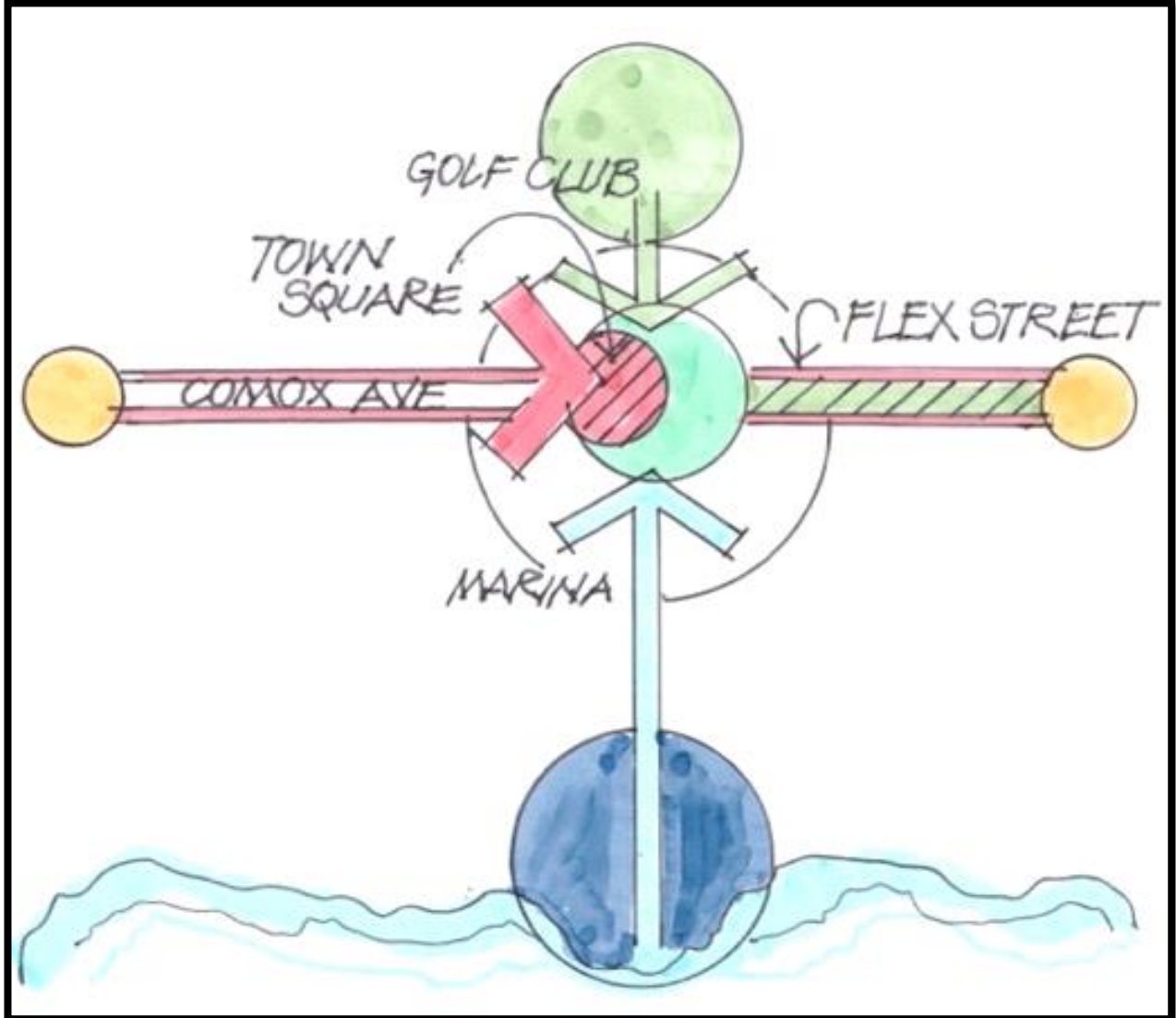
4.2 Make the Greater Downtown Destination

Fundamentals of Destination Comox: To move Comox from a town along the sea to a key destination in the Comox Valley, certain challenges must be resolved, and opportunities realized to enhance the “Greater Downtown” attractiveness:

- The Downtown **must be easy to find and be able to stay**. It must be memorable and create unique experiences to a reason to come back again and again.
- The Downtown must **feel safe, clean, and welcoming**.
- The Downtown must **have attractions for the whole family**.
- There should **be distinct gateways** that welcome visitors in the form of signage and features.
- There must be **several reasons to stay** for a while either events downtown, programming of the street or further activities in Memorial Park.
- **Comox needs destination accommodation**. The Comox brand story and history as a meeting ground and “Land of Plenty” – that has plenty to do and see.
- Brand Comox as an **“Ocean Adventure Centre”** with 4 marinas and endless waterfront that needs to be completed with trails and exploration points.



Destination Comox (illustrated above) consists not only the downtown but the waterfront and golf course. This approach recognizes the potential of the “Greater” Downtown as a destination with multiple activities and choices.



As illustrated above, the concept and theme of the “Greater Downtown” consisting of the downtown, marinas area, and the golf course are a greater critical mass of attractions and sub-destinations that have greater draw – regionally, provincially, nationally, and internationally.

The centre of this *Downtown Enhancement Action Plan* is the creation of additional destinations in the downtown area including:

1. The **Town Square** as a primary meeting place (see the next **section 4.3** for further details).
2. The **Comox Avenue “Flex Street”** to enhance the pedestrian and events potential of the downtown (see **section 4.4** for further details).
3. The **Golf Course reconsideration**, in part, as a more inclusive community asset (see **section 4.4**).
4. The **Marina area and Marina Park** as a completer and more enhanced waterfront (see **section 4.5**).

These could follow a “**Ocean Adventure**” or similar theme that distinguishes the “Greater” Comox downtown as a unique offering for everyone.

4.3 Create the Town Square Meeting Place

The Town Square was identified as the second highest priority by the community in the public workshops held in November of 2023. There are no hotels currently in Comox, so it would make sense to combine a hotel with the Town Square to reinforce the destination in the heart of town. The suggested Town Square and hotel location (illustrated below) is on the former Lorne Hotel site on the northwest corner of Comox Avenue and Port Augusta Street. This is the centre of downtown, across the street from the Comox Centre Mall and just south of the Golf Course. Everything in the downtown core is within a 5-minute walk. Alternatively, and as suggested, an alternative town square site could be adjoining a new potential Civic Centre across the street from the existing Town Hall on the north side of Beaufort Avenue (see **section 4.7**).

One alternative for the Town Square, is that it should be developed in association with a commercial residential development to accomplish the following:

- Be part of a development project so there are “eyes on the square” for safety and security as well as maintenance and cleanliness.
- Ensure that new public washrooms are provided that are clean and secure and open 24 hours with supervision.
- Provide information kiosks, at least during the peak summer season to orient and inform visitors and tourists.
- Provide sitting and viewing areas so that the Square is a great resting spot to meet.
- Tourists should be able to find convenient parking nearby (illustrated behind the hotel).
- The intersection at Comox Avenue and Augusta Street could also be improved with coloured stamped concrete, a possible with a possible “scrabble intersection” so pedestrians can cross diagonally, especially during special events (see next page).
- With the intersection improvements, large events could extend onto the street as part of the “flex street” approach (further described in **section 4.4**).



Town Square Concept at the northwest corner of Comox Avenue and Port Augusta Street.



An intersection concept for the central area of Baker Street in Nelson, BC that includes bollards, special paving, overhead lighting, and the potential for an all direction “scramble” intersection with new corner traffic lights.



An intersection and town square concept for the central area of Lethbridge, Alberta that includes a clock tower, festival banners, widened sidewalks, outdoor patios, bollards, special paving, overhead lighting.

4.4 Transform Comox Avenue to Full Potential

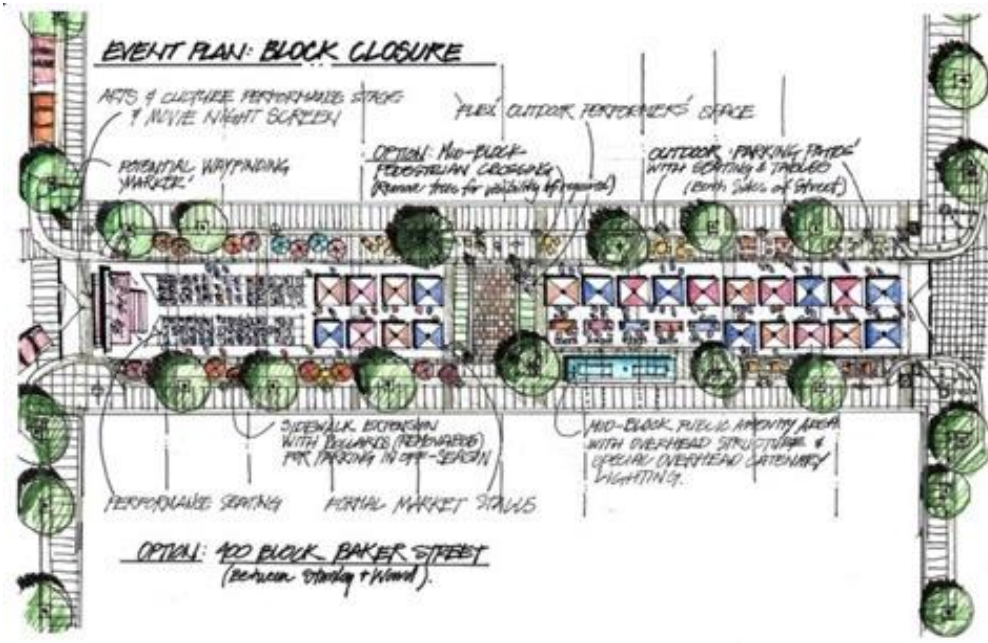
Adding “Streets Alive” programming on a weekly and seasonal basis will be important for return visits to downtown Comox. You must give people a reason to visit the downtown, and there should be multiple options between eating out, a quick great coffee or a visit to the museum. These options should be listed and distributed to the community on a weekly or monthly basis, be posted on the BIA and Town of Comox websites and mounted on information kiosks in the downtown.

A “Marine Nature Walk” both digital and physical could give Comox a greater unique flavour. The addition of permanent and rotating public art installations and heritage interpretation are also key strategies for making the downtown greater.

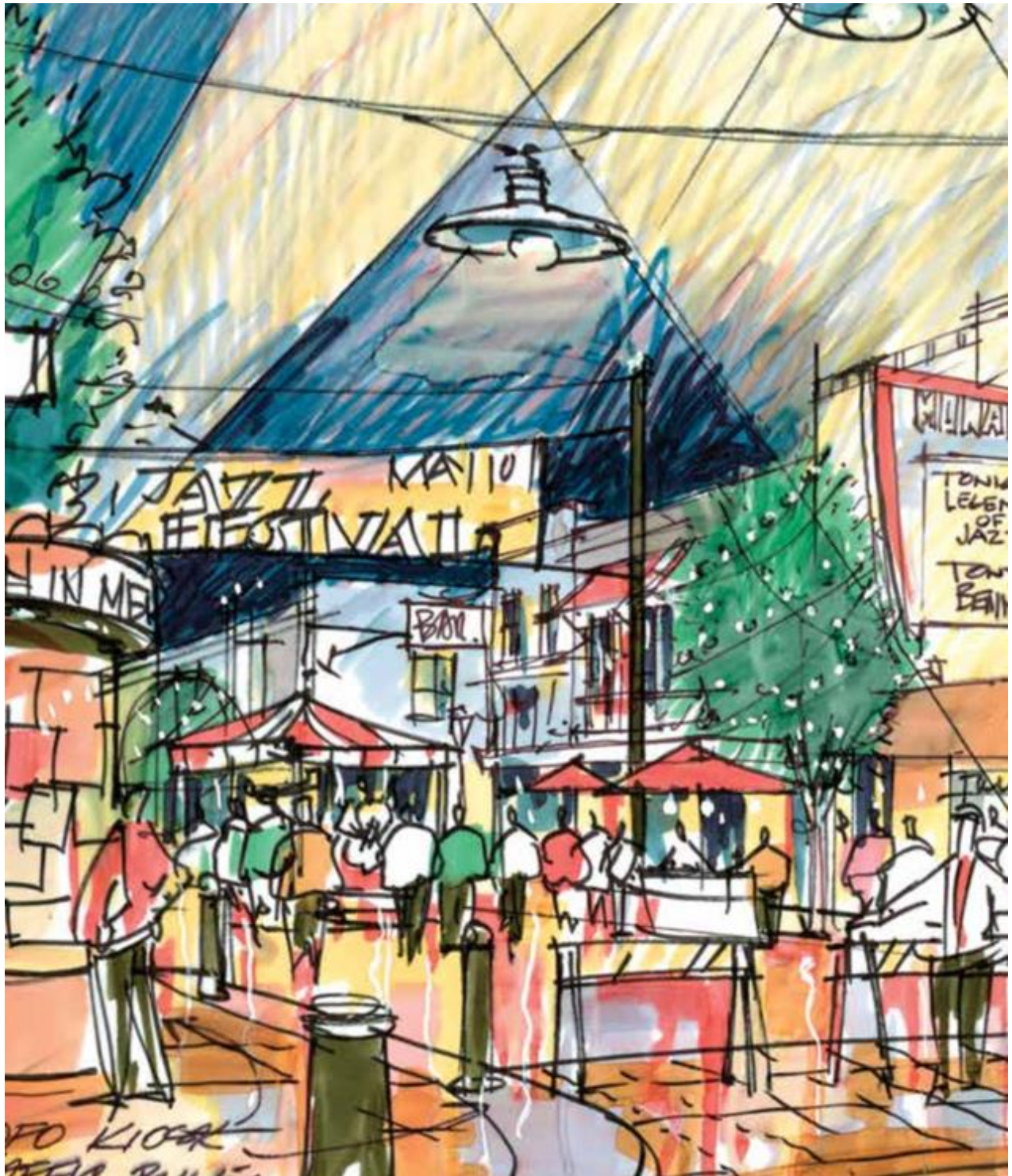


Temporary and permanent art installations, lighting, and temporary artisan markets can help transform the downtown into a meeting and gathering place (Quebec City, PQ).

The Flex Street Comox Avenue: A “flex” street is a section of the street that can be temporarily closed for special events and celebrations. The creation of the transformable Comox Avenue “Flex Street” (street block or part of the block) can first front on the Comox Centre Mall and then expand with demand. It could be programmed and closed for special elements such as a farmers’ market and fish market, Canada Day parade, and Christmas events. or a Friday night market. Comox could build a regional following for a special fish/marine market like Penticton or Nelson, British Columbia. Within the street right-of-way, there is ample room to recreate the street as an “outdoor living room” that is a destination and experience.



The Nelson Farmers’ Market on Baker Street is a “Flex Street” (temporary closure) example.



The concept of the night “Flex Street” temporary closure (above) during an evening jazz festival and the reopening of the Monarch Theatre in downtown Medicine Hat, Alberta as part of their downtown plan implementation.

Parking Patios: The following existing sidewalk at Jojo's Café in Osoyoos is a great example for expansion into a formal patio adjacent to the use with parking spots converted to motorcycle and bike parking (see illustration below). Other patio options do exist (see other photo examples). Make sure owners and employees do not park in front of the store to leave room for customers.



Jojo's Café in Osoyoos: Existing Situation.



Jojo's Café Patio Concept: Potential outdoor patio, external boardwalk and bike/motorcycle parking.

More Space – More Business: Parking Patios and Community Tables can extend uses and increase the attractiveness for pedestrians as destinations.



Outdoor Patio and Sidewalk Bypass with overhead shade structure (Peachland, BC).



Extending the uses and inviting the public to a “Community Table” (Squamish, BC).



Cool Corner Oasis overhead patio screening concept (Bozeman, MT).



Mobile or permanent food trucks for local food infill concept (Bozeman, MT and White Rock, BC).



Movable seating, fold-up benches, and colourful chairs create lingering places (Whitehorse, Yukon, and Whistler, BC)

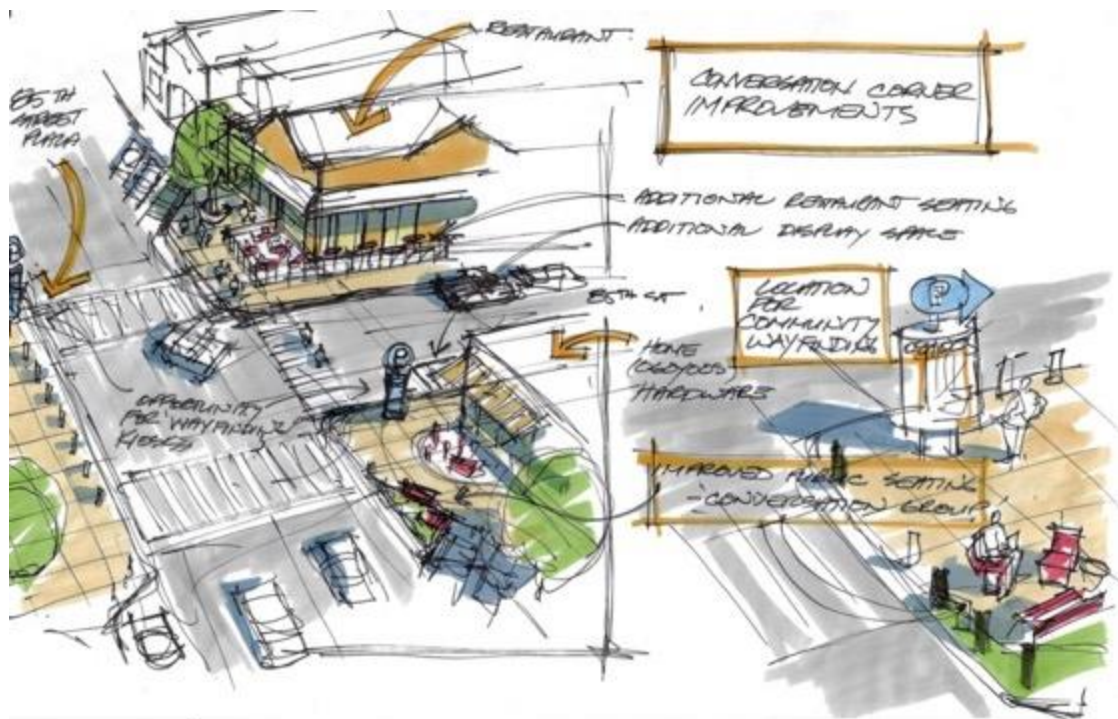
Conversation Corners: The potentially improved and safer pedestrian crossings on Comox Avenue and associated further sidewalk extensions (bulges) offer an opportunity pedestrian improvements such as seating, planting, public art, information, and planting to facilitate more meeting places and informal conversations in the downtown (see illustration below and next page).



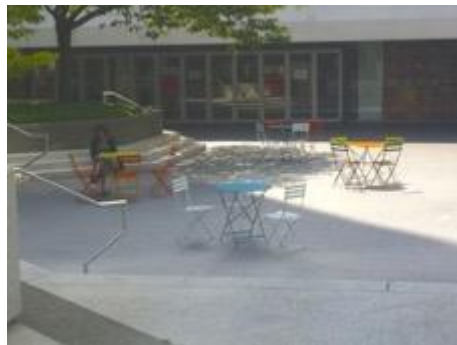
Existing Sidewalk Extension (bulge) on Main Street in Osoyoos.



Potential Conversation Corner Parkette Concept for corner bulge enhancements (Nelson, BC).

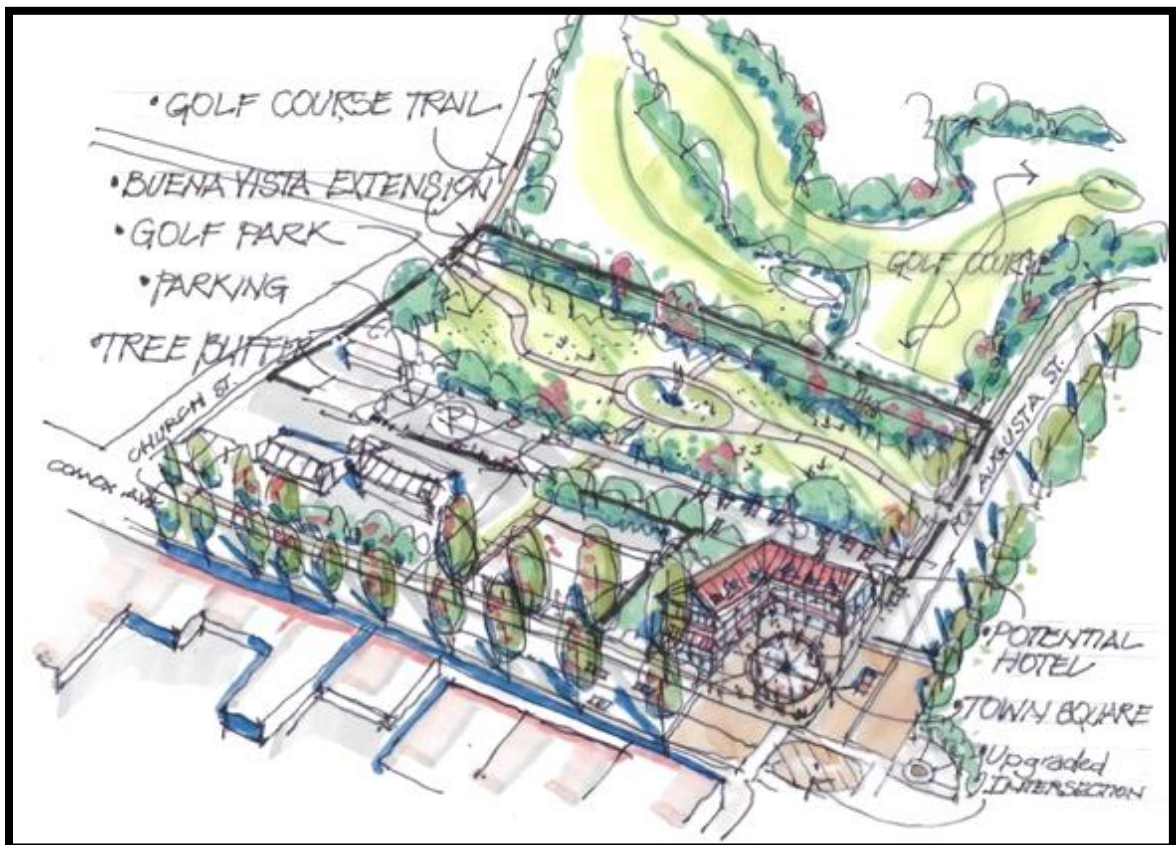


Conversation Corners: A wayfinding kiosk, public art, and seating could be part of the programming of these corner sidewalk extensions. It is suggested that each corner bulge design program be customized to meet the needs of that particular corner with input from adjacent businesses.



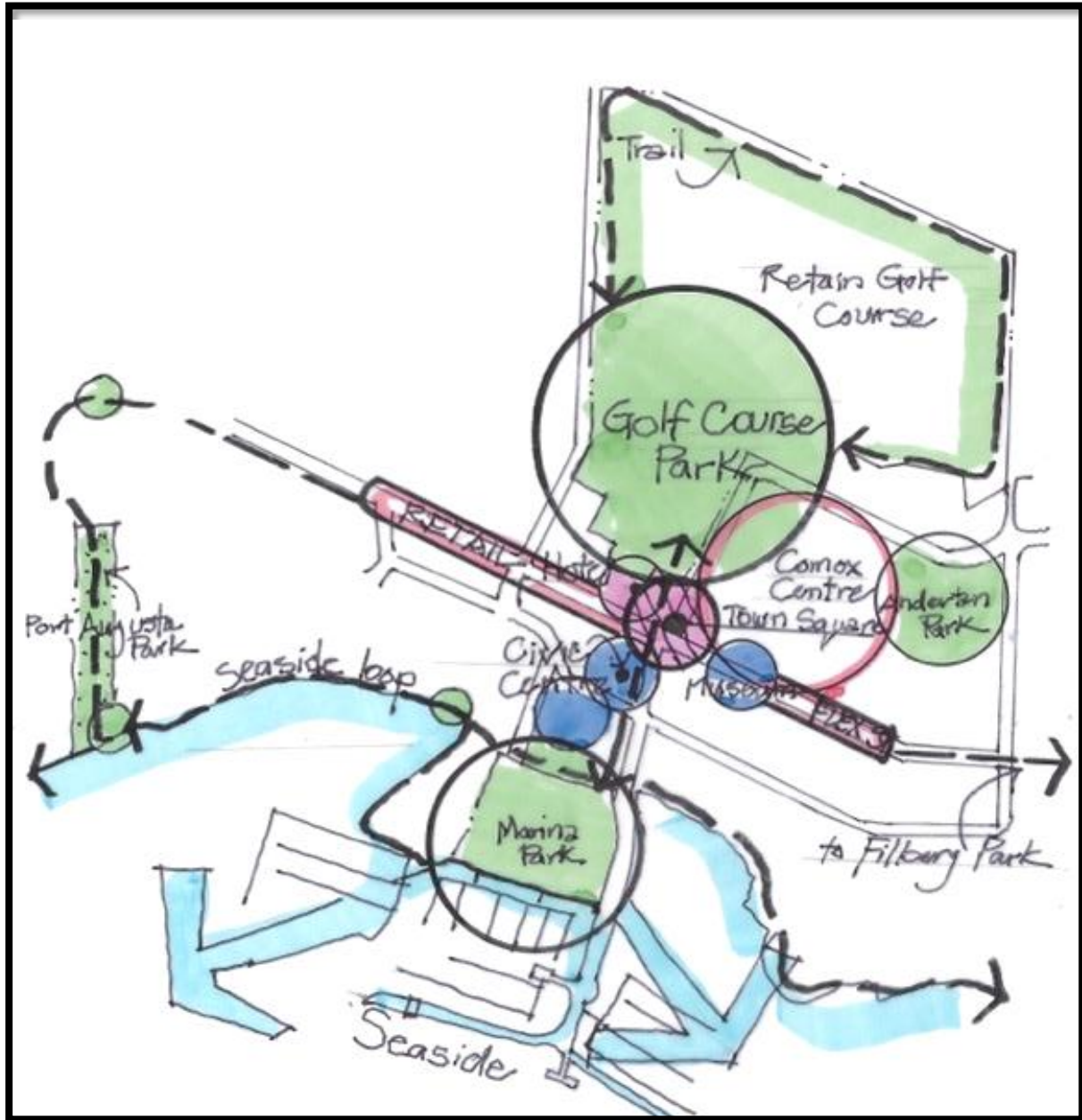
4.5 Recreate the Golf Course as a More Inclusive Recreation Asset

One of the suggestions at the community workshops was to reconsider the golf course as a park for the greater community. At least a looped public trail could be considered on the outer edge of the golf course to allow the community to appreciate the lands and the golf activity. Further, it was mentioned, that a park could be considered for part of the property on the south edge along with public parking which would enhance the downtown as a destination and expand parking opportunities in the centre of Comox. In addition, an extension of Beaufort Avenue could be considered to better connect the street to the downtown. The trail loop may be the most realistic short-term action, while the other proposals have direct impacts on the golf course function and operation. Not matter what action or actions are considered, further conversations with the golf club and community are required.



Golf Course Alternative Concept: The concept above shows a looped public trail around the golf course. It also illustrates the addition of a public park on the south edge of the golf course, requiring alteration of two golf holes and additional public parking. Buena Vista Avenue is also shown as extending east to better connect with the centre of town.

The illustration also shows the potential Town Square located at the northwest corner of Port Augusta and Comox Avenue (as discussed earlier in section 4.2).



The plan concept, as illustrated above, is that a trail loop is developed around the golf course, keeping the golf course primarily intact. Further redevelopment of the golf course could be considered and suggested at the community meetings to make it more a greater community asset. In that light, a community park could be considered at the south end with two golf course holes modified. At the same time, Beaufort Avenue could be extended east across the south end of the golf course to increase access to the downtown.

Note that all these proposals are sensitive and need further consideration, first with the Golf Club, and then with the greater community.

4.6 Complete the Marinas Area and Waterfront

The marinas and the waterfront also can be enhanced by considering several opportunities:

- Completing the walkways, trails and connections on the waterfront including: (preliminary concept illustrated below)
 - A connection west from Marina Park to the western waterfront seawall walk.
 - Better and safer connections along Port Augusta St. to Comox Ave./ golf course.
 - Complete safe pedestrian connections to the pier on the east side.
 - An improved connection between the Marinas and the Golf Course.
 - Extending the walkways east and west of the Marina area (medium to long term).
 - Introducing more commercial uses along the waterfront.
- Supporting the redevelopment of the vacant lands west of Marina Park in coordination with the parking lot (preliminary concept illustrated below):
 - Four storey stepped mixed use residential building with ground floor commercial and parking (that could include the Harbour Air offices).



Preliminary trail and pathway concept for the waterfront, downtown, and golf area.



Preliminary potential development concept for lot area west of Marina Park.



Waterfront pathway west of the marinas.



Innovative boardwalk viewing area off sensitive shoreline (waterfront concept from Gibsons, BC.)



The four marinas create variety for an incredible destination but more mooring and access could be expanded for non-motorized boats and boards with safety in mind.



The extensions of seawall walkways east and west of the marinas are a high priority for the community.



Marina Park is regarded as one of the destination jewels in Comox especially with the new Rotary Splash Park and the large open grassed area and gathering areas. Complemented by improved pedestrian connections to the downtown, the collective variety of destinations will help make a “Greater” Downtown.

4.7 Realize the Civic Centre Concept

The potential relocation of the existing Town Hall functions are being considered to consolidate operations in one building. One of the sites being reviewed is the area across from the Town Hall on the north side of Beaufort Avenue. This concept considers a mixed use building up to 4 storeys that retains parking of the basement floor with civic uses on the main floor and potentially three floors of residential units above. At the same time, the greenway pathway and the adjoining park space would be enhanced with a potential town square. These concepts and uses could take a variety of directions and require further detailed discussions and design before being seriously considered.



Preliminary Potential Civic Centre Mixed- Use Plan and Section Concepts (above) illustrating the potential of redeveloping a Town of Comox property on the north side of Beaufort Avenue across the street from the current Town Hall. In this concept, the parking and park, which could include a town square, are maintained with the civic uses on the first floor and three potential floors of residential units above.

4.8 Continue to Intensify Downtown

There are many underutilized lots or vacant lots in and around Comox's downtown that offer excellent opportunities for redevelopment and residential intensification. In other cases, many of the large lots have mature homes on them that could be ready for redevelopment. These redevelopments, up to four to six storey apartments, encourage more people to live closer to Comox's downtown core for convenience and vibrancy. This new more compact housing could provide needed rental and ownership units to offer more diversity, choice, and affordability in downtown Comox.



Potential rowhouse site redevelopment concept in the downtown area.



Additional potential four storey apartment housing adjacent to downtown with amenities and services (Fort Langley, BC).



There are already good examples of mixed commercial and residential uses on Comox Avenue with parking conveniently located to the rear of the property and commercial uses on the ground floor facing Comox Avenue.



A compatible stepped form and character is important to transitioning down the hillside to the waterfront.

4.9 Enrich Businesses in the Core Area

Comox's Downtown needs to grow and enrich itself to become a destination. This strategy includes retaining, expanding, and improving the mix of businesses in the downtown based on the important premise that local business should come first and consist of the dominant use (3:1 ratio of local to chain retailers). This local first approach not only creates a home-grown and unique "vibe" but increases local investments and profits reinvested in the community versus elsewhere. The local shopper also comes first over the visitor as they spend more, and the downtown serves them first with visitors providing additional prosperity.



Sign in the window of a Hope, BC business welcomes new residents and visitors.

Business Improvement strategies include:

- Create a **Comox Downtown Action Partnership (CDAP)** to lead and coordinate improvements in liaison with the local businesses.
- Establish a partially committed staff position (or a part-time contracted economic development coordinator) as a key driver for business recruitment and retention activities as well as events planning and project implementation.
- Recruit a few more locally owned smaller anchor stores that create multiple reasons for locals and visitors to come to the downtown and stay for an extended period. A home-grown destination retail store example is Home Hardware (see Osoyoos downtown Home Hardware store) or numerous marine specialty and antique stores. The Comox Centre Mall has several attractive stores that enhance Comox Avenue as a destination.

- Think of bringing more civic activities and destinations into the downtown like an interactive children’s museum. Bozeman, Montana has created a children’s museum adjacent to its downtown (see photo next page).
- Consider Introducing a Comox Downtown Discount Card (OTC Discount Card), which could be sold for \$5 at businesses in the downtown and would provide a 15% discount to any business. This could be valid/applicable during the shoulder seasons from October to April.
- It may be possible to introduce a Comox Downtown Dollars (HD Dollars) program in which participating businesses could sell HD Dollars (like gift cards or gift certificates) that can be used at downtown shops, restaurants, service providers and hotels. The HD dollars would be produced in \$5, \$10, and \$20 denominations. (This program has been successfully used in tourism markets like Vernon and Charlottetown). There is no fee for businesses to participate. They simply accept the dollars as cash and the Town of Comox or the BIA will reimburse them the full face value once returned to us. This could be an effective tool for Holiday Seasons such as Christmas.
- Through LOCO BC (www.locobc.ca), which advocated for Buying Local, the Town could set up a Buy Local Week.
- Provide opportunities for roof-top patios, pop-up businesses and food trucks during special events, and even work/live opportunities.
- Ensure that redevelopment or infill of parcels on Comox Avenue are at least 3 to 4storeys with retail uses on the first floor and offices and/or residential uses above.



Recruit a few more locally owned destination anchor retail stores on Comox Avenue like Home Hardware shown above in Osoyoos, BC. (Osoyoos, BC).



Recruit more special family arts, culture, and education destinations like a Children's Museum (Bozeman, MT).



Second floor patio use potential in Gardner, Montana could apply to the Comox downtown, Especially with the views to the sea.



Modern design indoor/outdoor patio (Bozeman, MT) and **special park play structures** (Berlin, Germany). These special features could invite and attract locals and visitors to the downtown area. An innovative play structure could be erected adjacent to the Town Square or as a complement to Marina Park that is part of an “Adventure Play” theme.



Modern work/live opportunities adjacent to downtown Comox that fits with the lower scale (Whitehorse, Yukon).



Pop-up business incubator workshops that are solarised could be temporary installations as part of an Arts Village on vacant parcels, or along the waterfront (Whitehorse, Yukon).

Gateways and Wayfinding: Comox needs signage/features to act as gateways and attractors for the downtown. There is excellent potential to improve the visitor and local orientation and experience through effective wayfinding (signage) and landmarks downtown. For motorists, a larger and more prominent “free parking” and “P” parking logo along Comox Avenue and a large similar sign on the civic parking lots would greatly enhance clear signage. For the pedestrian, selective information kiosks, blade signs in front of retail stores, public washroom signs, and further strategic positioning of downtown maps (info kiosks in the Town Square) would improve the visitor experience (see images on next page).



Primary Gateway concepts on Comox Avenue and Ellis Street (Edmonton, Alberta). Alternatively, the Town of Comox could consider a smaller entrance sign with landscaping that welcomes visitors.



Parking wayfinding and tourist ambassadors help visitors (Osoyoos and Quebec City, PQ).



Create gateways, welcome, restrooms and photo opportunity (Toronto, Ont., and Gardiner, MT).

APPENDIX A: Comox Downtown Projects Report Card

The purpose of the *Project Report Card* is for the suggested **Comox Downtown Action Partnership** (CDAP) and others to monitor actions' progress. The Projects Report Card should be completed, first in the upcoming six months to ensure recognition and budgeting for next year, and then on an annual basis to help ensure accountability and progress. The projects are not in priority order and can be implemented separately or together.

	Project Description	Responsibility	Timing/Funding Adjustment
1.	Organize for Success		
2.	Greater Downtown Destination Initiative		
3.	Town Square Meeting Place		
4.	Comox Avenue "Streets Alive" Program		
5.	Golf Course Public Recreation Asset		
6.	Marinas Area and Waterfront		
7.	The Civic Centre Concept		
8.	Residential Mixed-Use Intensification		
9.	Business Retention and Recruitment		

	Project Description	Responsibility	Timing/Funding
10.	Other Additional Actions: #1		
11.	Other Additional Actions: #2		
12.	Other Additional Actions: #3		
13.	Other Additional Actions: #4		
14.	Other Additional Actions: #5		
15.	Other Additional Actions: #6		

APPENDIX B: Comox Community Downtown Workshop

Opportunities and Constraints

Opportunities included:

Angle parking.
Everyone is closed at 5:00 PM.
Unique types of public transit (i.e., trolley, bike tours, pedicab, and beer bikes).
Larger storefront displays.
Street closures for community events - means no cars.
Steady growth year after year.
More marketing.
Marina Park.
Pedestrian walkway along the waterfront.
Connecting Port Augusta Park to Filberg Park through a boardwalk on the water.
Ocean market.
Convert part of the golf course to include a park.
One-way streets.
Densification.
Increased varieties of available activities.
More retail downtown.
Better signage for businesses.
Transient marine tourism attraction.
Marine industry near sea plane terminal.
Empty lot redevelopment of old Loren Hotel space for fish market or a market barn.
Gathering place downtown.
Potential to clean up downtown.
Area for development around Harbour Air.
Pedestrian and bike-friendly area.
Fish market in the Downtown.
Beach water access for activities beyond boating such as a walkway, swimming, kayaking, stand up boarding, and places for kids.
4 season market.
Our climate, views, and proximity to ocean.
Create a pedestrian main street and link in marina parks and goose spit.
Use the land at Comox Golf Course for other uses.
Diversify retail opportunities everywhere.
Create professional building spaces.
Increase nightlife spaces and events.
Many more opportunities for children and youth.
Gathering spaces with music and entertainment other than eating or drinking both inside and out.
Inter-island water and air transport/water taxi.
Attract hotel through incentives and creative process.
Shuttle service in downtown.
Increased waterfront development.
Activate the current buildings in Marina Park - convert sail building to commercial/ add more commercial uses.
Make downtown more accessible.
Street markets and temporary street closures - event based.
Town square somewhere, maybe associated with the new Town Hall.
Complete a multiuse pathway from Point Holmes to Royston.

Work with your neighbours – air base, airport, K’ómoks First Nation, and Area B.
More pet friendly areas.
More walking trails.

Constraints included:

Parking and access to parking.
Everyone is closed at 5:00 PM.
Closed on Sundays and many businesses on Mondays.
Lack of public transit in Comox and the rest of the Comox Valley.
Zoning/ Building Permit roadblocks and delays.
Lack of oceanside pedestrian walkways.
Through traffic is forced to go through downtown.
Outdated Official Community Plan (OCP).
Lack of density.
Parking/Signage Management.
Boat ramp over capacity.
Narrow main street corridor, lack of retail stores, and amenities.
Too many vehicles drive through downtown.
Dead space everywhere – rotunda area, Lorne Hotel site.
Multi-storied buildings being planned might be too intense for size of town.
Lack of retail.
Golf course use only.
Lack of retail amenities such as walkways and boutique hotel.
Not enough marketing.
Minimal capital available in town.
Limits to the number of people we can house.
Lack of a unified vision.
Town has a “wait and see” mentality.
Aging population - need younger families.
No performing arts centre and nightclubs.
Population is only at 15,000 residents – needs to grow.
Lack of walking paths by the water.
High taxes.
Lack of tall buildings - change the Town of Comox hold referendum if needed.
More multistory buildings needed with accessible elevators.
Our geography - with individual landowners along waterfront.
Too Many professional offices on the first floor of buildings or build a professional building.
Lack of inter-island transport.
Hesitant retail owners for change.
Old thinking that creates roadblocks to growth.
Coming into town at the top of the hill needs to be a welcoming access into the town.
Traffic flow - limited access one or two ways to downtown.
Cycling into the downtown core is difficult.
Marina parking areas need to be used.

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE	AREA OF FOCUS	PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES	TASKS	YEAR	* STATUS
	Asset Management	Develop and implement an asset funding strategy to close the infrastructure deficit			2023
Staff Retention	Develop Standards of Conduct Policy to promote a positive workplace	Develop Policy		2023	Policy drafted. Will be brought to Council in tandem with policies below
		Develop/Update accompanying policies - Respectful Workplace, Purchasing, Use of Technology		2023	In progress.
		Council adoption of policies		2024	In progress. Expected in the fall
	Pursue structural alignment through organizational Strategic Plan updates			2022-26	In progress
Bylaw Enforcement Officer Safety		Safety inventory and assessment		2024	Complete
		Personal protective equipment		2024	Equipment has been ordered and partially received
Internal Processes	TOP PROJECT: Streamline development application process**	Implement e-permitting for development applications		2024	Needs assessment & software scoping exercise complete Forms for application process being developed. Once forms complete and implemented, transition to permitting will begin
		Implement outcomes of development application review process		2024	In progress. Developer meeting to held on March 12th. Completed application flow charts Application forms and checklists being constructed
	Cross-train casual employees in different departments	Community Centre casual trained in Corporate		2023	Complete
		Corporate casual trained in Finance		2023	Complete
	Digitize requests for information - looking at using online forms for submission of certain requests.	Banner Station - online application		2023	Complete
		Bylaw Complaint - online application		2024	In progress
		Business Licence - online application		2024	In progress
	Complete Climate Change Risk Assessment and Action Plan	Deliver Climate Change Risk Assessment and Action Plan		2024	Draft expected to Council in April 2024.
	Council Policy Development and Renewals	Council Conference and Travel Policy		2024	Approved at Feb 21 RCM
		Video Surveillance Policy		2024	In progress
	Accessibility Requirements	Establish Accessibility Committee		2024	Comox Valley Accessibility Committee established as a regional committee for all Comox Valley local governments
		Complete accessibility audit of Town facilities, services and communications		2024	Audit of Town infrastructure received on March 1st
		Develop an Accessibility Plan		2025	In progress
	Legal Agreement Development and Renewals	Marine Service Building Leases		2024	In progress
Marina Food Vendor Lease Renewals			2024	In progress	
Solid Waste Commercial Contract Renewal			2024	In progress	
Facility Use Agreement Renewals			2024	In progress	
Bylaw Development and Renewals					
Filing System Review and Archive	Administration files review and archive		2024	In progress	
Customer Service	Move toward macro-focussed customer service model		2024	In progress. Example requirement to shovel sidewalks, requirement to mow boulevards, decreased support for development application construction.	
	Develop an organizational growth plan		2024	Council approved 50% non-market growth in 2024 budget towards additional Parks seasonal Council approved growth in Community Center revenue towards additional part time clerk and increased Ask-a-Trainer hours	

* Status Colours: Completed: On Hold: In Progress:

** Strategic initiative reworded


Updated: April 5, 2024

AREA OF FOCUS	PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES	TASKS	YEAR	* STATUS	
COMMUNITY CONNECTION AND WELLNESS	Recreation	Focus on providing equitable access to community recreation through the LEAP and TRIP programs.	Provide Council Report: make permanent LEAP Adults	2024	Report in Progress. Expected in Spring 2024
		Deliver youth recreation opportunities and continue to support the Comox Youth Council.		2024	New programmer to liaise with CYC.
		Youth Recreation	Hire Programmer	2024	Complete - Programmer starts March 28, 2024
		TOP PROJECT: Further enhance youth recreation opportunities through the construction of a pump track and development of skate park plans.	Determine location for pump track	2023	Council provided direction to seek grant support for pump track. Site considerations will be included in Parks and Trails Master Plan process
			Seek and submit grant funding proposals	2024	Contractor hired to assist with search for grants.
		Update Recreation Marketing Plan	Add Council Strategic Plan vision, lenses and values to plan and create schedule of monthly communication tactics.	2024	Complete
		Build schedule of Community Centre capital replacement	Source quotes for replacement Gym floor and wall	2024	In progress
	Sport Field Strategy	Work with Courtenay and the CVRD to implement recommendations from the 2023 Comox Valley Sport Fields Strategy report	2024-25	In progress. Items to be completed: application policy, centralized booking, and fees for youth fields.	
	Parks	Complete Brooklyn Creek greenway south of Noel Avenue.			In progress
		Acquire further parks and nature space within town boundaries.			In progress
		Complete an ocean front walkway connection west of Marina Park to Ellis Street.			In progress
		TOP PROJECT: Develop a Parks Master Plan and Urban Forest Management Strategy to catalogue current needs and map future growth of the Town's parks systems.		2024	Parks and Trails Master Plan is In progress. Project awarded to Lanarc. Currently in phase 1. Lanarc presenting to Council on March 20th. Interest group sessions on April 4th. Public Open House planned for April 11. Council workshop June 12th at Strategic Council meeting. Completion target Nov. UFMS will go out to tender in Q4 2024.
Complete an ocean front walkway connection west of Marina Park to Ellis Street.			2024	In progress. Developer meeting to be held March 12th	
Arts and Culture	Continue to support Nautical Days and Filberg Festival.	Renew management and maintenance agreement with Filberg Heritage Lodge and Park Association.	2024	In progress	
		Develop Nautical Days Policy	2024	Complete	
		Establish Nautical Days Advisory Committee	2024	Council Committee established, Terms of Reference on March 20 RCM, committee members appointed in coming months	
		Dissolve Nautical Days Society	2025	On hold pending depletion of funds	
	Provide support for community Halloween and Christmas Market events.		2024	Complete. Council resolved to provide funding to the BIA for these events.	
	Continue to provide space for Pearl Ellis Art Gallery and Comox Archives and Museum		2024	Complete	
Public Safety	Construct Mack Laing viewing platform.		2024	Waiting on arch permits	
	Continue provision of health and safety support including smoke detectors, AED's, Fire Smart support and wildfire mitigation, extreme weather event centers, and supporting outreach during extreme weather events.	Direct communications and assistance with citizens on improving their fire safety.	All	Very successful and on-going projects. 50 AED's have been installed across Comox one of the highest per capita in Canada. Extreme weather event policy adopted by Council and Town staff committed to outreach support in conjunction with other valley municipalities during extreme weather events.	
	Focus on life saving protection through the timely response to fire rescue and medical emergency situations.	Maintain good response times to emergencies.	All	Using a combination of career and paid on call staff service delivery times meet current needs. Current daytime response of less than 2 minutes out of the station.	
	Active participation in the Regional Emergency Management Program.	Maintain our partnership with other local governments to develop an effective role and response to local emergencies.	All	Career staff attend regular meetings of Comox Valley Emergency Planning group and participate in training and exercises. Regional pooling of funds for indigenous engagement has been approved	

* Status Colours:
 ** Strategic initiative reworded

Completed: 

On Hold: 

In Progress: 

Updated: April 5, 2024


ECONOMIC HEALTH	AREA OF FOCUS	PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES	TASKS	YEAR	*	STATUS	
	Downtown Vitality	TOP PROJECT: Complete a Downtown Action Plan to guide future development and balance the need for growth vs. desire to maintain a small-town feel.					Workshops and survey completed. Draft expected in spring.
		Support downtown beautification through flower beds and routine maintenance.					In progress
		Provide enhanced development approvals support for downtown projects.					In progress
	Balancing Vibrancy & Stability	Promote and support local commercial into residential areas.			2024		In Progress/On Hold (complete communities, rezoning application processing)
		Support the BIA in their renewal and potential boundary expansion process	Support the Renewal of the Downtown BIA		2025		Not started
			Examine the feasibility of expanding the BIA		2025		Not started
	TOP PROJECT: Complete an Economic Development Strategy and Downtown Enhancement Action Plan.						In progress
	Comox Marina	Complete and provide occupancy to the Marine Services Building.	Building Complete July 2023		2023		Official opening Sep 7, 2023
			Request for Proposals (RFP) for lease of Units 102 & 105, effective Aug 1, 2023		2023		Leases to Big Animal Encounters and Compass Adventure
Request for Proposals (RFP) for lease of Units 104 & 105, effective Feb 1, 2024				2024		Lease of both Units to Compass Adventure	
Provide marina space to encourage tourism and commercial activities.		2024 Mobile Vendor Renewals		2024		Ongoing	
		2025 Mobile Vendor RFP		2024			

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Completed: 

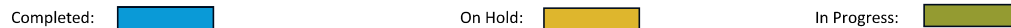
On Hold: 

In Progress: 

Updated: April 5, 2024

GOOD GOVERNANCE	AREA OF FOCUS	PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES	TASKS	YEAR	* STATUS	
	Community Participation		Develop a pre-application policy with community input requirements to support and broaden community participation.	Develop Application Flow Charts with specific engagement requirements	2024	Draft flow charts complete and presented to development community. New Provincial regulation changes will limit public participation in development
			Further enhance online information regarding proposed developments.	Include development information on website	2024	Complete but opportunities for public engagement decreased through Provincial Regulation changes.
			Continue Town's communication and social media growth to build knowledge and engagement on town projects and initiatives.	Increase website readership	2023	Website views on top five pages (Homepage, Community Centre, Automated Curbside Collection, Old Waste Containers, Employment Opportunities) increased by 36% in Jan 2024 compared to Dec 2023
				Increase social media engagement	2023	Facebook followers up 18% compared to 2023; Instagram followers up by 1000.
				Promote ReCollect App for solid waste information	2023	Over 1800 users registered with increased engagement in Jan/Feb 2024.
	Relationships	Maintain high levels of support and coordination with other local governments and K'ómoks First Nation.	Consult with K'ómoks First Nations on projects of shared interest		2023	Presentation made to K'ómoks Chief and Council
			Partner with other Comox Valley local governments in the Leisure for Everyone Accessibility Program (LEAP)		2023	Regional program established in April 2023
			Partner with other Comox Valley local governments in establishing a regional accessibility committee to meet legislative requirements		2023	Regional framework adopted November 2023
			Partner with City of Courtenay in regional sports field allocation and centralized booking strategy		2024	Initiated in November 2023
Coordinate with City of Courtenay in public engagement strategy for new solid waste collection program				2023	Complete	
Decision-Making		Public Engagement Strategy	Coordinate with City of Courtenay in public engagement strategy for new solid waste collection program	2023	In Progress.	
		Improve ground level data collection and continue to modernize internal processes.	Finance and Public Works Department is exploring Asset Management software to better track and improve coordination of asset management and replacement.	2024-25	In Progress through Complete Communities project	
		Include full life cycle costs in all asset acquisition or expansion decisions.		2024	Full life cycle costing is included in all capital acquisition budgeting decisions	

* Status Colours:
 ** Strategic initiative reworded



Updated: April 5, 2024


BALANCED COMMUNITY PLANNING	AREA OF FOCUS	PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES	TASKS	YEAR	*	STATUS
	Strategic Growth	Ensure appropriate amenity provisions in rezoning applications.		2024		Will be reconsidered through the DCC and ACC construction in preparation of OCP completion before 2025
		Develop an organization growth plan that supports and enhance the delivery of services as the community grows.	Work with Courtenay and the CVRD to implement recommendations from the 2023 Comox Valley Sport Fields Strategy report (staff report to Council, November 1, 2023).	2024-25		In progress
	Housing	TOP PROJECT: Update (Complete new) the OCP through community consultation to develop a vision for the future growth of Comox.		2024		Council approved scope of work. RFP to be released in April.
		Apply for and complete the Complete Community grant program to support future planning decision making.		2023		Complete. Grant obtained
		Apply for and complete the CMHC Housing Accelerator grant program to accelerate the Town's modernization process and secure funding for other community benefits.		2023		Complete. Grant obtained
		TOP PROJECT: Develop a Housing Strategy that creates conditions for a diversity of housing options		2025		Will be part of the OCP process
	Community Addition	Require greenway and connectivity networks in new developments.		2024		Parks and Trails Master Plan is In progress. Project awarded to Lanarc. Currently in phase 1. Public Open House planned for week of April 8-11. TBC. Completion target Nov. UFMS will go out to tender this Fall. Draft Urban Systems Permitting Software Needs Assessment and Software Evaluation received Feb 13/24. Staff comments provided Feb 27/24. Awaiting response.
		Complete a DCC review to ensure equity and fairness in cost allocation in new developments.		2024		In progress will be considered after Complete Communities and prior to adoption of the OCP
		Create a community amenity policy for developments.		2024		Expected to go to Feb 21 RCM

* Status Colours:

** Strategic initiative reworded

Completed: 

On Hold: 

In Progress: 

Updated: April 5, 2024