

DATE OF MEETING June 20, 2022

AUTHORED BY JAMES KNIGHT, CAPITAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST

**SUBJECT DESIGN COMMERCIAL CONCEPT AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To provide Council with the final concept plan developed during the Design Commercial project and to seek endorsement of the implementation plan.

### **Recommendation**

That Council:

1. Endorse the Design Commercial Concept Plans for an enhanced public realm along the Commercial Street Corridor; and
2. Direct Staff to include the Design Commercial Street Implementation Plan as part of the 2023-2027 Budget deliberations.

## **BACKGROUND**

Council has made a significant commitment to the downtown core during their term. At the 2019-JUL-15 Special Governance and Priorities Committee, Council provided their priorities for the downtown core. This included the need to take action on key vacant/underdeveloped sites, to make investments in the public realm, to improve mobility and to address safety issues.

Since that session, Council has acquired a number of key sites to support redevelopment in the downtown core and to improve mobility. Many smaller beautification projects have taken place to improve wayfinding, lighting and more public art has been introduced. A new Community Safety Officer program was endorsed in the spring of 2022. Public realm improvements are currently being planned, notably around Commercial Street through the Design Commercial Project (the "Project").

In September 2021 Council directed staff to engage the services of a consultant to assist with developing a new vision for Commercial Street. The objective was to re-establish downtown as a destination by enhancing the public realm space for retailers, community events and public art.

The Project area was focused along the Commercial Street corridor from the Wallace/Victoria Street intersection to Dallas Square Park, home of the cenotaph and Remembrance Day ceremonies. It also includes the surrounding area by including Bastion/Wharf/Skinner Street as well as the front portion of Diana Krall Plaza.

Through the City's procurement process, Toole Design Group were selected to lead the study. Their work plan included extensive engagement with the local business improvement associations, businesses, developers, key stakeholders, City staff and the general public. It was also important that Design Commercial build on the feedback and preliminary directions set out through Reimagine Nanaimo and the draft City Plan.

The resulting concept plans for Commercial Street have been well integrated with other projects such as re-envision Diana Krall Plaza, the redevelopment of 1 Commercial Street (former A&B Sound building), 6 Commercial Street (former Jean Burns property) and transit improvements being designed along the 500 block of Terminal Ave. |

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Shared Values, Vision & Principles**

As the main corridor through the historic downtown, Commercial Street represents a key location to bring people together in the City. The Design Commercial project connects with the five goals of the draft City Plan framework (A Green Nanaimo, A Connected Nanaimo, A Healthy Nanaimo, An Empowered Nanaimo and A Prosperous Nanaimo).

#### *Design Commercial Vision Statement*

Through the early engagement sessions and stakeholder meetings, the following Vision Statement was created:

*“Commercial Street is a green, connected, safe and equitable place that reflects the history of Nanaimo while attracting people, investment and vitality.”*

#### *Nine Design Principles.*

A set of nine design principles were also established for the street and the public spaces. Each principle plays a role in informing the approach, materials, treatments and overall look and feel of the area.

- Connected – Commercial Street must be well connected to the adjacent streets and public spaces in a mindful way.
- Convenient – visiting downtown needs to remain convenient and inviting in order to remove any barriers that could dissuade people from visiting and spending time on the Commercial Street corridor.
- Comfortable – providing ample room for walking, traffic calming, and spaces for people to stay and play will enhance the comfort of Commercial Street.
- Engaging – Commercial Street needs to inspire people to come and spend time downtown.
- Accessible – There should be as few barriers as possible to come and enjoy Commercial Street. Wider sidewalks, continuous crossings and public spaces combined with places to sit, play or relax create a downtown for all ages and abilities.
- Legible – Important that it remains clear to users how to behave in the space to ensure the enjoyment of everyone.
- Safe – imperative that users feel safe when moving along Commercial Street. Reduce or eliminate conflicts between road users, dark spaces and increased visibility.
- Equitable – Commercial Street must be a welcome space for all members of Nanaimo's community.

- Flexible – the corridor must be designed to be flexible to support a range of users and uses.

## Concept Plan

The Final Concept Plan is contained in Attachment A. The key features include the following elements being introduced to a refreshed Commercial Street:

- Flush Curb Street – to improve accessibility of the corridor, and to permit free movement of people using mobility aids and those on bikes. Deliveries to businesses can be made more easily from either the sides, back or front of vehicles. In addition, flush curbs provide flexibility of space to support tents and market stalls or temporary seating for restaurants or displays for merchants.
- Widened Sidewalks – more space for people to walk side by side, pass other or stop and do some window shopping.
- Contrasting Colours in the Public Realm – the use of colour to help define spaces for clarity and to celebrate elements of diversity in the downtown such as the rainbow cross walk.
- Lighting – improved lighting to enhance safety and enjoyment of Commercial Street.
- Greenery, Street Trees, Natural Elements – the ‘greening’ of the corridor through plants and trees provides a diversity to the landscape in terms of texture and colours while also improving sustainability and resilience of the space.
- Creating an On-Street Flex Zone to support activation and businesses – On Street parking and loading spaces are included in the design as these provide important opportunities to access local business and destinations. The space for parking is also intended to function as a flex zone: a space that can be used for parking and loading but is also a place for trees that provides narrowing at regular intervals to slow motor vehicles speeds and provide shelter.
- Redistribution of space and integration of Plazas and Parks into the Street – Dallas Square Park plays an important role as a memorial for the individuals who have served their country. It was important to maintain the honour of the space while also encouraging year round use. The design of the Park and Plaza include elements to support thought and reflection, space to play for children and families, and space for events, festivals and ceremony.
- Public Art – throughout the corridor, the addition of public art and colour has been carefully considered.

## Implementation Plan

The redevelopment of Commercial Street will be phased over a number of years. Budget is in place for work associated with Phase 1. Subsequent phases will be brought forward for consideration in the 2023-2027 Budget process.

- Phase 1 (2023/2024): Commercial Street from Victoria Crescent to Terminal Ave. In addition, improvements to the Commercial Street & Bastion Intersection.
- Phase 2 (2024/2025): Diana Krall Plaza (including the closure of Wharf Street) and Commercial Street from Diana Krall Plaza to the Great National Land Building.
- Phase 3 (2025/2026): Commercial Street from Terminal Ave to Diana Krall Plaza and Church Street.
- Phase 4 (2026/2027): Dallas Square Park & the Waterfront Upgrades on Front Street.
- Phase 5 (2027/2028): Skinner Street, Bastion Street & Wharf Street.

## Estimated Cost

A high-level cost estimate was developed for the project and broken down by phase of construction. Given the significant inflation occurring in the market for materials from supply chain issues, global geopolitical issues and the COVID-19 pandemic, these cost estimates will need to be revisited at time of construction.

		<b>Cost</b>
Phase 1	Commercial Street from Victoria Crescent to Terminal Ave	\$3.0 TO \$3.7 million
Phase 2	Diana Krall Plaza (including the closure of Wharf Street) and Commercial Street from Diana Krall Plaza to the Great National Land Building	\$2.4 to \$3.0 million
Phase 3	Commercial Street from Terminal Ave to Diana Krall Plaza and Church Street.	\$2.9 to \$3.5 million
Phase 4	Dallas Square Park & the Waterfront Upgrades on Front Street	\$1.0 to \$1.2 million
Phase 5	Skinner Street, Bastion Street & Wharf Street	\$2.4 to \$2.9 million
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$11.8 to \$14.2 million</b>

Funding for Phase 1 of the project is included in the 2022 Budget which includes work at Wallace/Commercial and upgrades to the Commercial/Bastion intersection. Future Phases will be brought forward as part of the 2023-2027 budget deliberations.

## OPTIONS

1. That Council:
  1. Endorse the Design Commercial Concept Plans for an enhanced public realm along the Commercial Street Corridor; and
  2. Direct Staff to include the Design Commercial Street Implementation Plan as part of the 2023-2027 Budget deliberations.
    - The advantages of this option: The Design Commercial project has involved considerable outreach and work with key stakeholders to arrive at a preferred concept. Establishing a clear vision for Commercial Street builds on Council's commitment to the downtown core and support this area as the primary urban node for the City. The investment will help stimulate development, support events such as the Thursday Night Market and attract other cultural events to the heart of the City.
    - The disadvantages of this option: None identified.
    - Financial Implications: Phase 1 of the project has funding secured through the 2022-2026 Financial Plan. Other phases of the project are not budgeted for and will be included as part of future Council deliberations on the 2023-2027 Financial Plan.
2. That Council provide alternate direction.

## **SUMMARY POINTS**

- Council has made a significant commitment to the downtown core during their term.
- In September 2021 Council directed Staff to engage the services of a consultant to assist with developing a new vision for Commercial Street through the Design Commercial process.
- The project was integrated with existing initiatives in the downtown core such as re- envision Diana Krall Plaza, public realm and transit improvements in the 500 Block of Terminal Ave and redevelopment opportunities at 1 and 6 Commercial Street.
- The Design Commercial project included a number of stakeholder consultation opportunities and incorporated feedback from the Reimagine Nanaimo process.
- The vision for Design Commercial is *“a green, connected, safe and equitable place that reflects the history of Nanaimo while attracting people, investment and vitality.”*
- The concept plans are based on nine guiding principles developed through the consultation process.
- The Final Concept Plan introduces a flush curb street, widened sidewalks, contrasting colours in the public realm, lighting, greenery and natural elements, a flex zone to support activation, redistribution of space and more public art.
- Revitalization of Commercial Street will be undertaken in a phased approach, with work in 2023 scheduled to take place at Wallace and Commercial and the Bastion/Commercial Intersection.
- Further Phases of the project will be brought forward for Councils consideration during the 2023-2027 Budget process.

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A: Design Commercial Final Plan |

### **Submitted by:**

Bill Corsan  
Director, Corporate & Business Development

### **Concurrence by:**

Laura Mercer  
Director, Finance

Bill Sims  
General Manager, Engineering and Public Works

Richard Harding  
General Manager, Parks Recreation and Culture

Dale Lindsay  
General Manager, Development Services/  
Deputy CAO

