

COBBLE HILL VILLAGE COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARRETTE



VILLAGE TOOLKIT

Keep it Rural



Prepared for the Cowichan Valley Regional District
by DIALOG.

July 2017.

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INTRODUCTION

CHARRETTE PURPOSE AND PROCESS

Cobble Hill Village is at an exciting point in its evolution. It is blessed with heritage resources in combination with a unique location within the regional context. The Official Community Plan (OCP) provides planning direction and a future vision for the village including new focused growth areas and recommendations for streetscape beautification while retaining a rural and rustic character. The OCP, however, provides little design direction on how the streetscape could retain the desired character if development were to happen, and what heritage character means in Cobble Hill. A design charrette and community engagement process was undertaken in order to provide greater design direction, and to ensure that new development reflects the character and feel that the community desires.

This design process was a visioning activity, allowing the Cobble Hill community to consider how the ideas presented in the OCP could be achieved, including: what heritage character architecture means for Cobble Hill? What does rustic and rural streetscape beautification look like? And, how could the vision be achieved?

The purpose of this toolkit is to summarize the outcomes of the charrette process in an engaging and meaningful way. The toolkit is meant to guide future planning and land use decisions in Cobble Hill related to character and architecture; to assist in future discussions with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure regarding the design of streets in the village; and, to provide residents, volunteers and business owners with a guidebook on the different initiatives that can be undertaken to help achieve the common vision of Cobble Hill as a rural, rustic, safe and charming place to live, work and recreate.

The Cobble Hill Village Plan design process was a 3 Step Process. The first step involved community engagement, including: a Public Open House, Community Conversations, and background review of existing plans and policy. In Step One a tremendous amount of wisdom and great ideas were shared by the community. The outcomes were the foundation for the design process during the charrette.

Step Two was the three day collaborative design charrette was the keystone event of the design process. The design charrette took place from April 5 - 7, 2017 at the Cobble Hill Community Hall. It built on the visioning undertaken in Step One by taking it a step further and manifesting ideas into design solutions.

In the final step, the ideas that were developed were summarized in this Village Toolkit. This provides a summary of the activities and events, as well as a graphic-rich synopsis of the plan, perspectives, and other imagery prepared during the design charrette.



STEP ONE SUMMARY

In December 2016 Community Conversations were held over four Saturdays to begin the conversation about the issues, goals and aspirations of the community for the future of Cobble Hill. A Canada Post mail-out advertised the event to all residents of Cobble Hill. Approximately 20 - 30 people attended. A number of themes emerged:

- **Traffic and safety** was identified as a concern for pedestrians and cyclists;
- A desire for expanded **arts, cultural, sports and recreation** programming and infrastructure was identified, particularly as they relate to agriculture;
- **Aging in place** was raised as a concern, including both the need for appropriate housing and services;
- **Tools for 'social glue'** to help connect residents and volunteers were desired; and,
- The need to **preserve the character of Cobble Hill** while allowing for new growth and additional housing was identified.

On March 20, 2017 a Public Open House was held to gather ideas and input from the community. Approximately 120 people attended. Participants shared their ideas using sticky notes on display panels and at mapping stations. The priorities for attention that were identified at the Open House reflected the themes that emerged during the Community Conversations. In no particular order, they were:

- Retain the small town, heritage character of the Village.
- Solve the infrastructure and traffic problems.
- Attract some new businesses, housing, services – but ensure new development fits the “quaintness” of the existing village.
- Extend the social aspects of the parks, open space and programming in the community.

These events provided the foundation for the design process. Summaries of these activities were introduced at the beginning of the design charrette to remind participants of the broad community’s aspirations and vision for Cobble Hill.

DESIGN CHARRETTE OVERVIEW

The design charrette created a collaborative space for many people to come together in the design process and to share their special knowledge and interest areas over a three day period. As a part of this process many topics were considered, including a conceptual landscape and public realm plan and directions for other community revitalization aspects.

The design team was made up of stakeholders including some of Cobble Hill’s most dedicated volunteers and individuals representing: Cowichan Valley Regional District, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, The Farmer’s Institute, Cobble Hill Historic Society, business owners, farmers, residents, children and youth, Evergreen School, land owners and parks.

The planning team included expertise in land use and development planning, architecture, landscape architecture, transportation and public engagement.



March 20th Public Open House



Charrette Day 3 Public Open House

Day 1: The morning consisted of a walking tour where stakeholders shared stories about Cobble Hill. During this time, participants learned of the volunteers and community efforts that have made many public spaces possible; they learned about issues and challenges that people face in Cobble Hill; and, they also shared their aspirations and were reminded of key places that act as ‘social glue’ in Cobble Hill. During the afternoon, participants worked in small groups along with a facilitator to consider big picture connections and to identify goals and aspirations.

Day 2: A morning large group exercise distilled the big picture ideas into principles and objectives to guide detailed explorations which were the focus of the day. Then, participants attended ‘Topic Tables’ to delve into design ideas in more detail. The topic tables were: Buildings and Architecture, Economic Vitality, Streets and Pedestrian Experience, and Community Programming and Connections.

A public pin-up invited the broad public to comment on the rough concepts that had been developed on Days 1 and 2. The Pin-Up was advertised through mail out fliers, through social media and in the newspaper. The input that was received was incorporated into the final work that was completed on Day 3 and that makes up the content of this Toolkit.

During the charrette, there was overwhelming response that the character and charm of Cobble Hill hinges on its rustic and rural character. “*Keep it Rural*” is the community mantra. Each and every design exercise was filtered through this mantra to ask if it was in keeping with the identity of Cobble Hill. In addition to this goal, there was also overwhelming input from the community regarding safety of streets. Almost every intersection in the community was identified as having safety issues.



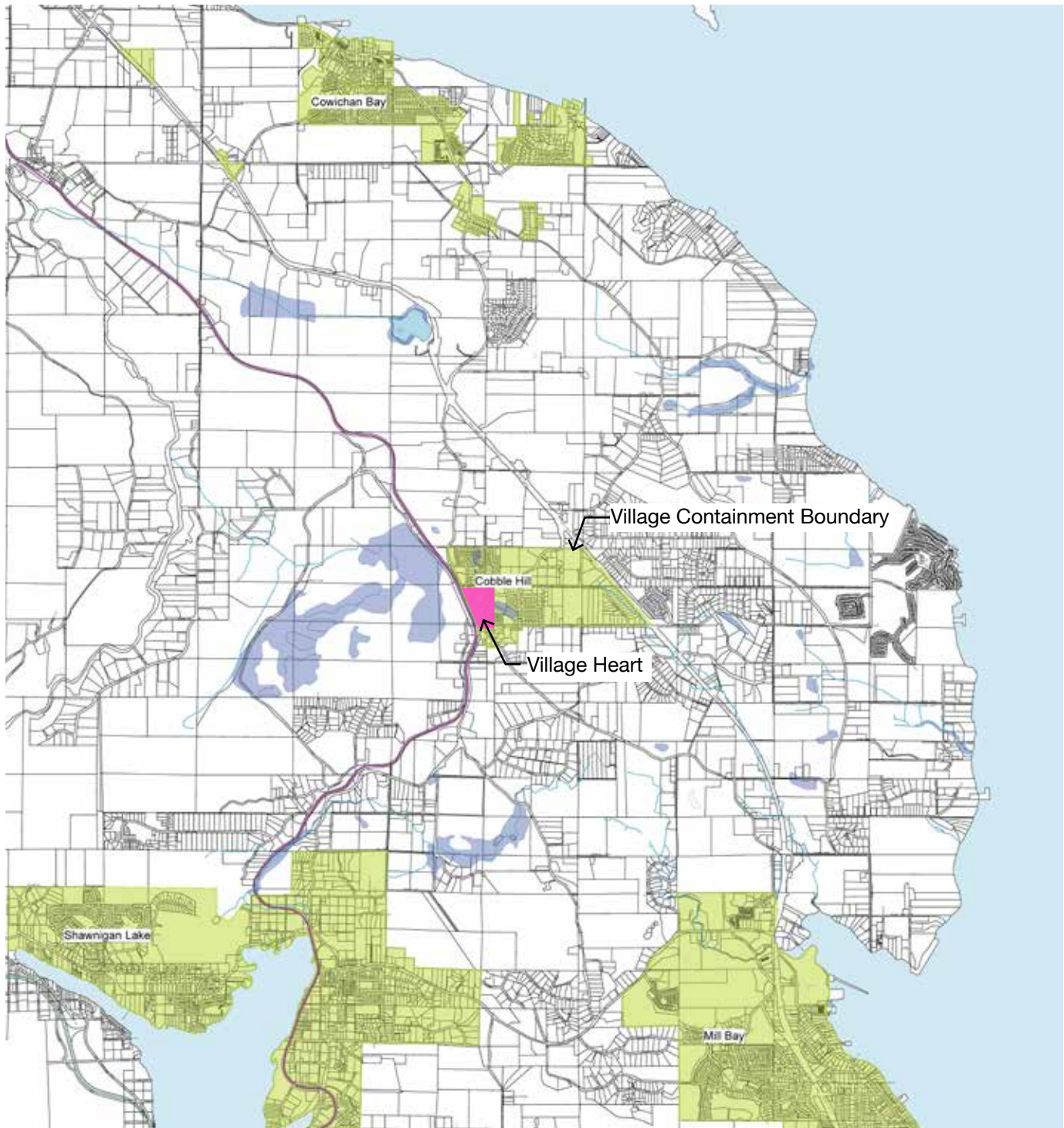
Charrette Day 2 Topic Tables



Charrette Day 1 Group Discussion

DESIGN SCOPE

The design charrette and other engagement activities were focused on the heart of Cobble Hill village within the Village Containment Boundary (VCB). The area within the VCB is where future growth will be focused in Cobble Hill. While the areas outside of the VCB were not a focus of the design charrette, the design charrette did consider how the village connects physically, culturally and economically to the broader context.





VILLAGE TOOLKIT

PLANNING AND DESIGN CONTEXT

One of the most valuable assets Cobble Hill has is a group of highly committed volunteers who have built many of the parks and open spaces that the community enjoys today and who act as stewards of village amenities. Their work gives physical expression to Cobble Hill history, culture and identity.

Cobble Hill's biggest challenge, however, is stitching together these parks and open spaces through a streetscape that is equally as reflective of the Cobble Hill community. As an unincorporated village, all streets in the village are designed and maintained at the provincial level by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI). MOTI does not have the capacity to sensitively adjust design standards or maintenance approaches in village centres. Standards are designed to be easily maintained and inexpensive to build. As a result, streets lack the elements of pedestrian safety that one would expect to find in a village centre; they lack the physical expression of the community and culture; and, they do not invite residents to linger, socialize or gather.

Long-time residents also clearly expressed that as newcomers and investors are inevitably drawn to Cobble Hill, they want them to be respectful of its rural character and to honor the volunteer efforts that have taken place in the community.

PURPOSE OF THE TOOLKIT

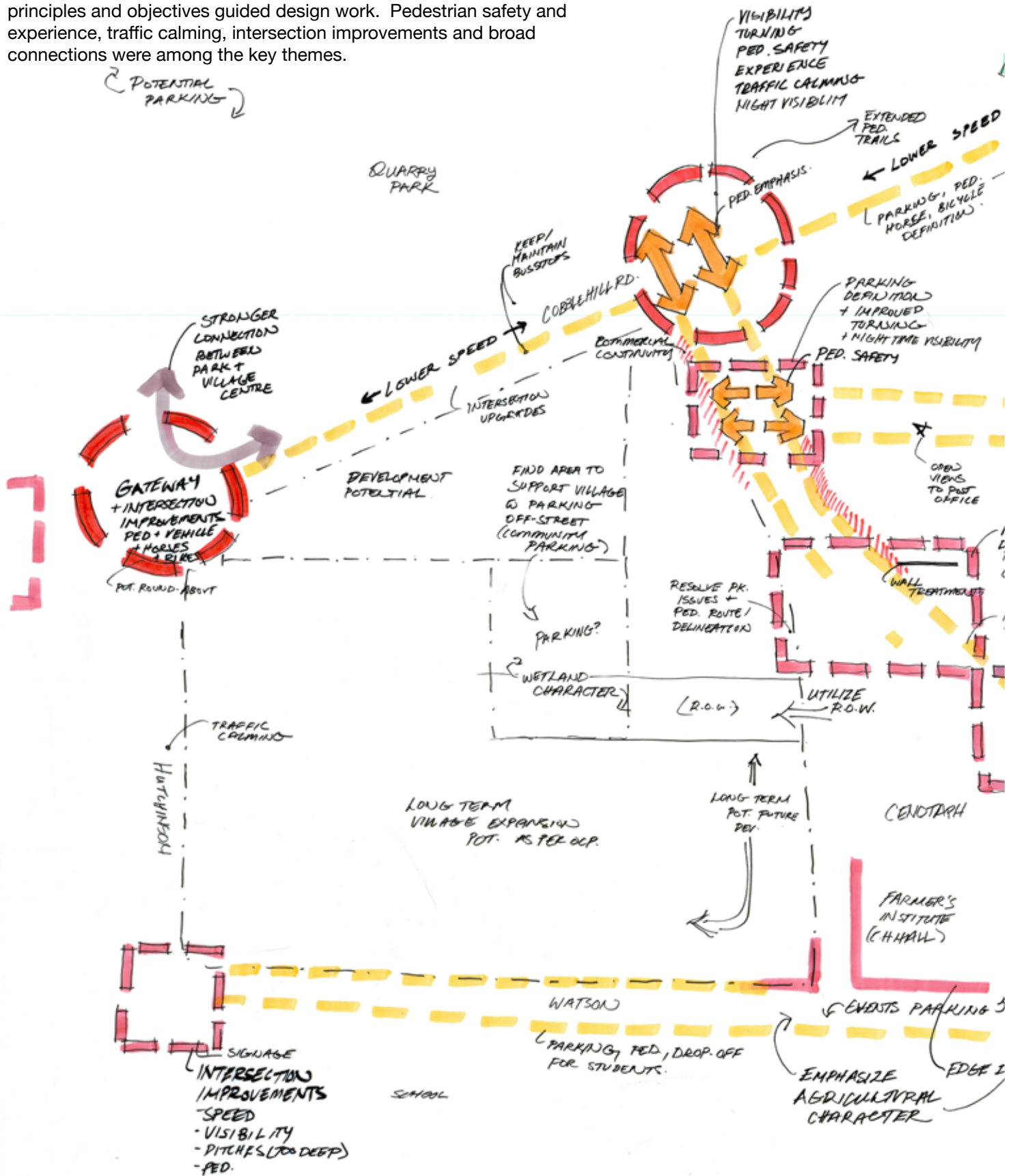
This Village Toolkit provides a practical set of design tools and resources that can be used to enhance the livability of the Cobble Hill Village core. Fundamentally, this document looks at how the desires and needs of the community can be reflected in the village's historic visual character.

The toolkit has identified short-term community beautification projects that can be achieved by local community and business leaders coming together. Long-term collaborative projects that involve roadways and pedestrian thoroughfares will rely on community organizations and champions working side by side with various levels of government to achieve a shared vision.

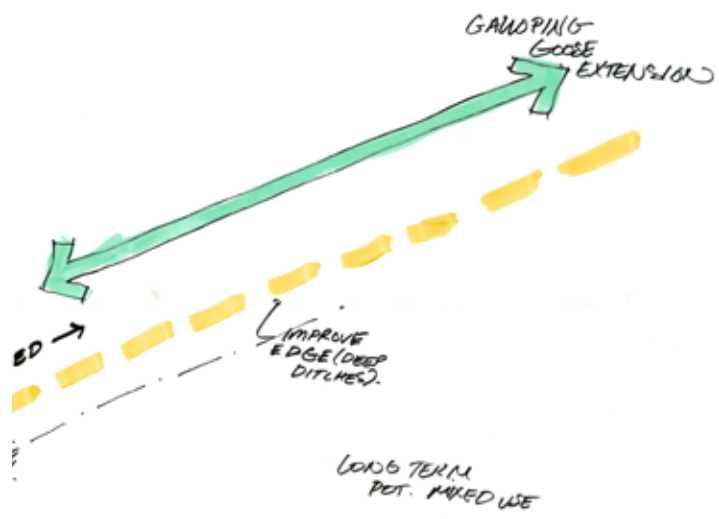
Finally, the *Design Guides* provide an illustration of how new residential and commercial development can be integrated into the village core in a way that enhances the village's identity.

VILLAGE PRINCIPLES & OBJECTIVES

This diagram summarizes the design principles and objectives that were identified by stakeholders during the design charrette. These principles and objectives guided design work. Pedestrian safety and experience, traffic calming, intersection improvements and broad connections were among the key themes.

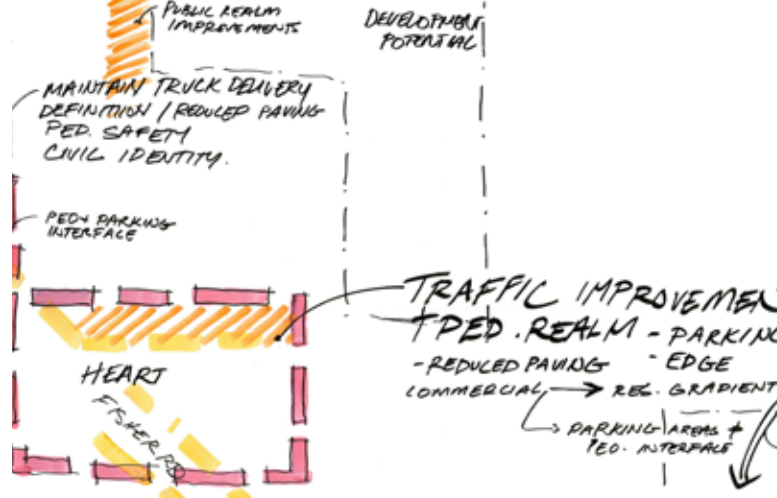


GAUVERS INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS



- LOCATION FOR TEMPORARY / WEEKLY EVENTS (ARTIST FAIR, MARKET, SCHOOL PAVILION).
- CO-OP

REMAINS RES. = LONG TERM COMM. VISION (OCP). AS PER OCP.



- PED. ACCESS TO PARK.
- PED. + CYCLING CONNECTOR.
- SENIORS?

THEME: KEEP RURAL CHARACTER

HIGHWAY CONNECTIONS (PED. + CYCLING)



VISION

There was overwhelming response during community engagement that the character and charm of Cobble Hill hinges on its rustic and rural character. “Keep it Rural” is the community mantra. Each and every design exercise was filtered through this mantra to ask if it was in keeping with the identity of Cobble Hill. In addition to this goal, there was also overwhelming input from the community regarding safety of streets. Almost every intersection in the community was identified as having safety issues.



The illustrated plan shows how Cobble Hill’s village centre could be stitched together through public realm improvements to make the village a welcoming and safe place for all to walk, socialize, and celebrate local culture.

Part 1: Community Projects

1. Village Entry
2. Claiming Public Space
3. Consolidating Parking
4. Trail to Transit
5. Blank Wall Treatment
6. Park-side Pedestrian Trails
7. Parking on Watson
8. Gateway Signage
9. Corner at the Community Hall
10. Trail to School

Part 2: Collaborative Projects

1. Gateway at Cobble Hill Road
2. Village Intersections
3. Holland Avenue Public Realm

Part 3: Design Guides

Form and Character
Materials and Colour

Community Projects

Keep it Rural

Community projects are projects that can be implemented and maintained by local volunteers. The elements library at the end of this section provides strategies for implementing some of these ideas.

1. Village Entry

LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE AND NEW VILLAGE PARKING

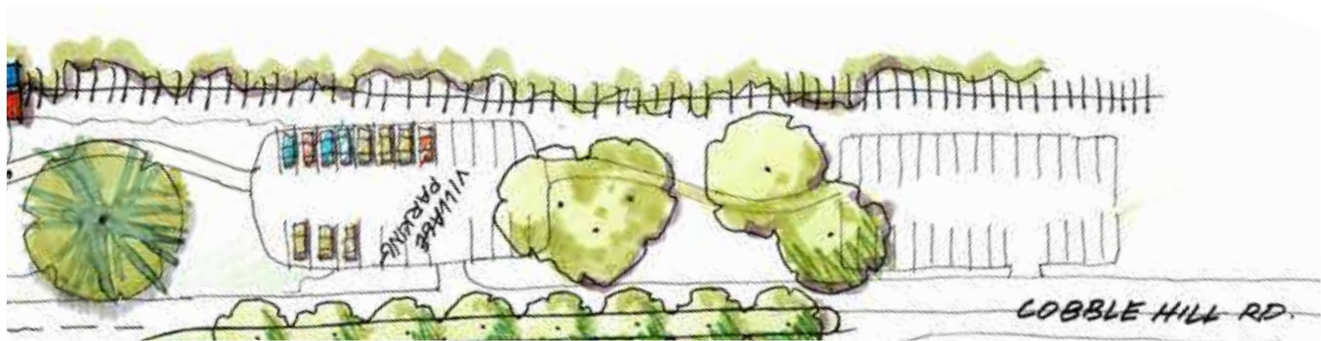
Use landscape maintenance and incorporate parking along Cobble Hill Road north of Fisher to create a sense of entry for drivers traveling south. A similar approach is used in Quarry Park, where cleaned up under-brush maintained by volunteers indicates to drivers heading north that they are entering a village centre.



Maintained area at Quarry Park.

Area needing maintenance.

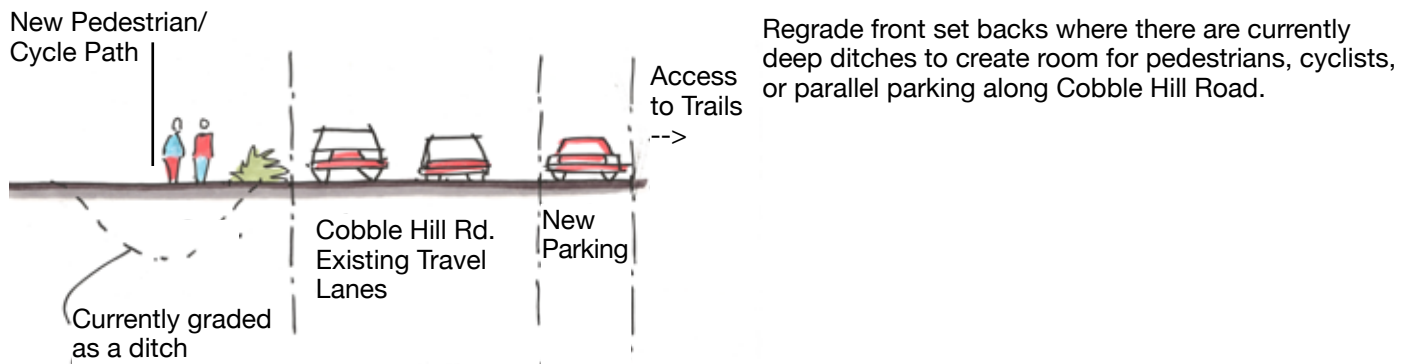
Parking lot at Quarry Park.



Alternate between parking areas and natural areas to maintain natural character and significant tree canopy. Incorporate trails in between parking lots.

These additional parking areas would invite more people to visit the parks, and connect more visitors to the businesses in the village centre.

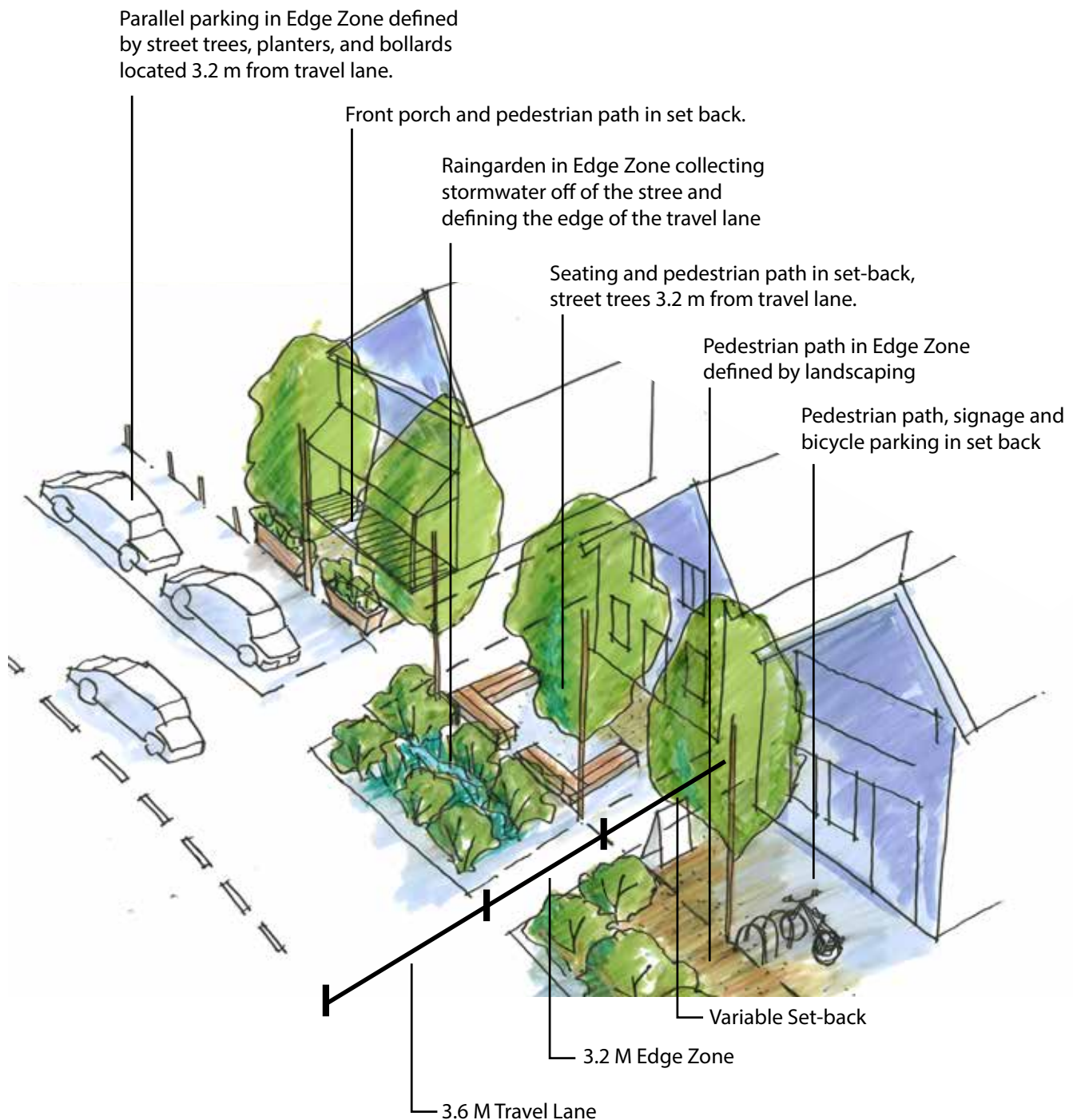
PARKING, WALKING AND CYCLING AREAS



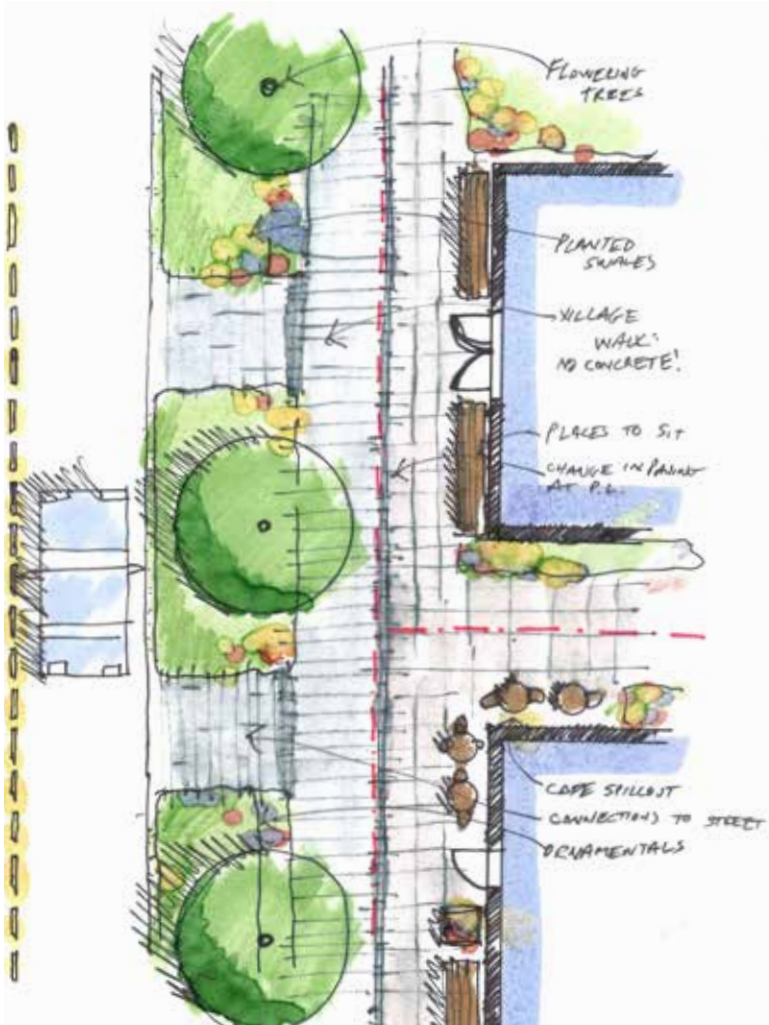
2. Claiming Public Space in Retail Areas

The following tools are some of the ways that shop owners can transform the streetscape in retail areas into a pedestrian friendly centre that fosters socializing and gathering by defining an “Edge Zone”. Maintaining a fully accessible pedestrian route for movement is important.

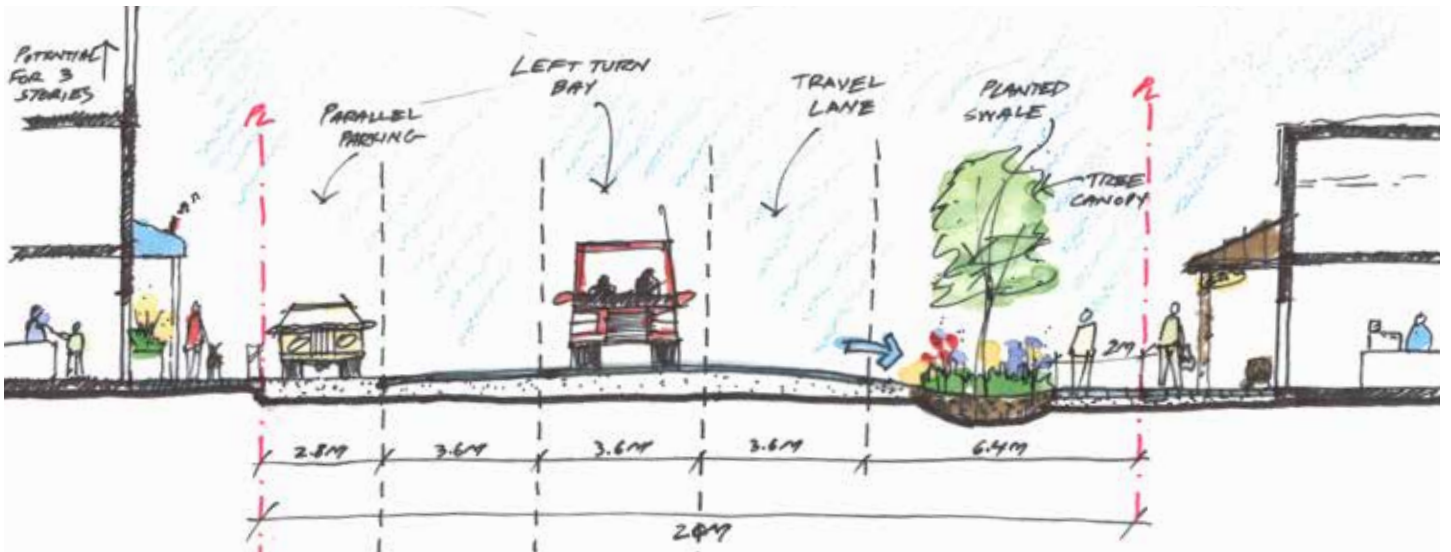
RETAIL STREETS STRATEGY: AXONOMETRIC VIEW



PLAN VIEW



SECTION



3. Consolidating Parking

Business owners work together to formalize, expand on, and connect existing parking and located it to the side and rear of businesses.

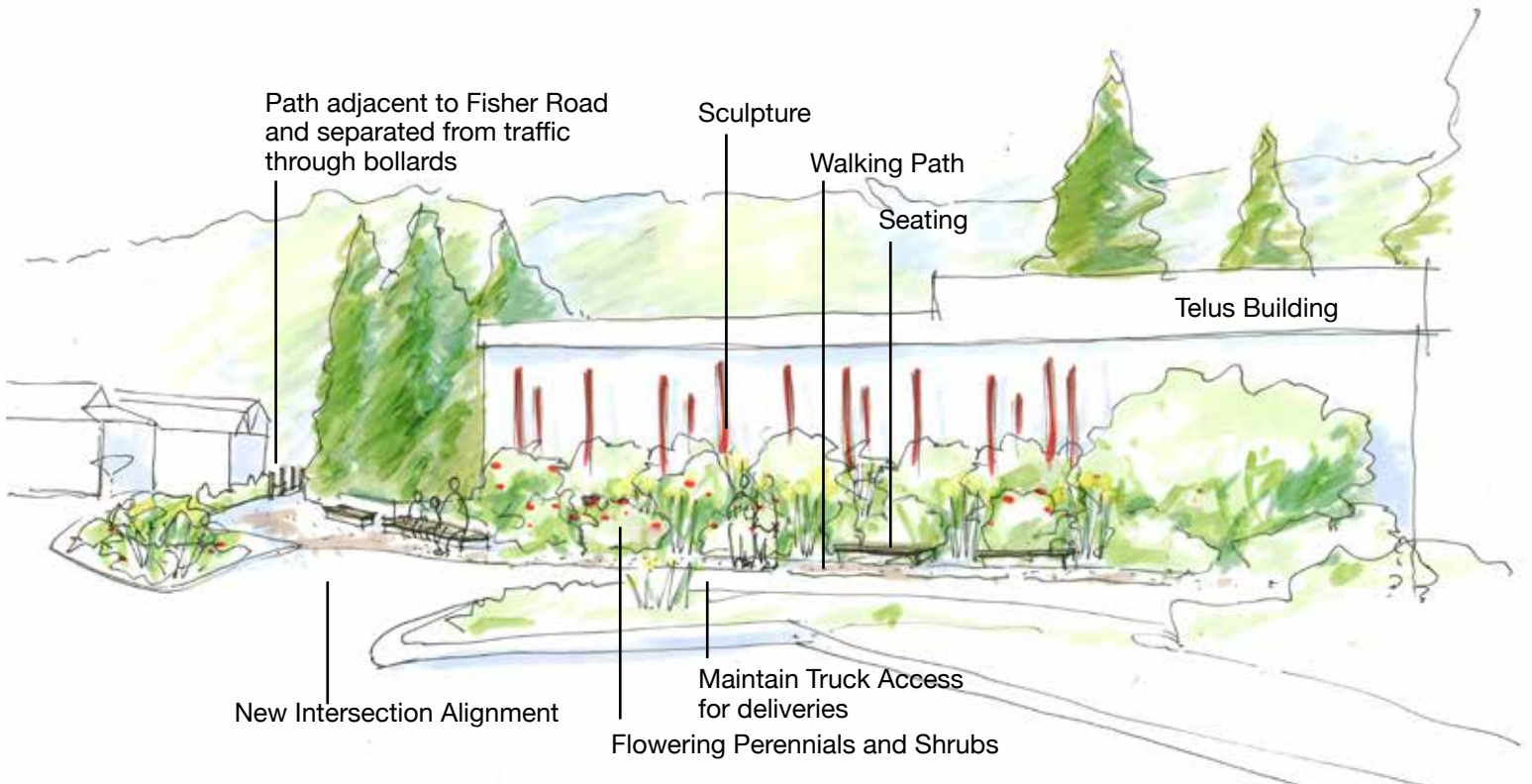
4. Trail to Transit

Create a trail system that would provide an alternate route from Cobble Hill village to the bus stop. Include a place to rest, like a gazebo or seating, along the way. The trail is shown connecting Fisher Road and Watson Avenue through to Olde School Coffee and the bus stop.



5. Blank Wall Treatment

The Telus Building creates a first impression for visitors arriving in the Cobble Hill village core from Fisher Road. Stakeholders envision an agricultural themed sculpture garden with seating adjacent to the Telus building.



6. Park-side Pedestrian Trails

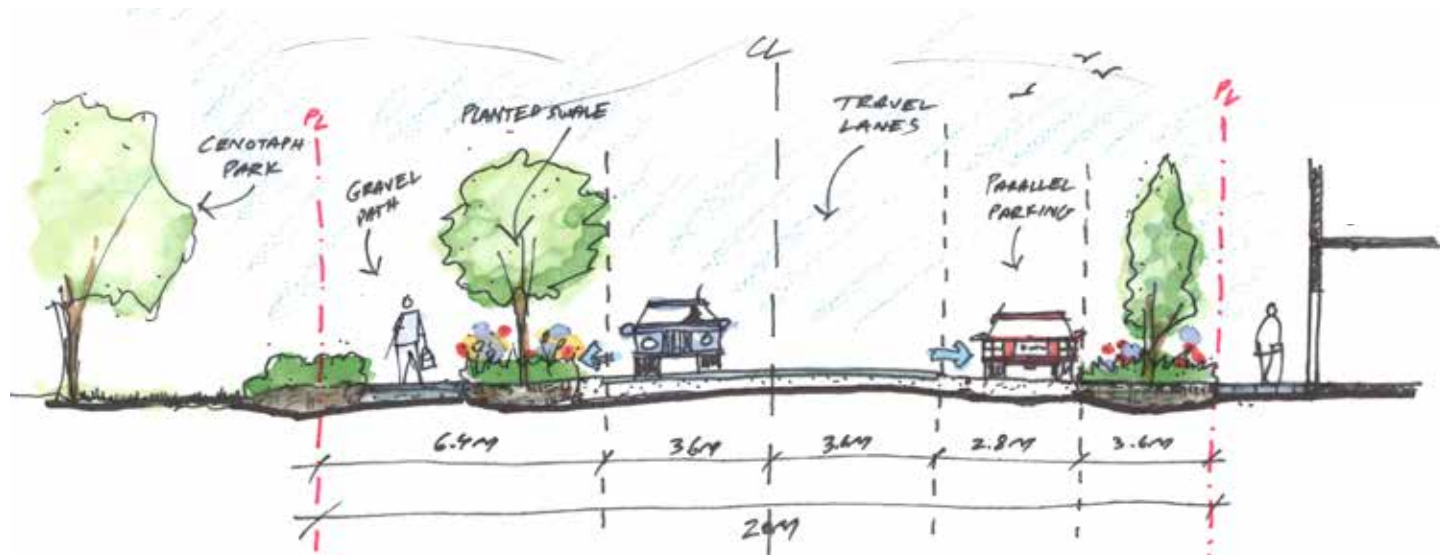
PATHS STRATEGY

Parks adjacent to Fisher Road, which is often used by heavy trucks, are the ideal location to incorporate trails made through community efforts. In addition to being more affordable than sidewalks, they provide a rural and rustic character that is appropriate for the village context, and can be design for shared use by cyclists and pedestrians. Two path character types are envisioned: the country path, and the bioswale.

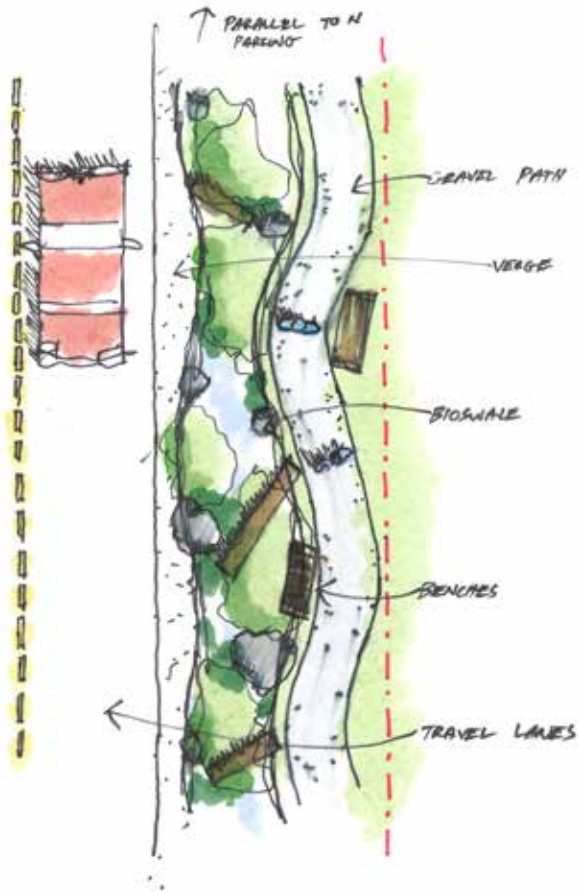
COUNTRY PATH EDGE



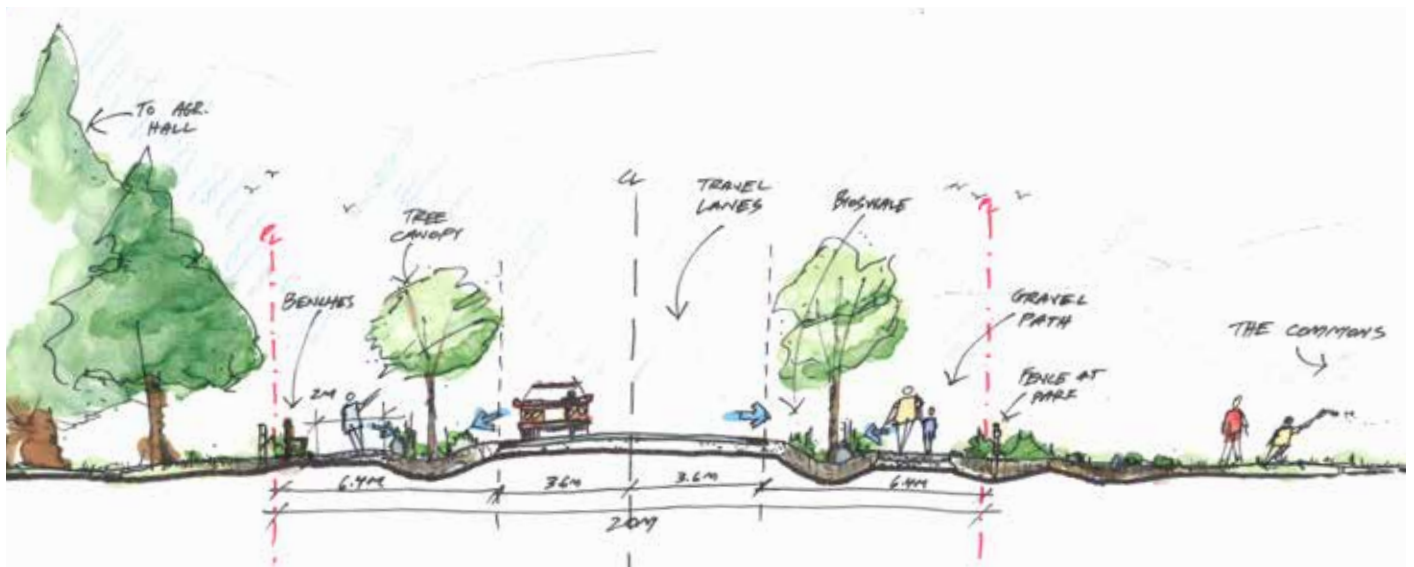
The idea of a country path edge is to include a variety of colourful perennials, shade trees and seating options adjacent to a gravel walking/cycling trail.



BIOSWALE PATH EDGE



The idea of a bioswale path edge is to include a bioswale adjacent to a gravel walking/cycling trail.





7. Parking on Watson

Reduce road width and provide additional on-street parking by creating angled parking adjacent to the Commons.

8. Village Gateway & Signage

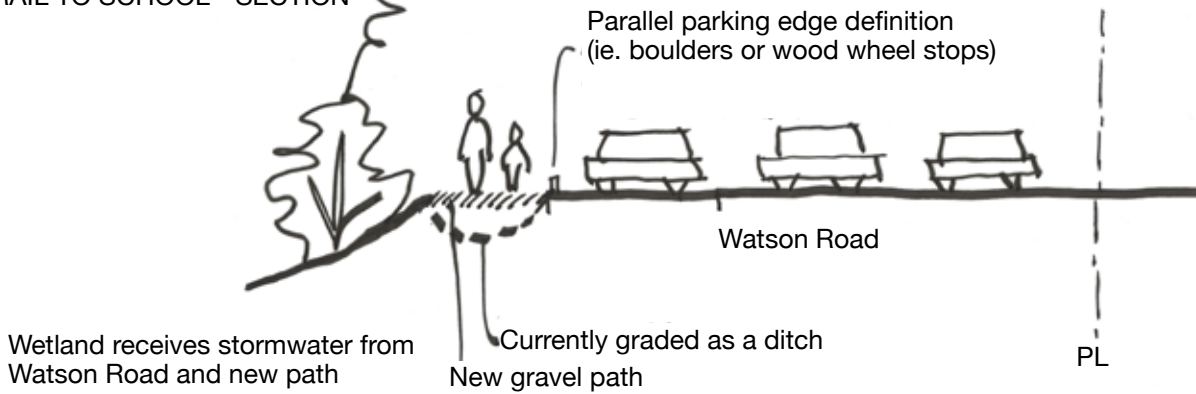
Create a sense of arrival on Fisher Road at Watson Avenue, by:

- Incorporating a 'Welcome to Cobble Hill' sign;
- Introducing stop signs for a four-way-stop and reduce the paving width with shrub planting to slow traffic; and,
- Planting large shade trees along Fisher Road adjacent to the Commons and to the Farmer's Institute in order to frame Fisher Road.

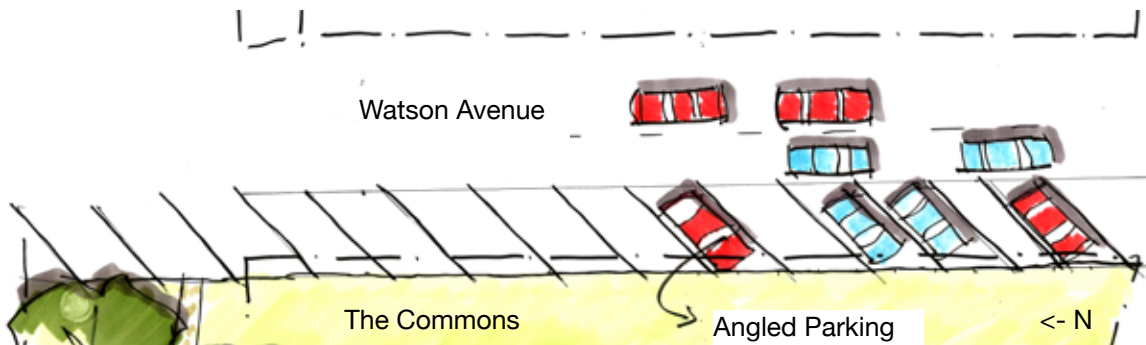
10. Trail to School

Establish a trail to Evergreen Independent School so children have a safe route to walk along.

TRAIL TO SCHOOL - SECTION



PARKING ON WATSON - PLAN VIEW



9. Corner at the Community Hall



Define the pedestrian route in front of the Cobble Hill community hall with wheel stops or curb blocks.

Reduce turning radius and create a corner garden, with split-rail fence to define the corner.

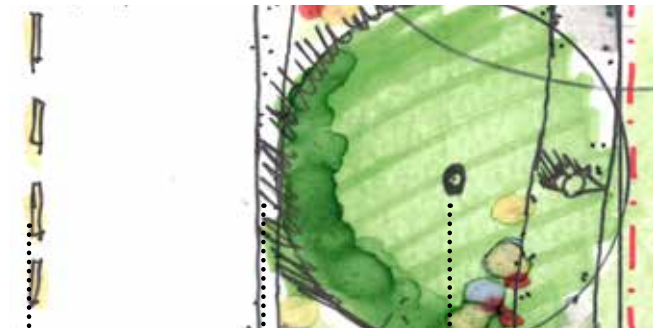


BEFORE

Community Projects: Elements Library

SETBACK REQUIREMENTS

In order to comply with MOTI standards, objects such as trees, seating or benches can be located at least 3.2 metres from the edge of the travel lane. Shrubs, parallel parking, and bioswales are permitted in the 3.2 metre wide setback.



3.6 m Travel Lane
measured from the
centre line

Beyond the setback 'Edge
Definition Elements' or
fixed objects such as trees,
bollards, benches, boulders,
etc. are permitted.

The Transition Zone is a 3.2 m setback that defines the space between the Travel Lane and the Edge. Fixed objects are not permitted, however shrubs, raingardens/bioswales, parallel parking and gravel paths are permitted.

TRANSITION ZONE ELEMENTS

The following elements are permitted in the Transition Zone and help to define the street edge.

Perennials and Shrubs for Road Edges and Intersection Definition



Plant recommendations

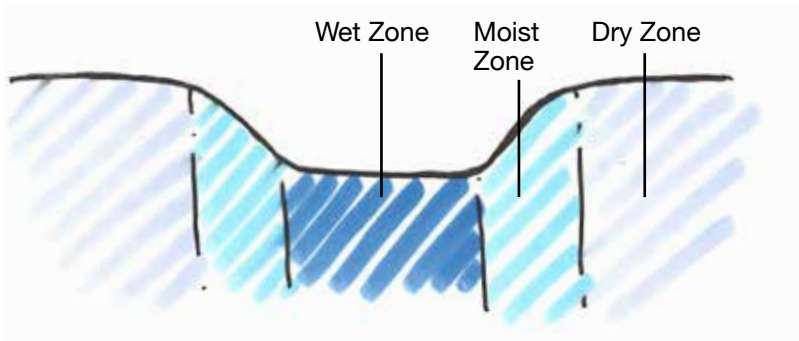
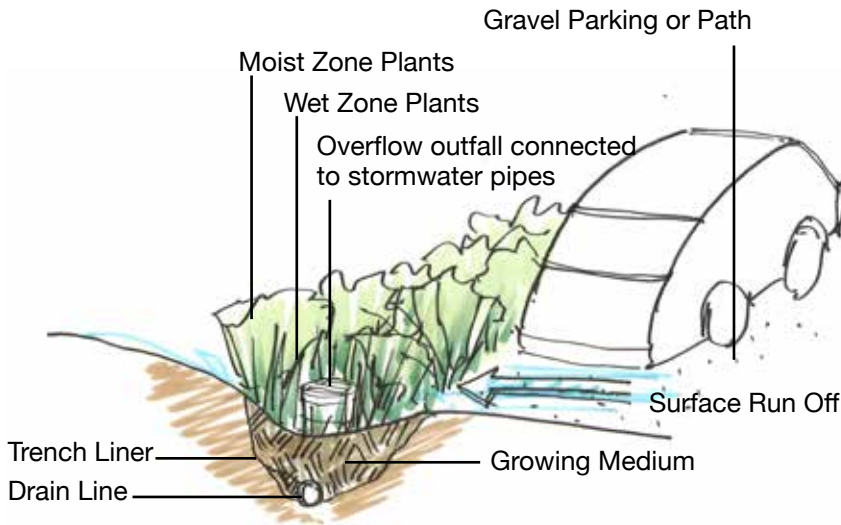
Plant recommendations are drought tolerant and provide ease of maintenance. Clear driver sight-lines are important, therefore consider the appropriate plant height for the location.

Perennial Suggestions:

- *Perovskia atriplicifolia* 'Filigran' (Filigran Russian Sage)
- *Rosa acicularis* (Prickly Rose)
- *Echinacea purpurea* (Purple Coneflower)
- *Philadelphus lewisii* (Lewis's Mock Orange)
- *Ribes Sanguineum* (Red Flowering Currant)
- *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus* (California Lilac)
- *Achillea millefolium* hybrids (Yarrow)
- *Forsythia* hybrids (Forsythia)

The Grow Me Instead BC Plant Wise Booklet provides dozens of plant ideas, and can be found online by visiting: http://bcinvasives.ca/documents/GMI-Booklet_2013_WEB.pdf

Raingardens



Raingarden Plants

Shrubs

- *Cornus stolonifera* (Red Osier Dogwood)
- *Philadelphus lewisii* (Mock Orange)
- *Mahonia aquifolium* (Oregon Grape)
- *Juniperus scopulorum* (Rocky Mountain Juniper)
- *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* (Kinnikinnick)
- *Amelanchier alnifolia* (Saskatoon)

Grasses

- *Festuca idahoensis* (Idaho Fescue)
- *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' (Feather Reed Grass)
- *Deschampsia cespitosa* 'Goldtau' (Tufted Hair Grass)
- *Helictotrichon semipervirens* (Blue Oat Grass)

When selecting plants for a rain garden, consider if they will be in a wet, moist or dry zone and plant them appropriately.

Gravel Paths



When building a gravel path, consider who will be using the path. Gravel paths intended for pedestrians and cyclists can be made so that they are wide enough to allow users to comfortably pass each other. Paths for pedestrians only can be much narrower.

1.2 metres minimum for pedestrians only; 2.2 metres minimum when shared by pedestrians and cyclists.

EDGE DEFINITION ELEMENTS

There are endless ways that the street edge can be defined. Below are a few low cost design ideas that communicate the rural character of Cobble Hill.

Feed Trough Perennial Planters



Bollards



Gabion Wall Benches



Reclaimed Wood Benches



Wood or Rock Wheel Stops



TREES SELECTIONS

Trees for Cobble Hill can meet the key goals of streetscape beautification, ease of maintenance, recognition of current and future climate, and resistance to pests. Climate models show an increase in summer drought conditions for the region, as well as an increase in pest populations, so the suggested species are drought tolerant (negating the need for ongoing irrigation), and resistant to other stressors. Irrigation will assist with successful establishment in the first few years, and may be supplied through 'Gator Bag' type applications. Lastly, the success of new trees will be more likely if they are protected from grazing deer until established.

Trees for Retail Areas

Recommended trees in the 'village core' are suitable in a spatially constrained environment adjacent to roadways.

Acer campestre 'Elsrijk' ('Elsrijk' field maple) and *Acer truncatum* x *platanoides* 'Warrenred' (Pacific sunset maple) are fairly compact and would be good selections. They will provide shading and help to define the edge zone by creating a distinct separation from vehicle travel lanes and pedestrian areas.

Acer truncatum x *platanoides* 'Warrenred' (Pacific sunset maple)



Acer campestre 'Elsrijk' ('Elsrijk' field maple)



Trees for Side Streets

The trees in this section are the main species suitable for creating allées along the roadway networks. These trees are larger in size while still maintaining an upright form. They would be appropriate along residential or commercial streets flanking Fisher Road.

Nyssa sylvatica (Black tupelo)



Zelkova serrata 'Green Vase' ('Green Vase' Japanese zelkova)



Trees for Park-Like Settings

Trees located along Fisher Road near the commons or in other park-like settings where there is room for them to be set slightly away from roadways can be more ornamental than trees in retail areas. These selections have broader canopies and showier characteristics, such as noticeable flowering or fall leaf colour.

Magnolia grandiflora (Southern magnolia)



Quercus garryana (Garry Oak)



Zelkova serrata 'Village Green' ('Village Green' Japanese zelkova)



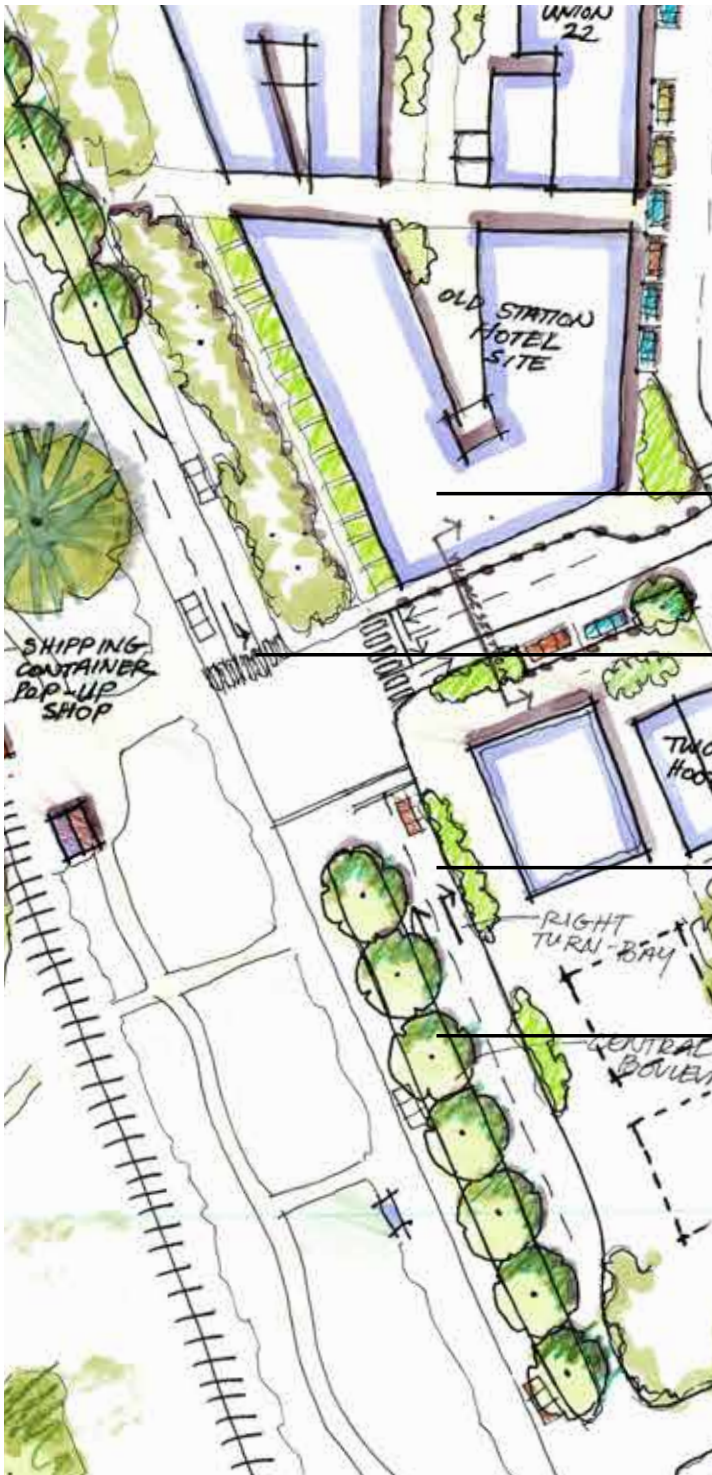
Collaborative Projects

Keep it Rural

These projects are private or require collaboration with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. Due to the investment and planning that would be required they are more likely to be achieved in the long term. Medium- or short-term strategies can be considered in the interim to alleviate safety issues, particularly related to intersections and pedestrian crossings.

1. Gateway at Cobble Hill Road

Create a sense of arrival on Cobble Hill Road at Fisher Road by incorporating a treed median, new left and right turn bays, pedestrian activated crossings and “Welcome to Cobble Hill Village” signs.



Interim median and turning bays



Long term median

New development can establish a presence on the corner, with an active ground floor use and patio space

Work with MOTI to incorporate a pedestrian activated light and additional crossings

New turning lanes on Cobble Hill Road and Fisher Road help to slow traffic entering the village and reduce traffic congestion of cars leaving the village

Painted median to reduce the right-of-way and slow traffic near the village heart; and a planted median in the long term

2. Village Intersections

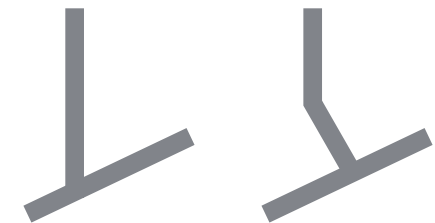
There are two strategies to improve village intersections. The first is to work with MOTI to reduce turning radius and ensure that streets intersecting with Fisher Road intersect at a 90 degree angle and to incorporate pedestrian crosswalks. This will help to slow traffic, reduce the corner cutting and rolling-stops that currently occur, and prioritize pedestrians over vehicles. The second strategy is to define the street edges. Residents and shop owners could use Edge Zone Elements to define the corners and street edges. When selecting elements to define edges on corners, consider the implication to driver sight-lines.



Incorporate Painted Crosswalks
T-in at a 90 Degree Angle and use edge zone elements to define the edge

Interim strategy: Use paint to define the intersection and street edges while ensuring that the adjacent Auto Body operations are not compromised

Intersect at 90 Degree Angles

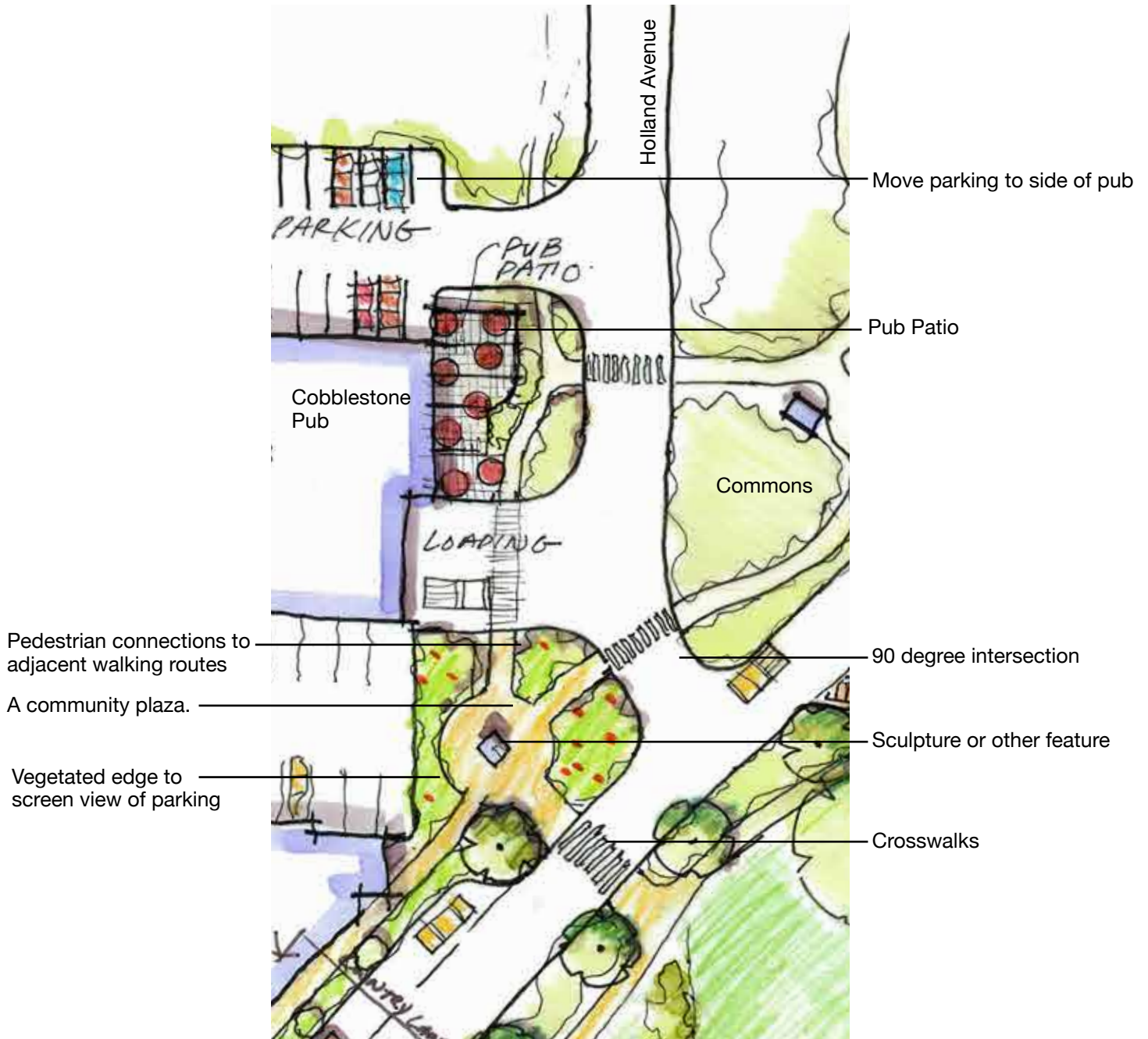


FROM THIS

TO THIS

3. Holland Avenue Public Realm Improvements

Holland Avenue is the retail street that sets the first impression for visitors to the village as they enter along Fisher Road. By working in close collaboration with MOTI, intersection improvements and the establishment of a plaza at Holland Avenue and Fisher Road could create a welcoming sense of arrival. The creation of a pub patio would contribute to a new face for Holland Avenue by creating a sunny place for enjoying views of the park. This could be initiated at any time that the pub owner wished to implement this public realm improvement.



Parking could be expanded into the adjacent pub owned lot, and moved from in front of the pub to the side to allow room for a patio.

Vegetated edge to screen view of parking

Pedestrian connections through to adjacent walking routes

A community plaza



Seating

Painted Crosswalks

A pub patio space would create a vibrant street front across from the park. A pedestrian route could be maintained adjacent to the new patio.

Intersection becomes a 90 degree angle with plants or other elements to define the edge

Landscaped areas to define the plaza edge and create a pleasant entry to the village core

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double sided printing.

Design Guides

Keep it Rural

As new development occurs it is important that it adds to the character of the village and does not detract from it. These guides illustrate how the form and character of new development can complement the existing scale and character of the historic rural village centre.

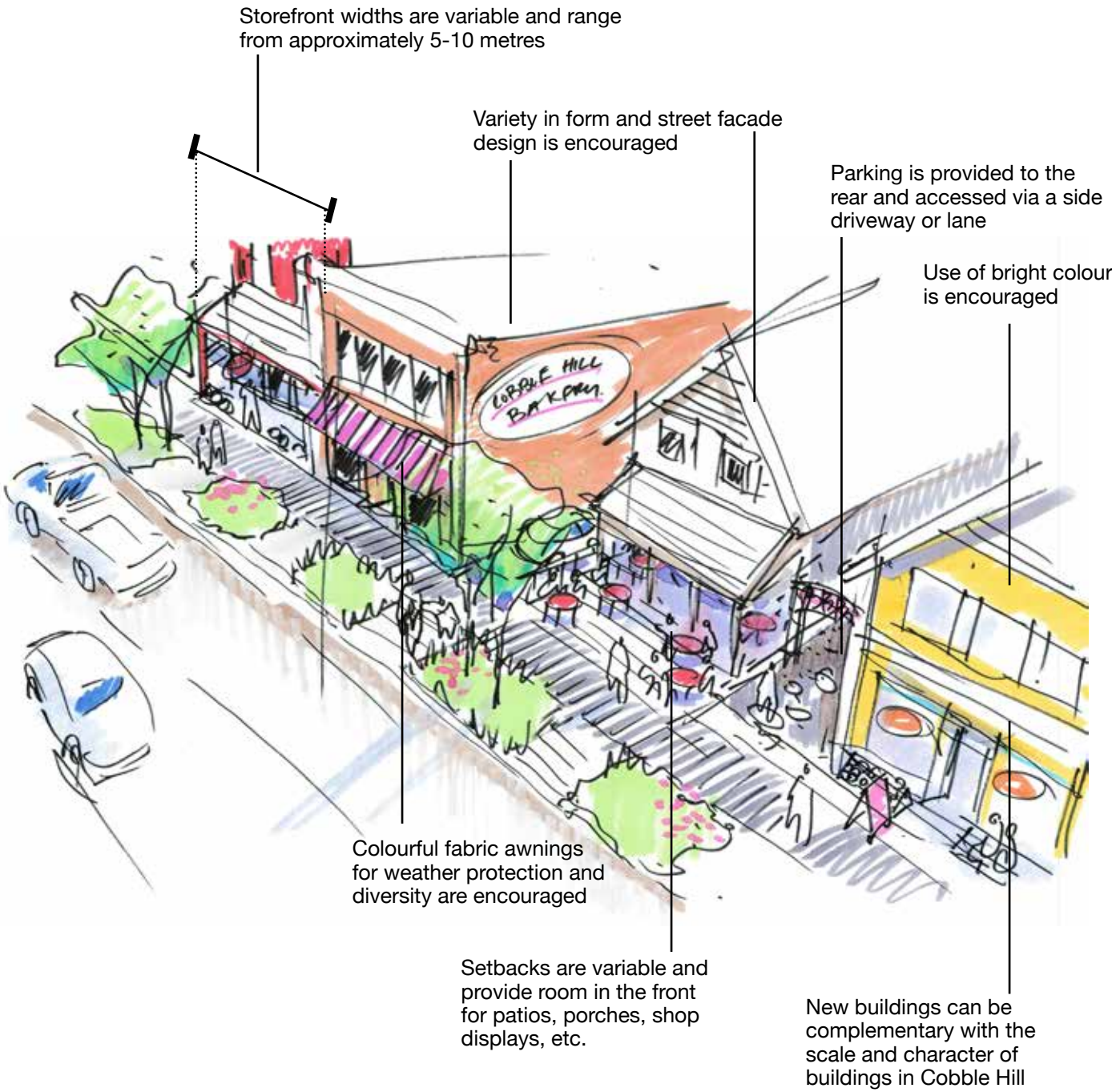
Form and Character

Design Guides are intended to provide direction for future development to show how it can be made to be complementary and compatible with the existing scale and character of the historic rural village centre.

BUILDING DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 1 Reference, Respect and Retain** heritage qualities that exists in Cobble Hill, but do not emulate or dilute in the new buildings
- 2 Use Traditional and Local Materials**, but offer contemporary interpretations.
- 3 Use Colour** to create a welcoming and interesting village centre.
- 4** New infill can be designed for **Seniors Housing and Adaptive Uses** on the ground-level, allowing for fully accessible ground floor units that can be used as needed (residential/office/retail space).
- 5 Keep it Woolly and Authentic** by allowing interior spaces to spill out into the front setback and program the street front





Storefront widths are variable and range from approximately 5-10 metres

Variety in form and street facade design is encouraged

Parking is provided to the rear and accessed via a side driveway or lane

Use of bright colour is encouraged

Colourful fabric awnings for weather protection and diversity are encouraged

Setbacks are variable and provide room in the front for patios, porches, shop displays, etc.

New buildings can be complementary with the scale and character of buildings in Cobble Hill

Flexible ground floor office, retail or residential uses

Building and roof mass of larger building can be broken up to create variety in form

Parking can be provided to the rear or side and accessed via a side driveway or lane

Ground-floor units can be ground-oriented and designed for universal access to provide housing options for seniors

Large blocks could establish a new laneway



Large windows provide transparency, sunlight

Building mass of larger building could be broken up to create variety in form and street facade design

Possible Homes / Habitable Space with/in Roof

Flexible ground-floor for retail or residential uses

Weather protected porches/patios and covered walkways

Unit widths could be variable and range from approximately 5-10 metres to create variety along the facade

10m max



Materials and Colour

Natural materials are appropriate in Cobble Hill, such as wood, brick, stone, concrete, exposed heavy timber and steel. Vinyl siding is not in keeping with the character.

The tradition of brightly coloured buildings in agricultural settings continues to resonate with residents of Cobble Hill today. Colourful buildings are most stunning when located next to other colourful buildings. The palette provides some ideas for vibrant colours that could be used in the village centre.

