



DUNCAN PUBLIC SPACE DESIGNS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

85 STATION STREET AND WHISTLER STREET

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When the city of Duncan made the decision to invest in improving 85 Station Street and Whistler Street, the leadership realized that both sites had potential to take a variety of forms. Either site could be transformed in to something new that had never before been seen in Duncan and was not prescribed by any existing guidelines. They knew that if they were to transform a public place, the best way to ensure its success would be to first listen to the community. The design process for both sites had to be centered around the people, and the history, culture, and aspirations that they represent.

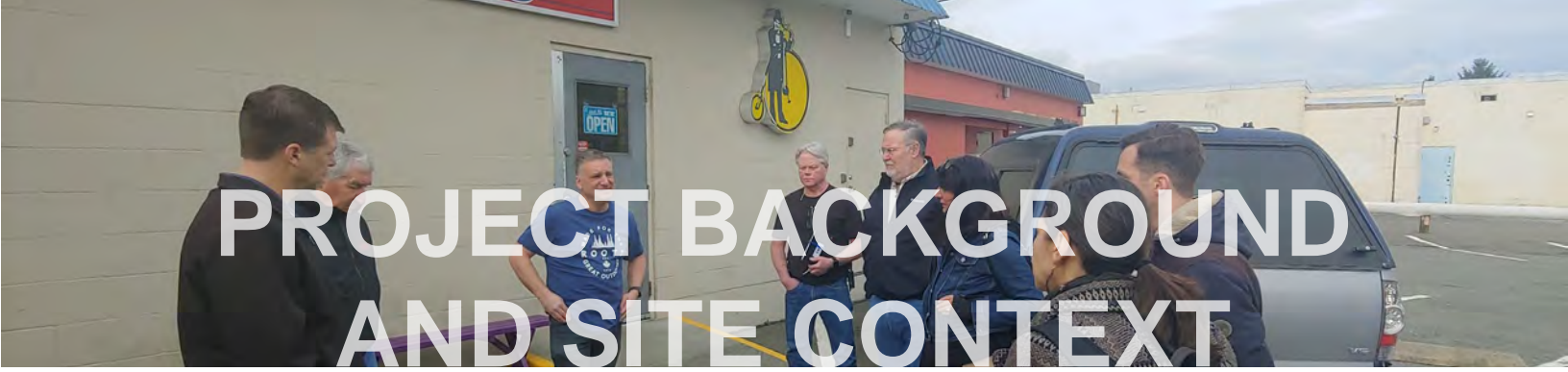
Communitecture was called in from Portland, Oregon, after having been involved in other public space projects and design workshops on Vancouver Island. We arrived with workshop tools and open minds about the best solutions for these two sites. We facilitated discussions with dozens of citizens who shared openly about challenges the community faces, the things they appreciate most about the city, and their hopes for its future. We are honored and grateful to get to work with a group of people that cares for their neighbours, strives to improve their environmental impact, and gets involved to shape the future. Participants thought creatively and compassionately about some of the biggest challenges the city faces, like houselessness, drug addiction, and public safety. They thought about immediate needs and sustainable solutions. They enthusiastically imagined places they would enjoy spending time and connecting with neighbours. A wealth of diverse ideas poured forth from the group.

After seeking two rounds of input from the community, we have synthesized and edited the ideas in to designs for two spectacular public spaces that any city should be proud to have. In the center of downtown, 85 Station Street will be transformed in to a public square that represents the community's love for nature, which makes it a park-town square hybrid. On less-central Whistler Street, a space traditionally reserved for cars will become a welcoming urban place to gather and celebrate art and music.

Implementing both projects can involve a variety of community members and groups and we hope to be involved as they take shape. We are honored to be on the team.

--Communitecture Team

Mark Lakeman, Robin Koch, Dylan Thomas, Dante Montebianco



PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SITE CONTEXT

The two sites in Duncan that are the focus of this report are quite different from one another in their context, their scale, and their challenges and opportunities. Mayor Michelle Staples and city staff chose to invest in public space improvements at these two sites for different reasons. Both sites called for new community-led designs for public space and therefore they were the subjects of parallel but separate design processes from February to August, 2020. The city hired Communitecture of Portland, Oregon to facilitate community input and synthesize ideas into the public space design concepts presented later in this report.

85 Station Street is a roughly 80-foot by 60-foot public space at the corner of Station and Craig Streets in the heart of downtown Duncan. The west half of the site was acquired by the City of Duncan in after an aged building was deemed a safety hazard and removed in 2014. After demolition, the site has simply been a flat grass-covered public space for several years. The east half of the site was already a city-owned “pocket park” which provided a small public space between two buildings prior to the demolition. It presently features three totem poles, a few small trees, and a mural on a remaining building. The recent expansion of this public space provides a special opportunity to create gathering space and public amenities, and it calls for a design that is attentive to, and representative of, the community.

Whistler Street is a nearly three block long spur off of Coronation Avenue in the Northeast area of Duncan. It is one block east of the Trans-Canada Highway and has no outlet. Most of the lots on the west side of Whistler span all the way to the TCH, making this minor street serve as a service alley to the backs of the businesses there. The east side of the street hosts a mix of businesses and




residences. Generally, the street and the private lots appear to have more asphalt parking area than necessary, very little landscaping, and no sidewalks, making the street feel vacant and unwelcoming. In part due to these conditions, the street has become a site of illicit drug sales, the public nuisances of drug use, and other criminal or unsafe activity in recent years. Business owners and residents on the street have endured threats to their safety as well as abuse to their property. They have observed that Whistler Street shields criminals from public view while providing an escape route to the north on foot, where a police vehicle would not have access. The City of Duncan has found that their patrols of the site have not solved the growing problems and decided to explore new strategies to improve safety, livability, and property values in this area of town. The hazards and nuisances are not a product of the streetscape alone, and therefore improving the street is only one prong of a broader approach. City policies approach houselessness and drug addiction with efforts to improve lives, rather than push people with needs away. The City decided to invest in improving Whistler Street only after seeking input from a wide variety of community members.



85 Station Street viewed from across the intersection of Station and Craig Streets



Whistler Street's current conditions, viewed from the south end of the street



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

On February 28th an insightful public presentation was provided by Mark Lakeman, of Portland-based consultants Communitecture. The presentation raised historic and contemporary issues and opportunities related to community development and public space in North America in general, and western Canada in particular.

The stage was set, and on February 29th and March 1st, a community participation-based workshop was held for each site, to convene the experience, knowledge, and inspiration of local residents, businesses, stakeholders, and interested persons.

Each workshop drew more than 40 participants representing local business owners, area residents, interested visitors, and City officials. Participants presented themselves and their interests, identified issues and strengths at each site, and collaboratively developed strategies, design elements, and a range of activities that they felt would help transform persistent physical, social, economic, and ecological conditions. The range of ideas was inspiring for its creativity and produced a range of concepts for Duncan to move into the future.

In addition to sharing verbal comments in both workshops, participants split in to five groups to place their desired design elements on site plans and begin to turn their ideas in to form. A comprehensive account of the workshops and a collection of comments, opinions, and ideas has been compiled by the City [here](https://www.placespeak.com/uploads/6330/Whistler-Station-Streets-Workshop-Follow.pdf) [https://www.placespeak.com/uploads/6330/Whistler-Station-Streets-Workshop-Follow.pdf]



Collaborative representations of design ideas for 85 Station Street from the public workshop



Collaborative representations of design ideas for Whistler Street from the public workshop

Communitecture analyzed the five designs that resulted from both workshops to find where they overlapped, what elements were most popular, and how the major or controversial elements should distinguish design options from one another. The five collaborative compositions for each site were combined and edited into three design options for 85 Station Street and two options for Whistler Street.

Design options were presented to the public online via PlaceSpeak from May 11th to June 7th, 2020. (A second round of live public workshops had been planned, but the COVID-19 emergency required that they be moved to online platforms.) This website allowed participants to provide public comments on each design option as well as answer surveys and rank their most preferred design attributes.

The design options presented and summaries of the feedback are included in following sections on Station Street and Whistler Street, respectively.

Communitecture and City planning staff analyzed the public comments and survey results to determine a design direction for each site. After several meetings and iterations of carefully considered site plans, final designs were developed to present to City Council on September 8th, 2020.



Project Description

Located at the intersection of Craig and Station Streets in the core of downtown Duncan, 85 Station has been used as a public green space since the demolition of the former Red Balloon commercial building in 2014. As a lawn-area, the site has functioned as an extension of the Station Street Park, recognized by visitors for its three totems, and known by locals for its remarkable “Fake Forest” mural.

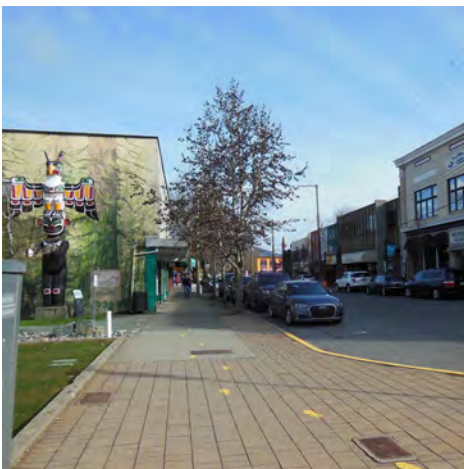
Workshop participants expressed a fondness for this site and named many strengths including:

- Central location in urban core
- Totems, mural, and open space
- Diversity of area businesses
- Annual public celebrations, frequent free concerts nearby and weekly farmers market

Participants also named a long wish-list of amenities and public space improvements, with some of the most popular being:

- Tree canopy, green space, and native plants
- Seating and shade
- Gathering areas for community events and performance space
- More public art

Based on the ideas and observations offered by workshop participants, three design schemes were developed for the next round of public engagement. The schemes provided different sets of amenities arranged in different ways and exhibiting different aesthetic themes to stimulate public conversation and feedback. Site plans and more 3D drawings of these schemes are presented in an online video [here](https://vimeo.com/411238273). [<https://vimeo.com/411238273>]



The existing space and surroundings at 85 Station Street

Design Options

Scheme A



STATION STREET SCHEME A

This design scheme features numerous “big moves”, including enhanced bike and pedestrian lanes and sidewalks. Scheme A would transition Craig Street into a walking and biking-only space, and proposes overhead fabric architecture that swirls out of the parking lot from the northeast and along the eastern edge until it rises toward the southwest.

Other ideas include:

- A multi-use open space in the centre,
- Many trees and plants with places to sit,
- Totem poles maintained within the park,
- Gathering areas with rocks and a water feature,
- Stage for performances,
- Road mural installation, and more.

The existing eastern wall mural is retained and another is added on the northern wall. All options include a movie screen on the north wall.

Scheme B



STATION STREET SCHEME B

This design option has a pollinator theme, featuring a sculptural stage, hexagon patterns on pathways, playful footprint patterns on pedestrian walking surfaces, and an intersection road mural.

Other ideas include:

- Sculptural benches that create inviting edges,
- A south facing multi-level sun porch,
- Pavilion topped by a green roof,
- A playful water feature,
- Sun porch, and
- Totem poles retained within the park.

There is also a food cart located in an adjacent parking spot. The existing eastern wall mural is retained and another is added on the northern wall. Passage through to the parking lot to the northeast is celebrated with a trellis.

Scheme C



STATION STREET SCHEME C

This design option is organized around a below-grade amphitheatre, with a stone path that winds around and down to it. There is interesting and sculptural seating along the west and south edges, with some of it covered by transparent roofs.

There is a raised water feature along the eastern edge, with a two-storey waterfall fed from the adjacent roof. There is a small tea house located in a south edge parking spot, and two bulletin boards along the west and south edges.

The road mural is larger and more elaborate. One totem is retained in place while another is relocated to spot across the street which expands the presence of these installations.

Summary of Public Comments

Duncan area residents had an opportunity to choose their preferred scheme as well as answer a questionnaire about a variety of design features. Feedback was gathered online via PlaceSpeak between May 11th and June 7th, 2020.

Poll Results

Which of the proposed design schemes do you prefer?

Scheme A – 16 votes (55%)

Scheme B – 11 votes (38%)

Scheme C – 2 votes (7%)

Survey Results

Rank the schemes in order of your preference:

Chosen as their first choice:

Scheme A - 51%

Scheme B - 24%

Scheme C – 24%

Chosen as their first or second choice:

Scheme A - 35%

Scheme B - 39%

Scheme C – 26%

The top priorities for the project are:

- Neighborhood interaction and gathering – 16 votes
- Cultural celebration, inspiring art, and/or aesthetic appearance – 8 votes

At least 50% voted for the following elements:

- Covered picnic tables (strongest in B) – 21 votes
- Decorative plantings: flowers, shrubs, trees (strongest in A & C) – 19 votes
- Public Washrooms (all schemes) – 22 votes
- Lighting (all schemes) – 20 votes
- Close one block of Craig Street to create pedestrian plaza (A) – 20 votes
- Local native plants (strongest in A & C) – 21 votes
- Tree canopy (strongest in A & C) – 23 votes

Trends in Comments

- Multiple comments point out that a stage already exists one block away and prefer other elements such as picnic seating here.
- Several comments encourage restraint and dislike “clutter”.
- The closure of one block of Craig Street is an especially controversial design idea.

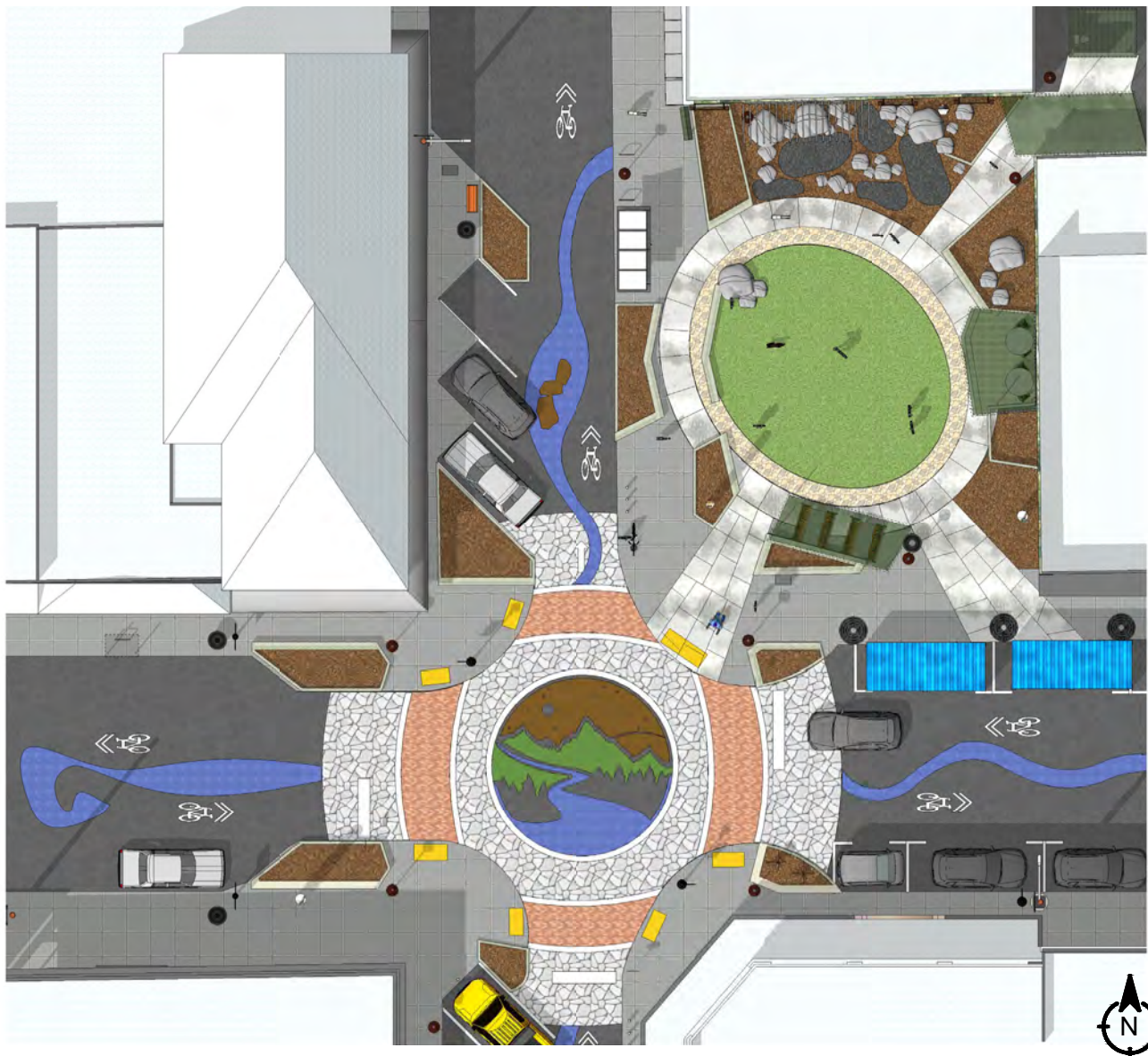
The full public discussion can be viewed at: <https://www.placespeak.com/en/topic/6316-station-street-placemaking-project/#/discussions>

85 Station Street Final Design

The final design for this urban park and gathering space brings together the most favored elements from the previous three schemes in to one formal concept. A variety of seating spaces and gathering areas are arranged around a spacious round lawn. Covered tables to the south and east provide space for meals and conversations in most seasons. Berms and boulders to the north invite young people to play and even splash in a seasonal stream in summer. The balance of tree canopy and open space offers choice of shade and sun. Lighting on all sides invites visitors to linger after dark.

The park opens to the intersection with a totem and tree suggesting a gateway between the two spaces. Planters and benches across the street extend the gathering space out in to the urban streetscape. Food trucks parked on Station Street and public washrooms in the alley to the north provide additional amenities that will activate the space with pedestrians.

The design of the new park is unified by a concentric pathway around the central open space. At the same time, through pathway design, a southwest gateway effect, landscape elements and other enhancements, the park also reaches out to link with the adjacent crossroads.





A raised seating area may serve as a stage visible from the lawn, Craig Street, and a variety of seating areas.



The park spills out to the street, incorporating parts of the existing sidewalks in to its form. Food carts and an outdoor movie screen make the park a special destination.



A seasonal fountain washes over a year-round nature play area featuring native plants.



Station Street Preliminary Design and Engineering Fee Estimates

All figures in CAD\$

Station Street Project

The Station Street project is a relatively simple site (58' x 80') to design and engineer, including approximately 4,640 square feet of city-owned land. The design site also includes the adjacent Right Of Way (ROW) for 80 feet of Craig Street, 58 feet of Station Street, as well as the adjacent intersection of these two streets. The 4,640 sf site and the ROW dimension of it have been separated here and approached differently, below.

The following fee estimates are based upon a standard rate of 10% of preliminary construction cost estimates. This number has then been reduced by 25% to account for the public process of schematic design which concludes with this report and public presentation of the outcomes.

4,640 sf Station Street Site

Preliminary construction cost estimate = \$418,189
(Not including demo and contingency)

Architecture and engineering services \$23,528 - (SD)25% = \$17,646

Landscape architecture and engineering services \$13,920 - (SD)25% = \$10,440

Total remaining 4,640sf site design and engineering fee = \$28,086

Station Street Site Right Of Way (ROW)

This estimate only provides Design Development services which will confirm scales and materials of elements. The estimate is based upon 3% of the preliminary cost estimate. Once these are confirmed, as well as apportionment of technical work that Duncan may be responsible for, construction documents and administration estimates can be completed.

Preliminary construction cost estimate = \$142,434
(Not including demo and contingency)

Architecture, landscape design, and engineering services @ 3% = \$4,273

Street graphic: Public process for final design, refinement and prep = \$6,000

Total design development fee for ROW areas = \$10,273



Project Description

Located along the east side of the Trans Canada Highway near the centre of the City of Duncan, Whistler Street is a 200-metre length of road running from Coronation Avenue to the border of the Municipality of North Cowichan.

Commercial businesses line the western side of Whistler Street, fronting the Trans Canada Highway, while a mix of residential and commercial uses make up its eastern side. While a vibrant strip of commercial businesses supports the street, there is a lack of pedestrian infrastructure and urban greenery that need to be responded to in order to support more diverse activity and uses. Over the past several years, Whistler Street has been particularly affected by the homeless and opioid crises, bringing challenges to businesses and residents in the neighbourhood that have required a concerted response from local government.

Workshop participants from all over the city expressed genuine concern for Whistler Street and compassion for its residents, workers, and houseless people. Many attendees either worked on Whistler Street or regularly patronized the music store, the bike shop, or the street's restaurants. They also brought a strong interest in environmental sustainability to this vehicle-oriented site. Some common goals included:

- Welcoming public space for parents to wait for their kids during music lessons, for example
- Improved safety and access for pedestrians and cyclists
- Building improvements to turn business' "fronts" toward Whistler Street
- Event space to attract positive activities, increase public attention to the space, and provide wholesome involvement to youth
- Public art



The existing streetscape of Whistler Street

- Services for community members in greatest need
- Tree canopy and stormwater management to improve sustainability

Based on the ideas and observations offered by workshop participants, two design schemes were developed for the next round of public engagement. The schemes provided different strategies for transforming the streetscape to stimulate public conversation and feedback. 3D drawings of these schemes are presented in an online video [here](https://vimeo.com/411575028). [<https://vimeo.com/411575028>]

Design Options

Scheme A



Scheme A recreates the environment in and around Whistler Street with a broad range of ideas, from the ground to the roof tops. Site issues are specifically addressed while also speaking to more general goals of the City of Duncan. This design does a lot of great place making and intends to make streets safer, more walkable and bikeable.

Option A also models sustainability, supports community gathering, and takes a big step toward improving conditions on the Trans Canada Highway as it travels through Duncan by reducing the number of vehicle access points.

The various features of this design are:

- A sculptural gateway that will attract people to visit Whistler Street. This idea becomes especially opportune if, and when, Whistler Street becomes completed local through-street that accommodates local traffic.

- Several place making effects that make the pedestrian environment more interesting while also supporting events and activities. These include:
 - Enhanced storefronts
 - Street graphic installations at the entry, middle, and end of the street.
 - More of a “community centre” approach to the development of the Corridor Safety Office, including a social porch, coffee serving cart, bike racks, and interesting surfaces and plantings.
 - A community stage at the north end of the street. This design is combined with a barrier that local business owners feel strongly will help discourage illicit activity traveling through the street at night.
 - Overhead lighting effects that will greatly enhance the experience of being on Whistler Street at night.
- A storage container for event materials and props.
- Activated spaces that offer places to gather and enjoy food and beverages, including a food cart village with seating, plants, and sculptural elements in the centre near a substantial road mural and lighting installation. This part of the project can help attract travelers from the TCH to visit and explore Whistler Street.
- Enhanced street and pedestrian designs that increase safety and walkability, including raised crosswalks with textured, painted surfaces/art, central boulevards with trees, and more defined parking that narrows the street width.
- A self-cleaning public restroom is proposed to be located just outside the CSO.
- Multi-functional sustainable effects such as street trees with companion plants, green roofs, storm water catchment features, and roof top solar panel systems.



Duncan Public Space Designs and Public Engagement Process



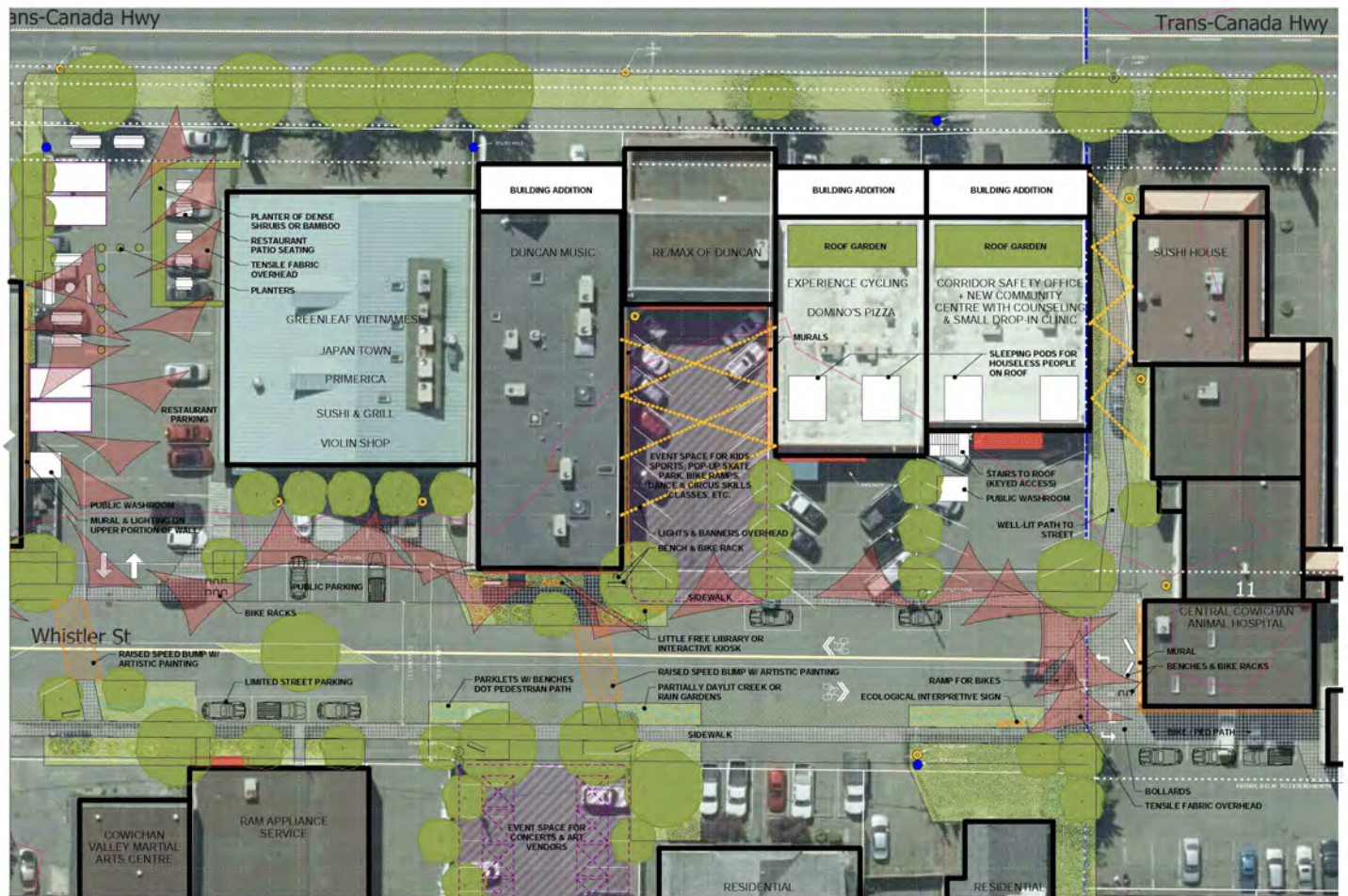
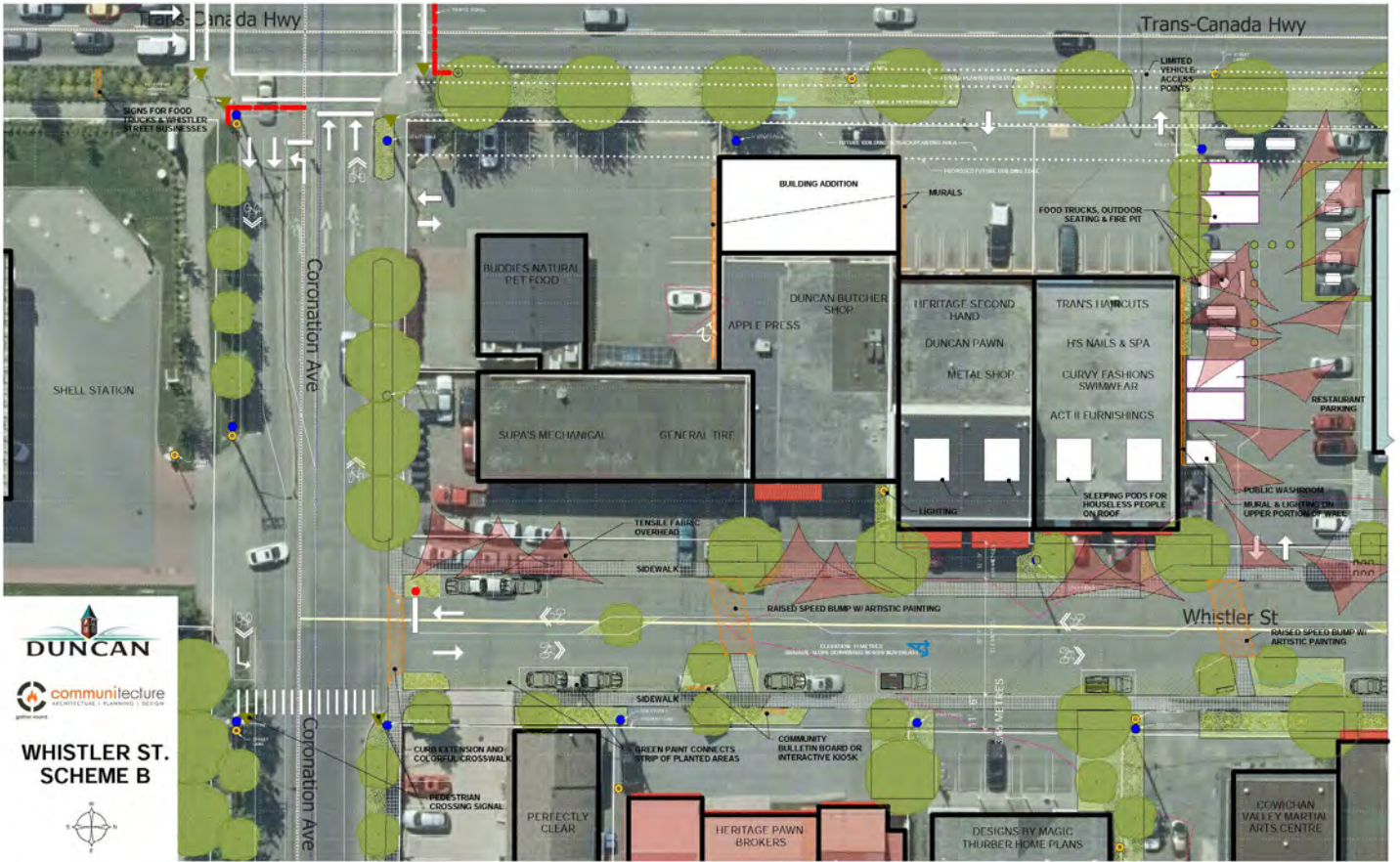
Scheme B



This design option strengthens the biking and pedestrian environment with several important, permanent, physical enhancements. At the same time the whole street becomes a more artistic experience from beginning to end.

Like Scheme A, this design speaks to urgent local issues while also looking to Duncan's goals for the future. The ideas fit into several categories including placemaking and culture building, a "complete streets" approach to transportation infrastructure, safety, and sustainability. Please see the list of features below.

- A continuous sculptural effect in the form of overhead fabric architecture that provides a more affordable approach to create a sense of place and pride, as well as visual connectivity, shade, and cover.
- A series of raised pedestrian crossings, with interesting artistic effects, that also slow cars.
- Continuous sidewalks on both sides of the street, including some amount of horizontal displacement to make the walking experience more inviting.
- Street chicanes with plants to ensure slower traffic speeds.
- Bike "Sharrows" that indicate to drivers that the design is a shared, multimodal street.
- Enhanced social edges and spaces including:
 - Store front improvements facing Whistler street.
 - Designated event areas including parking lots and street spaces.
- A food cart village at the centre which features great appeal to the TCH. This area also includes a public restroom.
- A pedestrian plaza at the north end which, notably in this design, does not provide a barrier to pedestrian movement at night.
- The CSO facility includes a social porch.
- An innovative approach to housing that utilizes roof tops of adjacent buildings for locating tiny homes. The individuals who reside in these structures can act as on-site stewards of the street day or night.
- Addition of green features including:
 - * Street trees with supporting companion plants,
 - * A "day lighted stream" (if possible),
 - * Tree and planting opportunities for property owners, and
 - * Numerous living roofs.



Summary of Public Comments

Duncan area residents had an opportunity to choose their preferred scheme as well as answer a questionnaire about a variety of design features. Feedback was gathered online via PlaceSpeak between May 11th and June 7th, 2020.

Poll Results

Which of the proposed design schemes do you prefer?

Scheme A – 3 votes (16%)

Scheme B – 16 votes (84%)

Survey Results

The top priority for the project is

- Safety from crime - 7 votes (41%)

Other priorities with considerable support are:

- Sustainability and resilience (24%)
- Local stakeholder and resident communication and coordination (18%)

At least 47% voted for the following elements:

- Shade trees and decorative plantings (stronger in B) – 13 votes
- Food truck pod – 12 votes
- Storefront improvements – 8 votes
- Arches over streets (lights, banners, sculptural signage) (A) – 8 votes
- Lighting on street (both but stronger in A) – 16 votes
- Discourage criminal activity by increasing connectivity and daily traffic to increase “eyes on the street” (B) – 12 votes
- Enhance CSO to become more like a hub of community (either) – 10 votes
- Discourage criminal activity by regularly holding public gatherings (both) – 9 votes
- Install pedestrian sidewalks on Whistler Street (B) – 11 votes
- Protected pedestrian crossings on Coronation Avenue (both) – 9 votes
- Tree canopy (stronger in B) – 13 votes
- Street planters with pollinator habitat, local native plants, benches and kiosks, local native plants (both but stronger in B) – 12 votes
- Solar power for on-site lighting (A) – 10 votes
- Roof gardens (A) – 10 votes
- Encounters with nature for pedestrians and residents (B) – 9 votes

Trends in Comments

- Comments lean toward encouraging visitors to the street as a primary way to make the street safer
- The preferred elements from each scheme are complimentary to each other and can be incorporated in to one design.

Full public discussion can be viewed at <https://www.placespeak.com/en/topic/6330-whistler-street-placemaking-project/#/discussions>

Whistler Street Final Design

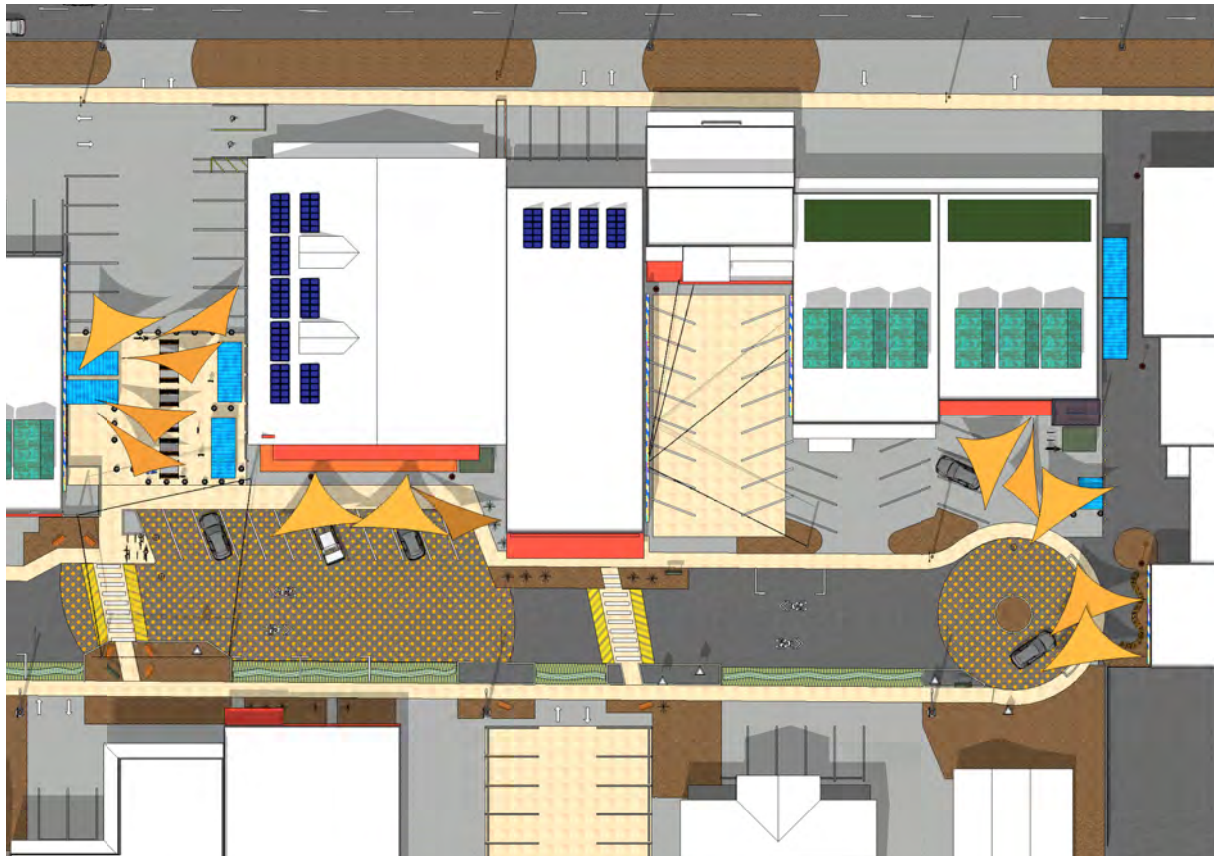
The final design depicts a transformation of the public street to a multi-modal urban space, a destination for public events, and an example of sustainable design. The surrounding private properties can be engaged in the shift in complimentary ways and suggested uses for their parking lots are depicted.

To make the street pleasant and safe for pedestrians and visitors, sidewalks, lighting and trees line both sides of the street. In some places, small green parklets and swales separate pedestrians from vehicles. Benches and bike racks are provided near popular businesses such as restaurants and the music store. Safety is improved on the TCH and its sidewalk by reducing the number of driveway access points and arranging parking areas more efficiently.

Most locals on Whistler Street favor blocking all movement at the north end of the street to address safety concerns, but a path through to the neighborhood to the north may also have a purpose at some time, so a wall with a city-controlled gate is proposed. The street with no outlet is an opportune location for street festivals so areas for gathering are enhanced in this design. Graphics on the street and tensile fabric and string lights overhead turn three areas of the street in to celebrated places. The southern end becomes a welcoming gateway while the middle and north end are equipped to host performing arts, food festivals, and art markets.

Improvements to existing buildings such as storefront enhancements and rooftop solar installations would compliment the new streetscape and may be incentivised by the city. The design suggests the occasional use of parking lots for festivals and a new full-time food cart pod in the central lot. A public-private partnership would support the success of this design and the realization of the wishes of the community.





Whistler St. - Plan- North Half



Whistler St. - Plan- South Half



The northern termination of Whistler Street is no longer a walled-in dead end but a vibrant venue for art and celebration.



New crosswalks, swales, and chicanes down the length of the street calm traffic and protect pedestrians. Shaded seating is provided under new trees.



A parking lot transformed in to a food cart village opens up to Whistler Street, linked by festive overhead lights.



The CSO parking lot at the north end of the street offers a coffee cart and public washrooms.

Whistler Street Preliminary Design and Engineering Fee Estimates

All figures in CAD\$

Summary of design fee context with process ideas

The following Design Development-only, preliminary estimate provides a general approach to translating schematic design elements that have resulted from the public participation design process into more definitive elements with clear scales, materials and structural systems. Some additional public participation and consultation may be needed in this process.

Unlike the Station Street Project context which is entirely city-owned and managed, the Whistler Street site has a much more complex design context that includes more a extensive ROW design site, and multiple private site ownership and stakeholders. While the City of Duncan is able to determine which projects to implement, potentially in phases, the private sites may require incentives, grants, and individual funding strategies. An important next step for progress on Whistler Street is to determine a sequential approach to commencing the work, how entities will be matched with each area of responsibility, so that a comprehensive yet flexible budget can be developed.

Preliminary construction estimate (ROW improvements only)**	= \$850,000
ROW architecture, landscape, and engineering DD* (under 3%) (For Pedestrian systems and features, place making elements including gateway, Central light feature, parklets with benches and kiosks, various landscape designs including swales, plaza design, and north end wall with gateway)	= \$20,000
<u>Street graphics: Public process for final design, refinement and prep</u>	<u>= \$11,000</u>
Total design development fee for ROW areas	= \$32,000

*Excludes: Final Construction Documents and Details, Civil Engineering

** Design fees for supporting projects on private sites can be developed upon further consultation with owners and stakeholders on a group scale, as well as a case by case basis.



Summary

City Repair is honored to provide this set of process and support recommendations for both the Station Street and Whistler Street projects in Duncan, BC. Our participatory place making work in Portland, and in support of cities across the continent, has equipped us to be of effective service to you in your endeavors. Both of these projects align well with our own vision and values, and we are pleased that the process so far has been driven by community engagement, grounded in local culture, and includes an important emphasis on the social, ecological, and historical context. The two sites are fundamentally different, and also have some important similarities. All of which stem from a development history that place making as a process is meant to address. Station Street is becoming an important open space and gathering node that will strengthen an already vibrant town center, while providing a crucial “missing” element. The work on Whistler Street will creatively address pressing social-economic related issues while also modeling some of the most powerful strategies for reanimating urban space in order to support a broader range of activities and attract a wider diversity of people.

Of particular concern to our organization is that these projects can enable stronger local networks to emerge, and in the case of Duncan between the civic culture and the wider community, and between Duncan and proximate tribes. The important presence of the First Nations totems in the scheme is impressive, and the idea that the final intersection graphic installation becomes a symbol of inter-cultural reconciliation are both very significant potential outcomes of the community design timeline. May the following process recommendations result in these kinds of outcomes, and more listed immediately below.

Likely outcomes from building community through place making:

- Engage youth while rebuilding the relationship of community to public space
- Build up an overall culture of sustained civic engagement and place making.
- Strengthen regional leadership network.
- Revolutionize educational possibilities for service learning in the region.
- Exemplify inclusive public-community partnerships in action.
- Restore functional gathering places while diversifying the use of streets.
- Reestablish functional commons in local communities across the town and region.
- Model most resilient practices for participation and collaboration
- Build ecological prototypes that model best practices and inspire replication.

Possible Timeline of community building opportunities at both Station Street and Whistler Street. including key moments, events, and spatial mock ups.

Employ social media live stream events where possible, document all events and processes for people who cannot physically be present during events, also related to Covid-19.

	Event	Potential Action
Sept 8, 2020	Approval by Duncan City Council	Symbolic celebrations at each site, literally sow native seeds.
Sept 12, 2020	Immediate mock up installations at each site	Swift installation of prefab gestures, pieces, and some built on site, events to briefly inhabit and test space.
Aut/Wint 2020	Begin various youth installations Holiday events at each site	Music events, bike demos, art projects Holiday events at each site Gathering at sites, including local business sale events.
Spring 2021	Ground Breaking at each site Initial prep at each site Culmination celebration	Press event, symbolic act, actual interactive install, community event. Barn-raising style events in week span of time to implement. Community installs pre-built features, some on site building, and all plantings installed. site building, and all plantings installed. Street closures around site, food, music, acknowledgements
Future	Annual Holiday events and celebrations at the sites.	Maintenance related gatherings are important opportunities, vital to engage youth w/ civic orgs.

Most Accessible Features and Processes

Both Station Street and Whistler Street present human scale numerous opportunities for community involvement as well as paid local help. In fact, considering the broad and diverse skill set in the Cowichan Valley, all of the work in the designs can be accomplished by the resident population. All of the materials should also be available through local sources and businesses.

Station Street

Like many urban places, Station Street will begin with some amount of preparatory civil work. These efforts will be followed by a sequence of projects that are mostly of a complexity and scale that enable the elements of the design to present skilled, educational, or unskilled involvement. Most of the work will be in the context of the Duncan-owned site, while some of it will be in the city-administered right of way. The fact that the project has been initiated and supported by Duncan, and that both contexts are administered by the same entity can simplify and enable more flexibility in how volunteers can be involved, and materials can be procured or donated. The following is a list of opportunities that have been identified, with comments on how to pull them off.

Opportunity (there are more elements)

All project elements can be presented and explained in a public setting, as to how they will be made, who will be involved, and what opportunities will become available.

Even with initial civil work, community members can follow the progress via online or real time photo documentation and interactive timelines. Short videos can be uploaded so that community members can follow progress on even seemingly mundane, but technically challenging work such as excavation, installing electrical service, or pouring concrete. Concise footage can be combined with brief interviews of the installers, who can then become community “rock stars”. Middle school students would be perfect candidates for this kind of service learning approach to supportive action.

Projects like the picnic pavilions, foundations for relocating totems, form work for poured raised planters, and locating boulders all require talented and technically skilled workers. Still, the engaged contractors may already be engaged in mentorship programs, or might be open to supporting interns in their processes of production and installation.

Smaller elements and mural effects including walls and street graphic.

Trees, shrubs, plants, and landscape materials.

Approach

City and contractor staff, lead artists

City and contractor staff working with teachers and students

City and contractor staff working with intern or introductory level youth.

Contractor staff and lead artists working with variously skilled community members

Contractor staff with wide variety of community volunteers of all ages

Whistler Street Projects

Like the Station Street site, many aspects of the designs for Whistler Street will begin with some preparatory civil work including below and above ground reworking of street and plumbing infrastructure. These efforts will also be followed by a sequence of above ground projects, many of which will be of a complexity and scale that enable the elements of the design to engage variously skilled people in volunteer or paid opportunities.

Much of the work will occur in the city-administered right of way, while the rest will occur across a spectrum of individually owned private sites. The fact that the implementation of the overall design at Whistler Street will involve multiple stakeholders makes the process more complex, and at the same offers a uniquely rich variety of opportunities.

The following is a list of opportunities that have been identified across multiple sites, with comments on how to pull them off.

Opportunity (there are more elements)

All project elements in the right of way can be described and explained in a public setting. All confirmed projects commencing on private sites can be similarly presented: How, who, what, and the opportunities that will become available.

Commencing with initial civil work, community members can follow the progress working via online or real time photo documentation and interactive timelines. Short videos can be uploaded so that community members can follow progress on technically demanding work such as excavation, installing electrical service, or pouring concrete. Footage can be combined with brief interviews with the installers. Middle school, high school, and university students would be perfect candidates for this kind of service learning approach to supportive action. Much the same approach can be taken when projects are being installed on the numerous private sites.

Projects like storefront improvements, overhead fabric installations, bench and kiosk construction and installation, street gateway arch fabrication, central overhead lighting installation, potential rooftop sleeping pods, living roofs, solar panels, and other features that require professional skills and tools can also be opportunities to engage, mentor, or even employ youth and community members.

Youth-made art installations, benches and kiosks, and overhead light sculptures in the ROW, the quick installation of the food cart village working with variously skilled with surface patterns, plantings, and overhead effects on a private site, community members and also smaller elements and mural effects including walls and ROW street graphics.

Trees, shrubs, plants, and landscape materials, community volunteers of all ages.

Approach

City and contractor staff, lead artists

City and contractor staff on public and private sites, working with teachers and students.

City and contractor staff working with

Contractor staff and lead artists

Contractor staff with wide variety of

Initial Mock-Ups on Each Site

While the process of refining and engineering the final designs for Station Street and Whistler Street sites proceeds, both sites can accommodate interesting initial mock ups that activate and animate the context. While this approach to place making is inherently temporary, it can have immediately beneficial and lasting effects. These can include bringing attention, participation, and creativity to the sites, as well as an immediate sense of “doing something” that can inspire more action. Temporary installations tend to be conducive to youth participation, attract the involvement of various organized groups that can outreach for broad involvement, certainly attract lots of financial and in-kind support, and leverage local governmental flexibility. Temporary projects offer the opportunity to creatively challenge normal assumptions about public space and community participation, and also to test unusual ideas that don’t often get a chance to happen. One very popular approach is to gather random materials, donated or resourced as “upcycling”, and use them to create spontaneous effects that are both functional as well as inventive and lovely. Frequent examples include large planar surfaces such as doors and windows, various kinds of panels, interesting industrial artifacts, natural unprocessed materials, reclaimed building materials, tension fabrics or rope, and a wide variety of trees and plants in pots. These can be modified, assembled in interesting ways, and enhanced via paint or other means.

Of course, all of these kinds of activities offer opportunities for gathering, activating spaces, sharing, mentoring, creative expression, and celebrating. The main idea is to activate the space as soon as possible so that the community remains engaged and actually inhabiting the spaces and uses does not become unduly deferred until a potentially nebulous time in the future when work has officially been funded, engineered, permitted, and completed. In fact, the functions and impacts we want to support in the space can begin to happen immediately even as the sites evolve into more permanent forms.

Station Street

This site offers an endless array of opportunities to test an entire calendar of ideas. Beginning with official approval of the final design for this site, it can be used as a pallet to try out ideas that activate the space. Just as during Covid-19 the space has been filled with tables and plants, it can also become something of an outdoor gallery for middle and high school art classes, a place to conduct hands-on workshops, extend the farmer’s market, a performance arena with folding equipment, and of course a place for building some of the future permanent features such as the benches, kiosks, and shelters.

Whistler Street Projects

Depending upon consent of the various land owners, many kinds of temporary installations are possible. However, given sometimes scarce availability of time, attention, and resources it may be a better choice to focus available energy on moving ahead with key implementations that attract lots of help and support. Graphic effects on street or parking lot surfaces, and also on walls, are excellent ways to have lots of people create huge, immediate impacts at low cost. In fact, these kinds of projects have proven enactable even during social distancing requirements. The installation of any planned trees or plantings can attract lots of involvement and support, and immediately change the impression of the site. As for immediate or temporary effects in the ROW, some of the suggested art features can happen sooner than later. Benches and kiosks are great examples that can be located now, and situated in a permanent way later. From a local business owner perspective, given the exciting plans that have now become imminent, beginning the process of storefront improvement in order to open up to the newly animated Whistler Street has become a great idea that should begin sooner than later.

Volunteer Engagement Thoughts

The City of Duncan has tremendous capacity to do things that have never been done before. The diverse, multi-generational community that resides in close proximity to the breadth of communities within the Cowichan Valley presents no limit to the skills and talents that can be brought to bear. In fact, if we can imagine that the Station Street and Whistler Street projects are actually a means to engage the well of talent and inspiration that resides in the Cowichan, it can become an exciting and momentous vision of a community coalescing to actually strengthen itself. Building gathering places for the constituent parts of itself. So, every department of the community can be seen as an asset. All city bureaus, leaders, staff and workers; all educational institutions, admin, staff, families and students; all civic groups, police and fire, all neighborhoods organized or not, and homeless people too can answer the call.

The time has come, all hands on deck.