

## 6. Downtown Sechelt

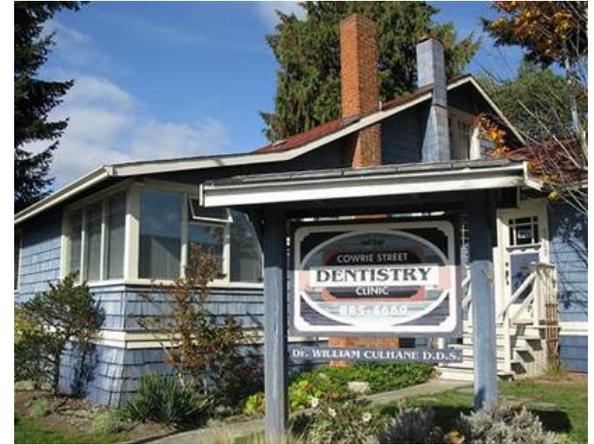
Downtown Sechelt is the focal point of the community, providing shopping, restaurants, cultural, education and government uses. The waterfront setting and seaside character are particular strengths of the Downtown, attracting many flourishing shops, restaurants and businesses, as well as arts, cultural and social activities that serve the wider community. The Downtown also contains diverse and growing residential neighbourhoods - the original Downtown Village, as well as new multifamily developments in and near the Downtown. Many positive changes have taken place in recent years to reinforce the role of the Downtown as the “heart of the community”, including completion of the Civic Centre with the new municipal hall, library, aquatic centre and courthouse, and development of several new commercial, multifamily and mixed-use buildings. Renewal continues with upgrades to older buildings, as well as new businesses that bring a sense of vitality and activity to the Downtown.

While there are many challenges to revitalization of the Downtown, the established core of business, government/civic uses and potential for increased living in Downtown ensure the long-term viability of this vital part of the community. Retail analysis indicates that strong demand for street-level retailing is a major trend in all communities, and is a particular asset and opportunity for Sechelt. Difficulties in assembling large commercial sites means the Downtown will play an increasingly specialized role in Sechelt’s business environment, providing shops, restaurants and specialty retail that attracts visitors and serves local



residents. OCP policies support this range of uses, with emphasis on the quality of design and scale of street-level uses to reinforce the seaside character.

Concentrated investment in the public realm – streets, sidewalks, signage, greenways and marine access – is particularly important to revitalize some key blocks of the Downtown. Proposed long-term changes to arterial routes, particularly to eventually remove major through traffic from Wharf Road and Teredo Street, will also play a major role in improving the pedestrian environment and Downtown livability. In the short term, improvements to those major routes are needed to slow the speed of traffic and improve pedestrian safety, so the Downtown functions as a town centre, rather than a highway route. New development also needs to present a more attractive “face” to these primary routes, with landscaping, building design and careful placement of parking areas.



## Previous Studies

Several previous studies have been used to develop the OCP policies for the Downtown. The Vision Plan provides many ideas to guide future development of the Downtown into a more pedestrian-oriented environment, with greater emphasis on mixed-use buildings. Many of these ideas were also expressed in the 1998 Downtown Revitalization Strategy (Urban Systems), and are slowly being implemented with each new development. Elements of these plans have also been carried forward into the Downtown Development Permit Area Guidelines (OCP Part Eight).

## Vision, Identity and Goals for the Downtown

- To develop the Downtown as a vibrant and welcoming seaside community, that is connected to its waterfront, with unique places to shop, live and enjoy the social and cultural activities of the community.
- To develop with an attractive but consistent urban design approach that emphasizes the pedestrian experience and retains the unique Sechelt “village” character.
- To take actions to revitalize the Downtown by investing in streetscape upgrades that improve the pedestrian routes throughout the Downtown and provide attractive “gateways” to the entrances to Downtown and waterfront areas.
- To increase the opportunities for living Downtown with a range of housing types, including multiple family and infill housing.

## Policies

### Downtown First

- 6.1 The **Downtown Centre** designation on Schedule C includes the “main street” shopping and business areas. This designation is intended to bring a vibrant mix of uses and to increase the number of people living in the Downtown, and permits a wide mix of retail, office, tourist commercial, cultural, institutional and residential uses.

- 6.2 Downtown Sechelt will continue to serve as the institutional and community services centre for the Sunshine Coast. Council will actively support initiatives to strengthen these public sectors (education, health care, justice, government and social services).

- 6.3 All public uses shall be designed to be accessible for all residents.

- 6.4 The extent of office and retail development will be limited in outlying commercial and industrial areas in order to retain and expand the professional and business service role of the Downtown.

- 6.5 Sechelt recognizes the importance of the arts and cultural services in the Downtown and supports development of facilities and activities that promote arts and culture.

- 6.6 New development on Cowrie Street, Teredo Street and Wharf Road should include ground floor commercial or cultural/public uses to create a continuous commercial streetscape. Buildings on these key commercial streets, including waterfront locations on Teredo Street, should “face the street” with welcoming entryways and other design features that create a ‘town centre’ appearance rather than a highway route. Upper storeys may include commercial, office and/or residential uses. In secondary locations (such as Inlet Avenue), ground floor commercial is



*New development in the Downtown should provide public plazas and wide pedestrian/seating areas to encourage street level interaction and activity (Vision Plan sketch).*

optional. All uses shall have pedestrian sidewalks, and road design may be altered to slow through traffic, using features such as four-way stops, pedestrian activated crossing lights or other measures that give priority to the pedestrian environment.

- 6.7 All new buildings in the **Downtown Centre** should have upper storeys; single storey uses are not supported. Redevelopment of major sites such as the Trail Bay shopping centre to include upper storey residential is also supported.
- 6.8 To achieve the long-term goals for the Downtown, the previous “Service Commercial” designation no longer applies to the lands on Wharf Street south of the hydro right-of-way. Existing uses will remain under their current zoning, but over time, redevelopment and rezoning to mixed commercial/residential uses is encouraged for this block.

#### **Transition Commercial**

- 6.9 The “transition commercial” OCP designations and zoning has allowed small-scale businesses, personal services and professional offices to develop within existing residential buildings near the main commercial areas. This has preserved a unique Downtown character while providing a



*This sketch illustrates mixed -use development on the east side of Wharf Road, with wide pedestrian sidewalks, landscaping and small on-street parking nodes (Vision Plan sketch).*

geographic transition between commercial and residential areas. However, this designation is now reduced in scope to reduce “leakage” from main downtown commercial streets. For these reasons, **Transition Commercial** areas will be limited to those shown on Schedule C,

#### **Appearance and Design Quality**

- 6.10 All new development shall have a distinctive design quality that reinforces the scale and unique character of Sechelt as a small coastal waterfront community.
- 6.11 The Downtown is designated as a Development Permit Area to implement a high standard of urban design, landscaping and streetscape improvements with any new development. The emphasis of these guidelines is to ensure the streetscape elements, pedestrian scale, and important design elements such as building materials, window and entry elements and building transitions to upper storeys are carefully managed (see OCP Part Eight for details).

#### **Wood and Natural Materials**

- 6.12 Wood is an important local material and should be featured prominently in new development in the Downtown.



### *Maximum Building Heights*

- 6.13 Building heights are very important in defining the physical character of the Downtown. Currently Sechelt has a small-scale feel and character, particularly along the main business streets and waterfront, with most buildings currently ranging from 1-3 storeys. To retain the Downtown Village character, new commercial and/or multifamily buildings in the **Downtown Centre** shall be limited to a maximum of 3 storeys in height (including any ground level parking structures) or 12 metres (30.4 feet) whichever is less.
- 6.14 Additional height may be considered in special circumstances where:
- (a) The building is no more than four storeys in waterfront locations or six storeys in locations where views are not affected (i.e. against hillsides);
  - (b) For the Lot A, Block B, DL 303, LMP 18610 only (Pacific Spirits site on Teredo Street), building heights up to 5 or 6 storeys may be considered by Council, provided significant public amenity is provided through additional open space or other provisions;
  - (c) The building can be sensitively integrated into the neighbourhood and the increased height does not significantly affect views or overshadow adjacent uses;
  - (d) Upper storeys are terraced back from the first floor at street level and/or from the waterfront, public park or open space areas;
  - (e) Additional park or public open space is provided that creates significant benefit to the downtown. As a general guide, a minimum of 10% of the lot area should be dedicated for each additional floor above a building elevation of 12 metres (39.4 feet);
  - (f) For waterfront sites, the required additional open space must be located adjacent to the waterfront; and
  - (g) The District has the ability to provide the necessary fire protection; and

- (h) The site is geotechnically suitable for the construction of the building.

### *Streetscape and Greenway Improvements*

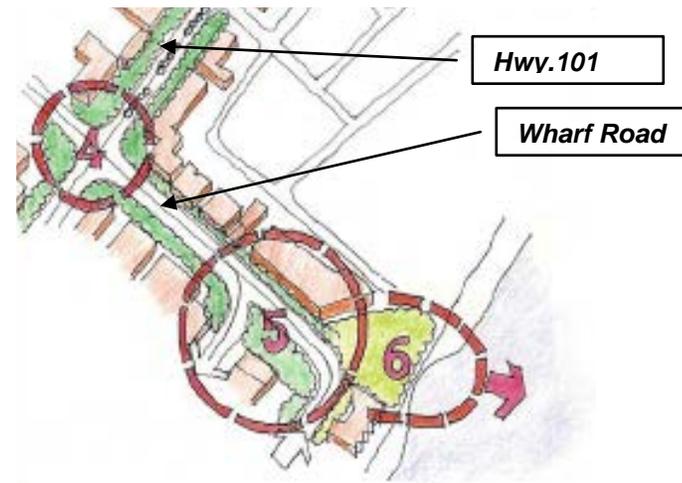
- 6.15 Sidewalks are the essential element in successful Downtowns. The District of Sechelt will upgrade the pedestrian environment in the Downtown by budgeting for and undertaking streetscape upgrades, in conjunction with property owners and utility agencies. This will include;
- (a) Placing wiring underground (remove above ground electrical power, cable and telephone services);
  - (b) Planting of street trees, planted medians and soft landscaping;
  - (c) Providing continuous pedestrian sidewalks on both sides of all Downtown streets, including the sections of Highway 101 (Wharf Road and Teredo Street) that pass through the Downtown.
  - (d) Widening of sidewalks to at least 3m width or wider wherever possible within the Downtown Centre.
  - (e) Special street furniture, pedestrian-scale, non-glare full cutoff street lights
  - (f) Install public seating, garbage receptacles and raised planters in high-use pedestrian areas and streets.
  - (g) Bus shelters and bike racks
  - (h) Create uniform decorative street and directional signage.

### Wharf Road Redevelopment

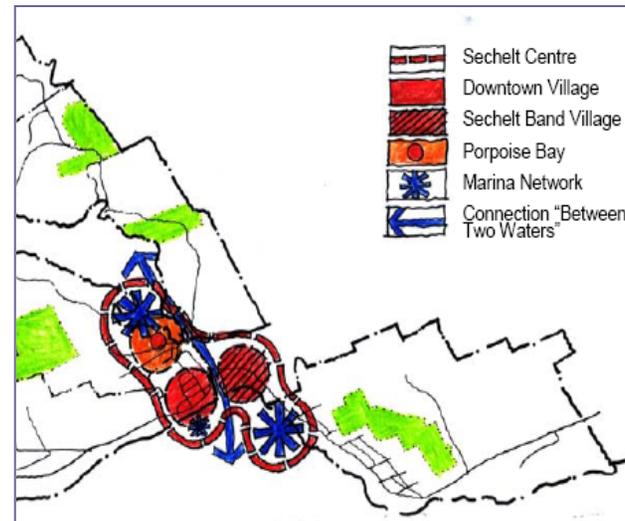
- 6.16 (a) The portion of Wharf Road between Dolphin and Cowrie Streets is a key entry point to Downtown and a priority area for future redevelopment to mixed-use buildings with ground floor commercial use. Council will support redevelopment of this key Downtown area, including use of the Revitalization Tax Exemption program and other incentives to facilitate redevelopment. Improvement of the pedestrian areas, streetscape, landscaping and relocation of parking to the rear of buildings will be key considerations for new development.
- (b) Over time, the area of Wharf Road north of Dolphin Street is recommended to redevelop into a more retail oriented area, with ground floor commercial and upper storey offices or residential use. Service commercial uses are encouraged to relocate in the long term to light industrial areas. Street improvements to add landscaping, wide pedestrian sidewalks and pedestrian crossings are needed in this area.

### Downtown Incentives

- 6.17 The District of Sechelt will take steps to actively support revitalization of the Downtown. Council supports the use of development incentives to encourage development and redevelopment in the Downtown, particularly in the core Business Improvement Area (BIA). A range of incentives will be considered within the BIA and priorities will be established by Council, which may include:
- (a) A Revitalization Tax Exemption program to support façade improvements, new residential units in the downtown or other priority types of development in the BIA (Business Improvement Area), as permitted in S.197 (a) of the *Community Charter*. The details of this bylaw and program will be developed in consultation with the BIA.



Priority gateway areas in Sechelt are Wharf/ Dolphin (4) and Wharf/Cowrie (5) intersections and the Trail Bay wharf/Maritime Gateway (6)(Vision Plan drawing)



Connecting the two waterfronts with a safe, attractive and prominent pedestrian route is a high priority for the Downtown. (Vision Plan drawing).

- (b) Providing annual awards of distinction for new developments or activities that add to the Downtown vitality and built environment;
- (c) Where appropriate, and within the financial means of the District, consider varying DCC charges or delaying DCC payments for the priority redevelopment areas (i.e. for the highly visible blocks of Wharf Road described above);
- (d) Reduced building permit fees for priority areas;
- (e) Potential cost-sharing of off-site works associated with the development;
- (f) Consider developing public parking areas through use of cash-in-lieu of parking spaces from new developments/businesses;
- (g) Priority processing of development applications within the Downtown area that meet the objectives, policies and Development Permit guidelines of the OCP. This could include delegation of authority to issue Development Permits to staff.

**Marinas and Tourist Commercial Use**

- 6.19 Marinas and the waterfront are important gateways and community amenities. Council supports these uses in appropriate locations where adequate upland area and on-site parking are available and environmental impacts can be mitigated.
- 6.20 Development of the Maritime Gateway project on Trail Bay with a day moorage facility is a high priority for Council.

**Downtown Village - Residential Areas**

6.21 As the historic centre of the community, the Downtown Village plays a special role in Sechelt, providing opportunities for living within walking distance of shopping and services. Providing for an increased range of housing choices to community residents is a goal for Sechelt, and increasing the density and diversity of the housing stock are important elements of Downtown revitalization. At the same time, respecting the scale and character of the existing

community requires careful integration of new development. OCP policy chapter 5 (Residential) provides detailed policies for future land use and densities in all areas of Sechelt, including the Downtown/Village. The



*Small cottages at the rear of single-family homes can increase density and affordability, while preserving the character of the neighbourhood (Vision Plan sketch)*

following summary outlines the residential policy directions for the Downtown Village:

- The **Multiple Family/Mixed Residential** designation provides for all forms of multiple-family uses (apartments, townhouses and triplexes).
- The **Village Residential Infill** areas have rear lane access and are suitable for infill development to housing forms such as duplex, carriage homes over garages, "laneway" cottages or small lot housing. This designation provides for incremental increases in density. Retaining a scale compatible with the neighbourhood character is a priority in this designation. Apartment structures are not supported. Prior to rezoning individual properties, the District will develop a new zone to regulate the building forms, maximum density, height, building coverage and other standards for these infill areas.

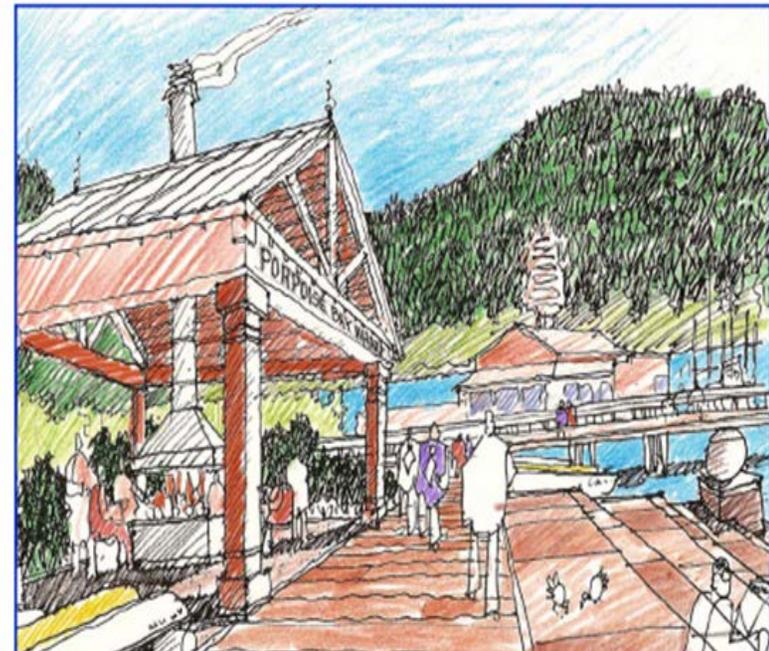
- **Special Infill Areas # 2 and #3** are waterfront residential areas with potential for increased residential density and/or tourist commercial or specialized commercial uses in the long term. Before considering development applications for these areas, more detailed analysis and discussion with area residents is required to establish a framework for appropriate uses, building forms, heights and densities. Any development in this area will be expected to provide a high standard of design, scale appropriate to the neighbourhood setting, improved public access/walkways along the waterfront, and a high standard of environmental protection and rehabilitation of the shoreline

### *Park and Greenway Priorities*

6.21 As an urban area, the types of parks and open space in the Downtown/Village include traditional park areas as well as smaller features such as public plaza or landscaped areas within development sites. Park, recreation and open space priorities for the Downtown/Village are:

- Acquisition and development of a pedestrian walkway/esplanade along the Porpoise Bay waterfront to East Porpoise Bay;
- Acquisition/development of a continuous pedestrian route connecting the Downtown Village to Davis Bay;
- Maintaining significant views of the waterfront from major roads and existing pedestrian areas as part of any new development;
- Maintaining the Porpoise Bay Wharf as a public wharf for marine transportation needs, and restricting vehicle traffic on the Boulevard;
- Develop safe, accessible and continuous sidewalk/pedestrian routes through all portions of the Downtown Village including commercial areas;

- Smaller parks connected by walking paths that include rest stops/seating to serve the growing seniors population;
- Close the Boulevard to vehicle traffic to improve pedestrian safety and use;
- Develop Village gateway features as detailed in the Vision Plan;
- Coordinate streetscape improvements with BIA, owners and utility agencies.



*Maritime gateways at both Trail Bay and Porpoise Bay should include wide pedestrian seating and viewing areas.*

Downtown Sechelt Future Land Use (see Schedule C for details)

