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Looking ahead to an improved downtown: reviewing design objectives for the St Ann's Upgrade Project

Downtown revitalization is alive and well and in progress in Campbell River. There are several projects moving ahead or recently completed, and more on the horizon. One of the projects currently underway--the St. Ann's Block upgrade project--has passed the halfway mark to completion.

"It can be a challenge to imagine what this area will be like when the work's all done because the final experience of driving or walking through the St Ann's area will only be apparent once the project is complete and all design elements are in place," said Campbell River Councillor Claire Moglove, who holds the economic development portfolio for City Council. "However, if you take a closer look—at the paving stone work on Dubeau or the new wider sidewalks on St. Ann's—it's possible to envision the final result and to see that it will be a positive new area that will attract business, visitors and residents to the downtown core."

The St. Ann's project is being completed in stages or phases that involve significant downtown road closures and detours.

"To keep traffic flowing, the City chose to open up sections of the roadway when they were ready for traffic. We are looking at the flow of cars and already we are seeing reductions in the speed of traffic coming down Alder Street," said Councillor Mary Storry, who holds Council's public works and transportation portfolio. "Safety for everyone, drivers, cyclists or pedestrians is always our priority. It's wonderful that we can achieve this while also adding elements to the roadway and sidewalks that make the area attractive for businesses too."

With the work scheduled to be completed by the end of this year, this mid-project moment provides an opportunity to review progress to date and project objectives.

A Green Link

St. Ann's Road is an important connection between the green space at City Hall and Campbell River's waterfront at Robert V. Ostler Park. Street trees and boulevard improvements in the St. Ann's block will help strengthen this link and enhance the public space. Additional improvements at the corner of Shopper's Row will enhance the visual connection to the water.

Shared Space

The St. Ann's block area includes land that is both public (Beech Street and Dubeau) and private (portions of the St. Ann's block where it meets up with the Seymour Pacific new office development). The design for improvements throughout the area treat these two spaces as a unified whole rather than two distinct places. To achieve this, coordination between the City works and development by the property owner is required.

Animated Public Space

With more windows, entrances, and active street-level uses, re-development in this area focuses on people. In both the short and long term, smaller scale enhancements can enliven the area through potential future elements such as unique lighting, gardens and public art.

Enhanced Pedestrian Space

While shared space for vehicles and pedestrians is proposed for Dubeau and Beech streets, Alder Street is envisioned to have curb and generous sidewalks to enable a more comfortable pedestrian environment and to accommodate smaller scale public events.

All of the design objectives work together to make downtown a more livable environment.

“All of the projects that are happening and the upcoming community input that the City will be seeking, work together from a land-use planning point of view,” said Campbell River Councilor Larry Samson who holds Council’s community planning portfolio. *“This area of downtown will have a new look and feel as a result of the City incorporating innovative planning and design concepts into these projects.”*

Slowing traffic flow along St Ann’s Road and Alder Street will be another result of the project. Deputy City Manager and General Manager of Operations, Ron Neufeld explains: *“As vehicle lanes narrow and corners become sharper, the downtown will change from being a vehicle-oriented place to offering a better balance between the vehicle and pedestrian experience. Drivers should notice these changes and quite naturally, their driving behaviours will change in the area because of the new design standards. For instance, drivers will slow down and use more caution when turning corners and will notice that pedestrians waiting to cross the road will be more visible to them.”*

The project team also notes that, while the project is still in progress, there are opportunities to make changes to relax the curb design in certain areas. The team has been observing traffic since re-opening St. Ann’s and is looking at options for shaving or reducing curb turn radius angles at certain corners, which would make these intersections seem more forgiving for drivers. Seeing the road in operation provides a chance to test the design and there are noted opportunities to alter curb elements to ensure the end result is a smooth, improved experience for everyone arriving at or travelling through the area.

Changes to the Look and Feel of Downtown

With the St. Ann’s Block upgrades nearing completion, other projects changing the look and feel of the downtown, and upcoming planning events being held to incorporate public feedback, the City will issue an overview of what to expect downtown once projects are complete.

Please visit the City of Campbell River online for news and dates of the upcoming downtown design charrette at: www.campbellriver.ca.

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