

south downtown concept plan 2004



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*City of*  
**Saskatoon**



## Steering Committee Members

### City of Saskatoon

Phil Richards

Stan Peakman

Lorne Sully

### Meewasin Valley Authority

Susan Lamb

### Riversdale Business Improvement District

Phyllis Lodoen

### Downtown Business Improvement District, "The Partnership"

Terry Scaddan



June 14, 2004

Dear Mayor and Council:

We are pleased to present a concept plan to you for the South Downtown area.

This is a special area, rich in possibilities. We believe the development that follows this plan will help transform the South Downtown area. It will enable the area to make a significant contribution to the social and economic life of Riversdale, the Downtown, and the City of Saskatoon as a whole.

We wish to thank the Steering Committee for their guidance and those many hundreds of individuals who prepared submissions that were made during, and subsequent to, the open houses.

CitySpaces Consulting  
Gwyn Symmons

Crosby Hanna & Associates  
Rob Crosby  
Andy Hanna

Kindrachuk Agrey Architecture  
Derek Kindrachuk



# Table of Contents

Planning for South Downtown .....	1
Strengthening the Downtown and Riversdale .....	2
Planning Principles .....	5
A Rich History .....	7
Issues .....	9
Concept Plan .....	11
1. Landmarks.....	11
2. Strengthen Connections and Access .....	13
3. Mix of Land Uses .....	17
<i>Housing .....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Hotel and Restaurant .....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Cultural, Theatre, Attraction, Interpretive and Public Space.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Retail, Brew Pub/Restaurant and Cafés .....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Parks .....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Farmers' Market, Riversdale Square and the Business Incubator .....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Transit and Parking .....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Existing Electrical Substation and Sewage Pumping Station.....</i>	<i>29</i>
4. The Riverfront as a Stage .....	31
5. Ambient and Special Event Lighting.....	33
6. Heritage and Environmental Interpretation .....	35
7. Streetscape and Public Art .....	37
8. Controlling Development and Design .....	39
Appendices .....	41



# Planning for South Downtown

The riverfront lands comprising South Downtown offer a remarkable opportunity for new development that will provide a major new destination for residents and tourists alike. Developed as planned, this area will help revitalize Riversdale and strengthen the Downtown.

This plan is one of a number that have been produced for this area over the years and include what has come to be known as the Moriyama Plan, the 1989 Mayor's Task Force report, and most recently, the Southeast Riversdale Design Plan (2001). The South Downtown Plan has borrowed heavily from the technical work underlying the Southeast Riversdale Plan.

Throughout this area's development history, there have been numerous studies, City Council hearings and other public processes. This plan was the subject of public open houses attended by more than 500 people over a two-day period. The concept plan and public input forms were available at City of Saskatoon leisure centres, City Hall, the Meewasin Valley Authority, and the three Business Improvement Districts. As well, the City developed a web page that allowed citizens to review the plan and provide input on-line. Three hundred and sixty-eight comment sheets, plus individual presentations, were received. The overwhelming majority (more than 80%) approved or strongly approved of the concept plan's key elements. (See Summary of Input Report.)

The Moriyama Plan, the 1989 Task Force Plan, and most recently the general comments of the attendees at the open houses shared the sentiment that the South Downtown is a special location that should be designed to become a destination and play a key role in the City. Both the current plan and previous plans incorporate similar themes in different

configurations - an extension to 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue (the 1989 Plan), public waterfront, a landmark, plazas, performance areas and parkland. The aim underlying these features has been and is to create what is often called a "people place" - a location that is a natural centre to gravitate to - a people friendly place where there is always activity and something "on" to watch or participate in. Most cities have an area that performs this role. Winnipeg's "The Forks" and Vancouver's Granville Island are examples that are often cited.

There are two features of this plan that distinguish it from its predecessors:

- The integration of Southeast Riversdale and the former Gathercole lands into one plan; and
- The availability of infrastructure funding, which will enable implementation to occur.

## The Nature of the Plan

This plan in its final form should still be considered a concept plan. This recognizes that it provides a framework for a whole series of detailed tasks that will take varying degrees of time to accomplish. Many, however, can be undertaken concurrently. These tasks include working up the details of proposals for specific sites and projects such as the "cultural block", the farmers' market and planning for the parks. The development of these details will take the involvement and agreement of a range of individuals and interest groups. This plan provides guidance for these tasks - a framework that sets out the land uses and the associated opportunities.

## Providing an Identity

Consideration should be given to formally selecting a name for the South Downtown or parts of it. The public consultation process brought a great number of suggestions for names that Council may wish to consider.



The South Downtown Planning Area

# Strengthening the Downtown and Riversdale

Perhaps the most important planning principle guiding this plan is the first: "Support and strengthen the Downtown and Riversdale". Both of these areas, at the core of the City, have struggled with a number of recent challenges.

## The Downtown

The Downtown, in common with many other downtowns in North America, has experienced the restructuring of retailing that has moved through the development of the suburban shopping mall, the big box retailers, power centres and the decline of the department store. Most recently "e-commerce" has started to erode the service sector - banks, insurance, and travel agencies. Suburbs have also attracted office and entertainment development.

Saskatoon has been impacted by these changes. The current Downtown is oversized relative to its main functions and there are vacant and under-occupied buildings both in the north and south of the City Centre. Uncertainty over the future of the South Downtown lands has contributed to these challenges and the area north of 19<sup>th</sup> Street has vacant land and buildings that have disconnected it from the Downtown along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

The Downtown has, however, many strengths that the plan for the South Downtown will both reinforce and capitalize upon. Some important strengths include:

- Retailing streets with a pleasant heritage ambience and interesting independently owned stores, restaurants, and bars;
- A significant Downtown employment base;
- A number of good hotels;
- The presence of the South Saskatchewan River; and

- Strong political, community and business commitment to Downtown.

Development of the South Downtown will help strengthen the Downtown in the following ways:

**Removing uncertainty, creating confidence.** With the future of the technical school and the use of the Gathercole lands unknown, there has been uncertainty for the private sector and for the lands north of 19<sup>th</sup> Street. The plan and construction of infrastructure and development will likely trigger development for these lands and, ultimately, a recycling of the underused buildings along and around 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

**Drawing residents and visitors.** The South Downtown Plan with its mix of uses and opportunities for programmed special events, is designed to act as a major draw for people through all seasons and from the morning into the evening. This will benefit other Downtown businesses and spawn new ones. In particular, the plan reinforces Downtown Saskatoon as a cultural centre. The theatre and small informal performance areas support the performing arts sector and provide a reason for coming Downtown in the evenings and on the weekends.

**Facilitating Housing.** Downtowns are increasingly becoming attractive to certain kinds of households as locations to live. Young singles, students, downsizing "empty nesters" and retirees are the main groups prepared to locate Downtown. Saskatoon already has a considerable amount of Downtown housing and has adopted policies to further encourage this. The South Downtown Plan provides for more housing opportunities and the mix of uses will reinforce the Downtown as an attractive and interesting place to reside. This, in turn, will help sustain and develop retail and services in the Downtown.

## Riversdale

The Riversdale neighbourhood faces many challenges with family incomes less than half that of the City and a housing stock that has significantly lower values. Infrastructure and housing conditions are also poorer and its commercial streets have many vacant and underused buildings. Although there are issues of poor housing conditions in this neighbourhood, it does offer housing, both owned and rental, that is more affordable than across the city.

A consultation meeting in Riversdale identified many community concerns, with affordable housing being significant. Riversdale residents and others have also expressed anxiety that the development proposed in the South Downtown Plan will trigger gentrification of the Riversdale community – increasing housing prices and displacing lower income individuals. Projecting the impacts of new development cannot be an exact science, but the consultants believe that the main impacts in Riversdale are as follows. The most apparent and earliest impacts will be the stimulus of new, small-scale commercial investment on the streets closest to Southeast Riversdale and, as the rest of the lands and Block 146 develop, strengthening commercial on 20<sup>th</sup> Street.

The residential portion of Riversdale may become more attractive to higher income purchasers and renters, but this is likely to be very slow for a number of reasons. Firstly, full build out of the South Downtown will take a number of years – the total number of housing starts in Saskatoon was 1,400 in 2003 and the South Downtown will be competing with development across the City. Changes in neighbourhoods

are usually slow and the area most likely to attract new residents will be Avenue C. Impact on the balance of the neighbourhood would probably take many years if it becomes defined as a “place to be” by those with choice in the housing market. In the event that change occurs at a pace that could be dysfunctional, there are strategies that can be adopted to mitigate this, including the acquisition and improvement of existing housing by the non-profit sector.

The wider Riversdale neighbourhood will be the subject of a neighbourhood plan in the next 12 months and, although the plan will have its limitations, it should be able to respond to a number of issues confronting the neighbourhood. The South Downtown Plan will also be limited in its impacts on Riversdale, but it will bring the following key benefits:

- Remediation of contaminated land and its development. A large area of land comprising Southeast Riversdale is alienated from the wider community, with a large area (the A. L. Cole site) actually fenced off. It creates uncertainty for investment and is a poor entrance to Riversdale on 19<sup>th</sup> Street. In its existing condition the site cuts off part of Riversdale from the river;
- Stimulating investment. New development in the South Downtown, and especially in Southeast Riversdale (the housing, the farmers’ market and trails) will stimulate small businesses on 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Avenues B and C and 20<sup>th</sup> – the main commercial street, bringing with it modest employment opportunities and retail;

- Parks and Trails. The plan for the South Downtown will bring two new parks to Riversdale – the small community park on Avenue C and the Riverfront park. A whole series of trails will better connect the community to the riverfront and Downtown;
- Safety and Security. The better integration of the community to the South Downtown and the trail and road connections will bring more people into the area; and
- Employment generation through the business incubator. The business incubator is proposed for the electrical building offices on Avenue B, adjacent to the farmers’ market.





SOUTH DOWNTOWN - Concept Rendering

# Planning Principles

Cities across North America and Europe have been reclaiming and redeveloping their waterfronts. Saskatoon has been a pioneer in protecting and enhancing its riverfront and an important framework for this has been the "Moriyama Plan".

A review of successful waterfront projects suggests that there are five key considerations for good waterfront development, and these have been taken into consideration in the preparation of these planning principles and the development of the plan:

- close contact with the water by pedestrians;
- continuous public open space along the waterfront edge;
- good connections with the Downtown and adjacent neighbourhoods;
- access for all with public space shared; and
- land uses and activities that will encourage its use.

Twelve land planning principles have also been drawn up to guide the preparation of the concept plan for South Downtown. Each element of the plan seeks to meet these planning principles.

1. Support and strengthen Downtown and Riversdale
2. Plan A.L. Cole and Gathercole sites together
3. Create a distinct identity and sense of place
4. Design to be a destination
5. Design for development viability
6. Appropriate density and building heights
7. Remember the past
8. Provide for special events
9. Ensure barrier-free access
10. Plan for all day and all season use
11. Ensure a mix of land uses
12. Plan for safety and security



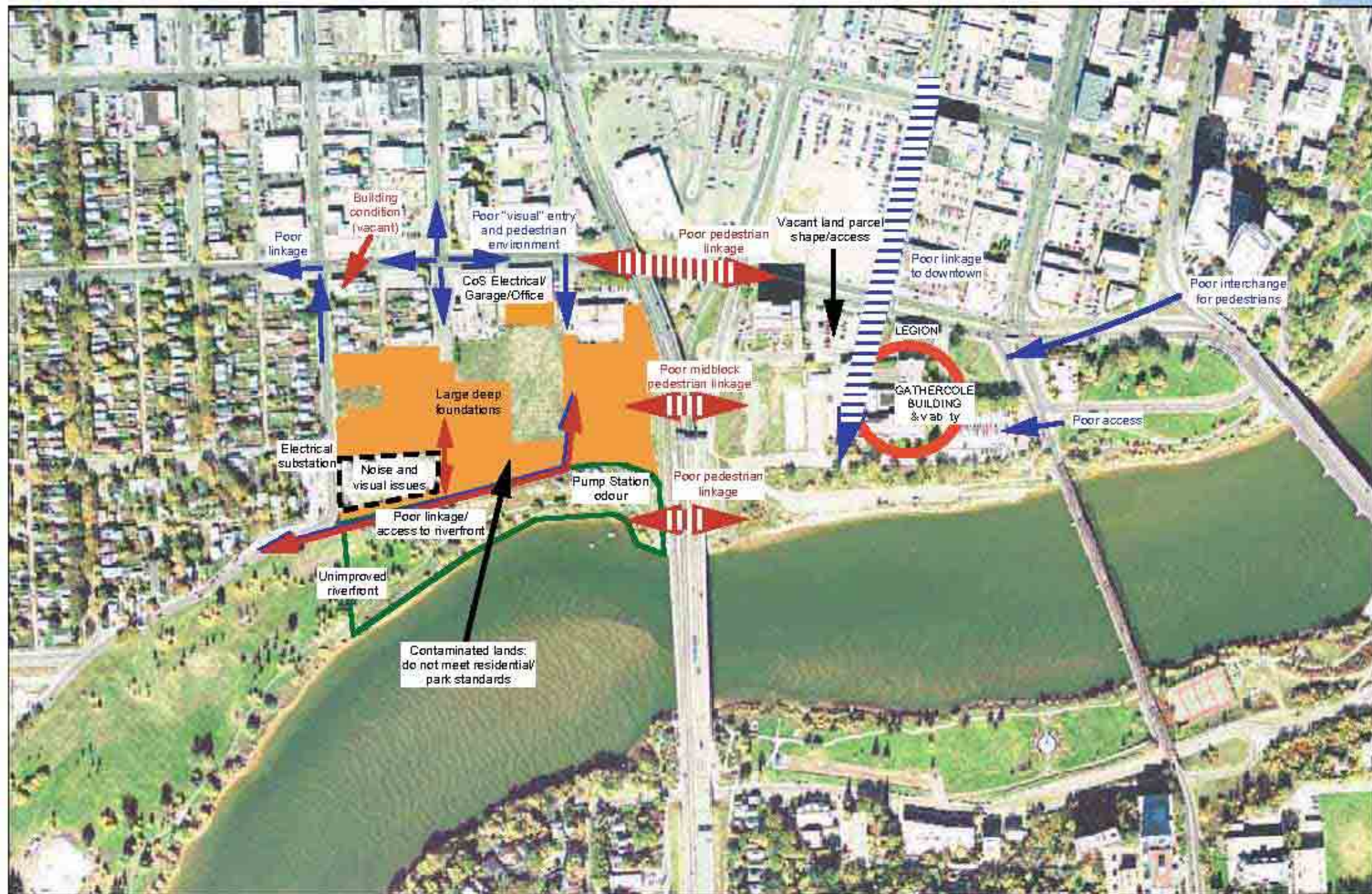


## A Rich History

In planning and developing the South Downtown, it is important to remember that the area has a rich history that should be acknowledged in the redevelopment of the area.

First Nations first used the riverbank in the Saskatoon area and, as in so many communities, the coming of rail determined the pattern of urban growth. The area has been at the center of Saskatoon as it has grown. The Chinese community, the Saskatoon Technical Collegiate and the A.L. Cole power station have all played a prominent part in the area's history. People from many different cultural and ethnic backgrounds have contributed to the Riversdale neighbourhood over its 100 years of settlement.





Issues Plan

# Issues

The planning process for the South Downtown began with an analysis of the site issues, which have influenced the development of the Planning Principles; all are addressed in the South Downtown Plan. These issues, in summary, are:

- **Poor connections and access.** Both Southeast Riversdale and the Gathercole lands have poor north-south and east-west pedestrian and vehicular connections. The technical school has blocked off the river Downtown via the natural extension of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. Riversdale is separated from Downtown by the Iydlwyd Freeway and a road/sidewalk connection under the former rail bridge. The intersection of 19<sup>th</sup> Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue is poor for pedestrians;
- **Contaminated soil.** The majority of Southeast Riversdale has layers of contaminated soil and other conditions. This area does not meet residential or park standards (see the Southeast Riversdale Design Plan technical report [July 2001] for reference);
- **Electrical substation, Avenue C.** There is a visual blight and a noise problem. Recent measurements (May 27, 2004) have confirmed that the noise at 15 metres from the substation is at 67.1 dBA Ldn. The maximum acceptable exterior noise level for residential development is usually 65 dBA;
- **Sewage pump station odour.** There is an odour problem associated with the pump station in the southeast corner of Southeast Riversdale;

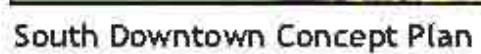
- **The riverfront lands are largely undeveloped;**
- **Safety and security.** The riverfront path, 19<sup>th</sup> Street and the large areas of vacant and fenced off land create a potentially insecure area; and
- **Adjacent vacant land and underused buildings.** North of 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Block 146 is vacant and adjacent buildings are vacant or underused. The extent of this vacant land, combined with the surface parking area to the west, creates a further barrier between the riverfront and the Downtown.



Poor connection - former rail bridge over 19<sup>th</sup> Street.



Undeveloped riverfront land and sewage pump station.



# Concept Plan

The proposed concept plan comprises eight key elements designed to meet the 12 planning principles.

## 1. Landmarks

Many cities have landmark structures that are symbols for the community and that become known internationally. Landmarks can be buildings or structures. Well-known examples in Canada are the CN Tower in Toronto and the Tower at Calgary, and in the US, the arch at St. Louis. Recently, a new structure has become a landmark in London, England: the "London Eye" - a giant ferris wheel. Landmarks of this type usually permit public access and some form of observation platform. Landmarks can also be more modest in scale, such as the lions acting as entrance portals to the Lions Gate Bridge in Vancouver.

Landmarks are proposed as a part of this plan - The Senator Sid Buckwold Bridge is a major entrance to the City and Downtown, and the South Downtown area provides an opportunity for a landmark. The concept of incorporating landmarks into this area was well supported by the public feedback received on the plan.

Two opportunities for landmark structures exist in the South Downtown. The first opportunity is for some form of high structure that is preferably located on the western edge of the cultural block. This would be visible from the bridge heading north into the Downtown. The structure would be publicly accessible and could include some form of observation platform. To assist the public, an abstract grain elevator was illustrated at the open house and is included in this plan. There was considerable support for the concept

of an elevator not unlike that representing Saskatchewan in Expo '86, but other proposals included more modern symbols of Saskatoon - for example, looking to its role in science and technology or to its native heritage.

A second opportunity for a more modest landmark is the terminus of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. The extension of 2<sup>nd</sup> is proposed to culminate in a turning circle that can act as a visual terminus. This feature could become a "natural draw" and an interesting feature that is a focus for this area. The idea of an illuminated dream catcher has been suggested for this location, or some alternate structure that again symbolizes some part of Saskatoon's heritage or future. Illumination at night will reinforce this role. A comparable, but much smaller, illuminated structure is the Vimy Memorial located at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> Street at the riverfront.

A development and selection process will need to be implemented for the design of both potential landmarks and to examine and develop options for funding. There were many ideas for landmarks in the public feedback. The aboriginal and arts communities are just two groups that may play an important role in this process.



Landmark adjacent to cultural block



Landmark at terminus of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue



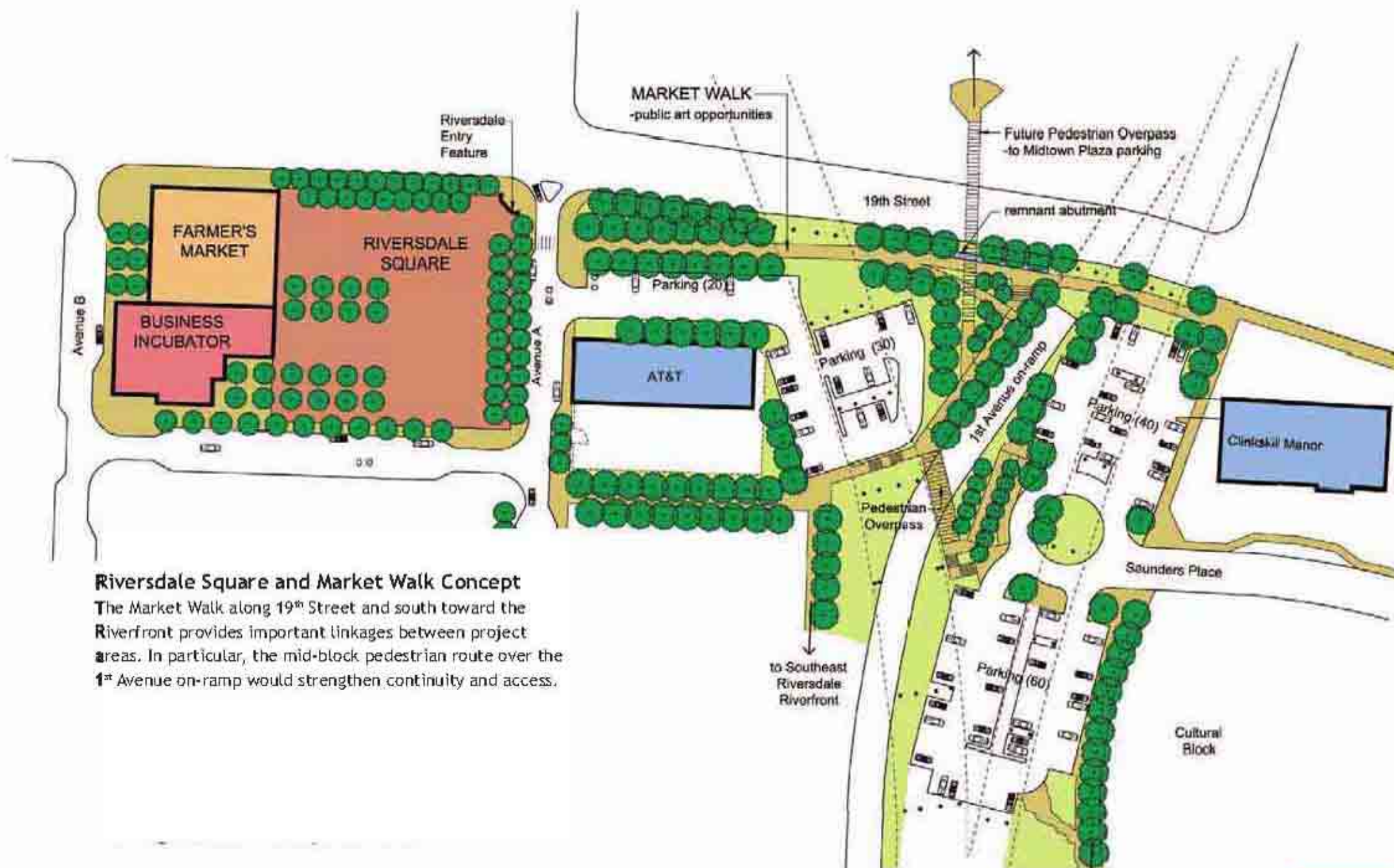
Vancouver



St. Louis



Expo '86, Saskatchewan Pavilion



## 2. Strengthen Connections and Access

The South Downtown Planning area has poor visual, vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle links between the Southeast Riversdale and the former Gathercole lands, and the Downtown and the Riversdale neighbourhood. To fully integrate the South Downtown with Riversdale and the Downtown, and to make the area a successful destination, these links must be improved. The network of new roads and trails will be complemented by signage, street furniture and public art. Most of the trails shown will be multi-use for cycling and pedestrians. Three main initiatives are planned. These should be designed for both pedestrians and cyclists.

### IMPROVEMENT OF THREE EAST-WEST PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE ROUTES

#### *Along 19<sup>th</sup> Street*

Currently 19<sup>th</sup> Street runs under the old rail bridge located between Idylwyd and the 1st Avenue on-ramp. This is an unpleasant area in which to walk or travel by bike, it feels unsafe at night. The sidewalks feel uncomfortably close to traffic under the bridge. Sight lines are poor for drivers and, perceptually, the area acts as a barrier between east and west. The plan envisions significant upgrades through the removal of the former railway bridge and possible adjustments to the road grade.

The plan proposes construction of a new east-west walkway on the south side of 19<sup>th</sup> Street, cutting into the bank and rising to the west, distancing pedestrians from the traffic. The new path is designed to take pedestrians directly into

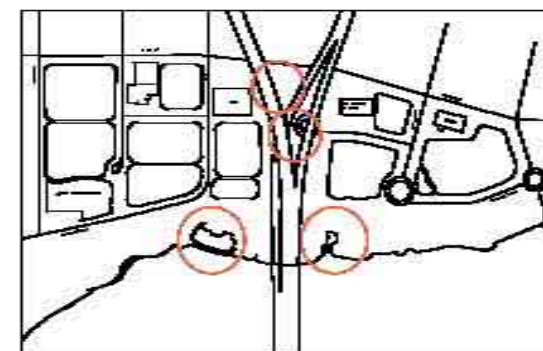
the proposed Riversdale Square adjacent to the farmers' market. The walkway should be designed, lit and landscaped in an interesting manner, perhaps including public art that celebrates the farmers' market. In the plan, it is called Market Walk but this, as with other new paths, could be the subject of a naming competition.

In the longer term, a higher-level footbridge across 19<sup>th</sup> could be considered for this location. There are redevelopment opportunities in this area immediately north of 19<sup>th</sup>, including the prospect of further major parking and a link to the north.

#### *Along the Riverfront*

The existing path along the riverfront passes under the Buckwold Bridge. The portion under the bridge is a "pinch point" with poor sight lines. This is both a safety and a security issue. The land on both sides of the bridge is currently unimproved. It is recommended that consideration be given to upgrading this pathway and removing the poor sight lines. The plan proposes that two feature bridges be constructed either side of the Buckwold Bridge. The first, immediately to the west of Buckwold, could take the path out over the water, possibly using the old water intakes that served the power station as a base. The second, to the east of the bridge, would be smaller and traverse a stream/river inlet that will run north-south parallel to the Buckwold Bridge as proposed in the Riverfront Master Plan.

These bridges will provide a closer relationship between pedestrians and cyclists to the water, enabling them to travel over water and provide a contrasting experience with the conventional paths along the riverbank. These bridges can



KEY MAP

Examples of pedestrian bridges in London and Manchester, U.K.



be designed to be visually interesting and distinct - the plan provides some illustrations of pedestrian bridges from other communities. Not only will these small bridges provide a practical improvement to this important route, they will also be a "draw" to the area.

#### ***Mid Block Connector - Pedestrian Bridge Over 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue***

This bridge would be a "mid block" bridge between the Southeast Riversdale and Gathercole sites, creating a path that would run under the Buckwold Bridge off-ramp and then bridge over the 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue on-ramp. This connection would provide access to the parking areas to be created under the Buckwold Bridge just south of 19<sup>th</sup> Street. The mid block connectors would also be linked by paths to the new streets to be created in Southeast Riversdale to the Market Walk and to other paths.

#### **North-South - The Riverfront to Downtown**

A key element of this plan is to extend 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue south to the riverbank. This terminus will be a turning circle with a major public art piece in the centre and pedestrian access directly to the riverfront. Extending 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue meets many objectives. The avenue will:

- provide year round vehicle access to the riverbank - allowing pick up and drop off;
- draw visitors to the river from Downtown and conversely to the Downtown from the riverfront. This route should incorporate storefronts and be visually interesting, safe and secure for pedestrians at all times of the year;
- provide access to restaurants, cafés and the cultural block;
- provide an opportunity for an item of public art

illuminated in a circle at the terminus of the extended 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. This will further add to the attraction of the area. The City already has a similar, but smaller, visual terminus in the form of the Vimy Memorial at the terminus of 20<sup>th</sup> Street. One suggestion is for an illuminated dream catcher to be located in the circle; and

- act as a public square - for parades, special events, street markets.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue extension will be designed to deter through traffic with built-in traffic calming. The street will be able to be closed off just south of the service lane that runs behind the Legion. Section 8 provides more information and illustrations of the street design, the street furniture and opportunities for public art consistent with other locations in the City.

The terminus of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue at the traffic circle is designed to be a busy, interesting focus. The adjacent land uses are important to contribute to this activity and interest. Section 3 on the mix of land uses provides more information.

North-south links also need to be improved in Southeast Riversdale and improvements undertaken on Avenues A, B and C north of 19<sup>th</sup> Street. Further planning and design work is needed on these streets. Avenue B is potentially important as a pedestrian and vehicular "spine" between 20<sup>th</sup> Street and Southeast Riversdale.



2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue extension linking Downtown to the riverfront.

### East and West Spadina Extensions

It is proposed that Spadina be extended from the west into the Southeast Riversdale lands and connect with Avenue A and the Riversdale Square, providing improved access to the riverfront and the new neighbourhood. This route will implement traffic calming in its design.

Spadina will also be extended west from the intersection with 3rd Avenue. This will also provide access to the riverfront and the hotel residential block and link through to the extended 2nd Avenue. Both 2nd Avenue and Spadina will be designed to deter through traffic. As with 2nd Avenue, the Spadina extension will be designed to be closed (just west of the intersection with 3rd) to accommodate special events, markets and festivals.



Example of a Riverfront bridge.



New Connections



Live/work housing allows people to work at home, offering a range of services (i.e. acupuncture, beauty salons, accounting, crafts). the Railyards and a Chinatown project in Victoria are examples of live/work projects.



Low-rise housing is encouraged along the edge of the park in Southeast Riversdale.

"Eyes on the street" - windows relate to the sidewalk and street.



Mid-rise housing, up to 14 storeys, will be permitted next to the AT&T building.



### 3. Mix of Land Uses

A mix of land uses is essential to meeting the Planning Principles identified and, in particular to be a destination for residents and tourists, creating an interesting and vibrant area that will be alive all seasons, all day long. Just one land use will not accomplish these planning principles. A land use mix has been drawn up that will meet the Planning Principles; these uses and the proposed densities are reflected in the DCD1 guidelines. The plan shown identifies the proposed mix of land uses across the Downtown site. Appendix A shows a plan with site areas and density.

#### Housing

Housing is a key ingredient for the South Downtown and a range of housing forms is proposed, including four-storey apartments, mid-rise (14 storeys) and live/work townhomes where individuals are permitted to undertake small businesses. Housing will be a permitted use on the residential hotel parcel located between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues. This may be a portion of the site if a hotel is attracted to this location, and the housing should be above the retail/restaurant uses along 2<sup>nd</sup> and Spadina. Housing in this location may well stimulate housing elsewhere in the Downtown.

Four main housing sites are proposed in the Southeast Riversdale area. The total buildable square footage of housing in this area could be as high 43,291 sq. metres.

#### Low-rise Waterfront

Four-storey housing is to be encouraged on the waterfront between Avenues A and B. This will likely be a condominium apartment building. There is similar and attractive housing adjacent to the riverfront on the south side of the river. The area of this site is 4,923 sq. metres (53,000 sq. feet) and the density would permit 9,846 sq. metres of development (FSR 2.1).

#### Mid-rise Apartments

Fourteen-storey housing is proposed to be permitted between Avenue A, the Buckwold Bridge and south of the AT&T building. The juxtaposition of the bridge and highway traffic requires that a building have height and density if it is to be successful. This site is 3,994 sq. metres (43,000 sq. feet), with a development potential of 11,984 sq. metres (FSR 3.1).

#### “Live/Work”

Centered between Avenues A and B and south of the farmers’ market and Riversdale Square is an area where live/work housing is to be encouraged. Across Canada, small/live work developments are being constructed. Many small entrepreneurs, artisans and professionals work out of their own homes. Purpose-designing this housing may include a workshop, office or small sales outlet on the ground floor along with interesting individual signage. If successful, this kind of housing, together with Market Walk, can create an interesting environment as a destination for residents and visitors. The housing form would likely be townhousing. The area of this block is 5,760 sq. metres (62,000 sq. feet) and the development potential is 11,520 sq. metres (FSR 2.1)

#### Mixed-use Redevelopment

A mixed-use redevelopment opportunity exists at 19<sup>th</sup> Street and Avenue C. This block of land is in private ownership and includes a closed restaurant. The site is large enough to accommodate a branch library and local history room, plus residential. Building height would be four storeys. Further consultation should occur with the library to determine if this is an appropriate location or whether another use would be more suitable. The City may need to facilitate the development on this site, which has the potential to be an affordable housing site. This will also depend upon the availability of funding programs. The total area of this site is

7,432 sq. metres (80,000 sq. feet), and it has the development potential for 14,864 sq. metres (FSR 2.1).



A library or other use could be part of a mixed-use development.



KEY MAP



Restaurants can animate the street in the summer.



A hotel is proposed on the east side of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.



## Hotel and Restaurant

A hotel should be encouraged on the parcel east of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, which is an excellent location for such a development. This use will contribute to bringing activity to the area late into the evening and reinforce the area as a destination. The plan shows a hotel use involving 20 storeys that might comprise 250 rooms. The development industry may respond to this site with different concepts, such as a "boutique" hotel or a hotel spa that has a lower number of rooms and is lower in height. Whatever the "market response", it will be important to ensure that parking is enclosed or underground.

Concern has been expressed in the open houses and follow-up comments about the building height proposed for this parcel. The permitted 20-storey building is proposed on the eastern corner of the parcel, away from 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. A five-metre setback above four storeys was originally proposed for all buildings along 19<sup>th</sup> Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Spadina. This has been increased to a further five metres along Spadina for the area designated for 20 storeys. A massing and shadow study is shown in Appendix B.

The development of this parcel will not permit views from 19<sup>th</sup> Street and a building edge along 19<sup>th</sup> is a key part of the plan. Retaining a view corridor completely down 3<sup>rd</sup> is not possible if the site is to be economically developed. A three-metre setback is proposed along 3<sup>rd</sup> to make this route pedestrian friendly.

Housing may also be developed as part of this block, ideally along 2<sup>nd</sup> above street retail. The extent of housing will depend upon the scale of a hotel development. The site has

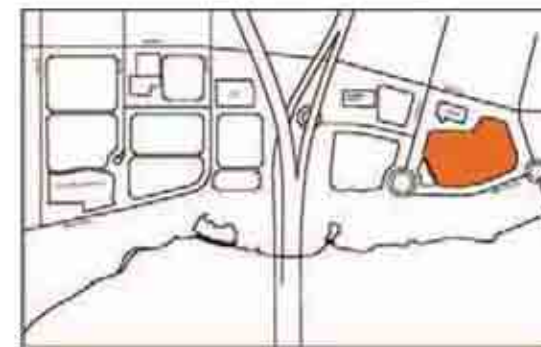
the potential to be developed as one or two parcels.

Service access and parking for this block is proposed via the lane to the rear of the Legion. Pick-up and drop-off for a hotel will be encouraged along Spadina.

Vibrant waterfront developments usually have an abundance of places to eat and drink. They are great draws and remain open into the evenings. People enjoy sitting by waterfront locations, which are great places for people watching. In the summer, there are opportunities for eating and drinking outside, contributing to the street life of the area. There are currently very few restaurants on the riverfront in Saskatoon.

A restaurant use is proposed for the eastern side of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue at its terminus, adjacent to the circle. This location will be a major focus of pedestrian and vehicle activity. A restaurant in this location may well be two storeys in height, and will probably be developed as part of this block, with housing or hotel use over. A site for a potential restaurant is retained in the Riverfront.

The overall area of this block is 9,661 sq. metres (104,000 sq. feet) and the development potential proposed in this plan, with a density of 4.1, is 38,646 sq. metres. The permitted height of this block will be eight storeys along 2<sup>nd</sup> and along part of east Spadina, with a stepback of five metres above four storeys. Along part of Spadina and in the northeast corner of the site, a high-rise development of up to 20 storeys will be permitted. A further stepback of five metres is proposed from the frontage of Spadina above eight storeys.



KEY MAP



Cultural Block

## Cultural, Theatre, Attraction, Interpretive and Public Space

A key part of the South Downtown Plan is the mixed-use development proposed for the west side of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue extension. The development on this parcel should be themed, with a name that will help develop the identity of the whole South Downtown. On the north side of this parcel a live theatre use is proposed, with the frontage along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue being primarily retail on the ground floor. Service access should be at the rear from the lane to the north, opposite Clinkskill Manor. The theatre space should include provision of workshops for set production.

On the south side of the block, and forming part of the overall building complex, there should be a public building with public space inside. This space should provide access to an interpretive centre, café, attraction (Joni Mitchell Centre has been suggested), public washrooms, access to the theatre and possibly access to the landmark feature, which would be located on the westerly portion of this site. This inside public space should be designed to include a small stage for musical performances and a three-storey atrium, making it a bright and interesting place. The whole of this space should face south over the river, with a glass elevation on the lower levels that opens out onto an adjacent plaza in the summer. The café should have inside/outside seating depending on the season and the weather. In wintertime, this large public space can provide a haven from the weather.

The Interpretive Centre should be an historical and/or environmental interpretive venue that will provide information about the rich history of the area and the river environment to tourists and residents. This concept might be broadened to include science and showcase Saskatoon's

role in science and technology in Canada. This centre can be three storeys in height along the south face of the building, sharing floors with an attraction.

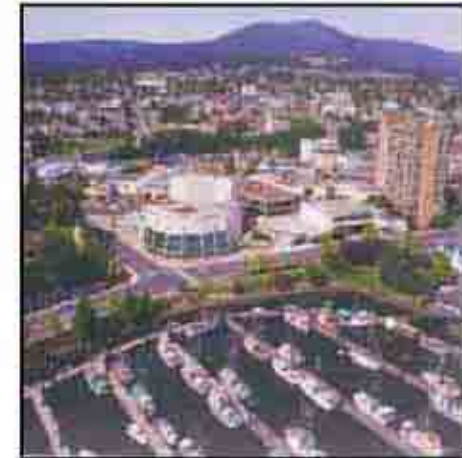
A visitor centre is a possibility in this complex - perhaps located in a storefront retail unit on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

## Retail, Brew Pub/Restaurant and Cafés

Retail is to be encouraged on both sides of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. Retail may also form part of development along 19<sup>th</sup> on the privately owned site at the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, and as part of the block at 19<sup>th</sup> and Avenue C. Retailing and certain services may occur within the parcel proposed for live work. Retail is not proposed to be a major use in the South Downtown; the intent is to complement the Downtown, not challenge its retailing base.

A brew pub/restaurant is recommended for the junction of Avenue A and the new Spadina extension. Located on the waterfront, this site would provide a view down to the pedestrian bridge and draw people into the area, ensuring there is life and vitality into the evening.

Cafés should be encouraged throughout the South Downtown. The multi-use theatre/interpretive building is a good location for this use, where it can be an inside/outside café, depending upon the season.

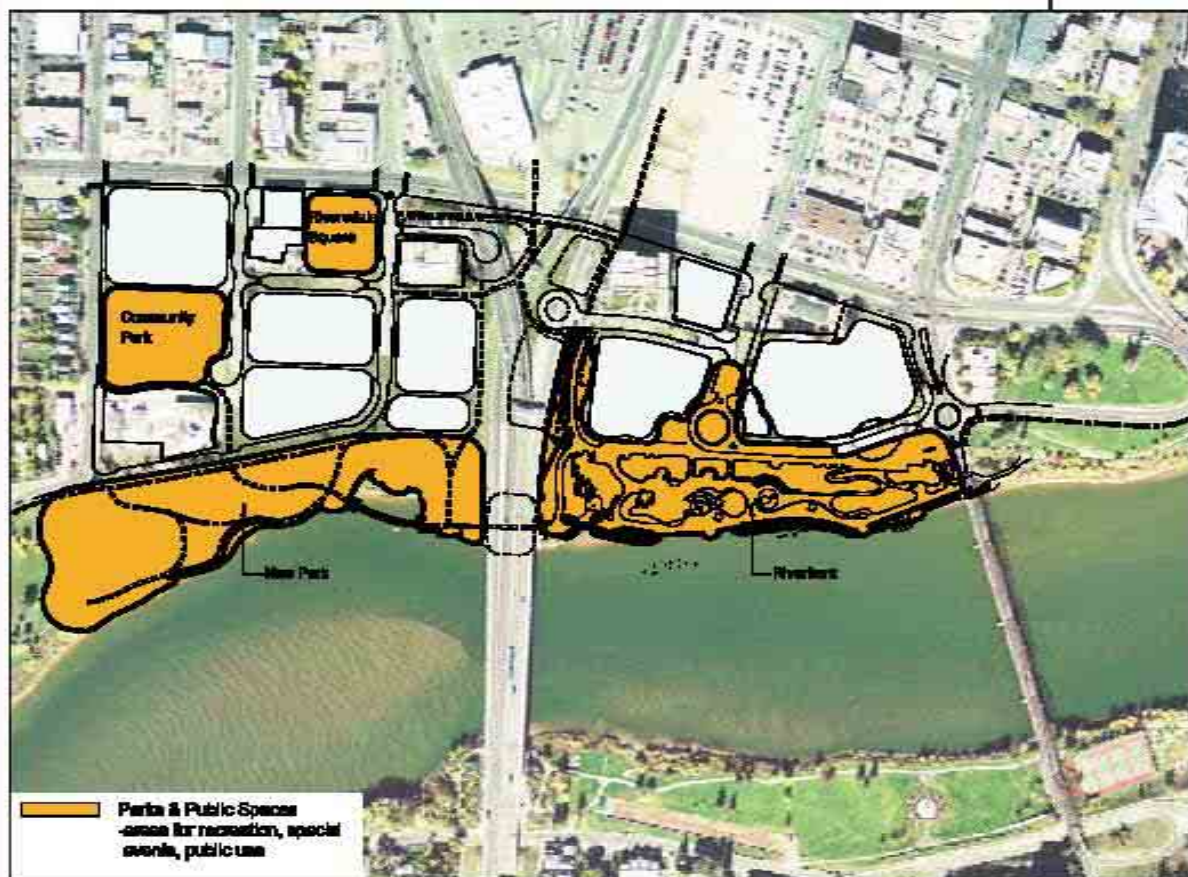


Terrence Williams Architects Inc.

Port Theatre, Nanaimo



Café



"Riverfront" - the proposed park and the terminus of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

## Parks

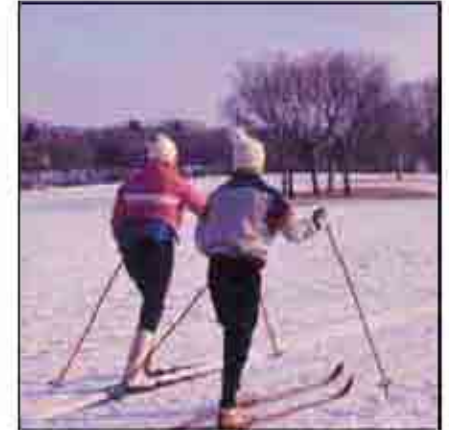
Three main parks are proposed in the South Downtown Plan:

- The riverfront at the terminus of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue has been the subject of major planning/design and construction is underway. This park will be a major focus of the overall riverfront development and includes provision for many all-season activities. A skating rink could be considered for this park in the winter season. A minor change has been proposed to the park in the form of improved access at the terminus of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue;
- There will be a new riverfront park on Southeast Riversdale lands, incorporating new grades, landscaping and trails and improvements to the sewage pumping station. Plans for this need to be developed. This park will be linked through to the riverfront park at the terminus of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue by new paths and incorporating the proposed two bridges; and
- A third, smaller park has been planned next to Avenue C and the electrical substation. There are a number of choices for the use and design of this park and further consultation will be needed.

The need for a boat launch was raised through public input. The river is used recreationally by individuals and organizations and hosts a number of special events, such as the Dragon Boat Races and River Roar. Spectators are drawn to boat launches. Periodically work is needed on the riverbank and its structures. Therefore, such a launch is important for river access and use. A boat launch requires a graded access from a public road, a ramp into the water and a parking area for trailers and vehicles. The new park area fronting the Southeast Riversdale area at its most westerly point, as it merges into Victoria Park, could very well accommodate this kind of facility. However, this would require study and conceptual design work to ensure grades are suitable and that the access can be integrated into the trail system and parking. This subject needs special study to examine locations, costs and practicality.



Parks for all seasons are important.





The farmers' market will be adjacent to Riversdale Square.



Schematic concepts showing how the electrical building can be converted.



## Farmers' Market, Riversdale Square and the Business Incubator

It is proposed that the area and existing buildings between Avenues A and B at 19<sup>th</sup> be redeveloped to form three elements, the juxtaposition of which will help create an interesting area.

### Farmers' Market

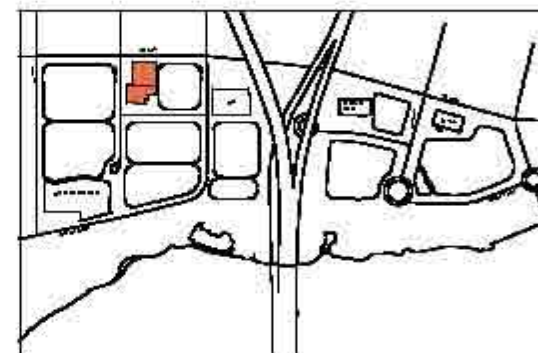
The former City of Saskatoon brick construction electrical garage should be recycled to form an indoor farmers' market. Conversions of industrial buildings into markets are an opportunity with a comfortable fit, with examples around the world. New glass in the door openings, along with the existing skylights, would provide natural light for the indoor market, while keeping a link with the past.

### Riversdale Square

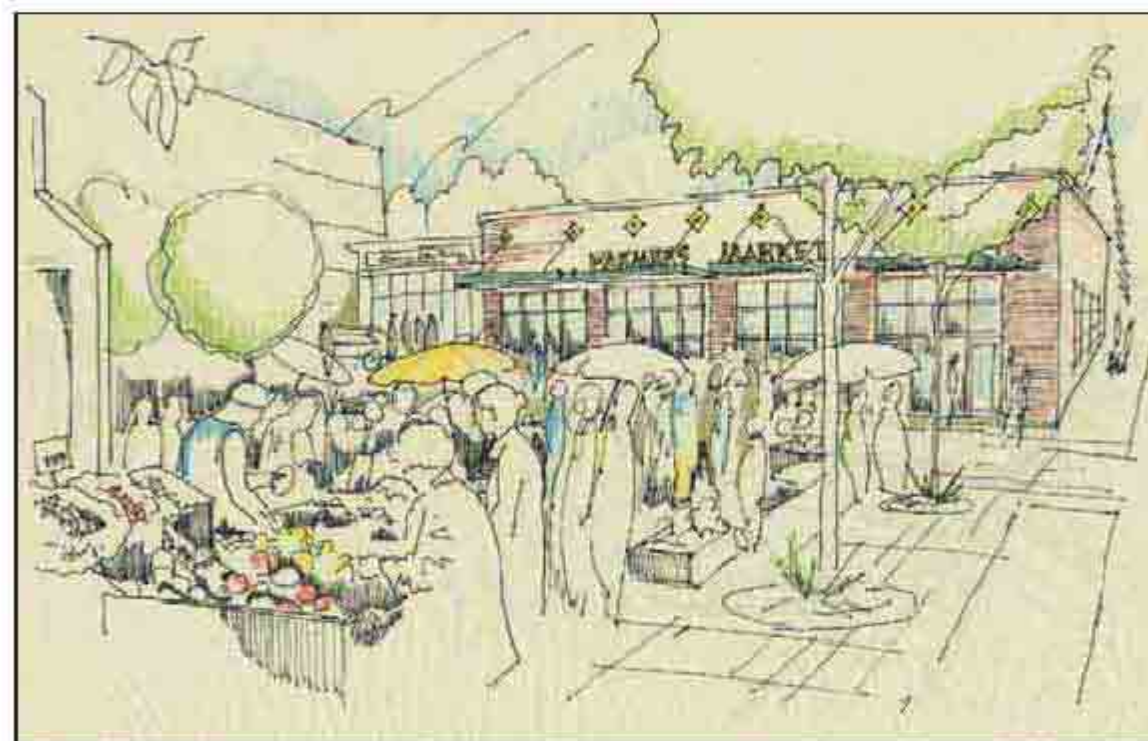
Adjacent to the market, a community "square" can be created for summer outdoor markets and for special events in conjunction with the market. The existing metal building, currently used for the market, should be demolished for this square. The location of this square at the intersection of Avenue A and 19<sup>th</sup> Street can form an important gateway into Riversdale and its design can be integrated with the proposed new Market Walk. A gateway sign at the square might be incorporated, which will be immediately visible when travelling west from under the Buckwold Bridge. The location of this square is important to help revitalize 19<sup>th</sup> Street as a retail area. It also allows easy access for farmers' and customers' vehicles. Recognition in this location can also occur for Saskatoon's first federal building, the "Immigration Hall" which was constructed close by in 1903.

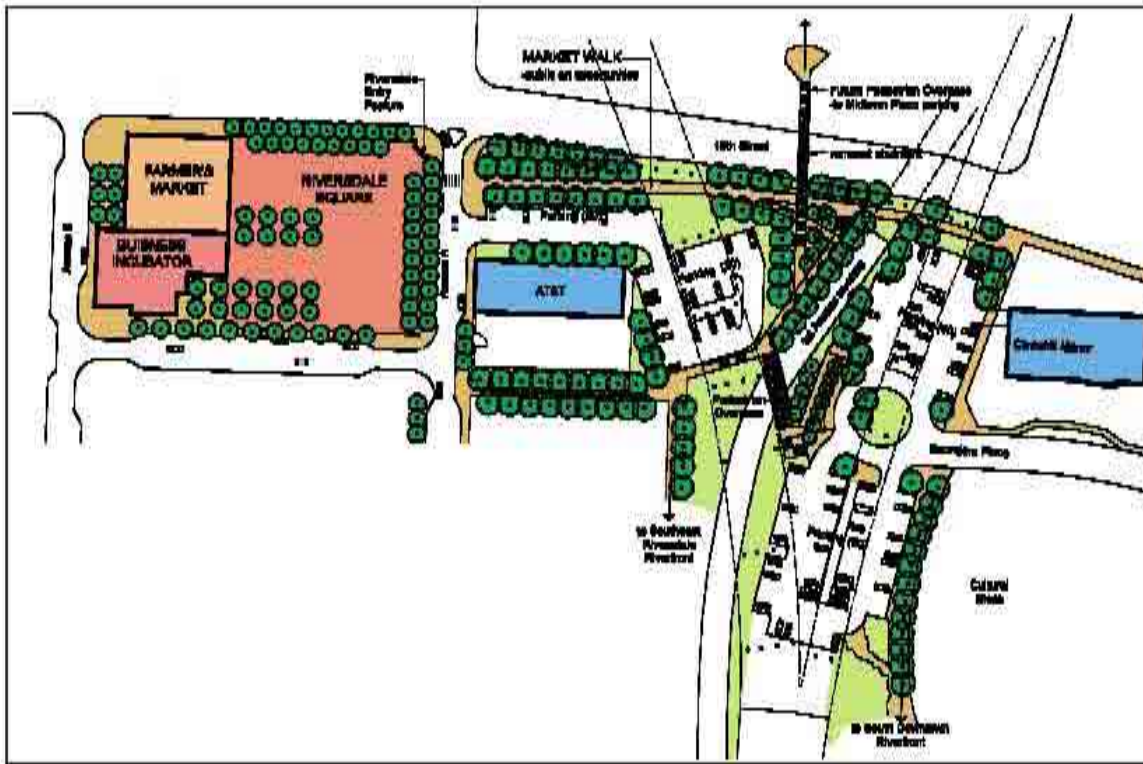
### Business Incubator

The adjacent electrical office building is also proposed to be recycled and improved as a "business incubator". There is potential for it to generate a significant number of jobs as it evolves.

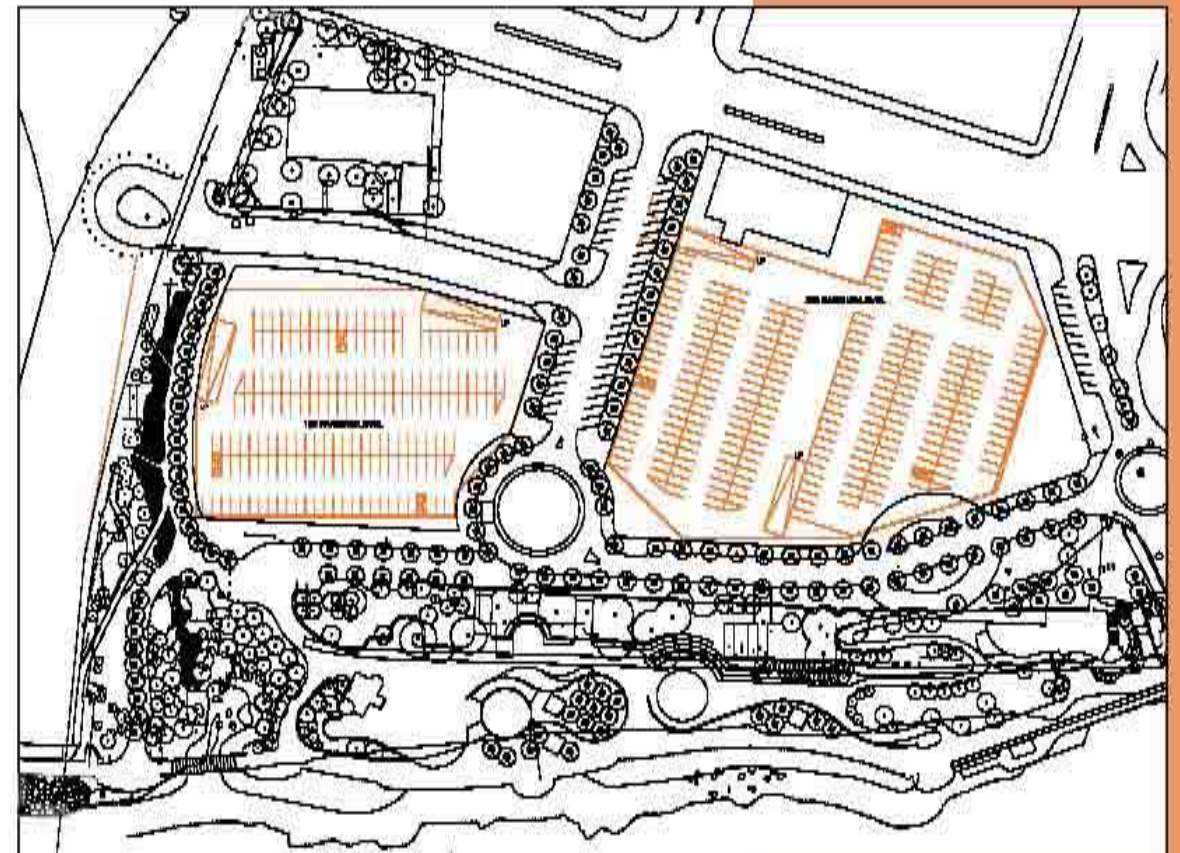


KEY MAP





Parking will be underground and on-street. Parking spaces will be created under the Buckwold Bridge.



Schematic of underground parking.

## Transit and Parking

For the South Downtown to flourish, it must be accessible by automobile and transit. This is especially true given winter conditions in Saskatoon.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Spadina extensions, including the traffic circles, are being designed to accommodate transit and tour buses. It is understood, however, that transit will use 19<sup>th</sup> Street close to 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue for transit stops. This will be convenient for pedestrian access via transit. Pick-up and drop-off areas for tour buses will likely be along Spadina. Transit stops on 19<sup>th</sup> between Avenues B and C should also be planned to serve Southeast Riversdale and, in particular, the Farmers' market. As the project evolves, further planning work should be undertaken on the details of transit stops and access.

Providing enough parking for a location that becomes a popular destination and a location for special events is always a planning challenge. It is a balancing act between the economies of parking cost, the demand for parking at peak time, and the need to avoid negatively impacting special areas by large parking lots or structures.

It is unlikely that enough parking can be provided on-site to fully meet the potential demand for special events, and this will mean that parking will occur off-site or individuals will transfer to transit, which is a positive alternative.

Parking provision will take three main forms:

- Underground parking/enclosed parking. This should be required for hotels and high-density residential developments. It should be encouraged for all the land parcels. The South Downtown is too important an area to have large areas of land dominated by surface parking lots. If a single level of parking is provided on both the parcels adjacent to 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, this will supply 470 spaces. Full underground parking may be a cost challenge for the cultural block, but this use will generate a significant demand during performances;
- On-street surface parking. There will be approximately 66 spaces on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Spadina and Saunders. Detailed planning has not been completed on road designs for the Southeast Riversdale area, but on-street parking should be permitted throughout this area and approximately 100 stalls would be possible; and
- Surface parking lots. There is an opportunity for surface parking under the Buckwold Bridge. The design of this parking, the turnaround and the path system needs to be worked out further. A preliminary estimate suggests more than 150 parking spaces could be accommodated in this location. This parking area is well positioned to accommodate parking demand associated with the farmers' market and the cultural block.



South Downtown will be serviced by transit.



Southeast Riversdale

## Existing Electrical Substation and Sewage Pumping Station

The electrical substation and sewer pumping station use are not preferred uses in the South Downtown but already exist in the Southeast Riversdale area at Spadina and Avenue C and to the south of Avenue A on the waterfront.

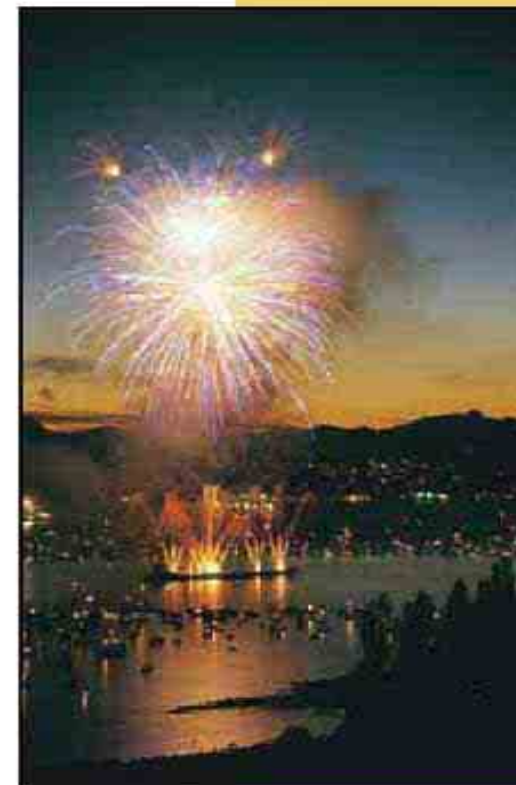
As indicated in the list of issues confronting the planning of this site the electrical substation is a land use that brings challenges of noise and visual impact. It is a detriment to the Southeast Riversdale area. Moving this substation is considered to be far too expensive. The prospect of reducing the noise levels emanating from the substation should be examined.

The impact of the substation needs to be mitigated. In the circumstances, this can best be undertaken by the construction of a noise wall around the whole substation, with extensive landscaping against the wall. Under the plan, roads form the boundaries to three sides of the substation. The small park has been located adjacent to the substation to permit mounding against the wall and landscaping.

The sewage pumping station cannot be moved, but a preliminary review suggests that the odour can be mitigated and the facility landscaped and its overall appearance improved.

The electrical substation needs a noise wall and landscaping.





The Riverfront can be used for many special events.

#### 4. The Riverfront as a Stage

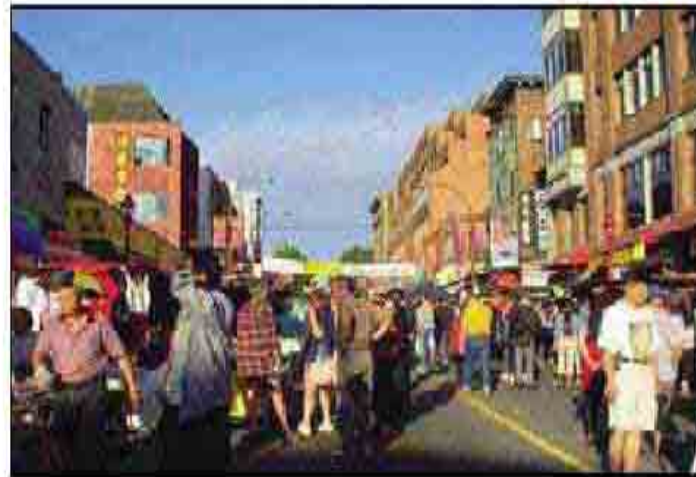
One of the major concepts underlying the South Downtown Plan is that of the whole area functioning as a major setting for special events. The area can be viewed as a "stage" or series of stages, and in different configurations used to host a wide variety of events. The parks and roads can be used for festivals, markets, and concerts. 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and the Spadina extension are being designed to accommodate these uses. The river can be used as a stage for performances - by mooring a barge or barges for performers and the river can be used for fountains, light shows, firework displays and other events. Victoria Bridge can be closed for special occasions and used for spectators.

These uses are key parts of a successful "people place". Many European and North American cities close streets for markets, concerts and special performances and the roads in the South Downtown are being designed to permit this to happen.

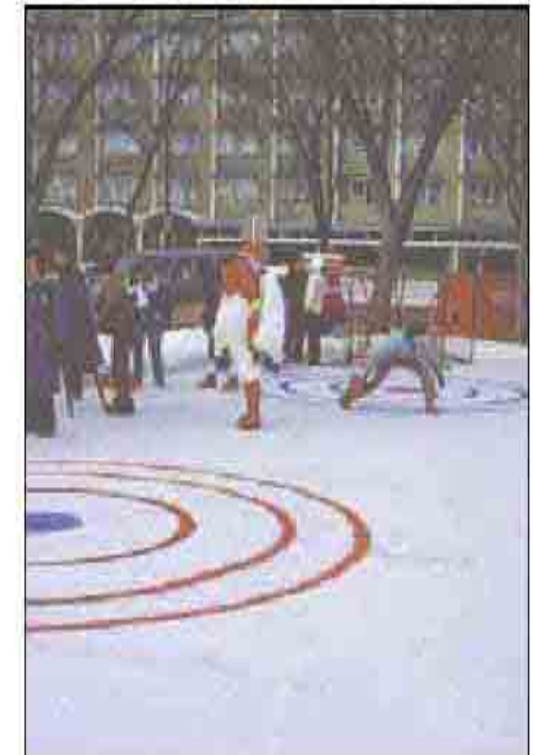
Although the plan can facilitate the use of the South Downtown as a location for special events, its success will also be dependent upon the programming of the area for this purpose. Consistent programming is crucial. Fortunately Saskatoon has a strong history of programming through "The Partnership" (The Downtown Business Improvement District), the MVA and the City.



Christmas market in Stuttgart



2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue can be closed for street markets and other special events.

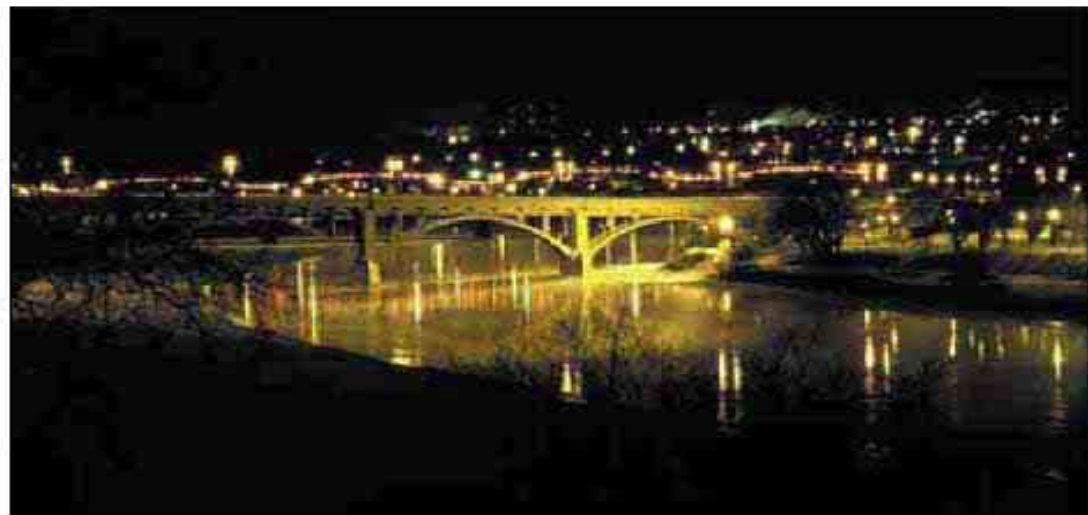




Illuminating bridges is proposed.



A lighting program will be prepared for the South Downtown.



## 5. Ambient and Special Event Lighting

Lighting will play many roles in the South Downtown and it will be particularly important in assisting in making the area a destination late into the evening for all seasons.

Overall the ambient lighting will assist in safety and security for visitors to the area whether they are walking from a parking lot, jogging along a trail or walking in the street. As a streetscape component, light fixtures also contribute to the integration of streets with the pedestrian environment. To embrace the river and further encourage the South Downtown to be a destination, there are opportunities for new ambient lighting along the riverbank, including the illumination of Victoria Bridge and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue landmark.

Opportunities exist to enhance the visual environment, to strengthen other streetscape elements, and to provide a unique identity. These objectives can be achieved by:

- provision of a family of fixtures that establish a distinctive character for the area;
- special attention to accent lighting that highlights landscape and architectural features such as the Victoria Bridge and landmarks;
- establishing contrasting light levels that reflect function. For example, providing more light at key intersections or crossings and less surrounding light at key features will highlight the importance of various components;
- provision for seasonal and special event lighting;

- consideration of the technical qualities of lighting to focus light where it is needed; conversely, to minimize light pollution, understanding that this is an important urban destination and that night lighting encourages activity; and
- use of metal halide lighting would contrast with existing urban lighting and provide a better light rendition/visual light quality.

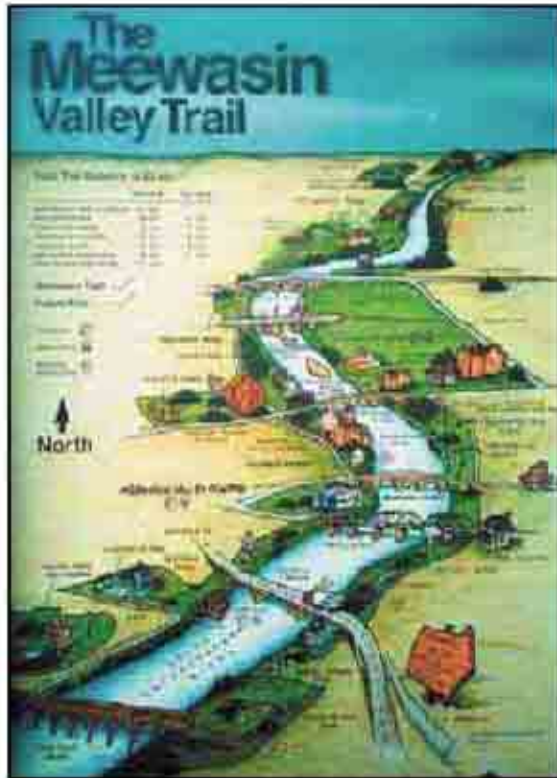
In addition, many cities host special event light shows and South Downtown is an excellent location to use the riverfront as a stage. Light shows using water sprays are one example (see also "The Riverfront as a Stage").

The importance of lighting for safety and security and to make the area inviting was noted many times in the public feedback on the first draft plan. The illumination of the Victoria Bridge was a particularly popular idea. At the same time, there was some caution expressed that there should not be too much light pollution and the lighting should be tasteful.

A lighting program should be prepared for the South Downtown taking into account the concepts identified in this plan and the comments received from the public.



Lights and signage can be combined.



There are many opportunities for heritage and environmental interpretation.



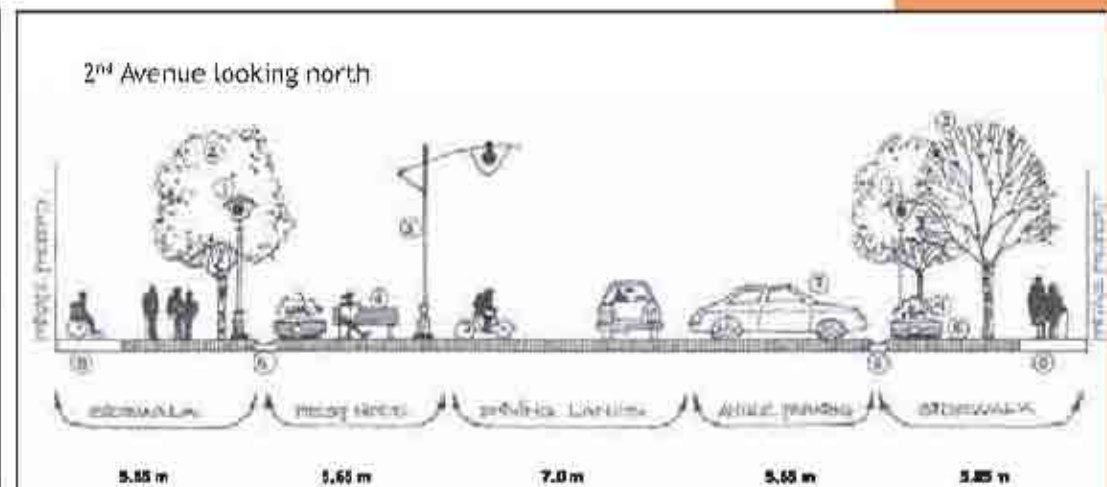
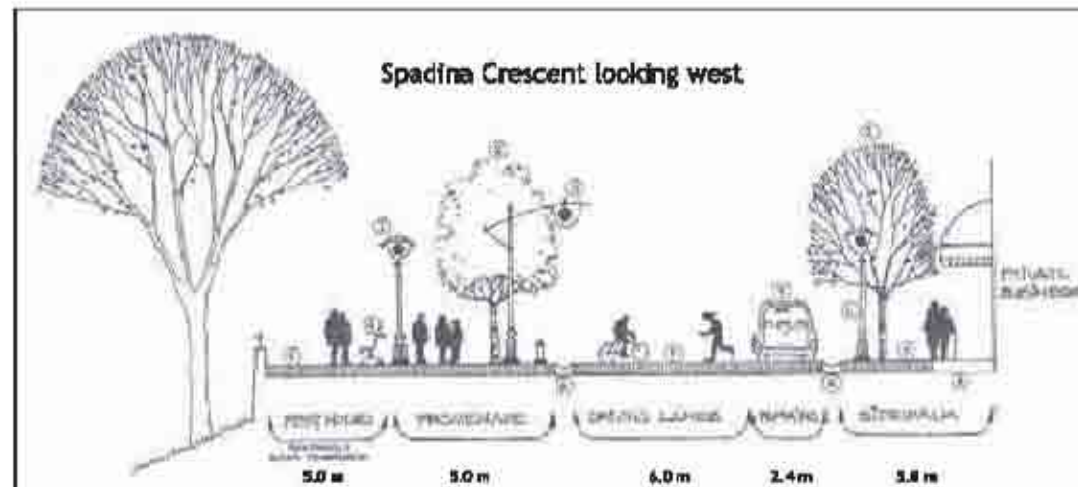
## 6. Heritage and Environmental Interpretation

This plan has drawn attention to the rich history of the South Downtown and the need to remember and celebrate it. The environment of the South Saskatchewan River is also of considerable interest and both history and environment will draw the attention of residents and visitors and add to the area becoming a destination. Schools, too, will likely use the area for studies and it can become a destination for school trips. The MVA's existing centre performs this role in an admirable way, but in a very confined space.

This plan proposes that an Interpretive Centre be established in the Cultural Centre; however, the history and environment of the area should be celebrated across the site through a series of techniques. These may include, for example, information panels, small displays and artifacts and public art that recall the past. Other techniques include inserts into sidewalk surfaces - for example, to show where rail lines went and the use of heritage street or trail names.

There are many heritage locations to illustrate, including the rail lines, federal immigration building, Chinatown, and the former power station.





## 7. Streetscape and Public Art

The South Downtown Plan involves planning and constructing a whole new series of streets in both the former A.L. Cole and Gathercole sites. Within the overall South Downtown Plan a "Streetscape Master Plan" should be prepared that will establish a long-term vision of the street, the pedestrian environment and develop details for the streets and their infrastructure. This plan should build on Saskatoon's very successful urban design program that includes public art and good street furniture design. This program was well supported by positive comments at the open house.

The South Downtown Streetscape Master Plan will be important in helping to meet the Planning Principles set out to guide the overall plan - in particular, to create a strong sense of place. The Plan will be aimed at producing a pedestrian friendly atmosphere, placing priority on pedestrian movement while still allowing slow speed vehicular circulation through the area to provide access to individual properties and to the riverfront parks. The elements of the Plan are more specifically described below:

### Design Theme

The site is located on the river, which plays an important role in the site's uniqueness. The river has had a vital role in the physical development of the city and is an essential element of its identity, distinction and pride. It is logical to choose the most visible physical element of Saskatoon as the theme for the streetscape and public art. It is proposed that the design theme of the project will be to "celebrate the river in the city". This theme can accommodate the interpretation of prehistory, aboriginal history, early European settlement, transportation and bridges, current river uses, conservation

and stewardship of the river, and other possible elements relating to the importance of the river in shaping the life of the city.

### Street Pattern

Second Avenue is extended directly south from 19<sup>th</sup> Street to the edge of the Riverfront Project in order to connect it physically and visually to the existing central business district. Spadina Crescent is extended westward from 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue to 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in order to provide visual and physical access to both pedestrians and vehicles in a manner consistent with the balance of Spadina Crescent East. Spadina is also extended east on the former A.L. Cole site and will connect to Avenue A.

Roundabouts are provided at the intersections of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Spadina Crescent and at Spadina Crescent and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue in order to accommodate flexible vehicular movement and slow traffic speeds. Details will be developed for the intersection of Spadina/Avenue A, the intersection with 19<sup>th</sup> Street and the farmers' market square. This is also the entrance to Riversdale.

### Traffic Calming

The vehicular portions of the street are narrowed at seven locations along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Spadina Crescent in order to slow vehicular traffic and promote pedestrian safety by shortening crosswalk distances and improving sight lines. The driving surface of the street will be covered with paving stone in order to identify the street as a pedestrian priority zone and to slow vehicular traffic through rougher texture surfaces, compared to asphalt or concrete. The vehicular



speed will be slow enough to permit jaywalking. Traffic calming will also be introduced on Spadina between Avenue A and Avenue C.

### **Sidewalk Design**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Spadina East sidewalk width will range from five to six metres compared to the standard 3.65 metre sidewalk in most of Downtown. For Southeast Riversdale, sidewalk details be developed. The extra width on 2<sup>nd</sup> and Spadina will accommodate more pedestrians and sidewalk amenity space. The curbs will be rounded and kept low in order to accommodate easy access by persons using wheelchairs, strollers or other wheeled devices. The sidewalk will consist of a paving stone amenity zone adjacent to the rolled curb to accommodate streetscape furniture, and a smooth concrete strip along the back of the sidewalk or building face to facilitate movement of persons in wheelchairs or other wheeled devices. The concrete strips will cross the driving lanes at the intersections.

### **Special Event Street Closures**

The combination of street design, traffic circles and sidewalk design will accommodate the periodic closure of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue or Spadina Crescent for special events. The centre of the roundabout at the terminus of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue will be designed to accommodate a landmark.

**Street Lighting and Special Lighting:** Street lighting will favour pedestrian lighting instead of vehicular street lighting. Special feature lighting may be provided to highlight public art, landscape features or architectural details.

### **Public Art**

Public art is a popular aspect of Saskatoon's Downtown and its incorporation into the streetscape in the South Downtown was endorsed by the public input received on the draft plan. Both permanent art and sites for temporary art will be incorporated into the streetscape design, as either freestanding objects or as art integrated with other streetscape features. The centers of the traffic circles are proposed as sites for either landmark objects or public art. The Market Walk, Riversdale Square and parts of Spadina East and the new parks will all be locations for public art.

### **Sidewalk Trees**

Approximately 200 trees will be added to the sidewalks in the Southeast Riversdale site. Approximately 150 trees will be incorporated into all public sidewalks within the South Downtown or adjacent sidewalks. A tree-planting plan has already been incorporated into the Riverfront Park. The new park fronting the former A.L. Cole site and pocket park adjacent to the electrical substation will also have a detailed tree-planting program. A mix of species will be chosen to improve bio-diversity and all street trees will be provided with root growth structures and irrigation to promote healthy growth. Sparkle lights (LEDs) will be added to the street trees to provide a warm festive atmosphere year round. Private developers will also be expected to add trees and landscaping to their sites.

### **Streetscape Furniture**

Unique streetscape furniture will be selected or designed to express the design theme proposed for the area. The streetscape furniture items will include benches, garbage

cans, bike racks, directory boards, flowerpots, bollards, ash urns, tree grates and other similar items. Special gateway features may be included at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue entries and at 19<sup>th</sup> Street and Avenue A.

### **Utilities**

Electrical power access and water access will be provided at strategic locations on the street to accommodate special events.

## 8. Controlling Development and Design

The City will need to prepare an implementation program for the South Downtown Plan, incorporating the four main areas where there will be partnerships with many organizations:

- **Regulatory approvals.** The City will need approvals for the plan from the MVA;
- **Shared funding on infrastructure.** The City is seeking funds from the federal and provincial governments on infrastructure funding;
- **Project development.** Land parcels will be developed primarily by the private sector, although community groups, non-profit societies and other organizations will also be involved in certain projects - the farmers' market, business incubator and the cultural block; and
- **The programming of the public areas.** As development is completed, programming will be essential for the success of the area.

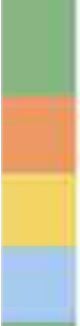
This section of the South Downtown Plan focuses solely on the third area of implementation: project development - design and controls.

### Project Development - Design and Controls

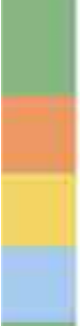
Controlling development and ensuring that a plan is realized as approved is always a challenge. The South Downtown area is special and prominent in Saskatoon and both City Council and the community will wish to ensure that the land use, design and form of the development that occurs is consistent with the intent of the plan.

There are four main mechanisms for the control of development in the South Downtown. Each has strengths and limitations but it is recommended that all four be utilized; together, they provide a considerable amount of control to the City.

- **Direct Control District 1 Guidelines.** The Guidelines have been prepared concurrently with the South Downtown Plan. The guidelines contain objectives, acceptable land uses, and requirements for building form and massing. The latter requirements specify maximum building heights across the area and building setback. Landscaping, signage, parking and service access are also the subject of control. The guidelines also refer to subdivision and approval process involving the City of Saskatoon and the Meewasin Valley Authority.
- **Architectural Control District.** This mechanism can be established by Council and requires that an Architectural Design Plan is drafted for the area and then each project reviewed by qualified staff or a Design Review Committee. The Architectural Design Plan can be required to address a number of key elements including proportion, scale, massing, architectural style, colour and relationship to the street. Adopting a mechanism for this degree of control is consistent with the action of other municipalities across the country where areas are considered to have special design significance. It is recommended that Council adopt an Architectural Control District for the South Downtown.
- **Request for Proposals.** The City owns the majority of the land comprising the South Downtown. All of this land will be the subject of competitive calls to the private sector. These calls can specify certain requirements for the site.
- **City Facilitation:** The City will be involved in a number of infrastructure projects, for example services, parks, roads and trails. It will, however, also need to help facilitate certain other key projects - specifically, the farmers' market, business incubator and the cultural block. Participation in these projects will ensure that they meet the intent of this plan.



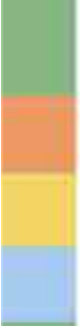
## Appendices



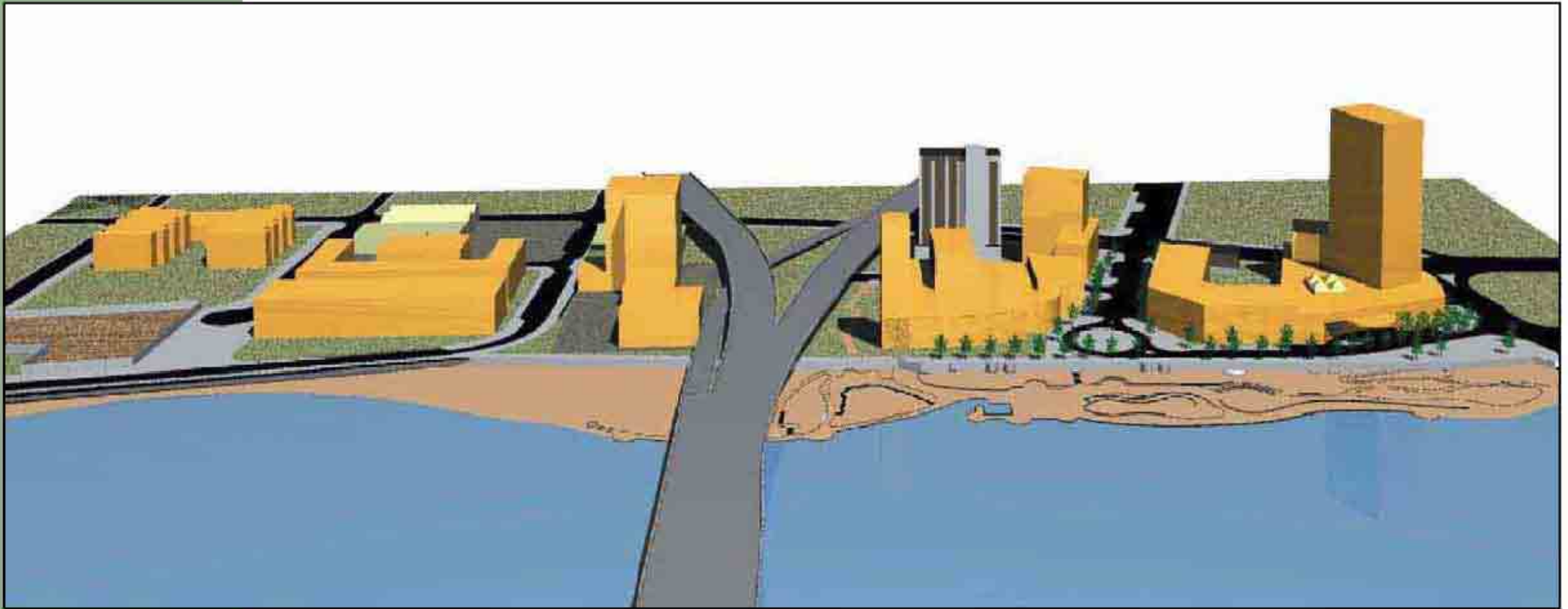
## Appendix A



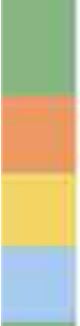
### **SOUTH DOWNTOWN: Parcel Plan, Areas, Proposed Densities and Development Potential**



## Appendix B



SOUTH DOWNTOWN: Massing Model



## Appendix B

### SOUTH DOWNTOWN: Shadow Study



Shadow Study - June 21, 9 a.m.



Shadow Study - June 21, 5 p.m.



Shadow Study - December 21, 9 a.m.



Shadow Study - December 21, 5 p.m.







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Planning, Development, Management

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HANNA  
& ASSOCIATES  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

KINDRACHUK  
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