



towards SOMEPLACE GREAT

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**Re-visioning the
Uptown-Douglas
Corridor**

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Toward Someplace Great: Re-visioning the Douglas Corridor

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“I would love to hear birds singing, water rushing by, have clean air to breathe”,

*“I’d like to get the sense that every time I walk a hundred yards
I’m in a different place.”*

“Daylight Darwin Creek, retain and rejuvenate green spaces ”

“Sound of multi-generational chatter”

*“Just jump on a free electric tram to get from Uptown to Downtown
and spots between”*

“I want to hear electric vehicles, electric everything.”

*“There are incentives to build multiple use buildings with low cost affordable
housing”*

“We need a true civic space.

I’d like to celebrate Canada Day at Saanich Municipal Hall”

A visioning dialogue event

On Feb 21st, 2015, 45 people attended the above named event sponsored by the Mount View Colquitz Community Association and the CRD. Within a context of global warming and regional planning, they spent the morning generating a mid-term 10-year vision of an improved living and biped experience in the Uptown-Douglas Corridor area by probing the following questions.

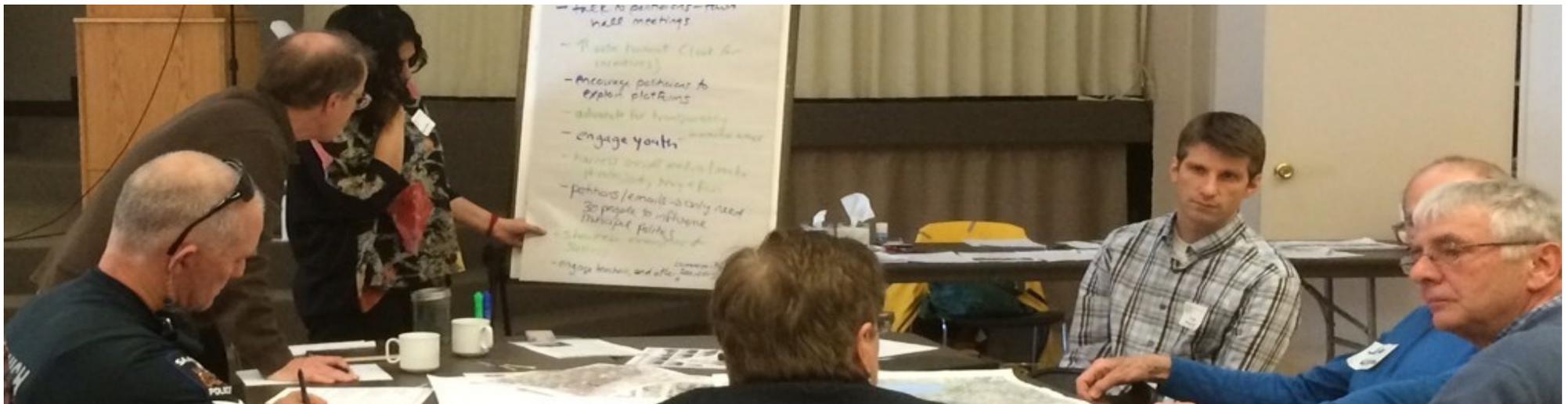
In 10 years,

- ◆ Why will you or other people come to the Uptown-Douglas corridor area?
- ◆ How does the area sound? How does it smell? What do you see?
- ◆ What is the area like to walk in? ride in? drive in?
- ◆ What is different from today? What has been retained?

- ◆ Of the 26 who returned evaluations, 11 lived in or near the corridor, all travelled through it, and only 6 worked in the corridor.
- ◆ Of those travelling through, not everyone specified how they travel. Of the 17 who did, 8 use a car, 4 use transit, 2 use a bicycle, 2 use all modes, and one person uses a car/bike combo.

At each of four tables, a professionally facilitated dialogue yielded the following themes:

Connectivity Green Space Higher Density Done Well Sense of Community Regional Approach



Themes



Interconnectivity: A skeletal biped network exists with the Galloping Goose and Lochside Trail bikeways. However the trail currently doesn't connect well East to West across the corridor and many of its intersections with road ways are dangerous for cyclists. Also, the trail is too narrow to accommodate all users well; there is a need for separation of commuter cyclists and pedestrians.

Currently, primary on street bikeways in the corridor are only class III – shared, marked wide or shoulder curb lanes. The CRD pedestrian and cycling master plan recommends that Blanshard, Vernon, Douglas, McKenzie and Bay St be upgraded to class I separated-on street bike facilities.

Green space: This area is the most paved, least treed area in the region, as can be seen in aerial photos. While there are parks nearby, access to them is not well signed, convenient or easy. A hierarchy of green spaces is needed, from mini-parks to more substantial park amenities. Some of this can be attained by widening and enhancing existing bi-ped pathways such as the Galloping Goose with park-like features such as benches, plantings and public art. However, as there is little easily acquired land that could be converted to larger park uses, creative thinking is required to correct the deficit.



Higher densities done well: Evidence suggests that areas of mixed use, low rise residential density with plenty of green space and parks create healthier communities than do areas of residential towers. Given the Douglas Corridor's low lying topography, it would be possible to increase the amount of higher density housing with low and mid-rise mixed use buildings that would not block views in areas further north or east. While the dominant zoning in the area is commercial, office and industrial, there are some un-used and underused parcels which could be re-zoned to allow housing and park land. Redevelopment of aging parcels in the area could also benefit from re-zoning to mixed uses. This is consistent with the vision of Oak Street as a pedestrian-friendly area.

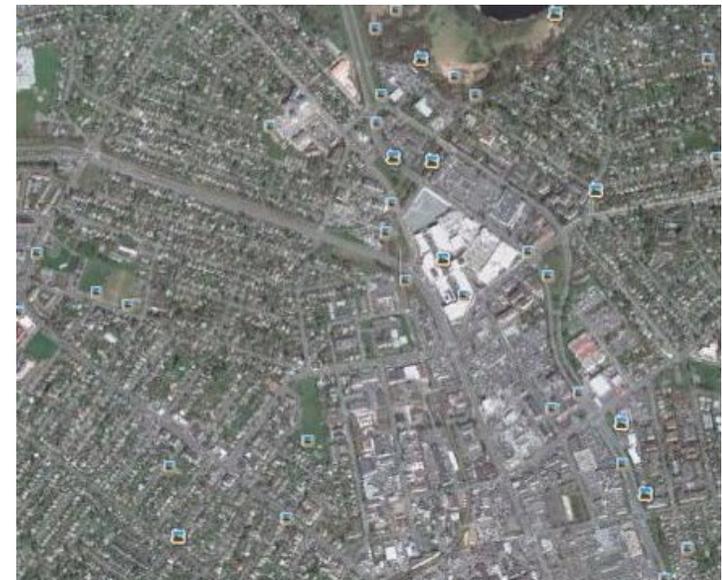
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Sense of community: Many participants suggested they would be coming to the Douglas corridor in 10 years to shop as they do now, but also to go to restaurants and attend concerts or other public events. Some indicated they would like to live in the area. It was noted that currently, except for the shopping malls (Mayfair and Uptown) there is little sense of place. Saanich municipal hall is located beside highway 17 (Vernon Ave) and there is little room for public events of any size either in or outdoors. The shopping malls are privately owned and so not true public space. All tables expressed the desire for community spaces.

From the perspective of those currently travelling through the Douglas corridor, the presence of small residential neighbourhoods nearby is not apparent. These many neighbourhoods—The enclave at Blanshard and Vernon; around Oak and Short streets, straddling Boleskine and Whittier streets, or along Tennyson Avenue—are isolated by traffic and cut off from one another.

Regional approach to corridor planning: The Uptown-Douglas corridor is an urban area of regional importance. The municipalities of Victoria and Saanich, the CRD, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and BC Transit are important regional stakeholders. Local stakeholders include Saanich's Mount View Colquitz CA, Quadra-Cedar Hill CA, Gorge Tillicum CA, as well as Victoria's Burnside Gorge CA, Quadra-Hillside Neighbourhood Association and North Park Neighbourhood Association. BC transit currently plans to complete protected bus/cycle lanes up Douglas to Tolmie Avenue by later in the spring 2015. The continuation of these up the Saanich portion of Douglas to the Transit exchange at Uptown is anticipated in the following year; however no public consultation on the nature of the exchange has yet been held. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure has jurisdiction over most of the major roads in the Douglas corridor.



10 YEAR VISION

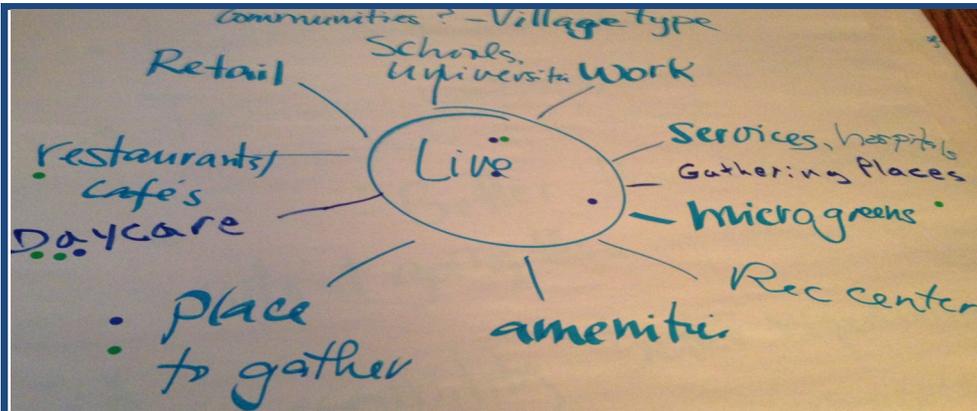
- ◆ Serviced by an Uptown-Downtown shuttle, Uptown-Douglas Corridor is host to a rapid transit system moving people through and beyond the region and is no longer dominated by vehicular through-traffic.
- ◆ Planning for the area is regional, led jointly by Victoria and Saanich.
- ◆ A residential or business address here is affordable and inviting. It is a walkable community in which people live, play and work.
- ◆ Plenty of green space, parks, day-lit creeks and other natural amenities combine with welcoming gathering to foster a strong sense of community.
- ◆ There is a pleasant sound ambience yet the area boasts a vibrant mix of employment opportunities.
- ◆ Neighbourhoods are connected by a continuous network of separated bike and walking paths that ensure good walking routes for all abilities and safe commuter cycling routes.
- ◆ Residents have easy biped access to regional transit routes, local businesses and micro-green spaces as well as more distant attractions.
- ◆ All biped pathways are separated from the road, are well signed, thoughtfully lit and secure



STEPS TO REALIZING THE VISION

During the afternoon, participants rotated from table to table, discussing three of the following four topics: planning green space; siting mixed use density; building an interconnected bi-ped network; and people power—what can community do to achieve the vision?

The afternoon conversations provide a basic road map for achieving the vision in some areas. and lay out intriguing possibilities for future consideration. Some recommendations simply require the implementation of existing regional and municipal policies contained in documents such as the CRD Regional Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan. Such mandated items are easily achievable, given funding, and are identified as such. Other recommendations have been framed as “Ideas requiring wider dialogue, collaboration and planning”.



Dialogue Participants noted that there are currently two parcels of un or under-developed land in the Douglas Corridor: the former Mayfair Lanes (Oak and Tolmie), once planned as a grocery store; parking lot at BC Systems building, which seems underused.

It was also noted, however, that the area is not a “blank slate” for land use planning. In addition to small residential enclaves, there are many established small businesses, industries and warehousing in the area as well.

Overview

- ◇ Build with contours in mind (lower levels, higher buildings, max 10 stories)
- ◇ Make space available for alternative housing forms such as intentional communities and co-housing.
- ◇ It is important that density of employment opportunity is maintained at the current regional 15% or increased.

Short term/lower cost

- ◇ Joint planning process/ Victoria and Saanich

Possibilities requiring greater discussion, buy-in and planning

- ◇ Transform Gateway and City Hall area into a municipal/ gathering area with presence
- ◇ Redo Saanich Plaza (high density mixed-use residential)
- ◇ Encourage mixed use density along Carey
- ◇ Plan for high density all up Douglas St. so that it connects to Gov’t St. and downtown (and Store St.) – people work and live there with lots of greenspace
- ◇ Oak Street mixed use, high density housing/shops below/ homes above
- ◇ 8 to 10 stories max “towers are isolating and alienating”
- ◇ Create shopping/eating destinations along the Goose and facing it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Saanich

- ◇ Work with City of Victoria to hold a joint area action plan in 2015
- ◇ Within the context of the above, ensure Local Area planning consultations include discussion of;
 - ⇒ Where to encourage density with emphasis on both repurposing and refurbishment (Gateway-Saanich Plaza-City all-other areas)
 - ⇒ How to improve the municipal precinct area?
- ◇ Discourage regional thru traffic in secondary road and residential areas

“We need to ensure employment density, so that the people living here are able to work here too”

Participants were struck by an equation given in the morning's Natural City presentation, that residents should be within 20 sec of green amenities, within 45 sec of nearby green space and within 1 min of a bigger park. With this in mind, it seemed clear that the Uptown-Douglas Corridor is lacking in green amenities and parks.



“Make the trail more beautiful”
“I see a range of parks to suit their Neighbourhoods; mini-greens; kids play grounds; tennis/ basketball courts; larger parks”
“There isn’t a single tree on the west side of Douglas from Boleskine to Tolmie”

Short term, do-able, low cost recommendations

- ◇ Link existing parks with pathways e.g. from Goose to Rudd par
- ◇ Overpass to Swan Lake at Huxley (or pedestrian controlled cross walk at Hwy 17 and Vernon)
- ◇ Connect trail fragments in Carey-Vernon and McKenzie-Carey sub-areas
- ◇ Lower speed limits on residential streets so that streets can be used for play
- ◇ Add park touches to pathways (benches, plantings etc)
- ◇ Day-light area creeks (e.g. Darwin creek)
- ◇ Fine tune development incentives to include parks in planning

Possibilities requiring greater discussion, buy-in and planning

- ◇ Green space includes usable green roof tops and woof-tops (roof top dog parks)
- ◇ Add green spaces: at Uptown phase 4; around switch bridge; May-fair lanes site; down Wascana
- ◇ Acquire greenspace by repurposing half of existing roadway to green walk/bike space; e.g: Northbound highway 17 (Vernon Avenue) becomes a green way for bikes, pedestrians and linear park
- ◇ Repurpose some areas to park, such as Gateway / Save On foods
- ◇ Like Banff – elevated living paths that animals can use as well as people (in place of walkways)
- ◇ Connect current greenspace like Swan Lake with walking trails.

For Saanich:

- ◇ Develop implementation plans and budgets to connect trail fragments in Carey-Vernon and McKenzie-Carey sub-areas, and to link existing parks with pathways: e.g. from Goose to Rudd park
- ◇ Overpass to Swan Lake at Huxley (or pedestrian controlled cross walk at Hwy 17 and Vernon)
- ◇ Match Victoria by amending Streets and Traffic By Law 8382 so that speed limits are reduced to 40 kpm or less in residential areas
- ◇ Work with CRD, Swan Lake and other stakeholders to daylight creeks in the area, such as Darwin creek, part of the Swan watershed.
- ◇ Add Douglas Corridor area to the Parks Priority list
- ◇ Amend re-zoning and development permitting processes to include a more robust park amenity package.
- ◇ Work with MOTI to transfer jurisdiction over Blanshard and Vernon from McKenzie to Tolmie
- ◇ Forward to the Local Area Planning process:
 - ◇ Options for enhancing greenway paths and green space such as at Uptown phase 4; around the switch bridge/Transit exchange; Mayfair lanes site; down Wascana
 - ◇ Options for public roof top gardens
 - ◇ Options for dog-walking
 - ◇ Park amenity packages for new and redevelopment in Douglas Corridor
 - ◇ Design of Transit exchange

For CRD

- ◇ Initiate public consultations about reclaiming excess roadway as park space
- ◇ Work with Saanich and other stakeholders to daylight Darwin Creek
- ◇ Examine applicability of a wild life passage across Hwy 17 from Swan Lake
- ◇ Implement BP Master Plan way-finding guidelines
- ◇ Add park touches to pathways (benches, plantings etc)

For MOTI

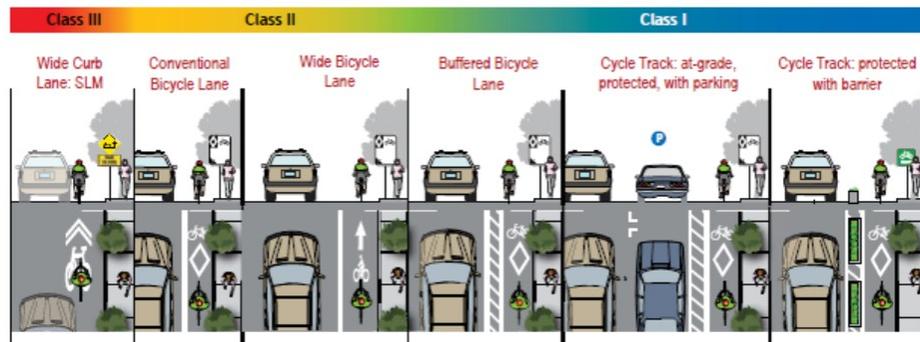
- ◇ To work with Municipality of Saanich to reach an agreement to transfer jurisdiction over Blanshard and Vernon from McKenzie to Tolmie, Ravine and Douglas
- ◇ Examine applicability of a wild life passage across HWY 17 from Swan Lake
- ◇ Inventory MOTI lands that could be repurposed as park (e.g. Blanshard Park, Carey Green, see map)

For BC Transit

- ◇ Include greenway and park area into transit exchange planning at Uptown.
- ◇ Initiate and participate in multi-stakeholder, public planning and consultation process on Uptown transit exchange



“Currently, primary ‘on street’ bikeways in the corridor are only class III – shared, marked wide or shoulder curb lanes. The Capital Regional District Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan recommends that cycle facilities on Blanshard, Vernon, Douglas, McKenzie and Bay Streets be upgraded to class I separated-on street bike facilities.



The Plan also identifies virtually all the Douglas Corridor area as a high pedestrian priority.

“This Master Plan identified regional pedestrian priority areas, which are linked to guidance for accessibility and treatment standards in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Design Guidelines. Individual municipalities are encouraged to use this information to inventory and prioritize sidewalks within the identified pedestrian priority areas within their jurisdiction.”

This would suggest that Saanich, through local area planning and other consultation and design processes including those for Transit development, would be well placed to implement the guidelines in the redesign of sidewalks and pedestrian areas at all major intersections up Douglas within a ten year period.

Short term, do-able, low cost

- ◇ *Separate cycle paths from roads (use bollards, parking lanes as buffers initially): This can be achieved in part by implementing the Capital Regional District Pedestrian and Cycling Masterplan recommendations that cycle paths on Douglas, Blanshard and Vernon be upgraded to the class 1 “separated on street” category.
- ◇ *Widen trails to accommodate slower traffic such as strollers, scooters and wheelchairs *Widen current paths to ensure wheelchair accessibility mandated (CRD PBMP)
- ◇ *Implement the 2014 Interim Cycling Destination Wayfinding Guidelines to direct people from trail to trail: a cycle/walk app.
- ◇ *Increase east west connectivity from Galloping Goose
- ◇ Shuttle/trolley/ streetcar/tram between Uptown and Downtown and other places in the corridor (similar to the Langford trolley)
- ◇ Add park-like and security amenities to the Galloping Goose/ Lochside and other trails including: park benches, water fountains, trail maps, dog disposal/garbage/recycling bins , emergency buttons/ thoughtful lighting/ reflective centre lines along the trail
- ◇ Designate bike, pedestrian lanes on the Galloping Goose and Lochside trails
- ◇ Safe crossings at mid-points of blocks on Blanshard/Vernon, Huxley/Carey, Kent
- ◇ Join current trails so that they link together; create an “adopt a trail” program
- ◇ Increase funding to keep trails and pathways in good condition in all weather; clear of snow and debris
- ◇ Discourage thru traffic in secondary road and residential areas
- ◇ Foot- Bike access from Oak Street to Blanshard Park

“Challenge the assumption that there will inevitably be flow-through traffic and conduits that we have to accommodate”

Possibilities requiring greater discussion, buy-in and planning

- ◇ Plan and establish a separate biped corridor/network
- ◇ Highway has to stop for urban core: transform it into regular urban streets
- ◇ Consider banning vehicles from certain roads/ consider banning certain types of vehicles
- ◇ Make Darwin, Nigel, Vernon a local boulevard for people. Turn the area into a real neighbourhood.
- ◇ Consider restricting traffic on certain roads at certain times of day.
- ◇ Put bi-ped cross traffic at a different level from the highway —think pedestrian / cycling overpasses with open spaces, patios, gardens. This would put pedestrian access on a level above traffic and give continuous connection.
- ◇ High speed rail from Swartz Bay to Uptown and a (solar!) street car



For Saanich:

- ◇ Plan and budget for local implementation of the CRD’s 2014 Interim Cycling Destination Wayfinding Guidelines and 2015 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.
- ◇ Develop implementation plans and budgets to connect trail fragments in Carey-Vernon and McKenzie-Carey sub-areas, and to link existing parks with pathways: E.g. From Goose to Rudd park
- ◇ Create an overpass to Swan Lake at Huxley (or pedestrian controlled cross walk at Hwy 17 and Vernon)
- ◇ Foot- Bike access from Oak Street to Blanshard Park
- ◇ Join Victoria by amending Streets and Traffic By Law 8382 so that speed limits are reduced to 40 kpm in residential areas
- ◇ Forward to Local Area Planning consultations ideas such as:
 - ◇ Make Darwin, Nigel, Vernon a local boulevard for people turn area into a real neighbourhood
 - ◇ Work with other stakeholders to develop the Uptown-Downtown Shuttle between Uptown and City Hall.
 - ◇ Work with CRD to increase funding to keep trails and pathways in good condition in all weather; clear of snow and debris
 - ◇ Discourage thru traffic in secondary road and residential areas

For CRD

- ◇ Implement the Capital Regional District Pedestrian and Cycling Masterplan recommendations that :
- ◇ Cycle paths on Douglas, Blanshard and Vernon be upgraded to the

class 1 “separated on street” category. (Douglas is currently under way.)

- ◇ Trails are able to accommodate slower traffic such as strollers, scooters and wheelchairs
- ◇ Implement the 2014 Interim Cycling Destination Wayfinding Guidelines to direct people from trail to trail: a cycle/walk app.
- ◇ Add park-like and security amenities to the Galloping Goose/ Lochside and other trails including: park benches, water fountains, trail maps, dog disposal/garbage/recycling bins , emergency buttons/ thoughtful lighting/ reflective centre lines along the trail
- ◇ Designate bike, pedestrian lanes on the Galloping Goose and Lochside trails

For MOTI

- ◇ To work with Municipality of Saanich to transfer jurisdiction over Blanshard and Vernon between McKenzie to Tolmie to transform them to urban streets rather than highways
- ◇ Allow pedestrian crossings on Vernon and Blanshard at the midpoint of block between Saanich Road and Ravine.
- ◇ Increase time duration of pedestrian crosswalks

For BC Transit

- ◇ Work with other stakeholders to develop the Uptown-Downtown Shuttle between Uptown and City Hall.
- ◇ Work with others to develop High speed rail from Swartz Bay to Uptown



Themes

- ◇ Citizen participation
- ◇ Consultations (public)
- ◇ Budgeting processes
- ◇ Advocacy
- ◇ Connect with others: e.g. community Assn's, coffee places, GG intersection
- ◇ Showcase examples from elsewhere, here
- ◇ Guerilla Urbanism

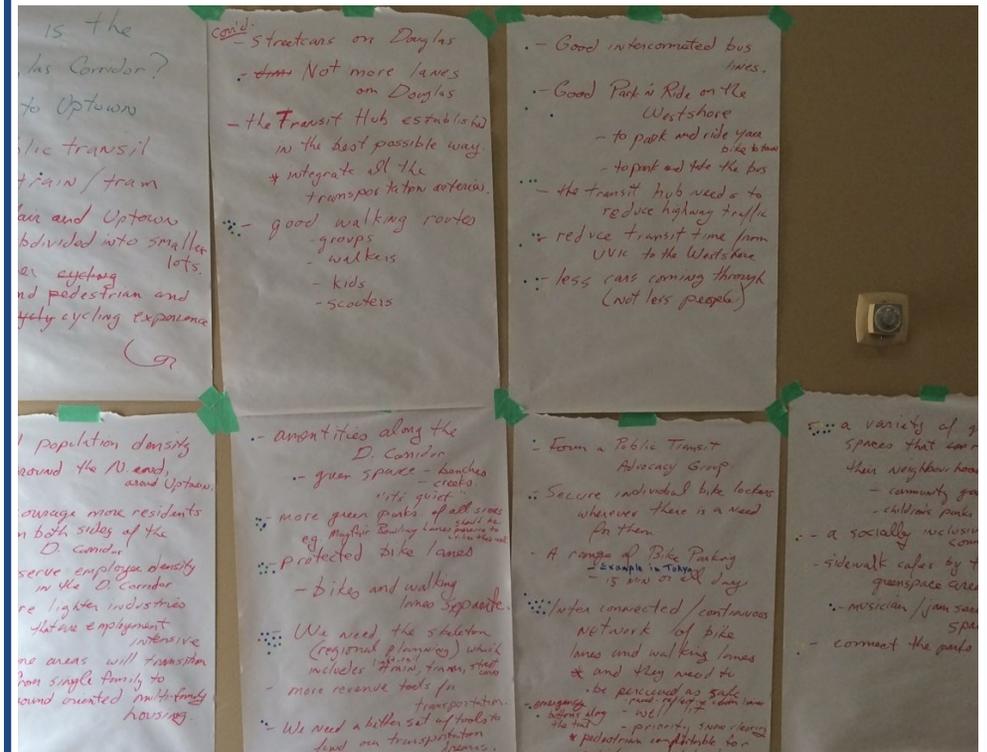
Short term, do-able, low cost

- ◇ Community Associations advocate for meaningful, substantive public consultation
- ◇ Advocacy:
 - ⇒ better way-finding signs
 - ⇒ standards for increasing lights on highways
 - ⇒ cycling education on rules of the road for Goose and road
- ◇ Raise awareness:
 - ⇒ by going to places people already gather: parent advisory groups, block watch, school based programs

- ◇ Engage people who use the Galloping Goose,
- ◇ Harness social media; make it relevant, sexy, fun
- ◇ Through ongoing amalgamation-governance discussions
- ◇ Individuals as active citizens: participate in land use planning, make voice heard, join political parties, participate all levels; join boards and community associations; join groups such as Walk on Victoria, GVCC, BTWW
- ◇ Form a transit advocacy group

Requires greater discussion, buy-in and planning

- ◇ Power sharing policies such as giving CAs budgeting power or earlier participation in land use planning processes



For Community Associations

- ◇ Work together to advocate with municipal and regional bodies for a unified area planning process for the Douglas Corridor.
- ◇ Advocate with municipalities to ensure earlier and more meaningful participation in planning processes
- ◇ Work together to form a transit advocacy group
- ◇ Raise awareness:
 - ⇒By going to places people already gather: parent advisory groups, block watch, school based programs
 - ⇒Engage people who use the Galloping Goose,
 - ⇒Harness social media

For Saanich

- ◇ Involve citizens in major deliberative and decision making processes such as budgeting.
- ◇ Engage with City of Victoria and community associations to hold a unified area planning process for the Douglas Corridor.

For MOTI and BC Transit

- ◇ Engage in on-going consultation with local residents where MOTI/ BC Transit plans and designs impact local communities.
- ◇ Participate in a unified area planning process for the Douglas Corridor.

For CRD

- ◇ Engage all stakeholders including the City of Victoria, Municipality of Saanich, community associations, MOTI and BC Transit to hold a unified area planning process for the Douglas Corridor.



NEXT STEPS

During discussions, the following next steps were identified to assist in moving this conversation further. Progress through these steps will be tracked on the Mount View Colquitz Community Association website.

- ◇ Draft model letter for CAs and other organizations/ individuals with an interest to send to Victoria and Saanich, BC Transit, MOTI to request joint planning for the Douglas Corridor.
- ◇ Report out to all stakeholders (Saanich, CRD MOTI, Transit) and request response
- ◇ Participants contact district council members to promote conclusions.



At both morning and afternoon sessions, participants drew on maps; adding linkages here, green space there. The many maps of possibilities have been compiled onto one which is a working document—an example of the possibilities that could be generated to make the Uptown-Douglas Corridor “Someplace Great”.

