
District of Lantzville

REPORT TO CAO

Committee of the Whole Agenda Item
June 3, 2013

File: 6930-20-VCCIP
G: Reports/13/ COW Village Core

AUTHOR: Meredith Seeton, Community Planner

SUBJECT: Village Commercial Core Improvement Plan Process

Recommendation

1. **THAT** members of the Committee receive the report titled "Village Commercial Core Improvement Plan Process" as information;
2. **THAT** members of the Committee direct staff to provide a revised Terms of Reference for the Village Commercial Core Improvement Plan.

Alternative

1. **THAT** members of the Committee receive the report titled "Village Commercial Core Improvement Plan Process" as information;
2. **THAT** members of the Committee recommend to Council that Council endorse the proposed Terms of Reference for the Village Commercial Core Improvement Plan as presented in the attachment to the staff report.

Purpose

To outline the impetus for the development of a Village Commercial Core Improvement Plan, propose the scope of the plan, and provide a suggested process and timeline for moving forward.

Background

The Community Vision included in the District of Lantzville Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 50, 2005, describes a village-like commercial centre, with locally oriented services and commerce. The vision calls for "improvement in the design and appearance of the Village Commercial Core, with greater emphasis on access for pedestrians, bicyclists and public transit".

Section 6.2 (8-9) of the OCP calls for a Village Commercial Core Improvement Plan addressing the following:

- Improvement in on-street parking and pedestrian flow as new development or redevelopment takes place.
- Provision of off-street parking.
- Detailed design guidelines for new buildings and redevelopment of existing buildings.
- A clean-up and beautification program for the Village Commercial core.
- Installation of underground utility services wherever feasible.

- Design of grading, locations, and surfacing for roads, on and off street parking, and sidewalks.
- Installing public amenities such as courtyards and bike lock-up racks associated with public and commercial buildings.

More recently, in its 2013 update to the Corporate Strategic Plan, Council made the following commitment:

“Council is interested in developing a plan that will encompass form and character, scale, approaches to the core, and most important, safe travel of pedestrians and cyclists throughout the downtown core”

In addition, a recent Transportation Review has been completed and has provided extensive analysis on roadways, bikeways, and pedestrian infrastructure, as well as a preliminary ‘village concept’. This review will inform aspects of the Village Commercial Core Improvement Plan, most notably the provision of off-street parking, and safe travel of pedestrians and cyclists through the downtown core.

Discussion

When considering the scope for the Village Commercial Core Improvement Plan, there are a number of important factors to consider:

- The geographic focus of the plan, as identified in the OCP, is limited (along Lantzville Road from Ware Road up to Huddlestone Park). Neighbourhood Plans, focused mostly on land use and urban design, tend to encompass larger geographic areas.
- Lantzville’s village core is smaller in scale than many downtowns, and can better be described as a main street. Creating a plan for a small area can be almost as resource-intensive as creating a plan for a larger area, because of the need to nevertheless cover off a range of plan elements.
- There is undeveloped land surrounding the Village Commercial Core, most notably along Ware Road, encompassed in the Village Comprehensive Development Plan Area.
- Should Lantzville acquire more water in the future, (re)development pressure could significantly increase. Improvements in the commercial core could then potentially be partially funded by private development. Acquiring water could be a significant game changer for the village core area.

In the attached draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for a Village Commercial Core Improvement Plan, staff are proposing a planning process that is tightly scoped and action-oriented – a blend between a downtown revitalization plan and a neighbourhood plan.

The draft TOR limits the geographic focus of the plan to the area identified in the OCP as the Village Commercial Core. However, Council could consider a blended approach whereby most plan elements are kept to the smaller geographic focus but the form and character DPA review could encompass the whole DPA (including the Ware Road area). This could allow the District to be better prepared for a potential increase in development pressure in the future.

The table below outlines the proposed main components of the plan:

Beautification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaping concepts and beautification plan
Land Use and Urban Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of zoning and potential amendments to enable revitalization, infill and rehabilitation opportunities • A review of the form & character DPA for the Village Core • A review of public realm (e.g. public spaces, streetscapes, street furniture, bike racks)
Circulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A parking assessment • Compiling of survey information (right of ways, etc.) • Refined 'village concept', including parking, pedestrian, and cycling considerations
Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of options for improvements to utilities (e.g. electricity and telecommunications lines, drainage)
Wayfinding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of signage for approaches to the core

In the attached proposed Terms of Reference, the concept of 'placemaking' is presented and it is suggested that this can be a useful guiding concept for the plan development. Attachment 2 is an excerpt from the webpage of Project for Public Places, exploring the idea of placemaking.

Staff are also giving a presentation at the Committee of the Whole meeting, and facilitating a discussion about the proposed scope of the plan. It is anticipated that the draft Terms of Reference will be amended based on priorities, questions and concerns that may be identified at that time.

Timeline and Process

The attached draft Terms of Reference for a Village Commercial Core Improvement Plan includes a description of the timeline and proposed process for developing the plan, through 4 stages stretching from the summer of 2013 to the summer of 2014, with implementation continuing on from that point:



Financial Implications

In the Corporate Strategic Plan, \$75,000 was noted as an approximation of the cost of completing the plan. A potential source of the funding could be from the Gas Tax Fund. Much of the planning and policy development work will happen by staff in-house, in collaboration with residents and key stakeholders. The most significant cost will be bringing in urban design expertise to assist with refinement of the design guidelines and circulation concepts. Other budget items include public engagement, a parking assessment, completing any additional surveys if needed (in order to develop a more detailed 'village concept' for circulation, and understand options for improving utilities), and the costs of implementing small pilot projects.

Implementation of the plan will occur over time, depending on priorities established in the action plan and as development proposals come forward. It is not possible to estimate the costs of undertaking upgrades, since the priorities and specifics will be identified through the planning process. Public infrastructure and improvements will be budgeted for as part of annual budget

and financial planning processes, through public benefit strategies and works and services agreements as development proposals come forward, and as grant funding becomes available.

Summary

This report outlines the impetus for a Village Commercial Core Improvement Plan and provides an outline of what such a plan could include. The attached draft Terms of Reference contains more detailed discussion of the proposed scope and process for the plan.

Respectfully submitted

Meredith Seeton
Community Planner
District of Lantzville

Reviewed By:

CAO	Dir. Finance	Dir. of PW
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District of Lantzville Village Commercial Core Improvement Plan

Project Terms of Reference (DRAFT)



Objective

Lantzville is fortunate to have a village core with a range of businesses, beautiful views, and a location off of the highway. Council and residents would like to see improvements to the village core, to better showcase the vibrancy of the community, attract business, and enhance the livability of the heart of the community. The vision for the plan will be created early-on in the process, so that the plan development is guided by a clear objective.

Scope

As called for in the Corporate Strategic Plan and in the Official Community Plan (OCP), the Village Commercial Core Improvement Plan will include elements related to urban design and transportation, as well as beautification. The plan will be a blend between a revitalization strategy and a neighbourhood plan – with action-oriented public-led revitalization strategies, as well as urban design and development guidelines for private development. The plan could ultimately become part of the Official Community Plan and will point to implementation actions that are both policy- and project-oriented.

Key elements of the plan will be:

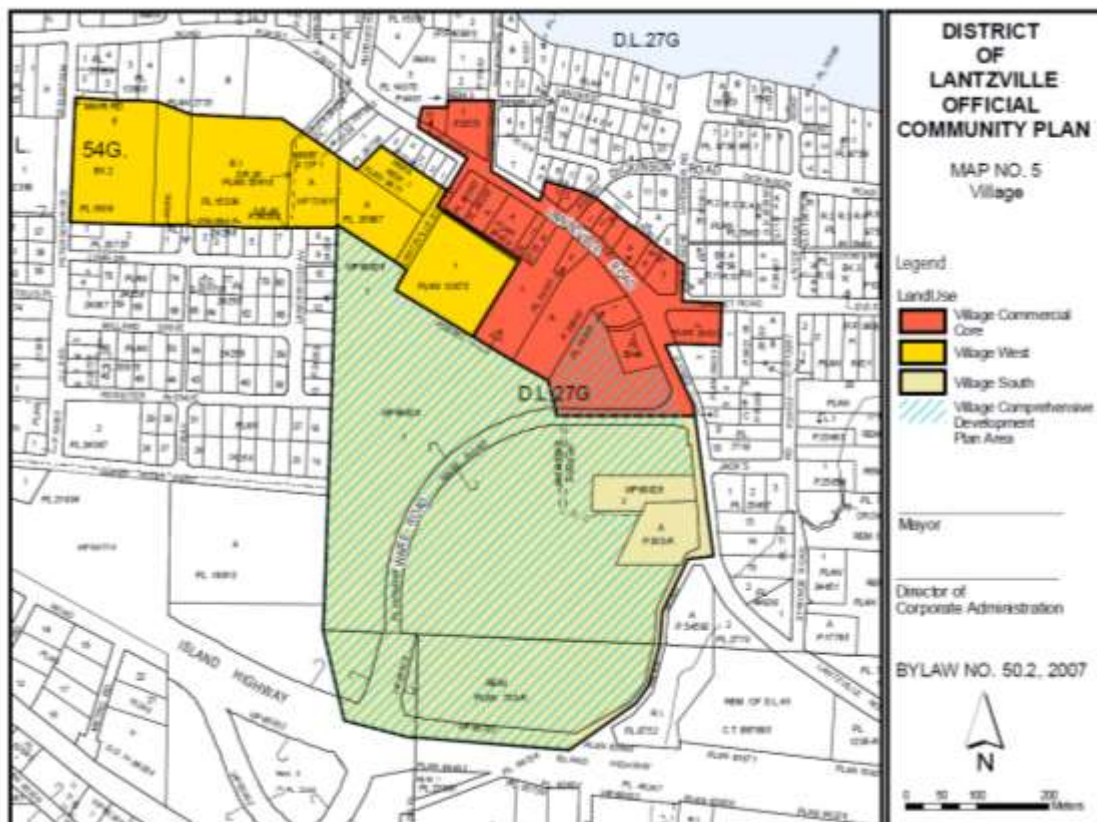
Beautification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaping concepts and beautification plan • A review of zoning and potential amendments to enable revitalization, infill and rehabilitation opportunities
Land Use and Urban Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the form & character DPA for the Village Core • A review of public realm (e.g. public spaces, streetscapes, street furniture, bike racks)
Circulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A parking assessment • Compiling of survey information (right of ways, etc.) • Refined 'village concept', including parking, pedestrian, and cycling considerations
Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of options for improvements to utilities (e.g. electricity and telecommunications lines, drainage)
Wayfinding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of signage for approaches to the core

The elements listed above will be delivered in a series of steps:

- A **background report** will include limited market analysis, current development capacity, and descriptions and analysis of the current status of urban design, circulation, public realm and wayfinding.
- A **Village Commercial Core Improvement Plan**,* created through engaging residents, key stakeholders, and bringing in urban design experts, will address the elements listed above.
- An **implementation plan** will include policy amendments and proposed projects, laid out in a matrix including prioritization, cost estimates, timeline, potential funding sources, and/or partnerships.

* It is likely that different aspects of the plan will have very different timelines. Some projects, such as smaller beautification projects, could be strategically accomplished in the shorter term (e.g. next five years), whereas others are dependent on more external factors such as development pressure, and could have a time horizon of 10 or 20 years. As another example, there may be smaller-scale project opportunities to increase walkability and connectivity in the short term, while longer-term circulation concepts will take longer to implement and may even require further planning. The planning deliverables could actually be presented as two separate plans – one focusing on the shorter term improvement opportunities, and the other broader, higher-level, and focused on the longer term. This way, the plan can be implementable, with both measurable short term impacts and a view to other opportunities on the horizon.

The Village Core Improvement Plan will pertain to the Village Commercial Core area, extending along Lantzville Road from Ware Road to half a block past Tweedhope Road, as shown in the map below (excerpt from the District of Lantzville Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 50, 2005):



Guiding Concepts and Approach

'Placemaking' will be a key concept for this planning process:

"Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, ultimately creating good public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well being" (Project for Public Spaces)

Keeping placemaking in mind will ensure that we are focused on building on the unique village centre and creating places that truly enhance livability.

The planning process will do the following:

- **Work with existing businesses:** Recognizing that there is a healthy range of businesses operating in the village with strong interests in revitalizing efforts, the newly formed Lantzville Business Improvement Association (LBIA) and other businesses will be included as key stakeholders.
- **Celebrate existing assets:** there is a mix of uses in the village core, with strong local businesses, community facilities, and green space. There are also celebrations such as Mine Town Day, a seasonal farmers' market, and events at Costin Hall – a great foundation for making the heart of the District even more vibrant.
- **Engage community groups:** Lantzville is blessed with a strong culture of volunteerism – from community groups running Costin Hall, to a park developed by a local service group and a farmers' market run by a volunteer organization, residents are organized and engaged, and can play a pivotal role in beautification and planning for the public realm.

Key Stakeholders

The public engagement process will keep an open door for **all interested residents** to participate – from youth to seniors to families and others.

- The **existing businesses** in the village commercial core are key stakeholders with large interests in seeing a successful improvement plan that gives consideration to their needs. Business owners involved in the new LBIA, as well as other business owners, will be engaged throughout the plan process. There could be some synergies between the economic development work of the LBIA and elements of the plan.
- **Real estate professionals** and potential developers with interests in the community will also likely participate actively.
- **Service groups** maintain community facilities such as Costin Hall and the Legion. The individuals that make up these groups are very engaged in the life of the village core and will likely participate actively in the plan development.
- **Provincial government and utility providers** such as BC Hydro and Telus will be engaged in the conversation about the potential for utility relocation.

It is recommended that a **Village Core Improvement Plan Standing Committee** be formed, with representation from key stakeholders and other residents, with representation from Council as well. The Community Planner would bring updates and issues for discussion to this committee (in addition to reports to Council). This committee would serve as a working group to keep the plan process grounded and moving forward. The mandate of the committee would expire at the end of the planning process.

Process & Timeline

The following four-phased process, broadly outlined below, is anticipated to be completed by the summer of 2014, with implementation occurring from that point on. Many of the plan elements overlap – such as circulation and land use planning. The steps outlined below will involve periodic reports to Council and extensive community engagement, with the Village Core Improvement Plan Standing Committee as a key steering committee.

Phase	Milestone	Description	Timeline	Approx. Budget
Start-up	Project start-up tasks	- Establish a Village Core Improvement Plan Standing Committee (create Terms of Reference, advertise) - Update District webpage outlining plan process and opportunities for engagement	June-Aug 2013	\$2000 (for Committee costs throughout plan process)
	Background Research	- Meet with Lantzville BIA - Collect lessons from nearby municipalities who have undergone downtown revitalization processes - Complete description & analysis of current urban design, public realm, circulation, wayfinding, complete limited market analysis (e.g. commercial floor space to number of residents, capacity at build-out, demographic trends)		Staff time
	REPORT TO COUNCIL	Status update to Council, with background report	Sept 2013	Staff time
Concepts & Ideas	Ideas Competition	Host an Ideas Competition, inviting elementary, secondary, and post-secondary students and residents to pitch ideas to activate and increase the vibrancy of the Village Core	Sept 2013	\$100
	Ideas Fair	Display & discuss concepts submitted in competition Collect further feedback and run visioning exercise focusing on desired experiences of the village core	Early Oct 2013	\$400
	Draft Vision Statement	Build on feedback from Ideas Fair, draft with Standing Committee	Late Oct 2013	Staff time
	REPORT TO COUNCIL	Update Council on progress, seek endorsement of Vision Statement	Late Oct 2013	Staff time

Phase	Milestone	Description	Timeline	Approx. Budget
Policy & Plan Development	Land Use & Urban Design plan components	- Bring in urban designer to assist with review of existing form & character Development Permit Area - Explore opportunities to create more enabling zoning (use, height, density) - Host walkabouts and design charrette	Sept-Dec 2013	\$62,500 Urban Design Consultant Staff time Volunteer time \$5000 Parking Assessment
	Beautification	- Work with Standing Committee and local landscape designers to develop landscape concepts and projects for the Village Core - Explore options to include residents in beautification, such as through Communities in Bloom	Nov-Dec 2013	
	Circulation plan components	- Build on the recommendations identified in the Transportation Review study, in particular: conduct parking assessment, complete survey of Village core if needed (including legal right-of-way and edge of asphalt, shoulder line and centre line), refine proposed Village Concept (to be considered during design charrette)	June-Dec 2013	
	Utilities	- Review possibilities for undergrounding or relocating utilities, prepare cost estimates - Review drainage improvement possibilities, prepare cost estimates	June-July 2013	
	Wayfinding	- Review approaches to the core and consider improvements	Sept-Dec 2013	
	Open House	Bring draft policy options to an Open House for community feedback	Jan 2014	
	REPORT TO COUNCIL	Bring policy options to Council for initial consideration, conduct prioritizing exercise	Jan 2014	
Plan Finalizing	Implementation Action Plan	Create an action plan with prioritized projects, timelines / phasing, partnership ideas, and potential funding sources	Feb 2014	Staff time
	REPORT TO COUNCIL	Bring entire plan for Council's consideration, complete with action plan and monitoring and evaluation provisions	March 2014	Staff time
Implementation	Pilot Projects	Implement one or more prioritized small-scale pilot projects, such as a community garden, mural, or other public realm improvements (potentially projects suggested in Ideas Fair)	April 2014	\$5,000
	Implementation	- Begin policy amendment process - Implement prioritized actions as opportunities arise	April 2014 - onwards	TBD