



Strathroy Downtown Master Plan

Master Plan Report

October 2020 | Re: public Urbanism



Strathroy Downtown Master Plan

Prepared for the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc
Prepared by Re:public Urbanism

October 2020

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1.0

Background

Like many Downtowns across Ontario, Downtown Strathroy has experienced a dramatic change in its role and makeup both within the town itself and the broader region. This changing role has had an impact on the vitality of the Downtown as well as its built form. As the Downtown continues to evolve, it is critical to provide a vision on how and where development should happen. Strathroy-Caradoc has continued its efforts to maintain and promote the critical importance of its historical Downtown. The Master Plan document is intended to create the opportunity to discuss the desires and expectations for the Downtown with members of the community and key stakeholders in order to provide a collective vision and design for the Downtown.



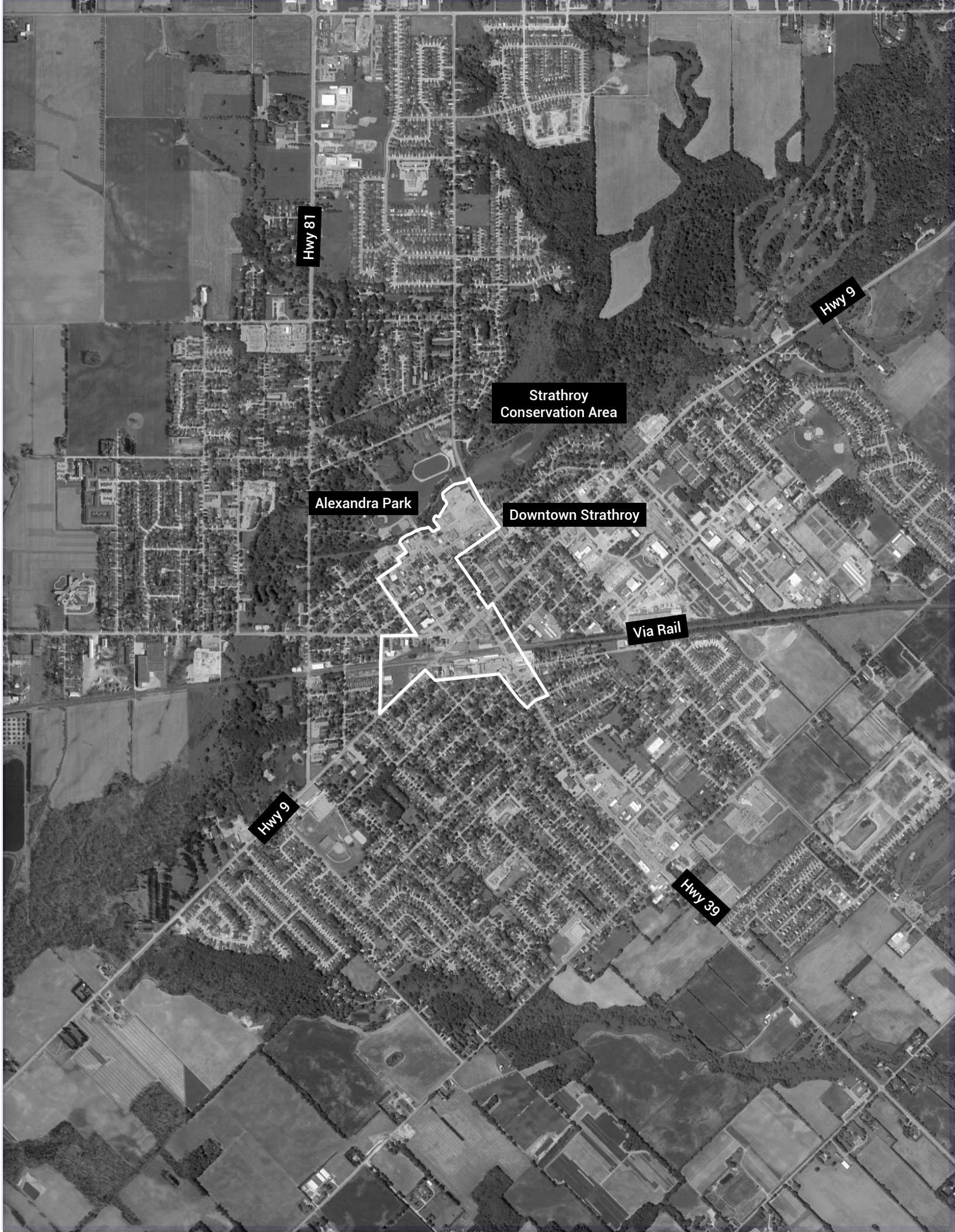
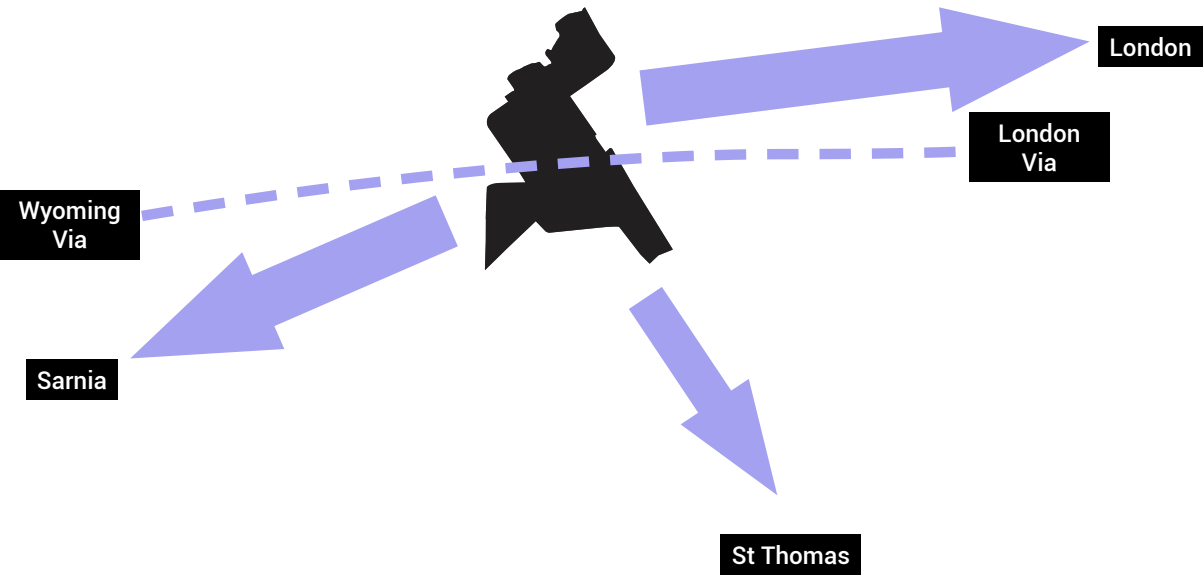
1.1 Downtown Strathroy

1.1.1 Downtown Context

Downtown Strathroy sits at the historic core of the community of the Strathroy in the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc. Strathroy itself, with a population of approximately 14,000, is the largest community in the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc as well as the County of Middlesex. It is also arguably the economic centre for much of the immediate region, including Western Middlesex County and Eastern Lambton County.

The Downtown evolved around the original settlement established by John Stewart Buchanan in the mid 1830s at the intersection of the Sydenham River, and what is presently Head Street. With the arrival of the railway in the 1856 commercial, social, and industrial activity moved westward to its current location around Front and Frank Streets. The community that has grown around the Downtown has seen significant growth since the 1990s, due in part to industrial activity and its proximity to the Cities of London and Sarnia (approximately 40 km east and 70 km west from Strathroy, respectively).

Despite significant suburban and highway commercial development within Strathroy, the Downtown has continued to function as an important centre of economic, civic, and social activity for both Strathroy and the immediate region. Intersected by three county (regional) roads and traversed by the Canadian National Railways line with VIA rail passenger service, the Downtown also continues to sit at a significant cross-roads in the community and overall region.



1.1.2 The Situation

Urban Structure & Uses

The Downtown's block structure largely follows an established grid pattern found throughout the core of Strathroy, with more irregular block patterns around the Sydenham River and Canadian National Railway. Lots and blocks are generally orientated east-west with narrow frontages and significant depths, framed by wide and generous streets. The areas around Front Street East and Frank Street contain the most intense use of land in the Downtown and are primarily composed of the 19th and early 20th century main street commercial typologies. Beyond this core, development patterns become more dispersed with a mix of highway commercial, light industrial uses, and vacant lands. There are also some significant clusters of stable residential development.

- Arterial/Highway Commercial

Main Street Commercial

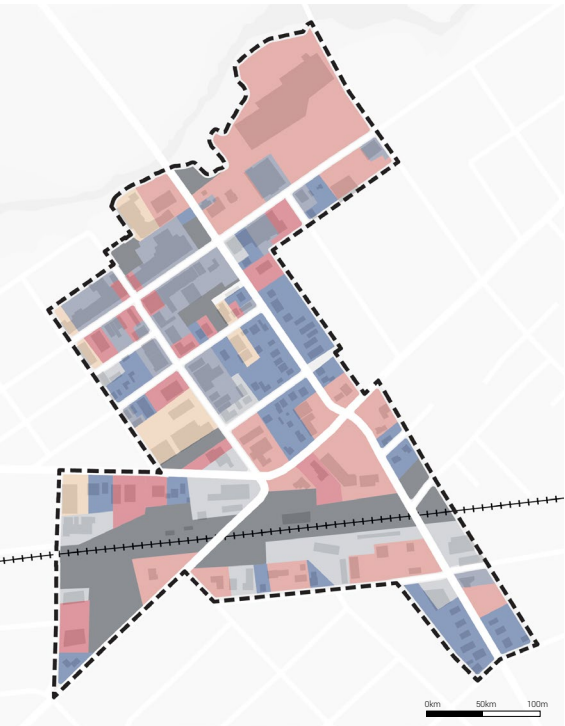
Residential

Industrial
- Vacant/Undeveloped

Community/Institutional

Office

Downtown Boundary



Landscaping in the Public Realm and the Public/Private Interface

Despite the significant amount of vacant / undeveloped space within the Downtown itself, there are few parks or open spaces of note aside from the public area around the Town Hall. With that said, the Sydenham River, Mill Pond, and associated parkland are the most significant natural elements in the Downtown, providing considerable amenity and beauty along the northern edge. The river's floodplain has placed some restrictions on development immediately abutting the river, but otherwise does not create any major constraints in the Downtown. A streetscaping plan dating from the 1980s extends along Front and Frank Streets which includes significant landscaping, bump-out curbs, paving stone sidewalks and crosswalks, and period streetlights.

- Passive Green Space

Active Green Space

Sydenham River

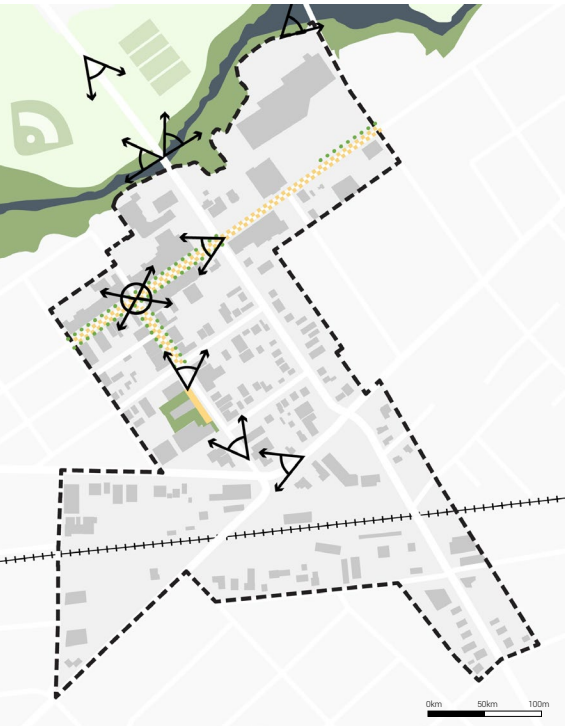
Plazas

Tree Lined Street
- Brick Paving Street

Downtown Boundary

Conservation Authority Regulated Land Boundary

View Corridors



Mobility and Gateways

The Downtown is well-served by a traditional hierarchical road system composed of arterial, collector, and local roads, as well as a limited network of rear laneways – the arterial roads also serve as the primary gateways into the Downtown. The VIA train station platform also serves as another major gateway into the Downtown and the regional public transit system (commuter bus) creates a link to Sarnia, Strathroy, and London. Many areas along the Downtown's main arteries contain low pedestrian amenity due to encroachment of parking/loading onto sidewalks, design of auto-oriented buildings, and higher speeds of traffic. The Downtown is also very well-served with public and private parking areas as well as on-street parking on all local roads free of charge.

- Arterial Road

Collector Road

Public Laneway

Local Road

Multi-Use Pathway

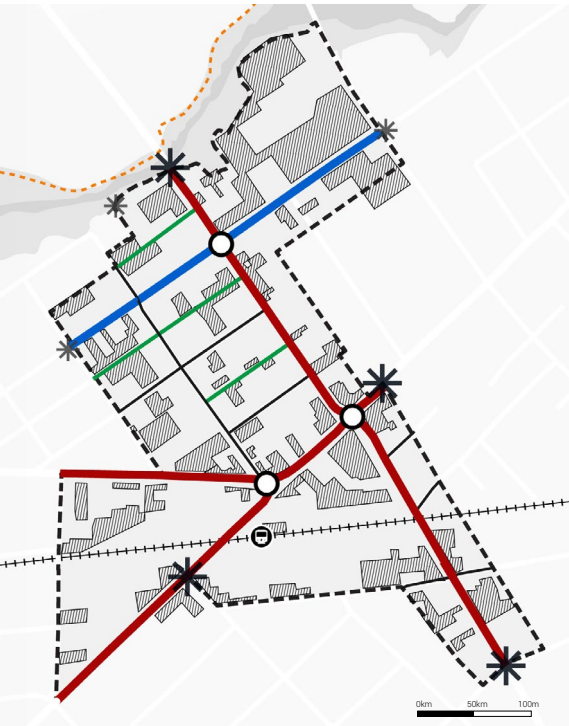
Downtown Boundary
- Parking Lot

Signalized Intersection

Train Station

Secondary Gateway

Primary Gateway



Building Typologies: Heights and Landmarks

The Downtown can be generally described as low-rise with very few buildings exceeding 3-storeys in height. This results in a distinct low-rise impression when coupled with its wide streets. The majority of the taller buildings are found in the central area of the Downtown in the vicinity of Front and Frank Streets and the majority of one-story development is located on the blocks of the Kenwick Mall, and around the intersection of Caradoc and Metcalfe Streets. The Downtown is also home to significant cultural / historical landmarks including the neo-federalist Town Hall (52 Frank Street); the "Dominion Style" former Post Office and Customs House (71 Frank Street); and neo-classical former Bank of Commerce Building (51 Front Street West), constructed in 1883.

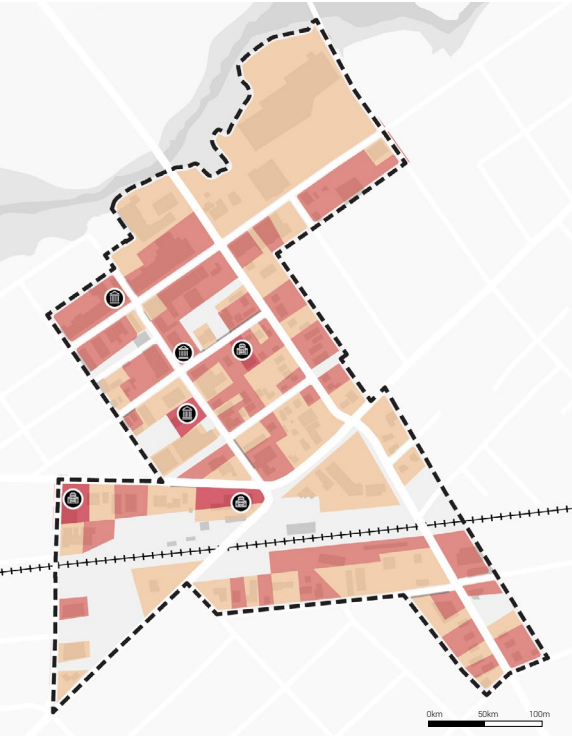
- 3+ Storeys

2-3 Storeys

1 Storey
- Downtown Boundary

Designated Heritage Building

Other Landmark Building



1.2 Previous Plans and Initiatives

The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc has had a long-standing commitment to maintaining the health and vitality of Downtown Strathroy. In 2006 the Municipality adopted its first CIP, a façade improvement programme. In 2008, the Municipality adopted a master plan for Downtown Strathroy outlining a series of municipally-led initiatives and strategic interventions to the public realm across the Downtown, many of which have been implemented. Most recently, the Municipality adopted the Downtown Strathroy Urban Design Guidelines in 2018 to provide detailed guidance on the development and redevelopment of land and buildings in the Downtown as well as the public realm.

1.2.1 Strathroy Downtown Master Plan

The first Master Concept Plan for the Downtown was adopted in 2010. The document was developed with Zelinka Priamo Ltd in collaboration with municipal staff, the Downtown BIA, and the Chamber. The document outlined a background study, which created a historical basis for design and development guidance in the Downtown. Six priority areas for municipal intervention were outlined in the plan. The document also included guidelines for underutilized areas, recommended additional parallel processes to occur to guide the future of the Downtown. The Background Report provides an inventory of projects which were outlined within the Master Plan which were and were not complete or are currently in process to better understand the successes of the plan, and areas which need to be adapted.

The intention of the 2020 Master Plan update is to ensure it reflects the current conditions of the Downtown, current municipal priorities, and overall best practices for the next step forwards.

1.2.2 About Face Community Improvement Plan

The About Face Community Improvement Plan (CIP) offers grants for building and business owners in the Downtown / commercial cores of Strathroy, Mount Brydges, and Melbourne. The intent of the CIP is to encourage tenants and property owners in the designated areas to rehabilitate and restore their properties using the financial incentives outlined in the Plan. Specifically, the CIP attempts to: maintain and enhance the architectural heritage of the Municipality's commercial districts; encourage investment in designated area properties; improve the economic viability of the Municipality's commercial districts; and improve the image and beautify the Municipality's commercial districts.

1.2.3 Strathroy Downtown Urban Design Guidelines

To ensure that new development and redevelopment in the Downtown makes a positive contribution to the community, the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc engaged Re: public to complete urban design guidelines for both the built form and the public realm of the Downtown of Strathroy. The focus of the guidelines surrounds creating human scale, pedestrian friendly development that reflects local building traditions and heritage, and builds on community assets such as the Sydenham River, Alexandra Park, and other local landmarks. The project engaged with residents, the Downtown business community, and the local development industry in the creation of the guidelines and a flexible and easy to follow implementation process for municipal staff. Key elements of the document provide site and street scale design guidelines which will be coherent and consistent within the 2020 Master Plan Update.

1.2.4 Moving Forward: The 2020 Community Improvement Plan and Master Plan Update

As the CIP and Downtown Master Plan have been in effect for 13 and 11 years respectively, the Municipality has decided to undertake a joint update to renew these important tools to ensure they remain relevant and useful to both the Municipality and the Downtown. This two-part project has a number of important objectives:

- Developing a new and expanded CIP for the Municipality offering a full suite of incentives to, not only property-owners and businesses in the Downtown, but across the Municipality;
- Supporting county-wide economic development objectives, with the creation of a CIP template that can be used by other municipalities as a base to create their own CIP programmes;
- Updating of the Downtown Master Plan to ensure it reflects current conditions in the Downtown, current municipal priorities, and overall best practices;
- Including updated official plan policies and zoning by-law regulations, again reflecting current conditions, priorities, and best practices;
- Ensuring that a good and effective public consultation programme is undertaken in support of both these updates



Figure 1 Front Street Storefronts



Figure 2 Clock Tower Frank Street



Figure 3 Front Street East Facade

1.3 Developing a Vision

1.3.1 Background Report: What We Heard

Strathroy-Caradoc undertook the review and update of this Master Plan concurrently with the development of a new municipal-wide Community Improvement Plan in 2020. Given the complementary nature of these two plans, a single harmonised public engagement strategy was carried out, called “REINVEST 2020”. This undertaking was promoted through both traditional physical and digital media. The strategy ultimately centered around “Downtown Summit” sessions where members of municipal staff, council, businesses, developers, and the general public were engaged in roundtable discussions on their vision and priorities for the future of Downtown Strathroy. Following the Downtown Summit, an online survey was published to allow for continued feedback from the community in the early stages of drafting the Master Plan. Based on the feedback received, the majority of the community felt that Downtown Strathroy has a well-established foundation of public space, interconnectedness, commerce, and built heritage; however, there were areas identified for improvement. The main priorities arising with respect to Downtown Strathroy included:

- Introducing more housing/attainable housing in the Downtown
- Creating a “Destination” – providing more opportunities for all-age entertainment and greater diversity among commerce in the Downtown
- Encouraging the renewal and revitalization of key landmark properties through infill, redevelopment, and beautification – either through public/private cooperation or incentives

- Continue to pursue landscaping/ streetscaping to improve the beauty of the public realm
- Strengthen the ties between existing/new recreation amenities and the Downtown fabric
- Improve non-vehicular (pedestrian, bicycles) connectivity throughout the Downtown and surrounding areas
- Evaluate the potential to revitalize and improve parking facilities in the Downtown

These priorities assisted the project team in identifying key missing links in the Downtown and the strategies for addressing them in Section 1.3.2, which eventually informed the development of the Master Plan outlined in Section 2.0, built by the community, for the community.



Figure 4 Consultation Images

1.3.2 Background Report: Findings & Priorities

In addition to the public participation process, the project team undertook research on the qualities of the Downtown which have been summarized in the Background Report. The report utilized the previous analysis developed within the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines to identify urban structures and form, while developing a deeper understanding of the qualities which make Downtown Strathroy successful.

The feedback from the community paired with this background analysis led to the creation of three key themes for the Downtown Master Plan:

- Creating a Destination for Business & People
- A Place for Living
- Improving Mobility

These three themes represent existing qualities of the Downtown which should be fostered through the design and implementation of the Downtown Master Plan and have been summarized in the following pages.

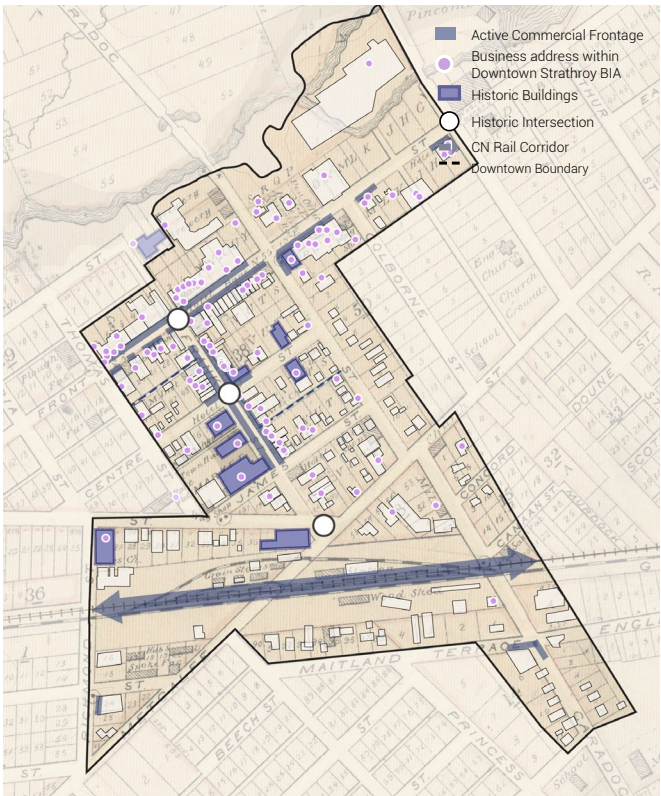


Figure 5 BIA and heritage streetscape analysis from Background Report

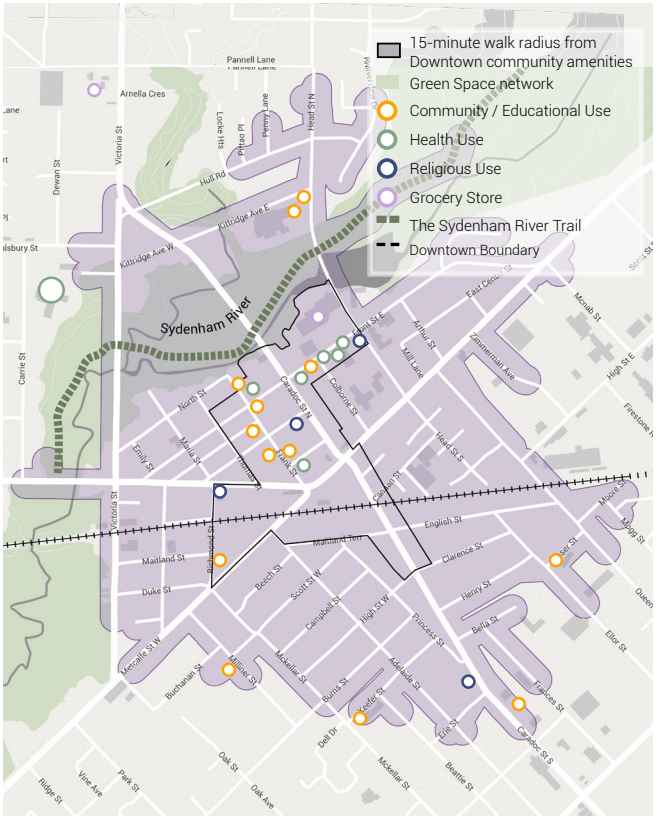


Figure 6 Access to facilities analysis from Background Report

"Creating a Destination for Business & People"

Downtown Strathroy and its Business Improvement Area has over 150 business primarily clustered along Frank and Front Streets. The quantity of businesses concentrated in an accessible radius provides the opportunity to create a relatively bustling area of commercial activity. Downtown Strathroy is also an area of rich historic, compact and varied land uses that has traditionally formed the social commercial and administrative core of the community. The historic grid, populated with key historical buildings and streetscapes, is a strong basis for identity and placemaking in the Downtown and should be continued and enhanced throughout the main commercial streets.



Missing Links

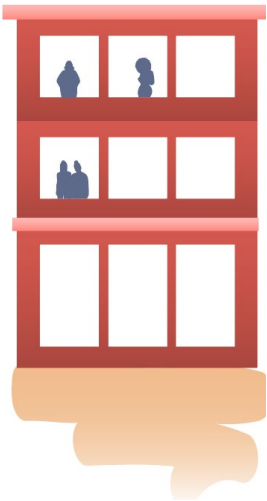
- Streetscaping and Pedestrian Right of Way
- The Kenwick Block
- Planning for Parking
- CN Rail Corridor Area
- Sydenham Walking Trail / Boardwalk
- Public Spaces and Outdoor Events

Strategies

1. Streetscaping improvements, particularly along Front and Frank Streets, will improve pedestrian experience and facilitate more prolonged visits to the Downtown.
2. Increase the depth of the pedestrian right-of-way to increase business spill-out spaces.
3. Undertake a parking master plan to provide direction for a coordinated, strategic approach to parking, including supply and demand, cost, and design, that aligns with the goals of the master plan.
4. Integrate new uses into CN Rail corridor lands including creative light industrial and enterprise business, increased public spaces, and residential development.
5. Identify underutilized buildings and sites based on potential for redevelopment, infill, and transition to new diverse uses that contribute to creating a destination (e.g. Kenwick Mall).
6. Increase the vitality and use of public spaces through new landscape designs and transitioning of underutilized surface parking lands.
7. Increase mixed-use activities and more development fronting onto the waterfront edge and explore opportunities to tie future redevelopment of larger commercial sites on the north side of the Downtown to the Sydenham River.

"A Place for Living"

The vitality of self-sufficient Downtown depends on access to facilities and amenities. It has been acknowledged that Strathroy's Downtown is home to much of the daily necessities needed for a complete community yet the residential presence in the Downtown remains quite low in terms of population and households. This is due to the low-density nature of the historic residential development. The Downtown is missing newer and more dense forms of residential development which can increase population access to facilities, local businesses, natural areas, and regional transit.



Missing Links

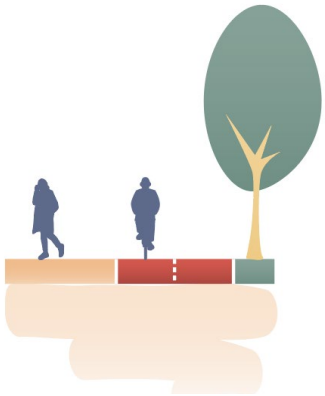
- An Extension of Residential into the Downtown
- A Variety of Housing Types
- Metcalfe Street and Caradoc Street North

Strategies

1. Extend mixed-use and single use mid-density residential along the east edge of Front Street
2. Increase residential development along the waterfront to improve access and activate the underutilized area
3. Introduce a mix of new housing types (e.g. mid-density, townhomes, and row-housing) with a mixture of tenure agreements
4. Introduce residential uses along Metcalfe and Caradoc Street to connect the residential axis and improve the pedestrian experience.
5. Encourage the establishment of new affordable/attainable residential units in the Downtown through incentive programming (e.g. purpose-built rentals, secondary units)
6. Encourage residential redevelopment and infill on larger "legacy" residential lots where appropriate to increase density in the Downtown.

"Improving Mobility"

Downtown Strathroy is primarily made up of a fine-grain road network which creates opportunities for walkability and access. However, the pedestrian amenities within the Downtown should be improved to promote safe access for all members of the community. Additionally, more links to natural areas and recreational areas should be improved in order to create a healthy and livable Downtown for residents.



Missing Links

- Access Across the Sydenham River
- Green connections along Caradoc Street North and Frank Street
- Increased Pedestrian Amenity Surrounding the Downtown

Strategies

1. Increase walkability in the Downtown through pedestrian connections and streetscaping
2. Increase the potential for cycling using safe street designs to introduce bike corridors/lanes that connect the Downtown Strathroy, South Strathroy, and North Strathroy
3. Improve existing/create new connections across the Sydenham River
4. Evaluate and prioritize the redesign of major intersections in the Downtown to improve the safety, accessibility, and experience for all users (pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles), particularly:
 - Metcalfe and Caradoc
 - Metcalfe, Albert, and Frank
 - Head and Front
 - Colborne and Front
5. Improve street frontages through new development south of James Street and Front Street
6. Introduce streetscaping and intersection design which strengthens the individual identity of the three historic areas.
7. Create pedestrian connection across Sydenham River Bridge and develop recreational trail in the southern section of the river
8. Improve green streetscaping along Caradoc Street North and Frank Street to develop green connections to naturalized areas.
9. Activate the James Street Parking Lot to increase the public experience around Town Hall



Figure 7 Farmer's Market

1.4 Vision for Strathroy's Downtown

Following public consultations and the identification of key themes and strategies, the project team has outlined a vision which embodies the potential of the existing and future conditions of the Downtown. The intention of the vision is to guide the overall framework of the master plan with a common goal.

"As the heart of the community and immediate region, Downtown Strathroy will thrive as a vibrant mixed-use centre, by continuing to evolve as a resilient economic centre, a livable neighbourhood, and a connected area."

2.0

Master Plan

Based on the vision and strategies outlined in the previous section of this report, and the public consultation taken to-date, the Master Plan creates the spatial framework for key projects and developments proposed in the Downtown. This section will outline the overall design intent, the 15 key interventions proposed in the area, a breakdown of the built form and mobility structure, and an in depth look at the design intent for each Character Area.



Figure 8 Clock Tower

2.1 Master Plan

2.1.1 An Evolving Downtown

The Master Plan is intended to achieve the strategies which have been outlined in the Background section of this report. Using the following design and land-use interventions the plan will create a Downtown which is connected to the natural waterfront, embraces the mixed-use mainstream built form, creates moderate density near highly livable spaces, re-imagines the mobility mix, and creates opportunity for a transit destination. Most importantly, the plan links the significant 'clusters' in each Character Area. From Front Street's mainstreet feel, Frank Street's civic area, the Rail district's rough and informal appeal, to Caradoc's historic residential forms, the Master Plan creates streetscapes, public spaces, building forms, and natural areas which connect and compliment each experience.

To achieve this, the Master Plan focuses on 15 key interventions and design initiatives tailored to addressing the community's priorities and missing links identified in Sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.2. Each of these interventions are outlined conceptually in the following section and are intended to provide guidance and direction on the future evolution of the Downtown.

These interventions are composed of a combination of both publicly and privately initiated projects. In some cases they involve lands and matters exclusively in within the domain of the Municipality or County such as streetscaping while other initiatives are composed of the redevelopment of private lands anticipated to be undertaken by private interests as the need or market dictates such as the private redevelopment of lands for mixed use purposes. In other cases, interventions will likely be implemented as part of a joint effort between the Municipality and the private sector, such as the creation of parks and open space to be undertaken through the development approvals process.

These key interventions are described in greater details on the following pages.



Figure 9 Master Plan



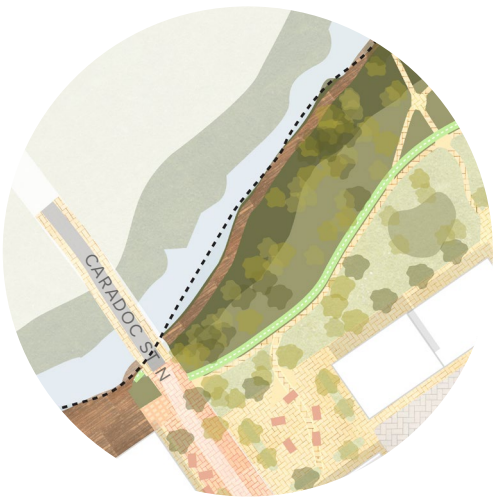
1 **2.1.2 Waterfront Recreation Hub**

The lack of open space and parkland within the Downtown make the south shore of the Sydenham River an appealing opportunity to provide these amenities. As such, a waterfront recreational hub is proposed intersection of the Sydenham River and Head Street behind the current Kenwick Mall. The proposed hub would include such features as an open air pavilion/shelter; shoreline river access to accommodate canoe / kayak access; and more formally landscaped open spaces, with the goal of increasing access and enjoyment of the River and connecting the Downtown to the larger municipal-wide trail system.



2 **2.1.3 Naturalized Landscape and Shorelines Restoration**

This area of shoreline along the south shore of the Sydenham also provides significant opportunities for shoreline restoration and naturalization, restoring the shoreline and providing a greater buffer between development and the River's flooding hazard. This also provides opportunities to implement a larger waterfront open space network while improving shoreline stability, water filtration, and wildlife/pedestrian access to the river. While the revegetation and use of plantings/native species will be a key effort, the re-naturalization would also see the creation of more intimate outdoor spaces within a larger park system along the waterfront, structured around open green spaces, landscape furniture, and some lighter passive rec features such as outdoor gyms or playground equipment.



3 **2.1.4 Waterfront Boardwalk**

Accessibility and mobility will be key considerations in the evolution of the south shore of the Sydenham to create a more open, natural public space network in the Downtown. Seeking to parallel the established waterfront trail on the north shore, a series of low impact interventions should be pursued that would establish a waterfront trail/boardwalk on the south shore, not only to allow users to enjoy the river and its natural spaces, but to create a pedestrian connection from Head Street, across Caradoc Street, to the Frank Street pedestrian bridge. This would include a mix of selective brushing/clearing, and the introduction of a formal trail composed of a mix of gravel and wooden-boardwalk legs, depending on the stability/saturation of the soil.



4 **2.1.5 Mixed-use Kenwick Mall Redevelopment**

The Kenwick Mall site presents one of the biggest opportunities for redevelopment, infill, and placemaking in the Downtown, and is one of the key interventions of the Master Plan. The plan envisions the redevelopment of the Kenwick block from its current single-use/ auto-orientated form into smaller mixed-use developments, allowing for more intimate spaces to be created through a mix of interesting built form, landscaping, and placemaking. Building height and massing along Front Street would reinforce pedestrian scale (at 3 to 4 storeys) while allowing subtle increases in mass/height moving north toward the river (upwards of 6 to 9 storeys). The site should be the focus of intensive mixed-use development containing residential uses and should include strong orientation to both the waterfront and Front Street. Parking is envisioned to be contained in the interior of the block with a combination of surface parking and some parking structures ideally located one-half storey below ground level to reduce their visual impact.



5 **2.1.6 Waterfront Commercial**

Similar to the Kenwick Mall site, the site immediately west of Caradoc Street, on the south of the Sydenham River would be redeveloped and reorganized to front onto the River and Caradoc Street and better frame this major gateway to the Downtown. In an effort to provide an additional mix of formal and natural public spaces along the River, this area should be structured to support small-scale food and/or retail uses that are complementary to tourism and waterfront trail users while potentially allowing residential uses above the first storey. Central to this intervention is again continued access to the River and shoreline allowing visitors to physically connect and touch the River.



6 **2.1.7 Urban Grocery**

A grocery store within the heart of the Downtown will be integral to a successful mix of uses, particularly supporting the increases in residential density. Any store should be strategically located at the intersection of two of the main Downtown arteries, Caradoc Street and Front Street. This will ensure that the higher volumes of traffic (particularly vehicular) can be appropriately accommodated, while also allowing for easy access to pedestrians with its central locale. Situated as the "head of the table" for the Kenwick Mall site, the urban grocery location and building height/mass will seek to create a terminating vista for the interior of the site to the east and a landmark for one of the main intersections in the Downtown at Front Street and Caradoc Street.



7 **2.1.8 Shared Street**

For all intents and purposes Front Street serves the 'main street' of activity in the Downtown and should be reconfigured as a shared street to improve access and mobility for all modes of transportation and pedestrians. The redevelopment of Front as shared spaces will blur the line between road and sidewalk, parking lot and plaza, bike lane and pathway, to create one linear space to guide visitors, shoppers, and residents along the Downtown's main artery and can be easily closed off to vehicular traffic for special events and festivities. A combination of street trees, furniture and strategic decorative paving will be employed to ensure a high level of legibility for users to delineate where and to what extent modes will be mixed, which will ensure that safety is upheld.



8 **2.1.9 Central Square and Shoreline Access**

The intersection of Caradoc St N and Front St should be developed as the core gateway to the Downtown through a mix of landscaping, wayfinding features, landmarks, and decorative features/signage. This intersection should be reorganized as a plaza from which all activity/traffic in the Downtown/waterfront area will be linked. Decorative paver stones, concrete work, and other distinctive features like paint and signage will help to establish this square as a key hub and cornerstone to the Downtown. The improvement of this space will further the sense of arrival and establish the formal entry to the Downtown from the north. Any proposed interventions on Caradoc St N will be subject to approval from the County of Middlesex.



9 **2.1.10 Mid-density Infill**

The Downtown area is characterized by low-density buildings with many underdeveloped/underutilized lands. This provides excellent opportunities for strategic and context-sensitive infill, particularly in the south end of Downtown around the Metcalfe Street - Albert Street - Frank Street intersections/areas. Infilling these areas with mid-rise residential units provides significant opportunities to increase the population of the Downtown and provide a wider range of housing types and affordability. The built form should be organized to frame the street with an interesting mix of façades, materiality, and stepped building massing and heights blend into the existing massing and scale of the Downtown. Fronting onto Metcalfe and Albert, commercial ground floor units are not necessarily required.



10 **2.1.11 Green Street**

Frank Street is arguably the main civic corridor in the Downtown and forms an axis between the (former) railway station and the Sydenham River, two features instrumental to the development of the community. It is also home to significant civic institutions including the Municipal Offices, Library, Museum, and Post Office. This often-wide street should be reconfigured as a 'green axis' between these two historically important features. Providing a gateway from the train station to both the Downtown and the Sydenham River, the reconfiguration should feature significant and coordinated landscaped boulevards with Low Impact Development features such as permeable pavement, mini stormwater-planter swales, and significant re-naturalization and landscaping to improve the tree cover. These interventions can assist in strengthening the importance of this civic corridor.



11 **2.1.12 Railway District and Market**

Centred around the landmark silos and former mill, this area currently contains underutilized railway lands, the former mill complex, and as well as some smaller lots occupied by both residences and commercial operations. This area has the potential to be the focus of a major redevelopment to create a food and entertainment destination and a permanent future home to the Strathroy Farmer's Market leveraging the industrial character of existing buildings to form a unique destination in the Downtown. Envisioned as a mix of uses such as eateries, microbreweries, cafés, bakeries, agricultural demonstration projects, and smaller scale retail this area could promote activity throughout all times of the day and offering spaces for entertainment and nightlife as well as, centred around a new permanent home to the Strathroy Farmer's Market.



12 **2.1.13 Transit hub**

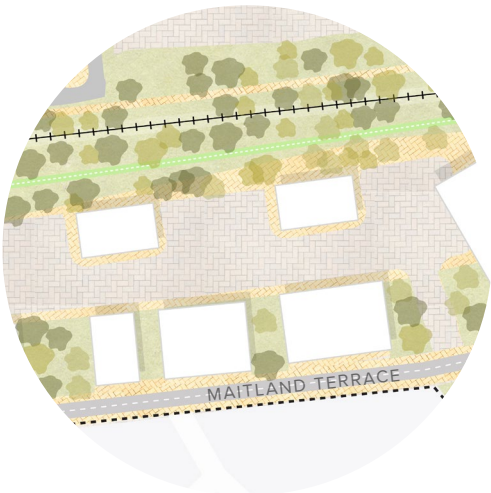
The VIA Rail Station and surrounding lands have long served as an important gateway to Strathroy and are currently significantly under-used and vacant. Carrying over a proposed initiative from the previous Downtown Master Plan, this Plan envisions this area redeveloped as a transit hub and commuter station for the existing train service as well as future potential regional / local public transit. The significant land holdings and their location along the county road and the railway makes the area conducive to vehicle parking and maneuvering of large vehicles. Redevelopment of these lands into a future transit hub would reinforce and reinvigorate this historical gateway into the Downtown and the community.



13

2.1.14 Stacked-Townhouse Residential

There is a considerable gap in the volume of higher-density, affordable residential development in the Downtown. The largely vacant lands south of the rail line offer an excellent opportunity to provide a softer typology of higher-density residential development (i.e. stacked townhouses) as the lands are surrounded by stable lower density residential neighbourhoods to the west and south. This area does not necessarily require the incorporation of the ground floor commercial units along the entire base of the development given the adjacent residential areas and provides an excellent opportunity for a mix of residential typologies and affordability.



14

2.1.15 Commercial / Light Industrial

The well-established light industrial / highway commercial lands south of the rail line will continue to play a role in diversifying the Downtown's employment opportunities and service offerings but have suffered from a lack of identity and a functional approach to urban design and architecture. In years past, these lands were previously home to some of Strathroy's most important industrial operations that could serve as an identity building tool. As the lands are located at the major southern gateway along Caradoc Street, focus should be placed on urban design, landscaping, and building placement to frame Caradoc Street. Recognizing that this area will likely continue to develop with low density, single use commercial and light industrial developments the focus should continue to be on high-quality site design and the incorporation of building elements and materials that are more reflective of the industrial heritage of the area.



15

2.1.16 Low-density Infill

Lower density residential infill will be promoted on some of the larger legacy lots in order to round out the fringes of the Downtown area and transition into the residential corridor along Caradoc Street South. A denser lot fabric will be promoted through severance processes, permitting the establishment of secondary dwelling units, as well as the construction of new row housing and/or duplex housing no more than 2 or 3 storeys. The area around the Caradoc Street and English Street intersection may be balanced with a mix of local commercial and residential uses in order to better transition to the Downtown.

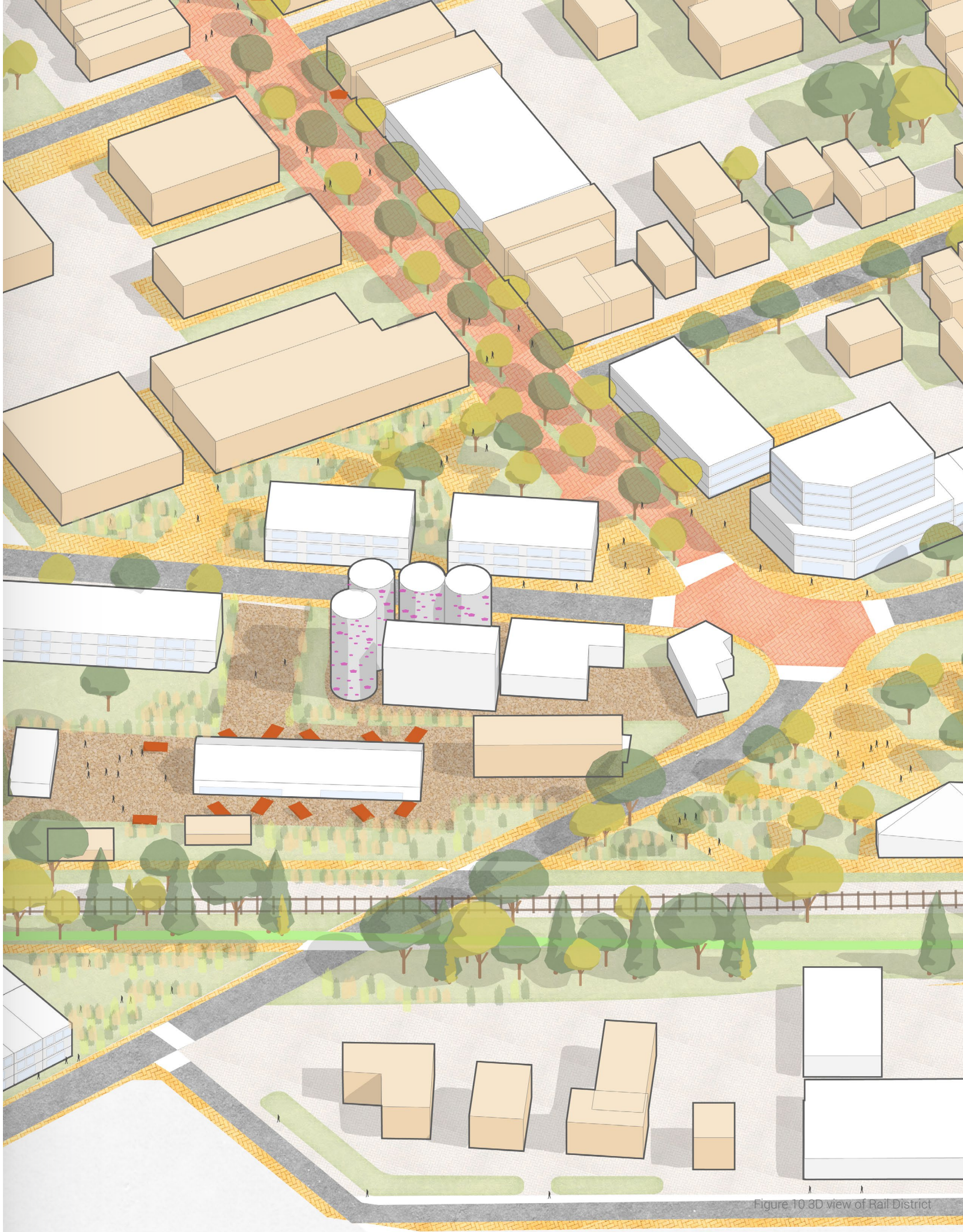


Figure 10 3D view of Rail District



2.2 Master Plan Structure

The following chapter will define the structure of the Master Plan by defining the urban form, density, land-uses, public space framework, and mobility network.

Figure 11 3D View Downtown Master Plan

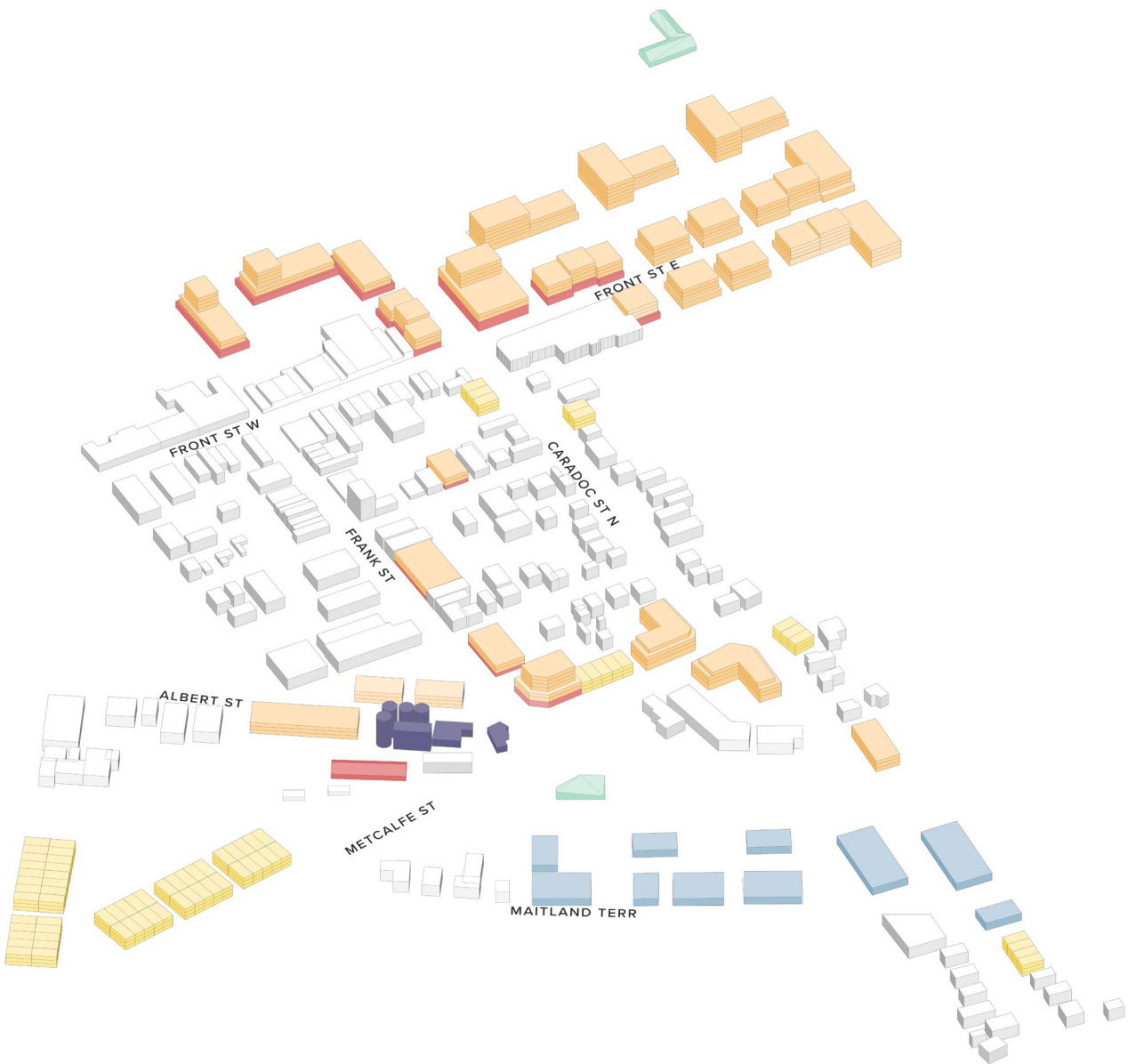


Figure 12 3D Land Use and Building Types

2.2.1 Land Use and Building Types

The urban forms outlined within the Master Plan are intended to give a balance of flexibility and guidance for heights and density in each area. As seen in Figure 12, the majority of mixed-use housing developments are located along Front Street and the waterfront. These forms are intended to provide moderate density along the attractive riverfront while extending the historic mainstreet forms of Front Street. It is integral that these development blocks retain parking in the rear of buildings, away from the streetscape and natural waterfront. Smaller scale infill projects are shown along Frank Street, Caradoc, and Metcalfe Street, in order to integrate new residential, and create more active streetscapes and intersections. To the south of the rail line, commercial blocks are used, focusing on street frontages, interior parking, and appropriate landscaping.

- Multi-unit Residential
- Single-unit Residential
- Retail
- Commercial
- Renovation
- Public Use and Transit
- Existing Buildings



Figure 13 Open Space, Green Space, and Public Plazas

2.2.2 Public Space and Recreation

The proposed Master Plan aims to develop upon the existing qualities of public and recreational spaces by creating new connections and new opportunities for public areas. These interventions include:

- A green rail corridor with multi-use pathways
- A new public / food destination area in the rail district
- A pedestrian oriented transit station area
- A small public park abutting the public library (James Street)
- Shared street spaces along Front and Frank Street
- A 'green connection' along Frank Street
- A plaza along northern Frank Street leading to the waterfront
- A re-naturalized waterfront landscape park with a new recreational trail

- Green Recreation Space
- Naturalized Riverfront
- Pedestrian Public Space
- Shared Street Connection



Figure 14 Mobility and Access Map

2.2.3 Pedestrian, Cycling, and Transit Connections

It is the intention of the Master Plan to create an interconnected Downtown for sustainable transport modes. Though the pedestrian grid structure of the Downtown offers ideal accessibility, streetscaping and public spaces have been designed to increase the pedestrian connections on major routes. As shown in Figure 12, the shared street along Front creates a clear pedestrian access to the transit station, as well as the Front Street core. Cycling connections were strategically chosen along the waterfront and along the 'green rail buffer'. A separated bike lane along Caradoc connects these two multi-use pathways, creating an efficient and comfortable cycling route in the Downtown.

Streetscapes and mobility will be further addressed in section 2.4.

- Pedestrian Connection: Shared Street
- - - Pedestrian Connection: Sidewalk
- Pedestrian Connection: Pathway
- - - Cycling Connection: Shared Pathway
- Cycling Connection: Cycling Lane
- Transit Destination

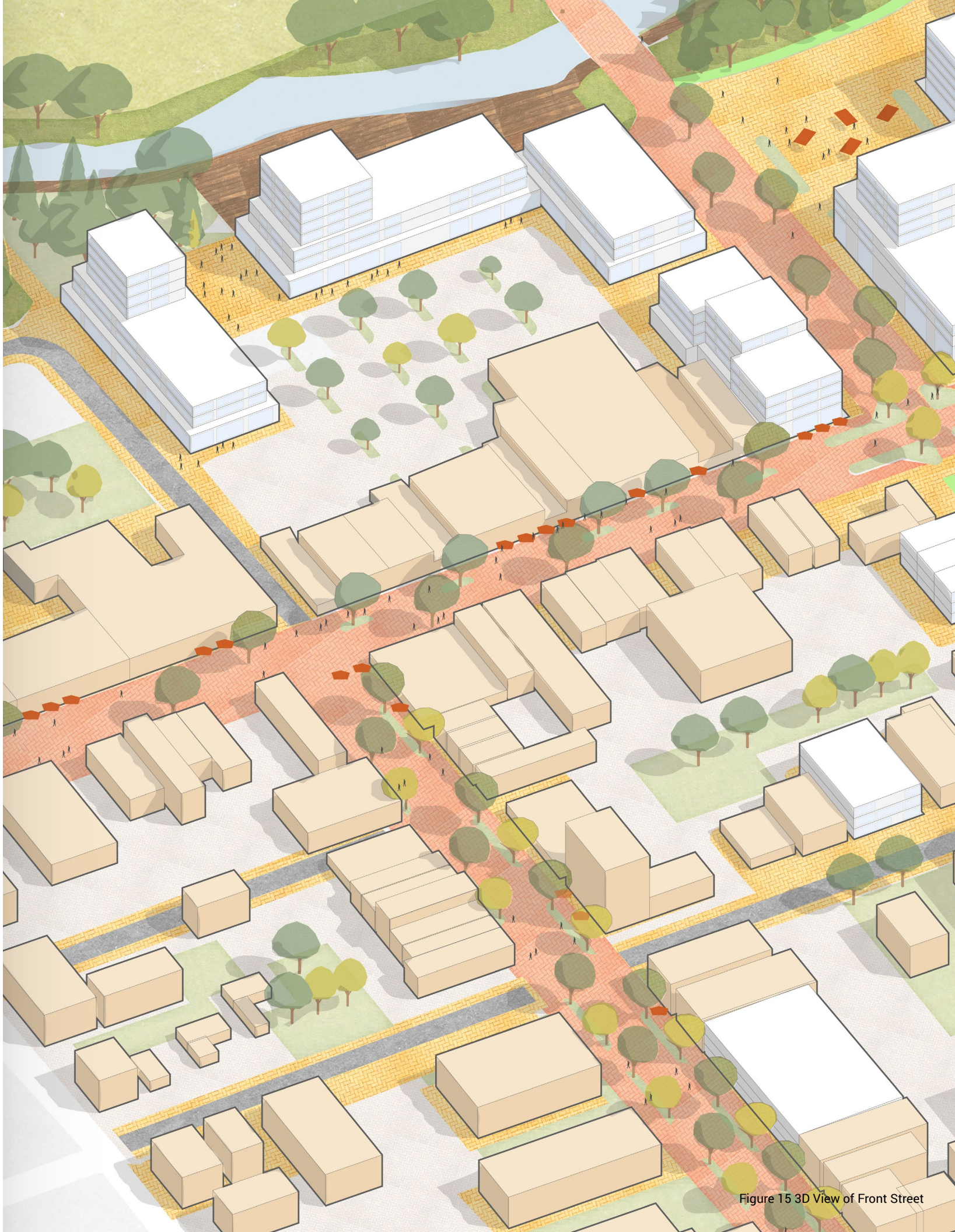


Figure 15 3D View of Front Street



Figure 16 3D Front Street West

2.3 Character Areas

2.3.1 Mixed Use Destination: Front Street West

The Front Street West Character Area extends along Front Street from Caradoc to Head Streets. While this area is where the settlement of Strathroy began, few historical buildings remain. Prior to the 1960s this area was home to limited development which included a commercial dairy. The area was significantly redeveloped beginning in the 1960s with the construction of modern auto-oriented commercial plazas, the most recent of which was constructed in 2010.

Master Plan Priorities:

- The urbanisation / reurbanisation of the commercial developments along Front Street;

- The development of a greater mix of uses and densities, recognising the area's potential to accommodate new residential development;
- Establishing a new relationship with the Sydenham River and opportunities to physically connect the Downtown to the riverfront via shoreline improvement and redevelopment;
- Balancing the established historical built-forms west of Caradoc Street with newer development to the east
- Framing the Caradoc Street and Head Street gateways to the Downtown



Figure 17 Reference Images: Front Street West

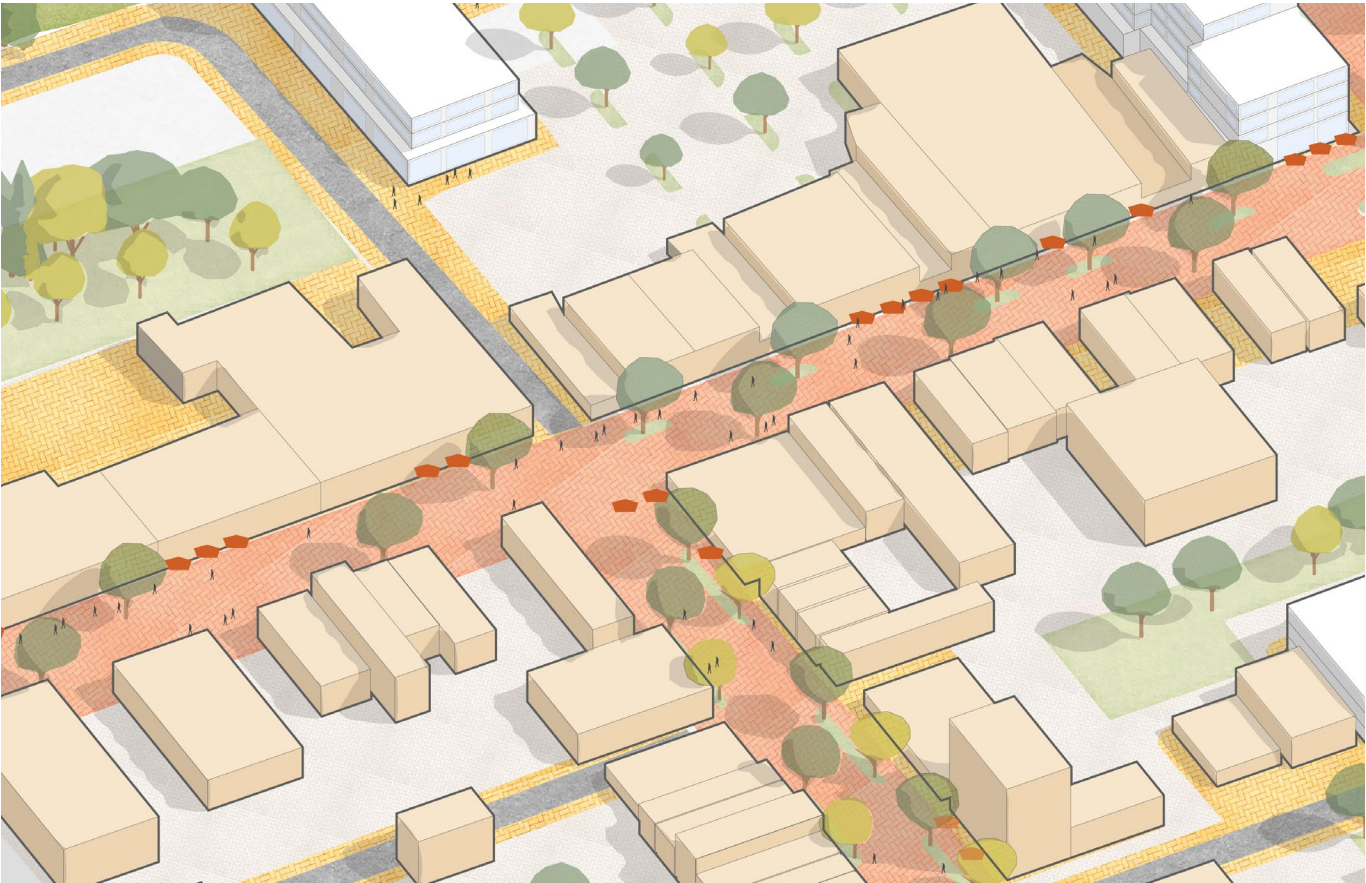


Figure 18 3D Central Core

2.3.2 Accessible Mainstreet: Central Core

The Central Core Character Area is composed of those parts of the Downtown surrounding the intersection of Front and Frank Streets. It is the most intensely developed and compact area of the Downtown and contains the largest collection of historical buildings. It also contains the majority of landmark buildings found in the Downtown. The majority of the parking facilities are also located within the central core.

Master Plan Priorities:

- Retaining and reinforcing the traditional street wall, building forms, and architectural character;
- Conserving and restoring historical / heritage buildings, regardless of whether they are designated under the Ontario Heritage Act;
- Developing new public squares and spaces to support the Downtown as a central gathering place for the community;
- Redeveloping and reorganizing Front and Frank Streets as shared streets to promote improved accessibility, mobility, and safety for all users, whilst allowing for new opportunities for place-making;
- Promoting mid-density infill and/or full-scale redevelopment on larger vacant/underutilized parcels
- Improving the access and character of existing parking facilities within interior blocks via wayfinding elements and landscaping.



Figure 19 Reference Images: Central Core



Figure 20 3D Residential

2.3.3 A Place for Living: Residential

The Downtown Residential Character Areas are composed of two smaller areas of purpose-built residential buildings primarily dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Particularly along Caradoc Street, many of these residences have been converted into office space, medical clinics, and other similar uses, while many remain private residences. Despite the many conversions of use, the character of these areas remains distinctly residential.

Master Plan Priorities:

- Preserving the distinctly residential character of these areas and supporting the residential use of these areas;
- Allowing for the accommodation of commercial uses while preserving the residential character;
- Recognizing the areas ability to support the establishment of higher density residential uses.



Figure 21 Reference Images: Residential

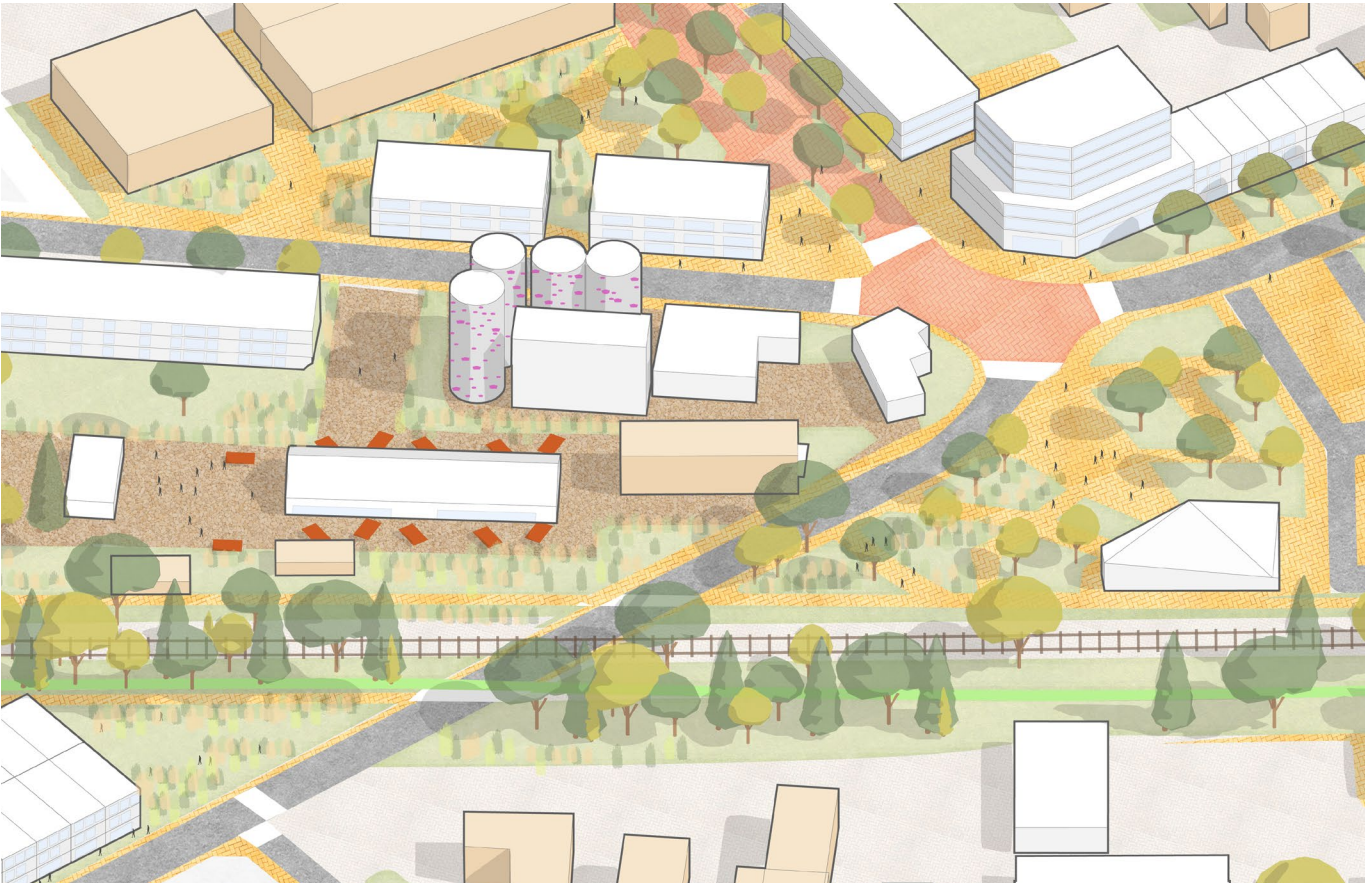


Figure 22 3D Rail District / Southern Gateway

2.3.4 The Rail District: Southern Gateway

The Southern Gateway Character Area is a large swath of the Downtown located along Metcalfe, Albert, and Caradoc Streets generally following the CN rail line. This area housed Strathroy's major industries (gathered along the rail line) during the first half of the 20th Century. Since the 1950s it has been the subject of significant demolition and redevelopment, and includes a number of unoccupied parcels and the remnants of industrial operations. Commercial uses in this area consist of a number of auto-oriented and auto-supported uses such as service stations and garages.

Master Plan Priorities:

- The urbanisation / reurbanisation of the area and the introduction of a greater mix of uses and densities, recognising the limitations caused by the railway line;
- Treating the area's arterial roads as urban boulevards and improving the overall pedestrian amenity, streetscaping, and wayfinding;
- Addressing the interface of this area with adjacent residential areas; and,
- Landscaping efforts intended to break up the larger areas of paving/gravel on sites.



Figure 23 Reference Images: Rail District / Southern Gateway

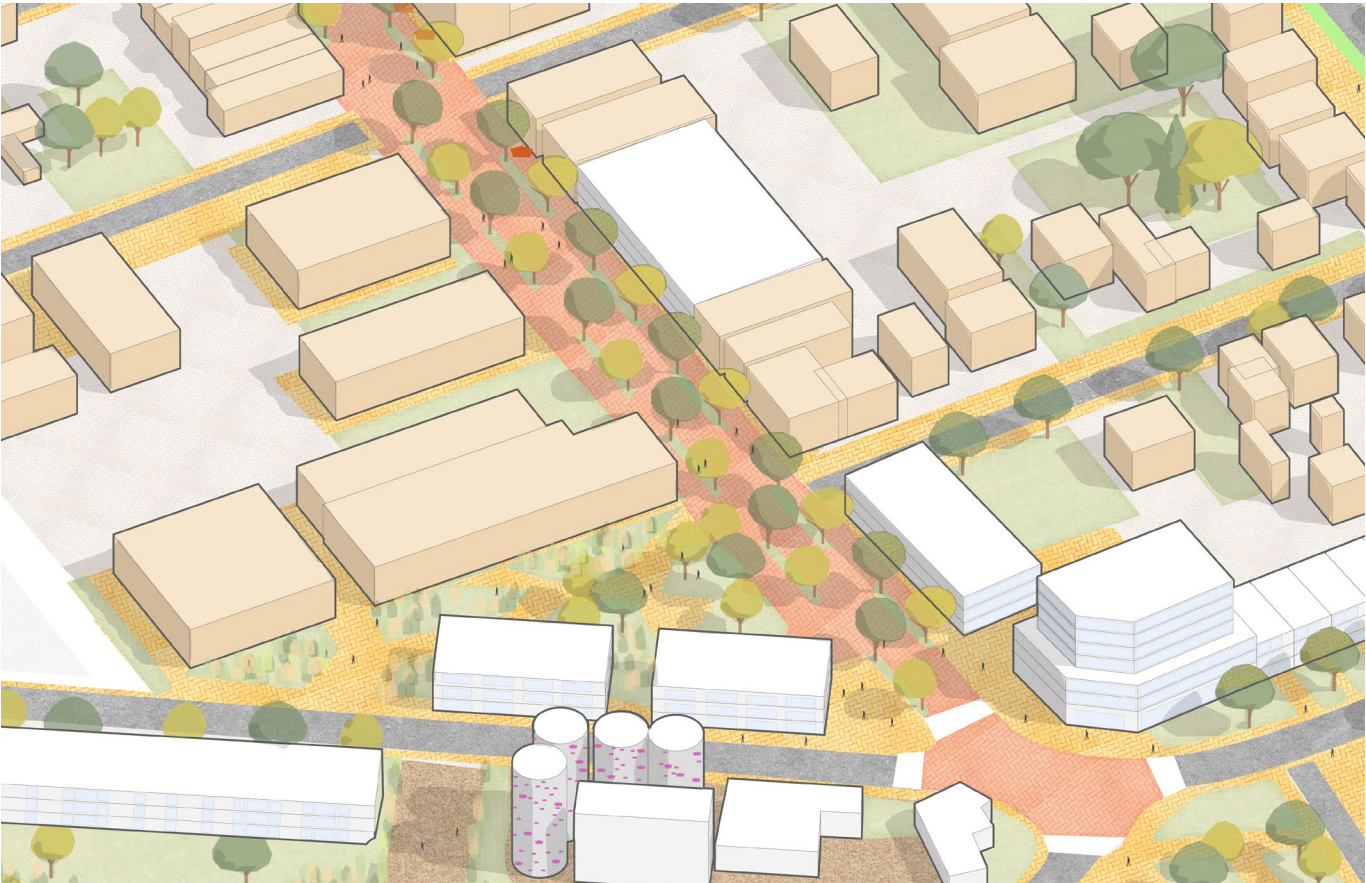


Figure 24 3D Frank Street

2.3.5 A Historic Civic Area: Frank Street

Frank Street is the main historical civic corridor in the community with the Town Hall, Post Office, Strathroy Library, and Museum in the south end, and Strathroy & Area Senior Centre, Sydenham River, and Alexandra Park in the north end. While the former streetscaping interventions in the Downtown are evident along Frank Street closer to Front Street, the streetscape widens south of Centre Street West and generally takes on a utilitarian form with little to no landscaping or street design features intended to improve pedestrian amenity. The intersection of Frank Street with Albert Street and Metcalfe is considerably large due to the irregular road layout caused by the historical industrial and rail-oriented uses in the area. As a result, navigation of this intersection by both pedestrians and vehicles can be difficult due to turn angles, street widths, and limited visibility in some cases.

Master Plan Priorities:

- Streetscaping interventions south of Centre Street West should be pursued to expand on previous works in the Downtown;
- Reorganizing the street to improve mobility and connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Redevelopment of the Frank / Albert / Metcalfe intersection to improve traffic flow, as well as safety and accessibility for pedestrians – possibly through the exploration of a traffic circle to better accommodate the sharp angles of approach from each road;
- Fostering a physical connection between the industrial railway area in the south to the Sydenham River and natural area to the north through physical design interventions along the streetscape; and,
- Emphasizing the civic character and significance of Frank Street, taking advantage of opportunities to support the further establishment of additional civic uses.



Figure 25 Reference Images: Frank Street

2.4 Streetscapes

2.4.1 Mixing Mobility Modes

The existing historic fabric in the Downtown has fostered a generally human-scale environment and a walkable base for the community. While this has created positive environments in certain areas, the streetscapes still uphold a traditional means of mode segregation with clearly separated spaces for vehicles and spaces for pedestrians. These separations are often oriented towards the use of the car and not for cycling and walking. Currently, there are missing links in the pedestrian network with missing sidewalks and discontinued pathways. Additionally there is lack of cycling infrastructure in the Downtown, including cycling lanes, locking stations, and bike repair stations.

The Master Plan intends to integrate a greater mix of mobilities in the Downtown. Firstly, the pedestrian experience will be placed at a higher importance by creating shared streets, pedestrian pathways, extended sidewalks, natural pathways, and improved intersection design. Further, cycling infrastructure will be included into the Downtown. The major infrastructure changes include a multi-use pathway along the waterfront, a separated cycling lane along Caradoc Street, and a multi-use pathway along the railway 'green line'.

Significant intersections will also seek to improve accessibility, safety, and legibility through interventions such as bulb-outs, pedestrian islands, signage, and delineated crossings. Crossing at major intersections should be a main consideration.

It is recognized that Caradoc, Albert, and Metcalfe Streets are under the jurisdiction of the County of Middlesex and any interventions on these roads required the approval from the County of Middlesex



Figure 26 Reference Images: Streetscaping



Figure 27 Streetscape Types

- 'Woonerf' Shared Street
- North-South Corridor
- East-West Corridors
- Secondary Streets

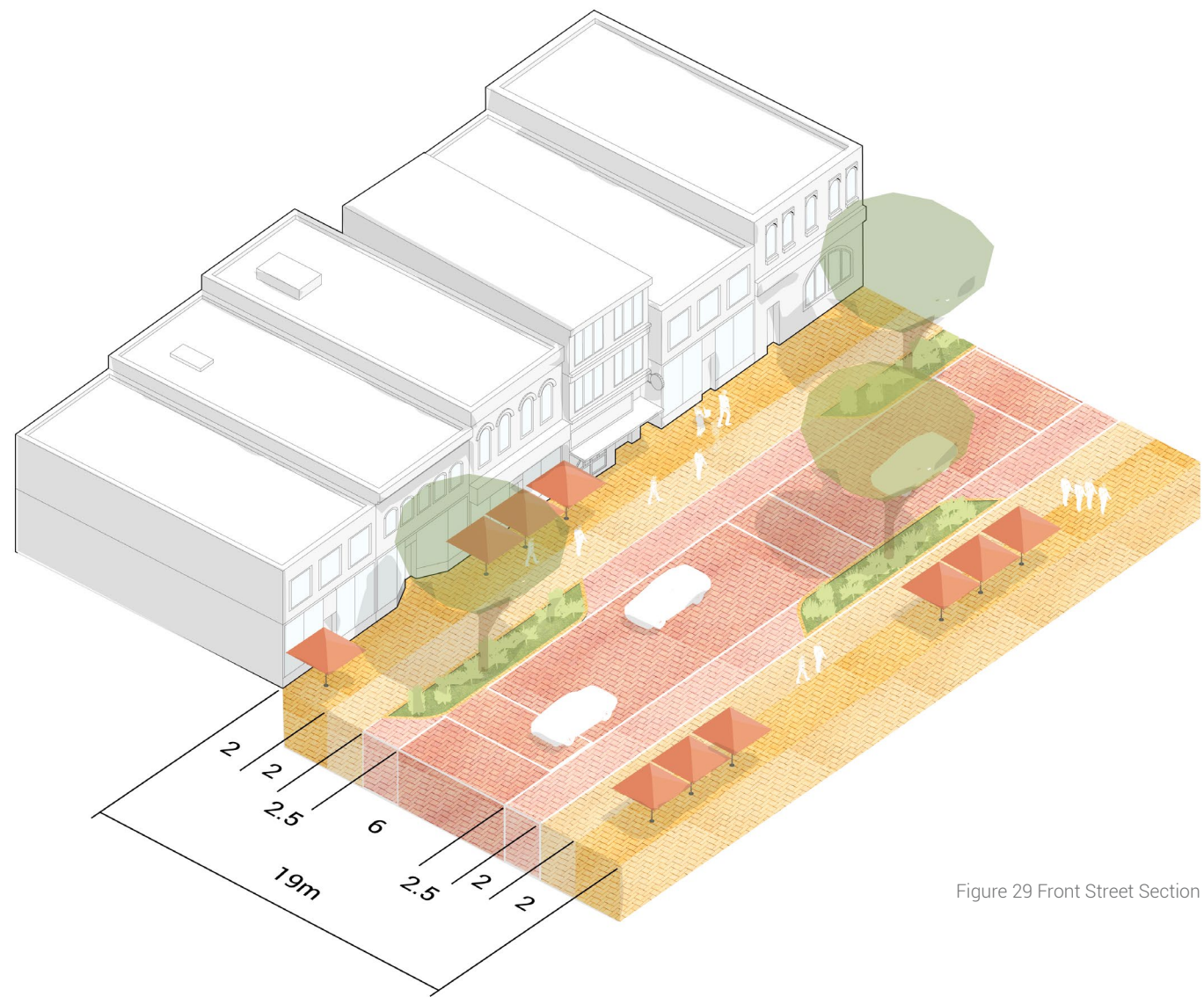


Figure 29 Front Street Section

2.4.2 'Woonerf' Shared Street

The Master Plan proposes that Front Street and Frank Street are transformed into a shared street, giving primary right-of-way to pedestrians and cyclists. This will be realized through paving design where vehicular access is legible, but seamless with the pedestrian areas. This streetscape design will allow for more area for storefronts to 'spill-out' with patios and outdoor spaces. A portion of Caradoc Street is also identified as a potential shared street, as this road is under the jurisdiction of the County of Middlesex it will be subject to approval from the County.

Front Street

The intention of the Front shared street is to create an active space for storefronts and public activity in the core. The existing right-of-way on Front Street is approximately 19m wide. This provides room for two vehicular lanes, double sided parking / landscaping strips, 2-3m pedestrian access, and 2-3m of storefront spill out space.

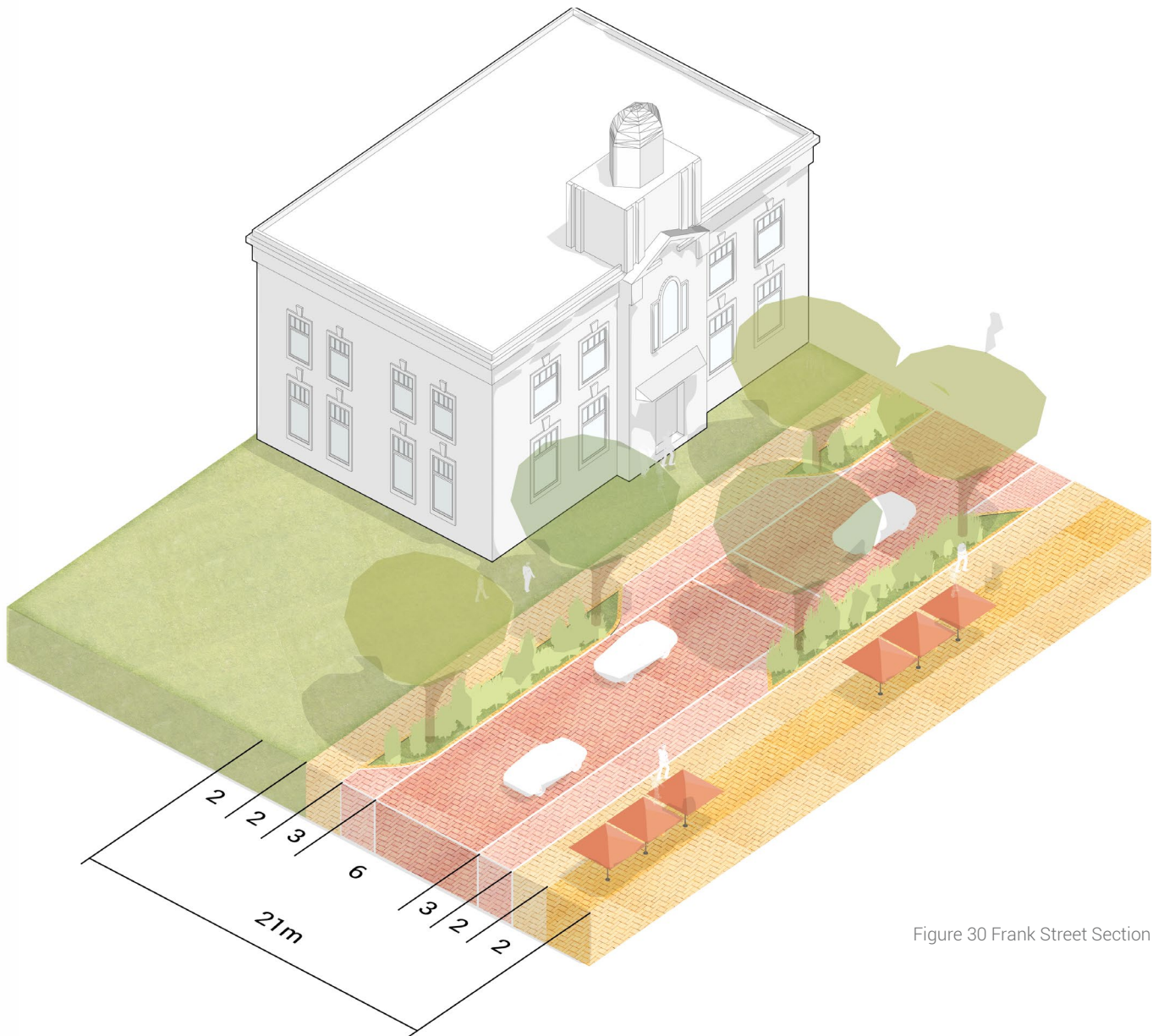


Figure 30 Frank Street Section

Frank Street

Slightly wider than Front, Frank Street provides approximately 21m of right-of-way space. Frank Street will also use the shared street typology, but will integrate more spaces for green landscaping with wider green buffers, in order to embrace the identity of the civic area and create a significant connection to the natural green spaces in the Downtown.

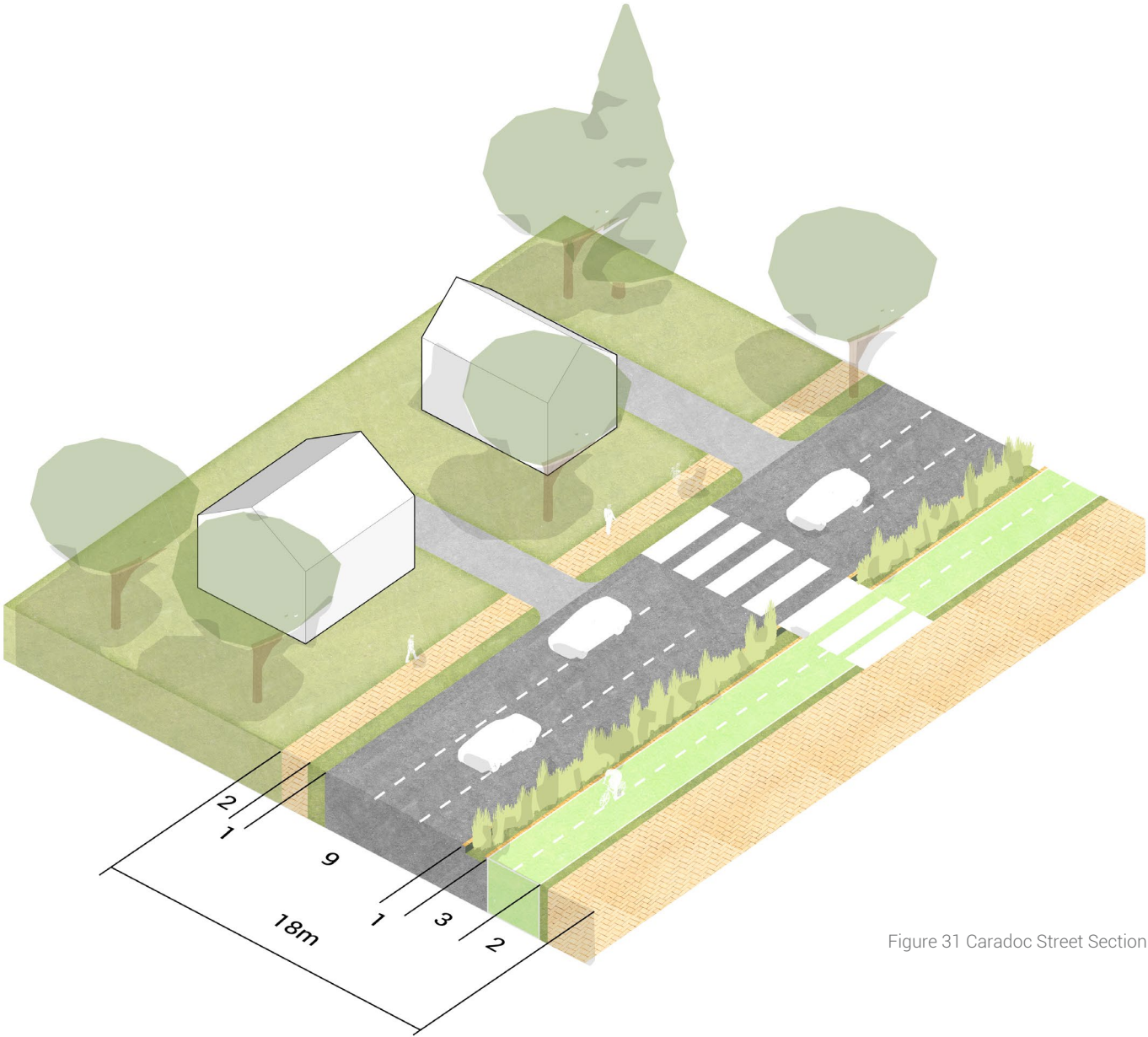


Figure 31 Caradoc Street Section

2.4.3 North-South Corridor

Caradoc Street is currently a low-density residential road with continuous sidewalks and 3-4 lanes for vehicular traffic. The approximately 18m right-of-way provided by Caradoc Street allows for more modes of transport and functional landscaping. The Master Plan outlines that Caradoc can create a north-south cycling connection (3m), a bioswale which may act as a buffer for cyclists (1.5-2m), 3 vehicular lanes (9m) and pedestrian sidewalks on both sides of the road. As this road is under the jurisdiction of the County of Middlesex it will be subject to approval from the County.

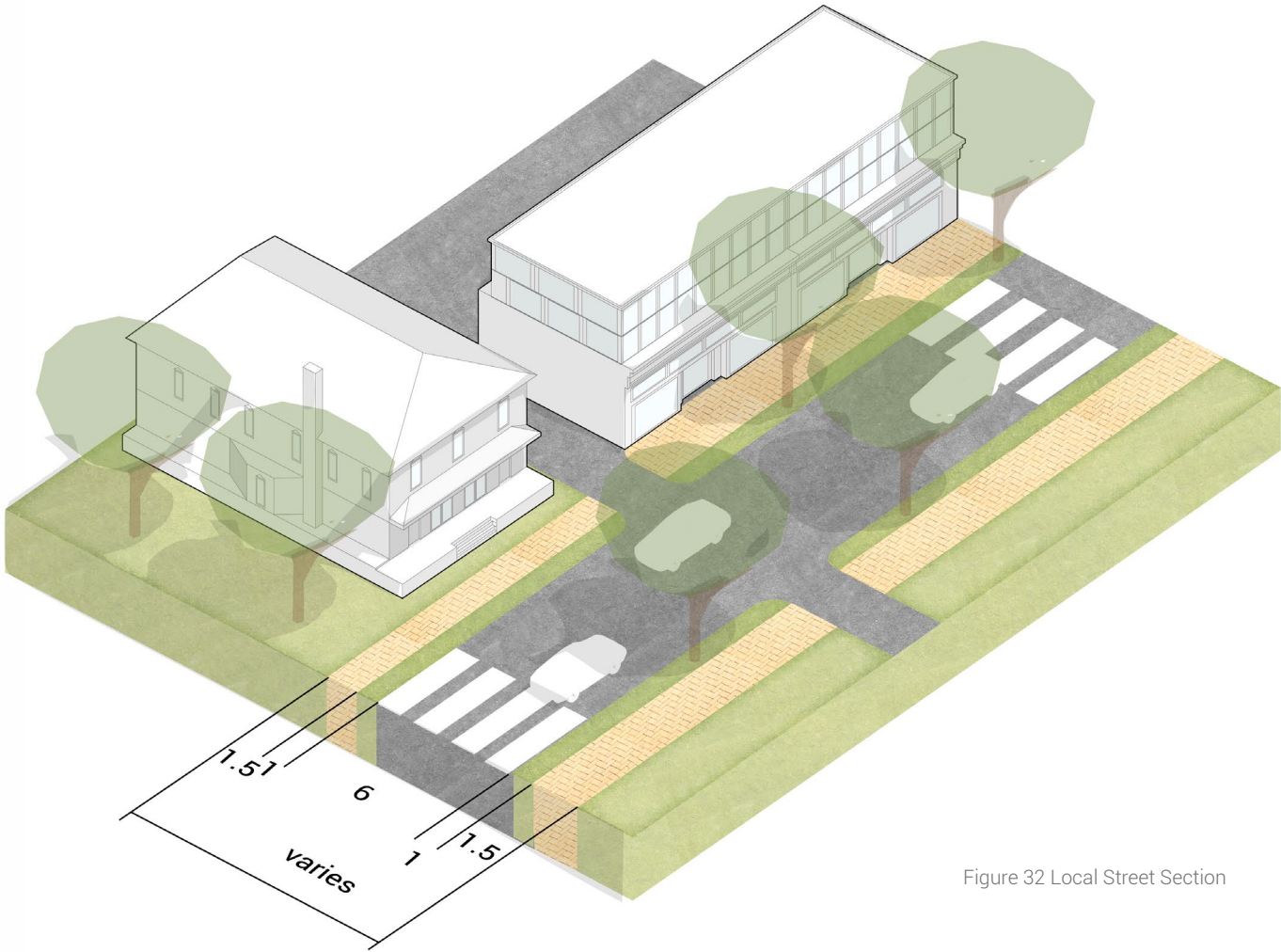


Figure 32 Local Street Section

2.4.4 Secondary Streets

Secondary streets create most of the west-east connections in the Downtown. It is vital that these streets maintain sufficient pedestrian connections with continuous sidewalks, and (when possible) slowed traffic between the blocks. As this road is under the jurisdiction of the County of Middlesex it will be subject to approval from the County.

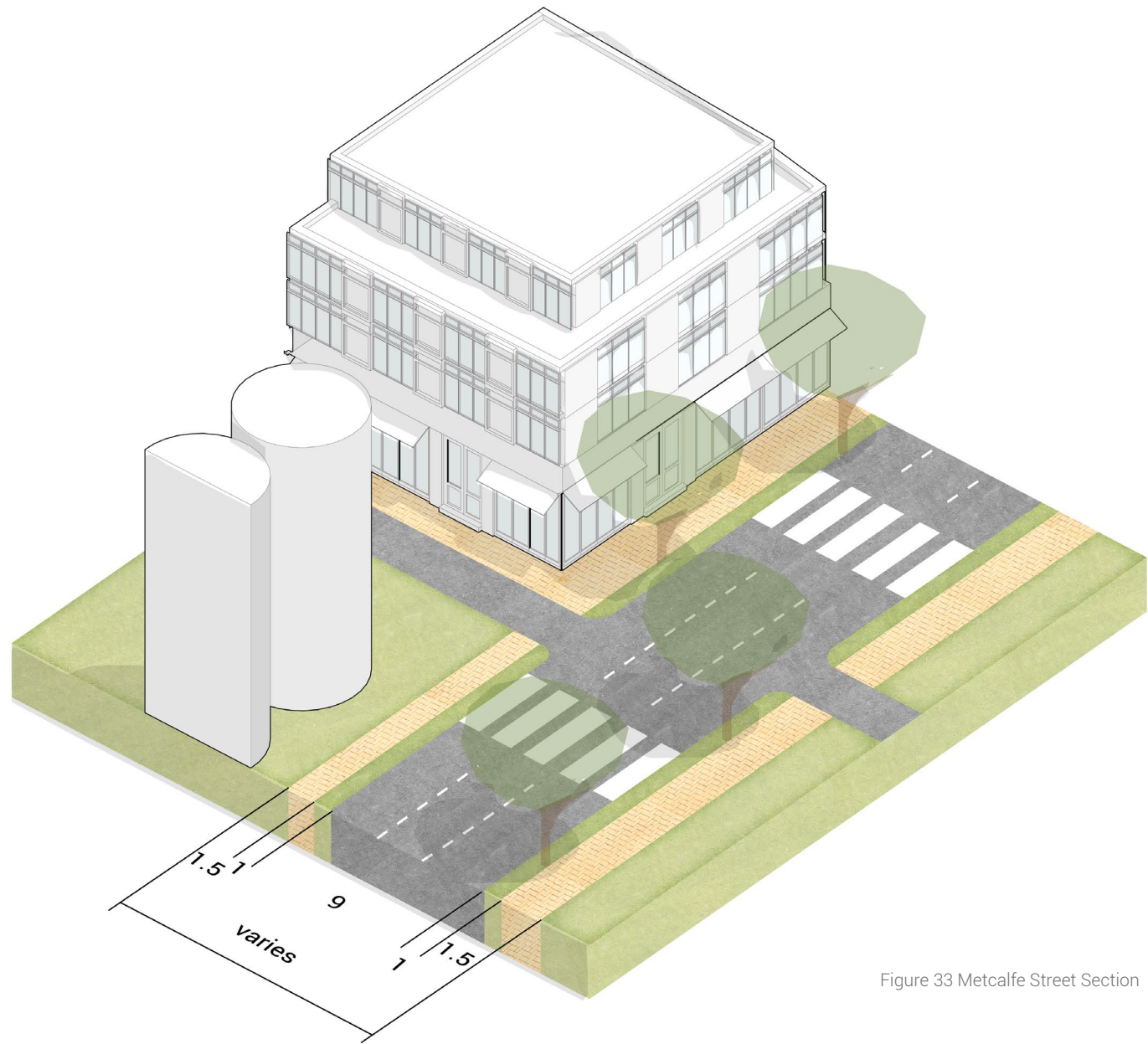


Figure 33 Metcalfe Street Section

2.4.5 East-West Corridors

The East-West corridors in the Downtown pertain to Metcalfe Street and Albert Street. Currently these streetscapes are primarily car dominated, with 3-4 vehicular lanes and inconsistent pedestrian connections. While these streets will continue to be significant vehicular connections, increased pedestrian amenities must be introduced into the streetscape. This includes continuous pedestrian connections on both sides of the road, green landscaping buffers where possible, decreased traffic speeds, and increased pedestrian crossings as developments increase in these areas.



3.0

Implementation

The vision contained in this plan will be realized over a number of years through the efforts and investment from the Municipality, County, development industry, Downtown business community, community organizations, and the public. Much of this Plan will be implemented through the planning and development approvals process - in doing so, it will be crucial to leverage existing policy tools such as the Strathroy-Caradoc Community Improvement Plan to incentivise projects, and the Downtown Strathroy Urban Design Guidelines to shape development, in order to push this vision forward. A forward-looking and creative approach to capital works by Council will also play an integral role in the implementation and timing of this Plan.

The following section provides a high-level implementation guideline for the Municipality to consider as part of the planning process for implementing this Plan.



3.1.1 Statutory Authority & the Development Approvals Process

Section 3.3.1.7 of the Strathroy-Caradoc Official Plan provides the direction and authority under which this Master Plan has been created, and it is has been adopted by way of official plan amendment OPA No. 11 and forms part of the Municipality's Official Plan.

In order to ensure that private development in the Downtown is consistent with the vision of the Master Plan, this Plan should be consulted and applied to the review of the following types of development applications:

- Official Plan Amendments;
- Zoning By-law Amendments;
- Minor Variances;
- Land Division;
- Site Plan Control; and
- Community Improvement Plan applications.

In reviewing the planning applications and development proposals, the Municipality should consider the overall development concept for the Downtown and what regard the application proposal has for upholding this vision.

Notwithstanding this, development proposals that do not necessarily align with the development concept outlined in the Plan, but that still demonstrate high quality and thoughtful design that supports the overall vision of the plan should be considered on their individual merits.

It will be at the discretion of Strathroy-Caradoc Council to determine whether or not a private development proposal requires an amendment to this plan by way of an official plan amendment or whether it is in general compliance with the direction of this Plan.

3.1.2 Jurisdiction of the County of Middlesex

This plan recognizes that certain roadways in Downtown Strathroy fall under the jurisdiction of the County of Middlesex including: Caradoc, Metcalfe, and Albert Streets, while all other roads fall under the jurisdiction of Strathroy-Caradoc. To that end, nothing in this plan binds the County of Middlesex to implementing the identified improvements to roads under their jurisdiction. Further this plan recognizes the planned function of these roads as arterial roads designed to safely and efficiently move high volumes of vehicular traffic including trucks and agricultural vehicles. As such, any improvements proposed by through this plan that may impact the planned function of county roads including: road surface materials, streetscape and landscape materials, access entrances, and cycling/pedestrian infrastructure will only be implemented through consultation with the County as road authority.

3.1.3 Interpretation & Limitations

This Master Plan is a long-term planning document, intended to promote a vision for the Downtown and proposes priorities, initiatives, and projects that work toward achieving that vision over time. However, these are not to be interpreted as an approval for a use or development on a specific site. No representation is made by this plan that any particular site is suitable for a particular purpose or development as site conditions, constraints, geotechnical suitability, and land use context must be assessed on a case-by-case basis as part of a development or planning application and/or building permit approval. Furthermore, unless otherwise noted, any boundaries, locations, or any features shown within the Plan are conceptual only and should be interpreted as such.

3.1.4 Monitoring

The implementation of this plan should be monitored to track progress and to ensure the priorities and visions for the Downtown remains relevant. A review and report to Council is recommended to be undertaken on the progress of this Plan every three years. Such a report should include an overall performance of plan in meeting intended objectives and priorities of the plan, as well as the status of any interventions or initiatives.

3.1.5 Implementation Schedule

The schedule proposed below highlights the important action items and milestones that should be pursued in the Municipality's implementation of the Master Plan.

Immediate Term (1-2 years): Laying the Groundwork

- Review and update Zoning By-law, Site Plan Control By-law, and any other relevant policies and regulations to ensure consistency with the vision of the plan
- Review Site Plan Control By-law and any associated development / design guidelines to ensure consistency with the vision of the Plan
- Dedicate a municipal webpage to the Downtown Master Plan that provides accessible information and updates on the status of the Plan's implementation
- Review and update asset management plans and capital works schedules for roads and other public works to identify potential timing and budgeting for road improvements in the Downtown:
- Frank Street Green Street Interventions
- Front Street Flex Street
- Caradoc Street Public Plaza / Flex Street
- Identify public sources of funding and/or grants that may be leveraged in the planning and development of public realm projects

Short Term (3-4 years): Outreach and Partnership Building

- Commence outreach on partnerships with the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority, Middlesex County, the Business Improvement Area, and the local development/business community in order to share information about the plan and its vision and applicable initiatives
- Initiate negotiations with private landowners and Canadian National Railways for land acquisition / leasing or access along the south shore of the Sydenham River and rail line
- Develop a prioritisation hierarchy for specific interventions on Frank, Front and Caradoc Streets in consultation with the public and Downtown businesses
- Conduct a transportation study to investigate alternatives for the conversion of Frank, Front, and Caradoc Streets. This should also incorporate

the investigation of alternatives as well as prioritization hierarchy for the improvements to major Downtown intersections.

Medium Term (5-6 years): Beginning the Transformation

- Undertake a preferred alternatives study for the development of a waterfront recreation hub in consultation with the public
- Acquire lands along the shoreline of the Sydenham River, undertake shoreline "cleanup" and addition of new trail connecting Head Street to Caradoc Street
- Issue request for proposal to develop detailed designs for Railway District and Market (subject to land acquisition / partnership arrangement with existing landowners)
- Issue request for proposals to develop detailed designs for transforming sections of Frank, Front and Caradoc Streets

Long Term (7 years +): Implementing Partnerships

- Undertake re-naturalization of south shoreline of the Sydenham River, and development of waterfront recreation hub based on the preferred alternatives
- Commence phased construction of Front, Frank, and Caradoc Street transformations
- Issue request for proposal to develop transit hub and commence construction

Ongoing

- Explore the introduction of "temporary" infrastructure that mirrors proposed interventions on public streets to test different layouts, locations, and designs for streetscape interventions prior to full-scale implementation (i.e. bike lanes, planter boxes for curb bulb-outs, pop-up parks)
- Support CIP projects involving development/ redevelopment aligned with the priorities of the Plan
- Develop marketing materials and conduct outreach with private landowners and development industry on possibility of redeveloping and improving private lands in accordance with the master plan



