

COURTENAY DOWNTOWN & HARMSTON PARK LOCAL AREA PLAN



SWOT ANALYSIS
NOVEMBER 2024



City of
Courtenay

EKISTICS



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The City of Courtenay respectfully acknowledges that the lands to which this Local Area Plan applies are on the Unceded territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.

Why do we make land acknowledgements?

Acknowledging human relationships to place is an ancient Indigenous practice that continues today.

In the spirit of reconciliation, the City of Courtenay makes this land acknowledgment to raise awareness of ongoing Indigenous presence and land rights in the territory that includes and encompasses Courtenay. It invites us – a settler government – to reflect on how we might be perpetuating colonial processes that are ongoing and from which we have benefited, as well as the changes we will make to honour the Indigenous peoples and their lands that we inhabit.

CONTENTS

▲ INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND
STUDY AREA

▲ CONTEXT

POLICY CONTEXT
EXISTING AREAS OF INTEREST
DOWNTOWN COURTENAY PLAYBOOK
OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN
CURRENT ZONING
EXISTING LAND USE
PARKS & TRANSPORTATION CONTEXT
LAND OWNERSHIP
SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT UNDERWAY
INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

▲ ANALYSIS

OVERVIEW
PLANNING DISTRICTS

RIVERFRONT

EXISTING LAND USE & CHARACTER
STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS

DOWNTOWN

EXISTING LAND USE & CHARACTER
STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS

FITZGERALD CORRIDOR

EXISTING LAND USE & CHARACTER
STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS

HARMSTON PARK

EXISTING LAND USE & CHARACTER
STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS

▲ LOOKING AHEAD

BACKGROUND

This **Local Area Plan** for Downtown and Harmston Park (DLAP) builds upon the vision established by the Official Community Plan (OCP, 2022) and the Downtown Courtenay Playbook (2016) of a complete and connected Downtown with a higher residential population, celebrating and connecting to the rivers, establishing a heart through public placemaking, all while working together for success.

Since the Playbook, a number of studies and significant infrastructure and development initiatives have been undertaken that together will comprehensively evolve the downtown. These include: the construction of the 6th Street Pedestrian Bridge, proposed green shores along the Courtenay River, proposed BC Transit exchange along 8th street, a number of larger mixed-use and multi-residential developments under construction or in application process, and the initiation of the Cultural Strategic Plan and Cultural Facilities Assessment. These initiatives will influence placemaking opportunities for the downtown and will become fixtures in the community around which to inform future planning and community input.

The DLAP will identify implementation actions for physical improvements necessary to support the creation of an Urban Design Framework to guide development. Opportunities to incorporate social dimensions of culture, social connectedness and supporting those vulnerable, such as those without homes, will also emerge from the process.

This SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis provides a situational analysis of the downtown local planning area that includes an inventory of land use, infrastructure, and development. The SWOT looks back on existing context, and identifies big idea projects for consideration. The SWOT is used to discuss with Downtown Playbook partners what is still relevant from the 2016 Playbook, what should be removed as we implement for the future, and what is missing in order to inform development of the DLAP and future public and interest-holder engagement.

STUDY AREA

The boundaries of the plan area are informed by the OCP and Downtown Playbook. The combining of plan boundaries across these two plans allows for a more comprehensive planning process that incorporates the high activity hub of the downtown commercial and mixed-use core as an anchor surrounded by key lands and waters that inform the history and character of the downtown. Within the comprehensive planning area are opportunities to develop distinct planning districts: the Courtenay riverfront to the east, the Fitzgerald Avenue corridor on the edge of the core to the west, and Harmston Park neighbourhood beyond including industrial employment generators, significant municipal lands, public parkland and established residences.



POLICY CONTEXT

As a type of town centre, the **Downtown and Harmston Park** area is intended to function as the local, citywide and regional centre of cultural, civic, culinary, economic, and public life with the widest range of activities and attraction for residents and visitors, day and night, throughout the year. Identified needs in the downtown are more housing, more space for special events and gatherings, more access to and integration with the Tsolum and Puntledge rivers, and better opportunities to get to and circulate within the downtown – particularly by foot, transit, and cycling.

Notable Downtown OCP policies informing the LAP:

1. Continue to support a diverse range of land uses within the downtown including diversity of multi-residential housing choices, small scale commercial uses, and other supportive uses to promote the establishment of a complete community and 10-minute neighbourhood.
2. Locate new government facilities downtown.
5. Consider and study the option of eliminating off-street parking requirements throughout the downtown.
6. Ensure more public and semi-public gathering spaces are incorporated into new developments.
7. Consider future use of public lands to promote community goals including for affordable housing, community gathering and open space.
8. Ensure compatibility of land uses between the downtown and adjacent urban residential neighbourhoods by providing transitional form, character, and densities.
10. Improve physical and visual connections to, along, and across the rivers, integrating nature and recreation with the downtown.
11. Support uses and activities that encourage both daytime and nighttime activation.

13. Work towards the vision of a public plaza in the form of a Common and Mews as the public heart of the downtown, providing for informal gathering and formal social and cultural events.

14. Seek opportunities to establish unique character districts.

15. Establish and promote distinctive character designations for the core downtown streets.

Notable Harmston Park OCP policies informing the LAP:

1. Initiate a process to develop a local area plan for the precinct in order to provide clarity of development goals for the publicly owned lands as well as direction to the development of privately owned lands. This plan will include:
 - a) community-wide consultation
 - b) a mix of land use and tenures
 - c) exploration of different types of housing opportunities
 - d) neighbourhood park function
 - e) consideration to the temporary or permanent closure of Harmston Avenue between 6th and 7th Streets
 - f) general urban design guidelines
 - g) exploration of Indigenous perspectives and worldviews, including K'ómoks First Nation traditional use and practices

Other Notable OCP policies informing the LAP:

Parks and Recreation 7: Develop a parkland acquisition strategy to provide equitable access to community amenities for residents.

Arts, Culture, and Heritage 7: Continue to support the downtown as the region's arts, culture, and heritage hub.

Food Systems 2: Work with the Comox Valley Farmers Market Association to secure a permanent site and facility for its year-round operation in a suitable and accessible location with necessary supportive amenities, preferably near the downtown.

EXISTING AREAS OF INTEREST



DOWNTOWN COURTENAY PLAYBOOK (2016)

The **Downtown Courtenay Playbook**, informed by extensive community engagement in 2015 and 2016, serves as a roadmap for downtown revitalization. It outlines a shared vision for the area, along with principles, goals, and a toolbox of strategies to achieve them. Recognizing the collaborative nature of this endeavour, the Playbook positions itself as a living document, open to ongoing review and adaptation as the community works together to bring new life to downtown Courtenay. Building upon this foundation, the Urban Design Framework does not aim to replace the Playbook, but rather to provide a more detailed and technical lens to translate its vision into actionable projects.

The public process resulted in five strategic planning goals to guide the community through review and implementation of the downtown revitalization projects identified in the Playbook, which remain relevant today:

Organize for Success | Partnerships and integrated City work-programs are to be the foundation for revitalization efforts and be structured to promote successful working relationships.

Establish Downtown as the Community's Heart | With an explicit emphasis on creating attractive gathering place and public realm, downtown will feel like it is designed with people's comfort and enjoyment first.

Encourage More Downtown Residents | A diverse mix of housing and associated services is to be increased throughout the greater downtown area.

Make it Easier to Get to and Be Downtown | All modes of transportation are conveniently able to access, circulate, and park within the downtown.

Celebrate and Connect to the Rivers | Connections to, along, and across the rivers are to be improved to ensure that nature and recreation are integrated into the downtown experience.

As a part of the Playbook's process, five "Catalyst Projects" were identified as transformational ideas for downtown to demonstrate City commitment, reinforce the community vision, and stimulate future investment. A number of these Catalyst Projects have been advanced, are completed, or are under review. Through the current Downtown Local Area Planning process, these projects will be reviewed, refined, and may be modified based on technical review and public feedback.

1

DUNCAN MEWS + COMMONS

"Create the Heart" project proposes Duncan Commons as a central hub for events. This includes a car-free Art Gallery Plaza, a pedestrian-oriented Duncan Mews street (a "Woonerf"), and a potential "Market Park."

2

ESTABLISH 4TH / 5TH / 6TH STREET CHARACTERS

This project characterizes the designated streets by name and theme, with 4th as a market street, 5th as a shopping street, and 6th as a green street.

3

PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION TO, ALONG, AND ACROSS THE RIVER

By improving access and creating a visual connection, this project aims to revitalize the riverfront and attract people to the area's natural beauty. This includes the approved 6th Street Active Transportation Bridge.

4

RIVERFRONT DISTRICT BETWEEN 5TH AND 6TH

The Playbook proposes a riverside district (5th-6th) honouring the Courtenay River's significance. Public access, artisan vibes, and an "industrial character" street aim to reconnect downtown and revive the waterfront.

5

INFILL HOUSING

This project explores zoning changes, incentives, and designs to create more housing options on underused land.



OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN (2022)

While the majority of current OCP land use within the LAP is defined as Downtown, the extension of the boundary includes existing Urban Residential, Neighbourhood Centre, and Urban Corridor.

DOWNTOWN

As a type of Town Centre, the downtown is intended to function as the local, citywide and regional centre of cultural, civic, culinary, economic, and public life with the widest range of activities and attraction for residents and visitors, day and night, throughout the year. Identified needs in the downtown are more housing, more space for special events and gatherings, more access to and integration with the Tsolum and Puntledge rivers, and better opportunities to get to and circulate within the downtown – particularly by foot, transit, and cycling.

URBAN RESIDENTIAL

These neighbourhood areas are largely residential neighbourhoods comprised mainly of ground-oriented single-detached residential buildings. "Gentle infill"* will be permitted in such areas in the form of an additional secondary residence. This may take the form of a secondary suite, or duplex, or carriage home or garden suite on lots with suitable access characteristics. Triplexes, townhomes, and small apartments will also be supported within these areas, particularly along the Frequent Transit Network, on a case-by-case basis and subject to rezoning applications. Limited small-scale commercial services will also be supported on a case-by-case basis and subject to rezoning applications.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

This area includes smaller-scale mixed-use areas (than that include a diversity of destinations and housing choices. Commercial and community amenities are within easy walking and cycling distance and more residential density could be accommodated to support transit frequency and use.

URBAN CORRIDOR

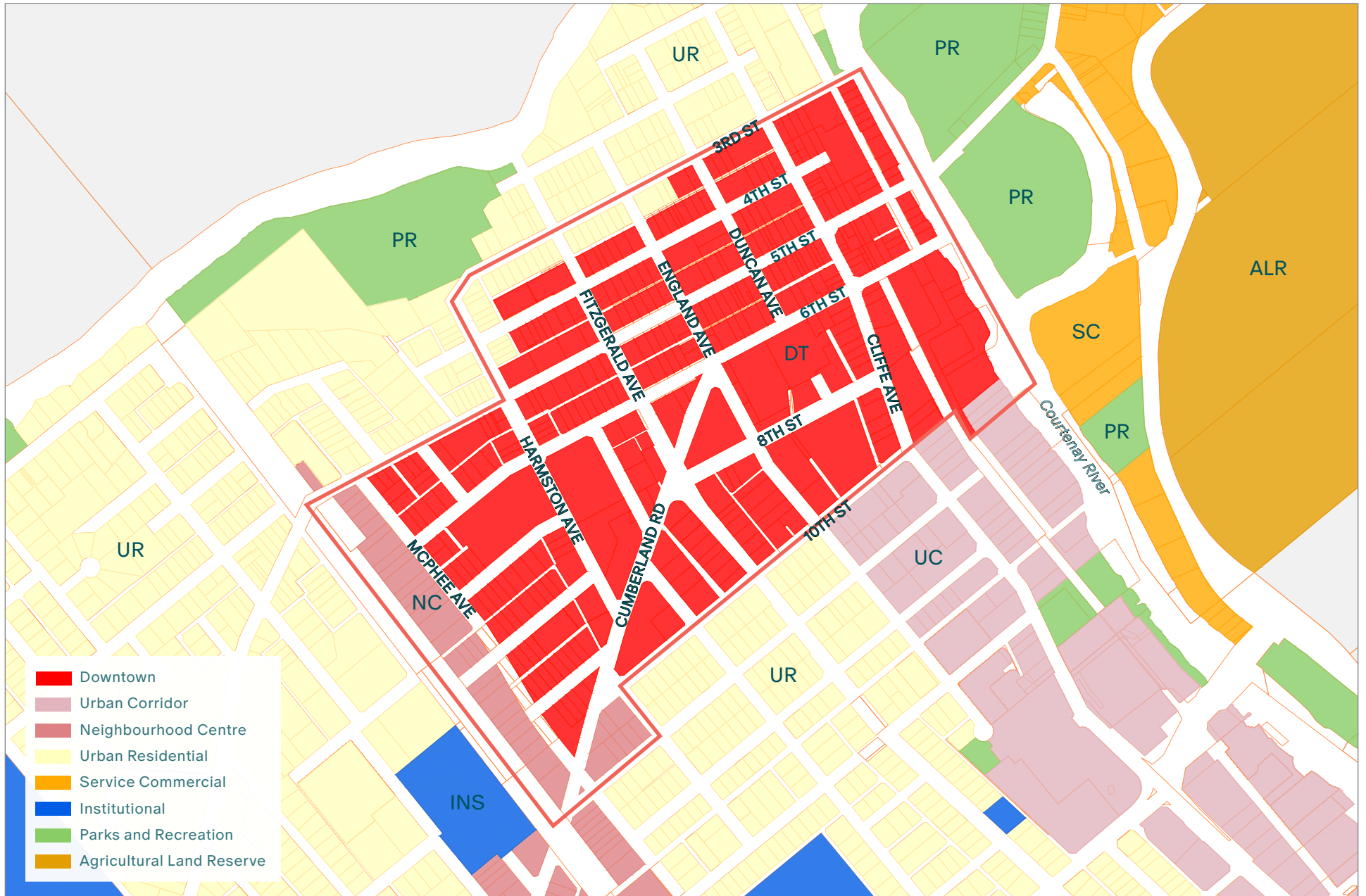
The Urban Corridor is intended to be a primary focus of commercial and residential densities outside the downtown. These areas will support a mix of uses that include a variety of higher-density housing choices as well as regional retail destinations.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Parks, trails, recreation facilities, and natural areas with limited accessory uses.

**While the OCP includes language regarding gentle infill, Bill 44 has provided additional direction to this type of development in the form of Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing (SSMUH).*

OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN MAP



CURRENT ZONING

The following zones are prominent within the Downtown LAP area. These zones will be reviewed as a part of the LAP process to align with the OCP land use designations, creating a Downtown of greater housing choices, increased development density, and mix of uses:

COMMERCIAL ONE (C-1)

C-1 is the defining zone of the Downtown area, allowing for a wide range of commercial uses, as well as multi residential dwellings.

Height: No building in this zone shall exceed 13.5 m

COMMERCIAL TWO (C-2)

C-2 also allows for a wide range of commercial uses, with the allowance for Building Supply Store use. The riverfront Central Builders parcels fall within C-2.

Height: No building in this zone shall exceed 9.5 m except for a combined commercial-residential building, in which case the height of a building shall not exceed 13.5 m.

PUBLIC USE AND ASSEMBLY ONE (PA-1)

Primarily institutional, permitted uses include assembly hall, care facility, cemetery, church and religious centre, facility for adults with a disability, government office and facility, hospital and related facility, utility facility, and school. Harmston Park is currently zoned as PA-1, as opposed to being zoned as a park under PA-2.

**Floor Area Ratio is the ratio of a building's total floor area to the size of the land it's built on.*

RESIDENTIAL FOUR B (R-4B)

This zone allows for single residential dwellings, secondary suites, duplex dwellings, multi residential dwellings, accessory buildings and structures, day care, and home occupation. The majority of residential parcels surrounding Harmston Park are zoned as such.

Floor Area Ratio*: 1.0 (apartments), 0.7 (all other residential)

Height: 13.71 m (apartments with underground parking), 10.0 m (apartments otherwise), 9.15 m (all other buildings)

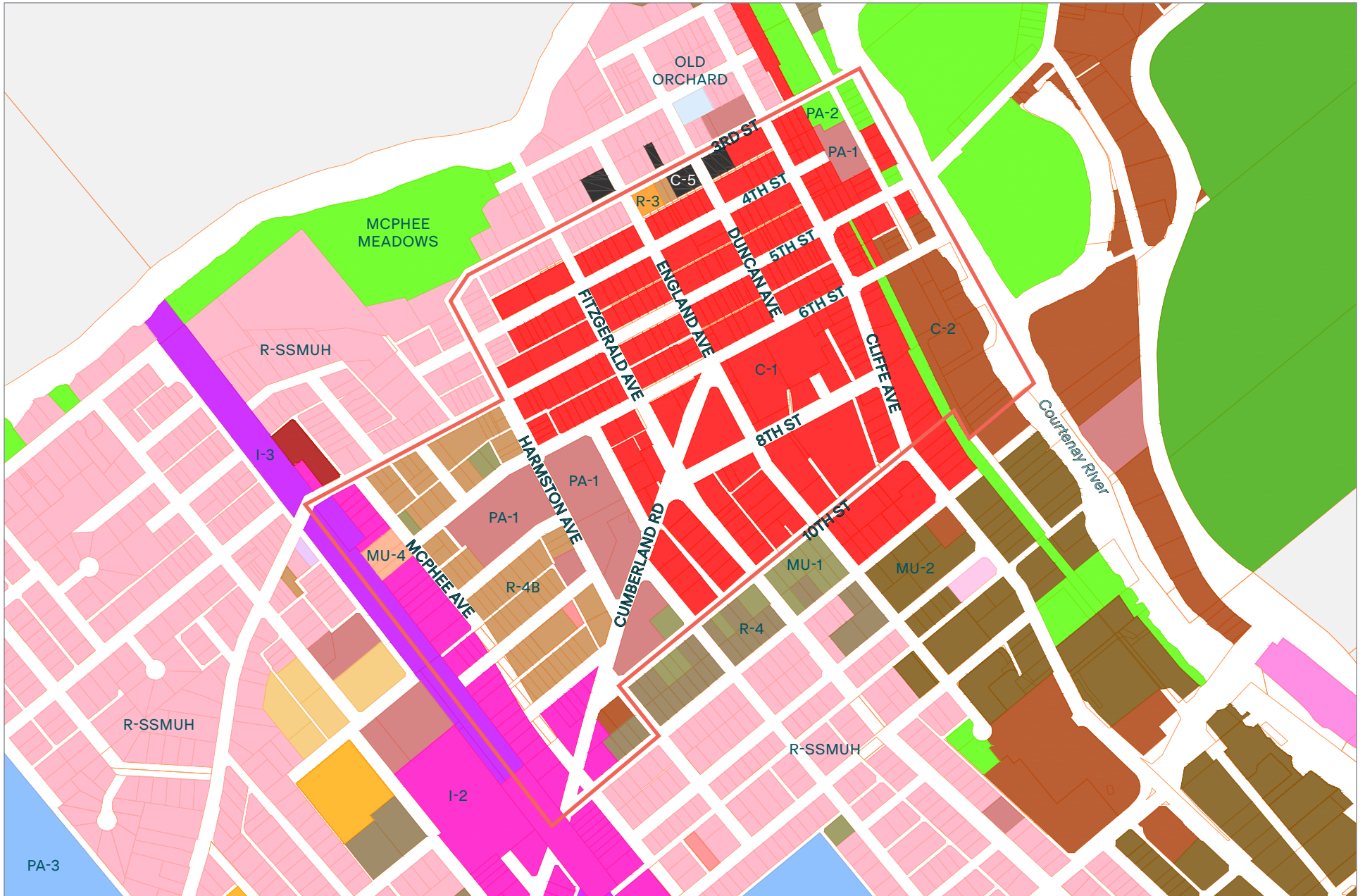
Parking: One space per residential unit

RESIDENTIAL SMALL-SCALE MULTI-UNIT (R-SSMUH)

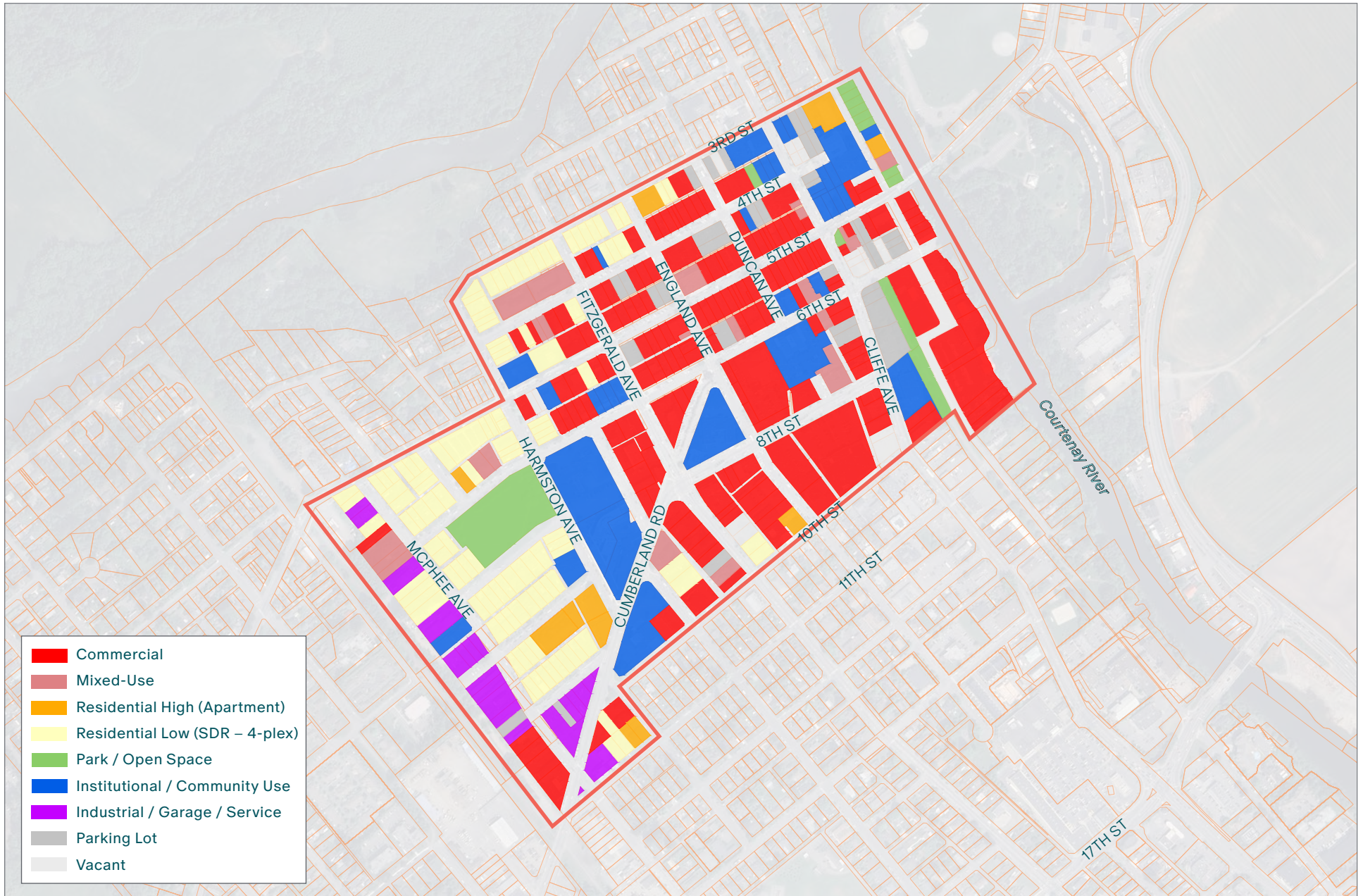
Allowances for residential uses including single residential dwellings, duplexes, townhouses, small-scale multiple unit housing and infill development.

	A-1 Agricultural One		PA-1 Public Use and Assembly One
	C-1 Commercial One		PA-2 Public Use and Assembly Two
	C-2 Commercial Two		PA-3 Public Use and Assembly Three
	C-2A Commercial Two A		R-SSMUH Residential Small-Scale Multi-Unit
	C-3 Commercial Three		R-3 Residential Three
	C-5 Commercial Five		R-3A Residential Three A
	CD-9 Comprehensive Dev. 9		R-3B Residential Three B
	I-1 Industrial One		R-4 Residential Four
	I-2 Industrial Two		R-4A Residential Four A
	I-3 Industrial Three		R-4B Residential Four B
	MU-1 Multiple Use One		R-5 Residential Five
	MU-2 Multiple Use Two		
	MU-4 Multiple Use Four		

CURRENT ZONING MAP



EXISTING LAND USE



PARKS & TRANSPORTATION CONTEXT



LAND OWNERSHIP

CITY

The following are notable municipally-owned parcels within the LAP:

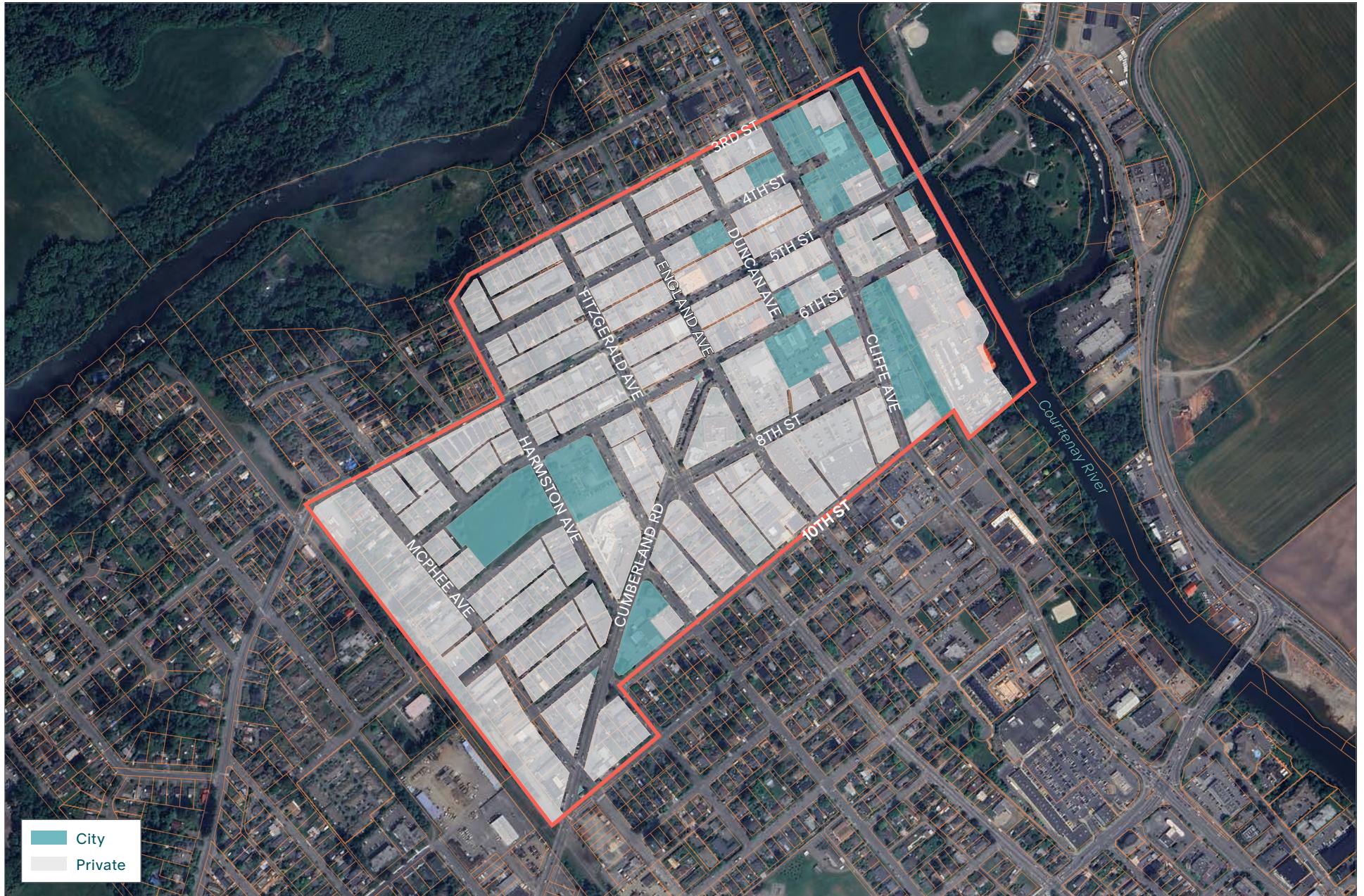
- Harmston Park (003-797-058)
- Share the Harvest Community Garden (030-871-191)
- Native Sons Hall (Multiple Parcels)
- Sid Williams Theatre (Multiple Parcels)
- Florence Filberg Centre (010-227-474)
- Courtenay & District Museum (Multiple Parcels)
- Comox Valley Art Gallery (028-799-925)
- Vancouver Island Regional Library (024-933-074)
- Courtenay City Hall (024-220-914)
- 90 5th Street, The Bridge (001-815-091)
- Parking Lot on Duncan & 4th (005-036-429, 005-036-445)
- Parking Lot on Cliffe between 5th & 6th (001-657-666)
- Parking Lot on Cliffe between 6th & 8th (005-100-992, 005-101-018)
- Riverfront parcels north of 5th (Park)

PRIVATE

The following are notable privately-owned parcels within the LAP:

- Large collection of singularly-owned parcels south of 5th Street
- Collection of singularly-owned residential parcels southwest of Harmston Park





SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT UNDERWAY

357 5th Street | *Completed in 2024*

Palace Place, a mixed-use, 4-storey building with 39 apartments and ground floor retail.

291 4th Street | *Under Construction*

Coastal Community Credit Union, interior and exterior upgrades, increased height.

574 Cumberland Road | *Building Permit Issued*

Mixed-use, 3-storey building with 38 studio apartments (312 sq ft), 11 one-bedroom units (700 sq ft), 3 two-bedroom units (775 sq ft), and 3 commercial spaces.

419 & 407 4th Street | *Development Permit, Height Variance Application Submitted*

4th and England, a mixed-use, 4-storey building with 39 units and 4 commercial spaces.

578 & 584 Cliffe Avenue | *Development Permit Variance, Application Submitted*

16-unit multi residential/combined commercial development, downscaled from 34 units to avoid contaminated soil on 590 Cliffe, with minor variance for front landscape buffer.

120 & 125 11th Street | *Rezoning Application, Third Reading*

104-unit rental building. *Rezoning application to change current Commercial Two (C-2) and Multiple Use Two (MU-2) Zones to a Comprehensive Development Zone Forty-One (CD-41)*



INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

UTILITY CAPITAL PROJECTS

- Leighton Ave Storm Drain Replacement
- McPhee Ave Sanitary Main Replacement
- Alley between 5th & 6th, England to Duncan, Storm / Sanitary / Water Replacement
- Alley between 4th & 5th, Duncan to Cliffe, Storm Replacement
- Anderton Lift Station
- Decommissioning Sanitary River Crossing

ENGINEERING PROJECTS

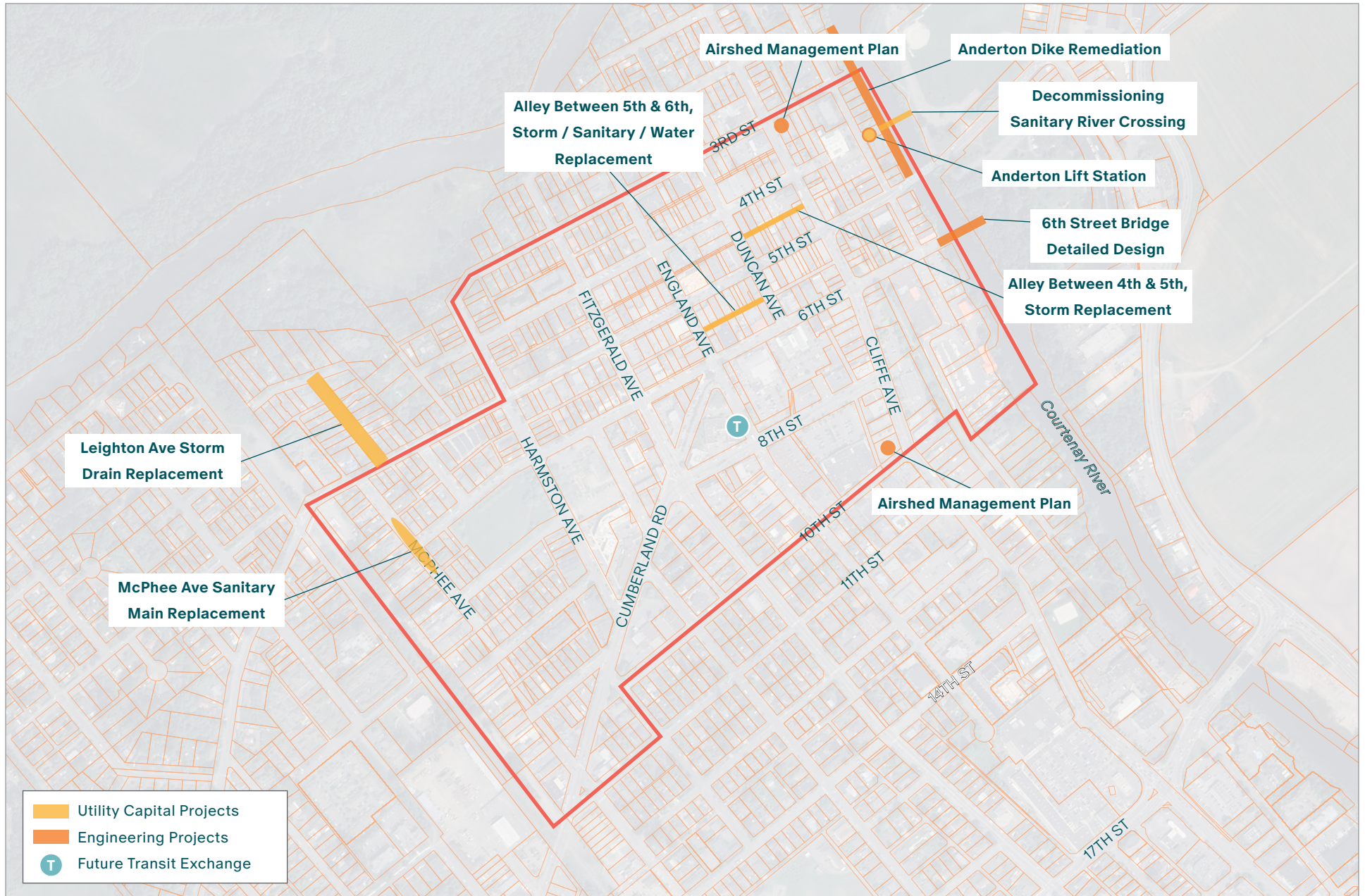
- Airshed Management Plan
- Anderton Lift Station
- Anderton Dike Remediation
- 6th Street Bridge Detailed Design (Construction starting in 2025)
- McPhee Meadows Park

TRANSIT EXCHANGE

- England Ave between 6th St & 8th St
 - 2025 Construction

RECREATION, CULTURE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

- Harmston Park Development
- Cultural Facility Feasibility Studies
- Strategic Cultural Plan



ANALYSIS | OVERVIEW

Building on the contextual research and groundwork established in this study, the following analysis provides a focused examination of the study area. To facilitate a detailed and organized approach, and as demonstrated on the following page, the area has been divided into four distinct planning districts, each representing unique characteristics and opportunities within the broader landscape:

Riverfront

Downtown

Fitzgerald Corridor

Harmston Park

This section includes an overview of specific land uses in each planning district, paired with a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis to identify key factors influencing future planning and development. By exploring these elements, the analysis lays the foundation for actionable recommendations tailored to the needs and potential of each district.

While each planning district is unique, the analysis has revealed several overarching themes that apply to the entire study area, offering a cohesive lens for understanding its broader challenges and opportunities:

STRENGTHS

- Grid urban form
- Cultural hub
- Centrally located with proximity to the river
- Several municipally-owned parcels
- Significant privately-owned parcels open to cohesive development planning

WEAKNESSES

- Limited existing green space
- Lack of focal point or centralized activity hub
- Lack of 'gateways' to Downtown
- Aged and vacant building stock

OPPORTUNITIES

- Develop clear strategies to create or enhance green space, street trees, and the urban forest
- Reimagine public spaces and pedestrian environment
- Encourage cohesive development planning
- Advance Indigenous reconciliation through arts and culture

THREATS (CONSTRAINTS)

- Upgrading infrastructure may be challenging
- Economic shifts impacting development viability
- Increased traffic pressure as the city grows
- Current public safety perceptions

PLANNING DISTRICTS



RIVERFRONT | EXISTING LAND USE & CHARACTER

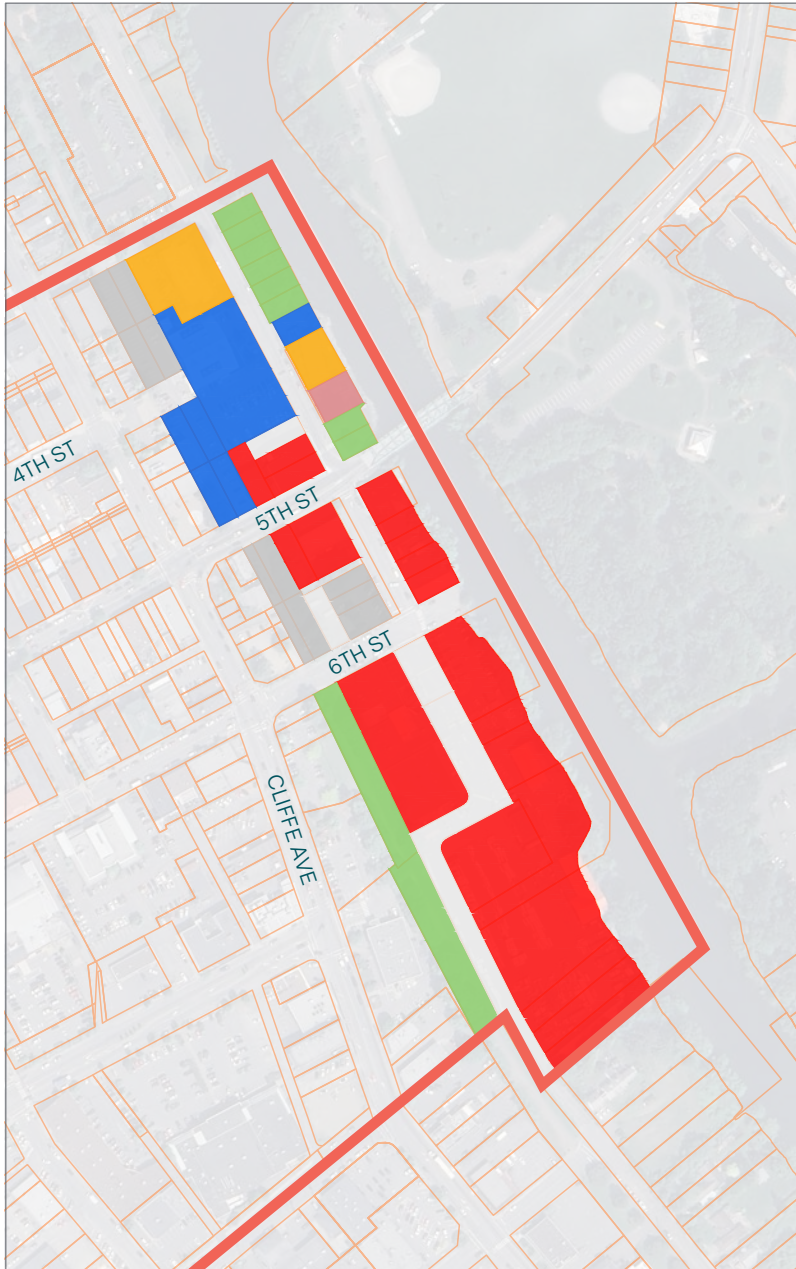
The Riverfront district, as the name suggests, encompasses all parcels on the river's edge, and extends inland to the Courtenay Riverway trail in the southern portion, and the steep bank adjacent to the Florence Filberg Centre in the northern portion.

Existing Land Use

- Riverside Park*
- Anderton Arms Apartments (426 Anderton Ave)*
- Mixed-Use (440 Anderton Ave)
- Florence Filberg Centre*
- Commercial / Services (5th St)
- The Bridge Building (90 5th St)*
- Central Builders - Home Hardware
- Courtenay Riverway Trail*

* Publicly-owned





- Commercial
- Mixed-Use
- Residential High (Apartment)
- Residential Low (SF – 4-plex)
- Park / Open Space
- Institutional / Community Use
- Industrial / Garage / Service
- Parking Lot
- Vacant

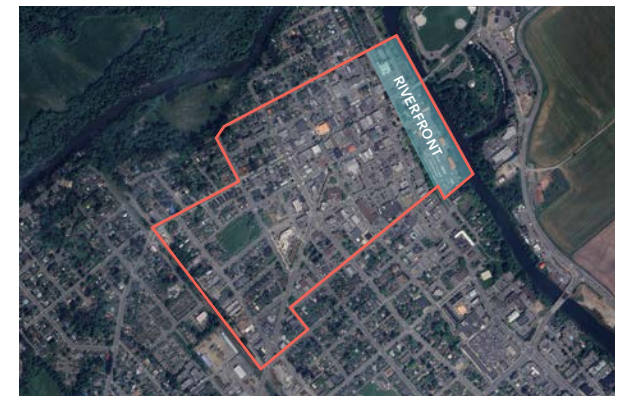
RIVERFRONT | SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

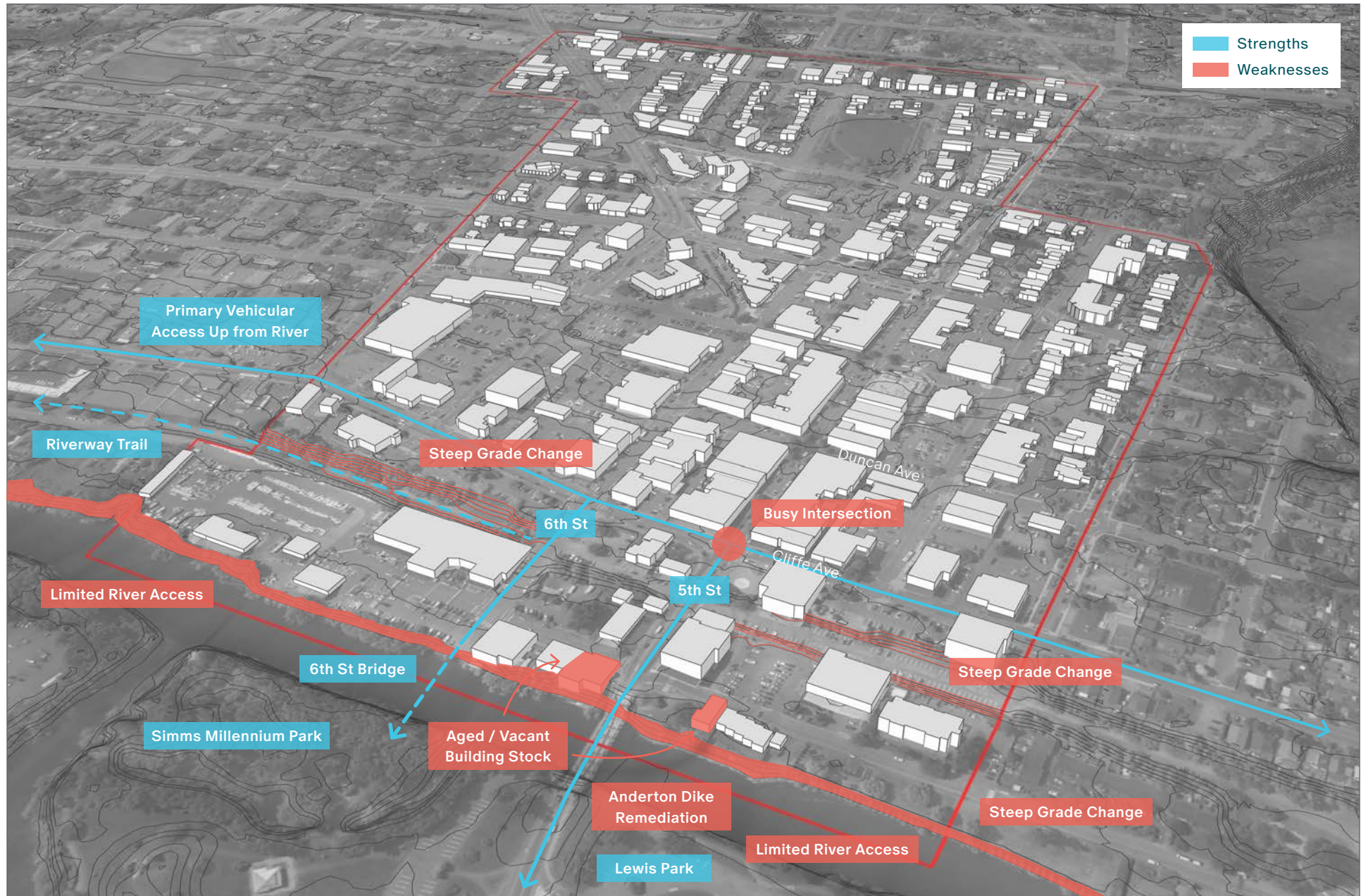
- Scenic area with significant natural beauty, attracting both residents and tourists
- Existing parks and trails along riverfront provide recreational opportunities
- Funding secured for 6th Street Active Transportation Bridge (construction to be completed in 2025)
- Riverfront district is opposite significant municipal parks:
 - Lewis Park
 - Simms Millennium Park
- Primary vehicular circulation at Riverfront is 2nd block back from the water
- 5th Street Bridge acts as 'gateway' to Downtown
- Riverway trail connecting south of Courtenay

WEAKNESSES

- No direct interaction with the water's edge
- Steep grade changes
- Proximity to river poses a flood risk, which could limit development potential or require costly mitigation measures
- Underutilized spaces
- Limited existing green space
- Lack of focal point / centralized point of activity
- Vacant building stock
- Aged building stock poses increased fire risk
- Busy, auto-oriented 5th & Cliffe creates barrier between Riverfront and Downtown



RIVERFRONT | SWOT ANALYSIS



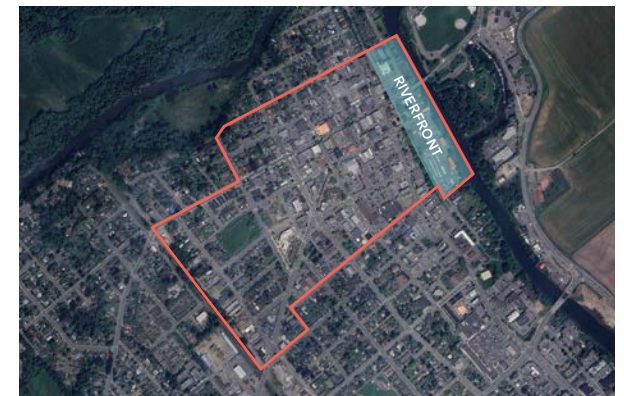
RIVERFRONT | SWOT ANALYSIS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Reimagined riverfront access - becoming a destination
- Central Builders - large collection of Riverfront parcels owned by CBS Land Corp with interest in relocation
- Several municipally-owned parcels
- Potential greenways
 - East / West on 6th Street (Harmston Park – Riverfront)
 - North of Courtenay Riverway on Anderton Avenue
- Underutilized spaces with Commercial zoning (Riverfront)
- 8th Street connection, continuing grid urban form
- Riverfront access for tubing
- Advancement of Indigenous reconciliation through arts and culture (consulting with K'ómoks First Nation, urban Indigenous groups, Métis)

THREATS (CONSTRAINTS)

- Stability of Riverfront land
- Flood risk along Riverfront
- Upgrading infrastructure could be a challenge for a unified development vision



RIVERFRONT | SWOT ANALYSIS



DOWNTOWN | EXISTING LAND USE & CHARACTER

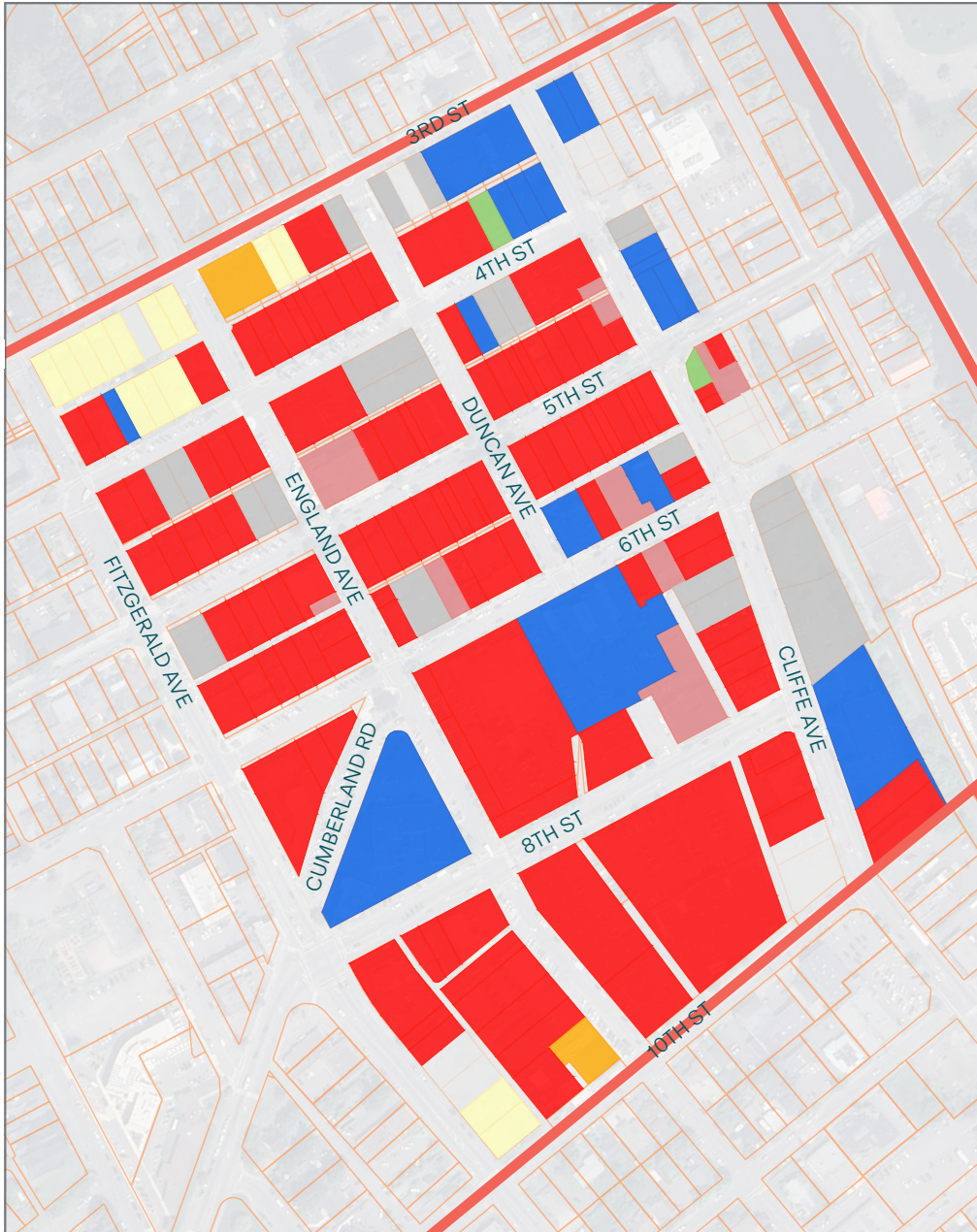
The Downtown district is the most established area within the LAP, guided by the vision outlined in the Downtown Playbook. Character opportunities have been identified for 4th, 5th, and 6th Streets as Market, Shopping, and Green streets, respectively, with predominantly commercial and mixed-use developments. The district's eastern edge is anchored by institutional and community uses, including the Native Sons Hall, Sid Williams Theatre, and Courtenay City Hall. Both the northern and southern boundaries feature a mix of low and higher-density residential properties.

Existing Land Use

- Small-Scale Commercial and Mixed-Use along 4th, 5th, and 6th Streets
- Native Sons Hall*
- Sid Williams Theatre*
- Courtenay City Hall*
- Courtenay & District Museum*
- Courtenay Courthouse*
- The Old Farm Market
- Vancouver Island Regional Library*

* Publicly-owned





DOWNTOWN | SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Centrally located, making it accessible and a focal point for both commerce and cultural institutions
- Character identities of 4th, 5th and 6th Streets (Downtown Playbook)
- Cultural hub (Courtenay & District Museum, Comox Valley Art Gallery, Sid Williams Theatre, Centre for Performing Arts)
- Strong presence of government services (City Hall, Vancouver Island Regional Library, Comox Valley Regional District)
- Strong presence of social services (Island Health, non-profits)
- Grid urban form
- Primary vehicular circulation at Riverfront is 2nd block back from the water
- Mixed-use, residential and commercial developments are underway Downtown
- Active transportation upgrades and street beautification on Fitzgerald Avenue
- Approved future transit exchange on England Avenue + 8th Street

WEAKNESSES

- Limited existing greenspace, street furnishings, street trees, and urban forest
- Sloped grade and lack of utilities along Duncan Avenue (for purposes of Duncan Commons)
- Aged and vacant building stock poses increased fire risk
- Underutilized public spaces, such as the Randy Wiwchar Plaza
- High vehicle presence, especially along 5th Street
- South of 6th Street is very car oriented
- Lack of focal point / centralized point of activity
- Lack of 'gateways' into the Downtown area
- Cliffe Avenue feels physically separate from Riverfront district



DOWNTOWN | SWOT ANALYSIS



DOWNTOWN | SWOT ANALYSIS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Potential greenways / multi-modal corridors
 - East / West on 6th Street (Harmston Park – Riverfront)
- Continue to strengthen identity of 4th, 5th, and 6th Streets
- Enhance pedestrian environment
- Reduced traffic congestion with investment in pedestrian, cycling and transit infrastructure
- Strategic Cultural Plan and Cultural Services review
- Build upon existing wayfinding program
- Revitalize aging infrastructure through development approval
- Develop clear strategies to create or enhance green space, street trees, and urban forest
- Consider relocating City Hall to 'Municipal Hub'
- Advancement of Indigenous reconciliation through arts and culture (consulting with K'ómoks First Nation, urban Indigenous groups, Métis)

THREATS (CONSTRAINTS)

- Changes and shifts in the economy could impact the viability of traditional retail and office spaces
- Competition from other commercial areas
- Upgrading infrastructure could be a challenge for a unified development vision
- Parking: On-street parking in Downtown reaches over 80% occupancy during peak hours (11:30 AM to 2:30 PM on weekdays), which could strain parking availability and deter visitors arriving by car during busy periods.





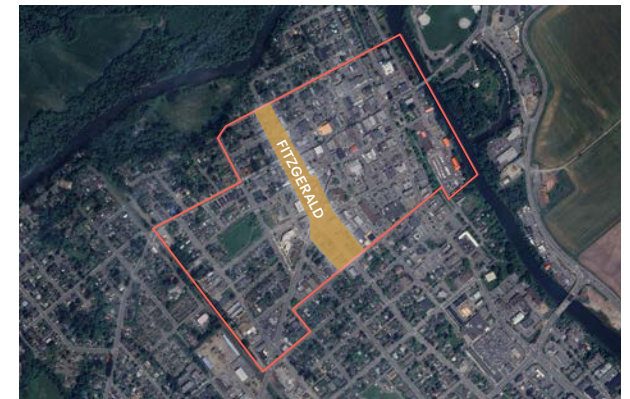
FITZGERALD CORRIDOR | EXISTING LAND USE & CHARACTER

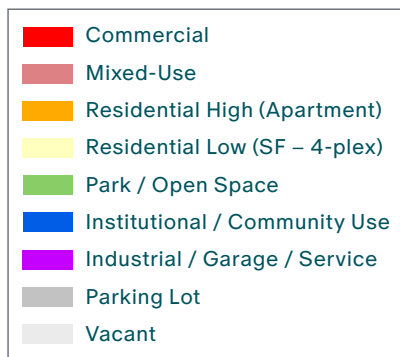
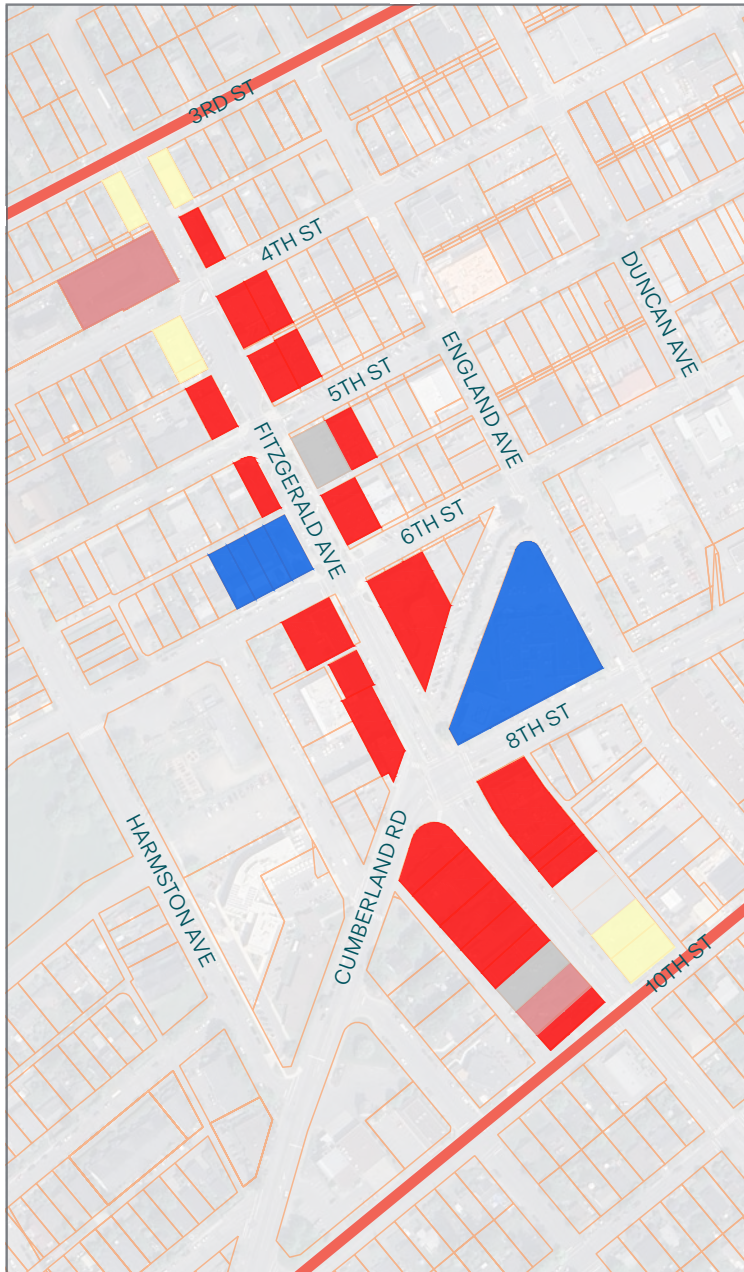
Fitzgerald Corridor acts as a natural divide between the Downtown and Harmston Park Districts. Fitzgerald Avenue itself is a significant collector road with commercial use fronting, along with active transportation and street beautification in progress. As with the Downtown district, the northern and southern edges feature residential uses.

Existing Land Use

- Mixed-Use at 4th St
- Commercial, Service, and Retail fronting Fitzgerald Ave
- St. George's United Church
- Banks, Financial, and Legal Offices
- Courtenay Courthouse*

* Publicly-owned





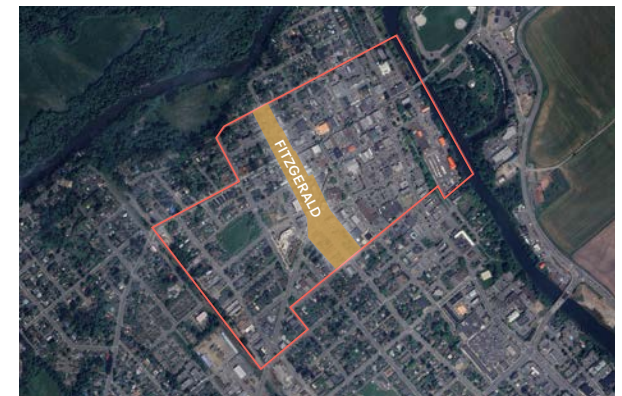
FITZGERALD CORRIDOR | SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Strategic location and key thoroughfare, providing access to various parts of the city and serving as a connector between neighbourhoods
- Active transportation and transit upgrades
- Street beautification has begun
- Grid urban form
- Diversity of service and commercial uses fronting Fitzgerald
- Acts as natural divide between Downtown and Harmston Park

WEAKNESSES

- Active transportation upgrades are constrained between 5th and 8th Streets
- As a major corridor, Fitzgerald Ave may experience traffic congestion, particularly during peak hours
- Acts as natural divide between Downtown and Harmston Park
- No municipally-owned parcels along Fitzgerald Ave



FITZGERALD CORRIDOR | SWOT ANALYSIS



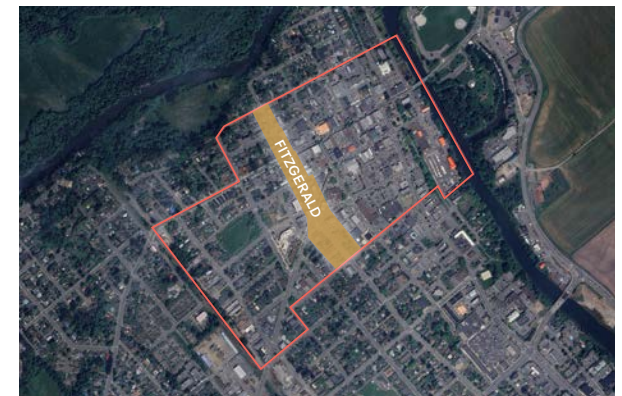
FITZGERALD CORRIDOR | SWOT ANALYSIS

OPPORTUNITIES

- 'Gateway' to Downtown
- Further active transportation upgrades and streetscape enhancements for pedestrians and cyclists
- Increase presence of commercial and mixed-use activity
- Potential for infill development, particularly on the northern and southern extents of the planning district
- Build upon existing wayfinding program
- Advancement of Indigenous reconciliation through arts and culture (consulting with K'ómoks First Nation, urban Indigenous groups, Métis)

THREATS (CONSTRAINTS)

- Commercial land owners could be difficult to incentivize towards increased development
- As the city grows, Fitzgerald Ave could face increased traffic pressure, exacerbating congestion and potentially reducing safety for pedestrians and cyclists
- Upgrading infrastructure could be a challenge for a unified development vision



FITZGERALD CORRIDOR | SWOT ANALYSIS



HARMSTON PARK | EXISTING LAND USE & CHARACTER

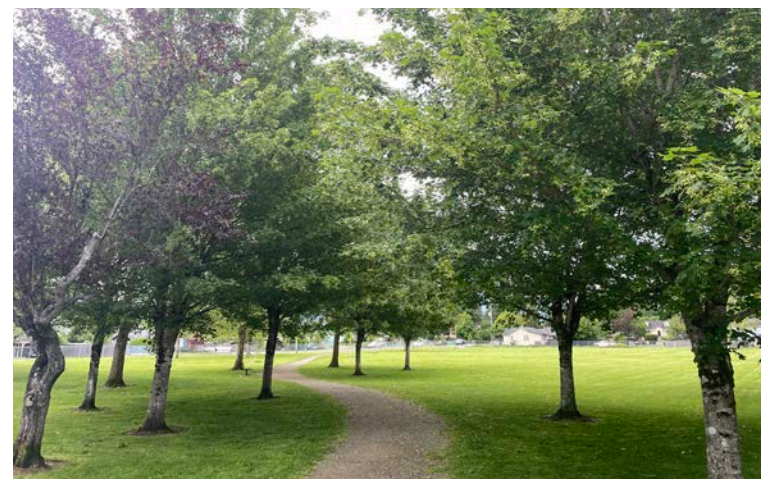
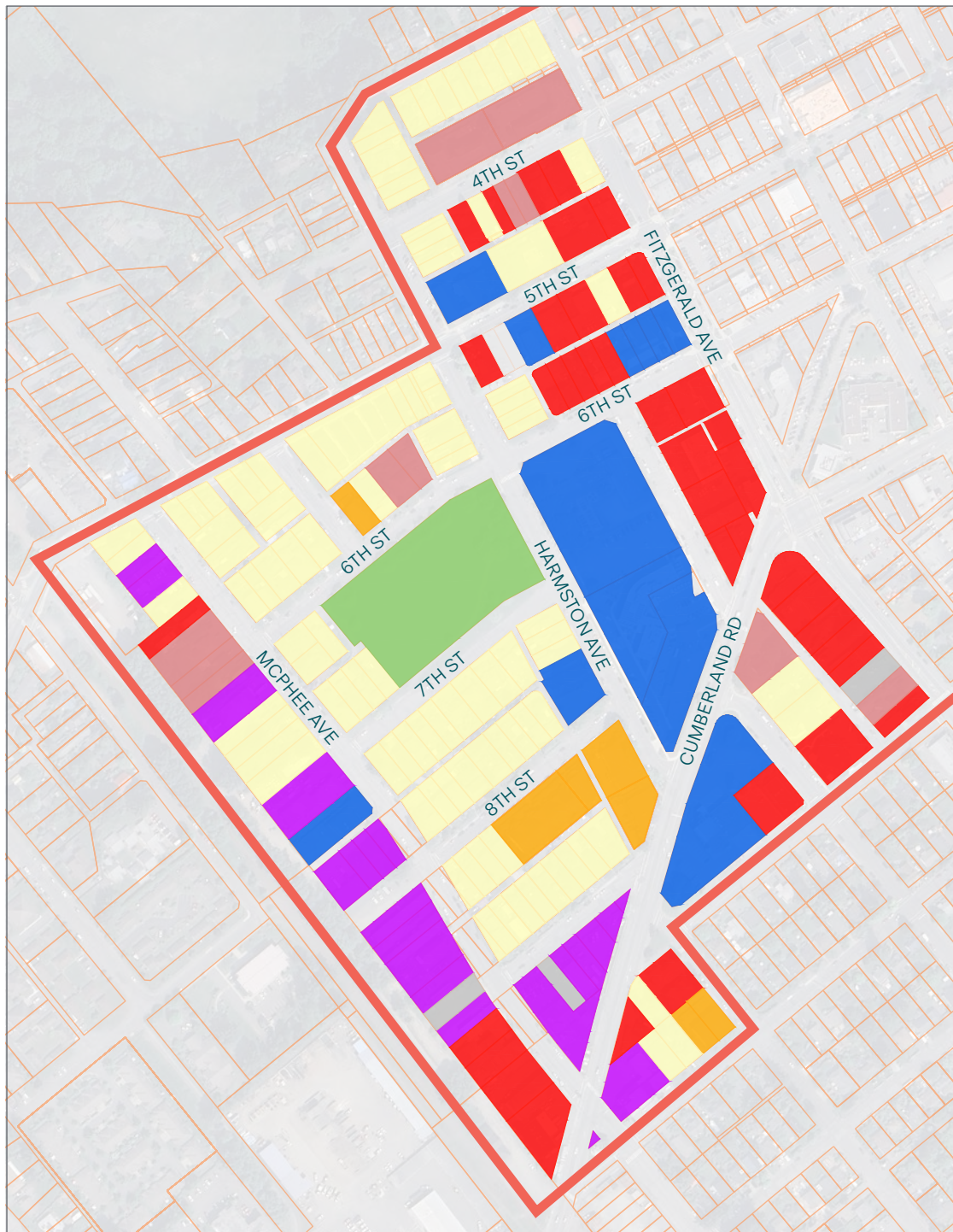
The Harmston Park district is a mosaic of land uses. At its heart lies a park surrounded by low-density residential neighbourhoods featuring primarily single-family homes and townhouses. To the west, light industrial buildings fronting McPhee Avenue and backing onto the Rotary Trail contribute to the area's character. On the eastern edge, a vibrant community hub emerges with the Share the Harvest Community Garden, Old Church Theatre, and essential institutional buildings housing the Comox Valley Regional District, School District 71 offices, and the Courtenay Fire Hall. Commercial establishments along Fitzgerald Avenue complete the district's diverse landscape.

Existing Land Use

- Harmston Park
- Single-Family Residential
- Fourplex Townhomes
- Light Industrial / Garages on McPhee Ave
- Share the Harvest Community Garden*
- Old Church Theatre
- Comox Valley Regional District*
- School District 71*
- Courtenay Fire Hall*

* Publicly-owned





- Commercial
- Mixed-Use
- Residential High (Apartment)
- Residential Low (SF – 4-plex)
- Park / Open Space
- Institutional / Community Use
- Industrial / Garage / Service
- Parking Lot
- Vacant



HARMSTON PARK | SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

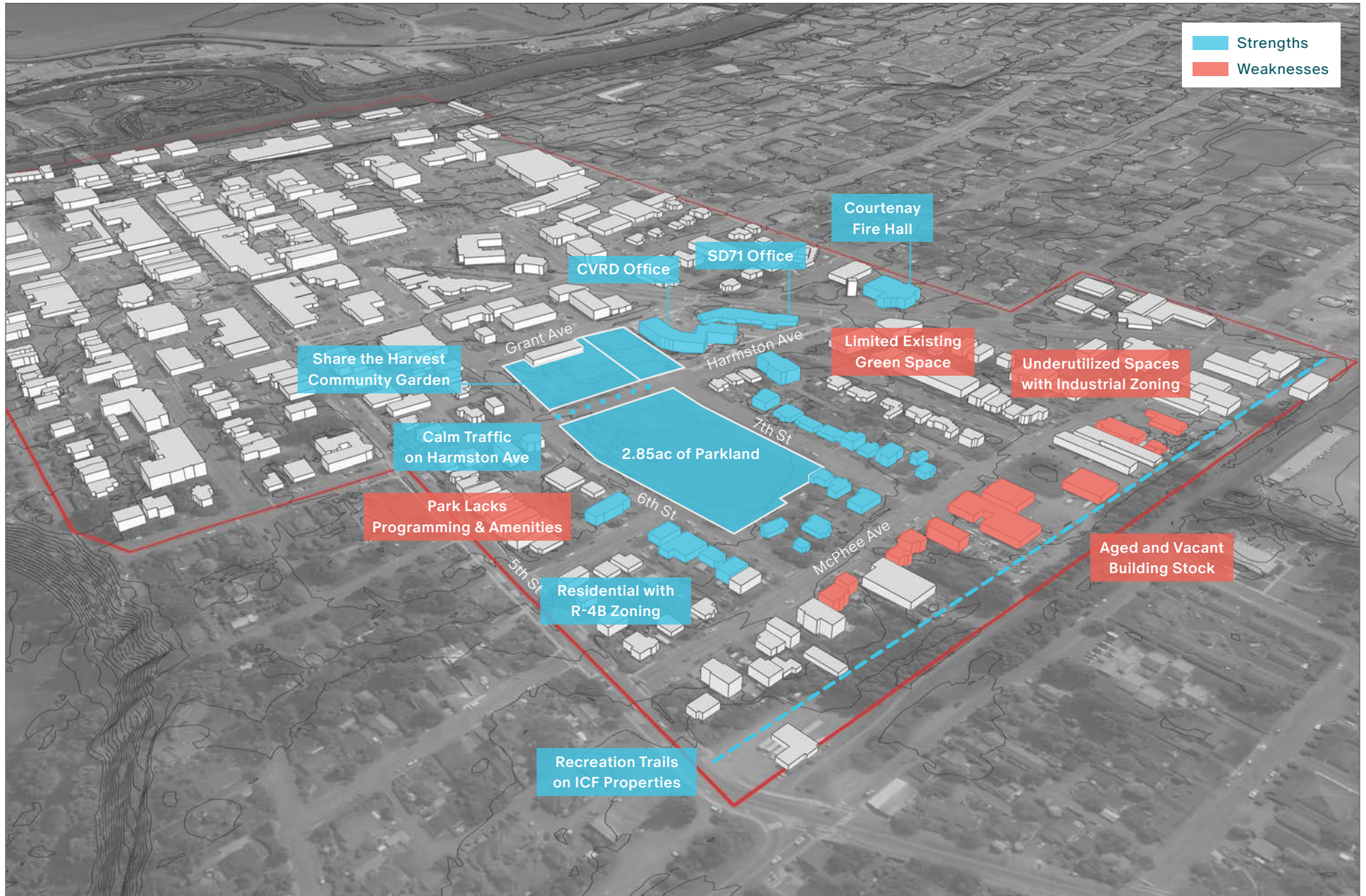
- 2.85 acre (1.15 hectare) parkland surrounded by residential use with favourable zoning, in close proximity to Downtown
- Active community garden (Share the Harvest) adjacent to Harmston Park on municipally-owned land
- Strong presence of both institutional and community land uses
- Calm traffic patterns on Harmston Ave
- Recreation trails on Island Corridor Foundation properties

WEAKNESSES

- Park lacks programming, modern amenities, and facilities, limiting its attractiveness for a broader range of activities and events
- Underutilized spaces, specifically Industrial zoned land fronting on McPhee Ave
- Limited existing green space
- Aged and vacant building stock



HARMSTON PARK | SWOT ANALYSIS



HARMSTON PARK | SWOT ANALYSIS

OPPORTUNITIES

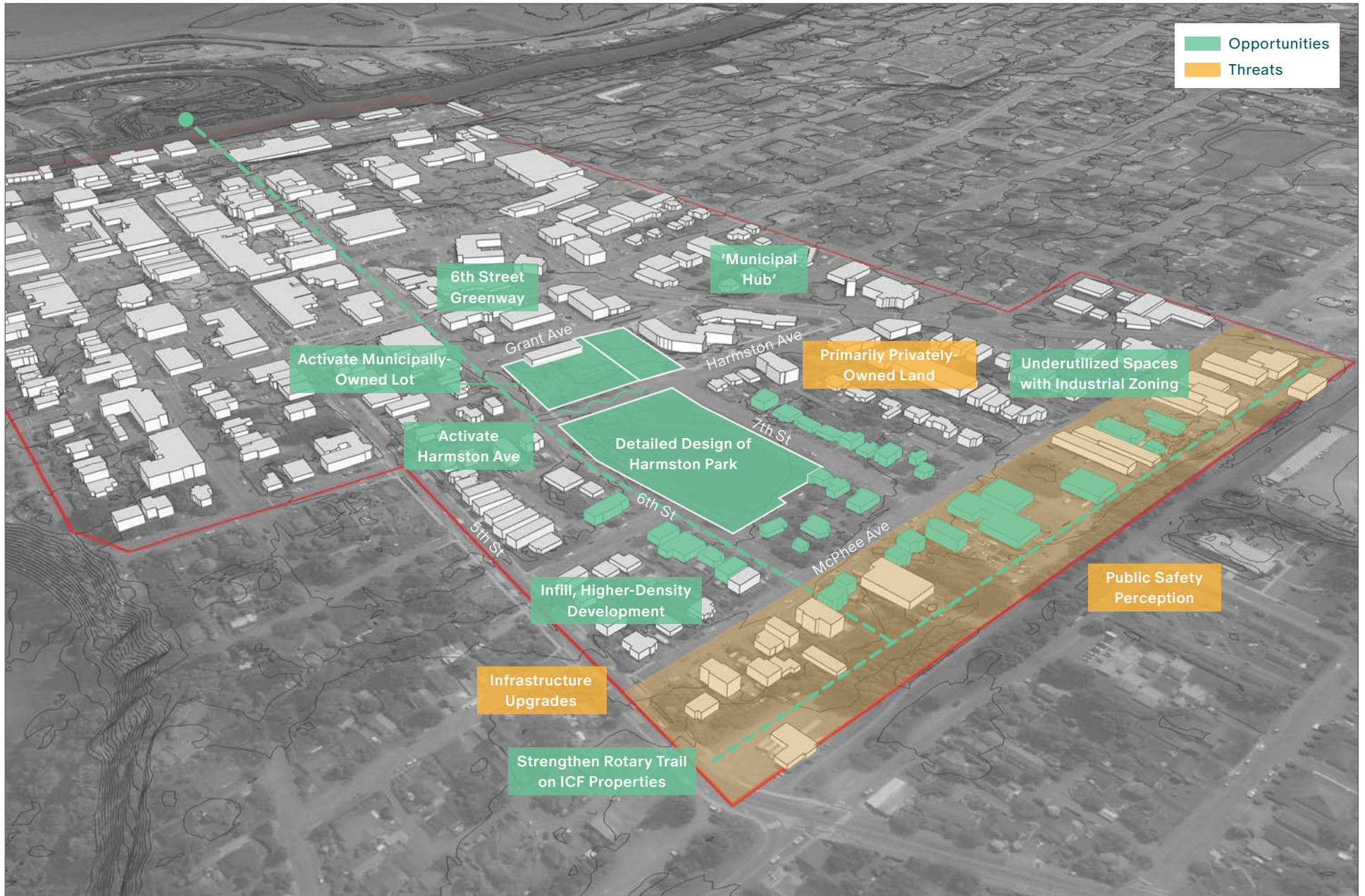
- Detailed design and development of Harmston Park
- Activating Harmston Ave and municipally-owned lot
- Introducing regular programming, enhancing the park's role as a community hub
- Potential greenways
 - East / West on 6th Street (Harmston Park – Riverfront)
- Infill, higher-density development surrounding parkland
- Partner or collaborate with local organizations and businesses to sponsor events and/or amenities
- Underutilized spaces with Industrial and Mixed-Use zoning
- Establishing a 'Municipal Hub', including the relocation of City Hall
- Strengthen Rotary Trail (and connections to trails) on Island Corridor Foundation properties
- Placemaking infrastructure
- Partial closure of Harmston Avenue in order to help activate park and municipally-owned lot (retaining fire access)
- Advancement of Indigenous reconciliation through arts and culture (consulting with K'ómoks First Nation, urban Indigenous groups, Métis)

THREATS (CONSTRAINTS)

- Current public safety perception of industrial area southwest of Harmston Park
- Privately-owned land around Harmston park could restrict the implementation of a cohesive redevelopment plan
- Upgrading infrastructure could be a challenge for a unified development vision
- Implementation of LAP will need to consider CVRD Regional Growth Strategy



HARMSTON PARK | SWOT ANALYSIS



LOOKING AHEAD | BIG IDEAS

The analysis of the study area has provided a detailed understanding of the unique opportunities and challenges facing the Downtown Local Area Plan.

While the Riverfront, Downtown, Fitzgerald Corridor, and Harmston Park planning districts possess distinct identities, several overarching themes have emerged, such as the need to enhance public spaces, improve connectivity, and support cohesive development. These insights form the foundation for a series of transformative actions that can shape the future of the area.

Through the Urban Design Framework process, the following Big Ideas will be further explored, refined, and adapted to align with community priorities and technical considerations. This approach ensures that each initiative is not only visionary but also grounded in feasibility and broad stakeholder support, setting the stage for meaningful change across the study area. While the following list highlights key ideas, it is not exhaustive and will continue to evolve through ongoing collaboration and planning:

1 Reimagine the Riverfront

Transform the Riverfront into a vibrant, accessible destination by improving public access, enhancing recreational amenities, and fostering development that integrates natural and cultural assets. This includes activating underutilized spaces and implementing flood-resilient infrastructure.

2 Activate Harmston Park and Surrounding

Design and develop Harmston Park as a dynamic community hub, supported by enhanced programming and infrastructure. Opportunities for higher-density housing and innovative uses for adjacent municipal lands, such as partial street closures, can further integrate the park into the community fabric.

3 Strengthen the Downtown Core

Revitalize the Downtown through strategic investments in public realm enhancements, green space creation, and improved pedestrian infrastructure. Initiatives such as gateway features and the potential establishment of a central 'municipal hub' could reinforce the Downtown as a cultural and civic heart.

4 Fitzgerald Corridor as a Key Connector

Elevate Fitzgerald Avenue's role as a key connector between districts with further streetscape improvements, active transportation infrastructure, and the promotion of mixed-use development. Establishing Fitzgerald as a welcoming gateway to Downtown will ensure it supports the broader vision for the area.





**City of
Courtenay**