

Municipality of North Perth

Downtown Areas Revitalization and Beautification Strategy

**PART TWO** 

# Streetscape design





# **Table of Contents**

1.0	Streetscape Design Recommendations				
	1.1 Introduction	1			
	1.2 The Plans	1			
2.0	Shaping the Driving and Walking Experience	5			
	2.1 Balancing Pedestrian and Vehicular Needs				
	2.2 Streetscape Form and Paving				
	2.3 Planting				
	2.4 Pedestrian and Bicycle Routes				
	2.5 Gateways				
	2.6 Street Furnishings				
	2.7 Signage	22			
3.0	Additional Recommendations for Monkton and Atwood	25			
	3.1 Streetscape Recommendations				
4.0	Additional Recommendations for Listowel	27			
5.0	Next Steps	29			
	5.1 Identify Priorities				
	5.2 Public Participation	29			
	5.3 Obtain Detailed Base Information	29			
	5.4 Prepare Detailed Designs / Working Drawings	30			
6.0	Conclusion	31			
Appe	endix A: Streetscape Design Concept Plans	32			

# 1.0 Streetscape Design Recommendations

### 1.1 Introduction

In 2011 the Municipality of North Perth began a formal and coordinated process of revitalizing and beautifying the community core areas (or "Downtown Areas") of Monkton, Atwood, and Listowel. The **Downtown Revitalization and Beautification Strategy** is a two-prong approach comprised of a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) and a Streetscape Design component. Detailed background information can be found in the Strategy Presentation provided to the Municipality's Project Steering Committee on November 28, 2011. Also refer to the accompanying document prepared by Zelinka Priamo Ltd. for information on the CIP.

The Streetscape Design is primarily a graphic document in the form of Streetscape Concept Design Plans (see appendix A). This report is intended to accompany and elaborate on the Plans. It has been prepared under the direction of a Municipal Steering Committee and in consultation with elected Officials, Perth County, members of the business community, and local residents.

### 1.2 The Plans

Figures 1-3 below outline the areas within each community identified as priorities for streetscape enhancements. The Streetscape Design Concept Plans illustrate recommended improvements for these areas.



Figure 1: Monkton CIP and Streetscape Design Areas

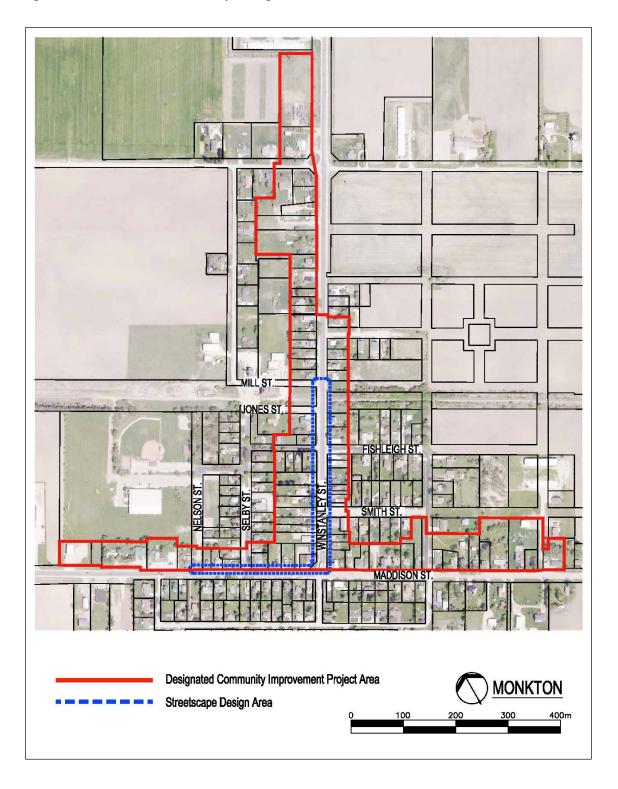


Figure 2: Atwood CIP and Streetscape Design Areas

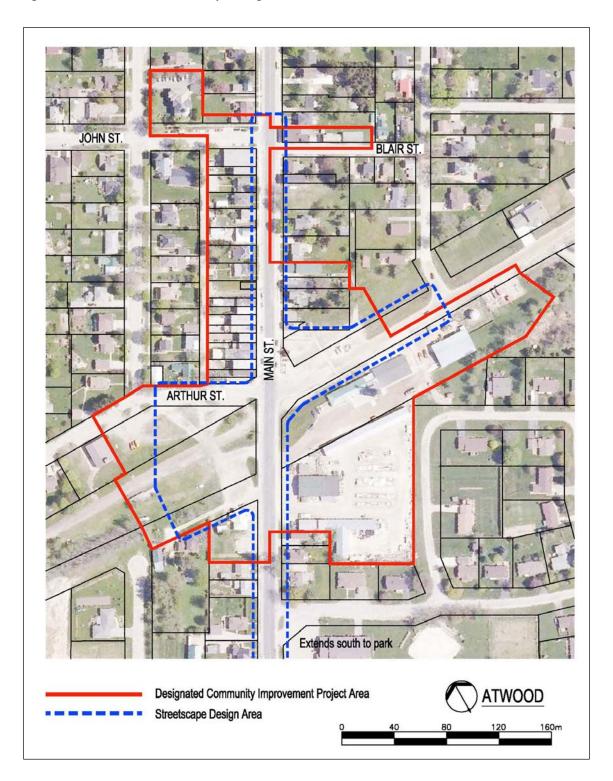
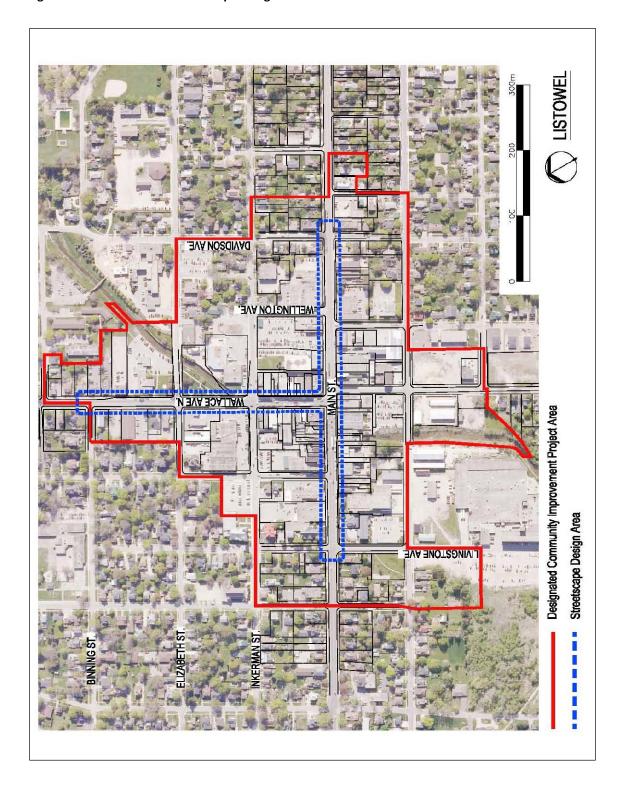


Figure 3: Listowel CIP and Streetscape Design Areas



# 2.0 Shaping the Driving and Walking Experience

The impression visitors take away from a community is often shaped by their experience driving through it. As they drive, visitors form a series of visual images in their mind—either positive or negative—and these in turn influence their overall impression of the place. How they remember their visit can influence whether they decide to return in the future.

We can shape the outcome of these visitor impressions through streetscape design techniques that affect how visitors (and locals) see the built community. Views to significant features can be emphasized, while less desirable views can be screened or minimized through visual distractions. Streetscape forms and features can be manipulated to create a linear series of unique spaces, like "rooms", one passes through—in a sense telling the story of the community and giving it a legible form (gateway, historic centre, commercial/retail centre, recreational / green space, nightlife area, etc.)

By giving a community a more structured form, we also influence how its inhabitants experience it. A more aesthetically pleasing community fosters local pride and encourages further beautification and improvement efforts.

The following recommendations outline techniques to shape the driving and walking experience. These are applicable to all three communities: Monkton, Atwood, and Listowel.



## 2.1 Balancing Pedestrian and Vehicular Needs

Before streetscape improvements are made, it is important to establish what the goals are: efficient traffic flow and maintenance, comfortable and attractive pedestrian zones, or a balance of both?

The overall form of the downtown streetscape needs to consider both vehicular and pedestrian users. Designing for only one user group often lowers the quality of the experience for the other user group. Thus, a street designed purely with traffic flow in mind can be an unpleasant place for those on foot. Similarly, a streetscape design that takes pedestrian needs into consideration must not overlook the driving experience or maintenance issues.

More often than not, streetscape improvements oriented towards the pedestrian experience have a positive impact on the driving experience as well, with minimal inconvenience for maintenance workers. Healthy tree canopies, coordinated street furnishings, and a busy street life all create a more pleasurable and memorable journey for drivers, and may also entice them out of their vehicles and into local businesses.

Such improvements cannot be made as an afterthought to traffic design, but must be implemented via a coordinated and master planned approach. For example, trees and other plantings have specific soil and space requirements and must be integrated with other infrastructure improvements—not added in later.

Through careful design and planning, it is possible to balance the needs of drivers and pedestrians.

## 2.2 Streetscape Form and Paving

### 2.2.1. Add Sidewalk Bump-Outs at Key Intersections and Strategic Mid-Block Locations.

Unique spaces along a driving route can be defined by entrance and exit points (like doors), created by narrowing the path of travel. This can be achieved through sidewalk extensions, or bump-outs, added to key intersections and strategic mid-block locations.

Bump-outs narrow the roadway and cause drivers to slow down and pay more attention to their surroundings. As a result, bump-outs make excellent locations to highlight community landmarks or provide navigational information (e.g., gateway features).

Bump-outs also create additional space in the pedestrian right-of-way (R.O.W.), providing opportunities for plantings, site furnishings, and crosswalks. They are especially effective for adding trees to the streetscape, as soil volumes of an adequate size to support healthy tree growth can be incorporated at the time of construction.

While bump-outs pose potential obstacles for snowplows, the benefits to the streetscape outweigh this inconvenience. To minimize damage from snow clearing equipment, vertical elements can be placed on the bump-outs to provide visual cues to plow operators.

The main streets in all three communities have sufficient width in most areas to accommodate sidewalk bump-outs. We have indicated optimal locations in the Streetscape Design Concepts included in this document. Design and implementation of the bump-outs will require coordination with and possible modification due to existing catch basins and underground utilities.



7

### **Examples of Sidewalk Bump-outs**



Sidewalk bump-outs with trees in planters (Woodstock, Ontario).



Sidewalk bump-out with plantings and pedestrian crosswalk (Ballard, Washington).

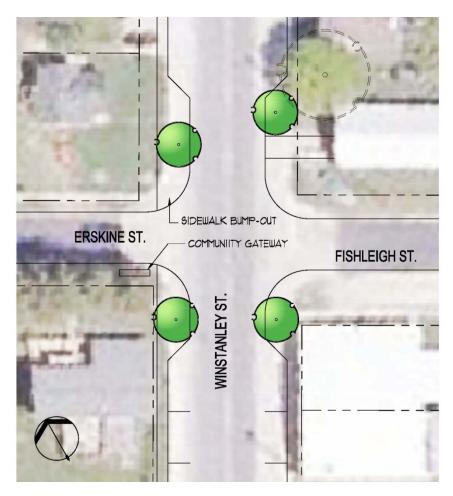


Sidewalk bump-out with trees and low planting.



Sidewalk bump-out with trees.

### **Proposed Bump-Outs for Monkton**



# 2.2.2. Use Decorative Pavers as Sidewalk Banding and at Key Intersections and Crosswalks

In order to enhance the pedestrian experience, we recommend adding a paved banding to community core sidewalks. This will not only help to define the pedestrian zone, but the colour and texture contrast can enhance the overall community image. Furthermore, contrasting colours and textures assist the elderly and visually impaired in navigating the streetscape. Textured paving is especially important at intersections for this purpose.

Decorative interlocking pavers are a durable and flexible option with a wide range of colour, texture and pattern possibilities. They are relatively easy to install and repair, when necessary.

The same material can also be applied to pedestrian crosswalks and key intersections, using concrete edging to contain the pavers (refer to Figure 4). Adding a contrasting colour and material will draw attention to these points and encourage drivers to slow down and pay more attention. Crosswalks should be raised to the elevation of the sidewalk to create speed tables that function as traffic calming measures. If properly designed and built, these do not pose a problem for snow plows.

For areas where heavy loads or settlement are a concern, decorative pavers can be placed on concrete or an ultra-base composed of granular materials mixed with cement to create a rigid surface.

#### **Examples of Streetscape Paving**



Sidewalk – before pavers added.

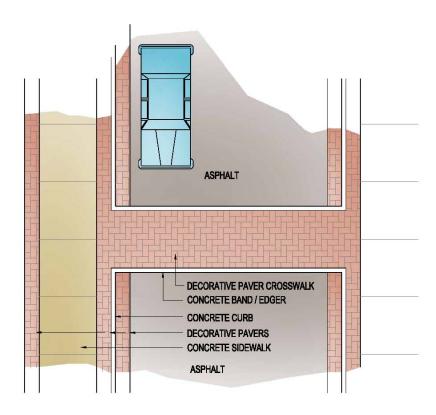


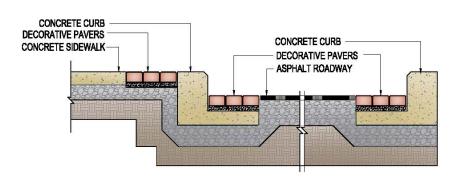
Sidewalk - after pavers added.



Sidewalk bump-outs and contrasting paving draws drivers' attention to a pedestrian crosswalk. Vertical elements such as bollards can aid visibility in winter.

### **Examples of Decorative Paving Crosswalk and Sidewalk Detail**





DECORATIVE PAVING CROSSWALK & SIDEWALK DETAIL - N.T.S.

### 2.3 Planting

# 2.3.1 Add Trees along the Public R.O.W. and Private Properties Where Space Permits

Trees have many positive benefits in urban spaces, including improved thermal comfort and air quality, aesthetic enhancement, and view framing / screening. Unique or historic specimens can also act as local landmarks. Trees help shape and define the scale of the pedestrian space, adding to the comfort and overall shopping experience. Recent studies suggest that shopping districts with trees are more popular and businesses are able to improve profitability.

We recommend that, where space permits, trees be added to the public R.O.W. In order for tree plantings to have healthy and vigourous growth, it is critical to provide them with adequate soil volume, root access to oxygen and water, and proper pH and drainage.

Technologies such as Silva Cells and structural soil can create growth zones that support the tree under paved areas. Breakout zones can also be provided to allow roots access to adjacent soil volumes.

Where existing sidewalk space is limited, bump-outs with integrated tree growth zones may be used to increase tree planting possibilities. They also move trees away from building faces, allowing for more natural growth and proper branch structure.

Business owners are often concerned about tree branches visually blocking signs and promotional displays. This is a result of low branches (for example, from planting small tree species). Proper growth and species selection will allow high branching—producing clear site lines to signage, and screening the upper floors of buildings. This directs the eye to the ground plan and enhances views to the businesses.

In order to further augment the main street tree cover, private home and business owners should also be encouraged to add street trees where their properties have sufficient room and the public R.O.W. space is limited. The Streetscape Design Concepts indicate many locations where this may be possible (especially in Monkton and Atwood).



### 2.3.2 Create Large Planting Beds with Groups of Raised Planters, or Trees and Planters, and Consider a Variety of Plant Heights

Large planters may also be used for smaller trees. In this case, a greater effect can be created by grouping planters together, or with other planting (trees in the ground, sidewalk plantings, etc.). Not only will this add more interest by providing a variety of plant heights, but judiciously placed planting groupings will help use the landscaping budget more effectively. Listowel already has a number of tree planters, which are currently spread out along the main streets and have less visual impact. By painting or staining these planters to coordinate with other street furnishings (see 2.6 below) and grouping them together in strategic locations, a greater visual effect can be achieved. These planters may be most useful in areas where underground utilities prevent inground planting (for example, where the Maitland River crosses below Wallace Ave.).

# 2.3.3 Include Low Walls or Other Edging to Discourage People Walking Across Planters

Street plantings—including shrubs, perennials, and annuals—should be visibly contained through the use of low planter / seat walls or other types of edging (see example photos). This will discourage pedestrians from walking across planting areas and causing damage. Plant selection should take into consideration maintenance, salt and drought tolerance, and year-round interest. The side faces of planter walls should be rounded and sloped to accommodate snow removal and maintenance. Planter edges should be slightly raised to prevent contaminants such as salt from entering the planting bed.

#### **Examples of Streetscape Plantings**



Planters grouped together for more impact, and mixed with trees for a variety of plant heights (Chicago).



A combination of trees, annuals and decorative planters creates visual interest (Chicago).



Decorative fencing provides a place to sit and defines the planter boundary (Chicago).



A simple, exposed aggregate concrete planter wall (Halifax).



Round planters also act as bollards.

Stone curb and seat wall with decorative fencing.

### 2.4 Pedestrian and Bicycle Routes

# 2.4.1 Consider Existing and Potential Pedestrian and Bicycle Routes through the Community

When considering community core areas, it is important to think of them not in isolation from the surrounding neighbourhoods, but integrated with them. Developing conceptual and physical linkages from the core into surrounding areas helps strengthen community activities and connections. Pedestrian routes are a critical component of these linkages.

At the community input meetings on November 17, we discussed with the participants how they move through their community, particularly on foot and bicycle. We were able to start developing an idea of pedestrian routes—both those already in use and locations where routes might be added or enhanced to improve access.

This initial picture informed our Streetscape Design Concepts. For example, we suggest logical locations for pedestrian crosswalks at intersections and selected mid-block locations. More detailed design work should continue to take pedestrian routes into consideration.

## 2.5 Gateways

# 2.5.1 Create Welcoming Gateways at Entrance Points to Each Community Core Area

As discussed above, the driving experience through a community can be shaped by creating a series of "rooms". Gateways at the entrance points to each community core area give visitors a sense of arrival, and can begin the narration of what the community is all about. A community core or downtown area is an expression of the community, its heritage, and values. The gateway is therefore an opportunity to establish a sense of place for visitors and residents. Care should be taken to develop a theme that is compelling, memorable, and not dated.

Gateway features such as walls, signage, and plantings should be coordinated within each community to portray a harmonious and unified message. The Concept Plans indicate where these gateway points may be best located.

#### **Examples of Gateways**



A gateway can help establish the character and values of a community.



Clear graphics and text help with navigation.

## 2.6 Street Furnishings

Street furnishings help establish the overall look and feel of a community, provide comfort and convenience to both pedestrians and drivers (e.g., street lighting), and can act as landmarks or way-finding aids (e.g., signage, unique plantings, etc.). Types of furnishings include:

- Benches
- Bike racks
- Trash / recycling receptacles
- Planters
- Lighting
- Signage

### 2.6.1 Develop a consistent palette of street furnishings

A consistent palette of street furnishings communicates a clear and unified image of a community to visitors and locals. By coordinating lights, benches, trash receptacles and other amenities, the community conveys a sense of care, planning, and order. This in turn can help define the community to both outsiders and residents, making it a more memorable place to live or visit.

# 2.6.2 Use the same style for all three communities, but customize for each community with unique colours or castings

A common style of furnishings should be used for Monkton, Atwood, and Listowel in order to tie them together visually under the same "brand", as North Perth communities. This will create a stronger impression for visitors travelling through the three communities, for example on the main north-south highway route.

Furnishings should be customized with unique colours or castings in order to foster individual community identity.

Other considerations in selecting furnishings include:

- Durability of materials
- Comfort
- Ease of use for all demographic groups (e.g., include arms on benches to assist the elderly and disabled)
- Resistance to vandalism and other damage

Garbage receptacles must be selected with consideration for maintenance issues as well. Maximum weight loads, types of pickup vehicles, frequency of visits, and winter access should all be reflected in the types chosen.

For recycling stations, the types of waste should be coordinated with the recycling programs available in the community. Keep in mind that some post-pickup sorting may be required to eliminate items that have been improperly placed.

# 2.6.3 Group furniture at logical gathering points rather than spreading them out along the entire streetscape

As with the planting, the streetscape furniture budget can be used most efficiently and effectively by concentrating improvements at logical gathering points rather than spreading them out along the entire streetscape. A street corner with a number of benches and other amenities is a more attractive and inviting place to stop to rest or meet a friend than a lone bench located off the beaten track.

While furnishings should be grouped together, care should be taken in locating waste and recycling containers. Pet waste and other garbage produce unpleasant odours and can attract wasps, so these containers should be close enough to benches for convenience, but not so close as to be a nuisance.



### **Examples of Coordinated, Customizable Street Furniture**



Example of a bench. Customized colours can be used for each community.



Customized casting on a bench arm.



Example of a trash receptacle. Customized colours can be applied.



Example of a coordinating recycling station. Customized colours can be applied.



Example of a bike rack. Customized colours and castings can be applied

### 2.6.4 Lighting Improvements

Lighting is important in both the vehicular and pedestrian zones. One of the issues raised at the community input meetings was that lighting is insufficient in many areas. Listowel has suitable existing light fixtures that can be modified to increase pedestrian zone lighting (see example photos). Modifications also provide an additional opportunity for community branding and seasonal expressions (banners, plantings, outlets for Christmas lights, etc.). Coordinating fixtures should also be used in Monkton and Atwood.

New lighting technologies such as LED fixtures offer improved performance and can lower long-term operating costs.

### **Examples of Lighting Options & Modifications**



Existing street lighting can be modified to provide more light, for example by using twin headed fixtures.



Pendant-style luminaires can be added to increase light in the pedestrian zone. Pendant arms can also accommodate banners or planters.

# 2.7 Signage

# 2.7.1 Add On-Street Signage to Direct Visitors to Important Community Amenities (Parking, Community Centre, etc.)

Ease of navigation and way-finding is an important factor when considering the visitor experience: visitors to a community take away a more positive impression when their visit is smooth and hassle-free.

Clear and consistent signage along the community core streetscape can assist navigation for both newcomers and residents. The public input meetings identified this as an issue, particularly in Monkton, where the community centre is located off the main route of travel and not well signed, and in Listowel, where parking facilities are not always clearly indicated. As noted in item 2.4, strengthening physical and conceptual linkages between a community core and surrounding amenities and activities is an effective way of creating a more dynamic sense of community for both residents and visitors. Improved signage will contribute to these linkages.

We recommend developing a consistent, uniform palette of signage, taking into consideration sign hierarchy, legibility at highway / in-town driving speeds, location, and graphic clarity.

### **Examples of Street Signage**



Clear and attractive signage that complements the existing light poles in Listowel.



Signage offers opportunities for community branding.

# 3.0 Additional Recommendations for Monkton and Atwood

Both Monkton and Atwood are rural, small town communities. As such, they elicit a generalized set of cultural expectations for visitors driving through (safe, family focused, healthy, connected to the land, etc.). If these expectations are not met, the community does not make a strong impression on the visitor. But if the community is able to express a clear sense of character to match these expectations, the visit becomes a memorable and positive one.

In Monkton and Atwood the main street is crossed by an old rail line, now converted to a multipurpose trail (pedestrians, cyclists, snowmobiles, etc.). In both cases, the trail is not well marked and may be easily overlooked by visitors travelling through the community.

The trail / street intersections and associated open green spaces offer great opportunities to develop attractive and memorable community amenities that can also shape the driving experience along the main street and enhance the rural character of these small towns.

### 3.1 Streetscape Recommendations

### 3.1.1 Add Planting and Trailhead Features (Kiosks, Pavilions) to Create a Park-Like Feeling

As illustrated in the Streetscape Design Concepts, the areas where the trail meets the roadway can be developed with plantings and structural features that highlight the trail, enhance the streetscape, and improve visitor way-finding.

The addition of trees and other plantings close to the road at these locations will also create a natural landmark or transition point between different spaces along the travel route. Finally, by bringing nature closer to the street, the rural character of the community can be emphasized.

#### 3.1.2 Add Planted Medians and Crosswalks

The current roadway width allows for the addition of planted central medians where the trail crosses the road. In conjunction with plantings on either side of the road, medians can visually and/or physically narrow the streetscape and encourage drivers to slow down and pay more attention. This in turn helps facilitate trail users crossing the roadway safely. In addition, medians act as a respite or stopping point, allowing pedestrians to rest and time their crossing more easily. This is especially important for elderly or disabled trail users.

Crosswalks paved with contrasting colours / materials and raised to the level of the sidewalk (as discussed above, see item 2.2.2) will also contribute to pedestrian safety by increasing visibility for vehicles.



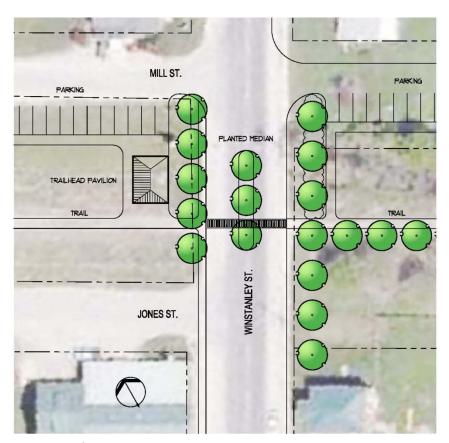
25

Medians should be designed to be wide enough to be seen easily from a vehicle, to allow snow plows to pass without damage, and to support healthy tree growth. Sufficient median width allows tree branches to be shaped more naturally to extend over the road, without posing a hazard for larger vehicles.

In addition to tree plantings, medians can be enhanced with a central feature such as a sculpture, clock tower, or fountain. These can become a memorable community landmark (consider the CN Tower or the Eiffel Tower).

#### 3.1.3 Create Clearly Defined Parking Areas

Currently, the parking areas around the trails are not clearly defined. As part of developing a more structured and planned trailhead area, formal parking areas should be included. The Concept Plans indicated logical locations for parking.



Example of proposed improvements to the trail crossing areas, including planting trailhead pavilion, and clearly defined parking: Monkton.

# 4.0 Additional Recommendations for Listowel

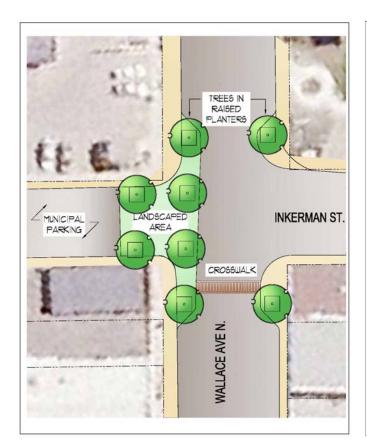
#### 4.1.1 Close or Limit Access to Inkerman Street West

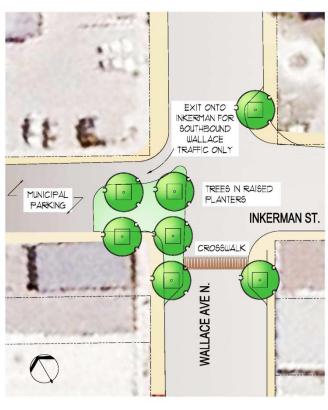
At the public input meeting on November 17, traffic congestion was identified as an issue in Listowel. For example, the block of Wallace Avenue N. between Inkerman Street and Main Street is often backed up with vehicles. The distance between these two intersections is relatively short, and vehicles turning on and off Wallace in both locations contribute to the congestion.

The intersection of Wallace Avenue and Inkerman Street is unsignalled. Vehicles attempting left-hand turns here (onto either street), contribute to congestion along Wallace. Rather than adding traffic signals so close to the Wallace-Main St. intersection, we recommend closing or limiting access to Inkerman west of Wallace (see figures 5 and 6).

#### Inkerman and Wallace - Closed West Access

#### Inkerman and Wallace - Limited West Access





This approach has additional benefits to the overall streetscape, and the downtown area in general. By closing or limiting access to Inkerman, additional space would be created for landscaping and trees, thereby extending the green / park space along the Maitland River further into the downtown area. This would strengthen the visual impact of the river and create a more memorable landmark within Listowel.

Altering the Inkerman – Wallace intersection would require traffic and parking studies, as well as an exploration of various design alternatives.

#### 4.1.2 Create a Municipal Parking Area along Inkerman Street West

The current land use along the block of Inkerman Street just west of Wallace is commercial, fronted by paved parking areas. Closing or limiting access from Wallace would create an opportunity to transform the street into a municipal parking area. It would be necessary to work with the neighbouring property owners to fashion a unified and coordinated space, to ensure access is retained to their businesses, and to enhance their presence on the street. By incorporating landscape features and furnishings from the streetscape, the parking area could be visually tied into the rest of the downtown core. A re-design of this area should also include strategies to screen garbage bins and utility areas.

### 4.1.3 Coordinate School Crosswalk with Gateways

The north gateway and crosswalk proposed at the intersection of Wallace Avenue and Binning Street is relatively close to an existing school crossing. These two crosswalks should be coordinated and/or combined, with consideration of the potential closing of the school in the next few years.

Safety is a concern with all crosswalks and school crosswalks in particular. Given the sloping topography of this section of Wallace, and the traffic volume, design of the gateway and crosswalk should include a careful examination of the views to the site.

# 5.0 Next Steps

The Streetscape Design Concept plans have been prepared as a tool to guide and inform future work in revitalizing the downtown areas of Monkton, Atwood, and Listowel. They are conceptual in nature, focusing on broad ideas and recommendations.

Moving forward, the following steps will be necessary to realize the vision laid out in this report.

## 5.1 Identify Priorities

Note that these are listed as general steps, but may not necessarily be applied to all areas at once. Rather, specific priorities and sites may be addressed individually as funding is made available, using the Concept Plans as a guide.

The Concept Plans can also be implemented as part of already-planned or future infrastructure improvements. For example, if sidewalks are to be rebuilt as part of a sewer replacement project, bump-outs and decorative paving banding (see 2.2.1 and 2.2.2) can be included as part of the rebuild.

It is therefore important that the Municipality begin to establish priorities in terms of specific areas or elements for revitalization, and use these to develop a plan to direct funding as it becomes available.

### 5.2 Public Participation

Public participation is an important component in determining community priorities for streetscape revitalization. Furthermore, given that one of the main goals of streetscape revitalization is to create a dynamic and attractive public space that reflects the character of the overall community, public input is essential in ensuring that any revitalization projects and programs have long-term viability and are well supported by the community.

### 5.3 Obtain Detailed Base Information

The base information used to prepare the Concept Plans included: aerial photography, parcel boundaries, and edge of road paving. Underground utilities locations were also available for Listowel.

In order to prepare more detailed and accurate plans ready for construction, additional base information will be required, including all street level and underground infrastructure, existing vegetation, topography and drainage patterns, and building outlines.



# 5.4 Prepare Detailed Designs / Working Drawings

Once more detailed base information is compiled, the general concepts can be developed into site-specific designs taking existing conditions into account. These can be further developed as construction-ready working drawings as resources and schedules allow.

### 6.0 Conclusion

Empty streets, no matter how attractive, are not as successful as streets that are full of life. The above recommendations primarily address the physical realm, but we recognize that this is only one component of the streetscape. We have therefore also considered social and cultural aspects of the streetscape and what it means to the greater community.

Community life on the street needs to be given as much attention as physical improvements. Shops and other businesses should be encouraged to use the street as an extension of their activities (e.g., sandwich boards, outdoor eating, planters, etc.). While use of the street should be controlled and may require some guidelines, it is important to allow expression of personality along the street in order to contribute positively to the quality of the street life. Pedestrian activity and interest encourages passers-by to stop and explore, and makes the street a vibrant and engaging place. People need to feel engaged in order to participate, and by participating, they take away a much more positive impression of a place.

The streetscape is a stage provided by the community. People and objects animate this space. The richness and vitality developed here results in a lively and healthy community.





