

Colborne Street South Side Workshop Summary

February 24th, 2010

Afternoon Session Summary

RED GROUP

Street Character

- Don't want another fortress streetscape like Market Square
- Need stronger 'feel good factor' along the street – better lighting, more shop doors, wider sidewalks and windows on street
- Parking needs to be included on the street for the retail uses – people won't want to park in the parking garage
- Angle parking?
- Cars need direct access to parking garage from Colborne Street
- Improve Water Street – bring it back as real street with active frontages and a better quality street character. There is an opportunity for this street to be more than just the front door of the YMCA.
- Idea presented to pedestrianize Colborne Street
- Icomm needs traffic calming if pedestrians or cyclists are to cross it safely\
- Car need direct access to parking garage from Colborne

Building Design

- Building design needs to fit with the existing 'feel' of Downtown Brantford. Shouldn't be totally out of context.
- Style of design can vary, but it needs to work with character of existing buildings – respect what is there already
- Can be a mix of contemporary and more traditional style
- 3-6 storeys on Colborne, although could go higher if buildings step back from street
- Taller buildings will capture views
- Taller elements can be more contemporary in design – offer a contrast to the experience at ground level
- Buildings could terrace down to Water Street – provide quality outdoor spaces for occupants
- Repairing the south side will help retail on north side of Colborne

Activity & Animation

- Build on Brantford's 'sports identity' – make this a destination area for the city (recreation, health, sports)
- Need to nurture downtown as a destination for suburbs – offer something that is not available in other parts of the city
- Tourist uses should be included along Water street
- Residential should be above retail or commercial uses at grade

- Building opposite Harmony Sq. needs to be the BEST use and the BEST building style
- Other uses to consider include concert hall, mid-size theatre, arts space, dance space. These big spaces could be accommodated in the base of the residential tower proposed at Icomm and Colborne.
- No ground level residential should be permitted – only public and active uses

GREEN GROUP

Street Character

- Provide retail space within Y
- Provide a balance of retail and commercial space
- Need small “non-active” spaces (as opposed to Market Square which is a large “non-active” space)
- Serious number and size of street trees
- Good streetscape treatment
- Provide wider sidewalks to improve accessibility
- Better quality paving materials—get rid of pavers
- Moratorium on stucco – as a small feature ok
- Bike lanes
- Vehicle Access to Parking Garage from Queen Street
- Rounded, character building at Brant - should come to street
- Public art – 1%-30,000/yr being considered by Council for the years 2011 and beyond

Appropriate Building Design

- The Y-needs more to be more than one floor
- Wilfred Laurier is looking at a residence but would have to go 7 or 8 storeys
- Opposite Harmony Square – no more than 4 stories to avoid shadowing on the square
- Created an integrated vision for south side stretch
- Downtown is an appropriate place to put higher density
- Gastown and Millard’s are good examples
- Trees, roof gardens,
- Be mindful of snow loading on new design
- Build to LEED standards
- Salvage some materials from the existing buildings, eg Thunderbird, keystones from the windows?

Connections & Linkages

- Bike path/lane/connected jogging path
- Wider sidewalks
- Get us to the river!
- Get us to the market!
- Way finding signage
- Navigation park
- SAFETY!
- Connection between Queen Street and parking garage

- Parking strategy need for supply and management of spaces
- Water Street as programmed outdoor space?

BLUE GROUP

Street Character

- Recognition of heritage
- Accessible outdoor spaces
- Appropriate sidewalk widths – slow traffic down; activity in front of buildings*
- Possibility of street closure for special events
- Co-ordinate street character with Dalhousie Street*
- Street trees w benches under canopy
- Creatively designed bike racks (artist designed)
- Quality materials; quality design

Appropriate Building Design

- Friendly; allow for spillover; breaks in building facades
- Blend in with Harmony Square architecture/"marriage" of architecture*
- Redesign of Parkade links – better design linkage
- LEED standards*
- Multi-purpose building at ground floor level with residential above
- Overall appearance: pleasing (e.g. window boxes even if office uses)
- Accessible to all
- Quality materials; quality design
- Building facades along Colborne Hill link – mural, shops facing onto link
- Consider how developments will look from riverside
- Utilize Water St. side – make it vibrant*

Connections & Linkages

Connections important between Colborne Street and River*

- Bike lane along Colborne Street
- Improve Water Street
- Link further east from Colborne Street to facilitate visits to Farmer's Market
- Better signage in Parkade
- Better access between Y and Parkade
- Formalized, safe connection (artist designed) across/over Icomm Drive
- Pedestrian crossing across Colborne St. at Harmony Square to Parkade*
- Indicate footprint of former canal

Activity & Animation

- Hotel with shuttle to casino
- Quality uses
- Parcel C (Icomm and Lorne Bridge)
 - o 6 storeys
 - o mixed residential
 - o gateway development /standout feature

- Attract youths and seniors
- Café strip
- Places to meet, sit and socialize (interactive uses) *
- Cultural district across from Harmony Square
- WHO age-friendly checklist*
- Look at Water Street as a front door for new entrepreneurial opportunities
- Public loos
- New student walk-in clinic

* indicates guideline principle presented to remainder of workshop participants at session's end

GENERAL YMCA DISCUSSION:

- Better than before, but still needs further thought
- Building feels very long - need to break it up. A courtyard opening onto Colborne would help break up facade and create amenity space for the community and the YMCA (for such services as daycares, etc)
- Block is too long for one big building – need to break block up to help move people down the street
- Y frontage should not be one solid wall – need to provide more variation
- Push building back to provide greater sidewalk width
- Maximize retail opportunities along Colborne
- What are opportunities for a green roof?

Evening Session

RED GROUP

Street Character

- Make it beautiful! – Needs to support good quality materials, easy maintenance, safe
- Extend treatment of sidewalk onto Colborne Street (paving, etc).
- More greenery needed (not just trees – what about grass?)
- Intimate street (narrower) vs. wider public realm (more grand),
- Bike lane needed
- Wider sidewalks would be nice
- Need to resolve bottle neck congestion at Queen and Colborne
- Need to ensure that Colborne operates as a transit street to serve YMCA and retail
- Need to control parking @ YMCA - no idling allowed!

Building Design

- Keep buildings open to street (not like Market Square)
- Keep texture of street (varied scales of frontages) even if large single uses are behind the facade
- Want variety of signage styles along length of street – like a real main street and not a mall
- Recreate scale of street except at Icomm Drive, where taller elements are okay
- Taller elements should be modern and sculptural – could be 10 or 12 storeys
- Protect view to important Brantford skyline elements (such as Federal Building tower)
- Want buildings to contribute to a varied skyline for Brantford
- Don't want faux heritage – new buildings are not old buildings – don't want cheap historic
- Can some of the façades be replicated in new structures?

Activity & Animation

- Need to include a new park or green space somewhere along Colborne length – shouldn't only be buildings – let's create a public amenity that can complement Harmony Square
- No residential uses at ground floors
- Specialist retail – downtown unique
- Cluster uses – don't extend all along entire length of Colborne
- Facilities shouldn't only be for university use or for students
- Also need to offer community uses - theatre, art galleries, dance studio, daycare

GREEN GROUP

Street Character

- Stamped concrete sidewalks
- Street trees, benches

- Bright lighting
- Canopies and awnings
- Temporary sidewalk fencing for cafes, restaurants, etc.
- Interesting bike racks (functional as well as public art)

Building Design

- Building scale –appropriate height; break monolithic expanse with setbacks and breaks
- Heritage character – brick, not stucco
- Create breaks between buildings
- Regulate colour of building
- Snow shedding off of building roofs-regulate

Activity & Animation

- View Water Street as having similar potential to York street in Stratford (activity there as well as along Colborne Street)
- Do whatever it takes to get people on the street
- Street-oriented residential
- Need a place for affordable housing (\$700/mo) Protect between too much gentrification

Connections & Linkages

- Safe connection for pedestrians and cyclists across/over Icomm Drive at Colborne Hill link
- Pedestrian link from Queen – Icomm Drive (internal thru Y)
- Safe pedway links to parkade

BLUE GROUP

Street Character

- Outdoor cafes (indoor/ outdoor)
- Food, Misc Retail
- Significant bldg @ west end
- Affordable commercial space so tenants can afford rents and not have to go out of the downtown
- The YMCA should contain some retail space along its frontage to continue retail character– potentially sports-related retail uses?
- Alternately, glass frontage could show YMCA activities – sports, fitness, etc. . Glass frontage would convey sense of activity, and provide transparency for pedestrians and Y patrons
- Entertainment venues not just for students, but for all ages to keep the area active from 5pm – 11pm
- Variety of uses for all demographics, increase attraction for population other than students

- Arts & cultural facility facing harmony square, potentially “market” style venue for local artists and artisans
- Naturalized street plantings where possible
- Street trees planted in green strips/ Lawn/swales
- Water Street should be treated as well as Colborne with a strong pedestrian environment and strong pedestrian connection from Colborne to Water.
- Water Street should be developed with the same types of uses as envisaged for Colborne.

Building Design

- What will be the interim treatment of the site after demolition of the buildings, but prior to development?
- There should be a height restriction for new development along Colborne
- Building standards bylaw with large fines for violations.
- The north side of Colborne could be retained with an outlet mall in the existing buildings such as the one developed in Cambridge
- “take care of shadows” – increase light penetration to street
- Building transparency – windows, light coming onto the street
- Commemorate history of site with plaques on the new building(s) or by architectural treatment having reference to the built form which preceded new building
- Take a piece of each building and put in new buildings
- Maintain rhythm of existing buildings
- NO MORE STUCCO
- Blend of contemporary and heritage in the architecture
- The condo building should be pushed east to create a park on the corner
- There should be new buildings fronting onto Water street

Connections & Linkages

- Connect Colborne to water in at least two locations, especially if new commercial uses are on Water

GENERAL YMCA DISCUSSION

- Would like to see YMCA moved down so it is opposite Harmony Square – highly compatible with activities in Harmony Square as well as the Library and Laurier offices
- Needs better architecture - it looks too much like a strip mall!
- Bigger, grander entrance on Colborne for pedestrians – Colborne should be the Main Entrance
- Only two storeys along Colborne Street is not ambitious enough – needs to be more
- Residential uses could be introduced above the YMCA
- Need to have more permeability through to Icomm Drive/Water Street from Colborne Street
- Is ‘Go big or go home’ the only option?