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# Designing a revitalized downtown

Just as the Main Street Improvement Project is more than a transportation project, the resulting *Main Street District Design Handbook* is more than just a catalogue of design recommendations. The first section of the handbook, "Retail Strategy," outlines the steps needed to transform Main Street into a "great retail street." It evaluates a list of current conditions along the corridor, studies Main Street's connections to other downtown commercial and retail areas, outlines issues requiring immediate action, and details a series of next steps and tactics to create conditions for success.



Additionally, the handbook provides specific guidance on such topics as retail activities, street-level connections with storefronts, and parking. It addresses traffic circulation, transit corridor options, bicycle facilities, and street and sidewalk designs, dimensions, and materials. It concludes with detailed recommendations for such features as streetlights, intersections, crosswalks, street furniture, and landscaping. Taken in full, the handbook provides the strategy, tactics, and tools for revitalizing the Main Street retail and commercial district from the ground up.

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Coming Soon: Turtle Place between Washington and Main on 7th Street.

## Stage is set for future progress

In early 2006, City of Vancouver Transportation Services and the community embarked on a series of steps to support the long-term economic vision for the downtown area, focusing on the Main Street corridor. Nearly three years later, several of those steps are complete or nearing completion. One important piece of that effort – the complete street and sidewalk reconstruction of Main Street from 5th to 15th streets – awaits funding.

Design Report which documents the design decisions in the Plans and identifies issues that still need to be resolved. A third document being completed is the *Main Street District Design Handbook*. This handbook will be of tremendous use over the next several years as the City awaits Streetscape construction funding. It addresses design standards and retail strategies to foster downtown revitalization.

"The Main Street streetscape project is primarily an economic development project. Improvements to the street environment were envisioned as a catalyst for retail revitalization along the corridor," Whitcomb

**"The Main Street streetscape project is primarily an economic development project."**

### Improvements part of long-term vision

The Main Street Improvement Project is closely connected to a series of other transportation projects to revitalize downtown Vancouver. Several projects have already been completed, some are in the works, and a few have a longer timeline.

### Accomplished to date

#### ■ Broadway Conversion

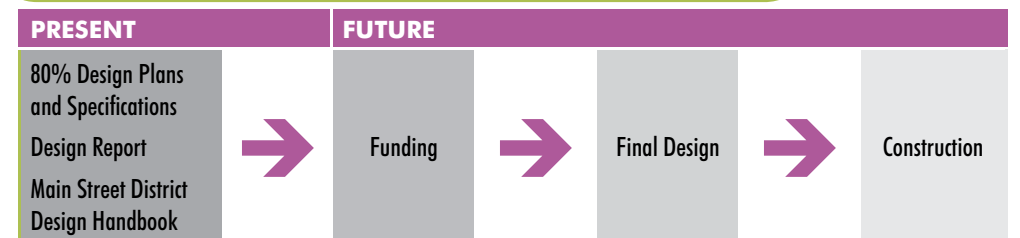
In the summer 2007, Broadway was converted from one-way to two-way traffic from 6th to 15th streets. The project included modification or removal of traffic islands, modification of traffic signals, addition of bus stops, and road restriping.

#### ■ C-Tran Service Modification

In the fall 2007, C-Tran implemented new bus circulation patterns in the downtown area. This included removing buses from Main Street, running buses north and south on the newly converted

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### Main Street: Now & Next Steps for Reconstructing the Corridor



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## Mapping the Improvements & Economic Vision

### Defining the economic vision

A new retail framework for the downtown area, created as part of the economic development portion of the Main Street streetscape project, could use existing assets and corridors to maximize opportunities for economic revitalization.

#### Main Street – Primary Retail

This six-block area from 5th to 11th streets would feature ground-floor retail with pedestrian-friendly storefront presentations. At one-quarter mile, this corridor is the optimum length for walkers in a retail setting.

#### Main Street – Office Commercial

This corridor of Main from 11th to 15th streets would be a focus of offices with some retail-type ground floor commercial activity.

#### Secondary Retail

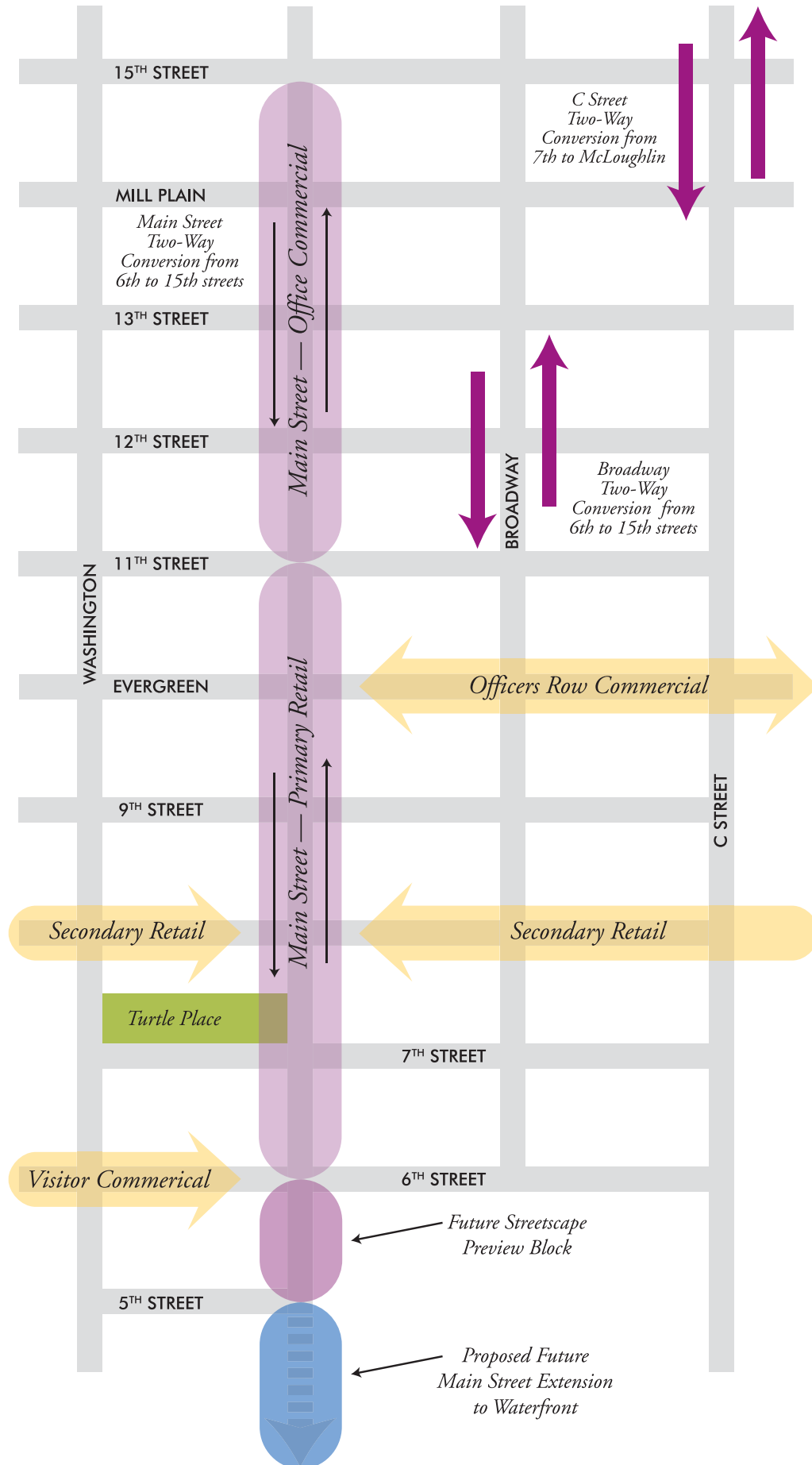
Similar in nature to Primary Retail, this corridor from Columbia to I-5 would help draw people from adjacent areas to Main Street.

#### Visitor Commercial

This pedestrian-friendly corridor, from Columbia to Main, would draw visitors from the Convention Center and Esther Short Park area toward Main Street.

#### Officers Row Commercial

This corridor along Evergreen would connect the Main Street area to Officers Row and the Historic Reserve attractions.



## Improvements part of long-term vision

(continued from page 1)

Broadway, establishing new bus stops throughout the downtown area, and relocation of the 7th Street Transit Center to 99th Street in Hazel Dell.



C-Tran's service modification removed buses from Main Street and created several convenient new bus stops in the downtown area.

### Turtle Place/ 7th Street Transit Center

Upon relocation of the Transit Center, the City converted 7th Street between Washington and C streets to two-way traffic. At the same time, Vancouver's Downtown Association (VDA) was spearheading a project, in cooperation with C-Tran and the City, to establish a temporary family-friendly public plaza on C-Tran property between Washington and Main. Turtle Place, a model of sustainable design and identified by a colorful new wall mural, will serve as a new downtown community gathering spot until a future transit use for the property is determined. The 50- by 200-foot plaza is funded by the VDA through proceeds from a state business and occupation tax incentive program. The VDA, C-Tran, and the City will share various maintenance responsibilities of the plaza. C-Tran will retain ownership of the site at least until plans are settled for the Columbia River Crossing project, which could include a transit station at the location.

### In the works

#### Main Street Conversion

As the City awaits funding for the complete reconstruction of Main Street, it

is working to implement traffic changes as cost effectively as possible. This fall, Main Street is being converted from one-way to two-way traffic from 6th Street to Mill Plain Boulevard. Work includes modifying traffic islands and bulbouts as necessary for two-way traffic; signal improvements for the new traffic configuration; and repainting of lane and parking lines. Parallel parking will be available on the east side of the street.

"The conversion will be similar to Broadway," says Bill Whitcomb. "And we'll be applying lessons learned to this project. The downtown community appreciated the fact that the Broadway work caused little traffic disruption and that the actual conversion took place over a weekend." Main Street will be converted to two-way traffic by

the end of 2008, weather permitting. Signal improvements are expected to be completed by the end of February 2009.

#### C Street Conversion

The timeline for the conversion of C Street to two-way traffic is contingent on delivery and installation of new traffic signals. In advance of that, foundations will be poured later this year for the signal poles. The project also includes restriping of the road and installation of a traffic island at 7th Street to prevent southbound drivers from proceeding the wrong way onto the freeway off ramps.



Broadway was converted to two-way traffic in 2007.

### Down the road: Projects with longer timelines

#### Preview Block

A preview of what the future Main Street streetscape design will look like is planned for the block between 5th and 6th streets. The east side of this block will be constructed in cooperation with Killian Pacific as part of its planned Frontier development. The west side of the block will be constructed by the City. The design will include streetscape features outlined in the *Main Street District Design Handbook*, which provides guidelines for street furniture, trees and shrubs, lighting, and other elements and design concepts. A construction timeline has not yet been set and will be dependent on economic conditions.

#### Reconnecting to the River

Prior to construction in 1917 of the Interstate Bridge, Main Street extended to the river. Planning for a possible return to this historic connection, the City has been working with the Columbia River Crossing project team to make sure the new bridge design does not preclude extending Main Street to the waterfront. Preliminary scenarios chart possible paths under the bridge and ramp structures, with space for business development and various open space options where the street meets the river.