

VISION: CONNECT WITHOUT BLURRING

The strength of Gibsons today is in its small town character. It is anchored by its breathtaking natural environment and an unhurried pace that promises a peaceful existence.

Yet, this dream of a peaceful existence is not realized for everyone. The community is divided by steep terrain and cleaved by the breadth of the Sunshine Coast Highway. Unplanned growth is changing the face of the built form, inserting generic forms and separating functions; it has blurred the unique quality of this coastal town. Some people cannot find employment or education in the place they choose to live. The slopes make it difficult for people, especially the elderly, to get around. For numerous reasons, the town is being passed over by vacationers and newcomers who are moving farther up the coast. Gibsons requires a plan that will help its residents to find local work, housing, recreation, and culture; one that makes the community attractive to newcomers; and a plan that will allow it to re-connect, preserve its character, and generate recognizable neighbourhoods.

The following five principles have been developed in response to the issues identified above, coupled with the predicted doubling of the population. These are:

Connect without blurring.	Broaden residents' use of the whole community while recognizing the unique roles of each neighbourhood and activity centre. These activity nodes will each serve a specific function in the community and require residents to move about, supporting each area. Strengthen the connection between Upper and Lower Gibsons and the rural areas.
Design for the pedestrian experience.	Reduce the priority of the car on streets and encourage other modes of transportation. Establish safe pedestrian ways. Press building frontage up to the sidewalk and promote outdoor retailing.
Respond to the natural landscape.	Provide green-links, protect sensitive eco-system components and respond to the terrain with new development. Take advantage of views.
Respect the small town feeling.	Limit building heights and massing. Build friendly streets. Provide places to work. Encourage individuality both in commercial and residential buildings.
Nurture distinct neighbourhoods	In order to foster local pride, designate character guidelines for new and established communities, allow residents to participate in the creation of neighbourhood identities.

Our proposed plan enhances the existing fabric of the community. Our goal to define the form, function and unique local character of specific areas and absorb growth in established neighbourhoods. This plan will illustrate the benefits growth can provide when guided by established principles.

ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN

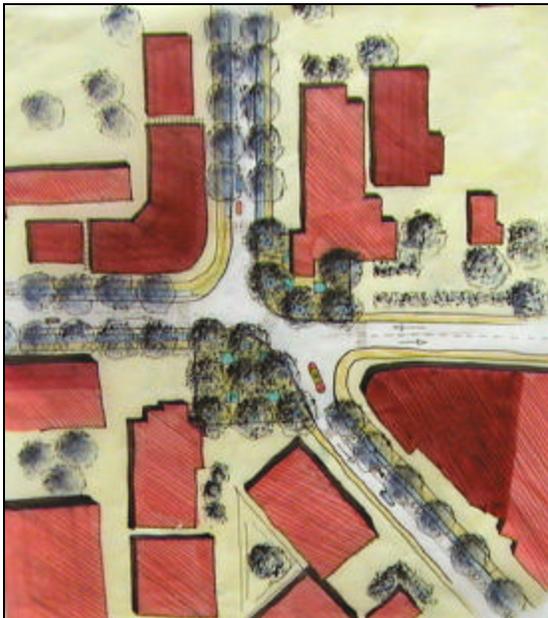




1. WATERFRONT ACTIVITY CENTRE

The waterfront activity centre has been planned as the cultural, leisure and civic hub of Gibsons. Mixed-use commercial and residential buildings adjoining the waterfront, along with improved public access to a continuous sea-walk will increase the use of the area by both residents and visitors. The new civic centre located adjacent to the library will provide a meeting hall large enough to hold the entire community and could also serve as a concert venue.

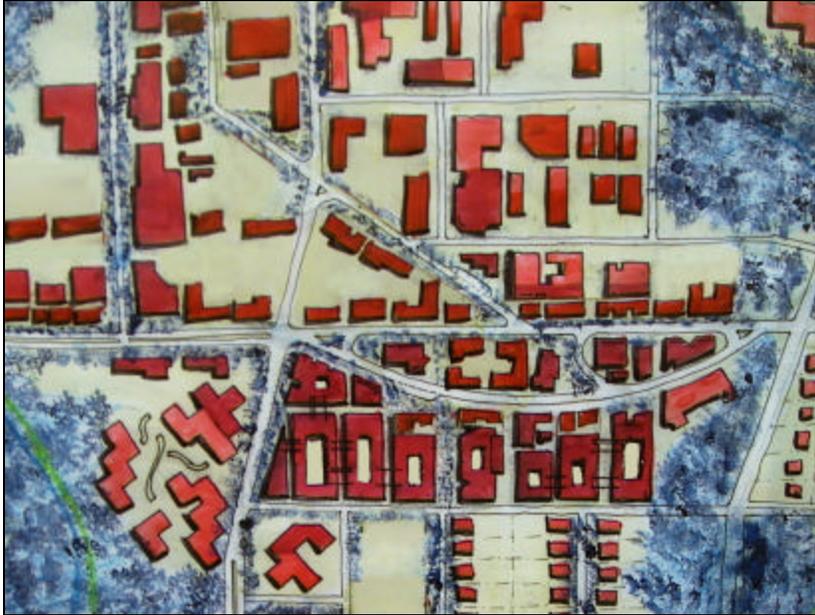
The remarkable School Road slope is a key feature of the downtown and the link between Gibsons' two levels. Increasing its appeal as a pedestrian way and encouraging buildings with friendly road frontages will enhance the route.



2. HERITAGE CORNER

The gateway intersection at North Road and School Road has been selected to site the new recreation facilities for the community. The structure, housing a skating rink and new pool, along with club spaces and day care, will join the existing school. Possible additions to the historic school could include a fine arts high school or a satellite college campus. A wellness centre and the historic play house round out the community facilities functions.

The intersection has been narrowed, forcing traffic to slow down as it enters and exits Gibsons, recognizing the importance of safety and the presence of the community.



3. EMPLOYMENT / RETAIL CENTRE

Located in Upper Gibsons on the major highway this centre offers a variety of shopping choices, work places, and living spaces. Small and large retail venues, units for live/work, and flexible industrial and office space will serve the transition in community economic generation. Each of the land areas is proposed for flexible zoning, allowing a variety of uses and tenure types that can change to reflect community need.



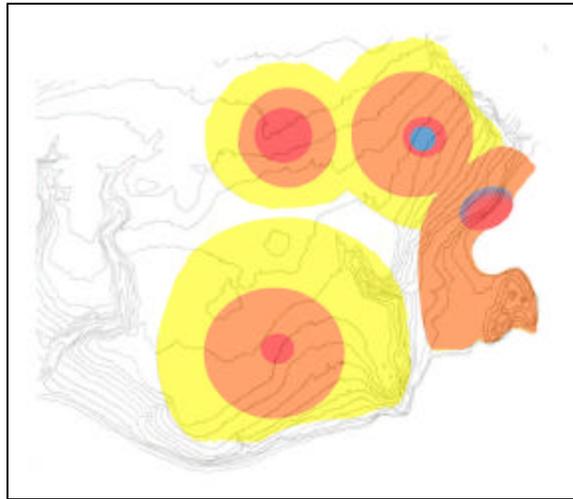
4. ELPHINSTONE NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

Reflecting the character of Lower Gibsons, the Elphinstone Centre is focussed around a small local commercial centre. The area is proposed for a variety of housing densities and building types. Strong roadways link this centre to the rest of Gibsons. The residents here can enjoy a uniquely natural setting while also having access to most of their amenities for day-to-day needs.

SYSTEMS DIAGRAMS

1. CENTERS AND DENSITIES

There are four activity centers in the Gibsons area. The waterfront center functions as the hub of cultural, civic and leisure activities in Gibsons. The heritage corner acts as the recreational and educational center for the community. The commercial and industrial center provides places for employment and variety of shopping choices. The neighbourhood center in Elphinstone provides local amenities for the residents. The population density is higher closer to the centers and decreases further away.



2. ROAD NETWORK

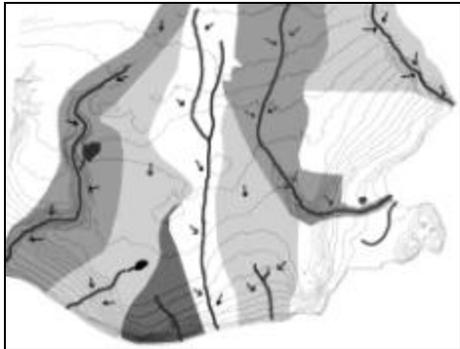
The existing road network, with upgrades on a few major routes, will service the proposed densities and growth areas. Public transportation connecting all neighbourhoods, employment and service areas will alleviate pressure on Gibsons' roads.





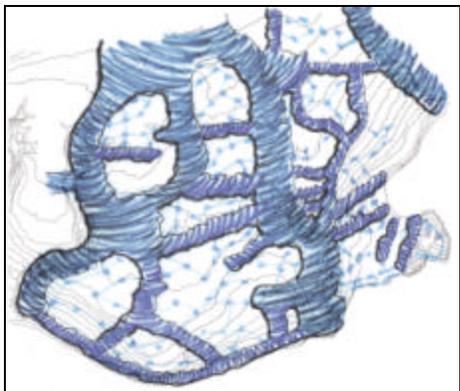
3. DISTINCT NEIGHBOURHOODS

Within the four major residential areas there are distinct neighbourhoods that have evolved over the years to suggest a special character. We propose that local residents participate in defining and maintaining these unique aspects of their areas. A variety in aesthetics and built form will enrich the experience of Gibsons for both visitors and residents and foster local community spirit.



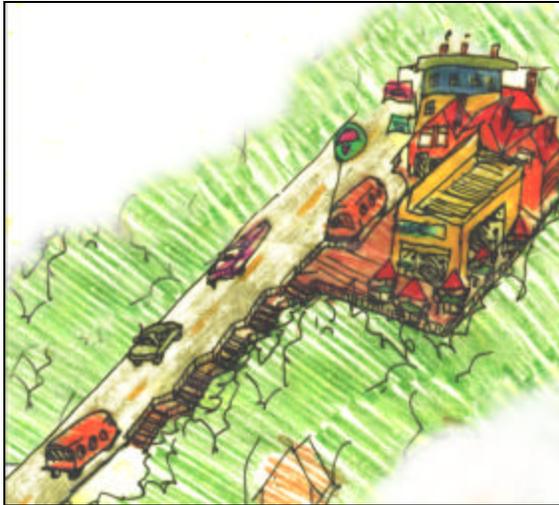
4. WATERSHED AND DRAINAGE PATTERNS

Managing the water flows into the three watersheds is a priority in this scheme. For example, reducing the volume of water flowing into Gibsons Creek by diverting run-off from residential developments through constructed wetlands. Detention ponds and swales have been integrated into the neighbourhoods and have become part of the park scheme in some areas.



5. THE GREEN GRID

In order to facilitate a balance between the built and natural environment, a network of wildlife corridors has been proposed. Fingers of green permeate and enrich the community. Major corridors provide an important link to the regional bio-centre. Minor corridors provide connections between these major links. Small patches of habitat act as stepping stones for small creatures and provide a further level of connectivity.



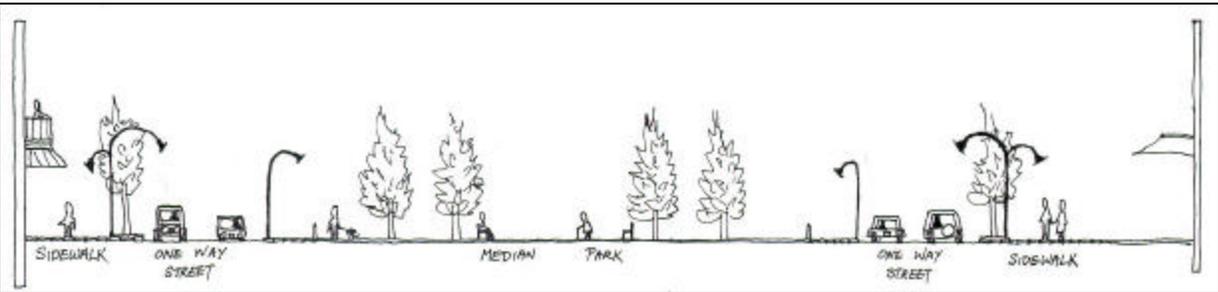
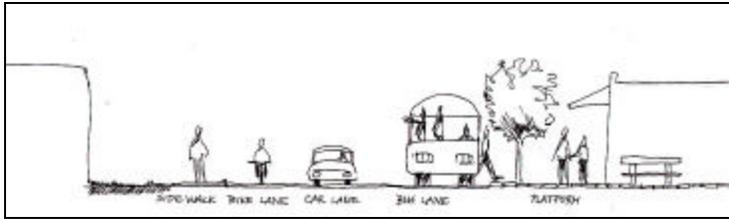
DETAILS

CONNECT WITHOUT BLURRING

- Strengthen the link between upper and lower Gibsons with a more usable transportation route
- Create platforms where walkers can rest on their way up School Road
- Provide more frequent, smaller buses between centres and neighbourhoods
- Create a system of footpaths throughout the Gibsons area which utilize the Green Grid

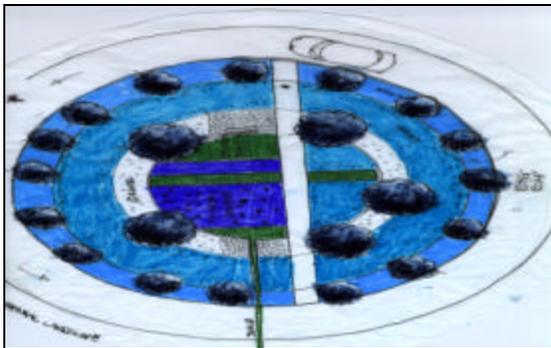
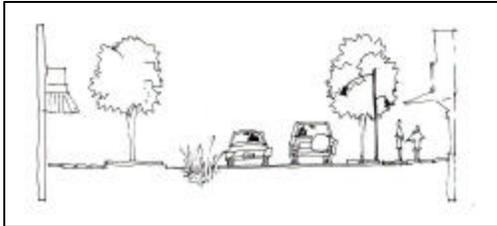
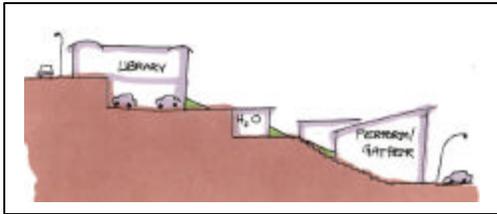
DESIGN FOR PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

- Create interesting places to stop along the sidewalks
- Limit building heights so people feel comfortable walking next to them
- Place building frontages close to the roads and sidewalks so pedestrians can access them easily



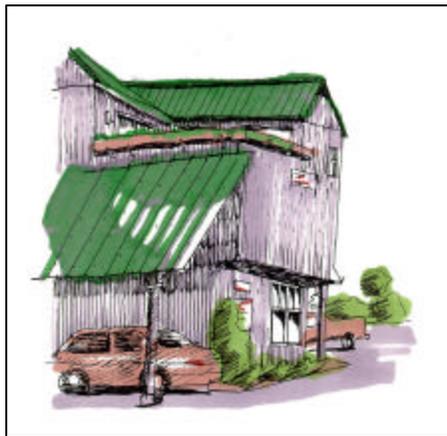
DESIGN FOR PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

- Reduce road widths and slow traffic so that streets become crossable
- Allow commercial activities to spill out onto the sidewalks to enrich the experience of walking along them
- Provide amenities for people who are on foot such as places to sit and rest, person-scale lighting, and interesting places to walk



RESPOND TO NATURAL LANDSCAPE

- Whenever possible buildings should use the existing topographical features rather than fight them
- Make natural resources available for members of the community for recreational purposes
- Maintain a network of wildlife corridors and watershed systems
- Develop strategies to reduce the impact of development on stream systems. Incorporate these approaches into design ideas for neighbourhoods.



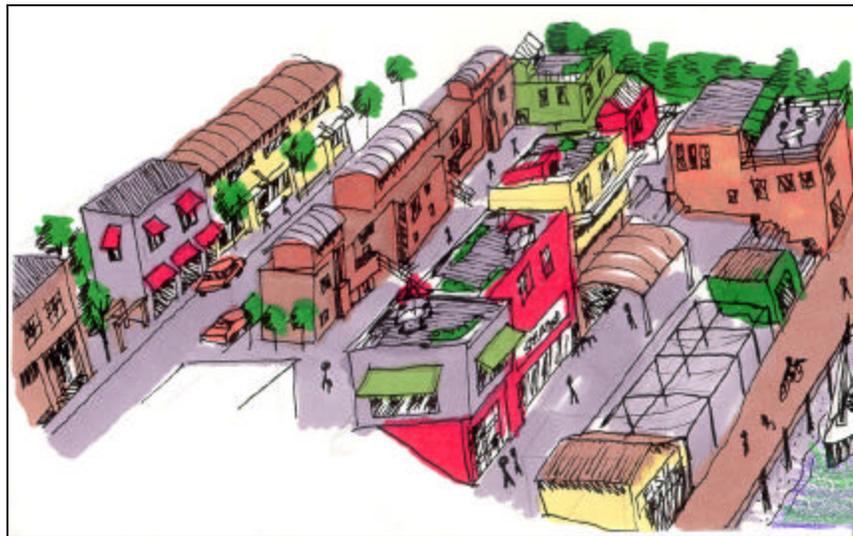
RESPECT SMALL TOWN FEELING

- house the increased population in buildings which do not differ drastically from ones currently found in Gibsons
- Restrict building heights to four-stories maximum
- Allow the mingling of cars and people
- New buildings should incorporate some of the materials, forms, and sizes of adjacent existing ones.
- Growth to the town should happen incrementally, not in broad sweeping actions



NURTURE DISTINCT NEIGHBOURHOODS

- Create identifiable Neighbourhoods to improve the social interaction of people and to create a 'that's where I belong to' feeling
- Use different building- and open-space-designs to stress the difference between parts of the town
- Refer to the existing character of a neighbourhood, when adding houses
- Provide different neighbourhoods to address the accommodation - needs of all people





NURTURE DISTINCT NEIGHBOURHOODS



IMPLEMENTATION

The plan will require considerable support from residents and enduring political will in order to be realized as suggested. An early public education and awareness campaign of the five design principles and the inherent philosophy of sustainable community development will be required. Once the community is more familiar with these ideas, workshops on a number of issues would be ideal. Out of the workshops will come an appreciation of planning goals, community concerns and implementation strategies that will direct planning policy.

Three tasks will be especially critical to the implementation of the plan.

1. Connect without blurring: Overlay the green-way grid.

A major public project, the green-way grid has been planned to link existing green areas and will have to be enhanced in others. In order to realize this grid, some properties will have to be covenanted or purchased by the municipality. It is proposed that a 'green-link levy' be placed on all new development to fund this effort. Public support must be forthcoming regarding location of the green-links and strategy of the companion natural storm water management system.

2. Respect the Small Town Scale: Increase densities, mix uses and limit building heights.

In order to accept the expected growth of the coming decades, the plan proposes absorbing 40% of new residential growth in existing Gibsons neighbourhoods, while providing new centres for the remainder in Upper Gibsons and the rural areas. Zoning for mixed-use in areas and buildings will be required. Flexible zoning that guarantees the allowance of additional density over time may help to achieve this growth in established residential areas. Limiting building heights and mixing uses such as combined retail/residential in the activity nodes will help ensure active, friendly streets. Community awareness of the cost savings granted by higher density will facilitate acceptance of the growth management strategy.

3. Nurture distinct neighbourhoods: create unique appearances for defined areas.

For this plan, a number of neighbourhoods have been suggested based on loose criteria of age and building typology. Residents should be encouraged to follow aesthetic guidelines when constructing or modifying their homes and yards. Infrastructure and roads should change only when being upgraded to reflect the unique choices of street construction, street furniture and lighting, landscaping and tree choices. The community should be asked to participate in the designation of distinct neighbourhoods and in the development of form and function guidelines that support the unique appearance of each.

Other physical manifestations of the design principles have been suggested in the design and described in following captions. The town will likely generate some of its own ideas to contribute to the design goals suggested here. Importantly, this plan and its implementation are loose suggestions that should be considered flexible and responsive to new needs, technologies, and lifestyles that evolve over the years to come.

Overarching this plan is the understanding that growth and change are incremental. Development will flow as need arises and when the community is ready to accept it. Mindful that Canadian sensibilities will be changing over the decades that the community grows, we believe the densities and strategies proposed will be acceptable to the groups it will serve. Keeping the design principles in mind while making future decisions should ensure a coherency in future development that will connect the old community with the new, connect home and work, connect function to sustainability without blurring the character of this special town.