Part V

6.0 Neighbourhood and Community Links

This section of the Strategy focuses on developing trails (Green Links) within neighbourhoods and local communities. These are the links that will encourage people to get out of their cars and walk or cycle to local destinations.

The Neighbourhood Links section identifies the conceptual framework that will improve the quality, safety and convenience of the pedestrian and cyclist's environment. The framework includes:

- Neighbourhood and Community Involvement
- Route Selection Criteria
- Wayfinding
- Infrastructure Improvements
- Establishing Priorities
- Pedestrian Master Plan

Although the main focus is on working towards identifying and improving distinct routes through the neighbourhoods, these tools can also be used to create an overall walkable community.

Neighbourhood Links

Infrastructure

Infostructure

Preamble

Infrastructure and Infostructure

Two main factors influence the ease of movement through a neighbourhood and the desire for people to choose to walk or cycle. These are the degree and quality of the physical **infrastructure** and the **infostructure** that exists in the landscape.

The *physical infrastructure* includes both the technical engineering and aesthetic aspects of the landscape that can either enhance or be a barrier to the user. This includes basic elements such as sidewalks, walkways, parks paths, roads, boulevards, light fixtures, trees, landscape featureS and site furnishings.

The *infostructure* is about how and what type of information is communicated to ensure that the route is easy to identify as part of the greater network. This can include how the neighbourhood identity and character is expressed, finding ways to reflect the history of the site, the look and information of the wayfinding elements (e.g. signs, maps, public art) and the involvement of the community in determining routes.

> A well designed pedestrian and cycling network should look at both aspects together to ensure the ease of use and clarity of direction.

Key Challenges

Each neighbourhood is different in its physical layout, history and degree of existing infrastructure. In older neighbourhoods that are well established it may be more difficult to introduce new sidewalks or walkways or to establish one direct route. In neighbourhoods undergoing significant land use changes there is an opportunity to create larger greenway corridors and ensure that there are more direct continuous links to other open spaces and destinations.

The challenges to creating a walkable and a cycling friendly community are the same whether an established neighbourhood is being retrofitted or a new area is being developed. These challenges include:

- determining the best routes
- providing enough information to move people through a neighbourhood to key destinations – 'wayfinding'
- providing the appropriate infrastructure and removing barriers

6.1 The Conceptual Framework

Creating the walkable and cycling friendly neighbourhood

6.1.1 Neighbourhood and Community Involvement

"*The pedestrian and cycling network should link to places people want to go".* This is a basic guiding principle in developing the trail network. Who better to determine this than the residents of each neighbourhood?

The most direct route may not necessarily be the preferred route if there is an alternative that is more attractive. For example, people may deke through a park, travel along a natural feature or walk down a well landscaped or architecturally interesting residential street. Community input is vital to determining what would be the *best* and most *desirable* route through a neighbourhood.

Community footprints (design features that reflect something meaningful to the neighbourhood) can be repeated along a route and designed by school children and other residents of the area. This could be artwork that is literally footprints or images in the ground or it could include naming certain pathways that have fond memories or reflect a special feature in the area.

Cycling routes may differ from pedestrian routes. People may wish to avoid major arterial roads or take a more leisurely ride zigzagging through neighbourhoods. The Richmond Cycling Committee, together with residents, are an excellent resource to provide mapping for these types of routes.

An existing community initiative that the City will continue to be involved with is the *Way to Go Program*, a school program sponsored by the Insurance Brokers Association and ICBC that provides schools with tools to teach traffic safety.

These are all opportunities for people to link to each other, build upon what is unique in their neighbourhood and create a stronger sense of neighbourhood identity.

Community Footprints

Community Initiatives

6.1.2 Route Selection

A number of specific criteria can be used to determine the best possible routes for either neighbourhood or city-wide trails. Basic criteria for evaluating a route include:

- does it link to neighbourhood, community facilities/retail or commercial areas?
- does it link to an existing or proposed city-wide trail?
- does it link green spaces?
- does it link to the transit system/cycling network?
- does it link to the waterfront?
- are there opportunities to create unobstructed pedestrian movement?
- are there unique features or special points of interest along the way?
- does it meet the long term vision and objectives as outlined in the OCP?

A community group can use these basic criteria as a starting point and then build upon this with their own knowledge of their neighbourhood: how it works internally as well as how it links to the next neighbourhood. The goal is to ultimately form a network of interconnected routes.

6.1.3 Wayfinding

The historic development of many subdivisions in Richmond has posed an interesting challenge. Often people cannot easily find their way into, through and out of the subdivision. The heart of the neighbourhood tends to be the school and/or park site which can also be difficult to find as people move from one neighbourhood to the other.

There are many recent and successful examples of applying the new standards for walkways, sidewalks and boulevards and ensuring that the pedestrian network is part of the overall land use planning. However, even in new neighbourhoods such as Terra Nova it is not totally clear as to what is private and what is public access or how to find key destinations such as the school, Terra Nova Natural Area, or the dyke trails.

Creating a new language for wayfinding - combining infrastructure and infostructure

To facilitate the movement of people and to promote neighbourhood identity a series of key wayfinding elements or visual cues are being proposed. These elements can be applied to any neighbourhood. Further images are in the Design Ideas Section.

A new language...

Gates

Signposts

Bridges

Trees

Furnishings

Groundplane

Gates are located at entries into the neighbourhood

- ❏ gates create a threshold to a neighbourhood
- ❏ should convey the name of the neighbourhood, history of the name, an emblem or icon and a locator map
- ❏ relate to major streets and coincide with the preferred route through the neighbourhood
- ❏ should be large enough in scale to be recognized when driving, yet personal when walking
- ❏ can be positioned on both sides or on one side

Signposts are positioned at key locations in the neighbourhood

- ❏ located where there is a change in direction of the walking route, where a specific or historic event is identified or as an element to create rhythm along the route
- ❏ signsposts can be single elements or can be a grouping
- ❏ signs can be incorporated as part of a existing light post
- ❏ attached to the sign is the infostructure
- ❏ the infostructure is comprised of information blades which convey local neighbourhood amenities, histories, stories and direction to adjacent neighbourhoods and amenities.

Bridges are located when passing over water or over a distinctive change in landform or use

- ❏ the bridge is already a distinctive element in the Richmond landscape that can be reinforced both where there is water and as a 'dry bridge' concept for any type of crossing
- ❏ it has an opportunity to be developed as an entry or a link in the neighbourhood
- ❏ with so many canals and small ditches the creation of bridges can become an art form and create a distinct identity
- ❏ a vertical post can be incorporated into the bridge for greater presence or as an infostructure element

Trees can be located as a single landmark element, as a grouping or as linear rows to reinforce direction along a route

- ❏ trees can be the single most powerful element in creating a comfortable scale, attractiveness and unity in a neighbourhood
- ❏ significant trees can be used to orient people in a neighbourhood
- ❏ trees on public property should be significant in scale especially if used as a landmark element or significant in numbers to have an impact
- ❏ a route may be chosen where established trees on private properties are significant and attractive and form part of: 'borrowed landscape' backdrop to a walking route

Details reflecting the character of the area

- ❏ trees can be used in conjunction with gateways and signposts to emphasize their importance

Groundplane treatments can be introduced into sidewalks, entry paths, nodal areas, roadway interfaces, roadway crossings, bridge decks and paths

- ❏ special groundplane treatments would occur along routes either as a continuous pattern on a sidewalk or at special intersections or rest areas to reinforce the route
- ❏ an endless variety of opportunities arise in creating patterns and texture in concrete from simple scoring of a grid system to more complex brick patterns or colouring patterns
- ❏ unique and interesting infostructure messages and community footprints (artwork) can also be introduced into new sidewalks, plazas and pathways
- ❏ sidewalks should be introduced at gate entries into neighbourhoods where vehicular and pedestrian interface is the highest

Furnishings are to be located in conjunction with the other elements to reinforce the route

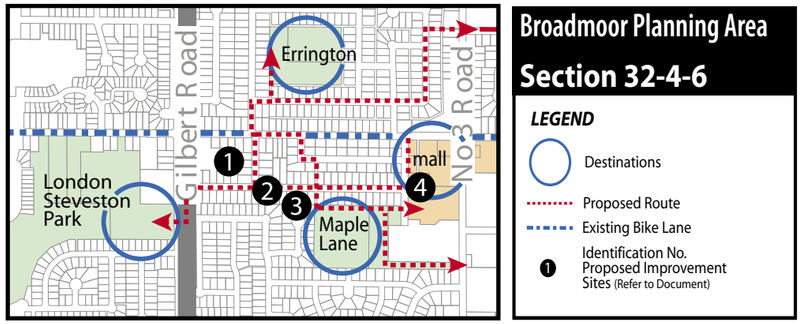
- ❏ benches, seating edges, walls, bollards, lighting, bike racks, public art can be added at important intersections or as a recognizable pattern repeated along the route to emphasize direction
- ❏ traditional elements can be used or creative interpretation reflecting something about the neighbourhood could be added

6.1.4 A Pilot Project

For purposes of determining how these wayfinding measures and infrastructure improvements may be applied, one neighbourhood was reviewed and a potential route selected for improvements. The following photographs and graphics show how a more aesthetic, comfortable and safe pedestrian environment can be created. (See Illustration 1)

Pilot Project:

Applying the wayfinding language of gates, signs, bridges, trees and site furnishings.



Broadmoor Planning Area

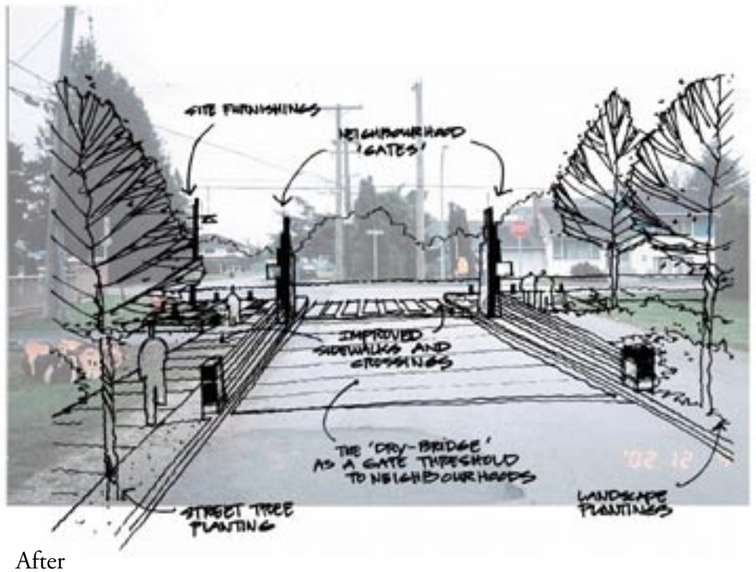
Section 32-4-6

LEGEND

- Destinations
- Proposed Route
- Existing Bike Lane
- 1 Identification No. Proposed Improvement Sites (Refer to Document)

1

Before - Deagle Road looking North to William Road



After

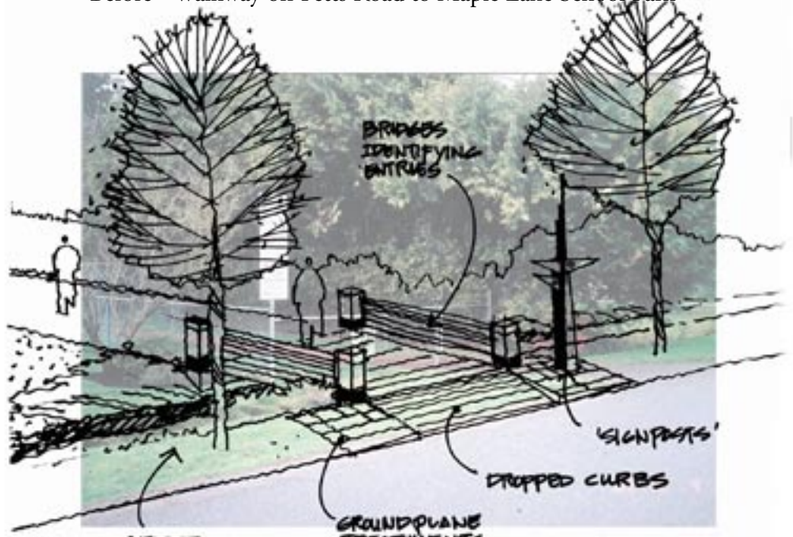
2

Before - Pett Road looking east

After

3

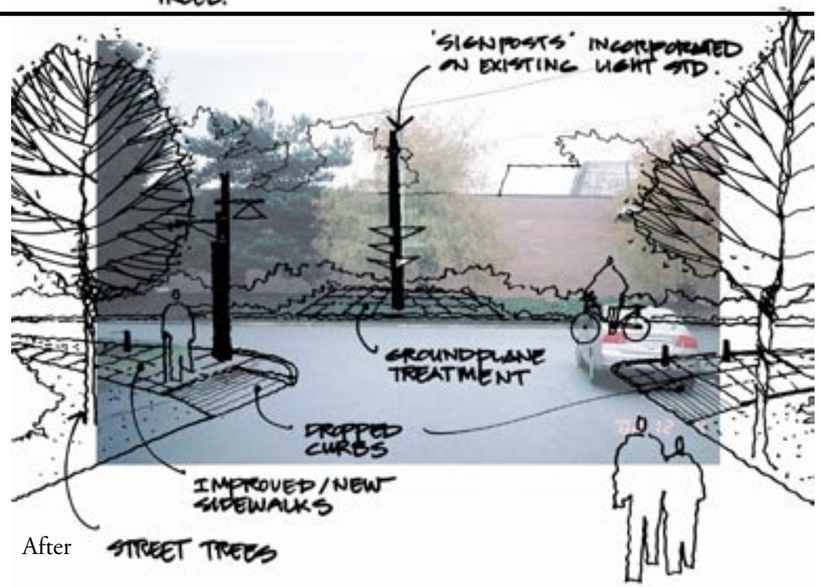
Before - Walkway off Petts Road to Maple Lane School Park



After

4

Before - Petts Road and Dundon Drive. Back of commercial mall



After

6.1.5 Infrastructure improvements

To create a more walkable and comfortable community basic infrastructure needs to be in place, barriers need to be removed and traffic calming measures added. A practical, cost effective approach based on priorities will need to be established.

Each neighbourhood will differ in its requirements and priorities. For instance, in many neighbourhoods, people walk on the streets and they may not think sidewalks are a priority if the street is quiet and has wide side boulevards. This may also be considered part of the neighbourhood character. Again, neighbourhood involvement will be important in determining these priorities.

However, some basic improvements and barrier removals should include:

- distinct directional signage and route markers
- curb cuts in the existing sidewalks and walkways for accessibility
- clear sight lines to streets or sidewalks from walkways for safety
- crosswalks at high traffic intersections for safety
- continuous pathways in all the parks with clear links to other walkways or sidewalks
- benches in parks along the walkway to provide resting and socializing opportunities

Further infrastructure improvements could include:

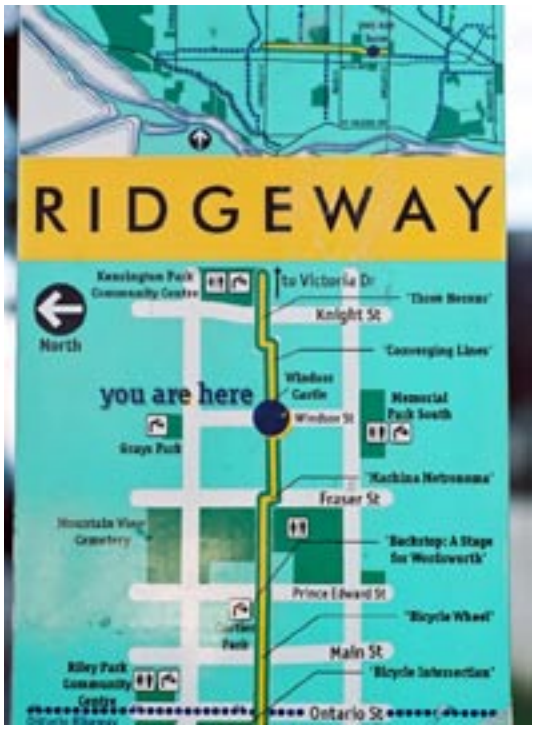
- signalization of crosswalks
- traffic calming measures such as traffic circles or curb extrusions
- addition of sidewalks
- widening of sidewalks along the main routes
- street trees
- rest areas with street furniture
- community art
- lighting of main routes
- distinct character street lighting
- a series of smaller loops for walking through the neighbourhood
- a network of linkages through new developments
- untilization of undeveloped right-of-ways
- better utilization of the park and green space in each neighbourhood

Traffic circles with community art

Directional signage

Distinct light standards

Community mosaics on sidewalks



Orientation Maps

It should be noted that these are tools for creating a more walkable community that have been recognized by the City and piloted in different areas. Standards have been adopted by the Engineering and Public Works Departments for new and improved sidewalks and a variety of traffic calming measures.

Implementing these standards all at one time would be costly and the challenge is to determine priorities for implementation.

Small details can provide neighbourhood identity

Places to rest

6.2 Establishing Priorities

A practical and cost effective approach to providing infra and infostructure based on priorities will need to be established. Establishing an index that looks at the potential and the deficiencies of each proposed project would help determine its priority.

Such an index could include the following factors:

A. Potential Factors:

Community Initiative: Has a neighbourhood or a business expressed interest? Are there other community initiatives like the Way to Go School Program occurring in the neighbourhood? Are there partnership opportunities?

Development Pressures/New Opportunities: Are there 'hot spots' of development that provide an opportunity through rezoning or the development permit process to seek walkways, special amenities and wider sidewalks? Are there other City projects underway that may allow for pedestrian improvements at a cost savings? This may trigger the need for the City to provide additional connections to complement new walkways.

Connectivity Potential: How many of the route criteria have been met? Is the walkway on a designated route or is the proposed project in close walking distance of a park, school, transit stop or other local destinations? Is it in an area that has a high volume of pedestrian traffic? Points can be assigned for each destination along a proposed improvement and for the number of people that it would serve.

B. Deficiency Factors:

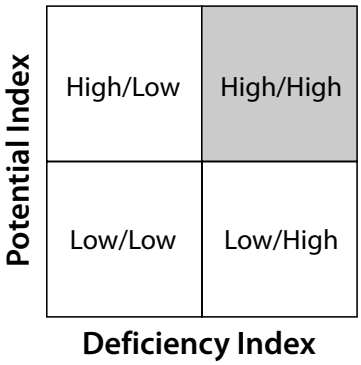
The potential factors should then be weighed together with deficiency factors that impede the safe and comfortable movement of pedestrians.

Lack of Connections: Are there missing links in a route? Are these links important to providing direct and comfortable access to local destinations?

Lack of Infrastructure or Infostructure: Are there missing sidewalks, lack of curb cuts, poor sightlines or lack of directional signage to locate key destinations?

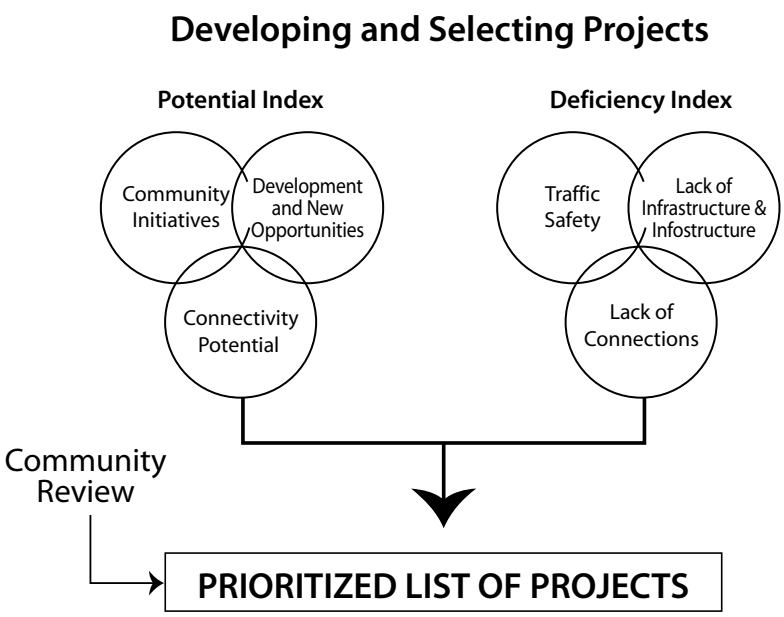
Traffic Safety Concerns: Traffic speed, volume, location of accidents, width of the roads will determine the safety of different routes. Difficulty of street crossings and the general sense of comfort on a street need to be assessed.

As there are so many factors involved in determining priorities including qualitative and cost factors, it is not expected that creating an index would be a precise measure of priorities but it can provide a general sense of project priorities.



Projects with high potential and high deficiency are high priority projects.

Portland Pedestrian Master Plan, June 1998



6.2.1 Establishing a Pedestrian Master Plan

The focus of this strategy is the development of a trails network made up of distinct identifiable routes through the City. However, people walk on more than just designated routes.

To truly create a walkable community and meet the policies, goals and objectives outlined in the Official Community Plan and the mandate of the Community Mobility Strategic Team, a more comprehensive look at the bigger picture will be needed eventually.

A Pedestrian Master Plan would provide focus and guidance in a number of key areas:

- pedestrian policies
- pedestrian street classifications
- design guidelines and construction standards
- potential capital projects and implementation strategy
- funding strategies
- integration with other mobility choices e.g. transit, cycling, etc.
- education programs

It should be noted that this would be a long-term project and that priorities would need to be determined for implementing overall pedestrian improvements in the whole City.

6.3 Recommendations

Short Term

1. Adopt the wayfinding language of signs, gates, bridges, ground plane, trees and site furnishings and incorporate it into new developments and along proposed Green Links in established neighbourhoods as funding allows.
2. Consider allotting 25% of the annual Trails Budget towards Neighbourhood Green Links improvements.
3. Conduct an inventory and analysis of all walkways in neighbourhoods for accessibility and safety.
4. Establish new standards to improve the accessibility of all walkways.
5. Inventory park pathways and identify the missing links to creating continuous pathway systems within all parks.
6. Establish an index or a system to prioritize neighbourhood infrastucture and infostructure improvements.

Medium Term

7. Work with the Cycling Advisory Committee as well as local residents to determine recreational cycling routes through neighbourhoods.
8. Construct new paths, as necessary, in school and park sites to connect to the surrounding neighbourhood.
9. Develop a kit for mapping routes and determining priorities with community groups. (See example of Neighbourhood Public Input Advertisement Appendix 3)
10. Design and implement a signage program for neighbourhoods that will provide directional information about key destinations and will also help distinguish public vs. private walkways. This would be part of a larger comprehensive signage system for other City facilities and amenities.

Ongoing/ Long Term

11. Coordinate with Transportation Planning initiatives for traffic calming, crosswalk installations and sidewalk construction along proposed Neighbourhood Green Links.
12. Work with other initiatives that are occurring in the neighbourhoods such as the Way to Go School Program.
13. Consider preparing a Pedestrian Master Plan that would look at the larger picture of creating a walkable city and that would include but not be exclusive to a classification system for the public realm, development standards, design guidelines and priorities for different types of pedestrian environments.
14. Incorporate the wayfinding language into new developments, as appropriate, along proposed Green Links in established neighbourhoods as funding allows.