

Downtown Guelph

Vision & Program Plan



by Project for Public Spaces

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Site Aerial: Downtown Guelph

Introduction

As part of an ongoing effort to strengthen the downtown's public spaces as the City's civic heart, Project for Public Spaces met with dozens of diverse stakeholders ranging from bankers to artists, small business owners to leaders from the faith-based communities during the course of three days from March 5th to 7th, 2013 to elicit ideas to develop a vision, program and activation plan for key areas of the downtown. The



re-animation and re-imagination of St. George's Square is part of a larger effort by the City of Guelph to reinforce Downtown Guelph as a major destination that will spawn economic, social, and creative activity around the city.

This report is a summary of the feedback Project for Public Spaces received as well as recommendations for improvements and public space management strategies drawn from its 38 years of experience. Input from City staff throughout the process also has helped to frame and inform the findings provided here.

About Project for Public Spaces

Project for Public Spaces is a non-profit planning and design organization that is dedicated to advancing the comfort, attractiveness, social, cultural and economic vitality of public spaces through research, education, planning, design and technical assistance. Since our founding in 1975, we

have worked with over 3000 communities within the United States and abroad to help grow their public spaces into vital community places, with programs, uses and people-friendly settings that build local value and serve community needs.

Our Placemaking approach is a way to ensure that the planning process is efficient and cost effective because it achieves the goals that matter most to communities in the long term: very broad approval; the creation of dynamic social gathering places; a plan for management and programming; and a feasible project with high return on investment. PPS has applied our Placemaking approach with a broad range of partners and stakeholders including government agencies and officials, downtown development groups, neighborhood associations, cultural, education and arts organizations, environmental groups among others.

PPS brings many resources to the table, including knowledge of how people in communities throughout the world have overcome similar issues and a rich array of benchmarks with relevant examples of improvements made elsewhere. This

information and knowledge will help facilitate discussion of issues, show participants the potential for positive change, and germinate ideas and solutions.

We facilitate the creation of great places through community workshops, presentations and interviews designed to help leaders to identify stakeholders and partners; broaden community involvement and leverage local assets; identify uses and activities specific to the site and neighborhood; build a management plan; and ensure that traffic and other access issues are dealt with to the benefit of all users. In these workshops stewardship, community pride, and a variety of uses, funding sources and volunteers are stressed as outcomes.

Unlike the usual consultant-led approach that leaves little capacity in place, we seek to catalyze and enable local institutions – or a consortium of institutional partners – to carry out many of the recommended improvements. We also like to focus our work on communities who are willing to try Placemaking on many levels, in projects around their city

What Makes A Great Place?

The principles of what makes a great place were used to guide the discussions, public workshops and stakeholder meetings facilitated by PPS.



The principles of placemaking

Sociability

A sociable place is one where people want to go to watch the scene, meet friends, and interact with a wide range of people that are different from themselves. Sociability is achieved by working together with the unique, local assets that can be found in all communities, and then combining the above ingredients to make a great place.

Activities and Uses

Good community places are full of home-grown activities that act as the glue of their communities, drawing people to them for companionship and relaxation. Examples might be a Saturday market, bake sales, a playground, a community garden, or a sidewalk café. A healthy variety of such uses will attract a variety of people at all times of day.

Access and Linkages

A good place is visible and easy to get to. People need to see that there is something to do and that others have been enticed to enter. Physical barriers can also be a tremendous obstacle: a street that is too wide or dangerous will prevent older people and children from crossing it to reach the place.

Comfort and Image

Good places entice people through well-designed amenities, such as seating, shade trees, bike racks, and bulletin boards, and also through good management that keeps sidewalks clean, paint from peeling, and helps keep a neighborhood safe. Details such as these can tantalize—they signal that someone took the time and energy to design facilities that are welcoming and respond to the unique needs of a neighbourhood and the people who live there.

Introduction to Placemaking Principles

Several key principles helped guide our approach, and ultimately our recommendations for the redesign of St. George's square and other public spaces in the downtown:

Start with a Program of Activities. First, if the goal is to create a great place, it is essential to start with a clear understanding of the activities that are going to occur in the space. Design and management will then support these activities. Successful public spaces are lively, secure and distinctive places because they offer many things to do and reasons for people to be there. It is also important to plan for different audiences, so that groups can come together and engage in enjoyable, sociable ways.

Create Destinations: The Power of Ten.

Every great district or downtown needs at least ten great destinations to create a critical mass of places where tourists and residents

alike could become immersed for hours. Taking the next step, each destination needs ten things to do – activities and smaller scale experiences that make it a must-visit, beloved destination. Ten great places is a realistic goal for St. George's Square and the institutions adjacent, if it wishes to become a focal point of activity in Guelph.

Triangulate. Triangulation is the concept of clustering activities together to create a busy, dynamic place for many different types of people at different times of day. For example, in Paris's Luxembourg Gardens, the combination of a puppet theatre, carousel, café, bocce court, and basketball court around a children's play area makes a very exciting destination for all ages. A museum next to an outdoor restaurant and a retail street will be a far busier place than any one of those uses by itself. One test of how well a place triangulates is to evaluate how long a person or family would want to stay there. If most people stay in a public place for an hour, then what more could be layered on to lengthen that visit to three or four hours?

Another indicator is how many different age groups use a place. If it is only people between 18 and 30, then what other activities could attract those younger and older?

Activate Edges. The area around a public space is as important to its success as the design and management of the space itself. A blank wall contributes nothing to the activity of the street. Arcades, while providing shelter or shade, conceal the activities going on within a building and create a barrier between the sidewalk and the building's ground floor. Likewise, successful plazas are usually surrounded by activities that spill outside. The reason the Campo in Siena is a vibrant place while Boston City Hall Plaza is always deserted has a lot to do with the activities surrounding the plazas.

Analysis of Downtown Public Realm

Several important themes emerged from the placemaking process that could inform discussions about how downtown Guelph in general and St. George's Square in particular can become major destinations. In conjunction with the specific management and design ideas that resulted from the workshops, focus group meetings, individual interviews, and PPS's own research, these also serve as the basis for the Lighter Quicker Cheaper program ideas outlined in this report.

Increase the diversity of users of and visitors to Downtown. At certain times, the downtown environment can be overwhelmed by the late-night bar crowd and other groups that tend to drive people away and discourage social interactions among strangers. A larger and more diverse

population of users including children, families, the elderly, and office workers would soften that tone and could reduce the prevalence (both real and perceived) of canvassing volunteers, and drug dealers. This can be addressed by increasing the positive use of the space by other sorts of people.

While more resources need to be available for events, downtown public spaces, especially St. George's Square, need to have programming and an environment conducive to casual, unplanned social interaction. Market Square and the numerous facilities downtown, like the Sleeman Centre and River Run Centre, already provide space for events. St. George's Square has the opportunity to be the place for ping pong in the public realm, or other pleasant additions to daily life in Guelph. The idea is to introduce programming to attract people and at the same time provide the right amenities at the locations where the people already are.

Address transit, access, circulation and parking issues throughout the downtown as a whole. Guelph's Downtown should be redesigned for people.

The goal should be to maximize the use of existing parking, and encourage people to park once and continue their errands and explorations of the area on foot. This could be achieved by creating a more pedestrian friendly and safe environment, and maximizing the potential of future and existing transit service. Temporary street closures should be expanded, such as by using retractable bollards to shut down certain streets at routine times. (e.g. Douglas Street)

Make the pedestrian experience safe and comfortable. Based on the successful precedents set by Carden Street, Safe Semester, and other experiments, public right of way needs to be strategically reallocated in order to realize the vision of a lively, imaginable, and safe downtown for pedestrians. In terms of decision-making, it means focusing first on the user's experience of shopping, dining, strolling downtown as a family, etc., and subsequently balancing the needs of traffic capacity and parking.

Great street design should make streets function as spaces in their own right. Experimenting with the narrowness of Carden

proved there was enough room for diagonal parking with narrower lanes. Thus, lanes on Macdonell and other streets could be narrowed to free up space to improve the public realm. The custom of loading and unloading trucks in the middle of Macdonell could be preserved or incorporated into a redesign. Another opportunity would be turning the Wilson underpass into a space with murals, lighting, seating, and a linear extension of the farmer's market up into Market Square.

As a charming, narrow street with significant historic character and a mix of uses, Douglas Street has the potential to become a vibrant retail node activated by the presence of people. Sightlines of the Church, slow one way traffic and linkages to the river make this street a desirable pedestrian priority street. Douglas Street could also become the major connection between downtown and the riverfront, even continuing across the river via the pedestrian bridge, through the back portions of lots along Douglas Street.

More streets should have sidewalks and roadways at the same grade like on Carden Street. People enjoy the feeling they get from

being in the curbless environment. Sidewalks should be wider and pedestrian crossings safer and shorter spaced. Pavers, especially the brick inlaid between the concrete sidewalk slabs, could be constructed and maintained such that they don't heave and create mobility issues and trip hazards. Rather, using a continuity of materials can avoid this issue.

More consideration of cyclist's needs and more infrastructure is needed to give individuals the option of biking to and around downtown. Cycling is a four season activity even in cold climates, as Icycle in Calgary clearly demonstrates.

- Bike share and plentiful bike parking will increase cycling downtown.
- Wilson Street and many other downtown streets could accommodate on-street cycling infrastructure.

Manage parking. Convenience is about more than parking, and devoting too much space to parking can make other functions of downtown less desirable. However, new development, especially certain types of office uses, will require reliable downtown

parking. There are areas where supply should be added; therefore diagonal parking on Wyndham should be considered. The need to manage parking demand as well is demonstrated by the car sharing system being launched in May and increasing turnover. Parking strategies should also aim to reduce customers and visitors from circling to find a close-in spot, which contributes to traffic congestion.

Increase use of public transit. Seasonal trolley rides between farmer's market and Saint George's Square have proven popular. The new transit center has improved functionality for riders. Increasing the use of public transportation to access and travel within downtown should be a continuing priority. Extra attention should be paid to orientating downtown towards those using the station. Free transit passes in exchange for parking spaces could be expanded to other employers beyond the City. Increasing ridership should be viewed as a strategy to reduce parking demand and car traffic while increasing retail foot traffic. Through on board transit surveys and the collection of postal codes from customers, the positive impact of transit users on retail uses should be examined.

As Downtown Guelph's major transit hub, Central Station should provide a comfortable place for commuters to wait and arriving passengers to orient themselves upon arrival. Workshop participants generally felt that the station did not have a sense of arrival and was not very visible from a distance. Although the stops were easy to navigate and users could navigate through the space, more signage and information about any nearby destinations should be added.

Improve the retail mix. The mix of retail and services should be synergistic. While retail gaps should be filled, a good retail mix is also about siting. For instance, while they are important services, social services are poor storefronts and should be encouraged to move to upper floors and secondary streets.

Storefronts/Facades. Lots of beautiful stone and brick buildings are still standing downtown, but storefronts and the ground floors could be more permeable and relate better to the character of the building. Grates and boarded up windows contribute to a perception that downtown is dangerous or run-down and therefore they should be removed wherever practicable. Facades

should be cleaned up, especially vacant ones, through the Community Improvement Plan. The current facade improvement program needs to be revisited to improve its uptake and expand its impact.

- Storefronts should advertise the uses within, but can also become an attraction themselves. For instance, if the Mercury is considering digital screens displaying news feeds for their storefront, that space could become an interactive storytelling platform. Adding to the public realm a level of public interaction similar to the mini-museum and community space that The Record has created in Kitchener.

Food and Drink. The draw and attraction of eating and drinking establishments is critical to downtown and should be extended into the street. More outdoor seating is needed both in public spaces and as well as at private restaurant patios and sidewalk cafes. Further, the controlled consumption of alcohol outdoors should be allowed as long as it isn't in conflict with family areas. Diverse street food options are needed and should be explored. A food truck festival, drawing operators from the region, could be held concurrent with other major events, such as

sporting events or other festivals, like John Galt Day. While downtown businesses are less cautious about food trucks associated with existing brick & mortar restaurants downtown, food trucks can serve as small business incubators and serve different markets.

anchors. Downtown has many major destinations that attract visitors beyond the city. However, opportunities exist to add additional anchors to the fabric of downtown and get more out of the existing anchors. The proposed new library could serve as a mixed-use anchor with leasable space for activities that go beyond simply checking out books. Retail and commercial anchor tenants will seek out downtown as rents increase.

The role of the farmers market in the vitality of downtown Guelph cannot be overstated. Located in downtown around the corner from the new City Hall, Market Square, and the Inter-modal centre, the Farmers Market is a successful gathering place. Exploring programming ideas that link the Market to these surrounding anchors can help the market become a multi use destination that anchors this part of the downtown. However,

shoppers feel overcrowded and there are more vendors who want a place in the market than there is room. The facility would appear to be under-sized given the popularity of the market and based on the limited operating hours, which is partially due to the limited capacity of the market to operate the facility more than it does currently. A satellite location of the farmer's market elsewhere downtown could distribute the activity of the market, instead of concentrating it on the edge of downtown. Satellite locations or wholly independent markets could specialize in certain types of goods, a flower market in St George's Square for example in addition to providing opportunities for vendors on the waiting list to participate in the market. Other opportunities to grow the farmer's market can come from linking it to local farming such as the Guelph Centre for Urban Organic Farming. The operations model could be revisited so that the market has the ability to be open longer and on more days. In addition, the physical space of the market could be extended out to Wilson Street for vendors and/or to Fresh Field Street. The 100 year anniversary of the market building should serve as both a moment of celebration for its past and contemplation for its future.

Use the design of the public realm and public art to engage the community and visitors. Downtown could become a key corridor of arts and activity for the region. In order for this to happen, artists need more space in which to create, to display and to sell their work. It is even better if works of art are interactive, especially if they provide something for children to play with.

Any and all physical changes to the public realm need to be *interactive and inter-generational*. Downtown Guelph needs to have spaces for children to climb about, teens to congregate, young couples to cuddle up, and seniors to people watch. Street furniture and sidewalk amenities are a straightforward means of accomplishing this, but private buildings and most importantly public art also need to be designed for human interaction. Public art needs to be curated and reach a level of sophistication, immediately giving downtown an identifiable sense of place. There should be special design touches incorporated into public spaces and architecture. One opportunity could be to celebrate individuals and organizations with an analog to the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Extend the influence of the downtown beyond its borders. By making improvements to the pedestrian realm throughout the Downtown, developing better signage and wayfinding, improving retail and building safe pedestrian and bicycle connections, as well as establishing a bread-crumbs trail of interesting destinations and small places that make walking more enticing and interesting throughout the area, the Centre can begin to "reach out like an octopus" to the rest of the City of Guelph. Its influence in the future would not only be as a place to be but strengthen its role as an economic engine that attracts and connects visitors to area businesses.

Wayfinding/Signage. In order to help newcomers navigate and direct people to destinations they were unaware of, wayfinding needs to be added to downtown. A LQC approach should be used at first to nail down the design, destinations, and placement of signs. This could be corrugated plastic signs mapping out the key anchors and attached to light poles and traffic signs with zip ties.

Wayfinding also needs to direct drivers to where parking is available. Wayfinding should have a public information component beyond signage. For instance, parking and street closures are a challenge for Sunday churchgoers, because the churches don't get informed which routes their parishioners should take.

- The current signage for many businesses and services should be more attractive and directed towards pedestrians.
- Develop a comprehensive wayfinding signage plan
 - Signage to portray history
 - Provide murals/directional signage to different spaces – City Hall
 - Orientation maps/ signs of downtown
- The City should encourage perpendicular signage and continue to encourage distinct, attractive signage.

Lighting. Seasonal string lights should be hung professionally and improved. Lighting should be more than seasonal. Facades such as that of The Church of Our Lady, the visual focal point of downtown need to be uplit and pedestrian-scaled lighting (like string lights) could create an ambience year round.

Seating. While the ledges around planters and other features provide a wonderful place to sit, physical obstacles (planters, concrete walls, etc.) along with the changes in elevation act as barriers to social interaction. Vertical elements should be designed for people to be able to sit and shouldn't alienate spaces.

Environment and Sustainability.

Incorporating, piloting, and showcasing, environmentally, ecologically, and economically sustainable practices, materials, resources and processes will help ensure the viability of the area over time, and can enhance and showcase ongoing efforts at land, air, and water management and preservation. It will also make it easier and less costly to manage and maintain the public realm over time, while doing the right thing for the environment.

Develop a well defined management strategy for the Downtown as a whole.

A complete management program needs to be developed for the downtown that includes activities such as security, maintenance, programming, and opportunities for commercial development (e.g. cafes, bike

rentals, and markets, etc. in key locations). These activities are taking place to a certain degree and in key areas, but a more holistic and coordinated approach is required and by an adequately resourced entity. The outline of a Management program is included in this report.

The City is not the only entity responsible for programming in Guelph's public realm. *Champions*

within the city's cultural groups, downtown businesses, and local organizations are critical to spearhead new initiatives and cultivate a routine of regular on-going opportunities for the community to contribute to city life. The City can facilitate this by generating "bridging" social capital between diverse groups and by incentivizing activities in the public realm.

Introduction to St George's Square

Throughout history, St. George's Square has always been a Central Square for the City of Guelph. During the past half century however, the Square's more ceremonial and iconic elements gave way to more functional elements that were needed to support a growing city, namely transit service and a growing street network. Until very recently, St. George's Square was the central bus transfer hub for downtown Guelph.

As a result of the transit hub's relocation to Carden Street , the Square has seen a reduction in pedestrian traffic. However, the fact that the buses and transit service has been relocated provides an unprecedented opportunity to re-imagine St. George's Square as the central square of a 21st Century city.



A Vision for St. George's Square

St. George's Square should be a multi-use destination for residents, employees, hotel guests, students and faculty, and people from neighbouring areas. In today's competitive global economy, great cities are defined more and more by great multi-use destinations – lively, user-friendly squares, waterfronts, commercial streets, markets, or a network of these. The design of multi-use destinations should be aimed at creating a "setting" or a stage that supports the uses that occur and that emphasize the products and authentic qualities of the place. This approach goes beyond the simple concept of "mixed use" toward a way of design and development that builds authentic places by

sustaining uses and activities that are related, interconnected and interdependent. When successful, such place have their own "organic" life and a true sustainability that stems from the relationships between activities, and the people who make them happen either by participating or running them – users, tenants, and community organizations. Ongoing and innovative management is key to creating such places.

- There is a very strong desire to re-imagine St. George's Square as a true civic hub: to transform it to a place you never want to leave. The Square could easily become a people and family friendly place that is both safe to walk to and through and comfortable to spend time in; a place that is inclusive and welcoming and regularly programmed with cultural activities and events that appeal to people of all ages.
- It can become a showcase for public art (permanent as well as temporary), as well as a place for people-watching or eating one's lunch outdoors. A re-imagined Square will go a long way in making downtown feel more vital and lively which will in turn bring people downtown and attract new residents and businesses.
- Prioritizing pedestrians over vehicles in the Square seemed to be a high priority, though how to best achieve this remains under active consideration. Whether through eliminating the curbs, changing the roadway surface, creating a speed table, narrowing laneways, widening sidewalks, slowing turning movements and pedestrianizing light signal timings, moving automobiles to the outside edges of the square and reconnecting the quadrants, or some combination thereof, the best combination of traffic calming tools that will physically makes this place whole again should be identified and implemented.
- There is a need for programming that would attract people here throughout the day. For example, creating a chain of seasonal and temporary events could help St. George's Square become a family friendly space. Participants agreed that flexible programming and moveable or temporary amenities would

be a "lighter quicker cheaper" way to make this a year round destination for a diverse set of users. Workshop participants also agreed that it was important to integrate public spaces into the surrounding retail activity and vice versa.

Short Term Recommendations for St. George's Square

A combination of programming and design experiments should be the focus of a well-managed effort in the short term that will spark a dramatic change in how the square is used and perceived.

Unifying the Square

All corners of St. George's Square should have a unifying design element that makes it feel like a single space or piazza. Potential ideas are a colonnade affixed to the facades or a tensile shade anchored in each space. Additionally, the center of the Square could incorporate a built element to reinforce the terminating vista where the alignments of Douglas, Quebec, and Wyndham Streets intersect.

- Improve aesthetic consistency throughout the square
- Paint surface or use ground art to delineate the Square
- Narrow the roads/extend sidewalks through striping/experimentation
- Remove concrete barriers and raised planting beds
 - Fill sunken plaza with sod or decking creating a park/play area

Downtown can become a destination for family outings by adding more amenities for children and parents. Specific ideas could include:

- Introduce interactive and/or climbable Public works of art in St. George's Square
- Ensure that public spaces and buildings are easy to navigate with children and strollers.

Public Patio

St Georges Square can be differentiated from Market Square by making it less of an event space and more of a day-to-day space for the community to linger and socialize. The Square could function as a public patio. The covered area at Market Square provides great protection from passing rain or bright sunlight during events. Likewise, weather should be considered in the design of all outdoor spaces. Preferably, public spaces should create microclimates that provide shade in the summer and wind protection in the winter.

- Add shade/canopy/triangular canvases
- Add temporary moveable tree canopy

with seating

- Remove raised planting beds

Pop-Up Activities

As evidenced by the popularity of yarn bombing St George's Square, the Guelph public wants more pop-up activities in public spaces. Arts and library programming, like yarn-bombing and bookmobiles, are great, but more pop-up commercial will increase the quantity and quality of street life. Specifically, street vendors and food trucks are great ways to layer in additional activities and destination.

Programming in St George's Square could include:

- A bike share staging area
- Beach volleyball
- Public vegetable garden
- Winter market – ex. Vintage clothing
- Outdoor craft market
- Interactive sculpture and/or temporary art to connect with other quadrants
- Dance lessons

- Children's programming (sidewalk chalk art/painted games)
- Buskers and impromptu (comedic) performances
- Gaming tables, chess checkers
- A temporary children's play area
- Frequent seasonal events

Amenities that support these activities include:

- Moveable tables and chairs
- Giant chess game
- Small kiosk or food cart; and
- Small seasonal garden beds.
- Stage/flexible performance area
- Interactive and/or climbable Public works of art
- Temporary/rotating window displays/art exhibits in the surrounding buildings
 - Recruit active ground floor uses
- Overhead string lighting across Douglas Street can create a pleasant outdoor ambience
- Art projections on the walls of the banks
- Attractive planters:

- Replace current planters with more attractive vessels
- Remove cages around the trees because they act as physical obstacles in the space.
- Reconfigure the planter boxes around St. George's Square and; possibly locate them around the fountain to soften the space and welcome people to sit around the fountain

T-Square (Maintaining the T Intersection)

Wyndham Street has excess capacity given the current volumes and has been identified as a priority streetscape in downtown. Removing excess capacity is a proven safety countermeasure that generally reduces speeding and crash rates without increasing congestion, see <http://www.pps.org/reference/rightsizing/>. In addition, space that was once necessary for buses to pull over for extended periods is no longer necessary given the relocation of transfers.

In this conceptual design, the approaches from Wyndham and Quebec are reduced to one through lane in each direction, which is as narrow as possible without preventing busses from entering the Square. In addition, neckdowns

beginning at the edge of the square on both Wyndham and Quebec reduce pedestrian crossing distances with minimal impact to on street parking. There should be no parking within the boundaries of the square, but bus bays can be recessed into the curb line as needed. Douglas Street is also narrowed along its current alignment, potentially becoming one way and/or allowing for flexible or scheduled closures. All curb radii would be reduced to the minimum needed for city buses to turns on their regular routes. The conceptual design could utilize mountable curbs or a shared space design as well.

Presently, the daunting impression of the roadway overwhelms the fragmented square, making the traffic intersection the focus rather than the spaces it anchors. The purpose of this conceptual design is to better utilize the existing alignments and allow for a design that can easily be tested with temporary, removable materials to justify a larger revisiting of the Square and its circulation patterns as indicated below.

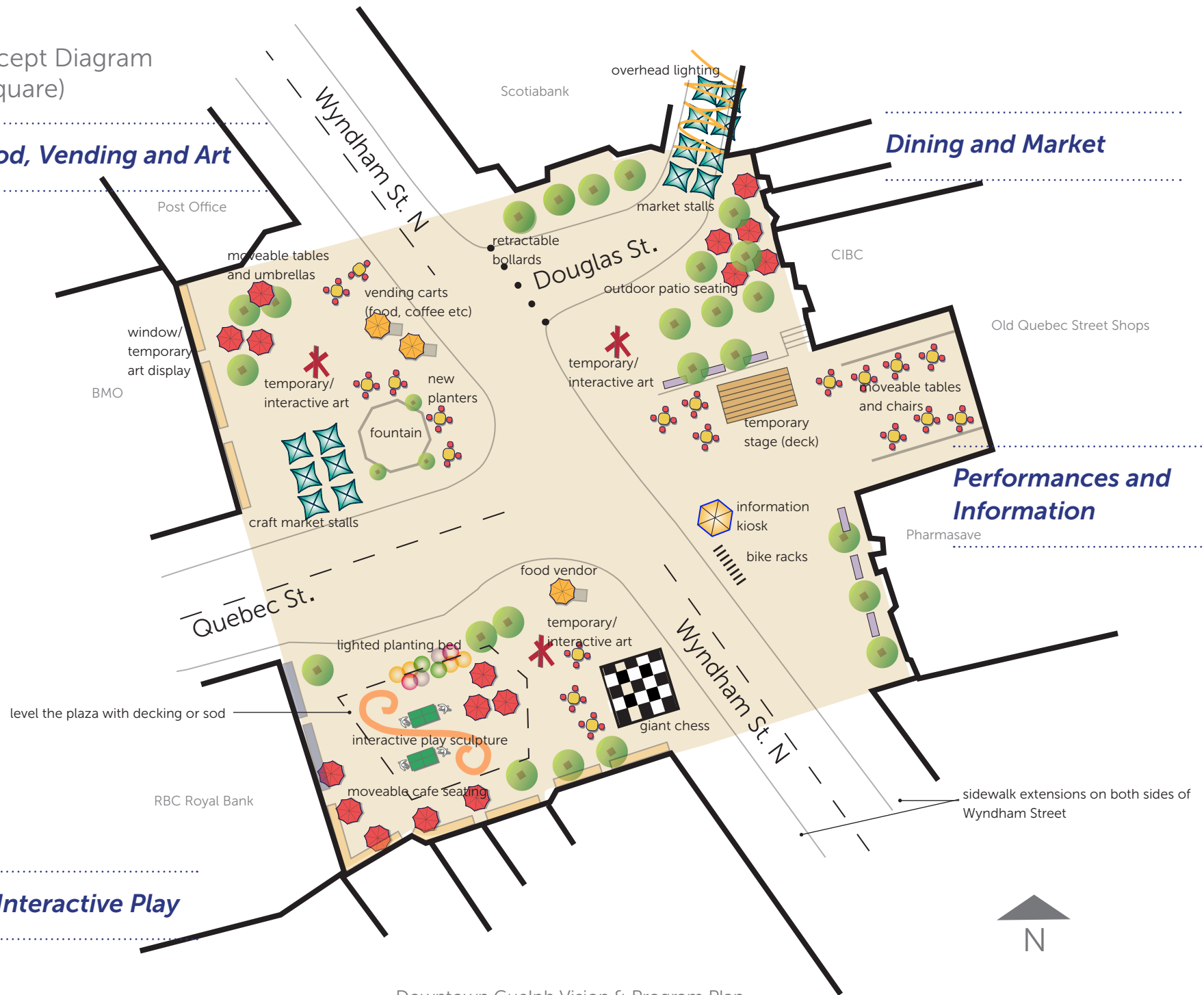
Concept Diagram (T-Square)

Food, Vending and Art

Dining and Market

Performances and Information

Interactive Play



Food vending and Art Displays



Interactive Play



Dining and Market



Performance and information



Long Term Recommendations for St. George's Square

While smaller improvements could be made right away to change the aspect of St. George's Square, certain elements would take longer to design and implement. In the long term, a unified square that serves multiple constituencies, including downtown workers looking for a nice place to eat lunch, families looking for safe and inspiring play spaces, and cultural partners who want to help present performances, festivals, food events, and more can become the major destination in downtown Guelph.

Experiments that could be tested are mentioned below and further discussed in the following pages:

- Consolidate the quadrants of the square to create a bigger public space:
- Study circulation (around and through the square):
- Narrow the curb to curb distance with permanent neckdowns and a speed table and only one lane of traffic in each direction on Wyndham.
- Create a central square with vehicular circulation reoriented around the edge

- Create a shared space with either of the traffic configurations mentioned above, but with the public realm and traffic lanes at one grade like on Carden Street. Delineation would be achieved through use of bollards, trees, and/or changes in materials.
- Close Douglas Street to through traffic, but consider allowing emergency vehicles and/or left open for early morning deliveries,

Amenities

- A central feature that attracts more activity – fountain or sculpture;
- Garden areas; and
- Places for children to play and for a wide range of games, small sculptures
- Establish free standing one or two level market hall in the square.
- Repave the entire square to announce it as a destination

Programming

A consolidated plaza would create a stage for larger events, festivals and performances such as:

- Markets (Holiday, night, cultural, flea, craft etc)
- Large music concerts/staged events
- Outdoor movies
- Beer garden
- Product promotions/launches
- Cultural festivals
- Demonstration classes
- Public speeches
- Fundraisers
- Catered events
- Book fairs, readings, signings etc
- Fashion shows
- Outdoor dances
- Flower shows
- Art exhibits



Unified Square

St. George's Square is a significant new public space of at least 3,000 square meters, with one lane of one way traffic circulating around it in a clockwise fashion. The redesigned square would NOT be a roundabout, rotary, or circle. Rather, it creates a true square reflecting the original dimensions with which St. George's Square was laid out, relatively equal in both length and width, and with street names along its sides such as St. George's Square North, St. George's Square East, and so forth. The conceptual design inherently unifies the isolated quadrants of the square and creates a greater spectrum of potential uses. Due to its conceptual nature, grading has not been directly addressed and would require additional investigation.

Currently, the banks and other land uses lining the square are recessed and hidden from the center of activity, namely the intersection of Wyndham and Quebec. Further, those land uses by their very nature (banks, community services, etc.) are unable or unlikely to attract enough activity to a public realm the size of the quadrants. Solving both of these issues, the design converts the existing public realm along the frontages into a sidewalk in the

range of 3.5 to 5 meters wide with significant street tree planting. A narrower, more intimate sidewalk environment doesn't need a lot of programming and would make the space in front of the current land uses feel more inviting and comfortable.

Space for buses to load and unload is provided either in the approach to the Square or within the Square; however, this hasn't been indicated in the drawing since locating the bus bay(s) would require additional planning with Guelph transit and any other bus operators. The turning radii at the corners of the square are small, in the vicinity of 7.3m. However, a mountable and/or material-delineated skirt is provided in the additional space occupied by a 12.8m radius, to facilitate the unfettered turning of buses while communicating to other drivers that they should confine themselves to the tighter turn. This technique is widely used in the design of modern roundabouts. Neckdowns begin many meters back from the start of the square calming traffic in advance of entering the Square. Traffic on Douglas Street is one way, most likely exiting the square. As with the aforementioned concept, trucks are a minor consideration. Trucks not making deliveries within the blocks terminating at the

square are redirected over Wellington Street or Norfolk Street in this design.

The southern approach on Wyndham Street is deflected to allow for smoother traffic flow into and out of the square and prevent turns from occurring too quickly in sequence. A pedestrian refuge and splitter island would be needed in the middle of the southern approach due to the fact that pedestrians crossing eastward at that point would have to turn over 90° counterclockwise to cross the first lane of traffic and nearly 90° clockwise to cross the second lane.

Optional: Create a shared space with the public realm and traffic lanes at one grade such as on Carden Street. Delineation would be achieved through use of bollards, trees, and/or changes in materials.

Concept Diagram (Unified Square)



Concept Diagram (Unified Square with Central Structure)



Unified Square with Central Structure

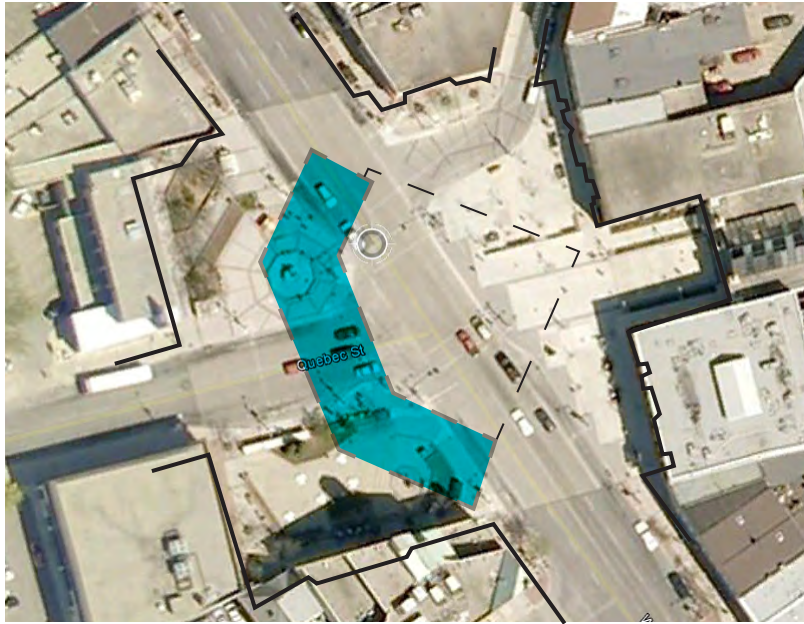
The Central Structure conceptual design is essentially identical to the Unified Square concept above. The major difference is a return to the Square's original function of having a major institutional structure on center, not realized since St. George's Church was removed in 1873. Having a strong visual terminus along Quebec, Wyndham, and Douglas creates a psychological stimulus for people to gather at the square.

Potentially, this is a satellite location of the Guelph Farmer's Market, though it could be any number of civic uses. Loading and unloading from the building is addressed by providing a mountable space within the square that delivery trucks could access at designated times. The inclusion of a structure does NOT necessitate its own onsite parking, since public parking is nearby.

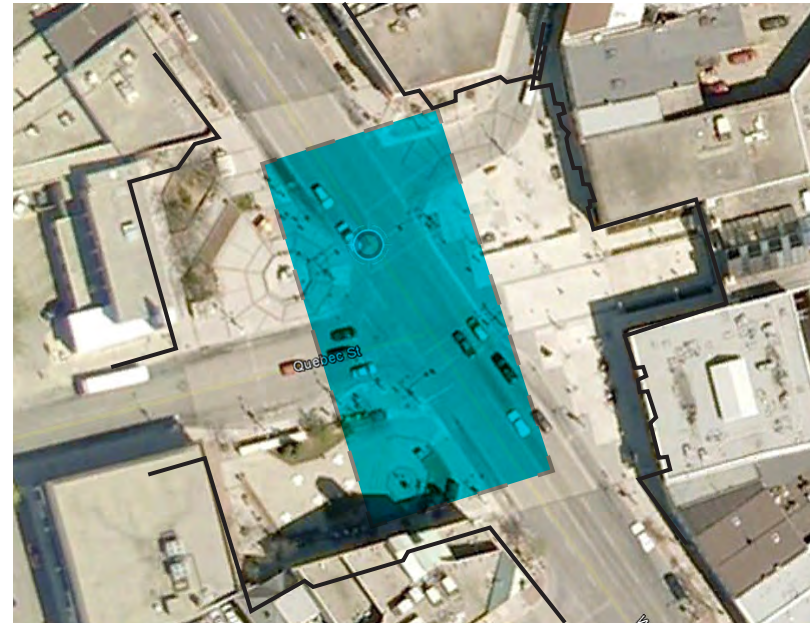
Optional: Create a shared space with the public realm and traffic lanes at one grade such as on Carden Street. Delineation would be achieved through use of bollards, trees, and/or changes in materials.



Tables and chars spilling out from the central structure



Scale comparison: Farmers Market. Guelph



Scale comparison: Market Square, Guelph

Management of Downtown Public Space

A public space advisory council could be convened that serve to advance the goals and objectives laid out in this report in the immediate term. This council could be comprised of City staff, the Downtown Guelph Business Association (DGBA), the Chamber of Commerce, as well as leaders from various stakeholder groups.

The various management stakeholders (e.g. DGBA) should develop their own strategy on how to work complimentary with one another. They each have obvious strengths and challenges and should work to find the place where their skills can supplement each other. There needs to be a change in the culture regarding how the downtown is managed. For example, the DGBA could expand on its advocacy role and become more involved in producing events. They also have a big role to play in finessing the interaction between local designers, the arts community and business owners to create more attractive retail signage throughout the downtown.

Principal Management Tasks for Downtown Public Space

A well functioning public realm is achieved when both public and private sector interests are balanced, both of which are key to the success of many urban public spaces. Public space managers seek to create and sustain this balance, which is not as difficult as it may seem when all parties agree upon a vision.

Security and Hospitality

Security should be visible and comforting without being intrusive. While the City's police department provides sufficient security on an everyday basis, paid ambassadors who greet visitors and answer questions would provide opportunities for random social interaction and improve visitors' experience. Ambassador also could subtly enforce rules of social conduct. If people feel "hosted" and "welcomed," they don't feel the need to be "protected," because to a very large extent the space becomes self-policing. For events that will attract large numbers of people, additional security may be outsourced.

Programming

"Programming" refers to the wide variety of planned activities and to all the facilities, City agencies, and equipment related to them. Special events and programmes should give everyone a sense of ownership of and responsibility for the space where they occur:

- schedule performances and events that will take place throughout the year
- furnish the space appropriately, for example, with chairs and tables that can be moved from sun to shade and back
- operate a retail program, with vending carts or a seasonal cafe
- use temporary art to build partnerships with other institutions.

Programming a public space successfully is an entrepreneurial art; the programmer drives the content the way a curator does in a museum.

Complimentary events should be planned before, during, or after sporting events and other major events that are already attracting people downtown. Certain local businesses are not seeing increased patronization during events and are actually losing customers, even when they are handing out coupons and flyers. Events should be timed so that both regular patrons and event goers both feel welcome to the space. When other spaces are unavailable, downtown churches can be used as public spaces under the right circumstances.

Governance

The City or another entity could craft an intuitive and graphic guide to hosting an event or contributing to programming in downtown Guelph or the Square. This could include anything from hosting a private gala to adding outdoor cafe seating. If this is done by a nongovernmental entity, they could further recommended providers for services and materials like facades, signage. Getting permits and liability insurance is a major hassle for those interested in utilizing downtown's public realm. Such a publication would direct individuals through the post cost and time effective means of attaining

permits and insurance. In addition, permit and insurance requirements could be reduced or in some cases eliminated.

Marketing and Promotion

Promoting the events and activities that take place in the City's public spaces will be an important adjunct to programming, particularly as spaces are programmed for the first time. Promotion during the transition should help locating existing events taking place in new areas and new events.

Until the Square is redesigned its public spaces become well-known and sought-after, it will be as imperative to market the Square to performance groups, special event sponsors or other potential partners, as it is to spectators and users. To help "build the brand" and get the programming rolling, a commitment to marketing and promotion, and the special skills it requires, will be needed right away, even before the Square is redesigned. This is an activity that can be shared with local civic and cultural organizations that may be using the space.

Fundraising

Raising money to support the programming of the City's public spaces from a variety of funding sources is key to creating a vibrant, well-maintained space. Establishing a not-for-profit to seek grant money and donations, or empowering a re-imagined DGBA to do so and raising money from user fees and rentals, will be important seed money to supplement City funding for the public realm.

Commercial Tenant Management

The public spaces and the surrounding ground floor commercial uses around St. George's Square should be seamlessly integrated. The public should flow from outside to inside and vice versa with as few barriers as possible. The activities of the restaurant and retail tenants should spill right into the streets and Square, and the outdoor activities and circulation should move smoothly through the buildings. The management entity, therefore, should work to coordinate the tenants' outdoor activities (e.g. outdoor dining), interior and storefront designs, and signage, and to involve them in programming and special events.

- More evening/seasonal use in adjacent businesses
- Banks should also be active participants in the future of the Square. The history of St. George's Square is intertwined with the banks that have anchored it. The history could be highlighted in the programming and design of the Square. Events and activities that the banks are hosting inside their buildings or elsewhere in the City can be brought into the Square, at least in terms of financial support. For instance, RBC has used their parking lot for programming like road hockey, which could potentially be moved to the Square. The walls of the banks could be used for art, specifically projected art. The frontages should be activated, even made to seem like stores. Because downtown branches are losing their unique role regionally and quality, reprogramming the Square could return them to their flagship, community-orientated prominence.

Appendix



Workshop Place Game Site Map

Workshop Summary

On March 6, 2013, PPS facilitated a workshop with community stakeholders, Council members, City planners, staff, residents and students to strategize ways in which downtown Guelph can become a great economically viable and livable destination. Over 60 participants worked together to develop an overall concept for St. Georges Square and its surrounding destinations, including Douglas Street, Central Station and the Farmers Market.

Site 1 – NW Corner of St. George's Square

Positives

- The fountain
- Some seating
- Greenery
- Pedestrian friendly
- Some decorative lights
- Public telephone

LQC Improvements

Amenities

- Improve wayfinding signage
- Lighted directory
- Add flexible seating
- Add family friendly/kid interactive art
- Add gaming tables, chess checkers
- Reconfigure planter boxes; possibly locate around the fountain
- Run fountain all year
- Utilize bus shelters
- Add shade/canopy/triangular canvases
- Add bike racks

Activities/Uses

- Attract buskers and impromptu (comedic) performances
- Dance classes
- Attract a few signature craft vendors
- Diversify street food options
- Repurpose alley
 - Open up roof to art installations

Long Term Improvements

- Reorganize intersection to create a roundabout with the fountain in the center
- Widen sidewalks
- Reconnect corners and edges of the Square

Site 2 – SW corner of St. George's Square

Positives

- Seating
- Sense of enclosure
- Lighting
- Activity of day businesses
- Variety of Merchants
- Well kept buildings
- Historic facades

LQC Improvements

- Improve aesthetic consistency throughout the square
- Extend hours for Capistrano
- Encourage impromptu use
- Paint surface to delineate the Square
- Narrow the roads through striping/experimentation

Amenities

- Café seating
- Pop up cafe
- Splash pad
- Moveable planters

- Temporary moveable tree canopy with seating
- Orientation maps/ signs of downtown

Activities/Uses

- Bike share staging area
- Beach volleyball
- Public vegetable garden
- Winter market – ex. Vintage clothing
- Jewelry market
- Add sculpture
- Temporary art to connect with other quadrants
- Clear the snow and make snow sculptures

Long Term Improvements

- Simplify the space; fix the grades
- Improve accessibility
- Add shade/colour; ex. tree canopy
- More evening/seasonal use in adjacent businesses
- Connect to other quadrants
- Reduce vehicle zone
- Relocate the “back stage” (clutter of utility and info board)

Site 3 – St. George’s Square East

Positives

- Wide open
- Trees
- Nice view of fountain
- Occasional buskers
- People watching
- Nice oak trees
- Central feeling

LQC Improvements

- More color
- Extend crosswalk all the way
- Remove retaining wall

Amenities

- Bike racks
- Signage
- More trees/greenery
- More seating
- Add all year lighting (ex. twinkle lights)
- Outdoor retail displays and café seating

Activities/Uses

- Close Wyndham Street for events
- Painted hopscotch/sidewalk chalk art
- Outdoor markets
- Amphitheater/dance lessons
- Art installation space
- Walking police presence

Long Term Improvements

- Remove walls
- Uniformity in materials to connect quadrants. (ex. cobblestone street)
- Raise road to sidewalk
- Provide shade
- Greenspace
- Drug clean up

Amenities

- Add a drinking fountain
- Add an interactive sculpture
- Provide a visual ground map
- Implement distance markers
- Redesign fountain as a splash pad

Activities/Uses

- Encourage diverse vendors
- Create family friendly areas
- Create a skateboard area
- Program kids activities

Site 4 - Douglas Street

Positives

- Historic architecture
- Variety of heritage materials
- Street width
- Church sightlines
- Controlled signage
- Variety of business options- Café, restaurant, bakery, lawyer
- Wide sidewalk on one side
- Charm

- Slow one way traffic
- Linkage to river/residences

LQC – Long Term Improvements

- Close Douglas Street to traffic
- Organize a street market
- Organize pedestrian only Sunday
- Improve warmth of space
- Explain significance of buildings using signage
- Beautify Scotia bank wall
- Link to St. Georges Square and County
- Add wayfinding signage
- Replicate Carden Street appearance and the cobblestone surface treatment
- Improve retail spaces
- Eliminate street parking?
- Draw murals on walls – red brick alleyway

Amenities

- Add more lighting
- Add a pop up café/retail
- Add large art work and murals on the walls of the alleyway
- Opening up the roof of buildings in the alleyway to art installations
- Provide additional seating
- Modify signage – too many “no parking” and “stop” signs

Site 5 - Farmers Market

Positives

- Welcoming
- Friendly crowds
- Walkable
- Central location
- Wide selection of fresh organic food
- On a bus route
- Meeting place
- Diverse users
- Artisans

LQC Improvements

- Advertise market days and events in college papers and website

Amenities

- Add signage
- Add awnings, shade
- Murals on the walls of the Wilson Street underpass walls to serve as signage
- Add a performance stage
- Add heritage lighting
- Add outdoor seating

Activities/Uses

- Music and performances
- Childrens’ area
- Extra days or hours
- Expand to Wilson Street for vendors and/or to Fresh Field Street
- Outdoor stalls

Long Term Improvements

- Restore brick outside and inside
- Remove vinyl
- Expand outdoor covered space
- Create openings to back side – Gordon Street
- Relocate bus stop closer to Wilson St. entrance door
- Replace overpass to create a more inviting walk, with more coverage
- Improve linkage to Fountain St. parking
- Close Wilson Street to traffic
- Develop improvement opportunities to the Heritage Conservation Plan

Amenities

- Develop a comprehensive wayfinding signage plan
- Signage to portray history
- Provide murals/directional signage to different spaces – City Hall

Site 6 –Central Station

Positives

- Navigable
- Openness
- Central location
- Connects to railway

LQC Improvements

- Break up distance of tracks
- Tracks are a barrier

- Fence reduces mobility from one end to another

Amenities

- Add temporary greenery such as hanging planters
- Bus schedules- event board
- Interactive touch screen info
- Downtown Directional signage
- Street furniture –seating etc

Activities/Uses

- Musicians, buskers
- Add checkers and chess tables
- Add Wi-fi
- Diversify food vendors
- Pedestrian orientation using existing maps (rotated to correct orientation)

Activities/Uses

- Coffee shop
- Mixed use development on north side

Long Term Improvements

- Shorten the distance to MacDonell Street by creating a passage through the buildings
 - Central block mews
- Improve blank facades
- Connect to retail using landscaping, signage, and or lighting
- Subdivide east properties

Amenities

- More bike racks
- Better wayfinding
- More permanent greenery across street
- More shelter – improve existing to be more weather proof
- Improve bus stop signage – route numbers, next bus etc