ST. JOHN'S

Cowan Heights

Neighbourhood Plan



Table of Contents

1. Introduction 4

1.1 Purpose 5
1.2 Plan Area 5
1.3 Neighbourhood Context 7
1.4 Vision & Objectives 8
1.5 Neighbourhood Strategy 9

2. Land Use 12

2.1 General Land Use Concept 15
2.2 Village Intensification Area 17
2.3 Blackmarsh Road Residential Area 20
2.5 Captain Whelan Drive Mixed-Use Area 22
2.6 Barachois Street Residential Area 25
2.7 Cowan Avenue Mixed-Use Area 27
2.8 Topsail Road Residential Area 29
2.9 Burgeo Street Mixed-Use Area 31

3. Mobility 33

3.1 General Mobility Policies 36
3.2 Topsail Road 38
3.3 Hamlyn Road 39
3.4 Blackmarsh Road 40
3.5 Burgeo Street 41

4. Parks and Recreation 42

4.1 General Parks and Recreation Policies 45
4.2 Community Parks 47
4.3 Off-Street Pathways 49
4.4 Neighbourhood Parks and Tot Lots 51
4.5 Parkside Community Centre 53

6. Implementation 55

Glossary 57

Chapter 1

Introduction



1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Cowan Heights Neighbourhood Plan is to guide future redevelopment and improvements in this neighbourhood for a ten year period, 2026-2036 – from the types of uses and the shape of buildings, to streets and park upgrades. The Plan builds upon the direction and policies in the Envision St. John's Municipal Plan and provides more specific direction tailored the local context and needs of Cowan Heights.

This Plan includes direction for:

- The future desired mix of land uses
- Appropriate heights and density for new development
- Investments in transportation infrastructure
- Programming and priorities for parks and open spaces
- Protection of natural features

1.2 Plan Area

The boundaries of the Cowan Heights Planning Area are established in Map P-2 of the Envision St. John's Municipal Plan. The boundaries include the Team Gushue Highway (TGH) to the north and west, Columbus Drive to the east, and Topsail Road to the south. It is located in the west end of St. John's, adjacent to Mount Pearl (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Cowan Heights Neighbourhood Plan boundary.



1.3 Neighbourhood Context

Cowan Heights is an established residential neighbourhood in the west end of St. John's.

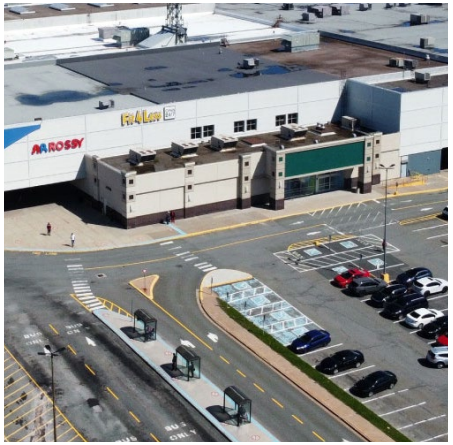
Sloping upward from Topsail Road to Blackmarsh Road, the neighbourhood features a unique internal parks and trail network throughout residential areas and two elementary schools near the neighbourhood's centre. Its main commercial areas are located on the edges of the neighbourhood along Topsail Road, with some smaller local commercial areas along the neighbourhood's edges. Cowan Heights is well connected to the rest of the City by transit, driving, and trails, including the transit hub at the Village Shopping Centre.

The neighbourhood is undergoing a demographic transition as existing residents are aging and new residents are starting to move into the area.









1.4 Vision & Objectives

The vision and objectives provide an overall framework for the Plan. All policies, strategies, and actions within this Plan implement the vision and objectives.

Vision

Cowan Heights will be a safe, primarily residential neighborhood with a high quality interconnected parks and pathway system at its heart. Framed by mixed-use and walkable services and amenities, the neighbourhood will provide many housing, recreation, and transportation options to support a high quality of life.

Objectives

The following objectives guide the future growth and development of the Cowan Heights neighbourhood:

1. **Enhanced Park Network:** Cowan Heights' connected network of parks and trails will be further connected and enhanced, providing opportunities for recreation and improved access to local shops and services.
2. **Focused Growth:** The neighbourhood will support strategic higher density and mixed-use development along main roads that are connected to transit and this development will provide a transition in building height and density to lower density residential areas.
3. **Connected Mobility:** Active transportation improvements will be completed, providing a safe standard and accessible walking and wheeling access throughout the plan area and to neighbouring communities.
4. **Complete Streets:** Streets and intersections will be designed to accommodate all road users, from pedestrians to bikes and vehicles, to support a range of mobility options.
5. **Livability:** Cowan Heights will grow in a way that continues to enhance livability and wellbeing for all residents by expanding the range of housing types and improving services and amenities for residents.

1.5 Neighbourhood Strategy

The Neighbourhood Strategy for Cowan Heights identifies seven strategies for how the neighbourhood will accommodate growth and achieve the overall vision and objectives of this Plan.

1. Transit-Oriented Redevelopment

The Village Intensification Area at Topsail Road and Columbus Drive will be the focus for future higher density mixed-use development. Growth in this area will be coordinated with improvements to the existing transit hub, and pedestrian and active transportation improvements along Hamlyn and Topsail Roads and intersections. Future redevelopment will provide additional housing options and community amenities that prioritize pedestrians and provide a connection to transit and existing trail networks, benefiting existing and future Cowan Heights residents.

2. Housing Expansion

The areas along Blackmarsh Road are envisioned as future medium and high density residential development, supporting additional housing options for the neighbourhood. On Frecker Drive, the existing neighbourhood commercial area will remain to support residents at the north of the neighbourhood. Growth in this area will be coordinated with improvements to Blackmarsh Road, including the extension of water and sewer mains to service this area and linkages to the existing trail network.

3. Community Park & Trail Upgrades

Kitty Gaul Park, Cowan Park, and the extensive connected trail network are Cowan Heights' most beloved neighbourhood assets. The two parks will be improved to better support changing recreation needs. Trails will also be evaluated and upgraded to improve accessibility and wayfinding.

4. Increased Residential Density

Land use changes to this area will allow for a transition in building height and density in housing from the high intensity Village Intensification Area and low intensity along Canada Drive. The area will support some additional medium scale apartments as well as smaller scale housing forms like townhouses and will allow for the continuation of commercial development along Topsail Road. Re-activation of the Parkside Community Centre and Barachois Street Playground for community gathering and programming will support residents in the surrounding area and the broader neighbourhood.

5. Gentle Density Corridor

This area along Topsail Road will support a gradual transition from lower density residential to more medium density forms of housing. Changes to the area will be based on market demand and require consolidation of properties over time to enable denser development. Additional housing will support the commercial areas along Topsail Road and be coordinated with active transportation improvements.

6. Neighbourhood Mixed-Use Areas

Future mixed-use areas are identified at Captain Whelan Drive, Cowan Avenue, and Burgeo Street. Over time, additional housing will be supported above commercial uses in a more walkable environment.

7. Tot lot Retrofits

The many smaller tot lots in Cowan Heights will be updated to provide more passive recreation and leisure opportunities for a broad range of ages and interests.

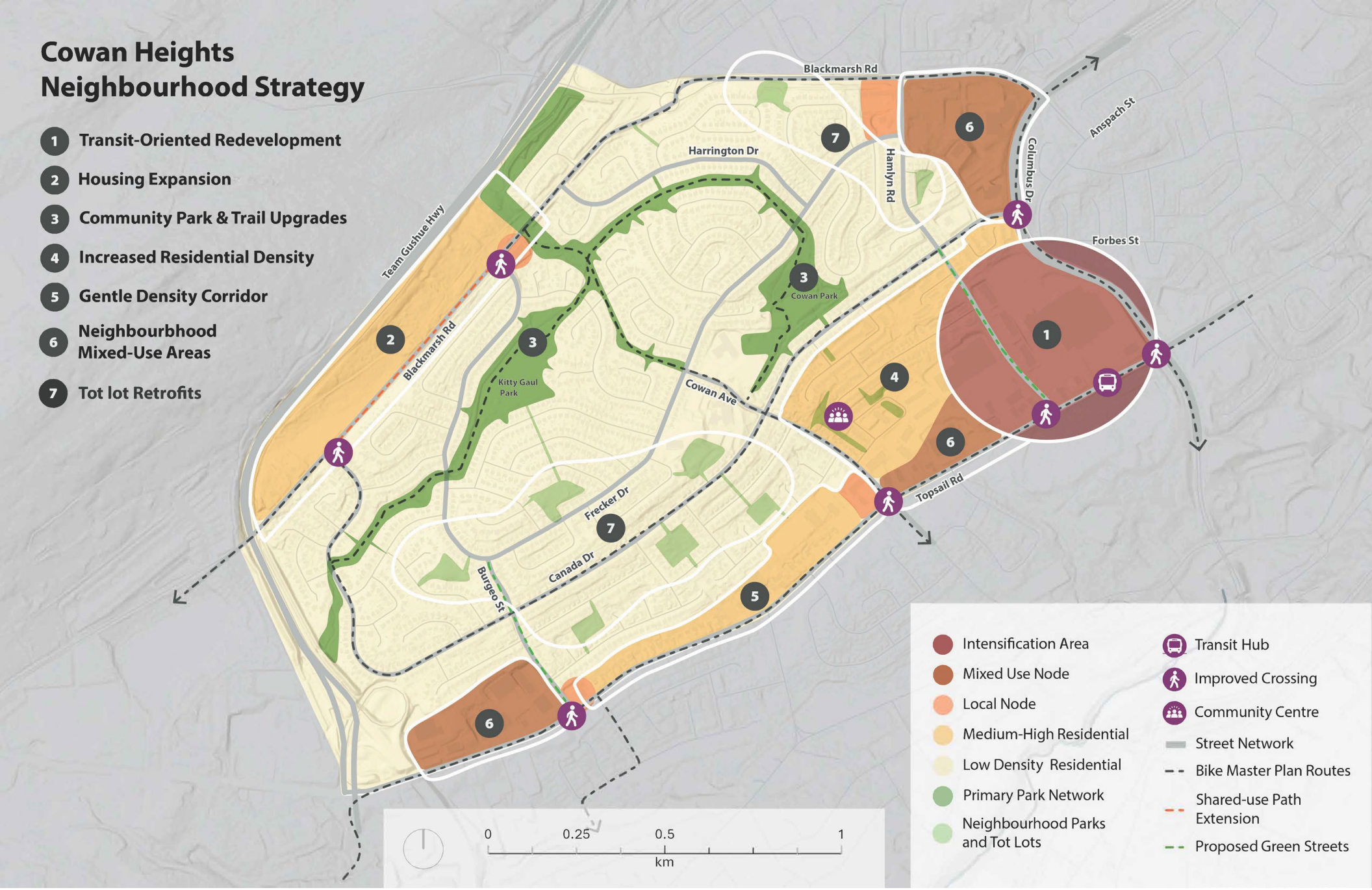


Figure 2. Cowan Heights Neighbourhood Strategy.

Chapter 2

Land Use

Land use policies shape how people interact with their neighbourhood and city. These policies influence where people live, shop and work, and what is built around them. The Envision St. John's Municipal Plan provides direction for how land use is managed on a city-wide scale. This Plan provides land use direction at a neighbourhood-scale to respond to the existing context of Cowan Heights and shape its future development in a strategic and efficient manner.



Current Context

Cowan Heights was initially developed in the 1970s and 1980s. The neighbourhood was intentionally planned with residential and schools in the centre, an internal connected parks and trail network, and commercial land uses at the edges of the neighbourhood along major roads. This development pattern still exists today.

The neighbourhood is undergoing demographic transition as residents are aging and new residents are moving in. This is creating growing demand on different types of housing and amenities, especially smaller and more accessible units for seniors or single occupant households that are connected to transit and services within walking distance.

The land use concept addresses the current context of the area while expanding opportunities to support changing housing and community needs.

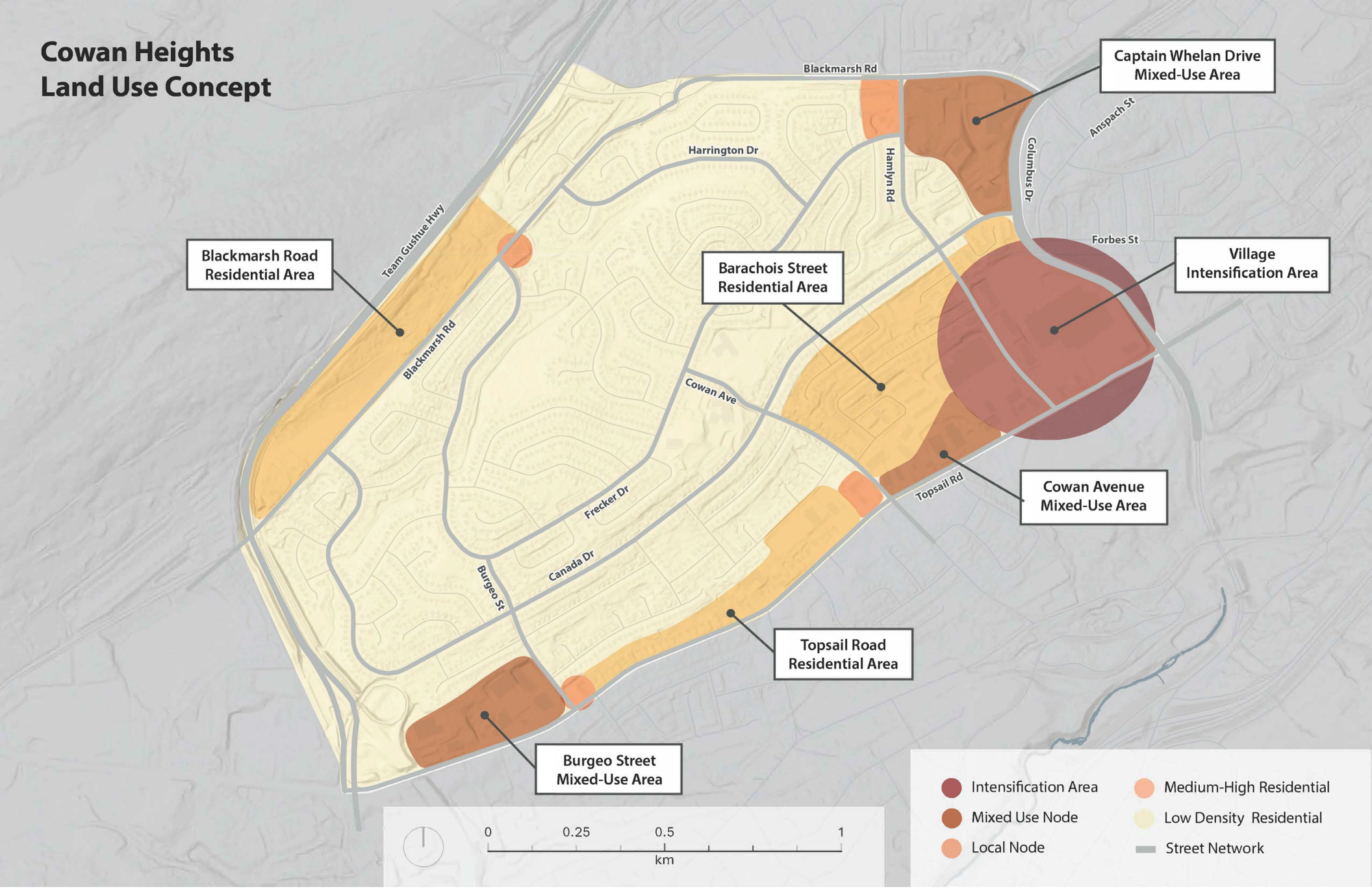


Figure 3. Cowan Heights Land Use Concept.

2.1 General Land Use Concept

Intent

The Cowan Heights Land Use Concept provides a conceptual framework to guide future growth and development in the neighbourhood. The concept builds upon the existing neighbourhood structure by strategically locating higher density uses along major corridors and nodes on the edges of the neighbourhood, while retaining lower density residential uses at the centre. Existing single-use commercial areas are envisioned to transition to mixed-use to incorporate residential uses over time, providing new housing options in close proximity to existing commercial services and connected to transit. Modest evolution of low-density residential areas will also continue to occur over time as properties are updated or redeveloped to adapt to changing household needs.

While the intent of this Neighbourhood Plan is to increase density in appropriate areas, infrastructure constraints may exist. Individual sites will be evaluated at the time of application to determine if infrastructure updates are required.

In addition to the general land use policies, seven focused locations for growth and transition have been identified and have specific land use policies assocaited with them.

Policies

The general land use policies apply to the entire neighbourhood (Cowan Heights Planning Area Map P-2, Envision St. John's Municipal Plan Appendices).

1. Prioritize highest intensity development in the Village Intensification Area.
2. Create a transition in height and density from the Village Intensification Area to surrounding development in accordance with the Development Regulations.
3. Encourage sensitive infill development throughout low-density residential areas, including four-plexes on corner lots, semi-detached dwellings, backyard suites, and subsidiary dwelling units, consistent with the Development Regulations.
4. Support sensitive infill development from low density to medium density through the rezoning process, where appropriate.
5. Encourage home occupations and child care services along local and collector roads to provide employment and services internal to the neighbourhood, within walking distance of residents.

6. Encourage the provision of new one and two-bedroom units, accessible units, and seniors' housing to address neighbourhood housing needs and improve housing choice.
7. Support non-profit organizations in developing and revitalizing affordable housing in the neighbourhood.
8. Consolidate driveway accesses between properties along major roads as part of redevelopment to improve safety and efficiency for all modes of transportation.
9. Coordinate public improvements with redevelopment to leverage investment in neighbourhood parks and trails.
10. Encourage the provision of secure bike parking, such as lockers or bike cages, near the transit hub in new development and redevelopments adjacent to the identified cycling network.
11. Ensure new development is in accordance with the Development Design Manual in particular to wastewater, sanitarity, and storm sewer requirements.
12. Celebrate the history and evolution of Cowan Heights through archiving and storytelling.

2.2 Village Intensification Area

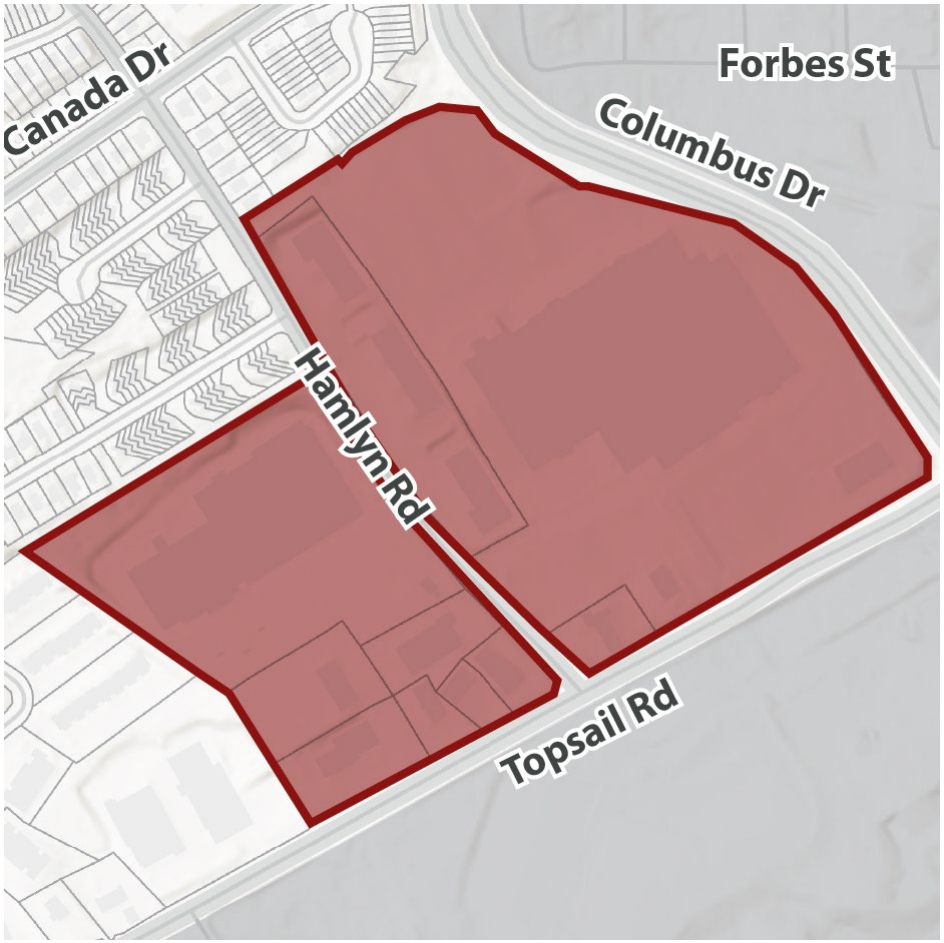


Figure 4. Village Intensification Area.

Intent

The Village Intensification Area is identified as the neighbourhood's Intensification Area, as illustrated in the Envision St. John's Municipal Plan Section 6.2 Secondary Plans and Map P-3, making it the primary location for growth and higher intensity development. The area currently features the Village Shopping Centre, commercial buildings, an existing transit hub, and significant surface parking to support the commercial uses. It is envisioned to redevelop as a transit and pedestrian-oriented mixed-use area that integrates residential, employment, and commercial uses, providing significant amenities for the entire neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood Strategy Links

Transit-Oriented Redevelopment

Mixed-use and high density redevelopment in this area will be integrated with transit infrastructure improvements, upgraded pedestrian circulation, and new amenities to support existing and new residents. Redevelopment will be coordinated with planned improvements on Hamlyn Road. Topsail Road, and intersections. This will create pedestrian-oriented connections from the neighbourhood to this Intensification Area and integrated transit hub.

Policies

Uses

1. The Village Intensification Area shall enable high density mixed-use residential, commercial, office, and institutional development through a Neighbourhood Infill Zone to provide housing, services, and employment opportunities in proximity to transit.

Built Form

2. The site layout for any redevelopment or new development in the Village Intensification Area shall be at the discretion of Council.

3. The City may require additional information, such as building elevations, wind study, shadow study or landscape plan to evaluate the proposal.

4. For commercial or mixed-use buildings, active commercial façades will be required on the ground floor of buildings along public streets and internal drive aisles to create a vibrant pedestrian experience. Active commercial façade design may include, but is not limited to:

    a. Frequent entrances and windows that maximize views to and from the street or drive aisle;
    b. Setbacks from the street or drive aisle to accommodate an extension of the use outside of the building, such as patios and display areas;
    c. Larger commercial uses integrated behind, or located above, smaller commercial units facing a street or drive aisle; and
    d. Material differentiation to accentuate the building's different uses.

5. For standalone apartment buildings, buildings will be required to:

    a. Be oriented to the street or drive aisle;
    b. Provide ground-floor entrances or patios to create a connection to the street or drive aisle; and
    c. Provide well articulated façades for façades along street or internal drive aisles. Blank façades will not be permitted.

6. Where a building faces both a street and a drive aisle, the building shall be oriented to and have main entrances facing the street, unless otherwise approved by Council.

7. For standalone apartment buildings, buildings will be encouraged to provide a ground floor ceiling height that could support future commercial uses.

8. Loading entrances will be located at the side or rear of the building.

Circulation & Parking

9. Circulation of the site shall include connections to public streets, trails, bike routes, buildings, and parking areas and consider all modes of transportation.

10. Site circulation will be coordinated with:

    a. City infrastructure and pedestrian improvements along Hamlyn Road; and
    b. Improvements to the Metrobus transit hub and other transit routes.

11. Parking shall be located at the rear of buildings, away from the street or drive aisle, or within a parking garage.

12. The City may consider reduced vehicle parking requirements, given the area's proximity to transit.

Amenities

13. Encourage the integration of public and/or privately owned publicly accessible spaces and other outdoor public amenity spaces into new development.

14. Locate and design public spaces adjacent to active uses and along streets to provide passive surveillance and increase perceptions of safety.

15. New developments and redevelopments must provide pedestrian-scaled lighting, frequent seating areas, and durable compact pathway surfaces, as may be acceptable to the City.

2.3 Blackmarsh Road Residential Area

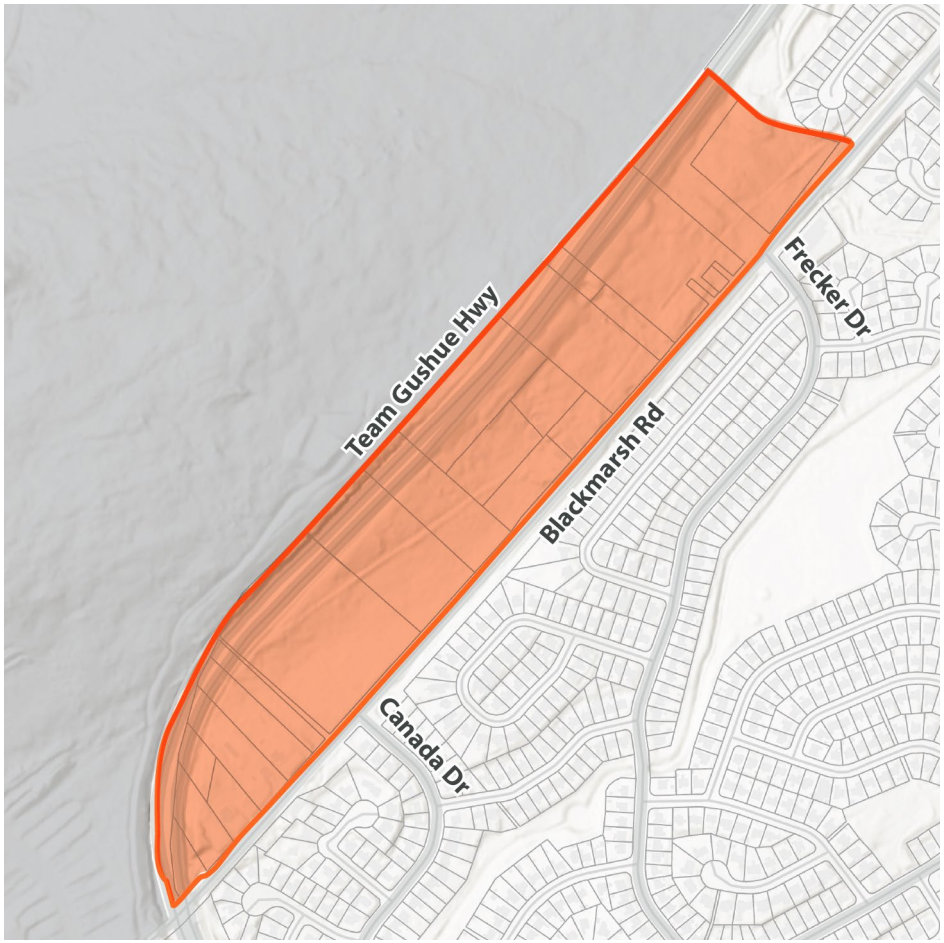


Figure 5. Blackmarsh Road Residential Area.

Intent

The Blackmarsh Road Residential Area will enable the development of the existing underdeveloped area along Blackmarsh Road to increase housing supply and choice.

Neighbourhood Strategy Links

Housing Expansion

Development of the lands along the north side of Blackmarsh Road will be coordinated with street upgrades to improve safety and accessibility for all road users.

Policies

Uses

1. The Blackmarsh Road Residential Area shall enable medium and high density residential development to expand the diversity of housing options in the neighbourhood.
2. Development shall be planned comprehensively and phased to ensure that road and servicing connections are able to be integrated across all properties.
3. Seniors' housing is encouraged.

Built Form

4. Residential buildings should be oriented towards internal drive aisles and amenity spaces, with parking located behind or to the side of the building, or within a parking garage.

Circulation & Parking

5. Provide safe and convenient pedestrian connections to public sidewalks, buildings, amenity spaces, trails, and parking areas.
6. Provide convenient, direct, and accessible pedestrian connections to the neighbourhood commercial area at Frecker Drive.
7. Redevelopment may use existing driveway access, consolidate driveway access points, or relocate driveway acess on Blackmarsh Road, as determined by the City.

Amenities

8. Encourage the development of a centrally located greenspace or amenity space to provide recreation opportunities for local residents, connect to the Blackmarsh Local Commercial Node, and connect to the broader Cowan Heights trail system.

2.5 Captain Whelan Drive Mixed-Use Area



Figure 6. Captain Whelan Drive Mixed-Use Area.

Intent

The Captain Whelan Drive Mixed-Use Area will maintain its core role as an employment centre, while enabling some additional residential or mixed-use development over time to serve employees and surrounding residents.

Neighbourhood Strategy Links

Neighbourhood Mixed-Use Areas

Redevelopment of this area over time will help to better integrate existing employment uses into the area, create better pedestrian connectivity, and integrate housing and walkable local services.

Policies

Uses

1. The Captain Whelan Drive Mixed-Use Area shall enable medium and high density residential, mixed-use, office, and institutional development through a Neighbourhood Infill Zone to provide housing, local commercial services, and employment opportunities.

Built Form

2. The site layout for any redevelopment or new development in the Captain Whelan Drive Mixed-Use Area shall be at the discretion of Council.

3. Development should transition from campus style development in existing employment areas to pedestrian-oriented and street facing development along Hamlyn Road.

4. The City may require additional information, such as building elevations, wind study, shadow study or landscape plan to evaluate the proposal.

5. For commercial or mixed-use buildings, active commercial façades will be required on the ground floor of buildings along public streets and internal drive aisles to integrate with adjacent residential areas and encourage active modes travel. Active commercial façade design may include, but is not limited to:

    a. Frequent entrances and windows that maximize views to and from the street or drive aisle;
    b. Setbacks from the street or drive aisle to accommodate an extension of the use outside of the building, such as patios and display areas;
    c. Larger commercial uses integrated behind, or located above, smaller commercial units facing a street or drive aisle; and
    d. Material differentiation to accentuate the building's different uses.

6. For standalone apartment buildings, buildings will be required to:

    a. Be oriented to the street or drive aisle;
    b. Provide ground-floor entrances or patios to create a connection to the street or drive aisle; and
    c. Provide well articulated façades for façades along street or internal drive aisles. Blank façades will not be permitted.

7. Where a building faces both a street and a drive aisle, the building shall be oriented to and have main entrances facing the street, unless otherwise approved by Council.

8. For standalone apartment buildings, buildings will be encouraged to provide a ground floor ceiling height that could support future commercial uses.

9. Loading entrances will be located at the side or rear of the building.

10. Where possible, incorporate existing treed areas into redevelopment landscaping.

Circulation & Parking

11. Consider an additional vehicle access point at Frecker Drive into the site.

12. New development and redevelopments will provide a link to the active transportation connection along Columbus Drive and provide pedestrian connections:

    a. To bus stops on Hamlyn Road, Blackmarsh Road and Columbus Drive;
    b. Between employment areas and parking lots; and
    c. To all streets.

2.6 Barachois Street Residential Area

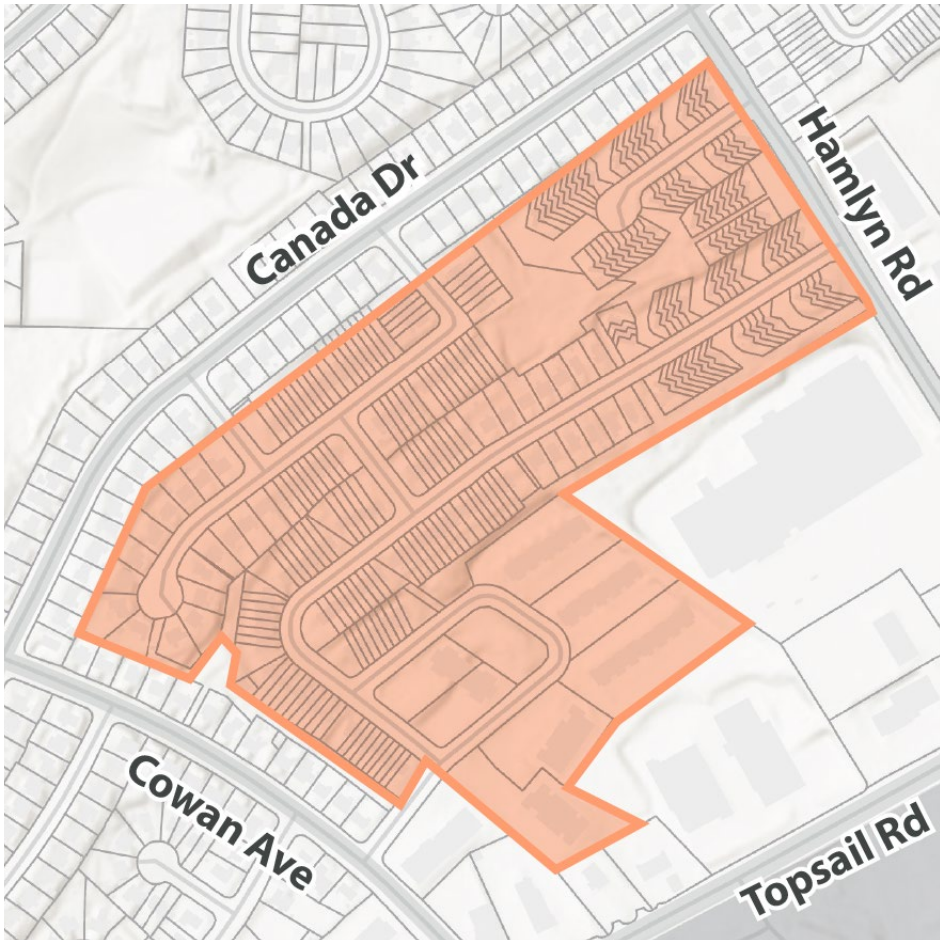


Figure 7. Barachois Street Residential Area.

Intent

The Barachois Street Residential Area is intended to continue to provide a range of housing types and serve as a transitional area between higher density uses at Village Shopping Centre and lower density residential areas.

Neighbourhood Strategy Links

Increased Residential Density

Increased residential density in this area will be supported by improvements to adjacent commercial areas, green street upgrades along Hamlyn Road, and the reactivation of the Parkside Community Centre.

Policies

Uses

1. The Barachois Street Residential Area shall enable medium and high density residential development.
2. Encourage child care services on the ground floor of new apartment buildings.
3. Encourage seniors' and accessible housing units.
4. The City will support Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation (NLHC) revitalization and redevelopment of existing affordable housing and, where appropriate, coordinate any NLHC development with City improvements to streets, trails, and parks.

Built Form

5. New standalone apartment buildings shall:
    a. Be oriented to the street or drive aisle, with parking located in the rear or side; and
    b. Provide height stepbacks when adjacent to lower density residential areas, where required under the Development Regulations.
6. New standalone apartment buildings should provide ground-floor entrances or amenity spaces to create a connection to the street.
7. Encourage additional programming of existing greenspaces, such as seating and gathering spaces, to support greater use and passive surveillance.

Circulation & Parking

8. Formalize pedestrian connections between the Barachois Street Residential Area and the Cowan Avenue Mixed-Use Area where appropriate.

2.7 Cowan Avenue Mixed-Use Area

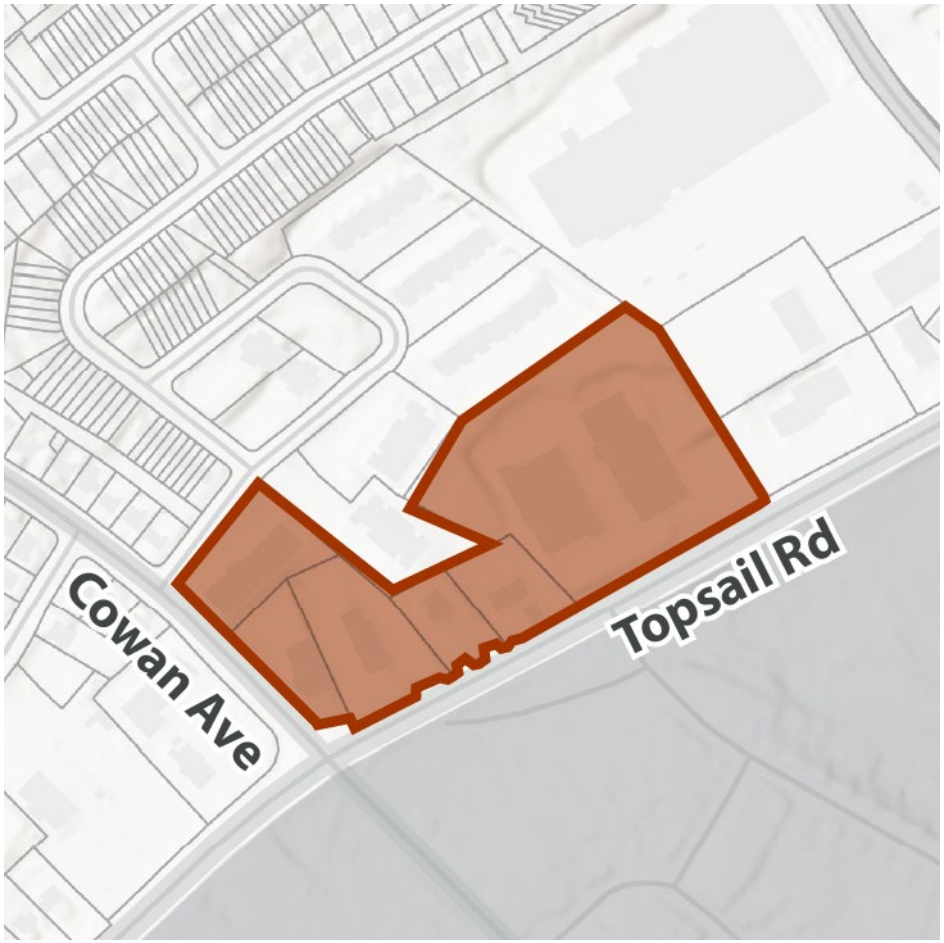


Figure 8. Cowan Avenue Mixed-Use Area.

Intent

The Cowan Avenue Mixed-Use Area will continue to provide a mix of local commercial services and employment opportunities along Topsail Road, serving as a transition area from the highest intensity mixed-use development at the Village Intensification Area.

Neighbourhood Strategy Links

Neighbourhood Mixed-Use Areas

Mixed-use redevelopment will be supported by active transportation improvements along Cowan Avenue and Topsail Road.

Increased Residential Density

Greater mixing of uses in this area will support increased density and enable a more complete, transit-supportive community.

Policies

Uses

1. The Cowan Avenue Mixed-Use Area shall enable mixed-use commercial, office, and residential development, in accordance with the Development Regulations, to provide services and employment opportunities.
2. Commercial uses shall be located at street level. Residential uses will not be permitted at street level.
3. Within mixed-use buildings, residential uses shall be located above the commercial uses.
4. Encourage an active commercial use at street level to encourage a vibrant pedestrian experience.
5. Allow for properties adjacent to the Cowan Avenue Mixed-Use Area to be incorporated into the development when appropriate.

Built Form

6. Encourage a transition from the adjacent Barachois Street High Density through landscaping, public amenity space, or other elements to encourage more walking and wheeling access.
7. Encourage outdoor patio spaces adjacent to buildings along internal accesses.

Circulation & Parking

8. Separate internal accesses from parking areas using landscaping or raised islands.
9. Upon redevelopment, update site circulation to provide pedestrian connections between buildings that reduce crossings of drive aisles, parking lots, and drive-throughs.
10. For redevelopment and new development, provide direct pedestrian connections to adjacent transit stops on Topsail Road and Cowan Avenue, as acceptable to the City.
11. Work with adjacent landowners to formalize pedestrian connections between the site and the Barachois Street Residential Area.
12. Encourage landscaping and trees along Hamlyn Road and Topsail Road in alignment with the Hamlyn Road Green Street.

2.8 Topsail Road Residential Area

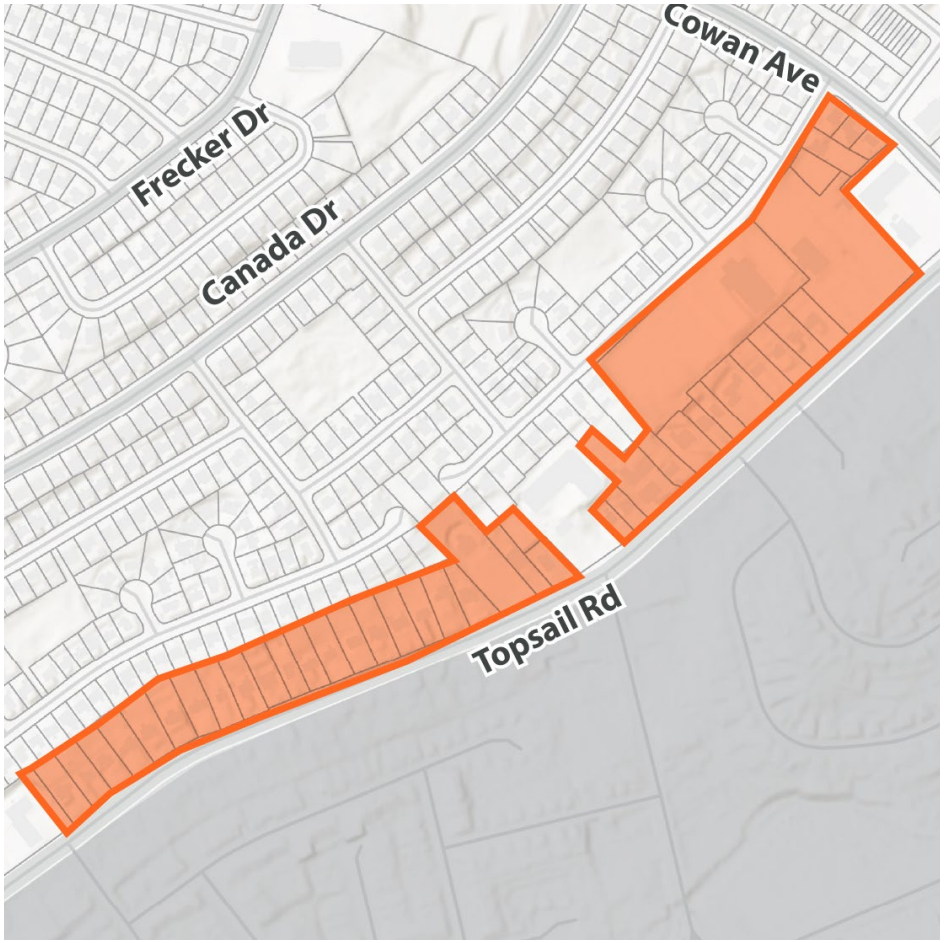


Figure 9. Topsail Road Residential Area.

Intent

The Topsail Road Residential Area is envisioned as a medium density residential corridor that will redevelop over time from current single detached dwellings to higher density forms such as townhouses and small apartments. In the future, the area may be able to support higher density housing if there is demand and several lots can be consolidated.

Neighbourhood Strategy Links

Gentle Density Corridor

Sensitive infill redevelopment of residential uses along Topsail Road between Cowan Avenue and Burgeo Street will be coordinated with additional active transportation improvements on Topsail Road.

Policies

Uses

1. The Topsail Road Residential Area shall enable a transition to medium density residential development, in accordance with the Development Regulations.
2. Consider allowing higher density residential development, such as apartment buildings, through the rezoning process where several lots have been consolidated and appropriate building height stepbacks to adjacent lower density residential uses can be provided.

Circulation & Parking

3. Redevelopment must use existing driveway access or consolidate driveway access points on Topsail Road, as determined by the City. New driveways or access points on Topsail Road will not be permitted.
4. Redevelopment shall locate parking areas behind buildings rather than adjacent to streets to create a better interface with the street. Parking garages can also be considered.

2.9 Burgeo Street Mixed-Use Area



Figure 10. Burgeo Street Mixed-Use Area.

Intent

The Burgeo Street Mixed-Use Area will transition from a highway commercial area to a mixed-use neighbourhood node with an increased focus on pedestrian connectivity and enhanced sense of place.

Neighbourhood Strategy Links

Neighbourhood Mixed-Use Areas

Redevelopment of this strategic location will help to increase housing supply and create additional walkable amenities and services for the neighbourhood. Development will be complimented by improvements to Burgeo Street and Topsail Road to enhance active transportation opportunities.

Policies

Uses

1. The Burgeo Street Mixed-Use Area shall enable medium and high density mixed-use residential, commercial and office development, in accordance with the Development Regulations, to provide housing, services, and employment opportunities.
2. Commercial uses shall be located at street level. Residential uses will not be permitted at street level.
3. Within mixed-use buildings, residential uses shall be located above the commercial uses.
4. Encourage an active commercial use at street level to encourage a vibrant pedestrian experience.

Built Form

5. Building heights will transition from highest along Topsail Road to lowest adjacent to residential areas along the north of the Burgeo Street Mixed-Use Area.
6. For medium and high density developments, building height stepbacks shall be provided for buildings adjacent to lower density residential areas.
7. Encourage a greenspace or plaza space adjacent to residential areas.
8. New buildings shall be located closer to Burgeo Street and Topsail Road to create a better interface with the street.
9. Encourage landscaping and trees along Burgeo Street and Topsail Road and align with the Burgeo Street Green Street.

Circulation & Parking

10. Separate internal accesses from parking areas using landscaping or raised islands.
11. Create direct pedestrian connections from public streets and transit stops to buildings and parking areas.
12. Formalize informal pathways and improve transportation connectivity to Bonavista Street.

Chapter 3

Mobility

Mobility describes the different ways people move around their neighbourhood and the broader city. Providing multiple transportation options helps to meet everyone's needs and connects residents to the locations they need reach as part of daily life.



Current Context

In Cowan Heights, there are many transportation options, including walking, wheeling, transit, and driving.

The highest capacity roadways are located along or near the edges of the neighbourhood, including the Team Gushue Highway, Columbus Drive, Topsail Road, and Blackmarsh Road arterials. Connected to these arterials are an internal network of collector roadways, including Canada Drive, Frecker Drive, Cowan Avenue, Burgeo Street, Harrington Drive, and Hamlyn Road, which provide access through the neighbourhood, connecting to all residential streets. Most streets in the neighbourhood are wide and have sidewalks on both sides of the street.

Cowan Heights benefits from an interconnected trail network through its parks and residential areas. These are currently well connected for recreational walking and wheeling, but are not as well connected for active transportation trips. The Bike St. John's Master Plan sets out plans to improve connectivity of the bike network throughout the neighbourhood by establishing routes along Blackmarsh Road, Columbus Drive, Topsail Road, Canada Drive, and Cowan Avenue, linked to the existing off-street trail network. This will improve access to the existing trail network and increase users of the trail.

Cowan Heights also benefits from good transit access, particularly at the existing Village Shopping Centre transit hub. Most transit routes travel along Cowan Heights' arterial and collector streets and connect to the Village Shopping Centre.

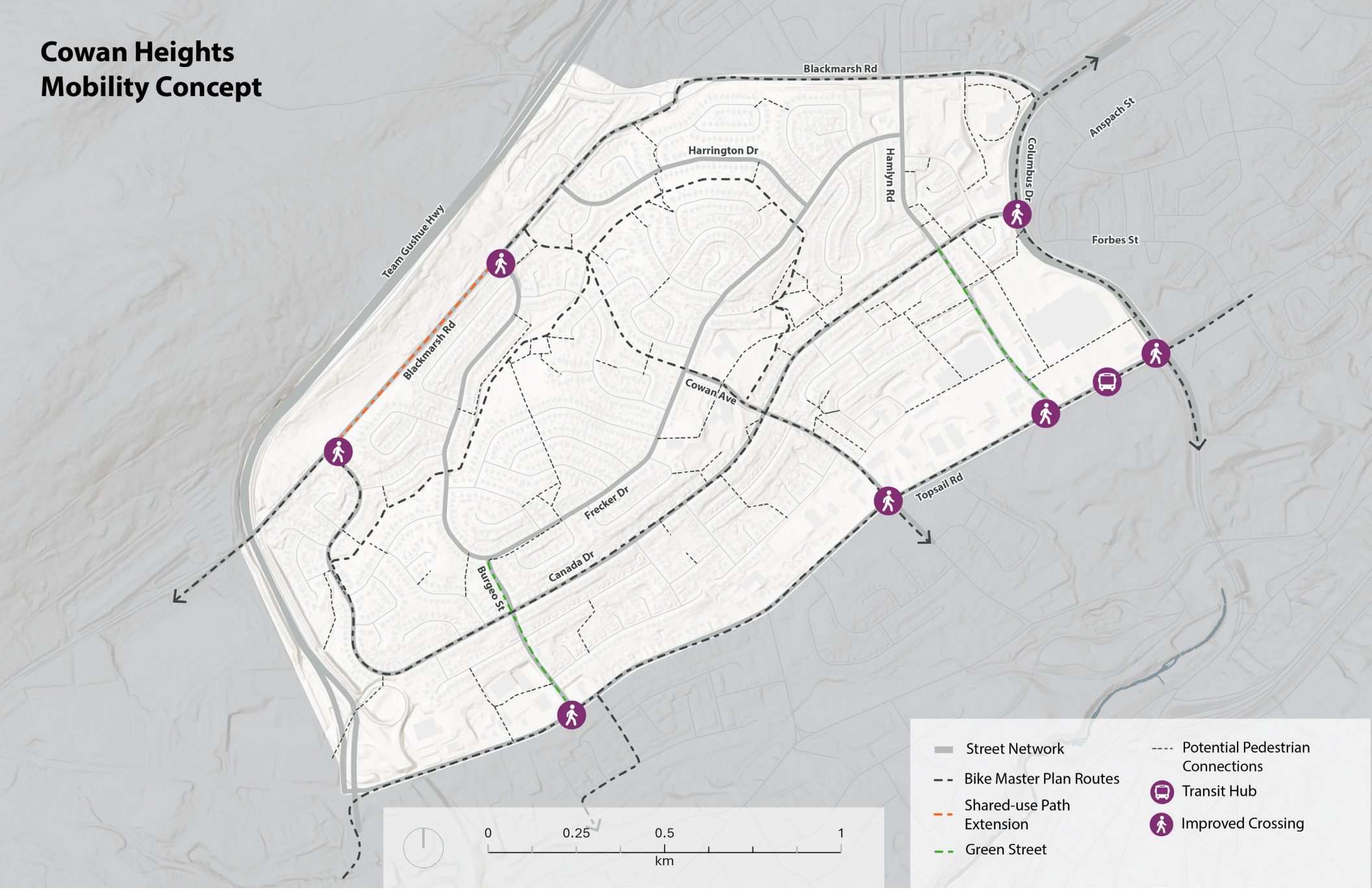


Figure 11. Cowan Heights Mobility Concept.

3.1 General Mobility Policies

Intent

As the neighbourhood grows, upgrades to Cowan Heights' mobility networks will be needed to support more people walking, wheeling, taking transit, and driving in the area. The priority upgrades are identified in Figure 11. The following general mobility policies are intended to reduce travel times, improve transportation safety, and support mobility choice to continue to provide an efficient mobility network.

Policies

Active Transportation

1. Continue to develop the on-street cycling network in accordance with the Bike St. John's Master Plan to support walking and wheeling connectivity throughout the neighbourhood and to surrounding areas.
2. Implement active transportation and intersection improvements to Columbus Drive, Topsail Road, and Hamlyn Road to support growth at the Village Intensification Area.
3. Implement traffic calming and crosswalk upgrades near Cowan Heights' schools.
4. Install wayfinding and signage throughout the neighbourhood to identify and promote active transportation connections.
5. Incorporate accessibility into street and intersection upgrades such as:
    a. Tactile paving;
    b. Auditory signals;
    c. Curb ramps;
    d. Lighting; and
    e. Seating.

6. Consider opportunities to increase pedestrian connections through development and redevelopment.

7. Consider opportunities to create small public spaces along active transportation routes , with amenities such as seating, public art, landscaping, and flexible spaces that can be programmed.

Transit

8. Work with Metrobus to integrate improvements to the transit hub along Topsail Road and adjacenet areas, such as:

    a. Improved pedestrian connections;
    b. Improved vehicle and bus circulation;
    c. Improved lighting and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) features;
    d. Potential park and ride opportunities; and
    e. Amenities such as winterized shelters and bathrooms.

9. Work with Metrobus to winterize transit stops and bus shelters throughout Cowan Heights to support better year-round transit ridership.

3.2 Topsail Road

Intent

Topsail Road is one of the main connections between Cowan Heights and the rest of St. John's. The road accommodates high traffic volumes and features two lanes in each direction with dedicated turning lanes at intersections. The following mobility policies guide improvements to the street as the areas along it redevelop. The improvements will make it more efficient for all road users.

Policies

1. When providing cycling connections on Topsail Road, integrate improvements such as:
    a. A buffer for pedestrians and cyclists from vehicle traffic, such as a landscaped boulevard or physical barrier; and
    b. Wayfinding signage to show connections to other bike routes.
2. As areas redevelop along Topsail Road, work with adjacent landowners to enhance the pedestrian experience along the road by encouraging the planting of trees and landscaping.
3. As the Village Intensification Area redevelops, implement transit priority measures.
4. At Topsail Road and Columbus Drive, implement intersection upgrades to improve active transportation and safety for all road users.

Neighbourhood Strategy Links

Transit-Oriented Redevelopment

Improvements to Topsail Road and the intersection with Columbus Drive will support additional intensification.

Gentle Density Corridor

Topsail Road improvements will help accommodate moderate residential growth planned along the corridor.

3.3 Hamlyn Road

Intent

Hamlyn Road is located within the Village Intensification Area and provides a key local connection for the neighbourhood between Topsail Road and Blackmarsh Road. As the areas along this street redevelop, Hamlyn Road provides an important north-south connection between residential areas and mixed-use areas that can be upgraded to better serve a variety of road users. Hamlyn Road will be upgraded to a green street to create a sustainable and vibrant street environment to better support walking and cycling.

Policies

1. Create a green street along Hamlyn Road between Canada Drive and Topsail Road that incorporates:

    a. Decreased vehicle lane widths and increased right of way for active modes;
    b. A landscaped buffer between the sidewalk and vehicle lanes where possible; and
    c. Increased landscaping and trees to enhance the pedestrian experience of the street.

Neighbourhood Strategy Links

Transit-Oriented Redevelopment

Improvements to Hamlyn Road will support growth and additional mixed-use redevelopment at the Village Intensification Area.

3.4 Blackmarsh Road

Intent

Blackmarsh Road provides an efficient connection between the east and west side of the neighbourhood along the north end of Cowan Heights. As the adjacent area develops, Blackmarsh Road will need to be upgraded to better integrate with the overall mobility network.

Policies

1. Complete a sidewalk and shared-use path along Blackmarsh Road from Captain Whelan Drive to Canada Drive to support walking and wheeling.
2. As the Blackmarsh Expansion area redevelops, upgrade the intersections at Canada Drive and Frecker Drive to improve active transportation safety and comfort.

Neighbourhood Strategy Links

Housing Expansion

The Blackmarsh Road policies and improvements will support the development of higher density housing along its north side.

3.5 Burgeo Street

Intent

Burgeo Street is located on the west side of Cowan Heights and provides an important connection between Topsail Road and the neighbourhood's residential areas. The street will be upgraded as a green street to accommodate growth while improving the street experience for pedestrian and cyclists.

Policies

1. Create a green street along Burgeo Street between Canada Drive and Topsail Road that incorporates:

    a. Decreased vehicle lane widths and increased right of way for active modes;
    b. A landscaped buffer between the sidewalk and vehicle lanes; and
    c. Increased landscaping and trees and enhance the pedestrian experience of the street.

2. Conduct intersection improvements at Topsail Road to improve pedestrian comfort and safety.

Neighbourhood Strategy Links

Neighbourhood Mixed-Use Areas

The Burgeo Street upgrades will support growth and mixed-use redevelopment of the properties along Topsail Road.

Chapter 4

Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation spaces are essential neighbourhood components, contributing to quality of life as well as physical and mental health. In Cowan Heights, the interconnected greenspace network of parks and pathways is an integral to the neighbourhood sense of place and why people want to live here. The following section provides direction on how to improve the existing parks network and enhance recreation opportunities.



Current Context

Cowan Heights' park network is a unique and treasured asset of the neighbourhood.

The system's variety of parks are linked together with pathways and neighbourhood streets, supporting walking, wheeling, and various passive and active recreational activities. The primary park network is made up of the neighbourhood's one community park, Cowan Park, as well as Kitty Gaul Park. This primary network is connected by an extensive internal pathway system. In addition to this primary network, there are a number of neighbourhood parks and tot lots, which are smaller park spaces surrounded by residential development. The neighbourhood also benefits from nearby access to the amenities and trails in Bowring Park, just south of the neighbourhood boundaries.



Figure 12. Cowan Heights Parks Concept.

4.1 General Parks and Recreation Policies

Intent

Cowan Heights' parks should be considered and planned for as an overall connected network. As the neighbourhood grows, retaining access to park spaces will be important. The spaces will also need to be upgraded over time to respond to recreation trends and changing demographics. The following policies direct where to prioritize park improvements and provide high level guidance on park design. The Cowan Heights parks and recreation policies are organized into four main sections: Community Parks, Pathways, Neighbourhood Parks and Tot lots, and the Parkside Community Centre.

Policies

1. Prioritize park and pathway improvements in areas planned for growth and redevelopment, including the Village Intensification Area, Blackmarsh Road Residential Area, and Barachois Street Residential Area.
2. Explore opportunities to provide additional public or privately-owned publicly accessible space in the Village Intensification Area as part of redevelopment.
3. Repurpose existing underutilized green spaces on public land for new community uses or activities.
4. Link any new park spaces to the existing parks and trail network where possible.

Park Design

5. Design new parks to be visible and accessible from surrounding public spaces and streets to provide passive surveillance.
6. Retrofit existing parks using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.
7. Provide additional wayfinding at the entrances to all park spaces or move park signage to where it is visible from public streets.
8. Develop a strategy in collaboration with local public safety and health authorities for appropriate sharps disposal locations in the neighbourhood.

Park Amenities

9. Upgrade Kitty Gaul Park to a Community Park standard.
10. Collaborate with the urban Indigenous community to identify appropriate ways to recognize Indigenous culture and contributions in park spaces such as naming, public art, and healing gardens.
11. Engage with residents and community organizations in the design and retrofit of park spaces.
12. Consider providing picnic tables and related amenities in the parks to support community gathering.

Landscaping & Environment

13. Ensure landscaping in parks is climate-resilient and responds to local environmental conditions.
14. Consider opportunities to expand urban tree canopy throughout the park network to provide shade and ecological function.

4.2 Community Parks

Intent

Cowan Heights features two main parks: Kitty Gaul Park and Cowan Park. These two parks provide the neighbourhood with larger spaces to accommodate sports amenities and community gathering spaces. Both parks feature baseball fields, tennis courts, and play structures and are located within neighbourhood blocks with minimal public street frontage. The following policies will update the amenities of these parks to meet modern demands and improve their accessibility and visibility from public streets.

Neighbourhood Strategy Links

Community Park & Trail Upgrades

Connected parks and trails are the greatest existing asset of Cowan Heights. Upgrades to parks will continue to protect and enhance these key neighbourhood amenities.

Policies

1. Initiate concept plans for Kitty Gaul Park and Cowan Park to evaluate existing amenities, prioritize improvements, and identify any opportunities to adjust the overall park layout and circulation.
2. Consult the urban Indigenous community, residents, community organizations and interested parties in the concept plan process.
3. Conduct an Accessibility Audit as a part of the concept plan process to identify current accessibility challenges and opportunities to make the parks more accessible for people of all ages and abilities.

Kitty Gaul Park

4. Improve wayfinding to Kitty Gaul Park by locating signage closer to Birmingham Street.
5. Consider extending the soccer field to a regulation size full soccer field.
6. Consider riparian restoration along the Kitty Gaul Brook and duck pond to enhance the ecological function of the watercourse.

Cowan Park

7. Improve wayfinding to Cowan Park by locating signage closer to Canada Drive.
8. Convert the tennis courts to pickleball courts.
9. Consider the addition of a disc golf course in Cowan Park.

4.3 Off-Street Pathways

Intent

One of the defining features of Cowan Heights is its interconnected recreational pathway system. The network of paths through parks encourages residents and visitors to travel between parks and creates a sense of nature within the City. The following policies will improve this system by making the pathways feel safer and more accessible, further enhancing this unique neighbourhood amenity.

Neighbourhood Strategy Links

Community Park & Trail Upgrades

Trail upgrades will enhance accessibility and connectivity throughout Cowan Heights for active modes.

Policies

1. Improve the intersections between off-street pathways and public streets to enhance safety by considering features such as:
    a. Distinct pavement markings or surfacing;
    b. Additional signage or signalization;
    c. Lighting;
    d. Raised crosswalks; and
    e. Speed bumps.
2. Upgrade pathways surfacing to provide a flatter, more accessible surface that is resistant to freeze-thaw cycles and tree roots.
3. Consider pathway markings or signage to help with separation between users.
4. Provide pathway lighting along main pathways to improve trail access and visibility.
5. Enhance the presence of the pathway and park network by creating wider pathway entrances and adding signage and lighting.
6. Integrate wayfinding upgrades to create a visible and consistent wayfinding system along streets, paths, and parks in the neighbourhood.

4.4 Neighbourhood Parks and Tot Lots

Intent

Neighbourhood Parks and tot lots are the smallest of the City's park types and are frequently distributed throughout Cowan Heights within the interior of its neighbourhood blocks. The original intent of these spaces was as a common backyard space with amenities for children. Many of the existing play amenities are underutilized and reaching the end of their lifecycles. There are opportunities to relook at the roles that Neighbourhood Parks and tot lots can play in the overall park network by enhancing passive recreational amenities for all ages and abilities.

Neighbourhood Strategy Links

Community Park & Trail Upgrades

Connected parks and trails are the greatest existing asset of Cowan Heights. Upgrades to parks will continue to protect and enhance these key neighbourhood amenities.

Policies

1. Engage with residents on community recreation needs and proposed tot lot upgrades.
2. Support and encourage residents and community organizations to program tot lots for community and recreational uses.
3. Continue to promote and support the creation of community-led community gardens in parks to improve access to local food.
4. When playgrounds reach their end of life, evaluate if there is continued demand for play structures and consider replacing with more nature-based play opportunities and amenities.
5. Consider opportunities for adult play, exercise, and mindfulness amenities in tot lots.
6. Consider an appropriate tot lot to provide a small, fenced dog off-leash area, where it will be located away from playgrounds or incompatible uses.
7. Consider naturalizing additional spaces in tot lots to reduce maintenance needs and increase the ecological function and natural enjoyment of parks.

4.5 Parkside Community Centre

Intent

The Parkside Community Centre is a lesser-known public amenity in Cowan Heights that has the opportunity to be re-activated as a community gathering space. Located between Cowan Avenue and Barachois Street, the Parkside Community Centre is within walking distance of two elementary schools and near proposed growth areas in the Neighbourhood Strategy. This public amenity currently consists of a small building and play structure on a triangular site connected by a driveway and pathway to its adjacent streets. There are opportunities to reprogram the site to better accommodate small community gatherings, after school programs, and other community programming.

Neighbourhood Strategy Links

Increased Residential Density

Upgrades and reactivation of the Parkside Community Centre will support growth and redevelopment in the Barachois Street Residential Area.

Policies

1. Evaluate the building condition of the Parkside Community Centre and conduct any necessary improvements to enable re-programming of the space.
2. Conduct accessibility improvements to the building, washrooms, and pathways connecting to the building.
3. Work with the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation to create more clearly delineated public access to the Parkside Community Centre.
4. Provide additional lighting and improve sight lines in Barachois Park in accordance with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.
5. Identify existing City and other partner organization programming that could utilize the space.
6. Engage with youth on opportunities to redesign the surrounding park space as a welcoming and safe space for youth.
7. Enable community rentals of the Parkside Community Centre for community events.

Chapter 5

Implementation

This Neighbourhood Plan works in alignment with the Municipal Plan to serve as the City's blueprint for future growth in Cowan Heights. It provides the structure to guide City investment, development, and community activation throughout the neighbourhood, helping to achieve the established goals and objectives. Arising out of this Plan, several ongoing actions are required to support successful implementation of the Plan:

- Effective ongoing administration;
- Appropriate investment in infrastructure; and
- Revision of Development Regulations.



6.1. Neighbourhood Plan Review

1. Review of this Plan should be undertaken concurrent to and as part of any broader Municipal Plan review as outlined in Section 9.1 of the Municipal Plan.

2. Amendments to this Plan should be considered consistent with the criteria outlined for Municipal Plan amendments in Section 9.1 of the Municipal Plan.

6.2 Neighbourhood Plan Investment

1. Future investments in municipal infrastructure as outlined in this Neighbourhood Plan will be coordinated and implemented in alignment with applicable master plans (e.g. Bike St. John's Master Plan; Parks and Open Space Master Plan).

2. Future updates to City master plans should give consideration to the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan in order to ensure effective and coordinated implementation.

6.3 Development Regulations

1. The City will endeavour to review and implement amendments to the Development Regulations that enable effective implementation of this Neighbourhood Plan.

6.4 Development Review

1. Where rezoning applications are made within the Neighbourhood Plan boundary, consideration for whether the proposal is in conformity with the intent of this Plan must be given along with all other considerations outlined in Section 9.5 of the Municipal Plan.

Glossary

This glossary is intended to assist in the interpretation of this Plan and is not intended to be legal definitions. Any conflict between the glossary and definitions in other City policies and regulations, the other policies and regulations govern.



Active Commercial Façade

Ground-level portions of commercial buildings designed to engage with and attract pedestrians, promoting activity and vibrancy on the street

Active Transportation

Modes of travel, including walking, cycling, and other human-powered mobility options (e.g., skateboarding, rollerblading, and the use of mobility devices like wheelchairs or scooters).

Affordable Housing

Non-market housing that is provided by not-for-profit operators.

Amenities

The features, services, or facilities that enhance the comfort, convenience, attractiveness, and overall quality of life in a community or public space. Examples include parks, private shops and services, community centres, public art and activities.

Built Form

The physical shape, structure, and arrangement of buildings and spaces within an urban environment. Features include building height, size, setbacks, and architectural style.

Campus Development

A form of development that usually consists of buildings spaced apart on a site and surrounded by open spaces.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

A multidisciplinary approach to crime prevention that uses urban and architectural design and the management of built and natural environments.

Green Street

Roads that include natural landscaping (trees, shrubs and grasses).

High Density

Areas that have a large number of dwelling units per building and area, typically in the form of apartment buildings.

Intensification Area

Areas in the city that are identified in the Envision St. John's Municipal Plan and are well suited for high density developments.

Low Density

Areas that have a small number of dwelling units per building and area, typically ranging from single-detached houses to townhouses.

Medium Density

Areas that have a moderate number of dwelling units per building and area, typically ranging from townhouses to apartments.

Mixed-use

Developments that have a mix of land uses, such as residential, commercial or office within one building or on one lot.

Mobility Options

A range of transportation modes, such as walking, biking, taking transit, or driving.

Mode of Transportation

Different transportation modes include walking, cycling, taking transit, or driving.

New Development

Development and redevelopment that occurs following the approval of this Plan.

Privately-Owned Publicly Accessible Space

Land that is open to the public but owned privately.

Redevelopment

Construction of new buildings on a property that had existing buildings already.

Setback

The distance between the property line and the building. Also known as the "Building Line".

Shared Use Pathway

A pathway that supports a variety of active transportation modes, such as walking, biking or using a wheelchair.

Subsidiary Dwelling Units

A separate dwelling unit that is located within the structure of a main building and which is subordinate to the main dwelling unit.

Transit Oriented Development

Development that is located near transit hubs that feature higher levels of transit service to support greater densities nearby.

Traffic Calming

Road design features that are intended to slow down vehicle traffic and create a safer environment for other road users.

Walkable

A place that supports and encourages more trips being made by walking or active transportation modes through the mixing of land uses and safe and convenient sidewalks and pathways.

Winterize

To weather proof a space for winter conditions, such as by providing a fully enclosed and heated bus shelter or waiting area.

ST. JOHN'S

Cowan Heights

Neighbourhood Plan

