

Streetscape Master Plans

Rodney and West Lorne Town Centres
Municipality of West Elgin



October 2013

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&

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The driving force which led which led to the preparation of the community improvement plan for the town centres of Rodney and West Lorne in 2009 and subsequently the preparation of the Streetscape Master Plans for each can be attributed to the determined efforts of Ed Markham who quickly got involved in community affairs following a long career in management with Chrysler Canada and retirement to Rodney where he opened a B&B with his wife Kim and joined the West Elgin Chamber of Commerce.

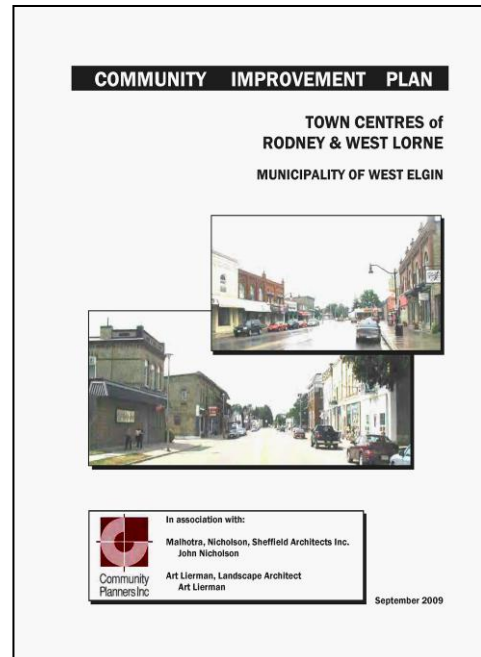
While attending a conference in St. Thomas in 2006 on community improvement featuring main street revitalization in three small communities in eastern Ontario, he strongly advocated for adoption of a similar strategy to address current conditions in Rodney and West Lorne. Consequently, Council supported a submission from the Chamber and authorized Community Planners Inc. to prepare a community improvement plan for the two town centres. A community improvement plan was prepared and adopted by Council in September 2009.

Ed also was instrumental in advocating for the Municipality's participation in the First Impressions Community Exchange Program in 2008 sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs designed to bring attention to community issues having both a negative and positive impression on first time visitors. The report filed underscored the need for revitalization and a thorough up-grading of main street in both town centres.

1.0 Context

In September of 2009, the Municipality of West Elgin adopted a Community Improvement Plan for the town centres of Rodney and West Lorne (Figure 1). The plan was a multi-faceted strategy designed to lead to the revitalization of the town centres that were clearly in a state of slow steady decline; both economically and physically.

A vision statement was incorporated into the *Community Improvement Plan* to provide an overall framework or context for revitalization; namely:



To create attractive, distinct and vibrant town centres in the villages of Rodney and West Lorne that capitalize on their assets and is characterized by the provision of goods and services and by a diversity of activities and experiences that exemplify successful main street characteristics and that contribute to the needs and quality of life of local residents, attracts visitors and tourists and enhances the economic viability of local businesses.

A number of goals were also adopted to guide the revitalization process. The goal directly related to the preparation of the streetscape master plans is:

To create a more attractive, distinctive and pedestrian friendly streetscape.

For rejuvenation of the town centres to have any chance of occurring, a comprehensive approach was considered essential which addressed their identity, physical condition, heritage preservation, potential assets, economic vitality, municipal partnerships and support from business and property owners.

Two of the key elements were the identity and physical condition of the town centres. This meant addressing not only the public realm that is largely vested in the ownership of the Municipality but also the built fabric that is, by contrast, largely under private ownership. Based on the findings of the *Community Improvement Plan*, which included a merchant survey and a report arising out of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs' *First*



RODNEY



WEST LORNE

Impressions Community Exchange, it became apparent that much was needed to be done and much could be done to improve the overall image of the town centres. The findings of the *First Impressions Community Exchange* on the state of the town centres were particularly noteworthy:

The need for downtown improvement and revitalization was very apparent.....The overall appearance of the downtown area was depressing with an obvious need for main street revitalization. Neither Rodney nor West Lorne core possessed any amenities that gave either downtown area a unique identity.....Downtown West Lorne is in need of streetscape and façade improvements. It lacks a visually attractive appearance due to the deterioration of some buildings, and lack of maintenance. The downtown core in both Rodney and West Lorne lacked a visual vibrancy that creates a “WOW” reaction in the visitor’s eye.....the downtown cores lacked appeal to attract visitors to the community. (First Impressions Community Exchange, 2009)

The streetscape master plan component of the community improvement strategy focuses on the public realm being essentially those lands comprising the street environment and characterized by the street itself, curbs and sidewalk. In addition, the public realm includes municipally-owned land and buildings such as the lands occupied by the McMillan Brothers Library in Rodney and the Community Complex and Fire Hall in West Lorne. Also included are lands which potentially might become part of the public realm to illustrate how they might enhance and contribute to the revitalization of the town centres. As has been found to be the case elsewhere, improvements to privately-owned land and buildings often followed improvements to the public realm.

Preparation of the streetscape master plans have been undertaken by Community Planners Inc. in association with Arthur Lierman Landscape Architecture. A streetscape design committee was appointed of local volunteers to provide input and comments on proposed improvements. The Committee included the presidents of the Rodney and District Horticultural Society and the West Lorne and Community Horticultural Society as both societies have had a long history of active involvement in beautifying and improving the image of their respective town centres. Activities and projects have ranged from the planting and maintenance of flower beds to raising funds for the purchase of street furniture to, in the case of West Lorne, replacing the existing street lighting with new, more decorative fixtures.

2.0 Existing Conditions

Based on the previous work undertaken in the preparation of the *Community Improvement Plan* and the report of the *First Impressions Community Exchange*, a number of conditions were identified in the public realm of both Rodney and West Lorne town centres that required attention and improvement. Through field research conducted in the preparation of the Streetscape Master Plan including consultations with the Streetscape Design Committee and municipal staff, other conditions and issues were identified. The full range of conditions included:

- deteriorating concrete sidewalks and inadequate maintenance,
- lack of cleanliness of public spaces,
- inadequate or insufficient landscaping i.e. street trees,
- weed-infested, shifting and inconsistent boulevard paving stone treatment,
- insufficient seating/benches (particularly for the elderly),
- unappealing garbage receptacles attached to poles,
- inconsistency in the design of street furniture,
- insufficient amenities such as bicycle racks, trees, fountains,
- underutilized public spaces,
- deteriorated, unsympathetic light fixtures in Rodney,
- questionable size and proportion of light fixtures in West Lorne,
- overhanging, unattractive, unprofessional business signage,
- unappealing road signs and traffic lights,
- excessive curb cuts / driveway entrances over sidewalks,
- unsightly overhead powerlines,
- broken and crumbling street curbing,
- unappealing or otherwise non-descript entrances (gateways),
- lack of public gathering places, parkettes and identity.



Suggestions and ideas have been expressed to deal with these physical conditions to make the town centres more appealing, inviting, enjoyable and distinctive. The conditions described and the suggestions and ideas offered formed a basis for the preparation of a streetscape master plan for each of the town centres, along with more detailed plans for specific lands or sites that constituted part of the public realm or that were potential sites for incorporating into the public realm.

3.0 Rodney Streetscape Master Plan

3.1 Overview

The overall Streetscape Master Plan for the Rodney Town Centre extends in a linear form along Furnival Road from Albert Street in the north to Main Street in the south (Figure 2). Key elements of the plan are described below.

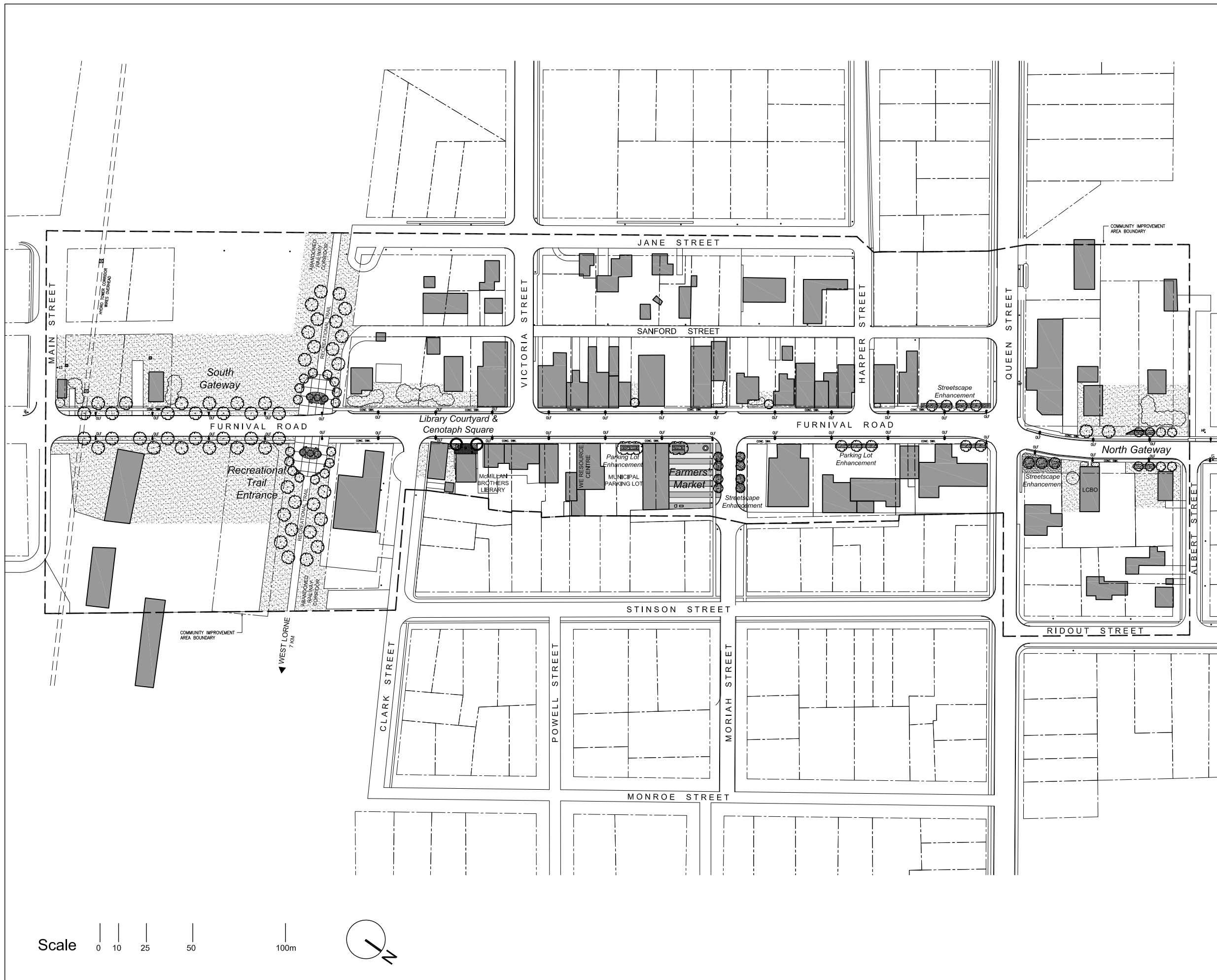


3.1.1 Street Lighting


















The existing streetlight fixtures bear little, if any, relationship to the heritage character of the downtown core. In addition, they are in an advance state of deterioration which has led to essential repairs to keep them operational. A complete and total replacement of the existing fixtures with a post-top mounted pole fixture in keeping with the heritage character of a traditional main street is recommended (Figures 3 & 4). The use of concrete over steel or aluminum poles offers a number of advantages. An opportunity exists to consider LED lighting, which has significant long term energy savings and should be explored. Mounting rests for hanging flower baskets are essential as the amount of available sidewalk width is generally considered insufficient in width for street trees. Arms and/or brackets for decorative elements should also be incorporated (i.e. to accommodate banners, seasonal decorations, etc.).

The proposed street light fixture is a post-top style pole with an acorn luminaire [approx. 4.6 m (15 feet) in height] mounted on an octagonal shaped concrete-spun pole with a strong extruded base tapering towards the top. The classic profile and simple lines of the pole are in keeping with the heritage and utilitarian character of the streetscape. The proposed arrangement of new fixtures would follow a regularly spaced symmetrical pattern as opposed to the staggered irregular pattern of the existing fixtures. The new pattern would result in a few additional fixtures, however, would produce a more aesthetically pleasing image. Colour and finish need to be determined. The recommended installation would be direct burial which is straight forward and cost-effective.



LEGEND

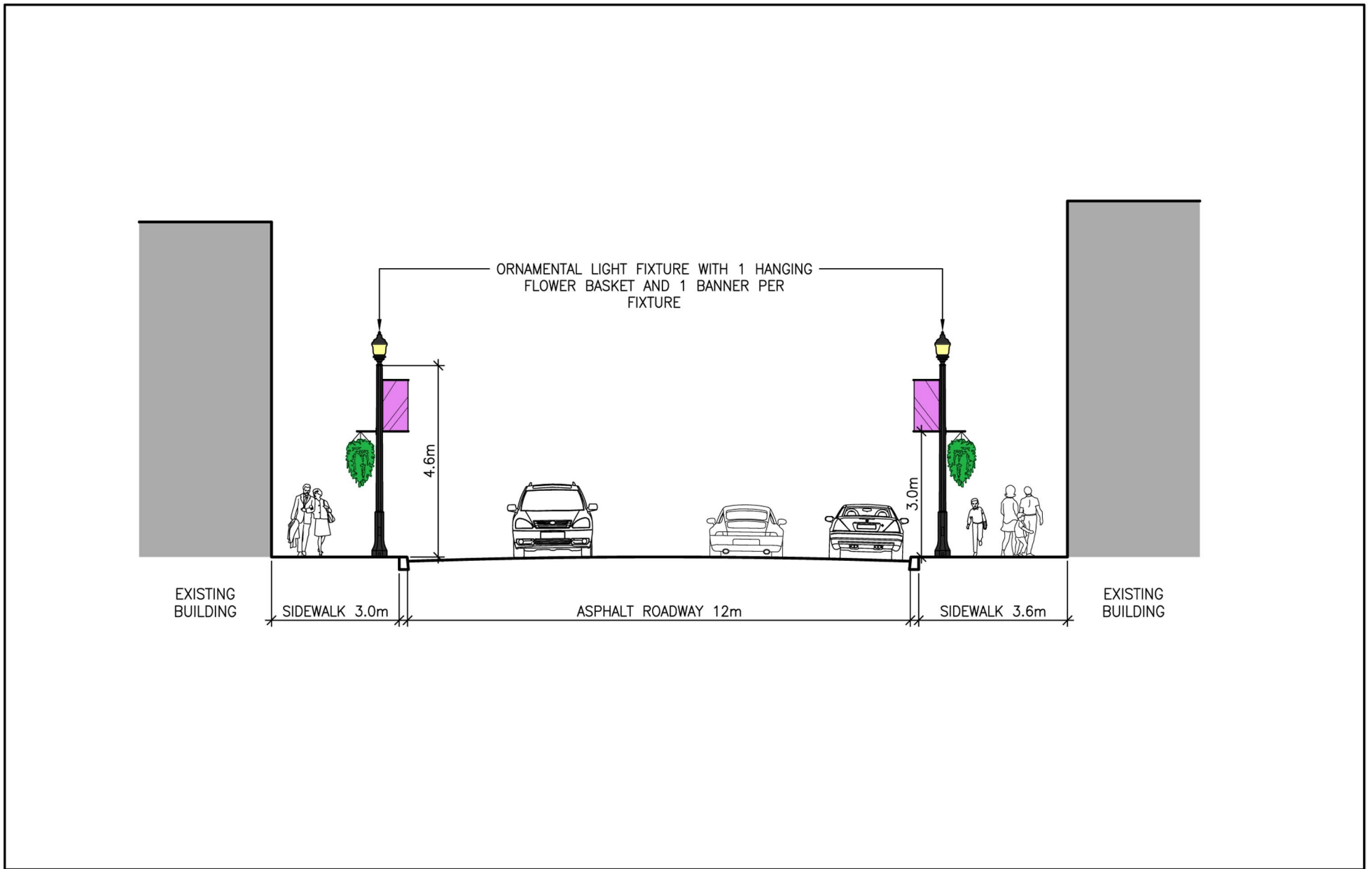
-  COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT AREA BOUNDARY 2009
-  EXISTING BUILDING
-  EXISTING DECIDUOUS TREE
-  EXISTING CONIFEROUS TREE
-  EXISTING VEGETATION
-  PROPOSED DECIDUOUS TREE
-  PROPOSED PLANTING BED
-  EXISTING LAWN
-  PROPOSED LAWN
-  PROPOSED PAVED SURFACE
-  PROPOSED STAMPED AND COLOURED CONCRETE BOULEVARD
-  EXISTING LIGHT STANDARD
-  EXISTING HYDRO POLE
-  PROPOSED ORNAMENTAL LIGHT FIXTURE
-  PROPOSED BENCH

**STREETSCAPE
MASTER PLAN**
Rodney Town Centre

FIGURE 2

May 2013





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Streetscape Master Plan

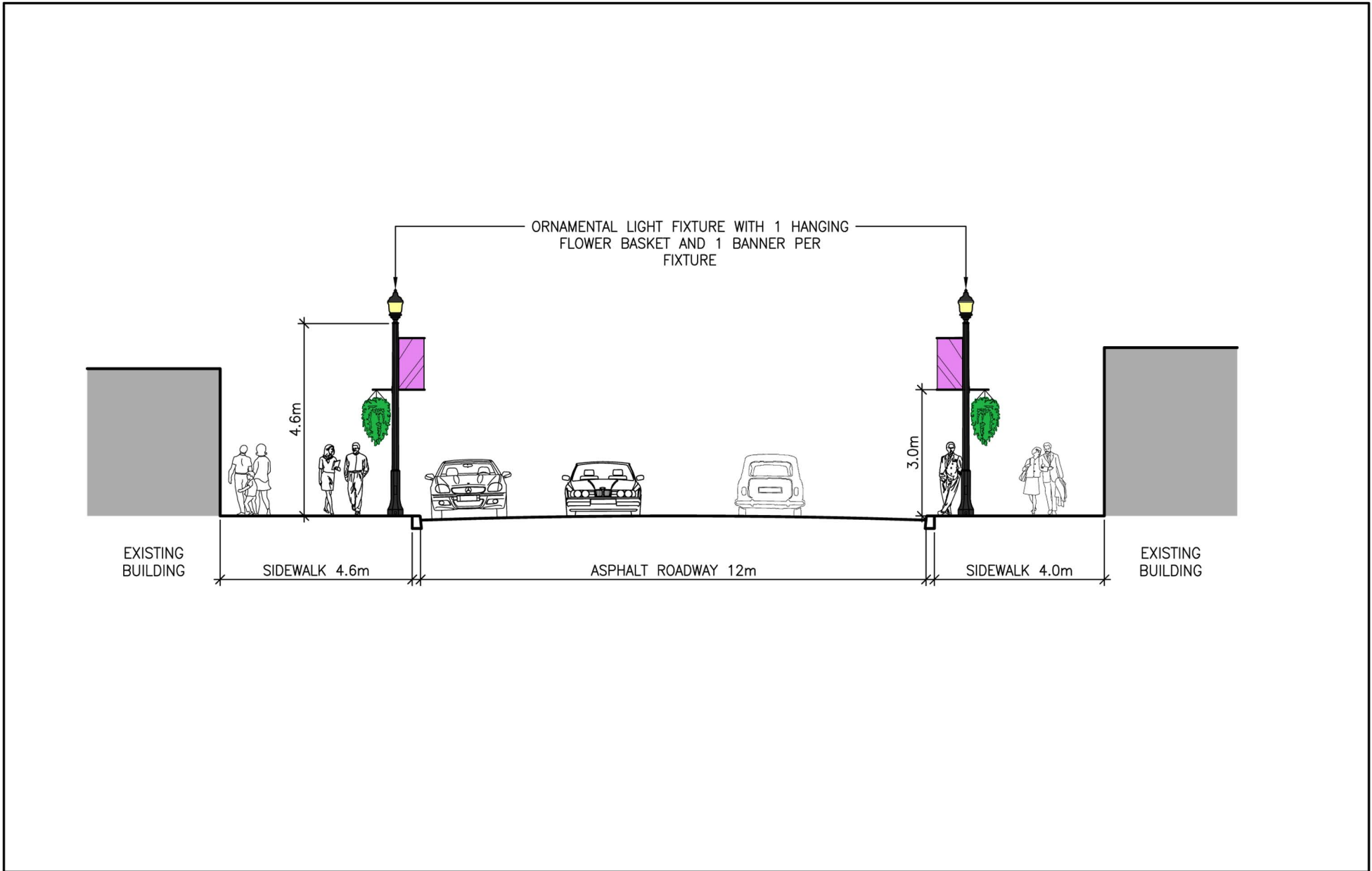
Rodney Town Centre

May 2013
scale: 1:125
FIGURE 3

STREET LIGHTING CONCEPT Furnival Road north of Victoria Street

ARTHUR LIERMAN

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



Community
Planners Inc

Streetscape Master Plan

Rodney Town Centre

May 2013

scale: 1:125

FIGURE 4

STREET LIGHTING CONCEPT

Furnival Road north
of Moriah Street

ARTHUR LIERMAN

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

3.1.2 Sidewalks

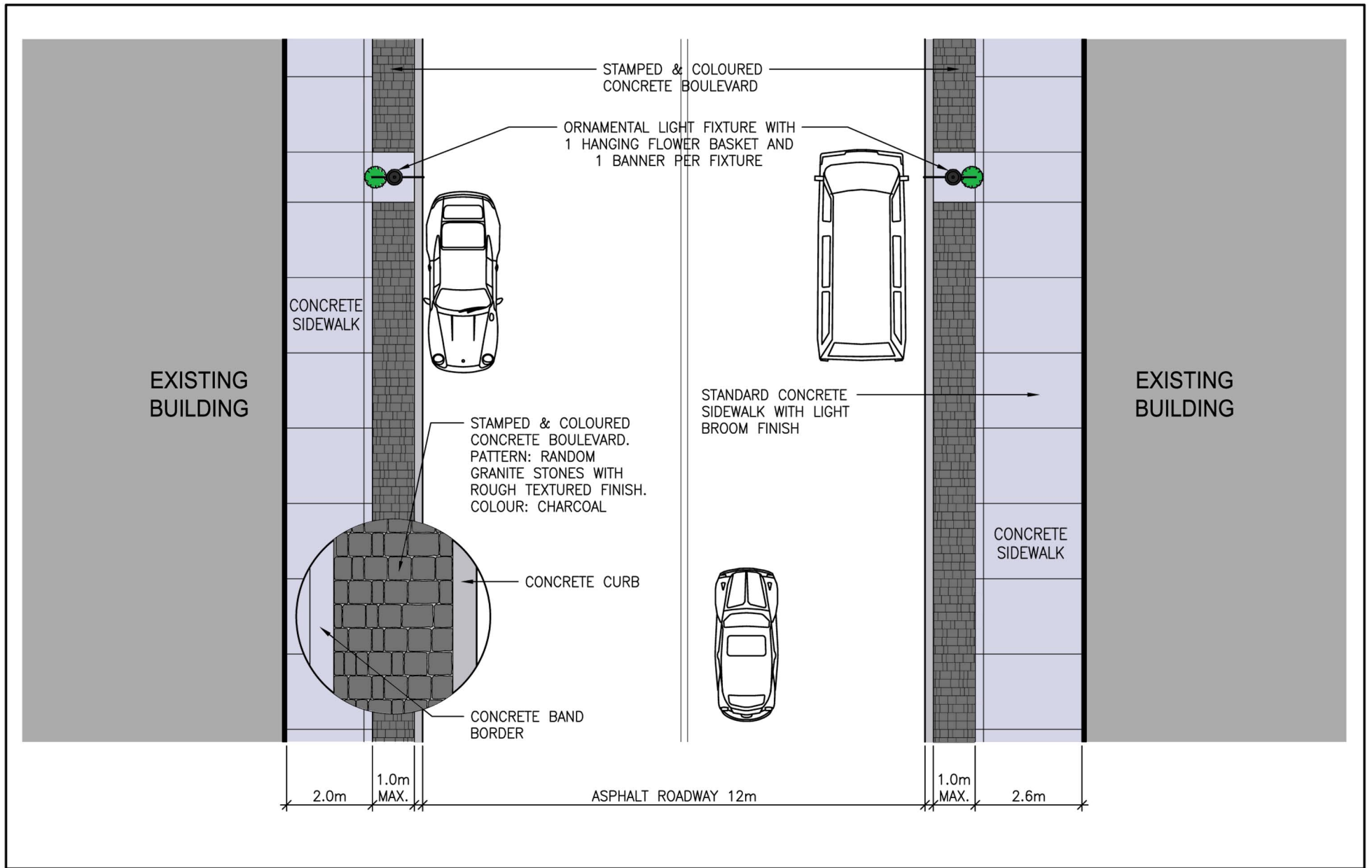
The existing concrete-surfaced sidewalks in the downtown core of Rodney are in reasonably good condition and total replacement would not appear necessary or warranted. On the other hand, the boulevard treatment between the sidewalk and the curb along with the curb itself needs to be addressed. Total replacement would be desirable. The current boulevard treatment is a mix of paving stone patterns of various shapes and sizes resulting from partial replacements over time which for reasons primarily of availability do not match the original pavers. Over time, the paving stones have shifted or sunk in areas while, in other instances, have become opportunities for weed growth – both contributing to an appearance



of deterioration and lack of maintenance. At the intersection of Furnival Road and Queens Line, stamped concrete has been recently used as border treatment and is standing up well.

The use of stamped concrete is recommended, being comparable on a cost basis (Figure 5). It resolves the issue of shifting paving stones and weed growth and makes replacement, when required, more uniform and consistent with the original. A traditional pattern is recommended to reinforce the heritage character of the Town Centre. Color is an important consideration to provide an accent (recognizing that colored concrete will fade over time) and to complement the yellow and red brick historic building facades in the Town Centre. The boulevard treatment should not be interrupted by driveways or vehicular entrances to ensure visual continuity and to reinforce the pedestrian-friendly as opposed to vehicular bias of the Town Centre.

The need to replace a section of boulevard in 2011 on the west side of Furnival Road south of Harper Street provided an opportunity to test the stamped concrete application. Apart from the color which is somewhat lighter than anticipated, the results seem to have been favourable and supported by neighbouring merchants.



Streetscape Master Plan
Rodney Town Centre

May 2013
scale: 1:125
FIGURE 5

SIDEWALK CONCEPT
Furnival Road



3.2 Gateways

The importance of attractive and enticing gateways is being increasingly recognized and a growing number of communities have gone to some lengths (in some instances, excessive lengths) to create a more appealing entrance to their downtown cores. The main points of entry into the Rodney Town Centre are from the north and from the south. Neither gateway, however, is particularly distinctive or attractive or gives a visitor a sense of arrival at the Town Centre or a favourable first impression.

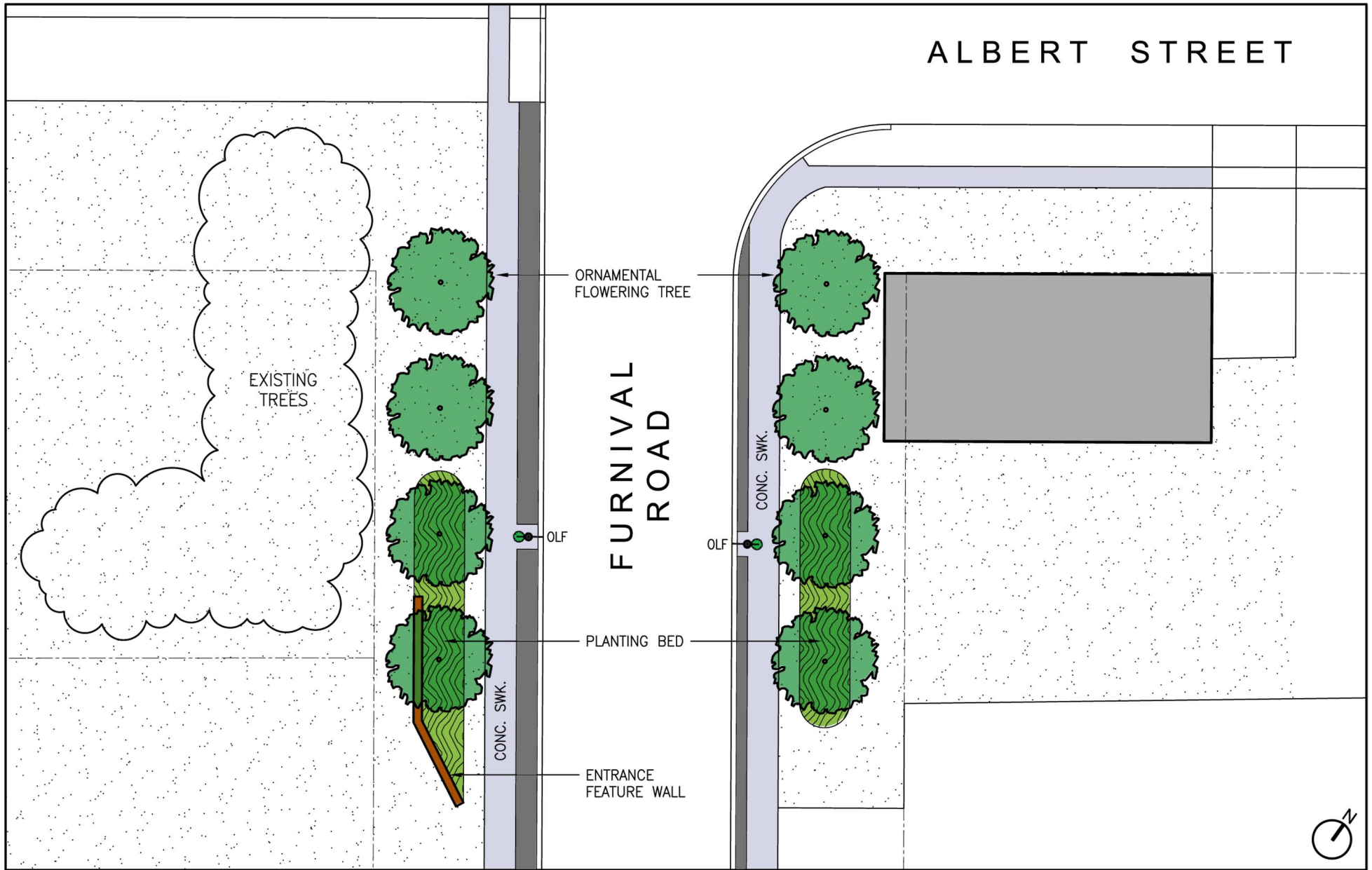
The north entrance to the Rodney Town Centre is arguably just south of Albert Street. A slight curve in Furnival Road at Queens Line enhances the arrival experience by serving to conceal the heart of the downtown core that lies ahead, thereby creating a sense of expectation as one approaches the intersection. This feature should be capitalized on. A limited amount of public land, however, limits the scale of any gateway treatment or feature which, on the other hand, helps to ensure it is not overdone. A modest treatment is proposed consisting of a row of flowering deciduous street trees on either side of Furnival Road south of Albert Street, planting beds and a low level welcome sign on the west side perhaps with a digital display for publicizing upcoming events (Figure 6).



The south entrance to the Rodney Town Centre begins just north of Main Street flanked on the east side of Furnival Road by the remnants of a former commercial grain drying facility



and largely vacant lands on the west side of Furnival Road. To the north lies the former railway corridors of the Canadian Southern Railway and Canadian National Railway. The Canadian National Railway lands were recently acquired by the Municipality of Chatham-Kent and subsequently transferred to a new entity Entegrus, a successor of Chatham Hydro to use as a future electrical transmission corridor.



Beyond the corridor and commencing essentially at Clark Street, lies the Town Centre. Similar to the north entrance into the Town Centre, the southern entrance is neither distinctive nor attractive.

The improvements envisioned for the South Gateway consist of a double row of deciduous street trees to provide a tree-lined entry with a strong and continuous canopy (Figure 7). At the location where the former railway corridor crosses the street, a small park/square is proposed which would also serve as the entry/termination to a recreational trail along the former railway corridor between Rodney and West Lorne. In this capacity, it would function as a staging and rallying area for organized events related to the trail as well as a meeting place and rest stop. Similar treatment is proposed for the westerly side of Furnival Road.

3.3 **Farmers' Market**

One of the economic generators proposed in the *Community Improvement Plan* for the Rodney Town Centre is the establishment of a farmers' market which would give recognition to the rich agricultural community of West Elgin and capitalize on its locally grown produce and value-added food products. A Task Force, set up following the adoption of the *Community Improvement Plan*, to determine the feasibility and scope of a farmers' market identified a preferred site for the establishment of a weekly, seasonal market in the Town Centre.

The preferred site identified by the Task Force is the southeasterly corner of Furnival Road and Moriah Street, long being a car lot for an automotive dealership and now owned by an automotive repair shop operating primarily out of the main premises of the dealership on the northeasterly corner of the intersection. The site is situated in the heart of the Town Centre with excellent exposure to



southbound traffic. The undeveloped site is hard surfaced readily lending itself to the establishment of a temporary market at minimal cost and which can be easily set up and readily dismantled. Along its southerly boundary lies a blank wall of an adjacent commercial building which would make an ideal canvas for a mural. East Alley, running along the easterly limit of the site, provides a safe and unobstructed entrance for vendors. Preliminary



Streetscape Master Plan
Rodney Town Centre

May 2013
scale: 1:750
FIGURE 7

SOUTH GATEWAY CONCEPT
Furnival Road



discussions with the current owners suggest the site could be made available for these purposes.

The proposed plan for the market includes a placemaking or identifying feature at the corner of Furnival Road and Moriah Street, a planter and seating area along the Furnival Road frontage, two planting beds each with a seating area, flowering street trees along Moriah Street and temporary sanitary facilities at the rear of the site to be set up on market day (Figure 8). The blank wall, with the consent of the owner, would support a mural promoting market day or a graphic vignette of the history and cultural heritage of the Village of Rodney.

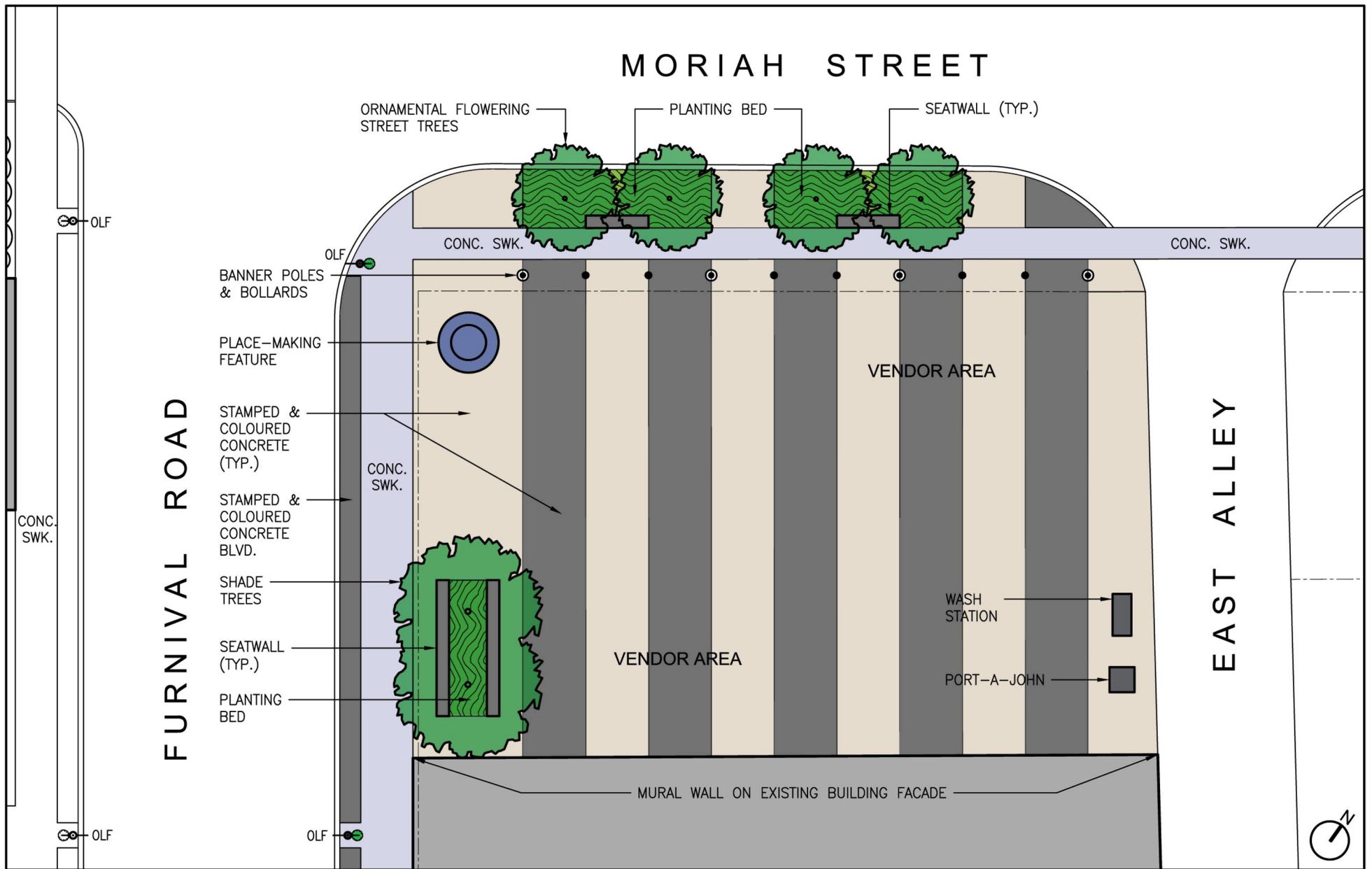
3.4 Library Courtyard & Cenotaph Square

Located on the east side of Furnival Road just north of Clark Street lies the McMillan Brothers Library owned by the Municipality and operated under agreement by the County of Elgin. The library is set back from the streetline providing a small but cherished landscaped open space in front. Two large, towering spruce trees flank the site. Amenities include a double-seated bench and plantings maintained by the Rodney and District Horticultural Society. On the front facade of the building adjacent to the main entrance is a plaque commemorating local veterans who sacrificed their lives in the two world wars; in front of which lays a small hard surfaced area used for ceremonial purposes on Remembrance Day.



Proposed improvements include enlarging the hard surface area in front of the memorial plaque to better accommodate the public which typically spills out onto the sidewalk and the street on Remembrance Day (Figure 9). A location for a small cenotaph has been identified. The seating area would be re-configured and integrated with the planting beds to provide a more enclosed and comfortable environment.

Exterior improvements to the building itself are overdue or otherwise desirable including the perimeter flashing on the roof overhang as well as the flag pole and mounting base which appear to be in a state of neglect. Highlighting the entablature above the overhang on the front facade would enhance the identity of the library and its founders. Removing the existing large, spruce trees and overgrown plantings would make the main entrance more

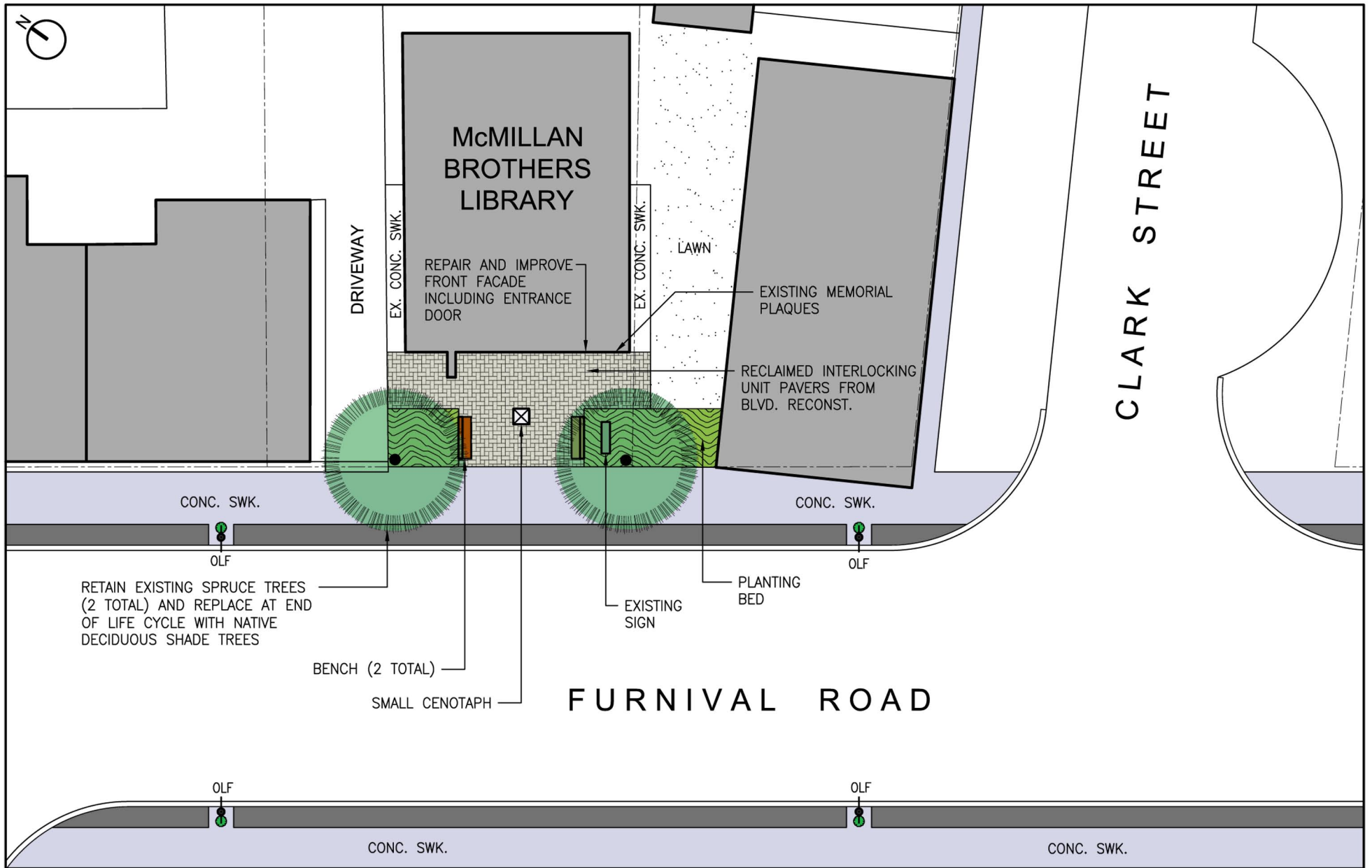


Streetscape Master Plan
Rodney Town Centre

FARMERS' MARKET CONCEPT

May 2013
scale: 1:250
FIGURE 8





visible. A more distinctive, higher quality front door to replace the rather utilitarian existing door is recommended.

A free standing ground level sign with an LED display has been recently installed by Elgin County. A design has been chosen complementary to the design of the building. The sign provides better identification of the library and greater awareness of days/hours of operation and up-coming programs and events.

4.0 West Lorne Streetscape Master Plan

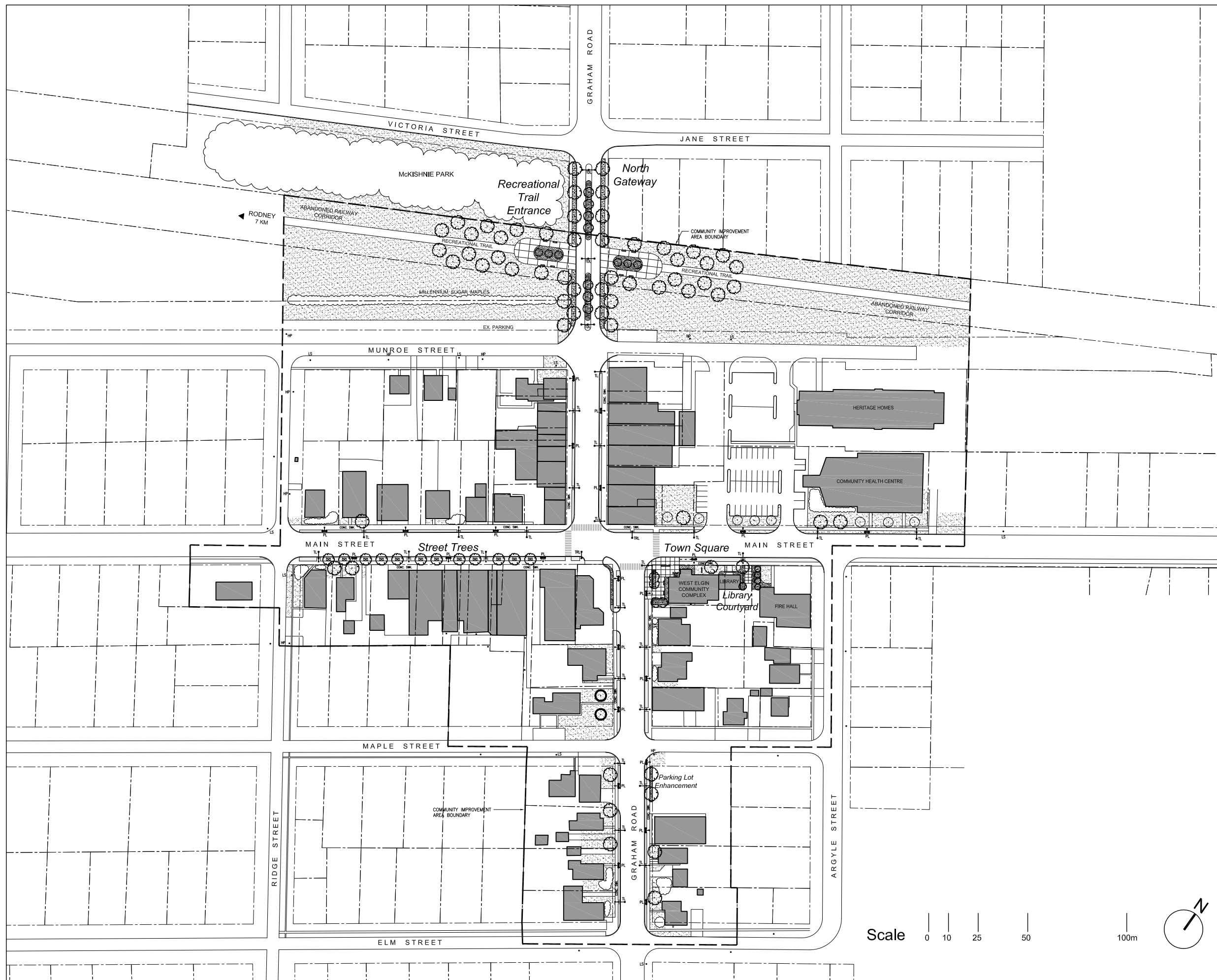
4.1 Overview




















Unlike the linear rectangular form of the Rodney Town Centre, the West Lorne Town Centre is more in the shape of a square extending one block, more or less, in all directions from its main intersection of Graham Road and Main Street. In addition to giving it a character readily distinguishable from Rodney, the shape of the downtown core lends itself to a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Key elements of the Streetscape Master Plan are described below (and illustrated in Figure 10).



4.1.1 Street Lighting

New, decorative street lighting was installed in the downtown core in the 1970s -- an initiative of the West Lorne and Community Horticultural Society. A style was chosen reminiscent of a light fixture that once lit the Town Centre. To make the project financially feasible a taller fixture was chosen which, as a result of its height, would shed more light and, in the process, require fewer fixtures than would otherwise would have been the case. Unfortunately, the greater spacing between fixtures precludes a sense of rhythm and connectedness along the street and the height of the fixtures often exceeds the height of the lower adjacent building facades, particularly along the south side of Main Street making the fixtures appear out of proportion and scale.



- LEGEND**
-  COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT AREA BOUNDARY 2009
 -  EXISTING BUILDING
 -  EXISTING DECIDUOUS TREE
 -  EXISTING CONIFEROUS TREE
 -  EXISTING VEGETATION
 -  PROPOSED DECIDUOUS TREE
 -  PROPOSED PLANTING BED
 -  EXISTING LAWN
 -  PROPOSED LAWN
 -  PROPOSED PAVED SURFACE
 -  PROPOSED STAMPED AND COLOURED CONCRETE BOULEVARD
 -  LS EXISTING LIGHT STANDARD
 -  HP EXISTING HYDRO POLE
 -  TL PROPOSED TALL ORNAMENTAL LIGHT FIXTURE WITH SIDE MOUNTED PEDESTRIAN FIXTURE
 -  PL PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN ORNAMENTAL LIGHT FIXTURE
 -  TDL PROPOSED TALL ORNAMENTAL DOUBLE LIGHT FIXTURE
 -  TRL PROPOSED TALL ORNAMENTAL TRAFFIC LIGHT FIXTURE
 -  PROPOSED BENCH
 -  PROPOSED BIKE RACK

STREETSCAPE MASTER PLAN

West Lorne Town Centre

FIGURE 10

May 2013



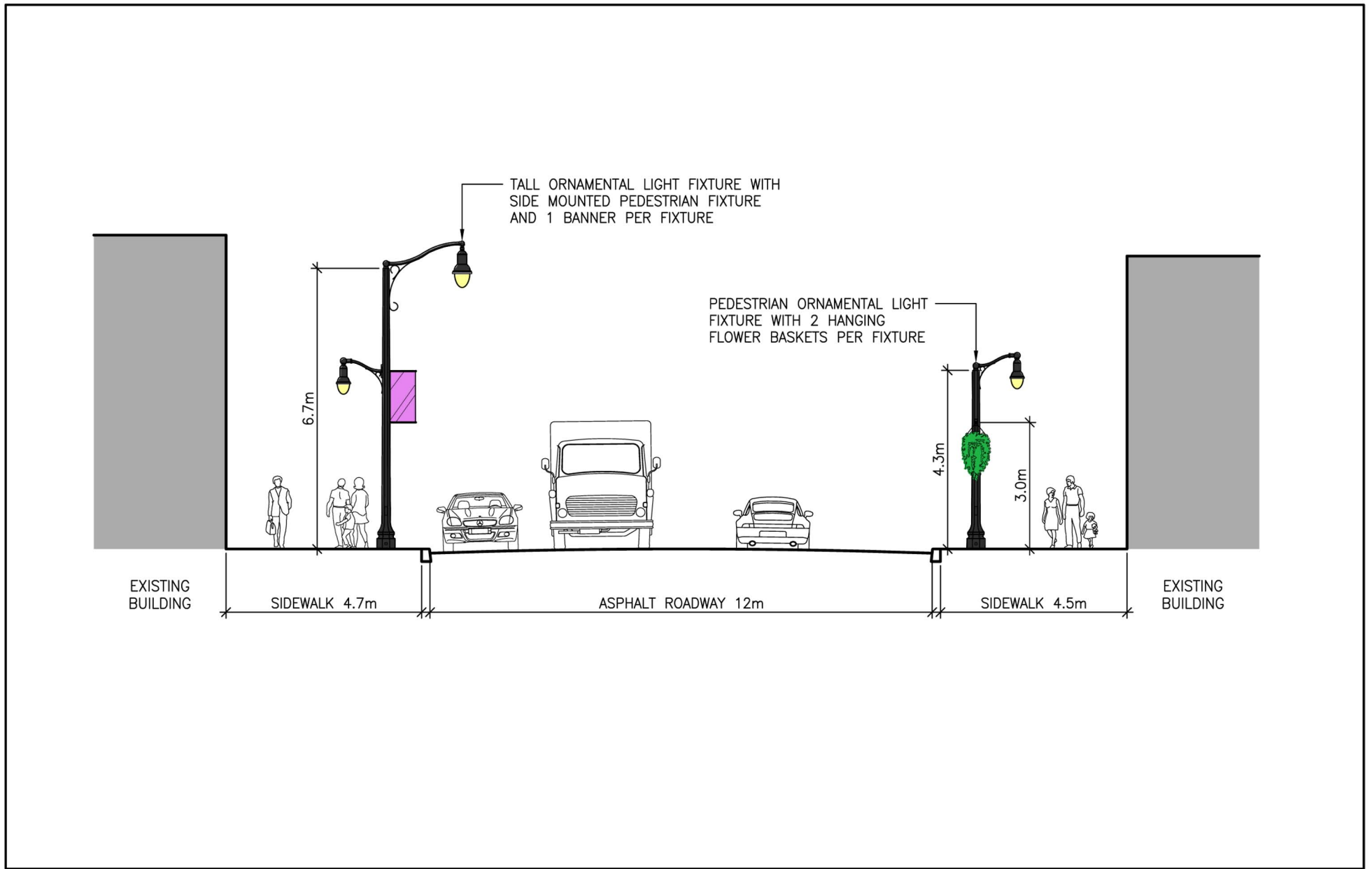
The proposed street lighting for the West Lorne Town Centre combines two different pole heights (approximately 7.5m (25ft) and 4.6m (15ft) and luminaires both of which would be side-mounted poles; a tall pole with both a roadway and a lower pedestrian pendant luminaire and a lower pole with a only a pedestrian pendant luminaire. Similar to Rodney, the recommended pole would be concrete-spun with an octagonal shape but with a lower extruded base that tapers towards the top. The elegant profile and graceful proportions of the pole would be in keeping with the heritage character and scale of the streetscape (Figures 11 & 12). The proposed arrangement follows the approximate locations of the existing fixtures with several new fixtures added and interspersed to provide a strong, staggered rhythm of tall and low fixtures opposite each other. Colour and finish need to be determined. The recommended installation would be direct burial which is straight forward and cost-effective.



Two street lighting alternatives have been identified. The preferred alternative would be to replace the existing light fixtures with the combination of proposed light fixtures outlined above. This would have the effect of making a greater visual presence while at the same time seeming to reduce the height of the fixtures more in proportion with the adjacent building facades. The second alternative would be to replace the existing light fixtures with the same fluted pole and base as described above but adorned with a post-top-mounted luminaire. A greater number of fixtures more tightly-spaced and more in keeping with the scale of the existing building facades, and by virtue of their increased frequency, would provide a more consistent rhythmic pattern along the street. In both scenarios, a preference exists for a fixture capable of supporting hanging flower baskets, banners and decorations, and lighted seasonal displays.

4.1.2 Sidewalks

Sidewalk conditions in the West Lorne Town Centre range in quality with the area most in need of attention being the south side of Main Street west of Graham Road. Here, settlement and cracking over time has required remedial repairs yet grade issues remain between the curb and the sidewalk making footing for pedestrians (particularly the elderly



Community Planners Inc

Streetscape Master Plan

West Lorne Town Centre

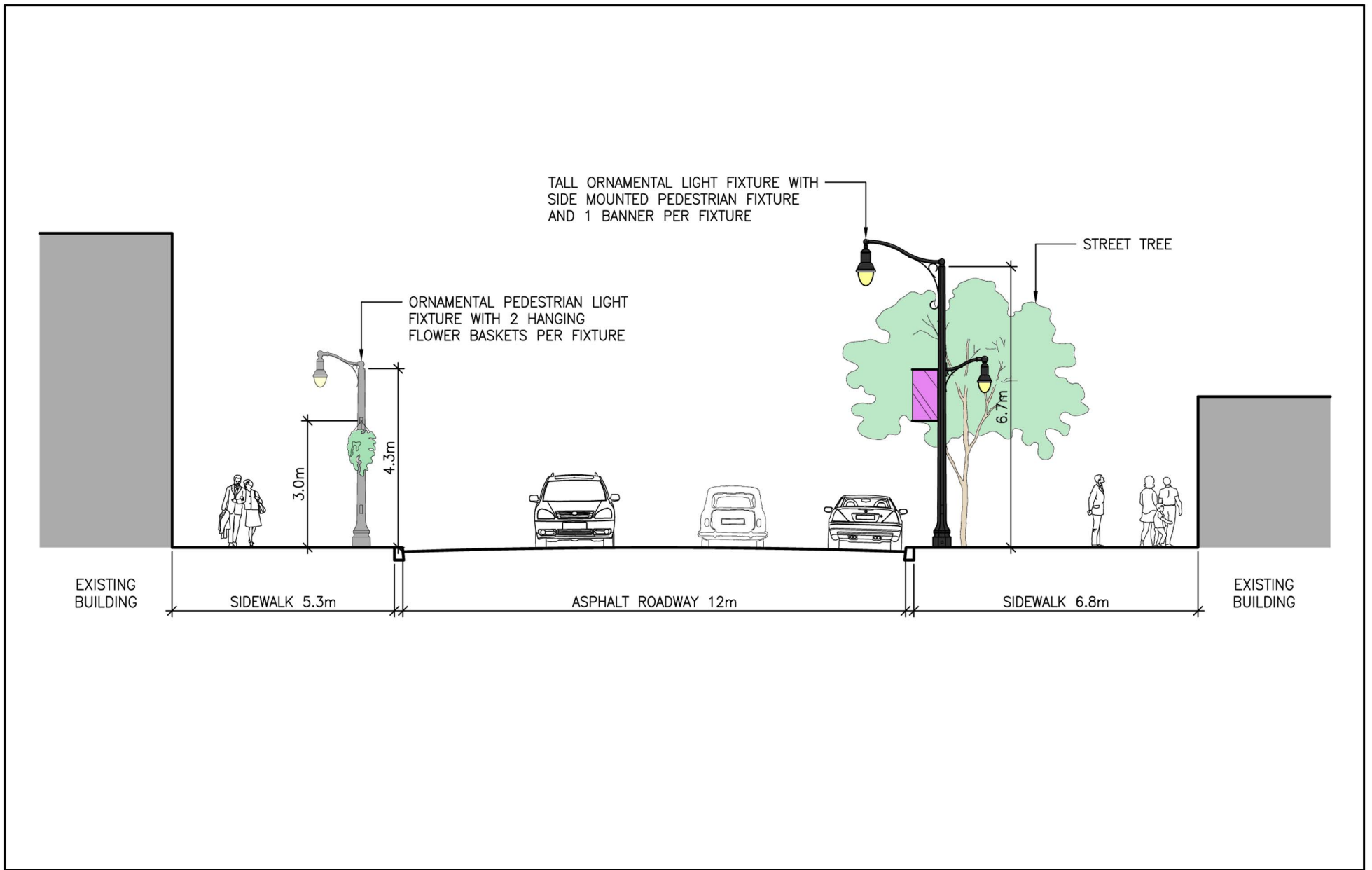
May 2013
 scale: 1:125
 FIGURE 11

STREET LIGHTING CONCEPT Graham Road

ARTHUR LIERMAN

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE





and physically challenged) precarious at best in good weather and treacherous at worst during inclement weather. The width of the public sidewalk in this area is generous from Main Street westerly before narrowing considerably beyond the more or less continuous commercial streetscape to Ridge Street. The extra width is attributed to the setback of building facades from the property line and the extension of the public sidewalk to the building edge. The extra width beyond what is needed for pedestrian flow could be capitalized on for street trees, merchandising, outdoor patios and other activities and amenities. Total replacement of the sidewalk between Graham Road and Ridge Street appears to be the best course of action to address existing deficiencies and capitalize on identified opportunities (Figure 13). To address grade issues, a number of alternatives are available. To retain a flat sidewalk surface and eliminate the grade to street level, a low retaining wall or stepped wall may be worth considering at the edge of the sidewalk with access at various intervals to step up or down from store level. A railing may be required for safety reasons.

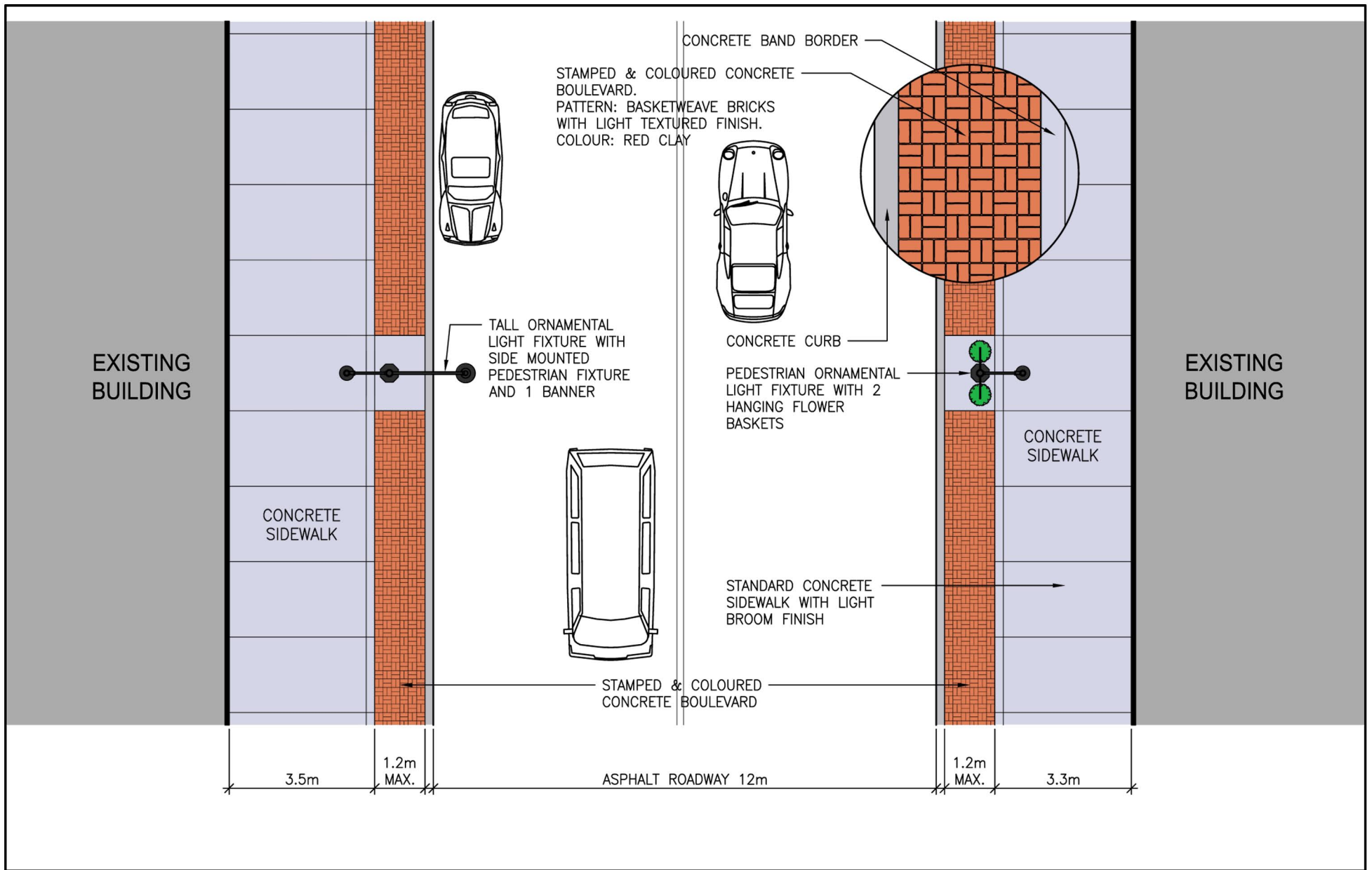


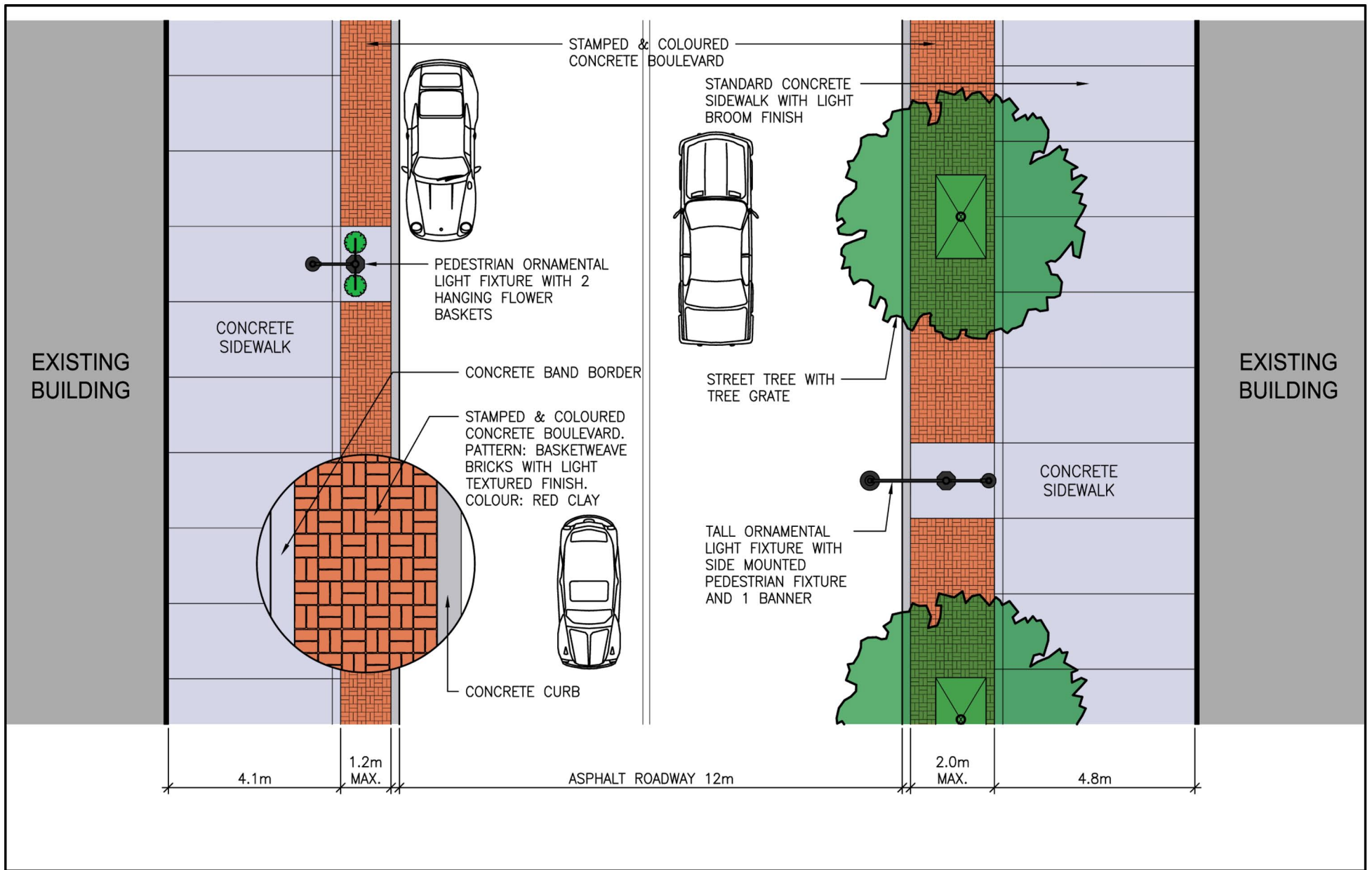
Elsewhere in the West Lorne Town Centre, sidewalks are generally in much better condition suggesting selective up-grading may be sufficient. What appears to be in greater need of attention is the border treatment which is characterized by a variety of



groundcover including grass, asphalt, paving stone and concrete. Like Rodney, different varieties of paving stone are evident, although not to the same degree. Excessive curb cuts and a corresponding depression in the boulevard surfaced with asphalt or concrete interrupts the visual continuity of the boulevard. Curbing is frequently broken and cracked throughout. The master plan calls for the

construction of new sidewalks on the south side of Main Street between Graham Road and Ridge Street, new consistent boulevard treatment and curb replacement throughout (Figure 14). As in Rodney, the preferred boulevard treatment is stamped concrete over





interlocking paving stones. Alternatively, extending the concrete surface to the curb, as on Graham Road between Munro Street and Main Street with possibly introducing a brick course along the sidewalk at regular intervals would be a far less expensive option

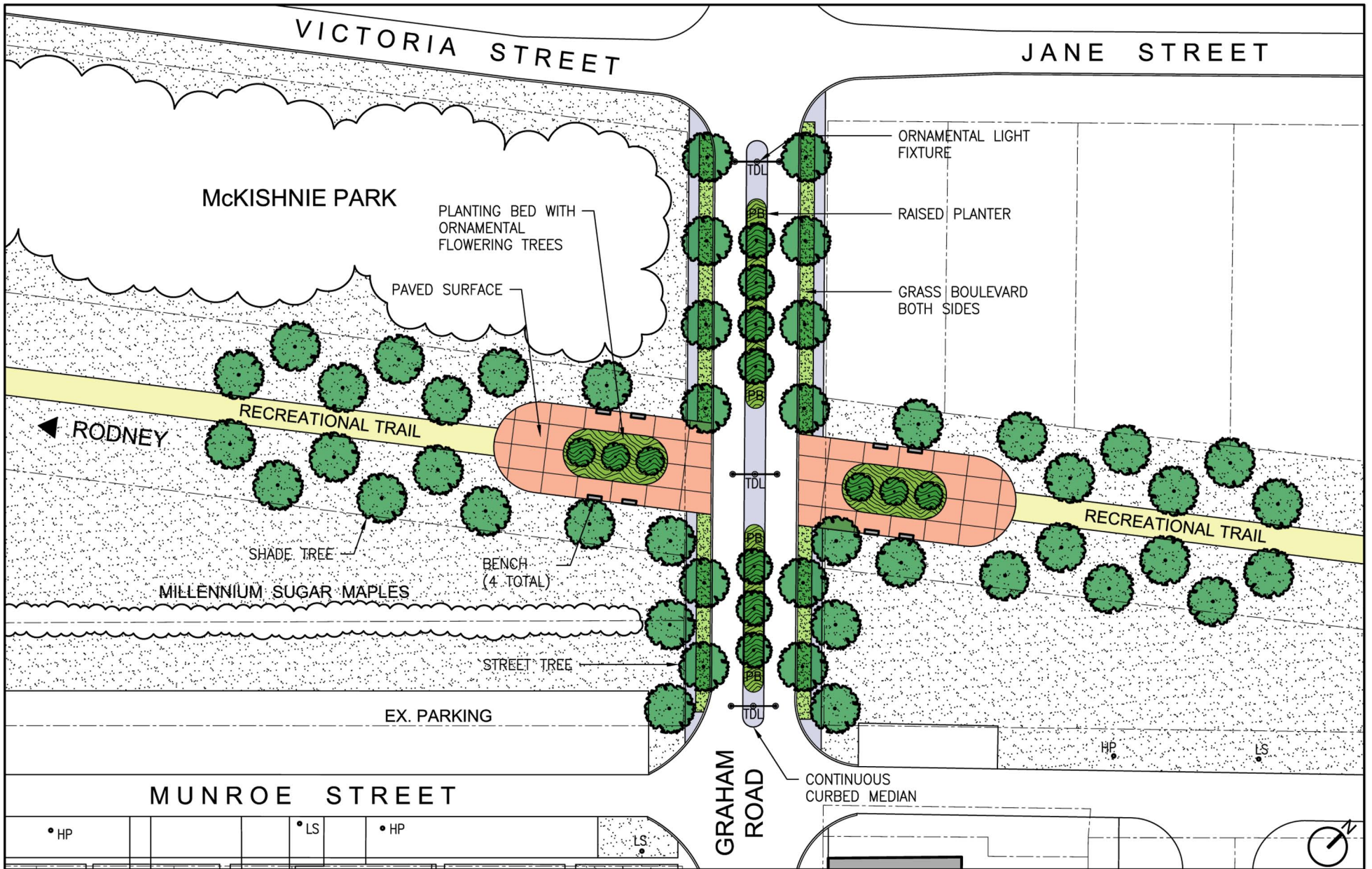


4.2 Gateways

In the absence of traffic counts to the contrary, the main point of entry into the downtown core of West Lorne is from the north along Graham Road. The remnant berm associated with the railway lines, which until recently passed through West Lorne, serves to conceal the downtown core and raising expectations as to what lies ahead as one approaches it from the north. While its elevation also creates a limited blind spot for motorists, it does provide a distinct opportunity to enhance the arrival experience into the Town Centre. A limited reduction in elevation to eliminate the blind spot should be feasible without significantly diminishing its height and the arrival experience it creates.

The recommended treatment to create a gateway feature at this location includes a planted median with a row of dual-armed light fixtures (Figures 15 & 16). While it has been pointed out that the median may prove to be an obstacle for farm vehicles using Graham Road to access lands lying north and south of the Village, it has not been possible to determine how many farmers would be affected and if alternative routes are feasible. This potential issue would have to be addressed before proceeding with the proposed median, however, until such time, the median has been retained in the improvement concept. A double row of street trees would partially line both sides of the sidewalk with grassed boulevards (Figure 17). The North Gateway would contribute in a considerable way to creating a favourable first impression for those entering the downtown core.

Like its counterpart - the South Gateway in Rodney, the North Gateway in West Lorne would have a secondary feature to complement a future recreational trail along the former railway corridor between West Lorne and Rodney. A small square and staging area is proposed along with seating and shade trees on the westerly side of Graham Road, being

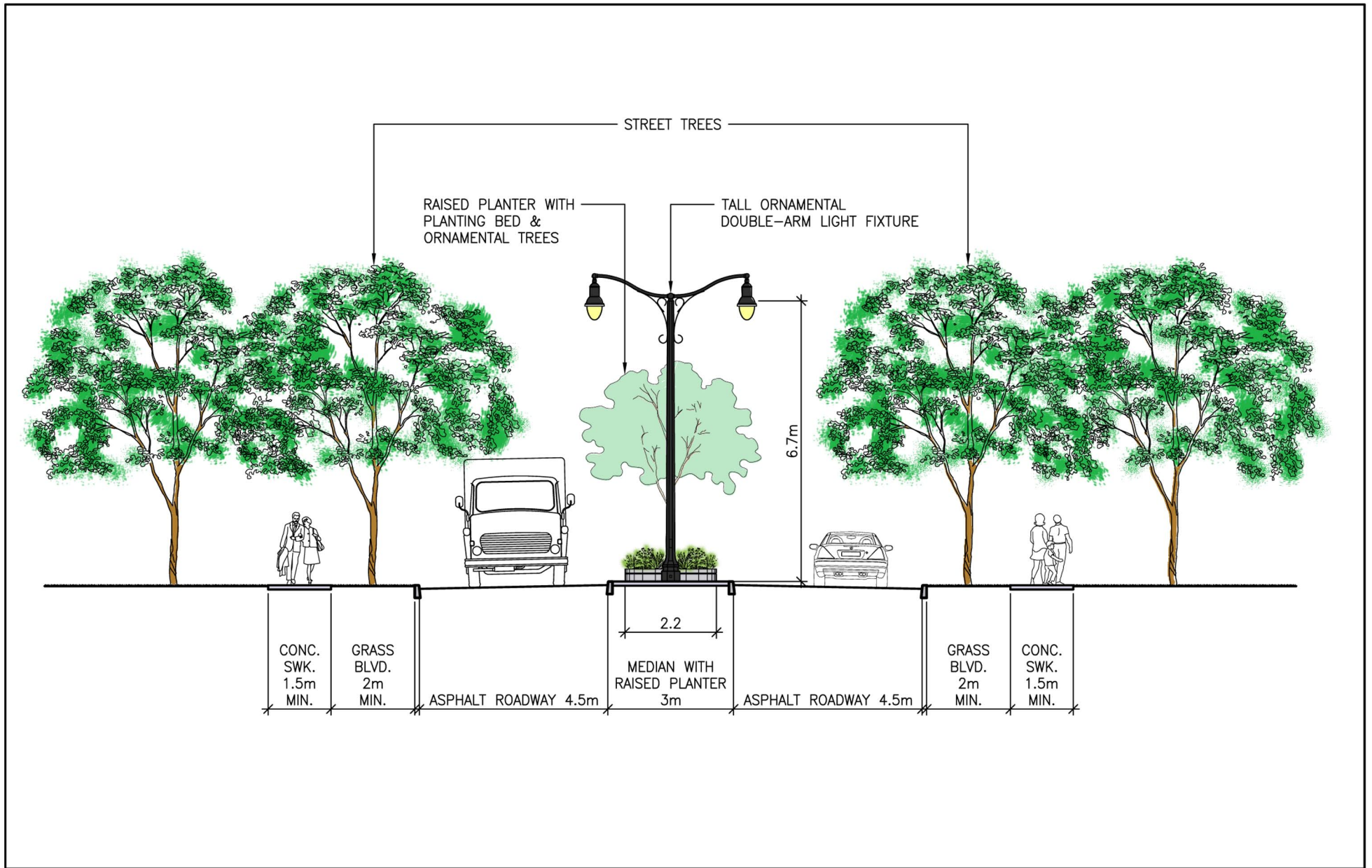


Streetscape Master Plan
West Lorne Town Centre

May 2013
scale: 1:750
FIGURE 15

NORTH GATEWAY CONCEPT
Graham Road





Community Planners Inc

Streetscape Master Plan

West Lorne Town Centre

May 2013
 scale: 1:125
 FIGURE 16

NORTH GATEWAY CONCEPT Graham Road

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LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



Streetscape Master Plan
West Lorne Town Centre

TOWN SQUARE CONCEPT

May 2013
scale: 1:300
FIGURE 17

the commencement and terminus of the recreation trail to the Rodney Town Centre. An historic plaque capturing the significance of the railway to West Lorne is also envisioned. Similar treatment is proposed for the easterly side of Graham Road .

While entry points to the Town Centre exist from the west and east along Main Street and from the south along Graham Road, special treatment in terms of creating a gateway feature is not considered warranted at this time.

4.3 **Town Square**

Graham Road and Main Street constitute the main intersection of the Town Centre in West Lorne and arguably, for that matter, the main intersection of West Elgin. With the West Elgin Community Complex firmly anchoring the southeast quadrant of the intersection, this corner of the intersection lends itself well to the creation of a town square which would constitute a



landmark feature, provide a public gathering space for not only rest and relaxation and casual enjoyment but also for organized activities and civic events and provide an opportunity to visually identify West Lorne as the arts and cultural centre of West Elgin as envisioned by the *Community*

Improvement Plan.

The recommended concept calls for a complete makeover of the existing public space turning it into a square or piazza framed by low level seating walls and planting beds (Figure 17). Shade trees and plantings would provide a contrast to the otherwise hardscape character of the Square and the trees themselves a respite to users on hot summer days. A place-making feature consisting of a piece of sculpture would provide a strong identifying feature at the apex of the square while the west-facing facade of the Community Complex is a potential location for a public art piece enhanced after dark by up-lighting. A re-designed community bulletin board, ideally electronic, could be a logical component of the Town Square given its centrality and function.

4.4 Library Courtyard

East of the proposed Town Square in the municipally-owned space in front of the library and extending to the existing green space in front of the Fire Hall lies the proposed Library Courtyard. In contrast to the generally hardscape character of the Town Square, the Library Courtyard is intended to be a softer, and more tranquil space better suited for generally passive



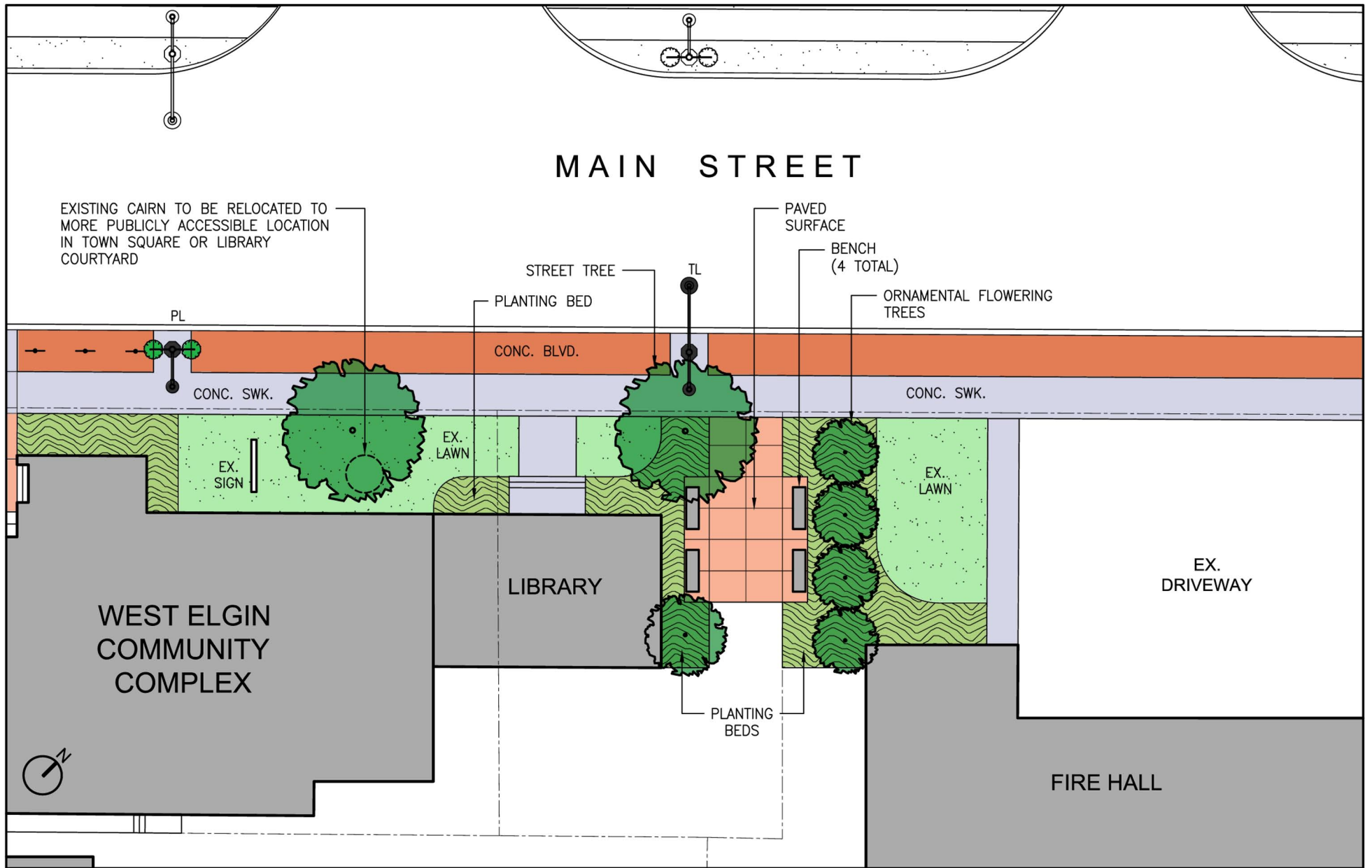
activities as well as outdoor space for conducting library programs and activities seeking a more private or quieter setting in comparison with the Town Square. Relocation of the existing cairn to the Courtyard would provide it with a more accessible setting and contribute to anchoring the space. The hard surface treatment between the Library and Fire Hall would allow for vehicular access to the rear if legally required (Figure 18).

5.0 Common Elements

5.1 Street Furniture

Existing street furniture in both town centres consists primarily of pedestrian benches, planter boxes, garbage receptacles and bicycle racks. The street furniture varies by design, materials, quality, quantity and condition. A need for more benches and bike racks was expressed through the preparation of the *Community Improvement Plan*. Negative comments generally focused on a particular style of garbage receptacles; a variety of which have been put into service. A design palette for various streetscape furniture elements is desirable in terms of providing visual continuity and avoiding seemingly unintentional clutter. Identifying appropriate locations, providing anchoring mechanisms and adopting maintenance standards is important.

Furniture such as benches, trash containers, recycling stations and bicycle racks play an important role in providing amenities for human comforts and needs and maintaining a design continuity in the overall streetscape design. Their careful selection and arrangement are essential to the intended use and success of the various redesigned urban spaces. Design issues such as location, concentration, and orientation of furniture are objectives to be considered but the ultimate goal is to provide a coordinated family of complementary pieces.



A new style of pedestrian bench is intended to replace the variety of existing benches and would be conscientiously located and concentrated within public spaces where their need is greatest due to the functional needs and conditions of the redesigned spaces. An appropriate bench style and comfort level expectation with back and armrests versus backless benches should be considered. Materials also come into play with various wood products, composite materials, recycled plastics and metal to choose from which all have their inherent qualities and characteristics such as comfort, maintenance and resistance to vandalism.

Concrete pads or other paved surfaces are recommended for all amenities as they provide a durable surface that visually anchors the element, provides security against theft and vandalism and offers ease of maintenance. Benches, in particular, should be positioned to take advantage of shade, vistas, and specific functional objectives for active and passive



area seating needs. There is no absolute requirement to have a trash container beside every bench but their frequency should respond to the amount of trash generated along routes and at locations of high pedestrian use.

5.2 Trees

The integration of trees in urban streetscape improvement projects responds to several ecological challenges and issues such as air and water quality, rising temperatures and erosion as well as provide aesthetic and amenity value. Trees can also play an important role in shaping and organizing streetscapes with rhythm and identity. Their inclusion however, is not essential and must be seriously considered given the character and function of the public realm to be redesigned and the spatial requirements to have suitable tree species and thriving specimens.

The proposed trees within the master plans are primarily located and concentrated within existing grassed areas or within proposed continuous planters or generous planting beds. Few street trees are proposed within existing paved areas due to space constraints and heritage character considerations. Careful tree species selection is warranted for all proposed applications as form, height, canopy spread, function, and urban condition tolerances are all factors to consider in determining suitable species. The ultimate goal is to enhance and create a livable environment.

Street trees within urban spaces face difficult environments with hard paved surfaces limiting access to rainfall, sufficient space for root growth, soil compaction, and exposure to pollution, salt and de-icing contamination. The integration of green infrastructure, utilities and technologies help to alleviate the harsh conditions and provide optimal conditions for unlimited amounts of soil for tree root systems and large tree growth. Technologies such as continuous underground tree trenches, modular suspended pavement systems, subsurface storm water utilities, and Deeproot Silva Cell and Citygreen specialty products for trees within paved urban areas are current options and critical considerations to improve their long term health and sustainability.

5.3 **Signage**

Signage in the downtown core can be a significant element in the overall visual appearance of the streetscape. It includes signs installed by both the public sector and the private sector.

Some towns and villages have gone to some lengths to regulate the size, location and design of private sector signs in order that they contribute in a positive way to the desired *look* or *feel* of their downtown cores. In some instances, municipalities have banned overhanging signs to create a clean, uncluttered look while in other municipalities that have recognized overhanging signs as being more pedestrian-friendly (due to their greater visibility) and contribution to creating a distinct identity and character. To achieve these results, some municipalities have strived to encourage creativity and individuality in the design of overhanging signs.





Given that the main streets of the Town Centres of both Rodney and West Lorne are under the jurisdiction of the County of Elgin, public signs are, for the most part, installed and maintained by the County. Design is, by necessity, standardized across the County and issues in terms of their impact on the overall appearance of the Town Centres are usually overlooked. Signs under the purview of the Municipality are, for the most part, restricted to street name signs and signs on municipal property. These latter instances include the McMillan Brothers Library in Rodney and the Fire Hall and Community Complex in West Lorne.

Signs erected by individual businesses are typically either attached to buildings or extend out over the sidewalk attached to buildings. Where buildings are setback from the property line, pole mounted or base mounted signs are common. Temporary sandwich-board signs also make an appearance from time to time. The Municipality does not have a sign by-law, so the placement and size of signs is unregulated except for structural and life-safety issues that are governed by the Ontario Building Code.



In terms of improving the overall appearance of the streetscape in the Town Centres, design guidelines for overhanging signs should be prepared and followed as a basis for obtaining municipal approval. For new signs, creativity, individuality, quality and context should be emphasized. Existing overhanging signs should be inventoried and assessed as a basis for any recommended actions for improvement or removal. A sign by-law governing signs on private property should also be prepared.



5.4 Overhead Power lines and Wiring



The existence of overhead power lines and wiring can significantly add to the visual clutter of a downtown core and in the process diminish the aesthetic quality of the built environment and public amenities. Visual quality is invariably enhanced by the elimination of such extraneous elements such as is the case in many European towns. Fortunately, the amount of overhead in the

town centres is limited. For the most part, it has been removed from Furnival Road in Rodney and from Graham Road between Munroe Street and Main Street and on Main Street between Graham Road and Ridge Street in West Lorne. In the remaining streetscape segments in West Lorne, the overhead is restricted to one side of the street.

Jurisdiction and responsibility for the electrical distribution system in West Elgin rests with Hydro One. It allows telecommunication companies to make use of its poles for their specific needs. The Municipality has no role in these matters.

A review of the overhead, which remains in both town centres, in conjunction with Hydro One, identified a number of instances where it would be feasible to rationalize (i.e. eliminate, re-route) certain sections of overhead at reasonable cost as well as other areas where, for all intents and purposes, it would be impractical to do so. In some cases, practical measures could include the removal of remnant utility poles no longer in use and the removal of abandon wiring/cable to create a less visually cluttered streetscape.



Remnant utility poles and wiring along the former railway corridor in the downtown core of West Lorne are the responsibility of the new property owner of the railway lands. Their removal would seem feasible and relatively effortless.

6.0 Implementation

The initiatives and improvements outlined in this document focus primarily on publicly-owned land. While, in most instance these constitute lands under the ownership and jurisdiction of the County of Elgin, being the road allowance for Furnival Road (County Road No. 103) in Rodney and for Graham Street (County Road No. 76) and Main Street (County Road No. 2) in West Lorne, the County has divested responsibilities beyond the curb abutting the pavement or road surface to the lower tier municipalities. Any improvements to sidewalks, street lighting, the planting and maintenance of trees and other improvements between the curb and the outer limit of the road allowance (usually the building line) are left to the discretion and cost of the host, lower tier municipality subject to the County reserving a minimum 0.6 m “clear offset zone” from beyond the curb within which permanent structures including trees and lighting fixtures are not permitted for safety reasons.

That being said, the most cost efficient and effective time to undertake any significant improvements within the road allowance beyond the curb is at the time major up-grading or infrastructure works are being undertaken between the curbs. In the case of West Lorne, no major improvements are contemplated affecting County Roads within the Town Centre in the foreseeable future. On the other hand, a major reconstruction of Furnival Road in the Rodney Town Centre is being contemplated by the County in or about 2022. While not imminent, this nevertheless would be the logical and ideal time to undertake streetscape improvements in Rodney related to new street lighting, new boulevard treatment, and tree planting. Similar improvements in West Lorne would by necessity have to be done independent of any improvements being undertaken by the County and, on this basis, could be commenced sooner.

Most of the site-specific improvement projects in West Lorne i.e. Town Square and Library Courtyard; and in Rodney i.e. Library Courtyard and Cenotaph Square are on publicly –owned lands. The Farmers’ Market site in Rodney is, however, on privately-owned land and would be ideally acquired or leased over the long term by the Municipality in light of the extent and cost of the improvements being contemplated. The gateway projects are within the road allowance beyond the curb and therefore within the purview of the Municipality. The proposed median in the North Gateway project in West Lorne would require the cooperation and approval of the County to become a reality. The trail staging area of the North Gateway project in West Lorne

and the South Gateway project in Rodney would impact lands owned by Entegrus – a regionally based public utility company operating out of Chatham.

In terms of funding improvements to the streetscape in both Rodney and West Lorne identified in this report, no specifically funded programs of either the Province or the Federal Government have been identified at this time for such purposes. While the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, until recently funded such improvements in small rural communities, under its Rural Economic Development (i.e. RED) program, this program has been overhauled and the new version just released. Listed as specifically ineligible for funding under the new version of the program are: *projects designed to improve community aesthetics and functionality (e.g. street-scaping, green space development, murals, street lights, walkway, tree islands, etc.)*. It is possible that the preparation of an economic feasibility study and business plan of the proposed Farmers' Market in Rodney may be eligible for funding under the program. The joint Federal-Provincial Community Infrastructure Improvement Fund administered by Fed-Dev Ontario may have been a possibility at one time but funding has been exhausted and there is no commitment from either level of government to re-fund the program nor does any announcement in this respect appear imminent. The Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing once provided funding for main street improvements but this was some time ago and is unlikely to reoccur.

The only other possibility for the municipality to raise funding for the improvements recommended, other than through general revenues, would be through the establishment of a Business Improvement Area (BIA) and a levy against those properties assessed for commercial purposes within the defined BIA boundary. An attempt in 2010 to establish a joint BIA for the Town Centres, however, met with stiff resistance from the business community and to this date has not proceeded any further. A strongly expressed view at the meeting was that the Municipality itself should assume responsibility for streetscape improvements and improvements to public property as these are publicly-owned lands and any improvements would benefit the entire community not just the business community. Furthermore, merchants and property owners, as a result of the economic climate and decline of 'main street', are by and large financially unable to shoulder alone the costs of a major up-grading of the streetscape in either village.

In terms of establishing priorities, improvements identified for up-grading the streetscapes in Rodney and West Lorne with new light fixtures, re-constructed sidewalks and tree planting would

in all likelihood have the most visible and widespread impact throughout the Town Centres and for these reasons should be considered the highest priority. That being said, such improvements in Rodney, for reasons stated earlier, should await the planned up-grading of Furnival Road currently scheduled by the County. If, improvements to the streetscape in Rodney are delayed until such time and if funds are available, of the site specific projects recommended, it is suggested consideration be given first to establishing the proposed Farmers' Market as it potentially has an economic impact as well as a visual impact. In West Lorne, of the site-specific projects recommended, it is suggested priority be given first to the North Gateway (or railway hump improvements) as its future has become a matter of interest to Council. Next in line, in terms of priority is suggested the proposed Town Square given its centrality and hence visibility to virtually everyone accessing the Town Centre.

Priorities, estimated costs and target dates have been developed in the accompanying chart (Figure 19). Estimated costs include the supply of material and construction/installation of the recommended projects based on quantity takeoffs applied with current pricing. The costs do not include landscape architectural fees or engineering fees for the preparation of detailed design for the purposes of tendering and construction or for the demolition and removal of existing conditions which can be quite variable depending on the extent of work involved. Once a decision has been reached on proceeding with a particular improvement project, the process can move to detailed design, where appropriate, which will, in turn, provide a sounder basis for cost estimating purposes and implementation.

Figure 19: STREETScape MASTER PLANS: RODNEY AND WEST LORNE – IMPLEMENTATION

Rodney Town Centre: Project	Project Details	Project Lead	Partner	Estimated Cost	Target	First Steps	Funding Source
Furnival Makeover - replace curbs, sidewalks, and boulevards with new, install new street-lighting, street trees, street signs and furniture	from Albert Street to Main Street	West Elgin	County of Elgin (Engineering Services)	\$700,000	2022	-prepare and coordinate street design drawings with County engineering plans for road reconstruction	Municipality
North Gateway	-south of Albert Street within road allowance -to enhance entrance to downtown core	West Elgin	County of Elgin (Engineering Services) Rodney & District Horticultural Society	\$20,000	2014	-prepare design drawing	Municipality
South Gateway	defer trail entrance feature on both sides until trail construction	West Elgin	-County of Elgin (Engineering Services) -Entegrus (for trail entrance)	\$15,000 plus \$85,000 for trail entrances	2022	-prepare design drawing	Municipality
Farmers' Market	one day a week seasonal outdoor market with emphasis on attracting local producers as vendors	West Elgin		\$130,000	2013-2014	approach OMAFRA for start-up assistance -secure site -prepare business plan -prepare detailed design	Municipality –start-up
Library Courtyard and Cenotaph Square	Revitalization of space in front of library and improvements to library facade	West Elgin	County of Elgin (Community and Cultural Services)	\$25,000	2014	- meet with stakeholders -undertake facade improvements - prepare design drawing	Municipality
Overhead Power Lines & Wiring	-remove/ relocate extraneous/abandoned utility poles and low voltage overhead power lines between former CN railway and Main Street	West Elgin	Hydro One	\$25,000	2014	-meet with partner to determine process and cost sharing	Municipality/ Hydro one
Total				\$915,000			
West Lorne Town Centre: Project	Project Details	Project Lead	Partner	Estimated Cost	Target	First Steps	Funding Source
Main/Graham Makeover -replace curbs, sidewalks, and boulevards with new, install new street-lighting, street trees in selected locations, street signs and street furniture	Phase 1 south side of Main Street- Ridge to Graham Phase 2- remainder of Main Street – Ridge St to Argyle Street Phase 3- Graham Road	West Elgin	County of Elgin (Engineering Services)	\$835,000	2014(Phase 1) 2015 (Phase 2) 2016(Phase 3)	-prepare street design plan -resolve access issues to individual storefront -ensure safe grade change to street level	Municipality
Overhead Power Lines & Wiring	remove/ relocate extraneous/abandon utility poles and low voltage overhead power lines on former railway lands and road allowance between Ridge Street and Jane Street and elsewhere where feasible.	West Elgin	Hydro One, Entegrus	\$25,000	2015		Municipality/ Hydro One/ Entegrus
North Gateway	on former railway hump, defer trail entrance feature on both sides until trail construction	West Elgin	County of Elgin (Engineering Services)	\$110,000 plus \$90,000 for trail entrances	2015	-confirm feasibility of centre median determine need to reduce hump to address safety issue - prepare design plan	Municipality
Town Square	at sw corner of Graham an Main St	West Elgin	County of Elgin (Engineering Services)	\$75,000	2016	-meet with stakeholders - prepare design plan	Municipality
Library Courtyard	In front of library building and Firehall	West Elgin	County of Elgin (Community and Cultural Services)	\$35,000	2017	-meet with stakeholders - - - - prepare design plan	Municipality
Total				\$1,080,000			