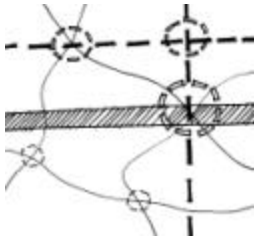
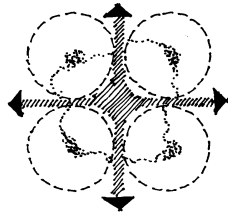


VISION: WEAVING THE WEB

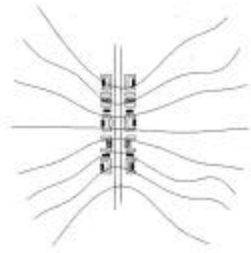
The Building Blocks Revisited



A HIERARCHY OF INTERCONNECTED HUMAN AND NATURAL CIRCULATION NETWORKS JOINING BOTH CULTURAL AND NATURAL NODES



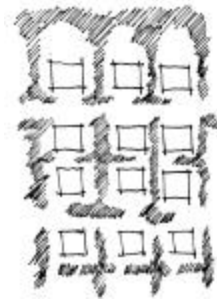
NODES AT A HIERARCHY OF SCALES WHICH DEFINE NEIGHBOURHOODS, COMMUNITIES AND REGIONS. THESE NODES WILL BE DIVERSE AND IDENTIFIED BY THEIR OWN UNIQUE CHARACTERS AND SPATIAL QUALITIES



BUILT FORM WILL WORK WITH SITE SPECIFIC NATURAL PROCESSES SUCH AS CONTOURS AND TOPOGRAPHY



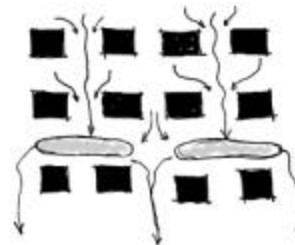
BUILT FORM WILL MAXIMIZE THE BENEFITS OF NATURAL LIGHTING, SOLAR ENERGY, THE USE OF LOCAL MATERIALS AS WELL AS PROVIDING VARIED AND DIVERSE EXPERIENCE AND CHARACTER



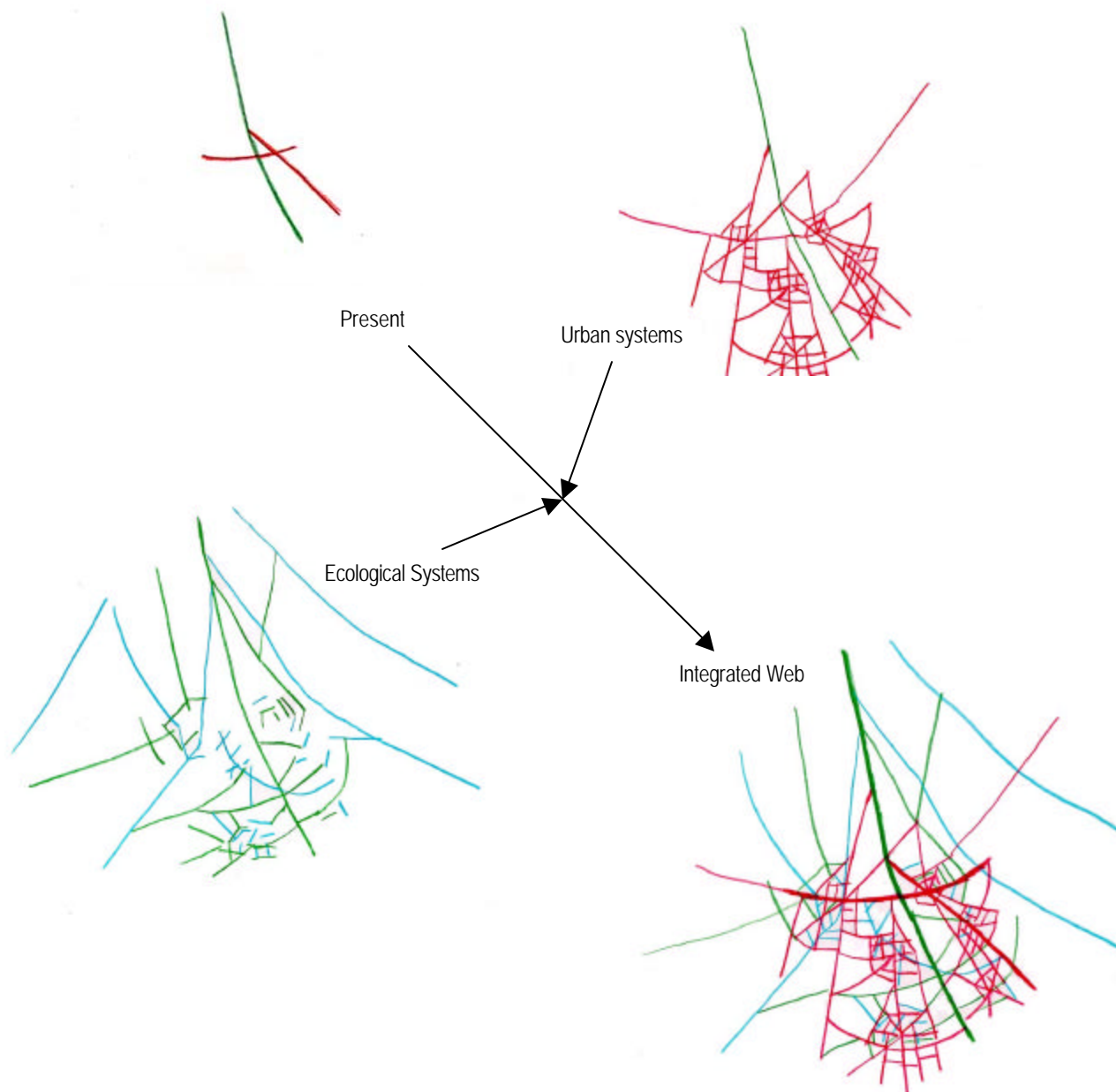
THE FOREST/URBAN EDGE WILL ENHANCE BOTH HUMAN AND ECOLOGICAL CO-EXISTENCE, PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR BOTH RECREATION AND HABITAT ENHANCEMENT



THE STREAM/URBAN EDGE WILL BE INFORMED BY NATURAL STREAM HYDROLOGY AND FORM, STRENGTHENING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HUMANS AND NATURE



RE-ESTABLISH NATURAL DRAINAGE PATTERNS WITHIN THE URBAN FABRIC AND ALLOW THIS NATURAL DRAINAGE SYSTEM TO INFORM DESIGN AND PLANNING OF STREETS, TRAILS AND NATURAL CORRIDORS



CONCEPT STATEMENT

Historically, the development of the town of Gibsons was centered around the sea and the forest. With the arrival of the Langdale ferry and highway, the automobile played a directional role in the structuring and development of the town as well as influencing settlement patterns along the new highway. These changes have led to a decrease in prominence of the original defining elements of the Gibsons community. This shift in focus from its natural roots has resulted in a town predominantly structured by the car and the increasing presence of suburban sprawl. In anticipation of future development and expansion, we propose that Gibsons re-unite with its roots, celebrating its natural and historical context. The area of Gibsons is a diverse landscape supporting humans, streams, birds, mammals and a variety of interesting plant communities. We took our cues from the natural order of these systems to help define the order of "Gibsons the town" and "Gibsons the living landscape".

An example of a naturally ordered system is the spider's web. Thin strands of webbing are woven together to produce a delicate yet strong network that functions to trap food for the spider. However, a single thread, taken in isolation is structurally weak and cannot function. Only when threads are interconnected is the web strong. What presently exists in Gibsons are the initial strands, or backbones of the web. However, the other systems of streams, streets, plant and human communities are disconnected. By integrating and interweaving these networks of threads within the urban and ecological systems, we hope to form an integrated web where the parts not only reinforce but also celebrate each other. We hope to create a hierarchy of networks where the strength of each strand becomes integral to the success of the whole system. We suggest the following concept tool to help design a connected and healthy Gibsons.

As part of our visioning exercise towards a Gibsons for the future, we identified several key building blocks that serve as the foundation for our proposal. From these building blocks, we identified four fundamental systems or networks that make up the whole.



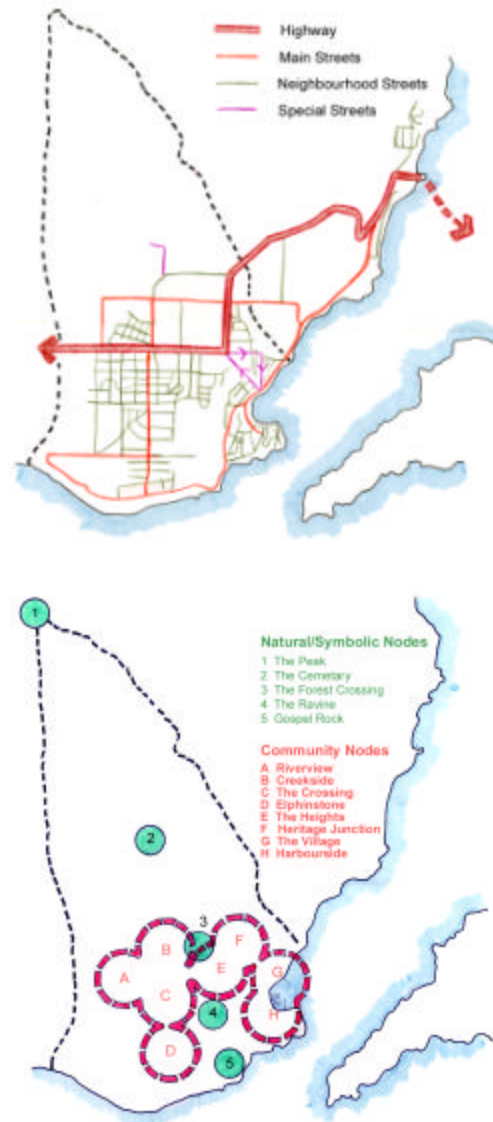
1. WATERSHEDS AND STREAMS

Gibsons and its surroundings consist of several watersheds. Our design process evolved from the idea of allowing water to move naturally through the landscape enhancing both the human and natural environment. In order to maintain and enhance the natural hydrologic pattern, many small infiltration basins will be incorporated into local neighbourhoods and swale systems. In addition, a presently diverted stream will be redirected into a swale the feeds the Charmer Creek watershed.



2. VEGETATION

Two vegetation patterns emerge from the proposed work. The large forest mass on the mountain side extends into the urban fabric of Gibsons. In order to function ecologically this forest needs a large mass in order to buffer the streams and wildlife habitat to minimize human impacts at the headwaters of the stream systems. The second pattern is the urban greenways, street plantings and urban park systems that bring nature to the community and maintain connection throughout the system.



3. CIRCULATION

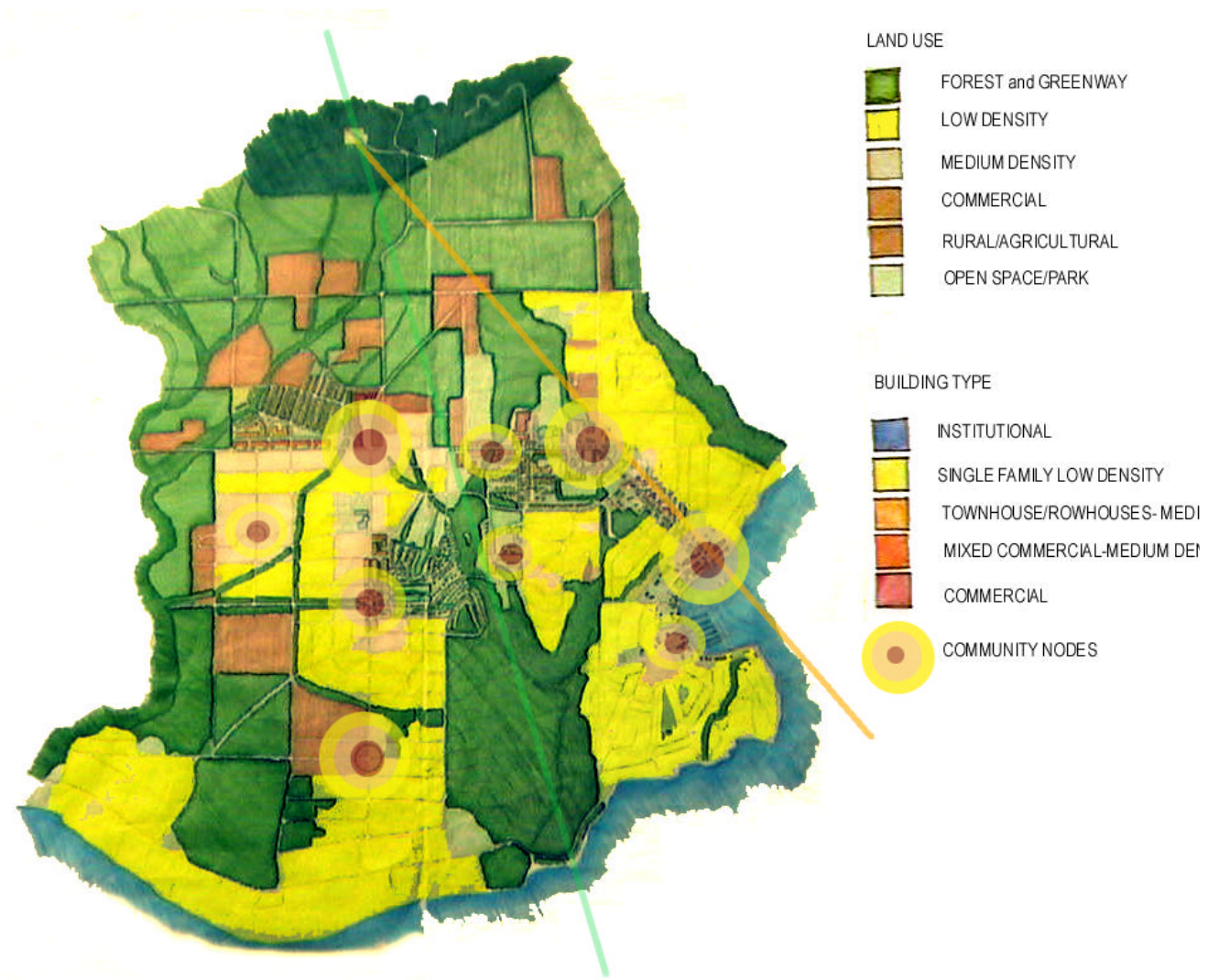
The circulation pattern works with the community and neighbourhood nodes. Main streets and trails connect the neighbourhoods and will support public transportation. A grid pattern was created with the nodes and major circulation connections. The grid helps order and structure the community. Smaller neighbourhood streets work with the local topography and stream networks and therefore move away from the grid pattern. The Special Streets include the one way loop from The Village to the Heritage Junction and the sacred road to the Cemetery.

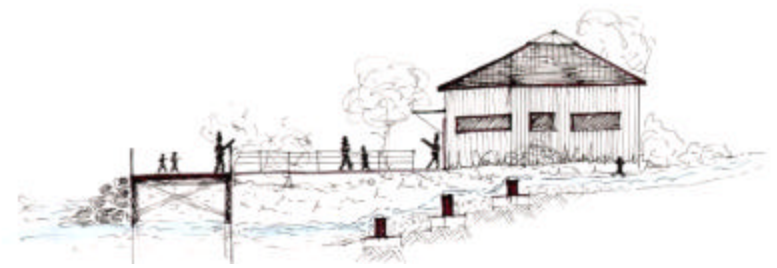
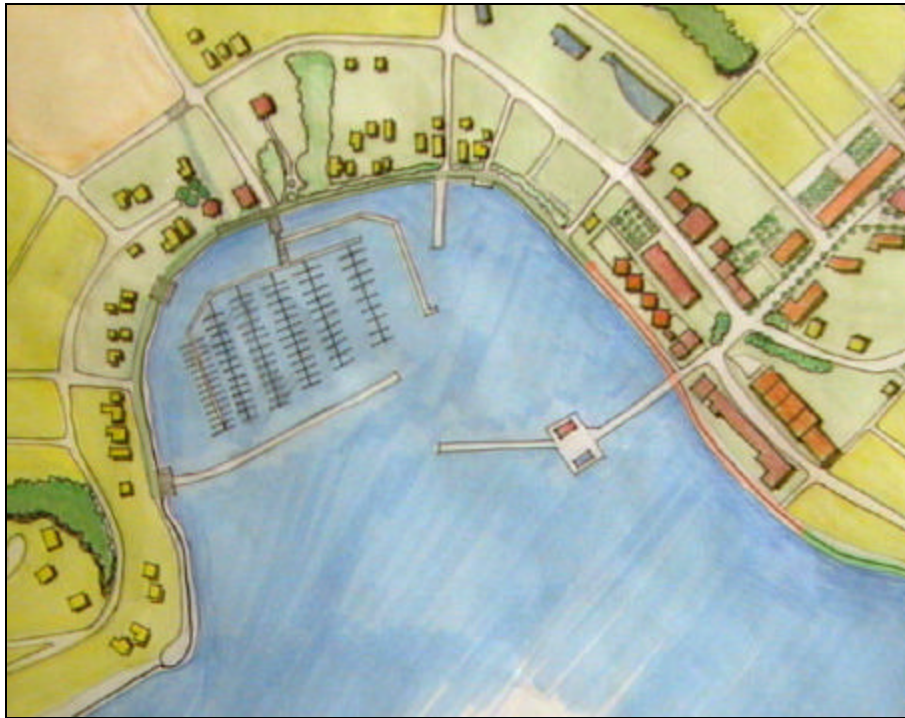
4. COMMUNITY AND NATURAL NODES

Nodes create a series of regional and local landmarks that help to structure and define the urban environment. The creation of a series of nodes establishes a definition of place and character. The location of community nodes will allow residents to live within easy walking distance of community amenities and work environments. The anchoring system of these community nodes will be the green spine along School Road and the upper highway. The natural/spiritual nodes represent habitat diversity within Gibsons, connecting the oceans edge, Gospel Rock, the forest ravine, the Forest Crossing on the highway and colliding with the human axis at the cemetery before ascending to the mountain peak overlooking Gibsons.

ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN

This plan illustrates how these layers of networks become an integrated web in the planning and design of both the natural and human communities of Gibsons.

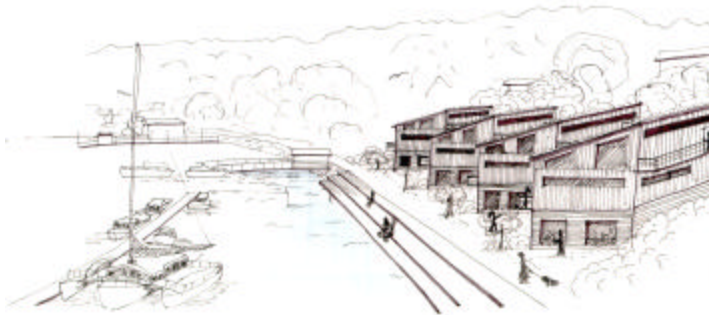




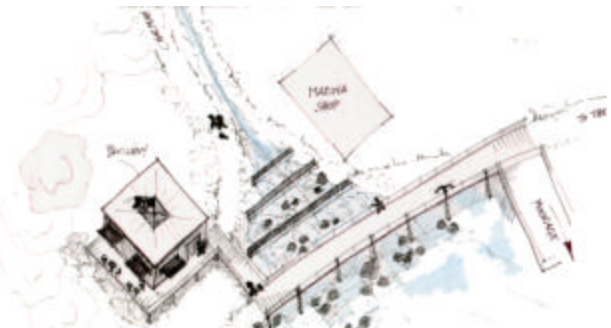
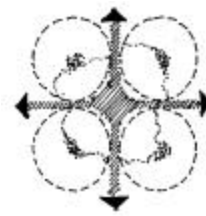
Section of restaurant at the mouth of Charman Creek.

WATERFRONT WALK

- The government wharf becomes a car free zone. The wharf plaza could be used for cultural activities (concerts, theatre, markets, festivals, etc.).
- Increasing the density in the centre with new urban elements is an effective way to create an attractive plaza.
- The seawalk becomes continuous all the way around the waterfront. There are various interesting edges along the seawalk. Next to the plaza the walkway becomes a pedestrian zone with a more urban character, with market shops and live work units. It then changes again into a natural path past Charman creek mouth and up to the breakwater.



Water access in front of live/work studios and market shops along seawall walk.



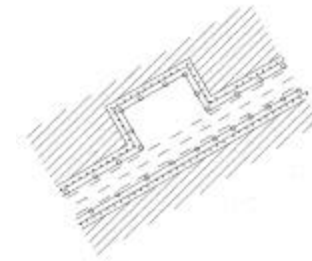
Aerial view of proposed restaurant pavilion beside Charman Creek.



SCHOOL ROAD

School Road should be considered as a significant part of Gibsons spine which would connect the wharf and heritage downtown area to the upper Gibsons. Its character could be changed from a traffic connector to a lively and livable street, strongly oriented towards pedestrian activities. The street would be designed with stepped/ ramped and tree planted sidewalks that connect many small plazas along the street. Plazas would function as public spaces that host people for shopping, sitting, eating and enjoying street activity and views. The main node along the street would be designed as a plaza across from the Abbs Road intersection. The street could function as a one way street north with either one or two lanes of street parking.

Buildings would provide medium to high density mixed use urban space with retail activities at the sidewalk level and office and/or residential on upper floors and inner courtyards. Hotels, bed-and-breakfast facilities, and services related to tourism could be located along the street.

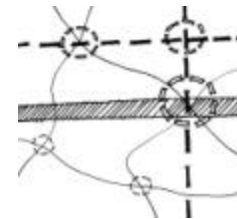


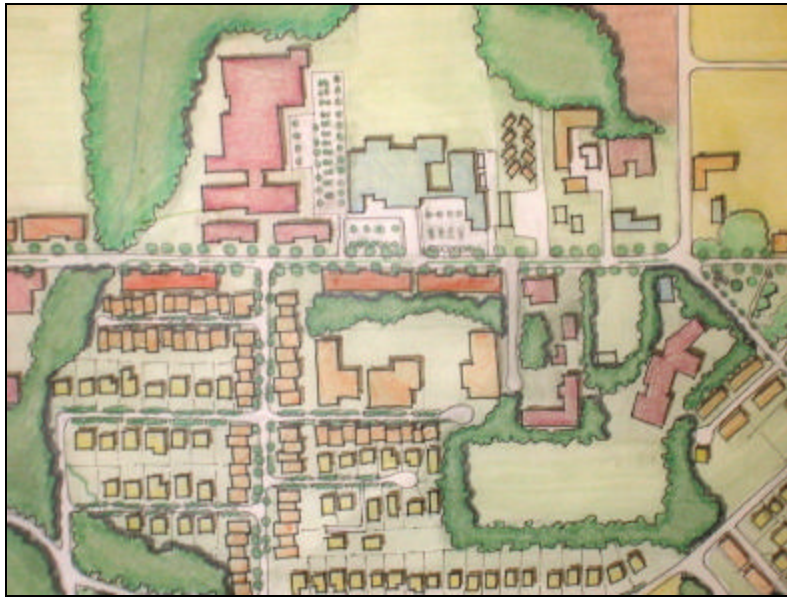


HERITAGE JUNCTION

The Heritage Junction is a key cultural node in Gibsons linking the School Road enclave with the two new town nodes along the Sunshine Coast Highway, as well as the Langdale ferry terminal. A new traffic pattern is proposed, with School Road as a one way north street and the Sunshine Coast Highway as one way south-east. As a result, the Heritage Junction intersection becomes more pedestrian friendly as road widths are reduced. A new civic park with a covered performance area is proposed for the existing commercial centre. Better lighting and enhanced plantings will also help to re-establish this intersection as an important cultural node in Gibsons.

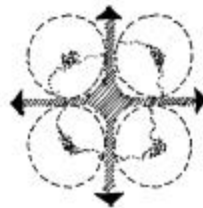
A rain pavilion in the civic park will provide a unique small performance space adjacent to the school and theatre. A tiered naturalized garden behind the pavilion will enhance the notion of ecology and culture within the fabric of Gibsons. The garden adjacent to the theatre and the rain pavilion will act as a gateway to the Sunshine Coast Road Boulevard.





FOREST CROSSING

This area is a continuation of the pedestrian spine along School road linking upper and lower Gibsons. The intent is to create a pedestrian oriented community node defined by a mixture of schools, commercial, and residential. Characteristics of the pedestrian scale street architecture include a tree lined boulevard, multi-story mixed retail and residential buildings oriented to the street, and parking to the sides and backs of buildings in “parking orchards”. A mixture of single family, row housing and co-op housing are all located within walking distance to commercial and community amenities. The forest crosses the highway at the north side of the community.



CREEKSIDE

This area is a major commercial and residential node centered around the existing IGA mall. Orientation and width of the streets and buildings are influenced by natural drainage patterns, benefits of solar energy and minimum functional size requirements. Housing density is concentrated near the commercial area along the main highway providing close proximity to working and shopping opportunities. The building footprint of the mall has also been broken up from the current footprint to decrease its scale, allow for more pedestrian penetration, and provide opportunities for community green space.

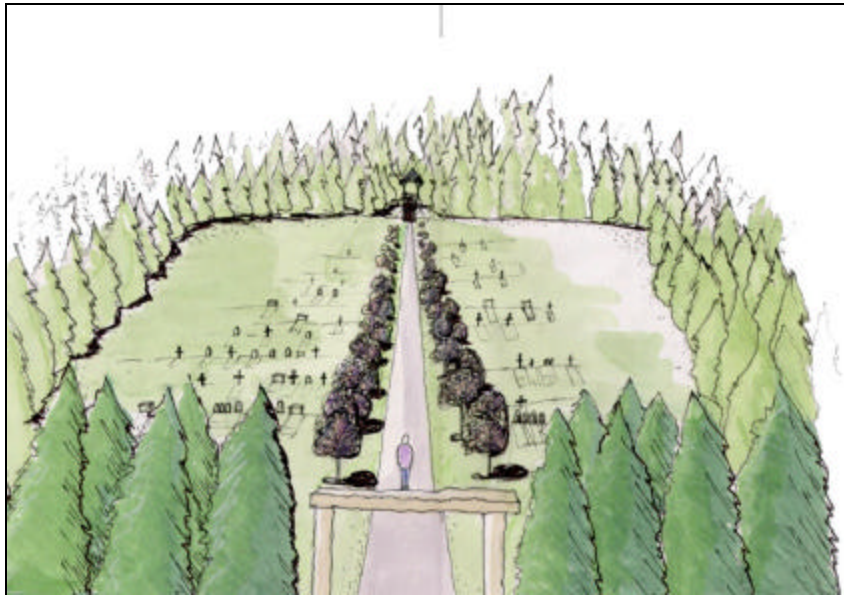
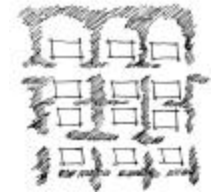
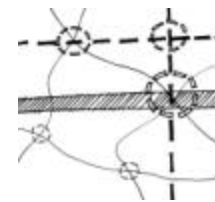


Left: Section illustrating swales and backyard greeways in Creekside.



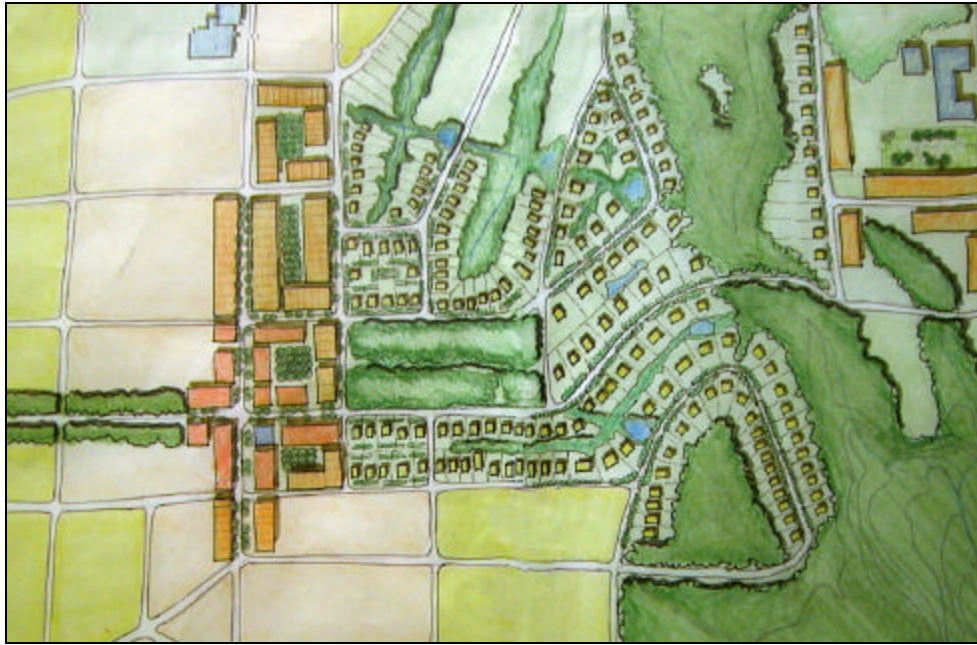
THE FOREST CROSSING

A key feature of this area is the crossing of the natural forest across the urban boulevard. The intent of this is to bring nature into the urban landscape to strengthen the sense of place defined by the local natural elements which are so prominent in Gibsons and its environs.



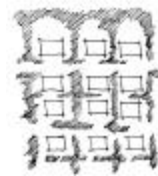
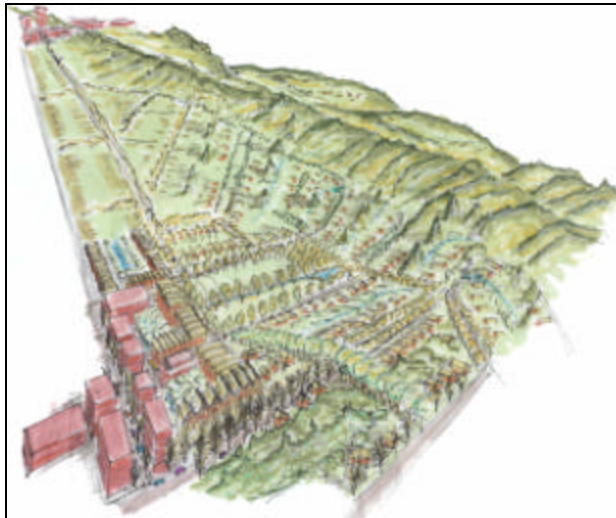
THE CEMETERY LINK

The Cemetery is the spiritual link between the natural surroundings of Gibsons and its rich cultural layer. The major greenways in the community lead up to the cemetery on the hill. A double row of flowering cherry trees creates a strong axis to a lookout tower, which provides views in all directions. The tower is intended to be an *axis mundi* which links forest, sea and mountain, the key natural components of Gibsons. The Cemetery link and the Forest Crossing are both key ecological nodes described in the concept plan.



THE CROSSING

The Crossing is a typical urban node within the community design. Density is highest at the centre and gradually decreases as the node radiates outwards. The central area is structured using the grid pattern while outer roads work with the local topography and drainage networks. Aligning roads with land contours will decrease the amount of site grading while creating areas to slow the movement of water to the nearby stream. The ability of the landscape to absorb water is critical to the health of nearby streams and sensitive fish populations. Maximizing areas of infiltration through organic soils will help maintain natural hydrological flow and permits biofiltration of urban pollutants found in stormwater before they enter the stream. Swales behind housing units provide areas of water retention; major swales cutting across contours provide a collection outlet for minor swales. Infiltration of pervious areas is enhanced providing up to 85% water absorption of pre-development. The swales and ponds also provide a natural network for transportation and recreation.



Left: Aerial view of the crossing. Top left corner of drawing shows the Sunshine Coast highway.

IMPLEMENTATION

Policy

Community Planning Process

Community nodes should be recognized as the basic planning units of Gibsons. Neighbourhood committees should be established to make decisions on local issues at the town scale. Local development could be managed through these committees, replacing the prescriptive zoning process of the existing OCP. The Town Hall's planning department could act as a coordinator and facilitator between neighbourhood committees for larger scale decisions. A series of public workshops should be initiated to generate a shared vision of Gibsons, as well as allow residents to begin to meet and establish neighbourhood committees and create neighbourhood vision plans.

Flexible Zoning

Flexible zoning is needed to facilitate increased density within the existing urban fabric. This zoning strategy would allow for secondary suites, duplexes, carriage houses, rowhouses and mixed commercial units to be added to a variety of existing zoning categories. This would encourage multi-unit and mixed use developments in Gibson's existing fabric. Densification will provide a larger base of population in neighbourhoods to support basic community facilities within walking distance. Neighbourhood committees should be responsible for setting guidelines for local zoning decisions.

Integrated Planning Process

Planning for stormwater management, urban greenways, wildlife corridors, parks and roads should be integrated into one physical network. All design and planning work should address these components collectively.

Planning Based on Natural Systems

Planning for densifying nodes as well as for circulation and infrastructure systems should be guided by ecological and topographical influences. As an example, forest and watercourse corridors should guide the patterns of development. New development should be oriented to the greenway system and incrementally fill in areas within natural system.

Financing

- Because of the limited financial resources of Gibsons, public projects should be funded through a variety of mechanisms:
- Community, private sector and government partnerships.
- Density bonuses as an incentive to encourage higher density developments.
- Development costs charges that reflect true infrastructure costs including stormwater, road and transportation infrastructure, and sewer maintenance and construction costs.
- A discretionary tax system to direct the development process.
- A land trust system to promote housing for low-income groups on public lands.

Phasing

- Locate greenway corridors and establish covenants, easements and propose land swaps etc. to begin to fill in the proposed greenway system..
- Focus land acquisition and covenant establishment along riparian corridors.
- Implement a stormwater tax to encourage retrofitting the existing system to a more ecologically based system.
- Focus on first densifying existing community nodes, such as Lower Gibsons and School Road, as well as the Forest Crossing node.
- The next phase of development should occur at the community node in Elphinstone
- Housing needs and community growth should be re-evaluated before implementing The Crossing development.
- Incremental growth is the key in creating a fully integrated ecological and cultural web in the Town of Gibsons.

