



Age-Friendly Beausejour

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Why Age-Friendly?

The proportion of aging adults is increasing in North America. In 2011 the first of the baby boomers turned 65 and in the following decades, two million more will join them (Hodge, 2008). Rural towns in Manitoba experience the effects of an aging population more acutely, as the collective aging of their residents is exacerbated by both an influx in older adults as many retirees prefer small town living, and by an exodus of young adults to larger urban centers for education and employment. Responding to these shifts, many communities are attempting to integrate a long term age-friendly planning approach. An age-friendly community is one which recognizes aging adults as a resource, offers a wide range of opportunities, anticipates age-related needs, respects the independent decisions of older adults, protects the most vulnerable of that group, and promotes inclusive and meaningful contribution in all areas of community life (WHO, 5).

Beausejour, Manitoba, a town in the Rural Municipality of Brokenhead, is a growing community that boasts an outstanding quality of life and sense of community for its residents. As a town with a large population of seniors (Statistics Canada, 2011), Beausejour is beginning to recognize its long term responsibility to the town's older adults. Through thoughtful planning, it can ensure that its exceptional quality of life continues to be possible for all its residents, including aging adults.

Guiding Documents

The World Health Organization's Global Age-Friendly Cities

The WHO's Global Age-Friendly Cities serves as a guide to help communities manage the issues associated with an aging population. Within the context of two prescient shifts in global populations, the proportion of persons over sixty years of age and the trend of intensifying urbanization, it aims to clarify which features comprise an age-friendly community, which barriers limit full participation, and specific suggestions which could improve the lives of its older residents. These features are arranged into eight categories: outdoor spaces and buildings; transportation; housing; social participation; respect and social inclusion; civic participation and employment; communication and information; and community support and health services.

Rural and Remote Communities

This document is the product of the Healthy Aging and Wellness Working Group (of the Federal/ Provincial/Territorial Committee of Officials) which provides a rural Canadian context for issues of aging. This guide aims to describe the amenities and resources communities need so that seniors can "maintain active, healthy, and productive lives," and provides practical tools to identify barriers to age-friendly living and some rudimentary methods for age-friendly improvements in rural and remote communities (Public Health Agency, 2007). Building upon the work of the ground-breaking World Health Organization's document, it emphasizes the unique challenges and opportunities to rural communities, as expressed by the ten participating communities and their focus groups. Following the same eight themes outlined in the World Health Organization document, it emphasizes the specific barriers facing residents of rural communities: suitable transportation, opportunities for social engagement, affordability and prevalence of community supports, and limitations to aging in place.

Complete Communities: An OurWinnipeg Direction Strategy

This planning document is a complete street strategy guidebook. It lists specific directions and strategies for Winnipeg neighborhood typologies and influenced the recommendations in this report through its vision of complete communities. It focuses on identifying areas for growth, promoting accessible urban design, and encouraging mixed-use development, to name a few. The direction strategy suggests using four types of tools including planning tools, incentives, capital budget & infrastructure, and leadership & partnership.

Who we are

In the fall of 2013 a group of students enrolled in the City Planning Design Studio at the University of Manitoba began working with three towns in rural Manitoba. The participating towns were Beausejour, Tyndall & Garson, and Gladstone. Five students, Lea Rempel, Gaalen Pierce, Vanessa Scarola, Robert Galston, and Adam Kroeker worked specifically with the town of Beausejour to identify how it could become more age-friendly and increase the quality of life for its growing population of older adults.

Project Overview

Using methods of field research, empirical research, and statistical analysis we compiled a body of information which we examined under the lens of aforementioned essential age-friendly planning documents, the World Health Organization's *Global Age-Friendliness Cities: A Guide* and the Healthy Aging and Wellness Working Group's *Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide*. We presented our findings to key community stakeholders at two different stages in the project and encouraged feedback to ensure we were accurately representing their needs and desires. Finally, at the end of the project we presented a series of age-friendly design suggestions in an open meeting at the local community centre in Beausejour. This document is a summary of observations, research, documentation, analysis, community feedback, and design proposals for Beausejour, Manitoba.

History

Geographical Significance & Location

The largest town in the R.M. of Brokenhead, Beausejour is located on Provincial Trunk Highway 44, which links Winnipeg (46 kilometers to the southwest) to the Whiteshell Provincial Park (40 kilometers to the east).

Beausejour's economy has benefitted from its proximity to Winnipeg and to some of Manitoba's best cottage country (Beausejour & Brokenhead Development Corp., 2010).

Nearby communities like Tyndall and Garson depend on the services and amenities available in Beausejour, particularly in the areas of health care and services for older adults.

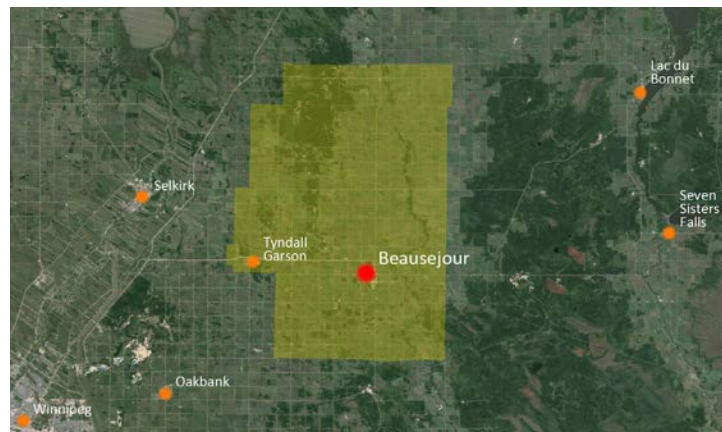


Figure 1. Location of Beausejour in the R.M. of Brokenhead (yellow) and proximity to some other rural Manitoba towns.

The Story of Beausejour

Beausejour began as a small settlement in the 1880s around the Canadian Pacific railway stop known as Burgoyne Station. The settlement grew as people moved in to the region to capitalize on the wealth of agricultural commodities being delivered to the train station for export by nearby Ukrainian, Polish, and German immigrant farmers. In 1906, entrepreneur Joseph Kielback built Western Canada's first glass factory next to the village's sand-bottomed lake and used the trains to deliver glass bottles and ink wells across Manitoba. Three hundred and fifty people were employed at the glass factory, significantly increasing Beausejour's population.

Beausejour was incorporated as village in 1908 and then as a town in 1912. The establishment of both telephone and electrical systems shortly thereafter proved that Beausejour was one of the most progressive towns in Manitoba. Once the electric lights were strung above its main street, Park Avenue, the place was nicknamed "The Million Dollar Mile" (Czuboka, 1982). (See Figure 3).

Another population increase began in 1974, when people moved to the town to work in the new Department of Highways Maintenance Garage and at the Beausejour Provincial Building on First Street (Dubray, Pierce, Kolton, Kozyra, MacKenzie, Warren, 2011; Czuboka, 1982). This growth meant an increased need for housing, and for the next ten years, suburban residential development occurred on the southern edge of town (Dubray et al., 2011). Thirty years later, the town is entering another period of growth.



Figure 2. Park Avenue, c. 1911.



Figure 3. Park Avenue, circa 1940.

Town Documentation & Analysis

Demographics

Growth

There are 3,126 residents in the town of Beausejour, according to the 2011 census (Statistics Canada, 2012). This shows considerable growth (9.7%) since 2006. Prior to this, (2011 to 2006) the town had experienced several years of slower growth, estimated between 1% to 3%. If population growth continues at a rate of 1.3% to 3.2% annually, Beausejour will have a population between 4,250 and 6,250 within the next 20 years (Third Street Concept Plan Background Report, 2013).

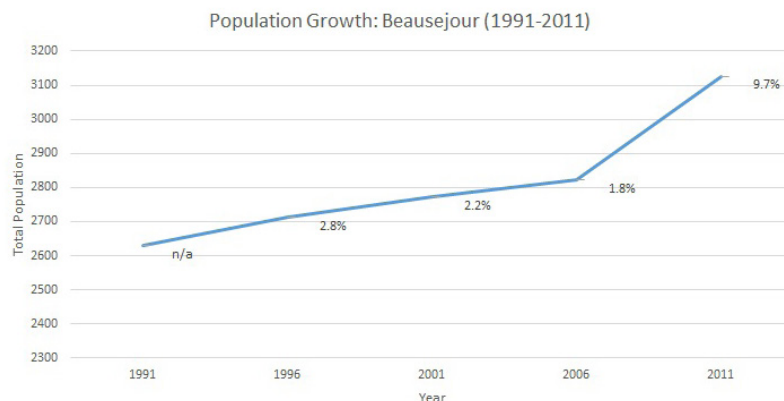


Figure 4. Population growth, 1991-2011.

Distribution

More than one quarter (27.2%) of Beausejour's population is over the age of 65. This figure is significantly higher than the national average of only 13.8%. The largest age group in Beausejour is between 45-60 years old, making up 32% of the total population.

The latter group roughly represents the Baby Boom generation, a group that is increasingly choosing to age in place, suggesting that in the near future Beausejour's largest age group will be those ages 65+ years (Statistics Canada, 2011).

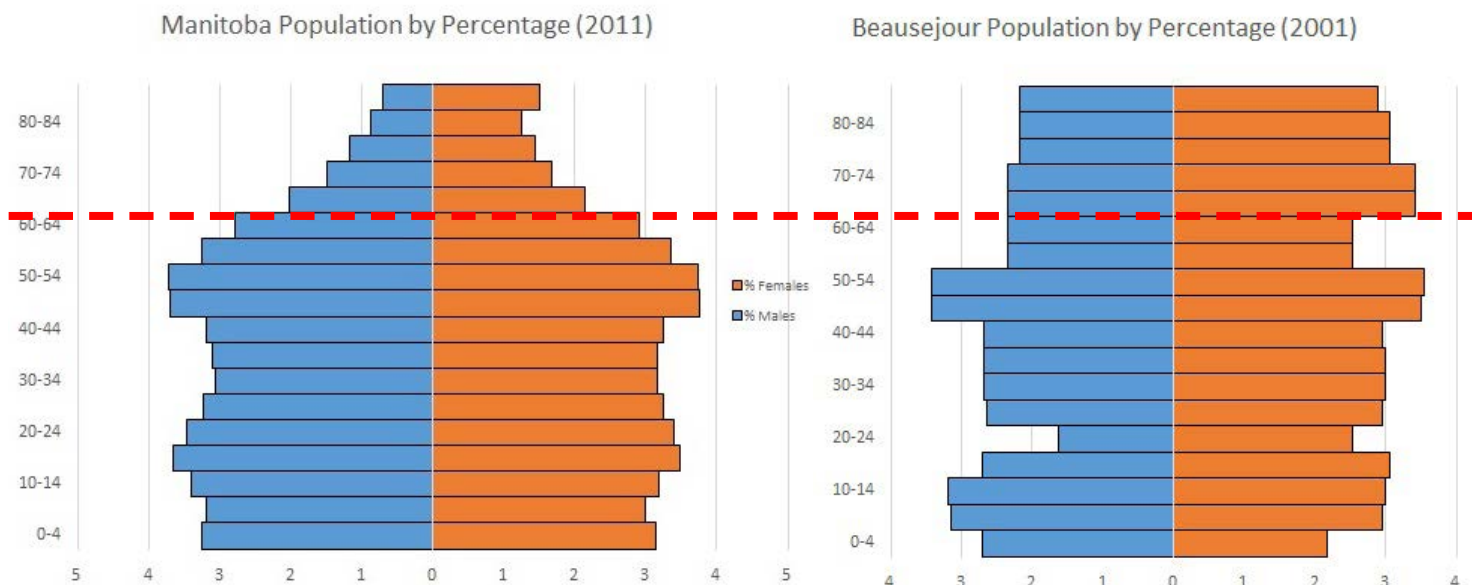


Figure 5. Population percentages by age: Manitoba and Beausejour.

Income

Beausejour is also home to a high percentage of wealthy residents. Forty four percent of the households in the Beausejour, Brokenhead, Springfield region have an annual income of more than \$70,000; 22.5% of the households have an annual income of more than \$100,000 (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Buildings & Open Space

Institutional

The Town of Beausejour has numerous institutional buildings, including provincial government facilities, schools, churches, and a hospital. After Beausejour native Edward Schreyer became the Premier of Manitoba in 1970, a Provincial building was constructed at First Street and Park Avenue. Forty years later, the province continues to employ civil servants in Beausejour. Schreyer also lends his name to one of the two schools in Beausejour. Another, the Beausejour Early Years School, was recently built at James Avenue and Joyce Street.

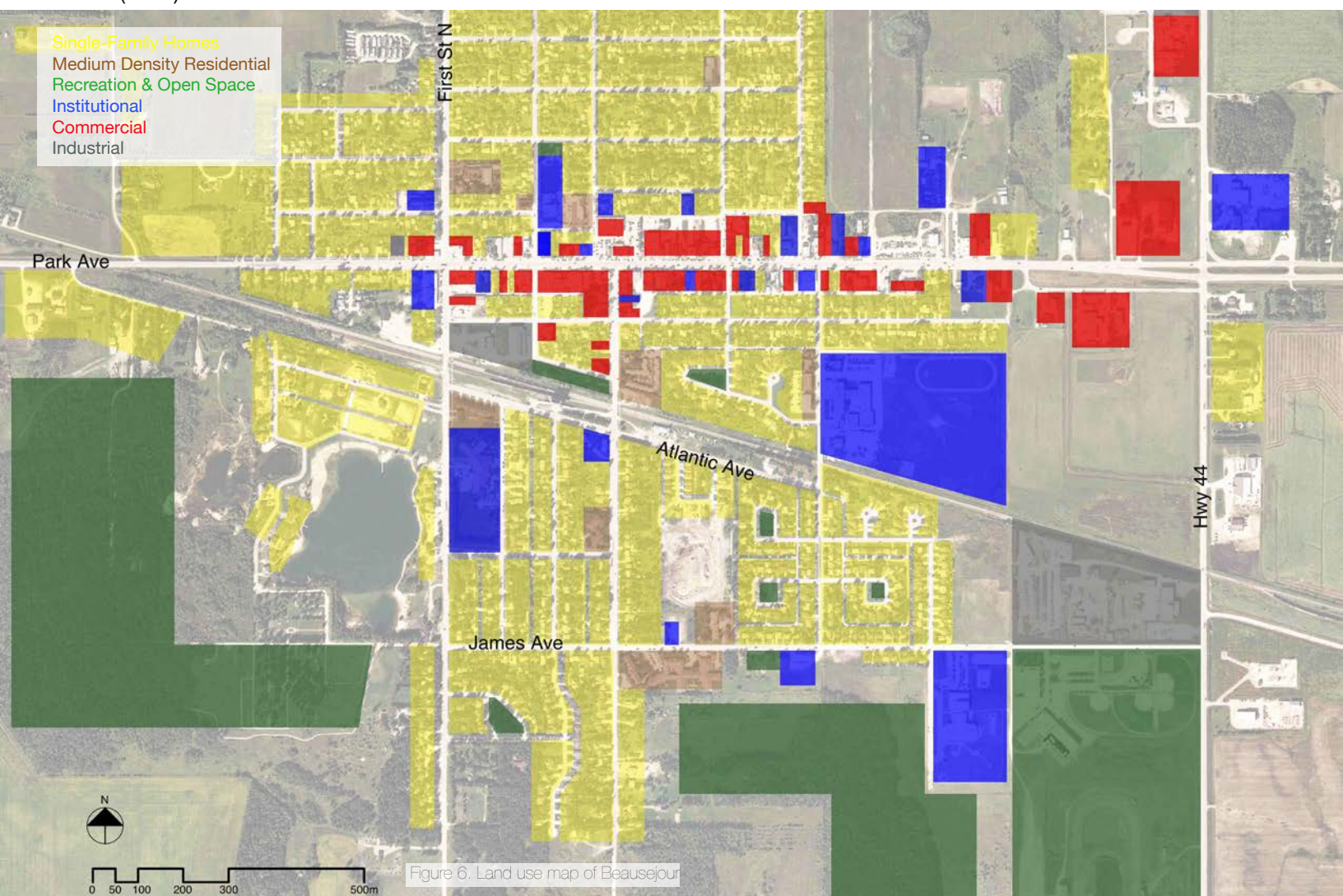
Older residents may benefit from the community support and activities provided by Beausejour's eight churches. Residents also have access to two medical clinics and a Primary Care Centre attached to the Beausejour Hospital, which has been called one of "the most efficient rural hospitals in Canada" by the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada (2009).

Recreation

Beausejour offers several excellent recreational facilities that are used by people of all ages.

The Sun Gro Centre is located in the southeast corner of town and includes a recreation hall and an arena. A splash pool, racetrack, softball complex, and the Legion are all located in this area of Beausejour. Unfortunately, this location may not be easily accessible, especially for residents who do not own, or cannot drive, a car, as it lies on the outskirts of town, and is not well connected through the sidewalk network.

Elsewhere in town, there are two playgrounds, as well as a number of small green spaces in the centre of several cul-de-sac developments. It is uncertain how much these latter spaces get used for recreational purposes.



Parks

Beausejour is nationally recognized for its groomed parks and its natural beauty. The town won the 2012 National Edition of Communities in Bloom with a 5-bloom rating. Twenty-five-hectare Wally Chryplywy Wilderness Park received a special mention for excellence. The Wilderness Park, which features cross country ski trails and a purple martin tower for bird-watching, is an excellent destination for active seniors. Two other important parks in Beausejour are the Train Whistle Park (on Third Street) (See Figure 6) and the Daylily Gardens. All of these parks are maintained by volunteers.

In general, the park areas in Beausejour are well-maintained and feature both smooth walking paths and places to rest, both of which are outlined in *Global Age-Friendly Cities* as important aspects that encourage use by aging adults.



Figure 6. Train Whistle Park.

Commercial

Commercial land use in Beausejour is clustered along Park Avenue, with some development moving south down 3rd Street. Park Avenue features many services including a grocery store, a bank and a credit union, law offices, a liquor store, a hardware store, a number of dollar stores, and numerous hairdressers. This cluster of many different kinds of amenities and services is the first step towards a complete community as outlined by the *Complete Communities* document.

However, there are some opportunities for improvement on Park Avenue. As it exists, there are safety concerns for pedestrians crossing the street at uncontrolled crosswalks. There are also opportunities for enhancements to the sidewalk and building facades. Furthermore, there is an opportunity for infill development on vacant lots, which would increase walkability.



Figure 7. Commercial activity on Third Street.

Industrial

Beausejour's industrial development began with the Beausejour Glass Factory in the early 1900s. During this time, Beausejour also had a creamery, an egg grading station, two blacksmiths shops, and a flour mill (Beausejour Centennial History Book Committee, 2011). Since then, industrial development has mainly occurred in an area on the northeast edge of town. This is where a (now abandoned) Polaris snowmobile plant opened up in 1966, and where a large regional school bus garage will soon be built. Future commercial development are planned for this area (Beausejour & Brokenhead Development Corporation, 2013).



Figure 8. Park Avenue at Third Street.

Housing

Existing Housing

There are 1,380 households in Beausejour. Most residents live in detached, single-family homes. Thirty-five per cent of these individual homes are primarily maintained by people over the age of 65 (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Statistics show that most of the private dwellings in town are bungalows constructed before 1980 (Statistics Canada, 2011). Most of these bungalows have entrances at street level. The lack of stairs in these homes makes it easier for seniors to age in place; however, the age of these homes likely means they are more expensive to upkeep than homes built after the 1980s.

Houses constructed since 1980 are often two stories tall and located in areas without sidewalks. This may pose challenges for older adults who live in them, as they will have to climb stairs, maintain lawns, and overcome obstacles to pedestrian activity.



Figure 9. Bungalows with driveways and large garages on Weselak Drive.

Seniors' Housing

There is a high demand for new housing in Beausejour to meet the growing and aging population (see Demographics).

There is a particular need for suitable seniors' housing. Although Beausejour has more than 180 units of age 55+ and long-term care housing (located in 8 multi-family residences), there is a general lack of both affordable housing and rental options that can accommodate more than one adult (Hutton et al, 2010). Affordable housing, as outlined in *Global Age-Friendly Cities*, should be available to all older adults.

There is also a need for tenancy options like co-housing for seniors, which would help to prevent social isolation - a prevalent mental health concern for older adults (Hodge, 2008). Currently, 71% of non-family seniors in the R.M. of Brokenhead risk isolation because they are living alone (MB Bureau of Statistics, 2008).



Figure 10. Stony Plains Terrace, a seniors residence on James Avenue.

Third Street Development

The proposed Third Street Development, as highlighted in Figure 12, will not fully address the need for more seniors' housing or affordable rental units. It may also present new connectivity, accessibility, and walkability issues because of its distance from Park Avenue.



Figure 11. Site of proposed Third Street Concept Development plan.

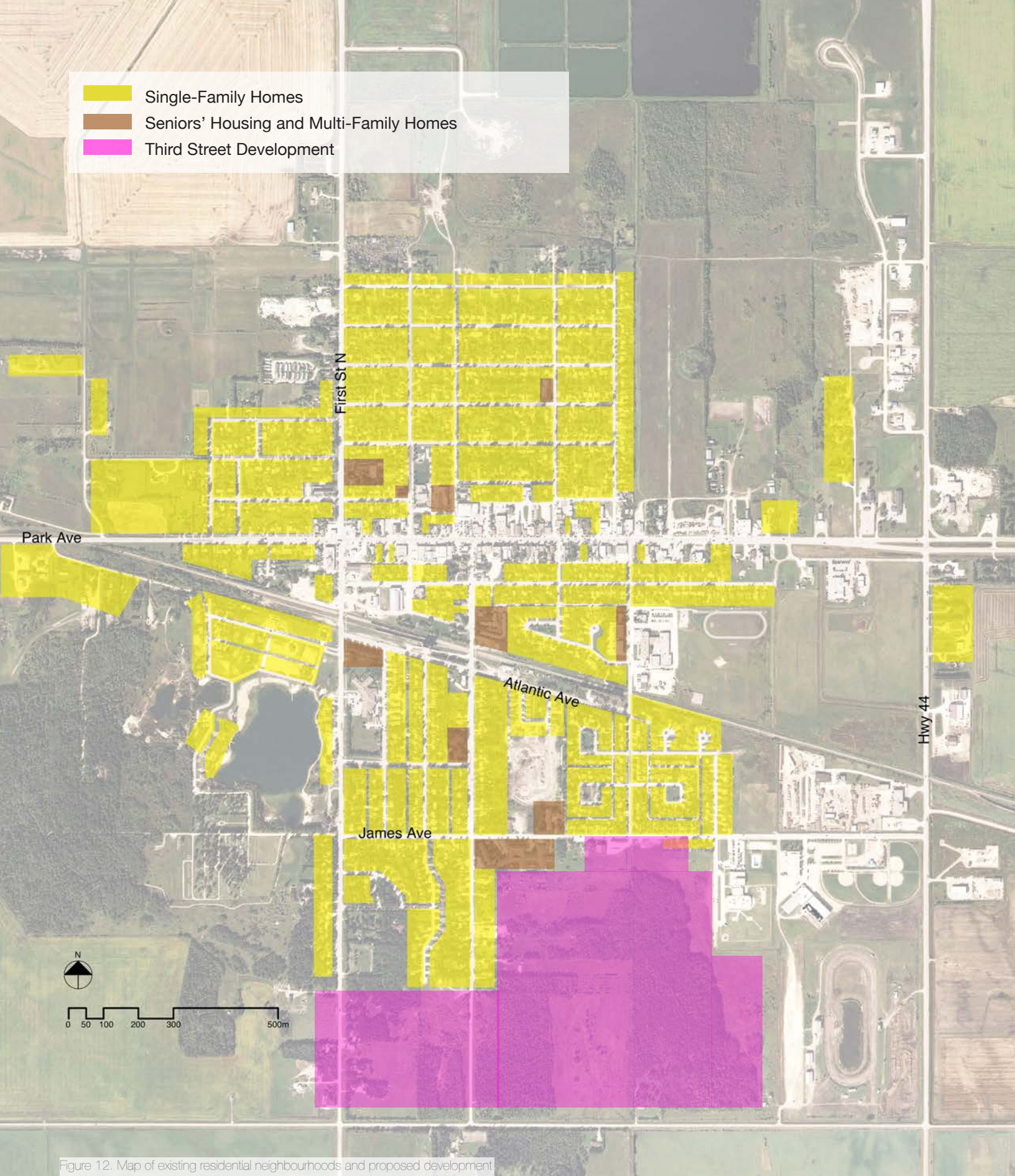


Figure 12. Map of existing residential neighbourhoods and proposed development

Transportation

Observations

Beausejour's location, halfway between Winnipeg and eastern Manitoba, makes it a convenient stopping place for tourists.

In the early 20th century, the automobile began to replace the train as the dominant method of transportation to Beausejour. In 1927, Manitoba's Highway 1 (PTH 1), the main east-to-west route in the province, was routed down Beausejour's Park Avenue. This undoubtedly contributed to some of the town's commercial growth and the establishment of inns like the Beausejour Hotel and Howland House.

Although this highway was re-routed to the outskirts of Beausejour in the late 1950s, the town is still very automobile oriented. More than 90% of Beausejour's residents use automobiles to commute to work (Statistics Canada, 2012).

Unfortunately, this means that people who cannot drive (due to health concerns, disabilities, finances, or age) may encounter transportation challenges within town. Many seniors are forced to rely on friends and family for transportation. If these options are not available, they may have to pay for the Handivan service or walk.

Beausejour Handivan Inc.

Beausejour has two wheelchair accessible Handivans that provide transportation services to seniors or people with impairments. (See Figure 13). It provides weekly group excursions, rides within the community, and rides into Winnipeg.

To ensure seniors are aware of this service, group trip pamphlets are distributed at various businesses in town. This transportation option addresses a number of points outlined as important by *Global Age-Friendly Cities* including Age-Friendly vehicles, affordability, specialized services, and safety and comfort.



Figure 13. The Beausejour Handivan.

Transportation Network

The primary or most heavily used routes include Park Avenue, 1st Street, and Highway 44. Most other streets are secondary roads, used on a regular basis but not as much as primary roads, and tertiary roads include lanes and roads within cul-de-sac developments. There are only three roads that cross north to south over the train tracks. These are 1st Street, 3rd Street, and 5th Street.

All on street parking in Beausejour is free. Most is concentrated on Park Avenue where it is diagonal parking. This can be issue for both pedestrians and motorists in terms of visibility for parking and for crossing the street. There is limited accessible parking and what is available could be more clearly marked.

Automobile oriented planning has led to much single-use zoning around town. Large suburban areas are connected by wide roads to isolated recreation centres. The map below shows dots at two key locations in town: the main commercial area (on Park Avenue at Third Street) and the main recreation area (surrounding the SunGro Centre). The smaller circles identify a distance of 400 meters (a 5 minute walk). The larger circles identify a distance of 800 meters (or a 10 minute walk).

The circles show that Park Avenue is walkable from one end of the retail zone to the other. It is also within walking distance of the majority of residences in the town. However, Park Avenue is a 1.8 kilometer walk, too far for most people, from the SunGro Centre on James Avenue. It is also too far from the residential units that are being proposed in the new Third Street Development.

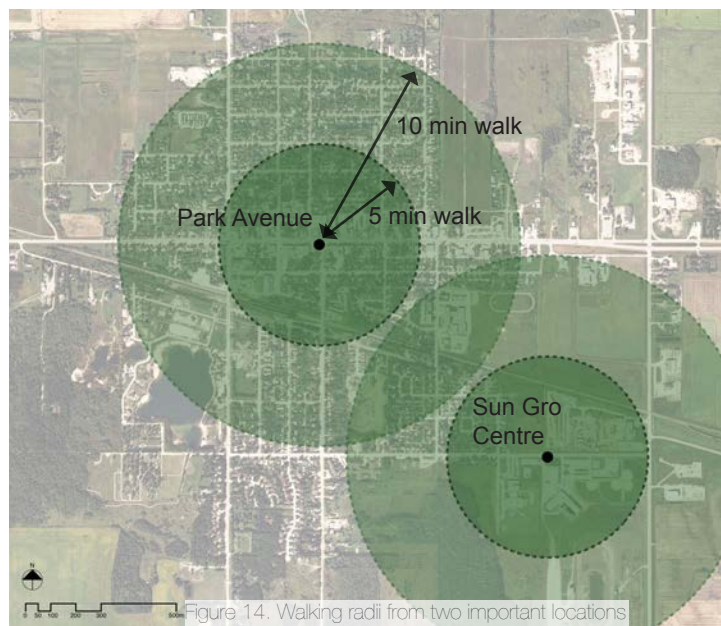


Figure 14. Walking radii from two important locations

Town Documentation & Analysis

Connectivity

According to *Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities*, seniors living in rural areas are less likely than those living in larger centres to have access to suitable transportation options. Because Beausejour has a higher-than-average population of seniors, there is an even more urgent need for better sidewalks and active transportation paths throughout town.

While many streets have sidewalks, Beausejour's overall sidewalk network is incomplete. Beausejour has a great opportunity to improve walkability because many services are already clustered in a few areas. Completing the sidewalk network will give residents more freedom to move through their town.

The map below highlights the gaps in the sidewalk network that need to be addressed in order to connect the places that seniors live to the places they need to get to fulfill their activities of daily living (Hodge, 2008).

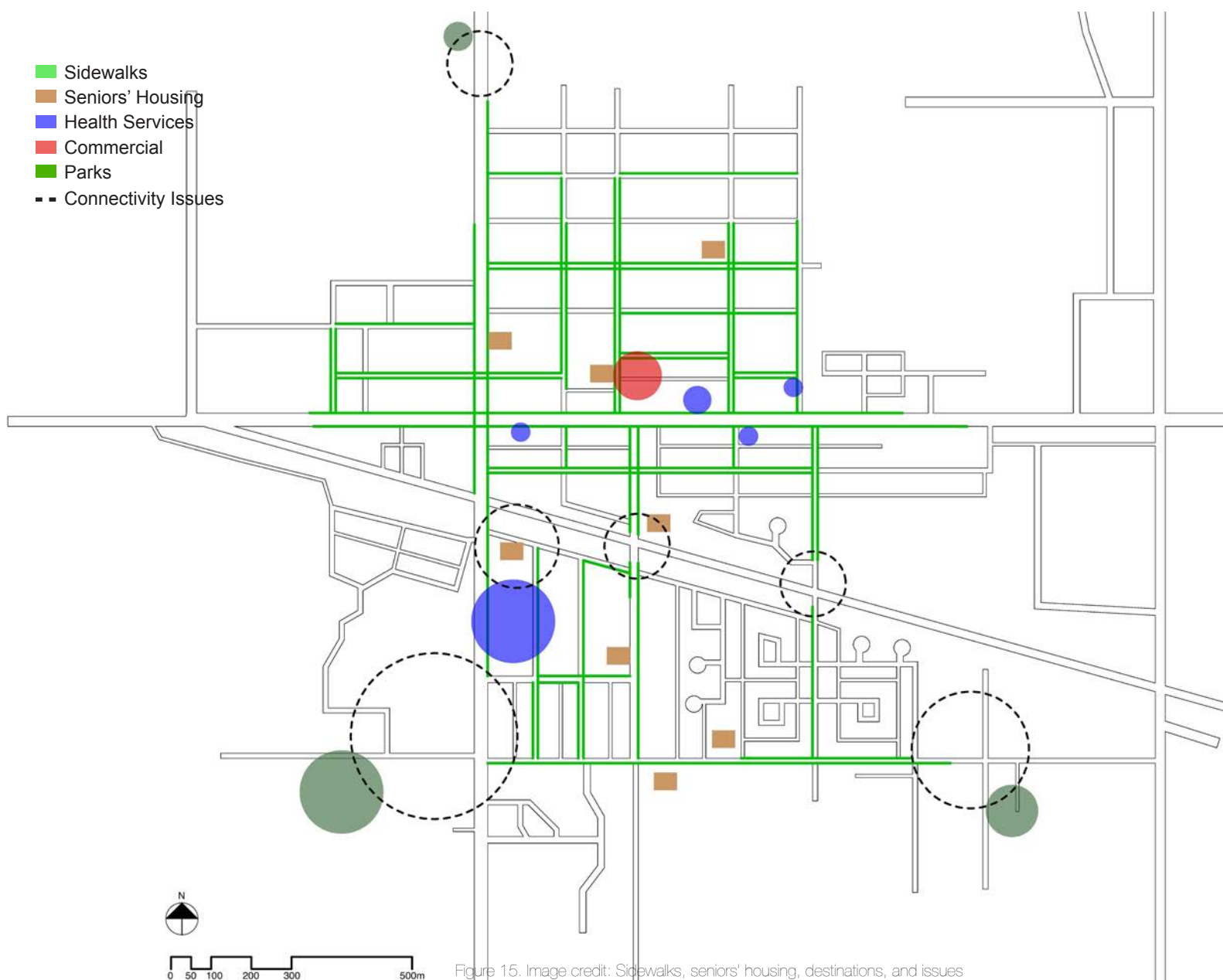


Figure 15. Image credit: Sidewalks, seniors' housing, destinations, and issues

Social Infrastructure

Events

The Town of Beausejour and volunteer organizations provide many community services, resources, and activities. All of these are particularly important for senior citizens because people of that age demographic are the most likely to suffer from mobility issues and social isolation (World Health Organization, 2007).

According to *Global Age-Friendly Cities*, a range of available activities and events is necessary to achieve age-friendliness.

Seniors in Beausejour are brought together in many ways through various events and organizations. These events encourage social interaction and participation and provide the opportunity to take pride in their community.

Some of these events include: the Beausejour Craft Show and Sale, the Old Time Dance, the Prairie Roots Garden Club, a German Ethnic Night, the Common Threads Quilt Group, a Polish Night, BJ Kickers: Line Dancing, and the Shades of the Past Car Show (Dubray et al., 2011).



Figure 16. Beausejour Seniors' Square Dancing.

Organizations & Locations

In a study by Statistics Canada in 2012, approximately one in four Canadian seniors expressed a desire to participate in more social and recreational activities. However, many activities in Beausejour take place in locations that may be difficult to get to for seniors. According to *Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities*, active and involved seniors are less likely to experience social isolation. Fortunately, Beausejour has a number of excellent organizations that provide social opportunities and resources for seniors.

Club 50 is an organization in Beausejour that is especially relevant to aging adults. This is a group of over one hundred seniors that get together on a monthly basis at the Brokenhead Community Club for a dinner and dance.

The Royal Canadian Legion #132 is another key destination for seniors in Beausejour. The Legion offers a number of social events that provide opportunities for social inclusion and support. This includes: support programs for veterans, darts on Wednesdays, Wednesday wing nights, cribbage Saturdays, Thursday night bingo, and Friday and Saturday meat draws. Organized sports provide great opportunities for seniors' to get involved, not only as a player but also as a coach. There are numerous leagues that seniors can join that provide great options for staying active. Some of these include the Ladies Golf League, Beausejour Mixed Golf League, and Beausejour Old Timers Hockey. The Beausejour Curling Club, located at the SunGro Centre, has Tuesday morning drop-in times and offers seniors a chance to play and coach (Dubray et al., 2011).

In total, there are more than twenty clubs and organizations for Beausejour residents to join, not counting the groups associated with churches and seniors' housing.



Figure 17. Royal Canadian Legion #132.

Resources

Seniors in Beausejour have access to numerous resources that can help them as they adapt to the challenges of growing old. The main resource centre for older adults in town is the Beau-Head Seniors Association, which has a small office on Park Avenue. Seniors who have internet capabilities can access the Brokenhead Outreach for Seniors Inc. website. This page has a wealth of resources for seniors including transportation options, housing, and entertainment.

Further transportation information for seniors can be found by talking to the Beausejour Handivan coordinators or by using an online resource called The Transportation Options Network. This provides guidance for seniors who can no longer drive, with specific information for those who live in rural areas (Beausejour & Brokenhead Development Corp., 2010).

Services

Beausejour has a wide range of services that can support physical problems associated with aging. The town has dental offices, an optometrist, an audiologist, a physiotherapist, and a chiropractor. Older adults with mental disabilities may access the services provided by the Association for Community Living, Beausejour Branch (ACL-BB). The ACL-BB has a retirement program that allows these residents to join other seniors for activities around town.

Information & Communication

There are multiple ways for seniors to access information regarding these services and resources. Many seniors find out about upcoming events and services from a seniors' column and classified section in *The Clipper* weekly newspaper. This newspaper also informs Beausejour residents about activities that are taking place in nearby communities like Selkirk, Oakbank, and Tyndall. Aside from the newspaper, seniors are able to get activity information from several places around town. There are poster boards in many local stores, an LED sign displaying events at the Credit Union on Park Avenue, and a prominent message area at the Daylily Gardens (off one of the main access roads into town).

Lastly, there are a number of event calendars and age-friendly resources available on the Internet. These resources can be found on the town's website (Our Home, Your Home) and at the home page for the Seniors Resource Network of Manitoba.



Figure 18. Beausejour Farmer's market.



Figure 19. Community information board at the library.



Figure 20. Community events displayed on credit union screen.

The Community said...

The first presentation to community council members and age-friendly community representatives was held on October 28, 2013. At this time the group presented their observations of Beausejour's history, physical and social characteristics, and current challenges. Park Avenue was recognized as a key feature of town, and the restaurants and cafes on Park were identified as informal social spaces, particularly for seniors. However, council members and community representatives noted that Park Avenue had also been an area of concern in recent years, with plans for improvements to address issues of safety. While there was an emphasis from attendees on improving Park Avenue through things like adding a median and widening sidewalks, it was also felt that commercial expansion was necessary, particularly to the vicinity of Park and Highway 44 where commercial development, including a Boston Pizza, are currently planned for development. The deputy mayor pointed out that the Town is in negotiations with the company that currently owns the old railway lands, to sell the land between Third and Fifth Street, since this is no longer an active railway line. This would create an opportunity for development of this land, which the deputy mayor envisions as infill housing developments and an active transportation route. This would address some of the connectivity issues identified by the research group.

There was an affirmation of Beausejour's residential character of large lots and single-family housing, but also that there is a shortage of housing for seniors in Beausejour, particularly affordable, multi-family rental housing options.



Figure 21. The group of students presenting observations and research at the first community meeting.



Figure 22. The community providing valuable feedback on initial presentation.

Goals & Objectives

Establishing a set of goals is essential to developing a strong vision for a planning project. Using the group's research from the age-friendly planning studio, readings and coursework, and the feedback from early stages of consultation with community members from Beausejour, the group identified three guiding goals. First, promoting long-term economic development, which addresses the interests of the Beausejour Development Corporation by tying the benefits of age-friendly planning to economic resiliency. Secondly, improving the quality of life for seniors recognizes the wide scope of planning opportunities available in the age-friendly literature. Lastly, improving accessibility and inclusivity, addresses the significant issue of isolation of seniors in the community. Together, these goals functioned as a framework within which precedents from other locations were researched, and which informed the group's strategies and early design concepts that began to address the needs of the community. The group focused on 4 areas: the development of Park Avenue, a trail network, new housing options, and social gathering spaces.



Figure 23. Exercise done by group to assist in determining goals, objectives, and strategies.

Process & Precedents

Precedents

The group used precedent research and the presentation of applicable examples of interventions that can address the four areas of focus and had the potential to be applied in Beausejour. The use of precedents help to augment the ideas and areas of focus, and also to provide real-life examples of what things might look like. In researching precedents, it was important that the municipality was similar to Beausejour, and so a priority was placed on finding examples from small towns in Canada or in the American Midwest, but applicable examples from around the world were used. These precedents were included in presentations to the community, and informed and influenced proposal ideas and drawings of sites in the group's final presentation.



Figure 24. Housing precedent in Berlin, Massachusetts.

Precedents research not only influenced the proposals, but functioned as a references during the consultation process. Community leaders are interested in results, therefore providing successfully implemented precedence in comparable communities supported the team's proposals. The following two pages outline the precedents that had the most positive response from the community.

Buildings & Open Space

Well designed built environments provide opportunities for social inclusion and an active lifestyle. Our team placed a particularly strong focus in research on Park Avenue, a walkable street that acts as the commercial and geographic heart of Beausejour. A wide range of downtown improvement initiatives were considered. Included in our final proposal are adaptive infill developments, facade improvements, pedestrian oriented streetscaping, and a road diet. These were presented to the community as examples of planning interventions Beausejour could adopt and to illustrate what makes a great small town main street.



Figure 25. Georgetown, Ontario.



Figure 26. Littleton, Colorado.

Housing

A shortage of different kinds of housing options, particularly affordable rental housing for seniors, was identified through the group's research. Precedents which could satisfy the unmet needs of the community yet preserve Beausejour's identity were considered. It was important that these precedents demonstrated a strong connection to nearby amenities. The ideas for rental apartments, housing developments among the Train Whistle Trail, and secondary suites (or granny flats) in back yards throughout Beausejour, were well received by the community.



Figure 27. Granny flat in Seattle, WA



Figure 28. Small apartment building in Portland, Oregon.

Process & Precedents

Transportation

Most of Beausejour is built on a grid network of streets, but sidewalk gaps, uneven surfacing, and an unused railway line create disjointed connectivity through town. In order to address these gaps in pedestrian connectivity, attention was paid to connections through improvements to the sidewalk network and developing a trail along the old railway line that could connect the major centres of activity in town. Precedents for different trail and sidewalk surfacing, street crossings, outdoor furniture and lighting, wayfinding signage, and the use of unused rail rights-of-way were considered.



Figure 29. Multi-use path integrated with existing sidewalk in Boston, Massachusetts.



Figure 30. Designated crossing in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Social Infrastructure

Beausejour has many social and recreational opportunities for seniors, but many of these are scattered across town and may be inaccessible. Precedents illustrated ways that social and recreational infrastructure could be strengthened by being centralized in well-connected areas of town. Precedents for indoor farmers' markets and a plaza space on sites similar to the underutilized Memorial Arena and the Beausejour water tower were found. In addition, examples of outdoor exercise equipment to promote physical activity among seniors were found for locations along the proposed Train Whistle Trail.

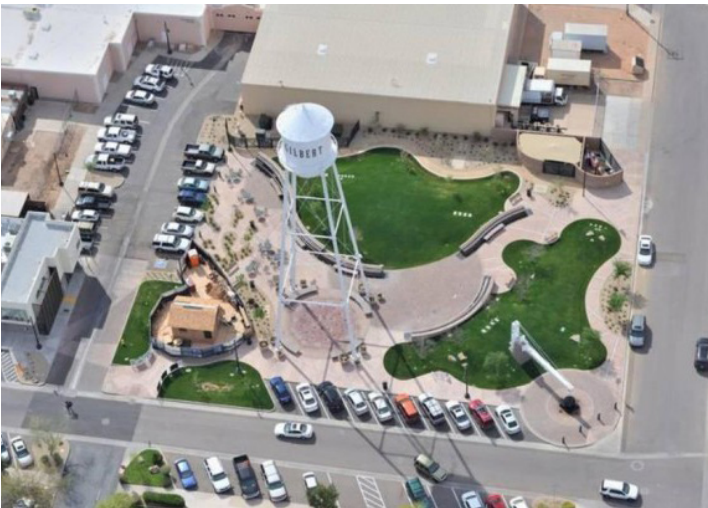


Figure 31. Water tower and public plaza, Gilbert, Arizona.



Figure 32. Indoor market in Toronto, Ontario.

The Community said...

On November 25, 2013 the group presented preliminary design proposals, including precedents for the development of Park Avenue, a trail network, new housing options, and social gathering spaces, which were informed by feedback from the October 28, 2013 presentation. The group also prepared five idea stations that included various activities facilitated by the group members that were meant to elicit thoughts and feedback from the meeting attendees. After the presentation, people attending the meeting were asked to take part in the activities and provide feedback on what they thought would or would not work in Beausejour. This feedback was valuable because it helped the group move forward in the right direction for the final parts of the project. However, fewer than ten people attended the meeting and so these activities were not necessarily representative of the entire community.

The importance of Park Avenue was reiterated by members of Council. Areas where pedestrian safety was a concern were identified, notably in front of the Post Office. Also related to Park Avenue, one of the meeting attendees suggested design standards could be put in place for renovations and new construction, so that Park Avenue could continue to reflect the heritage and feel of a small town main street. Secondary suites (or ‘granny flats’) were a precedent that was encouraged by attendees, and it was pointed out that examples of secondary suites already exist in Beausejour.

Lands for larger-scale housing development were noted as being north of Park Avenue and east of Fifth Street. This land is already serviced by sewer pipes. Other sites south of Park were identified and the potential land available on the former CP railway lands in the centre of town was also a place attendees were wanting to see a range of housing options built.



Figure 33. A group member receiving feedback from the deputy mayor of Beausejour.



Figure 34. One of the community engagement activities the group prepared.



Figure 34. The group further developing design concepts in studio space.

Intervention Overview

Beausejour has a wealth of existing assets and a number of dedicated people with a desire to improve it. This allowed the group to focus efforts on specific areas in order to improve age-friendliness and make the town function more effectively as a cohesive whole. The group proposed 4 strategies: the Train Whistle Trail Network, locations for additional housing developments, the reinvigoration of Park Avenue, and additional social infrastructure.

Community Vision

Train Whistle Trail & Network
Additional Housing
Reinvigoration of Park Avenue
Additional Social Infrastructure

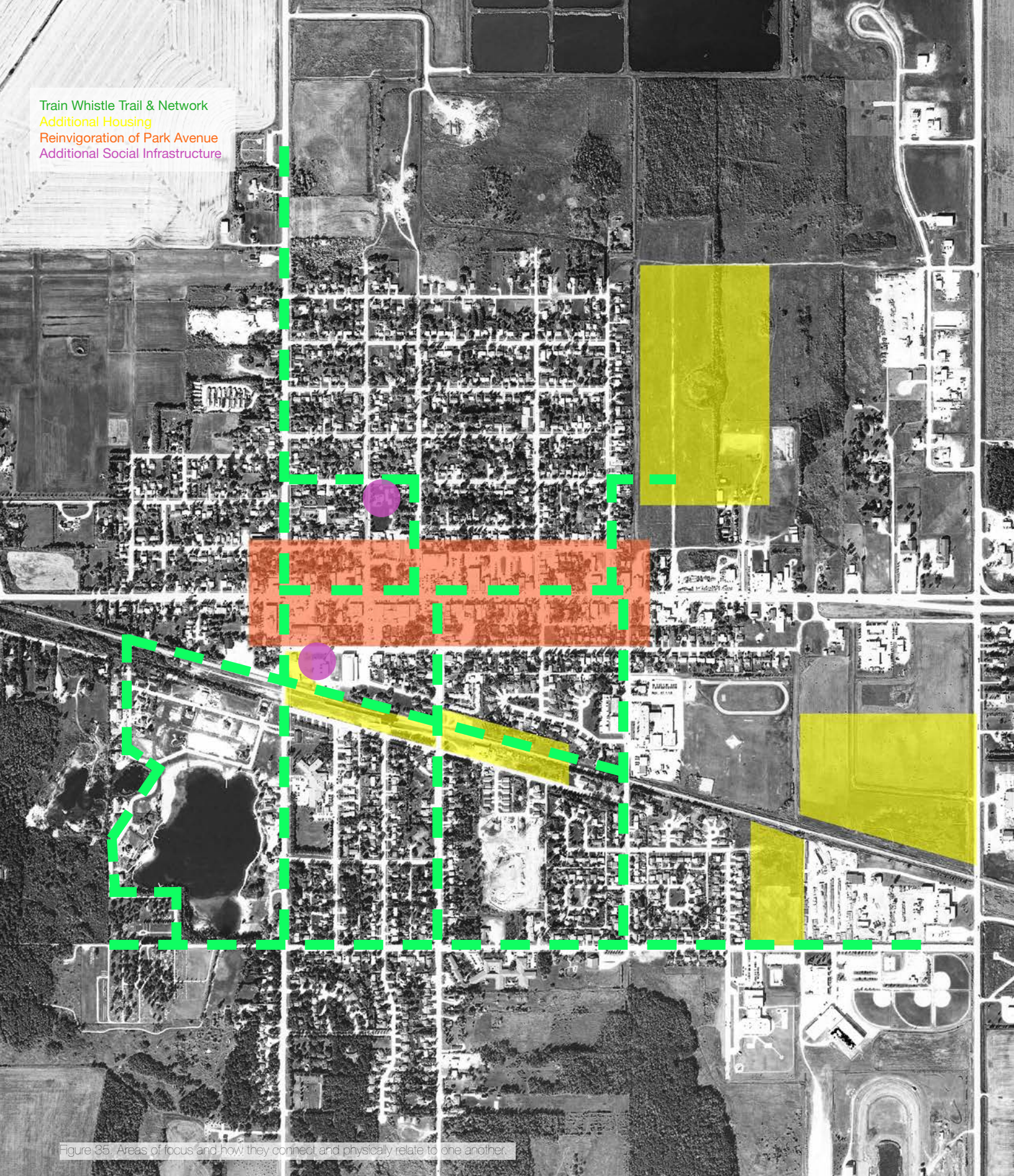


Figure 35. Areas of focus and how they connect and physically relate to one another.

Train Whistle Trail

What is it?

The Train Whistle Trail Network is a proposed system of sidewalks and pathways that address existing connectivity issues and promotes active transportation throughout the town. The trail will also open up additional commercial and residential development possibilities where it intersects with existing roads.

Why is it important?

Connectivity, accessibility and walkability have been identified as major areas of concern for residents within Beausejour. An accessible town-wide trail network has many possible benefits. It can enhance accessibility and inclusivity by improving existing pedestrian connections and creating new ones where necessary. It can enrich the quality of life for seniors as it offers an alternative way to get around town after they can no longer drive. This intervention also has the potential to contribute to economic development as parts of it may become destinations not only for residents of Beausejour but also for people from other towns or cities.

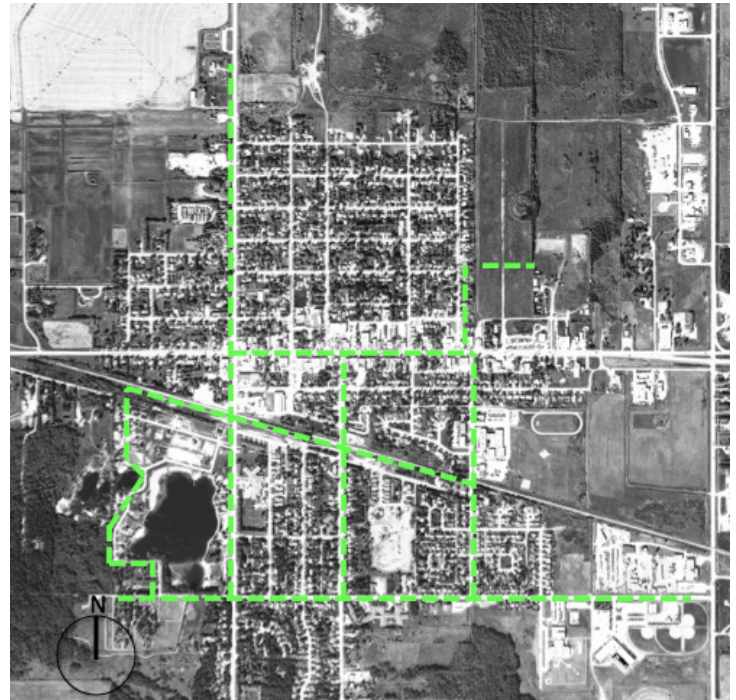


Figure 36. The proposed Train Whistle Trail & Network

The Network

The starting point is the existing Train Whistle Park, because of its central location and historical significance as the original train stop which the town was built around. The heart of the trail would be extended along the inactive CP rail line which would then be part of a wider town network that includes sidewalk improvements and constructing new sidewalks. The proposed trail would serve as a link between two major activity areas: Park Avenue and the Sun Gro Centre. These two areas are very important for seniors, as most commercial and recreational activities occur within them. The proposed network would improve accessibility, connectivity, and walkability throughout the town.

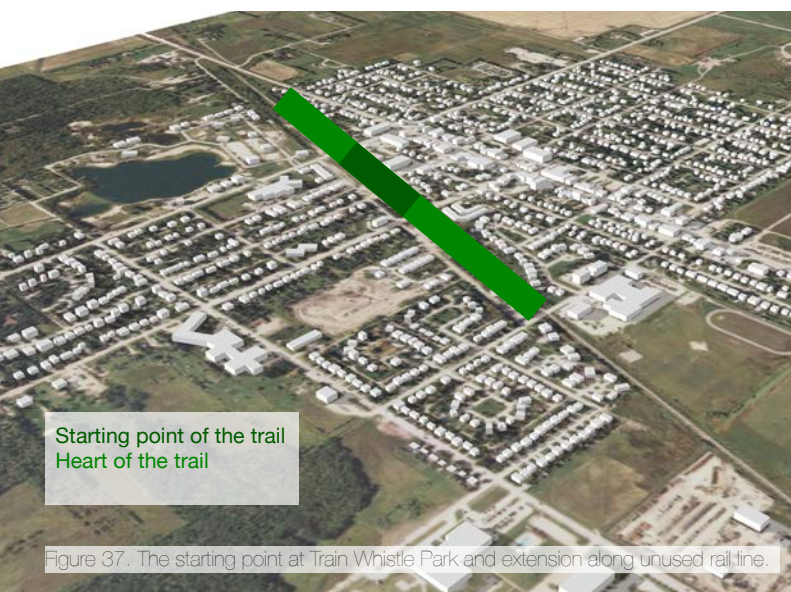


Figure 37. The starting point at Train Whistle Park and extension along unused rail line.

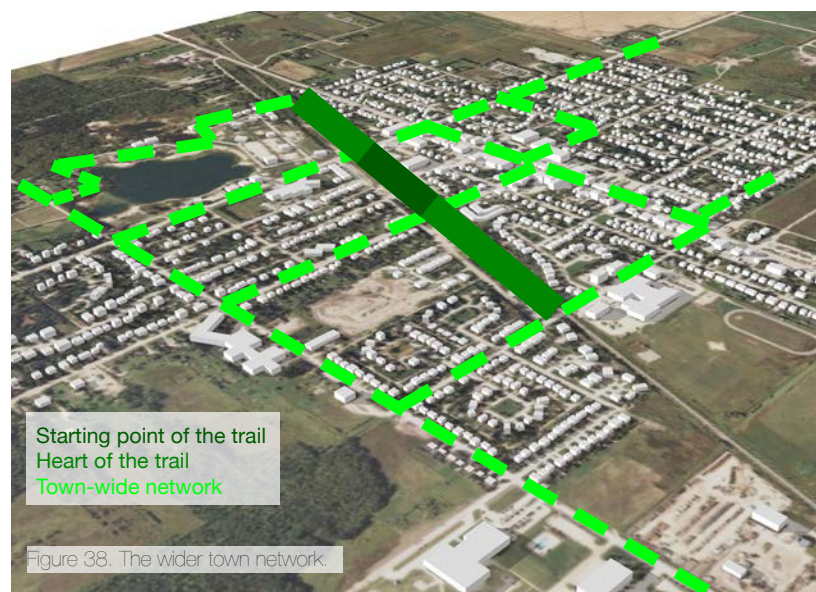


Figure 38. The wider town network.

Community Vision



Figure 39. Wayfinding signage designed for the city of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Identifiable wayfinding signs would start at the heart of the trail and continue throughout the town. This wayfinding strategy would assist residents to navigate through the network and encourage an active and healthy lifestyle. A good wayfinding strategy would not only assist seniors in orienting themselves, but could also reflect and represent the history of the area and subsequently contribute to a greater sense of place.



Figure 40. Wayfinding signage that reflects the history of the area.

A multi-purpose pathway that runs diagonally through the town may also alleviate social isolation for seniors. The incorporation of universal design features and the improvement of walking connections could help seniors to age actively. Major sidewalk improvements, the addition of a lane for cyclists, enhanced lighting and wayfinding signs will increase feelings of safety and address accessibility concerns within town.



Figure 41. Section at Fifth Street and Kaatz Drive, looking north.

The Train Whistle Trail Network could preserve and complement the natural environment and benefit people of all ages. Path connections could be incorporated through existing parks and green spaces, making them more accessible and connected to the community.

Parks that are more easily accessible have a greater chance of residents utilizing them. By connecting important parks and landmarks to the trail, seniors will have greater opportunity for staying active within their community.

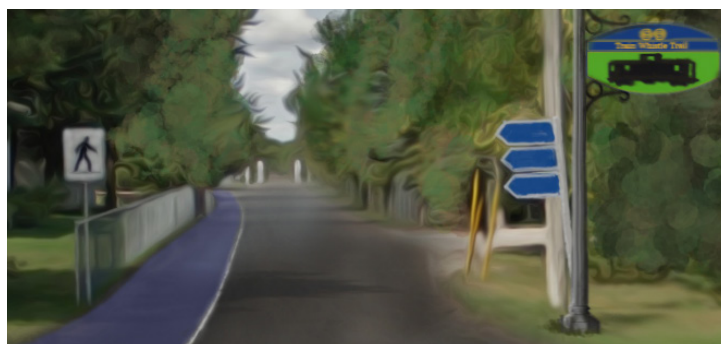


Figure 42. Pedestrian connection to Wally Chryplywy Park.

Train Whistle Trail

The Heart of the Trail

There are many possibilities for development along the unused rail line. This area will serve as the heart of the trail and function as an exciting destination in itself, not only for residents but also for people passing through, attending a festival, or simply looking for a place to visit for the day. The group has proposed affordable housing opportunities, a water tower plaza, a new location for the farmers' market, and a stage or picnic area within this area. These amenities would function as social gathering places for residents and visitors throughout the year.



Figure 43. Plan view of the heart of Train Whistle Trail, between First Street South and Third Street South.

Community Vision

A Walk Along the Trail



Figure 44. Proposed band-stand and outdoor concert area.

A bandstand could be located on the trail. Community plays, high school bands and church picnics could be hosted here. An area like this would provide a centrally located gathering space that could foster a sense of community.



Figure 45. Outdoor bandstand in Victoria, BC.



Figure 46. Existing park area could be enhanced.

Serving as a meeting place for residents and visitors alike, the trail could be a major hub of activity, and a destination for day trippers. The group has identified a need for amenities and has proposed the addition of sheltered picnic areas along the trail.



Figure 47. Picnic area in North Tahoe, CA.



Figure 48. Path crossing Third Street South.

Having available and affordable housing in the right location would improve quality of life, inclusivity and accessibility for seniors. Adequate housing can also allow seniors to age in place. Constructing housing in this central location would allow for easy access to the trail and other key services.



Figure 49. Path through housing in Berlin, MA.

Housing

Opportunities

Beausejour's rapidly-growing population and the long wait-lists for seniors' residences means that new housing is a high priority for the town.

During one community meeting, council members identified a number of housing styles and types that would compliment Beausejour's existing housing stock (see Community Consultation & Feedback, p.20). Several infill and new development locations were then identified where these housing types could be placed.



Figure 50. Potential locations for new housing.

The community also provided positive response to the concept of secondary suits or granny flats. These can be located throughout the town as they are stand alone units that are built on existing residential lots. The group felt it was important to communicate that Manitoba Housing provides financial support to eligible homeowners interested in constructing a secondary suite on their property providing they follow certain criteria.

Possible areas for development

There are several locations where new housing would fit in Beausejour within walking distance of current amenities. It is important to note that each of the styles that were identified can be a number of different tenure types.

There is room to develop several multi-story apartment buildings in the area near the town water tower in conjunction with a plaza. These could be sold as condominiums or rental units. Bungalow-style housing could be arranged around a public space in the old CP rail bed beside the Train Whistle Trail. Additional row-houses and seniors' housing could be located in new developments north of Park Avenue or around the Sun Gro Centre.



Figure 51. Apartment building in Portland, OR.



Figure 52. Affordable housing in Seattle, WA.



Figure 53. Cohousing in Berlin, MA.



Figure 54. Secondary suite



Figure 55. Secondary suite

Community Vision

Possibilities



Reinvigoration of Park Avenue

What is it?

Park Avenue already has a fantastic small town main street feel, but could benefit from preservation and enhancement initiatives. Enhancing the pedestrian experience, reinforcing the small town main street image, and de-emphasizing the automobile are three general approaches which we have recommended. Above all, preservation of historic and current street qualities were a priority.

Our approach strives to create a 'resilient downtown,' a space which recognizes the contributions of seniors, celebrates historic legacies, attracts new residents, and continues to focus business growth in downtown areas.

Why is it important?

Commercial main streets occupy an important place in a small community's economic, social, and cultural identity. A healthy main street provides an inviting venue for socialization, walkable shopping opportunities, places to live and work, and invites new visitors from outside the community.

The combination of increasing density and making the street more pedestrian-friendly can have a powerful effect on the success of Park Avenue in the future. The group was acutely aware transforming Park Avenue could be a lengthy and complicated process and so looked at both short-term and long-term strategies.

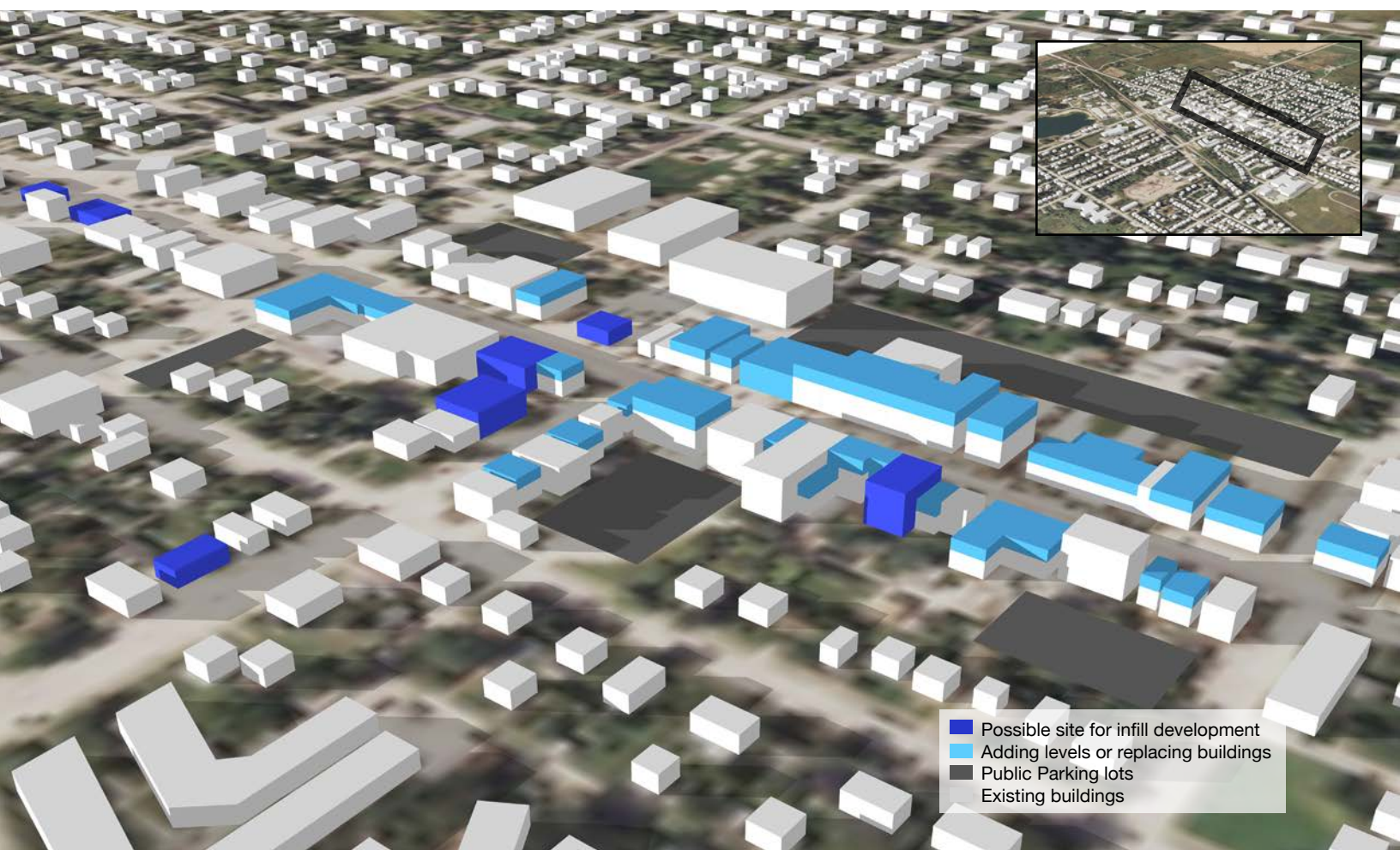


Figure 58. Two ways of increasing density on Park Avenue.

Short-term strategies

New Development

It is important to encourage new development within walking distance of the existing cluster of businesses. This will create a healthy amount of competition and make the street more walkable.

Determining Design Standards

It is important to simultaneously identify design and accessibility standards for new development. This will help to maintain and improve the traditional small town main street feel and strengthen a sense of place and identity. Many towns across North America have already implemented design standards for their main streets.

Begin a Road Diet

A road diet is a restructuring of the street to make it more pedestrian-friendly and less dominated by the car. Much of the success of Park Avenue rests on the ability to make it attractive, comfortable, and safe for pedestrians. In this stage it could be as simple as painting new lines on the street to add bike lanes and incorporate a shared turning lane.

Additional Crosswalks

The intensification of Park Avenue will likely result in additional foot traffic, so more crosswalks will be needed. We propose a number of new crosswalks, notably at Park Avenue and Third Street. This will allow pedestrians to cross the street safely in areas where jay walking is a problem, like close to the Post Office and the Marketplace Co-op.



Figure 59. Infill opportunities on Park Avenue focusing on the importance of storefronts.

Long-term strategies

Continue Road Diet

Vibrant street life encourages drivers to slow down, stop, and visit. Constructing bump-outs will not only slow traffic, making it safer for pedestrians, but will also encourage people to enjoy Park Avenue's unique character instead of racing out to a generic restaurant on the edge of town. This intervention is dependant on communication between Beausejour and the highway maintenance department because Park Avenue is part of a provincial highway. Bump-outs have been successfully added in other rural communities like Morris, Manitoba.

Increasing Density

The economic resilience of Park Avenue can be encouraged through increasing density by continuing to cluster commercial development in this area. Businesses do well when they are within walking distance from one another, because customers appreciate getting higher value from their automobile trips.

New Parking

As a part of making Park Avenue more pedestrian-friendly, the angled parking which currently exists could be replaced with parallel parking. With the changes in roadway proposed (road diet), there may be a need for increased parking spaces. Public parking lot space should be located off the main street, behind the main storefronts.

Bring Back the Lights

Park Avenue was once referred to as the Million Dollar Mile. Bringing the iconic street lighting back offers an incredible opportunity to celebrate Beausejour's history and to make it distinct once again. To avoid additional costs this should only be implemented after the highway has been redone.



Figure 60. A shared turning lane and painted bike lane.



Figure 61. Park Avenue at night, circa 1940s.

Reinvigoration of Park Avenue

What it could be

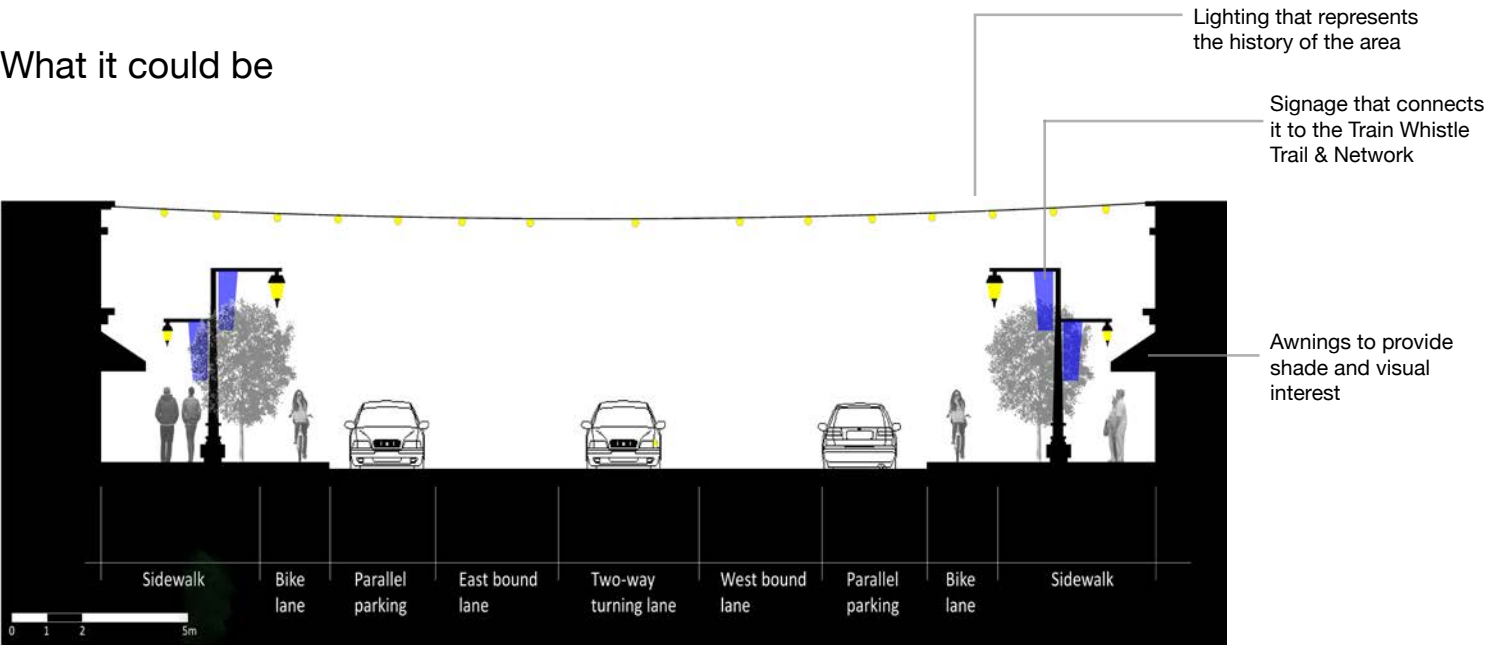


Figure 62. Section of Park Avenue after all strategies have been implemented.

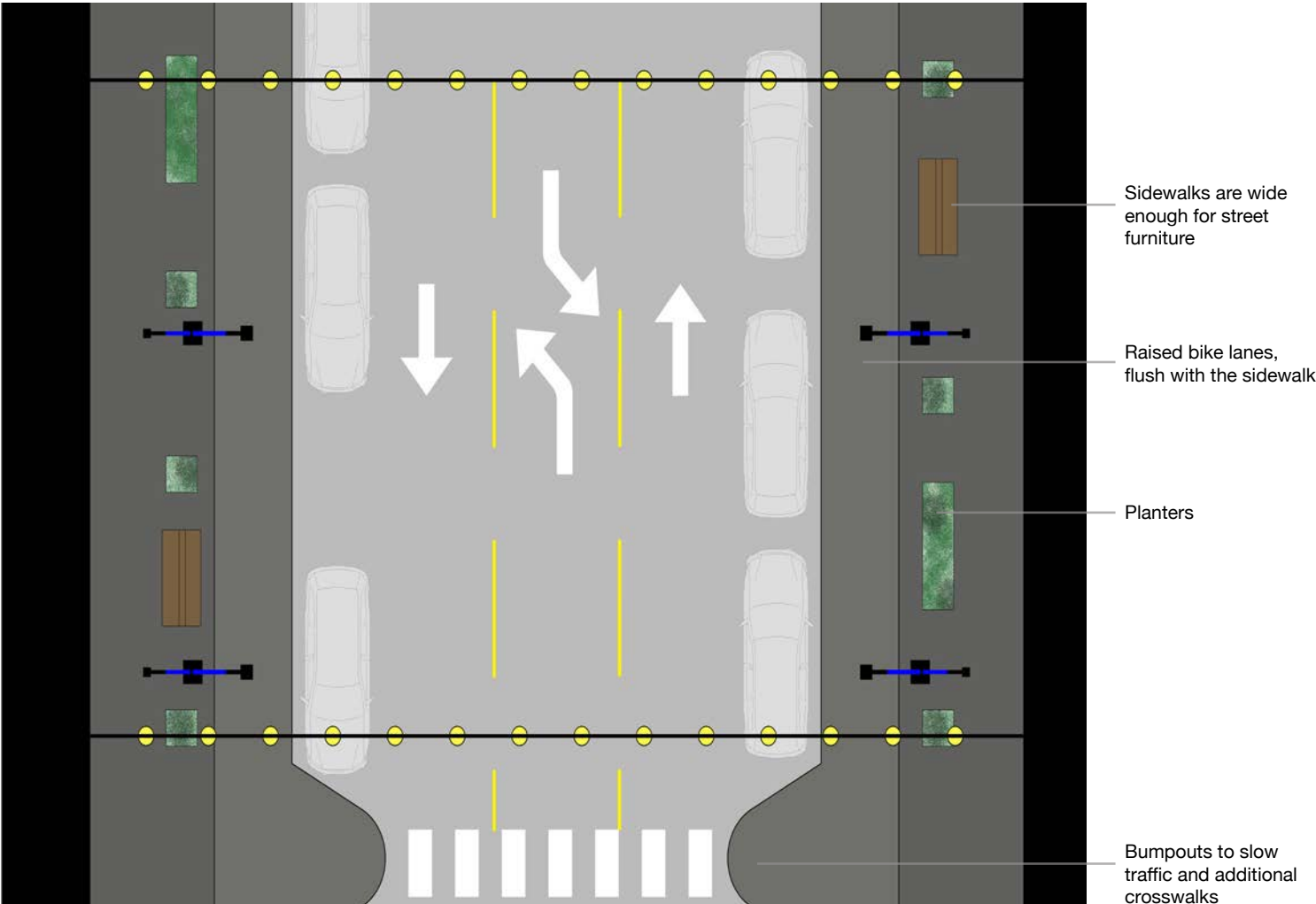


Figure 63. Plan view of Park Avenue after all strategies have been implemented.

Community Vision

The group envisioned a main street that could meet the needs of all residents of Beausejour: a place where families could spend the evening together and greet their neighbors under the warm glow of the million dollar mile lights. This is possible.



Figure 64. Perspective of Park Avenue on a winters evening.

Social Participation

Opportunities

Beausejour residents of all ages already have the opportunity to participate in the many social activities and community events put on by the town's churches, clubs, and other organizations (see Town Documentation & Analysis above). However, there are opportunities to improve access to the areas where these social activities take place.

Many events are held at the Royal Canadian Legion building or the Sun Gro Centre in the south end of town, where pedestrian access is limited. The Beausejour Farmers' Market is even more remote, as it currently operates out of a location three kilometres east of town. Furthermore, some weekly events have no location information available online. Thus, seniors who may be interested in these events may not have the information required to actually attend.

Beausejour must therefore look at ways to make these social events more accessible to seniors. While it is important to provide activities and events specifically for seniors, it is also important to ensure they are included in all social events and activities in order to encourage intergenerational relationship building. There are a number of ways this could be accomplished: First, the Beausejour Farmers' Market should be relocated from its current location to a more central one. Second, a community gathering space or plaza could be created. Third, a youth and seniors' drop-in centre and outdoor exercise environment could be built in a central location.

Farmers' Market

Bringing the market inside the town of Beausejour would promote local agriculture and crafts: two industries that have declined in the Brokenhead region over the last census period (Beausejour & Brokenhead Development Corp., 2010).

The ideal space for such a market would be near Park Avenue, the main retail area in the town. One possibility (provided by a community member during a consultation) would be to locate the market in the Broken-Beau Pioneer Museum north of Park. This would provide a lively and interesting space for a market.

Another possibility for a location would be to situate the farmers' market between Park Avenue and Train Whistle Park, making it most accessible to the rest of town (especially the new residential developments planned south of Park Avenue).

An ideal location for this plan is the old Memorial Arena at Second Street and Ashton. The Arena is a historical landmark that is now being used to store heavy equipment for the municipality. This equipment could be easily relocated to the industrial area of town, and with a few small changes, the arena could be adaptively reused as an indoor market. This would give the farmers' market a permanent identifiable location that would be sheltered from the elements. In nice weather, the market could spill out the back doors of the arena on to the proposed Train Whistle Trail.



Figure 65. The Beausejour Farmers' Market could be moved to the old Memorial Arena.

Community Vision

Youth & Seniors' Drop-In Centre

Beausejour could benefit from having a central location for seniors' activities that currently take place in private residences or in remote parts of town. At the same time, there is a need for a youth drop-in centre, which could be a safe place for young people to gather for indoor and outdoor social activities.

A combined youth and seniors centre would encourage intergenerational activity and create a lively space that could be frequented by different groups at different times of the day. Seniors, for example, could make the most use of the space during the time when young people are in school. This drop-in centre should be placed in a central location. One potential area is on the Sunrise Education Centre lot north of Park Avenue on Second Street. This location is a former school building now used by the school division for offices. Its gym has been designated for public use, but this potential has not been realized, according to community members. The Drop-In Centre could be adapted into the Sunrise Building, or a new building could be built on the grass lot to the north.

Outdoor Exercise Environment

A grass lot between the Sunrise Centre and a community playground north of Park Avenue could be used for an outdoor exercise environment for adults. This would cluster three uses together: the Drop-In Centre, the exercise space, and a playground. This would allow adults to exercise while watching their children play. It would also create a well-used, vibrant outdoor space near the Drop-in Centre.

Water Tower Plaza

The Beausejour water tower is the most distinct landmark in the town. However, it is currently only enjoyable from afar, seeing as it sits in the middle of a gravel parking lot.

With some landscaping work, this parking lot could be transformed into a social plaza that would link the Beausejour Provincial Building to the Train Whistle Park. The plaza could feature trees, seating, and a splash pad that could serve residents on the west side of town.



Figure 66. Water Tower Plaza.



Figure 67. Youth & Seniors' Drop-in Centre, with an outdoor exercise environment in background.

The Community said...

The final presentation was held on December 9, 2013 at the SunGro Centre. Members of Town Council, the Age-Friendly Committee, and members of the general public, including local seniors, were in attendance. Attendees reiterated that the Town was still in negotiation regarding acquiring the railway lands, but that the proposal presented was in line with their ideas for the this area. One councillor noted that removing the railway tracks would allow for easier street crossings for wheelchairs (ie, on Third Street).

Ideas for Park Avenue were received positively by members of Town Council, noting that they are in discussion with the Province for street improvement funding on Park Avenue. The few seniors who were in attendance fondly recalled a busy Park Avenue on Saturday evenings in decades past. The creation of new recreational spaces that was linked through a trail network was well-received.

The feedback from these meetings were very informative, and gave a general sense that attending community members strongly value Park Avenue as an important destination; the former rail lands in the centre of town present an excellent opportunity for new housing and greenspace development; that more housing options for seniors is desperately needed; and that a wealth of social activities for seniors is highly prioritized.



Figure 68. Community members interacting with prepared boards.



Figure 69. Community members watching the presentation.

Final Thoughts

These early design concepts attempt to increase the ability of Beausejour residents to age in place, not only something that most seniors explicitly desire, but something that we can all benefit from thinking about earlier in life. People are all happier when they are healthy and older adults are no exception. An active and connected community is a healthy one. That is what this group has tried to imagine for Beausejour.

The concepts we have identified in this report build on the rich history and the many strengths that already exist in Beausejour. The Train Whistle Trail Network reimagines the CP rail line that first made Beausejour a great place to stop. The redevelopment of the Memorial Arena into an indoor farmers' market recalls Beausejour's agricultural and recreational heritage. And our proposals for Park Avenue aim to reinvigorate the vibrant main street feel that once gave it the nickname, "The Million Dollar Mile."

We were pleased with and grateful for the willingness of Beausejour's councilors and development workers to engage with our ideas during this studio project. We hope that the community will be able to use our proposals in continuing to make Beausejour a place that is inclusive and accessible to people of all ages.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks our studio instructors, Dr. Richard Milgrom and Molly Johnson from the Department of City Planning at the University of Manitoba for their guidance and insight during this project. We would also like to thank Anna Wolonciej Mondor and the other members of the Beausejour Brokenhead Development Corporation for their work in initiating this project and organizing the community meetings. Lastly, we would like to thank the members of the Beausejour Age-Friendly Committee and the other residents of Beausejour that came out to the meetings and provided valuable feedback; your informative feedback and kind words were an inspiration to our group.

Figure 1. Beausejour within the R.M. of Brokenhead. Source: Base map from Google Maps, modified by Gaelen Pierce.

Figure 2. Park Avenue c. 1911 photograph. Source: University of Alberta Peel Library.

Figure 3. Population growth diagram. Information Source: Regional Economic Assessment Process for Beausejour Brokenhead Development Corporation, diagram Created by Adam Kroeker.

Figure 4. Manitoba population pyramid. Information Source: Dubray et al., 2011. Diagram recreated by Adam Kroeker.

Figure 5. Land Use map of Beausejour. Source: Created by Lea Rempel, base map from the province of Manitoba, Manitoba Land Initiative.

Figure 6. Train Whistle Park. Source: Photo taken by Lea Rempel (2013).

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