6 PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

Public spaces such as parks and sidewalks make up a large part of people's urban experiences. There are several opportunities within the CDP area and public rights-of-way for enhancements to the overall greenspace and streetscape.

6.1 STREETSCAPE

Improving the identity, aesthetics, and general pedestrian comfort of the streetscape is a significant part of adding to the appeal of Bank Street. The enhancement and introduction of parkettes, public art, street trees and lighting will aid in enriching the overall streetscape.

6.1.1 STREET TREES

Trees in an urban landscape create spatial patterns which enhance the experience of moving through a particular space. Trees help connect the shape and scale of buildings with the streetscape and contribute to the overall identity and feel of a space. They ameliorate the microclimate, provide pedestrian comfort, and contribute to the environmental health of the area.

Trees should be used to improve the overall aesthetics and unique identity of the study area. Trees should be planted every 7 to 10 metres in the setback of the public ROW (provided that there is sufficient space) to establish an avenue of mature trees which gives character, identity and distinction to Bank Street as an important pedestrian and automobile route. When site conditions make it impossible to achieve this in the public ROW, the City will encourage private landowners to plant trees in the front yard setback areas to complement the public realm plantings.

Trees are not intended to be located in the boulevard (area between the sidewalk and the road) due to restricted space available and low probability of survival. The successful establishment of healthy and mature urban trees is dependent on adequate soil volume, drainage, and quality (most commonly affected by road salt). Achieving an adequate soil volume for trees in an urban environment can be challenging considering the high demand on available space.

There are several planting pit options which can be implemented to improve the soil conditions of trees and the chances of long term growth success that should be applied when considering tree plantings in the public ROW setback and private development sites. Appropriate selection of a planting pit option will require an understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of each type of planting pit as well as the existing conditions and constraints of each potential planting site when developing a landscape plan.

i. Root paths: long and narrow topsoil paths between planting pits provide additional soil volume.
ii. Soil trenches: Linear trenches that extend out from the planting pit and under adjacent paving.
iii. Structural soils: soils which are engineered to be compacted while still providing space for water and organic material.
iv. Structured cells/vaults: a modular system of plastic cells which provides space for soil while supporting adjacent paving.

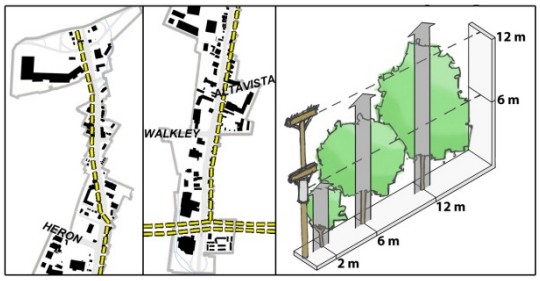
Street tree locations should be coordinated with underground utilities and infrastructure to minimize root pruning during utility maintenance, mitigate potential damage and to ensure optimum tree growth.

Street Trees and Overhead Power Lines

As overhead power lines run parallel with Bank Street, both the type of tree and planting site must be considered to avoid interfering with overhead utilities. Figure 6.1 illustrates the minimum setbacks for low, medium, and tall trees. Based on Hydro Ottawa regulations, trees planted adjacent to the sidewalk should be planted away from overhead utilities at least the distance of the height of the tree at maturity. In areas where space is limited, it is recommended that trees with a shorter mature canopy be planted to avoid contact between branches and overhead wires.

The CDP does not recommend burying the overhead wires because of the high financial costs. The City's Underground Wiring Policy (2011) concluded that the undergrounding of overhead wires on the City's right-of-way be undertaken only when the full cost of burial is paid for by the requesting party, or as otherwise approved by Council on a case-by-case basis. If the City were to consider burying overhead wires, priority areas would be corridors such as Traditional Mainstreets. As illustrated in Figure 6.1, utility lines extend from the hydro corridor south of Walkley up the east side of Bank Street to Evans Boulevard, where they switch over to the west side of Bank Street and continue to Riverside Drive.

Figure 6.1 | Existing Hydro Pole Street-side Alignment with Recommended Street Tree Setbacks



(Right-side figure adapted from Hydro Ottawa, 2009/10)

6.1.2 PARKETTES

During the stakeholder consultation, the study area was described as a hostile environment for pedestrians and cyclists. There is a general lack of seating, rest and refuge areas, greenspace, and appropriate microclimatic spaces for those moving along the street edge.

The introduction of public parkettes, private patios and courtyards will greatly increase the comfort of pedestrians while improving the overall streetscape appeal and aesthetic. Furthermore, given the current character of the streetscape, parkettes are an excellent way to integrate additional trees and help create a more consistent setback by filling in some of the setback gaps.

A parkette is generally a small piece of unused/underutilized land or building frontage that has been converted into greenspace, recreational area, playground, or simple seating area. Figure 6.2 illustrates a possible parkette design. The introduction of parkettes along the corridor is ideal in that they require a small footprint but considerably enhance the local pedestrian environment.

Figure 6.2 | Parkette Design Concept

Parkettes should be located at regular intervals (every 400-600 metres or 1-2 every block) and near publicly active areas including retail locations, street corners and transit stops. Where public space is limited, private businesses should make provisions for seating and greenscaping as part of the building street frontage.

Parkettes will adhere to the principles laid out in the Access for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

and Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and be designed as comfortable and safe spaces for the public. Design considerations should include appropriate seating, bike racks, trash receptacles and/or plantings of native trees and shrubs, which provide both summer and winter interest.

The desired microclimate of the space should be considered when designing the parkette. The orientation and type of seating, placement and type of plant, hardscaping, and overall context of the site are all factors in ensuring that the parkette will be comfortable throughout all the seasons.

Existing parkette on Bank Street in Old Ottawa South (MMM Group, 2011)

6.1.3 GATEWAYS AND ENTRANCE FEATURES

Gateways and entrance features can be thought of as a natural or built structure that reflects the local culture, history, natural landscape or built form. Typically located in the ROW of arterial roads, they are designed to be distinctive, attractive and long lasting features which define community boundaries, symbolize an arrival to a specific community or area and enhance the surrounding landscape while assisting in wayfinding.

Gateway Lookout at Rideau River/Billings Bridge Area

The intersection of Billings Bridge with Riverside Drive is a major transition from Old Ottawa South to Bank Street south of the Rideau River. Furthermore, the corners where the bridge meets Riverside Drive is a very active but hostile area for pedestrians, cyclists and automobiles due to the constrained space. As such, there is the opportunity to introduce a gateway which announces this transition while significantly improving the public realm.

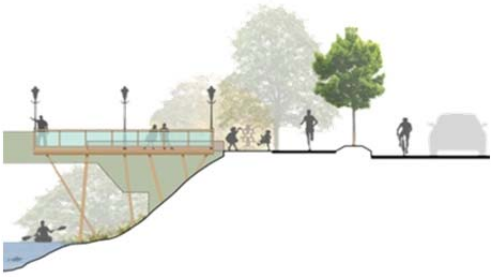
The lack of space at the corners of Billings Bridge and Riverside Drive forms a choke point for pedestrians and cyclists travelling along Bank Street and those moving along the NCC multi-use pathway. A platform should be constructed over the embankment to create an overlook. It should be designed to integrate into the Billings Bridge when it is reconstructed. The platforms would significantly increase the space at the corners and thus lower conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and the roadway. Additionally, the platforms would capitalize on the opportunity to appreciate the views of the Rideau River. The design and approvals phase of the project will determine how pedestrians and cyclists maneuver on and around the lookout to avoid conflicts.

The platforms should be an integrated design serving as a marque landmark and gateway to Bank Street south of the Rideau River while creating a refuge and meeting area for the public with opportunities for public art, information plaques and wayfinding.

Location of Proposed Lookout platforms (Google Maps, 2011)

Existing view from Billings Bridge (MMM Group, 2011)

Lookout platform concept rendering



Lookout platform concept section

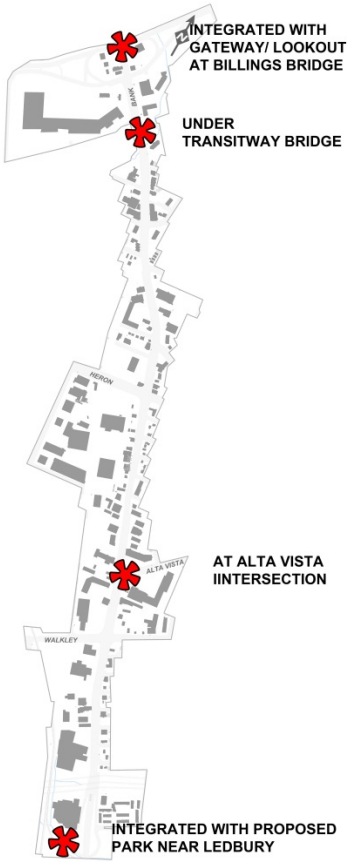
6.1.4 PUBLIC ART

Public art should be installed in several locations within the study area. Public art will improve the streetscape and help foster a sense of identity. Figure 6.3 illustrates the strategic locations for public art, which are:

i. Integrated with the proposed Rideau River platform/lookout;
ii. Under the Transitway bridge;
iii. At Alta Vista Drive / Bank Street intersection; and
iv. Integrated with the design of the proposed public greenspace near Ledbury Park.

Public art in the CDP area should be undertaken and supported by the City of Ottawa Public Art Program, which can commission artwork, work with community groups, and/or hold local design competitions. The final locations for public art installation should be determined by the artist in collaboration with the City.

Figure 6.3 | Priority Public Art Locations



6.1.5 STREET LIGHTING

Street and pedestrian level lighting should be on shared poles where possible and practical. Tall height lighting equipment should be located at the curbside to create a sense of separation from vehicular traffic.

Pedestrian and roadway lighting along Perth Street in Richmond, ON (MMM Group, 2011)

Tall height lighting equipment is comprised of a 9.8 metre or 10.7 metre high pole with a decorative luminaire, side mounted onto the pole with a bracket arm. The City of Ottawa Right-of-Way Lighting Policy (2009) specifies that the tall height lighting equipment is to be used on its own for rights-of-way along Arterial Mainstreets and also in conjunction with 'short-height' poles in all other "Special Areas."

Short-height lighting equipment is typically used for pedestrian scale lighting. The equipment is made up of a 4.3 metre high decorative pole or a 4.6 metre standard pole and a top decorative luminaire.

It is suggested that the tall height lighting equipment be used in conjunction with short height poles (when shared poles for lighting are not an option) to make a more unique and comfortable pedestrian environment as well as contributing to a sense of identity for Bank Street and improving the continuity of the streetscape.

Figure 6.4 | Decorative Lighting Assemblies for Short Height Poles (City of Ottawa Right-of-Way Lighting Policy, 2009)

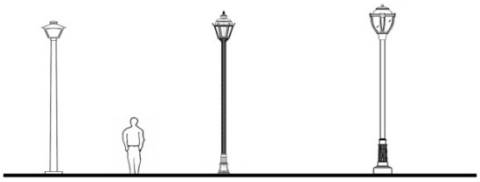
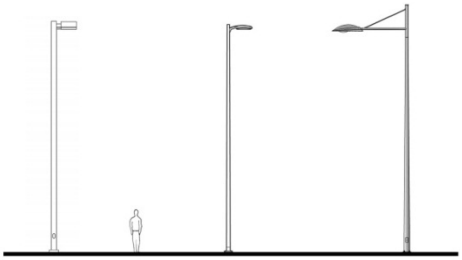


Figure 6.5 | Decorative Lighting Assemblies for Tall Height Poles (City of Ottawa Right-of-Way Lighting Policy, 2009)



6.1.6 COMMERCIAL SIGNAGE

Signage must accommodate the needs of business owners while respecting the character and aesthetics of the Bank Street area. Signage should be designed to promote a pedestrian oriented streetscape while still being visible to automobiles. Signage should not result in undue clutter or distractions for drivers.

Retailers which have signs facing perpendicular to the street assists pedestrians in locating retail locations (City of Ottawa Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines, 2007)

The City of Ottawa's Urban Design Guidelines for Large Format Retail, Gas Stations, and Development along Arterial Mainstreets highlight

several guidelines for signage related policies. Commercial owners and tenants should refer to these documents together with the CDP when considering signage location, design, and scale.

Context sensitive signage with focused lighting on Richmond Street in Westboro (MMM Group, 2011)

Signage must be designed to have focused illumination which avoids light pollution including glare and light spillover towards adjacent land uses. Signage should respect the character and scale of the area. With this is mind, buildings should be designed to accommodate signs that complement both the buildings scale and architectural features.

It is important that signage be used to identify and distinguish between uses where there are multiple buildings on a site. However, individual signs should not be allowed to dominate a site or public spaces. Signage should not contravene the City's Permanent Signs on Private Property By-law.

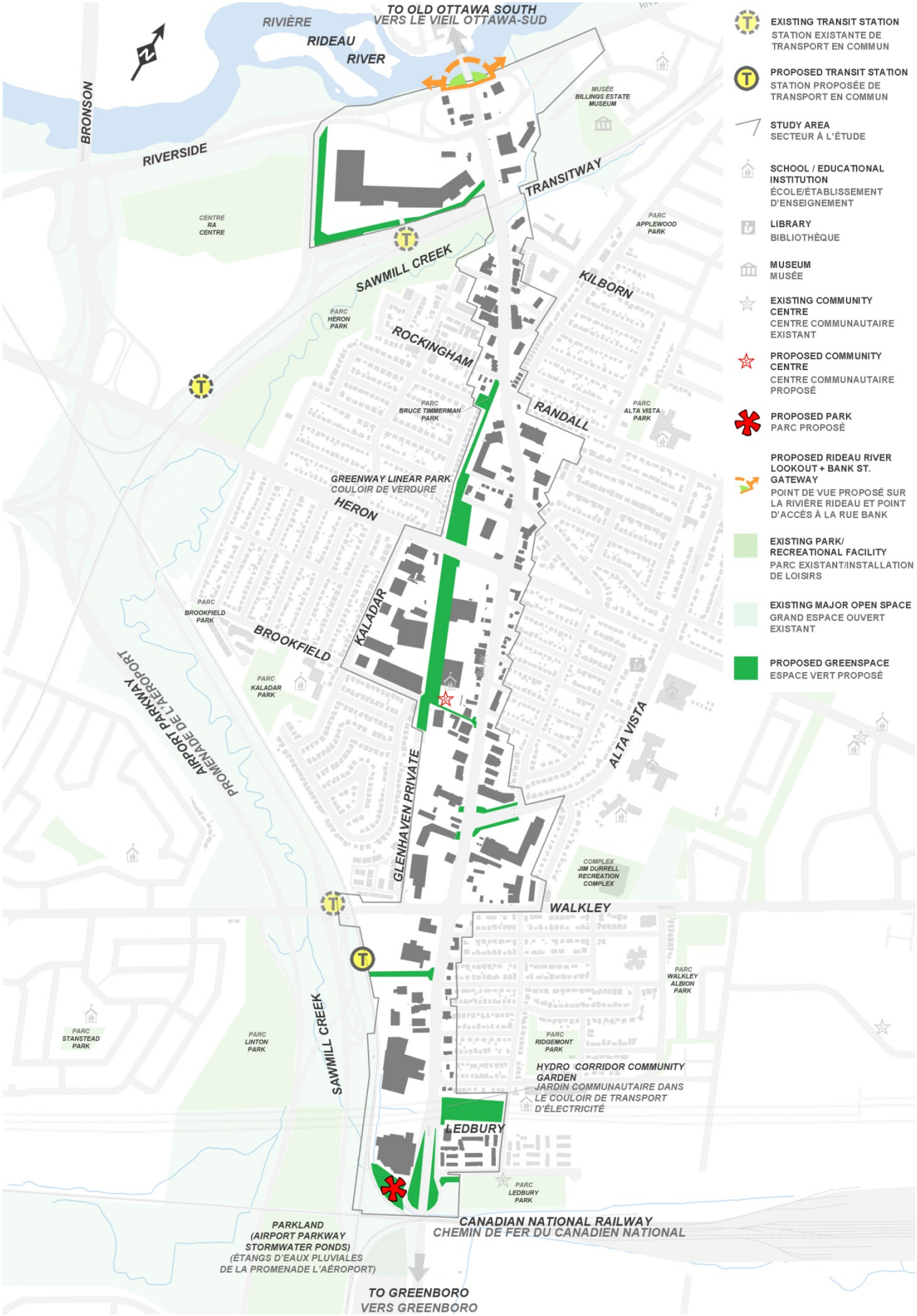
Temporary and portable signs on Bank Street should be restricted and adhere to the City's Temporary Signs on Private Property By-law.

6.2 GREENSPACE

The study area along Bank Street lacks open space, uniform landscape treatment, and components typical of comfortable outdoor pedestrian environments. Through results of the public consultation process, vegetated open space linkages are strong desires of the neighbourhood.

Bank Street has potential for improving the access, connectivity, quality, and sustainability of existing greenspace while capitalizing on opportunities to create new active and passive greenspace with improved ecological functions. Figure 6.6 outlines the locations for recommended greenspace improvements.

Figure 6.6 | Greenspace Improvement Locations

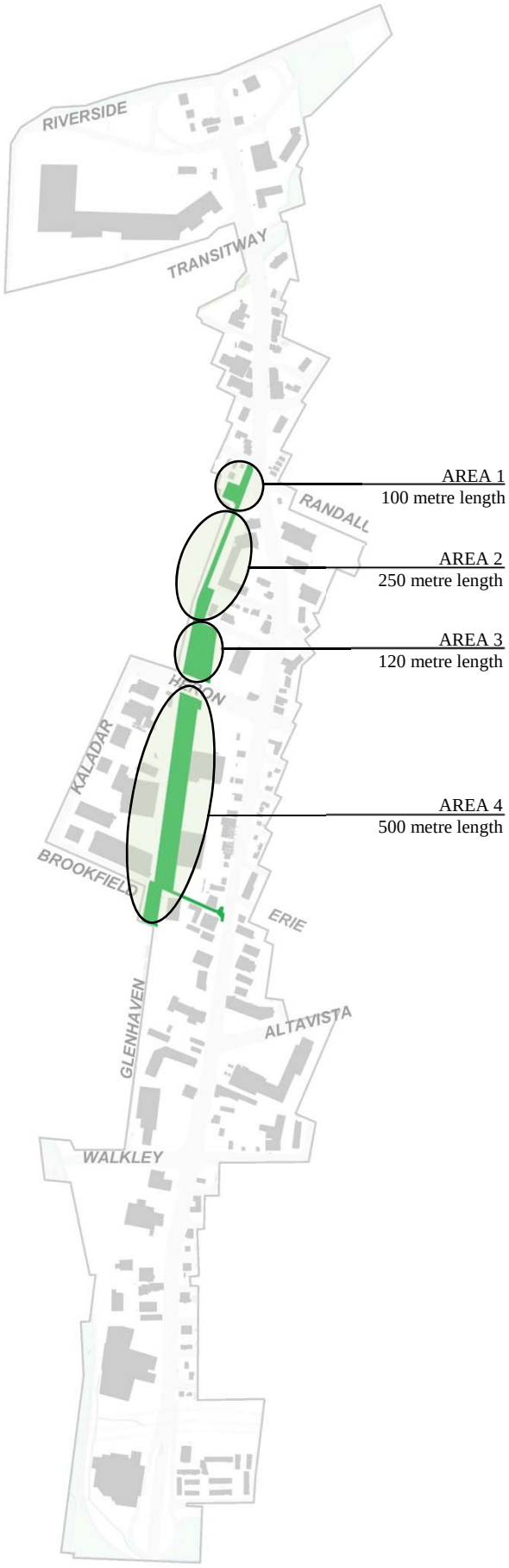


6.2.1 GREENWAY LINEAR PARK

The development of a Greenway Linear Park along the former CN Rail corridor, from the vicinity of Randall Avenue to Brookfield Road, will provide the public with a central public corridor of vegetated open space. By enabling multi-use modes of active transportation and passive recreation, the corridor will serve the neighbourhood as a critical recreational and transportation spine. The network of open space will create a direct linkage to local destinations and transportation infrastructure such as bus stations, light rail, future park and pathway developments, and transit-oriented development nodes.

The universally accessible greenway is a significant open space within the study area and the broader community. It is critical that through planning and site design that pedestrian activity is encouraged. It will be comfortable and aesthetically pleasing and include a 3.5 metre wide multi-use pathway with regularly spaced seating, bicycle infrastructure, and decorative lighting. Its landscape design shall consider sustainable stormwater management practices by promoting on-site stormwater retention and detention and include a variety of green infrastructure improvements such as rain gardens, bio-infiltration swales and stormwater planters. Site design will consider the use of responsible material selection and enhance biodiversity of local flora and fauna.

The geometry, layout and proximity (predominantly parallel to Bank Street) of the Greenway will enhance its significance and potential for adjacent future development in the area. Where the Greenway meets major streets, commercial uses can wrap around the edge to partially face the Greenway to help animate the spaces. The following photos illustrate existing conditions along portions of the old rail line corridor.



6.2.1.1 Greenway Linear Park by Section

AREA 1: Enhancement to Bruce Timmerman Park

To improve public open space and accommodate the future Greenway Linear Park, Bruce Timmerman Park should be enhanced by establishing a playground and improving/adding seating, lighting, and vegetation. This area has the potential to become a new destination space and gateway to an off-road pedestrian network connecting Bank Street at Randall Avenue to the proposed LRT station at Walkley Road.

AREA 2: Connecting Pathway

The City should entertain an easement agreement or acquire property from the commercial properties and private residential lots. The proposed multi-use path would result in no net parking loss to the Blue Heron Mall rear parking lot. Furthermore, creating public space behind the retail lot would provide better pedestrian connections for potential customers. There are complex grading and stormwater management issues that need to be resolved in detailed design.

AREA 3: Development Of City-owned Parcel

The city-owned site north of Heron Road provides the opportunity for the development of a destination space halfway along the urban greenway. This property has the potential for mixed-use development and new recreational park space integrated with the Greenway Linear Park.

AREA 4: Property Acquisition to Create Public Open Space and Recreational Pathway Linkage

A new linear park could be the centre of a redevelopment and intensification strategy south of Heron Road. The land would be acquired through parkland dedication as sites are redeveloped. To connect the park to Walkley Road, the City should ensure that there is a public access agreement on

Glenhaven Private and indicated as a signed cycling route.

6.2.2 New Public Greenspace Near Ledbury Park Area

A small natural haven overlooking the running flow of Sawmill Creek is located south of Home Depot and west of the Bank Street Bridge over the CNR line. This site should be developed as a future public greenspace.

The site is currently being used as an informal access to the Airport Parkway trails and as a break spot for staff of nearby stores. The City of Ottawa Pedestrian Master Plan highlighted this area as a proposed multi-use pathway access point to the Airport Parkway trail network. As such, the site has the potential to become an active public space and steps should be taken to enhance the area.

The greenspace development will require provisions for environmental restoration, recreation, refuge, and act as a pedestrian and cyclist node with connections to future planned multi-use pathways along Sawmill Creek.

Opportunities for environmental restoration and improved ecological functions include: creek clean-up, planting of trees and vegetation which shade the watercourse, introducing aquatic plants which help filter the water, establishing native plants with a special focus on introducing fruit bearing and pollinator species, and removing invasive tree and plant species.

As a public destination, this space needs to be designed as a comfortable pedestrian environment. This includes adhering to CPTED principles (primarily lighting and sight lines), providing seating, and designing with microclimate in mind.

Deciduous trees and structures like trellises can provide shade during summer months but allow the sunshine to penetrate during winter. The ultimate goal is to create spaces with a comfortable temperature throughout the seasons.

6.2.3 BILLINGS BRIDGE SHOPPING CENTRE AND TRANSITWAY

Greenspace enhancement and expansion should be made as part of an overall pedestrian access improvement to the Billings Bridge Shopping Centre and Transit Station.

6.2.4 ALTA VISTA

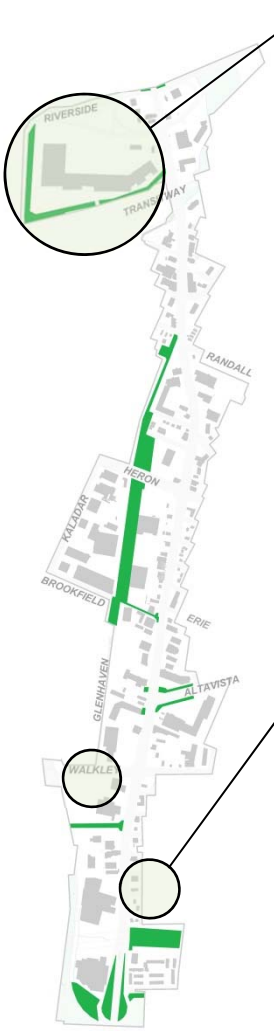
As part of a general intersection improvement, provisions through private redevelopment and part of capital improvements should be made to enhance and expand landscape features at the corners of Bank Street and Alta Vista Drive.

6.2.5 PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO FUTURE WALKLEY LRT STATION

Public greenspace should be incorporated with pathway access between Bank Street and the future LRT station south of Walkley. Furthermore, provisions should be made to incorporate a parkette at the junction of the pathway and Bank Street.

6.2.6 HYDRO CORRIDOR: COMMUNITY GARDEN

A community garden and space for recreation should be established in the hydro corridor that crosses Bank Street south of Walkley Road. The community garden would serve the adjacent neighborhoods while creating a community destination for Bank Street. The community garden would also function as a gateway to a pedestrian and cyclist corridor which is proposed along the hydro corridor further to the east as part of the City's Pedestrian and Cycling Plans.




(MMM Group, 2011)


(Bing Maps, 2011)


(MMM Group, 2011)