

NO: R151

COUNCIL DATE: July 25, 2011

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **July 25, 2011**

FROM: **General Manager, Planning and Development
General Manager, Engineering**

FILE: **6520-20 (Surrey City
Centre)**

SUBJECT: **Surrey City Centre Plan Update – Stage 2 - Status Report**

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Development Department and Engineering Department recommend that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Approve the revised Surrey City Centre Land Use and Density Concept attached as Appendix I;
3. Approve the Surrey City Centre Building Height Concept attached as Appendix II;
4. Approve the revised Surrey City Centre Road Width Concept attached as Appendix III;
5. Approve the proposed Surrey City Centre Green Lane Cross Sections as shown in Appendix IV;
6. Approve the Surrey City Centre Road Network Concept attached as Appendix V;
7. Approve amendments to the Road Classification Map and Road Allowance Map in Surrey Subdivision & Development By-law, 1986, No. 8830, to reflect the changes referenced in recommendations 4 and 6; and
8. Authorize the City Clerk bring forward for the required readings the necessary amendment by-law to Surrey Subdivision & Development By-law, 1986, No. 8830.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide information regarding the status of the Stage 2 work on the update of the Surrey City Centre Plan and to obtain Council approval related to elements of the work that have been completed.

BACKGROUND

Staff has been working on an update of the 1991 Surrey City Centre Plan (Corporate Report No. R172) for some time. On February 9, 2009, Council received Corporate Report No. C001, and approved the Surrey Centre Plan Update- Phase II Stage 1 and authorized staff to move forward with Stage 2 of the Plan. Stage 2 of the Plan is now nearing completion.

The Stage 1 Plan set out the Land Use and Density Concept, Basic Road Network, Road widths, Parks & Open Space Concept, and Interim Implementation Strategy.

Stage 2 of the Plan mainly addresses the Urban Design Guidelines and the Engineering Servicing and Financing Strategy. A detailed list of the elements of the Plan that are part of Stage 2 is contained in Appendix VI to this report.

DISCUSSION

Over the past few years, there has been substantial momentum established and interest in undertaking development in the Surrey City Centre area. To be responsive to this momentum and to provide a level of certainty for the development industry, this report addresses the Stage 2 component of the City Centre Plan update.

Updated Density Concept

An assessment of the Low Density (1.5 Floor Area Ratio) land use areas shown in the Land Use & Density Concept as previously approved by Council, suggests that this density designation should be adjusted to better reflect development realities while accommodating the need for family-oriented housing forms in the City Centre area.

To evaluate this designation, staff conducted a review all four-storey apartment buildings in City Centre constructed in the past 10 years, as well as all in-stream applications for similar building types. The review indicated that the majority of four-storey apartment buildings exceed a Floor Area Ratio ("FAR") of 1.5. In fact, most four-storey apartment projects in City Centre are achieving densities of approximately 1.8 FAR, with some projects achieving close to an FAR of 2.0.

Since the Surrey City Centre Plan Update – Phase II, Stage 1 Report was received by Council in January 19, 2009 (Corporate Report No. C001) the British Columbia Building Code has been amended to permit six-storey wood frame buildings. These buildings are appropriate in areas currently designated as "Low Density" in the City Centre Plan Land Use and Density Concept; however, six-storey buildings can easily achieve a density of 2.5 FAR, which is well above the current 1.5 FAR maximum currently permitted in "Low Density" areas of the City Centre Plan.

As a result, it is being recommended that the Land Use and Density Concept (as shown in Appendix I), be amended to consolidate the areas previously designated as Low Density (1.5 FAR) with the Medium Density (2.5 FAR) to create an "up to 2.5 FAR" designation.

The "up to 2.5 FAR" designation can accommodate a mix of townhouse and medium density apartment building forms. Mechanisms, such as urban design guidelines requiring two-storey townhouses along road frontages, will encourage the development of townhouse family housing as part of larger developments, including apartments.

Building Height Concept

As part of the Stage 2 work, staff conducted a three-dimensional (3-D) building massing study and a skyline study. The building massing study involved the creation of a three-dimensional (3-D), digital model of Surrey City Centre. The 3-D digital model allowed staff to test various land uses, densities and building heights to ensure a desirable urban environment is being achieved.

Based on the information gathered from these studies, a Building Height Concept was developed as illustrated in Appendix II to this report. The Building Height Concept proposes to cluster the tallest buildings in City Centre around each of the three SkyTrain Stations, with the greatest concentration of tall buildings in the vicinity of the Surrey Central SkyTrain Station. This concept will result in an attractive and memorable skyline with three peaks linked by valleys of lower buildings.

The proposed Building Height Concept will result in three distinct nodes of high-rise buildings in City Centre. In the longer term, as more construction occurs, the Surrey Central and King George SkyTrain Station nodes will grow together due to their proximity.

Parks and Open Space

To identify strategies for creating a greener City Centre, the consulting firm of Phillips Farevaag Smallemberg was engaged to prepare a study on establishing a "green network" in the City Centre, building on the existing public open spaces that are already in place or identified.

The study, completed in 2010, made recommendations on parks and plazas, greenways and multi-use pathways, street treatments to promote pedestrian activity and cycling, sustainable drainage, and art in the public realm.

A key recommendation of the study was the need for additional public open space in City Centre to serve as neighbourhood gathering places. The Land Use Plan has been updated to include an additional neighbourhood park at 105A Avenue and Whalley Boulevard as illustrated in Appendix I.

Staff is currently reviewing the study recommendations in relation to the greenway and multi-use pathway components. Specific multi-use pathway and greenway standards are being developed in conjunction with the Greenways Master Plan. Updated standards will be incorporated into the Stage 2 Plan. In addition, opportunities to incorporate environmental habitat reclamation plantings and rain gardens, natural play areas and public art into portions of the Quibble Creek Greenway are being explored through a pilot project at 102 Avenue and 140 Street.

Once the final amenities are determined for park and open space areas, a community amenity package will be developed and be incorporated into the Stage 2 Plan.

Revised Road Width Concept

The City Centre Road Width Concept has been developed to reflect the special characteristics of a number of streets within the City Centre. These include additional road allowance width for future rapid transit, streets that will carry higher traffic volumes and streets within the central core where multiple demands for road space are expected, including parking, transit and high pedestrian volumes. The revised Road Width Concept is shown in Appendix III.

Finer Grain Road Network

A finer grained road network has been identified as a key element of the Land Use Plan in transforming the City Centre into a walkable, pedestrian-oriented downtown. The large blocks that currently characterize much of the City Centre create significant barriers to comfortable, direct and pleasant pedestrian and cycling circulation and the efficient movement of vehicles. This is broadly recognized by leading urban designers and transportation experts as a fundamental ingredient to developing a liveable downtown area.

The Basic Road Network for the City Centre Plan was developed as part of the Stage 1 planning process and was to be refined during the Stage 2 work. To assist in achieving a finer-grained road network, a new road standard called a "Green Lane" has been developed. Green Lanes are intended to provide the traditional servicing function of a lane and provide for easy movement of vehicles in each direction. Green Lanes are not intended to be a substitute for a local road. They will also provide a greener, more inviting pedestrian and bicycle environment than current lane standards allow. Green Lanes will facilitate access to underground parking for multiple developments, reducing the number of driveways that access directly onto adjoining streets. The reduction of driveways on more major streets will create a safer and more comfortable pedestrian environment.

The road allowance for Green Lanes is proposed to be 12-metres in width, which is narrower than the typical 20-metre local road width. This new Green Lane standard will allow pavement width for concurrent traffic flow in each direction as well as a sidewalk on one side, a boulevard and, in some cases, parking.

The standard cross-sections for the Green Lane are illustrated in Appendix IV. Cross section "A" shows the lane without parking and cross section "B" shows the lane with parking. The appropriate lane type at any specific location would be influenced by site conditions, adjacent buildings and the broader land use context and would be determined as part of the development application review process.

Green Lanes have been incorporated into the City Centre Road Network Concept as illustrated in Appendix V.

Although the development of the finer grain road network is considered a fundamental part of the Land Use Plan, it is recognized that there will be circumstances within the City Centre where the provision of a new road or lane connection will be difficult to accomplish. Staff is considering various mechanisms to facilitate the introduction of such lanes on a case-by-case basis. Recommendations in this regard will be forwarded to Council as part of the Surrey City Centre Plan – Stage 2 final report.

Utility Servicing Strategy

As part of the Stage 2 work, staff is preparing a Utility Servicing Strategy for the sewer, water, and drainage utilities in support of the Surrey City Centre Land Use and Density Concept, which is attached as Appendix I.

On-site storm water best management practices (BMPs) are being developed. This approach satisfies the objectives of the City's Sustainability Charter, and is consistent with the City's emerging best practices for managing minor storm events.

Based on work to date, it is expected that the implementation of the City Centre Servicing Strategy for water, sewer and drainage will not require a Development Cost Charge (DCC) rate adjustment for the City Centre area. The City Centre area will remain one of the most affordable areas for commercial and high density residential development in the Metro Vancouver region.

Local Infrastructure Servicing

Under the Economic Investment Action Plan, a strategy has been developed for easing the financial burden of providing local engineering services infrastructure in the City Centre area. Under this strategy, the City will initially finance the costs of the servicing infrastructure and charge benefitting properties (by instalments) for their share of the costs when they develop. The City, in doing this, is also helping by taking the risk that some properties do not develop in the 15 years a latecomer is applicable. This approach allows for the costs of local sewer, water, and drainage infrastructure works to be financed over a period of time at better than market interest rates.

District Energy

At its Regular Meeting on May 9, 2011 Council adopted the recommendations of Corporate Report No. Ro69- "Surrey District Energy System Utility – Governance and Branding", which authorized staff to establish a District Energy Utility as a business unit of the Engineering Department, operating under the name of Surrey City Energy, for the purpose of designing, constructing and operating a district energy system in City Centre. At the same meeting, Council also adopted the recommendations of Corporate Report No. Ro70 – "Financing for a District Energy System in Surrey City Centre – Surrey City Energy", which authorized an allocation from internal reserves as a loan to allow for the implementation of a district energy system to serve development in vicinity of the Surrey Central Station, including the new City Hall, the new City Centre Library and other future development in this area. The utility is intended to be self-liquidating.

Staff is currently developing plans for the district energy system as approved under the referenced reports. The system will be expanded over time to take in development in a broader area of City Centre.

Community Building

In addition to the City Centre Plan - Stage 2 planning work, staff is also working on a community building strategy. The intent of this work is to foster a sense of belonging and community among the residents and businesses in City Centre. This is a crucial element in creating a true "downtown" that is attractive, safe, vibrant and successful.

The first component of this work is to identify and highlight existing neighbourhood assets that contribute to quality of place in the downtown. Vibrant downtowns are typically made up of a mix of older, unique neighbourhood features as well as new contemporary places. Identifying the existing important features in the downtown will help ensure that the unique character and history of the City Centre is incorporated with the new development to enrich the "sense of place".

To determine the various hidden gems in the City Centre, staff is undertaking various community engagement approaches; including a community walk that was held in May 2011, a photo documentation project currently underway and a heritage inventory study. This work will identify opportunities to incorporate, interpret and celebrate important existing elements of City Centre as new development proceeds in the area.

The second component of the work is a community building strategy that will identify elements that are "missing" from the City Centre area that would assist in building a vibrant downtown; the kinds of places and events that add life to and animate streets and public places. This component includes the use of survey questionnaires with residents and business owners in the area, as well as bringing together focus groups involving new residents in high-rise buildings in the area and employees of the Central City Tower. The information gathered through this component will inform further plan and related policy refinements including, but not limited to civic programming and beautification. Staff will report further on key proposed initiatives that are identified through the community building process.

CONCLUSION

This report outlines the progress on the Stage 2 component of the Surrey City Centre Planning process. It is anticipated that the Stage 2 work, including a servicing and financing strategy and urban design guidelines, will be completed later this year, at which time staff will bring forward a final Stage 2 City Centre Plan for Council approval.

Based on the information in this report, it is recommended that Council:

1. Approve the revised Surrey City Centre Land Use and Density Concept attached as Appendix I;
2. Approve the Surrey City Centre Building Height Concept attached as Appendix II;
3. Approve the revised Surrey City Centre Road Width Concept attached as Appendix III;

4. Approve the proposed Surrey City Centre Green Lane Cross Sections as shown in Appendix IV;
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7. Authorize the City Clerk bring forward for the required readings the necessary amendment by-law to Surrey Subdivision & Development By-law, 1986, No. 8830.

Original signed by
Jean Lamontagne
General Manager,
Planning and Development

Original signed by
Vincent Lalonde, P. Eng.
General Manager,
Engineering

VL/PH/kms/saw

Attachments:

Appendix I	Surrey City Centre Land Use and Density Concept
Appendix II	Surrey City Centre Building Heights Concept
Appendix III	Surrey City Centre Road Width Concept
Appendix IV	Surrey City Centre Green Lane Cross Sections
Appendix V	Surrey City Centre Road Network
Appendix VI	Surrey City Centre Stage 2 Items to be completed

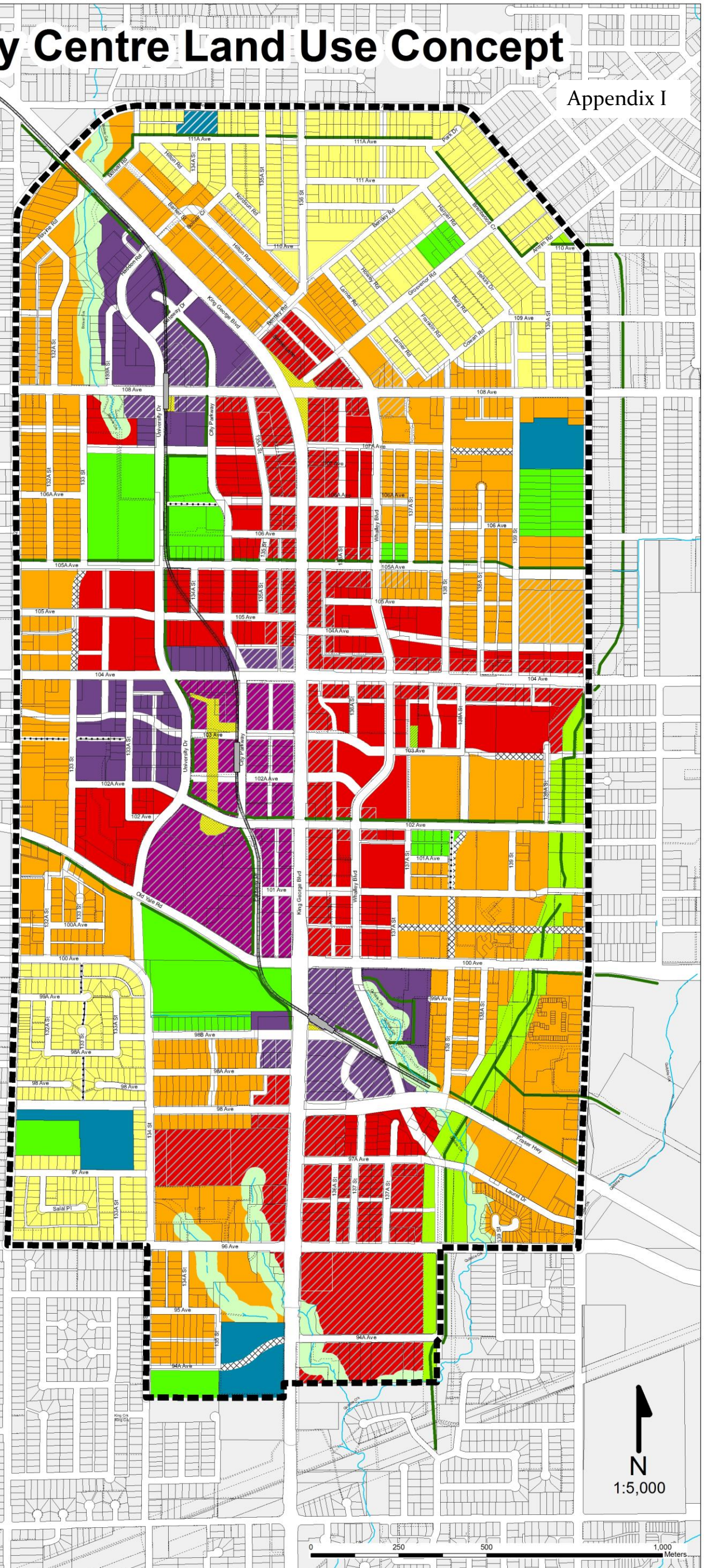
Surrey City Centre Land Use Concept

Appendix I

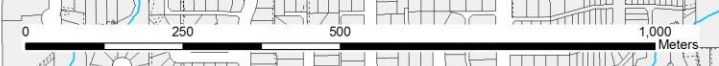
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City Centre Land Use

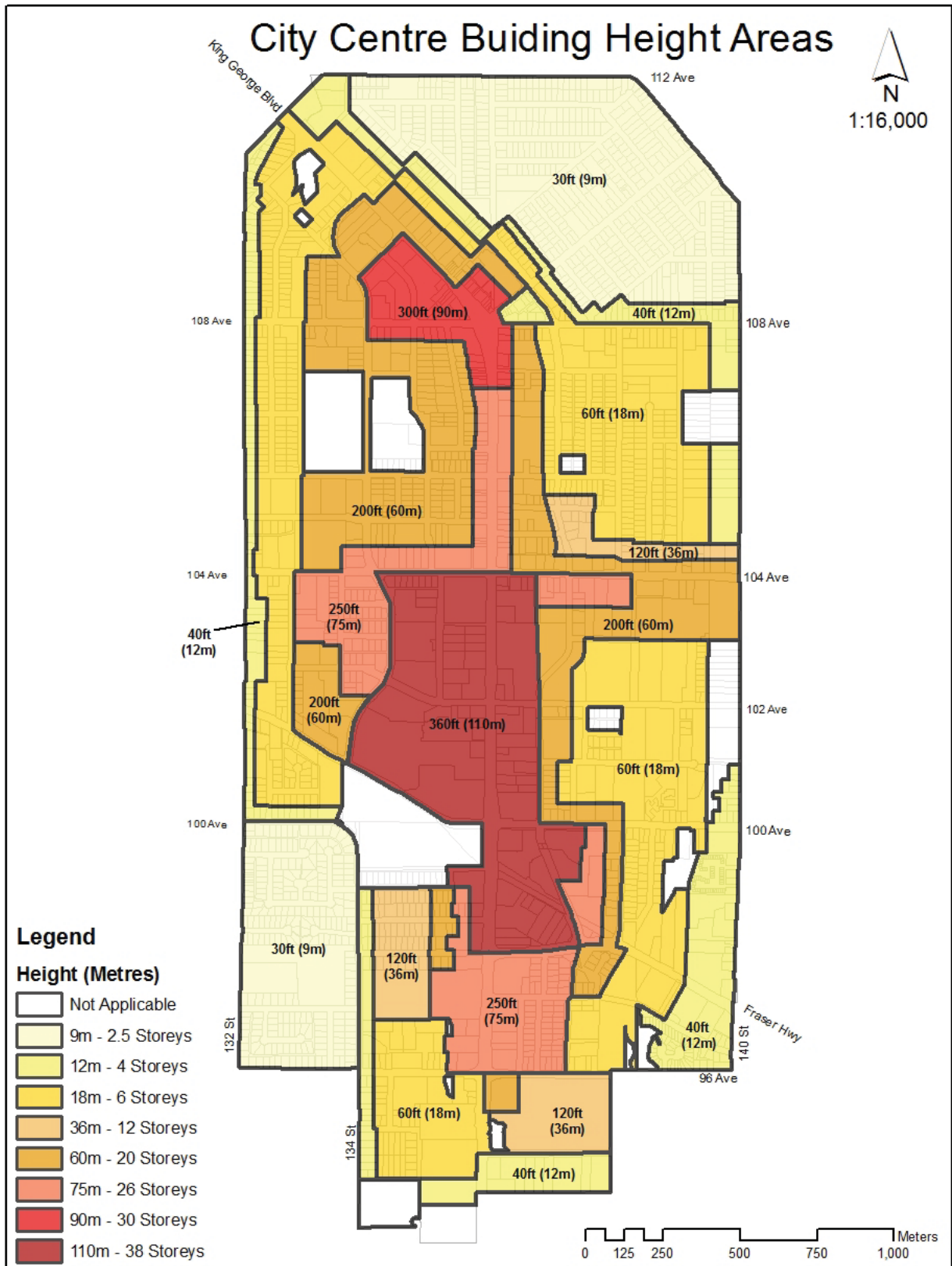
- High Rise 5.5 FAR
- Mid to High Rise 3.5 FAR
- Low to Mid Rise up to 2.5 FAR
- Single Family/Duplex 0.6 FAR
- Mixed-Use 2.5 FAR
- Mixed-Use 3.5 FAR
- Mixed-Use 5.5 FAR
- Mixed-Use 7.5 FAR
- PLAZA
- Public Open Space
- School
- Institutional
- Park
- Creek Buffers
- Greenway
- Road
- Long Term Road
- City Centre
- Creeks
- Skytrain Station
- Skytrain Line
- Lots
- MultiUse Path
- Pedestrian Connection



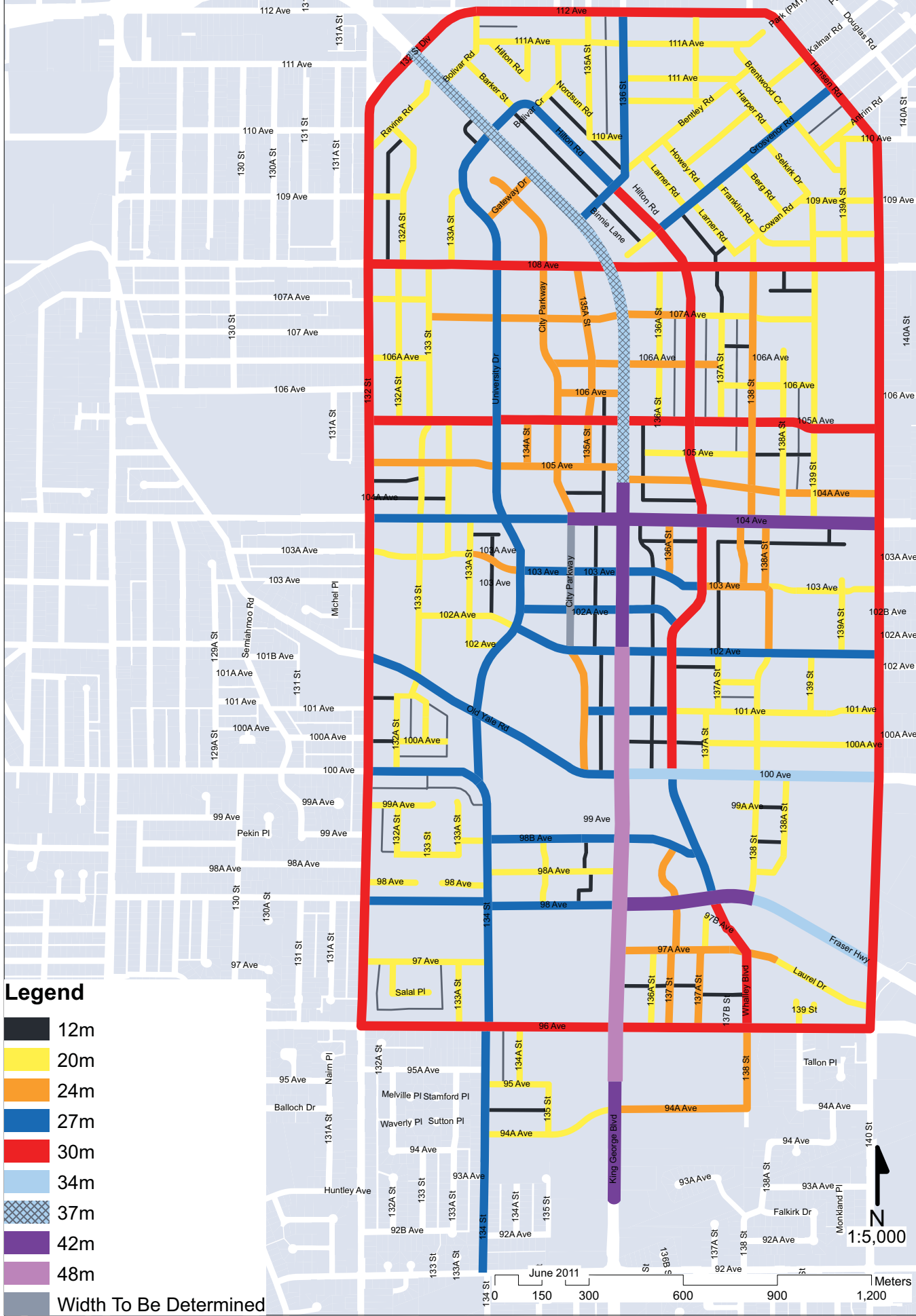
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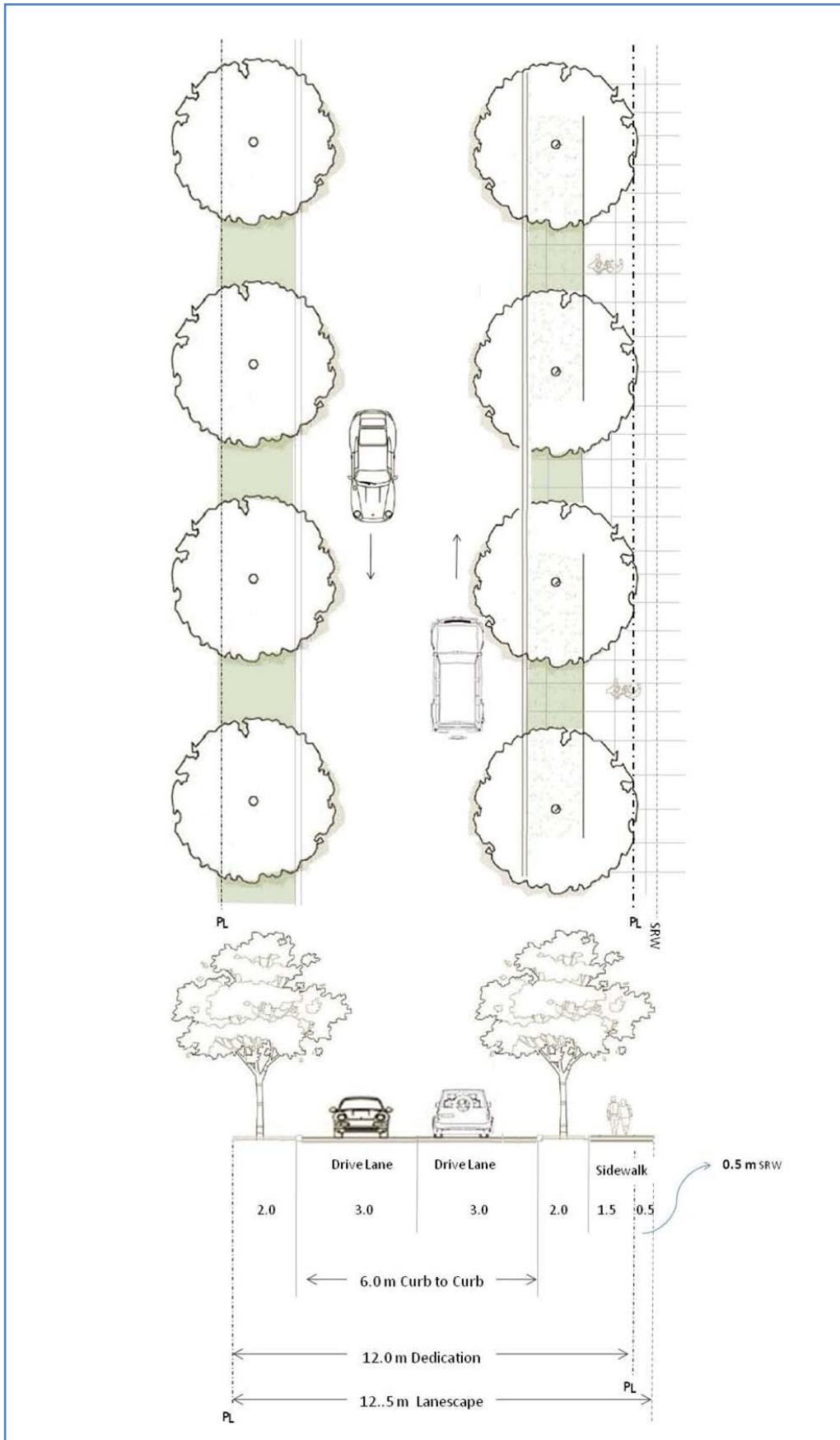
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Surrey City Centre Road Width Concept

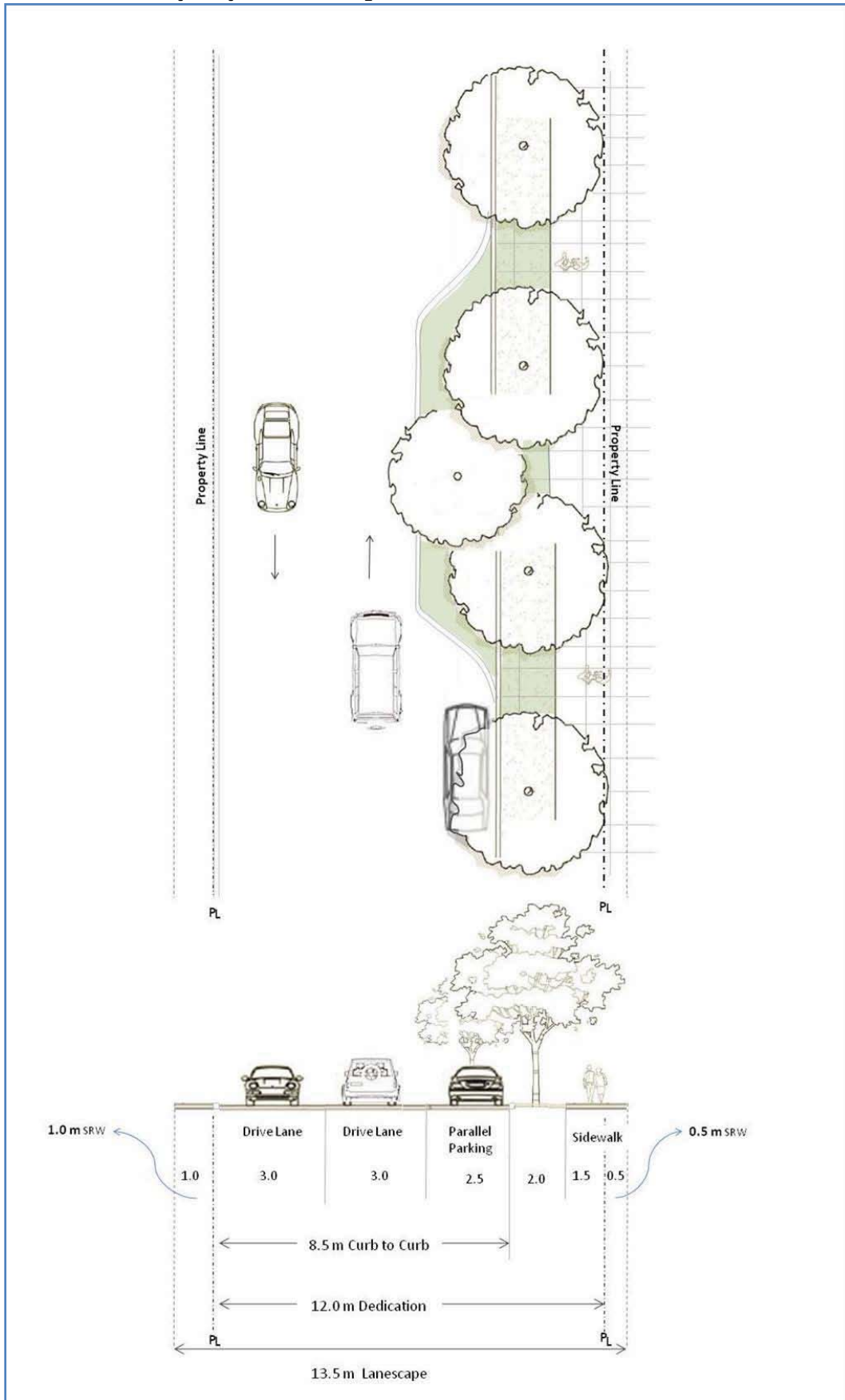


Surrey City Centre Proposed Green Lane Cross Section A



12m Green Lane without Parking

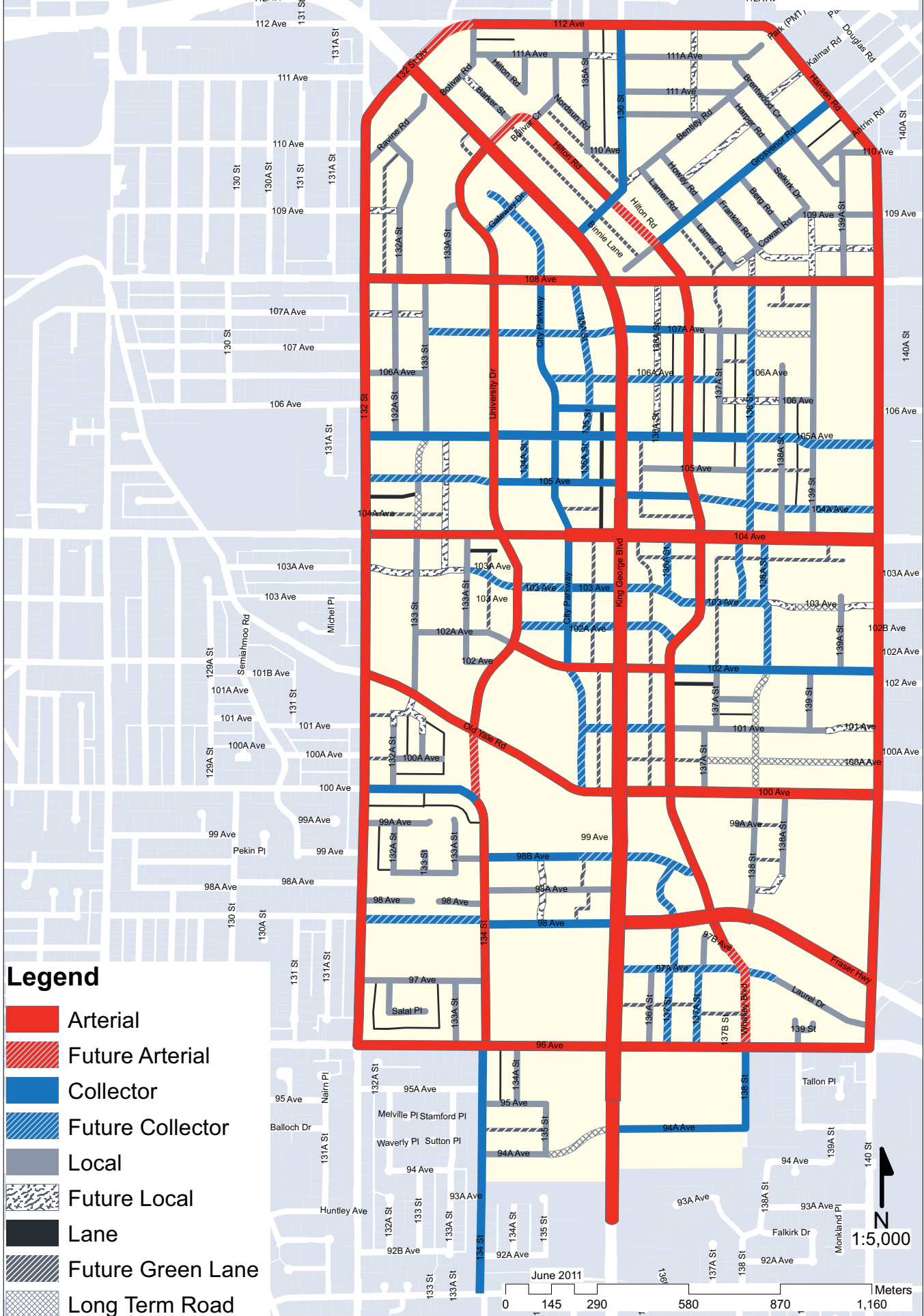
Surrey City Centre Proposed Green Lane Cross Section B



12m Green Lane with Parking

Surrey City Centre Road Network Concept

Appendix V



Legend

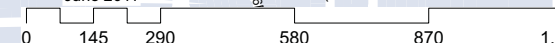
- Arterial
- Future Arterial
- Collector
- Future Collector
- Local
- Future Local
- Lane
- Future Green Lane
- Long Term Road

June 2011



1:5,000

Meters



Surrey City Centre Plan Update- Stage 2 Items for Completion

- Development of an urban design concept and detailed urban design guidelines, including three-dimensional massing and skyline studies to establish a future city form and building heights;
- Review and evaluation of all public realm and streetscape elements, standards and criteria;
- Development of design guidelines and operational criteria to transform King George Highway into a "Great Street";
- Review of community and leisure services requirements, criteria and guidelines, including public art and establishing how these can be incorporated into private and public section projects; and
- Review of the concept of neighbourhoods within Surrey City Centre.
- Establishment of policy and process for the development of new parks within Surrey City Centre and for the transformation of existing parks in Surrey City Centre into more urban parks that relate to high-density development.
- Establishment of sustainability elements to be incorporated into private and public sector projects.
- Further research to determine which mix of regulations and incentives can be implemented to achieve a more balanced mix of type and size of housing units that are necessary to create housing for a wide variety of socio-economic groups, needed to create a vibrant City Centre; and
- Further refinement of the truck routes within, and around, Surrey City Centre;
- Review and evaluation of existing and proposed parking standards and requirements;
- Review and evaluation of proposed public transit and rapid transit improvements; and
- Preparation of a Utility Servicing Strategy.
- Identify amendments to the Surrey Official Community Plan (OCP) to implement the range of densities and mix of uses proposed for City Centre; and
- Identify possible amendments to the Zoning By-law, including the development of new zones that can accommodate the range of densities and mix of uses proposed for City Centre.