

AMBLESIDE LOCAL AREA PLAN OPTIONS BOOKLET

District of West Vancouver | January 2023

Ambleside is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Skwxú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), śxʷməθkʷəyʹəməʔɪtəməxʷ (Musqueam), and səlʹilwətaʔɪtəməxʷ (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations, who have inhabited these lands since time immemorial.



Introduction

In June 2022, Council directed staff to prepare three high-level, draft local area plan (LAP) options for Ambleside. This booklet illustrates them for the community to discuss, respond to, and collaboratively shape. None of the three options are “the” plan for Ambleside. They are an engagement tool for your input, which will subsequently help lead to the LAP for Council to consider adopting into West Vancouver’s Official Community Plan (OCP).

The three options respond to existing OCP policies, including direction to: create capacity for 1,000-1,200 estimated new housing units (2.1.13); emphasize Ambleside as the heart of West Vancouver with commercial uses (shops, services, restaurants and offices), cultural spaces, civic facilities, and visitor accommodation (2.3.1); and prioritize mixed-use and apartment forms in core areas, with ground-oriented multi-family forms to transition to adjacent neighbourhoods (2.1.14).

These options are also informed by Ambleside’s local planning history. With over 30 studies completed in the last 75 years, many issues and ideas for the future have been explored.^[1] Six key themes emerged from this review:

1. The **character** of Ambleside and the appropriate scale and height of buildings.
2. The **housing mix** to accommodate current and future residents.
3. The **commercial hub** and the shops, services and employment the centre provides.
4. The **natural setting** and the way the slope, creeks and waterfront shape Ambleside.
5. The **public realm** and how people gather, spend time, and move around.
6. The **focus** of Ambleside, where it begins and ends, and where change makes most sense.

The three draft options respond to these six themes and the OCP policies in different ways. This allows you to see alternatives and puts a variety of ideas “on the table” for discussion. The options illustrate different ways of thinking about the future of Ambleside that are not mutually exclusive. Your response to these options—what you like, dislike, or think could be improved—will shape that future by distilling or refining the best elements of each option into the LAP.

^[1] These are summarized in a separate planning history document at: www.westvancouverite.ca/plan-ambleside



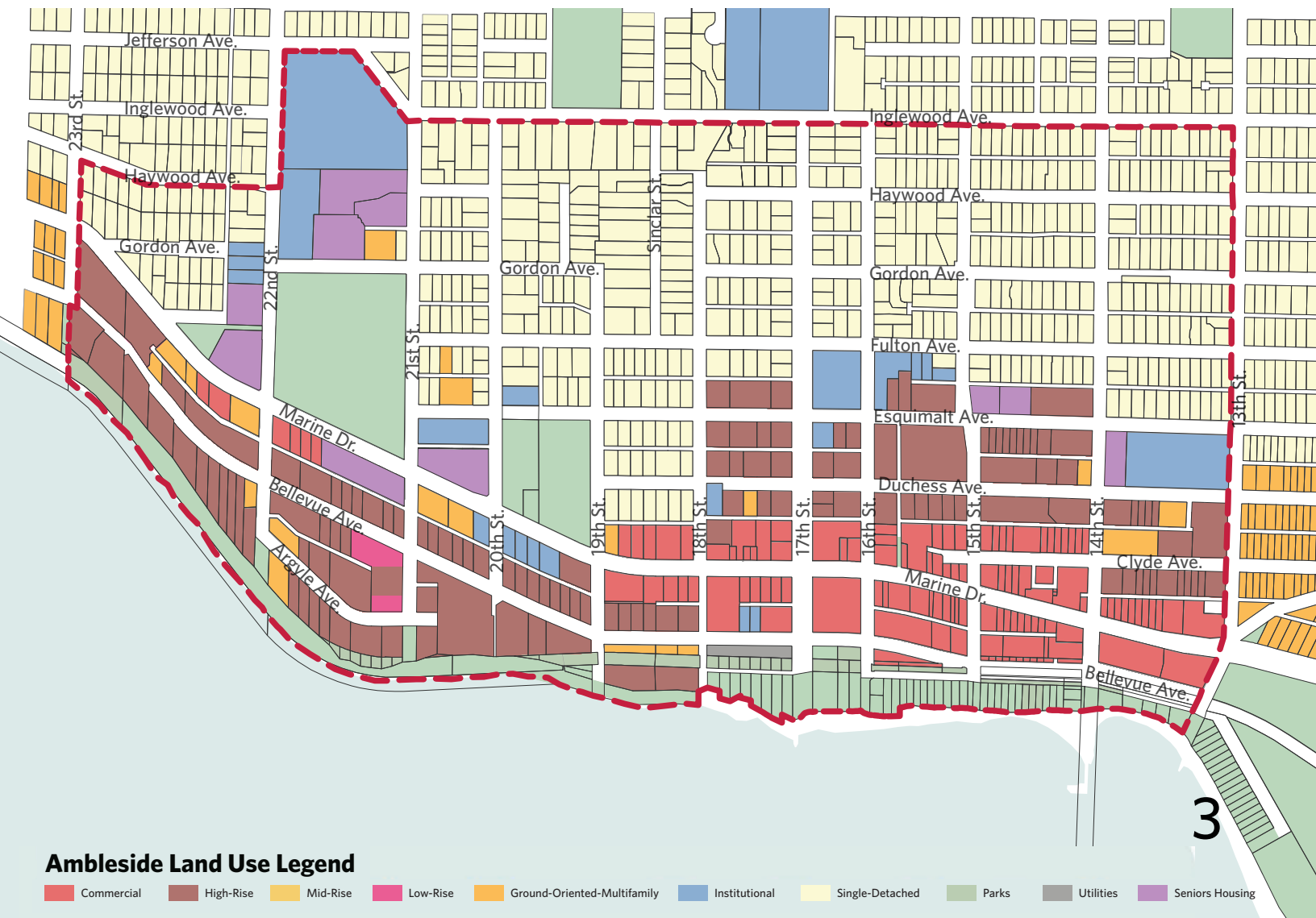
ambleside

The Study Area Today

Ambleside is located on the north shore of the Burrard Inlet, situated between—and complemented by—the smaller, single commercial block of Dundarave to the west, and the regionally-serving Park Royal shopping centre to the east. The area slopes up from the waterfront and rail line, crosses the main throughfare of Marine Drive, and moves northwards to the apartment area and single-detached neighbourhoods beyond. This natural, topographical “amphitheatre” around the commercial precinct includes McDonald, Lawson and Vinson creeks, which run through the backyards of single-detached houses before, in some cases, entering culverts through the apartment and commercial areas.

In addition to being a distinct neighbourhood and centre in and of itself, Ambleside plays a unique and primary role in the District as our “seat of government”, our largest social “hub”, and our commercial “main street”. It includes a range of signature parks, three schools within or adjoining the study area, and many public facilities (including the library, community and seniors centres). It remains a focus for residents, businesses, and visitors—and its continued success and long-term vitality is of importance to the entire West Vancouver community.

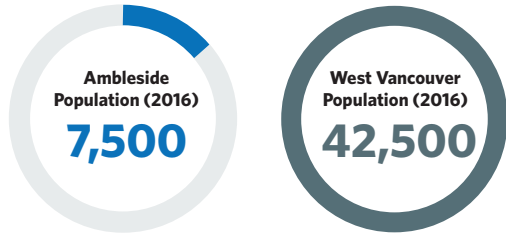
While the final LAP boundaries will be determined as an outcome of the planning and engagement process, the map below illustrates existing land uses within the study area. In total, about 71% of Ambleside’s land is occupied by residential uses, 22% by community and park uses, and 7% by commercial uses.



The Community Today

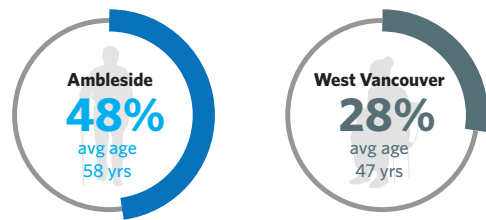
An important part of community planning is understanding the community today. These infographics summarize some of Ambleside's population characteristics compared to the District.

Percentage of Residents who live in Ambleside



Ambleside is West Vancouver's main population hub and is home to 7,500 residents (nearly one-fifth of District's total).

Percentage of Residents above 65 yrs old



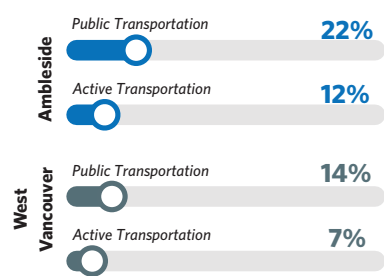
Ambleside has an aging population and is home to 45% of West Vancouver's low-income seniors.

Percentage of Residents who are Children + Teenagers (5-19 yrs old)



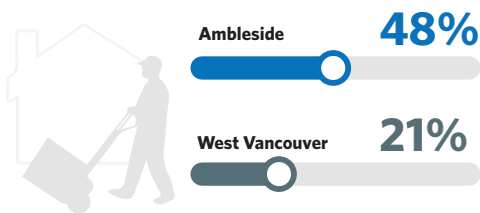
Ambleside has a low percentage of children, despite containing three schools within or adjacent to its boundary.

Percentage of Residents who Take Public Transit to Work



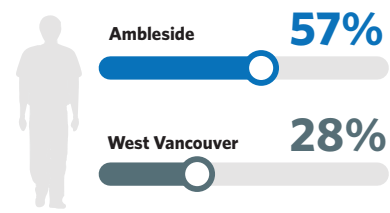
Ambleside's mixed-use environment offers opportunities to bus, cycle, or walk, and residents are approximately 50% more likely to commute to work using public transit.

Percentage of Renters



Ambleside contains 90% of West Vancouver's purpose-built rental units, and 74% were built over 40 years ago.

Percentage of Single Person Households



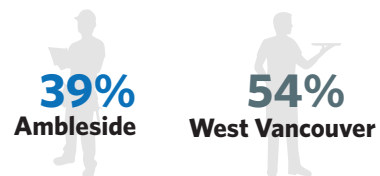
Ambleside's households average 1.8 persons, which is smaller than the District average of 2.5 persons.

Percentage of Low-Income Residents



Approximately half of households in Ambleside make less than \$30,000 and ~75% make less than \$50,000.

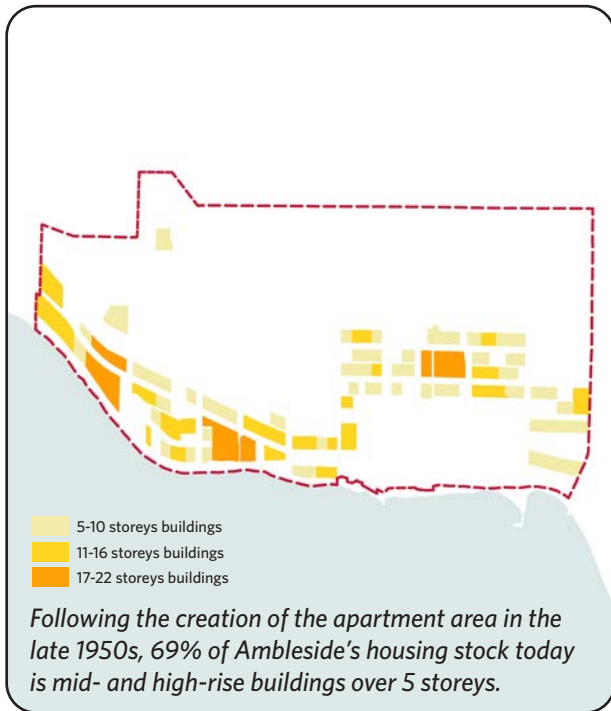
Percentage of Residents in Labour Force



Ambleside has 3,000 jobs (21% of West Vancouver's total jobs), but a lower labour force to work in local businesses.

From a History of Planning to Planning for the Future

Through the review of 75 years of planning, six consistent themes were identified. These themes frame the options and present planning and design considerations to be addressed by the LAP.

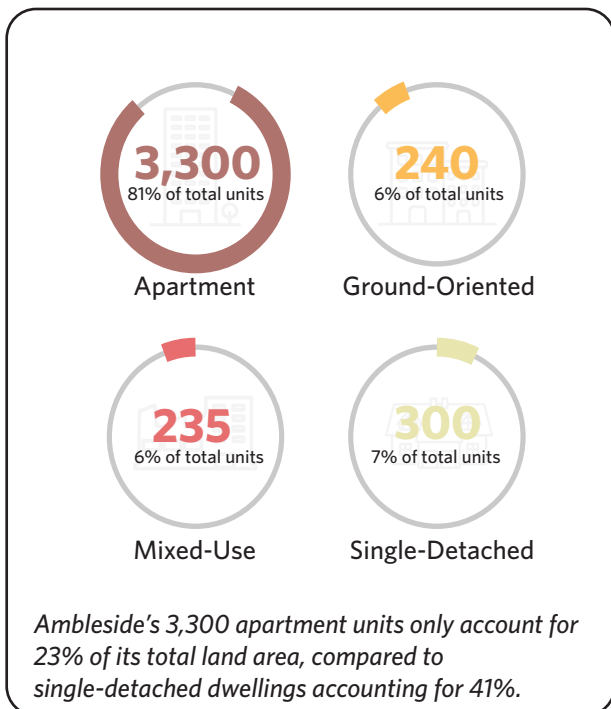


1. Height

Previous conversations about planning in Ambleside have often centered on height, notably regarding buildings over 4 storeys. Ambleside is generally a mix of low-rise commercial, mid- and high-rise apartments, and single-detached houses, which in places leads to abrupt height transitions or “zoning cliffs”. There is a desire to ensure the scale of new buildings is balanced with existing ones, housing needs, and revitalization objectives, so that Ambleside succeeds now and in the future.

The LAP should consider:

- Where could changes be made, and what building heights might be appropriate?
- How could building scale help define and identify different sub-areas?
- Should there be fewer sites changing to taller buildings, or smaller buildings over a larger area?
- Should height limits be fixed and uniform, or sculpted for variety?



2. Housing Mix

Ambleside's housing mix mainly includes aging apartment buildings and expensive single-detached homes, with limited mixed-use or ground-oriented “missing middle” options like townhouses. Ambleside's apartment area provides 90% of the District's rental stock, but these buildings will be vulnerable to redevelopment over time. Housing diversity is needed to provide options for families, workers, downsizers, and seniors.

The LAP should consider:

- How could we support seniors to “age in place” or younger families to move here?
- How and where could “missing middle” housing be introduced?
- Should the apartment area be expanded, or are there opportunities for new housing within it?
- In what ways could rental housing be protected, expanded or replaced?

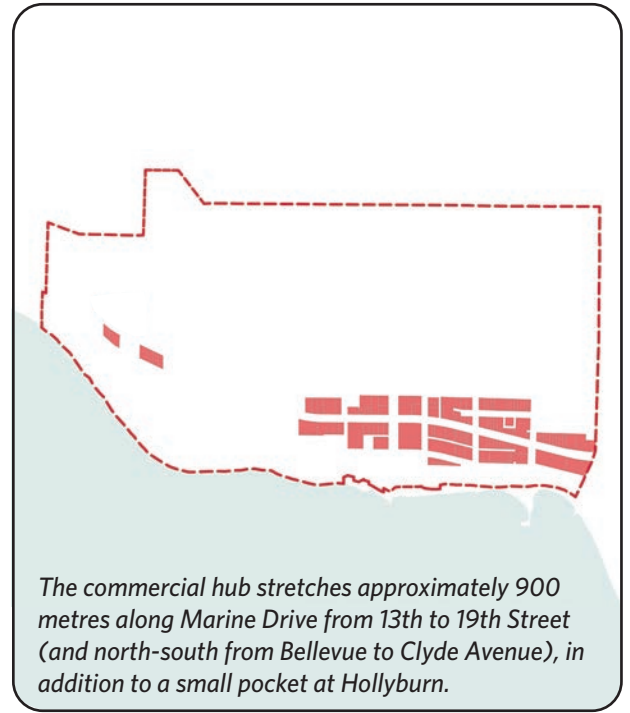


3. Commercial Hub

Ambleside includes a concentration of small, independent businesses. Real estate, health and financial services, and restaurants are the three main sectors. Spread out over a long high street (around 3,000 feet) with a smaller commercial cluster in Hollyburn to the west, Ambleside doesn't have a single, compact core. Without a large local labour force, and with older commercial spaces in need of upgrades, planning needs to ensure the commercial area thrives for businesses, workers and customers.

The LAP should consider:

- What is the desired commercial mix to serve residents and encourage vibrant streets?
- Where could specific desired uses (e.g. hotel) be located?
- Should the length of the high street be shortened, or should different "character" areas be encouraged across it?
- Should new development be focused north-south, east-west, or both?



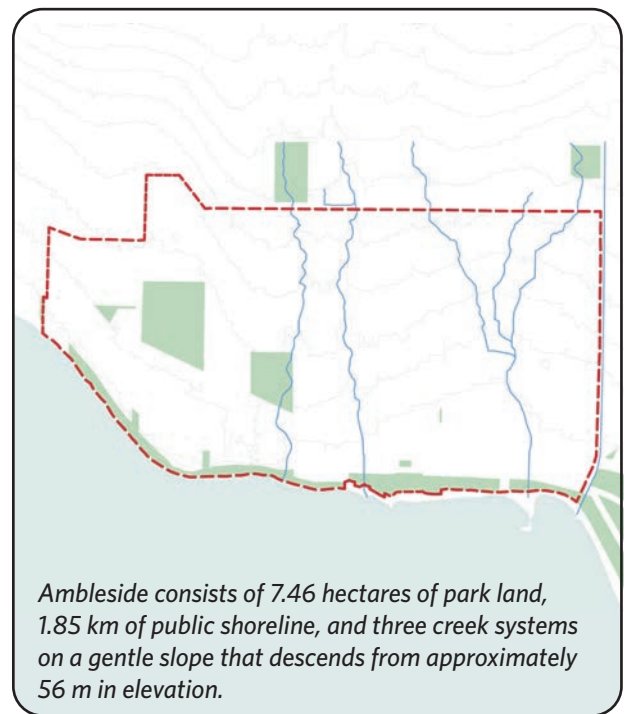
The commercial hub stretches approximately 900 metres along Marine Drive from 13th to 19th Street (and north-south from Bellevue to Clyde Avenue), in addition to a small pocket at Hollyburn.

4. Natural Setting

Ambleside's waterfront location—with natural watersheds, green spaces, and parks—reinforces the area's connection to nature. The topography, with a 6.5% slope, creates an "amphitheatre" effect with challenges and opportunities for development. Access to nature and recreational spaces will need to be balanced with natural asset protection and climate change adaptation.

The LAP should consider:

- How might commercial and residential buildings better integrate with nature?
- How can access to Ambleside's natural setting support its protection in the future?
- How can our watersheds and the waterfront become more accessible to the public?
- How should the natural slope inform the scale of new development?



Ambleside consists of 7.46 hectares of park land, 1.85 km of public shoreline, and three creek systems on a gentle slope that descends from approximately 56 m in elevation.

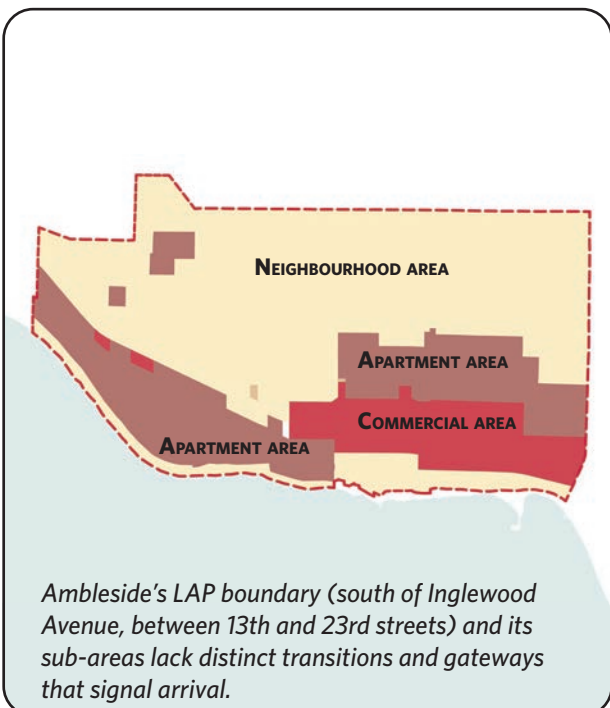


5. Public Realm

Ambleside’s public realm is enjoyed by many, featuring trails, waterfront recreational spaces, and some north-south connections to the commercial core. There have been a range of community perspectives on how the public realm could be improved. These include an interest in nicer laneways, more social gathering spaces, and better connections between the waterfront and commercial precinct.

The LAP should consider:

- How should we balance moving to and through Ambleside, with spending time there?
- Where might we introduce new social gathering spaces?
- Should different commercial streets (Bellevue, Marine, and Clyde) have a different character or function?
- How can we better connect trails and improve the pedestrian network?



6. Focus

Ambleside includes three different areas—commercial, apartment, and neighbourhood—with each having its own smaller sub-areas. Previous planning work has explored different boundaries or components of Ambleside, and the LAP study area is quite large. There is a desire for a more holistic view, better integration within and between areas, a clearer “centre” or focal points, and a stronger sense of arrival.

The LAP should consider:

- Where might change be considered, and should this be targeted or spread throughout the study area?
- How could we create a “sense of arrival” to Ambleside, as well as a strong identity within?
- Should the large LAP study area be reduced—and if so where?
- How can each sub-area collectively support a stronger and more cohesive Ambleside?

Introducing the Three Options

The following pages present the options. These are draft, high-level, and structured to show that there are a variety of ways to respond to the key themes that could subsequently be refined and combined into the LAP. Each option reflects a different overarching planning and design approach by arranging the following building types in different locations: 3-4 storey residential ground-oriented townhouses; 4-6 storey residential low-rise apartments; 6-8 storey residential mid-rise apartments; and 6-9 storey mid-rise mixed-use (must include a commercial use) or choice-of-use (may include a commercial use).

Option 1 - Frame and Accent

This option presents a compact approach, where development would be focused in a concentrated core.

Option 2 - Connect and Weave

This option presents a systems approach, where development would respond to natural creek and slope systems.

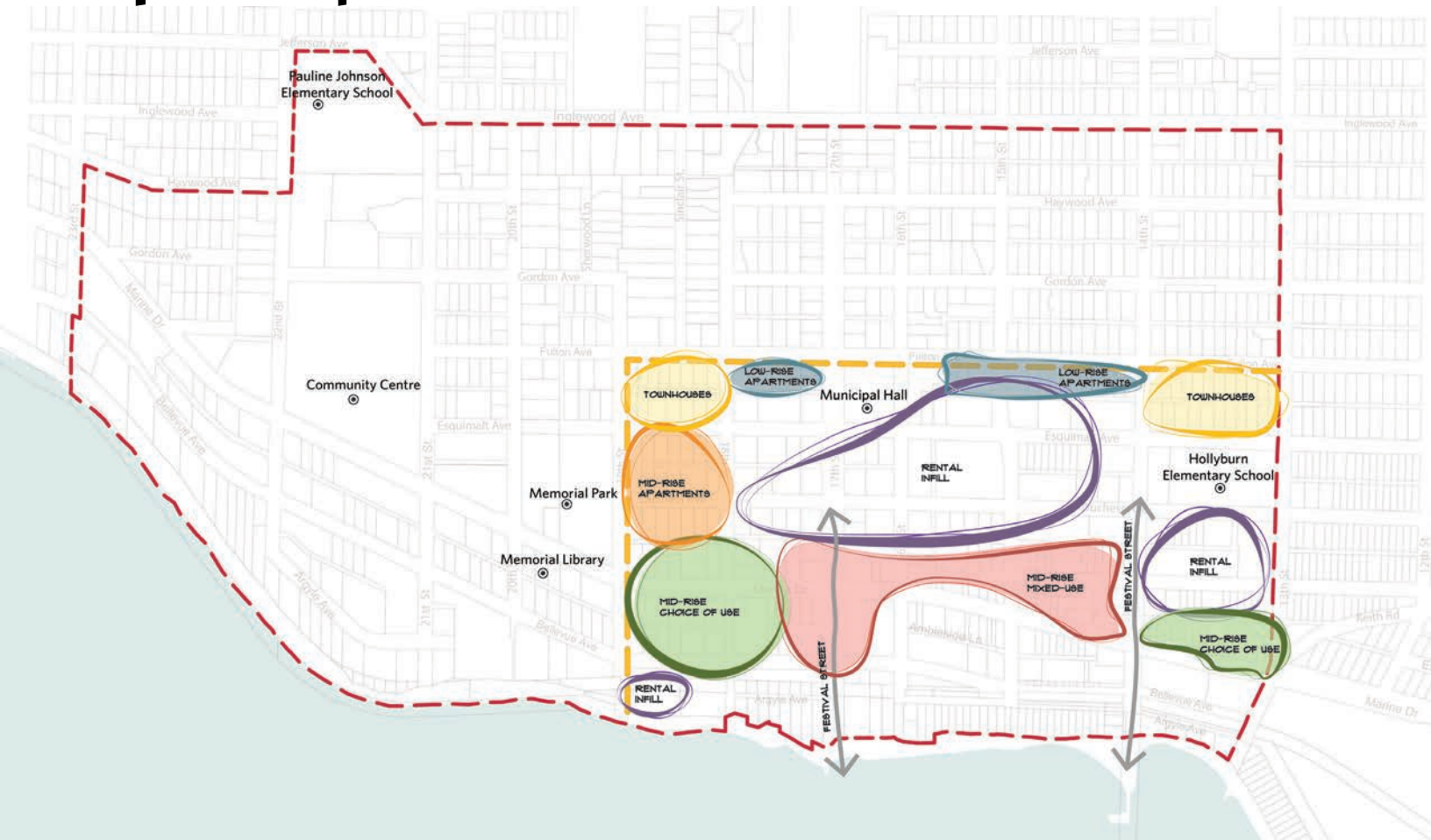
Option 3 - Blend and Punctuate

This option presents a transitions approach, where development would soften and vary existing changes in building heights.

Each option is first introduced as an annotated **land use concept** plan, so you can understand its main ideas; then **illustrated three-dimensionally** so you can see what it might look like in context; and then **evaluated against the six key themes** so you can measure how it responds to Ambleside's planning topics.



Option 1 | Frame and Accent

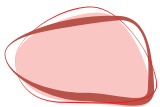


Option 1: Land Use Concept



Focus future development

The LAP boundary would focus on a compact “rectangle” between 13th, 19th, and Fulton, directing growth to a more defined and vibrant area.



Frame the Waterfront

Mid-rise mixed-use along 14th and 17th “festival streets” and Clyde would wrap around the low-rise, waterfront centre to the south.



Increase Flexibility

Choice-of-use on the 1300- and 1800-block “flanks” of Marine would support compatible “main street” uses next to the commercial core, like hotel, office, rental and seniors housing.



Support Rental

Twenty rental sites within the apartment area east of 19th would be allowed additional density in mid-rise forms to enable the increase of rental stock over time.



Complete the “Rectangle”

Townhouse, low- and mid-rise would transition outwards from existing commercial and apartment areas to Fulton and 19th.

Option 1: Overview

existing buildings
 potential buildings
 (#) number of storeys in existing buildings



Overview looking north

This option would frame and accent the centre by directing change to the rectangle south of Fulton and east of 19th. In the following images, the white buildings are existing with building heights annotated in storeys, and those shown in brown are potential buildings enabled through this option.



Looking west over Duchess near 13th

Mid-rise mixed-use on the north side of Marine and both frontages of the 1400 and 1500 blocks of Clyde would place housing close to shops and services, and adjacent to existing buildings of a similar scale. Ground-oriented housing and low-rise apartments would transition from existing high-rises to single-detached houses across Fulton.

Option 1: Detailed Views

existing buildings
 potential buildings
 (#) number of storeys in existing buildings



Looking northwest from the waterfront

For the commercial core, existing low-rise would remain south of Marine between 14th and 16th, framed by the existing Grosvenor building at the 14th festival street and new mid-rise mixed used buildings along the 17th festival street.



Looking southwest from near 16th and Fulton

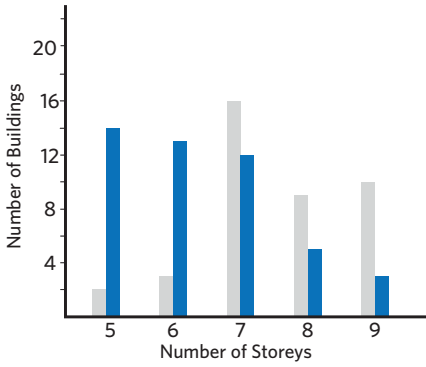
Mid-rise along the 1700 and 1800 blocks of Marine would connect the existing high-rise areas around Esquimalt and Bellevue, and transition between existing high-rises and Memorial Park.



Transect through Memorial Park looking east

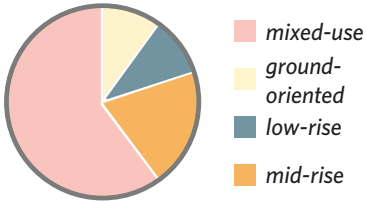
Ground-oriented and apartment housing would blend with the context and would be at a lower height than existing buildings and trees.

Option 1 : Evaluated against the six key themes



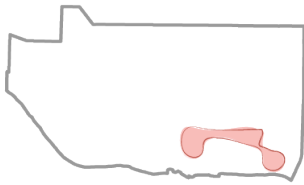
Height

The chart shows the number of potential additional 5-9 storey buildings (in blue) compared to Ambleside's existing number of 5-9 storey buildings (in grey); this option would prioritize 5-7 storey buildings.



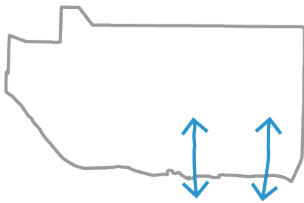
Housing Mix

Apartments in mixed-use buildings in the core would be predominant, with an estimated housing mix of 10% ground-oriented, 10% low-rise apartment, 20% mid-rise apartment, and 60% apartments in mixed-use buildings.



Commercial Hub

This option would shorten the high street, with a focus on Marine Drive between 14th and 17th, generally distinguishing between a mid-rise Clyde to the north and a low-rise Bellevue to the south.



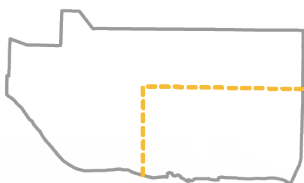
Natural Setting

Building on Ambleside's festival streets (which lead to the 14th and 17th street piers) this option would help bring the waterfront experience into the commercial core.



Public Realm

This option would direct public realm improvements (such as wider sidewalks, patio dining, and informal gathering spaces) to a defined and reduced waterfront-oriented centre.

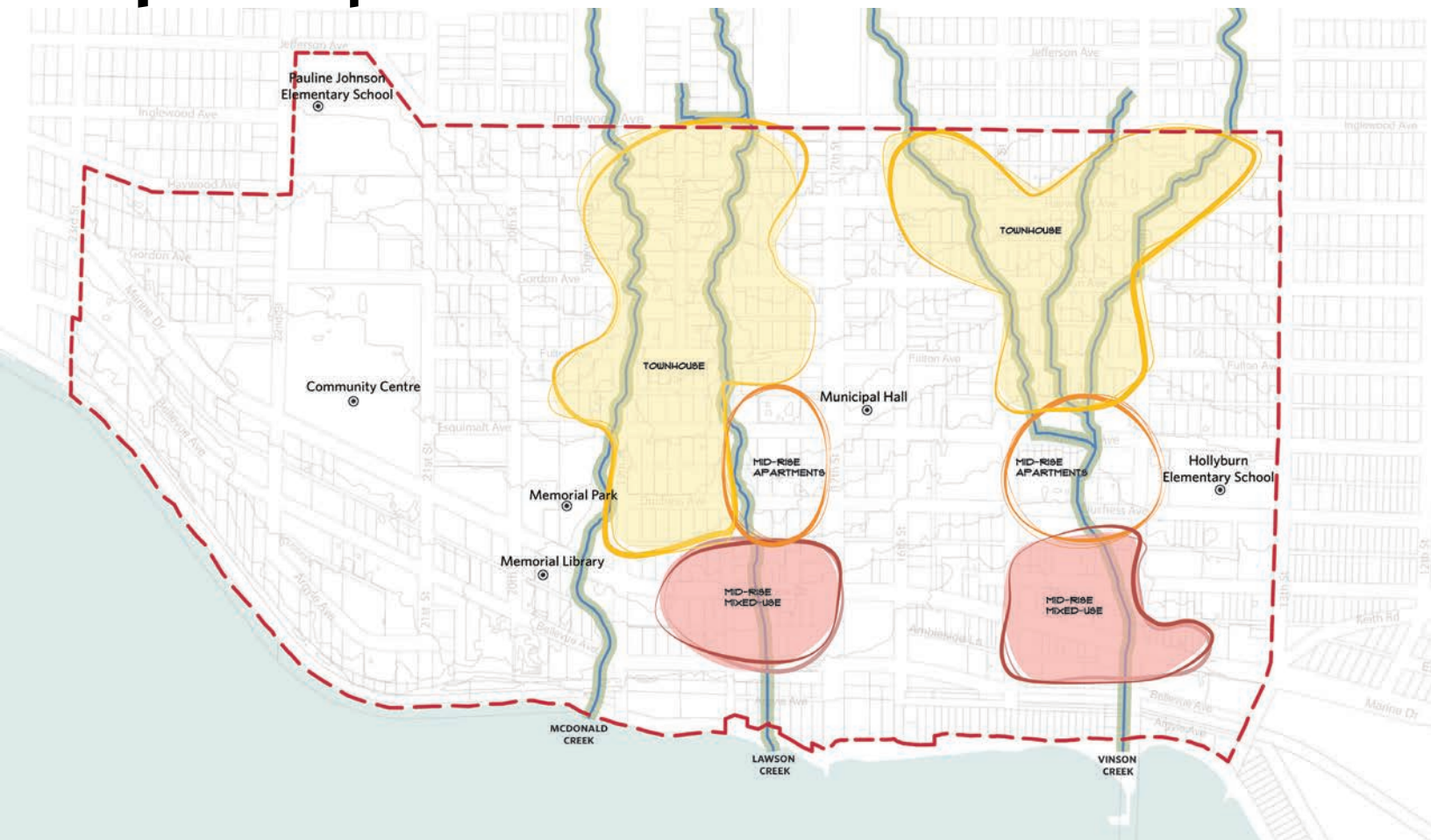


Focus

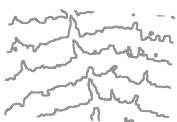
This option would provide a defined and smaller focus, meaning existing policies and regulations would be unchanged for study area lands west of 19th and north of Fulton.



Option 2 | Connect and Weave

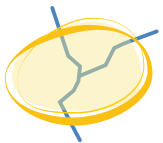


Option 2: Land Use Concept



Respond to the Slope

Building scale would reflect topography with mid-rise transitioning to townhouses moving up the slope.



Follow the Creeks

Townhouses along McDonald, Lawson and Vinson creeks would incrementally open up public access to these natural systems.



Naturalize the Apartment Area

Additional density in mid-rise forms would support the daylighting of Lawson and Vinson creeks as existing buildings are gradually replaced.



"Bookend" the Shopping Area

Mid-rise mixed-use around 14th and 18th would establish a sense of arrival in the commercial core, with public spaces along Lawson and Vinson creeks.



Make "Blueways" into Greenways

Tying the land use changes together, new north-south connections would enhance natural protection and create new creekside trails.

Option 2: Overview

existing buildings
 potential buildings
 (#) number of storeys in existing buildings



Overview looking north

This option would follow natural systems by directing change to the areas along McDonald, Lawson and Vinson creeks from the waterfront north to Inglewood Avenue. In the following images, the white buildings are existing with building heights annotated in storeys, and those shown in brown are potential buildings enabled through this option.

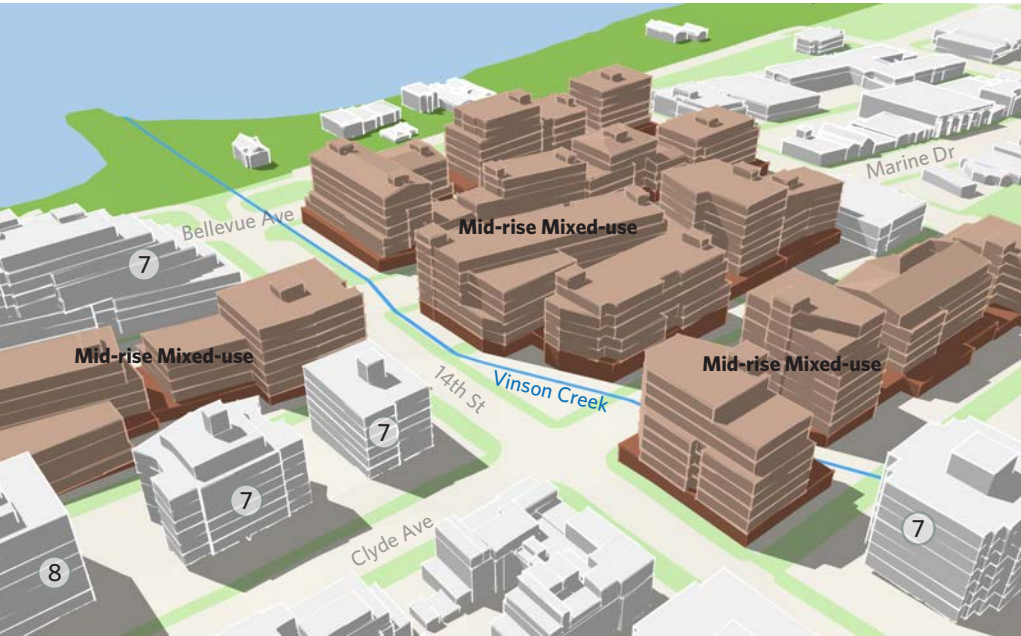


Looking south over 16th near Inglewood

Ground-oriented and apartment housing would create opportunities to daylight watercourses where buried and to introduce public trails connecting the surrounding neighbourhoods to Marine and the waterfront.

Option 2: Detailed View

existing buildings
 potential buildings
 (#) number of storeys in existing buildings



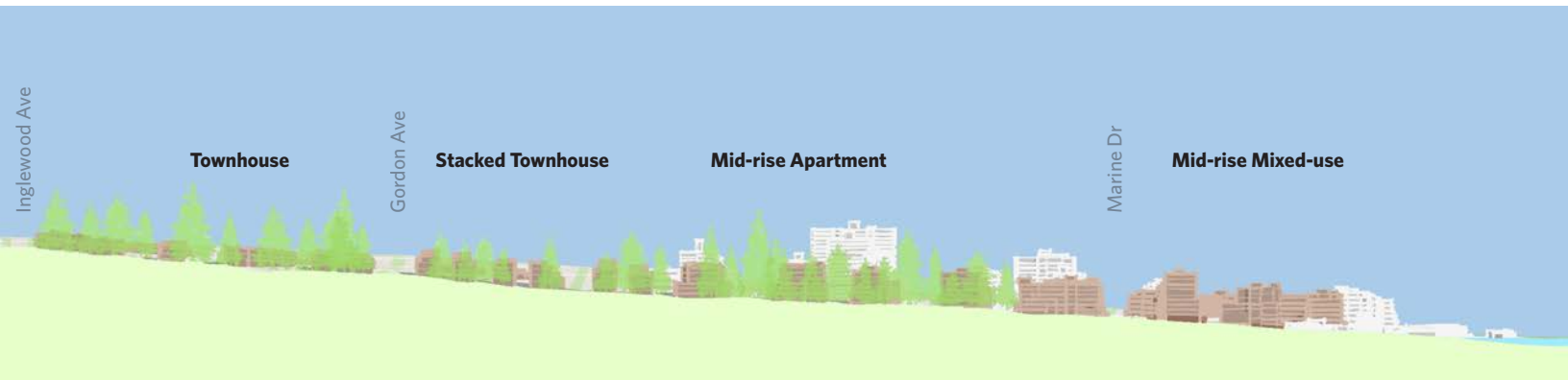
Looking southwest where Vinson Creek parallels 14th near Clyde

For the commercial core, mid-rise mixed-use buildings between Bellevue and Clyde would emphasize daylit creek crossings, frame new public spaces, and mark the arrival to Ambleside's shopping area at the 1400 and 1800 blocks of Marine. These "gateways" are strengthened by the existing buildings in these locations, including the Grosvenor building along Vinson creek.



Looking south where Lawson Creek parallels 18th near Esquimalt

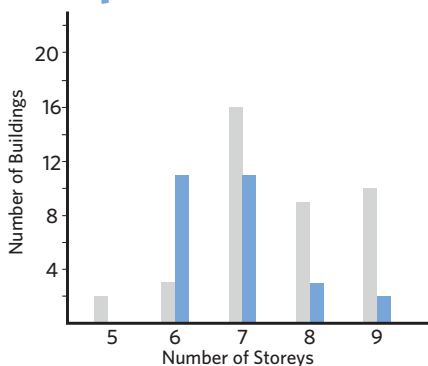
Ground-oriented and apartment housing would lead to mid-rise mixed-use buildings along Marine. This western "gateway" along Lawson creek already includes the Hollyburn Plaza and The Wentworth buildings. Ground-oriented housing supports the transition from the existing high-rises to Memorial Park.



Transect through Lawson Creek looking east

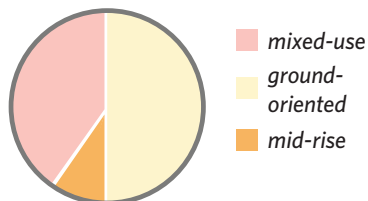
Ground-oriented and apartment housing would blend with the context and would be at a lower height than existing buildings and trees.

Option 2 : Evaluated against the six key themes



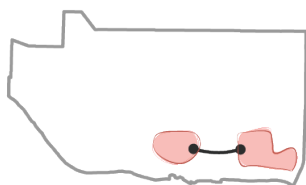
Height

The chart shows the number of potential additional 5-9 storey buildings (in blue) compared to Ambleside's existing number of 5-9 storey buildings (in grey); with this option's focus on ground-oriented townhouses, most new buildings would be under five storeys (not illustrated in the chart).



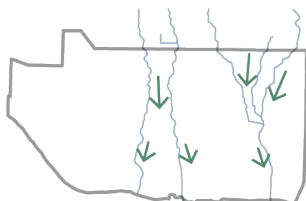
Housing Mix

Opportunities for ground-oriented housing would be prioritized, with an estimated housing mix of 50% ground-oriented, 10% mid-rise apartment, and 40% apartments in mixed-use buildings.



Commercial Hub

This option would "bookend" the main business area around 14th and 18th, providing a clearer sense of arrival or "gateway experience" from both the east and the west.



Natural Setting

Following the natural waterways and slope, this option would create incremental opportunities for areas of each creek to be naturalized, daylit and environmentally-managed.



Public Realm

New north-south creekside trails would expand and connect into Ambleside's existing parks and trail systems, providing an increased pedestrian and recreational network.



Focus

Responding to the creeks and the slope, the focus would be along north-south bands shaped by McDonald, Lawson, and Vinson creeks between Inglewood and the waterfront.



Option 3 | Blend and Punctuate



Option 3: Land Use Concept



Modulate the Main Street

Existing low-rise between 13th and 19th would be “punctuated” by limited mid-rise sites to create more distinct “pulses” of retail activity.



Infill the apartment area

Apartment infill within the existing high-rise area would be allowed on existing duplex-zoned sites and existing rental sites with underutilized site area.



Support our Aging Community

Existing age-restricted sites would be supported with additional density to enable the gradual increase of seniors-oriented housing.



Highlight Hollyburn

Mid-rise choice-of-use next to the existing apartment area would expand shops and services around this community and institutional hub.



Blend the Edges

Ground-oriented and low-rise housing diversity would be increased around parks, schools, and public spaces, with softer transitions from existing commercial and apartment sites.

Option 3: Overview

existing buildings
 potential buildings
 (#) number of storeys in existing buildings



Overview looking north

This option would smooth abrupt shifts in existing building heights by directing changes to those transition areas. In the following images, the white buildings are existing with building heights annotated in storeys, and those shown in brown are potential buildings enabled through this option.



Looking southwest near 14th Street and Gordon

Ground-oriented housing would transition between existing high-rises to single-detached houses, and this option would support the renewal and expansion of existing seniors housing by enabling mid-rise apartments on those sites.

Option 3: Detailed View

existing buildings
 potential buildings
 (#) number of storeys in existing buildings



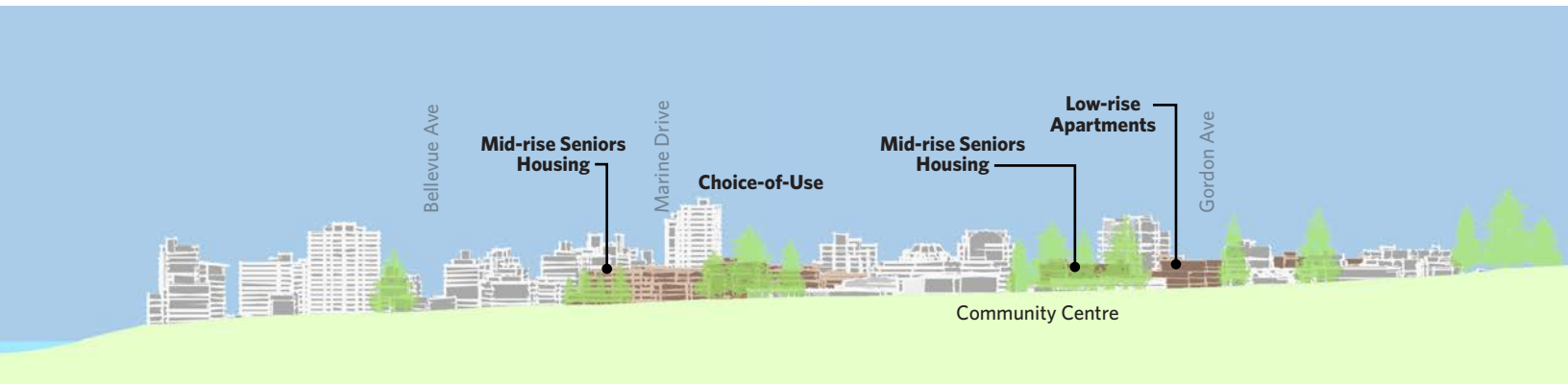
Looking east over Marine Drive near 23rd Street

Ground-oriented and apartment housing would transition between existing high-rises and single-detached homes. Mid-rise choice-of-use across Marine from the Community Centre and Westerleigh PARC buildings would allow flexibility along those blocks. This reflects the existing range of uses and could expand and support shops and services in the Hollyburn area.



Looking south over 21st Street near Haywood Avenue

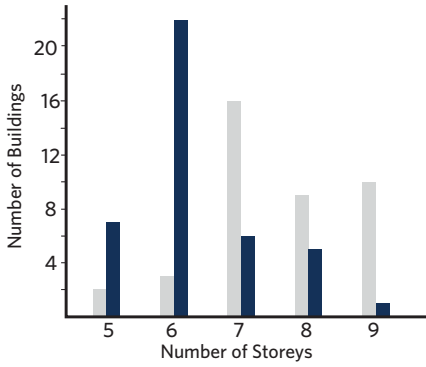
Ground-oriented and apartment housing would frame the 2100-block community and institutional uses, including the Community and Seniors Activity Centres.



Transect through 21st looking west

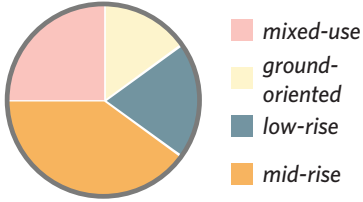
Ground-oriented and apartment housing would blend with the context and would be at a lower height than existing buildings and trees.

Option 3 : Evaluated against the six key themes



Height

The chart shows the number of potential additional 5-9 storey buildings (in blue) compared to Ambleside's existing number of 5-9 storey buildings (in grey); this option would prioritize 6 storey buildings.



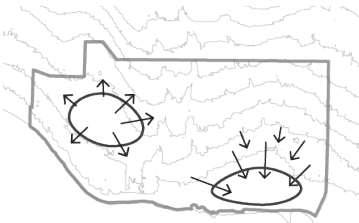
Housing Mix

This option would distribute new housing opportunities, with an estimated housing mix of 15% ground-oriented, 20% low-rise apartment, 40% mid-rise apartment, and 45% apartments in mixed-use buildings.



Commercial Hub

This option would retain the full extent of commercial sites along Marine Drive, with intentional "pulses" both within the 13th to 19th high street and at the Hollyburn hub to the west.



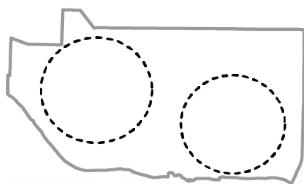
Natural Setting

Two responses to terrain would reflect the two topographies across the study area: one for Ambleside's natural "amphitheatre" to the east, and another for the flatter "plateau" to the west.



Public Realm

With a more distributed approach, this option would create wider opportunities for public realm improvements (such as better sidewalks and interfaces with parks and public amenities).



Focus

By punctuating within and blending outwards, this option would have a broader LAP focus, generally organized around the two neighbourhoods of Ambleside and Hollyburn.



Examples from Elsewhere

The three options show a variety of planning and design ideas – some that build on things Ambleside already includes, and some that are newer. The following photos show examples of how different ideas in the options have been achieved in other communities.



Mid-rise mixed-use can be oriented north-south to better connect the public realm with the waterfront and step building heights with the slope (Lower Lonsdale) | Source: District of West Vancouver



New townhouses and apartments can help define park spaces while contributing financially to these improvements and other community amenities (Moodyville) | Source: PFS Studio



Daylit creeks can provide recreational and environmental benefits, as well as a high-quality neighbourhood setting for new housing (Northgate) | Source: City of Seattle



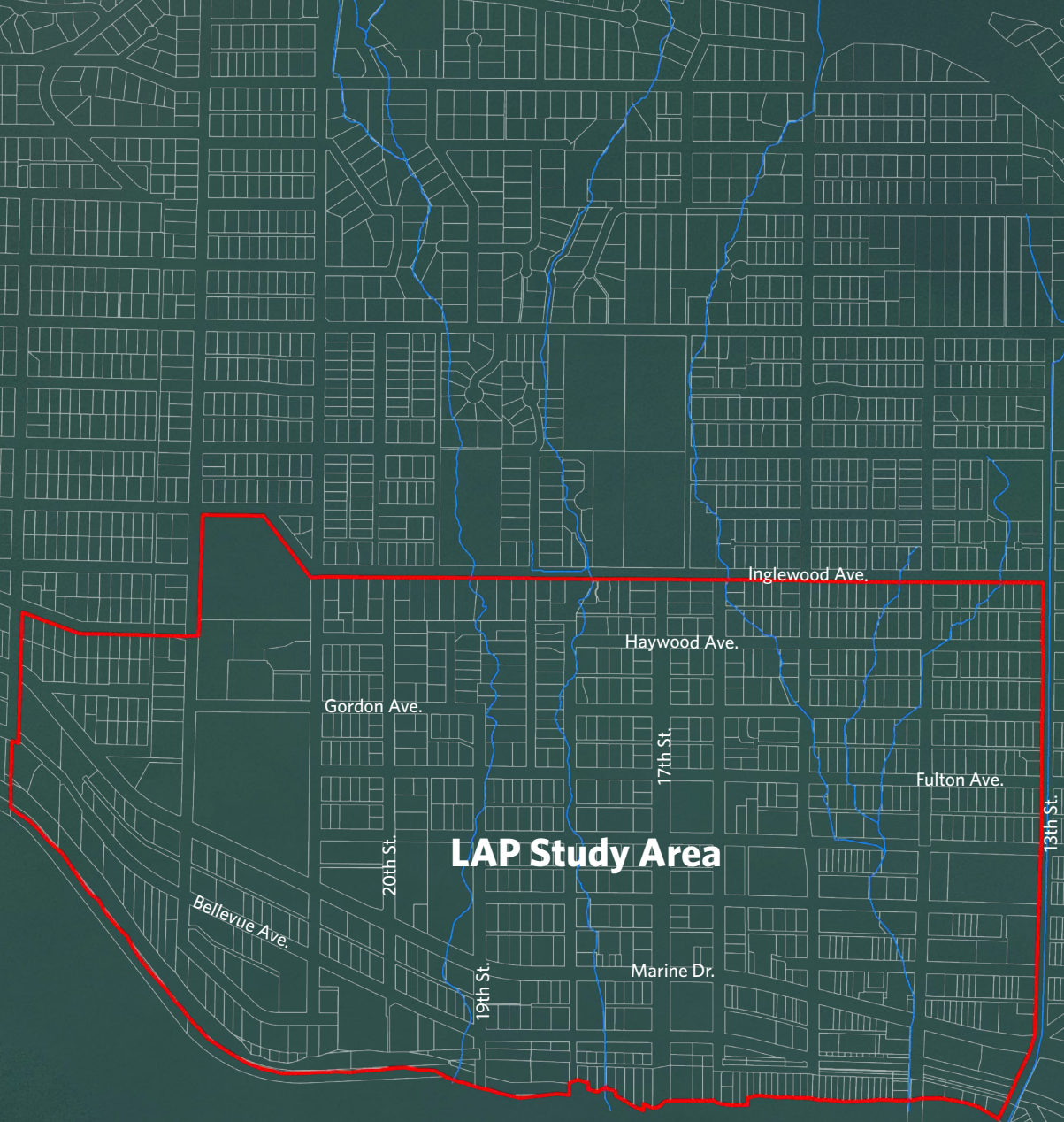
Different forms such as mid-rise, low-rise, and townhouse, built in varied architectural styles and materials, can be successfully combined (Port Moody) | Source: Connect Landscape



Selectively introducing additional height both within and between buildings can add visual interest and create a more sculpted skyline (Santa Monica) | Source: Equity Apartments



Specific uses with distinctive architecture, such as a mid-rise hotel, can become focal points and landmarks for both visitors and locals (Napa) | Source: Napa Valley Register



LAP Study Area

What's Next?

The options in this booklet are an engagement tool and we want to hear from you. There are around 900 individual lots within the study area—this is an important project for West Vancouver's future, the ideas we've presented aren't definitive, and you can help shape and improve them as we work towards the LAP.

- To find out more, including background information and how to get involved, please:
- Visit the project web page at www.westvancouverite.ca/plan-ambleside
 - You can sign-up for project updates and find out about engagement events
 - You can share your feedback with staff at 604-921-3459 | planambleside@westvancouver.ca

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