

# PROPOSED AMBLESIDE CENTRE LOCAL AREA PLAN

District of West Vancouver | May 2025

*Ambleside is located on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), səłilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation), and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Nation), who have inhabited these lands since time immemorial.*



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# 01 INTRODUCTION

This Ambleside Centre Local Area Plan and Design Guidelines (LAP) forms part of the District of West Vancouver's Official Community Plan (OCP). It provides a long-term vision for our community's most central commercial hub, as well as flexible policies and guidelines that serve as decision-making tools to achieve that vision. Subsequent chapters include specific objectives; but the overarching vision described in the LAP is one of successful regeneration, increased business vitality, strengthened social vibrancy, and enhanced liveability in this important centre.



# 1.1 Background

Ambleside is located on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the Squamish, Tseil-Waututh and Musqueam First Nations, who have inhabited this area since before recorded history. At the time of the establishment of West Vancouver in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ambleside was a centre of commerce, with ferry connections to both Vancouver and across the North Shore. The opening of Lions Gate Bridge in 1938 shifted the business (and vehicular) focus towards Marine Drive; and later, in 1950, the opening of Park Royal Shopping Centre began to create the significant competition for local businesses which continues today.

The introduction of the surrounding Ambleside Apartment Area in 1958 enabled high-rise residential construction, and new housing over the next two decades supported business vitality in the centre. Subsequent decades also saw the addition of (or improvements to) many civic facilities, such as the community centre, library, municipal hall, and waterfront park – confirming the wider Ambleside neighbourhood as the District’s overall “centre”.

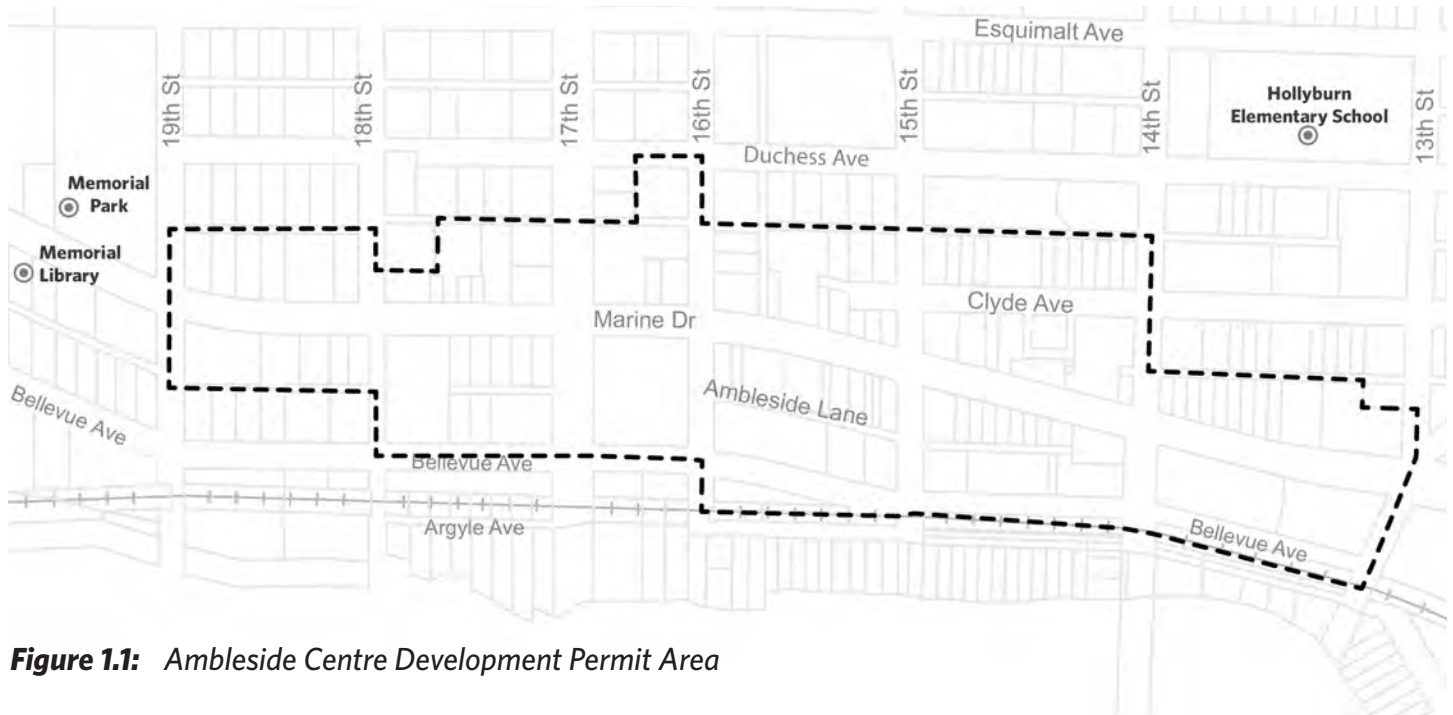
Over the course of several decades and multiple studies, the community has identified many hopes and opportunities for Ambleside. And the engagement process that directed the development of this plan confirmed that many previously identified aspirations still resonate today. These include: better integration of the centre with its outstanding, waterfront setting; increased foot traffic animating a more vibrant retail core; a “living centre” with residential options above shops and services; new public gathering spaces to strengthen our shared social hub; the renewal of aging buildings within a predominantly low-rise scale; and both more convenient parking and a better pedestrian experience for all who frequent Ambleside.

The LAP process included meaningful conversations around these (and other) themes. This plan responds to community input by providing a path forward that builds upon Ambleside’s context, opportunities, assets, and identity to guide the long-term success of this special place.



## 1.2 Application and Scope

This LAP applies to the design, review and approval of developments within its boundaries. It supports new Zoning Bylaw regulations and also updates the Development Permit Area (DPA) with associated form and character guidelines. All lands shown in Figure 1.1 within the LAP are designated as the Ambleside DPA and design guidelines apply.



**Figure 1.1:** Ambleside Centre Development Permit Area

The Development Permit Area designation is recognized under the OCP as follows:

- Category:** Local Government Act s. 488(1)(d), (e) and (f)
- Conditions:** The development permit area designation is warranted to ensure that buildings and sites are well designed and articulated, crafted and constructed with high-quality materials, and respond to the contextual circumstances of Ambleside.
- Objectives:** These guidelines are the primary means to deliver development that maintains and enhances the unique characteristics of Ambleside.
- Guidelines:** Planning Area Design Guidelines shall apply.
- Exceptions:** Development may be exempt from the requirement for a Development Permit if the proposal:
- does not involve the construction of any new buildings or structures; or
  - is for a renovation or a small addition that is considered to have no material change to the external appearance of the premises, meets all requirements of the Zoning Bylaw and conforms to the Planning Area Design Guidelines; or
  - is for residential-only development (where allowed under the Ambleside Centre Local Area Plan), in which case the Ambleside Apartment Area Development Permit Area Guidelines apply.

Incremental reinvestment over the life of this plan will contribute to Ambleside’s continuing role as the centre of West Vancouver. As a guiding document, this plan is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. Its purpose is to guide decisions towards an overall vision; it does not present the final decisions themselves. As such, this LAP serves as a framework for Council, staff, and the community to consider future development proposals in Ambleside.

Applicants should be prepared to demonstrate how development proposals adhere to the LAP and DPA. Drawings and sketches in this plan are conceptual in nature and are intended to illustrate possible outcomes of the associated provisions. This includes artist illustrations that present existing buildings in white (for context), with colour used to show the kinds of potential new buildings this plan contemplates. The boundaries and locations of any symbols or areas shown on a figure are approximate only and shall be interpreted as such. They are not intended to define exact locations except where they coincide with clearly recognizable or fixed boundaries, such as property lines. Unless otherwise specified, quantities and numerical standards within text, figures, drawings or diagrams are to be interpreted as general; anticipated densities and heights are accordingly provided as ranges. Precise regulations and prescriptions will be determined in the detailed design stage and through other regulatory documents such as the Zoning Bylaw.

## **1.3 Organization**

This plan is divided into the following sections to support the continued strengthening of the identity, livability, and vitality of Ambleside:

### **Public Realm**

The “spaces between buildings” including gathering places, pedestrian connections, the retail street experience, and parking.

### **Land Use Designations and Policies**

The “uses within buildings” including the densities and heights associated with commercial and residential uses.

### **Building Design**

The “look and feel of buildings” including architectural expression, building articulation, massing, and materials.

### **Plan Management**

The administration of the plan as a “living document”, with its implementation and monitoring as a means to achieve plan objectives.

# 02 PUBLIC REALM

Ambleside is the commercial, social, and creative waterfront hub of West Vancouver. Located at the base of a natural amphitheatre where waterways flow from the mountains to the sea, this setting contributes to its enduring appeal to residents, workers, and visitors drawn from across the District, region, and beyond. Anchored by beachside parks along a scenic sea walk, the waterfront is activated year-round by a lively arts and festival scene. The nearby streets and sidewalks leading to and within the centre further form Ambleside's distinct public realm.

This plan describes the incremental delivery of new shops, services, and homes to enable reinvestment in and enhancement of the community including: strengthened connections between the commercial core and the waterfront; a network of new social gathering spaces; and, better sidewalks, parking, and infrastructure to benefit all those who live, work, and play in Ambleside. This chapter provides direction on a cohesive public realm system, the related street experience, and an integrated approach to transportation. Building on Ambleside's success today as a cherished and unique locale, the plan's placemaking objectives are to:

**Create new and varied public spaces** with opportunities to gather in the civic, cultural and commercial centre of West Vancouver;

**Enliven the street experience** by guiding commercial use, encouraging a diverse mix of businesses, and delivering an improved public realm; and

**Improve connections to and within Ambleside** by expanding convenient access to parking and supporting active transportation.



## 2.1 Public Realm System

An evolving network of distinct community areas, smaller gathering spaces, and vibrant streets that constitute the public realm system forms the basis of Ambleside’s identity (Figure 2.1). This section describes how improvements will contribute to its success.

- 1) Celebrate the natural setting defined by the slope, streams, and waterfront (Figure 2.2):
  - a) Elevate and bring attention to these placemaking features.
  - b) Consider opportunities to reflect First Nations traditional place names.

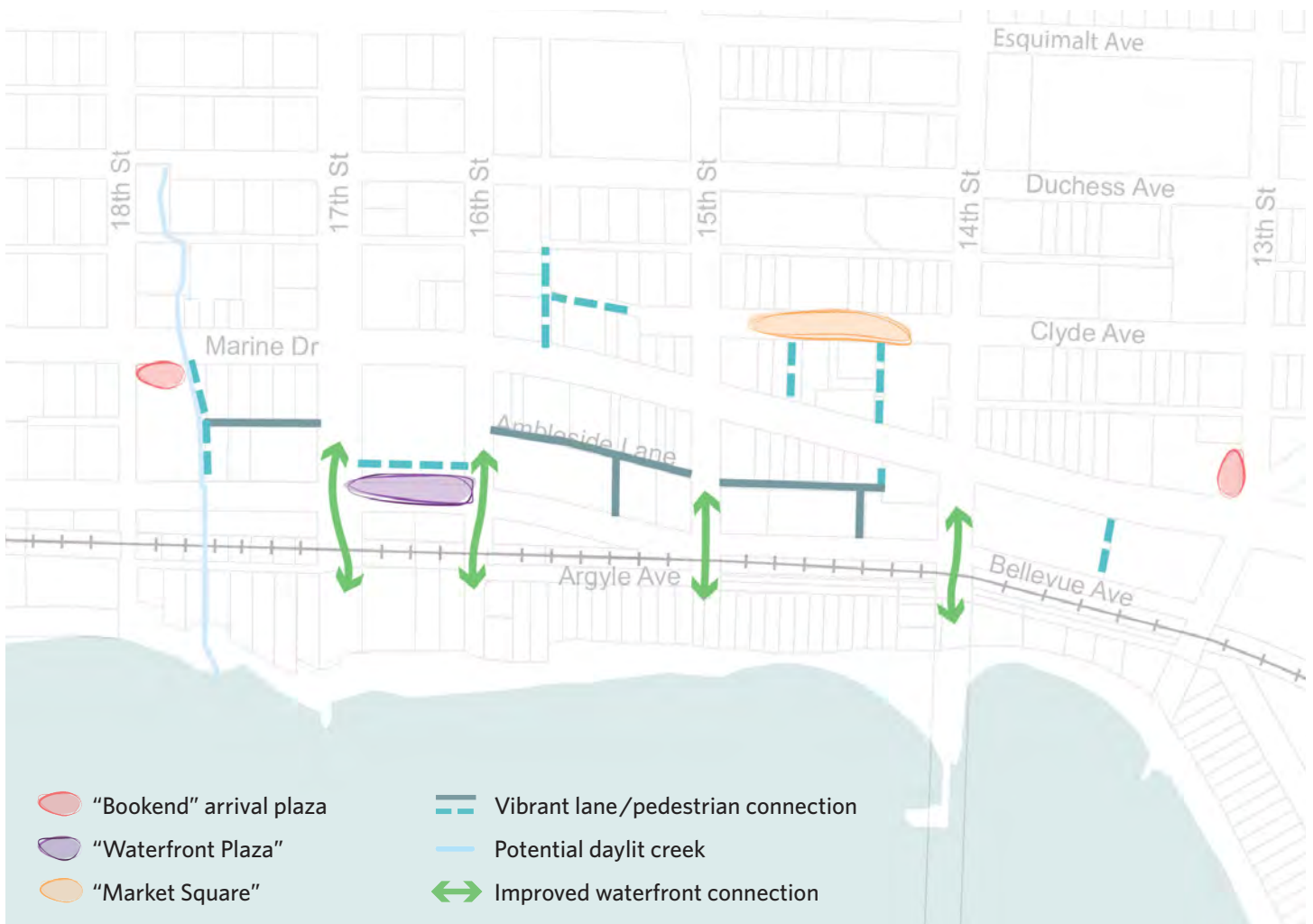


Figure 2.1 Key elements of the public realm system



Figure 2.2 Artist's illustration of a naturalized Lawson Creek at Bellevue Avenue

- 2) Establish a network of connected gathering spaces to enhance pedestrian circulation, expand publicly accessible spaces, and encourage exploration and visits:
  - a) A **"waterfront plaza"** on Bellevue Avenue, between 16<sup>th</sup> Street and 17<sup>th</sup> Street (Figure 2.3):
    - i) Provide an active frontage of cafes and restaurants with generous outdoor seating areas.
    - ii) Create a seamless interface between this publicly accessible plaza and Bellevue Avenue.
    - iii) Enhance the visual and physical connection with the waterfront through improved streets and landscaping.
    - iv) Emphasize a strong tie with Ambleside Lane on both 16<sup>th</sup> Street and 17<sup>th</sup> Street, with distinct paving patterns and attractive wayfinding.
    - v) Encourage convenient access with nearby on-street, surface, and new on-site underground public parking opportunities.



Figure 2.3 Artist's illustration of a "waterfront plaza" on the 1600-block of Bellevue Avenue

- b) A **“market square”** on Clyde Avenue, between 14<sup>th</sup> Street and 15<sup>th</sup> Street (Figure 2.4):
  - i) Support a range of creative employment uses that activate the street.
  - ii) Provide a lively mix of active customer frontages and commercial service functions.
  - iii) Introduce a flexible street design with distinct paving patterns that builds on the character of Clyde Avenue and facilitates temporary street closures for special events (such as farmers’ markets and food truck festivals).
  - iv) Enhance the public realm with integrated and blended plaza, pedestrian, and shared street elements.
  - v) Emphasize mid-block, pedestrian retail alleys between Marine Drive and Clyde Avenue to enable a sense of discovery.
  - vi) Encourage convenient access with nearby on-street and new on-site underground public parking opportunities.
- 3) Increase the vibrancy of the commercial area by implementing the public realm system and strengthening connections with the waterfront:
  - a) Improve sidewalks, landscaping, and wayfinding, especially between Marine Drive and the waterfront.
  - b) Enhance existing and encourage new mid-block pedestrian pathways.
  - c) Identify opportunities for additional connectivity as they arise through the *Ambleside Waterfront Park Implementation Project*.
- 4) Highlight the arrival to Ambleside by establishing Marine Drive “bookend” plazas at 13<sup>th</sup> Street and 18<sup>th</sup> Street (Figure 2.5).
  - a) Provide active frontages of cafes and restaurants with ample, outdoor seating areas to activate the spaces year-round.
  - b) Create a seamless interface between these publicly accessible plazas and Marine Drive.
  - c) Celebrate the arrival to Ambleside through public art and signage.



Figure 2.4 Artist’s illustration of a “market square” on the 1400-block of Clyde Avenue



Figure 2.5 Artist's illustration of a Marine Drive arrival plaza at 13<sup>th</sup> Street

- 5) Support vibrant streets and lanes within Ambleside (Figure 2.6)
  - a) Apply universal accessibility strategies and appropriate lighting standards.
  - b) Use paving and landscaping, where appropriate, to situate lanes as shared spaces for pedestrians in addition to serving as effective parkade and commercial truck access.
  - c) Encourage active retail frontages along lanes, where possible.
- 6) Highlight nature within the commercial area:
  - a) Daylight Lawson Creek as part of a new, publicly accessible plaza at 18<sup>th</sup> Street and Marine Drive, subject to feasibility and in accordance with applicable environmental regulations (Figure 2.2).
  - b) Protect and retain major trees and vegetation, where possible.



Figure 2.6 Artist's illustration of vibrant shopping streets

## 2.2 Street Experience

The focus on pedestrian streetscapes requires a correlated attention to building frontages, with designs reflecting the desired qualities of the respective streets (Figure 2.7).

- 1) Prioritize the pedestrian street experience, with particular attention to any adjoining gathering space:
  - a) Design in accordance with the existing *Ambleside Village Centre Streetscape Standards* to ensure high quality and compatible street designs, sidewalks, landscaping, and furniture, with the LAP taking precedence should there be any inconsistency.
  - b) Ensure generous pedestrian infrastructure, and integrate weather protection and patios to encourage use.
  - c) Specify commercial signage and lighting in accordance with related policies and guidelines.
  - d) Incorporate public art created by local and First Nations artists including murals, where appropriate.



Figure 2.7 Street frontage identification to inform the architectural response

- 2) Differentiate the street experience to reflect the identity and role of individual streets (Figure 2.7):
  - a) **Waterfront**
    - i) Focus on street level cafes, restaurants, and specialty retail with activated facades including extensive glazing, outdoor seating, and patios (Figure 2.8).
    - ii) Improve connections to the waterfront parks with purposeful landscaping to buffer existing infrastructure such as surface parking, rail tracks and the substation.
  - b) **Active**
    - i) Encourage a diverse range of commercial uses, including businesses that support the needs of employers and residents (e.g. grocery stores, pharmacies, banks) along with more lively and vibrant uses (e.g. retail, cafes, restaurants).
    - ii) Continue to allow a limited amount of office and services use at street level.
  - c) **Flexible**
    - i) Encourage smaller format commercial to support a diversity of local and emerging businesses.
    - ii) Allow the broadest range of commercial uses including services in accordance with related bylaws and policies.

## 2.3 Integrated Transportation

Interconnected with land use policies, new buildings will support and contribute to the efficient operation of varied transportation options (Figure 2.9).

- 1) Increase parking supply in new developments:
  - a) Access parking from the lane or lowest hierarchy street where lane access is not available.
  - b) Maintain commercial and visitor off-street parking levels in rezoning applications.
  - c) Consider publicly accessible, off-street parking in excess of minimum requirements as an amenity in rezoning applications, with the expectation that such amenity be provided on large sites that can efficiently deliver infrastructure.
  - d) Require a transportation impact assessment for each site-specific rezoning application.



Figure 2.8 Artist's illustration of Bellevue Avenue with improved waterfront interface

- 2) Improve the pedestrian experience while optimizing public street parking:
  - a) Increase supply and reduce conflicts by accessing off-street parking and loading from the lane, where possible.
  - b) Encourage shared parking and parking access, especially where there are land assemblies and/or new developments.
  - c) Consider expanding the availability of angled parking, where possible.
  - d) Support businesses and visitors through regulations that encourage the efficient use of available on-street parking.
  - e) Incorporate landscaped boulevards.
- 3) Balance and integrate transportation modes in Ambleside:
  - a) Provide convenient and attractive visitor bicycle racks, including designated bike parking for bike programs.
  - b) Consider future pedestrian, cycling, and multi-modal (e.g. Spirit Trail) enhancements aligned with parking needs, through related District initiatives (e.g. parking studies and Waterfront and Ambleside parks planning).



Figure 2.9 Expanded parking and active transportation opportunities

# 03 LAND USE DESIGNATIONS AND POLICIES

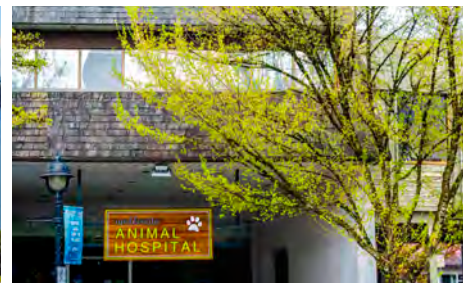
Ambleside has served as West Vancouver’s “main street” and commercial hub since before the District’s founding, and its continued success is a community priority. It is characterized today by a concentration of small, independent shops and services along the main retail streets: Marine Drive, Bellevue Avenue, and Clyde Avenue. A comparatively limited amount of development over recent decades has resulted in the current concentration of older commercial buildings with only a small number of dwellings. This plan considers incremental revitalization of the area as critical to support local businesses and make available to residents the shops and services that meet their daily needs.

This chapter outlines the overall concept, key directions, land use designations, and related policies to guide the future of Ambleside. Building on Ambleside’s context, strengths, as well as its current and future needs, the plan’s land use objectives are to:

**Revitalize the centre** by enabling redevelopment to create diverse retail and commercial spaces from small-scale retail storefronts to a full-service grocery store;

**Introduce more housing** including new ownership and rental options to support Ambleside as a “living centre”; and

**Manage incremental change** that reflects and shapes Ambleside’s different and distinct areas, centred around Marine, Bellevue, and Clyde.



### 3.1 Concept and Key Directions

To deliver these objectives, this plan responds to Ambleside’s three east-west commercial streets by strengthening the low-rise “heart” of the community, increasing its connection to the waterfront, and responding to the upslope context. This land use concept identifies distinct character areas (Figure 3.1):

A **“low-rise heart”** encompassing the majority of the plan area, including the length of Marine, the central portion of Bellevue, and parts of Clyde, with opportunities for new street-level commercial with set back upper floors.

An **“activated waterfront”** with a more diverse range of building forms along “west Bellevue”, creating focal points to deliver new public spaces and better connect the commercial centre to the waterfront.

An **“upslope precinct”** focused on and around “central Clyde”, with a quirkier mix of shops and services, and opportunities for new public spaces and housing that integrates with the upslope apartment area.

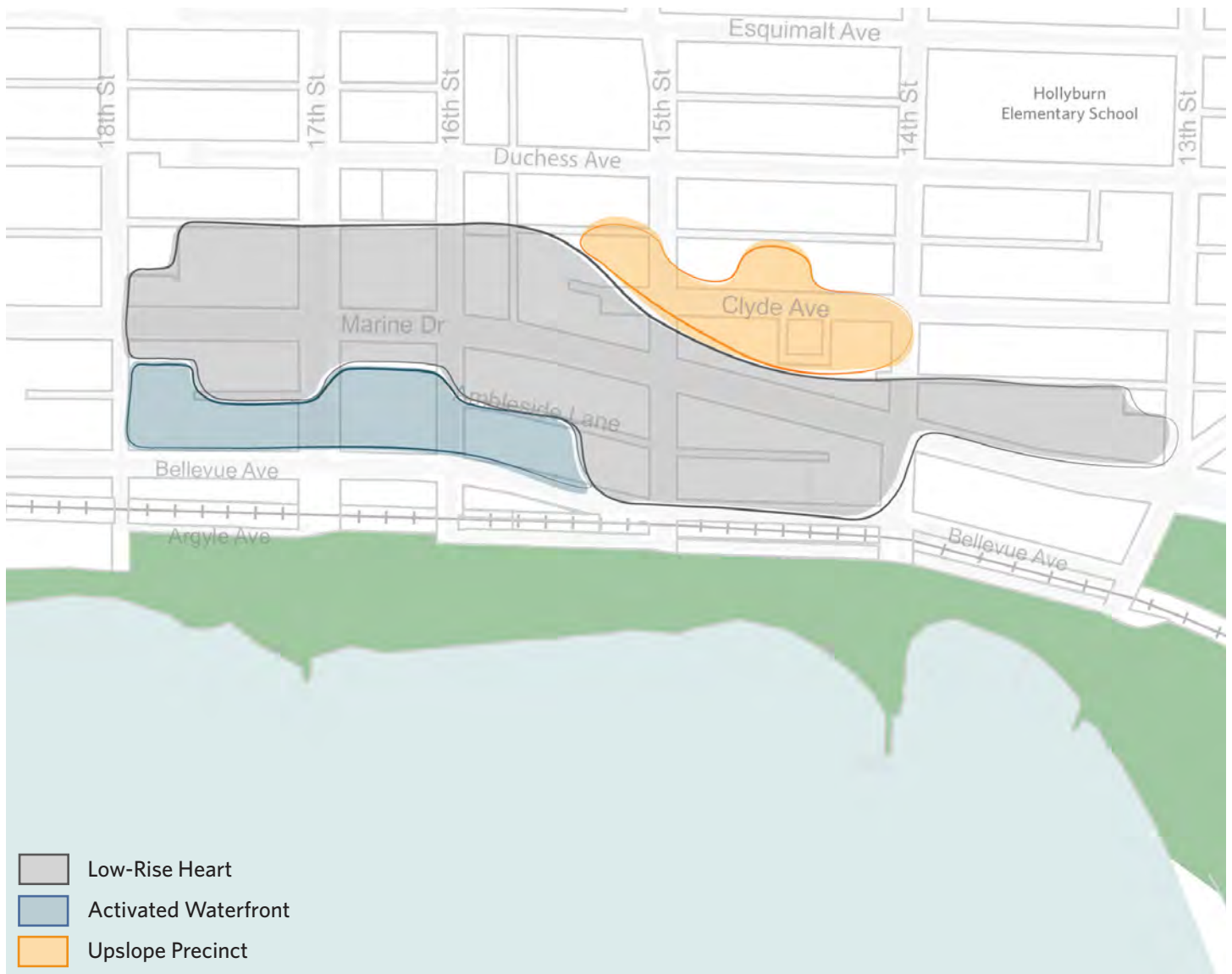


Figure 3.1 Conceptual land use framework

## 3.2 Future Land Use

Lands within the plan are designated as shown in Figures 3.2, 3.4, and 3.7. This section includes descriptions of the land use intent, the use, density, and height associated with each designation, and any related conditions.

### 1) Low-Rise Heart

These designations continue the historical scale of the commercial area, including the Marine Drive corridor (Figure 3.2). Removal of barriers for redevelopment at similar height and density to the prevailing zoning enables the incremental renewal of buildings.



Figure 3.2 Ambleside Centre Low-Rise Heart designations

#### a) Low-Rise A

Intent:

Prioritize low-rise regeneration for most of Ambleside by removing existing regulatory barriers (Figure 3.3).

Use, Density and Height:

Up to 1.75-2.0 FAR and 3-4 storeys with commercial at street-level. Upper storeys may be any combination of commercial or residential. No amenity contributions are required. Parking requirements may be reduced where site area and/or site dimensions are constrained.

Implementation:

Update Ambleside Centre zoning regulations for these sites.

**b) Low-Rise B**

Intent:

Manage the evolution of gas station and surface parking sites towards retail frontages with expanded commercial and rental uses.

Use, Density and Height:

Up to 1.75-2.0 FAR and 3-4 storeys with commercial at street-level. Upper residential storeys are restricted to rental, or may be strata residential where at least one additional storey is commercial. No amenity contributions are required. Parking requirements may be reduced where site area and/or site dimensions are constrained.

Implementation:

Update zoning regulations to allow both existing land uses and these additional land uses.

**c) Low-Rise C**

Intent:

Create an eastern “gateway” with new development and an arrival plaza at 13<sup>th</sup> Street and Marine Drive.

Use, Density and Height:

Up to 1.75-2.0 FAR and 3-4 storeys, with commercial along the Marine Drive building frontage, and public space at the 13<sup>th</sup> Street corner in lieu of other amenity contributions. Upper storeys may be any combination of commercial or residential. Parking requirements may be reduced, based on site design and feasibility.

Implementation:

Consider rezoning applications, subject to the policies of this LAP.



Figure 3.3 Artist's illustration of low-rise Marine Drive

## 2) Activated Waterfront

These designations apply to lands in the western part of the plan area that front Bellevue Avenue, with heights transitioning from the adjacent apartment area (Figure 3.4). They include a commercial focal point and deliver important community objectives through new public spaces, an improved connection with the waterfront, and other amenities.



Figure 3.4 Ambleside Centre Activated Waterfront designations

### a) Waterfront D

Intent:

Establish a focal point with new development to create a “waterfront plaza” and other significant public benefits (Figure 3.5).

Use, Density and Height:

Up to 3.5-4.0 FAR, with commercial at street-level. Building height should generally be as follows: up to 3-4 storeys fronting Marine Drive; up to 5-6 storeys fronting 16<sup>th</sup> Street; up to 14-16 storeys fronting 17<sup>th</sup> Street; and up to 3-4 storeys for the remainder of the Bellevue Avenue frontage.

Implementation:

Consider rezoning applications, subject to an evaluation of the proposal’s overall benefit, including:

- a “waterfront plaza” fronting Bellevue Avenue
- the re-provision of a full-service grocery store
- publicly accessible parking
- ownership and/or rental housing
- other commercial uses
- financial or in-kind community amenities



Figure 3.5 Artist's illustration of Waterfront designations D and E (1500 and 1600 blocks of Bellevue Avenue)

**b) Waterfront E**

Intent:

Revitalize Bellevue Avenue's waterfront area with new commercial or mixed-use development (Figures 3.5 and 3.6).

Use, Density and Height:

Up to 2.5-3.0 FAR and 6-8 storeys, with commercial at street-level. Upper storeys may be any combination of commercial or residential.

Implementation:

Consider rezoning applications, subject to the policies of this LAP.

**c) Waterfront F**

Intent:

Create a western "gateway" with new development and an arrival plaza at 18<sup>th</sup> Street and Marine Drive (Figure 3.6).

Use, Density and Height:

Up to 3.5-4.0 FAR and 3-4 storeys with commercial at street level, restricting the existing, zoned 180-foot height maximum to the southern portion of the site fronting Bellevue Avenue.

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**Waterfront F** *continued from previous page*

Implementation:

Consider rezoning applications, subject to an evaluation of the proposal's overall benefit, including:

- public space fronting Marine Drive
- a pedestrian mews connecting Bellevue Avenue, Marine Drive, and Ambleside Lane
- a daylit portion of Lawson Creek, if feasible and environmentally sound
- ownership and/or rental housing
- other commercial uses
- financial or in-kind community amenities

**d) Waterfront G**

Intent:

Renew a former community use site and transition from the existing Hollyburn Plaza tower (Figure 3.6).

Use, Density and Height:

Up to 3.5-4.0 FAR and 10-12 storeys, with commercial or community use at street-level. At least one storey restricted to community use, and remaining storeys may be any combination of commercial or residential.

Implementation:

Consider rezoning applications, subject to the policies of this LAP.



Figure 3.6 Artist's illustration of Waterfront designations E, F, and G (1700-block of Bellevue Avenue)

### 3) Upslope Precinct

These designations apply to lands in the northern part of the plan area, with heights reflecting the upslope apartment area (Figure 3.7). They include a commercial focal point and deliver important community objectives through new public spaces, a range of housing types, and other amenities.



Figure 3.7 Ambleside Centre Upslope Precinct designations

#### a) Upslope H

Intent:

Establish a focal point with new development to create a “market square” and other significant public benefits (Figures 3.8 and 3.9).

Use, Density and Height:

Up to 3.5-4.0 FAR, with commercial at street-level. Building height should generally be as follows: up to 2-3 storeys fronting Marine Drive; up to 6-8 storeys fronting 14<sup>th</sup> Street; up to 12-14 storeys roughly centered on the site; and up to 3-4 storeys for the remainder of the Clyde Avenue frontage.

Implementation:

Consider rezoning applications, subject to an evaluation of the proposal’s overall benefit, including:

- a “market square” fronting Clyde Avenue
- two pedestrian mews connecting Marine Drive with Clyde Avenue
- publicly accessible parking
- ownership and/or rental housing
- other commercial uses
- financial or in-kind community amenities



Figure 3.8 Artist's illustration of Upslope designations H and I (1400-block of Marine Drive)

**b) Upslope I**

Intent:

Revitalize Clyde Avenue with new commercial or mixed-use development (Figure 3.8 and 3.9).

Use, Density and Height:

Up to 2.5-3.0 FAR and 6-8 storeys, with at least two storeys of commercial. Remaining storeys may be any combination of commercial or residential.

Implementation:

Consider rezoning applications, subject to the policies of this LAP.

**c) Upslope J**

Intent:

Combine the revitalization of Clyde Avenue with the opportunity to deliver Ambleside civic amenities (Figure 3.9).

Use, Density and Height:

Up to 3.5-4.0 FAR and 10-12 storeys, with commercial at street-level and any use on upper storeys, on condition that amenity contributions that may be offered include consideration of the transfer of ownership of 1590 Bellevue Avenue to the District.

Implementation:

Consider rezoning applications, subject to the policies of this LAP. Any future use of 1590 Bellevue Avenue, if granted to the District, would be subject to Council's determination and could include expanded park space or community use such as an arts facility.

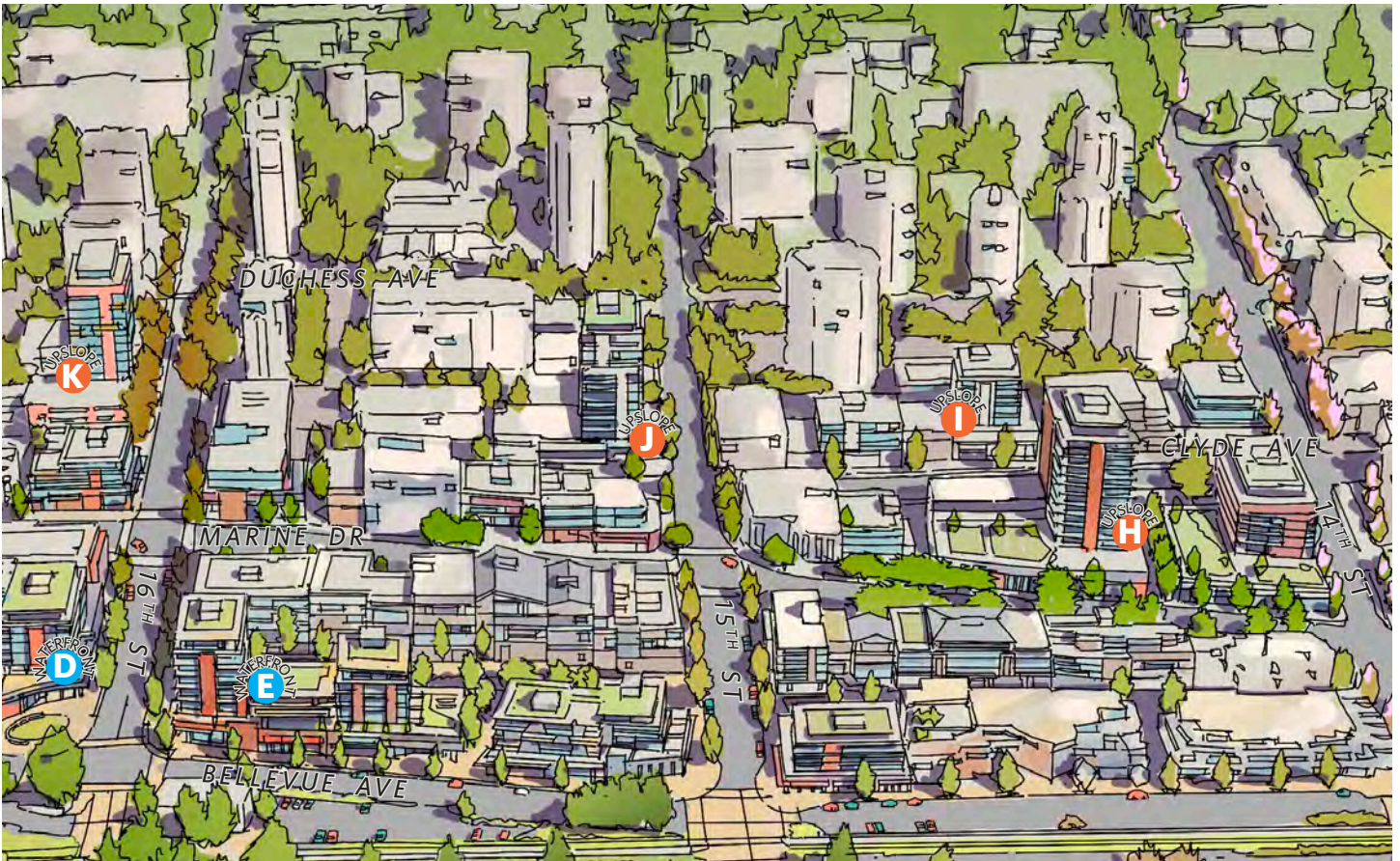


Figure 3.9 Artist's illustration of Upslope designations H through K (1400 and 1500 blocks)

**d) Upslope K**

Intent:

Enable and incentivize additional affordable housing in Ambleside (Figure 3.9).

Use, Density and Height:

Up to 3.5-4.0 FAR and 10-12 storeys, with optional commercial use at street-level, and all residential uses to be either 100% rental, or 70% strata and 30% below market rental.

Implementation:

Consider rezoning applications, subject to the policies of this LAP.

**3.3 Area-wide Policies**

Notwithstanding the specific considerations related to the land use designations above, the following policies apply to all new buildings within the LAP.

- 1) Strengthen commercial vibrancy:
  - a) Require street-level commercial use on all sites unless otherwise specified (Figure 3.10).
  - b) Enable commercial-only use on all sites unless otherwise specified.
  - c) Encourage a diversity of businesses, from unique clothing and design stores to artisan and “maker” spaces including bakeries, breweries and distilleries.

- 2) Support diverse housing:
  - a) Encourage a range of unit sizes, types, and tenures supporting different demographics, including seniors.
  - b) Enable rental as a residential use on all sites and consider the inclusion of market and/or below market rental as part of any amenity contributions offered in rezoning applications, where appropriate.
- 3) Prioritize use of amenity contributions:
  - a) Support the enhancement and/or renewal of local public facilities such as the civic site, library, and parks.
  - b) Create or contribute land or funding to new public facilities such as an arts facility.
- 4) Consider heritage revitalization agreements where appropriate, including the possible transfer of density within Ambleside Centre through a comprehensive rezoning process.
- 5) Provide flexibility for changes to use, density and/or height, subject to a site-specific pre-application including contextual review and a report to Council, particularly where they enable delivery of:
  - a hotel, an arts facility, or other community uses;
  - increased commercial revitalization or greater housing affordability;
  - exceptional public realm such as expanded park space; and/or
  - other purposes on their merit.



Figure 3.10 Artist's illustration of vibrant street-level commercial

# 04 BUILDING DESIGN

Situated within a frame of mid- and high-rise apartments, Ambleside today is generally characterized by low-rise offices and retail in the centre. Roughly half of the commercial building space is over 50 years old, and it is without a prevailing architectural style. Expanding on the land use designations of this plan, design guidelines that respond to Ambleside’s character and context strengthen the connection of new buildings with the public realm. Creative and diverse responses are expected to enhance the sense of place, avoid generic outcomes, and support the community’s overall identity now and into the future.

This chapter provides direction on building design with the intention of shaping the incremental delivery of new buildings in Ambleside over the life of this plan. The plan’s building design objectives are to:

**Prioritize the street interface** by requiring intentional building design to complete a great public realm;

**Modulate height and massing** to avoid monolithic “tunnel effects”, and carefully locate a limited and varied number of taller forms in context; and

**Encourage excellent architecture** with diverse expression, individual designs, and creative responses to each site.



## 4.1 Street Interface

This plan prioritizes the delivery of high-quality streets, and it requires that the form and massing of new buildings support the pedestrian experience.

- 1) Require site designs that complete and frame great streets and public spaces (Figure 4.1):
  - a) Contribute to vibrant streetscapes with varied heights, rooflines, and building separation.
  - b) Distinguish through architectural expression the low-rise heart, activated waterfront, and upslope precinct.
  - c) Reflect the hierarchy of streets and lanes with particular attention to Marine Drive, Bellevue Avenue, and Clyde Avenue.
  - d) Integrate different uses, where possible, to foster a dynamic environment to live, work, and socialize.
- 2) Express land use densities through diverse forms and varied massing:
  - a) Prioritize active, commercial frontages articulated with a fine-grained rhythm that supports a vibrant and appealing streetscape.
  - b) Align building massing, setbacks, transitions, and materiality with the enclosed uses.
  - c) Set back residential uses above commercial, with particular attention to the primary frontage.
  - d) Support small-scale buildings without consolidation by allowing flexibility to building articulation on constrained sites.
- 3) Prioritize active commercial frontages:
  - a) Provide quality ground-floor retail spaces with extensive glazing and appropriate ceiling heights.
  - b) Enable active uses such as patios and support widened pedestrian areas where appropriate and feasible.
  - c) Make residential entrances visible from the street, and integrate residential lobbies with commercial storefronts where appropriate.

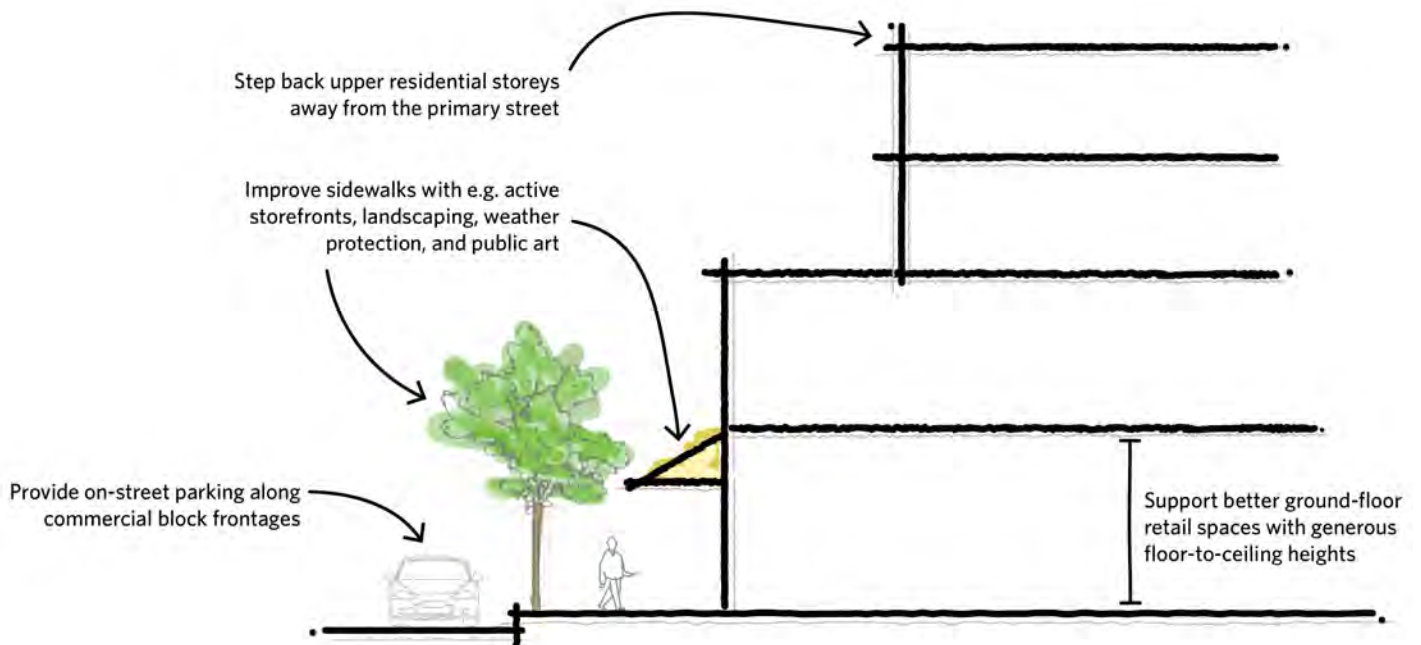


Figure 4.1 Illustrative section of buildings framing the street

## 4.2 Building Height

New buildings will enhance visual interest by contributing to Ambleside's varied heights.

- 1) Create diversity and respond to Ambleside (Figure 4.2):
  - a) Manage the designated height and density with an emphasis on the overall low-rise scale of the plan.
  - b) Encourage massing and height variations both within and between buildings (Figure 4.3).
  - c) Reflect the cadence of existing higher buildings in the siting of new development where taller forms are contemplated (Figure 4.4).
  - d) Maintain the existing mix of predominantly one- and two-storey commercial uses along Marine Drive, with three storeys considered where appropriate (Figure 4.4).
- 2) Manage massing to benefit solar access, privacy, and other potential impacts:
  - a) Consider site-specific topography where appropriate when considering storey height in rezoning applications.
  - b) Orient higher buildings to consider upslope view impacts where appropriate.
  - c) Shape upper storey and roof expression to reduce overall bulk.
  - d) Limit residential overheight spaces, with particular attention to those above the ground floor.
  - e) Integrate mechanical equipment, elevator overruns, and other building systems with the overall architectural design.



Figure 4.2 General illustration of managing maximum heights in context

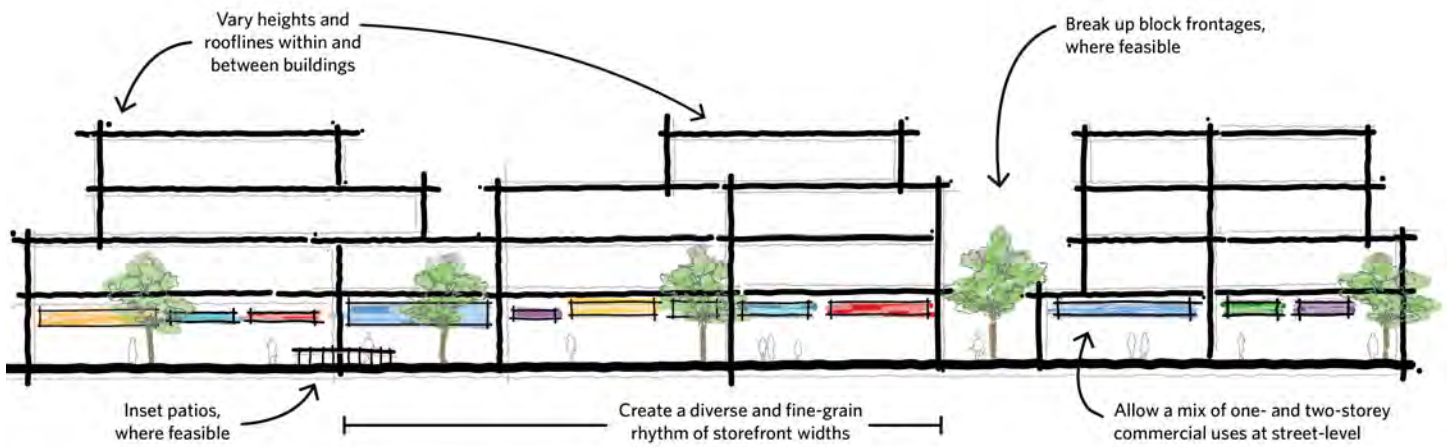


Figure 4.3 Illustrative elevation of varied building heights and massing

## 4.3 Architectural Expression

Ambleside will continue to be an assemblage of diverse architectural styles. New buildings will contribute to this variety, while addressing long-term viability and limiting potential conflicts.

- 1) Use individual building design to contribute to the overall identity for Ambleside (Figure 4.5):
  - a) Encourage creativity, balance complexity and clarity, and consider cohesion with contemporary design that reinforces the pedestrian scale.
  - b) Complement—but be distinct from—adjacent buildings through eclectic and purposeful use of architectural style, materiality, and colour.
  - c) Emphasize variety on large sites to better reflect a finer grained context.
  - d) Design all frontages adjoining the public realm to create visual interest with particular attention to the primary commercial street.
  - e) Avoid unarticulated walls and continue architectural expression around corners.
  - f) Recess entrances and integrate balconies.

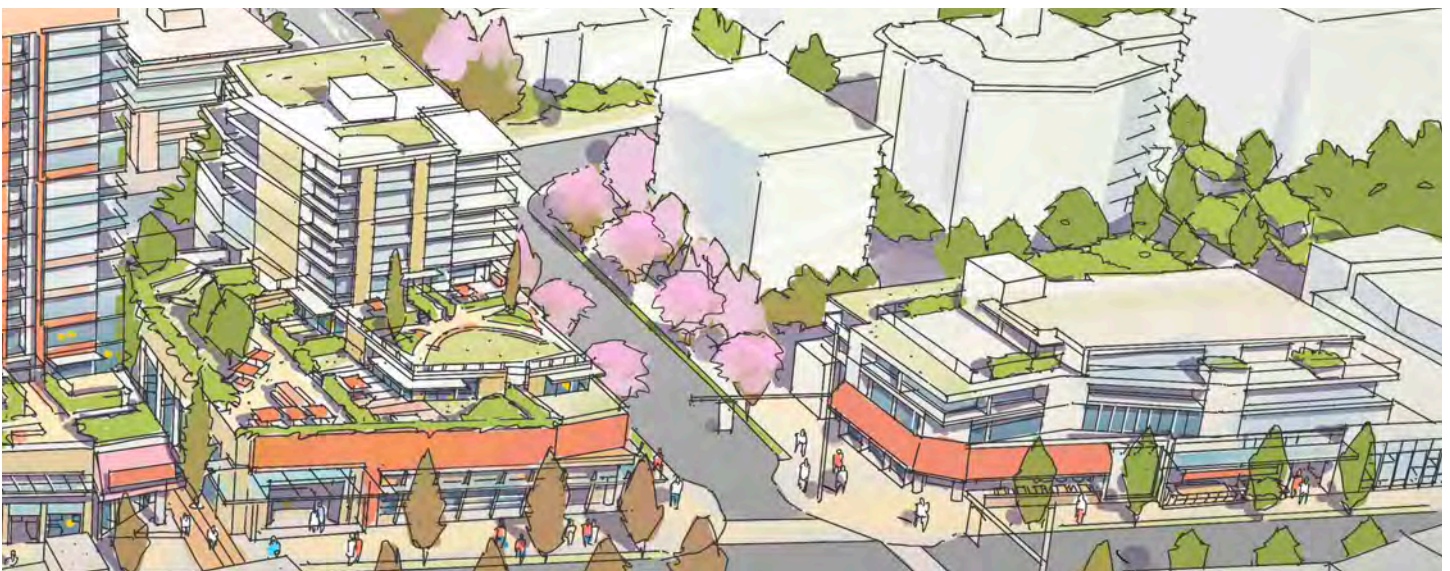


Figure 4.4 Artist's illustration of low-rise Marine Drive with higher buildings placed within existing pattern

- 2) Design buildings with attention to their long-term viability:
  - a) Utilize high quality and durable materials.
  - b) Consider building massing that supports passive design and natural cross ventilation, and limit the depth of internal residential units that do not have two or more exterior walls.
  - c) Incorporate sustainable design principles, including energy efficiency, greenhouse gas reduction, and increased resiliency, in adherence with related bylaws, policies, and guidelines.
  - d) Integrate active and green roofs where appropriate with the overall site design.
  - e) Include purposeful landscaping and make use of permeable surfaces.
  - f) Maximize accessibility through site and building design.
- 3) Manage provision of building services:
  - a) Appropriately scale loading facilities and driveways, and minimize impacts on pedestrian and vehicle circulation.
  - b) Enclose or screen garbage and recycling areas.
  - c) Minimize noise and/or odour from heating, cooling and ventilation systems, with particular attention to potential impacts on the public realm.
  - d) Underground utilities where feasible.



*Encourage massing and height variations both within and between buildings*



*Design frontages adjoining the public realm to create visual interest*



*Integrate active and green roofs where appropriate*



*Include purposeful landscaping and make use of permeable surfaces*



*Utilize high quality and durable materials*



*Enable active uses such as patios and support widened pedestrian areas*

*Figure 4.5 Artist's illustrations of architectural expression as directed by this plan*

# 05 PLAN MANAGEMENT

This LAP is a long-term planning document intended to shape the coordinated revitalization and regeneration of the commercial centre. It provides guidance on public realm improvements, appropriate uses, heights, and densities of new developments, and associated building design guidelines for this purpose.

## 5.1 Implementation

Directions in this LAP will be realized incrementally through subsequent Council decisions as they relate to the renewal of public spaces and sidewalks, updates to zoning regulations, and the review of individual development applications. Future or related planning initiatives for parks, transportation and civic facilities in and around Ambleside will provide further opportunities to advance implementation. As a “living” document, this LAP may change over time as Council priorities and community needs evolve. Any amendment to the LAP would require Council approval and all legislatively required procedures. The general approach for plan implementation (Figure 5.1) and an artist’s illustration of the overall plan vision (Figure 5.2) follow.



Figure 5.1 Approach to enable predominant low-rise forms while achieving community objectives



Figure 5.2 Artist’s illustration of overall plan vision

## 5.2 Regulating Future Development

The policies and design guidelines included in this plan are a tool for Council, staff, community members, and individual owners, setting expectations for development within the designated area. Direction provided through this LAP does not constitute approval for any given project on any given site. Rezoning, subdivision, development, and/or building permit approvals may only be granted after the full technical consideration—including environmental, structural and infrastructural—of an application for a specific project.

Applications for redevelopment should respond to this plan as well as all applicable District bylaws, including other development permit area guidelines in the District’s OCP.

## 5.3 Plan Monitoring

Monitoring and evaluation play a critical role in the implementation of any plan. The *Ambleside Centre Local Area Plan* forms part of the District’s OCP. Monitoring and evaluation will therefore be situated within the broader context of OCP implementation. Staff will monitor the build-out of the LAP over the next five years and, if necessary, report back to Council on progress to support an assessment of the effectiveness of the plan.

# AMBLESIDE CENTRE LOCAL AREA PLAN

District of West Vancouver | May 2025

