

REIMAGINE

CHURCHILL SQUARE

Introduction

Churchill Square is bounded on the north and south by multi-unit, mixed-use buildings including a new multi-unit residential building that is currently under construction on the site of the former Dominion. The Square is bounded on the east by the Terrace on the Square commercial centre and, to the west, faces Elizabeth Avenue and a large recreational area containing soccer fields and a playground. The central area contains a large surface parking lot and brick-lined walkways which provide space for food trucks, open air farmer's markets, and seasonal vendors.




Over time, the Square has evolved to become an important public space for St. John's and it has long acted as a local hub for residents of the Churchill Park and surrounding neighbourhoods. Recently, the City has been considering an upgrade to several important pieces of municipal infrastructure that serve the area such as the lighting and the parking management system.

These initiatives allow us to look at other improvement opportunities that may exist, such as accessibility improvements, new public amenities, or additional landscaping. The purpose of this study is to "Re-imagine Churchill Square" by taking a holistic look at what opportunities could be considered to revitalize and restore the Square as a high-quality public space.



Community Engagement - Round 1 (March to June, 2020)

How We Engaged

 Engagement Activity	 Date	 How Many People Engaged?
Meeting with the City's Advisory Committees	March 10th	20+
Meetings with Representatives of the Churchill Square Business Association	April 21st/May 14th	4
Online Survey	May to June	646
engagestjohns.ca	May to June	1,898
Meeting with KMK Capital (developers of former Dominion)	May 20th	2
Community Virtual Open House	June 25th, 1pm	45
Community Virtual Open House	June 25th, 7pm	44
Submissions via email or Access St. John's (311)	May to June	24

Note: The full What We Heard Summary can be found on the Engage page at <https://www.engagestjohns.ca/12603/widgets/49996/documents/38194>

What We Heard



The space needs to be comfortable for cyclists and include infrastructure such as bike lanes & bike racks



More benches and places to sit, relax, linger, and have social interaction



The current configuration seems to prioritize vehicles over pedestrians; this should be reversed



More trees and green space are needed throughout



Move bus stops closer to the Terrace on the Square for better transit service



Support the small businesses, especially mobile vendors, by providing public space for their customers



Addition of a grocery store would provide a much needed amenity for the area



Signage clutter along Elizabeth Avenue takes away from the Square's curb appeal



Better lighting is needed, but must consider neighbours by reducing glare and bright spots



Churchill Square needs to provide outdoor spaces that can be used in all four seasons



Parking and access to the Square is extremely important to support the business community



Can the centre driving lane be removed and reconfigured to provide a pedestrian promenade?



Pedestrian safety challenges exist at the intersection and sidewalk in front of Terrace on the Square



Consider alternate uses for the parking lot during off-peak hours such as evenings and weekends

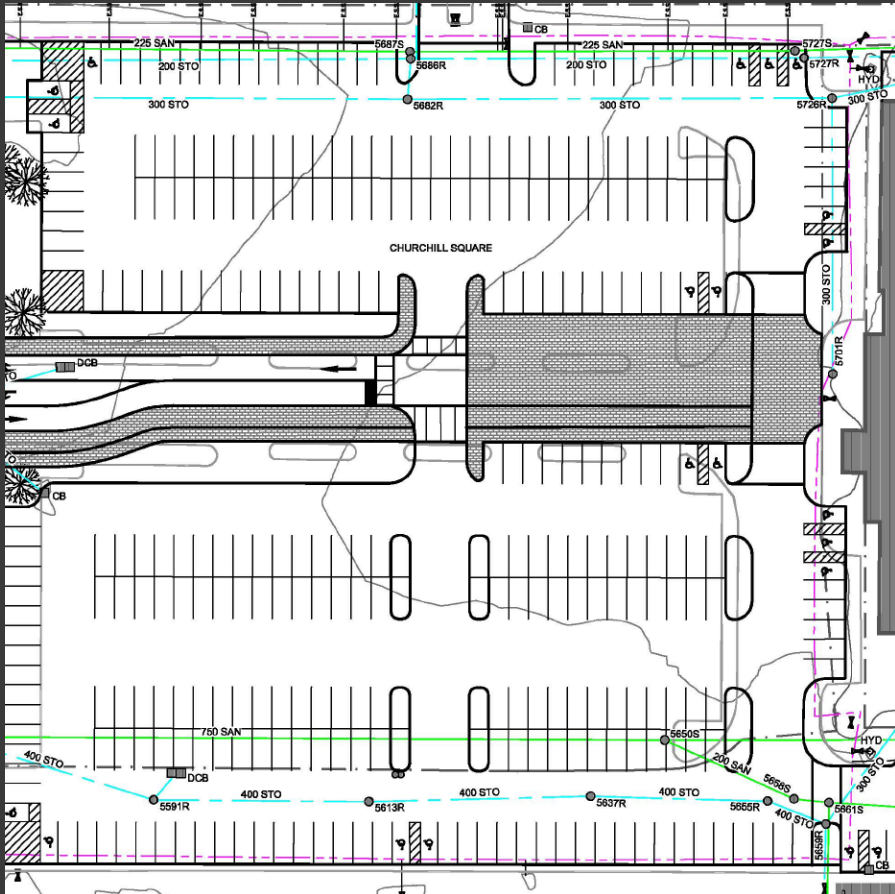


Underutilized spaces adjacent to By Sharpe Design and CIBC bank should be better incorporated



Improve walkability through better, wider sidewalks and strong connections to adjacent areas

Technical Analysis



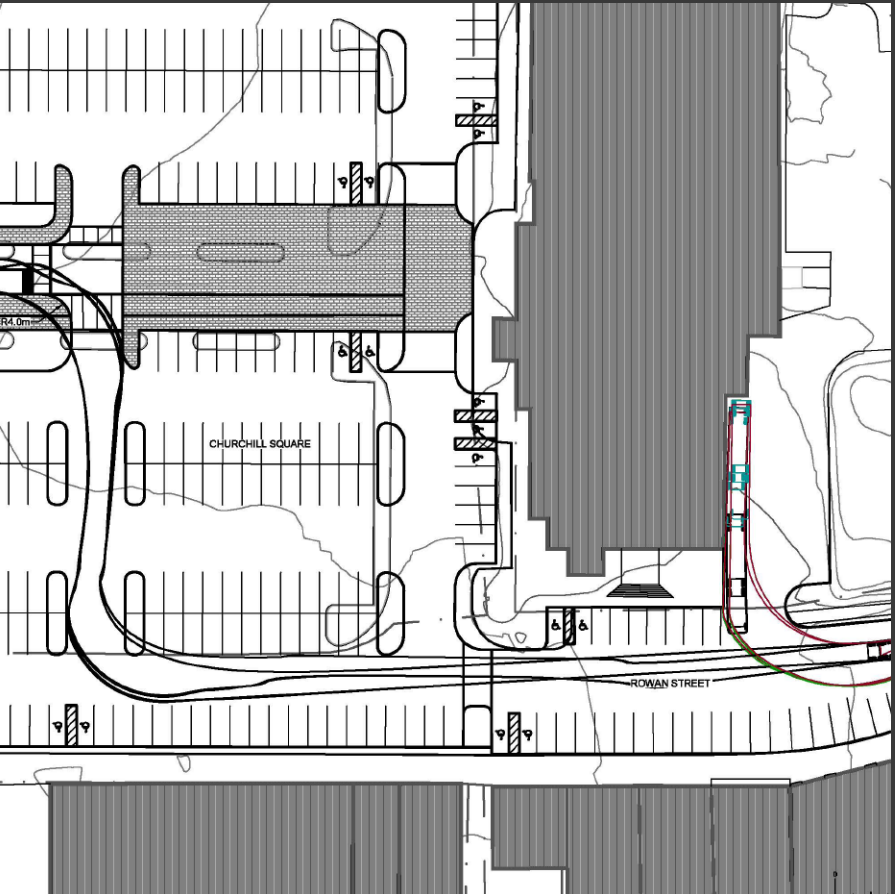
Underground Infrastructure

Existing underground infrastructure such as water, sanitary, and storm sewer lines were overlaid on the Churchill Square site plan to ensure possible conflicts with proposed elements (such as trees or structural footings) was avoided. Proposed infrastructure changes associated with the new KMK mixed-use building was also reviewed. Mitigation of any potential conflicts with these services was identified and reflected in the proposed Churchill Square concept plan presented in this report.



Grading

The finished floor elevations of the existing buildings and grades of adjacent roads and sidewalks (Elizabeth Avenue and Rowan Street) are well established. Topographic survey information was reviewed to ensure all proposed elements of the Churchill Square plan would work with the existing grading constraints. Where necessary, stairs, curb ramps, and ramps have been proposed to improve this condition. Conceptually, all proposed features meet current accessibility requirements, however slight adjustments may be required during detailed design.



Vehicle Delivery Requirements

The businesses and tenants of the Terrace on the Square building receive regular deliveries including several via large truck traffic that accesses the rear loading area. Swept path analysis of design vehicles was completed in consultation with property owners to ensure the proposed Churchill Square concept plan can accommodate commercial deliveries. Slight adjustments may be required during detailed design.

Project Goals & Objectives

The feedback collected during the Community Engagement phase directly informed the project goals and objectives.

01

Multifunctional Spaces

- » Space is limited in Churchill Square - the design must ensure spaces are able to serve more than one purpose wherever possible.
- » Ensure spaces are flexible to allow different type of activities and programs to occur.
- » The parking demand changes depending upon time of day - the design should consider other uses for the parking during off-peak times.

02

Multimodal

- » Accommodate all methods of transportation including pedestrian, vehicular, transit, and cycling.
- » Ensure the site is intuitive, safe, and enjoyable for all users regardless of their preferred method of transportation.

03

Aesthetics

- » Create high-quality public spaces that make Churchill Square one of the city's premiere attractions.
- » Improve the curb appeal of the Elizabeth Avenue frontage.
- » Improve the way public space looks and feels.
- » Preserve existing vegetation and introduce more landscaping.

04

Pedestrian Experience

- » Reduce pedestrian and vehicle conflicts.
- » Provide spaces that encourage people to linger.
- » Provide a variety of places to sit and relax.
- » Introduce places for social interaction.
- » Create safer spaces through improved lighting.
- » Improve accessibility.

05

Site Operations

- » St. John's is a winter city - the design must ensure space is able to be easily maintained during winter months to ensure year-round use.
- » Accommodate existing underground infrastructure to avoid unnecessary and potentially-costly upgrades.
- » Utilize materials that are durable and lasting to reduce maintenance requirements.
- » Consider the drop-off/delivery requirements of businesses in the area.

Overall Concept Plan



Overall Concept Plan

- 1 Streetscaping Beautification
- 2 Entry Signage
- 3 Sidewalk Zones
- 4 Two Way Bike Lane
- 5 Sidewalk Connection
- 6 Main Pedestrian Plaza
- 7 Covered Bike Parking Area
- 8 Raised Crosswalks
- 9 Terrace on the Square Plaza
- 10 Metrobus Lay-by

Total Parking Provided:
351 Spaces

Total Accessible Parking:
23 Spaces



Bird's Eye View

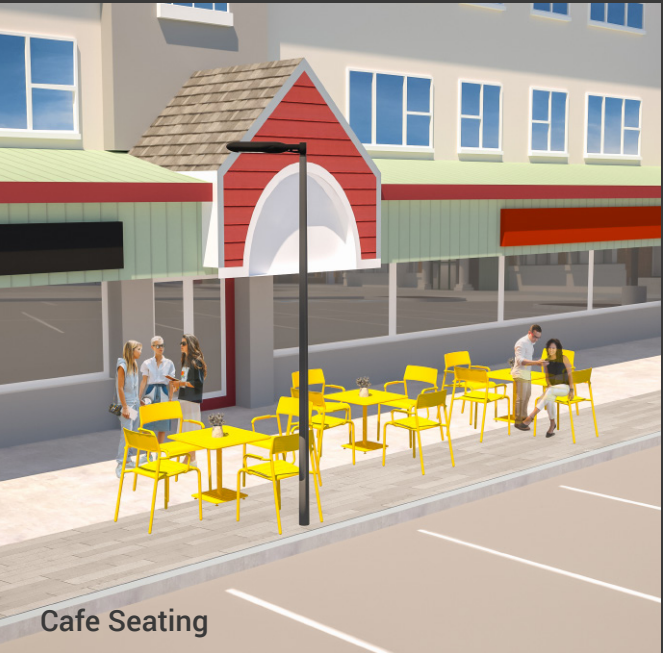


Sidewalk Zones

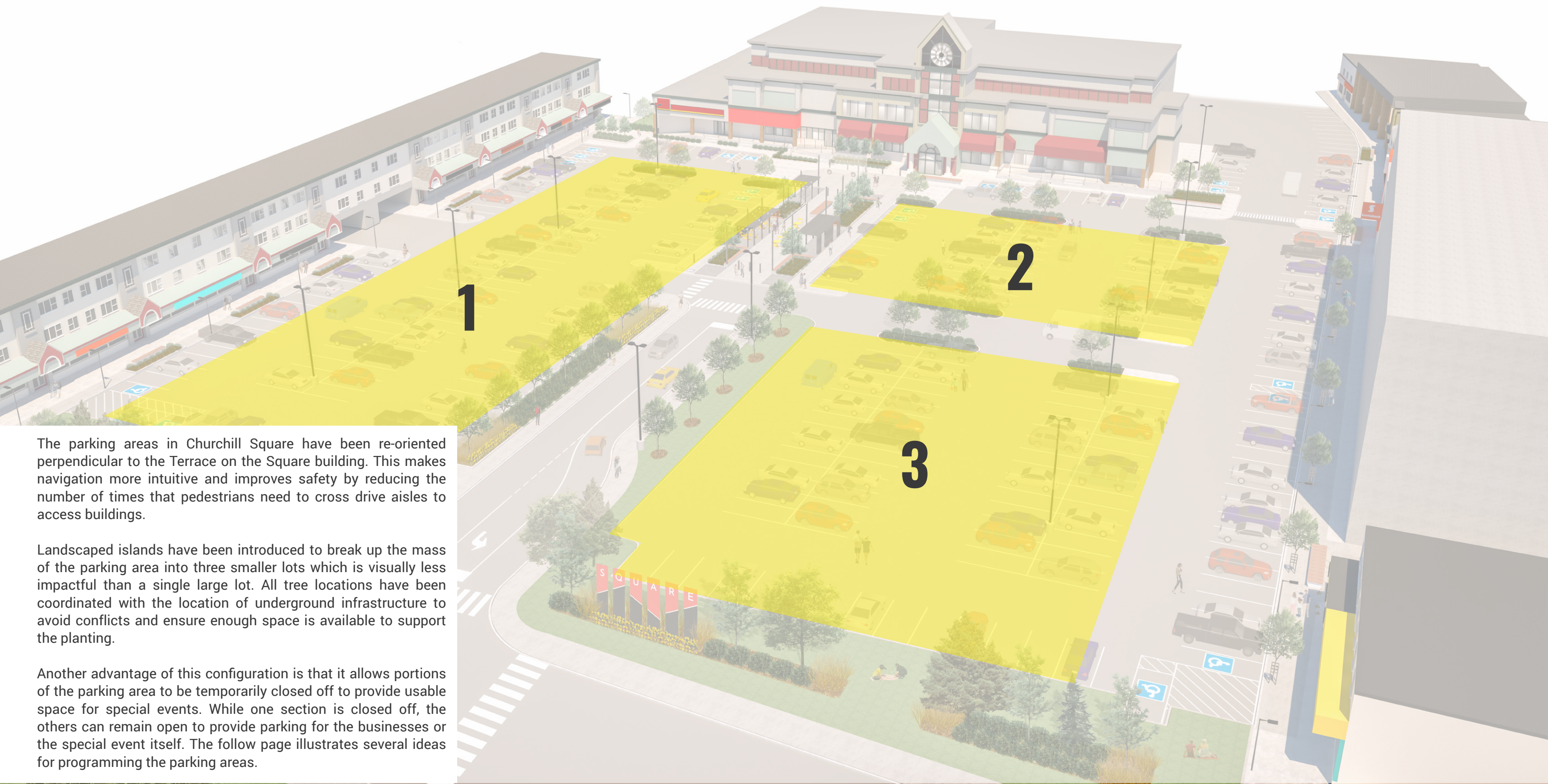
Our experience of a place is typically from the sidewalk level, so it is important that they are thoughtfully-designed as distinct public spaces. They are not simply corridors for movement, but essential pieces of the placemaking puzzle that encourage active transportation (such as walking and cycling); provide opportunity for social interaction such as dining, shopping, or sitting; contribute to an area’s economic vitality by providing access to businesses; and animate the public realm by encouraging activity and longer stays.

The existing sidewalk network in Churchill Square exists on three sides - north (in front of the Alpine Country Lodge side), east (in front of the Terrace on the Square), and south (in front of the former Dominion). This general configuration will remain, however all sidewalks have been widened by 1 to 2-metres. This provides a more generous sidewalk, increasing pedestrian space and accommodating new sidewalk amenity zones.

Sidewalk amenity zones are invisible areas that divide sidewalks into different spaces depending on their use. The sidewalk widths in Churchill Square allow for the creation of two zones; a pedestrian through zone and an amenity zone. The pedestrian through zone is the primary route that provides pedestrians with safe and adequate space. This zone is kept clear of obstructions. The amenity zone provides space for amenities that contribute to a vibrant public realm and positive pedestrian experience. The following images represent examples of typical amenities found in these zones. The amenity zone also improves site operations by ensuring streetscape elements are out of the path of sidewalk plows and protected from winter maintenance procedures.



Parking Areas



The parking areas in Churchill Square have been re-oriented perpendicular to the Terrace on the Square building. This makes navigation more intuitive and improves safety by reducing the number of times that pedestrians need to cross drive aisles to access buildings.

Landscaped islands have been introduced to break up the mass of the parking area into three smaller lots which is visually less impactful than a single large lot. All tree locations have been coordinated with the location of underground infrastructure to avoid conflicts and ensure enough space is available to support the planting.

Another advantage of this configuration is that it allows portions of the parking area to be temporarily closed off to provide usable space for special events. While one section is closed off, the others can remain open to provide parking for the businesses or the special event itself. The follow page illustrates several ideas for programming the parking areas.

Parking Areas as Multipurpose Space

Note: The images shown are conceptual and illustrate possible examples of how the reconfigured parking areas could be used for different activities/events.



Drive-in Movie Night



Ball Hockey Tournament



Food Truck Festival



Concert



Main Pedestrian Plaza

The main plaza space is located right outside the front door of the Terrace on the Square making it an extension of the building itself. It will feature places to sit and socialize, covered bike parking, and a flexible space for events such as a pop-up market or sidewalk sale.

Trees and pavilion structures at the edges provide a sense of enclosure from the adjacent parking while providing shade and protection from the elements.



Main Pedestrian Plaza



Terrace on the Square Plaza

The space in front of the Terrace on the Square has been re-imagined as a contemporary linear plaza. New ramps are provided with gentle slopes that meet current accessibility requirements. The intersection in front of the building has been raised to sidewalk level creating a smooth transition that improves accessibility and calms vehicle traffic. A lay-by is conveniently located outside the front door for drop-off/pickup, GoBus, and deliveries. Existing trees are preserved where possible with new landscaping also provided to improve curb appeal.



Design Components



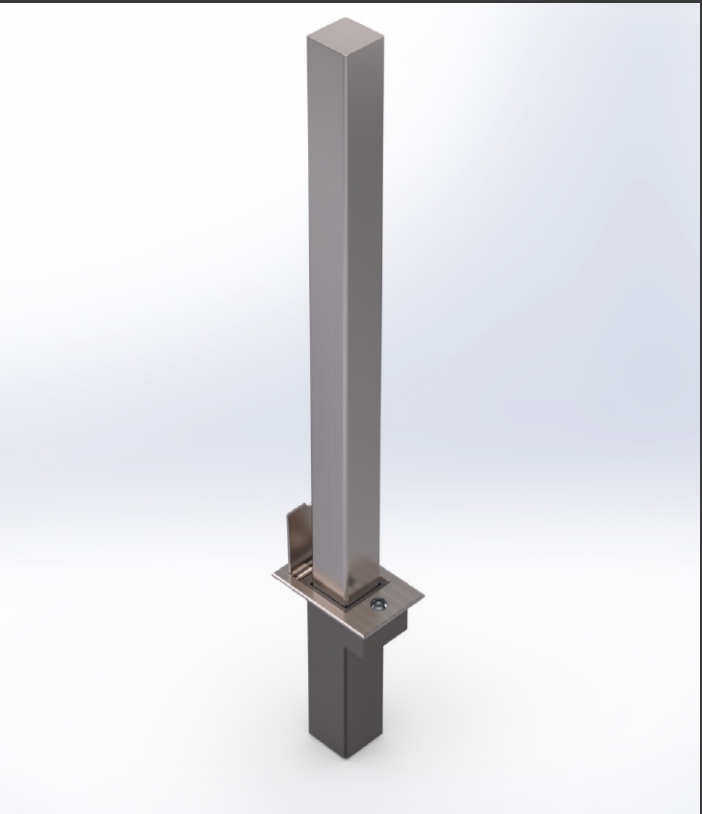
Soil compaction is a significant challenge to healthy tree establishment in urban environments. The location of the trees in the Churchill Square concept plan have been planned to provide adequate soil volume and space for healthy growth, however there may be instances where soil volume is difficult to establish (such as in front of the new mixed-use building that is currently under construction). In this case, the City may consider a **structural soil system** such as the Silva Cell or Stratacell. These systems can also be tied to the stormwater management system to improve water quality and reduce flow rates.



Tree grates allow for a balance of human and ecological needs, protecting trees from pedestrian traffic while maximizing pedestrian space. Tree grates should have small openings to be heel-friendly and to ensure garbage does not collect, and be easily removable for cleaning and maintenance purposes. In the Churchill Square concept plan, tree grates should be considered for the trees in the hardscape in front of the new mixed-use building.



The City completed a Bike Master Plan in June of 2019 which advocates for a cycling-friendly culture through the installation of high-quality cycling infrastructure. **Bike racks** encourage cycling and provide safe, secure bike storage for visitors to Churchill Square. The design should include not only covered bike parking in the main pedestrian plaza area (as shown), but additional bike parking in the sidewalk amenity areas around the Square for convenience.



Bollards are short, sturdy posts which act as traffic control devices. The City should consider installing bollards wherever pedestrians and vehicles are in close proximity to one another, such as the main pedestrian plaza or the lay-by in front of the Terrace on the Square. These can be removable (as pictured) to facilitate snow clearing during winter.

Note: The images shown are conceptual and represent items that may be further considered during detailed design.

Design Components



Tactile wayfinding surface indicators are textured surfaces embedded in sidewalks which inform visually-impaired users that they are approaching an intersection or crosswalk. These should be provided at all crossing locations in Churchill Square.



Similar to a traditional paver, **mega pavers** are made of precast concrete and available in many colours. Mega pavers, however, are larger than traditional pavers making them heavier, more durable, and less likely to heave due to freeze-thaw. In the Churchill Square concept plan, these have been concentrated in areas where they will be the most impactful and contribute to achieving a vibrant public realm, including the main pedestrian plaza, the plaza in front of Terrace on the Square, and the expanded sidewalks/bike lane adjacent to the drive aisle. Special consideration in detailed design must be given to ensure proper installation to avoid uneven surfaces that may create accessibility issues.



Concrete sitting walls are proposed throughout Churchill Square. These are clad in Ipe, a durable hardwood that provides comfortable seating. Sitting walls provide flexible seating opportunities that allow users to sit alone or in groups. These are proposed around the perimeter of the site as well as the main pedestrian plaza. In most cases, they are incorporated with a planter which has the added benefit of protecting the landscaping from routine maintenance activities.

Note: The images shown are conceptual and represent items that may be further considered during detailed design.

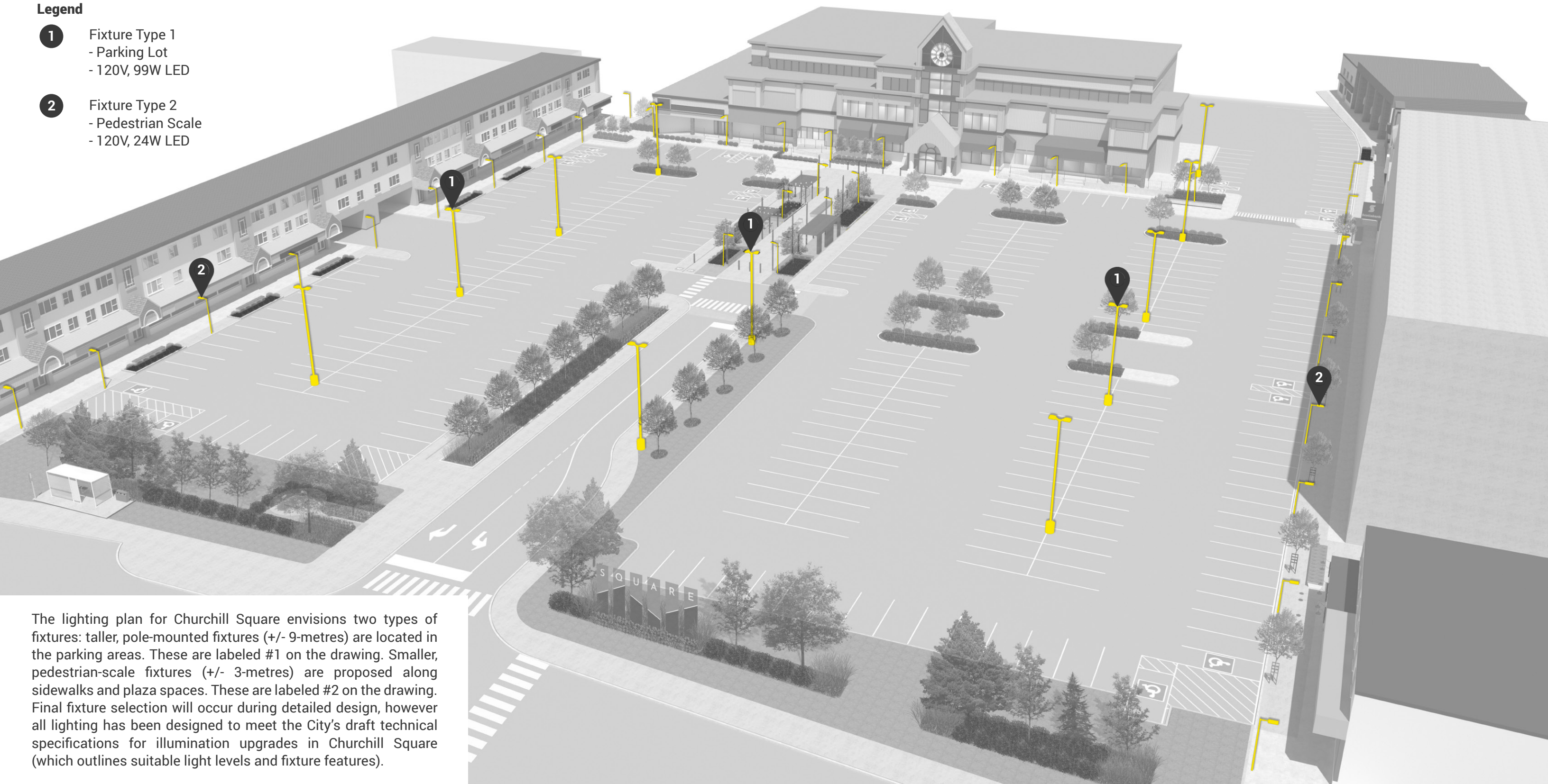


Commercial-grade string lights are proposed to hang above the main pedestrian plaza. This would enhance the pedestrian environment by making it more inviting, as well as extend the plaza’s use into the evening and during shorter winter months.

Conceptual Lighting Layout

Legend




- 1 Fixture Type 1
- Parking Lot
- 120V, 99W LED
- 2 Fixture Type 2
- Pedestrian Scale
- 120V, 24W LED



The lighting plan for Churchill Square envisions two types of fixtures: taller, pole-mounted fixtures (+/- 9-metres) are located in the parking areas. These are labeled #1 on the drawing. Smaller, pedestrian-scale fixtures (+/- 3-metres) are proposed along sidewalks and plaza spaces. These are labeled #2 on the drawing. Final fixture selection will occur during detailed design, however all lighting has been designed to meet the City's draft technical specifications for illumination upgrades in Churchill Square (which outlines suitable light levels and fixture features).

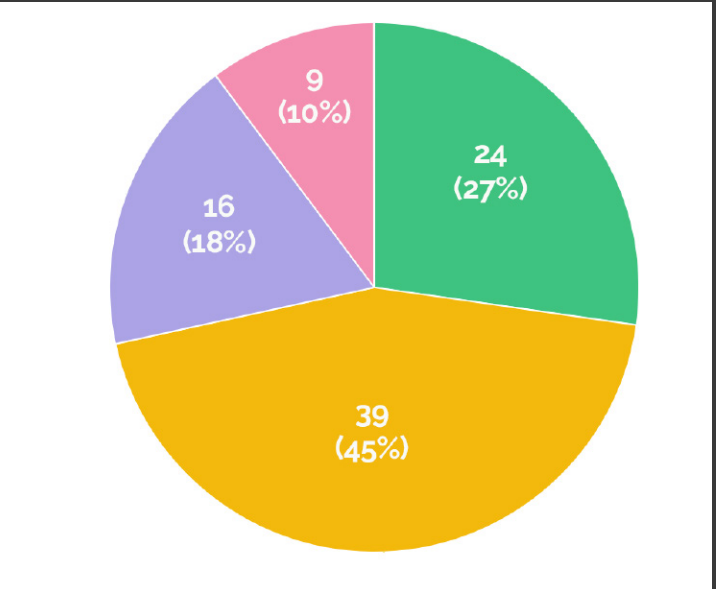
Community Engagement - Round 2 (December, 2020 to March, 2021)

How We Engaged

 Engagement Activity	 Date	 How Many People Engaged?
Meeting with KMK Capital (developers of former Dominion)	December 18th	2
Meeting with Representatives of the Churchill Square Business Association	January 5th	3
Submissions via email or Access St. John's (311)	March 2021	10
engagestjohns.ca	March 11th to 28th	5,513
Meeting with the City's Inclusion Advisory Committees	March 23rd	20
Meeting with the City's Advisory Committees	March 24th	27
Community Virtual Open House	March 25th, 10:30am	48
Community Virtual Open House	March 25th, 6:30pm	47

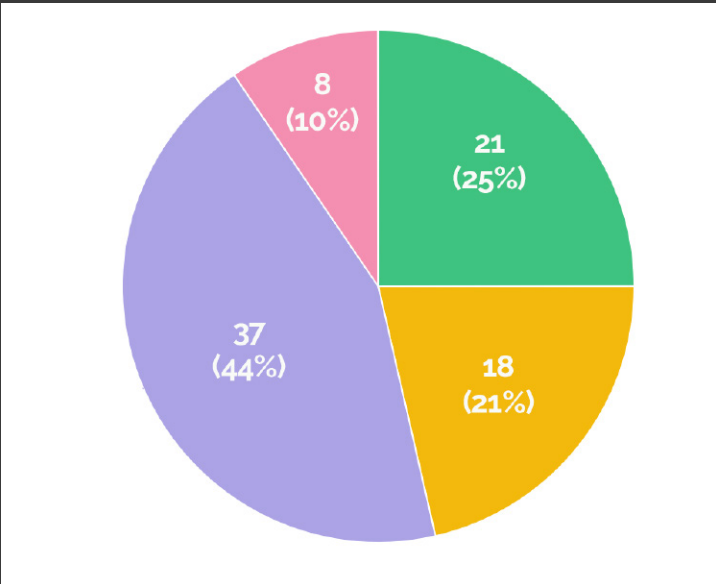
What We Heard - Engagestjohns.ca

Q1: What do you think about the expanded sidewalk area in front of the businesses?



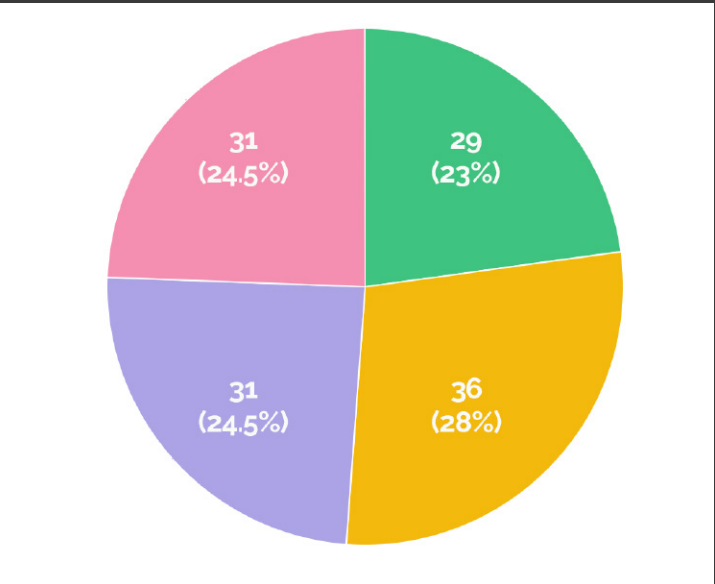
- It's amazing, I love it!
- I can live with it.
- It's good, I like it.
- I don't like it at all.

Q2: What do you think about the central plaza area for pedestrians?



- It's amazing, I love it!
- I can live with it.
- It's good, I like it.
- I don't like it.

Q3: How do you feel about the proposed re-imagine concept plan?



- It's amazing, I love it!
- I can live with it.
- It's good, I like it.
- I don't like it at all.

Community Engagement - Round 2 (December, 2020 to March, 2021)

What We Heard

Too much space is still allocated for parking

The redesign is an improvement to pedestrian safety

Interest in the mix-use opportunities was expressed while some had concerns about neighbourhood impacts of possible events

The concept plan represents a definite improvement in accessibility

Expanded sidewalks in the area were well received and people were generally supportive of expanding pedestrian and amenity space

Some people were disappointed there wasn't more pedestrian and green space. There was an expectation by some that there would be a significant reduction in area parking.

Residents in the area generally felt the project was positive for the neighbourhood

Support for maintaining the existing vendor setups and improving the Square for vendors was noted

Importance of the bike facility connections and parking was voiced

People want to see electric vehicle charging stations incorporated

The importance of ongoing winter maintenance and design to support all-season and all-weather use was expressed

Many comments provided feedback on what people would like to see out of a detailed design (e.g. types of landscaping) as well as comments on things outside of the project scope (e.g. type of businesses in the square and ideas for Churchill Park).

Prepared by



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