
CITY OF KELOWNA

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 18, 2008

File No.: 6340-30

To: City Manager

From: Manager, Policy, Research, and Strategic Planning

Subject: Ellis Street Streetscape Concept Plan

Report prepared by Patrick McCormick

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT City Council receive for information, the Ellis Street Streetscape Concept Plan (Attachment 1) as noted in the June 18, 2008 report from the Planning and Development Services Department;

AND THAT staff be directed to consult with business and property owners that would be affected by the proposed changes, and to report back to Council regarding their comments and their willingness to participate in the streetscape improvements according to the terms set out in the attached report.

BACKGROUND:

Direction for a strong public realm enhanced through comprehensive streetscape improvements was identified in both the *Cultural District Implementation Strategy and Marketing Plan*, endorsed by Council in June of 2000, and the Cultural District Charrette which was held in February, 2002.

Recent Development Activity

Recent years have seen considerable development activity along the Ellis Street corridor between Doyle and Cawston Avenues. These projects include 1289 Ellis Street (the Cannery Lofts), 1329 Ellis Street (the Downtown Lofts), and 1331 Ellis Street, (Ellis Court).

In each of these instances, there was an opportunity to realize property owner-funded frontage improvements consistent with the policy directions set out. However, this did not happen principally because the City did not have a concept plan that would serve as a template for the improvements. In each of those instances the sidewalk was replaced to the Urban Centre standard set out in the Subdivision and Servicing Bylaw.

In anticipation of future development within the Ellis Street Corridor north of Doyle Avenue, in particular construction at 1387-1399 Ellis St. (the Madison), staff set out to develop a concept plan.



Transportation Requirements Identified

The Planning Department and the Parks Division have worked closely with Transportation staff on this project. Underlying Transportation Division requirements were to maintain Ellis Street as a truck route and to avoid interventions that could compromise the ability to deliver vehicles to the new bridge. The latter requirement meant that streetscape improvements had to be limited to the segment of Ellis Street between Doyle and Coronation Avenues.

The Concept Plan provides for additional future left turn lanes and for dedication of sufficient lane width for through lanes in the north/south direction. The Plan accommodates shared use by bicycles and motorized vehicles.

Implementation of left-turn lanes, as indicated in the Concept Plan, will facilitate less traffic congestion in the area, in particular vehicles turning left to head west on Doyle Avenue as part of the enhancement of the Doyle/Stockwell connection through to Gordon Drive. As well, a left turn lane from Ellis Street to Smith Avenue will facilitate access to the Library Plaza Parkade. The status quo at the Ellis Street / Cawston Avenue intersection would be maintained, meaning that there would be no addition of left turn lanes from Ellis Street onto Cawston Avenue. However, the City could choose to institute left-turn lanes in the northbound and southbound directions at a future date, if necessary to maintain the operational efficiency of Ellis Street as it pertains to vehicle movement.

Streetscape Concept

The concept aims to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment principally by providing curb bulbs to allow for the addition of street trees and other vegetation, as well as public amenities such as bicycle parking, seating, and public art. As the plan shows, proposed curb bulbs have been identified for each of the intersections in the study area. Additionally, mid-block curb bulbs could be achieved through the strategic removal of parking stalls.

New mid-block crosswalks would be instituted to facilitate pedestrian movement along a block that is approximately three hundred (300) meters in length and well in excess of what is considered to be optimal from a pedestrian mobility perspective. One of these crosswalks would be at the Ellis Street/Smith Avenue intersection, acknowledging the desire of pedestrians to cross Ellis Street at this location. In particular, the addition of the crosswalk would make it easier for motorists using the Library Plaza Parkade to conveniently cross Ellis Street to visit retailers along the east side of Ellis Street.

Tree grates, as per those currently used within the Cultural District, would be implemented within the subject area. A complement of pedestrian-oriented streetlights would also be provided at regular intervals along this length of Ellis Street. It is expected that one street tree species and one type of light standard would be used within the subject area. These elements would be specified pending Council's positive consideration of the concept.

It is anticipated that implementation of the proposed concept plan would result in an environment that, through its visual cues (a perceived narrowing of the corridor), would have a traffic-calming effect (Attachment 2).

It is noted that there are other streets within Downtown, i.e., within the area covered by the Downtown Plan, where it is not anticipated that sidewalks can be widened due to the need to maintain existing curb-to-curb widths. The concept proposed herein might be applied to those streets. Preparation of concept plans for these streets (e.g., Lawrence and Leon Avenues) could be considered in the future.

Setback of Buildings

Because existing curb alignments are maintained within the concept plan, it is not possible to attain wider sidewalks along this stretch of Ellis Street, except where curb bulbs occur. The concept therefore envisions the potential setback of buildings from their Ellis Street property lines (Attachment 3) at the time of redevelopment of each property. An optional setback of 1.8 to 2.4 metres would allow enough space for café seating and outdoor merchandising as well as give the perception of wider sidewalks even though a portion of the sidewalk width would be on private property. Such setbacks would be encouraged as per the C7 Zone Design Guidelines.

Transitions Between Frontages

A last component of the Concept Plan addresses the transition from one frontage improvement to the other. As it is expected that development of properties along the subject corridor will take place according to the timelines of the individual property owners, the question arose as to how a concept could be implemented that would have a high degree of coordination while having the flexibility to allow frontage improvements to take place on an ad hoc basis, i.e., in a manner that would allow each frontage improvement to smoothly transition to the frontage improvements associated with development on adjoining properties to the north or south. To this end, each property would be encouraged to design and implement its own sidewalk surface pattern, both within the public right-of-way and on any adjoining surface within the development's property (Attachment 4).

Pending endorsement of the concept plan, suitable surface materials based on a terms of reference would be identified in conjunction with discussions with Cultural Services and the Public Art Committee. At either end of the frontage length a fillet would form the transition to the next frontage improvement. In keeping with the character of the Cultural District, property owners would be encouraged to take an artistic approach to treatment of these filets, possibly employing artists to develop surface treatments.

Parking

Currently there are thirty-six (36) parking stalls along the east side of Ellis Street between Doyle and Cawston Avenues. There are currently no parking stalls along the west side of this portion of Ellis Street although a curb-side area adjacent to the Laurel Building is dedicated for four buses.

It is anticipated that regardless of whether the Concept Plan is endorsed by Council, approximately ten (10) parking stalls along the east side of Ellis Street, between Doyle and Smith Avenues, will need to be removed to accommodate new left-turn lanes. Up to four (4) more stalls would be removed between Smith Avenue and Cawston Avenue for curb bulbs and crosswalk enhancements. Approximately seven (7) new stalls would be added on the west side of Ellis Street between Cawston and Smith Avenues resulting in an anticipated total of twenty-eight stalls (28) on both sides of the street after incorporation of the proposed changes. This would result in a net loss of about seven (7) parking stalls between Doyle and Cawston Avenues.

This loss of parking is considered by staff to be a reasonable trade-off to achieve a more pedestrian-oriented streetscape within the subject area.

Frontage Improvements to 1387-1399 Ellis St. (the Madison)

Not all of the roadway depth made available by the removal of the parking stalls will be used by the new back-to-back turning lanes on Ellis Street between Doyle and Smith Avenues. Approximately one (1.0) metre will be available to widen the existing sidewalk along this length. A portion of this potential to widen the sidewalk falls within the frontage belonging to 1387-1399 Ellis St. (the Madison).

Construction timelines for the Madison will require a decision on sidewalk widths prior to Council's formal consideration of the Ellis Street Streetscape Concept Plan. Staff are therefore working closely with the Madison to achieve an outcome that is consistent with the Concept Plan as proposed in this report but which ultimately, if necessary, could stand on its own.

Summary

Staff encourage adoption of a streetscape concept plan for the Ellis Street corridor between Doyle and Coronation Avenues as a means to achieving a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

EXISTING POLICY:

Cultural District Implementation Strategy and Marketing Report; Cultural District Charter.

EXTERNAL AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

During the design process, staff met several times with the Downtown Centre Strategy Task Force. The most recent of these meetings was on February 21, 2008 at which time the Downtown Task Force endorsed the Concept Plan.

COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS:

Staff suggest an Open House to allow local business and property owners, as well as representatives of the DKA, UDI, and the Chamber of Commerce, to view the proposed plans and to provide comments.

The Open House would seek stakeholder feedback on the Concept Plan in general and on the extent of support for eliminating existing parking stalls. Staff would review all comments and suggestions forthcoming from an Open House before submitting a Final Concept Plan to Council.

FINANCIAL/BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS:

Funding from Property Owners

A key aim of the Plan is to have frontage improvements funded by property owners as properties are developed/redeveloped. To achieve this outcome, the intent has been to maintain the existing curb-to-curb widths along Ellis street (except where curb bulbs are shown, and for a portion along the east side of Ellis Street from Doyle Avenue to Smith Avenue where the removal of parking would allow the sidewalk along this length to be widened by approximately 1.0 metre). This approach means that redevelopment of individual frontages can proceed according to the property owners' timelines.

Furthermore, it precludes the need for a comprehensive implementation over a specified period of time and thus eliminates the need for the City to play a coordinating role.

City Participation

Although the Concept Plan has been prepared in such a way as to allow progress without direct City involvement, the achievement of the complete vision will require City resources.

The City owns some of the properties along Ellis Street (Attachment 5). The expectation regarding City-owned properties would be the same as for any other property within the subject area, i.e., the opportunity for frontage improvements would apply to its properties the same as it would apply to properties owned by the private sector.

Curb bulbs and enhanced walking surfaces required to improve the subject area crosswalks would also need to be funded by the City, as would the pedestrian-oriented streetlights, litter containers, and bicycle racks. The most likely source of funds for these improvements would be the City's Streetscape Budget. However, current annual budget allocations will not be sufficient to fund both the Bernard Avenue and Ellis Street Streetscape initiatives. It is recommended that implementation initiatives (including detailed costing of the city-funded streetscape components) not take place until funding appears imminently available. [Since the City is a significant property owner in this area, City funding would be required even if area improvements were to be otherwise funded by property owners (e.g. through specified area bylaws)].

In the meantime, if the Concept Plan is favourably considered by Council, it would serve as a basis for discussions with all property owners regarding frontage improvements associated with redevelopment of their properties.

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS:

Staff time will be required to organize and advertise a public open house and to prepare a follow-up report to Council.

INTERNAL CIRCULATION TO:

- Transportation Manager
- Parks Manager

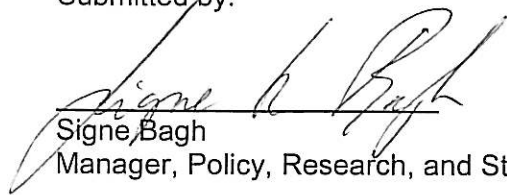
Considerations that were not applicable to this report:

LEGAL/STATUTORY PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS:

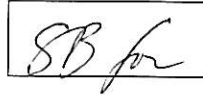
TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

ALTERNATE RECOMMENDATIONS:

Submitted by:


Signe Bagh
Manager, Policy, Research, and Strategic Planning

Approved for Inclusion:



Paul Macklem
Acting Director, Planning and Development Services

encl. Attachments 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

ATTACHMENT 5 - City-owned Properties



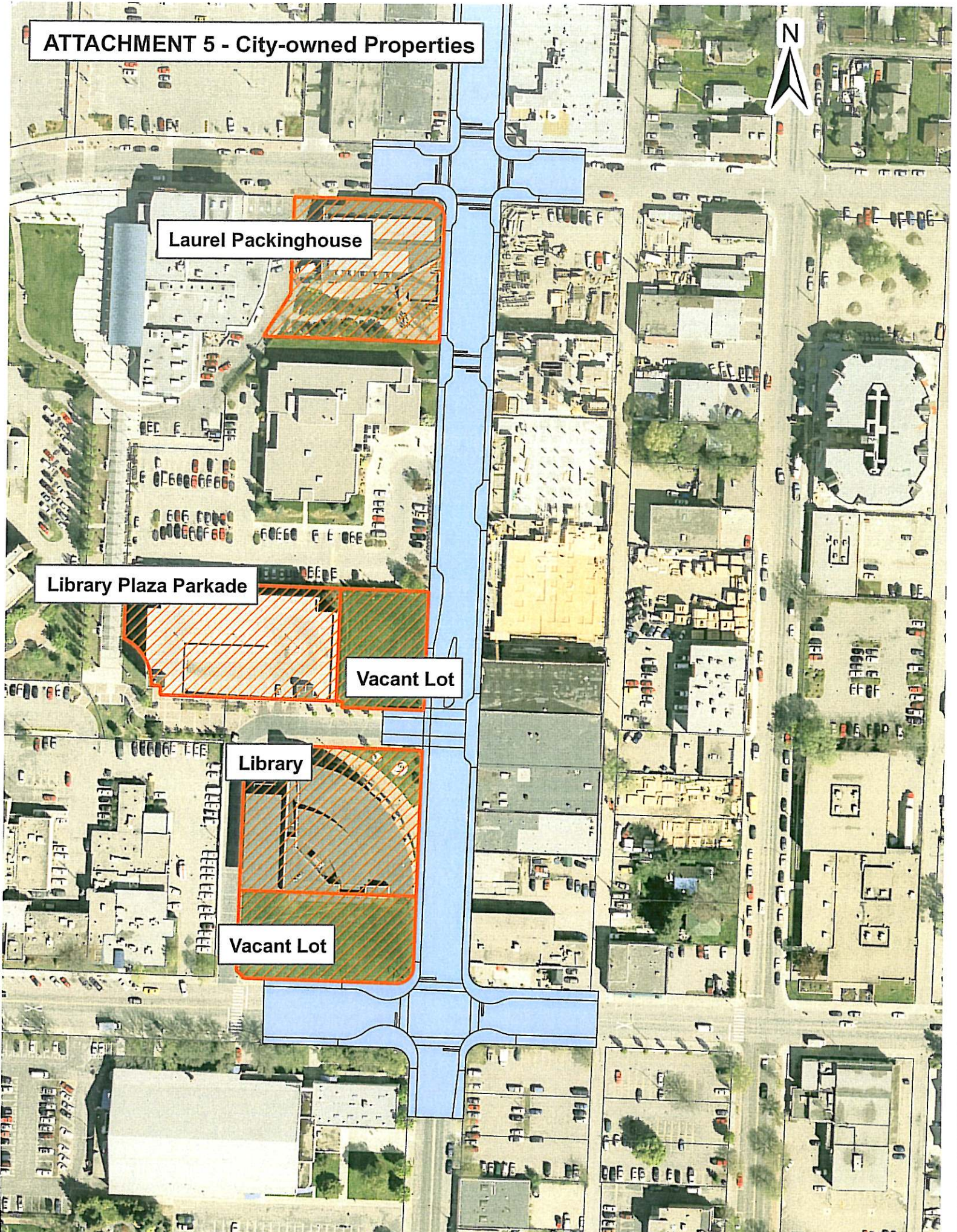
Laurel Packinghouse

Library Plaza Parkade

Vacant Lot

Library

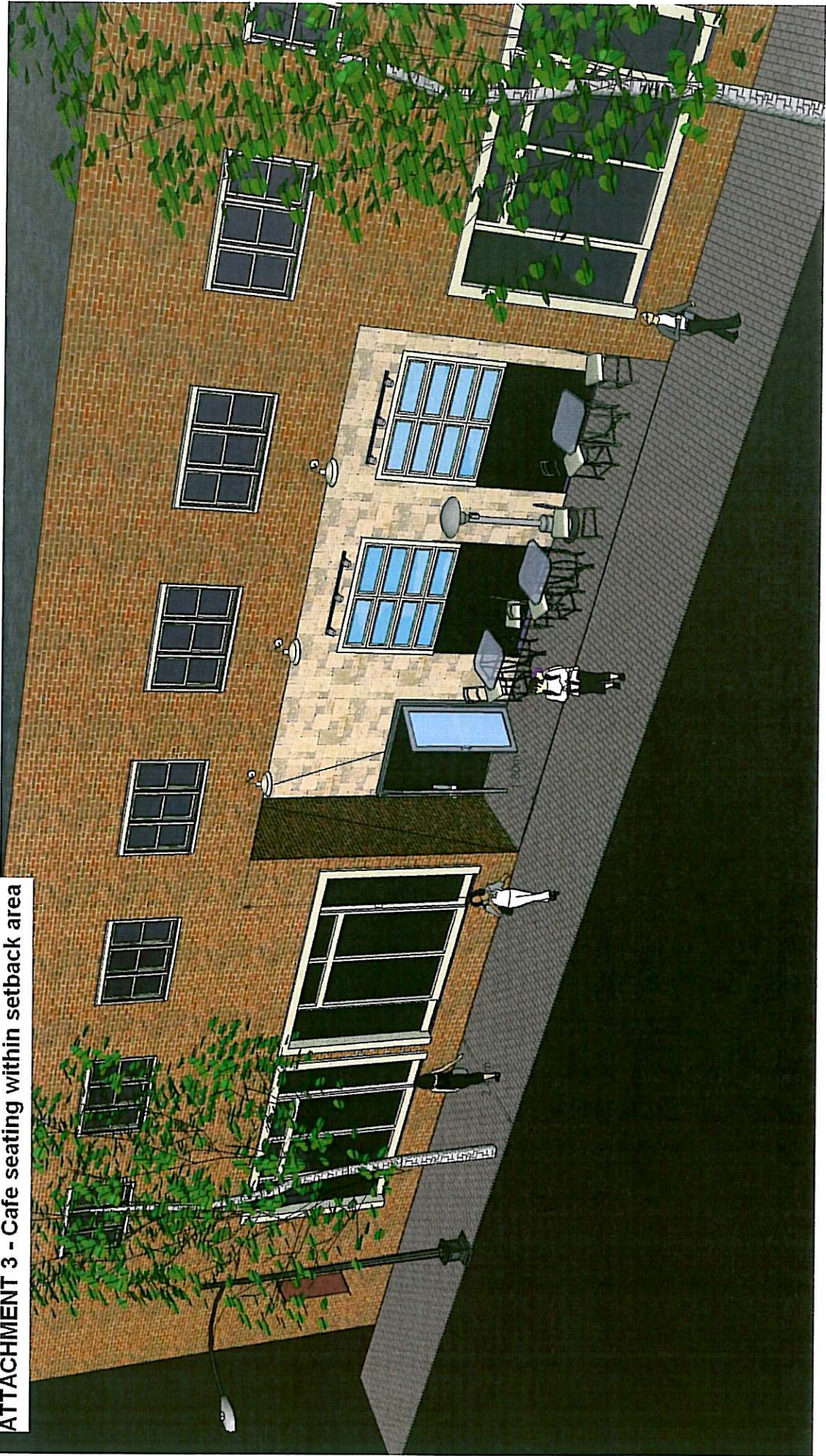
Vacant Lot



ATTACHMENT 2 - Looking north from crosswalk adjacent to Library



ATTACHMENT 3 - Cafe seating within setback area



ATTACHMENT 4- Proposed Sidewalk Pattern



ATTACHMENT 1 - Concept Plan

