



RETAIL STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Enhancing street level activation in priority commercial areas



NEW WESTMINSTER

Retail Strategy

The Retail Strategy seeks to leverage planning tools and policy, develop business support programs and initiatives, and collaborate with community partners, to create the conditions and environment needed for the city's commercial areas to thrive and serve as activity magnets.



Recommendations

- Limiting at-grade uses in priority core areas of Great Streets to 'active uses'
- Amend the Sign/Business License Bylaw to encourage the visual connection between passersby on the street and interior uses to provide an engaging streetscape experience (e.g., limit opaque window treatments).
- Strengthening commercial and mixed-use Development Permit Area guidelines by:
 - Integrating more detailed commercial retail unit design guidelines to ensure functionality for a range of business types, and
 - Encouraging inclusion of storefronts with a mix of widths, sizes, and configurations in new mixed-use and commercial developments, to facilitate the inclusion of small independent businesses and incubation.

Defining Active Uses

ACTIVE RETAIL USES are...

Optimal generators of street-level activity and vitality, including restaurants, retail and specialty food stores, specialty retail stores, arts culture and entertainment uses, and personal service-oriented businesses that generate frequent customer traffic.

Other uses can be designed to be more 'active' (i.e., to better support street-level vibrancy), such as finance, insurance, and real estate offices.

General office uses are not considered active uses.



Window Transparency

Sign Bylaw

- (10.8) Window Signs are permitted, provided that the total area of the signs, including all sign copy, logos, lifestyle graphics, images and decorative borders shall not exceed 20 percent of the area of windows and glazed areas of doors along street frontages of a building or business unit.

Business Licence Bylaw

- (2.29) Unless otherwise permitted through a sign variance, every licence holder, with respect to the business for which their licence was issued, shall ensure that at least 80% of the sum of the area of all exterior windows and glass portions of glazed doors belonging to the business that are along street frontages remains unobstructed during the operating hours of the business. For clarity, obstructions include signage, graphics, decals, frosting, decorative railings or grillwork placed in front of or behind storefront windows or glazed doors, or any other manner of obscuring such that the interior of the premises is not visible from the exterior.

Signage/Window Transparency

- Working with Chamber of Commerce to develop an awareness campaign on improving window transparency at businesses
 - Public-facing, illustrative guide that corresponds with existing/new signage standards for active retail/commercial uses at street level
 - Updating business licence applications to highlight
 - Walkabout, mail outs, social media campaign
 - Working with community partners to help spread the word
- Taking a soft enforcement approach for next year for existing businesses. Try to gain voluntary compliance through education/awareness.
- New business licence applications are being made aware and checked through approvals process.



Refining Active Uses In Zoning Bylaw

Consider...
focusing on what
uses do not meet
the test of 'active
use'

Active Use – permitted at grade	Conditional – permitted at grade with conditions	Non-Active Use - not permitted at grade
Accessory Recycling Return Centres	Animal grooming and daycare facilities	Animal Boarding
Amusement arcades	Animal hospitals and veterinary clinics	Business and professional offices (e.g. medical, dental, legal, temp employment office, general office)
Antique stores, thrift stores, consignment stores	Audio recording studios	Car washes
Cafés or restaurants, excluding drive-thrus	Banks	Catering establishments
Clothing and garment design/fabrication	Childcare	Clubs and lodges
Cottage breweries	Fitness studios	Commercial & private schools
Drapery and furniture upholstery shops	Government offices and institutions (educations/judicial), museums, art galleries, civic buildings, concert halls	Funeral parlours
Hotel	Insurance and real estate offices	Vape stores?
Jewelry manufacturing	Non-profit community serving use, including offices	Wholesaling
Libraries	Public utilities	
Personal service establishments: hair salons, nail salon, dry cleaning, optical stores, florists, shoe repair, etc.	Studios (artist, display, radio, recording, television)	
Printing, publishing and bookbinding	CONDITIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front of house, reception or other customer focused active uses must be located at the front of the building along the street frontage • No office component may occupy more than 25% of the ground level window frontage (e.g. banks, insurance office) 	
Public assembly and entertainment use		
Retail stores, including cannabis and pharmacy		

Defining Priority Commercial Areas

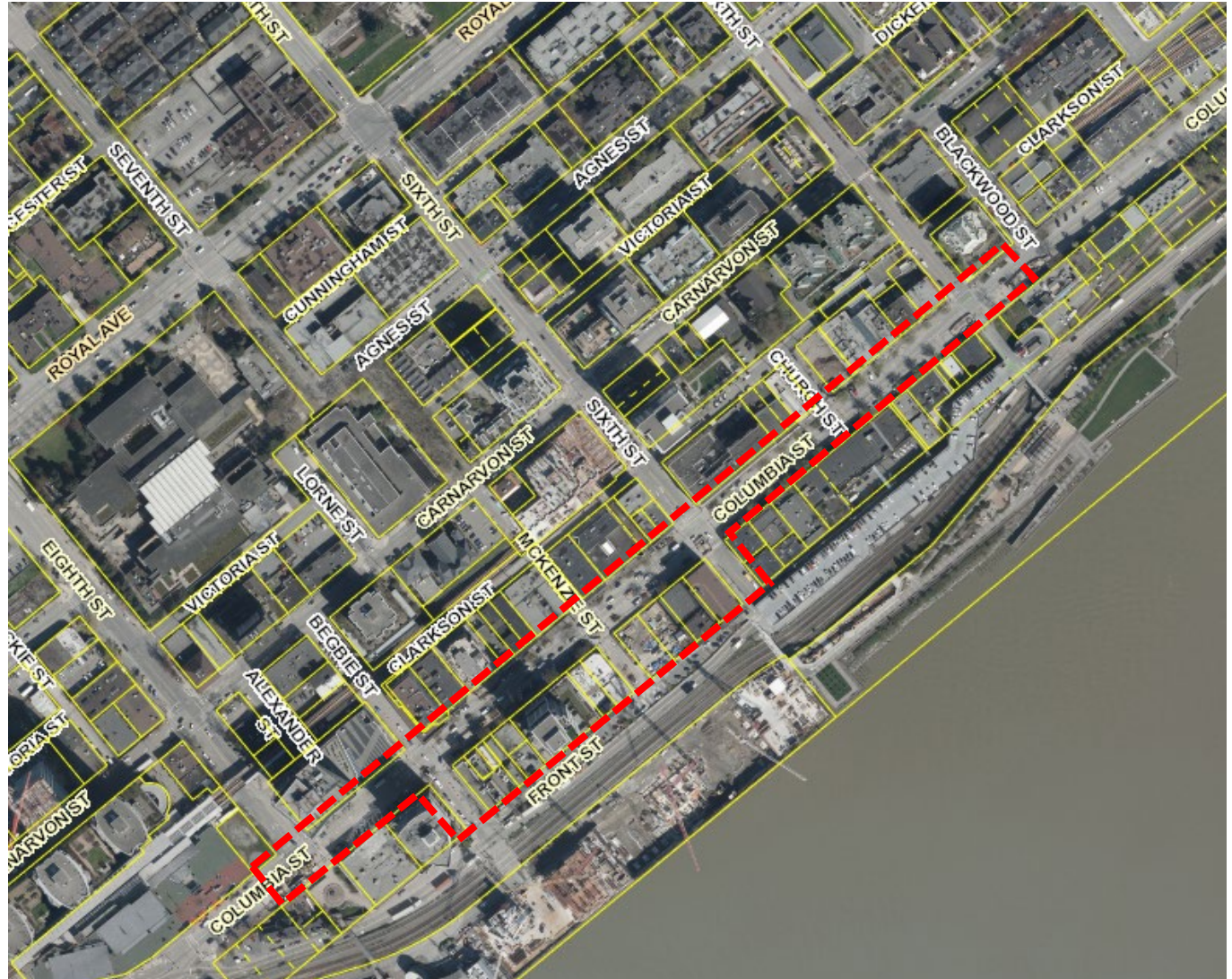
Consider...

Are these the areas where active uses should be required?



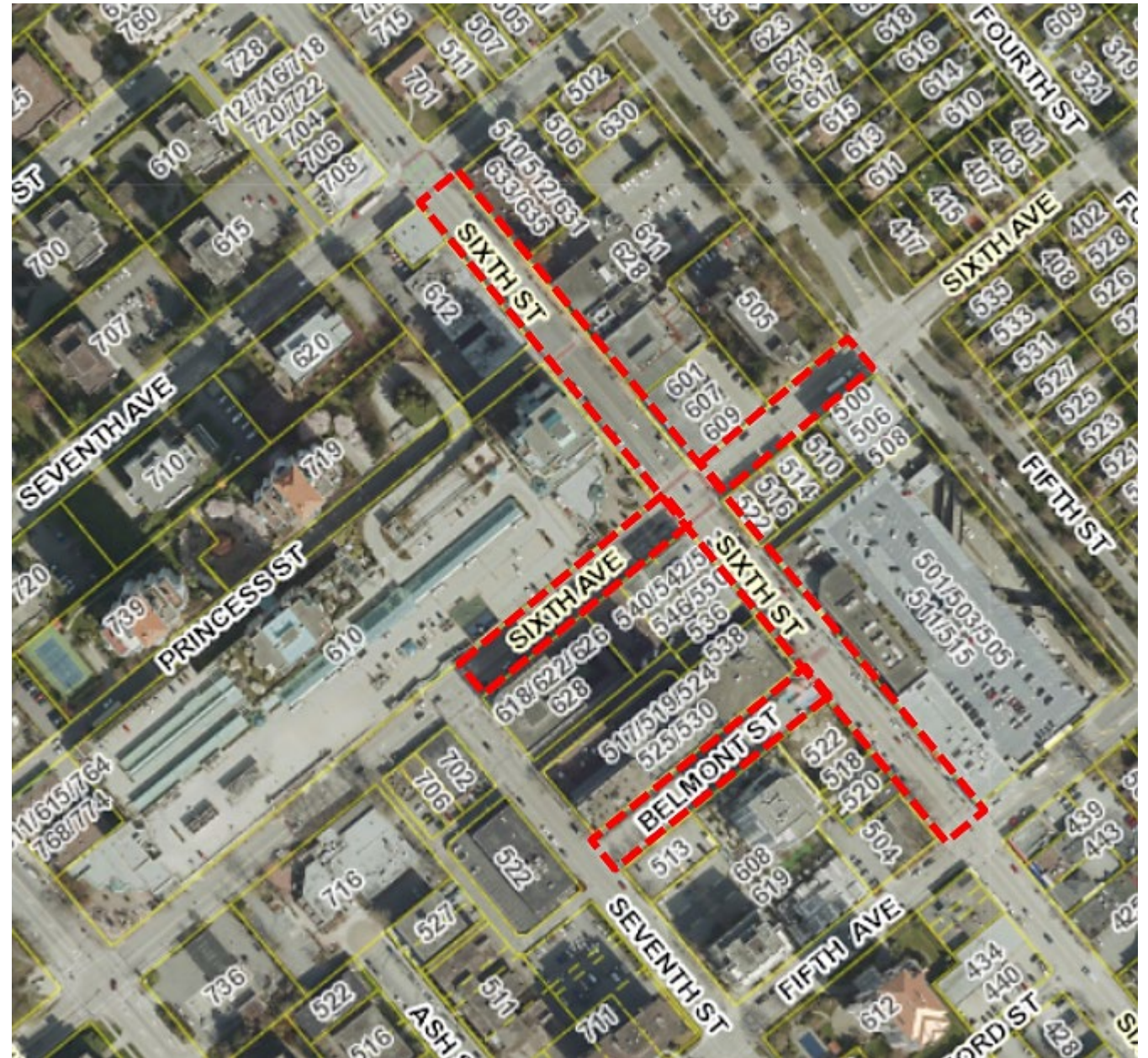
Downtown

- Columbia Street - Eighth to Fourth Street
- Front Street Mews



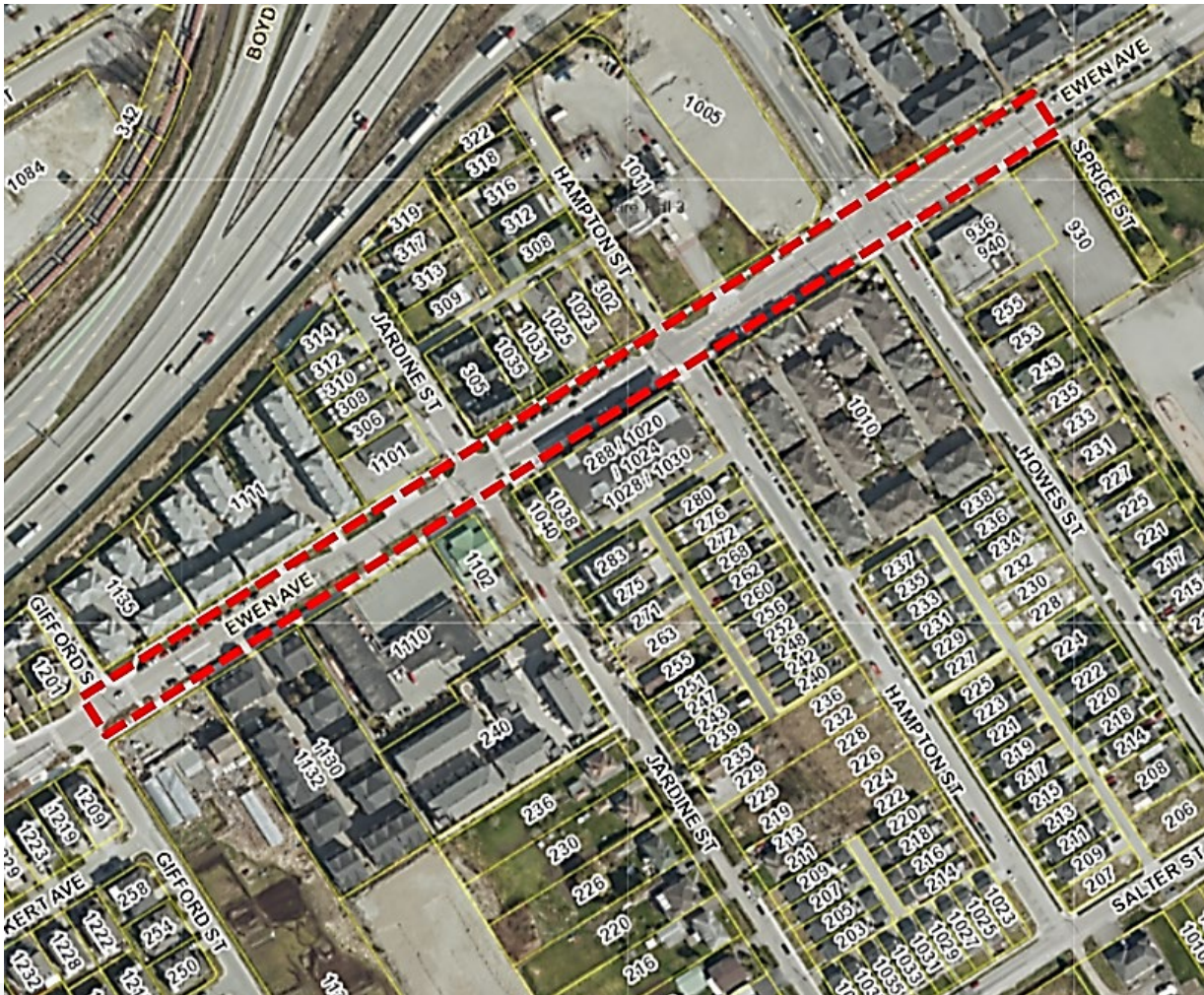
Uptown

- Sixth Street - Fifth Avenue to Seventh Avenue
- Sixth Avenue – Fifth Street to Seventh Street
- Belmont Street



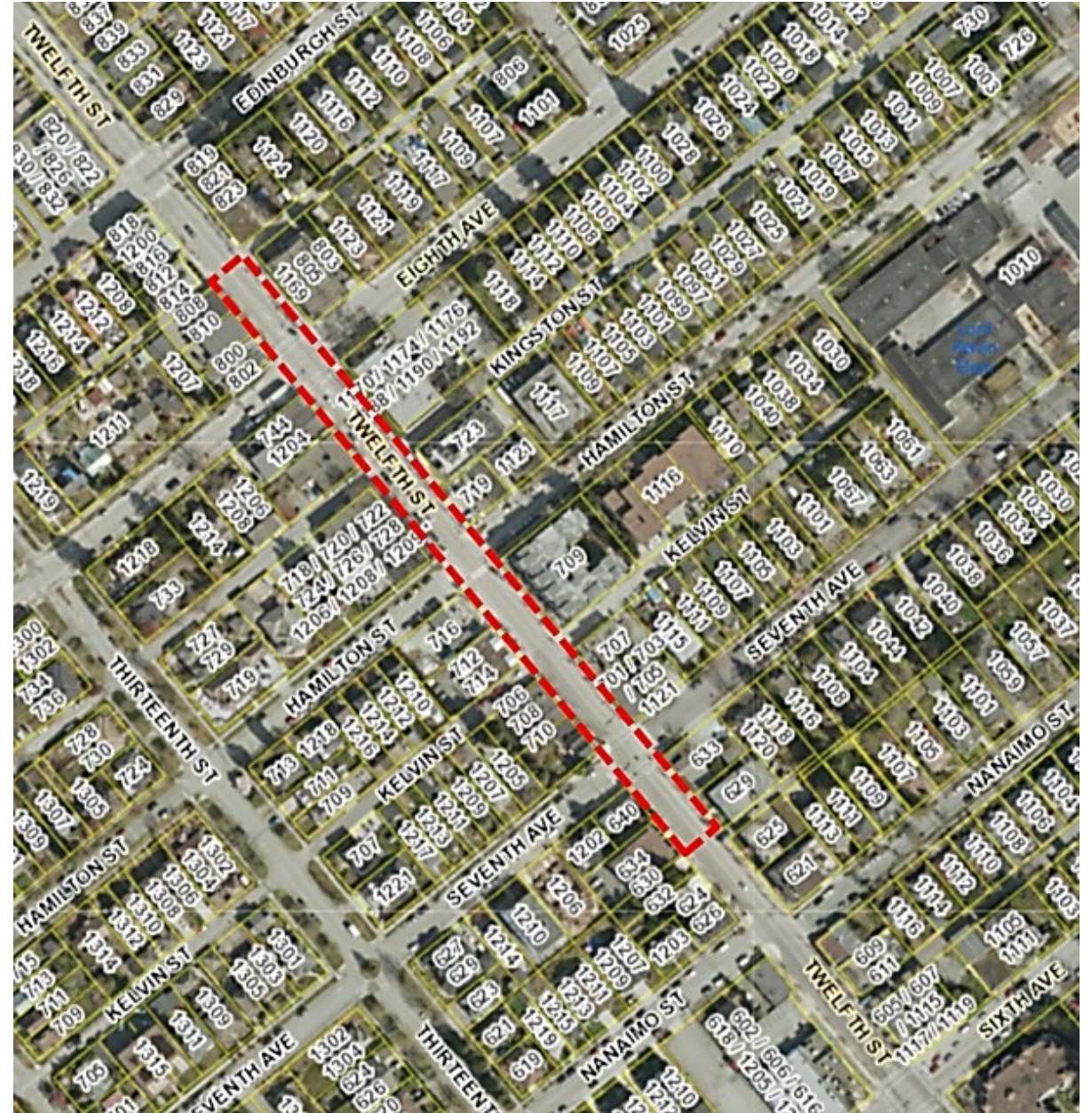
Queensborough

- Ewen Avenue - between Gifford Street and Sprice Street
- Mercer Street – between Blackley Street and Ewen Avenue



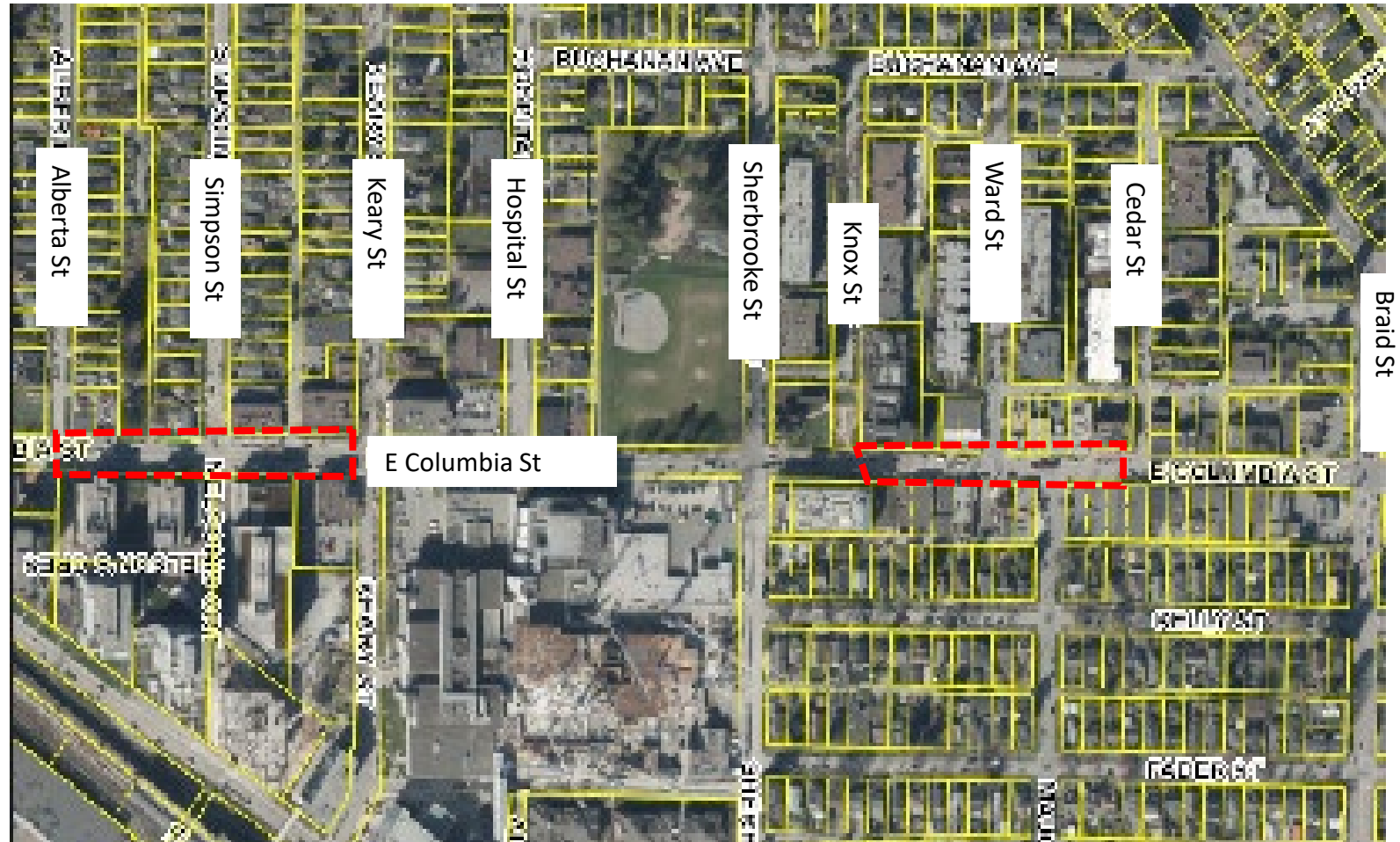
Upper Twelfth

- North of Eighth Avenue and south of Seventh Avenue
- Lower Twelfth to be considered as planning work evolves



Sapperton

- Braid to Sherbrooke Street
- Alberta to Keary Street



What types of buildings should this apply to?

Applicable to new development only

- Active uses in priority areas would apply to new commercial development only
- Recommendation in Retail Strategy: exempt existing buildings from new regulations related to 'active' retail/commercial use(s)
- Takes a conservative approach - majority of buildings on great streets are older building stock and would not be subject until redevelopment occurs
- Older building stock tends to offer spaces more desirable/attainable for use by institutional and community service uses
- Window transparency regulations would continue to apply to new and existing buildings



What types of buildings should this apply to?

Applicable to all properties – existing and new development

- Applies to existing buildings and new development
- Existing businesses not considered an active use would be able to continue, but if discontinued for a continuous period of six months, any subsequent business becomes subject to the zoning bylaw
- Strong message on desire for active streetscapes, greater potential impact on property owners as a result of more stringent regulations on potential leasers/purchasers/permitted uses in ground level units



Consider... Comments on either approach?

Regulating Active Uses

Pros	Considerations
Seeks to create more active street fronts	Community values change over time (e.g. arcades, dentist offices)
Encourages more vibrant street frontages with uses that generally desire transparency into stores	Can be seen as “adding” regulations to doing business
Could make units have more affordable rent/prices due to fewer permitted uses	Could decrease value of units due to few permitted uses

Consider... Other points to consider?

Next Steps

1. Present to ACEDAC for discussion – April 2025
2. Present to Council in Workshop – anticipated June 2025
3. Be Heard – Community Engagement – anticipated June/July 2025
4. Bring Zoning Bylaw Amendment to Council
5. Work w/Chamber of Commerce to develop a public-facing, illustrative guide that corresponds with existing/new signage standards for active retail/commercial uses at street level, to be included with business licence applications.
6. Future amendment to Official Community Plan that would designate and incorporate specific retail Design Guidelines - 2026

Consider...

Any other
comments you
want to share?