



NICOMEKL RIVER DISTRICT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

DESIGN BRIEF
DESIGN WORKSHOP
JUNE 25-26, 2019



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1 | INTRODUCTION

This design brief is intended to serve as the foundation for the Nicomekl River District Neighbourhood Plan design workshop being held on June 25, 2019. It establishes the framework within which each design team will develop a new vision and ideas for how the area might grow and evolve in the future. To prepare for the design workshop participants are encouraged to become acquainted with the materials in the brief, open their minds to the future possibilities of this integral part of Langley City, and begin thinking about their own aspirations for the neighbourhood's future.



*NICOMEKL:
THE
ROUTE
TO
GO,
THE
PATHWAY.*

(HALQ'EMEYLEM LANGUAGE)

2 | LANGLEY CITY: NEXUS OF COMMUNITY

In 2018, Council endorsed a new vision for Langley City as the **Nexus of Community**. The vision communicates the foundation on which the next evolution of Langley City will be developed. It includes four pillars: **Community, Connected, Experiences, Integration**. Each of these represent something valuable to the community, its hopes and ambitions.

As part of the vision-making process, ideas were shared around what defines those hopes and ambitions to ultimately shape a great city. The following list is what underpins Langley City's Nexus of Community vision:

- A feeling of welcome and safety
- Friendliness and people on the streets, day and night
- A sense of place, character, and identity that showcases the values and ideals of the residents
- History around you as a reminder of the past and to give context to the present
- The diversity of people and ideas which makes a community whole and multifaceted
- A walkable city of pedestrian scale
- Development on a smaller scale to emphasize community
- A magnet of entertainment and attractions
- Greenspace and easy access to nature and recreation

In many ways, Langley City already features a number of these important elements in its people and its urban form. A strong foundation exists and the Nicomekl River District Neighbourhood Plan is an opportunity to help implement this Langley City of the future.

More importantly, it is also an opportunity to dream big and start planning a neighbourhood that responds to our future needs and reaches the great potential we have as a community!

COMMUNITY



CONNECTED



EXPERIENCES



INTEGRATION



The four pillars of the Langley City: Nexus of Community vision



3 | NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROCESS

We're following a 3 phase process to create the Nicomekl River District Neighbourhood Plan and we anticipate completing the plan by March 2020.

Phase 1 launches the project with broad public outreach and targeted stakeholder promotion. This phase introduces key issues and trends and conducts a comprehensive design charrette for community input into the development of neighbourhood plan concepts. At the end of this phase, Council is provided an update on what we heard in the form of an engagement summary, including multiple neighbourhood plan concepts.

Phase 2 is a deep-dive phase, where themes are examined in detail by stakeholder groups and the public. Using a variety of face-to-face activities and dialogue, consensus starts to emerge on key topics to guide the development of the neighbourhood plan. Near the end of Phase 2, an outline of the Neighbourhood Plan and its content materializes. A check-in with Council at the end of the phase ensures we are on the right track and can move to the final phase.

Phase 3 begins by fully drafting the Neighbourhood Plan and the providing the public with an opportunity to review a full draft. We perform high-level engagement that allows the public and stakeholders to provide feedback, and ensure the policy reflects public and stakeholder feedback. We refine the Neighbourhood Plan based on public and TAC feedback and present a final version to Council.

The document is then guided through a bylaw adoption process in accordance with the Local Government Act. Once the bylaw is adopted, the project is concluded and we can celebrate together for a job well done!





*WHERE
CAN
WE
GATHER
WITH
FRIENDS
AND
FAMILY?*

4 | NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

The boundary being used for the purpose of this neighbourhood plan exercise is one that extends from 196 Street in the west to 208 Street in the east. The northern and southern edges vary but seek to include destinations such as Linwood and Douglas Parks in the north and Sendall Botanical Gardens, H.D. Stafford School, and Langley City Park in the south, as shown in the figure below.

A “Neighbourhood Plan” boundary (Figure 1) demarcates the area most adjacent to Nicomekl River floodplain and as such will be the focus of this study. An “Area of Influence” boundary extends further out to places that aren’t necessarily adjacent to the floodplain, but may influence decisions related to land use, connections, and design.

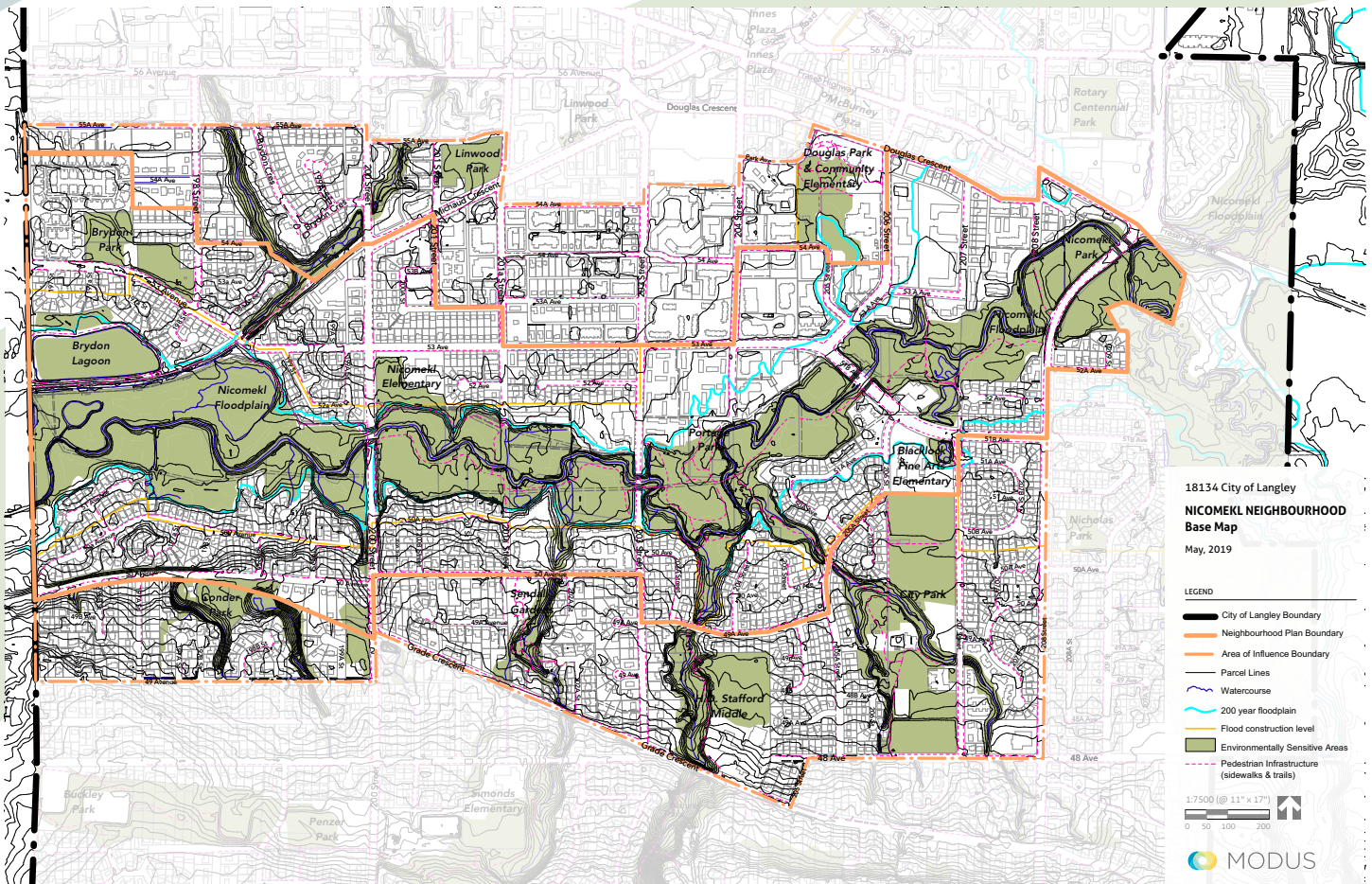


Figure 1. Nicomekl River District Neighbourhood Plan Boundary



*WHAT
ECOLOGICAL
FEATURES
SHOULD
WE
PRESERVE?*

5 | WORKSHOP PURPOSE & AGENDA

PURPOSE

The Design Workshop offers an opportunity to engage with the Nicomekl River District Neighbourhood Plan process. We will explore the future of the community through a range of activities, intended to solicit input across a diversity of participants. City staff and MODUS' project team will be on hand to provide information (e.g. project purpose, planning process, and draft priorities), facilitate discussions and explore design concepts.

OBJECTIVES

- Demonstrate integrity throughout our community engagement effort;
- Raise awareness about the planning process and the Neighbourhood Plan;
- Foster shared understanding by providing background information about key topics;
- Better address community needs by gathering additional input, where relevant;
- Co-create a vision, priorities and goals for the future; and,
- Develop community design concepts and options.

FORMAT

Vision Workshop: On Tuesday, June 25, a team of urban designers and technical experts will meet with the public, key community groups, and other stakeholders, to gather information on the present qualities and future opportunities for the Nicomekl River District. This session will also unlock the community's aspirations and dreams for the neighbourhood and seek to reveal important themes and shared priorities that will inform the development of concepts.

Concept Development: Over the course of approximately a day and a half, following the vision workshop, the project team will apply what they learnt and develop two concepts for the future of the neighbourhood, differentiated by themes and/or key issues identified during the vision workshop. Our project team will work to develop and refine solutions that will result in clear and realistic plan options for future development. The graphic quality of the final illustrated plans will communicate conceptual/approximate boundaries so as to express an openness to change and flexibility at this stage in the process.

Open House: The final event is a 2-hour open house wherein the public will have an opportunity to provide feedback on vision elements and planning principles, and the concepts developed through the design workshop process. A comprehensive summary will document the event and all feedback will be recorded – including what is liked or disliked about concepts and why – to be presented at a later Council check-in.

AGENDA

Design Workshop - JUNE 25
Mackie Room
Coast Hotel & Conference Centre

Open House - JUNE 26
Main Floor
Langley City Hall

8:45AM	Registration
9:00AM	Welcome & Introductions
9:15AM	Neighbourhood Plan Overview
9:30AM	Q & A
9:35AM	Hopes & Fears Exercise
9:50AM	Coffee Break
10:00AM	Four Rooms Mapping Exercise
11:30AM	Report & Pin-Up
11:40AM	Group Feedback
11:50AM	Next Steps
12:00PM	Workshop Ends

6:00PM	Event Begins
8:00PM	Event Ends

7 |

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

ENGAGED PUBLIC & STAKEHOLDERS

The public and key stakeholders are engaged and feel invested in the planning process. Their ideas and vision for the Nicomekl River have been genuinely understood, considered, and incorporated into the development of concepts. They feel energized and inspired, and they will continue to follow along the process and provide feedback at key milestones.

DRAFT VISION & PRINCIPLES

From the workshop will emerge a draft vision and principles for the neighbourhood. These will be aspirational, bold, and future-oriented. The vision will forge a clear path for the development and growth of the neighbourhood. The principles will bring together the essential elements that will help Langley City achieve this vision. Together they will serve as the foundation for the neighbourhood plan.

DRAFT CHARACTER AREAS

Within the neighbourhood plan area, several draft character areas will be designated, each with their own identity. They'll respond to the background research conducted, notably the watercourse assessment, and speak to the important heritage that can be found along the Nicomekl floodplain.

DRAFT LAND USE OPTIONS

To guide the future of development in the neighbourhood, draft land use options will present where future growth can take place. Each option will identify a unique way for the neighbourhood to develop all the while staying true to the draft vision and principles. Maps showing the conceptual land uses and densities will help determine the final land use plan that will ultimately regulate development in the future.



6 | NEIGHBOURHOOD DESIGN PRINCIPLES

WALKABLE & ACCESSIBLE

People-oriented street designs and inviting pathway connections will make walking a delightful activity and allow people of all abilities to move around safely and comfortably.

MIX OF USES

A mix of uses within the neighbourhood, its smaller precincts, and even within some buildings will help enliven the area and create a complete community, all within a short distance from home.

ECOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE

Careful stewardship of the Nicomekl River and its floodplain will ensure it stays healthy and full of biodiverse life for generations to come.

HERITAGE CONSCIOUS

Recollecting the past and animating the landscape with the stories and imagery of those who inhabited the area prior to us will help us understand the present and provide context for the future.

PLAYFUL & SAFE

Planning and designing for fun and whimsy across all ages will help bring people together and foster a sense of security and ownership in the community.

*WHICH
DESTINATIONS
CAN
BE
FOUND
ALONG
THE
WAY?*



8 | NEIGHBOURHOOD INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

A significant amount of background research and analysis was conducted to help inform the design charrette, including a:

- watercourse assessment;
- land use & urban design analysis;
- transportation review; and,
- civil infrastructure review.

This research has helped shape the desired principles and outcomes of the design charrette and form the foundation on which the workshop exercises and open house engagement were developed. The results set a baseline for the successful implementation of the eventual neighbourhood plan.

The following is a summary of the findings. Technical memos relating to the watercourse assessment, and transportation and civil infrastructure reviews can be found in the appendices.

WATERCOURSE ASSESSMENT

Prior to European settlement, the lowland areas surrounding the Nicomekl River resembled a mosaic of old conifer forest, shrubland, and grass dominated wetlands. The river was supported by a network of slow moving drainages and streams and floods were regular occurrences. The area would have been influenced by First Nations and their early farming practices.

As flood control measures were implemented for farming and urban settlement, the dynamics of the river changed and now the tributaries that feed into the Nicomekl are constrained and most originate from redirected stormwater.

The Nicomekl still floods regularly and the natural areas surrounding the watercourse can generally support 1 in 10 year events. However, the modelled 200-year flood event extends well into the existing developed areas, with the greatest impacts east of 203 St. (Figure 2).

Despite the challenges associated with existing dykes, flood control measures, and poor instream habitat, there are extensive salmon migrations up the Nicomekl River and over 10 different fish species have been observed over the last 20 years.

Further downstream from the study area, E. coli concentrations often exceed recommended guidelines for swimming, but wouldn't typically prevent other types of recreation like canoeing. Though, the channel through the study area is rarely wide or deep enough for this activity.

For the purpose of planning the neighbourhood, two different reaches were identified, each with their own characteristics that can help inform future programming and management practices. The geographic area of the reaches are shown in Figure 3.

Reach 1

From 196 Street to 203 Street, the first reach is one that includes multiple ponds and wetlands that provide high value habitat for wildlife, including amphibians. There are also patches of forest, shrub, and grassland communities. Most of the grass is not natural and remains from historic farming practices. There are also large patches of invasive Himalayan Blackberry.

The 200-year flood level is contained within the natural boundaries and the river is generally well buffered from adjacent development. There is very little tree canopy cover or shading. The in-stream habitat could be improved by planting trees and shrubs along the edges of the river to shade it and provide leaf and litter input. Wildlife habitat features that are recommended for this area include standing wildlife trees, raptors perches, and large woody debris.

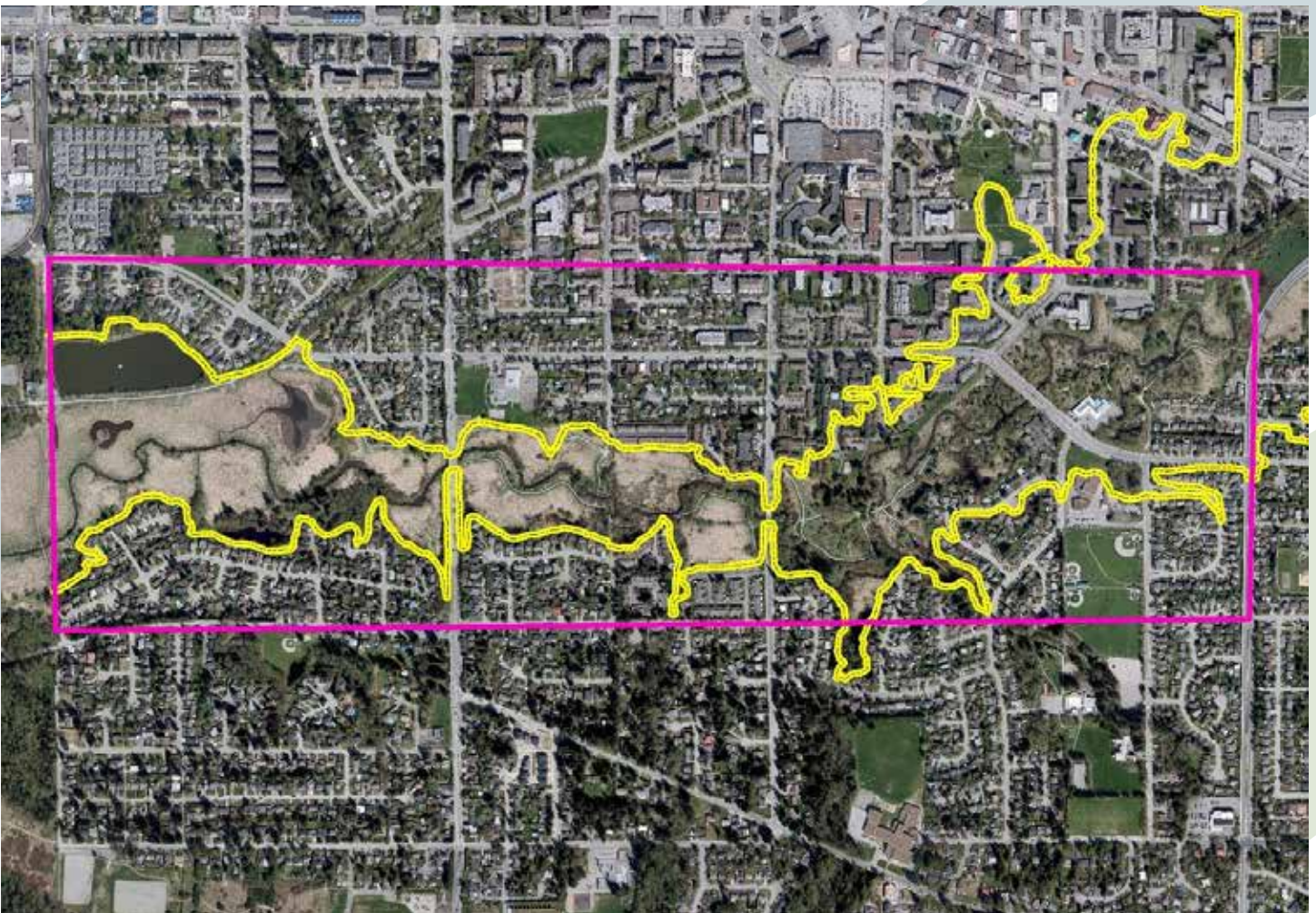


Figure 2. 200 Year Flood Level

Reach 2

East of 203 Street, there are also some ponds and wetlands that provide high value habitat. In this area, the riparian community includes a greater diversity of plant species and a greater cover of trees and tall shrubs. Much of the river is shaded by this vegetation, however some large areas are dominated by the invasive Himalayan Blackberry.

Here, the 200-year floodplain extends well beyond the natural boundaries of the reach and adjacent development is higher density with less porous surface which could threaten the floodplain area with polluted runoff.

Protection

The Nicomekl River is a regionally significant river and is recommended to be protected by a riparian setback of 30m. The area within this setback must be managed to ensure the riparian communities remain intact and continue to protect the integrity of the streams.

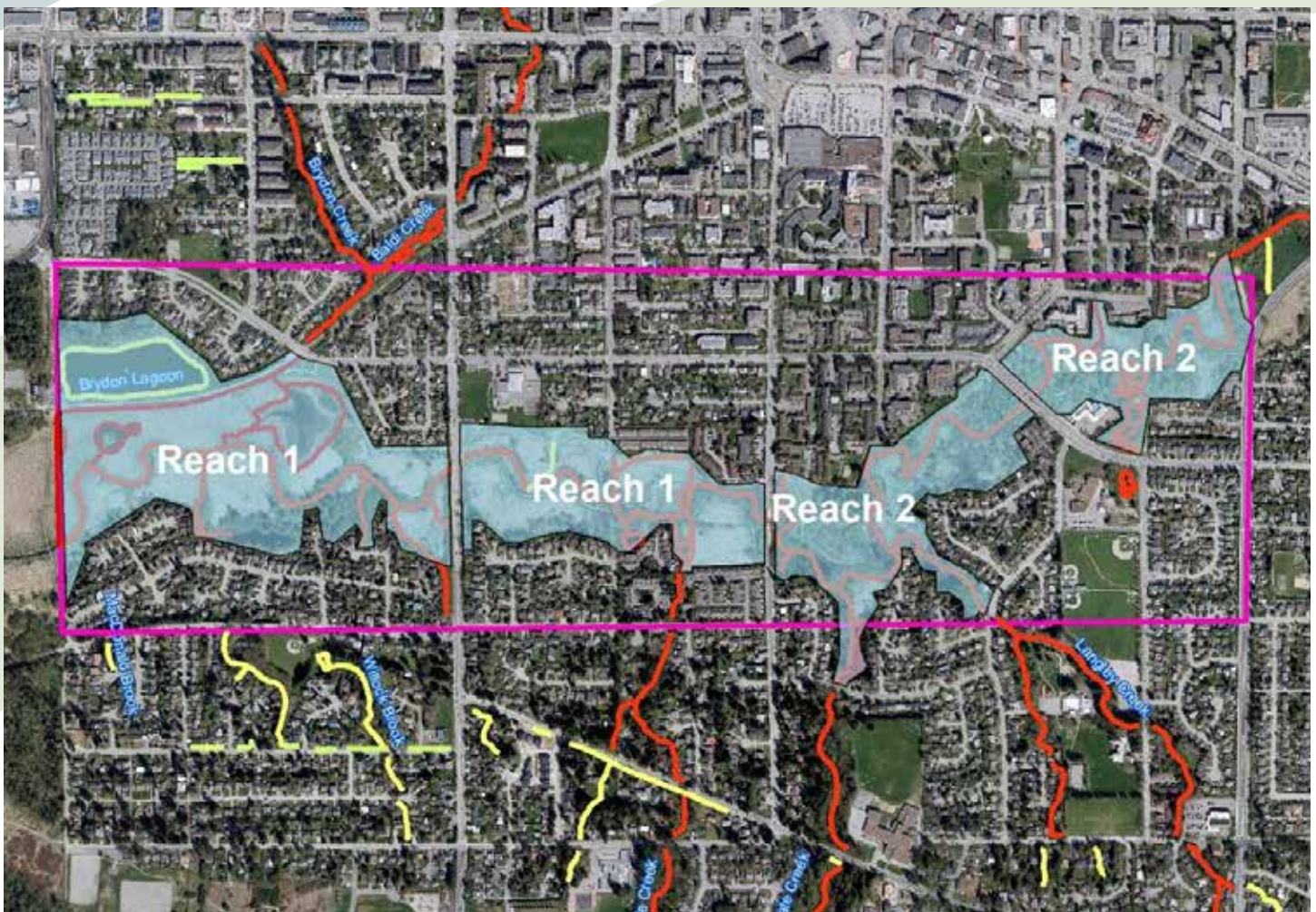


Figure 3. Nicomekl River Reaches

LAND USE & ZONING

A clear and defining boundary exists in Langley City's 2005 land use plan separating north and south along the Nicomekl River (Figure 4). Apart from a few properties on the south, multifamily residential is contained to the north as is any future commercial or industrial lands.

Lands that have continued as single detached neighbourhoods while household sizes (number of people per household) have dropped over the last few decades may be contributing to a decline in population south of the Nicomekl.

In contrast, complete communities and neighbourhoods that are walkable and sustainable require a mix in uses. This would typically translate into a tapestry of colour on the land use map. Even among the higher density residential uses north of the Nicomekl, small scale commercial uses aren't permitted. This means residents have to travel long distances, likely by car, to gain access to shops and services for their daily needs.

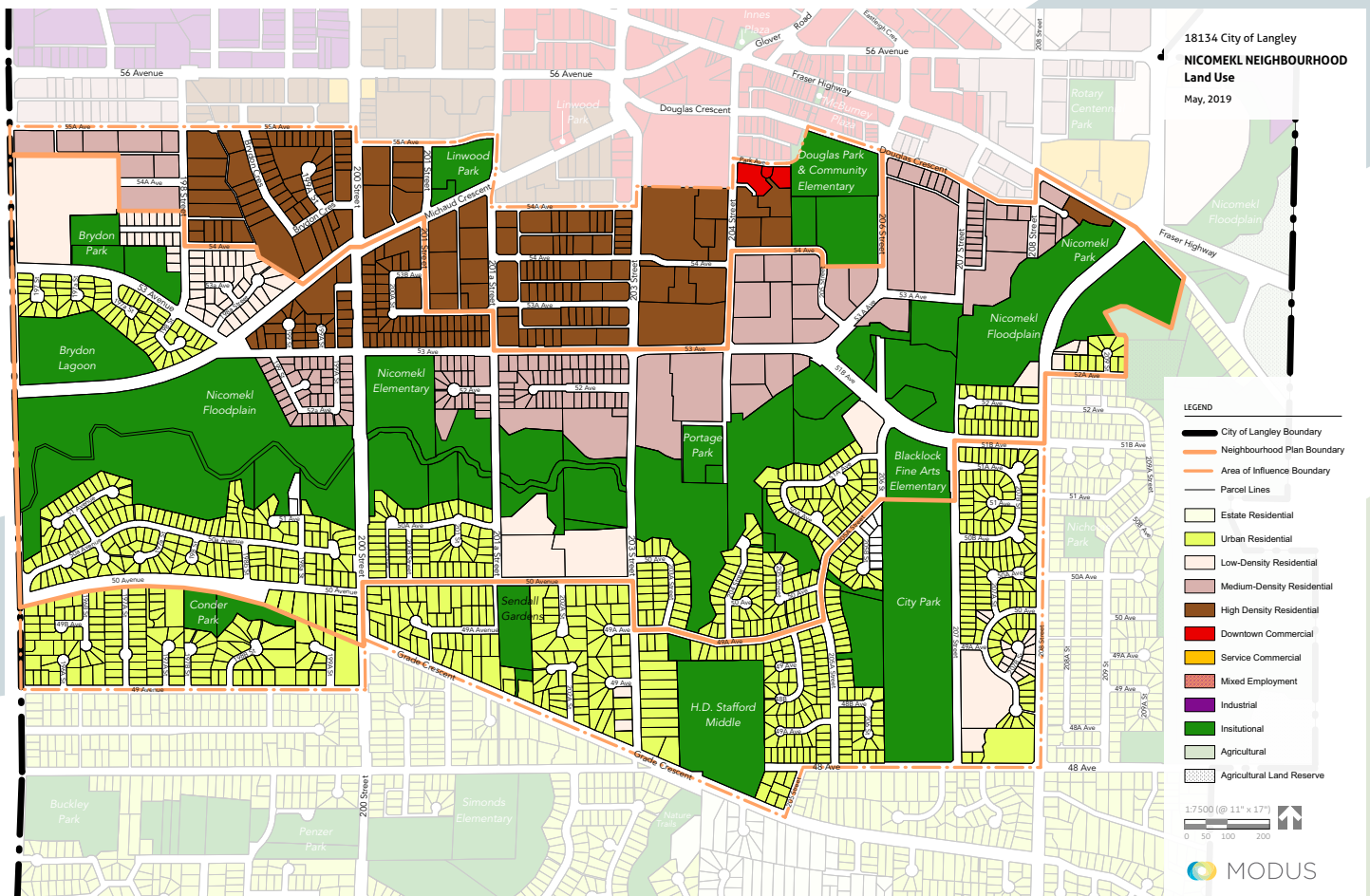


Figure 4. Land Use Designations

Providing the opportunity for gentle amounts of neighbourhood scale commercial in strategic locations (i.e. cornerstores, cafes, local retail, etc.) paired with supporting densities would improve the economic, environmental, and social sustainability of the entire Nicomekl area.

Another notable land use observation is the prevalence of green “fingers” reaching into the southern neighbourhoods and connecting them to the Nicomekl River. With the arrival of SkyTrain and the growing vitality and magnetism of Downtown Langley, more green connections reaching northward could help “sew” the community together and create a central destination out of the Nicomekl River. These connections could take various forms, either as added public green space or redesigned streets that provides generous space for an attractive and leafy boulevard.

The zoning of the area (Figure 5) is more piecemeal north of the Nicomekl, portraying a neighbourhood in transition. There is some redevelopment potential here on properties currently zoned RS1 (Single Family Residential Zone) but designated for multifamily residential in the City’s land use plan. Many CD (Comprehensive Development) zones have emerged here too, signalling the need for more adaptable zones that can cater to a greater number of development proposals.

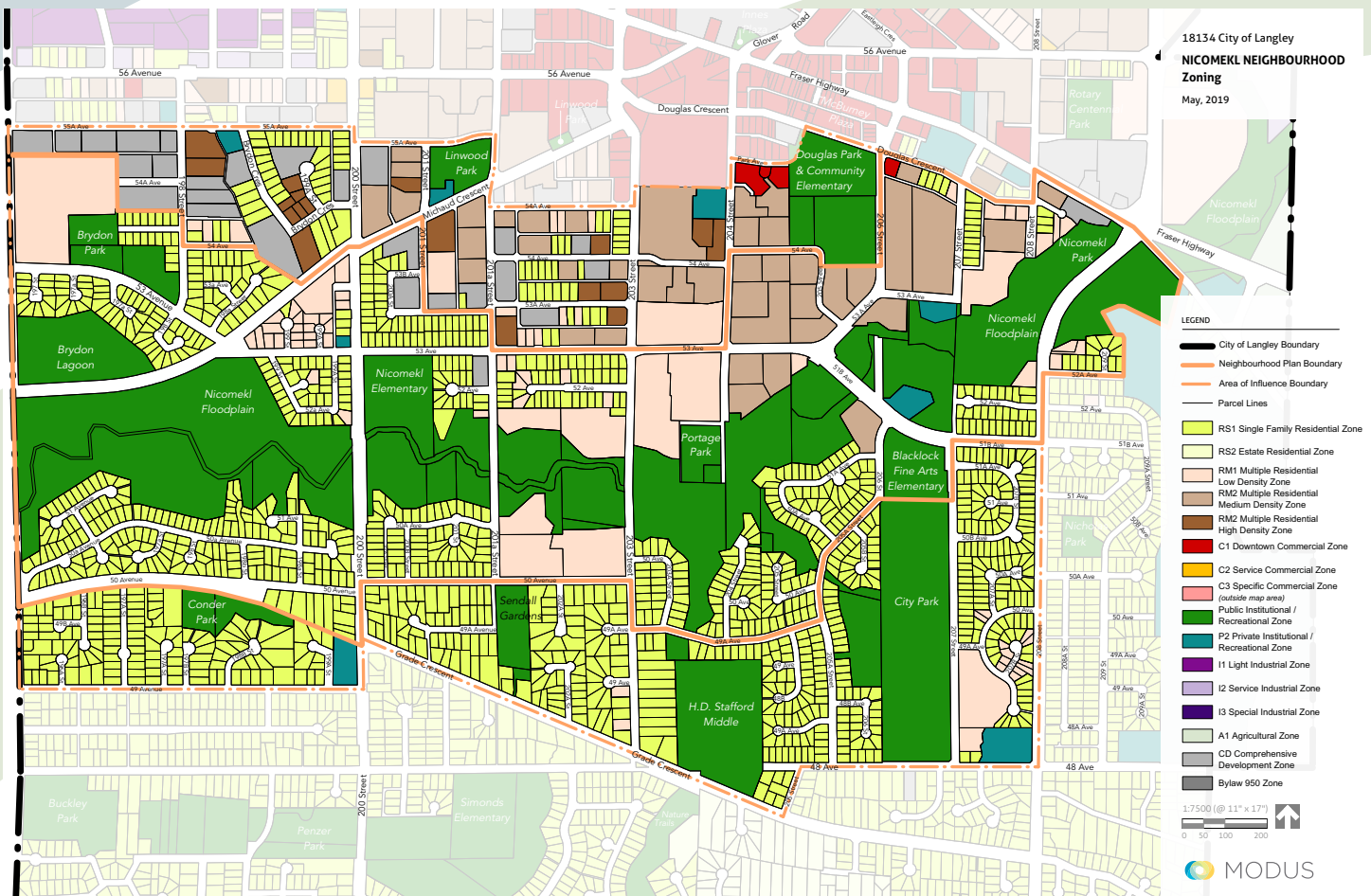


Figure 5. Zoning

FIGURE GROUND

The figure ground below provides a clear indication of the extent to which the open space of the Nicomekl River corridor—and the additional open spaces that it links to—are largely intact and well-defined. At the same time, the delineation of building footprints throughout the City of Langley generally corresponds to the scale and “grain” of development as permitted under current zoning and reflects the same pattern of separated multi-family and single-detached neighbourhoods corresponding to the areas north and south of the river respectively. That said, a few interesting exceptions to the rule reveal areas whereby single family detached forms exist within areas zoned for more intensive residential uses, suggesting areas of opportunity for redevelopment.

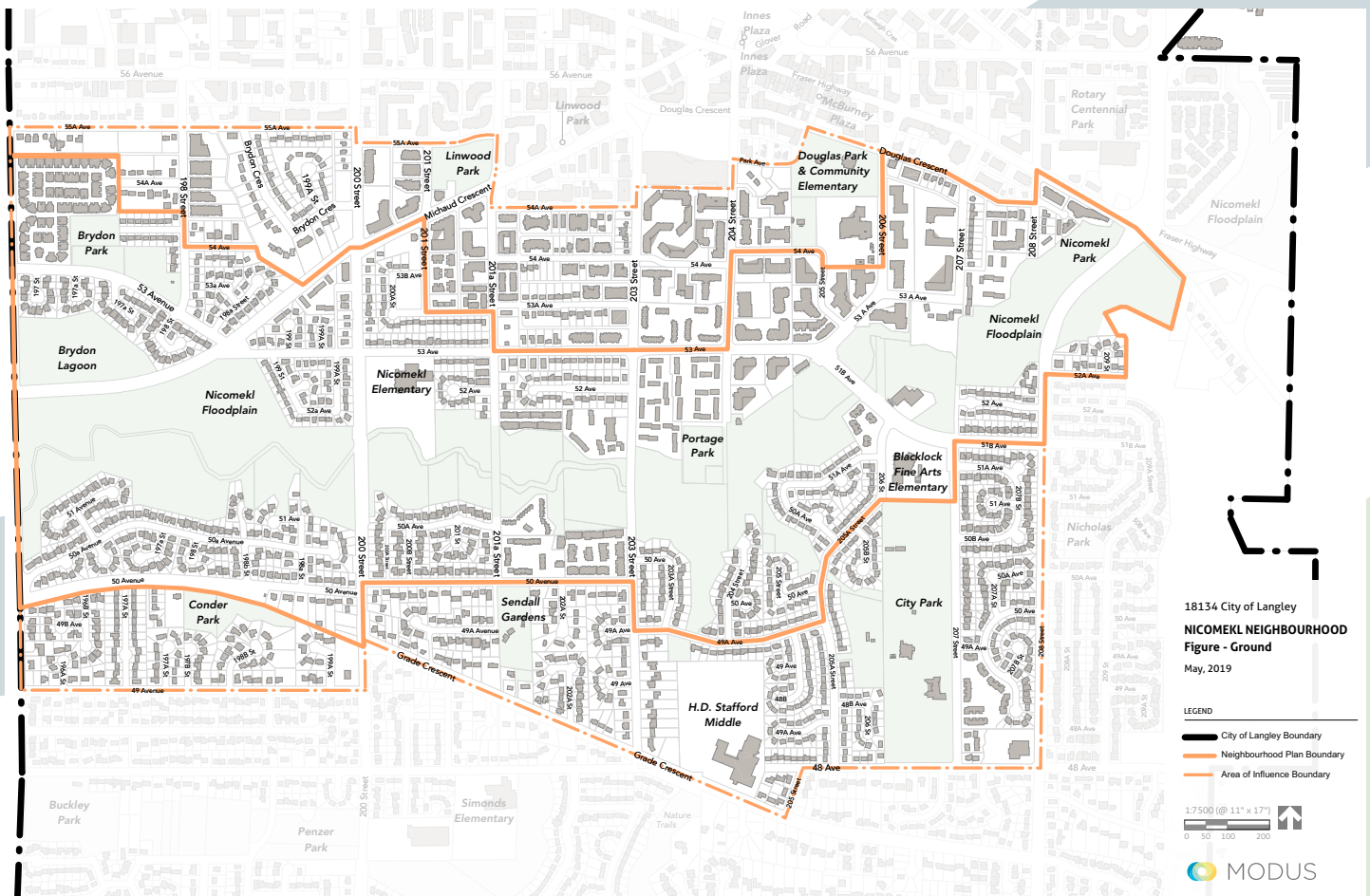


Figure 6. Building Footprints

NEIGHBOURHOOD STRUCTURE & ROOMS

Emerging from a combination of urban design parameters (e.g. 5-minute walkability), experiential qualities/physical boundaries (e.g. viewsheds and street networks) and biophysical characteristics (e.g. river reaches defined by hydromorphological characteristics including bank profiles and riparian vegetation), the plan below identifies four distinct neighbourhoods of landscape “rooms.”

And while this conceptual structure is fairly coarse, it provides intuitive direction to:

- imagine a series of interdependent and interconnected program opportunities related to the enjoyment of the Nicomekl River;
- identify key opportunity sites to create “centres” or “stepping stones” to actively contribute to the River District sense of place, neighbourhood identity and and sequence of programming; and,
- explore ways that adjacent development might (re)develop in a form that better engages the riparian environment through opportunities ranging from “borrowed views” and extension of indoor/outdoor and open space programming to habitat enhancement;

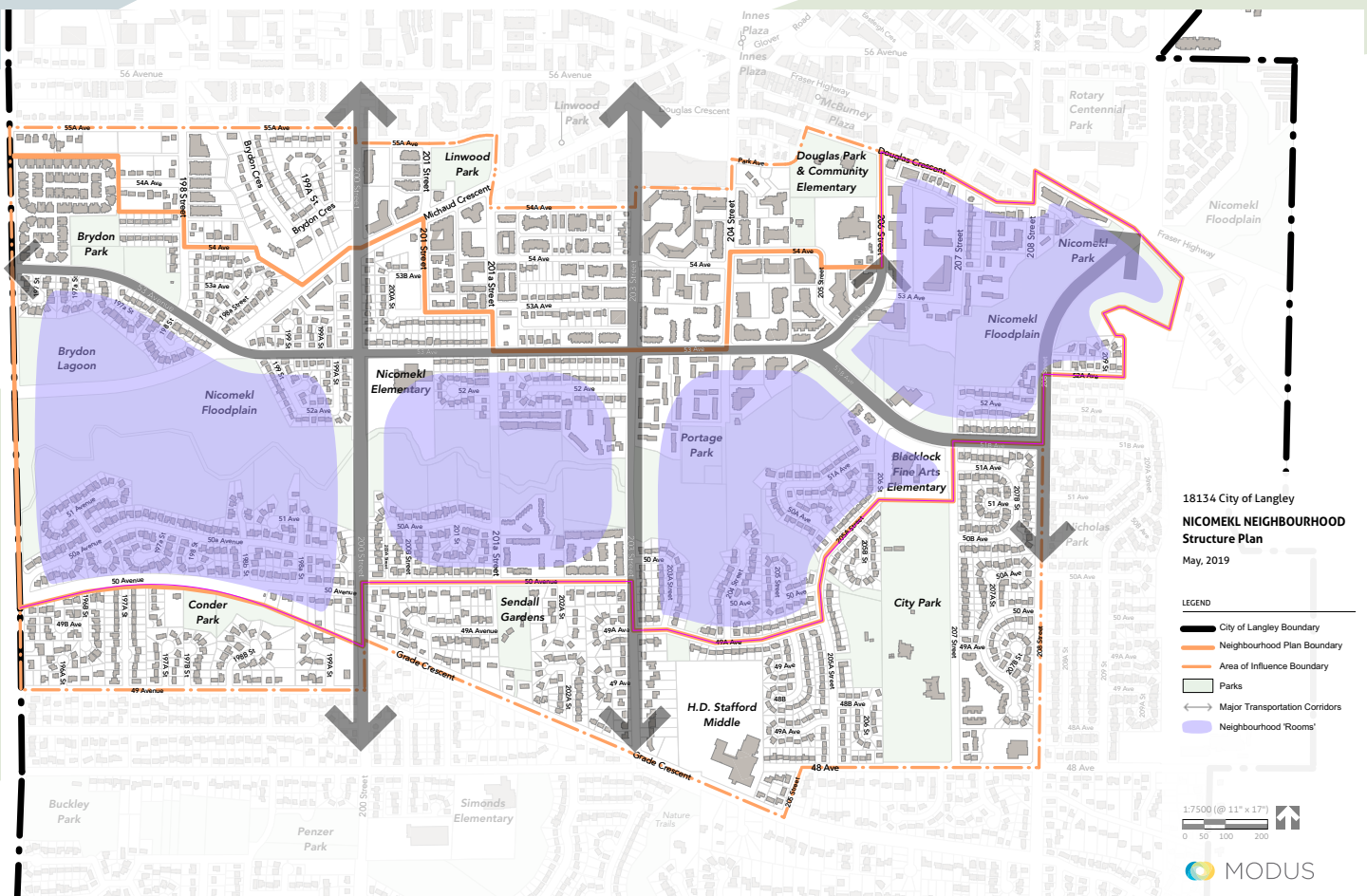


Figure 7. Neighbourhood Structure & Rooms

TRANSPORTATION

Transit

Creating a Nicomekl River District Neighbourhood Plan will help the community prepare for the planned fixed rail rapid transit connection slated to arrive in Langley City within the next decade. While the proposed line would not enter the study area, rapid bus routes running north-south across the Nicomekl floodplain to connect with the line should be considered within this planning exercise.

Two future lines, along 200 St and 208 St will help link the neighbourhood to the eventual rapid transit line and vice versa. How these important transit lines integrate with the trail system will be important for improving access to the Nicomekl River.



Cycling

The future cycling network identified in the Transportation and Transit Master Plan include north-south connections along 203 St and 208 St and east-west connections along 53 Ave & 48 Ave. Other recommendations within the neighbourhood plan area are shown on the map below, and include:

- Bicycle lanes on 203 St, 53 Ave, 48 Ave, and Michaud Cres
- Neighbourhood bikeways respectively on 201A, 204, 205, 205A, 206, 208, 209 St and 54, 52, 50, and 49A Ave
- An off street path alongside 208 St connecting Nicomekl Trail to Fraser Hwy



Figure 9. Future Cycling Network

Walking & Accessibility

For improved walkability and accessibility throughout the neighbourhood, the Transportation Master Plan calls for increased sidewalk coverage, especially within 300m of schools. It also identifies future improved pedestrian/cycling crossings at the following locations:

- 200 St at Michaud Crescent, 53 Ave, and 48 Ave
- 203 St at 53 Ave and Grade Cres
- 208 St at 48 Ave and 51B Ave
- 51B Ave at 206 St

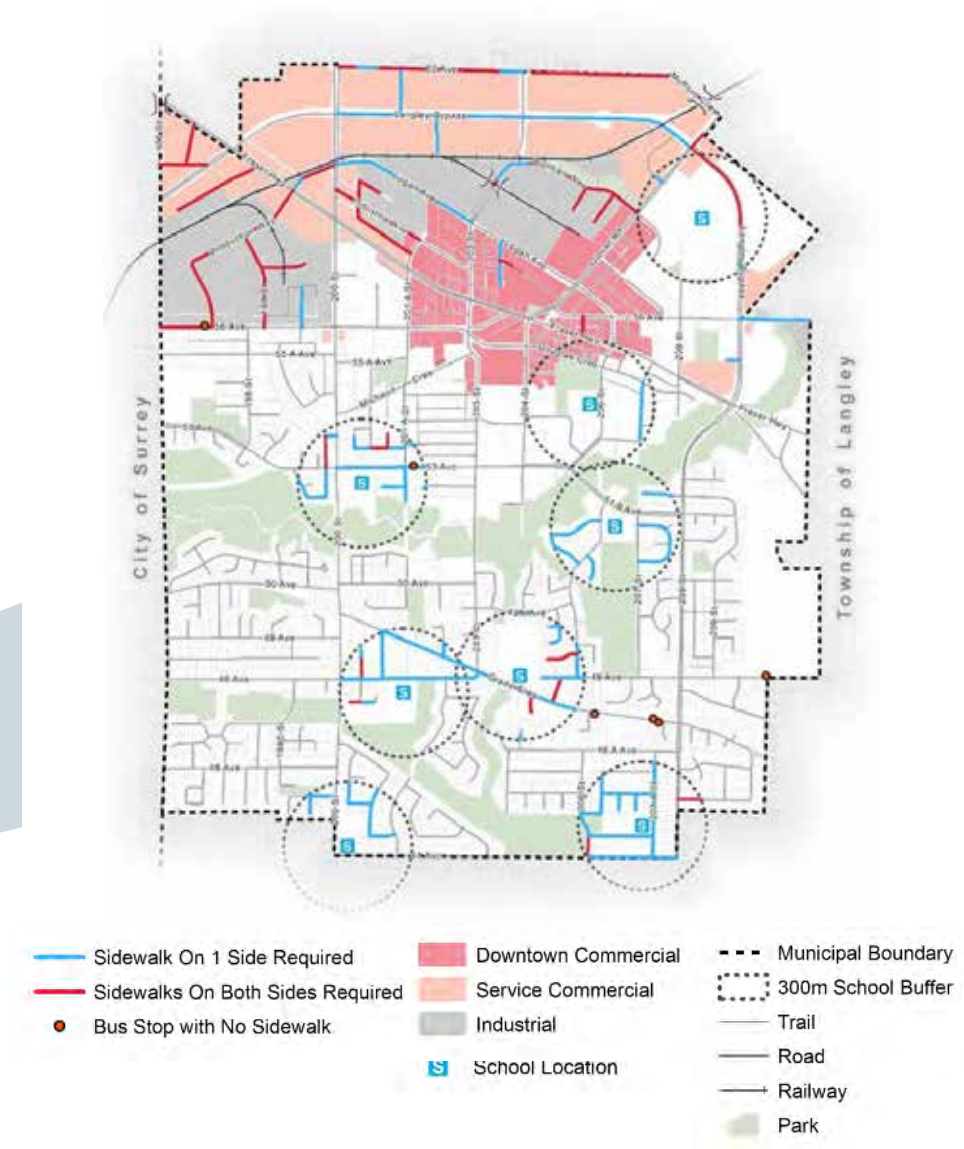


Figure 10. Future Pedestrian Network





WHAT
WILL
MAKE
THE
NEIGHBOURHOOD
FEEL
UNIQUE
&
SPECIAL?

9 | **PALETTE OF IDEAS**

As a way to inspire and get our heads around what kind of future is possible for the Nicomekl River and its broader neighbourhood, this section is an assemblage of various projects both near and far, from the local to the international. Each has elements that parallel the specific conditions that make the Nicomekl unique. Whether it's an urban riverfront development or a natural landscape enhancement project, the images should serve as a palette of ideas for the workshop.

OSPREY VILLAGE, PITT MEADOWS

Nestled along the northern shore of the Fraser River in Pitt Meadows, Osprey Village is composed of a mixed use high street with adjoining residential development primarily consisting of three-storey townhouses. The South Bonsons Community Centre anchors the neighbourhood along the river's edge and a riverfront trail connects the neighbourhood to the Pitt River Regional Greenway.





Image 1: "Osprey Village Pitt Meadows" www.themacnabs.com (retrieved May 9, 2019)

Image 2: The Vancouver Condo Buzz "Mosaic's Osprey Pitt Meadows Community" www.vancouver-real-estate-direct.com (retrieved May 9, 2019)

Image 3: RWAArchitecture "South Bonson Community Centre" www.rwa.ca (retrieved May 9, 2019)

FISHTRAP CREEK, ABBOTSFORD

Along Fishtrap Creek, wetlands were created to ease runoff and water retention challenges in the area. It is today a beautiful and publicly accessible nature park. The Discovery Trail runs through the park with several viewpoints showing off the the increase in habitat and biodiversity that is a direct result of the redesign.





Image 1: Blue Jay Elementary School "Divison 1 at Fishtrap Creek Park" bluejay.abbyschools.ca (retrieved May 23, 2019)

Image 2: Discover ideas about British Columbia "Elwood Park, Abbotsford" www.pinterest.ca, saved by Petra Rentrop (retrieved May 23, 2019)

Image 3: Discovery Trail "Picnic area at Discovery Trail" www.tripadvisor.ca (retrieved May 23, 2019)

JOCK MARSHALL RESERVE NATURE WALK, MELBOURNE

Deep in the suburbs of Melbourne, Australia lies the Jock Marshall Reserve. Surrounded by college dorms from the adjacent Monash University, this ecological feature provides a respite for busy students. A nature walk blends seamlessly with the surroundings and weaves its way across the reserve providing strong and peaceful connections throughout the university campus.





Image 1, 2, & 3: Landezine “Jock Marshall Reserve Nature Walk” www.landezine.com, taken by Drew Echberg (retrieved May 9, 2019)

BEDFORD LANDING, FORT LANGLEY

Bedford Landing is a new development in the heart of Fort Langley that manages to link the past to the present. With a mix of single detached homes, townhomes, work-live studios, apartments, and even a little commercial node, this vibrant community has become a great addition to the national historic site beside which it was developed. Between the river and the development is the Fort-to-Fort Trail which does an excellent job of connecting Bedford Landing to other regional destinations.





Image 1: Ramsay Worden Architects "Fort Langley Waterfront" www.rwa.ca (retrieved May 9, 2019)

Image 2: Parklane Homes "Bedford Landing" www.parklane.com (retrieved May 9, 2019)

Image 3: Mike Marfori Personal Real Estate Corp. "Waterfront at Bedford Landing" www.mikemarfori.com (retrieved May 9, 2019)

RIVER DISTRICT, VANCOUVER

Vancouver's River District is a new community along the southern arm of the Fraser River that sensitively integrates with its surroundings through riverfront remediation and rainwater management. The mixed-use development incorporates a range of different housing types and a small-scale commercial amenities and destinations to help create a complete and walkable neighbourhood.





Image 1: Peterson Photography "Romer's Burger Bar" www.flickr.com (retrieved May 9, 2019)

Image 2: Wesgroup Properties "River District Remediation Case" www.wesgroup.ca (retrieved May 9, 2019)

Image 3: Wesgroup Properties "River District Vancouver Community" www.wesgroup.ca (retrieved May 9, 2019)



THANK YOU!