

TownShift: Suburb into City

A design competition for envisioning the future of Surrey

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Welcome to the City of Surrey – “The Future Lives Here.” Whoever developed the new slogan for this emerging metropolis insightfully summed what the province’s fastest growing city will mean to many of its new residents.

In the design world, to use the words *future* and *here* in the same sentence usually implies that a person could look and imagine how a space will develop. To use these same words in reference to a city implies vision and planning — it requires knowing how people live. With the City Centre neighbourhood of Surrey established, the focus of planning has turned to the city’s many other constituent neighbourhoods. An estimated one thousand people move to the city every month, which is pressuring the municipality to ensure that all of Surrey’s neighbourhoods are developing sustainably. This means a clear vision for living expressed through density, form, community connections, and transit opportunities. TownShift was created to help develop this vision.

The TownShift design competition opened in November 2009 to the public on the national and international scale. Its focus was to engage people for ideas on anything from master planning through to landscape standards on a variety of scales at five different neighbourhood sites. Each site was described in its particular challenges and requests for strategies. Participants were allowed to enter conceptual designs on any one or all five of the sites, provided it met the competition requirements. Although the focus of the competition was on sites in Surrey, the challenges expressed in each of the five categories were representative of growing cities around the world. The five categories, as described in the competition brief, included:



Surrey Observations

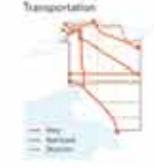
Boundaries



ALR



Transportation

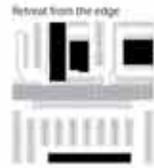


The Future Lives Here... Surrey is ideally positioned as a metropolis located between the city of Vancouver, the USA and the Fraser Valley. It offers resources and amenities such as an extensive system of parks and greenways, the Agricultural Land Reserve, cultural and arts centres and universities. Its most significant potential and challenge lie within the infrastructure of its major arterial thoroughfares. These thoroughfares make Surrey highly accessible and connected, but are, to date, undeveloped in their urban and livability potential.

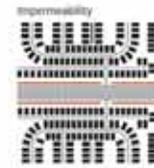
Approach
Our proposal was developed through an analysis of all five TownShift sites. We found that all the sites share similar typological challenges. Thus, in our opinion, a relevant proposal needs to develop a strategy to reform these typological conditions. For this submission our proposed strategies have been adapted for the Cloverdale site. However, the overall strategies are also applicable to the other TownShift sites.

Surrey Challenges

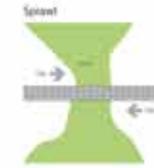
Retreat from the edge



Impermeability



Spread



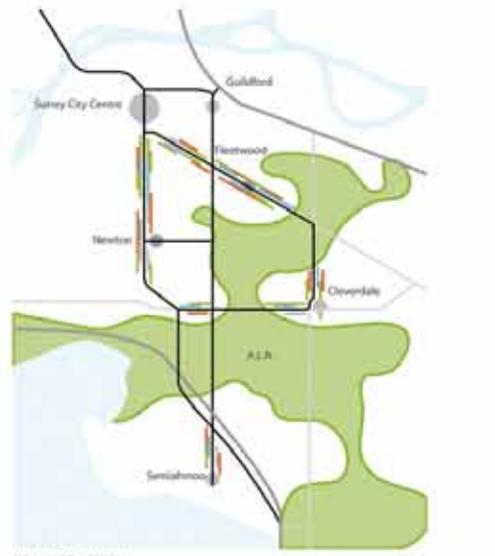
Typological Challenges
The built environments, constructed in response to the arterial roads crossing through Surrey, have produced three conditions that impede sustainable urban development.

Retreat from the Edge
Most commercial developments are set back from the arterial road. Parking dominates and creates a generic landscape.

Impermeability
Cul-de-sac developments impede the permeability of Surrey’s large block structure and reduce connectivity within neighbourhoods. Single and multi family housing turn their back on the highway. One’s impression of these neighbourhoods is a 6 foot high plastic privacy fence.

Spread
Development pushes into the Agricultural Land Reserve along the highway edge, eating up the dwindling supply of agricultural land, while allowing unchecked growth.

Surrey Proposed Strategies



Urban and Rural Linkage

Our Proposal

Focus Growth
Focus growth using arterial corridors as they already have the infrastructure in place to support higher density. They are also well served by public transportation routes. Over time this will create a highly serviced loop between existing town centres.

- Establish hierarchy by building residential towers only at the highest density nodes and medium density solutions elsewhere.
- Locate car-oriented commercial and light industrial uses at the highway edge with surface parking behind buildings.
- Develop surface parking areas that can also be used for recreational and cultural activities when parking demand is low. Divide parking areas into small pockets with green edges.
- Avoid residential development directly adjacent to highways. Locate medium-density housing parallel to the highway - buffered by commercial and light industrial buildings.

Reconnect the City

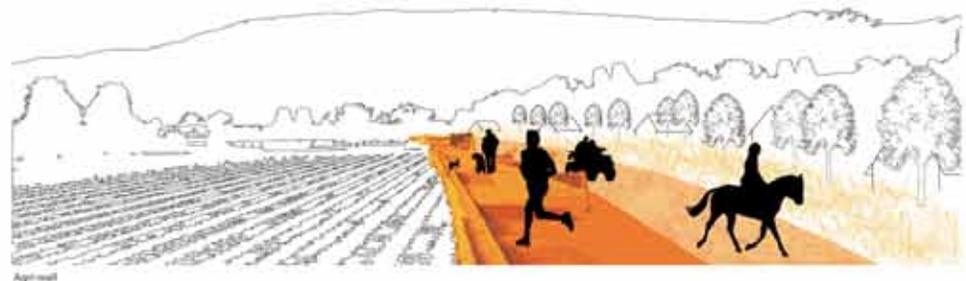
- Increase connectivity between arterial routes, residential neighbourhoods and amenities by connecting secondary streets to arterial roads and through Surrey’s large blocks.
- Expand and link green corridors between residential areas, amenities and the ALR.

Limit Encroachment on the ALR and Re-brand it as an Artery

- Limit spread to encourage densification and urban food production.
- Re-brand the urban boundary and re-orient development to value rural vista.
- Develop an Agri wall that negotiates the edge between agriculture and urban uses, connects urban and rural residents and redefines this edge as primary urban amenity.



Arterial Densification



Agri-wall

Cloverdale: Round-Up – Building Affordability

Focus: “How can we add housing density near a historic district that builds retail vitality and enlivens public spaces?”

Fleetwood: Marker – Shaping Gateway Identity

Focus: “How can the designs of architects or artists demark and celebrate otherwise nameless suburbs, whose boundaries are not known even by their own residents?”

Guildford: Cornered – Place-Making at Mall’s Edge

Focus: “How do we temper busy arterial streets; what do we do with the dreary corners of regional shopping mall parking lots; how do we shape gateways to new cities?”

Newton: New Town – Connecting Density to Transit

Focus: “What do you do with the unsafe and unloved spaces around the bus exchange or recreation centre; how can transit shape the renewal of suburban hubs; how do we shape the mixed-use heart and public spaces appropriate to a postmodern suburb?”

Semiahmoo: Up – Forming Plaza through Residential Towers

Focus: “Can high rise residential towers— located very close to bungalows and low-to-the-ground apartments be designed in scale and counterpoise, helping to animate arterial streets and pay for a new civic plaza?”

Design submissions were submitted in January 2010 and reviewed by a panel of acclaimed judges for winner selection. The international response was overwhelmingly positive with 20 countries responding and 138 design concepts submitted. The judges selected 27 finalists and awarded the top entrants from each category with cash prizes totalling \$75,000. A display of the submissions was assembled at the SFU campus during the 2010 Games. Finalist submissions and information on the winners is currently available at www.townshift.ca. [SL](#)

crossing surrey

cloverdale



Hotel marking entry to the historic town centre



Interface between new mid density housing and existing main street



Surface parking between mid density housing and highway commercial buildings

Cloverdale Implementation Strategy

We propose creating a new symbiotic relationship between Highway 15 and the historic town centre. As a main thoroughfare, Highway 15 plays a role in shaping the identity of Cloverdale. As such we propose that a defined street edge be created along Highway 15 with light industrial, car-oriented commercial and public amenity buildings. New retail would be directly linked to the town centre and would support it by drawing people to the area and providing additional parking for shops on the main street. Mid-density housing between the highway and town centre mediates the transition in scale and pace. By breaking through existing city blocks to reconnect secondary streets and green corridors, we knit together residential neighbourhoods, the fair grounds, amenities and the town centre. Greenways also connect to the ALR north-south and tie into the proposed agri-wall recreational amenity.



1. Reconnect main street with the city fabric
2. Develop the anchor site as a marker for the downtown and a major tourist draw to the town centre with a hotel use
3. Extend greenways and introduce secondary lanes to connect city blocks at a finer scale
4. Develop residential infill at a scale and density that makes sense for Cloverdale—with varied housing types
5. Develop an anchor grocery store to attract shoppers to the downtown and support smaller business
6. Develop surface parking to support grocery and small business - while building in potential alternate uses such as hard surface sports and festivals
7. Provide new emergency services centre and station
8. Density arterial edge with light industrial and car oriented uses
9. Provide connection of the ALR from south to north by linking existing and new greenways while integrating urban agriculture

All Images Courtesy of TownShift Competition Organizers.



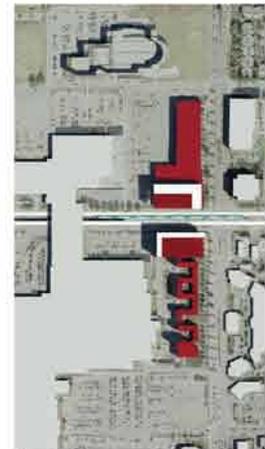
Guildford: Cornered Place-Making at Mall's Edge

RETURN OF RITUAL

NOW. The trek to the mall; get dressed and drive. The radio acts as brain filler until you reach the mall. No conversation, no opportunity to meet friends to pause along the day's journey.

WOW. The vision for Guildford's intersection is to create an amazing street; SUPERBIA. By emphasizing the corners, this design proposes to act as a catalyst for a new community along 152nd Street. The design seeks to replace the desert of surface parking through the insertion of spaces - filling the gap with new rituals besides driving, exploring the relationship of the public realm above the vehicles. Neighbourhood identity is created through colour. Colour has remarkable properties in making a place; it is emotional, it has smell, it has memory, it unites people like team jerseys of their favourite sports team or country of origin.

Reacting to its location, the proposed buildings massing responds to street and site orientation like stacked logs; creating a series of courtyards at ground level and above. The massing and expression are inspired by childhood memories of what was once and what could be; courtyards for festivals and daily street markets, living beside your favourite places to meet friends; shelter from the rain; elevated walking trails; quiet places to feel the morning sun.



context plan



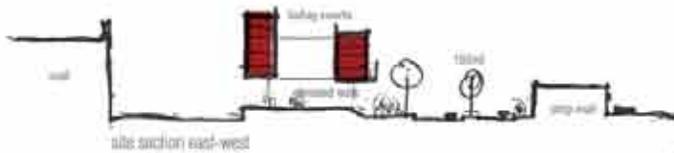
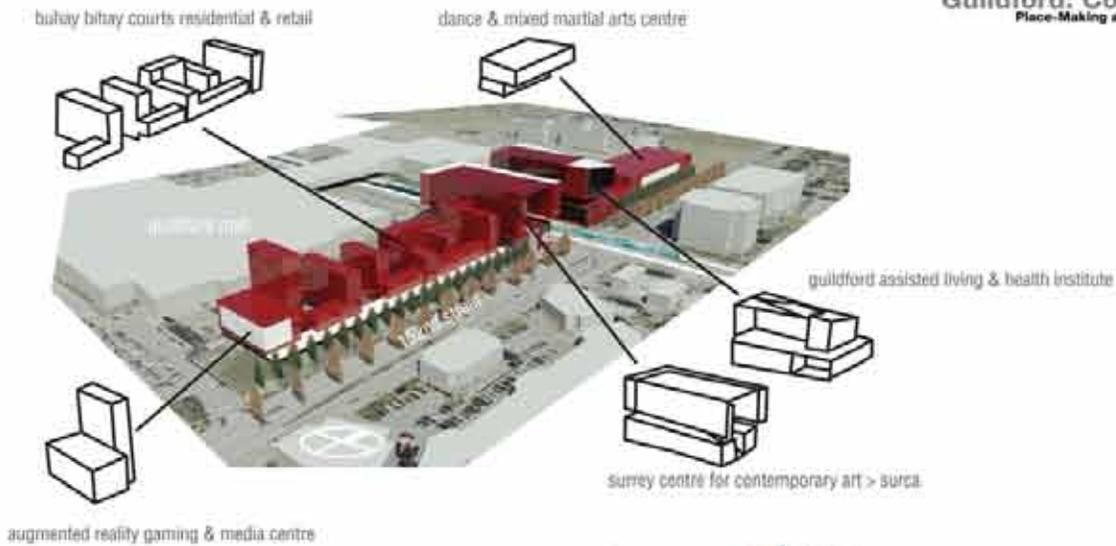
memories of my favourite things



RETURN OF RITUAL

Guildford: Cornered

Place-Making at Mall's Edge



isa - contemporary art morning plaza

