

# SEATS, SEEDLINGS AND SADDLES:

Opportunities for benches, tree planting and bicycle fix-it stations in the Main Street Dartmouth Area



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Why does the Main Street Area need benches, trees and bicycles?.....	4
Main Street Dartmouth Area Trees and Benches Opportunity Sites (MAP)....	5
Priority Bench Sites .....	6
Priority Tree Sites.....	12
Bicycle Fix-it Station.....	13

# INTRODUCTION

Located in East Dartmouth, Nova Scotia the Main Street Business District has been one of the most the most-frequented shopping districts in the Halifax region for more than 50 years. After extensive community consultation the area became a Business Improvement District (BID) in 2008.

The Main Street Area is a diverse and unique community. With over 40 health and well-ness businesses and a strong mix of shops and services in a less than one kilometer square area the Main Street Area has amazing potential and a lot to offer. In 2013 new zoning rules came into effect that will guide the development of Main Street from a busy commercial strip to a mixed-use town center.

This information package, and others like it, is part of the BID's mandate to improve the Main Street Area and to educate and engage the public. By spearheading improvements to public infrastructure and organizing community events the BID hopes to accelerate new development in the Main Street area to achieve a re-imagined Main Street. One day, Main Street will be a walkable, vibrant and mixed-use community.

This information package will specifically address the need for benches, trees and a bicycle fix it station in the district. The BID plans to purchase and install 3 new benches and a bicycle fix it station for the summer of 2015. We also have long term plans for additional benches and tree planting.

The Main Street Dartmouth Business Improvement District has also written these exciting and informative reports about change our community:

- “Public Consultation Response to the Moving Forward Together Draft Plan”
- “Active Transportation- Assets, Opportunities and Challenges”

All of our planning and design information is available on our website  
**[www.villageonmain.ca](http://www.villageonmain.ca)**



# WHY DOES THE MAIN STREET AREA NEED BENCHES, TREES AND BICYCLES?

In 2008 Regional Council approved and established the Main Street Business Improvement District (BID) to help drive new development in the area. As part of this designation, the BID witnessed tremendous changes of its Land Use By-laws which paved the way for the Main Street area to go through a major transformation over the coming decades. The goals of these changes to policy are summarized in the Dartmouth Municipal Planning Strategy as follows:

- Foster incremental development of a mixed-use town center;
- Focus housing close to shops, services, employment and transit; and
- Encourage walkable streetscapes (*Dartmouth MPS, pg. 91*)

The HRM Regional Plan identifies the Main Street Area as a local growth center. According to the Urban Planning and Design policy for growth centers, the area needs to fulfill the following requirements:

- Pedestrian oriented transit stops
- Enhanced pedestrian linkages
- Access to AT routes (*Regional Plan +5, pg. 41*)



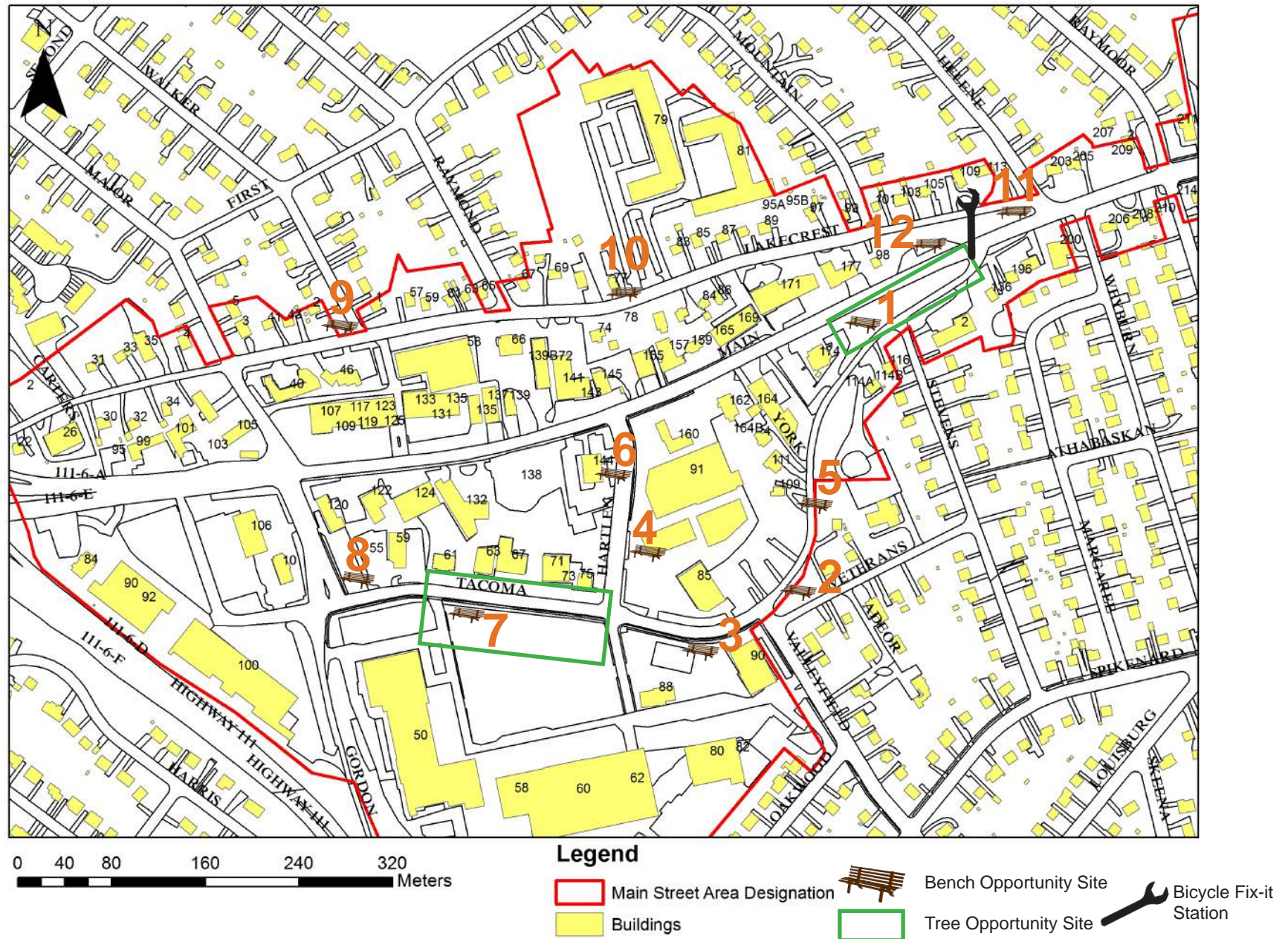
Adding benches to the sites we have addressed in this report will increase the walkability of the Main Street area, enhance pedestrian links, and make bus stops more enjoyable for all users. The bench sites we have proposed will also make the area more walkable for seniors and those with physical disabilities by providing a place to rest. Community members from the Main Street area have identified the need for benches in the area (*Ekistics 2007, App. p. 12*).

Currently, the Main Street area has an average “walkscore” of 66 out of 100. This means that many errands on Main Street require a car to accomplish. By adding more benches we can make the area more walkable and potentially reduce car dependency.

Benches are an integral part of the complete community that the Main Street area is going to be in the future. High quality public infrastructure is needed before a successful reorganization of the area can take place. Trees fit into this equation as well and we have identified two priority areas for tree planting. Having trees next to benches and along roads will create an attractive streetscape in line with the design policies of the area. HRM should plant these trees in compliance with the goals of the Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) which notes that Tacoma Plaza has a tree canopy cover of approximately >1% (*UFMP, p. 235*). Finally, we also intend to install one bicycle “fix-it” station in summer 2015. The Main Street BID wants the area to be an attractive, accessible, complete community and these public infrastructure improvements are the first step to achieving this.



# MAIN STREET DARTMOUTH AREA BENCHES, TREES AND BICYCLE FIX-IT STATION OPPORTUNITY SITES





# PRIORITY BENCH SITES

## SUMMER 2015

These bench opportunity sites are our priority for summer 2015. The BID is applying for a grant to cover the cost of three benches. Site #1 is due to be replaced by the municipality, but we have chosen to include it here to highlight the need for the bench to be replaced as quickly as possible. Similarly site #3 has a bench nearby that can be easily relocated. To clarify the BID is intending to use grant funds to finance the purchasing of benches at sites 2, 4 and 5. All of the sites listed were identified using a simple criteria. It involved asking the following questions:

Do persons with less energy or physical disabilities have a place to rest nearby?, Where is the nearest bench relative to this area?, Is this an enjoyable area to sit?, Is this a gathering place without adequate seating?

1



Photo: Google Maps

Site 1 is located on a small municipally owned park, sandwiched between Main Street and Tacoma Drive. Until recently this site had a bench, as pictured above, but it has since gone missing. It is at the top of a hill offering a place of rest for people with less energy or physical disabilities. There is a church directly across Tacoma drive and the Garden View Restaurant is at the southern end of the park. Three mature trees within the park and a landscaped garden at the church make it an enjoyable place to sit. It is the most obvious location for a bench on Main Street.

2



Photo: Google Maps

Site 2 is a small triangle of municipal land bordered by Tacoma Drive, Veterans Avenue and Valleyfield Road. It is at the bottom of the hill that site 1 is on top of. This piece of land has potential to one day become a pocket park and placing a bench on the site now not only provides a place to sit but could start making the park a destination for people living and working in the area.

# 3

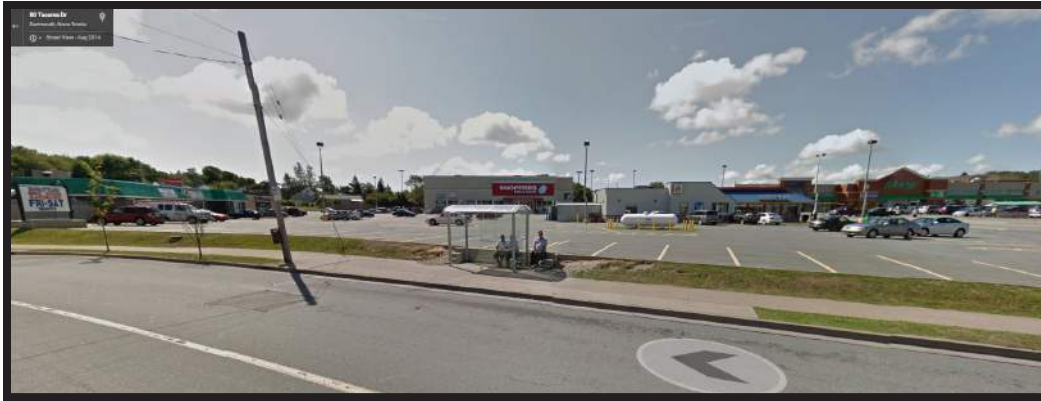


Photo: Google Maps

Site 3 is a bus stop on Tacoma Drive. It is serviced by routes 10, 54, 66 and 72. This bus stop was recently moved from the Sobeys parking lot approximately 40 meters from its currently location. A bench and trash receptacle still sit in the old location (pictured below) and could easily be moved to the existing bus stop. Site 3 is a critical location for a bench because it serves local transit routes. It is a common gathering place for people waiting for transit connections at all times of the day, as pictured above.

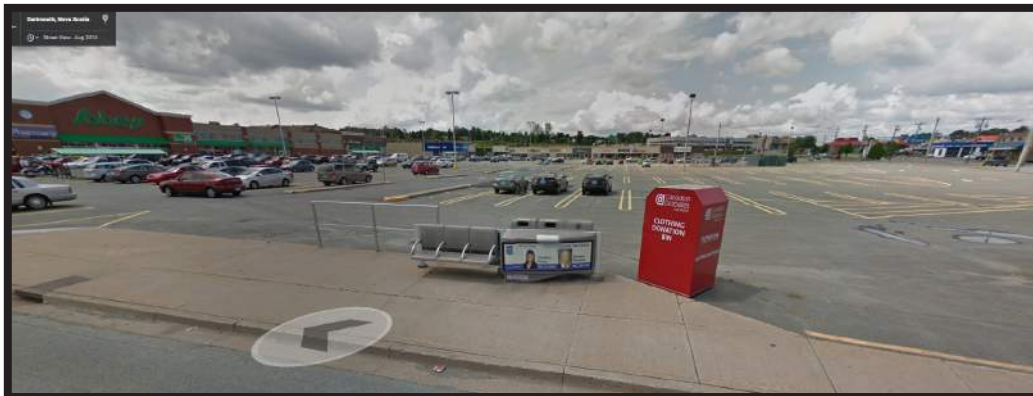


Photo: Google Maps

# 4



Photo: Author

Site 4 is located on Hartlen Street at an existing bus stop. This stop is often busy with several people waiting for transit connections. While there is a small bench in the bus shelter and a trash receptacle next to it the site would benefit from a bench for people to rest on. The current bench is insufficient to support the volume of pedestrians using the bus stop. In the photo above 8 people are waiting for the bus.

# 5

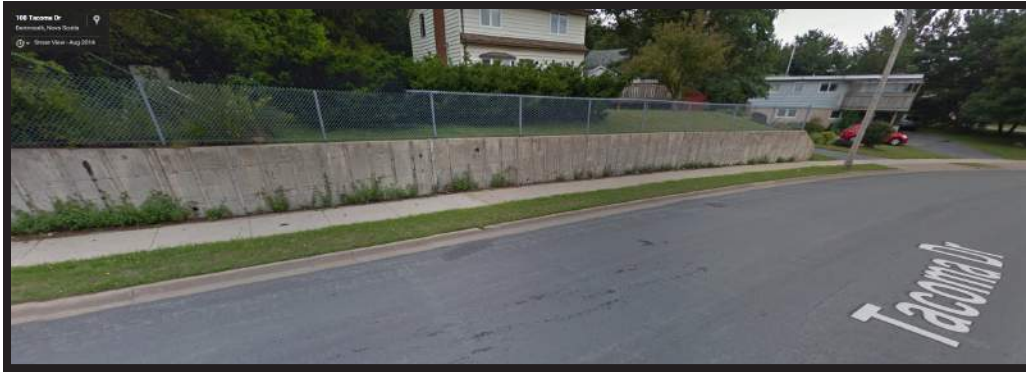


Photo: Google Maps

Site 5 is located near civic address 108 on Tacoma drive. It is situated about halfway between sites 1 and 2. This site offers a rest area for persons walking up the hill which ends approximately at site 1. This site is an enjoyable area to sit. It is located away from the noisy traffic of Main Street and central Tacoma Drive. The area immediately surrounding the site is nicely landscaped and would be an enjoyable place to sit.

## PHASE 2 BENCH SITES

The BID hopes to have the following four bench sites furnished in the next 2-3 years. These future sites are certainly a priority for the BID but limited financial constraints mean we cannot install all the benches at once.

# 6



Photo: Google Maps

Site 6 is located on Hartlen Avenue opposite site 4. It is an important transit connection to North Preston and other rural communities beyond the district. It is serviced by routes 10, 54, 66 and 72. The landscaping around McDonald's makes the site a desirable place to sit and it is located at a major intersection near many shops and services. Unlike the bus stop across the street there is no bench or shelter at this site, as a result it is a priority of the BID to have a bench at this site.



7



Photo: Google Maps

Site 7 is located on Tacoma Drive at the southern most entrance to the Sobeys shopping center. It is a common gathering place. During the day many people can be seen using the white sign in the foreground as a make-do bench. There is an abundance of space here and pedestrians walking to and from the dense residential neighborhoods near Lakecrest Drive would benefit from a place to rest. Seniors and persons with physical disabilities would benefit from a place to sit in this area as there is currently a severe lack of seating.

8



Photo: Google Maps

Site 8 is located on Gordon Avenue at the intersection with Tacoma Drive. Like site 7 this area is a common gathering place located amongst some of the busiest shops and services that the BID has to offer. A bench at this site would offer another resting location for people traveling between the dense residential Lakecrest Drive area. The street planters featured in the photo make the site an enjoyable location to sit.

# 9



Photo: Google Maps

Site 9 is on the corner of Walker Street and Lakecrest Drive. It is an enjoyable place to sit and resides on the edge of a dense residential neighborhood. There are two new residential developments that are expected to be built in about a year that will increase the density of this neighborhood. A bench in this location would add a much needed rest area in a location that otherwise has nowhere to sit. Lakecrest Drive could be made more senior friendly by this bench addition.

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## PHASE 3 BENCH SITES

The BID hopes that the final bench sites we have identified can be implemented in 3-4 years. Again, like all the other sites these are important too. The BID has a limited financial capacity to purchase benches and must phase their installation.

# 10



Photo: Google Maps

Site 10 is on Lakecrest Drive near civic address 77. This location is across the street from a planned new development. The lot behind the proposed site is vacant and could be developed at any time. It is also beside a dense apartment complex and is near the proposed Hartlen Street extension which would see Main Street and Lakecrest Drive linked where Hartlen Street currently is. The site is on a route to several schools, several parks, churches, a community center and a dense residential community.

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# 11

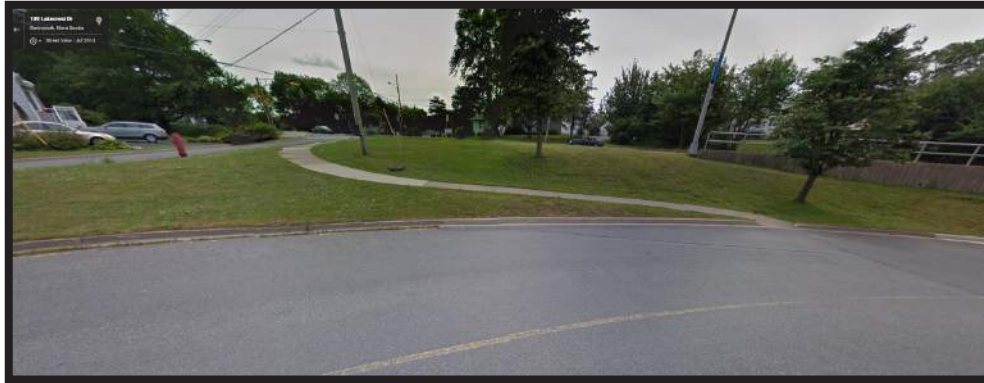


Photo: Google Maps

Site 11 is near the intersection of Lakecrest Drive and Mountain Avenue. It is on a small municipal park. The exact bench site the BID is proposing is on the point of the park farthest from Main Street to reduce exposure to car traffic. The park is underused and could benefit from the addition of a bench to make the park more attractive. It is on the edge of a dense residential neighborhood near the same amenities as site 10.

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# 12

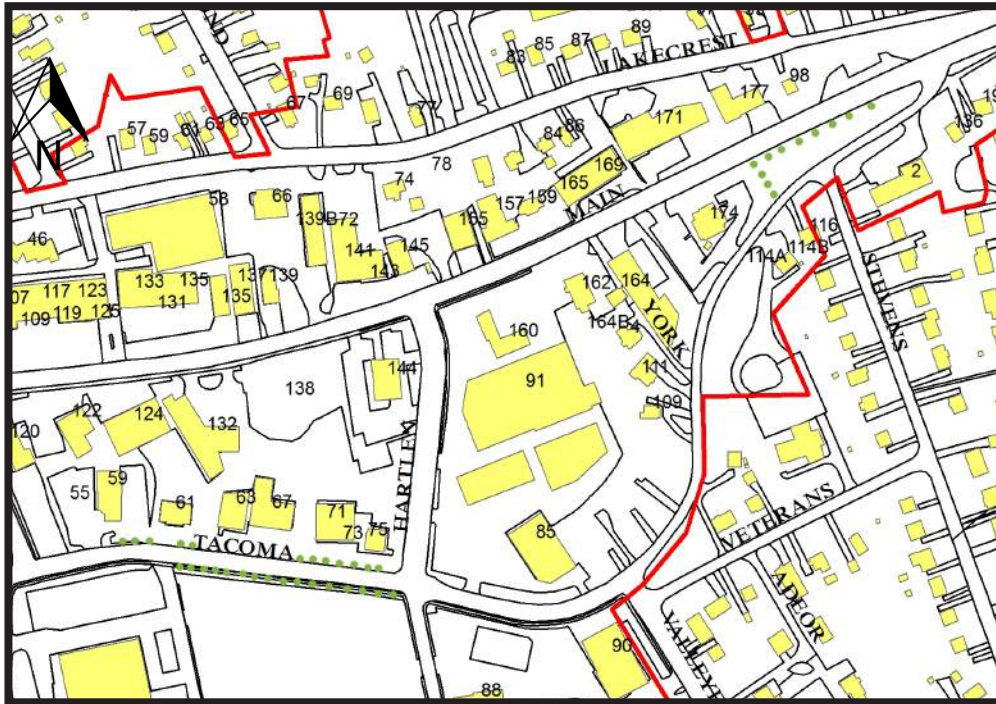


Photo: Google Maps

Site 12 is in the same park as site 11. This particular site is on the opposite end of the park close to Main Street. It offers a good location to rest after walking up Main Street from Tacoma Center. The site is also a potential candidate site for a bus stop, should Halifax Transit elect to redirect a bus as the BID is proposing. Having a bench in this location would make the area more walkable and make the Main Street area more enjoyable experience for pedestrians overall.



# PRIORITY TREE PLANTING OPPORTUNITY SITES



As shown in the maps on page 5 and above the BID has identified two sites for tree planting in the near future.

Tacoma Drive (near bench site 7) has some trees on the western end of the street but none between Hartlen street and the western Sobey's parking lot entrance. The current streetscape has the potential to be very walkable. However, the current lack of trees make the area highly exposed to wind and the sun. Adding trees to the Tacoma street area will make it more enjoyable for pedestrians by offering some shade from the sun and by beautifying the area.



The Main Street tree site (near bench site 1) is a municipal park with the potential to be an enjoyable area for pedestrians. It is currently underused. The site has three mature trees but has none abutting Main Street. Adding trees in the proposed site will provide shade and a more enjoyable environment for park users. It is on the edge of a dense neighborhood and directly across the street from Steven's Road Baptist Church. The trees would provide a buffer between the loud traffic of Main Street, the park, and the nearby neighborhood. Taking advantage of this space will make the district more walkable and provide public meeting spaces to improve the overall quality of the Main Street district.



# BICYCLE FIX-IT STATION



Photo: dal.ca

As part of the *Main Street Dartmouth Planning Vision and Streetscape Concept* (Ekistics Planning and Design, 2007) and the *Transportation Study- Main Street Dartmouth Area* (Genivar Consulting, 2011) it is Recommended that the existing bike lane, which currently ends on Main Street at the intersection with Caledonia Road, be extended to travel down Lakecrest Drive. The plans also call for creating a shared-use bike and pedestrian path to link the end of Lakecrest Drive with Braemar Drive. Additionally, according to the *Making Connections: 2014-2019 Halifax Active Transportation Priorities Plan* (HRM, 2014) the municipality has identified Lakecrest Drive as an important bicycle lane corridor.

With these facts in mind the BID will be taking on various projects to facilitate the expansion of bicycle infrastructure in our district. The BID has decided that the first step of this process is to procure and install a bicycle “fix-it” station near the proposed Lakecrest AT route. Several of these units have already been installed on the Halifax Peninsula but according to the Halifax Cycling Coalition website as of May 22, 2015 none have been installed in Dartmouth. The BID wants to demonstrate that it is truly committed to making the Main Street area as accessible and bicycle friendly as possible. If we receive grant funding in 2015 we will be sure to install one of these units in our district.

Examples of the “fix-it” station can be seen in the two photos on this page. The top picture was taken in Victoria Park, Halifax. The picture below is a typical “fix-it” configuration with a demonstration of how to mount a bicycle to the unit.

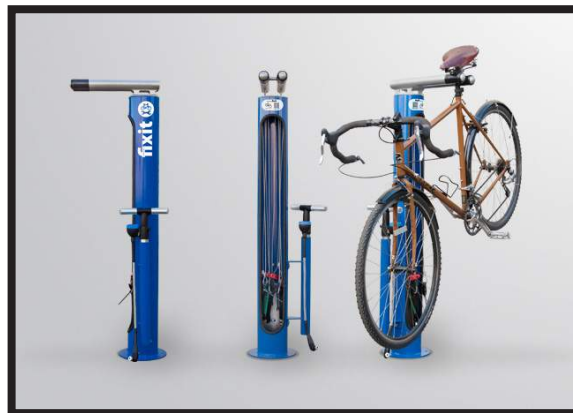


Photo: Dero Fix-it

THANK YOU FOR READING!

