



Downtown Public Space Strategy · Places for People

# Downtown Public Space Strategy





# Downtown Public Space Strategy



# Acknowledgment

xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Sḵw̓x̓ wú7mesh and səilwətaʔ

Downtown Vancouver is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̓x̓ wú7mesh (Squamish), and səilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh), who have inhabited these lands since time immemorial.

However, Vancouver's landscapes and public spaces do not fully reflect this. Colonialism has contributed to erasure and exclusion of Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh people on these lands, which has limited their involvement in defining and shaping Vancouver's culture.

The City of Vancouver has designated itself as a City of Reconciliation. The City is committed to seeking ways to further its Reconciliation efforts and to strengthen its relations with the host Nations and urban Indigenous peoples. The policies and guidelines in this document recognize that they apply to unceded territory, and will be implemented within the Reconciliation process.



# Content

## 1 Introduction

1.1 Strategy Overview	6
1.2 Why Public Space Matters	8
1.3 The City's Role in Public Space	10
1.4 Places for People	12
1.5 Downtown Overview	14
1.6 Brief Timeline of Downtown Public Space	16
1.7 Downtown Today - Assets and Issues	18
1.8 Developing the Strategy	20
1.9 Public Space Visions and Values	24

## 2 Strategic Directions

2.1 For All, by All	30
2.2 The "Right" Supply	46
2.2 Design for People	60
2.4 Day-long, Year-long	74
2.5 Nature and Resilience	80
2.6 Connecting People and Places	88

## 3 Delivering the Strategy

3.1 Key Moves	98
3.2 Downtown Public Space Framework	100

## Appendix

Glossary	104
Acknowledgements	108



# 1

## Introduction



# 1.1 Strategy Overview

## Downtown Public Space Strategy: A People First Downtown

Downtown Vancouver is the heart of the city, and features much of what attracts residents and visitors to our growing West Coast metropolis – vibrant, culturally diverse neighbourhoods, engaged communities, deep social and environmental values, and a dynamic economy – all set against a stunning natural backdrop. Downtown is also home to some of the most popular public spaces in Vancouver, including ʔxwʔʔənəq Xwtl'e7énk Square, Granville Street, English Bay Beach, the Seawall and Stanley Park, which draw hundreds of thousands of people daily.

Demands on the public realm are increasing as the population of the Downtown and region grows. These new demands on the public realm require a new approach to creating and managing public spaces. In planning for the public realm, we must account for the challenges of climate change, rainwater management and sea level rise, changing demographics, new technologies, homelessness and housing affordability. We must also consider changes in the make-up of households and the trend towards living in more compact spaces, whereby public space becomes the collective backyard or living room of many residents.

The Downtown Public Space Strategy establishes a vision for a complete public space network that puts people first. It promotes the Downtown as a place for all people to enjoy and participate in public life.

The Strategy will guide ongoing planning, new ideas and future partnership opportunities over the next 30 years - and help us achieve a vibrant, equitable, memorable and well-connected Downtown.



## 1.2 Why Public Space Matters

The high quality of livability in Vancouver is very much connected to its public spaces. Successful public spaces foster health and sustainability, support local business, promote social engagement and connect people to their local communities.

### Achieving Out City Goals

The Downtown Public Space Strategy supports the implementation of a number of key City objectives, which, together, will build a more equitable, affordable, sustainable and resilient future:

### Reconciliation and Redress

The City of Vancouver has been working to strengthen relationships with the xʷməθkʷəy̍əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh). This ongoing relationship building has informed the Strategy and will continue to shape future public space initiatives with a commitment to work with the host Nations and urban Indigenous communities on public space projects to advance initiatives that increase the presence and visibility of Indigenous Peoples and foster more inclusive spaces, including the advancement of the Framework for the City of Reconciliation (2014).

### Equity and Accessibility

The Strategy seeks to empower communities and encourage people and organizations to become active participants in public space planning, design and stewardship, reducing barriers to participation for all Vancouverites, including the most vulnerable groups and individuals.

Related Policy: Women's Equity Strategy (2018) and UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces initiative (ongoing)

#### Public Space

Public spaces are places open to public use. They can include both public and private property, and encompass plazas, squares, streets, laneways, pathways, parks and waterfront.

#### Public Life

Public life is the shared, daily experience of the city created by people when they live their lives in the public realm.

Public space is the collective backyard or living room of many Vancouverites.



Refer to the Appendix for a comprehensive list of relevant policies.

## Housing Affordability and Livability

In the current housing affordability crisis, one of Vancouver's greatest challenges is to provide a high quality of life in a more compact setting. As more residents live in smaller houses - and sometimes in precarious or insufficient housing - public spaces must play a larger role in providing spaces to socialize, rest, play, and work. The quality of these spaces is directly connected to livability and wellbeing.

Related Policy: Vancouver Housing (2017)

## Climate Action and Resiliency

As an extensive land base, the public realm is a critical area of opportunity in our response to climate change. Ecological functions, habitat protection, rainwater management, heat island mitigation and disaster response hubs must be integrated into public space planning and design, to ensure a healthy resilient urban environment.

Related Policy: Climate Emergency Response (2019), Rain City (2019) and Resilient Vancouver Strategy (2019)

## Local Economy

The public realm supports a vibrant, resilient economy, and contributes to an affordable, livable city for all citizens. The public space network supports lively shopping streets, restaurant and café patios, and popular tourist destinations, as well as providing low-barrier commercial opportunities, such as food, buskers and subsistence vendors.

Related Policy: Vancouver Economic Action Strategy (2011)

## Arts and Culture

The public realm plays an important role in supporting cultural activities across our city, including festivals and outdoor performances, and hosting public art. The Strategy supports the direction set in the Culture|Shift strategy.

Related Policy: Culture|Shift (2019) and Making Space for Arts and Culture (2019)

## Outdoor Activity and Recreation

Access to outdoor recreational space is a quintessential part of Vancouver's cultural DNA - particularly park spaces. This strategy supports collaborative implementation of the Board of Parks and Recreation's VanPlay Masterplan, completed in 2019

Related Policy: VanPlay: Parks and Recreation Services Masterplan (2019)

## 1.3 The City's Role in Public Space

Many different City departments work collaboratively on the planning, testing, design, operations, and stewardship of public spaces. This work includes:

### Planning & Design

Vancouver has a legacy of excellence in public space planning and design, which has led to world-class public spaces such as the Seawall, Stanley Park and Robson Square. Public realm planning is also integrated into community planning processes, such as Northeast False Creek and Jericho Lands, and will be an important consideration in the development of the Vancouver Plan.

### Implementation & Construction

The City is an established leader in innovative public realm delivery, including the conversion of excess vehicular lanes to “people places” for active transportation, expanded sidewalks, and plazas; securing public open spaces through private development; and the integration of green and rainwater infrastructure into the public realm.

### Testing & Tactical Urbanism

VIVA Vancouver is the City's dedicated tactical urbanism program. It promotes community-driven public space activation, as well as the innovation and integration of new forms of public space. The City has piloted several new types of public space, such as parklets, curbside patios, and pavement-to-plazas, as well as new public space uses, such as on-street food vending and public bike share – which have been successfully integrated into established programs.

### Maintenance & Operations

The City strives to achieve an excellent standard of maintenance and operations. This ensures that our public space assets are protected and that our public realm remains accessible, welcoming and in good condition. We use innovative approaches to providing efficient, equitable services, including a recent pilot that employs social enterprises to deliver micro-cleaning and peer-to-peer docent services in plazas.



### Programming, Events & Permitting

The City supports a variety of public space programming to help foster public life, ranging from passive (e.g. moveable seating and interactive art) to active (e.g. performances and markets). The City is committed to lowering barriers to participation through community-led programming and partnerships, including VIVA Vancouver's open calls for public space activations and pilots, and no-fee “permit lite” programs for small community events (Share a Square).

### Stewardship & Partnerships

‘Stewardship’ is a holistic approach to the governance, management, operations and programming of a public space. The City is currently developing the Plaza Stewardship Strategy, a city-wide policy to guide the management of plazas through broad and diverse community partnerships and participation, including BIAs, local businesses and community groups, as well as First Nations and urban indigenous communities and equity-seeking groups.

### Parks Board

The management of the City's parks is an important part in delivering high quality public spaces. The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation coordinates with the City to deliver a complete public realm, including alignment with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (VanPlay).



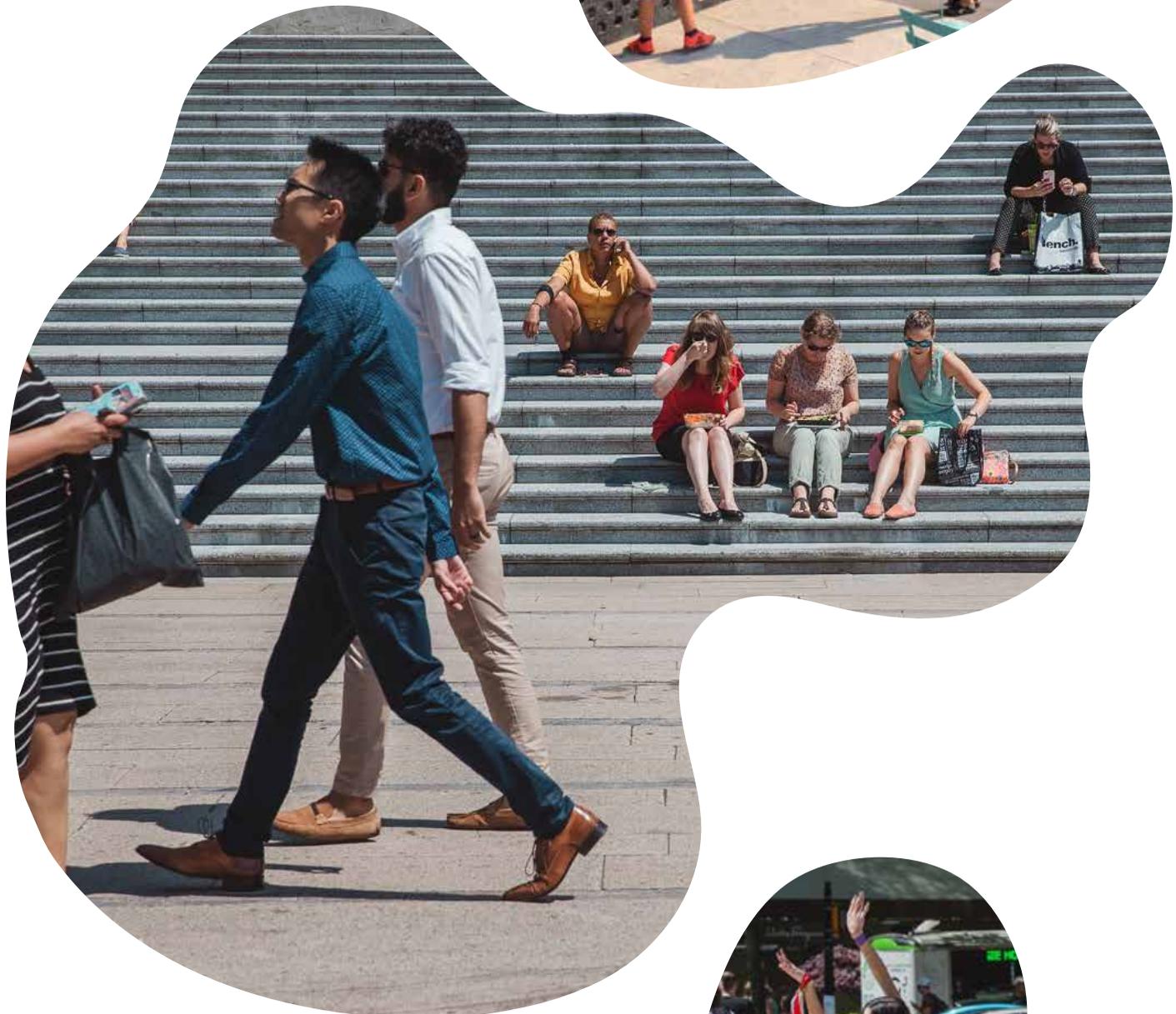


### 1.4 Places for People

#### The City of Vancouver's Public Space and Public Life Program

Places for People is a new approach to public space planning and design in the City of Vancouver, that is grounded in an evidence-based understanding of public life, and puts people's experience and use of the public realm at the forefront of public space design and decision-making. This approach is intended to be integrated into how we conceptualize, plan, design and deliver public space in Vancouver.

*The Downtown Public Space Strategy is the first policy developed through Places for People. The program will inform policy for the public realm city-wide, including on-going and upcoming public space related projects in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) and the Vancouver Plan.*



# 1.5 Downtown Vancouver

The 7.1 sq km Downtown Peninsula is the most densely populated area of Vancouver and home to over 100,000 people, 150,000 jobs, and a growing number of visitors. The strategy focuses on the Downtown Peninsula and its neighbourhoods, including: the Central Business District (CBD), Coal Harbour, West End, Yaletown, and Northeast False Creek.

- Downtown Public Space Typologies**
- Plazas
  - POPS
  - Mews
  - Pavement to Plazas
  - Atriums
  - Parks
  - School Parks
  - Mini-Parks
  - Parklets
  - Station Areas
  - Activated Laneways
  - Community Gardens
  - Seawall
  - Rooftop Garden
  - New NEFC Public Spaces
  - Streets



# 1.6 A Brief Timeline of Downtown Public Space

## Coast Salish Peoples.

The xʷməθkʷəy̍əm (Musqueam), Skwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səliilwətat (Tsleil-Waututh) have occupied and governed the territory that is now Vancouver for thousands of years and continue to live here today. The Downtown and False Creek areas were heavily used for fishing, harvesting and hunting by these Nations. Each Nation have their own relationship to the area, including their own place names and uses for the lands and resources.



Streetcars passing at the 400 Block of Granville Street, Vancouver, in 1908

**1890. Streetcars.** Vancouver's streetcar system was launched, providing local and interurban connections, and establishing the city's retail high streets, including Granville and Hastings Streets. Streetcar service was discontinued in 1958.



Stanley Park, early 1900's



Construction of Georgia Viaduct in 1970

## 1950-60's. Freeway Fight.

Three major freeways were planned to cut through Vancouver, however local opposition helped block the proposed crossing of Burrard Inlet and a Downtown waterfront freeway. The only elements of this plan to be completed were the Granville Street Bridge and the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts - the latter are now planned for removal and replacement with a waterfront community.



False Creek Waterfront, Expo '86

**1986. Expo '86** was held along the shoreline of False Creek where the defunct industrial waterfront was transformed into a vibrant promenade of venues and public spaces - demonstrating the potential of future development along False Creek. The Expo also introduced the Skytrain system to Vancouver.

## 2010. Olympics.

The 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympics were hosted with major venues located Downtown. The Canada Line was opened, the Convention Centre was expanded on the waterfront including the addition of Jack Poole Plaza, and Robson Square and Granville Street were closed to traffic for public gatherings and celebration.



Granville Street, 2010 Winter Olympics

**2020-onward.** Places for People program is established and the Downtown Public Space Strategy will help shape public space over the next 30 years.

## European Exploration

José María Narváez of Spain was the first European to explore the coast of present-day Point Grey and parts of Burrard Inlet in 1791.

## Chinese Population.

By 1884 there was a small but growing Chinese population that settled in around the historic Downtown area, mostly working as sawmill hands and merchants.

## 1865-1890. European Settlement.

The first settlement in present day Vancouver set up around the Hasting's Mill established on the south shore of the Burrard Inlet, at the foot of what is now Dunlevy Street.

In 1884, the decision to establish the western terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) on the Downtown Peninsula, just west of the historic townsite, laid the foundation for the present day Downtown. Vancouver was incorporated shortly after in 1886.

## 1886. Stanley Park.

The 400-hectare natural West Coast rainforest is Vancouver's first, largest and most beloved park - established shortly after incorporation in 1886.

## 1917. Seawall.

Vancouver's Seawall began construction with a section around Stanley Park. Today it is the world's longest uninterrupted waterfront path, that extends 28 km from the Vancouver Convention Centre to Spanish Banks Park.



Seawall in Stanley Park, 1930

## 1929. Bartholomew Plan.

This was the first (and only) master plan for the City of Vancouver. Although never officially adopted, it was the first major document to consider the city as a whole, providing direction for everything from streets, parks, development and schools.

## 1979-1983. Robson Square.

Construction of Robson Square begins, encompassing three city blocks in the heart of Downtown. Designed by Arthur Erickson to function as Vancouver's landmark civic centre and public plaza, the project added much needed open space to the Downtown core.



Robson Square and BC Courthouse

## 1990s. Downtown Waterfront Redevelopment.

A new vision for the Downtown waterfront replaced the industrial shoreline with new mixed-use communities including North False Creek, Yaletown and Coal Harbour. This urban design vision incorporated podium style development that included retail activity along the street in combination with slim, point towers above - a form of development that would earn the moniker "Vancouverism." Great emphasis was placed on creating a high quality public realm along streets, as well as adding new parks and plazas, and expanding access to the waterfront.



North False Creek Seawall

The success of the Olympics sparked a number of people-first initiatives for Downtown public spaces and streets. The VIVA program - Vancouver's tactical public space and testing initiative - was launched. The Robson Redux reimagined the 800 block of Robson Street as a permanent plaza through a series of pilot designs. The 5xʷʌnəq Xwtl'e7énq Square was updated and given its current name that acknowledges the local First Nations culture and history, and a new neighbourhood was planned for Northeast False Creek, with a number of new plazas, parks and active streets and laneways.



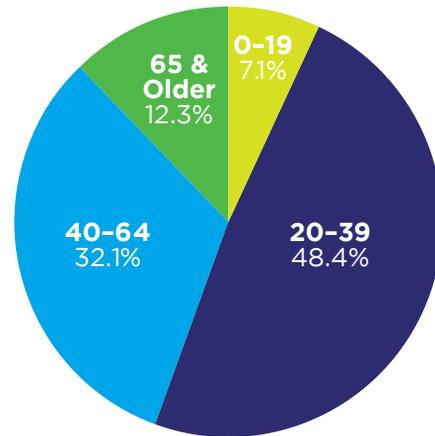
2014 Robson Redux Winner: Urban Reef

# 1.7 Downtown Vancouver Today

With forecasted population and job growth in the Downtown the result is an increase in use and demand on existing public spaces. This will result in the need to provide additional public spaces in all areas of the Downtown.

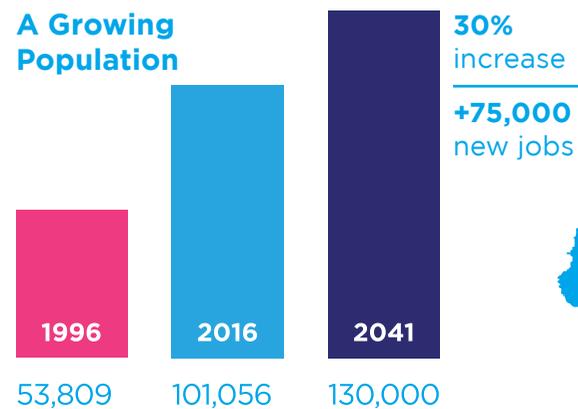
However, maintaining provision levels is challenging in compact urban environments where the intensity and rate of growth generates demand in areas where it is difficult to acquire new open space. This requires more creative approaches to maintaining an adequate supply of public space that provides a full range of public life experiences. It also requires us to focus on improving the quality, diversity, flexibility and management of the public realm.

The Downtown Public Space Strategy proposes creative solutions to provide additional public spaces, as well as ways to improve the existing public space network, and presents a range of strategies to realize a vision for public space and public life in the Downtown.

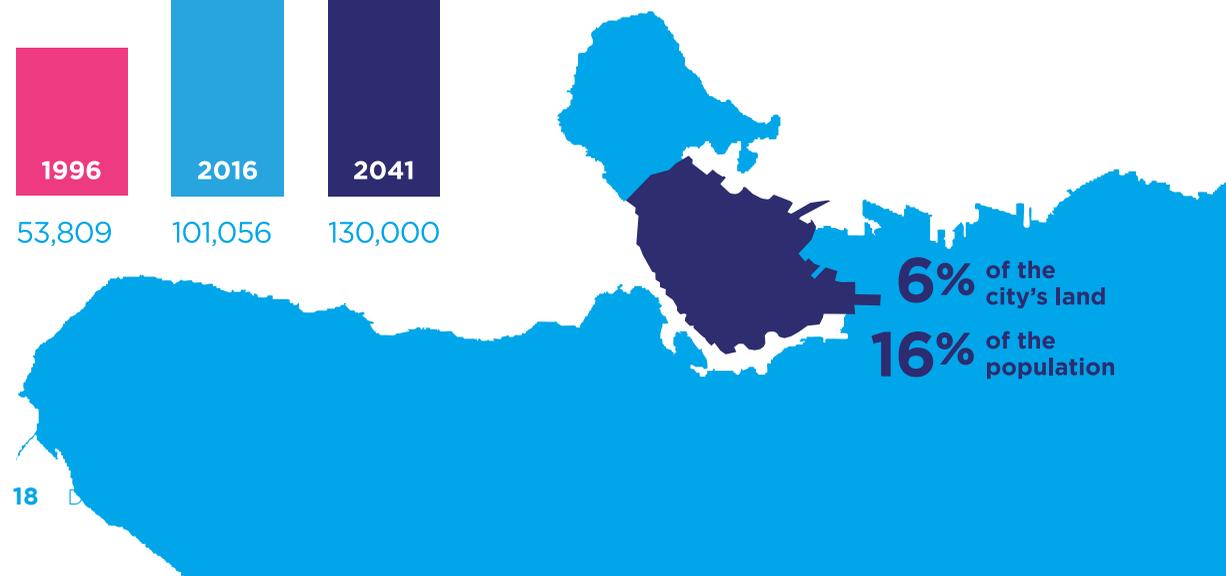


**Younger Population**  
Downtown residents are generally younger than those living elsewhere in the city.

## A Growing Population



**Limited Land**  
How do we deliver new spaces with a limited land supply?



## Addressing Assets...

- Well connected street grid and popular retail streets
- High quality green space and a continuous waterfront
- Vibrant neighbourhoods and engaged communities with a strong culture of participation
- Compact mixed use neighbourhoods
- An established culture of walking and rolling



People love Downtown, but they want more!

- Thriving summertime activity
- Successful arts and culture programming

## ...and Challenges in Downtown

- Loneliness and weak social networks
- Changing attitudes and new ways of living and working
- Difficult to navigate City policies and guidelines
- Not everyone feels welcome
- Affordability and smaller living spaces
- Many sidewalks are overcrowded or lack pedestrian amenities such as seating or planting



- Poor connections and accessibility

**Guiding Questions:**  
How can Downtown Vancouver better support vibrant and dynamic public life with everyday experiences, events and activities that serve all people?

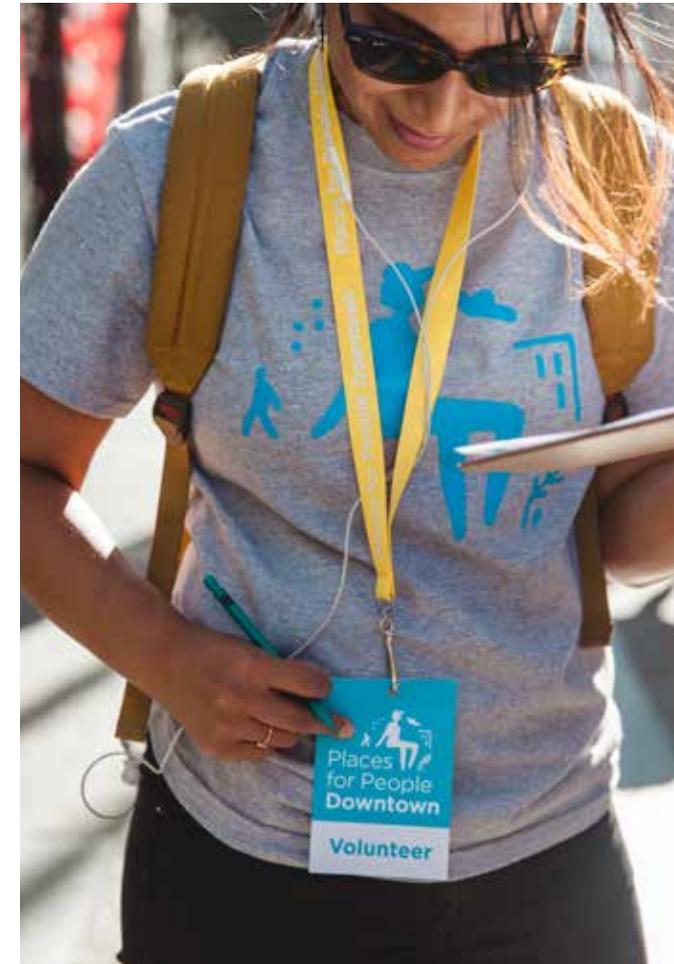
What is the character and quality of Public Space in Downtown today?

How can we expand the Public Space network and make better use of existing spaces?

## 1.8 Developing the Strategy

The development of the Strategy was informed by diverse engagement and collaboration with the public and stakeholders, a robust analysis of the current and emerging conditions, and one of the most extensive public life studies in North America.

A number of targeted engagement activities were also conducted, including child and youth-centred engagement and feedback on seasonal activities during the rainy winter months. The Strategy highlights the need to expand outreach and engagement in future initiatives to ensure more inclusive and equitable responses and participation.



### Downtown Vancouver Public Space and Public Life Study (PSPL)

The companion PSPL summary provides an overview of the Public Space and Public Life Survey of Downtown Vancouver's public space network, including key findings and trends for the whole of the peninsula, including site specific highlights, which encompasses the 115 survey locations.

This report is available on the project website, at: [www.vancouver.ca/placesforpeople](http://www.vancouver.ca/placesforpeople)





1



2



3



4

- 1 Launch Event - Asset Mapping
- 2 Launch Event - Kalido Seats
- 3 Volunteer - Public Life Study
- 4 Volunteers Public Life Study Training
- 5 Jay Pitter - Urbanarium Speaker Series
- 6 Panel - Urbanarium Speaker Series
- 7 Vancouver Art Gallery - Dinner & Dialogue
- 8 Public Disco
- 9 Walking Tours



5

6



7



8



9

# 1.9 Public Space Vision and Values

## Vision

**A Downtown for People.** Downtown will be a place for all people to enjoy and participate in public life, with public spaces that are well-connected and feel safe, comfortable, and inviting.

## Values

The values were developed through engagement with the public and stakeholders, and reflect their ideas and aspirations for public space and public life. They provide the overall direction for the Downtown Public Space Strategy.

### Respecting Indigenous Cultures, & History

Vancouver is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam Indian Band, Squamish Nation, and Tsleil-Waututh Nation. These lands have been their home since time immemorial. The public realm should recognize and reflect the history of the land on which the city was built, by providing ways to decolonize current practices, and providing agency and visibility back to the host Nations and to the urban Indigenous population.

### Equitable, Inclusive and Welcoming

Downtown Vancouver's public spaces should be welcoming, inclusive, and accessible to all genders, ages and abilities, incomes and ethnic groups.

### Connect & Engage

Public spaces should support social connections, community, and civic engagement, and encourage gathering and meeting.

### Walkability

The public realm should encourage enjoyable walking experiences, with well-connected, intuitive routes, streets and open spaces that feel safe and comfortable.

### Accessibility

Design and maintain public space to ensure universal access.



### Balancing Activity & Tranquility

There should be tranquil spaces throughout the Downtown with comfortable places to sit and relax that promote mental and physical well-being, balanced with space for more vibrant activity - prioritizing appropriate uses for different spaces.

### Connection to Nature

The public realm should integrate green and natural spaces - with a strong connection to our natural setting - while incorporating climate resilient systems.

### Fostering Play

Downtown Vancouver should integrate play elements for people of all ages throughout, nurturing the spontaneous and the whimsical, while maintaining core functionality.

### Comfort & Safety

Public spaces should feel safe, clean and comfortable for all to enjoy, all times of day, throughout the year.

### Creativity & Cultural Expression

Public spaces should be adaptable and provide opportunities for artistic, musical, and impromptu cultural expression.

### Distinct Placemaking & Neighbourhood Character

The public space network should strengthen and reflect the distinct neighbourhoods, character areas, and Downtown's culturally diverse communities.

### Thriving Local Businesses

Great public spaces and vibrant local businesses should enrich each other, including restaurants and shops with engaging frontages that attract people and are exciting to walk by, to look at, and to visit.

### Community Partnerships and Empowering the Public

Community partnerships should continue to be fostered with residents, employees, community groups and businesses, and more opportunities should be found to empower the public to engage in placemaking.



# 2

## Strategic Directions

The section proposes a series of strategies, objectives and actions for improving public life and public space across the Downtown.



# Overview of Strategic Directions



# 1

## For All, by All

Provide public space that feels welcoming, and safe for people of all ages, genders, backgrounds and abilities. Encourage people to create, activate and be stewards of public space...**pg. 36**

# 4

## Day-long, Year-long

Provide opportunities to enjoy public spaces throughout the year, both day and night...**pg. 80**



# 2

## The “Right” Supply

Match the supply of public space to need, by providing an equitable, appropriate distribution of public spaces across the Downtown...**pg. 52**

# 5

## Nature and Resilience

Clean water, clean air and biodiversity are basic requirements for a healthy urban landscape. Consider the natural environment, urban hydrology, disaster response and climate emergency when planning the public realm...**pg. 86**



# 3

## Design for People

Provide a high quality well designed public spaces to support a rich range of experiences...**pg. 66**

# 6

## Connecting Places

Ensure that the public space network is well connected and easy to navigate for people walking, rolling and cycling...**pg. 94**



“By recognizing and developing the positive potential of public spaces, cities can enhance safety and security, create economic opportunity, improve public health, create diverse public environments and public democracy”

—Global Public Space Toolkit, UN Habitat

## 2.1 For All, by All

Provide public space that feels welcoming and safe for people of all ages, genders, backgrounds and abilities. Encourage people to create, activate and be stewards of public space.

### 2.1.1. Centre Musqueam, Squamish, & Tsleil-Waututh Visibility and Voice on the Land and Across the City.

Work with the Musqueam Indian Band, the Squamish Nation, the Tsleil-Waututh Nation (MST Nations) and urban Indigenous communities to inform the creation, design and programming of public spaces. (Refer to Framework for City of Reconciliation, 2014)

a) Facilitate opportunities for the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and urban Indigenous communities to influence the planning and design of space projects to advance initiatives that reflect the living culture and history of their peoples, and foster more inclusive public spaces.

- Explore opportunities to create public spaces that are specifically designed for the MST Nations' use, including self-determined artistic and cultural expression, social gathering and water access.

b) Support opportunities to identify, steward, and access places of cultural significance in the public realm. Fund Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh representatives or consultants to:

- Identify sites of cultural significance to inform urban planning, development of cultural spaces, and place naming.
- Develop cultural significance statements for all major public space projects.
- Identify opportunities to steward the land.



Vancouver is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̍əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh), who have inhabited these lands since time immemorial.

- Explore innovative ways to recognize the layers of current and historical Indigenous cultures and landscapes, in culturally significant public space sites.
- d) Explore opportunities for the naming of new and existing public spaces that reflect Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh, through ongoing engagement with the MST Nations and the public asset naming protocol.
- Support the development and integration of hə́nqəmiḥəm and Skwxwú7mesh language naming signage, and visibility.
  - Explore creative opportunities to use signage and naming to mark the living culture of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Peoples, throughout the public realm.

## OUR LEGACY

### City of Reconciliation Plaza Naming Project

On June 18, 2018 the City of Vancouver, xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlílwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh) announced two new names for prominent public spaces downtown Vancouver.

Acknowledging the colonial legacy of naming in Vancouver the plaza naming process sought to return decision-making to the original inhabitants of this land and bring more visibility to the local Indigenous languages and cultures.

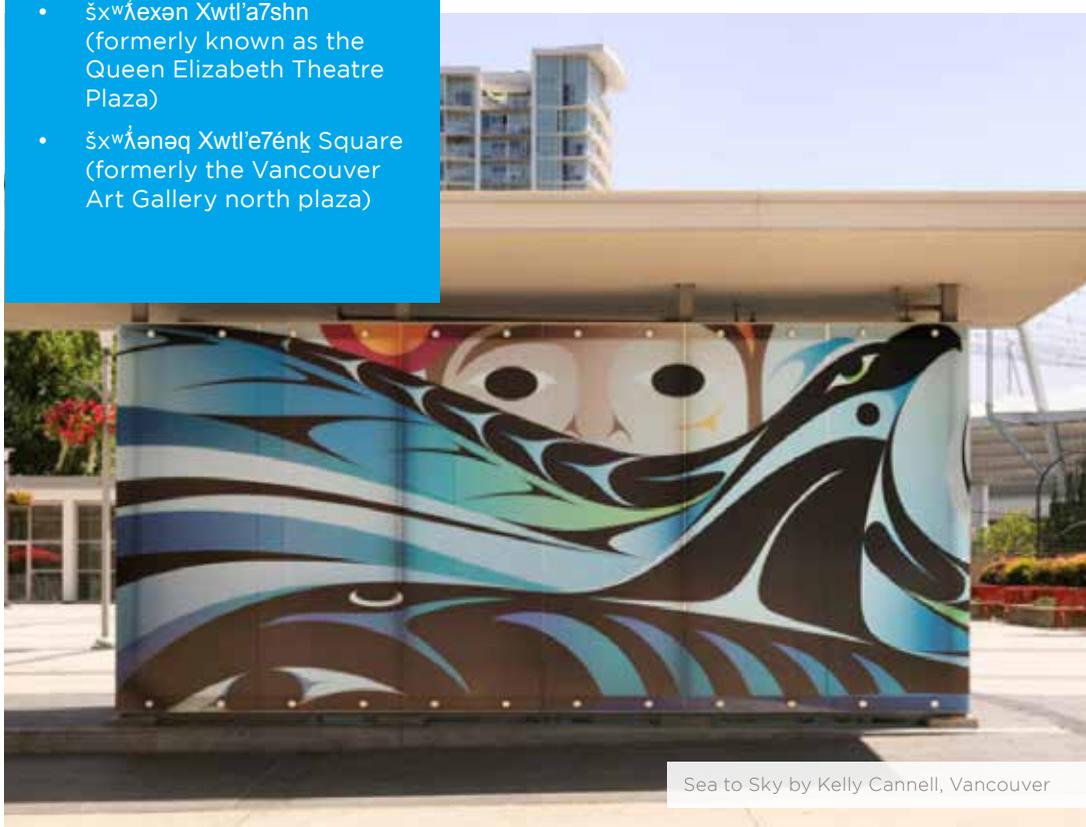
- šxʷálexən Xwtl'a7shn (formerly known as the Queen Elizabeth Theatre Plaza)
- šxʷáənəq Xwtl'e7énk Square (formerly the Vancouver Art Gallery north plaza)



Dancers performed as part of the ceremony



Ray Harris of Stz'uminus First Nation led the ceremony



Sea to Sky by Kelly Cannell, Vancouver



### ACTION:

Conduct research and engagement on the experiences of historically marginalized groups (e.g. women, people of colour, racialized communities) of public space, and develop principles for applying an intersectional lens to public realm projects. (in progress)

**2.1.2. Equity.** Foster an accessible and welcoming public realm that allows all people to fully participate in public life, including the most vulnerable groups and individuals.

**a) Historically Marginalized groups.** Work with historically marginalized groups to better understand the ways in which public spaces in Vancouver have been designed to exclude groups and individuals, and prioritize providing public spaces for these groups.

**b) Inclusive Engagement & Partnerships.** When designing and programming public spaces, consider the socioeconomic, cultural, physical and psychological accessibility needs of the public, and engage with the relevant communities.

- Continue to engage with under-represented groups to understand their preferred uses and needs of the public realm. Leverage engagement events and programs to reach socially isolated and other vulnerable populations.
- Plan and design public spaces through an intersectional lens, that reflects dialog between gender, feminist, ethnicity, culture, class, and age.
- Ensure that systemically excluded groups and those of all backgrounds have opportunities to contribute to the design of public space.

**c) Street-involved and Homeless Persons and Hard-sleeping.**

- Recognize that the ability and willingness to participate in public life is impacted by socio-economic status. Ensure engagement with local community outreach staff for public space projects.
- Recognize that public realm improvements can potentially displace existing communities and street-involved and homeless persons. To mitigate these impacts, ensure ongoing, inclusive engagement with existing communities and outreach staff. Explore design strategies and programming that foster inclusion of more vulnerable persons.
- Work with community organizations and outreach staff to build a better understanding of homeless persons' needs and desires of the public realm, and develop a compassionate, collaborative approach to accommodate their needs.

d) **Accessibility.** Design and maintain public space to ensure universal access:

- Consult Accessibility community stakeholders on all public space projects. Where appropriate, consult with the City’s Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee and the Seniors’ Advisory Committee.
- Design public space signage and wayfinding to facilitate readability by the widest range of users.
- Provide easy access to universally accessible public restrooms along well traveled walking and cycling routes (every 400 m), and in highly visible locations nearby to public spaces.
- Design public restrooms to be fully gender inclusive.
- Adopt accessibility criteria for public restrooms.
- Explore options to expand and improve the delivery of public restrooms to serve high volume public spaces, including incorporating them in private developments
- Explore opportunities to coordinate with and support Park Board’s Public Washroom review (in process), to help ensure safe and accessible washrooms nearby to public spaces.



**Initiative Zones.** Also consider Park Board’s Initiative Zones in VanPlay for its equity-focused project prioritization.

“Improving access to good public spaces for the most vulnerable urban residents is a powerful tool to improve equity, promote inclusion and combat discrimination in the city”

—UN Habitat

**e) Children, Youth, Older Adults and Families.** Ensure that the needs of children, youth, older adults and their families are considered by meaningfully engaging them in public space planning and design, and by providing quality public space experiences for all ages.

**ACTION:** Develop a Child Friendly Cities Initiative to deliver child and youth centred public realm design principles under the UNICEF banner.

**Children & Youth:**

- Build upon feedback from the City’s Child and Youth Centred Engagement (“what we heard from children and youth”) partnership with Society for Children and Youth of BC.
- Consider child-centred spaces that take a holistic, best practices approach to child development, including amenities and gathering spaces.
- Encourage elements of learning and play that are not limited to playgrounds (e.g. natural spaces and habitats, sidewalks, plazas, etc.).

**Older Adults:**

- Encourage a combination of active and passive recreational opportunities suited for older adults in public space design.
- Include a variety of seating options in open spaces (i.e. plazas, parklets, etc.) and along sidewalks, including seating suited to older adults and persons with limited mobility.
- Adopt best practices in public realm design for persons with dementia (including paving, materials and colours, etc.), to support them to remain active and engaged in the community.



Community-led Activities , Stanley Park



## Urban Explorers: Child and Youth Engagement in Planning

Over the 2017-18 school-year, the Society for Children and Youth of BC (SCY) partnered with the City of Vancouver's Places for People team and Park Board's VanPlay team to deliver a child and youth-centred engagement program with a focus on delivering better public spaces for young people. Vancouver elementary school students explored the neighbourhood and looked at various environmental and social challenges in their community. The student findings and ideas were incorporated into the development of the strategy - specifically on how to make Vancouver's public spaces better for young people! For a full summary of the Urban Explorers findings visit: [www.vancouver.ca/placesforpeople](http://www.vancouver.ca/placesforpeople)



Urban Explorers Program

How do we make Vancouver's public spaces better for young people?



## Child Friendly Cities

**Children's Right to the City.** The Growing up in Cities (GUC) and the Child-Friendly Cities (CFC) initiatives were created with the general objective to provide opportunity for children to participate in urban planning processes, and to guide local governments in the implementation of the principles outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Both initiatives are part of the broader Children's Right to the City approach that builds upon critical urban theory, and promotes not only the right to safe and healthy physical environments, but also the right to civil, political, economic, social, and cultural inclusion.

Child Friendly Cities focuses on developing an improved understanding of the complex relationship between physical environments, social and environmental inequities, and children's health and well-being.

60 students  
3 classes

ages 9-12

grades 4-7





Crosswalk by Musqueam artist, Robyn Sparrow, Vancouver



Hinge Park, Vancouver

**Women and girls:**

- Ensure that women and girls contribute to the design of public space, so that their preferred uses and perceptions of comfort and safety are accommodated.

**2SLGBTQQIA Friendly Spaces:**

- Ensure that 2SLGBTQQIA communities contribute to the design of public space, so that their preferred uses and perceptions of comfort and safety are accommodated, and that the historical marginalization of these groups is considered.

**Racial and Ethnocultural Groups:**

- Consult with different racial groups on how they prefer to use public space, so that there preferences and perceptions are accommodated.

**Cultural Identity:**

- Explore opportunities to recognize and promote cultural identity and social equity.
- Conserve and enhance living heritage and cultural assets through new public space design and renewal.
- Seek opportunities to identify appropriate names for public space assets based on the histories and contributions of diverse cultures.

**ACTION:** In 2018, the City of Vancouver joined UN Women’s Global Flagship Initiative, “Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces.” As part of the Safety in Vancouver: A City for All Women, Women’s Equity Strategy, this partnership commits the City to creating safe and inclusive cities for for all residents, and will expand initiatives to “increase residents’ sense of belonging and safety.

**2.1.3. Social Connection.** Foster public spaces that cultivate community.

- a) Continue to support programming that brings people together, such as community events, community gardens etc., including through community partnerships.
- b) Install seating that encourages social activity, along frontages, setbacks and street intersections, where appropriate.
- c) Consider how residential (semi-private and private) setbacks and frontages can contribute to the sense of community and belonging, both in existing blocks and when approving new residential buildings.
- d) Work with community groups and citizens to promote public space programming that encourages people to gather and stimulates new social interactions.

Explore opportunities for residents to help shape and steward these spaces and encourage future design to incorporate best practices around encouraging social and neighbourly interactions.



Activated Laneway - Alley Oop, Vancouver

➔ **ACTION:** Continue and build upon the Street Vendors' Collective program, which facilitates vendors from the DTES to sell wares from temporary kiosks in public spaces

f) Partner with community groups (e.g. Vancouver Foundation) to provide targeted engagement for populations that are more vulnerable to social isolation.

**2.1.4. Safety.** Ensure that public spaces feel safe for all people to enjoy, through design, stewardship and programming.

- a) Promote design that creates a feeling of safety in public spaces, including pedestrian friendly lighting, clear sight lines, and marked entrances.
  - Improve the perception of safety by ensuring that public spaces are animated with a diversity of users, programming and adjacent uses that provide 'eyes on the street.'
  - Incorporate Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in design and programming.
  - Collaborate among City departments, other public agencies and community partners to identify locations where CPTED improvements are most needed.
  - Install dimming technology to new light standards to manage light levels based on the need (visibility, time of day, seasons, and events and other activities).
  - Encourage passive surveillance and a sense of ownership through community building initiatives.

b) Apply an intersectional approach to public space and transportation design projects, recognizing the different perceptions of safety for women and vulnerable persons. Consider how some notions of surveillance and safety systemically target racialized communities (i.e. Indigenous and black youth) and certain practices (i.e. playing or performing of rap, hiphop music, skateboarding, etc).

c) Integrate best practices for crowd protection and event safety into public realm design, particularly for open spaces that are intended to accommodate significant events (e.g. civic plazas, neighbourhood plazas, high streets).

d) Work with residents and community groups to ensure homeless populations are part of an equitable process related to safe and inclusive design.





Public space art intervention by Frida & Frank, Vancouver



Fresh Air Cinema, Stanley Park



Hot and Noisy Chinatown, Vancouver

**2.1.5. Empowered Communities.** Engage people and community organizations to become active participants and stewards for public spaces.

- a) Foster community participation and expression in the creation, design, activation and stewardship of public space.
  - Continue to build and expand the VIVA Vancouver program, to explore innovative tools for public engagement and community-driven activations in public spaces (i.e. pop-ups and events, public design competitions, pilot programs, etc.).
  - Expand and support programs for community art projects (refer to Culture|Shift: Blanketing the City in Arts and Culture).

**ACTION:** Develop a Plaza Stewardship Strategy, to establish a framework for forming partnerships with community-based stewards, and establishing service levels and funding options. Develop Stewardship Plans for Jim Deva and Block 51 plazas, as pilots. (in progress)

“Most of the wonderful places in the world were not made by architects but by the people.”

—Christopher Alexander

**ACTION:** Expand and implement the Share a Square and Block Party programs, which enable permit-free grassroots activations in plazas and streets. Implement the Special Events policy recommendations to streamline permitting process for major events by the event community (approved Sept 2019).

- Continue to encourage youth to engage in public space initiatives by supporting community-based programs, targeting youth in public consultations, and leveraging academic work experience requirements to include youth participation in public space policy and initiatives (e.g. Green Scholar program, SFU Semester in Dialogue).
  - Explore opportunities to enable low-income populations to contribute to public space activation and stewardship (e.g. community gardens, public art, vending).
- b) Reduce barriers to participation, to enable more community-generated public space initiatives.
- Implement improvements to City permitting processes for community-driven public space events and activations, to make the process simple, affordable and easy to navigate.
  - Review the City’s regulations and approval processes for temporary projects in Vancouver’s streets and underutilized lots (i.e. alleyway activations, street plazas, play streets, urban prototypes, and pop-ups), to reduce barriers.



Games Night, Jim Deva Plaza, Vancouver

➔ **ACTION:** Improve the public space landing page on the City website, to make it more user-friendly, disseminate volunteer and community opportunities, and promote upcoming City-led public space projects and programs. (in progress)

c) Explore opportunities for integrating the City's permitting and services, including working collaboratively with the Park Board to streamline services for activating and programming processes.

h) Develop and implement a Plaza Stewardship Strategy, to protect and sustain public space assets.

- Partner with local businesses, non-profit organizations and community groups to support the stewardship of public spaces (including operations, maintenance and programming).
- Establish service levels required to support different types of plazas, identify the funding required to achieve these service levels, and explore funding tools.
- Create Stewardship Plans for existing and new public plazas.



## 2.2 The “Right” Supply

Match the supply of public space to need, by providing an equitable, appropriate distribution of public spaces across the Downtown.

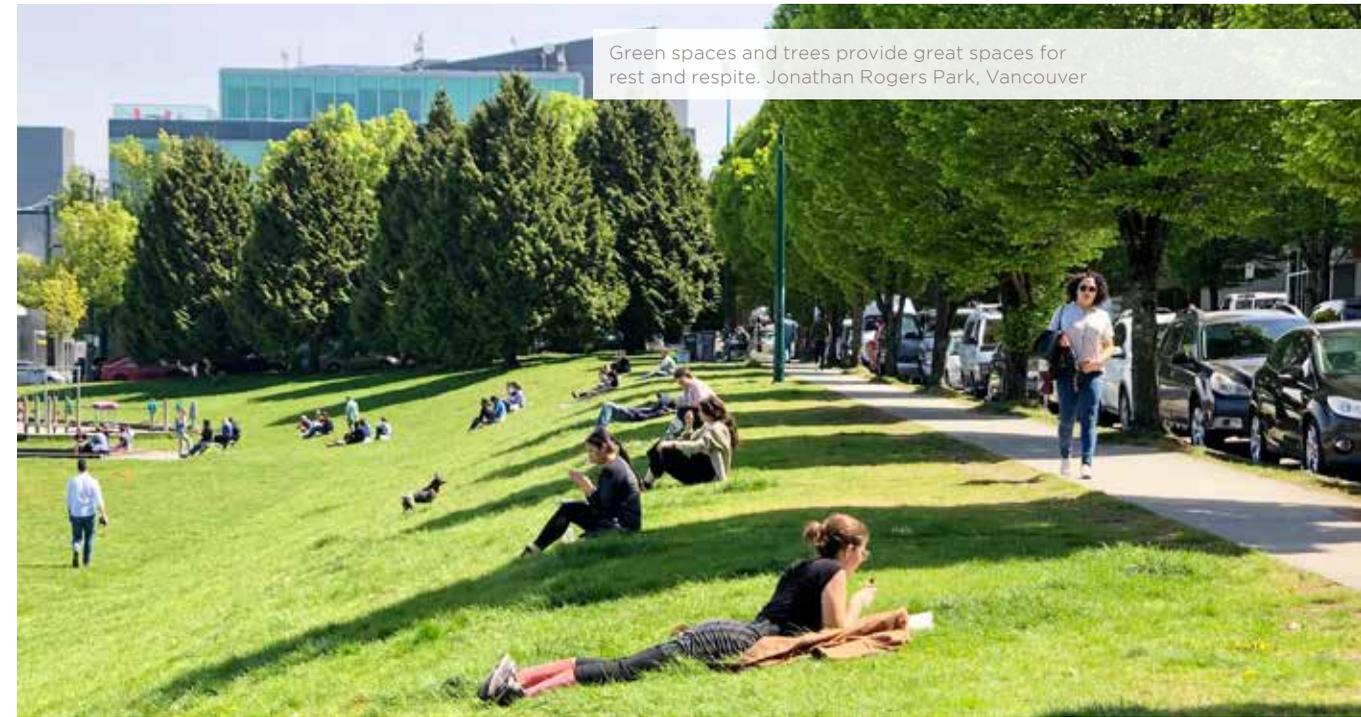
**2.2.1 Provide an equitable, balanced distribution of Public Spaces.** Respond to the public space Gap Analysis by providing each downtown neighbourhood with public spaces that fulfill the following functions:

a) **Inviting Social Spaces.** Welcoming and inclusive social spaces support people to engage and identify with their community and neighbourhood. This social engagement has been demonstrated to have significant health and well-being benefits, including reducing social isolation.

The design of social spaces should facilitate a broad range of social activities, such as people-watching, opportunities for children to play and for youth to “hang out”, chance meetings and intentional small gatherings, and larger organized events, such as community parties and meetings.

“Metro Vancouver’s green spaces provide a great venue for building healthy communities. A third of residents in Metro Vancouver do not have a yard or common area where they can socialize with neighbours”

— Vancouver Foundation, *Connect & Engage - A survey of Metro Vancouver, 2017*



Green spaces and trees provide great spaces for rest and respite. Jonathan Rogers Park, Vancouver

Social spaces - Perch Program, Vancouver



b) **Respite and Contemplative Spaces.**

Contemplative spaces provide an opportunity to take a break from the noise and stimulation of urban life, alone or in a small group. A quiet place to walk, or sit to enjoy the natural surroundings, can provide a moment of restoration and connection with oneself.

These are often natural and green spaces with park like qualities. They should be serene, attractive places, and should provide some protection from noise, traffic and interruptions.

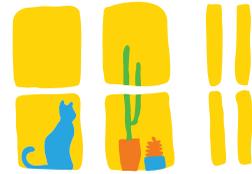
c) **Surprising, Creative and Adventurous Play Spaces.** Play features and joyful elements can be integrated in the broader public realm, outside of conventional playgrounds, to inspire a sense of adventure and wonder that is often lost in the more routine functions of the city. An out-of-the-ordinary space design, a colourful paving pattern, a set of swings in a plaza, or a live music event in a pocket park are some of the elements that can create fun and surprise, and invite people of all ages to play.



d) **Vibrant Commercial Areas.** Adjacent commercial activity, such as markets, shopfronts, restaurants, cafes and patios, is a common activator of public spaces, inviting people to stop, stay and interact with one another.

Small scale retail shops and restaurants at the edges of streets, plazas and parks support both the businesses and the public space itself. Commercial adjacency extends the hours of the day and the seasons when a public space will be well-used. Adjacency also increases a sense of comfort and safety of public space – adding “eyes on the street.”

e) **Celebration and Event Spaces.** Celebration and event spaces support festivals, events, performances, parades and a variety of other cultural activities. These spaces tend to be major destinations, with marquee programming that attracts locals and visitors to the city, supports cultural creation and expression, and boosts the local economy. Because these destination spaces are larger and fewer, they must be well-connected to transportation routes. They also require physical and operational infrastructure to successfully support major events.



The “eyes” get stronger when there are a range of activities taking place on the street.

**ACTION:** Support targets set out in the Making Space for Arts and Culture report (2019) to target spaces for events that can accommodate 8,000 - 50,000 people with appropriate and adequate infrastructure.

“There must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street. The buildings on a street equipped to handle strangers and to insure the safety of both residents and strangers, must be oriented to the street.”

— Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

f) **Places for Cultural and Civic Expression.** Public space provides important opportunities to express personal, cultural and political messages, which are foundational to democracy and freedom of speech.

In Downtown Vancouver, a few select civic public spaces provide a platform for large political meetings, demonstrations and protests, as well as for more modest activities such as collecting signatures, handing out flyers or staging protests. These, as well as other smaller public spaces, provide arenas for diverse communities to celebrate and share their culture.

**Diversity of Functions.** The public space network should provide a diversity of public spaces that are designed and programmed to offer diverse activities that attract different people to these spaces for different reasons at different times of the day.

**Proximity.** Public spaces that serve local neighbourhoods should be within a 5-minute walk. Major destination public spaces (i.e. large event spaces) should be accessible from each neighbourhood by a strong active transportation network.



POPS in commercial area - Alberni Street, Vancouver



A POPS that provide a place for respite - Park Place, Vancouver



Canada Day on Bute Street, Vancouver

Best Practice Case Studies

# Neighbourhood Plaza

## The favourite local hang-out and go-to meeting place

A Neighbourhood Plaza is a public space to stop, socialize, linger and gather. These are more intimate than civic plazas. They serve as a community meeting place and can host local special events such as markets. An ideal location would be adjacent to a high street and along an active transportation (i.e. walking, rolling or cycling) desire route.

Pavement-to-Plaza is a type of neighbourhood plaza that converts a portion of roadway to public space. They have a mix of fixed and movable seating, host passive and spontaneous activities and provide space for walking, rolling, cycling and public bike share.

This typology is also very dependent on community buy-in and stewardship. Having partners to help maintain and support programming is crucial for the success of the space.

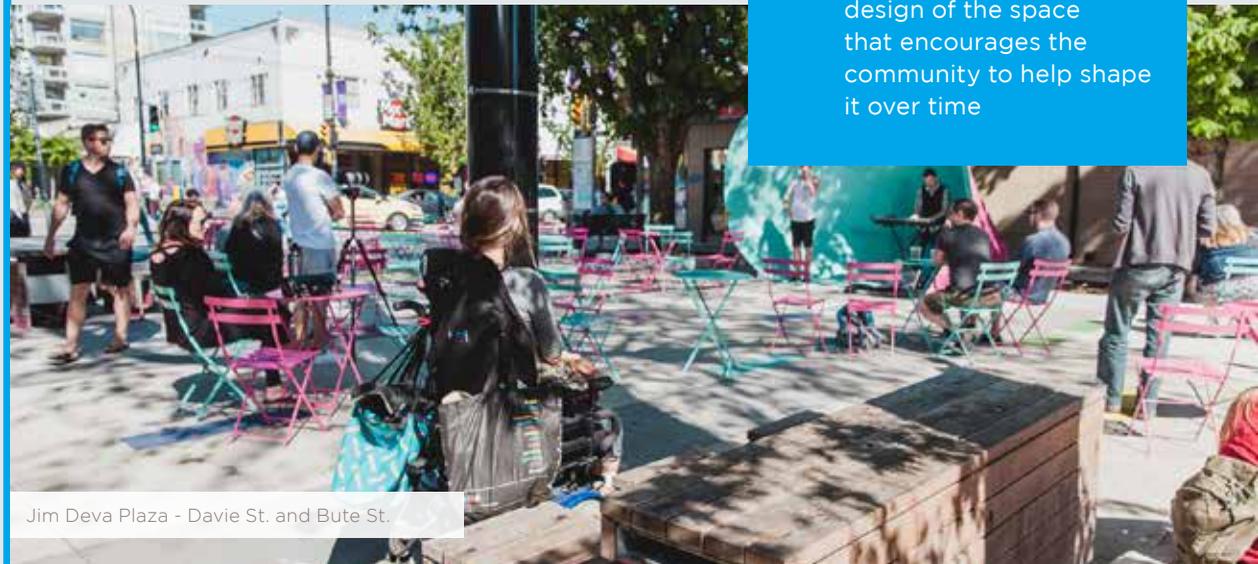
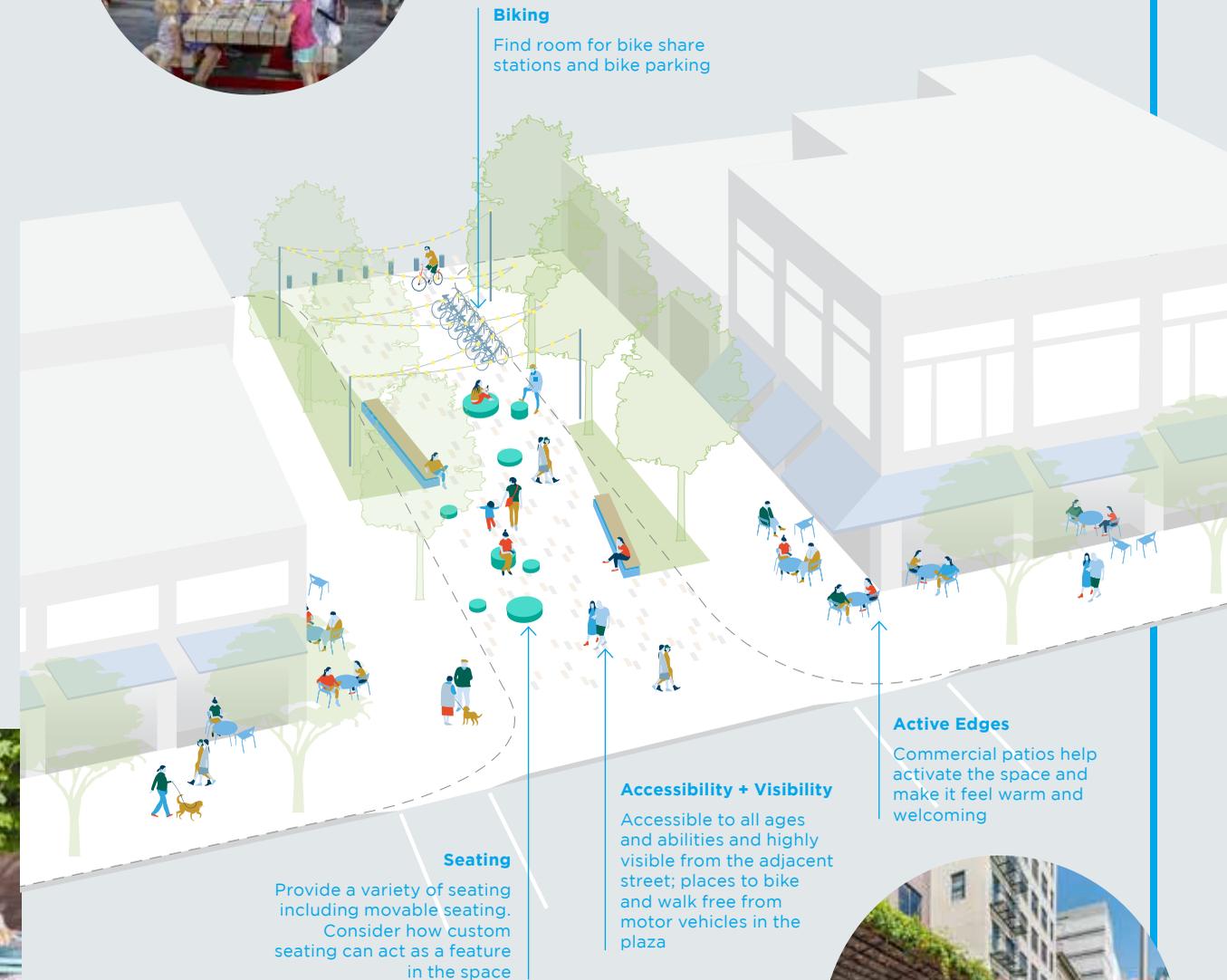
**Key Design Considerations:**

- **Neighbourhood Identity** - plazas should reflect the character and qualities of the neighbourhood
- **Accessibility** - highly accessible and visible for all; places to bike slowly; public bike share stations nearby
- **Active Edges** - cafes and restaurants with patios
- **Exposure** - permanent protection from the elements
- **Planting** - deciduous trees and green infrastructure
- **Site Furnishings** - movable and fixed seating; bike racks and trash receptacles
- **Storage and Utilities** - on site storage, electrical and water supply
- **Flexibility** - allow for flexibility and spontaneity in the design of the space that encourages the community to help shape it over time



**69th Street Plaza, Wauwatosa, WI**

With an ample supply of picnic tables, special paving, trellis, and string lights, this small space is a welcoming spot for gatherings



Jim Deva Plaza - Davie St. and Bute St.

**Mint Plaza, Los Angeles, CA**

This successful street conversion project features planting, movable and fixed seating as well as an architectural trellis to provide shade





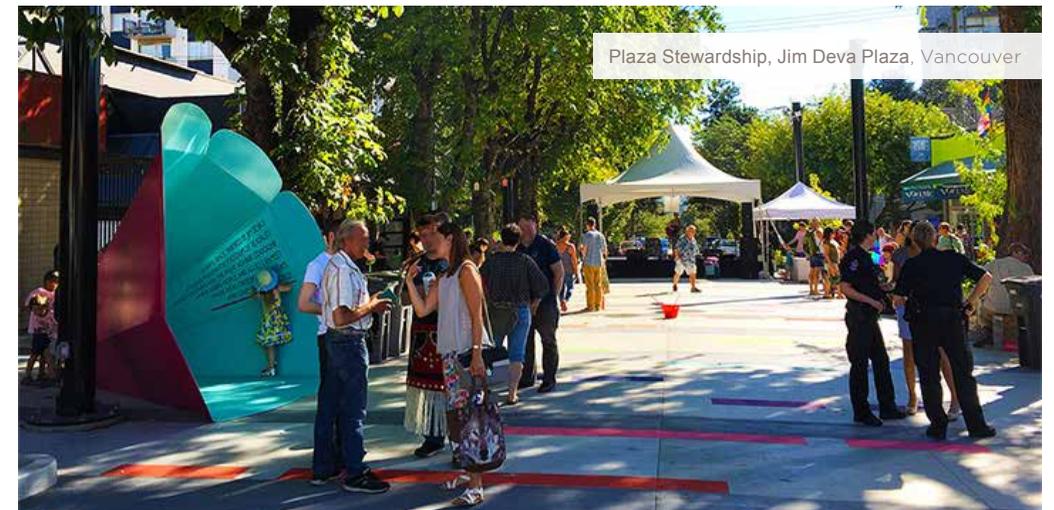
Urban Reef - 800 Robson, Vancouver



Parklet on street right-of-way on Robson Street, Vancouver



Temporary plaza on Bute and Davie Streets, Vancouver



Plaza Stewardship, Jim Deva Plaza, Vancouver

**2.2.2. Delivering Public Space.** Identify opportunities to deliver public space through acquisition, repurposing, improvement, partnerships, connections, testing and stewardship.

a) **Acquire.** Acquire and expand setbacks, statutory right-of-way on private property, and dedications of private property to the City, to provide new public spaces where most needed (as shown in the Gap Analysis and Public Life Study).

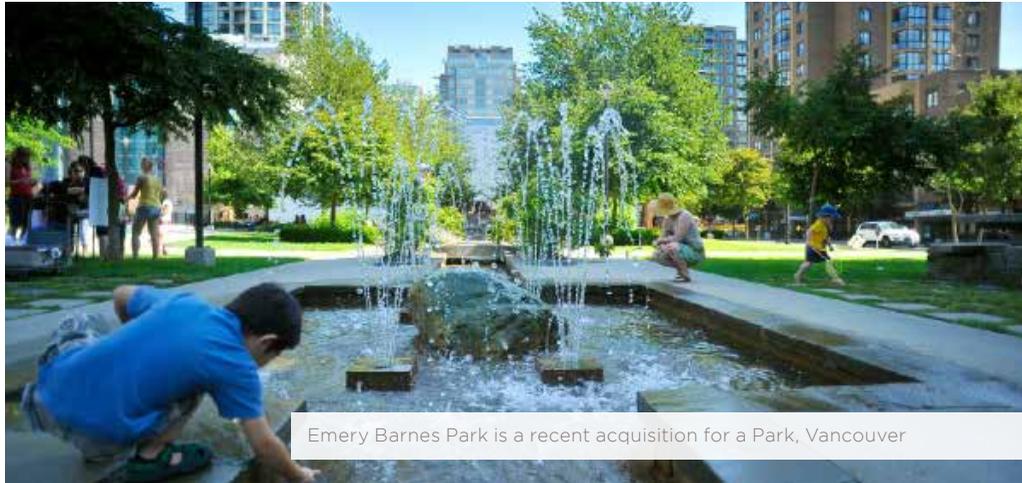
b) **Repurpose.** Repurpose street right-of-way, where feasible, to provide new public space where most needed. Update infrastructure to support programming in these new spaces.

c) **Improve.** Renew existing public spaces to increase their utility, better connect them to the broader public space network, and serve to a wider range of users.

d) **Partner.** Partner with other owners of open spaces, including schools, sport and cultural facilities (e.g. stadiums and theaters), and privately owned publically accessible spaces (e.g. POPS or office plazas), to leverage these open spaces to fill the gaps in the public space network. Ensure public access is maintained.

➔ **ACTION:** Deliver a new permanent plaza at Bute-Robson, to build on the success of the temporary street closure and test plaza, and help address the deficit of “social” public spaces in the Downtown.

➔ **ACTION:** Develop a City-wide Land Acquisition Strategy in coordination with the Vancouver Plan that identifies future land acquisition and project opportunities.



Emery Barnes Park is a recent acquisition for a Park, Vancouver



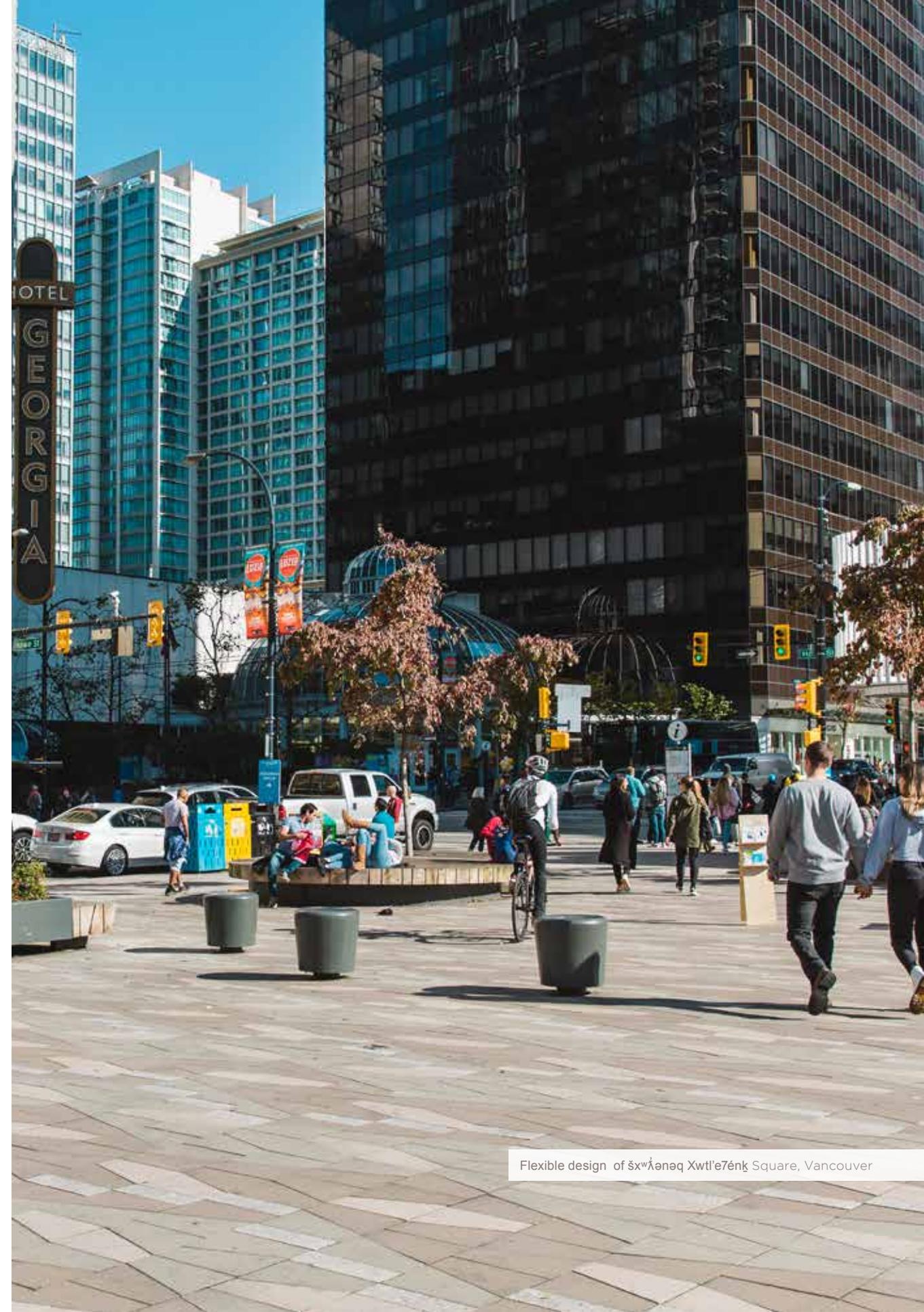
Community stewardship - Arbutus Greenway, Vancouver

e) **Connect.** Strengthen the linkages between key public spaces, to create a cohesive walking and cycling network and expand the public space experience beyond traditional parks and plazas.

f) **Test.** Continue to test and evaluate potential public space projects and engage the community in public space creation through VIVA Vancouver, the Pavement-to-Plaza and Parklet programs, and other City initiatives.

g) **Steward.** Create partnerships and stewardship plans to support the maintenance, operations and programming of public space, to sustain and protect our public space assets.

➔ **ACTION:** Deliver a new public space under the Granville Bridge, activated with public programming, through an innovative partnership with the adjacent property owner. (in progress).



Flexible design of Xwtl'e7énk Square, Vancouver

### 2.2.3. Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS) –

Secure, retain and enhance POPS spaces.

#### a) Secure, Retain and Renew.

- Continue to secure new Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces as part of the development process, where appropriate; with a focus on areas that are currently most underserved (see Gap Analysis and Public Life Study).
- Encourage the retention of existing POPS sites, particularly in underserved parts of the Downtown.
- Encourage the improvement and renewal of existing POPS, to serve a wider range of users and uses, and better connect to the public space network.
- Ensure a transparent and consistent process for securing, retaining and operating POPS, to support their access and enjoyment for the public.

#### b) Design.

- Ensure that new and renewed POPS achieve the same high quality design standard as publically-owned spaces, are inclusive and accessible, encourage a diversity of uses, and are well-integrated into the wider public space network.

#### c) Stewardship.

- Learning from the model of the Plaza Stewardship Strategy for publically-owned plazas, encourage property owners and businesses to establish

**ACTION:** Develop a policy framework and process for securing and retaining existing POPS, and acquiring new POPS through new developments.



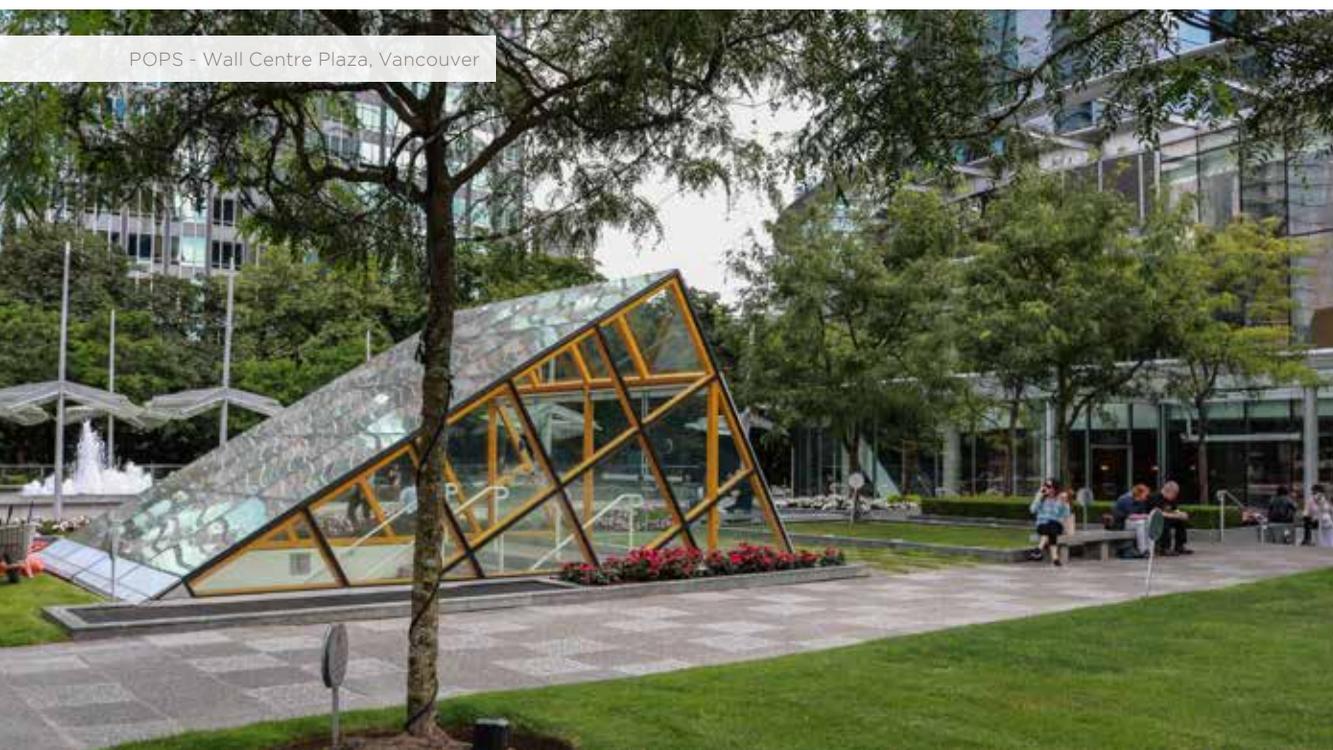
**ACTION:** Update the current Plaza Design Guidelines (1992) for POPS, and expand to provide guidance for the design, wayfinding and access, operations, use and stewardship.

individual stewardship plans for new and existing POPS spaces, to support their operations, maintenance and programming.

#### d) Welcoming and Awareness.

- Ensure that POPS are designed and programmed to be publically-accessible and welcoming to all users, and are not monitored to exclude groups or individuals.
- Encourage a greater diversity in types of activity and users in these spaces.
- Ensure that POPS have consistent, clear, visible and welcoming signage that identifies these spaces as publically-accessible, and identifies the types of activities and uses that are welcome.

POPS - Wall Centre Plaza, Vancouver



**Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS)** are spaces that the public are invited to use, but remain privately-owned and maintained. POPS are an important component of the downtown public space network, but do not replace the City's need to develop public open spaces. They are especially significant in the Central Business District (CBD), where they provide the majority of open space in the area. It is important that these spaces are secured, retained and enhanced to be accessible and enjoyed by all.

# Office Plaza

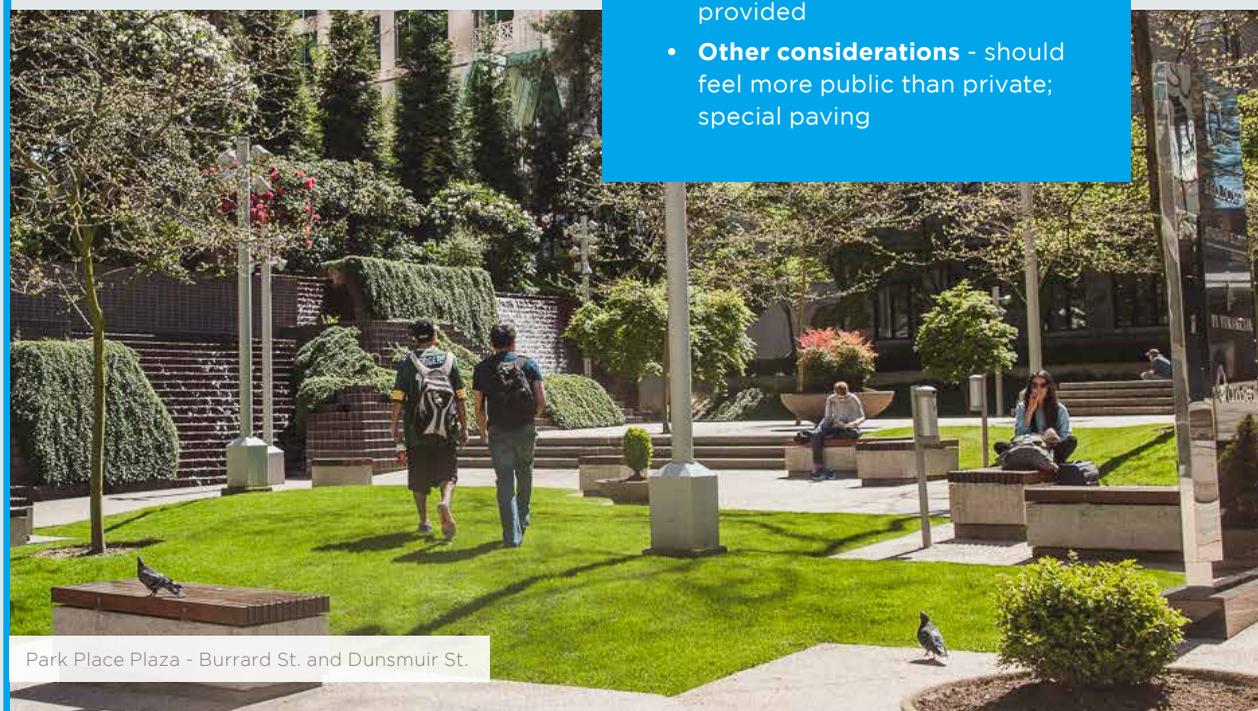
## Inviting public space available in your workplace neighbourhood

An Office Plaza is a type of privately owned public space. Once a common feature in the downtown fabric they are slowly being lost to additional office space or retail as aging buildings are renovated or redeveloped.

Most active during work hours and especially during lunch, these spaces are wonderful amenities for people during their work week. Because of jurisdiction associated with these spaces, there is opportunity to provide more custom, refined or varied materiality. Grading is often complex and associated with building entries and parkade slabs so planting and accessibility can be a challenge.

### Key Design Elements:

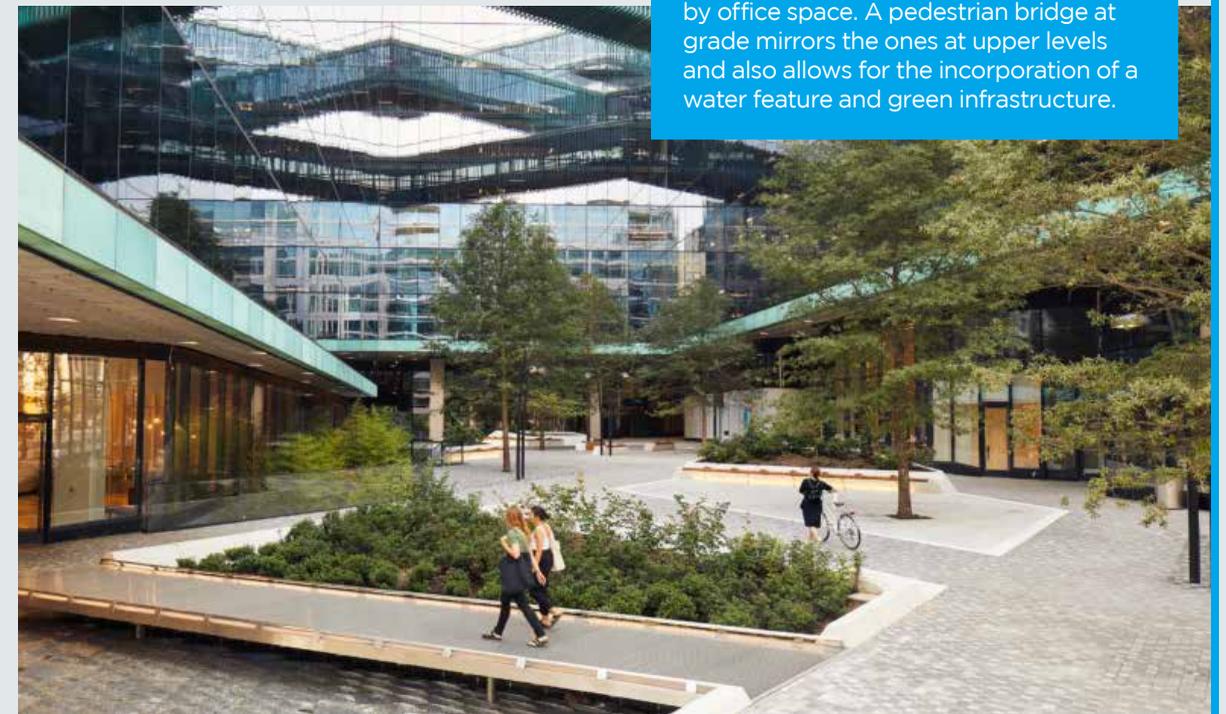
- **Active Edges** - Cafe / restaurant patios, other commercial and office spaces.
- **Accessibility + Visibility** - mitigate grade changes at building entries in a way to keep plazas universally accessible; maintain good site lines, especially to building entries
- **Safety** - may have a security guard after hours; lighting
- **Exposure** - provide options to sit in sun and shade; weather protection in building canopy
- **Trees and Planting** - provide greenspace for respite and rainwater retention.
- **Site Furnishings** - movable tables and chairs are preferred for flexibility but permanent seating options should be provided
- **Other considerations** - should feel more public than private; special paving



Park Place Plaza - Burrard St. and Dunsmuir St.

### Midtown Center Plaza, Washington

This plaza is bordered on three sides by office space. A pedestrian bridge at grade mirrors the ones at upper levels and also allows for the incorporation of a water feature and green infrastructure.



### Prudential Center Plaza, Boston (US)

This plaza is divided into two main parts: a paved open space right off the building and a buffer of planting and interesting planter walls closer to the street. This layout provides a soft buffer and improves circulation.



### Beekman Street Plaza, New York (US)

Custom pavers, water features, benches and movable tables and chairs all add to the character of this linear office plaza that connects two adjacent streets. Fully accessible at grade.



### St. James Plaza, Melbourne (AUS)

This plaza is bordered on three sides by office space but the entries are at different levels. The design has mitigated the grade change as much as possible to try and keep it accessible.

## 2.3 Design for People

Provide high quality well-designed public spaces to support a rich range of experiences.

**2.3.1. Space to Pause.** Introduce opportunities for people to stop and socialize.

a) Introduce new spaces for stopping and staying along the sidewalk, by reallocating road space, where feasible, and by acquiring or improving building setbacks.

b) Encourage diverse public seating options at frequent intervals.

- Seek to provide seating approximately every 100m (or at every block) along streets, focusing on street blocks with seating deficiencies.
- Ensure that furniture meets the principles of universal design, which promotes accessibility and inclusion.
- Consider additional temporary seating in open spaces with larger volumes of activity (e.g. šxw'łəneq Xwtl'e7énk Square) during peak seasons and to support events.
- Explore options with the City's Street Furniture program to identify potential street furniture types and arrangements.



Shade, seating and table for eating and games Bute-Robson Plaza, Vancouver



Building corner activation, San Francisco, California

c) Encourage generous ground floor building setbacks, focusing on areas where sidewalk space is limited and pedestrian volumes are high.

### Commercial Setbacks:

- Explore opportunities through new development to acquire statutory right-of-way or road dedication for public spaces and/or semi-public patio spaces, in addition to generous sidewalks.
- Create a seamless connection between public and private realms by using similar materials, landscape elements and, where possible, furniture.
- Encourage building occupants to activate and steward these spaces (including patios and other public and semi-public seating areas).

### Residential Setbacks:

- Encourage the design of front setbacks for new developments to include semi-public areas for passersby to stop and sit, to strengthen

**ACTION:** Develop Design Guidelines for Downtown Streetscape that provides guidance for the treatment of building setbacks, corner plazas and forecourts, patios, and other streetscape elements.

neighbourhood character, particularly on popular walking and cycling streets.

- Encourage landscape features in setbacks along local residential streets that beautify the public realm, are native and adaptive, and assist in managing rainwater.

d) Corners - Encourage special design treatments for corner buildings, such as chamfered corners, to distinguish major street intersections as memorable public places, and to manage higher pedestrian volumes.

e) Explore opportunities to create new or expanded public spaces, such as pocket parks and neighbourhood plazas, at approximately 10-minute walking intervals, to be delivered through transportation design and public realm improvements, the Pavement-to-Plaza program, dedications and statutory right-of-way on private property (POPS), and other opportunities.

**2.3.2. Active Edges.** In commercial areas, design ground-floor facades that are open and transparent to encourage interactions.

a) **Human Scale.** The façade of buildings should relate to a human scale, in its detailing, tactility and material expression. The first one or two stories of the façade should feature the highest level of detail, quality materials, and design variety.

b) **Street-Activating Uses .** Provide a mix of publicly accessible uses at grade along commercial streets and open spaces (e.g. shops, restaurants, cafés, services, meeting spaces, etc.). Discourage inactive uses such as offices.

c) **Transparent Facades.** Provide transparent facades for the majority of the ground floor (avoid tinted or reflective glass), and encourage fenestration that opens to the street (including roll-up windows).

d) **Displays.** Promote outdoor retail displays and display windows. Discourage large lifestyle posters and decals that block visibility, and signage structures that impede pedestrian movements.

e) **Narrow Storefronts and Frequent Entrances**  
Encourage narrow storefronts and frequent entrances along commercial streets.

- Target 10-15 entries every 100 metres.

f) **Interactive Building Edges.** Encourage building edges that blur the boundary between public and private realms, by including places to sit, stay, and people watch.

- Make "blank" facades on existing buildings more engaging by adding seating structures, play elements, murals, pop-up vendors, or other programming.

g) **Consistent Street Wall.** Encourage continuous streetwalls, by requiring new building development to adhere to required setbacks, except where programming or pedestrian volumes warrant forecourts.

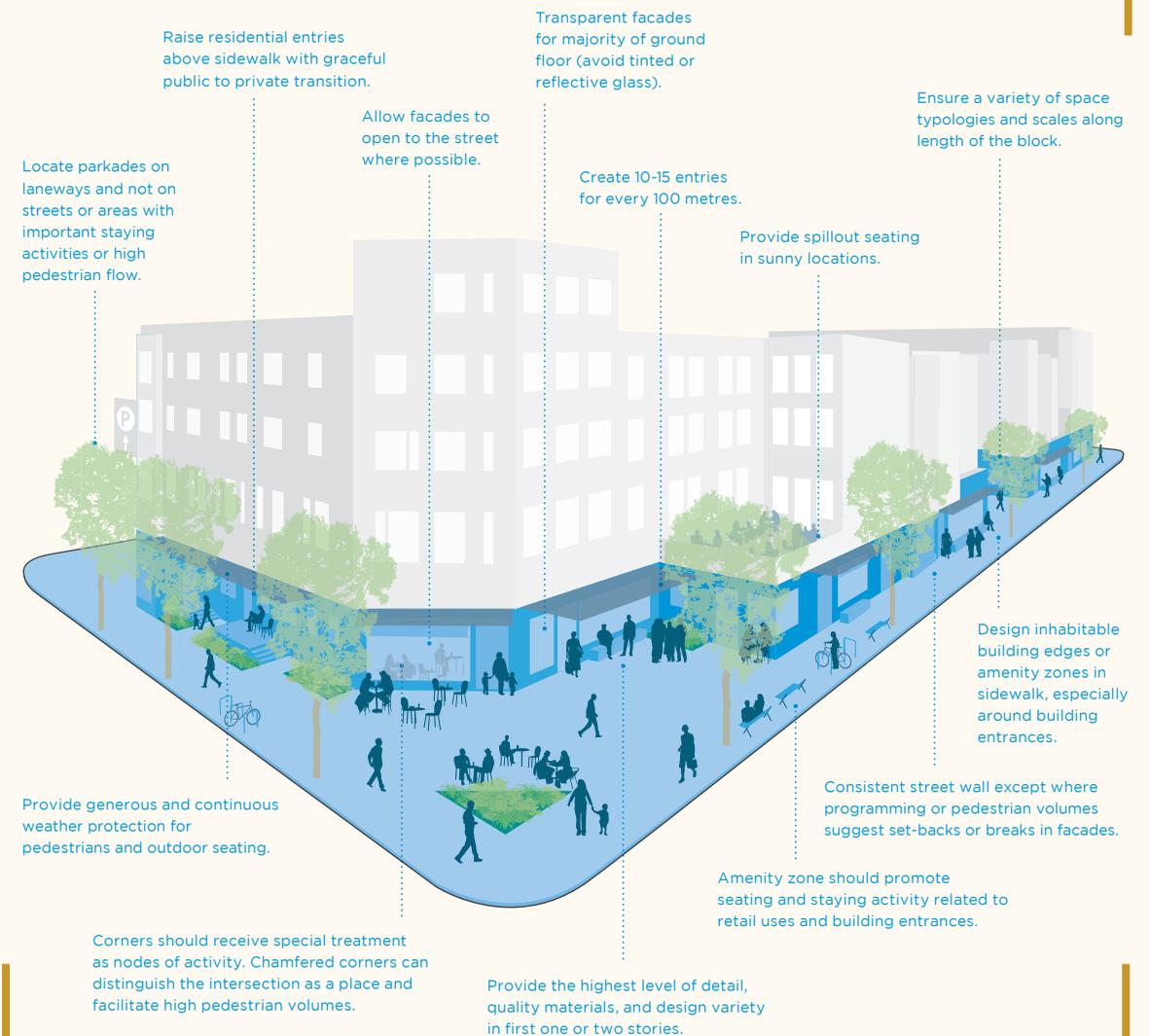
h) **Ground Floor Residential Frontages.** Encourage the design of residential buildings to contribute interest to the public realm, while providing adequate privacy for residents in ground floor units. Balconies and operable windows can provide "eyes on the street".

**ACTION:** Expand the temporary storefront activation program in Chinatown to other parts of the City.



# Active Edges

**Design ground-floor facades that engage with the sidewalk and contribute to the public realm.**



- Notes:
- Use the same guidelines to design active edges that interface with parks and other public spaces.
  - Minimize driveways and parking access throughout.
  - Design façades around large floorplate retail with the same granular level of detail and transparency as small storefronts.

“Our senses are designed to perceive and process sensory impressions while moving at about 5 km/h walking pace.

Architecture that embodies 5 km/h details combines the best of two worlds: a glimpse of the town hall tower or distant hills at the end of the street and the close-up contact of ground-floor façades”

—Jan Gehl, *City at Eye Level*

**2.3.3. Make Streets ‘Places’.** Celebrate streets as public spaces that encourage public life, while maintaining transportation functions and other street uses.

a) Strengthen the character of each street according to its functional role in the network.

b) Leverage the heritage and cultural attributes of key streets in each neighbourhood, to make them more memorable, reflecting the important contributions of diverse communities in Vancouver.

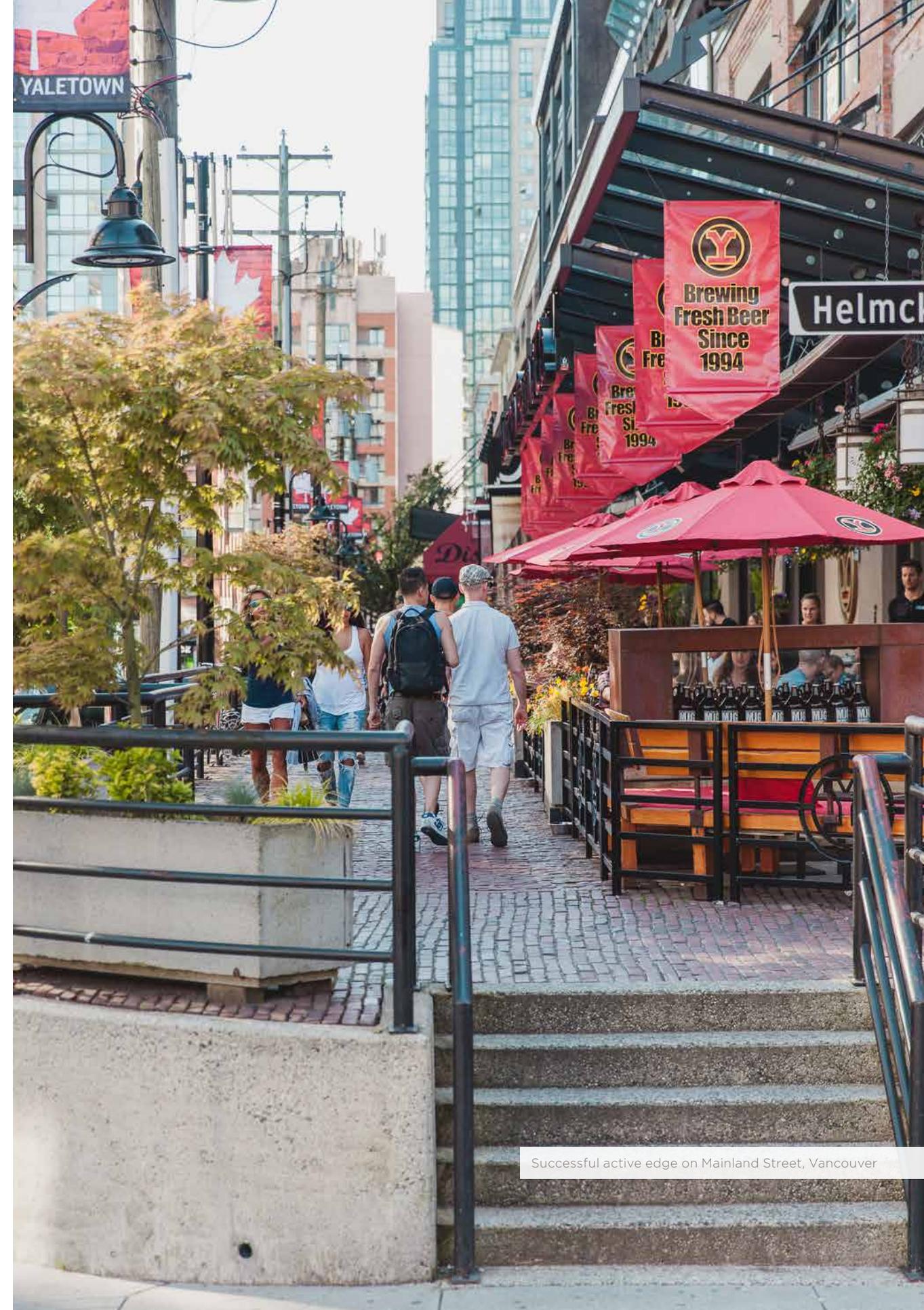
c) Encourage a streetscape design (e.g. furnishings, signage, decorative lighting, paving, and horticulture) that is attractive, delightful, and supports universal accessibility, while maintaining the streets’ transportation function.

d) Focus on the journey, by prioritizing intuitive, accessible wayfinding for people walking and cycling.

e) Where appropriate, and where feasible for transportation functions, explore opportunities to transform street right-of-way into public spaces, through the Pavement-to-Plaza program, parklets, curbside patios and other creative uses.

f) Design key street intersections to be memorable public spaces, considering building design, paving, horticulture and green rainwater infrastructure, and specialty crosswalks. Improve street crossings to prioritize walking and safety.

- Implement crosswalk upgrades at high volume intersections.
- Prioritize pedestrian movements over other modes at side streets and laneways.
- Design streetscape, park and plaza edges to be integrated - consider entrances and walking routes.



Successful active edge on Mainland Street, Vancouver

g) Driveways - Wherever possible, locate driveways on laneways and not on streets or areas with important staying activities or high pedestrian flow.

**2.3.4. Play for All.** Integrate elements of play and surprise into public spaces.

a) Design and integrate play spaces and joyful elements in a variety of public spaces (streets, plazas, etc.) that invite families, children, and users of all ages, abilities and income brackets.

- Vary the scale and type of playful installations depending on location and neighbourhood.
- Encourage opportunities for informal play (e.g. skateboarding).

b) Encourage commercial and residential developments to incorporate playful elements in front yard setbacks.

c) Incorporate 'art as play' into public art and design features, including the use of rainwater.



Play spaces in San Francisco, California



# Beyond the Playground

## Play for All



**Play on the way.** Sidewalk Trampolines and other small interventions can be added into spaces as narrow as sidewalks, providing opportunities for active play that will be encountered in the 'between spaces' along peoples typical routes between home, school and other destinations.

**bouncy surfaces and playful paint**



**variety of play options between bike parking and the sidewalk**



**telephone pipes squeezed in for telling secrets**

**Play for all ages.** The plaza welcomes all ages with opportunities for active and passive recreation. The space includes a children's playground as well as a multi-use sunken court and ping pong tables flanked by public seating.

**Play for all seasons.** In winter the sunken plaza transforms into an ice rink, drawing families to the park and encouraging outdoor play and recreation even in the coldest, most grey months.



**Blågårds Plads, Copenhagen**  
A flexible space, characterized by a sunken plaza surrounded on all sides by shared streets and active frontages, including a public library and community centre that opens onto the plaza. This enables a synergy of public life by activating the space and providing a shared outdoor space for the organization.





Street side patio, Vancouver

d) Work with local community partners to test new ideas to incorporate play in temporary public space installations.

**ACTION:** Develop city-wide solar access policy, to retain and protect solar access for prioritized public spaces at targeted times of day/year, from shadow impacts of new development. (in progress)

“When there are people present in a public space such as city streets, it strengthens the space and inspires social cohesion.”

—Jane Jacobs



Active edge in Elephant Grounds, Hong Kong

**2.3.5. Sunlight.** Protect and preserve access to sunlight in public spaces

- a) Protect key public spaces and parks from the shadow impact of new buildings or other structures. Plan for sunshine when and where it is needed.
- b) Shadows generated by new proposed developments should be minimized based on the following hierarchy:
  - Parks, plazas, schoolyards, and shopping streets – Preclude shadowing (no new net shadow) within designated hours, as per existing guidelines and policy.
  - Sidewalks – Minimize shadows, prioritizing north side of street.
  - Privately owned public space (POPS – e.g. SRWs & CUAs – Minimize shadowing, with site and context consideration; no new shadowing on existing sites that are designed to maximize sun access.
  - Private and semi-private spaces – Minimize shadowing.

c) For highly exposed open spaces (e.g. along the waterfront), explore options for shade and shelter, with special consideration for populations that are more vulnerable to weather exposure (e.g. seniors and children).



Afternoon shadows on Robson Street, Vancouver



Canada Day on Robson Street, Vancouver

**2.3.6. Celebrate Neighbourhood Character and Identity.** Enhance each neighbourhood's identity through the unique design of its public spaces

- a) Enhance the character of each neighbourhood through place-making features that highlight their different histories, cultures and connections to the land. Where appropriate conduct First Nations and historical statements of significance.
- b) In each neighbourhood, use consistent design elements in the public realm (e.g. materials, lighting, furniture, paving, etc.).
- d) Explore opportunities through zoning policy to encourage new uses and mixed uses to enhance neighbourhood identity.
- e) Facilitate local residents and businesses to explore creative ways to design and animate frontages and setbacks.

**2.3.7. Flexibility.** Allow for flexibility and spontaneity in the design of public spaces that encourages the community to help shape them over time.

**2.3.8. Memorability.** Encourage the unique identity and legibility of spaces through distinctive design, public art, and iconic features.

**2.3.9. Views.** Protect and preserve views.

a) Existing preserved pedestrian-level views from public spaces should be protected and, wherever possible, interesting new views should be created (also refer to Downtown Design Guidelines and community plans). Key views should include the following:

- Views of mountains and water from street level, especially from street-ends near the waterfront.
- Views of landmark buildings, bridges, art pieces, and special landscape features.
- Vantage points for viewing major pedestrian activity, and key activities in the city, such as the Port



Vancouver hosts hundreds of events throughout the year - from smaller neighbourhood events to large multi-day festivals.

**2.3.10. Events Infrastructure.** Ensure that plazas and gathering spaces have infrastructure to support diverse programming and events (align with targets and directions put forward in the Making Space for Arts and Culture Strategy [2019] and Music City Strategy [2019]).

a) Design plazas and other public open spaces with sufficient, flexible infrastructure to support a range of special events, festivals and community gatherings appropriate to location and size.

b) Design plazas to connect and relate to adjacent streets and laneways, to allow for concurrent and safe use of areas for expanded events and festival uses.

c) Ensure that adjacent land uses support event spaces, and that additional noise projection is considered in the building design- with special consideration for entertainment and patio zones.

d) Ensure that the ability to close streets for celebrations and events is accommodated in transportation planning and design.

**2.3.11. Maintenance and Cleanliness** Provide appropriate garbage bins as well as frequent maintenance, repair and cleaning of public spaces.

a) Continue to seek efficient and innovative approaches to maintenance, cleaning and waste management in public spaces, such as the social enterprise-delivered micro-cleaning pilot for plazas.

**2.3.12. Public Art.** Promote iconic public art works that bring new meaning to the public realm by reflecting the complexities of place and publics, engaging cultural practices, and provoking critical dialogue.

a) Support both permanent public installations and temporary public art projects in public spaces.

b) Involve artists in shaping the public realm, including artist-initiated public art commissions and arts-based engagement.

c) Align the private development public art process with City strategies and priorities, including art installations in POPS.

d) Support Indigenous Public Art Programs in public space:

- Commission public art throughout the city to increase the visibility of Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh cultural presence.
- Commission diverse Indigenous public art works and murals in ways that are sensitive to their placement on unceded Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil- Waututh lands.
- Create Public Art Temporary Projects Program to mentor Indigenous artists new to public art commissioning processes to create temporary projects.



The Birds by Myfanwy MacLeod, Vancouver

## OUR LEGACY

### Public Art Program

The City of Vancouver's public art program spans a range of approaches. The program supports excellence in public art by emerging and established artists, in new and traditional media, through award-winning commissions and partnerships.

The public art program is actively developing ways to bring a wide range of perspectives and practices to the City, and has prioritized support for works that reflect the cultural presence of Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil- Waututh on their unceded lands. Additionally, the City has worked to create more intentional opportunities for artists to respond to and reflect communities whose representation in the public realm has been minimized through racialized forms of discrimination.



People Amongst the People by Susan Point, Vancouver



Public Art Partnerships - Uninterrupted, Vancouver



Playtime by Shannon Oksanen, Vancouver



Monument for East Vancouver by Ken Lum

## 2.4 Day-long, Year-long

Provide opportunities to enjoy public spaces throughout the year, both day and night

**2.4.1. Year-round Spaces.** Increase year-round activity through design and programming for a variety of weather conditions.

a) Promote rain-friendly public spaces.

- Incorporate weather protection, shelter and other rain-friendly design features where appropriate.
- Provide weather protection on sidewalks to protect pedestrians as well as commercial patios.
- Encourage rain-friendly programming and activities that embrace the rain, and include rain activated public art (e.g. Life Between Umbrellas competition).

b) Encourage creative design that uses colour, lighting and other elements to invite activity during the dark and grey times of year.

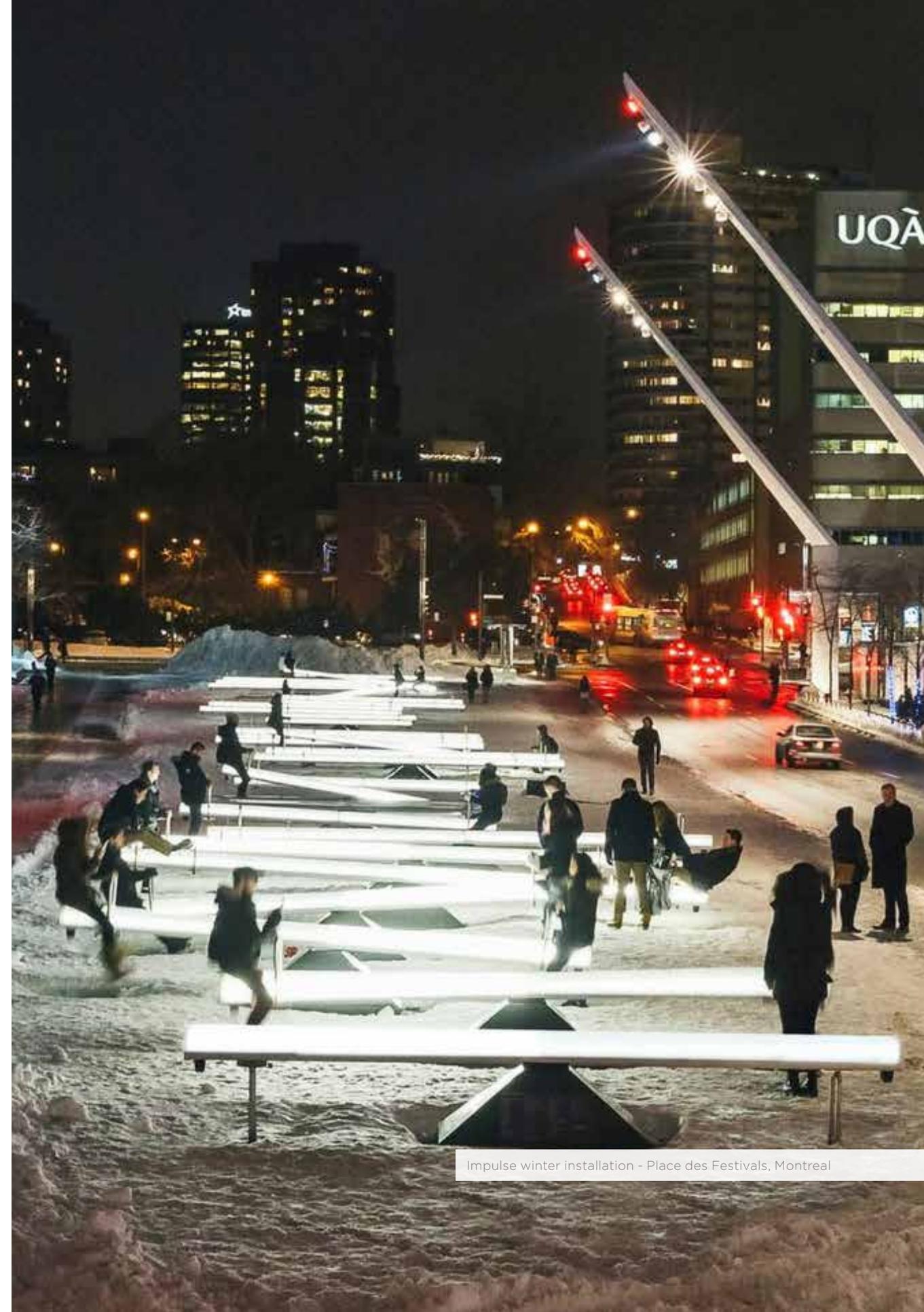
- Use lighting to increase the feeling of safety and comfort for pedestrian walkways, and to support wayfinding.
- Incorporate creative lighting features in public realm design, with a special focus on gathering spaces. Consider warm temperature lighting and remote/programmable colour-changing to create visual interest.
- Explore opportunities for temporary lighting features to animate the public realm, including events and programs, (e.g. Lumiere artistic lighting festival).

c) Expand opportunities for local businesses to use covered outdoor markets, vendor stalls and kiosks throughout the year.

d) Provide generous, continuous weather protection for people walking along commercial building frontages and, where possible, encourage additional protection for outdoor seating areas, such as patios and café seating.

➔ **ACTION:** Implement rain-friendly activations and prototype installations in public spaces, through VIVA Vancouver's Life Between Umbrellas design competition. (in progress)

➔ **ACTION:** Update weather protection guidelines to facilitate ample, continuous, well-designed awnings or canopies in commercial areas. (in progress)



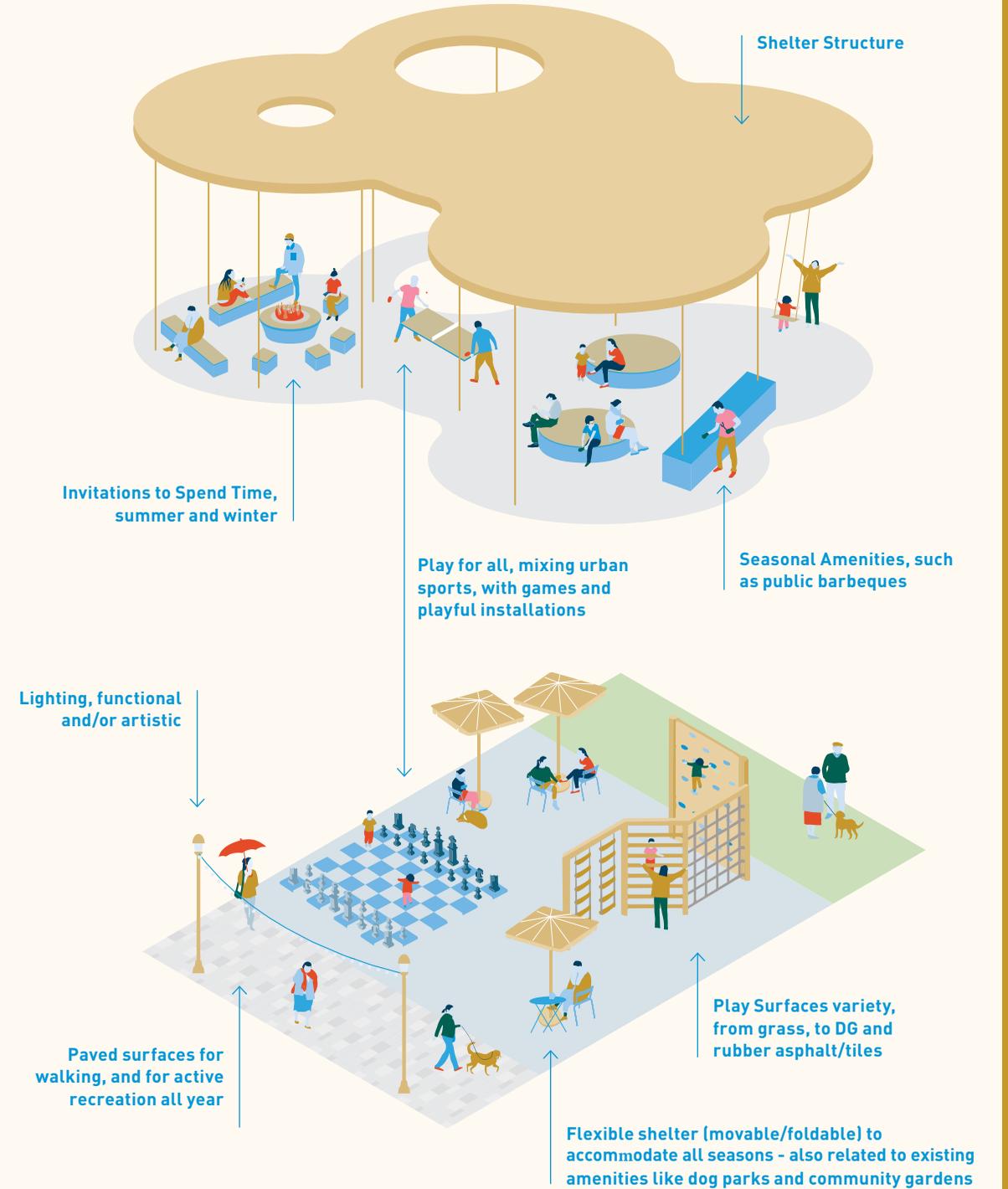
Impulse winter installation - Place des Festivals, Montreal

# All-Year Outside

Creating more opportunities to enjoy public spaces throughout the year, with shelter from the elements & activities for all.



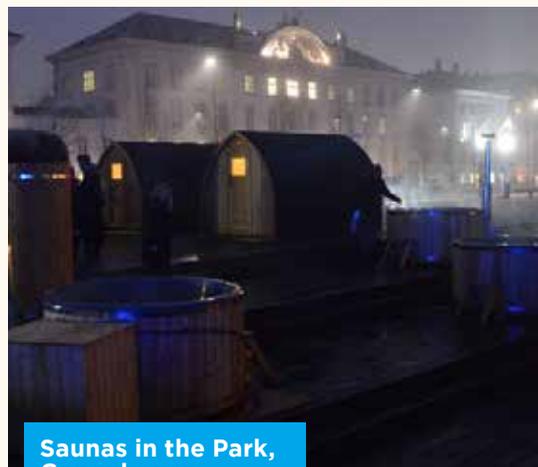
## All-Year Design Considerations



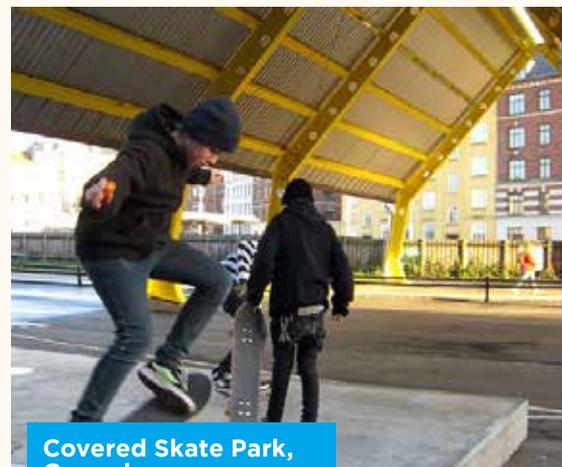
**Weather Canopy  
Granville Island, Vancouver**



**Rainy Days Vision Collage  
(ideas for Vancouver)**



**Saunas in the Park,  
Copenhagen**



**Covered Skate Park,  
Copenhagen**



VIVA Uninterrupted event 2017, Vancouver



Good night Out Vancouver



Place du Molard, Geneva, Switzerland



Light-play structure, Lot 19, Vancouver

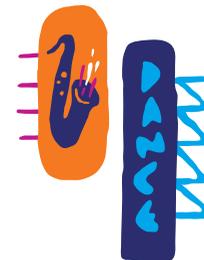
**2.4.2. Evening Activities.** Encourage safe and welcoming evening experiences, including vibrant nightlife districts.

- a) Broaden the invitation to night life areas to a greater variety of people, and encourage more diverse activities.
- Expand day time activities, and introduce new early-evening uses.
  - Explore enhanced amenities and services to increase safety and comfort, such as public washrooms and washroom docents.
  - Incorporate more evening support services (such as food, transportation, information and toilets) to support safe and enjoyable nightlife.

➔ **ACTION:** Promote a safe and welcoming nightlife, by supporting community-based stewardship programs such as “Good Night Out”. (ongoing)

➔ **ACTION:** Develop a Nighttime Economy Management Strategy, including key nightlife areas such as Granville Street and Davie Street.

- Use creative lighting to enhance safety while also creating a memorable sense of place.
- b) In areas that suffer a significant drop-off of activity in the evening (e.g. CBD), explore new evening commercial land-uses (e.g. live entertainment).



## 2.5 Nature and Resilience

Clean water, clean air and biodiversity are basic requirements for a healthy urban landscape. Consider the natural environment, urban hydrology, disaster response and climate resiliency when planning the public realm.

**2.5.1. Ecological Functions.** Integrate ecological functions in public space design.

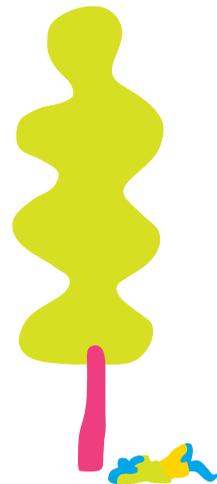
- a) Explore opportunities to align with existing strategies related to re-establishing ecological functions (see Appendix III).
- b) Encourage the use of native and adapted shrubs and ground cover plants species.
- c) Integrate rainwater management techniques that prioritize green surface expression, (e.g. rain gardens) where appropriate, so that natural elements and functions can be seen and experienced by people.
- d) Ensure that tree soil volumes meet current industry and municipal standards and seek opportunities to use rainwater as a water source (e.g. rainwater tree trenches).
- e) Increase the presence of native birds and pollinators with the use of appropriate plant species, and by creating key sources of food and habitat.
- f) Encourage trees and understory planting that supports migratory species patterns and provides food sources.

**2.5.2. Green Network.** Establish a cohesive network of streets and pathways to improve sustainability, increase habitat, and increase tree canopy cover.

- a) Enhance pollinator and bird habitat connections between green spaces and parks, and align with existing strategies.

“In addition to boosting people’s sense of nature connection, daily doses of urban nature deliver the benefits of improved physical, mental and social wellbeing”

- World Health Organization



- b) Strengthen biodiversity corridors and urban forest canopy by planting trees that will mature to a medium to large size.

**2.5.3 Blue-Green Connections.** Networks of park-like corridors that manage water, contribute to the urban forest, and provide active transportation routes.

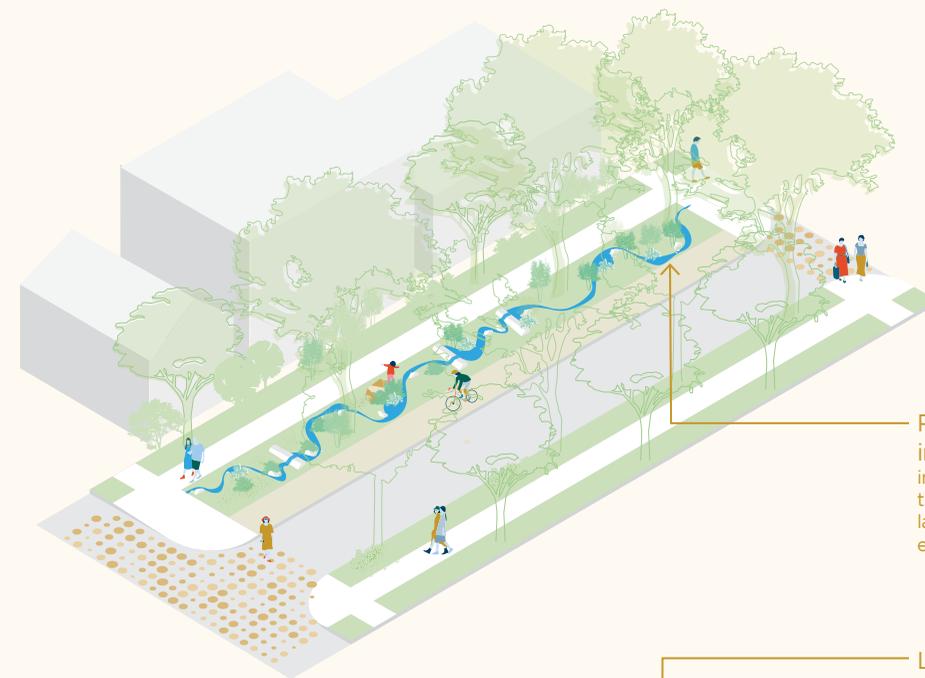
- a) Support natural corridors for pollinators by connecting larger habitat patches within the parks with ecologically diverse horticulture in public spaces.
- b) Integrate green rainwater infrastructure, and design features to have a visible, aesthetic expression of rainwater management in the public realm.
- c) Explore opportunities to provide education and foster innovation through rain friendly design.
- d) Where possible, support maintenance of assets through community-based stewardship, such as the Green Streets volunteer program.
- e) Develop Greenways with enhanced walking and cycling experience to connect people to nature and key destinations.

**ACTION:** Develop Bute Street as a blue-green network corridor.



Permeable sidewalk and integrated green-infrastructure, Barcelona

## Blue-Green Street Design Considerations



Rainwater infrastructure integrated with the associated landscape expression



Larger habitats  
Connect Blue-Green streets with adjacent habitat patches using pollinator-friendly species and design

Stewardship programs and community involvement to support the maintenance and operation of new facilities

### Green Infrastructure for Rainwater.

A water management technique that employs nature-based solutions that seek to replicate the natural water cycle.

**Blue-Green Street Network.** A blue-green network would connect the City's major parks, ecological areas, and other key destinations such as schools and shops with green linkages that work with the natural flow of rainwater across the city. These blue-green connections aim to co-locate habitat, hydrology and active transportation corridors and public spaces to provide a connection to nature within the urban environment.



Tasinge Plads, Copenhagen, Denmark



Hinge Park, Vancouver

**2.5.4. Water as a Resource.** Design spaces to celebrate rainwater and reconnect urban rainwater to the hydrological cycle.

a) Ensure that public realm improvements support the implementation of the Rain City Strategy and Integrated Rainwater Management Plan.

b) Seek opportunities to use rainwater as a source of water for all greenery in new public spaces.

c) Seek opportunities to connect systems for rainwater conveyance and management with the existing green infrastructure network.

d) Encourage absorptive landscapes in the public realm, including plazas and streetscapes:

- Manage rainwater through the use of permeable surfaces.
- Integrate techniques such as rain gardens, rainwater tree trenches, and biofiltration swales.
- Seek opportunities to incorporate rainwater management and water sensitive urban design in other public realm improvement functions, such as traffic calming.

e) Encourage interactive and educational elements in public realm design, to engage the public on the function of rainwater in the urban environment.

f) Encourage private property owners to incorporate green rainwater infrastructure into the design of their landscaping and plazas.

**ACTION:** Explore means to meet the Rain City Strategy rainwater management targets on all new public realm projects.





King Tides at False Creek, Vancouver

**2.5.5. Sea Level Rise Mitigation.** Ensure public spaces are designed to respond to sea level rise.

- a) Explore creative opportunities to integrate flood resilience into the design of the waterfront and parts of the public realm that will be impacted by sea level rise.
- b) Ensure all elements of the waterfront are designed with current sea level rise projections in mind.
- c) Ensure any flood management infrastructure (e.g. seawall) meets current Provincial structural standards and requirements.
- d) Design flood management infrastructure so that it enhances the public realm, and uses a nature-based approach to supporting shoreline habitats and biodiversity.

**2.5.6. Climate Change Resiliency**

- a) **Flood Resiliency.** Design public spaces with rainwater runoff flooding in mind.
- b) **Drought Resiliency.** Explore opportunities to collect rainwater for reuse on site and on a district-wide scale to replace and/or supplement potable water use.

**2.5.7. Heat Island Effect Mitigation.** Incorporate elements that mitigate urban heat island.

- a) Prioritize new street tree planting locations and expanding the tree canopy cover, particularly in tree deficient areas (Refer to Park Board’s VanPlay and the Urban Forest Strategy for priority locations).
- b) Explore opportunities for cooling stations (e.g. water misters) and shaded structures in areas that are more vulnerable to heat.
- c) Ensure generous public access to drinking water, by incorporating new drinking fountains, bottle filling stations and bulk water fill stations, in high demand areas.

**2.5.8. Disaster Readiness.** Design key public spaces that can be used in the event of a public emergency

- a) Explore opportunities for public spaces to function as disaster support hubs where people can initially gather to coordinate efforts and offer assistance to other members of the community; and where City staff and trained volunteers can provide information and services to the public.
- b) Explore the role of public spaces in times of disaster, such as earthquakes and flooding, and provisions required after these incidents. Consider connectivity, location, and neighbourhood functions.

**ACTION:** Explore harvest and reuse of private realm water as a source of street tree irrigation during summer months.





Connecting neighbourhood and Seawall, Vancouver

## 2.6 Connecting People and Places

Ensure that the public space network is well connected and easy to navigate for people walking, rolling and cycling.

**2.6.1. Walking City.** Design streets, sidewalks and walkways to encourage a walking and rolling culture.

- a) Build on the success of Vancouver as a walkable city by supporting and enhancing a high-quality varied walking experience.
- b) Deliver a more connected Downtown by requiring public connector walkways through statutory rights-of-way on private property, particularly on long blocks.
- c) Explore opportunities for sidewalk widening, focusing on high streets and blocks where sidewalks are congested.
- d) Ensure that new developments meet current standards for sidewalk clear zone widths.



“You have to design your streets for everyone. The cities that have safe streets, that are easy to get around, are the ones that will grow and thrive in the 21st century,”

—Janette Sadik-Khan

**ACTION:** Develop a Street Typologies matrix, to categorize streets and clarify their roles in the transportation and public space networks, to help inform transportation and public realm improvement projects. (in progress).

e) Use temporary closure of streets to evaluate the potential benefits and challenges of repurposing select streets as pedestrian-priority routes and places.

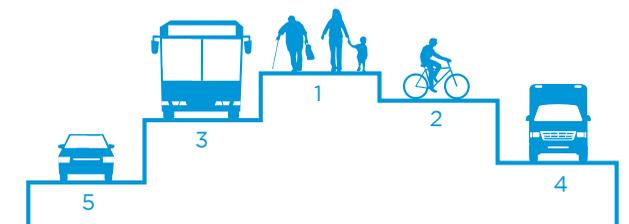
f) Explore innovative approaches to traffic management to achieve optimum balance between functionality, safety, public health, business and public life, including reducing the maximum speed limits.

g) Improve the street crossing experience by prioritizing people moving across high volume intersections on key commercial, blue-green and iconic streets in the network, and investigate crosswalk upgrades.

**2.6.2. Shore to Core.** Enhance walking and cycling connections across the peninsula.

- a) Provide more direct and intuitive connections to the waterfront from the CBD and neighbourhoods, with a specific focus on improving crossings at key intersections.
- b) Provide a wayfinding system that includes signage, landmarks and other cues to improve access between the waterfront, the CBD, and neighbourhoods.

Transportation Hierarchy:  
 1. Pedestrians  
 2. People on Bikes  
 3. Transit  
 4. Goods Movement  
 5. Private Vehicles



**2.6.3. The Seawall Loop.** Complete the Seaside Greenway.

- a) Improve connections for people walking and cycling between CRAB Park and Main Street, and Carrall Street.
- b) Integrate the Seaside Greenway in future Waterfront Station area planning and Gastown public realm improvements.
- c) Explore opportunities for an urban waterfront by Waterfront Station, which would connect the city to the water with gathering spaces, public access and programming.
- d) Develop 'anchor points' where the Seawall meets key streets that support wayfinding and provide memorable places.

**ACTION:** Deliver near-term public realm projects that reinforce the identities of the high streets on the Downtown Loop, and strengthen shore-to-shore connections, including Robson-Alberni Street improvements, Bute-Robson Plaza, and Bute Street .

**2.6.4. The Downtown Loop.** Enhance the pedestrian experience of the Robson, Denman, Davie and Granville high streets (identified in the Vancouver Greenways Plan and the West End Community Plan).

- a) Strengthen walking connections to link the four high streets and key destinations through incremental, strategic public realm improvements.
- b) Explore an enhanced wayfinding strategy that is functional, intuitive and accessible, and also helps define the Downtown Loop as a unified entity.
- c) Explore options to use public realm design elements to animate and unify the Loop, including a lighting strategy.
- d) Engage BIAs and communities in developing visions for the public realm design of each high street.

**2.6.5. Local and Regional Connections.** Ensure the public space network connects with surrounding neighbourhoods and the regional greenways network identified in the Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy (2017).

**2.6.6. Clear and Intuitive Wayfinding.** Integrate wayfinding to make it easy and enjoyable for people to move through, navigate and discover.

- a) Use accessible wayfinding methods which consider the needs and abilities of all users.
- b) Increase legibility of the public realm, by using distinct points of reference, such as clear sightlines to landmark buildings, natural features and public artworks.
- c) Integrate wayfinding cues, and signage, at key locations along main pedestrian streets and near key destinations.

**2.6.7. Celebrate Places of Arrival.** Enhance the arrival experience at entry points to Downtown.

- a) Enhance transit station areas and transit stops as vital parts of the public space network, and gateways to the Downtown.
  - Provide seating options that are comfortable for 5, 10, and 20 minutes.
  - Provide weather protection.
  - Consider activating edges with services, such as refreshment kiosks.
  - Consider end of trip or mid-trip amenities such as litter receptacles, bicycle parking, and washrooms.
- b) Explore opportunities to enhance the arrival experience, for people walking and cycling, at bridges, key intersections at the waterfront, and other key entry points to the Downtown.

**Connectivity.**  
Also look at Park Board's vision for a connected network of parks recreation and nature in VanPlay.





View from Harbour Green Park, Vancouver

**2.6.8. Lively Laneways.** Enhance laneways as public spaces, while maintaining their role as service routes.

- a) Consider ways to improve lane environments as attractive pedestrian routes, while maintaining essential services such as loading, parking, fire access, and deliveries.
  - Ensure infrastructure will support any proposed pedestrian and place-making uses, including consideration of underground utilities or lighting.
  - Consider naming all laneways, as in the West End, with street signs to improve navigation and familiarity.
  
- b) Explore opportunities to identify and develop select laneways as local public spaces, particularly in areas that lack access to public spaces.
  - Explore active uses, including retail, cafes and restaurant patios.
  - Explore options to consolidate and streamline services (e.g. garbage and recycling collection), to expand the available areas and hours for pedestrian and place-making uses.
  
- c) Work with community groups to address displacement related to laneway upgrades, including impacts to binning and hard-sleeping.

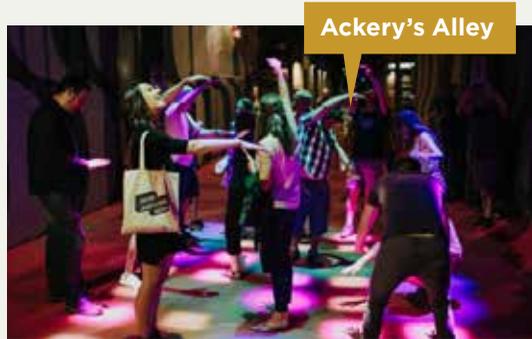


Commercial pedestrian-priority laneway, Tokyo

# Laneway Activation

Vancouver has examples of activated laneways including Alley Oop, Mole Hill and Ackery's Alley.

## Vancouver laneways



Ackery's Alley



Mole Hill

### Green Infrastructure

Mole Hill laneway has been reduced in width from 10 m to 6 m. This space was used to create a community garden with edible plants and a water feature which retains and recycles stormwater.

There are a number of international examples of activated laneways that incorporate programming, art, events and commercial activity.

## Downtown Melbourne laneways



Centre Place



Hosier Lane

### Art

Hosier Lane is known for edgy, graffiti-covered walls and art installations. It has an off-the-beaten-path kind of feel, like you're discovering their displays of artistic ability for the first time.

## Alley Network Project, Seattle



changing perception

### Meet Your Neighbours

Events that fill the alleys with people are great human-scale places to mingle with strangers or get to know your neighbours. The Alley Network Project has successfully transformed the way people view what alleys can be used for.



event space

### Community Watch Party

The Alley Network Project plans temporary activation of alleys across Seattle to promote local arts, commerce, and healthy living. Projects have included art installations, film screenings, sports viewing parties, and performance art shows.

## Balmy Alley, San Francisco



expression of the community

### Voicing Community Concerns

Located within the heart of the culturally diverse Mission District, Balmy Alley has been a venue for artists to express their outrage over human rights, politics, and more recently, gentrification.



mix of fixed and temporary art

### In Constant Flux

Murals are updated or changed frequently, so the experience of the alley is more like an art gallery than a single art piece. A nearby located non-profit curates and offers guided tours of the alley

# 3

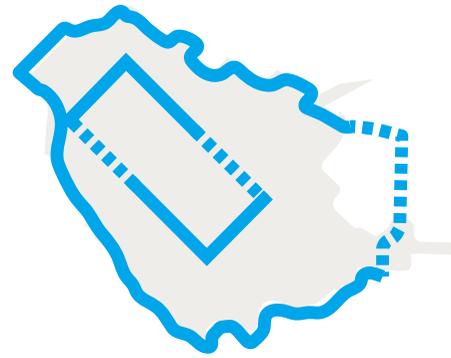
## Delivering the Strategy

This section highlights the *Key Moves* and *Downtown Public Space Framework* that will provide spatial direction to achieve the Strategy's values and goals. It also highlights short-term and long-term opportunities for public realm improvements in the Downtown.



## 3.1 Key Moves

The three Key Moves represent a set of integrated spatial transformations that build on the Downtown assets, guide how the public space network will be expanded, improved and connected.



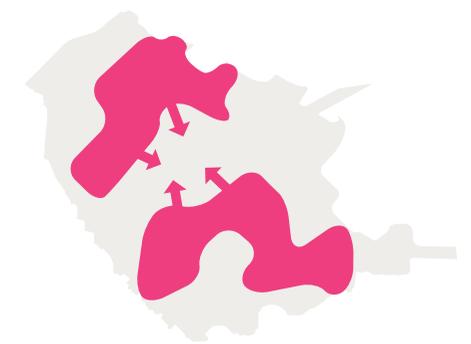
### Complete the Loops

The completed Seawall Loop and Downtown Loop (Davie, Denman, Robson and Granville Streets) provide a strong framework for the Downtown public space network, and connects most of the Downtown's key open spaces and amenities. Gaps in the loops should be filled to create a continuous, coherent pedestrian experience that encourages more active uses and attracts a broader range of people.



### Connect Shore-to-Shore

In many ways Downtown Vancouver, is defined by its relationship to the water. Taking advantage of this remarkable natural amenity, Shore-to-Shore connections run across the peninsula, connecting neighbourhoods to the shore with active transportation routes and natural corridors that support rainwater management, biodiversity and habitat.



### Fill in the Gaps

Currently, most public spaces in the Downtown withstand heavy use and must fill multiple functions. The addition of new public spaces and renewal/expansion of existing spaces will provide more equitable access across the peninsula, and ensure that all residents and employees are able to enjoy a range of public spaces and experiences (ie. "function") in their local neighbourhoods.



Downtown Vancouver Skyline and Waterfront

## 3.2 Downtown Public Space Framework

Several public space projects and planning initiatives are currently underway across the Downtown. The Strategy builds on these, and the Public Space Framework, which also highlights new priorities that will require further study, investment and community partnerships.

### Existing Public Space Network

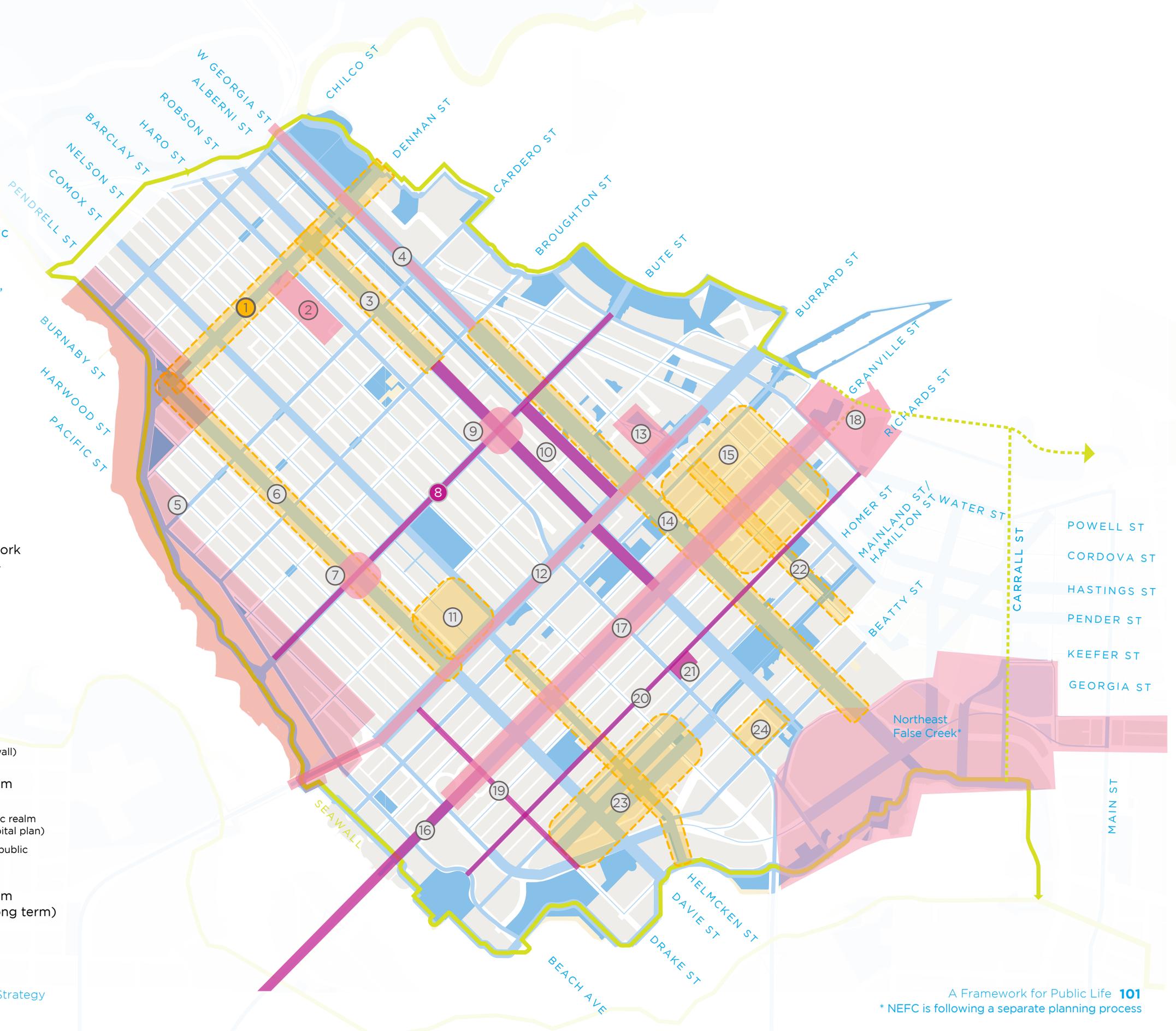
-  Key public open spaces - parks, plazas, etc.
-  Ceremonial Street
-  High Street
-  Greenway
-  Pedestrian Connector
-  Local Street
-  Seaside Greenway (Seawall)

### Opportunities for Public Realm Improvements (short term)

-  Areas with upcoming public realm improvements (current capital plan)
-  Upcoming study areas for public realm planning

### Opportunities for Public Realm Improvements (medium to long term)

-  Opportunities for public realm improvements



# Opportunities for Public Realm Improvements Legends and Names

- ① Denman Street Public Realm Improvements
- ② West End Community Centre Renewal
- ③ Lower Robson Public Realm Improvements
- ④ West Georgia Complete Street
- ⑤ West End Waterfront Master Plan
- ⑥ Davie Street Public Realm Improvements
- ⑦ Heart of Davie Village
- ⑧ Bute Street Greenway
- ⑨ Bute-Robson Plaza
- ⑩ Robson Village
- ⑪ Former St. Paul's Hospital's site Public Realm Opportunities
- ⑫ Burrard Street Public Realm Improvements
- ⑬ Burrard Station Area Public Realm Improvements
- ⑭ Georgia Street Public Realm Improvements
- ⑮ New public space opportunities
- ⑯ Granville Bridge Connector
- ⑰ Granville Street Refresh
- ⑱ Waterfront Station Area Planning
- ⑲ Drake Street Public Realm Improvements
- ⑳ Helmcken Street Public Realm Improvements
- ㉑ Richards Street Public Realm Improvements
- ㉒ New Park at Smithe and Richards
- ㉓ Dunsmuir Street Public Realm Improvements
- ㉔ Yaletown High Streets Public Realm Improvements
- ㉕ 800 Beatty Block Public Realm Improvements
- ㉖ Northeast False Creek Community Plan and Park



Canada Day on the West End

# Glossary

## **2SLGBTQIA**

Umbrella acronym to refer to Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual. We acknowledge that this acronym has its limitations and we don't mean to exclude any sexual and/or gender minorities.

## **Accessibility**

Accessibility is the practice of making services and resources available to people who experience disabilities. Disability is defined in different ways.

Universal access allows one to enter a building or public area, find one's bearings and adequately make one's way, as well as make full use of the services provided to the public, supported by appropriate communications and information tools.

## **Blue-Green Street**

Networks of park-like corridors that manage water, contribute to the urban forest, and provide active transportation routes. Blue-green systems seek to protect the ecological, hydrological, and social values of the urban landscape and water cycle, and to provide resilient measures to address climate change and flood management, increase connectivity, and enhance access to nature.

## **CBD**

Vancouver's Central Business District.

## **Climate adaptation**

Actions taken to respond to the impacts of climate change by taking advantage of opportunities or reducing the associated risks.

## **Climate mitigation**

Ongoing efforts to limit climate change through the reductions of greenhouse gases emissions into the atmosphere.

## **Climate resilience**

The ability to absorb stresses and maintain function, and to adapt and evolve in the face of impacts from climate change.

## **Ecological functions**

The set of processes or services that a specific ecosystem deliver.

## **Equity**

Canada Council recognizes that "Equity is a principle and process that promotes just conditions for all persons to fully participate in society.

It recognizes that while all people have the right to be treated equally, not all experience equal access to the same resources, opportunities or benefits.

Achieving equality is not simply about treating individuals or groups in the same way, but may require the use of specific measures to ensure fairness.

## **Green rainwater infrastructure (GRI)**

A suite of rainwater management tools that use both engineered and nature based solutions to protect, restore, and mimic the natural water cycle. (For technical definition, see the Rainwater Management Bulletin).

## **Intersectionality**

The understanding that the impacts of inequity are compounded by all forms of discrimination related to gender, race, disability, language, immigration status, income, age, ability, sexual orientation and more.

## **Livability**

The sum of the factors that add up to a community's quality of life -including the built and natural environments (including functioning infrastructure

and utility services), economic prosperity, social stability and equity, public health, educational opportunity, and cultural, entertainment and recreation possibilities.

## **Parklet**

A parklet is typically an extended platform over a parking space, and can include benches, tables, chairs, landscaping, and bike parking.

## **Pavement-to-plaza**

Is a City of Vancouver program that transforms streets into engaging public spaces for people. Some great examples downtown are Jim Deva Plaza and the Bute-Robson Plaza.

## **Placemaking**

Approach to public space design that aims to enhance people's health, sense of community, sense of belonging, happiness, and well-being.

## **Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS)**

Privately owned public spaces are open to the public, but owned by a private entity, typically a commercial property developer. These include plazas and open spaces adjoining commercial and residential properties, pathways or mews, patio spaces and furnished setbacks.

## **Programming & Activation**

Both passive programming (such as moveable seating and interactive public art) and active programming (such as performances and outdoor markets) contribute to the success of public spaces. The events, activities, and recreation that occurs within public spaces.

## **Public Life**

Public life is the shared social and physical experience of the city, created by people when they live their lives outside of their

homes, workplaces and cars. It is the everyday life that unfolds in streets, plazas, parks, and spaces between buildings.

## **Public Realm**

Public realm has a broader meaning than "public space", as it also includes privately owned public spaces, and the building façades, storefronts, displays, and patios that shape the experience of public spaces.

It also incorporates streetscape elements such as street furniture, lighting, public art and distinctive sidewalk treatments. Generally everything that can be seen and experienced at pedestrian eye level. The sum of these parts contributes to the public realm, and the overall experience and attractiveness of a public space.

## **Public Space**

Public Spaces are all places publicly owned or in public use, accessible and enjoyable by all, including parks, playgrounds, plazas, mini-parks, parklets, streets, sidewalks, laneways, pathways, and the seawall. To a limited extent, government buildings which are open to the public, such as public libraries are public spaces, although they tend to have restricted areas and greater limits upon use.

## **Resiliency**

The capacity to recover from eventualities or impacts.

## **Temporal**

The temporal quality of public spaces describes the different and flexible uses imbued in a space throughout the day, week and seasons, including temporary uses of spaces including trial plazas, parklets and summer patios.

**Setback**

It is the minimum distance from the building to the adjacent property line. In this strategy, the setbacks are seen as opportunities to create more and better public spaces.

**Statutory Right-of-Way**

Is a legal agreement that allows a government agency to access private property.

**Stewardship**

Management and oversight of resources and assets. The stewardship of open spaces range from the sense of ownership to effective management and programming.

**Stickiness**

It is a measurement of how spaces are successful in inviting people to stay - we measure it with the ratio of people lingering to people passing by. (e.g. Mainland Street has a 1 to 4 ratio on a summer weekend, where Times Square in New York City has a ratio 1 to 5)

**Temporal**

The temporal quality of public spaces describes the different and flexible uses imbued in a space throughout the day, week and seasons, including temporary uses of spaces including trial plazas, parklets and summer patios.

**VIVA Vancouver**

Is a City of Vancouver program that works in collaboration with community groups, local businesses and regional partners to create great places by modifying road space and open spaces; test new ideas and remove barriers that discourage public life; and invite people to slow down, sit, relax, connect with friends, people watch, etc.

**Vulnerable communities**

Vulnerable communities face historic or contemporary barriers to economic and social opportunities and a healthy environment. The principal factors in community vulnerability are income, race or ethnicity, age, language ability, and geographic location.

**Walkability**

Measure of how a neighbourhood or area is to walking or rolling. Factors that affect walkability are: land use, existence and quality of sidewalk, sense of safety and security, pedestrian network, traffic conditions, accessibility, etc.

**Wayfinding**

A set of infrastructure to aid in identifying one's position and defining/following a route.

## Acknowledgements

The Downtown Public Space Strategy is the product of the tremendous dedication, hard work, and input from nearly all City departments, as well as an immense number of stakeholder and community organizations, officials, experts, and volunteers who contributed their time and energy to help shape this innovative strategy. This would not have been possible without the help of the thousands of downtown residents, employees and visitors who provided invaluable input, insights and ideas about their public spaces and public life at open houses, workshops, walking tours, speaking events, online surveys and through the Public Space and Public Life Study.

### Community Groups, Stakeholders and Other Organizations

Downtown Vancouver BIA  
West End BIA  
Robson BIA  
Yaletown BIA  
Tourism Vancouver  
Vancouver Public Spaces Network  
Society for Children and Youth of BC  
West End Senior's Network  
BOMA (Building Owners and Managers Association of British Columbia)  
Vancouver Coastal Health  
Directions Youth Services  
Planning Institute of British Columbia  
British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects  
Environmental Youth Alliance  
HUB Cycling  
PavCo - Vancouver Convention Centre  
Active Transportation Policy Council  
School of Community and Regional Planning - UBC  
Urbanarium

### City Advisory Groups

Women's Advisory Committee  
Seniors Advisory Committee  
2SLGBTQ2+ Advisory Committee  
Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee  
Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee

### Volunteers

Thank you to all of the volunteers who contributed throughout the project.

## City of Vancouver Team

### Leadership Team and Steering Committee

Gil Kelley, General Manager, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability  
Lon LaClaire, General Manager, Engineering  
Margaret Wittgens, Deputy General Manager, Engineering  
Neil Hrushowy, Community Planning  
Paul Storer, Director, Transportation  
Lisa Parker, Senior Branch Head, Street Activities  
Dale Bracewell, Senior Branch Head, Transportation Planning  
Dave Hutch, Director, Park Planning and Development, Parks Board  
Doug Shearer, Manager, Planning Policy and Environment, Parks Board

### Project Team

Thomas Daley  
Danielle Wiley  
Fausto Kadomoto Inomata  
Austin Norrie  
Sam Cameron

## Production Credits

### Graphic Design and Illustration:

Jeff Kulak · jeffkulak.com

### Photography:

Allison Boulier · alisonboulier.carbonmade.com

### Additional Photography

Tibor Mate  
Aaron Lao  
Yuichi Watanabe

### Consultant Team

Gehl Studio · gehlpeople.com

Stephen Irving Communications · stephenirving.ca

Licker Geospatial Consulting Co. · lgeo.co

Thomas Daley  
Planner - Downtown  
Planning, Urban Design, and Sustainability  
City of Vancouver | 525 W 10th Ave  
604.871.6270

Danielle Wiley  
Senior Public Space Planner,  
M.ARCH | PHD  
Street Activities, Engineering Services  
City of Vancouver | 507 W Broadway  
604.873.7757

**Like all cities, Vancouver's public spaces — the plazas, squares, streets, laneways, pathways, parks and waterfront — are where public life happens.** These are the places of daily interaction, and the spaces where we work, play, create, explore and connect. Often, we can overlook how important public space is in shaping our lives, and how its quality and functionality can support our daily activities.

The Downtown Public Space Strategy provides a framework to shape the public realm in Downtown Vancouver over the next 30 years. It also demonstrates the application of this approach to current and future public space policy and project development in Vancouver.

