

**Public Space for Public Good:  
Making Privately Owned Public Spaces in Vancouver More  
Inclusive and Supportive**

by

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kmaq'i,  
the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.  
We are all Treaty people.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the influence and effects of privatisation to support arguments for improved policy regarding Privately Owned Public Space (POPS). In Vancouver, BC city agencies negotiate POPS and other contributions from developers in exchange for density allowances. This private-public partnership is used to strengthen the public realm without substantial cost, however the current policy has resulted in POPS that are exclusionary, underutilized, and are under surveillance. This thesis takes a planning approach to address these issues by providing updated policies and guidelines that work for the public interest. These updated documents prioritize amenity in public space and add requirements involving needs assessment exercises, diverse programming, and shared management structures. These documents act as the framework to redesign an existing POPS in downtown Vancouver. The resulting design features civic amenity and supportive spaces within a large plaza that is welcoming for all, and empowers the diverse citizens of the city.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Urban public space is where planning and urban design meets architecture. A well-used public space showcases a city's identity by balancing citizens' goals for vibrant, supportive spaces with developers' need to obtain a return on their investment. Vancouver presents a valuable lesson in how a city can realize both objectives. It is a beautiful city with many pleasing spaces for the public, however most of these are privately owned public spaces (POPS). These are public spaces built and managed by private entities in exchange for greater development allowances by the city (Rahi 2012). Many of these public spaces are aesthetically pleasing, yet they sit empty most of the day, are under constant surveillance, and public activities are monitored and restricted. They are also rarely designed to support the needs of a diverse urban population.

Currently, the City of Vancouver conceives of public spaces as places where people meet, entertain, and have fun (City of Vancouver 2020), but not as places that can serve the needs of unhoused or marginalized populations, even though those are the groups who spend most of their day in the public realm. Such contradictory and varying views regarding the nature and purpose of public spaces, make them a complex area of study. They are also an important and relevant area of study because public spaces are ground zero for social interactions between all citizens of a city.

Vancouver's POPS present a rare opportunity to influence public space design through policy. In this thesis, I argue that the key issue is not whether they are privately or publicly owned, but what conditions will incentive the developers,

designers, and managers of these public spaces more likely to act in the public interest. I believe a more inclusive conception of public space and “community amenity”, and design guidelines that support the needs of the broader public, can turn Vancouver’s POPS into more inclusive and supportive spaces for all inhabitants of that city.

***Abbreviations of Commonly Used Terms***

POPS: Privately-Owned Public Space

PPP: Public-Private Partnership

CAC: Community Amenity Contribution

## Chapter 2: Privatisation of Public Space

### History of and Context of Privatisation

In the past several decades, city governments globally have shifted away from providing state-owned services to contracting public services as a way to balance their budgets (Goodman and Loveman 1991). In these Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), cities partner with the private sector in the planning, development, maintenance, and management of public spaces such as plazas, parks, and streets. “The social rationale for this exchange is that the public is better off in a physical environment replete with public spaces and bigger buildings than in one with fewer public spaces and smaller buildings” (Kayden 2005, 177). However, governments often lack significant understanding of public participation when entering PPPs and this results in a reduction of public amenities and accountability (Ntakana & Mbanga 2020).

Supporters of privatisation claim it will boost the efficiency and quality of government services and activities, reduce taxes, shrink size of government, and cut costs and increase customer satisfaction because of the profit-seeking goals of private owners (Goodman & Loveman 1991). However, private owners are profit-oriented and rarely act in the public interest. This is because privatisation involves the replacement of one set of managers entrusted by the stakeholder-citizens with another set who are accountable primarily to investors (Goodman & Loveman 1991).

## The Problem with Privatising Public Space

This thesis focuses on Privately-Owned Public Space (POPS), an in-kind contribution which is a form of Public-Private Partnership. POPS occur when cities give developers density allowances in exchange for public space. POPS are seen as a mutually beneficial collaboration between public and private sectors but it's questionable if this trade-off is equitable. The developers get extra density which increases their profit, and the city benefits from less financial strain — but the public space that results from this partnership is usually lacking in social value. Instead, such seemingly 'public' spaces are often highly controlled and monitored, and designed to exclude certain sectors of the population (Rahi 2012).

Such privatisation of public space is a relatively recent phenomena. Throughout the history of cities, activities such as eating, bathing, and laundry were conceived as part of the civic urban space, not the private dwelling. However, in recent decades access to amenities has become more exclusive and privatised as cities move towards private ownership and PPPs. Privatisation is a modern issue and has culminated in public space becoming irrelevant and inaccessible for many urban inhabitants, especially within the more vulnerable in the public realm (Sennett 1977,6). As a direct result of this recent shift, Ntakana & Mbanga (2012) argue that public spaces are at risk of becoming “white elephants”. This term refers to spaces that are not viewed as valuable by the community and develop into being redundant and underused (Ntakana & Mbanga 2012). Furthermore, Goodman & Loveman posit that the key question is not the ownership but what conditions will make managers more likely to act in the public interest. This highlights the fact



Fig. 1: Barriers to public access in POPS around Vancouver

that if the new owners can be made to answer to the same stakeholders the ownership becomes less relevant. This suggests that most people aren't aware of the transition of ownership of public space within the city unless they see signage controlling the use of those spaces. Although this physical barrier is blurred the distinction is critical, as the ownership affects the accessibility and inclusiveness of spaces (Fry 2022). Privatisation has negative effects on social inclusion and interaction, Individual liberties and sustainable spatial settings (Nemeth 2011).

### **A Short History of Public Space in Vancouver and the Emergence of POPS**

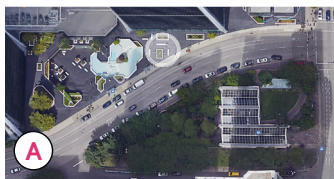
Incorporated in 1887, the City of Vancouver underwent multiple building booms until the stock market crash of 1929 resulted in a 35-year period of little change (City of Vancouver 2022). It wasn't until the late 1960s and 1970s that the city emerged as a financial and business centre and began to grow rapidly. Citizens too, were involved in setting the direction of urban growth, defeating proposals for new freeways and promoting the preservation of historical districts and increased public spaces.

In the 1970s and 80s the City of Vancouver began to enter into informal PPPs. These were mostly informal negotiations with developers to permit larger developments in exchange for greater building setbacks or addition of plazas (Rahi 2012).

In the 1980s, spurred by its selection as the host city for the World Expo of 1986, the City of Vancouver embarked on a robust, municipally driven development plan, adding significant public infrastructure such as BC Place, a 60,000-seat arena, the transformation of the former industrial lands

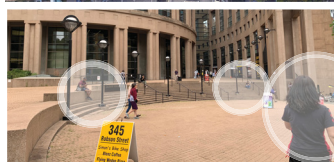
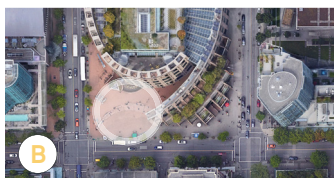


### PRIVATELY OWNED



Very little activity in plaza mid-day in optimal weather. Looks public but is not = Welcoming but exclusionary

### PUBLICLY OWNED



Same day in public plaza off of library. Useful programs + Inclusive space = Activity (even with lack of investment in infrastructure)

Fig. 2: Comparison of Privately and Publically owned spaces show inclusivity makes for useful spaces more than investment in basic aesthetic design (base aerial images from Google Earth 2020)

of False Creek into a residential neighbourhood with parks and civic amenities, and the construction of the city-wide SkyTrain rail system. It also began to develop formal plans, codes, and policies in this period, creating its first Central Area Plan in 1991 (City of Vancouver 2022). New legislation in this period enabled the city to introduce development cost levies (DCLs) on all new development in order to fund new parks, childcare, affordable housing, and expanding roads and city infrastructure. The Community Amenity Contribution (CAC) policy and system was developed later by city council as an addition to the DCLs, targeting a plethora of community objectives (City of Vancouver 2022).

## POPS Policy today

The City of Vancouver defines public spaces as:

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. (City of Vancouver, 2017)

Vancouver is unique in that many of its 'public' spaces were formed as POPS and are not municipally owned or maintained (Fig. 3). They are open to the public, but typically owned by a commercial property developer. These include plazas and open spaces adjoining commercial and residential properties, pathways or mews, patio spaces and furnished setbacks (City of Vancouver 2017). POPS straddle the boundary of what is public and private. According to Ntakana & Mbanga, "this is a confused term meant to describe a confused arrangement of operations. It leaves ample ambiguities in its regulation and management."



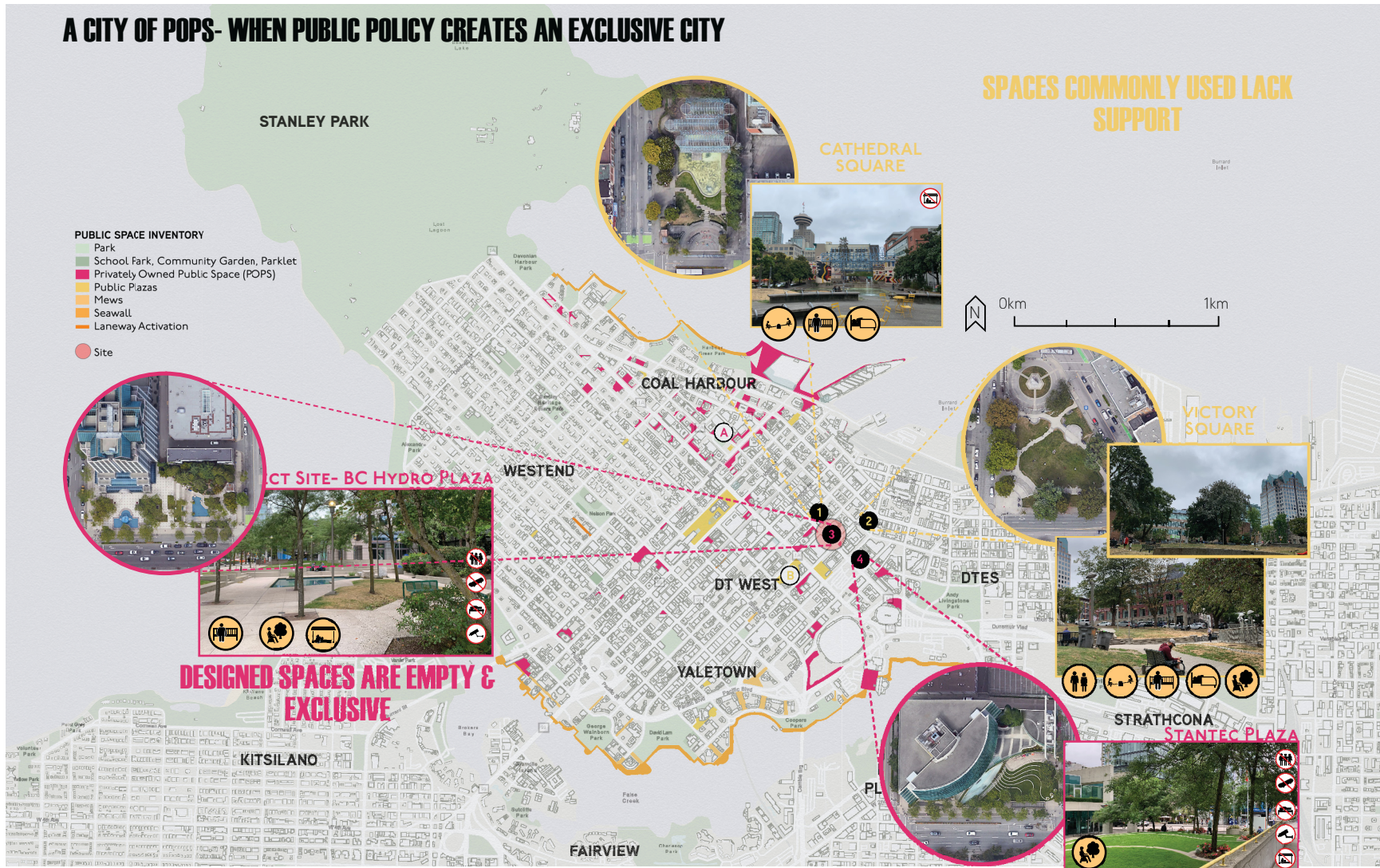


Fig. 3: The predominance of pink on the map shows the majority of Vancouver's urban public space is privately owned (layers from City of Vancouver 2018 and base layers from Cadmapper n.d.).

Most POPS are in plazas dating back to the 1970s and 1980s, established through informal negotiations at that time. Prior to 1989, the Zoning and Development By-Law of 1957 (No. 3575) gave city planning officials a large amount of discretion for each major development. For the public, POPS serve to offset the negative impacts of increased density, such as street congestion, pollution, and loss of sunlight (Rahi 2012). Today, POPS are created through Community Amenity Contributions (CACs), which are one of three types of development contributions. Development contributions are one of City of Vancouver's main funding sources for city projects, along with property tax and partner contributions. The three development contributions are defined below.

#### **CACs**

- In-kind or cash contributions provided by property developers when City Council grants development rights through rezoning.
- Determined through a CAC target and/or negotiated approach.

#### ***Density Bonus Zoning***

- Applies to all developments seeking additional density
- Flat rate contribution per square foot of 'bonus density' to be built.

#### ***Development Cost Levies***

- Applies to all developments
- Flat rate contribution per square foot of floor space to be built.

Vancouver's policy is based on the principle that new development should pay its fair share of growth-related costs and the city recognizes that partnerships like PPPs help them deliver and maintain the wide array of facilities

in their extensive recreation system are fundamental to making a healthy city for all (City of Vancouver 2021).

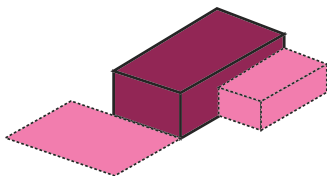


Fig. 4: Community Amenity Contributions (CACs)



Fig. 5: Development Cost Levies (DCLs)

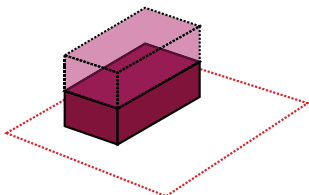


Fig. 6: Density Bonus Zoning

Of the three development contributions, CACs are the only ones with the option for in-kind contributions, hence they have the most effect on built form and privatization in the city. The chart on the following page shows the breakdown of where the contributions have been allocated to expand public facilities and infrastructure. CACs are often plazas, but can also take the form of affordable housing, childcare facilities, community facilities, transportation, or arts and culture spaces. Fig. 7 shows that only 9% of CACs since 2012 are POPS but they still represent a majority of Vancouver’s public space (City of Vancouver 2021). Arts and cultural spaces can include offices where non-profit organisations are brought on as users, partners, or owners. This involvement presents a third party to invigorate and support vibrant public space.

City of Vancouver provides growth related amenities through 3 the policy tools above.

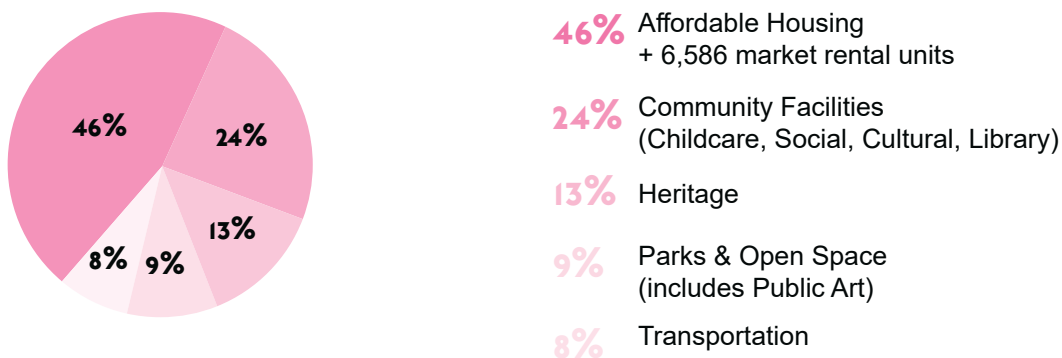


Fig. 7: In kind contributions by type Although Parks & Open space are not a large percent, the amount of public spaces that are POPS show how influential they are.



## **A Rare Opportunity**

While Vancouver's goals align with that of a vibrant, inclusive city, the current state of POPS shows the consequences of privatisation, as these spaces are not as inclusive as their public counterparts. In principle, public spaces should be accessible to everyone regardless of social status, mobility, or age. Although the private owners of POPS legally cede the right to exclude anyone from these spaces, in practice this is not always the case and the degree to which these spaces are truly public is contingent on the management practices of each owner (Rahi 2012).

I argue the key question is not ownership of POPS but what conditions will make managers more likely to act in the public interest. Joseph Fry, founding principal of Hapa Collaborative, a landscape and urban design practice in Vancouver, believes the result of many challenges is due to lack of commitment. Referring to the prioritization of transportation projects over the public realm, he says "We have done a terrible job of putting the cost of public realm in perspective to everything we invest in as citizens and an even worse job of demonstrating the disproportionate positive impact of public realm on civic life" (Fry 2022).

For these reasons, Vancouver presents a rare opportunity to influence public space design through policy framework around CACs, and the design and management of POPS. PPPs, if leveraged properly, can use financially motivated developers to reimagine POPS as more inclusive, amenity-rich spaces that mitigate the problems of privatisation within the city, instead of adding to them. Astute landowners already understand the value of applying the principles of good design and see value in providing ongoing programming,



Fig. 8: An unhoused person's belongings, a 3 minute walk from site.

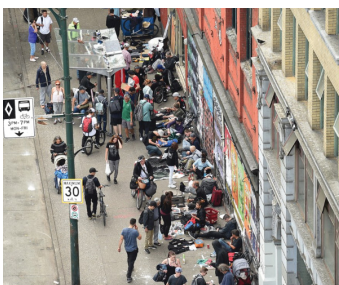


Fig. 9: Large tent encampment on East Hastings Street, less than a 10 minute walk from site (Toulgoet, 2019).



Fig. 10: Encampment with 100+ tents at Oppenheimer Park before residents were moved into BC Housing (Toulgoet, 2019).

Privatisation has resulted in undesirable public spaces in Vancouver where marginalised populations gather, and live. These encampments have been forcefully removed as recent as April 2023, for the one shown in Fig. 9.

management, and maintenance of these spaces as it brings users and profit to the owners, however the inherent value of vibrant spaces needs to be demonstrated to those who don't see it (Fry 2022).

### ***The Need for Inclusive Civic Amenities***

Most well-designed urban public spaces are vibrant social spaces, but they are often designed for a narrow set of users and activities. This thesis demands more of urban public spaces — that they be designed to support the daily needs of marginalized populations, such as alternative programs and life-sustaining amenities.

The increasing severity of the Vancouver homeless crisis can be traced by examining the federal government funding patterns. Before 1980, the federal government made significant investments into the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), which supported affordable and accessible urban housing across the country (Gaetz 2010). This funding was cut in the 1980s, when the federal government transferred responsibility for housing to the provinces, affecting both housing and social programs available to the vulnerable sectors of the public (Gaetz 2010). The result was an exponential increase in the homeless population of Vancouver over the past four decades, from 600 persons in 1999 to over 3600 persons in 2020 (BC Non-Profit Housing Association 2020). The alarming growth rate of homelessness in the city is a stark reflection of the urgency of reforming the existing POPS system to better serve vulnerable members of society by providing key amenities.

The prevalence of POPS in Vancouver has faced the city with a massive crisis of a large unhoused population

living in streets and parks, and who are not served by the majority of the 'public' spaces in the city. In the summer of 2022, for example, the city's fire marshal had to step in and dismantle a large tent community on the sidewalk of East Hastings Street, just outside of downtown. More inclusive and supportive public space cannot solve the issue of homelessness, but more mindful design of the needs of our vulnerable populations can help mitigate the negative experience of living within the 'public' space.

### Inventory and Prevalence of POPS

Over the course of several months in 2023, I visited and inventoried the amenities available in different public spaces in downtown Vancouver. The privations caused by privatisation were evident. The amenities I focused on are shown below.

An inventory of amenities in a publicly owned and a privately-owned public space can be seen in Fig. 12. The public open spaces show unhoused people living on city-owned property. The icons in red are key amenities not provided or actively discouraged with signage.

Publicly owned Nelson Park had a public washroom that was out of order but replaced by a portable toilet. It had

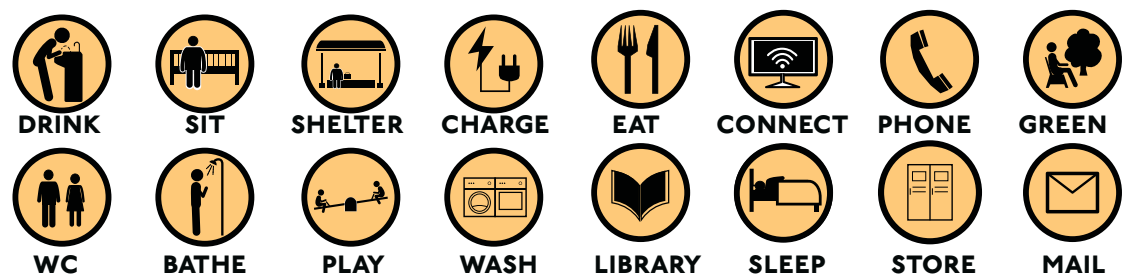


Fig. 11: Icons representing the types of amenity inventoried throughout the city.

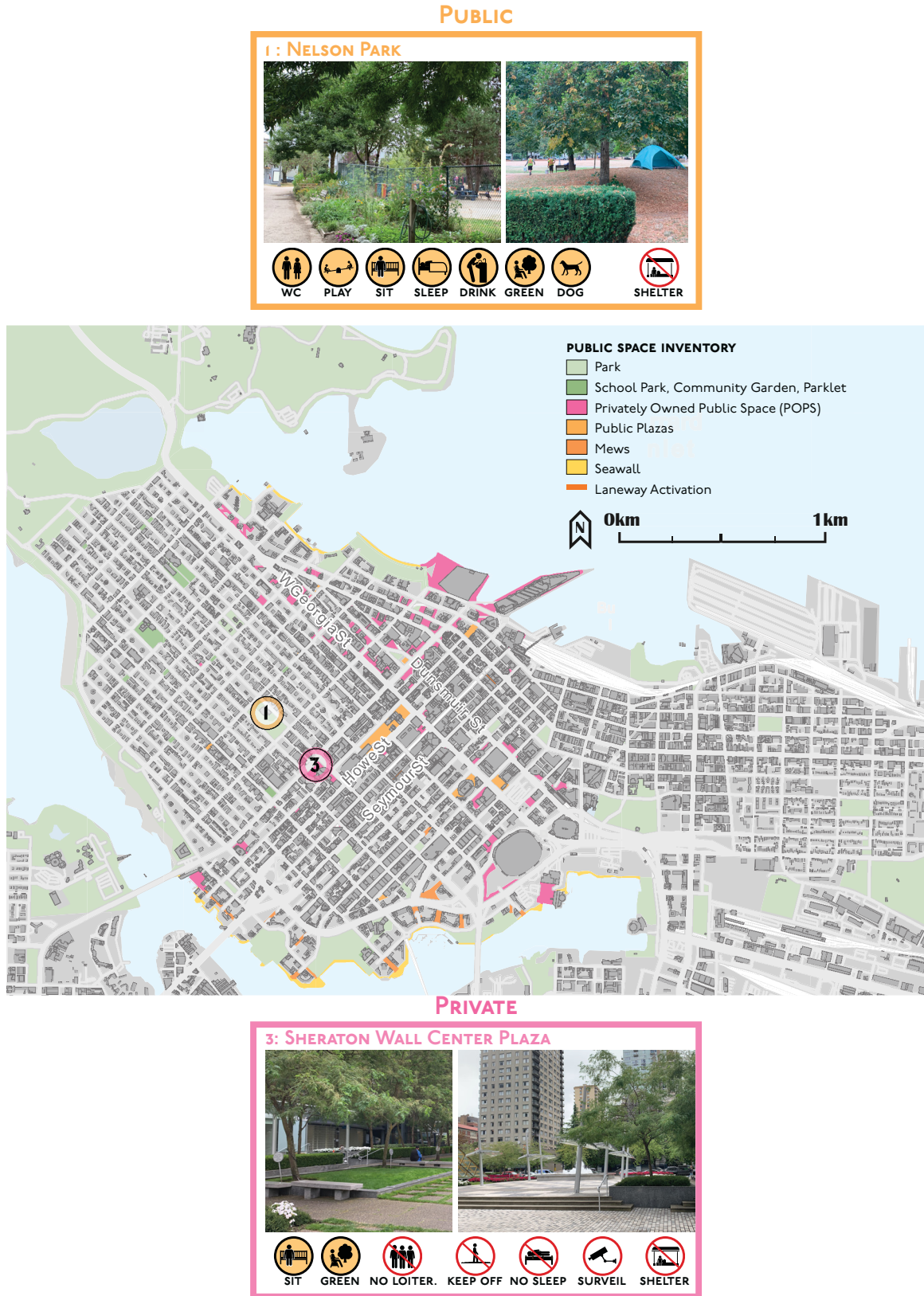


Fig. 12: Amenity inventory of existing public spaces in the city. Public spaces lack investment, resources and upkeep, where private spaces lack effort (layers from City of Vancouver 2018 and base layers from Cadmapper n.d.).



a water/mist station and few tents. It also had a park, day care, and playground, supporting a variety of users. During my visit, there were always people sitting, meeting with friends, and kids playing.

POPS generally showed a much less diverse use of space and fewer people within. At the Sheraton Wall Center, has one of the most controlled plazas in the city. The grass is for show only, evidenced by signs reminding you not to walk, sit, or let your dog on the grass. The only amenities are benches. Every time I visited these two plazas, they had less than five people in them, even in the middle of a summer day. Fig. 8 shows the POPS adjacent to publicly owned Cathedral Square and Victory Square. Even in the following aerial you can observe the limited activity within the POPS compared to the adjacent public spaces. In Fig. 3 more private and public spaces are surveyed including the selected site for this thesis. The BC Hydro Plaza at 333 Dunsmuir Street had a few people sitting and one person arranging their bags and changing (likely only allowed because the office tower is currently vacant).

This inventory demonstrates that POPS severely limit public activities. Truly inclusive public spaces have been pushed away from valuable real estate, and only through this neglect and marginalization are they permitted to be inhabited. Unhoused populations currently live in these spaces, showing that they are welcoming, but in their current state undervalued and unsafe.

Vancouver's POPS also fall short in meeting the needs of downtown residents who are seniors, children, and those whose working schedules don't conform to the 9 to 5 norm of the 1980s. These populations also need more inclusive

public spaces that serve their needs around the clock., and they are the first to point it out. A 2018 survey found “people expressed concerns around affordability, accessibility, and inclusion. In addition, people recognize a lack of supporting functions and elements such as shelters, seating, and public restrooms, that could broaden use all year long by various user groups.” (Gehl Studio and City of Vancouver 2018, 45). Other than Robson Square and waterfront boardwalks, the city has few significant central gathering spaces, being riddled instead with small, fragmented spaces that are inhospitable to many facets of public life (Rahi 2012).

### Right to the City

The municipal policy that defines POPS provides little scope for citizens to have a voice in shaping their public spaces. Yet public input is essential for such spaces to be successful. The key concepts here is the “right to the city”, as articulated by the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1996)

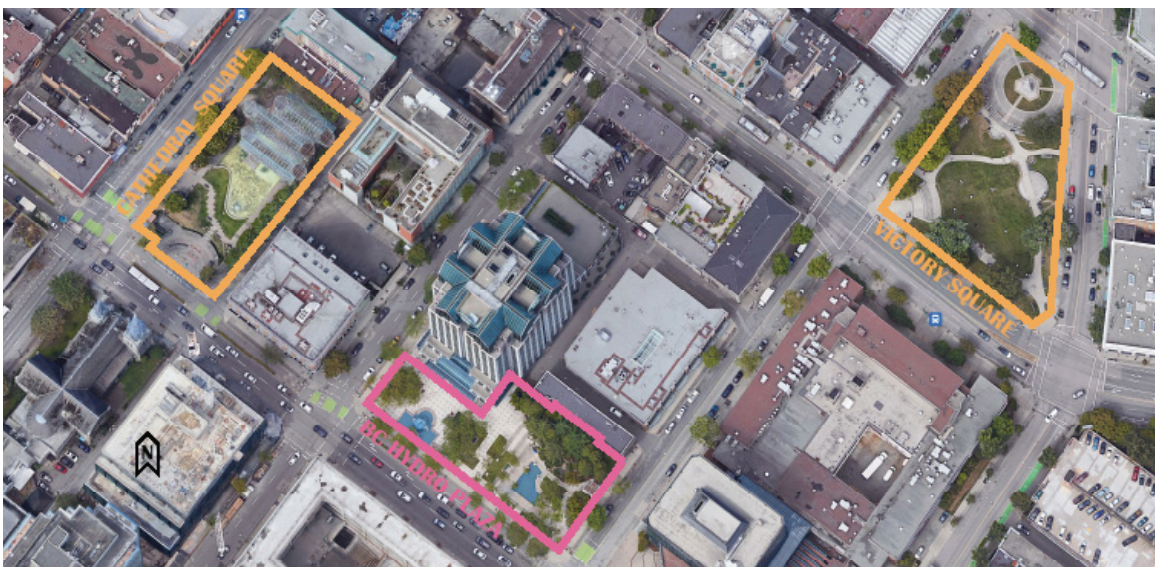


Fig. 13: Adjacent public spaces are in need of upkeep but are used and inhabited instead of the existing BC Hydro Plaza at 333 Dunsmuir Street (base image from Google Earth 2020).

and the British urban geographer David Harvey (2020). They both explore popular resistance to top-down planning models of urban development, particularly those that involve municipal governments working with capitalist developers to appropriate, control and manage the urban public realm. Such popular resistance aims for public spaces that prioritise public needs over privatisation of property. According to Harvey, “the freedom to make and remake ourselves and our cities is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights” (Harvey 2020). This can only be achieved through substantial policy changes that champion residents’ right to the city in creating public spaces and enabling public agency.

For Lefebvre, capitalism is the primary culprit in the commodification of interchangeable, hollow, and abstract space. He writes, “what runs counter to a society founded on exchange is a primacy of use. What counters quantity is quality” (Lefebvre 1991). Lefebvre’s notion of “counter-spaces” can be traced to the many concurrent contradictions between the spaces created through “top-down” planning, the dynamics of social relationships, and the needs of the public that are all too often disregarded. Counter-spaces are developed in direct opposition to abstract space. They prioritise the creation of spaces that are designed for and with the people (Altun 2018). Such counter-spaces are complementary to the notion of the right to the city, and they reflect the essentially spatial nature of social struggle and transformation (Altun 2018). If POPS were conceived of as counter-spaces that instill human-oriented approaches, they can be leveraged to give citizens back their right to the city.

Lefebvre’s argument for the public’s “right to the city” is central to the goal of this design thesis — a re-conception

of Vancouver's privately-owned public spaces as "counter-spaces" to the status quo, spaces that work for all citizens, and in which citizens recognize that they share the civic public realm with all.





## **Chapter 3: Creating a More Supportive Planning Policy**

### **Leveraging Privately Owned Space for Public Good**

Within the existing public space strategy there is already an action to update the current Plaza Design Guidelines for POPS (City of Vancouver 2017, 57) that originated in 1992. This action aims to expand to provide guidance for the design, wayfinding and access, operations, use and stewardship of POPS. However based on current conditions in the city it is clear stricter attention to the latter goals needs to be explicitly explored and prioritised. Throughout the document the city uses key design terms of “inclusive”, “accessible”, “diversity of uses” but few public spaces offer any of this currently (City of Vancouver, 2017). The CAC targets and negotiation between the city planning department and developers provides an opportunity to require more out of the contributions in order to address the issues within the city. This thesis presents these underperforming spaces, policy, and guidelines as an opportunity to take the actions the city has yet to and implement more socially sustainable policies, guidelines and design.

### **Community Amenity Contributions Policy – Critique and Proposed Revisions**

The Community Amenity Contributions policy framework, created in 1999 and regularly amended, has been successful in leveraging development to fund civic amenities. For example, CACs currently apply to rezoning applications which meet “locational and eligibility criteria” related to specific neighbourhood needs (City of Vancouver 2022, 4). For example, new commercial development in the

Downtown, Broadway and Metro Core areas require cash contributions ranging from \$123-185 per sm, which is used to fund affordable housing and childcare in the Metro Core area (City of Vancouver 2022, 10).

The use of CACs in the creation of public outdoor spaces however, is more problematic. Policy 8 “Exemptions” for example, asserts right at the outset, that CACs are best directed to incentivize the private sector, and they exclude public space or facilities that may already be serving the public sector on a given site. If a proposal already provides community facilities that meet the following criteria, it cannot benefit from CACs: (i) provides City-related social and/or cultural services; (ii) is operated by a non-profit society; (iii) is open and accessible to all; (iv) is accepted by Council as a public benefit under policy 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, or 2.6; (v) is secured for long-term use through legal agreements with the City and/or City land ownership. This is problematic because it argues that if a site already provides public benefit, there is no reason to incentive further investment — even if the current programming is successful!

The city is aware of the limitations of POPS and publicly states as its goal the creation of inclusive, diverse, and accessible spaces (City of Vancouver 2017, 57). Yet its POPS policy does not hold private owners sufficiently accountable for social amenities. What is needed is not changes to the City of Vancouver’s priorities, goals, or services. Instead, it is its CAC policies, enforcement and procedures that need to be revised if the City is to meet its goals. This must be done in a way that puts greater importance on the amenities provided in public spaces and how these spaces are managed. This thesis proposes several revisions to the Community Amenity Contributions Policy document (Appendix A).

- **Revision 1.** Expand the use of CACs beyond rezoning applications to include new developments. All new developments should benefit from in-kind contributions to expand the enrich the public realm.
- **Revision 2.** Under Policy 2 “Eligible Allocation and Use of CACs”:
  - o 2.1 (c) Add a site-specific needs assessment in relation to demographics and adjacent amenities, to ensure the amenity serves the immediate community (for example, the provision of public toilets and showers).
  - o 2.1 (e) Specify that long term operational viability is the responsibility of the owner or owners (when additional organisations are brought on in a management role).
  - o 2.1 (f) Specify that CACs should support the activities of all demographics within its neighbourhood.
- **Revision 3.** Policy 4 “Ownership of In-kind CACs” is key to the management of privately owned spaces. This revision would be to expand current preference for city-owned in-kind CACs to give equal preference to other public-interest organizations — such as senior levels of government, Indigenous, or non-profit organisations. This would diminish the percentage of privately-managed ‘public’ spaces throughout the city and increase the number of spaces managed with the public interest in mind. Community based and non-profit organisations are often more closely linked with the communities they support and experienced with service provision.



## **Plaza Design Guidelines – Critique and Proposed Revisions**

The City of Vancouver's Plaza Design Guidelines are largely unchanged since 1992. They are very high-level. While they provide clear diagrams for some concepts, they lack examples for others, such as:

A plaza is an open space designed for public use and defined by surrounding buildings and/or streets. Its primary functions are to encourage a diversity of opportunities for social interaction and activities, to provide relief and relaxation, to expand and reinforce the public realm and to contribute to the livability and general amenity of the downtown and other developing parts of the city. (City of Vancouver 1992, 1)

Other of the current guidelines are not inclusive, such as “appropriately located and designed lighting may also discourage loitering” (City of Vancouver 1992, 6).

While safety is a key requirement for an inclusive public space, the current guidelines do not provide sufficient detail. For example, lighting is considered important, but there is little guidance on how to select lighting fixtures appropriate to each application — are they floodlights, ambient lights, or path-marking lights? There is similarly little guidance on the many ways to provide weather protection.

For the purpose of this thesis, the guidelines' most integral part is advice on amenities that support a broader range of inhabitants. Currently, amenities are described only as “features that encourage general public usage and create a sense of liveliness and excitement” (City of Vancouver 1992, 11). Lastly, the management guidelines almost exclusively refers to maintenance, and there is no further guidance on how public spaces can be invigorated or on the appropriate level of control that should be provided over each space (City of Vancouver 1992, 12).

This thesis proposes several revisions to the Plaza Design Guidelines in order for them to be more effective. These revisions require a greater public amenities amenity addition and appropriate management of the public space (Appendix B).

- **Revision 1.** A new Policy 2.2.(f)(i) is added: “open spaces must adhere to the revised Plaza Design Guidelines 2023 where possible in order to align with the City’s priorities, goals, and services”.
- **Revision 2.** Section 2.1 focuses on Use and Concept of public spaces. It is important to set a standard for analysis of adjacencies in this section. The current guidelines recognize that

A plaza should reflect and reinforce the character of its location. For example, the purpose and nature of a plaza on Robson Street may differ significantly from one on Georgia Street. Within an area of the city, an individual plaza may function best as part of a hierarchy of open spaces, some small, others grand, still others as links within an open space network. (City of Vancouver 1992, 1)

To strengthen the social infrastructure of the city as a whole, each project must look at what is already provided and what is lacking in the surrounding area. A new requirement is added, stating “Mapping activities of adjacent sites including what amenities they provide can finely integrate the project into the existing infrastructure of the city, support its users and foster the use and success of the project.”

- **Revision 3.** Section 3 is about safety. The existing guidelines state “the differences in usage, ownership and responsibilities among commercial, commercial/residential and residential plazas should be recognized, so that the different approaches to their design relative to

urban safety is addressed at the initial planning stages” (City of Vancouver 1992, 3). What is not addressed is the possibility that a variety of programs will bring different user groups to the space at different times of day. Programming a plaza for only one use will leave it empty and unsafe outside of the hours of operation.

Section 3.3 Defensible Space is based on Jane Jacobs’ concept of “eyes on the street”. This point was expanded to highlight universal access as well as surveillance. Having many access points throughout the site helps give users the comfort of choice while in the space. By providing many different ways to move in, out, and through a space gives the users control on how they interact with the space and the other people in it. Lighting is also an important feature in the design of safe spaces. A new requirement is added here, stating “Low level lighting, shorter than streetlights and elements to light the ground can provide safety and ensures the plaza is comfortable from a human scale”.

- **Revision 4.** In Section 4, environmental considerations are updated to include weather protection in the form of canopies or enclosed spaces.
- **Revision 5.** Section 5.2 on user attractions has been revised to include non-profit activities as activity generators and the value of additional owners to oversee the management and maintenance of open space. In 5.3 additional amenities to serve the public have been added, such as:
  - drinking fountains, showers, washrooms, laundry facilities, charging stations, WiFi, public computers, storage lockers, PO boxes, and free phones;
  - places to sit, eat, sleep/rest, play, and socialize; and

- places of shelter from wind, rain, and sun.
- **Revision 6.** Good management comprises the last section of the guidelines. Revisions include special consideration for effective but not debilitating surveillance of space, to keep it safe without limiting the range of activities and users of the space. This includes hiring staff trained in harm reduction who are there to promote safety.

## Chapter 4: Applying the Revised Planning Policy Framework to Urban Design

These policy documents will serve as the framework for the redesign of an urban plaza in downtown Vancouver.

### Step 1: Amenity and Demographic Mapping and Site Selection

As required in the revised community Amenity Contributions Policy, a newly designed POPS requires a site-specific needs assessment in relation to demographics and adjacent amenities. This means mapping what amenities are near the chosen site, and what gaps in necessary amenities exist, in relation to the population expected to use this public space.

Figures 15 and 16 are maps that represent the life-sustaining amenities most needed by unhoused populations: Fig. 15 locates social supports such as libraries, shelters, community centres, and foodbanks, while Fig. 16 locates amenities for personal hygiene, like washrooms, laundries, showers and drinking fountains. Most public washrooms in Vancouver are in commercial buildings; those shown on Fig. 16 are accessible without charge. These two maps show that Vancouver's downtown provides many needed amenities, but there remain "amenity deserts", here highlighted in red. The site selected for this thesis is on the edge of one such gap NE of Georgia Street. Figure 20 represents neighbourhood districts and their demographics. Yellow areas contain <10% low-income populations while dark blue contains 40%+. The selected site is located between these two demographics



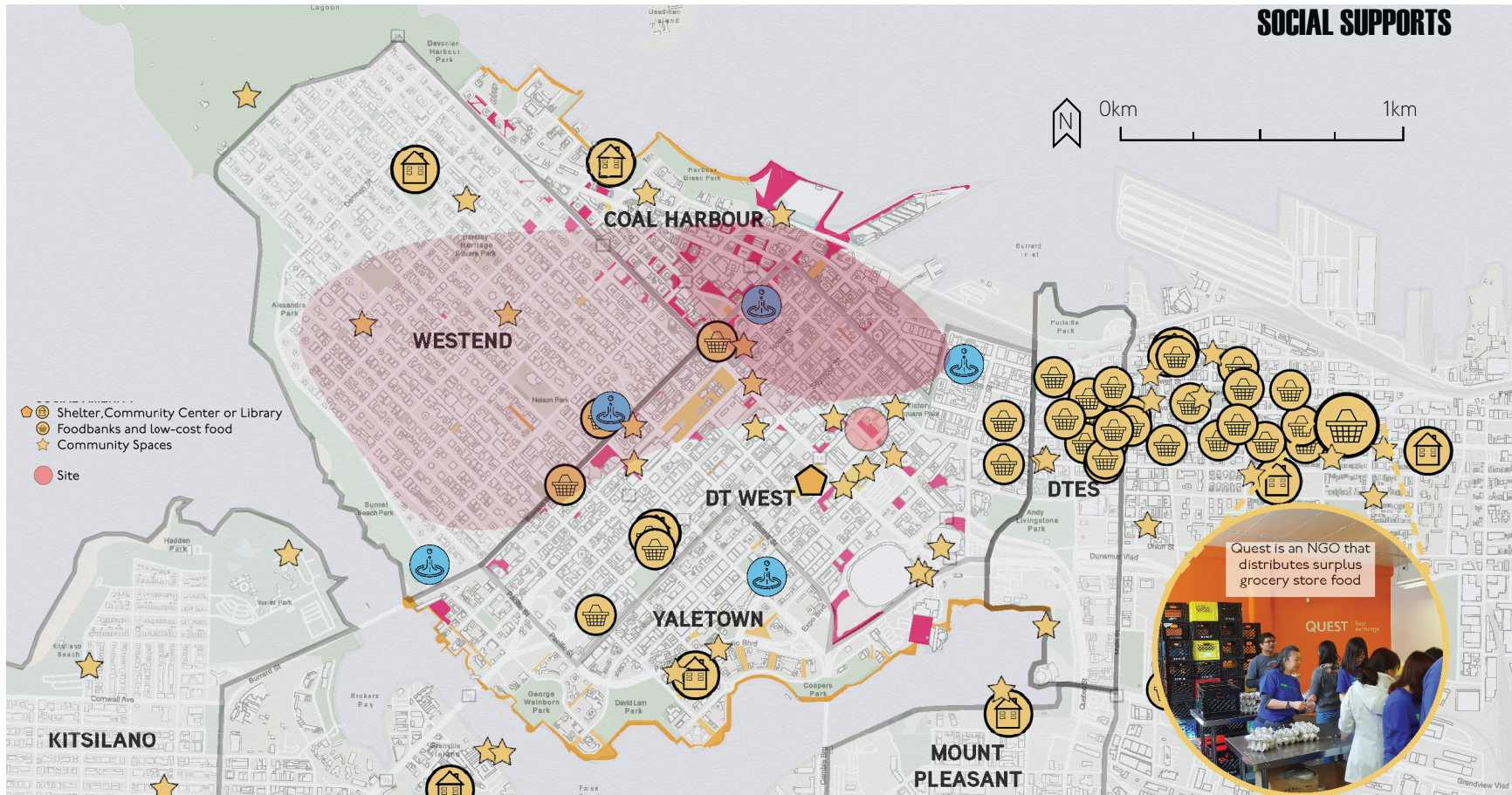


Fig. 15: Civic amenities provide citizens of the city with spaces to gather and connect. Civic amenities like libraries and community centres are often the only places to provide extended social supports. A 5 minute walkshed is seen around these spaces to start to see where adjacencies are lacking (layers from City of Vancouver 2018 and base layers from Cadmapper n.d.).



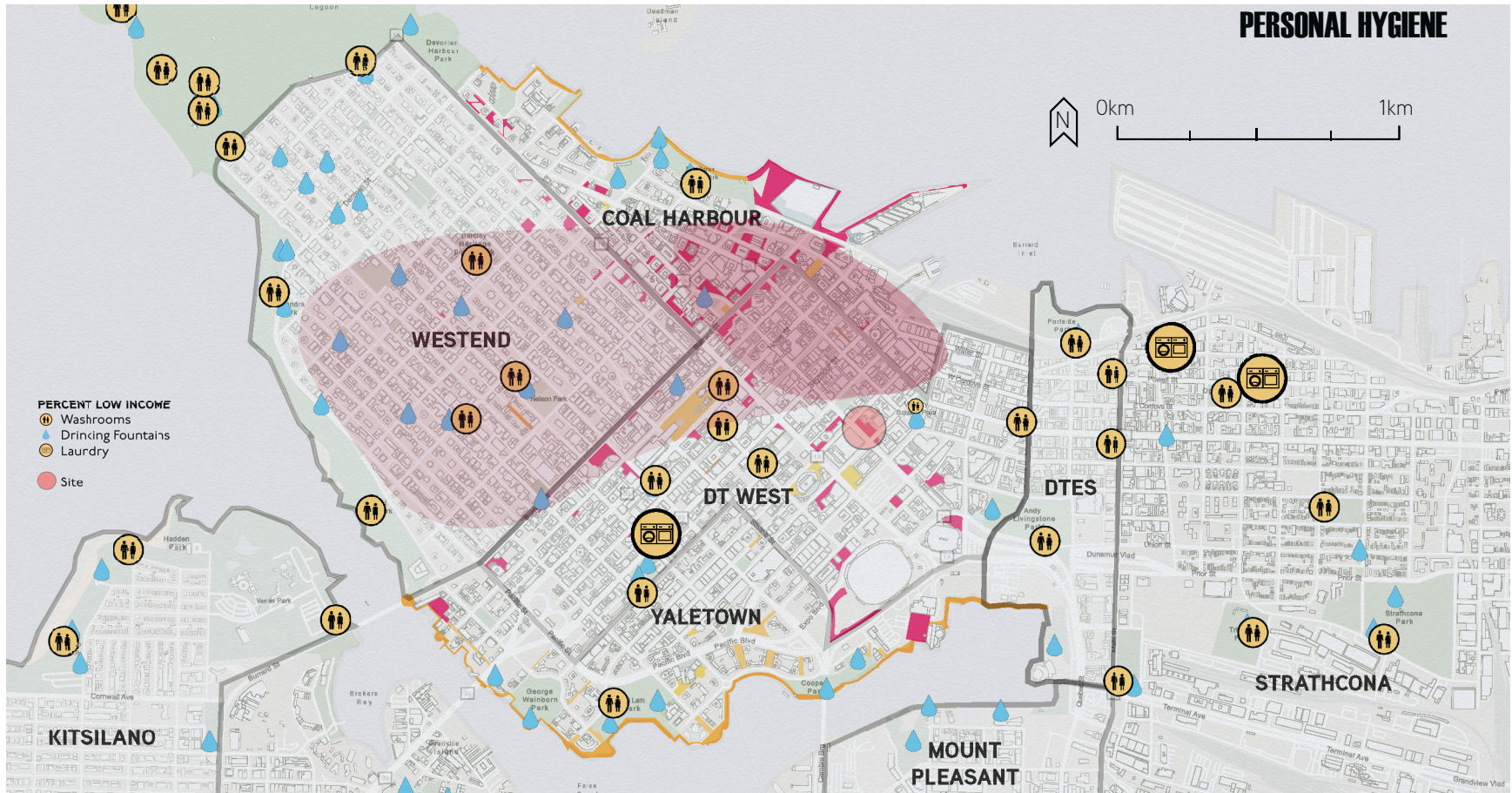


Fig. 16: These are seen as supportive amenities. They provide basic hygiene and dignity to users (layers from City of Vancouver 2018 and base layers from Cadmapper n.d.).

with stark income differentials. This influenced what users were considered important on site.

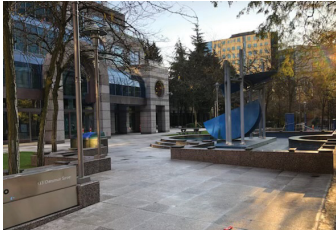


Fig. 17: View from Dunsmuir Street and Homer Street Corner.



Fig. 18: View from Dunsmuir Street sidewalk.

The selected site is BC Hydro Plaza at 333 Dunsmuir Street (indicated in pink on the maps). This 1980s-era tower and public space lies at the junction of Vancouver's central business district and the city's Downtown Eastside, a district historically known as Skid Row, and with a high number of unhoused and poorly housed populations, with attendant social problems. Although BC Hydro Plaza is within a five-minute walk of the Vancouver Library, and two large public squares, it is right on the edge of a large gap in any social services. It is well connected to transit and bike paths. Since the Covid pandemic, the BC Hydro office tower has been only partially occupied, making it a good candidate for the addition of a non-profit organization as a partner in managing the public space.



Fig. 19: View of lower Plaza from site. These preliminary site photos at 333 Dunsmuir show investment in design and open space but not usability or inclusiveness.



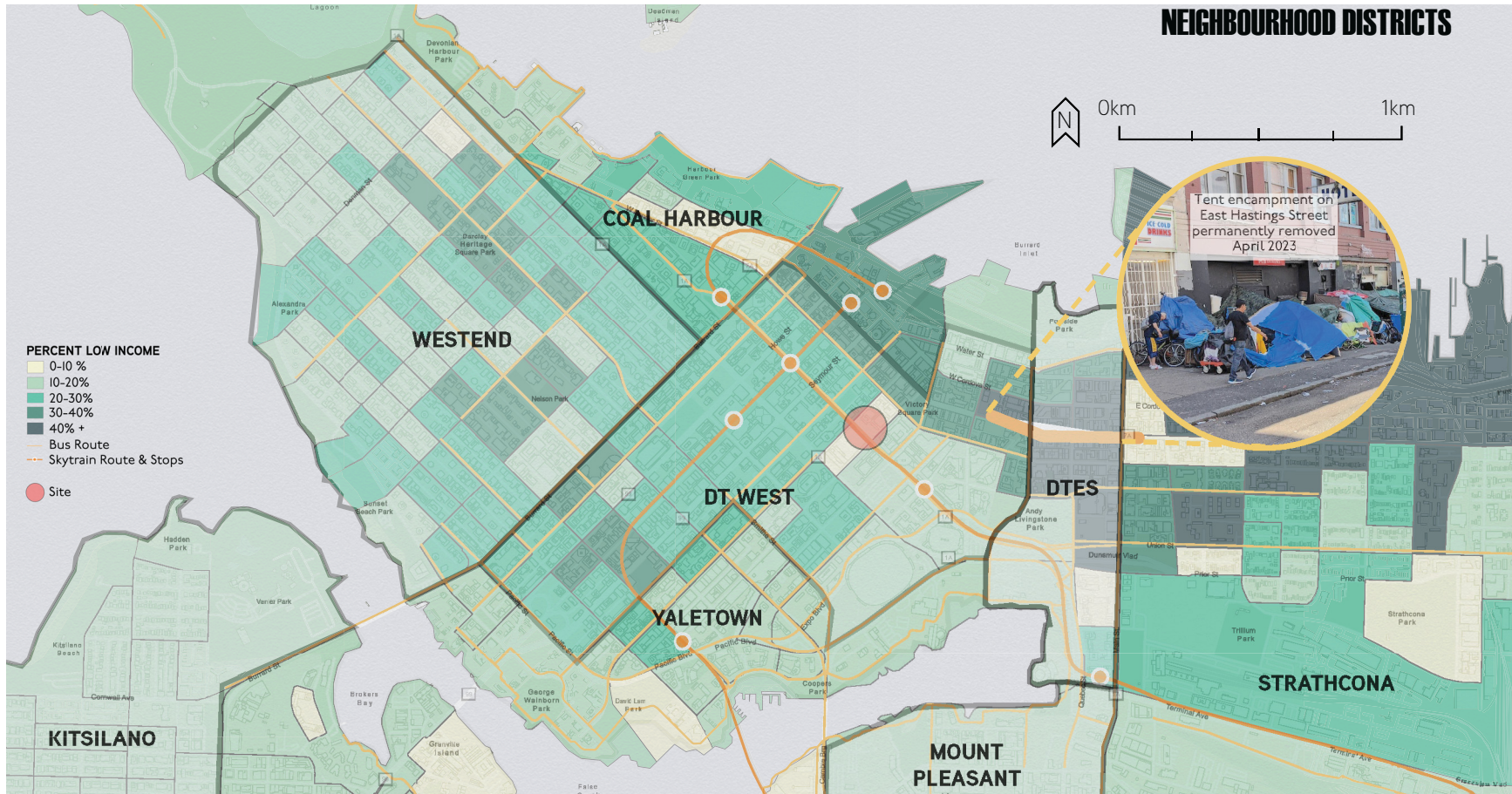


Fig. 20: Lays some important demographics. The colours show percent low income and speak to the diversity of the city. Neighbourhood divisions are also shown. The proximity of the site to the DTES should be noted as this is a lower income area (layers from City of Vancouver 2018 and base layers from Cadmapper n.d.).

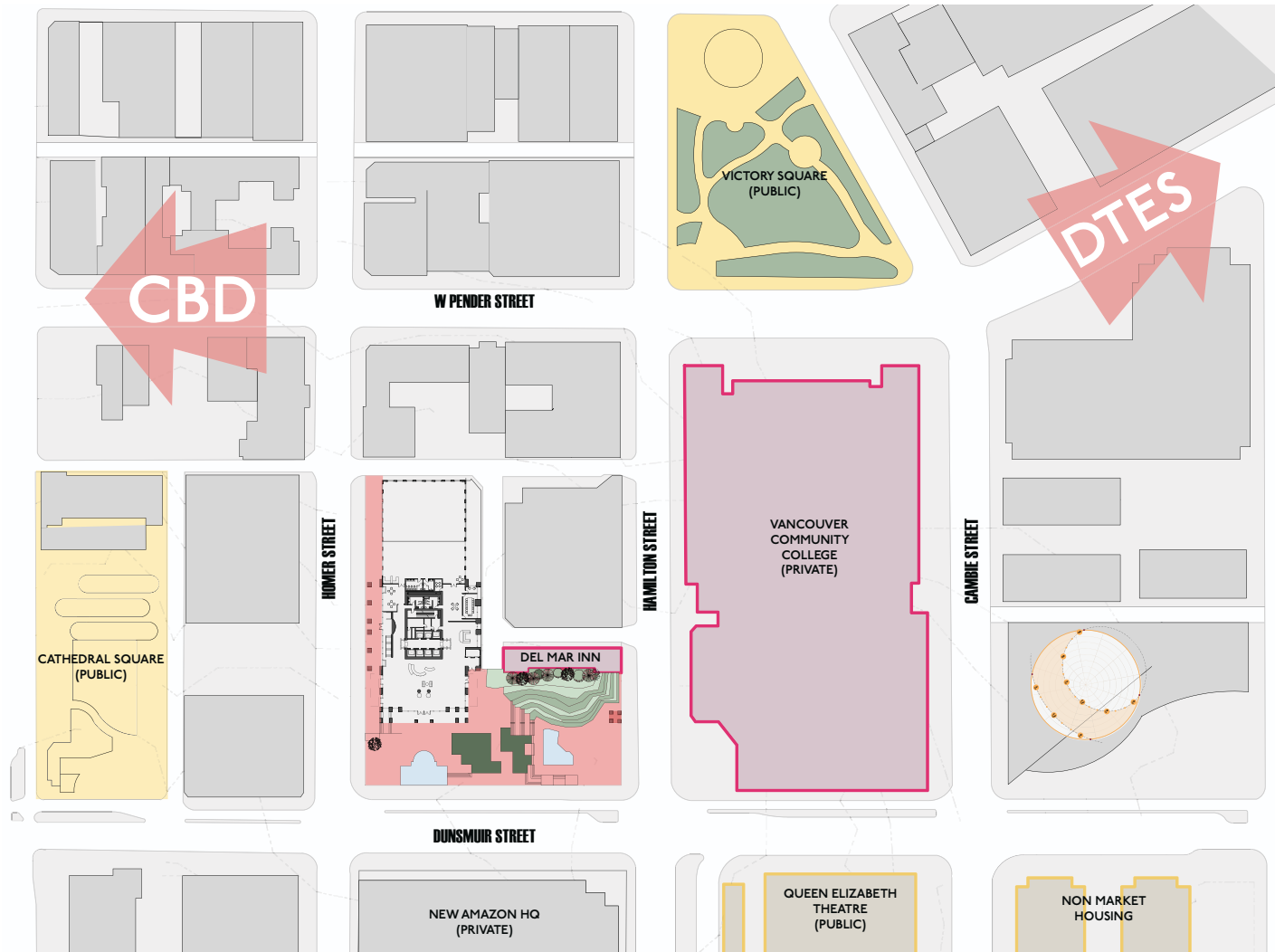


Fig. 21: Existing Site Plan and Key Site Adjacencies. After large scale amenity mapping it is important to consider key adjacencies that inform design decisions. In this case, students were specially considered as users and workers on site because of the VCC Campus (base layers from Cadmapper n.d.).

## Step 2: Providing More Inclusive Amenities

A central goal of this thesis is to design POPS so that diverse populations can use it comfortably at the same time, as currently happens in Vancouver’s Public Library and Robson Square. This requires careful consideration of programs so they are needed, used and can be comfortably located in close proximity. Most of the existing POPS in the downtown area are designed for office workers and seniors. The BC Hydro Plaza is an opportunity to provide amenities for the unhoused, such as:



- Open-air space for social gathering that feels safe and is sheltered from inclement weather
- Communication facilities, such as free phone and WiFi, charging station, and access to computers
- Mailing address and PO boxes needed to receive essential social supports
- Storage lockers to provide security for personal belongings
- Private, controllable space to sleep or rest
- Washrooms, shower, and laundry facilities

Fig. 22: “Existing Adjacent Amenities” the type of amenity existing within a 5 minute walk will not be prioritized in the design as they are already provided, those lacking will be.

### Step 3: Identifying Key Users

Five key user groups were identified from demographic mapping: office workers, students, the elderly, the unhoused, and staff working on the site. The office workers in BC Hydro Place and nearby office towers are considered to be existing users. So are the students from the nearby Vancouver Community College (across Homer Street), who currently lack outdoor space in their building and are likely to use this POPS. They will also staff the market and cafe in partnership with a culinary non-profit. The two populations this project aims to recruit, are the elderly — who live in nearby residential apartments and towers and are considered to be likely patrons of the YMCA mini spa on site. Similarly, the unhoused, mostly residing in the Downtown Eastside — this is the population most in need of supportive public space. And lastly, the staff managing this POPS need to be considered as primary users and their safety and comfort is important.



Fig. 23: Key Users by group. The colours used to represent each group are used later in design drawings.

# Chapter 5: Urban Design Strategies

## Design Strategies

In order to create carefully programmed, accessible spaces where private and non-profit partners work together for the public good, human-oriented design ideals must guide decisions.

## Social Sustainability

For a private business and a publicly oriented non-profit to support and work with each other in development and operation of a POPS, they must share a common interest in so doing. One contemporary term used to describe such a common interest is “social sustainability.”

The Young Foundation defines this as “A process for creating sustainable, successful places that promote wellbeing, by understanding what people need from the places they live and work. Social sustainability combines design of the physical realm with design of the social world — infrastructure to support social and cultural life, social amenities, systems for citizen engagement and space for people and places to evolve” (Woodcraft, Hackett, and Caistor-Arendar 2011).

The authors outline six necessary supports:

1. a sense of community identity and belonging
2. tolerance, respect and engagement with people from different cultures, background and beliefs
3. friendly, co-operative and helpful behaviour in neighbourhoods
4. opportunities for cultural, leisure, community, sport and other activities
5. low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour with visible, effective and community-friendly policing



6. opportunities for all people to be socially included and have similar life opportunities.

### **Programming for Safety and Inclusion**

The juxtaposition and intermingling of diverse programs is a well-theorized strategy in modern architecture — from Le Corbusier’s Vertical City in Marseille to Rem Koolhaas’s “cross-programming” and Bernard Tschumi’s “cross-programming,” “trans-programming,” and “dis-programming” strategies (Koolhaas, et al. 2006). All of these recognize the importance of diversity and inclusion in public life, and the need for people to meet, communicate with and intermingle with others who are younger, older, visibly different from themselves, richer, poorer, and so forth.

However, such adjacent programming in public spaces can generate tensions, if it is done without consideration of peoples’ need to control their safety and exposure to others. This requires special attention to the boundaries, edges, and overlaps between different public programs.

#### ***Boundaries***

Boundaries define and separate space. They are a fundamental of architecture, defining the limits between inside and out, above and below, public and private, construction and nature (ROCA 2021). In a public space, boundaries can solid like walls and buildings, or porous (like fences, trellises and shrubs).

#### ***Edges***

Edges are any boundary which define the extent of a surface or volume. For this POPS, one significant edge is the perimeter of site as it meets the city. For the POPS to feel safe, its perimeter must be very porous, with many

points of physical and visual access physically from the street through the site.

### **Overlaps**

Although different programs require identifiable boundaries, an inclusive POPS needs to have spaces designed to encourage social mixing, accommodating the circulation of one group through the space of another, and in general, a sense of ease and personal control when navigating through the site. This way, people can see what is happening in any part of the site and choose to move towards or away from it. In this POPS, a central public outdoor plaza forms the anchor to the public space. All of the other amenities are distributed in relation to it.

Lastly, any well-designed public space needs to provide areas people can retreat to, when they need quiet or more privacy.



Fig. 24: Map showing urban design strategies of boundaries, edges, and overlaps in new design.

## Recent Precedents for Inclusive, Safe and Amenity-rich Public Spaces

### *Hospitality Hub, Memphis TN, 2020 | Architects: A2H and Youngblood Studio*



Fig. 25: Image showing resting pods which double as outdoor art wall (A2H Design 2019)

The Hospitality Hub in Memphis, TN is a public space “campus in development” comprised of a community centre, an emergency women’s shelter, and a day plaza. It is an excellent example of programming for safety and inclusion. The community centre — which includes the women’s shelter — is the non-profit association providing the core programming supports, while the landscaped day plaza provides additional amenities to the broader community. This public space is designed to encourage interactions between unhoused people and other members of the community. It provides amenities like seating, tables, hammocks, an amphitheatre, public restrooms, water, electrical outlets, and lockers. The park also shows careful programming and spatial arrangement which allow users to control their degree of interaction with others. A colourful wall around the plaza encloses private capsules where people can lay down and rest; this wall also serves as a boundary between the food trucks on the street and the landscaped green (Hospitality Hub 2019). This clever, amenity-rich public space supported by a publicly oriented non-profit addresses many of the issues in this thesis. It is an excellent example of how good design can provide needed public amenities in a welcoming, safe public environment.





Fig. 26: Map showing diverse programming and clever use of boundaries make many different users feel welcome (A2H Design 2019).

***Shipyards Market, North Vancouver, 2019 | Architects: DIALOG***

Having grown up ten minutes away from this project, I have seen good urban design fully transform this area in a few decades. In my youth, Lonsdale Quay and Shipyards were an indoor market and transit station, with notoriously unsafe outdoor spaces. Now as a result of a PPP and dedicated owners, this public space was redesigned for social sustainability, providing a variety of programs including shops, restaurants, and outdoor spaces including an all year rink. In the summer, it hosts weekly food truck festivals on Friday nights and has become a cultural hub in North Vancouver. With the transformation of its public spaces, the area has become a desirable neighbourhood, attracting new residents. The market and neighbourhood always had the foundation for a great space, being well connected and at a human scale, but it was effective design, investment and management by the private owners that transformed it into a vibrant year round public space. This renovation project showed that accessible, socially sustainable spaces can transform a transit hub into a lively community center.



Fig. 27: Image showing the new Shipyards rink and market (Fry 2022).

## **Design Principles**

For people to feel safe and welcome in public spaces, they need to be able to “read” the space and use it to the degree that they feel comfortable. The following design principles are guidelines to support good design and decision-making in such spaces. Such principles help to define areas for mingling, for privacy, and for social supports. An important element in providing the feeling of user agency is a site that communicates designated uses, has clear focal points, and well-defined thresholds.

### ***Thresholds***

Thresholds help to distinguish between one programmed space and another, between public and private spaces, and they guide users through the project. Thresholds are needed to give a sense of control to users as they separate people, programs and spaces.

### ***Designated Uses***

When public spaces have many different amenities and uses, it is important to define and group designated uses so that they complement each other. In this thesis project, those designated uses can be categorized as spaces for social mixing, civic amenities, or social supports.

### ***Flexible Space***

Good public space design allows different interactions depending on each user’s comfort level and ability to access the space. This requires that space between designated uses is designed to be flexible, so that people can move freely through the thresholds between programs.



***Readability***

Readability is also important. This means that spaces must make their uses clear through their built form and location, so that users easily understand where the amenity they seek is located.

***Focal Points***

Focal points also enhance readability on site. Significant program drivers are located in plain sight from many approaches — they welcome people and draw them into the site, where they then interact with other programs.

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- **THRESHOLDS:** help to distinguish between one programmed space and another, between public and private spaces, and they guide users through the project.

- **DESIGNATED USES:** it is important to define and group designated uses so that they complement each other. In this thesis project, those designated uses can be categorized as spaces for social mixing, civic amenities, or social supports.

- **FLEXIBLE SPACE:** space between designated uses is designed to be flexible, so that people can move freely through the thresholds between programs.

- **READABILITY:** means that spaces must make their uses clear through their built form and location, so that users easily understand where the amenity they seek is located.

- **FOCAL POINTS:** enhance readability on site by placing significant program drivers in plain sight from many approaches.

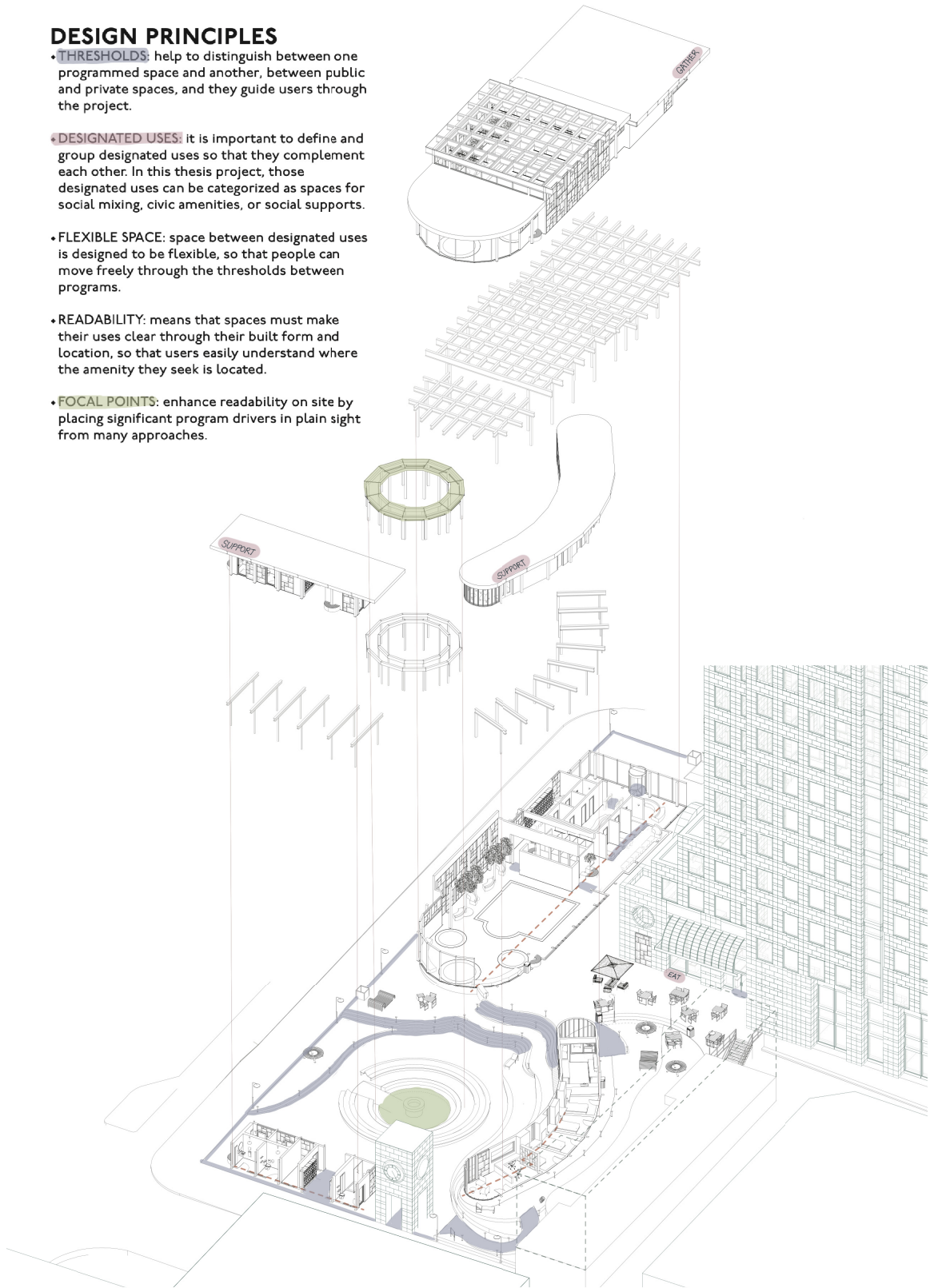


Fig. 28: Urban design principles in practice

## **Chapter 6: Redesign of BC Hydro Place Plaza as an Inclusive Public Space**

The thesis design project builds on the policy and guideline revisions and applies them to an existing POPS. The goal is for the resulting “supportive space” to serve as a test case to incentivise developers by demonstrating the benefits of a comprehensively designed and managed privately owned space, a space where a private program and non-profit reinforce each other to create a vibrant, inclusive public realm.

The urban redesign of BC Hydro Plaza at 333 Dunsmuir Street has three goals: to create amenity rich spaces that support urban life; to be inclusive to all regardless of their social status, abilities, or age; and to make spaces that work for people regardless of their ownership.

In this project, non-profit and amenity programs are introduced to give new life to a currently underused space. The project comprises multiple in-kind contributions in the form of community facilities, cultural spaces, and open space throughout the site. These individual programs are connected through a shared plaza, and their relationship to each other is key in the creation of a comprehensive, safe, supportive space.

### **The Central Plaza – A Mixing Space**

The focal point of the project is a gathering circle around an open-air fire ring, the metaphorical anchor and hearth of the site. It serves as a “mixing space” for different groups to co-inhabit, a rarity in Vancouver’s downtown. The heat of the fire pit provides warmth, and it is surrounded by public

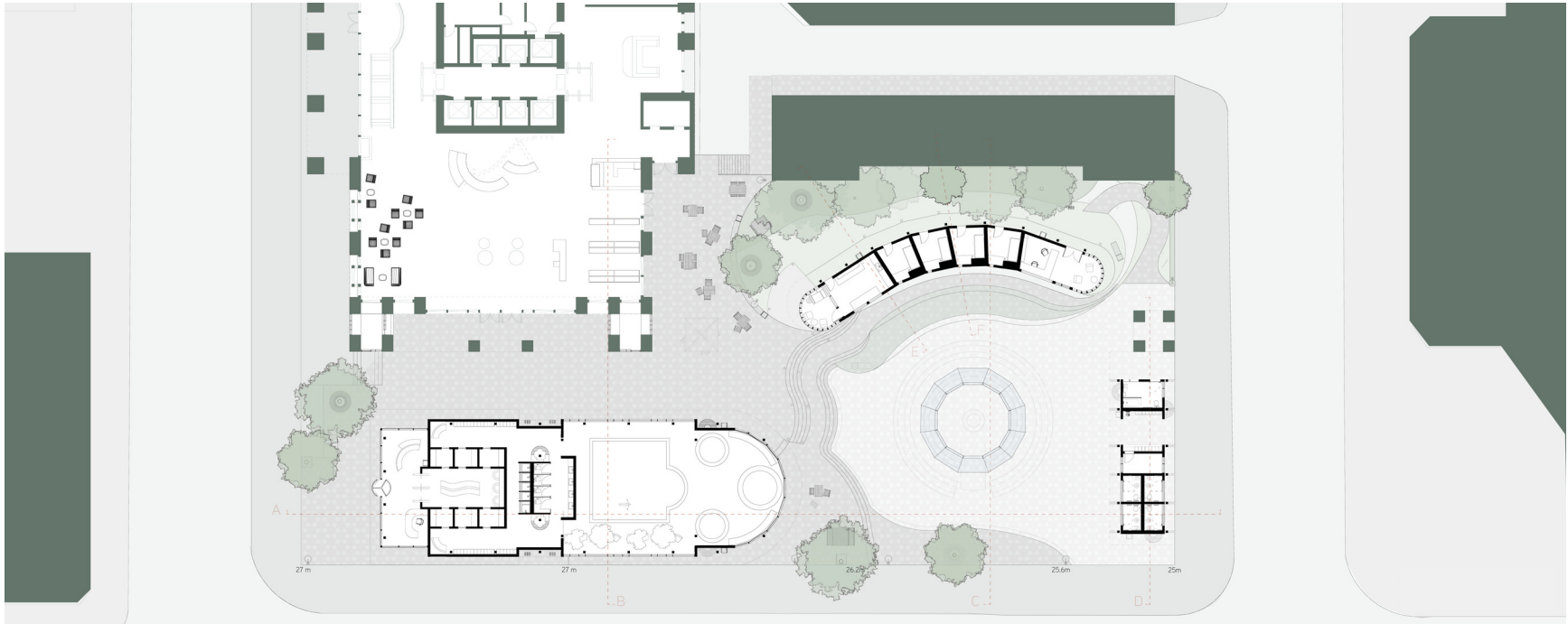


Fig. 29: Site Plan showing civic amenity and supportive spaces within the large plaza mixing space.



Fig.30: Site Section through civic amenity, supportive space and mixing space.





**SITE AT NIGHT**



**MAIN MIXING SPACE- CONNECTED VISUALLY BUT BROKEN UP WITH LANDSCAPE FEATURES**

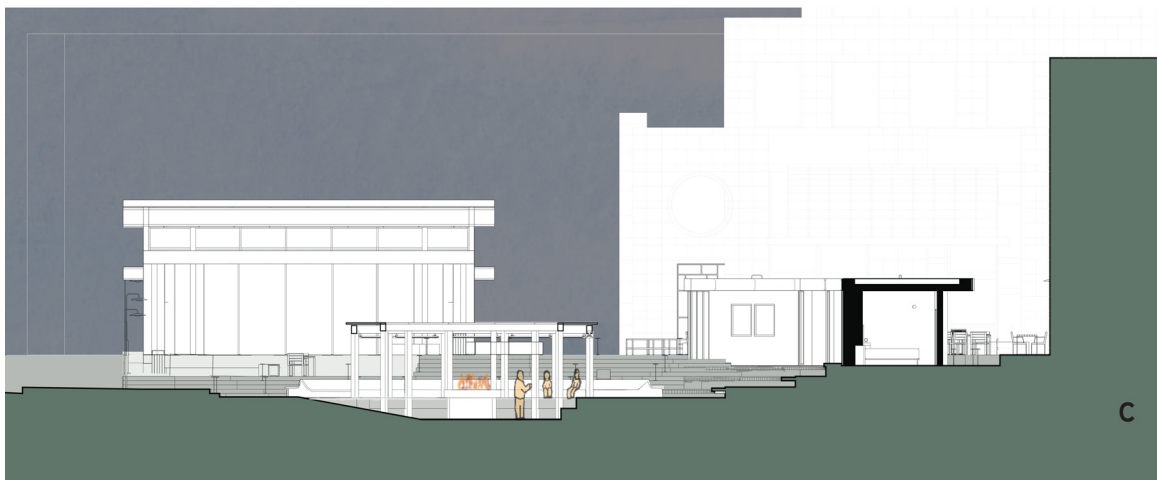


Fig. 31: “Social Mixing” the plaza is the glue that holds the whole site together and the central fire pit provides a hearth to this neighbourhood of the city. An uniquely large, inclusive space in the city, this space allows large groups to meet, share and enjoy.

seating, and landscaping with areas to sit, find shelter, or bask in the sun. The various seating options provide quiet spaces away from activity as well as gathering spaces for groups of different sizes. Heaters distributed across the site encourage year round outdoor use. Sight lines are open through the site, making the plaza feel like an extension of the public sidewalk and giving users a feeling of security and agency in choosing where to move and where to “hang out”. Lower level lighting provides greater intimacy than overhead streetlights, while providing good visibility. The plaza’s proximity to the community college allows this space to be used for class activities.

### **The Amenity Pavilions - Supportive Spaces and Civic Places**

The varied community amenities proposed for BC Hydro Plaza would be developed and operated as a PPP between the property owner BC Hydro, non-profit public-interest organizations (such as the YMCA and QUEST), and institutional partners such as the Vancouver Community College. Each partner was chosen for the value that this project would carry for them — reflecting their core mission, providing a needed opportunity for expansion, or for their public profile. The amenities can be roughly categorized into two groups: supportive spaces serving primarily unhoused people and civic places attractive to a broad cross-section of citizenry.

#### **Supportive Spaces**

Several smaller amenity buildings provide social supports for rest and rejuvenation, and personal hygiene. These pavilions surround the main plaza, strengthening the site’s edges. These amenities are most needed by the unhoused



Fig. 32: “Supportive Space” these pavilions flank the two sides of the site and act as a threshold, in terms of the personal hygiene pavilion that anchors the Hamilton, Dunsmuir corner. Then the rest and rejuvenation pavilion creates a border to the site and sits privately up the terraced landscape.

population of downtown Vancouver. These facilities will be owned and maintained by a public service non-governmental organization.

### ***Rest and Rejuvenation Pavilion***

Between the main plaza and a low-cost inn at the back of the site, a low curved pavilion nestled between trees serves as a welcome centre for unhoused populations. The entry point is approached from Homer Street and is marked as public by easily visible glass walls and signage. Here, two staff members trained in harm reduction are constantly present — one is a liaison who provides key cards and vouchers, the other is responsible for safety and security. At the reception, users can check into one of four available sleeping pods to be used for short term stays or naps, nothing more than a day. These private spaces with clerestory windows provide a safe, dignified place for people to rest in privacy. There is a laundry facility at the far end, accessed by card, but defined by boundaries to keep belongings secure. A small atrium abuts the laundry for people waiting for their wash to be completed.

### ***Personal Hygiene Pavilion***

A second pavilion is located between the main plaza and Homer Street, marked by an existing clock tower. This pavilion comprises public washrooms, an important amenity for many urbanites, but especially pregnant women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, taxi and delivery drivers and of course, the unhoused.

The first step to dignity in basic social acceptance is hygiene, on site there are multiple places to help with this. Overall North American cities have really never seen washrooms

as public responsibilities because it has been put on private property. This has created stigmas for those who use public washrooms as well as public washrooms themselves. These washrooms aim to break down these stigmas. These washrooms will be regularly maintained on an hourly basis, like gas stations or restaurants, rather than the cursory maintenance of many public washrooms. The large block on the corner contains 4 public toilets and a larger accessible washroom closest to the rest and rejuvenation pavilion also contains a shower. All of the washrooms are clad with coloured glass that is translucent when unoccupied and becomes opaque when occupied. The frosted glass is set on a 45 minute timer, to alert staff if people are incapacitated while inside. There is also space for storing small items in lockers, and larger items (like shopping carts) in a storage room.

## **Civic Places**

### ***Food Market and Café.***

Inside the large atrium of the BC Hydro Building, a small market and sandwich shop/café have been added, opening up to the plaza with tables and outdoor seating. This amenity is run as a PPP between QUEST and the Vancouver Community College. QUEST is a non-profit organisation that works with other non-profits to receive surplus grocery store food and make available it to the public at a reduced price. It usually works with other non-profits, but for this site a relationship with the VCC is proposed — noting that the VCC currently operates a bakery, cafeteria, and restaurant in their campus on nearby Hamilton Street. This partnership offers low-cost groceries and ready-made food. Office workers or seniors are paying customers supporting the

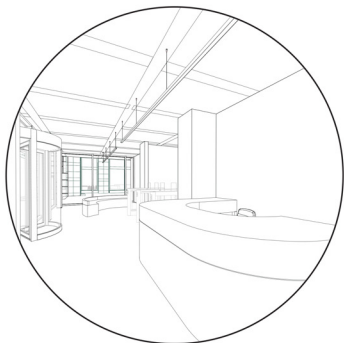




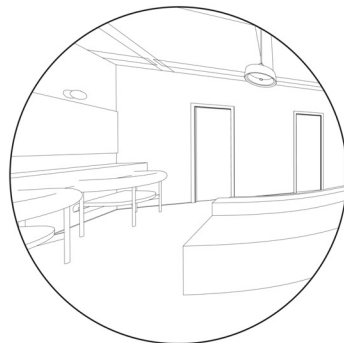
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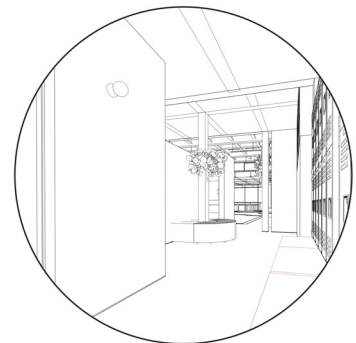
AQUA AEROBICS CLASSES



SPA LOBBY



SPA CHANGEROOM



SPA ENTRY



B

Fig. 33: "Civic Amenity" this pavilion provides an escape from the city and key gathering place to the senior population in the city.

market, while unhoused or marginalised populations can get food and grocery vouchers from the reception in the Rest and Rejuvenation Pavilion.

### ***Downtown Spa***

The last program element is a public bathhouse off Dunsmuir Street. This facility will attract a new demographic, further activating the POPS. This space would be run by YMCA which operates a much larger facility on nearby Burrard Street. Inspired by the adjacent BC Hydro Building, this pavilion celebrates the healing power of water. This building is conceived as a series of thresholds that take the user from the city, through changerooms, and into a space with lockers, showers and washrooms to ready themselves for the spa. A main pool is used for aqua aerobics classes, while smaller pools provide a heat-cool-rest cycle with a cold plunge and hot tub flanking a hydrotherapy pool. Resting spaces line the perimeter.

There is strength built from the adjacencies on site and this provides many different ways to interact with each other and space. All the different amenities build off of each other on site and provide many variations of how one visits the site. For example an unhoused person can check in at reception to get their access card. From here they can put on a load of laundry then go park their shopping cart in storage. They can then go use the shower and get a free meal from the market with their voucher from reception. Alternatively, they could take a shower and spend a sunny afternoon in the bathhouse while they wait for their laundry. The options are endless and the choices are fully those of the user. All of these activities are connected in space while being separated with boundaries and edges.

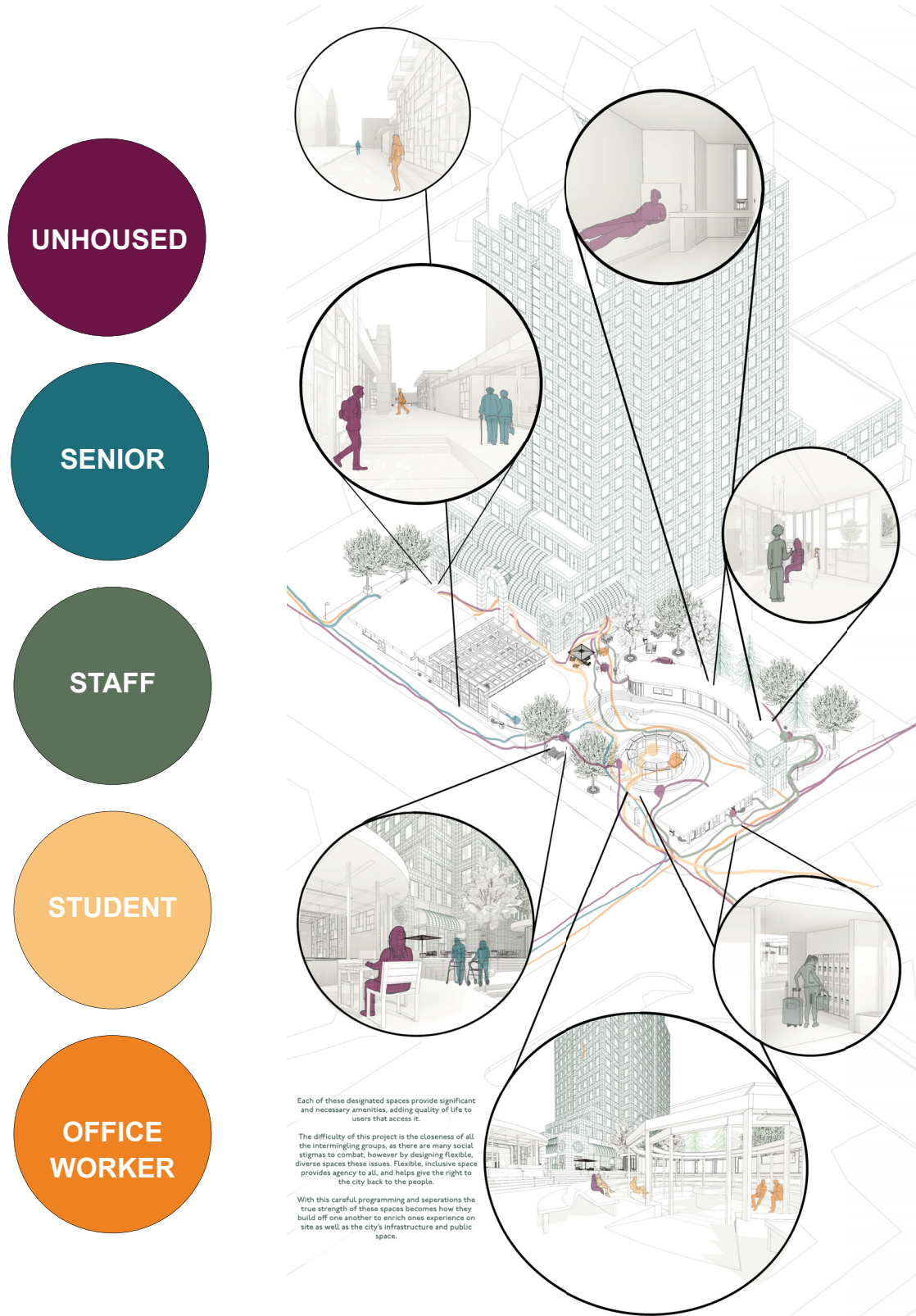


Fig. 34: Key Connections in Space. Pathways show how the different key users can interact with the site and vignettes show how they interact with one another or are separated by architectural and landscape design features.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis aims to assess the intricate dynamic between the disciplines of planning, architecture and urban design in the sphere of Vancouver's Privately-Owned Public Spaces (POPS). Each of these disciplines played an integral role in the comprehension of complexities and challenges associated with POPS and their impact on a city's public realm. Strategies behind good urban design inform the physical layout, aesthetic, appeal and functionality of public spaces and can either promote inclusivity or perpetuate exclusion between groups. This was not happening in practice in Vancouver even though the city's urban design and planning strategies emphasize the importance of creating inclusive space.

This lack of inclusion in public space was a result of the ownership structure and outdated policy and guidelines. Planning provided the quintessential base and framework of the project by providing specific policies, guidelines, and unique historical context that influenced the emergence of

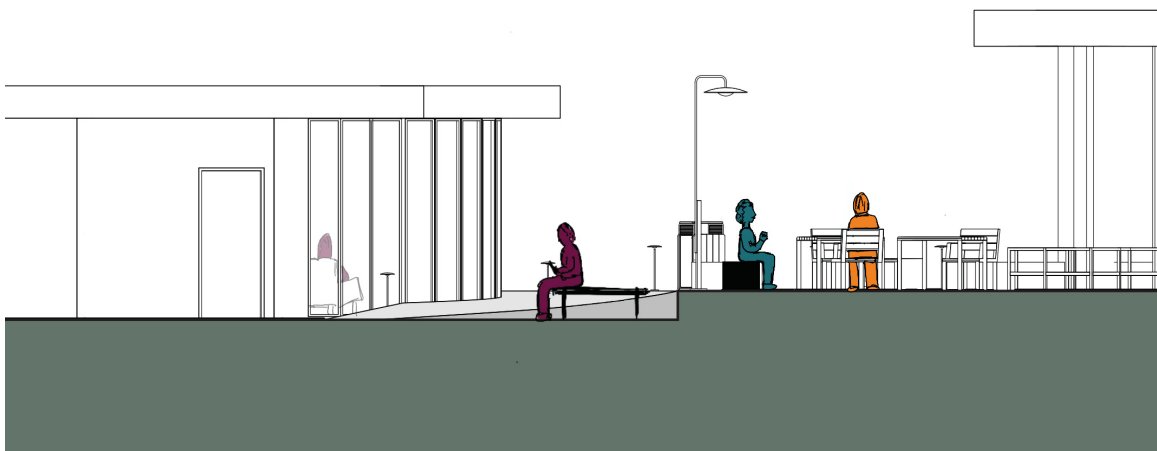


Fig. 35: Architectural and landscape thresholds separate uses and give comfort to users. In this case the publically accessible laundry in the Rest and Rejuvenation pavilion is separated from the main outdoor eating space by change in grade and a ramp for access. Flexible outdoor seating allows connection if welcomed by all parties.

POPS in Vancouver. The existing structure was revised in order to give planning policy the power to demand more out of public space and enable architects to design these spaces for safety and inclusion.

Architecture is the mode by which this policy impact is demonstrated. Key design principles and strategies in conjunction with one another, allow users to have agency and feel safe in space, which leads to well used and inhabited public spaces. The most crucial is to define use, and use landscape and architectural features to separate and connect these used in various ways, this makes for truly flexible spaces.

Vancouver should strive to create more spaces like 333 Dunsmuir and lead the transformation of POPS into supportive, accessible and socially valuable spaces that truly cater to the needs and ambitions of its diverse urban population. The journey towards achieving these changes requires a collaborative and collective effort, shared vision and objectives from private and public partners, and a perpetual commitment to creating public spaces that enhance the quality of life for all residents.

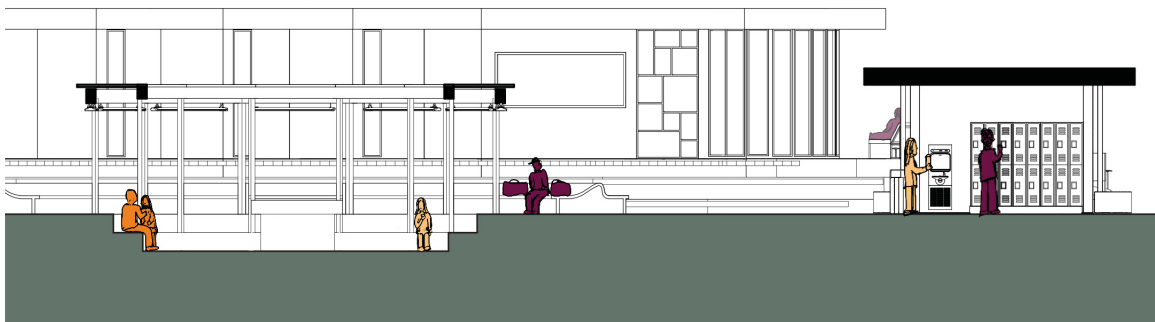


Fig. 36: Variable seating and use of grade allows users to gather or separate themselves at the central heath. The Personal Hygiene pavilion is a common instance of connection between user groups.



# Appendix A: Revised Community Amenity Contributions Policy

## Policy

### Community Amenity Contributions Policy for Rezoning

*Approved by Council January 28, 1999*

*Last amended March 23, 2023*

#### UPDATES:

##### Annual Inflationary Rate Adjustment

On June 7, 2022, Council approved the annual inflationary rate adjustments to the CAC Targets that came into effect on September 30, 2022. To view the new rates for each of the CAC Target areas, refer to "Table 1: CAC Targets and Eligibility Criteria" in the Appendix of this document.

##### Marine Landing Policy & Rupert Renfrew Updates

On December 8, 2021 and March 29, 2022, City Council amended the CAC Policy to make rezoning applications in the Marine Landing Intensive Employment Area in South Vancouver and Grandview-Boundary Mixed Employment Area subject to a Negotiated CAC approach.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please visit [vancouver.ca/financegrowth](https://vancouver.ca/financegrowth) or email [financegrowth@vancouver.ca](mailto:financegrowth@vancouver.ca).

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## Background and Context

Vancouver is supported by an extensive network of public benefits (i.e. amenities and infrastructure). These public benefits play a large role in making Vancouver one of the most livable cities in the world and help attract new residents, employees, and visitors to the city.

The City strives to maintain its existing assets in an appropriate state of repair, and expanding its network of public benefits to address population and employment growth. The City uses the following sources to achieve this:

- City contributions – Property tax, user fees (e.g. water and sewer utility fees) and parking revenue, and other operating revenue funds. City contributions primarily fund the maintenance and renewal of existing infrastructure and amenities.
- Development contributions – Community Amenity Contributions ('CACs'), Development Cost Levies ('DCLs'), Density Bonus Zoning contributions, connection fees, and other conditions of development. Development contributions primarily fund the provision of new, expanded, or upgraded infrastructure and amenities.
- Partnership contributions – External funding from senior governments (i.e. federal, provincial, and regional) or senior government agencies (e.g. Translink), non-profit agencies, foundations, and philanthropists. Partnership contributions help to fund existing or new infrastructure and amenities.

Long-range plans developed by the City (e.g. community plans) "plan ahead" when considering the use of these funding sources. These plans contain detailed expectations on the types of public benefits that will be delivered through the various funding sources used by the City, often summarized in a Public Benefit Strategy. These Public Benefit Strategies are developed through public input and needs assessments, and outline the development contributions anticipated to deliver the growth-related public benefits. The implementation and delivery of these public benefits is done through the City's capital plan and annual budget processes, or through in-kind contributions provided on-site as part of a development.

## Intent

The Community Amenity Contributions Policy for Rezoning ('the Policy') sets out the City's policies around how Community Amenity Contributions ('CACs') are determined, allocated and spent.

Community Amenity Contributions ('CACs') are voluntary contributions toward public benefits that are provided by new applicants and rezoning applicants as in-kind or cash contributions when Council grants additional development rights through the enactment of rezonings. All CACs are negotiated between the applicant and the City (on behalf of Council) with Council as the approving authority and secured as conditions of by-law enactment. CACs come in two forms:

- In-kind CACs – A form of CAC where land and/or capital facilities are provided by applicants, typically as an on-site public benefit;
- Cash CACs – A form of CAC where a cash payment is provided by applicants in-lieu of providing land and/or capital facilities as a public benefit. Cash CACs are deposited into dedicated reserves and invested through Council approval on public benefits through the City's capital planning and annual budget processes.

## Principles

The following principles for a CAC system were established by the City's Financing Growth (2004) policy:

- Secure amenities through rezoning to help maintain the livability of the city and its neighbourhoods as redevelopment occurs;
- Provide a fair exchange between the amenities being provided, and the new density (or development rights) being granted, so that desired redevelopment occurs and housing affordability is maintained;
- Provide consistency and predictability in the application of CAC Policy, so that developers can anticipate the amenity contributions being sought, and community can expect appropriate amenities that meet local needs when rezoning occurs;
- Be consistent with other City policies;
- Be developed with informed input from stakeholders;
- Be separate from other development charge requirements, to ensure there is not double payments being made for amenity items.

## Policies

### 1 Application of the Policy

- 1.1 CACs will apply to rezoning **and new development** applications unless it is exempt under policy 8.1 or policy 8.2.
  - (a) **new development applications will be accepted if owners seek development benefits above what is allotted.**
- 1.2 CACs will be negotiated either:
  - (a) based on target contributions ('CAC Targets') provided that **the application** meets the locational criteria and eligibility criteria in the *Appendix* and is not exempt under policy 8.1 or policy 8.2.
    - (i) CACs determined through CAC Targets under policy 1.2(a) will be restricted in their allocation and use, as summarized in the *Appendix*, unless otherwise allowed through policy 2.1; or
  - (b) based on negotiations if **the application** does not meet the locational criteria and eligibility criteria in the *Appendix* and is not exempt under policy 8.1 or policy 8.2.
  - (c) CACs determined through negotiations under policy 1.2(b) will target a minimum of 75%<sup>1</sup> of the increase in land value based upon an application.

### 2 Eligible Allocation and Use of CACs

- 2.1 The specific amenity to be provided will be determined based on the following criteria:
  - (a) CACs should be growth-related (i.e. serving population and/or employment growth);
  - (b) CACs should be consistent with services provided by the City (i.e. a type of service normally provided or supported by the City and at a service level supported by City policy);

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<sup>1</sup> Except for the addition of penthouse storeys being added in Southeast False Creek where 85% of the increase in land value is targeted as the CAC.

- (c) CACs should be based on public benefits **and amenity** needed by the community as summarized in City/Community Plans **and** through a site-specific needs assessment;
    - (i) **needed additions are to be determined by close survey and assessment of neighbourhood demographics and adjacent amenities**
  - (ci) CACs should be prioritized to be located in the neighbourhood in which **the project** takes place and/or serve the site. CACs may also be directed to public benefits that are located outside of the neighbourhood provided that there will be a demonstrable benefit to the community in which the rezoning takes place; and
  - (cii) CACs should have long-term operational viability (i.e. long-term operating and maintenance costs are supportable).
    - (i) **operational viability falls on the responsibility of the owner or owners (when additional organizations are brought on in a management role)**
  - (ciii) **CACs should support the activities of and represent all demographics of people within the neighbourhood it resides**
- 2.2 Cash or in-kind contributions toward the following categories of public benefits may be considered as CACs, subject to policy 2.1:
- (a) Affordable housing;
  - (b) Childcare;
  - (c) Transportation and public realm;
  - (d) Community facilities (e.g. community/recreation centres; libraries; social facilities such as family/youth/seniors' centres, neighbourhood houses, indigenous-serving spaces, and social non-profit **operational or** office spaces);
  - (e) Public safety (e.g. fire halls; police stations);
  - (f) Parks and open spaces;
    - (i) **open spaces must adhere to the revised Plaza Design Guidelines 2023 where possible in order to align with the City's priorities, goals, and services**
  - (g) Arts and culture spaces (e.g. artist studios; rehearsal spaces; cultural and social hubs; cultural non-profit office spaces; presentation spaces such as theatres, galleries, and music spaces);
  - (h) Heritage conservation
- 2.3 Furnishing, fit-out, and equipment associated with in-kind contributions may be considered as CACs for initial occupancy of affordable housing, childcare, community facilities and arts and culture spaces.
- 2.4 Capital renewal<sup>2</sup> and/or capital renovation<sup>3</sup> costs for any public benefits from policy 2.2 may only be considered as CACs to the extent it can be demonstrated that it provides an incremental benefit beyond what is currently provided to the public and is related to population and/or employment growth.
- 2.5 Reserve funds to support City-owned social facilities, childcare, and cultural spaces may be considered as CACs provided that they be used for major capital maintenance<sup>4</sup> specifically of the following base building components:
- (a) Structure (foundations, basement construction);

<sup>2</sup> Capital renewal means the complete replacement or rehabilitation of an existing building/structure.

<sup>3</sup> Capital renovation means additions, expansions, or upgrades that provide improved functionality to an existing building/structure.

<sup>4</sup> Capital maintenance means the replacement of building/structure components that provide no improved functionality to an existing building/structure.



- (b) Shell envelope (superstructure; exterior enclosures; roofing); and/or
  - (c) Electrical and mechanical systems (electrical; elevators; plumbing; HVAC; fire protection)
- 2.6 Capital projects funded through Development Cost Levies ('DCLs') may also be funded through CACs provided they assist in bridging the gap between what DCLs pay for and full cost recovery.

### 3 Ineligible Allocation and Use of CACs

- 3.1 Any contributions toward the following will not be considered as CACs:
- (a) Capital renewal and/or capital renovation that does not offer an incremental benefit beyond what is currently provided to the public;
  - (b) Capital maintenance unless otherwise allowed under policy 2.5;
  - (c) Operating, programming, and non-capital maintenance, including:
    - (i) Operational and administration costs (e.g. utility costs; salaries; program development; office supplies);
    - (ii) Non-capital maintenance and service fees (e.g. janitorial services; parking; landscaping; fire monitoring);
    - (iii) Office equipment and furnishings unless otherwise allowed under policy 2.3;
  - (d) Disbursement of cash to a non-City entity unless it is directed to non-profit, indigenous, or senior government organizations for the purpose of constructing new capital facilities or capital renovation and is secured for long-term use through legal agreements with the City;
  - (e) Contributions under the categories of public benefits in policy 2.2 that are not secured for long-term use through legal agreements with the City;
  - (f) Seismic upgrades for existing, non-City-owned buildings and structures unless it is eligible under the City's *Heritage Incentive Program Policies and Procedures*.

### 4 Ownership of In-kind CACs

- 4.1 In-kind CACs from policy 2.2 (except for heritage conservation) may be owned by the City, senior levels of government, or Indigenous or non-profit organizations that have a demonstrated organizational, operational, and financial capacity to run a facility with the programs and services to the satisfaction of the City.
- (a) In-kind CACs owned by the City ~~will be sought as a first priority~~ and will be subject to the following conditions:
    - (i) Applicants will be responsible for constructing, finishing, furnishing, and equipping the in-kind CAC as well as for payment of all applicable up-front development costs;
    - (ii) The size, location, materials, and design of the in-kind CAC will be to the satisfaction of the City and in accordance with applicable guidelines; and
    - (iii) The City will select a non-profit operator if necessary.
  - (b) In-kind CACs that are not owned by the City will be subject to the following conditions:
    - (i) The in-kind CAC must provide amenities, programs, and services that align with the City's priorities, goals, and services that the City is responsible for;
    - (ii) The in-kind CAC must meet a demonstrated community need ~~and support the needs of all demographics of people within the neighbourhood~~;
    - (iii) The in-kind CAC must provide community access that is affordable, equitable and

accessible;

- (iv) The in-kind CAC must be secured through legal agreements with the City for ongoing long-term use and availability as if it were a City-owned and operated facility;
  - a. The in-kind CAC will be secured on title in perpetuity to the satisfaction of the City, including pursuant to Section 219 covenants and statutory rights of way, and the type of public benefit will be reflected in the applicable zoning by-laws;
  - b. The City will have the option to purchase the in-kind CAC for a nominal amount if a senior level of government, indigenous, and/or non-profit organization is unable to continue ownership of the in-kind CAC;
  - c. The City will have the option to lease the in-kind CAC for a nominal amount if a senior level of government, indigenous, and/or non-profit organization is unable to continue operation of the in-kind CAC;
  - d. Applicants may receive a CAC credit for CACs determined through policy 1.2(b) depending on the amount and degree of affordable community access secured for the in-kind CAC as well as the degree of security related to tenure.
- (v) The in-kind CAC must not be mortgaged or financed for any reasons other than for reasonable on-site capital renewal and improvement of the asset subject to Council approval;
- (vi) Applicants must inform the City of any financial or other agreements in place with respect to the delivery, ownership, or operation of the in-kind CAC in the case of private development partnerships with non-profit organizations;
- (vii) Applicants will be responsible for constructing, finishing, furnishing, and equipping the in-kind CAC as well as for payment of all applicable up-front development costs; and
- (viii) The City will lead the selection of a non-profit operator, if necessary.

## 5 Timing of Payment

- 5.1 CACs will be secured as conditions of by-law enactment.
  - (a) Cash CACs must be paid prior to by-law enactment, except that a portion of cash CACs valued over \$20 million may be deferred on terms and conditions in the City's sole discretion, subject to approval by the City's Risk Management Committee.

## 6 Refunding/Altering CACs

- 6.1 CACs for rezoning applications that have been approved in principle by Council at Public Hearing, but not yet enacted, cannot be changed without withdrawal of the existing application and submission of a new rezoning application.
- 6.2 CAC payments made to the City will not be refunded after the relevant rezoning application has been enacted.

## 7 Annual Inflationary Adjustments and Updates of CAC Targets

- 7.1 CAC Targets as shown in the [Appendix](#) will be reviewed for inflationary adjustments on an annual basis to be effective on September 30 of each year.
- 7.2 CAC Targets will be reviewed comprehensively (recalibrated) as part of the City's 4-year capital planning process or, pursuant to Council approval, at an earlier date based upon the recommendation of the Director of Planning.
- 7.3 Increases to CAC Targets under policy 7.1 or policy 7.2 will have no effect if a rezoning or new

development application has been submitted prior to the adjustment (in-stream rate protection).

## 8 Exemptions

- 8.1 Rezoning and new development applications that meet any of the following conditions will be exempt from the application of CACs only to the extent that the following uses comprise a portion of the floor area of the proposed development:
- (a) Social housing that meets the DCL By-law definition;
  - (b) Heritage where existing floor area and bonus floor area is related to heritage conservation;
  - (c) Public schools for Kindergarten to Grade 12;
  - (d) Places of worship that are tax exempt;
  - (e) Community facilities that meet the following criteria:
    - (i) Provides City-related social and/or cultural services;
    - (ii) Operated by a non-profit society;
    - (iii) Open and accessible to all;
    - (iv) Accepted by Council as a public benefit under policy 2.2, policy 2.3, policy 2.4, policy 2.5, or policy 2.6;
    - (v) Secured for long-term use through legal agreements with the City and/or City land ownership.
- 8.2 Rezoning applications that meet any of the following conditions will be exempt from CACs:
- (a) Certain rezonings initiated by the Director of Planning;
  - (b) Rezoning for changes of use, except for changes of use from industrial to commercial, where:
    - (i) the proposed development includes no residential use; and
    - (ii) there is no increase in total floor area;
  - (c) Rezoning to District Schedules that include provisions for 'affordable housing shares' and/or 'amenity shares' as identified in Schedule F of the Zoning and Development By-law;
  - (d) Rezoning for 100% non-strata commercial developments within the South Vancouver Industrial Area as shown in the Appendix that are not deemed a large site as per the Rezoning Policy for Sustainable Large Developments;
  - (e) Rezoning for routine, lower density secured market rental that comply with the City's rental policies as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Exemptions for Routine, Lower Density Secured Market Rental Rezoning Applications<sup>(a)</sup>

Areas	Zoning District	Rezoning to Specific Height
Mixed-Use Commercial/ Residential Areas	C-1	<= 4 storeys
	C-2 zones	<= 6 storeys
	C-3A	Refer to local height maximums in C-3A guidelines
	MC-1	<= 6 storeys
Residential Areas	RS/RT zones	<= 5 storeys
	RS/RT zones (in community plan areas) <sup>(b)</sup>	<= 6 storeys
	RM zones (applicable to infill projects where existing rental units are not demolished)	<= 6 storeys

## Notes:

- a. Table excludes the Oakridge Municipal Town Centre area in the Cambie Corridor
- b. RS/RT applies to Cambie Corridor, Marpole, Grandview-Woodland, and Joyce-Collingwood Station Precinct

## 9 Annual Reporting

- 9.1 A report to Council on CACs will be produced on an annual basis and be made available to the public.

## Appendix

This Appendix consolidates select Council-approved CAC policies into this Policy. If there is any discrepancy between other Council-approved CAC policies and this Policy, the latter will prevail.

The City's VanMap application contains information on development contributions. If there is any discrepancy between VanMap and this Policy, the latter will prevail.

Table 1: CAC Targets and Eligibility Criteria

Map	CAC Target Area and Eligibility Criteria <sup>(a)</sup>	CAC Target <sup>(b)</sup> (effective Sept 30, 2022)	Allocation of CAC <sup>(c)</sup>
Map A (Southeast False Creek)	Rezoning applications on sites zoned M-2 up to 3.5 FSR as shown in Map A. Additional CAC will be negotiated > 3.5 FSR.	\$794.27/m <sup>2</sup> (\$73.79/ft <sup>2</sup> )	Affordable housing in Southeast False Creek
Map B (Cambie Corridor)	Rezoning applications for 4-storey residential as shown in Map B	\$846.43/m <sup>2</sup> (\$78.64/ft <sup>2</sup> )	As per the Cambie Corridor Public Benefits Strategy
	Rezoning applications for 4-storey mixed-use as shown in Map B	\$235.08/m <sup>2</sup> (\$21.84/ft <sup>2</sup> )	
	Rezoning applications for 6-storey residential as shown in Map B	\$1,210.85/m <sup>2</sup> (\$112.49/ft <sup>2</sup> )	
	Rezoning applications for 6-10 storey mixed-use as shown in Map B	\$1,316.60/m <sup>2</sup> (\$122.32/ft <sup>2</sup> )	
Map C (Little Mountain Adjacent Area)	Rezoning applications for 4-6 storey apartments as shown in Map C	\$557.18/m <sup>2</sup> (\$51.76/ft <sup>2</sup> )	Affordable housing on the Little Mountain site or projects in or around the Riley Park/South Cambie neighbourhood
Map D (Norquay Village)	Rezoning applications on sites zoned C-2 along Kingsway that are less than 1 acre as shown in Map D	\$152.69/m <sup>2</sup> (\$14.19/ft <sup>2</sup> )	As per the Norquay Village Public Benefits Strategy
Map E (Marpole)	Rezoning applications for 6-storey residential as shown in Map E	\$925.18/m <sup>2</sup> (\$88.46/ft <sup>2</sup> )	As per the Marpole Public Benefits Strategy
Map F (Grandview-Woodland)	Rezoning applications in Nanaimo St/ E 12 <sup>th</sup> Ave. shopping nodes as shown in Map F	\$826.99/m <sup>2</sup> (\$76.83/ft <sup>2</sup> )	As per the Grandview-Woodland Public Benefits Strategy
	Rezoning applications in the Midrise Multi-Family areas as shown in Map F	\$275.62/m <sup>2</sup> (\$25.61/ft <sup>2</sup> )	
Map G (Downtown, Broadway Plan area and Rest of Metro Core)	Rezoning applications for 100% non-strata commercial developments in the Downtown area as shown in Map G	\$185.53/m <sup>2</sup> (\$17.24/ft <sup>2</sup> )	Affordable housing and childcare in the Metro Core (Downtown and Rest of Metro Core)
	Rezoning applications for 100% non-strata commercial developments in the Broadway Plan area as shown in Map G	\$123.65/m <sup>2</sup> (\$11.49/ft <sup>2</sup> )	As per the Broadway Plan Public Benefits Strategy
	Rezoning applications for 100% non-strata commercial developments in the Rest of Metro Core area as shown in Map G	\$123.65/m <sup>2</sup> (\$11.49/ft <sup>2</sup> )	Affordable housing and childcare in the Metro Core (Downtown and Rest of Metro Core)
Key Map (City-wide)	Rezoning applications for 100% institutional developments (i.e. hospitals, community care facilities, and post-secondary schools)	\$35.21/m <sup>2</sup> (\$3.27/ft <sup>2</sup> )	

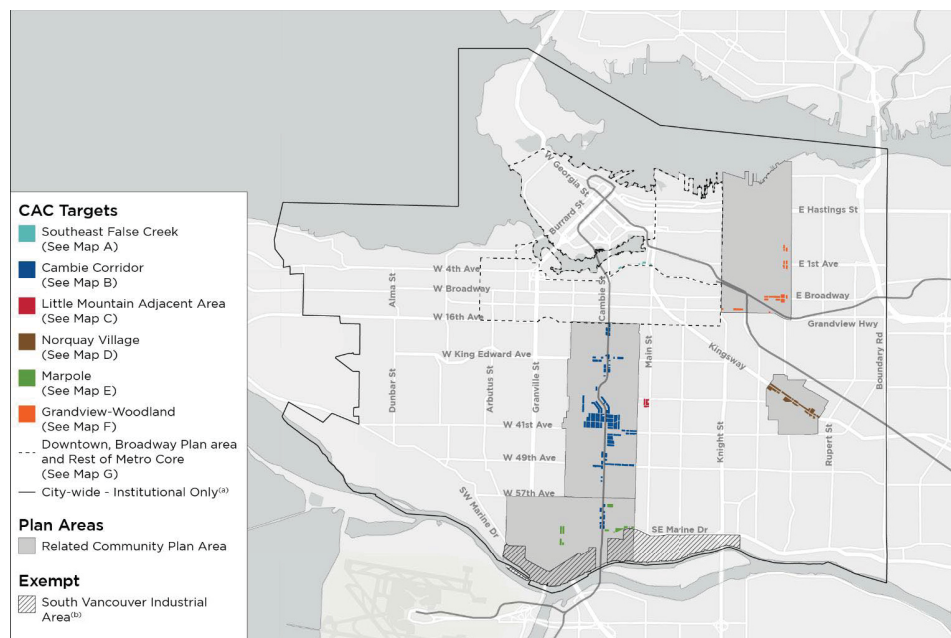
Notes:

- Secured market rental rezoning applications located within CAC Target areas may be subject to a negotiated CAC as per 1.2(b) of the CAC Policy provided it is not already exempt under Section 8.2(e) of the CAC Policy.



- b. Calculation based on net additional floor area in excess of the maximum permissible under current zoning. In circumstances where the total floor area is not being increased but involves a conversion of use from industrial to commercial, or non-residential to residential, the CAC will be based on the converted floor area.
- c. CAC Targets may be directed to public benefits located outside of the community provided that the public benefit meets the criteria in policy 2.1.

## Key Map



## Notes:

- a. Applies to 100% institutional developments (i.e. hospitals, community care facilities, and post-secondary schools).
- b. Applies to rezoning applications that are exempt under policy 8.2(d).

# Appendix B: Revised Plaza Design Guidelines

\$2



**City of Vancouver** *Land Use and Development Policies and Guidelines*  
Community Services, 453 W. 12th Ave Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4 -a. 604.873.7344 fax 873.7060  
planning@city.vancouver.bc.ca

## PLAZA DESIGN GUIDELINES

*Adopted by City Council November 17, 1992*



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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** The guidelines were prepared by Larry Diamond Landscape Architects in consultation with Planning and Social Planning Departments staff.

## 1 Application and Intent

These guidelines are to be used in the assessment of development applications in the following zoning districts: DD, CWD, BCPED, FCCDD, FC-1, DEOD, C-2 and C-3A.

They should assist developers and consultants to establish a design **framework and rationale in order** to create improved open spaces associated with new projects.

While not intended for rigid application, the guidelines featured in this document highlight important considerations which, when appropriately selected and interpreted, can result in safe and useful outdoor places which add economic and amenity value to a project.

A plaza is an open space designed for public use and defined by surrounding buildings and/or streets. Its primary functions are to encourage a diversity of opportunities for social interaction and activities, to provide relief and relaxation, to expand and reinforce the public realm and to contribute to the livability and general amenity of the downtown and other developing parts of the city. **Plazas should work to serve the public interest and provide supportive life sustaining amenities to all user groups in the city.**

Historically, plazas have been central to the development of urban centres. Examples such as European squares and piazzas have afforded citizens places to meet, trade and celebrate. In a modern changing city such as Vancouver, it is also essential that plazas have a purpose and are not merely leftover areas between buildings. As the city grows, opportunities are presented through new development to provide open spaces that offer **support, delight, surprise, rest, enlightenment and amusement** for a wide variety of users over the course of the day, week and year. Activities accommodated by public plazas such as socializing, resting, eating, bus waiting, exhibitions and open air markets add to the quality of city living and working, enhancing diversity and increasing the educational and cultural opportunities that define the positive experience of urban living.

## 2 Context

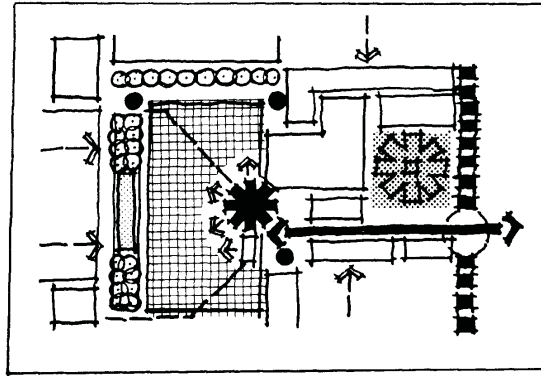
### 2.1 Use and Concept

Like a successful building, a plaza requires a program of use and a strong concept. Therefore, careful thought should be given to a plaza's principal functions and to its relationship with the adjacent public realm (i.e. streets, pedestrian routes, other open spaces), activities and architecture. **Mapping activities of adjacent sites including what amenities they provide can finely integrate the project into the existing infrastructure of the city, support its users and foster the use and success of the project.** While some plazas may act primarily as pedestrian nodes, others function best as important viewpoints or enhance the setting for a building.

A plaza should also reflect and reinforce the character of its location. For example, the purpose and nature of a plaza on Robson Street may differ significantly from one on Georgia Street. Within an area of the city, an individual plaza may function best as part of a hierarchy of open spaces, some small, others grand, still others as links within an open space network. Therefore, an understanding of area objectives, existing plazas and pedestrian movement, **adjacent amenities, building and street scale, materials and circulation patterns** are all essential in developing a use program and overall concept. Adjacent amenities and services to be analysed include but are not limited to:



**Figure 1. A Plaza's Proposed Uses, Functions and Linkages Should Be Determined as Part of the Overall Project Design Process**



## 2.2 Visibility and Views

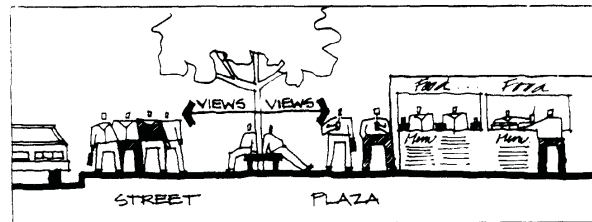
Good street-to-plaza visibility announces the plaza's internal attractions. It signifies that it is a public space, it permits users to watch street activity and it makes the space safer.

Good visibility can be achieved by the following:

- arranging any walls and planting to not screen or block off the plaza from the street;
- locating the plaza at or as close as possible to street level, preferably no more than 1.0 m above or below street level.

A plaza should also take advantage of distant views to the mountains, ocean and other landmarks wherever possible.

**Figure 2. Good Street-to-Plaza Visibility Should Announce the Plaza's Internal Attractions**



**Figure 3. Plazas Should Take Advantage of Views**



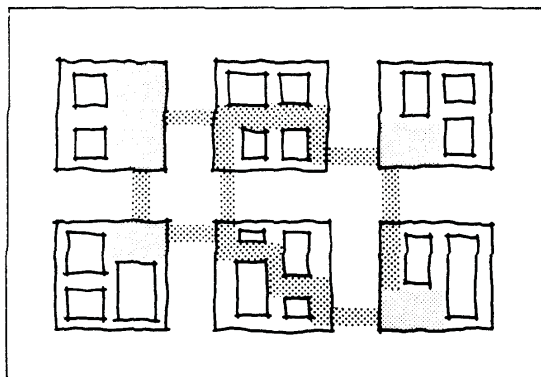
### 2.3 Linkages

A plaza should be linked to other surrounding open spaces, as well as interior spaces such as lobbies, to create a dynamic pedestrian network. Such links will make the plaza more useful and provide a more dynamic, coherent urban environment.

Linkages can be achieved or reinforced using the following devices:

- passages;
- bridges;
- steps/ramps;
- paving patterns;
- planting.

**Figure 4. Plaza Linkages Should Be Created to Achieve a Coherent Pedestrian Network**



## 3 Safety

### 3.1 Design

A plaza will be unsuccessful if it is not well used because of a perception of unsafeness.

The design of a plaza should provide for safety. Regard should be given to principles of designing for safety such as defensible space, clear sightlines, good lighting and provision of alternate "escape" paths.

The differences in usage, ownership and responsibilities among commercial, commercial/residential and residential plazas should be recognized, so that the different approaches to their design relative to urban safety is addressed at the initial planning stages. For example, zones of responsibility should be established and delineated in the design of these plaza types, taking into account their respective use patterns.

A mix of uses can be used to increase safety of plazas as it can invigorate the space for a greater length of time. For example offices and stores have different hours of operation, having a store open into the evening prevents the space being empty after 5pm.

### 3.2 Accessibility

A plaza should provide easy and direct access particularly for the elderly, disabled and young children. Ramp slopes should not exceed 8.3 percent and handrails should be incorporated.

Selection of surface materials should result in easy access for the elderly and disabled, and also discourage incompatible plaza activities such as skateboarders. Placement of planters, non-moveable seating and handrails should further encourage easy wheelchair and pedestrian access, and seek to discourage the use of skateboards.

### 3.3 Defensible Space

A plaza should afford good visual surveillance opportunities both from within the space and along the edges. People need to feel secure and will usually avoid dark hidden corners and vacant places.

A plaza should be designed to maximize opportunities for casual monitoring from its perimeter and abutting developments. Surveillance and overview from adjacent sidewalks, windows and decks are necessary components that contribute to the safety of a plaza.

### 3.4 Lighting and Public Features

Good night time generalized lighting is important to enhance safety of a plaza, particularly if it functions as a short cut or as a through route for pedestrians. ~~Appropriately located and designed lighting may also discourage loitering.~~

Low level lighting, shorter than streetlights and elements to light the ground can provide safety and ensures the plaza is comfortable from a human scale.

**Figure 5. A Plaza Should Provide Lighting Along Major Night Time Routes**



In autumn and winter, darkness occurs in late afternoon, coinciding with rush hours. This is generally a time of maximum plaza pedestrian flow, generated from office and retail buildings so lighting should be on timers to account for seasonal changes.

A plaza should also provide easy and direct access to public telephones and information signs.

**Figure 6. A Woman and Child Enjoy a Safe, Relaxing Plaza Environment**



## 4 Environment

### 4.1 Sunlight

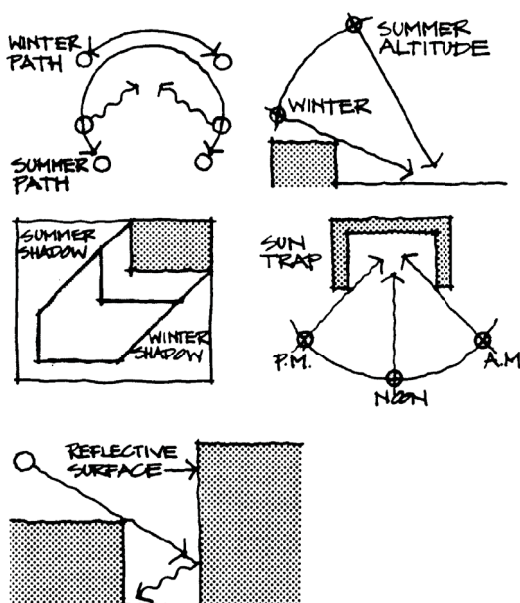
In Vancouver, exposure to direct sunlight is very important for many people. Warmth and sunshine are major user attractions.

Sun paths, sun altitudes and shadow patterns in the plaza should be examined for all seasons, particularly the spring and autumn. Sunlight is particularly valued at lunch time in commercial business areas.

Sunlight can be maximized by:

- locating seating in areas of maximum sunlight;
- creating sun traps - areas surrounded by walls with an orientation toward the south (walls should not block plaza/street visibility);
- utilizing reflective light surfaces (if no direct sunlight is available).

**Figure 7. Plazas Should Consider Sunlight Factors**



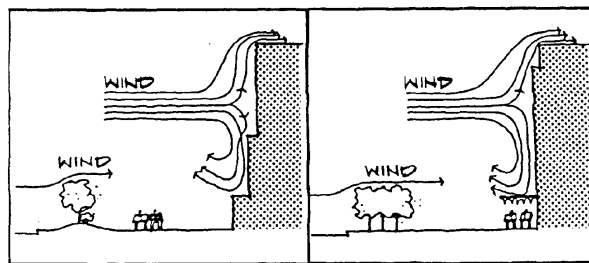
### 4.2 Wind

Downdrafts from surrounding high-rise buildings can cause user discomfort and should be prevented or reduced through specific design measures. Wherever possible, protection should be offered from strong northwest winds and from harsh easterly winds which can accompany fall and winter rainstorms.

Wind reduction can be achieved by the following measures:

- avoid large, open, unprotected areas;
- avoid wind funnels: narrow openings between buildings with easterly or northwest alignment;
- utilize planting, low walls and canopies for wind deflection.

**Figure 8. Plaza Users Should Be Protected From Harsh Winds With Planting and Canopies**



#### 4.3 Noise

High levels of traffic, industrial and other ambient noises detract from the enjoyment of a plaza.

Noise can be partially mitigated by detracting attention from the noise source through the introduction of such elements as fountains or waterfalls.

**Figure 9. A Plaza Should Strive To Partially Reduce Street Noise With Water Features**



#### 4.4 Weather Protection

In Vancouver's rainy climate, plazas should be designed with ~~some~~ overhead weather protection. Such protection should be provided at waiting points and along major pedestrian routes.

Protection can be achieved with the following devices:

- canopies;
- awnings;
- shelters;
- glazed trellises;
- enclosed but not temperature controlled pavilions

**Figure 10. Weather Protection Should Be Provided Along Major Routes**





#### 4.5 Environmentally Sensitive Design

Landscape design today must recognize a new reality in environmental awareness. For example, wherever possible, permeable surfaces should be considered. Use of drought resistant plants may lessen dependency on automatic irrigation. Selection of plant materials should be done with a mind to reduce use of chemical laden maintenance. Perhaps plantings can be more productive by providing a habitat for birds. A revised aesthetic may be in order: seasonal change can be achieved by selecting a variety of flowering or colourful shrubs and perennials instead of largely relying on annuals which are put to waste several times during the year.

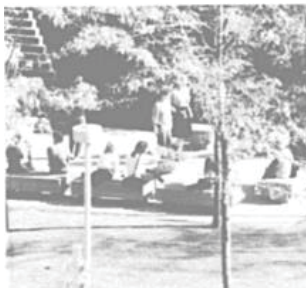
### 5 User Attractions

#### 5.1 Seating

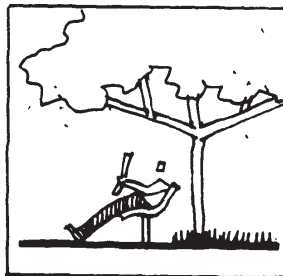
Good seating is important to plaza users. Without it, fewer people will stop to use a space. There are four major points to remember when planning seating:

- a) Plentiful Seating
  - maximize opportunities for sitting: walls, steps, planters, pool edges, lawns.
- b) Choice of Sitting Location
  - locate seating toward street, oriented to a view, near building entrances, next to attractions/amenities, in shade, in sun.
- c) Variety of Seating Types
  - in groups/couples/alone;
  - fixed and moveable;
  - disabled accessible.
- d) Comfortable Seating
  - provide warmth: generally wood is preferable to stone, concrete or metal;
  - provide contoured seating, preferably with a back and armrest.

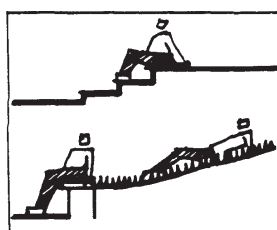
**Figure 11. Group Seating**



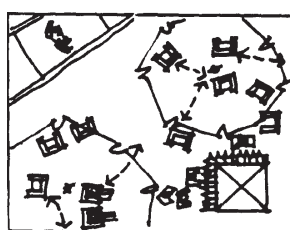
**Figure 12. Seats With Backs**



**Figure 13. Seating on Inherent**



**Figure 14. Moveable Seating Features**

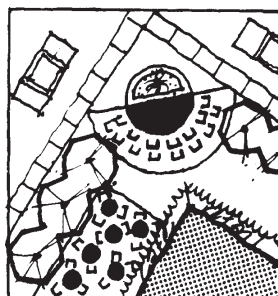


**5.2 Activity Generators**

Successful plazas are generally characterized by several activity generators. Examples of such activity generators include food and retail outlets, as well as entertainment, which attract users and encourage socializing, relaxation and festivities. Good plaza management can include soliciting groups to activate the space, such as folk dancers, street theatre musicians and exhibitors (see Section 5.7, Good Management). Providing the infrastructure for events (e.g. electrical outlets, water supply and lighting) will facilitate such activity.

Alternate owners and managers of spaces for non-profit activities can also serve as activity generators and help oversee the management and maintenance of open space.

**Figure 15. Food and Retail Outlets and Entertainment Create a Social Atmosphere**



**Figure 16. Open Air Cafe**



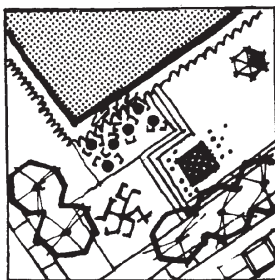
### 5.3 Amenities

A plaza which is furnished with a variety of amenity features encourages general public usage and creates a sense of liveliness and excitement. Art work should provide a focal point for the plaza or become an integral component of the overall design of the plaza. ~~Bike racks, drinking fountains and waste receptacles are practical, essential amenities.~~ **Essential, life sustaining amenity should also be considered to support a broader range of activities.**

Some others are:

- game tables;
- kiosks for information and posters;
- open air cafes;
- children's play equipment (where appropriate).
- **Drinking Fountains, Showers, Washrooms, Showers, Laundry Facilities, Charging stations, Wifi, Public Computers, Lockers, PO Boxes, Free phone**
- **Places to sit, eat, sleep/rest, play, interact**
- **Places of shelter (from wind/rain/sun)**

**Figure 17. Plazas Should Be Furnished With Open Air Cafes, Sculptures, Game Tables and Kiosks**



**Figure 18. Sculpture Often Provides a Focal Point in the Plaza**



### 5.4 Natural Elements

Natural elements which reflect seasonal change should be provided, such as water and trees, shrubs, ground covers, vines and flowers in a variety of colours and textures. Whenever appropriate, lawn areas should be provided to visually "soften" the urban environment and as an effective dry weather seating area. Vegetation should never create substantial enclosures from the street.

**Figure 19. Natural Elements "Soften" a Plaza and Attract Users**

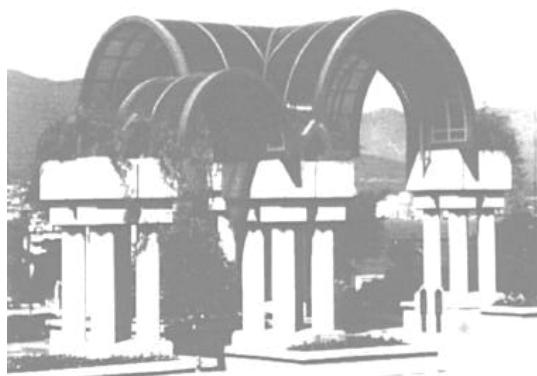


### 5.5 Detailing and Materials

Plazas which are built of high quality durable materials, which reflect thoughtful detailing consistent or compatible with the development's architectural language, and which acknowledge the practical considerations of drainage, non-slip paving, disabled access and easy maintenance have a good chance of being successful. Quality detailing implies attention to jointing, building and street edges, and technically correct construction techniques.

Plants used should be of the highest quality and in sufficient quantity and of sufficient scale to make an impact. Plantings should be selected and located so that their functional and aesthetic qualities can be maximized. Incorporation of irrigation and adequate drainage will help to assure their survival and best possible appearance over time.

**Figure 20. Careful Detailing Should Include Consideration of Materials, Their Durability and Appearance**



#### 5.6 Spatial Variety

Unless there is a specific symbolic or functional desire to accommodate large scale activities, large open spaces should be spatially defined into smaller, more easily identifiable and relatable areas. These smaller areas facilitate orientation and territory definition. People commonly gather at articulated edges in or around a plaza. A distinct sense of place can be achieved, in part, by defining edges and establishing a sense of enclosure through the use of canopies, trees, arcades and trellises which must be balanced with issues of visibility and defensibility.

**Figure 21. A Plaza Should Be Organized into Small Identifiable Spaces**



#### 5.7 Good Management

Good plaza management should be provided, with emphasis on maintenance, operation and activity programming. This not only affects how a plaza looks but also how well it can attract users. By keeping the grounds clean, maintaining the lighting, seating and surface areas, providing seasonal planting and by operating a food service, the management will create a safe, lively and attractive space.

Managers are responsible for the security of the plaza but too much surveillance and control over the activities within a space can be debilitating to it's use. Managers should encourage a broad range of activities and provide spaces to support them.

**Figure 22. A Clean, Well-Maintained Plaza Will Attract Users**





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