

From: "White, Josh" <Josh.White@vancouver.ca>

To: "Direct to Mayor and Council -

Date: 8/21/2026 1:32:38 PM

Subject: Memo to Mayor and Council - Railtown Area Planning Program Update

Attachments: Memo to Mayor and Council - Railtown Project Update Aug 2026.pdf
Memo Appendices- Railtown Project Update- Aug 2026.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

Please see attached Council memo providing an update on the Railtown Area Planning program, as directed by Council through the motion passed on [July 9, 2025](#).

This memo provides an update on the work underway for the Railtown district and summarizes the following:

- The public engagement to date, which included an online survey with a high response rate, two community outreach events attended by over 100 people, and one to one meetings with representatives of interested organizations in the area.
- The technical work that is underway to provide expert advice on the area plan, including heritage planning guidance, design feasibility assessments, and economic viability analysis.
- The focus group that was attended by representatives of interested organizations, and the key considerations identified for this area plan.
- The next steps in the project timeline, and the timing for the area plan and potential zoning amendments to be presented to City Council for consideration.

If you have any questions related to this project, please contact Josh White (josh.white@vancouver.ca) or Chris Robertson (chris.robertson@vancouver.ca)

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MEMORANDUM

August 21, 2026

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: City Leadership Team
Donny van Dyk, City Manager
Jason Twa, City Clerk
Mellisa Morphy, Deputy Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office

FROM: Josh White
General Manager, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

SUBJECT: Railtown Area Plan: Project Update

RTS #: RTS 18103

Purpose and contents

This memo provides an update on the work underway in response to Council's July 2025 [Council Motion](#), for the Railtown District. The July Motion directed staff to consider potential zoning changes and options for mixed-use development, including:

- Increased flexibility for creative, industrial and employment land uses, and no net loss of industrial or employment space;
- Transportation/transit network enhancements;
- Retail at grade, increased vibrancy and eyes on the street;
- Consideration of which sites may be suitable for a diversity of housing options;
- Heritage protection of pre-1930s buildings not currently listed.

This update memo is organized into four sections: (1) Public Engagement to Date, (2) Technical Work Underway, (3) Focus Group for Interested Partners on Key Considerations for Area Planning, and (4) Next Steps.

1. Public Engagement to Date

The first phase of engagement commenced in Winter 2025. This initial phase of engagement was intended to raise awareness of the planning process in the neighbourhood, and to identify the broad range of challenges and opportunities that exist in the area. Phase 1 engagement included: (1) a new project website, (2) an online survey which received a high number of survey responses (575 responses), (3) community outreach events at the Carnegie Community Centre and the Evelyn Saller Centre, where staff spoke to over 100 people, and, (4) one on one meetings with 20 representatives from interested partners in the Railtown area. For an overview of what staff heard through this first phase of engagement, see Appendix A.

The project was referred to the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation) through the City's referral process. To date, we have received feedback from Musqueam Indian Band and Squamish Nation, and staff will continue working with the local Nations to integrate their perspectives.

2. Technical Work Underway

The City has retained technical consultants to provide expert advice on the area plan, including:

- Heritage planning guidance, undertaken by Ance Building Services.
 - A draft of the consultant's heritage planning guidance was presented to the Vancouver Heritage Commission on March 23 and May 11.
- Design feasibility assessments, undertaken by TKA+D Architectural and Design Practice.
- Economic viability analysis, undertaken by Coriolis Consulting.

3. Focus Group for Interested Partners on Key Considerations for Area Planning

The first focus group for organizations with an interest in Railtown was held at the Japanese Language School and Hall in Railtown on July 6, 2026. 23 representatives from interested organizations, including service providers, not-for-profit organizations, public agencies, businesses and landowners took part in this focus group. Staff, alongside the architectural consultant, provided an update on the project, and key learnings so far. Participants were then asked to discuss their priorities and their vision for the area with other participants at their table.

Summary of The Key Learnings to Date Presented at the Focus Group¹:

a) Local context

- Railtown's location within the Downtown Eastside, and connections to Gastown and Downtown Vancouver, is important. Careful consideration should be given to how any

¹ A full copy of the slides and speaking notes presented at the focus group is available in Appendix B.

- new job space, amenities, services or housing contributes positively to the area, and fits the neighbourhood context.
- b) Railtown's diverse local economy
 - Railtown is home to many businesses and supports around 2800 jobs for the City. The creative industries sector makes up the largest proportion of businesses in Railtown, including artists and design services, which contributes to the distinct character of the area.
 - c) Opportunity to improve vibrancy
 - Greater flexibility of uses could support business retention, growth, and improve the occupancy rates of existing buildings.
 - Consideration of ways to promote a safe, welcoming and vibrant district at all times of the day.
 - d) Heritage, culture and character
 - Railtown has a rich history with strong connections to Indigenous Peoples, and the Japanese Canadian community.
 - Railtown has a unique creative and artistic character, its home to many creative businesses and artists, and the area hosts many cultural events.
 - e) Feasibility of housing
 - Technical work is being undertaken to analyse the feasibility of introducing housing into Railtown.
 - The technical consultants have identified key considerations for mixed-use development in Railtown, including:
 - i. The proximity to the rail yard has implications on the types of land uses and buildings that can be located here. Consideration is needed for the types of uses, physical safety, noise and vibration impacts. Addressing these concerns will increase the complexity of construction and costs.
 - ii. Compatibility of locating housing with industrial and employment space, the liveability of the residential and the continued operation of the job space.
 - iii. Preservation of significant historic and cultural assets, serving as a catalyst for place making and economic value, rather than a constraint.
 - iv. Ensuring growth contributes to the areas distinct identity and evolving character.

4. Next steps

A summary of the project timeline is provided in Figure 1 below. Emerging policy directions for the area will be developed and shared with the community later this year. The draft area plan, and potential zoning amendments, will be presented for consideration by City Council in Spring 2027.



Figure 1: Project Timeline

Please feel free to contact either myself or Chris Robertson, Director of Citywide and Regional Planning, if you would like any further information.

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General Manager, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability
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RAILTOWN AREA PLAN

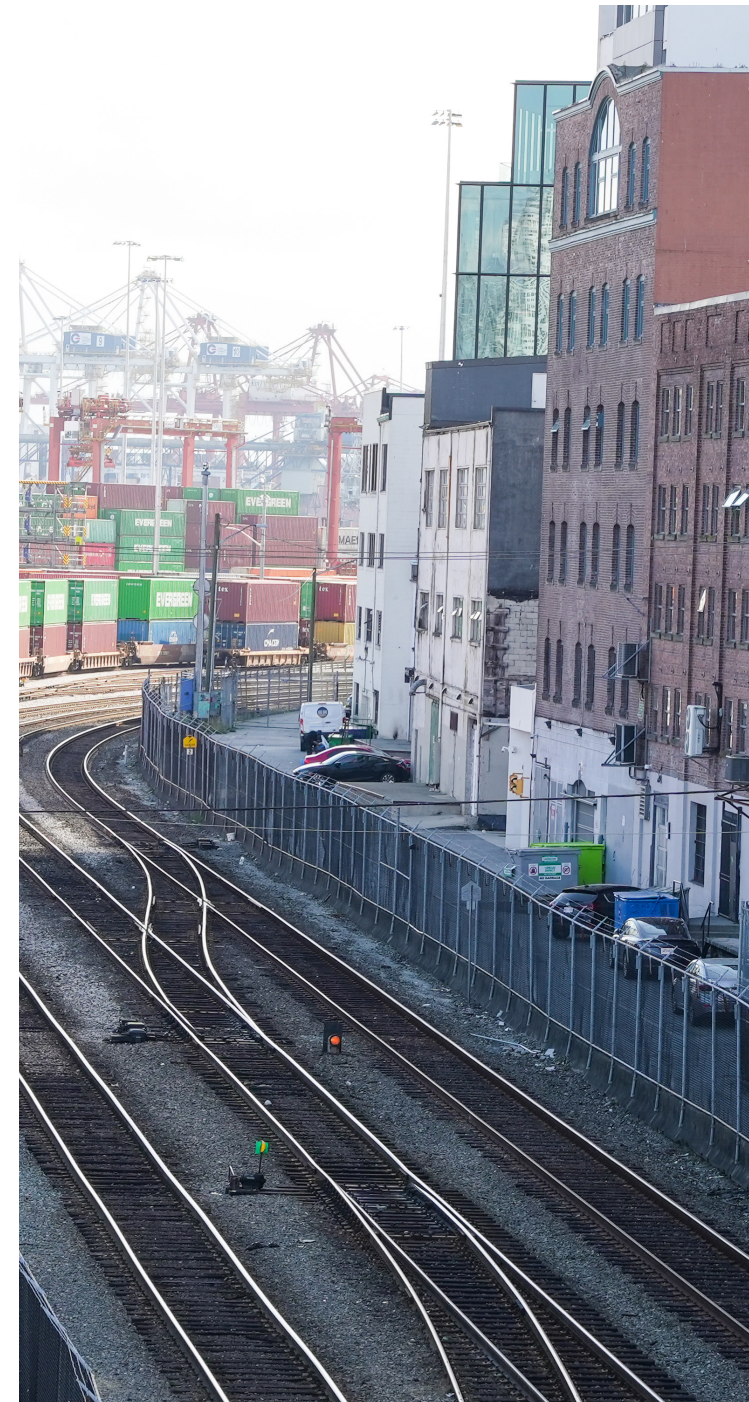
ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Identifying Challenges and Opportunities

March 2026

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Land Acknowledgement

The City of Vancouver acknowledges it is on the unceded and ancestral territory of the hə́ńqəmiḥə́ and Sk̓wxwú7mesh speaking peoples, the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Sk̓wxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and sə́lilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation), and has been inhabited and stewarded by them since time immemorial.

Through the Railtown area planning program and its implementation, we will work with Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations to align and advance the City's commitment to Reconciliation.

Musqueam Indian Band:

musqueam.bc.ca

Squamish Nation:

squamish.net

Tsleil-Waututh Nation:

twnation.ca

Project Overview

The City of Vancouver is developing an Area Plan for Railtown following Council direction to explore potential zoning changes and options for mixed-use development. Staff are assessing ideas to support a thriving neighbourhood, including more flexible spaces for businesses and opportunities for housing.

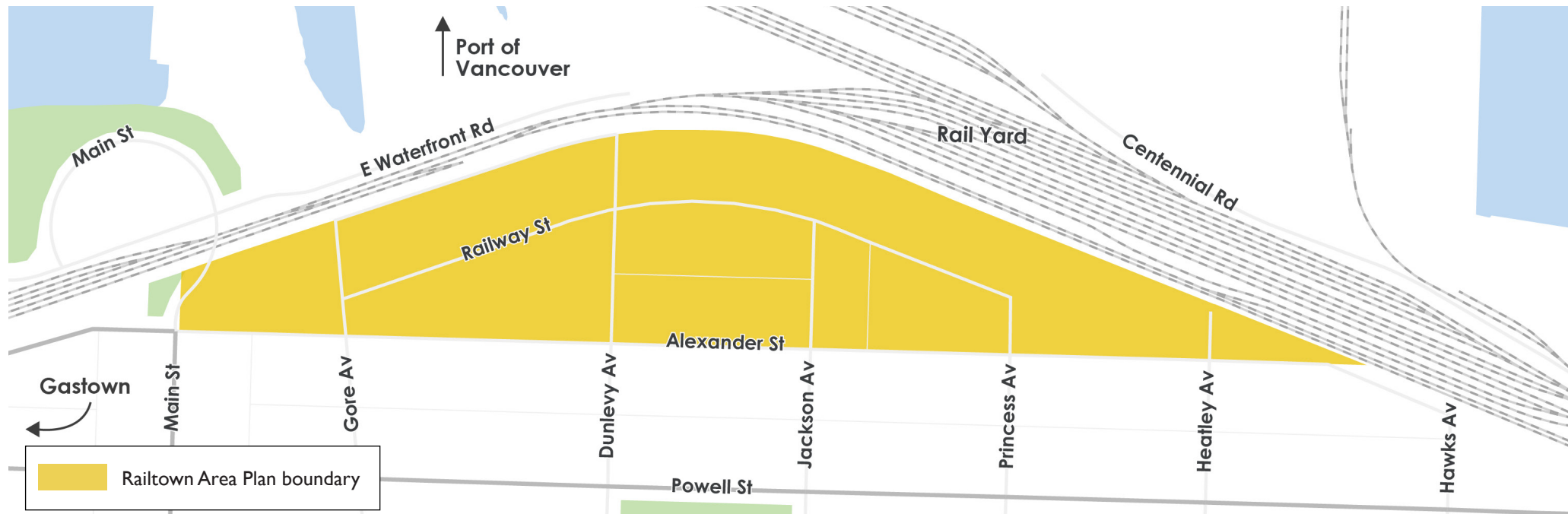
Initial community engagement took place in fall–winter 2025 to identify Railtown’s strengths, challenges, and opportunities. This feedback, together with technical analysis, will inform the policy directions of the Area Plan and guide the future of Railtown.

Project Timeline



Area Plan Boundary

Railtown is located in the Downtown Eastside, on the north side of Alexander St and east of Main St. It is adjacent to the Port of Vancouver and the rail yard.



Engagement Process

This report outlines the feedback gathered during the initial phase of engagement. Activities included an online survey, community outreach, and focused meetings with interest holders, conducted both in person and online. Additional input was received through the dedicated email address for the Railtown Area Plan.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

In fall–winter 2025, staff provided several opportunities for the public to learn about the project scope and share how they use Railtown, along with the challenges and opportunities they see for the area. This input will help staff understand the community's priorities for the Area Plan.

Interested Partners

Staff held one-on-one meetings with representatives from not-for-profit organizations, service providers, local businesses, Business Improvement Areas, and public agencies.

Community Outreach

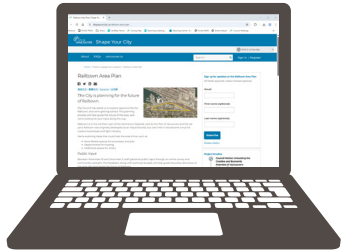
Two pop-up engagement events were held at the Carnegie Community Centre and the Evelyn Saller Centre.

Survey

An online survey on the Shape Your City platform was available from November 12 to December 3, 2025. The survey link was shared by email with community partners, on posters, and on the City's social media channels.



Overview of Engagement Activities



3,000+
website visits
the website was translated into
4 languages



389
postcards mailed
to 115 businesses and
274 residences



2
pop up events
with over 100 visitors



575
survey responses



20
meetings with
interested partners

Feedback from Interested Partners

Throughout the engagement period, staff met with representatives from not-for-profit organizations, service providers, public agencies, local businesses, Business Improvement Areas and Residents Associations, who have an interest or operate in and around Railtown. Representatives from these interested partners provided verbal and written feedback. Staff reached out broadly to community contacts, and those who participated are listed below. During these conversations, staff also asked whether there were additional individuals or groups who should be contacted.

Who we engaged with

- All Nations Outreach Society
- Canadian National Railway
- Community Coordinated Research network
- Community Impact Real Estate Society
- Eastside Arts Society
- Exchange Inner City
- Gastown Residents Association
- Hastings Crossing BIA
- John Steil Artist Studio
- Port of Vancouver
- Powell Street Festival Society
- Railway Association of Canada
- Railtown Coalition
- South Shore Community Liaison Committee
- Strathcona BIA
- Strathcona Residents Association
- TransLink
- Urban Development Institute
- Vancouver Coastal Health
- Vancouver Japanese Language School and Japanese Hall

WHAT WE HEARD

The following themes and bullet points represent a high-level summary of conversations with interested partners. Key themes and bullet points are presented in no particular order.

Key Themes

PROTECT JOB SPACE

- Create mixed use projects that retain employment space and ensure no net loss.
- Create low-barrier employment opportunities
- Retain and attract small businesses, small cafes and niche retail stores.
- Create spaces that are flexible and can be used by a range of businesses.

MARKET CONDITIONS

- Vacancies exist in both new and old buildings.
- The area is attractive to small start up type businesses because the rent is often cheaper than elsewhere.

"Railtown has high vacancy rates and a decline in business licenses."

PRESERVE HERITAGE AND CHARACTER

- Preserve the uniqueness and creativity of the area.
- Retain the look and feel of Railway Street.

ENVIRONMENT

- Noise, physical safety and air quality concerns from the proximity to rail, the port and the roads.

IMPORTANCE OF CREATIVE SECTOR

- Increase affordable spaces for artists.
- New public art to draw people in.
- New spaces are too expensive for artists, consider ways of supporting artists and designers.

SENSE OF SAFETY

- The area is quiet after 5pm and can feel uncomfortable after dark.
- Supports for peer led street de-escalation.

"High crime and safety concerns...leads to business losses and public safety issues."

DIVERSITY OF HOUSING

- Diversity of housing is needed, there is a lot of social housing in this area.
- Residential uses might improve the area, but it should be low to moderate income housing.
- Any new housing must serve the needs of DTES community.

PUBLIC REALM CONSIDERATIONS

- Improve street lighting.
- Enhance street cleaning.

"Public realm that is animated, attractive, available to all and safe."

IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS

- Limited parking for residents, workers and visitors in the area.
- The walkability of the area and connectivity between Railtown and other areas needs improving.

FLEXIBILITY OF ZONING

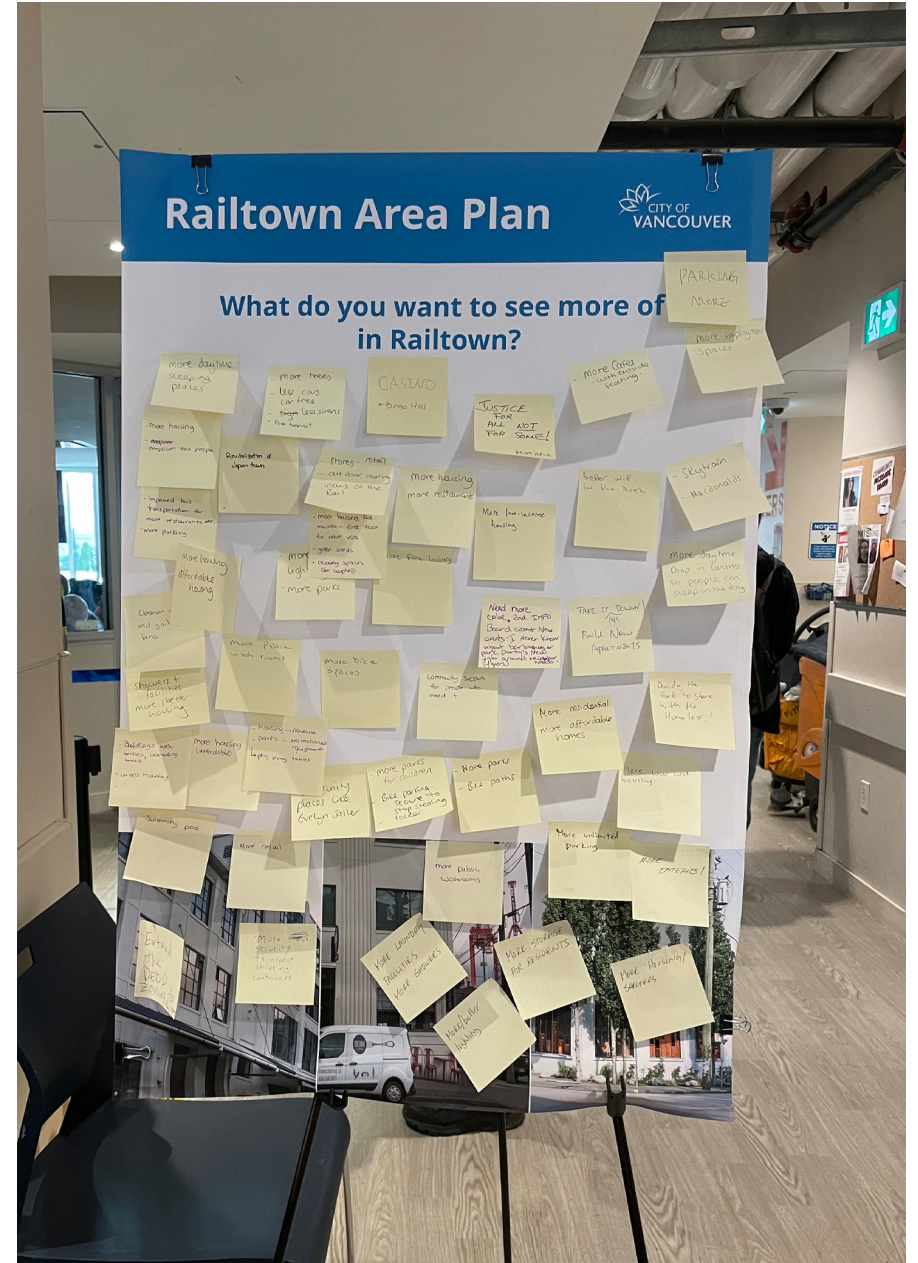
- The current zoning is incompatible with market demand.
- Employment space zoning is needed in Railtown.
- Industrial zoning restricts creative business and restaurant growth.

Community Outreach

During October and November, staff hosted pop-up outreach events at the Information Fair at the Carnegie Community Centre and at the Evelyn Saller Centre. Across these two events, staff engaged with more than 100 people and received over 90 comments.

100+ interactions

90+ comments



WHAT WE HEARD

The following summarizes the comments we recieved at Carnegie Hall and Evelyn Saller Centre.

What do you like about Railtown?

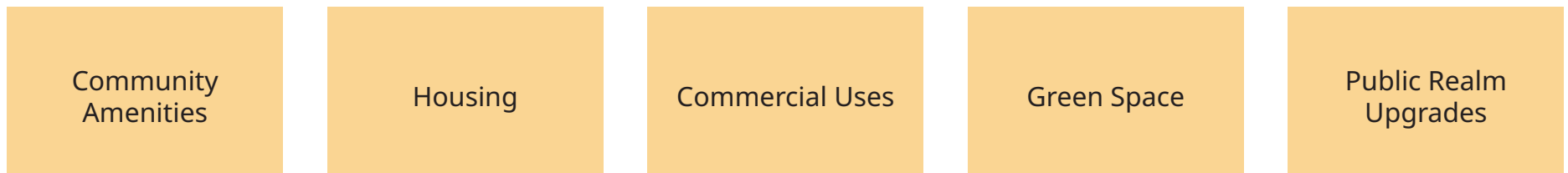


“
There’s a lot of love here, everyone helps each other

The culture and creativity

Easy access on the bus

What do you want to see more of in Railtown?



“
Community support for people who need it

More lockers and shower facilities

Public washrooms

Extend DEOD zoning to Railtown

More low income housing

Co-op housing

More employment space

More restaurants

Maintain the first floor of housing for commercial uses

More parks and outdoor space for children

Parks with recreational equipment

More street lighting

Cleaner streets and garbage bins

Outdoor seating

Survey

Staff conducted an online survey on the Shape Your City platform from November 12 to December 3, 2025 to gather community feedback on the use of Railtown, including its strengths, challenges, and future opportunities. The survey link was shared by email with community partners, on posters, and on the City's social media channels.

The survey was offered in English with translation support available through 3-1-1. Residents, businesses, employees, and others who spend time in Railtown were invited to participate.

In total, we received 575 responses and more than 1,400 written comments.

1,045
survey views

575
survey responses

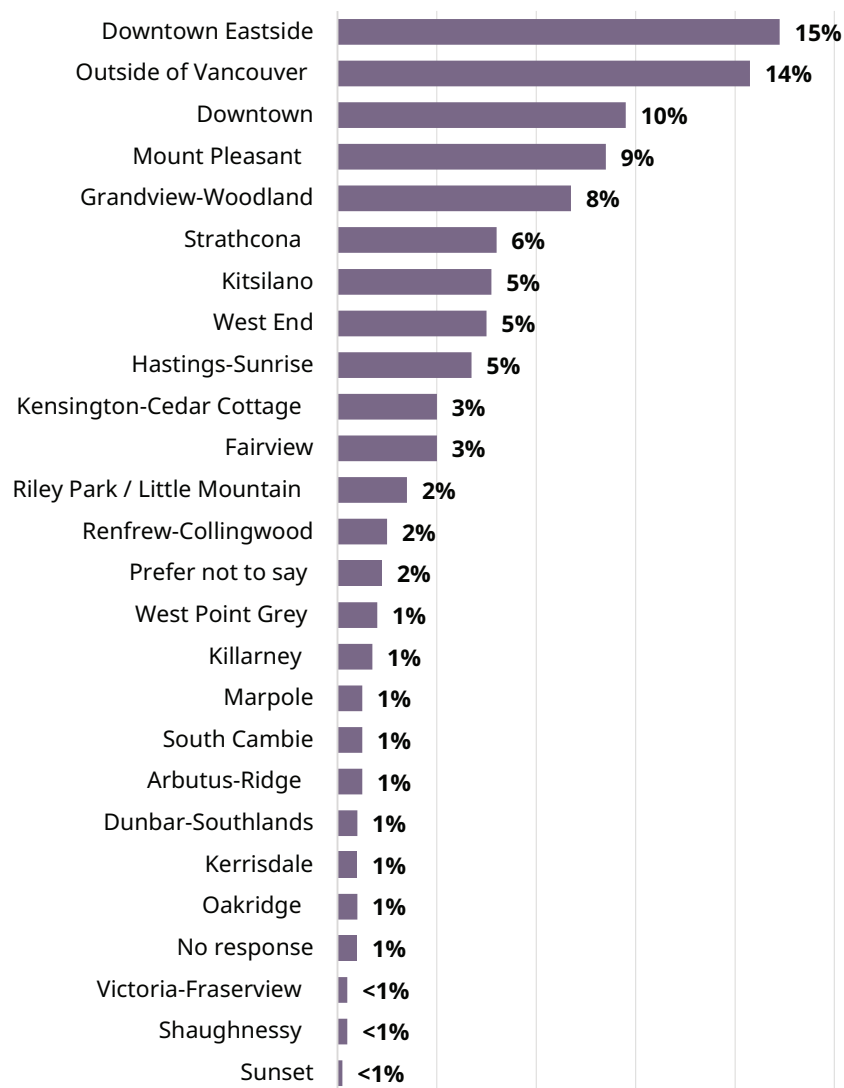
1,400+
comments



WHO WE HEARD FROM

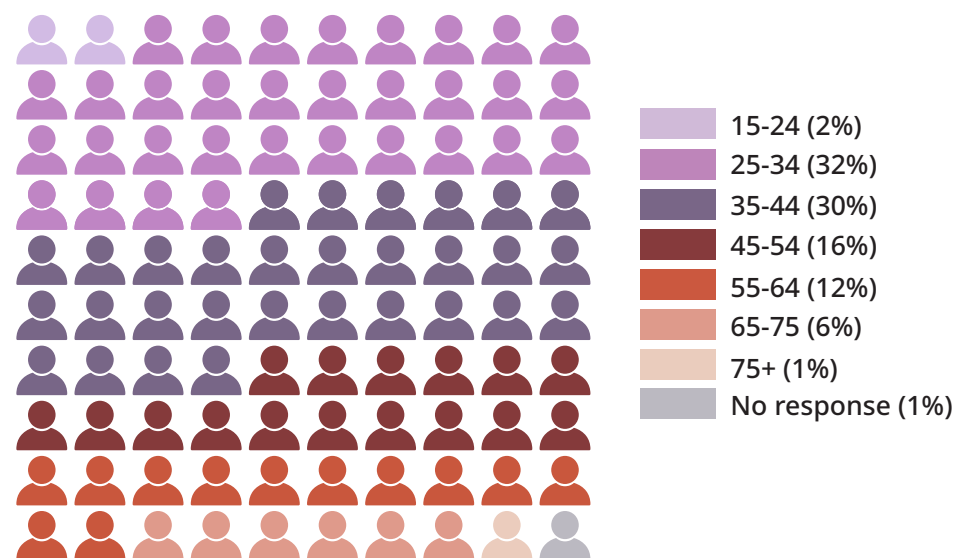
Where do you live?

85% of survey respondents live in Vancouver and 14% live outside Vancouver. 1% of respondents skipped this question.

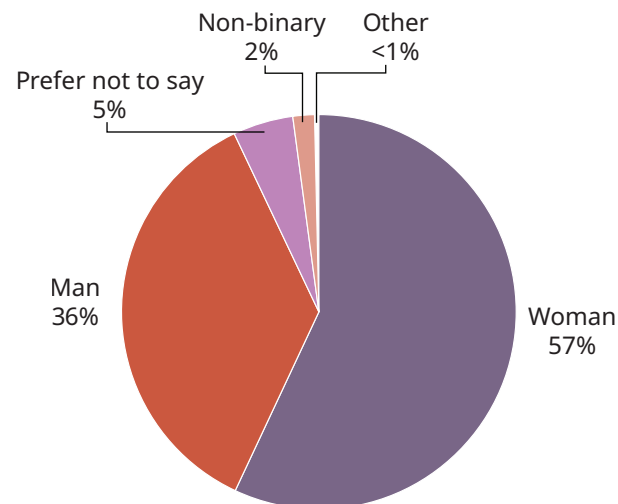


What is your age group?

Majority of survey respondents were between the ages of 25-44 (62%).



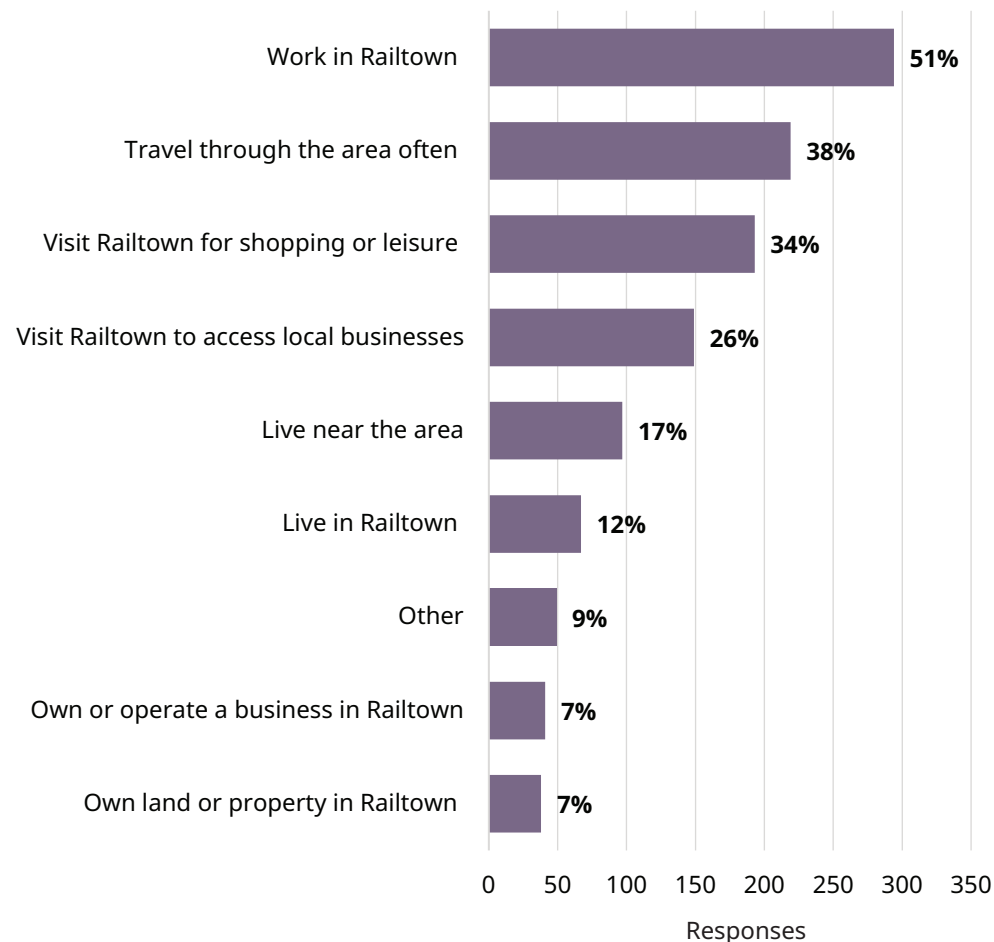
What is your gender identity?



WHAT WE HEARD

What is your relationship to Railtown?

This was a multiple choice question and respondents (n=575) could select all that apply:



9% of respondents selected “other”. Key themes included:

Community Participation including attendance at Japanese Language School classes, involvement in events, and volunteering.

Cultural and Historical Connections including visiting Japantown and attending religious ceremonies.

Personal Connections including previously living in Railtown and visiting friends who live/work in the area.

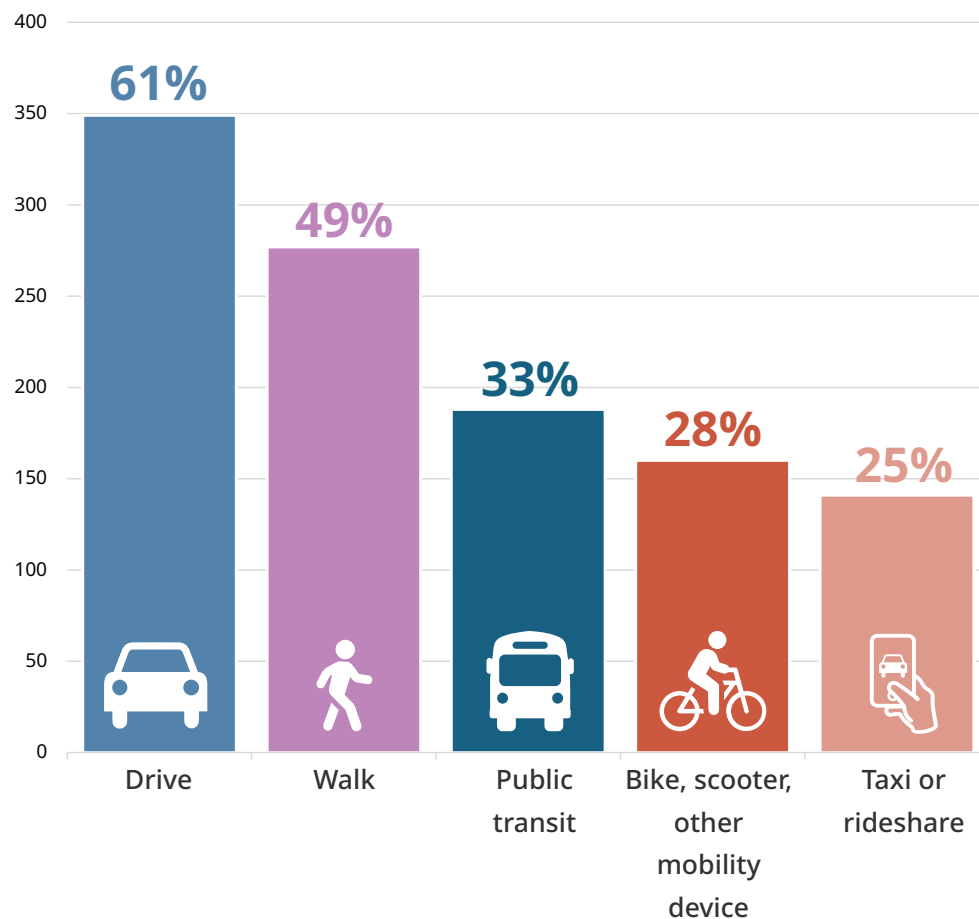
I take weekly language classes at the Vancouver Japanese Language School. I also regularly attend their community events.

It is a part of my community's history.

I lived in railtown until recently, and may do so again in the future.

How do you access Railtown?

This was a multiple choice question and respondents (n=571) could select all that apply:



What do you like about Railtown?

This was an open-ended question. Respondents (n=477) shared a variety of things they like about Railtown, often discussing multiple topics:

CURRENT LAND USES

- Commercial and retail uses
- Artistic spaces
- Industrial land use
- Office space
- Housing
- Overall diversity in uses



CHARACTER

- Heritage architecture
- General vibe of the neighbourhood
- Community
- Views
- Quietness

PUBLIC REALM

- Green space

CONNECTIVITY

- Location
- Transportation options
- Bikeability

CULTURE

- History
- Events

SOCIAL SERVICES

- Social housing

POTENTIAL

- Lots of opportunities in Railtown



Mix of industrial and commercial spaces, eclectic business mix, history, gritty urban feel, very interesting restaurants and arts venues.

It has a really nice historic character with some of its older buildings, and great examples of adaptive reuse. Also the mix of unique businesses and occupancies is a real strength, providing a useful mix of creative studios, light industry, and service.

Historic Neighbourhood for the Japanese Canadian community. The annual Powell Street Festival is awesome also!

For the residents, it's a small unique and vibrant community full of friendly and often familiar people.

The opportunities that exist for the area are exciting. It is well located in the city, with amazing views of the north shore, and has a unique character and feel that can be leveraged into a world class neighbourhood benefiting the entire region.

What could be improved in Railtown?

This was an open-ended question. Respondents (n=511) shared a variety of things they think can be improved in Railtown, often discussing multiple topics:

LAND USES

- More commercial and retail spaces, artist spaces, office spaces, and housing
- More services and affordable housing across the City for people experiencing homelessness
- More flexibility in zoning

PUBLIC REALM

- Improve cleanliness
- More green spaces
- Utilities repairs
- More street trees
- Preserving heritage and historical assets



SENSE OF SAFETY

- Increase active frontages and street level activity
- Better manage open drug use
- Improve crime rates and police presence
- Improved street lighting



CONNECTIVITY

- Better parking options
- More transportation options
- Enhanced bike infrastructure

ENVIRONMENT

- Improve noise and odours from Rail and Port

“
Strengthen it as a mixed use destination including support for cultural and entertainment opportunities.

We need to bring more industry, food services, and economic development to the area. We should find a way to celebrate its history while at the same time bringing in business and housing options to elevate the community.

Public parking is limited.

Safety needs to be improved. More presence of security, better lighting, and clearer public safety measures.

More people live in the area would help create that critical mass that would bring people in, and live here. Right now, after 5, it's a ghost town.

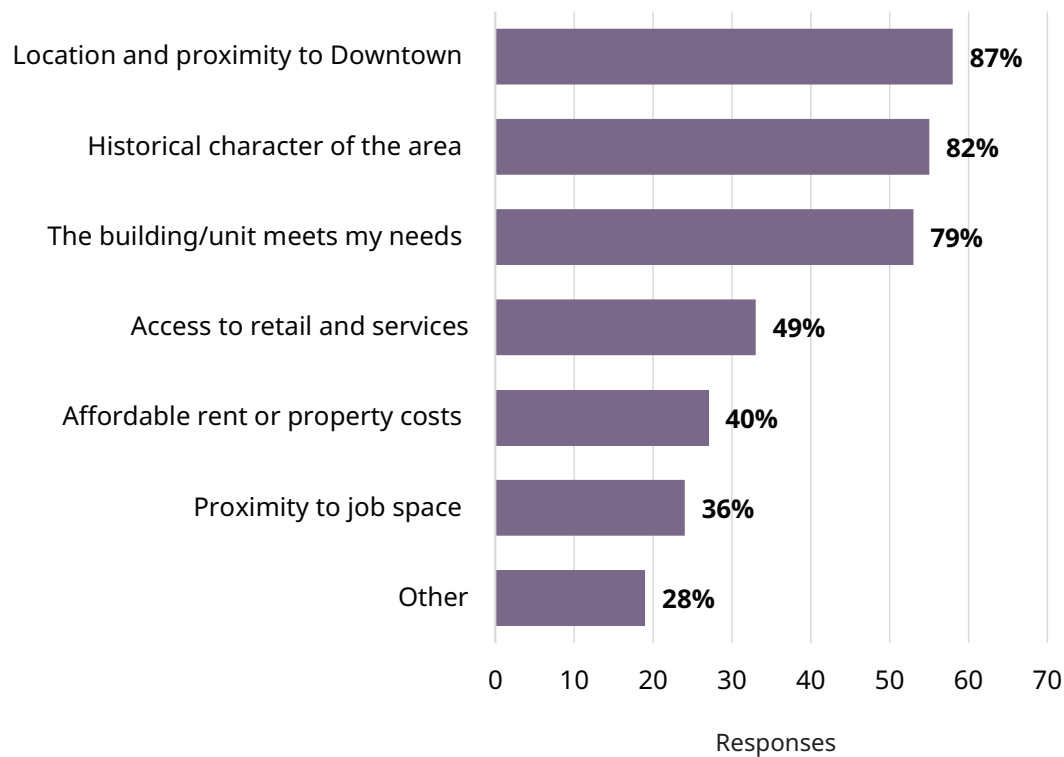
Would love to see more restaurants, storefronts, perhaps a workout class studio, and more (green!) places to sit and have lunch.

Residents

Respondents who selected “live in Railtown” were given the option to provide insight and feedback on what they like about living in the area.

What do you like about living here?

This was a multiple choice question and respondents (n=67) could select all that apply. There was also space to provide more information on their experience living in Railtown:



For respondents that selected “other”, or provided more information for this question, the key themes discussed included **Community** and **Character**.



We love being a part of the Railtown community, surrounded by other small businesses, families, and people who want to build a better future in our area.

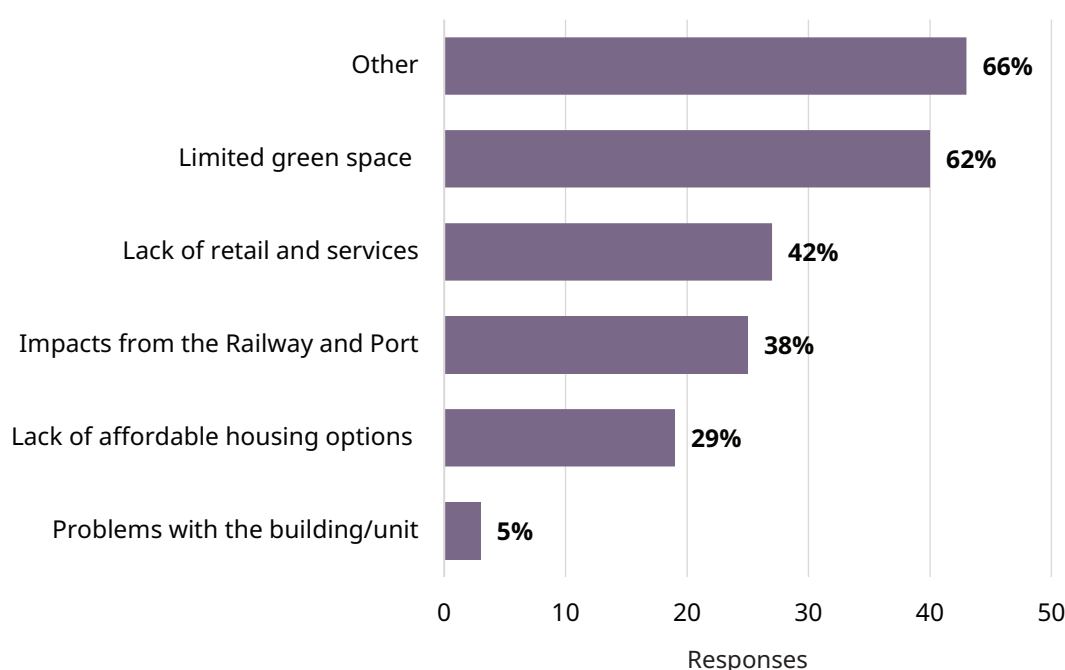
I love the diversity and creative vibe the area has.

I enjoy the community feel of the neighbourhood, the diversity, the history and the uniqueness.

Respondents who selected “live in Railtown” were given the option to provide insight and feedback on what they dislike about living in the area.

What do you dislike about living here?

This was a multiple choice question and respondents (n=65) could select all that apply. There was also space to provide more information on their experience living in Railtown:



For respondents that selected “other”, or provided more information for this question, the key themes discussed include:

- Sense of safety
- Discomfort over presence of homelessness
- Discomfort with open drug use
- Cleanliness on sidewalks
- Crime
- Parking challenges
- Noise from police presence

“Opioid usage on the streets, concerns about the well-being of the unhoused population in the area.

Local residents do not feel safe.

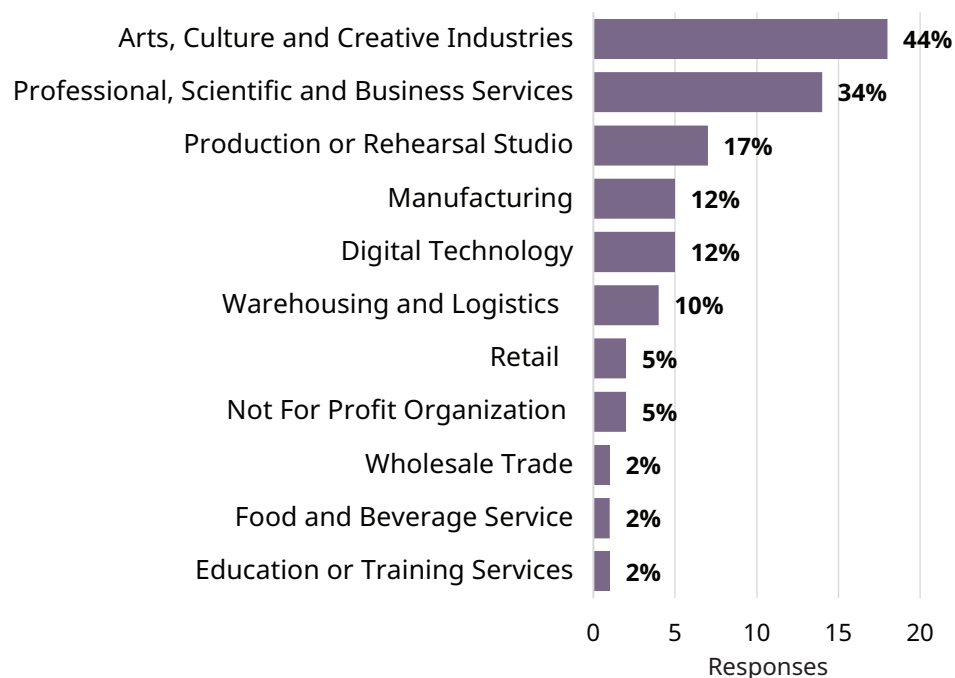
Lack of residential street parking options and the ongoing reduction of available parking.

Business Owners and Operators

Respondents who selected “own or operate a business in Railtown” were given the option to provide insight and feedback into what type of business they own or operate and why they chose to locate in Railtown.

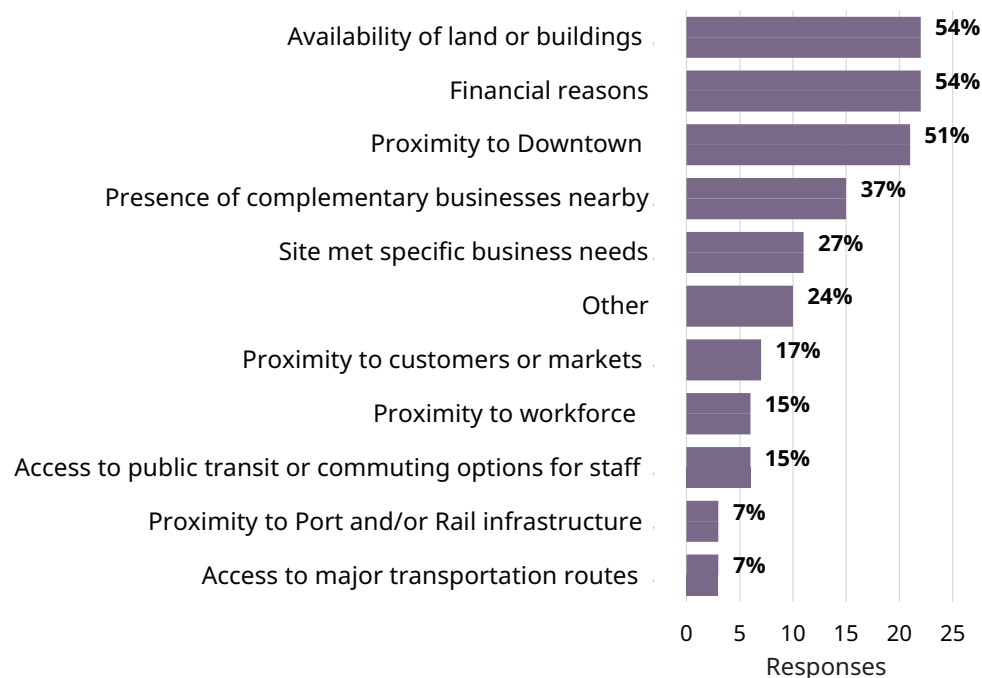
What type of business do you own and/or operate?

This was a multiple choice question and respondents (n=41) could select all that apply:



Why did you choose to locate your business in the area?

This was a multiple choice question and respondents (n=41) could select all that apply:

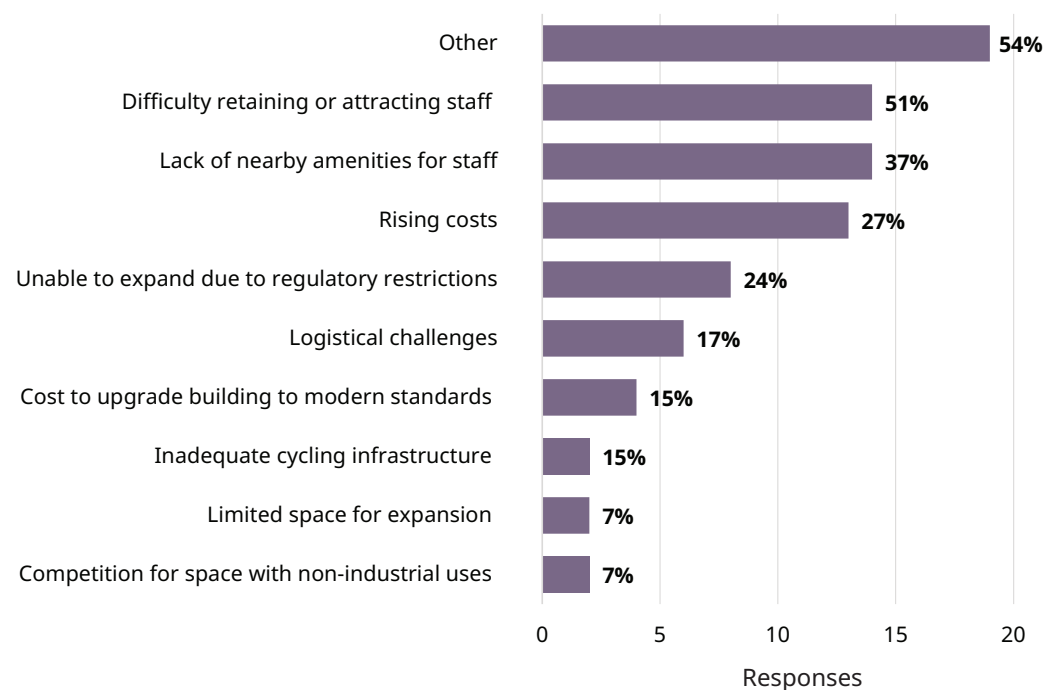


24% of respondents selected “other”. Other reasons for locating a business in Railtown included: zoning, availability of live-work studios, and land ownership.

Respondents who selected “own or operate a business in Railtown” were given the option to provide insight and feedback on challenges they experience.

Does your business have any challenges that are specific to the area?

This was a multiple choice question and respondents (n=35) could select all that apply. There was also space to provide more information on challenges and opportunities for businesses in Railtown.



For respondents that selected “other”, or provided more information for this question, the key themes discussed include:

- Sense of safety
- Discomfort over presence of homelessness
- Discomfort with open drug use
- Cleanliness on sidewalks
- Parking challenges

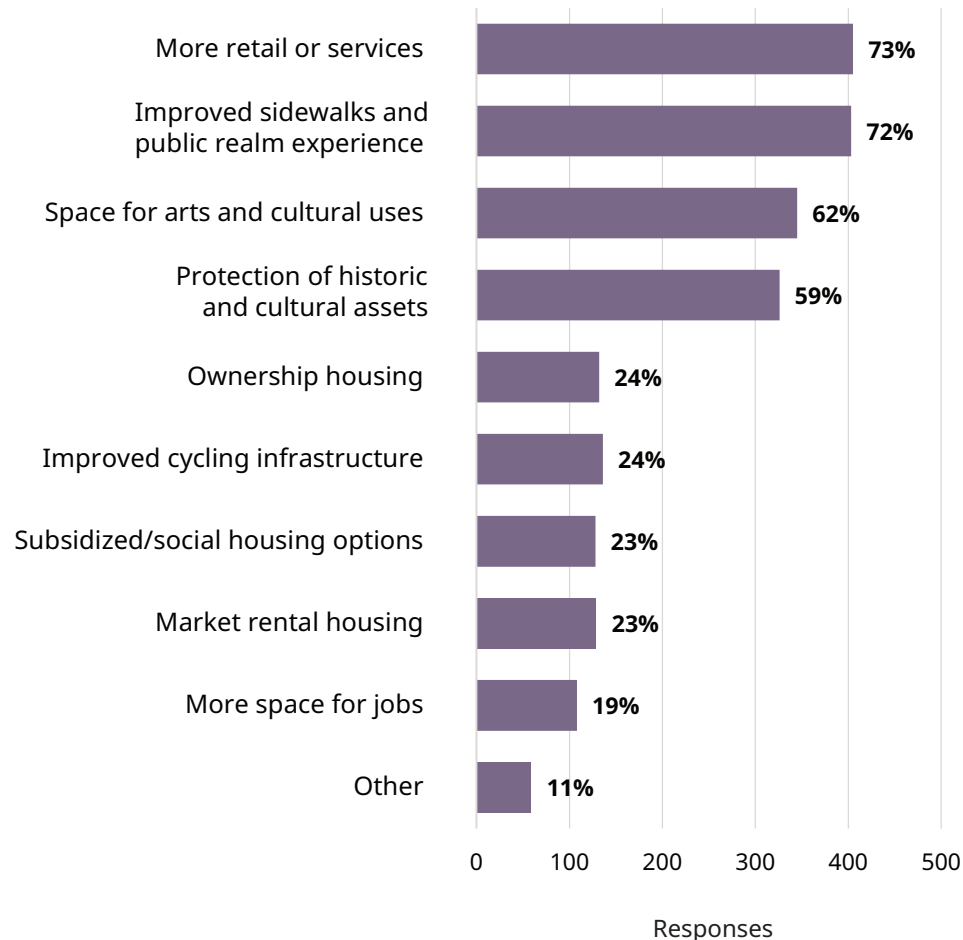
One opportunity was also identified:

- Updating zoning

“The challenges include the security and safety concerns that inhibit business and talent attraction and retention. Opportunities include allowing a diverse mix of market residential and commercial uses to increase 24/7 vibrancy.”

What would you like to see in Railtown?

This was a multiple choice question and respondents (n=556) could select up to 5 choices. There was also space to provide more information on what respondents would like to see more of in Railtown.



For respondents that selected “other”, or provided more information for this question, the key themes discussed include:

- Parking improvements
- Transportation improvements
- Safety improvements
- Increased vibrancy
- More green space
- Increased social support
- Utility upgrades
- Zoning updates

“Diversity, economic growth, safe street activity, music and food venues, vibrancy.”

Free parking for people who live and work in the area, and expanded public transport options.

Adding greenery and improving sidewalks and cleanliness would be a simple change in enhancing the overall feel in the area.

As much as I would like the area to be cleaner and safer, I would also like the area to remain affordable for families like us.



Land Acknowledgement

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Focus Group Participation

- Be present
- Please take care of yourself as needed
- Share the mic
- Share the lesson, not the story
- Listen to understand
- Treat everyone with respect

Today's Agenda

8:30 am	Registration and Breakfast
9:00 am	Presentation - Where we are - What we have learned - What's next?
9:30 am	Small group conversations
10:15 am	Report back
10:30 am	End



We spoke with many of you last Fall as part of the initial phase of engagement, and we wanted to continue these conversations as we progress with the area plan.

We have a diverse mix of organizations in the room today. We have service providers, businesses, public agencies and landowners.

1. We are going to start off with a short presentation about where we are, what we have learned and what's next.
2. We will then move into small group conversations for the majority of the session.
3. We will then do a report back to the group.

We will ask that you please keep any questions until the small group conversations, after the presentation.

Purpose of Today's Focus Group

Part one: presentation

- To provide a recap and update on the Railtown Area Plan project.
- To provide information on what we have learned so far.

Part two: small group conversations

- To discuss and understand your priorities and vision for Railtown.
- The feedback, amongst other considerations, will be used to guide the development of the policies.



- In today's focus group we will provide a recap, and update on the Railtown Area Plan project.
- We will also be sharing information on what we have learned so far, with help from our architectural consultants.
- We will then move into small-group conversations at your tables, to discuss your priorities and your vision for this area.
- This feedback, along with further community engagement and other considerations, will guide the development of the area plan policies.
- We will be bringing these draft policies back to this group, as part of the second phase of public engagement.

Project Recap

Council Direction	Summer 2025
Public Engagement- Phase 1	Winter 2025
Drafting area plan policy	
Public Engagement- Phase 2	Winter 2026
Finalizing area plan and zoning updates	
Council consideration	Spring 2027

Last July, Council formally directed staff to review the Railtown area and consider opportunities for the future.

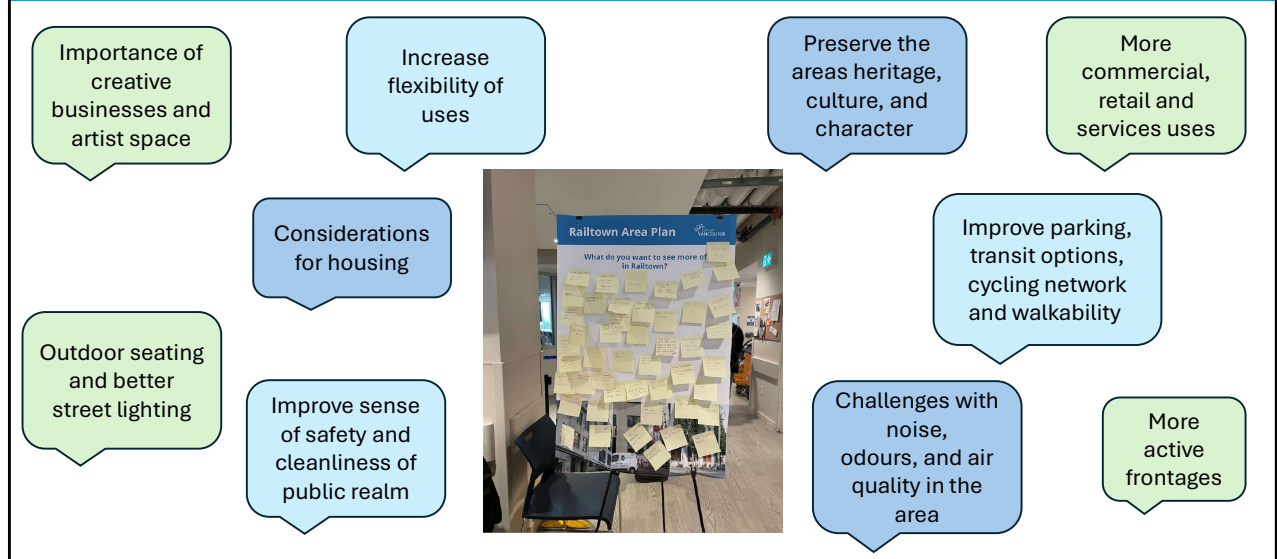
Some of the things Council asked us to look at include:

- How we could encourage more flexible employment uses for buildings
- Whether we could introduce housing into the area to improve vibrancy
- How we could encourage more arts and cultural uses into the area
- How we could protect important historic and cultural assets

In Fall last year we undertook the first phase of public engagement, and we are in our first interested partners focus group.

There will be more opportunities to share your feedback and engage with us, as the project progresses. We will plan a second focus group for later this year, to discuss the emerging policy directions.

Phase 1 Engagement- What We Heard



In November we completed the first phase of public engagement.

This included an:

1. online survey
2. Two community outreach sessions,
3. and conversations with interested partners like yourselves.

On the slide are some of the themes we heard through Phase 1 of engagement.

What we have learned:

Local context

Local economy

Opportunity to improve vibrancy

Heritage, culture & character

Housing feasibility

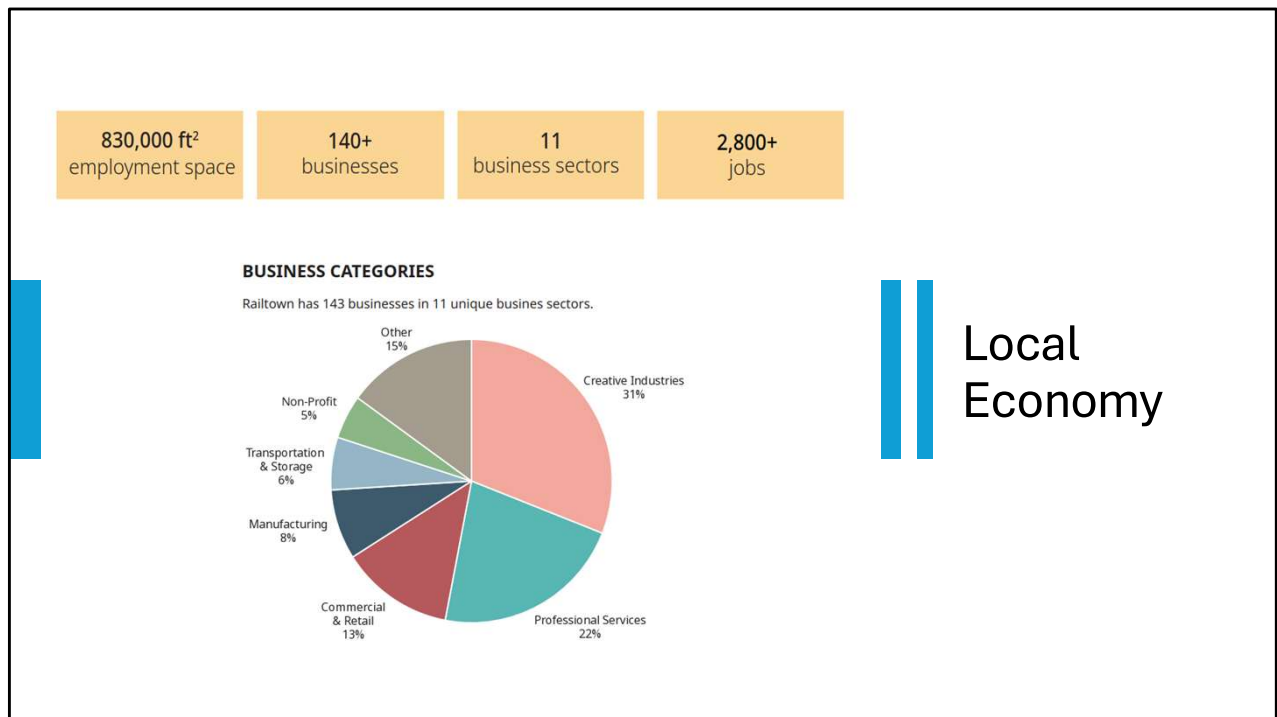
Through the public engagement and the technical studies we have undertaken so far, we have learned the following key things, which we will go into in the next few slides.

DTES Neighbourhoods



Local Context

- Railtown's relationship to the wider Downtown Eastside and Gastown is important. Careful consideration should be given to how any new job space, amenities, services and housing contributes to community cohesion.
- Proximity to the rail yard and the port influences the types of buildings and uses that can be located here.



Railtown is home to around 140 businesses, in a wide range of sectors, creating around 2800 jobs for the City.

The Council Motion requires a no net loss of existing employment floorspace, and so the existing 830,000 sq.ft must be retained as part of this area plan.

The Creative Industries sector makes up the largest proportion of businesses in Railtown. This sector, which includes artists and design services, contributes to the character of the area and is considered important by many of the public engagement participants.



Opportunity to
Improve
vibrancy

We have learned that there are opportunities to improve the vibrancy of Railtown.

Our initial economic studies show that:

- Current zoning regulations can limit businesses growth and expansion.
- Greater flexibility in permitted uses could support business retention, growth and improve the occupancy rates of existing buildings.



Photo source: Eastside Culture Crawl



Heritage, Culture & Character

Railtown has a deep history with strong connections to Indigenous Peoples, and the Japanese-Canadian community.

Railtown also has a unique creative and artistic character. It hosts events like the Eastside Culture Crawl, the Powell Street Festival and the Railtown Rooftop Party.

Railtown is also home to many creative employers such as Bocci, Aritzia and Hershel.

In order to understand Railtown's deep history, and provide heritage guidance for this project, the City has retained heritage consultants.

Assets of historic or cultural significance will be recommended for preservation, where appropriate, in line with the Council motion.



The Council Motion requires us to explore whether housing could be introduced into Railtown. To undertake this feasibility analysis, the City has hired Architects TKA + D.

TKA+D

We are here because we have been tasked with:

- Providing built form and urban design advice to inform land use policy development for the Railtown industrial area;
- Investigating strategies for the safe integration of housing and mixed-use developments adjacent to rail corridors, particularly addressing considerations related to noise, vibration, and safety.;
- Considering how future development can reflect and incorporate Railtown's existing and future heritage sites, as well as its cultural, historical, and socio-economic fabric, to ensure that growth contributes to the area's distinct identity and evolving character;
- Preserving industrial and employment space

Railtown has a distinct character. Formed by its geography and its proximity to the industrial waterfront, the built form reflects its industrial activity past and present. Railtown has historically been, and continues to be a place of industry, production, and manufacturing. Maintaining this industrial use is crucial to preserving its unique character.

PRECEDENTS CASE STUDIES

Precedents were selected based on criteria directly applicable to Railtown including:

- neighborhood scale;
- proximity to rail infrastructure;
- compatibility of industrial and residential uses, and
- strategies for retaining employment while addressing livability and safety.

This targeted selection ensured that the precedents are directly informative for Railtown's unique planning and design requirements.



Neighborhood scale



Building scale



TKA+D have investigated various case studies from across the world. TKA+D have chosen these examples that have some similarities with Railtown.

- The proximity to rail, but noting that most precedents are not in close proximity to an active freight rail yard;
- Examples of co-location of residential and industrial within the same building,
- Proximity to the water;
- Presence of historic or cultural assets in the neighbourhood

LESSON LEARNED

Patterns and Recurring Strategies:

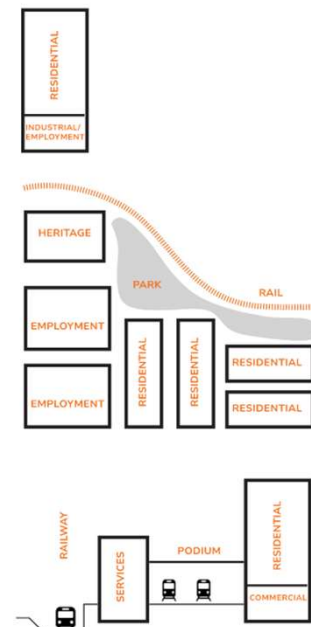
Stacking different uses
Heritage Integration
Public Realm Activation
Infrastructure Mitigation

Balanced Approach:

Industrial
Residential Cohabitation
Livability
Employment Space
Economic Realities
Social Objectives

No One-Size-Fits-All:

Context-sensitive approach
Activation of ground levels



Lessons we have learned so far:

- Complete integration of residential and true industrial uses in the same building is rare.
- The more successful projects use a vertical organization, placing industrial and employment uses at grade, with commercial and community uses as buffers and residential above. This helps resolve conflicts between livability and industrial activity while supporting job retention.
- Preserving and re purposing industrial heritage buildings is a consistent theme, serving as a catalyst for identity, place making, and economic value rather than as a constraint.
- Employing physical separation elements from the rail—such as setbacks (where possible), crash walls, and using less-sensitive non-residential occupancies as a buffer adjacent to rail infrastructure—can address noise, vibration, and safety risks. Given that a 30m setback is not workable on most Railtown lots, crash walls and layered buffers will be essential.
- In summary, these patterns illustrate that successful mixed-use and industrial-residential precincts rely on strategic layering, flexible design, and robust mitigation.

OPPORTUNITIES:

1. Relationships; Layered Section Strategy

2. Comfort; Rail & Infrastructure Mitigation

3. Familiarity; Heritage as Framework, Not Constraint

4. Flexibility; Flexible / Convertible Typologies

5. Community; Public Realm + Vitality

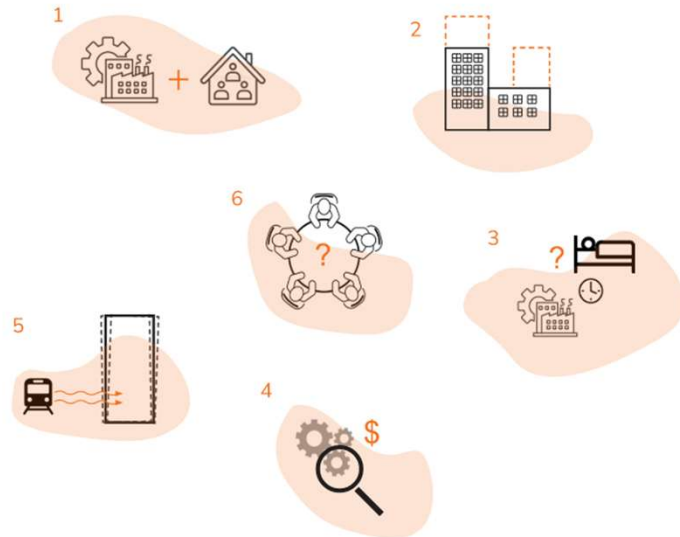


We are exploring opportunities for Railtown.

- The approach must be context specific. Having industrial at grade, a commercial buffer with residential above is identified as a consistent theme in most successful projects we have researched.
- For Railtown specifically, where a 30m setback is often unworkable, crash walls and robust at-grade buffers will be required. Non-residential uses (industrial, commercial, maker space) should be used on the ground level, with residential uses above, incorporating design features to reduce noise and vibration.
- Consider heritage as a framework, not a constraint.
- Developments often feature large, adaptable floor plates that can accommodate evolving uses, including industrial, creative, and office spaces, as well as residential. Encouraging adaptability ensures spaces can evolve as employment needs change, thereby future-proofing buildings and employment space.
- Nearly all successful precedents prioritize fine-grain retail, maker spaces or active frontages at grade. This strategy supports “eyes on the street” and 24-hour activity.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. **Limitations;** Compatibility of uses
2. **Complexity;** Heritage Integration Complexity
3. **Uncertainty;** Market and Tenant Uncertainty
4. **Feasibility;** Financial Feasibility
5. **Constraints;** Mitigating Vibration
6. **Community;** Creating a cohesive Community



There are a number of things we must consider when testing the feasibility for development in Railtown.

- We must analyze the compatibility of different uses for sites in Railtown.
- Heritage integration can be complex.
- Assumptions about the viability of flexible industrial spaces, or the market demand for mixed-use typologies in Railtown, may not play out as expected. Uncertainties in housing mix, demand for job space, or the attractiveness of residential uses near active rail and industrial sites could impact project outcomes.
- Layering uses and integrating mitigation features (e.g., crash walls, specialized construction for vibration/noise) increases construction complexity and cost.
- Mitigating vibration to meet criteria requires detailed consideration and may not be technically feasible in all scenarios and this needs to be tested.
- Adding a mix of uses and potential new job space, amenities and residential population must be carefully considered. Creating a cohesive community is important.

Small-Group Conversations



What are your key priorities for Railtown?
What is your vision for the area?

45 minutes

We want to hear from you, as the experts of this area, what your vision is, and what your priorities are for Railtown.

Railtown Area Plan Focus Group: Vision and Priorities

Area plans are guided by council priorities, budget, resources, environmental impacts, and community engagement. Your feedback will be summarized in the Railtown Area Plan engagement report.

For each box below, please rank the items in order of priority, 1 being your highest priority. Please use the space below to think about your vision for the area, and what you think the future looks like for Railtown.

Please use the blank boxes to add other items you consider a priority for Railtown. We will collect these sheets after the event.

Spaces for Working	Priority rank
Office spaces	
Industrial and workshop spaces	
Artist and creative spaces	
Retail/Restaurant units	
Cultural spaces	

Heritage, Public Realm and Transportation	Priority rank
Preservation of historic and cultural assets	
Building heights and shadowing	
More open or green space	
Enhanced and safe active transportation options	
Public realm enhancements, such as street lighting, wider sidewalks	

Spaces for Living	Priority rank
Homes to own (Strata)	
Social rented housing	
Rental homes at market rents	
Rental homes at below market rents	
Homes or Live/work options for Artists	
Limit/restrict housing in Railtown	

Safe and Welcoming	Priority rank
Enhanced social services in the area	
Low barrier employment opportunities	
Enhanced programs for the neighbourhood such as street cleaning	
Enhanced supports for mental health and substance use	

What is your vision for the Railtown area? What does the future of this area look like to you?

On the table in front of you is an engagement sheet that looks like this, with a list of suggested priorities on and a question about your vision for the Railtown area. The priorities that are listed here are things we heard through engagement. There is also space to add priorities that are not listed.

City staff members will join your tables to hear what your priorities and vision for the area. Staff will also take notes, which will be used in our engagement summary.



Thank you for
participating!

If you would like to share additional feedback please feel free to email
Railtown@vancouver.ca