

Engagement Summary

Gastown Streets: Local Business Visioning Workshop

Gastown's streets are in need of major repair and rehabilitation and we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to holistically plan the area's streets. Local businesses are key to the vitality, character and economy of Gastown, and thus are important stakeholders in this planning process.

In order to help the City of Vancouver better understand the perspectives and needs of local businesses, staff hosted a workshop with the support of the Gastown BIA on Tuesday, April 10, 2018.

The purpose of the workshop was to:

- Share information about the Gastown Streets planning process
- Learn more about the unique character of the area, as well as the challenges in the area today from the business community
- Explore different visions for how car-light might work, or not, in Gastown

The Gastown business workshop was an initial conversation with a wide-range of local businesses. It will help staff develop three or four high-level network options for Gastown's streets to test and explore further with the community in late 2018.

PARTICIPANTS

In total, there were 35 local businesses who attended the workshop. A range of business types were represented – independent and chain restaurants, independent clothing and design stores, galleries, architects, property owners, the film school, etc.



WORKSHOP FORMAT

The workshop was 3 hours and consisted of both presentations and table discussions.

The first presentation explained background about the project and the planning process.

A table discussion followed that asked participants to identify the unique 'character areas' in Gastown today:

- What are the distinguishing features of these areas?
- What works well and what could be improved?

The second presentation focused on how people travel in Gastown and explored a spectrum of car-light examples from around the world – from light-touch public realm improvements to car-free districts.



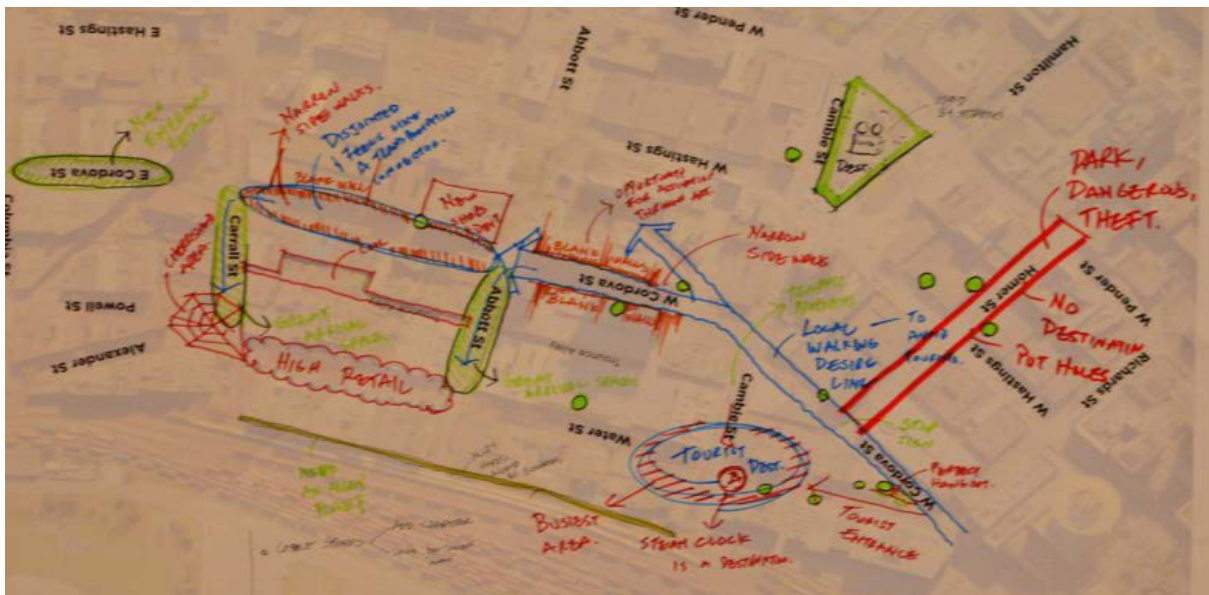
To help staff in their development of options for Gastown, the second table discussion asked each table to choose one character area around which to build a vision for the streets. Participants were asked to imagine this character area in the future: what could it be? They were then asked to create a broader vision for Gastown, building off their ideas for this character area, to identify what are the possibilities and what are the considerations.

WHAT WE HEARD

Big takeaways:

- **Learn more about the impacts of car-light areas in other cities** – In particular, what kinds of businesses thrive? Which don't? Did these areas in other cities experience retail gentrification? What happened to the character of these areas?
- **Be flexible and learn by doing** – Let's try out car-light in a flexible way that allows us to see how a design change would work in Gastown. Consider designs that can adapt based on the season or time of day, or can be expanded slowly over time.

- **Be mindful of the social and retail mix in Gastown** – How will any expanded public space be used, cared for, activated? How can we create spaces that feel safe and clean, and yet also not push people out of the area?
- **Create connections to the distinct character areas in Gastown** – Gastown isn't just Water St. Consider ways to draw people to all parts of the neighbourhood – for example public art, extending the street features beyond Water St., better wayfinding, etc.
- **Emphasize the 'gateways' to Gastown** – Gastown has more than one gateway. Consider the many entrances to Gastown, how they welcome people to the neighbourhood, and encourage people to stay in the area.
- **Pay attention to the small, intimate spaces in Gastown** – In planning the area's streets, laneways and public spaces, consider the places that encourage people to linger in the area, create opportunity for small and affordable retail, and add character to the neighbourhood.



Character areas discussion:

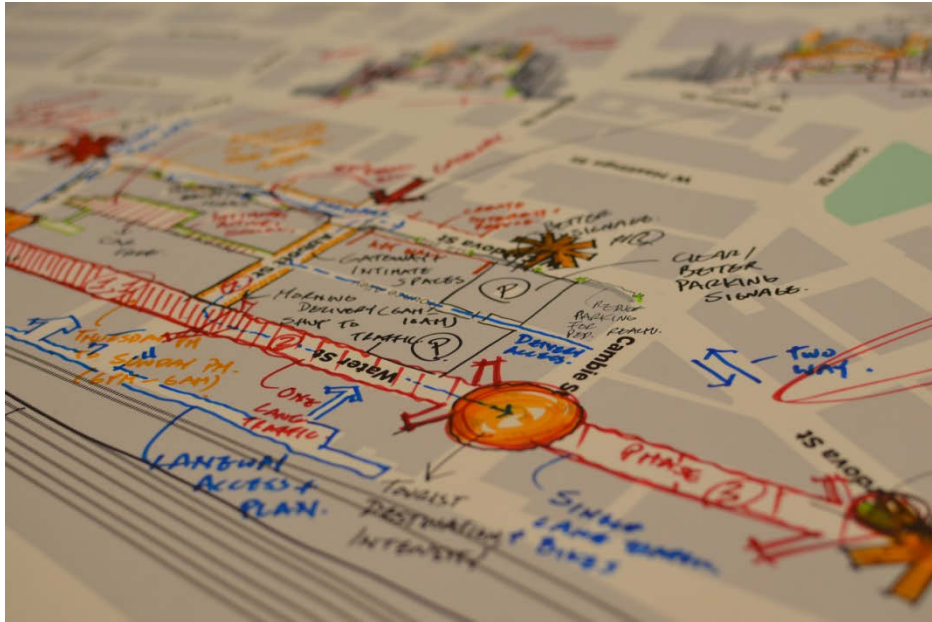
Listed below are the character areas and their defining features collected during the first table discussions.

- Steam clock at Water St. and Cambie St.**
- Hot spot for tourists
 - Often crowded, people spill over onto the street
 - Place for wedding photos

- Trounce Alley and Blood Alley Square**
- Trounce Alley is important for deliveries
 - Retail in back adds life and character
 - Important walking connection

- Blood Alley Square is a special gathering place
- Crab Park**
- Under-utilized
 - Needs a better connection
- Pigeon Park**
- Who is it for? Should it be better integrated into Gastown?
- Carrall St.**
- Dead-end has opportunity
 - Alexander St./Carrall St. centre of 'east' Gastown
 - Great arrival place
 - Carrall St. and Hastings a gateway to Gastown
- Dead ends/view points on Water St.**
- Important views to rail tracks and water
 - Under-utilized public spaces
 - Access to water?
 - A High Line type platform above the tracks?
- Abbott St.**
- Important connection to transit
 - Tour buses hop on and off near rail corridor
 - Great arrival place
 - A gateway into Gastown
- Cordova St.**
- Cordova and Abbott St. has more retail potential
 - Consider connections with Chinatown
 - Cordova and Columbia emerging retail space
 - W Cordova has v. narrow sidewalks, some blank walls
 - Too much of a thorough-fare
- Victory Square**
- Important character area, connect to it
- Powell St. from Columbia St. to Main St.**
- Growing area for new businesses, sees more traffic
 - Food destination
 - Columbia St. has minimal street life
 - Columbia is a potential gateway
- Water St. at Cordova St.**
- This is a successful retail area, heavily treed
 - A gateway into Gastown
- Cambie St. and Hastings St.**
- Hidden gem
- Laneways**
- Potential with laneways, some feel unsafe today.
 - Pop up in 2017 was great
 - Need an alley/laneway plan
 - Potential area to build character
 - North alley close to rail is scary
- Homer St.**
- Can feel dark and dangerous.
 - Lots of bike theft
 - Dangerous crosswalk at Cordova St.

Visions for Gastown:



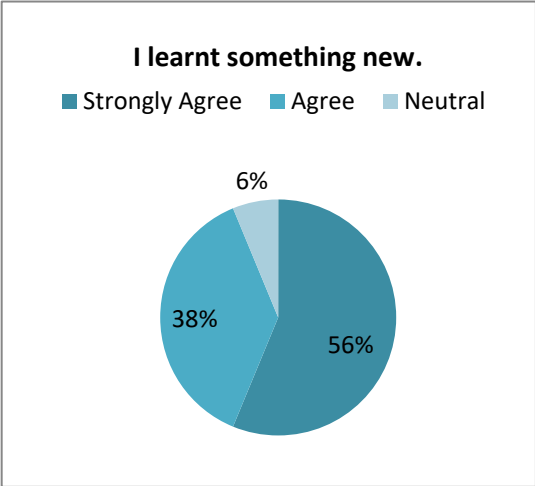
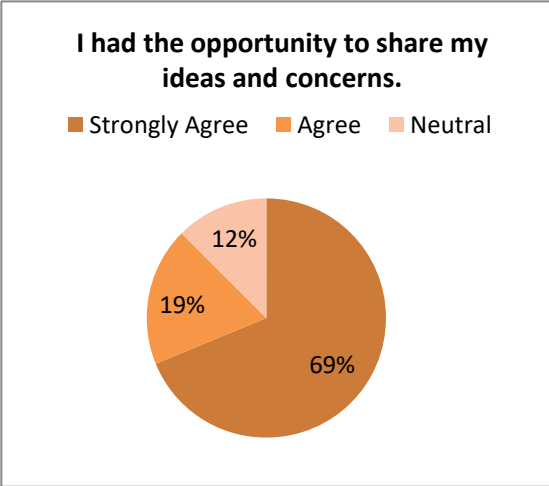
Visions and considerations for the future of Gastown’s streets from the table discussions are captured in the table below.

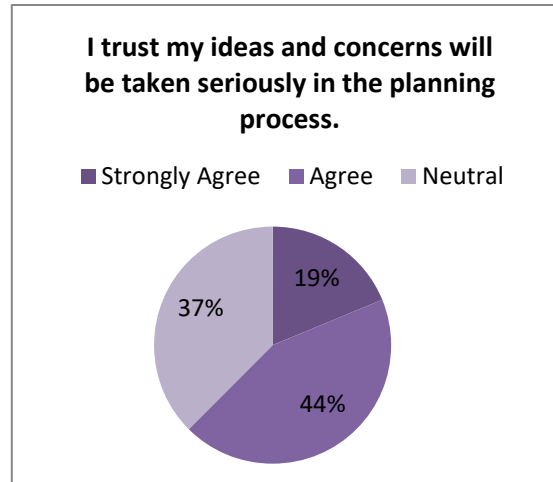
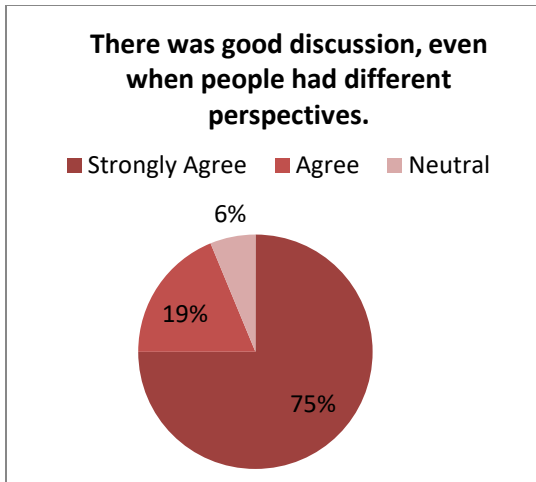
Visions + ideas	Considerations + Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider small scale affordable retail or artisan spaces at back of buildings / in laneways. Incent landlords to try this • Plan for kids and families – e.g. Family Friday • Close Alexander St. to vehicles? • Opportunities for wider sidewalks and more patios (Main St. and Powell St.; Maple Tree Square) • Consider ways to activate the dead end at Cambie St. and Water St. • Reduce speeds on Water St. • Encourage people to walk on south side of Water St. • Extend feel of Gastown to Abbott St. and Hastings St. • All modes share the space, no curbs, flexible design. If there’s less street parking, maybe people will circle less looking for a spot. • Consider car-free weekends in the summer, but it must be easy to do and not costly like today. We want a more enduring effect of car free. • Railway tracks at Abbott – consider roof top gardens, public space with views • Narrow Water St so that we can get wider sidewalks, but focus on improving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area will need to work for tourists and locals • Safety is a major challenge • Dogs need a place to relieve themselves • Take tour buses off Water St. and encourage walking through Gastown • Where will the commuter traffic go? • Garbage bins and pick-up needs to be considered. • Consider easy ways to close the street, flexible design • Create safer feeling parkades especially at night. • Secure bike parking is needed • Costs! Where is it most important to invest? • Consider residential access • Go slow and steady • Consider visibility for businesses – cars and delivery trucks can block visibility of businesses today. • Study impact of car-light • How will new public spaces be funded? • Weather and rain is an impediment • Perception of available parking is important, address parking at gateways to Gastown • Retail rent controls? • Delivery access

<p>the lanes. Bikes on North lane? Mobi stations? Activate them with temporary installations, public art, balloons, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-way Cordova to get some of the commuter traffic off Water St • Public art, murals on blank walls, to really draw people through the neighbourhood • Tour busses should go on Cordova • More greenery, lighting, flower hanging baskets • Weather protection in appropriate places • Community picnic table! • We need better wayfinding at gateways to Gastown • Deepen cultural experience – indigenous history, cultural walking tours, Jazz festival, etc. • Phase in car-light over time on Water St. • Maple Tree Square – plaza and patios – consider diverting traffic on weekends • Trounce Alley car free? • Need to keep people in Gastown longer • 2-way Columbia St. • Pop-up markets • Lively sidewalks, for walking and retail spilling onto them • Consider morning deliveries on Water St. • Need better signage for finding parking, for encouraging people to explore all of Gastown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More lighting • More washrooms • Don't create isolated feel by restricting traffic • Need to think about how businesses will use the space and whether bylaws will allow more flexible uses, whether special permits are required – e.g. this means higher costs for businesses
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WORKSHOP EVALUATION

We asked participants to fill out a feedback form about the workshop. Sixteen people filled out a form.





NEXT STEPS

Throughout 2018 staff will work to develop and test a range of three or four high-level network options for Gastown’s streets that can be explored with the broader community. As part of this work, staff will also learn more about how the implementation of car-light areas in other cities has impacted local businesses, with a particular focus on changes to the retail mix.

In developing a range of high-level network options, staff will engage other key stakeholders in the community, technical consultants, as well as planners, urban designers, street designers, and waste management experts internal to the city.

Throughout the Gastown planning process, we expect to have ongoing conversations with the Gastown BIA and will reach out again to local businesses for an in-depth discussion once the high-level network options for the streets are developed.

In the short term, we will be following up with local businesses to encourage them to complete the loading and delivery survey – available here:

<http://survey.vancouver.ca/s3/Gastown-Streets-Business-and-Goods-Movement-Questionnaire>

Please feel free to get in touch if you have questions or comments at any time at gastownstreets@vancouver.ca

Thanks again for taking the time to work with us,

Justine Clift, Rachel Magnusson and the Gastown Streets team