WHAT WE HEARD, WHAT WE SAW

On August 7, 2014, the City of Vancouver hosted a Cantonese walking tour with seniors involved in local Tai Chi and dance groups to explore ideas for Norquay’s public realm, focusing on Ravine Way and plazas. Around thirty-three participants joined City staff to envision what these places could be like as they walked by the future plaza site at Purdy’s, the Learning Orchard on Horley Street and the newly painted Ravine Street Mural. The walking tour concluded with a dim sum brunch at Come Along Seafood Restaurant on Kingsway.

Here is a summary of what we heard.

**General Observations**

- Most participants walked to the starting point, taking the closest route from their homes, including walking along Kingsway.
- Generally the seniors find Norquay walkable but missing interesting connecting points along their routes, which are also challenged by street conditions such as potholes and lighting (e.g. along Wales, Duchess around Norquay School, Earles, and around Slocan Park).
- **They may not know the street names but rely on landmarks, descriptors to identify routes and places.**
- Would like to see some exercise equipment to facilitate individual, passive exercise.
- Stress the need of shelter (e.g. in Norquay Park) to accommodate exercise/group gatherings.
- Perceived safety is a factor in creating healthy walking environments.
1. Ravine Way

Possible Chinese Names

Participants were asked to suggest Chinese names for ‘Ravine Way’.

- 快活谷 (‘Happy Ravine’)
- 樂其徑 (‘Norquay Way’)
- 麗韻小徑 (Based on phonetic translation of ‘ravine’)
- 峽谷徑 (Literal translation of ‘Ravine Way’)

Design Elements

Participants were asked to suggest design ideas and elements for Ravine Way.

- A passive walking route for all including families, serving the connector function
- No bikes
- Flat, smooth surfaces are welcome to enhance accessibility, especially for seniors
- Design elements:
  - Seating
  - Shelter of different kinds (natural like trees which also provide shade, or structured)
  - Natural landscaping, green, flowers
  - Art – can also incorporate into design of path
  - Exercise opportunities/apparatus (this is a ‘practical’ activity)
- Should be designed to have low maintenance costs
- Consider safety (e.g. lighting)
- Many participants were not aware of local initiatives such as the learning orchard, even with the signs translated into Chinese; more education and/or promotion needed for Ravine Way concept.
2. Plazas

Purdy's Chocolate Factory Site (2777 Kingsway)

*Walking tour participants generally see the future plaza on this site as more passive in character:*

- Quiet and leisure spaces for exercise
- Resting places for individuals or small group gatherings
- ‘Connect’ with other public space in the neighbourhood

2400 Kingsway

*Participants generally see the Kingsway site as the hub of the community:*

- More activity including areas for kids
- Local meeting place for the neighbourhood while also providing quiet and leisure space
- Take advantage of co-location with neighbourhood facility; activities should spill out onto plaza. (Currently many of the walking tour participants go outside of the neighbourhood to participate in exercise and social programs.)
- Should welcome visitors too — serve more than just the local community
- The community really needs a performance/gathering space for e.g. dancing/singing, but also need to consider noise impacts and frequency of events for surrounding residents
- The plaza would serve as a focal point in the community for a variety of local events such as farmers markets for neighbours to share/swap produce (not necessarily for sale) or donate to food banks; annual events to celebrate Chinese New Year and Moon Festival
- Need a portion of hardscape for exercise in the form of Tai Chi or dance
- Plaza should be visible to the community and visitors, and close to transit (e.g. face Kingsway)
- **Space needs to be multifunctional, flexible and aesthetic in design to invite usage**