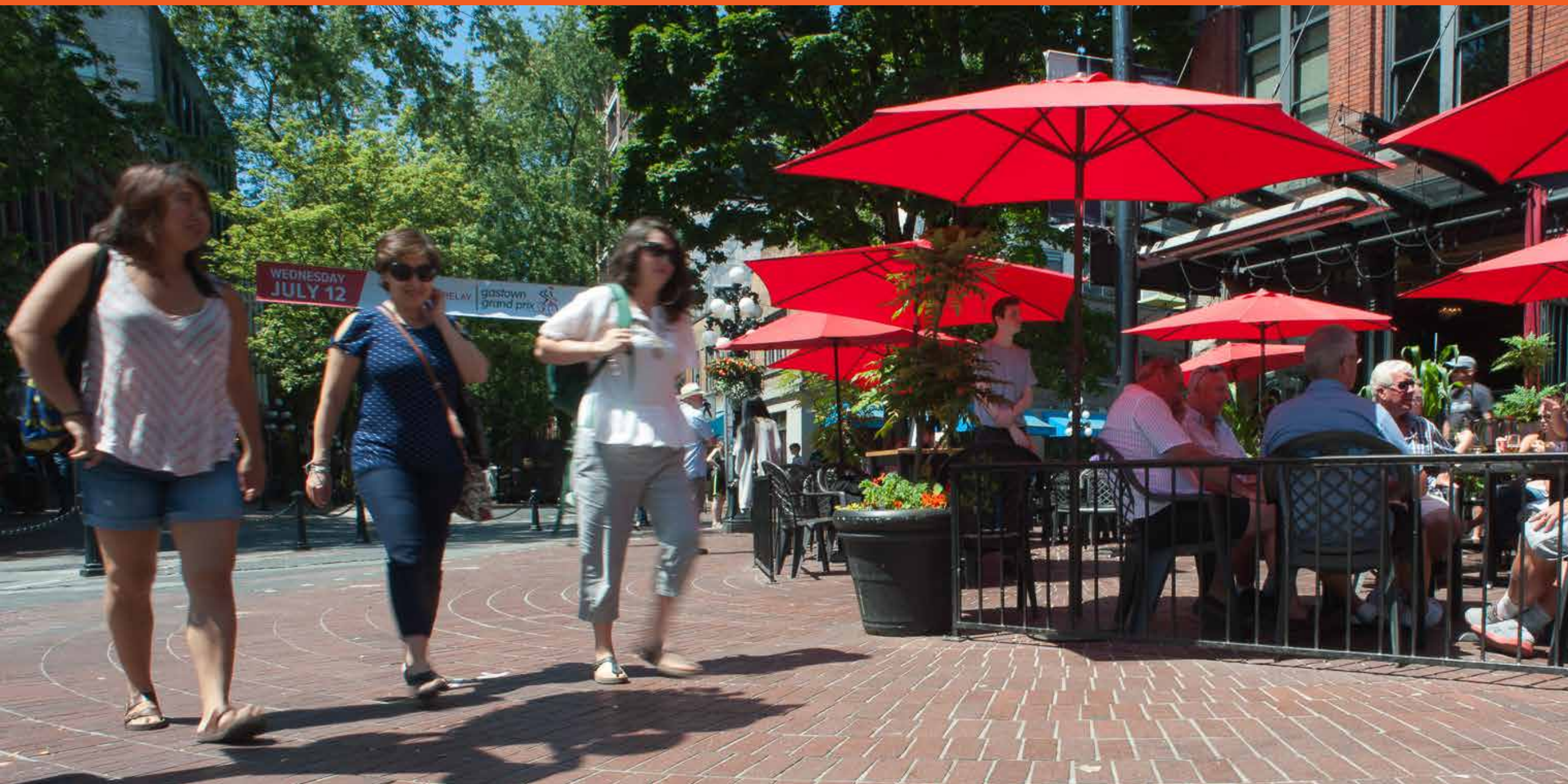




# **Imagine Gastown Streets**

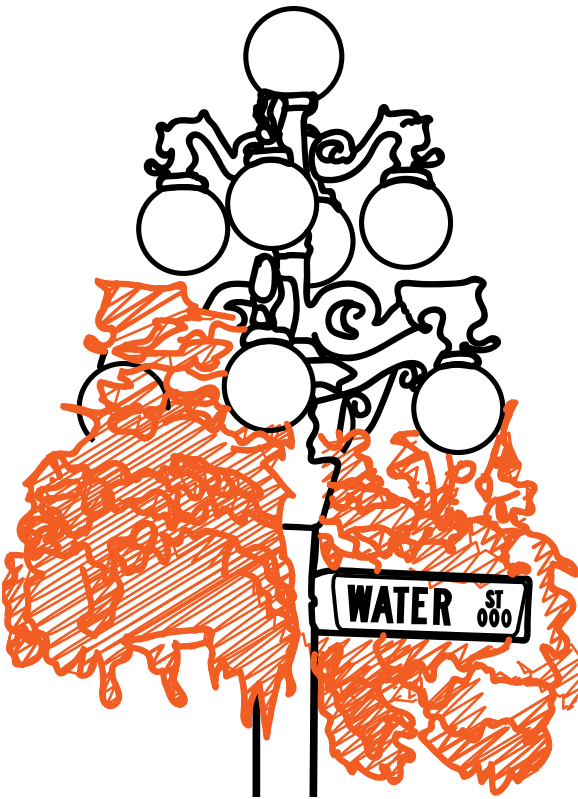
**Phase One  
Engagement Summary  
2017-2018**





# Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Who We Heard From	6
What We Heard	8
What We Learned	
Visiting Gastown	10
Getting to Gastown	12
Places That Matter	14
Imagining the Future	
Car Light	16
Public Space Opportunities	18
Heritage and History	20
Next Steps	22



# Introduction

## *An even better place for people*

The streets of Gastown are in need of major repair and rehabilitation. This means we have a unique opportunity to holistically plan the neighbourhood's streets. The City of Vancouver has begun a transportation planning process to explore how we might make Gastown an even better place for people.



## *Birthplace of Vancouver*

Gastown is the birthplace of our city and a beloved historic destination for locals and tourists alike. It is a diverse, mixed-income neighbourhood with a vibrant business district and critical resources for some of Vancouver's most vulnerable residents.

## *First Nations Unceded Territory*

Gastown is also within the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-waututh First Nations. It has been at the centre of many of the city's defining moments – like the Great Fire of 1886 when First Nations paddled across the Burrard Inlet to help rescue people from the fire, and the famous protests in the late 1960s to prevent the construction of the freeway into downtown.

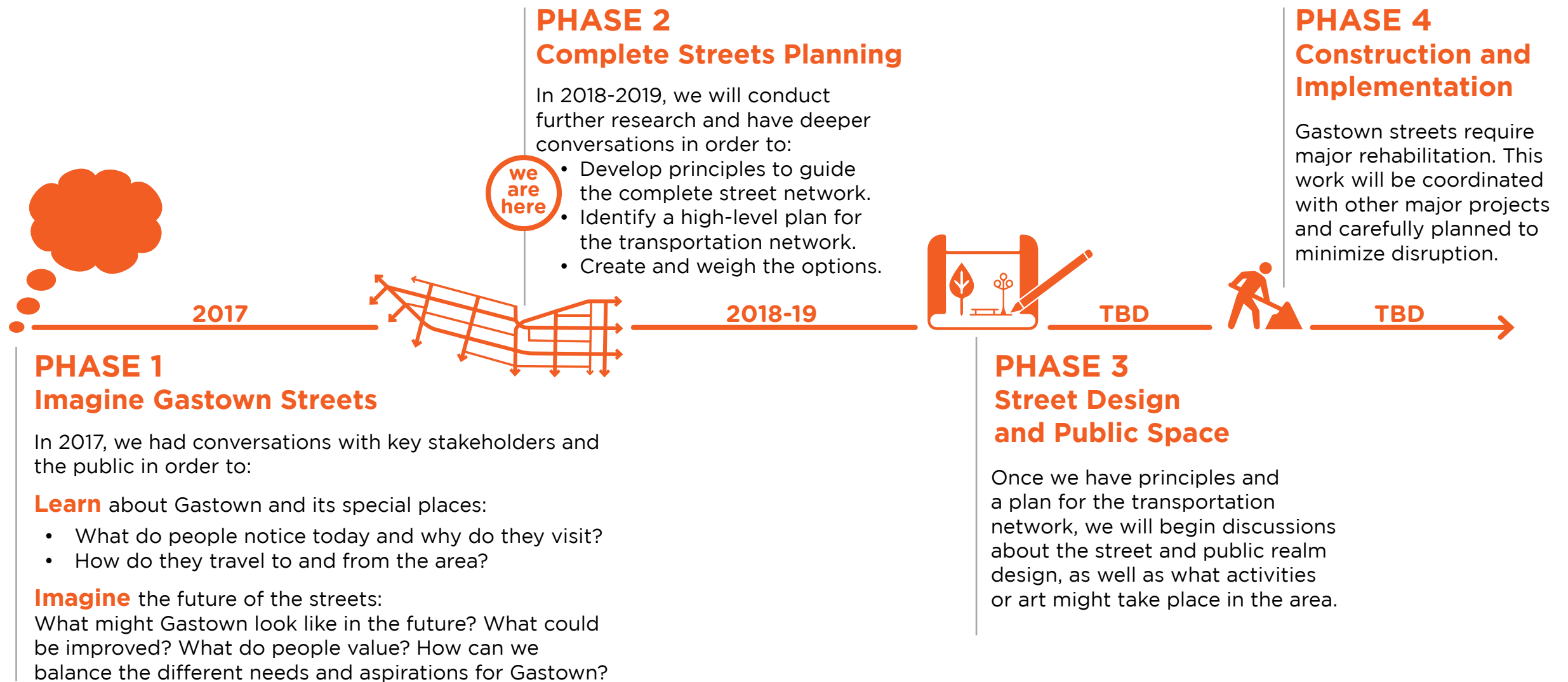
Following Transportation 2040 and the Downtown Eastside Plan, our initial **goals** for Gastown's street network are to:

- Support and enhance what is unique about Gastown.
- Celebrate and acknowledge Gastown's complex history and work towards reconciliation.
- Explore Vancouver's first car-light area.
- Address a major gap in the all-ages-and-abilities cycling network.
- Enhance transit service for bus and future streetcar.

## **The Planning and Engagement Process**

The transportation area planning process for Gastown consists of four phases, with lots of opportunity for public participation, in person and online. This report is a direct reflection of what we heard and learned from the public in **Phase 1: Imagine Gastown Streets**.





# Who We Heard From

There is a wide range of people who live, work, and visit Gastown. To plan the network of streets, it is important to obtain a thorough understanding of how different groups experience and value the area. This means approaching a wide range of stakeholders, residents, visitors, and the wider public in as many ways as possible, including surveys, in-depth discussions, street chats, and workshops.

## Who's missing?

It is difficult to reach everyone. Some people would rather not participate, others are unable to for various reasons.

In Gastown, we heard that many people with disabilities never visit the area because of the rough and uneven street surfaces.

3

## Indigenous Groups

City staff met with local urban indigenous organizations in the Downtown Eastside.

The City continues to work on partnering with the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations in 2018 to learn about how they would like to be involved.



6

## City Advisory Committees & Working Groups

City staff presented to:

- Active Transportation Policy Council
- Transportation 2040 Stakeholder Advisory Group
- Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee
- Urban Indigenous Peoples Advisory Committee
- Gastown Historic Area Planning Committee
- Tour bus working group

44

## Local Stakeholders

Throughout the summer and fall of 2017, City staff had conversations with stakeholders from local business organizations, community groups, and service providers.



147

## Street Chats

City staff 'popped-up' in four locations in Gastown to chat to passersby about their experience of Gastown and what they'd like to see.



1305

## Intercept Survey Participants

To obtain an accurate snapshot of how and why people travel to Gastown, two intercept surveys were conducted, where people were surveyed at random on the street. Surveys were conducted by an independent market researcher in August and November 2017, between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. on weekdays and weekends. A total of 1305 people were interviewed.



5

## Walking Tours

City staff invited community groups to give tours of Gastown:

### **BEST**

Better Environmentally Sound Transportation

### **Binner's Project**

Group of waste-pickers aided by support staff working to improve their economic opportunities and reduce the stigma of recyclable collection.

### **Gastown BIA**

Gastown Business Improvement Society

### **VPSN**

Vancouver Public Space Network

### **John Atkin**

Local historian and heritage expert.

101

## Workshop & Open House Participants

On October 21, 2017, City staff hosted collaborative conversations in an open house and workshop to learn 1) what are the important issues, and 2) where are the special places in Gastown?



2164

## Talk Vancouver Survey Participants

To gain a wider perspective of how people across the region understand and experience Gastown, the City of Vancouver launched a survey through its online platform, Talk Vancouver. The survey was open throughout the month of October 2017 and had 2164 responses.

**TALK VANCOUVER**

# What We Heard

In the summer of 2017, we 'popped up' on the streets of Gastown to chat with people in the area. We shared our initial planning goals and talked to people about how they get around and what they'd like to see in the future.

Pop-Up Locations



More public washrooms in the area would be a great thing.

During the cruise ship season, there are too many people on the sidewalk. Need more patios! And get rid of dog poop.



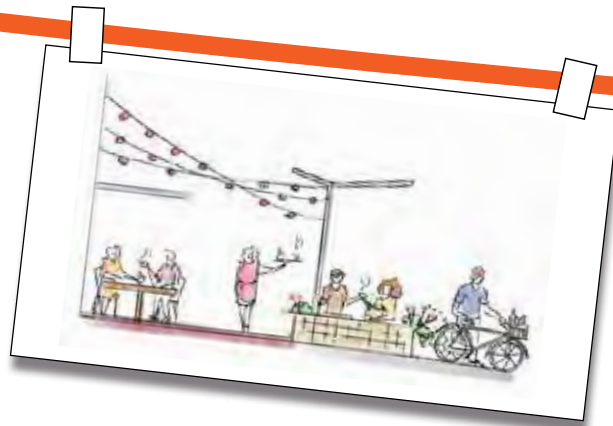
Keep cobblestones for the sidewalks, but add different material for cyclists because cobblestones are dangerous when wet.



My most special memories of Gastown are in the fall and winter, at night when the cobblestones are wet and reflect the string lights, shops and all the movement and strolling on Water Street.

I'd like to see better cycling connections. It is sometimes awkward to get around Gastown cycling and the crossings can be confusing at Maple Tree Square.





I worry a lot about being pushed out of the neighbourhood and the city.

The roads and sidewalks need repair - it isn't comfortable for walking.



I have lived here for 20 years and I like the idea of car-light. I don't walk down Water St. in the summer because it is too crowded.



We see how often a single car having trouble turning or trucks stopping can back up traffic quite far. We see a lot of road rage in the area, people even get out of their vehicles and they often involve pedestrians and cyclists as well.

I think small spaces like Jim Deva plaza are great, where people can really hang out. I think laneways could be these kind of spaces in Gastown.

I like the idea of a pedestrianized Water Street and I love the cobblestones. I don't like the delivery trucks and refrigerators making noise in my apartment.



***How do you experience Gastown streets?***

# What We Learned

“I go to galleries, concerts, meetings, plays - I spend a LOT of time here.”



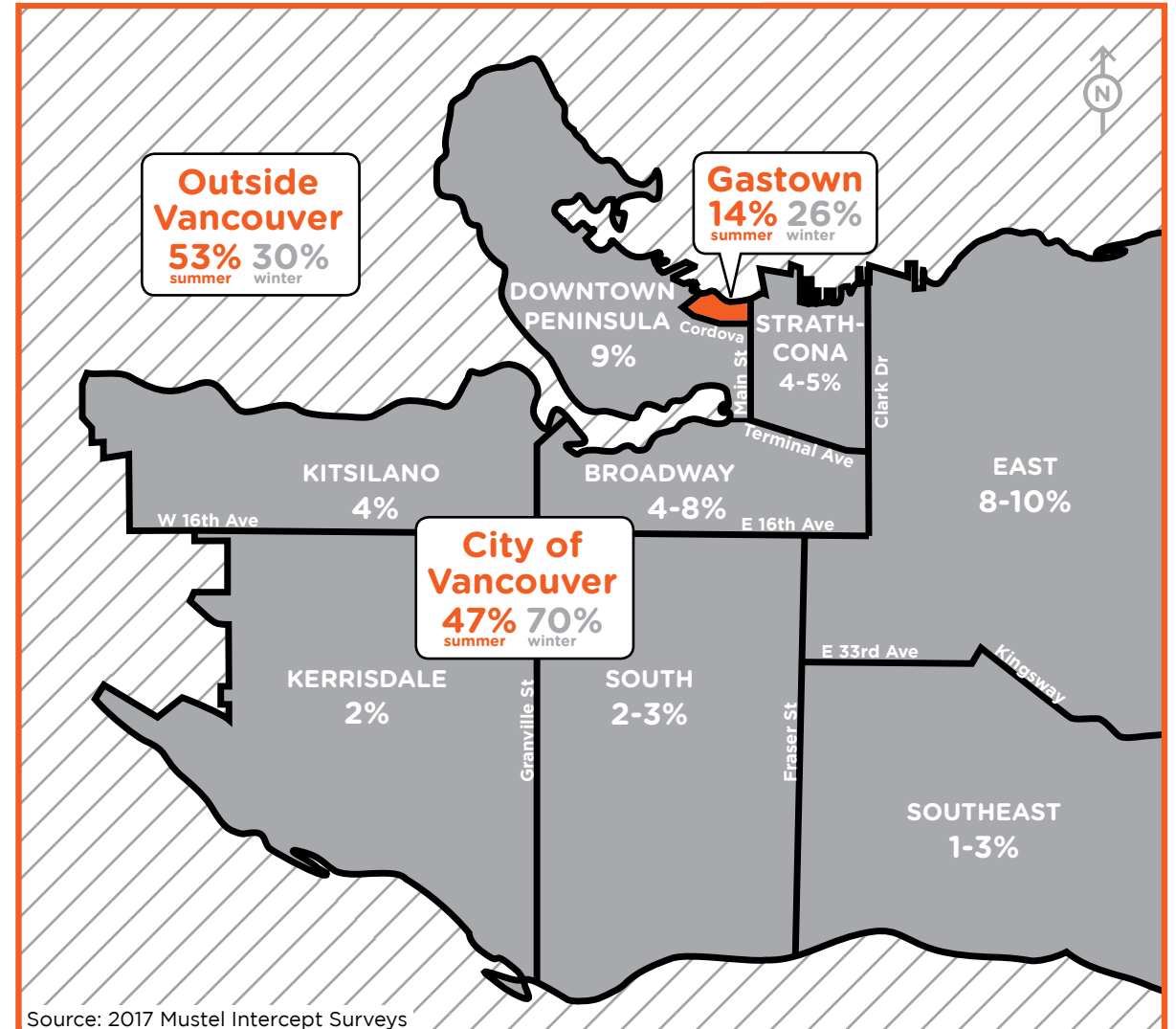
## Visiting Gastown

### Who is visiting Gastown?

Being a tourist destination, it's not surprising that visitors in the summer differ from those in the winter. In the summer, people from out-of-town account for 53% of visitors to Gastown, while in the cold and rainy winter months, 70% of visitors are local. Similarly, Gastown residents comprise 14% of those in the area in the summer, and increases to 26% in the winter.

The proportion of visitors from all other parts of Vancouver remained fairly consistent throughout the year.

## Where are Gastown visitors from?



Source: 2017 Mustel Intercept Surveys

### Why do people visit Gastown?

The most popular reason to visit Gastown is for the shopping, food and other services in the area. About half of those interviewed in the survey said that they intended to stop at a business in Gastown during their visit.

Hanging out and people-watching is also a popular reason to visit Gastown. In August, 24% of people surveyed were visiting just to hang out, and in November that number fell only slightly to 18%.

22% of those surveyed in summer and winter work or go to school in Gastown.

Finally, approximately 10% of people travel through Gastown on the way to somewhere else.

Of the people interviewed on the streets of Gastown,

1 in 5  
are there to  
**work/  
study**

1 in 2  
are there to  
**shop/  
eat**

1 in 5  
are there to  
**hang out/  
people watch**

Source: 2017 Mustel Intercept Surveys

### What kind of businesses do people visit in the **summer** vs. **winter**?



Source: 2017 Mustel Intercept Surveys

“I go to Gastown for a rare sense of beauty that’s hard to find in this condo-obsessed city.”



“Living and working in Gastown for over 14 years, I have already seen a lot of changes. The food, drink and small shops are what make Gastown. The lanes should be redone and turned into great small bars, restaurants. More Graffiti Wall Art. Bricks have to be repaired. Don’t take all traffic out however.”

# What We Learned

## Getting to Gastown

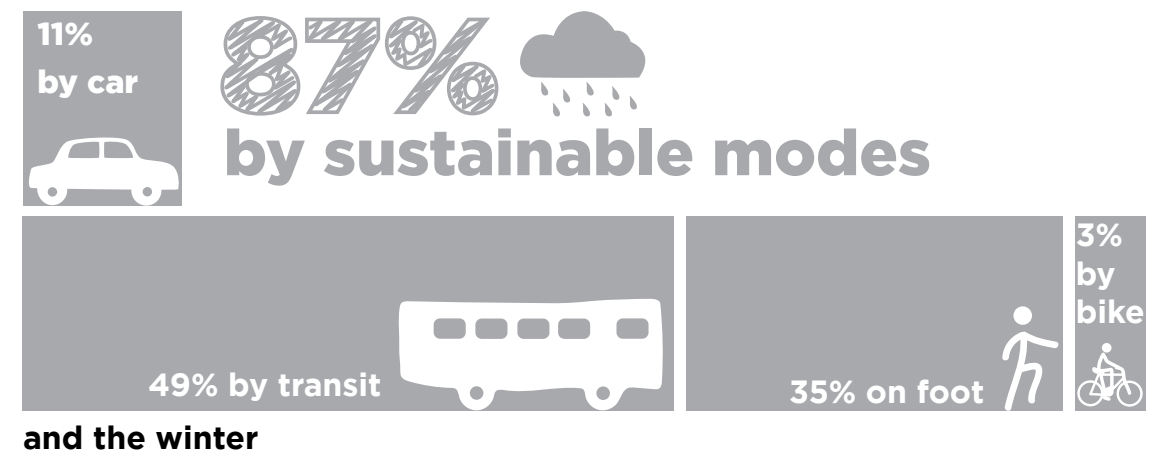
When making transportation decisions, it is important to consider how people travel **to** an area as well as how we travel **through** it. In the case of Gastown, survey results show that people tend to choose different modes of transportation, depending on whether they are stopping in the area to spend some time or passing through on the way to someplace else.

Results from the Talk Vancouver survey showed that when people from Metro Vancouver travel through Gastown, they choose to drive more and walk or take transit less than when they visit Gastown as a destination.

### Gastown as a destination

Intercept survey results indicated that 83% of people chose a sustainable mode (walking, biking or taking transit) to get to Gastown in the summer, compared to 14% who travelled by car. The winter weather resulted in a greater contrast, with 87% choosing a sustainable mode, and 11% travelling by car to Gastown.

### How people get to Gastown

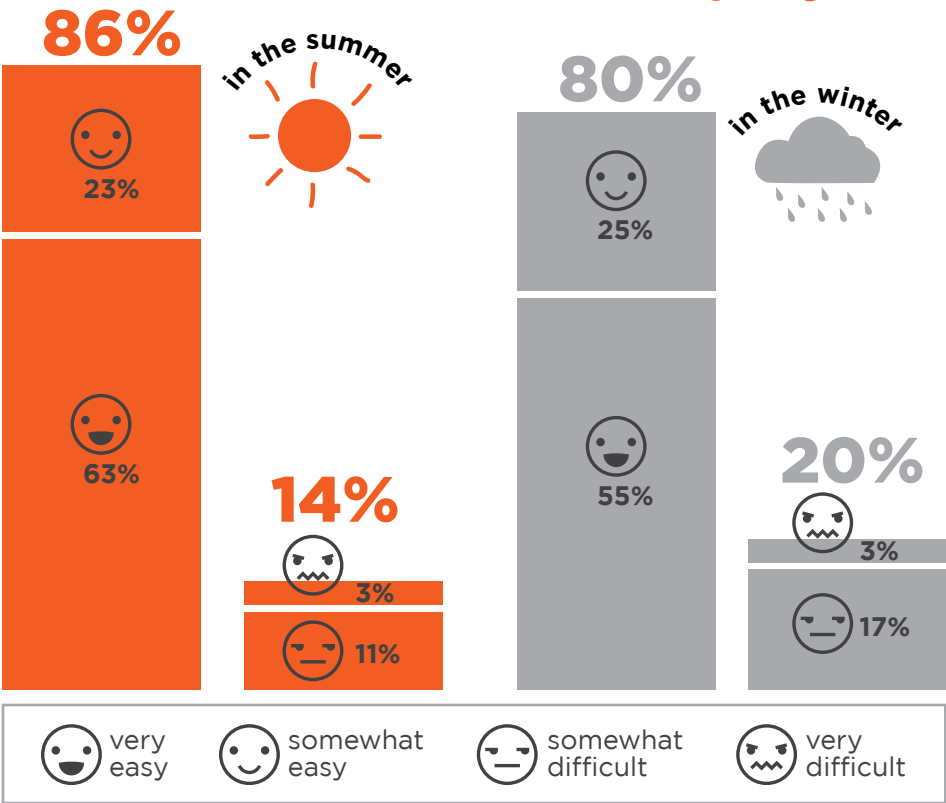


Source: 2017 Mustel Intercept Survey

Parking in Gastown

Survey data shows that a large majority of people who arrived by vehicle in Gastown found it easy to find parking in the area both on and off the street.

How easy is it to find parking in Gastown? 



Source: 2017 Mustel Intercept Survey

“I’d like a free bus that made it possible to leave your car in a parking lot and get on and off in particular areas in Gastown. After having both knees replaced, I found it difficult to get around Gastown.”

“It’s difficult for pedestrians to navigate crossing the streets. Cars are very fast. It does not feel very safe.”



“In the summer, it is all tourists, sidewalks are jam packed, streets are filled with huge buses. In the winter, there are tons of taxis darting by, but never during the time when we need them the most (after 10 PM).”

# What We Learned

## Places that Matter

We asked workshop participants to identify which places in Gastown felt special to them and could make great people spaces.



Water Street Yule Duel

"I'd like to see plaza spaces with seating and tables, and better utilized public space for music and fun at the north side of Water Street where the cross streets end (i.e. Water St & Abbott St). We need better accessibility for wheelchairs, strollers, walkers, and binnies. Please fix the street. We should reintroduce sidewalk prisms and make sure to maintain the ones we already have. Have a car-free day on Water Street! Also, please remove the chains to allow access to bike racks from the street. Maybe deliveries could be restricted by time of day."

"I'd like to have direct access and views to Burrard Inlet, the trains and boats, maybe with an elevated viewing platform, but also be able to walk alongside the tracks parallel to Water Street to Waterfront Station. Maybe we can have trains coming in from the suburbs on the weekends. Can this area be used for loading?"



Railway tracks



Woodwards building

"I love Woodward! We need more covered gathering spaces like this. It brings the community together and feels safe."

## Locations Identified as 'Special Places'



"I walk along Cordova or Trounce Alley to avoid the pedestrian congestion on Water Street. Cordova has got a lot nicer over the years."



CRAB Park

"I can see CRAB Park as a place for ceremony or amphitheatre. Tour buses could stop here. And if there were an overpass from Gastown, it would be more pet friendly. The park also needs bins for pet poop."



Blood Alley Square

"There's huge potential here for events, urban art and graffiti murals, teaching about First Nations cultures. Also, need public toilets here, covered bicycle parking, and less garbage."



Maple Tree Square

"I'd like to see more flexibility and either street closures or limited traffic to have live entertainment and events like music festivals, markets. It could be like a counterbalance to the steam clock, drawing people to the other side of Gastown. But need to take down the bollards and chains for accessibility and make it easier and clearer for bikes and walking."



CP Rail Right-of-Way

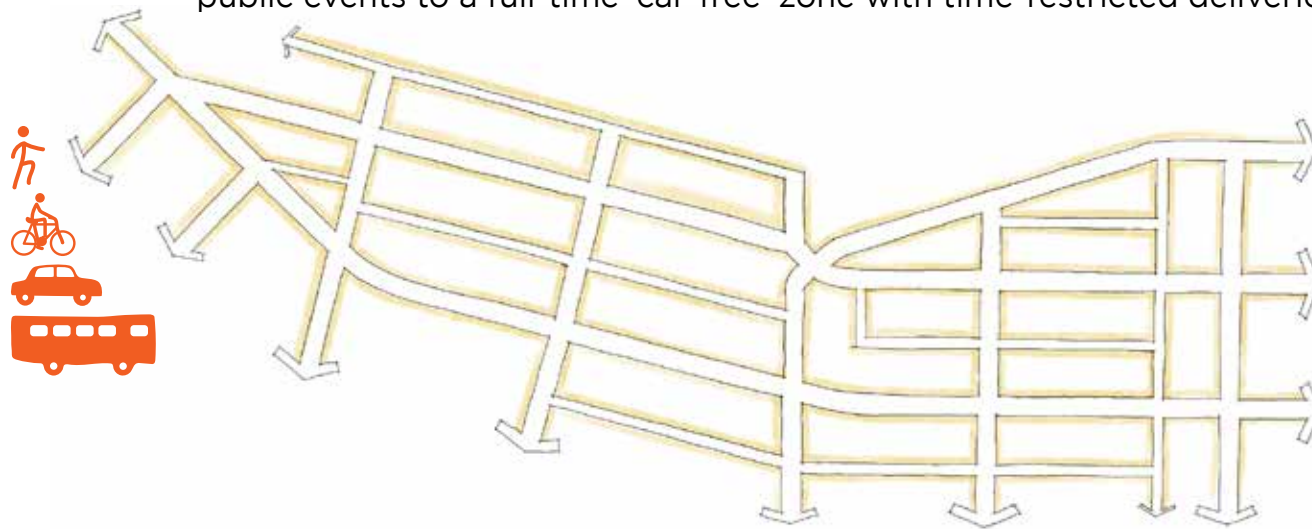
"We should open up and make use of this old CP railway line as a public space. Make it a space for hanging out, eating, public art, community gardens, urban food production."

# Imagining the Future

We received hundreds of comments and had many conversations during Phase 1. From this feedback, three big ideas emerged:

## ① Explore Car Light

There is a strong interest in exploring car-light streets in Gastown. This means different things to different people: from shared spaces at slow speeds that prioritize walking or cycling to more space for people with occasional closures for public events to a full-time 'car-free' zone with time-restricted deliveries.



### Some challenges to consider:

1. How do we plan for all the vehicles currently travelling through Gastown?
2. How do we maintain access to homes and businesses?

“People plaza - a place for people to walk, cycle, and enjoy. I would like to see traffic moved to Cordova - make it a 2-way street and take the commuter traffic off Water Street. Gastown could have times of the day for deliveries similar to how they do it in many European cities.”

## *Slower pace*

“A major example of how a traffic route can be transformed into a lively public space...in my hometown of Sweden...now a large part of the downtown core is what I call an ‘anything goes zone.’ This means all modes of transport are allowed but priority has been inversed where pedestrians have the right of way anywhere, then bikes, then cars. I believe the speed limit for cars is between 7-15km/hr...Love it!”



“[Gastown should be] for people first (whether hanging out, walking or cycling), but still allow for some slowed vehicle traffic.”

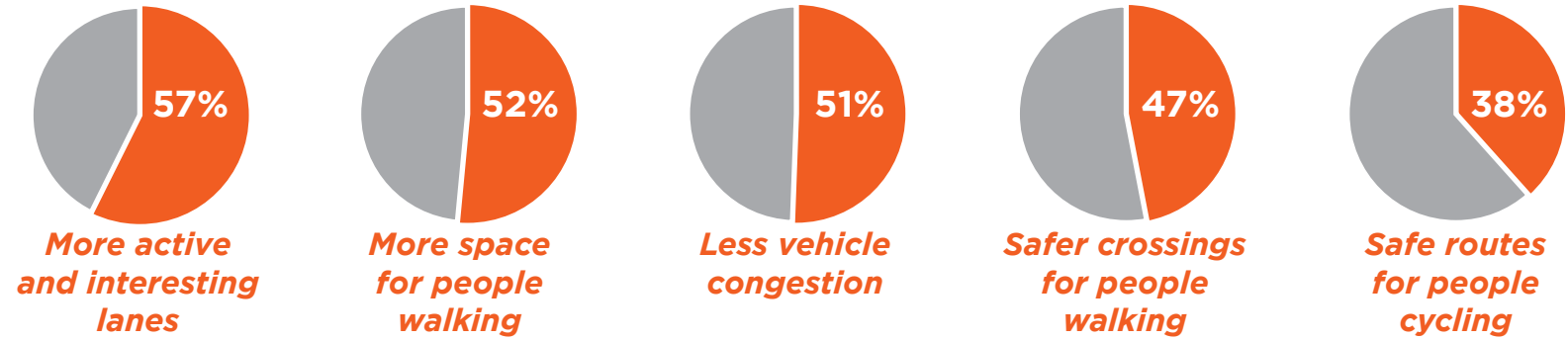
**More secure bike parking**

“Gastown should be friendly for car traffic. The city is trying to make life unpleasant for drivers, but that is the only way suburbanites can reasonably get into the city, especially when travelling in family groups.”

**Less noise and air pollution**

“Private cars and large buses should have access at the edges, but Gastown should be relatively free of motorized vehicles. Pedestrians only, so we can have a safer, calm historic district with less exhaust fumes.”

When it comes to travelling to or through Gastown, what would you like to see in the future?



Source: 2017 Talk Vancouver Survey

“Prioritize human-speed transportation to make outdoor spaces more pleasant to be in and make you want to linger, look, shop, eat, interact. Right now, it’s a place to get what you want and leave quickly to avoid the noisy traffic - build it and the pedestrians/cyclists/shoppers/diners/placemakers will come!”

**Changing with the seasons**

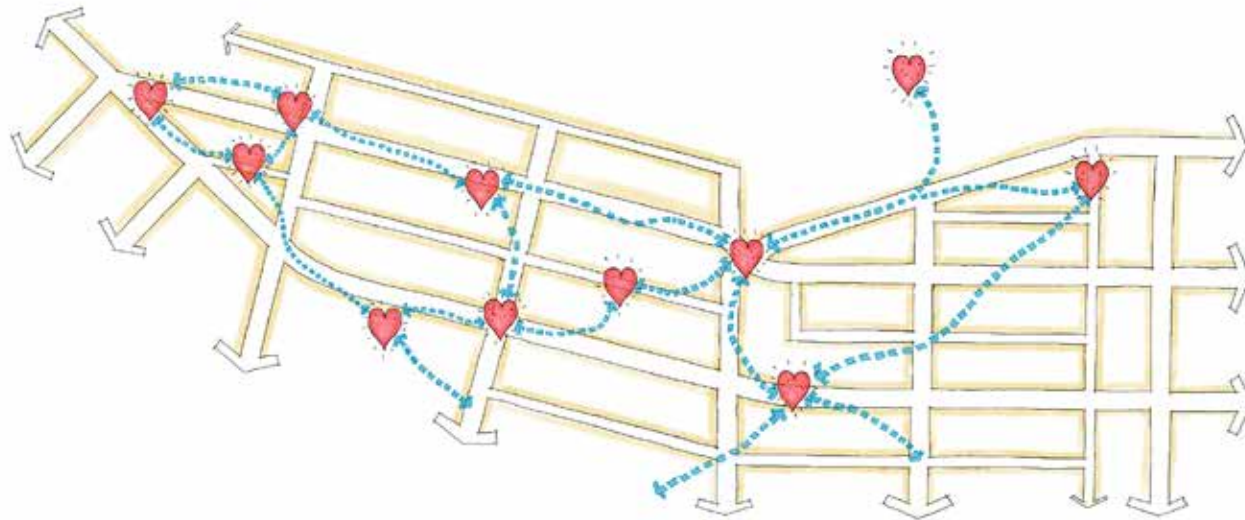
**Better access to transit**

“I generally avoid driving through Gastown due to traffic congestion. However, when Hastings or Pender are undergoing road construction, that is my only alternative to return home after grocery shopping each week. I would support closing Gastown to vehicle traffic on weekends or other specified times as long as there is no road construction in the area blocking vehicles.”

# Imagining the Future

## ② Public Space Opportunities

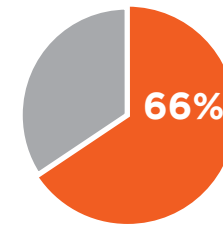
The opportunity to create dynamic and vibrant public spaces in Gastown is an idea that many people found exciting. It sparks the imagination and lends itself to many different visions for how this could take place.



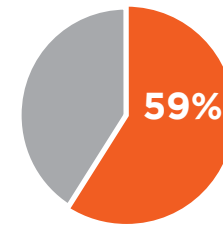
### Some challenges to consider:

1. How do we design a space that is inclusive for everyone? Some people are uncomfortable with hardship, some people feel pushed out.
2. How can we balance spaces for people with spaces for travelling, parking, deliveries, and garbage?

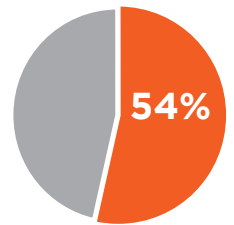
**When it comes to public space in Gastown, what would you like to see in the future?**



*Trees and plant life*



*Places to sit and hang out*



*More patios*

Source: 2017 Talk Vancouver Survey

## *More maps and signage*

*“I’d like Gastown to be cleaner, safe, and pedestrian-friendly, with plentiful places to sit and rest. People on the streets need to be provided with proper facilities and dignified living spaces.”*

*“Make flexible public spaces for summer months or weekends.”*

## ***Street space for small-scale vendors***

*“Open and accessible, with interesting places to sit. I work there and would love a nice place to sit outside and eat lunch in the good weather.”*

## ***Enliven alleys***

*“Enliven alleys and laneways with murals and businesses.”*

*“I’d like to see community gardens and a connection to CRAB park, with a viewing platform over the railway.”*



## ***Buskers and cultural life***

*“I would like the pavements and roads to be better. Don’t pave again with slippery bricks! Do pave with granite blocks or cobblestones. I don’t say no to all cars, but I do say no to a thoroughfare. I would like to see more interesting food vendors. I have often felt I would like to see a better place for indigenous carvers than on doorsteps. Instead of a hotdog stand, there should be shelter for carvers to sit protected from the rain to do their carving and painting.”*

*“Make the streets equal; otherwise, Gastown becomes all about Water St.”*

## ***More public washrooms***

*“Hopefully public washrooms would help with the public urination while also providing services to the local homeless.”*

## ***Rain shelter***

*“There should be an atrium cover above the street and an abundance of planters and outdoor cafes, but not with ugly tables and chairs.”*

*“This should not only be a tourist area, but an area where Vancouverites can come and enjoy themselves.”*

# Imagining the Future

## ③ Heritage and History

Gastown is a national historic site, and the heritage feel of the streets is important to the majority of people we reached through the Talk Vancouver survey. People love the brick and cobblestone, and the feeling of being surrounded by history.



When asked what would you like to see in the future of public space in Gastown:

**80%** chose  
**character & heritage  
street elements**

**51%** chose  
**recognition of the  
area's history**

Source: 2017 Talk Vancouver Survey

### Some challenges to consider:

1. How do we keep a heritage feel while making the streets accessible to everyone?
2. What heritage(s) do we want to recognize? The current streetscape of brick and cobblestone, light standards, and bollards was created through a redesign in the 1970s aimed at protecting the neighbourhood from demolition. This is an important part of Gastown's history, but there are other elements too, including the First Nations, Japantown, and Chinatown.

*“Gastown should reflect Musqueam values and their desires for the land. It’s also an opportunity to learn about our history.”*

***Authentic -  
not sterile and fake***

*“The area should reflect meaningful history, not fake steam clocks. Find the stories of the first settlers as well as the pre-settlement residents in this area.”*

***Grit is part of the  
charm***

*“Gastown was originally all about lumberjacks, dock workers, and railwaymen (and most definitely some gold rush diggers) - play with some of that. It really was like the Wild West in a lot of ways.”*

“Draw attention to all aspects of Gastown history, not just the steam clock.”



“Gastown should be accessible, safe, and inclusive for all income levels, with a prominent acknowledgement of Indigenous history and visible efforts to decolonize the space (i.e. more Indigenous businesses in the area, murals by local Indigenous artists).”

“Be as true to the historic look and feel of Gastown as possible while being safe and accessible to everyone (i.e. wheelchairs, strollers, walkers, high heels, cyclists, etc).”

## **Indigenous history and art**

“Reintroduce prisms in the walkways.”

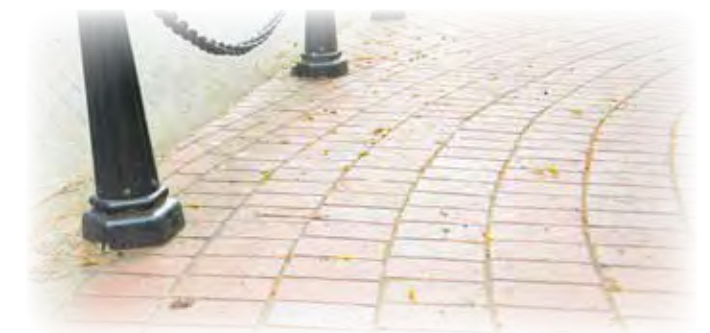
## **Pet-friendly spaces**

“Make Gastown greener and more welcoming to everyone. There should be more public seating and overhangs for rain protection for those who work there, those who visit, and those who sleep there. This may seem impossible, but I would like to see more places that welcome a mix of people, not just those with money, which is what the neighbourhood is stating to cater to.”

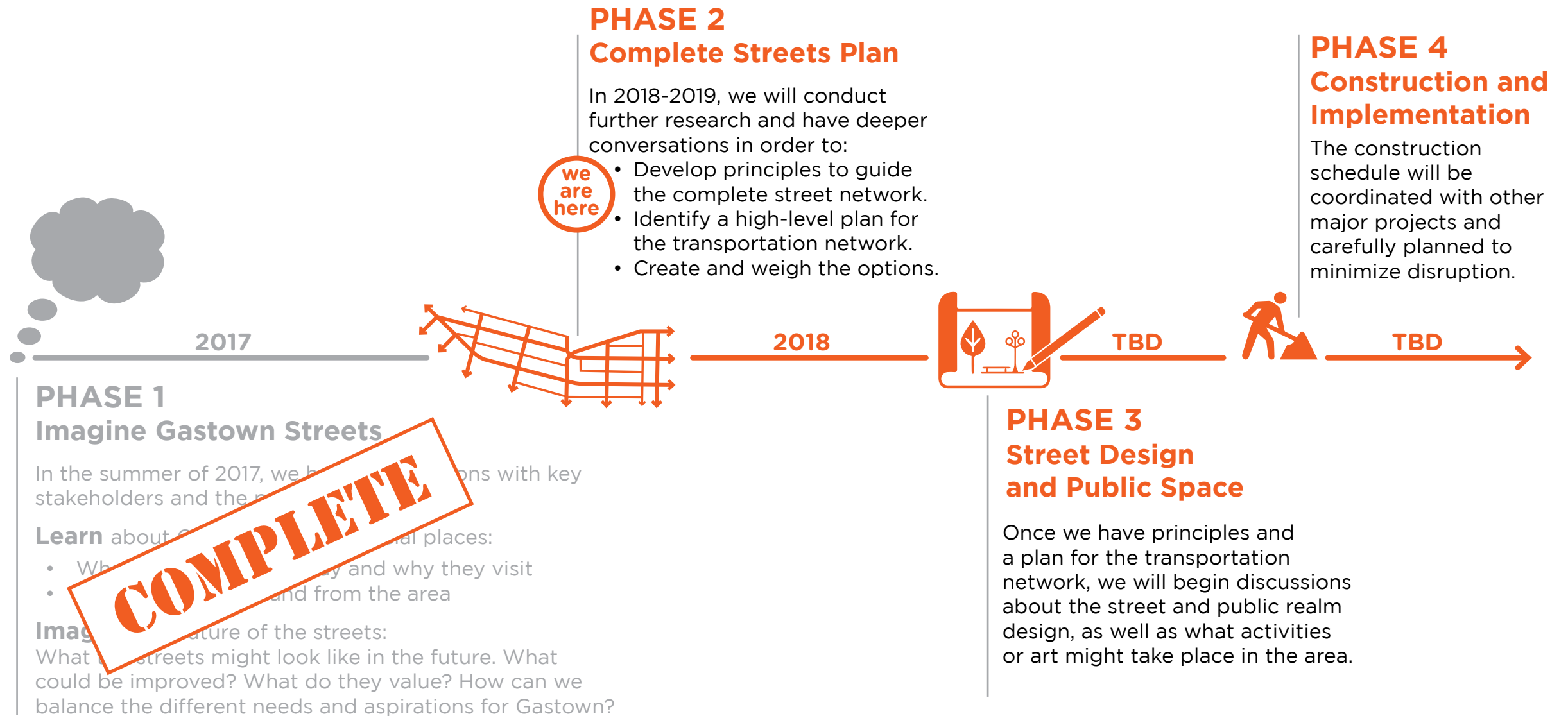
“Gastown should be a mix of old and new. I love the red brick! But maybe not everywhere, it would be nice to be able to bike off of it.”

## **Brick and cobblestone**

“Whatever happens, the original materials that make up the roads should be kept or recycled whenever possible. For example, we could use the old bricks for the new driving lanes but use new materials for biking and walking areas. But new materials should be historic looking. No plain asphalt!”



# Next Steps



## What You Can Do Now

### Stay informed!



Subscribe to our mailing list online to get notified about more public events, surveys, and project updates:

[vancouver.ca/gastown](http://vancouver.ca/gastown)



Check for updates and document links on project website:

[vancouver.ca/gastown](http://vancouver.ca/gastown)

### Share your inspiration!

Send us pictures and stories about your favourite people spaces or car-light places around the world by December 1, 2018. E-mail us at:

[gastownstreets@vancouver.ca](mailto:gastownstreets@vancouver.ca)