

Places for People

Urban Explorers

Child and Youth
Engagement in Planning





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Introduction

Over the 2017-18 school-year the Society for Children and Youth of BC (SCY) partnered with the City of Vancouver's Places for People team to deliver a child and youth centred engagement program with a focus on delivering better public spaces for young people.

Vancouver elementary school students explored Vancouver and looked at various environmental and social challenges in their community. The following is a summary of the students findings and ideas on how to make Vancouver's public spaces better for young people!





Background

Places for People

Vancouver’s public spaces — plazas, squares, streets, laneways, pathways, parks and waterfront — are where public life happens.

These places and spaces are where we interact with the city on a daily basis, as we work, play, create, explore and connect with each other.

Places for People proposes an approach to public space planning that starts with an understanding and appreciation of public life and the people who use public space on a daily basis.

Great public spaces are Places for People!

A strategy for public life and public space in Downtown Vancouver

Downtown is the heart of the city, and home to some of the most popular public spaces in Vancouver. It’s also an area that’s growing with more residents, businesses and visitors each year. This means increased demand on the existing public space network in the future. Since space and opportunities are limited in the Downtown core, we need to be creative and strategic in how we deliver public space.

Through Places for People | Downtown we will create a comprehensive strategy to coordinate and deliver Downtown public space over the next 30 years.



Downtown Study Area

The strategy will cover the each neighbourhood area on the downtown peninsula, including: the West End, Yaletown, Coal Harbour, Central Business District, and Northeast False Creek.



Project Timeline

1	Phase 1 Launch: Vision, Values & Favourite Places
2	Phase 2 Public Space & Public Life Study
3	Phase 3 Emerging Directions
4	Phase 4 Draft Strategy & Report to Council



Urban Explorers: Child and Youth Engagement

The Urban Explorers program aims to provide opportunities for child and youth participation in urban planning and development through the implementation of a sustainability education curriculum that is based on participatory planning methodologies. The program is developed under the Society for Children and Youth of BC's Child and Youth Friendly Communities projects, and is delivered in collaboration with various departments of the City of Vancouver (Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability, Transportation and Engineering), the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Translink, and other community organizations.

Urban Explorers builds on the objectives of UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities (CFC) and Growing Up in Cities initiatives. CFC aims to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the level of local city governance, with the goal of directly affecting children's lives in the present and the future.

Participating Students

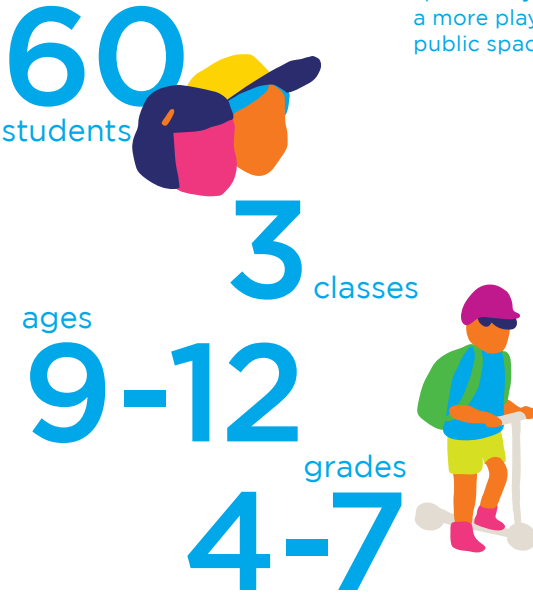
Sixty elementary school students from three schools across the Vancouver School Board participated in the Urban Explorers program. Students ranged from ages 9-12, in grades 4-7.

The three participating schools are located in the City of Vancouver's Riley Park neighbourhood (Brock Elementary), the Sunset neighbourhood (Moberly Elementary), and in the West End neighbourhood (Lord Roberts Elementary).

How do we make Vancouver's public spaces better for young people?

Helping to shape public space and public life

Student input from the Urban Explorers program will inform the ongoing Places for People Downtown planning process, specifically the efforts to advance a more playful and child centered public spaces.



Child Friendly Cities

Children's Right to the City

The Growing up in Cities (GUC) and the Child-Friendly Cities (CFC) initiatives were created with the general objective to provide opportunity for children to participate in urban planning processes, and to guide local governments in the implementation of the principles outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Both initiatives are part of the broader Children's Right to the City approach that builds upon critical urban theory, and promotes not only the right to safe and healthy physical environments, but also the right to civil, political, economic, social, and cultural inclusion.

Child Friendly Cities focuses on developing an improved understanding of the complex relationship between physical environments, social and environmental inequities, and children's health and well-being.

The emphasis of this work is on children's right to play, to nature, to independent mobility, to healthy, safe and unpolluted urban environments, meaningful education, social and cultural interactions, and the right to participate in decisions made around children's environments.

The Growing up in Cities and Child Friendly Cities movements view children not merely as future citizens, or 'adults in the making' but as capable, competent citizens of today who are autonomous or semi-autonomous, and fully equal human beings with already existing and developing skills for responsible citizenship. Children therefore, are both knowledge holders and knowledge seekers, and need to be given equal opportunity to participate in social and political aspects of their community.



childfriendlycities.org

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Exploring Public Space

Urban Explorers Curriculum

The Urban Explorers program is highly interdisciplinary, and was incorporated as part of the students' social studies curriculum.

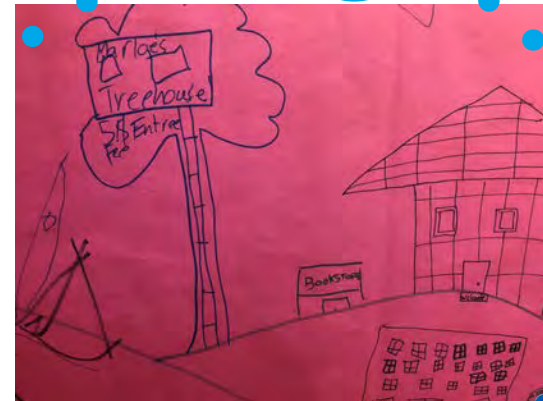
1 "City-on-the-Wall" Co-design

Each class began the program with Stanley King and Susan Chung's "City-on-the-Wall" co-design activity. Students drew elements of the city as the facilitator narrated a story that introduced them to the processes of urban growth and development, urban sprawl, and how cities transform landscapes. The activity ends with a discussion about the role of urban planning and city planners.



2 Vancouver's History

Students explored the history of the land that is present-day Vancouver, with a focus on Indigenous, multicultural (settler-immigrant), and locally and culturally relevant events through a Timeline Card Game developed by SCY.



3 Human Needs & Human Rights

The Human Needs to Survive and Thrive activity asked students to identify what they require in order to have their basic needs met (survive), and in order to live to their full potential (thrive). The discussion following the activity explains the concept of Human Rights, and leads into a dialogue on how cities can be built to meet everybody's needs. The discussions with the students focused on urban sustainability and the roles of housing, public spaces, parks/urban nature, and transportation.

4 Public Space Assessment Tours

Each class participated in a Public Space Assessment field-trip that included a tour of City Hall, where students learned about their local municipal government.

Students collaborated with SCY staff and their teachers to select a series of downtown and West End public spaces to explore with the Places for People planning team. Students used photo-documentation to record their findings as part of their Photovoice projects.

5 Photovoice

Following the public space walks, students completed their neighbourhood and city assessments using a method called Photovoice. This involved students using their own photography to highlight positive and negative aspects of the built and natural environments, and annotating with observations and suggestions for improvement.





Photovoice & Walking Tours



Student Showcase

May 29, 2018
Stanley Park Pavilion

Showcase Projects

Students mapped out what they felt were the most pressing current global and local sustainability issues, and selected those that they aimed to address through a group project.

Students created models of a public spaces and parks - imaginary or existing - that addressed a their identified social or environmental issues.

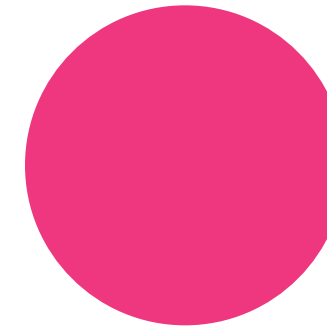
On May 29, they presented their findings and recommendations to City of Vancouver and Parks Board staff. This work will inform the ongoing Places for People Downtown planning process, specifically the efforts to advance a more playful and child centered public spaces.



Student showcase projects - public spaces

Visioning Essays

Students in the grade seven class also wrote a short essay describing how they see the City of Vancouver in 50-100 years - helping to inform their understanding of how we create the city they live in.



Student Feedback

Students expressed an interest in finding ongoing opportunities to learn more about many of the sustainability challenges in the City of Vancouver. Within social sustainability this interest was most significantly to learn about drug use and the overdose crisis, homelessness, mental health issues, and crime.

Within environmental sustainability students were most interested to learn more about the effects of pollution on ecosystems ("I would like to know what animals think of all the garbage in the ocean"), climate change adaptation, and how social and environmental issues interact ("How does the social issue affect the environmental issue?").

Students found the real-world learning highly motivating and developed a desire to better understand the important role of urban and park planning, including the specific tasks of planners, city budgeting, architecture/design, and how planners address the many social and environmental challenges.



Student showcase project - fun seating



Student showcase project - public spaces

Key Learnings

from the students!

1

More places to play!



2

More places to meet friends

3

More opportunities to play in nature all year round

4

More local healthy food options

5

More opportunities for creative expression

6

More inclusive spaces for everyone to enjoy



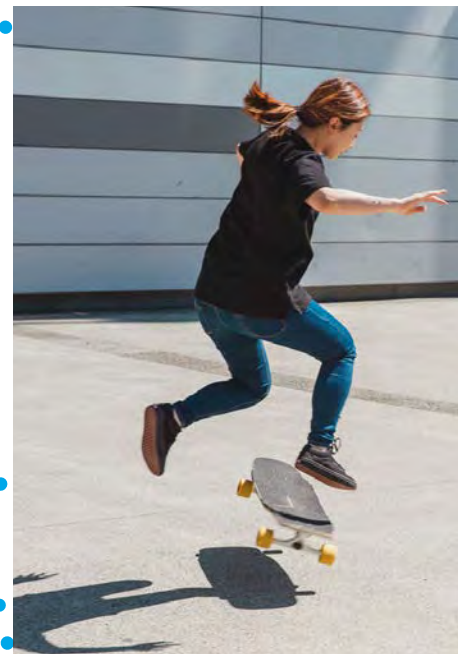


More places to play!

The students expressed the desire to see more opportunities for play throughout the city. While on walking tours they demonstrated that play is not confined to the playground... in fact some of the best places are while you are on your way.

Students also wanted to see a wider variety of activities and experiences throughout the year, including dance, climbing, sports... and notably ziplines.

everywhere



play-on-the-way



Urban Explorers

2

More places to meet friends

that are welcoming and safe

Students highlighted some of their favourite places in the city, but expressed a need for more places that are specifically welcoming to them, where they can hang out with friends in a safe and comfortable spaces.



3

More opportunities to play in nature all year round



Students expressed concern for our changing climate and encouraged opportunities for climate mitigation. This included ideas to integrate natural features and weather protection into public space design in ways that make spending time outside during sunny days and the rainy days playful and exciting.



**Having fun
outside,
rain or
shine!**

4

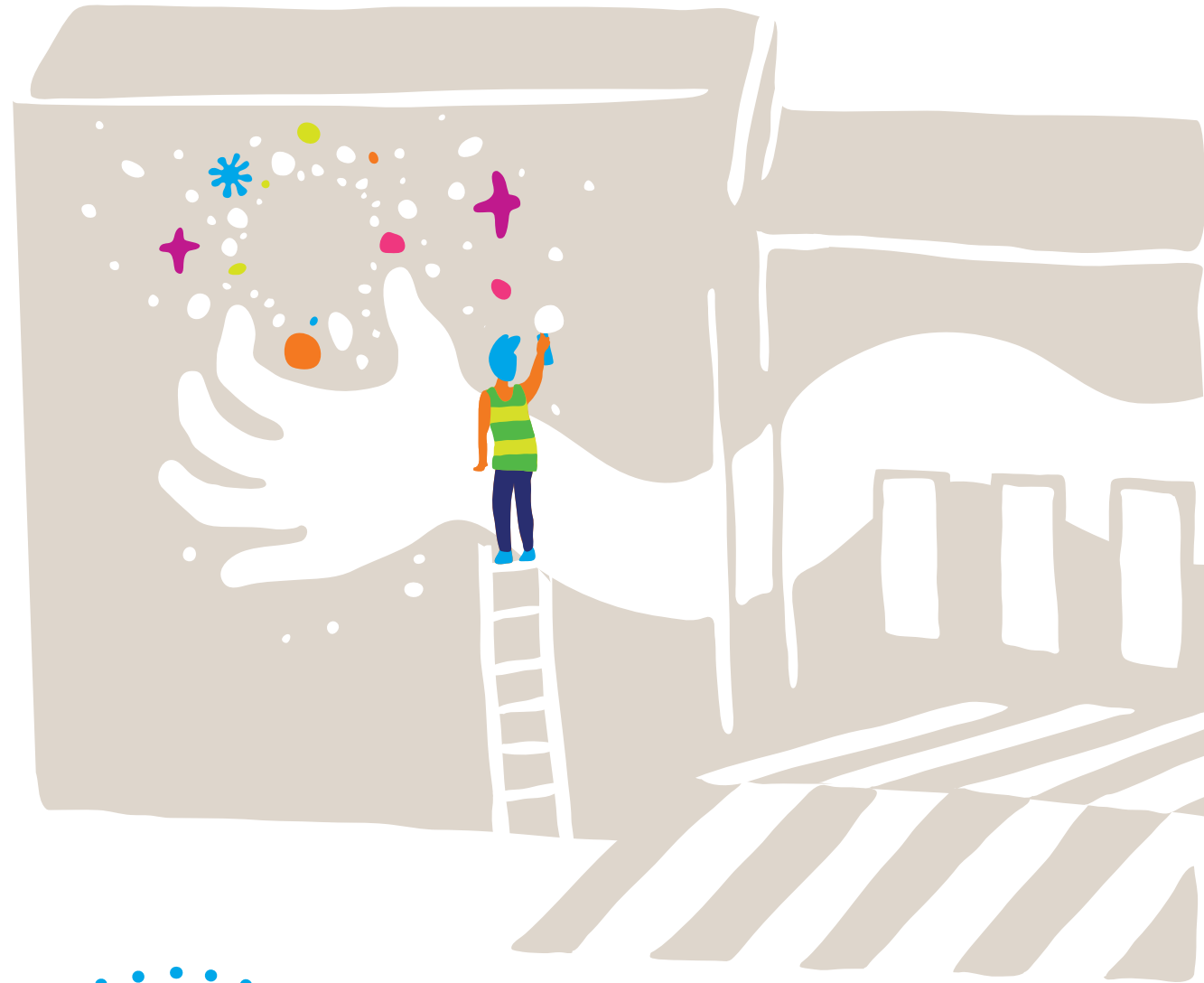
More local healthy food options that are affordable



The students highlighted a need for healthy food options in their neighbourhoods that are close to their homes and schools. They noted a loss of neighbourhood grocers and convenience stores that they could visit on their own, and wanted to see them return. With few places to hangout in the winter months, older students said they relied on restaurants and coffee shops that were affordable and welcoming to young people to meet with friends.

eat & meet with friends

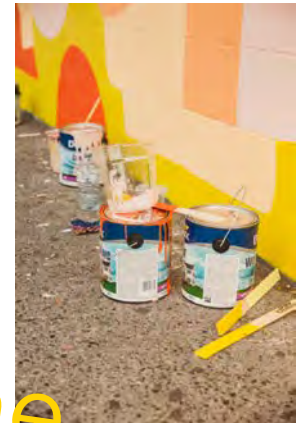
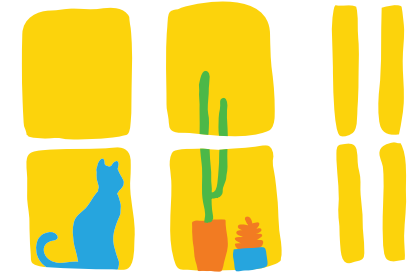




5

More opportunities for creative expression

and shaping the neighbourhood



Students expressed a desire for more art and creative expression in public spaces, including colorful wall murals and sculptures that you can climb on. They encouraged creating more opportunities to express themselves while in the city and make it easy to participate in the creation of public space.

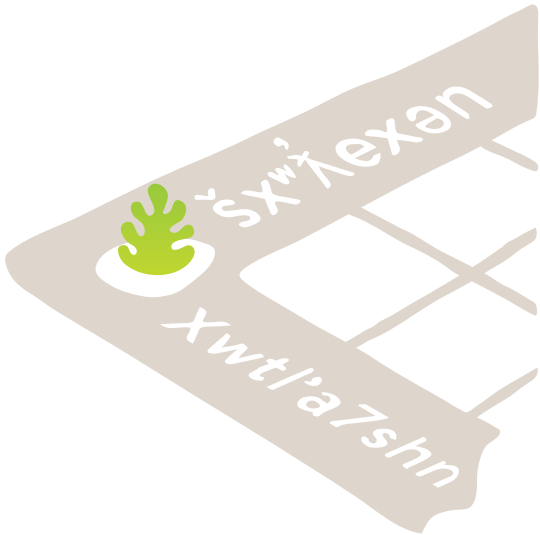


6 More inclusive spaces for everyone to enjoy

Students showed a significant concern for homeless and street-involved people, and a need for inclusive public spaces. They proposed more welcoming, comfortable and safe spaces for people of all ages, genders, backgrounds, incomes and abilities.



places for everyone





Next Steps

This document outlines what was heard through the Urban Explorers Child and Youth engagement process. The Key Learnings will help inform our Emerging Directions and frame the focus of the planning work as we work towards a comprehensive Public Space Strategy for the Downtown.

The Public Space Strategy will coordinate and deliver public space over the next 30 years.

Stay Involved

Help us create exceptional, vibrant, and memorable public spaces, places, and experiences in the Downtown. We want to hear about your favourite public spaces, what you like or dislike about current spaces, your ideas for the future and more! Visit us online to learn about ways to get involved and provide feedback:

[Vancouver.ca/placesforpeople](https://vancouver.ca/placesforpeople)

#placesforpeoplevan



