



Places for People Downtown

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

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

Great public spaces are
Places for People!



What will the strategy do?

Places for People Downtown will consider public spaces on City-owned properties, as well as privately-owned public spaces (POPS) such as office plazas.

The strategy will provide the following:

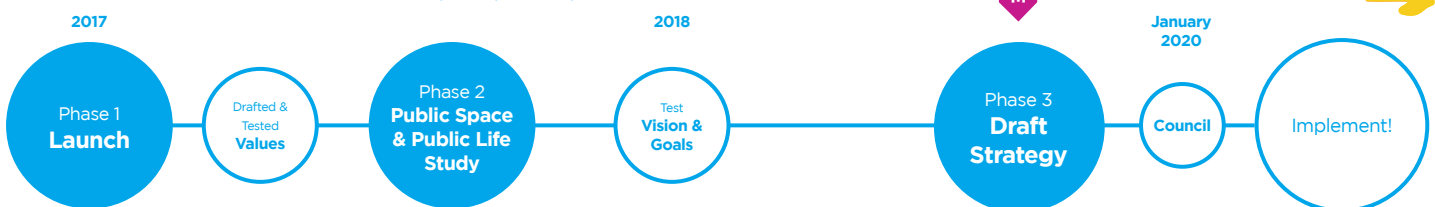
- An inventory of existing public spaces, and an analysis of what's missing and could be improved
- Guidance on how to improve public space in the Downtown over the next 30 years, through planning, design, programming, and stewardship
- Establishes principles to prioritize public space initiatives and, over time, shape a more vibrant and complete public space network

Provide Input Today

Today, we are sharing with you our Draft Gap Analysis and Strategic Directions. We are asking a) whether we missed anything, and b) where future improvements should be located and what kind of spaces they should be



WE ARE HERE



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Context & Background

What are public spaces and public life, and why do they matter?

Public Life

Public life is the shared experience of the city created by people when they live their lives outside of their homes, workplaces and vehicles. It is the everyday life that unfolds in streets, plazas, parks, and spaces between buildings.

The high quality of life that we enjoy is very much connected to public space and public life. Successful public spaces and public life fosters health and sustainability, supports local business, promotes social engagement and connects people to their local communities.

Public Spaces

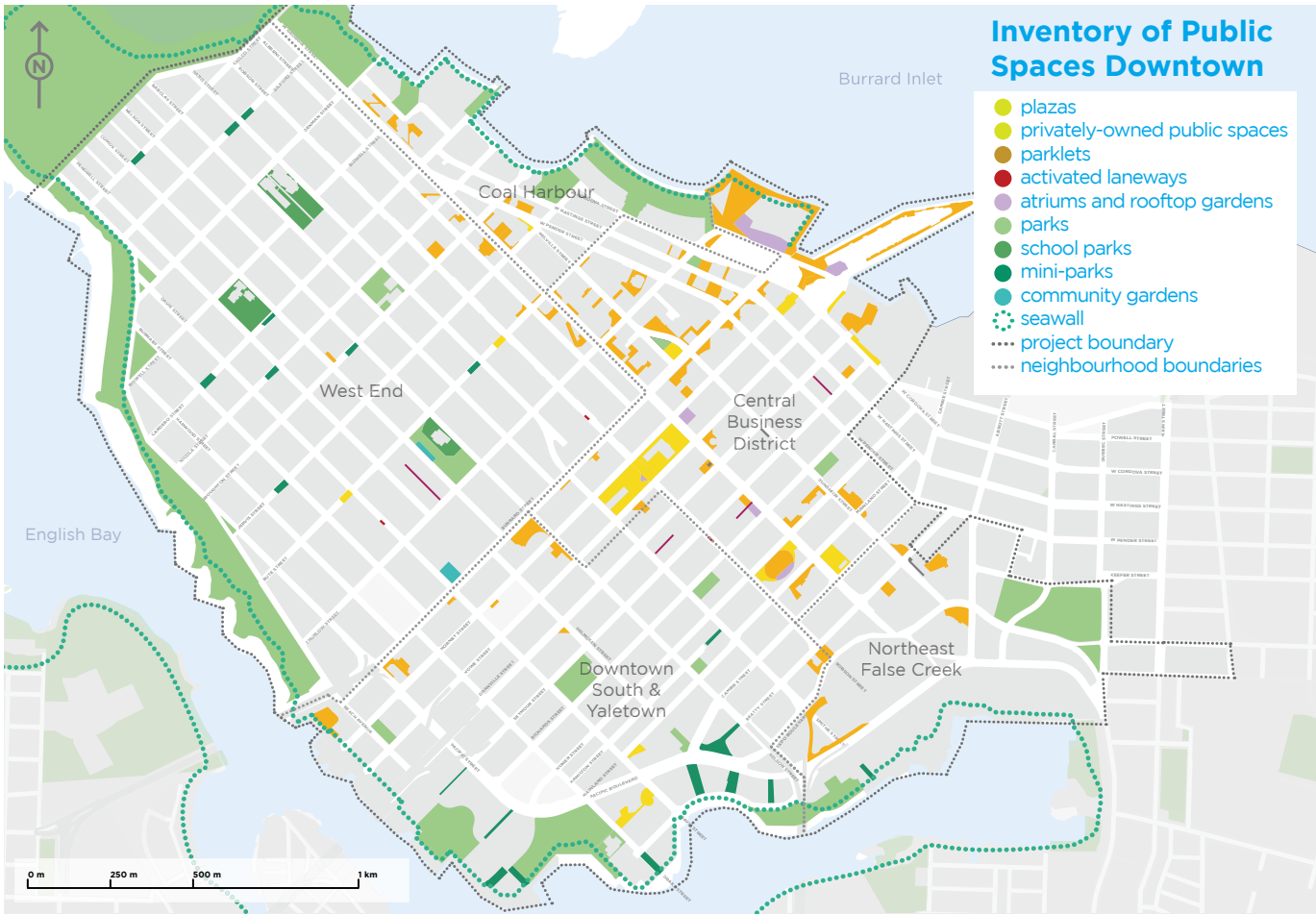
Public spaces can be plazas, squares, streets, laneways, pathways, parks and waterfront on both public and private property



Why do we need a strategy for public space in Downtown Vancouver?

Downtown is the heart of our city, and home to some of the most popular public spaces in Vancouver.

Places for People Downtown is the City of Vancouver’s approach to public space planning for people, with people in mind. The strategy is grounded in an evidence-based understanding of public life, and aims to serve as the basis to guide cohesive and connected, people-centred urban design around Vancouver’s Downtown peninsula.



Whenever we say “walking” we are being inclusive of people who use wheelchairs and mobility aids.

Early Findings

What we did

Using the **Public Space Public Life (PSPL)** study as a comprehensive snapshot of people in public spaces, we reached:

878 ☀️ People directly engaged in conversation in the summer

630 ❄️ People directly engaged in conversation in the winter

115 📍 Sites around Downtown to observe people, use, and activities

What we heard (so far)

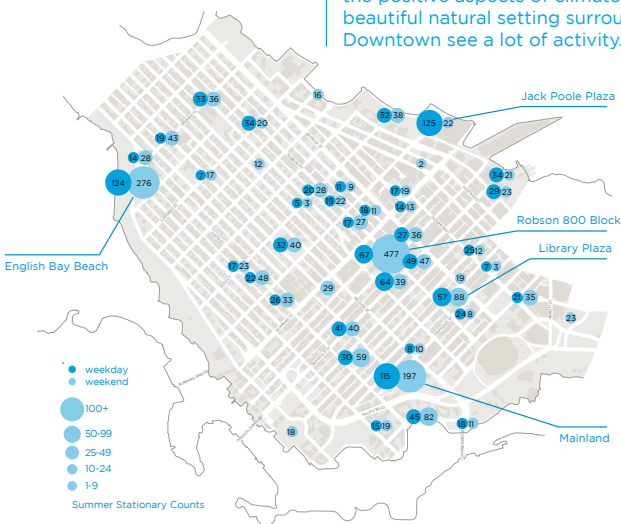
Downtown Vancouver is:

- An outstanding walking Downtown that invites people out walking all year
- Home to a community and businesses with a strong culture of participation
- A vibrant series of neighbourhoods, where people live, work and recreate
- Providing high quality public space that is in high demand, and serves both locals, visitors and businesses

What we found (sneak peek)

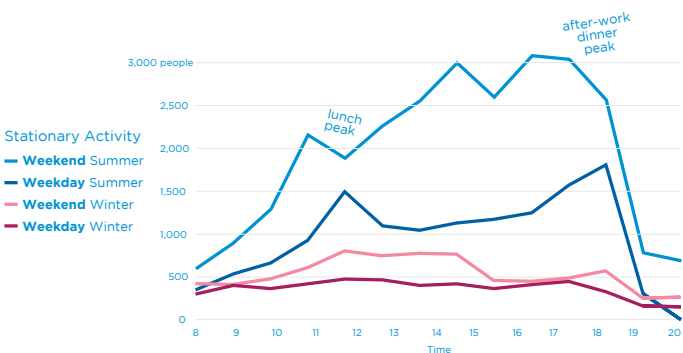
Where are People Stopping?

People choose to stop and stay, and participate in public life when they feel invited, safe and comfortable. Destinations that invite people to enjoy the positive aspects of climate and the beautiful natural setting surrounding Downtown see a lot of activity.



When are People Out?

In the summer, Downtown is bustling with life and many people choose to stop and stay in public space. In the winter, staying activity drops by 70%.



What people do when they linger in public open spaces?

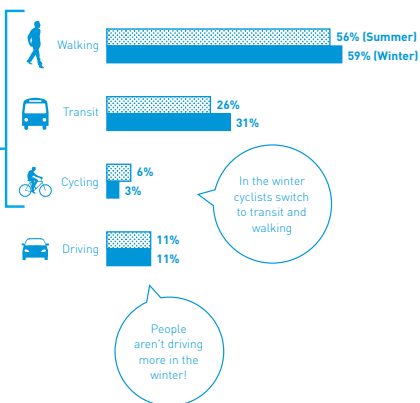
The majority of stationary activities observed are related to passive recreation, with many people sitting on stairs in the summer. In the winter, most people are standing and engaged in necessary activities, such as waiting for the bus.



How are People Getting In and Around Downtown?

Places for People compliments and supports the Downtown's unique walking culture.

9 out of 10 people choose active mobility or transit



Where we need to go

For full details from the PSPL study, please visit: vancouver.ca/placesforpeople

- Invitations for everyone to spend time in public spaces throughout the year
- Public spaces that people enjoy every day, and for events and large gatherings
- Opportunities for everyone to actively participate in creating public spaces
- Opportunities to connect and socialize



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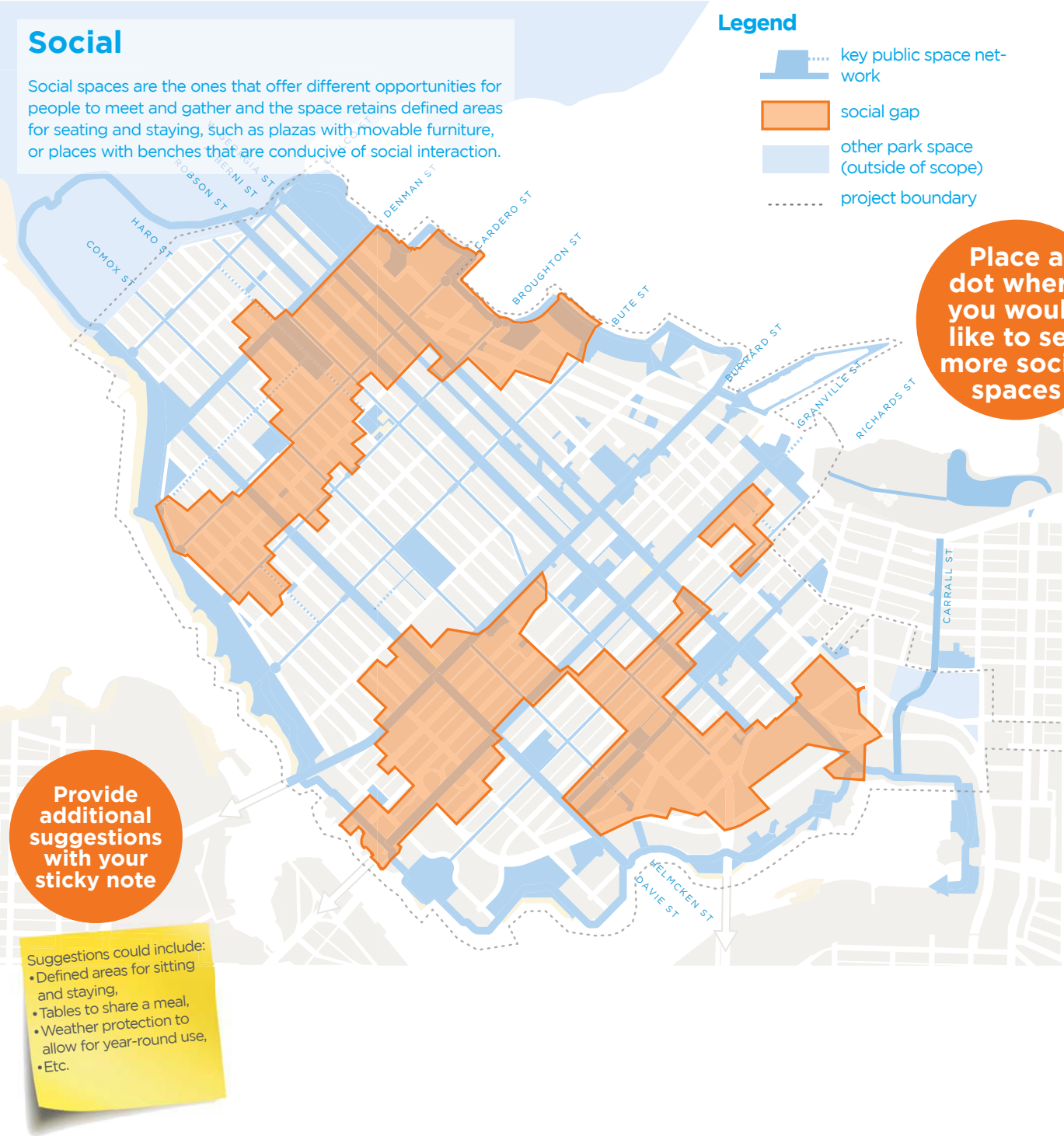
Open Space Gap Analysis

A complete public space network should provide an equitable, balanced distribution of public spaces. While different communities will have different needs, there are several basic functions that should be within a 5-minute walk from where people live or work. The list of key functions was determined through the inventory and a qualitative assessment of the existing public space network (2018). The map below shows areas in the Downtown that are 5 minutes or more away from streets or open spaces that provide a more active social function.

Key Public Space Functions

- Play**
Formal and informal play (for adults too)
- Social**
Places to meet and gather
- Respite**
Contemplation and rest
- Commercial**
A variety of commercial activities
- Civic and Cultural Expression***
Spaces that support art, cultural expression, and public manifestations
- Celebration and Events***
Spaces that can support different sizes of celebrations and events

* Civic and Cultural Expression and Celebration and Events are city-wide functions that may be located outside of a 5-minute walk, and have not been assessed though this analysis.



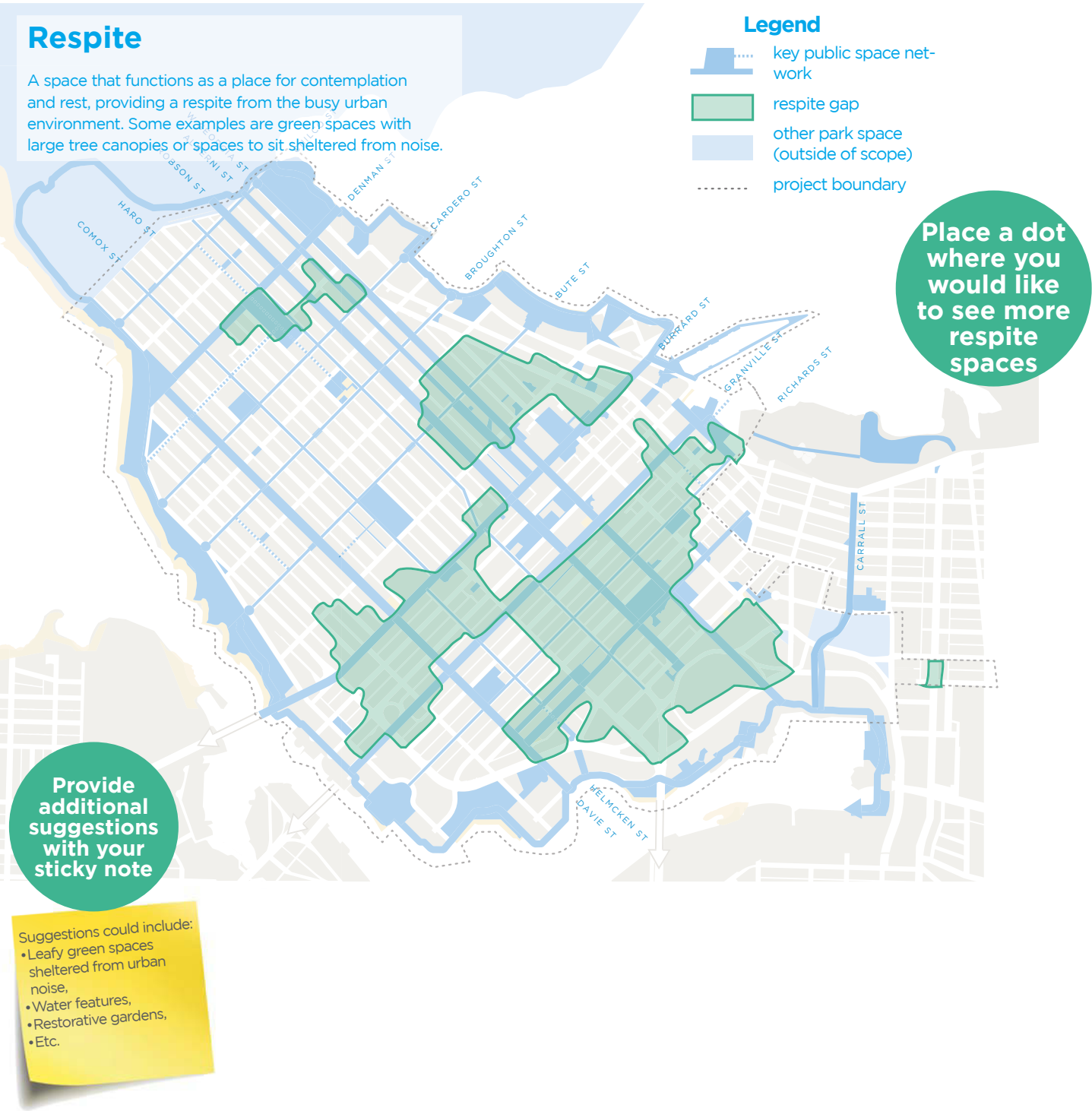
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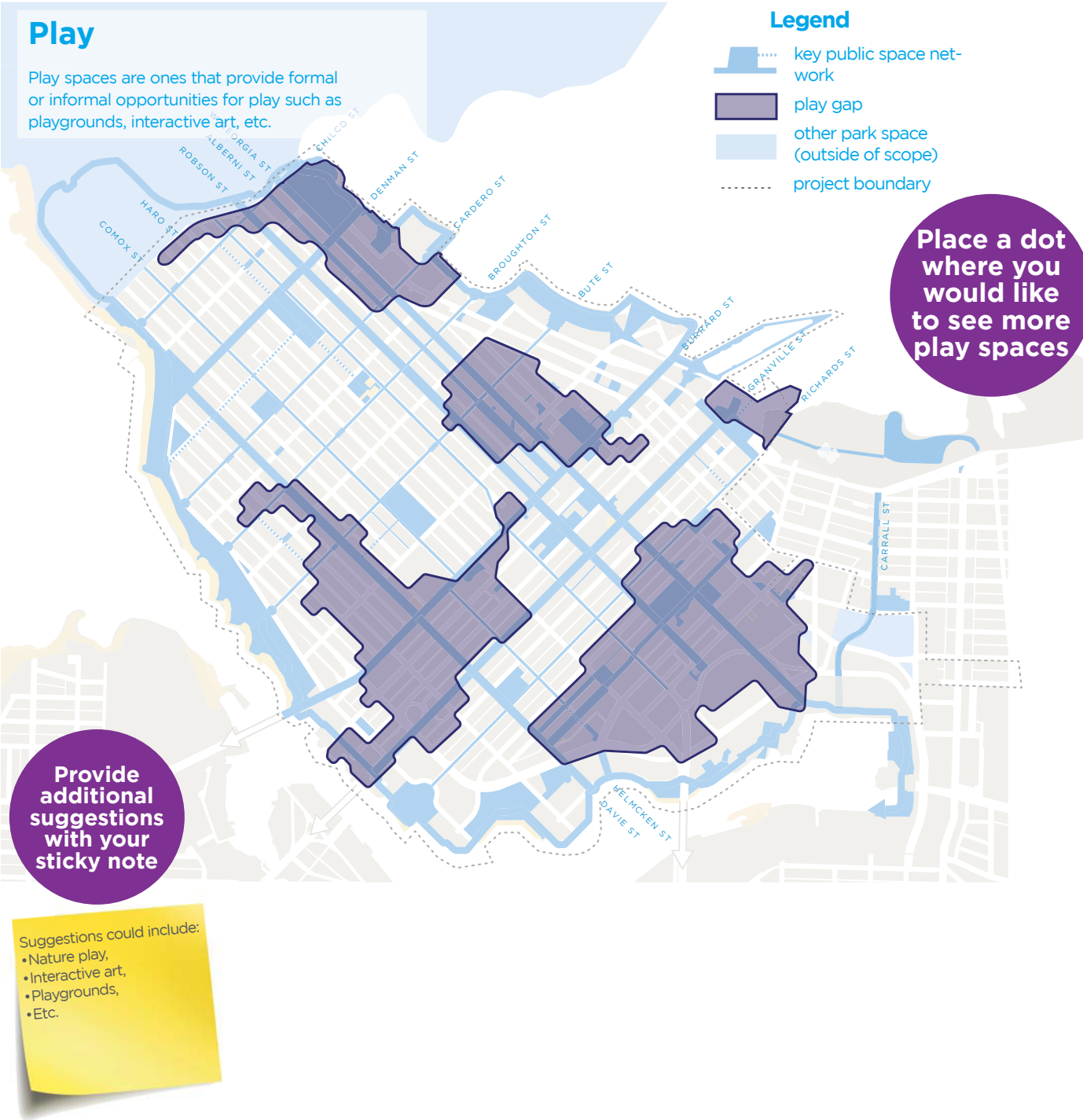
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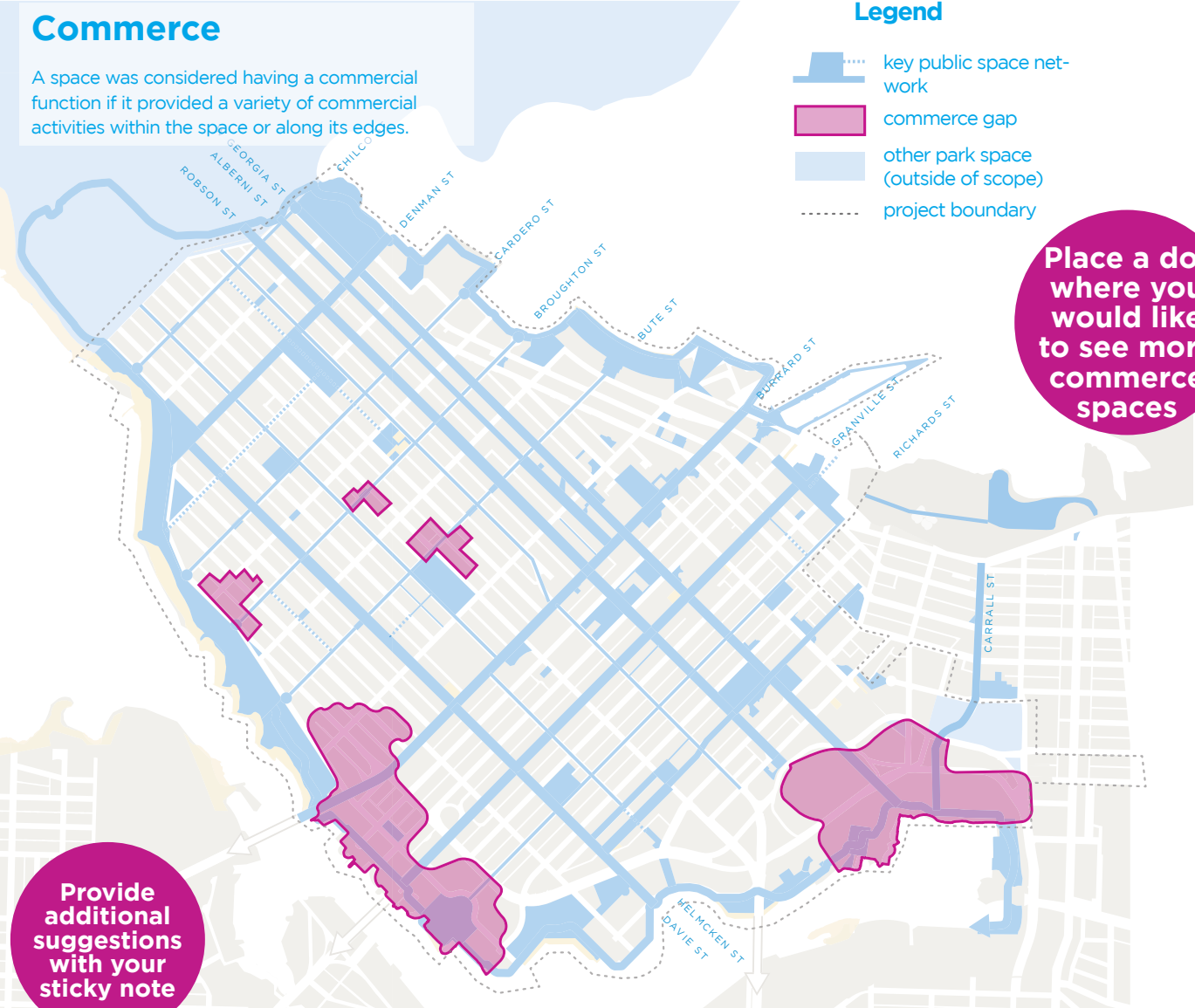
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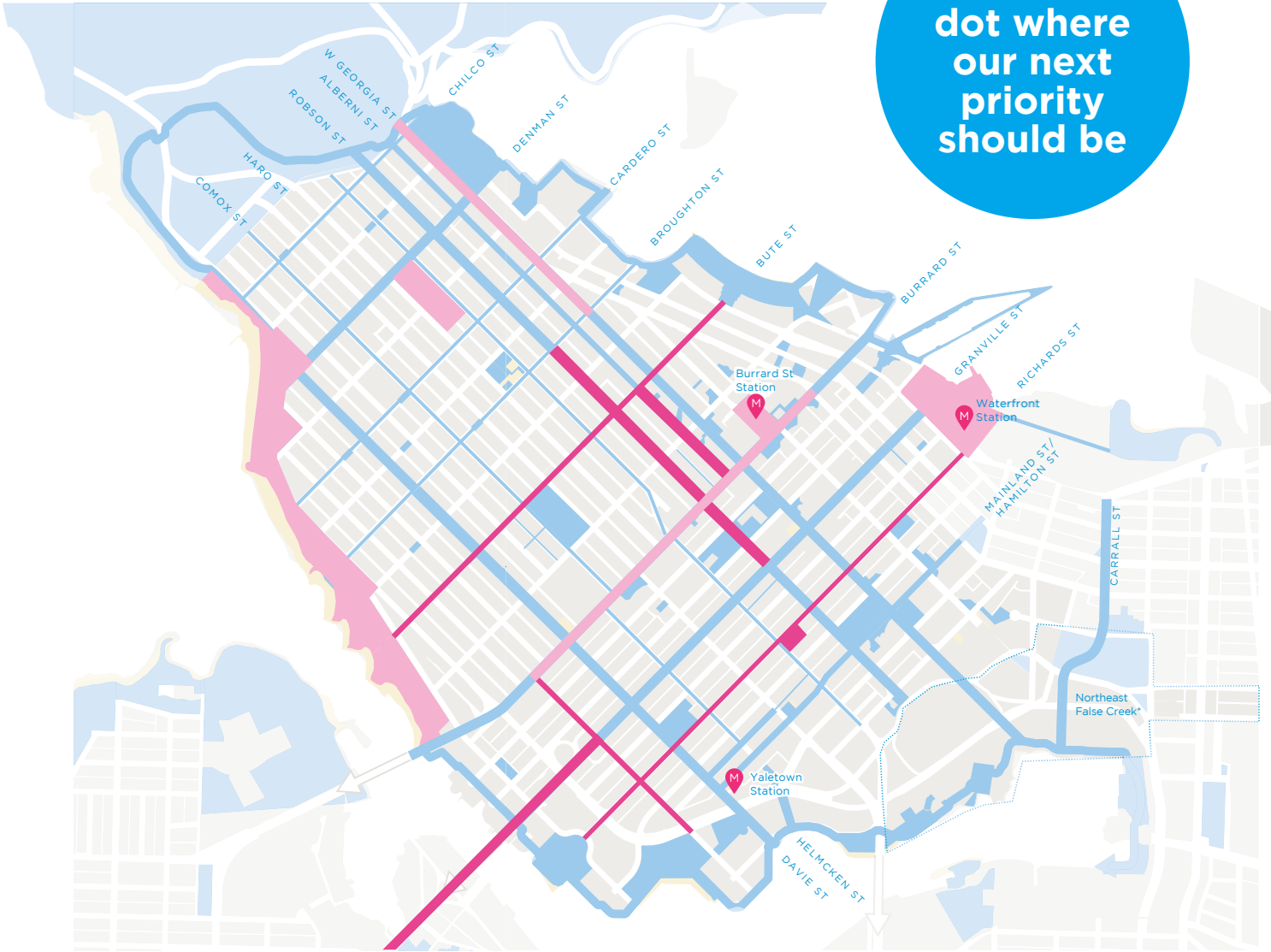
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Current Public Space Projects

Below are some upcoming open public space projects downtown that will be happening in the next years.

Place a dot where our next priority should be



Legend

- key public space network-streets, parks and plazas
- upcoming study areas for public realm planning
- areas with upcoming public realm improvements (current capital plan)
- transit stations



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Strategic Directions

These are the draft policies and goals for improving public life and public spaces across Downtown



1 The “Right” Supply

Match the supply of public space to need, by providing an equitable, appropriate distribution of public spaces across the Downtown



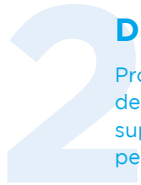
3 For All, by All

Provide public space that feels welcoming, and safe for people of all ages, genders, backgrounds and abilities. Encourage people to create, activate and be stewards of public space



5 Nature and Resilience

Clean water, clean air and biodiversity are basic requirements for a healthy urban landscape. Consider the natural environment, urban hydrology, disaster response and climate emergency when planning the public realm



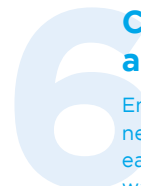
2 Design for People

Provide a high quality well designed public spaces to support a rich range of experiences



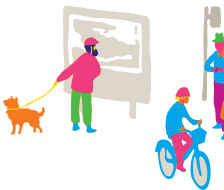
4 Day-long, Year-long

Provide opportunities to enjoy public spaces throughout the year, both day and night

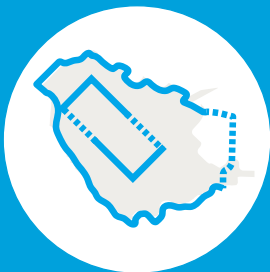


6 Connecting People and Places

Ensure that the public space network is well connected and easy to navigate for people walking, rolling and cycling



Key Moves



Complete the Loops

The completed Seawall Loop and Downtown Loop (Davie, Denman, Robson and Granville) provide a strong framework for the Downtown public space network, and connect most of the Downtown’s key open spaces and amenities. Gaps in the loops should be filled to create a continuous, coherent pedestrian experience that encourages more active use of the space and attracts a broader range of people to enjoy these places.



Connect Shore to Shore

In many ways Vancouver, especially the Downtown peninsula, is defined by its relationship to the water. Taking advantage of this remarkable natural amenity, Shore-to-Shore connections run across the peninsula, connecting neighbourhoods to the shore with active transportation routes and natural corridors that support rainwater management, biodiversity and habitat.



Fill in the Gaps

Downtown public spaces are enjoyed by large numbers of both local and regional users. Many public spaces are asked to withstand heavy use and provide for a wide range of use. The addition of new public spaces and the renewal/expansion of existing spaces will be prioritized to provide more equitable access across neighbourhoods and ensure that all residents and employees are able to enjoy a range of experiences (play, social, commerce and respite) in their local neighbourhoods.



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The “Right” Supply

Match the supply of public space to need, by providing an equitable, appropriate distribution of public spaces across the Downtown.



Urban Reef, 800 Robson, Vancouver



Bute Street, Vancouver



Alley Oop, Vancouver



Bute & Robson Plaza, Vancouver

What We Heard

- More space for gathering and socializing
- More sidewalk space on popular streets for walking, sitting and gathering
- Retain and enhance public and private open spaces
- Focus on expanding and improving public space near major transit hubs
- Expand opportunities for public life



Købmagergade, Copenhagen, Denmark



Alberni Street, Vancouver



Perch Program, Vancouver



Parklet on Robson St, Vancouver

Here are some ideas to deliver the “Right Supply” of Public Spaces Downtown:

- Provide an equitable, balanced distribution of Public Spaces Downtown by responding to the spatial gap analysis.
- Ensuring public spaces serve distinct functions: for socializing, respite, play, commercial activity, celebrations, and cultural expression.
- Deliver public space through acquisition, repurposing, improvement, partnerships, connections, testing and stewardship
- Secure, retain and enhance privately owned public spaces (POPS)



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Design for People

Provide high quality well-designed public spaces to support a rich range of experiences.



Alexandra Park, Vancouver



Alley Oop, Vancouver



Building corner activation, San Francisco



Games in the shade, Vancouver

What We Heard

- Sit-able spaces and gathering spaces should be a priority
- Support a diversity of uses and have flexibility
- Create unexpected places
- Promote a diversity of public art, with more interactive art



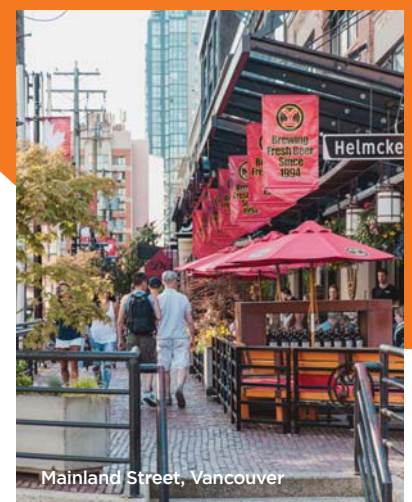
Mural Festival, Vancouver



Bute and Robson, Vancouver



Play spaces, San Francisco



Mainland Street, Vancouver

Here are some ideas and opportunities to help create places with Design for People:

- **Space to Pause** – Introduce opportunities for people to stop and socialize
- **Active Edges** – In commercial areas, design ground-floor facades that are open and transparent to encourage interactions
- **Play for All** – Integrate elements of play and delight into public spaces.
- **Make Streets 'Places'** – Celebrate streets as public spaces that encourage public life, while maintaining transportation functions and other street uses.
- **Sunlight** – Protect and preserve access to sunlight in public spaces
- **Celebrate Neighbourhood Character and Identity**
- **Memorability** – Encourage the unique identity and legibility of spaces through distinctive design, public art, and iconic features
- **Views** – Protect and preserve views
- **Events Infrastructure** – Ensure that plazas and gathering spaces have infrastructure to support diverse programming and events.



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For All, by All

Provide public space that feels welcoming and safe for people of all ages, genders, backgrounds and abilities. Encourage people to create, activate and be stewards of public space.



Walk for Reconciliation, Vancouver

What We Heard

- Downtown should be welcoming for all
- Honour Indigenous culture, history and reconciliation in public spaces
- More open and inviting experiences that are attractive to all ages and abilities
- More universally accessible restrooms and drinking fountains



Chinatown, Vancouver



English Bay, Vancouver

Here are some ideas and opportunities to help foster a Downtown For All, by All:

- **First Nations Collaboration** - Work with Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations and Urban Indigenous communities to inform the creation, design and programming of public spaces, and support their full participation in public life
- **Inclusion** - Foster an accessible and welcoming public realm that allows all people to fully participate in public life, actively engaging and working with the most vulnerable groups and individuals
- **Social Connection** - Foster public spaces that cultivate community
- **Safety** - Ensure that public spaces feel safe for all people to enjoy, through design, stewardship and programming
- **Empowered Communities** - Engage people and community organizations to become active participants and stewards for public spaces



Crosswalk by Musqueam artist, Robyn Sparrow, Vancouver



Canada Day, Vancouver



WEBIA, Fresh Air Cinema, Vancouver



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Day-long, Year-long

Provide opportunities to enjoy public spaces throughout the year, both day and night



Bus Station Canopy,
Aarau, Switzerland



Lumière Festival,
Vancouver



VIVA uninterrupted
2017, Vancouver



Bishops Square,
London

What We Heard

- More space for live events, and encourage events during the winter months
- Provide all-season spaces with weather protection
- Encourage more patios to enjoy eating, drinking and people-watching
- More amenity including food and drink in public spaces
- Prioritize experiences in the public realm that are free of charge



Impulse, Place des Festivals, Montreal



Jim Deva Plaza, Vancouver



Weather canopy, Granville Island, Vancouver



Bute + Robson, Vancouver



Granville Street, Vancouver

Here are some ideas and opportunities to help create more opportunities for Day-long, Year-long open spaces:

- Provide opportunities to enjoy public spaces throughout the year, both day and night
- Year-round Spaces - Increase year-round activity through design and programming for a variety of weather conditions.
- Evening Activities - Encourage safe and welcoming evening experiences, including vibrant nightlife districts.



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Nature and Resilience

Clean water, clean air and biodiversity are basic requirements for a healthy urban landscape. Consider the natural environment, urban hydrology, disaster response and climate resiliency when planning the public realm.



Rain Playground, Gothenburg



Seawall, Vancouver

What We Heard

- More trees, landscaping and natural features
- Foster access to nature as places for recreation and respite
- Improve connections between the Downtown Core and the waterfront
- Incorporate green infrastructure into the design of public spaces



Hinge Park, Vancouver



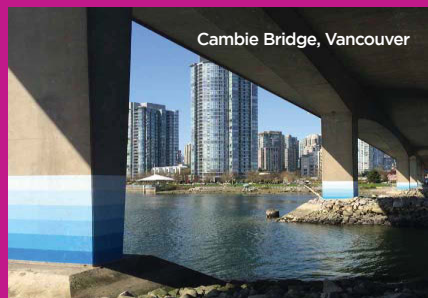
East Boston Landing, Coastal Resiliency Solutions
Source: asla.org



Tasinge Plads, Copenhagen, Denmark



Green Alley Program, Chicago



Cambie Bridge, Vancouver



18th & Yukon Park, Vancouver

Here are some ideas and opportunities to help Nature and Resilience in our design:

- Clean water, clean air and biodiversity are basic requirements for a healthy urban landscape. Consider the natural environment, urban hydrology, disaster response and climate resiliency when planning the public realm.
- Ecological Functions - Integrate ecological functions in public space design.
- Green Network - Establish a cohesive network of streets and pathways to improve sustainability, increase habitat, manage rainwater, and increase tree canopy cover.
- Blue-Green Streets - Establish a cohesive network of streets that integrate rainwater management (Blue) and the associated landscape expression (Green)
- Water as a Resource – Design spaces to celebrate rainwater and reconnect urban rainwater to the hydrologic cycle.
- Sea Level Rise Mitigation – Ensure public spaces are designed to respond to sea level rise
- Climate Change Resiliency
- Heat Island Effect Mitigation – Incorporate elements that mitigate urban heat island effect
- Disaster Readiness – Design key public spaces that can be used in the event of a public emergency



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Connecting People and Places

Ensure that the public space network is well connected and easy to navigate for people walking, rolling and cycling.

Here are some ideas and opportunities to Connect People and Places:

- Walking City – Design streets, sidewalks and walkways to encourage a walking and rolling culture
- Shore to Shore – Enhance walking, rolling and cycling connections across the peninsula.
- The Seawall Loop- Complete the Seaside Greenway.
- The Downtown Loop – Enhance the pedestrian experience of the Robson, Denman, Davie and Granville high streets (identified in the Vancouver Greenways Plan and the West End Community Plan).
- Local and Regional Connections – Ensure the public space network connects with surrounding neighbourhoods and the regional greenways network.
- Clear and Intuitive Wayfinding – Integrate wayfinding to make it easy and enjoyable for people to move through, navigate and discover.
- Celebrate Places of Arrival – Enhance the arrival experience at entry points to Downtown
- Lively Laneways – Enhance laneways as public spaces, while maintaining their role as service routes



Seawall, Vancouver



Wayfinding, Vancouver



Georgia St., Vancouver



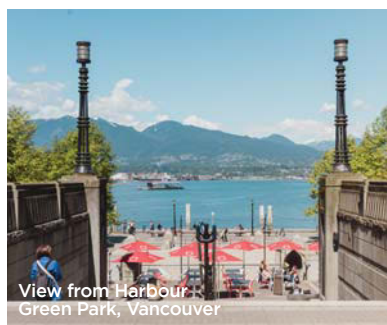
Robson St., Vancouver



Davie St., Vancouver



Public Disco on Alley Oop, Vancouver



View from Harbour Green Park, Vancouver

What We Heard

- An expanded and connected public space network should be a priority
- Have shore-to-shore connections for active transportation
- Have places to play throughout the Downtown



Granville Street, Vancouver



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