



# Plaza Stewardship Strategy

Partner Consultation + Preliminary Engagement Results



2018



## How we take care of plazas

Plazas are key spaces for community gathering and public life in our city. We need to ensure they are well managed public spaces. The *Plaza Stewardship Strategy* will guide the operations of plazas across Vancouver.

In summer 2018, the City engaged with a number of key community partners and interest groups through a workshop in partnership with the Vancouver Foundation and an online survey.

This document outlines what was heard through the engagement process. This feedback will be incorporated into the strategy to ensure it has a greater impact on the care of plazas. The strategy will consist of high level guidance on how to care for spaces.

The strategy is due to be completed in 2019.





## Overview

Engagement on the Plaza Stewardship Strategy targeted key groups involved or interested in plaza stewardship. This included groups, such as community-based stewardship groups, business improvement associations, neighbourhood houses, social enterprise representatives, grass-roots space activators, larger event organizers and other institutional agencies. The majority of groups had some practical experience of stewardship or public space management.

## Key themes that we heard:

1

There needs to be clarity around roles and responsibilities for groups involved (eg. the City, partners and the wider community)

2

The City needs to be more supportive (eg. provide advice on desired activations, funding, agreement types, etc.) if we are looking to partner with other groups on this work and we also needs to recognise the contribution of groups.

3

More information is needed on how this strategy will influence the different approaches to stewardship (eg. include an explanation on agreement types or levels of involvement) in different types of plazas.

4

The use of space needs to be more inclusive and less restrictive.



## Early Ideas Workshop Summary

In June 2018, the City co-hosted a workshop with the Vancouver Foundation to better understand the aspirations of various groups around to plaza stewardship. The intent of the event was also build community capacity and understanding around plaza stewardship.

In general, the feedback from the groups was positive that the City had begun to look at the how public space is cared for and what considerations are there to open it up to greater public accessibility and wider involvement.

The key themes from the group discussion were:

- It is great to see a strategy for the stewardship of plazas and public spaces.
- There needs to be clarity around roles and responsibilities (i.e. the role of the City, stewardship partners and the wider community). There needs to be clarity on who is responsible for maintenance and management in a space.
- More clarity is needed around how this strategy will support stewardship approaches through funding, permitting support, and empowering community groups in different plazas (i.e. events, maintenance etc. larger and smaller spaces).
- A plaza stewardship coordinator role within the City is needed to support this work.
- The city needs to think about how we will partner, support and connect with different groups through this work and also how the community is represented.
- We should work on sharing our best practices and lessons continually with groups interested in this work.
- Better communication around the types of activities that need permitting in a space is required and it needs to be more readily accessible.
- We need to clearly articulate how funding will support this work on an on-going basis.

So many groups are interested in getting involved in the public realm and it's great to see them excited about this. The next step is connecting them together.

- vancouver  
foundation

We should consider putting informative videos up online to show how stewardship is undertaken in different spaces. These should be in different languages.

- **Collingwood Neighbourhood House**

Groups like the Gordon Neighbourhood House would love to take on a plaza and the availability of space is the limiting factor right now.

- **Gordon Neighbourhood House**



## Feedback on Guiding Principles

Participants were asked for feedback on the scope of the work and the draft principles.

Draft Principles with a **high** level of agreement:

- Places to Connect
- Open to New Experiences
- Inclusive of all People
- Sustainable Funding
- Easy to Use

Draft Principles with **less** agreement:

- Fostering Partnerships
- Sustainable Funding
- A Focus for Public Life
- Reflective Community Character
- Range of Experiences

**Fostering Partnerships** is important to create a sense of ownership for local communities. There needs to be a clear structure for management of issues and the City should focus on empowering groups. Clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the different involved groups is key. Groups need to be involved early and have a sense of ownership and agency if the space truly is to be a **Focus for Public Life** and **Reflective of Community Character**.

Having plazas that are **Inclusive of all People** means that guidance is needed on of who is welcome to the space and how to ensure community representation. Defining what types of revenue streams could be considered as part of **Sustainable Funding** is important. Also defining what types of private versus public funding mechanism are available needs to be considered.

Some considered that 10 principles may be too many and also that management and maintenance were less explicitly captured. Finally, one of the key messages was that the City needed to adopt a less adverse approach to different activities in spaces. If we do truly want to see a **Range of Experiences**, we need to step back and allow a greater range of uses and support groups in this.



## Online Survey Summary

Following the *Early Ideas Workshop* an online survey was sent to the participants to further capture their feedback. Out of the 25 responses more than half of the survey respondents had also attended the workshop. All of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the direction of the work and outline of the strategy.

Some of the key additional responses we heard through the survey were:

- There needs to be details on the site specific design and what elements are key to the success of a plaza.
- Plazas require a high level of maintenance and cleanliness.
- We need to think of how we support large-scale events and plan for large plazas.
- Is there a non-profit agency who could work with the City to support this work and look for ways to work collaboratively with different organizations?
- The City should create guidance and support for groups navigating other departments eg. maintenance, procurement, etc.
- Specific information on what activities are allowed in each plaza would be very helpful.
- There was a high level of interest in the groups participating in a *Community of Practice* and connecting more regularly with each other on this topic.

## Next Steps

The feedback from the partner engagement will be used to inform the guidance provided in the *Plaza Stewardship Strategy*. Once a draft of the strategy is complete City staff will circulate this to the identified external partners.

The strategy will be completed in the coming year and it is intended that they City will take a more proactive approach is connecting with these groups moving forward.

