



Plaza Stewardship Strategy

Stakeholder Workshop Engagement Summary



2020



How we take care of plazas

Plazas are key spaces for community gathering, socializing, connecting and experiencing public life in our city. Plazas are important public space assets that need to be well managed and cared for to ensure they are inviting places. The *Plaza Stewardship Strategy* will guide how the City and steward partners manage, maintain and program plazas across Vancouver.

In February 2020, the City engaged with a number of key community partners and interest groups through two workshops on the emerging directions for the *Plaza Stewardship Strategy*.

This document outlines what was heard through the workshops. The feedback from the workshops will shape the final recommendations that will be shared with stakeholders and the community in a future phase of public engagement.

The strategy is due to be completed in 2020.



Overview

The workshops on the *Plaza Stewardship Strategy* targeted key groups involved or interested in plaza stewardship.

This included groups, such as business improvement associations, neighbourhood houses, art and culture programmers, social enterprise representatives, grass-roots space activators, larger event organizers, community-based stewardship groups and other institutional agencies.

The participants had a varying level of knowledge, interest and experience in stewardship. Fifty-six people participated in two workshops hosted on February 6, 2020.

Principles

The guiding principles for the *Plaza Stewardship Strategy* were shared with the workshop participants for input. The principles were refined based on public engagement feedback from an earlier workshop (2018). The draft principles are:

A Focus on Public Life

Public plazas play a vital role in public life, enabling celebrations, rallies and protests, community events, and neighbourly interaction. Plazas should be clean, safe and well-lit and feel secure at any time of the day and night.

Inclusive of all People

Plazas should be spaces where every person feels safe, welcome and a sense of belonging. Plazas should be inclusive and inviting destinations for all residents and visitors to achieve a balance of uses and user groups.

Range of Uses and Experiences

Plazas should be available all-year round and encourage dynamic and adaptable use. Plazas provide a rich range of experiences, from people watching, gathering, eating, entertainment and respite. Plazas need to balance programmed activities and being passive public spaces.

Fostering Partnerships

Plazas should be managed in collaboration with members of the public, community groups, businesses and property owners. Partnerships are essential to creating opportunities for community involvement and a sense of ownership.

Supportive Design

Plazas should be well-designed spaces that consider the mobility and accessibility of each space. Public realm amenities such as seating, lighting, public toilets, water fountains, and public art contribute to an inclusive and enjoyable space.

Reflective of Community Character

Plazas should reflect the local community character and take a placemaking approach through plaza design, management and programming. The community should feel a sense of pride for the space and have multiple opportunities for involvement.

Open to New Ideas

Plaza management is constantly evolving. The approach to the design and management of these spaces must be innovative, flexible and continually adaptable. Ongoing monitoring and pilots are important tools to testing new opportunities and approaches.



Emerging Directions

The workshop focused on sharing the draft emerging directions and the format was short presentations followed by small group discussions on key questions.

Inclusivity, Equity and Reconciliation

Why is Inclusivity, Equity and Reconciliation important? How are we going to achieve Inclusivity, Equity and Reconciliation?

Management

What and who is involved in the management of plazas? What kind of partnerships are we exploring? How does the broader community have a voice in stewardship?

Maintenance and Operations

What basic and enhanced services are needed to keep our plazas well-maintained and welcoming spaces? How are we matching service levels with the needs of different types of plazas?

Programming

What types of programming work in different spaces? Who is involved in programming and what is the City's role in programming? How do we ensure programming is inclusive?

Funding

What costs are incurred by management, maintenance and programming? What tools are available to the City and steward partners to fund stewardship activity?

Key highlights that we heard:

1 Inclusivity, Equity and Reconciliation

The City has established steps and approaches to achieving inclusivity, equity and reconciliation.

Further work is needed to engage with traditionally excluded communities and people with lived experience of poverty and homelessness.

There is a need to look at the geographic distribution of plazas across the city from a spatial equity lens.

3 Maintenance and Operations

The City shared an approach to maintenance and operations which defines services levels, both core and enhanced, for different types of plazas based on demand, neighbourhood context and intensity of use.

Feedback from participants supported this approach and helped confirm the role of the City and steward partners in maintaining plaza. Feedback highlighted the City's as primarily responsible for maintenance and operations tasks.

2 Management

Participants provided feedback on what roles and responsibilities are best suited to the City and steward partners.

There is a need for guidelines and training to communicate what is involved in management and stewardship generally.

Participants support a local place-based approach to seeking plaza partners. If partners are going to take on day-to-day management, partners need financial support to do this work.

Further work is needed to refine the management and partnership models for plazas and to define the governance role of an Oversight or Advisory Committee.

Key highlights that we heard:

4 Programming

Participants provided feedback that programming is best delivered by community-driven, community-based organizations and groups.

Feedback from participants highlighted the City's role as facilitator, connecting programmers to plaza spaces and to existing stewards and community partners. Feedback also highlighted the need for ongoing financial support for programming.

Participants highlighted the need for guidelines to communicate the programming and special event processes and to ensure diverse programming in plazas.

Further work is needed to communicate and promote programming opportunities in plazas, and to determine what funding is needed to support programming in plazas.

5 Funding Options

Participants provided a mixed response to funding tools, such as sponsorship and private event and marketing event fees. Feedback highlighted the need to establish guidelines for frequency, size and scale for private and marketing events. Feedback also highlighted the need to balance corporate interest and local business needs, and to spread revenue to plazas outside Downtown.

Further work is needed to engage stakeholders on the event fees and guidelines for private and marketing events.

There is a need to explore additional funding tools and how the revenue would be allocated to support stewardship.

Workshop Summary

Roles and Responsibilities Activity

Participants completed an activity to identify which entity (City, Partner, Other) could be or should be responsible for a variety of tasks associated with the care and maintenance of public plazas.

The activity results help identify what roles are best suited to the City, which roles are best suited to partners, which roles are best shared. The City was identified as primarily responsible for most operations and maintenance tasks. Steward partners were identified as best suited for programming tasks. Within management tasks, there was a greater breakdown with some tasks more suited to City, some to Partners, or shared. Some tasks were identified as better suited to another entity (i.e., social enterprise or other service provider).

Guidelines and Training

Throughout the discussions on plaza stewardship, a number of needed resources were identified to support partners and to communicate more generally what is involved in key areas of stewardship, such as:

- Guidelines for the maintenance of a plazas
- Guidelines for partnerships
- Guidelines for programming
- Training for partners

This feedback is helpful as the City develops the stewardship program and what additional enabling tools will help the community.



Workshop Summary continued

Community Involvement

Participants shared ideas about how to get the public involved in plaza stewardship, such as through volunteer clean-ups, programming or decision making. Participants recommended neighbourhood houses, community centres, schools, resident associations and business improvement associations as potential partners. Steward partners were identified as being better positioned to engage the community.

The City shared information and experiences of working with Oversight or Advisory Stewardship Committees (i.e., Jim Deva Plaza and Block 51, which includes 800 Robson and ʂxnqXwt!e7énk Square). Oversight or Advisory Committees are representative bodies who help with governance and decision-making on plaza stewardship.

Participants identified the need to outline how committees work, their accountability and authority over plazas. Participants also shared that an oversight or advisory committee may not be suitable for all types of plazas.

Share a Square

The City shared information about a new pilot program Share a Square. Share a Square is a program to support small scale community-based events at five City-owned plazas. The City is piloting this program based on feedback to make hosting low impact events easier.

Participants were learning about this program for the first time and generally were very supportive and expressed interest in using the program.



Next Steps

The feedback from the stakeholder workshops will be used to refine the draft emerging directions and guide the ongoing work to finalize the *Plaza Stewardship Strategy*. A third phase of public and stakeholder engagement is planned for late spring and early summer. Once a draft of the strategy is complete City staff will circulate this to the identified external partners and stakeholders. The strategy will go to City Council in the Fall of 2020.

The next steps for the Strategy are:

- Design and deliver targeted engagement with traditionally excluded communities.
- Review future plaza locations with spatial equity and geographic distribution in mind.
- Review management and partnership models.
- Establish guidelines for Advisory Committees.
- Evaluate funding options - private events, marketing events and sponsorship.

