

A faint, light grey architectural line drawing of a viaduct structure is visible in the background. It shows multiple parallel tracks supported by a central pier and side supports, with the tracks curving upwards towards the top corners of the page.

RE:CONNECT IDEAS COMPETITION
SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES: THE VIADUCTS

DECEMBER 2011



RE:CONNECT

The submissions and commentary presented in the re:CONNECT Open Ideas Competition provided a glimpse into public opinion surrounding the potential future for the viaducts and the land beneath them. Over-arching themes emerged that sought an area that was refreshingly unique; with nearly every one of the fifty submissions illustrating a decided departure from the previous development pattern lining the north shore of False Creek. Embedded in this was a level of public focus that place the primary goal of creating an exciting and inviting place

for the citizens of the city to congregate. This document provides a quick recap of the overall themes and strategies that formed the submissions.

STRUCTURAL APPROACH

In the end, 51 unique submissions were received that addressed the issue of the viaducts, in either the Visualizing the Viaducts or Wildcard category of the competition. While one might have anticipated that the open invitation to envisage a different future would have led to more aggressive approaches, well over half of all submissions suggested that both structures be retained (33,

Structural Options Illustrated in Submissions				
	Retain	Modify		Complete Removal
Primary Function		Minor	> 50%	
Traffic	13	0	4	n/a
Public / Cycling Link	12		7	n/a
Both (Traffic & Public)	7	2	0	n/a
Neither	1	0	0	n/a
TOTALS	33		13	5

65%). Of those that sought retention of the structures, opinions were essentially evenly split between focusing on traffic needs, and focusing on retaining the structures for the purpose of the public use. In summary, 13 sought retention for traffic (25%), 12 sought retention for parks and public space or cycling/pedestrian links (24%), while seven sought a retention for both (14%).

CENTRAL THEMES

Looking at all of the submissions together central themes begin to emerge.

PARK SPACE:

Three-quarters of all submissions addressed an enhanced public park as a central driver of their submission.





ACTIVATED GROUND PLANE:

Of the submissions that retained, or modified the viaduct structures, nearly all took strides to activate the public realm at the ground plane. Approaches ranged dramatically from retail infill under the structures, to developing gathering spaces, markets, swimming pools and yoga studios. Part of this activation explored the potential for increasing the amount of covered public space at the ground plane.

INTRODUCTION OF WATER:

Water is an integral element of the site's history and this fact was something that was picked up on by a number of the participants. Whether in the form of canals or swimming pools, water played a role in a larger number of the submissions received.



BIKES & PEDESTRIANS:

Well over half of all the submissions (31) addressed the need for cycling and walking connections through this area of the city.

ENGAGING THE STRUCTURES:

Of the submissions that retained or modified the structures 19 of them sought to engage the elevated level of the viaduct with some sort of building or structure. These ranged from civic structures and galleries, to commercial and residential development.

INTRODUCTION OF DEVELOPMENT:

Another theme that emerged in 20 of the submission was the introduction of additional development opportunities in one way or another into the scheme. This development ranged in use but provided some contextual infilling opportunities as a way of engaging the ground plane.

BUILD UNDER THE VIADUCTS:

In the schemes where the viaducts were either retained or modified, a number of submissions (12) sought to fill in underneath the structures.

TUNNELING OF TRAFFIC:

A few of the submissions (5, 10%) sought to remove the pedestrian barrier of vehicular movement by exploring some level of tunneling of traffic.

THEMES MOVING FORWARD

The ideas competition has been an informative first look into the desires and ideas that the public have about the future of this important area of the city. While the real value of the competition is in the collection of ideas there are a number of themes and directions that staff will be actively looking to integrate into the future

options and schemes presented to the public. They include:

- deliver a highly public and human scaled district
- maximize the potential & quality of park
- Introduce water and references to its historic presence in the area
- Ensure that the uses activate the public realm, and should the viaducts remain, the ground plane under the viaducts
- In phased options, explore ways to engage the structures to animate underneath

SPECIFIC IDEAS TO TEST

- A thoughtful street re-configuration was put forth by the team of Dialog, PWL, Beasley & Green which staff is exploring to unite Pacific & Expo and to resolve the complicated intersections on the eastern edge.

