



A CASE FOR PUBLIC INTEREST DESIGN IN VANCOUVER'S DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE

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SUBMITTED TO:



A Case for Public Interest Design in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside

by

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B.A. (Honours), McGill University, 2009

A PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS (PLANNING)

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
School of Community and Regional Planning

We accept the project as conforming
to the required standard

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

October 2013

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to my project supervisor, Maged Senbel, for his continued support, guidance, and mentorship throughout my journey in the planning program. His advice and intuition were of invaluable help in this project. I also wish to extend my gratitude to Scot Hein who, by giving me the wonderful chance to immerse myself at the City of Vancouver in the summer of 2012, gave the initial impulse to this project. His design sense will continue to inspire me as I move forward. Thanks to Andrew Pask for his insights on public space assessment and observation, and to Fadi Shayya for his advice when I was encountering difficulty midway through this project. Finally, my endless thanks go to those closest to me, and especially Ryan Coghlan, for his patience and encouragement, and for opening my eyes to the craft and theory of landscape architecture from which I drew much inspiration along the way.

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1.

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

This project makes a case for the adoption of Public Interest Design (PID) as an instrument and a philosophy for public space thinking in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

In recent years, spontaneous and often citizen-led public space transformations have offered an appealing alternative to traditional planning culture. As people learn to take ownership of their environment, a myriad of organisations, agencies, firms, and individuals are building a strong case for the benefits of collaborative, incremental, and locally-driven design in empowering communities and scavenging local potential to resolve complex urban issues. Somewhere between grassroots initiatives and facilitated co-design lies the potential for more place-sensitive public space design in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES).

Amidst real-estate pressures and given the changing face of the urban economy, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside continues to undergo changes that will introduce new, at times competing, and possibly conflicting demands on its public spaces. As newcomers, businesses, and long-time residents learn to coexist, what defines safe and appropriate public space use may become a source of tension.

These changes arise as the City of Vancouver reinforces its commitment to

achieving healthier and more equitable communities. In the Downtown Eastside, the wellbeing of vulnerable populations and the sense of belonging and inclusion of residents figure as top priorities in emerging planning directions. The challenge of "gentrification without displacement" has driven tremendous efforts devoted to strengthening housing policies that may enable low-income populations to remain in the neighbourhood.

The issue of open space, however, has attracted less prescriptive attention. Yet some important questions arise. How might the public spaces of the Downtown Eastside mitigate conflicts arising from the intensified juxtaposition of diverse – and occasionally clashing – uses and lifestyles? How could the most cherished aspects of existing public spaces be retained and enhanced? Can urban design be a tool to further inclusion and coexistence? Urban design and planning practitioners may not only wish to rethink the streets and open spaces that mend the urban fabric of this diverse neighbourhood, they may also be required to continuously adapt the very processes used to achieve change in public space.

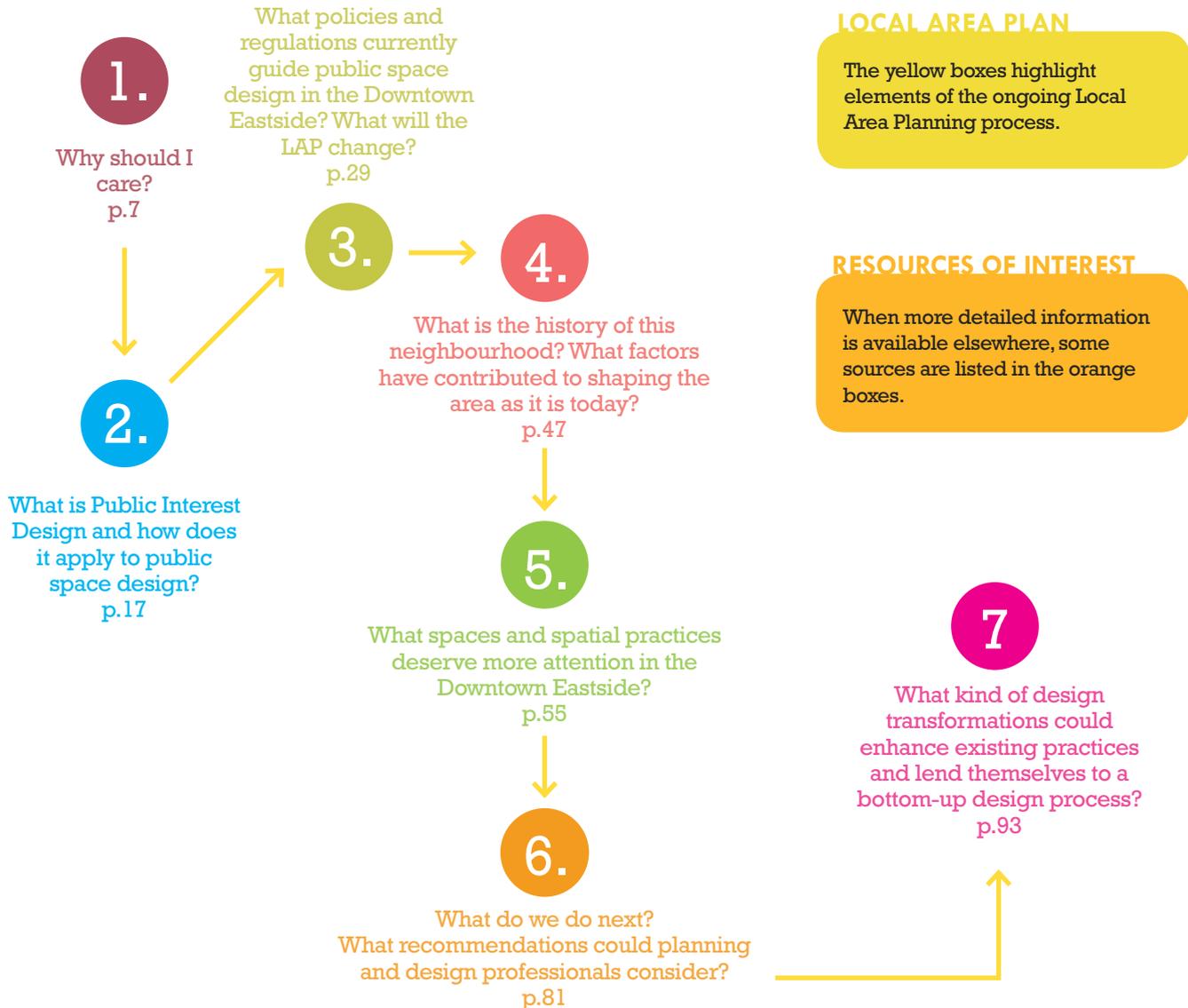
Using observations supported by relevant literature and best practices from the field of Public Interest Design, this project makes recommendations as to how the City

may wish to address public and privately owned open space planning in the neighbourhood. These recommendations are illustrated by potential transformations, meant as prototypes for a human-centered urban design agenda driven by community input, iteration, and cost-effectiveness, and devoted to promoting safety, wellbeing, and social interaction. The objective of these proposed reconfigurations is to encourage planners to challenge the prevalent approach to sidewalk design and show that simple reconfigurations can help accommodate a richer set of pedestrian activities. Another goal is to shed light on the potential for reclaiming underused, leftover space to add to the supply of open space in the Downtown Eastside. The intent is not to prescribe a particular layout or program but to explore certain combinations of design elements, processes and partnerships that might lead to desirable community outcomes.

Although this report uses the Downtown Eastside as a study area, the ambition is that its recommendations will be found relevant for the city and the region as a whole, at a time when ongoing community planning processes have highlighted the evergrowing need for creative citizen involvement in neighbourhood planning.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Each section of this report answers specific questions. The diagram below may help you navigate its contents.



RATIONALE

In Vancouver, the techniques and tools of Public Interest Design present a tremendous potential, not least because they are, in many respects, already being tested and refined by local planning and design professionals. Co-design, creative placemaking, storytelling, and active citizen engagement are already blooming aspects of the City's culture. The goal of this project is to serve as a source of specific guidance as to the public space applications of PID.

This project builds on the momentum of the Downtown Eastside Local Area Planning Process (LAPP), launched by Council in January 2011 with a view to provide a "framework to guide change and development in the neighbourhood. The LAP's principal goal is to achieve the goals outlined in the Healthy Cities Strategy, for the DTES to become healthier in three areas: healthy people, healthy communities and healthy environments.

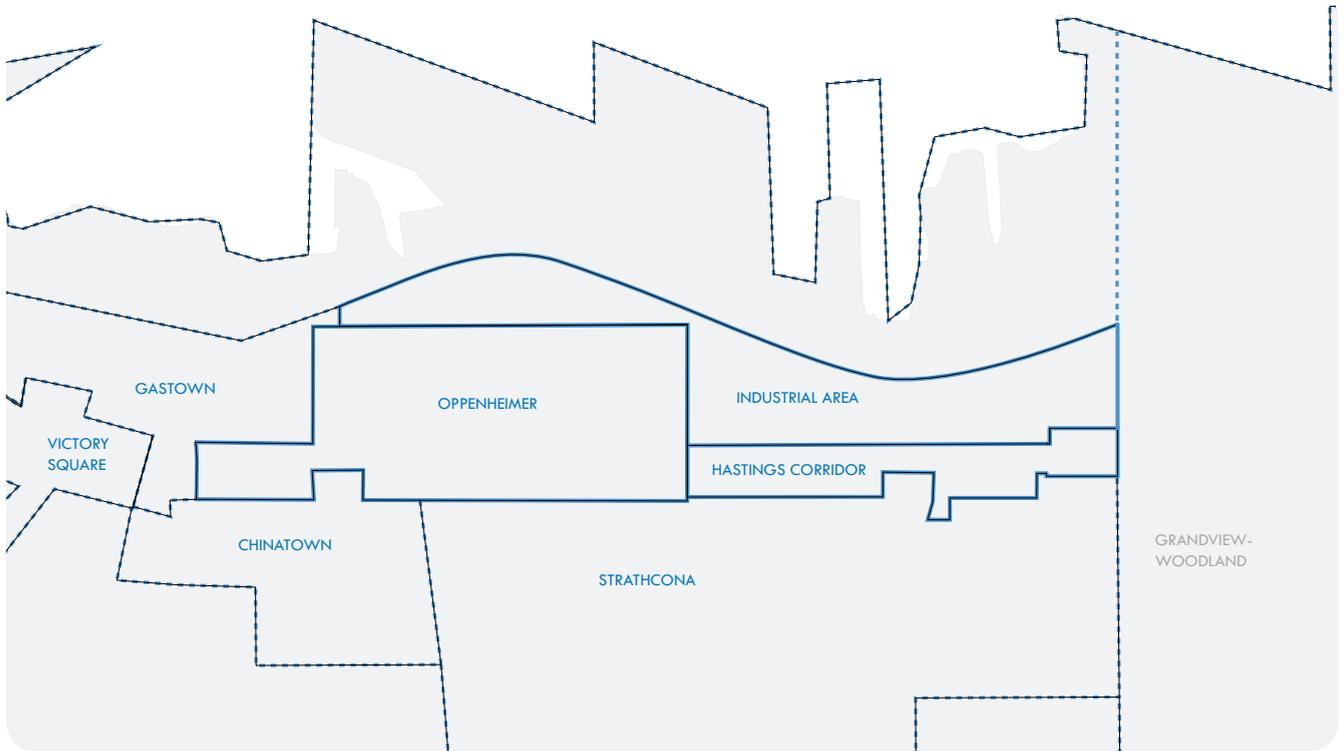
This project is also rooted in the belief that Vancouver's Downtown Eastside has

a vocation to emerge as a laboratory for social planning best practices that involve experimenting with urban design frameworks that support the need for diverse households, socioeconomic groups, and businesses to coexist and mutually support each other. In recent years, developers and architects have begun to experiment with development paradigms that aim to reconcile real-estate interests with principles of social justice and equity. The redevelopment of Woodward's paved the way for this shift. Despite continued controversy and criticism, the intentions that shaped it continue to inspire those who seek new avenues for social mix and inclusion in the city and the region.

More broadly across North America, policy-makers and public officials are warming up to the idea that quality design in low-income communities can be a beneficial investment in the long term. This shift is being paralleled by the desire, emerging from the design community, to think outside the box when designing shelters, social, and supportive housing. In

Vancouver, citywide policies demonstrate a strengthening commitment to deliver improved options along the continuum of housing needs, from homelessness to home ownership (CoV, 2012).

As new architectural and housing models gain popularity, an equally thoughtful reinterpretation of the continuum of public space begs attention. In disenfranchised neighbourhoods undergoing change, and where design upgrades have often been perceived as a zero-sum game, the task of prioritizing inclusive thinking is particularly important. Theories of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) have helped shine some light on the relationship between behaviour and urban design. But beyond CPTED, a growing body of evidence pointing to the positive impacts of public space design on mental and physical health outcomes as well as social interaction suggests that this thinking can be stretched much further.



THE OPPORTUNITY

The sidewalks, parks, and laneways of the Downtown Eastside are a canvas upon which a formidable array of formal and informal commercial and social – licit or illicit – activities unfolds day and night. The use of public space is perhaps more intense there than anywhere else in the city, to the point where the neighbourhood’s public spaces have come to be known as a ‘living room’.

Underlying this intensity is a reality marked by struggles with homelessness, addiction, mental illness, and social disenfranchisement. The lack of safe housing and private space in the Downtown Eastside has been a key factor causing the streets and alleys to become the heart of drug trade and consumption (Boyd et al, 2008). Together, perception and reality have nourished the various stigma that have nourished the area’s ‘skid road’ image in collective memory (Robertson, 2007), making it difficult for local businesses and residents to find a positive identity to define themselves (Vancouver Agreement, 2004).

Nevertheless, while the DTES can be seen as a landscape of marginalization, it is also one of acceptance. Many

individuals who feel unwelcome elsewhere in the city consider its streets and parks a home (Pederson & Swanson, 2008, 2009; Masuda & Crabtree, 2010). In a study of residents’ perception of the Downtown Eastside, Masuda and Crabtree (2010) found that “the DTES neighbourhood is perceived by its inhabitants as a therapeutic landscape in the fullest sense, as participants have reported its importance in realizing their needs for belonging, social interaction, redemption from social marginalization, and solidarity against political oppression.” (Masuda & Crabtree, 2010:664)

Through a community asset mapping process, the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP) found that some spaces inspire particular meaning and care. In 2009, in a report titled *Our Place & Our Words*, the CCAP listed the top five meaningful spaces in the Downtown Eastside: the Carnegie Community Centre, CRAB Park, Oppenheimer Park, the Four Sisters Housing Co-op, and Sunrise Market. The process revealed that green spaces “help residents make a connection to nature and have become spiritually important.” (Pederson & Swanson, 2009:xx)

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The DTES neighbourhood is perceived by its inhabitants as a therapeutic landscape in the fullest sense, as participants have reported its importance in realizing their needs for belonging, social interaction, redemption from social marginalization, and solidarity against political oppression.

- Masuda & Crabtree, 2010: 664

Below: “Our Places”, a community mapping output generated by community members and City of Vancouver staff.

LOCAL AREA PLAN



THE CHALLENGE

Amidst real-estate development pressures and economic restructuring, public spaces will be subjected to increasingly different, and often conflicting, expectations from disparate users. In a city faced with the challenge of housing a rapidly growing population while tackling the affordability crisis, the Downtown Eastside is falling under intensifying development pressures. New developments promise to attract new demographics into the area in years and decades to come. This shift has by now become very tangible in Gastown and Victory Square, but recent and proposed developments foreshadow an eastward expansion of new construction. Hutton (2008) describes the process in those terms: "Victory Square is being rapidly transformed from an interstitial space squeezed between the downtown proper and marginal residential communities, to an integral part of new housing and amenity, as the high-momentum, high-externality 'new inner city' creeps ever closer to the City's Downtown Eastside. (...) the smaller and more marginal enterprises will almost inevitably be squeezed toward the lower-rent districts further east. Pressures exerted by new social groups to impose order on the streets and spaces will act to efface the grit and edginess that define that area's identity. (Hutton, 2008:268-9)

Such pressures have spurred concerns among community advocates about the dislocation of vulnerable populations, and while there is hope that new investment will inject vitality into a struggling district,

many fear that revitalization will result in the displacement of marginalized residents (Pedersen & Swanson, 2008, 2010).

In response to these fears, the City of Vancouver established regulatory mechanisms to achieve revitalization without displacement in the Downtown Eastside / Oppenheimer District (hereafter DEOD), by securing or replacing existing social housing and imposing a fixed proportion of affordable units in new projects, all the while injecting market units into the neighbourhood to promote a mix of residents that can support the vitality of local businesses (Vancouver, 2005). The flipside of these policies is that tensions might arise from the juxtaposition of condo dwellers with housing and services for marginalized groups (Powe, 2010).

In addition to the western encroachment of new market housing, the Downtown Eastside's industrial areas are seeing their role change in the transitional context of global and regional economies (Hutton, 1998). In keeping with Metro Vancouver's commitment to retain inner-city industrial lands (Metro Vancouver, 2007), the City of Vancouver (2005) identified the Powell Street/Clark Drive area as a potential incubator for new businesses and a promising location for light industrial production, distribution, and repair (PDR) industries (Vancouver, 2007). These changes will likely attract new public space users, mainly professionals, and new public realm expectations.

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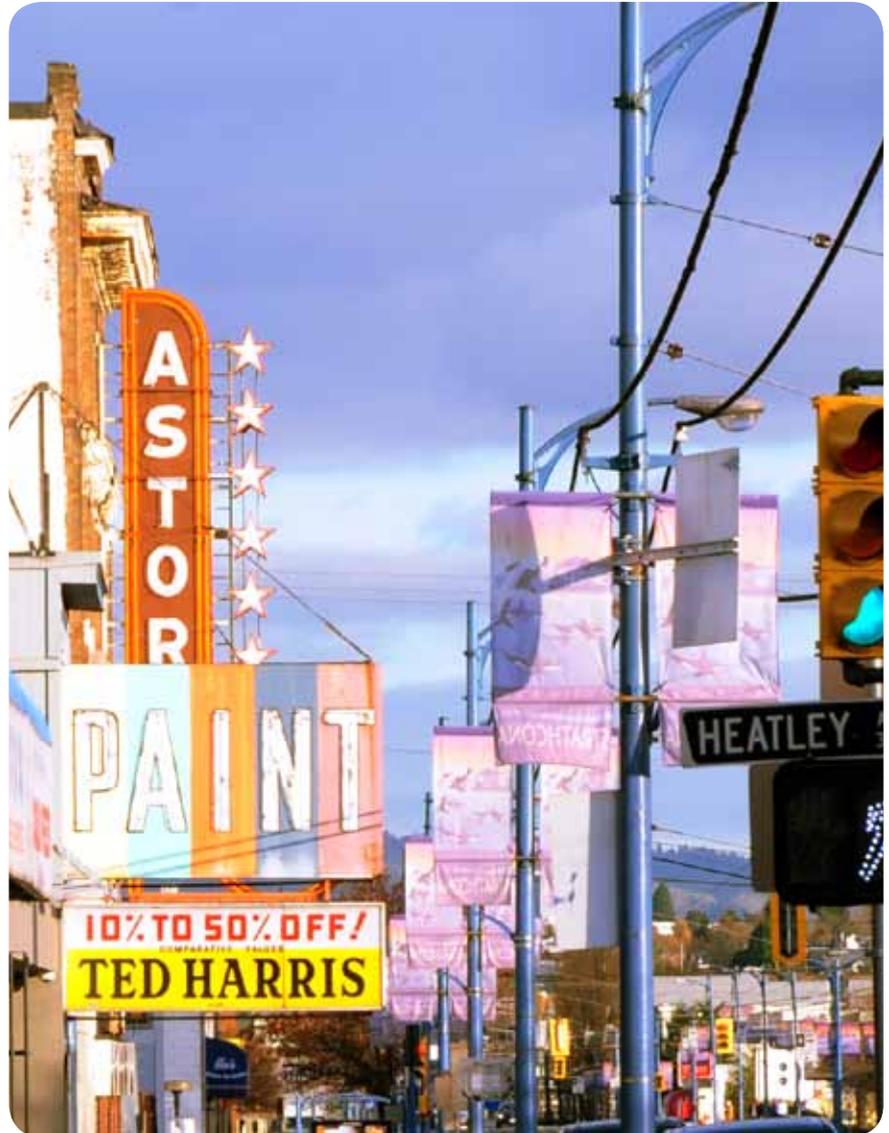
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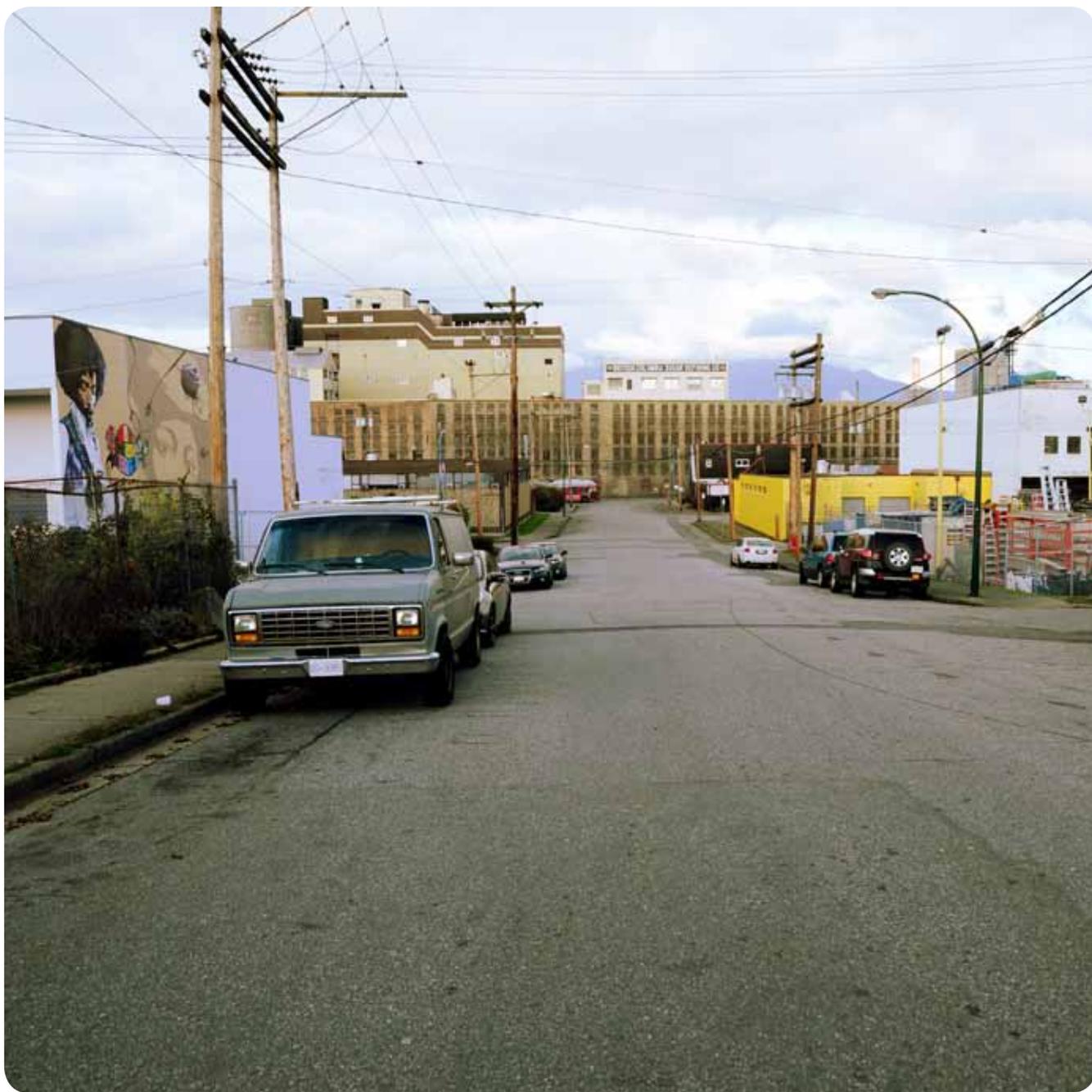
- Hutton, 2008:268-9

LOCAL AREA PLAN

Below are the key issues identified by the Local Area Planning team on the topic “Our Places”. They represent experiences and perspectives collected from the public, social and housing providers, cultural service providers, and business improvement associations.

- Inappropriate land use and development are leading to gentrification
- Appropriate land use is needed in the right locations to reduce social impacts
- Market developments are raising land values and displacing local residents and businesses
- Public places require improvements and protection; too few parks and open spaces
- Streets and lanes are not safe due to traffic speeds and crime
- Aging recreation facilities need improvements
- Low-income residents don't always feel at home in their own gathering places
- Lack of stewardship and feelings of neighbourhood care and responsibility





2.

LITERATURE REVIEW

WHAT IS PUBLIC INTEREST DESIGN?

PUBLIC INTEREST DESIGN AND THE OPEN CITY

INCLUSION, PUBLIC SPACE, AND SIDEWALKS

URBAN NATURE, CRIME, AND SAFETY

URBAN NATURE, HEALTH, AND WELLBEING

WHAT IS PUBLIC INTEREST DESIGN?*

Public Interest Design emphasizes the creation or redesign of products, environments, and systems, with a clear human-centered approach, while often likened to the well-established fields of public interest law and public health. Below are some of the fields that are most relevant to neighbourhood and public space design.

Human-centered Design is a process emphasizing observation, empathy, abstract thinking, prototyping, and iteration while working directly with end users. Its goal is to create solutions that are desirable, feasible, and viable.

HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

Participatory Design is an approach which actively involves and engages all potential stakeholders in the design and planning process from the very start of a project in order to allow the community to inform and direct the project and take ownership over its progress.

Socially Responsible Design proposes that designers have a moral or social responsibility to work with all people, particularly those who are most disadvantaged in society. It suggests that the responsibility of designers is not only to their direct clients but also to all people, environments and entities indirectly impacted by their work.

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE DESIGN

CO-DESIGN

Co-design is an approach in which trained professionals engage directly with end-users in order to develop design solutions that are aligned with user needs, responsive to socio-cultural contexts, and reflective of real-world usage patterns. Co-design posits that design solutions must include both professionals' "expert" knowledge and users' "local" knowledge in order to be successful.

Social Impact Design calls specific attention to the need for designers to test, prove, and document the impacts of their work, particularly emphasizing the importance of demonstrating rigorous measurable social impacts.

SOCIAL IMPACT DESIGN

EMBEDDED DESIGN

Embedded design or immersive design emphasize the need and value for designers to live and work within the communities they are serving for extended periods of time, particularly before the start of a project, as a means to build empathetic relationships with the community, vet potential ideas, and better understand all factors and contexts that might impact the design process.

* All definitions taken from the Public Interest Design Glossary of publicinterestdesign.org available online at

www.publicinterestdesign.org/glossary/

VALUES

PROCESSES

OUTCOMES

PROFESSIONS

HUMAN FOCUS



INVOLVE END USERS



EQUITABLE



ARCHITECTURE



COMMUNITY DRIVEN



OBSERVE



MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL



LANDSCAPE & URBAN DESIGN



INCLUSION



ITERATE



MEASURABLE



PRODUCT DESIGN



PARTICIPATION



PROTOTYPE



FUNCTIONAL



GRAPHIC DESIGN



NOTABLE AGENCIES

architecture for humanity



PUBLICINTERESTDESIGN



PUBLIC INTEREST DESIGN AND THE OPEN CITY

In the introduction of *The Just City*, Susan Fainstein points out that in cities, “decisions concerning where to locate facilities become warped by considerations of their economic, as opposed to their social, impacts.” In recent years, a growing concern for reversing that trend and achieving urban social justice has permeated the field of planning policy and public space design, urging practitioners to rethink the form and function of the commons and to reflect on the ethical implications of their interventions. Alongside a battle to democratize access to the city, planning and design professionals have embraced the challenge of making tools and processes themselves more accessible to the public.

The Public Interest Design (PID) movement has come to encompass the growing approaches, agencies and projects that strive towards equity and inclusion and lie at the intersection of design and service. PID emerged from a cross-disciplinary impetus to democratize access to quality goods and spaces across income-levels, ethnic groups, and social statuses. Since its early boom in the 1990’s, it has been a catalyst for participatory, socially responsible, user-oriented, and human-centered design thought and practice. Most of it has found successful applications in humanitarian contexts, with agencies like Architecture for Humanity spearheading

projects in over twenty countries across the globe. While architects have featured prominently in this field, so too have product designers, industrial designers, graphic designers and urban designers. Many of the best practices generated in each of these fields has the potential to crossover to, and inform planning and public realm design.

As processes for public space production evolve to become more human-centered and community-driven, designers and planners often emerge as facilitators in a design process increasingly akin to a participatory planning process. Design professionals’ role shifts away from that of experts as they “become active partners in the development process.” (Sinclair, 2012: 11). In effect, the 21st century planner is, ultimately, multi-faceted as he begins “to play the role of negotiator or even contractor, supervising active collaboration, whilst engaging and challenging various relevant parties.” (Urhahn Urban Design, 2010: 18). In this context, urban designers adopt a broader set of skills in order to lay the groundwork of a design process, scavenge local potential and knowledge and provide guidance from one end to the other of the design process.

Increasingly, the misconception that public space is universally accessible and unequivocally inclusive simply by virtue of being in public ownership have been challenged (Kingswell and Turmel, 2009).

To some extent, the Occupy movement has made the public more aware that beneath the “public space” nomenclature lie several shades of accessibility, ownership, and inclusion.

The notion, however, that good public spaces are essential components of democratic city form has long featured in design research, with seminal work by Kevin Lynch (1980) and Richard Sennett (1982) to name only a few. In recent years, new concepts have come to enrich this longstanding discourse. In their 2009 book *Rites of Way, The Politics and Poetics of Public Space*, Mark Kingwell and Patrick Turmel state that “healthy public spaces offer one of the best, living parts of a just society.” (Kingwell & Turmel, 2009: xi), in a quote that mirrors a growing commitment to improving population health and wellbeing through environmental design and urban policy. To refer to public spaces as “living” underlines a shift away from permanence and towards the flexible, spontaneous city, anchored in a notion of design as an unfinished experiment (PPS, n.d.), responsive and adaptive over time.

Consequently, planning practice has witnessed a shift away from capital-heavy and top-down projects. In their stead, temporary interventions have flourished, rooted in the belief, both pragmatic and adventurous, that by testing ideas via small-scale and low-cost pilot interventions, cities can incrementally provide a richer

RESOURCES OF INTEREST

Placemaking Chicago's Step-by-step Guide to Placemaking for Residents: www.placemakingchicago.com/guide/

Ideo's Human-centered Design Toolkit: www.ideo.com/work/human-centered-design-toolkit/

The Street Plans Collaborative's Tactical Urbanism Vol. 1 & 2.
http://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical_urbanism_vol.1
http://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical_urbanism_vol_2_final

HB Lanarc's Digital Sustainability Conversations: How Local Government Can Engage Residents Online.

network of open spaces, responsive to local context and adaptive to changing needs over time. These spaces, often reclaimed from underused or car-centric urban areas, have come to symbolize a dynamic and playful approach to pedestrian- and bike-friendly city making. More importantly perhaps, temporary spaces have acquired a fine track record for increasing opportunities for social interaction, neighbourhood pride, safety, and community involvement.

Small-scale (although not necessarily temporary) place-making has in many cases demonstrated that projects that are simple to execute can be surprisingly effective (Moskow and Linn, 2010). This approach, aggressively supported by the NYC Department of Transportation under the leadership of a tenacious commissioner, Jeanette Sadik-Khan, is gaining ground at an astounding pace in cities across the world. Many are now considering ways of transitioning pilot interventions into permanent public spaces. The City of Vancouver itself is currently exploring ways to transform the summer activation of Robson Street's 800-block into a permanent space. In time, we may very well imagine a planning profession tasked with the paradoxical mission to combine long-term visions and temporary processes into its master plans.

Another key approach, rooted in the idea of urban justice, has been the quest for the

Open City, whose advocates often draw most heavily from Jane Jacobs' legacy. The Open City literature is concerned with exploring the extent to which coexistence and openness can be engineered in the contemporary city, and to reflect upon strategies whereby architects and urban designers can contribute to the promotion of social, cultural, and mutually beneficial cohabitation in urban settings (Rieniets, Sigler & Christiaanse, 2009). Advocates of the open city do, however, acknowledge that its benefits are finite, and that its very success can be at the root of its self-destruction. "An attractive and diverse district can become a victim of its own success through the emergence of a surplus of the functions that made the district success in the first place. These in turn drive out less successful activities, leading to a process of gentrification and a reduction in diversity." (Rieniets, 2009: 34). In a mild counter-argument to the open city, Susan Fainstein goes so far as to recommend some level of segregation to ensure equity in the just and diverse city. She writes: "... some amount of spatial segregation offers the best method of coping with clashing styles of behavior, provided that sufficient space is allocated to each group. Spatial segregation is, however, at the cost of a wholly shared environment that forces people to deal with difference." (Fainstein, 2010: 72).

INCLUSION, PUBLIC SPACE, AND SIDEWALKS

The decline of 'skid row' districts and the rise of homelessness 1980s North American cities triggered regulatory responses geared towards increased sanitization and control of public spaces in low-income areas (Ellickson, 1996; Loukaitou-Sideris & Ehrenfeucht, 2009; Powe, 2010). Municipal bylaws often came packaged in a language that further stigmatized marginalized populations by emphasizing their disruptive behaviour, describing them as 'unruly', and 'disorderly', and criminalizing them as agents of 'chronic misconduct' or even as 'street nuisance' (Ellickson, 1996).

Throughout the 1990s, as city regulations strengthened and municipalities began to enact more controls, prohibiting begging, loitering, sitting, and sleeping in public space, urban design became an effective tool for enacting exclusionary strategies (for an overview of fluctuations in the strength of social controls from the 1950s to the 1990s, see Ellickson, 1996:1207-1219). In urban areas across the United States, the outright 'fortification' of public space became the infamous design manifestation of a deliberate quest to monitor behaviour and restrict access to certain areas of the city to preferred publics (Davis, 1992; Loukaitou-Sideris, 2012) and minimizing contact between the affluent and unwanted outsiders (Low, 2006; Fyfe et al., 2006).

In their 2009 study of homelessness responses in Boston, Seattle, and Los Angeles, Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht

observed that "cities do not plan for people who are homeless" (179), pointing out that alongside manifest design strategies like gated communities, soft control design elements became widespread to prevent public sleeping and loitering and as a way to ask people to move, often with the support of local business associations. The addition of armrests on benches to deter public sleeping, as well as the progressive removal of all seating from areas prone to crime, are but a few examples of less obvious design decisions that impact the use of public spaces.

Based on the observation that "public spaces are the first and often only sites where homeless and housed residents interact", Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht focused their exploration on the role of sidewalks as shared spaces that accommodate diversity and occasional conflict. As sites where multiple interests overlap, sidewalks inevitably become sites of confrontation and disruption, where violations of social norms can lead to discomfort. In some cases, sidewalks become the locus of 'micropolitical acts of resistance' used by certain populations to challenge social inequality and maintain their integrity. They write: "Talking loudly in public or lingering for a long time on sidewalks run counter to expected behavior but may not be intentional political acts. Through repetition, such acts can also change a space, altering expectations and making it public for people who previously did not feel

comfortable there." (Loukaitou-Sideris & Ehrenfeucht, 2009: 83).

Since the 9/11 attacks, American cities have witnessed a tightening of public space (Marcuse, 2006), through strategies which attracted criticism from supporters of an open and accessible public space as an essential feature of democratic societies. In British Columbia, legal interventions such as the provincial adoption of the Safe Streets Act in 2004 (inspired by the Ontario Safe Street Act of 1999) reinforced concerns among activists and scholars that the criminalization of the poor was leading to "the diminution and shrinking of truly public space, particularly for the homeless" (Blomley, 2010:332). In his review of the criticism of 'Safe Street Talk' (SST), Blomley challenges the common understand of public space regulation as a tool for stripping homeless people from basic rights and freedoms, and to a certain extent of their citizenship and right to the city. His argument is that such arguments miss the point of the SST by failing to understand the importance (rooted in liberal thought) given to the 'bounded self', whereby the individual is an autonomous subject to be protected, through separation, from incursions into his or her sphere. He writes: "The panhandler, from this perspective, is not an opportunity for the 'advancement of knowledge', but an unsafe obstruction. The pedestrian is not imagined as open to encounter, but a Goffmanesque 'vehicular unit', governed by a 'traffic code'. The sidewalk, more generally, is not a forum for expressive liberties, but a conduit of flow." (Blomley, 2010:345).

RESOURCE OF INTEREST



A counter-argument, proposed by Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht (2009:186) is that “those with fewer options should not be denied use of public spaces when their priorities conflict with those of others or when they make others uncomfortable. Instead, the fact that these residents are engaging in life-sustaining activities should ensure that their interests take precedent.”

The battle over public space has been alive in British Columbia, where discourses of fear have also contributed to the

criminalization of poverty in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (Dobson, 2004). Across Metro Vancouver, municipalities such as Abbotsford and Surrey have used zoning legislation to prohibit harm reduction facilities in certain neighbourhoods, thus blocking vulnerable populations from access to care (Pivot Legal Society, n.d.) and indirectly deterring a certain portion of the population from venturing into more affluent neighbourhoods.

In Vancouver, the Street and Traffic bylaw has prohibited loitering and “obstructive

solicitation” since the 1940s, while other bylaws prohibit sleeping on the streets and in parks, and erecting a shelter on city property. These regulations have recently come under attack by the Pivot Legal Society, after they filed a lawsuit in B.C. Supreme Court challenging their constitutionality. In response, Mayor Robertson has expressed willingness to review them in the future (Globe and Mail, 2012).

URBAN NATURE, CRIME, AND SAFETY

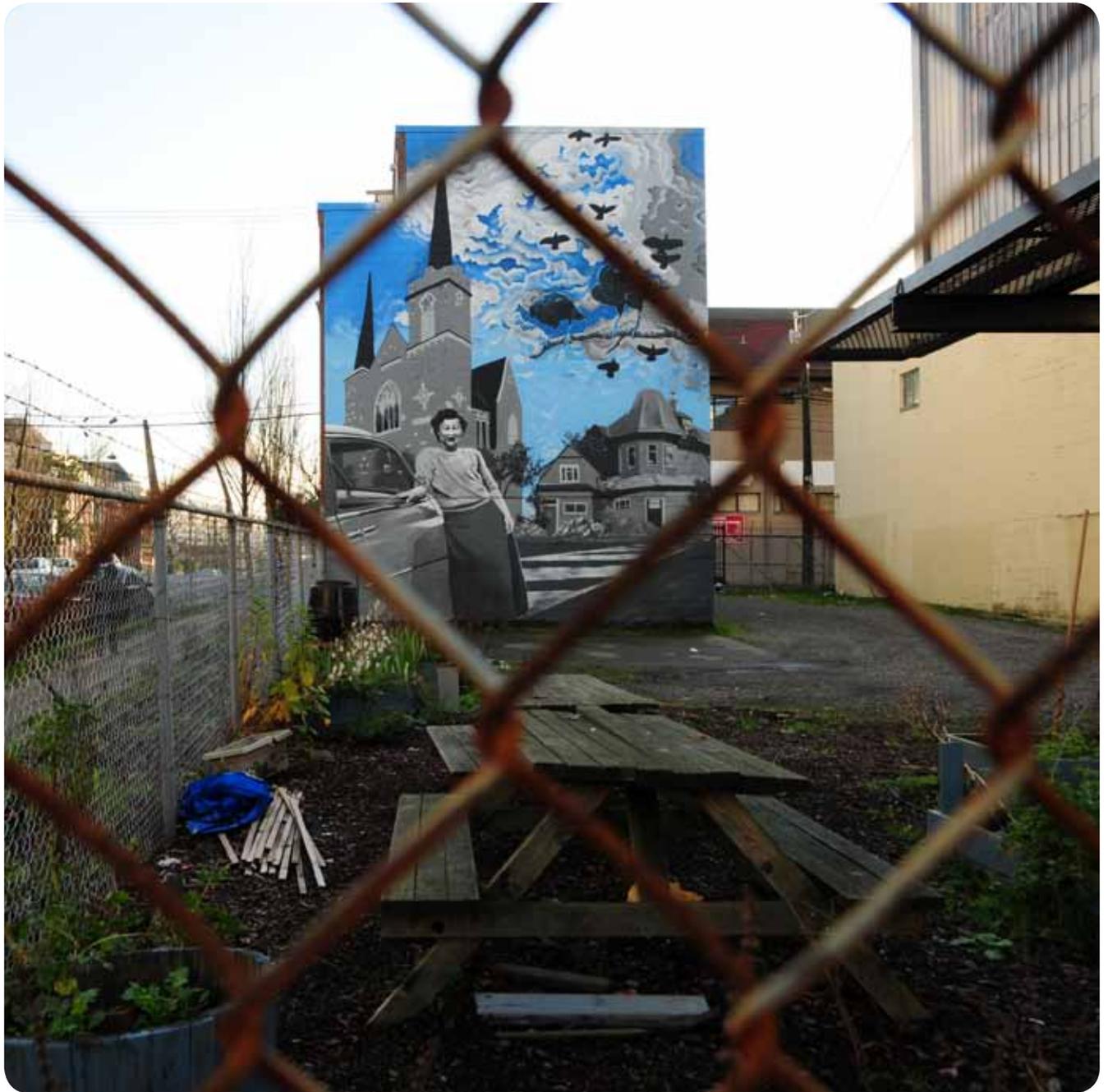
In reaction to defensive and militaristic responses to crime and safety in urban settings (explored by Davis, 1992 and Tiesdell & Oc, 1998), a body of research has emerged from the field of environmental psychology investigating whether specific design characteristics of the physical environment can enhance feelings of safety and deter criminal behaviour in inner cities. The reborn interest in the relationship between environment and human behaviour led to the rejuvenation of the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) theory (Crowe, 1991) and the elaboration of concepts and guidelines for design and planning.

The pioneering work of Kuo et al (1998) and Kuo & Sullivan (2001) has challenged two main convictions traditionally held by local governments. On the one hand, their research discredits the belief that inner-city vegetation allows crime perpetrators to hide from view and is therefore associated with increased crime rates. Densely wooded areas and urban parks in particular have been targeted based on the belief that they were triggers of fear and perception of danger. As a result, many municipalities engaged in vegetation removal. Kuo and Sullivan's (2001) study of the effect of vegetation on crime occurrence in 98 apartment buildings of a Chicago public housing development supports the idea that visibility-preserving vegetation may actually deter crime in poor inner-city neighbourhoods by increasing surveillance

and by mitigating some of the psychological precursors to violence.

On the other hand, Kuo et al (1998) challenge the notion that landscaping serves no functional purposes, and as such is a luxury which public administrations should be reluctant to spend precious resources on in public housing projects. Their research shows that landscaping can mitigate the negative environmental impacts of inner-city living, and that residents generally welcomed the introduction of basic landscaping and indeed often enjoyed being involved in the landscaping process.

Talbot and Kaplan (1984) have suggested that while some aspects of urban vegetated environments – areas with large amounts of undergrowth and dense groupings of trees – can indeed be perceived as dangerous, open and well-maintained green areas with distinctive features are valued and associated with relaxation, escape, relief from tensions and worries, and reflection. Building on Kuo and Sullivan (2001) Donovan and Prestemon (2010) investigated the effect of trees on crime in Portland, and again found a positive – albeit modest – correlation between vegetation and crime reduction. Based on their findings, the authors argue that with all the benefits of trees combined, crime prevention could be an additional incentive for urban tree planting.



URBAN NATURE, HEALTH, AND WELLBEING

Vegetation is not merely a deterrent of unwanted behaviour but also a factor leading to better health outcomes in urban populations. Up until recently, emphasis has been placed on the health impacts of environmental degradation, whereas the outcomes of environmental deprivation went largely unaddressed, not least as a result of a societal approach that understood nature as separate from humans (see Maller et al., 2009 for a review of the literature).

The past two decades have seen a resurgence of interest in the therapeutic value of gardens and access to nature. Therapeutic landscapes are defined by Gesler (1996:96) as places where the “physical and built environments, social conditions, and human perceptions combine to produce an atmosphere which is conducive to healing.” Healing in this framework is understood as encompassing “physical and mental health and well-being in places.” (Gesler, 2009:229). The concept of healing in restorative, and therapeutic landscapes is aligned with the World Health Organization’s holistic definition of health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, nd).

Promising findings initially emerged from studies of the role of gardens in healthcare facilities, particularly with regards to pain management and stress alleviation among patients and staff (Cooper Marcus & Barnes, 1999; Cooper Marcus, 2000; Hartig & Marcus, 2006). While the therapeutic landscapes framework has been most widely embraced in the fields of environmental psychology, medicine, and health geography (Gesler, 1992, 1996, 2009; Wilson, 2001, Kaplan, 1995; Jackson, 2003; Lewis & Sturgill, 2007), its applications in environmental and urban design are becoming increasingly recognized (Jackson, 2003; Schweitzer et al, 2004). The positive impacts of urban nature on physical and emotional health in urban settings have been explored (Lewis & Sturgill, 2007), with several contributions from Rachel and Stephen Kaplan exploring the restorative role of nature on mental fatigue and stress (Kaplan, 1992; Kaplan, 1995; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1998).

Research conducted by Wakefield and McMullan (2005) explored the ways in which residents of Hamilton, Ontario, reconstructed the image of their city as unhealthy and re-defined it as therapeutic, health-maintaining. The authors elaborate on the effects of stigma on marginalization

and decline. Lewis and Sturgill (2007) have argued that healing moments can occur in urban environments, in “urban activities and settings involving nature which are life-enhancing, and create a sense of tranquillity and well-being”.

Katcher and Beck (1987) explored the favorable emotional and health value of active contemplation and nurturing contact through the act of caring for living things and the environment. The concept of care and its implications for planners and designers of human settlements was further explored by Spirn (1988) in an essay on a new aesthetic of urban design rooted in the notion that nature and culture together contribute to making a place particular. Spirn’s approach references inner-city community gardens as a model of how to care for a place, stressing the necessity to allow people to build and manipulate their environment, thus calling for designers to “relinquish control (...) while maintaining an aesthetically pleasing order.” (Spirn, 1988:117). Spirn extends her observation of community gardens to urban form in its entirety: “urban form represents a dialogue between human purpose and nature’s processes over time.” (117) Further: “A city’s natural environment and its urban form, taken together, tell a

story of the interaction between natural processes and human purpose over time.” (118). “This aesthetic, as applied to the urban landscape, must prove satisfaction on multiple levels: on the level of the senses aroused, the functions served, the opportunities for ‘doing’ provided, and the symbolic associations engendered.” (125).

While the literature is well equipped with theoretical approaches to therapeutic landscapes, there remains a dearth of practical resources guiding the physical implementation of restorative strategies in the urban landscape. In *With People in Mind: The Design and Management of Everyday Nature*, Kaplan, Kaplan & Ryan (1998) distill the impressive body of research and propose what is thus far the most complete review of such practices.

The need for users to have control over their environment has been shown to be restorative as well as promoting sense of security. Additional research has highlighted the policy relevance of these considerations by showing that the stewardship of green spaces may achieve social capital outcomes as well as natural capital outcomes (Burls, 2007).



OPPENHEIMER PARK



3.

PLANNING CONTEXT

DISTRICTS & STUDY AREA

POLICY BACKGROUND

ZONING

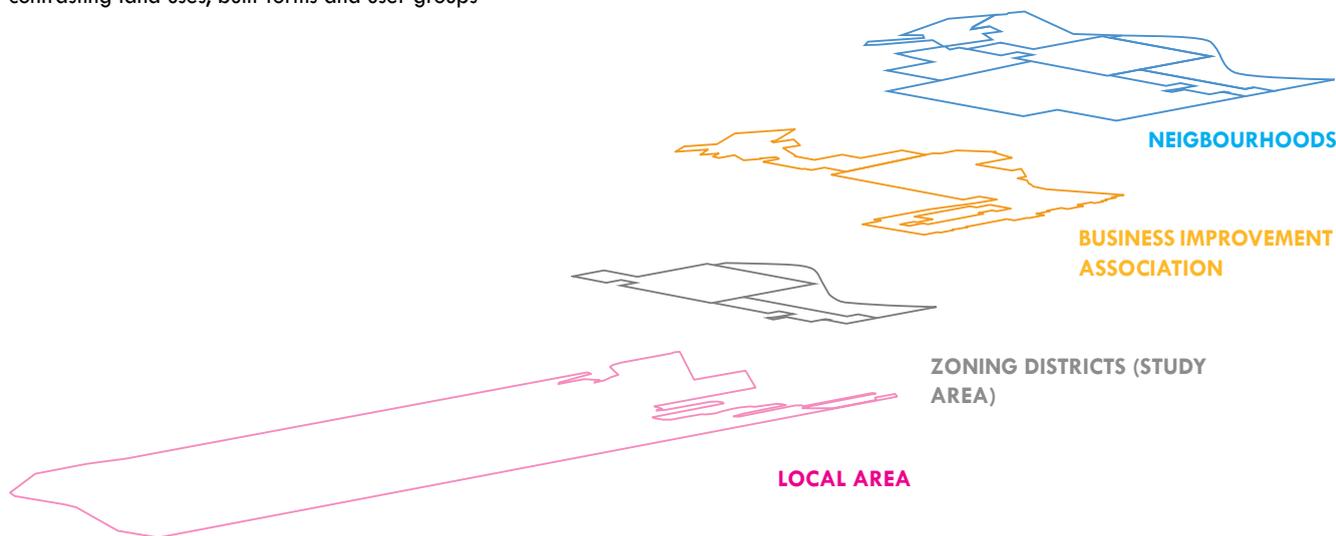
CURRENT PLANNING CONTEXT

DESIGN GOALS & GUIDELINES

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

DISTRICTS & STUDY AREA

The Downtown Eastside includes Victory Square, Gastown, Chinatown, Downtown Eastside-Oppenheimer, the industrial lands adjacent to the port and along Hastings Street, and Strathcona. The focus of this project is on the areas that where the predominantly residential Oppenheimer District, the Industrial Lands, and the Hastings Corridor, come to a junction, with contrasting land uses, built forms and user groups



In *The Image of the City*, Kevin Lynch (1960) highlighted the importance of districts as basic elements of city image. Districts, he wrote “are the relatively large city areas which the observer can mentally go inside of, and which have some common character. They can be recognized internally, and occasionally can be used as external reference as a person goes by or toward them.” (Lynch, 1960: 66). While the Downtown Eastside is often referred to as such, the names of its neighbourhoods

(Gastown, Strathcona, Oppenheimer, Victory Square, Japantown) are also in use and sometimes preferred.

This diagram represents the different district boundaries used by different agencies and users to delineate identity and jurisdiction. It is safe to assume that neighbourhood boundaries are probably those which most residents identify with, whereas the local area and zoning boundaries are tools most often used by planners.

I chose to limit my study area to the extent of the zoning districts because, on the one hand, they overlay with the neighbourhood boundaries and, on the other hand, they do reflect a certain cohesion of built form and demographic composition. Like all boundaries, however, they are inevitably arbitrary and more porous than their official nature would suggest.



STRATHCONA



HASTINGS



INDUSTRIAL AREA



JAPTOWN

POLICY BACKGROUND

In many respects, Vancouver's planning approach in the Downtown Eastside evolved in a rather different direction than the rest of Canada and the United States. In 1998, Vancouver developed its own brand of collaboration and engagement with the launch of the Downtown Eastside Community Revitalization Program. The program was envisioned as a process of crime prevention through community development, relying on the use of mediation and facilitation to engage a wide spectrum of diverging stakeholder groups (Vancouver, 1998).

Commitment to improving conditions in the Downtown Eastside found a renewed momentum in March 2000 when the City, the Province, and the Federal government coalesced to form the **Vancouver Agreement**. This unprecedented instance of intergovernmental cooperation came into existence in an effort to tackle the Downtown Eastside's 'acute health crisis', marked by rising levels of HIV and overdose rates throughout the 1990s. The Vancouver Agreement crafted a vision to create "healthy, safe and sustainable communities where all organizations, from informal groups to governments, work effectively together to improve the quality of everyone's life" (Vancouver

Agreement, 2010). The agreement established intergovernmental committees and created four task teams devoted to Economic Revitalization, Safety and Security, Housing, Health and Quality of Life, in an effort to address the goals of the agreement:

1. To increase economic development in the Downtown Eastside
2. To improve the health of area residents
3. To increase public safety

By the time it expired in 2010, the Vancouver Agreement had supported several initiatives, among which the **Vancouver Agreement Economic Revitalization Plan** (Vancouver Agreement, 2004), which was instrumental in implementing public realm improvement initiatives directed at increasing the demand for DTES products and services (see text box). The Economic Revitalization Plan specifically identified the need to create strong neighbourhood brands, to address safety and security concerns, and to upgrade the appearance of, and strengthen the links within the area.

Alongside these efforts, the Province adopted the **'Four Pillars' Drug Strategy** in 2001, drawing inspiration from Swiss,

German, and Australian precedents, and further setting Vancouver apart from its American counterparts with regards to substance abuse policy (McCann, 2008). By using a definition of addiction as a medical condition rather than a criminal issue, the Strategy laid the groundwork for the City to focus on harm reduction and prevention, rather than on enforcement alone. In 2003, the opening of Insite, the first legal supervised injection site in North America, is one of the most successful achievements of the policy. While the model has proved difficult to replicate beyond the Downtown Eastside, it sets an inspiring precedent for similarly inclusive policies.

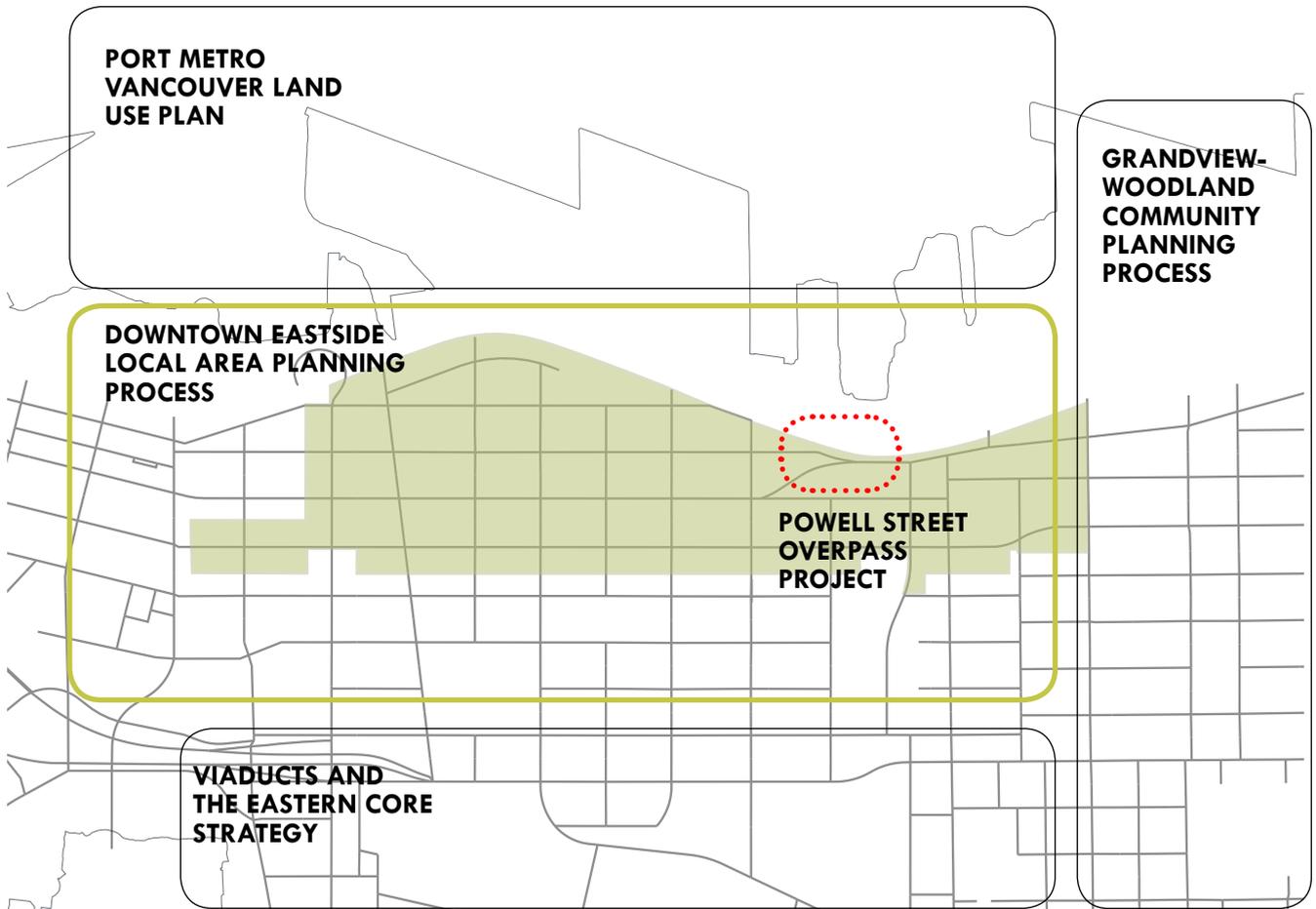
The Downtown Eastside Housing Plan (Vancouver, 2005) marked yet another important planning milestone as the first document presenting a vision for the future of housing in the Downtown Eastside. The document outlines the City's commitment to providing housing security to the low-income community while integrating new market housing. One of the key concerns of the Housing Plan is the need to monitor the pace of change, on the basis that "a balanced pace of development will help ensure that newcomers are integrated into the communities." (Vancouver, 2005:6).



OPPENHEIMER PARK PLAYGROUND

CURRENT PLANNING CONTEXT

The Downtown Eastside and surrounding areas are undergoing a tremendous amount of change that promises to induce significant transitions in years and decades to come.



DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE LOCAL AREA PLANNING PROCESS

In 2012, the City of Vancouver launched the Downtown Eastside local area plan (LAP), with a view “to create a vision and plan for the Downtown Eastside that will focus on ways to improve the lives of low-income DTES residents and community members.” (City of Vancouver website, n.d.) After undergoing a review and a planning phase, the City is currently in the third phase of the process, focused on feedback.

GRANDVIEW-WOODLAND COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESS

Launched in 2012, the Grandview-Woodland community planning process is destined to outline a series of long-range directions for the neighbourhood. In recent months, City staff have reached out to the public through a series of themed workshops. At this time, emerging policy directions derived from the consultation process have recently been presented to the public in the context of open houses.

VIADUCTS AND THE EASTERN CORE STRATEGY

The Eastern Core Strategy is a transportation and land use strategy for the lands surrounding the Georgia and Dunsmuir Viaducts and False Creek Flats. It involves a concept plan for the viaducts, and a strategic plan for the Eastern Core. The process has involved several stages, including a public ideas competition (from September to November 2011), public consultations, and a public survey.

POWELL STREET OVERPASS PROJECT

The Powell Street Overpass project is a major road and rail infrastructure enhancement for a section of Powell Street. The project is driven by the need to expand the capacity of the rail network that supports goods movement through Metro Vancouver. It is also designed to enhance pedestrian and cyclist access and safety on the Powell Street Corridor.

PORT METRO VANCOUVER LAND USE PLAN

Port Metro Vancouver (PMV) is currently undergoing phase 3 of its Land Use Plan. The process, launched in January 2012, has involved an initial phase of public consultations and a second phase focused on developing goals and policy directions. At this stage, PMV is drafting the plan. The final document will serve to guide the physical development of the Port. PMV has expressed intentions of “growing in an environmentally, economically and socially responsible manner.” (Port Metro Vancouver website, n.d.)

RESOURCE OF INTEREST

METRO VANCOUVER REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY



GREENEST CITY ACTION PLAN



TRANSPORTATION 2040

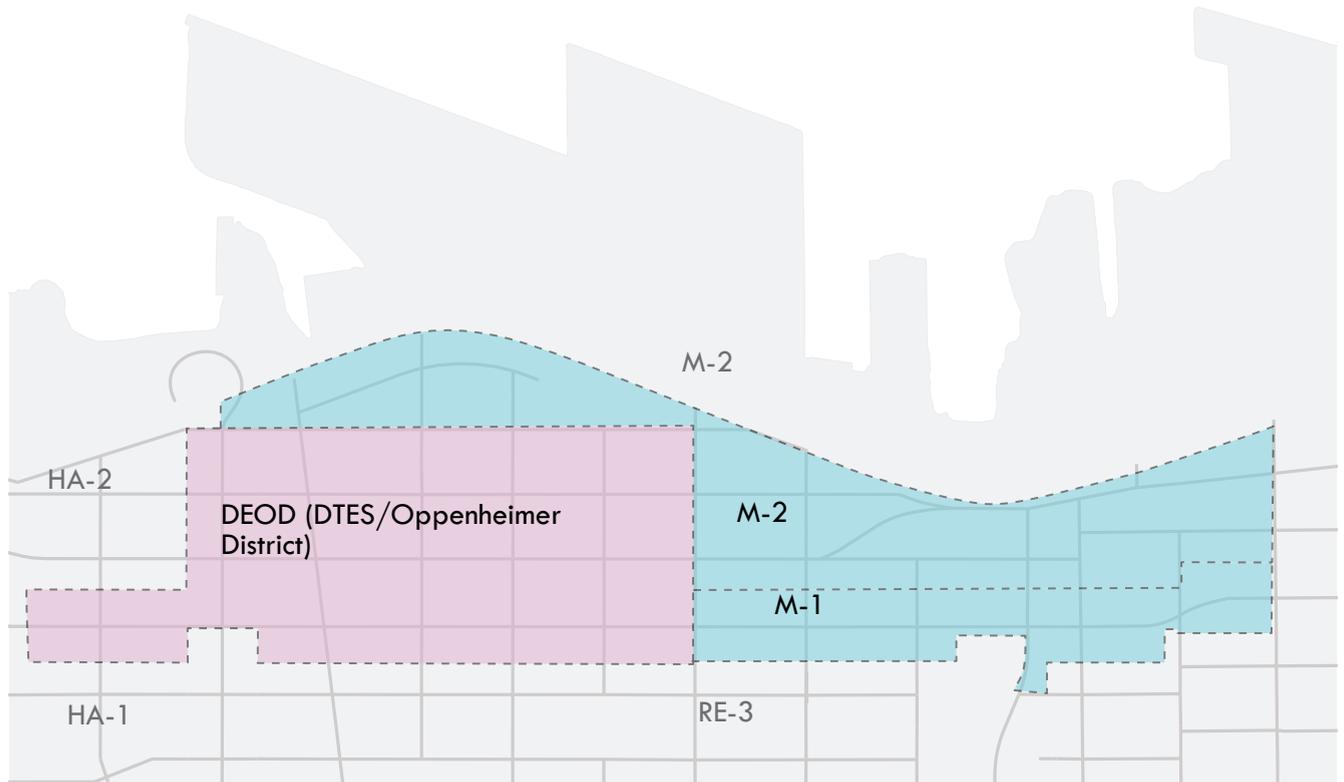


HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY



CURRENT ZONING

The study area overlaps two industrial zoning districts and the Oppenheimer district. It is adjacent to residential zoning in Strathcona, as well as the heritage zoning of Gastown. While these juxtapositions result in some richness, abrupt separations also do occur. Specifically, Hastings Street and Heatley Avenue, emerge as edges separating different land uses and urban fabrics. The real division created by those mental boundaries require particular emphasis on strategies geared towards making connections between districts more porous.





DEOD

Retain existing and provide new affordable housing

Provide for compatible commercial and industrial uses in some areas.



M-2 Industrial District

Permit industrial and other uses that are generally incompatible or potentially dangerous or environmentally incompatible when situated in or near residential districts but that are beneficial in that they provide industrial employment opportunities or serve a useful or necessary function in the city.

Max density 5.0 FSR.
Max height 30.5 m.



M-1 Industrial District

Permit industrial and other uses that are generally incompatible with residential land use but are beneficial in that they provide industrial employment opportunities or serve a useful or necessary function in the city.

Max density 5.0 FSR.
Max height: 30.5 m

DESIGN GOALS & GUIDELINES

Guidance for open space planning comes from a few key documents which tend to outline general goals rather than specific strategies.

The Downtown Eastside Policy Plan, adopted by Council in 1981, sets the basis for policies related to land use development in the Downtown Eastside/Oppenheimer District (DEOD). These policies are implemented through the DEOD/Oppenheimer Official Development Plan (ODP), adopted by By-law in 1982. Together with the Design Guidelines, the ODP regulates the development of the district, and represents Council's intent as to how the district should be developed. The ODP is not binding and remains open to interpretation by the Development Permit Board. The documents address the DEOD/Oppenheimer area through the lens of these four sub-areas (refer map)

- Main/Hastings
- Cordova Street,
- Powell Street/Japanese Village
- Alexander/Powell

The ODP provides general development guidelines as well as sub-area guidelines. General guidelines. Overall, however, the document avoids overly prescriptive considerations, recommending that the amount of public open space be increased, and that more outdoor recreation opportunities be provided. The ODP also seeks to enhance the public enjoyment of the waterfront and views to the North Shore and mountains. Guidelines

pertaining to traffic, transportation and parking were also included in the ODP, and can serve as a direction for public realm design as well. The first is to “ensure a pattern of traffic movement within, through and adjacent to the Downtown-Eastside/Oppenheimer area that improves the character, pedestrian safety and quality of life in the area.” The second is to encourage greater use of public transit by workers and local shoppers from outlying areas. The final goal is to discourage commuter parking.

The policies and regulations outlined in the ODP provide general guidance for public realm improvements, but their implications at the design level are illustrated in the Design Guidelines, which highlight specific opportunities and issues as well as practical suggestions for new development. The document recognizes Oppenheimer Park as “the focus of the resident community and the only significant open space in the area.”

The design guidelines also take into account the necessity to address transitional character within the DEOD, namely by recognizing the characteristics of adjoining areas while encouraging harmonious transitions between them. Attention is also given to pedestrian movement and weather protection, with a specific reference to the need to improve the general convenience, comfort, safety, and pleasure of pedestrians, and to improve the area's pedestrian connections to other areas of pedestrian activity.

LOCAL AREA PLAN

Below are the Parks and Open Space Planning principles identified by the Local Area Planning team in the Emerging Directions:

- Neighbourhood safety and accessibility is improved (lighting, quality of sidewalks, transportation networks);
- Public parks and open / green spaces are improved and increased;
- Public outdoor recreation facilities for all sectors of society (seniors, children, youth, and adults) are improved and increased;
- Spaces for vulnerable people are provided and protected, and;
- Low-income residents feel at home in their own neighbourhood.

DEOD DESIGN GUIDELINES GOALS



ALL
OPEN SPACE

- MAXIMIZE SUNLIGHT
- PROVIDE WEATHER PROTECTION
- MINIMIZE NOISE
- OFFER FREE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE NATURE
- MAKE OPEN SPACE SAFER
- PROGRAM SPACE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ANTICIPATED ACTIVITIES AND USERS.



PUBLIC
OPEN SPACE

- PROVIDE SEATING, LIGHTING, HARD AND SOFT SURFACES, RECREATION AND PLAY EQUIPMENT, PATHS, PLAZAS AND PLANTING IN LOCATIONS AND QUANTITY INDICATED BY THE PROGRAM.
- EASY MAINTENANCE, AS WELL AS THE NEED TO ENCOURAGE INSTITUTIONS, SERVICES AND PRIVATE DEVELOPMENTS TO PROVIDE PUBLIC OPEN SPACE, ARE ALSO EMPHASIZED.



PRIVATE
AND SEMI-PRIVATE
OPEN SPACE

- DEFINITION
- CONTROL
- SENSE OF OWNERSHIP
- DEVELOPMENTS SHOULD INCLUDE CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS
- NEW DEVELOPMENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO MAKE USE OF ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF PRIVATE AND SEMI-PRIVATE OPEN SPACE (ROOFTOPS, BALCONIES, ETC.)

GENERAL DESIGN GUIDELINES GOALS

- 1) Improve the usability, attractiveness, and safety of Oppenheimer Park.
- 2) Maintain options to develop a future major "waterfront gateway" open space at the foot of Main Street.
- 3) On Gore Street, maximize the opportunities presented by wider sidewalks, deeper setbacks, heritage buildings, and lighter traffic to create a system of sidewalks related mini-parks, and sunny resting places.
- 4) Encourage the provision of useable private and semi-private open space, especially in residential development.
- 5) Encourage development and use of the proposed pedestrian walkway as part of the area's open space system.

WHAT THE LOCAL AREA PLAN MAY CHANGE

The Local Area Plan (LAP) proposes significant zoning, transportation and public space changes throughout the Downtown Eastside. Many of these proposals are in line with PID principles, especially with regards to the importance of social impact assessment.

NEIGHBOURHOODS

In the **Downtown Eastside Oppenheimer District**, the LAP proposes the adoption of new Community-based Social Impact Guidelines to advise how developments can bring positive benefits to the low-income community and prevent possible negative impacts.

The Plan's emerging directions also propose the creating of "New Neighbourhoods", one of which, **Hastings East**, falls in this project's study area. The following goals are stated for Hastings East:

- Support development of a mixed-use neighbourhood from Heatley to Clark.
 - Encourage a mix of commercial, service, and retail uses at grade, with light-industrial uses where feasible.
- Establish a pedestrian-oriented, local-serving retail and service area on Hastings

between Heatley and Campbell.

- Maximize delivery of on-site social housing, with a focus on families, through new development.

For the **Railtown** neighbourhood, the LAP's goal is to Affirm and update its role as a historic warehouse district with a mix of local, regional, national, and global-serving industrial and office uses.

For **General Industrial** areas, the hope is to maintain them and connect them with key transportation infrastructure. The plan also proposes to support local industry clusters in areas of economic growth and social enterprise.

OPEN SPACE AND TRANSPORTATION

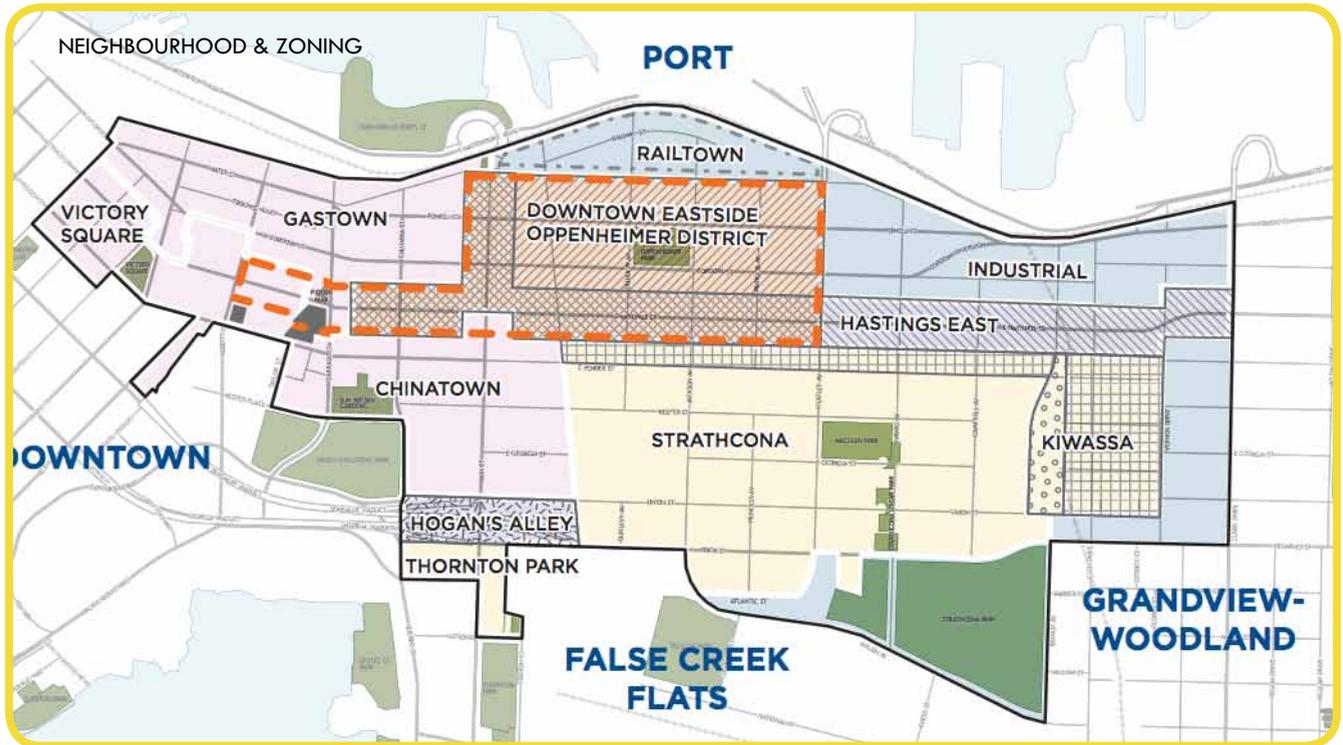
The key transportation and public space moves included in the LAP Emerging Directions consist of improved pedestrian and cyclist connections. A potential waterfront access is envisioned, although the logistics of it have yet to be worked out, considering the waterfront is the ownership of Port Metro Vancouver and is currently fenced off for security reasons. Aside from the renewal of Maple Tree Square, no other specific upgrade is yet outlined in the plan.



PARKS & OPEN SPACE



TRANSPORTATION DIRECTIONS



 COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT AREA

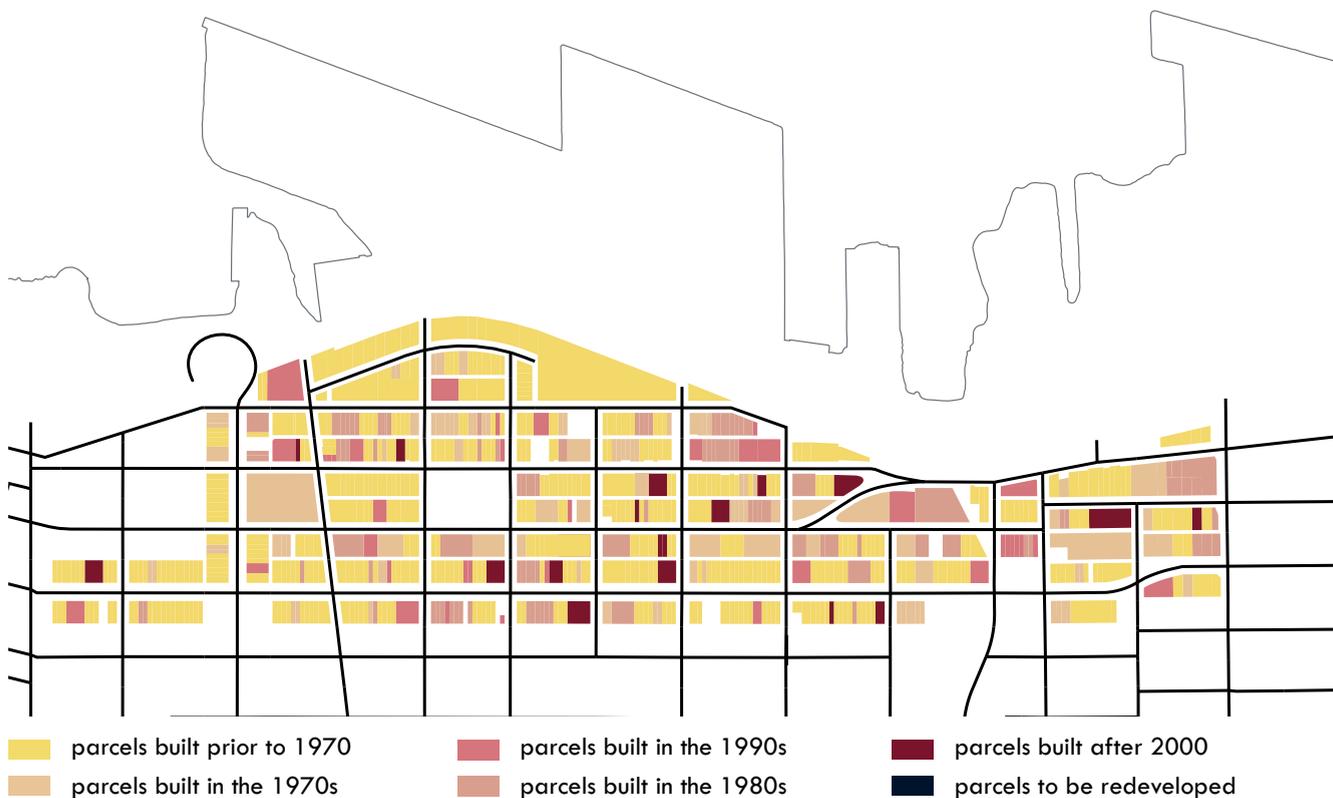
 NEW NEIGHBOURHOODS

 INDUSTRIAL NEIGHBOURHOODS

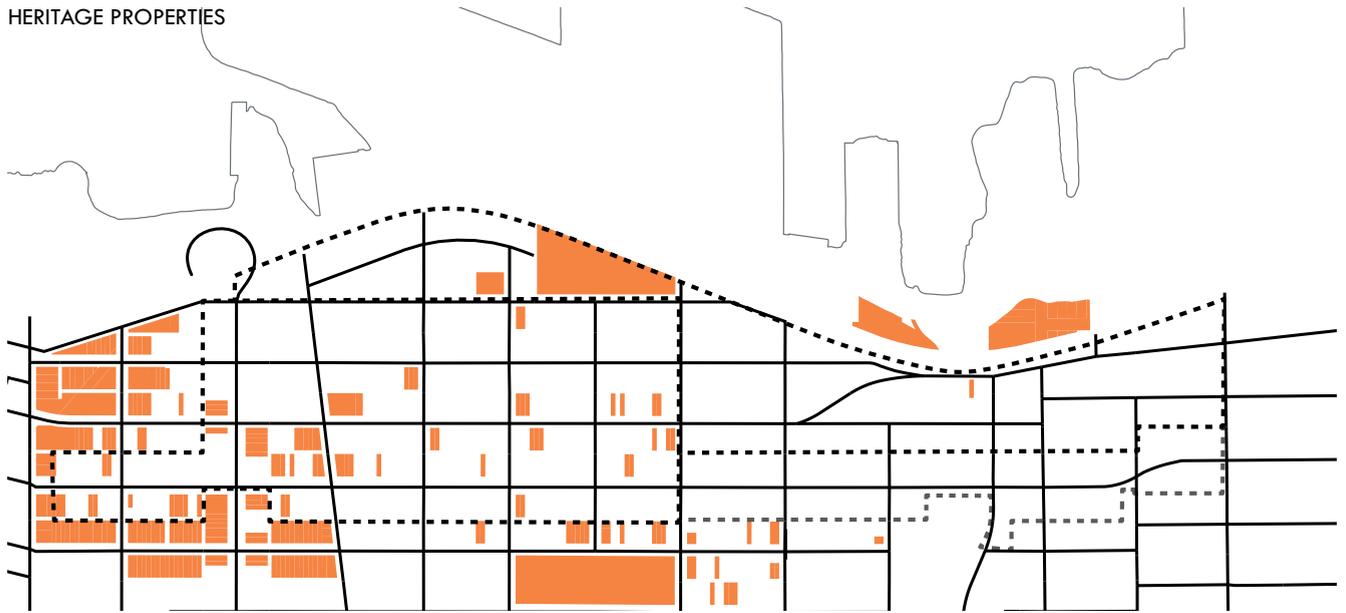
VISUALIZING THE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

One of the ways to assess and visualize development potential is through the age of the building stock. The older a building, the more likely it is that it will be redeveloped. The map below shows that most of the neighbourhood focus area's parcels were built up prior to the 1970s. Since many buildings are reaching the end of their lifespan, they present a significant redevelopment potential. This is especially true as we make our way east, where social services and heritage buildings (see maps on the right) are fewer.

PARCEL BUILD UP



HERITAGE PROPERTIES

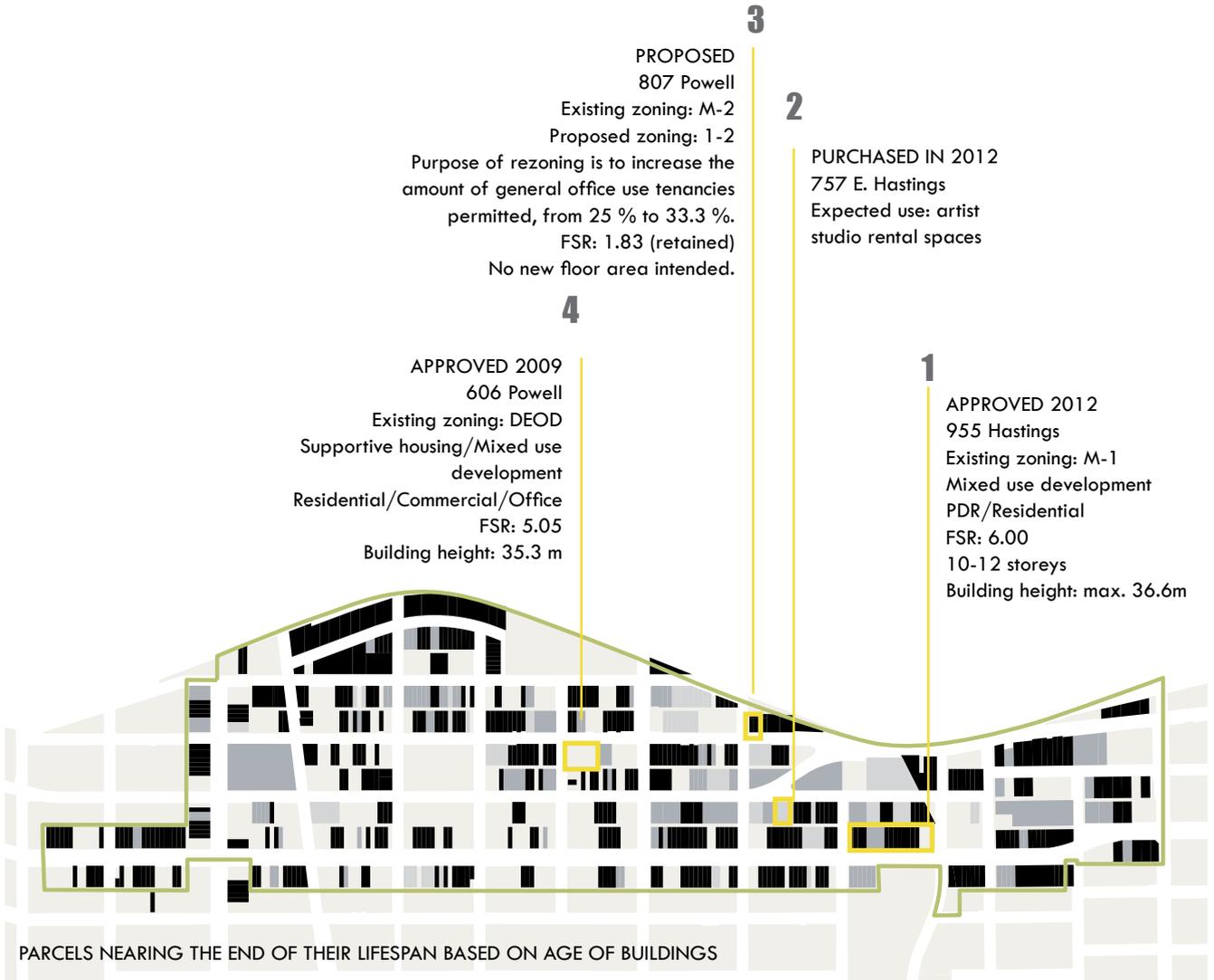


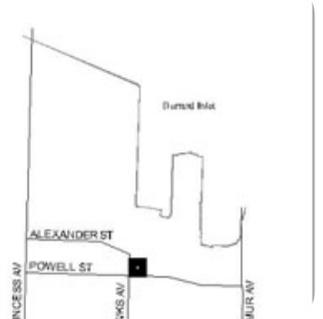
SROs, NON-MARKET HOUSING & HOMELESS SHELTERS



RECENT LAND PURCHASES AND REZONINGS

This section shows the parcels that have most recently been subject to a rezoning, and those whose purchase foreshadows future development and potential rezoning. The rezoning of 955 Hastings is currently the boldest “game-changer” in the area.





4. HISTORY & MORPHOLOGY

The Downtown Eastside played a defining role in the founding and development of Vancouver, and is now home to some of the oldest residential and commercial districts of the city. Throughout its history, the convergence of various interests left an imprint on the streets, the built form, and the uses of the Downtown Eastside.

1860

The first non-native workers settle Burrard Inlet under the impulse of the forest industry. First land preemptors obtain rights for the land.



1865

Edward Stamp sets up the first sawmill on the Vancouver side of Burrard inlet, at the foot of today's Dunlevy Avenue. The establishment of Stamp's Mill boosts the economic development of the area and makes it a hub of employment and industry based on warehousing, transportation, and commerce (Macdonald, 1992). Vancouver's resource economy attracts workers from diverse ethnic backgrounds, especially single men. The sawmill will continue to operate until 1926. As of 1874 it is known as the Hastings Sawmill.



1867

Gassy Jack's landmark Saloon is established and the area continues to attract a concentration of bars and services catered to men, many of them seasonal workers living in local hotels and working as loggers or fishermen.

1885

In 1884, the CPR negotiates a substantial land grant west of Carrall Street. In 1885 the CPR's land surveyor drew and registered the official townsite plan for Vancouver. The survey was done on paper and disregards existing topography. The streets we know today come into existence: Water, Cordova, and Hastings, Carrall, Abbott and Cambie. Gore Street follows the route of a logging road supplying logs to the mill, which is why it is off the rigid grid.

1870^s

In 1871, British Columbia becomes part of Canada on the condition that a railway gets built from Ontario to the coast of BC. In 1877, Granville is designated as the CPR Railway terminal. The announcement leads to land pre-emptions and purchases. In the meantime, in 1876, a road linking Granville to Hastings is built along the waterfront, further enhancing connections with other areas of the region.

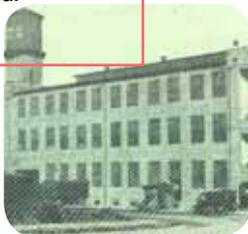
1886

The City of Vancouver is incorporated in 1886, and Burrard Inlet becomes the centre of BC's trade and distribution but loses its central position in the heart of the city to the CPR's real estate strategies and port developments. Hastings Sawmill and Moodyville Sawmill continue to dominate the lumber industry in BC. Granville and Hastings emerge as competing commercial corridors, reflecting the competing interests of the CPR and the VIC, and most government buildings are located between these streets.

The provincial government auctions off much of the land east, west, and south of CPR's main land grant. The Vancouver Improvement Company is the main landowner after the CPR, and owns most of the land east of Carrall Street. The streets of the area are named after the company's shareholders: Oppenheimer (now Cordova), Powell, Dupont, Keefer, Harris, Barnard, Prior, and Jackson).

1913

The American Can Company is established.



1889

The expansion of the streetcar system allows many families who could afford to move away from the Downtown Eastside to do so. The Downtown Eastside retains its status as a working class neighbourhood.



1890^s

Industries expand along the waterfront.

1902

The Powell Street Grounds (Oppenheimer Park) are created.

1903

The second location of Woodward's Department Store opens on Cordova Street, at the heart of Vancouver's shopping district.

The same year, the Carnegie Library is built, under the push of eastside interests, but the city's commercial core continues to be pulled toward CPR land west of Carrall Street. Logging is winding down, and the Downtown Eastside settles for industrial development. The westward shift of investment continues and the east-west divide increases.

1914

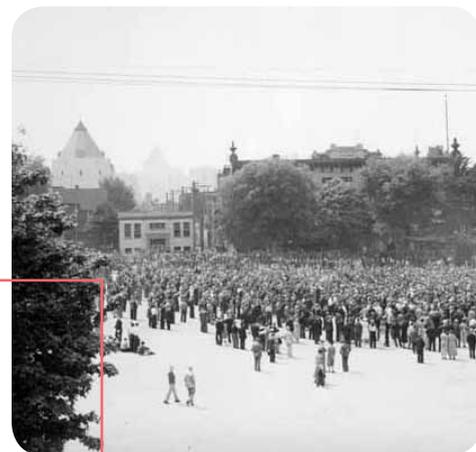
The Asahi Japanese-Canadian team is founded. They play in Oppenheimer Park.



1950^s

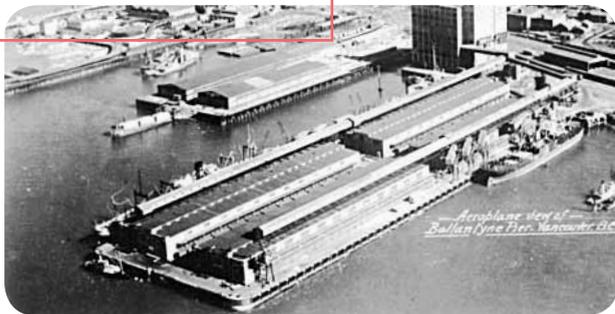
Along East Hastings, new industries replace housing. The streetcar system is dismantled by BC Electric and replaced by trolley buses by 1955.

In 1957, the Vancouver Public Library moves to another location. The Carnegie building falls into disrepair.



1923

The Ballantyne Pier, the most technologically advanced port in the British Empire, is completed.



1930^s

In 1931, mass demonstrations by unemployed area carried out in Oppenheimer Park. In 1936, the Parks Board designates Oppenheimer Park as the only park in the city where political and religious views could be voiced.

1960^s

Urban renewal in Chinatown and Strathcona. City Hall expropriated 57 acres of residential land, Bulldozed the houses and moved 3,300 people into private and public housing projects at MacLean Park, Skeena Terrace, and Raymur.

MacLean Park Project built in 1962. Raymur Housing Project 1966.

1965: CPR's "Project 200" plan proposes a redevelopment in the community that would cut a large waterfront roadway through the heart of Gastown.



1990^s

In 1993, Woodward's goes bankrupt and closes its doors, precipitating the decline of the area. In 1998, the Victory Square Concept Plan is published.

1970^s

The deinstitutionalization of thousands of psychiatric patients find acceptance in the Downtown Eastside community. In 1971 the provincial government conceded to protect the Chinatown and Gastown regions of the Downtown Eastside by designating them as historic preservation sites.

1980^s

Hastings Street becomes known as Skid Road. Under the impulse of neighbourhood activists, the former Carnegie Library reopens as the Carnegie Community Centre, owned by the City of Vancouver, and run by the Carnegie Community Centre Association.

2000^s

The Gastown Land Use Plan is published.

In 2003, Insite, the only legal supervised injection site in North America, is founded at 139 East Hastings Street.

In 2009, The Woodward's development is completed.

Today, as gentrification creeps eastward, fears of displacement fuel tensions and resentment of the "condo storm".

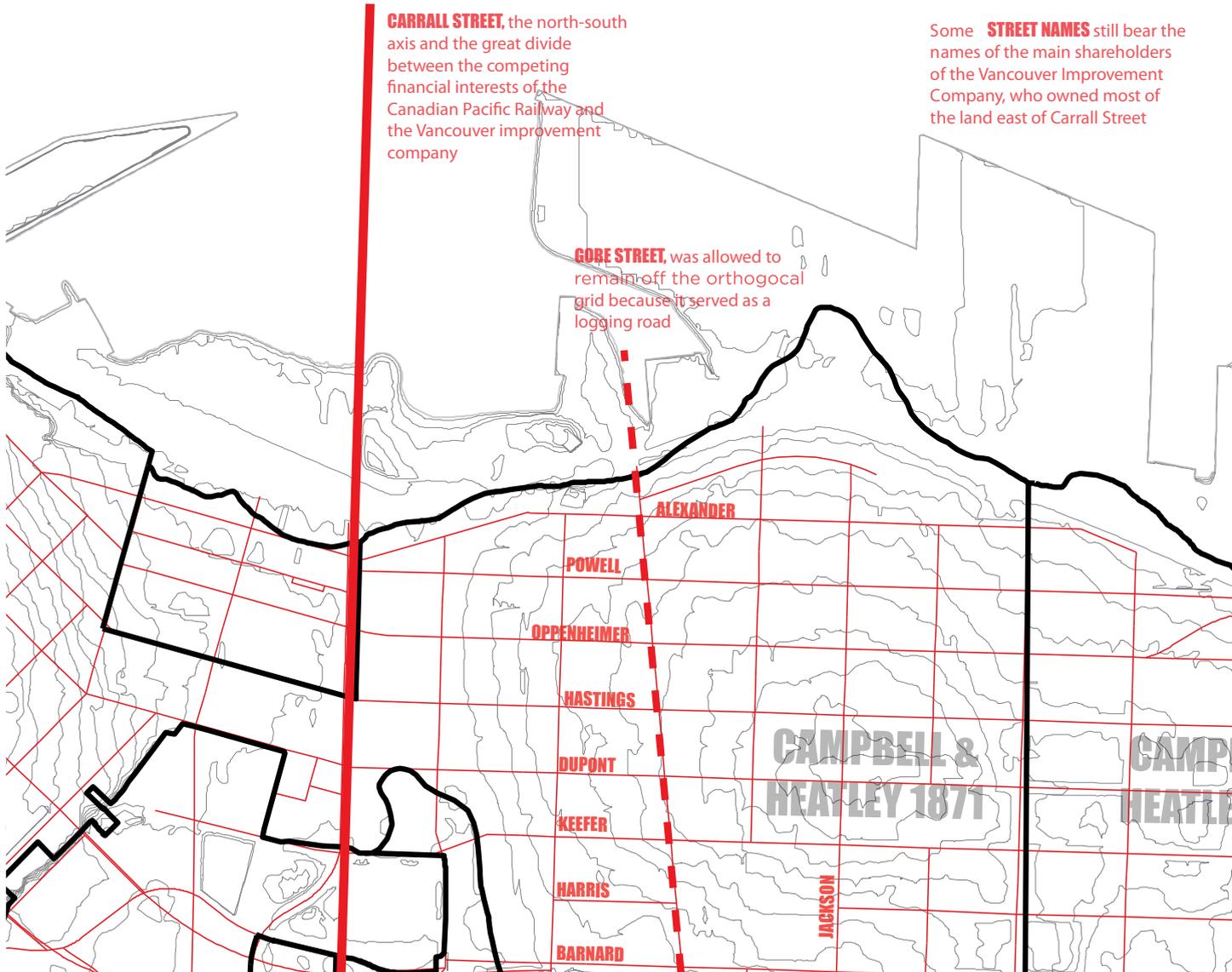


RESOURCES OF INTEREST

- Kluckner, M.** (1984). *Vancouver The Way it Was*. Vancouver: Whitecap Books.
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- Macdonald, B.** (1992). *Vancouver: A Visual History*. Vancouver: Talon Books
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- Photos:** City of Vancouver digital archives.

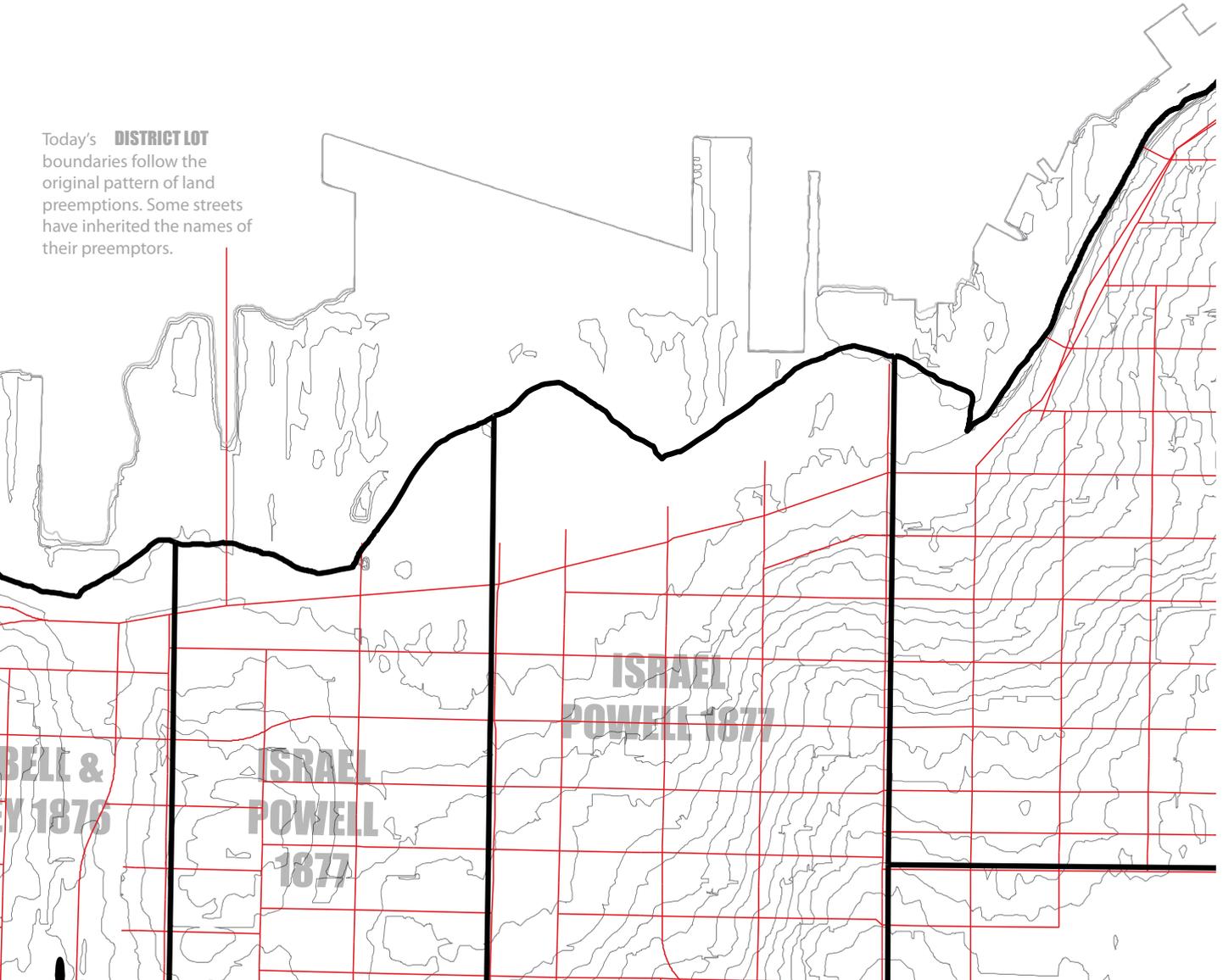
KEY URBAN FORM DETERMINANTS

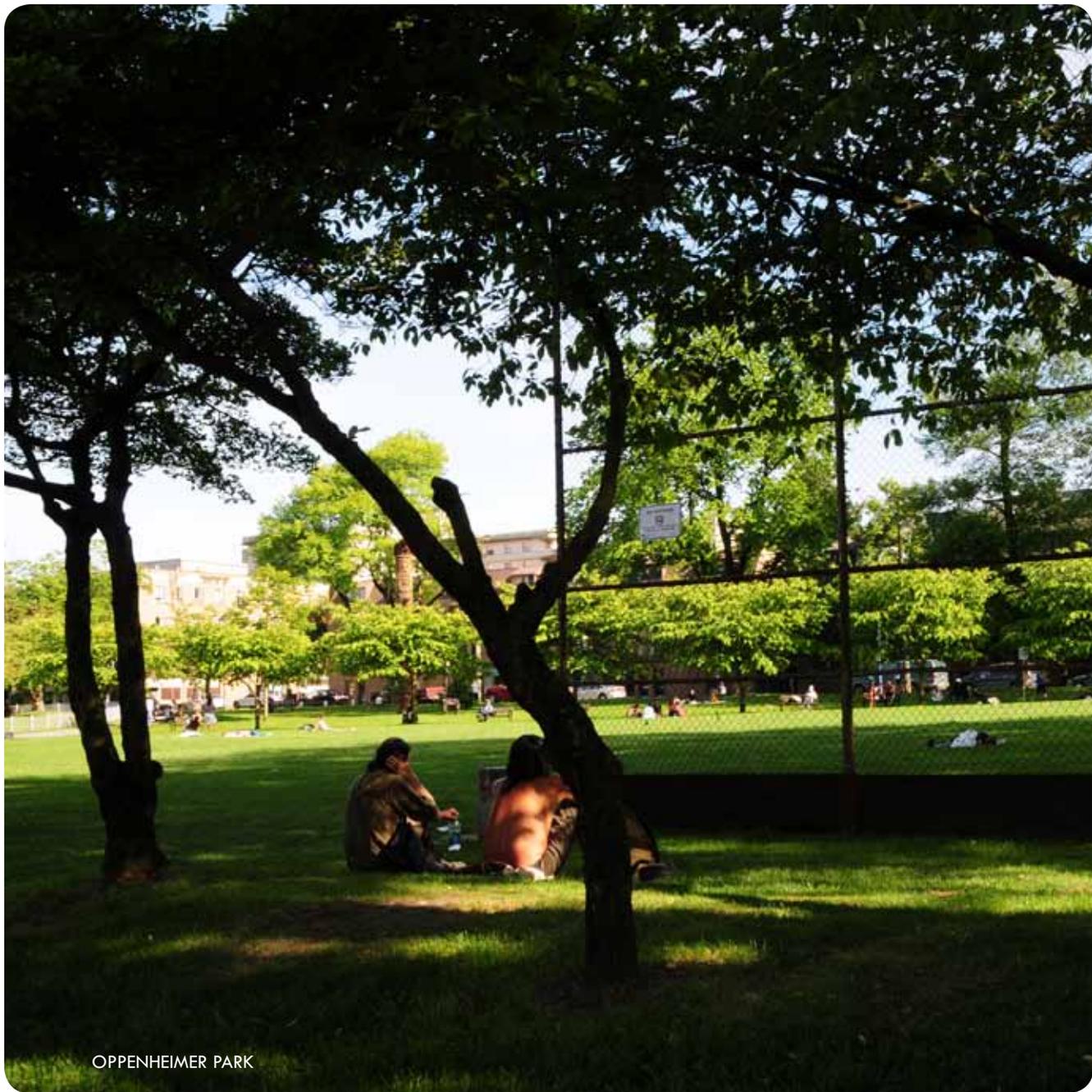
Land preemptions, financial interests, and the topographically oblivious grid.



Some **STREET NAMES** still bear the names of the main shareholders of the Vancouver Improvement Company, who owned most of the land east of Carrall Street

Today's **DISTRICT LOT** boundaries follow the original pattern of land preemptions. Some streets have inherited the names of their preemptors.





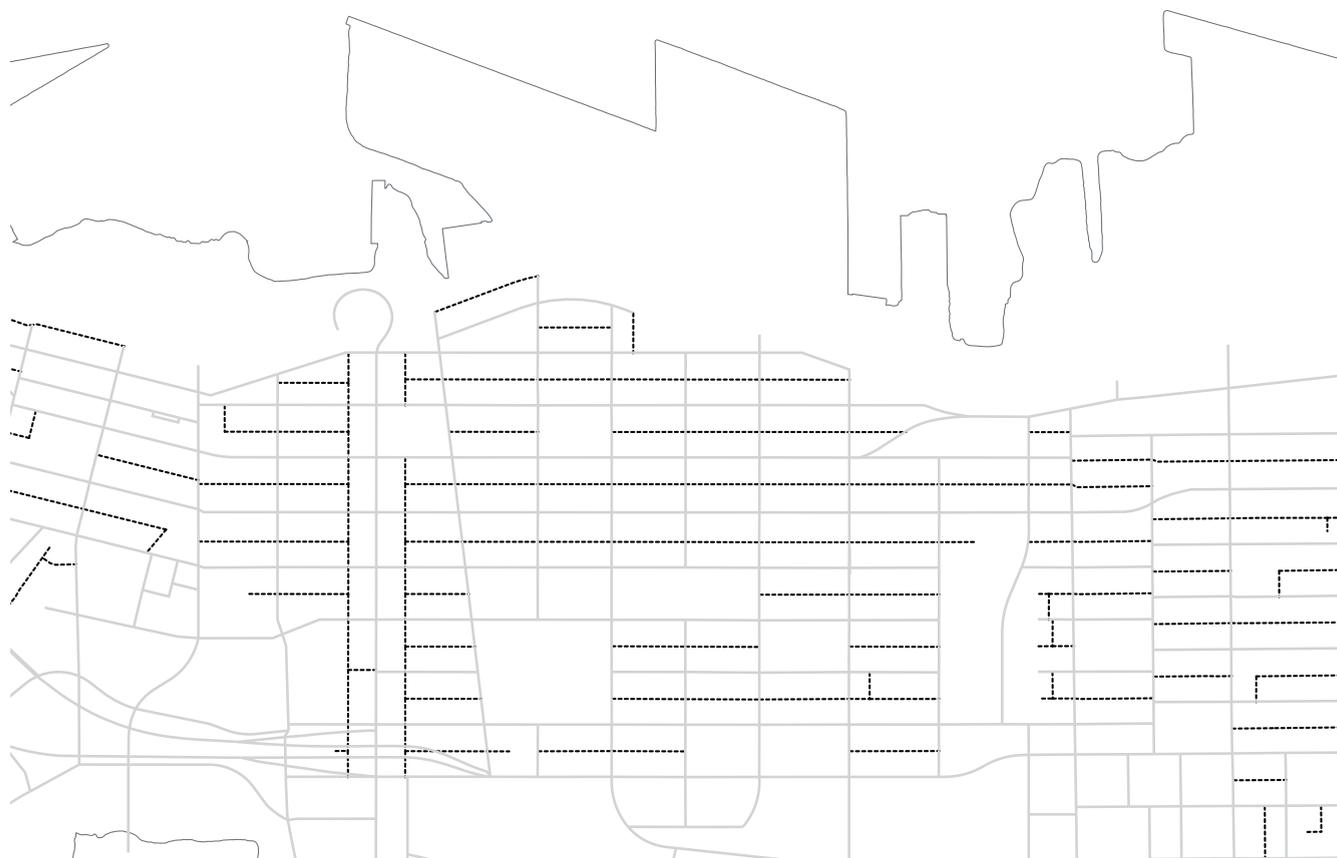
OPPENHEIMER PARK

5.

PUBLIC SPACE PUBLIC USE

PATHS & NODES
THRESHOLDS
PARKS
LEFTOVER SPACES

STREETS & ALLEYWAYS



- Public Streets
- - - Alleyways

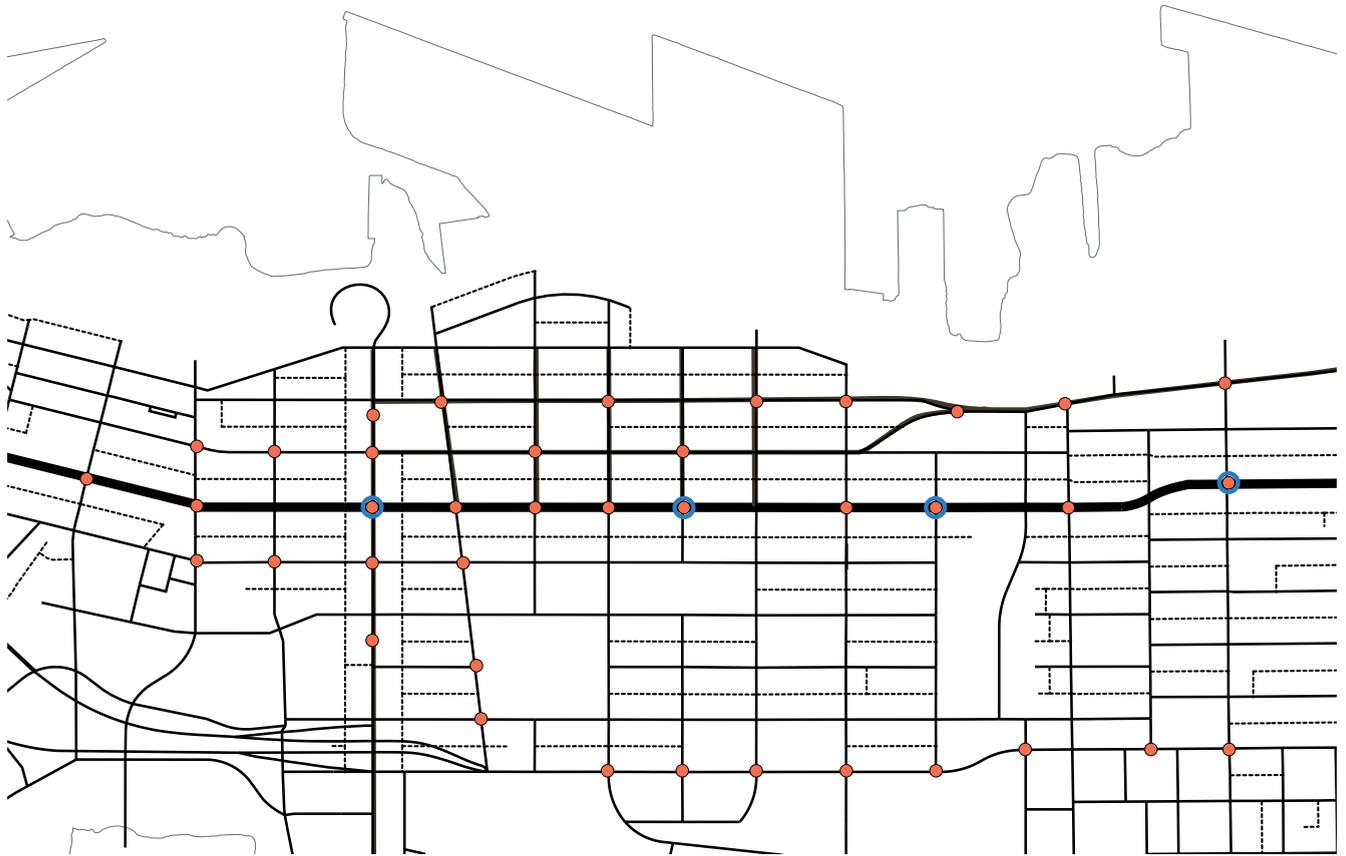


ALLEYWAY AT CORDOVA, BETWEEN
MAIN AND COLUMBIA STREETS



INDUSTRIAL ALLEYWAY

ROADS & TRANSIT NODES



- Public Streets
- Arterial
- Truck Routes
- Alleyways

- Bus Stops
- B-line Stops



CORDOVA DIVERSION, LOOKING WEST



HEATLEY AVENUE LOOKING SOUTH



DUNLEVY AVENUE LOOKING SOUTH

PEDESTRIAN & BIKE NODES

This map shows that pedestrian volumes vary depending on time of day. They also taper off toward the easternmost industrial areas of the neighbourhood, where blocks are longer, traffic signals less frequent, and bike routes altogether absent.



- Bus actuated traffic signal
- Fixed time traffic signal
- Pedestrian actuated traffic signal

- - - - - Existing bike network
- - - - - Proposed bikeway (Transportation 2040)

- AM Pedestrian Counts (Source: VANMAP)
- PM Pedestrian Counts (Source: VANMAP)



HASTINGS STREET



CORDOVA STREET

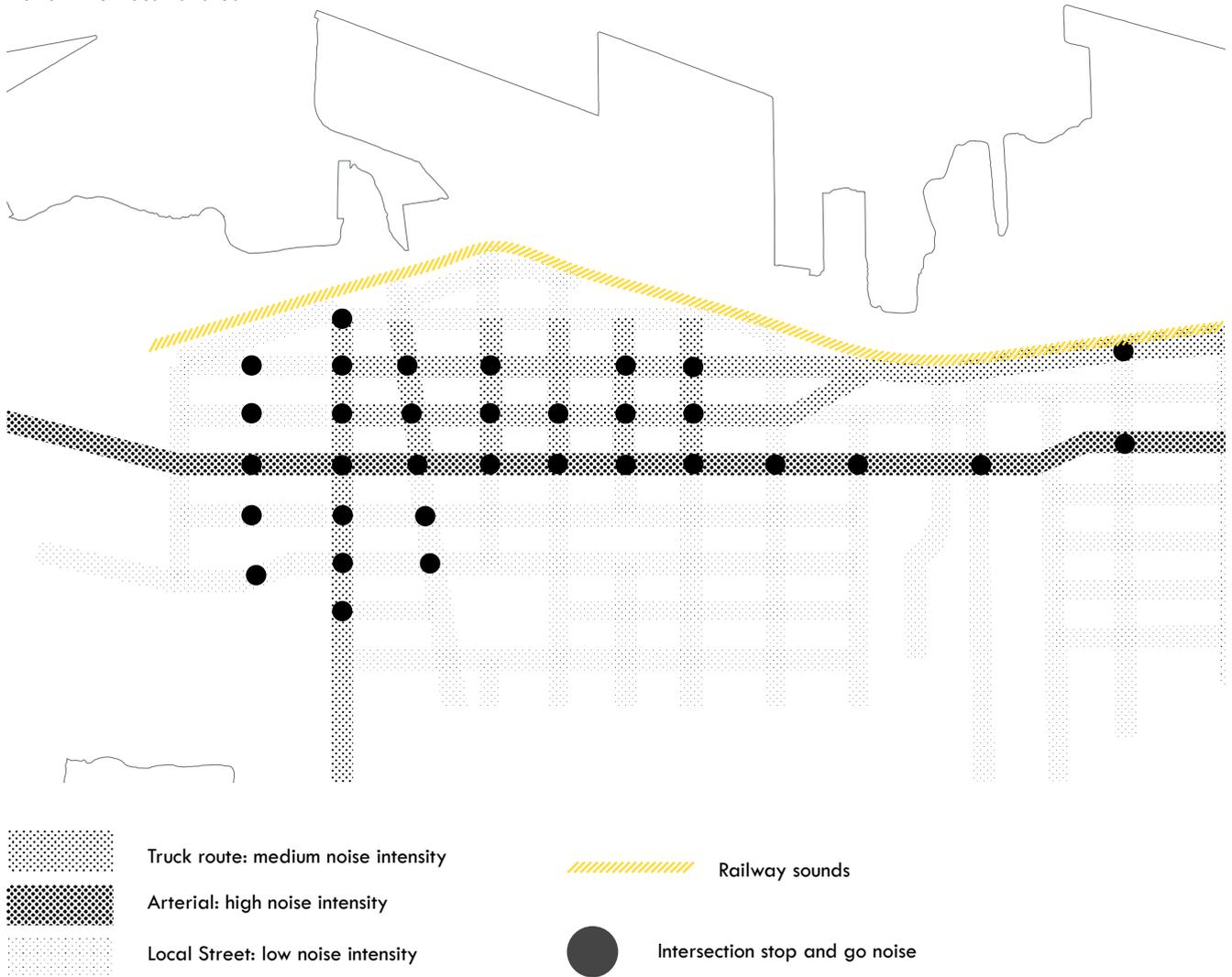
The informal bike network: cyclists can frequently be seen riding on sidewalks, since the bikeway network currently tapers off in the easternmost areas of the DTES, where most streets are truck routes serving industrial uses.



HASTINGS STREET BUS STOP

NOISE

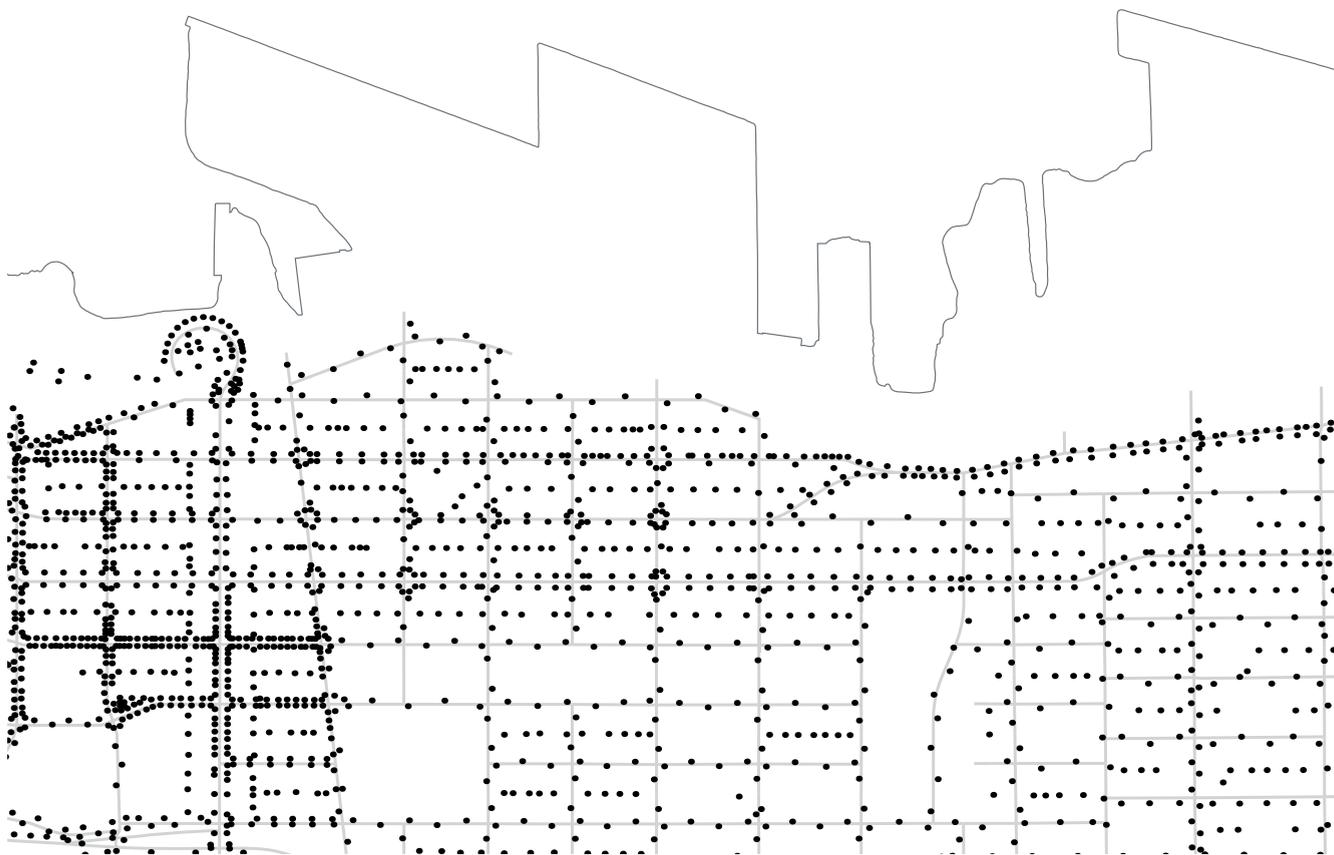
Noise from motor vehicles adds to the stress of the city and has as much of a social impact as other environmental factors. As a result of lack of resources, however, noise reduction is too often forgotten from urban planning and design agendas. This map approximates noise intensity based on the road hierarchy. Black circles indicate noise arising from stop and go situations, at junctions that feature a traffic signal. Noise in these locations typically reaches a higher level than when crossing is uninterrupted (Jahandar et al., 2012). Despite the prevalence of motor sounds, some positive sounds do exist and add to the character of the area. One of these is the occasional sound of trains in the industrial area.





LIGHTING

In addition to providing a sense of safety to pedestrians at night, lighting fixtures add mood and character to a streetscape.





OUTDOOR HANGOUTS

In *The Great Good Place* Ray Oldenburg proposes a typology of hangouts or “third places” that form ‘the core setting of informal public life’. Oldenburg defines these as “public spaces that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work.” (Oldenburg, 1989:16).

This mapped inventory was largely inspired by this notion of “third places”, and adapted to focus on places of outdoor informal interaction. The emphasis is placed on smaller and informal spaces of gathering, including private or semi-private outdoor spaces. This catalogue was compiled by recording where people sat or gathered for a cigarette, coffee, or a chat on a warm sunny day and on a dry cloudy day. Many such places may have been missed, as each of these comes to life at different times of day and night. Their rhythm is often a result of the internal operations of an adjacent building.

Incomplete as it may be, this inventory presents a broad spectrum of hangout types and reveals that sidewalks, especially thresholds, liminal spaces between private and public ownership, play a key role in social interaction in the Downtown Eastside. The observer can imagine how vital these outdoor “hangouts” are and how they complement indoor third places in the neighbourhood.

The appropriation, for gathering purposes, of incongruous spaces, was perhaps the most interesting finding of this recording.

Everybody likes an old-fashioned chair, but sometimes the platform of a loading area (#19) or a conveniently sized planter that acts like a bar counter in a parking lot (#2) work just as well if not better.

Whether people are standing outside a shelter entrance, sitting on a moveable chair outside a community kitchen, chatting on a ledge, on a porch, or on stairs, they gather wherever they find a place to sit or a feature to lean on.



12



10



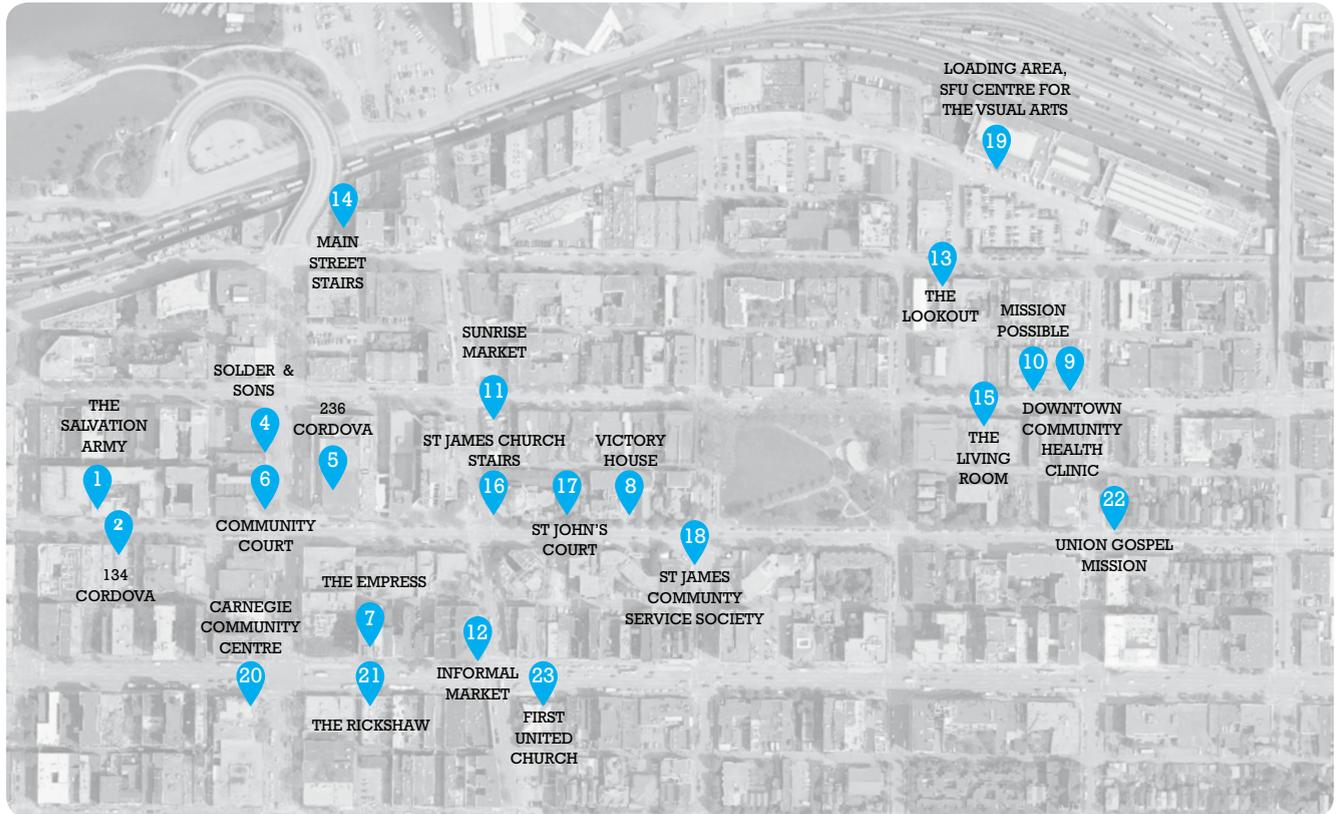
2



13



19



ANTI-SPILL DESIGNS

While thresholds and sidewalks are important spaces of socialization and informal trade, many of these spontaneous uses are unwanted by property and business owners who choose to adopt 'anti-spill' designs to deter sitting, sleeping, and loitering outside their property. These are a few examples of such structures.

SLOPING LEDGE



SPIKES



HIGH PLANTER



ARMRESTS



A TYPOLOGY OF THRESHOLDS

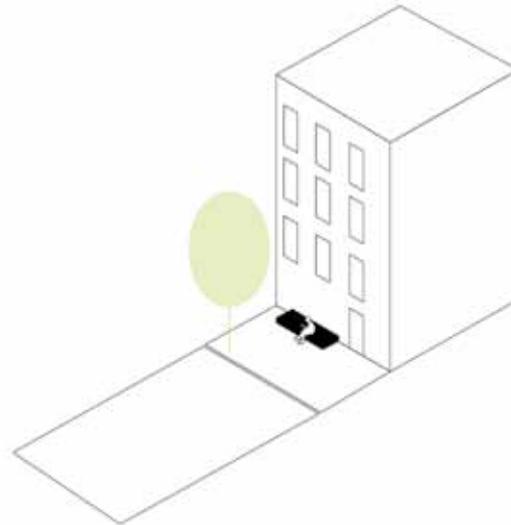
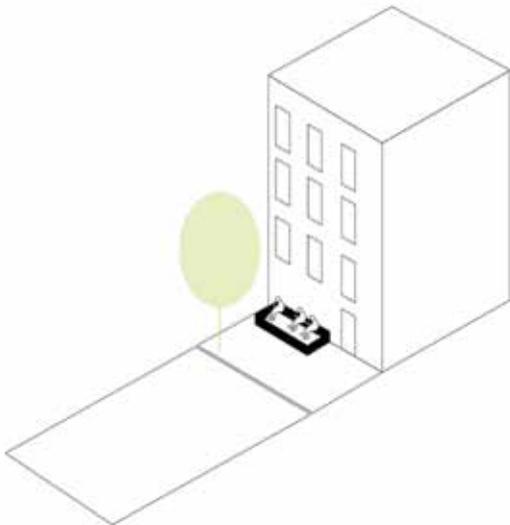
Too often, these microspaces of social life are forgotten in new developments or in design upgrade. It is difficult if not impossible to plan for them. In fact, they seem to fail whenever they are intentionally designed, and to be most popular when random.

FRONT PORCH OR STOOP

Privately owned seating area provided by the owner for residents or service users to socialize. May or may not be fenced off.

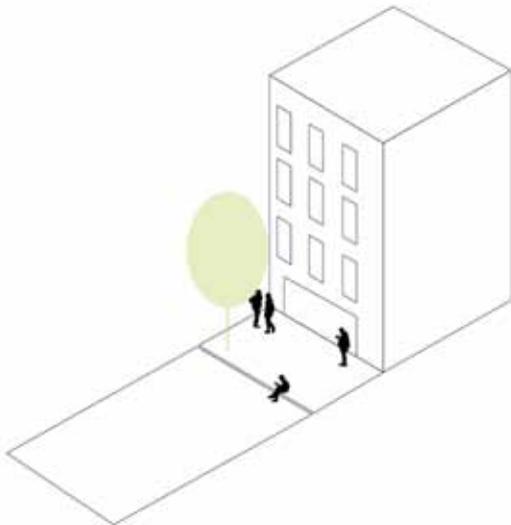
LANDSCAPED SETBACK

A planter, ledge or seatwall located outside a building.



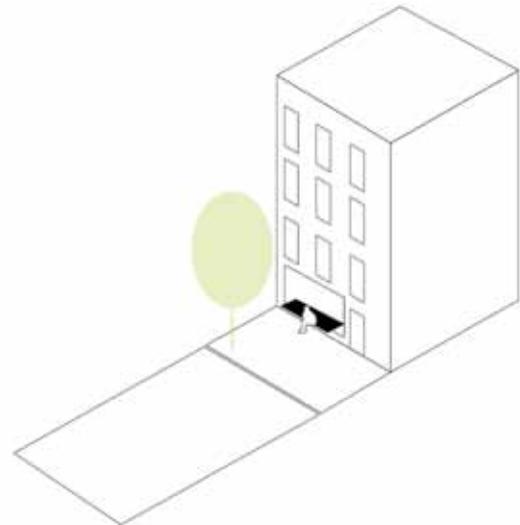
SIDEWALK
SPILL

Full use of the sidewalk in the absence of seating. People stand close by the building or use the edge of the curb to sit and chat, leaving the middle of the sidewalk free for movement. Same thing occurs when moveable seating is provided by the owner/service.



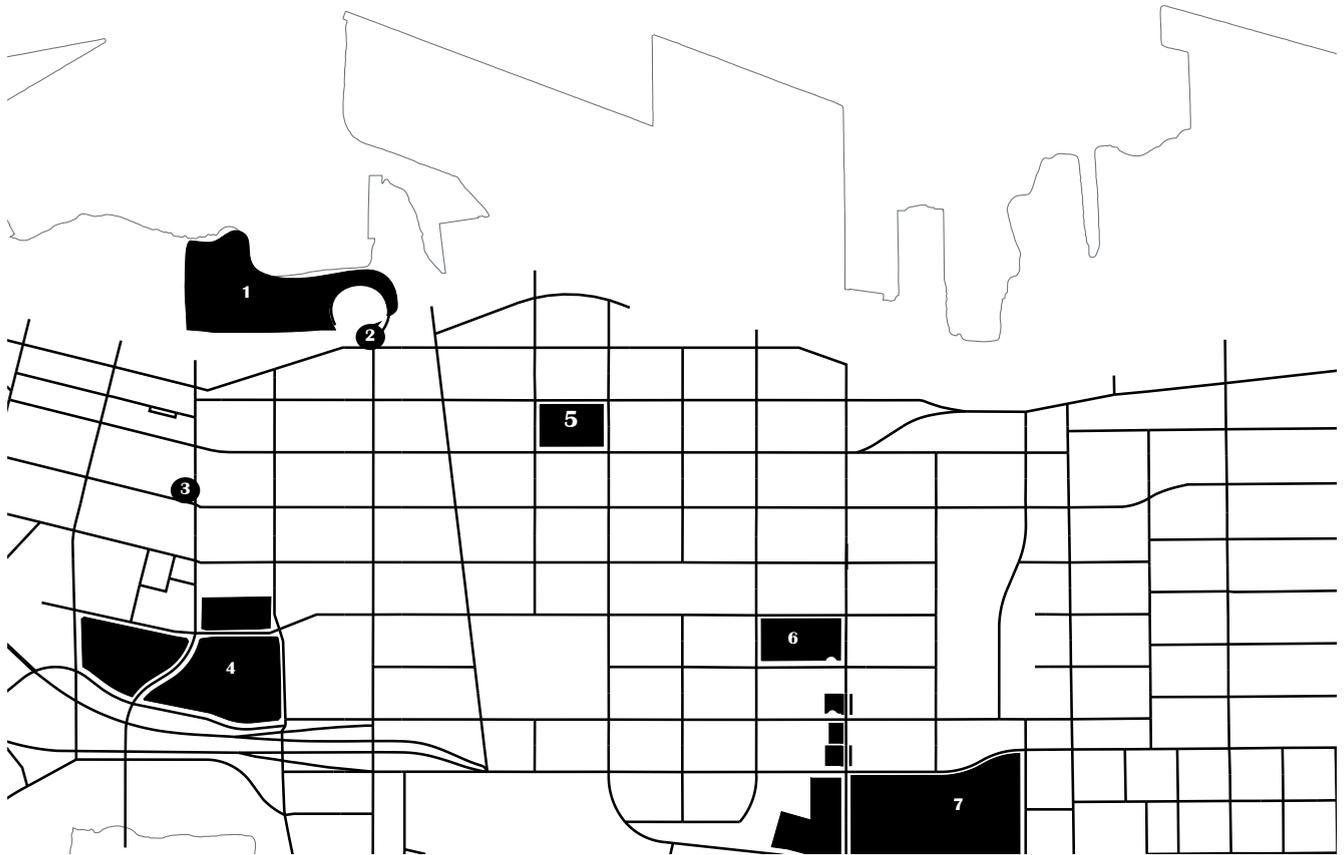
INCONGRUOUS
GATHERING SPACE

Elements of the public realm that were not designed for any social use but that have been appropriated as such, like a planter delineating the edge of a parking lot, or a loading platform.

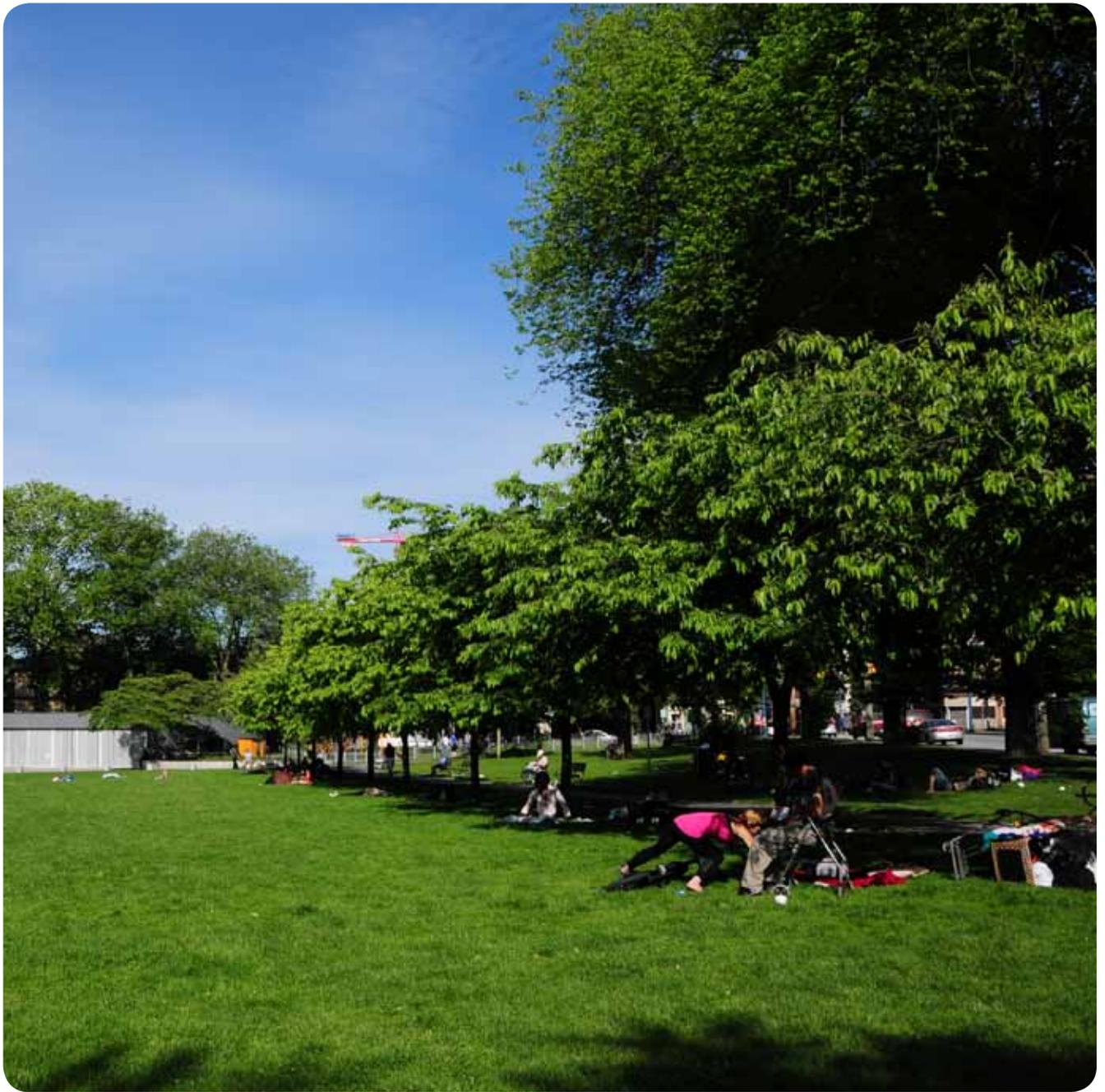


PARKS

The Downtown Eastside is rich in parks that fulfil a variety of functions and cater to very different needs and demographics.



- 1** CRAB PARK
- 2** WENDY POOLE PARK
- 3** PIGEON PARK
- 4** ANDY LIVINGSTONE PARK
- 5** OPENHEIMER PARK
- 6** MACLEAN PARK
- 7** STRATHCONA PARK



PARKS INVENTORY

1 CRAB PARK



3.31 hectares

- 1 Dogs Off-Leash Area
- 1 Field House
- 2 Playgrounds
- 1 Washroom
- 1 Water/Spray Park

2 WENDY POOLE PARK



0.04 hectares

3 PIGEON PARK



0.03 hectares

- 1 Washroom

7 STRATHCONA PARK



10.07 HECTARES

- 1 Baseball Diamond
- 1 Basketball Court
- 1 Field House
- 1 Playground
- 1 Running Track
- 1 Skateboard Park
- 4 Soccer Fields
- 2 Softball fields
- 4 Tennis Courts
- 1 Washroom
- 1 Dogs Off-Leash Area

4 ANDY LIVINGSTONE PARK**4.21 hectares**

- 1 Basketball court
- 2 Field Hockey
- 1 Field House
- 1 Lighted Field
- 3 Playgrounds
- 1 Skateboard Park
- 2 Soccer Fields
- 1 Softball
- 2 Tennis Courts
- 2 Ultimate Fields
- 1 Washroom

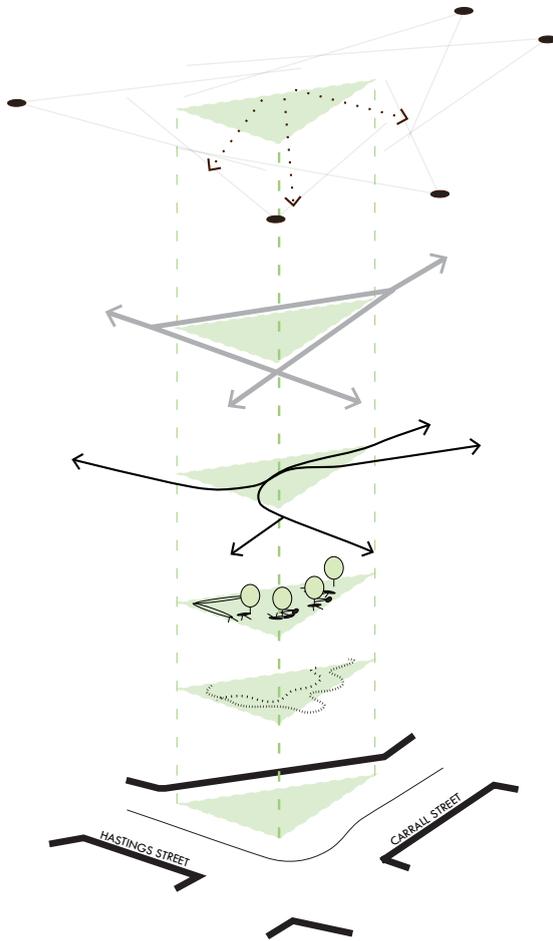
5 OPPENHEIMER PARK**1.00 hectare**

- OPPENHEIMER PARK
- 1 Field House
- 1 Playground
- 1 Washroom
- 1 Picnic Site
- 1 Horseshoe Pitch
- 1 Sport Court

6 MACLEAN PARK**1.21 hectares**

- 1 Field House
- 1 Playground
- 1 Softball field
- 1 Washroom Facility
- 1 Water/Spray Park

PIGEON PARK



VISIBILITY

Occupying the corner edge of a triangular intersection, Pigeon Park is visible to passers-by but also affords its users great views of the intersections. This position allows people within the park to greet approaching acquaintances from across the street and is conducive to a vital atmosphere.

PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT

Pedestrians who do not wish to visit the park usually circumnavigate it.

INTERNAL CIRCULATION

While the park is too small to require internal pathways, circulation within it is fluid and unimpeded by furniture. Ample room is available for wheelchairs to manoeuvre around benches and through the site.

GATHERING-FRIENDLY SEATING

Benches are laid out so as to encourage interaction and discussion among friends and strangers.

SOFT EDGES

Despite its high visibility, Pigeon Park is nonetheless well defined and bounded by trees and benches, which give it a certain definition and allow a relative degree of privacy.

HARD EDGES

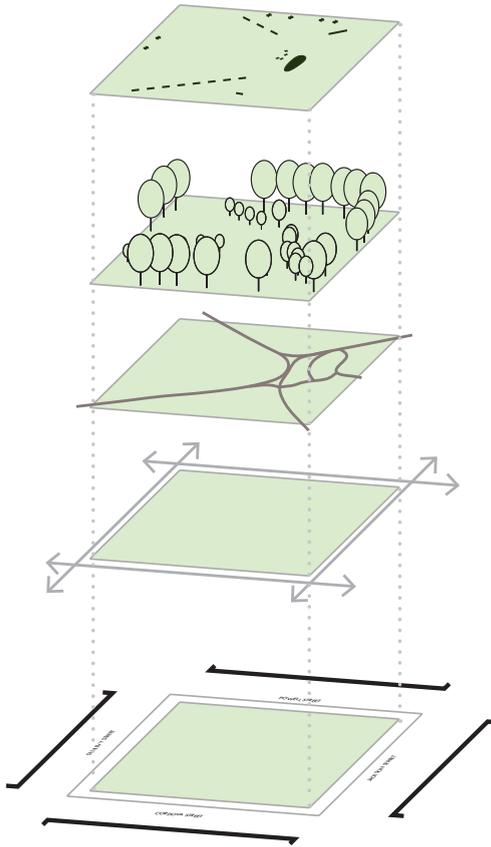
The intersection itself is framed and contained by buildings, which are the ultimate boundary of Pigeon Park. This edge is best experienced during Sunday markets, when commercial activities spill over onto the roadway and into Carrall Street.



PIGEON PARK DURING THE SUNDAY MARKET

OPPENHEIMER PARK

Oppenheimer Park is centrally located within our study area and offers a high level of amenity. It has both current and historical significance for the DTES community. Overall, vegetation and site furniture are in good condition. A variety of seating options are made available, offering a hierarchy of options for social interaction and people watching. It also derives its strength from a relatively wide array of sub-areas, each catering to various forms of active and passive recreation.



SEATING

One of Oppenheimer Park's best features is the variety of seating options it offers, from seatwalls, picnic tables, to benches, chairs, and lawns. The park offers opportunity for privacy and social interaction.

VEGETATION

The park is framed by old trees and more recently planted Cherry Blossoms offer visitors shade in the summer on the park's internal pathways.

PATHWAYS AND ENTRANCES

While the park is accessible from all sides, five entrances are visible and connected to each other by well-defined internal pathways, which themselves provide definition to the park's sub-areas, which include a baseball diamond, a street hockey court, a field house, a playground, and various vegetated surfaces designed for passive recreation.

STREET PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT

Because it occupies a city block, pedestrian street movement circumnavigates the park.

HARD EDGES

The park's ultimate edges are the buildings that frame it.



LEFTOVER SPACES

This project is based on a definition of public space that encompasses all areas of a city, publicly or privately owned, which all or most citizens can physically enter. In this framework, vacant lots, parking lots, traffic islands, dead-ends are also public spaces. In *Typology of New Public Sites*, Graham Coreil-Allen classifies these under-signified and overlooked spaces as “voids”, “pauses”, “lost spaces”, “paths”, and “vistas” and names their components in hopes that cataloguing and drawing attention to these sites allows us to reassign meanings to them and activate them. These sites are numerous in the study area, and become increasingly present as we move towards the industrial lands to the East. This map catalogues those that are most representative of the kind of leftover spaces that can be found there.



THE LANDSCAPED RIBBON



THE TRAFFIC REFUGE



THE (T)RAIL



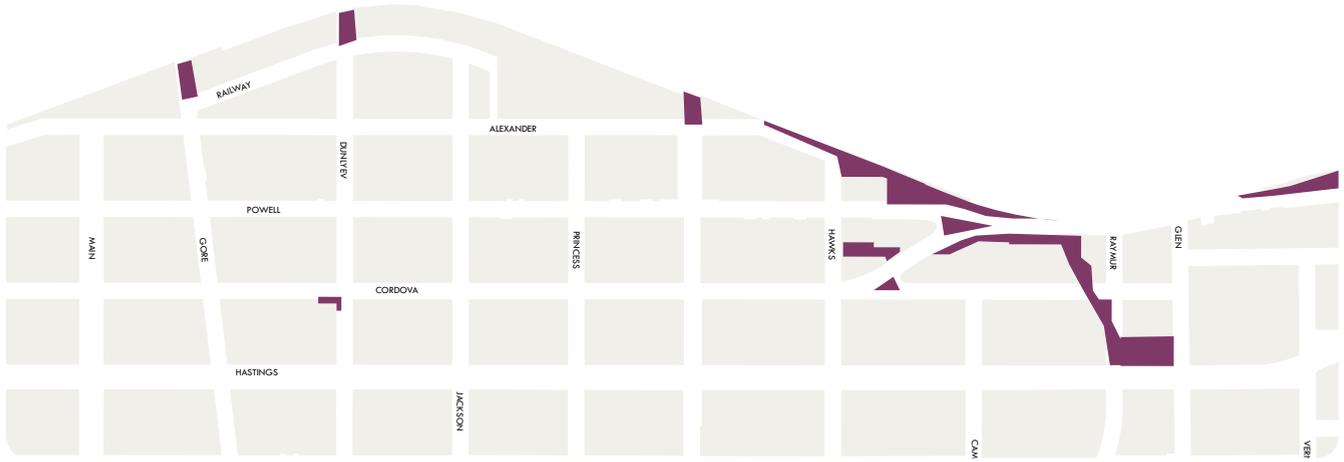
THE DEAD END



THE LEFTOVER SIDEWALK SPACE

RESOURCES OF INTEREST

Coreil-Allen, Graham. 2010. *The Typology of New Public Sites: A Field Guide to Invisible Public Space*.



RESIDUAL SPACE COMPONENTS





6. RECOMMENDATIONS

PRESERVE EXISTING OUTDOOR HANGOUTS AND ENABLE THE EMERGENCE OF NEW ONES
APPROACH OPEN SPACE AS A FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING
RECLAIM AND RECONFIGURE LEFTOVER SPACES
APPROACH PUBLIC SPACE TRANSFORMATION AND CREATION AS A COMMUNITY-BUILDING EXERCISE
PRIORITIZE CHEAP AND LOW-MAINTENANCE MATERIALS

#1 PRESERVE EXISTING OUTDOOR HANGOUTS AND ENABLE THE EMERGENCE OF NEW ONES

Encourage, provide incentives for or require developers to incorporate gathering-friendly design elements on their site.

Incoming developments may alter the streetscape of certain streets and the nature of informal socialization in the Downtown Eastside, but by developers can also be brought on board to ensure that some key aspects of sidewalk gathering explored in this project, namely the importance of small thresholds, are retained and, if necessary, enhanced. Current design guidelines emphasize the importance of providing shelter from the rain, but incentives to incorporate ledges and seatwalls would be a welcome addition.

Modify guidelines to prohibit “anti-spill” designs in new developments to prohibit exclusive furniture on public sidewalks

These include landscape elements and furnishings that make it difficult to sit or sleep in public space.

Rethink and reconfigure sidewalks

Beyond their role as public infrastructure, sidewalks perform various social and recreational functions that are key to citizens’ daily lives, giving them access to goods, places, people, and countless opportunities for social interaction. For many in the Downtown Eastside, the sidewalk is a space where many life-sustaining activities unfold. Because of this layering of activities, sidewalks are also places of conflict, negotiation, and contradiction. The challenge for planners and urban designers is to create vibrant streets while enabling competing activities to unfold seamlessly.

Relax the Street and Traffic By-law to decriminalize idleness.

The Street and Traffic By-law defines a sidewalk as “the portion of a street, improved for the use of pedestrians, between the curb lines or the lateral lines of a roadway and the adjacent property

lines.” Yet not all pedestrian activities are accepted on sidewalks, and the by-law establishes the primacy of flow over stationary activities. Indeed “to stand or wait around idly or without apparent purpose”, also known as “loitering” is prohibited in these terms: “No person shall stand or loiter on any street in such a manner as to obstruct or impede or interfere with traffic thereon.”

Reconfigure sidewalk space, where possible, to enable loitering and spill without impeding pedestrian flow.

Few loitering activities truly obstruct the full width of the Downtown Eastside’s sidewalks. Providing appropriate and comfortable seating on dedicated portions of wider sidewalks (such as Hastings’) in the form of seating “strips” inspired from parklet designs. Explore the potential of modular, moveable, and low-maintenance features and investigate ways to prototype and test such designs with the community.

If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.

What outsiders perceive as a public space improvement can sometimes be devastating to the social ecosystem of a place. Practice small, temporary experiments so that they can be reversed if proven ineffective.



Sidewalk Exchange

Antenna Design's Sidewalk Series are award-winning proposed interventions in the form of street furniture and fixtures that "resonate with people's obscure yearnings and facilitate odd actions and temporary relationships between strangers." (Moskow and Linn, 2010: 110).

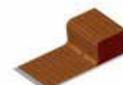


Shrink Bench



Modular "Walklet" design by San Francisco-based firm Rebar.

A MIX-AND-MATCH, MODULAR SYSTEM. CREATE YOUR OWN P



SIMPLE SEAT

Find space to walk, a spot to sit, and room to breathe in a crowded urban space. Our simple bench does it all.



DEEP SEAT

Relax and put your feet up, lounge in the sun, or spread out an entire picnic on our most accommodating urban surface.



SIMPLE EXTENSION

The ultimate space-maker, our sturdy filler platform will expand your sidewalk horizons. Also available with a bike rack attachment.



END RETURN

Provide a stylish entry into your new public space with our angled cap piece.



HIGH TAB

Pause for chat at or also provide between 1



SIMPLE P

Provide se in one fell species lik and a tree



DEEP PLA

Natural sit deep plan easily acc tree plus q

#2 APPROACH OPEN SPACE AS A FUNDAMENTAL ASPECT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Modify guidelines to stress the importance on stress-alleviation and physiological comfort in open space

The LAP emerging direction and the Greenest City Action Plan call for enhanced access to nature among residents, goals and targets avoid considering the experiential quality of green open spaces. Consider incorporating design guidelines that will guide design practitioners in ensuring that new and existing environments have truly restorative benefits:

- Opportunities to make choices, seek privacy and experience a sense of control
- Opportunities which encourage people to gather together and experience social support
- Opportunities for physical movement and exercise
- Engagement with nature
- Visibility
- Accessibility
- Sense of security
- Physiological comfort
- Quiet
- Familiarity
- Unambiguously positive design features

Approach tree planting in a meaningful way

To achieve its targets, the Greenest City Action plan proposes that “Every suitable space in a street or park is planted with a tree.” As often as possible, ensure that trees are planted where they can be loved as social places.

Modify guidelines to call for enhanced landscaping and ecological functionality, especially in, but not limited to, industrial areas

While the Greenest City Action Plan focuses its “Access to Nature” targets on residents, the employment clusters of the industrial areas are often forgotten, yet they need more than a few shrubs and strips of grass. Workers need a place to get a breath of fresh air and relief from concrete, asphalt, and steel. Alongside the psychological benefits of residents and workers, new requirements would ensure a mitigated ecological footprint of new developments, which in turn would contribute the health of the wider area. Privatey owned and public open spaces should be designed to capture, filter, and recyle rainwater from adjacent buildings and streets.

The city may want to consider adopting a metric to require and measure minimum sustainability features of open spaces which could include increased coverage of landscaping, rainwater harvesting and other features.



Photo credit: Varial

#3 RECLAIM AND RECONFIGURE LEFTOVER SPACES

Capitalize on underused and under-signified spaces to increase public space options, and promote a sense of belonging and safety in the neighbourhood.

Consider programming elements that encourage the following activities:

- Seeing and being seen
- Triangulation
- Play in public
- Passive surveillance
- Gathering places
- Writing on the walls

Consider better lighting options, and ensure that elements that are conducive to a sense of insecurity are removed from sites. Those include debris, chain link fences, and soulless landscaping.

The City may want to consider launching an ideas competition to generate thinking about ways to reinhabit those sites.



BROOKLYN, PEARL STREET TRIANGLE BY DAVID ELLIS



LA PLAZA MOVIL, BUENOS AIRES

La Plaza Movil was developed by Manuel Rapoport, founder of Designo Patagonia in Argentina. The concept is that of a portable street park for overcrowded Buenos Aires. The portable infrastructure consists of benches and games, as well as waste containers.

POP-UP PROMENADE, GREENSBORO

Greensboro's Pop-up Promenade uses a street mural pattern as its central feature. Volunteers were asked by the city to help paint the pattern.

This project shows how a simple treatment of the asphalt can engage people to address the street differently. A blogger who took part in the painting process wrote about it in those words: "...there's a pride in doing something with your hands that changes the physical space. I'm not a formal planner or even a full-time community developer and getting a chance to do just that, even for just a few hours on the weekend, was priceless." (theblackurbanist.com)



MILWAUKEE. MARSUPIAL BRIDGE AND MEDIA GARDEN

The City of Milwaukee implemented a design to transform an unused and unsafe space into a gathering space. The main precedent for this project is the urban plaza created under the viaduct. The main intervention involved using glowing acrylic "lumibenches" to lit the space at night and provide seating. While the intervention was a costly one, it highlights possibilities for enhancing safety in underused spaces by incorporating lighting fixtures.



#4 APPROACH PUBLIC SPACE TRANSFORMATION AND CREATION AS A COMMUNITY-BUILDING EXERCISE

Start early, include many, provide alternatives, practice small experiments

- Facilitate design-build camps
- Organize charrettes
- Launch Competition

Seek maintenance partners in the community.

Consider establishing an “Adopt a Space” system.

Share the knowledge

Create a how-to guide to community placemaking. Encourage open source information sharing.

Use public open space as a platform for engaging those hardest to reach

Many DTES residents and service users have no fixed address and cannot be reached online. Use public space itself as a tool to seek feedback creatively and in a way that is accessible. Create consultation kits for members of the community to facilitate consultation sessions themselves, using their own tools. This technique allows those whose schedule or lifestyle does not allow to attend conventional consultation events to participate otherwise.



PIGEON PARK ASSET MAPPING EXERCISE, VANCOUVER

Asset mapping was used in planning the redesign of Pigeon Park, carried out as part of the Carrall Street Greenway.



STEM DESIGN-BUILD BOOT CAMP, CHICAGO

“This two week intensive design workshop for teenage girls from the Roseland neighborhood of Chicago empowers them to find and help solve problems in their community through science and design thinking. This ‘doing’ camp preferences action over simulation, growing from the firm beliefs that young adults are both some of our most important agents of change in their communities and that creating opportunities for them to directly change or impact of the world around them are critical for helping them grow into powerful leaders. It will not only generate important information, data, and ideas for the new community center but will also start growing a cadre of young female community design leaders in Roseland, and serve as a pilot project to help us design innovative ongoing STEM + community design leadership programming for the young women as they transform a vacant lot into a play space.”

(Source: Latent Design)

The Museum of Possibilities was a citizen engagement intervention by Melissa Mongiat, Mouna Andraos, and Kelsey Snook. It took place in Montreal’s Quartier des Spectacles for one summer day. Its intent was to gather citizens’ thoughts and insights on what they wanted the place to be. It is an example of how public space itself can become a vector for reaching out to the public.



BEAM OPEN STOOP PROJECT

The project was initiated by the PlayLab design office in 2011. The movable stoop was designed during a summer camp called “Beam Camp”, during which youth aged 7 to 17 were given tools and compelled to bring something to life. “We proposed the kids design a simple stoop on wheels, an Open Stoop that could be put anywhere, anytime, for anyone to use. It was designed so that they’d get to use a variety of materials and methods from woodworking to welding, and masonry to hydraulics.” (PlayLab.org)

#5 PRIORITIZE CHEAP AND LOW-MAINTENANCE MATERIALS

The “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper” approach is promoted by the Project for Public Spaces in defence of incremental, locally-based improvements that are so often at the origin of successful and beloved urban destinations. These are but a few examples of the multitude of low-cost, low-maintenance, and often DIY public space materials and components that can be found for free or bought in bulk. Their setup and maintenance is widely documented online and they presents opportunities to engage the local community in the installation process.



ARTIFICIAL TURF

- Artificial lawns are an easy way to create more welcoming environments for leisure and play Easily to install
- Works in various climates
- Successful for different surface traffic, slopes and contours.
- Particularly durable, easy to clean, and requires almost no maintenance. Available in a variety of textures and colours.



ASPHALT PAINT

Paint is a low-cost, quick, and creative way to customize asphalt surfaces, regardless of their existing condition. Paint is particularly appealing for painting games and sport courts. It can be used for public art, community expression, or to give accents to sub-areas of a site.



MOVABLE CHAIRS

According to Project for Public Spaces, a park bench costs as much as ten chairs. Movable chairs are a low-cost seating option widely used in temporary as well as permanent space activations. While their benefits lie in cost-effectiveness and flexibility, they are more prone to theft and vandalism than heftier furniture items. They can, however, be secured to prevent theft as is the case in the park recently completed by the City at 18th and Main.



GABIONS

Gabions are versatile, easy to install, cost-effective, and customizable. Their weight is an effective deterrent against theft. While they are often used as benches, gabions can also be adapted for other outdoor furnishing purposes such as tables and planters. Used as sound walls, they also prove to be an effective noise barrier in high-traffic settings.



MILK CRATES

Milk crates are free and easily available and their sturdiness, colorfulness, and modularity have made them a favourite item in public space installations and garden furniture. The CityLeaks collective in Melbourne has documented their installation process.



RUBBER TIRE PLANTERS

Discarded tires can be recycled for plant and vegetable growing as they are in fact safe for food production. They can also be used as compost bins and are extremely durable.



DIY SKATE RAMP



SHIPPING PALLETS

Shipping pallets can be found and picked up in commercial alleyways across the city and as such are a highly cost-effective material for public space interventions. Many online resources have documented ways to transform them into planters, but they have also been used for building benches, stairs, and picnic tables.



DIY SWINGS



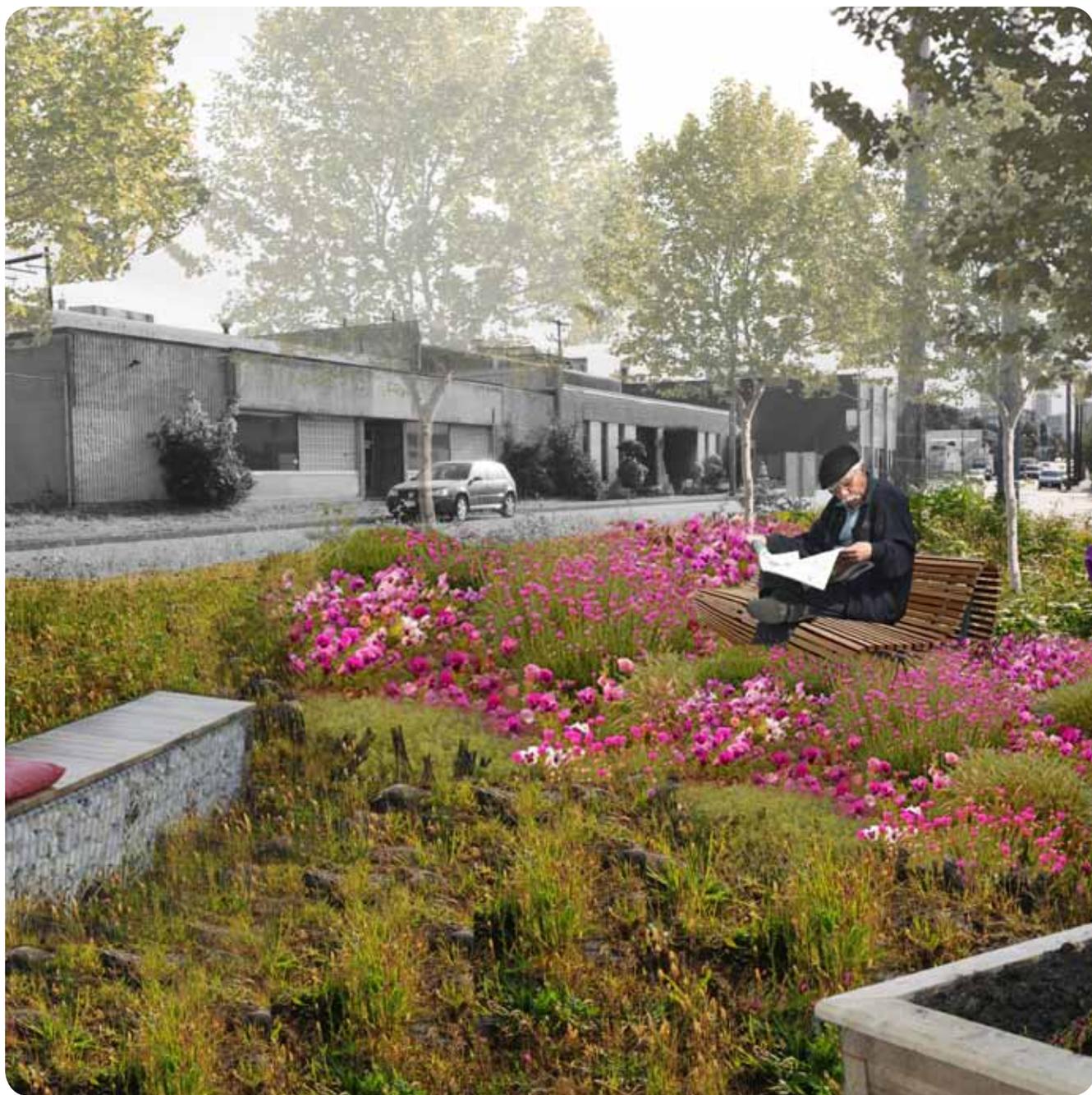
CHAIN LINK FENCE

Chain link fences, ubiquitous in the Downtown Eastside, can be appropriated by willing gardeners as a planting area.



CHESS BOARD

DIY play equipment, especially when incorporated in a design-build process, can be a rewarding community involvement experience.

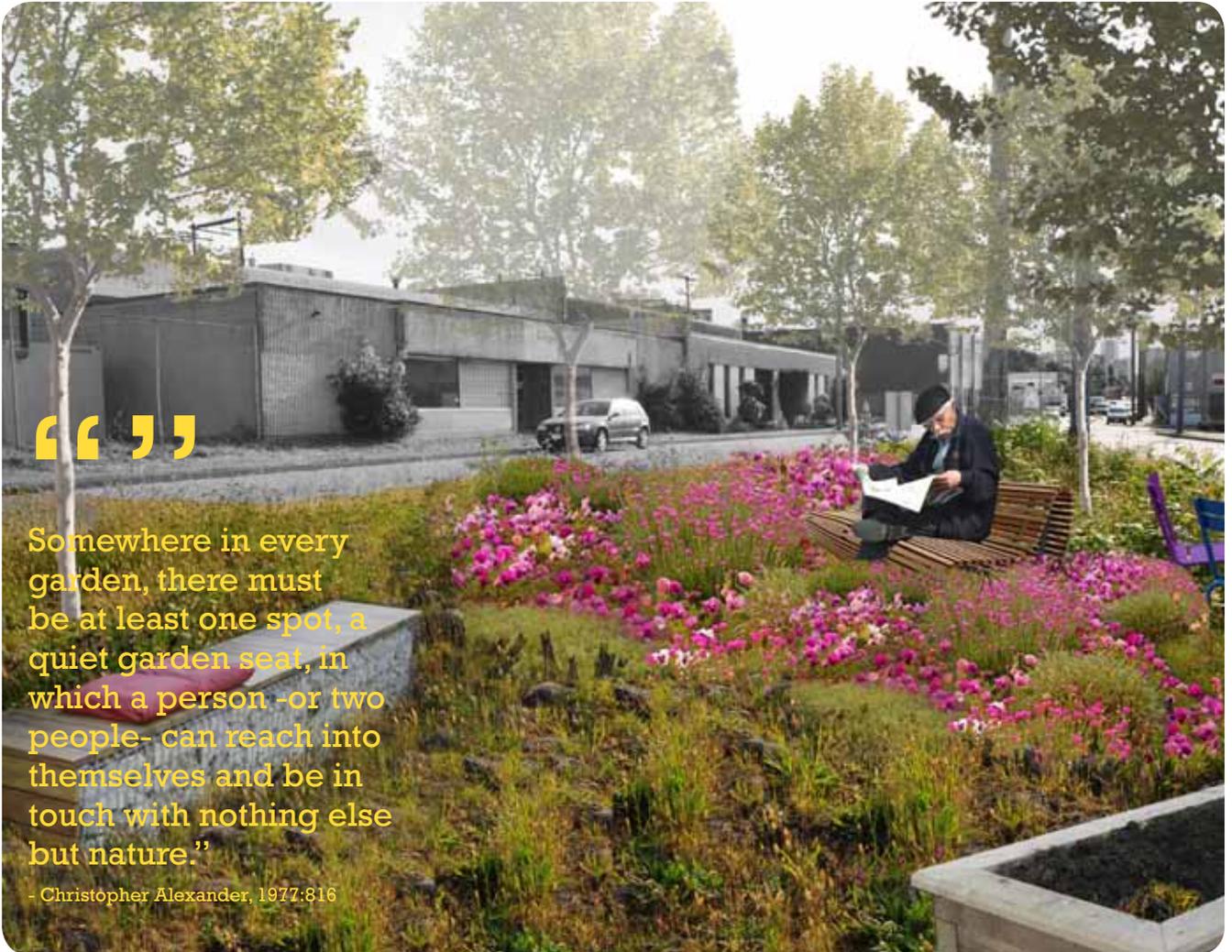


7. TRANSFORMATIONS

URBAN RETREAT ISLAND
DEAD-END TO CUL-DE-SAC
PLEASE LOITER
STOOPENDOUS
WILDEST CITY

URBAN RETREAT ISLAND

The traffic island located where Cordova Street becomes the Cordova Diversion is envisioned as a retreat for nearby workers and residents, in an industrial area painfully devoid of green space. Incongruously located in the middle of traffic, it is nonetheless relatively quiet and can be accessed safely by pedestrians. If cleverly reconfigured, this island could present qualities as an urban refuge. By retaining and enhancing the existing vegetation, whilst adding one or two simple seating options, this small space can transition from a leftover enclave into a peaceful destination.



“ ”

Somewhere in every garden, there must be at least one spot, a quiet garden seat, in which a person -or two people- can reach into themselves and be in touch with nothing else but nature.”

- Christopher Alexander, 1977:816



LOCATION

Cordova Diversion

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

To provide a restorative environment for gardening and contemplation in an incongruous urban space.

To create a gateway between the industrial lands and the Oppenheimer District.

EXTENT OF INTERVENTION

Vegetation and seating

POTENTIAL MAINTENANCE PARTNERS

City of Vancouver

Vancouver Park Board

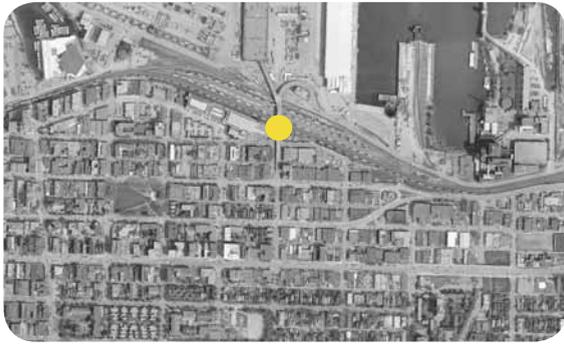
Business Improvement Association

Volunteer Gardeners

DEAD-END TO CUL-DE-SAC

The demise of the cul-de-sac as an emblem of urban sprawl has made it easy to forget its qualities as a community space, and most importantly its role in enabling youth to play safely in car-dependent environments. In the Downtown Eastside, virtually every north-south street dead ends where Port Metro Vancouver begins. Following in the footsteps of the Pavement-to-Plaza program, a Dead-end to Cul-de-sac initiative might compell local residents and workers to claim ownership of these leftover spaces and rearrange them in a low-cost and playful manner to achieve a variety of needs. This is a specific exploration of the dead end of Heatley street.





LOCATION

Heatley Street.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

- To provide opportunities for nearby employees, residents, service users, and youth to recreate.
- To enhance the sense of safety of the area at night and mend the urban fabric by reclaiming lost space.
- To provide a versatile space that acts as a canvas for local expression and a performance space.

EXTENT OF INTERVENTION

Furnishing, lighting treatments, surface enhancement.

POTENTIAL MAINTENANCE PARTNERS

City of vancouver, property owners, community members.

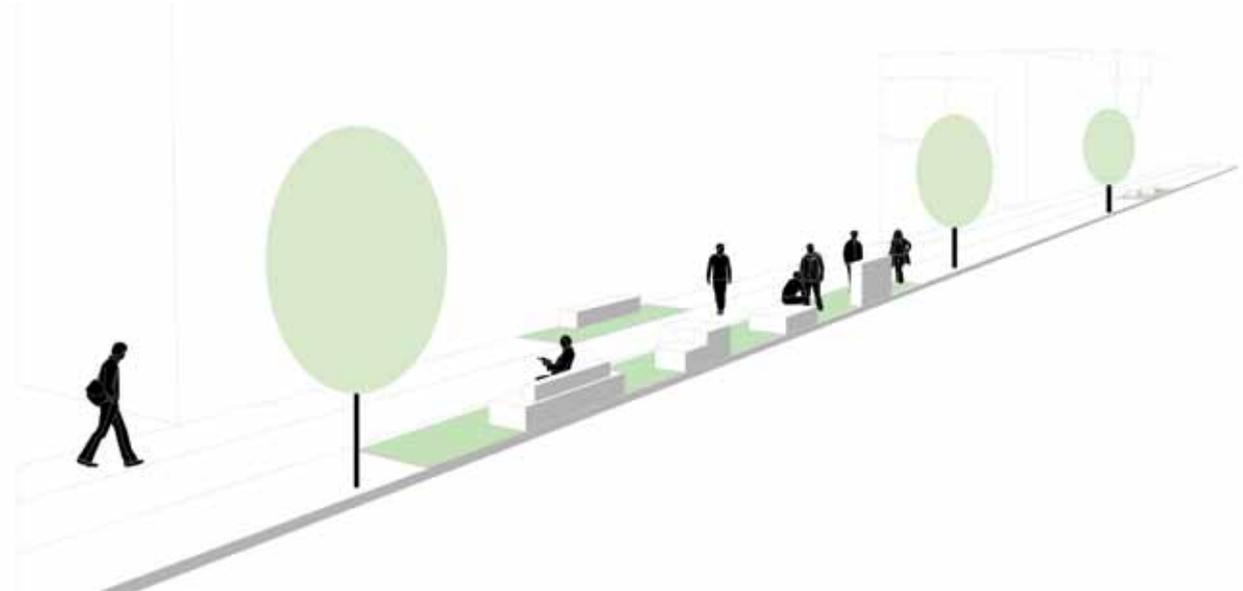
PLEASE LOITER

Please Loiter is a proposal to build “disruption” into the sidewalk of Hastings Street. It is a response to the fact that idleness is at once one of the most frowned upon public behaviours, and a most vital aspect of a successful city. Beyond their role as public infrastructure, sidewalks perform various social and recreational functions that are key to citizens’ daily lives, giving them access to goods, places, people, not to mention countless opportunities for social interaction. Because of this layering of activities, sidewalks are also places of conflict, negotiation, and contradiction.

While roadway traffic is increasingly regulated and choreographed through signage, markings and paving, the sidewalk continues to be treated as more or less monolithic. Often, pedestrians have to navigate the leftover space between property lines, furniture, and utility fixtures that take precedence over human traffic. Not only are we forgetful of and unresponsive to the many forms and speeds of pedestrian flow, but our city bylaws prohibit certain pedestrian behaviours deemed obstructive or disruptive, and which are nevertheless vital to many.

Because rules are breached on a daily basis on the streets of the Downtown Eastside, to design in a way that prohibits obstruction would be exclusive. Instead of criminalizing idleness through the prohibition of loitering, this proposal seeks to work around the conflict. Please Loiter is not unlike parklets, in that loiter zones are reclaimed from underused street space. In this case, the idea is to appropriate space from the furnishing zone, the area of the sidewalk where lighting and fixtures are typically located. East of Princess Avenue on Hastings, sidewalks are slightly wider and the furnishing zone is relatively clear. This offers a potential to locate designated “loiter” areas at the edge of the sidewalk. In the absence of a business entrance, such designated areas can be located by the buildings. Simple yet durable seating is recommended.





LOCATION

Hastings Street.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

To enable unimpeded pedestrian travel while enabling sidewalks spill.

EXTENT OF INTERVENTION

Modular furnishing.

POTENTIAL MAINTENANCE PARTNERS

City of Vancouver, Business Improvement Association, Property owners;

STOOPENDOUS

Whether it is a stoop of New York's East Village, a doorstep in Manchester, or a front porch in Strathcona, thresholds are beloved spaces of interaction, located at the subtle junction of public and private space. As we have seen earlier, thresholds are a key feature of social life on the quieter residential streets of the Downtown Eastside. Yet they remain few and far between, and are virtually absent from the neighbourhood's industrial zones and from new development projects. In future design initiatives, it will be crucial to acknowledge and enhance possibilities for such social interactions to occur despite the vivid concern for safety. Stoopendous is a proposal inspired from parklets to explore the potential of using stoops in a low-cost and temporary way as a placemaking feature as well as a tool for engaging those hardest to reach via traditional means of public consultation.



LOCATION

UNSPECIFIC

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

Make sidewalk spillover more pleasant by creating structures that support social gathering and seating.

EXTENT OF INTERVENTION

Movable seating, paint.

POTENTIAL MAINTENANCE PARTNERS

Housing providers, residents, business association, service providers, on an "adopt a stoop" basis.



“ ”

In any place where people loiter, add a few steps at the edge where stairs come down or where there is a change of level. Make these raised stairs immediately accessible from below, so that people may congregate and sit to watch the goings on.”

- Christopher Alexander, 1977-80



WILDEST CITY

This proposed transformation is a hypothetical exploration of the rewilding of an historical urban edge by using resident involvement.





LOCATION

Strathcona railway.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

To transform an historical urban edge into a green corridor
 To involve residents in a rewilding process over several years/decades.

EXTENT OF INTERVENTION

Cleaning, planting, potential furnishing additions.

POTENTIAL MAINTENANCE PARTNERS

City of vancouver, property owners, community members.



CONCLUSION

OBSERVATION

RATIONALE

TRANSFORMATION

RELEVANT RECOMMENDATION

LOITERING IS
PROHIBITED
BUT VITAL

HOMELESS OR TRANSIENT PEOPLE SHOULD
NOT BE PROHIBITED FROM CARRYING
OUT LIFE-SUSTAINING ACTIVITIES ON THE
SIDEWALKS

PLEASE LOITER

#1 #3 #5

UNSAFE DEAD-
ENDS

VEGETATION, PASSIVE SURVEILLANCE,
AND EYES ON THE STREET CONTRIBUTE TO
MAKING PLACES SAFER AND TO ENHANCE
THE SENSE OF SAFETY

DEAD-END TO
CUL-DE-SAC

#3 #4 #5

THRESHOLD
SOCIALIZING

THRESHOLDS BETWEEN PUBLIC AND
PRIVATE SPACE ARE KEY COMPONENTS OF
A HEALTHY SOCIAL LIFE IN THE DOWNTOWN
EASTSIDE

STOOPENDOUS

#1 #4 #5

HEALTHY
COMMUNITIES
GOALS

THERAPEUTIC URBAN SETTINGS HELP
ALLEVIATE STRESS AND MENTAL FATIGUE
AND CONTRIBUTE TO POPULATION
WELLBEING

ISLAND RETREAT

#2 #3 #5

LACK OF
GREEN SPACES

RE-GREENING CAN BE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR
RESIDENTS TO COME TOGETHER AND REGAIN
CONTROL OVER THEIR ENVIRONMENT

WILDEST CITY

#2 #3 #4

This report has sought to present a public space-centered perspective on ways to achieve healthier and more equitable neighbourhoods. With the help of field observations supported with current trends in Public Interest Design and relevant literature, this report formulated recommendations as to how the City of Vancouver may wish to approach future public space planning in the Downtown Eastside.

This report began by arguing that much of the success reaped by temporary, community-led interventions in many cities, including Vancouver, might be adapted as a strategy to maintain some of the undeniable qualities of the Downtown Eastside in the future, while making some of its spaces safer and healthier for a broader range of users. By acknowledging fears that costly design upgrades might foreshadow or enhance the threat of gentrification and displacement, this project recommended strategies to involve end users at all stages of the process, from conception to design and monitoring. It also supported the use of low-cost materials and small experiments to support incremental change when needed.

The overview of the planning and policy background of the Downtown Eastside has shown that while the local planning tradition has strived toward progressive measures, public space design guidelines have remained too general to guide effective action.

By providing an inventory of public spaces and the way they are commonly used, this project dwelled on the particular importance of thresholds in the everyday social life of Downtown Eastside residents and service users. It also outlined some of the qualities parks that were most welcoming to vulnerable populations, before moving on to address the untouched potential of leftover spaces as a source of future public open space.

Using the above observations as a basis, this report ended with several recommendations, illustrated with proposed transformations. Ultimately, this project by celebrating the informal and the spontaneous, while at the same time providing a safer, activated streetscape in underused areas.

More generally, this report hopes to invite its readers to engage in the larger question of what makes public spaces truly public. It also hopes to challenge the use of design as a strategy to deter “unwanted” behaviour, and instead to promote it as a tool to embrace contradiction.

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