

[WHERE'S *the* SQUARE?]

design competition brief

Public squares form the heart of many great cities around the world.

When well-designed, they can provide a central location for accessible, year-round activities -- as straightforward as eating a bite of lunch, catching some sun, or playing a game of chess, to more elaborate events like community celebrations, concerts and political rallies. Public squares are engines of cultural and local economies. They are the spatial realization of democratic principles.



BACKGROUND

Vancouver has a number of public squares scattered throughout the city - Victory Square, Granville Square, and Robson Square, to name a few. And of course, there are the steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery, which come closest to the type of public space that is missing from Vancouver: that kind of 'grand public square' that could -- and should -- act as a focal point of civic life in the city.

The "Where's the Square?" design competition aims to generate ideas about where such a square might be located in the city, and what it might look like. This competition is supported by a variety of public events that will aim to engage residents of Vancouver in thinking about the role that a public square could play in the city, and the value it could have to the people who live, work and play here.

This is an ideas competition, open to any individual, school or organization in Vancouver that wants to participate in creating a new public space for our city.

COMPETITIVE OBJECTIVES

This will be a competition for the best ideas, not necessarily the best drawings. The objectives of the Where's the Square Design Competition are to: (1) raise awareness about the importance of public squares, and the significance they hold in creating and fostering public interaction; and (2) stimulate the creation of ideas about the design and location of a civic square -- a "grand gathering place" for Vancouver.

The Vancouver Public Space Network is looking for submissions that will locate and design a square that has potential of becoming our civic centre, and that speak to what it means to be "Vancouver".

ELIGIBILITY AND ENTRANT FORMS

This competition is open to all - young and old, resident and non-resident, professional or "lay" designer. Participants can enter as individuals or collaboratively. All entrants to the competition are to submit a competition entrant form available for download from the *Where's the Square?* website (www.WheresTheSquare.ca). **Forms must be submitted no later than 5:00 p.m. PST Friday, January 30, 2009.** Completed Entry forms can be submitted to the address listed in the How to Submit Your Entry section (see page 3).

DEADLINES

Entrant Forms:
January 30, 2009

Final Designs:
March 20, 2009





JURY

The competition jury will be comprised of no less than three members and will consist of a panel of experts drawn from fields relevant to the competition. Judges will be announced prior to the competition deadline.

Entries will first be short-listed and presented to the public during a public event that will take place in Spring 2009. Two awards will be generated from the short-listed entrants: the Overall Winner and the People's Choice Award.

The decision of the jury is final. After the jury's decision, competition results will be announced at a public event.

DESIGN CRITERIA

The area that you choose and your design for the grand public square should meet the following criteria. A glossary of key terms (marked with an *) can be found in Appendix A.

Size / Dimension / Location

- Able to accommodate at least 5,000 people standing (Approximate area: 1.5 ft² or 0.14 m² per person);
- Respond to the context and existing or proposed surrounding land uses;
- Be located within the boundaries of the city of Vancouver*, British Columbia Canada.

Note: To be eligible, proposed squares must be situated within the municipal boundaries of the City of Vancouver. The specific location of the proposed square is up to you. However, entries will be judged on the potential for the square to become the civic centre of the City as well as how the proposed square responds to the context of its existing or the proposed land uses that surround it.

Utility

- Include a staging area* for large events;
- Accommodate vehicular access, including emergency vehicles (e.g. fire trucks, ambulances and police vehicles);
- Address the site's storage/servicing needs;
- Be flexible in its design, to allow for a variety of uses;
- Be used year-round (i.e. consideration for Vancouver's climate and proper weather protection).

Accessibility

- Incorporate the elements of Universal Design*;
- Be within close proximity to public transit (within 200 meters of a major transit route);

Programming and Sociability

- Demonstrate programming* or programming opportunities for all ages and abilities;
- Account for the diversity of uses that residents want to see in public space (see the examples found in Appendix B);
- Be reflective of the city – meaning that design ideas should index a 'sense of place' and speak to what it means to be 'Vancouver.'

Entrants should also be aware that the following are not limitations for the present competition:

- Not limited to public property – Design Ideas can be located anywhere within the municipal boundaries;
- Not limited to being on "terra firma" or located on solid ground.

SUBMISSION CRITERIA

Submissions must include all of the following. Incomplete submissions will not be considered.

(1) A written summary (maximum two 8.5 x 11 pages; minimum 10pt font size). This submission should include:

- (a) the name of the Design Idea,
- (b) a brief description of the design/concept,
- (c) its location and relevant details about the context in which it will be located,
- (d) how it responds to the criteria set out in the Design Brief
- (e) its features and,
- (f) a brief overview of programming and relevant aspects of the social use of the space.

(2) A separate page with complete contact list for all members of the design team.

(3) A minimum of two A1 size (2'x3') illustrations/drawings/renderings, including one complete plan view* (birds eye view) of the square and one section view* of the square (where the section drawn is left up to the entrant). If desired other illustrations may be submitted for illustrative purposes.

The total number of images must be formatted to fit on no more than three (3) boards with the following specs: A1 size or 2' x 3'; full colour (CMYK colour); TIFF format.

If your design idea is hand-drawn, please submit a high-quality photograph formatted to the same specs.

Finalists will be asked to submit printed and mounted boards at A1 or 2' x 3'. **Please do not print your submission boards unless requested to do so by the competition coordinators.**

Note: For comparative purposes, the Jury will be asked to focus on the Plan View and one Section View. Additional illustrations will be treated as supplemental and will not be a part of the final evaluation. Please be aware that owing to space limitations it might not be possible to display supplemental illustrations during the Short-listing Event.

How to Submit Your Entry

Items (1) and (2) should be submitted as PDF files. In combination, items (1), (2) and (3) must be submitted on a single CD/DVD, labeled with your name (or the Lead Designer's name) and key contact details.

Disks can be mailed to :

Where's the Square Competition
c/o Vancouver Public Space Network
P.O. Box 2754, Station Terminal
349 West Georgia Street
Vancouver, BC, V6B 3X2

The week prior to the conclusion of the competition several drop-off locations will also be announced. If you want to submit your disk in-person, please watch for these addresses.

Note: Entry materials become the property of the Vancouver Public Space Network and will not be returned. By submitting your ideas you agree to let us use your excerpts and images (with appropriate attribution) for our promotional work around the *Where's the Square?* competition and related public space/public square advocacy.

Additional Resources

Additional resources for designers are available on both the Vancouver Public Space Network and "Where's the Square" websites. These include useful links, suggested readings, consultation materials and backgrounders on relevant public space items.

Evaluation Criteria

The following table describes the criteria that will be used by the jury to evaluate submissions to determine a competition winner.

CRITERIA	SCORING
Idea/Concept and Description	40%
Design Quality	30%
Meets Design and Submission criteria	15%
Overall Presentation	15%
TOTAL	100%



A P P E N D I X - A
a glossary of key terms

WHERE'S *the* SQUARE?

Plan View A bird's eye view of your design. *See also: Section View.*

Programming Refers to the development of planned activities or opportunities activities that accompany the management of the public square. (As distinguished from spontaneous or unplanned activities). An example of public square programming could be a lunchtime concert series.

Note: Designers should consider the users of the particular environment and function or objective of the project. For example, what kinds of activities are people going to be able to engage in this space? Is there sufficient room and space for these activities?

Universal Design "Universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. The intent of universal design is to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications and built environments more usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost." *[Adapted from: www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about_ud/about_ud.htm]*

Section View The view looking through the plaza or square – usually rendered in one of the cardinal directions (north, south, east or west). *See also: Plan View.*

Staging Area The complete area that would be required for a performance or major event – including stage (or performance area), backstage facilities, audio-visual requirements, space for support vehicles, first aid, and other supports.

Vancouver For the purposes of the Where's the Square Competition, "Vancouver" refers to the City of Vancouver and not the GVRD (or MetroVancouver as it's sometimes called). You can view the complete municipal boundaries via the City's website (www.vancouver.ca) or by referring to Section 1.6 of the Vancouver Charter – available at: www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/V/vanch_01.htm#section1.