

## Appendix B - Citizen Square Consultation: Report Back

### Overview

On November 10, 2008 the Vancouver Public Space Network held a facilitated community consultation at the Vancouver Public Library. The event was designed to explore people's impressions of good public squares and gathering places, as well as the type of design and social features that participants found enjoyable or memorable.

The following document contains an overview of peoples responses to three main questions.

**Question 1: Do you have a favourite public square, plaza, piazza, gathering place (in Vancouver or elsewhere)? If yes, what do you like about it?**

### Squares, Plazas and Other Public Spaces in Vancouver

- **Library Square:** the play of theatre vs. library, the feeling, built environment follows topography, the colour of materials
- **Victory Square, Vancouver:** small scale, different levels which engage the street
- **Grandview Park/Britannia Community Centre, Vancouver:** Concert practice outside
- **Arbutus Corridor, Vancouver:** A scenic place, rewarding to visit, good for walking
- **David Lam Park, Vancouver:** Overlooks False Creek, Granville Bridge; located beside seawall; presence of musical acts
- **Vancouver Art Gallery/Robson Square:** A mix of activities - protests, musical and cultural activities, lots of things to 'draw you in.'
- **Victory Square:** Cenotaph and site of the Remembrance Day parade; the way the streets come together creates an interesting hub; interesting views down streets (i.e. Hastings); square can act like an amphitheatre; surrounded by significant, attractive buildings; good scale
- **Plaza of Nations, Vancouver:** sense of positive emotional experience that is associated with the many sporting events that take place in and around this area.
- **Hastings Park, Vancouver:** experience of a range of different environments within the one place

- **Granville Island, Vancouver:** anyone welcome; stuff for locals, tourists alike; mix of commerce and entertainment; good gathering place
- **Choklit Park:** Provides a gateway, a place to people watch, without necessarily interacting with them
- **Trout Lake (John Hendry Park):** A feeling of harmony with its surroundings; good size
- **UBC Endowment Lands:** presence of edible plants
- **Ambleside Park, West Vancouver:** large gathering place for concerns; natural and artificial seating
- **New Westminster Quay, New Westminster:** place to get together

### Other Canadian Cities

- **Nathan Phillips Square, Toronto:** Opportunities for skating and many other activities; City Hall; Speakers Corner
- **Olympic Plaza, Calgary:** has concerts, festivals, skating, transit access, water...
- **Place Jacques Cartier, Montreal:** great gathering space; good landscaping and nice architectural setting

### American Squares

- **Bryant Park, New York:** presence of trees, pond for skating, lots of activities
- **Jackson Square, New Orleans:** fenced formal gardens, artists market, boardwalk, unique food offerings, musicians, presence of river; “the heart of the city”
- **Pioneer Square, Portland:** Stepped bricks; well-defined space, shows, people playing chess, art
- **Union Square, New York:** conducive to the needs of all ages; lots of artists; different activities in different weather
- **Union Square, San Francisco:** A place to hang out, many cafés
- **Plaza Mayor, Madrid:** Scene of many events; surrounded by three story buildings, also an administrative centre

### International Squares and Plazas

- **Tallin, Estonia:** Outdoor living room, central urban room,
- **Federation Square, Melbourne:** the tilted floor that somehow works.
- **English/French Squares:** framed by non-rectilinear streets and buildings, historical communication spaces
- **London, England (e.g. Trafalgar Square):** Lots of aesthetic amenities; opportunities for protests, rock concerts, cultural events; tents get set up, taken down; also presence of trees; opportunities for quiet

- **Piazza del Campo, Sienna** - and other Italian piazzas: Pedestrian streets converge at main square; one's arrival is a surprise; restaurants, tower that mark the place; brings citizens of the city together
- **The Zocalo, Mexico:** (the Zocalo is the name of the main square in Mexico City but, as a term, also refers to the many small squares that dot towns throughout the country): mercantile by day, lively at night... a place to dress up and go to at night.
- **Brussels (e.g. Grand Place):** Has a "sense of order", provides orientation
- **Odessa, Ukraine:** has a number of squares, all seem to transform between day and night
- **Chile:** many squares and plazas - common denominators include institutional and symbolic space, educational elements
- **Market Place Square, Basel (Switzerland):** transportation needs are well-integrated with the square - lots of at-grade trains, taxis, etc.; lots of public art; a great diversity of street food
- **Zurich, Switzerland:** Has many really wide streets that act like squares - have three to four story buildings, a very human scale.
- **Spui Square, Amsterdam:** A small square, nice brick work, public art, weekly book and art markets, vendors and cafes nearby, and a tram line that bisects it
- **Leidseplein, Amsterdam:** A larger square, lots of outdoor cafes, surrounded by shops, presence of musicians, major concert venues nearby... and a very short walk to commercial district and nearby Vondelpark.
- **Neuchâtel, Switzerland:** has a small square near the centre that has a market and gallery
- **Ritter House Square, Philadelphia:** nicely proportioned, a good size for the square; traffic circle around square
- **Wenceslas Square, Old Town Square, Prague:** Wenceslas is commercial, Old Town has a clock tower, monuments, also some shows

### **Other Characteristics that participants found enjoyable in the Squares that they had visited**

- Interesting activities - portrait painters, ballet, dancing, concerts, etc.
- The squares are the site of continual uses... something's always happening
- Consideration of wheeled (wheelchairs, bikes, prams)
- Colour - as square or imported as part of daily activities (eg. Market)
- Materials, important?
- Flexibility - moving from parking to markets.
- formed by roads
- Has to have a "natural" location - though not necessarily the centre of the city/town

- Presence of nature (particularly trees), water, art, elements of culture
- Presence of benches, places to sit, opportunities to socialize, relax
- Doesn't have to be a square - could be triangular, or another shape
- Acted as a central gathering place
- Accessible
- Places to sit, to look across and see others (sight lines)
- The sense of discovery of walking through smaller constrained streets, then into the open square
- Sometime the surrounding buildings are important, but sometimes not - ex. Pioneer Square in Portland
- Edge seating and moveable seating
- Multi-level spaces that enable a variety of views, activities, and experiences - providing options of spaces that reflect mood
- Amphitheatre or performance spaces
- People - lots of people
- Cafes or proximity to cafes
- Hardscapes - good hard surfacing
- Some vegetation
- "In North America, we are graphing pedestrian squares onto auto dominated landscape"
- Southern Exposure, sun
- Welcoming space that isn't overly designed
- Animated buildings - through multi-media projections or using as walls of space
- Ideally, one side isn't a road
- Big futuristic architecture
- Fountains - for drinking and for art
- Artistic insertions and nodes
- Small gatherings and healing spaces
- Vegetation that is open, adds colour, and is not overly dense
- Colour
- Surrounding density that supports the square, brings people there

**Question #2. If you were to imagine a public square in Vancouver, what sorts of features or attributes might it contain?**

**Facilities**

- Public washroom facilities with concierge (like Victory Square in Van)
- Washrooms
- Washrooms, H2O fountains
- Benches, seats
- Public washrooms - need to make sure
- Drinking fountains

## Material Features

- Large scale sculpture...less concrete
- Rooftop garden
- A place for recognition of event participants
- Water feature...adult waterpark...accessible and fun for adults
- Pier?
- Colorful gardens
- Something to mediate acoustics so people can hear speeches and quiet conversations
- Aspects of nature
- Weather protection like Plaza of nation roof
- Well lit at night
- Trees
- Waterfront connection
- Dining room table
- Sunny areas
- Bird habitat—feeders, etc.
- Donated materials, space for public art
- Ponds with fish, Japanese garden
- Seating—wooden
- No car parking (underground)
- Sound garden
- Some way to infiltrate rainwater—gravel etc.
- Framed by building around it, connection to a sister city
- Media connection—global internet etc, wifi, hologram floor
- Place to get a drink
- Food and drink but of course need to regulate
- Stage
- Water fountain
- Focal points for gathering
- Acoustical spaces
- Easily engaged—at grade—not below the street; permeable
- A guest house (like in Katmandu)
- Tourist information
- Food, language, cultural elements, restaurants—could be surrounded by lots of different types of food
- Parliament Building, Victoria—monuments, historical features
- To be on the water
- Water fountain
- Markers of place
- Free wi-fi
- Cookies.
- Covered area? Umbrellas? Retractable coverings?
- Participatory designed artwork like mosaics that can be created over time

- Buildings to shape, form space
- Sun exposure, very important
- Lots of 'nooks', spaces within spaces
- Restaurants!
- Seating areas - both moveable chairs and permanent seating
- Tables
- Maybe have an agreement with local businesses to take care of the chairs, bring them in at night in exchange for a lease to be there? This would have to be public chairs
- Performance space
- A Permit free performance zone!
- Water fountains, interactive water features
- Interactive sculptures. Maybe educational sculptures?
- Greenery
- Lighting - want 24 hour use, so need lighting at night. Use PV operated light standards
- Storage facilities for operation of square
- Special clock that goes off a few times a day - to draw people in
- Pet-friendly areas
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### **Non-material features**

- Avoid presence of large corporations/gov't offices, allow for small enterprise
- Place for eccentric people to let it all hang out
- Place to "blow off steam"
- Opportunity for people watching
- Not just day-time use
- Central location with many activities around it: commercial, music, walkable
- Website listing amenities that people could expect and wayfinding devices—electronic, etc.
- Public art with opportunities for participation and change
- Vancouver—not engaging—centrifugal vs. centripetal
- Square without design or programming element—Vancouver needs to be front and centre
- Needs to be encouraging a sense of community
- Activity nearby
- Lots of interaction
- Square as a tax-free zone
- People generated adjacent uses (i.e. cafes)
- No CCTV!!

### **Accessibility**

- Safe for families and children
- Good access: Skytrain, bicycle facilities, bike routes, parking, pedestrian
- Well-supported transportation
- Open to all—economically inclusive
- Walk to, bike infrastructure
- Sense of safety, enclosure, shelter—but inclusive.
- Surrounded by residential—to encourage people 24/7
- For all groups to feel safe but realizing that there may be conflict.
- Good transportation system—seamless—not front and centre
- Needs to be permeable...Belgium had 4 walls and felt claustrophobic
- Access to square - look at surrounding context and how to design the streets so they are pedestrian friendly and encourage people to walk to the square?
- Need to ensure that everyone can be there - from toddlers to grannies.
- Connections to transit
- Supports multi-modal transit
- Bike Parking
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## Design/Esthetics

- Lends itself to celebration
- Spirit of the East End Culture Crawl
- More diversity in use of space—wild spaces/plazas/seating/gardens
- -Avoid mall layout/feeling
- Social organ for airing of emotion
- Flexible enough for small and large groups
- Acknowledge history
- Reflect complexities of life—ages, cultures, uses, for all people to be comfortable
- Design to allow different groups to come together.
- Elements of surprise
- Something unique
- Good visual experience, mountains
- Uplifting experience...Fountain, trees, flowers...
- Needs to recognize that we live in a wet climate.
- Needs colour
- The idea that many roads seem to converge on the square
- The space is defined by the buildings that surround it
- Artwork shouldn't be just plunked down and added, but integrated and designed for that space
- Need to make sure that public art is integrated into the process
- Integration of arts
- Use environmentally friendly materials
- Innovative green technologies and materials

- A space that doesn't need to be programmed to function, but one that can be programmed
- Mixed incomes? Need to be accepting
- Iconography from different cultures
- Varied sizes of gathering
- "Come as You Are"
- Method for looking to the future of public space...what is the social network in the future?
- Rotating use of Space
- Notion of turf—something to bring everyone together
- Stop off point for the unexpected events on the way to somewhere else
- Connect people, a network, a social space

### **Activities (segue to Question #3)**

- Opportunity for free speech, on "soapboxes" (like Hyde Park, London)
- Performers
- Nocturnal art show (Halifax), temporary street art...different types of art
- Buskers—but no robots
- Entertainment
- Public market for artisans to display wares
- Venue for creative people to express selves
- Flower market

### **Question #3: What sorts of activities would take place?**

- Needs to be flexible "for 5 people to place hacky sack, to 1000s when the Canucks win the cup."
- Farmer's Markets
- Performance
- Theatre
- Movies
- Watching TV - like hockey, the elections, the world cup
- Celebrations
- Official ceremonies
- Vendors
- Artisans markets
- Jazz festival
- Comfortable sitting area
- Farmer's Markets
- Jazz Festival (Free \$ Access)
- Indulge in discourse amongst visitors to the square
- Opportunity for dialogue (public)
- Public Forum
- Place for Athletes to Convene

- Commercial ventures
- Swap meet/Flea market
- Activities at edge of square—museums, galleries, things to help activate the square
- Cedar Cottage...
- Nelson Park, Gardens, Off-leash
- 24-hour activities:
  - o ice skating
  - o dancing classes
  - o restaurants
  - o library
  - o festivals
  - o night market
- Food festival
- Rallies/Protest (large scale)
- Concerts
- Athletic events
- Plays
- Poems
- New Year's Party
- Play area for children, youth and adults
- Community gardens...opportunities for conversation between strangers (unthreatening)
- People watching
- Laundry-doing with clothes lines
- Chess table
- Sports fields—soccer
- Bird feeding
- Art Exhibition