

Where's the Square Ideas Competition

Site: Plaza of Nations, BC Place precinct.

Name of the Project: Terry Fox Memorial Plaza and BC Place Development design proposal.

Design Concept

The concept for the Terry Fox Memorial Plaza and BC Place Development design proposal is to create a large pedestrian plaza, which will reach out to the surrounding areas, providing a connection between the downtown core and seawall. The existing underutilized BC Place, which is surrounded by open parking lots, acts as a barrier between two vibrant Vancouver arteries, Robson Street and the Seawall. Developing the area between these two main pedestrian arteries will be essential to creating the new heart of Vancouver. The square or in this case the plaza, will receive a constant influx of people from the connection of these two main pedestrian routes and is essential to the success of this gathering space.

The proposed project will act as a destination at the end of Robson Street and from the Seawall. The intent is to encourage people from the downtown core to venture down and explore this new, exciting, and energetic place - full of restaurants, cafes, artisan shops, various retail outlets, grocers and bookstores. The project would bring life to the exterior façade of BC Place by cladding it with artisan and retail shops, creating a large outdoor mall around the perimeter with large glass canopies for year-round protection. Removing the air supported roof and the numerous airlock doors will free the space required to add these exterior shops. After venturing around the Stadium Galleria and the West Village, Terry Fox Memorial Plaza will act as a large spill out space along False Creek. The south-facing plaza along the water would be a great gathering place for people. A steady flow of people would enter the plaza from the seawall, which extends to Kits Beach, Granville Island, Olympic Village, English Bay and Stanley Park, adding to the vibrant energy of this place. The terraced restaurant and cascading stairs provide a place for people watching on a warm sunny day. The public pier, tidal steps, and the contemplation garden provide places for people to explore and relax. The sunken sculptural garden and atrium engage the art and public, creating a rich cultural experience.

The concept is fairly simple; it proposes a new ground at +20'-0", which is the same elevation as the raised concourse the surrounds BC Place. The idea is to fill the gaps between the existing sky walkways that surround the stadium, placing a variety of uses on top. The +20 new ground will be developed as a pedestrian only zone, providing connections to: Stadium Station (+20'), proposed Terry Fox Memorial Plaza (0'), South East Pacific Boulevard – drop off Zone (0'), Robson and Beatty Street (+40'), Cambie Bridge (+20'), West Side near YaleTown (0'), Seawall (0') and the Concord developments on the east and west of Terry Fox Plaza (0'). This new ground will stretch over the existing open parking lot with the idea of adding more parking underneath. Commercial and retail spaces will straddle the edge of the parkade, animating the perimeter along Pacific and Expo Boulevards. These retail lofts will extend up to a height of 35', and will connect to the West Village above at +20', giving them two street fronts. The idea of the loft space is to enhance the physical and visual contact between street (0') and the west village (20'). Elevators or stairs within these shops will allow people to move back and fourth at the two elevations, making the Village area pervious. Additional dedicated vertical access cores will also be added to facilitate the movement between these two levels.

Terry Fox Memorial Plaza

The idea of the Terry Fox plaza started from researching Terry Fox and my own reaction to the existing Memorial, which sits on the North Side of BC Place. In 1980, Terry Fox started the *Marathon of Hope*, which was a run across Canada to raise money for cancer. Due to the onset of his own cancer he was forced to stop halfway through his journey in Thunder Bay, Ontario. The Terry Fox foundation has raised over 400 million dollars in the fight against cancer and he was voted one of the Greatest Canadian of the 20th Century. Terry Fox started his journey by dipping his artificial leg into the Atlantic Ocean and I wanted to capture this symbolic moment in a new memorial. The proposed Terry Fox Memorial Tidal Steps, which descend into the ocean, will give everyone the opportunity to complete his journey. Radiating out from a circular contemplation garden with an oak tree planted in the center (symbolic for strength), there will be ten tidal steps, each representing a Canadian Province. The idea is to place the steps at a level where the high tide finishes at the 5th step - symbolizing the end of his journey. As the tide heads out, it will expose the various provinces he was unable to complete. This connection to the ocean will give everyone a chance to participate and complete the journey by symbolically dipping our own legs into the Pacific Ocean in honor of Terry Fox.

The plaza could also benefit from a major culture building. My proposal incorporates the new Vancouver Art Gallery, which would partially lie beneath the plaza. Opaque skylights would line the proposed plaza, introducing vast amounts of natural light into the gallery space below. Large glass atriums extending upwards and sunken sculptural plazas would engage both art and public. The Vancouver Art Gallery would take advantage of the strong pedestrian link between the Seawall and downtown core enabling the public to catch glimpses of various exhibits, thereby adding to the overall richness of the Terry Fox Memorial Plaza.

The Terry Fox Memorial Plaza will offer flexible staging. A potential stage location could be in front of the contemplation garden, on the cascading stairs, stramps or tidal steps. The terraced and pier restaurants/ pubs will offer year-round amenities and the Pacific Ocean along the south will work together in creating a sense of place - unique to Vancouver. The public pier and tidal steps offer places for people to explore and relax, a welcomed detour for seawall travelers. Areas under the restaurants will offer public facilities and storage. Stramps, ramps within BC place and vertical movement cores will make this entire proposal 100% accessible.

To summarize, this proposal tackles the current disconnect caused by the 40' elevation change from Robson Street to the Seawall, the road network surrounding BC Place, and the lack of amenity areas around BC Place. Currently, the only way of getting to the Plaza of Nations is by navigating a labyrinth of bridges or by car. The Terry Fox Memorial Plaza and BC Place Development design proposal is ambitious, but essential to bringing continuity to the urban fabric. The proposal turns this once derelict area into a vibrant pedestrian community in the heart of Vancouver. It strengthens the connection between west and east Vancouver and act as a catalyst for future growth in the area.