

## **>TERMINAL SQUARE<**

**< IDEA>** Today the City of Vancouver has a number of public squares and gathering places that are successfully used for various special events. However the city lacks that everyday gathering place that would be a focal point of the city's life; a place that would draw people and promote expression and interaction. But to become a Grand Gathering Place from scratch, it has to be more than a venue for art, performance and public gathering. It has to be meaningful and unique to the city, having an identity so strong and the image so distinct, that regardless of its novelty, it would anchor itself in people's minds and become a symbol of the city. Generally main gathering places around the world were planned when the city began and naturally evolved over the long periods of time. They were often purposefully placed in the center of the city so that the city grew around them, focused on the square. The identity of the space was then strengthened over the years of use. That way the square was not only central, but also grounded in history and tradition.

Thus, in order to represent the city and have meaning and significance today, Grand Gathering Place of Vancouver must be anchored in its history. It can then use the energy that is already there, but at the moment lacks focus. Vancouver began as a Terminal City, when it became a Terminus of Canadian Pacific Railway in 1887 and the town's population increased dramatically from about 400 to 13,000 in four years. The city started its growth from the area around Gastown, where the last train station of transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway was located. Historically then this is the center of the city and the most appropriate place for the main square. Building on this history it will be called Terminal Square.

**<ICON>** Traditionally, main gathering places have strong, grounding elements, for example monuments or historical buildings, which become symbolic of and represent the city, as well as anchor and ground the space. Terminal Square would be such an icon in itself on a grand scale. When viewed from above as well as from the water, it is strongly expressed as an iconic steam train wheel. Reflecting the identity of Vancouver as "the city at the edge", Terminal Square hovers above the train-tracks, accessed only via a large single ramp. In the corner of the site there is a proposed railway themed coffee-shop/museum, with public washrooms and storage facilities that will address the site's servicing needs.

**<CONTEXT>** Terminal Square feeds on the flow of today's sky train, sea-bus and cruise-ship terminal, as well as on the energy and presence of the past of the historic Gastown. Central and easily accessible, it overlooks Canada Place to the North and opens up to the views of the marine freight storage and cranes to the East. It is prominent and easily identifiable from the docking cruise-ships at Canada Place, as well as from the North shore. Located where Vancouver began, Terminal Square captures the essence of the city through its placement and design.

**<UPPER PLAZA>** The Square consists of two distinct components: the iconic Upper Plaza, which is meant to function as a Grand Gathering Place, and The Lower Plaza, which reflects the vibrant, diverse and multicultural Vancouver of today in its design and function. An elevation change of four feet separates the two and a 25 foot drop down to the railway below creates a dramatic effect. Expressed as a

large steam train wheel the Upper Plaza sits on a great concrete column, with the network of concrete beams at the soffit, forming the spokes of the wheel. Away from the shadows cast by the neighbouring buildings it is, on a nice day, a sunny open space, contrasting with the Lower Plaza, which for the most part remains in the shadow. It is thus meant to attract people when it's sunny, while The Lower Plaza would provide a sheltered performance space when it rains. The focal point of the upper plaza is a symbolic steam stack with circular seating area around it, forming the center part of a grand wheel. The steam stack and the seating are purposefully placed on axis with the entry ramp, creating interest and inviting people into the space. The cylinder forming the back of the seating around the steam stack would be warm to the touch and the steam would periodically rise to greet and welcome the visitors.

Designed to be a venue for visual, as well as performance arts, the square features moveable secure glass art displays placed on the rail tracks along the radiating spokes of the train wheel. They can be shifted to the outer circumference or concentrated in the center allowing for greater flexibility during a special event, when they can also be used as seating. On a day-to-day basis, the displays entice the visitors to come in and take a roundabout walk along the wheel. The square rises into a viewing platform through a series of steps, bound by two semi-circular ramps on each side, which create a circulation loop. The edge of the wheel is "green", animated by planters, that on the viewing platform, form private nooks with double-sided benches. Large concrete steps alternate with smaller lighter steel ones, which, made from see-through perforated metal mesh, open up the center of the square to the view of the tracks below. The large south-facing steps are designed to function as seating for special events, as well as for everyday activities. They are focused on the staging area off to the side of the entry ramp, which is meant to be used for large scale special events, where a stage can be set up.

**<LOWER PLAZA>** The Lower Plaza was conceived as a venue for smaller, more frequent events, thus complementing the large scale upper venue. At ground level it is defined through a series of steps that also function for potential seating and viewing. The steps form a semicircle around the central podium, which can be used as a stage. Through the gentle slope of the ground and the build-up of the steps, The Lower Plaza is meant to draw people coming from the Waterfront Terminal, inviting them to linger in the space and focusing them on the podium and the performance. The space can be used for a variety of activities from simply busking to small dance and theatre performances. In order to be comfortable and usable all-year-round in Vancouver's rainy climate, it has extensive weather protection. Grounded in the center of the podium, the glassy twister spirals upwards creating a hierarchy of space by providing cover at the low level for most of the viewing space around the podium, and at the upper level protecting the entry ramp to The Upper Plaza and the staging area. The frosted glass and the light steel expression evoke the imagery of rising steam.

Today, Vancouver is a diverse multi-cultural city that is changing and growing at increasingly fast pace. While streets like Granville and Robson are the cities main pedestrian arteries, Gastown will always be its heart. Inspired by the history of Vancouver in its form, a reflection of what the city is today in its function, Terminal Square would become a prominent symbol and a landmark for the future.