

March 20, 2009

Where's the Square Competition
Vancouver Public Space Network
P.O. Box 2754, Station Terminal
Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2

NAME

WATERFRONT SQUARE
Where Vancouver Began

DESCRIPTION

Waterfront Square has two major components. We create a large plaza at the elevation of the intersection of Granville and Cordova Streets, by removing the top floor of the parkade on the west side of Waterfront Station. This would allow the North Shore mountains and Burrard Inlet, currently hidden by the parkade entrance, to become the background of the square. As people walk towards the water, they would enjoy 180 degree views of historic Gastown, the dramatic working port and the historic railyard. The first trans-Canadian train arrived there, leading to the founding of Vancouver. The plaza would be heavily activated with a stage for public events, and edged with food service and entertainment facilities. A retractable glass roof would cover much of the plaza. The west end of Waterfront Station would be restored to its heritage configuration. The heritage Sinclair Centre across Cordova Street would be restored by removing the pedestrian bridge attached to its east side.

Waterfront Square is at the hub of regional transit for the Lower Mainland. Its second component would be a soaring all-glass galleria built north of Waterfront Station that *Celebrates Transit*: the conflux of *ten* major transit lines— providing unified access to the West Coast Express, three Skytrain lines, rapid bus, regional commuter buses, ferries, helicopters, taxis and tour buses— and would include a welcoming centre to orient visitors. The galleria would replace the unattractive collection of ramps and small transit halls now appended to the north side of Waterfront Station. Alongside the galleria, a new transit road for buses and taxis would bring all public transit facilities closely together. Stairs and ramps would descend to the extended Seawall recreational corridor along Waterfront Rd.

LOCATION

Waterfront Square is located at the north end of Granville St., next to Waterfront Station and across from the Sinclair Centre. It was the site of the first Canadian Pacific Railway station and docks, which were the reason for creating the city of Vancouver. It is the only remaining site which captures the iconic Vancouver setting of mountains and water, industry, transportation, history, and modern downtown. It is within a 400 metre walk of historic Gastown, the Canada Place convention centre, the

Granville St. entertainment district, two universities, BCIT and numerous language schools, the Seawall, hotels, and the heart of the downtown business district.

RESPONSE TO DESIGN CRITERIA

Accommodation. Using the competition's metric, Waterfront Square, at more than 100,000 sq. ft., can comfortably hold more than 60,000 people. In addition, we provide for permanent food and entertainment facilities, sculptures and a stage.

Context of existing and proposed surrounding land uses. The city, region and province have made massive public transit investments in the area, including the terminus of the Canada Line. Waterfront Square celebrates these investments. Waterfront Station and the Sinclair Centre are two of the finest heritage structures in Vancouver, and Waterfront Square would fully restore their heritage qualities. Waterfront Square would have a welcoming centre for arriving visitors to the newly expanded Canada Place convention centre a block away, and for travellers from YVR arriving on the Canada Line. Being at street level, Waterfront Square would be accessible to the thousands of workers, students, and commuters who are in the immediate area. Obsessive attention to wayfinding will make it easy for visitors to orient themselves. We have identified new development opportunity sites that would help pay for the new public facilities.

Location in the city of Vancouver. The proposal is so located.

Utility. Waterfront Square includes a stage for large events. Emergency vehicles would be able to directly drive onto the plaza, and we provide a service staging area. Waterfront Square's design is exceptionally flexible, and large enough to accommodate two major events simultaneously. In respect for Vancouver's weather, a major portion of the plaza would be covered by a retractable glass roof. The adjacent transit galleria would be all-glass and designed to open to the plaza.

Accessibility. Waterfront Square would be fully accessible to everyone capable of using a public street. We provide new pedestrian and bicycle access to Waterfront Rd. and a future Seawall trail extension, via a stairway and ramp. We provide secure, sheltered bike parking and rental facilities.

Programming and Sociability. This place says Vancouver! Waterfront Square's first draw would be its central transit location and spectacular views. Intensive programming would build on that. First would be a Welcoming Centre for visitors arriving on the Canada Line and cruise ships. Wayfinding would be comprehensive, in every language spoken in Vancouver (there'd be a contest to identify them all). History would be remembered with First Nations sculptures and a giant Douglas Fir stump, as tall as possible, a reminder of the forest that once covered this peninsula. Firs would be planted at grade along Waterfront Rd. Major public sporting events, like the Sun Run, could start here. In winter, there could be an ice skating rink, covered by the plaza's retractable glass roof. Food and beverage services, retail and cultural offerings would encourage lingering. All chairs and tables would be moveable. Tents on the plaza would shelter a summer farmer's market and other seasonal activities. The Transit Galleria would have additional food, service, and retail facilities for travellers.

VIABILITY

Where's the Square? is a competition of ideas. Waterfront Square takes that further. **We are committed to creating a Waterfront Square design that will be built**, giving Vancouver one of the things it most lacks— a communal gathering place of infinite variety.