

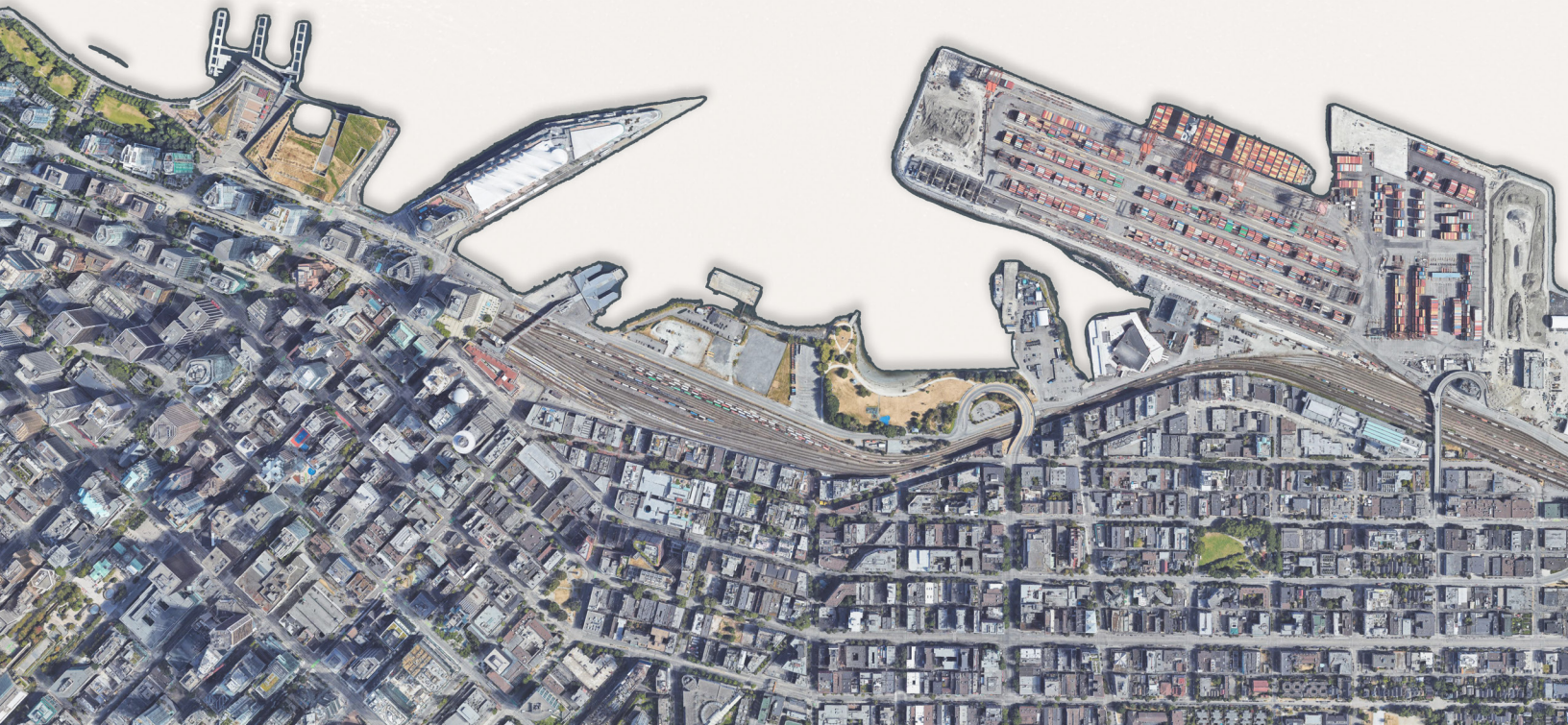
A New Vision for the Central Waterfront



Final Vision Plan

Prepared for James K.M. Cheng and the Downtown Waterfront Working Group

Prepared by Trey Schiefelbein, Grace Sherrell, Ruofan Wang, Tracy Wilkins





THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
School of Community and Regional Planning
(SCARP)

Positionality Statement

As young, able-bodied, middle-class individuals who do not belong to a systemically racialized group, we do not embody the lived experiences of many partners and community members—particularly of those who experience housing insecurity and of Indigenous peoples, on whose unceded lands the Central Waterfront sits. Furthermore, as planning graduate students, we are situated within the dominant discourses of our chosen profession and are influenced by its leading paradigms. Though this personal and academic background shapes our worldview, we made conscious attempts to center the voices of the community in this project.

Acknowledgements

This project was supported by James KM Cheng Architects, the Downtown Waterfront Working Group (DWWG) and the University of British Columbia’s School of Community and Regional Planning (UBC SCARP). This project was made possible with the generous contributions of time, knowledge and supervision from the following people:

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Sincere appreciation goes to the other members of the Downtown Waterfront Working Group and community members who took the time to share their knowledge and experiences for this project.

Statement from the Downtown Waterfront Working Group

The Downtown Waterfront Working Group is appreciative of the UBC SCARP faculty and students for reaching out to the community and offering research and analysis on important city- building projects. We are especially thankful to UBC SCARP for selecting a community sector client. As a year-long project, the student team devoted hundreds of hours of their time in unravelling the governance, planning and design complexities of the Central Waterfront. The recommendations put forward in the report do not, in their entirety, match the views of our Group but we acknowledge that differences in opinion and judgement help foster meaningful engagement. We are confident that this work will pay dividends in the future creation of a waterfront that places the advancement of public good in the centre of future planning and development.

Land Acknowledgment



From left to right: First Nations people camped at the foot of Columbia St in the Central Waterfront; a war canoe race in the Burrard Inlet; Squamish dwellings in today's Coal Harbour.

Source (all): City of Vancouver Archives, Major Matthews Collection.

We respectfully acknowledge that the area currently known as the Central Waterfront is located on the traditional and unceded territories of the Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. Prior to colonization and the subsequent reshaping of the shoreline, the area was known as Lek'lekí (Squamish for “beautiful grove”) and served as a portage route for Indigenous communities that connected the Burrard Inlet to False Creek via today's Carrall St.

The seasonal Squamish settlement of K'emk'emeláy (meaning “maple trees”) emerged further east near the foot of what is today known as Dunlevy St. By 1865 the Hastings Mill opened nearby, and the colonial settlements of Gastown and Granville followed. The City of Vancouver was officially incorporated in 1886, but was lost to a fire shortly after. During the Great Vancouver Fire, residents of the Squamish community at Ustlawn crossed the Burrard Inlet on their canoes to help evacuate the area, saving hundreds of residents that had waded into the Burrard Inlet to escape the fire. One year later, K'emk'emeláy was forcefully evicted and destroyed by the police. In the years following, Vancouver was rebuilt, and continued to grow to where we are today.

We have much to learn from our Host Nations. The waterfront has and always will be a place of great significance to Indigenous peoples. For generations, they have demonstrated and embodied resilience. Despite multiple forms of colonial violence, our three Host Nations are still here – caring for these lands and working tirelessly to create a better future for all. We are grateful for their wisdom and leadership and look forward to a Central Waterfront developed in partnership with the original stewards of these lands, creating a waterfront for current and future generations.



Table of Contents

Introduction

A New Vision

Plan Area

Objectives + Approach

Guiding Principles.....

Process.....

Principles.....

The Vision

A New District.....

A New Governance Model

A New Engagement Strategy

Conclusion

1

1

3

4

5

5

5

7

7

17

22

33

Executive Summary

The Central Waterfront is the stage for Vancouver’s civic aspirations. It presents an opportunity to reflect Vancouver’s values of reconciliation, equity, and resilience; to improve the well-being of local communities; and to welcome visitors to the city. Despite its immense potential, several attempts to redevelop the area over the past 40 years have stalled due to various challenges.

This report outlines a new vision and redevelopment approach for the Central Waterfront that confronts the area’s challenges to achieve its fullest potential. It presents a cohesive plan for the area that addresses its physical form, creates opportunities for collaboration, and reflects the needs of the surrounding communities. Informed by the needs and values of the community and project partners, this plan is the culmination of a three stage visioning process that spanned seven months. This included a robust background analysis, targeted outreach with 20 community members and organizations, and participation in a four-day planning charrette hosted by Cadillac Fairview and Carrera Development Corporation.

The proposed Vision Plan for the Central Waterfront is based the following foundational elements:

A “phase 1” plan to create a new district around Waterfront Station that is achievable in the short-term.

The vision focuses on the creation of a district around Waterfront Station as the first phase of development. While this is only a portion of the entire Central Waterfront, it is an area that can be redeveloped in the short-term and inspire long-term efforts to revitalize the rest of the Central Waterfront.

A new governance model to coordinate different levels of government and private interests as they work towards a strategic master plan.

To unlock development across the whole site, historic investments and newfound unity of purpose across all levels of government will be needed. The establishment of a development corporation would allow governments to pool together their powers and resources to create a single strategic master plan laying out a unified vision for the whole site.

An innovative engagement strategy that ensures an open waterfront for all and reflects the values of the community.

To become the iconic area that the Central Waterfront deserves to be, a fulsome engagement process is required to shape the area and give it meaning. While some engagement work has been completed already, the new strategy highlights who is missing from the conversation as a way to create a more inclusive waterfront.

While building out Vancouver’s Central Waterfront is an ambitious endeavour that will require consensus between rights-holders, governments and the public that does not yet exist, the concrete steps outlined in this plan can inspire the community and catalyze further development on this site. This Vision Plan builds off of the growing momentum in the community to spark discussion on what is possible and inspire action along the Central Waterfront.

1 Introduction

The Central Waterfront is the stage for Vancouver's civic aspirations. It presents an opportunity to reflect Vancouver's values of reconciliation, equity, and resilience; improve the well-being of local communities; and welcome visitors to the city. A targeted redevelopment of the Waterfront Station District combined with innovative engagement strategies and a new governance model can unlock this potential and catalyze the redevelopment of the entire waterfront.



The interface of the CPR railyard with Gastown and the waterfront, as seen from the SeaBus walkway.

A New Vision

A new vision is needed for Vancouver's Central Waterfront. While similar neighbourhoods like Coal Harbour, Yaletown, and the Olympic Village experienced world-renowned transformations, the Central Waterfront is defined by railyards, parking lots, and other port activities. There have been several attempts to redevelop the area since the 1960s, but they have all stalled due to various challenges such as jurisdictional boundaries, private land ownership patterns, the presence of the port activities, and heritage preservation.

The new vision for the Central Waterfront must directly confront all of these challenges to activate the area's fullest potential. In particular, it must present a cohesive plan for the area that addresses its physical form, creates opportunities for collaboration, and reflects the needs of the surrounding communities. To this end, this Vision Plan proposes the following three strategies:

1. A “phase 1” plan to create a new district around Waterfront Station that is achievable in the short-term.

The vision focuses on the creation of a district around Waterfront Station as the first phase of development. While this is only a portion of the entire Central Waterfront, it is an area that can be redeveloped in the short-term and inspire long-term efforts to revitalize the rest of the Central Waterfront.

2. A new governance model to coordinate different levels of government and private interests as they work towards a strategic master plan.

To unlock development across the whole site, historic investments and newfound unity of purpose across all levels of government will be needed. The establishment of

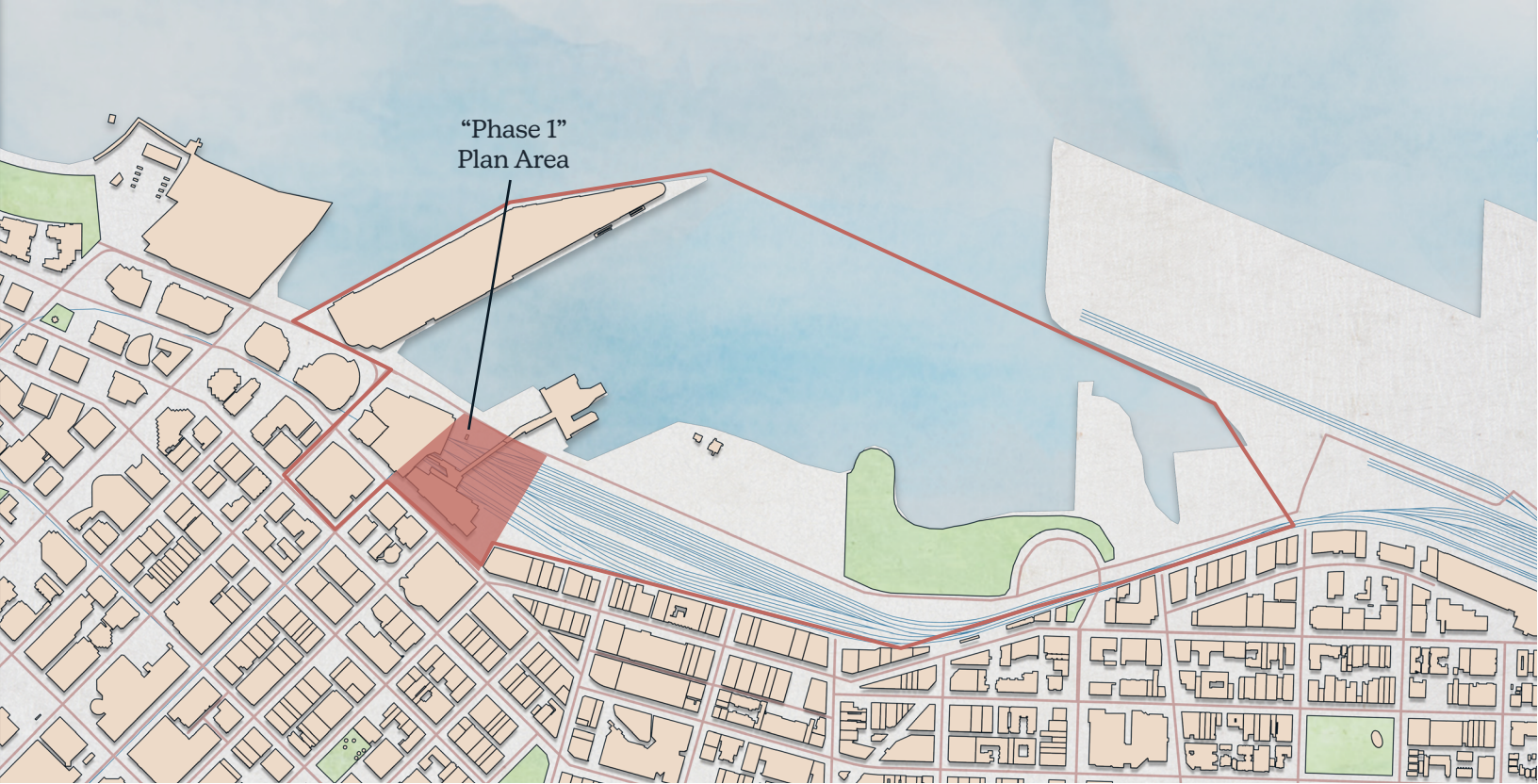
a development corporation would allow governments to pool together their powers and resources to create a single strategic master plan laying out a unified vision for the whole site.

3. An innovative engagement strategy that ensures an open waterfront for all and reflects the values of the community.

To become the iconic area that the Central Waterfront deserves to be, a fulsome engagement process is required to shape the area and give it meaning. While some engagement work has been completed already, the new strategy highlights who is missing from the conversation as a way to create a more inclusive waterfront.

This work was completed by a team of graduate students from the School of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia at the request of the Downtown Waterfront Working Group, an independent advocacy group working to advance cohesive and collaborative plans for the area, and James K.M. Cheng Architects, an internationally recognized architecture firm based in Vancouver. The following report is the summation of this work, while the complete findings from the planning process are available as an appendix.

The process was initiated in response to a series of community dialogues hosted by Simon Fraser University and roundtables of key partners hosted by the Hon. Hedy Fry MP, which helped build interest in the area. Additionally, recent Council motions from 2022 and 2023 re-affirmed the City of Vancouver's commitment to the area, and a work-plan and budget will be completed in 2024. As momentum is growing, the time to act is now.



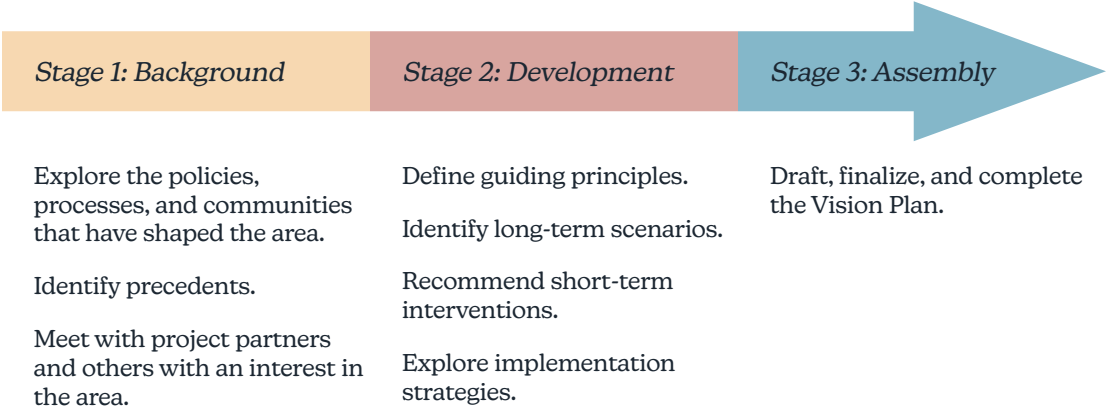
Phase 1 of the Vision Plan within the greater Central Waterfront.

Plan Area

The Central Waterfront occupies 59 hectares of land between the Vancouver Convention Centre to the west, the Port of Vancouver’s Centennial Terminals (also known as Centerm) container terminal to the east, Gastown to the south, and the Burrard Inlet to the north. The site has a rich Indigenous history: its oldest known settlement was the Squamish community of K’emk’emeláy (“maple trees”) and it served as a transportation hub for the Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations, with the name Lek’leki (occasionally translated as “beautiful grove”) given to a now buried waterway that once connected False Creek to the Burrard Inlet. The importance of transportation to the site continued into the colonial era, as it was the location of the public Vancouver City Wharf until 1889. Public access to the waterfront was lost with the expansion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), as the area evolved around port and rail activities.

In 1987, years of advocacy by the local community led to the creation of the first public green space on the Central Waterfront, CRAB Park. Despite this step, the Central Waterfront’s landscape today is virtually unchanged. The CPR railyard dominates the site, as do surface parking lots, and other port-related industries largely owned by the federal government through the Port of Vancouver. The commercial real estate company Cadillac Fairview has multiple assets in the area, as does Carrera Management Corporation.

As the redevelopment of the Central Waterfront will unfold across decades and in multiple phases, this plan will focus on a hypothetical “Phase 1” to initiate the process. Similar to the 2009 Central Hub Framework by the City of Vancouver, the Vision Plan focuses on the creation of a district around Waterfront Station as the first phase of development. This site was chosen for its pragmatism and vital role in reconnecting the city to the waterfront, and is necessary to unlock the rest of the area.



Objectives + Approach

The objective of this plan is to offer a new vision for the Central Waterfront that is grounded in - but not necessarily bound by - the policies, precedents, conditions, and communities that have shaped the area. As the redevelopment of the Central Waterfront is a decades long process, this vision prioritizes planning and implementation strategies that are achievable over a 30-year period. These strategies reflect the needs and values of both the community and project partners, and are the culmination of a three stage visioning process that spanned seven months.

The planning process consisted of three stages: Background (Stage 1), Development (Stage 2), and Assembly (Stage 3). The Background stage (1) built the foundation for the plan and explored the policies, processes, and communities that shaped the area. Precedents were also identified to better understand how plans were designed and implemented. The Development stage (2) synthesized the information from stage 1 to create a set of guiding principles based on the background work to date; identified development scenarios that are contingent upon potential changes in land use on the plan site; developed a governance model for the site; outlined an engagement framework to support future policy efforts; and drafted a design concept. The final stage (3), Assembly, consisted of the drafting and finalization of this Vision Plan for the Central Waterfront.

From left to right: Waterfront Station on its platform; graffiti in Gastown; inside Waterfront Station.



2 Guiding Principles

Process

The guiding principles are the result of a community visioning process that spanned the entire project. This included understanding who was engaged in these discussions, what was said, and who was left out. This provided a lens to understand the aspirations expressed up to now and identify what was part of - or missing from - the process.

Targeted outreach was conducted to identify and interview community members and organizations who may offer valuable insight but have been missing from the conversation so far. The intention was to understand how their aspirations align with what was heard elsewhere and to gain new insights towards the Central Waterfront. Additionally, in December 2022 and January 2023, Carrera Development Corporation and Cadillac Fairview hosted a four-day planning charrette with key partners to share interests and to develop an integrated vision for the area, which provided additional context for this project.

It is important to reiterate that given the limited resources available throughout this project, any analysis is a preliminary understanding of community viewpoints on the Central Waterfront. These viewpoints were organized and categorized into several areas of interest, and distilled into the guiding principles below.

Principles

1. Create a new and distinct urban district with a revitalized Waterfront Station as the nexus.

As the community heart of the Central Waterfront, an experience will be created from the moment of arrival to the area around Waterfront Station. With views of the North Shore Mountains framed by landmark buildings, abundant public spaces, bountiful parks, and a world-class transportation hub, the Central Waterfront will transform into the most iconic area of Vancouver.

2. Uphold national commitments to truth and reconciliation and respect Indigenous history and sovereignty.

Commitments and responsibilities towards truth and reconciliation must be reflected throughout all aspects of the plan. This includes meaningful partnerships with Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, and embracing an overall plan that is reflective of their values. Opportunities to support the aspirations of Host Nations should be prioritized.

3. Enhance connections and remove barriers to an open and accessible waterfront.

From the beginnings of an Indigenous portage route at what is now Carrall St, the Central Waterfront has served as a transportation hub for thousands of years. As the legacies of colonialism imprinted the area with streets, artificial elevation changes, and industrial barriers, the Central Waterfront grew increasingly disconnected from the city. These connections must be re-established and integrated in an adaptive and flexible way to meet the diverse and growing needs of the region.

4. Respect, protect, and celebrate heritage and culture.

The historical and cultural significance of the Central Waterfront must be protected and celebrated. It is particularly important to give tribute to the Indigenous history of the area, as it spans thousands of years. CRAB Park is valuable to the communities of the Downtown Eastside, while the historical significance of Gastown, Japantown, Chinatown, and other heritage areas are also treasured. Context sensitive development is a priority.

5. Maintain the presence of a working waterfront in the short to medium term.

It is understood that both the port and railyard provide vital goods and services to Vancouver and the rest of Canada, and that the growth of these industries are high priorities. Additionally, significant portions of downtown are serviced by Waterfront Road. These functions remain throughout the proposed timeline, but the plan embraces an approach that reduces the capacity of the freight railyard with the ultimate goal of relocating it entirely.

6. Lead with an inspired and collaborative approach in pursuit of the public good.

An inspired approach is necessary to create a Central Waterfront that benefits all. It must embrace cooperation, Indigenous partnerships, and a willingness for change. Most importantly, it requires collaboration across all levels of government to fund and deliver new infrastructure and public investments. The public good must be at the heart of this process through the engagement of all community voices.

7. Follow a fiscally responsible and realistic approach.

Given the constraints of the site, redeveloping the Central Waterfront will be an expensive project that spans multiple decades. A pragmatic and multi-phased approach is necessary to move the project forward one piece at a time, as is the sharing of costs between developers and different levels of government.



First Nations people camped on Alexander Street beach at the foot of Columbia Street.

Source: City of Vancouver Archives, Major Matthews Collection.

3 The Vision

A New District

Existing Conditions

There are several physical constraints that impact the Central Waterfront. Cordova St sits atop the natural escarpment over Vancouver's historic waterfront, and some buildings like Granville Square and Waterfront Station were constructed on platforms that create abrupt changes in elevation. Further, much of the waterfront is in a floodplain, including the CP railyard. Additionally, the Central Waterfront sits between the modern highrises of downtown and the heritage buildings of Gastown, Chinatown, and the Downtown Eastside, each with distinct communities. Redeveloping the Central Waterfront must address this unique context in unique and meaningful ways.

Vision

The Central Waterfront presents many opportunities for the betterment of the region. Built upon the guiding principles, this section presents a high-level vision for a vibrant Waterfront Station District that creates a sense of arrival to the city and prioritizes convenient connections and convivial streetscapes.

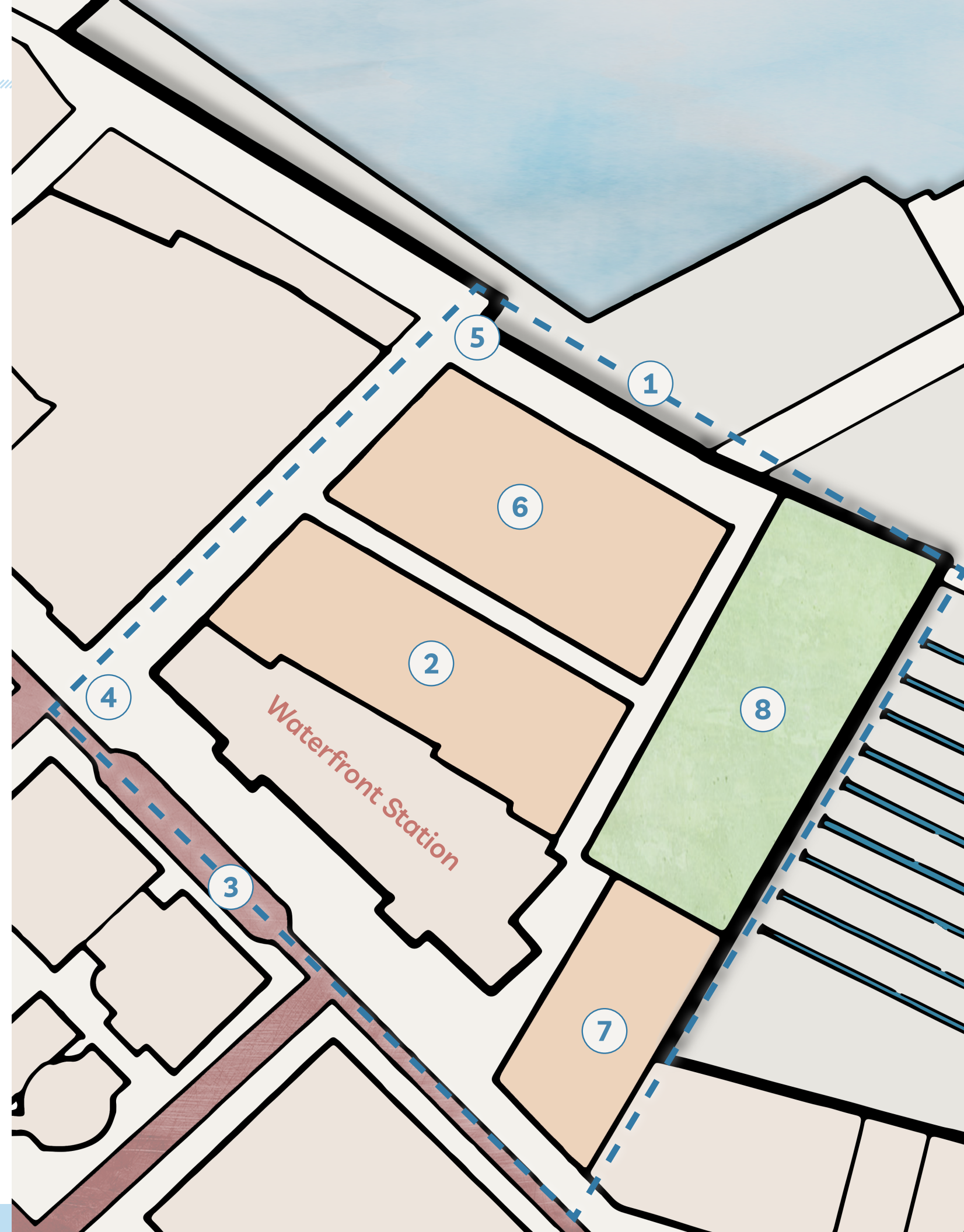
Further details should be developed following community engagement and the creation of a partnership with Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. The area provides a critical opportunity to represent local Indigenous values and design in an area of historic and contemporary importance.

This vision focuses on the area around the historic Waterfront Station. While other sections of the site may require the creation of a governance model to account for differing jurisdictions, this site was identified as the first stage of development as the land is privately owned and subject to the City of Vancouver's planning regulations. As the first phase of the Central Waterfront, this site will create excitement and public will to move forward with the rest of the waterfront.

The vision assumes primarily private development that seeks to balance financial feasibility and public good, creating a vibrant and welcoming urban district that acknowledges the area's importance to the community.

The vision consists of eight key features which will create a hub of activity, convivial streetscapes, and convenient connections.

1. Celebrating and Promoting Indigenous Culture
2. An Expanded and Modern Transit Concourse
3. Prioritizing Public and Active Transportation on Cordova St
4. Opening Granville St Towards the Water as a Pedestrianized Street
5. Extending the Downtown Platform and Shorten the Railyard to Create New Development Opportunities
6. New and Iconic Buildings North of Waterfront Station
7. Balancing Public and Private Interests at 555 W Cordova
8. A Terraced Public Space that Connects the City to the Waterfront



Setting the Scene - Big Design Moves

1. Celebrating and Promoting Indigenous Culture

Though not bound to a specific location, the redevelopment of the Central Waterfront is a critical opportunity to celebrate the cultures and values of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations in new and meaningful ways, and reconcile with their history. While collaborating with Indigenous artists for placemaking and public art opportunities is an important part of the process, these efforts must go deeper than surface-level forms of representation. This may include creating opportunities for intergenerational learning and mentorship; policy that reflects commitments to truth and reconciliation; and partnerships with Indigenous architects for the design of buildings, public spaces, and interior spaces that create a new and iconic district that is recognizable across the world. Additionally, there are growing calls for an Indigenous Centre for Science, Technology, and Languages, and space must be provided for this unique opportunity to preserve and promote Indigenous cultures.



Clockwise from left: Blanketing the City by Debra Sparrow in Vancouver, BC; the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre in Whistler, BC; The National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

Sources: City of Vancouver Public Art Registry; the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre; the United States Library of Congress.

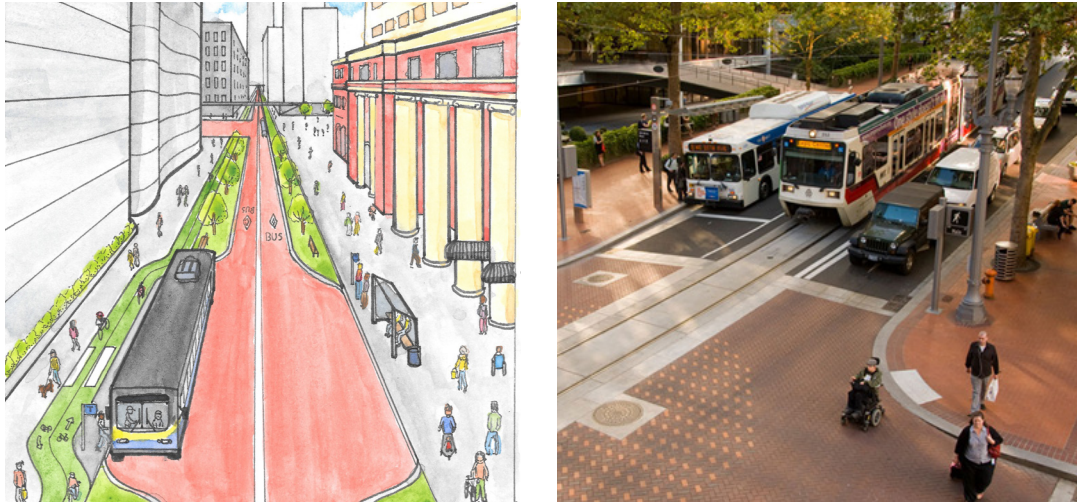
Clockwise from left: Estación de Madrid Atocha in Madrid, Spain; Moynihan Train Hall in New York City; Paddington Station in London, UK.

Sources: Alev Takil via Unsplash; Mark Kauzlarich via the New Yorker; Kevin Grieve via Unsplash.



2. An Expanded and Modern Transit Concourse

At the core of the vision is an improved and expanded transit concourse behind the historic Waterfront Station. Attached to the rear of the existing building, the new concourse should provide greater circulation and convenience for commuters transferring between different modes of transit while providing space for increased services in the future. Transit platforms may be realigned to provide shorter transfers between the West Coast Express and SkyTrain Lines with an improved connection to the SeaBus terminal. Due to a natural escarpment, rail-based modes of transit are located underground, providing the opportunity for retail, restaurants, and an information kiosk at the ground floor of the concourse. As a key transportation and tourism hub, the materials and design of the concourse should reflect local culture and values, creating an atmosphere of arrival. This may include a glass roof to allow natural light to illuminate the space and preserve a near 360 degree view of the historic Waterfront Station. Ultimately, the new concourse should respect the historic structure, but acknowledge it can be expanded to improve intermodal transfers, provide space for increased services, and create an atmosphere of arrival.



Clockwise from top-left:
Artist's rendering of a new
Cordova St; Portland Transit
Mall in Portland, OR; Nicolle
Mall in Minneapolis, MN.

Sources: Project team; Bruce
Forster via Planetizen; John
Muggenborg via Architectural
Record.

3. Prioritizing Public and Active Transportation on Cordova St.

Transforming Cordova Street into a busway between Burrard and Richards Streets supports the vision of an improved transit hub that is thoroughly integrated into the city's network of active transportation paths. Narrowing the street to one bus lane in each direction provides four lanes of additional width to support bus bays in front of Waterfront Station, a buffer of trees, space for transit users to queue, a bi-directional bicycle path, and wider sidewalks. This creates space for heritage and cultural markers, public art, and signage to improve wayfinding to nearby communities and tourist attractions. Positioning the busway on Cordova between Burrard and Richards creates a connection between the Burrard Landing (the current terminus of the Seaside Greenway) and the Richards Street Greenway. This will complete the Seawall/greenway loop around the downtown, though the Seawall may be extended further east along the shoreline once the port lands are developed. Ultimately, the Cordova Busway reorients the street's use away from personal vehicles and towards transit users, cyclists, and pedestrians, supporting existing and future demand while improving connections to nearby communities.

4. Opening Granville St Towards the Water as a Pedestrianized Street

To support the district, Granville Street should be extended as a pedestrianized street that stretches north, wrapping around Granville Square and connecting to the end of Canada Place. While it would require the partial removal or reduction of the existing parking lot and Granville Square, it would restore the historic connection of Granville Street to the water and open views to the North Shore. The space should prioritize pedestrian use, however, a single lane for taxi or emergency vehicle access may be included. The extension would provide access to new buildings north of Waterfront Station while further integrating nearby hotels, Canada Place, the cruise ship terminal, and the Seawall with Waterfront Station. As a pedestrianized street, the extension will serve as a focal point of the district; characterized by a wide walkway, adjacent restaurant patios, public seating to enjoy the view, and space for community programming and public art. An outlook on the northern edge should provide undisturbed views of Burrard Inlet and the North Shore, capitalizing on the site's prominent place on the waterfront. The Granville extension can restore the historic connection of Granville Street to the water, create a natural connection to the end of the Seawall, and provide access to new buildings north of Waterfront Station.



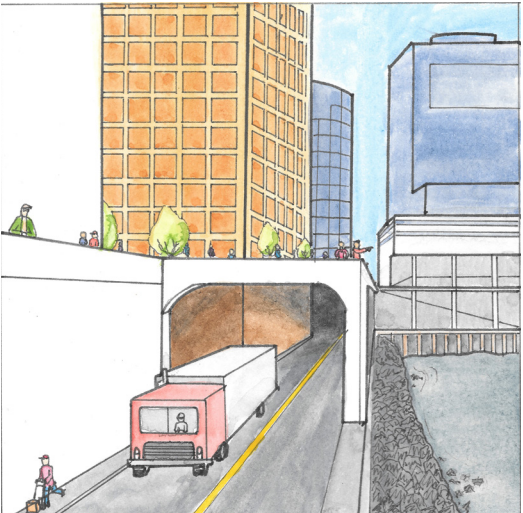
Clockwise from top-left:
Artist's rendering of a new
Granville St; Street life in
Brisbane's West End ; Fulton
St in Chicago's West Loop.

Sources: Project team;
Hayball; Chicago YIMBY.



5. Extending the Downtown Platform and Shorten the Railyard to Create New Development Opportunities

To facilitate the construction of the district, a platform similar to that of Granville Square should be built at the elevation of Cordova Street northwest of the Landing Building, and the railyard tracks should be shortened to stop just before the platform. While the SkyTrain and West Coast Express tracks should continue under the platform, the railyard tracks should be shortened. This will provide space under the platform for parking or loading bay use, while ensuring trains maintain a distance from development. The platform will create a level foundation for development above the floodplain and support the Granville Extension but also ensure the district is accessible to different modes of movement. By building the ‘ground floor’ at the elevated level of Cordova Street, the district maintains the functionality of Waterfront Road below which is used to service nearby businesses. Further, it removes the need for loading bay access on the new ‘ground floor’ as the buildings can be serviced from the lower level, separating pedestrians and cyclists from large trucks. Additionally, parking may be provided on the lower level, under the platform. The extension of a platform will allow a flat and accessible public realm, enable development, and support the continued use of Waterfront Road as a service access road for nearby businesses.



Clockwise from top-left:
Artist's rendering of a new
observation deck over the
Waterfront Rd; Developing
over trains and Hudson Yards
in New York City; Millennium
Park in Chicago, IL.

Sources: Project team; Robert
Bye via Unsplash; Walter
Martin via Unsplash.



Clockwise from top-left:
Artist's rendering of a
public space in the Central
Waterfront; Union Station in
Denver, CO; Qianhi Prisma
Towers in Shenzhen, China.

Sources: Project team;
Anderson Mason Dale
Architects; Bjarke Ingels
Group.

6. New and Iconic Buildings North of Waterfront Station

New buildings should be constructed north of the proposed station concourse, providing a hub of activity while contributing to the financial feasibility of the district. Uses may include hotel, convention space, offices, and residences. Further, the area should include space for the Indigenous Centre for Science, Technology, and Languages as a commitment to reconciliation and recognition of the area's historic importance to Indigenous peoples. The new buildings should integrate restaurants, cafes, and commercial spaces on the first floor, especially around the Granville Extension. This will encourage pedestrians to stop and linger, contributing to the vibrancy of the district. Further, the buildings should account for a pedestrian walkway along the northernmost edge of the platform to the Granville Extension, providing access to the structures and nearby public spaces while revealing a stunning view of the North Shore. Ultimately, the built form in the northeast corner of the district should seek to balance financial feasibility and public good, creating a hub of activity in the district.

Clockwise from left: New and old development in Brisbane’s West End; the Woodward’s Building in Vancouver’s Gastown; Microsoft’s office at 155 W Cordova.

Sources: Hayball; Paul Worchal via ArchDaily; Kenneth Chan via the Daily Hive.



7. Balancing Public and Private Interests at 555 Cordova

A structure should be built at 555 Cordova, sited towards the Landing building, to contribute to the financial feasibility of the district and create a node of daily activity. Cadillac Fairview owns the parcel containing Waterfront Station and the parking lot to the east and has expressed interest in developing the parking lot site. Any new structure should respect the character of adjacent heritage buildings and integrate a similar character where possible. While density may be required for financial feasibility, the City should explore opportunities for density transfers to reduce the height of the site to a scale more consistent with that of its historic neighbours. Adjacent to the historic Waterfront Station, there should be a welcoming public corridor that provides access to the station and the district behind the site. The structure should seek to balance financial feasibility and public good, creating a node of activity that facilitates public access to the district behind it.

Clockwise from top-left: Artist’s rendering of a terraced park in the Central Waterfront; Pukeahu National War Memorial in Wellington, NZ; the River Theatre in Chicago, IL.

Sources: Project team; New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage; Ross Barney Architects.

8. A Terraced Public Space that Connects the City to the Waterfront

North of 555 Cordova, a linear public space should provide uninterrupted views of Burrard Inlet and the North Shore. This public space will replicate, if not improve, the views from the parking lot currently sited at 555 Cordova, east of Waterfront Station. This space may include a public square and a terraced park that gradually steps down towards the elevation of Waterfront Road. The space should have suitable sun exposure, plenty of benches, and superb views of the water. The terraced landscape of the park should provide uninterrupted views at different levels while gently sloping towards the water, creating a space that is visually and sonically removed from the bustling urban fabric behind it. This terraced park’s sloped edge on the east of the platform structure could facilitate future expansion which may slope down eastward to meet the elevation of Gastown. The public space should seek to create a space for respite and sociability, providing space for impromptu picnics and enjoying the view.





Ownership and jurisdictions within the Central Waterfront.

A New Governance Model

Existing Conditions

Redeveloping the Central Waterfront requires the participation of all property owners, rights-holders, and title-holders in the area. However, each group has its own interests and priorities, resulting in a chronic lack of consensus or drive to move forward. Without full cooperation, there is not likely to be any meaningful progress in renewing the waterfront. With this in mind, new strategies are required to generate momentum towards unblocking the process.

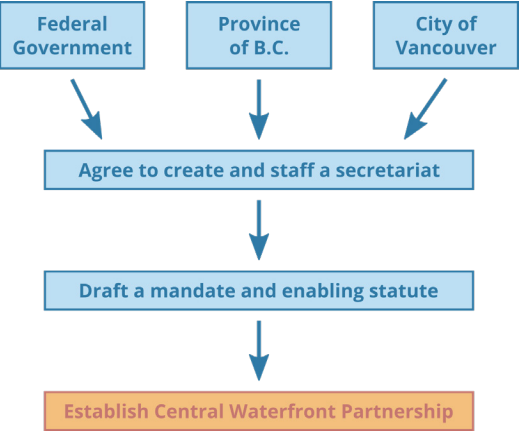
The fragmented governance of the Central Waterfront project site is the lynchpin by which the lack of progress on the development of the site can be explained. With the lack of coordination between levels of government and the failure of the various regulators to come to an agreement on a common framework for development, there is little prospect for sitewide development without substantial governance reform. As such, this section outlines a new governance model to unlock the area.

Vision

Governance has long been one of the principal barriers to action on the Central Waterfront site, with the balkanization of jurisdiction across government agencies and the inability of public actors to adopt a common vision preventing comprehensive sitewide development from taking place. A particular issue with the current governance situation is that the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority and CP Rail have shown little interest in urban redevelopment, posing a significant obstacle to unlocking large swaths of the project area. While some immediate first steps are achievable within the Waterfront Station District under existing City of Vancouver land-use policies, the development of a cohesive plan for the whole site will require a fundamental reimagination of the governance arrangements.

Creation of a Central Waterfront Partnership

Ultimately, the fragmentation of governance across levels of government is not conducive to a comprehensive visioning process for the Central Waterfront. While the City of Vancouver has the greatest interest in the site’s redevelopment, it has lacked the financial resources and political will to lead the process. Conversely, while the federal government owns significant tracts of land on-site, it has not been involved in discussions about the future of the area. Meanwhile, the Host Nations have inviolable sovereign rights over the unceded lands that make up the site, yet the existing governance pays little attention to their community needs and inalienable rights. Therefore, an intergovernmental approach is needed which permits the pooling of resources, the harmonization of regulations, and the establishment of a common purpose and direction, as has successfully been implemented in downtown Winnipeg by the Forks North Portage Partnership and on the Toronto waterfront by the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation. A federally led development corporation was also successfully used on the Vancouver Waterfront itself to create Canada Place.



As such, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia, the Federal Government, and the Host Nations should enter into an agreement to create the Central Waterfront Partnership, a development corporation for the management of the Central Waterfront along the Toronto and Winnipeg models. Accordingly, the corporation should be governed by a board of directors appointed in equal parts by the four partner governments and should be delegated land-use powers and planning authority over the whole Central Waterfront site east of the Waterfront Station District—namely the Port Lands and the Canadian Pacific railyard.

As we envision the governance model, the district around Waterfront Station itself would remain under the land use planning authority of the City of Vancouver as there are no inherent structural issues with the governance of that site which would prevent the redevelopment of the site by the existing rights-holders, provided that the financial conditions are appropriate. Moreover, the exclusion of this site is consistent with concerns that we have heard from City of Vancouver staff that excessive delegation of municipal authority may be challenging or objectionable. However, were the four government partners to instead come to the conclusion that the Waterfront Station District should be part of the development corporation’s jurisdiction, they could direct the secretariat to do so.

Preliminary Steps

As the creation of a development corporation is a long process fraught with challenges, some preliminary steps should be taken towards the planning of the Central Waterfront site within the existing governance framework.

Since higher levels of government are not needed to unlock the development potential

Top to bottom: Rendering of Quayside on Toronto's Waterfront; the Forks in Winnipeg, MB.

Sources: Waterfront Toronto; Brydon McCluskey via Unsplash.



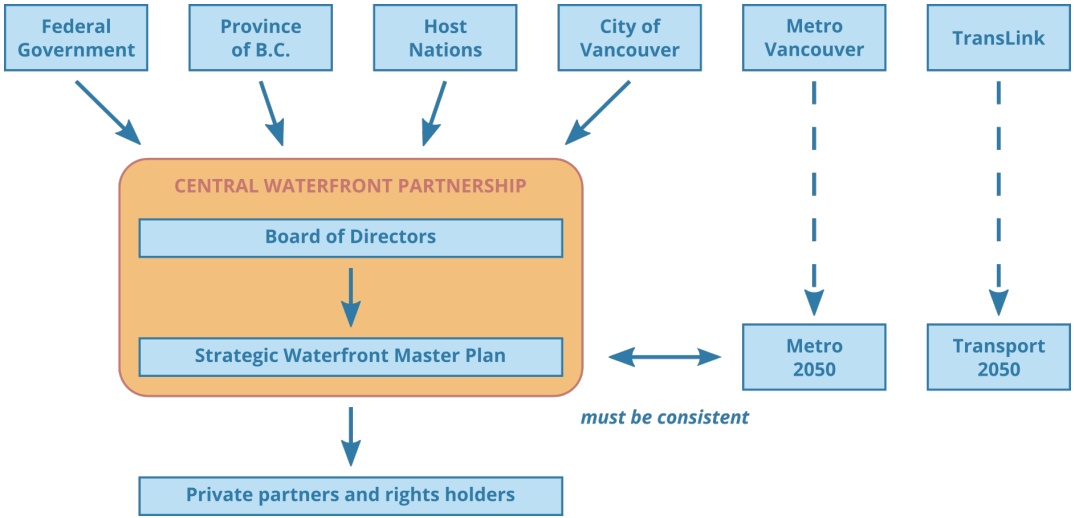
of the Waterfront Station District, we propose that a major new development built around Waterfront Station should go ahead immediately to catalyze excitement and further action for the Central Waterfront. However, under the current Hub Framework, development is unlikely to be financially viable given the extensive road network envisioned to be built at the rights-holders' cost: we recommend that City of Vancouver staff and Council should revise the Hub Framework to remove such conditions and enable the type of development that we suggest in the design section above in order to ensure the creation of an economically viable development opportunity that preserves the original goal of enhancing Waterfront Station as a transportation hub.

A secretariat should also be established among the four levels of government to work together towards the establishment of a development corporation, to negotiate the details of its enabling legislation, and to conduct public engagement to determine where the public interest lies in its work. The secretariat could be hosted, depending on capacity, within either the City or a federal department, with staff seconded from other levels of government. Based on the recommendations and conclusions of the secretariat, an enabling statute would then be drafted by its staff in consultation with the government partners and enacted by the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

Mandate, Powers, and Financing

As part of the creation of the corporation, every level of government should delegate its planning authority over the Central Waterfront to the new special-purpose entity in order to allow it to create a land-use plan. However, in order to preserve the rights of existing public decision-makers who are not part of the Central Waterfront Partnership, the enabling statute should require the corporation to have regard for the Metro Vancouver Regional District's Regional Growth Strategy (Metro 2050), TransLink's mandate and Regional Transportation Strategy (Transport 2050), and the mandate of the B.C. Pavillion Corporation.

The corporation should be granted a specific mandate to create and implement a strategic master plan for the development of the Central Waterfront area as a regional gateway, with explicit references to the site's importance for tourism, movement, employment and hospitality. Moreover, the mandate should recognize and elevate key external



partners in the development of the site, namely by directing the corporation to work with the private sector and to commit to reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples of Canada.

Like its precedents in Toronto and Winnipeg, the corporation should be initially funded by fixed contributions from the federal, provincial, and municipal governments, as it is in the interest of each level of government to see that the Central Waterfront reaches its potential and begins to serve the needs of the public. Once the Port Lands are placed under the jurisdiction of the corporation, it could potentially expand its revenue sources through leasing plots to private partners in alignment with the strategic master plan.

Indigenous Co-Governance and Reconciliation

Reconciliation is an official priority for all levels of government, particularly in light of the municipal, provincial and federal governments having bound themselves by statute or resolution to uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As part of the commitment to reconciliation, Indigenous co-governance should be incorporated into the corporation's enabling statute.

Indigenous representation on the corporation's board of directors, in the form of a voting representative appointed jointly by the Host Nations, should also be guaranteed in permanence. Moreover, the corporation should be required by law to seek the free, informed and prior consent of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations in the drafting of its strategic master plan, as well as tasked with engaging Indigenous communities on an ongoing basis about the administration of the Central Waterfront. Though the Host Nations are represented in the partnership, seeking express consent is still important to uphold respect for Indigenous land title, as Musqueam recently expressed in relation to the Park Board's co-governance motion.

Future of the Port Lands

Owing to its marine- and industrial-focused mandate, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority is ill-equipped to manage urban development in the Crown lands to



From top to bottom: the federal port lands between CRAB Park and the CP railyard; downtown Vancouver from Waterfront Rd; barriers at the Port of Vancouver.

the north of Waterfront Road. Yet, these federal Crown lands are entrusted to its administration, resulting in a disconnect between mandate and ownership.

As these lands are not currently used for any activities within the mandate of the port, nor do concrete plans exist for future port or industrial use, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority has no meaningful stake in their future development. Accordingly, the Port Authority should be divested of jurisdiction over the Central Waterfront port lands by Parliament, which should then assign ownership either directly to the development corporation or to a federal agency tasked with working in conjunction with the corporation on urban development, such as the Canada Lands Company.

Once the port lands are placed under the jurisdiction of the corporation, tremendous opportunities for public amenities and private development will be unlocked on the northern half of the site. We make no recommendation as to whether the corporation should be empowered to sell port lands to private sector entities, but note that a leasehold model has been successfully implemented on Granville Island and in the Old Port of Montreal.

Strategic Plan

Once established, the first priority for the development corporation will be the creation of a strategic master plan that envisions a comprehensive vision for the development of the underutilized portions of the Central Waterfront site, including land uses, public amenities and permitted private development types. Key issues that the master plan will need to address include the future of the Canadian Pacific railyard, what to do with the Port Lands, and what—if any—new or enhanced connections are needed between Gastown, the Waterfront Station District, and the undeveloped site. Because new development on the eastern portions of the site appears to be fundamentally incompatible with the ongoing operation of the existing railyard in the medium- to long-term, the development corporation should liaise with the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority and the railways to plan for the relocation of rail operations in order to permit more productive and beneficial uses on-site.

The Land Back mural in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. The mural includes contributions from 37 artists and was facilitated by Trey Helton and the Overdose Prevention Society.



A New Engagement Strategy

Existing Conditions

The Central Waterfront provides an abundance of opportunities to improve livability in Vancouver and provide high-quality public spaces for all residents. However, waterfront initiatives around the world often result in exclusionary developments that inscribe certain values and memories over others (Avni, 2018). A Central Waterfront that benefits all residents is worth fighting for, but requires an approach that includes all voices.

Previous public engagement for the area includes consultation on 2009’s Central Waterfront Hub Framework and two development applications at 555 Cordova spanning from 2014 to 2020. While these processes brought together rights-holders, major stakeholders, interest groups, and the public, some key voices were absent. Notably, Indigenous representation was missing and public processes were limited in their reach. While the Central Waterfront Hub Framework succeeds in creating a realistic and attainable vision for the area, it proposes a district with a blank set of buildings that lack identity. This provides an opportunity to engage with the histories, communities, and cultures of the area to find new ways of representation and collaboration in placemaking. Reflecting these cultures and values in the built environment will require both an engagement strategy that explores innovative approaches to elevate new voices as well as partnerships with Host Nations and local communities. This will create memorable experiences for visitors to the area.

Recent efforts to bring community members into the conversation have included SFU dialogues and Urbanarium events for youth and urban enthusiasts, as well as a series of roundtables hosted by the Hon. Hedy Fry MP that brought key partners together. In December 2022 and January 2023, Carrera Development Corporation and Cadillac Fairview hosted a four-day planning and design charrette to share interests and to develop an integrated vision for the area. The charrette was a monumental opportunity for the Central Waterfront, as nearly a decade has passed since a coordinated effort of this scale between the partners. Significantly, cultural advisors and knowledge keepers from Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh were present.

That being said, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, and CP Rail did not attend and community-based voices were not at the table. While more of a reflection than critique, the discussions were led by predominantly male voices. There was desire

in the room to learn more from the Indigenous representatives, the conversations regarding heritage were largely based upon colonial narratives with a limited understanding of Indigenous history. The enthusiasm to include Indigenous voices in meaningful ways is encouraging, and opportunities to build capacity and foster mentorship within these communities is essential. Finding creative ways to bring key partners together and to ensure a diversity of voices feel empowered in the conversation will create a Central Waterfront that works for all.

Additionally, CRAB Park, as the result of years of activism, is deeply treasured by Indigenous and Downtown Eastside residents and communities. It holds significance in the community both because it provides much needed respite in an area with insufficient green space, and as the community was deeply involved in the process of its creation. An approach that embraces community partnerships and includes underrepresented voices in meaningful ways should provide inspiration for the Central Waterfront’s engagement process.

CRAB Park with downtown Vancouver in the background.



Vision

Voices and topics that were missing from the conversation were elevated to find engagement strategies that could bring partners together, build excitement among the public, and inspire change. The project team scanned publications and materials from 2015 to 2023, conducted targeted outreach with community members and organizations, and participated in the four-day charrette. Over the past seven months, 20 interviews were held with community members from a variety of interests including BIAs, Downtown Eastside community organizations, Indigenous cultural advisors, coastal adaptation specialists, as well as architects, urban designers, and planners that have been involved in the Central Waterfront discussion or other waterfront projects. A list of interviewees is available in the appendix.

Eight strategies were developed that include several recommendations that should be leveraged as resources and opportunities arise. The recommendations are provided in the following section, but can be summarized by the following four principles:

- 1. **Elevate new voices: Innovative engagement strategies and the creation of a stewardship group will empower a diversity of community members to get engaged, bring new ideas, and build excitement.**
- 2. **Demonstrate commitments: A meaningful opportunity to demonstrate commitments to reconciliation will bring partners together and support the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples.**
- 3. **Build capacity: Developing resources to bring the community along throughout the process will build trust and earn support.**
- 4. **Spark conversation: Initiatives that encourage community dialogue and showcase the potential of the site will bring disengaged voices to the table.**

In addition to the recommendations, the team developed a fulsome stakeholder map of 80 organizations and community members that will be important for the discussion moving forward. The stakeholder map can be found in the appendix.

“I always fall back on one term of reference and it's to be inspired. Reflect inspiration in all aspects. Inspiration to learn and unlearn, to change policy, to inspire relationship building experiences. It's proven itself to be a catalyst of change.”
Cory Douglas, Cultural Consultant

Recommendations

1. Pursue a multi-phased development approach that demonstrates a commitment to the public realm, placemaking, and community engagement as central philosophies.

- The Central Waterfront must be public to the greatest extent possible. A plan that demonstrates its commitment to the public realm will garner public support and attract development interest.
- Front loading the public benefits through key projects such as opening up Granville Street, reallocating Cordova Street, and connecting the public space north of 555 Cordova to the water will provide an arena for engagement where workshops and other engagement activities can be held to build interest in the remainder of the site.
- A multi-phased approach that is designed in collaboration with an extensive placemaking and engagement plan will allow for adjustments as market and community needs shift. Recommended phasing would start with the Waterfront Station District and move east.
- Development of an interim use and placemaking strategy will ensure that available waterfront lands are activated year-round right away. Partnering with Downtown Van, the Vancouver Mural Festival, and others to activate public spaces while construction is ongoing will allow community members to experience the transformation underway while also building excitement, supporting the local economy, and providing unique spaces to garner feedback.



Waterfront Toronto, Canada

From the beginning, Waterfront Toronto assigned resources to the design and construction of open space on the waterfront via an initiative it has called [Leading with Landscape](#), which puts parks, ecology, and natural features first and builds complete communities that respect the history and context of waterfront sites. The objective has been to demonstrate a concrete commitment to the wider redevelopment program and thereby encourage private sector investment. In pursuit of this initiative, the TWRC has used design competitions to attract international interest to the waterfront.

Image source: Waterfront Toronto.

2. Develop engagement strategies that are rooted in Indigenous histories and in partnership with Indigenous communities.

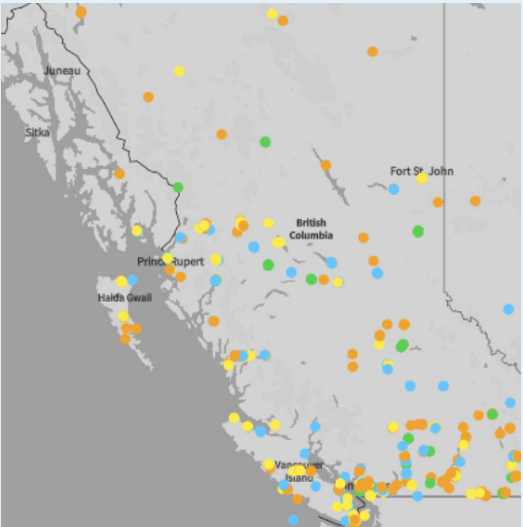
- The Central Waterfront development and engagement process provides a meaningful opportunity for all partners to transform words into action and to demonstrate national commitments to reconciliation.
- Increasing cultural competency, one of the three pillars of the City's Reconciliation Framework, should be a key component early in the engagement process. Centering Indigenous histories and stories in engagement efforts from the beginning will help build knowledge about the area's history and ensure that it stays top of mind throughout the process.
- Investment should be expected in the front end of the engagement process to ensure that Indigenous histories are told and respected in a variety of insightful ways. It should be understood that the long term benefits of doing things right and in a good way will far exceed initial costs.



Auckland Waterfront, New Zealand

Along [Auckland's waterfront](#), industrial activities are central to the public realm experience and have been integrated as an attraction. Derelict artifacts are reprogrammed, the rust and grit is embraced, and a rich dialogue between the working waterfront and public space is encouraged.

Image source: urbanNext.



Populous Map, British Columbia

[Populous Map](#) is an interactive way for community members to experience the hidden history of British Columbia. Innovative tools should support storytelling, educate the community on the complex history, and encourage all community members to reconsider their relationship with the land and water.

Image source: Populous Map.

3. Incorporate mentorship opportunities for youth into the engagement and development process.

- Mentorship and intergenerational learning opportunities for Indigenous youth were noted as key priorities by the cultural advisors Cory Douglas and Ginger Gosnell-Meyers. The Central Waterfront process can support cultural knowledge transmission between knowledge keepers and Indigenous youth by ensuring meaningful ways to capture stories and share them back with the community. The proposed Indigenous Centre for Science, Technology, and Languages in the Waterfront Station District could house and support this work.
- Youth voices have been missing from the conversation. The engagement process should not only seek the involvement of youth in innovative ways but also provide learning opportunities. Given the proximity to SFU, other learning institutes, and the incredible youth engagement work by organizations such as CityHive, Urban Native Youth Association, and SFU’s Public Square ([Holding Space, A Community Engagement Toolkit](#)) the Central Waterfront provides an incredible landscape for educating and supporting the next generations of planners, designers, artists, and dreamers.



West End Community Hub Plan, Vancouver

To support intergenerational learning and cultural knowledge transmission during the [West End Connect engagement process](#), Coast Salish Project Associates were given the opportunity to select one young person for mentorship. The W.E. Connect Mentees were invited to be part of various aspects of the Coast Salish Project Associates’ work on the project, including taking part in project meetings and contributing ideas, input, and learnings throughout.

Image source: West End Community Centre.



Hester Street (HST), New York City

[Hester Street’s Jim Diego Fellowship](#) provides students of color, LGBTQIA+, women, and other underrepresented voices in architecture, urban planning, and design with hands-on experience working on HST’s innovative projects, as well as leadership development and mentorship opportunities with HST’s diverse staff and partners.

Image source: Hester Street.

4. Determine opportunities to celebrate the rich culture and heritage of the area, promote tourism, and build excitement.

- The tourism opportunities at the Central Waterfront are immense and the discussion could bring partners together while supporting social, environmental, and economic goals.
- Given PavCo’s strong relationship with the port, the tourism potential at the waterfront may offer a strategic avenue to get the Port Authority to the table. In collaboration with the Hon. Hedy Fry MP, a third roundtable focused on the tourism opportunities and potential within the site may bring disengaged voices to the table. Municipal and provincial representatives, tourist interests, Host Nations, and representatives from Chinatown, Gastown, and Japantown should be present to determine how this area can support multiple goals while celebrating the many histories in culturally significant ways.
- The potential for the Central Waterfront to connect the gap in Vancouver’s beloved continuous pedestrian and bikeway seaside path will garner great excitement throughout the community. In partnership with local artists, Indigenous representatives, BIAs, and community partners, the development of a seaside/portside art, culture, and historic greenway tour could serve many goals. Points of interest along the route could shed light on the area’s history, provide wayfinding to nearby sites and neighbourhoods, and bring people to the underutilized Wall Street parks. Furthermore, when people have the opportunity to help shape physical spaces in their community, they feel a greater sense of community, meaning, and belonging. In turn, this leads to greater care and responsibility for shared spaces.
- Supporting the economic recovery of treasured neighbourhoods such as Chinatown and Gastown is critical to the City’s wellbeing. The art, culture, and historic tour could be extended throughout Gastown and Chinatown to promote the heritage buildings in the area and attract visitors.



Asunción Master Plan, Paraguay

As part of the Asunción Master Plan, programming and art were leveraged to build excitement for its initiatives. “Blind Walls Interventions”, carried out through the international Street Art Festival Latido Americano Paraguay, gathered 40 artists to paint murals throughout the city. Involving the citizens in different types of activities and participatory events encouraged interaction and a collective discussion about the murals, sparking interest, commitment, pride, and a collective feeling of belonging to the community.

Image source: Ecosistema Urbano.

5. Develop a temporary art program to encourage new voices to join the conversation.

- In addition to its ability to transform public spaces, art is an important tool for promoting awareness, education, and social revitalization. A temporary art program will support a greater diversity of local artists, encourage discussion among the public, and perhaps pique the interest of disengaged partners. Local and emerging artists, such as the Squamish artist [James Harry](#), should be prioritized.
- It is largely agreed that relocating the tracks at the Central Waterfront is necessary for a successful Central Waterfront plan, yet previous attempts to get CP to the table have proven unsuccessful. Whether dangerous goods should be permitted in the Central Waterfront, as they are now, is a key question that should be asked. Partnering with Uytae Lee of the CBC and About Here to produce a video that sparks conversation among the public and partners may get CP’s attention and provide the spark for a fruitful discussion about safety and the potential need to relocate the tracks.
- Hundreds of thousands of people pass through the Central Waterfront daily, presenting an opportunity to hear from a broad spectrum of community members that are important to the conversation. Engaging and playful pop-ups and intercept surveys that people can fill out on their commute will encourage the public to get involved in the conversation.

6. Develop a research and engagement lab that encourages the public to consider the waterfront’s relationship with the shoreline and sea level rise.

- While the discussion of sea level rise has been minimal in engagement thus far, its looming threat to the Central Waterfront will require key partners to come together and take action. Innovative engagement strategies can help reframe the reality of sea level rise as an opportunity rather than a constraint and bring community members and partners together to think creatively about the future site. Learning from Sea2City, it is critical that this conversation centers Indigenous knowledge and closely collaborates with Indigenous partners.
- Building off the work being done by Sea2City collaborators, Indigenous partners, Living with Water, UBC Adaptation Lab, and local artists, the lab can find innovative ways to spark conversation among community members in an effort to help shift our relationship to and understanding of the shoreline.

“The work is premised on an idea that rather than a constraint, SLR adaptation is an opportunity to envision new spatial developments that are at once robust and flexible—taking into consideration uncertain future conditions and possibilities for upgrades while providing protection in the near-term.”

Kees Lockman, Envisioning the Future Port



Toronto Landscape Observatory

Jane Wolff has worked for the past several years with the Toronto Biennial of Art to reveal Toronto’s rich and often unnoticed landscape processes and phenomena to exhibition visitors. In 2022, Susan Schwartzberg and Wolff co-curated the [Toronto Landscape Observatory](#). In this interactive exhibition, Indigenous and settler knowledge keepers, scholars, and artists created instruments for observing the environment. In the associated program series, Observatory contributors walked and talked with visitors to explore and consider the changing face of Toronto’s historic industrial landscapes.

Image source: Toronto Biennial of Art.



Don River Radio, Toronto

In collaboration with Waterfront Toronto and Evergreen, New York-based art collective Mare Liberum conducted a two-year research and public engagement project which explored the relationship between Toronto’s Lower Don River, its Indigenous and colonial histories, and its traditional and future uses. It explored the role of art in urban and environmental policy making in a series of commissions. One project called “Artist as Policy Shaper” convened artists, writers, thinkers, and policy makers in a public conversation to reflect on recent art and policy collaborations. Another project invited artists, collaborators, ecologists, community members, Indigenous water keepers and historians to record their own narratives of the Don River through a program called [Don River Radio](#).

Image source: Don River Radio.

7. Develop a Central Waterfront Stewardship Group (CWSG).

- The complexity of the site warrants a strategic engagement approach that engages deeply with a stewardship group.
- It is critical that those who make decisions about the Central Waterfront are representative of the diverse communities of the city. Women, youth, and BIPOC have not been included in the discussion in meaningful ways and it is important that these groups are not only engaged in the discussion but in decision making roles. While this is an issue that reaches beyond the Central Waterfront discussion, the engagement process has a responsibility to seek out and include a diversity of communities. Terms of reference should be developed to outline how members are compensated, to clarify how decisions are made, and to ensure the group has the ability to impact outcomes.
- Stewardship Group members should demonstrate strong leadership as well as knowledge that reflects the project’s guiding principles. The primary focus of the CWSG is to advise on the engagement strategy, support engagement within their communities, and consider how to acknowledge and incorporate social, historical, environmental, and cultural significance from a citywide perspective into the plan.
- Committee membership is intended to reflect Vancouver’s diversity and should include (but not be limited to) representation from the following groups or interest areas:
 - Indigenous
 - Youth
 - Charities and nonprofits, with a focus on DTES communities
 - Public space design and large event and festival organizers
 - Transportation and accessibility
 - Environmental design, with interest in waterfront sites
 - Arts, culture and heritage
 - Tourism
 - Commercial and business development

"These types of projects are really important opportunities for cultural knowledge transmission between knowledge keepers and younger people in the community and host nations community in general."

Ginger Gosnell-Meyers

8. Build support for the project by building capacity in the community.

- It is challenging to keep the public engaged on a long and complex project and expectations of community members must be managed in order to build trust and garner support for the project. The engagement process must explain the complexity of the project and bring the public along in a language that is accessible.
- Capacity should be built through community enhancements grants and developing toolkits which allow community members to conduct engagement with their own communities. This allows engagement to be conducted through organizations that have already built deep relationships within their communities; it is especially important when engaging with vulnerable populations such as CRAB Park residents or Indigenous communities.



Shipyards, North Vancouver

[The North Van Urban Form](#), a group of community members advocating for transparency, dialogue, and meaningful participation in the development of the public realm, was a critical voice throughout the Shipyards process and a key player in the success of the project. The City of North Vancouver provided space for the Forum to host community events. By providing resources for community groups early on, a better waterfront for all will be created.

Image source: Peter Skaronis via Unsplash.



Sasaki High Line Canal Vision Plan, Colorado

[Sasaki’s High Line Canal Vision Plan](#) represents the first time in the canal’s 134 year history that all jurisdictions have come together to support a common vision for its future evolution and preservation. By taking care to convey ideas plainly, boldly, and in an accessible way to all audiences, as well as by framing the process as writing a “story” through community input, the process felt more approachable, understandable, and exciting. Additionally it encouraged community members to think holistically about the canal and to engage in productive conversation about their concerns, their goals, and what tradeoffs could be made for the greater good.

Image source: Sasaki.

4 Conclusion

It is time for a new approach towards the Central Waterfront that celebrates the potential of the site. This is a historic opportunity to transform one of the most significant locations in Vancouver into an iconic and inclusive community that reflects what the city aspires to be. While other attempts to revitalize the area have stalled due to a number of challenges, this vision confronts these obstacles as a way to unblock the process. The plan is organized around three strategies related to design, governance, and engagement to inspire future progress.

Through the design and development of the Waterfront Station District, the plan improves the immediate surroundings of the station by creating a vibrant and welcoming urban district that acknowledges the area's importance to the community. A balance between financial feasibility and the public good is prioritized, which builds public support and excitement moving forward.

Subsequent development phases will require a new governance structure to untangle the complexity of the site. The plan outlines a path forward through the creation of the Central Waterfront Partnership between the City of Vancouver, Province of British Columbia, the Government of Canada, and the Host Nations. This partnership will create a new strategic master plan for the area and work towards its implementation.

The third strategy calls for new and innovative approaches towards engagement that give the area meaning. It will elevate new voices who have or are typically left out of the process, and will empower the diverse community in the area. It will also express commitments to truth and reconciliation, and support Indigenous communities. Ultimately these new engagement strategies will help build capacity and trust in the community, and create conversation and excitement about what the area can be.

This plan contributes to the ongoing discussions about the Central Waterfront, and will continue to evolve with time. While building out Vancouver's Central Waterfront is an ambitious endeavour and many challenges still lie ahead, one thing is for certain - it will only be realized by coming together.

