

Vancouver, a Phenomenon

Section 4.1 examines how Vancouver as a phenomenon is expressed in art and cultural imagery.

Nodes

Section 4.4, examines a richly programmed node with a strong sense of identity that serves the neighborhood well.

Corridors

Section 4.3 examines how walking through a 'generic' corridor reveals a highly localized experience where daily needs are met within a 5-min walk.

Mobility or Exchange City

Section 4.2 moves to the neighbourhood scale to examine how greater mixed-use, less automobile-centric travel modes and denser housing patterns can produce a more walkable exchange city that provides greater opportunities for social interaction.

Volumetrics and Iconography

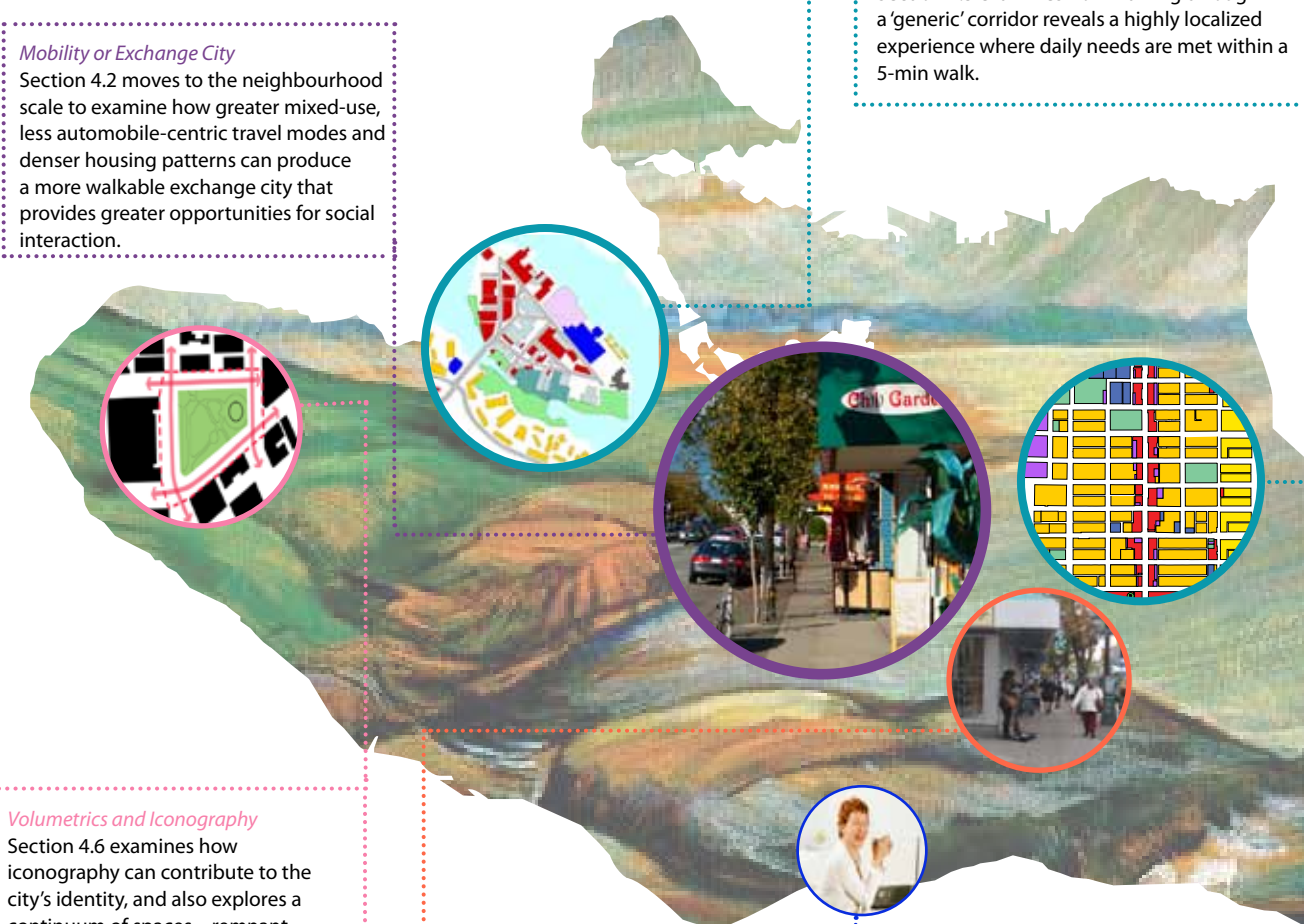
Section 4.6 examines how iconography can contribute to the city's identity, and also explores a continuum of spaces – remnant to volumetric – in the process of creating a sense of place.

Place and Attachment

Section 4.5 explores how attachment to place is often formed in a simple ability to select favourite spots within close proximity to one's work and home environments.

Lifestyle, Time, Urban Space

Section 4.7 concludes at the human-body scale by exploring how spaces are used today, and how spatial configurations transform due to this changing usage. Analyzing today's trends and lifestyles will help us continue making choices that produce a sustainable, liveable city.



A city's well-being is reflected in the way its urban form is qualitatively experienced and perceived. Positive encounters with socially, ecologically and economically sustainable urban forms can inspire us to make choices to sustain a city's well-being. As environmental theorist Paul Gobster suggests, the most immediate part of the environment one engages with is the "perceptible realm" consisting of buildings, cultural/natural landscapes and other humans. This engagement produces an aesthetic experience.

Since aesthetic experiences of the perceptible realm are emotional and physical, humans are heavily influenced by their built environment. It is for this reason that the utmost care must be taken when designing the public realm. The designer has great influence over the affections of the individual in their perceptions of sense of place and identity.

Gobster concludes, "aesthetic experiences may thus lead people to change the landscape in ways that may or may not be consistent with its ecological function." [1] In short, one must make choices to produce a sustainable, sociable and liveable city, and such a city inspires one to continue making those choices.

Through comparative examples from various Vancouver neighbourhoods, this chapter looks at how certain urban forms at differently scales produce sense of place, increase walkability, increase a desire to interact with others and a will to form attachment.

Source:

[1] Paul H. Gobster et al., "The Shared Landscape: What does Aesthetics have to do with Ecology?" in Landscape Ecology (2007, 22:959-972), 960.

city form and city
PLACE

4.0

TEAM MEMBERS: Neda Roohnia, Patrick Chan, Mary Wong, Peiqi Wang, James Godwin, Lisa Lang, Cindy Hung

Design considerations for creating a sense of place:

- Positive emotional and physical experiences of a city can influence us to continue making choices that improve the city's socio-economic and ecological well-being.
- Positive emotional and physical experiences of a city are often formed in mixed use neighbourhoods with active street-life and diverse usages that allow greater social interaction.
- A place's well-being can be attributed to not just iconography but also to sites that hold strong memory and sense of place.
- The way we are using places differently - for work or leisure - calls for a new way to program commercial spaces and the public realm.

Public
Visual
Delight
Public
Public
Public Realm
Image of the City
Cityscape
Public Realm
Public
Experiential
Experiential
Sense of place
Identity
Public
Experiential
Experiential
Image of the City
Public Realm



Top, left to right: 1: A totem pole an iconic phenomenon, 2: Lions gate bridge, 3 & 4: post cards of Granville street 1928, 5: Downtown Vancouver, 6: aerial photo of Vancouver.



Bottom, left to right: 1: Totem pole by Emily Carr, 2 & 3: Vancouver's nature by Emily Carr, 4: Downtown Vancouver by Ryan Heshka, 5: Water edge, Vancouver by Emily Carr, 6: Downtown Vancouver by Emily Carr

Nature
Image of the City
Image of the City
Public Realm



Vancouver artist unknown, 7: Aerial painting of downtown and north shore Vancouver, by John Hartman

basic
PHENOMENOLOGY
and morphology of Vancouver

4.1

TEAM MEMBER: Neda Roohnia

Vancouver, the city of nature:

"At every instant, there is more than the eye can see, more than the ear can hear, a setting or a view waiting to be explored." *Kevin Lynch*

- Keep a delicate balance between nature and the constructed environment.
- Try not to eliminate or make large abrupt changes to sensitive and iconic spots in the city.

This section compares how an exchange city fares qualitatively against a mobility city. Simply put, a mobility city is automobile-centric, while an exchange city is characterized by more pedestrian-oriented streets, public transport and urban form allowing for greater social exchange.

Two Vancouver areas, a section along Kingsway and a section along Main Street are examined to illustrate some qualitative characteristics of the mobility and exchange cities respectively. This section illustrates how Vancouver could look and feel if developed as an exchange city.

Four factors help us compare how areas designed for social exchange fare against areas designed for automobile-centricity:

- Typology and Use
- Traffic Conditions
- Sidewalk Conditions
- Public Amenities

Mobility city: Kingsway (Gladstone to Killarney). While Vancouver prides itself as sustainable, many sections of the city are still auto dominated. One such area is the 1.43km stretch of Kingsway, an extension of the 1A Highway from Gladstone to Killarney (this page).

Exchange city: Main Street (Broadway to King Edward). This 1.57km stretch of Main Street (opposite page) is a major thoroughfare like the Kingsway section. However, as it moves within 2km of downtown it takes on a different character due to its pedestrian-oriented programming, street furniture and building typology.



Sidewalk Conditions:

- Ample parking in front of businesses indicates the area's automobile-centricity.
- Lack of trees, street-furniture, bus-shelters and mid-block crossings make walking less pleasurable.

Typology and Use:

- Mostly 1 to 2 storey commercial buildings housing bodyshops, fast food outlets, gas-stations and small offices.
- A few motels, factories and big-box stores.
- Small number of single-family houses and low-rise condos.
- Off Kingsway, RS-1 zone dominates.
- A low mix and number of businesses here does not allow locals to work locally forcing people to travel elsewhere for work.

Traffic Conditions:

- 6 car lanes
- Auto-count is 53,209 in a 24-hour span
- Average 320m distance between crossings allowing cars to travel more than 2 standard 150m blocks without stopping
- Lack of trees and deep front setback (some up to 10m from the curb) reduces "side friction" and instigates faster driving

Public Amenities:

- While Norquay and Slocan Parks and several schools are within 400m from this stretch of Kingsway, it lacks services like banks, post-offices, clinics and childcare.

Main Street, an Exchange City

Typology and Use:

- 1 to 4 storey mixed-use buildings with grade-level commercial activities like cafes and antique shops, and residences above
- Few heritage buildings.
- Small businesses staffed by locals
- Higher density RM-4, RT-6 and RS-7 zones off Main Street provide the population that supports its socio-economic vibrancy.

Public Amenities:

- The Little Mountain Neighbourhood House, Heritage Hall and Mount Pleasant Community Centre are anchor points.

Traffic Conditions:

- On-street parking effectively reduces usable 6 car-lanes to 4.
- Auto-count is 29646 in a 24-hour span.
- Average 150m distance between crossing puts more stops in traffic flow.
- Street-trees and buildings closer to the curb (~ 4m) increase "side friction" prompting the driver to slow down.
- Bulges and bottlenecks calm traffic.



Sidewalk Conditions:

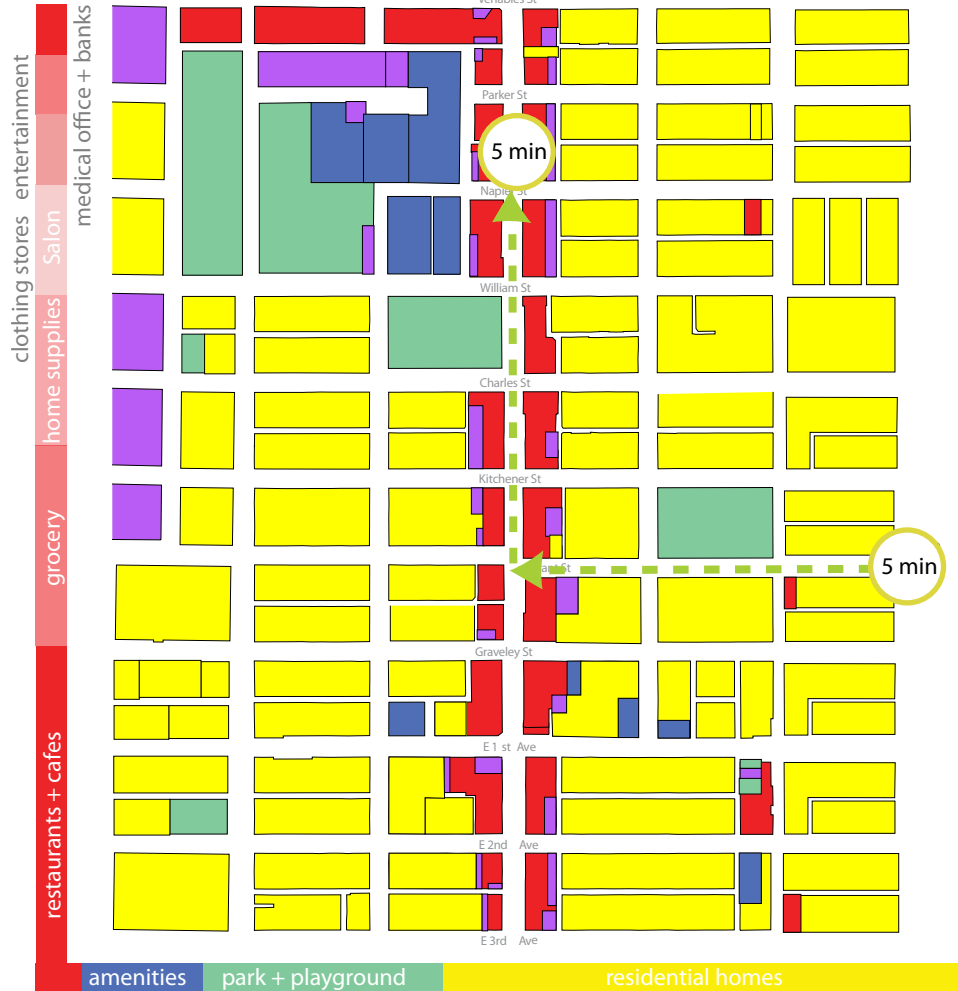
- Custom street furniture, trees and sidewalk cafes make Main Street more than a street to be "hurried through" while walking.

Vancouver, EXCHANGE OR MOBILITY city? 4.2

TEAM MEMBER: Patrick Chan

Design considerations for an exchange city:

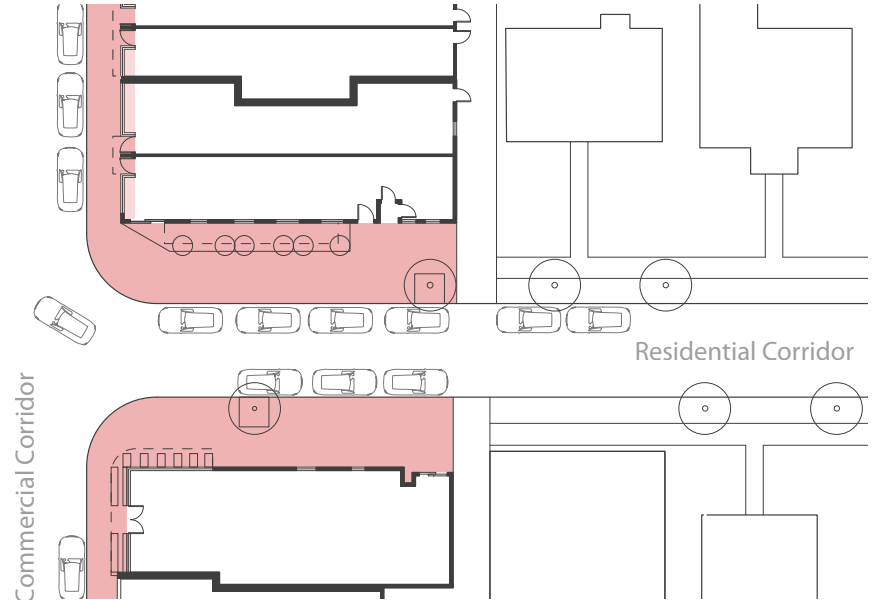
- Maximize solar exposure on both sides of a street (one in the morning, one in the afternoon) to encourage outdoor activities.
- Frame and tame the street with human-scale streetwalls, street parking and trees to frame the street and increase side friction to reduce traffic speed and volume. This in turn produces a safer and more pleasant walking environment.
- Shorter blocks and mid-block crossings place more breaks in the traffic flow and reduce the overall vehicular speed. Also, finer grain urban forms create greater visual diversity conducive to walkable environments.
- Activate the sidewalks with cafes and street furniture to offer places of respite. The street is not "hurried through," it is a place one dwells and builds attachment, exchanging with others and the built environment.
- A larger more diverse population provides a locally-based workforce to staff a higher mix and number of businesses. Moreover, this workforce can walk and/or take transit to work rather than drive.



clothing stores + entertainment
 medical office + banks
 Salon
 home supplies
 grocery
 restaurants + cafes
 amenities
 park + playground
 residential homes



5 minute walk through residential neighbourhood



Commercial Corridor:

A diversity of restaurants and stores line a commercial corridor. It is a transect that provides services for daily errands and job locations that is accessible by public transit. It creates a shared experience that both local residents and visitors can engage in, with a unique ambiance and goods and services specific to this locale.



Residential Corridor:

One block off a bustling commercial corridor, one emerges onto a quieter but equally programmed street. Each home is within 5 minute walk of a residential park, where elderly, young children, and parents gather. Familiar faces are key to the sense of neighbourhood. This experience primarily engages local residents, it is an everyday transect that begins when they leave home.



The Intersection:

Where two corridors meet, a pronounced place of gathering is created. Restaurants wrap their outdoor seating around corners, framing an entrance to the surrounding residential neighbourhood. Buildings include recessed spaces, with engaging store displays enhancing the pedestrian experience. Some store owners further adapt this space by spilling their goods and services onto the sidewalk.

Dialogues:

During the course of this study, the investigator questioned 5 people on their impressions of Commercial Drive and its surrounding neighbourhood, some recurring impressions are:

- Diversity (of shops, lifestyle, and ethnicity)
- Strong sense of community
- Restaurants, affordable specialty shops, parks
- Alive yet laid-back
- Fun

morphology and phenomenology of **CORRIDORS**

4.3

TEAM MEMBER: Mary Wong

Design considerations for corridors:
 The localized experience of a 'generic' corridor houses multiple rhythms of activity.

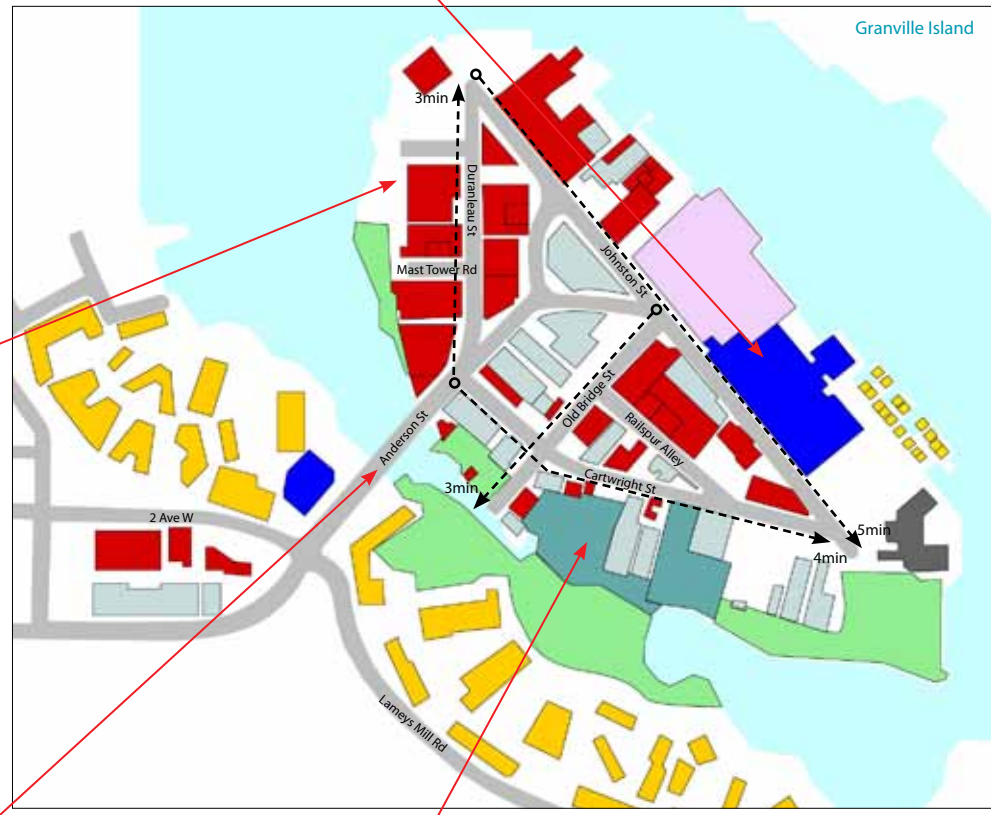
- Corridors showcase what is evident throughout the neighbourhood: a strong community identity with emphasis on diversity and inclusion.
- Everyday needs are readily met within a five minute walk through two types of corridors: commercial and residential.
- Small, diverse goods and service are street-oriented with frequent spill outs providing gathering space for residents and visitors. Parks and amenities provide another type of gathering space for local residents.
- Where the two corridors meet, a node-like gathering space emerges.



industrial & institutional → downtown experience



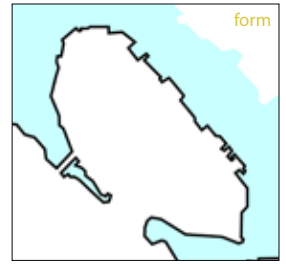
recreational & commercial
arrival



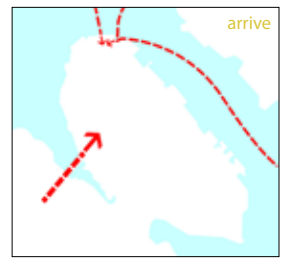
community parks & play fields → neighborhood experience



1. Clear and definite edge:
Bounded by open water, the node is naturally given a definite edge, which is shaped by a series of docks and waterfront pathways. A definite edge makes the node appear well-contained, and enhance its sense of territory.



2. Identifiable gateway:
A causeway serves as the major gateway to the node, creating a final destination arrival experience and simplifies the traffic condition. This is complemented by a couple of ferry routes. A definitive gateway presents a strong identity to the node.



3. Traffic loop:
A simple loop traffic circulation system within the node effectively reduces traffic volume and discourages automobile use. More importantly, it frees up larger pieces of land for gathering spaces that serve both the city and the neighborhood.



4. "Corridors" within the node:
The traffic loop is lined with restaurants, cafes, galleries, and shops, with off-street parking and pedestrian space on one side. Open spaces usually take form at the end of "corridors", and where two intersect.



Nodes Design Implications:

- **A definite edge and noticeable gateway** provide strong identity and improve recognizability.
- **Traffic serves place**, instead of dominating and dividing.
- **Corridor spaces** within the node provide structure and connection.
- **Diversity and easy accessibility** promote vibrancy and resiliency.

morphology and phenomenology of NODES 4.4

TEAM MEMBER: Peiqi Wang

Neighborhood nodes provide an urban, exchange experience:
Urban form contributes to strong identity and experiential diversity

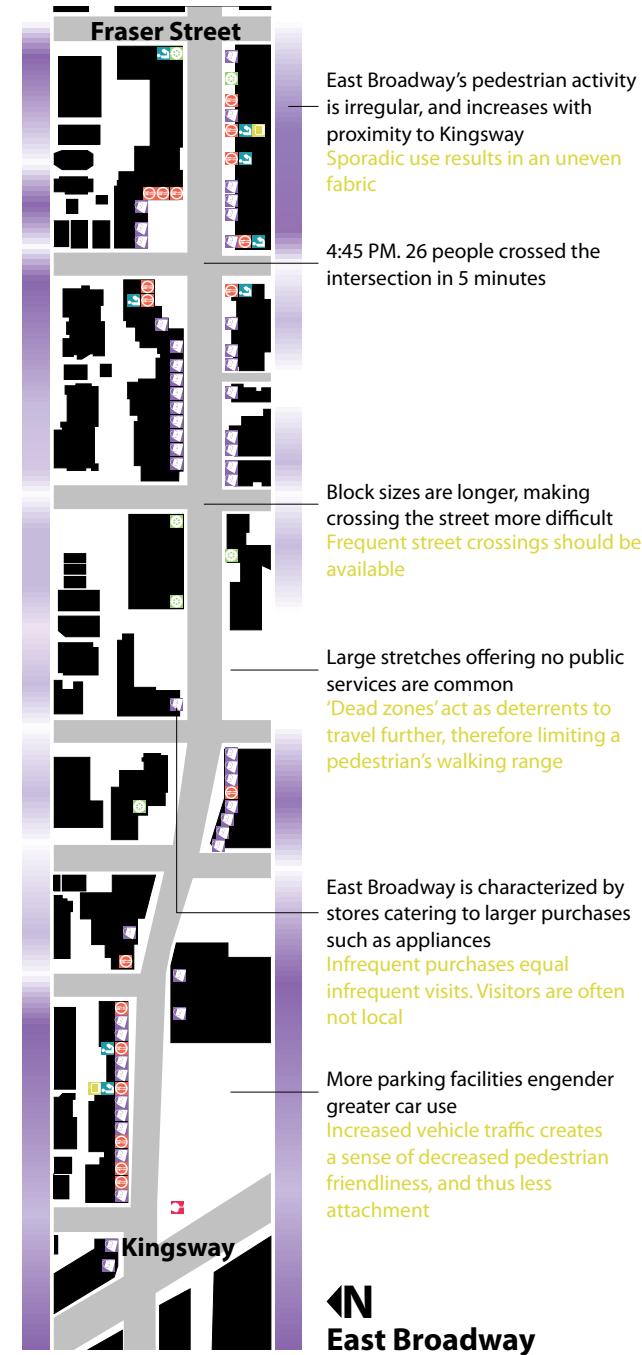
- Surrounded by open water and connected by a causeway, a peninsular node provides a destination experience, and serves both the neighbourhood and the city.
- An identifiable gateway entrance offers a strong arrival experience.
- Everyday needs are all readily satisfied within a comfortable waking distance and neighborhood amenities are located close by, producing a sense of belonging and attachment.
- A series of corridor spaces formed by a variety of markets, cafes, shops, and gathering places provide an urban experience.



Commercial Drive
Located on Vancouver's east side, Commercial Drive is a neighbourhood known for its diversity and colour. Foot traffic is abundant, and ample services exist for every aspect of day to day living, such as eating, shopping, and leisure.



East Broadway
East Broadway benefits from its proximity to Kingsway and Main street, however pedestrian traffic thins out as distance increases between these hot spots. Little choice is offered for daily activities.



East Broadway's pedestrian activity is irregular, and increases with proximity to Kingsway
Sporadic use results in an uneven fabric

4:45 PM. 26 people crossed the intersection in 5 minutes

Block sizes are longer, making crossing the street more difficult
Frequent street crossings should be available

Large stretches offering no public services are common
'Dead zones' act as deterrents to travel further, therefore limiting a pedestrian's walking range

East Broadway is characterized by stores catering to larger purchases such as appliances
Infrequent purchases equal infrequent visits. Visitors are often not local

More parking facilities engender greater car use
Increased vehicle traffic creates a sense of decreased pedestrian friendliness, and thus less attachment

how
PLACE
creates attachment

4.5

TEAM MEMBER: James Godwin

Design considerations for creating a sense of affinity:

Attachment to a place can form in many ways. Most frequently, attachment arises out of positive experiences in a locale and the ability to imprint oneself on these surroundings. For the average user of a given neighbourhood, attachment is often formed by spending solid lengths of time in a given area, not only at work, but also during leisure time.

In the context of urban corridors, those that succeed provide a wide variety of choices for a wide variety of needs. Numerous choices engender not just greater use, but the ability of people to pick and choose their favourite locales.

- Key traits include:
- Pedestrian friendly design
 - Frequent rest stops
 - Numerous alternatives for similar services
 - Stores catering to daily needs

When asked to identify iconography of Vancouver, images of mountains, ocean and forest quickly spring to mind. But delve a little deeper and one will realize how difficult it is to come up with a list of icons readily identifiable to all of the citizens.

Iconography exists on a continuum from small to large, and the scale of the icon strongly correlates to the dialectics of here/there. Large icons such as the mountains and ocean are often associated with Vancouver. However, these icons are fairly ambiguous and can no more readily be identified with Vancouver (the “here”) than with any other coastal community in British Columbia (the “there”). On the other end of the spectrum is the small icon, visible and much loved at the neighbourhood level and likely unknown to other citizens of the city. They exist in the quirky bowling alley, the homemade fence, the unusual garden. These small scale icons are important in that they embody “hereness” and allow a resident to form an attachment to a specific place. Small icons exist in abundance throughout the city.

In between these two scales exists the scale that resonates with all residents to feel connectedness within the city. Vancouver faces an absence of the middle scale of iconography within the city.

Urban space exists on another sort of continuum: from remnant space to volumetric space (Condon, *Cubist Space*). Remnant space is the space that is subordinate to the surrounding buildings and is essentially leftover after construction. This space is generally planned as an afterthought whereas volumetric space is much more intentional.

Volumetric space is strongest when it is entirely bound by surrounding features such as buildings that become walls for an outdoor room. In this case the buildings become subordinate to the space enclosed. The finest example of volumetric space in Vancouver is Victory Square (opposite). When analyzing the space in plan, one can see how the roadways that penetrate the park disrupt the sense of enclosure and weaken this space. The roof

of the building located at the highest point of the park seems to extend itself right over the park, creating a ceiling for this room. The greatest sense of arrival into the square is through an arched alleyway that frames the space and gradually unfolds the square as you enter through it.

In this case, it is the presence of the icon that strengthens the space. The monument at the base of the park provides anchorage.

The slope towards this monument naturally allows for assemblage during Remembrance Day ceremonies and other events. The helmet lighting style further adds to the thematic imagery of the site.

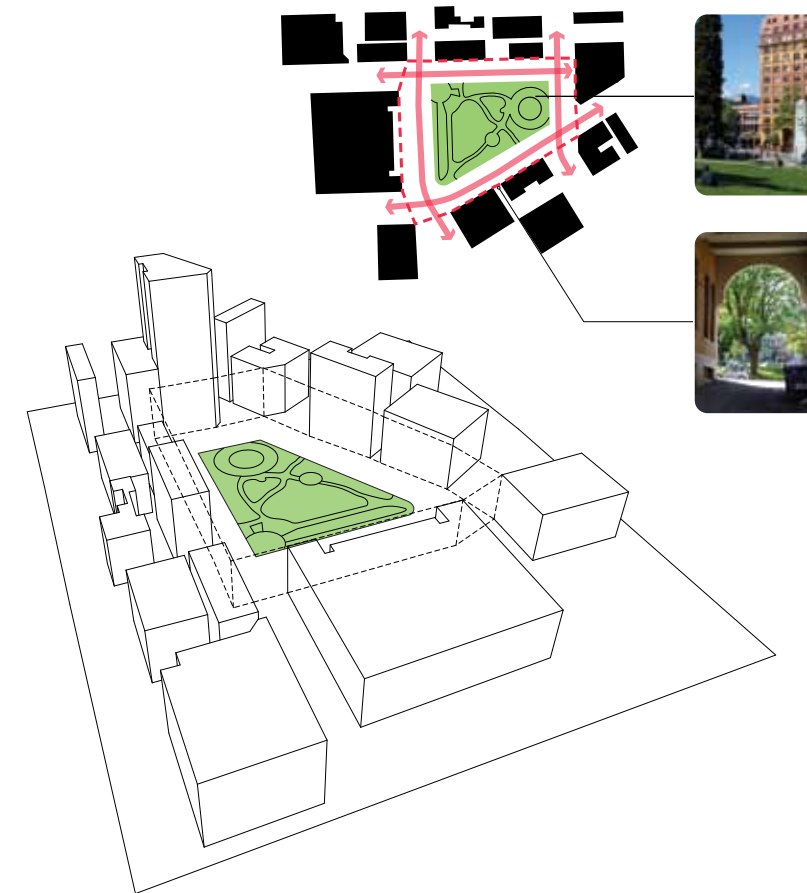
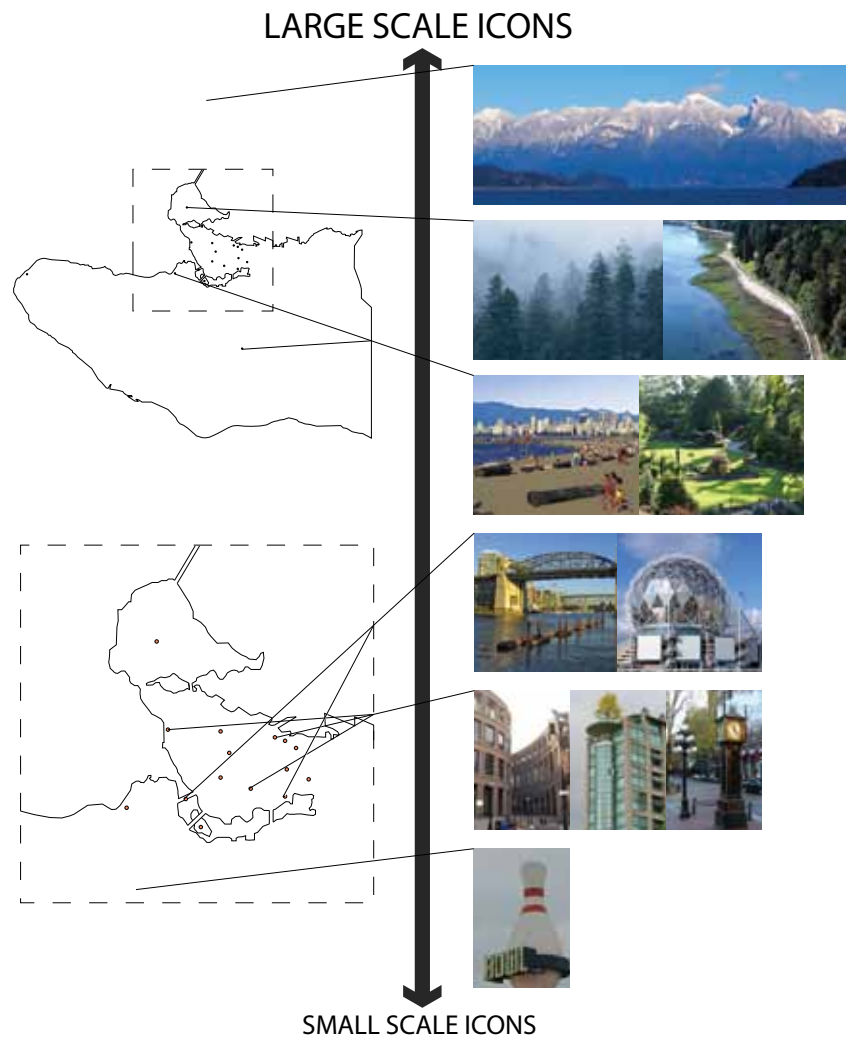
In Victory Square we have an example of how volumetric space and iconography can work together to strengthen the identity of an urban space within the city fabric. When successfully combined they can induce a unique sense of place that cannot be replicated anywhere else.

Opposite:

A diagram indicating the variety of scale seen in the iconography of the city. Vancouver tends to operate strongly at the large end and the small end of the scale.

Below:

Victory Square is one of the best examples of volumetric space in the city of Vancouver. This diagram illustrates how the surrounding buildings act as walls for this outdoor room. Iconography in the square (the obelisk and the lighting) strengthens the identity as do subtle moments like the alley entrance to the park.



**the iconography and
VOLUMETRICS
of identity**

4.6

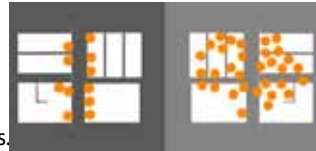
TEAM MEMBER: Lisa Lang

**Design considerations for
volumetrics and iconography:
Carefully consider the type of space
and scale of iconography**

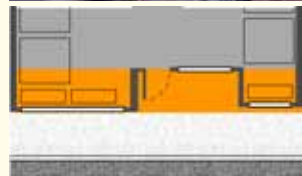
- Iconography exists on a continuum from small to large; small scale icons contribute much to the “hereness” of a neighbourhood, but there is a need for a medium scale icons representative of the city, so that all of Vancouver’s residents can identify with them and each other,
- Urban space exists on a continuum from remnant space to volumetric space; a designer should strive for the creation of volumetric space as it is strongly intentional and has a greater sense of place, and
- Where appropriate, iconography and volumetrics can be used in conjunction with one another to strengthen the identity of a place

Moving to Vancouver = Multi-Cultural Approaches in Street Morphology

- Large numbers of immigrants move to Vancouver every year. 74% of these immigrants are originally from Asia (BC States 2007).
- The distribution of immigrants and their cultural differences create interesting ethnic neighbourhoods.
- Lifestyle, family structure and neighbourhood patterns vary from cultural backgrounds.



Commercial clusters for different ethnic groups. LEFT: typical Western, RIGHT: typical Eastern

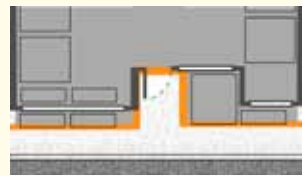


Shop
Buffer
Walkway

Pedestrians invading store fronts

Typical storefronts in Kitsilano have large viewing windows and indentations at the entrance as buffers to the pedestrian walkway. Therefore, people entering the shop consciously know they have walked through a wall.

The indentation and windows allow cleaner and wider sight lines, so pedestrians have a sense of openness and a slower sense of time.



Shop
Buffer
Walkway

Store front invading public space

Typical Chinese storefronts or market places have less buffering space between doors and the street. The merchandise often invades the public walkway to increase the chance of attracting random customers.

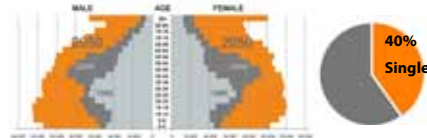
The merchandise often provides extra visual interests, even or distinct smells, and it blurs the wall between private and public. The narrow walkway gives users a sense of confinement and a creates the sense of a much faster pace.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

- Permeable street front design, that is flexible to change, can accommodate different shop behavior.
- Add penetration points in a continuous surface, such as windows and alleys, to increase visual interest and expand the pedestrian experience by expanding the viewer's sight line.

Staying Single+Population Growth in Elderly = Elderly Single Residents in 2050

- The largest area of population growth is in the 55-75 age range. The first baby boomers turn 65 in 2011. (Census 2006).



Projection of 2050 population in orange: Doubling of the total population, Elderly(65+) population is about 25% of the total population.

- Vancouver has the highest concentration of single men and women. About 40% of the population over 15 years old are SINGLE.

- As the majority of the population shifts to single and elderly, people start to have more leisure time, and less work and family time.

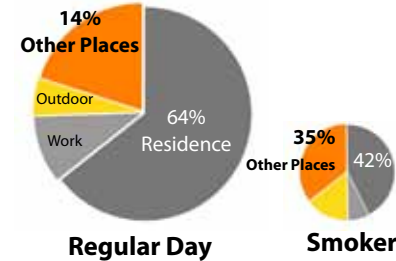
- Average household size continues decreasing.

- Currently, the major activities of elderly life in the city are recreation, attending senior schools and housework (Rural and Urban Elderly-China, 2006). Possibly more recreation and community spaces will be needed.

- Building types should be diverse and not be limited to one bedroom suites in towers.
- More grocery and medical facilities are needed within a walking distance.
- Elderly friendly neighbourhood design is increasingly important.

How do People Spend A Day? = More Free Time in The Future

- A chart of daily lifestyle in Vancouver: about 64% of time is spent in residence, 10% at work, 6% outdoor, and 14% possibly in public realms.



- A significant factor affecting the distribution shown in National Human Activities Pattern Survey (2001) is whether the respondent is a smoker. Smokers spend more time outdoor, and in other places.

- In 2003, a Canadian coffee drinking survey showed that 63% of population over 18 drinks coffee on daily basis. 66% of coffee is consumed at home, 12% is at work, 25% is at eating places and in other places.

- In conclusion, people spend an average of 3.6 hours per day in public. There is a big chance that the time will be spent in coffee shops that are close by or where people have formed an attachment.

- More leisure time means well-designed "Third Places" and journeys to desirable destinations.
- Journeys should have easy access to transit, unique streetscapes, interesting corridors, or a route with views, etc.

Internet Savvy Residents = Rule the World with a Laptop

- In the Vancouver area, internet usage for all ages is averaging about 16 hours per week

- 18-34 year olds are spending 20+ hours per week online compared to 18 hours for those over the age of 35 (Ipsos Reid conducted 2009). Over 23% of seniors have household internet access(2004).

- With a laptop or a mobile device, people can now access the internet from anywhere with Wi-Fi. Spaces with free Wi-Fi in the city quickly become the new gathering place.



A sea of laptops and people not interacting with each other is no longer unusual.

- People spend time in the coffee shops for drinks and free Wi-Fi. On weekends, 80% of chairs are usually taken by internet users.

- This internet savvy generation is going to be the major demographic of Vancouver in 2050.

- The Third Places need to survive and define themselves to maintain both convenience and qualities of a public space.
- The Third Place should encourage human interaction.



personal time, LIFESTYLE and urban space

4.7

TEAM MEMBER: Cindy Hung

Design considerations for changing lifestyles:
Urban design must adapt to change over the next 40 years

- People will be spending more time in the public realm: design focus should be on the "Third Places" and the trip there.

- Age groups will be shifting, and the streetscapes will continue being influenced by immigrants. Therefore, flexible planning and permeable street fronts are keys to more sustainable urban form.

- Different housing types and mix-used commercial/residential are desirable for elderly populations and are also suitable for other age groups.