City of Vancouver *Land Use and Development Policies and Guidelines*

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

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FALSE CREEK FLATS URBAN DESIGN POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR IC-3

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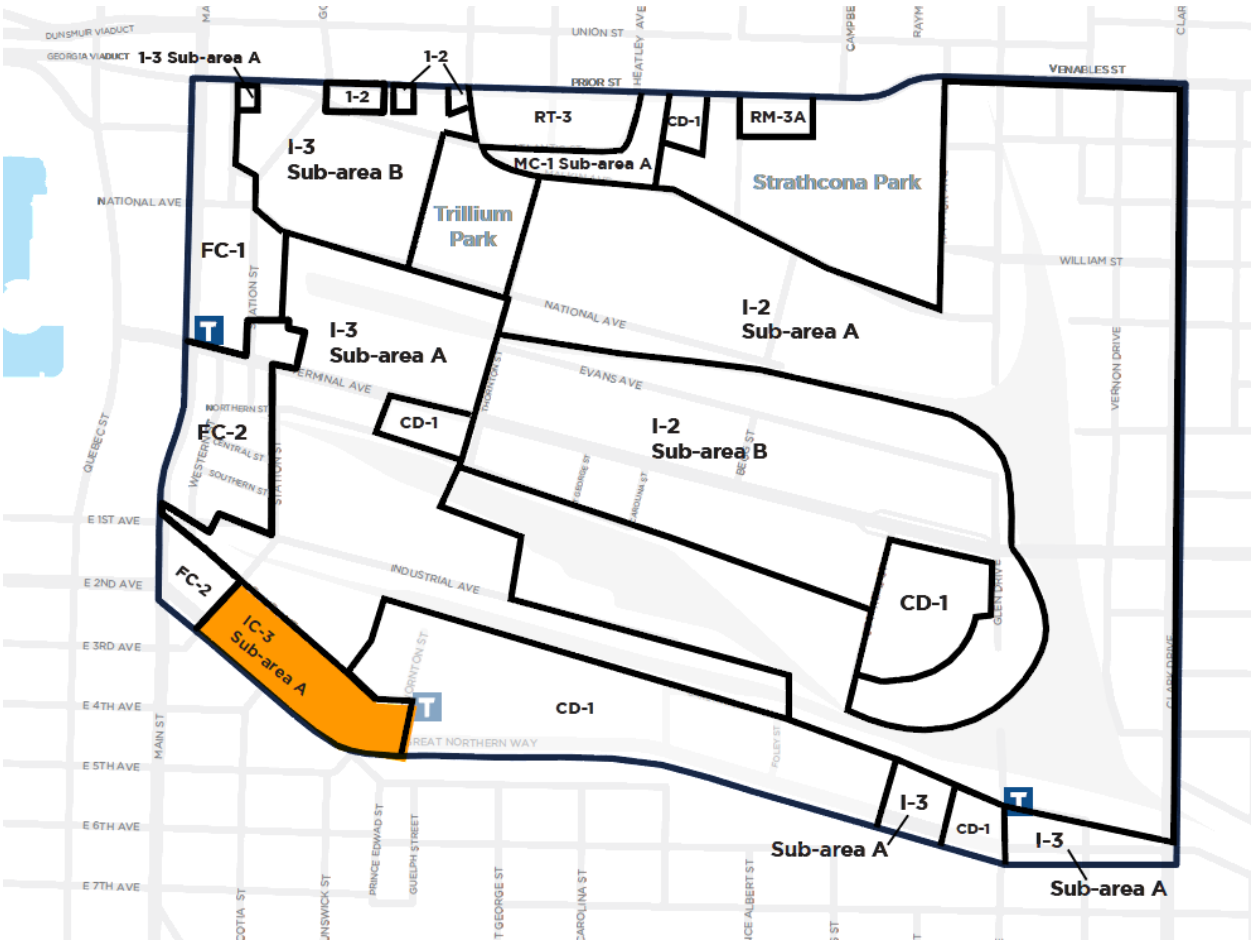
July 2022

Map 1 – False Creek Flats Zone District Map for IC-3A



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Application and Intent

1.1 Plan Principles

These policies and guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the IC-3 District Schedule in the Creative Campus Subarea of False Creek Flats and should be consulted in seeking approval for conditional or discretionary relaxations to regulations. As well as assisting the applicant, these policies and guidelines will be used by City staff in the evaluation of projects.

The intent of the policies and guidelines is to:

(a) Intensify Employment Opportunities: Increase job space around existing and future transit sites that reflect the industrial character and nature of the area. Explore opportunities for higher use of existing buildings for more intensified job space.

(b) Maximize Flexibility: Ensure that new buildings can adapt and evolve to accommodate future changes in economic production.

(c) Encourage Vertical Stacking of Industry and Production Spaces: There is increasingly an opportunity to stack many industrial/production businesses in the same building. With the goal of increasing employment and the productive output of the area, the plan supports a return of vertically stacked industrial uses in the Flats.

(d) Take Advantage of Unique Opportunities: A thriving economy requires space for all scales of businesses from start-ups to headquarters. Large lot sizes create flexibility and scale not available elsewhere in the inner city. Plan for flexible outdoor spaces that can host a variety of uses over 24 hours.

(e) Create Buildings that Respect & Respond to the Public Realm: Design buildings at the scale of the pedestrian by incorporating elements at the ground floor that help to create attractive, well- functioning and welcoming spaces.

(f) Reference Industrial & Institutional Urban Fabric: Consider a campus approach to the design and siting of developments on large sites. Accommodate industrial and institutional scales within a finer grained urban setting to facilitate organic growth and phasing over time.

(g) Create healthy and productive workspaces: Design the public realm to maximize sunlight on public spaces and daylight in work environments.

(h) Encourage Working Rooftops: Expand economic functions to the roof tops of buildings.

(i) Create Thoughtful Transitions Respectful of Surrounding Residential Neighbourhoods: Require transitions between working industrial lands and adjacent residential.

(j) Showcase Functional Workspaces in the Public Realm: Create links between the public realm and industrial function to showcase the industrial character of the Flats.

(k) Create Buildings and Neighbourhoods that Respond to Sea Level Rise: Low topographic elevations and anticipated sea level rise presents a major challenge for development in False Creek Flats. Provide adaptive, flood resilient building design solutions.

(l) Re-purpose Vehicle Parking: Minimize surface parking and design for parking areas to transition to work space over time as other modes of transportation improve

2 General Design Considerations

Proposals will be evaluated based on urban design performance objectives including setbacks, massing, building articulation, access to daylight and views, transition to surround communities, improved building articulation and animated streetscapes as described by this section. Throughout False Creek Flats, there is a need to seek ways to create a more comfortable pedestrian experience by greening the streets with tree planting, continuous sidewalks and by encouraging active street frontages for businesses.

Site layout and building design such as building separations, widths, depths, or setbacks should reinforce the surrounding scale and street network and provide a means to inform opportunities for open space, vehicular access, rain water management and permeability as well as augmenting the Network of Public Spaces described in Section 6.

2.1 Neighbourhood Character

I-3 - Creative Campus Sub-Area

The intent for the Creative Campus sub-area is to enable intensification opportunities for well-functioning, flexible industrial and light industrial workspace, office space and other employment opportunities while enhancing the public life and creating pedestrian interest. IC-3 permits residential uses. Residential uses should be carefully designed and considered with respect to non-compatible uses.

Map 3 - False Creek Flats Character Areas.

2.2 Unique Spaces and Places

The diverse combination of uses and forms of development in the False Creek Flats intentionally provides for opportunities to create unique and varied places. Creation of opportunities for public engagement in a variety of distinct places are highly encouraged.

2.3 Views

New development should be considerate of the impact on existing distant views. However as development progresses, the anticipated scale and density will impact the ability to preserve these existing views. Development should therefore place a higher emphasis on the following strategies:

(a) Provide an attractive near view. This can include a finer grained urban fabric and building modules, high-quality materials and detailing, visually permeable facades, programming for active outdoor uses and landscape elements.
(b) Visually linking new open space to existing open space. This can serve to expand the depth of views.
(c) The form and shape of tower elements should be informed by view studies.
(d) View Cones may limit building heights along Lorne Street.

2.4 Topography: Floodplain

False Creek Flats has low topographic elevations and will be at risk of flooding during large storms by the end of the century if projected sea level rise occurs. The Flood Plain Standards and Requirements as adopted by Vancouver City Council sets the designated flood plain at 4.6m from GVRD datum. As a consequence, existing grades including street right of ways, are often one to two meters below the anticipated ground floor elevations. A plan to raise street elevations may be considered in the future. Therefore, new development should be designed to be adaptive when incorporating flood resilient construction methods and to accommodate public realm objectives for both the current and potential future at grade conditions. Solutions should be accommodated within the property, be visually interesting, relate to the pedestrian scale, and may include increased building setbacks, internalized stairs and ramping as well as adaptable entries, loading and parking.

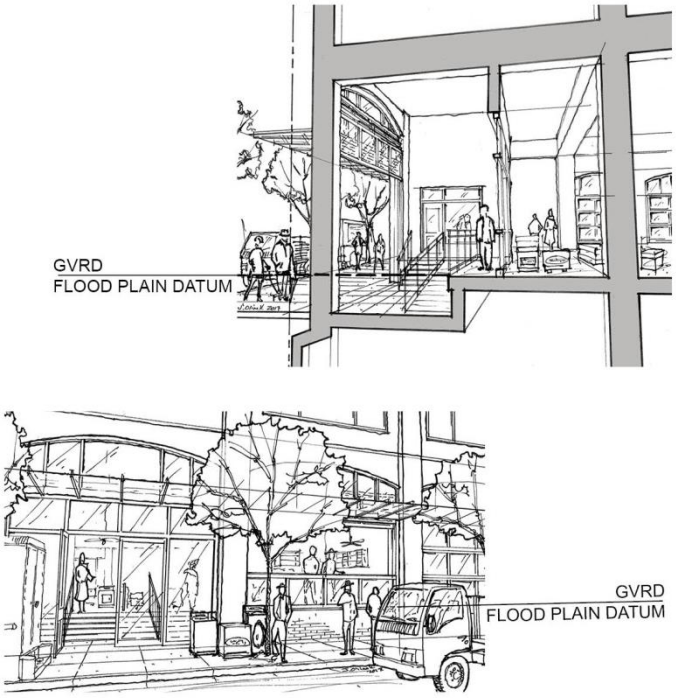


Figure 2 - Floodplain Strategies

2.5 Light and Ventilation

Light and ventilation are important for both workspace and residences.

Residential: For dwelling uses the horizontal angle of daylight (H.A.D.) regulations in the District Schedule should be supplemented with the following considerations:

(a) living rooms should not face into courtyards less than 73 m wide;
(b) building massing should maximize sun access to courtyards and outdoor amenity areas;
(c) mechanical ventilation of commercial and service spaces should be pre-ducted for exhaust through the roof at the highest level or at a location having the least impact on residential liveability;
(d) maximize opportunities for cross ventilation of dwelling units such as corner units or double fronting units; and
(e) locate residential units and open spaces away from areas of noxious odours and fumes related to nearby traffic or land uses.

Note: Consult individual sub-areas for permitted Dwelling Uses and tenancy.

All other Uses: Daylight and ventilation in work environments can improve energy usage as well as promoting a health and productivity. Considerations include:

(a) solar shading devices and glazing performance;
(b) building orientation and massing;
(c) increased floor and ceiling heights; and
(d) operable windows.

2.6 Weather

Weather protection should be provided continuously and at all common building entries as well as at individual entries.

(a) In terms of appearance, a uniform canopy or awning across the entire building façade may be inappropriate to the diverse and varied character of the sub-area. Design architecturally integrated, high quality awnings and canopies, but ensure some variety in form, and/or the ability for tenants to vary them.
(b) Ensure that awnings and canopies are deep enough and close enough to the ground to provide shelter. The recommended minimum depth to height ratio is approximately 7:10.
(c) Transparent or translucent glazed canopies that permit the passage of light are encouraged.

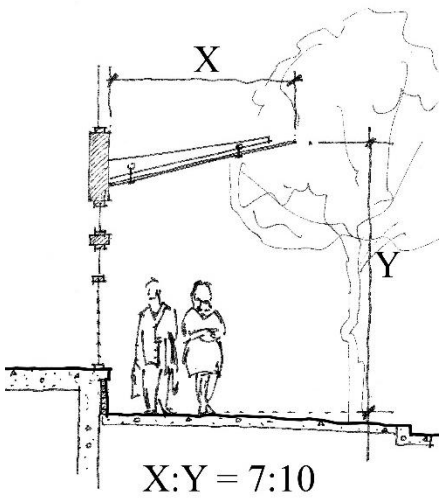
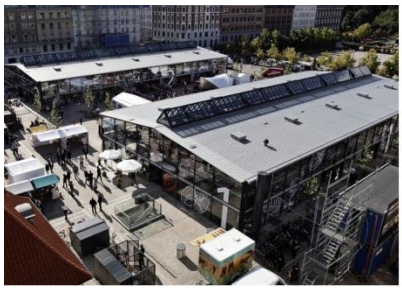


Figure 10 – Weather Protection

3 Use

3.1 Uses at Grade

Active and engaging uses at grade should be provided. In the False Creek Flats an emphasis is placed on providing attractive, well-functioning and welcoming space to showcase workspace. Strategies including visually permeable frontages, operable window walls, setbacks and weather protection to accommodate outdoor workspaces are encouraged. Other than entrances and lobbies, Residential and Office uses should not be located at the ground floor level. Section 6 for the 'Arts Walk' should inform ground floor design, in particular for considerations along the lane.



4 Policies and Guidelines Pertaining to the Regulations of the Zoning and Development By-law and the Parking By-law

4.1 Building Height

The intent for increasing maximum achievable building heights includes for intensified employment opportunities, well-functioning and flexible job space, vertical stacking of industrial uses, working and green roof tops and response to sea level rise. New development should create an active and engaging public realm within a unique, vibrant, attractive, interesting and amenity rich environment. The Director of Planning may increase the maximum achievable building height based on the objectives of all applicable policies and guidelines including the evaluation of:

(a) Impact of building height, bulk, massing, location and overall design of the building on the site, surrounding buildings and streets. In addition, the general design considerations listed in Sections 2 and 5 describe the intents and objectives relating to general building expression and architectural components.
(b) The provision of on-site open space, landscape, and the effects of overall design on the general amenity of the area. In particular Sections 6 and 7 describe open space and landscape objectives for the Public Places and Spaces, Network of Public Spaces, On-Site Public Open Space, streetscapes and landscape.
(c) The effect on traffic in the area.
(d) Provision for pedestrian needs including continuous sidewalks, weather protection, safety, and active and engaging frontages that respect and respond to the public realm.

4.2 Floor Space Ratio (FSR)

The intent for increasing the maximum achievable floor area is to provide opportunities for intensified employment and well-functioning and flexible job space. New development should create an active and engaging public realm within a unique, vibrant, attractive, interesting and amenity rich environment. Not all sites will be able to achieve the maximum floor area. The Director of Planning may increase the maximum achievable floor area based on evaluation of the objectives of all applicable policies and guidelines and including:

(a) Impact of building height, bulk, massing, location and overall design of the building on the site, surrounding buildings and streets. In addition, the general design considerations listed in Sections 2 and 5 describe the intents and objectives relating to general building expression and architectural components.
(b) The provision of on-site open space, landscape, and the effects of overall design on the general amenity of the area. In particular Sections 6 and 7 describe open space and landscape objectives for the Public Places and Spaces, Network of Public Spaces, On-Site Public Open Space, streetscapes and landscape.
(c) The effect on traffic in the area.
(d) Provision for pedestrian needs including continuous sidewalks, weather protection, safety, and active and engaging frontages that respect and respond to the public realm.

4.3 Building Massing

Form and massing should be carefully considered with respect to the objectives of these policies and guidelines including access to daylight on the public realm, creating engaging public spaces, building articulation, an attractive near view and finer grained urban settings.

(a) **Tower Elements**: Tower elements (considered to be any portion of a building over 22.0 m (72 ft.) in building height) should:
   (i) be separated from other commercial tower elements by 15.2 m (50 ft)
   (ii) be separated from residential tower elements by 24.0 m (80 ft).

   Where adjacent sites are not fully developed, the proposed tower should maintain a distance of 7.6 m (25 ft) from the interior side and rear property lines unless residential uses are permitted on the adjacent lots in which case the setbacks should increase to 12.5 m (41 ft.).

(b) **The Network of Public Space**: Building massing should respect the importance of sunlight on the Network of Public Space. Development along Walk the Line and adjacent to the Network of Public Space as described in Section 6 should seek to minimize shadowing on the opposite sidewalks, mini-parks, urban plazas and other public places.

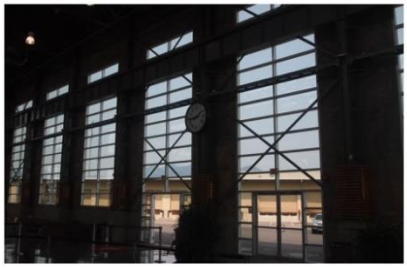
(c) **Street Wall and Shoulder**: The intent is for development to be built out to the front yard setback and create a consistent approximately 4 storey 18.3 meter street wall and shoulder. This should be evaluated based on existing and anticipated adjacent development.

(d) **Roof**: The profile and silhouette of roofs should be considered as part of the skyline. Elevator penthouses, mechanical rooms, equipment, vents and other appurtenances should be integrated with the architectural treatment of the roof and screened from view.

5 Architectural Components

The intent for architectural components and materials is to recognize the area's unique industrial character as well as the following:

(a) Reinforce the near view with high-quality materials, detailing and active storefronts.
(b) Express a finer grain urban fabric by articulating smaller structural bays and modules.
(c) Generic "big box" building designs that exhibit little facade interest and transparency to the street should be avoided.
(d) Storefronts should be transparent at grade and are encouraged not to contain long blank walls.
(e) High clearance warehouse-type spaces should have clerestorey windows at the upper storey of the facade.
(f) Building interface with the public realm should emphasize details and proportions at the scale of the pedestrian with particular consideration to the objectives of animated streetscapes and showcasing functional outdoor workspaces.
(g) Reference the "heavy duty" context with details and expression.



5.1 Windows

Windows at grade are important to enhance pedestrian interest.

(a) Maximize transparency through use of high transom, low sill window designs, as well as openable windows where appropriate.
(b) Where windows cannot be used, use other means to add visual interest such as expressed vertical elements, vines, murals, and detailing. Avoid long stretches of blank wall.
(c) Uses and functions which do not lend themselves to enhancing pedestrian interest should be located away from ground floor windows.
(d) Use of mirrored or highly reflective glazing, window decals or other vision obscured treatments are highly discouraged, and may not be permitted, especially at grade.

5.2 Entrances

The intent is to create buildings and spaces that relate to and respect the public realm as well as to showcase functional workspace. Characteristics of these buildings include:

(a) Main building entries should be clearly identifiable, transparent and accessible from the street.
(b) Locate secondary entrances and individual small tenant entries with frequency along adjoining sidewalks. Separate uses or accessory retail spaces should have separate and distinct entries.

(c) Reinforce visually and physically, the connection of interior spaces to the public realm. Strategies, such as operable folding storefronts and roll-up doors, are encouraged to introduce opportunities for outdoor workspace.
(d) Provide pedestrian interest and comfort at entries provided through specifically designed seating, signage, lighting and features that indicate the building's use and function,

5.3 Exterior Walls and Finishing

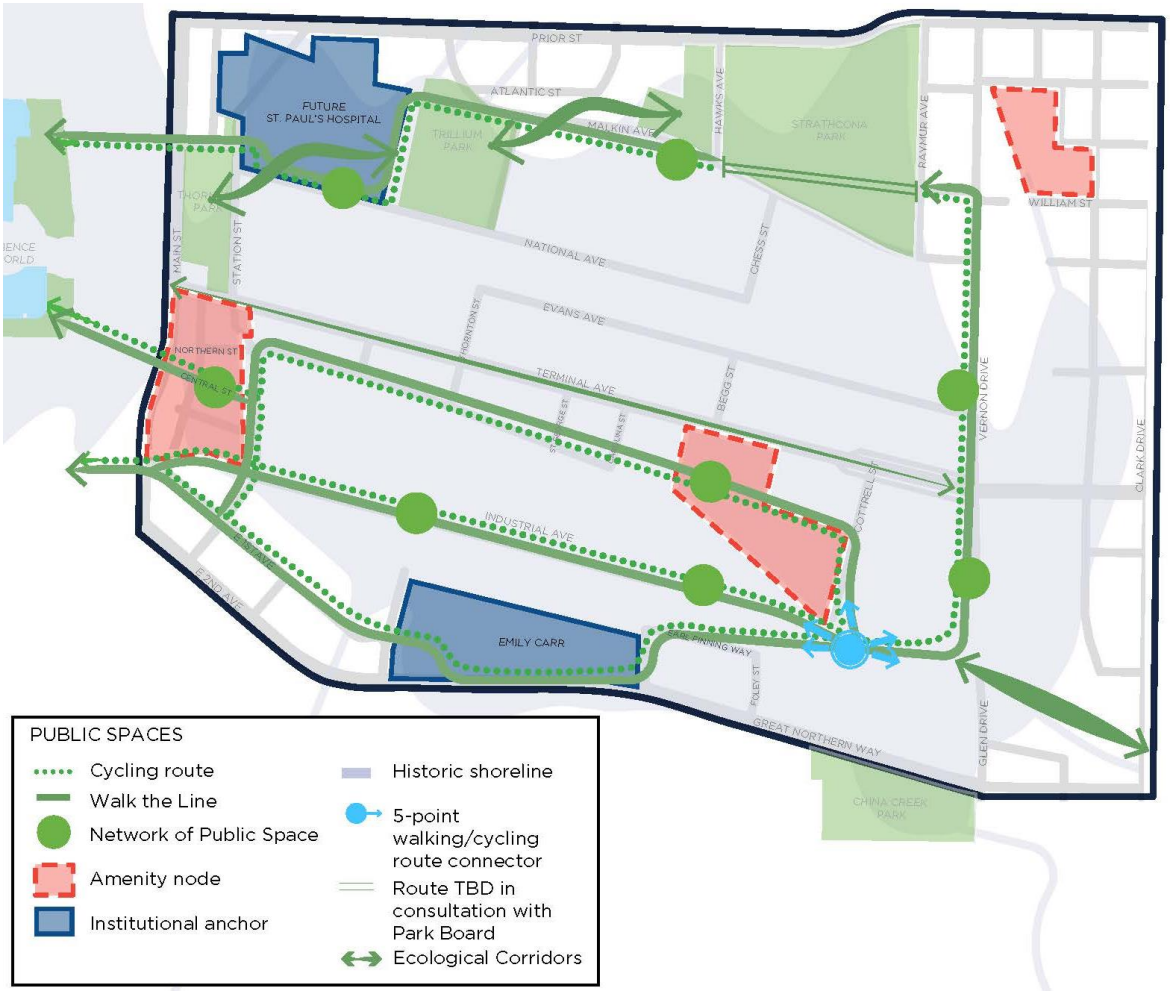
(a) Exterior building design should reflect the industrial and institutional urban contaxt and be of high-quality durable materials.
(b) Exterior materials that are encouraged include:
  (i) contemporary metal cladding systems;
  (ii) heavy timber structural elements;
  (iii) glass and steel;
  (iv) masonry, architectural concrete or brick.
(c) Stucco and vinyl are discouraged as primary exterior materials and may not be permitted by the Building By-law.
(d) Roofs, especially visible from above, should be architecturally treated and/or landscaped.

6 Open Space

6.1 Public Places and Spaces

Create unique, vibrant, attractive, interesting and amenity rich environments. Objectives and character descriptions of the key public pathways and connections envisioned for the False Creek Flats include:

(a) **Innovation Corridor – Railtown to Mount Pleasant**: A new off-Main complete street will connect Gore to Station to Lorne, and will serve as a primary north-south link for all transportation modes and tie the innovation nodes together along this corridor. This route may take on the character of a high-street with active and lively storefronts.
(b) **Arts Walk**: The lane between First Avenue and Second Avenue has a unique character and the potential to contribute to the public space network. While maintaining its primary function for servicing, it provides an opportunity to animate a walking link between the Innovation Hub and Emily Carr. This link is envisioned to be lined with commercial galleries, or an "arts walk." The future lane treatment could include lighting, seating and other public realm improvements.
(c) **Central Spine**: A key connection to the Creative Campus is a prominent public linkage along Central Street, through the Innovation Hub to the Seawall that will provide the southwestern starting point of Walk-the-Line. Development should explore opportunities for shared programming as a means to showcase adjacent workspace.
(d) **The Five Points**: The meeting point of the CN and BNSF yards has the potential to link five key desire lines for the flats public space network. Opportunities for public spaces on an elevated structure would provide key vantage points over the rail with views to downtown and the mountains.
(e) **Walk-the-Line**: Walk-the-Line is envisioned as a multipurpose route that connects the various sub-areas into a cohesive whole. The general concept is to roughly trace the old shore line of False Creek, extending the Seawall through the Flats on an approximately 4.5km loop.
(f) **Central Valley Greenway:** Maintain this important cycling route along East 1st Avenue until such a time as a future Industrial Avenue linkage is realized.



6.2 Semi-Private Open Space

Social semi-private open space is desirable for employees, visitors and residents and should be provided to accommodate the intended users wherever possible. It could be located at grade or on the rooftop as part of a landscaped rooftop garden and should maximize sun exposure.

6.3 Private Open Space

(a) For residential uses, private open space should be provided for each dwelling unit in the form of balconies, decks or patios with a minimum single horizontal dimension of 1.8 m and a minimum area of 4.5 m² (50sf); and

(b) Private open space should be designed to capture sun and views where possible, as well as to avoid noise and to take account of visual privacy and security. Balcony enclosure to reduce noise may be appropriate in some cases.

6.4 On-Site Public Open Space

(a) Where practical, the public open space and greenways will be constructed on City owned land or City Right of Way (R.O.W.). In some circumstances, an additional R.O.W. may be requested from adjacent development to provide a more useable trail width.

(b) Landscaping elements and public art, including temporary projects, are encouraged.

(c) Reflect the industrial history of the area as well as contemporary life, innovation and experimentation.

(d) Enhance habitat for birds, pollinators and other flora and fauna and following the Bird Friendly Design Guidelines.

6.5 Public Art

Public art should be considered based on the following process and objectives:

(a) Consideration for 24/7 access and use of the site;
(b) Opportunities for rotating installations and diversity of scale and material;
(c) Opportunities for art to be embedded in public spaces and infrastructure;
(d) Consider opportunities to create diversity throughout the site and in unexpected places; and
(e) Create public spaces built upon people being together in innovative ways.

7 Landscaping

7.1 Streetscape

(a) Landscape design should provide for views into buildings for pedestrian interest, as well as special features such as opportunities to sit, view or take part in walking or active recreation.
(b) Explore opportunities for integrated rain water management.
(c) Provide a high quality public realm with street trees, landscaping, lighting, street furniture, signage and wayfinding, and green infrastructure where possible. Street trees should be provided on all streets not currently having them, or where their spacing is inconsistent.

7.2 Site Landscape

(a) Landscaping should be used to help mitigate impacts between residential and industrial uses.
(b) Landscape design on site should relate to anticipated activities.
(c) Strengthen urban forest connectivity.
(d) Consider planted roof tops.
(e) Enhance habitat for birds, pollinators and other flora and fauna and following the Bird Friendly Design Guidelines.
(f) Limit extent of underground parking layout and design to accommodate retention of existing trees and for the provision of new ones.

8 Utilities, Sanitation, and Public Services

8.1 Garbage and Recycling

Garbage and recycling are essential services that can detract from the pedestrian experience and nearby residential development unless careful design is used to screen them.

(a) Garbage and recycling facilities should be located adjacent to the lane, fully enclosed by a roof and sides or within the building envelope, and screened from the lane and street where possible.
(b) A location for onsite queuing and pick-up is highly encouraged.

8.2 Neighbourhood Energy System

Where the General Manager of Engineering Services deems a connection to the NES is available and appropriate, buildings within any development will be required to connect to the NES prior to occupancy, or post-occupancy through a deferred services agreement, or otherwise, at such time that a system becomes available. Buildings will be subject to the Neighbourhood Energy Utility Connectivity Guidelines & Requirements. Where NES connection is not available or otherwise deemed unfeasible by the General Manager of Engineering Services, buildings should be designed to meet an equivalent carbon performance outcome.

8.3 Underground Wiring

In order to improve the visual environment for residents, developments on larger sites (45.0 m frontage or wider) should investigate with the City Engineer the feasibility of using underground wiring for electric, telephone and cable services, including the removal or partial removal or existing overhead plant.

9 Environmental Considerations

9.1 Soils: Retention, Cleansing and Replacement

Provide soil remediation on all sites as required by the Environmental Management Act, the Vancouver Charter and all city policies with respect to the remediation of city streets. Additional considerations include:

(a) Limit excavation thereby reducing soils remediation;
(b) Reintroduce water and natural systems such as urban forests, wetlands and pollinator meadows;
(c) Topsoil should be retained and soil quality improved where necessary;
(d) Contaminated soils should be replaced with quality soils to enhance plant growth and ground water quality; and
(e) Employ soil remediation techniques such as piling and ground densification to ensure buildings are seismically stable and not subject to liquefaction.

9.2 Green Buildings

(a) Green building technologies to help advance the criteria for healthy productive workspaces;
(b) Green roof tops, including potential business opportunities such as a permanent home for urban agriculture or other rooftop businesses or uses;
(c) Passive design features and technologies including complimenting the burgeoning green building economic sector;
(d) Support innovation with respect to green building and renewable energy system design, operation and placemaking;
(e) Green fleet programming and electric vehicle charging infrastructure; and
(f) Passive strategies to building heating, ventilation and cooling including solar orientation and operable windows.

9.3 Energy: Conservation and Efficiency

(a) Building materials, systems and construction methods should be considered to conserve energy and reduce long-term operating costs.