



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

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

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CENTRAL AREA PEDESTRIAN WEATHER PROTECTION (EXCEPT DOWNTOWN SOUTH)

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Amended September 30, 1986, July 30, 1991 and November 9, 1993

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1 Background

Weather protection for pedestrians has been of concern to Vancouver citizens for many years. This is understandable, as “measurable” precipitation in the form of rain or snow occurs on the average about 40% of the days of the year. Weather protection is therefore an important factor affecting pedestrian movement and public amenity within the Central Area of the city.

Recently, concern has been expressed by the Development Permit Board, the Urban Design Panel, and others involved with the development permit approval process, regarding the need for a clear and understandable policy towards the encouragement of pedestrian weather protection as part of development proposals within the Central Area of the city.

Some development proposals have been approved with the requirement for weather protection features, in areas where this was clearly needed. However, in other areas where present policies are somewhat unclear, development permit applications have been approved without the requirement for canopies or awnings. This was done sometimes in spite of the recommendation from the area planner that these features were desirable for public amenity purposes. This has happened largely because of the somewhat unclear nature of present policies and the lack of an overall plan for pedestrian weather protection, particularly within the Central Area of the city.

There is a need for a clarification and coordination of policy guidelines for the Central Area as a whole, and for the various sub-areas within it, so that City policy towards the provision of pedestrian weather protection as part of development proposals may be made more explicit and understandable to all concerned.

The purpose of this report is to:

1. Summarize existing policies and design guidelines concerning pedestrian weather protection along public streets within the Central Area.
2. List the general objectives that these policies are intended to achieve.
3. Discuss various planning and engineering considerations and policies affecting the formulation of a comprehensive plan for pedestrian weather protection within the Central Area.
4. Develop a schematic plan where pedestrian weather protection is “encouraged” and where it is “actively promoted” as part of development proposals.
5. List various design guidelines related to the form, materials, and maintenance of awnings, canopies, building recesses and arcades.

2 Existing Policies and Guidelines (Deleted September 1986)

3 General Objectives

The existing guidelines and policies documented in the following sections are intended to achieve the following main objectives:

- (a) Weather Protection
 - (i) The development of a comprehensive continuous pedestrian weather protection system in the form of awnings, canopies, building recesses and arcades, along significant pedestrian public streets and through private development areas;
 - (ii) The provision of adequate weather protection for pedestrians at significant waiting and gathering places.
- (b) Livability and Amenity
 - (i) The encouragement of greater movement of people on foot and by public transit within the Central Area of the city;
 - (ii) The emphasis of the pedestrian function of public streets and the provision of a supportive environment for such activities as window shopping, and other active pedestrian street uses.

- (c) Shopping Area Improvement
 - (i) The further enhancement of the appearance of special pedestrian-oriented shopping districts which already have an established character due to the presence of small-scale awnings and canopies;
 - (ii) The improvement of the economic viability and advantages of established shopping areas by creating areas which are usable in all weather without having to go underground.

4 Engineering Considerations

Where existing or future utilities are located under the street boulevard, access to them for digging equipment could be made difficult by fixed canopies over the sidewalk. In such cases, the weather protection may have to be in the form of removable awnings, building recesses or arcades on private property. These major concerns can be summarized as:

- (a) Access to existing and future utilities within and under the street and boulevard must be maintained;
- (b) Freedom of movement of existing and future vehicular and pedestrian activity must not be restricted.

5 Planning Considerations

Below are listed the major planning considerations that have influenced the planning policies discussed in Section 6, and the overall plan of pedestrian weather protection areas discussed in Section 7 and shown on Map 1, page 7.

5.1 Existing Pedestrian Traffic

The attached Appendix A indicates a generalized plan of pedestrian traffic volume in the Central Area of the city, based on survey counts done largely in 1973, but with some recent updating completed in March 1977. The "Central Area Pedestrian Study", funded under the LIP Program for 1977, has recently carried out a survey of pedestrian movement patterns within the Downtown area. In the past, information regarding this and other physical amenities encouraging greater pedestrian use of the street, has not been readily available or consistently updated year by year. It is hoped that this information base, if maintained, will provide a useful reference and planning aid for both public and private development in the Central Area. It should also show the degree of success in increasing the extent and continuity of the pedestrian weather protection system, as the City develops further.

Appendix B indicates the major pedestrian traffic generators (private) and the extent of retail use existing now.

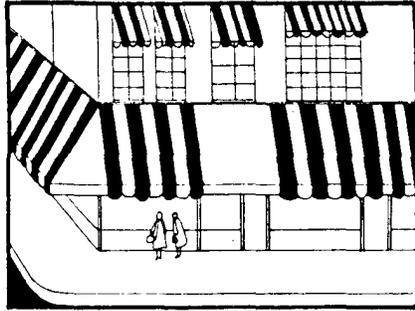
5.2 Future Pedestrian Traffic

It is difficult to predict accurately the effects that future growth and major developments will have on pedestrian movement patterns. The introduction of the possible ALRT system within the Downtown area will be a major determinant of future patterns. Although the alignment of the system is not yet fully resolved, it is probable that it will relate to some of the major pedestrian traffic nodes that presently exist. Other factors such as the amount of retail growth, the extent of residential development in the Downtown, and the general increase in people working Downtown, will affect future patterns of pedestrian movement.

Appendix D shows the major proposed developments and recommended extent of retail use in future, which may be subject to change.

5.3 Pedestrian Needs

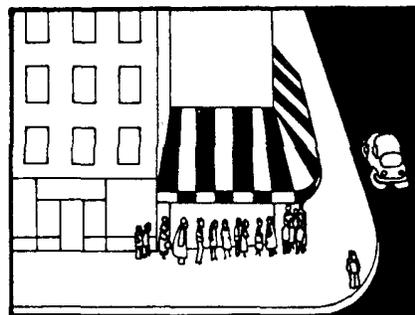
- (a) Shelter Continuity
In terms of a comprehensive system of pedestrian protection, the single most important aspect is the degree or extent of continuity that is provided. If this continuity is broken at frequent intervals, it will not encourage significant pedestrian use.



Appendix C indicates a generalized plan of existing street areas where substantial pedestrian weather protection (over 25 and 50% of the street frontage) exists in the form of awnings, canopies, building recesses or arcades.

(b) Waiting Areas

Particular building uses such as theatres and places of entertainment, hotels, restaurants, and major public buildings in front of which significant waiting by people occurs, should be required to provide adequate weather protection. Similarly, pedestrian shelter in the form of awnings or removable canopies should be encouraged from the major building entrance to curbside taxi zones or drop-off areas. Also, buildings adjacent to bus zones and street corners where people wait for traffic lights, are buildings that, because of their location, should be encouraged to provide pedestrian protection.



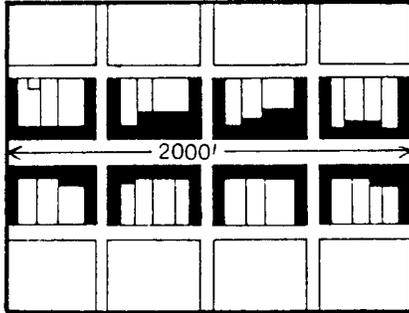
(c) Viewing Areas

Retail storefront and display windows are perhaps the single most important factor in creating the activity and visual interest that encourages pedestrian use of the street. Adequate weather protection should be provided over these store fronts to encourage browsing and casual viewing of merchandise by pedestrian passers-by.



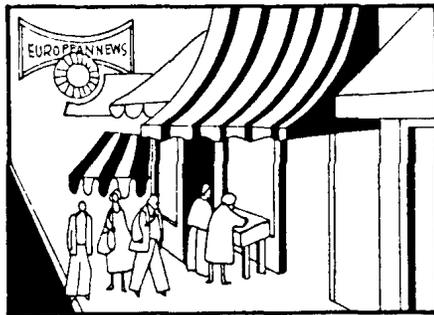
5.4 "Core" Shopping Areas

Pedestrian-oriented retail shopping areas, outside of the Downtown (i.e. South Granville, Central Broadway, and Main/Kingsway) have an effective "core" area, beyond which retail activity diminishes. This is due to the limited distance that most people are prepared to walk while shopping, and also to a limit on the perceived image of the "heart" of the shopping area. In the case of most strip commercial shopping areas, the limiting distance of the "core" retail area is three or four city blocks. Within this "core" area, adequate weather protection for shoppers should be expected to be provided by property owners or merchants.



5.5 "Character Areas"

The Downtown Plan has identified several pedestrian-oriented retail shopping "Character Areas" within the Downtown peninsula. As well, there exist particular areas in the West End and Central Broadway that have this function. Some of these areas, such as Robson Street, Denman Street, and the South Granville Area, have a unique image and character due in part to the proliferation of existing storefront awnings and canopies. The character of these areas should be maintained and enhanced by expecting new development to provide similar pedestrian amenities.



6 Planning Policies

The following policies detailed in sections 6.1 and 6.2 have been developed in order to gradually implement a comprehensive plan for the provision of pedestrian weather protection features as part of continuing development proposals within the Central Area of the city, except Downtown South. For Downtown South, refer to Granville Street (Downtown South) Guidelines and/or Downtown South Guidelines (excluding Granville Street). They are also intended to make more explicitly clear to developers and architects the City's concern for improving this important public amenity feature encouraging more pedestrian use of streets and public areas.

Weather protection features (see Section 8, page 8, for definitions), may be provided in a number of different ways, dependent on the nature of the development, frontage length, location, adjacent street requirements and other urban design and engineering concerns which must be fully considered in the design and development review process. It should be noted that in most cases, other factors affecting the street use which the City Engineer considers more critical and necessary for public safety, such as possible access to underground utilities or interference with traffic needs, may limit the extent or form of pedestrian weather protection features possible over the City sidewalk. Accordingly, the weather protection will usually have to be in the form of an awning or detachable canopy, or located entirely on

private property. Where, in the City Engineer's opinion, traffic and utility requirements would not preclude canopies, fixed canopies over the City sidewalk could be approved under a special "encroachment agreement" by the City Engineer.

The provision of pedestrian weather protection will not be a requirement in any area. Nevertheless, the relative importance of this amenity feature will be indicated by the designation of areas where it will be "actively promoted" and where it will be "encouraged".

The generalized plan of pedestrian weather protection areas (Map 1, page 7) has been developed from the policies listed below.

6.1 "Actively Promoted" Pedestrian Weather Protection

Under the following policies "actively promoted" shall mean that for a new development, or significant change in an existing building, the provision of pedestrian weather protection shall be considered as a desirable public amenity feature of the development. The form of weather protection chosen can be either a recess or arcade on private property, a detachable awning, or in some cases a fixed canopy which would be subject to the approval of an encroachment agreement by the City Engineer. Also, for existing buildings, the form and extent of weather protection is also subject to the compatible architectural design relationship to the building facade.

POLICY #1: RETAIL USE AREAS:

Where present zoning controls require retail use at ground floor level as a definite condition of development, then pedestrian weather protection is desirable to be provided along the public street frontage associated with ground level retail uses.

POLICY #2: CHARACTER AREAS

Within established "Character Areas" having a tradition of continuous pedestrian weather protection in the form of store front awnings or canopies, new development should preferably also provide similar pedestrian weather protection features to relate to neighbouring development and the general area, i.e. Robson Street, Denman Street, Granville Mall, Chinatown and Gastown.

POLICY #3: PUBLIC ASSEMBLY USES

For theatres, auditoriums, and other places of entertainment where frequent public assembly and gathering occurs, suitable weather protected waiting areas are important. These can be either along the public street frontage or directly adjacent to the major entrances of the development.

POLICY #4: SYSTEM CONTINUITY

Where the continuity of existing pedestrian weather protection systems is disrupted by a relatively minor "gap", then new development occurring within this "gap" area should provide pedestrian weather protection in order to link up with and substantially improve the continuity of the total system.

6.2 "Encourage" Pedestrian Weather Protection

Under the following policies, "encouraged" shall mean that for a new development or significant change in an existing building the provision of pedestrian weather protection shall be considered as an important public amenity feature, but to a somewhat lesser extent than in the areas where it is "actively promoted". The form of weather protection chosen can be similar to that described in the section above.

POLICY #5: CONNECTOR ROUTES

In areas where substantial pedestrian traffic occurs, which act as important pedestrian connector routes within the Downtown District, then pedestrian weather protection should be encouraged to be provided.

POLICY #6: CORNER AREAS

Development occurring at corner intersection locations where traffic lights or other considerations cause pedestrian waiting to occur, should be encouraged to provide pedestrian weather protection adjacent to the corner crossing area.

POLICY #7: DISPLAY AREAS

Development having a significant part of its frontage as retail display windows, should be encouraged to provide pedestrian weather protection over these areas, so as to assist casual browsing and viewing of merchandise by pedestrian passers-by.

POLICY #8: COMMERCIAL USE AREAS

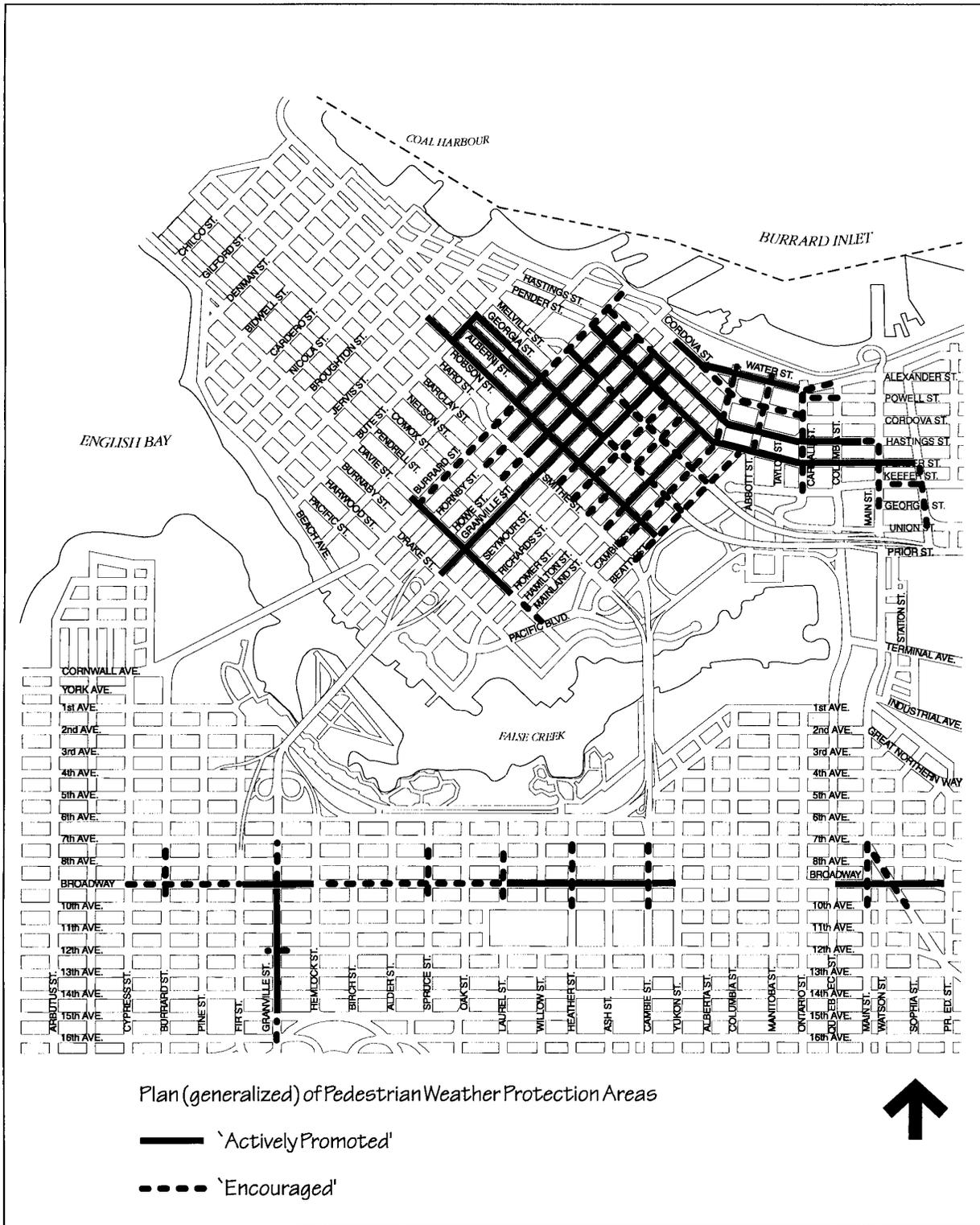
Where present commercial zoning controls or guidelines encourage retail use at ground floor level as part of the flexible design aspects of development, then pedestrian weather protection should also be encouraged to be provided in conjunction with those retail use areas fronting on the public streets.

7 Pedestrian Weather Protection Areas

Based on the planning policies outlined in Section 6, and planning considerations noted in Section 5, a generalized plan of pedestrian weather protection areas has been developed (see Map 1, page 7). It indicates street areas where weather protection should be “actively promoted” or “encouraged” as part of private development proposals.

LIST OF “ACTIVELY PROMOTED” WEATHER PROTECTION STREETS (Map 1, p. 7)

- (a) Downtown District (DD Zone)
 - ALBERNI STREET, from Bute to Burrard
 - BURRARD STREET, from Robson to Georgia
 - BUTE STREET, from Robson to Georgia
 - CORDOVA STREET, from Granville to Richards
 - DAVIE STREET, from just west of Burrard to Homer
 - DUNSMUIR STREET, from Burrard to Howe
 - GEORGIA STREET, from Bute to Seymour
 - GRANVILLE STREET, from Drake to Hastings
 - HAMILTON STREET, from Robson to Pender
 - HASTINGS STREET, from Granville to just west of Main
 - HORNBY STREET, from Smithe to Hastings
 - HOWE STREET, from Smithe to Hastings
 - PENDER STREET, from Burrard to Carrall
 - ROBSON STREET, from Jervis to Beatty
 - SEYMOUR STREET, from Robson to Hastings
- (b) Central Broadway (C-3A Zone)
 - WEST BROADWAY, from Laurel to Cambie
 - GRANVILLE STREET, from Broadway to 15th Avenue, including the connecting 2 block area of BROADWAY, from Fir to Hemlock.
 - EAST BROADWAY, from Quebec to Brunswick.
- (c) Chinatown (HA-1 and HA-1A Zones)
 - PENDER STREET, from Carrall to Gore, including the 1 block area of GORE AVENUE, from Pender to Keefer
- (d) Gastown (HA-2 Zone)
 - WATER STREET, from Cordova to Carrall (Maple Tree Square)



8

Definitions

The architectural and building elements used to provide pedestrian weather protection as part of private development along public streets, or on privately-owned property, are generally described and defined as follows:

(a) **AWNING**

A light, detachable structure of fabric, sheet metal or other flexible material supported from the building by a frame (fixed or retractable) to offer shelter from both the sun and rain.



(b) **CANOPY**

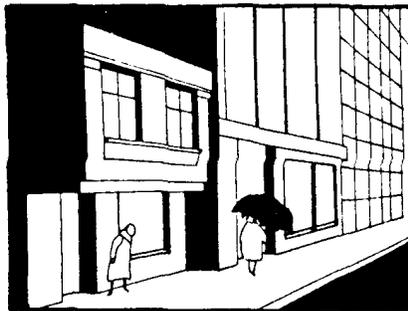
A rigid, roof-like structure, usually below the building roofline, extending out from the building face to provide shelter from sun and rain, and entirely supported from the building.



NOTE: Canopies extending over the City sidewalk must, unless indicated otherwise by the City Engineer be constructed in such a way as to be removable should this be required by the City at a future date. Canopies must be the subject of an encroachment agreement.

(c) **BUILDING RECESS**

A recessed portion of a development created by the overhanging upper portion of the building to provide a sheltered area at grade level in front of storefronts facing the public street.



NOTE: Under the Encroachment By-law No. 4243, no portion of a building used for habitable purposes is permitted beyond the property line above the City street space.

(d) ARCADE (Exterior)

A covered passageway facing the street, set back from the main building line, usually having store fronts along the back side and separated from the street by a line of supporting columns or arches.



NOTE: This definition does not include an “interior” arcade through private development linking public street, lane, or interior courtyard areas.

9 Design Guidelines

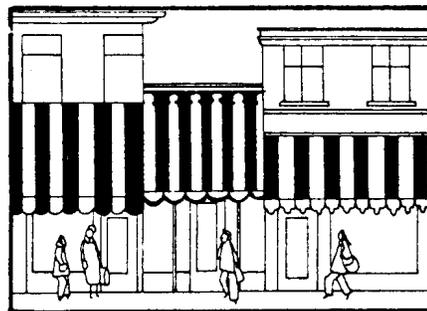
(a) AWNINGS

(i) Form

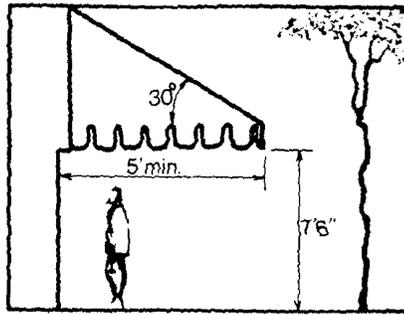
- (A) Awnings are preferred for use on narrow shop fronts, and in areas where an established character is due to the variety of existing awnings. (i.e. Robson Street, South Granville, Chinatown, etc.)
- (B) Awnings should have a low clearance in order to create effective protection and an intimate scale for pedestrians.

NOTE: Please refer to the Sign By-law or the Building By-law for minimum clearances for awnings.

- (C) Awnings should be placed on a storefront at a height which relates both to the architectural features of the building and adjacent storefront awnings.

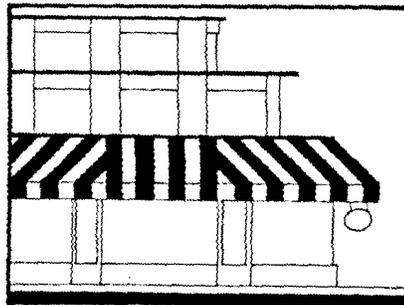


- (D) Awnings should extend out over the sidewalk at least 5 feet, with greater coverage desirable in areas of high pedestrian traffic and where sidewalk widths are adequate, but should occupy no more than 2/3 of the total sidewalk width.
- (E) Awnings should have a minimum slope of 30° to allow for proper drainage and self cleaning action of rain and wind.



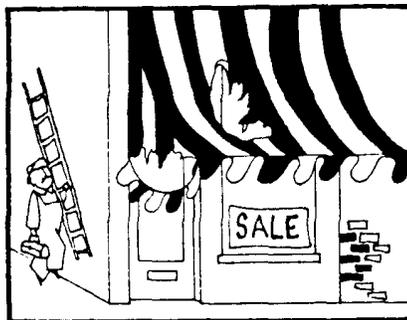
(ii) Material

- (A) Awnings should be constructed of durable, colour-fast material, possibly of reinforced plastic coated fabric.
- (B) Striped, patterned, or dark-coloured awnings tend to show less the effects of dirt and discolouration than plain light-coloured awnings.



(iii) Maintenance

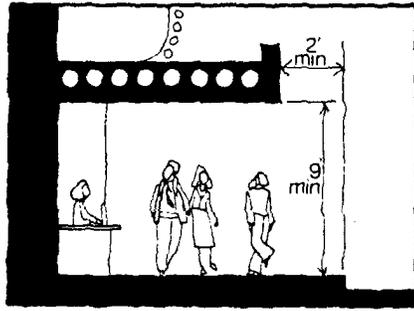
- (A) Awnings should be regularly maintained and cleaned, preferably at least every 3 or 4 months, particularly in areas and periods of high dust and dirt accumulation.
- (B) Awnings should be tightly stretched over a rigid metal frame in order to minimize the accumulation of dirt through sagging, and also to improve their neat appearance.



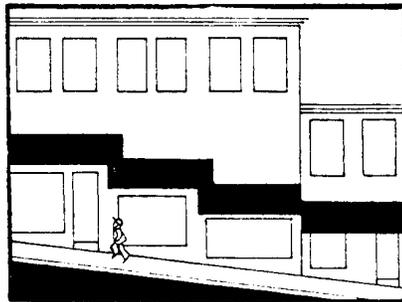
(b) CANOPIES

(i) Form

- (A) Canopies are preferred for use on building frontages over 50 feet, along major pedestrian routes having a predominance of existing canopies, and on theatres and other buildings in front of which significant waiting areas occur.
- (B) Canopies should have a minimum vertical clearance of 9 feet, measured from the sidewalk.
- (C) Canopies should preferably extend out over the sidewalk at least 8 feet, but should maintain a minimum setback from the outer face of the curb of 2 feet.

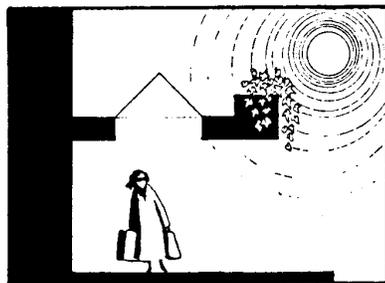


- (D) Canopies should incorporate architectural design features of buildings from which they are supported.
- (E) Canopies must be removable, unless indicated otherwise by the City Engineer.
- (F) Deep canopies on building faces subject to heavy shade either because of orientation (north facing) or adjacent building form (blocking sunlight), should incorporate glazing into part of the canopy to allow natural light to penetrate to storefronts and the sidewalk below.
- (G) Canopies extending over building frontages greater than 100 feet should be designed to reduce their apparent scale and length, so as to relate better to the pedestrian scale of the street.
- (H) Canopies, where sloping sidewalks occur, should be stepped and terraced down to follow the general profile of the street.



(ii) Material

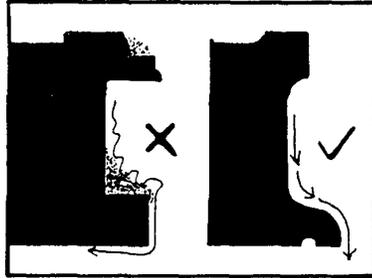
- (A) Canopies should be constructed of non-combustible material supported entirely from the building.
- (B) Glazing used in canopies for the transmittance of natural light to the sidewalk below, should be either of wired glass or of approved fire-resistant plastic.
- (C) The use of landscaping material placed on top of canopies to soften their appearance and provide streetscape variety, should be encouraged, provided that adequate arrangements are made regarding maintenance, drainage and stability of planting material.



- (D) Architectural glare-free lighting should be incorporated into the canopy soffit, which has either a low level light source or one not directly visible to pedestrians.

(iii) Maintenance

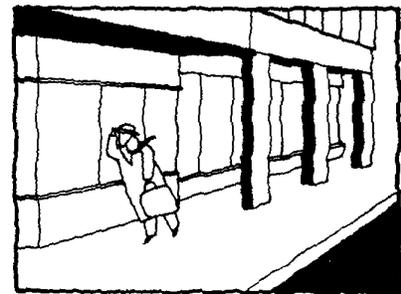
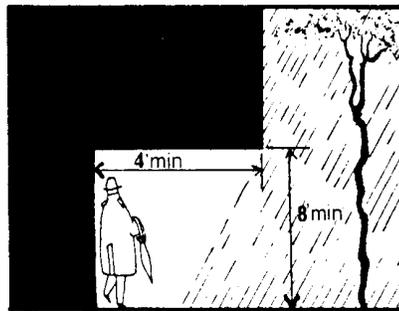
- (A) Canopy roofs should be drained in accordance with the Plumbing By-law so that the water flowing therefrom is carried back into the building.
- (B) The exterior facing material of canopies should require minimum maintenance and have good weathering qualities.
- (C) Canopies should be designed to minimize the accumulation of dust and dirt, by eliminating as far as possible horizontal ledges and other design details which tend to trap dirt.



(c) BUILDING RECESSES

(i) Form

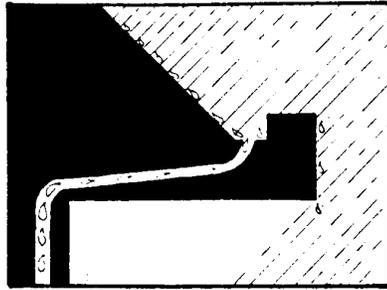
- (A) Building recesses (on private property) may be preferred in cases where canopies and/or awnings are not desirable because of limited street or sidewalk width or other urban design considerations.
- (B) Building recesses should have a minimum vertical clearance of 8 feet, measured from the sidewalk, but the bottom of the overhang should not be greater than 12 feet above the pedestrian sidewalk level.
- (C) Building recesses should extend back a minimum of 4 feet from the building face or property line. This should be increased for a higher overhang if the overhang faces the prevailing wind or rain direction.



- (D) Building recesses should relate to the form of adjacent development, so that the continuity of the pedestrian shelter system is maintained and improved.

(ii) Material

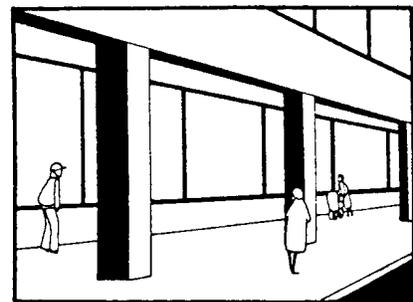
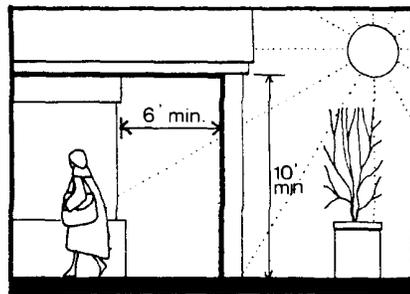
- (A) Architectural, pedestrian-level lighting should be incorporated into the soffit, which is glare-free or not directly visible to pedestrian.
- (B) Building overhangs which are sloping above so as to collect a substantial amount of rain water on the face of the building should provide for a catchment gutter above the pedestrian sidewalk.



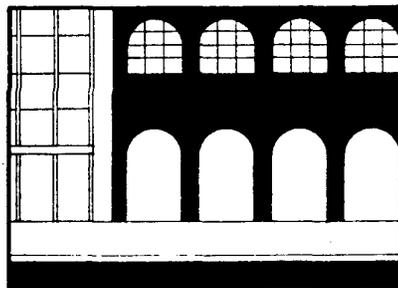
(d) ARCADES

(i) Form

- (A) Arcades may be preferred for use on building frontages over 100 feet, and in areas where canopies and/or awnings are not practical because of limited sidewalk width, or where the arcade will add to the continuity of the existing pedestrian path system.
- (B) Arcades should have a minimum vertical clearance of 10 feet measured from the sidewalk, to permit some direct sunlight to penetrate to recessed store fronts.
- (C) Arcades should have a minimum horizontal clear width of 6 feet, measured between store fronts and supporting columns. This width should be increased in areas of high pedestrian traffic.



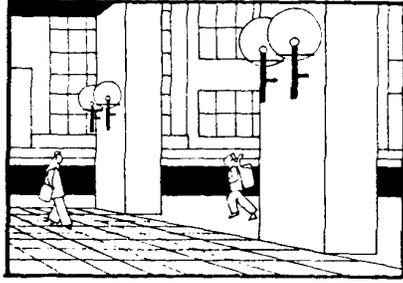
- (D) The width and spacing of arcades supports occurring along the property line should be such that maximum visibility is permitted from the sidewalk into the arcade.
- (E) The spacing and rhythm of arcade supports should relate to the structural pattern of the building and should be consistent along the length of the arcade.



- (F) Arcades be designed to link up with adjacent development, so that the continuity of the pedestrian shelter system is maintained and improved.

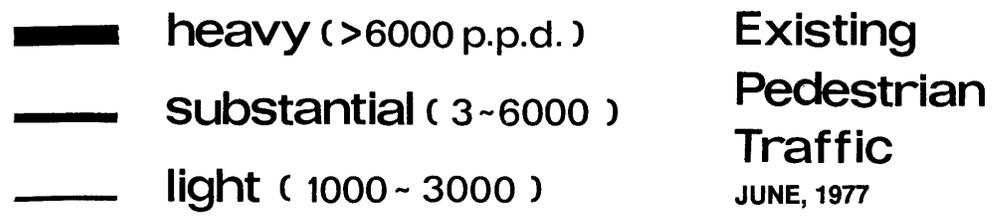
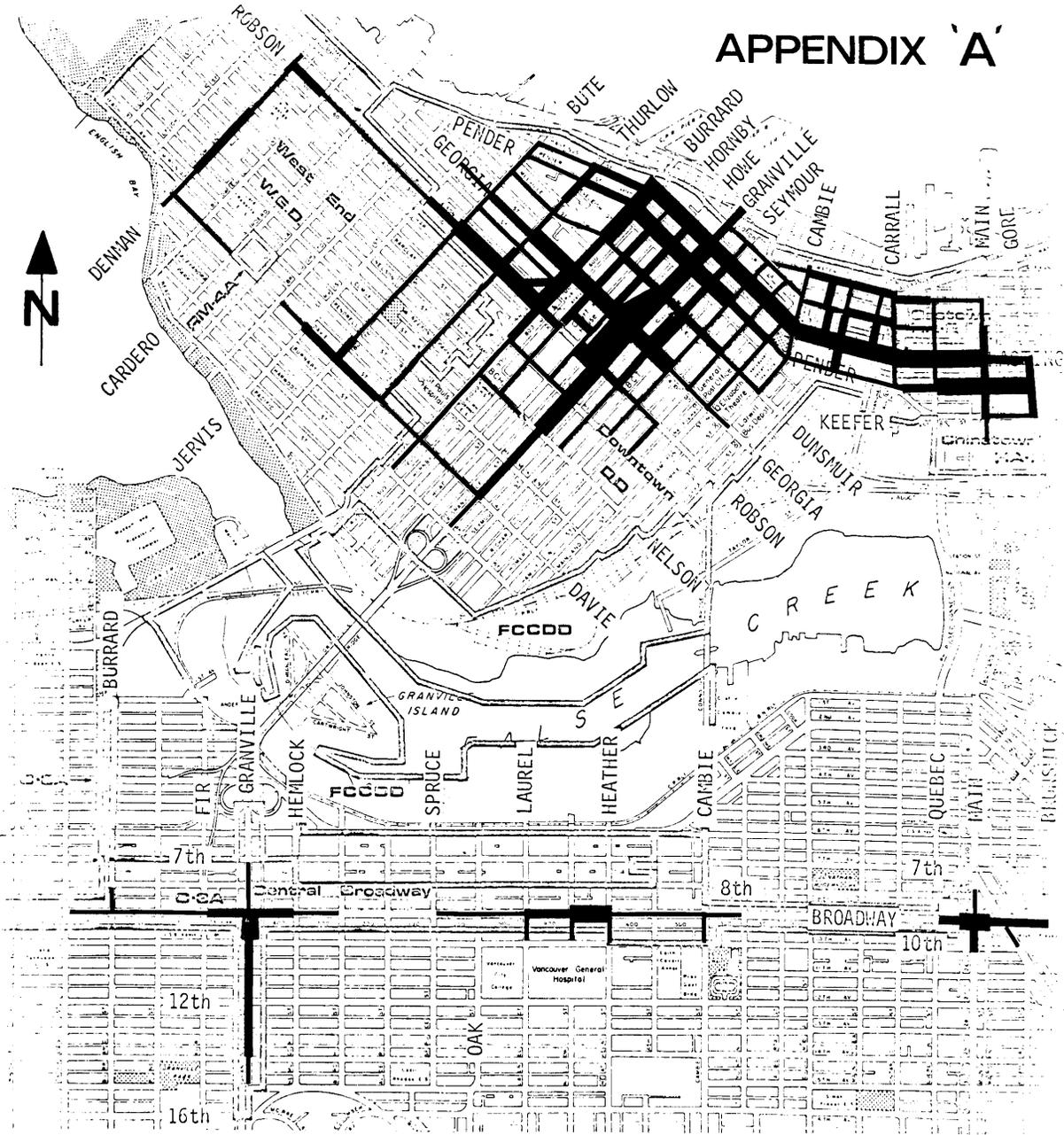
(ii) Material

- (A) Arcades should incorporate high quality attractive facing materials, related to the overall building design.
- (B) The use of special paving material can enhance the attractiveness of the arcade for pedestrians.
- (C) Architectural, pedestrian-level lighting should be incorporated into the arcade. It should be glare-free or not directly visible to pedestrians.

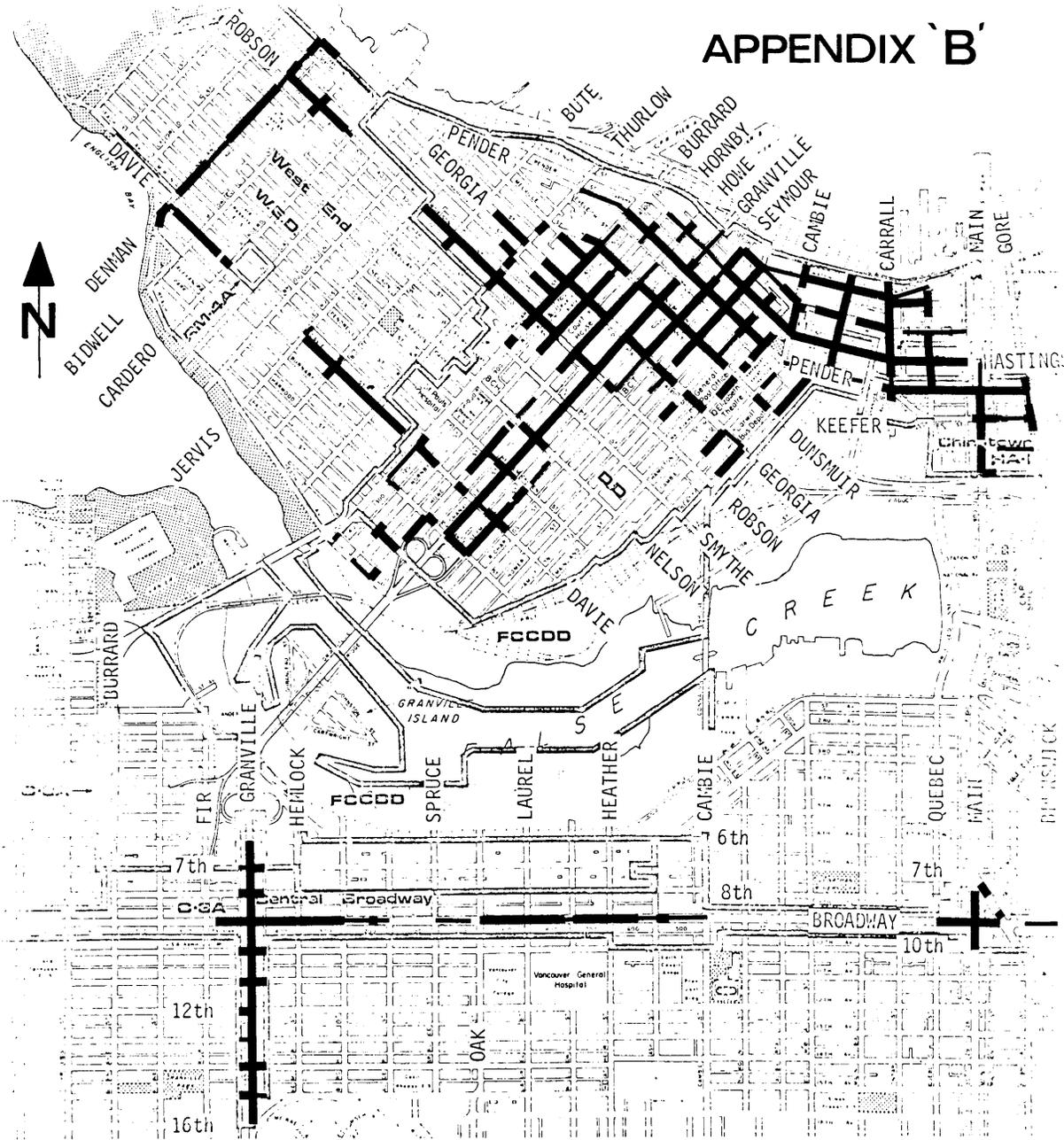


- (D) At night, the general light level within the arcade should be sufficient to eliminate shadows and to invite pedestrian use.
- (iii) Maintenance
 - (A) Materials used should be durable and require minimum maintenance.
 - (B) Landscaping within or alongside an arcade should be adequately maintained to ensure an attractive appearance.

APPENDIX 'A'



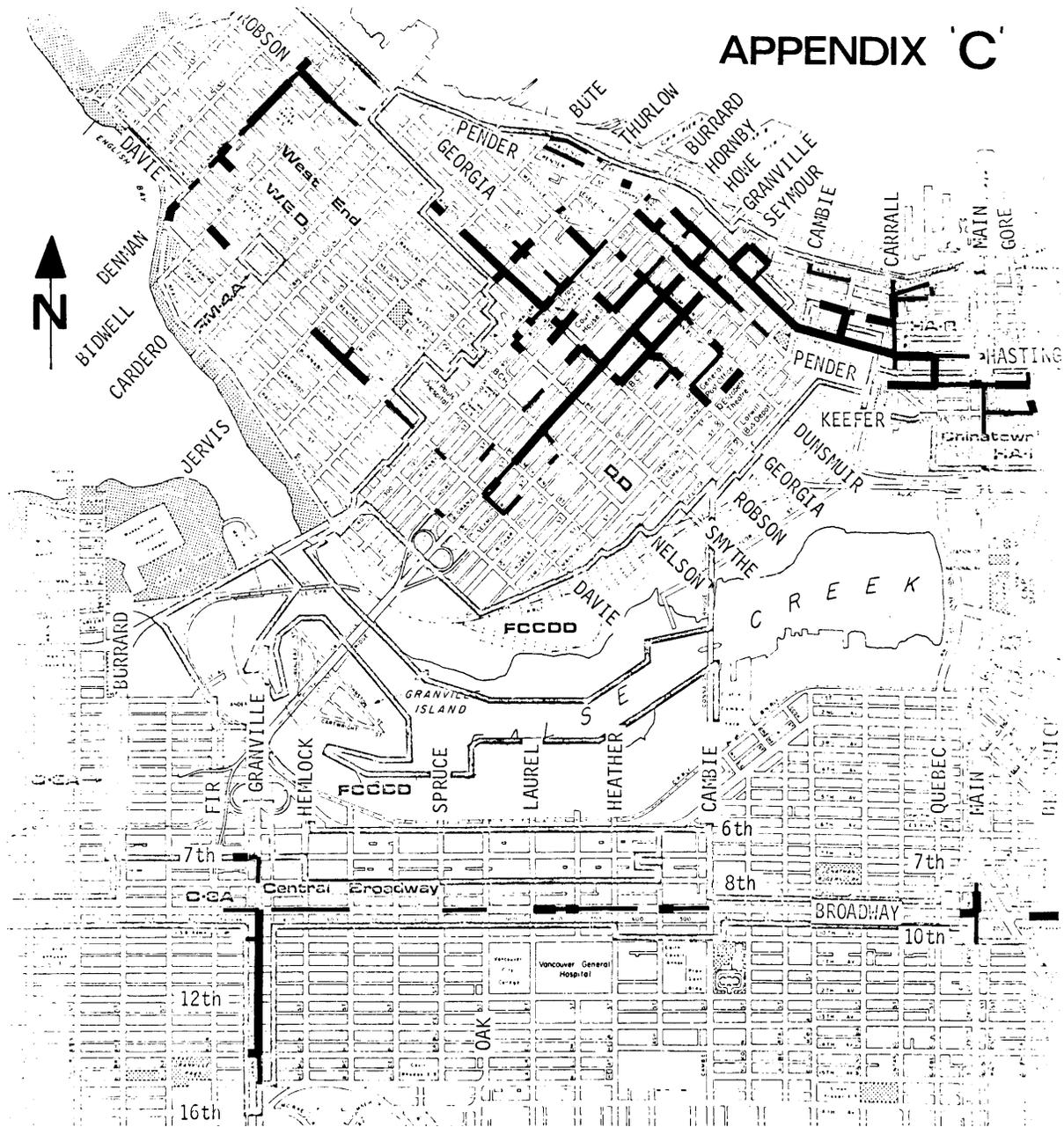
APPENDIX 'B'



- > 50 % street frontage
- 25 – 50% frontage

**Existing
Retail
Use**
JUNE, 1977

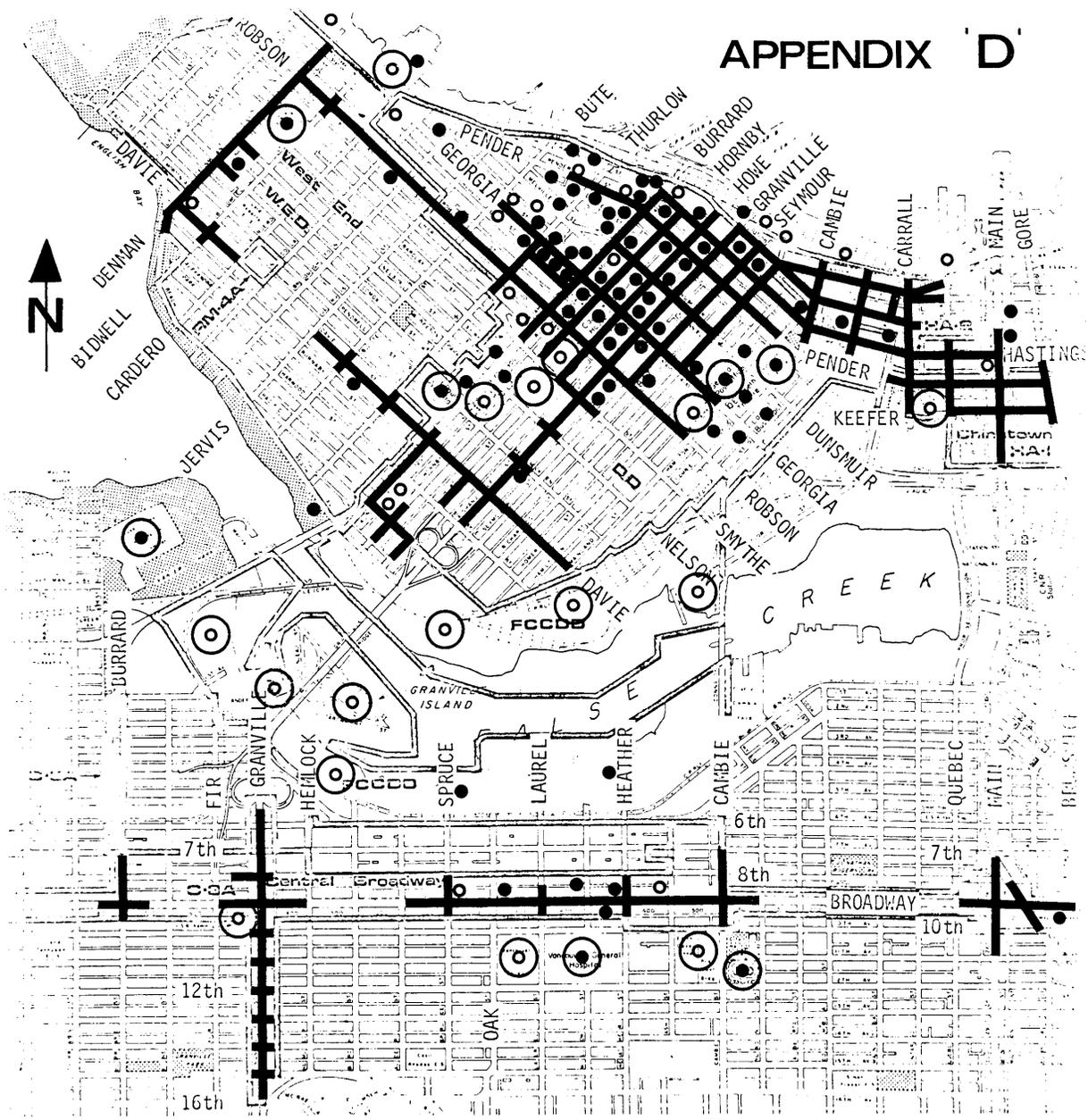
APPENDIX 'C'



- >50% street frontage
- 25 ~ 50% frontage

**Existing
Weather
Protection**
JUNE, 1977

APPENDIX 'D'



- retail use areas
- existing developments
- ⊙ major institutional uses
- possible development
- ⊕ proposed projects (major)

**Future
Development &
Retail Use**
JUNE, 1977
(Subject to Change)