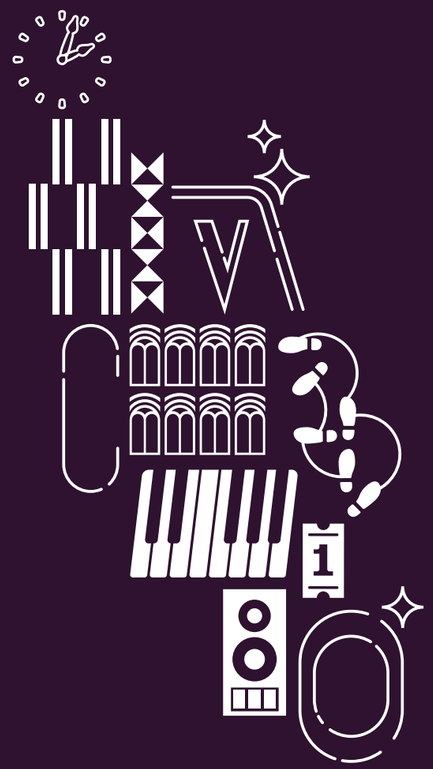
Granville Street Plan

CITY OF VANCOUVER



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This plan was approved by Vancouver City Council on June 4, 2025

Produced by
City of Vancouver
453 W 12th Ave, Vancouver, BC
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Copies of this plan are available from www.vancouver.ca

Granville Street in the evening
(Image: Casey Yee)

Granville Street Plan

Land Acknowledgement

The City of Vancouver acknowledges that the lands on which downtown Granville Street is situated are the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. These lands have been stewarded by xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples since time immemorial, and their unique and inherent relations, history, Title and rights in these territories remain intact.

The City of Vancouver will continue to work with the Nations on the implementation of the Granville Street Plan and through other endeavors to strengthen its future as a City of Reconciliation.

City of Vancouver

Introduction

The City of Vancouver has prepared the Granville Street Plan (the “Plan”) to support revitalization of Downtown Granville Street and the Granville Entertainment District (GED). The Plan builds on Granville Street’s rich history of live performances and its 'eclectic and electric' character. The Plan was developed with input from businesses, residents, cultural institutions and community partners. It aims to enhance daytime and nighttime activities, improve safety, expand live music, unlock economic opportunities, increase hotels and dining options, and deliver a world-class public realm.

The Plan’s Framework guides change through three key moves: 1) defining distinct character areas (City Centre, Entertainment Core, and Bridgehead); 2) creating a destination public space and pedestrian zone; and 3) implementing transit improvements on Howe and Seymour Streets. The Plan's policies will guide new uses, expand development, promote arts and culture, and improve public space and transportation, building on the area's historic character.

An Implementation and Phasing Strategy will guide the area’s transformation through partnerships, re-investment, redevelopment and City-led projects.

Located in the heart of downtown Vancouver, Granville Street is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. Vancouver’s downtown Granville Street area is a unique entertainment district with a rich cultural history, known for its neon signs and iconic venues. This area of Granville Street is a central hub for arts, music and live performance, along with retail, office space, hotels, theatres, night clubs and dining establishments.

Figure 1 Downtown Vancouver: Granville Street Plan Area

The Case for Change on Granville Street

The Granville Street Plan outlines a vision that will need strong, coordinated support from the City of Vancouver and all stakeholders and partners. The Plan will play a vital role in coordinating efforts across City departments, private property owners, businesses, and venue operators to transform Granville into a dynamic destination for culture and entertainment. Once approved, the Plan will need regular review and updates to ensure it works as intended and adapts to changes.

Downtown Granville Street evolved from a bustling commercial hub in the early days of Vancouver's incorporation to become home to the Granville Entertainment District (GED). In the 1990's and 2000's, the GED was a vibrant destination for celebration and performance - known for its iconic neon signs, marquees, and venues like the Orpheum Theatre and the Commodore Ballroom. Today, the GED boasts a diverse mix of live performance venues, music-related businesses, cultural activities, restaurants, cafes, pubs, clubs, punk shops, tattoo parlours, and accommodations.

Granville Street was part of the Vancouver's historic streetcar network and remains a busy transit corridor. City-wide routes converge here, connecting to downtown Vancouver's employment and retail centres, key transit SkyTrain stations, and intersect with prominent streets like Georgia, Robson and Davie.

The 2010 Winter Olympics marked a peak of activity on Granville Street, with thousands of visitors filling the street day and night. The Canada Line and public realm improvements for the 2010 Winter Olympics were the most recent significant changes to Granville Street.

Today, the area faces challenges with vacant storefronts, lack of daytime activity, street disorder, and rising health and safety concerns. These issues have contributed to a negative perception of the GED, as highlighted during the Plan's public engagement process.

The City of Vancouver recognizes Granville Street's challenges but sees it as an area full of opportunity. The Granville Street Plan can enhance the area's future for businesses, venues, visitors, and residents by introducing a vision, and outlining the incremental changes needed.

Granville Street
(Image: AE Creations)

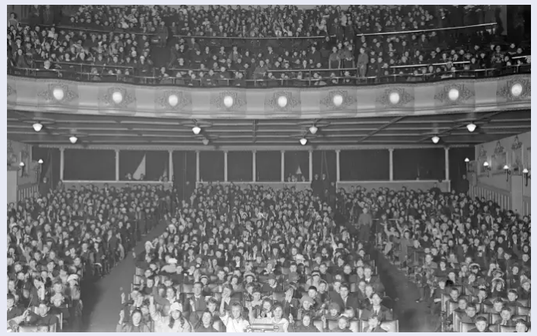
Granville Street Through the Years

Granville Street is a unique, ever-evolving cultural landscape with layers of history. Granville Street is valued for: its enduring connection to the Indigenous Peoples of the area; its growth as a transportation corridor - in relation to the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), the British Columbia Electric Railway (BCER) and, later, bus and light rail service; its post-contact Edwardian-era development, which resulted in the construction of many of its extant buildings; its perceived deterioration and cyclical evolution resulting in a variety of urban planning initiatives; its importance to the cultural, artistic, and societal development of a variety of communities; its role as the heart of the region's entertainment development, both formally and informally, replete with extensive neon signs; and its variety of architecture and building typologies and styles that compose its characteristic 'sawtooth' streetscape profile.

2024 Cultural Heritage Study | Granville Street (Luxton)

Plaza Theatre (881 Granville Street) 1937 (VPL 11050)

Construction of electric railway along Granville Street, 1912 (CVA A09783)



Children in the audience of the previous Orpheum (761 Granville Street) 1918 (CVA 99-5150)

Street car 'sawtooth' streetscape profile (800 block Granville Street), 1920 (CVA A37856)

Iconic neon signs at night (800 and 900 blocks), 1959 (CVA A40472)

Construction of Granville Mall, October 15 1974 (CVA 800-0746)

Local punk legends DOA at the Commodore, 1977 (Bev Davies)

Nirvana at Commodore Ballroom, 1991 (Charles Petersen)

Broken Social Scene Commodore Ballroom, 2010 (Vancouver Sun)

Crowds on Granville Street after Canada's Men's Ice Hockey gold medal win during the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics (Hulse & Durrell)

Granville Street Block Party, 2024 (Downtown Vancouver BIA)

A New Vision for Granville Street

Located in the heart of downtown, Granville Street is envisioned as a safe, welcoming, diverse and vibrant entertainment district that is alive with activity day and night, all year round. As the plan is implemented, Granville will evolve into a premier cultural and tourist destination for live performances, dining, civic life, and celebrations.

A new vision for Granville Street will:

- Promote safety and a sense of welcoming for all
- Enhance live music and performance
- Encourage a wide selection of restaurants and patios
- Expand hotels and amenities
- Celebrate unique character and heritage
- Support events, celebration and civic gathering
- Become a destination public space
- Improve accessibility and maintain transit connections

Potential future of Granville Street in 20 years

*These sketches are for illustrative purposes and are not directly representative of any specific location. They may differ from actual build out.

Section 1

Plan Framework

To realize the long-term vision for Granville Street, efforts and investments should focus on areas with the highest potential to spark broader transformation.

The plan guides change through three key moves: 1) defining three distinct character areas, 2) creating a destination public space and a year-round pedestrian zone along Granville Street and 3) undertaking necessary transit improvements on Howe and Seymour Streets.

The framework aims to reinforce and build upon the district's status as Vancouver's premier live-music and cultural destination, making it a vibrant street of belonging and celebration for everyone.

The plan framework will be delivered through a 20-year phased process.

1

Character Areas

The plan focuses on three character areas: City Centre; Entertainment Core; and Bridgehead. Each area provides a spatial framework for Granville Street's growth and change.

The plan focuses on three character areas: City Centre, Entertainment Core, and Bridgehead. Each area provides a spatial framework for Granville Street's growth and change. The Plan outlines each area's qualities, policies, and future development, combining land use with public spaces while reflecting unique character and context of the different zones. For applicable, site-specific, land-use policies and development and design guidelines (i.e. building heights, densities, uses and built form), refer to Land Use and Development policy directions (page 30).

2

Destination Public Space

The plan seeks to create a destination public space and gradually work towards a year-round shore-to-shore pedestrian zone on Granville Street from Granville Bridge to Waterfront Station. A plaza at Granville and Robson will become an iconic gathering place and connect to Robson Square and the Stadium District. The pedestrian zone will feature programming, amenities, and unique design features for year-round, day and night enjoyment. Initial efforts will involve testing temporary seasonal pedestrian zones in the near term (see Public Space page 48).

3

Transit Improvements

Relocating bus service to Howe and Seymour Streets is necessary to support a destination public space and pedestrianized Granville Street. To accommodate this shift, transit priority improvements will be made to these streets to enhance reliability and access. (see Transportation page 56)

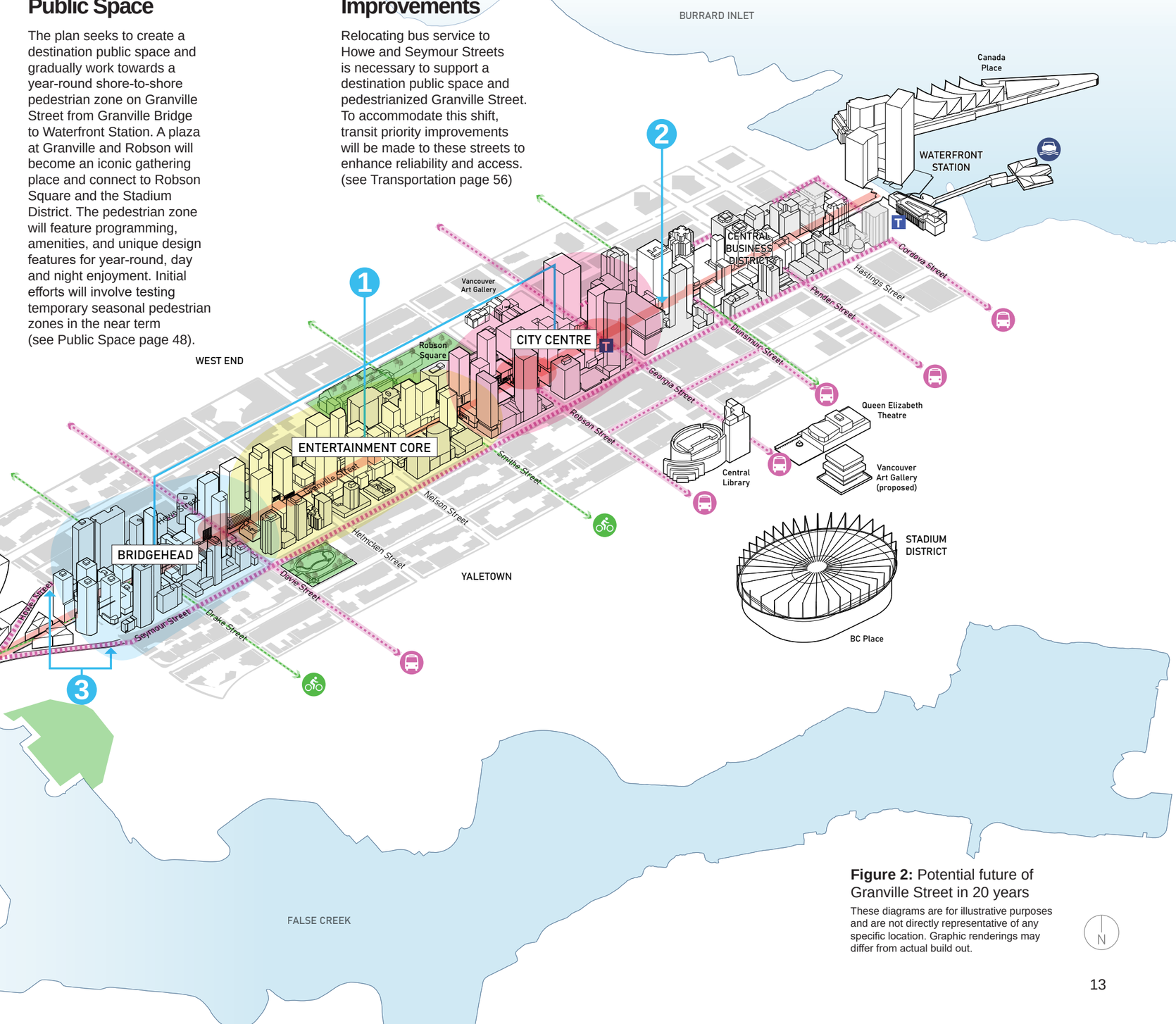
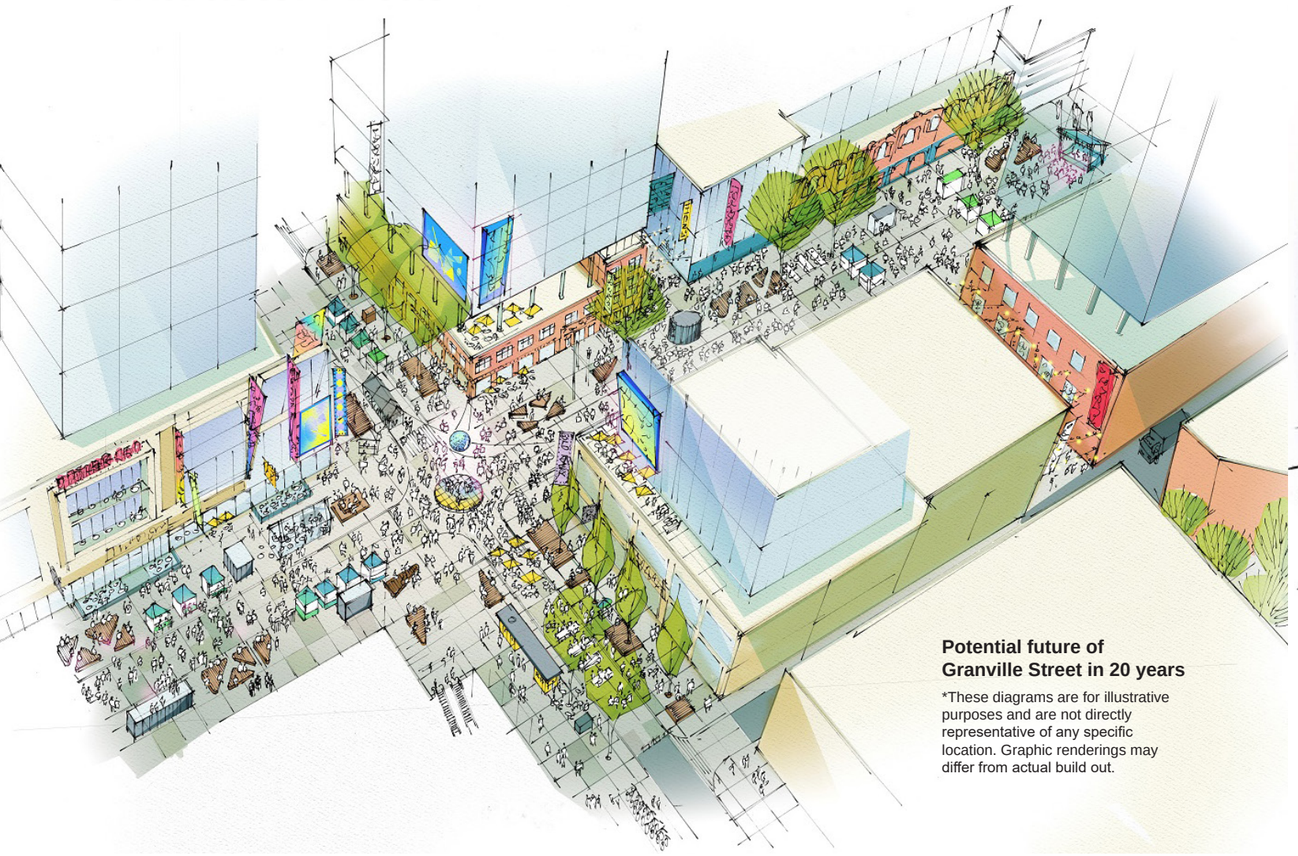


Figure 2: Potential future of Granville Street in 20 years

These diagrams are for illustrative purposes and are not directly representative of any specific location. Graphic renderings may differ from actual build out.

Character Areas

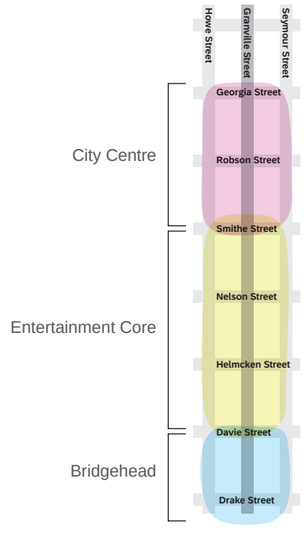


Potential future of Granville Street in 20 years

*These diagrams are for illustrative purposes and are not directly representative of any specific location. Graphic renderings may differ from actual build out.

City Centre

The City Centre area, between Georgia and Smithe Streets, focuses on Vancouver City Centre and Granville SkyTrain stations and Granville and Robson intersection. This area will be transformed into a central public plaza for large civic gatherings and celebrations. The City Centre will be revitalized as a vibrant civic, retail, and commercial hub. It will feature new mixed-use residential developments, including some of Vancouver's tallest towers, redefining the city skyline and marking the area as the centre of downtown. Transit entries and connections will be integrated into new developments to ensure connectivity.



Entertainment Core

The Entertainment Core, between Smithe and Davie Streets, will feature attractions, live-music venues, theatres, restaurants, bars, and nightclubs. This dynamic hub is designed for socializing, cultural experiences, and celebrations, making it a go-to destination for locals and visitors. New development will support arts and entertainment activity and blend indoor and outdoor activities with a pedestrian zone that supports cultural events and performance.

Bridgehead

The Bridgehead, between Davie and Drake Streets, blends residential, commercial, cultural spaces, local shops, and a quieter street experience. This area connects the lower part of Granville Street with nearby downtown residential neighbourhoods like Yaletown and the Granville Loops, as well as the Granville Bridge.

Section 2

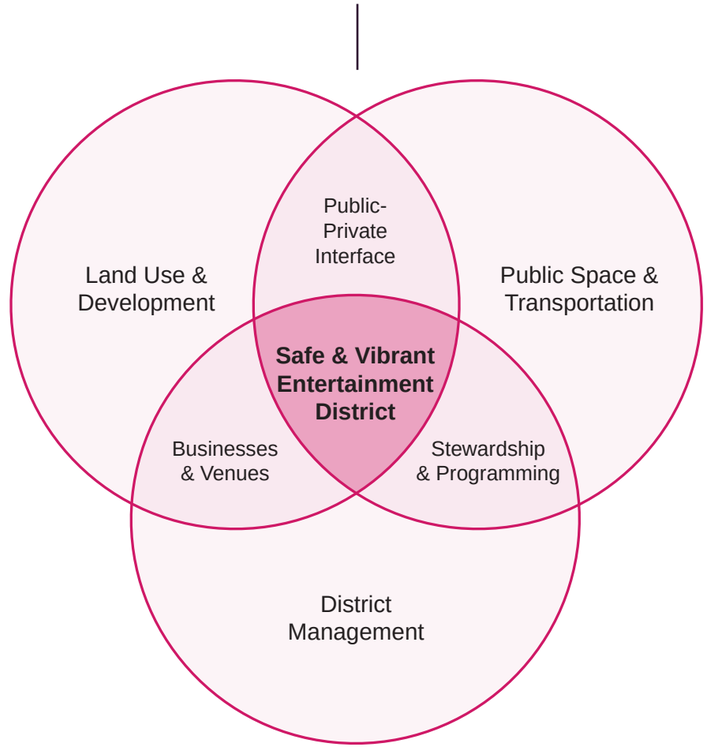
Policy Directions

This section outlines the policies required to deliver the Plan and is organized into five (5) policy areas. These policies guide City-led projects and partnerships, detailing specific land use and development criteria (e.g., uses, height, density) for new developments in the area.

Policy Areas	Objectives
1.0 Partnerships and Services	A safe and vibrant entertainment district requires partnerships and coordinated service management to deliver sustained success.
2.0 Arts, Culture and Live Performance	Ensure arts, culture, live music and entertainment take centre stage.
3.0 Land Use and Development	Increase development opportunities and diversify land use to attract new investments, promote entertainment, boost tourism, and stimulate activity both day and night.
4.0 Public Space	Create a destination public space and work toward a year-round pedestrian zone with a focus on gathering and celebration.
5.0 Transportation	Improve transit reliability and access by implementing supportive transit priority infrastructure, and enhance the walking and wayfinding experience in the area.

A Holistic and a Balanced Approach

The Policy Directions provides a holistic approach to fostering a safe and vibrant Granville Street and Granville Entertainment District. It will require sustained action in each policy area to deliver the vision.



1. Partnerships and Services

A safe and vibrant entertainment district requires partnerships and coordinated service management to deliver sustained success.

Effective partnerships foster collaboration among businesses, the City, and community organizations, enabling better responses to challenges and opportunities. A strategic approach to managing events, marketing, operations, ambassador programs, sanitation, maintenance, and social services can enhance safety and enjoyment for everyone. This ensures the district remains appealing and adaptable to trends, attracting diverse groups of locals and visitors, supporting local businesses, and enhancing daily and nightly experience.

Safety and Experience

Prioritizing visitor experience and public safety is essential for a thriving entertainment district. This should be integrated into planning, design, service provision, and programming. The plan includes actions and policies to make Granville Street safe and welcoming for everyone. The City acknowledges the challenges in the Granville Entertainment District and aims to address them through new and on-going initiatives, investment, infrastructure, and partnerships. The Granville Street Plan focuses on mid- to long-term strategies to attract visitors, encourage day and night activity, promote positive behavior, and foster a safer community.

Directions related to Safety and Experience are highlighted throughout the Plan by this icon.

Good Night Out Street Team
(Image: JustJash)

NightBus signage
(Image: Translink)

Granville Block Party
(Image: City of Vancouver)

Night Buses on Granville Street
(Image: AE Creations)

Granville Street curbside patio barrier
(Image: City of Vancouver)

1.1 Prioritize Safety

The Granville Street Plan builds on emerging initiatives and identifies medium- and long-term priorities to enhance safety and comfort for everyone, including visitors, business owners, employees, and residents, including the unhoused.

Policies

1.1.1 Continue to address social service needs in the area, in collaboration with senior governments and other community partners.

1.1.2 Apply a safety and gender-based violence prevention lens to all planning and infrastructure design in the Granville Entertainment District (GED) especially in the Entertainment Core. This includes public realm infrastructure as well as future programming in gender-based violence prevention and response (See 4.0 Public Space for additional directions).

1.1.3 Implement design strategies to support crowd protection and event safety in the public realm on Granville Street, including during large-scale events (see 4.0 Public Space for additional directions).

1.1.4 Partner with public-sector organizations and service delivery partners, to support a safe and welcoming public realm.

Granville Block Party
Image: City of Vancouver

Public Space Stewardship

Stewardship refers to the management, maintenance, and programming of public spaces to ensure their on-going care, use and enjoyment. Sustaining Granville Street's long-term success as an entertainment district and pedestrian zone requires a new approach to coordinated district management. This approach should go beyond the City's established partnership-based stewardship model for typical plazas. A successful model for Granville Street could be expanded or replicated over time to support seasonal or year-round pedestrian streets in other areas of Vancouver.

The Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association (DVBIA) plays a key role in activating and caring for Granville Street today. The City will continue to partner with the DVBIA and other organizations to advance the policy directions in this chapter and throughout the Plan.

1.2 Develop a district management plan

Destination entertainment districts and pedestrianized streets have unique operational needs that differ from other commercial districts. These needs include increased demand for:

- Strategic planning: Supporting a diverse mix of cultural, entertainment and nightlife venues alongside retail and dining destinations.
- Branding and promotion: Establishing a strong identity and promoting the district to local, regional, and international visitors.
- Comprehensive vision and strategy: Developing a cohesive plan for a diverse range of small and large-scale activities, programs, and special events, and ensuring coordination between indoor and outdoor events.
- Public space stewardship: Maintaining a high level of care for public spaces that are heavily used around the clock.
- Support services: Providing services to accommodate high levels of activity, visitors, and the nighttime economy

Much of this work is already carried out on Granville Street today by the City or external agencies and partners. However, effective district management will require a distinct organizational model or entity with a mandate and capacity to manage these needs in a more coordinated manner. This includes securing dedicated funding and sustainable revenue sources. Continued efforts through Plan implementation will help shape an enhanced and expanded district management approach for Granville Street.

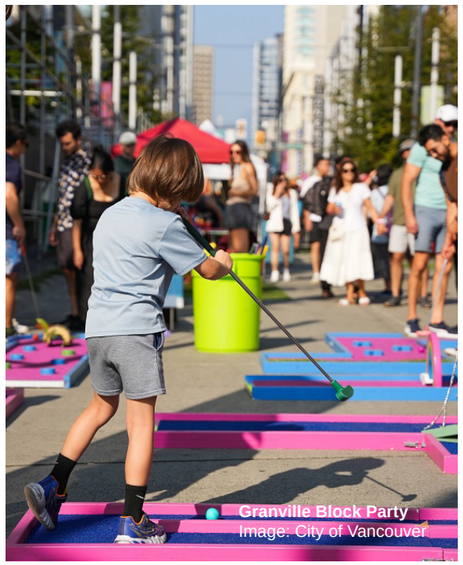
Policies

1.2.1 Collaborate with external partners, including xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish Nation), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh Nation), area businesses, government, non-profits and other community interest holders to develop a comprehensive district management plan that considers governance, operations, funding and revenue generation.

1.2.2 Support the self-determined priorities of xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations through district management governance, strategic planning, and operating decisions.

1.2.3 Develop a public space stewardship strategy that can evolve over time to support the programming and maintenance needs of an entertainment district and pedestrian zone.

1.2.4 Identify sustainable funding sources and establish an annual operating budget for district management and public space stewardship needs.



Granville Block Party
Image: City of Vancouver

2. Arts, Culture & Live Performance

Ensure arts, culture, live music and entertainment take centre stage.

Recognizing, celebrating, and supporting arts, culture, and entertainment is crucial to the Granville Street Plan vision. The policies in this section aim to strengthen Granville Street's role as a hub for arts, entertainment, dance, live music and performance by retaining, improving and expanding cultural spaces and commissioning public art.

The Granville Street Plan prioritizes safe, inclusive and equitable support for local artists, cultural workers, and organizations in their artistic production, service delivery, and program offerings, which contribute to the vitality of the Granville Entertainment District. Work will continue with xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish Nation), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh Nation) to identify culturally significant areas, traditional place-naming, protocols for shared-spaces and processes for launching art-based projects within the Granville Street Plan area.

The Granville Plan's Arts, Culture and Entertainment policies are supported by a number of other city-wide strategies and policies:

- Culture|Shift: Blanketing the City in Arts and Culture (2019)
- Making Space for Arts and Culture (2019)
- Vancouver Music Strategy (2019)
- Accessibility Strategy (2024)

Policy Directions

Concert at the Commodore Ballroom
(Image: Rebecca Blissett)

2.1 Ensure Reconciliation, Redress, Equity and Accessibility

Policies

2.1.1 Prioritize support of self-determined cultural spaces, public art, design, naming and programming that advances cultural visibility for xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), sə̓lílwətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations in alignment with the UNDRIP Action Plan (2024).

2.1.2 Promote safe, inclusive, and equitable access to cultural events and spaces for marginalized communities through dedicated services and outreach efforts. (see 1.0 Services and Partnerships).

2.1.3 Encourage the participation of equity-deserving communities and arts organizations, ensuring commissioned public artworks represent their communities.

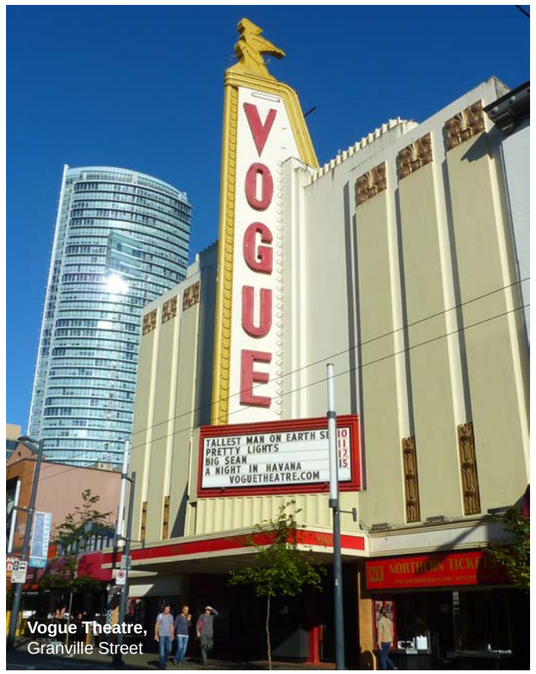
2.1.4 Ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities by providing inclusive services, programs, partnerships, and infrastructure for artists, cultural workers, and audiences, for live performances and cultural events, as well as in existing and new cultural spaces and venues.

2.2 Retain, Expand and Create Affordable Arts and Cultural Space

Policies

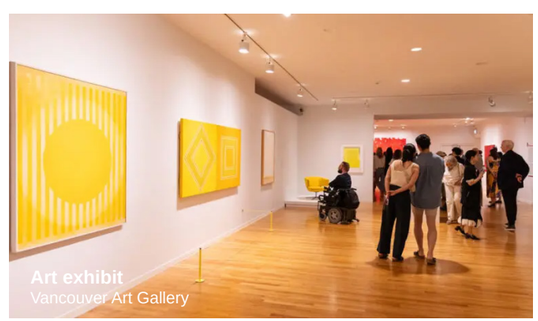
2.2.1 Encourage the creation of new arts and culture spaces that accommodate a variety of daytime and nighttime activities and art practices. Utilize tools such as rezoning and development applications, density inclusions for cultural spaces, and public benefit contributions (e.g., commercial linkage fees) to achieve these spaces, including:

- xʷməθkʷəy̓əm Sḵwx̱wú7mesh, and sə̓lílwətaʔɬ self-determined public art and cultural spaces.
- Spaces that support live music, ethno-cultural performances and events and comedy.
- A range of small- to mid-size live performance spaces including cabarets, halls, and theatres, and integrated performance space within restaurants, hotels, bars, and other commercial or retail spaces.
- Exhibition and gallery spaces including ground level access and space with suitable ceiling heights.
- Venues for all-ages and family-focused and low-barrier events for full community participation.
- Exploring potential for Social Housing for artists, including associated production space, in suitable locations within Bridgehead and City Centre (see 3.0 Land Use and Development).



Vogue Theatre,
Granville Street

Underground Comedy Club
Vancouver, BC


Art exhibit
Vancouver Art Gallery

2.2.2 Support no net loss of cultural space. The existing amount of cultural space in the GED should be increased and/or improved through redevelopment.

2.2.3 Secure, enhance and improve key cultural heritage spaces, utilizing tools such as rezoning and development applications, density inclusions for cultural spaces, and public benefit contributions (e.g., commercial linkage fees) to secure these spaces, including but not limited to:

- Dance Centre (677 Davie Street) as a non-profit cultural hub with priority for dance production, rehearsal, presentation and administration;
- Commodore Ballroom and Lanes (800 Granville Street), including improved accessibility, secured use, and new live performance venue;
- City-owned Orpheum Theatre expansion and improvements including accessibility and loading facilities; and
- Vogue Theatre (918 Granville Street) as heritage theatre and all ages venue.

2.2.4 Prioritize cultural heritage designation for high-priority arts and culture venues, such as the Harbour Dance Centre (927 Granville Street), The Pearl (881 Granville Street), The Roxy (932 Granville Street), Gorg-O-Mish (695 Smithe Street), Golden Age Collectibles (852 Granville Street), and Tyrant Studios (1019 Seymour Street). Additionally, support the retention of cultural use and enhancement of these and other culturally significant arts and culture venues.

2.2.5 Integrate cultural spaces, such as live performance spaces in hotels, restaurants, bars and other commercial or retail spaces as part of rezonings in Entertainment District.

2.3 Deliver Arts and Cultural Programming

Policies

2.3.1 Encourage low-cost activation of the street for live performances, public art and cultural events as part of the district management plan and other event programming for Granville Street (see sections 1.2 and 2.5.3).

2.3.2 Enhance and expand use of electronic video signs (digital billboards) in the Granville Street Electronic Video Sign Zone (see section 3.6) at Robson and Granville for live performances and rotating video installation projects.

2.3.3 Partner with a broad range of equity-deserving communities and cultural organizations on stewardship approaches and programming strategies to support a diversity of street events and cultural programming.

2.4 Support Live Events and Performances

Policies

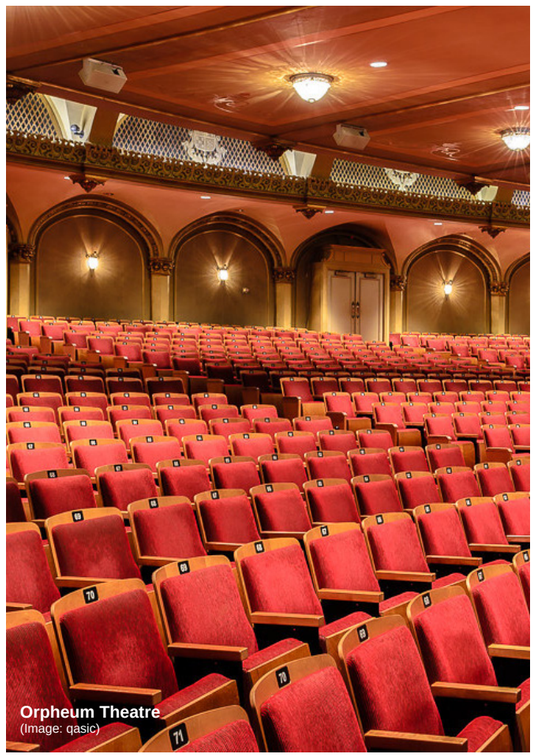
2.4.1 Ensure new infrastructure supports the safe and effective delivery of outdoor cultural activities, including small-to-large sized events, busking, arts and cultural festivals, markets, and live music performances and dedicated areas for programming (see section 4.0 Public Space for related policy directions).

2.4.2 Adopt practices to protect and enhance live events, music and other entertainment-related activities and uses (i.e. “Agent of Change Principles”), including but not limited to:

- Assess the impact of sound and noise on both existing and new hotel and residential buildings located on or adjacent to Granville Street, including a sound/noise study to optimize the design of outdoor performance venues to support excellent live performance acoustics.
- Consider amending the Noise By-Law to include the Granville Cultural Entertainment District as part of the Event Zone.
- Implement acoustic mitigating designs for new developments to minimize noise impact.

2.4.3 Continue to simplify and reduce administrative barriers for permitting arts and cultural activities and events.

- Pilot lower-cost events and street activations by providing dedicated arts and cultural programming infrastructure and/or lowering permit fees. Explore the possibility of permit-free busking.



Orpheum Theatre
(Image: qasic)

Interactive neon murals by Spidertag
Springfield, MO, USA

Digital art displayed on LED screens
Outernet, London, UK

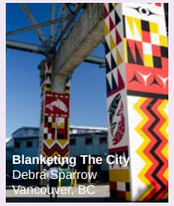
These Hands
by Vanessa Brown
Vancouver, BC

Spirit of Our Ancestors On The Land
by Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun
Vancouver, BC

Heart of the City by Analso Franco
Sydney, Australia

Digital art display (interior)
Outernet, London, UK

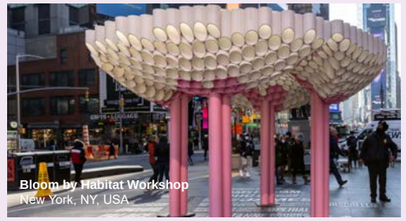
Sea to Sky - light box
by Kelly Cannell, Vancouver, BC



Blanketing The City
Debra Sparrow
Vancouver, BC

Interactive public art
Chicago, IL, USA

Nighttime sculpture
Shanghai, China



Bloom by Habitat Workshop
New York, NY, USA

2.5 Develop a Public Art Strategy

Policies

2.5.1 Develop a public art strategy that ensures a coordinated and equitable approach to delivering public art projects, enhancing the street's outdoor spaces in line with existing public art guidelines.

2.5.2 Work with xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish Nation), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh Nation) to elevate visibility, voice and cultural practices. Develop a coordinated and resourced approach for delivering major public art projects, including:

- Input on identifying any areas of significance for design, artworks and Indigenous approaches.
- Co-developing specific commissioning guidelines.
- Identifying areas of potential mentorship, artist residencies and/or on-going programming for xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Sḵwx̱wú7mesh, and sə̓lílwətaʔɬ artists to build capacity.

2.5.3 Encourage pooling private sector public art revenues from the public art amenity charge to commission large-scale permanent artworks on community-centered sites along Granville Street.

2.5.4 Partner with local organizations, artists, and curators within the Granville Street Plan area to co-program rotating temporary artworks and arts and cultural events.

Public Art Vancouver

Public Art Vancouver commissions artists and supports artistic practices that open spaces for encounters with art and the city. The program provides art opportunities of many kinds from single commissions to artist collaborations with design professionals and diverse communities.

3. Land Use and Development

Increase development opportunities and diversify land uses to attract new investments, promote a vibrant entertainment and live performance scene, boost tourism, and stimulate day and night activity.

The Granville Street Plan builds on the area's historic character and cultural context while advancing the vision through specific land-use and development policies. These policies will guide the addition of new uses, expand development opportunities and catalyze change. They aim to enhance Granville Street as a hub for live music, entertainment and performance, grow its economic potential, and attract new visitors and residents. This will boost day and night activity, supporting the long-term goal of a pedestrianized high street with a destination public space that regularly hosts outdoor performances and events. This section also defines the role of housing in the area, including the approach for replacing Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing.

The policies in this section will guide the review of rezoning applications. They should be coordinated with other relevant policies, including:

- Downtown Official Development Plan (DODP)
- Downtown Rezoning Policy
- Single Room Accommodation (SRA) Bylaw
- Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy (2019)
- Granville Street Special Design District Guidelines (in conjunction with the Development and Design Guide)

Applications to increase height and density can be considered if they align with the Downtown Rezoning Policy, which also explains how they can contribute to public benefits (outlined in Section 3). Redevelopment of sites that generally don't allow rezonings should follow the Downtown Official Development Plan (DODP), unless stated otherwise in the land-use policies.

Granville Street - 800 and 900 blocks
(Image: Miko Fox)

Land Use Policy Areas

The land use policies address area-specific opportunities and objectives identified in the character areas outlined in Section 3.2 of the Plan Framework. These policies focus on the City Centre, Entertainment Core, and Bridgehead character area (see Figure 2).

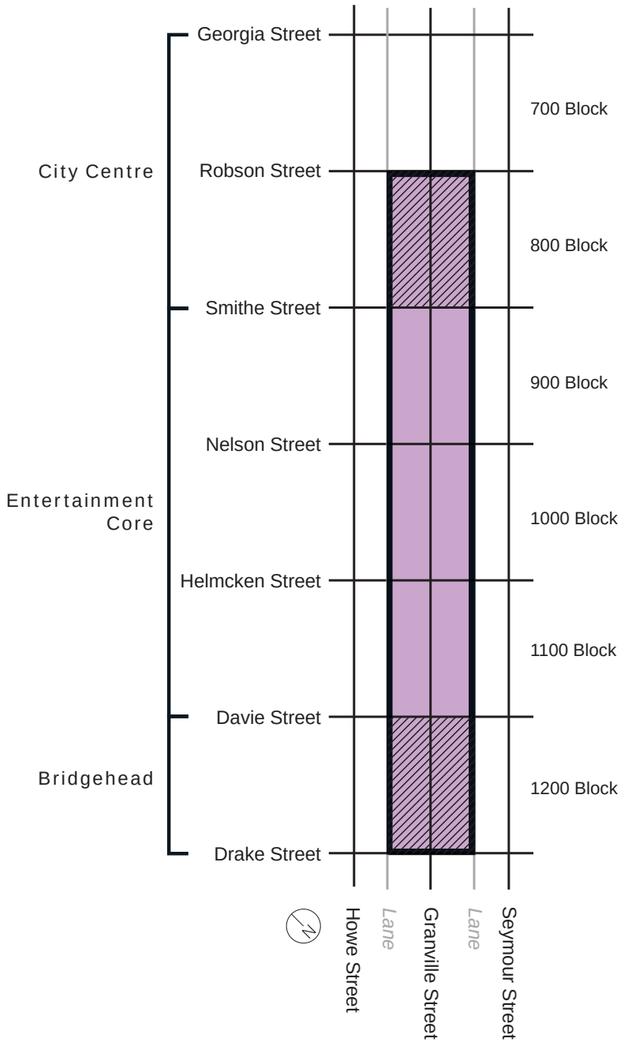


Figure 3: Rezoning Policy Areas

Rezoning for commercial and service uses (in all areas)

Rezoning for rental housing in Transition Areas (800 and 1200 blocks)

Note: CBD Rezoning Policy applies to 700 Block of Granville Street

Granville Street - Looking South from Georgia Street
Vancouver, BC

Granville Street
Image: jesselistoen

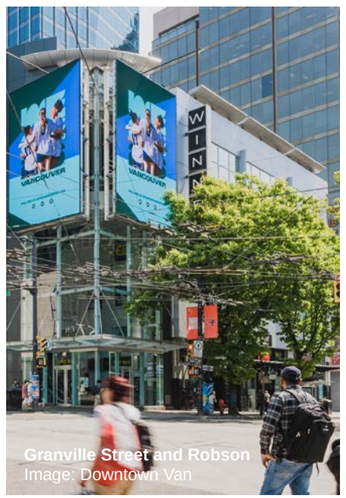
3.1 City Centre

The City Centre area, located between Georgia and Smithe Streets, encompassing the Vancouver City Centre and Granville SkyTrain stations, will be revitalized as a vibrant hub for civic, retail, and commercial activities. It will feature new mixed-use residential developments, including some of Vancouver's tallest towers, redefining the city skyline and establishing the area as the centre of downtown. To support connectivity, transit entries and connections will be integrated into these new developments where possible, and new developments will be designed to support an improved and active public realm. The intersection of Granville and Robson Streets will be reimagined as a central public plaza for large public gatherings,, enhanced by vibrant electronic video signs (or electronic billboards).

To achieve this, rezonings with residential uses (rental housing) will be considered in the 800 block of Granville Street to foster near-term revitalization and secure new or expanded cultural facilities, as well as additional hotel space. This approach will also support rezonings that replace existing Single Room Occupancy (SRO) buildings with new, self-contained social housing. The City will require the highest noise mitigation design standards, ensuring rental housing is situated well above street-level activity to minimize noise conflicts between residential and entertainment activities (see Figure 4). Future implementation of the plan will involve a policy study for the area surrounding the City Centre Canada Line Station at Granville and Georgia Streets (including the 600 and 700 blocks of Granville Street). This study will offer site-specific policy directions, including requirements for higher buildings.

Key Objectives

- Near-term revitalization
- Secure cultural spaces
- Expand hotel space
- SRO replacement
- Transit integration
- Noise mitigation
- Establish an electronic video sign zone



Granville Street and Robson
Image: Downtown Van

Figure 4
Potential build out of a block in the Transition Areas

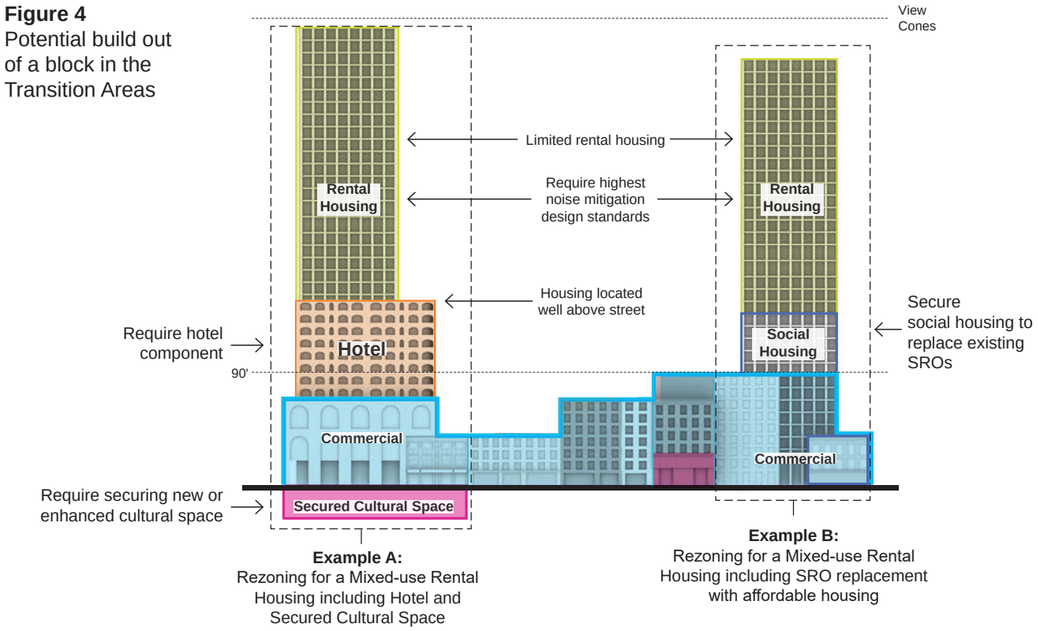


Table 1 Applicable Land Use Policies and Regulations - City Centre

Land Use Policy Direction	**Zoning: Downtown District Schedule (DD) – Area K**	**Rezoning for commercial and service uses**	**Rezonings for mixed-use residential (rental housing) (800 block of Granville Street):**	
			Deliver Hotel and Cultural Space (no SRO replacement)	**Deliver SRO replacement**
Uses	Hotel, office, service/ retail, cultural, institutional*	Hotel, office, service/ retail, cultural, institutional	Hotel, office, service/retail, cultural, institutional, secured market rental housing, below market rental housing, social housing	Hotel, office, service/retail, cultural, institutional, secured market rental housing, social housing
Requirements	N/A	a) Commercial Linkage Fee	a) Addition of new or expanded cultural facility(s) b) Addition of a viable and substantive hotel component (a minimum of approximately 3.0 FSR or 200 rooms)	a) Replacement of SRO units with social housing
Housing Tenure	N/A	N/A	Secured market rental housing, social housing	Secured market rental housing, social housing
Max Height	90 ft.	To the underside of the most restrictive View Cone		
Density	3.5 FSR; plus sensity relaxations of cultural space density relaxation (Area K); Heritage density relaxation	Determined by urban design performance		
Reference Policies	*See DODP for more details.*	*See the Downtown Rezoning Policy for more details.*		

3.2 Entertainment Core

The Entertainment Core area between Smithe and Davie Streets will become a vibrant hub featuring live music venues, theatres, restaurants, bars, and nightclubs. Developments will prioritize socializing, cultural experiences, and celebrations, making it a prime destination for locals and visitors. The area will blend indoor and outdoor activities within a pedestrian zone that supports special events and performances.

Rezonings for increased height and density for hotel and office developments will be permitted. New projects will include secured arts, culture, and entertainment spaces, as well as restaurant and retail use on lower levels to activate street-level spaces. Outdoor dining will be promoted through rooftop and sidewalk patios. New residential uses will be restricted to minimize noise conflicts with expanded entertainment activities.

Key Objectives

- Establish a vibrant entertainment, culture and performance hub
- Create new hotels and increase job space
- Prohibit new residential developments in the Entertainment Core
- Ensure seamless indoor and outdoor activity
- Elevate outdoor dining

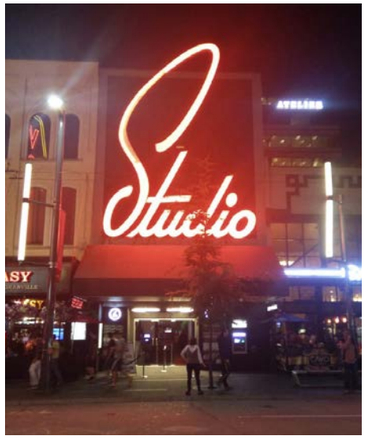


Figure 5
Potential build out of a block in the Entertainment Core

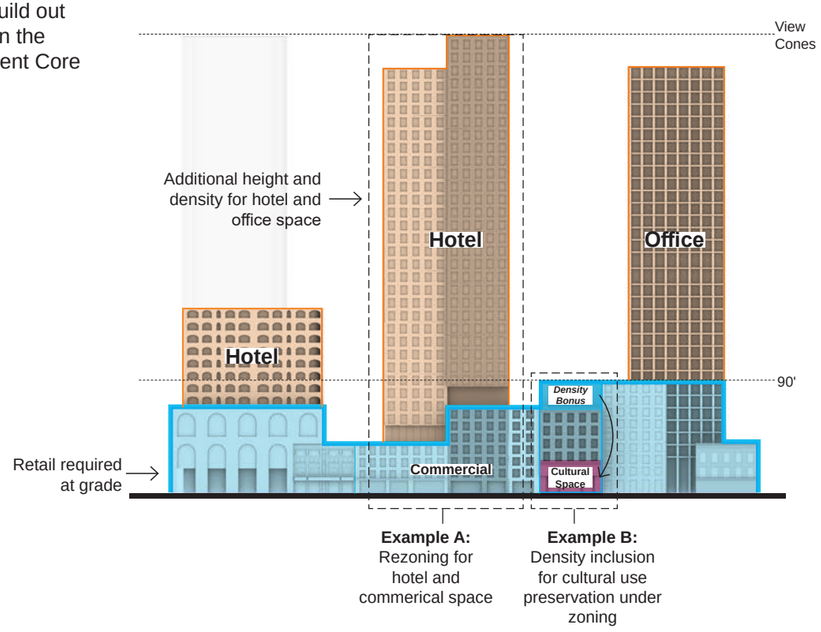


Table 2 Applicable Land Use Policies and Regulations - Entertainment Core

Policy Direction	**Zoning: Downtown District Schedule (DD) – Area K**	**Rezoning for commercial and service uses**
Uses	Hotel, office, service/retail, cultural, institutional*	Hotel, office, service/retail, cultural, institutional
Requirements	N/A	a) Commercial Linkage Fee
Housing Tenure	N/A	N/A
Max Height	90 ft.	To the underside of the most restrictive View Cone
Density	3.5 FSR; plus sensity relaxations of cultural space density relaxation (Area K); Heritage density relaxation	Determined by urban design performance
Reference Policies	*See DODP for more details.*	*See the Downtown Rezoning Policy for more details.*

Granville Street - 1300 Block
Source: Community Builders

3.3 Bridgehead

The Bridgehead, spanning Granville Street between Davie and Drake Streets, offers a mix of residential, commercial, and cultural spaces, along with local shops and a quieter street experience. It connects Granville Street with nearby neighbourhoods like Yaletown and the Granville Loops, as well as the Granville Bridge.

Rezonings for mixed-use residential (rental housing) developments are permitted to encourage revitalization and secure new cultural facilities and hotel space. This approach supports replacing existing Single Room Occupancy (SRO) buildings and social housing with new, self-contained social housing. The City will require the highest noise mitigation standards, ensuring rental housing is situated above street-level activity to minimize noise conflicts.

Key Objectives

- Near-term revitalization
- Encourage local neighbourhood street character
- Expand hotel space
- SRO replacement
- Noise mitigation

Figure 6
Potential build out of a block in the Transition Areas

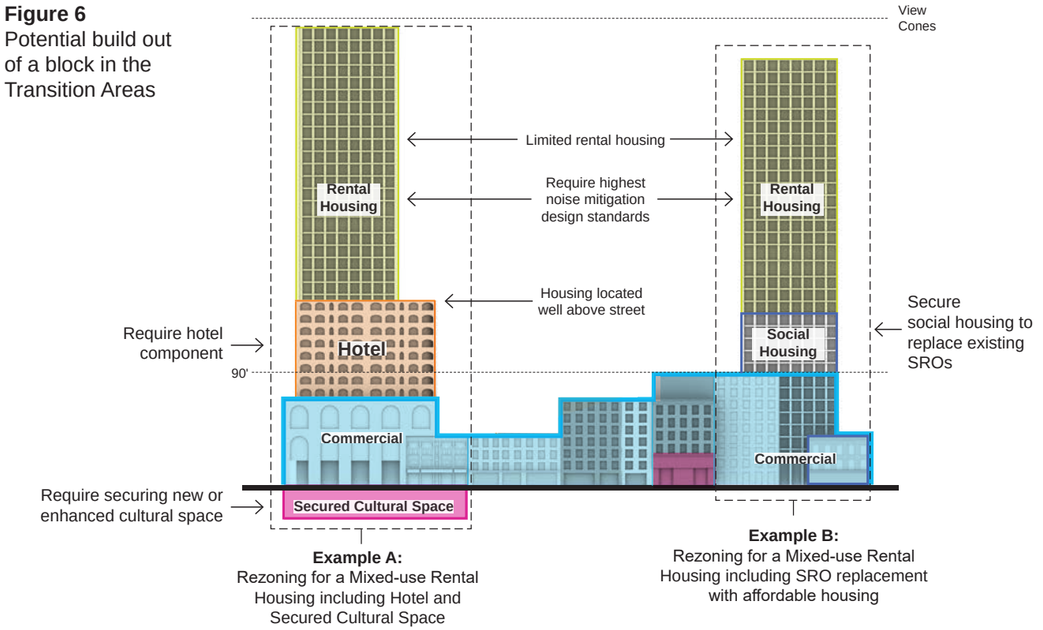


Table 3 Applicable Land Use Policies and Regulations - Bridgehead

Land Use Policy Direction	**Zoning: Downtown District Schedule (DD) – Area K**	**Rezoning for commercial and service uses**	**Rezonings for mixed-use residential (rental housing) (800 block of Granville Street):**	
			Deliver Hotel and Cultural Space (no SRO replacement)	**Deliver SRO replacement**
Uses	Hotel, office, service/ retail, cultural, institutional*	Hotel, office, service/ retail, cultural, institutional	Hotel, office, service/retail, cultural, institutional, secured market rental housing, below market rental housing, social housing	Hotel, office, service/retail, cultural, institutional, secured market rental housing, social housing
Requirements	N/A	a) Commercial Linkage Fee	a) Addition of new or expanded cultural facility(s) b) Addition of a viable and substantive hotel component (a minimum of approximately 3.0 FSR or 200 rooms)	a) Replacement of SRO units with social housing
Housing Tenure	N/A	N/A	Secured market rental housing, social housing	Secured market rental housing, social housing
Max Height	90 ft.	To the underside of the most restrictive View Cone		
Density	3.5 FSR; plus sensity relaxations of cultural space density relaxation (Area K); Heritage density relaxation	Determined by urban design performance**		
Reference Policies	*See DODP for more details.*	*See the Downtown Rezoning Policy for more details.*		

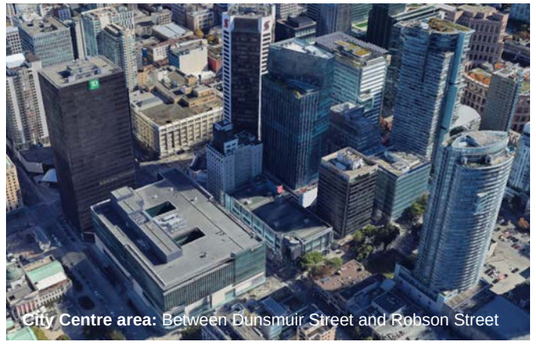
3.4 Additional Land Use and Development Directions

Policies

3.4.1 Adhere to key urban design objectives for rezoning applications as outlined in the Downtown Official Development Plan, Downtown Rezoning Policy, and Granville Street Special Design District Guidelines.

3.4.2 Limit building heights for rezonings according to public view guidelines, except as permitted under the Higher Buildings Policy. Overall density for rezonings should be based on urban design performance, with flexibility needed due to the Plan area's complexity.

3.4.3 Include measures to mitigate anticipated noise levels in new rezoning applications that permit residential and hotel uses, as outlined in the Granville Street Special Design District Guidelines. Development applicants must provide notices on title and notices to rental tenants that their residence is part of an entertainment district.



City Centre area: Between Bunsmuir Street and Robson Street

3.4.4 Undertake a City Centre higher building policy study principally in the blocks surrounding the intersection of Georgia Street and Granville Streets – 600 and 700 blocks of Granville Street). The City Centre area requires site-specific policy directions, including outlining requirements for higher buildings entering Queen Elizabeth Park Public View in accordance with the Higher Buildings Policy.

Granville Street Special Design District Guidelines

Granville Street's appeal to businesses, residents and visitors stems from the unique design of its buildings, streets, and features like the large neon signs and marquees. Design goes beyond aesthetics; it impacts the functionality, amenity, and public contribution of a project. Cities that prioritize high-quality design attract people and investment, leading to economic prosperity.

The Granville Street Special Design District Guidelines (the Guidelines), along with the Development and Design Guide, sets minimum standards and raises design quality expectations for development in the area. The Guidelines focuses on key design components that contribute to a lively and successful street experience. It emphasizes how buildings respond to their specific context and enhance Granville Street's vibrancy, economy and urban quality for decades to come.

3.5 Replace Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Hotels and Social Housing

A number of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Hotels are located within the Granville Street Plan area. SRO housing typically consists of small rooms with minimal amenities and includes shared bathrooms and kitchens. SROs play an important role in housing low-income individuals with limited options. The City of Vancouver aims to replace SROs with self-contained social housing and collaborates with senior levels of government to address their replacement and rehabilitation. There are eight Single Room Accommodation (SRA) buildings with roughly 600 rooms in the Granville plan area, many privately owned. Additionally, there are a variety of social and supportive housing projects owned by the City of Vancouver and the Provincial Government.

The Plan aims to encourage entertainment and commercial uses in the Entertainment Core and limit residential uses. On-site replacement of SROs and social housing will not be permitted in this area. The Plan supports creating new affordable housing to replace existing SROs or social housing in the Bridgehead and City Centre areas with new self-contained social housing as part of larger mixed-use developments (see Downtown Rezoning Policy).

Policies

3.5.1 Replace existing SROs or social housing in the City Centre and Bridgehead character areas with new, self-contained social housing as part of larger mixed-use rezoning (see Downtown Rezoning Policy). To minimize pre-emptive closure of SROs, Development Permit and Rezoning applications for conversion or redevelopment will only be considered for SROs with at least 80% occupancy at time of application. Exceptions may be considered for rooms that were already vacant prior to the Plan's approval.

3.5.2 On-site replacement of SROs and social housing will not be permitted in the Entertainment Core. Through the Single Room Accommodation (SRA) By-law (2003), applicants wanting to redevelop or convert their SRO sites must replace the rooms off-site or provide a cash contribution to support SRA replacement or other conditions Council may require. To minimize pre-emptive closure of SROs, Development Permit and Rezoning applications for conversion or redevelopment will only be considered for SROs with at least 80% occupancy at time of application. Exceptions may be considered in cases where rooms were already vacant prior to the Plan's approval.

3.6 Granville Street Electronic Video Sign Zone

The Granville Street Electronic Video Sign Zone at Granville and Robson Streets (see Figure 7) will feature large digital billboards, transforming it into a landmark destination like Times Square in NYC and Piccadilly Circus in London. This zone will showcase synchronized visual art displays, live-event screenings, and accommodate large gatherings. This location was selected to enhance pedestrian experience and placemaking.

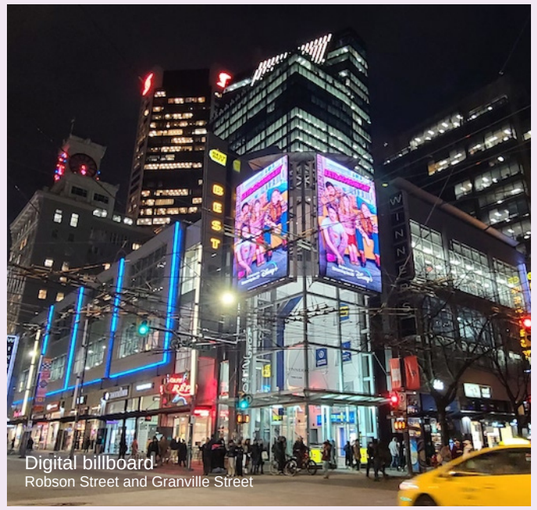
Policies

3.6.1 Consider electronic video signs through a site-specific amendment to the Sign By-law in the Granville Street Electronic Video Sign Zone at the intersection of Granville and Robson Streets (see Figure 7). These signs should meet Sign By-law requirements, Granville Street Special Design District Guidelines, and are subject to approval by Council.

Proposed signs:

- Should be on the corner of a building facing the intersection of Granville Street and Robson Street in the Granville Street Electronic Video Sign Zone (see Figure 7).
- Should be above the first storey, up to 27.4 m (90 ft.) above the street and 15.2 m (50 ft.) from the corner of the building at Robson and Granville.
- May display third party advertising, public information and artistic content.
- Should dedicate airtime to public art, community cultural, and concert announcements administered by the City of Vancouver. This can be coordinated with other signs in the district.
- Should provide an annual financial contribution to the City of Vancouver to support arts and cultural programming on Granville Street as part of a District Management approach. The amount will be determined through negotiations for the Sign By-law amendment.

Figure 7 Granville Street Electronic Video Sign Zone


Digital billboard
Robson Street and Granville Street

3D Cat on a billboard at Shinjuku Station
Tokyo, Japan

Large electronic billboard at Piccadilly Circus,
London, UK

Interactive display at the Outernet Pavilion,
London, UK

Coordinated Public Art in Times Square
NYC, NY, USA

Concert in in Times Square with live video display
NYC, NY, USA

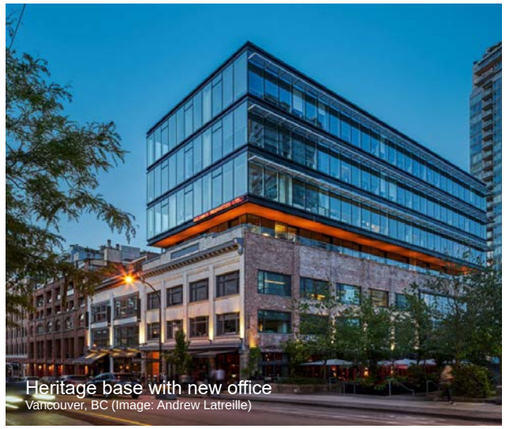
3.7 Heritage

Granville Street and the Granville Entertainment District boast a rich history that reflects diverse communities, distinctive character and cultural identity. The Granville Street Plan embraces a broader concept of heritage, including both tangible elements (buildings, monuments, venues, natural and cultural landscapes) and intangible or living heritage (oral traditions, celebrations, social practices, performing arts). Recognizing these historic places and features informs opportunities for stewardship of heritage assets, highlighting Granville Street as an important historic, cultural and entertainment district.

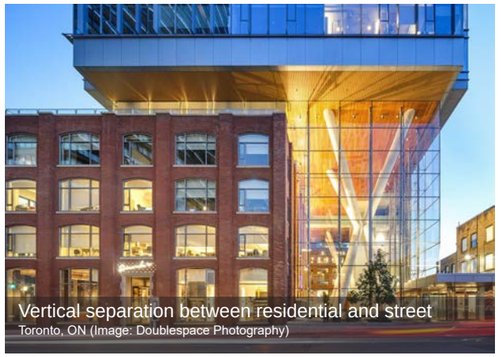
The City uses the Vancouver Heritage Program along with various other tools, such as Heritage Revitalization Agreements, Heritage Amenity Shares, and the Heritage Incentive Program, to promote heritage recognition and conservation. This effort includes incorporating input from the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil- Waututh) Nations. The Plan aligns is aligned with these directions and highlights findings from the Granville Street Cultural Heritage Study (2024), including a Heritage Value Statement for the area.

Definitions :

- **Heritage Property:** Property with sufficient heritage value or heritage character to justify its conservation (may or may not be listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register) or is protected heritage property, as defined in the Vancouver Charter.
- **Heritage Value:** Aesthetic, cultural, educational, historical or scientific worth or usefulness of property or an area, as defined in the Vancouver Charter.
- **Protected Heritage Property:** As defined in the Vancouver Charter.
- **Potential Heritage Site:** Property that may have sufficient heritage value or historic character, subject to further review, to justify its conservation, listing on the Vancouver Heritage Register, and protection through heritage designation.



Heritage base with new office
Vancouver, BC (Image: Andrew Latreille)



Vertical separation between residential and street
Toronto, ON (Image: Doublespace Photography)

Wythe Boutique Hotel Williamsburg
Brooklyn, New York (Image: Mark Mahaney)

Policies

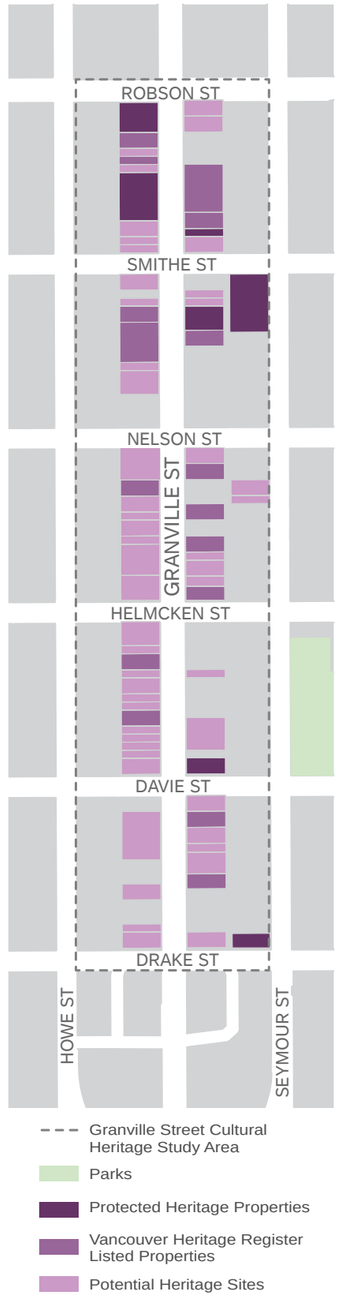
3.7.1 Apply the citywide Heritage Policies (2020) and reference the Granville Street Cultural Heritage Study (2024) when considering a rezoning or development permit proposal involving a heritage property:

- A development proposal (rezoning or development permit) for a sites with a protected heritage property (by heritage designation bylaw, Heritage Revitalization Agreement or Restoration Covenant) will not be considered if they involve demolition, severe alteration, structural replacement, removal of character-defining elements or loss of heritage value, including façade-only retention of a protected heritage property.
- To be considered favourably for development, through rezoning or development permit process, the heritage property on a site must be retained, conserved (a high level of structural retention and cultural heritage conservation achieved) and upgraded seismically and structurally. Legal protection of the heritage property is required, if not already in place.
- Heritage conservation must be consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada and the City's Heritage Policies (2020) to be eligible for relaxations and variances beyond zoning provisions for development permit proposals.

3.7.2 Acknowledge and honour the unique cultural heritage of both current and historical communities on Granville Street, especially those that may be impacted by plan implementation. Reflect this in the design and programming of new developments, cultural spaces, public art, and the public realm through the retention, enhancement, or replacement of culturally specific spaces.

3.7.3 Work with community partners, property owners and stakeholders in the Granville Street Plan area to add newly identified and evaluated heritage properties to the Vancouver Heritage Register (VHR), including priority sites from the Granville Street Cultural Heritage Study (2024).

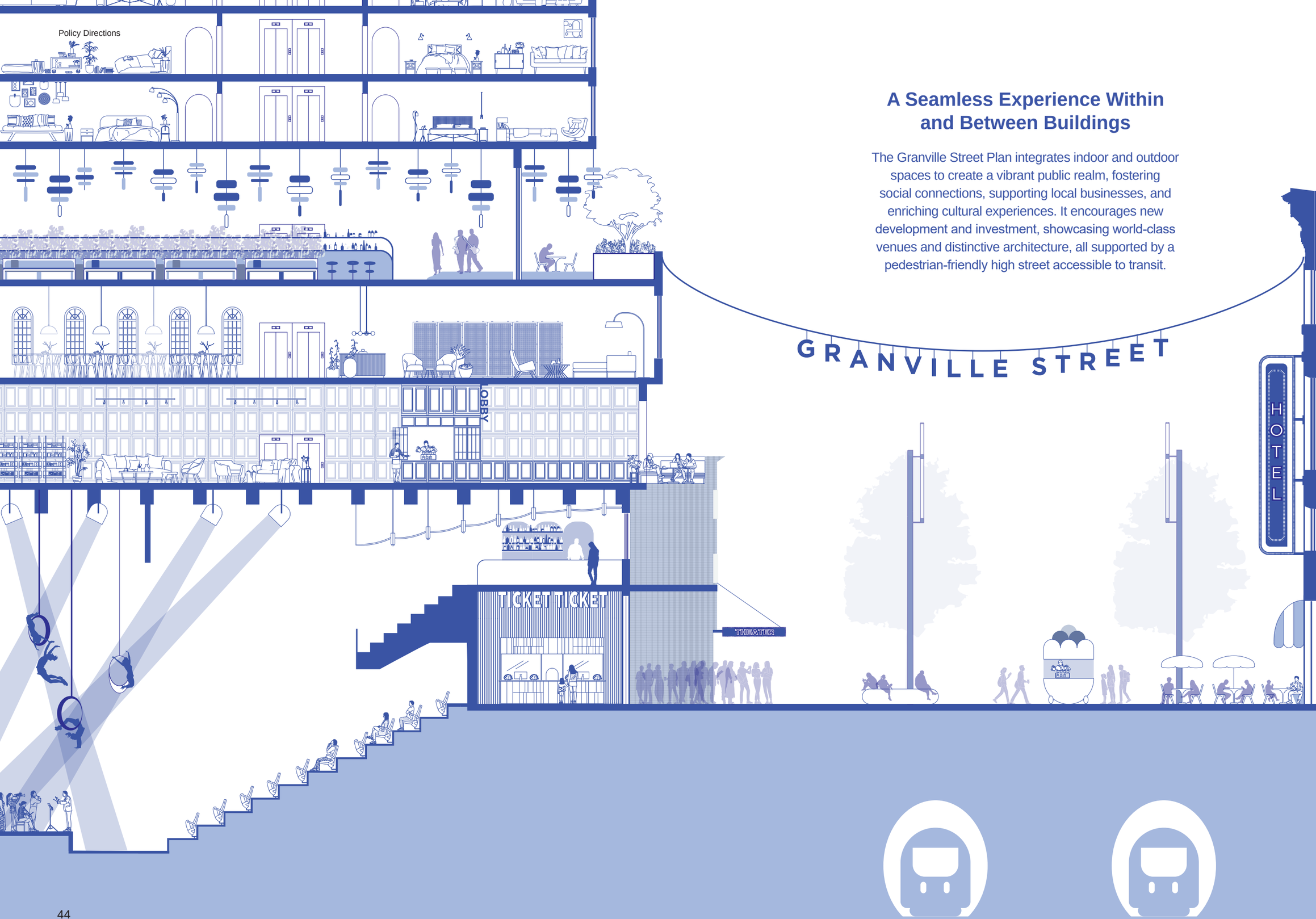
Figure 8 Granville Street Heritage Sites



Updated June 2025

A Seamless Experience Within and Between Buildings

The Granville Street Plan integrates indoor and outdoor spaces to create a vibrant public realm, fostering social connections, supporting local businesses, and enriching cultural experiences. It encourages new development and investment, showcasing world-class venues and distinctive architecture, all supported by a pedestrian-friendly high street accessible to transit.

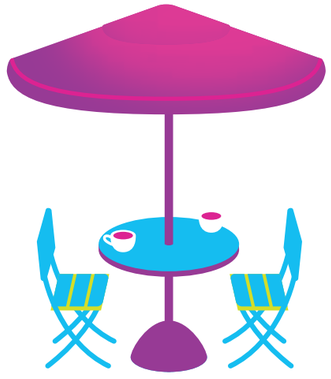


4. Public Space

Create a destination public space and work toward a year-round, shore-to-shore pedestrian zone focused on gathering and celebration.

Granville Street has long been one of Downtown's most important central gathering spaces for residents and visitors to Vancouver. It hosts summer events, holiday festivities, nightlife, and sports-related celebrations. It is also a place for public life throughout the day and night, including meeting friends, dining outdoors, queuing for venues or transit, enjoying busker performances, and strolling the street to shop or enjoy the sights. While there are complex challenges impacting experiences in this neighbourhood today,, the Granville Street Plan aims to build on this legacy toward a safe and vibrant entertainment district centered around a lively pedestrian street.

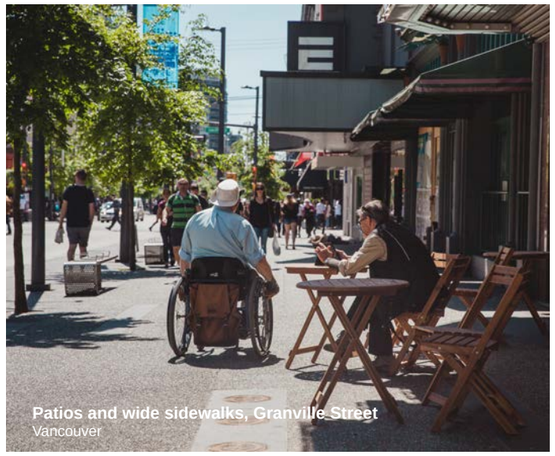
The policies below are intended to guide the public-space design and programming of Granville Street through Plan implementation. Delivery will occur through re-development, City-led capital projects, and partner contributions. Strong and consistent collaboration with external partners will be critical to the success of Granville Street as a destination public space and pedestrian zone (see 1.0 Partnerships and Services). Implementing a pedestrian zone will require additional infrastructure on Howe and Seymour Streets to maintain high-quality transit service (see 5.0 Transportation).



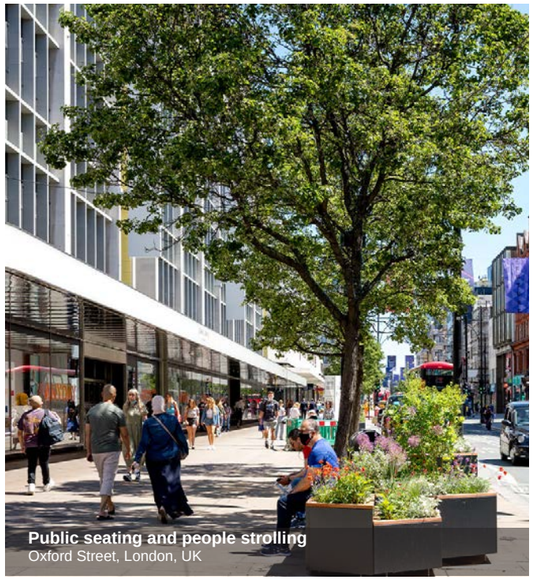
Dancers at the Granville Street Promenade
Vancouver

Buskers performing during Beaches Jazz Festival
Toronto

Playful mural and seating
Salou, Spain



Patios and wide sidewalks, Granville Street
Vancouver



Public seating and people strolling
Oxford Street, London, UK

Granville Street Block Party
Vancouver

4.1 Create and maintain vibrant public spaces that enrich both day and night experiences for all residents and visitors.

Policies

4.1.1 Work alongside xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish Nation), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh Nation) in public space design processes and the development of a district management approach to prioritize self-determined visibility, uses, and programming in the public realm.

4.1.2 Enhance daily and nightly public life experience and support the local economy by providing space for patios, public seating, queuing, art, busking, market stalls and food trucks, while maintaining flexibility needed for special events.

4.1.3 Coordinate outdoor amenities and activities with adjacent land uses and indoor activities (e.g. venues, restaurants, retail, residential) in each character area.

4.1.4 Initiate a phased approach toward a year-round pedestrian zone, beginning with seasonal closures. Monitor these seasonal pilots to inform improvements in street design and operations over time.

4.1.5 Increase capacity for daily programming and special events over time through partnerships, dedicated funding, and infrastructure support, aligning with public space stewardship and district management efforts.

4.1.6 Prioritize design and activation strategies to support safety in the public realm, including:

- Considerations for large events and seasonal and year-round pedestrian zones, including protection from vehicles, crowd control, and emergency egress.
- Physical safety measures and supportive infrastructure, including lighting locations and types.
- Safe waiting areas for transit and taxi/ride-hailing services.
- Gender-based safety considerations for events and year-round.
- Emergency service access into pedestrian zones and during events.
- Enhanced ambassador, outreach, and/or peer support services
- Additional safety and health services during high-attendance events.

4.1.7 Enhance accessibility and comfort by providing street furniture and amenities such as seating, washrooms, water fountains, bike racks, lighting, litter cans, weather protection/shade and street trees.

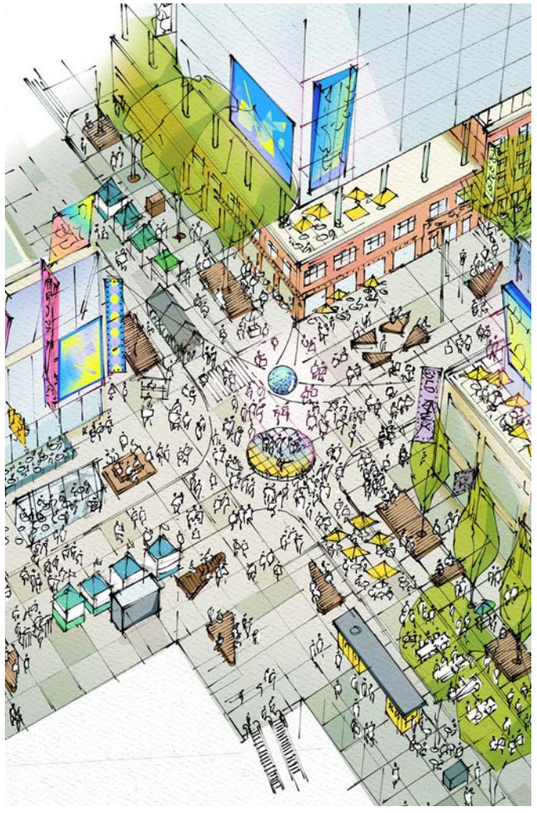
4.1.8 Create visual cohesiveness with consistent public realm design elements along Granville Street. Integrate distinct elements that highlight the unique features and activities in each character area, considering fit with surrounding areas (e.g. Granville Street from Georgia Street to Waterfront and intersecting east-west streets).

4.1.9 Provide electricity and water access to support food vending, busking and events.

4.1.10 Explore opportunities for built-in or flexible spaces with dedicated on-site infrastructure for event organizers. This reduces setup costs, duration and noise (e.g. purpose-built fencing, weather protection, stage equipment, power, lighting, water access, and load-in locations).

4.1.11 Identify opportunities for dedicated indoor storage space for event-related and daily public realm operational equipment, as well as volunteer respite, within new developments.

4.1.12 Consider opportunities to enhance the street tree canopy and introduce additional greenery suitable for an entertainment district with high pedestrian volumes and regular special events.



Potential Granville Street activation.

4.2 Transform the City Centre (Georgia to Smithe Street) into a lively, iconic public space that emphasizes daytime activities and civic gatherings.

Policies

4.2.1 Establish a signature central public plaza (vehicle-free) between Georgia and Smithe Streets, centered on the intersection of Granville and Robson Streets, designed to support large celebrations, civic gatherings, daily public life, pedestrian movement, and daytime activations.

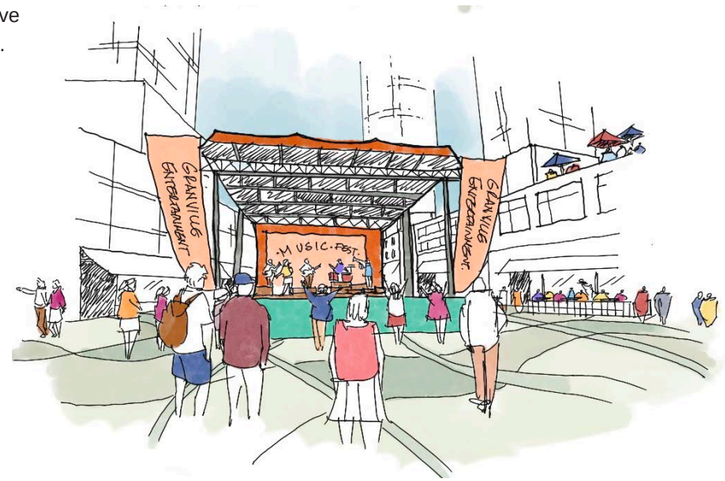
4.2.2 Extend the signature vehicle-free plaza treatment along Robson Street at least to adjacent lanes, with pedestrian priority continuing to Howe and Seymour Streets.

4.2.3 Strengthen visual and pedestrian connections to Robson Square, SkyTrain and Canada Line stations, the Stadium District, and the Entertainment Core area.

4.2.4 Provide unique, high quality and durable social seating and amenities, decorative lighting, public art, street vending, and busking nodes to support daily activation.

4.2.5 Test more daytime events and outdoor performances and explore ways to improve compatibility with nearby residential uses.

Curbside patios on Granville Street.



Variety of outdoor amplified performances.

Events throughout the day.

4.3 Establish the Entertainment Core (Smithe to Davie Street) as the heart of evening and nightlife activity featuring dynamic outdoor performance spaces.

Policies

4.3.1 Expand public realm space to support public life, adjacent ground floor uses like large patios and queuing areas, programming, street vending, commercial uses, and pedestrian movement.

4.3.2 Explore flexible public realm design elements to accommodate daily programming, special events, and live outdoor performance.

4.3.3 Establish a primary location for outdoor performance events and explore opportunities for temporary and/or permanent performance infrastructure including power access and stage equipment.

4.3.4 Test more outdoor amplified performance, including evening hours, and explore ways to improve compatibility with nearby residential uses.

4.3.5 Explore potential to expand the pedestrian zone onto Helmcken Street at least to adjacent lanes.

4.3.6 Consider ways to strengthen the intersection of Granville and Davie Streets as a key location linking adjacent neighbourhoods. Enhance visual and pedestrian connections along Davie Street to Yaletown and Davie Village, and from the Entertainment Core to Bridgehead areas.

4.4 Foster a quieter yet lively street experience in the Bridgehead area (from Davie Street to Granville Bridge).

Policies

4.4.1 Provide social seating and sidewalk space for commercial uses like patios and merchandise displays to support a lively street experience.

4.4.2 Enhance the sense of arrival onto downtown Granville Street from Granville Bridge with gateway design features.

4.4.3 Consider opportunities to enhance the street tree canopy and introduce additional greenery to provide shade and support the mixed-use residential and commercial activities in this area.

Active storefront displays.

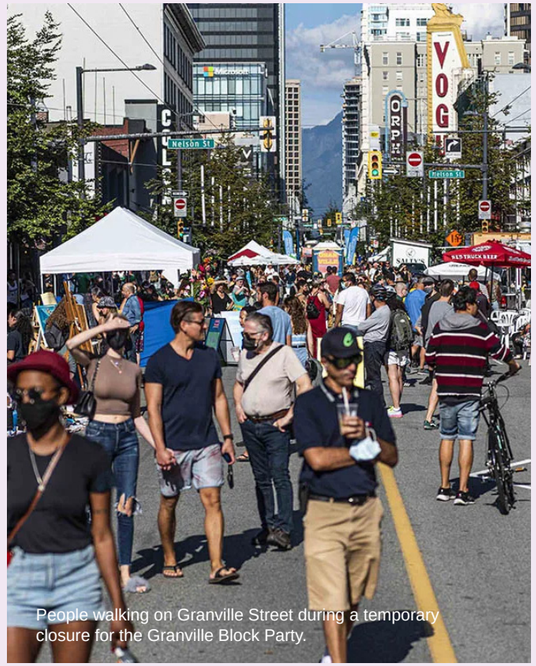
Cafe seating and neighbourhood activity.

Temporary public realm improvements and seating
Montreal, Canada

A Successful Pedestrian Zone

A fully pedestrianized Granville Street is achievable over time. Learnings from other cities and Vancouver's own experiences point to the need for a phased approach, allowing for adaptation, testing, and partnership-building. A successful pedestrian zone will rely on support from:

- More day- and night-time destinations and activities that draw people to the street throughout the day, week, and year.
- An enhanced district management approach, including robust public space stewardship, and a coordinated strategy for events and programming.
- Streamlined processes for special events and business uses on the street, with consideration for access and loading needs.
- Investments in transit priority on Howe and Seymour Streets.



People walking on Granville Street during a temporary closure for the Granville Block Party.

5. Transportation

Improve transit reliability and access by implementing supportive transit priority infrastructure on Howe and Seymour Streets and enhancing the walking and wayfinding experience in the area.

Public transit is a crucial aspect of transportation in Vancouver, especially in the Downtown Core where thousands of people rely on transit to reach key destinations such as jobs, restaurants, and retail services. Currently, Granville Street is one of the most important transit corridors in the city - supporting eight frequent bus routes through downtown and two SkyTrain lines. Transit is the most popular way to access Granville Street, with 1,100 buses serving 21,000 passengers on the street on a typical weekday.

To support a world-class public space and thriving pedestrian zone on Granville Street, buses will move to adjacent Howe and Seymour Streets. As the key directions of Public Space and Transportation are intrinsically linked, a year-round pedestrian zone on Granville Street requires supportive transit improvements on Howe and Seymour Streets. The Plan supports the development of transit-priority infrastructure to mitigate the impacts of moving buses off Granville Street while improving transit reliability and access for the high volume of transit users.

Policy Directions

Buses and SkyTrain Station entrance at Granville Street and Georgia Street intersection

5.1 Re-route Granville Street bus services to Howe and Seymour Streets with strong transit priority measures.

Policies

Phases 1 & 2 - Near and Medium Term

5.1.1 Seasonally re-route bus service to Howe and Seymour Streets during pedestrian zone pilots with temporary bus priority lanes and bus stop improvements.

5.1.2 Implement additional transit reliability improvements on Granville Street south of Smithe Street to improve service in the interim. This could include additional turning movement restrictions to limit access to local vehicle trips only or extension of the transit mall.

5.1.3 Expand the sidewalk on Granville Street to improve the public realm and enhance the walking experience.

5.1.4 Work with TransLink to explore opportunities to expand late-night transit service.

Transportation Network Changes To Accommodate A Pedestrian Zone

Phase 3 - Long Term (when Granville Street is fully pedestrianized, and transit operations are no longer feasible)

5.1.5 Permanently re-route bus service to Howe and Seymour Streets for the entire length of Granville Street downtown. Implement permanent full-time bus-priority lanes and additional transit priority measures, potentially including bus bulbs, traffic signal improvements, parking restrictions, and turn restrictions.

5.1.6 Improve transit access by reviewing bus stop locations along Howe and Seymour Streets to minimize walking distances to key destinations like SkyTrain stations, while spacing stops for better transit speed and reliability.

5.2 Improve the public realm on Howe and Seymour Streets to accommodate more people and maintain high-quality transit service.

Policies

5.2.1 Provide comfortable, safe, and accessible waiting areas at bus stops with improved lighting, shelters, and widened sidewalks.

5.2.2 Improve wayfinding to highlight connections between SkyTrain stations and bus stops on Howe and Seymour Streets, as well as to late-night transit services.

Busy pedestrian crossing at Granville Street and Georgia Street

5.3 Enhance the walking experience and provide a safe and comfortable active travel environment.

Policies

5.3.1 Provide wide, accessible pedestrian clear zones to accommodate high pedestrian volumes on Granville Street.

5.3.2 Improve sidewalks on east-west streets connecting Granville Street to Howe and Seymour Streets.

5.3.3 Provide safe and comfortable east-west cycling and micromobility infrastructure so vulnerable road users can access Granville Street.

5.3.4 Install additional shared mobility stations at key locations on intersecting east-west streets.

5.3.5 Consider how to accommodate cycling and micro-mobility on Granville Street in a low-speed shared environment when the street is pedestrianized to provide access to SkyTrain stations and destinations along the street.

5.4 Support people and goods movement.

Policies

5.4.1 Ensure functional loading and servicing for businesses along Granville, Howe, and Seymour Streets.

5.4.2 Provide passenger loading and taxi zones on east-west streets near Granville Street and on Howe and Seymour Streets to facilitate day and night transportation options.

5.4.3 Monitor phased seasonal closures and conduct additional analysis to develop a long-term design for Howe and Seymour Streets that prioritizes high-quality transit service with full-time bus-priority lanes and enhances the public realm while accommodating people and goods movement.

Bus on Granville Street

Vancouver City Centre Canada Line Station

Section 3

Implementation

The Granville Street Plan will guide the area's transformation, implemented over time through partnerships, investment, redevelopment and City-led capital projects.

Phasing Strategy

The Granville Street Plan will guide the area through the changes proposed in each policy section. It is designed to be flexible and adaptable to the changing context as transformation and development occur in different parts of the district. The phasing strategy provides a strategic approach to facilitate revitalization and initiate the long-term transformation of the area.

The Granville Street Plan is expected to be implemented through three general phases:

Phase 1
Immediate actions
0-5 years

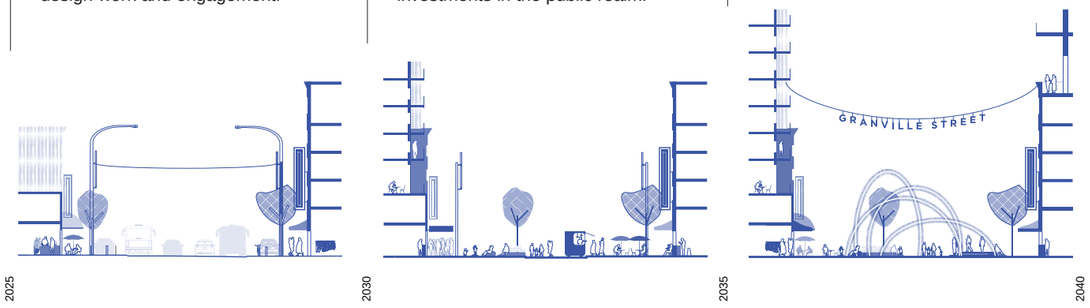
Delivery of the Granville Street Plan is already underway; early catalyst development projects in progress; initial public realm improvements and pedestrian zone pilots completed, including summer celebrations; begin public realm design work and engagement.

Phase 2
Medium Term
6-10 years

New developments are completed and investments are made in cultural spaces and businesses; seasonal pedestrian zone continuously tested and improved; public realm design work completed, priority area(s) identified; and begin larger capital investments in the public realm.

Phase 3
Long Term – Vision Realized
11-20 years

The district is at near full build-out and the street becomes a year-round pedestrian zone with additional capital investments in the public realm.



	Phase 1 Short Term 1-5 Years	Phase 2 Medium Term 6-10 Years	Phase 3 Long Term 11-20 Years
Arts, Culture & Entertainment	Support arts and cultural programming and securing new and exisitng spaces	Expand arts and cultural programming and secure new cultural space through new development	Support a thriving arts, cultural and entertainment destination through regular prorgramming, events and performance space
Land Use & Development	Early Catalyst Redevelopments and New Businesses	Additional Redevelopment and Improved Occupancy	Full Build and High Occupancy
Public Realm & Transportation	• Pilot and monitor seasonal pedestrian zone and related transit changes on Howe/Seymour • Design phased public realm concepts • Deliver initial improvements	• Continue to test and improve seasonal pedestrian zone and related transit changes • Deliver additional large-scale public realm improvements • Design Howe/Seymour permanent transit improvements	• Deliver permanent transit improvements on Howe and Seymour • Permanently move bus service • Create year-round ped zone • Deliver additional phases of permanent and vehicle-free improvements
District Management	• Develop approach in collaboration with key partners • Establish funding and begin to implement	• Refine approach and plan for additional needs of year-round pedestrian zone	• Ramp up resourcing and operations to support year-round pedestrian zone

*See Sections 3.4 Public Space and 3.5 Transportation for related detailed phasing information.

Public Benefit and Infrastructure Priorities

The Public Benefit and Infrastructure Priorities outline the 10-year priorities and a long-term vision for delivering public amenities and infrastructure to address current and future renewal and growth needs. We anticipate that priorities will be refined and further detailed in the implementation phase of the plan.

The Public Benefit and Infrastructure Priorities provide strategic direction for the Granville Entertainment District, as a downtown and regional serving entertainment and cultural destination. The Plan considers the following:

- Existing service gaps and future service needs
- Renewal needs due to aging amenities and infrastructure
- New and/or expansion needs to address growth or outdated programming

Infrastructure and amenities are typically funded from property taxes, utilities fees, development contributions, and senior-government funding. Capital-investment priorities within the Granville Street Plan will be reviewed alongside other city-wide investments during the capital planning process for prioritization and potential implementation. In-kind contributions may be provided on-site as part of a development where appropriate. The Granville Street Plan area also falls within the downtown commercial linkage target area of the Community Amenity Contributions Policy for Rezonings (2024) and will be coordinated with these policies and other related City investment tools.

Figure 9 Public Benefit and Infrastructure Priorities

CATEGORY	20 YEAR PROJECTS	10 YEAR PRIORITIES			
	Details:	**Details:**	**Cost Estimate - Renewal of existing infrastructure & amenities:**	**Cost Estimate - New or expanded infrastructure & amenities:**	**TOTAL:**
ARTS & CULTURE					
Cultural Facilities	• ~27,500 sf square feet of new presentation space including performance/exhibition space • ~6,000 sf of new performance/production hub • Protect, retain, and secure ~64,000 sf of cultural heritage spaces and uses • ~6,000 sf of dedicated production space in new social housing for artists • Renew and expand ~100,000+ sf of existing cultural spaces such as Orpheum phase 1 and 2	• ~20,500 sf of new presentation space including performance/exhibition space • ~6,000 sf of new performance/production hub • ~6,000 sf of dedicated production space in new social housing for artists • Renew and expand ~ 5,000 sf of existing cultural spaces such as Orpheum phase 1	-	$44M	**$44M**
Public Art	• 2 new large-scale permanent public artworks • Establish rotating temporary public artworks	• 2 new large-scale permanent public artworks	-	$1M	**$1M**
Heritage	• Conservation of heritage resources in support of area's cultural heritage, and reinstitution of culture uses in new and rehabilitation projects	• Allocate 10% of cash CACs collected in the Granville Street Plan area to the Heritage Conservation Reserve	$5M	2M	**$7M**
COMMUNITY FACILITIES					
Social Facilities	• ~1,500 to 2,000 sf of new community "drop-in" space in support of gender-based violence prevention/safety • Consider activation of a localized "sobering space" in partnership with health authority and other partners	• ~1,500 to 2,000 sf of new community "drop-in" space in support of gender-based violence prevention/safety. Shared use with other compatible programming may be a consideration (e.g., daytime vs night-time activation).	-	• Lease/Space share (preferred approach): $120K annually • Site purchase (alternate approach): TBD	**$1M**

Figure 9 Public Benefit and Infrastructure Priorities (cont.)

CATEGORY	20 YEAR PROJECTS	10 YEAR PRIORITIES			
	Details:	**Details:**	**Cost Estimate - Renewal of existing infrastructure & amenities:**	**Cost Estimate - New or expanded infrastructure & amenities:**	**TOTAL:**
PUBLIC SPACE AND TRANSPORTATION					
Streets & Transportation	Seasonal Pilots and Interim Improvements • New temporary infrastructure on Granville Street and temporary transit priority improvements on Howe and Seymour Streets to support seasonal pedestrian zones • New interim improvements/ placemaking prioritizing the City Centre character area	• New temporary infrastructure on Granville Street and temporary transit priority and bus stop improvements on Howe and Seymour Streets to support seasonal pedestrian zones • Transit reliability improvements on Granville Street south of Smithe Street • New interim improvements/ placemaking prioritizing the City Centre character area	-	$20-30M	**$20-70M**
	Permanent Improvements • Undertake public realm design process to develop permanent pedestrian street concepts and phased implementation plan • New permanent public realm improvements that support full pedestrianization • New ~2,000 sf of dedicated indoor space to support district management • Full-time bus priority lanes on Howe and Seymour Streets • Additional transit priority and public realm improvements on Howe and Seymour Streets, potentially including bus bulbs and shelters, improved lighting, traffic signal improvements, parking restrictions, and turn restrictions • Public realm improvements on intersecting streets between Howe, Granville, and Seymour Streets	• Undertake public realm design process to develop permanent pedestrian street concepts and phased implementation plan • New permanent public realm improvements - Phase 1 (based on concepts and phasing identified in design process) • New ~2,000 sf of dedicated indoor space to support district management	-	Up to $40M	
AFFORDABLE HOUSING					
Social Housing	• Support off-site and on-site redevelopment of City-owned sites (218 rooms) in the Entertainment Core and Transition Areas in conjunction with senior government funding partnerships » Support off-site replacement of non-profit and Provincially owned non-market housing sites (280 units) » Support off-site replacement of privately owned SROs (380 rooms)	• Support replacement of City-owned site (Gresham Hotel – 41 rooms) in conjunction with senior government funding partnerships	$16M	-	**$16M**
ESTIMATED COSTS FOR THE FIRST TEN YEARS (ALL SERVICE CATEGORIES)					
TOTAL			~$21M	~$68-118M	**~$89-$139M**

Utilities and Infrastructure

Upgrades to utilities and infrastructure to support future population and employment growth will be confirmed and/or implemented concurrently with, and/or through the rezoning process. These upgrades include, but are not limited to, sewer and drainage, potable water, green rainwater infrastructure, groundwater management and third-party utilities. Developments may be required to deliver neighbourhood-serving upgrades and additional management requirements, with development conditions that may impact project viability. Upgrades may be identified during the rezoning application and will need to be coordinated between the City and regional and local partners.

Implementation Projects

Project	Timeline	Responsible City Department
Develop Public Arts Strategy	After Plan approval	Arts and Culture
Amend the Downtown Official Development Plan (DODP) to a new Downtown District Schedule DD in the Zoning and Development By-law) and align with the Granville Street Plan including: • Consolidate the areas K1, K2, K3 into one sub-area (area K); and • Remove residential as a use from the 1000 and 1100 blocks of Granville Street (between Nelson and Davie streets)	After Plan approval	Planning, Development and Sustainability
Launch the City Centre higher building policy study (see Section 2: Development & Land Use 3.4.6)	After Plan approval	Planning, Development and Sustainability
Further transportation study	After Plan approval	Engineering
Develop District Management approach and initial operating and funding models	After Plan approval	Engineering
Yearly seasonal pedestrian zone testing and monitoring	After Plan approval, beginning in 2026	Engineering
Develop long-term and phased public realm design concepts for Granville Street	After Plan approval, beginning in ~2027	Engineering
Deliver phased public realm investments	After Plan approval and development of conceptual and detailed designs	Engineering
Howe and Seymour Investments	After Plan approval	Engineering
Transportation monitoring program	After Plan approval	Engineering
Create plan for Gender Based Violence drop in site	After Plan Approval	Social Policy and Projects
Scope and plan for Sobering Center in partnership with VCH	After Plan Approval	Social Policy and Projects

Monitoring

Throughout the 20-year Granville Street Plan, the City will evaluate its performance based on Downtown's economic, cultural, social, and development metrics, and report findings to the Council through appropriate methods. Monitoring will also include review and reporting key metrics related to public space use, transit performance, transportation management, and project piloting.

Implementation work will include developing metrics and indicators to measure the Granville Plan's progress toward its key objectives. An ongoing monitoring process will enable City staff to assess whether the Granville Street Plan is achieving its goals and will inform any future changes to City Council.

Appendix A:
Transportation

Background

Transportation is a key consideration for the Granville Street Plan as it plays a vital role in contributing to the vibrancy of the street today. Granville Street is a busy transit corridor, with eight bus routes and 1,100 daily buses serving 21,000 daily bus passengers. The street supports many other modes of travel along different sections of the corridor including local vehicle access, taxis, service vehicles, walking, and cycling. The adjacent Howe and Seymour Streets are part of the regional Major Road Network that support vehicle movement through the region. To support a pedestrian zone on Granville Street, buses will need to move to Howe and Seymour Streets for the length of Granville downtown. To retain bus speed and reliability, supportive transit priority infrastructure will be needed on Howe and Seymour Streets to provide fast and reliable transit service for the thousands of transit riders. Once the necessary transit priority infrastructure has been implemented, and new trolley buses allow for extended duration off wire in the event of an issue, buses can be shifted to Howe and Seymour Streets.

Collaboration with TransLink

TransLink's preference would be for transit vehicles to continue operating on Granville Street with additional transit priority, as it is an established and important hub that provides convenient access to several frequent bus services and both the Expo and Canada Lines. Granville Street provides a high level of transit priority, with further opportunities for transit improvement on the corridor as private vehicles are de-emphasized. It also has strong legibility for transit riders with so many transit services operating in both directions on the same street.

Recognizing that retaining buses on Granville Street is not compatible with the delivery of a signature public space, high degree of outdoor performance and public space programming associated with an entertainment district, and pedestrianization, the City has been collaborating closely with TransLink throughout the planning process on a range of different customer experience and operational considerations, including the efficient re-routing of bus routes onto Howe and Seymour Streets.

TransLink has provided input on the transportation analysis and modelling methodology described below, feedback on public engagement materials, and liaised with different impacted teams at TransLink and the Coast Mountain Bus Company regarding different planning and operational considerations.

Transportation Analysis and Modelling

A range of high-level transportation analysis and modelling was undertaken for the Granville Street Planning project to understand the impacts of various scenarios on Granville, Howe, and Seymour Streets. This included identifying capacity-constrained intersections, evaluating potential mitigation and transit priority measures, and assessing key metrics to help select potential transportation scenarios that support the overall vision for Granville Street. The transportation analysis informed the impacts of removing both vehicles and buses from Granville Street, which include:

Impacts from removing vehicles from Granville Street

- Reduced access for taxi passengers, particularly for passengers with accessibility needs and late-night trips, as pick-up/drop-off for taxis will no longer be accommodated directly on Granville Street.
- Removal of loading space for goods delivery on Granville Street.
- Local vehicle access shifting to adjacent east-west streets, laneways, and Howe and Seymour Streets.

Impacts to transit riders and transit activity from moving buses to Howe and Seymour Streets:

- Howe and Seymour Street bus stops will be located further from SkyTrain stations and most bus stops for east-west bus routes.
- People will have to walk further in at least one direction to or from their jobs or residences to reach bus stops on Howe and Seymour Streets (this longer walk may be a limiting factor for some people in deciding whether to use transit).
- Changes to legibility and wayfinding may add navigational challenges for some users such as the elderly, tourists, people with language or mobility barriers and people with disabilities.
- Transit-generated pedestrian activity will move from Granville Street to Howe and Seymour Streets.

Other impacts from moving buses from Granville Street to Howe and Seymour Streets:

- General-purpose travel lanes and/or parking and loading spaces on Howe and Seymour Streets will be reallocated to accommodate necessary transit priority and public realm improvements.
- Capital investments are required to maintain current levels of transit service as well as to deliver on future priority and infrastructure improvements.

The City will collaborate with TransLink and businesses to identify solutions that prioritize transit and deliver successful transit service on Howe and Seymour Streets as part of the Granville Street Plan. The goal is to deliver sufficient transit priority infrastructure on Howe and Seymour Streets to support both a flourishing pedestrian zone and successful transit, prior to moving buses to those streets.

Next Steps

Further analysis is needed to design successful transit improvements on Howe and Seymour Streets. This will be done through additional modelling in coming years. Data collection and monitoring of multi-modal performance during future seasonal pedestrian pilots and additional analysis will also be conducted before selecting a preferred configuration for Howe and Seymour Streets.

Additional work will include:

- Locating passenger and commercial loading and working with development to improve loading activity in the laneways.
- Reviewing bus stop locations along Howe and Seymour Streets to minimize walking distances to key destinations like SkyTrain stations, while considering bus speed and reliability for through trips.

Appendix

Appendix B:
District Management

Background

Destination entertainment districts and pedestrianized streets have unique operational needs that may be distinct from those of other types of commercial districts, including increased demand for:

- Strategic planning: Supporting a diverse mix of cultural, entertainment and nightlife venues alongside retail and dining destinations.
- Branding and promotion: Establishing a strong identity and promoting the district to local, regional, and international visitors.
- Comprehensive vision and strategy: Developing a cohesive plan for a diverse range of small and large-scale activities, programs, and special events, and ensuring coordination between indoor and outdoor events.
- Public space stewardship: Maintaining a high level of care for public spaces that are heavily used around the clock.
- Support services: Providing services to accommodate high levels of activity, visitors, and the nighttime economy.

District management refers to entities created with a mandate, appropriate organizational model and resources to meet the unique needs of a destination area in a coordinated way. Dedicated funding and sustainable revenue sources are required to meet these needs effectively.

The City's existing coordination models to manage streets and public spaces range from a "standard approach" to retail streets, which relies on partnerships with Business Improvement Areas and City permit programs for street uses, to the "plaza stewardship" model, where formal partnership agreements enable coordinated programming and enhanced services like micro-cleaning, to ad-hoc "special partnerships" to meet the needs of temporary programs like the seasonal Water Street Pilot (2024/2025) and related Open Streets permitting, and the VIVA Granville program which ran from 2010-2014. Sustaining Granville Street's long-term success as a destination entertainment district and pedestrian zone will require a new approach with greater coordination and resourcing. The future model for Granville Street can also be expanded or replicated over time to support seasonal or year-round pedestrian streets in other parts of the city with similarly heightened level of need.

Development Process

Developing a new district management approach for Granville Street requires a multi-phase process. To begin this process, staff procured consultants to develop a spectrum of models for further consideration, informed by a current state assessment (including internal and external stakeholder interviews) and detailed case study research. The final report is anticipated to be completed in summer 2025, and select early findings are included below. Following approval of the Granville Plan and completion of the consultant report, staff will begin a collaborative process with key partners to explore a shortlist of potential models, develop a tailored governance and funding model, and establish an initial operating plan and level of service in line with the Plan's vision. Staff will return to Council for approval before taking any necessary steps to create a new management entity or group and seeking resources to begin implementation. The district management approach will be tested and refined over time, with a ramp-up of operational needs and resourcing expected to support a year-round pedestrian zone in the longer-term (see Figure below).

Model Options for Further Consideration

Large-scale stewardship and district management models generally have three core components:

- Governance model – defines the scope of decisions that are made, parties making decisions, and how these parties make the decisions. There are some legislative or regulatory constraints, and it influences options for legal entity set-up.
- Operating model – defines how a service is delivered (e.g. in-house, outsourced, or hybrid) and is driven by risk tolerance and financial capacity of the organization
- Funding model – defines how a service is paid for (or costs recovered) and potential revenue sources are typically tied to the governance model

Based on case study research, there is a spectrum of potential models for further consideration, ranging from decentralized to centralized decision-making and fully internal (i.e. City-led) to fully external governance. Staff expect to consider a sub-set of models including city-led and hybrid options. Two types of models are not likely to go forward for consideration, including: 1) a City-led model with a cross-team/matrix structure, as it essentially reflects the current approach, and 2) a full external model similar to the Street Alliances found in major U.S. destinations (e.g. Times Square in New York City, Union Square in San Francisco), as staff do not recommend delegating all decision-making authority to an external body at this time. Staff will bring a detailed report to Council on district management with consideration for all options.

Next Steps

Following approval of the Granville Plan and completion of the consultant report, staff will begin a collaborative process with key partners to explore a shortlist of potential models, develop a tailored governance and funding model, and establish an initial operating plan.

Key considerations in exploring and developing a preferred model include, but are not limited to:

- Balance of City and external roles
- Risk management capacities
- Legislative, regulatory and or labour relations implications and constraints
- Funding and revenue generation implications and constraints
- Desired levels of service (e.g. sanitation, maintenance, ambassadors, programming) and required resources
- Implementation timelines
- Community responsiveness and engagement
- Inter-agency coordination opportunities with other service providers

Staff will return to Council for approval to implement in approximately late 2026.

Acknowledgements

The Granville Street Plan is the result of the dedication, effort, and passion of numerous partners who have helped shape it. This includes countless businesses, venue operators, property owners, residents, arts and culture providers, service providers, and many others who support Granville Street. Their contributions, along with those of the elected officials and all City departments involved, are evident throughout the Plan and will be crucial to its successful implementation.

A specific thank you to:

City of Vancouver Mayor and Council

Downtown Vancouver Businesses Improvement Association

The Hospitality Vancouver Association

Destination Vancouver

Good Night Out

TransLink

City of Vancouver Team

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