

LOWER LONSDALE: THE MAKING OF A CULTURAL NEIGHBOURHOOD - 04

Arts and Culture Defined and Goals Identified

Many of the city’s planning studies have identified the Lower Lonsdale as an area of special significance and interest. The idea that it could become a cultural neighbourhood has considerable currency among interested citizens and there have been a number of reports that have recommended such a focus for Lower Lonsdale. In assessing the question of how best to address the location, relocation and facility needs of the Presentation House tenants, this study inevitably had to consider the implications of Lower Lonsdale as a cultural neighbourhood.

Several previous studies, including the City of North Vancouver Economic Development Strategy of 2008 and the North Vancouver Cultural Plan of 2002 and its appendices of surveys and findings do a good job of outlining the benefits of a cultural neighbourhood in Lower Lonsdale. The reader will also find references to the economic and public benefits of clustered cultural amenities throughout this facility study.

Our assessment considered how culture in such a neighbourhood might be defined, whether there was a need, what gaps in service it might appropriately address for the community and what would make it viable. We began by defining what kinds of cultural activities would best support both a neighbourhood and the community.

“Art” and “Culture” are two words that mean many different things to different people. Therefore it is very important to find a definition that stands firmly in the background of an inquiry like this one.

There is general agreement that “participatory” (recreation and leisure-driven) and “community” (amateur and voluntary) arts and cultural activity is well served in North Vancouver. Public and private schools and private/commercial lesson providers also contribute to arts and culture learning.

“There are significant class and program offerings from pottery to theatre and dance for all ages”

Cultural Study

The gaps in service and in opportunity lie with those who have or would like to take their arts and cultural practices to a professional level and for those audiences and attendees who want access to professional work in well designed, equipped and purpose-appropriate venues.

“There is a need for more programs and more studios for serious artists”

Cultural Study

The expression of need leads us to a goal:

- Provide opportunities for the development of professional arts and culture practices for artists and the public.

Attendant goals are economic vitality, community livability and visitor attraction. We have confirmed these needs and goals for the

City of North Vancouver.

Having done that, we can define what art and culture is in the context of this planning initiative. Art and culture is defined as:

- advanced forms of intellectual and artistic activity and the works produced by them.

Activities, when they fit this definition, considered for the purposes of this planning study were:

- Visual arts and historic exhibits including art galleries and museums; their curatorial, interactive and interpretive activities;
- Painting, drawing, photography, pottery, sculpture, glass and jewelry making and other tactile arts;
- Craft and textile works;
- Performing arts including theatre, music, dance, festivals and the activities supporting them such as hosting, facility management, design and technical support;
- Film, video, computer generated work, sound recording and multimedia
- Aboriginal arts;
- Multicultural activities;
- Arts education and instruction;
- Writing and publishing;
- Arts supply and commercial activity;
- Architecture and design;
- Arts and cultural administration and professional service organizations.
- Arts and cultural education

The City’s arts and culture sector, in order to thrive, should have a fully rounded provision of opportunities so that citizens do not have to leave the North Shore to practice their skills.

The “City wishes to supply as many of our community needs locally as is practical...thereby reducing demands on...transportation and on the environment.” **OCP Community Vision**

Though many artists and other Cultural practitioners live in North Vancouver, many work in other parts of the region. We should be retaining these workers and emerging professional artists. The City also should endeavour to capture leading edge art interests.

In order to capitalize on sector opportunities serious artists need open space studios and “dirty rooms” for ceramics, sculpture, glass, metal and wood work where specialised equipment is available. They also need facilities in which their work can reach the public.

In order to ascertain in which areas of arts and culture practices there might be gaps and where service needs were generally being met, we examined each broad genre of practice. Included in this discussion are the needs of audiences and viewers or participants.

The Biggest Gaps

High Level Visual and Tactile Arts & Crafts Instruction

There is concern that children and youths who are particularly talented in these arts are not sufficiently served and have nowhere locally to go for truly expert instruction or practice. Adults who are capable of going beyond the hobby artist level are not served by the recreation system whose intent is to give people a “taste” of an arts activity from which they can move on.

Spaces and Tools for Expert Level Visual Arts and Crafts

But where are these master artists to move on to? There are only two publicly accessible pottery studios in North Vancouver and both are fully committed in recreation facilities. There are not enough studio spaces for exceptionally talented people to produce their work, especially in “dirty” or equipment-heavy arts practices.

Because there is a dearth of space, there are not enough artists able to instruct or engage in high level mentoring for professional arts practices in North Vancouver.

Public Art Galleries

CityScape Gallery, run by the Arts Council, is in a visible storefront. It serves local and emerging artists but in a very small space. Presentation House Gallery curates proudly professional exhibitions but its space is inadequate and relatively unknown due to a



CityScape Art Gallery on Lonsdale Avenue

challenging facility. There is little opportunity for those wishing to have a professional art gallery experience in North Vancouver.

Museum Practices

There is little opportunity to participate in professional museum programming due to restrictions of size and the quality of the current space at Presentation House. The Museum’s archive at the Community History Centre, in Lynn Valley, is a fine research facility but serves only one part of museum practice.

The ability to share local history and its continuum of cause-and-effect with children and adults in North Vancouver is severely limited at this time. Appropriate artefact care and preparation is also very difficult.

Theatre / Dramatic arts / Story-telling

High school drama programs exist and Uncle Randy Productions offers young musical theatre artists a good on-stage bridging experience. There is little more being offered. The North Vancouver Recreation Commission does not serve serious dramatic artists. Reportedly, lack of drama instruction is partly due to the lack of good rehearsal facilities and classroom space for dramatic practices.

Capilano University, based in the District of North Vancouver, has some theatre administration and drama programs which draw students from across the region. The drama program’s access to space is very limited, however. North Vancouver’s young talent goes to various Vancouver services like Arts Umbrella because they cannot access them in North Vancouver.

Audience access to professional experiences in dramatic arts is hampered by the poor infrastructure at the City’s producing

company- Presentation House Theatre. Centennial Theatre, though a fine hosting facility, is mainly geared to rental activity and does not produce works. It does, occasionally, present dramatic pieces when they are on tour across Canada.

Aboriginal and Multicultural Arts Practices

These are subsets of the genres referred to earlier. However, it is fair to say that the professional artists of these cultural groups would also be better served if there were appropriate and well equipped studio facilities and if the PH Theatre, NV Museum and PH Gallery were better able to engage with them.

Genres Generally Well Served

Dance

Dance instruction is generally well served by private dance studios; there are many on the North Shore. Talented students are sent on to other private schools across the region and country. From there they move on via dance company internal networks.

Most private dance schools perform at least annually at Centennial Theatre or other regional facilities where they get professional production standards for their dancers, choreographers and audiences. Centennial Theatre also occasionally presents professional touring dance companies and it has some relationships with dance operators who use the dance rehearsal studio on site. Recreation and community centres offer some social and beginner dance classes.



Historic Building at 1st & Lonsdale

Music

This genre is relatively well served by instructors in the school system, by private lessons and, at a higher level, by Capilano University, at UBC and other programs in Vancouver. Uncle Randy Productions also plays a role with cross-over students of drama, dance and music. There are a number of high level choirs in the city.

The Recreation Commission hosts a concert series at Edgemont Village and Centennial hosts musical concerts and presents children's music and entertainment to serve audience needs.

Film and Recording

Audiences for film are relatively well served. Access for artistic cinema is provided by the Arts Council's once-a-month programming at a commercial cinema. Capilano University also has a film series. Both of these programs are well attended.

Capilano University has a film studies program of instruction which serves people wanting to go into the field. They will soon build a facility for this program on the existing campus. There are professional film studios in North Vancouver that deal with the producing, commercial film industry and there are a number of professional recording studios to serve musician's needs.

Introductory, Hobby and Leisure (or recreational) Arts

There is a lot of art programming through recreation and leisure services for both children and adults and organizations like Neighbourhood House also offer these programs. The activities are well subsidized through the City and District. They tend to be at the

"passive leisure" level for people doing the activities for diversion as they might any other hobby. These services are intended as introductory arts activities and do not fit into our definition as described earlier (**pg. 80**)

Recreation based arts programs require very long range planning to meet deadlines, space schedules and minimum registration levels. Therefore the programs tend to be quite mainstream. The instruction must generally be at a beginner level of proficiency that does not serve serious, emerging or established artists. There does not appear to be a gap in services at this level. Audience and viewer service is not a strong goal; these are participatory programs.

Writing and Publishing

Writers and literary needs, in the context of a community like North Vancouver and its public services, will be served by the library system and by commercial publishing houses and book stores. Instruction is undertaken in school and university systems. The City has a new library with extensive services to the public and it appears to be well used and successful in its work.

Other Visual Arts Providers for Children

The "Artists for Kids" program is a very good service. It will soon have a home with a gallery to display its small but growing permanent collection. It is driven by the availability of artist/teachers who are already part of the public school workforce. The programs take place in the teachers' classrooms and according to their schedules. The students travel to the teacher and his/her school and classroom.

After school art programs by professional, non-teacher artists, which take place in the students' schools (the artist travels to the students) are provided, on a limited basis, by the Arts Council. These are currently only available in three inner city schools and are partly sponsored by Neighbourhood House. The two programs that were once in other schools were recently discontinued in order that they not interfere with the Artists for Kids program.

Conclusion

This exercise allows us to pinpoint the most pressing needs and the biggest evident gaps in the spectrum of opportunities.

The things we should concentrate on as we look toward the creation of a cultural neighbourhood and the goals of economic vitality, community livability and visitor attraction are

- Public art galleries,
- High level instruction,
- Spaces and tools for expert level arts and crafts practitioners,
- Aboriginal and Multicultural arts practices,
- Theatre/dramatic arts production,
- Museum services.

Site Study Area

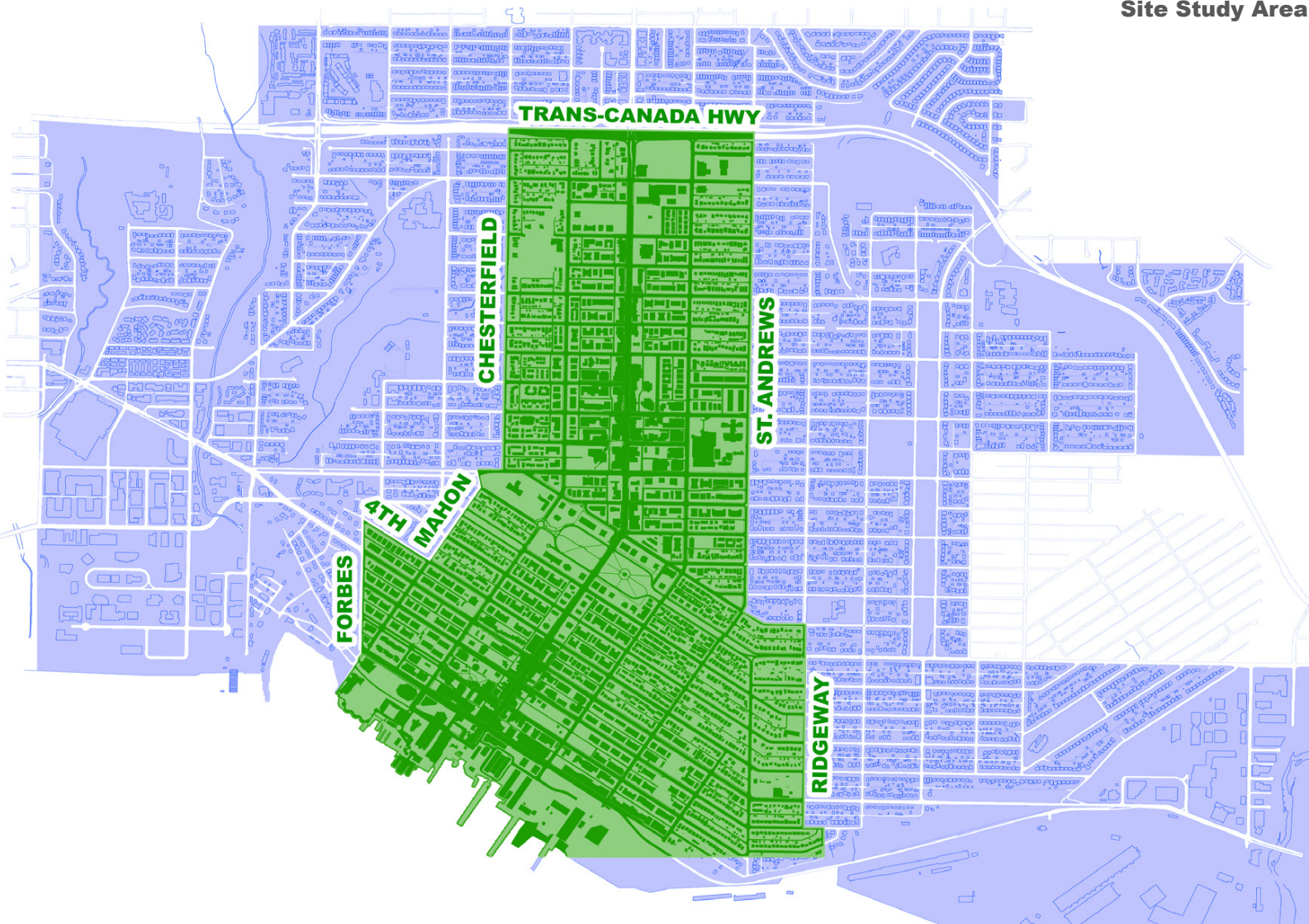
While this study is focused primarily on Lower Lonsdale cultural facilities, the study area required expansion to include Central Lonsdale in order to fully understand the impact of the four areas on each other and on the entire Lonsdale Regional Town Centre.

Yet the North Shore relies on the City of Vancouver to provide many of the arts and cultural needs of its citizens. The proximity of this much larger city, whose service levels for arts and culture are high, make this dependence possible if not desirable.

Vancouver’s commercial, regional visitor and tourist sectors are flourishing as a consequence of its cultural infrastructure. The City of North Vancouver wants a piece of the action they can see so clearly across Burrard Inlet. It too has an interesting waterfront that could, with the right development, be a magnet to regional and international visitors. With Vancouver’s hotels and residential high-rises now marching in file from the Vancouver Port Lands to Stanley Park, there are a huge number of Vancouverites and visitors that could and would cross to North Vancouver via a 10 minute SeaBus ride.

But they would do it only if there were interesting experiences to draw them. And only if those experiences were housed in facilities of a quality that matched those in Vancouver. To make such enterprises viable, those experiences would have to be varied and diverse enough to warrant repeat visits. They would also have to serve and appeal to local residents so they can spend their cultural leisure time and purchasing dollars in North Vancouver rather in Vancouver.

Access to both these markets and their commercial opportunities is, of course, the underlying goal of creating a cultural neighbourhood in the Lower Lonsdale neighbourhood.



Culture Partnered with Commerce

Other communities have found, through hard experience, that merely focussing on what business and developers bring to the table does not make an area vibrant. Unique, non-commercial assets should also be there. After all, you can shop, drink coffee or eat anywhere.

Brisbane: A Case Study

The now iconic South Bank Development Area in Brisbane Australia realized they had missed the mark in 1997. They saw the under utilization of a site they had already been developing for many years. While it was a popular precinct for tourists and locals alike, with a few notable exceptions, commercial redevelopment had not proceeded.

It too, like North Vancouver, had natural advantages of locations; it was directly across the river from the Brisbane Central Business District (Brisbane C.B.D.). But it lacked visual continuity and liveliness.

The renewal of the site was undertaken with three major strategies of civic intervention. One of these was The Millennium Art Strategy which, with public funds, created arts, cultural and entertainment facilities that are now successfully intertwined with the balance of the South Bank site.

The city introduced policy to encourage a wider range of development uses while reducing the overall area of development. In addition, the edges of the precinct were blended into the community that surrounded it.

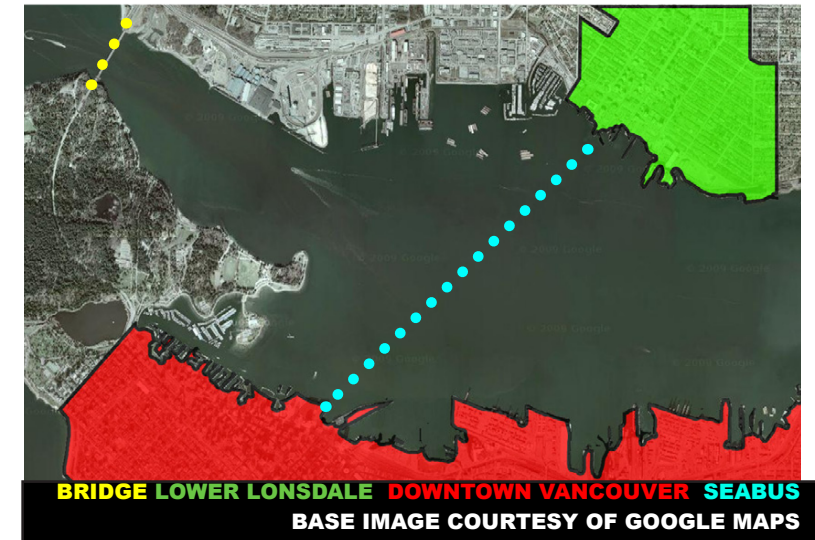
Councillor Paul Bell, then Acting President of the Local Government Association of Queensland, said in an address about culture as a development and civic renewal tool (Taipei 2004): “In June 2003 the moving annual attendance in the South Bank achieved over 5.79 million visitors, a 24 percent increase over the period. Clearly investment in renewal of urban cultural precincts can be economically, cultural and socially successful.”

The South Bank was reclaimed as a “living” city space. Brisbane saw its job as ensuring that the south bank of Brisbane’s great river realized its potential. In the same vein, the job of North Vancouver City can be seen as ensuring that the northern shore of a great BC waterway realizes its potential.

In Brisbane as in other locales other locales, public investment took the lead in order to make an area flourish commercially.

Other Jurisdictions

This report will cite examples of cultural districts in Canadian cities, in Vancouver and abroad. Some are of long standing and some are in the beginning stages of development. In the US the movement to revitalise urban and even small town centres through the establishment of what they refer to as ‘*cultural districts*’ is well established. Some states have enshrined their establishment in policy and offer funding incentives.



Potential For Achievement in Near and Longer Term

The City of North Vancouver is not seeking to revitalize a defunct or dangerous neighbourhood. The Lower Lonsdale is already blossoming and has many attractive attributes. The question here is more subtle – what kind of neighbourhood do we want it to be? How do we make it attractive to visitors? How can it best enhance the quality of life for the City’s citizens? How do we capitalize on the social richness and economic benefits that cultural activities can bring? Should we, and how do we, integrate our most important existing cultural institutions into the framework of such a neighbourhood? In what way, if at all, might this affect cultural links with the rest of the region?

An urgent need to revitalize a neighbourhood can sharpen civic intent and create the political will necessary to invest in a cultural neighbourhood. When the need is on the level of creating a public good rather than solving a public crises the movement toward the goal may be more sluggish and require more advocacy and a longer planning cycle.

In the case of North Vancouver and the Lower Lonsdale the planning and discussion cycle has already been in play for over 15 years. Progress has been made. It has been mainly in the social service, commercial and residential sectors. While these are necessary to a well balanced neighbourhood, the cultural elements now need attention if a cultural neighbourhood is to be brought into existence. The process can, and will, take from 10 to 20 years.

With 15 years already under North Vancouver’s belt, it is time to step into an implementation stage with clear intent and focus.

Actions to Achieve
The potential to create a cultural neighbourhood rests on the following actions taking place in the next 10 to 20 years:

- Concentrating on the needs of professional artists and cultural workers and the exhibition, presentation and interpretation of their work.
- Placing at least two of the three primary tenants currently on the Presentation House site within the Lower Lonsdale in purpose built and renovated facilities. These will provide the anchor institutions around which other activity will cluster. The design of a cultural neighbourhood for Lower Lonsdale involves more than the strategic placement of key cultural facilities. The intention is to insert at least two major cultural institutions into the existing urban fabric. Each should rely on the existing infrastructure and public space to foster a sense of place and identity for the neighbourhood. Connectivity between facilities, both primary and secondary, is critical to avoid functional spaces that, although well designed and considered, don’t interrelate.
- Establishing clearly delineated boundaries for the cultural neighbourhood will help to encourage further exploration in the area. If possible, locating key facilities at the edges of the neighbourhood will not only help to define these boundaries, but draw pedestrian traffic from Lonsdale Avenue east and west towards the periphery.
- Creating physical connections and visual cues between the waterfront, historic Lonsdale Avenue and key institutions.

- Creating the policy and bylaw environment that will encourage the light industrial and warehouse district on the east side of Lonsdale (from St. George’s to St. Patrick’s) to become an artist studio district.

The City has a “small amount of upland devoted to light industrial” ; these will remain so. *OCP*

- Instituting an organizational mechanism through which formal outdoor stages and other indoor locations can be used for performances, exhibitions and busking on a regular, ongoing basis.
- Planning the locations and types of public art that will create a walking district throughout Lower Lonsdale and commissioning those art pieces in a strategic way.
- Building at least one cluster of artist studios and specialized shop or “dirty spaces” that may be leased by professional artists for the creation of their work, possibly at PH Centre.
- Improving visitor welcoming services, especially from the Sea Bus terminal but also from other transportation entry points, and using best practices for wayfinding, signage and public awareness.
- Maintaining a high standard of care for the grounds and exteriors of all public cultural buildings and areas where visitors will gather.
- Applying a high level of care to the streets through which visitors will pass to access arts and culture experiences.
- Negotiating cultural amenity spaces in developments on sites of interest.

Studio Policy Framework

Studios in which artists can produce their work are an integral part of creating a healthy cultural ecology in any city. Artists work in countless mediums and often in economically high risk environments. Much of their work is experimental or has a lengthy learning component that will not produce a saleable product in the short term. That is why low rent/low lease work space is essential to support the inherent research and development part of cultural practice. Clustering studios in a strategic way can promote sharing of resources and creative exchange between artists. A City can put special frameworks in place that enable what are essentially small, specialized producers in these clusters. It is not unlike planning for a specialized “industrial park” or high tech sector installation. It is the policy framework, and the practical matters attendant to it, that draws artist entrepreneurs and creative enterprises to a community. All of this is part of creating a vibrant cultural neighbourhood.

Goal 4.2b : “encourage artist ... studios in commercial districts, through OCP policy and zoning by-laws”

North Vancouver Cultural Plan

City administrators need more information about what artists do and how they do it in order to draw artist entrepreneurs and creative enterprises to North Vancouver, to enable a studio district to be successful and contribute to the community’s economic activity. Staff and policy should not become a barrier. Departments like engineering, planning, by-laws and licensing need to become as adept at understanding cultural producers as they might be in understanding a specialty like tug boat operation. The same holds

true for economic development offices, business associations or small business centres. When establishing a cultural neighbourhood, a commitment to enabling practices that underwrite the artists’ contribution should infuse all parts of a municipality’s systems. In the civic milieu the principles should emulate those of a doctor: “Do no harm”. Local legislation should not be so rigid that it interferes with the healthy development of cultural enterprises, artistic practices or events.

Policies and Procedures to Examine for Strategic Compatibility with Artists’ Practices

Arts activities can often fall outside the norms seen by civic clerks and policy makers. Or they may fall into several categories that require outside-the-box thinking. That is in the very nature of creative activity. In a city that wishes to attract cultural enterprises, the policy framework, and the city staff applying it, should be encouraged toward flexibility -- focused on problem solving and a strong sense of partnership.

The study team’s mandate did not include review of current city policy, by-laws or approach to artist studio creation. The following list, therefore , is very general and requires that North Vancouver consider its practices, and those of related bodies, and determine where they may support, or hinder, light industrial property owners from leasing spaces to artists for studios.

- CONSIDER:
- Tax assessments on studio spaces
 - Special zoning designation for arts practices or temporary changes in zoning to assist landlords who wish to accommodate artistic work in their buildings
 - Restrictions and licensing needs including special business licensing for studios, allowing some direct sales
 - Special zoning status, recognizing artistic practice as different from light industrial or manufacturing
 - Insurance needs as they impacts business licenses
 - Parking stipulations in relation to square footages of studios and other parking issues
 - Allowances for temporary work and exhibition spaces and permits for art openings in unusual spaces

This is not an easy exercise. Even in cities like Vancouver which has seen, for instance, 1,000 artist studios built or acquired between 1987 and 2007 and a policy set for enabling them since 1996, artists have problems with the system. Approvals take too long, permits are contradictory, bylaws don’t fit the purpose and frustration abounds. Getting it right is a process. Fortunately, other communities have found many best practices to encourage the establishment of arts studios. These can inform North Vancouver’s efforts. The OCA is encouraged to contact the City of Vancouver and other jurisdictions to review their research in this regard. (see *also pg. 156 appendices*) of this report for a discussion of US regulatory flexibility.

Compatible and Desirable Cultural Resources

The tables to the right show a scan of compatible resources often found or desired in cultural precincts.

Cultural precincts, districts, or neighbourhoods generally grow quite organically once a community applies some core resources to them and has a few major players in place. They should, however, be given conscious planning focus. The municipality that wishes to capture the vitality that comes of cultural activity should learn what the ecology of such a precinct is. It can then apply its economic development, engineering, planning, cultural, commercial and tourism savvy to the task of creating a cultural neighbourhood.

Successful cultural precincts are strategically designed and professionally managed, they are mixed use and urban in character. They may be small or quite sprawling. They may follow a watercourse, a street or a historic cluster but there are always connecting elements and a few leader organizations. Calgary’s cultural district is a case in point.

Other Agencies and Uses

Social service and community agencies also make good partners in a cultural district. Churches may be suitable if they double as meeting, performance and gathering spaces. In areas where these are a natural fit, multicultural and aboriginal organizations, both arts based and others, will encourage interesting exchanges of practice and outlook.

REQUIRED RESOURCES BY CULTURAL PRACTICE

STUDIO / WORKSHOP

Type of Resource	Broad Brush Attributes	Examples of Cultural Practices
Simple Space Studios for Artists	good light, potable water	Painters, weavers, textile artists
Studios with special equipment	as above + equipment	Print-makers, jewellers
Shops and workrooms with heavy equipment	as above + equipment	Wood & metal workers
Dirty and specialty spaces	as above + equip. + special provisions	Potters, glass makers

CONNECTING WITH CUSTOMERS

Type of Resource	Broad Brush Attributes	Examples of Cultural Practices
Art and Photography materials & supply	storefront location	visual arts, crafts, etc.
Exhibition and sales galleries	storefront location humidity / temp control	public, commercial, artists’ co-op, artist run
Indoor and outdoor busking and performance locations	space, power	buskers , magicians, musicians, etc.
Libraries, book stores	storefront location	literary activities
Meeting and screening rooms, small cinemas	accessible, furnished, audio or visual equipment	organizational, board, planning, conference, film screening, audition
Museums	community connections, humidity/temp control, security artifact care	artefact, archive, interpretation, art, special collection
Printing & reproduction	storefront and equipment	posters, programmes, advertising, publishing, photography
Theatre facilities	stage, seating, equipment, backstage services	plays, concerts, lectures, dance film multimedia, meetings, competitions, festivals
Teaching facilities, colleges, conservatories, music schools	classrooms, shops, labs and equipment	visual, musical, media, dance, craft, culinary, technical, theatrical

Some of these resources can cohabit or be shared easily with others. For example, a studio where goods are made may also be a sales location or a teaching space. A rehearsal room may double as a meeting location. Carpentry shops may be shared by a theatre producer building sets and a museum preparator building an exhibit. A screening room may double as a lecture space. An art gallery may host a catered soirée. The categories used in the tables are not meant to separate but to describe.

Facilities should be equal to the work

In order to grow and become a force artistically and economically the spaces that ‘house’ the work should be of a standard equal to the work on the walls, in the exhibits or on the stage.

In some instances, as in the Sidney Opera House, Ottawa’s Museum of Civilization, or the Guggenheim at Bilbao, the facility itself becomes the economic driver and visitor destination. The building acts as a cultural icon along with the work found inside its walls. Even more tellingly, the work, given a frame of respect and beauty, rises in value and appeal.

Calgary: A Case Study

“It’s about destination building and community building,” says Erica Mattson of the Calgary Arts Development Authority (CADA). “Since 2001, the cultural district collective has worked hard to create a sense of ownership in this neighbourhood.” (CADA is responsible for allocating arts and culture funding to organizations on behalf of the municipal governments)

REQUIRED RESOURCES BY CULTURAL PRACTICE

BEHIND THE SCENES		
Type of Resource	Broad Brush Attributes	Examples of Cultural Practices
Administrative space	offices, workrooms, tech support	cultural association, service group, regional, national organization
Architectural and Design firms	offices, workrooms, tech support	architects, designers, specialty services
Construction Shop spaces	power, equipment, tools	set building, artefact and installation preparation, props, costumes
Film Reproduction studios	controlled environment and equipment	film making, editing, reproduction
Game design, creative IT, interactive and computer design studios	offices, workrooms, tech support	creative technologies
Loading, truck / people access points	street engineering, infrastructure, lighting, security	all cultural activities
Rehearsal spaces	large volume, empty space, sprung floor, plumbing, power	choirs, dancers, actors, bands, etc
Sound Recording studios	sound proofing and equipment	musicians, film, etc.

CREATURE COMFORTS AND VISITORS

Type of Resource	Broad Brush Attributes	Examples of Cultural Practices
Cafes, restaurants, clubs and pubs	storefronts, performance, display spaces, equipment	diners, entertainment seekers, artists
Commercial / retail opportunities	storefronts, access, visibility	shoppers
Linear parks, waterfronts, piers, historic icons, artefacts, buildings, public art, plantings	access for walkers, bikers, cars, visible parking, good signage	all users and visitors
Public washrooms, clocks, drinking fountains, street furniture	plumbing, engineering, power	visitors
Wayfinding cues, rest areas, view corridors, information centres.	aesthetic walking connections and building treatments, good signage	visitors

Michael Brown, of Matthews Developments and member of the Cultural District's board, described the rapid transition of Calgary's Stephen Avenue cultural district from an empty, slightly dangerous stretch to a bustling hotspot for young urban professionals, executives and tourists. According to Brown, it took a lot of collaboration, promotion and the adoption of a mixed-use space model.

But the physical development of a cultural district happened somewhat naturally, as people used it. "When we opened our offices [in an old hotel building] there, the whole street changed around us. We had a hundred people coming in and out every day, using the spaces, venues, and restaurants."

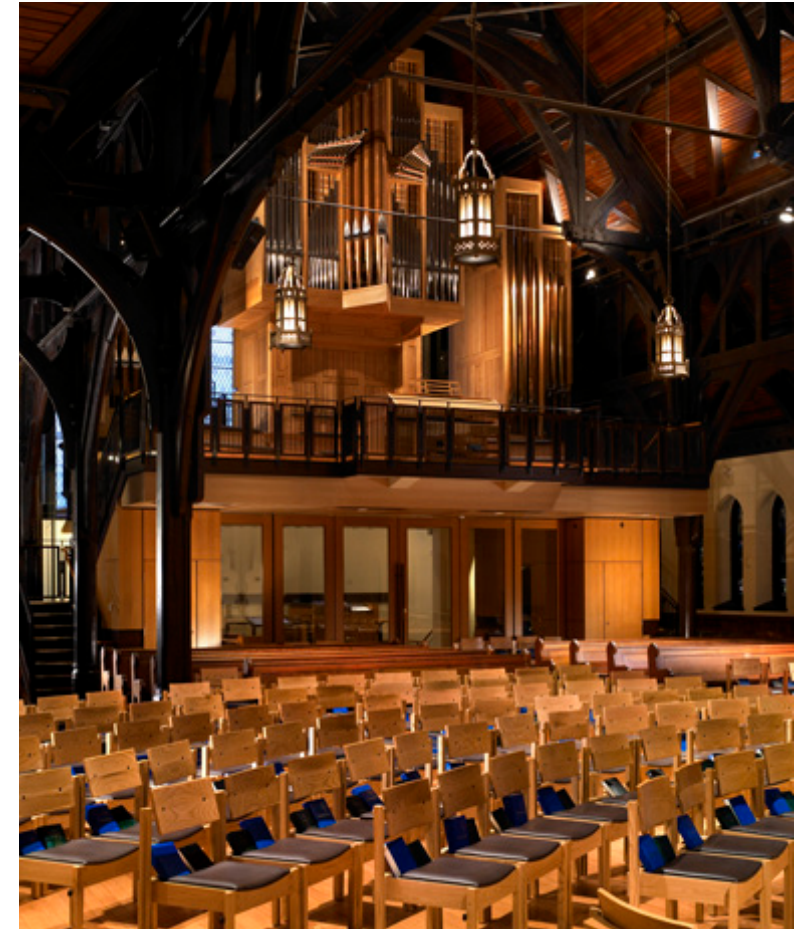
The original concept and boundaries of the district were conceived by Colin Jackson, then-president of the Epcor Centre. In 2001, Jackson assembled a group of like-minded citizens for what became the Cultural District Renaissance Society of Alberta, a non-profit organization operating the district. The organization is now known simply as the Cultural District and it runs in partnership with CADA.

Calgary's district includes the Art Gallery of Calgary, Glenbow Museum, Epcor Centre for the Performing Arts, Art Central, the Grand Theatre and many other arts and cultural destinations. Today they are heavy hitters on the cultural scene but most had a modest or rocky beginning.

The example of Calgary's cultural district is cited here to highlight the focus and attention that its creation received. Mixed use, a collection of key professional players, a guiding agency and municipal commitment were all required. This will apply in North Vancouver too.

"The appearance of our arts facilities reflects our attitude about arts and culture"

Cultural Plan respondent, when asked about the need to upgrade existing buildings



Interior of Christ Church Cathedral, 690 Burrard Street, Vancouver; example of a church which doubles as a performance space

In order for businesses and cultural activities to thrive in a cultural district there should be a certain amount of activity that engages people no matter at what time they come to the area. There may be peak activity – for instance in summer months and on weekends -- and there may be overlapping activity that requires some management of parking and crowd control. This is desirable, from the perspective of neighbourhood security and commercial sustainability. The cultural district of Granville Island is a familiar case in point. Using it as an example, let us look at a day in the tourist off season and mid-week.

Granville Island: A Case Study for Patterns of Use

During a normal midweek morning: the food markets will serve both nearby residents and visitors, in the cultural buildings, rehearsals, administration and production is engaging hundreds of workers. Artists are throwing pots, making glassware and weaving garments. In the restaurants, preparation for lunch and evening diners is underway. Stores are open and serving shoppers. The Community Centre is engaging with children and fitness classes are underway.

People stroll, run along the seawall and exercise their dogs along the linear parks. At Emily Carr College of Art and Design, students are in arts practices of all kinds. At the small shipyards, enthusiasts and artisans are working on boat maintenance.

In the afternoon of the same day: all of the work described above continues but now Arts Umbrella brings children into afternoon art classes and there are a few hardy buskers performing at designated sites. More out-of-town visitors are on the scene, it's all hands on deck for servers as people stop for lunch, for afternoon coffee and after work drinks. Those bound to office desks earlier in the day stop by to get a fresh baguette, pick up tickets and buy flowers. A casting call is underway at Playwrights Theatre Centre and at the Waterfront Theatre, technicians are preparing for a concert.

In the evening: There is a brief flurry as day workers leave the Island, the last tour bus loads its passengers and the market closes. Parking becomes easier to find. The community centre now serves its adult patrons and meetings start at many of the arts related buildings. Arts Umbrella is in full evening class mode. Rehearsals continue in rehearsal halls, and the show crowd starts to arrive. Some stop for dinner and others pause for a pre-show drink. Artists are busy with costumes and warm up, front of house and ticket staffs prepare for audiences and technicians check all systems. Potters and other artisans who have day jobs move into the studios to make their wares. In a few of the bars, local up-and-coming bands are crowded onto tiny stages, rubbing elbows with their fans.

Late at night: Bars and restaurants serve the post-show crowd, crews are busy re-setting stages and doing clean up, performers are having a beer with their cast-mates and a few audience members are having a last stroll along the water, admiring the city lights. Meetings



Midweek morning at the Granville Island Market

are breaking up and people are picking up their kids and partners from evening classes and events. Travellers return to the hotel from their visits to other parts of the city and cleaners arrive to do their work.

The island is likely to be still only for a few hours in each or the available 24. This makes for a lively and safe neighbourhood that attracts people from nearby apartments, from all over the region and from abroad.

All of these activities accelerate in summer months, on weekends and during festivals. The important thing is that the area is not only busy on premium, good-weather days. It is not only busy during rush hour, nor during the business lunch or when shops are open.

This wealth of activity does not happen accidentally.

The Granville Island precinct is busy enough to require a non-profit agency, the Granville Island Cultural Society (GICS), to organize and schedule use of its performance buildings, its many busking sites, meeting rooms and its studio rentals. Canada Mortgage and Housing (CMHC) also administers the many real estate leases, the parking garages, other infrastructure and maintenance. It is a densely populated cultural district with many players - all methodically planned and appropriately resourced.



Afternoon concert on Granville Island



Lights come on in the evening on Granville Island

Lonsdale Cultural District and Potential Use Patterns

Though many of the potential district-making enterprises listed in this study will have the occasional evening reception or special event, the list to the right will show the most likely and dominant use patterns as we anticipate them today.

It is important to note that some organizations, particularly theatres, will be in administration and production mode during the day and in performance mode during the evening. These will have staff on site at least 16 hours in each “open” day, but the larger audiences will appear for only the 4 hours of pre-show, show and post-show scheduling.

The organizations in the table to the right are those that are either proposed to have new / upgraded facilities or are not yet fully realized. Some organizations, such as the Public Art Gallery (currently at Presentation House) propose to extend their hours once they are in a new building, doubling the current public access times.

Though Lower Lonsdale currently hosts many seasonal festival events and attracts day trippers to its foreshore it does not yet have the mix of activity that creates a lively, repeat-visit district during an ordinary, mid-week day in February.

It could, however, begin to enhance its “off season-off peak” visitors and local traffic through a strengthening of its core cultural

destinations and the heavy programming of its proposed outdoor stages and all busking locations. Another element the neighbourhood needs to encourage is working artist’s studios that are accessible to the public.

Working Shops and Administration

Though North Vancouver stakeholder input indicates a lowering of enthusiasm for “live-work studio housing”, the need for specialized shop space for the creative use of artists and artisans continues to be a priority for many. Lower Lonsdale should move toward being an incubator district for working artists in all disciplines. These can feed into commercial sales in Lower Lonsdale, artist-run galleries and into the exhibition and performance activities of the larger organizations.

It may be possible for either the Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) or the Arts Council to undertake the administration of such resource provision. In any case the OCA offices should be located in Lower Lonsdale.

CULTURAL USE PATTERNS IN LOWER LONSDALE

Resources	Opening Hours	Opening Days
Arts Council / CityScape Gallery	9-5 12-5	Mon-Fri Sat
John Braithwaite Community Centre	various - 10	Mon-Sun
Late Night Bars / Pubs	-	N/A
Lonsdale Public Market	9-7	Mon-Sun
Public Market Restaurants	various	Mon-Sun
Art Gallery	12-5	Wed-Sun
Administration	9-5	Mon-Fri
Neighbourhood House	9-8 9-1	Mon-Fri Sat
North Vancouver Museum	9-6	Mon-Sat
Presentation House Theatre	9-5	Mon-Fri
Presentation House Theatre Performances	various	various
Outdoor Stages, Plazas	various	seasonal
Restaurants / Coffee Shops	various	various
Studios (private)	various	not for public
Studios (public)	9 am - 10 pm	various

We’ve talked about what makes a cultural neighbourhood possible but must also assess the challenges that exist and how to address them.

Lower Lonsdale Challenges

The North Shore settlements and Moodyville were among the communities, including Victoria and New Westminster, which were eventually eclipsed by Vancouver when the rail line terminus was established on the southern shore of Burrard Inlet. The separation, not only by distance but by water, still dictates much of what happens on the North Shore in relation to other Metro Vancouver communities.

Mixed Messages: “Come-Here-Go-Away”

The North Shore Districts are both staunchly suburban and fairly strictly residential. As such, the Districts of West Vancouver and the District of North Vancouver focus on service to residents. Housing is primarily single family, self-owned. There are few jobs within these districts except in service, public sector and retail. Most workers travel south to employment in other jurisdictions. The districts are truly bedroom communities to Greater Vancouver. They are seen as not wanting tourists and are not density or industry friendly – in fact suburbs generally might be described as “stranger averse”.

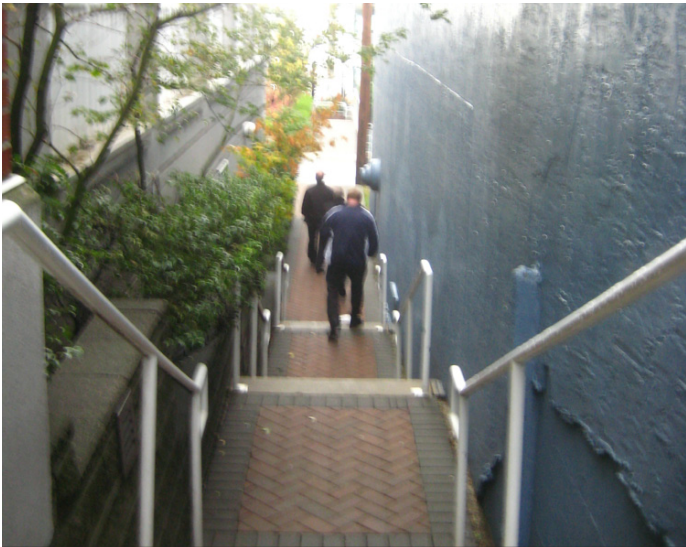
From the perspective of residents on the south shore of Burrard Inlet – in Vancouver and the 19 or so other regional municipalities – the “North Shore” is often perceived as a single entity, one that is both exclusionary and with little to offer non-residents.

The City of North Vancouver, however, aspires to an urban and regional persona. It wishes to serve local residents but also welcome visitors and tourists. Even so, it does have citizens who feel ambivalent about this aspiration. One might say there is some “attitude spill” into the City from the more suburban and exclusionary neighbouring Districts. Successfully distinguishing itself as a uniquely welcoming North Shore City that is eager to host visitors, will require some negotiation with these citizens.

The City wants a sustainable cultural and commercial neighbourhood in Lower Lonsdale. In order for these enterprises to be viable they will need local and visitor patrons. Lower Lonsdale should give visitors more reasons to stay longer - longer than a quick trip on the SeaBus to grab a snack and take pictures of the view. For the City to prepare for and project an authentic eagerness to host visitors, its public infrastructure and its internal policy messages should be cohesive with the invitations of its cultural and commercial institutions to those “from away”.

Solving Local Mysteries

The Lower Lonsdale and its adjacent historic area need ways to make exploring the area easier and more obvious. As you approach the City from the water its streets and parks seem navigable, but once you arrive on the shore, it is a puzzle. How do you get to the walkways? Where do you access that lovely pedestrian overpass? Is that big wharf you thought you saw to the left or the right as you disembark and make your way through the bowels of the terminal? Can you get there from here?



East Path pedestrian connection

Lower Lonsdale entices but then excludes the visitor. It currently presents itself as a place for locals who know its mysteries. The secrets of getting from one interesting location to another are not easy to learn. There are no readily available public maps as you disembark from the SeaBus, street signage is poor or non-existent. You may walk and find yourself with no obvious way forward. The adventurous visitor who wanders bravely on is likely to be confused about how to get back. They are more likely to find themselves on a quiet residential street than at a café or an interesting piece of public art.

Way-finding aids and visual cues will be essential for the successful development of the area and should receive attention in tandem with cultural development. The clear views up the avenues that you see from the water should be supported and enhanced once you land on the waterfront and should lead you into Lower Lonsdale.

Connectivity and Reducing Physical Barriers

Many factors can enhance connectivity. The neighbourhood should have a distinctive identity that communicates the presence of arts and culture. It should be of a walkable scale with a diversity of attractions as well as interesting architectural and open spaces. It should have distinct boundaries and vistas, and maintain a consistent use of colour and graphics in its way-finding and signage. The SeaBus and Transit Terminal is the main transportation hub in Lower Lonsdale. It is the critical connection to Downtown Vancouver and rapid transit networks that serve other areas of the Lower

Mainland. As the largest source of pedestrian traffic in the area, it should be included in the cultural neighbourhood, and well connected to the key cultural facilities.

Lower Lonsdale is classified as a ‘pedestrian precinct’ according to the City of North Vancouver Long-Term Transportation Plan, yet it struggles to be pedestrian friendly due to a number of physical barriers that limit its attractiveness to visitors and inhibit movement from the SeaBus Terminal into and around the study area. These barriers should be minimized.

Barriers Include

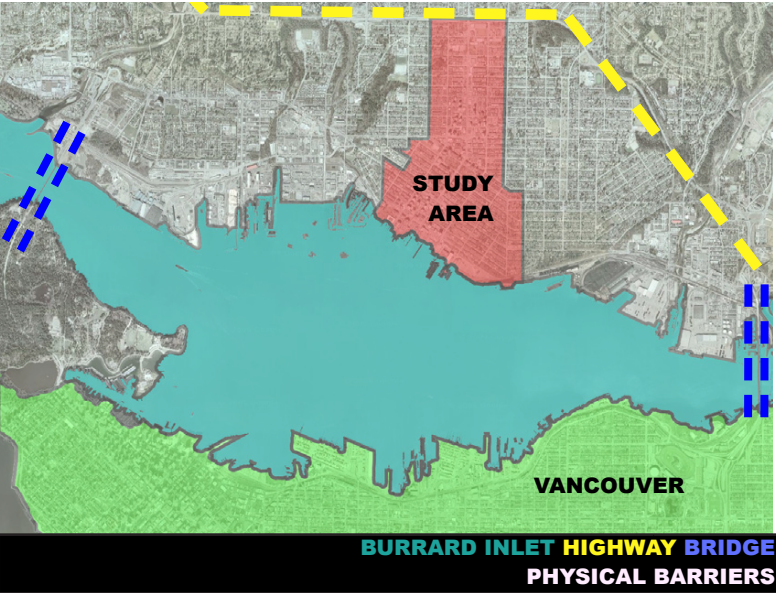
The Inlet

Although easily navigated by frequent transit service, the Burrard Inlet discourages movement between Lower Lonsdale and Downtown Vancouver. Visitors require strong incentives to make the crossing, especially towards North Vancouver.

Bridges, Highways and Traffic Volume

The two bridges, Lion’s Gate Bridge and the (Second Narrows) Steelworkers’ Memorial Bridge, and the Transcanada Highway also partially divide the municipalities of West Vancouver District, North Vancouver District and North Vancouver City. This division manifests itself between the three communities, but also between neighbourhoods within them. And, far from joining these

Physical Barriers to reaching North Vancouver



municipalities to the rest of Greater Vancouver, the bridges act as an access barrier due to high traffic volumes. The highway acts as a barrier based on speed and the “freeway exit” effect.

Esplanade

At 4 lanes of fast moving traffic as well as on-street parking, Esplanade is part of the interregional frequent transit network. Despite its commercial presence at street level, it acts as a barrier discouraging pedestrian travel from the Waterfront north into Lower Lonsdale. Visual cues should encourage crossing.

Lonsdale Avenue

As the primary north-south roadway in Lower Lonsdale, Lonsdale Avenue is the spine of all efforts to create a cultural neighbourhood. It is both a major transit corridor for passenger and truck traffic as well as a major pedestrian area where well-designed sidewalk and crossing facilities should accommodate people and encourage alternative modes of transportation. Currently, it dominates activity in Lower Lonsdale creating a pedestrian and commercial boundary between the east and west according to stakeholders.

Grade

The steepness of grade from the waterfront up to Central Lonsdale is perhaps the greatest perceived barrier to pedestrian activity in Lower Lonsdale. It is problematic for pedestrian flow in both directions, both uphill and down.

It is accepted wisdom that the Lonsdale Avenue hill is a barrier to people moving up and down its corridor. However, the Lonsdale hill is not especially steep. Psychologically, the mountains to the north exaggerate perceptions of steepness. The width and straightness of the street also visually exaggerates grade.

The slopes from Vancouver’s Davie Street to English Bay are equally if not more steeply graded and are not seen as a barrier to north/south movement. San Francisco’s steep streets do not keep visitors away; neither have the cobbled stairs and steep lanes of the many hillside towns in Europe. A grade can be used as an asset because it offers views and a clear idea of where one is within a landscape.

The Lonsdale slope is not as much a barrier as poor way-finding cues and lack of visual connectors that tell you where you are, what lies ahead and that, whatever it is, it is worth walking to. Various destinations should be clearly visible or known in advance.



Grade on Lonsdale approaching 3rd

Strategies to Increase Social Interaction in the Public Domain

City Planners and engineers know a great deal about this issue but we will touch on some of the things that increase social interaction in the context of a successful cultural neighbourhood.

In order to create a neighbourhood where vibrancy, inside and outside of “office” hours, is fostered, you need street liveliness. You want places people can get to easily, where they wish to be because there are things to do and where there is a sense of intimacy and security. Most of all you want people to congregate and interact there. Because the thing people most like to do is watch other people and be in contact with them, encouraging social interaction is a key strategy.

Vehicle Traffic and Parking

One strategy is to slow people down. The environment should make car drivers want to move slowly; perhaps in search of an elusive parking space near an interesting sidewalk café. Allowing some surface parking even in very small areas should not be scorned, it indicates that you welcome visitors. Street parking, carefully sited, can provide a buffer between the sidewalk and traffic. It can also be used to narrow streets and slow traffic. Parking lots between the street and a building, however, do not foster social interaction and should be discouraged through by-laws.

While the OCP recognizes the need to coordinate the provision of on-street and off-street parking suitable to the needs of each neighbourhood (OCP 6.11.7), it also recognizes Lower Lonsdale as

a ‘special study area’ due to its difficulties with traffic, parking and pedestrian circulation (OCP 5.9.2.).

Because both the PH Theatre and NV Museum are destination locations and rely on vehicular traffic, a parking strategy is necessary in the cultural neighbourhood and the Lonsdale Town Centre to assure its adequate provision. The provision of adequate parking has been identified as key to the development of Site 8.

With the priority on pedestrian planning in Lower Lonsdale, supply of parking in this area has been limited, both to discourage excessive vehicle use and to encourage the use of alternative transportation. Many surface parking lots have been replaced with pay parking underground. Though City staff believes there is adequate parking available, this belief does not extend to the public. Therefore it creates a barrier to the use of the neighbourhood. Insufficient parking has been identified as a problem in the public’s perception, particularly in the newly developed areas to the west of Lonsdale Avenue. There is a fear that a similar situation will occur with development to the east. Underground or above ground parking access should be clear; signage should be well placed to guide drivers to entrances, and once inside, access to the street should be easy and well lit.

Pedestrians and Pedestrian-Friendly Streets

The street environment should also make pedestrians want to walk slowly and stop to look into shop windows, read community notices, make eye contact and have conversations. There should be many things in the environment to see and an understanding that there is a lot to do, whether you choose to do them or not.



Existing parking lot on site 8

Commercial Interaction

There should be many windows at street level with interesting things behind them. Street level shops, cafes, restaurants and public services should be encouraged. Private offices, residences, studios and workrooms should be placed on or above second floors.

Outdoor cafe seating can create a sense of safety, especially if the establishments are open at night. Merchandise placement on sidewalks in front of shops makes people pause and enter. Street-side ticket services, with their waiting patrons, can also signal liveliness. Above all, the streets in cultural neighbourhoods should be active at all times of the day and evening, encouraging people to stroll in a safe and interesting environment at any time.

Streets

Many streets in Lower Lonsdale have been developed according to the recommended pedestrian treatments found in the Transportation Plan. These include generous sidewalk widths, landscaping and street furniture, marked and narrower crossings, street lighting, public facilities and building design that focus on pedestrian orientation and accessibility. Successful examples include W 1st Street between Lonsdale Avenue and Chesterfield Avenue, Lonsdale Avenue between Esplanade and 2nd Street and within the Quay and Pier Development areas. At specific times of day these spaces are active; they are comfortable and clean and promote security and safety. Those running east-west support an ease of travel desirable for pedestrians.

In general, however, these areas tend to feel isolated from each other, and offer little incentive to link pedestrian movement from one area to another. They don't clearly promote their own activities, giving no indication of what destination points, if any, are along the route or how they connect.

Accessible Pathways

Three predominant pathways exist in Lower Lonsdale – the Waterfront Path (and by extension the Spirit Trail), the West Path connecting the SeaBus Terminal to W 2nd Street and the East Path connecting the Pier Development Area to E 1st Street.

They make use of elevators, escalators, street overpasses, enlarged pathways, ramps and stairs to guide pedestrians through Lower Lonsdale. They use similar pedestrian treatments as the streets. They effectively resolve both Esplanade and grade as physical barriers.

By linking different types of spaces, they make the route interesting and allow for vistas and views between buildings. They reduce travel time to various destinations, and because they are indirect, allow for a sense of discovery not found along vehicular streets. Further, the West Path is completely accessible.

In general, the East and West Paths have little relation to Lonsdale Avenue and the Waterfront, and are hard to find. The Waterfront Path doesn't clearly connect pedestrians in the Quay and Pier Development areas. Again, they give little indication of what



destination points are in proximity and do not relate to the key facilities in the area. Having no clear start and finish, they dissolve at their ends, leaving pedestrians wondering, as earlier stated, why they are there.

In addition, the open spaces they link tend not to have enough prescribed activity surrounding them to encourage their proper use.

Public Transportation

As mentioned, the SeaBus Terminal provides efficient and easy access across the Inlet, and acts as the hub for all public transit in the area. Buses run predominantly up and down Lonsdale Avenue, with a few up Chesterfield to 3rd Street. Bus route access to different destinations in Lower Lonsdale is not directly apparent in the terminal. This is a disorienting experience; especially when first arriving from Vancouver.

Way-finding

A strategy for way-finding is necessary to link cultural facilities to the pedestrian friendly routes. It can be used to identify the boundaries of the neighbourhood and provide orientation for visitors to increase the accessibility of the area. It is also an opportunity to brand the identity of the cultural neighbourhood. Current efforts by the Waterfront Project staff, TransLink and Coast Mountain to improve the transit hub and general way-finding in Lower Lonsdale should be coordinated to accommodate this.

Information Kiosks and Bulletin Boards:

These require central location points for information dissemination to help those most unfamiliar with orientation and key destination points in Lower Lonsdale. They are outreach tools used to inform the public about events and activities in the area. Each should contain a location map element with cultural facilities clearly marked and routes highlighted. One suggested primary location should be in the Quay close to the exit of the SeaBus Terminal, with secondary locations at each of the key cultural facilities. Elements of this information should extend to areas that visitors come from, including upper Lonsdale, Downtown Vancouver and YVR.

The City of Seattle had a “small and simple” street improvement campaign some years ago in which special poster kiosks were built for utility poles. Nearby merchants would remove old flyers as needed. This allowed shows, lessons and events to become visible in a controlled setting.

Wayfinding and Orientation Maps

Maps should be located at major entry points, within the boundaries of the neighbourhood and along set distances of the pathways to help increase and enhance the user’s knowledge, curiosity and interest in the place. They help visitors direct themselves by highlighting points of interest and may be linked to public transportation and bus routes. Maps should be updated as conditions change.



West Path: Pedestrian park / Jack Louck's Court



East Path: Engaging pedestrians off-sidewalk

Identification Signs

Signs are required to identify primary and secondary facilities in the neighbourhood and should be coordinated. They should be designed to encourage accessibility and linkages from predominant routes of travel and should be visible from a distance, preferably from the SeaBus, Lonsdale Avenue and 3rd Street.

Directional Signs

Signs should be posted intermittently to help users keep their bearings and feel located and secure. They can make use of landmarks or other points of interest, and should continually reference the location of key cultural facilities and public art.

Educational Signs

Signs should be used to engage users in the interesting aspects of the place especially as they relate to local arts and culture. Landmark historic buildings and locations can have small narrative plaques for pedestrians to stop and read.

Branding & Coordination

In order to coordinate all signage in the cultural neighbourhood, it is recommended that signage guidelines and plans be implemented. The graphic design and materiality of these signs is an opportunity to create and maintain a desired image, or “cultural brand”.

Other Visual and Unifying Cues

Street furniture, planting strips, wide sidewalks and banners are strategies used to enliven a street visually.

Substantial attention has already been given to the use of street furniture in the developed areas of Lower Lonsdale. Benches and tables, signage and kiosks, garbage receptacles, mailboxes and street lights can be used as ‘branding’ tools to tie together disparate areas of the cultural neighbourhood.

Public Art, Buildings & Externals

Curated public art pieces can also guide visitors from site to site and act as way-finding cues for drivers. Seasonal decorations can brighten connecting streets and dark winter evenings. Public buildings should not turn their backs to the street and blank walls along streets and pathways should be discouraged. When they are already in place, such walls should be enlivened with building detail, paint, plantings or professionally executed and maintained murals.

Trees and plantings can provide welcome shade and colour but, at maturity, should not block signs or the sightlines to an important cultural building or a defining distant view. Small, well-lit plazas and “pocket plantings” can make people slow down and interact. Awnings can protect from weather but also create a sense of intimacy and enclosure on a street.



Awnings on 3rd help to activate the sidewalk

It is important to note that public cultural buildings set the tone for a cultural neighbourhood. These are often municipally owned and as such need owner attention. Their exteriors, grounds, sites and adjacent streets and sidewalks should be maintained to a high standard by civic services in order to create a sense of safety, public pride and welcome.

Lighting

Currently the lighting along the developed routes is geared towards pedestrian rather than vehicular traffic in that it is smaller scaled and more frequently spaced. Yet there is little consistency in lighting design throughout the study area. A lighting strategy can be developed to increase safety and accessibility while decreasing vagrancy. It can aid in geographic location by using well lit focal points as landmarks to help users find their way and highlight key details that contribute to the identity of the cultural neighbourhood. This will encourage winter and evening use and enhance the views of the Lower Lonsdale from Burrard Inlet and from the neighbourhood's upland neighbourhood areas.

The main focus of a lighting strategy should be to create compatibility and coordination of lighting in the cultural neighbourhood. Different fixtures serving different purposes should relate to one another as part of a family of fixtures that is then conceived of as part of a coordinated line of amenities such as garbage receptacles and other street furniture.

Demographics and the Changing Public Domain

Lower Lonsdale and the Lonsdale corridor represents a prime location for visitor attraction, cultural and leisure development. It is also a high density residential area. Demographics tell us that both aging populations and young families with children choose apartment dwellings and opt for urban lifestyles more frequently now than in the past.

As they abandon the single family home with its garden, family room and car in the driveway, they will look to the streets, the parks and the public buildings for their social interaction and their leisure time. Small living spaces encourage people to go outside. They encourage people to search for activities for their children and themselves in the public domain. Our museums, galleries, theatres, community centres, cafes, streets and sidewalks can, and should, be made to welcome and serve them well.

