



# **PUBLIC SPACE REPORT CARD**

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## **Section 1:**

Introduction  
Process of Development

## **Section 2:**

Vancouver Public Space Survey

## **Section 3:**

Nelson Park Survey Results  
Emery Barnes Park Survey Results  
Robson Square Survey Results  
Use Comparisons Between Public Spaces  
Mapping Use

## **Section 4:**

Connecting the Social and Physical  
Conclusions and Recommendations



# Introduction



The project that formed the basis for this directed studies was undertaken in collaboration with the Vancouver Public Space Network (VPSN) and is titled Public Realm Report Card. We originally became aware of the VPSN's interest in producing a report card that would evaluate the efficacy of Vancouver's public spaces through a general meeting of the VPSN. From there, we consulted with Andrew Pask, president of the VPSN, to define, schedule and implement a special project that would meet both their expectations and our scholastic requirements.

The VPSN's expectations were essentially to develop a tool that could be used to evaluate public spaces across a range of size and programming characteristics. The survey that was developed was meant to be applicable to the full range of public spaces. However, the three case studies used to test and refine the survey were taken from a narrow sub-set of the potential range. This was done intentionally to ensure that even with a small sample size some comparisons could still be made.

The survey was broken up into two components. The social survey focused on recording the various levels and type of human uses of the space and the physical survey focused on describing the design and formal characteristics of the space. When considered together, connections between the social and physical characteristics of the site could begin to emerge.

The three public spaces used as case studies were the north side of Robson Square, Nelson Park and Emery Barnes Park (photos from top left respectively) - all located on the downtown peninsula of Vancouver, BC. The spaces were surveyed over the summer of 2008.

# Process of Development

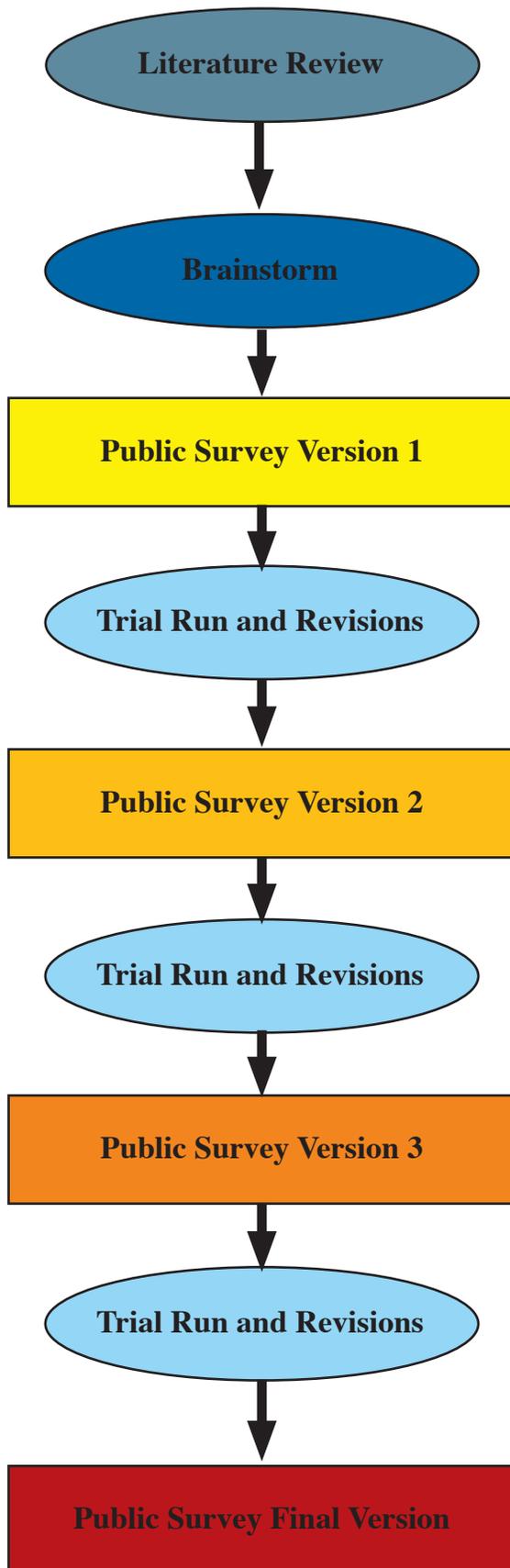
We undertook this project in collaboration with the Vancouver Public Space Network (VPSN). The VPSN was interested in producing a report card that would grade the efficacy of Vancouver's public spaces. This goal was initially based on the 'Privately Owned Public Spaces' Project undertaken in New York. We thought that if we could determine how well public space was functioning by making connections between the physical structure of the space and how it was socially used, we might be able to make steps toward improving Vancouver's public space. We also thought that the survey might be replicable across cities and countries, so that we can compare how public space functions across the world in the future.

The process of developing a public space survey was far more complex than expected. Most pertinent became questions of what type of information we were trying to gather and its ultimate purpose. The language used to ask questions was a major factor in the quality of the survey results and thus, had to be specific, easy to understand, and concise. The first version of the survey was developed through several processes: the perusal of other public space surveys; an attempt to include important aspects that might indicate how well a space functioned, such as the presence of seating, direct circulation routes and accessibility; and a brainstorm of everything we could think of that might be relevant to the rating of public space. From there, the survey was revised several times through trial runs by Kari and I, Andrew Pask, and other members of the VPSN.

In terms of the survey process, we asked that the surveyor go to each site at least three times at different times of the day and week to attempt to obtain a broad base of results. We also asked that the surveyor make journal entries for each space and take pictures and/or sketch the site.

Our final product was a 21 page physical survey that would record the physical attributes, amenities and conditions of the space; indications of community involvement; whether there was space for a variety of uses; and the safety and accessibility of the site. The survey also asked whether the surveyor felt comfortable in the space and why they rated particular aspects the way they did. Ultimately, while the primary goal was to note the presence or absence of particular elements and their conditions, we also wanted the opinions of the surveyor to tell a story of the site.

# Public Space Survey Process Diagram



To start, we reviewed other public space surveys, as well as public space and design theory. The literature suggested human preference for particular types of space. This influenced the inclusion of a formal design section in the surveys.

We thought that the best way to describe the complexity of the physical public spaces was to break them into subunits based on physical boundaries and explicit uses, such as the playground or dogpark.

The social survey was developed by the Project for Public Spaces.

Members of the VPSN Urban Design Working Group conducted a trial survey and suggested changes to language, additional questions and an interview to collect stories from users. The interview was never developed.

Short descriptions were included at the beginning of each section to facilitate the understanding of the goals of the questions and the types of information the survey was trying to access.

The subunit idea was scrapped in the end because it was too unwieldy: it was difficult to decide whether each question should be asked for each subunit, and then found that most were not applicable to each subunit, and we didn't want to use so much paper!





Vancouver Public Space Network

## State of Public Space Project – Space Evaluation Form

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Name of Public Space: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Weather Conditions: \_\_\_\_\_ Date & Time \_\_\_\_\_

Hours of Operation: (if app): \_\_\_\_\_

Photos taken?  Yes  No File Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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# SECTION A: Overall Site

## Part 1 – Site Plan Sketch

1. Draw a map detailing the space. Use the legend to help mark key features.

<p><b><u>Legend</u></b></p> <p>T - Tree W - Water Feature PA - Public Art B - Bench G - Garbage W/C - Bathroom</p> <p><b><u>Please Include:</u></b></p> <p>Key “Sub” areas Street Names North Arrow Entrances &amp; Gateways</p>
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2. Write a brief description of the site, identifying key points of interest, design features, or other items that will help to explain your map.

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## Part 2 – Overview

1. What type of Public Space are you evaluating?

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plaza            | <input type="checkbox"/> Park                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Indoor Space     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Square    | <input type="checkbox"/> Linear Park (e.g. Seawall) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trail or Pathway | <input type="checkbox"/> Pocket Park                | _____                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/>                  | <input type="checkbox"/>                            |   |

2. What are the approximate dimensions of the site?

**Note: One pace is approximately equal to one metre.**

3a. Is there a predominant (North, South, East, West) orientation to the site (i.e. is the site noticeably sloped in a particular direction)?  Yes  No

3b. If yes, what is it? \_\_\_\_\_

### Iconic Features

4. Describe any features that are unique to the space or define its character (i.e. a major monument or sculpture, a particularly captivating view, a historic reference, a distinctive landform)

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### Comfortability

1a. Please rate your INITIAL LEVEL OF COMFORT with the site.

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

1b. If you can, please describe why you rated your comfort level this way.

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### Part 3 – Overall Site Context

1. What is the space bounded by? I.e. water; streets (high traffic, low traffic); residential, stores, office buildings, etc.

North side: \_\_\_\_\_

South side: \_\_\_\_\_

East side: \_\_\_\_\_

West side: \_\_\_\_\_

Corners: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Notes:**

(1) Where possible make note of the number of stories on the neighbouring buildings,

(2) If the site is bounded by a street, please note what lies on the other side of the street.

2. Describe the general sun/shade characteristics of the site.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Is the site a destination or thoroughfare? Please describe.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Does traffic noise dominate the site or are you able to hear a diversity of sounds (ie. children playing, water flowing, birds chirping)?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Part 4 – Entrances & Pathways

*A defined entrance helps to determine the boundaries of a site and whether the site is a destination, or a thoroughfare. Pathways facilitate movement and interaction throughout the site.*

1a. Is there a pronounced ENTRANCE or series of entrances to the site?  Yes  No

1b. If yes, please describe the (1) location, (2) building materials and characteristics, and (3) condition of each (e.g. "wrought iron gate at north end of park – newly painted but with some damage").

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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2. Please describe the PATHWAYS in the public space. Are they official or unofficial (i.e. desire lines)? Describe (1) their materials (e.g. brick pavers, gravel, worn dirt), (2) their location / where they go (from what point to what point) and (3) and the condition they are in.

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## Part 5 – Site Amenities and Infrastructure

*Good site infrastructure is key to creating a useable public space. Good infrastructure provides public access to necessities (water, bathrooms, food), but also provides a safe and comfortable environment for a diversity of users and uses.*

### TREES

*Trees help to soften urban spaces. They improve air quality, as well as provide vertical interest, shade and habitat for humans and wildlife. Also, the theory of biophilia states that people are drawn to spaces with life and have a positive emotional response to other living things. Thus, plants and trees in public space contribute to both physical and emotional revitalization.*

1a. Are there trees on the site?       Yes     No  
1b. If yes, are they

- Deciduous (broad-leafed)
- Coniferous (Evergreen, needled, cones)
- Mixed

1c. Are the trees

- Small     Medium     Large     Mixed

1d. If you are able to estimate the number of trees, please do so:

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1e. If you are able to identify some or all of the tree species, please do so:

1f. Please rate the overall condition of the TREES. (Are they in good material condition? Are they well maintained?)

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

1g. Please describe why you rated the condition of the trees this way.

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## **SEATING**

*Good seating opportunities provide a chance for the public to take a break, eat lunch, chat with friends or watch the world wander by.*

**Note: A bench typically seats 2-3 people comfortably.**

1a. Are there SEATS/BENCHES in the public space?  Yes     No

1b. Is there seating located:

Around the edges of the site?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	TTL # Seats _____
Along the main circulation routes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	TTL # Seats _____
Close to activity spots?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	TTL # Seats _____
Randomly throughout the site?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	TTL # Seats _____
Is there movable seating?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	TTL # Seats _____

1c. What type of seating is present?

Bench	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Landscape feature (e.g. wall, fountain edge, boulder)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Grassy area	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Multi-use? (i.e. Benches that allow for sleeping?)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is there adequate seating for large numbers?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

1c. Please describe the CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SEATING

Does most of the seating have attractive or interesting views (i.e. overlooking the ocean or people watching)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is sheltered seating available (from wind and rain)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is seating available in the sun?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is seating available in the shade??)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does seating allow for passive social interaction (i.e. facing each other, close together)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

3c. Please rate the overall state of the SEATING. (Are they in good material condition? Are they well maintained? Are they located well? Do they function well for a variety of users?)

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

4d. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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**TABLES**

2a. Are there TABLES in the public space?  Yes     No

2b. If yes, please describe what TABLES exist (Number? Location?):

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2c. Please rate the condition of the TABLES. (Are they in good material condition? Are they well maintained?)

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

2d. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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**BATHROOMS**

3a. Are there BATHROOMS in the public space?  Yes     No

3b. Are there BABY-CHANGE TABLES in the bathrooms?  Yes     No

3c. If yes, please describe what bathroom facilities exist:

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3d. Please rate the overall condition of the bathroom facilities.

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

3e. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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**DRINKING FOUNTAINS**

4a. Are there DRINKING FOUNTAINS in the public space?  Yes     No

4b. If yes, please describe the FOUNTAIN facilities exist (i.e. how many, location):

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4c. Please rate the overall condition of the bathroom facilities.

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

4d. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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**FOOD VENDORS**

5a. Are there FOOD VENDORS in the public space?  Yes     No

5b. If yes, please describe FOOD-RELATED facilities exist (i.e. how many, location):

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**GARBAGE BINS**

6a. Are there GARBAGE BINS in the public space?  Yes     No

6b. If yes, please describe what GARBAGE & Waste Disposal amenities exist:

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6c. Please rate the condition of the Garbage facilities. (Are they in good material condition? Are they well maintained? Neat, or overflowing with garbage?)

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

6d. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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6e. Is excess litter present on the site?

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**RECYCLING FACILITIES**

7a. Are there RECYCLING FACILITIES in the public space?  Yes     No

7b. If yes, please describe what RECYCLING amenities exist:

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7c. Please rate the condition of the RECYCLING facilities. (Are they in good material condition? Are they well maintained? Neat, or overflowing with garbage?)

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

7d. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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**BIKE RACKS**

8a. Are there BIKE RACKS in the public space?  Yes     No

8b. If yes, please describe what BIKE RACKS amenities exist:

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8c. Please rate the condition of the BIKE RACK facilities. (Are they in good material condition? Are they well maintained?)

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

8d. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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**PUBLIC PHONES**

9a. Are there PUBLIC PHONES in the public space?  Yes     No

9b. If yes, please describe what PUBLIC PHONE amenities exist:

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9c. Please rate the condition of the TELEPHONE facilities. (Are they in good material condition? Are they well maintained?)

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

9d. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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**MAGAZINE & NEWSPAPER BOXES**

10a. Are there MAGAZINE & NEWSPAPER BOXES in the public space?  Yes     No

10b. If yes, please describe what MAGAZINE & NEWSPAPER amenities exist:

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## **BULLETIN BOARDS**

11a. Are there BULLETIN BOARDS in the public space?  Yes  No

11a. Is the public able to post notices; or are they restricted (public can read, but not post?)

Public Access  Restricted Access

11b. If yes, please describe what BULLETIN BOARD amenities exist:

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11c. Please rate the condition of the BULLETIN BOARDS. (Are they in good material condition? Are they well maintained?)

Very Bad

Bad

Not Sure

Good

Very Good

11d. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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## **SHELTER**

12a. Are there opportunities to seek SHELTER from rain/poor weather (e.g. an over-hanging ledge? a gazebo?)  Yes  No

12b. If yes, please describe what sorts of opportunities for SHELTER exist:

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12c. Please rate the condition of the SHELTERS. (Are they in good material condition? Are they well maintained?)

Very Bad

Bad

Not Sure

Good

Very Good

12d. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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## **OTHER**

13a. Are there OTHER AMENITIES that should be considered as part of this review?  Yes  No

13b. If yes, what are they?

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13c. Please rate the condition of the OTHER AMENITIES.

Very Bad

Bad

Not Sure

Good

Very Good

12d. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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## Part 6 – Public Art / Community Art / Street Art

*Public and community art helps to enliven spaces – adding texture and visual escape to the public realm. In this question we distinguish between the “official” public art – the government (or corporate) installations that exist, “community art” – installations that are produced by the community for a particular space, and “street art” – graffiti, etc. – that are the product of lone artists who tend to install their work in a more clandestine fashion. The distinction between these categories can be a bit blurry.*

1a. Does the site contain PUBLIC ART features? (e.g. statues, fountains, sculptures)  Yes  No

1b. If yes, what are they?

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2a. Does the site contain COMMEMORATIVE features? (e.g. plaques, cornerstones, “In memory of” plaques)  Yes  No

2b. If yes, what are they?

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3a. Does the site contain COMMUNITY ART features? (e.g. community-produced murals, mosaics)

Yes  No

3b. If yes, what are they?

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4a. Does the site contain STREET ART features? (e.g. graffiti art or stencils (differentiate from spray-paint tags or vandalism)  Yes  No

4b. If yes, what are they?

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## Part 7 - Programming – Entire open space

*Space for public gatherings is necessary in urban settings, in order to provide a venue for civic participation. Events can range from protests to Canada Day celebrations. Spaces for gathering and performance also enliven a city.*

### **PUBLIC GATHERINGS**

1a. Is the space favourable for PUBLIC GATHERINGS, such as for a celebration, protest, or spontaneous pillow fight?  Yes  No

1b. Please rate the condition of the space for PUBLIC GATHERINGS.

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

1c. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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### **PERFORMANCES**

2a. Is the space able to accommodate PUBLIC PERFORMANCES – such as an outdoor concert?  Yes  No

2b. Please rate the condition of the space for PUBLIC PERFORMANCES. (Space for performance? Presence of natural seating areas? Spaces to dance? General acoustics?)

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

2c. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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### **TEAM/INDIVIDUAL SPORTS & RECREATION – FORMAL SPACES**

*Formal sports and recreation spaces refer to areas programmed for specific activities (ex: tennis courts, basketball courts, skateboard parks).*

3a. Is the space able to accommodate FORMAL SPORTS & RECREATION ACTIVITIES?  Yes  No

3b. If yes, which of the following activities are most obviously supported?

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basketball      | <input type="checkbox"/> Walking/jogging | <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baseball        | <input type="checkbox"/> Skateboarding   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cycling/Blading | <input type="checkbox"/> Golf            | _____                                     |

3c. Please rate the condition of the SPORTS & RECREATION AMENITIES.

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

3d. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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### **SPORTS & RECREATION – INFORMAL SPACES**

*Informal sports and recreation spaces refer to unprogrammed open spaces. For example, hard, unbracketed surfaces can allow for skateboarding, or flat, covered space can allow for tai chi.*

4a. Could the space be used for INFORMAL SPORTS & RECREATION ACTIVITIES?

Yes     No

4b. Does the space have BOARD GAMES and other GAMES? (e.g. chess sets built into tables)

Yes     No

4c. Please describe what sorts of informal recreation and game spaces exist.

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4d. Please rate the condition of the INFORMAL RECREATION AND GAME SPACES.

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

4e. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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### **CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA**

5a. Does the space feature a children's play area?     Yes     No

5b. Please rate the condition of the children's play area.

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

5c. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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### **COMMUNITY GARDEN**

6a. Does the space have a COMMUNITY GARDEN in it?     Yes     No

6b. If yes, approximately how big is the community garden? \_\_\_\_\_

6c. Please rate the condition of the COMMUNITY GARDEN.

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

6d. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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**OFF-LEASH AREAS**

7a. Does the space have a OFF-LEASH AREA for dogs in it?       Yes       No

7b. Is the OFF-LEASH AREA fenced and separated from the main space?       Yes       No

7c. Please rate the condition of the OFF LEASH AREA?

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

7d. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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**OTHER PROGRAMMING FEATURES**

8a. Are there OTHER PROGRAMMING FEATURES that should be considered as part of this review?  
 Yes       No

8b. If yes, what are they?

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8c. Please rate the condition of the OTHER AMENITIES.

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

8d. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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**Part 8 - Safety**

*Feeling safe in a public space is a necessity for its well-functioning.*

**LIGHTING**

1a. Does the lighting create a feeling of safety along the routes most used in the park/plaza?  
 Yes       No

1b. Is there uniform lighting throughout the space or are there dark and light spaces?

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1c. Is the lighting ambient (diffuse, subtle) or brilliant (direct, bright)?  Yes  No

1d. Please rate the condition of the LIGHTING.

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

1e. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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**SIGHTLINES**

2a. Is the interior space visible from outside (i.e. is your view into the site generally free of obstructions?)

Yes  No

**SECURITY AND POLICING**

3a. Is there the visible presence of:

Police?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Private Security?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Surveillance Cameras?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

3b. Please rate the FEELING OF SAFETY.

Very Bad                      Bad                      Not Sure                      Good                      Very Good

3c. Please describe why you rated the FEELING OF SAFETY this way.

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**REGULATIONS**

4a. Are signs with rules and regulations prominently displayed in the space?  Yes  No

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**ACOUSTICS**

5a. Would a call for help be heard outside the space?  Yes  No

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## **OTHER SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

6a. Are there any other considerations or elements that contribute to, or detract from, making the space feel safe?  Yes  No

6b. If yes, what are they?

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## **Part 9 - Accessibility**

*Public space should be physically accessible to all users.*

### **UNIVERSAL DESIGN**

1a. Are all parts of the site accessible for use by wheelchair?  Yes  No

1b. If not, please describe the conditions of accessibility.

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1c. Is the access and major circulation  paved  gravel  both?

1d. If gravel, does the design impede the accessibility for wheelchairs, strollers etc.)?

Yes  No

1e. Please rate the DEGREE OF ACCESSIBLE DESIGN.

Very Bad

Bad

Not Sure

Good

Very Good

1f. Please describe why you rated the ACCESSIBLE DESIGN this way.

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### **TRANSIT & MOBILITY**

1a. Is the site close to public transit?  Yes  No. If yes, which one? \_\_\_\_\_

1b. Is the site close to a bike route?  Yes  No. If yes, which one? \_\_\_\_\_

1c. Is there parking onsite or near the site (i.e. on-street parking)?  Yes  No.

1d. If yes, approximately how much? \_\_\_\_\_

1e. Are there easy linkages to other amenities (i.e. library, commercial areas, other open spaces)

Yes  No. If yes, which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

## **SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING**

1a. Is signage legible?

1b. Is signage  uni-lingual  multi-lingual  symbol-based?

1b. Please describe

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2a. Is there historic/interpretive signage?  Yes  No

2b. Please describe

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3. Is the signage easily visible?  Yes  No

4. Does the signage distract from the setting?  Yes  No

5a. Please rate the EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SIGNAGE.

Very Bad

Bad

Not Sure

Good

Very Good

5b. Please describe why you rated the SIGNAGE this way.

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6a. Are there other wayfinding devices present (i.e. maps, directional arrows)  Yes  No

6b. Please describe

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## **Part 10 - Corporate Elements**

*While corporate donations can help to develop open space, corporate branding of a public space can detract from a sense of place, or historic identity of the site.*

1a. Does the name of the open space reflect corporate interests? (i.e. General Electric Ice Plaza)

Yes  No

1b. Please describe:

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2a. Is corporate branding present? (i.e. advertising within the site)  Yes  No

2b. Please describe:

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3a. Are billboards or other advertising elements visible from within the site?  Yes  No

3b. Please describe:

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## Part 11 – Landscaping and Design

1a. How would you describe the landscape?

- Formal (ordered or geometric)
- Naturalistic (“random” groupings of trees etc. that imitate natural settings)
- Elements of both

1b. Notes:

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2a. Is the landscape:

- High maintenance (i.e. planted with annuals, large lawns are regularly mown, hedges regularly trimmed etc.)
- Medium maintenance (i.e. plants and lawns do not necessarily regular grooming; hedges are allowed to grow etc.)
- Low maintenance (i.e. perennial plantings that don’t need to be trimmed; groundcover does not require mowing etc.)

2b. Please describe the plantings on site:

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3a. Approximately what percentage of the site is paved (i.e. gravel, pavers or concrete)?

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## Part 12 - Construction

*Materials will contribute to the character and comfortability of the site (ex: whether it feels historic or contemporary; welcoming, or not).*

### Materials

What are the predominant materials used in the design of this site? e.g. concrete, turf grass, gravel, stone, wood). Please describe the characteristics (e.g. highly polished, rough) of each (colour, condition) and location (i.e. main circulation paths, structures):

Material	Characteristics	Location/Use
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

## Part 13 - Design Characteristics

*Research in the field of environmental psychology has revealed a number of spatial characteristics that are commonly associated with landscapes that appear welcoming and attractive to people. These characteristics shape our initial emotional responses to a given environment and help to determine our level of comfort inhabiting various spaces. Whether we feel vulnerable and exposed in a given landscape or safe and secure depends largely on these spatial characteristics. It is often a sliding scale where neither extreme is entirely desirable and instead we prefer some middle ground where security and adventure find a balance.*

1a. Does the space have a sense of enclosure (e.g. from trees or buildings bounding the site) or is it undefined (e.g. without clear edges)?

Yes    No

1b. Please describe:

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2a. Is the ground plane simple and well defined? I.e. Is the central space open and flat with few complex grade changes such as stairs, ramps, multi-tiered terraces, monuments or large sculptural features in the center of the space?  Yes  No

2b. Please describe:

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3a. Are positions available along the edge of the site where people can sit and look into the space without being seen (or being partially sheltered from view; protected vantage points in the form of windows, balconies, seating etc.)?  Yes  No

3b. Please describe:

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4a. In your opinion, does the space arouse CURIOSITY (i.e. encourage the viewer to move further into the site; promise new information “around the next corner”)?  Yes  No

4b. Please describe:

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5a. How would you describe the visual complexity (visual diversity, visual richness) of the site?

- High (different materials & structures/ elements; diverse plantings)
- Moderate
- Low (undifferentiated in colour, form, or texture)

## Part 14 – Final Assessment of Entire Site

1a. Are there any elements that affect the safety, comfortability, accessibility, programming or other functioning of the site that have not yet been noted?

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2a. Please rate the OVERALL CONDITION OF THE SITE. (Is it in good condition? Well maintained? Is the furniture looked after, or deteriorating?)

Very Bad

Bad

Not Sure

Good

Very Good

2b. Please describe why you rated the condition this way.

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Name of Public Space: Nelson Park  
Researcher Name(s): Kari Dow and Elizabeth Laing  
Weather Conditions: Cloudy and cold but no wind or rain  
Date & Time: Sunday 10:00: - 11:00 am January 11, 2009  
Hours of Operation: (if app): 6am - 10pm  
Photos taken? Yes

Nelson Park is located in Vancouver's West End. It is the only park in the West End besides Stanley Park and the seawall, both of which are located along the edges of the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood has a high residential density, three major commercial corridors (Davie, Denman, and Robson) and is immediately adjacent to downtown Vancouver.



Approximate site dimensions: 200m x 90m (minus the school area: 130m x 50m) = 18,000 - 6,500 = 11,500 sq m  
Impervious surface area: 4%  
Pervious surface area: 96%  
Canopy cover: approximately 40%

The thickest planting of trees is around the large central open space to the southwest of the site. The edges of the site adjacent to streets are all lined with trees and trees are interspersed throughout the dog park and remainder of the site.



Nelson Park is well known in the neighbourhood for its dog park and the Farmers Market that is held every Saturday during the spring/summer/early fall along Comox street.

Comfortability: Good

The space is centrally located and therefore benefits from “eyes” on the site, both from surrounding buildings and from passersby. The park is lively and well maintained and shows obvious signs of care (in the form of community gardens).

Overall Site Context

The block is entirely ringed by medium to high density residential buildings and a one story Elementary school. The West End community is a vibrant, high density residential district immediately adjacent to Vancouver’s downtown district. There is a wide range in the demographics from professionals to young families, the elderly and students. There is also a fair number of street affected people in the area. Nelson Park is the only park in this neighbourhood other than the seawall and Stanley park which fall to the outer edges of the neighbourhood.

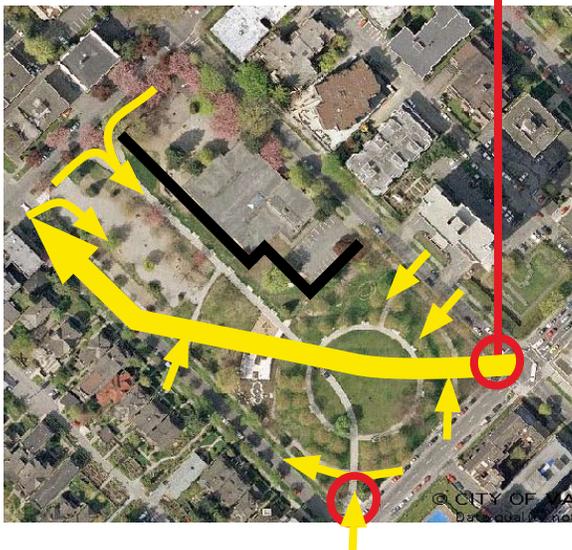


Legend  
HR = Highrise (more than 10 stories)

Entrances and Pathways: Gravel, fair condition

The main entrances to the site are marked at either corner along Thurlow but the major circulation for through traffic is diagonal through the park from Nelson and Thurlow to Bute and Comox. There is only one entrance to the dog park (which is very well used) and this is at Comox and Bute. Bute is a major pedestrian route connecting the two major retail streets in the neighbourhood: Davie Street and Robson Street. The Elementary School disrupts circulation within the park somewhat as it provides an impenetrable barrier along portions of the northern edges. Major circulation routes are gravel edged with pavers. Secondary circulation routes are simply gravel with no edging. The gravel for both major and secondary routes tends not to be contained well resulting in a messy appearance.

Two main entrances along Thurlow are framed by two stone markers but only the entrance at Thurlow and Nelson is well used. The entrance to the dog park is located at the corner of Comox and Bute and is marked with a metal gate



Major circulation



Secondary circulation

## SITE AMENITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE



### Legend

- G** Garbage bin
- W** Wayfinding
- N** Newspaper stand
- Lamp posts
- Bench
- Water** Drinking fountain

	Present	Number	Condition
Trees	yes	86	Good
Seating	yes	23	Good
Tables	no		
Bathrooms	no		
Drinking	yes	1	Good
Food vendors	no		
Garbage bins	yes	4	Good
Recycling	no		
Bike racks	no		
Public phones	no		
Newspaper	yes	2	Good
Bulletin	no		
Shelter	no		
Other _____			

### Trees

There are a large number of trees on this site and the majority of them are quite mature (25-40 years). Most of the trees are deciduous except a small number interspersed throughout the site, especially smaller coniferous trees in the dog park area. The trees appear to be healthy and well maintained. Their roots are not constrained by planters.

### Seating

There are a large number of benches on the site along circulation routes, at activity nodes and ringing the large central grassy open space. Seating is not provided around the edge of the site. During the drier summer months grassy knolls and the large open space are also used as seating. There are no seats available that are protected from the rain but there are seats found in both shady and sunny spots with interesting views. Some of the benches near the trellis structure are positioned in such a way (proximity or direction) as to facilitate passive social interaction. None of the benches are designed to prevent people from sleeping on them.





### Food Vendors

There are no facilities for food on the site or within one block of the site.

### Garbage bins and Recycling facilities

Garbage bins are provided along the major circulation route and close to the community garden plots.

### Bike Racks

No bike racks are provided on the site.

### Public Phones, Newspaper Stands and Bulletin Boards

Two newspaper stands at the major circulation nodes (Nelson @ Thurlow and Bute @ Comox) are provided but there is no community bulletin board or public phones.

### Shelter

Shelter is provided from the sun (which generally isn't a major concern in Vancouver) but not the rain (which generally is).

### Water Fountain

A small water fountain next to the trellace structure adds interest to the site but is not a dominant feature.

### PUBLIC / COMMUNITY/ STREET ART

The site doesn't contain any commissioned art features or community art.

No street art (graffiti, posters, stencils, stickers etc.) was present at the time of this survey.



PROGRAMMING

	Present	Details	Condition
Public Gatherings	yes	large open space	Fair
Performances	yes	large open space	Fair
Formal sports	no		
Informal sports	yes	large open space	Fair
Play area	yes	play structure	Good
Community garden	yes	plots lining pathways	Excellent
Off-leash area	yes	fenced dog park	Good
Other _____			

The park does a good job of balancing diverse, sometimes conflicting, needs and accommodating both programmed and unprogrammed activity. The dog park is fenced to allow dogs to run freely without disrupting the rest of the park, the play area is centrally located and is edged with seating and the large open space allows for large gatherings and flexible programming.

SAFETY

Lighting

Subtle (not overbearing) but effective lighting is provided along circulation routes and the edges of the site are lit by ambient lighting from buildings and street lights.

Sightlines

The interior space is visible from the edges of the site as well as from a large number of windows overlooking the site.

Regulations

Clearly displayed signs can be distracting.

Acoustics

During the day the surrounding streets are busy and calls for help would be heard but these streets are less busy late at night.



Signage on many of the lamp posts in the site is a little overbearing.

## Other

Nelson Park seems to be one of the rare places in Vancouver where street affected people intermingle comfortably with the rest of the public. The benches edging the large open space are often inhabited by elderly street people with their carts while children play nearby. The physical design of the space allows all members of the community to feel comfortable and safe.

## ACCESSIBILITY

### Universal Design

Although the circulation routes are gravel they are small enough grained that they are still accessible to wheelchairs but not to rollerbladers etc.

### Transit and Mobility

The closest bus route is one block southwest along Davie street. No transit or bike routes are immediately adjacent to the park.

## SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

Other than the name of the park there is no signage or wayfinding.

### Corporate Elements

No corporate elements were seen during the course of this survey.

## LANDSCAPING and DESIGN

Although the major pathways seem to be determined more by circulation needs than by any formal imperatives, secondary pathways (especially around the large open space) are quite geometric.. Trees ring the large open space, follow circulation routes and are ‘randomly’ interspersed throughout the site, especially in the dog park. Broadleaf evergreens and grasses are planted in a highly formalized way that reference the circular pathway ringing the large open space.





CONSTRUCTION

Material	Characteristics	Location/Use
Gravel	fair condition still new	pathways
Pavers	new, good condition	lining primary circulation
Brushed concrete	new, good condition	activity nodes
Woodchips	new, good	play area
Metal	black, good condition	trellace

DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS

Enclosure Good

Trees lining the park, as well as larger buildings, especially along Thurlow, act to create a sense of enclosure in the space. The large open space is especially well defined by the double, sometimes triple rows of trees ringing the edge of the space.

Simple Ground Plane Good

Nelson Park can be divided into three distinct sub-areas: the dog park, the play area and the large open space. The dog park is somewhat irregularly shaped and has some topography but because of the consistency of material and the rolling changes (rather than abrupt) in topography, the ground plane remains well defined. The ground area in the play area is broken up by the play structure, changes in material, a fountain and a trellace structure and benches. The ground plane in the large open space is very well defined with consistent materials and topography.

Views Into the Site Good

Complexity around the edges of the site (primarily in the form of trees and topography) provide vantage points for observers to view the site while remaining partially obscured from view however there is no seating available for people to stop/pause and passively engage with the site (observe) without actually entering.

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Curiosity

Good

The dog park provides the opportunity to watch people and animals interacting in a very active manner that is fun and interesting to watch and draws the eye of pedestrians walking by. The relative complexity of the play area arouses curiosity and encourages passerby to venture into the site. This effect is amplified during good weather when the site is well used by a variety of users who add human interest to the site. The large open space is also well inhabited during summer months and draws the attention of the passerby with the human dimension. The community garden plots, especially those along Comox street also peak ones curiosity.

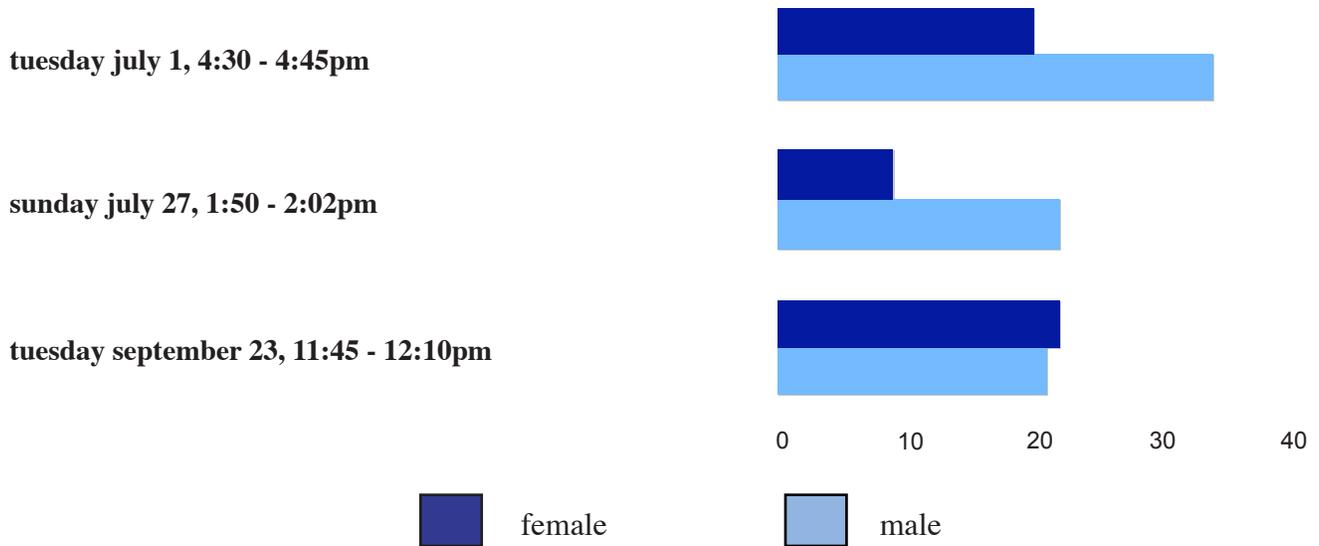
Visual Complexity

Good

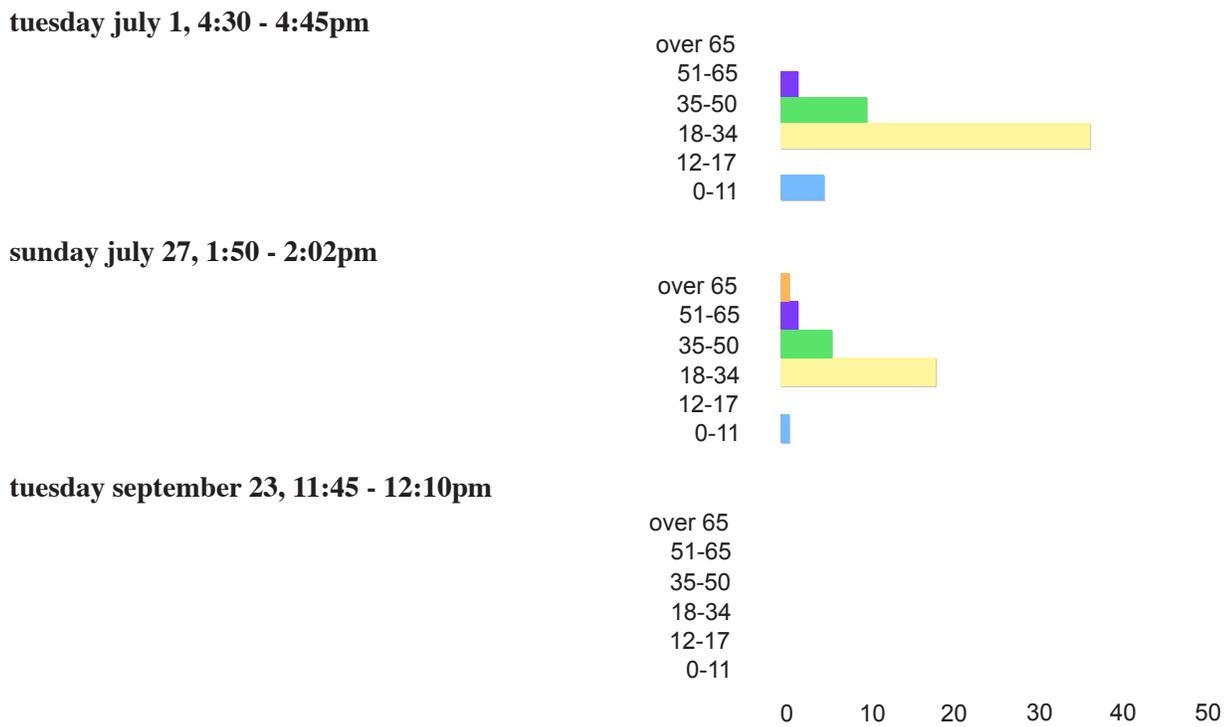
I would rank the visual complexity as high, primarily in the play area. There are a number of changes in material and several scultural features (including a water feature, play structure, interesting plantings and a large trellis structure) that attract attention without overwhelming the senses with too much visual information (the design in unified by material choice and a cohexive design concept).

# Social Survey Results for Nelson Park

## male/female use



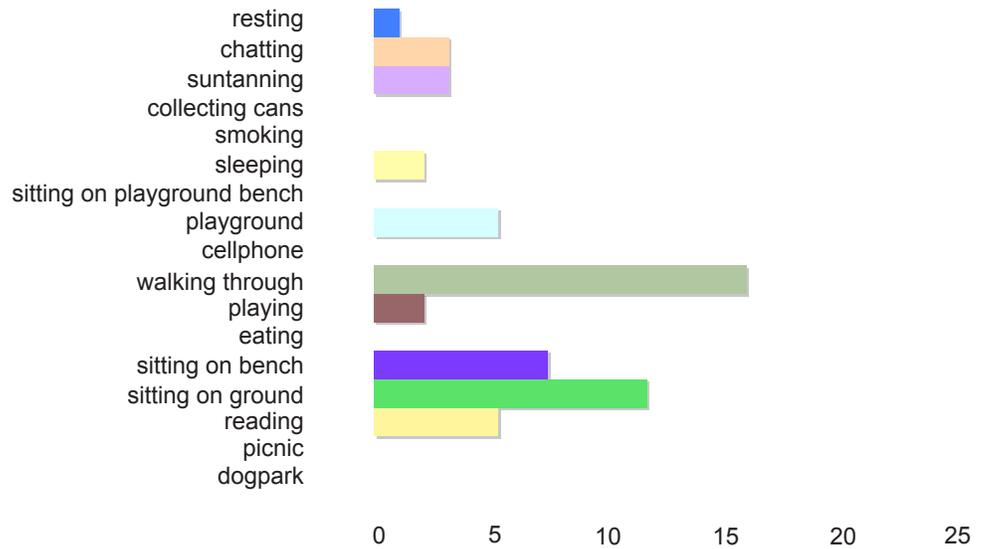
## age groups



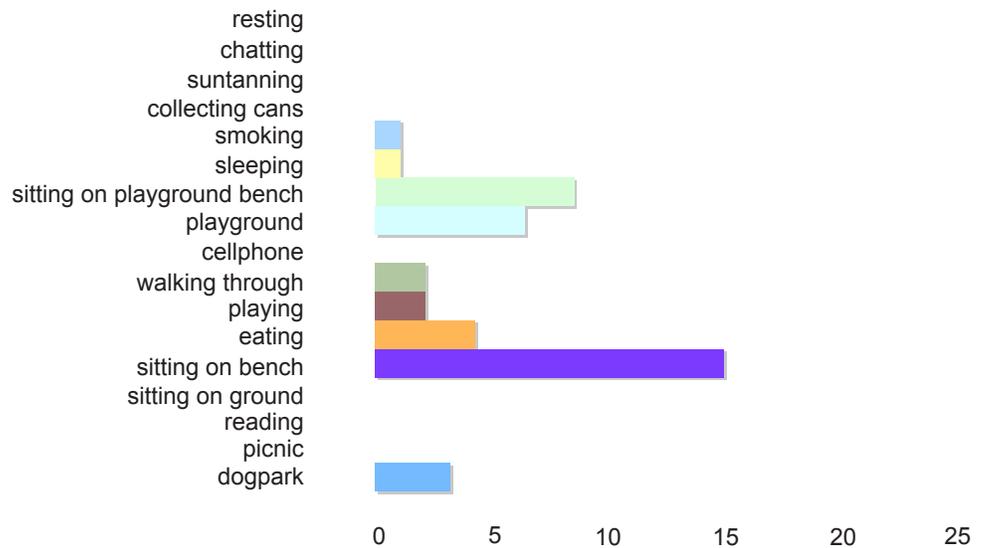
# Social Survey Results for Nelson Park

activities

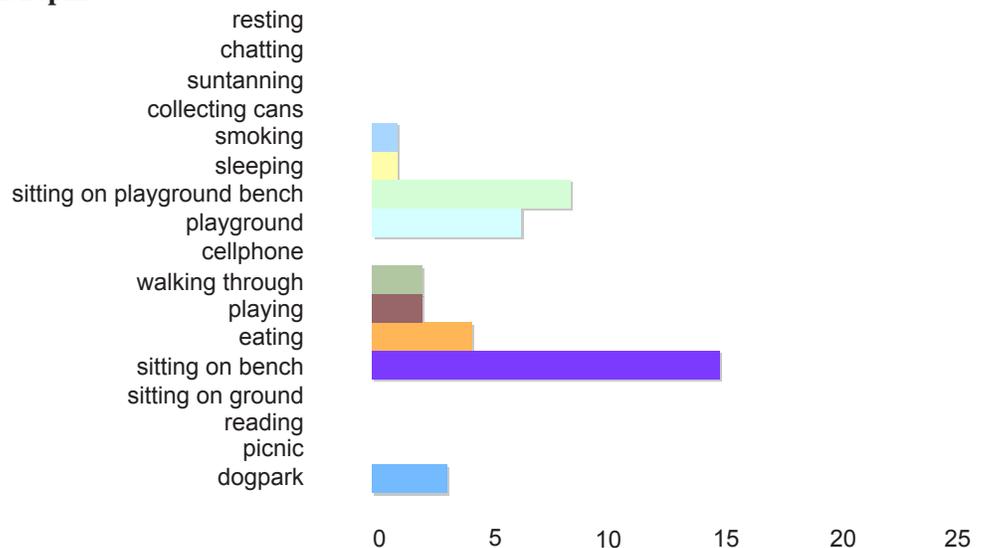
tuesday july 1, 4:30 - 4:45pm



sunday july 27, 1:50 - 2:02pm



tuesday september 23, 11:45 - 12:10pm

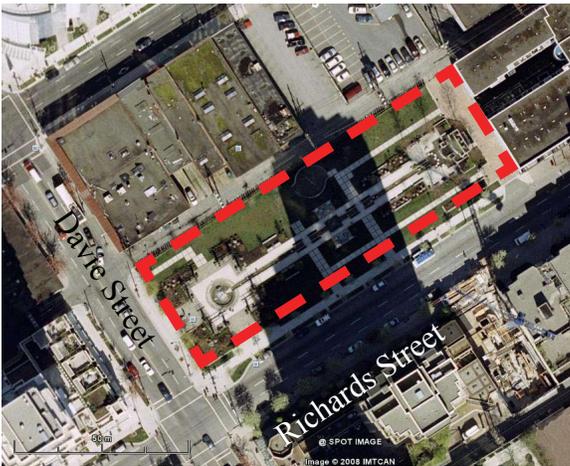


# **Journal Entries for Nelson Park**

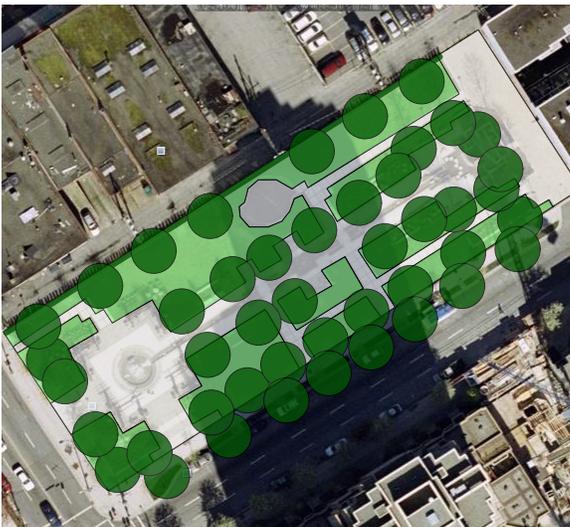
**Tuesday, 23 September 2008**

This is a popular neighbourhood park - not much of a destination for people outside the neighbourhood. It does not feel busy, despite the number of users and is well removed from traffic, although you can still hear it. There is lots of coming and going, and feels safe. There is a wide range of users, with little conflict. Many street affected people take refuge on the outside edges of the meadow area, underneath the trees.





Source: Google Earth 2006



Name of Public Space: Emery Barnes Park  
Researcher Name(s): Kari Dow and Elizabeth Laing  
Weather Conditions: Clear skies, warm  
Date & Time: Sunday 1:00-3:00pm August 31, 2008  
Hours of Operation: (if app): 6am - 10pm  
Photos taken? Yes

Emery Barnes park is located on Davie street between Seymour and Richards. With the construction on Granville street, Seymour has become the major bus route into the downtown area with bus stops lining the road along the top of the park. Davie street is an upbeat, dynamic street with countless night clubs, bars, lounges and cafes and is also a focal point for the social and political actions of Vancouver's gay community. The park is also within the boundaries of the upscale, trendy downtown district, Yaletown. Yaletown's converted heritage buildings are home to some of the city's top fashion and design shops, as well as cutting edge restaurants and bars. The park is also frequented by a large population of street affected people and drug use is relatively prevalent.

Approximate site dimensions: 80m x 50m = 4000 sq m  
Impervious surface area: 34%  
Pervious surface area: 66%  
Canopy cover: 50%

Even though the trees planted on this site are still quite young, the canopies still cover much of the site. The impervious surfaces is approximately 34%.

Iconic Features: The only feature in the site is a long linear water feature, which unifies the site, but is not particularly iconic, nor does it connect the site with its surrounding context.

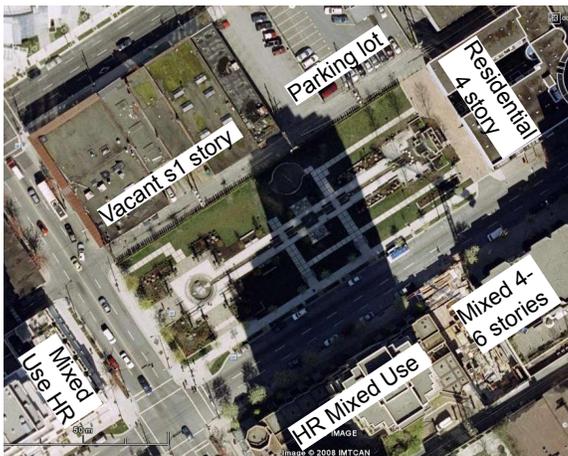
Comfortability: Good

The space is centrally located and therefore benefits from “eyes” on the site, both from surrounding buildings and from passersby. Immediately adjacent to Richards Street the noise of vehicles is very loud even though the park has been raised above the street level, probably to reduce the dominance of the street on the site. This attempt is only partially successful.

### Overall Site Context

The north eastern edge of the site is bounded by a thick hedge and chain link fence that partially blocks the view of the alley and the vacant buildings and parking lot behind it. This creates a physical, psychological and visual barrier to movement over a large portion of the site. The northwestern edge of the site is similarly blocked by a residential building that could potentially open to the park but is instead isolated behind a high fence.

The highrise mixed-use commercial residential buildings to the southwest and southeast are tall enough to provide a sense of enclosure even though they are across major streets. They also shade the site for a significant portion of the day. The groundfloor commercial, especially along Davie enlivens the sidewalk environment. The site appears to mainly function as a destination where people come to sit and read, eat or relax. There are also a large number of dog walkers.

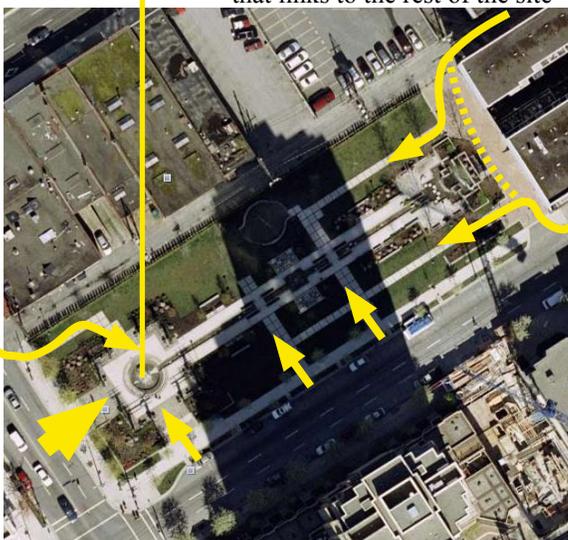


Legend  
HR = Highrise (more than 10 stories)

### Entrances and Pathways: Pavement, good condition

The main entrance to the site is along Davie and is marked by steps leading up to a large trellis structure and terminating water feature. Two major pathways, on either side of the long linear water feature that connects to the terminating water feature, are paved and in good condition. Secondary pathways are 3' x 3' concrete pavers with a 2" gap between them. In many places the grass growing between these pavers have been tramped and muddied.

The main entrances to the site are framed by terraces and open to a predominant water feature that links to the rest of the site



## SITE AMENITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE



### Legend

-  Bike rack
-  Garbage bin
-  Wayfinding
-  Bus stop
-  Lamp posts
-  Washroom

	Present	Number	Condition
Trees	yes	44	Good
Seating	yes	24	Good
Tables	yes	4	Good
Bathrooms	yes	1	Good
Drinking	no		
Food vendors	no		
Garbage bins	yes	4	Good
Recycling	no		
Bike racks	yes	2 (8 bikes)	Good
Public phones	no		
Newspaper	no		
Bulletin	no		
Shelter	no		
Other _____			

### Trees

There are a large number of trees on this site. They are all relatively young and therefore small but when they mature will shade most of the site. All of the trees are deciduous except for the evergreen hedge that acts as a barrier between the park and the alley. The trees appear to be healthy and well maintained.

### Seating



There are a large number of benches on the site, mostly facing the linear water feature and its terminating fountain. Four tables are also located in the centre of the site at the intersection of two major pathways. Seating is not provided around the edge of the site but is instead situated along major circulation routes and close to activity spots. Various landscape features such as walls and steps provide additional seating. There are grassy areas that are also potential seating areas but these only dry out sufficiently for a month or two in the summer. There are no seats available that are protected from the rain but there are seats found in both shady and sunny spots with interesting views. Benches are not positioned in such a way (proximity or direction) as to facilitate passive social interaction and they are fitted with metal “armrests” to prevent people sleeping on them.

### Food Vendors

There are no facilities for food on the site but adjacent to the park on both Richards and Davie are a number of businesses selling food, including a grocery store on the corner of Davie and Richards.

### Garbage bins and Recycling facilities

Multi-purpose bins that allow for disposal of garbage and recycling are located throughout the site.

### Bike Racks

Two bike racks, one at either end of the site provide parking for approximately 8 bikes in total. A bike lane along Richards provides direct bike access to the park.

### Public Phones, Newspaper Stands and Bulletin Boards

Communication infrastructure in the site is very poor lacking phones, newspaper stands or bulletin boards.

### Shelter

Shelter is provided from the sun (which generally isn't a major concern in Vancouver) but not the rain (which generally is).

### Water Fountain

A large water fountain is a dominant feature that links the site together. The fountain begins at the far northwestern edge of the site and falls down an attractive sculptural element before flowing throughout the site to the terminating fountain at the main entrance to the park.

### PUBLIC / COMMUNITY/ STREET ART

The site doesn't contain any commissioned art features (other than the fountain) but it does contain community art features in the form of mosaic tiles made by children in the community.

No street art (graffiti, posters, stencils, stickers etc.) was present at the time of this survey.



PROGRAMMING

	Present	Details	Condition
Public Gatherings	no		
Performances	no		
Formal sports	no		
Informal sports	no		
Play area	yes	one swing	poor
Community garden	no		
Off-leash area	no		
Other _____			

The park is predominantly set up for small groups or individuals to sit or walk through the site. Very few activities outside of walking, reading, sitting and taking the dog out can be accommodated in this space. The play area is very minimal, probably due to vandalism. Tables provide opportunities for games like chess or cards.

SAFETY

Lighting

Lighting is present around the edges of the site due to street lights and ambient lights from surrounding high rise buildings. Lighting within the site is also a major element in the design. Lights line the major circulation route through the park.

Sightlines

The interior space is visible from the edges of the site as well as from a large number of windows overlooking the site.

Regulations

One small sign indicates the closing time of the park but otherwise the presence of authority is minimal.

Acoustics

During the day the surrounding streets are busy and calls for help would be heard but these streets are less busy late at night.

Other

There is open drug use in the park and it appears to be a space frequently occupied by homeless people while still remaining a popular spot during the day, especially for dog walkers.



## ACCESSIBILITY

### Universal Design

The main entrances to the site are stairs but ramps are provided at each end of the park and major circulation routes are wheelchair accessible.

### Transit and Mobility

The site is located close to public transit (there is a stop on the site along Davie) and bike routes (along Richards) and there is on-street parking (also along Richards).

## SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

Other than the name of the park there is no signage or wayfinding.

### Corporate Elements

Although the name of the site does not reflect corporate interests corporate advertising is present on bus shelters and washrooms.

## LANDSCAPING and DESIGN

Although the pathways and general structure of the park is very formal with strong axial alignments, much of the landscape, especially around the main entrance is planted in a naturalized fashion. Trees planted throughout the site re-enforce the formal structure and linearity of the path network.

## CONSTRUCTION

Material	Characteristics	Location/Use
Concrete	good condition still new	pathways and high activity areas
Pavers	new, good condition muddy around pavers	secondary pathway
Stone	new, good condition	tables and walls
Metal	good condition	railings and trellis



## DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS

Enclosure Fair

Tall buildings across Davie and Richards provide some sense of enclosure to the park but the long edge of the alley, defined only by a relatively low hedge and fence, opens that side of the park and reduces the sense of enclosure.

Simple Ground Plane Poor

This park is a good example of the modernist ‘object in space’ way of designing. The central water feature, while beautiful and interesting, breaks up the ground plane and eliminates the opportunity for uniting the space and allowing for large social gatherings. The design of this site instead favours an individualistic appreciation of the space.

Views Into the Site Fair

Complexity around the edges of the site (primarily in the form of trees along Robson and the vegetation and trellis structure along Davie) provide vantage points for observers to view the site while remaining partially obscured from view. However there is no seating available for people to stop/pause and passively engage with the site (observe) without actually entering.

Curiosity Good

The relative complexity of the central space arouses curiosity and encourages passerby to venture into the site. This effect is amplified during good weather when the site is well used by a variety of users who add human interest to the site.

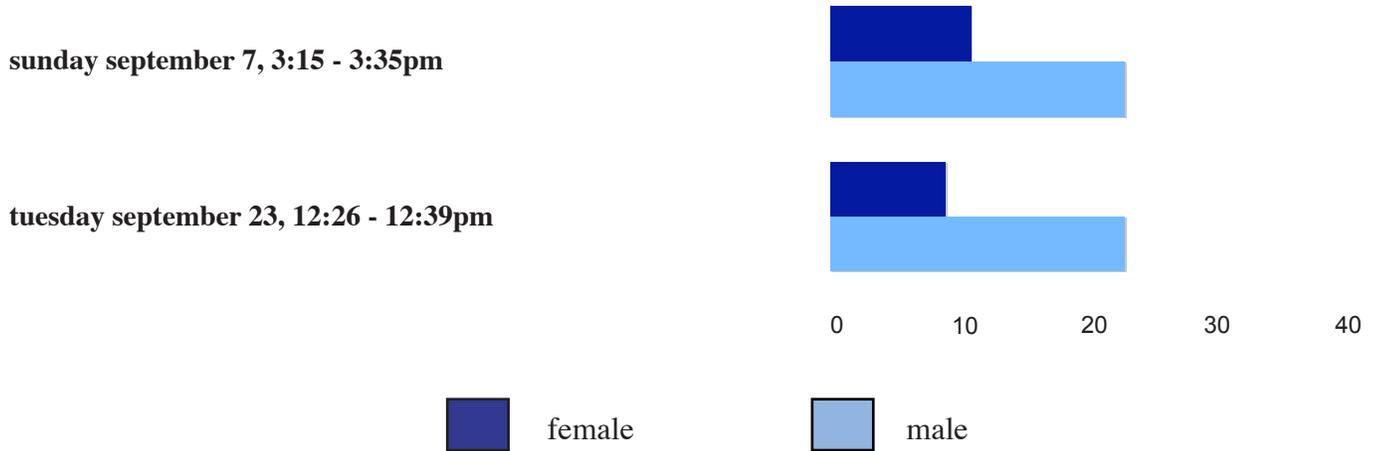
Visual Complexity Good

I would rank the visual complexity as high. There are a number of changes in grade and material and several sculptural features (including a central water feature comprised of a waterfall, channel and basin stretching the length of the site; interesting plantings and a large trellis structure) that attract attention without overwhelming the senses with too much visual information (the design is unified by material choice and a cohesive design concept).

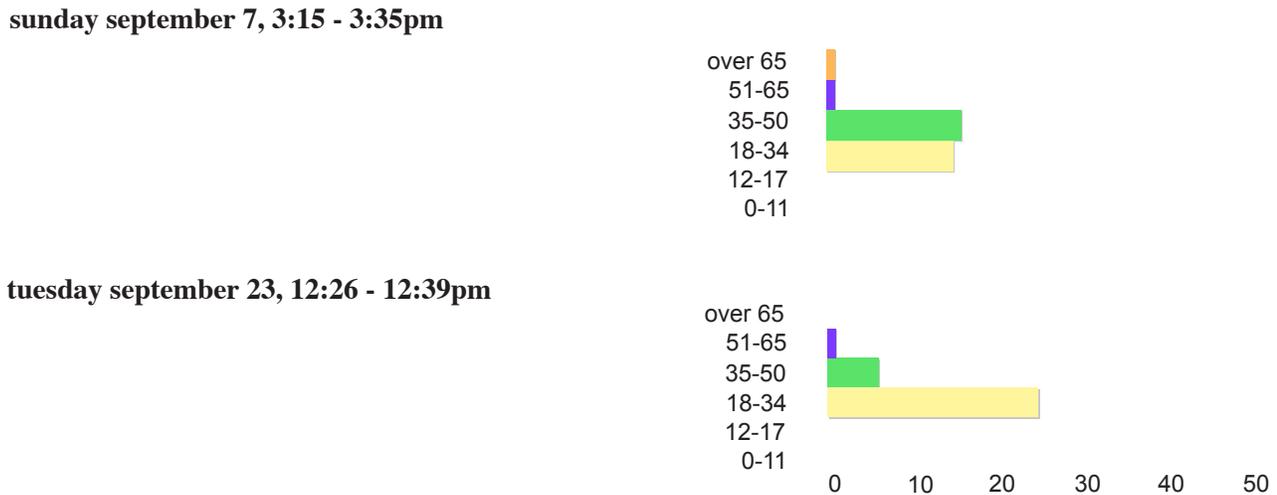


# Social Survey Results for Emery Barnes Park

## male/female use



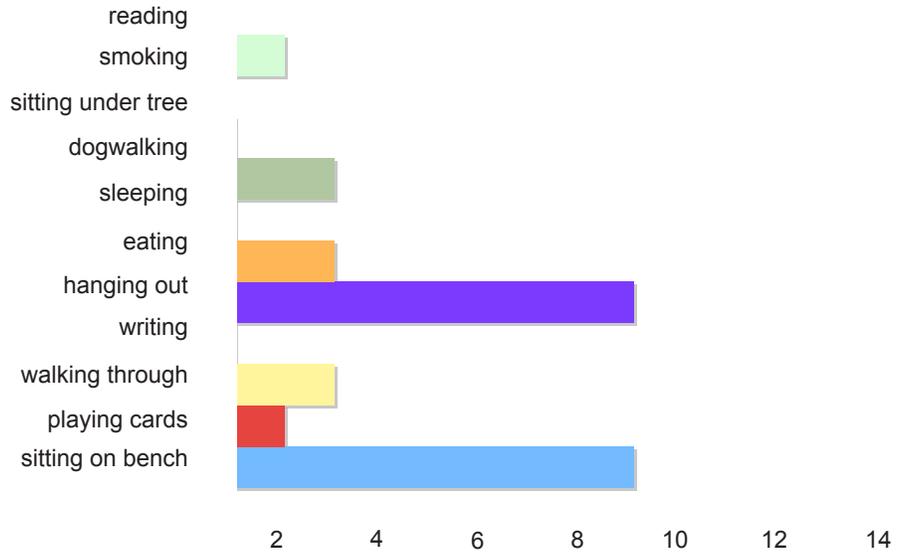
## age groups



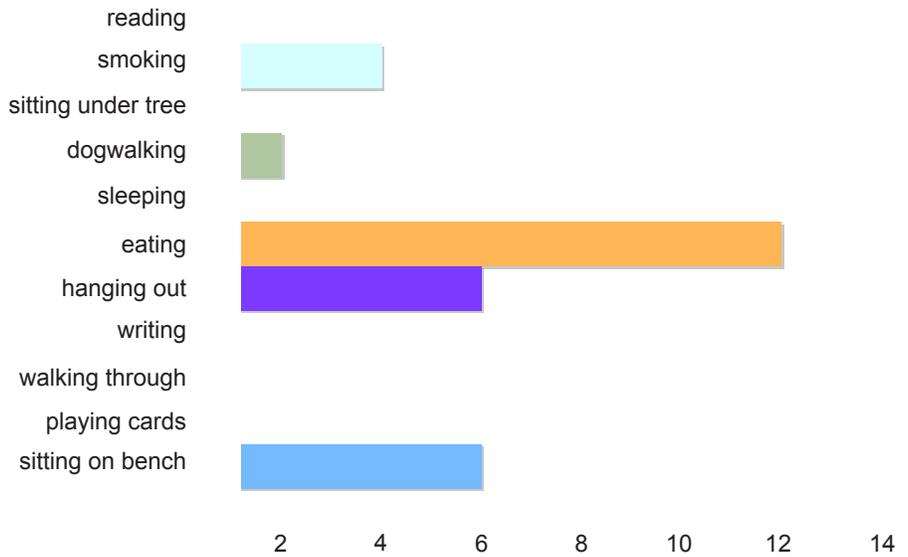
# Social Survey Results for Emery Barnes Park

activities

sunday september 7, 3:15 - 3:35pm



tuesday september 23, 12:26 - 12:39pm



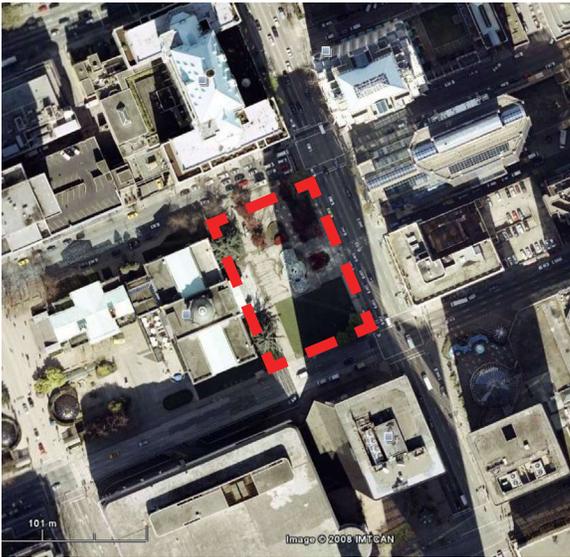
# Journal Entries for Emery Barnes Park

## **Sunday, 7 September 2008**

It is peaceful, the fountains block out street noise. The shade and sun offer a nice range of seating possibilities. It feels safe and there is a wide range of users. This is a nice place to sit and read the newspaper. The park allows for a range of uses, mostly passive. The space isn't busy at all like Robson Square, despite many users. It's not a thoroughfare, everyone walking through is strolling, not commuting. There is no visible security presence, though there are Downtown Ambassadors across the street at the coffee shop.

## **Tuesday, 23 September 2008**

There is a different feeling in Emery Barnes today. I would not feel welcome to sit closer to the waterfall, as it is claimed space (like the upper VAG steps). But there are lots of people eating lunch, mostly in the plaza seating area. It's cold in the shade and lots of the seating is at least partially shaded. It is more comfortable to sit closer to Davie Street, but the smell of chlorine is awful and the traffic noise is very loud.



Source: Google Earth 2006

Name of Public Space: Robson Square  
Researcher Name(s): Kari Dow and Elizabeth Laing  
Weather Conditions: Clear skies, warm  
Date & Time: 1:00-3:00pm August 14, 2008  
Hours of Operation: (if app): Not applicable  
Photos taken? Yes

The site is located in downtown Vancouver outside what was once the front entrance of the Law Courts, now the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG). Historically this space was used for large demonstrations and events but more recently the south side of the VAG has become more popular. Several factors including lack of sun exposure, the closing of the Georgia-side entrance, and the construction of a large water feature in the center of the space could explain this shift in preference.



Approximate site dimensions: 80m x 50m = 4000 sq m  
Impervious surface area: 65%  
Pervious surface area: 35%  
Canopy cover: 25%

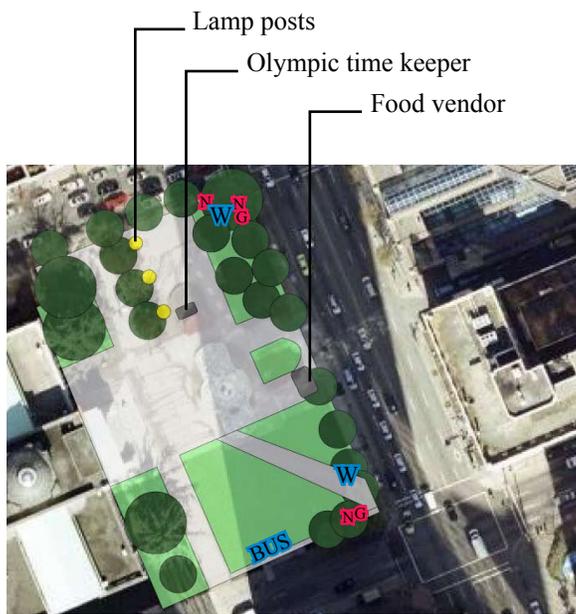
More than half of the site is paved. A large, open lawn in the south-east corner covers approximately 25% of the site, 2 vegetated planters cover 7% and the rest of the pervious surfaces are found under the tree canopies.

A number of large, coniferous evergreen trees are planted in front of the VAG along the south-west edge of the space. The majority of the trees are deciduous of various sizes and are found mostly along the edges of the site and in one row entering the site.



Iconic Features: The space's character is largely defined by the historic Law Courts Building, now the VAG. More recently, a large 2010 Olympic count-down timekeeper has been installed.





**Legend**

- N** Newspaper stand
- G** Garbage bin
- W** Wayfinding
- BUS** Bus stop

**SITE AMENITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

	Present	Number	Condition
Trees	yes	23	Good
Seating	no		
Tables	no		
Bathrooms	no		
Drinking	no		
Food vendors	yes	1	
Garbage bins	yes	2	
Recycling	no		
Bike racks	no		
Public phones	no		
Newspaper	yes	6	
Bulletin	no		
Shelter	no		
Other _____			



**Trees**

There are 15 trees on the site, several of which are large, coniferous evergreens located on either side of the steps leading up to the VAG. The rest of the trees on the site are deciduous, ranging in size from small, ornamental trees to large shade trees.

Considering their location in the midst of downtown Vancouver, the trees appear quite healthy. This is probably due to the fact that the larger trees are not in planters and therefore their roots have more freedom to spread.



**Seating**

There are no benches or other forms of designated seating on the site but the large stairs leading up to the historic courthouse are well used as seating. The edge of the fountain and raised planter ledges are also utilized as seating on the site. During good weather the large lawn in the southwest corner of the site is used for seating as well although the lawn seems in fairly poor condition, probably due to overuse and trampling. Most of the seating overlooks activity nodes, therefore providing interesting views and passive engagement with the site. There are locations in both the sun and the shade.

### Food Vendors

There is one food vendor, located at the main entrance along Georgia. The vendor sells hot dogs and a selection of beverages.

### Garbage bins and Recycling facilities

Multi-purpose bins that allow for disposal of garbage and recycling are located at the two corners of the site along Georgia street.

### Bike Racks

Bike racks are conspicuously absent from the site. People were observed using railings and other features such as utility poles to lock up their bikes.



### Water Fountain

A large water fountain is a dominant feature in the middle of the site. Although it provides an attractive element in the site it also acts to break up the space and prevent larger gatherings of people for concerts, protests or other civic functions.



### PUBLIC / COMMUNITY/ STREET ART

The site contains a number of art pieces: the 2010 Olympic Time Keeper, the fountain with mosaic inlay, and currently there is also a large art installation hanging on the outside of the VAG (a floating, blown-up baby)

The site also contains a commemorative feature in the form of a historical plaque for the historic law courts building. There is no street art (graffiti, posters, stencils, stickers etc.).



## PROGRAMMING

	Present	Details	Condition
Public Gatherings	yes	large space	good
Performances	yes	stairs	good
Formal sports	no		
Informal sports	yes	skateboarding	fair
Play area	no		
Community garden	no		
Off-leash area	no		
Other _____			

The space is favourable for public gatherings although it would be better without the large fountain in the middle of the site. The stairs provide a good space for performances and staged events or seating. The space does not accommodate formal sports or recreation activities although it does seem to perform well for skate boarders as there are no brackets on walls or ledges to prevent skateboarding.

## SAFETY

### Lighting

Lighting is present around the edges of the site due to street lights and ambient lights from surrounding high rise buildings. Lighting within the site is limited: three lamp posts leading from Hornby street to the Olympic Time Keeper (which is also lit at night) and lighting within the water fountain. The lighting is not uniform within the site but instead ranges from fairly deep shadows to pockets of light.

### Sightlines

The interior space is visible from the edges of the site as well as from a large number of windows overlooking the site. Private security and surveillance cameras are both present in the site.

### Acoustics

During the day the surrounding streets are busy and calls for help would be heard but these streets are less busy late at night.

### Other

There is open drug use on the stairs and around the edges of the site.

## ACCESSIBILITY

### Universal Design

All parts of the site (except for the upper stairs) are accessible by wheelchair and the major circulation is paved creating a very good degree of accessible design.

### Transit and Mobility

The site is located close to public transit (there is a stop on the site along Howe) and bike routes (along Hornby) and there is on-street parking (also along Hornby).



## SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

The two corners along Georgia street provide uni-lingual signage and wayfinding that helps to place the site within the greater context of Vancouver with a particular emphasis on the relative location of other tourist destinations such as the Vancouver Art Gallery entrance on the south side of the historic courthouse. There is also multi-lingual (french and english) interpretive signage for the historic courthouse.

### Corporate Elements

Although the name of the site does not reflect corporate interests corporate advertising is very present on bus shelters, on banners advertising VAG exhibits (ie. sponsors like American Express, TD Bank and The Keg).



## LANDSCAPING and DESIGN

The landscape is best described as formal with highly ordered hedges and ornamental annual plantings. I would characterize this landscape as high maintenance because of the trimming required for the hedges and the annual plantings which require water and weeding and must be replaced each season.

CONSTRUCTION



Material	Characteristics	Location/Use
Concrete	exposed aggregate fair condition	pathways and high activity areas
Pavers	new, good condition	new pathways and around the clock
Rocks	large, new, good condition	decorative but can be used for seating
Iron	black painted, some chipping	railings on stairs

DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS



The tall buildings surrounding the site create a sense of enclosure

Enclosure Good

Although the site is bounded on three sides by busy streets it still maintains a sense of enclosure due to the dominant presence of the historic law courts building along the southwest edge and the relative size of the high rise buildings which exert a presence even from across the streets. In addition, plantings of trees are concentrated around the edges of the site (large coniferous evergreens and deciduous street trees) which add to the multi-leveled feeling of enclosure.

Simple Ground Plane Poor

Although the central open space has good potential to be a unifying element in the site, this potential is inhibited by the placement of the fountain, complex grade changes and poorly situated sculptural elements and plantings. In addition, major changes in paving pattern/colour don't correspond in meaningful ways to the comprehension of the site.



Views Into the Site Fair

Complexity around the edges of the site (in the form of signage, lighting and trees) provide vantage points for observers to view the site while remaining partially obscured from view however there is no seating available for people to stop/pause and passively engage with the site (observe) without actually entering.



### Curiosity

Good

The relative complexity of the central space arouses curiosity and encourages passersby to venture into the site. This effect is amplified during good weather when the site is well used by a variety of users who add human interest to the site. During poor weather the site suffers, particularly along Howe street due to it's over-exposure to the street (shown to the left).

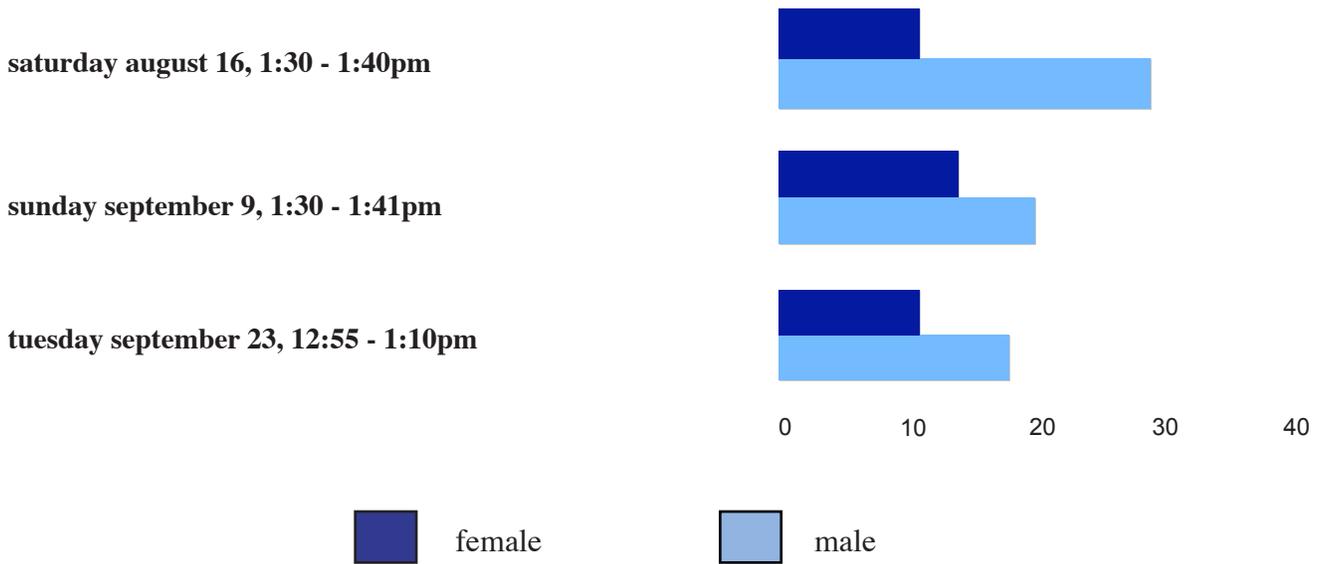
### Visual Complexity

Good

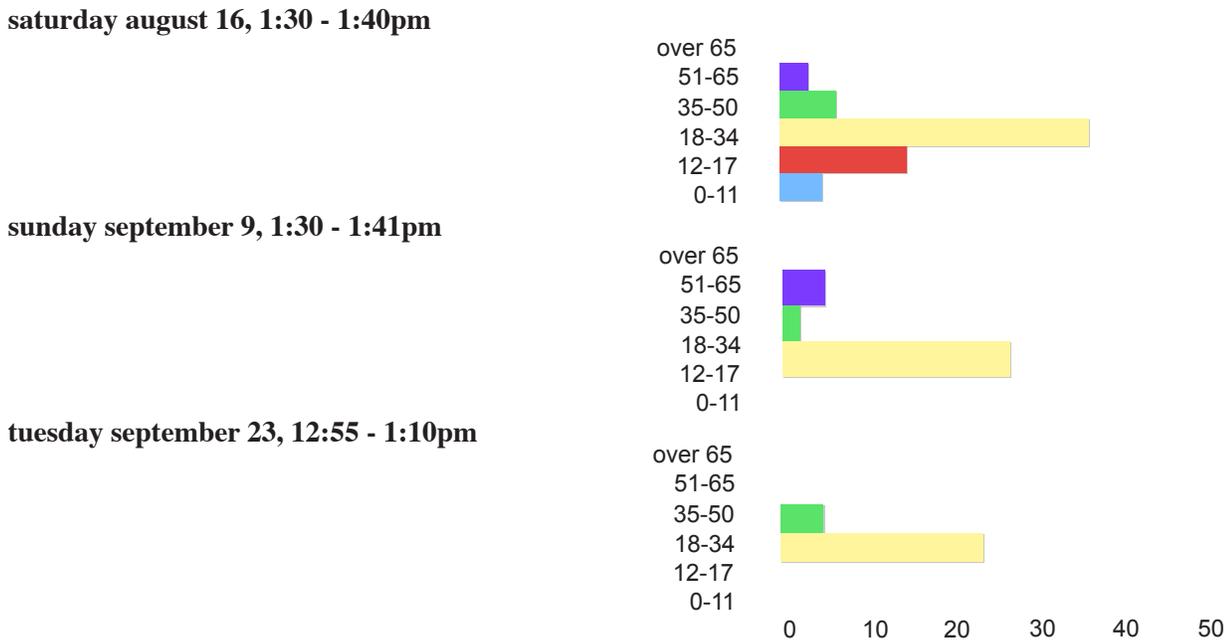
I would rank the visual complexity as moderate. There are a number of changes in grade and material and several scultural features (including a fountain with dramatic flowing water and intricate mosaic inlay, and the Olymic Time Keeper) that attract attention without overwhelming the senses with too much visual information. The site remains a fairly cohesive stage on which the drama of human activity is the star.

# Social Survey Results for North Side Robson Square

## male/female use



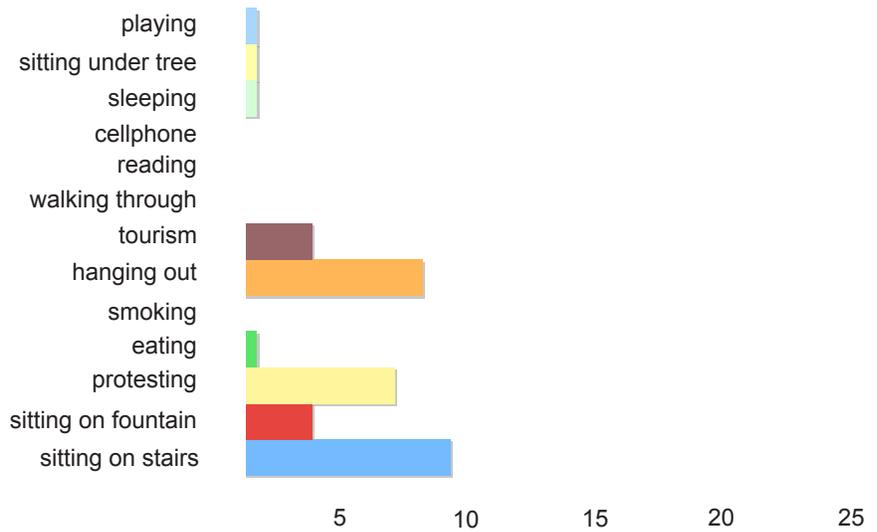
## age groups



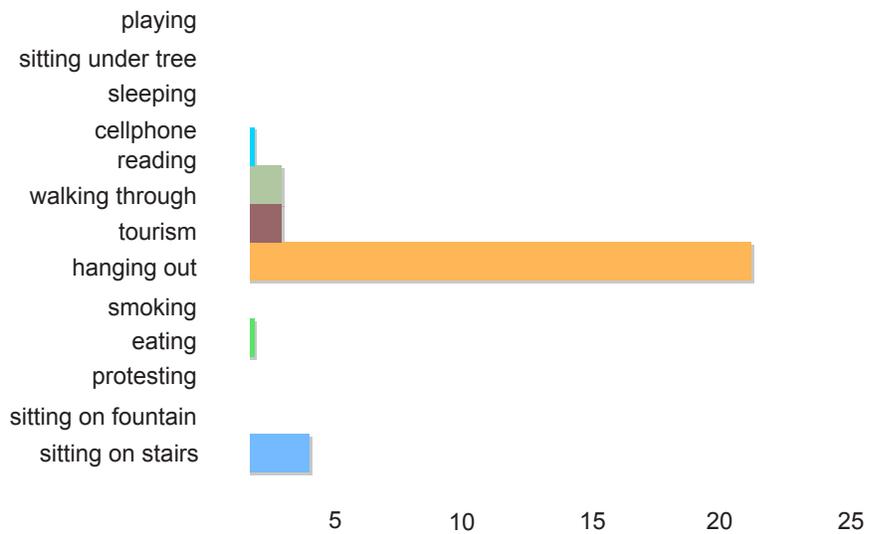
# Social Survey Results for North Side Robson Square

activities

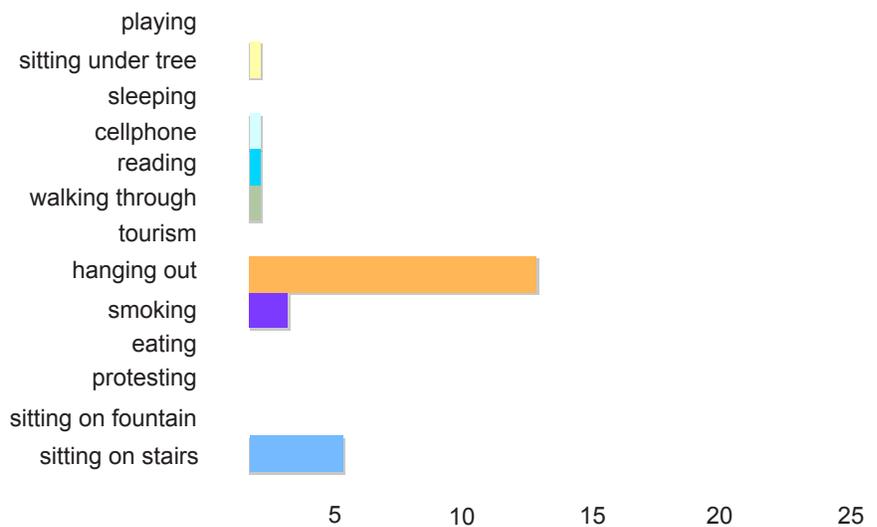
saturday august 16, 1:30 - 1:40pm



sunday september 9, 1:30 - 1:41pm



tuesday september 23, 12:55 - 1:10pm



# Journal Entries for North Side Robson Square

## **Saturday, 16 August, 2008**

Busy. There is constant movement through the site. But people appear to be enjoying themselves - appreciating the shade. There are multiple age groups and activities. Also many different kinds of people - families, tourists, couples, skateboarders and street affected. People seem to appreciate the differences, there is room here for difference. There are costumed girls giving out free hugs and head rubs. Earlier today there was a large zombie convention. Now there's dried fake blood everywhere.

## **Sunday, 9 September, 2008**

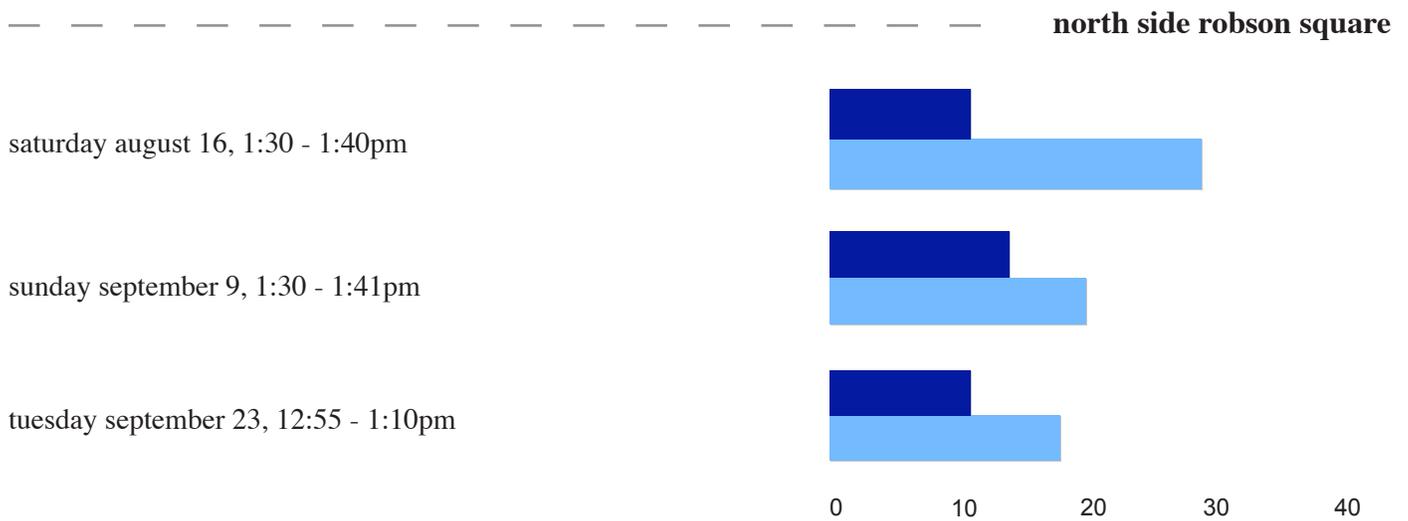
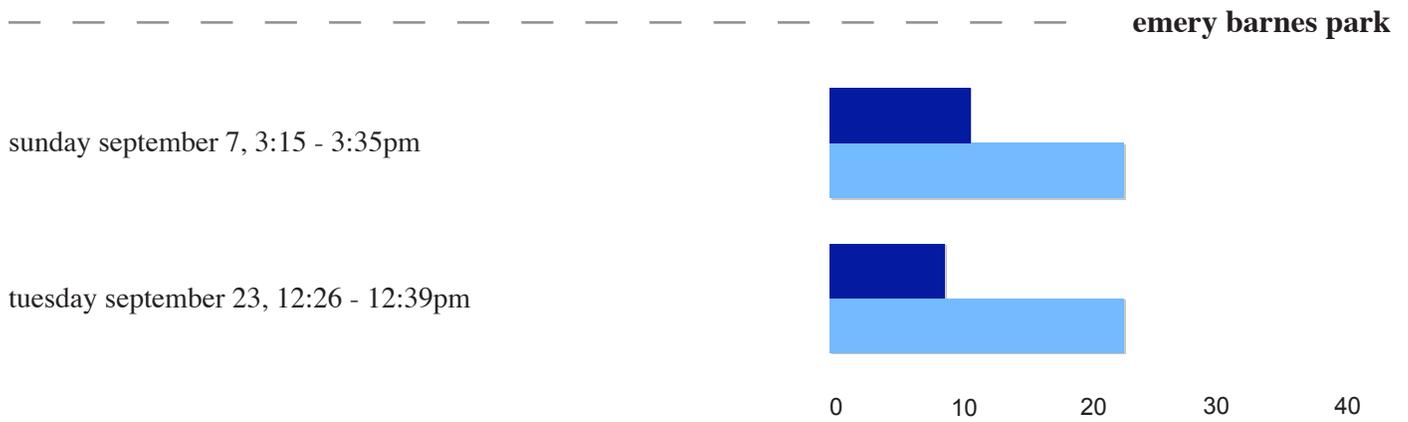
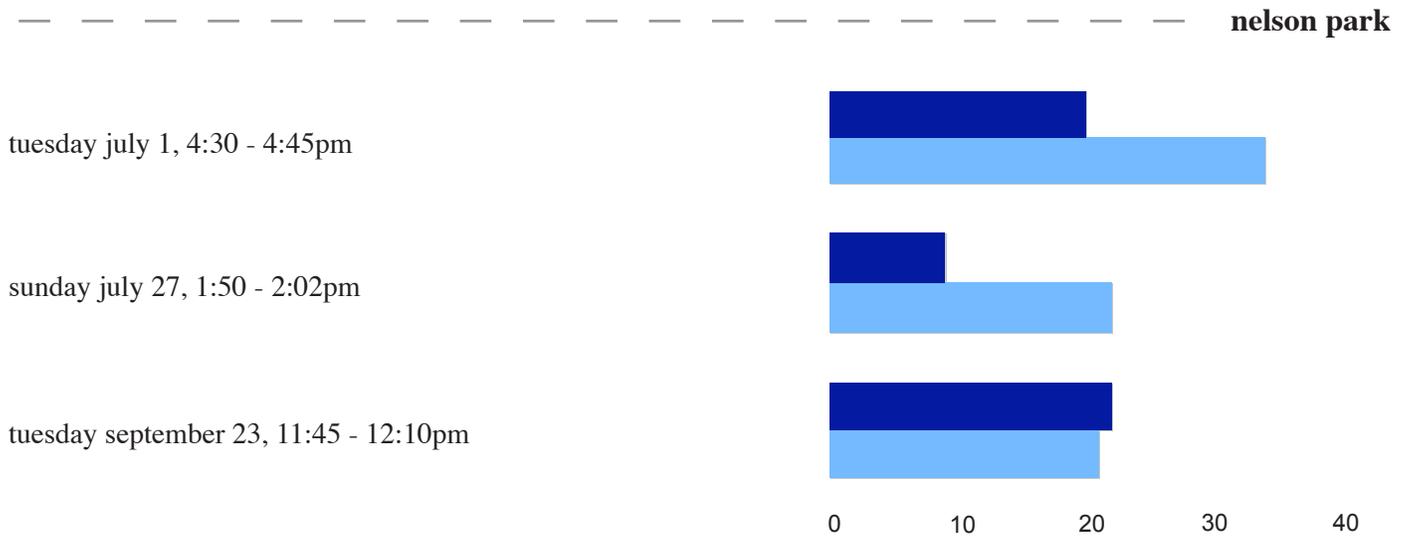
While not as busy as a sunny weekend, there is still an urban feel - it's not an oasis like Emery Barnes. The fountain drowns out some traffic and construction noise, but not all. Many people use the walkway through the square as an alternative thoroughfare to Georgia St. There are lots of people coming and going. It is fine place to sit and eat, even on a cloudy day. The upper steps of the VAG are a regular place for street people to hang out. It's claimed space, the line is somewhere towards the upper steps. The bike couriers have claimed space too, underneath the cedar tree usually. An ever changing group, coming and going, reading, smoking, fixing their bikes.

## **Tuesday, 23 September 2008**

The fountain is not on. There is a lot of traffic noise and busy surroundings. This doesn't feel like much of a destination.



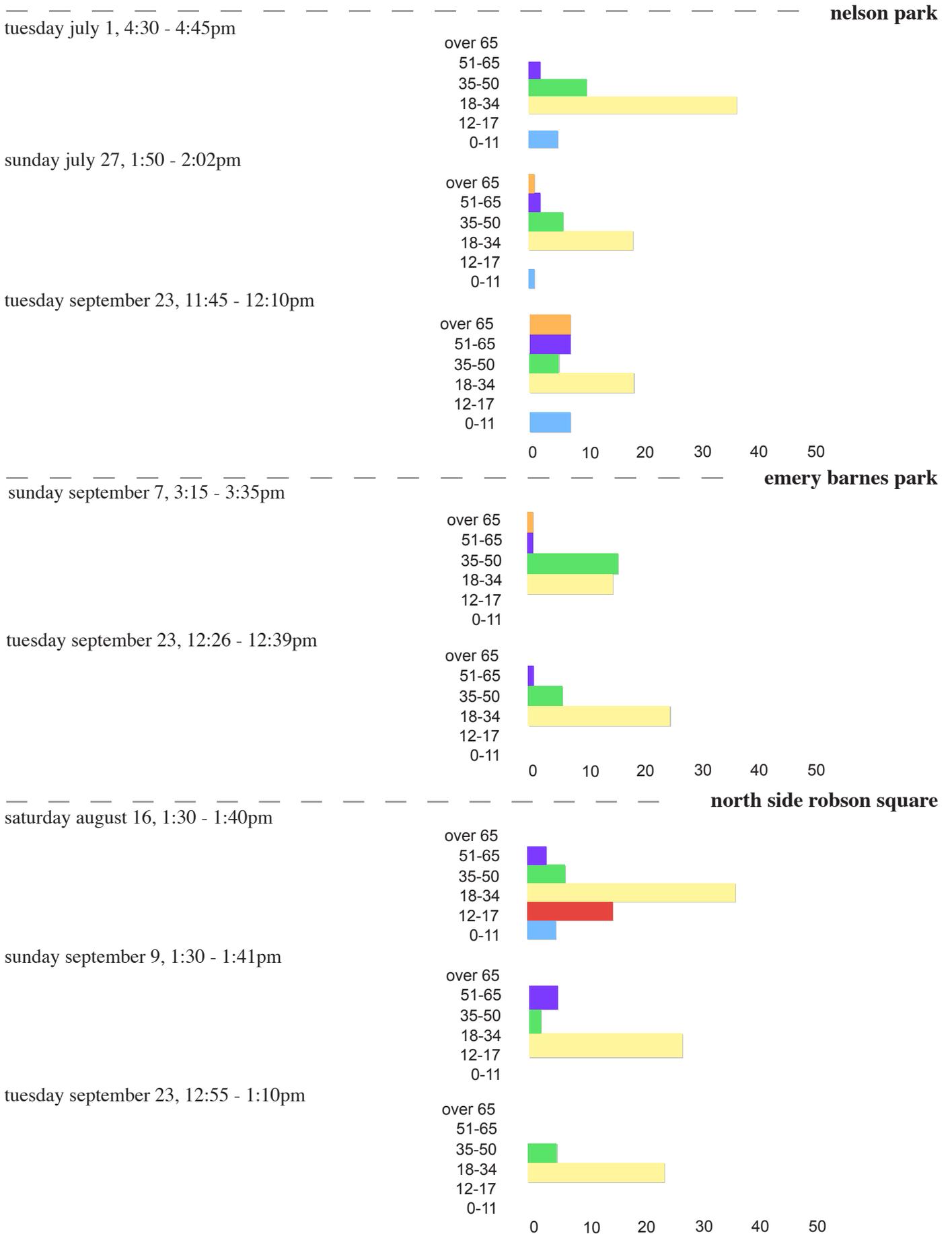
# Male/Female Use Comparison Between Public Space



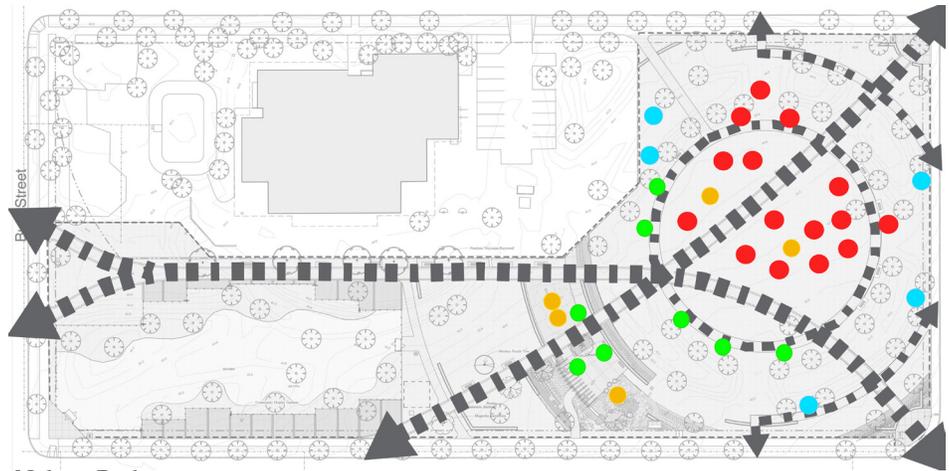
female

male

# Age Use Comparison Between Public Space



# Mapping Use



Nelson Park



Emery Barnes Park



Robson Square





# Connecting the Physical and the Social

In his book *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, William Whyte (1980) found that women seem to be more sensitive to their environment, only choosing to regularly inhabit spaces with a certain degree of comfort or amenity. He therefore found that the number of women in a space was a good indicator of how well the space worked from a social stand point. Using this indicator Nelson Park performs the best out of the three spaces surveyed for this report. Numbers of women are highest in Nelson Park and it is the only park where the number of women actually exceeded the number of men during any of the survey times. A number of contextual and physical design attributes of the park may help to explain the relative success of this space.

First, Nelson Park is located within a neighbourhood that has a relatively high residential density. Many of the buildings in this neighbourhood are apartments, often lacking balconies or porches, therefore public open space may be the only outdoor space that residents in this area can enjoy. This provides a good base user group for the park but also introduces potential conflicts with the diverse users and uses of the park. The way in which Nelson Park mediates these potential conflicts through physical form is ultimately instrumental in whatever success it may have as a place where the needs of the community may be met.

Circulation within and especially through the site is very well defined in Nelson Park and allows the park to be used as a thoroughfare as well as a destination. This has the effect of increasing the number of people in the park, even if they are simply travelling through. Whyte (1980) found that the first step in becoming comfortable with a space is through visually observing it. This can be done by travelling along its edges, glimpsing the interior of the site, or travelling through it as part of one's larger circulation route. Slowly, as a person becomes more comfortable with the space they are more and more likely to linger, engage and inhabit the space. Unlike the north side of Robson Square and Emery Barnes, Nelson Park has four highly permeable (visually and physically) edges that increase its friction with the larger community. Both the north side of Robson Square and Emery Barnes have inactive and impermeable edges along much of their perimeter. In both of these cases the impermeable edges (the closed Courthouse building entrance in Robson Square and the long fence in Emery Barnes) have led to the appropriation of the space, often by a narrowly defined user group. While the appropriation of these spaces may benefit these groups, particularly when these groups are marginalized from other spaces, it also creates pockets of defined territories in which other people may feel threatened or uncomfortable. The permeability and diversity of spaces in Nelson Park thus contributes to a space where there is some degree of territoriality, but a wide variety of users feel comfortable inhabiting the park together.

Site amenities and infrastructure in Nelson Park are extensive and well maintained. Unlike the north side of Robson Square seating and subtle lighting is provided along the major circulation routes and at activity nodes. This gives users the chance to comfortably linger in the site. Nelson Park recently went through a redesign so many of the site furnishings are new and in very good condition. Through the redesign process the original trees were all retained and the mature trees add significantly to the overall feel of the site and help to define the park. Edward O. Wilson explains our attraction to "natural" settings, especially those found in urban environments, with the concept of biophilia which describes "the connections that human beings

subconsciously seek with the rest of life.” All three of these parks actually have some degree of natural amenity. Nelson Park’s may be more effective simply due to the size of the space. Both the north side of Robson Square and Emery Barnes are relatively small sites where one can never truly escape the dominance that the adjacent high traffic streets exert over the site. Nelson Park not only benefits from quieter streets on three sides but is also large enough that even along the one edge where there is high traffic volume one can put enough distance between them and the street as to greatly diminish its dominance. In Nelson Park the more subtle noises of birds and rustling leaves can be heard without being drowned out by the sound of traffic. It is therefore easier to gain a sense of rejuvenation here than in the other two sites.

Nelson Park is also the only site with a strong community component. Not only is it adjacent to a weekly farmers market during the spring, summer and early fall but with the redesign it is now also home to a number of community garden plots. These plots are well maintained and are a highly visible sign of the kind of care that the community has invested in the site.

In his article *Cubist Space, Volumetric Space, and Landscape Architecture*, Condon talks about how the character and proportion of the “floor”, “walls” and “ceiling” of outdoor spaces defines the boundaries of the space and in the right configurations can add to a sense of comfort, unity and wholeness. The walls of an outdoor space can be defined by built structures such as buildings, rows of trees or other landscape features. The most successful space in this regard is not Nelson Park as a whole (which actually has a fairly complicated ground plane and ill-defined edges) but the large central open space within Nelson Park. The large open space is bounded continuously by a double, sometimes triple row of mature deciduous trees under which pathways and seating are provided. This has the effect of animating the edges of the large open space, providing places for people to sit and look into the site while also providing the simple, open ground plane that unifies the space and provides programmatic flexibility that accommodates diverse users and uses. Emery Barnes is perhaps the most contrary to the formal space principles laid out by Condon. Here the central ground plane is complicated with sculptural forms, plantings and seating. As might be expected, many of the activities observed in Emery Barnes were solitary, favouring observation rather than participation.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, we found the survey to be a useful tool for exploring the relationship between physical elements - which are essential in validating the publicness of a space - and the social use of the space. Through the social survey we recorded a broad range of uses and users. While not always predicted or intended, the social uses of these spaces are certainly a result of particular elemental relationships. This finding indicates the range of requirements of different user groups, but also suggests that public space should be flexible enough to allow for unforeseeable uses.

For instance, the social survey indicated that Nelson Park is the most popular public space for women and children, but that it also provides spaces for street affected people. The park's openness and diversity of spaces and seating seems to effectively mitigate potential conflicts. Emery Barnes Park on the other hand, was shown to be most frequented by elderly street affected men, especially in the space closest to the solitude of the waterfall, while lunchtime users sat closer to the intersection of Davie and Richards. Finally, the urban nature and protection of the Robson Square steps provide a good vantage point for street affected youth and the adjacent cedar tree is a good shelter for bike couriers. All of these are valid uses and indicate that each of these spaces is successful in providing a place for particular people to occupy. Findings such as these should be taken into consideration for not only the design, but also the distribution of public spaces, to meet the needs of the widest possible range of users.

To that end, the survey process empowers citizens to understand their neighbourhoods better, but potentially will also encourage them to get involved in policy decisions that ultimately affect their social well-being.

This has been an enlightening experience in terms of engaging in a collaborative process to develop a publicly accessible tool, applying theoretical knowledge in the analysis of space, and following through with the results from our initial ideas to the synthesis of data. We hope that this survey will lead to a meaningful documentation of the efficacy of public space in Vancouver, and ultimately indicate to policy-makers (and the public) the needs of residents in their public life.

# References

Condon, Patrick. 1988. *Cubist Space, Volumetric Space and Landscape Architecture*.

Whyte, William H. 1980. *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. Washington, DC, The Conservation Foundation.

Wilson, E.O, 1984. *Biophilia: The Human Bond With Other Species*.

## **Lessons Learned for Good Social Survey Practices**

Stay for the same amount of time for each survey - ideally for an hour, to get a sense of the comings and goings of people.

Try to survey over a range of days and times, ideally for a few times each.

Diligently record feelings, special events or notes of interest in your journal for each place.

Be consistent with language in describing activities. If there are inconsistencies in your notes, record them right away so that you don't forget what you were referring to.