



REVISED AGENDA - COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Thursday, July 4, 2024, 9:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, 1 CENTENNIAL SQUARE

The City of Victoria is located on the homelands of the Songhees Nation and Xwsepsum Nation

Meeting will recess for a lunch break between 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Pages

A.	TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	
B.	INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS	
C.	APPROVAL OF AGENDA	
*D.	CONSENT AGENDA	
	<u>Proposals for the Consent Agenda:</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">F.2 - Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Community Excellence Awards SubmissionF.3 - Appointment of Bylaw OfficersH.1 - Council Member Motion: Financial relief for residents affected by crime and social disorderH.2 - Council Member Motion: Support for the Victoria Hockey Legacy Society Bid for the 2025 U17 Hockey Challenge	
E.	PRESENTATIONS	
E.1	<u>Victoria Police Department - 2024 Quarter 1 report</u>	1
F.	STAFF REPORTS	
*F.1	<u>Centennial Square Revitalization Concept Design Update</u>	11
	A report requesting the approval and direction to implement the updated concept design for Centennial Square as outlined in the report.	
	<i>Addendum: Updated Appendix 1</i>	
F.2	<u>Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Community Excellence Awards Submission</u>	83
	A report seeking Council authorization to submit an award to the UBCM Community Excellence Awards for OUR DWTN.	

F.3 Appointment of Bylaw Officers 85

A report regarding the appointment of Bylaw Officers as a Business Licence Inspector for the City of Victoria, and recommending approval.

G. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1 Council Member Motion: Financial relief for residents affected by crime and social disorder 86

A Council Member Motion directing staff to investigate options for financial relief for residents affected by crime and social disorder.

H.2 Council Member Motion: Support for the Victoria Hockey Legacy Society Bid for the 2025 U17 Hockey Challenge 89

A Council Member Motion seeking support for the Victoria Hockey Legacy Society Bid for the 2025 U17 Hockey Challenge.

I. CLOSED MEETING, IF REQUIRED

J. ADJOURNMENT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE



Community Safety Report Card for Victoria Council – Q1 2024

July 4, 2024

Chief Constable Del Manak

Highlights for Q1

- Operational Update
- Crime Prevention
- Community Engagement
- Current Focus

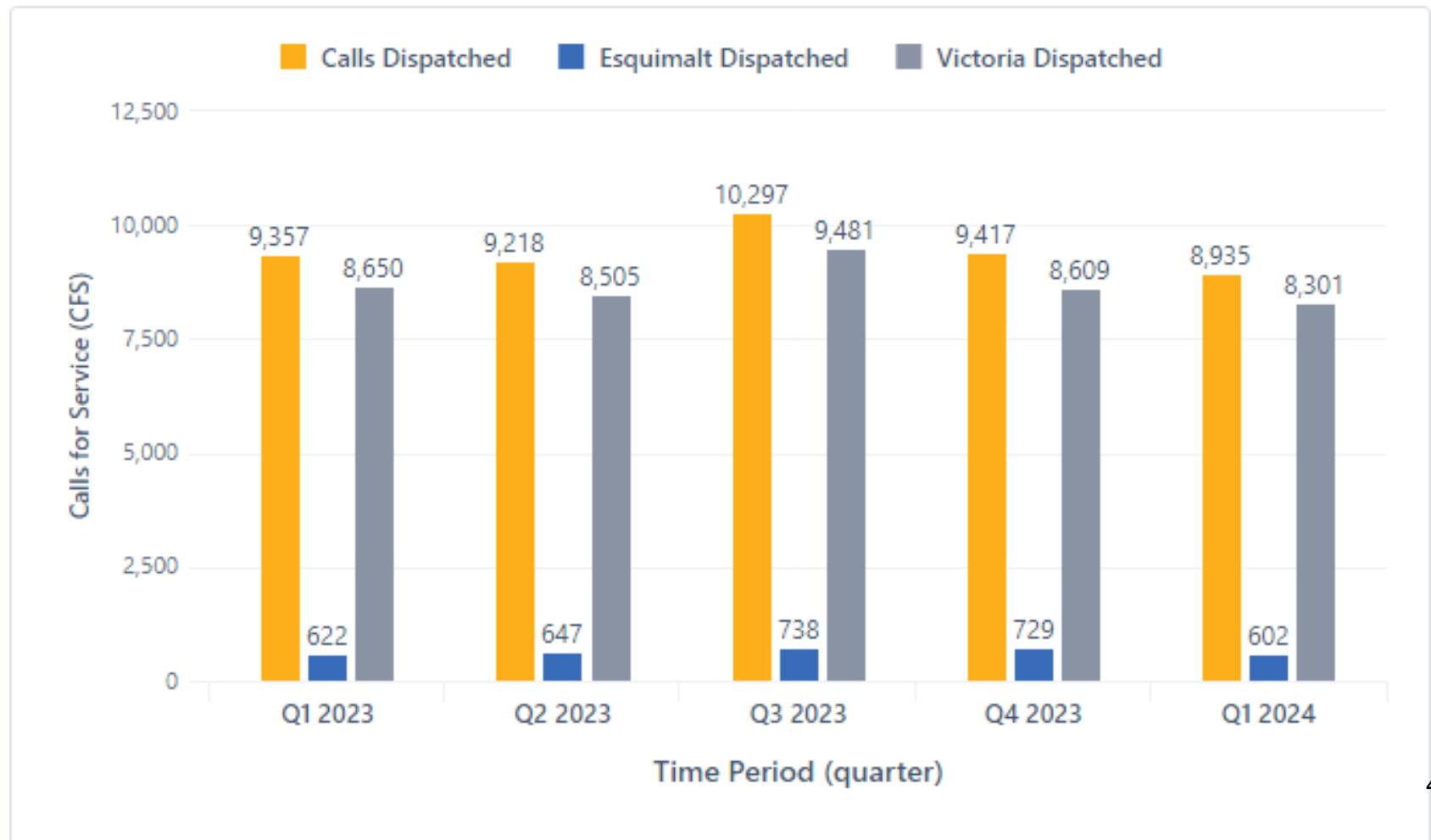


Full report available at *Open VicPD*



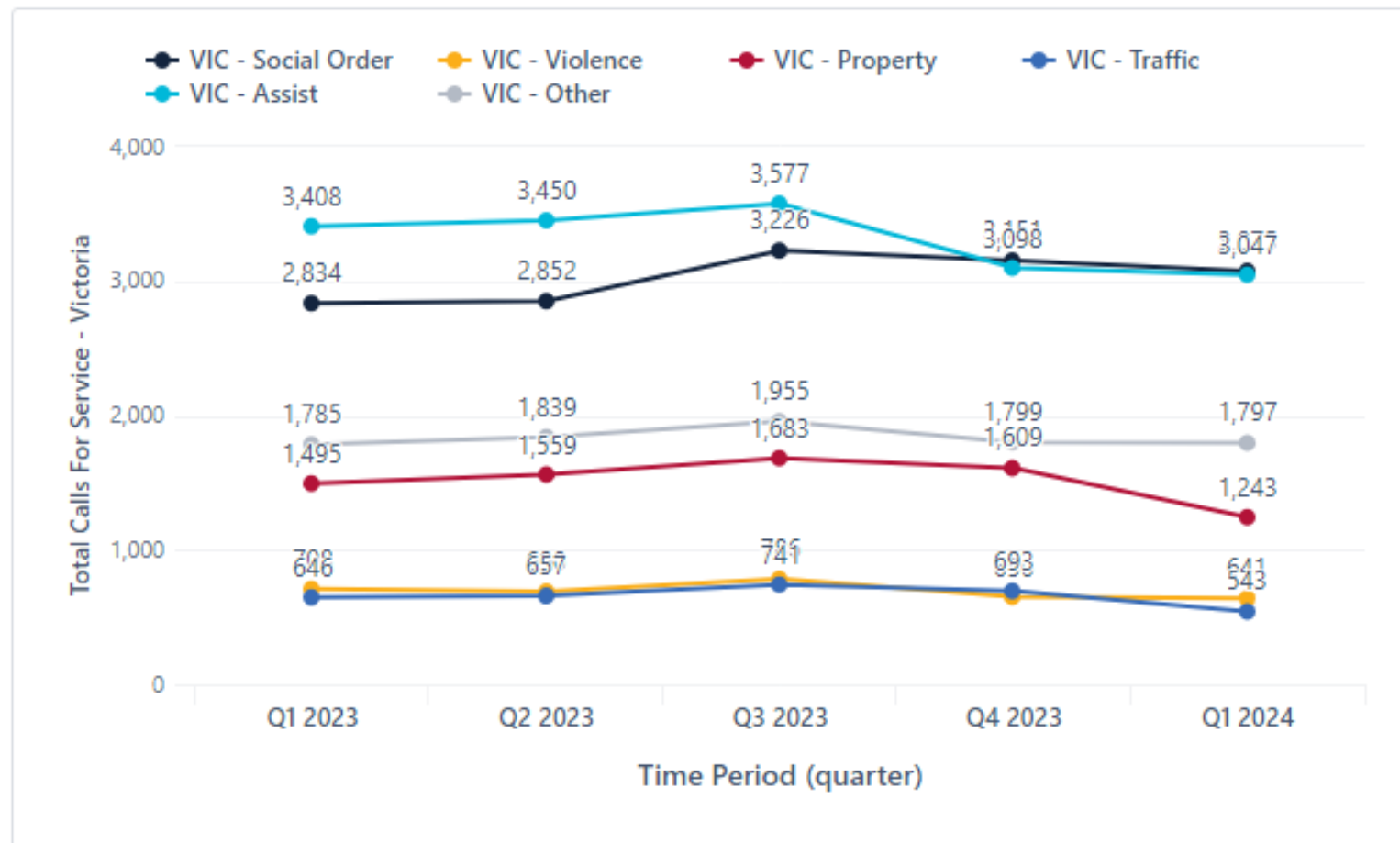
Operational Update - Calls for Service

VicPD Jurisdiction Calls for Service – Quarterly



Calls for Service - By Category

Victoria Total Calls for Service – By Category, Quarterly



Operational Update

- Cybercrime
- Project Halo
- Ongoing Demonstrations
- Files of note
 - Stranger Assaults
 - Stabbings
 - Vehicle Vandalisms
 - Fraud



Crime Prevention

- Gang Awareness
- Distracted Driving
- Retail Theft / Project Lifter



VIC PD

DISTRACTED DRIVING CAMPAIGN

In Just **Two** Days:

81

Tickets issued for distracted driving

#LeaveYourPhoneAlone

Community Engagement

- ❑ Polar Plunge
- ❑ Youth Sports
- ❑ DAC Dance Party
- ❑ Police Camp
- ❑ New Volunteers



Current Focus

- ❑ Violent Crime
- ❑ Downtown Patrols
- ❑ School Engagement
- ❑ Event and Visitor Season



Questions?



BACKGROUND

Centennial Square, the city's main civic plaza, was constructed in 1964 to commemorate Victoria's 100th year. For many decades this urban park has served the community as a venue for events and gatherings, including ceremonies, demonstrations, performances, cultural festivals, and markets.

The City has renovated portions of Centennial Square over the years in response to the community's evolving needs and to address emerging infrastructure issues. In 2019, following Council direction to create a more versatile and welcoming public space capable of accommodating a diverse range of special events and programming, the City developed the Centennial Square Action Plan. The plan incorporated extensive community input received through stakeholder workshops and meetings that explored possible design solutions for Centennial Square.

In June 2023, staff provided an update to Council on the project plan and recent insights on the Action Plan following the pandemic period. Staff advised that further analysis was required on the public art and central fountain, as well as potential commercial opportunities, and options for mitigating the effects of extreme heat. Funding to implement the design and construction work for this project was approved in the 2024-2028 Financial Plan.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

The Centennial Square Revitalization Concept Design Report, included as Appendix A, builds upon previous work and provides additional site analysis informed by technical investigations. It contains detailed information on the updated concept design and implementation approach. The design was refined through a value engineering process guided by a team of professionals.

Design Overview

The updated concept design introduces new features to the heart of the Square to enhance the daily experience for residents and visitors. The large central plaza, with its interactive water feature, offers opportunities for both gathering and play. When activated, jets of water with integrated lighting and sound will create a lively atmosphere. When the water is deactivated, the plaza offers an unobstructed area for markets, performances, festivals and other cultural events.

The eastern edge of the central plaza introduces elements of play, with climbable cut stone blocks, plantings and water features. This area includes an elevated platform serving as a new performance stage.

Improved amenities and opportunities for expanded programming, combined with enhanced circulation and sightlines increase connectivity and functionality, which will help to activate the Square and make it more welcoming. The new design also addresses barriers to accessibility through thoughtful space arrangements, lighting, and surface grading.

A new sloping grass area on the west edge will offer a place to relax next to the McPherson Theatre. This expanded greenspace connects with Spirit Square, supports stormwater management, and helps to mitigate the impacts of extreme heat during the summer. New trees are proposed to be planted along the north edge where tree canopy can expand without obstructing views into the plaza.

The proposed approach includes a year-round commercial kiosk in the heart of the Square and support infrastructure for mobile vendors. The undercroft is proposed to continue housing the City's

bike valet service with minor improvements.

The future Douglas Street Rapid Transit Improvement project is expected to result in an improved transit stop at the entrance to the Square and will serve as a destination for RapidBus services. In addition, the pedestrian improvements associated with the City's Government Street Refresh project will further strengthen connections to the Chinatown area.

The updated concept design also targets improvements to accommodate large-scale events within the central plaza and a new performance zone adjacent to the McPherson Theatre. The Square will be equipped with power and water connections, facilitating easy access for event operations. The existing stage attached to the McPherson Theatre is proposed to be repurposed for much-needed storage of event staging and equipment to support events and programs.

To achieve the updated vision, the concept design incorporates changes to the public art and fountain as well as replacement of existing trees north of City Hall.

Relocating the Monoliths and Fountain

The monoliths and surrounding fountain were a central focal point of the original park design. Unfortunately, over time these features presented challenges relating to both asset maintenance and use of the Square for events. Based on recent investigations, staff have confirmed the scale of restoration work required for the three vertical art pieces and noted that the fountain spray appears to have contributed to the damage. Moreover, many of the fountain components are proving difficult to service due to the age and design of the mechanical system.

In the proposed design the monoliths are relocated and combined with a new pond at the east end of the Square. This change will result in improved functionality of the central plaza, and an ability to refurbish the art pieces prior to reinstalling them in a new high-profile site adjacent to Douglas Street.

Another change involves removal and replacement of trees in the green space north of City Hall to create a new plaza next to Douglas Street. The trees proposed for removal include a large sequoia, a sweetgum and a cherry tree. The design includes 17 new trees, appropriate for the urban location.

The proposed removal of the existing trees is based on a detailed technical assessment of each. This area of the Square was constructed on top of asphalt paving from the section of Cormorant Street that once passed through the site. City records indicate that the sequoia tree was planted years after the original development. The soil under the sequoia and sweetgum trees is shallow and sandy. The shallow rooting of the trees has led to damage of adjacent infrastructure, including heaving and cracked pavement, which has caused safety issues. The sequoia and sweetgum's root systems are also in very close proximity to an underground BC Hydro duct as well as other underground utilities, including a water main, stormwater infrastructure and telecom lines. The situation also poses a risk to the long-term stability of the trees due to their inability to anchor in deeper soils.

The new trees will be strategically planted using soil cells and root barrier systems, enabling the renewal and protection of adjacent underground utility services. This enhanced planting methodology captures stormwater to irrigate the trees and other natural assets and support the trees' health.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

OPTION 1 - (Recommended) That Council approve the Centennial Square Revitalization Plan and direct staff to proceed with implementation.

This option would direct staff to implement the Centennial Square Revitalization plan as outlined in the attached concept design report and proceed to the detailed design and construction phases using previously approved funding. Detailed design work will commence immediately and be completed by early 2025 with construction being completed in two phases:

- Phase 1 encompasses the area between Douglas Street and the central plaza. Construction is anticipated to begin in mid 2025 and be completed by late 2026.
- Phase 2 includes the expanded green and the commercial kiosk. Construction is expected to begin in mid 2027 and be completed by early 2028.

OPTION 2 - That Council provide alternative direction to staff on desired outcomes or potential improvements for Centennial Square.

Council may provide alternative direction to staff to modify the existing proposal or develop a revised version. In this instance, staff may need to report back to Council with additional information.

Impacts to Financial Plan

The design and engineering budget of \$750,000 was included in the 2023 Financial Plan. Additionally, Council approved an \$11.2 million budget to implement the plan as part of the 2024-2028 Financial Plan. To reduce property tax impacts, Council allocated \$4.5 million from the *Growing Communities* grant toward the revitalization plan. An additional \$150,000 from the Art in Public Places Reserve is proposed to cover the costs of restoring the three ceramic fin monoliths. Program and maintenance budgets will be included in future financial plans.

Table 1: Total Project Budget Summary

Project Component	Budget
Design	\$750,000
Phase 1 Construction	\$9,150,000
Phase 2 Construction	\$2,200,000
Growing Community Grant Funding	-\$4,500,000
Art in Public Places Reserve	-\$150,000
Total Funded Through Debt	\$7,450,000
<i>Note: The budget includes a 30% contingency of approximately \$2.5 million and an allowance of \$500,000 for cost escalation</i>	

Accessibility Impact Statement

The new vision for Centennial Square is premised on advancing key goals from the City’s Accessibility Framework. The revitalization work will align with the City’s commitment to removing barriers and promoting equitable access for individuals of all ages and abilities.

2023-2026 Strategic Plan

The revitalization of Centennial Square is an identified priority in the Strategic Plan.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

The Centennial Square Improvements Project and Updated Concept aligns closely with the goals of the Official Community Plan by contributing to downtown vibrancy, walkability, arts and culture, inclusivity, community health and well-being, environmental sustainability, and resiliency.

Climate Leadership Plan

The updated concept responds to goals set out in the City's *Climate Leadership Plan*, with design solutions that promote sustainability and climate adaptation. These include sustainable stormwater management, new resilient trees in healthy growing conditions, new water features which will reduce and recycle water onsite, and high-quality public realm materials that can be reused or recycled.

CONCLUSIONS

The updated Centennial Square concept design has been informed by public input and builds on previous plans and technical studies. The design honours the Square's historic significance while upgrading and replacing infrastructure to meet the current and future needs of the community. This blueprint will guide the revitalization efforts to establish Centennial Square as a vibrant, welcoming and inclusive space, realizing its full potential as Victoria's primary civic plaza.

Respectfully submitted,

Justin Dykstra
Manager
Park Design and Development

Brooke Stark
Acting Assistant Director
Parks and Open Spaces

Derrick Newman
Acting Director
Parks, Recreation and Facilities

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

List of Appendices:

Appendix A – Centennial Square Revitalization Project Concept Design Report

Appendix A

Centennial Square Revitalization Project Concept Design Report



Centennial Square Revitalization Project

Concept Design Report

DIALOG®





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Executive Summary

The City of Victoria is embarking on a significant endeavor to reimagine one of its pivotal downtown public spaces. The transformation of Centennial Square seeks to meet the evolving demands of a vibrant city and redefine the concept of a “civic heart”, navigating both changing demographics and post-pandemic relationships with downtown public space. With increasing concerns about the perceived safety of the Square, aging infrastructure at the end of its life, and a public art piece in need of significant investment and restoration, the time is right to explore what a revitalized Centennial Square could be.

Originally conceived in the early 1960s, Centennial Square emerged as a bold and pioneering effort to revitalize downtown Victoria. Spearheaded by the Permanent Projects Committee of the Victoria Centennial Advisory Committee, this endeavor formed a crucial part of a broader urban renewal initiative. Amidst the wave of revitalization sweeping across North American cities in the late 1950s and 1960s, Victoria stood out by preserving its historic City Hall, evading the fate of so many other cities that lost cherished architectural landmarks to demolition. The Square’s original design envisioned a modernist civic plaza, removing Cormorant Street to seamlessly connect the historic City Hall to Government Street, blending tradition with innovation.

Since the 1960s, downtown Victoria has undergone significant transformations, shaped by shifting demographics, increased development, and the more recent challenges posed by the pandemic. The urban landscape has evolved, with new architectural styles blending with historic landmarks, reflecting changing tastes, relationships with public space, and design trends. The continual change and evolution have significantly influenced Victoria’s character and needs, prompting a reevaluation of public spaces like Centennial Square.

In 2017, the City undertook a Downtown Public Realm Plan, a five-year Arts and Culture Master Plan that sought to establish a design framework and set of principles, strategies, and standards for downtown public spaces. An important outcome of this report was the identification of Centennial Square as a priority public space for significant improvement and refresh. The resulting concept plan, approved by Council in 2019, captured a moment in time and one that responded to existing conditions in a measured and intentional way.

As Victoria continues to evolve and new challenges arise, there is a pressing need to revisit the approved design concept to ensure that it aligns with the contemporary needs of Victoria. Central to the current design challenge is the question of how to best acknowledge the past, respecting the history of the Square while still moving it firmly into the future. Just as the 1960s project represented a major transformation of the public realm to meet the needs of the day, so too must this iteration respond to the City’s contemporary needs and build future resilience.

This report represents an updated concept design for Centennial Square encompassing proposed revisions and enhancements to the Square, as well the process undertaken to get to a preferred design. It serves as a detailed blueprint that articulates a new vision, guiding principles and ideas that will guide the revitalization effort. By presenting a comprehensive overview of proposed changes, the concept report facilitated informed decision-making and ensures alignment with the evolving needs and aspirations of Victoria.



Building Blocks

The “building blocks” are the foundational elements or components that form the framework and contribute to the Square’s overall structure, function, and aesthetic. They encompass the various physical, conceptual, and experiential aspects that have informed the proposed concept design for Centennial Square. Central to this is the overall intent to re-establish Centennial Square as a great civic space, the place for Victoria to gather, to celebrate, to embark in play, to protest, or simply enjoy a quiet cup of coffee on a random Tuesday afternoon. Since the completion of the Downtown Public Realm Plan, the needs of public spaces in downtown have continued to change, with increasing demand for places that are inclusive and welcoming where families and children can relax and play together, flexible enough to support programming without impeding everyday uses, and focused on meeting the needs of Victoria residents first.

To envision and articulate any refinements to the previously approved plan, a thorough understanding of the current site was a critical part of the design process. Considerations such as the physical project site, including trees and infrastructure, the condition of the monoliths, surrounding current and proposed building uses such as office, residential, and retail, and civic programming requests and opportunities have been reviewed and assessed in a holistic manner to establish the building blocks for the future vision of the site.

IT IS NOT WHAT YOU LOOK AT THAT MATTERS, IT IS WHAT YOU SEE.

– HENRY DAVID THOREAU



Site Analysis

Existing Context

Circulation and edge conditions were examined around the Square to understand how the current configuration influences daily use. Existing trees and how they impact sight lines, along with other CPTED considerations were also studied.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

- 1 Accessible route of travel should be intuitive and clear.
- 2 Improve loading/maintenance vehicular access.
- 3 Increase the activation of edge conditions.
- 4 Ensure the trees do not block circulation/views into or out of Square.
- 5 Maintain large mature trees around edge of the Square where sight lines are not a constraint.



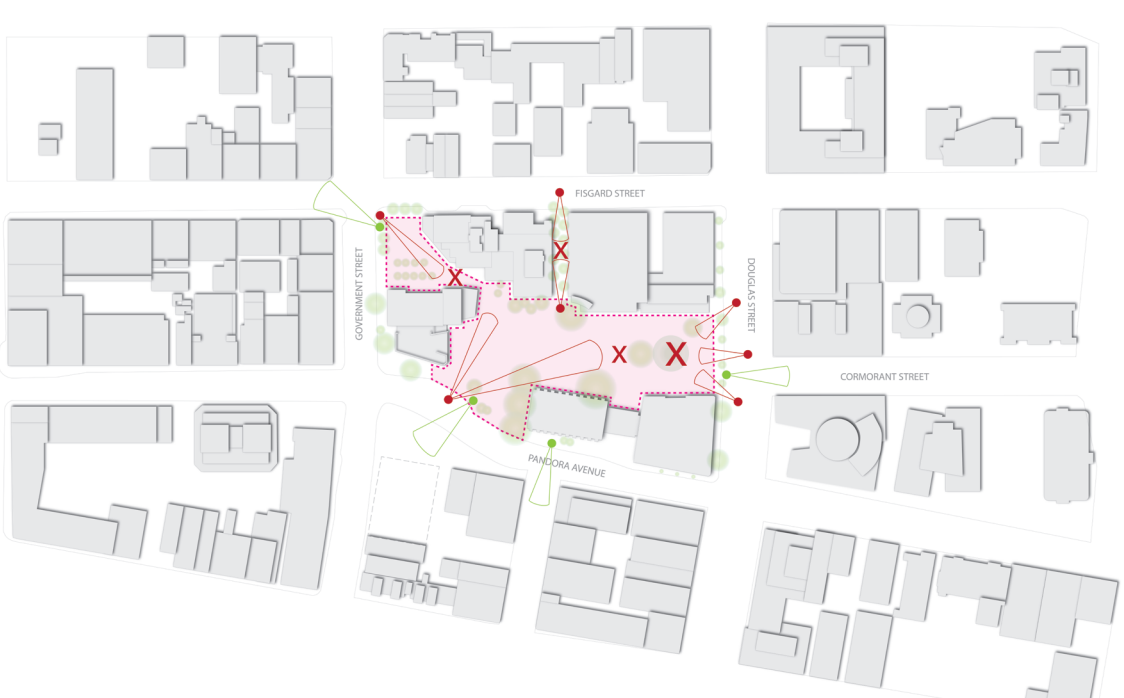
CIRCULATION + ACCESSIBILITY MAP



EDGE CONDITIONS MAP



EXISTING TREES MAP



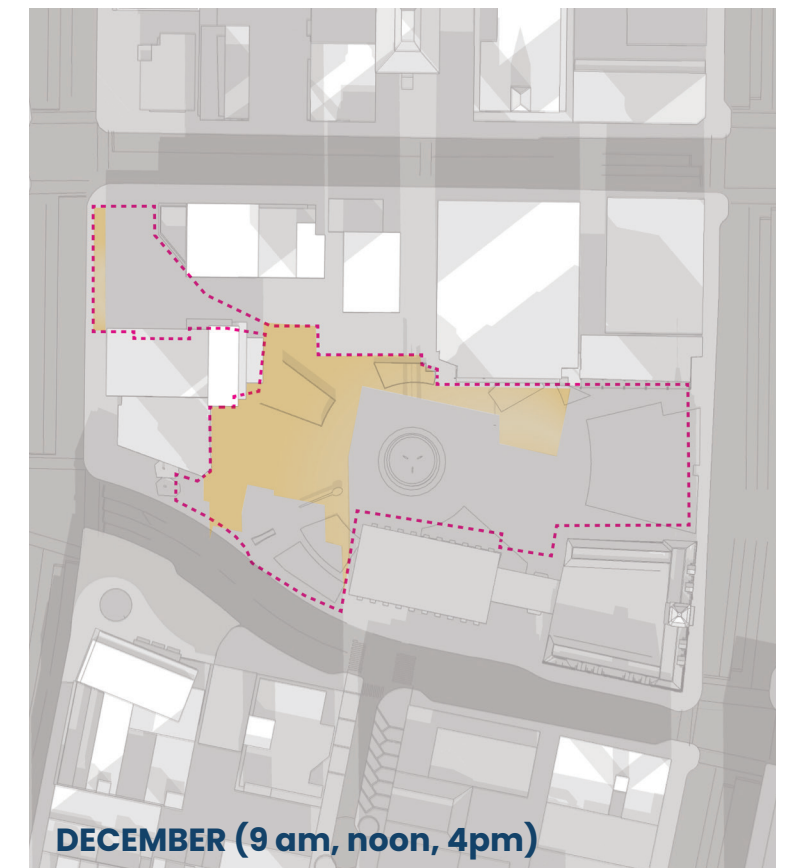
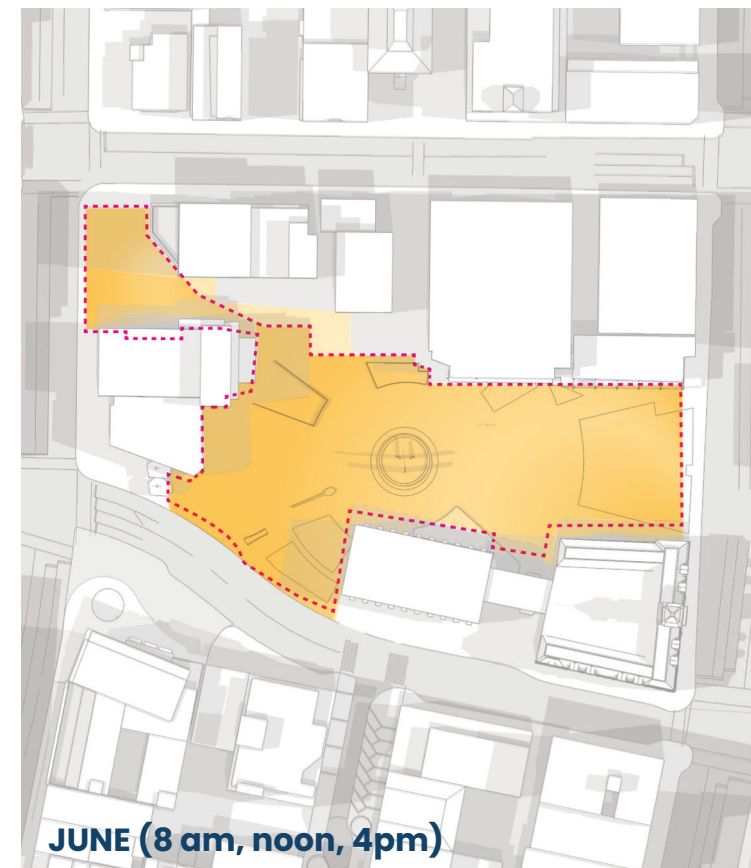
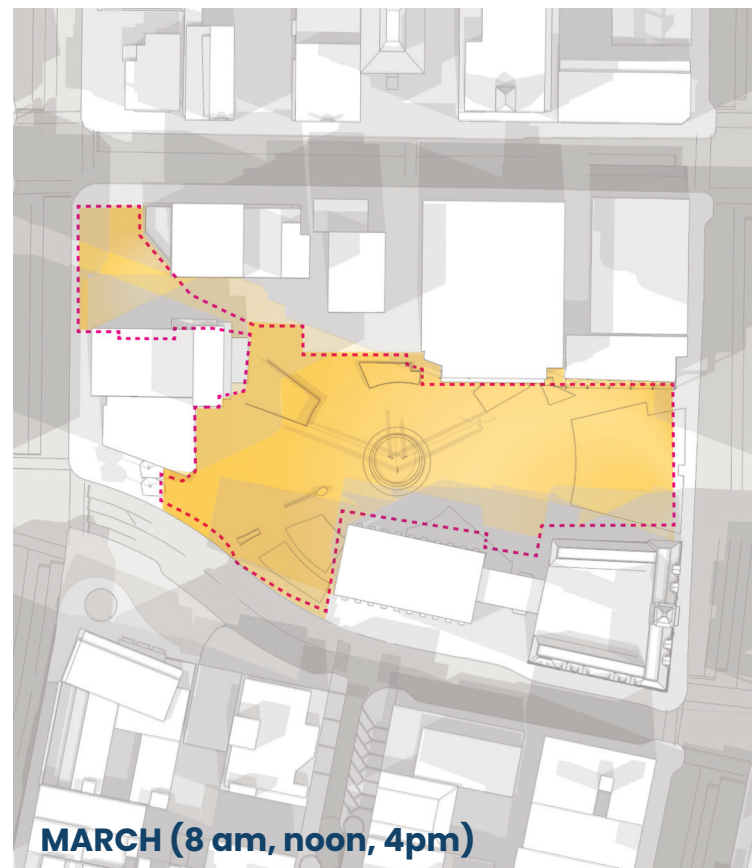
SIGHTLINES MAP

Microclimate

Working with local weather and climate patterns is important to produce comfortable spaces. Wind and sun patterns were studied to inform the location of various program elements.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

- 1 Design and orient fountains to reduce wind spray and be located in places that remain comfortable.
- 2 The western side of the site has the highest amount of year-round sun and is good to locate any future water-based amenities in a warmer zone.
- 3 The northern edge of the site can provide pockets of sun in the winter for noon-hour events or outdoor seating.
- 4 Amplify the site's gateway moments

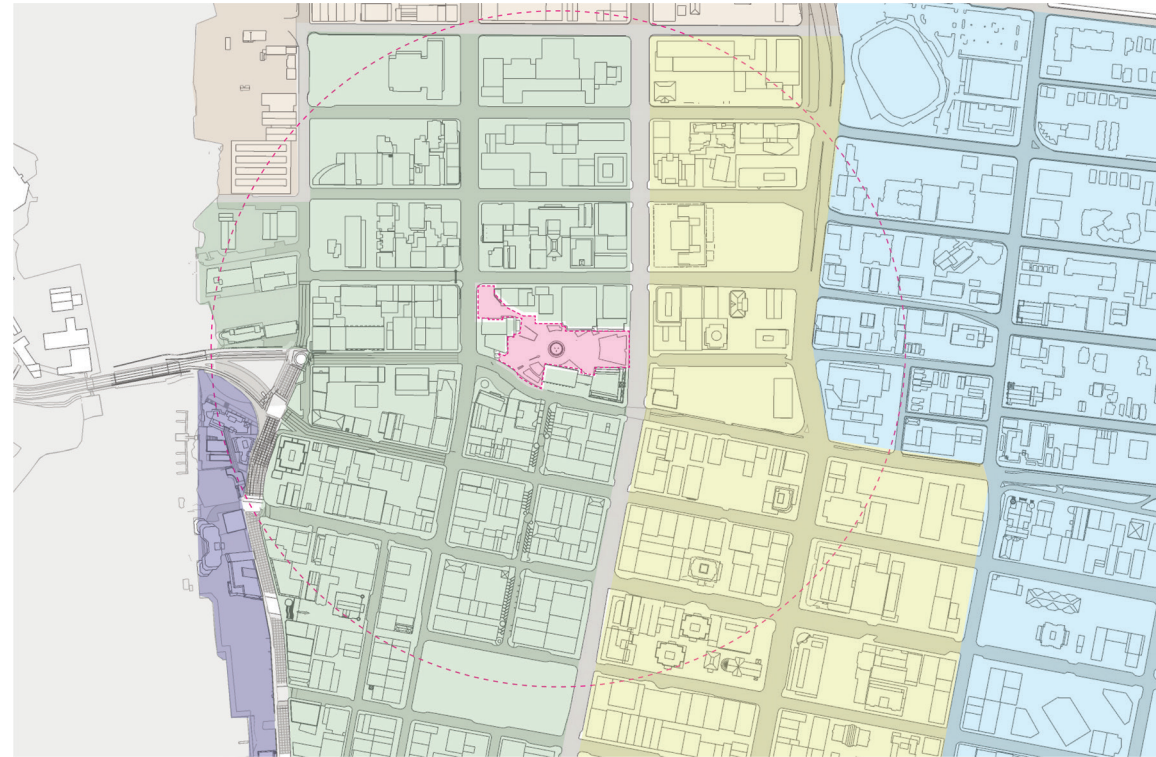


District Analysis

Centennial Square sits at an important place in Victoria's downtown, and will continue to be the area's main outdoor gathering space. Changing demographics and more residents downtown means it will need to be designed to accommodate these needs.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

- 1 Its place as a 'hinge point' to many surrounding cultural neighbourhoods (eg. Chinatown) means it can act as a meeting space for numerous different groups and end users.
- 2 Recognizing that the growing population downtown needs open space, design the Square to be a comfortable, daily destination.
- 3 A wide range of cultural spaces means the site can play host to various groups in close proximity.
- 4 The high proportion of younger residents (mid 20s-40s) means a need for family friendly programming and uses.
- 5 The inclusion of other age demographics suggests also creating pockets with varying activity levels and noise.



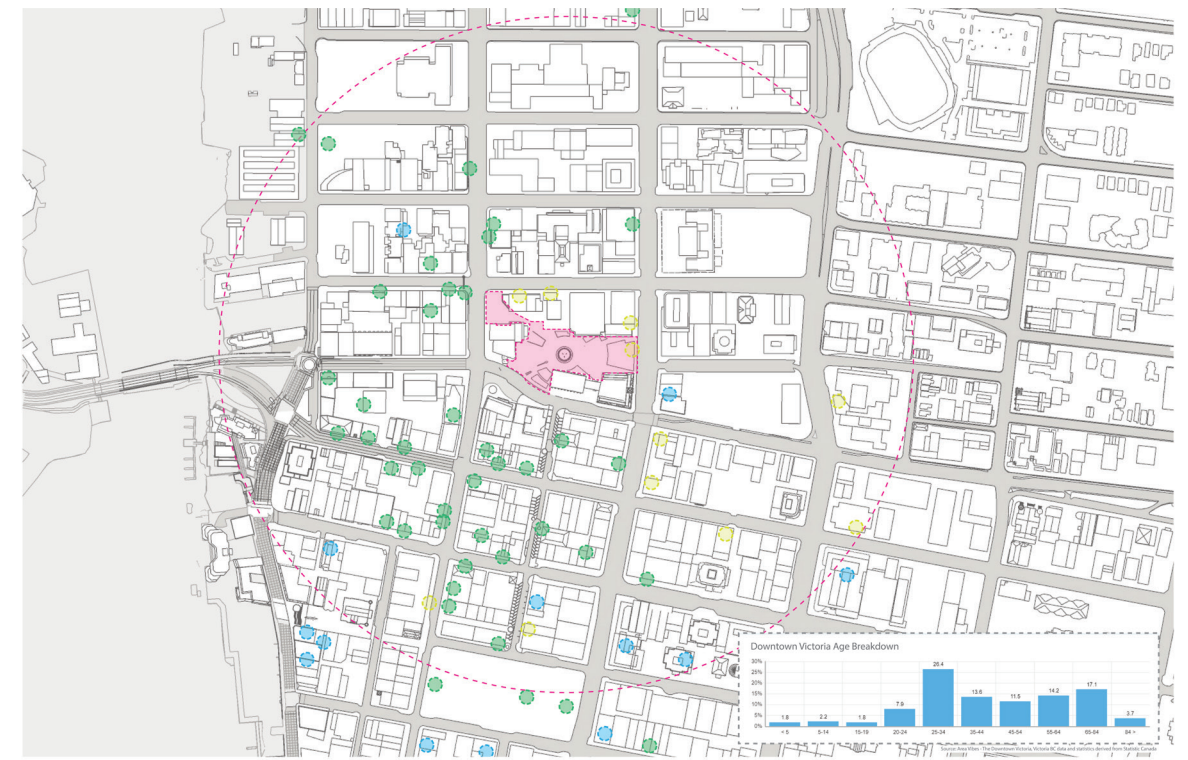
DISTRICTS



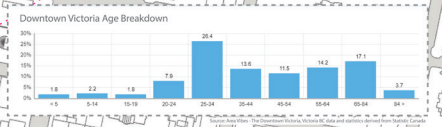
PARKS + OPEN SPACES



CULTURAL HUBS



AGE DEMOGRAPHICS + KEY INDUSTRIES

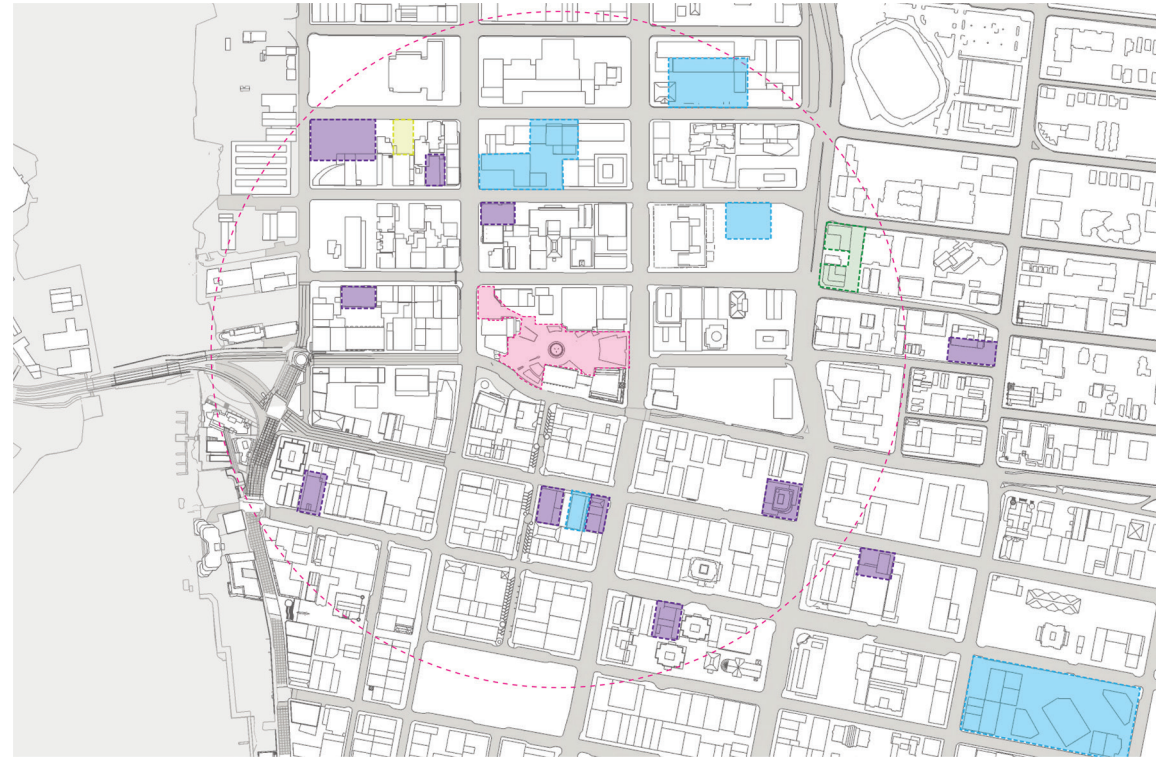


Downtown Growth

Increasing residential development has outpaced the addition of other daily needs and amenities in downtown, such as grocers and play spaces. The project analyzed these changes in the future as well as other nearby City projects to ensure alignment with other big moves.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

- 1 The increased residential population downtown means the Square will need to serve the daily open space needs of a growing population.
- 2 Smaller condo units will require a public 'living room' that operates throughout the day.
- 3 Retail traffic is along major streets, and the Square should be designed to pull shoppers through the space on their routes.
- 4 The Square should complement the lack of grocers in the area with its own offerings - food trucks, etc.
- 5 The City of Victoria is undergoing a transformation, and Centennial Square exists within a larger context of relevant policy. The Square should align with these nearby changes.



LEGEND
 site boundary
 5 minute walkshed
 existing residential buildings
 approved development
 proposed development
 city purchased lands for future urban park

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



LEGEND
 site boundary
 5 minute walkshed
 outdoor specialty stores
 gift/stationery stores
 boutique/clothing
 general stores
 grocery stores

RETAIL



LEGEND
 site boundary
 5 minute walkshed
 pubs/bar
 restaurants
 cafes

FOOD + BEVERAGE



LEGEND
 site boundary
 5 minute walkshed
 Government St. Refresh
 Government St. Refresh (Potential / Future)
 Rock Bay Industry, Arts and Innovation District
 Douglas Street Mobility Corridor
 City Purchased Land for Future Urban Park
 Future Civic Building

PUBLIC PROJECTS





A New Centennial Square

Transformation and change is not new for Centennial Square. As a prominent public space within the city, it has born witness to the continued revitalization of downtown Victoria and persists in responding to periods of intense change and growth for the City.

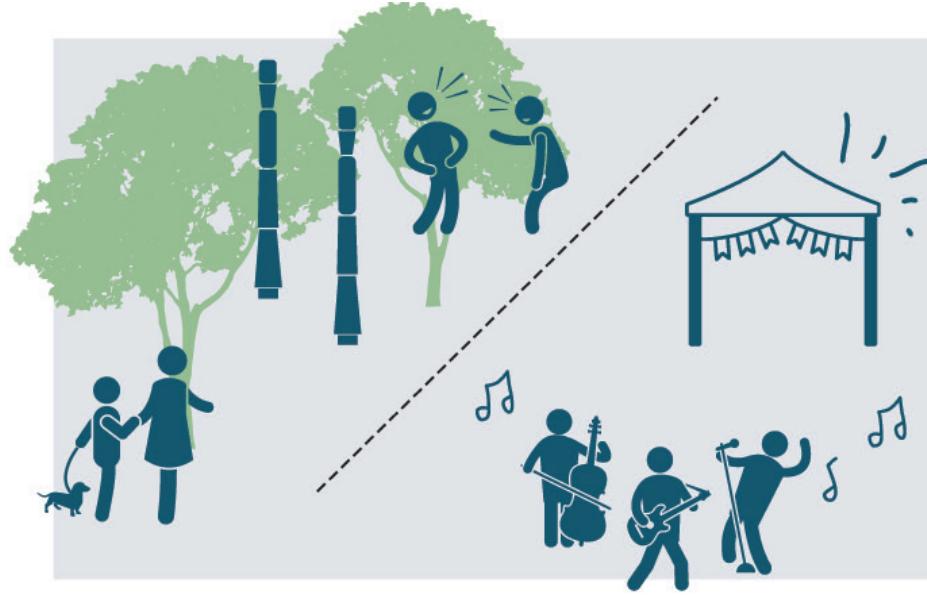
The new vision for Centennial Square balances its historic significance with the contemporary and future needs of a dynamic and evolving Victoria community. Improvements and design changes prioritize enhancing the quality and utility of the space, simultaneously acknowledging and celebrating the past, but with an eye keenly on the future. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive, and they require a design that is both courageous and sensitive, unafraid to propose change that, similar to the origin story of the Square, envisions a bold direction deeply rooted in the context of place.

Overall, the design intent of the Centennial Square Improvement project is to transform this important civic space, addressing not only maintenance and operational constraints, but proposing design solutions that meet the current and future needs of the city.

The following guiding principles were developed in consultation with the City Project Team and leverage the Building Blocks of the project established during the analysis phase.



Guiding Principles



A Place for All

Centennial Square is a **place of civic significance** and **urban vitality**, and its future state will serve as a catalyst for **celebration, play, and cultural expression**.

The square's success lies in its ability to reflect Victoria's diverse community as an **accessible, inclusive, and welcoming** space for people and nature.



A Magnet for Public Life

Centennial Square has **symbolic, cultural, and functional** importance within the City of Victoria and will continue to serve as a **central gathering** and **civic space** for the community.

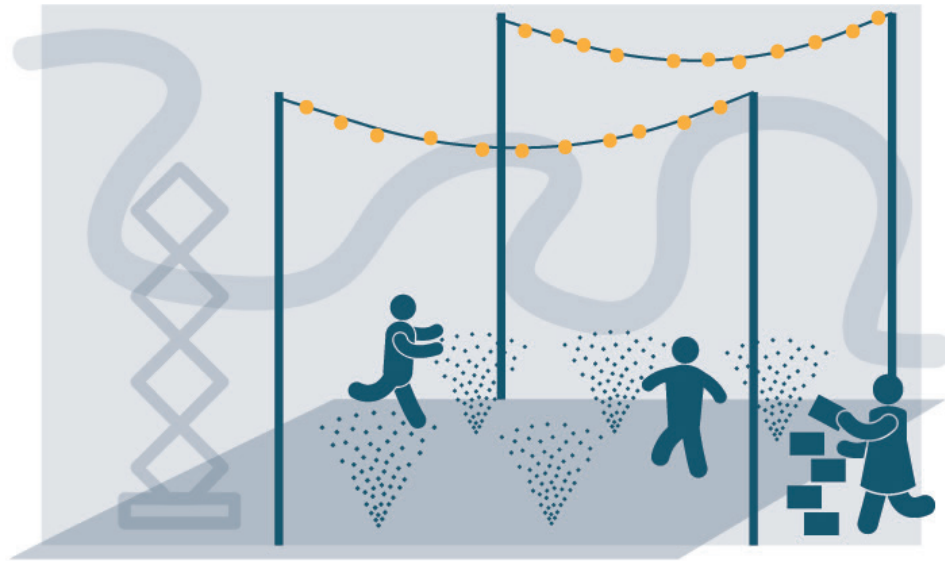
Through thoughtful design and strategic intervention, the square will be a **vibrant hub** of community **activity** and **connection** – drawing residents and visitors through engaging **programming**, and **dynamic community amenities**.



Celebrate the Past, Adapt to the Future

Great public spaces are never finished – they are constantly evolving based on the changing needs of the dynamic cities and communities that they serve. As the **civic heart** of Victoria, Centennial Square is rich with **natural, cultural, and designed histories** that can help to shape the future of the Square.

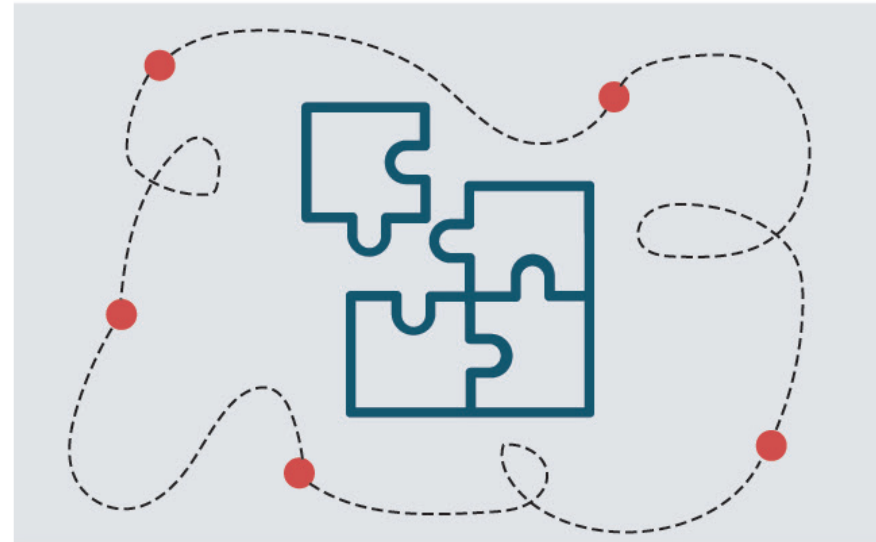
The square will reflect the site's **storied history**, its **present reality**, and its **future potential** – one that is **resilient**, accomodates **changing climates**, is **adaptable**, and **vibrant**. The transformation of the square will require **boldness**, rooted in an understanding of the **trade-offs** required to **balance** potentially competing interests.



Infuse Whimsy and Play

Public space provides the canvas to **spark joy**, foster **creativity**, and encourage **exploration** – pushing the boundaries of **creative expression**.

Centennial Square will be a place for community gathering, events, and discourse, but also be a place of **fun** and **joy**, creating a vibrant atmosphere where users can engage in **spontaneous interactions**, discover **delightful surprises**, and forge lasting **memories**.



Foster A Unified Experience

The public realm is a **shared encounter space**, setting the stage for social interaction, cultural activities, and community life.

Like a symphony, it's critical that all pieces within the public realm **coherently** come together, and each design element plays a specific role in contributing to a **unified public realm** experience.



Prioritize Timeless and Enduring Design

Amidst an ever-changing landscape of design trends, **timeless** principles of **simplicity** and **functionality** serve as a sturdy foundation that can weather the passing of time. Centennial Square's original design captures a moment in time, but it is important to recognize the changes within Victoria and address **urban renewal** and the increasing **pressure** on the downtown core.

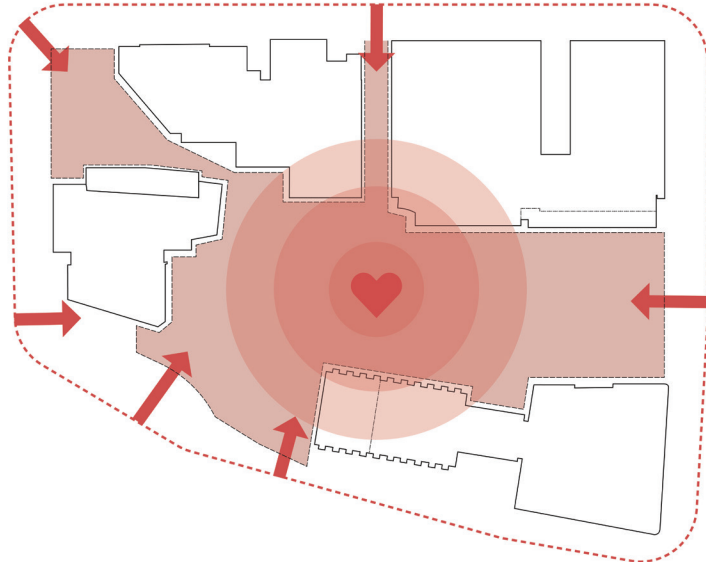
Prioritizing **timeless design** and **functional simplicity** ensures that the square will cater to the **evolving needs** of users well into the future, ensuring relevance, and **adaptability** for diverse audiences.

Design Strategies



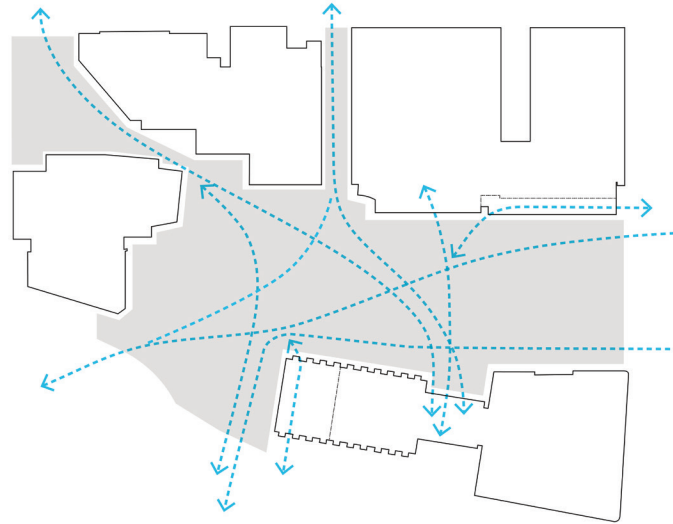
Build on Work to Date

This is not about starting from scratch, rather about refining some big moves.



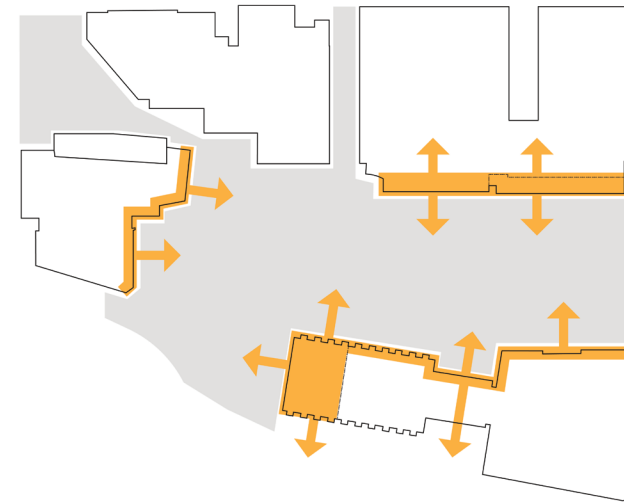
Bring Back the Civic Heart

Centennial Square will support a dynamic, evolving downtown.



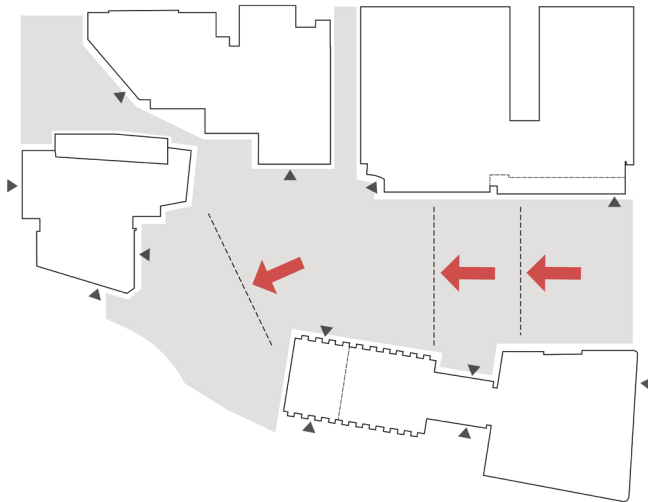
Reinforce Existing Circulation

Accessibility and movement will be simplified and realigned.



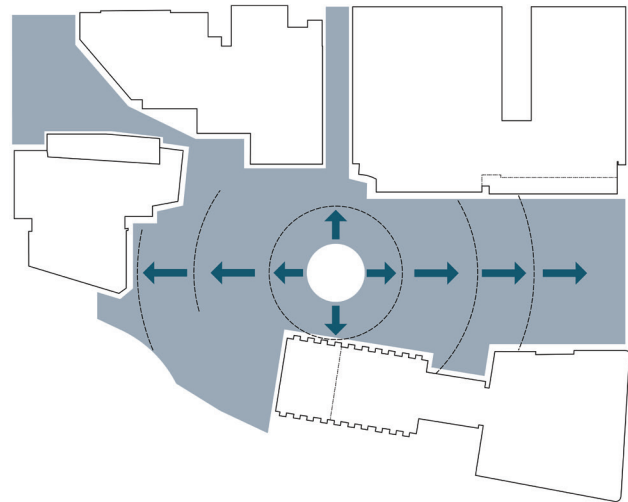
Sticky Edges

The Square is envisioned to have a series of re-imagined, active edges.



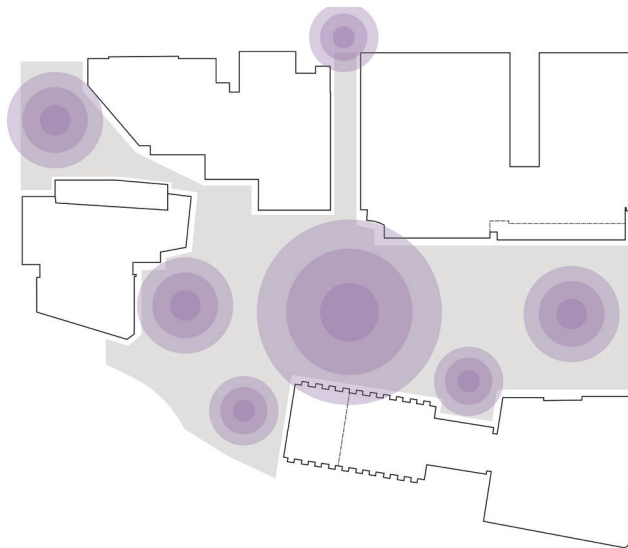
Leverage Grades

Three significant grade breaks are leveraged as a positive feature.



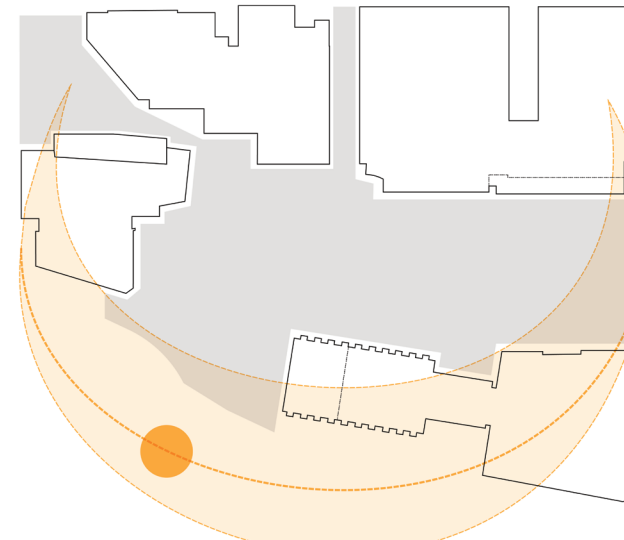
Maximize Gathering Space

The heart of the space is opened up to create new possibilities for gathering.



Create a Hierarchy of Nodes

A series of seamless 'rooms' are created to offer multiple possibilities.



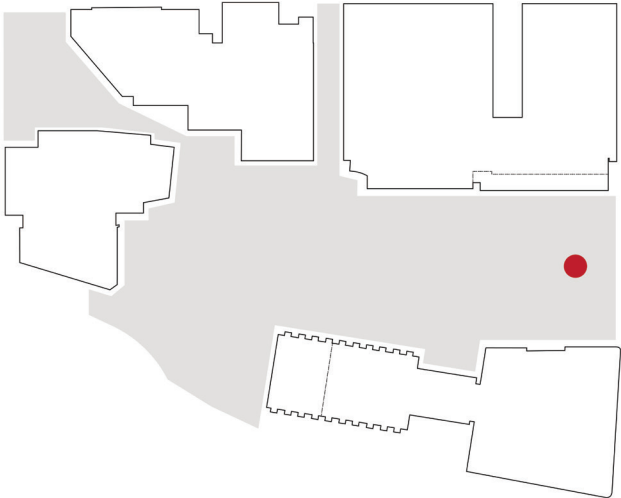
Optimize Solar Access

Seating and gathering spaces are reorientated for comfort.

The Monoliths and the Fountain

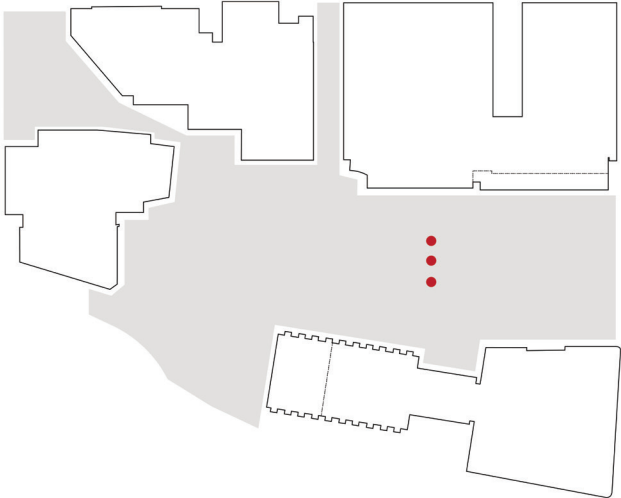
The role of the Monoliths can be rethought to open up the Square.

In their current location, they orient the entire Square towards themselves and preclude larger gatherings or other uses in the central part of the space. Various options were explored to understand how these elements might be best retained on site.



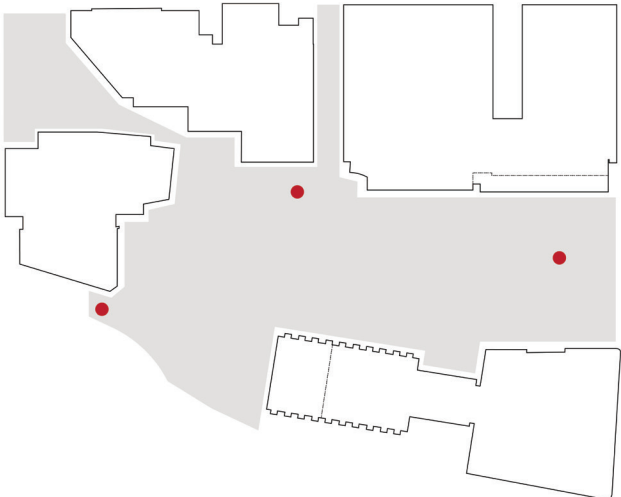
Option 1: Move Up

- One option would be to shift the monoliths to the upper Civic Plaza. Here they would speak to the heritage also personified by City Hall.



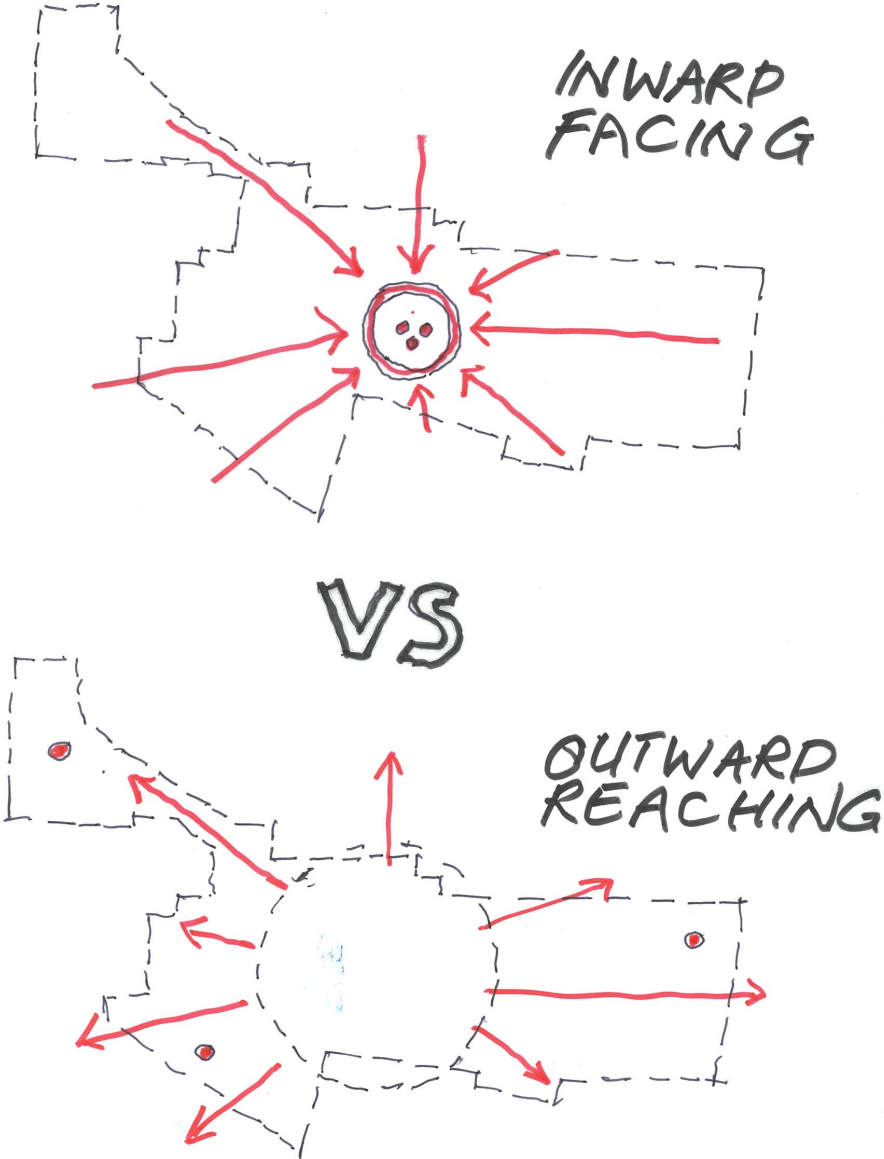
Option 2: Shift a Little

A new home for the monoliths in the central area that doesn't dominate the space is also possible.



Option 3: Scatter

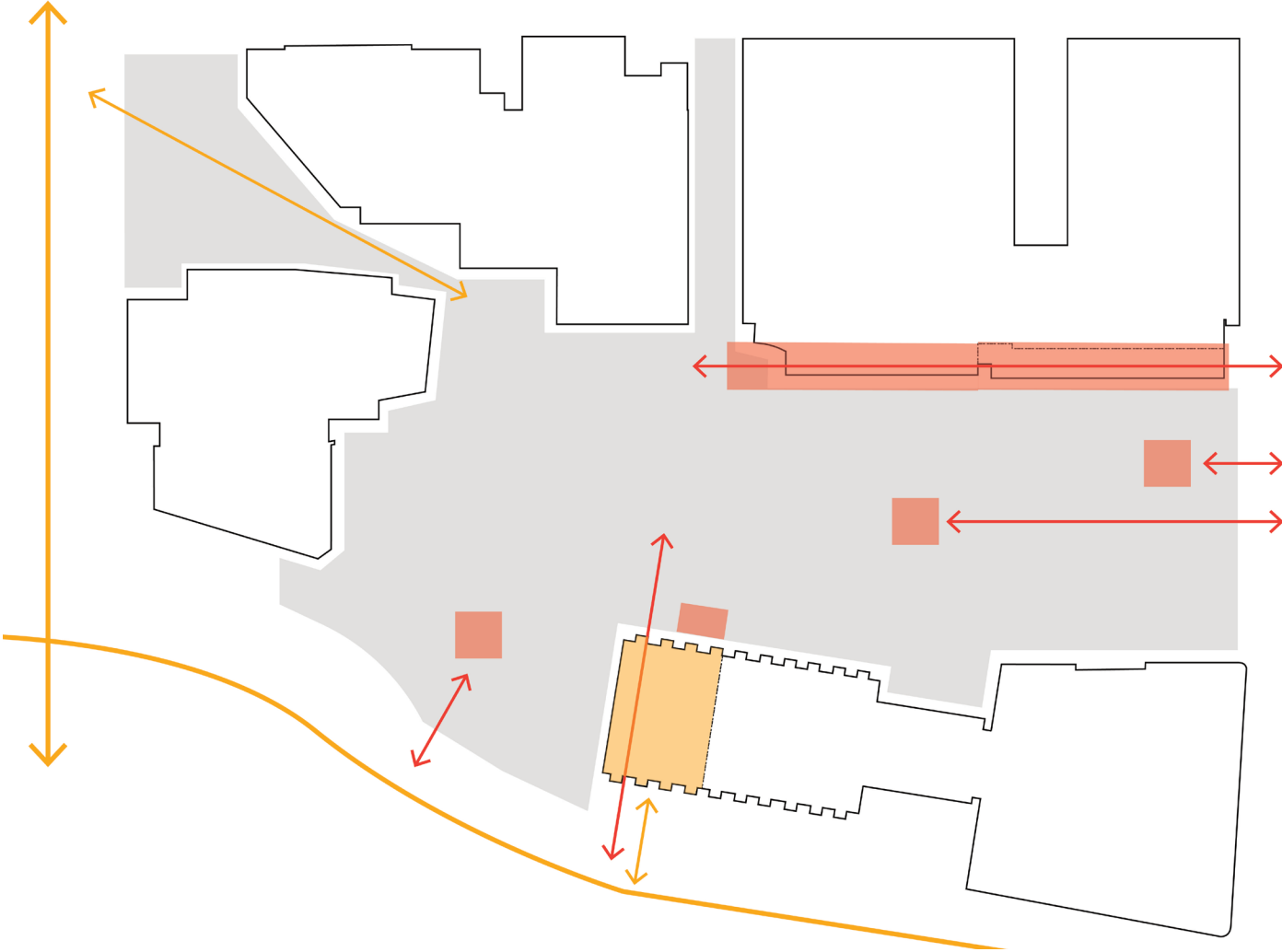
The monoliths can also be separated with one announcing an arrival from each major gateway direction.



Commercial Space + Bike Valet

A key part of activating the Square will be bringing a commercial energy to the space.

The team has looked at numerous configurations for the different commercial types and edges that might exist. The interim condition will retain the bike valet in it's current location to continue to facilitate connections. An adjacent commercial kiosk will also bring retail amenities into the park. Animating the arcade next to the parkade will anchor the Northern edge as well as help with CPTED concerns.



The Trees

The renewed Centennial Square should focus on a tree strategy for the next 50-100 years.

Many of the current trees bring a sense of character and scale to the site, however some block important sight lines, impact or damage existing infrastructure, or restrict gathering spaces. The team has looked at keeping some key specimens and introducing the next generation of trees for the future, species of appropriate scale that help the site adapt to a changing climate, reduce local heat island effects, and aid in stormwater management. In particular, the existing Sequoia and Sweetgum, planted over the old Cormorant Street paving, are causing damage to adjacent infrastructure and have a limited ability to thrive. Previous attempts to mitigate these impacts have been unsuccessful, and a new strategy better suited to the site conditions is needed, to provide growing conditions suitable for the future.



A Collaborative Process

The current process builds on Public Engagement completed as part of the Centennial Square Action Plan.

The revised concept is grounded in public and stakeholder feedback, particularly around the Action Plan process. Robust staff engagement and workshops were held, to distill a plan reflective of the needs and wants of the community.

Process statistics:

- 1500 responses from Pop Up Events and Online Survey
- 20 different stakeholder groups consulted
- 12 design ideas / solutions from an "Ideas Jam".

Experience

playful seating elements and art

destination outdoor art gallery public art elements

come when it's cold and rainy

come to discover

shady tree spots grab a bite eat and relax

come for lunch

URBAN OASIS

ACTIVE YEAR ROUND

CIVIC HEART

CELEBRATION

URBAN PLAY

DESTINATION

winter markets light displays digital art covered areas

come to see local art

come to socialize

community block party community gatherings

come for local events and food

markets unique events

Centennial Square



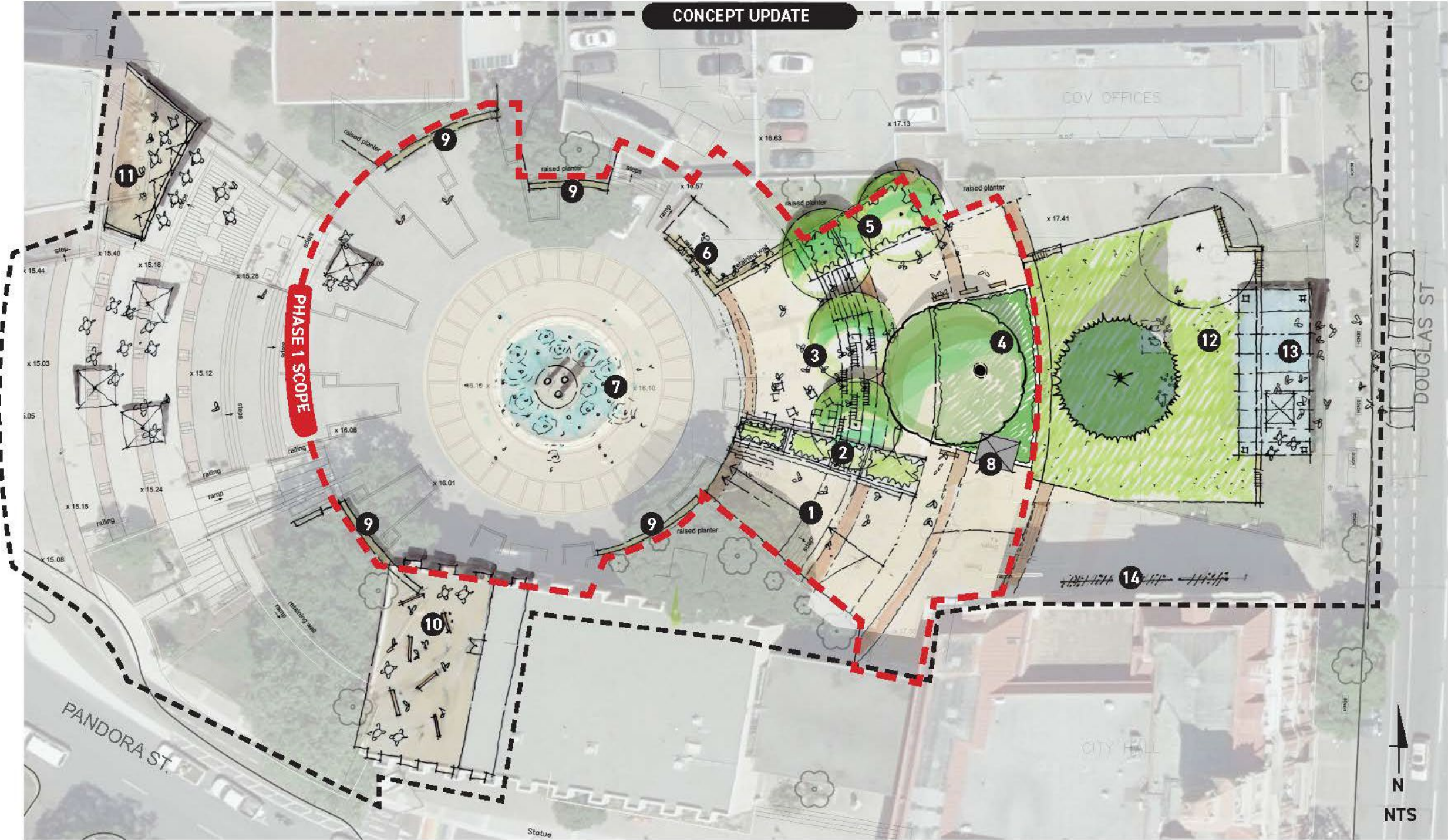
The Original Concept

The original Centennial Square Action Plan presented a vision for the Square in 2018 balancing a number of elements.

Through a variety of original site analysis, community workshops, design events, and internal working groups a vision was presented that sought to introduce a more active central feature while also providing updates to accessible paths of travel.



The Original Concept



PHASE 1

- 1. Accessible ramp
- 2. Planter / Water feature
- 3. Rest and shade area with seating terraces, new shade trees and play space and features

- 4. Planter and understory plantings around existing large canopy tree
- 5. Additional lawn area with new shade trees
- 6. Seating steps at opened platform

- 7. Splash park with in-ground spray features around existing monoliths
- 8. Commercial unit/ kiosk
- 9. Improved seating at perimeter

FUTURE PHASES

- 10. Indoor multipurpose space
- 11. Enclosed commercial space
- 12. Improved lawn area
- 13. Transit hub with large canopy structure
- 14. Bike parking

Three Concept Options

Three concepts were developed, to explore the recommended open space program for the Square.

Each concept built on the outcomes of the site analysis and staff feedback on operations and programming, to test potential design ideas and spatial configurations. Trialing each ultimately led the team to a new concept premised on the big moves developed here: improving accessibility, opening the space up for more better and family friendly programming, and upgrading infrastructure to include a more climate friendly water feature and efficient mechanical systems.



The Urban Forest

Conjoining the spaces and giving a new central identity is a central, iconic commercial element paired with a bosque that can have echoes throughout the site and can pull people into the Square from Pandora and Douglas.



The Square

This scheme focuses on taking the original concept and tweaking it, adding in some elements that have become necessary since the work in 2019. A central water feature still grounds the entire space - a true square! - with entries from the East and West that reflect a Civic gateway as well as an Indigenous focused Spirit Square.



The Urban Plaza

Where before there were multiple spaces that made up Centennial Square, this scheme prioritizes making two larger ones that speak of mixing the modern with the past. Commercial space can be located in the undercroft zone.

Urban Design Narrative

Originally conceptualized as a catalyst for civic renewal in the 1960s, Centennial Square and its modernist elements, including the bespoke fountain and artistic monoliths, no longer best serve the contemporary needs of Victoria. In 2017, the Downtown Public Realm Plan outlined a vision for renewal, improving activation, addressing safety and accessibility concerns, weaving in elements of play and whimsy, and ultimately replacing end of life infrastructure to optimize city maintenance and operations.

The Centennial Square Improvement Project began its journey with a clear mandate and a concept that built upon work completed as part of the Downtown Public Realm Plan. The initial concept, which was developed prior to the pandemic, imagined a new interactive water feature at the core of the square, flanked by ample seating, trees, and planted areas, including a grassy lawn. It proposed a space that could support and host diverse programming, from night or farmers markets to concerts to civic festivals and other events, improving sight lines to and through the site and anchored by a commercial kiosk. However, the impact of the pandemic and a growth in population within the downtown core has placed additional pressures on Centennial Square in terms of concerns over safety, accessibility, and inclusion, as well as the influx of young families and a renewed interest in the downtown core.



In addition, the modernist fountain, encircling the three monoliths adorned with Italian glass mosaic, has been an important driver of both the original concept response and urban design ethos as well as the new Centennial Square. The monoliths represent an important aspect of the history of Victoria and its relationship with its neighbours, the three surrounding municipalities of Oak Bay, Esquimalt, and Saanich. However, the fountain's aspect, orientation, and location have become problematic when looked at through the lens of a contemporary and vibrant public space, the need for flexible and supportive spaces for programming, and the importance of a safe and connected site, and the project process has sought to balance out the influence of the past with the needs of the future.



The Big Idea

In collaboration with the Project Team, the “big idea” for Centennial Square revolves around the notion of home, a space for the community to come together. The concept seeks to create three distinct “rooms”, each serving a unique purpose while seamlessly blending into one cohesive space and leveraging plants and materials that reflect and showcase the context of the Victoria landscape.

The first room, the front porch, has a prominent location on Douglas Street. This is the most formal space, the front of house that welcomes visitors graciously, and sets the tone for the experiences and opportunities within. The Douglas Street Plaza is the gateway to the Square, a formal yet inviting space – one that exudes a sense of civic importance and responds to the proximity of the historic City Hall. Accessibility has been improved by the elimination of stairs, and ramps now transition down the slope in intuitive and natural manner, connecting to the north entrance of City Hall and the Parkade.

The Heart is the living room of Centennial Square, a flexible and fun space that transitions both in formality and elevation. This is the centre of activity and energy, at times both a relaxed and playful space where users can unwind, socialize, and connect with each other. Designed with flexibility and play in mind, the openness of the Plaza invites visitors to stop and linger and supports a wide range of diverse programming opportunities for festivals and events.

Moving west, towards Chinatown, the Green expands the already successful Spirit Square into a verdant oasis, the backyard of the Square. This lush, green zone contrasts some of the more structured spaces within the Square, inviting the community in to kick off their shoes and relax on the lawn. These moves are complimented by activated edges that encourage interaction, foster connection, and increase activity both around and into the Square.



exciting, comfortable,
welcoming, friendly, cozy,
familiar, destination

**BACK
YARD**

**HOME
(HEART)**

**FRONT
YARD**

passive recreation, relaxing,
cozy, welcoming

gateway, formal, green,
urban, welcoming

Douglas Street Civic Plaza

The Douglas Street Civic Plaza stands as a testament to the City's civic pride and heritage, respecting the past while looking forward into the future. This prominent space anchors Centennial Square to the east, designed with a symmetry that acknowledges the relationship of the site to the historic City Hall as well as the urban grid of the former Cormorant Street. Within the Civic Plaza sit the relocated monoliths, thoughtfully sited to honour the artwork's historic significance and elevate civic presence along Douglas Street while also weaving the historic narrative of the city's past into the future of the Square. A bosque of trees opens sight lines to and through the Square, adding a valuable leafy green canopy to the City's urban forest without impeding light and views. The bosque creates a lush, biophilic backdrop, framing the relocated monoliths, and increasing resiliency for a changing climate, with future forward plant species selection, and the integration of soil cells and other low impact development / stormwater management features. Material selection and plaza layout have been carefully considered within the lens of designing a space that meets the needs of the community today and for future generations as well.



The Heart

The centre of the new design is The Heart, a playful focal point where the chatter of community gathering, joyous cries of delight, and the occasional splashes of water bring joy and whimsy to downtown. From the east, an elevated platform casts a watchful eye over the fountain, offering a place to sit and enjoy a coffee in the sunshine on movable tables and chairs, host buskers or street performers during the farmers market, or from which a noon-time Zumba class may be taught, and housing the modern and updated mechanical infrastructure below. Stone steps and planting traverse the grade change, spilling down to a seasonal shallow pool where toes can be dipped or water can be played in, inviting the young, and young at heart, to sit and linger. The stone, planting, and water feature is inspired by the coastal landscapes of Victoria, hearkening back to the slopes of Beacon Hill Park, and strongly connecting the Square to its sense of place in the surrounding landscapes. Heading west a flexible plaza space, with an interactive fountain, offers endless opportunities for both gathering and play. When turned on, jets of water with integrated lighting and sound and energy to the Square, inviting visitors to stop, engage with neighbours, and play. When the fountain is off, the plaza becomes a foil for celebration and gathering, hosting a holiday market, a weeknight performance, or a full-scale civic festival, or even a simple splash in the rain. Integrated seating is built into the edges of this central space, allowing people to sit and linger with a coffee purchased from the commercial kiosk or even enjoy an outdoor workday meeting with colleagues. Safety concerns are mitigated through enhanced sight lines, fostering connectivity and functionality across the Square. New and distinctive lighting will contribute to this inviting new heart.

The Green

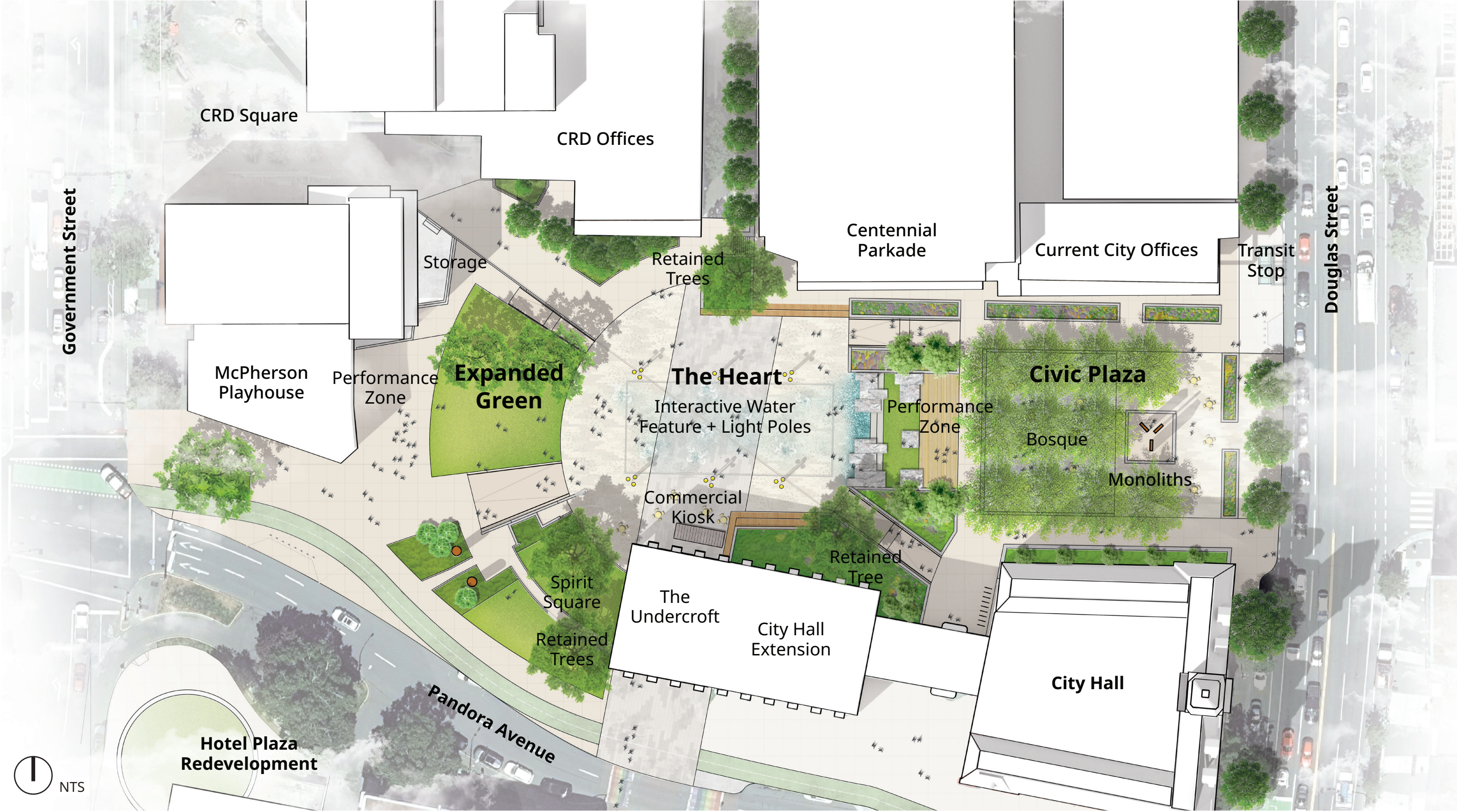
The west edge of the Square is its "backyard", the place to bask in the sunshine or spread a blanket on the lawn to take in a movie displayed on the facade of the McPherson Theatre. The transition of this space from hardscape to softscape invites additional greenery into downtown, expanding the green of Spirit Square and encouraging infiltration of stormwater and mitigating the impacts of the urban heat island. New trees in this space contribute to the City's urban forest, and create a soft, welcoming edge without blocking views into the plaza.

Active Edges

The new design seeks to intentionally activate the edges, enhancing the vibrancy and encouraging positive use of the space. Sight lines have been opened, reducing the perception of places to hide, and the addition of seating encourages activation and lingering. The long-term future of the Centennial Parkade is unknown, but a parking structure is not likely the highest and best use of the site, and the concept design responds to this anticipated future change in a way that seeks to maximize flexibility for the future without compromising the activation of the edge condition in the present. Clear pedestrian paths of travel connect Douglas Street through to Pandora and Government Street, encouraging foot traffic to traverse through rather than around the Square. Opportunities to further enhance the architecture of the arcade, such as improved lighting, colour and material selection and the transparency and activity of at grade uses are also tools that will help to energize these important edges.



The Updated Concept Plan





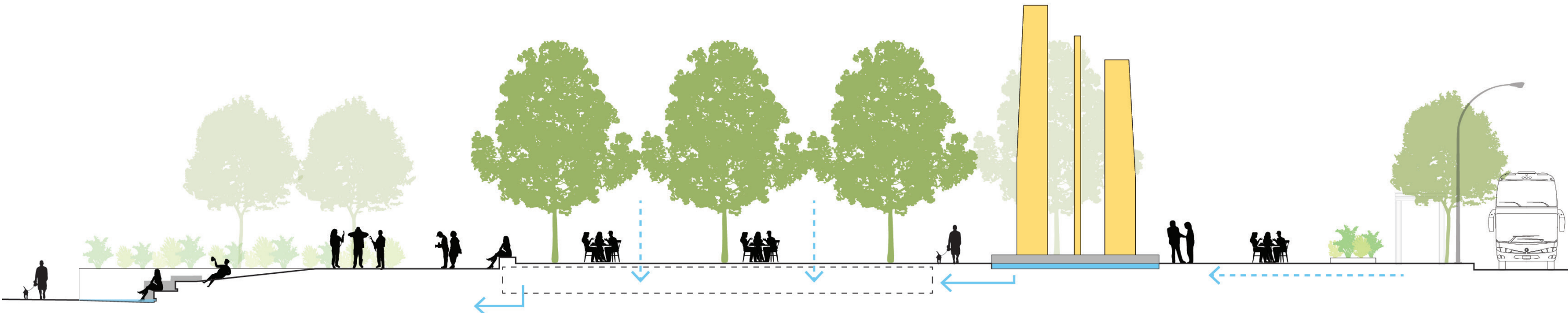
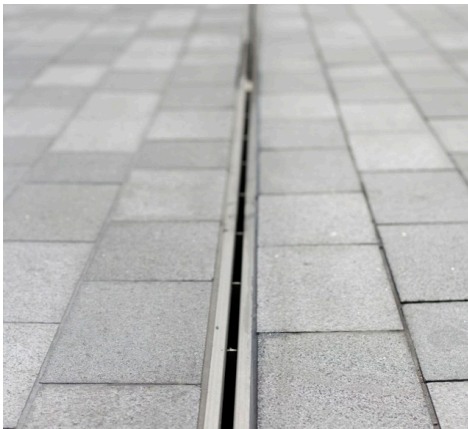
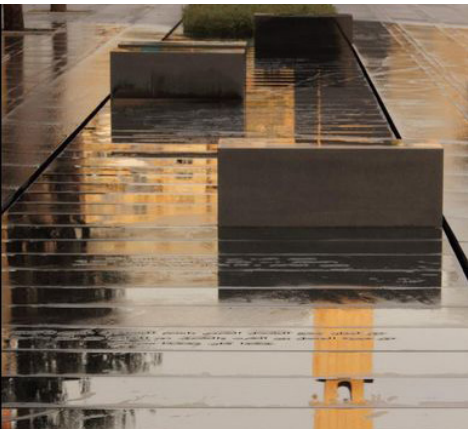
View of Douglas Street Plaza from the northeast looking south.

Douglas Street Plaza

A Civic Story

The Douglas Street Plaza is the gateway to the Square, a new front porch for Downtown Victoria. The centre of the Plaza is anchored by the relocated monoliths, honouring their significance to the story of the Victoria with this prominent location only footsteps from City Hall. New trees, planted in a traditional bosque formation, is a striking and lush backdrop that frames the public walkway to and through the Square, opening up sight lines while maintaining an essence of civic formality. Seating under the dappled shade of the trees can be replaced with tents for a Holiday or Farmers Market, and a new planter provides a gentle separation from the bustling energy of the Douglas Street transit corridor.

The front will be a broad space where food trucks or other commercial elements can find temporary homes. Further in will be the retained monuments - sitting in a skim of water - and past them will be a bosque where the trees are able to grow large due to soil cells beneath. Water can be used as a theme through highlighting stormwater at grade and then capturing it for use in the soil cells.





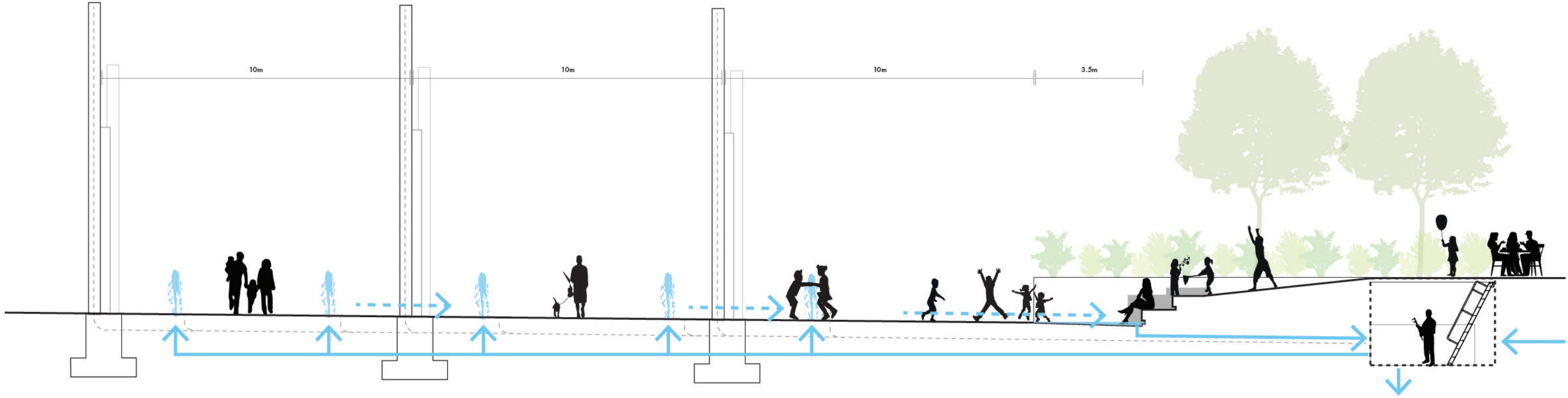
View of The Heart from the northwest looking south towards City Hall.

IF THAT YEAR, A FEW WEALTHY SAN FRANCISCO MERCHANTS REBUILT THE CITY

The Heart - A Playful Experience

A Fun and Flexible Zone

The water feature will be a series of flush spray heads that can animate the plaza. The fountains will be on programmable circuits that also feature lights that can change colour. Water will then run off - as well as pool due to help from smaller bubblers - at a small seating node. The design will allow for turning off the larger fountain zone to host events while pooling can still occur at the seating. The system will be recirculating water, and supported by a buried (but not confined space) mechanical room above the upper wood deck performance zone.





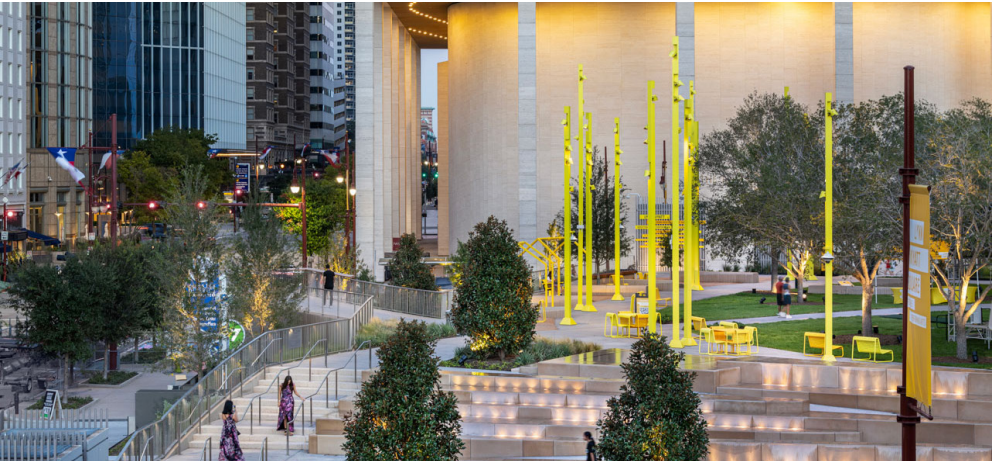
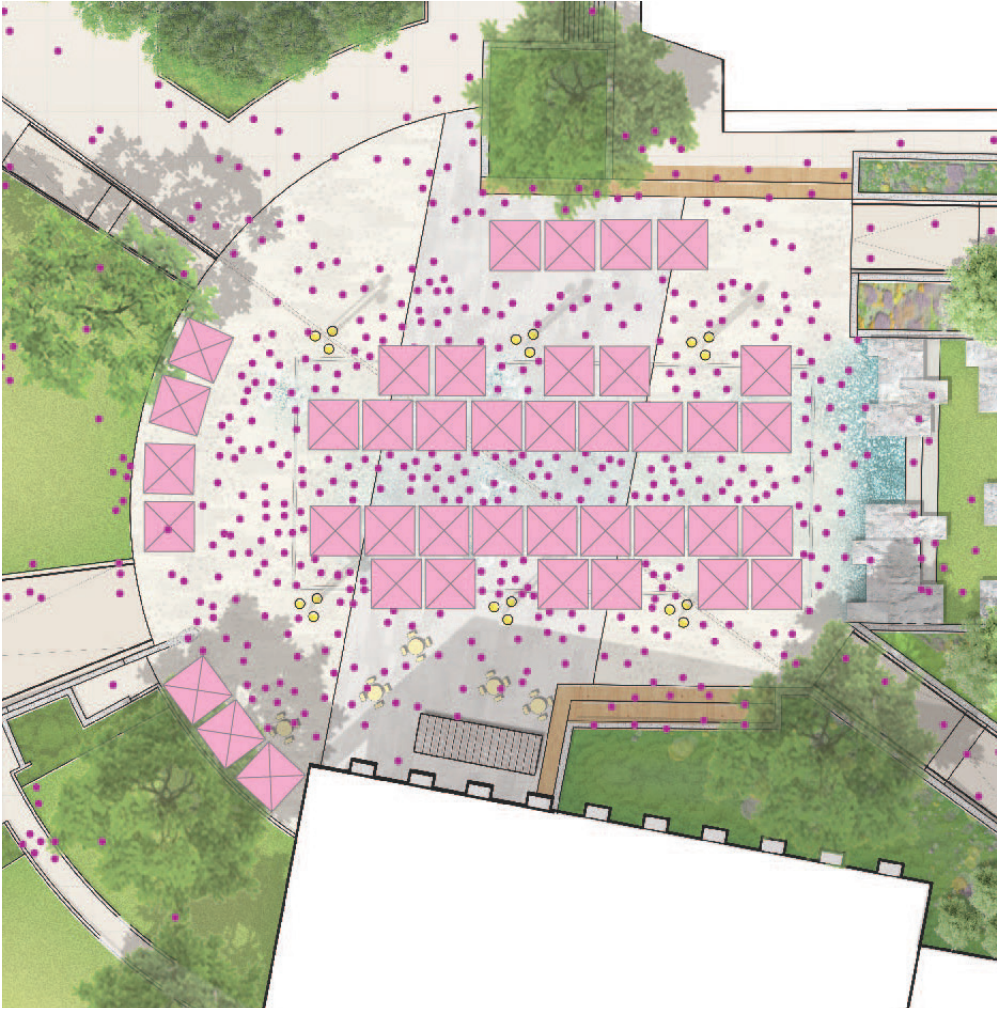
Aerial View of The Heart during a fall market, looking east.

Light Poles + Events

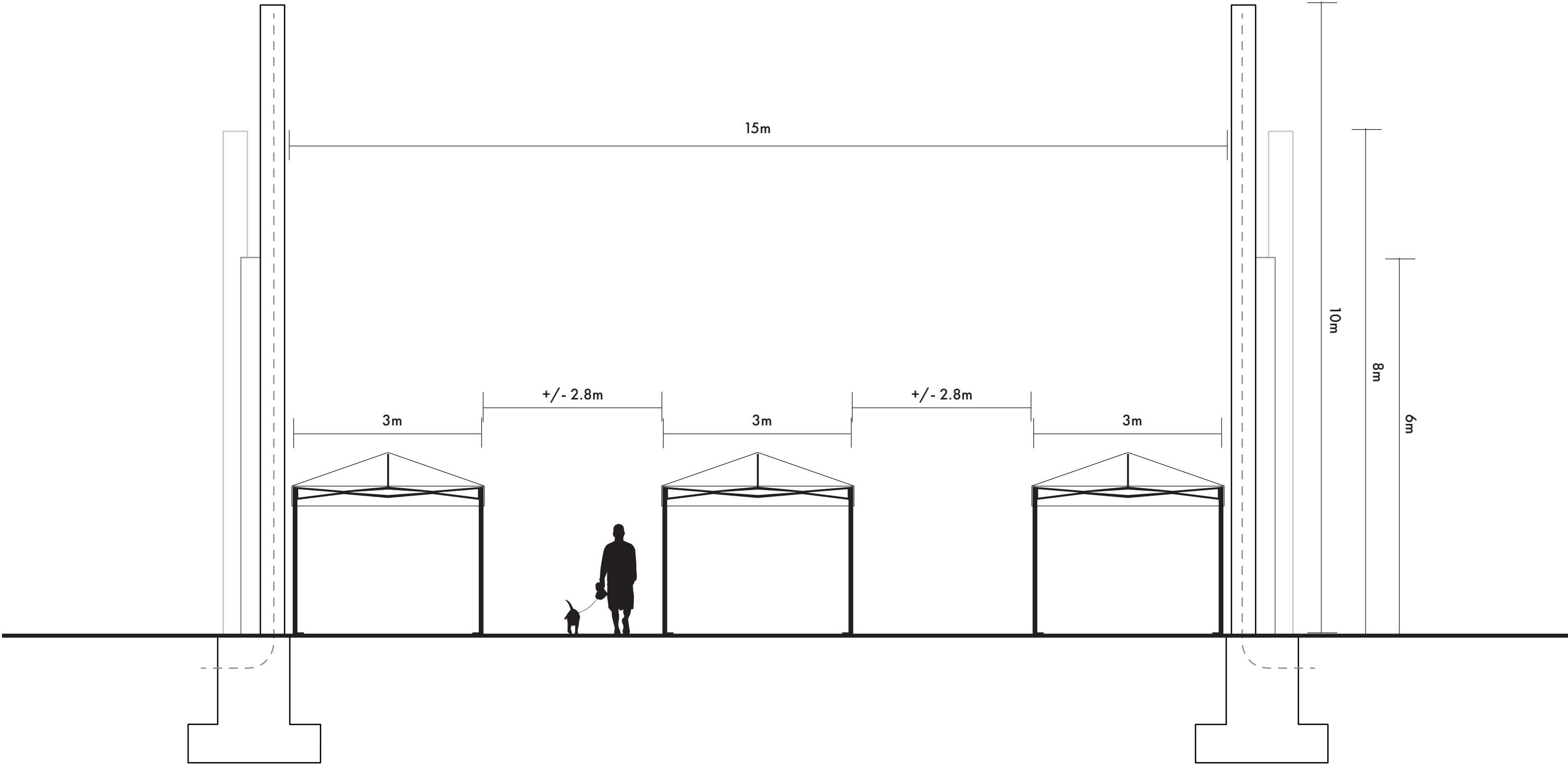
Framing the Square

The central portion of the Square is where major events will occur and the majority of day-to-day gathering will be centered. To frame this space is proposed a series of light poles that provide not just illumination, but also an opportunity to host art or other elements. The cluster of three poles reflects the height and organization of the monoliths, a contemporary and functional reference to the site's heritage. The poles also provide an opportunity for the provision of shade sails to enhance comfort and allow for flexible year-round use of the space.

Placing these poles to allow for events has been an important consideration, and the diagrams below and on the next page show spatial considerations to make sure they don't preclude any gatherings or event setup.



Light Poles + Events

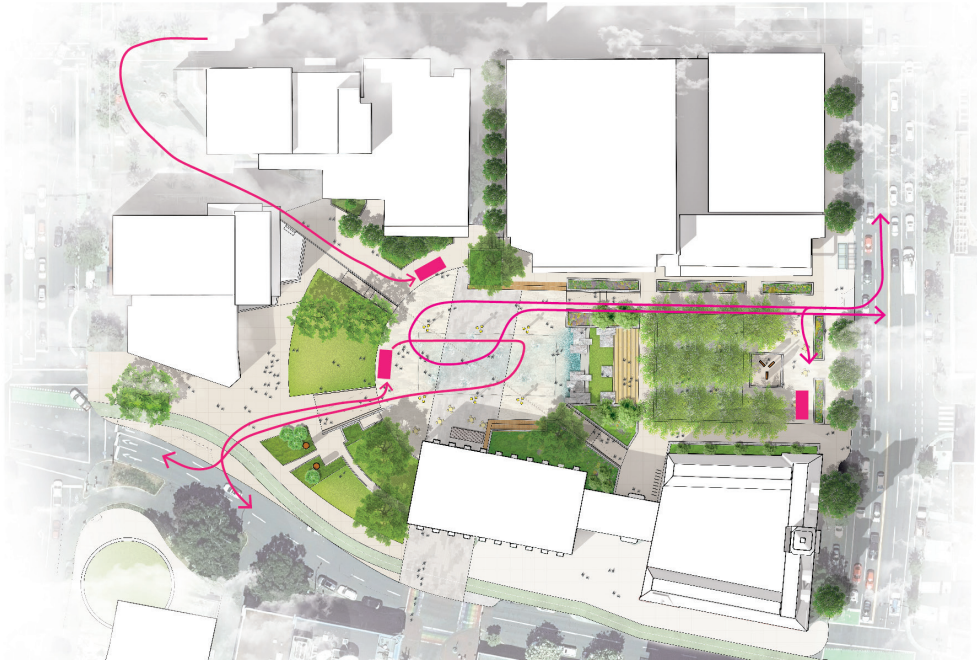


Programming and Performance Opportunities

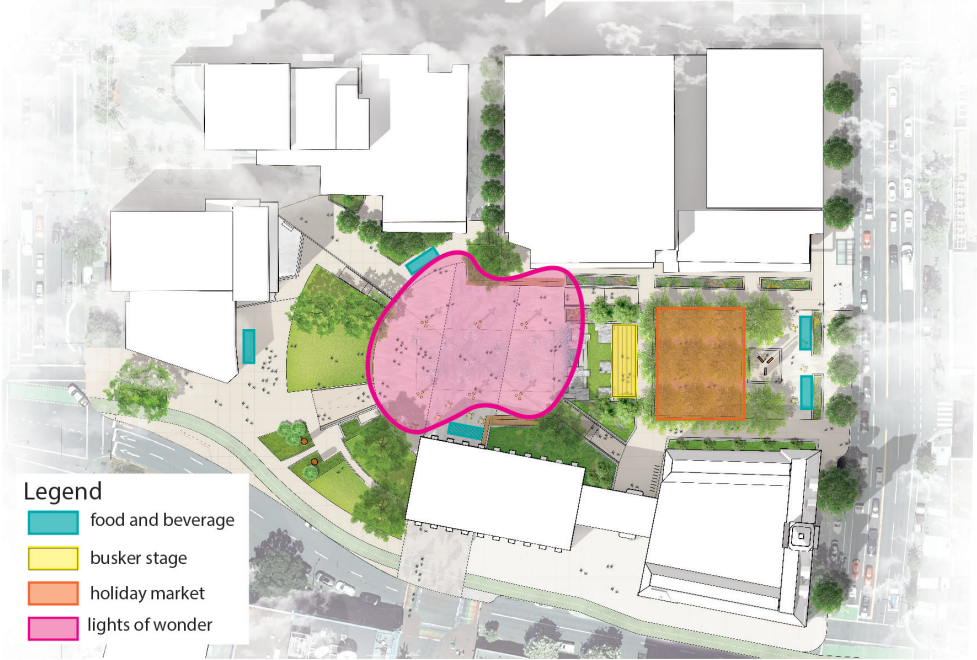
A flexible space for a variety of different events and gatherings.

The proposed concept has been tested against a series of possible events of varying sizes. The team has considered how holiday festivals, such as lights of wonder might work, as well as larger performance events. A potential market setup is also illustrated, along with possible loading options and access scenarios.

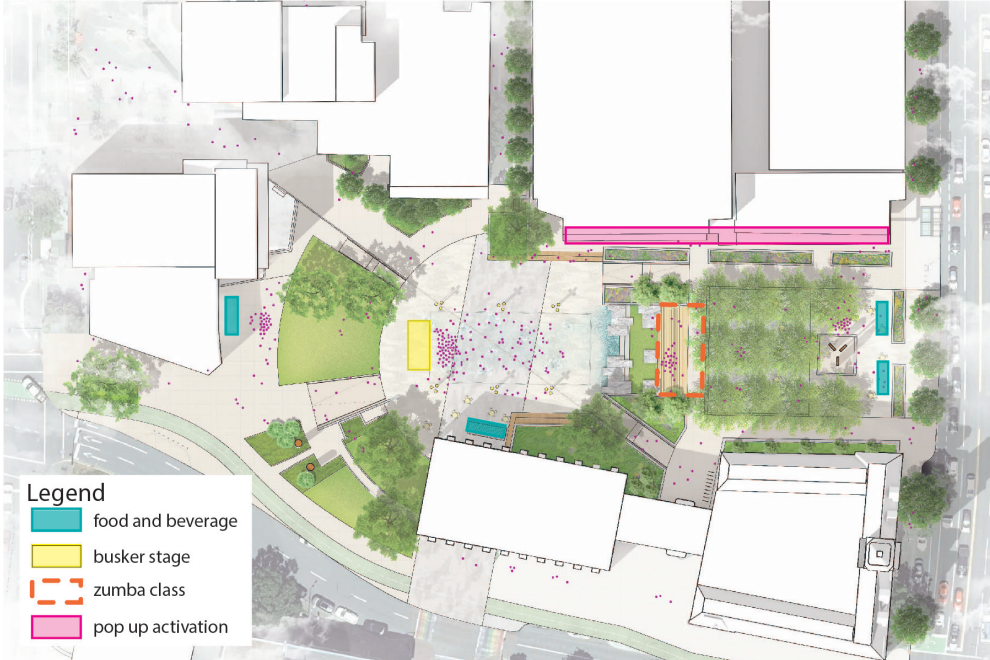
Loading + Access



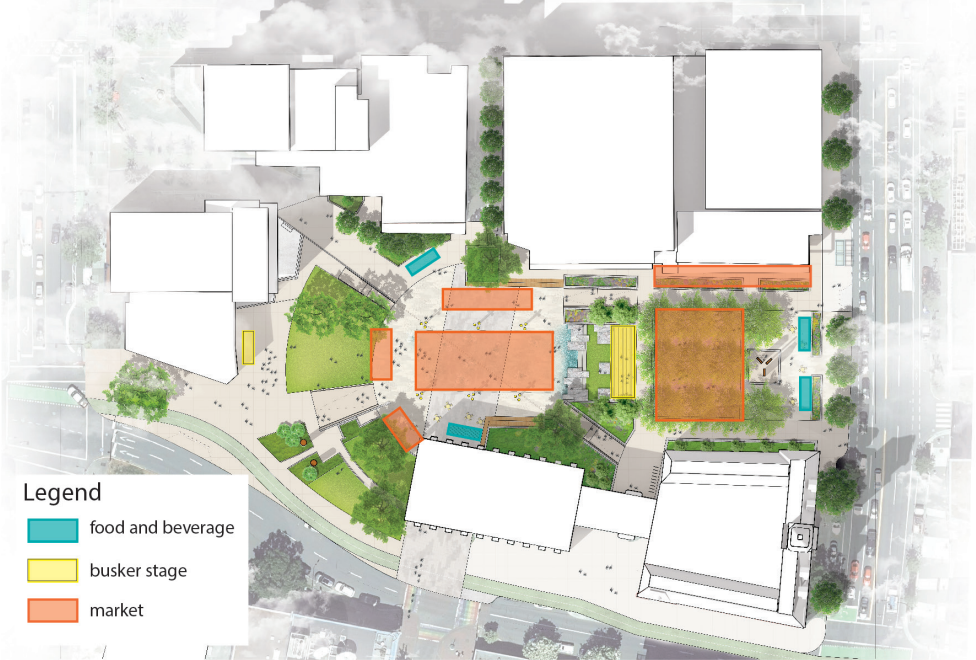
Holiday Events



Small Scale Programming

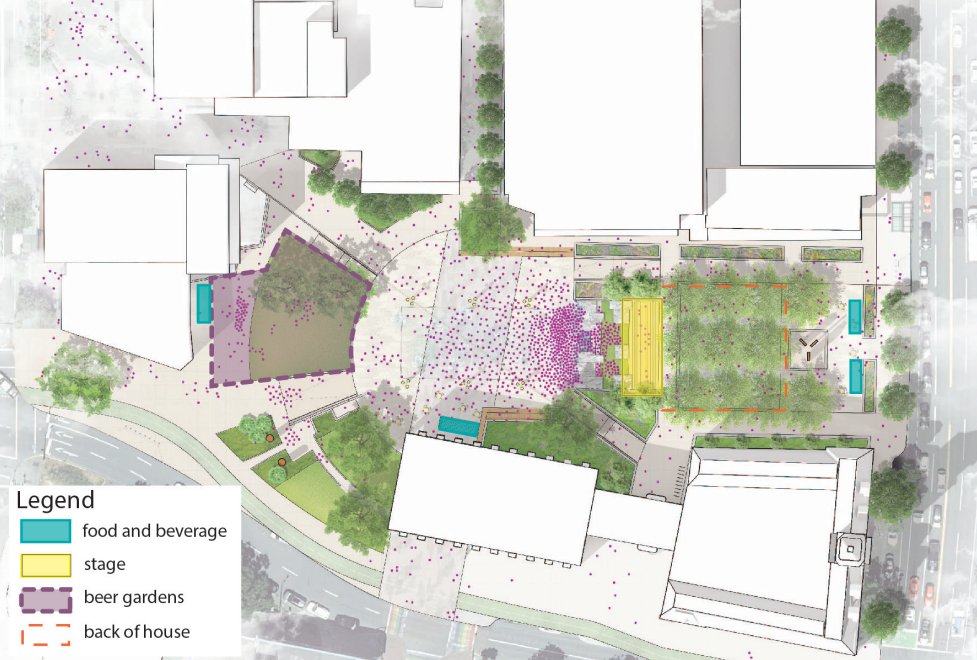


Market Day



Estimated Tent / Stall Capacity: 65-70

Large Performance

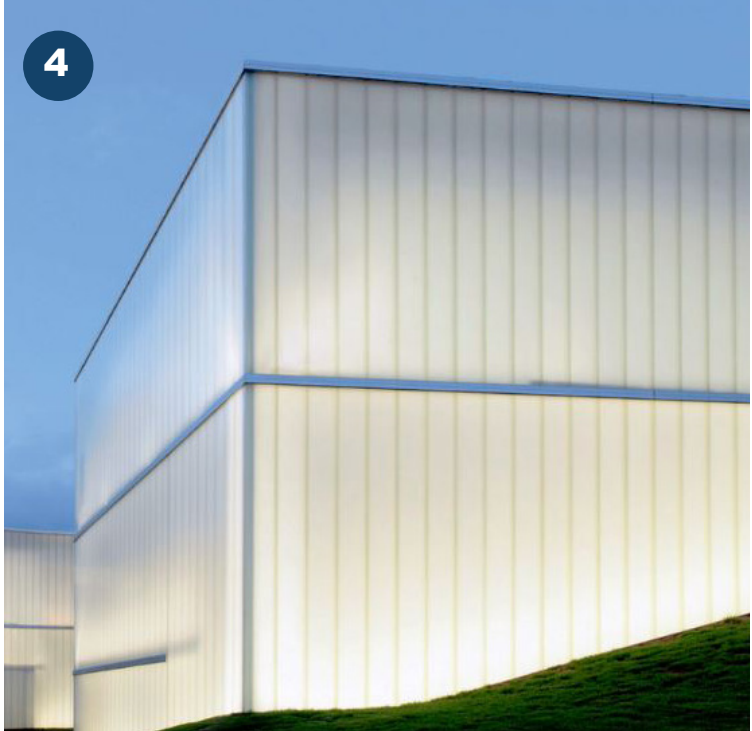
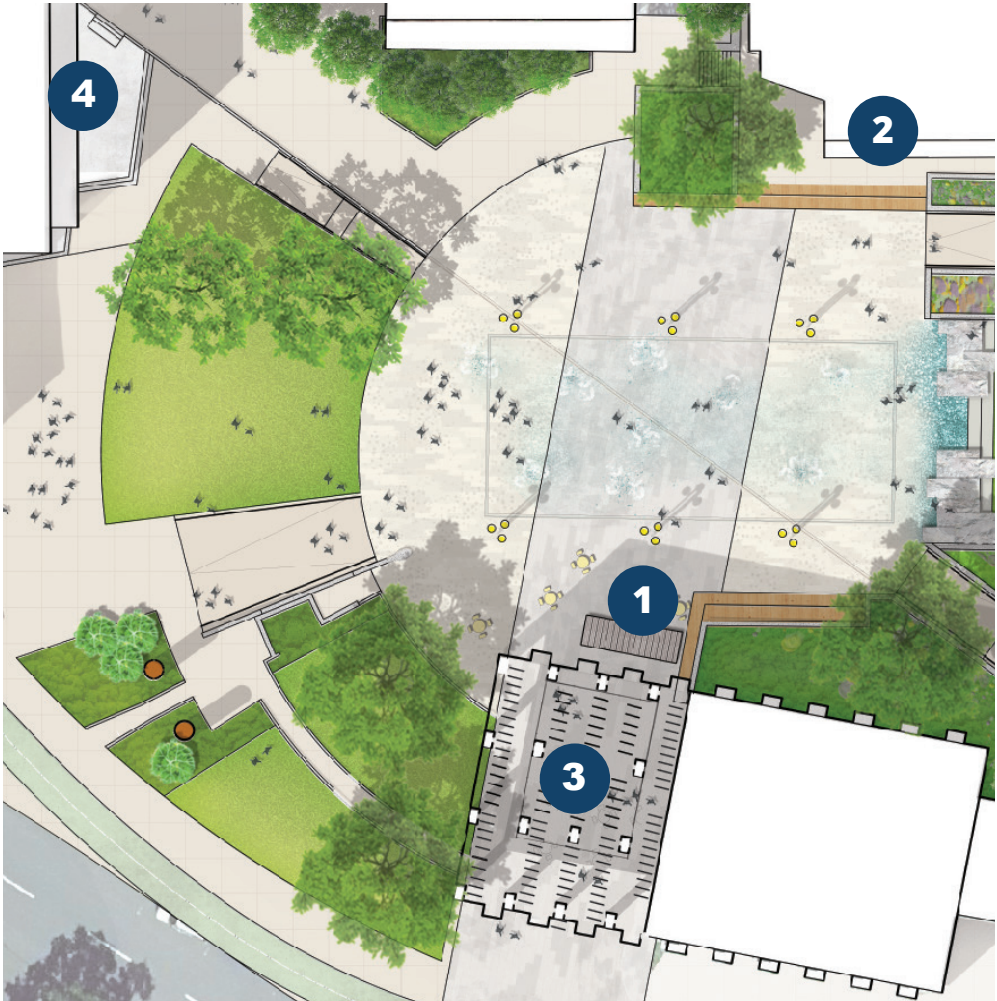


Estimated Large Event Audience Capacity: 4000 - 5000 people

Undercroft, Arcade, and Existing Stage

Supporting the Square

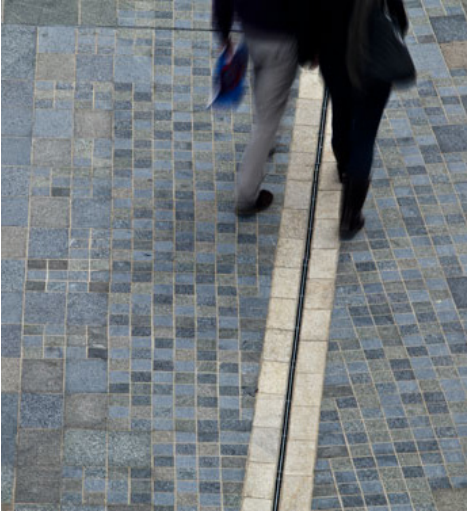
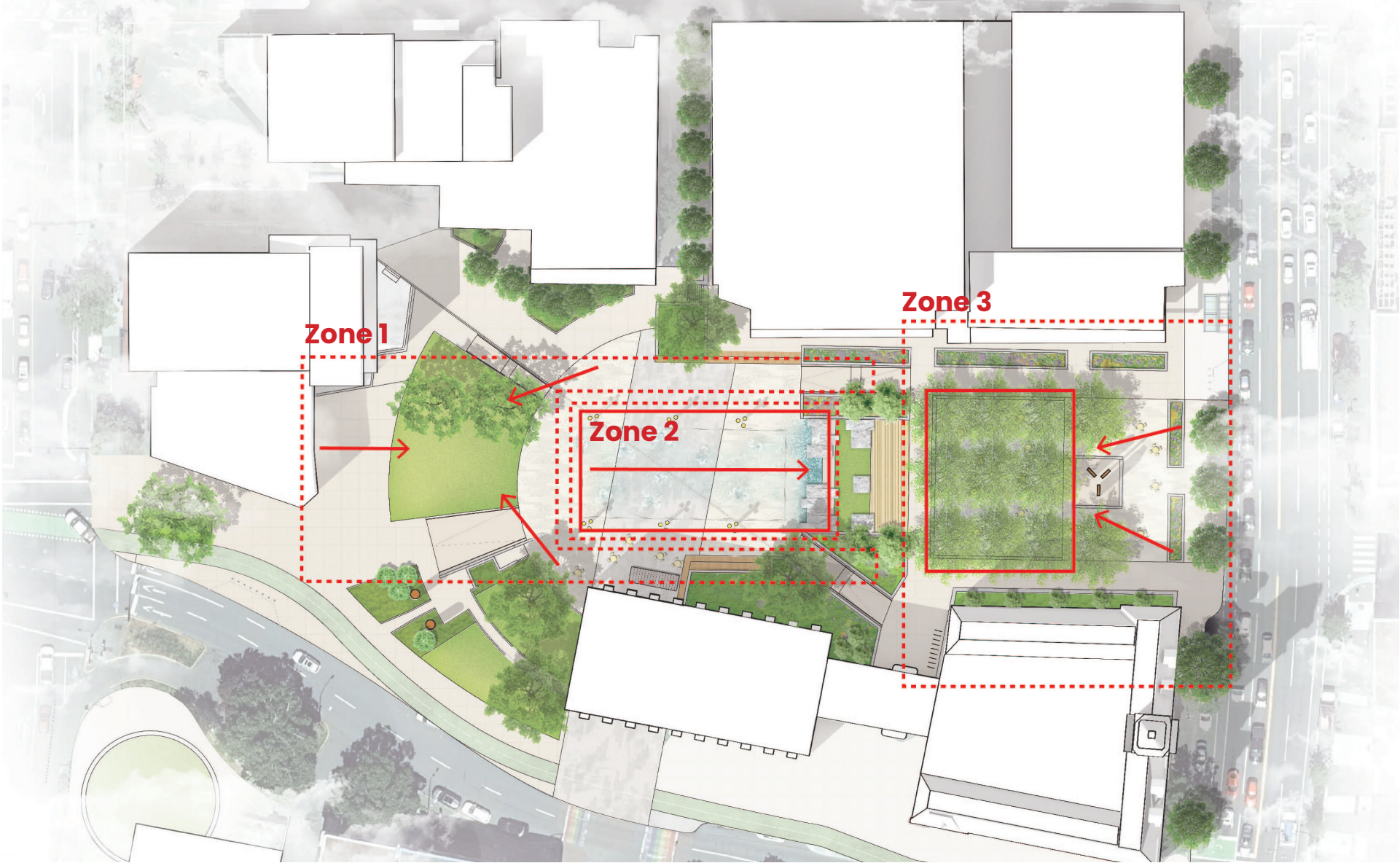
The functioning of the Square will be enhanced by a number of supporting uses and edge improvements. The undercroft will continue to house the successful bike valet with improved fencing and connections to the Square. A year-round commercial kiosk with incorporated small storage and changeroom facilities will be located adjacent to the Undercroft and have a character similar to the modified shipping containers or trailers shown in the images at right. Interior modifications will be made at the covered arcade on the north side of the site to allow temporary window art exhibits that will create interest and help animate the area. The existing stage will be modified to create enclosed, secure storage for equipment and furnishings that will support special events and daily activations.



Stormwater Strategy + Climate Resiliency

Celebrating and Reusing Water

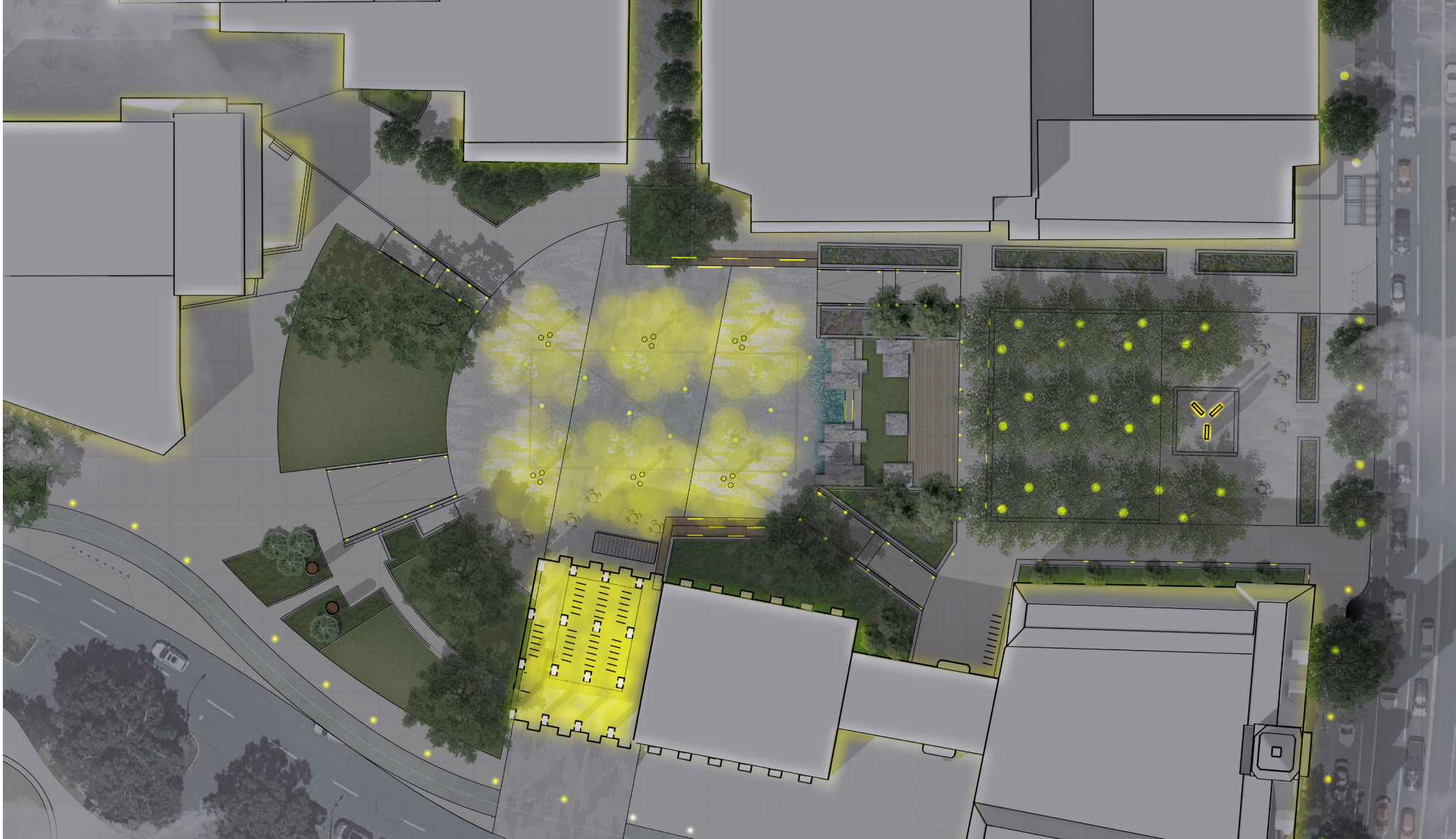
The revitalization of Centennial Square offers the opportunity to address the needs of a changing climate. The addition of new trees in the Douglas Street Civic Plaza, in soil cells, offers improved growing conditions, stormwater management, and certainty about the impacts of tree roots on below grade infrastructure. Stormwater in this plaza will be directed this soil cell gallery beneath the bosque to support the growth and vitality of large canopy trees. In the central Square, water will be captured through a series of clean, architectural drains, and the water feature is an amenity that helps in situations of extreme heat, providing cooling potential during hot days, with the ability to be turned off during periods of drought. Water in the rest of the site will be directed to planted zones where possible, and the expanded amount of green space helps to mitigate the impacts of the urban heat island effect.



Lighting Strategy

Vibrant and Colourful

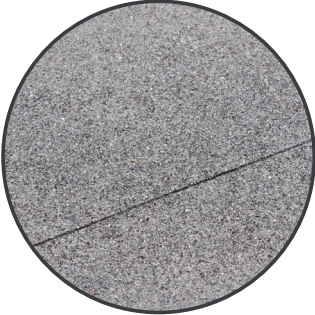
The site lighting strategy will centre on the feature light poles in the central area. These will be major elements capable of not just being illuminated, but mounted with lighting to spotlight elements during events and performances. The bosque will be lit for nighttime comfort and as a central element. A variety of supporting lighting will also be provided in the form of under-lights at walls and benches, colourful inset lights at stairs, and pedestrian pole lights as required.



Materiality

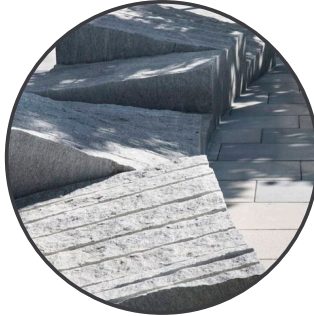
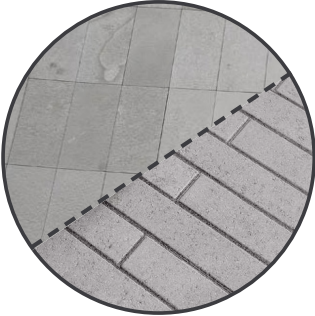
Materials to Reflect Context

Taking cues from the surrounding woods, rock, and habitats of Vancouver island a contemporary materials palette is shown.



1 CONCRETE / EXPOSED AGGREGATE

2 CRUSHED GRANULAR



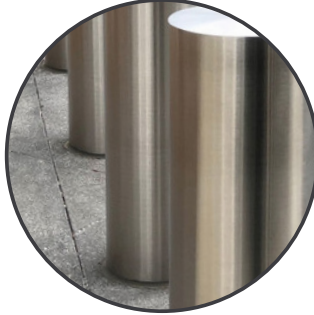
3 STONE + CONCRETE UNIT PAVERS

4 ARCHITECTURAL STONE ELEMENTS



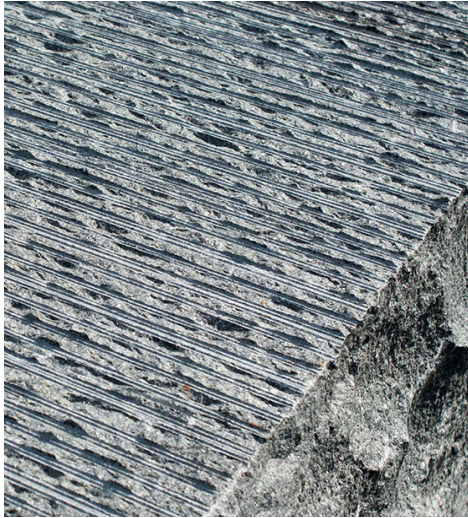
5 BRICK IN SELECT ZONES

6 INSET STORY ELEMENTS



7 WOOD FURNISHING ELEMENTS

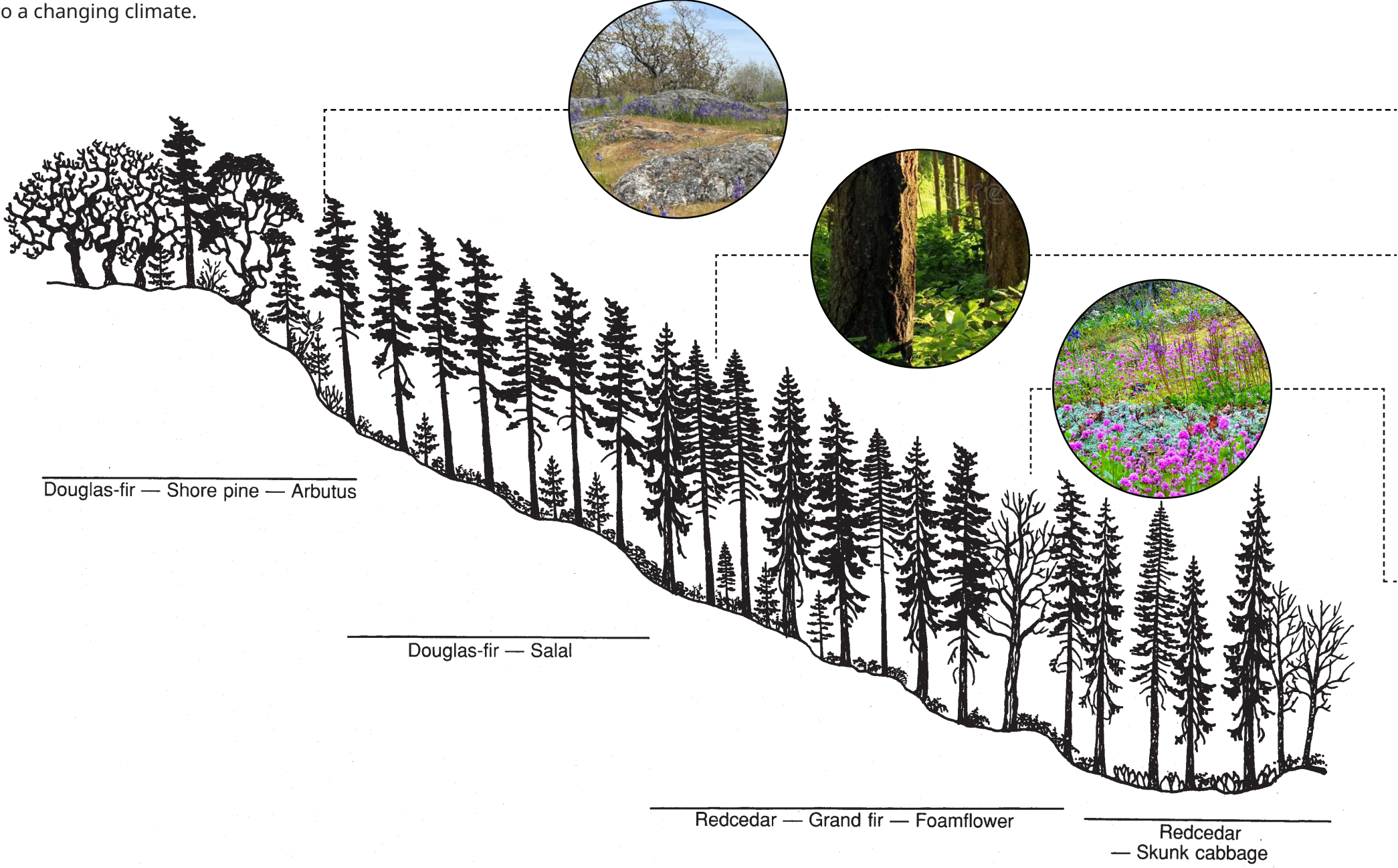
8 METAL SITE ELEMENTS



Planting

Bringing the Natural In

Victoria occupies one of Canada’s most unique biogeoclimatic zones. Shown on a transect, upper Garry Oak escarpments give way to more lush midlands down through to lowlands full of colour and blooms. We propose adapting these themes to an urban setting with a plant palette that seeks to enhance the City’s urban forest and is adapted to a changing climate.



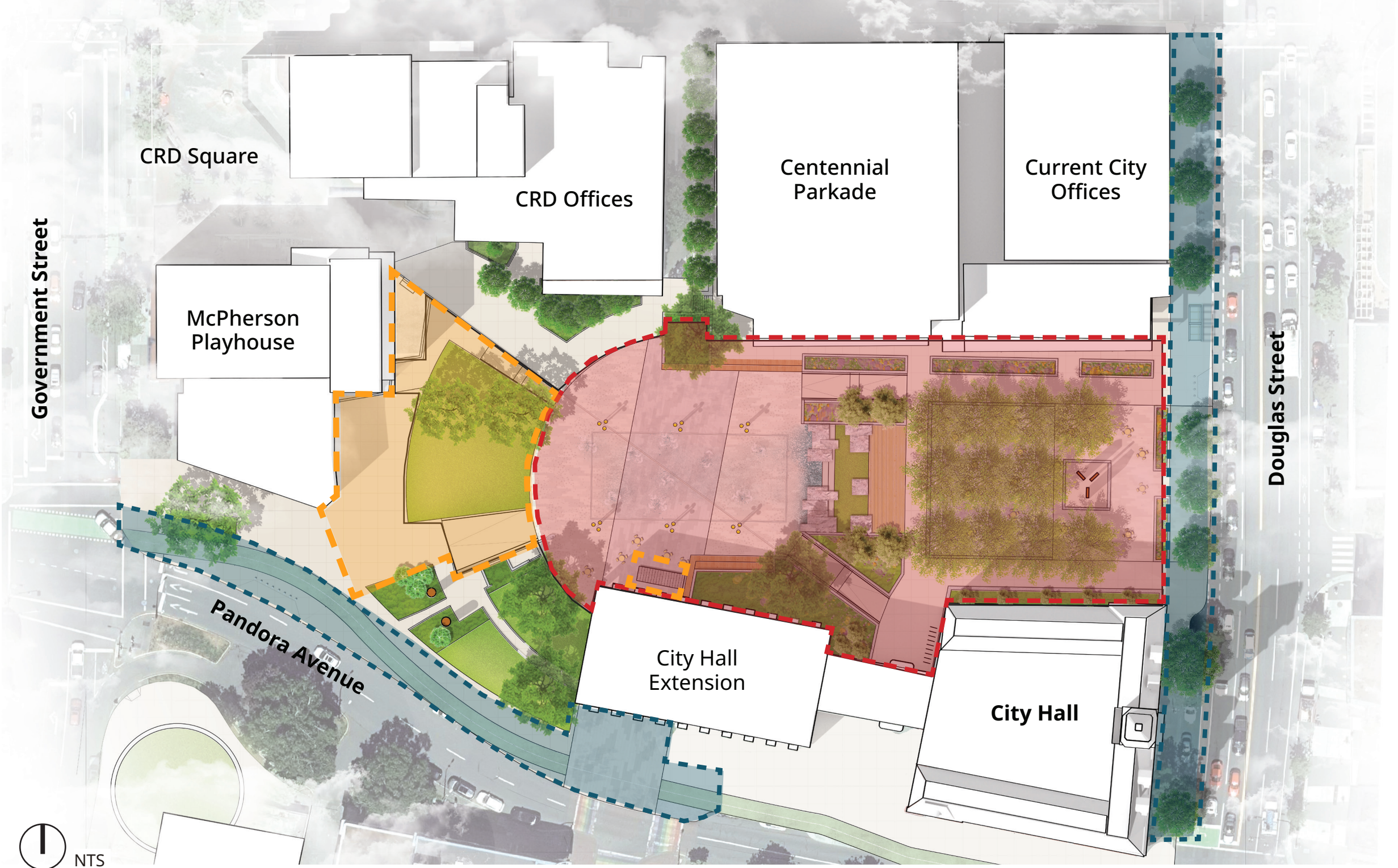
Moving Forward: Implementation

The concept for the revitalization of Centennial Square is comprised of a core scope of work that will be implemented in two phases. The core scope of work includes the relocation of the monoliths, the development of a new interactive water and play feature, the addition of the bosque of trees, and associated site improvements including decorative paving, site furnishings, planting, lighting, and associated site infrastructure. Hardscape improvements on the south side of the MacPherson Theatre and improvements to the pedestrian connections to CRD Square and Fisgard Street are not included.

Two additional scopes of work have been identified, outside of the core project, that will be completed through future transportation improvement capital projects. The phasing diagram on the next page identifies these areas on the plan. Streetscape improvements along Douglas and Pandora Streets are not required to fulfill the vision for Centennial Square and were not included in the class 'C' cost estimate completed as part of the project but are synergistic in nature and supportive of the project and the ongoing investment in Downtown Victoria.

The upcoming Douglas Street Rapid Transit Improvement project will establish an improved transit stop at the entrance to the civic plaza and will serve as a destination for RapidBus services, which aims to double ridership by 2030. This plan makes Centennial Square a key transit destination, complementing the Government Street Refresh pedestrianization efforts and strengthening connections to Chinatown. The transit stop improvements provide a key destination for pedestrians and cyclists, given the Square's central location at the heart of Downtown's commercial and tourist areas. These upgrades will enhance general transit and mobility through the Square, increasing its vibrancy and activity. Streetscape improvements envisioned at the Pandora St frontage that would better connect the existing AAA bike route to the Square may be considered for inclusion in future transportation capital projects.

Phasing Strategy



- PHASE ONE / CORE PROJECT
- PHASE TWO / CORE PROJECT
- FUTURE STREETScape UPGRADES

NTS





Centennial Square Revitalization Project

Concept Design Report

DIALOG



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Moving Forward: Implementation	37



SOURCE: WWW.TIMSCOLONIST.COM

Executive Summary

The City of Victoria is embarking on a significant endeavor to reimagine one of its pivotal downtown public spaces. The transformation of Centennial Square seeks to meet the evolving demands of a vibrant city and redefine the concept of a “civic heart”, navigating both changing demographics and post-pandemic relationships with downtown public space. With increasing concerns about the perceived safety of the Square, aging infrastructure at the end of its life, and a public art piece in need of significant investment and restoration, the time is right to explore what a revitalized Centennial Square could be.

Originally conceived in the early 1960s, Centennial Square emerged as a bold and pioneering effort to revitalize downtown Victoria. Spearheaded by the Permanent Projects Committee of the Victoria Centennial Advisory Committee, this endeavor formed a crucial part of a broader urban renewal initiative. Amidst the wave of revitalization sweeping across North American cities in the late 1950s and 1960s, Victoria stood out by preserving its historic City Hall, evading the fate of so many other cities that lost cherished architectural landmarks to demolition. The Square’s original design envisioned a modernist civic plaza, removing Cormorant Street to seamlessly connect the historic City Hall to Government Street, blending tradition with innovation.

Since the 1960s, downtown Victoria has undergone significant transformations, shaped by shifting demographics, increased development, and the more recent challenges posed by the pandemic. The urban landscape has evolved, with new architectural styles blending with historic landmarks, reflecting changing tastes, relationships with public space, and design trends. The continual change and evolution have significantly influenced Victoria’s character and needs, prompting a reevaluation of public spaces like Centennial Square.

In 2017, the City undertook a Downtown Public Realm Plan, a five-year Arts and Culture Master Plan that sought to establish a design framework and set of principles, strategies, and standards for downtown public spaces. An important outcome of this report was the identification of Centennial Square as a priority public space for significant improvement and refresh. The resulting concept plan, approved by Council in 2019, captured a moment in time and one that responded to existing conditions in a measured and intentional way.

As Victoria continues to evolve and new challenges arise, there is a pressing need to revisit the approved design concept to ensure that it aligns with the contemporary needs of Victoria. Central to the current design challenge is the question of how to best acknowledge the past, respecting the history of the Square while still moving it firmly into the future. Just as the 1960s project represented a major transformation of the public realm to meet the needs of the day, so too must this iteration respond to the City’s contemporary needs and build future resilience.

This report represents an updated concept design for Centennial Square encompassing proposed revisions and enhancements to the Square, as well as the process undertaken to get to a preferred design. It serves as a detailed blueprint that articulates a new vision, guiding principles and ideas that will guide the revitalization effort. By presenting a comprehensive overview of proposed changes, the concept report facilitated informed decision-making and ensures alignment with the evolving needs and aspirations of Victoria.



Building Blocks

The "building blocks" are the foundational elements or components that form the framework and contribute to the Square's overall structure, function, and aesthetic. They encompass the various physical, conceptual, and experiential aspects that have informed the proposed concept design for Centennial Square. Central to this is the overall intent to re-establish Centennial Square as a great civic space, the place for Victoria to gather, to celebrate, to embark in play, to protest, or simply enjoy a quiet cup of coffee on a random Tuesday afternoon. Since the completion of the Downtown Public Realm Plan, the needs of public spaces in downtown have continued to change, with increasing demand for places that are inclusive and welcoming where families and children can relax and play together, flexible enough to support programming without impeding everyday uses, and focused on meeting the needs of Victoria residents first.

To envision and articulate any refinements to the previously approved plan, a thorough understanding of the current site was a critical part of the design process. Considerations such as the physical project site, including trees and infrastructure, the condition of the monoliths, surrounding current and proposed building uses such as office, residential, and retail, and civic programming requests and opportunities have been reviewed and assessed in a holistic manner to establish the building blocks for the future vision of the site.

IT IS NOT WHAT YOU LOOK AT THAT MATTERS, IT IS WHAT YOU SEE.
- HENRY DAVID THOREAU



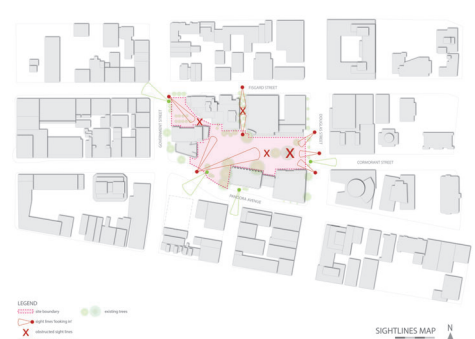
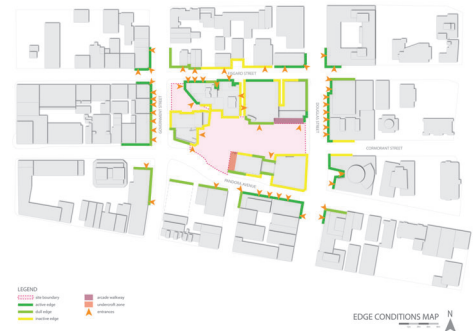
Site Analysis

Existing Context

Circulation and edge conditions were examined around the Square to understand how the current configuration influences daily use. Existing trees and how they impact sight lines, along with other CPTED considerations were also studied.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

- 1 Accessible route of travel should be intuitive and clear.
- 2 Improve loading/maintenance vehicular access.
- 3 Increase the activation of edge conditions.
- 4 Ensure the trees do not block circulation/views into or out of Square.
- 5 Maintain large mature trees around edge of the Square where sight lines are not a constraint.

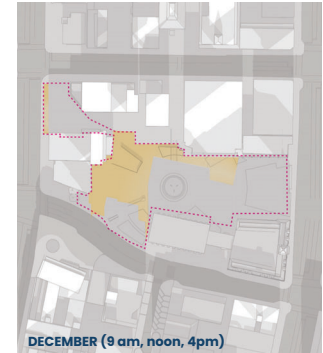
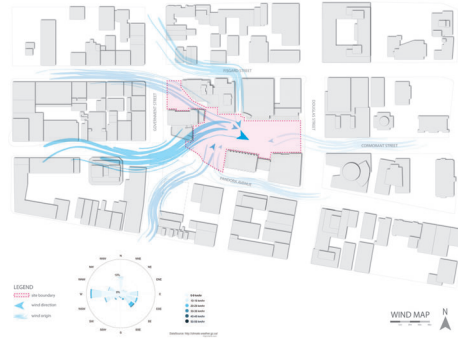


Microclimate

Working with local weather and climate patterns is important to produce comfortable spaces. Wind and sun patterns were studied to inform the location of various program elements.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

- 1 Design and orient fountains to reduce wind spray and be located in places that remain comfortable.
- 2 The western side of the site has the highest amount of year-round sun and is good to locate any future water-based amenities in a warmer zone.
- 3 The northern edge of the site can provide pockets of sun in the winter for noon-hour events or outdoor seating.
- 4 Amplify the site's gateway moments

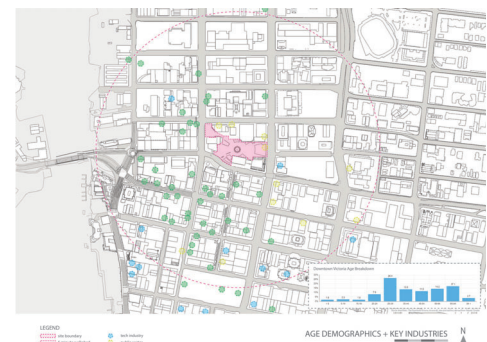
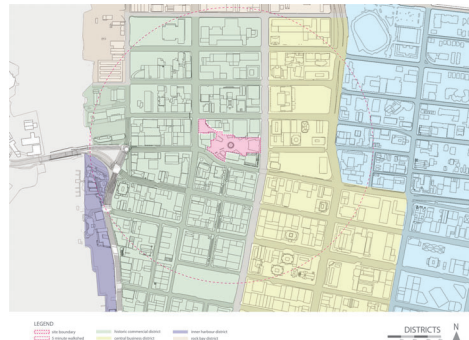


District Analysis

Centennial Square sits at an important place in Victoria's downtown, and will continue to be the area's main outdoor gathering space. Changing demographics and more residents downtown means it will need to be designed to accommodate these needs.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

- 1 Its place as a 'hinge point' to many surrounding cultural neighbourhoods (eg. Chinatown) means it can act as a meeting space for numerous different groups and end users.
- 2 Recognizing that the growing population downtown needs open space, design the Square to be a comfortable, daily destination.
- 3 A wide range of cultural spaces means the site can play host to various groups in close proximity.
- 4 The high proportion of younger residents (mid 20s-40s) means a need for family friendly programming and uses.
- 5 The inclusion of other age demographics suggests also creating pockets with varying activity levels and noise.

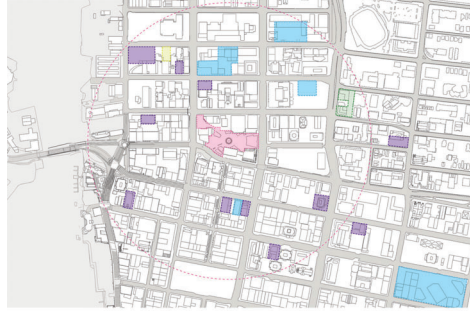


Downtown Growth

Increasing residential development has outpaced the addition of other daily needs and amenities in downtown, such as grocers and play spaces. The project analyzed these changes in the future as well as other nearby City projects to ensure alignment with other big moves.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

- 1 The increased residential population downtown means the Square will need to serve the daily open space needs of a growing population.
- 2 Smaller condo units will require a public 'living room' that operates throughout the day.
- 3 Retail traffic is along major streets, and the Square should be designed to pull shoppers through the space on their routes.
- 4 The Square should complement the lack of grocers in the area with its own offerings - food trucks, etc.
- 5 The City of Victoria is undergoing a transformation, and Centennial Square exists within a larger context of relevant policy. The Square should align with these nearby changes.



A New Centennial Square

Transformation and change is not new for Centennial Square. As a prominent public space within the city, it has born witness to the continued revitalization of downtown Victoria and persists in responding to periods of intense change and growth for the City.

The new vision for Centennial Square balances its historic significance with the contemporary and future needs of a dynamic and evolving Victoria community. Improvements and design changes prioritize enhancing the quality and utility of the space, simultaneously acknowledging and celebrating the past, but with an eye keenly on the future. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive, and they require a design that is both courageous and sensitive, unafraid to propose change that, similar to the origin story of the Square, envisions a bold direction deeply rooted in the context of place.

Overall, the design intent of the Centennial Square Improvement project is to transform this important civic space, addressing not only maintenance and operational constraints, but proposing design solutions that meet the current and future needs of the city.

The following guiding principles were developed in consultation with the City Project Team and leverage the Building Blocks of the project established during the analysis phase.



Guiding Principles



A Place for All

Centennial Square is a **place of civic significance** and **urban vitality**, and its future state will serve as a catalyst for **celebration, play, and cultural expression**.

The square's success lies in its ability to reflect Victoria's diverse community as an **accessible, inclusive, and welcoming** space for people and nature.



A Magnet for Public Life

Centennial Square has **symbolic, cultural, and functional** importance within the City of Victoria and will continue to serve as a **central gathering and civic space** for the community.

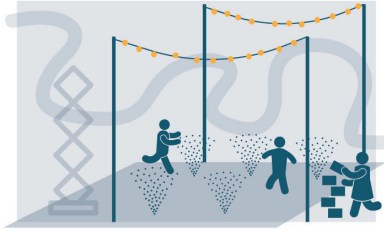
Through thoughtful design and strategic intervention, the square will be a **vibrant hub** of community **activity** and **connection** – drawing residents and visitors through engaging **programming**, and **dynamic community amenities**.



Celebrate the Past, Adapt to the Future

Great public spaces are never finished – they are constantly evolving based on the changing needs of the dynamic cities and communities that they serve. As the **civic heart** of Victoria, Centennial Square is rich with **natural, cultural, and designed histories** that can help to shape the future of the Square.

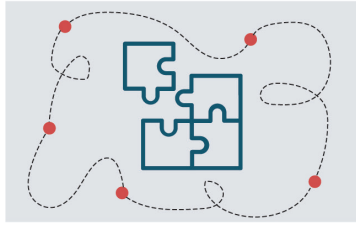
The square will reflect the site's **storied history**, its **present reality**, and its **future potential** – one that is **resilient**, accommodates **changing climates**, is **adaptable**, and **vibrant**. The transformation of the square will require **boldness**, rooted in an understanding of the **trade-offs** required to **balance** potentially competing interests.



Infuse Whimsy and Play

Public space provides the canvas to **spark joy**, foster **creativity**, and encourage **exploration** – pushing the boundaries of **creative expression**.

Centennial Square will be a place for community gathering, events, and discourse, but also be a place of **fun and joy**, creating a vibrant atmosphere where users can engage in **spontaneous interactions**, discover **delightful surprises**, and forge **lasting memories**.



Foster A Unified Experience

The public realm is a **shared encounter space**, setting the stage for social interaction, cultural activities, and community life.

Like a symphony, it's critical that all pieces within the public realm **coherently** come together, and each design element plays a specific role in contributing to a **unified public realm** experience.



Prioritize Timeless and Enduring Design

Amidst an ever-changing landscape of design trends, **timeless** principles of **simplicity** and **functionality** serve as a sturdy foundation that can weather the passing of time. Centennial Square's original design captures a moment in time, but it is important to recognize the changes within Victoria and address **urban renewal** and the increasing **pressure** on the downtown core.

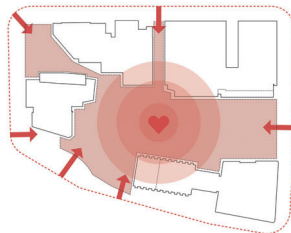
Prioritizing **timeless design** and **functional simplicity** ensures that the square will cater to the **evolving needs** of users well into the future, ensuring relevance, and **adaptability** for diverse audiences.

Design Strategies



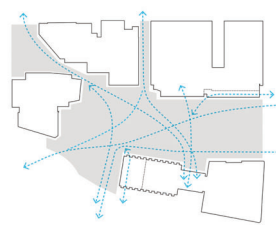
Build on Work to Date

This is not about starting from scratch, rather about refining some big moves.



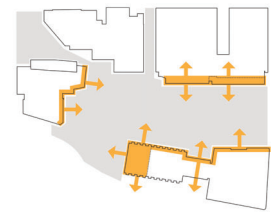
Bring Back the Civic Heart

Centennial Square will support a dynamic, evolving downtown.



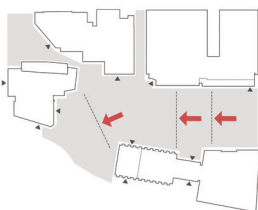
Reinforce Existing Circulation

Accessibility and movement will be simplified and realigned.



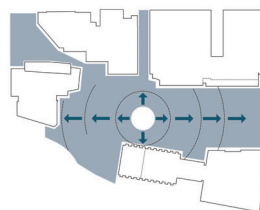
Sticky Edges

The Square is envisioned to have a series of re-imagined, active edges.



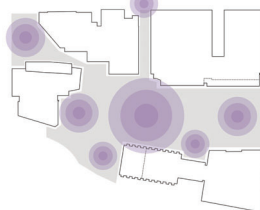
Leverage Grades

Three significant grade breaks are leveraged as a positive feature.



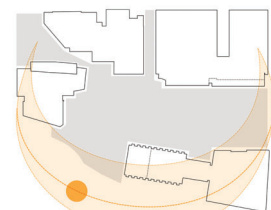
Maximize Gathering Space

The heart of the space is opened up to create new possibilities for gathering.



Create a Hierarchy of Nodes

A series of seamless 'rooms' are created to offer multiple possibilities.



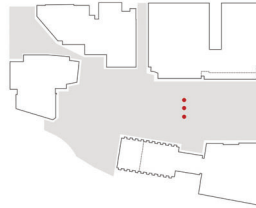
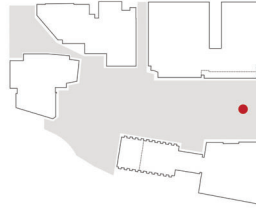
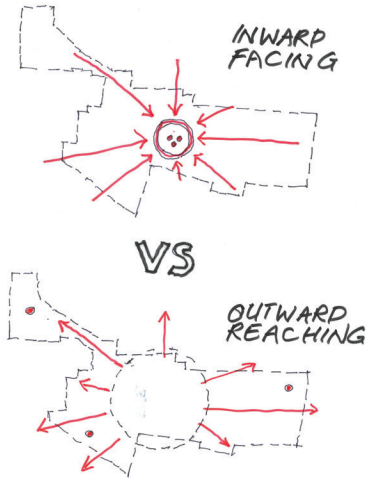
Optimize Solar Access

Seating and gathering spaces are reoriented for comfort.

The Monoliths and the Fountain

The role of the Monoliths can be rethought to open up the Square.

In their current location, they orient the entire Square towards themselves and preclude larger gatherings or other uses in the central part of the space. Various options were explored to understand how these elements might be best retained on site.



Option 1: Move Up

- One option would be to shift the monoliths to the upper Civic Plaza. Here they would speak to the heritage also personified by City Hall.

Option 2: Shift a Little

A new home for the monoliths in the central area that doesn't dominate the space is also possible.

Option 3: Scatter

The monoliths can also be separated with one announcing an arrival from each major gateway direction.

Commercial Space + Bike Valet

A key part of activating the Square will be bringing a commercial energy to the space.

The team has looked at numerous configurations for the different commercial types and edges that might exist. The interim condition will retain the bike valet in its current location to continue to facilitate connections. An adjacent commercial kiosk will also bring retail amenities into the park. Animating the arcade next to the parkade will anchor the Northern edge as well as help with CPTED concerns.



The Trees

The renewed Centennial Square should focus on a tree strategy for the next 50-100 years.

Many of the current trees bring a sense of character and scale to the site, however some block important sight lines, impact or damage existing infrastructure, or restrict gathering spaces. The team has looked at keeping some key specimens and introducing the next generation of trees for the future, species of appropriate scale that help the site adapt to a changing climate, reduce local heat island effects, and aid in stormwater management. In particular, the existing Sequoia and Sweetgum, planted over the old Cormorant Street paving, are causing damage to adjacent infrastructure and have a limited ability to thrive. Previous attempts to mitigate these impacts have been unsuccessful, and a new strategy better suited to the site conditions is needed, to provide growing conditions suitable for the future.



A Collaborative Process

The current process builds on Public Engagement completed as part of the Centennial Square Action Plan.

The revised concept is grounded in public and stakeholder feedback, particularly around the Action Plan process. Robust staff engagement and workshops were held, to distill a plan reflective of the needs and wants of the community.

Process statistics:

- 1500 responses from Pop Up Events and Online Survey
- 20 different stakeholder groups consulted
- 12 design ideas / solutions from an "Ideas Jam".

Experience



The Original Concept

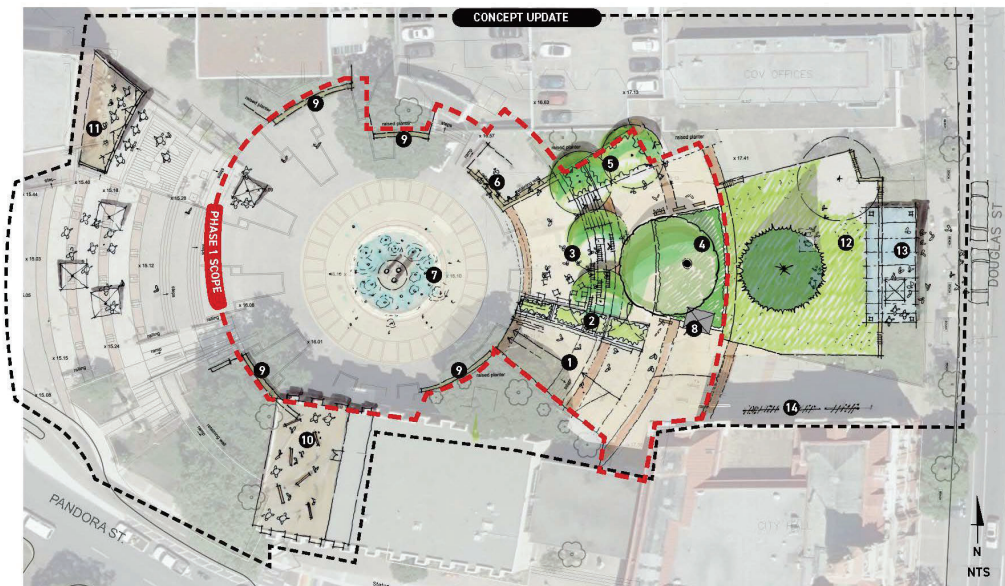
The original Centennial Square Action Plan presented a vision for the Square in 2018 balancing a number of elements.

Through a variety of original site analysis, community workshops, design events, and internal working groups a vision was presented that sought to introduce a more active central feature while also providing updates to accessible paths of travel.



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The Original Concept



PHASE 1

1. Accessible ramp
2. Planter / Water feature
3. Rest and shade area with seating terraces, new shade trees and play space and features

4. Planter and understory plantings around existing large canopy tree
5. Additional lawn area with new shade trees
6. Seating steps at opened platform

7. Splash park with in-ground spray features around existing monoliths
8. Commercial unit/ kiosk
9. Improved seating at perimeter

FUTURE PHASES

10. Indoor multipurpose space
11. Enclosed commercial space
12. Improved lawn area
13. Transit hub with large canopy structure
14. Bike parking

Three Concept Options

Three concepts were developed, to explore the recommended open space program for the Square.

Each concept built on the outcomes of the site analysis and staff feedback on operations and programming, to test potential design ideas and spatial configurations. Trialing each ultimately led the team to a new concept premised on the big moves developed here: improving accessibility, opening the space up for more better and family friendly programming, and upgrading infrastructure to include a more climate friendly water feature and efficient mechanical systems.



The Urban Forest

Conjoining the spaces and giving a new central identity is a central, iconic commercial element paired with a bosque that can have echoes throughout the site and can pull people into the Square from Pandora and Douglas.



The Square

This scheme focuses on taking the original concept and tweaking it, adding in some elements that have become necessary since the work in 2019. A central water feature still grounds the entire space - a true square! - with entries from the East and West that reflect a Civic gateway as well as an Indigenous focused Spirit Square.



The Urban Plaza

Where before there were multiple spaces that made up Centennial Square, this scheme prioritizes making two larger ones that speak of mixing the modern with the past. Commercial space can be located in the undercroft zone.

Urban Design Narrative

Originally conceptualized as a catalyst for civic renewal in the 1960s, Centennial Square and its modernist elements, including the bespoke fountain and artistic monoliths, no longer best serve the contemporary needs of Victoria. In 2017, the Downtown Public Realm Plan outlined a vision for renewal, improving activation, addressing safety and accessibility concerns, weaving in elements of play and whimsy, and ultimately replacing end of life infrastructure to optimize city maintenance and operations.

The Centennial Square Improvement Project began its journey with a clear mandate and a concept that built upon work completed as part of the Downtown Public Realm Plan. The initial concept, which was developed prior to the pandemic, imagined a new interactive water feature at the core of the square, flanked by ample seating, trees, and planted areas, including a grassy lawn. It proposed a space that could support and host diverse programming, from night or farmers markets to concerts to civic festivals and other events, improving sight lines to and through the site and anchored by a commercial kiosk. However, the impact of the pandemic and a growth in population within the downtown core has placed additional pressures on Centennial Square in terms of concerns over safety, accessibility, and inclusion, as well as the influx of young families and a renewed interest in the downtown core.



In addition, the modernist fountain, encircling the three monoliths adorned with Italian glass mosaic, has been an important driver of both the original concept response and urban design ethos as well as the new Centennial Square. The monoliths represent an important aspect of the history of Victoria and its relationship with its neighbours, the three surrounding municipalities of Oak Bay, Esquimalt, and Saanich. However, the fountain's aspect, orientation, and location have become problematic when looked at through the lens of a contemporary and vibrant public space, the need for flexible and supportive spaces for programming, and the importance of a safe and connected site, and the project process has sought to balance out the influence of the past with the needs of the future.



The Big Idea

In collaboration with the Project Team, the "big idea" for Centennial Square revolves around the notion of home, a space for the community to come together. The concept seeks to create three distinct "rooms", each serving a unique purpose while seamlessly blending into one cohesive space and leveraging plants and materials that reflect and showcase the context of the Victoria landscape.

The first room, the front porch, has a prominent location on Douglas Street. This is the most formal space, the front of house that welcomes visitors graciously, and sets the tone for the experiences and opportunities within. The Douglas Street Plaza is the gateway to the Square, a formal yet inviting space – one that exudes a sense of civic importance and responds to the proximity of the historic City Hall. Accessibility has been improved by the elimination of stairs, and ramps now transition down the slope in intuitive and natural manner, connecting to the north entrance of City Hall and the Parkade.

The Heart is the living room of Centennial Square, a flexible and fun space that transitions both in formality and elevation. This is the centre of activity and energy, at times both a relaxed and playful space where users can unwind, socialize, and connect with each other. Designed with flexibility and play in mind, the openness of the Plaza invites visitors to stop and linger and supports a wide range of diverse programming opportunities for festivals and events.

Moving west, towards Chinatown, the Green expands the already successful Spirit Square into a verdant oasis, the backyard of the Square. This lush, green zone contrasts some of the more structured spaces within the Square, inviting the community in to kick off their shoes and relax on the lawn. These moves are complimented by activated edges that encourage interaction, foster connection, and increase activity both around and into the Square.



Douglas Street Civic Plaza

The Douglas Street Civic Plaza stands as a testament to the City's civic pride and heritage, respecting the past while looking forward into the future. This prominent space anchors Centennial Square to the east, designed with a symmetry that acknowledges the relationship of the site to the historic City Hall as well as the urban grid of the former Cormorant Street. Within the Civic Plaza sit the relocated monoliths, thoughtfully sited to honour the artwork's historic significance and elevate civic presence along Douglas Street while also weaving the historic narrative of the city's past into the future of the Square. A bosque of trees opens sight lines to and through the Square, adding a valuable leafy green canopy to the City's urban forest without impeding light and views. The bosque creates a lush, biophilic backdrop, framing the relocated monoliths, and increasing resiliency for a changing climate, with future forward plant species selection, and the integration of soil cells and other low impact development / stormwater management features. Material selection and plaza layout have been carefully considered within the lens of designing a space that meets the needs of the community today and for future generations as well.



The Heart

The centre of the new design is The Heart, a playful focal point where the chatter of community gathering, joyous cries of delight, and the occasional splashes of water bring joy and whimsy to downtown. From the east, an elevated platform casts a watchful eye over the fountain, offering a place to sit and enjoy a coffee in the sunshine on movable tables and chairs, host buskers or street performers during the farmers market, or from which a noon-time Zumba class may be taught, and housing the modern and updated mechanical infrastructure below. Stone steps and planting traverse the grade change, spilling down to a seasonal shallow pool where toes can be dipped or water can be played in, inviting the young, and young at heart, to sit and linger. The stone, planting, and water feature is inspired by the coastal landscapes of Victoria, hearkening back to the slopes of Beacon Hill Park, and strongly connecting the Square to its sense of place in the surrounding landscapes. Heading west a flexible plaza space, with an interactive fountain, offers endless opportunities for both gathering and play. When turned on, jets of water with integrated lighting and sound and energy to the Square, inviting visitors to stop, engage with neighbours, and play. When the fountain is off, the plaza becomes a foil for celebration and gathering, hosting a holiday market, a weeknight performance, or a full-scale civic festival, or even a simple splash in the rain. Integrated seating is built into the edges of this central space, allowing people to sit and linger with a coffee purchased from the commercial kiosk or even enjoy an outdoor workday meeting with colleagues. Safety concerns are mitigated through enhanced sight lines, fostering connectivity and functionality across the Square. New and distinctive lighting will contribute to this inviting new heart.

The Green

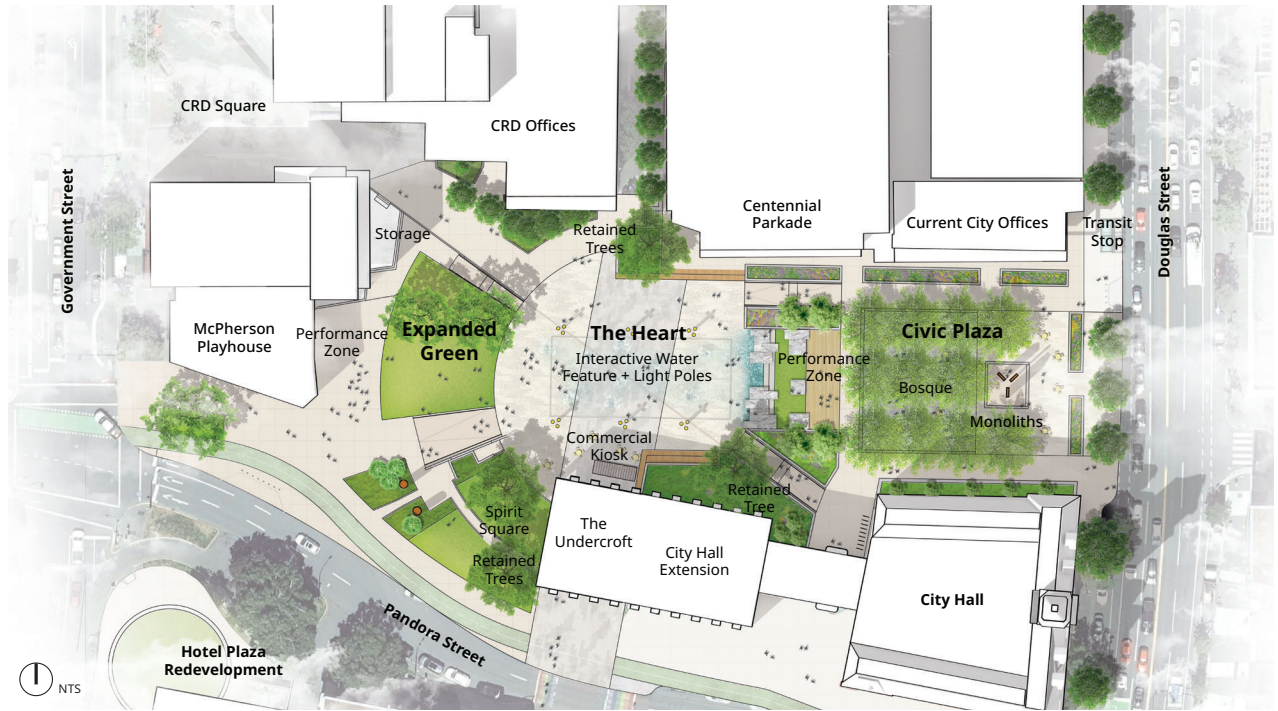
The west edge of the Square is its "backyard", the place to bask in the sunshine or spread a blanket on the lawn to take in a movie displayed on the facade of the McPherson Theatre. The transition of this space from hardscape to softscape invites additional greenery into downtown, expanding the green of Spirit Square and encouraging infiltration of stormwater and mitigating the impacts of the urban heat island. New trees in this space contribute to the City's urban forest, and create a soft, welcoming edge without blocking views into the plaza.

Active Edges

The new design seeks to intentionally activate the edges, enhancing the vibrancy and encouraging positive use of the space. Sight lines have been opened, reducing the perception of places to hide, and the addition of seating encourages activation and lingering. The long-term future of the Centennial Parkade is unknown, but a parking structure is not likely the highest and best use of the site, and the concept design responds to this anticipated future change in a way that seeks to maximize flexibility for the future without compromising the activation of the edge condition in the present. Clear pedestrian paths of travel connect Douglas Street through to Pandora and Government Street, encouraging foot traffic to traverse through rather than around the Square. Opportunities to further enhance the architecture of the arcade, such as improved lighting, colour and material selection and the transparency and activity of at grade uses are also tools that will help to energize these important edges.



The Updated Concept Plan



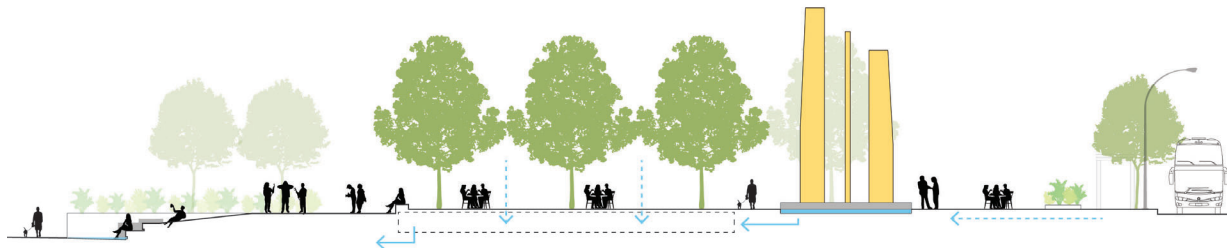
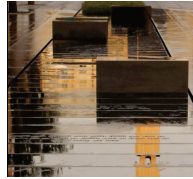
View of Douglas Street Plaza from the northeast looking south.

Douglas Street Plaza

A Civic Story

The Douglas Street Plaza is the gateway to the Square, a new front porch for Downtown Victoria. The centre of the Plaza is anchored by the relocated monoliths, honouring their significance to the story of the Victoria with this prominent location only footsteps from City Hall. New trees, planted in a traditional bosque formation, is a striking and lush backdrop that frames the public walkway and through the Square, opening up sight lines while maintaining an essence of civic formality. Seating under the dappled shade of the trees can be replaced with tents for a Holiday or Farmers Market, and a new planter provides a gentle separation from the bustling energy of the Douglas Street transit corridor.

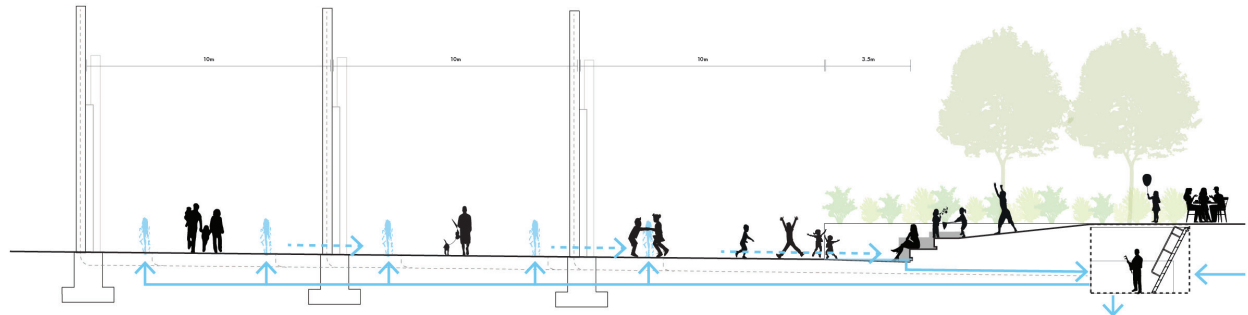
The front will be a broad space where food trucks or other commercial elements can find temporary homes. Further in will be the retained monuments - sitting in a skim of water - and past them will be a bosque where the trees are able to grow large due to soil cells beneath. Water can be used as a theme through highlighting stormwater at grade and then capturing it for use in the soil cells.



The Heart - A Playful Experience

A Fun and Flexible Zone

The water feature will be a series of flush spray heads that can animate the plaza. The fountains will be on programmable circuits that also feature lights that can change colour. Water will then run off - as well as pool due to help from smaller bubblers - at a small seating node. The design will allow for turning off the larger fountain zone to host events while pooling can still occur at the seating. The system will be recirculating water, and supported by a buried (but not confined space) mechanical room above the upper wood deck performance zone. Provision for shade, either through large umbrellas or solar shades, will be explored further, to mitigate the hot summer sun during summer months.



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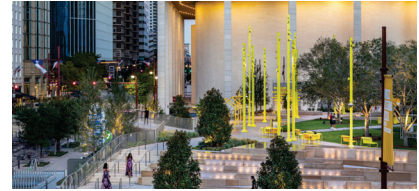
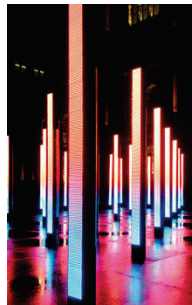
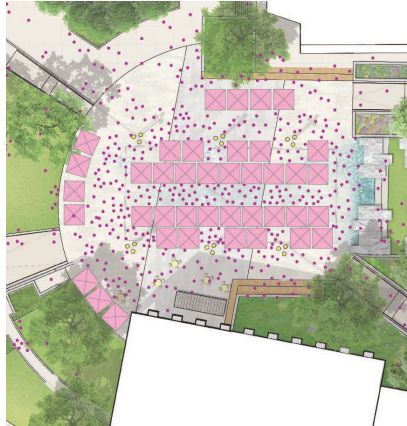
Aerial View of The Heart during a fall market, looking east.

Light Poles + Events

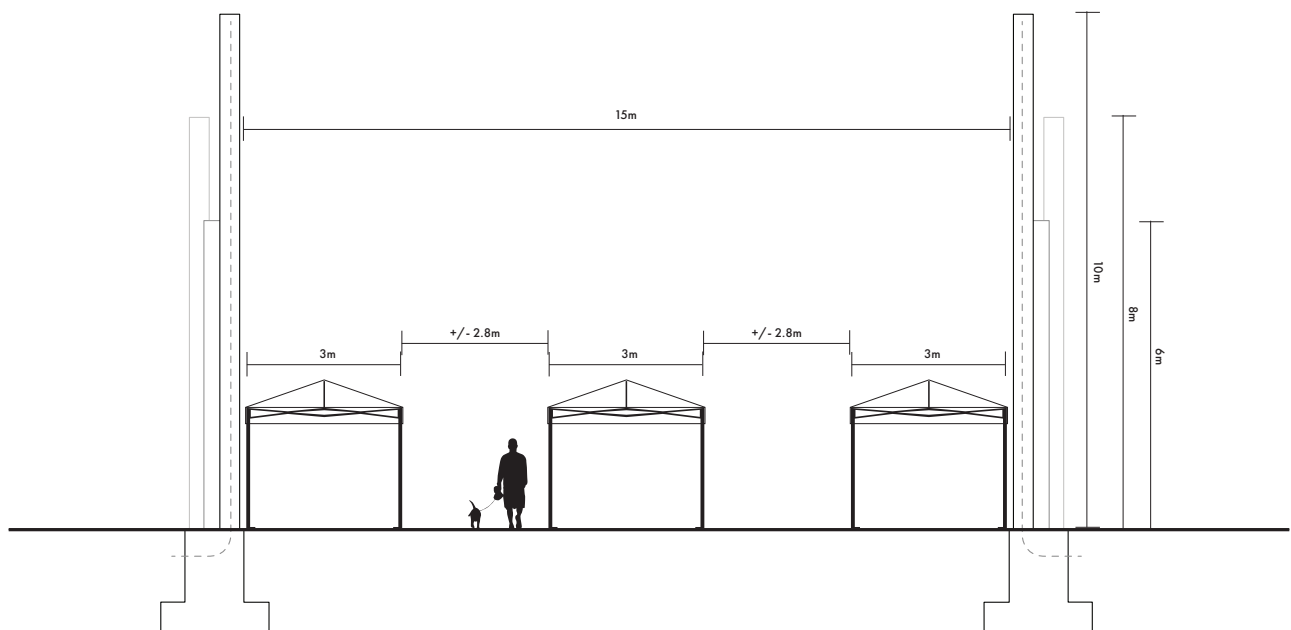
Framing the Square

The central portion of the Square is where major events will occur and the majority of day-to-day gathering will be centered. To frame this space is proposed a series of light poles that provide not just illumination, but also an opportunity to host art or other elements. The cluster of three poles reflects the height and organization of the monoliths, a contemporary and functional reference to the site's heritage.

Placing these poles to allow for events has been an important consideration, and the diagrams below and on the next page show spatial considerations to make sure they don't preclude any gatherings or event setup.



Light Poles + Events

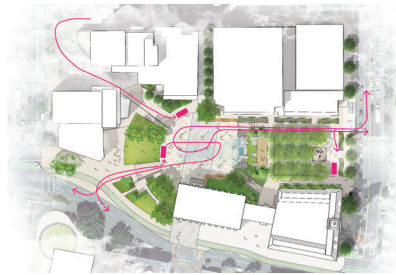


Programming and Performance Opportunities

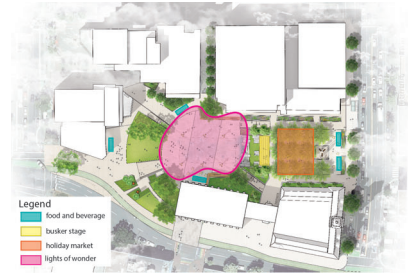
A flexible space for a variety of different events and gatherings.

The proposed concept has been tested against a series of possible events of varying sizes. The team has considered how holiday festivals, such as lights of wonder might work, as well as larger performance events. A potential market setup is also illustrated, along with possible loading options and access scenarios.

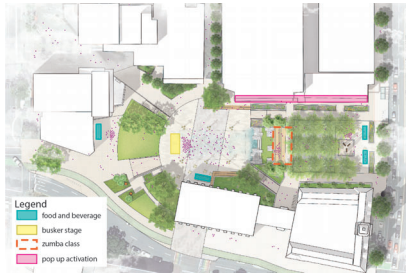
Loading + Access



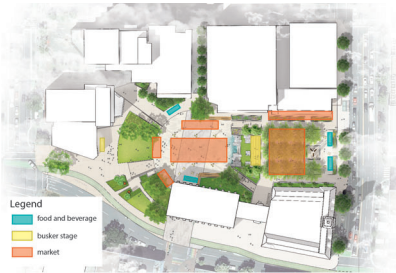
Holiday Events



Small Scale Programming

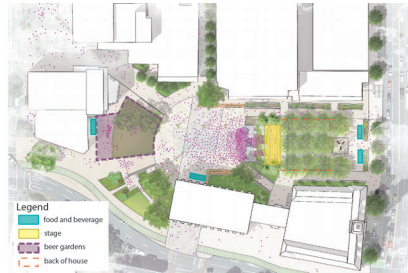


Market Day



Estimated Tent / Stall Capacity: 65-70

Large Performance

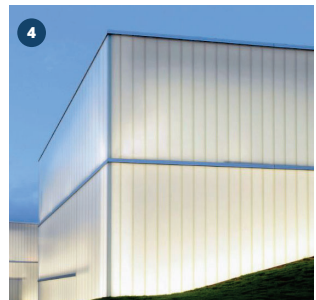
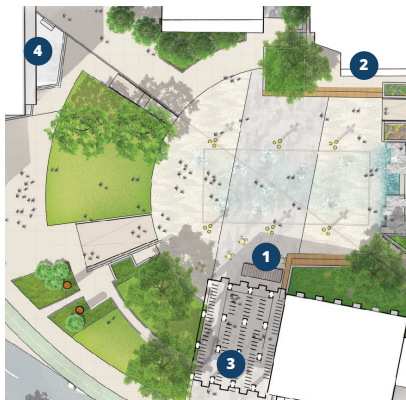


Estimated Large Event Audience Capacity: 4000 - 5000 people

Undercroft, Arcade, and Existing Stage

Supporting the Square

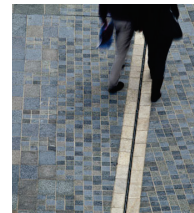
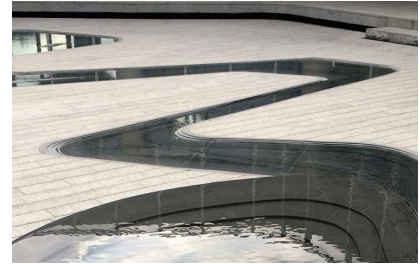
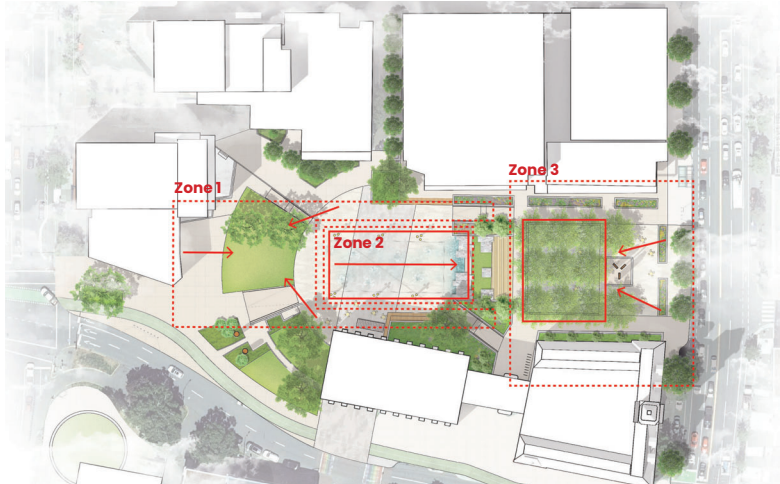
The functioning of the Square will be enhanced by a number of supporting uses and edge improvements. The undercroft will continue to house the successful bike valet with improved fencing and connections to the Square. A year-round commercial kiosk with incorporated small storage and changeroom facilities will be located adjacent to the Undercroft and have a character similar to the modified shipping containers or trailers shown in the images at right. Interior modifications will be made at the covered arcade on the north side of the site to allow temporary window art exhibits that will create interest and help animate the area. The existing stage will be modified to create enclosed, secure storage for equipment and furnishings that will support special events and daily activations.



Stormwater Strategy + Climate Resiliency

Celebrating and Reusing Water

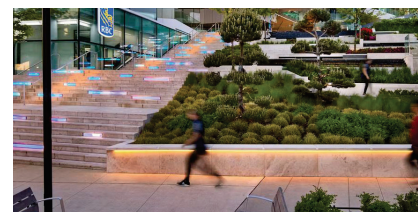
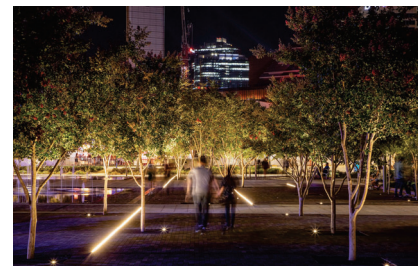
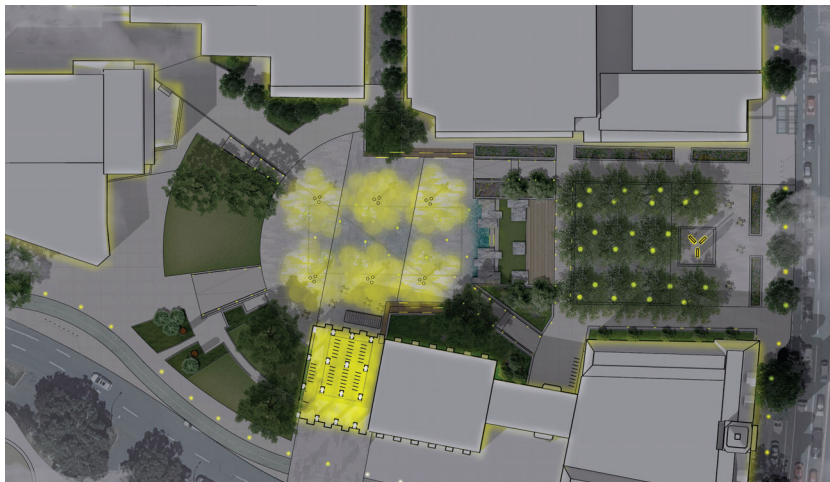
The revitalization of Centennial Square offers the opportunity to address the needs of a changing climate. The addition of new trees in the Douglas Street Civic Plaza, in soil cells, offers improved growing conditions, stormwater management, and certainty about the impacts of tree roots on below grade infrastructure. Stormwater in this plaza will be directed this soil cell gallery beneath the bosque to support the growth and vitality of large canopy trees. In the central Square, water will be captured through a series of clean, architectural drains, and the water feature is an amenity that helps in situations of extreme heat, providing cooling potential during hot days, with the ability to be turned off during periods of drought. Water in the rest of the site will be directed to planted zones where possible, and the expanded amount of green space helps to mitigate the impacts of the urban heat island effect.



Lighting Strategy

Vibrant and Colourful

The site lighting strategy will centre on the feature light poles in the central area. These will be major elements capable of not just being illuminated, but mounted with lighting to spotlight elements during events and performances. The bosque will be lit for nighttime comfort and as a central element. A variety of supporting lighting will also be provided in the form of under-lights at walls and benches, colourful inset lights at stairs, and pedestrian pole lights as required.

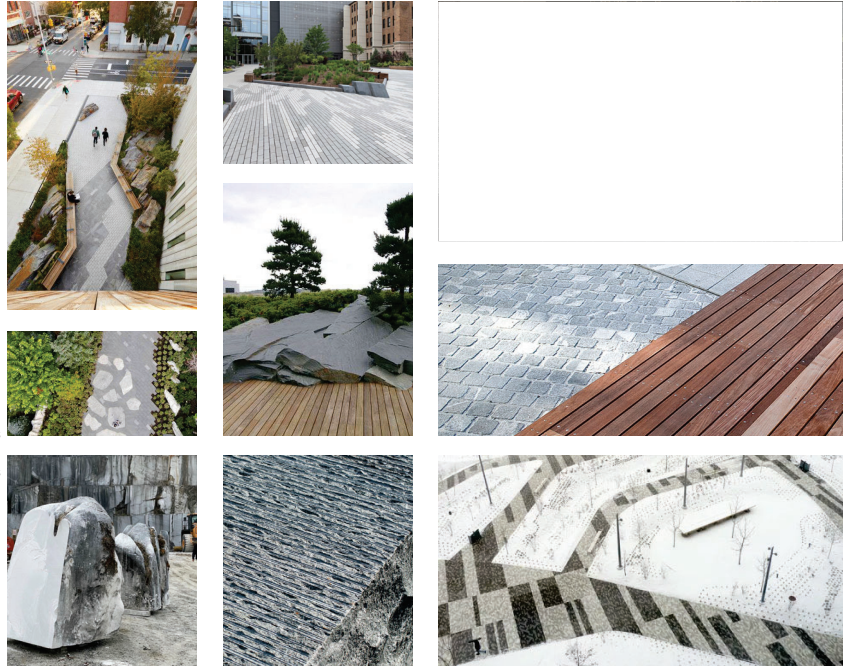


Materiality

Materials to Reflect Context

Taking cues from the surrounding woods, rock, and habitats of Vancouver Island a contemporary materials palette is shown.

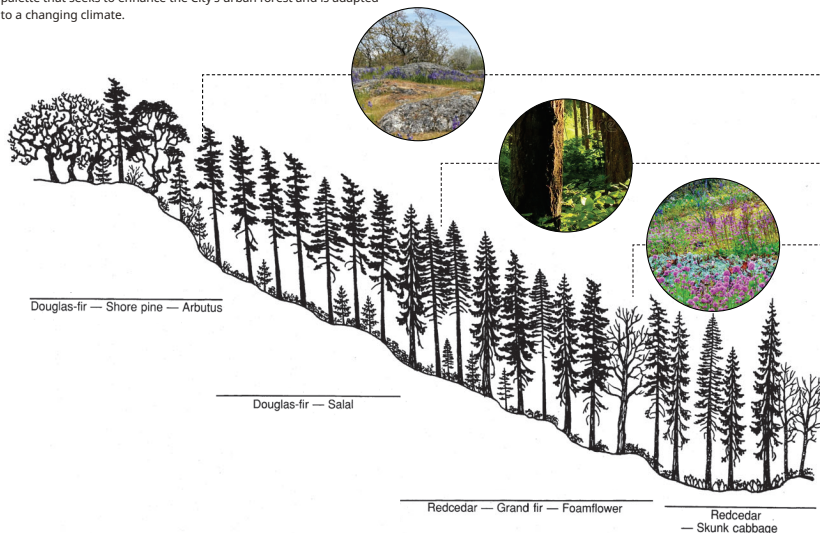
		1 CONCRETE / EXPOSED AGGREGATE
		2 CRUSHED GRANULAR
		3 STONE + CONCRETE UNIT PAVERS
		4 ARCHITECTURAL STONE ELEMENTS
		5 BRICK IN SELECT ZONES
		6 INSET STORY ELEMENTS
		7 WOOD FURNISHING ELEMENTS
		8 METAL SITE ELEMENTS



Planting

Bringing the Natural In

Victoria occupies one of Canada's most unique biogeoclimatic zones. Shown on a transect, upper Garry Oak escarpments give way to more lush midlands down through to lowlands full of colour and blooms. We propose adapting these themes to an urban setting with a plant palette that seeks to enhance the City's urban forest and is adapted to a changing climate.



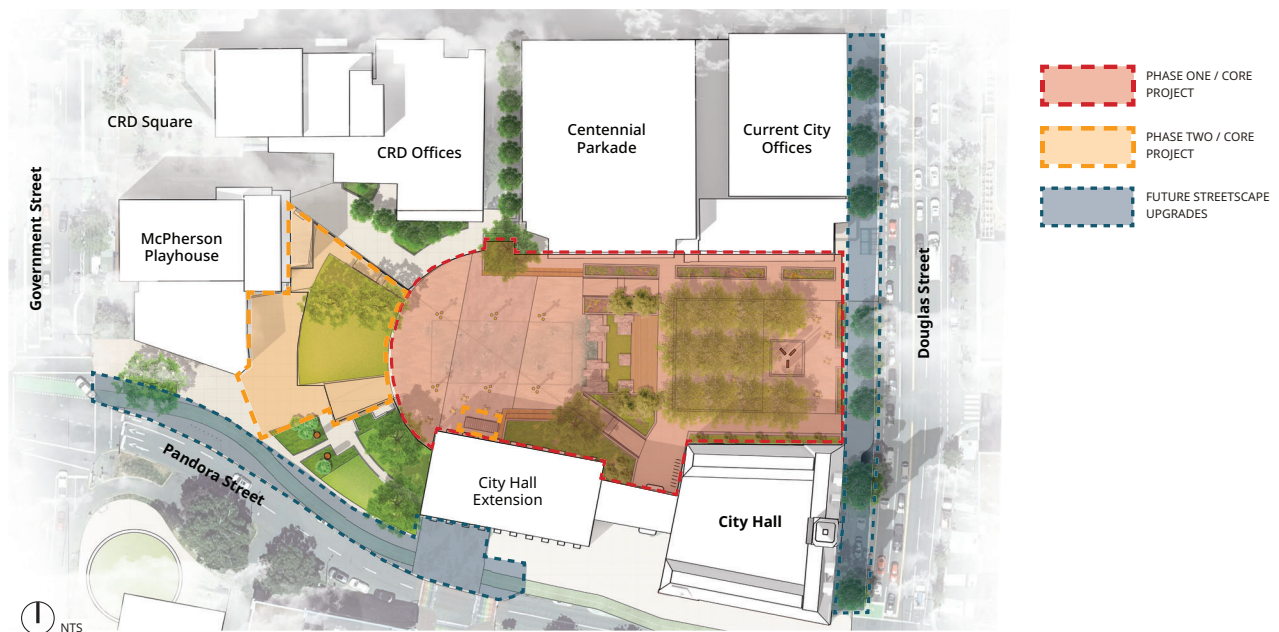
Moving Forward: Implementation

The concept for the revitalization of Centennial Square is comprised of a core scope of work that will be implemented in two phases. The core scope of work includes the relocation of the monoliths, the development of a new interactive water and play feature, the addition of the bosque of trees, and associated site improvements including decorative paving, site furnishings, planting, lighting, and associated site infrastructure. Hardscape improvements on the south side of the MacPherson Theatre and improvements to the pedestrian connections to CRD Square and Fisgard Street are not included.

Two additional scopes of work have been identified, outside of the core project, that will be completed through future transportation improvement capital projects. The phasing diagram on the next page identifies these areas on the plan. Streetscape improvements along Douglas and Pandora Streets are not required to fulfill the vision for Centennial Square and were not included in the class 'C' cost estimate completed as part of the project but are synergistic in nature and supportive of the project and the ongoing investment in Downtown Victoria.

The upcoming Douglas Street Rapid Transit Improvement project will establish an improved transit stop at the entrance to the civic plaza and will serve as a destination for RapidBus services, which aims to double ridership by 2030. This plan makes Centennial Square a key transit destination, complementing the Government Street Refresh pedestrianization efforts and strengthening connections to Chinatown. The transit stop improvements provide a key destination for pedestrians and cyclists, given the Square's central location at the heart of Downtown's commercial and tourist areas. These upgrades will enhance general transit and mobility through the Square, increasing its vibrancy and activity. Streetscape improvements envisioned at the Pandora St frontage that would better connect the existing AAA bike route to the Square may be considered for inclusion in future transportation capital projects

Phasing Strategy



Technical Appendices





Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of July 4, 2024

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** July 04, 2024
From: Kerri Moore, Director of Business and Community Relations
Subject: UBCM Community Excellence Award Submission

RECOMMENDATION

That Council authorize staff to submit an award for OUR DWTN for the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Community Excellence Awards for excellence in service delivery.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Applications have opened for the annual UBCM Community Excellence Awards. The Community Excellence Awards recognize and celebrate UBCM members that have implemented projects or programs that demonstrate excellence in meeting the purposes of local government in BC. The awards are designed to profile promising practices and to encourage local governments to learn from the success of other members in order to implement changes in their own communities.

Staff propose OUR DWTN: City of Victoria Downtown Revitalization Project for the Excellence in Service Delivery category as a successful project that meets the awards criteria for submission.

PURPOSE

To seek Council authority to submit an award to the UBCM Community Excellence Awards for OUR DWTN.

BACKGROUND

The OUR DWTN program is truly a collaborative effort involving all City departments to collectively work towards a common vision to make our downtown the best in North America.

Each thematic area is interconnected to create a safe, clean, fun and beautiful downtown experience. Efficiencies in staff time, resource allocation and mobilizing City departments were realized through intentional, collaborative leadership by providing City staff the creative freedom and licence to get new ideas off the ground -- quickly.

The Community Excellence Awards recognize and celebrate UBCM members that have implemented projects or programs that demonstrate excellence in meeting the purposes of local government in BC.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

UBCM Awards are an excellent opportunity to share our work with communities across the province and shine a spotlight on the OUR DWTN program after a successful inaugural year of completion.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

OPTION 1 (Recommended): That Council authorize staff to submit an award for OUR DWTN for the UBCM Community Excellence Award for excellence in service delivery.

Provides an opportunity to share our project with other local governments across the Province and highlights the successful first year of completion for the program.

OPTION 2: That Council provides alternative direction to staff.

CONCLUSIONS

Respectfully submitted,

Nichola Reddington
Manager, Arts, Culture and Events

Kerri Moore
Director of Business and Community Relations

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.

List of Attachments (if relevant)



Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of May 23, 2024

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** June 17, 2024
From: Mark Fay – Manager, Bylaw and Licensing Services
Subject: Appointment of Bylaw Officers

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the appointment of Alyson Barnes and Kurn Koshal

1. As Bylaw Officers pursuant to section 2(a) of the Inspection Bylaw (06-061); and
2. As a Business Licence Inspector for the City of Victoria

That this motion be forwarded to the July 4, 2024 daytime meeting of Council for consideration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Alyson Barnes and Kurn Koshal recently joined the City's Bylaw and Licensing Services staff to fill the role of Bylaw Officer. To enable them to act with full capacity, a resolution of Council is required.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Fay
Manager, Bylaw and Licensing Services

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:



**Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of July 4, 2024**

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** June 27, 2024
From: Councillor Hammond
Subject: Financial relief for residents affected by crime and social disorder

BACKGROUND

With Victoria property taxes due by July 2nd, some councillors have been hearing from taxpayers who are negatively affected by crime and social disorder, and are suffering social, experiential and financial consequences. In the last couple weeks, a number of taxpayers, whether they are businesses, or residents have reached out to some or all councillors. Without revealing their actual names and addresses, here are just three examples:

Example 1

I have spoken to and received numerous correspondence from residents living close to the 900 block of Pandora (even prior to the October 2022 election). Less than a month ago, I received an email from one of these residents: "People on my block (1000 Pandora) feel left with no support since the 900 Block Sweep. No one was surprised when tenters relocated to our Block and started accumulating junk almost immediately. Shelters and piles of garbage have sat without removal since the morning after the sweep. The crows, other curious nomads and the fierce winds have been distributing junk all over the neighbourhood. We pick up what we dare but we are not responsible for the location of these entitled, belligerent, messy, disruptive people. We are concerned that Bylaw has been chastised for doing their job and trying to respect those of us who feel trapped living on Pandora Ave and yet still continue to contribute to City coffers. Is this current inertia coming from City Hall? Is there a plan? Hope so because our frustration and resentment is really starting to boil."

Example 2

I received one of several emails from a business located on a street where many people hang out, causing numerous problems. This is part of one email: "This block is, and has been, a constant hangout for street people. It has been going on for years and is getting worse. Check with bylaw to see the amount of emails we send them, asking for their assistance. This morning, there was a large structure, garbage, and a couch, right outside our shop door, blocking customer parking. While I was on the phone to the police, one of our customers phoned, saying that he had an appointment today, and was here before the shop opened. Of course, he couldn't park in front of the shop, so he went across the street, where one of the street people threw a glass jar at his vehicle, which exploded on impact with his truck, damaging his vehicle. We have been saying for a long time how the amount of street people constantly on this street is affecting our business. We shouldn't have to deal with this. Our customers should not be scared to come to our shop...We

were told of extra bylaw enforcement, and more street cleaning. That happened for two weeks, then back to the same mess. New garbage cans were installed, which resulted in more garbage being available for the homeless to scatter all over the street and sidewalk. Why are the street people coddled by the city? Why are they allowed to break the bylaws about no camping and no loitering?"

Responding to my email to this business, they wrote: "Yes, it is getting frustrating. We have heard that bylaw won't attend to this street without police escort, because it is a dangerous area. How does the city think we feel? Or our customers? Will our customers also be able to get a police escort, to come to our shop? Taxes keep going up, but we are getting less service. We feel that the local businesses should receive a tax break, since we are getting reduced services. If I give an estimate for work...but don't do all the work quoted, I can't charge as much...The street is still a mess, with street people on both sides, taking up parking spots with their debris, fighting while we are trying to deal with customers, and the local prostitute screaming obscenities. If we park a car too long on the street, we get a ticket, but a street person can camp, with all their garbage, on the sidewalk and street, for a week, without consequences. This is absurd."

Example 3

Just this week, I received an email from a property manager, representing owners of a condominium building near Vancouver and Johnson. She wrote, "We have had issues with the homeless since Covid. But for some reason in the last 3 or 4 months, the activity has ramped up to every night, lighting fires on the porch and sidewalk, large groups of people hanging out on the porch, sleeping, doing drugs and behaving in ways that make the residents feel very unsafe. This behaviour has been reported to the police but as we all know the police are stretched to capacity and have a hard time responding. We have had to now engage a security company full time at night, 7 days a week at a significant cost \$40 an hour for 8 hours which is \$2,240.00 a week. As you can imagine, this is a cost that this small group of owners are having a hard time paying for, so suggestions from the City of Victoria on how to pay for a necessary service that is a direct result of the City's inability to deal with the downtown homeless situation would be appreciated. Also, looking for guidance from the City of Victoria on how this group of owners are to continue living and working in a situation that is frankly dangerous and terrifying."

Victoria residents and businesses expect a safe and secure environment. With approximately 24% of the City's budget going towards police services, with millions more spent on bylaw and public works responses, and other social service contributions, people also expect appropriate services in exchange for their tax dollars.

As noted in the examples above, residents who, by virtue of their business or home location are repeatedly exposed to the impacts of crime, nuisance and/or social disorder, question why they are paying the same taxes as other residents and businesses who do not have to endure the same negative activities. One perspective is that the city should pay for some of the costs for responding to these activities for those who pay taxes but are not living the same city experiences as most others. Another perspective is that the city should pay for loss of the standard of peace and order that accompanies most of the residents and businesses in Victoria.

Acknowledging that the City must be cautious and prudent when embarking on new programs that may set precedents that are unsustainable (and hopefully unnecessary over time), there is an argument for temporary programs that acknowledge and compensate for circumstances that are currently suffered by some residents, while those circumstances gradually improve as actions undertaken by the City, other orders of government and agencies yield results.

As a first step, city staff could be asked to investigate options for such programs, in particular reviewing

- criteria to determine eligibility for financial assistance
- length of time for eligibility and duration of the program
- source of funding
- timeline for implementation
- similar programs currently available in other municipalities in British Columbia and/or Canada, if any.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council direct staff to investigate options for methods in which residents affected by crime, nuisance and/or social disorder might be compensated and return to Council with recommendations for such methods, including implications for their implementation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Hammond". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Hammond

secured from municipal, provincial and federal governments. Victoria Hockey Legacy Society is reaching out to other local governments, the province of BC (which has indicated support in an amount yet to be determined), the government of Canada, and corporate and private donors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Council request the mayor write to the Victoria Hockey Legacy Society, indicating support for their bid to host the 2025 World Under-17 Hockey Challenge, indicating contributions of in-kind and/or financial aid up to a value of \$100,000 which may be derived from an application to the City's Major Community Initiatives and Events Grants program.
2. That should this Motion be adopted, it be further considered at the daytime Council meeting July 4, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,



Mayor Alto