

Imagine West End Waterfront

PHASE 1: LISTEN AND LEARN ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY – WHAT WE HEARD

March 2022



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The stretch of shoreline commonly known as English Bay, Sunset Beach Park, and Beach Ave is located on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), and səlilwətaʔ (Tseil-Waututh) Nations and represents a place of great cultural and ecological significance. The Park Board and City are collaborating on the plan with Indigenous partners so that the plan deeply reflects how Coast Salish people have always been and will continue to be hosts to visitors and newcomers to these lands and waters.

Summary

The Vancouver Park Board and the City of Vancouver are planning for the future of the West End's iconic Salish Sea oceanfront parks, beaches, and streets.



FIGURE: Imagine West End Waterfront project area.

The West End Waterfront Plan will be created with extensive community input and engagement over the next two years. The final plan seeks to:

- Support Vancouver's commitment to Reconciliation and decolonization
- Improve neighbourhood connections and access to the area
- Enhance the seawall experience
- Address climate change and sea level rise to improve the resilience of the area
- Restore shoreline habitats and support the ecological revitalization of the area
- Upgrade services, facilities, and infrastructure to meet increased population demand
- Enhance the parks identities and how people experience the parks

This document summarizes community engagement through Phase I: Listen and Learn, which took place over a two-and-a-half month period from late August to mid-November 2021. The purpose of this project phase was to:

- Inform people about the project and opportunities to participate and engage.
- Identify barriers to participation in the engagement process and identify communities who may wish to participate.
- Inform and share with people about the complexity of the project and its multiple considerations (e.g., Reconciliation and decolonisation; climate change and sea level rise; transportation, accessibility).
- Learn about the site through multiple lenses of experience, elicit site-specific memories and stories, and understand

the kind of relationship to people have with this place.

- Identify important spaces and places, as well as concerns and opportunities.
- Learn about past and current use, including how people use and travel to and through the site and how people use the parks and Beach Avenue throughout the seasons and at various times of the day.

Following a comprehensive stakeholder mapping and assessment process that identified almost 100 stakeholder groups, engagement activities in this phase included:

- Early community visits and outreach
- Seven in-person community pop-up information events throughout the West End
- Nine online and in-person introductory project workshops (Community Conversations)

- The establishment of a 15-member project Community Advisory Group
- A Talk Vancouver survey that was supported by two in-person survey sessions with community organizations in the West End.

Collectively, the activities generated **4,600 interactions** and approximately **14,500 comments**.

Earlier linked project activities that preceded Phase I: Listen and Learn include two intercept surveys conducted in the project area in 2019 and 2020 (1,386 respondents), and three pop-up information sessions conducted by Park Board staff in 2019 at English Bay Park and Sunset Beach Park (~150+ interactions, ~265 comments).



PHOTO: Community Pop-up at the West End Farmers Market.

PHASE 1: LISTEN AND LEARN

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

9
COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS
with over **150 participants**

30+
COMMUNITY VISITS

7
COMMUNITY POP-UPS
with over **900 interactions**,
including over **2,250 comments**

2
COMMUNITY SURVEY SESSIONS
with **70 interactions**,
125 comments, and
34 surveys

150+
COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP APPLICANTS
and **1 meeting**

1,922
SURVEY RESPONSES
with over **11,200 comments**

800
POSTCARDS & POSTERS distributed

1,400
PARTICIPANTS in the **2019/2020 On-site Interviews**

150+
2019 PARK BOARD POP-UP INTERACTIONS including **265 comments**

15,000
TOTAL COMMENTS PROVIDED

6,000
TOTAL INTERACTIONS
Phase 1 and Lead-up Activities (including survey respondents)

FIGURE: Phase 1 Listen and Learn Engagement Summary.

WHAT WE HEARD – GENERAL FINDINGS

Based on an analysis of Community Pop-up comments, Talk Vancouver survey responses, Community Conversation feedback, and preceding project work (i.e., 2019 Park Board pop-ups, 2019/2020 Intercept surveys), the following noteworthy findings emerged. These general findings are followed by more detailed findings on early vision themes and emerging goal directions.

Consistency of feedback

Feedback from Community Conversations, Community Pop-ups, the project survey, and early feedback from the Community Advisory Group is relatively consistent and reflects some shared values around the West End waterfront and parks and beaches that make it up. A separate analysis of survey responses for gender, housing situation, and age found similar shared values. This approach also provided insight on what we could do better to ensure inclusive and equitable engagement.

Additionally, there is consistency with feedback from related and relevant outreach conducted both for this project and other projects, including two intercept surveys conducted in 2019 and 2020 for the Park Board about the West End waterfront, and the comments provided at the three 2019 community pop-ups organized by the Park Board.

Some of these consistent themes, values, and ideas include the following.

- **A unique and valued place:** The West End waterfront and its parks, beaches, and pathways (sea wall, interim bike path) are highly valued places for people that live, work, or recreate in the area. It is an important and unique area for the city, but also for visitors from the region and abroad.
- **Environmental and ecological health:** Improving and expanding natural habitat areas for ecological health and wildlife is a central and consistent

value. So too is ensuring that water quality is protected and improved for swimming, wading, ecosystem health, and sea level rise adaptation.

- **Flexible and multi-functional:** Improvements to the West End waterfront should continue to support its role of providing accessible parks that welcome a diversity of users and a range of passive and active uses, including individual enjoyment, small gatherings, and larger community events.
- **Safe, accessible, and inclusive:** The West End waterfront is used by the full diversity of communities that make up Vancouver and is largely considered safe and inclusive. Safety can be an issue in the evening for some people who are uncomfortable with beach parties and gatherings that are common in the warmer months. Safety is a common concern for people experiencing bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicle conflicts.

Limited accessibility to and through the parks and beaches for those with mobility challenges is an issue. Transit accessibility to the area could be improved.

- **Indigenous use, history, and awareness:** Revitalizing and amplifying visible acknowledgement of Host Nations' living connection and rights to this place, including spaces for Indigenous land-based practices as led by the Host Nations and input from urban Indigenous peoples, interpretive

features on Indigenous use of the area, gathering spaces for ceremonies or events, and native and medicinal plant gardens.

- **Improved and expanded facilities:** Commonly suggested changes include more weather protected seating and tables, improved washroom facilities, better waste disposal facilities, more food opportunities (e.g., expanded concessions, food trucks, or temporary food vendors/farmers market), more play structures, performance/event spaces, and a community garden. A significant proportion of Talk Vancouver survey respondents indicated that any service/facility/infrastructure improvements should not impact the environment, reduce natural areas, or decrease affordability of spending time along the waterfront.

Strong public interest and positive feedback

Throughout all engagement, public feedback on the process and engagement efforts to date has generally been very positive. There appears to be some common understanding of the rationale for the project (i.e., challenges and threats posed by population growth and sea level rise, etc.), as very few participants questioned the need for the project. As an indicator of the interest in the project, Community Conversation participants were asked if they wanted to continue to be involved in future project phases using an online polling tool; of those who responded, almost 100% indicated that they did.

A need for continued public information on project considerations

While most of the feedback provided through this first phase of work clearly indicated that people appreciate many aspects of the waterfront as is, participants also shared some opportunities for improvement. Some participants also expressed an interest to better understand

the issues and challenges currently facing the area, including existing facilities and infrastructure nearing the end of their service lives, the ever-present challenge of climate change and sea level rise, and the journey towards Reconciliation and decolonization.

Stakeholder interest

Throughout Phase 1: Listen and Learn, the project team had meaningful dialogue and began building relationships with several West End organizations working with equity seeking and traditionally under-represented groups. These groups have expressed a desire to continue their engagement in the project and their involvement will be expanded and deepened in future phases. Some of these groups, organizations, and associations include the Gathering Place Community Centre, Gordon Neighbourhood House, Barclay Manor/West End Seniors Network, Vancouver Pride Society, and QMUNITY. Other groups that were engaged in Phase 1 activities and who have expressed a desire and interest to maintain their involvement in the project include the West End Business Improvement Association and the Vancouver Public Space Network.

Amenities & Design

- More seating, including rain protected seating and shade
- Better lighting
- Improved and expanded washrooms
- More garbage, recycling, and compost options
- Small, local food options and/or food trucks
- Indigenous design and features
- Barrier-free design
- Multiuse pavilion

Nature & Environment

- More naturalized areas
- More trees for shade, habitat, and environmental health
- Ecosystem education and awareness
- Edible landscapes
- Indigenous gardens, plants, gathering places

Arts, Culture & Events

- Space for small scale performances, events, music, arts activities
- Indigenous art and design features
- Art reflective of all communities
- Farmer's market space, local craft market space

Mobility & Transportation

- Better signage and wayfinding for bikes, pedestrians, and vehicles
- More bike amenities, like racks, lockers, pump stations
- Improved/safer pedestrian crossings
- Better access to public transit
- More bike share stations
- Marine access – ferry pier

Spaces & Places

- Spaces for families, including play structures for children
- Places for peaceful relaxation
- Fitness - classes, outdoor circuits
- Space for picnicking, including more places to sit and eat
- Areas for dogs

Activities & Features

- Multi-use spaces
- Sport courts or places for team sports (e.g., basketball, roller hockey)
- Skate park
- Weather protected areas for classes (e.g., yoga, dance)
- Flexible, peaceful spaces for hanging out and socializing

FIGURE: Common West End waterfront design and programming ideas heard across all forms of engagement.

WHAT WE HEARD – EMERGING VISION THEMES

A *VISION* is a description of an area's future that articulates a desired outcome – a place where project participants agree they would like to journey towards together. A vision is the anchor point of a plan. A well-written vision statement should be simple and specific to the place.

A significant part of Phase 1: Listen and Learn engagement focused on gathering preliminary vision ideas for the area. We asked participants:

- *How do you imagine the West End Waterfront in the future?*
- *What are your favourite things about the West End Waterfront?*
- *What would you like to see more of?*
- *What would you like to see less of?*
- *What could change to make it feel like a safer and more inclusive place?*

Building on the outputs of Phase 1, a draft vision will be developed for review and refinement during the next engagement process in Phase 2: Visioning. Along with the goals and design principles, the vision will help guide the development of site concepts in Phase 3: Initial Concepts and Ideas and the final Imagine West End Waterfront plan which will be developed in Phase 4.

The word cloud identifies the most common words that participants provided in the Talk Vancouver survey, at Community Conversations, and from Community Pop-ups.



FIGURE: What we Heard – word cloud of common vision theme words heard during Phase 1.

WHAT WE HEARD – EMERGING GOAL THEMES

GOALS are statements of direction that define the path(s) to achieving the Imagine West End Waterfront project vision. Goals will also be used to support the evaluation of the three design concepts to be developed over the spring and summer of 2022 (i.e., How well do concepts address goals?).

A large part of Phase 1: Listen and Learn engagement focused on gathering feedback on project considerations first developed and approved by the Park Board in July 2019. The project considerations were simplified for public engagement and outreach and an additional consideration of Reconciliation and decolonization was added.

- Habitat restoration and ecological health
- Equity, inclusivity, and safety
- Reconciliation and decolonization
- Recreation and leisure
- Climate resilience, including sea level rise
- Services, facilities, and infrastructure
- Access and transportation connections

The Talk Vancouver survey and Community Conversations asked which considerations people felt were most important for the Imagine West End Waterfront project to address. Engagement participants were also invited to share additional ideas and elaborate on why these considerations are important to them. Similar themes also came up consistently in Community Pop-up feedback.

From an analysis of Talk Vancouver Survey, Community Pop-ups, and Community Conversations feedback, we heard the following directions begin to emerge. They are not prioritized, and all will be carried forward and further reviewed in the next phase of work.

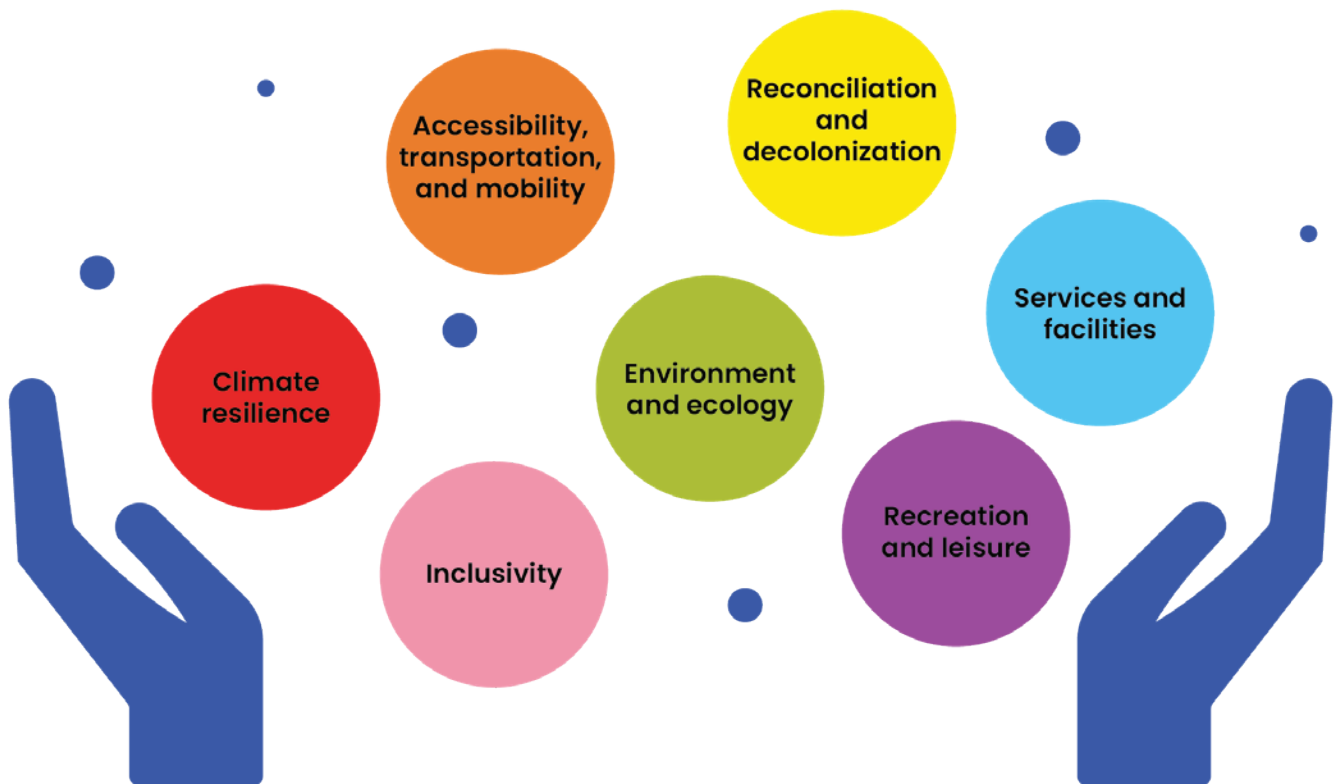


FIGURE: What we Heard – a graphic illustrating common emerging goal themes heard during Phase 1 engagement.

Using feedback from Phase 1 engagement, the emerging goal themes are further described below.

Environment and Ecology

Protect, restore, and expand habitat areas, biodiversity, and ecosystem health on coastal foreshore and upland areas.

Inclusivity

Improve site safety and cultural inclusivity, and make it accessible and welcoming for all ages, while celebrating and honouring the Indigenous and 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Climate Resilience

Address and improve climate resilience, including sea level rise, while educating the public about it.

Accessibility, Transportation, and Mobility

Improve access and transportation connections to and through the area for all ages, abilities, and modes.

Reconciliation and decolonization

Increasing visibility of Host Nations' living connection and rights to this place, including spaces for Indigenous land-based practices as led by Host Nations and input from urban Indigenous peoples, interpretive features on Indigenous use of the area, gathering spaces for ceremonies or events, and native and medicinal plant gardens.

Services and Facilities

Upgrade and enhance services, facilities, and infrastructure, including passive and active recreation features.

Recreation and Leisure

Enhance use of existing spaces and opportunities for recreation, leisure, activities, and events throughout the seasons.



PHOTO: Morton Park Community Pop-up.

PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Over a two-and-a-half-month period between the end of August and mid-November, the project team worked to engage the community and begin preliminary outreach through several channels. The following section summarizes core outreach and engagement activities for Phase 1: Listen and Learn.

- **Community Pop-ups:** Seven pop-up events held at various locations throughout the West End and project area to get to a broad spectrum of site users given the size of the project area and its various sub-areas. The pop-ups included project information and a map-based activity to help identify general issues and opportunities along the West End waterfront. The first two pop-ups were held in conjunction with a Vancouver Park Board Skate Strategy event at Sunset Beach, and the last two pop-ups were held with the W.E. CONNECT project at the West End Community Centre and Jim Deva Plaza. An additional pop-up was held with HUB Cycling's Go-by-Bike week activities at Sunset Beach Park next to the interim bike path along Pacific Avenue. Other pop-up locations included the West End Farmers Market and Morton Park. The pop-ups were very well received and generated almost 900 interactions and 2,260 individual comments.
- **Community Conversations:** Eight one-hour, interactive online sessions for people to learn more about the project and to provide early feedback on the project area (i.e., issues and opportunities) and project components (i.e., project goals and vision). A ninth in-person Community Conversation was held at Barclay Manor seniors centre in the West End. Approximately 151 people participated in the Community Conversations, most of whom had a positive experience and said they would like to continue to be engaged in the project.
- **Imagine West End Waterfront Survey:** An introductory project survey hosted on the City of Vancouver's Talk Vancouver platform. Open from October 18 to November 22, the survey generated 1,922 respondents and over 11,200 comments.
- **Survey Support Sessions:** Two small information sessions organized to help promote the Talk Vancouver survey and collect additional project feedback. Sessions were held at Gordon Neighbourhood House and the Gathering Place Community Centre. The sessions helped generate an additional 34 surveys, about 70 interactions, and 125 additional comments that were provided using Community Pop-up material.
- **Community Advisory Group:** A 15-member project advisory group established for the project. The group was selected from a pool of 151 applicants using diversity, equity and interest criteria and met at the end of Phase 1 on November 23, 2021.

Phase 1: Listen and Learn also assessed information gathered from earlier linked project activities. This work included two intercept surveys conducted in the project area in 2019 and 2020, which generated 1,386 respondents. Park Board staff also carried out three pop-up information sessions at English Bay Park and Sunset Beach Park in 2019, which generated 265 comments. The intercept surveys and pop-ups asked some similar questions to what was asked in Listen and Learn Community Pop-ups, Community Conversations, and the Talk Vancouver survey.