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Institute

British  
Columbia

# Urban Design 101

## Lunch n' Learn

Tuesday, October 3rd, 2017

**Instructor:**

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Design  
Changes  
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# NYC: "The City That Never Sleeps" Vibrancy

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# NYC: Contemporary Building Vibrancy?

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# NYC: Contemporary Building Vibrancy?

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# Vancouver "Urban Renewal" That Wasn't



*The proposed freeways separate the waterfront from the city. The hotel Vancouver is still the dominant building in the downtown core.*

[https://www.raisethehammer.org/article/1427/a\\_distant\\_mirror:\\_40\\_years\\_of\\_urbanism\\_in\\_vancouver](https://www.raisethehammer.org/article/1427/a_distant_mirror:_40_years_of_urbanism_in_vancouver)

➤What made Vancouver different from other highway blighted North American cities?

➤"Urban renewal" was a term used in the US where social problems/poverty stemming from the abandonment of the downtowns were "solved" by bulldozing entire neighbourhoods in the 1950's- 80's.

➤Canada always followed suit 20 years later. By the 1970's highway proposal had strong community opposition and voted in the TEAM Vancouver Council where its support and money petered out.

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5. Vancouver, Canada — The city is among Canada's densest, most ethnically diverse cities, with 52% of its population having a first language that is not English



<http://uk.businessinsider.com/mercer-2017-quality-of-living-worldwide-city-rankings-2017-3/#23-montreal-canada-this-city-is-one-of-five-canadian-cities-that-made-the-overall-rankings-the-french-speaking-city-has-established-itself-as-a-centre-of-commerce-finance-and-technology-1>

## Mercer-Quality of Living Index 2017:Vancouver #5

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<https://www.straight.com/life/885476/vancouver-voted-millions-travellers-top-destination-canada>

# TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Award in Canada: Vancouver #1

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A nighttime photograph of a city skyline, likely Vancouver, with several tall skyscrapers illuminated and their lights reflecting on the water in the foreground. The sky is a deep blue, and the water is dark with shimmering reflections of the city lights. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

# Municipal Planners + Pedestrian Oriented Urban Design + Sustainability

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# Density Without Public Space Amenities = Fear at Public Hearings



➤Warehousing" people doesn't work-Pruitt-Igoe, St. Louis, Missouri. Demolished after 20 years in 1976.

➤Human nature does not change- we are highly social animals. What changes are cultural contexts. This is an example of "density done badly" that lives in the North American psyche, which appears to show up at Public Hearings as fear.

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# Hollywood at Work: Density In Media



Courtesy of CBS

➤ **Blue Bloods** CBS programme, the "double patriarchal (grandfather + Son-NYC Police Chief) traditional family Sunday dinner in a heritage, single family house. The "good guys" live in single family.



Courtesy of CBS

➤ **Blue Bloods** CBS programme, crime scenes, with "working girls", very often occur in a multi-family, steel frame construction, higher density housing from the 1920's (?) Higher density= Crime.

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# Good News:

COV + region is exceptionally consistent at implementing pedestrian oriented urban design in contemporary buildings.

Great local examples of livability in higher densities to counteract the Hollywood version of crime ridden high density.

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➤ Vibrant streetscapes and walkable communities are made up of a series of incremental additions.

➤ Successful new consolidated development sites mimic this pedestrian oriented incrementalism (top, Kits , Broadway, 15 years old [?] not from the streetcar era)

➤ How many choices of shops & services are there to draw people to the area? Top & bottom?

➤ While the Apple Store, bottom, in Portland Ore, is "sexy", the curtain wall glass has only one entry point for a block long. If you don't need an "Apple", you won't be using this block. Vibrancy?

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➤ Downtown Portland Ore. does not appear to have the fine grained shops and services at 25' intervals as Vancouver does in former streetcar suburbs.

➤ While the bays appear to be 40'-50' wide for more than half a block of glass curtain wall (or other), the single pub use, as interesting as it is, it limits the number of people that use the shop and the activities/errands that can be run in the area. It limits vibrancy /use to certain times of the day.

➤ The chic picnic table craze is a great way to mitigate a set of given architectural conditions.

## Building Edge Programming

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➤Residential building edge programming is also very important, especially when it comes to designing housing and streetscapes to be self-policing, otherwise known as "eyes on the street" (Jane Jacobs).

➤Privacy is very important , esp. at grade. Good rule of thumb: 3 risers minimum on stairs, to create visual privacy. Residents' heads and dinner table are going to be above the heads and eye level of pedestrians.

➤Layer the patio edge- this example- ground plantings, concrete container, then shrubs. Only semi-private patio- no one can hide to jump the resident.

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➤ Pedestrian friendly streetscape in Olympic Village, Vancouver.

➤ CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) is mostly about designing visual cues into the architectural streetscape to "fake-out" any would-be criminal from doing anonymous things.

➤ Design it such that it appears that anyone at any time could pop their head out to call the police- hence the term "eyes on the street".

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- Portland Ore., new construction . Residential right at grade on the street. No transition between private and public space.
- Note the blinds are drawn. Clear that the residents are uncomfortable with the lack of privacy. It is difficult to live without any source of natural sunlight. Sign on the door-"Private Residence".
- The architectural form & typology should make that clear. This residential streetscape is quite commercial looking.

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# Basics of Public Space

Private, Semi-Private, Semi-Public, Public



What are the clues to indicate that this is a public or private space?

Vancouver, BC

Photo: G. Venczel

➤ **Public Space** is somewhere you could dress funny, say what you like and stand/sit where you like (as long as you don't bother others and it's law-abiding):

- Sidewalk
- City square
- Park
- Any public property, though sometimes difficult to tell

➤ "Loitering", aka, people watching, is highly encouraged in pedestrian oriented streetscapes while vagrancy isn't. It is a fine line.

➤ In a democracy, the quality of the public space is often a barometer of the robustness of the negotiated dialogue between citizens and those that govern them.

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# Basics of Public Space

Private, Semi-Private, Semi-Public, Public



➤ **Semi-Public Space** is a tricky one as it is sometimes interchangeable with **Semi-Private Space**, depending on the context.

➤ In residential and multi-family contexts, the actual property line is usually a good indication that it is a **Semi-Private Space** where you could go after a Frisbee, if need be, without problems but not stay. Or you could stay but you need an invitation.

➤ How comfortable would you be asking for directions from someone gardening in their single family front yard? If they were sitting on their front porch?

Molehill, Vancouver

Photos: G. Venczel

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# Basics of Public Space

Private, Semi-Private, Semi-Public, Public



West Fourth Ave, Vancouver

Photo: G. Venczel

➤ **Semi-Public** in the commercial context means that you do not need an invitation to use the space. Indeed, the business would suffer if it operated by invite only.

➤ You do not need an invitation to browse the goods at the hardware store from the **Public Space** sidewalk. You do not need to buy anything. You can go inside the store and not need to buy anything.

➤ While browsing the goods, you are still in the **Public Space** on the sidewalk and you could be still funny looking and say what you want as long as it is law abiding.

➤ Is the inside of the store **Semi-Private**? Do your qualifications to partake change? Do you need an invitation? Can you dress funny? Can you say what you want? It is on private property.

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# Basics of Public Space

Private, Semi-Private, Semi-Public, Public



Dunderave, West Vancouver

Photo: G. Venczel

➤ A **Semi-Public Space** in a commercial context can be defined as it being open to the public, no need for an invite.

➤ Once inside, there are restrictions, however, that relate to the success of the business and the responsibilities that go along with being the business/land owner regarding safety and other liability issues. The **Semi** in **Semi-Public** is the qualifier. It is the necessary conditions for the business to operate.

➤ Is it a reasonable definition of Semi-Public by determining who the anticipated "users" are, namely, the public who do not need an invite but with conditions?

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# Basics of Public Space

Private, Semi-Private, Semi-Public, Public



➤ The **Semi-Public** café and other similar venues have become the vaunted "Third Place" or the "Public Living Room", both inside and out.

➤ It is a place outside of the home and the traditional office. It is a social and now a workplace venue with many self-employed having home offices.

➤ The Buddha-Full Café is a great example of the public realm design that accommodates a "public living room" on the streetscape.

➤ What design elements allows for flexibility of uses to accommodate an outdoor café, green grocer etc. that adds vibrancy to the streetscape? (hint: think sidewalk + storefront)

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Lower Lonsdale, North Vancouver

Photos: G. Venczel





# Basics of Public Space

Private, Semi-Private, Semi-Public, Public



Molehill, Vancouver

Photo: G. Venczel



➤ A **Semi-Private Space** can be defined as a space where you need an invite to stay. It is not completely hidden from view from the **Public Space** and it is not indoors.

➤ The balcony is **Semi-Private**, as well as the ground floor patio.

➤ What are the visual cues that the residents of this converted single family house feel comfortable enough to use their Semi-Private Spaces?

➤ Is there enough of a transition between the Public Spaces to the Semi-Private so that the residents don't feel that they are on display?

➤ Is there a cultural difference between suburban expectations in levels of privacy and city levels of privacy?

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# Basics of Public Space

Private, Semi-Private, Semi-Public, Public



Home=  
Private  
Space

➤ **Private Space**, as you can guess, often offers complete privacy from the public and **Public Realm**.

➤ It is the inside of a home, where you need an explicit invitation.



Retail=  
No  
Private  
Space

➤ A private club, as well as other similar settings, is just that, a private venue through invitation only.

➤ There generally is no functional use for a **Private Space** in a retail context. There may be a broom closet and a back office, but even with an invitation, the business owners will not derive added value by inviting the public to the broom closet.



Office=  
Private  
Space

➤ There is, however, **Private Space** in an office-like commercial setting. Invite only.  
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# Basics of Public Space

Private, Semi-Private, Semi-Public, Public



Multi-Family Housing, Burnaby

Photo: G. Venczel



Newport Village, Port Moody

Photo: G. Venczel

➤ Is there a **Semi-Public Space** in residential/multi-family housing?

➤ Is there a **Semi-Private Space** in retail shops?

➤ No to both. Can you provide an educated guess as to why?

➤ Does it have to do with who the target audience or 'users' are?

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# Basics of Public Space

Private, Semi-Private, Semi-Public, Public



West End  
Apartment,  
Vancouver

Photo: G. Venczel

➤ Identify the public, semi-public, semi-private and private spaces for the West End Apartment.

➤ What visual cues are you picking up as to how that space is used?

➤ Identify the public, semi-public, semi-private and private spaces for the back patio for the Garden Apartments in North Vancouver?

➤ What visual cues are you picking up as to how that space is used?



Garden  
Apartments/  
Townhouse ,  
North  
Vancouver

Photo: G. Venczel

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# Basics of Public Space

Private, Semi-Private, Semi-Public, Public



Manhattan, NY

Photo: G. Venczel



Holden Skytrain Station area,  
Burnaby

Photo: G. Venczel

- Why are quality **Public Realm Spaces** so important to city life and vibrancy?
- Boredom is public enemy #1 for walkable neighbourhoods. Who's going to walk where there is nothing to see?
- Holdom Skytrain Station area has a fairly underwhelming public realm. The Manhattan outdoor dining room in the street has a vibrant public realm.
- What are the streetscape design differences between Holdom Skytrain area public realm and that of the street dining room in Manhattan?

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# Questions?

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