



# Spaces that Connect Us

Key considerations for delivering social infrastructure. Prepared by Jean Roe.

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# Executive Summary

This report provides a set of Key Considerations for the creation, design and maintenance of activated, welcoming and useful spaces of social infrastructure in new mixed-use developments. Catalyst Community Developments Society commissioned this research to help document Catalyst's business model and research, to help build capacity in the not-for-profit development sector. Founded in 2013, Catalyst is a non-profit real estate developer focused on the development, ownership and operation of vibrant, affordable and inspiring spaces for living and working. As a mission driven organization, Catalyst strives to leverage real estate assets for significant community benefit. Many of Catalyst's projects include social infrastructure.

Social infrastructure refers to "social facilities and spaces that help individuals, families, groups and communities meet their social needs, maximize their potential for development, and enhance community well-being." Social infrastructure is often undervalued yet important for combatting social isolation and building community resilience. Examples of social infrastructure include places of worship, libraries, neighbourhood houses and restaurants. In Vancouver, it is increasingly common for new social infrastructure to be delivered alongside housing. Mixed-use projects can meet multiple community needs at once, by providing both housing and community space. Furthermore, the ongoing revenue of rental housing can provide reliable funding for an organization to maintain its community space and deliver on its mission. This report explains social infrastructure, why it is important and how it is delivered in the private, public and non-profit sectors.

This report is designed for community organizations seeking to redevelop land into mixed-use projects that include social infrastructure. The 14 considerations provide conceptual suggestions, inspiring examples and questions to consider when building a new community-serving space. No two projects are the same, so each consideration is relatively broad. These considerations are divided into three sections: Getting Started, Physical Space Design and Maintenance and Operations. Although not completely comprehensive, these considerations are intended to act as a starting point for groups considering (re)development. As Catalyst's projects continue to reach occupancy, these considerations will adapt and grow.



# Introduction

## Purpose

This report provides key considerations for how to design and maintain activated, welcoming and useful spaces of social infrastructure in new mixed-use developments. The report will be added to a public toolkit that will document Catalyst’s business model and research, helping build capacity, resilience and long-term sustainability within the not-for-profit sector of affordable housing and community space development. This research was supported by Catalyst Community Developments Society, the Mitacs Accelerate Program and the University of British Columbia’s School of Community and Regional Planning and Housing Research Collaborative.

## Intended Audience

This report is designed for community organizations seeking to redevelop land into mixed-use projects that include community-serving spaces.



# Summary of Key Considerations

The following considerations are intended to provide conceptual suggestions for community organizations considering redevelopment. No two projects are the same, so each consideration is relatively broad. These considerations are divided into three sections: Getting Started, Physical Space Design and Maintenance and Operations. The following is a summary of the considerations — go to page 33 for more detail.

## Getting Started

Before thinking about real estate, the first step is to understand your organization and its mission, vision, objectives, capacity and connections. The following “Getting Started” considerations are adapted from Vancity’s “Building it Right Toolkit.”

- 1. First things first: Is redevelopment necessary?** Redevelopment is a large undertaking, so it is key to assess an organization’s readiness and the necessity of redevelopment. An existing space may be a bit run-down, but does it need to be rebuilt?
- 2. Review your mission and vision, then confirm organizational objectives and priorities.** Purpose-driven real estate projects benefit from a clarified mission. If an organization can articulate priorities and objectives that are aligned with its mission and vision, the objectives can directly move the mission forward.
- 3. Assess your organization’s capacity.** Your organization’s staff and executive team will play a crucial role in the redevelopment process. Consider if your organization has the skill set for redevelopment and what capacity there is for a new project.
- 4. Invest in partnerships and community connections.** Partnerships can provide skills, relationships and equity in a redevelopment process. Your organization can partner with funders, government groups, fellow non-profit organizations or neighbours.
- 5. Understand the needs of your organization and the community.** If you choose to redevelop, think about what your organization needs for a new space. Assess the existing assets and needs of the local area.

## Physical Space Design

If your organization has decided it has the clarity and capacity to start a redevelopment project, the next phase will be developing a concept and business plan. In this phase, real estate and spatial factors will have more prominence than the previous “Getting Started” phase.

1. **Design with your values in mind.** Certain design decisions can allow your new project to reflect the values of your organization and could directly further your mission.
2. **Consider revenue generation.** Mixed-use projects with commercial or residential space can meet multiple community needs at once, while also helping provide consistent revenue that can help fund the community space(s).
3. **Share your space.** There is opportunity for certain physical spaces to be shared with other organizations, which reduces costs, adds resources and helps with day-to-day operations.
4. **Bigger isn’t always better.** It is easy to be attracted to big, blue-sky designs with high quality materials and large spaces. However, it is important to be pragmatic about the design and ensure your organization’s priorities are met.
5. **Design for both flexibility and specificity.** Flexible spaces allow for a variety of programming and uses, allowing the space to be responsive to shifting community needs.

## Maintenance and Operations

Once residents and tenants move into the redeveloped project, maintenance and operation considerations will affect the daily experience of the space. Although these considerations won’t be implemented until occupancy, they should be considered in early days.

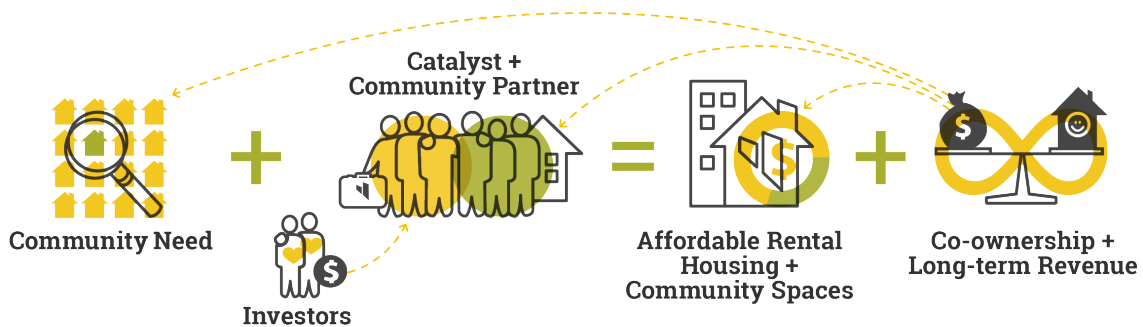
1. **Prioritize community building.** The success of a particular space is “not solely in the hands of the architect, urban designer or town planner; it relies also on people adopting, using and managing the space – people make places, more than places make people.” Find ways to put people first and prioritize community building.
2. **Step-by-step.** A new project does not have to be completely perfect when it opens. A slightly imperfect space allows for input and ownership from local residents, creating the opportunity for the community to take part in the evolution of the space.
3. **Observe, measure, assess, adapt.** Observing who is using a space, who isn’t using it, where people are sitting, what they are doing, who they are talking to, and how long they are staying can provide insights about how a space is functioning.
4. **The work keeps going.** As the Project for Public Spaces states, “about 80% of the success of any public space can be attributed to its management. No matter how good the design of a space is, it will never become a true place unless it is cared for well.” Consider how you will finance and manage the day-to-day operations and maintenance.

# Meet Catalyst

Founded in 2013, Catalyst is a non-profit real estate developer focused on the development, ownership and operation of vibrant, affordable and inspiring spaces for living and working. As a mission driven organization, Catalyst strives to leverage real estate assets for significant community benefit.

## • The Catalyst Business Model •

*Catalyst partners with non-profit organizations and municipalities to create new affordable rental homes and community spaces, and achieve long-term financial sustainability.*



Catalyst creates, develops, owns and operates community-oriented projects that provide secured below market rental housing. Many projects are mixed-use with commercial space and/or affordable space for other community-based organizations. Catalyst works and partners with non-profits, municipalities and market developers with affordable housing obligations on their sites to secure affordable land and maintain community ownership. At the time of writing, Catalyst has eight sites under development, and three completed projects. Of the completed projects, one is owned and operated by Catalyst, and two were delivered through a development management agreement. Five of these sites include community-serving spaces, as seen on the following page.

***“One of the community’s needs is clearly affordable rental housing. The other need is to have spaces for the community, where people can connect and interconnect.”***

***- Robert Brown, Catalyst***



## Catalyst Projects with Community Spaces

Address	Status	Community partners	Affordability Highlights	Community Space Highlights
2318 St. John's St., Port Moody	Under construction	Inlet United Church*, Kinsight, SHARE	100% below market rental	Multi-purpose church space, child care centre, shared atrium
2221 Main St, Vancouver	Under construction	City of Vancouver, Marcon, Mid-Main	100% below market rental	Large park, local restaurant, health clinic, community-oriented amenity rooms
Hanelore, 585 W 41st Ave, Vancouver	Under construction	Oakridge Lutheran Church (OLC)*	100% below market rental	10,000 sq ft church and community space, retail space
Unitarian Church, Vancouver**	Project generation	Unitarian Church of Vancouver	100% below market rental	Church space
Mid Main, 3998 Main Street, Vancouver**	Project generation	Mid-Main Community Health Centre	100% below market rental	Ground floor retail

\*Housing Societies will own residential component

\*\* In feasibility stage

Catalyst strives to serve community needs and build on community assets. “One of the community’s needs is affordable rental housing. The other need is to have spaces for the community, where people connect and interconnect,” says Robert Brown, President of Catalyst. Redeveloped church spaces, day cares, restaurants, health services and other community spaces are intended to be used by both residents and the broader community. These types of spaces hold the potential to provide important services for an affordable rate while also helping build a sense of community and connection for residents in the building and neighbouring area.

For example, churches traditionally provide affordable space for daycare providers because it is part of the church’s mission to serve the community (and supporting a daycare facility directly fulfills this mission). However, much of this type of existing low cost community space is ageing and many owners of have no cash to redevelop — they are asset rich but cash poor. Furthermore, provision or re-provision of this space is not protected by planning policy. If these organizations undergo a full-scale redevelopment at market rates, they likely will be unable to afford to rent their redeveloped space at a low rate due to high mortgage and construction costs. Catalyst strives to offset some of these challenges with its non-profit business model and mission based redevelopment process.

# Advocacy at Catalyst

Catalyst strives to build capacity of the non-profit development sector by sharing its story and providing resources for the broader community, specifically social investors and non-profits considering redevelopment. The organization intends to continue to increase their advocacy and storytelling to showcase the potential impact of innovative and mission-driven non-profit development. Past publications include “Homes That Connect Us” and “The Role of Social Investment in Canadian Affordable Housing.”

## Homes That Connect Us

Catalyst’s first completed, owned and operated site is Madrona, a 49-unit below market rental townhouse in Victoria. In anticipation of tenants moving in, Catalyst considered how it could actively try to foster a friendly, socially connected and resilient community through social design and tenant engagement. In fall 2017, Catalyst piloted a 12-month “Community Connections” project that explored social design and programming. Insights from the research are intended to stimulate a broader dialogue about opportunities to foster social connection in dense housing. As Catalyst grows, its goal is to inspire others to put effort and resources into smart social design and programming that fosters diverse and truly livable communities.<sup>1</sup>



Robert Brown, Catalyst

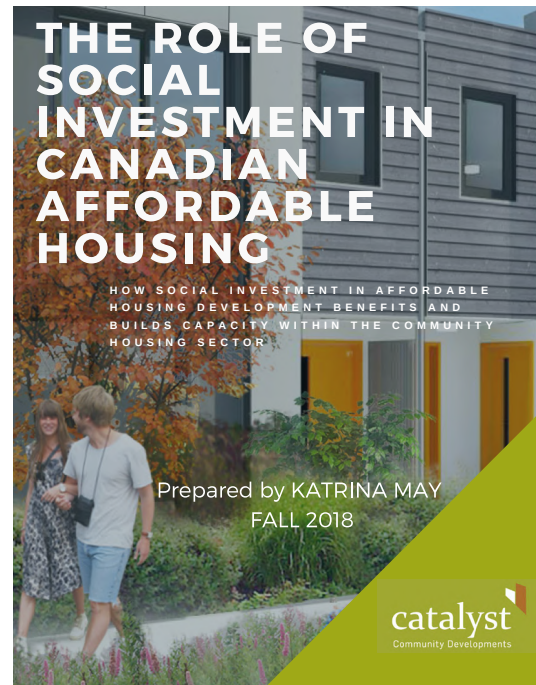
1 Hoar, Michelle. “Homes That Connect Us: Building Social Connections and Community Engagement among Residents of Multi-Family Rental Housing.” Vancouver: Catalyst Community Developments Society, 2018. p. 2

## The Role of Social Investment in Canadian Affordable Housing

In Fall 2018, Catalyst released a report explaining the process of development finance and the potential of social investment to build capacity and resilience within the Community Housing Sector.<sup>2</sup> Through literature review and interviews with social investors, and using Catalyst’s projects as case studies, the report explains the challenges and opportunities with incorporating social investment into the financing strategy for non-profit development.

## Connecting on Community Redevelopment

This forthcoming research (to be published Fall 2019) identifies gaps in capacity-building efforts within the community housing sector. The report intends to support further research and development of a community-led platform that would facilitate information-sharing and relationship-building.



*This report provides resources and recommendations to ensure community spaces are set up for success. It will be added to Catalyst’s collection of open-source publications.*

**Social Investment:** Private capital invested with the intention of positive social outcomes. Also known as “socially responsible” or “impact” investments, these are investments made into companies, organizations, and funds with the intention to generate measurable social and environmental impact alongside a financial return.

**Community Housing Sector:** The wide range of local partners who have a stake in building and maintaining a long-term supply of permanent affordable housing. This includes non-profit and co-op sector organizations and housing providers, community land trusts, municipalities, charities and faith-based groups, as well as cause-driven private sector organizations and financial institutions.

# Social Infrastructure: An Introduction

*Social infrastructure refers to*

*“social facilities and spaces that help individuals, families, groups and communities meet their social needs, maximize their potential for development, and enhance community well-being.”*

*– City of Vancouver*



# What is social infrastructure?

Social infrastructure is a broad term that encompasses a large network of physical spaces. For the purposes of this report, The City of Vancouver’s definition will be used, in which social infrastructure refers to “social facilities and spaces that help individuals, families, groups and communities meet their social needs, maximize their potential for development, and enhance community well-being.” City-owned and city-supported spaces include neighbourhood houses, community halls and youth centres. Social infrastructure also encompasses the shared spaces that allow for frequent social interaction to occur, such as libraries, places of worship, restaurants and markets. As sociologist Eric Klinenberg argues, we may not set out to build relationships with strangers every time we buy a coffee or drop off a library book, but “when people engage in sustained, recurrent interactions, particularly while doing things they enjoy, relationships inevitably grow.”<sup>3</sup>

*“Building real connections requires a shared physical environment, a social infrastructure.”*

*– Eric Klinenberg, Palaces for the People*



Women at public market. Photo credit: Alecia Steels via Unsplash.

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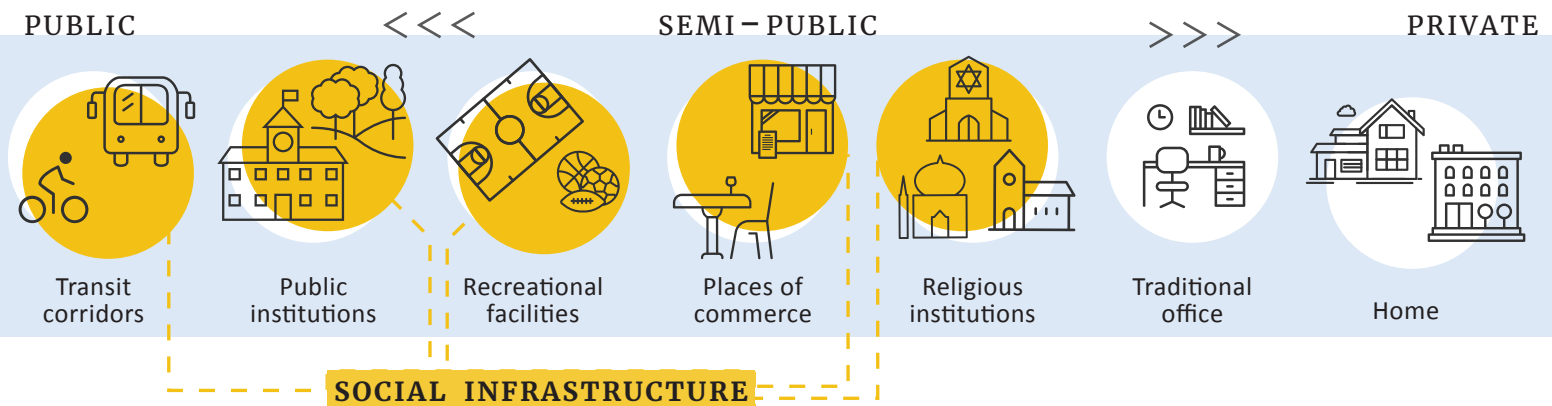
<sup>3</sup> Klinenberg, Eric. *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*. Crown/Archetype, 2018, 5

# Understanding social infrastructure

Social infrastructure can be understood across scales, from a single physical space (a church or coffee shop) to the interconnected network of all social spaces in a neighbourhood or city. The concept can also be understood across a continuum of clearly public to clearly private spaces. Within one mixed-use project, various types of social infrastructure may exist, creating an interconnected network of social infrastructure in the development.

**Public space** (such as a sidewalk) is completely open and accessible to the public, often owned by local or regional government. Commercial transactions, hours of operation or membership is not expected or required. On the other end of the spectrum, in **private spaces**, (such as residences and traditional offices) only few people have access and users have control over the rules and expectations of the space. In between private and public are **semi-public spaces** (religious institutions, places of commerce, recreational facilities and public institutions), which are spaces that allow for public life and social support to occur.

The diagram below shows a simplified continuum of public to private space with the primary types of social infrastructure included. Ranging from community-serving spaces that provide services and support to public and semi-public spaces that allow for casual social interaction, social infrastructure is an essential element for thriving and resilient communities.



*Continuum of public to private spaces, including a typology of social infrastructure. The typology of social infrastructure is adapted from: Latham, Alan, and Jack Layton. "Social Infrastructure and the Public Life of Cities: Studying Urban Sociality and Public Spaces." *Geography Compass* 0, no. 0 (2019): e12444. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12444>.*

# Social Infrastructure Typology\*



## Transit corridors

The spaces and networks of mobility. *e.g. sidewalks, train stations, bus stops.*



## Public institutions

Places or facilities that are provided publicly and intended for public use. *e.g. libraries, schools, universities, memorials, squares, plazas, parks, art galleries.*



## Recreational facilities

Places intended for leisurely recreational activity. *e.g. gyms, sports fields, basketball courts, swimming pools, bowling alleys, cinemas, theatres, skate parks, public pianos.*



## Places of commerce

Spaces that involve commercial transactions. Payment might be required. *e.g. markets, shops, cafes, bars, restaurants, hair salons, street vendors*



## Religious institutions

Places of worship. *e.g. churches, church halls, mosques, synagogues, temples*



## Traditional office\*\*

Traditional workspace. Note that some offices, such as coworking space, could be considered social infrastructure, due to the collaborative nature of coworking space.



## Home\*\*

Private homes for various household sizes. *e.g. single-detached home, townhouse or apartment building.*

*\*Adapted from Latham, Alan, and Jack Layton. "Social Infrastructure and the Public Life of Cities: Studying Urban Sociality and Public Spaces." Geography Compass 0, no. 0 (2019).*

*\*\*Not considered types of social infrastructure.*

# Why is social infrastructure important?

Social infrastructure is an under-valued yet critical element for healthy communities and is strongly associated with positive social outcomes.<sup>4</sup> Local amenities increase sense of neighbourhood satisfaction, increase chances that people will live in the neighbourhood for longer, generate enhanced feelings of interpersonal trust and help people feel less isolated.<sup>5</sup> Overall, these spaces can help combat social isolation and build community resilience.

## Combating social isolation

In cities across the world, social isolation and loneliness are persistent challenges. Vancouver is no exception. A 2012 survey by the Vancouver Foundation reported that social isolation was the main concern of Metro Vancouver residents, an even greater concern than housing affordability.<sup>6</sup> In the same study, one in four people agreed that they found themselves alone more often than they would like. The number of people who report they never talk with their neighbours is twice as high in apartments compared to ground-oriented buildings, and almost twice as high in rented dwellings compared to owned dwellings.<sup>7</sup> This statistic illustrates that apartments can be particularly isolating places, increasing the need for nearby amenities and social infrastructure in medium and high density areas.

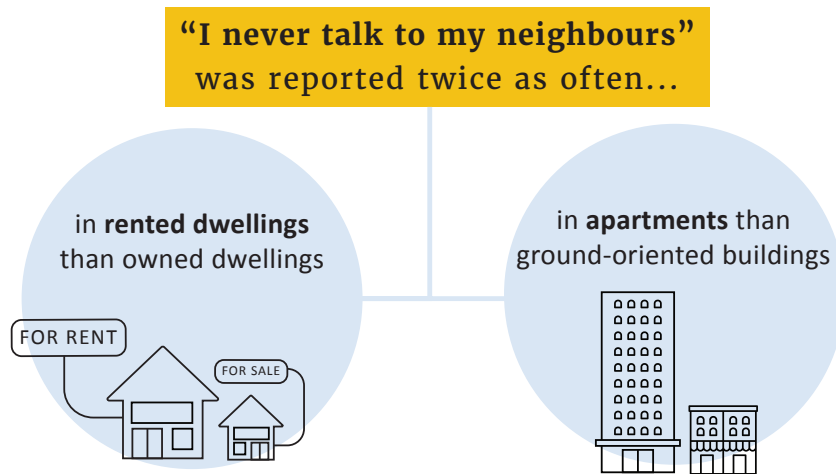


Figure. Key finding from 2012 Vancouver Foundation research.

4 Cox, Daniel, and Ryan Streeter. “The Importance of Place: Neighbourhood Amenities as a Source of Social Connection and Trust.” *American Enterprise Institute*, May 2019.

5 *ibid*

6 “Connections and Engagement. A Survey of Metro Vancouver.” *Vancouver Foundation*, Metro Vancouver, June 2012.

7 *ibid*



## Building community resilience

Across municipalities, researchers and organizations have identified the importance of spaces for social connection in emergency situations. During earthquakes, floods or heat waves, the most important resources are family, friends and neighbours.<sup>8</sup> Governments and disaster planners are increasingly understanding the importance of social infrastructure for climate security.<sup>9</sup> The City of Vancouver, for example, recognizes that community connections and robust social infrastructure play a foundational role in preparing for and recovering from disasters or other shocks and stresses.

**“...public places and institutions play a pivotal role in the daily lives of our neighbourhoods and communities. On good days, they can determine how many opportunities we have for meaningful social interactions. On bad days, especially during crises, they can mean the difference between life and death.”**

**– Eric Klinenberg. *Palaces for the People* (p. 226)**

### Sociability in multi-family residential buildings

In Vancouver, research has recently been conducted about increasing sociability within multi-family residential buildings. Two key initiatives regarding this topic are the City of Vancouver’s Hey Neighbour Collaborative and Happy City’s Happy Homes Toolkit.

#### **Hey Neighbour!**

Hey Neighbour!, initiated by the City of Vancouver, is an ongoing examination of how residents of higher density buildings can connect with each other through design improvements and social programs. This initiative highlights the link between sociability and health, and discusses the roles that municipalities, the housing industry and residents can play in cultivating such connections. The work is done in partnership with the City’s Housing Policy team to help inform the updated High-Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines.



#### **Happy Homes Toolkit**

The Happy Homes project, conducted by the Vancouver-based firm Happy City, has taken the lead on studying how to strengthen social relationships in multi-family housing through design, bringing to light the importance of design strategies that foster positive social connectedness. The Happy Homes toolkit provides ten key principles on how design can provide opportunities for social wellbeing and happiness for all.

<sup>8</sup> “A Healthy City for All: Vancouver’s Healthy City Strategy. 2014-2025. Phase 1.” Healthy City Strategy. City of Vancouver, 2014, p. 35

<sup>9</sup> Klinenberg, Eric. *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*. Crown/Archetype, 2018.

# Challenges facing social infrastructure

## Real estate challenges

Vancouver's real estate market faces extreme affordability challenges. Attention is often placed on the affordability of the housing market, yet unaffordability impacts all spaces (office, commercial, retail, institutional and industrial).<sup>10</sup> Not-for-profit, social purpose and cultural organizations (which contribute to the network of social infrastructure) are also affected by affordability pressures. To operate successfully, these types of organizations need affordable spaces to meet their needs. However, the real estate challenges facing the Metro Vancouver region threaten the security and sustainability of these organizations and their services.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the importance of social infrastructure, the Metro Vancouver region has seen a loss of community spaces. Existing spaces and programs face development pressure and may be at risk of displacement. Although the general loss of space is known, there is limited data about the specific needs and dynamics of social infrastructure. In 2013, the Social Purpose Real Estate (SPRE) Collaborative conducted a study to learn more about the SPRE market in Metro Vancouver.

A survey was designed to gain a more thorough understanding of the real estate situation facing non-profits, social purpose and cultural organizations in Metro Vancouver. An updated study is set to be conducted in 2019-2020. Some key findings from the 2013 SPRE study include:

- Approximately 70% of survey respondents will require more space within the next 5 years (typically less than 500 square feet)
- Few social purpose organizations own their space
- There are limited funds for programming, maintenance and recapitalization
- Up to 30% of respondents are on a month-to-month lease, indicating insecure tenure
- There is a strong willingness among owners of SPRE to redevelop land and potentially collaborate and co-locate with aligned groups.

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10 ["RENT- LEASE- OWN: Understanding the Real Estate Challenges Affecting the Not-For-Profit, Social Purpose and Cultural Sectors in Metro Vancouver."](#)  
[Vancouver: Real Estate Institute of BC and Social Purpose Real Estate Collaborative, March 28, 2013.](#)

11 [ibid](#)

**Social Purpose Real Estate (SPRE)** can be defined in two parts: (i) social purpose, meaning organizations with a mission to provide community benefits; and, (ii) real estate, in this context referring to the property and/or facilities either rented, leased, or owned and operated by social purpose organizations. SPRE refers to property and facilities owned and operated by organizations and investors for the purpose of community benefit, and to achieve a blended value of returns.

## Under-utilized or poorly maintained spaces

Despite the demand for community space, some social infrastructure spaces are under-utilized or don't meet the organization's objectives for the space. Limited organizational capacity, increased maintenance costs, changing community needs, and lack of resources can lead to social infrastructure that is not used to its best potential. An example of a space in need of maintenance was the Oakridge Lutheran Church in Vancouver. The church was run down and in need of costly repairs. Partnering with Catalyst, the church decided to redevelop their property into a six-storey mixed-use building, with retail at street level, a new church and community space on the second floor, and four levels of affordable housing above the church. The inclusion of housing allows for long-term revenue that will help fund the day-to-day maintenance of the church, while also providing affordable housing for the community.



## Delivering Social Infrastructure

### Delivery in mixed-use developments

For community spaces to be financially feasible, they are often delivered within mixed-use projects. Housing units, office space or successful retail space can help finance the development and maintenance of community spaces that may not generate much revenue. For organizations with the mission to provide community space, a mixed-use model can help the organization deliver its mission by providing a long-term revenue stream, as shown in the example of Oakridge Lutheran Church provided above. Rental housing is often an attractive option, as it can provide consistent revenue for years to come.

## Delivery of Social Infrastructure in Vancouver

The City of Vancouver is considered to have a flexible zoning system, where developers and city planners negotiate to adjust the design, density and height of projects on a case-by-case basis. Development cost levies, community amenity contributions and density bonusing zoning are key concepts relating to how development (of both housing and social infrastructure) functions in Vancouver.

**Development Cost Levies** (DCLs) were approved almost thirty years ago, which gave Vancouver City Council the authority to use such levies to fund capital expenditures. DCL funds can be used for building or maintaining childcare facilities, infrastructure, housing or parks. Some projects are exempt from DCLs, including projects that do not increase total square footage, tax-exempt churches and non-market housing. The City of Vancouver has various DCL districts — collected DCLs must be spent within the area boundary (except for housing DCLs which can be spent anywhere in the city).<sup>12</sup>

**Community Amenity Contributions** (CACs) apply to projects that require rezoning. They are technically voluntary contributions, as they are not required by law. That said, in practice, rezoning applications often don't go forward without a CAC. The cost of a CAC is negotiated on a case-by-case basis between the City and the developer. CACs typically help fund parks, childcare facilities, community centres, libraries, neighbourhood houses and culture spaces.<sup>13</sup>

**Density Bonus Zoning** is a zoning tool that permits developers to increase the allowable buildable floor space in exchange for amenities and affordable housing. Amenities include community centres, libraries, parks, childcare centres and affordable housing. The financial contributions are determined by the density bonus contribution rate set in the pre-determined zones.<sup>14</sup>

## Market Delivery of Social Infrastructure

Much of the social infrastructure delivery in market developments arise from Development Cost Levies, Community Amenity Contributions and Density Bonus Zoning. Market developers may include commercial or retail services in mixed-use buildings to generate revenue and attract tenants.

## Municipal Delivery of Social Infrastructure

Beyond receiving funding through developer contributions (as explained previously), the City also receives funding through property tax, user fees and other operating revenue. The City may also receive funding from the provincial and federal government, non-profit agencies, foundations and philanthropists to build certain types of social infrastructure.

### **City of Vancouver Social Infrastructure Plan (forthcoming)**

The City of Vancouver's Social Infrastructure Plan is set to be released in fall 2019. The plan will provide recommendations for how to strategically meet social infrastructure needs. The plan is focused on understanding what social infrastructure exists, who it serves, and how well it meets current needs; what future social infrastructure will be needed; how to best fund and deliver new spaces; and priorities for strategic investments. This plan focuses only on City-owned and City-supported facilities (as other plans already pay attention to other types of social infrastructure). Examples include neighbourhood houses, family places, youth centres, seniors' centres and immigrant-serving organizations.

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12 [City of Vancouver. "Development Cost Levies," July 11, 2018.](#)

13 [City of Vancouver. "Community Amenity Contributions," July 11, 2018.](#)

14 [City of Vancouver. "Density Bonus Zoning," July 11, 2018.](#)



## Non-profit Delivery of Social Infrastructure

When non-profit groups that own land seek redevelopment, they hold a unique opportunity for the delivery of social infrastructure, because the redeveloped land can remain a community-owned asset.<sup>15</sup> Maintaining community owned land in non-profit's hands "enhances the sustainability, capacity, and asset base" of the non-profit development sector to build and maintain "more affordable homes and community space for more people."<sup>16</sup> Non-profit organizations face several delivery options for their project, effecting who will own and manage project components and who will take on potential risk and reward.<sup>17</sup> The following figure explains the delivery options for non-profit development, ranging in impact, risk, expertise and control.

### Development Options for Non-Profit Organizations with Land



*Continuum of development options for non-profit organizations. Sourced and adapted from Vancity Community Foundation*

**Non profit as developer.** The organization takes on all aspects of ownership and development — it owns the land, takes on debt, hires a development manager, holds contracts, fully manages the completed building, and undergoes maintenance and repairs.

**Joint venture with non-profit.** Working with a non-profit or social purpose developer, work together to create social impact. Share the risk and reward.

**Partner with public agency.** The role is restricted to program management and delivery. The agency provides land, manages development and tends to retain ownership.

**Partner with market developer.** If an organization brings equity (land or cash), it can partner with a market developer and receive a space built for its needs.

**Rezone and sell land.** An organization can rezone before selling to maximize the value of the land.

**Sell land.** If an organization owns land, it can sell the land for a lump sum, which you can use for the organization's immediate needs.

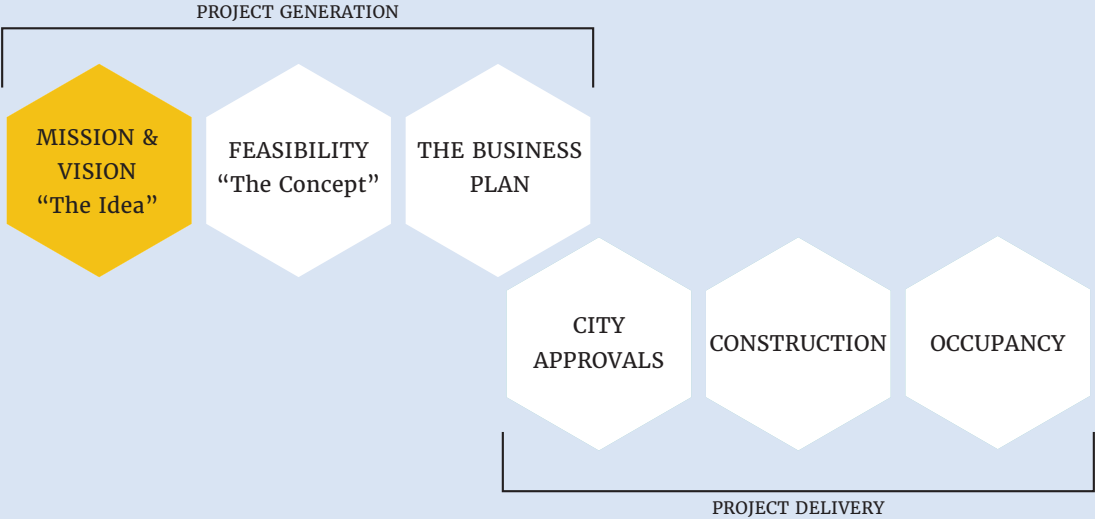
<sup>15</sup> Brown, Robert. Quoted in May, Katrina. "[The Role of Social Investment in Canadian Affordable Housing: How Social Investment in Affordable Housing Development Benefits and Builds Capacity within the Community Housing Sector.](#)" Vancouver, Catalyst Community Developments Society, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*

<sup>17</sup> Vancity Community Foundation. "[Building It Right: Non-Profit Development Delivery Options.](#)"

# Catalyst's Mission-Based Real Estate Development Process

Catalyst's typical development process follows the steps shown below, which provides both structure and flexibility for any project. The process begins with the partner organization clearly defining and confirming their mission and redevelopment goals. In the feasibility phase, the options for the building mix would be explored. An organization's mission, goals, and capacity, as well as the neighbourhood context and financial considerations will determine whether or not social infrastructure would be included in a project.



*Catalyst's Mission-Based Real Estate Development Process*



*Construction site of 2221 Main St redevelopment project. Photo Credit: Jean Roe*

# Examples of social infrastructure

The following pages provide four examples of social infrastructure, including a public institution (library), recreational facility (basketball hoop and piano), place of commerce (restaurant) and a religious institution (church).



## Public Institution – Library

Public institutions are vital for a strong network of social infrastructure in cities.<sup>1</sup> As an example, libraries and community centres provide a variety of important social services and resources for people with various backgrounds, needs, interests and motivations. Libraries and community centres can provide benefits to immigrants, seniors, people searching for work, students, parents and children. Although some may argue that libraries are less important in today's digital world, the symbolic, cultural and socioeconomic roles of libraries persist.<sup>2</sup> Access to internet, computers and other electronic information is yet another service that libraries now provide. Libraries are the “bedrock of civil society”<sup>3</sup> with an underlying ideology that is “democratic, neutral, educational and inclusive”<sup>4</sup>

## Mount Pleasant Community Centre and Library (Vancouver)

The Mount Pleasant Community Centre and Library, located in Vancouver's Mount Pleasant neighbourhood, integrates a library, community centre, gym, café and rental housing units into one project. The library's foot traffic averages at 1400 people per day. The community centre is also an official Disaster Support Hub location, serving as a public area for citizens to gather following a natural disaster to share information and resources. This centre is an essential space for the community, providing a multitude of formal and informal services for families, adults, seniors, youth and teens.



1 Klinenberg, Eric. *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*. Crown/Archetype, 2018.

2 Leckie, Gloria J., and Jeffrey Hopkins. "The public place of central libraries: Findings from Toronto and Vancouver." *The Library Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2002): 326-372

3 Klinenberg, Eric. *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*. Crown/Archetype, 2018, 220.

4 Leckie, Gloria J., and Jeffrey Hopkins. "The public place of central libraries: Findings from Toronto and Vancouver." *The Library Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2002): 332





## Place of Commerce – Restaurant

At restaurants, cafes and bars, people can come together to enjoy good company and lively conversation. The local restaurant is a place where it is possible for close friends to meet regularly, the “unacquainted to strike up conversations,”<sup>1</sup> or where individuals can be “left alone in relative comfort by others.”<sup>2</sup> According to Oldenburg, author of *The Great Good Place*, restaurants and bars are true **third places** when they feel like a home away from home, are inclusive to the general public, regulars are present, and the establishment is modest in its décor and atmosphere.

### Catalyst Case. 2221 Main St, Vancouver — under construction

Catalyst is working with Vancouver Affordable Housing Agency (VAHA) to redevelop 2221 Main Street in Vancouver’s Mount Pleasant neighbourhood. The project will have retail space, a community health centre, 145 affordable rental homes, and a restaurant. When deciding on the restaurant tenant, Catalyst received two offers. The first was from a chain restaurant that offered financial security. The second option was a local Main Street restaurant group with a number of eclectic operations. Catalyst decided to choose the local restaurant to support a local business and because it seemed to fit the context of the area better.



Cafe on Main Street. Photo Credit: Jean Roe.

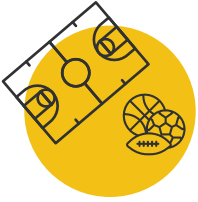
**Third places:** Public places where people can gather, put aside concerns of their first and second places (home and work) and enjoy good company and conversation. These places are “at the heart of a community’s social vitality and the grassroots of democracy.” Examples include restaurants, cafes and bars.

1 Laurier, Eric, and Chris Philo. “Cold Shoulders and Napkins Handed: Gestures of Responsibility.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 31, no. 2 (2006): 193–207.

2 *ibid*



2221 Main Street rendering. Image Credit: Rositch Hemphill Architects



## Recreational Facilities – Sport and Music

Athletic facilities, including soccer fields, swimming pools, basketball hoops or fitness classes, attract people of “different backgrounds into a shared social space, allowing for competitive, playful, often joyous activity, and sparking relationships that would never have been formed off the field or court.”<sup>1</sup> For many, sport is the area of life in which they open themselves up to a variety of encounter and community.<sup>2</sup> Similar effects can occur with music and creative performance.

### Woodwards (Vancouver BC)

The Woodward building in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside provides multiple uses, including social housing, retail stores and food services. The central atrium includes a variety of public seating, a public piano and a basketball hoop. Based on multiple conversations with users of the space, it became clear that the basketball hoop and piano create a sense of community in the atrium. A security guard who has worked at Woodward for three years said “the only place where intermingling occurs across different groups [students, working class, homeless people, office workers] is at the piano and basketball hoop.” People may come to Woodward to run errands, but they stay because of the publicly accessible recreational activities in the atrium.



Basketball hoop in Detroit. Photo Credit: John Lewis (Intelligent Futures)

Based on multiple conversations with users of the Woodward atrium, it became clear that the basketball hoop and piano created a sense of community in the space.



Piano player at Woodward, Photo credit: Jean Roe

1 Klinenberg, Eric. *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*. Crown/Archetype, 2018, 167.

2 Latham, Alan, and Jack Layton. “Kinaesthetic Cities: Studying the Worlds of Amateur Sports and Fitness in Contemporary Urban Environments.” *Progress in Human Geography*, July 4, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132519859442>.

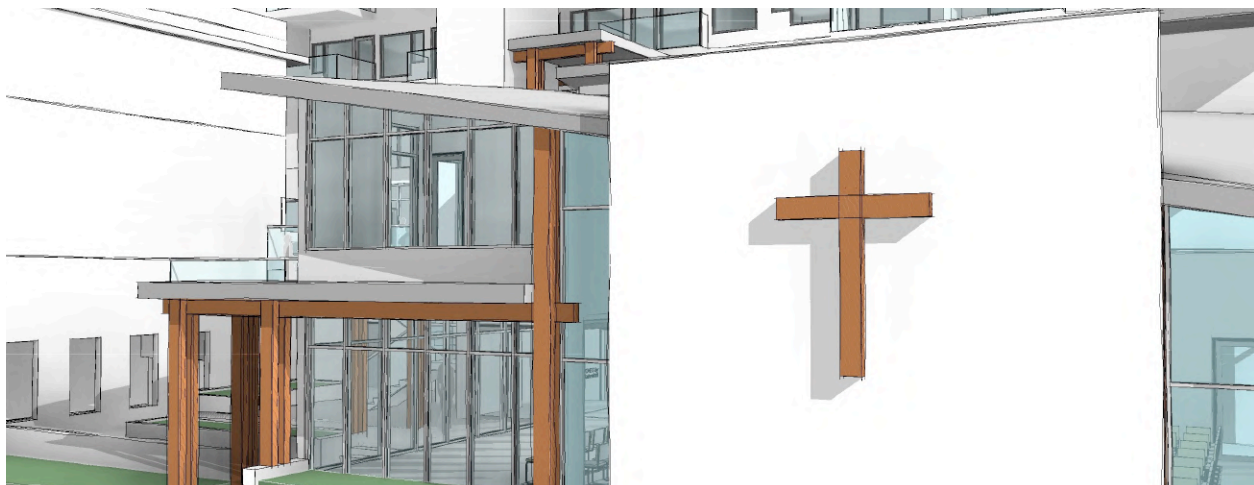


## Place of Worship – Church

Places of worship, such as churches, were originally the centre of neighbourhoods – communities were literally built around these buildings. Acting as places of service and gathering, churches have historically been key to the social infrastructure network of cities. As many religious organizations face shifting congregation numbers, changing demographics and increased maintenance cost for old buildings, redevelopment becomes an opportunity. Faith-based groups that own land assets are uniquely positioned to build community by providing a place of worship, as well as multi-purpose rooms, affordable housing and other social services in redevelopment projects.<sup>1</sup> Whether religious organizations focus on building bridges outside their congregation, or only focus on their members, these physical spaces are important elements of social infrastructure.<sup>2</sup>

### Catalyst Case. The Springs, Port Moody — under construction

The St. Andrew’s United Church (now part of the newly amalgamated Inlet United Church), located on St. Johns Street in Port Moody, has been located on the same property since the 1800s. In past years, the church began to face declining congregation numbers and the building needed many repairs. The church started to consider its options – amalgamation or redevelopment? Church members interviewed a few private developers, who told them the best option was to turn the land over to developers who would build market housing to subsidize the cost of a redeveloped church space. This didn’t fit the church’s vision of providing affordable housing, a church and community space. In search for a different option, the church eventually found Catalyst. The project broke ground in summer 2019. Inlet United Church will own the church space and Kinsight – a group that works alongside families of children, youth and adults with developmental delays and disabilities — will own a parcel of the land, where a children’s centre and administration space will be located. Ideally, the redeveloped church space will offer a variety of opportunities for people to frequently gather and make connections.



Rendering of The Springs. Image Credit: Francl Architecture

1 May, Katrina, and Jordan Konyk. “Common Visions for Faith-Based Redevelopment.” Student Report. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2018.

2 Klinenberg, Eric. *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*. Crown/Archetype, 2018



# **Social Infrastructure:** **Key Considerations**

# What makes a great place?

The following section of this report (on page 33) provides Key Considerations when contemplating (re) development of a community space, to help ensure the space is a well-utilized and well-maintained place for the community to enjoy for years to come. The Key Considerations are rooted in the process and philosophy of **placemaking**. Placemaking is a multifaceted approach to the planning, design and management of shared spaces with the goal to strengthen “the connection between people and the places they share”.<sup>18</sup> Too often, architects, developers and planners focus on specific steps to *deliver* spaces and forget about placemaking —that is, ensuring the spaces become memorable, interesting and valued places people enjoy for years to come. For stakeholders involved in the delivery and maintenance of social infrastructure, placemaking considerations can help ensure spaces are valuable to the community. Although social infrastructure is a broad term, placemaking can be applied to a variety of places, from churches and shops to community centres and libraries.

According to the Project for Public Spaces, a New York based non-profit that act as a champion of the placemaking movement, great places occur when a space is **accessible** and **well-connected**; it projects a **quality image** and **people feel comfortable**; it is a **social place** where people enjoy gathering and **people participate in activities** and/or utilize important services. The Project for Public Spaces created these criteria based on the concept of placemaking. The diagram on the following page further explains the key attributes of great places.

*Placemaking is a multifaceted approach to the planning, design and management of shared spaces with the goal to strengthen “the connection between people and the places they share.”*

18 — Project for Public Spaces. How to Turn a Place Around: A Handbook for Creating Successful Public Spaces. 2000.

The following pages explain the key considerations for ensuring your new space is an activated and successful place and are divided into three sections:

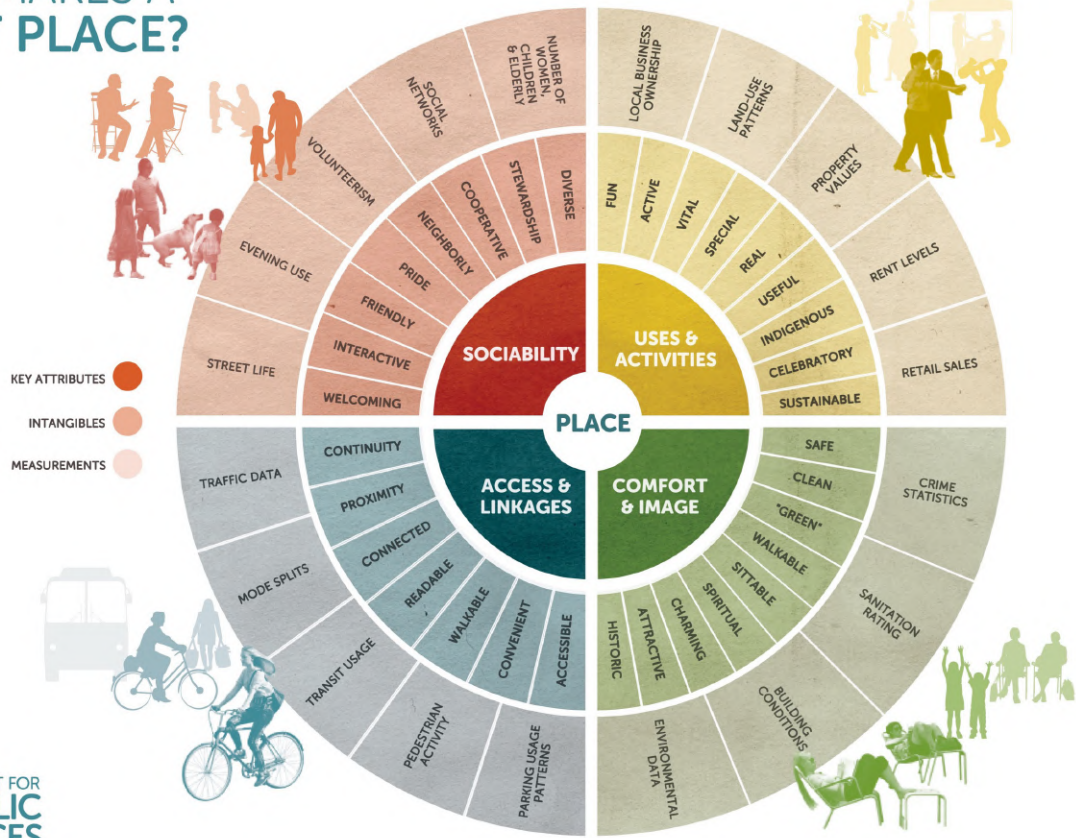
- Getting Started
- Physical Space Design
- Maintenance and Operations

As Catalyst’s ongoing projects reach occupancy, this set of considerations will likely grow and adapt. The considerations are intended to be an exploratory and inspiring starting point for non-profits who seek to redevelop space, and is not entirely comprehensive.



Activated public spaces in Calgary and Vancouver, respectively. Photo Credit: Jean Roe

# WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?



What makes a great place? Image Credit: Project for Public Spaces. <https://www.pps.org/article/grplacefeat>



Public art in Toronto. Photo credit: Jean Roe



Outdoor cafe in Lisbon. Photo credit: Jean Roe

Project for Public Spaces is a New York City based non-profit organization that strives to build the placemaking movement across the world and connect people to resources, expertise and partners.

Learn more on the [Project for Public Spaces website](#).

# Getting Started

## *Development phase – Mission and Vision “The Idea”*

Before thinking about real estate and the physical design or operations of social infrastructure, the first step is to understand your organization. It is key to review your organization’s mission, vision, objectives, capacity and connections. The following considerations are adapted from Vancity’s “Building it Right Toolkit.”

### **1. First things first: Is redevelopment necessary?**

If you have a space of social infrastructure and you’re considering redevelopment, the first consideration is to understand if you should redevelop. The space may be a bit run-down and old, but does it need to be rebuilt?

### **2. Review your mission and vision, then confirm organizational objectives and priorities.**

Purpose-driven real estate projects benefit from a clarified mission. If an organization can articulate priorities and objectives that are aligned with their mission and vision, the objectives can directly move the mission forward.

### **3. Assess your organization’s capacity.**

Your organization’s staff and executive team will play a crucial role in the redevelopment process. Consider if your staff has the skill set for redevelopment and what capacity there is for a new project.

### **4. Invest in partnerships and community connections.**

Partnerships can provide skills, relationships and equity for a redevelopment process. Your organization can partner with funders, government groups, fellow non-profit organizations or neighbours. There is also opportunity for ‘spatial’ partnerships, where certain spaces are shared between organizations.

### **5. Understand the needs of your organization and the community.**

If you choose to redevelop, think about what your organization needs for a new space. Assess the existing assets and needs of the local area.



## Getting Started

### 1. First things first – Is redevelopment necessary?

If you operate existing social infrastructure and you're considering redevelopment, factors to consider include: is the space wheelchair accessible? Are there any major infrastructural problems? Is the place weather-proof and structurally sound? Does your organization have the capacity and motivation to redevelop? If your space does not face any major accessibility or structural problems, you may not need to redevelop. Redevelopment requires a large amount of time, money and organizational capacity, so it's important to really consider if you need to redevelop before you do. A key potential benefit to redevelopment is the ability to leverage the land for community benefit. Both housing and community spaces can be included in redeveloped projects.



*Hannelore Church Members in original church space.*

#### Catalyst Case. Hannelore. 5688 Ash St. (Vancouver, BC) – under construction

For decades, the Oakridge Lutheran Church was faced with increasingly expensive maintenance and repair costs for the church. Over time, the church decided to redevelop, because the maintenance costs were high and the needed repairs were extensive. The team embarked on a redevelopment project with Catalyst.

#### Learn more

- [Vancity Community Foundation. "Building It Right: Are you ready to start?," November 2014.](#)



*New church windows at the redeveloped Oakridge Lutheran Church. Photo Credit: Catalyst.*

#### Questions to consider

- What community does your organization serve and what is the future role of your organization?
- Is the aim to continue the existing program(s) or to develop a new direction?
- Are there any possible partners you'd like to develop with?
- Are you interested in applying for rezoning?
- What nearby community assets and amenities exist?

## Getting Started

# 2. Review your mission and vision, then confirm organizational objectives and priorities

Purpose-driven real estate projects benefit from a clarified mission. Ideally, your organization should already have a clear mission statement that clearly communicates your work and motivates the people in your organization. If an organization can articulate priorities and objectives that are aligned with their mission and vision, the objectives can directly move the mission forward.

### Catalyst Case. The Springs (Port Moody, BC) – under construction

In the initial stages of working with Catalyst, Kinsight — a group that works alongside families of children, youth and adults with developmental delays and disabilities — confirmed that a top priority to move its mission forward was to build a Tri-Cities Children’s Centre. Catalyst reviewed Kinsight’s real estate portfolio to find space for the Children’s Centre, but these properties were determined unsuitable for the project. At the time, Catalyst was working with St. Andrew’s United Church (now Inlet United Church) in Port Moody, and Catalyst made the connection between the two groups. The result was the inclusion of the Tri-Cities Children’s Centre into the Springs project in Port Moody. This example shows the strength of adopting a process which is first focused on organizational mission, then organizational priorities that would move the mission forward, then, and only then, a review of the real estate portfolio.



Claire MacLean, CEO of Share Family and Community Services (left), and Christine Scott, CEO of Kinsight (right) at the groundbreaking event for The Springs Project. Photo credit: BC Housing.

### Learn more

- [Vancity Community Foundation. “Building it Right: Your redevelopment vision,” November 2014.](#)

### Questions to consider

- What is your mission statement?
- What is your vision statement?
- What priorities will move your mission forward most effectively?



Rendering of The Springs. Image Credit: Francl Architecture



## Getting Started

### 3. Assess your organization's capacity

Your organization's volunteers, staff, executive team and board of directors will play a crucial role in the redevelopment process. Consider if your team has the expertise for redevelopment and what capacity they have for a new project. Redevelopment typically takes many years (and the work doesn't end when the project is built), so long-term dedication from your team is vital for pushing a project along and ensuring a successful space for years to come.

#### Catalyst Case. Hannelore. 5688 Ash St. (Vancouver, BC) – under construction

When the Oakridge Lutheran Church (OLC) decided they were ready to redevelop, the group assessed their organizational capacity and knew they needed to hire support for the redevelopment process. Based on an analysis of capacity in the feasibility stage with Catalyst, the church hired an owners representative, who provided support and development expertise along the way. Oakridge Lutheran Church also partnered with the Catalyst team, who provided development expertise and infrastructure that the church lacked.



Oakridge Lutheran Church and Catalyst redevelopment team.

#### Learn more

- [Vancity Community Foundation. "Building It Right: Are you ready to start?," November 2014.](#)

#### Questions to consider

- How do you suspect your capacity will change in the next five years?
- Does your team have the necessary skill-sets and expertise for redevelopment?
- Do you need recruit anyone with a specific skill-set?
- Do you have the financial capacity to undergo redevelopment?
- What other projects are on the go? How would this project help or hinder these other projects?

## 4. Invest in partnerships and community connections

Partnerships can provide skills, relationships and equity for a redevelopment process. Your organization can partner with funders, government partners, community representatives, fellow non-profit organizations or neighbours. Your organization should strive to partner with groups that hold aligned values. Aligned values and visions can help foster unique opportunities, leading to innovative and impactful redevelopment projects. These partnerships can be hard to navigate at times (due to increased coordination efforts), but the benefits often outweigh the challenges. There is also opportunity for 'spatial' partnerships, where certain spaces are shared between organizations.

### Catalyst Case. The Springs (Port Moody, BC) – under construction

At 2318 St. Johns Street, Inlet United Church, Catalyst Community Developments Society and Kinsight Community Society are partnering on redevelopment. The land-owning church decided to partner with the organizations based on aligned missions. As Brian Asselstine, co-chair of the church leadership team, said, "the success to date of this project is due to a strong partnership of organizations that share a common vision for re-purposing community assets and developing strong community relationships."

### Questions to consider

- Who have you enjoyed partnering with before? Why did that partnership succeed?
- What types of organizational skills, resources and work would compliment your organization?





## 5. Understand the needs of your organization and the community

If you choose to redevelop, think about what your organization needs in a redeveloped space, i.e. a functional program. Functional programs help match the needs of the organization with its general space needs. Organizations often want multi-purpose and flexible spaces, but specific needs should also be met. For example, your organization may need a community garden or a space to store archives. To understand what the new space could include, assess the existing assets and needs of the local area. By talking with partners and community members, you can gain a better understanding of how a new space could be most effective. This stage is typically conducted in collaboration with an architect.

### Catalyst Case. 2221 Main St. (Vancouver, BC) – under construction

At 2221 Main Street, a project that includes non-market housing and supportive retail and office space is under construction. The base building will house a community health clinic. The base building was not originally designed to accommodate clinic infrastructure. Kirsten Reite Architecture (KRA) led stakeholder workshops to help create a design and functional program that would work best for the health clinic. The workshops included doctors, nurse practitioners, dentists and a patient representative, as well as architects and Catalyst staff.



2221 Main Street rendering.  
Image Credit: Rositch Hemphill Architects

### Learn more

- [Vancity Community Foundation. “Building it Right: Your redevelopment vision,” November 2014.](#)
- [Thomas Bevan. Social Purpose Real Estate Toolkit. University of British Columbia, Vancity Community Foundation, 2012.](#)

### Questions to consider

- What is most important about the new space to you?
- How much space do you really need?
- What are the most important components that you currently have and want to keep?
- What does your organization need?
- What nearby community assets and amenities exist? What is working well, and what isn’t, for these spaces?
- How could your new space complement the existing assets?

# Physical Space Design

## *Development phase – The Concept Plan, The Business Plan, City Approvals*

If your organization has decided it has the clarity and capacity to start a redevelopment project, the next phase is developing a concept and business plan. In this phase, real estate and spatial factors will have more prominence than in the Getting Started phase.

- 1. Design with your values in mind.**

Certain design decisions can allow your new project to reflect the values and mission of your organization and can further your mission.

- 2. Consider revenue generation.**

Mixed-use projects that include commercial or residential space can meet multiple community needs at once, while also helping provide consistent revenue for your organization to maintain your community space(s).

- 3. Share your space.**

When a group of organizations with aligned missions partner to build social infrastructure, there is opportunity for certain physical spaces to be shared, which in turn reduces costs, adds a greater pool of resources for funding, helps the day-to-day operations, and can provide more volunteers.

- 4. Bigger isn't always better.**

It is easy to be attracted to big, blue-sky designs with the highest quality materials and large spaces. However, it is important to be pragmatic about the design and ensure your organization's priorities are met.

- 5. Design for both flexibility and specificity.**

Flexible spaces allow for a variety of programming and uses and can be responsive to community needs as they shift over time. Specific space needs and financial considerations should also be considered and included in the design.

## 6. Design with your values in mind

Certain design decisions can allow your new project to reflect the values of your organization and could directly further your mission. Distinguishable architecture features, from the materials and building form to the entrance and interior, can make the space more interesting and unique while also reflecting your organization. For example, if your organization wants to create a space that feels welcoming and comfortable, including natural light and greenery can help foster such an image.

### The Arcus Centre for Social Justice Leadership (Kalamazoo, MI)

The Arcus Centre for Social Justice Leadership trains leaders working in human rights and social justice. As a meeting space and learning environment, the Centre brings people together for conversation and activities. The open, socially-oriented physical space reflects the organization's values of social justice by breaking down psychological and cultural barriers between people. A fire place, kitchen and living room is located at the centre of the building, creating the potential for frequent meetings and casual encounters. The building exterior is built from wood masonry, a low-tech and cost-effective method of construction.

#### Learn more

- Check out the Arcus Centre for Social Justice Leadership project [here](#).
- Roe, Jenny. "Cities, Green Space, and Mental Well-Being." Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Environmental Science, November 22, 2016. "Happy Homes." Happy City, May 26, 2017. <https://thehappycity.com/resources/happy-homes/>.

#### Questions to consider

- What are the core values of your organization?
- How can these values be represented through physical design?



*The Arcus Centre for Social Justice Leadership. Photo credit: Steve Hall, Hedrich Blessing*



*The Arcus Centre for Social Justice Leadership. Photo credit: Steve Hall, Hedrich Blessing.*

## 7. Consider revenue generation

The day-to-day maintenance costs of community spaces can be a major financial drain, which can be relieved by revenue from housing or commercial space. In the long term, your organization can use the revenue surplus to commit to additional mission based activities. If the main goal of your redevelopment is to deliver a new community space, consider how the project could generate revenue. Rental housing is often a great option, as it meets a common community need while also providing consistent revenue for your organization, which will help the financial sustainability of the project — your organization does not have to be dependent on unreliable funding from community donations or government grants.

### Catalyst Case. Hannelore. 5688 Ash St. (Vancouver, BC) – under construction

To finance the day-to-day maintenance costs of the Oakridge Lutheran Church (OLC), affordable rental housing units and a bank were included in the project. The revenue from the bank helps subsidize the cost of housing, ensuring the units stay affordable. Additionally, the revenue from both the bank and the affordable housing helps finance the day-to-day operations of the church space, which does not generate enough revenue to be financially sustainable.

### Catalyst Case. 2221 Main St. (Vancouver, BC) – under construction

Catalyst decided to include a restaurant in the 2221 Main St project. Located on a busy commercial street, there is market demand for a restaurant at this site. This restaurant will generate revenue for the project, which can help finance the day-to-day maintenance of the publicly accessible amenity room as well as the affordability of the rental units.



### Questions to consider

- To what extent does the existing space generate revenue?
- What main costs does the existing space incur?
- How might this project generate revenue while still furthering your organization’s mission?



## 8. Share your space

When a group of organizations with aligned missions partner to build social infrastructure together, there is opportunity for certain physical spaces to be shared. There are both economic and practical reasons to share space, with the potential to reduce costs, improve collaboration and ensure the space is used throughout the day and evening. Beyond practical reasons, “when successful, shared spaces seem to practice alchemy<sup>19</sup>.” There is a movement towards creating “social innovation labs” or “community hubs” where non-profits and social purpose enterprises share space to allow workers to take advantage of multiple services, participate in community building, or simply meet up. Mixed-use buildings can also share the space of the required amenity room, by opening it up for public use. Despite the potential benefits, space sharing can increase legal and practical complications, which should be considered.

### Via6 (Seattle, WA)

At Via6, a mixed-use market rate development in Seattle, the lobby mixes commercial and retail uses (including restaurants, a pub and a café, an urban grocer, flower shop, and a bicycle shop) with residential amenities (including a mezzanine level with flexible shared space). This open concept mixed-use lobby is permeable to the street and to each other, creating a vibrant and authentic sense of place. Because the space is open and shared, it feels activated throughout the day and night, making the place well-utilized and increasing chances for community connection.

### Catalyst Case. The Springs (Port Moody, BC) – under construction

Inlet United Church entered a space sharing agreement with Kinsight (who will own the child-care centre). The groups have agreed to share meeting room space and parking.



### Learn more

- [Building Capacity, Sharing Values: Shared Spaces and Social Purpose Real Estate.](#) (November 2014, Tides Canada, prepared by: LoriAnn Girvan).
- City of Edmonton. [Edmonton Non-profit Shared Space Feasibility Toolkit: A resource for Non-profit Co-location Initiatives in Edmonton.](#)
- <sup>19</sup> – [Centre for Social Innovation. Rigour: How to Create World-Changing Spaces](#)

### Questions to consider

- Do you and your potential shared space partners share an aligned vision?
- Do you have previous experience sharing space with other organizations?
- Does the potential return (financial/social impact) justify the financial and planning investment?

## 9. Bigger isn't always better

When embarking on a redevelopment project, it is easy to be attracted to big, blue-sky designs with the highest quality materials and large interiors. However, it is important to be pragmatic about the design and ensure your organization's priorities are met. For example, if a key priority for your organization is to deliver affordable housing alongside social infrastructure, it is important to ensure the finances allow for adequate affordability. Furthermore, designing for longevity is key — the ability to effectively manage a space is far more critical to success than an extravagant design. Modest spaces can also often feel more welcoming, allowing users to feel comfortable and a sense of ownership in the space.

### Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House (Vancouver, BC)

The largest hall in the Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House can fit 140 people. Overall, it isn't a massive or fancy building, but the space provides endless essential services and activities for the local community. The building is designed for longevity and practicality, while still providing a quality image. The modesty of the space welcomes users to feel a sense of ownership and comfort — it isn't so pristine that it feels 'untouchable'.

#### Learn more

- Project for Public Spaces. "Eleven Principles for Creating Great Community Places." Project for Public Spaces. <https://www.pps.org/article/11steps>.
- Oldenburg, Ray. The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community. Hachette Books, 1999.

#### Questions to consider

- What design elements are 'must haves' and what are 'like to haves'?
- How can the space be designed to allow people to feel comfortable?



Photo Credit: Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House.

## 10. Design for both flexibility and specificity

Flexible spaces allow for a variety of programming and uses and can be responsive to community needs as they shift over time. Small design choices can make the space more adaptable, from movable chairs and wall partitions, while still maintaining unique qualities. Flexibility strategies should be considered from the beginning of the development process. Consult with the end users of the space to understand what type of flexibility would be best for them. While flexibility is important for a multi-functional space, specific space needs should also be considered and included in the design. For example, if your organization prioritizes its need for a community kitchen or a room for archives, these specific needs should be placed at the forefront of design considerations.

### Mount Pleasant Community Centre (Vancouver, BC)

One of the key lessons the head architect of the Mount Pleasant Community Centre learned from this project was that “it’s all about flexibility, creating spaces that can be use in multiple ways.” David Dove, architect at Perkins and Will, recognized that when designing community spaces, you should be cognizant that the space will likely be understaffed. Finding ways to provide maximum flexibility and consistent sight lines throughout the space allowed the space to be adaptable for various functions.



### Questions to consider

- Who are your end users? What are their space needs?
- What type of programming occurs at your existing space? Are there ways to accommodate this type of programming better?
- Does your organization have any specific space needs that require a particular design?

*“The building will be used in ways that you can never imagine. You don’t want your design to preclude any of those possibilities.”*

*– David Dove, Architect, Perkins and Will*

### Catalyst Case. The Springs (Port Moody, BC)

For the Inlet United Church redevelopment in Port Moody, the church chose to not have permanent pews in the sanctuary. Brian Asselstine, co-chair of the church leadership team, expressed the desire for a flexible space. “We wanted it to be flexible. Some church organizations see these spaces as sacred space that you don’t use for anything else, but when we looked at it... our old sanctuary sat empty most of the week. You have this huge space and it’s not very usable because you have permanent seating that you can’t move around.” The flexible design of the sanctuary allows for other organizations (including partner group Kinsight) to use the space for a variety of community events.

# Maintenance and Operations

## *Development phase – Occupancy*

Once residents and tenants move into your redeveloped project, maintenance and operation considerations will affect the day-to-day experience of the space. Although these considerations won't be implemented until occupancy, they should be considered in conjunction with physical space design. The following considerations are based off literature review and interviews with Vancouver-based architects, developers and designers.

### 1. Prioritize community building.

The success of a particular space is “not solely in the hands of the architect, urban designer or town planner; it relies also on people adopting, using and managing the space – people make places, more than places make people.” During the maintenance and operations of your new space, find ways to put people first and prioritize community building.

### 2. Step-by-step.

A new project does not have to be completely perfect when it opens. A slightly imperfect space allows for input and ownership from local residents, creating the opportunity for the community to take part in the evolution of the space.

### 3. Observe, measure, assess, adapt.

By observing who is using a space, who isn't using it, where people are sitting, what they are doing, who they are talking to, and how long they are staying can provide huge insights about the way a space is functioning and performing.

### 4. The work keeps going.

As the Project for Public Spaces states, “about 80% of the success of any public space can be attributed to its management. No matter how good the design of a space is, it will never become a true place unless it is cared for well.” Consider how you will finance the day-to-day operations and maintenance of the project.



## 10. Prioritize community building

As the Joseph Rowntree Foundation states, “the success of a particular public space is not solely in the hands of the architect, urban designer or town planner; it relies also on people adopting, using and managing the space – people make places, more than places make people.” During the maintenance and operations of your new space, find ways to put people first and prioritize community building. If the local community feels a sense of belonging in the space, they may grow to feel a sense of ownership, which can lead to a space that is truly community-oriented. Community building includes programmed events, but also goes beyond formalized experiences, including encouraging the community to lead how the space is used. Providing opportunity for a variety of activities as well as arts and cultural programming can be used to build community.

### **Paintbox Bistro, Toronto.**

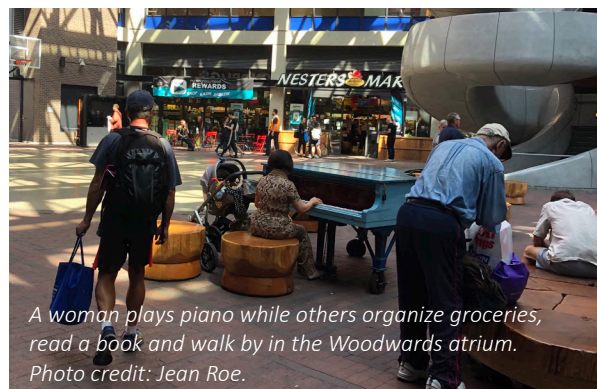
Located on the ground floor of Paintbox Condos in Toronto’s Regent Park neighbourhood, Paint Box Bistro is focused on social and environmental responsibility. The restaurant prioritizes local community building by employing dozens of Regent Park residents — over 10 of the recruits received funding for four months of culinary training. Paintbox Bistro also rents event space. The restaurant is located in the same building as the Regent Park Arts and Cultural Centre, which provides event, exhibition and performance space for the local community.



*Paintbox Bistro. Photo Credit: Catch da Flava Magazine.*

### **Woodwards (Vancouver, BC)**

People may come to Woodward’s to run errands, but they stay because of the publicly accessible recreational activities provided in the atrium. A resident at Woodward’s said the atrium space and stores at the ground floor “calms her down.” She was sick and had a broken ankle for many months — being able to head downstairs and interact with others, hear the piano play and watch people shoot hoops helped her recover from social isolation and depression.



*A woman plays piano while others organize groceries, read a book and walk by in the Woodward's atrium. Photo credit: Jean Roe.*

### **Learn more**

- Worpole, Ken, and Katharine Knox. “[The Social Value of Public Spaces.](#)” Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007.
- [Artscape Creative Placemaking Lab](#)

### **Questions to consider**

- How can we ensure people feel a sense of belonging?
- What types of formal community building programs should we prioritize?
- How might the local community take ownership of the space?

## 11. Step-by-step

A new project does not have to be completely perfect when it opens. A slightly imperfect space allows for input and ownership from local residents, creating the opportunity for the community to take part in the evolution of the space. You can take incremental steps to building and changing how the space is designed and programmed based on local assets and needs. Tactical urbanism is a placemaking approach that refers to city, organizational and/or citizen led community building using short-term, low-cost interventions to catalyze long-term change. Although tactical urbanism is often used for improving street design (by transforming parking lots to parks, calming traffic at intersections or adding public art to the street), the concept can be applied to any type of social infrastructure, on the interior or exterior.

### Main and 14th Parklet (Vancouver, BC)

The City of Vancouver employed tactical urbanism to transform small spaces of underused roads into public plazas, including the plaza at 14th Avenue and Main Street. This plaza is located outside a café, providing extra seating for café patrons as well as the general public. The transformation was quick and easy — the City added movable chairs and garden planters and painted the street. These types of small-scale improvements (that often lead to permanent changes) can occur over time for your redevelopment.

#### Learn more

- Reardon, Mitchell. [“Can We Design More Trusting Public Spaces?”](#) Happy City, June 25, 2019.
- [Project for Public Spaces. “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper: A Low-Cost, High-Impact Approach,”](#) March 20, 2011.
- Street Plans Collaborative. [“Tactical Urbanism Materials and Design Guide.”](#)
- Munro, Karen. [Tactical Urbanism for Librarians: Quick, Low-Cost Ways to Make Big Changes.](#) Chicago: Amer Library Assn, 2017.

#### Questions to consider

- What types of affordable design and programming experiments can occur when the space opens? How can the community be involved in these interventions?





## 12. Observe, measure, assess, adapt

By observing who is using a space, who isn't using it, where people are sitting, what they are doing, who they are talking to, and how long they are staying can provide huge insights about the way a space is functioning and performing. For example, the presence of more women than men is usually an indicator of a successful public place because women are generally more selective about the types of spaces they use, for reasons of perceived safety and comfort. Once your space is in use, take the time observe and measure how the space is used and perceived, and consider ways to improve the space based on your observations.

### Questions to consider

The Project for Public Spaces provides a series of questions to consider when observing a space, including:

#### *Use and Activities*

- Are people using the space or is it empty?
- Is it used by a range of ages?
- Are people clustering in groups? (And what kinds of groups?)
- How many types activities are occurring?
- Which parts of the space are used, and which are not?

#### *Comfort and Image*

- Does the place make a good first impression?
- Are there more women than men?
- Is there a management / security presence?
- Are people taking photos?
- Are there enough places to sit?

#### *Access and Linkages*

- Can you see the space from a distance? Is the interior of the space visible from the outside?
- Can people easily and safely walk to the place?
- Do occupants of adjacent buildings use the space?
- Do a variety of transportation options provide access to the space?

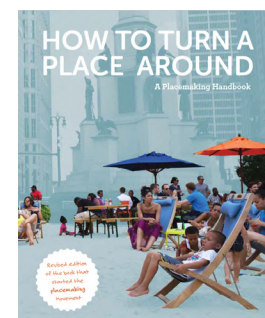
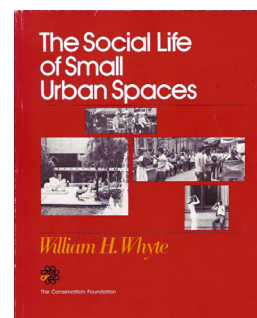
#### *Sociability*

- Is this a place where you would choose to meet your friends?
- Do people come in groups?
- Are people talking with each other? Are people smiling?
- Do people use the place regularly and by choice?
- Do users know each other by face or name?
- Do the users of the space reflect the community at large?

### Learn more

- Gehl, Jan, and Birgitte Svarre. *How to Study Public Life*. Island Press, 2013.
- Project for Public Spaces. *How to Turn a Place Around: A Handbook for Creating Successful Public Spaces*, 2000.
- Project for Public Spaces. [“Eleven Principles for Creating Great Community Places.”](#) Project for Public Spaces.
- Whyte, William Hollingsworth. [The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces](#), 1980.

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Two great resources for observing, measuring and improving public spaces. See “Learn more” for more information.

## 13. The work keeps going

The success of a place goes far beyond the initial design. As the Project for Public Spaces states, “about 80% of the success of any public space can be attributed to its management. No matter how good the design of a space is, it will never become a true place unless it is cared for well.” It is important to consider how the managers of the space will have the capacity and resources to maintain and care for the space for years to come. Revenue generating space helps ensure the project will be financially self-sustaining in the long term, which is necessary for a project to see continued success.

### Catalyst Case. Madrona @ Dockside Green (Victoria BC).

Catalyst’s Madrona project does not include defined community space, but it still provides a useful example for the importance of ongoing management. With 49 affordable homes, this project strives to build community through tenant engagement and social design. The management team at Madrona seeks ongoing feedback from tenants and strives to adapt management practices based on the feedback. This process can be applied to projects with community spaces as well.

### Learn more

- Project for Public Spaces. “[Eleven Principles for Creating Great Community Places.](#)” Project for Public Spaces.

### Questions to consider

- How might we ensure the project is financially sustainable for years to come?
- Who will manage the space?

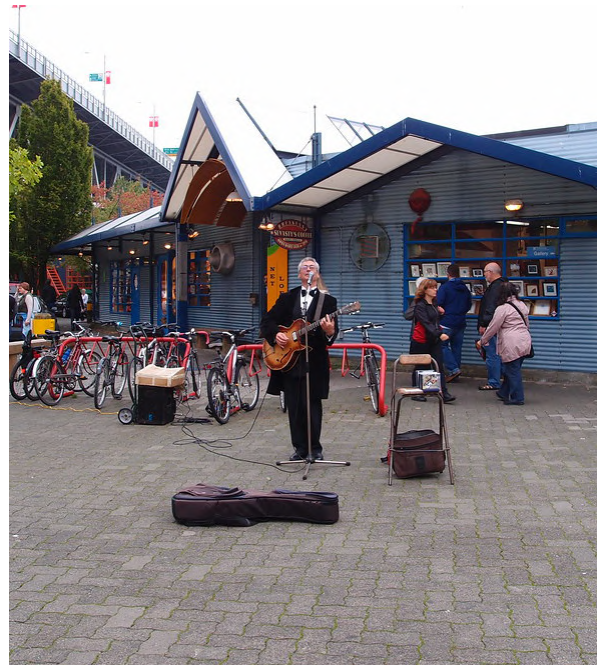


Madrona. Image credit: Martin Knowles Photography.



# Conclusion

Social infrastructure is essential for vibrant, resilient and connected communities. The physical spaces that allow people to connect with others help combat social isolation and build community resilience. Yet, many existing spaces are under-utilized or in need of costly repairs. There is opportunity to redevelop community spaces to include revitalized social infrastructure, alongside other uses such as affordable rental housing. This report provides a series of Key Considerations for community groups considering the (re)development of social infrastructure. While the list of considerations may feel daunting, there is great potential for positive social impact. Through the process and philosophy of placemaking, community-oriented spaces can strengthen the connection between people and the places they share. Future work could expand on the Key Considerations, providing further recommendations. These considerations will adapt as more of Catalyst’s projects reach occupancy.



Woodwards. Photo credit: Jean Roe

# Appendix

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