

# Downtown Vancouver Laneway Transformation Strategy



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# Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that this project took place on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Selílwitulh (Tseil-Waututh) peoples. We thank them for caring for these lands and waters for dozens of generations - the most powerful case of public realm stewardship this region has ever known.

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# Executive summary

The goal of this report is to encourage and guide laneway activations and transformations in Downtown Vancouver. It is intended to support the DVBIA in determining strategic sites and routes for activations and transformations, and to identify the steps needed to enable greater use of these laneways as public space.

To achieve this, Happy City undertook a review and analysis of numerous documents that guide the DVBIA and City of Vancouver, as well as an array of supporting documents. Together with input from DVBIA contacts, this analysis informed the development of guiding project principles, which are intended to not only guide this project, but future projects that will further activate these laneways.

In addition, we conducted stakeholder interviews with numerous key actors working in this area. These actors include: urban planners and designers at the City, people who have hosted events in the lanes, artists who have activated the lanes, representatives of organizations who work with street-involved Vancouverites, and more. Feedback from this in-depth engagement was augmented through digital engagement with DVBIA members, including both business and property owners. Finally, we conducted a block-by-block assessment of every laneway within the DVBIA jurisdiction. All together, these findings led to the development of metrics that informed a GIS mapping tool. Using these, all laneways were assessed and attributed a score based on their potential for activation. Importantly, static maps included in this document are accompanied by a GIS data set and programming script. This will enable the DVBIA to update the maps as conditions within the jurisdiction change.

Through this work, we have identified a series of individual laneways, as well as three routes that have high potential for activation. These include the following routes:

- Laneway between Howe and Hornby - 1000 to 1200 blocks
- Laneway between Seymour and Richards - 700 to 1100 blocks
- Laneway between Howe and Granville - 1000 to 1200 blocks

And the following individual laneways:

- Eveleigh Street (Bentall Centre)
- Ted Northe Lane & the Henshaw Lane
- 600 between Seymour and Richards, north side
- 600 between Richards and Homer, north side
- 700 Burrard

This project delivers recommendations on which laneways to activate, as well as widely-shared goals and concepts that can be harnessed to generate support for further laneway activation and transformation. Through this work, additional pieces that can support more intensive use of laneways as public space were identified. They include a waste management pilot project, design guidelines and site-specific engagement when determining new laneways for activation or transformation.

This report delivers a strategy to guide laneway transformation in Downtown Vancouver. In doing so, it also identifies the next steps in transforming these ubiquitous spaces into places that support social connection, equity, local business, and more.

## Key learnings:

- Downtown Vancouver laneways present significant opportunities to support business, community and wellbeing.
- An array of uses could be considered for different laneways. It will be important to ensure that event space and public space for lingering are differentiated from existing plazas and public spaces.
- Laneway activations can be accomplished along a spectrum of design change. Some activations may succeed with the simple addition of brightly coloured murals, while others could be realized with far more significant change, such as allowing cafe frontages and patios in laneways.
- Design solutions including vehicular traffic calming measures, directional speakers, hooks for lights and cables, and rain protection are important factors to support laneway events.
- Waste containers, commercial haulers, loading bays and parkade entrances are key barriers to laneway activations.
- Vehicular traffic and access to laneways is a significant impediment to full closure for laneway activations.
- Cleaning and maintenance of laneways is an ongoing, costly challenge; stewardship and ownership of activated laneways must be considered in advance.
- Commercial hauling contracts are difficult to break, and City can't get too involved. However, they can revoke permits with 60 days notice (doesn't void a hauler's contract).
- It's important that we structure the project in a way that shields us and businesses from "incitement of breach of contract" accusations by hauling firms.
- The Binnars' Project, United We Can or other local social enterprises could be brought on to support alternative waste management solutions. The involvement of social enterprises and people with limited incomes garnered widespread support from many of the people we spoke with and presents a key opportunity to advance equity in this project.
- Permitting and by-laws around events are unclear - even experienced city folk are getting stuck in contradictory regulations.
- Residential or mixed-use areas are sensitive to noise and light and other event-based disruptions.
- Stakeholder engagement and buy-in is essential for any long-term activations.
- Initiating changes as a pilot program would be most amenable for the City.



*Image Credit: Kai Jacobson*

# Introduction

## Purpose

Vancouverites are living closer to each other than ever before. Despite this physical proximity, many are feeling lonelier and isolated from their neighbours. Being the home of nearly 70,000 residents, Downtown Vancouver's 8,000+ businesses provide employment to 140,000 people. To harness socio-economic growth opportunities and address its challenges, Vancouver's laneways have the potential to become urban living rooms where residents, visitors and local businesses come to connect. A renewed 10-year DVBIA mandate and demand for post-pandemic recovery measures make this the ideal time to turn this Strategy into action.

The purpose of this work was to develop a strategy to create a network of linked laneways across the DVBIA district, while assessing the potential to enhance laneways as public space. The assessment also looks at the wellbeing impact of this work - both during the process and after implementation.

Fulfilling this strategy will enable people to move through one or more joy-sparking laneway routes that bisect the 90 blocks in Downtown Vancouver. We envision a future where Vancouver's laneways are transformed into thriving public spaces that support resident wellbeing, attract visitors that support local business, create new income opportunities for street involved residents, and much more.

**This project builds on the DVBIA's success with Alley Oop, Ackery's Alley, Canvas Corridor and snékwem lane, as well as on Happy City's experience with tactical interventions, placemaking master plans, and local public space research. The outcomes of this work will create a new Downtown destination that boosts wellbeing and captures the imaginations of people across the region, and even around the world.**





## Structure

This project consisted of five stages of work, spanning from August 2020 to April 2021.

### **Stage 1 - Background Document Review**

We reviewed the DVBIA's vision, planning documents, as well as reports and materials from previous activations. We assessed the City of Vancouver's previous public space research, as well as other documents about social inclusion and equity. We also conducted best practice research on successful laneway activations and transformations from around the world. Through this research, we summarized key findings that helped generate a list of potential metrics to evaluate laneway blocks for activation, and collected input for the development of the project principles.

### **Stage 2 - Laneway Transformation Strategy Project Principles**

Using over a decade of wellbeing research and findings from Stage 1, we developed a draft set of wellbeing principles to guide the Strategy, and

provide direction for design and programming of future laneway transformations. These principles were reviewed and refined in coordination with the DVBIA. The final set of principles reflect both wellbeing evidence as well as the DVBIA's values and ambitions for laneway activations, while emphasizing the need to support equitable use of space in Vancouver.

### **Stage 3 - Engagement & DVBIA Member Outreach**

Our outreach and engagement work was divided into two main approaches: stakeholder interviews and digital engagement. Individual interviews were conducted with an initial list of stakeholders who were selected for their experience or expertise with laneway transformations and the Downtown Vancouver context. From these interviews, additional stakeholders were identified through a snowball method. In addition, we designed a digital engagement survey for members of the DVBIA, to understand their levels of interest and support for

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laneway transformations in Downtown Vancouver. This survey was tailored for an audience of both property owners and businesses, and was distributed through the DV BIA’s regular communication channels. Survey responses were analyzed to inform the development of the laneway mapping tool, as well as to further inform our understanding of the waste management landscape.

#### **Stage 4 - Laneway Assessment**

Previous stages of work allowed us to establish the context, needs and aspirations for laneway transformations, and to develop a framework for the laneway activation assessment. To add to that work, we developed a series of assessment metrics for the built environment and human activity in laneways and conducted an in-person analysis of laneways in the DV BIA jurisdiction. We assessed over eleven kilometers of laneways, collecting scores for each metric. We reviewed and weighted the metrics together with the DV BIA and Licker Geospatial (LGeo). LGeo then generated an interactive map and tool for highlighting laneways with activation potential, which can be adjusted and updated for future use by the DV BIA.

#### **Stage 5 - Next Steps & Waste Management Pilot**

Dumpsters, waste management, and laneway access were highlighted as key areas of concern during engagement and stakeholder interviews. An effective and coordinated waste management system is essential to the sustained success of laneway transformations. Our findings validated that addressing this issue is a critical step to unlocking the potential of laneways to become spaces that support social connection, local business, health, happiness and inclusion.





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# Project principles

Creating guiding principles is a crucial step towards ensuring wellbeing is incorporated into complex, long-term, multi-stakeholder projects. Working together with the DV BIA, these principles were developed to support the DV BIA's values and aspirations for laneway transformations, while maintaining an emphasis on an equitable use of public space in Downtown Vancouver.

The principles will be used to guide the project and can be combined with other overarching strategies, such as those relating to environmental sustainability and social inclusion.

## Laneway Transformation Strategy Principles:



### **Sociability**

*Create places and paths where people can connect and engage with each other, local business, and their city, and which support trust-building social interactions.*

### **Equity**

*Develop inclusive and welcoming spaces that help to address inequity in Downtown Vancouver by prioritizing equitable access for, and engagement with, a representative array of people and identities.*

### **Joy**

*Spark joy through events, programming and designs that generate excitement, creativity and play for all ages, backgrounds and abilities.*

### **Meaning**

*Identify routes and spaces that create the opportunity to celebrate distinct characters, stories and lived experiences of each neighbourhood through design and programming.*

## **Resilience**

*Plan for long-term success by determining how laneways can better support local business, identifying opportunities for businesses to steward the laneways and by making space for business and community to connect and care for these spaces.*

## **Health**

*Create connected paths that are intuitive to follow in order to promote active mobility along safe, accessible routes that facilitate walking, rolling or cycling.*

## **Connectivity**

*Build connections through the city that support transit and increase freedom of movement to help fulfill everyday tasks, as well as leisure activities, while also providing spaces for rest and respite.*

## **Belonging**

*Engage and empower local businesses and communities to develop partnerships that build a long-lasting sense of ownership and care for place.*

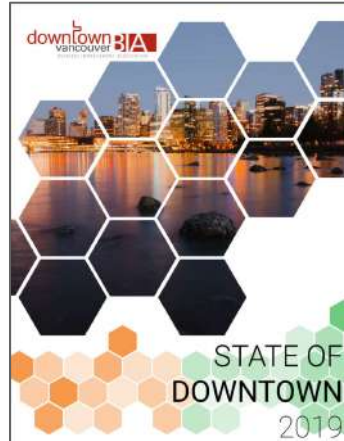
Drawing from key findings in our Background Document review, as well as global best practices and the DVBIA's existing values, we developed a set of draft principles for wellbeing. This initial draft was built on Happy City's expertise on urban wellbeing, including over a decade of research on the connection between the built environment and health and happiness. Understanding the context of laneways in Downtown Vancouver, we also emphasized the need to support equitable use of space when considering design transformations.

An initial round of review was done by the DVBIA, and edits were incorporated into a final set of principles.

# Background document review

The following is a consolidated summary of key points drawn from a review of 16 background plans, documents, articles, and studies about laneways in Vancouver and beyond. The list of background documents reviewed consists of the following:

- State of Downtown 2019
- Downtown Vancouver Re-imagined
- Championing the Vision: 5 Years into Re-Imagine
- Imagine...A Dumpster-free Downtown
- More Awesome Now Learning Guide
- Places for People Downtown: Public Space & Public Life
- Places for People: Downtown Public Space Strategy
- BizMap Report: Downtown Vancouver
- A Right to the In-Between City: How does alleyway redesign in Downtown Vancouver Impact Homeless Individuals Experiences of Them?
- Case Study: Leveraging our Laneways
- Case Study: Perch Program
- DVBlA Biz Map Profile
- Downtown Vancouver COVID-19 Economic Impact and Recovery Snapshot
- Melbourne: A Case Study in the Revitalization of City Laneways
- How Melbourne Transformed Its Tiny Laneways into a Pedestrian Mecca
- The Lanes of Melbourne: Could Something Similar Happen Here?
- A Resurrection of Laneways: Toronto's Activation of Public Space Through Lanes



## Key learnings

Through reviewing and analyzing the background documents mentioned above, key learnings were derived to help inform potential metrics for the Laneway Transformation Strategy, as well as the project's wellbeing principles. These learnings can be summarized into several relevant themes, including:

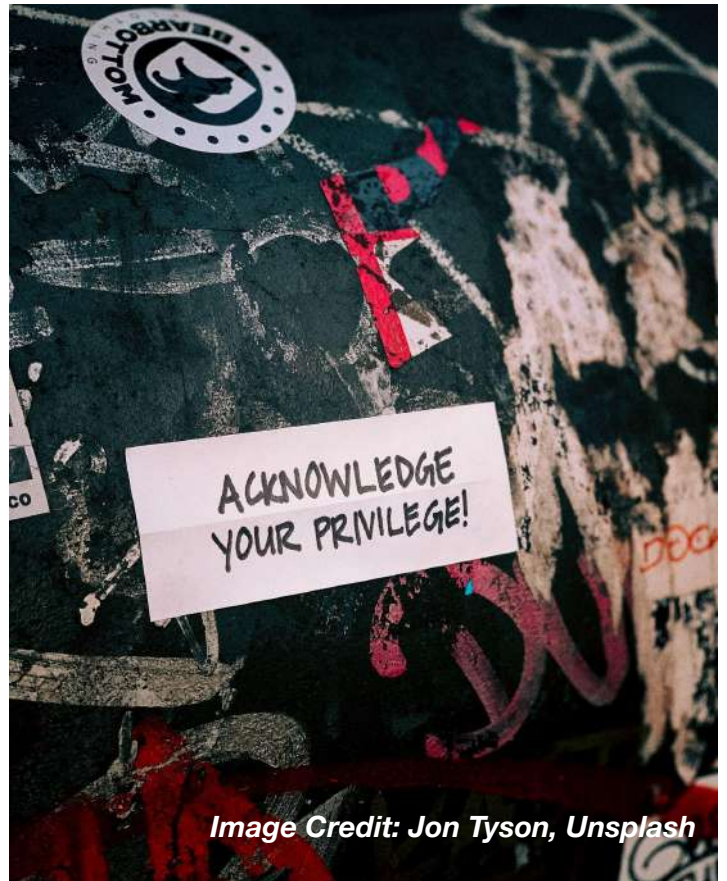
### Equity

To increase the likelihood of project success, it is crucial that the goals and objectives of the Strategy align with the Downtown for People Plan and broader City of Vancouver initiatives. One shared objective is equity, which was consistently found to be an essential focus for and across the documents reviewed.

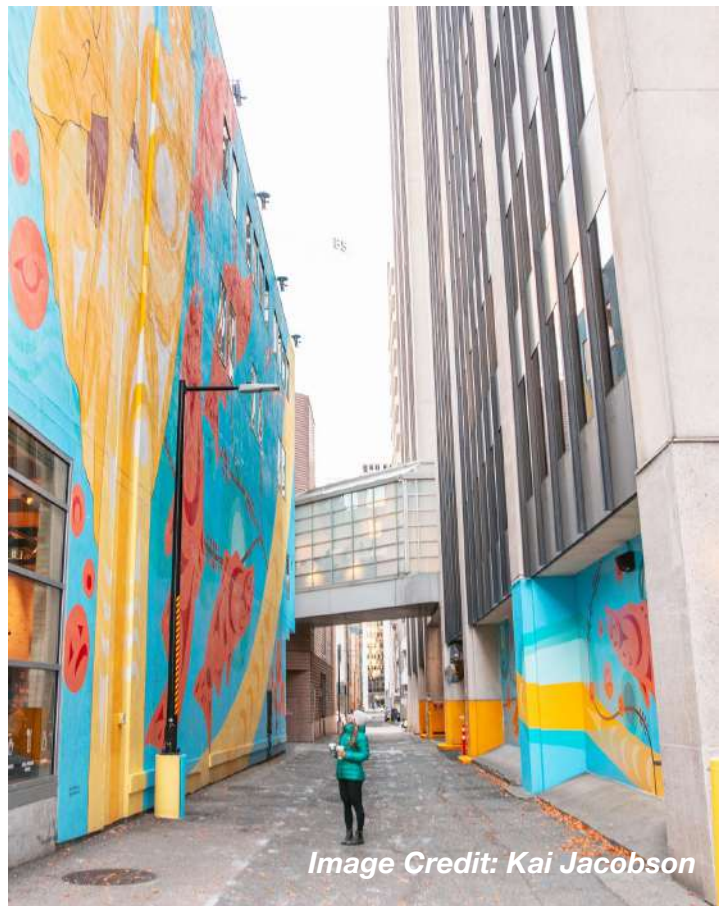
With regard to the public realm, equity can be defined as providing equitable access, comfort, safety and opportunities, as well as sense of meaning and belonging, for a wide array of people and identities. It must be acknowledged that Vancouver's diversity of people and identities means there will be a wide array of interpretations and expectations about equity. As such, equity building and advancement should embrace dualities - both commonalities and differences.

Through our analysis, we noted that public spaces are viewed as places where everyone can enjoy and actively participate in public life.

**In particular, laneways have a dual purpose since they occupy the edge spaces between buildings and often serve as important places for the urban poor. Their “in-betweenness” - both physical and social - further embraces dualities, having been theorized as facilitating inclusive places for marginalized populations in both academia and urban planning. With these qualities and characteristics, laneways can serve as good places to enact equity building.**



*Image Credit: Jon Tyson, Unsplash*



*Image Credit: Kai Jacobson*

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In line with this, the DVBIA has embraced the dualities of its membership and broader aspirations for Downtown Vancouver. Supporting, promoting, and representing the shared interests of more than 7,000 businesses and property owners, they focus on the priorities voiced by their members. Member aspirations include situating the DVBIA jurisdiction at the intersection of natural and urban, historical and contemporary culture, east and west, local and global, in a dynamic and safe setting. With their diverse program and service experience, they serve as an ideal leader to help initiate the activation of laneways to advance equity.

This dynamic between place and partner, along with Downtown-focused and City-wide policies and initiatives supporting stewardship of public spaces, can make the Strategy long-lasting. Transforming laneways to advance Equity - by means of being easily accessible, well-connected, comfortable, safe, and inviting to a range of people who have an array of lived experiences - can help turn the overarching Downtown for the People vision into a reality.

## Representation & Reconciliation with Distinct Communities

**A critical component of both City-wide and Downtown-focused equity objectives is the prioritization and advancement of representation and reconciliation with distinct groups - including Indigenous communities and homeless individuals.**

To the latter, it is important to note that the data drawn from observations and interviews does not speak for all homeless communities in downtown Vancouver. As such, the phrase 'homeless individuals' is often used and will be the case here.

With regards to homeless and street-involved individuals, local research has found that they use laneways as spaces of respite from the hectic nature of cities. Others might benefit from this function as well, and create a valuable way to bring people together as a result. In addition, homeless individuals tend to engage in sustenance activities in Alley Oop. To build on this, larger varieties of optional and resultant activities are suggested to involve this distinct group in these spaces.



It's possible to radically transform Vancouver laneways, as illustrated in this Jeep commercial. However, successful, widespread and sustained transformation requires clear goals that support broader aspirations in the City. In determining these goals, partnerships that result in the collaborative rethinking and reuse of these spaces becomes possible. *Screenshot from YouTube.*



### Support for Laneway Activation & Transformation

Our analysis also identifies that support already exists to make better uses of underutilized spaces a priority in a number of cities. Concerning laneway policies and initiatives, millions of people recognize that these spaces can be activated by art. People also realize that the laneways present a clear opportunity to support and differentiate the distinct characteristics and experiences amongst various districts across the city. Activating these spaces can also help transform the dominant image of laneways, which is currently associated with activities that conjure negative and anti-social perceptions amongst people.

### Laneway as Active Transportation Infrastructure

The value in creating a system of active pedestrian paths through downtowns is widely recognized across our analysis. Specific to this project, this is supported by DVBI's efforts in addressing initial perceptions that pedestrians would not use alleyways or other car-dominated spaces. Initial analysis suggests that more people will be driving a vehicle to work Post-COVID, at least in the short-term; however, parkades and surface parking lots will remain relatively vacant due to fewer transient parkers. Simultaneously there will be an increase in people cycling to work.

Downtown Vancouver will be no exception to this. Hence, this project serves as a great opportunity to support the shift in mode choices and movement behaviours.

## A New Home for Small Businesses

Growing trends show that downtowns will be moving towards experience-based retail, co- and flexible working, as well as creative and 24-hour use and activation of spaces. Therefore, laneways have the potential to help support small, local businesses who are struggling to make it work in other parts of Vancouver. As the DVBIA advocates for long-term economic benefit for smaller/ unconventional occupants to leasing agents, a symbiotic relationship can be established between the two. These businesses may be better for the economic vitality of laneways, whose activations can contribute to the growth of physical, natural, economic, social, cultural, and human capital (as defined by the *Community Capital Framework*). For this to happen, it is worth revisiting and evaluating current laneway project permitting processes with VIVA Vancouver, the City's tactical urbanism and public space innovation team and a key touchpoint for activations.



Image Credit: Tim Mossholder, Unsplash



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## Project logistics

To ensure the success of this project, our analysis revealed that there are several logistical components and questions to the key learning themes that must be addressed and answered.

### Representation & Reconciliation with Distinct Communities

**To prioritize and advance Indigenous representation and reconciliation, opportunities to create public spaces - including laneways - that are specifically designed to reflect Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh (MST) artistic and design styles and traditions, should be explored.**

Examples of programs and uses may include self-determined artistic and cultural expression, social gathering, and access to water; however, actual uses should be determined by members of Indigenous communities themselves. This can be accomplished by funding MST artists, community representatives and consultants, who can help with a variety of laneway planning initiatives. This includes identifying sites of cultural significance, integrating Indigenous place naming, sharing the meanings of spaces, and offering other reflections on Vancouver's pre-colonial past into the process. Representatives from MST communities can also develop cultural significance statements for all major public space sites, explore innovative ways to recognize the layers of historical and current Indigenous cultures and landscapes in these sites, and find opportunities to steward the land.

### Support for Laneway Activation & Transformation

As mentioned previously, Downtown-focused and City-wide policies and initiatives that support stewardship of public spaces already exist. To realize this, there must be opportunities to inspire and foster stewardship to happen and take hold in the first place. A great example of this is Melbourne's *Love Your Laneway*, a 10 year city-run revitalization program that supported waste management, drainage, public art, and signage and wayfinding to create lively laneway spaces.

It is important to note a number of key details when assessing potential locations for activations. These include overhead lighting, interesting architectural elements, length of lanes, and loading bays and activities of service vehicles. The assessment should also identify and locate assets that could pose challenges, such as parking and access points, as well as overhead power lines and other utilities.

**For instance, while events and joy-sparking activities are critical to the activation of laneways, methods to address noise are equally critical. The visibility of laneways to pedestrians and passing cars is another point to address, as it serves as an indication to users that they are now entering into a special space.**

Of course, it is well known that successful public spaces around the world put great amounts of consideration towards accessibility. To ensure the success of this project, consultation on how to implement accessible wayfinding, as well as the locations of washrooms at every 400 metres ideally, are worth considering.





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## Laneway as Active Transportation Infrastructure

Enhancing transit use and active mobility, are helpful goals to help build support for laneway transformations. In doing so, the DVBIA must consider what factors are required from institutional stakeholders such as the City and TransLink to earn their support. In this case, the location, programming and function of laneways will affect the services they provide and the statutory areas of responsibilities they hold. Weighing the benefits and drawbacks of more engagement, outreach, and investment will be crucial in determining whether these stakeholders serve as critical partners, who may provide valuable insight and resources towards the successful planning and execution of this project.

## A New Home for Small Businesses

From the standpoint of businesses interested in helping to activate laneways, there are questions around how they'll be allowed to use these spaces. In particular, given that businesses of the DVBIA have been hit hard by COVID-19, are there opportunities in laneways to provide affordable new spaces for them to help sustain their businesses and customer base? This is a compelling motivation to expand laneway activations from murals and installations to include commercial use as well.

## An Extension of Urban Ecosystems

Throughout this process and beyond, it is important to note that laneways have the potential to maintain and advance healthy urban ecosystems and rainwater management—meeting the goals and targets of the Greenest City Action Plan and Rain City Strategy. With this in mind, it is important to consider introducing native plantings, while setting appropriate targets for the percentage of greenery and native species to be incorporated in these spaces. To support and irrigate these laneway landscaping, consider how rain and stormwater might be harvested from laneway infrastructure.



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## Locations

There are several notable DVBIA places that can fit into the 10-year Strategy including:

- Anchor Point Elementary, Pattison High School and Alexander Academy
- Granville Street
- Lot 19
- Cathedral Square
- 855 Granville Street
- Alley Oop
- Ackery's Alley
- *Eihu lane*
- šxʷłənəq Xwtl'e7énk (formerly North Side Art Gallery)
- Telus Garden Laneway
- Melville POPS
- šxʷłexən Xwtl'a7shn (QE Theatre Plaza)
- The Downtown Loop: Enhance the pedestrian experience of the Robson, Denman, Davie and Granville high streets (identified in the Vancouver Greenways Plan and the West End Community Plan).

## Notable people and businesses

From our analysis, we identified artists and organizations like Vancouver Civic Theatres as notable people and/ or businesses who should be engaged or highlighted as part of this project.

## Precedent: learning from Melbourne

Vancouver can look to places such as Melbourne to help activate its central core. Specifically, the City of Melbourne had implemented critical public realm strategies and policies - one of which was the 2014 Walking Plan. The Plan estimated that increasing walking connectivity of the central grid by just 10% could generate an additional \$2.1 billion dollars per annum to the local economy. Key to this economic boost was unlocking opportunities for commercial activity, and the City looked to revitalizing downtown laneways in order to accomplish that. Some supporting initiatives that helped to actualize the Plan included Postcode 3000, a first effort initiative to revitalize laneways by increasing residential development in Melbourne's downtown core, and the previously mentioned *Love Your Laneway* initiative.

The main takeaway from Melbourne resides in the importance of test interventions, which can respond directly to current contexts in quick, creative ways. Once these interventions have been validated, people's imaginations can be captured by planning big!

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# Engagement learnings

The engagement stage of this work consisted of two key components: stakeholder interviews and digital engagement surveys. Collecting input and perspectives from both DVBIA members as well as people currently using laneways in the downtown core was an essential first step towards building our understanding of key aspirations and concerns around laneway activations.



## Stakeholder Interviews:

### Methodology

Following the completion of the background document review and project principles development, individual stakeholder interviews began. An initial round of interviewees were identified based on their experience working on laneway transformations, ranging from areas of expertise like Film and Special Events, to alternative waste management solutions providers. Interviews were conducted using a snowball method, with an initial round of interviewees suggesting next steps on who to speak with to further our conversations and understandings of current and future laneway use. Interview summaries and findings are presented below. Critically, these interviews also enabled us to identify potential partners for future efforts to support laneway activation and transformation.

### Summary

The following provides a summary of the interviews that Happy City conducted between September and November 2020. Key learnings are presented for quick review, followed by a brief overview of the stakeholders we have spoken with. The remainder of the summary is structured around the following key themes: Strategic opportunities; events; design; vehicular traffic; waste management; potential laneways for activation; and, additional key stakeholders that could be engaged.

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## Who we spoke with

Between September and November, we spoke to the following people:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
09/23	Jaspal Marwah	City of Vancouver - Stewardship Team
10/09	Will Dunn & Belinda Chan	City of Vancouver - Viva Vancouver
10/07	Desiree Hamilton	City of Vancouver - Film and Special Events (FASE)
10/07	Michelle Harris & Steven Drake	City of Vancouver - Waste Management
10/20	Jonathan Mcdermott	City of Vancouver - Solid Waste Programs Branch
09/17	Nick Collinet	Public Disco
09/29	Landon Hoyt & Davin Boutang	Binners' Project
11/03	James Harry & Lauren Brevner	Laneway Artists
03/11	Ginger Gosnell-Myers	SFU - Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue
02/17	Jesse Wiebe & Rachel Magnusson	City of Vancouver - Blood Alley Planners
02/12	Alisha Masongsong	City of Vancouver - Community Economic Dev.
02/12	Michelle Lackie	Exchange Inner City - Executive Director
02/04	Jose Fernandez-Garcia	City of Vancouver - Community Economic Dev.
01/29	Jen Sheel	UBC - Municipal Services & Construction
01/22	Andrew Pask	City of Vancouver - Community Planning
01/21	Thomas Daley & Selina Bull	City of Vancouver - Community Planning
01/20	Jordan Magtoto	City of Vancouver - Public Space Planning
12/18	Bing Smith	United We Can - Board Chair

The following section includes short biographies and relevant information about each person we spoke with.

**Nick Collinet** - Experienced in laneway activations (over 5 years of experience starting with events via Van Mural Fest, now as Executive Director of Public Disco); noted PD may be outgrowing laneways now due to size of organization and events that need more space.

**Jaspal Marwah** - Planner on the Stewardship team at the City; plays a more reactionary role in laneway activations when partners like DVBIA come forward; noted he was not around for Alley Oop or Ackery's Alley transformation.

**Landon Hoyt & Davin Boutang** - Binners have a good relationship with the Streets and Engineering and Maintenance teams. Working on ways to minimize barriers to mobility in relation to binning; locked bins Downtown cause challenges for binning. (They are not locked from Binners intentionally, rather from other businesses disposing waste in the wrong bins) Binners have previously been consulted on Alley Oop, Blood Alley and Reimagine DT via DVBIA. Binners' Project is excited to collaborate further and make laneways more accessible, showcase their members!

**Michelle Harris & Steven Drake** - Michelle is a senior engineer in Waste Operation and Steven directly supervises enforcement team: containers, by-laws and works closely with haulers; Have helped DVBIA with previous activations, particularly around relocation of containers.

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**Desiree Hamilton** - As Operations Manager at FASE, Desiree oversees all city spaces, public places, laneways; over 600 events a year; can make anything happen, but have to keep in mind things to work around.

**Will Dunn & Belinda Chan** - From the City's Viva Vancouver program, started interacting and working with laneway activations around 2017, shortly after Alley Oop was completed.

**Jonathan McDermott** - Experience with previous dumpster-free attempts as Manager of Solid Waste Programs at CoV, which includes permit programs for waste haulers and businesses to place waste containers (including totes) on City property, annual permit renewals; supportive of dumpster-free lanes, but can't be the ones leading the work.

**Lauren Brevner & James Harry** - These two Indigenous artists have worked together in the past, and for their biggest and most complex project, recently completed a laneway mural in the lane at Bentall Place. Their work focuses specifically on reclamation of space, especially with Salish art. They took this opportunity to change the experience of the space using bright colours to create a more visceral experience, in an effort to bring more awareness to what Pacific Northwest art looks like. They note that creating mural art in laneways is a completely different process than painting murals elsewhere.

**Ginger Gosnell-Myers** - Ginger previously served as the City's first-ever Manager of Indigenous Relations. She is a member of the Nisga'a and Kwakwak'awakw Nations, and has been bringing forward new perspectives of Indigenous peoples in cities for over 20 years. She is currently with the SFU's Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue.

**Jesse Wiebe & Rachel Magnusson** - Jesse and Rachel are City of Vancouver planners currently involved with the planning of Blood Alley.

**Alisha Masongsong** - Alisha is a social planner in the Community Economic Development department whose work includes an emphasis on the Downtown Eastside.

**Michelle Lackie** - Michelle is the Executive Director of Exchange Inner City, a community backbone organization of over 55 individuals and organizations working in the Downtown Eastside.

**Jose Fernandez-Garcia** - Jose is a social planner in the Community Economic Development department whose work includes an emphasis on the Downtown Eastside.

**Jen Sheel** - Jen is the former lead for the 2008 Waste Management Initiative at the City of Vancouver. She is currently the Superintendent of Municipal Services and Construction for UBC.

**Andrew Pask** - Andrew is a Community Planner at the City of Vancouver with an emphasis on commercial areas and complete neighbourhoods. He is also the founder of VPSN.

**Thomas Daley & Selina Bull** - Thomas and Selina are Community Planners at the City of Vancouver who were involved with the DVBI Laneway Transformation Strategy.

**Jordan Magtoto** - Jordan is a public space planner with the City of Vancouver, with an emphasis on laneways and plazas.

**Bing Smith** - Bing is the Board Chair of United We Can, an organization that coordinates large-scale binning in Vancouver to provide income for homeless and street involved people. The organization is also involved in activism and other urban initiatives.

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## What we heard

### Laneway Transformation Strategy

There was near-unanimous agreement among the stakeholders we spoke with that Vancouver's downtown laneways presented significant opportunities for business, community and wellbeing. A network of laneways that could serve as walking routes is in alignment with City of Vancouver goals in the Downtown for People Plan, while the need to create more accessible public space in a densifying area was also underlined. The value of public space, particularly in densely populated areas has become even more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**In considering how laneway activations can contribute to the public realm, several stakeholders noted that it would be important to determine how these spaces might be used differently from existing plazas and public spaces in Downtown Vancouver.**

Such differentiation could include appealing walking routes, space for small-scale and/or community-driven events. On a related note, several people saw opportunities to support safe access to schools and transit. Further, stakeholders noted that there are opportunities to educate visitors about the people, heritage and businesses in the DV BIA through art, programming and tours through the area.

**Finally, many stakeholders highlighted the importance of identifying allies, building relationships and aligning common goals as a critical step - and opportunity - for laneway activations.**

Many interviewees also raised the importance of collaborating with local First Nations to centre Indigenous memory and values in the design, programming and naming of laneways. One participant shared advice about how the DV BIA can respectfully engage and work with Vancouver's Host Nations—Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh. For instance, they remarked that relationships with the Host Nations take years to develop, and that outside partners must recognize the nuances between the Nations. Other key goals raised by stakeholders included: Income generating work with marginalized groups, enhanced access to public space, encouraging healthy active living, supporting local business and advancing environmental sustainability goals.

Further opportunities - and associated challenges - are detailed in the Interview Summary on the following pages.



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## Events

Using laneways as spaces for special events, or for shorter-term events-based activations, was a common theme that arose when discussing opportunities for laneway activations. Importantly, it was noted that not all laneways are well-suited for events. For example, despite being designed specifically as a performance space, Ackery's Alley faces challenges to program with adjacent theatres, who have veto power over these spaces, and concerns of noise bleed.

**Many stakeholders suggested programming laneways with vendor markets. These markets could feature a variety of vendors, from artisans to food trucks. Laneway markets would also provide street involved people with a formal space to sell their goods, which many do for subsistence.**

Markets could operate in a decentralized fashion, with vendors selling in multiple laneways simultaneously. Despite the appeal of markets, stakeholders listed a variety of obstacles to their implementation. Firstly, they would need widespread support from businesses, residents, and property owners. Secondly, there are logistical challenges, such as vendor access to electricity and water, and deliveries to businesses. Moreover, there are public safety considerations, including reduced access to laneways for emergency services. Lastly, sustainable markets would require effective stewardship.

Public Disco described their experience running laneway events, noting that permitting and safety regulations are inconsistent and continuously evolving. This makes the permitting process difficult to navigate. The response from the City in terms of permitting seems to vary heavily based on which departments are involved, and who hears about the activations. For example, regulations on decibel limits (noise bylaws) and lighting restrictions can vary based on adjacent buildings and ownership. Also of note, is that any event permits must be submitted by all event organizers and adjacent businesses involved, which can drastically slow down the paperwork process.

**Notably, all interviewees who were involved in previous laneway events pointed to a lack of clear guidelines and policies, and to the increasing complexity that arises with each additional involved party.**

Another key takeaway was that these challenges make it extremely difficult for new or inexperienced event organizers to navigate and overcome the barriers required in order to successfully execute a laneway event. The process is unclear, and there is limited public information. For example, while FASE noted that they offer funding to cover fees for free, public, and non-commercial events, which could be used to cover fees for signage or road closures in laneway-based events, they also mentioned that the difference between a "special event" that must go through FASE, versus one that would be considered under the purview of the City's Stewardship team is still being worked out, even internally. Overall, additional education and guidance is required to help understand the requirements and regulatory obstacles for anyone hoping to activate a laneway in this manner.







## Design

Design solutions are not a central component of this project, but ideas around them did emerge from the conversations we have had with key stakeholders. Importantly, multiple people emphasized that different laneways could serve different roles. This included simple treatments to encourage walking (which could be linked to the Downtown for People Plan), designs that support small gatherings, and if the need was suitable and space available, a space to support slightly larger gatherings. A similarly important takeaway is that as the laneway program develops, it could be practical to start with simple, compelling solutions. For instance, walking routes could be encouraged with simple, colourful, murals on walls (and/or other public art), basic vehicle traffic calming and laneway crosswalks. These simple solutions would not necessarily require that dumpsters are removed to be initiated. In fact, dumpsters could receive a simple artistic treatment as part of this solution as well.

**Should hosting events be a goal for future laneway activations, several stakeholders emphasized that infrastructure to support events would be an asset.**

This could include lighting, hooks for temporary lighting and cables, flip down seating and, in a slightly more ambitious approach, noise directing speakers, to enable people to enjoy musical events, without disturbing the neighbours. Building on this tangent, multiple people mentioned the value of rain shelter, for events, but also to create higher quality public space. This could include retractable awnings, or even a roof over the laneway.

A number of stakeholders also noted that should the City of Vancouver make significant changes by law changes that permit businesses to use laneways as frontages for small businesses, or to include patios in laneways, major new opportunities for design and site enhancement would become available.

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As it stands, these activities are not permitted in most lanes; however, this Strategy can help foment this compelling change. Downtown Vancouver has been hit hard by COVID-19. A major transformation of laneways that permits businesses to front onto laneways could help to attract people back into the city centre. There are parallels to the situation Melbourne was in prior to its radical laneway transformations. This approach could be part of a compelling rationale to motivate changes at the City of Vancouver.

**Importantly, improving the laneways also risks disenfranchising people who already use the space.**

With downtown laneways, this frequently includes street involved people, drug users and others with few options for places where they can rest or linger in peace (which often include an overrepresented share of LGBTQ+ and BIPOC people).

**When considering major design changes to a laneway, hiring people in these communities to study the site and engage its existing users can help create a connection between the past and future of the space, while creating new opportunities for stewardship, tourism and waste management.**

## Vehicular Traffic

Laneways serve as access points and important routes for deliveries, waste management and other important functions for both commercial and residential buildings. This creates significant challenges for any activation that require an adjustment to the laneway's existing access patterns. For example, parkade entrances are a major obstacle for both short and long term laneway activations, because blocking access is not only difficult to coordinate, but also leads to tension with adjacent businesses or residents who rely on these spaces.

Programming (events) in laneways that require shutting down access to the street, not just putting down barricades, also create significant challenges for vehicles who rely on laneway access (like delivery trucks, and haulers). Utilities and other important infrastructure are also often physically routed in laneways - unobstructed access is therefore essential for maintenance or other repairs. When planning for laneway activations, the laneways' existing vehicular traffic patterns and needs are a top priority consideration, and can vary greatly by area.

**As described by the City's Stewardship team, "[Vehicular] Traffic by-laws will provide 95% of the stumblings blocks for activations".**

For example, laneways in the Granville area are key areas for post-bar vehicle traffic, while laneways near theatres and performance venues rely on day-time access for loading and unloading materials. Most commonly, laneways are home to waste containers and are important routes for commercial haulers and waste management vehicles.

## Waste Management

Nearly all hauling in commercial areas in Vancouver is conducted by private hauling firms. The City does not define hauling firms jurisdictions, which means all haulers can work city-wide. There is limited coordination between businesses regarding hauling, which means that there can be many dumpsters in a single laneway. Some lanes have up to 12 dumpsters and other waste receptacles. The City has provided permits for 1600 containers across the city, many of which are located in the DV BIA jurisdiction.

### **Previous attempts to create more efficient or coordinated approaches have resulted in threats by hauling firms that the party undertaking this effort is at risk of “Incitement of breach of contract”.**

In previous cases, when threatened with legal action, parties have stopped their efforts to improve the system. Contracts between businesses and haulers typically range from 3 to 5 years. However, even upon completion, it can be challenging for a business to end the legal relationship, as contracts may include

an auto-renewing clause or a clause that the agreement cannot be discontinued unless the business can prove they have found a better contract. The existing hauler then typically has the ability to match that contract.

To improve on this approach, it is important to educate businesses about their agreements and present an alternative that fits with the goals of a number of key stakeholders (businesses, City, BIAs). It appears that a solution that builds around social enterprises, such as The Binner’s Project and/or United We Can, would support this goal alignment. [add in a few sentences about UWC and Binner’s]. Notably, the City altered permitting rules in the most recent revisions to the Vancouver Charter in an effort to limit the haulers power and influence around commercial waste management. Navigating the challenges around contract alignment and the ability to adopt a different waste management approach will be critical to the success of a laneway transformation strategy.



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**As part of a potential solution, a social enterprise could be contracted to sort waste in large buildings, as The Bidders Project is already doing at the Conference Centre, Bentall Towers and elsewhere.**

Custodial staff would mark which firm within the tower is responsible for the waste and deliver to a location (ie. parking garage, basement) where the social enterprise could sort it. In doing so, they would be able to confirm the share of waste produced by each firm in the building, while also diverting recyclables from the waste stream. The various forms of waste would then be collected by a single hauling firm, thereby reducing the number of dumpsters and trucks moving in the area. Similarly, a “co-mingled” approach, currently used in some Yaletown lanes, where waste is sorted by bag and all placed in one container could be facilitated by a social enterprise to reduce the number of dumpsters in a laneway. The hauling firms Solid Waste Management and Revolution are open to piloting new solutions. Waste Management has communicated this to the City and is currently waiting for direction about which lanes might work.

**The solutions outlined above have been put into practice to varying degrees (and with context-specific adjustments) in other cities.**

Seattle’s “Sacks” system in Downtown Seattle involves a local social enterprise collecting waste from businesses, sorting the waste and having it removed by hauling firms, who each have a jurisdiction within the downtown area. Similarly, Portland uses a franchise system where each hauler has a designated area. A long-standing rule that a directive must be applied city-wide has meant that this system has not been permitted within the Vancouver Charter; however recent updates to the Charter have provided more flexibility in defining what an “area” is, allowing greater opportunity to pilot a new approach within a defined area in the DVBA jurisdiction.



**Laneway highlighted as promising sites for activation**

Each stakeholder interviewed was asked if they had thoughts on specific laneways that may be ideal, or particularly challenging for future activations. While many noted that this was not something they had reflected on in the past, the general consensus was that laneways with lighter vehicle traffic (in the the lane), and those with fewer, or no adjacent residential buildings were better candidates for event-based activations due to noise and access challenges. For example, those around the central business strip were noted as good potential candidates since they are largely surrounded by non-residential buildings.

**The presence of parkade entrances and waste containers were also noted as important (detering) factors to consider.**

Buildings built after the 1990s were noted to typically have built in garbage and recycling rooms, meaning they rely less heavily on the laneways for storing waste containers. (However, hauling trucks do still require laneways for access.) For larger-scale events, laneways with adjacent space for overflow were noted to be ideal, as were laneways with some rain protection.

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Suggestions for laneways with good potential for activations include:

- The laneway across from the Telus laneway (due to the adjacent parking lot for event expansion)
- The laneway behind the BC Hydro building (although it was noted a nearby social housing building may pose challenges)
- Laneways near Vancouver House, as the new building is developed across the street
- Laneways around the Thurlow/Melville area (currently underused) - particularly around 1000 Melville
- Laneways around around Robson, specifically the North/South Side immediately West of Hornby
- Laneways around Bentall Place

Some locations that were noted as particularly challenging for activations include:

- Pender Street, due to having a mix of commercial and residential buildings
- Locations that are regularly used for filming, like near 1000 W Hastings (which often sees weekly filming) or around Pender & Richards or Pender & Homer. These locations are often used to represent New York City or Chicago, therefore maintaining their integrity and flexibility is a key concern for the film industry.
- 500 Thurlow, as previous experience with the American consulate nearby has led to challenges (it was noted that they require significant engagement and consultation)

**Overall, stakeholders underlined the importance of considering the displacement that comes with laneway activations. Beyond just the physical barriers that need to be moved, many people rely on laneways for shelter, respite, or other interactions outside of the immediate public eye, and these functions, although not always immediately apparent, are important aspects of laneway use. Stakeholders noted that proximity to the DTES increases the complexity of laneway activations.**



Section 1 of 4

## DVBIA Member Outreach: Laneways

### Digital engagement:

#### Methodology

Equipped with initial findings from stakeholder interviews, we turned our focus to businesses in the DVBIA jurisdiction.

**DVBIA members make up a key stakeholder group, as they can directly impact the success of laneway transformations by supporting or opposing these interventions. This stage of engagement was focused on understanding DVBIA members' support for more laneway transformations, as well as their current use of laneways and future aspirations for them.**

Importantly, outreach at this stage also provided the DVBIA with an opportunity to begin discussing laneway transformations and laying the foundation for obtaining buy-in from their members.

To reach this audience and avoid oversaturating members with communications, we coordinated our efforts with the DVBIA's existing digital outreach schedule.

We designed a preliminary digital questionnaire to be sent out to members of the DVBIA jurisdiction, directly from the DVBIA's communications team.

Tailored versions of the survey were designed for two key sub-groups of the DVBIA's membership database: businesses and property owners.

These two groups were selected to better understand the needs, concerns, and aspirations for laneway transformations in the Downtown area, both from a day-to-day perspective (from businesses) and from a higher-level perspective of key decision-makers (property owners) who would ultimately need to provide buy-in.

A pilot version of both surveys was sent to a small subset of each group, to collect initial feedback on the questions and format. Once finalized, the surveys were sent to the full list of businesses and property owners in the DVBIA's database (approximately 250 property owners and 5000 businesses). Members were given 2 weeks to complete the survey, and were incentivized to participate by being entered in a prize draw supported by the DVBIA. A total of 99 responses were received (71 from businesses and 28 from property owners).

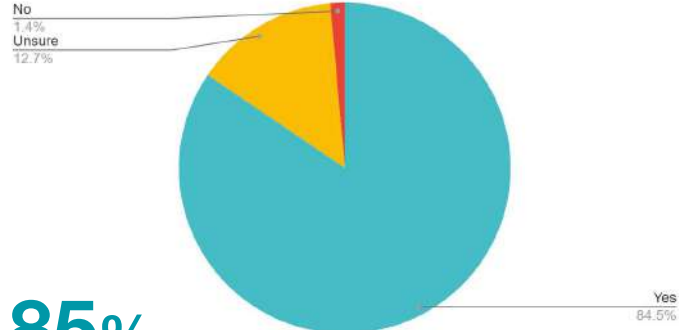
# Findings

## Businesses

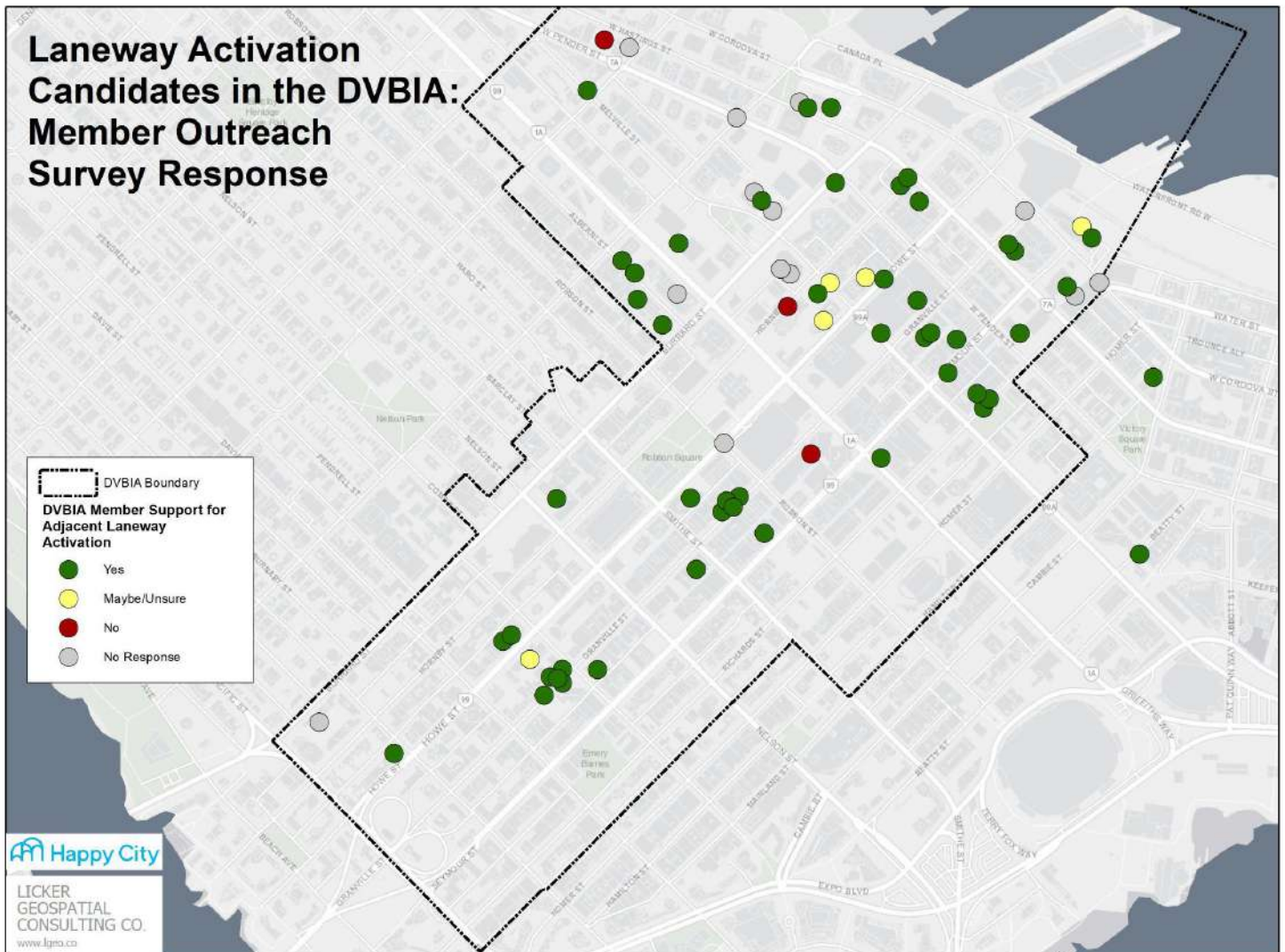
The following section quantifies survey responses from DVBIA members about laneways.

Seventy-one businesses responded to the business-oriented version of the digital survey. Of those who responded, 59.2% of businesses stated that they were located at ground level, and 70.4% said they have a laneway adjacent to their building. Support for laneway activations was fairly high among survey respondents. Eighty-four percent said they support laneway activations overall (12.7% were unsure and 1.4% said they do not), and 67.6% said they support activations in the laneway adjacent to their business (for 18.7%, this question was not applicable due to not having an adjacent laneway).

Do you support more laneway activations in the Downtown area? [Businesses]



**85%**  
**Businesses Support Laneway Activations in the Downtown Area**



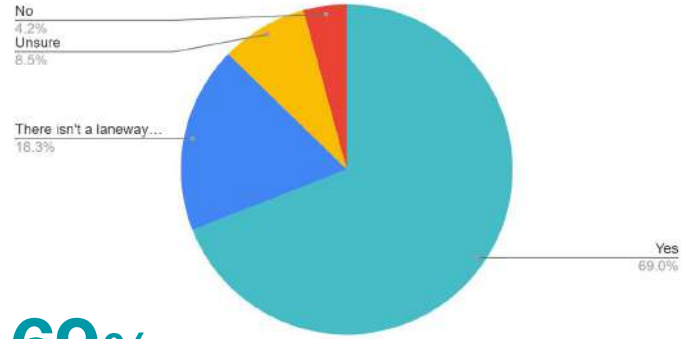
Of those who said they supported laneway activations in the Downtown area, 55% said that they would like to use their adjacent laneway for commercial purposes (and for 15% this question was not applicable because they do not have an adjacent laneway).

In terms of waste management, responses were closely distributed: 42.3% of respondents said they store their business' waste containers in the laneways adjacent to their business, while 40.8% said they do not. However, almost 17% of respondents were unsure. While most respondents (54.9% said they do not share their dumpsters with neighbouring businesses, a quarter of respondents (25.4%) of businesses said they do. This leaves room for discussion and possible expansion of dumpster sharing across the DV BIA.

When asked if they would be interested in participation in a co-design or hosting events in an activated laneway, 54% said yes, and 30.2% said no. The remainder of respondents were unsure and referred to the higher-level decision-making required for this activity.

Many qualitative responses pertaining to laneway transformations expressed concerns about safety, and displacement of current uses for the space (ranging from drug use to deliveries and building management access). Overall, the general sentiment from businesses was that if executed properly and with care, laneway transformations would be welcome in the DV BIA. There were no notably negative responses.

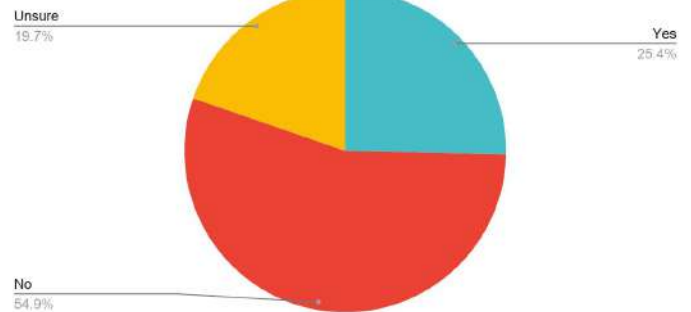
Do you support a laneway activation in the laneway behind or adjacent to your business? [Businesses]



**69%**

**Businesses Support Laneway Activations in the Laneway Behind or Adjacent to Their Business**

Do you share dumpsters with neighbouring businesses? [Businesses]



**55%**

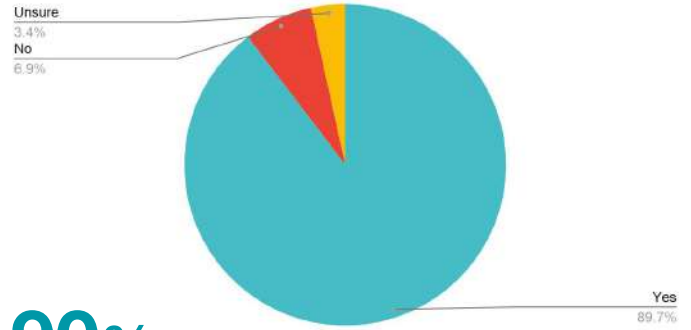
**Businesses Do Not Share Dumpsters with Neighbouring Businesses**



## Property Owners

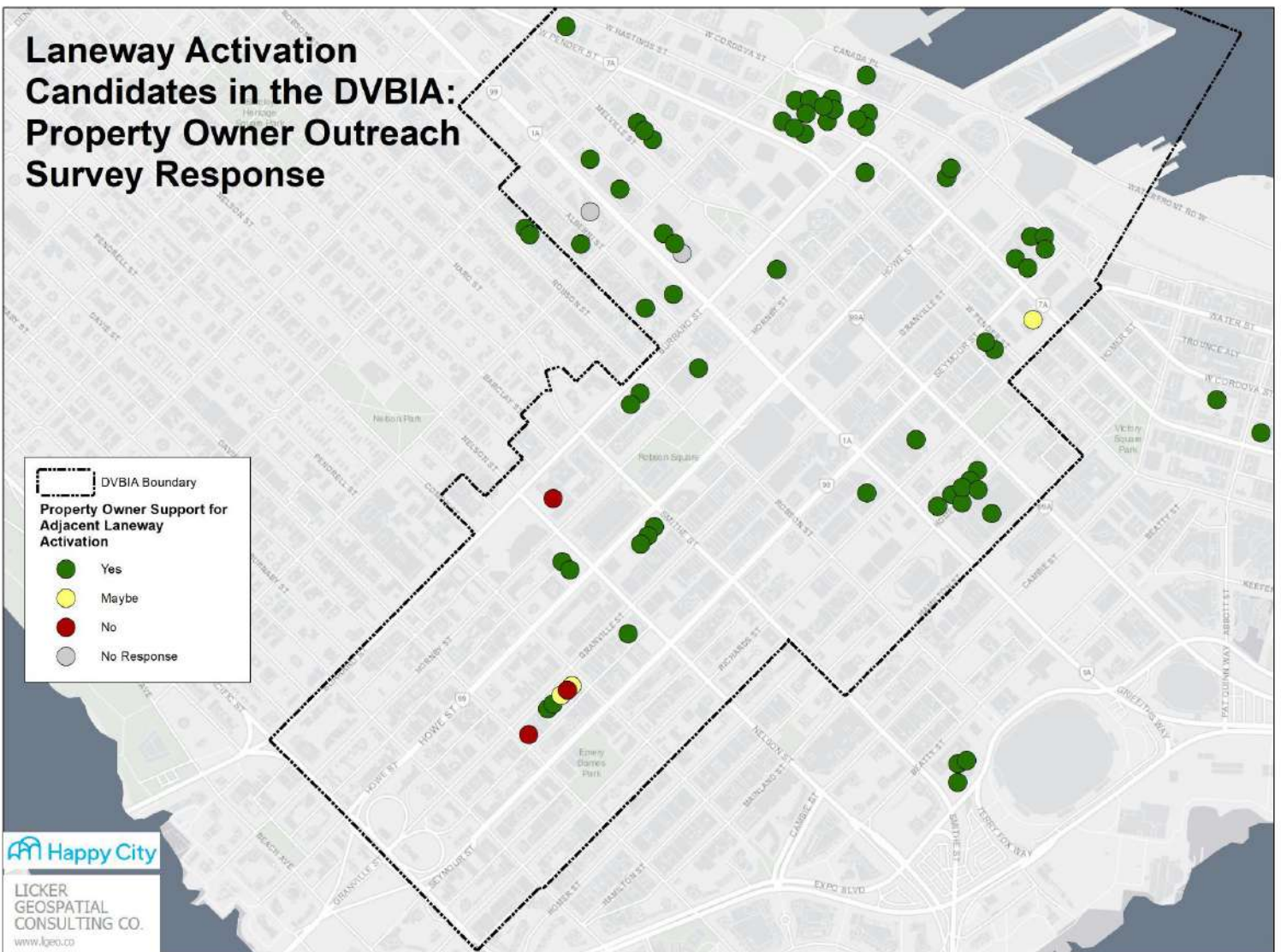
Twenty-eight responses were collected from the Property Owner survey. Of these, 75% said there was a laneway adjacent to the building(s) they manage. A significant majority (89.7%) of respondents said they support more laneway activations in the Downtown area--3.4% were unsure and 6.9% said they do not. When asked specifically about laneway activations in the laneway adjacent to their building(s): 69% supported the idea, 13.8% were unsure, and 10.3% were not in support (For 6.9% this question was not applicable). Of those who supported laneway transformations, 38.5% said they would like to use the adjacent laneway for commercial purposes, like patios or outdoor retail.

Do you support more laneway activations in the Downtown area? [Property Owners]



**90%**

**Property Owners Support Laneway Activations in the Downtown Area**

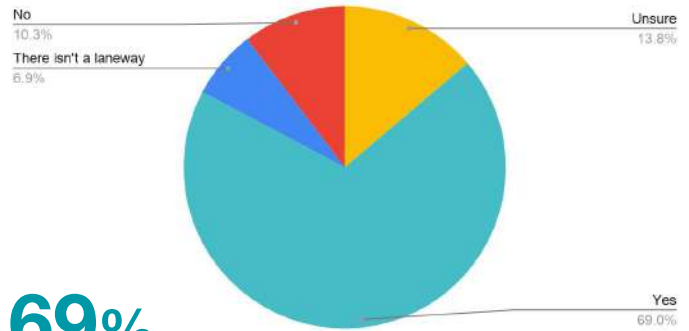


In terms of waste management, 72.4% of property owners who responded said they do manage waste for tenants in their building (17.2% said they do not, and 10.3% were unsure). In addition, 31% of property owners said they store their building's waste containers in adjacent laneways, while 55% said they do not (13.8% were unsure).

When asked about their willingness to participate in future activations, 52% of property owners said they would be interested in co-designing or hosting events in an activated laneway, should the opportunity arise.

The majority of qualitative responses were fairly neutral. Most responses, if any, expressed general concerns around the feasibility of laneway transformations. These concerns were related to cleanliness, access to parking, waste management, or deliveries; otherwise, most were supportive of the idea, barring these logistical considerations. One respondent from the Dance Centre expressed strong opposition to laneway activations overall, stating the idea is "ridiculous", "jeopardizes safety" and that activation of any laneways around their building would be "detrimental".

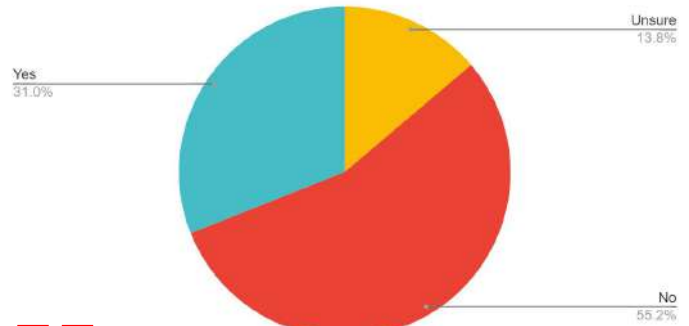
Do you support a laneway activation in the laneway behind or adjacent to your building? [Property Owners]



**69%**

**Property Owners Support Laneway Activations in the Laneway Behind or Adjacent to Their Building**

Do you store your building's waste containers in adjacent laneways? [Property Owners]



**55%**

**Property Owners Do Not Store Their Waste Containers with Adjacent Laneways**



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# Laneway activation assessment

The work up to this point was vital in establishing the context, needs and aspirations (and much more) around Downtown Vancouver laneways. Importantly, it also informed the framework for our laneway activation assessment. To identify specific laneways for activation, it was vital to assess every laneway in the DVBIA's jurisdiction.

**To accomplish this, we mapped out all laneways in the jurisdiction, and analyzed a series of existing data sets, which are in the right column on this page.**

Based on the background document review, principles, interviews, and more, we then developed a series of assessment metrics for the built environment and metrics for human activity in the laneways, both of which are listed below. At the same time, we also reviewed the Squamish Atlas, the Musqueam Online Mapping Portal, and the First Peoples Map of BC to identify places of Indigenous meaning in or near Downtown Vancouver laneways. Subsequently, we went out and analyzed the laneways using the most accurate approach we know: in-person on foot.

**In total, we walked more than 11 kilometers of laneways across nearly 90 blocks of Downtown Vancouver. At each block, we input scores for each metric into an Excel table on an Ipad.**

## Existing data sets:

- Minimum walking distance to park
- Minimum walking distance to schools
- Median Household Income
- Adjacent Population Density
- Adjacent Retail Business Count
- Minimum walking distance to transit stops
- Minimum distance to public washroom
- Businesses on corners of lane

## Built environment assessment metrics:

- Number of doors to businesses
- Presence of high-quality street art
- Adjacent residences
- Number of dumpsters
- Number of loading bays
- Number of parking entrances
- Is parking permitted?
- Is commercial stopping permitted?
- Presence of electrical outlets
- Presence of rain cover
- Presence of lighting
- Cleanliness

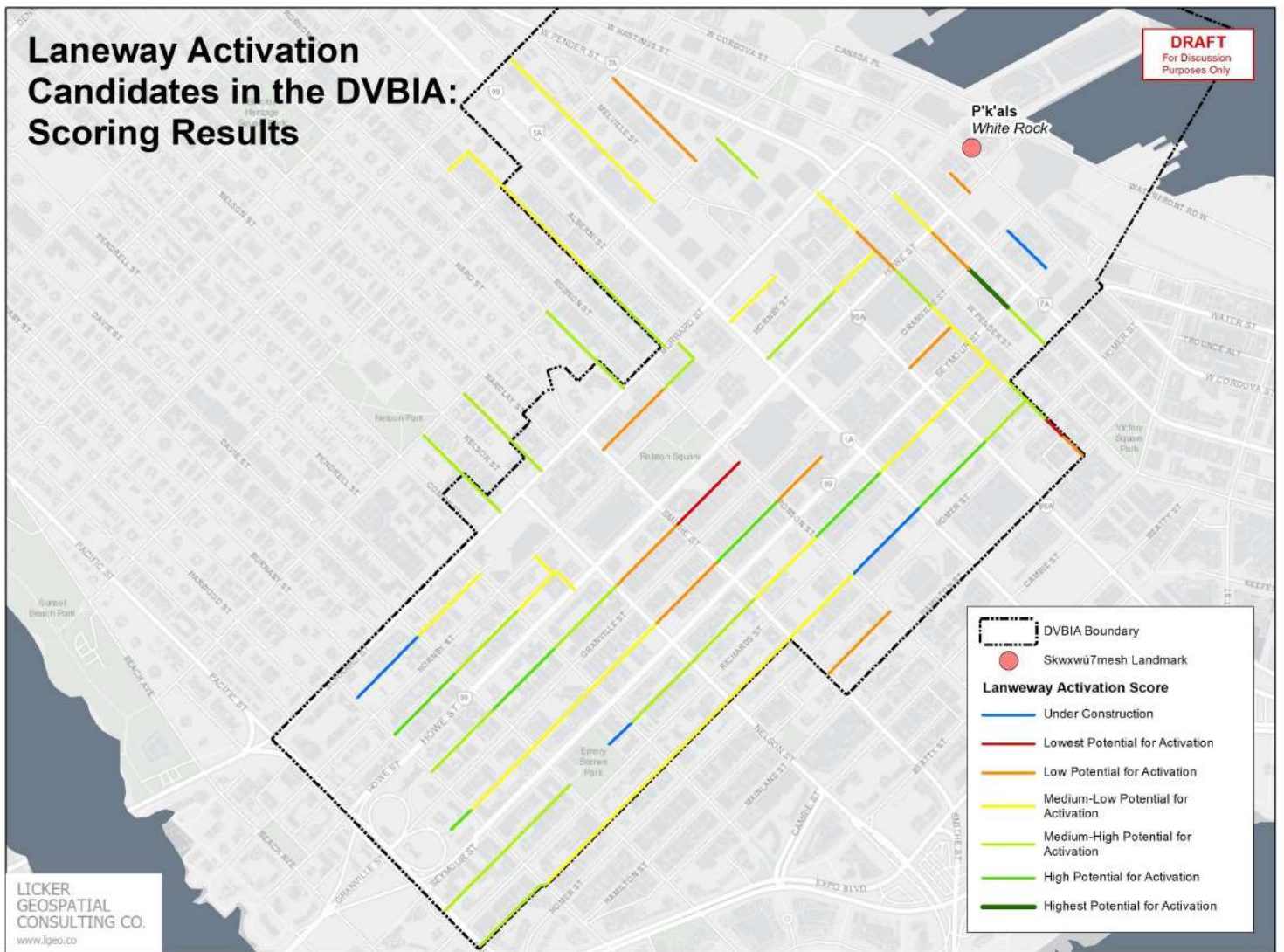
## Human activity metrics:

- Presence of people experiencing homelessness
- Presence of community fingerprints
- Presence of distinct neighbourhood characteristics
- Presence of people lingering
- Indications of people using lane as route



Once all data was collected, we conducted a metric review session with DV BIA representatives and data analysts at Licker Geospatial. During this session, we reviewed the metrics that data was collected for and collectively determined their weighting on a scale of 5 to 1. Several metrics were also removed during this session. Finally, we added a metric of our subjective perceptions of activation potential for each laneway. While this metric is subjective, it is also built on a year of research and engagement regarding laneways, as well as nearly a decade of conceiving and implementing activations in these laneways.

Subsequently, the data for each metric was entered into ArcGIS to generate a map highlighting the laneway potentials for activation. Importantly, by building this through ArcGIS, rather than as static maps, these metrics can be adjusted to shift the weighting of each metric, depending on importance, and can be updated in the future. Outputs were then reviewed through a block-by-block secondary assessment using Google Streets. Following this review and final revisions, we confirmed the results presented below.



## Results

Based on our analysis, several notable routes are evident. These routes can be put into two categories: **routes with strong potential for activation** and **individual laneways of interest**. Importantly, the static map included above (as well as several included later in this report) is accompanied by a GIS data set and programming script. This will enable the DVBIA to update the maps as conditions within the jurisdiction change. As such, we recommend re-assessing the laneways every two to three years and updating this dynamic tool accordingly.

Through this work, we have identified a series of individual laneways, as well as three routes that have high potential for activation. These include the following routes:

- Laneway between Howe and Hornby - 1000 to 1200 blocks
- Laneway between Seymour and Richards - 700 to 1100 blocks
- Laneway between Howe and Granville - 1000 to 1200 blocks

And the following individual laneways:

- Eveleigh Street (Bentall Centre)
- Ted Northe Lane & the Henshaw Lane
- 600 between Seymour and Richards, north side
- 600 between Richards and Homer, north side
- 700 Burrard

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## Routes with strong potential for activation



### Laneway between Howe and Hornby - 1000 to 1200 blocks

There is significant mural and public space potential anchored at 1000 block between Howe and Hornby. Most notably, the owner has expressed interest in transforming the “T” shaped lane into public space. Such transformation would still allow delivery vehicles to come through and provide space for central waste management collection. This would also be a welcoming addition to the existing small, rain covered public space at the south end of the lane. With minimal parking entrances, loading bays, and housing, a connection could be established between the lane and the elevated Nelson Square in the long term design plan - making for an even stronger site and more compelling destination.

Multiple large facades front the laneway between these blocks. Opportunities exist for vines, vertical greenery, and other plantings to help activate existing blank facades. This would build on public space and greenery elements found at both the 1100 and 1200 blocks.

By augmenting this space with murals and more greenery, an integrated public space system can be created in the laneway between Howe and Hornby.



### Laneway between Seymour and Richards - 700 to 1100 blocks (could extend into 1300 and 1400 blocks)

There is also a good opportunity for public space activation and mural installation in the laneway between the 700 to 1100 blocks of Seymour and Richards. This case for activation here is enhanced by the fact that the route here is clean, green, includes rain cover, and contains lighting and some quality public art already. Furthermore, the laneway includes access to the lobby of Dolce Vita, the Telus Lane, and a connection to nearby Emery Barnes Park - an indication that it will be supported by adjacent businesses, programs, and activities.

Within this stretch, there exist several sites - including a parking lot in the 800 block - that can be identified and marked out using ground murals. If or when these sites are redeveloped, it would be useful to engage their owners to encourage intensifying the use of the laneway and adjacent building entrances, while identifying effective loading and waste removal solutions.



1200 Seymour+Richards



1100 Granville+Howe

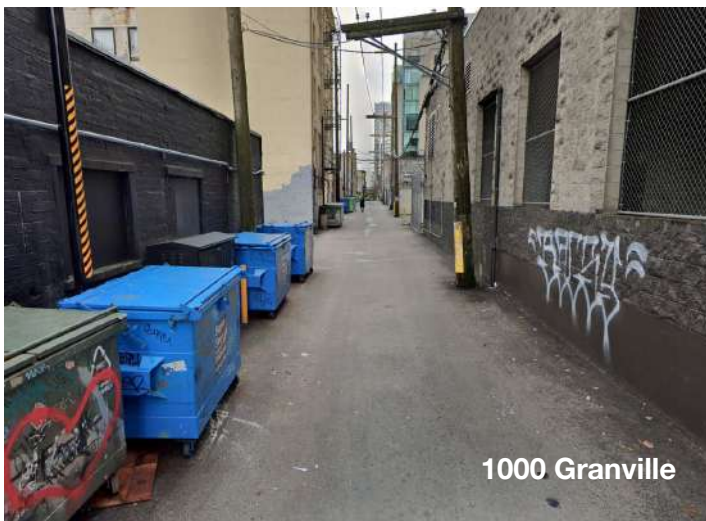
Further extension of activation into the 1300 and 1400 blocks, which contain several public space-like features and greenery elements, is also ideal. By doing so, a potential link could be created between the south side of the DV BIA all the way to the Downtown core.

All in all. The activation of this laneway presents a compelling opportunity to create a dynamic place and movement route that connects Pacific Boulevard all the way up to West Georgia Street.

### Laneway between Howe and Granville - 1000 to 1200 blocks

With almost no loading bays, few adjacent residences, and some parking spaces along this stretch of the laneway between Howe and Granville, the potential for murals and public space activation could be explored as well. For example, small parking lots scattered in the area could be transformed into public spaces or private patios. Similar conditions are found just beyond this stretch, which makes it possible to expand the project into the 900 block. Using an art-focused approach that suits the nightlife strip well, there is also opportunity to activate the abundance of chain link fencing found in the area and add to the existing street art in the process.

Even with all its potential, it must be noted that any plan here would require careful consideration in relations with Granville Street interests. In addition, with the notable presence of street involved people in these lanes, their engagement would be vital to the success of activations here. With these points in mind, a sequenced approach to activation, where murals are added prior to further consideration of public space, may be a useful way to introduce the idea to the local community and assess its impact and reception.



1000 Granville

## Individual laneways of interest



Eveleigh Street

### Eveleigh Street (Bentall Centre)

Various mural and activation opportunities exist in Everleigh Street. Long facades created by surrounding buildings and ample room overhead allow for installations to be placed up above and along its sides. New murals at adjacent garage entries can also help highlight the unique qualities of this space. Since the lane has a single owner and is in a relatively clean state, installations can be easily managed.

There may also be opportunity to develop this as a public space for events. This is partly due to the fact the lane is enclosed on three sides, which provides clear framing for use of the space and eliminates the risk of vehicular through traffic. Further, the permeability of surrounding buildings enables human access from the lobby of Bentall Centre, which creates an opportunity for the space to serve as a magnet that draws people down from the towers.



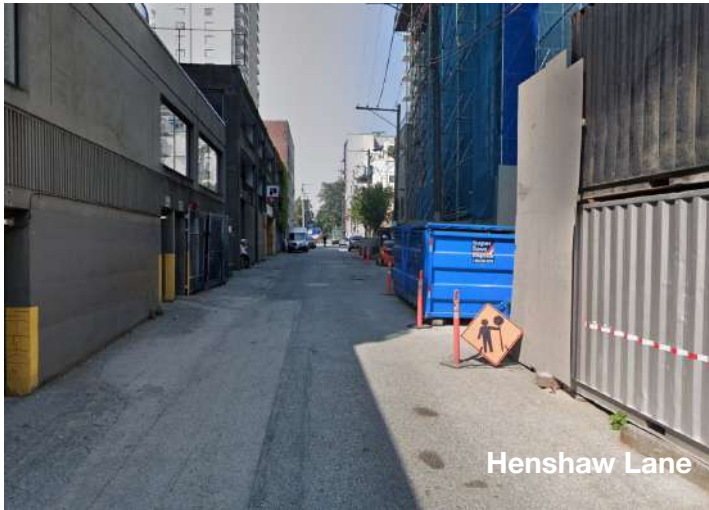
Ted Northe Lane

### Ted Northe Lane & the Henshaw Lane

It must be noted that not all of these two lanes belong to the jurisdiction of the DV BIA. Despite this, the parallel lanes could be connected via Thurlow and Burrard - or even Nelson Park - to create a small walking route in the middle of Downtown Vancouver. Doing so would support City efforts to encourage active transportation while also creating further linkages between Vancouver's most urban locations and nearby greenspace.

The potential for Ted Northe Lane to be activated by murals and transformed into a public space is high. On the north side of the entrance off Burrard, the existing facade presents a good activation opportunity. The heritage building on the south side also holds visual interest, but the scope for activations is narrow. Overall, the lane's clean conditions, lack of loading bays, and few opportunities for residential parking (outside of the DV BIA's jurisdiction) make it an ideal space for public space activation and mural installation.





While the lane between Comox and Nelson is currently under construction, it could still become a great public space. The lane has suitable conditions for transformation. These include a lack of loading bays, presence of large blank facades created by surrounding buildings and connection to Nelson Park (an important local hub and community green space) to the north. In turn, this lane provides opportunities for a combination of public space activation, mural installations, and urban greenery to be implemented. Importantly, construction currently occurring in the lane could influence this.

### 600 between Richards and Homer, north side

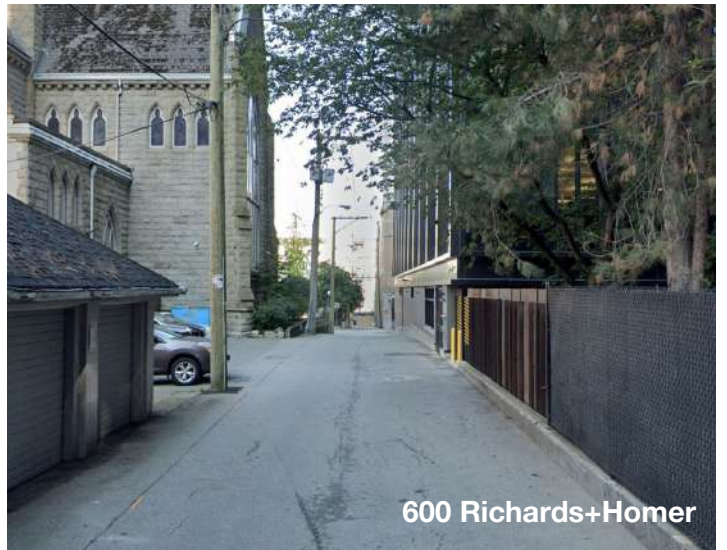
This laneway includes multiple facades that are well-suited for murals. While the south end of this lane includes a loading bays and parking, the north side has minimal uses or built environment barriers to impede activation. A series of parking spaces could potentially serve as public space, as well. The Holy Rosary Cathedral, located next to this lane, could potentially serve as a steward for this site. The Cathedral already maintains several gardens in the laneway.

Notably, activation could also extend to the laneway north of this site, next to Cathedral Square. However, we recommend that such a move only occur in conjunction with revitalization of the Square itself.



### 600 between Seymour and Richards, north side

Covered in grass and other soft textures, this lane is great for hosting events if the parking lot is booked. It's lack of loading bays is another great quality. Currently, people are able to access the space on foot from multiple directions and the brick walls create a distinct visual. Additional space could be made available if the parking lot is used. In order for this lane to be activated successfully, it is important to manage the parking thoroughfare. This is a privately owned space; however, its distinct characteristics make it well-suited for events. Outreach with the property owner should be considered to assess whether it is feasible as an event space.





700 Burrard

### 700 Burrard (leading to rear entrance of the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver)

Murals and wall activations can be implemented to liven the space up, given that a massive blank wall makes up one side of this left-turning lane. With the turn-in nature of the lane, it may be best to activate only half of it to reduce the vehicular traffic impact and lessen disruption on both Burrard and Robson.

Any activation here would benefit significantly from the Fairmont Hotel's support, as one side of the hotel faces onto the lane. A local attraction itself, the hotel would attract attention and visitors to the site.



1000 Granville+Seymour, Image 1

### 1000 Granville-Seymour

Although this lane has great built environment attributes, the heavy presence of people experiencing homelessness currently makes it unsuitable for activations. Numerous adult-only businesses that flank the space further diminishes the site's potential. Despite these conditions, the context may change in the future. Any potential solution should involve deep engagement with street involved community members.

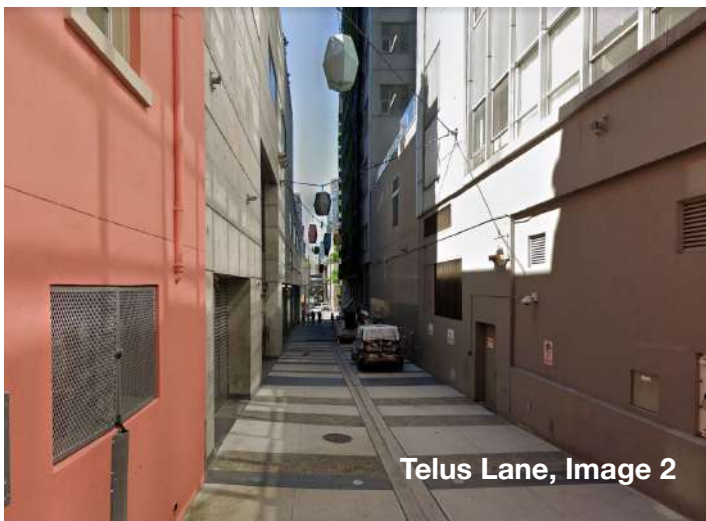


1000 Granville+Seymour, Image 2



### Telus Garden

On paper, this lane appears to be an excellent, complete, and clean public space. There are no dumpsters or loading bays in sight, thanks to supportive ownership model that was created to enable this. In reality though, the owner has faced numerous challenges from the City. This lane is an example of how even when the end product appears strong, the process behind it can challenge and even prevent things from happening. City bylaws can obstruct activations. In order to make things happen, a re-assessment of certain bylaws with the City may be needed.



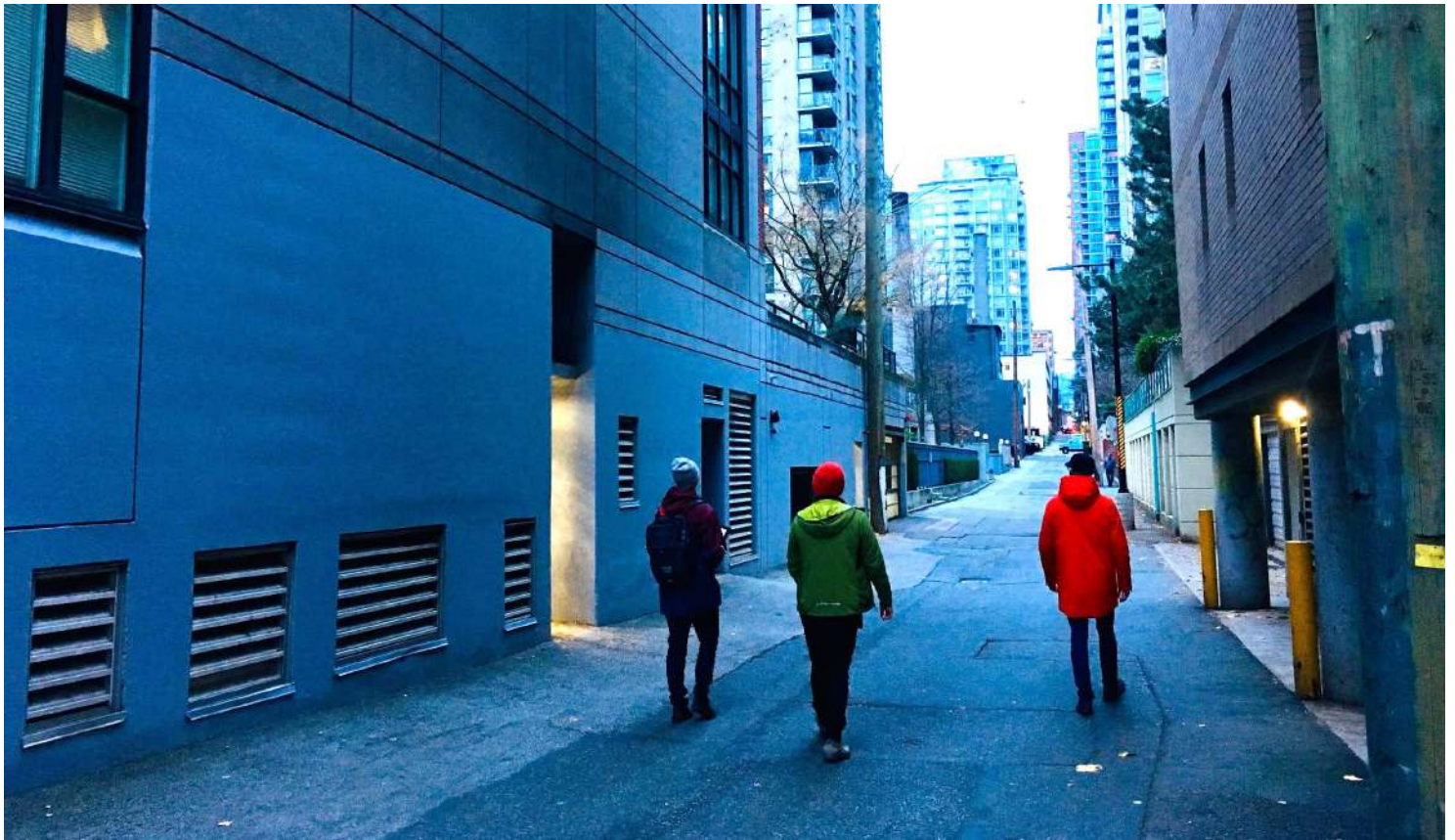
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# Next steps

Over the course of this project, we analyzed a range of background documents, conducted interviews with numerous subject matter experts and stakeholders, surveyed conducted surveys with business and property owners, performed conducted an assessment of every laneway in the DV BIA jurisdiction and solicited DV BIA input at numerous points of the project. In doing so, we:

- Established guiding principles for the project;
- Identified alignment with City policy and goals, as well as the goals and aspirations of other key stakeholders;
- Identified challenges and barriers to laneway activation;
- Assessed business and property owner support for the further activations;
- Analyzed all laneways in the DV BIA jurisdiction for their potential for activation
- Mapped out all laneways in the jurisdiction and identified those with high potential for activation.

With this in mind, the DV BIA is well-equipped to initiate a 10-year Strategy that turns one-off laneway activations into a cohesive network. Through this process, a number of additional actions were also identified, should the DV BIA wish to go beyond mural activation, to transform these lanes into places where people can linger, connect and support small business. These actions include the following:



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## Conduct a waste management pilot project

Resolving the challenges around waste management is critical to progressing from going beyond wall and ground murals, as well as programmed activities, to the successful activation of laneways as public spaces throughout Downtown Vancouver. Beyond the sheer number of dumpsters, the fact that there is presence of numerous dumpsters managed by multiple private hauling companies in many laneways across the area is a particular issue. Addressing this issue is a critical first step to unlocking the potential for laneways as spaces that support social connection, local business, health, happiness and inclusion. To do so, we recommend initiating the process with a waste management pilot project. We commend the DVBIA for starting and supporting this project, working with several partners, including the City of Vancouver and The Binnerns' Project to turn it into reality.

## Conduct a public life study to assess the behavioural wellbeing impacts of murals and other transformations

It is important to measure what matters, and with many new murals becoming fixtures in Downtown Vancouver, understanding how they influence wellbeing, as well as the length and frequency of the public's visits to these sites (key economic metrics) is vital. This study would equip the DVBIA with important information to inform decision-making around future murals.

## Establish design guidelines for short-, mid-, and long-term laneway activation as public space

This project identified laneways with high potential for activation throughout the DVBIA. How these laneways are activated remains a question. To establish consistency and clarity across laneways, we recommend that - should the waste management pilot project be conducted and demonstrate how this critical issue be addressed - the DVBIA work with the City to establish design guidelines for these laneways. In doing so, we believe there is an important opportunity to work with Indigenous communities in Vancouver to advance reconciliation in the City.

**This Strategy is an important step to transforming Vancouver's laneways into happy, healthy and inclusive places that support local business, foster social connection and develop new income generating opportunities for people experiencing homelessness. We applaud the DVBIA's ambition in pursuing this project and are grateful for the opportunity to support these efforts.**

**Redevelopment, and changes of use could unlock many additional laneway opportunities.**



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