

City of Terrace Spirit Square

George Little Park



At the heart of every great community lies a site – a park, plaza, town square or open space – where citizens can gather for special occasions. These spaces help give towns and cities their identity and are recognized as “places to go” for community celebrations and commemorations. The “B.C. Spirit Squares” program will support the creation or improvement of such places in communities throughout BC.

Successful public open spaces contribute to the vibrancy and health of communities on a daily basis. Such spaces are important social destinations that animate the street and support local businesses. Investments in the public realm should also build on sustainable planning principles that encourage compact, walkable communities and improve connections to the surrounding neighbourhood. The B.C. Spirit Squares program will support these goals by funding well-designed and optimally-located squares, parks and plazas that enhance the social, cultural and economic life of the community and build on its distinctive history and natural features. Successful squares and plazas are open and welcoming to all. They are well-maintained and provide for a range of opportunities and activities—allowing visitors to celebrate, play, browse, shop, entertain and be entertained, or simply sit and watch the passing scene.



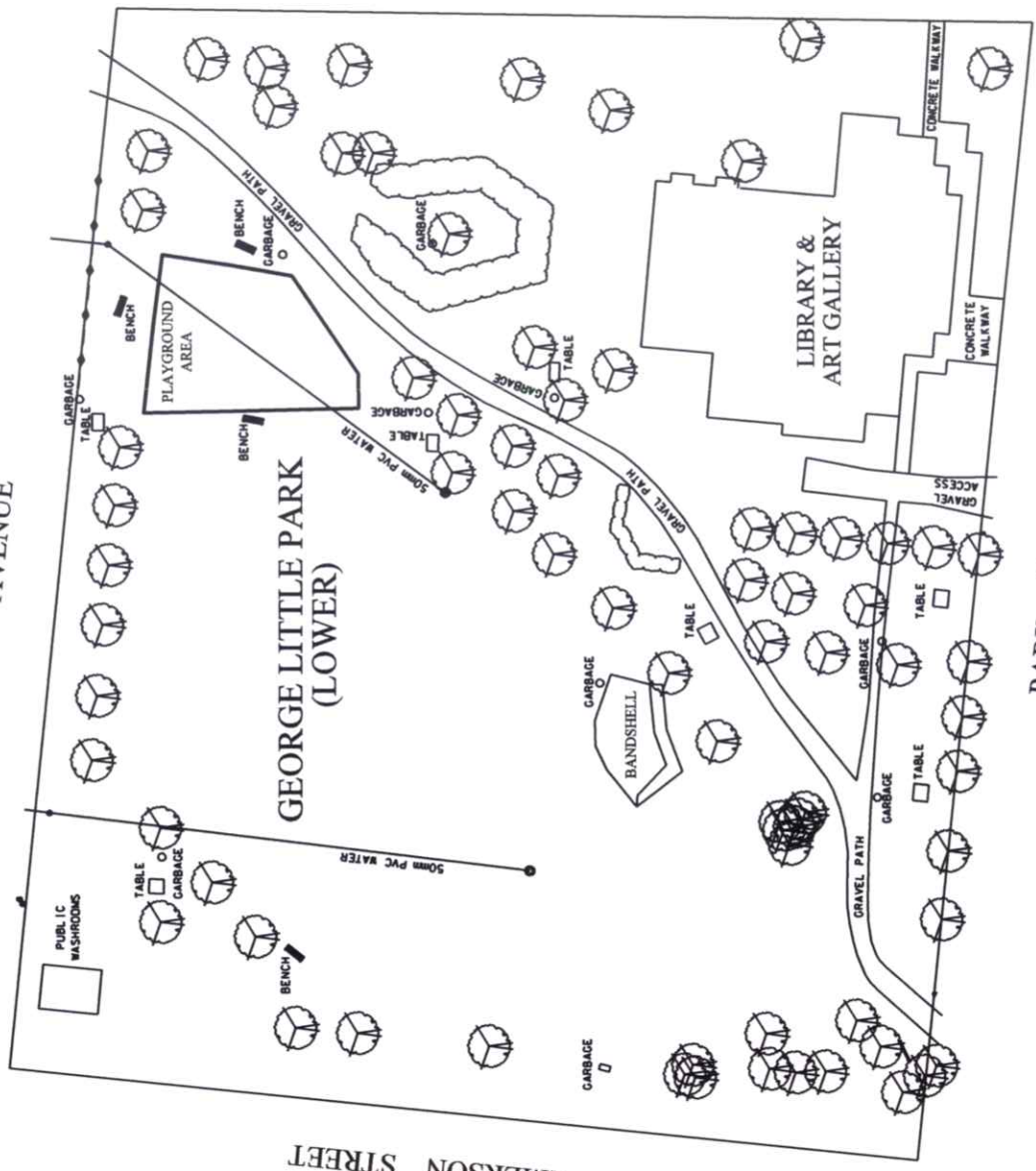
KALUM STREET

DAVIS AVENUE

GEORGE LITTLE PARK (LOWER)

EMERSON STREET

PARK AVENUE



GEORGE LITTLE PARK: FACILITIES

SITE SURVEY: 2004 SCALE: 1:1000

PRINT: FEBRUARY 9, 2007



Ten Principles for Creating Successful Squares

(Partnership for Public Spaces – PPS)

Small details add up to great places.

Squares have been a core focus of PPS beginning with our first project 30 years ago--Rockefeller Center's Channel Gardens. We've honed the ten principles below based on the hundreds of squares--the good and the bad--that we've analyzed and observed since then. What stands out most is that design is only a small fraction of what goes into making a great square. To really succeed, a square must take into account a host of factors that extend beyond its physical dimensions.

1. Image and Identity



A popular square in Copenhagen, Denmark. Historically, squares were the center of communities, and they traditionally helped shape the identity of entire cities. Sometimes a fountain was used to give the square a strong image: Think of the majestic Trevi Fountain in Rome or the Swann Fountain in Philadelphia's Logan Circle. The image of many squares was closely tied to the great civic buildings located nearby, such as cathedrals, city halls, or libraries. Today, creating a square that becomes the most significant place in a city--that gives identity to whole communities--is a huge challenge, but meeting this challenge is absolutely necessary if great civic squares are to return.

2. Attractions and Destinations



Ghirardelli Square, San Francisco. Any great square has a variety of smaller "places" within it to appeal to various people. These can include outdoor cafés, fountains, sculpture, or a bandshell for performances. These attractions don't need to be big to make the square a success. In fact, some of the best civic squares have numerous small attractions such as a vendor cart or playground that, when put together, draw people throughout the day. We often use the idea of "[The Power of Ten](#)" to set goals for destinations within a square. Creating ten good places, each with ten things to do, offers a full program for a successful square.

3. Amenities



Circular benches provide a comfortable place to sit in Rockefeller Center, New York City.

A square should feature amenities that make it comfortable for people to use. A bench or waste receptacle in just the right location can make a big difference in how people choose to use a place. Lighting can strengthen a square's identity while highlighting specific activities, entrances, or pathways. Public art can be a great magnet for children of all ages to come together. Whether

temporary or permanent, a good amenity will help establish a convivial setting for social interaction.

4. Flexible Design



Tennis on the square, Copenhagen.

The use of a square changes during the course of the day, week, and year. To respond to these natural fluctuations, flexibility needs to be built in. Instead of a permanent stage, for example, a retractable or temporary stage could be used. Likewise, it is important to have on-site storage for movable chairs, tables, umbrellas, and games so they can be used at a moment's notice.

5. Seasonal Strategy



The holiday market in New York's Union Square.

A successful square can't flourish with just one design or management strategy. Great squares such as Bryant Park, the plazas of Rockefeller Center, and Detroit's new Campus Martius change with the seasons. Skating rinks, outdoor cafés, markets, horticulture displays, art and sculpture help adapt our use of the space from one season to the next.

6. Access



A short pedestrian crossing at Plaza Santa Ana in Madrid, Spain.

To be successful, a square needs to be easy to get to. The best squares are always easily accessible by foot: Surrounding streets are narrow; crosswalks are well marked; lights are timed for pedestrians, not vehicles; traffic moves slowly; and transit stops are located nearby. A square surrounded by lanes of fast-moving traffic will be cut off from pedestrians and

deprived of its most essential element: people.

7. The Inner Square & the Outer Square



Ground floor retail rings the edge of this square in Verona, Italy.

Visionary park planner Frederick Law Olmsted's idea of the "inner park" and the "outer park" is just as relevant today as it was over 100 years ago. The streets and sidewalks around a square greatly affect its accessibility and use, as do the buildings that surround it. Imagine a square fronted on each side by 15-foot blank walls --

that is the worst-case scenario for the outer square. Then imagine that same square situated next to a public library: the library doors open right onto the square; people sit outside and read on the steps; maybe the children's reading room has an outdoor space right on the square, or even a bookstore and cafe. An active, welcoming outer square is essential to the well-being of the inner square.

8. Reaching Out Like an Octopus



A great square reaches out into the surrounding neighborhood, like Piazza Maggiore in Bologna, Italy.

Just as important as the edge of a square is the way that streets, sidewalks and ground floors of adjacent buildings lead into it. Like the tentacles of an octopus extending into the surrounding neighborhood, the influence of a good square (such as Union Square in New York) starts at

least a block away. Vehicles slow down, walking becomes more enjoyable, and pedestrian traffic increases. Elements within the square are visible from a distance, and the ground floor activity of buildings entices pedestrians to move toward the square.

9. The Central Role of Management



Attentive maintenance is an essential part of good management in St. Stephen's Green, Dublin.

The best places are ones that people return to time and time again. The only way to achieve this is through a management plan that understands and promotes ways of keeping the square safe and lively. For example, a good manager understands existing and potential users and gears events to both types of people.

Good managers become so familiar with the patterns of how people use the park that waste receptacles get emptied at just the right time and refreshment stands are open when people most want them. Good managers create a feeling of comfort and safety in a square, fixing and maintaining it so that people feel assured that someone is in charge.

10. Diverse Funding Sources



Sponsorships can help fund events like Festa Italiana in Portland's Pioneer Courthouse Square.

A well-managed square is generally beyond the scope of the average city parks or public works department, which is why partnerships have been established to operate most of the best squares in the United States. These partnerships seek to supplement what the city can provide with funding from diverse sources, including--but not limited to--rent from cafés, markets or other small commercial uses on the site; taxes on

adjacent properties; film shoots; and benefit fundraisers.

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The most memorable cities and towns have public squares. These magical spaces bring life and economic vitality to their surroundings.

What are public squares and why are they important?

Squares are publicly-owned spaces that provide a central location for year-round, 24-hour activity, ranging from community celebrations to fundraising events, political gatherings, children's programs and farmers markets. This type of open and inviting space is often called the community's "living room."

How far back do squares date?

The hearts of ancient towns and cities were unified around public squares. In 1573, King Philip II of Spain issued the "Laws of the Indies," a series of ordinances regulating the design of colonial cities in the New World. The Open Space Ordinance stated that "the main plaza is to be the starting point for the town." Today, these grand spaces continue to bring significance and identity to cities worldwide.

Should all downtowns have squares?

Yes. Squares are beneficial to communities. In addition to giving a city its own distinct character, an active public square promotes economic vitality. Residents, visitors and tourists who frequent squares also spend time at restaurants, retail shops and galleries.

How do parks differ from public squares?

Parks are designed with specific areas set aside for recreational activities or quiet contemplation. The typical park is dominated by grassy areas, trees and pathways. Public squares should be simply designed with paved surfaces to accommodate a variety of uses.

Where should squares be located?

Squares should be located in the symbolic "heart" of the city and comfortably enclosed by buildings with active ground floor uses. They should be inviting to people of all ages and have a variety of places to sit and enjoy the activity or visit with friends. Pedestrian, transit and auto infrastructure must be easily accessible.

Can squares be added to a downtown?

Yes. However, squares should not be built merely where space is available. Instead, they should be designed as a part of an overall downtown plan and located in a central active area that will be seen as a natural place for public gatherings. Public support for a square will follow if its features and amenities are consistent with the community's unique history and needs.

For more information contact:
Debra Ames, Marketing Director
520 SW Yamhill, Roof Suite 4
Portland, Oregon 97204
503.417.7879 phone
503.417.7904 fax
www.ca-city.com

