

# ARTS & CULTURE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK & INVESTMENT PLAN



OPPENHEIMER  
HASTINGS



GASTOWN



CHINATOWN

THE  
DOWNTOWN  
EASTSIDE

*The Heart  
of  
Vancouver*

## DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

JANUARY 2007



VICTORY  
SQUARE



RAILTOWN  
INDUSTRIAL LANDS



STRATHCONA



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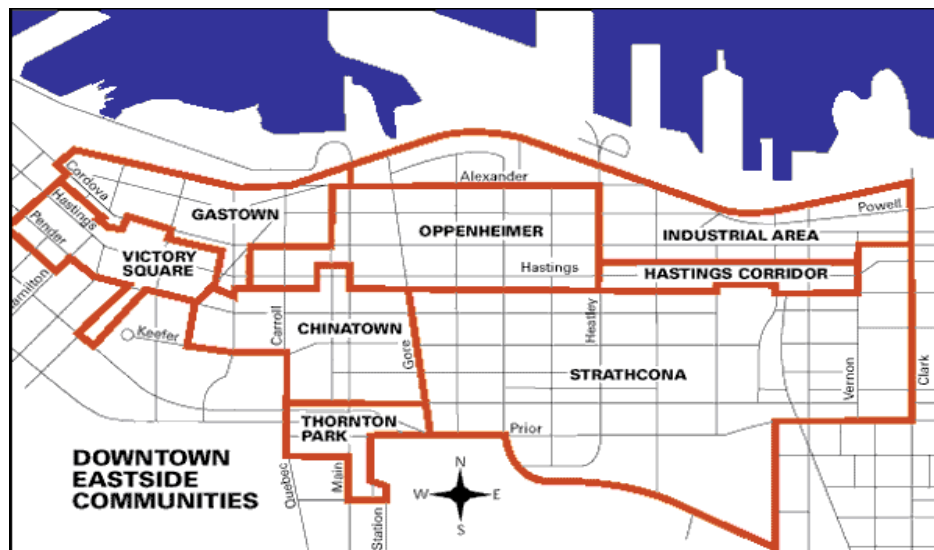
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## ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

### ***DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE***

The geographic footprint of the “Downtown Eastside” has been defined for planning purposes by the City of Vancouver<sup>1</sup>. According to the City, the DTES generally conforms to the following boundaries - Clark and Raymur streets shape the eastern boundary, Malkin and Prior form the southern boundary, Richards and Cambie constitutes the western boundary while the waterfront forms the northern boundary. The area is home to seven distinct areas including the historic neighbourhoods of Chinatown and Gastown; Gastown; Strathcona; and Oppenheimer. It also includes an Industrial Area along the northern waterfront, and Thornton Park bordering the southern edge of Chinatown.



The Downtown Eastside was once known as the “heart” of the City offering residents and visitors a strong commercial, retail, and entertainment district. Today a number of historic sites and impressive architecture such as the Carnegie Library, Europa, the Dominion Building, and the Sun Tower give character to the area. They are standing witnesses to the former vitality and past investment in the area. In some neighbourhoods, there is a strong community identity, business thrives, and there is a healthy level of street activity. However, in some areas the past decades have seen major retailers and businesses relocate. Over time vacant lots, abandoned buildings, empty storefronts, and an increase in poverty, transient populations, illegal drugs and street crime became visible signs of the areas dramatic economic and social decline. Despite the decline the neighbourhoods constantly worked toward maintaining and protecting their unique character and assets. Local residents, business, government, and NGO’s continue to identify and address those economic and social aspects that affect their quality of life, their community, and the public image of their neighbourhoods<sup>2</sup>. Today there is increased investor interest in these neighbourhoods; the Woodward’s redevelopment is an example of this renewed interest and commitment to the area.

<sup>1</sup> City of Vancouver Planning Department 2004

<sup>2</sup> For additional information on the DTES communities and revitalization see web source <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/community%5Fprofiles/downtown%5Ffeastside/>

The DTES is home to over 2,800 enterprises employing approximately 20,000 workers. There are over 28 languages spoken indicating a strong multi-cultural influence in the DTES.<sup>3</sup>

The following section provides an overview of the neighbourhoods in the DTES. For the purpose of this project we have separated the area into the following districts: Chinatown, Gastown, Strathcona, Victory Square, Oppenheimer, and Rail Town/Industrial Lands. This section highlights the contextual and physical factors that can influence economic revitalization.

### **The Neighbourhood Character**

The neighbourhood character provides a brief history of the area and identifies those factors that set the area apart from surrounding neighbourhoods. It highlights those conditions that help to form the public's perceptions and images of the area and consequently may affect development and revitalization efforts.

### **The Physical Environment**

The physical environment identifies those factors that support or discourage investment and development. These factors include the number of empty storefronts and vacant lots that take away from the vibrancy of a street, and the number of historic or significant building sites that can add character and induce investment in a district. It also looks at the "attractiveness" and "pedestrian friendliness" of the district. For example, poor signage, garbage-strewn areas, graffiti, lack of green spaces, and poorly maintained facades usually discourage both commercial and residential development. Collectively these factors will help to give a sense of the environmental conditions that are influencing the presence of a healthy commercial and social environment and in turn the potential for investment in the arts and cultural industries

### **Street Activity and Public Safety**

Public safety and pedestrian friendly streets are critical to encouraging and sustaining investment. This section identifies some of the public safety challenges that impact the neighbourhood and tend to influence the public's perceptions of the area. Perceptions of unsafe conditions can severely affect the number of visitors to an area resulting in poor attendance at events and acting as a deterrent to investment initiatives

### **Gateways and Visibility**

Gateways and visibility identifies a number of factors that can anchor the district or mark its boundaries. Gateways consider factors that provide a "welcome" or access to a district. Gateways also provide connections to other significant areas, attractions or neighbourhoods. These factors can significantly impact visitation levels, and the public's perception of an area.

### **Destinations**

Destinations are defined as sites, buildings or events that attract non-residents to the area. Destinations are an important factor in developing markets for artists, galleries and cultural events. Destinations also help to create the critical mass of supporting services to ensure the sustainability of the district.

### **Arts and Culture**

The arts and culture section provides a synopsis of the Resource Map applicable to the area. It highlights the cultural profile of the neighbourhood with a special focus on the cultural character and strengths of the area. Where possible it identifies the local assets that are supporting the arts and cultural sector or have the potential to attract further investment in the area.

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<sup>3</sup> "Competitive Advantage of the DTES" Vancouver Agreement 2004 - source Statistics Canada 2001

Factor	CHINATOWN Highlights
<b>Neighbourhood Character</b>	Established in the late 1800's, by Chinese workers. Today a vibrant area with distinct Chinese character offering speciality shopping, dining, cultural and heritage activities.
<b>Physical Environment</b>	Colourful, compact, and energetic streetscape; few empty buildings, secure parking; offers affordable residential, office and retail space; significant number of historical or heritage buildings; community undertaken steps to address graffiti and unclean alleyways.
<b>Street Activity Public Safety</b>	Daytime very high level of commercial activity; public safety concerns addressed by a number of projects aimed at improving public safety and the public's perceptions of the area.
<b>Gateways and Visibility</b>	Has a very distinct identity; Millennium Gate provides a strong symbolic gateway into the area; Silk Road route connects Chinatown to Vancouver downtown.
<b>Destinations</b>	Popular tourist/local destination with numerous attractions: Dr Sun Yat Sen Garden; Millennium Gate; Chinese Cultural Centre Museum and Archives; West Han Dynasty Bell, Sam Kee Building and Monument of Chinese Canadians.
<b>Art and Culture</b>	
➤ Local assets	Home to Lion Dance and martial arts clubs, and musical organizations like the Ngai Lum Musical Society; the Lingnan Painting School; shops selling primarily imported artwork, pottery, sculpture, and antiques; some shops sell brush paintings by local artists; recently several new home and fashion design shops have opened in the area;
➤ Festivals and Events	Events include: the Night Market and Chinese Spring Festival, Winter Solstice Lantern Festival, the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival, Chinese New Year Parade, and the Summer Enchanted Evening Music Series.
➤ Public Art	Sau Phan Abacuss and the Century Winds of Change Mural Vancouver Chinatown Millennium Gate, West Han Dynasty Bell.
➤ Sector Assets	Sing Tao Daily and Channel M are located in Chinatown; Tinsel Town; Society Buildings,

Factor	GASTOWN Highlights
<b>Neighbourhood Character</b>	Established in the late 1880's early growth related to proximity to the port and railway; once the location of prestigious retail stores, warehouses and hotels; suffered a prolonged period of decline but now centre of significant investor interest; today a heritage setting showcasing architectural gems, with a mix of residential and commercial buildings, offering an eclectic mix of traditional and modern services, including restaurants, boutiques, galleries and nightlife.

<b>Factor</b>	<b>GASTOWN Highlights</b>
<b>Physical Environment</b>	Attractive pedestrian friendly brick lined streets; well marked stores and restaurants add vibrancy; few empty storefronts, significant heritage buildings, secure parking; ongoing construction and redevelopment of historic buildings; community undertaken steps to address graffiti and unclean alleyways.
<b>Street Activity Public Safety</b>	High level of activity day and evening; public safety concerns addressed by a number of projects aimed at improving public safety and the public's perceptions of the area.
<b>Gateways and Visibility</b>	Distinct heritage character sets it aside from its neighbours; within walking distance of downtown and borders commuter hubs for rail, ferry, and bus.
<b>Destinations and Events</b>	Popular tourist/local destination; Gastown Steam Clock, Maple Tree Square; Blood Alley.
<b>Art and Culture</b>	
➤ Local Assets	A number of indigenous art galleries; artist run centres with regular exhibits; independent galleries; several restaurants provide music/performance venue; thriving fashion and home design community; print and graphic companies; architectural firms; wholesale and retail fabric distributors.
➤ Festivals and Events	Events include International Jazz Festival; Tour de Gastown; Motorcycle Show and Shine; Concours D'élégance.
➤ Public Art	Steam Clock; Gassy Jack Sculpture; Fish Fountain; Historic Footprints; Mosaic Project; Angel of Victory statue.
➤ Sector Assets	Warehouse studios (recording); casting agent offices; film schools; live/work spaces.

<b>Factor</b>	<b>STRATHCONA Highlights</b>
<b>Neighbourhood Character</b>	One of Vancouver's oldest neighbourhoods; over the years it was home to many immigrants; today it is home to diverse population, seniors, young families, and many artists.
<b>Physical Environment</b>	Pleasant, thriving older residential neighbourhood offering a wide range of housing options; area includes a number of parks, public spaces and community gardens.
<b>Street Activity Public Safety</b>	Concerns of increased drug and sex trade in the area; community works aggressively to address maintain safety of neighbourhoods and reduce crime.
<b>Gateways and Visibility</b>	Has high traffic arterials, bike routes to the west, visual identity supported by banner program.



**Destinations** Strathcona and Cottonwood Community Garden; Union Foods and Benny's Market two popular draws; MacLean Park.

### Art and Culture

- **Local Assets** Home to many well-known artists; numerous studios provide painting, pottery, furniture glasswork and fashion design; drawing classes and studio space.
- **Festivals and Events** Eastside Culture Crawl; numerous annual block parties; Brecht in the Park Summer Play Series (past); Circus of Dreams Event (past); Fall Pumpkin Patch.
- **Public Art** Untitled - concrete relief on the exterior N,S,W sides of Fisherman's Bldg Strathcona Pavilion; Strathcona BIA Banners; current image from Sunrise Grocery Mural; Guardian Dragon Mural on the Keefer Street Overpass; Glass Hand Project; bench; MacLean Park, Ray-Cam Mural; Thornton Park Tribute to the Cambie Works Yard; Project for a Works Yard; Roller-Sculpture; Marker of Change.
- **Sector Assets** Ukrainian Hall; Russian Hall; live/work/studio spaces

<b>Factor</b>	<b>VICTORY SQUARE Highlights</b>
<b>Neighbourhood Character</b>	Site of first provincial courthouse and historical rallying point for political protests; today it is surrounded by educational institutions, office buildings and small number of housing units.
<b>Physical Environment</b>	Resembles European style civic squares; known as a crossroads between "uptown" and "downtown" as the park marks the changing physical landscape to the east boarded up storefronts, graffiti, garbage strewn streets, to the west retail shops, schools, and restaurants. Recent government funding has enabled significant improvements including lighting, performance area, and park furniture making the area more attractive and welcoming; in addition Parks Board staff and United We Can maintain cleanliness of area.
<b>Street Activity Public Safety</b>	Recent improvements have reduced drug activity in the park but it continues to be a problem.
<b>Gateways and Visibility</b>	The Cenotaph and park marks the area.
<b>Destinations</b>	The Cenotaph and Remembrance Day ceremonies draw many to the area. The Dominion Building and other architectural significant buildings are important draws.
<b>Art and Culture</b>	
➤ <b>Local Assets</b>	Area home to artists, filmmakers and arts organizations; hub for literary organizations.
➤ <b>Festivals and Events</b>	Summer daily programs in the park, special events such as Christmas Angel Project, Jazz Festival presentations.

Factor	VICTORY SQUARE Highlights
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|-----------------|---|
| ➤ Public Art    | The Cenotaph, Historic Footprints Mosaic Project.   |
| ➤ Sector Assets | First Nation Employment Society, Vancouver Film School, VCC campus offers digital arts, fashion and jewellery design; Architect Institute of BC; BC Association for Magazine Writers; and, Association of BC Book Publishers. |

Factor	OPPENHEIMER (HASTINGS CORRIDOR) Highlights
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<b>Neighbourhood Character</b>	Oppenheimer prior to WW2 was home to a large and thriving Japanese population, however after WW2 few returned to the area. Hastings Corridor was once known as the City's important commercial, retail, and community activity but later became known as "skid row"; today home to predominately single men; area has the distinction of being one of the lowest income communities in the country.
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<b>Physical Environment</b>	Area with a high number of empty storefronts, and graffiti covered buildings; numerous SRO's, and social agency offices, as well as long established retail outlets serving low-income community.
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<b>Street Activity Public Safety</b>	Area has very public displays of illegal drug use, sex trade, crime, homelessness, poverty and mental illness; general public avoid the area.
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<b>Gateways and Visibility</b>	Significant commuter route into Vancouver; gathering spot for people involved in street activity.
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<b>Destinations</b>	The Firehall Arts Centre, the Police Centennial Museum, and the Carnegie Centre draw a number of people and patrons.
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Art and Culture	
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|------------------------|--|
| ➤ Local Assets         | Firehall is a hub for performing arts; number of community galleries music programs sponsored by Carnegie and St James Music Academy; strong focus on community cultural development and arts projects.  |
| ➤ Festivals and Events | Powell Street Festival; Oban Festival; Dancing on the Edge; BC Buds; the Heart of the City Festival; DTES Women's Centre annual Block Party  |
| ➤ Public Art           | Historic Footprints Mosaic Project; Memorial Totem Pole and memorial bench in Oppenheimer Park; Bruce Eriksen Mural; Offerings: A garden installation, Firehall Arts Centre, V6A - ART Mural, Gerry Whitehead Mural on East Facing wall of the BC Electric Building, Carrall Street Greenway Murals and Banners. |
| ➤ Sector Assets        | Pantages Theatre, Merchant Bank Building and Media One; Firehall; Golden Harvest Theatre; Buddhist Temple; Chapel and Garage (Dunlevy); Woodward's.  |

<b>RAILTOWN/ INDUSTRIAL LANDS HIGHLIGHTS</b>	
<b>Factor</b>	
<b>Neighbourhood Character</b>	Began as a logging camp in the late 1800's. Later became home to warehousing and manufacturing industries. Today most buildings are between 50-85 years old. As a result of rent increases in other areas Railtown has seen a recent influx of artists and business.
<b>Physical Environment</b>	Industrial and light manufacturing area with very few green spaces, wide streets, and large warehouses, some live work studios in the area.
<b>Street Activity Public Safety Gateways and Visibility</b>	Very little pedestrian traffic, area has attracted drug and sex trade. Busy commuter route linking eastern and western routes, streets are generally well lit with the port facilities being the most visible landmark.
<b>Destinations</b>	The waterfront and warehouse district attract some people but mainly residents or business related visitors; Alexander Centre; Japanese Language School and Hall.
<b>Art and Culture</b>	
➤ Local Assets	Strong design presence including furniture, interior and graphic design.
➤ Festivals Events	Ironworks Studio hosts events for the Jazz Festival and is a regular music venue in partnership with Coastal Jazz and Blues society; the Vancouver Japanese Language Hall and School host an annual Spring and Fall Bazaar fundraiser.
➤ Public Art	Hastings Mill Commemorative, Historic Footprints Mosaic Project.
➤ Sector Assets	SFU School for Contemporary Art; Iron Works Studios; Intermission Artist Society; Japanese School and Language Hall.

The following section provides a more detailed overview of the DTES communities.

## **DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE COMMUNITIES**

### **CHINATOWN**

#### **Neighbourhood Character**

In the 1880's Chinese immigrants settled on the periphery of False Creek; over 1000 people lived in "Shanghai Alley" and "Canton Alley". It was a vibrant area offering dining, entertainment, opera music, shopping, and political and cultural activities. At the turn of the 19 century, it was large enough and sophisticated enough to support a 500 seat Chinese theatre<sup>4</sup>. Today Chinatown's distinct character continues to attract residents and visitors interested in cultural activities, speciality shopping, dining, and viewing the unique heritage buildings and sites. There are a number of very active community groups and organizations dedicated to preserving Chinese heritage, and the revitalization of the district.

#### **Physical Environment**

During the daytime, the physical environment is compact and energetic. Many merchants have colourful street side displays, and staff enticing visitors into the stores. Vibrant red appears to be the prominent colour of Chinatown where even the vintage style lamp-posts are painted red. Distinct and pleasant aromas come from the many bakeries, cafes, tea-shops, markets and herbalists.

In the past the area has been plagued with graffiti and unclean alleyways. In 2004 local merchants and others began an aggressive clean up program to address these problems with excellent results<sup>5</sup>.

There are very few empty storefronts. The neighbourhood offers some residential housing, and affordable office and work space. There are a significant number of historical or heritage buildings including the *Sam Kee Building*, *Chin Wing Chum Society Building*; *Chinese Benevolent Association Building*; *Chinese Free Mason Building*; *Wing Sang Building*; the *Royal and CIBC Bank buildings*; and the *Koumintang Building*. In some cases, there is growing concern about the physical condition of some of these historic buildings. A number of public art pieces can be found in the neighbourhood including the "Abacus" and the *Century Winds of Change Mural*.



#### **Street Activity and Public Safety**

The local business community, non-profit groups, and the City of Vancouver have initiated a number of projects to improve street safety, and support a crime free environment. Programs include "Neighbours First" and 24-hour security patrols. The alleyways continue to be a neighbourhood concern since they tend to attract loiterers and illegal garbage dumping.

#### **Gateways and Visibility**

Chinatown has a very distinct identify. The Millennium Gate provides a very strong symbolic gateway into Chinatown. "The Silk Road" route is the first pedestrian walk connecting Vancouver Chinatown to the town center. Colourful banners and road signs clearly mark the way providing opportunities for self-guided walking tours that encompass all activities, services, and cultural highlights of Chinatown<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Web source: <http://www.vancouver-chinatown.com/english/history.html>

<sup>5</sup> ibid

<sup>6</sup> Web source: <http://www.vancouver-chinatown.com/english/attraction.html>

The *Carral Street Greenway* is a new project that will eventually result in the connection of Chinatown to the Downtown Eastside and Gastown linking a number of interesting sites and anchor attractions. This greenway will improve connections to the False Creek Seawall and the Port Lands Waterfront. Its design will encourage greater recreational use in a friendly, safe, and attractive streetscape.

### **Destinations**

Chinatown is in itself a popular destination. Within Chinatown, there are a number of sites that attract non-residents. These include *Dr. Sun Yat Sen Gardens*; *the Millennium Gate*; *China Gate*; *Chinese Cultural Centre Museum and Archives*; *West Han Dynasty Bell*; *Sam Kee Building* and the *Monument of Chinese Canadians*.

Chinatown also hosts a number of annual events and festivals including the *Night Market* on Keefer and Pender Streets, and the *Chinese Spring Festival Parade*.

### **Arts and Culture**

Chinatown is home to Lion Dance and martial arts clubs, and musical organizations like the Ngai Lum Musical Society. Chinatown is filled with shops selling primarily imported artwork, pottery and sculpture. There are shop owners that are also brush painters that sell their work out of their shops along side the imported products.



James Tan operates The *Lingnan Painting School* out of his Gallery in the 400 block of Columbia Street. It is worth noting that many of the buildings in Chinatown are owned by family societies. In some cases where there are very limited resources, such as *Ngai-Lum Musical Society* and *Lingnan Painting School*, the Societies offer generous rental agreements to support the enterprises continued existence in Chinatown. The cultural, familial relationships that are common to Chinatown significantly contribute to Chinatown's sustainability.

In the last two years a proliferation of home and fashion design shops have popped up in Chinatown. In most cases these new shops are operated by non-Chinese. These shops include *Bombast*, *Funhauser*, and the *Peking Lounge*. Opening recently in the same block, in Jack Chow's building at 1 East Pender Street, is *Mihrab*, an antique store formerly located on South Granville. It is worth noting that these 4 shops and the new Bob Rennie development the "EAST" are all in the same block. "*Wanted*" is located in the surrounding area, in the 400 block of Columbia Street. These stores are selling locally and nationally produced work, clothing, home furnishings, body care and gourmet food products.

Print and visual media in Chinatown is delivered by *Sing Tao Daily*, and *Channel M*, which broadcasts in 22 languages.

The festivals in Chinatown are primarily organizationally driven, with the neighbourhood associations organizing the events versus artists, with the exception of the *Winter Solstice*. Chinatown holds a number of festivals throughout the year. *Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Gardens* hosts the *Winter Solstice Lantern Festival*, the *Mid-Autumn Moon Festival*, and the *Summer Enchanted Evening Music Series*. The *Chinatown Revitalization Committee* hosts the *Chinatown Arts and Culture Festival* and the *Chinatown Benevolent Association* hosts the *Annual Chinese New Years Parade*.

## GASTOWN

### Neighbourhood Character

In the late 1860's "Gassy Jack" Deighton established a saloon on the south shore of the Burrard inlet adjacent to a lumber mill. The area quickly became known as "Gastown" Although it was later named "Granville" and then in 1886 incorporated as the City of Vancouver the locals continued to name the area "Gastown".

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century Gastown's close proximity to the port and railway encouraged considerable investment in the area. Gastown was the City's main shopping district and became home to several prestigious hotels, retail stores, wholesale vendors, and warehouses. Many of these buildings are still standing and considered architectural gems. These heritage buildings give the area its distinctive "Victorian" character.

Although by the mid 1960's the area had significantly declined and was viewed by many as "skid row" Gastown has seen resurgence in investment. Thanks to the ongoing revitalization efforts of local business, residents, NGO's and governments, Gastown has become a tourism magnet, and is experiencing growth in its residential population. Gastown has maintained a combination of lofts and live/work spaces, with affordable housing. Gastown is home to the award winning *Four Sisters Social Housing Complex*, *Lore Krill Co-operative Housing*, and numerous SRO Hotels. Today Gastown offers its residents, workers, and visitors an eclectic mix of traditional and modern services in a charming heritage setting. Gastown is known for its unique stores, award winning restaurants, energetic nightlife, galleries, and lofts.

### Physical Environment

The main streets in Gastown, such as Water and Cordova, are attractive and welcoming to visitors. Some areas have brick lined streets, and in the summer over 200 flower baskets hang from Victorian style street lamps. The boutique style stores offer interesting and enticing displays with easy access. The restaurants and clubs add to the vibrancy of the area especially in the evening. *Blood Alley* and the *Gaoler's Mews* offer pedestrian friendly walkways and cafés. The City is also altering the traffic patterns in the area to make the neighbourhood more accessible to non-vehicular traffic.

Gastown has struggled with maintaining clean streets and alleyways. Litter and hundreds of illegal signs and posters must be removed weekly from public infrastructure. The Gastown BIA has taken a number of steps to address this problem.

At the street level, there are very few empty storefronts. There are a number of vacant second storey spaces. Gastown has many designated heritage buildings in a relatively small area. These buildings while reflecting late 19<sup>th</sup> century, early 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture vary in physical condition. However, due in part, to the City of Vancouver heritage incentive programs Gastown is benefiting from a number of significant restoration projects. There are at least 23 heritage buildings in Gastown including: *the Europe Hotel*, *the Lonsdale Block*, *the Byrnes Block*, *the Holland Block*, *the Leckie Building*, *the Dominion Hotel*, *Hudson House*, *the Dunn Building*, *the Masonic Temple*, *the Horne Building*, *First Malkin Warehouse*, and many others<sup>7</sup>. There are also several new construction projects in the area. The restoration projects and new construction are providing residences, office space, live/work studios, restaurant and retail upgrades.

### Street Activity and Public Safety

Public safety is of critical importance to the businesses and residents of Gastown. Gastown businesses and residents have often heard complaints from tourists and visitors that the area has a high number of panhandlers and they have negative experiences with some "street people". To provide a safe and welcoming district the Gastown BIA has initiated a safety patrol program.

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<sup>7</sup> heritage conservation program, City of Vancouver, community services walking tours - Gastown

Through this program Gastown Patrol Officers provide daily, year round support and assistance to businesses, workers and visitors<sup>8</sup>.

### **Gateways and Visibility**

The physical environment and “old world” character of this district sets it aside from its neighbours. Gastown is featured in many Vancouver tourism marketing campaigns and tours. The district is within walking distance of the “Downtown”. The old CPR station on the west end of Cordova Street is a significant transportation hub for the lower mainland providing connections to buses, trains, ferries, and rail.

The Carrall Street Greenway project will run through Maple Tree Square and will provide a pedestrian friendly link between Gastown and Chinatown and the Burrard Seawall. The district also has many plaques highlighting historical events and heritage sites.



### **Destinations**

Like Chinatown, Gastown is a popular destination for locals and visitors. Besides the distinct character of the neighbourhood its services, shopping, nightlife, and restaurants there are a number of other attractions that draw people to the area. The *Gastown Steam Clock*, based on an 1875 design, is a significant tourism draw and favourite photo shoot. Another attraction is *Maple Tree Square* home to the statue of Gassy Jack. *Blood Alley Square* is also a popular place for local community organized events. There are also guided or self-directed walking tours that showcase many of the heritage buildings and historical sites.

Gastown also hosts a number of annual summer events including: “*Tour de Gastown*” a popular cycling event; *International Jazz Festival*; “*Concours D’élégance*” a heritage car show; and “*Motorcycle Show and Shine*”.

### **Arts and Culture**

Like Chinatown, arts and culture is the primary attraction and source of business in Gastown along with the restaurants. Gastown hosts a number of commercial indigenous art galleries, *Marion Scott*, *Spirit Wrestler* and *Hill’s* showcase the work of well-known First Nations and Inuit artists, and in many cases such as *Hill’s*, the work of local First Nations artists are also featured. Gastown is also home to a concentration of artist run-centres including *Access*, *Artspeak*, *Gallery Gachet* and the *Helen Pitt Galleries* which have regular exhibits, but operate on limited hours. Smaller independent Galleries such as *Hungry Thumbs Studio* and the *Crying Room/Studio 156* are supported through the collective of artists that use the space for production and run infrequent exhibits and events.

Numerous venues support arts and culture in Gastown; The *Iris Heather*, the *Shebeen*, *Limerick Junction*, and The *Alibi Room* all provide venues for performance and events. The *Lamplighter*, the *Columbia Hotel*, and the *Blarney Stone* are regular live music venues.

Gastown hosts a number of support industries in arts and culture; including *Rocket Repro Graphics*, *Gastown Projections Inc.*, *Biz Books* and *Kimprints*. There are a number of casting agents throughout Gastown along with theatre and Film training schools. In 1997 Bryan Adams opened *Warehouse Studios*, located on Powell Street; it is considered to be one of the finest recording studios in North America.

<sup>8</sup> Web source: <http://www.gastown.org/programs/index.html>

Many reputable architecture firms have their offices in Gastown, most notably *Merrick Architects* and *Birmingham Wood*. These firms have been involved in developments in the neighbourhood. Members of their respective firms have also been involved in a number of community planning processes. *Inform Interiors* features the work of many European furniture designers and a small portion of Canadian work and *Industrial Artefacts* is a gallery of locally made, recycled home furnishings and artwork. The fashion design community is thriving in Gastown, with three fashion design programs, *Helen LeFeaux*, *John Casablanca*, and *VCC*. There are numerous independent designer shops, including *Hunt and Gather*, *Angel*, *City of Pula*, *Obakki*, and *Rick Yuenn*. There are the extremely high-end imported designer's shops such as *Richard Kidd* and for the thrifty shopper, there is *Mintage* and *Deluxe Junk Co*. Fashion Industry supports in Gastown include: wholesale and retail fabric distributors such as *Dressew*, and *West Coast Apparel/Mr. Jax*, and *Button, Button*.

Festivals in Gastown are predominantly commercial ventures directed to tourists, such as the Car and Motorcycle shows. In recent years, Gastown hosted a *Car-Free Gastown Day* and this year there was a block party held on Alexander Street. CRAB Park is host to the annual Canada Day Festival.

## **STRATHCONA**

### **The Neighbourhood Character**

Strathcona is one of this city's oldest neighbourhoods. The neighborhood developed out of the shacks and small buildings that bordered the Hastings Mill site. In 1986 the City of Vancouver identified and included the area bordered by Pender and Prior Streets, Campbell and Jackson Avenues, and two blocks south of Prior Street to the City's Heritage Inventory because of its distinctive mix of building styles<sup>9</sup>.

Strathcona is a community that has long struggled to maintain its old neighborhood feel, with freeway threats, development pressures and highly-politicized debates from heritage paint colors to harm-reduction strategies, the community continues to thrive, and is home to a very diverse population of seniors, young families, artists, writers and musicians of all ages.

### **The Physical Environment**

Strathcona is the most suburban of the Downtown Eastside communities. The majority of single family homes are in Strathcona, with a combination of rooming houses, low-rise apartments, and affordable housing projects. The area around Thornton Park also provides a wide range of housing options for singles and families. Strathcona is an ideal neighbourhood in many ways for young families. Strathcona is served by two community centres: Strathcona Community Centre and Ray-Cam co-operative Centre, has Elementary Schools, pre-schools and day-care centres. Neighbourhood design processes encouraged the reduction of car traffic, with a number of traffic calming measures, and the introduction of bike routes, promoting a pedestrian friendly neighbourhood. The environment of Strathcona is predominantly very inviting, and filled with spaces that encourage slowing down and interacting with your neighbours, these spaces include parks: Thornton, Strathcona and Mclean linear parks, public squares, the corner stores and the community gardens. Strathcona is very green, and is home to some of the most beautiful blocks in Vancouver.

### **Street Activity and Public Safety**

There is drug use and sex trade activity that occurs in the schoolyards, parks and throughout the neighbourhood. Along with the new developments in Strathcona there has also been a steady level of property crime. The Strathcona BIA works with Goodbye Graffiti and United We Can to remove graffiti and provide additional street cleaning. The BIA also supports the businesses in

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<sup>9</sup> City of Vancouver, Community Web Pages



their area with 9,000 hours of security patrols and a Block Captain Program. The Strathcona Security team works full-time to keep a safe environment for local businesses.

### **Gateways and Visibility**

Strathcona could have been a freeway, but thanks to the efforts of SPOTA (Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association) numerous vocal activists in the neighbourhood, the freeway was stopped. There is however, Prior Street and the Georgia Viaduct which are high traffic arterials into the neighbourhood. Union Street provides a good bike-route into Downtown and to the West-side of the City. The Strathcona BIA also works to create a creative visual identity for the neighbourhood through Banner programs and working with the CETA Co-op (Creating Employment Through the Arts) to create murals for local businesses.

### **Destinations**

The Strathcona and Cottonwood Community Gardens recently celebrated their 20<sup>th</sup> annual Garden open house and sale, which draws many locals as well as visitors from all over the city. The Gardens, heritage houses, and friendly small-town feel draws many people from all over the city to the Strathcona neighbourhood. Many locals would agree that the two corner grocers, the Union Market and Benny's Foods are the top neighbourhood destinations.

### **Arts and Culture**

Strathcona is the most suburban of the DTES neighbourhoods. Therefore, the arts and cultural activity manifests in the ways that fit the community best; block parties, open houses, and events in the parks. Strathcona is the birthplace of the Eastside Culture Crawl. The Crawl began with 45 artists and 3 studios in Strathcona, and has now grown to include the areas of Grandview Woodlands, the Waterfront, and Main and 1st Avenue, and features over 300 artists, at over 38 locations. The Crawl draws thousands of people from all over the city each year. The Mergatroid Building, Parker Street Studios, the Onion Studios, Paneficio and Red Iron Studios, provide an incredible range of Painting, Pottery, Furniture, Glass work and Fashion design.



Strathcona hosts a number of annual block parties in the summer, which are showcases for the many talented local musicians. MacLean Park has been the venue for the Brecht in the Park summer play series, with Ruby Slippers and Vancouver Moving Theatre, the Circus of Dreams events, produced by the Public Dreams Society, and the annual Fall Pumpkin Patch.

The Ukrainian Hall, which has been in the community since 1928, is the home of the Barvinok Folk Choir, the AUUC School of Dancing, the semi-professional Dovebush Dancers, the Annual Melanka(New Years) Celebration and the Vancouver Folk Orchestra, the City's longest running Folk Orchestra. The Russian Hall is another arts and culture venue in the community and home to local theatre company, the Leaky Heaven Circus.

The Basic Inquiry Studio on Main Street has provided life-drawing classes and studio space to artists for many years, and just across the street there is a new artist live- work space called The Left Bank. One block north is the Lucky Red Gallery, operated by artist 12 midnite.

Strathcona is home to numerous well-known artists, such as Stan Douglas, filmmakers, Velcrow Ripper and Lynn Stopkewich, author, and radio host Bill Richardson and Musicians from the Be Good Tanyas, to The New Pornographers and Mimosa.

## **VICTORY SQUARE**

**The Neighbourhood Character:** Victory Square is the un-official entrance to the Downtown Eastside communities. It is the site of the first provincial courthouse, and has historically been the

rallying spot for protests: from the On to Ottawa March in 1935, fighting for better wages, more work and better working conditions for men in the labour camps, to 2003 and the Tent City actions for the creation of housing. The area surrounding Victory Square Park is surrounded with educational institutions, office buildings, and a small number of housing units.

The *Friends of Victory Square* established themselves in 2000, in response to the safety issues of the park, and the general lack of activity and care of the space. The group is comprised of business owners, residents, and members of the *BC Regiment Association*. As an organization they have been responsible for fundraising for the park improvements and organizing numerous events in the park.

### **The Physical Environment**

Victory Square Park is surrounded by heritage buildings and is the closest Vancouver comes to a classic European style civic square. The park has recently benefited from a series of improvements, funded by the civic and federal levels of government. The upgrades and new additions included: a small stage performance area; new park furniture; improved lighting; and the recently completed upgrade around the area of the Cenotaph. Being one of the few grassy parks in the Downtown area, it's a welcome spot for locals and visitors. Victory Square also has one of the few public washroom sites downtown. Victory Square is maintained by Parks Board Staff and *United We Can* also works to maintain cleanliness



in the park and the surrounding areas. The surrounding areas change dramatically depending on which direction you go. On Hastings, east of Cambie, there are a number of boarded up storefronts, a few convenience stores, some SRO's, some graffiti, and occasionally overflowing garbage bins and infrequent crowds of people. West of Cambie, there are a number of retail shops, restaurants, ESL schools, more regular pedestrian traffic, moderately cleaner streets, and very few boarded up storefronts. Many locals see Victory Square as a crossroads, where "uptown" meets "downtown".

### **Street Activity and Public Safety**

Prior to the park upgrades in Victory Square, the park had a great deal more drug activity. The space received very little attention and provided an open space for drug use and trafficking. The improved lighting and the increased maintenance of the space made a clear statement that the space was claimed cared for and on the radar of the surrounding businesses, organizations, and institutions that surround the park. The drug trade still exists, people still sleep in the park, since it is fitted with benches and in the summer, soft dry ground, but the park is now a far safer, and more inviting space to be for locals and visitors.

### **Gateways and Visibility**

The *Cenotaph* serves many purposes in the neighbourhood, as a site of remembrance, but also as an iconic point that you are in Victory Square, and that you are entering the Downtown Eastside community. The park itself is very well lit. The streets and sidewalks in the surrounding area are wide and open to account for the commuter and pedestrian traffic.

### **Destinations**

The *Architecture Institute of BC* faces on to Victory Square Park, and provides architectural tours of the DTES neighbourhoods. The *Cenotaph* and the Remembrance Day ceremonies draw thousands of people to the community from around Vancouver every November 11<sup>th</sup>. The *Dominion Building* is probably one of the most photographed heritage buildings in the City and is on the North side of Victory Square Park.

### **Arts and Culture**

The *Friends of Victory Square* have created partnerships with a number of organizations to produce events in Victory Square park. The *Christmas Angel Project* was a partnership with *Still Moon Arts Society* and *Mortal Coil*. They have also partnered with *Coastal Jazz* and *Blues Society for Jazz Festival* presentations, and the *Chinatown Revitalization Committee* and the *Carnegie Centre* for the *Lunar New Year Celebration* and the Parade. In 2002 The Friends partnered with the Carnegie Centre to provide a summer of daily programs in the park, the program was funded by the Vancouver Parks Board.

The *Architecture Institute of British Columbia* is home to a number of architecture firms and is also the location for the *First Nations Employment Society* which offers training and placement in the film industries.

The *Only Magazine* (formerly Terminal City) has held music events in Victory Square for Labour Day and Mayday.

*Vancouver Film School* has its offices on the east side of the park and their school on the west side. VCC on Pender Street offers, digital arts programs and fashion and jewellery design programs.

The *Dominion Building* is the office tower to many artists, filmmakers, and arts organizations including: *Direct Current Media*; *Haddock Entertainment*; *Felix Culpa Theatre Company*; *Battery Opera*; *Kinesis Dance*; and, *Tooba Physical Theatre Centre* which operates their workshops and classes in the building.

The area around Victory Square is a hub for literary organizations, on-line magazines, and print magazines. The over 30 year old *Spartacus Bookstore*, the *Association of BC Book Publishers*, the *BC Association for Magazine Publishers*, *The Tyee* and *Schema* on-line magazines, *Redwire Magazine*, the *Kootenay School of Writing* and *Word on the Street Festival* are all in the Victory Square area.

Following the purchase of the Woodward's building from the Province of BC in March 2003, the City has successfully assembled it as a major redevelopment featuring market and subsidized housing, alongside educational, cultural, and business service providers. Working with socially, environmentally and economically sustainable principles the site features a pedestrian and resident friendly plaza which will become a prime cultural space for the Victory Square neighbourhood. Festivals, public events, marketplaces, and exhibitions will be housed under a glass atrium with a 500 to 800-person capacity. A process to create a community-use agreement for the public plaza area between the City, stakeholder tenants, and Westbank (the developer and owner) is currently being developed.

The City of Vancouver will also retain a 31,000 square foot property to house cultural and social service agencies. A woodworking studio will be housed in the 1903-era structure, as well as a daycare, health services, and a neighbourhood house. A community TV studio is proposed for the ground floor adjacent the public plaza, this being part of the 9,400 square foot Centre for Creative Technology and Community Arts. A major drug store as well as grocery store will also share the ground floor, providing everyday services and improved quality of life for residents.

The major cultural tenant at Woodward's is the Simon Fraser University School for the Contemporary Arts. The School will occupy more than 100,000 square feet of space allowing the school to house the bulk of its degree programs that are currently based in Burnaby, and expand its annual enrolment of 1,200 students. Onsite production and presentation venues will foster a range of dance, interdisciplinary, film and video works. A 170-seat multimedia theatre will provide a high tech wired venue accessible for local community and professional arts productions.

## **OPPENHEIMER - HASTINGS CORRIDOR**

### **(A neighbourhood within a neighbourhood)**

#### **The Neighbourhood Character**

The Downtown Eastside neighbourhood within the Downtown Eastside district is most often the area people associate with the DTES. It has long been described as "skid road". In the 1970's *Bruce Eriksen*, founder of the Downtown Eastside Residents Association (D.E.R.A) and most vocal advocate of the day, challenged the label of "skid road" and requested that the neighbourhood be called the Downtown Eastside.

This part of the Downtown Eastside contains Main and Hastings, Oppenheimer Park, Powell Street and the Hastings corridor. There are has traditionally included numerous SRO (single room occupancy) hotels in the area. These were originally built for the travellers and tourists coming in on the steamships, and later would become home to the many itinerant workers in the logging, mining and fishing industries<sup>10</sup>. The SRO's remain today, and generally are in a state of disrepair, but still home to predominantly single men. Recently several SRO's have been sold. The area around Main and Hastings features the landmark *Carnegie Centre*, which been in the community for over 103 years. Over the last 80 years this centre has been serving one of the lowest-income communities in the country as a library, a museum, and as a community centre for.

The area around Oppenheimer Park was once known as Japantown and Oppenheimer was known as the Powell Street Grounds. Prior to being interned into camps in the interior of BC in 1942 this area had a significant and active Japanese community. Following the Second World War some in the Japanese community returned to the area but it was never the same. Today only three Japanese organizations remain, the *Vancouver Japanese Language Hall and School* which just celebrated its centennial anniversary, the *Vancouver Japanese Buddhist Church*, and the *Powell Street Festival Society*.

Over the past 60 years there has been a series of pivotal closures that have created or contributed to the culture of neglect that exist today in the Downtown Eastside. In 1957 the *Interurban Station* closed, the station drew thousands of people into the community daily. The closure of the *Carnegie Library* also occurred in 1957, with the library remaining until 1967, the library moved to Burrard and Robson which was rapidly becoming the new City centre. In 1992 *Woodwards* shut its doors and around the same time thousands of psychiatric patients were being de-institutionalized. Many of these patients found the DTES to be the most affordable and accepting place for them to call home.

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<sup>10</sup> City of Vancouver, Web Pages

This community has suffered as few have; whole communities being sent to internment camps, an HIV/AIDS epidemic, unprecedented in the western world<sup>11</sup>, many women, missing and murdered, and by Canadian standards extreme poverty. Despite all the suffering, the Downtown Eastside remains a strong community, and not as transient as it appears to non-residents; people grow up here, contribute, and live out their lives here, and many are proud to call it home.

### **The Physical Environment**

The streets around the areas of Oppenheimer Park, Main and Hastings and along the Hastings Corridor have many boarded up storefronts, emblazoned with a fair amount of graffiti. There are numerous SRO's hotels, social and affordable housing, and service organizations such as: *St. James Anglican Church*, and *Community Services Society*, *Mission Possible*, *The Living Room*, *The Lookout*, *The Lifeskills Centre*, *The Door is Open*, *Triage*, and *Vancouver Native Health Society*. There are some long-time business, such as *Army and Navy*, *Knowlton Drugs*, *The Only Seafood*, *The Ovaltine*, *Save-On Meats*, and *Sunrise Market*, that provide much needed and affordable businesses for the low-income community. The area parks include Pigeon and Oppenheimer Parks.

### **Street Activity and Public Safety**

This part of the DTES communities has the most public displays of drug trafficking, drug use, sales of illegal goods, and sex trade activity. There are also numerous food lines, and people sleeping in doorways, alleyways, on the street and in the parks. There are also many physically ill people, with severely compromised immune systems. The presence of police cars, ambulances, and fire trucks are a regular sight. For many, the scene is tragic and frightening. The situation is not healthy or safe. It is however extremely rare for a local, not involved in the street scene, or a tourist, to be physically harmed. The *Vancouver City Police*, *Vancouver Coastal Health Authority*, and many outreach organizations work on the front lines to manage and deal with the issues. Many of these organizations are overwhelmed and are limited by many factors such as a lack of supportive housing, Detox and treatment facilities, drug laws, and nimbys'ism.

### **Gateways and Visibility**

Hastings, Cordova, and Powell Street, serve as main arterials for commuters. The City's major bus lines run through these streets. There are a lot of people around on the streets, partially due to the drug scene, but also due to the small spaces people live in. The sidewalks are wide, so they have naturally become gathering places. The streets are generally well lit, however there are areas around Oppenheimer Park which are darker. Oppenheimer Park will be receiving lighting upgrades in 2008.

### **Destinations**

The *Firehall Arts Centre* is the longest running performing arts centre in the neighbourhood. The *Vancouver Police Centennial Museum* provides educational tours for young people and is located next to the Firehall on Cordova Street. The *Carnegie Centre* is the site of many neighbourhood tours. For as much as fear repels people from the community, it also draws a number of interested tourists, locals, students, and artists to the neighbourhood. Some to see the first supervised *Safe-Injection Site* in North America, some to simply witness what's happening, and in some cases try and help. Many students have undertaken their practicum and research in this part of the community.

### **Arts and Culture**

The history of Arts and Culture in the Downtown Eastside is long and rich. "After Vancouver's Great Fire of 1886, the city's undertaker put up the first theatre: *Hart's Opera House* at Carrall and Pender. Within 40 years, the Downtown Eastside was the heart of Vancouver's theatre

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<sup>11</sup> Globe and Mail article in 1997

district. Within a 10-block radius, it hosted over 10 big theatres with 10,000 seats<sup>12</sup>. The strip of the Hastings Corridor was a hot-spot for Jazz Musicians in the 40's and 50's. The *Smiling Buddha*, formerly in the 100 block of east Hastings featured numerous well-known Canadian musicians. The Firehall Arts Centre is the hub for performing arts in the neighbourhood and offers residents' opportunities for training, and performing; shows are also accessible to residents at a small cost. The Firehall has demonstrated their commitment to the Downtown Eastside through very challenging times and has proven that it is possible to provide high quality, innovative theatre and dance in this community.

The area has long been home to artists, many of them creating internationally recognized work inspired by the community. Artist *Stan Douglas* created a photographic series and book, "*Every building in the 100 block of West Hastings*", *Lincoln Clarke* created a series of photos of street-involved women in the neighbourhood called "*Heroine's*" and a book was also published. *Nathaniel Geary's* award winning films, "*Keys to Kingdoms*" and "*On the Corner*" portrayed the life struggles of people in this particular part of Hastings Street.

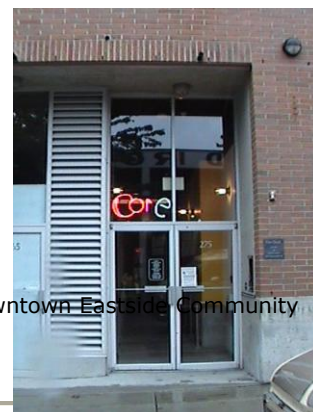


In contrast to the other neighbourhoods, arts and culture in this part of the community primarily exists as a means of community cultural development, with minor economic development components. Community based art projects like the *Historic Footprints Mosaic Project* take you on a history tour of all the DTES neighbourhoods. The project also provided a life-skills program and low-threshold employment for people struggling with addictions and/or street-involved. The *Speaking in Chalks Project* that took place on the corner of Main and Hastings in 1995

demonstrated that art can be a means of engagement for those who seem the hardest to reach. Community Galleries like the *Interurban* and *Potter's Native Art Gallery*, show locally produced work, and *Centre A* located on Hastings has provided a venue amongst their exhibitions for local forums and public events. The *Carnegie Community Centre* also offers many opportunities for residents to perform and attend performances. The *Carnegie Music Program* is in the process of producing their second CD collection of songs, originals, and covers. Dancer *Karen Jamieson* has been providing dance workshops at the centre for a number of years. Young people in the neighbourhood will soon be benefiting from the new music school at St. James Anglican Church. The *St. James Music Academy* will provide musical training for children in the neighbourhood aged 5-18. St. James also partners with *Pacific Baroque Orchestra* to provide by donation, concerts to residents.

The neighbourhood hosts many festivals including: *Powell Street Festival*, the *Oban Festival*, *Dancing on the Edge*, *BC Buds*, the *Heart of the City Festival*, and the *DTES Women's Centre Annual Block Party*.

*Infinity Films* has purchased the majority of the west side of the 300 block of Main Street and restored the former *Golden Harvest Theatre*. *Wiens Studio's* has restored the Chapel and Garage at Dunlevy and Cordova Streets. The venue has played host to a number of successful events at the space including the recent "*Hive*" performances and workshops, Created and produced by theatre companies: *Boca del Lupo*, *Electric Company*, *Felix Culpa*, *Leaky Heaven Circus*, *Newworld Theatre*, the *Only Animal*, *Radix*, *Rumble Productions*, *Theatre Replacement*, *Theatre SKAM*, and *Western Theatre Conspiracy*.



<sup>12</sup> Savannah Walling, From Great White Way (article by research for the Downtown Eastside Community Play).

The *Pantages Theatre*, and the former *Merchant Bank Building*, the *Media One* project will be undergoing renovations and providing new and arts and culture facilities along the Hastings Corridor.

## RAILTOWN/INDUSTRIAL LANDS

### The Neighbourhood Character

The history of the Industrial Lands remains largely un-recorded. The warehouses and large old heritage building only became chic to occupy in the 1970's, before this date the industrial lands were almost exclusively a working district, with some cafes for the workers. Artists occupied the warehouses along Railway Avenue. By the late 1980's and early 1990's many of these buildings were sold and underwent renovations and conversions to "official" Artist Live/Work spaces. Today the neighbourhood offers artists a number of live/work spaces, including *The Edge* and *Railtown Studios*. Nestled amongst these developments is CORE an artist's live/work co-op providing 30 units of affordable artists housing. This development is one of two sites, in the City that offers affordable housing specific to artists.

The Industrial Lands area is still very much a working neighbourhood, but a number of the shipping companies have moved and have been replaced by film production and design companies. The area is interesting to explore. Externally the buildings generally remain the same but they now take on a different function.

### The Physical Environment

The Streets along Railway Avenue are quite wide and lined with a number of historic buildings, the *Empire Stevedoring Building* is now being sold as warehouse and office space. The area has few trees and very little green space. A number of the live/work spaces have compensated for the lack of green space with roof-top gardens.

Along Alexander Street the scene changes and there are a number of affordable and market housing units. The *Evelyn Saller Centre* and the *Lookout Emergency Shelter* provide emergency housing and services to homeless and low-income people. The area is also relatively clean, though it does show signs of some graffiti. The warehouses that house production spaces have little or no relationship to the pedestrian traffic, which makes for quiet streets. There are some small cafes in the area. *Sean Heather*, who currently runs five establishments in Gastown, plans to renovate an old café at the corner of Gore and Alexander Streets.

### Street Activity and Public Safety

There is very little public activity in this area, perhaps a consequence of very few amenities that encourage street level interaction. The relative quietness of the area has attracted drug and sex-trade activity.

### Gateways and Visibility

There is an overpass to the waterfront at Heatley and Powell Street. Powell is a fairly busy commuter route, with bus-lines that can take you East to the PNE west to UBC and Dunbar, and north into North Vancouver. The streets along Railway are generally well lit, and they receive some additional lighting from the shipyards.

### Destinations

The Waterfront and the Warehouse Districts are often common destinations in large cities where wholesale fashion and furniture companies offer sales to the general public. This sometimes happens in this area. Like other neighbourhoods in the area the architecture is also striking and



attracts attention; from the more modern *Alexander Centre*, to the 100 year old *Vancouver Japanese Language School and Hall* and the many beautiful brick heritage buildings along Railway Avenue that overlook the waterfront. The area offers a break from the frenetic pace of the other Downtown Eastside neighbourhoods.

### **Arts and Culture**

The area is home to many design companies. The *Alexander Centre* at 611 Alexander is the hub of the Design District with many furniture, interior fashion, and graphic design firms including: *Karo Design*, *Hello Cool World*, *Aritzia Holdings* and *Talula Babaton*, *William Switzer Decorative fabrics* and *Carmel Designs*. Six Hundred and eleven (611) Alexander is also home to *SFU's School for the Contemporary Arts* and *SFU* will maintain their visual arts program at this space when they open the new facilities in Woodward's in 2009.

The *Ironworks Studio* is a multi-purpose arts facility that provides studio space for film, television, and photography. There is also a gallery space. The Ironworks also provides a regular venue for music performances and events, many of them in partnership with *Coastal Jazz and Blues Society*.

The *Vancouver Japanese Language School and Hall* are located on Alexander Street and recently celebrated their 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The Hall in recent years has played host to a number of theatre productions including: *Lulee the Iceberg*, *Practicing Democracy*, *In the Heart of a City: The Downtown Eastside Community Play* and most recently the *Headlines Theatre* production of "*Meth*".

*Intermission Artists Society* is located in the area and provides a support base for artists, working in a contemporary context. The society's artists' curate and facilitate projects and events in non-traditional spaces.

## **SUMMARY**

Arts and culture is thriving in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhoods. The community has an abundance of arts and culture producers: visual artists, designers-graphic, fashion and furniture, performing artists, filmmakers, and writers.

The neighbourhoods have a primary arts and culture focus: Victory Square serves as an office base for many arts organizations, Strathcona, Gastown and the Industrial lands provide housing, studio space, production, and retail for arts and culture workers. Chinatown is predominantly retail, with some studio space, and the Downtown Eastside/Oppenheimer area is abundant with community-based art projects and programs.

There are numerous projects, events and initiatives that connect the communities through arts and culture, including: Storyscapes Chinatown, The Eastside Culture Crawl, SWARM Festival of Artist- Run culture, the Historic Footprints Mosaic Project, the Heart of the City Festival, the Chinese New Year's Parade, the Carrall Street Greenway, and local historian, John Atkins neighbourhood tours. These projects all connect one or more of the communities within the Downtown Eastside. This happens by having you move through them, like SWARM, the Crawl, or the Mosaics or draw all of the communities into one neighbourhood, like the Chinese New Year's Parade, which features delegates from numerous organizations, and draws people from all over the community and the City.

The strengths are clear; the Downtown Eastside communities have a rich offering of arts and cultural assets that are currently integrated into the community's economy and have the potential to further enrich the development of a healthy and sustainable community.



## ARTS & CULTURAL ECONOMY

This section reviews the industry segments including current level of activity and industry assets. It highlights some of the challenges and opportunities within each industry segment, and describes the roles of various NGO's within sectors. Finally, this chapter looks at "measuring" the impact or influence of arts and cultural economic activity in the DTES, and of the cultural workforce.

Nationally and internationally, there is not a standardized definition of the term "arts and cultural sector" for the purpose of economic or policy research. A comparison of various definitions illustrates common themes and attributes. However, the scope and application of the term usually differs from place to place and circumstance to circumstance reflecting cultural differences and concepts of creativity.

For the purpose of this project, the consultants were guided by the following definition:

*Those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill, talent, and which have their potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. These have been taken to include the following sectors: advertising, architecture, the art and antique market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and television and radio.<sup>13</sup>*

### ARTS AND CULTURE INDUSTRY SEGMENTS

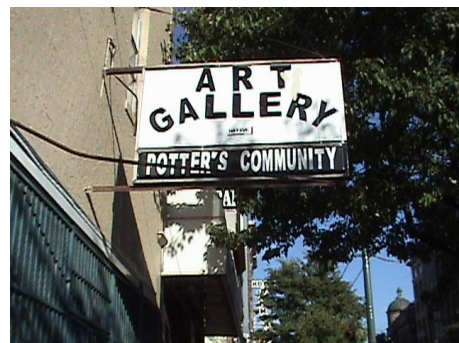
The DTES arts and cultural sector has been grouped into the following seven categories: Visual Arts; Performing Arts; Events and Festivals; Design; New Media, Film, Recording; Heritage and Historic Preservation; and, Print and Publishing.

#### Visual Arts

The DTES arts and heritage district features 38 commercial and artist-run centre galleries. In addition there are 12 retailers offering arts supplies, framing, originals and popular commercial art prints for sale. The critical mass of arts production and dissemination spaces is a distinguishing feature that supports the growth of the sector.

More than 250 artist studios are located in the DTES. Visual arts clusters are located in the Strathcona, Industrial, and Victory Square areas. These include, for example, *William Street Studios, Glass Onion, Dynamo, 1000 Parker Street Studios, and the Mergatroid Building.*

Many DTES visual artists live well below the poverty line and shelter ranks as their number one priority in order to both sustain themselves and their creative output. The successful lobbying of *Artist for Creative Environments (ACE)* in the 1980s resulted in the creation of one thousand artist live-work housing units on what was previously lesser value industrial land. While many artists were eventually housed, many sites do not reference 'definition of artist' language for the selection of tenants. Given the degree to which artists live under the poverty line, most DTES artists are not able to afford



<sup>13</sup> Source: DCMS 2002

to invest in a home or access the investment required to become owners in their neighbourhood.

In 1995, the City approved *CORE* and *The Edge*, a rezoning at Gore Avenue and Alexander Street, for mixed industrial and artist live/work studio use. During the rezoning process, the City purchased 8 studios for \$760,000 and secured 22 artist live/work studios at no cost (valued at \$2.3 million). The 30 units are leased to *CORE*, a DTES co-operative of DTES artists who have previously lived and worked in the neighbourhood. This project represents the single most effective public initiative and use of the regulatory apparatus to protect low-income artists' positions within the neighbourhood. There are also other low-cost housing concepts currently under discussion in the neighbourhood.

*ARC* is another live-work studio complex, although using a fundamentally different ownership model to *CORE*. While *CORE* remains affordable, *ARC* is a rental facility on Powell Street where tenants are susceptible to rising rental rates. At *ARC*, a website functions to give each suite its own online gallery space where artists can display images of their painting, sculpture, or photography. *ARC* offers renters a wood and metal shop, kiln room, dark room, dance and performance room, gym, and music practice rooms. Rents range from \$750 for 500 sq ft and \$1,850 for 1,700 sq ft. associated live-work housing properties to *ARC* include *55 Water, Railtown Studios* on Railway, and *33 Water Street* (where a 737 sq ft studio rents for \$1,660, and a 1,195 sq ft for \$2,100). Purchase prices are in the \$340,000 to \$600,000 range. Throughout the consultation process of this report, artists cited lack of affordable housing as the primary impediment to their attaining sustained success as DTES resident artists.

Artists living at *ARC* make use of their economy of scale to attract buyers for semi-annual sales. *ARC* is also one of the largest Eastside Culture Crawl participating venues. Much of the visual arts community is isolated, not within proximity of representation and access to galleries. This situation calls for ingenious strategies to accommodate direct access to consumers from artists' studios. Do-it-yourself (DIY) methods are commonplace; in part due to the relatively low levels of public arts grant programs, compared to other Canadian or European jurisdictions. Limited consumer access, be it neighbourhood residents, Vancouverites, GVRD residents, or tourists, is especially under-realized when ethnicity of artists is factored in. This is also an acute reality for First Nations artists. Marginalized artists throughout the DTES face health or obstacles due to living in poverty and face numerous barriers to accessing production, exhibitions, and sales opportunities.

Many artists in medium-sized shared studio facilities lack access to capital to purchase their facilities or to micro-credit for equipment purchases to generate additional income. Higher costs in the real estate market often make artist studio hubs in light industrial areas unsustainable. Improved access to affordable financing is key to these hubs surviving continued increases in property values. Purchasing sites as cooperatives, non-profit societies, or incorporated businesses enables artists to build equity despite being low-income entrepreneurs.

Lack of affordable venues for visual arts can threaten innovation as creative spaces are converted into commercial properties leaving fewer places available to stimulate and support creativity. A group of visual artists and designers are experimenting with using the vacant retail spaces at International Village (Tinsel Town) as both production and sales venues. However the visual arts entrepreneurs do not have lease agreements, and are susceptible to changing market pressures.

The artist-run centre community is vibrant, delivering a strong exhibition program from many sites. However, the sector lacks adequate professional development and volunteer recruitment and retention programs to improve management and planning capacity for individual sites, and the sector as a whole. While some centres receive multi-year core funding from Canada Council and BC Arts Council, many do not, thereby eroding their capacity to provide continuity in planning and development. These centres have a variety of relationships to the neighbourhood, ranging

from genuine engagement with residents to having very limited local public education and community access. Artspeak Gallery is the only artist-run centre which was able to purchase its building.

Artist-run spaces, which feature illegal live-work arrangements or non-conforming public presentation rooms, face the inevitable situation of being closed for code violations. In the past two years ten sites have been shut down because of building code violations. During consultation, concerns have been expressed that within the City there is not a coherent and consistent strategy to help in addressing the outcome of some of these closures. Artists find it ironic that many arts production spaces, while providing an authenticity and adding character to the neighbourhood, are often at risk because of zoning, permitting, and regulatory issues.

While the DTES visual arts sector changes with the influx of market pressures, and the income gap sharpens between rich and poor, NGOs are increasingly delivering arts programming as complementary health care and community service. Concerns have been raised that while these programs are worthwhile this expanding sector often lacks awareness of professional standards and codes of conduct for program access, peer review, accountability to the broader sector, curatorial policy, and fee schedules. The community arts are funded at varying levels depending on sites, i.e.: *Carnegie Community Centre* employs an arts programmer, while *Park Board* facilities, such as *Strathcona Community Centre* are limited to the *Park Board's* arts funding systems. In several cases, NGOs and service sector agencies involved in local delivery of cultural services lack adequate financial resources, including the human resources needed to sustain professional standards in arts production or presentation, as well as implementation of best practices in programming.

The commercial galleries geared to the tourist market, are situated around Water Street, and largely dependent on the tourist trade. These businesses are vulnerable to the impacts from negative comments and often misconceptions of the DTES' public health crisis. Many tourist organizations continue to dissuade visitors from journeying to the DTES thereby cutting off a lucrative market.

The artist-run centre community is vibrant, yet lacks adequate professional development and volunteer recruitment, and retention programs. Further, the lack of multi-year core funding erodes capacity to provide continuity in planning and development. The relationship of these centres to the neighbourhood varies ranging from providing robust community access and participation programs to having very limited public education and community access interest. Almost no artist-run centres own buildings and few centres have any capital development plan at work, most rely on the City of Vancouver for assistance. As the rental market rises these centres risk being forced further east from Gastown towards Clark Drive.

Many centres have returned to the neighbourhood after been founded here in the sector's DTES heydays of 1977 to 1983. At that time the DTES was a hub of artist-run culture activity, with hundreds of artists living illegally in Gastown and DTES warehouses. Today, the *Pacific Association of Artist Run Centres* (PAARC) represents many local ARCs and is part of a national network. PAARC also is involved in the *Community Arts Network*, and is continuing to expand its membership base and joint-marketing initiatives. Lack of funding, management, and volunteer supports impact the sector's capacity to maximize convergence and build opportunities.

A disturbing decades-long trend of the birth and demise of artist spaces in heritage buildings is continuing. Artist-run spaces which feature illegal live-work arrangements or non-conforming public presentation rooms are ordered vacated by municipal permit and fire inspectors, and property owners facing fines. Ten sites have been shut down in the past two years due to building code violations. Artists have raised the concern that within the City there are insufficient consistent strategies to help mitigate independent arts centre closures. It is ironic that these cultural spaces provide an authenticity for the neighbourhood, while being the most vulnerable

due to the regulatory framework. The City, through the Office of Cultural Affairs is intending to be more proactive in assisting artists with providing information on how to work through the various procedures to creating safe space for living and working.

## Performing Arts

The performing arts sector is playing a leading role in establishing a thriving arts and heritage district in the DTES neighbourhood. However there is a significant lack of appropriate venues that is limiting the growth and economic success of the sector.

The *Firehall Arts Centre* is the only integrated performing arts venue in the neighbourhood. It has taken a leadership role in the community as the marquee professional performing arts facility. However, the facility is in need of additional operating and maintenance funds. The Centre includes a theatre, rehearsal studios, art gallery, concession, outdoor performance venue, and administrative space.



There is a recognized need in the community for a multidisciplinary incubator space to connect the thriving community arts sector with professional practices and employment in the sector. Supporters believe that such a site would support individual artists as well as fledgling cooperatives and non-profit organizations. The *Vancouver Coastal Health* owned property at Gore and Hastings has been sought after as a resource hub including administrative, rehearsal, production, and presentation components to foster the sustained development of a DTES arts and heritage district.

The *Pantages Theatre* on Hastings, built in 1907, is being earmarked as a proposed cultural amenity packaged with a development by Worthington Properties. With a capacity of 600 this would be the largest DTES ticketed venue. Vancouver's Pantages Theatre is the oldest remaining Pantages vaudeville theatre in North America, and the oldest surviving theatre in Vancouver. The live venue was once part of a thriving theatre district in the heart of Vancouver.

In the past numerous improvised sites have been used for rehearsal and presentation venues. In Strathcona these sites include the *Russian People's Hall* that was transformed into the home base of *Leaky Heaven Circus*, and *Vancouver Moving Theatre's* use of the *Ukrainian Hall* and the *Strathcona Community Centre*. While these and other non-traditional performing arts venues can be used, they are often challenged to meet municipal regulations relating to the capacity requirements for washrooms, wheelchair access, and the ability to meet the fire code. In addition, there is a requirement for sites to support public presentation of original work. There is also an urgent need for production and storage spaces for sets, props, and costumes. *The Carnegie Theatre* and *Japanese Language School* are also popular non-traditional performing arts venues but lack performance infrastructure.

Many theatre companies have considerable history in DTES neighbourhoods, but due to the lack of venues and the perception and/or reality of lack of audiences production has been pushed outside of neighbourhood. Theatre production and presentation is often situated away from DTES on *Granville Island*, at the *Roundhouse*, or at the *Vancouver East Cultural Centre*. These venues not only have access to subsidies but, because of their perceived "safe" locations, can attract more audiences.

Dance companies, musicians, and video/film are represented in the area but they have all been affected by the lack of presentation/dissemination venues. There is a need for more adequately equipped residency production labs.

*Hastings Dance* and *Al Mozaico Flamenco Dance Academy* are located on East Hastings at the former *Main Dance* facility. (*Main Dance* is the only pre-professional, certificate granting, studio-based modern dance training program in western Canada. It moved out of the neighbourhood in 2004.) *Al Mozaico* offers comprehensive technique and choreography classes at all levels from introduction to advanced and master classes.

There is interest in community-based performing arts, however at this time there is little integration with professional practices. Opportunities for integrating community based performance and professional companies are restricted by a number of factors including: 'Equity' employment requirements, scarcity of resources, and concerns over increased production and artist costs.

The Firehall Centre delivered a comprehensive apprenticeship training program for new practitioners in the 1990s. This program was filling a crucial need for paid capacity building and on-the-job work experience within the non-profit and commercial creative sectors. This need still exists unfortunately the program was cancelled due to a lack of funding. There are limited entry points for prospective workers interested marketing, stage management, administrative and human resource management though some mentoring opportunities exist for actors and writers. An integrated volunteer program between arts and culture organizations would streamline access and opportunities for personal and professional development. These access and participation opportunities might also flow into paid employment as the sector grows.

There are a number of barriers in attracting audiences to venues in the DTES. These barriers include a lack of secure parking, security, extreme poverty, public health crisis, and the consequential aesthetics of this inner city neighbourhood. A major constraint has been that crime and safety concerns have made it very difficult to attract patrons to attend performances, particularly at night. A sustained communications strategy and neighbourhood branding initiative is required to encourage increased new audiences. Currently advertising and cross pollination with media and print publications is beginning to occur. The *Community Arts Network (CAN)* has approached *Tourism Vancouver* with its *Fearless Magazine* product to build bridges with the tourism sector and create a momentum for increased customer growth and retention.

The *Tourism Cluster of Building Opportunities with Business (BOB)* is also addressing issues with street safety, lighting, signage, taxi service, parking, and integration with the hospitality and tourism industry. Existing linkages to restaurants for DTES theatre patrons remain weak. Opportunities for joint marketing have been explored and tested with the *Alibi Room*, *Zulu House*, *The Irish Heather*, *The Shebeen*, *Salt Tasting Room*, and *Incendio*.

At present, commuters and visitors traversing the neighbourhood on Cordova are exposed to numerous food line-ups operated by the *Salvation Army*, *Sisters of Atonement*, and *Union Gospel Mission*. These operations are structured so that low-income residents are required to wait for service on the public sidewalks. While acknowledged to be a very necessary service, the food line up clientele are often perceived by the general public to be associated with numerous public safety challenges and the line-ups add to the public's perceptions of the neighbourhood as a dangerous and derelict wasteland. With public investment, the Firehall recently established a lit marquee sign on Cordova to lessen the negative impacts for commuters. *Vancouver Agreement* funded renovations in 2002 to the Powell Street. Stakeholders agree that coordination and dialogue is needed with the charitable organizations to address these issues. Some have suggested that "Good Neighbour Agreements" might be an effective route to establish common priorities and interests between stakeholders.

## Events and Festivals

Festivals have a long and rich history, reflecting back to DTES residents and visitors the rich diversity of the neighbourhood. There are many festivals and events ranging from small locally-produced to professionally contracted exhibitions and spectacles. Some are operated for profit others are non-profit in nature. The City of Vancouver, guided by policy within the Office of Cultural Affairs, invests in many festivals. The City's *Special Events Policies and Procedures* document describes how special events contribute "in making Vancouver a vibrant City, in reflecting our cultural diversity and neighbourhood character, and for the economic, cultural and recreational benefits they bring to the City."

Local festivals planned for 2007 include:

- **Discipline-specific arts** — 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Eastside Culture Crawl, 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Music Waste, 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Dancing on the Edge Festival of Contemporary Dance, 8<sup>th</sup> Annual SWARM: Festival of Artist-Run Culture, 22nd Annual TD Canada Trust Vancouver International Jazz Festival, ...
- **Community and multidisciplinary arts festivals** — 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Powell Street Festival, 11<sup>th</sup> Annual explore Asian Heritage Month Festival, 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Heart of the City, 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Firehall BC Buds Festival, 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Winter Solstice Lantern Procession, 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Vancouver Chinatown Festival, Steamworks Tour de Gastown (retooled after 20 years), 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Downtown Eastside Women's Centre Columbia Street Block Party, ...
- **Economic development initiatives by BIA's** — Chinatown Night Market, Gastown Show 'n Shine...

Significant events have taken place in streets, parks and squares throughout the DTES. Venues include performances and celebrations in parks and open spaces, as well as theatres, community centres, community halls, and galleries. Outdoor venues include *Blood Alley*, the *Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Courtyard*, Crab Park, Oppenheimer Park, Victory Square Park, and Strathcona Park. Other public activities include celebrations of Chinese New Year, the winter holidays, *Canada Day*, and the *Remembrance Day* ceremony. The DTES Public Realm Program Plan has identified numerous small and medium scale projects and sites for animation and improvement. These proposed investments range in scope from daily street and sidewalk-level cultural programming to connecting arts practitioners with outdoor festival venues.

The proposed renovation of the *Pantages Theatre* promises to be a boon for the festival sector. The renovated theatre will host 600 ticketed audience members, thereby providing a crucial economy of scale to attract marquee artist and turn a profit. Currently the most popular community venues, the *Carnegie Theatre* and *Firehall Arts Centre* are under 150 person capacity. The *Japanese Language School* has emerged as a major venue with a 400 person capacity, but lacks performance infrastructure. Office space is available for local arts groups at the Japanese community facility.

Arts, community, and social service organizations in the DTES recognize the importance of welcoming celebrations, sporting events, and special events to the vibrancy of the neighbourhood. However, infrastructure obstacles and shortage of venues hamper the sector. There is a serious shortage of large venues in the neighbourhood. The largest available venue is situated just south of the Victory Square in the false Creek North neighbourhood, at the *Plaza of Nations*. In November 2006, the site was declared unsafe due to roof issues. With its 4,500 capacity, it is the largest covered venue near the DTES, and represents a key festival and special event site for residents of Vancouver. In the Plaza of Nations Land Use Study (2005) undertaken by the City of Vancouver, 70% of respondents identified the site as a key legacy from Expo '86. There is considerable community support for ensuring its future is protected for festivals. Increased integration with the DTES will likely occur with the site once the Concord Pacific

developments are concluded and pedestrian traffic can move more easily between neighbourhoods.

Parks offer large venues in the area however Parks often present serious logistical and equipment problems. In 2003, a grant of \$60,000 was made by the City of Vancouver to the *Portland Hotel Society* for the purchase of equipment including marquee tents, heaters, cooking equipment, a PA system and portable skateboarding ramps for use in community events in the Downtown Eastside, Chinatown, Gastown, Strathcona, and Victory Square. The *Portland Hotel Society* and their associated project *Fundefined* have hosted a number of innovative and cross cultural performances and celebrations, most notably in *Blood Alley*.

Many of the major private sector festivals and events adjacent to the DTES have not seized the opportunity to involve local residents as producers, presenters, or audiences. In this regard, the lands surrounding the Chinatown and Victory Square neighbourhoods are often considered as entertainment zones for non-DTES residents. These sites include *Canada Place*, the *Concord Pacific* lands south of Chinatown, *Andy Livingstone Park* (Cirque du Soleil, Molson Indy, Redbull Flugtag,...), and *GM Place* and *BC Place*. These sites could represent significant opportunities for residents as festival volunteers, and employees.

There are numerous opportunities for the communities to engage larger festivals, such as the *Annual TD Canada Trust Vancouver International Jazz Festival*, in extending the benefits of free world-class entertainment on Water Street and to showcase local artists, events, and businesses. There is also considerable opportunity for the development of sector-specific festivals connecting social enterprise (such as One Day Festival) with the creative economy of the DTES. In many jurisdictions design festivals have managed to motivate significant growth in the sector.

Much as block parties capture the imagination of a particular street or block, and involve residents, businesses, non-profits, and agencies creative festivals can also expand laterally with their neighbours. Festivals can build long term relationships for arts and culture organizations with complimentary hospitality and service providers, including restaurants, hotels, and other suppliers.

Festivals and events also can work in reverse of the intended outcomes. Businesses have complained about the brunt of street closures, parking shortages, setup and takedown inconveniences, and reduced sales as visitors come to unwind rather than consume.

DTES festivals have also leveraged social outcomes through fundraising for charitable and social causes. In 2004, a portion of the proceeds of the Downtown Eastside Film Festival, produced in partnership with Cinematheque, went towards the new Downtown Eastside Community Arts Trust.

Significant research and planning has gone into a new report recommending improved support to the sector, in particular how it utilises and engages residents outdoors. The report is the Downtown Eastside Arts Program and Events Planning for Parks and Open Space.

## Design

A range of small, medium, and large design firms operate in the DTES. They include industrial, furniture, fashion, and architectural firms and entrepreneurs. Many are located in the Industrial District on Railway and Alexander Streets, as well as further east near Parker and Clark. These clusters of design activity were not specifically created; rather, they occurred spontaneously from a set of uniquely advantageous local conditions. Low rents in adapted vacant warehouses and manufacturing sites attracted artists and small enterprises. With the advent of live work housing, and clamp downs on illegal living situations, many artists and entrepreneurs were forced to move away from Gastown and inner-city neighbourhoods to the more out-of-the-way light industrial

areas. Away from the customary licensing, zoning, and fire inspectors, these new clusters flourished. There is growing concern that many of these renters are at risk given they hold no equity and face escalating rents as land values and property assessments in the area continue to rise. In time, and without protection or equity as property owners, these sites may be converted to housing by real estate speculators and developers.

The design clusters in the DTES offer opportunities for both cooperation and competition among firms and solo operators. By developing clusters and growth mechanisms, artists, and small-sized enterprises can compete effectively with established cultural institutions and retailers. However despite the existence of a few centres of production, the capacity of the clusters has only begun to be realized, and further development and business planning could be implemented to enable the clusters to prosper.

One example of cluster style activities is housed at the former American Can Company Building at 611 Alexander Street, which was built as a container factory in 1925, and rehabilitated as a design centre in 1988. It features showrooms for Vancouver's emerging and established clothing and fabric designers as well as offices and studios' occupied by architects, communications firms, and others in the design industry. Another example is 1000 Parker Street, and the adjacent Mergatroid Building, house more than 100 artists and designers involved in clothing, craft, industrial and furniture design. Both these centres are featured in the annual Eastside Culture Crawl, which features visual arts, and design disciplines. The Crawl provides excellent opportunities for collective marketing and increased sales.

Local clothing designers and retailers continue to flourish in the 300 block of East Cordova, surrounded by hair salons and cafes. This retail design hub is growing as designers establish further east on Cordova and adjacent streets. On Carrall Street, several clothing design shops and boutiques are joining the established visual arts enterprises. At this time the sector could benefit from increased joint-marketing and business training supports in order to maximize the return on the investments made by these individual cultural entrepreneurs. Overall in the DTES, there are more than 1300 employees in this apparel industry.

## **New Media, Film and Recording**

On the neighbourhood's periphery, the interactive entertainment industry is represented by global heavyweights *Electronic Arts (EA)* and *Radical Entertainment*. *Rockstar North* recently emerged with the purchase of *Gastown's Educational Programs* serving these creative industries at both the *Vancouver Community College – City Centre* and the *Vancouver Film School*.

Canadian new media content development is typically funded by private investors, with some investment through CRTC mandated development funds. DTES creative content development is typically housed in small, independent firms with minimal access to capital. As a result, opportunities to meet emerging trends, in particular trends with cross-platform synergies are limited. This situation gives a competitive advantage to international media firms. In a world of rapid innovation however, these smaller firms do have the advantage of being agile and adept at identifying new trends and opportunities, compared to more vertically integrated businesses. The lack of access to capital reinforces a unique business culture which relies on the 'soft infrastructure' of support networks and innovative financing models. An example of this is situated adjacent to *Maple Tree Square*, where *Bryght's* open source '*Drupal*' research and development work relies on networking and collaborative exchange as a core business activity.

The new media sector is organized and has a strong professional network that underpins the industries commitment to continually expand and develop, *New Media BC* plays a leading role in servicing and supporting this sector. Non-profit and private training and service providers offer trade shows, and training seminars.

Vancouver ranks fifth within North America for having a high concentration of film/video



companies relative to the size of its economy. Local film production is one of the most active locations in North America. More than 300 employees work in the film sector locally. This is disproportionately larger than other Vancouver neighbourhoods, as well as other Stats Canada census metropolitan areas. When using Stats Canada Culture Statistics Program, the per capita figure for film production per Vancouver resident is \$147, however the ratio for the DTES would likely be more than \$350, making it the highest in Canada.

The industry is embedded in a complex structure of public funding mechanisms supporting the *CBC*, *Knowledge Network*, *NFB*, *Telefilm*, while other cultural granting agencies, as well as the production tax credit system provide a significant base. Over the past few years many US productions have been outsourced to British Columbia, and this has allowed the industry to grow. However, as the Canadian dollar strengthens, or film production tax credits change with other competing Canadian jurisdictions, the health of the sector can quickly become vulnerable and at-risk.

Local residents have obtained work as extras; however there are few other employment opportunities due the transient nature of film production, and prohibitive cost of training. Some film corporations, including *Haddock Entertainment*, provide some return to the local community through contributions of labour and donations. Some groups are discussing the prospects of DTES film industry benefits agreements to support integration and opportunities for local residents.

The sound recording sector in the Downtown Eastside is characterised by its marquee facility, owned by *Bryan Adams*, at Powell and Gore. The site's three studios, completed in 1999 in Vancouver's oldest brick building, are used by world-class musicians and producers. Smaller recording companies, studios, labels (such as *Nordic Trax*) and music industry firms are also located in the Downtown Eastside, in particular the Gastown district.

New platforms including ringtones, MP3s, file sharing are dramatically changing the sector, and bode well for start-ups seeking entry points for their creative services. While there are numerous live venues and music industry activity, there is limited development of the recording industry.

The sector is also supported by *Music BC (the Pacific Music Industry Association)*, located on Abbott Street, which is a non-profit society providing education, resources, advocacy, opportunities for funding, and networking.

## **Heritage and Historic Preservation**

The heritage and historic preservation industries involve activities that focus on the restoration and redevelopment of historic sites. This includes a range of goods and services that are required for the restoration and protection of heritage homes and commercial and industrial properties as well as historic sites and public spaces. Enterprises in this sector include construction companies, architectural firms, interior design firms, conservators, antique dealers, auction houses, museums and libraries.

The DTES is rich in architectural heritage and iconic sites. The City of Vancouver has long recognized the importance of preserving heritage buildings and enhancing heritage environments. Over the years the City has implemented a number of successful incentive programs that have promoted and encouraged owners to conserve and restore heritage designated buildings. The Gastown and Chinatown areas are noted for their successful use of heritage density bonusing, and heritage preservation incentives. Other neighbourhoods have not yet maximized benefits associated with the protection and preservation of their heritage assets.

The local tourism and hospitality sector recognizes the value of the DTES' heritage assets. The fledgling Tourism Cluster, shepherded by Building Opportunities with Business (BOB), has begun to explore increased opportunities to maximize the benefits from the area's heritage assets.

However while heritage and cultural represents the largest draw for tourists in the Downtown Eastside, the hospitality and tourism sector, and the arts and culture sectors have very little experience collaborating. With the exception of a few noteworthy destinations such as the Chinese *Cultural Centre* and *Sun Yat Sen Gardens*, the arts community has lacked the available resources to exploit and maximize the benefits from the tourist market. In addition, many mainstream tourism operators and personnel continue to dissuade visitors from walking or touring the neighbourhood due to public health and safety concerning, and the visible signs of homelessness and poverty in the neighbourhood.

Considerable pressure is also being felt by residents and low-income artists residing in heritage buildings which are not properly maintained to municipal standards. Many artist run centres have been forced to shut down because of municipal health and safety concerns related to illegal occupancy or bidding code violations. Often Downtown Eastside facilities do not meet the requisite standards of fire safety and earthquake proofing.

The DTES area contains *Tsleil-Waututh Nation* and *Squamish Nations* traditional camp and village sites. Today many other Nations, from BC including the Musqueam, and other aboriginal people from across Canada have members living off-reserve in the DTES. Within the DTES aboriginal community there are many established and emerging artists. More and more local First Nations are sharing their cultural heritage with the broader society, and using cultural heritage tools to support economic self sufficiency and self determination. Recent partnerships with the *2010 Olympics* provide examples of First Nations reaping economic benefits through cultural enterprises.

## Print and Publishing

The local printing industry includes most aspects of the industry, from prepress, press, bindery and finishing, print management, and sales and marketing. Over the past decade the local printing industry has evolved through tremendous technological change. The last remaining web press in the neighbourhood, *College Printers*, moved away from its Terminal Avenue location in the 1990s. The closest web printer, *Horizon Publications*, is located further east, at Victoria Drive. Numerous local publications are printed at that site. Sheet-fed printers remain in the DTES, including *B&L Printworks* on Powell, a small family press on East Georgia in Chinatown, and arguably, one of Vancouver's finest printers, *Metropolitan Press* at Clark Drive. There are also a small number of screen printers and limited-run digital printers. Several other companies servicing this sector are located throughout the area.

The rapid technological changes have put additional demands on the need for skilled workers. With approximately 550 employees the Downtown Eastside has its share of BC's strong 11,000 employee printing industry. From SFU Harbour Centre's Writing and Publishing Program to Vancouver Community College's digital and print design courses, there are ample training opportunities nearby. However in the past there have been challenges for some prospective employees in accessing education and training programs. To address access issues SFU has partnered with local non-profits to deliver the *Print to Publish Program*. This innovative program (no longer in operation) offered low-income residents hands-on training and experience in web and newspaper publishing.

The printers serve a region-wide market however there appears to be a lack of engagement of prospective local clients by printers. This is due in part to the limited size of the local market and a perception of high risks associated with sourcing nearby clients. With increased economic activity in the DTES, growth opportunities do exist for the DTES printing industry.

Technological innovations have maintained low publishing prices for customers. However, in the arts market the limited publishing budgets encourage reliance on internet technologies, thereby supplanting use of offset printing as a cost-effective means of production and distribution.

DTES based book and magazine publishers are small or medium-sized businesses, individually-owned, or non-profit societies. Some of this activity includes web-based publishing. DTES publishers are involved in several genres, including fiction, non-fiction, educational, and children's. This non-profit and commercial activity is situated throughout Gastown, Chinatown, and Victory Square. Some local publishers and publications (representing the range of production methods and scale) include: *Arsenal Pulp Press*, *Gastown Printers*, *Ion Magazine*, *Geist*, *Fearless*, *the Only Magazine*, and *Carnegie Newsletter*. Public literary arts programming is limited to *Spartacus Books*, *Carnegie Community Centre*, *Artspeak*, and *Kootenay School of Writing (KSW)*.

A general lack of networking opportunities and integration with community residents (and other artists and prospective clients) is characteristic of this sector—which persists—despite the scarcity of resources. Publishers are attracted to the area because of the low rents. Many have offices in the Dominion Building on Hastings, and in neighbouring buildings.

Limited government funding and insecure access to markets leaves many publishers vulnerable. The *Association of Book Publishers of BC*, located in the Victory Square area, takes steps to address this with their services, including their 'Sell Your Story' program each year in Gastown, as part of *BC Book & Magazine Week*. Writers are invited to pitch book and article ideas to a panel of book and magazine publishers, with opportunity for feedback, mingling, and networking.

The publishing of books and magazines plays a vital part of the knowledge base and educational system of our community, as well as taking an important role in the new information economy. Opportunities for market growth of local and BC publishers are impeded by industry characteristics such as foreign magazines owning 80% of Canadian retail sales. Split-run laws (permitting foreign publishers to compete for Canadian ads) sap the Canadian ad market, and act as a barrier for the development and growth of DTES and regional publications. The "Genuine Canadian Magazines" campaign by industry service agency *Magazines Canada* is a successful marketing resource utilised by local publishers to offset market limitations.

## **ARTS AND CULTURAL ENTERPRISES AND WORKFORCE**

Measuring the impact and presence of the arts and cultural economy requires the analysis of arts and cultural employers and enterprises, as well as that of the arts and cultural workforce. Unfortunately, little micro-level data is available that could provide an accurate measurement or good picture of the arts and cultural economy in the DTES. In part, this is due to the small population, the general undercounting of art and cultural enterprises, the challenges in identifying and classifying "artist" for statistical purposes, and the high incidence of free-lance or self employed workers<sup>14</sup>. A report by Canada Council highlights some of the limitations in collecting reliable data:

*There are numerous reasons why it is difficult to count the number of artists in Canada. First, there is no widely accepted definition of which occupations should fall under the heading of "artist". Second, Statistics Canada does not have one well-defined occupation category for artists. Third, membership in artist associations, another possible source of data, would not provide complete information as some artists belong to associations while others do not. Fourth, previous studies have shown that as many as 50% of cultural workers hold multiple jobs. Some artists (e.g. the musician who also works full time as a taxi driver) will therefore be counted in statistics under a non-artistic occupation.<sup>15</sup>*

<sup>14</sup> Statistics Canada, Cultural Labour Force Survey 1995

<sup>15</sup> Web source: <http://dsp-psd.communication.gc.ca/Collection/K23-26-2-1999E.pdf>

These challenges in collecting data impede economic analysis of the sector. In addition to these challenges and limitations it is also difficult to determine the impact of the arts and cultural sector on other industries such as tourism, education, renovation and construction. It is acknowledged that Gastown and Chinatown attract workers and visitors because of their cultural assets. The unique heritage status of these communities also contribute to the renovation and construction industries; while local educational and training institutions often employ artists, and have cultural activities embedded into their programs and services. Although the economic links between arts and culture and other industries is evident, it is difficult to quantify.

In the absence of data it is difficult to measure the economic impact and economic presence of arts and cultural industries in the DTES<sup>16</sup>. There is however evidence that the arts and cultural sector is a significant contributor to the economic vitality of the DTES. The Resource Map is one such indicator.

## Cultural Workforce

The cultural workforce faces a different employment environment than those in many other occupations. Creative workers are often required to be proficient in a number of areas because they are frequently called upon to serve more than one function at a time or shift roles from project to project. In addition the nature of the sector often requires employers to hire skilled workers in non-standard jobs for project specific tasks. The economic realities of the sector often results in employers hiring creative workers on a free-lance basis rather than offering fulltime employment. These situations have led to a high proportion of self employed workers. In fact in Canada 1 in 4 workers<sup>17</sup> is self-employed and many workers often need to supplement work with other employment.



A 2004 research study looking at trends in metropolitan areas<sup>18</sup> identified the following characteristics of culture workers when compared with non-cultural workers:

- Culture workers were, on average, older, equally likely to be male or female;
- Had much higher levels of educational attainment, were equally likely to be disabled, and less likely to be visible minority and Aboriginal people;
- The typical culture worker had a lower average employment income than a non-culture worker - partly explained by higher rates of part-time employment among culture workers. However, when median income is looked at, the image of the underpaid culture worker was challenged;
- Workers in performing and visual arts occupations involving creation, such as dancers, artisans, craftpersons, musicians, singers, painters, sculptors, and other visual artists had incomes that were well below average for the culture labour force.

The research study also highlighted the following Vancouver characteristics:

- Vancouver had 5.2% of its labour force in culture industries;
- Film and video industries represented 18.4% of the CMA's culture labour force and 1% of the labour force at large;
- Vancouver was also relatively prominent for architectural services, although this comprised just 3.3% of its culture labour force;

<sup>16</sup> The collection and analysis of primary data is outside the scope of this project.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*

<sup>18</sup> Trends and Conditions in Census Metropolitan Areas; Census Metropolitan Areas as Culture Clusters; David Coish; [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)

- Vancouver ranked high for specialized design services and independent artists, writers and performers;
- Vancouver had more male than female workers;
- Vancouver had a much higher than average share of its labour force employed as graphic designers, architects, producers, directors and choreographers, actors and comedians, musicians and singers and painters, sculptors and other visual artists; and,
- Vancouver had the highest rate of recent immigrants among its culture labour force.

A recent study by Hills Strategies Research identified Vancouver's V6A postal code - east Vancouver<sup>19</sup> as ranking number 7 amongst Canadian postal codes for concentrations of artist in the workforce. East Vancouver had 5% people of the local labour force in arts occupation. These figures indicate a significant talent pool in the DTES.

The cultural work force can generally be grouped into three categories:

**1. Originators and Interpreters**

Including: Musicians, dancers, choreographers, writers, artists, film theatre directors, composers, photographers, graphic designers, fashion designers interior designers, game developers architects, and conservators.

**2. Technicians**

Including: Broadcasting, sound engineers, camera operators, editors, library and museum technicians, technical writers, and workers in the construction trade who build sets or historic renovations.

**3. Educators**

Those who teach the next generation of the cultural work force including: art and music instructors, dance instructors, design instructors, and instructors in arts and humanities studies.

## **DTES Workforce**

The DTES residents, when compared to other areas of the City, tend to be older, single males. The area also reports a higher incidence of mental illness, and drug and alcohol abuse. In addition, the area reports comparatively low labour market participation. The DTES has the lowest per capita income of any urban area within Canada.

The 2001 census reported the following employment related findings:

- The DTES population was 16,590;
- There is a much higher percentage of men than women in the labour force;
- There were 4,365 in the 15 and over labour market;
- 67% of the population have low incomes compared with 27% city wide;
- There is a significantly higher unemployment rate in the area for those over 25 - (22%) compared to Vancouver (8%);
- Of those unemployed 1,315 are men and 265 women;
- 25% of the population have less than a ninth grade education;
- 13% have University degrees;
- 550 people reported working in arts, culture, recreation and sports occupations – an increase of 230 over 1996.

The DTES has a high proportion of marginalized workers. There are however numerous employment placement and life/work skills training programs in the area. To increase the participation of marginalized residents in the arts and cultural industries or to use the arts and cultural sector for cross training will require some additional investment in outreach, networking and development of entry level programs and employment opportunities.

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<sup>19</sup> Web source <http://www.hillstrategies.com/creativity.php>

## Cultural Enterprises

Statistics Canada defines the cultural sector as those industries that are involved in the creation, production, manufacturing, distribution, and preservation of cultural goods and services.

*The Culture Statistics Program*<sup>20</sup> provides data on cultural establishments and their outputs. The following table presents information collected through this program. It highlights the number of establishments in Canada, and Vancouver. It also includes our own approximation of the numbers of cultural establishments in the DTES based on the information collected for the development of Resource Map.

Cultural Establishments	# in Canada <sup>21</sup>	# in Vancouver <sup>22</sup>	# in DTES <sup>23</sup> (approx)
Film Production	778	75	14
Film Post Production	274	27	
Film Distribution	211	16	
Movie Theatres	746	43	4
Book Publishing	672	24	11
Periodical Publishing	2027	141	10
Sound Recording	311	33	3
Performing Arts	583	51	27
Heritage institutions	2436	100	6

## Arts and Cultural Support Systems

The arts and cultural sector is made of many types of enterprises. However the sector also relies on a high proportion of associations and networks. These associations include non-profit groups, non-government organizations, industry associations, public resources and philanthropy. These groups provide critical support components to the overall sustainability and growth of the sector.

Network and Advocacy Organizations	# in DTES
Sector Organizations	12
Heritage Professionals/ Organizations	3
Business Associations	4

## DTES Resource Map

The DTES Resource Map provides a more detailed overview of the various organizations and cultural enterprises operating in the DTES. The table below provides a summary of the number of entries for the various categories listed in the Resource Map.

Network and Advocacy Organizations	# of Categories	# Entries
Arts and Culture Infrastructure	16	132
Festivals and Event	4	24
Education and Training in the Arts	8	14
Infrastructure Public	10	55
Cultural Industries	5	45
Design (Fashion, Furniture, and Graphic)	4	44
Networks and Advocacy organizations	3	19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>333</b>

<sup>20</sup> Web source: [www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/87-008-GIE/about.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/87-008-GIE/about.htm),

<sup>21</sup> Web source: [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Resource map