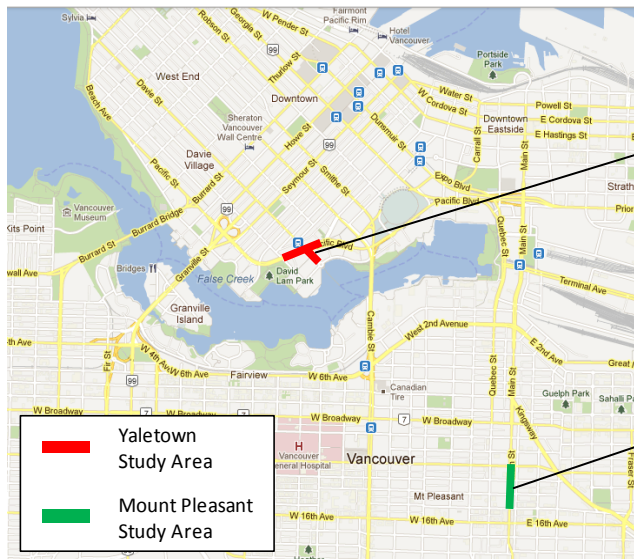


## Executive Summary

The objective of this research study is to investigate the relationships between street life and the characteristics of street environments by comparing and evaluating two commercial areas in Vancouver. One of the study areas is located in Yaletown, a community developed according to the principles of ‘Vancouverism’. It is characterised by high-rise buildings that are incorporated into the street environment in a manner that provides strong opportunities for pedestrian engagement. The other study area is located in Mount Pleasant, one of the city’s oldest neighbourhoods. Its built form is composed of a variety of low and mid-rise buildings, but very few high-rises. The contrasting built forms found in the two study areas is significant to the research study, which was guided by the following research questions:

- How does a commercial area that embodies the principles of ‘Vancouverism’ compare to a low-rise neighbourhood commercial street in terms of their capacities to support street life?
- How do the commercial areas’ environments at street level compare in terms of their physical characteristics, and how are these characteristics related to pedestrian activity and street life?
- In what ways can these commercial areas be modified to become more supportive of street life?



Locations of study areas in Vancouver



(Top) Pacific Boulevard, Yaletown  
(Bottom) Main Street, Mount Pleasant

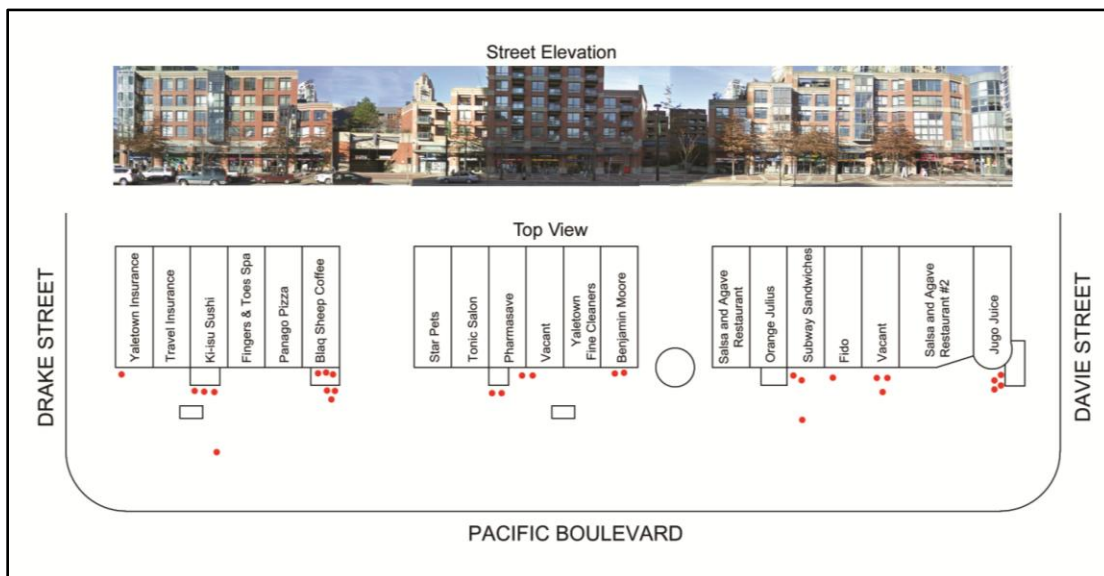
### Research Methodology and Evaluation Framework

Eleven evaluation criteria provided the framework for investigating the street life and street environment characteristics in Yaletown and Mount Pleasant. They were derived largely from a research methodology developed by Mehta (2006). Using direct observation methods such as pedestrian counts, structured observations, and walk-by observations, evaluation of the two study areas took place over four days in January 2012. The primary measurement of street life was the number of people engaged in stationary activities, which are optional leisure activities that can also involve social interaction. The evaluation of street environment characteristics involved observing attributes such as building heights, the variety of distinct uses, and sidewalk widths.

### Data Analysis

The data collected from the evaluation of the study areas is summarized in the adjacent table. The quantitative nature of most of the findings facilitated comparisons between the study areas, although subjective and qualitative analyses were also integral to identifying relationships between street life and street environment characteristics. Behavioural maps like the one below were used to display where stationary activities were recorded.

	YALETOWN	MOUNT PLEASANT
	Study Area	Study Area
<b>Street Life</b>		
Stationary Activities	184 people	242 people
Social Activities	118 people	163 people
>5 Minute Stay	43 people	62 people
Avg. Hourly Pedestrians	859 people	864 people
<b>Street Environment Characteristics</b>		
Building Height Range	2 to 38 storeys	1 to 4 storeys
Access Points/100m	7.5	8.7
Distinct Uses/100m	5.5	5.9
Indep. Businesses/100m	3.0	4.3
Seats/100m	17.2	14.7
Physical Artefacts/100m	20.5	20.2
Avg. Sidewalk Width	5.7 metres	4.4 metres



**Locations of stationary activities on Pacific Boulevard between Drake St. and Davie St. (Yaletown)**

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Yaletown

Over the observation period, the street environment in Yaletown was found to be highly supportive of street life. Unexpectedly, the areas with the most favourable street environment characteristics were not necessarily where street life concentrated. People who were engaged in stationary and social activities were most likely to be near three specific uses: the Urban Fare grocery store, the Starbucks coffee shop, and the Roundhouse Turntable Plaza. These uses were located on blocks that exhibited good, but not particularly favourable characteristics in terms of street front permeability, the variety of goods and services, and sidewalk width. This suggests that uses with significant retail or functional appeal for pedestrians have greater capacity to influence stationary and social activities than street environment characteristics.

In general, the quality of the street environment in Yaletown was high, and supported street life despite the prevalence of tall buildings. The comfortable pedestrian environment provided evidence that the principles of ‘Vancouverism’ were effective in minimizing negative impacts of tall buildings by regulating building orientation, spacing, and size. The recommendations for Yaletown address weak points such as weather protection, and leverage upon existing strengths in order to provide even stronger support for street life.



**Social activity in front of Urban Fare grocery store on Davie Street**

### Recommendations:

- Improve Weather Protection
- Encourage the Establishment of Commercial Tenants that Contribute to Street Life
- Activate Roundhouse Turntable Plaza with Programming

## Mount Pleasant

The total amount of stationary and social activities observed in Mount Pleasant was greater than that of Yaletown. However, it was strongly concentrated within certain parts of the study area – 50% was observed on a single block on Main Street between E.13<sup>th</sup> and E.14<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This particular block contained popular uses that attracted many leisure and social activities, namely Bert's restaurant, Everfresh produce, and Starbucks coffee shop. The association of street life with independent and food-related businesses in Mount Pleasant suggests that the study area plays an important function as a social destination with the capacity to attract people from beyond the immediate community. Furthermore, it hints at the significance of independent businesses and food service establishments to the essential appeal of Mount Pleasant, as perceived by the people who spend leisure time there.

The blocks that supported the most street life in Mount Pleasant also scored highly in terms of the characteristics of the street environment, particularly in the evaluation of street front permeability, variety of goods and services, and sidewalk width. This finding counters the weaker relationship observed in Yaletown between the physical qualities of streets and stationary and social activities. The recommendations for Mount Pleasant involve targeting select areas for improvements to the street environment, and ensuring that the unique retail make-up of this community is maintained.



**Pedestrians and social activity in front of independent restaurant on Main Street**

### Recommendations:

- Widen Sidewalks and Add Public Seating in Strategic Locations
- Maintain and Promote Distinctive Character of Street-oriented Uses