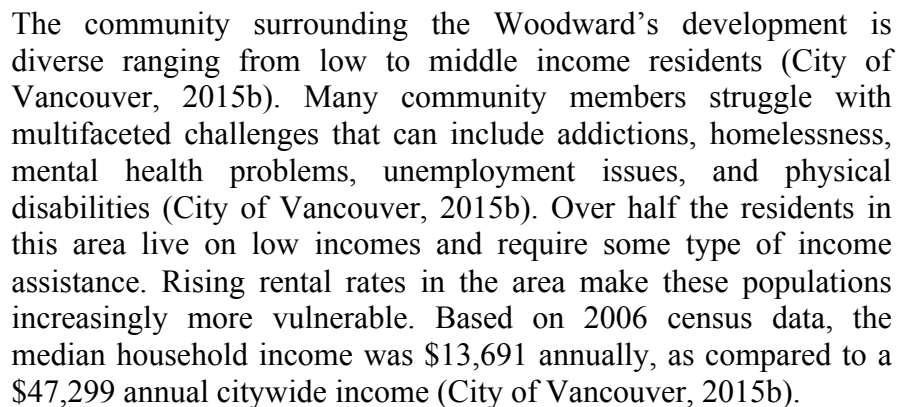


Woodward's opened its doors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside in 2010 and has provided socially mixed housing, indoor and outdoor public spaces, and various amenities in the area (Enright, 2010). As the Downtown Eastside progressively changes, the Woodward's development has had a large impact in the area's revitalization (Urban Land Institute, 2014). Both the indoor atrium and outdoor urban park and public plaza have provided the surrounding community with new areas for engagement and socialization.



The Woodward's development project has a total of 746 residential units. Two hundred of these units are non-market (government subsidized) housing units, while the remaining 546 residential units are freehold (privately owned and purchased at market rates) housing units, or condominiums (Enright, 2010). This development

is a prime example of a large scale, socially diverse, mixed-use community. To anchor this building, the developers secured a number of key tenants including Simon Fraser University's School for the Contemporary Arts, the City of Vancouver's social planning office, federal government offices, the National Film Board of Canada, Canadian Heritage, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Works and Government Services, Nesters Market, London Drugs, TD Canada Trust, and a large restaurant (Urban Land Institute, 2014; Enright, 2010).

The development is configured in a perimeter block formation and consists of a number of different buildings that make up the overall complex. The tallest building, W43, includes 366 condominiums and is positioned in the northwest corner of the site (refer to *Figure 2: Woodward's Development Configuration*). In addition, there are four retail units on the ground floor and ten accessible housing units that are managed by Vancouver Resource Society (VRS) for people with disabilities (Urban Land Institute (2014). The second largest building is W32, which is a condominium and mixed-use building. This tower is located on the northeast corner of the site along Abbott Street. This building includes retail on the ground floor, offices on floors two and three, family non-market housing on levels four through ten, and 170 condo units on floors 11 to 32 (Urban Land Institute, 2014).

The bigger of the two smaller buildings is the Hastings building, which includes retail on the first and second floors (London Drugs), the Simon Fraser University School for the Contemporary Arts on levels one through four, and singles non-market (i.e., government-subsidized) housing on floors five through ten (Urban Land Institute, 2014). Finally, the Heritage building, which is a restored version of the original department store, is located on the southwest portion of the site and includes first floor retail and office space on levels two to six. The office space in this building is primarily for City government and non-profit bodies. A daycare is also located in the Heritage Building on level seven (Urban Land Institute, 2014).

In order to create permeability through the site, there are a series of pathways that lead from the streets that border the site to the two public areas and allow for a cross-block connection (Urban Land Institute, 2014). These public spaces include in an indoor atrium space and an outdoor urban park and public plaza (refer to *Figure 3: Plan View of Woodward's* for the location of the spaces). These spaces have now been in place for five years. In order to comprehensively evaluate how these spaces are currently functioning, this research project used the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) Successful Place Criteria to observe and assess the public areas. The Project for Public Spaces (2015) defines placemaking as:

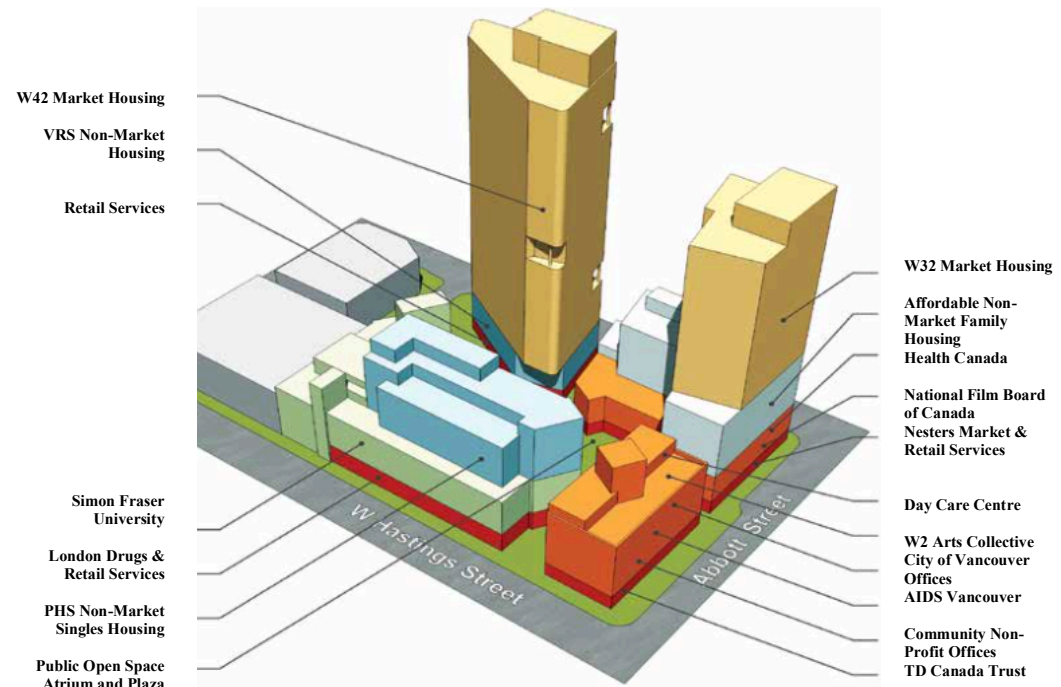


Figure 2: Woodward's Development Configuration (ULI, 2014)

“How we collectively shape our public realm to maximize shared value. Rooted in community-based participation, placemaking involves the planning, design, management and programming of public spaces. More than just creating better urban design of public spaces, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of activities and connections (cultural, economic, social, ecological) that define a place and support its ongoing evolution” (p. 1).

The main research question that was addressed in this report is:

How are the urban design features of the public spaces in the Woodward’s development creating a sense of place?

To adequately answer this question, the research method used three different types of data collection, which allowed for a thorough analysis and also ensured strong construct validity. The three methods consisted of a brief review of the relevant literature, an observational survey, and interviews for validation purposes. The survey used a likert scale to evaluate the areas based on the PPS (2015) Successful Place Criteria. *Table 1: Summary of Site Observations for the Indoor Atrium and Outdoor Urban Park and Public Plaza* represents a summary of the findings based on each space. Jan Gehl’s (2010) Criteria for Evaluating Public Spaces was then used to provide a comparative analysis. There are three main categories within Jan Gehl’s criteria, which include delight, comfort, and protection. The subcategories within each of these headings specify what is included within the main heading categories. Refer to *Table 2: Jan Gehl’s (2010) Criteria for Evaluating Public Spaces* for a summary of the twelve evaluation criteria.

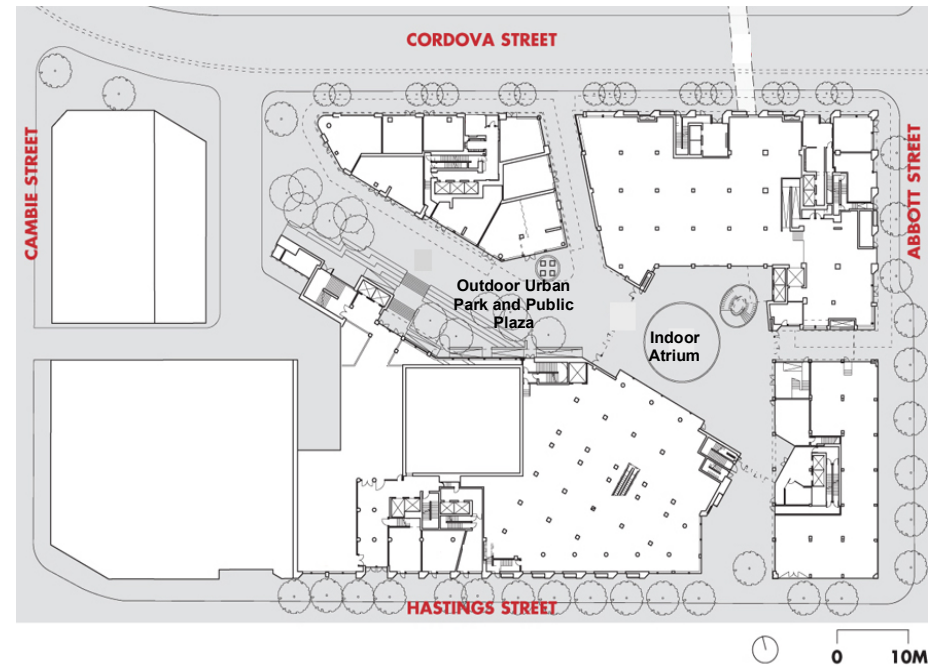


Figure 3: Plan View of the Woodward's Development (Henriquez Partners, 2014)

Table 1: Summary of Site Observations for the Indoor Atrium and Outdoor Urban Park and Public Plaza






























PPS Criteria	Likert Scale Rating	
	 Excellent  Very Good  Good  Fair  Poor	
Access & Linkages	Indoor Atrium	Outdoor Urban Park and Public Plaza
• Can you see the space from a distance? Is its interior visible from the outside?		
• Is there a good connection between the space and the adjacent buildings, or is it surrounded by blank walls?		
• Can people easily walk to the place? For example, do they have to dart between moving cars to get to the place?		
• Does the space function for people with special needs?		
Comfort & Image		
• Does the place make a good first impression?		
• Are there enough places to sit? Are seats conveniently located? Do people have a choice of places to sit, either in the sun or shade?		
• Does the area feel safe? Is there a security presence?		
Sociability		
• Are people in groups? Are they talking with one another?		
• Are people smiling? Do people make eye contact with each other?		
• Does a mix of ages and ethnic groups generally reflect the community at large?		
Uses & Activities		
• Are people using the space or is it empty?		
• How many different types of activities are occurring – people walking, eating, playing baseball, chess, relaxing, reading?		
• Which parts of the space are used and which are not?	N/A	N/A

Table 2: Jan Gelh's (2010) Criteria for Evaluating Public Spaces

DELIGHT	Human Scale Buildings and spaces are designed to the human scale	Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of the climate Sun/shade, heat/coolness, breeze	Positive sensory experiences Good design and detailing, good materials, fine views, trees, plants, water
COMFORT	Opportunities to walk Room for walking, no obstacles, good surfaces, accessibility for everyone, interesting facades	Opportunities to stand/stay Edge effect/attractive zones for standing/staying, supports for standing	Opportunities to sit Zones for sitting, utilizing advantages: (view, sun, people), good places to sit, benches for resting
	Opportunities to see Reasonable viewing distances, unhindered sightlines, interesting views, lighting (when dark)	Opportunities to talk and listen Low noise levels, street furniture that provides "talkscapes"	Opportunities for play and exercise Invitations for creativity, physical activity, exercise and play (by day/night and in summer/winter)
PROTECTION	Protection against traffic accidents—feeling safe Protection for pedestrians, eliminating fear of traffic	Protection against crime and violence—feeling secure Lively public realm, eyes on the street, overlapping functions day and night, good lighting	Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences Wind, rain/snow, cold/heat, pollution, dust/noise/glare

KEY FINDINGS

These two sets of criteria were the basis for the key findings produced in this report and informed the overall recommendations. A summary of the key findings is included below:

1. The two-way mural inhibited visibility between the two public spaces.
2. The atrium and plaza both lacked adequate green features including trees, plantings, and natural elements like wood.
3. Materials of concrete and brick dominated both the indoor atrium and outdoor urban park and public plaza.
4. Overhead trusses in the indoor atrium blocked a significant amount of natural light.
5. Seating in the indoor area was lacking and ambiguous. There were two options for seating outside, but in both areas there was no moveable seating.
6. The main use observed in atrium and plaza was a cross-block connection and an urban shortcut facilitated by the design.
7. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Principles and natural surveillance were created in the outdoor space by residences above and businesses that fronted onto the space. Within the indoor atrium active surveillance was created by security guards and passive surveillance by cameras.
8. There were no plaques explaining the history behind the Stan Douglas mural or the sculptural 'umbilical' stairs that were key pieces of public art within the indoor atrium.
9. Basketball was a main use within the indoor area and provided an opportunity for users to stop and linger in the atrium.
10. The site was designed with numerous buildings along the southern edge of the property providing sun and shade opportunities for users to enjoy.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were informed by the literature review, observational survey and analysis, and key informant interviews. These recommendations are categorized by the PPS Successful Place criteria, an implementation timeline, and the identification of the responsible agency/collaborator in order to implement these changes and improvements. With regards to the implementation timeline, short term represents recommendations that should be implemented within a year and long term within the next 2-5 years.

Category	Recommendation	Implementation: Short or Long Term?	Agency/Collaborators
Access & Linkages	Open the glass panes of the mural in the summer months (weather permitting) to improve visibility into the indoor atrium. This would create more penetration through the Gastown Riot mural and would enhance the connection between the indoor and outdoor areas. The mural is designed to open so this recommendation would be easily adaptable.	Short	Westbank (the developer)
Comfort & Image	Incorporate more green features– including more detail such as trees, shrubs, and flowers for seasonal colour, form, human scale, texture, and health. Incorporating more wood in both the indoor and outdoor areas to continue the wood theme from the existing wooden chairs in the atrium would help to integrate these natural features.	Short	Westbank in collaboration with the City of Vancouver and Phillips Farevaag Smalenburg (landscape architects for the project)
	Provide additional seating in the indoor atrium and provide different seating options in the both the indoor and outdoor spaces would create a more inviting area. Seating could include moveable chairs that can be secured during the evening. Moving the seats and having diverse seating options and arrangements would benefit the public experience of the places and the users ability to congregate.	Short	Westbank and/or City of Vancouver
	Incorporate a changing public art display on the indoor stairwell to bring art and light into the space. The stairs represent an umbilical cord to connect the atrium to the community and this connection could be enhanced by displaying public art forms on the outside of the stairs.	Short	City of Vancouver in collaboration with Henriquez Partners, Vancouver Film School, or local artists
	Implement different kinds of supplemental lighting including uplighting. This would benefit certain areas of the indoor and outdoor areas in order to create a greater feeling of safety during evening hours.	Long	Westbank

Category	Recommendation	Implementation: Short or Long Term?	Agency/Collaborators
Uses & Activities	Implement and integrate a public art display program within the space. This would draw users into the indoor atrium. These artists could be local to the area.	Short	City of Vancouver in collaboration with Vancouver Film School and/or local artists
	Install Plaques outlining the features of the space including the staircase and mural. This would provide an increased understanding of the atrium and the history behind it. The televisions in the space should be functioning with displays and information about the public art within the Woodward's Development.	Short	Westbank in collaboration with Henriquez Partners, the City of Vancouver, and Gallop/Varley (originally responsible for project signage)
Sociability	Implement noise dampening materials or white noise techniques in the indoor space. This would help to create a more social environment.	Long	Westbank in collaboration with Henriquez Partners and Brown Strachan Associates (original acoustic engineers for the project)
	Maintain the atrium and enhance the community imprint and investment by reinstalling the community input panels on the doors of London Drugs. Keep these input panels updated regularly. Maintaining the investment that businesses within the space have with the users is key to the success of the space.	Short	London Drugs in collaboration with a local community organization from the DTES
	Create more accessible/easy to find programming by developing a website and having a kiosk/notification centre in the space. This would benefit the neighbourhood at large. While the atrium and plaza should not be over programmed, branding the area and providing the right type of programming would effectively bring the community together.	Short	Westbank in collaboration with Henriquez Partners and the City of Vancouver

