

MEMORANDUM

December 2, 2016

TO: City Council

FROM: Vancouver City Planning Commission

SUBJECT: **Downtown Public Space Inventory and Plan**

A rising issue of concern with the Vancouver City Planning Commission is the state of public space, particularly in our city's densest neighbourhoods and districts. Therefore, we want to draw attention to the incremental loss of usable public space in downtown Vancouver and the need for a downtown public space plan. Through Commissioner LaMontagne, we have participated in the regular review of development projects at the Urban Design Panel. Some of these projects have involved the redevelopment of property previously secured by the city to be publicly accessible space. Although the spaces in question may be small and underperforming as compelling and desirable spaces, they are nevertheless important contributors to the overall downtown public space network.

The Planning Commission recognizes the benefits of redevelopment in adding additional office, retail, and residential space to support a growing city and economy. However, we also worry about the cumulative effect of the incremental loss of public space in the downtown and note that, in our opinion, the projects in question fell short of maintaining the spirit and quality of public realm as should be expected of such redevelopment projects. Moving forward, a more creative and holistic approach to improving public space, in balance with private development opportunities, is needed.

In response, we are asking Mayor and Council to prioritize completion of a downtown public space inventory and plan (a 'spaces and places' plan) to ensure that in the future there will be the proper context to inform sound decision-making and effective stewardship of a very important public asset, the downtown public space network. The Planning Commission would be proud to contribute to this effort through facilitating public dialogue on public space issues in the downtown and throughout the city.