

CITY OF VANCOUVER

POLICY REPORT  
DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING

Report Date: June 28, 2005  
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Meeting Date: July 14, 2005

TO: Standing Committee on Planning and Environment

FROM: The Director of Current Planning and the Managing Director of Cultural Services

SUBJECT: Plaza of Nations Land Use Study

**RECOMMENDATION**

THAT the document entitled "False Creek North: Land Use Policy - Special Event, Festival and Entertainment Functions" (attached as Appendix A) be adopted as the guiding policy for future planning and development in False Creek North.

**GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS**

The General Manager RECOMMENDS approval of the foregoing.

**COUNCIL POLICY**

City Cultural Goals, October 1987  
False Creek North Official Development Plan (approved 1990)  
Central Area Plan (approved 1991)  
Management of Large Events in Vancouver (approved 1994)  
Plaza of Nations CD-1 (349) By-law (approved 1996)  
False Creek North Urban Design Plan (approved 2001)  
Special Event Policies and Procedures (adopted 2004)

## SUMMARY AND PURPOSE

This report recommends Council adoption of a policy statement for the special event, festival and entertainment areas of False Creek North. The policy statement is the result of staff technical and policy review, as well as public consultation during the Plaza of Nations Land Use Study. The policy is intended to complement the land use policy contained in the False Creek North Official Development Plan and the zoning of the Plaza of Nations site, which permits commercial and entertainment uses.

The policy is supportive of Council's Special Events Policies and Procedures (adopted 2004) that states: "Council welcomes celebrations, sporting events, and special events for their contribution 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. Council supports the facilitation of these events by staff, encourages mitigation of short-term disruptions in neighbourhoods and encourages citizens to welcome these activities and to participate in them."

The report summarises the key outcomes of the Plaza of Nations Land Use Study regarding the most appropriate land use mix at the site and surrounding areas. The policy that emerges from the study identifies the land use mix and infrastructure services needed to support Vancouver's ability to host festivals and other large events, the impact of entertainment uses on the livability of the emerging neighbourhoods in the area, and the management of buildings and structures that represent the legacy of Expo '86, most notably at the Plaza of Nations. While some stakeholders and members of the public supported a residential future for the site, the majority supported retaining a commercial and entertainment future.

The study concludes that the current mix of uses at the Plaza of Nations meets the City's goal, maintains the vision for waterfront entertainment use and provides a key niche in Vancouver's cultural infrastructure. Some future redevelopment could be appropriate provided it achieves a better functionality and design for this commercial and entertainment use, which would likely require a comprehensive approach involving adjacent properties.

Based on these findings, staff conclude that the current proposal by the Plaza of Nations property owner to add residential uses and reduce the importance of entertainment and casino functions is not supportable at this time, but encourage the property owner to examine a more comprehensive approach with adjacent owners to meet the objectives of the policy and to ensure neighbourhood livability.

## BACKGROUND

The Plaza of Nations consists of three buildings and a covered performance space on the Northeast shore of False Creek. The site was the location of the British Columbia Pavilion during Expo '86 and along with Science World, the Roundhouse and Canada Place, is one of the few remaining physical reminders of the transformative events of Expo '86.



Following Expo '86, the Plaza of Nations was sold by the Province's BC Development Corporation to private interests and has been held by Canadian Metropolitan Properties since 1990.

The False Creek North Official Development Plan calls for the Plaza of Nations site to remain generally as built as of April 10, 1990, with a commercial and entertainment function. Canadian Metropolitan Properties purchased the property in 1990 under the then - current zoning. Since the ODP was approved in 1990 there have been several zoning amendments to allow various uses at the Plaza of Nations site. These include a family sports and entertainment complex (1996) and a hotel (1998). These amendments were considered to be supportive of this primarily commercial and entertainment function. As of now, neither of these additional uses has been realised.

In late 2004, Council approved a casino in the Enterprise Hall as an interim use for a period of less than four years. The lease agreement between the Edgewater Casino and Canadian Metropolitan Properties gives control of the performance space to casino operator.

The CD-1 zoning by-law for the Plaza of Nations currently states that building height must not exceed 90.45m and the maximum floor area must not exceed 63,137m<sup>2</sup>, with uses listed below:

Use	Maximum Floor Area (m <sup>2</sup> )
Casino uses - includes halls, theatres, gaming activity and circulation space	20,900
Hotel	32,100
Office and retail uses	18,300
Production and rehearsal studio	4,000

It is also worth noting that Concord Pacific has submitted rezoning applications for residential uses at adjacent sub-areas 5B and 6C. Both would involve conversion from the commercial

uses currently permitted in the False Creek North Official Development Plan, to include a residential component. These applications are now on hold at the request of Concord Pacific.

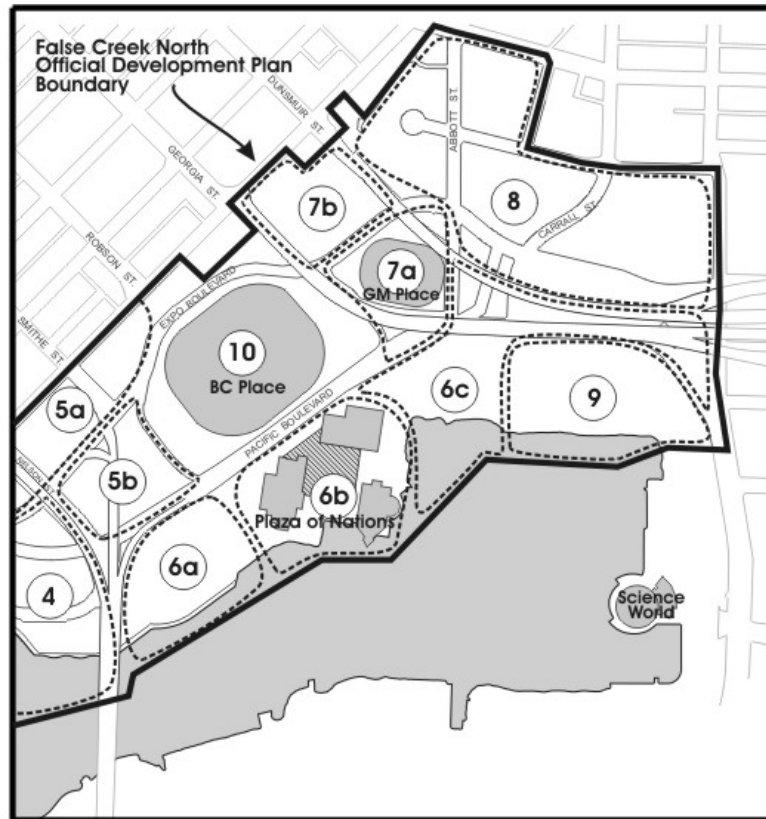


Figure 1 Northeast False Creek, including sub-areas of the False Creek North Official Development Plan

False Creek North, east of the Cambie Bridge, is the location of many of our largest event and festival facilities including BC Place, GM Place and the Plaza of Nations. It is also the location of many of the emerging high density, residential neighbourhoods in the central area. This mix of uses raises a fundamental policy question: should residential be added to the essentially commercial and entertainment precinct in area 6B, 7A and 10?

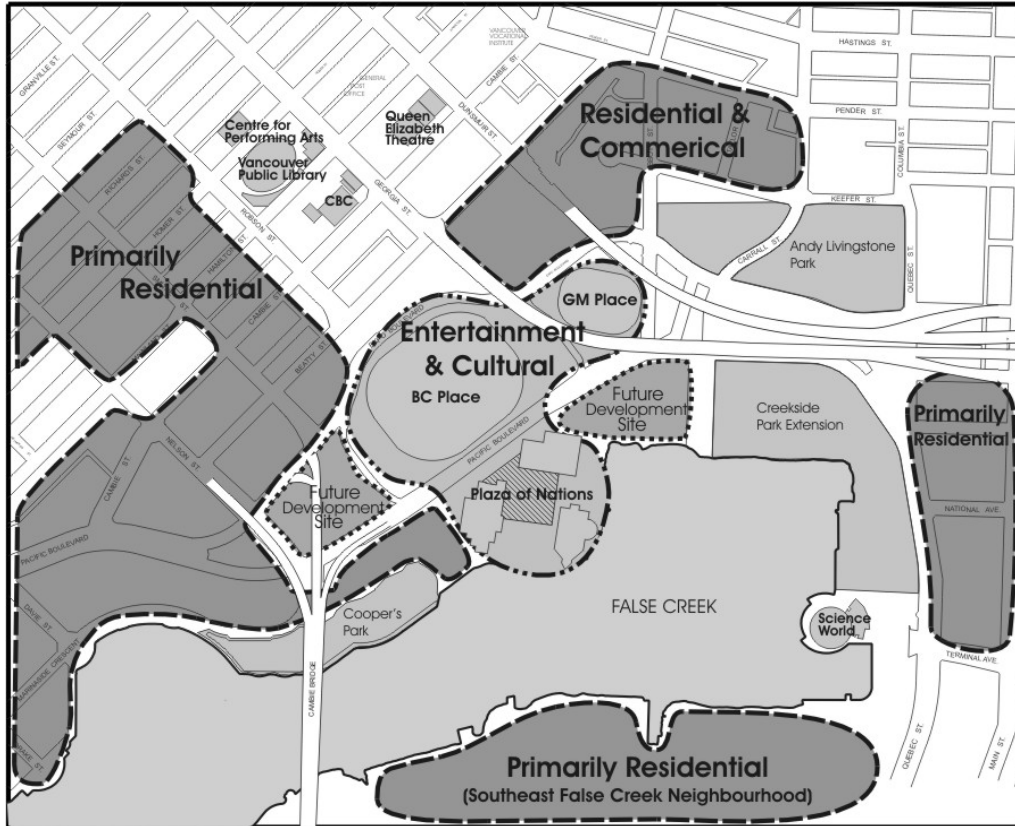


Figure 2 Generalised land use patterns in Northeast False Creek

Canadian Metropolitan Properties, the owner of the Plaza of Nations, has submitted an inquiry about a potential rezoning that would seek to add civic and residential to the permitted uses and reduce the importance of the entertainment and casino components of the site. The proponent indicated to staff their desire to add a substantial amount of residential, and retain only the Enterprise Hall for civic uses. In recognition of the change in land use policy suggested by the applicant and the potential for larger implications for False Creek North and the city, Staff and the proponent cooperated to initiate the 6-month Plaza of Nations Land Use Study on a cost-recovery basis.

The study examines two key issues:

1) *Alternative Futures for the Site*

- Commercial and Entertainment Future: Should the site continue to have a primarily commercial and entertainment character? Does the site play a strategic role as a 'festival space' on False Creek? Can these functions be compatible with residential development on adjacent sites? Could the site play an important role in the 2010 Winter Olympic Games?
- Residential Future: Should the site become primarily residential? If the site becomes residential in character, what would be appropriate and compatible uses with residential and, particularly, how much neighbourhood-serving commercial should be permitted?

2) *'Legacy' Buildings*. Should the Expo 'Legacy' buildings remain on the site? Should a portion of these structures be retained or could they be demolished?

## DISCUSSION

The Plaza of Nations Land Use Study began in March 2005 to examine these issues through a technical and policy review, a public process and an issues report to Council. The staff policy and technical review examined the commercial/entertainment and residential futures at the Plaza of Nations through an analysis of the value of the site to the city's cultural inventory, the implications for our ability to host large events, the desirability of protecting a legacy of Expo '86, and an examination of urban design issues such as livability, land use compatibility, sustainability, employment, and crime and safety concerns.

### *Plaza of Nations Value as an Entertainment Facility*

Vancouver encourages special event, festival and entertainment functions to maintain the vibrant civic and cultural life in the city. With more than 350 special events, festivals and celebrations across the City, there is no shortage of activities. These events take place in our parks, on plazas and in the streets. There is however a growing demand for gathering spaces, an active and well-used park system, and a growing residential population in all areas of the city. This trend highlights the need to plan clearly for growth and compatibility between residential, recreational, entertainment and park uses.

The Office of Cultural Affairs has initiated a study of the outdoor event spaces in Vancouver. As part of that study, staff performed an inventory of the existing outdoor spaces currently used for special events, celebrations and festivals and consulted with community representatives to determine needs, deficiencies and gaps in the existing inventory. A summary of key findings of the study is attached to this report as Appendix C. Staff will be reviewing the recommendations of the study along with the results of an update of the current Council-approved Cultural Facilities Strategic Plan with the City Creative Task Force and will report back to Council with a comprehensive 10-15 year cultural facilities plan.

After substantial policy and technical analysis, staff conclude that False Creek North should maintain or improve the special event, festival and entertainment function at present levels and extent. The results of the public consultation process support this conclusion.

As one of the key facilities in False Creek North, the Plaza of Nations is an important component of the area's entertainment and festival function. Specifically:

1. *It is the only outdoor facility with an estimated capacity of 4500 people.*  
Historically, the Plaza of Nations has been host to a numerous variety of cultural celebrations such as the Taiwanese Cultural Festival and the Philippine Festival. It has also been used for trade shows, corporate events, major concerts, high school graduations, and as staging areas for the Vancouver International Marathon and the Sun Run. This is a key capacity range which is most sought by the mid-sized events.
2. *It is the only outdoor plaza that has a roof.*  
Given the temperate, yet rainy climate of Vancouver, having weather protection gives the community the ability to enjoy outdoor events year-round.
3. *It is the only cultural facility located on the waterfront.*  
As a city virtually surrounded by water, the opportunity to gather, commune and celebrate at the water's edge is a defining characteristic of Vancouver living - one

that is valued by its residents. Marquee events such as the Vancouver International Dragon Boat Festival and the upcoming Sea Vancouver Festival would not be possible without the existence of dedicated, accessible, waterfront facilities such as the Plaza of Nations. While events such as the Vancouver International Children's Festival and the Vancouver Folk Festival are held adjacent to the water in parks such as Vanier Park and Jericho Beach Park respectively, they are done so at considerable expense to the non-profit presenting groups. As more and more residential capacity is realized in the downtown core, there will be a corresponding increase in desire and demand for these types of opportunities that can not currently be accommodated and sustained in existing parks.

Many other attributes define the Plaza of Nations as a unique cultural facility. The existing infrastructure (stage, ample electrical power) and surface design (flat, high load bearing ground) make the site extremely flexible for diverse uses and users. The Plaza of Nations has demonstrated its breadth of utility by hosting events ranging from corporate functions to sporting events, fashion shows, major concerts, cultural festivals and high school graduations. In a broader context the Plaza of Nations is situated next to both BC Place Stadium and GM Place Arena, which are significant facilities not only for Vancouver, but for the region as a whole. These types of major facilities rely on the existence of adjacent support areas to host events of national and international stature: the importance of the Plaza of Nations in this role must also be recognized.

Historically there have been operational challenges arising from the divergent needs of the private owner to run a successful business and the community's desire for affordable access. To assist with this, the City has secured a Community Use Agreement with the Edgewater Casino which ensures access for up to 7 days per month for use by Vancouver non-profit organizations for community festivals, events and celebrations. As this amended agreement has only been in place for a few months, staff will perform a review and report back to Council in 1 year's time.

In summary, looking at gaps in the inventory and potential opportunities for future outdoor gathering and performance venues, staff conclude that there is a need for a 4000 - 6000 person outdoor gathering place in the downtown core adjacent to the water's edge, purpose built and designed for staged events, with excellent access and visibility, infrastructure and support systems. The site also needs to minimize any potential conflicts between residential and active uses through location, design and infrastructure. The Plaza of Nations is currently the only venue that comes close to filling this requirement.

In considering the planned Thurlow Plaza site adjacent to the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre expansion, it should be noted that the limited load capacity and limited accessibility (both for attendees to the site and production related service vehicles across the site) present significant barriers as a large-scale festival location. The plaza may serve as a successful gathering space for smaller events, events which do not require infrastructure and staging, or for waterfront viewing, although staff also note that the elevation above the water does not lend itself to water access for water based festivals and celebrations.

Acknowledging that the facility is not ideal in its current physical and operational state, the Plaza of Nations represents a very important and unique cultural facility in Vancouver nonetheless, both as a venue unto its own, and in support of the major entertainment

facilities adjacent to it. While it might be improved with modifications, it is critical that it at least be maintained.

### *Role in the Staging and Supporting Major Events*

Vancouver's ability to host large events and festivals is contingent not only on the availability of sufficient venues and locations, but also on the existence of adequate back of house, support, and staging areas in relative adjacency to these venues. The Plaza of Nations supports this need as both a venue, and as a support facility for large events such as the Grey Cup and associated FanFest at BC Place.

As Vancouver plans for the 2010 Winter Games, these functions will also be important for False Creek North with many of the activities occurring in this area, including the opening and closing ceremonies at BC Place. Although the logistics and space needs across the city are still being negotiated between VANOC and property owners, given the venue analysis outlined previously in this report and recognizing the importance of available open areas surrounding BC Place and GM Place, the Plaza of Nations could play a role for ancillary events such as Olympic-related cultural festivals. It is also likely that security concerns and staging functions will require the closure of Pacific Boulevard during the 2010 Games, which accentuates the importance of the Plaza of Nations for potential back-of-house and staging functions.

### *Expo '86 'Legacy'*

A key component of the study is to understand the extent to which future land use decisions need to protect the Plaza of Nations as a legacy of Expo '86. Although the buildings are not specifically registered on the Vancouver Heritage Register, the study considered whether there may be value in preserving some or all of them as a link back to the transformative events of Expo '86. Staff engaged Donald Luxton, a heritage consultant, to examine these issues and to prepare a Statement of Significance for the Plaza of Nations site.

The issue was brought before the Vancouver Heritage Commission on April 4, 2005 to gauge the Commission's interest in reviewing the legacy issues of the site. At its request the Statement of Significance was brought back to the Commission on May 16, 2005 where it was approved in principle, pending some minor revisions. In general, the Heritage Commission concluded that the legacy value resides primarily in the relationship of the site to the Roundhouse and Science World that expresses the spatial extent of the world's fair, as well as in the covered plaza and Enterprise Hall. The Commission also passed a motion to pursue the addition of the Plaza to the Vancouver Heritage Register in 2006 when it becomes 20 years old and will therefore be eligible for consideration.

Results from the public consultation process indicated that many of the stakeholders and general public value the Plaza of Nations as a legacy of Expo '86 (72% of written responses expressed this sentiment). Many members of the public specifically mentioned the glass-covered amphitheatre and the Enterprise Hall as valuable.

Staff believe that additional development of compatible uses could be accommodated on the site while retaining these legacy resources. For example, the hotel development that was previously approved was envisioned as involving the redevelopment of the east building while retaining the glass-covered, enclosed amphitheatre and the Enterprise Hall. Any future development proposals should be encouraged to preserve these legacies.



### *Compatibility and Livability Issues*

Future planning in False Creek North for further residential development must seek to mitigate the impacts of entertainment and cultural activities on adjacent housing, and vice versa. Festival and entertainment functions can be constrained in their ability to stage large events by noise complaints and event hour restrictions, problems with local traffic in loading and unloading during staging activities, and by security concerns with local residents. Residential uses are also impacted in many similar ways by the disruption and noise caused by special event, festival and entertainment functions.

Vancouver is not unique in its issues with residential and entertainment compatibility in its central area. The City of Seattle has similar issues with the 18-week Summer Nights at the Pier concert series adjacent to the new residential development in Belltown. The City of Toronto has the Molson Amphitheatre on its waterfront in close proximity to adjacent residential uses. The City of Chicago has recently built a large outdoor amphitheatre in Millennium Park in the heart of the city. In each of these instances, impacts on housing has been mitigated through design, buffering of incompatible land uses to address adjacency issues, and careful consideration of the overall land use mix. It must be recognized however that if we are to encourage and promote concerts, festivals, events and celebrations in the city, then there will inevitably be some compatibility issues.



Toronto



Seattle



Chicago

**Figure 3** Examples from other cities of entertainment functions in close proximity to other uses in the downtown core.

The issue of livability is a key concern to staff with the current development of adjacent sub-area 6A to residential use, and an expression of interest from Concord Pacific for the rezoning of sub-areas 5B and 6C from commercial to residential. If the Plaza of Nations (site 6B) were to have a residential future, even more serious land use adjacency issues would exist with residential uses immediately adjacent to the entertainment functions of BC Place and GM Place.

Staff note that cooperation among land owners in the planning of False Creek North may allow an opportunity to address the proximity of residential to entertainment functions. These difficult issues cannot be resolved through the design treatment of individual sites. The mitigation of potential conflicts would be better achieved through a comprehensive examination of the land use mix and transitions between functions at all of the sites.

### *Implications for the City's Economy*

With an estimated 200-300 direct jobs on site, the commercial and entertainment uses at the Plaza of Nations is not considered significant in the jobs and resident balance in the central area. However, as noted above, the Plaza of Nations is a critical facility to the overall cultural and entertainment sector, which does provide significant employment. The existing zoning at the Plaza of Nations also allows for more job creation on site if the hotel or family sports and entertainment functions are realised. The direct jobs and spin-off employment would be lost with conversion to primarily residential.

### *Crime and Safety Issues*

As many members of the public remarked, there are currently safety and CPTED issues at the Plaza of Nations in the evenings and during non-event periods. Staff discussions with Social Planning and representatives of the Vancouver Police Department indicated that these issues may increase with the mixture of residential and entertainment uses on site.

### *Sustainability*

From the perspective of sustainability, there are benefits to maintaining the special event, festival and entertainment functions at the Plaza of Nations site. The site is ideally situated close to the high population density of the city core and is well served by public transportation with the regional linkages of the Skytrain system, and with future local connectivity enhanced by the proposed False Creek Streetcar. Staff believe that this commercial and entertainment function should remain in this location rather than be relocated to an area where automobile transportation is the only option.

## **Public Process Review**

Because of the local, city-wide and regional use of the Plaza of Nations, the public consultation process was designed to garner a wide variety of input. The public was asked to comment on three principal issues:

- potential future uses of the site, ranging from commercial and entertainment uses to primarily residential development of the site;
- the value of the site as a performance stage, event venue, and cultural space; and

- the relevance of the Plaza of Nations as a legacy of Expo '86.

The following consultation techniques were employed, with the approximate number of participants in parentheses:

- Targeted Stakeholder Issues Scoping Meetings (30)
- Project website
- Youth Engagement Session, facilitated by the Environmental Youth Alliance (15)
- Facilitated Multi-Stakeholder Session (60 participants, including local residents, business associations, water-based users, cultural representatives, BC Place, GM Place, Concord Pacific, and Canadian Metropolitan Properties)
- Public Open House at the Central Library promenade (250-300)
- Written Submissions (49)

In general, the public supported the retention of the commercial and entertainment function at this location, and expressed a desire to retain a link to Expo '86. While there was some support for residential, the majority of the participants felt that there was enough residential in the area and additional residential would exacerbate noise and livability issues. The public also felt that additional commercial uses are desirable and may help to animate the area and better integrate it into the city. The outcomes of the public consultation are summarised in Appendix B.

The public was also offered the opportunity to provide written comments on comment sheets, by letter mail and by email. Thirty-six comment sheets and thirteen written submissions were received. Staff analysed this input to determine where the public specifically mentioned agreement or disagreement around key issues. This analysis revealed that 89% of the respondents thought that the Plaza of Nations should be retained as a waterfront entertainment facility and 72% agreed that it should maintain a legacy of Expo '86. When asked about other appropriate uses on the site, 69% of the respondents thought that residential was not appropriate while virtually all of the participants felt that more retail and services would be welcome at the Plaza of Nations.

## PROPOSED POLICY

Staff recommend the adoption of the land use policy in Appendix A. While the False Creek North Official Development Plan and the Northeast False Creek Urban Design Plan provide strong and integrated policy on housing, transportation, design, and other fundamental planning issues, staff have concluded that complementary land use policy is needed to support special event, entertainment and festival functions.

The policy was developed through extensive technical review, policy review, inventory and analysis of our city's cultural infrastructure, and public consultation. The policy seeks to:

- Maintain sufficient areas for special event, festival and entertainment functions at current extent and levels of functionality, or better;
- Animate the waterfront, including opportunities for waterfront events for a variety of ages and cultures;
- Ensure compatibility between special event, festival and entertainment functions and adjacent residential development;
- Encourage property owners to maintain the legacy resources of Expo '86; and

- Address the provisions of better access and connectivity for special event, festival and entertainment functions.

Staff feel that the policy is supportive of council policy for supporting festival and entertainment functions, and provides direction for achieving a vibrant and livable central area.

## APPLICATION OF POLICY

The land use policy recommended in Appendix A will provide guidance for future development and planning initiatives in False Creek North. It also provides a basis to assess current zoning and development proposals.

### *Plaza of Nations*

As it currently stands, the existing zoning and land use at the Plaza of Nations fits within the proposed policy, including the development allowances for the expansion of commercial and entertainment activities and the addition of a hotel tower. However, staff conclude that the proposal by Canadian Metropolitan Properties to develop a substantial residential use at the Plaza of Nations and reduce the importance of the commercial and entertainment function is not supportable. The proposal would increase the conflict between residential and entertainment functions in the area, would not animate the waterfront as envisaged by staff and the public, and could result in the loss of the covered amphitheatre that links back to Expo '86.

### *Plaza of Nations/Concord Pacific Integrated Development*

It is projected by this evaluation to date that a more optimal scheme can be developed along the waterfront in Northeast False Creek if the two key landowners collaborate on an integrated land use concept and development scheme. It may be that a better transition with existing residential can be achieved if the noisier entertainment/commercial functions shift east. It may be possible to integrate some transition housing forms or other compatible uses within the Plaza of Nations context, between sub-areas 6A and relocated entertainment functions. It may be possible to integrate entertainment/commercial activities at the western edge of the designated park in sub-area 9 (but having very careful regard for implications for CityGate residents further east and for the general active or passive recreational functionality envisaged for the future park). These possibilities are worthy of consideration, but only if the landowners decide to work together.

### *BC Place and GM Place*

The Urban Design Plan approved by Council in 2001 identified potential public realm proposals and commercial development opportunities for the BC Place Stadium site. The GM Place zoning also includes the opportunity to develop an office tower at the southeast corner of the arena. In both cases, commercial and office development is encouraged as a use that is compatible with entertainment functions. In addition, these commercial uses would help to provide the desired land use transitions to the neighbouring residential areas. It is unlikely that residential uses will be compatible with the existing allowable uses. If a residential

proposal is submitted for either of these sites, it would be reviewed in the context of the special event, entertainment and festival policy.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications.

#### **CONCLUSION**

To achieve Council policy of welcoming celebrations, sporting events, and special events for their contribution in making Vancouver a vibrant city, it is fundamental that we plan for adequate areas to support these functions. The city's objectives of a vibrant and livable central area requires not only diverse and enjoyable residential areas, but also places where Vancouverites can gather to celebrate our unique and diverse cultural heritage. False Creek Northeast has acted in this capacity since Expo '86 and it is essential to retain and plan for this function as final decisions re now made on this pattern of permanent development of this remaining precinct of False Creek North.

\* \* \* \* \*

## False Creek North: Land Use Policy - Special Event, Festival and Entertainment Functions

### Application and Intent

The policy is intended to complement the existing land use policy in the False Creek North Official Development Plan to ensure land use policy supports special event, festival and entertainment functions.

The intent of the policy is to provide sufficient venues and locations, and supporting infrastructure and services, to maintain the city's cultural vibrancy while ensuring that any new neighbouring development has a high degree of livability. It also establishes the need to recognize the legacy of Expo '86.

The policies apply to portions of False Creek North as shown on the map, particularly the Plaza of Nations (6B), BC Place (10) and GM Place (7A), but with implications for the adjacent undeveloped areas of 5B and 6C.

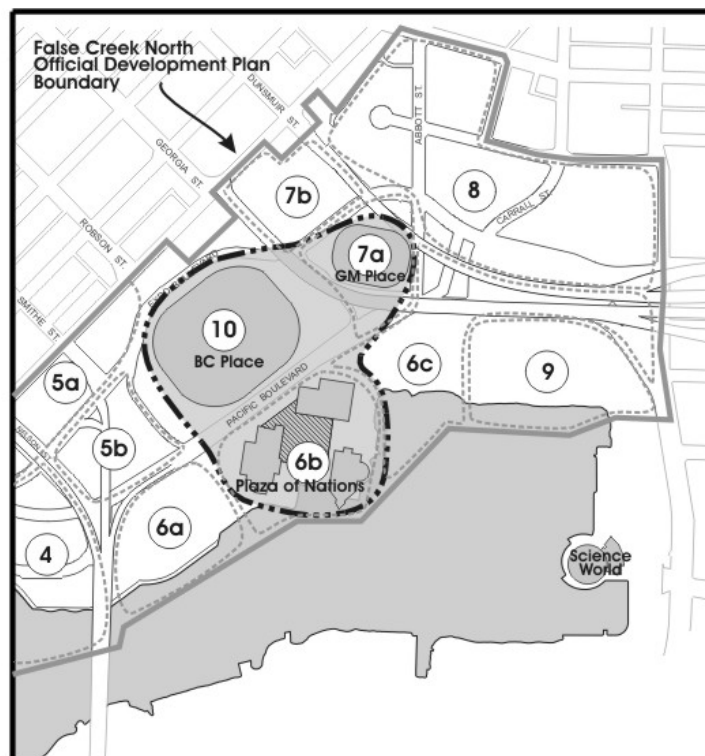


Figure 1: Entertainment Facilities in Northeast False Creek and adjacent sub-areas of the False Creek North Official Development Plan

**Policy 1.0 Sufficient Areas for Special Event, Festival and Entertainment Functions**

1.1 Maintain existing special event, festival and entertainment functions as the primary activities of the Plaza of Nations, BC Place and GM Place (with sufficient back of house, support areas, staging functions, on-site utilities and services, and weather-protected outdoor performance spaces) at their current extent and levels of functionality, until such time as they may be successfully relocated to compatible sites in the immediate vicinity. (see 1.4 below)

1.2 Commercial, entertainment, retail, hotel and tourist facilities are considered to be compatible uses at the Plaza of Nations, BC Place and GM Place while special event, festival and entertainment functions remain in their current configuration and extent.

1.3 While special event, festival and entertainment functions remain in their current configuration and extent:

(a) Residential use is not considered to be compatible at the Plaza of Nations; and

(b) Residential use is also generally not considered compatible on the BC Place and GM Place sites, other than possibly a modest number of special units integrated with the sports facilities.

1.4 Residential use may be considered in future in the context of comprehensive multi-site development planning involving sub-area 6B ( Plaza of Nations) and sub-area 6C that successfully reconfigures the special event, festival and entertainment functions, improves their functionality, and incorporates appropriate land use transitions and impact mitigation into the site planning and urban design.

**Policy 2.0 Animated Waterfront**

Seek to better animate the waterfront during any redevelopment, including facilities and opportunities for waterfront and water-based special event, festival and entertainment functions for a variety of ages and cultures.

**Policy 3.0 Compatibility between Special Event, Festival and Entertainment Functions and Adjacent Residential Development**

3.1 Maximise compatibility and minimize conflict through careful land use transitions, appropriate land use mix, and design development where residential use is proposed in close proximity to special event, festival and entertainment functions.

3.2 Ensure that residential developers and purchasers in adjacent areas are cognisant of the primarily special event, festival and entertainment functions in Northeast False Creek.

- Policy 4.0**    **Legacy Resources from Expo '86**  
Encourage property owners to maintain and enhance the Enterprise Hall and the glass-roofed plaza at the Plaza of Nations as legacy resources representing the transformative events of Expo '86.
- Policy 5.0**    **Access and Connectivity for Special Event, Festival and Entertainment Functions**  
Provide sufficient access and connectivity for special events and festivals, including enhancing barrier-free pedestrian connections, cycling routes and transit services, and accommodating truck access and loading.



### Summary of Public Consultation Activities

Because of the local, city-wide and regional use of the Plaza of Nations, the public consultation process was designed to get a wide variety of input from local residents, those with an active interest in the site and from citizens across Vancouver. The public was asked to comment on three principal issues:

- potential future uses of the site, ranging from commercial and entertainment uses to primarily residential development of the site;
- the value of the site as a performance stage, event venue, and cultural space; and
- the relevance of the Plaza of Nations as a legacy of Expo '86.

The following consultation techniques were employed, with the approximate number of participants in parentheses:

- Targeted Stakeholder Issues Scoping Meetings (30)
- Project website (n/a)
- Youth Engagement Session, facilitated by the Environmental Youth Alliance (15)
- Facilitated Multi-Stakeholder Session (60)
- Public Open House at Library Square (250-300)
- Written Submissions (49)

#### *Communications Activities*

Advertisements for the public open houses were placed in local newspapers (Couriers, Westender, Xtra West, The Creek, Georgia Straight, Ming Pao, Sing Tao, The Link and The Voice) and a poster for the youth session was sent out to youth outreach workers at community centres across the city. Staff also invited letters and other feedback.

#### *Targeted Stakeholder Meetings*

Several targeted sessions were held with stakeholder organisations to provide an opportunity for input into the study, and to help clarify some of the issues around the existing uses on the site. These consultations included meetings with the Community Affairs Committee and Infrastructure Task Force of the Board of Trade, GM Place management, BC Place management, and the organisers of the World Junior Hockey Championships. Each of these groups was also offered the opportunity to a written submission. Specific requests for written comments were also requested during conversations with the Yaletown Business Improvement Association, Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association, the Downtown Vancouver Association, the Chinatown Merchants' Association and the Gastown Business Improvement Association.

#### *Project Website*

A project website was established and continues to be available for the public at [www.vancouver.ca/plazaofnations](http://www.vancouver.ca/plazaofnations). The website contains background, relevant council policy,

staff contact information to provide public input, the project timeline and copies of the presentation boards from the open houses.

### *Youth Engagement Session*

The Youth Engagement Session took place at the Central Library on May 6, 2005. Youth interests were specifically targeted for consultation given the large number of youth-oriented events such as graduations, concerts, raves and skateboard competitions at the Plaza over the years.

Planning staff cooperated with the city's Youth Outreach Team to structure the session according to best practices. The session was integrated into the Youth Engagement Fair at the library that was taking place as part of City of Vancouver's Youth Week, and was scheduled prior to the Vancouver Youth Awards. A table was set up at the fair to encourage youth to participate in the session. The session was attended by approximately 15 youth representatives and was co-facilitated by youth facilitators from the Environmental Youth Alliance. In addition to this session, one youth outreach worker took the initiative to facilitate a smaller focus group with the youth group at his community centre.

Overall, the consultation demonstrated that young people value the Plaza of Nations as a site for outdoor sporting and entertainment events, such as the Dragon Boat festival and concerts. Although the majority of youth identified positive associations with the Plaza of Nations, their responses also made it evident that they rarely access this venue due to various barriers. Young people often do not have access to their own vehicles or have their own source of income and the lack of a nearby bus stop and the high price of concert tickets act as deterrents to youth going to this site. An even stronger factor voiced by many of the consultation participants was the sense that the Plaza of Nations is an unsafe space during the day and at night due to the low number of people there at a given time and the site's relative isolation from the downtown core. Although young people in this consultation valued the Plaza of Nations as a cultural, entertainment and sporting venue, they are not currently able to fully utilize its potential.

Young people's concern for the lack of activity currently at the Plaza was central to informing their vision for the future of the Plaza of Nations. By and large, the ideas for change that they recommended focused on ways to increase public usage of this space, including ways to beautify the area, draw families, gather youth, and improve transit accessibility. Under this vision were various innovative ideas such as a mobile skateboard park, a rooftop garden, and a youth centre. Vibrant billboards were also suggested to liven up the space. The central image they painted was as a mixed outdoor venue for public cultural events and outdoor sports, in which the site's heritage would also be preserved (in the form of the covered glass roof), and with the site being much more accessible by public transportation.

### *Facilitated Multi-Stakeholder Process*

On May 9, 2005 a multi-stakeholder session took place at the Forum Restaurant at the Plaza of Nations and was facilitated by John Baker of Shift Consulting. The session engaged approximately 60 participants who were selected to be representative of local residents, businesses located on the site, Plaza of Nations user groups, the cultural and entertainment industry, downtown business associations, community groups and adjacent interests such as

the management of BC Place, GM Place and the Edgewater Casino. The Plaza of Nations owner, Canadian Metropolitan Properties, also engaged in the process.

The purpose of the session was to garner some understanding of the stakeholders' vision for the site and surrounding areas, as well as the values that they place on the Plaza as a legacy of Expo '86 and a cultural and performance space. The process consisted of small table discussions that were facilitated by city staff, and then a larger group discussion facilitated by the consultant to find common themes among the group. The individual comments were recorded on flipcharts and the common themes were derived cooperatively following a report back from each of the tables. The key themes that emerged from the group's shared vision are presented in the graphic below:



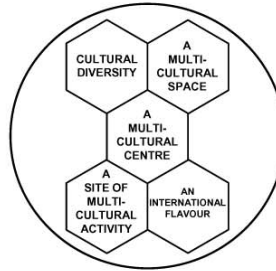
**Plaza of Nations  
Shared Vision of the Future  
May 9th, 2005**

Appendix A

**FRESH, CLEAN & WELCOMING**



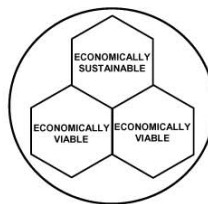
**A PLACE FOR CELEBRATING  
OUR CULTURAL DIVERSITY**



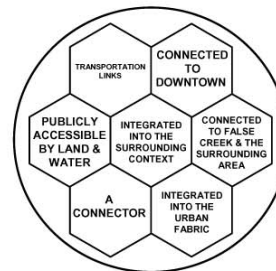
**A WARM & INVITING  
GATHERING PLACE**



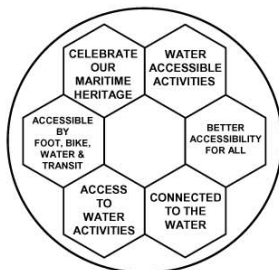
**ECONOMICALLY  
SUSTAINABLE**



**THE HEART OF THE CITY**



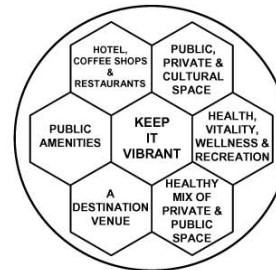
**ANIMATED WATERFRONT**



**APPROPRIATELY  
GOVERNED**



**A CENTRE OF ACTION**



Although the session was primarily intended to be a visioning exercise, it became clear that the stakeholders' ideas centred on "problem solving" to make the site more vibrant and viable as an entertainment and festival space. Only a small number of participants suggested residential use. This notion suggests that the majority of the stakeholders do place value on

retaining the current commercial and entertainment function of the Plaza of Nations and seek ways to improve the design and functionality site.

*Public Open House*

A public open house was held on Saturday May 7, 2005 in the North Promenade of the Central Public Library, with approximately 250-300 citizens stopping to review the materials. The public was invited to review information on ten boards, to have their questions answered by staff, and to fill out comment sheets. On six of the boards, the public was invited to post their thoughts directly on the boards using Post-it notes in response to the following open-ended questions:

- What are your thoughts on the current uses found at the Plaza of Nations? Which of these uses are most appealing to you?
- What access & transportation issues do you feel are important to the Plaza of Nations site? What elements of the Plaza of Nations are important to retain as a link back to Expo 86?
- What are your ideas for addressing downtown residential and entertainment compatibility issues?
- How much residential use do you feel is appropriate for the Plaza of Nations?
- How much retail, restaurants and services is appropriate for the Plaza of Nations?

The public input that was captured on the numerous Post-it notes on the presentation boards was transcribed and analysed to determine how the public responded to the key questions. Staff analysed this input to determine where the public specifically mentioned agreement or disagreement around key issues. This analysis is presented in the table below:

Stated Position	Number of Posted Public Responses		Totals	
	The Plaza of Nations should...			
			Agree	Disagree
		+ -		
Maintain a waterfront entertainment function.	25	3	89%	11%
Maintain a physical link to the legacy of Expo '86.	22	5	81%	19%
Include more residential uses	8	21	28%	72%
Include more retail and services	18	2	90%	10%

**Table 1:** Summary of public response to key issues as determined from the responses posted directly on the presentation boards.

Finally, during the open house and in the weeks subsequent, the public was offered the opportunity to provide written comments on comment sheets, by letter mail and by email. Thirty-six comment sheets and thirteen written submissions were received. Staff analysed this input to determine where the public specifically mentioned agreement or disagreement around key issues. This analysis is presented in the table below:

Stated Position	Number of Written Public Responses					
	Comment Sheets		Written Submissions		Totals	
The Plaza of Nations should...	+	-	+	-	Agree	Disagree
Maintain a waterfront entertainment function.	25	2	8	2	89%	11%
Maintain a physical link to the legacy of Expo '86.	14	6	4	1	72%	28%
Include more residential uses	11	19	1	8	31%	69%
Include more retail and services	7	0	3	0	100%	0%

**Table 3:** Summary of public response to key issues as determined from written responses and comment sheets.

*Themes from the Public Consultation*

Immediately following all of the public consultation activities, Staff who participated in the sessions met with the facilitator of the multi-stakeholder session to debrief on what was heard from the public. The facilitator worked with staff to determine the key themes that arose from the public consultation. These themes are included below and are reflected in many of the comments from the public:

***The Plaza of Nations is a special place.*** The public feels that the Plaza is a unique and special place in Vancouver. This value can be linked both to its central role in the celebrations and transformative events of Expo '86, as well as to the iconic nature of the building on the False Creek waterfront.

Sample comments include:

"It's the heart of Expo and needs to be saved";

"It's beautiful + a great heritage feature!";

"Clear roof structure appropriate and unique to our climate. Should be valued as unique asset to Vancouver";

"Indeed, I feel 'very strongly' that not only is the Plaza of Nations a valuable link to Expo'86, but it should be preserved for same in perpetuity."

***The Plaza of Nations is a valued location for a performance and community event space.*** Although there was recognition of governance, structural and logistical issues, the Plaza of Nations is still highly valued as a mid-sized (4,500 person) waterfront performance and celebration space.

Sample comments include:

"We need to keep it for events we don't need more residential or gambling facilities. Noise is an issue everywhere...";

"Marvellous concert and event location!";

"Vancouver has few large public gathering places. The site should be retained for these (festivals, celebratory gatherings) purposes."

***The Plaza of Nations should be better animated with a mixture of uses and activities.***

The public feels that outside of event times, the Plaza of Nations is isolated, under-utilised and potentially unsafe. Numerous suggestions were made for different uses, events and activities that could bring life and interest to the Plaza at all times of day and make it more of a destination. Commercial uses were preferred to residential by most stakeholders due to livability concerns, and the sentiment that there was already enough residential in the area.

Sample comments include:

- "It's isolated. It's kind of scary, and empty, no one is there";
- "Overall the site has a somewhat forlorn and desolate feel when there's not an event. Perhaps it needs rejuvenating in some way without changing its present designation"
- "More waterfront public space, some retail, some cafes and nightlife".

***The Plaza of Nations should be for all ages.*** There is a desire to broaden to accessibility for people of all ages whether through youth spaces and programming, or better accessibility and resting places for seniors.

Some sample comments include:

- "We just need to make better use of it. Share it with all ages";
- "More benches and resting places for seniors";
- "Never been to any events at the Plaza of Nations, never heard of any events lately for youth, etc."

***The Plaza of Nations events and activities could showcase Vancouver's cultural diversity.*** The public places value on the originating theme of the Plaza of Nations at Expo '86 as the principal stage to showcase cultural activities from all participating nations, and in its continued use for multi-cultural events since the world's fair.

Some sample comments include:

- "Important for cultural linkage to Expo. Let it be an area to celebrate multiculturalism. It started here, let it stay";
- "When I think of Plaza of Nations I think of different cultures, over the world, from the name, the history---told to me by my mom about Expo 86";
- "A site of multi-cultural activity";
- "an international flavour."

***The Plaza of Nations should embrace and celebrate the water's edge.*** There is a general sense that the Plaza of Nations does not successfully animate the waterfront or celebrate our maritime heritage. The public also expresses concern about the lack of accessibility through the site from the downtown core to the waterfront.

Some sample comments include:

- "Maximize the water with waterfront events. Some retail and services to be diverse";
- "Access to the water---integrate uses with the waterfront";
- "I would also like to see an active, interesting promenade similar to Halifax's or San Francisco's waterfront, with buskers, entertainment and possibly a market."

***The Plaza of Nations should be easily accessible and better integrated into the urban fabric of the city.*** Although the Plaza is located in the central area, it is felt that the Plaza

seems isolated from the rest of the downtown core and is difficult to access by pedestrians and transit-users. There is a desire to bring the site into the “heart of the city” through the creation of clearer land use and transportation linkages.

Some sample comments include:

“Site is somewhat inaccessible for transit users when events are happening. Skytrain is too far away along an inhospitable route”;

“There is so much infrastructure there for cars in the surrounding areas. It is unwelcoming for me as a pedestrian”;

“integrated into the surrounding context”;

“connected to downtown”;

“while the Plaza of Nations, BC Place Stadium and GM Place have been identified as belonging to an identified entertainment zone, the three facilities are so disjointed from one another that they may as well be in different parts of the city.”

*The Plaza of Nations needs special consideration to maximise compatibility and minimize conflict where residential use is adjacent to special event, festival and entertainment functions.* Although many members of the public suggested that noise from the Plaza and the entertainment uses in the area are simply part of downtown living, particular attention needs to be paid to minimising the conflict with adjacent residential use.

Some sample comments included:

“People need to realize where they are buying. Downtown has more noise and most people should expect that. Venues like this are integral to creating life in the city”;

“Allowing residential development might reduce fiscal pressure to use the site for concerts? Shifting concert use to community celebrations & family events might improve acceptability of noise for residents”;

“Noise is generally part of development as long as the noise is within a certain perimeter, it shouldn’t bother residents greatly you’ll get used to it.”



## Outdoor Venue Study SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The City has initiated a study of the outdoor event spaces in Vancouver. As part of that study, staff inventoried the existing outdoor spaces currently used for special events, celebrations and festivals to identify needs, deficiencies and gaps in the existing inventory.

### Inventory:

There are currently more than 200 public open spaces in Vancouver which can be generally categorized into 3 types of outdoor venues:

1. *Parks*: Venues which utilize park land such as Jericho Park for the Folk Festival, Vanier Park for the Children's Festival and Bard on the Beach, and David Lam Park for Jazz Festival performances.
2. *Public Plazas*: These are hard surface areas such as the areas on either side of the Art Gallery currently used for a range of planned activities such as National Aboriginal Day as well as unplanned demonstrations and spontaneous gatherings. The Vancouver Public Library is also regularly used for events such as the Word on the Street Festival and First Night celebration. As well, in the future the Thurlow Plaza planned for the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre could provide an outdoor plaza for public gatherings and special events.
3. *Amphitheatres*: Dedicated outdoor performance facilities such as the home of Theatre Under the Stars, Malkin Bowl, and the Plaza of Nations.

In the downtown core, there are 7 parks, 11 public plazas, and 2 amphitheatres that have been identified as locations suitable for special events, festivals and entertainment functions of various sizes.

In assessing the utility of these spaces as potential performance or events venues, the following criteria must be taken into account:

1. *Infrastructure*: load capacity, availability of power, water services, washroom facilities, weather shelter
2. *Accessibility*: proximity to transit, pedestrian/cycle routes, parking availability etc.
3. *Adjacency* to residential developments
4. *Layout*: surface type, topography, sight and access obstructions

The inventory was reviewed against these criteria to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and gaps in our city's outdoor venue infrastructure as outlined below:

1. *Parks*:

In Vancouver, parks are both well-loved and well-used for an extraordinary array of activities from the very passive to highly active and intense uses. The greatest active use

is sport and recreation activities (accounting for 92% of usage), with a great many parks operating at or near full capacity. The Park Board and its partners program a full array of events in most city parks throughout the year.

As listed in the Park Board Guide to Special Events in Vancouver Parks, Appendix B: "Special events held by non-profit organizations whose events are primarily of interest to the general public" are accommodated on third priority as space is available. This creates scheduling challenges for special events and celebrations with so many groups seeking access, usually during the summer months.

Finally, in addition to the scheduling challenges, Vancouver's parks have not been designed or specifically planned with the basic infrastructure required to support special events, festivals and celebrations.

## *2. Public Plazas:*

Outdoor hard-surfaced plazas are typically located in dense commercial areas bounded by major city streets. Plazas are also, by their very definition, functioning entrance and exit areas for the buildings that adjoin them.

In Vancouver there are public, private and semi-private plazas in the downtown area. To the public, ownership and governance issues are less of concern than access to events. However, governance is the most challenging issue for event organisers as it relates to availability and affordability in making plazas available for festivals and events.

As with parks, our city's plazas have not been specifically designed to accommodate events and celebrations. There are also off-site and land use adjacency issues which make staging large events in downtown plazas challenging. These include sound and light impacts and accessibility issues for not only the staging and support of events, but for vehicular and pedestrian traffic in attending events.

From the existing inventory we found that many of the plazas are used on a fairly regular basis. However event organizers do so with creativity and persistence to compensate for these challenges, which is not ideal for maintaining our city's special event, festival and entertainment functions.

When this same analysis is applied to the proposed Thurlow Plaza site currently in development with the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre expansion, it is clear that the site has critical challenges as a large-scale festival location given the load restrictions on the plaza which preclude vehicle access for equipment or service delivery. The plaza may serve as a successful gathering space for smaller events, events which do not require infrastructure and staging, or for waterfront viewing although staff note that the elevation above the water does not lend itself to water access for water based festivals and celebrations.

## *3. Amphitheatres:*

Typical amphitheatres are designed with a stage and seats arranged in a circular or oval area of tiered or sloping ground.

There are 2 outdoor venues in downtown Vancouver which are often referred to as amphitheatres: Malkin Bowl, an open air public Park Board facility in Stanley Park; and the Plaza of Nations, a privately-held covered, outdoor facility with a public use and right of way agreement on the shores of north east False Creek.

Both venues have potential and are generally well-utilized but lack the infrastructure and consistent maintenance of dedicated amphitheatre facilities. Additional infrastructure - stage, stage support, audience seating and audience support could greatly assist in making these venues even more successful.

While there are numerous existing venues for outdoor festivals and events, all of them could be more affordable and greatly improved with infrastructure upgrades to better serve the needs of the City's growing number of festivals, celebrations and special events. Staff will be reviewing the recommendation of the outdoor facilities study along with the results of an update of the current Council-approved Facilities Strategic Plan with the City Creative Task Force and will report back to Council with a comprehensive 10-15 year cultural facilities plan