



City-wide Design and Development Guidelines

Phase Two Actions

Refined Solar Access Guidelines, Legacy Guideline Document Repeal and TOA Rezoning
Policy Amendments

Standing Committee on Policy & Strategic Priorities
September 17, 2025



CITY OF
VANCOUVER

City-wide Design and
Development Guidelines



An aerial photograph of Vancouver, British Columbia, showing the city's coastline, harbor, and surrounding mountains. A large, semi-transparent yellow rectangle is centered over the city, containing the title and introductory text. The background image shows the city's urban layout, including residential areas, commercial districts, and the harbor with numerous boats and ships. The mountains in the background are partially covered in snow.

Introduction

Support housing and economic development while continuing to honour the things that make Vancouver a great place to live, work and visit.



Background

CDDG Overview



Objectives

- Help to **streamline housing**
- **Improve the approvals process** and simplify the regulatory structure
- **Improve certainty**, predictability and transparency
- **Right-size efforts**
- Align with **Council priorities**



Related Work Plans

- Vancouver Plan Implementation
- Process Improvement Program (PIP)
- Policy, Regulations and Process (PRoP [RR & DPR])

CDDG Overview



Early Actions

July 2024

Focus on solar access, residential tower floor plates and view cones without public engagement.



Phase Two Actions

July 2025

Focus on solar access in downtown and repeal of legacy guidelines, along with amendments to the TOA Rezoning Policy.



Referred back to staff for engagement and refinement



Phase Two Actions – Refined

September 2025

Focus on amended approach to solar access in downtown and repeal of legacy guidelines, along with amendments to the TOA Rezoning Policy.

CDDG Overview



City-wide Design & Development Guidelines

Early 2026

Consolidate and modernize 2,200+ pages of Vancouver's built form policies and guidelines.

An aerial photograph of a city harbor, likely Vancouver, with mountains in the background. A large yellow rectangular overlay is centered on the image, containing the text "Report Summary".

Report Summary

Phase Two Actions



Legacy Guideline Repeal



TOA Rezoning Policy Amendments



Solar Access Policies

1. 10 am – 4 pm vs 10 am – 2 pm Solar Fan
2. Downtown Solar Access

An aerial photograph of a city harbor, likely Vancouver, with mountains in the background. A large yellow rectangular overlay is centered on the image, containing the text "Legacy Guideline Repeals".

Legacy Guideline Repeals



Recommendation C

THAT Council **repeal various guidelines** related to urban design, generally as presented in Appendix C;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to **report back with consequential amendments** to the Zoning & Development By-law at a later date.

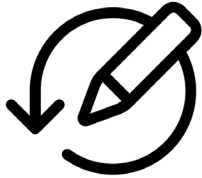


The 27 guidelines being repealed as part of Phase Two:

- Are for **CD-1 developments that are complete**
- Are **no longer relevant** to the current development context
- Will be **replaced by the CDDG in 2026**

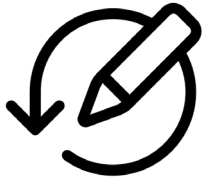
An aerial photograph of a coastal city, likely Vancouver, showing the harbor, surrounding urban areas, and distant mountains. A large yellow rectangular overlay is centered on the image, containing the title text.

TOA Rezoning Policy Amendments



Recommendation D

THAT Council approve the **amendments to the Transit-Oriented Areas Rezoning Policy**, generally as presented in Appendix D, to **clarify the relationship of the policy to new area plans and built form expectations**.



The amendments being made to the Policy:

- Clarify how the policy **relates to new or updated area plans**
- More clearly outline **form of development expectations**
- Add clearer references to existing **City liveability policies**

An aerial photograph of a coastal city, likely Vancouver, with a large yellow rectangular overlay in the center. The city features a mix of residential and commercial buildings, a harbor with many boats, and a bridge crossing a body of water. In the background, there are snow-capped mountains under a clear sky. The yellow overlay contains the text "Solar Access".

Solar Access

Sun in public space supports...



Vibrant
Public Life



Mental and Physical
Well-Being



Usable Play Spaces
and Sports Fields



Healthy Urban
Vegetation



Sense of Place and
Community

...especially in the Spring and Fall




Shadows from trees and shade structures:

- Are generally **human-scaled and localized**
- Provide **sun protection in hot months** while allowing **sun penetration in colder months**
- Can be strategically **planned for in park and site designs**
- Are often accompanied by **other health and comfort benefits**, such as clean air and protection from rainfall

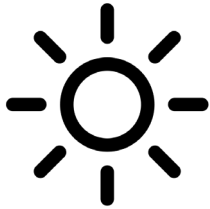


Shadows from tall buildings:

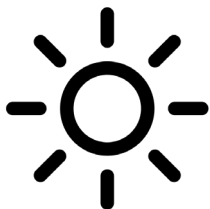
- Are generally **spread over a larger area**
- **Do not vary in density** between seasons
- Tend to **move quickly depending on building** height, massing and location
- May provide larger areas of **shade in hot summer months**
- Are **difficult to plan for** in park and site designs
- Are **unavoidable** in a growing, dense **mixed-use city**

An aerial photograph of a coastal city, likely Vancouver, showing a large harbor with several ships, a dense urban area with many buildings, and mountains in the background. A large yellow rectangular box is superimposed over the center of the image, containing text.

10 am – 4 pm vs 10 am – 2 pm
Solar Fans



Maintain 10 am – 4 pm PDT solar access timeframe outside of downtown as per the *Solar Access Guidelines for Areas Outside of Downtown*



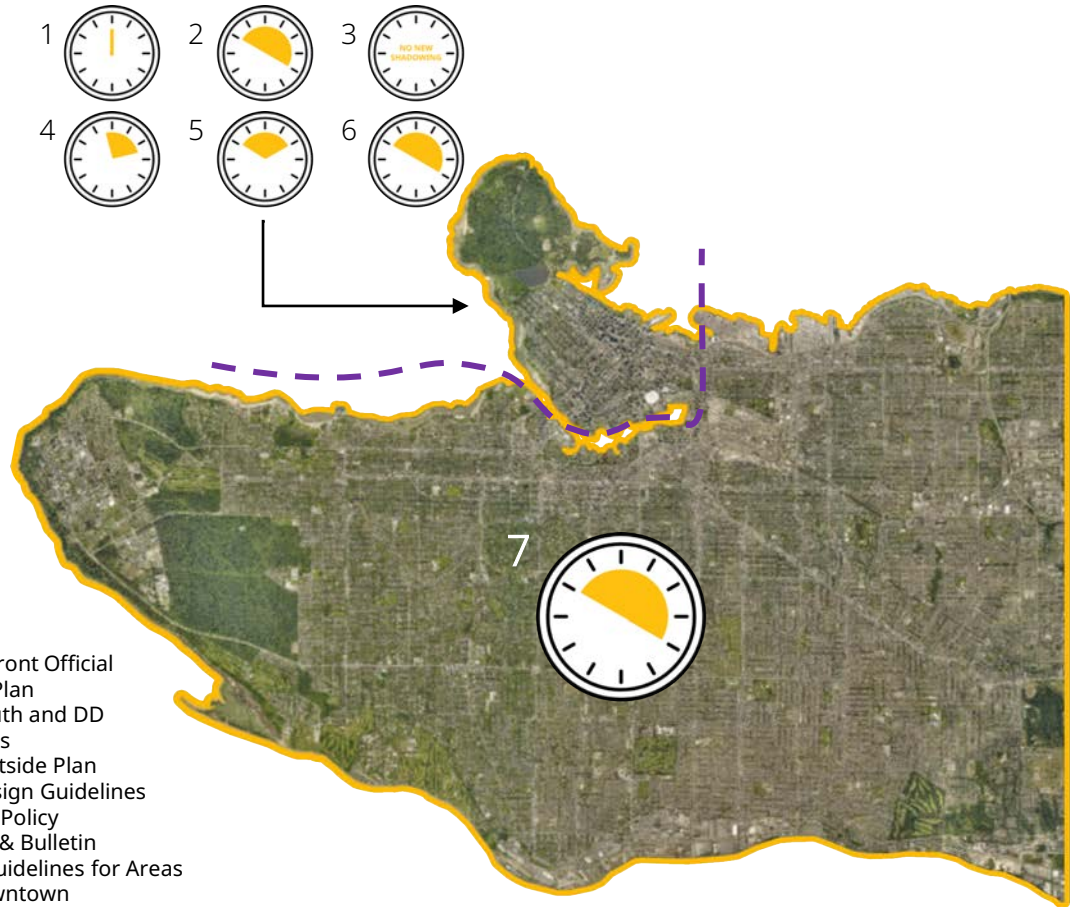
Maintaining the 10 am – 4 pm solar fan:

- Protects park **sunlight during peak afternoon use** (after 2 pm), especially in the spring and fall
- Affects **less than 2% of parcels**
- Results in **nominal impact to the number of potential residential units** compared to 10 am – 2 pm timeframe
- Includes **flexibility for six storey rental buildings** and 100% **social housing** of any size

An aerial photograph of a coastal city, likely Vancouver, showing the harbor, mountains, and dense urban development. A large, semi-transparent yellow rectangle is centered over the city, containing the text "Downtown Solar Access".

Downtown Solar Access

Solar Access Policies Current State



Objectives for a new approach



- Continue to treat **sunlight in public spaces as an invaluable asset**
- Reinforce that **Vancouver is a world leader in dense urban living**
- Support the **long-term viability of public assets** (e.g. resilient vegetation in public parks, intended use of play spaces, etc.)
- Provide for **additional shading** in the hottest **summer months**
- **Ease existing barriers** to great city-building developments
- Recognize that many **projects deliver benefits of equal or greater value** to urban living as natural sunlight
- Ensure that the **downtown peninsula** remains the **primary hub of economic growth** and activity in the region
- Support **project viability** in a challenging development context
- Reduce the number of disparate policies and **improve clarity**
- Encourage and **celebrate innovation**

Recommendation



New Solar Access Guidelines for the Downtown Peninsula

- Reinforce the **established baseline performance** criteria to give most applicants an **easy path forward**
- Provide for **flexibility** designed to support **public benefits, encourage rigor** and help shape future policy approach

An aerial photograph of a coastal city, likely Vancouver, with a large yellow rectangular overlay in the center. The city features a dense urban core, a large harbor with many ships, and a bridge crossing the water. In the background, there are snow-capped mountains under a clear sky. The yellow overlay contains the text "Industry and Council Insights" in a black, sans-serif font.

Industry and Council Insights

What did we get right?



- **A separate approach is needed for Downtown** that's more responsive to its specific challenges
- **Sunlight in public spaces is important** but there needs to be flexibility
- **Replacing six different policies** with a **single consistent guideline** document helps to streamline the regulatory framework
- Being **specific about the applicable public places** helps with clarity

What needs another look?



- Guidelines are **too complex** and can be read as **more limiting** than current context
- **Terms for flexibility** are too limiting or **unclear**
- Current wording is **not safeguarded against future misinterpretation**
- **'Baseline' performance criteria** (i.e. 10 am – 4 pm solar fan) is a **more restrictive benchmark** than some existing policies (i.e. 11:30 am – 2:30 pm solar fan)

What changes?
What's added?



Relaxation Criteria

- **Refined language** to allow greater flexibility for projects that **advance a major city-building policy** (e.g., Hotel Development Policy)

Decision Trees and Maps

- Applicability diagrams to help **navigate the guidelines**

'Basic' vs 'Comprehensive' solar access studies

- **Clearer differentiation between studies** depending on applicability and **clarified deliverable expectations**



Applicant Shadow Rationale Statement

- New deliverable that **gives applicant the opportunity to make the case** for relaxation, rather than relying on staff interpretation



Before

Exceptions to [the 10 to 4 solar fan] may be considered on a site-by-site basis in consultation with City staff subject to the following conditions:

- a) The applicant demonstrates that strict compliance with [the 10am – 4pm solar fan] would **significantly hinder the delivery of below-market rental housing, social housing or a major public amenity** (e.g., major public realm improvements, heritage conservation, public childcare) **exceeding minimum policy provisions**;
- b) A **solar budget analysis is submitted**, covering the period from 10 am to 4 pm PDT, at 15-minute intervals, on the fall equinox (September 22). For each interval, the analysis should quantify and delineate the following shadow impacts (in square meters):
 - i. Shadows cast by...



After

Council, the Development Permit Board, or the Director of Planning may consider exceptions to [the 10 to 4 solar fan] on a site-by-site basis subject to the following:

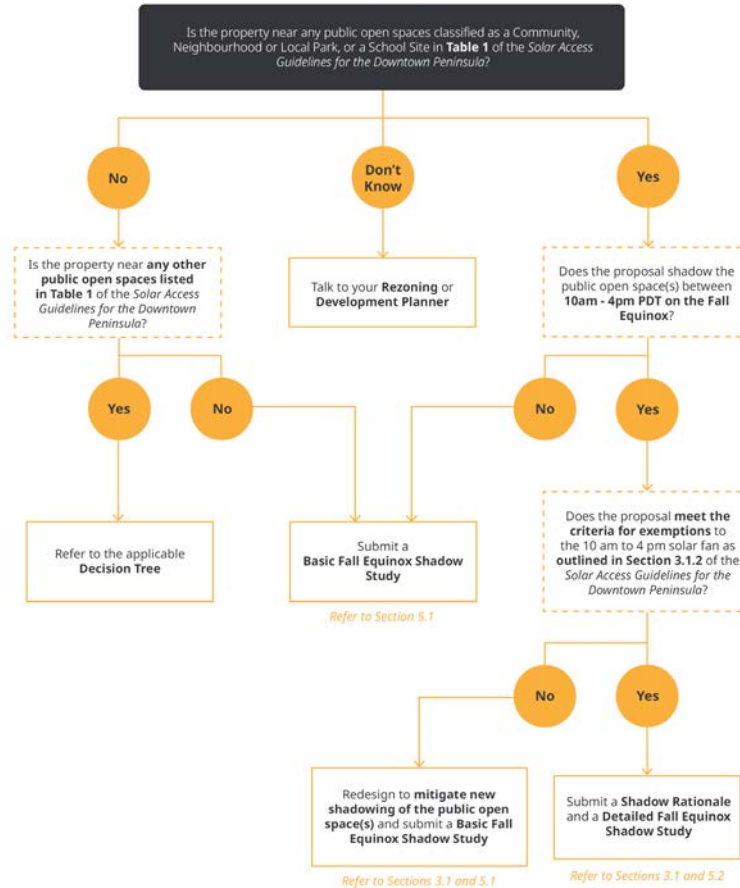
- a) The proposed development **contributes a substantive public benefit** (e.g., social housing, below-market rental housing, public childcare facility, heritage conservation, etc.) or **advances a major city-building priority as identified by City policies** applicable to developments in the downtown peninsula;
- b) The applicant submits a **shadow rationale statement** outlining the proposed response to [the above] and summarizing the impact of strict compliance with [the 10 to 4 solar fan] to project viability;
- c) The applicant submits a **Detailed Fall Equinox Shadow Study**, as outlined in Section 5.2.

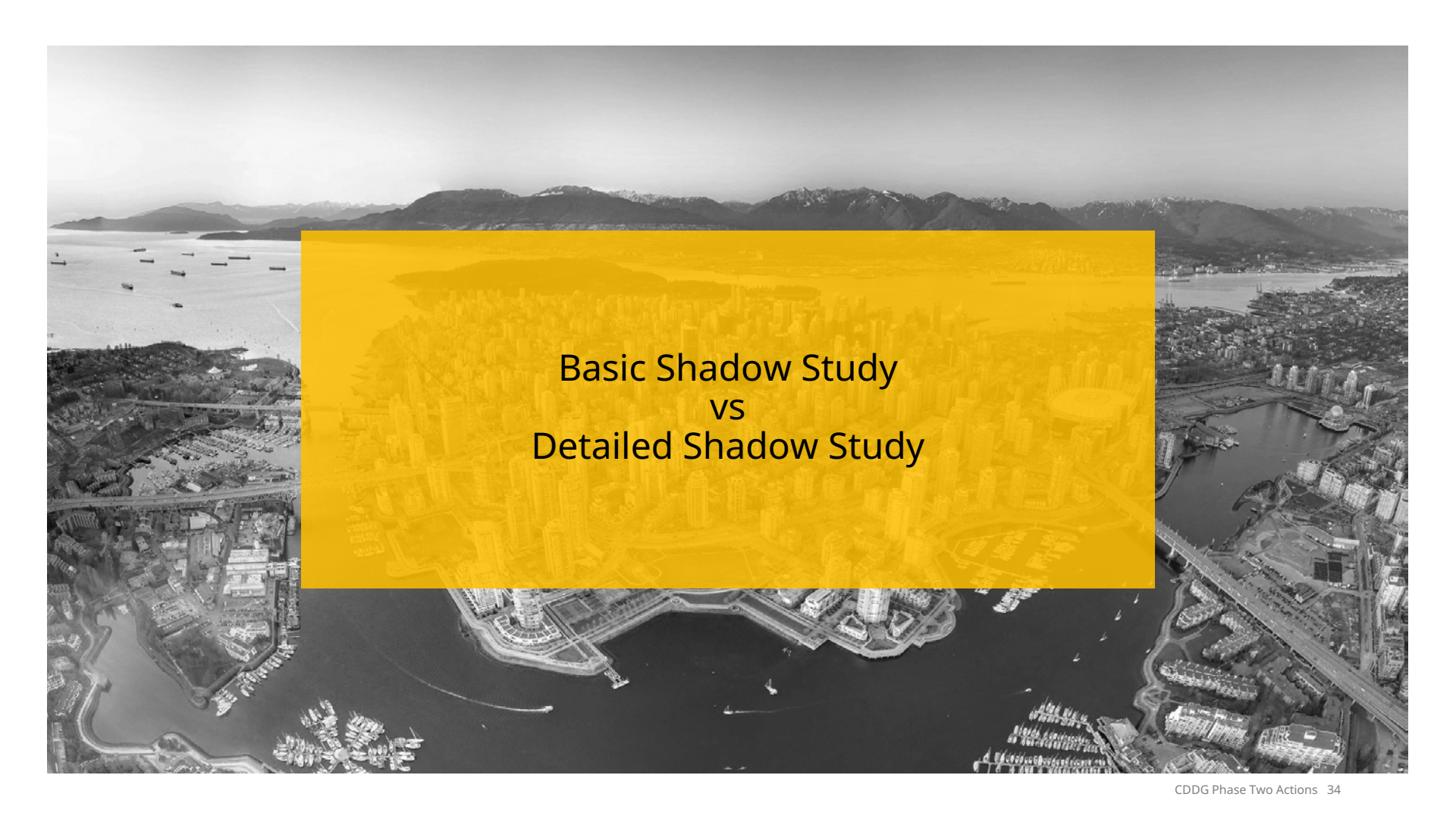
[illegible]

CDDG Phase Two Actions 32

Note: This Decision Tree is to be used for development proposals in the Downtown Peninsula as identified in the *Solar Access Guidelines for the Downtown Peninsula*. For all other proposals, refer to the *Solar Access Guidelines for Areas Outside of Downtown*.

Decision Tree A - Properties near a Community, Neighbourhood or Local Park, or a School Site



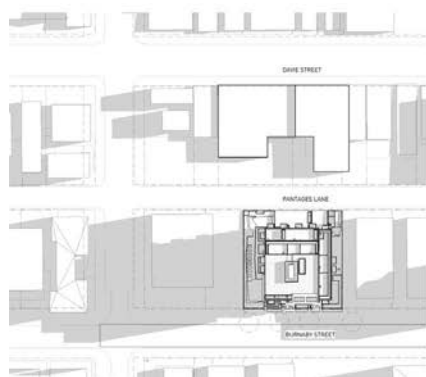
An aerial photograph of a coastal city, likely Vancouver, showing a large body of water, a city skyline, and mountains in the background. A large yellow rectangular overlay is centered on the image, containing the title text.

Basic Shadow Study VS Detailed Shadow Study

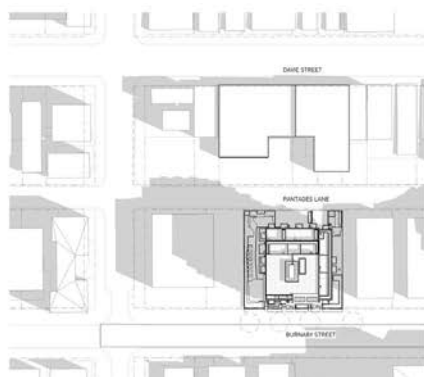


Basic Fall Shadow Study

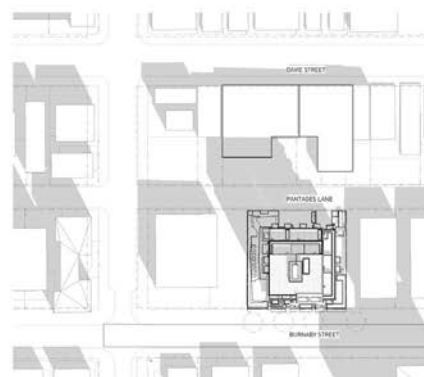
Covering the period from 10 am to 4 pm PDT, **at 2-hour intervals**, on the fall equinox (September 22)



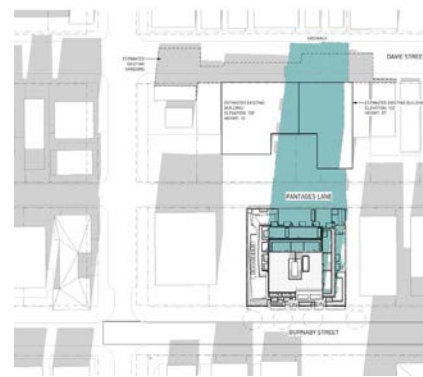
10:00 am PDT



12:00 pm PDT



2:00 pm PDT



4:00 pm PDT



Detailed Fall Shadow Study

Covering the period from 10 am to 4 pm PDT, **at 15-minute intervals**, on the fall equinox (September 22)

Three Parts

Part A – Shadow Diagrams

Part B – Shadow Area Takeoffs (sq. m)

- Existing Shadows
- Proposed Additional Shadows
- Cumulative Shadows

Part C – Shadow Coverage Calculations (%)

- Existing Shadows
- Proposed Additional Shadows
- Cumulative Shadows



Detailed Fall Shadow Study

Covering the period from 10 am to 4 pm PDT, **at 15-minute intervals**, on the fall equinox (September 22)

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Why?

These show how, when, and where shadows fall on the public space(s). In many cases, they show the dynamic nature of shadowing from tall buildings. (i.e., shadows move pretty quickly)



Detailed Fall Shadow Study

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Why?

This provides the most quantitative information on how much shadow occurs and when. This information will help us build out future digital tools.



Detailed Fall Shadow Study

Covering the period from 10 am to 4 pm PDT, **at 15-minute intervals**, on the fall equinox (September 22)

Three Parts

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Why?

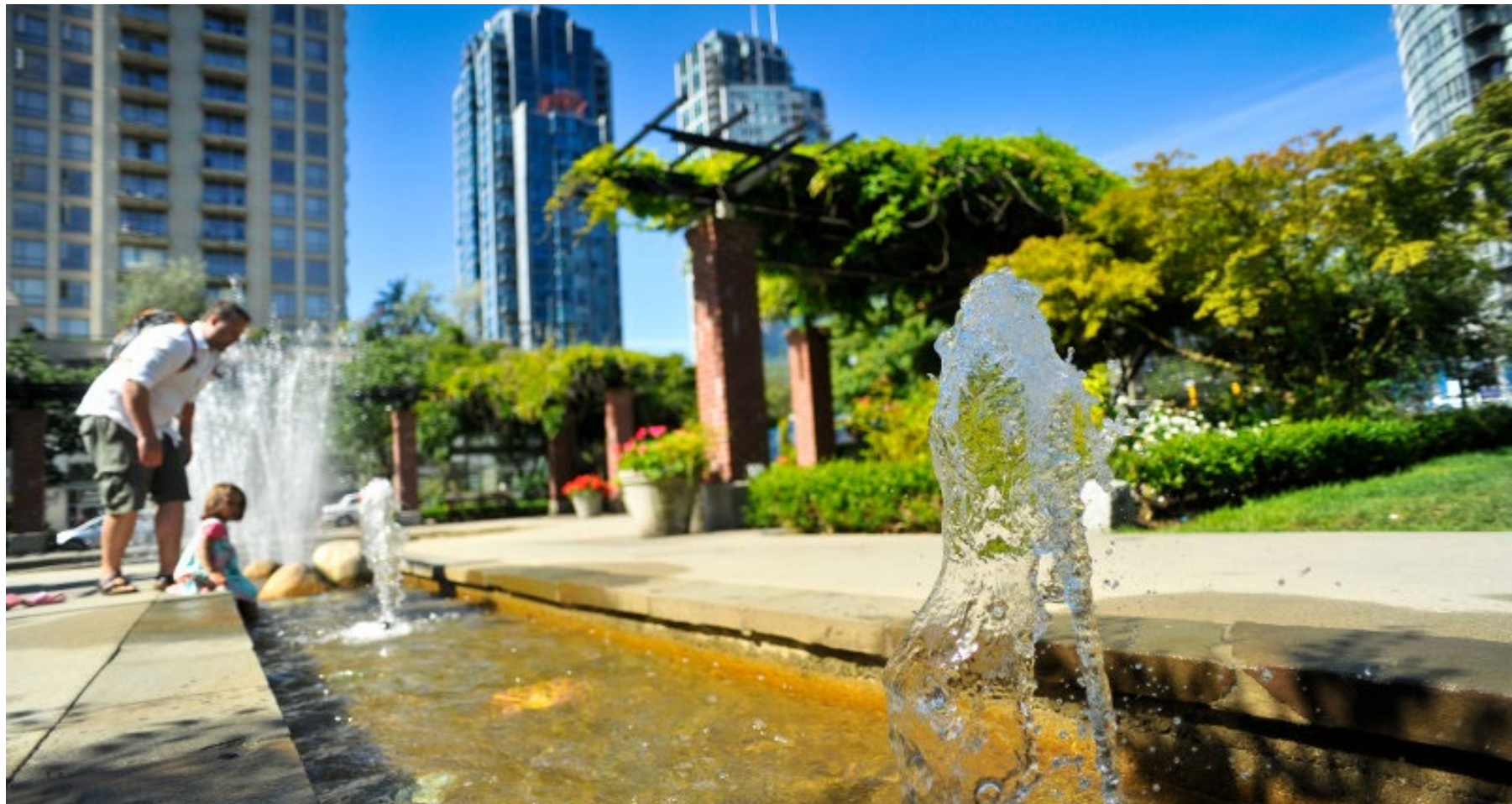
These calculations tell us how much of a public space's total public open space sun exposure is in existing, proposed additional, and cumulative total shadows.



Replacement to Recommendation A

Staff recommend that Council put forward a motion to replace Recommendation A of the July 23, 2025 CDDG Report with the following:

THAT Council approve the Solar Access Guidelines for the Downtown Peninsula generally as presented in Appendix A of the Yellow Memorandum dated September 2, 2025, and consequential amendments to policy documents, generally as presented in Appendix B of the report titled City-wide Design and Development Guidelines – Phase Two Actions dated July 23, 2025.



An aerial photograph of Vancouver, British Columbia, showing the city's dense urban landscape, the harbor, and the surrounding mountains. A large, semi-transparent yellow rectangle is centered over the city, containing the text "Thank You!".

Thank You!