

The Piazza Proposal

While we do not wish to distract from the Kettle Friendship Society alternative proposal, we believe there is an excellent opportunity at Venables and (old) Commercial Drive (to the west of Ace of Suedes), to add a public plaza in the style of an Italian piazza, adding to the public space roster of the neighbourhood and enhancing the Italian cultural heritage of Commercial Drive.

The proposal is as follows:

1. Close most of Commercial Drive, located between Uprising Bakery and Ace of Suedes (not Commercial Diversion), to car traffic while allowing utility access and turnarounds along and within the existing laneways that abut Commercial Drive.
2. Furnish the area with public seating, large planters that can accommodate trees, and smaller ones that can accommodate shrubs and flowers.
3. Ensure that parts of the piazza are shaded from direct sunlight for comfort during summer months.
4. Allow some open space in parts of the piazza in order to accommodate impromptu gatherings, community events, farmer's markets, small local vendors, and the like.
5. Keep the space generally non-commercial, even if some commercial events, like a farmers' market, are occasionally held there, to allow people from all walks of life to feel comfortable in all parts of the piazza.
6. Make the piazza accessible from Commercial Diversion where there is a bus stop and other foot traffic by transforming the existing laneway into a route that can safely accommodate both pedestrians and utility/delivery truck traffic.

The benefits of this proposal include:

1. Since the City of Vancouver already owns the land (the road) and traffic on the road is light, the piazza allows for additional public space to be added to the neighbourhood at minimal cost.
2. Grandview Woodland is park deficient as the city has noted in the Draft Plan. The piazza would augment our community's public space roster and could contribute to greening the neighbourhood and particularly that area, which borders industrial land, if it contained planters, trees, and other greenery.
3. It would "keep the Drive vibe" going towards the York Theatre and Hastings Street, revitalizing the northern section of Commercial Drive and adding to the vitality of that part of the neighbourhood.
4. It could be a lovely showpiece for the city.
5. It would greatly enhance a stand-alone Kettle building and anything else built on the footprint as well as contributing to the existing uses in that area, which includes a longstanding bakery/café and small local businesses.