

# the VANCOUVER orphaned space PROJECT

mapping a neighbourhood | transforming a space



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# Executive Summary



The key components of this student-driven *CityStudio* project include a map of all the orphaned spaces and parking lots in the Grandview-Woodlands neighborhood and a transformation of one space. This marks the first time a map of this kind has been created in Vancouver. The map is intended to be a valuable resource for locating future City projects including orchards, community gardens, farmer's markets, community events, parks, and more. Our intention with the transformation is to contribute to the *Access to Nature* goal, demonstrate the potential of orphaned spaces, install an interactive art piece in the form of a picture frame, and to embody the ideals of the community in a transformative landscape plan. Following implementation, we will maintain a Facebook page to provide a link to our maps, photos, and act as a hub for other people interested in revitalization projects.

## What is *CityStudio*?

*CityStudio* Vancouver is an energetic hub of learning and leadership where students design and implement Greenest City projects.

*CityStudio* is co-led by Duane Elverum (Emily Carr University of Art and Design) and Dr. Janet Moore (Simon Fraser University – Centre for Dialogue). The project is a collaboration of the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Economic Commission (VEC), British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), Emily Carr University of Art and Design, Langara College, Simon Fraser University (SFU), University of British Columbia (UBC) and Vancouver Community College (VCC). The project is supported by Vancouver's Campus City Collaborative (C3).

## Team Members



**Jaclyn Bruneau** is a 4th-year Communications student at Simon Fraser University, passionate about independent media, contemporary art and LGBTQ issues. She has volunteered for the Vancouver International Film Festival, TEDx Conferences, WISH Drop-in Centre (for female-identified sex workers on the DTES), and the Vancouver Biennale. She is a writer and an editor, constantly exploring ideas about messaging, and capable of embodying a wide array of topics and styles. Jaclyn has spent time volunteering in Harlem and the Bronx of New York City, tutoring and mentoring inner city kids. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, making her own clothes, experimenting in the kitchen, and brainstorming her next project.



**Martyna Purchla** is a fourth-year Health Sciences student at Simon Fraser University. Having spent four months in India working with a non-governmental organization that empowers victims of human trafficking she became even more passionate about issues surrounding gender equity, sustainability in developing countries and how globalization and international trade agreements impact health status. Currently, she is juggling school, working as a research assistant at SFU, volunteering for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Outreach Committee, and collaborating with friends on a social venture that raises awareness about sex trafficking and exploitation. She enjoys the thrill and adrenalin rush of triathlons and surfing.



**Becky Till** is a forth year Human Geography student at Simon Fraser University with a keen interest in sustainable community development, arts for social change, and food (growing, cooking and eating). She has worked as an environmental coordinator for the Township of Langley where she developed and implemented an ambitious four-stream school recycling system that will be used as a model for a district-wide recycling program. She also conducted extensive research and promotion for the food scraps recycling program. Becky also volunteers on the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives youth outreach committee, is a singer and a writer who has toured Western Canada and Europe, and has recently taken up the banjo. This summer she will be conducting qualitative field research during a tour of Northern BC. Becky's goal is to synthesize her love of people, sustainability initiatives, and music into a career path.



**Victoria Veidner** is a human geography student, currently completing her last semester at Simon Fraser University. She has extensive course work experience in the environmental field including the completion of two separate field schools abroad in England and Poland. She has also gained experience close to home, having completed two work terms at Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) working in the Groundfish Management Unit (GMU) and at BC Hydro working in the corporate Environment & Sustainability department. Besides geography related experience she has also gained a business perspective as a marketing coordinator for an international dental company. Victoria is an avid traveller, spending her summer months in Slovakia with her family, and travelling to new destinations across Europe.

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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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### What has the City of Vancouver asked for?

Sadhu Johnston, Vancouver's Deputy City Manager, was asked what project he would want a group of keen students working on to help realize the *Access to Nature* goal outlined in Vancouver's *Greenest City Action Plan*. One of his main visions was to have Vancouver's abandoned spaces addressed and transformed.

### What did we provide?

Our team took on this challenge by:

**Creating a detailed map** of all the orphaned spaces in the Grandview-Woodlands neighborhood, one of six neighborhoods pinpointed as "park deficient" by the Parks Board.

**Transforming a space** to contribute to the *Access to Nature* goal and to exhibit qualities more conducive to leisure, relaxation, and connection.

### What is an "Orphaned Space"?

Any lot, area, strip, triangle, curb, or fragment of the urban landscape, which can be characterized as underutilized, abandoned or otherwise lonely. They are spaces, big and small, with the potential to be more. A more familiar term may be "abandoned spaces" but given the literature, we decided to follow suit using "orphaned spaces."

## What are the project goals?

1. The map will become a valuable resource for a variety of city workers, citizens, and any other party who expresses interest (will be public).
2. Our project will encourage residents to revitalize orphaned spaces both in the Grandview-Woodlands area and beyond, as a step toward increasing *Access to Nature* – one of Vancouver's 10 Greenest City goals.
3. Our Facebook group will be a helpful and fun resource for people keen to take on mapping and revitalization projects in their own neighborhoods. It will also display a photo log of people interacting with the art piece in our new space.
4. Local residents will enjoy the newly converted space for years to come.
5. City staff will be keen to collaborate on further student projects due to their positive experience with our group.

## Who is our main contact?

Andrew Pask a Community Planner for the City of Vancouver (in the Grandview-Woodlands area) and Director of the Vancouver Public Space Network (VPSN). He provided us with background reading, gave us insight into what we might expect undertaking a project of this type, assisted us in the process of partnering with numerous city workers, and helped us strategize mapping and community conversations.

# METHODOLOGY

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## 1. Creating a map of the Grandview-Woodlands Neighborhood



### Mapping

We mapped all orphaned spaces between Clark to Nanaimo and East Broadway to the water (*refer to image 1*). We did this by:

- a. Creating a typography log to describe the space, and surrounding area (*See Appendix A*).

#### Criteria included:

- Address
- Lot space or thoroughfare
- Size of the space
- Volume and lighting
- Amenities
- Residential housing, commercial facilitates, industrial district
- Plant life
- Pedestrian, bike or vehicle traffic
- Other comments

- b. Using VanMap to locate layers of the city owned spaces, property numbers and city owned projects in progress in the Grandview Woodlands neighborhood (<http://vanmapp.vancouver.ca/>)
- c. Biking and driving around the Grandview Woodlands neighbourhood for three days. Took pictures of orphan spaces and filled criteria based on typography log (See Appendix A).

## Classifying

We classified all the orphaned spaces into four types:

### City-Owned Orphaned Spaces

These are spaces owned by the City of Vancouver that are under-utilized.

### City-Owned Projects with Potential

Existing parks or green spaces with low functionality. Very often they are bare areas with grass, and minimal amenities. Simple transformations would increase usage.

### Privately-Owned Orphaned Spaces

Although these spaces are privately-owned, it is common for landowners to rent spaces that are currently orphaned if the transformation contributes to social good, as the owners will receive a tax break. Take into consideration that transformations here are typically temporary.

### Parking Lots

A second map was created to explore alternative uses of current parking lots. Could parking lots become more effectively used? What if property owners rented these spaces for farmers markets over the weekend? Or sections of larger parking lots transformed into mini-parks? The possibilities are multitudinous – we just need to think outside the box.

There are three categories of parking lots

1. *Paid Parking Lots*
2. *Private Parking Lots*: Intended for use by employees or residents of a building
3. *Public Service Parking Lots*: Intended for public use, includes parking lots in community centres, churches and educational institutions

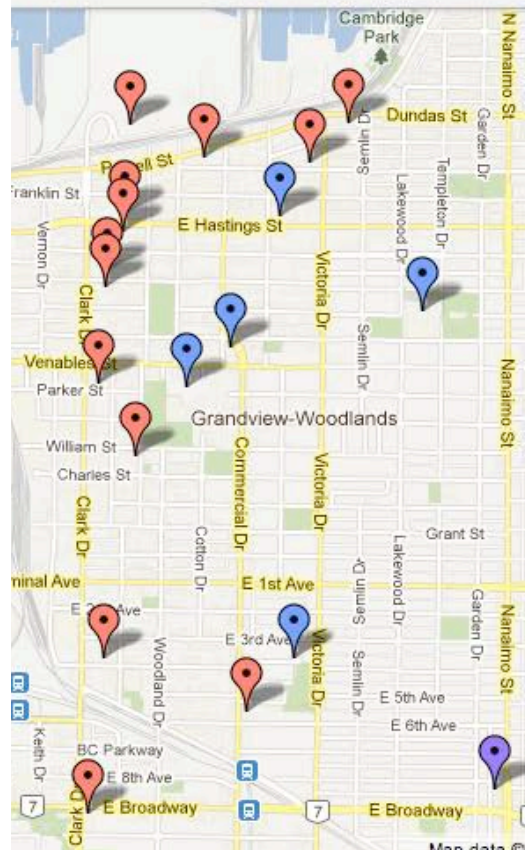


**Image 1: Grandview-Woodlands Orphaned Spaces**



GRANDVIEW WOODLANDS – ORPHANED SPACES

<http://g.co/maps/xfhq9>



GRANDVIEW WOODLANDS – PARKING LOTS

<http://g.co/maps/z7vq8>

## 2. Transforming a space



## Choosing a space

After exploring the neighbourhood, we decided the best spot for a transformation was somewhere with high foot- and bike- traffic. We loved the idea - following Green Streets' lead - of improving the aesthetic of boulevards, traffic circles and road pork chops. With careful consideration of each space in relation to our limited time frame, we choose a "pork chop" on Commercial Drive and Adanac Street. The space has an exceptional view of the mountains and is a great spot for people-watching.

As fate would have it, the City's Engineering Department had existing plans to reconstruct our space and the surrounding sidewalks in an initiative to slow traffic and create a grass-and-tree parkette. Upon discovering this, we proposed a richer, community-based approach to designing this now-larger space, which they agreed to take on.



## The Picture Frame

What better way to urge people to re-conceptualize the current use and appearance of a space than by literally framing it? The construction of the elegant, empty photo frame revolves around its purpose as an interactive art piece, inviting people to take photos, spend time, and consider their environment. Our frame is made from sustainable materials and was constructed by the City's fabrication shop. The frame captures the North Shore mountains, the Port of Vancouver, the busy intersection of Commercial and Hastings, and of course, the newly-transformed space. Our vision was made possible with the generous help of Peter Judd and Neal Carley, of the City's engineering departments, and their talented teams who worked on the design, construction, and implementation of the frame (*see appendix B*).



### Community Conversations

It was important to us to have conversations with residents surrounding the space to ensure their ideas were woven into our plan. We visited the Lion's Den, a residence for seniors across the street from the space, and they showed immense support for the project. The majority of residents requested flowers, native plants, colour, and some seating. In addition, the photo frame was an exciting prospect for residents. We also held an open, drop-by consultation at a local café to meet residents, pitch our idea, and find community partners.



### Greening the Space

Once we had collected feedback from the community we began drafting a landscape plan, which included the desires of the community. To make this transformation a reality, Sara Orchard, Vancouver's Green Streets coordinator, is supplying low maintenance plants and the Parks Board is donating park benches. We collaboratively planned out the placement of each section of the new space.

# Conclusion

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## How does our project add value?

1. **The orphaned space map** is the first of its kind created in Vancouver. City officials have classified this map as a fundamental resource in locating spaces for projects aimed at achieving the greenest city goals. Community gardens, farmers markets, and parks are just some of the future projects being discussed to revitalize these orphaned spaces. Furthermore, this map is open to the public, and intended for use by everyone. Our intention is that this map becomes a valuable tool for communities who are interested in transforming a space into something desirable in their neighborhoods.
2. **The transformation of the space** fulfills the *Access to Nature* goal in one of the six "park deficient" neighborhoods by providing local residents with a new natural space. In addition, installing the frame has the potential to broaden perceptions and awareness of nature. Through our community conversations we engaged local residents in the process of transforming a space and more importantly, took into consideration the requests of the community. We hope this transformation sparks a trend of community stewardship over other orphaned spaces, and once under-utilized hubs become loved destinations.

## What is our measure of success?

1. Enlivening a space in one of the six park deficient, priority neighborhoods.
2. Generating excitement around the Greenest City Goal of *Access to Nature*.
3. Providing the City and the general public with a resource that contributes to future community projects.
4. Demonstrating the possibilities for change when the City works in collaboration with students.
5. Piloting a project that begins the snowball effect for other positive transformations within the City of Vancouver

# Moving Forward

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## Completing the transformation

The week after class concrete will be poured to install the frame and the benches. Once the Engineering Department's completes construction, we will commence planting and beautifying with the help of volunteers from the community.

## Creating a maintenance plan

A maintenance plan is vital to the preservation and beatification of the space. The transformed space belongs to the community, and it would be ideal if residence of the area took ownership of the parkette. We have identified one volunteer within the community who is enthusiastic about looking after the space. In the coming weeks we will create a maintenance plan with our volunteer. We also hope to build partnerships with additional community stakeholders to create a stronger sense of ownership and to ensure long-term maintenance.

## What gaps have we identified?

For individuals or groups interested in transforming an orphaned space we have some recommendations.

1. Do not hesitate to build partnerships with stakeholders, non- governmental organizations, volunteers, and City staff. In most cases they are eager to provide assistance. If you are attempting to execute your project in a short time frame contact potential partners immediately.
2. Partners can provide valuable resources to your orphaned space, such as plants, manpower, time, power-tools, benches, and maybe they will even build you an art piece. However, funding can be difficult to find. The City of Vancouver, as well as other organizations provide grants for projects that contribute to social good. If time permits, it would be worthwhile to apply for these grants to secure extra funding.
3. For future CityStudio students considering a similar project determine what it means to be collaboration with the City of Vancouver. This is a question we asked ourselves frequently. We asked for lots of services from the City, but when do you overstep your boundaries? Discuss this with your project lead as well as your instructors.
4. Identify community volunteers and prepare a maintenance plan as early as possible. Many community-driven projects fall into disrepair once enthusiasm dies. Due to this reality, the City requires a plan, which outlines how long-term care will be provided.

5.

## Acknowledgements

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Our lead Andrew Pask, COV Community Planner

Neal Carley, COV Director of Streets Division, Engineering Services

Duane Elverum, Co-founder CityStudio

Sadhu Johnston, COV Deputy City Manager

Peter Judd, COV General Manager of Engineering Services

Darrel Letendre, COV Superintendent of Fabrication/Black Smith/Machine Shop

David Louie, Working Trades Foreman

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# Appendix A- Mapping Materials

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## Typography Log

Orphaned City-Owned Spaces Tracking Log

**Address/Location:**

**Destination? OR Thoroughfare?**

**Lot space? OR Street Space (pork chop, roundabout)?**

**Size:**

- ☐ *SMALL* (ping pong table or smaller),
- ☐ *MEDIUM* (in between ping pong table and tennis court), OR
- ☐ *LARGE* (tennis court or bigger)

**Physical Features / Amenities:**

Live / Dead Grass   Concrete   Pebbles   Garbage  
Water   Graffiti   / Art   No/Seating  
Covered/Uncovered   Living / Dead Plants   Stores  
Residential   Office/Industrial   Bike Parking

**Tone:** High / Medium / Low Volume   Loud / Quiet  
Appears Dangerous / Safe   Lighting – Good / Bad / Unsure

**Bounded by:**

Wall(s)   Fences   Fenced-off

**Type and Number of Entrances:**

**Other Comments:**



## GRANDVIEW WOODLANDS ORPHANED SPACES LOG

### PRIVATELY OWNED ORPHANED SPACES

#### # 1460 VENABLES STREET



- ~9500 sq ft fenced off destination space surrounded by sidewalks
- Near commercial facilities in industrial area
- Appears somewhat dangerous
- Poorly lit and medium noise level
- 90% concrete covered in graffiti art
- Low pedestrian and bike traffic, high car traffic

#### #1601 VENABLES STREET



- ~6200 sq ft fenced off destination space surrounded by sidewalks
- Near commercial facilities in industrial area
- Appears somewhat dangerous
- Poorly lit and medium noise level
- 70% dead grass and plants, 30% concrete
- High car traffic. Low bike and pedestrian traffic
- Minimal amount of graffiti art.

#### # 2075 EAST HASTINGS STREET



- ~15,000 sq ft. fenced off destination space, surrounded by sidewalks.
- Near commercial facilities in industrial area
- Safe area
- Well lit and high noise level
- 80% dead grass and 20% concrete
- High car traffic. Medium pedestrian and bike traffic
- Other: Possibly contaminated land



### #603 VICTORIA DRIVE



- ~4,100 fenced off destination space, surrounded by sidewalks
- Near residential housing and commercial facilities
- Safe area
- Poorly lit and medium noise level
- Dead grass and minimal amount of concrete
- Minimal amount of graffiti art
- Low pedestrian, bike and car traffic

### #1610 POWELL STREET



- ~16,500 sq ft fenced off destination space, surrounded by sidewalks
- Near commercial facilities in industrial area
- Appears somewhat dangerous
- Well lit and high level noise
- Dead plants and grass. Large rocks
- High car traffic. Medium pedestrian traffic. Low bike traffic

### #1299 POWELL STREET



- ~ 3,400 sq ft fenced off destinations space, surrounded by sidewalks on the south and east side, and railway tracks on the north side.
- In industrial area
- Appears somewhat dangerous
- Poorly lit with high noise level
- Dead grass and minimal amount of concrete
- Graffiti art
- Amenities include: garbage cans
- High car traffic. Low pedestrian and bike traffic
- Adjacent to port bypass connector

#### #1680 EAST HASTINGS STREET



- ~16,600 sq ft fenced off destination spaces, surrounded by sidewalk
- In industrial area
- Appears somewhat dangerous
- Poorly lit and high noise level
- Dead grass
- High car traffic. Low pedestrian and bike traffic
- Other: possibly contaminated land

#### #1343 NAPIER STREET



- ~3,600 sq ft fenced off destination space, surrounded by sidewalk
- Near residential housing in industrial area
- Well light and high noise level
- Minimal amount of live grass, mostly concrete
- High car traffic.
- Other: billboard, lots of moss and garbage cans

#### #1436 WOODLAND DRIVE



- ~8,800 sq ft fenced off destination space surrounded by sidewalks
- In residential area
- Safe area
- Well lit and low noise level
- Dead grass and pebbles
- Other: Park on opposite side of the street. Contaminated land

### #1661 EAST 2<sup>ND</sup> AVENUE



- ~ 10,400 Sq ft fenced off spaces, surrounded by sidewalk and adjacent housing
- Near residential housing and commercial facilities
- Safe area
- Well lit and low noise level
- Dead grass and plants. Pebbles. Garbage cans
- Low car traffic, and medium-high pedestrian traffic
- Other: Plans for construction – multiunit residence

## CITY OWNED PROJECTS WITH POTENTIAL OPRHANES SPACES

### #1806 ADANAC STREET



- ~21,000 sq ft destination space surrounded by sidewalks
- Near residential housing
- Safe area
- Well lit and medium noise level
- Live grass and roughly 5 large trees
- Amenities include: playground, bike parking, garbage cans and seating
- Medium pedestrian and bike traffic. Low car traffic

### # 2099 WALL STREET



- ~30,000 sq ft destination space, surrounded by sidewalks on the south-side and railway tracks on the north-side
- Near residential housing in industrial area
- Safe area
- Poorly lit and medium level of noise
- Living grass, trees and maintained community garden
- Amenities include: garbage cans, seating, playground on opposite side of the street
- Low car, bike and pedestrian traffic



### #2160 COMMERCIAL DRIVE



- ~500 sq ft destination spaces, surrounded by sidewalks
- Near residential housing and commercial facilities
- Safe area
- Well lit and medium noise level
- Live plants and live grass
- Amenities include: bike parking
- Other: Near busy JJ Bean

### #1636 CLARK DRIVE



- ~ 8,900 sq ft destination spaces bounded by 2 sidewalks, one alley
- Near residential housing in industrial area
- Appears safe
- Well lit, high noise level
- Live grass and plants
- High car traffic, medium pedestrian and bike traffic
- Other: Large billboard on south side. Corridor view of the mountains

### #1001 COTTON DRIVE



- ~ 1,100 sq ft destination space surrounded by walls and sidewalks
- In residential area
- Safe area
- Well lit and low noise level
- Live grass and plants
- Low car and foot traffic
- Other: Mural art

### **MEDIAN ON EAST PENDER AND VICTORIA DRIVE TO TEMPLETON DRIVE**



- ~16,900 sq ft thoroughfare median
- In residential area
- Safe area
- Well lit and medium noise level
- Live grass and roughly 15 large trees
- Low bike, pedestrian and car traffic

## CITY OWNED ORPHANED SPACES

### COMMERCIAL DRIVE AND ADANAC STREET



- ~580 sq ft destination space, surrounded by roads
- Near residential housing and commercial facilities
- Safe Area
- Live grass
- Well lit and medium noise level
- High bike traffic
- Other: On the #20 bus route to downtown and corridor view of the mountains

### #1395 MCLEAN DRIVE



- ~3600 sq ft fenced off destination space, surrounded by sidewalk
- In residential area
- Safe area
- Well lit and high noise level
- Uneven landscape, live grass and 2 large trees
- High car traffic, medium pedestrian and bike traffic

### GRANDVIEW HIGHWAY NORTH from CLARK STREET TO WOODLAND STREET



- ~140,00 sq ft fenced off thoroughfare, surrounded by sidewalks
- Near residential housing in industrial area
- Safe area
- Poorly lit and medium noise level
- Live grass and dead plants
- High car and bike traffic, low pedestrian traffic
- Other: Does not get much natural daylight, seating



## Appendix B- Space Transformation

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### The Picture Frame

