

# **REPORT**

## ***Parks & Recreation, Community Services and Engineering Services***

**To:** Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council      **Date:** June 9, 2025

**From:** Dean Gibson,  
Director- Parks & Recreation      **File:** 2708902

Blair Fryer,  
Director- Community Services

Lisa Leblanc,  
Director- Engineering Services

**Item #:** 2025-168

**Subject:** **Fourth Street Stairs Project Update and Public Realm Enhancements**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. *THAT the report titled "Fourth Street Stairs Project Update and Public Realm Enhancements" dated June 9, 2025 be received for information.*
  2. *THAT staff be directed to develop a programming plan to support activation at the new Flex Space at the Fourth Street Stairs and bring a resource request for consideration at a future Council meeting.*
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### **PURPOSE**

To update Council on the progress on the Fourth Street Stairs Project and planned enhancements designed to support daily recreational activities, community events and public activations in this area of Downtown.

## **SUMMARY**

This report provides Council with an update on the Fourth Street Stairs Project, a new connection and public space under construction at the east end of Front Street Mews (at Fourth Street). While the focus of the report is on the progress of the permanent stairs and hillside (designed in 2017/2018) which more seamlessly provides pedestrian connection between Columbia and Front Street, this report also highlights complementary proposed enhancements for the flex space located underneath the parkade. These additions are currently under review and aim to ensure this new connection and flexible public space can be enjoyed by the public year-round, day and night.

## **BACKGROUND**

Following the [Downtown Livability: Public Realm Improvements and Activation report to Council on December 12, 2022](#), staff are now providing an update on the Fourth Street Stairs and Flex Space project located at the east end of the Front Street Mews (below the parkade). Developed in 2018/2019 in collaboration with stakeholders, the design features:

- Permanent concrete stairs;
- Hard surface treatment for the hillside to mitigate invasive species growth and minimize risks associated with current activities on and adjacent to the temporary stairs and hillside.
- Feature lighting
- Improved drainage
- Integrated flex space with opportunities for a wide range of programs and large-scale community events, as well as day-to-day activities (i.e. informal seating, street-style skate features and two half-court basketball courts).
- Colorful paving treatment to reinforce this area as a public space and encourage regular recreational activity in the covered area (beneath the existing parkade structure).

Precedent images of the site feature are included as Attachment “A”.

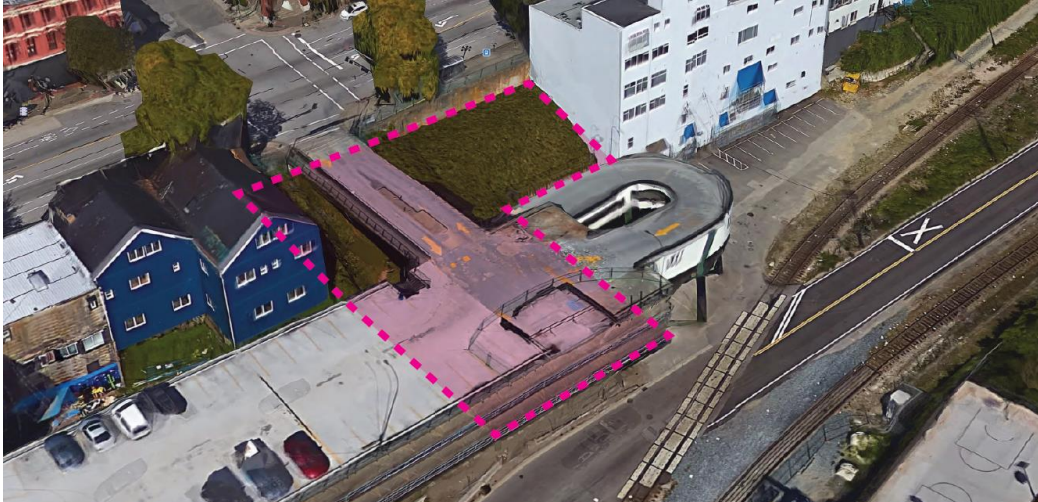


Figure 1. Overview- Location of Permanent Fourth Street Stairs and Flex Space

The design for the western portion of the Front Street Mews was shaped by extensive community feedback. This process highlighted the need for continuity throughout the entire Mews and directly influenced the Fourth Street Stairs and Flex Space project.

Key consultation milestones include:

- **Stakeholder Workshops (Downtown businesses):** Emphasized continuity in design elements (colors, materials, lighting) across the entire Mews (Begbie to Fourth Street).
- **Comprehensive Plan:** Developed based on feedback and supported by the Mayor’s Task Force on the Riverfront and Public Realm (January 2017).
- **Temporary Improvements (2018):** Installed on the eastern Mews to support events like "Fridays on Front Holiday Edition," showcasing the potential of this covered space.
- **Design Workshops (October 2017):** Engaged Front Street business owners and DBIA on ideas for the permanent Fourth Street Stairs and Flex Space.
- **Public Art Advisory Committee (September 2017):** Consulted on public art integration opportunities for the project.
- **Skatepark Relocation Consultation (November 2017):** Led to the recommendation for "street-style" skate spots to be integrated into the covered space at Fourth Street, complementing the new Queen's Park skatepark.

This collaborative approach directly informed the final design and features of the Fourth Street Stairs and Flex Space, ensuring it meets community needs and enhances downtown livability.

Updates on the Fourth Street Stair and Flex Space Project have been provided to the DBIA, local business owners and the broader community through the Invest New West Newsletter and the dedicated [Projects on the Go page](#) on the city’s website. In addition,

construction notices have been hand-delivered to the surrounding businesses and residents and emailed to the DBIA.

**DISCUSSION**

The final design for the permanent Fourth Street Stairs and Flex Space (refer to **Attachment A- Fourth Street Stairs and Flex Space Design and Precedent Images**) aims to more seamlessly provide pedestrian connection between Columbia and Front Street and create a unique identity and vitality at the east end of the Front Street Mews, providing a vibrant public space for year-round enjoyment, day and night. This new connection and public space is currently under construction and scheduled for completion in the fall of 2025.

Once completed, the Fourth Street Stairs and Flex Space will provide opportunities to positively activate and animate this formerly underutilized downtown area. Its unique covered and lit design, coupled with its connection to both Columbia Street and the Front Street Mews, makes it a key pedestrian route to the Riverfront Esplanade, park spaces and Downtown retail corridor.

A successful example that demonstrated its potential for successful winter events due to its covered nature was the "Fridays on Front Holiday Edition" that the Downtown Business Improvement Association (DBIA) hosted in this space in 2018.



*Figure 2. Image- Fridays on Front Holiday Edition (2018)*

Community events and activations at the Fourth Street Flex Space will depend on ongoing joint efforts between the City, community/business organizations, and local residents. These partnerships will be explored to commence in fall/winter 2025, following completion of the capital project. Staff will also assess the additional resources required for the City to facilitate and participate in these events as current resourcing of

staff, programming and maintenance budgets have not contemplated additional events within this space in 2025.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Report back to Council with an updated Community events and activations plan for fall 2025 and into 2026 with resource request as part of the 2026 budget process.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The 2025-2029 Capital Plan includes \$1,828,390 to complete the planning, design and construction of the Fourth Street Stairs and Flex Space. A community events and activations plan alongside associated operating costs related to a programming coordinator, maintenance and cleanliness will be explored and presented to Council at a future Council meeting after staff have connected with community organizations to ascertain interest and capacity.

### **INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON**

Interdepartmental liaison has occurred between staff from Parks & Recreation, Engineering and Community Services departments. The Finance Department has reviewed the Financial Implications section of this report.

### **OPTIONS**

There are three options for Council's consideration; they are:

1. *THAT* the report titled "Fourth Street Stairs Project Update and Public Realm Enhancements" dated June 9, 2025 be received for information.
2. *THAT* staff be directed to develop a programming plan to support activation at the new Flex Space at the Fourth Street Stairs and bring a resource request for consideration at a future Council meeting.
3. *THAT* staff be provided with alternate direction.

Options #1 and 2 are recommended.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Fourth Street Stairs and Flex Space project represents a significant investment in enhancing the vibrancy and usability of downtown public spaces. Upon its completion in October 2025, this thoughtfully designed, year-round amenity will transform an underutilized area into a dynamic hub for recreation, community events, and social

interaction. By creating a versatile and inviting connection between Columbia Street, the Front Street Mews, and the Riverfront, the City is proactively fostering a safer, more active, and enjoyable downtown for all residents and visitors.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A- Fourth Street Stairs and Flex Space Design and Precedent Images

**APPROVALS**

This report was prepared by:

Erika Mashig, Deputy Director- Parks, Policy and Planning  
Jen Arbo, Manager- Community Partnerships

This report was reviewed by:

Kwaku Agyare- Manu, Deputy Director- Engineering Services

This report was approved by:

Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer  
Dean Gibson, Director of Parks and Recreation  
Lisa Leblanc, Director of Engineering Services  
Blair Fryer, Director of Community Services