



**URBANARIUM  
STUDIO**

# **Public Washrooms & Our City**

**A BRIEF FOR THE URBANARIUM  
STUDIO MARCH 10, 2021,  
PREPARED BY SHIRLEY DUONG**



## **1** *CONTEXT*

*public washrooms and our city*

## **2** *PAST*

*history of public washrooms*

## **3** *PRESENT*

*impact of COVID-19 and existing facilities*

## **4** *FUTURE*

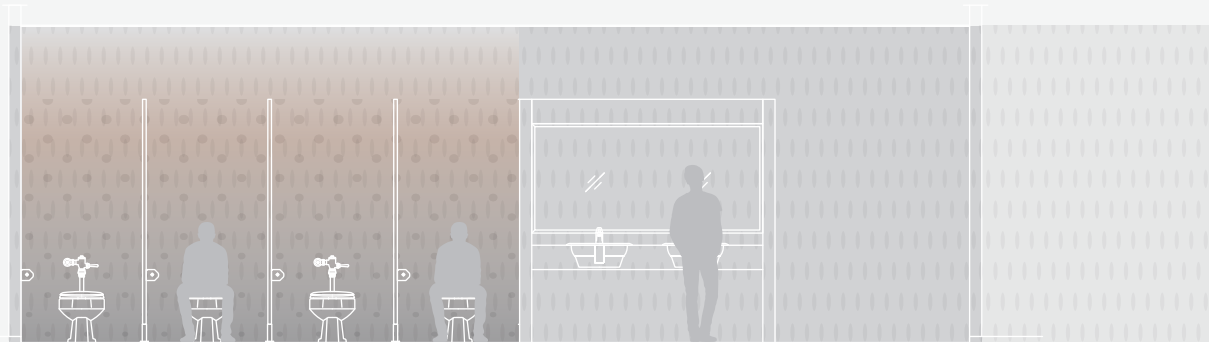
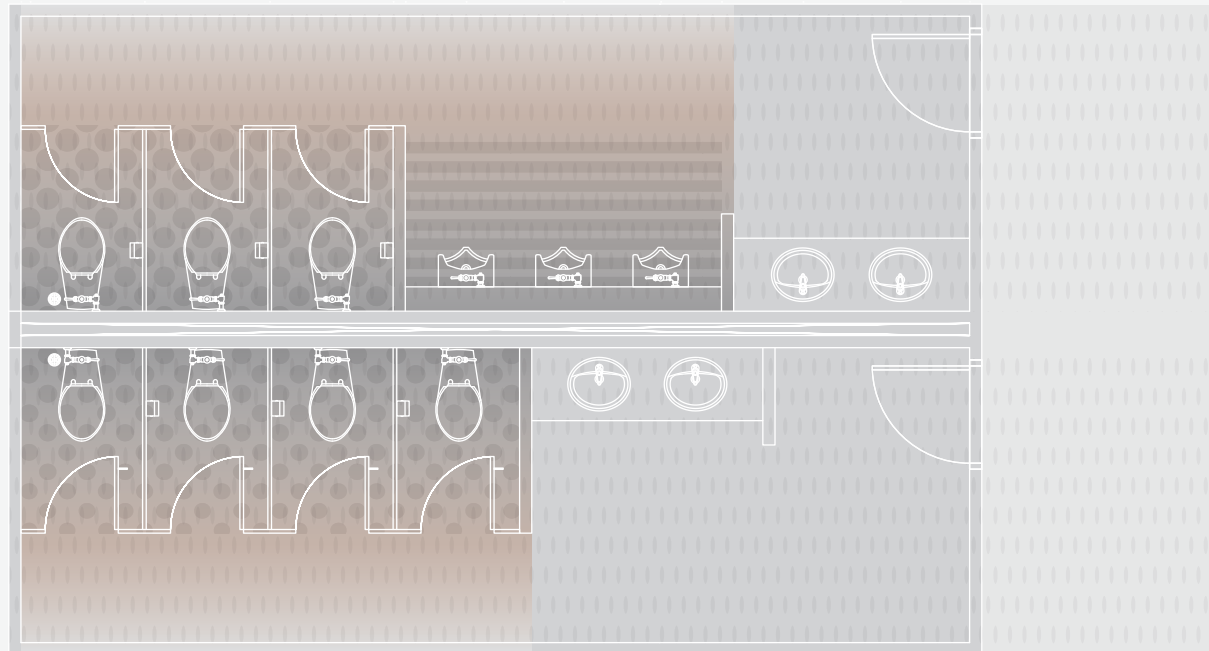
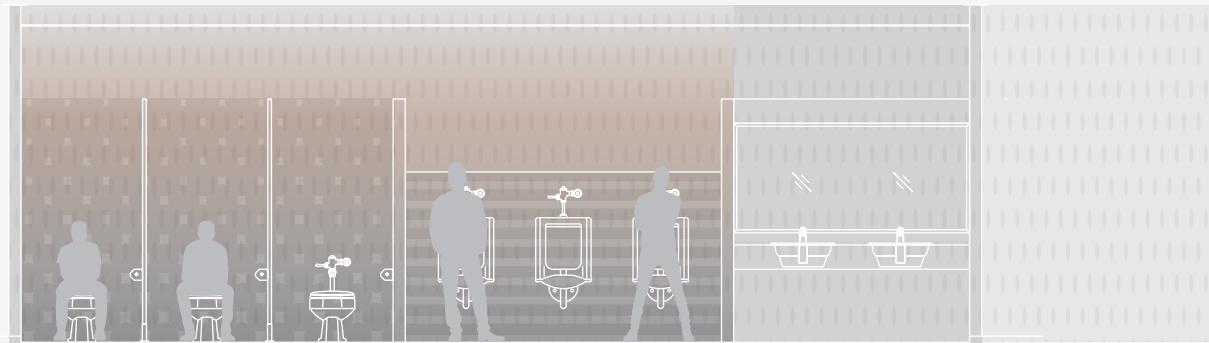
*opportunities and projects around the world*



## CONTEXT

*what is the relevance of public washrooms?*

- everyone needs to go
- we are not in complete control of our bodies
- public washrooms register psychological and sociological uncertainties about our bodies and surroundings

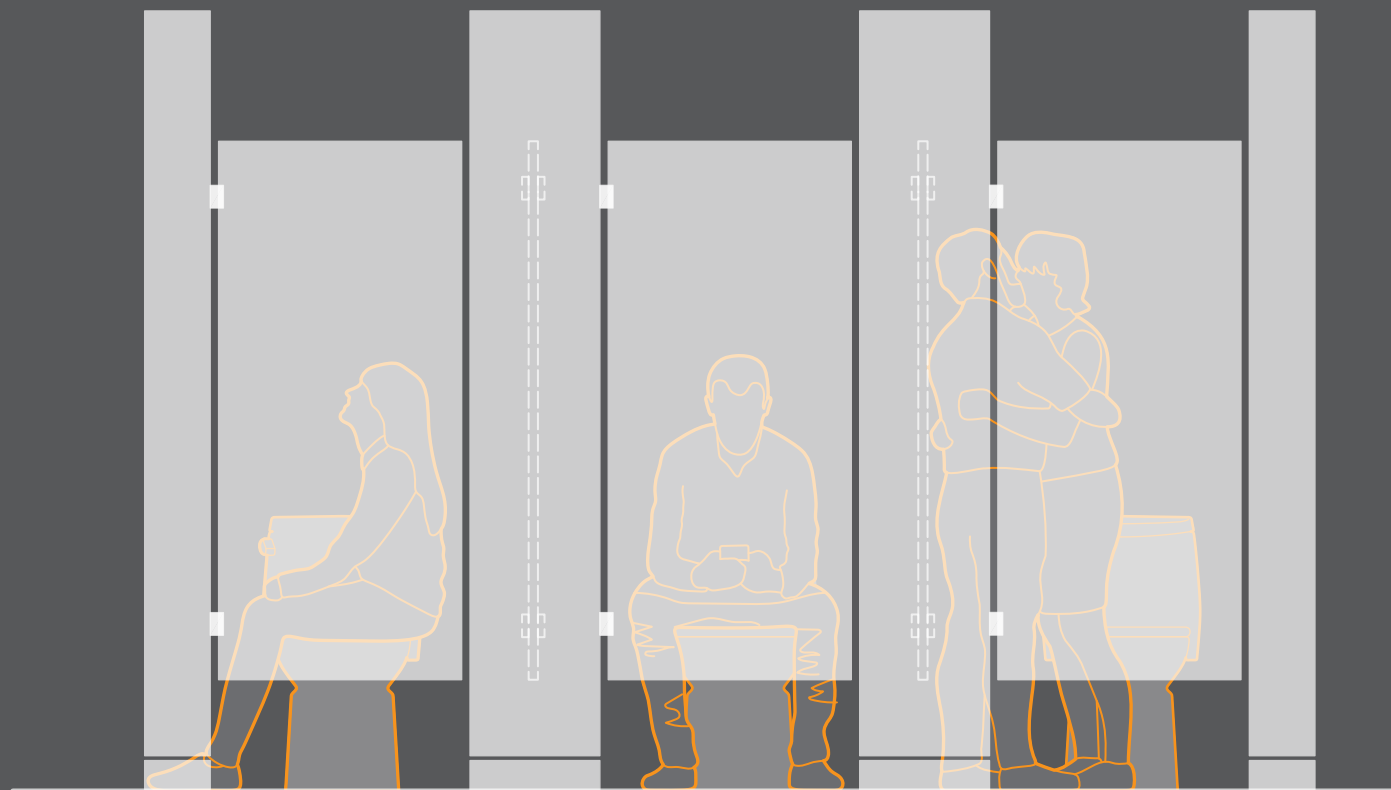


## CONTEXT

*how do public washrooms affect us?*

- scale of impact affects beyond just the building
- embodies larger issues of exclusion based on class, race, gender
- access to public washrooms should be a basic human right

*Public washrooms should be considered within a greater scope of urban design and policy.*



## **CONTEXT**

*how do we use washrooms?*

**USE TOILET, EMPTY COLOSTOMY BAGS, WASH HANDS, DRY HANDS/BODY, ACCESS WATER, USE A MIRROR, APPLY MAKEUP, ANY TYPE OF PERSONAL HYGIENE, BLOW YOUR NOSE, MENSTRUAL CYCLE NEEDS, TAKE MEDICATION, TAKE DRUGS, WASH UP, CHANGE CLOTHES, CHANGE A BABY, BREAST FEED, PRACTICE DAILY RITUALS WHERE YOU NEED TO DO QUIET, PRIVATE THINGS LIKE CRYING (THEY BECOME TEMPORARY HIDEOUTS), PLACE THAT IS CLIMATE CONTROLLED, RELIEF IN A VARIETY OF WAYS, THROW UP OR A PLACE TO BE SICK, MEET PEOPLE WHILE WAITING TO USE THEM, SAFETY, LOCK YOURSELF IN.. THINK OF ALL THE WAYS YOU NEED A QUICK SPOT TO BE QUITE, PRIVATE, WITHOUT DISTRACTION, HAVE SEX/SEXUAL ENCOUNTER**

***“PUBLIC TOILETS  
ARE A NECESSARY  
COMPONENT FOR PEOPLE  
TO INHABIT THE BUILT  
ENVIRONMENT”***

*- Clara Greed in “Urban Design: Public Toilets”*

## **CONTEXT**

*why do we need public washrooms in our cities?*



- increases mobility in our city, encourages access to our city
- component of our city's transportation network
- a tool that allows people to stay longer and go farther





## *PAST*

### *history of public washrooms*

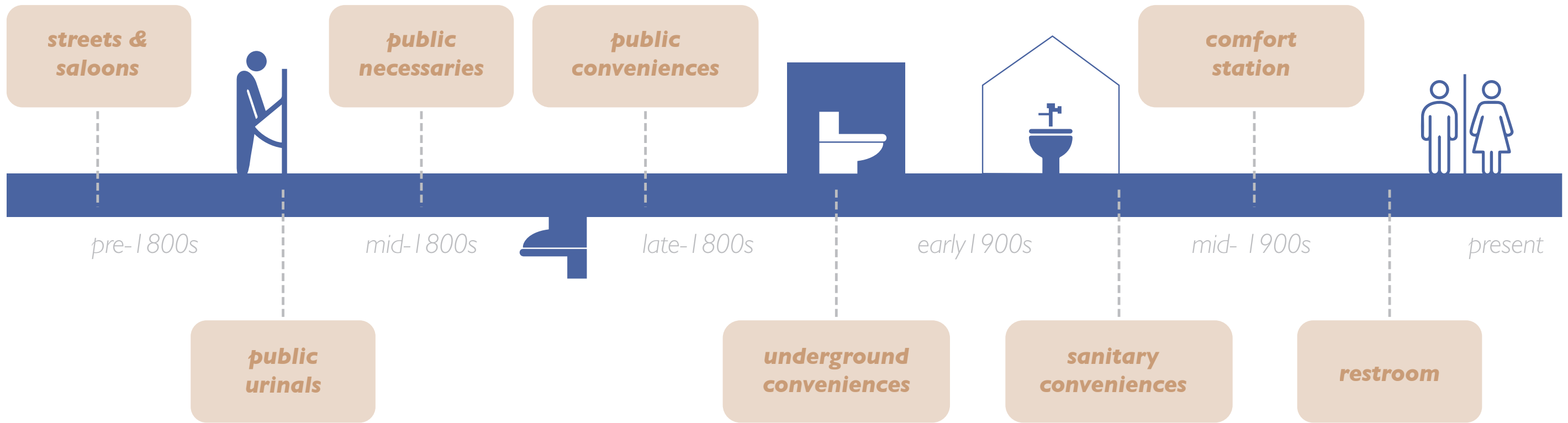
- public washrooms were implemented to prevent bodily elimination in the streets and the control disease and outbreak
- sanitary provisions and legislation evolved to meet the changing needs of the public and adapt to rapidly growing populations

[Link to article about Vancouver's public toilet history](#)

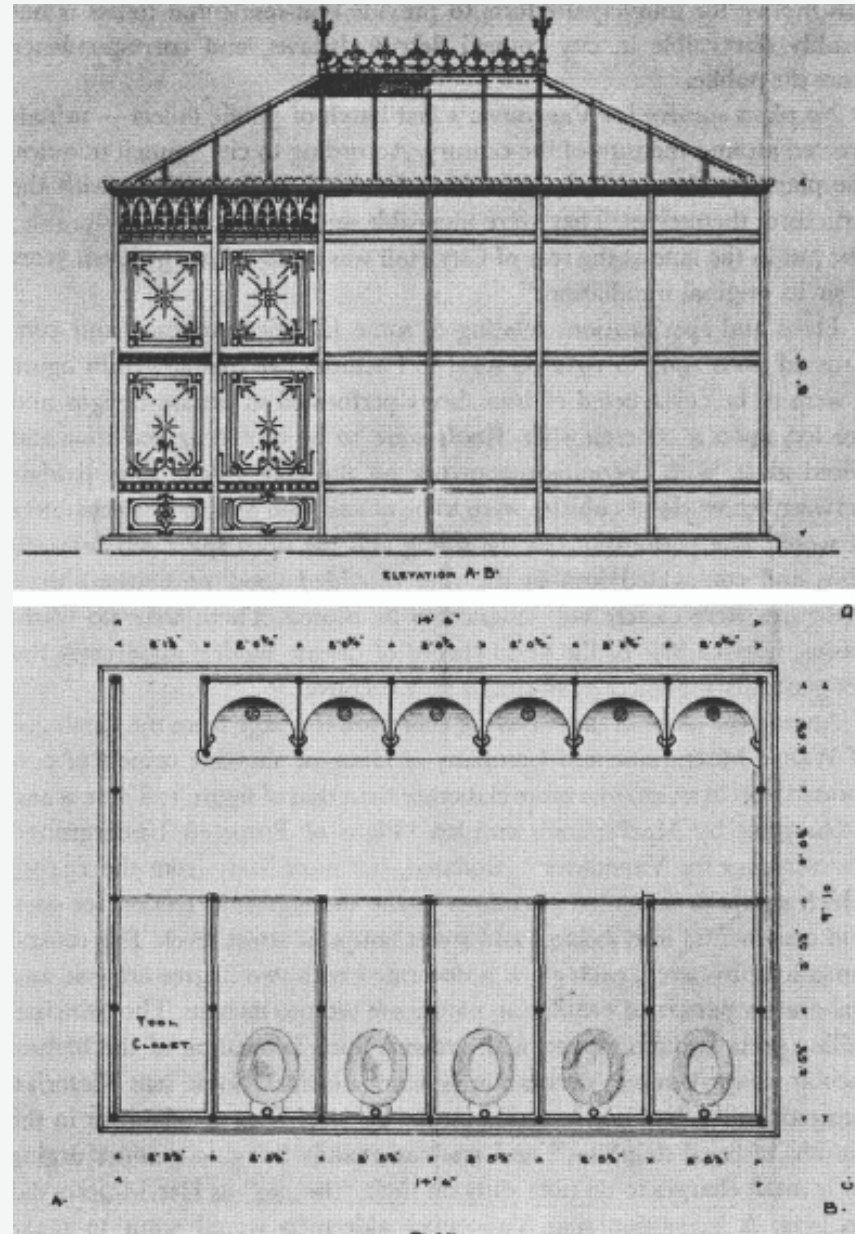
# EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC WASHROOMS

*adapting to promote better hygiene and cities*

Public Health Act of 1848



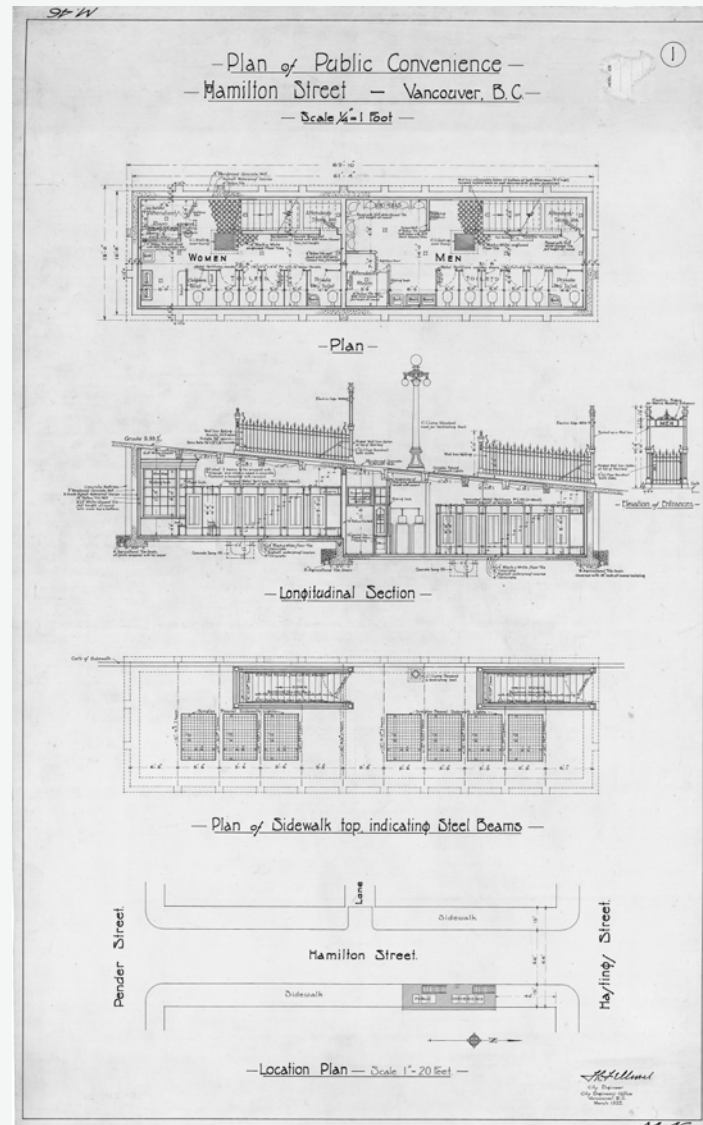
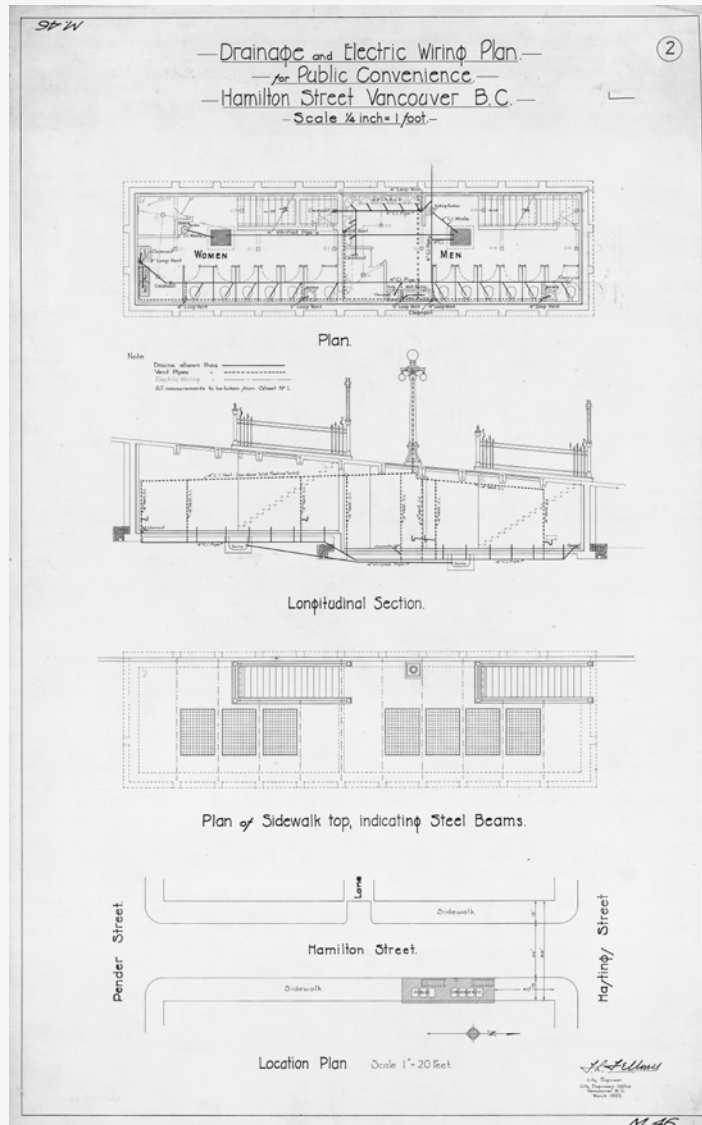




Andrews, Margaret W. "Sanitary Conveniences and the Retreat of the Frontier: Vancouver, 1886-1926."

## **PUBLIC CONVENIENCE** *history of public washrooms in Metro Vancouver*

Constructed from plans designed in England, Vancouver's first batch of public toilets were not durable and required to be replaced after ten years. These architectural drawings, commissioned for the City of Vancouver in 1908, illustrate an elaborate public convenience design to be placed as a prototypical facility in the city.



## UNDERGROUND CONVENIENCE

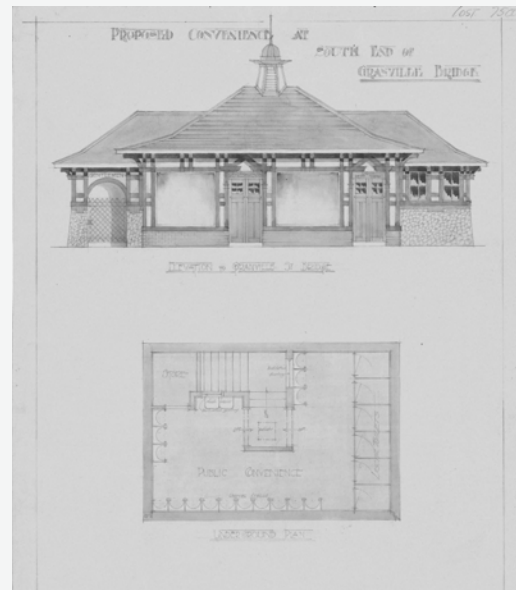
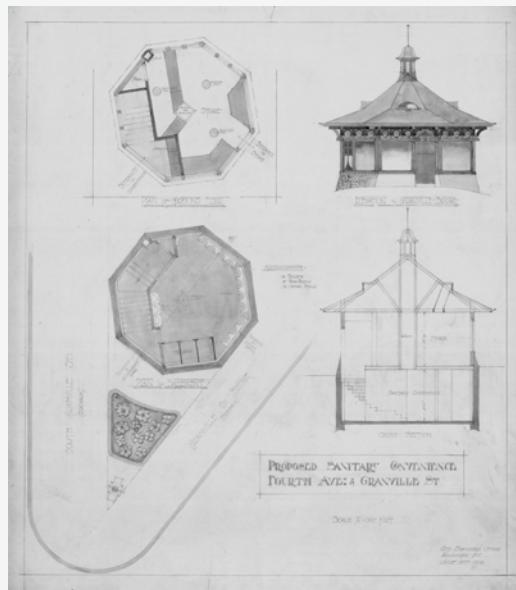
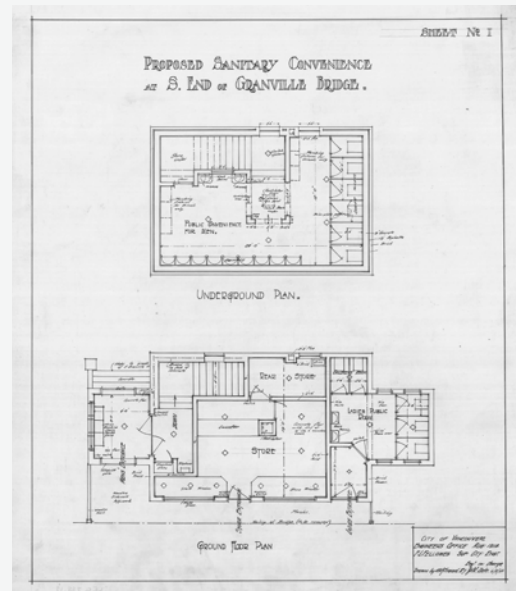
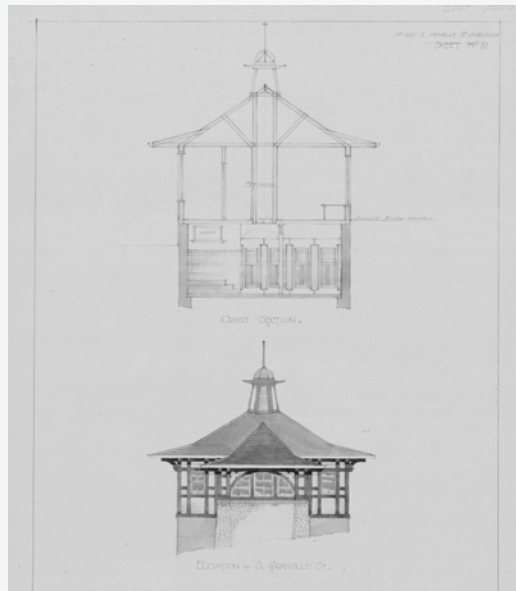
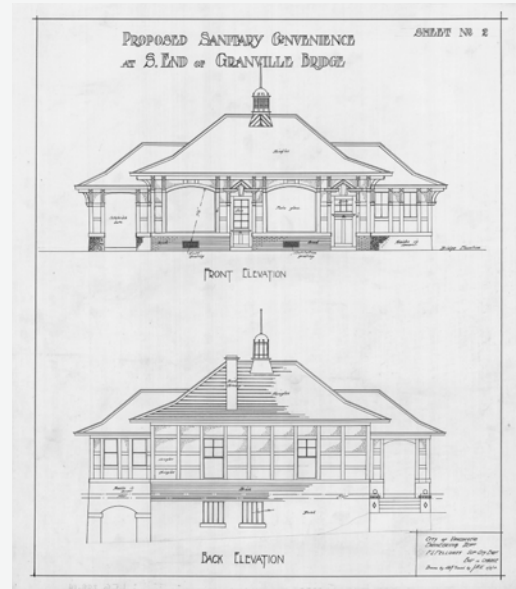
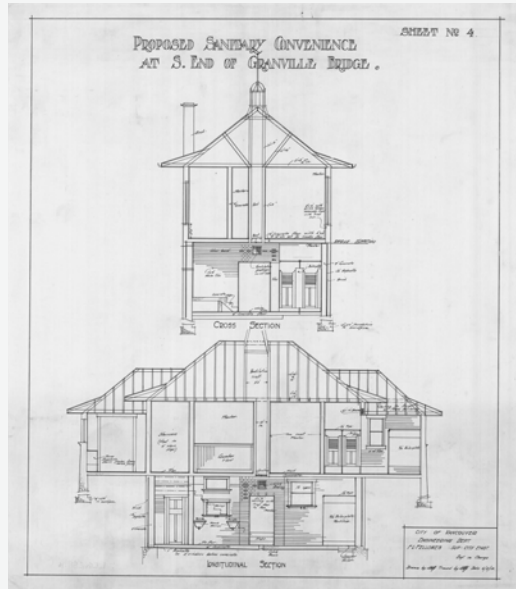
history of public washrooms in Metro Vancouver

Located underground, the Hamilton street underground convenience is removed from the bustling public streets. As part Vancouver's city provision to clean the urban context, the conveniences rid the streets of poor toilet behaviour and unsightly habits.

With limited operating hours from 6 am to 6 pm, they reportedly cost \$100,000 each year, and are not accessible to people with disabilities as it is located underground through stair access.

Constructed Hamilton Street underground convenience at Victory Square

Vancouver Archives



# SANITARY CONVENIENCE

history of public washrooms in Metro Vancouver

With growing urban sprawl, public work projects began to focus on developing peripheral parks rather than upgrading washroom facilities in urban centers. Numerous sanitary conveniences were proposed in outlying parks and along highways featuring attractive architecture and floral landscaping. These conveniences often combined washroom facilities with concession stands.

Proposed Sanitary  
Conveniences  
Around Vancouver  
(Never Built)

Vancouver  
Archives





Photos by Ben Nelms/ CBC News

## **PRESENT**

*impact from COVID-19*

- pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities and vulnerabilities due to lack of access to public washrooms in Metro Vancouver, especially DTES
- April 24, 2020, a newborn was found dead in a portable toilet
- portable toilets, meant to be a temporary solution, has created new health and safety problems
- a greater need for public washrooms is critical now more than ever

[Link to CBC article.](#)

**Victoria Public Urinal**

Architect:  
Matthew Soules

To address public urination in Victoria's downtown, this public art piece was created. Undulating metal tubes conceal one urinal with open air access.



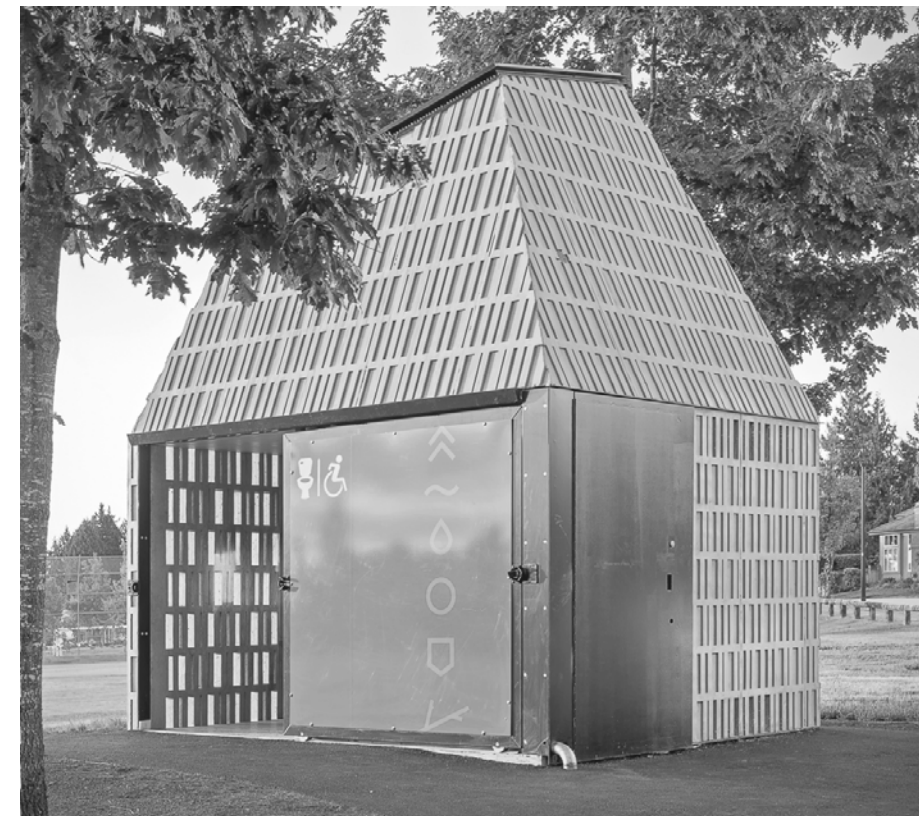
**Vancouver's Automated Public Toilet (APT)**

Manufactured by JCDecaux, these automated toilets self clean after each use. The average cost per unit is \$82,500. These facilities are often broken down due to its complex mechanisms.



## EXISTING WASHROOM FACILITIES

steps towards solving the problem in BC's urban cities



**Surrey's new modular park washroom**

Architect: JIM Architecture

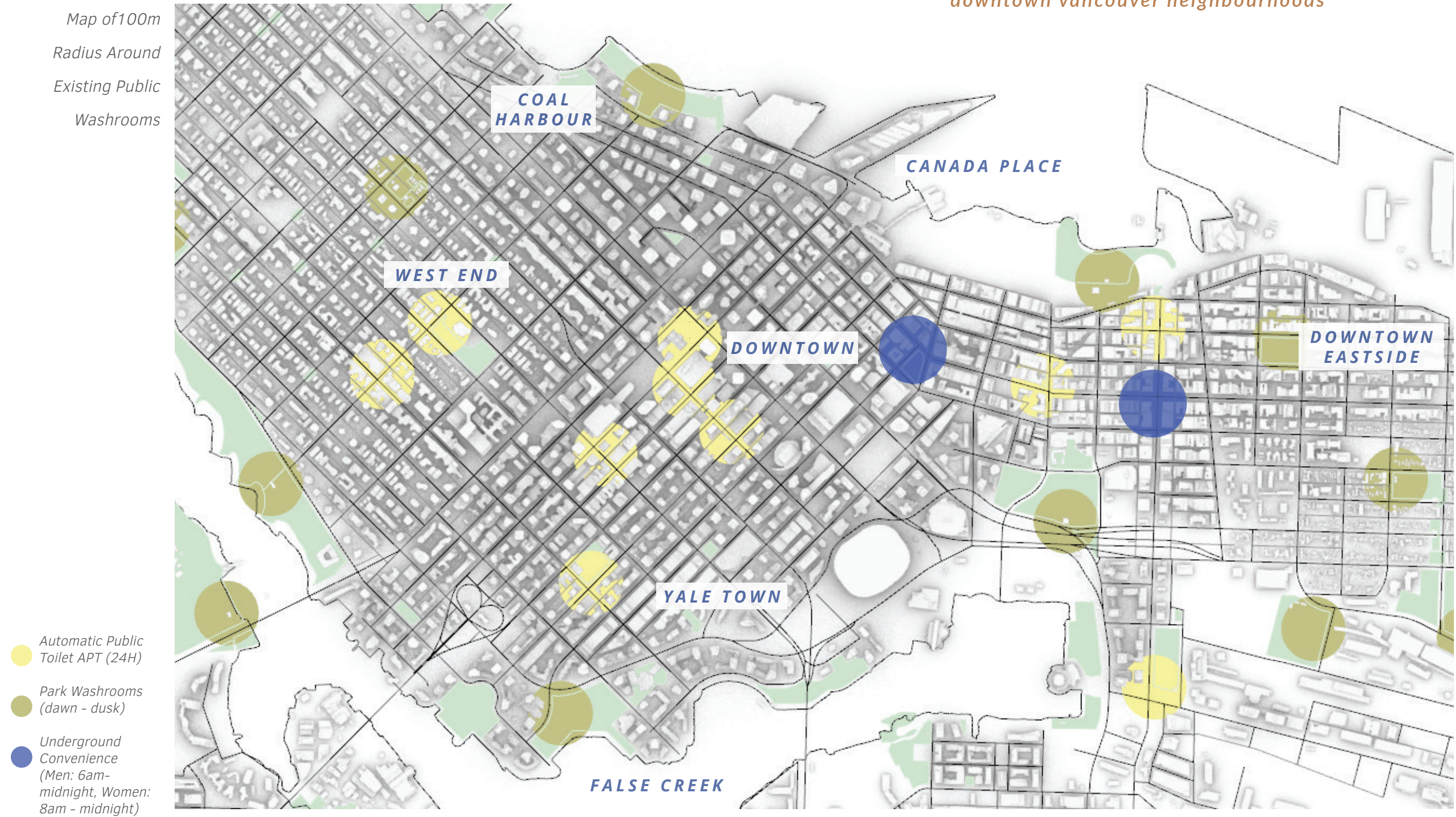
Commissioned by the city, specific features of this modular washroom allow installation throughout the park system, where needed.



# EXISTING WASHROOM FACILITIES

*downtown vancouver neighbourhoods*

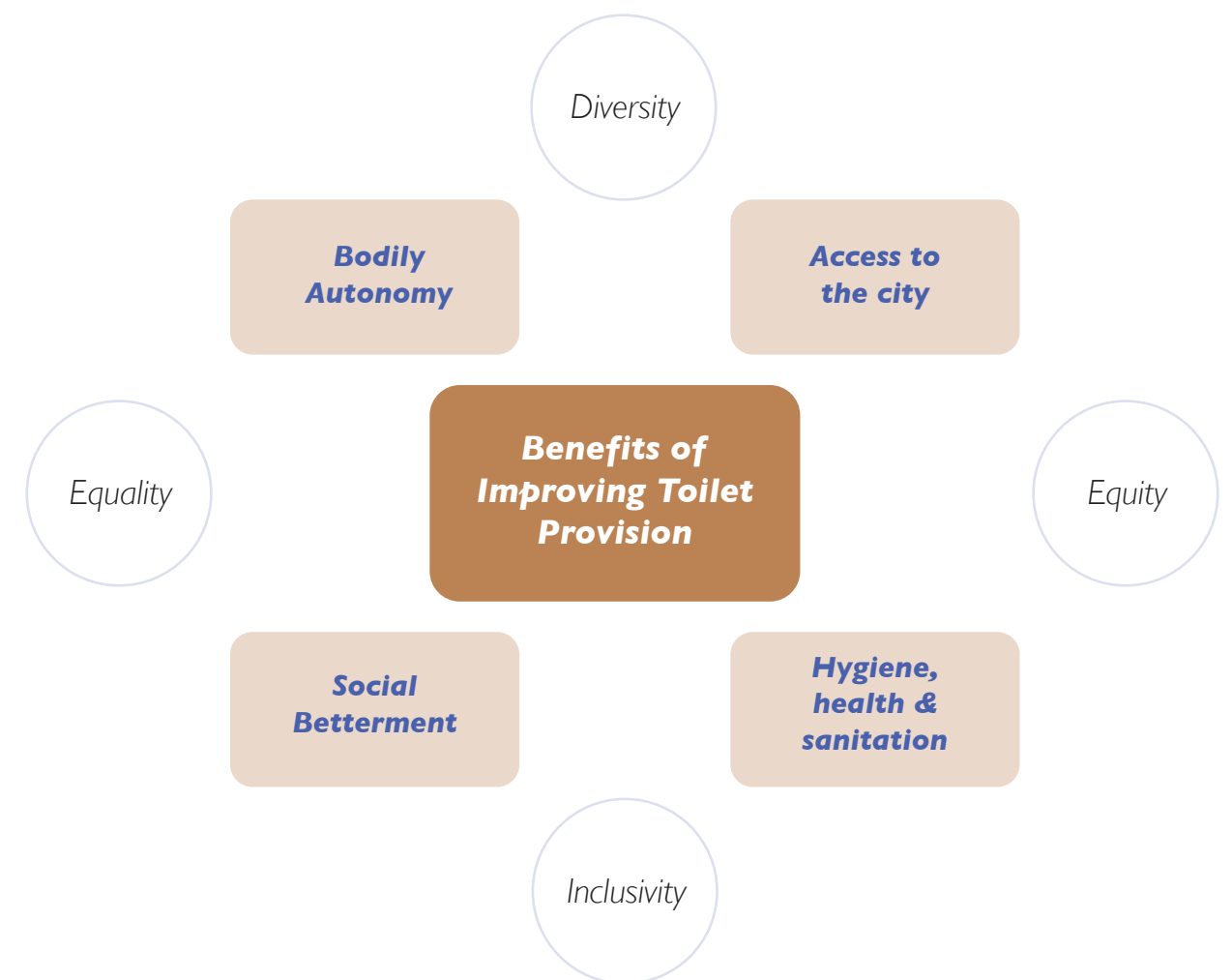
Map of 100m  
Radius Around  
Existing Public  
Washrooms





# **FUTURE**

*opportunities for new public washrooms*









**Xingshe  
Public Toilets**

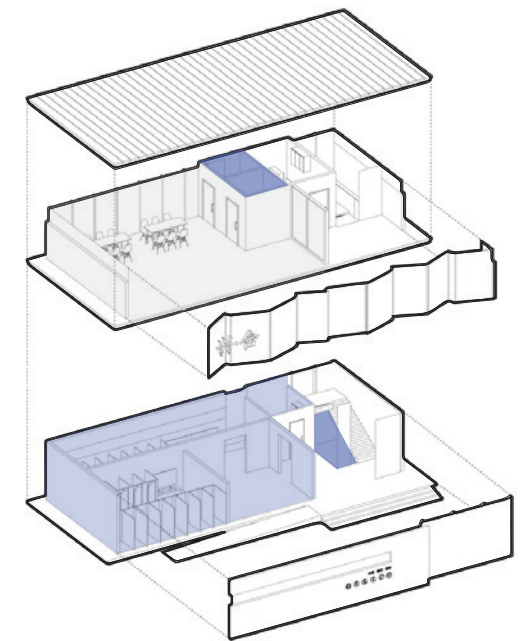
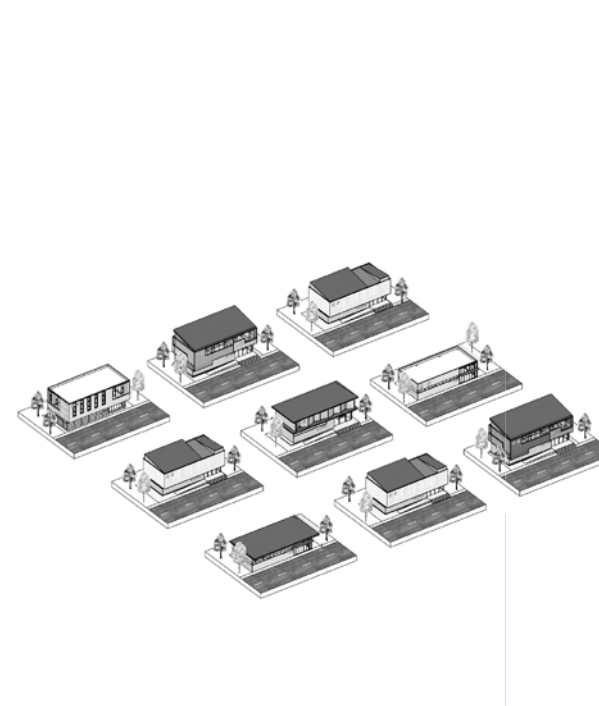
Architect:  
Cobblestone  
Design Canada

Daxing, China  
2018

## PRECEDENTS

*innovative projects around the world*

The Xingshe Public Toilets push the boundaries on typical public toilet design, integrating a resting oasis for outdoor staff, community service center, and public activity place into a unique typology. The new facilities consist of ten completed projects with three standard layouts and four different elevation patterns, becoming an integral part of the “toilet reformation” in China’s urban centers. Each facility includes WIFI, digital toilet management and mobile charging stations with a multifunctional space on second floor allows community to participate in activities.



Architect:  
Tadao Ando

A circular toilet  
block design,  
wrapped in  
vertical metal  
louvres, creates  
privacy while  
letting air  
circulate .



Architect:  
Shigeru Ban

Two public toilets  
are surrounded  
with transparent  
glass walls that  
become opaque  
when they are  
occupied.



## PRECEDENTS

*innovative projects around the world*

The Tokyo Toilet project includes several unique public washroom designs by Japan's most notable architects. With many design constructed and numerous underway, the city has commissioned site specific washrooms to be located at critical points within the city as vital component of its urban fabric. Promoting hospitality through safe and clean access to public washrooms help activate communities and enrich our lives.



## **94 PUBLIC WASHROOMS**

*existing in Metro Vancouver, 2019 COV Inventory*

## **1 PUBIC WASHROOM**

*per 33,236 people in Metro Vancouver*

---

## **1.2 MILLION DOLLARS**

*budgeted for DTES public washroom renewal & washroom study, 2019-2022 Capital Plan*

## **8.7 MILLION DOLLARS**

*budgeted for new washrooms & fieldhouses, 2019-2022 Capital Plan*

## **8.3 MILLION DOLLARS**

*budgeted for renewal & upgrades of washrooms, fieldhouses & concessions, 2019-2022 Capital Plan*

## **FUTURE**

*how is Metro Vancouver adapting?*

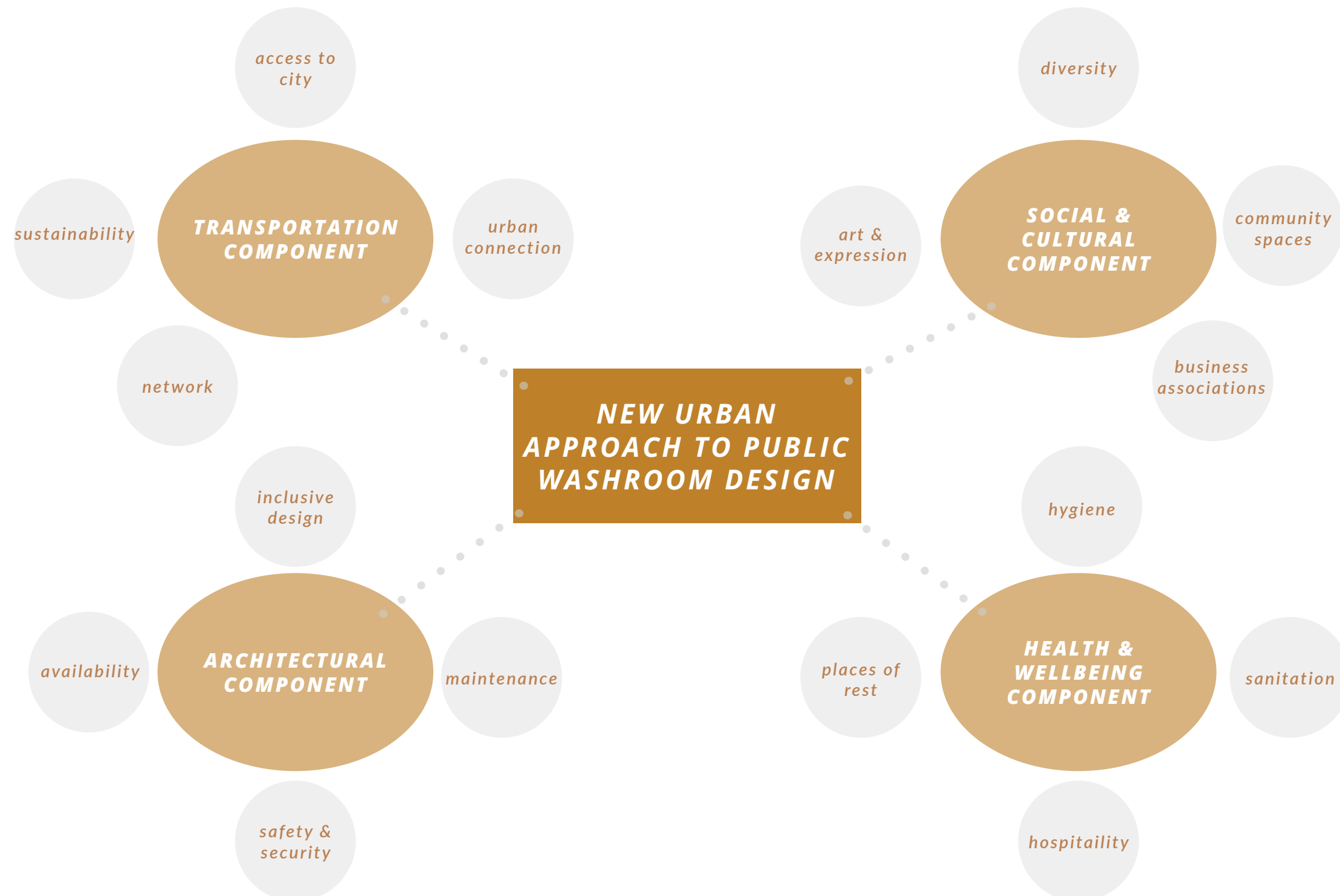
City of Vancouver 2021 Budget and Five-Year Financial Plan

- begin implementation of the Washroom Strategy to provide single-user washrooms with universal options for all users, to ensure that a safe, clean and accessible washroom is available to everyone

VanPlay Report

- 2040 Asset Targets: a washroom facility near every destination playground, sports field, water recreation access point and community gardens, and at intervals along the Primary Network.
- Achieve 70-80% of washrooms in good condition or better

# INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH





*Thank you*

## **FURTHER RESEARCH**

*where can I learn more about public washrooms?*

Interesting Article Links:

- [Vancouver's Public Washroom Problem](#)
- [War Against Public Urination](#)
- [DTES Public Washroom Budget](#)
- [Vancouver Park Board Public Washroom Strategy](#)
- [Washroom Problem During Pandemic](#)
- [History of Public Conveniences in Vancouver](#)