

BenchMark

**Preliminary Proposal
October 25, 2007**

BenchMark

Synopsis

BenchMark is a public art seating area developed by artists Alison Maddaugh and Jamie Robson, in partnership with the *Hastings Sunrise Neighbourhood's Public Realm Committee*. *BenchMark* will engage members of the local community in the creation of a public gathering place. A multi-phase project, *BenchMark* will be located on the northeast corner of Hastings Street at Kamloops, in the heart of the Hastings Sunrise Neighbourhood.

This interactive project will bring a public face of the social and historical fabric of the community to the street. Drawing on an archive of stories that resulted from *Media Undefined's* 2005 project, *Our community Story** (www.mediaundefined.ca), a selection of historical anecdotes and images about the history of Hastings Street will be inscribed on sculptural seating forms. These colourful, ramped benches and cubes will provide increased opportunities for social interaction, rest, and dialogue, and will aesthetically enhance the neighbourhood streetscape.

Project Description

Originally built in 1885, Hastings Street is one of the earliest established main traffic arteries in and out of the city. While it continues to be one of the busiest east-west traffic corridors in Greater Vancouver, Hastings Street forms the core of the pedestrian-based shopping area in the Hastings Sunrise Neighbourhood. This section of East Hastings Street, from Nanaimo to Kaslo Streets, is characterized by a culture of long established, family-owned businesses. These shops not only serve the local community, but are also destination stores that attract residents from other Vancouver and Burnaby neighbourhoods. Specialty shops such as Polonia Sausage House and Olympia Tailors draw a regular clientele from the lower mainland.

While this is the main shopping district in the area, the street is currently absent of public gathering places and public seating areas.

* Our Community Story was a living history project about the Hastings Sunrise Neighbourhood produced by Media Undefined in 2005. OCS resulted in an audio archive of stories told by residents, about the history of the neighbourhood. For more information go to www.mediaundefeind.ca.



BenchMark will integrate the ideals of *placemaking** into the Hastings Sunrise Neighbourhood. It has been designed as a public destination that will enhance an existing niche of green space, and offer a place to pause along this busy pedestrian corridor.

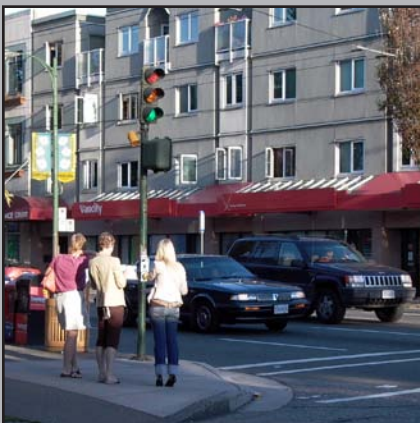
Through a thorough analysis of East Hastings Street from Nanaimo to Kaslo Streets (see site selection criteria below), the northwest corner of East Hastings Street and Kamloops Street has been identified as the most suitable site for this initiative. Located in the heart of the Hastings Sunrise Neighbourhood, this intersection is one of the busiest in the area. Bustling with local residents, commuters, business people, and shoppers, hundreds of pedestrians pass this intersection each day. In addition, this intersection has good visibility with sight lines that allow for visual access from all directions. This corner as well and the corner adjacent to it have been the site of recent greening and improvements, making the intersection suitable for the installation of public art without extensive redesign of the streetscape. The recent addition of an attractive perennial planting bed at this site has enhanced the streetscape. *BenchMark* will build on these improvements to further develop the qualities of 'place-making' already initiated at this site.

Criteria for Site Selection

The following criteria were taken into consideration in the selection of the proposed site:

- Hastings Sunrise Public Realm Committee requested placement at an intersection;
- The intersection at Hastings and Kamloops Streets has been the site of recent greening and site improvements by two local businesses: Vancity Credit Union, and TD Canada Trust;
- Site reflects an existing balance of hardscape and softscape, which allows for the installation of public art/seating elements without extensive redesign of the streetscape;
- At present this intersection lacks public art;
- Consistent mid to high traffic volume will showcase art within the community;
- The selected corner has good visual access from all directions;
- The addition of a public art and seating installation will not interfere with current circulation patterns and current land use;
- The windowless, 'blank' walls that span the northwest and southwest corners of the intersection provide a prime location for a mural. The mural will provide a key vertical element to the cluster of seating that will visually engage passersby from a distance, and will anchor the intersection as a landmark. By bracketing the Hastings corridor, the mural will add to the visual iconography of the neighbourhood.

* "Placemaking is not just the act of building or fixing up a space, but a whole process that fosters the creation of vital public destinations: the kind of places where people feel a strong stake in their communities and a commitment to making things better. Simply put, Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, ultimately creating good public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well being. As our survey responses suggest, this process is essential--even sacred--to people who truly care about the places in their lives." (www.pps.org)



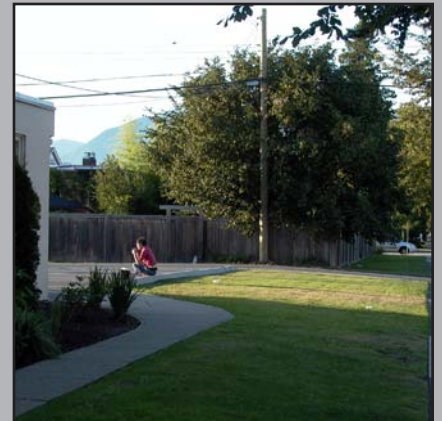
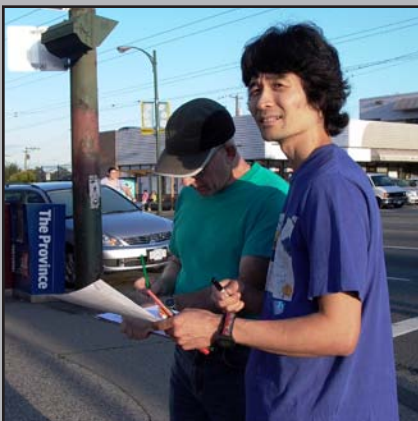
Materials and Installation:

All materials and installation methods will be safe, long lasting, and will be suitable for participation from all age groups:

- Clay brick: Unfired clay brick will be sculpted to produce a ramped, curved form with rounded edges. All exterior brick surfaces will be glazed to produce a smooth, vibrant and durable surface free of sharp or rough edges.
- Ceramic Tile: Industrial strength, frost resistant porcelain tile will be embedded into the sides of the bench forms.
- Decals: Ceramic decals printed with anecdotes and archival imagery will be applied to ceramic tiles.
- Coloured Concrete will be used to form a secure foundation, and internal core for the benches.

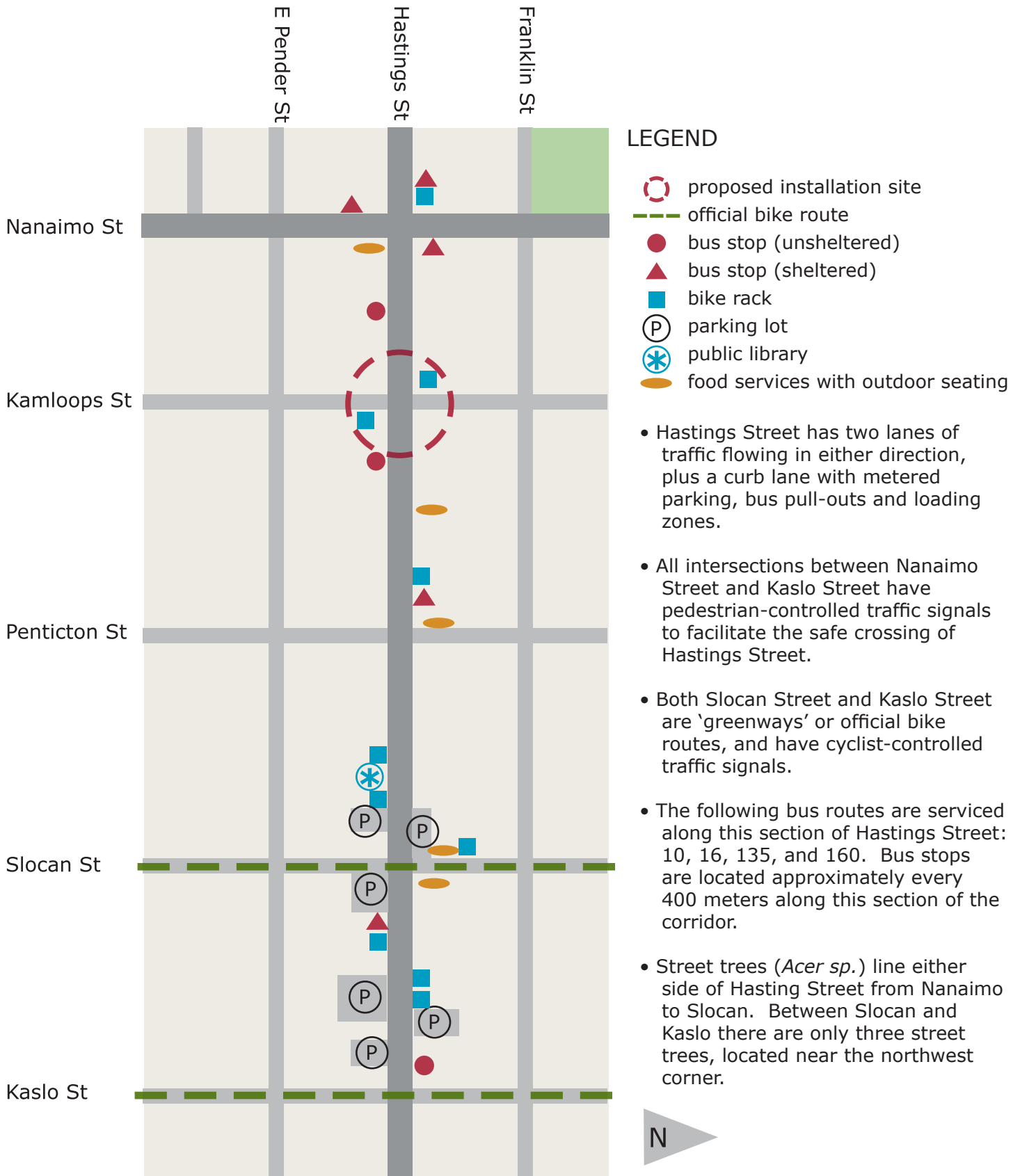
Colour Pallet

A pallet of colours will be selected by the artists, in consultation with the Hastings Sunrise Public Realm Committee and the Hastings North Business Improvement Association.



HASTINGS STREET CORRIDOR ANALYSIS

Nanaimo Street to Kaslo Street



LEGEND

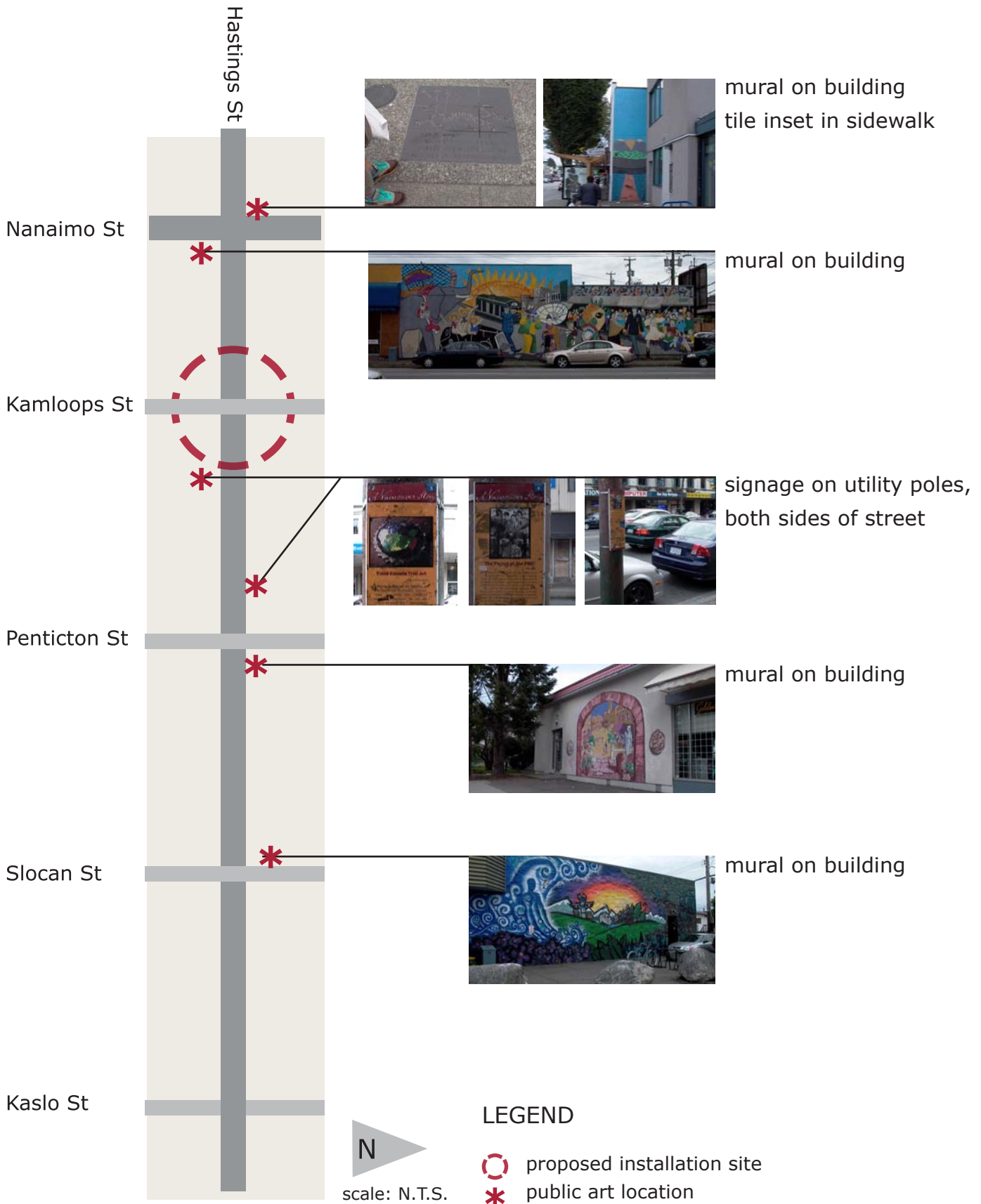
- proposed installation site
- official bike route
- bus stop (unsheltered)
- bus stop (sheltered)
- bike rack
- parking lot
- public library
- food services with outdoor seating

- Hastings Street has two lanes of traffic flowing in either direction, plus a curb lane with metered parking, bus pull-outs and loading zones.
- All intersections between Nanaimo Street and Kaslo Street have pedestrian-controlled traffic signals to facilitate the safe crossing of Hastings Street.
- Both Slokan Street and Kaslo Street are 'greenways' or official bike routes, and have cyclist-controlled traffic signals.
- The following bus routes are serviced along this section of Hastings Street: 10, 16, 135, and 160. Bus stops are located approximately every 400 meters along this section of the corridor.
- Street trees (*Acer sp.*) line either side of Hasting Street from Nanaimo to Slokan. Between Slokan and Kaslo there are only three street trees, located near the northwest corner.



PUBLIC ART INVENTORY

Hastings Street corridor, Nanaimo Street to Kaslo Street



INTERSECTION ANALYSIS

Kamloops Street at Hastings Street

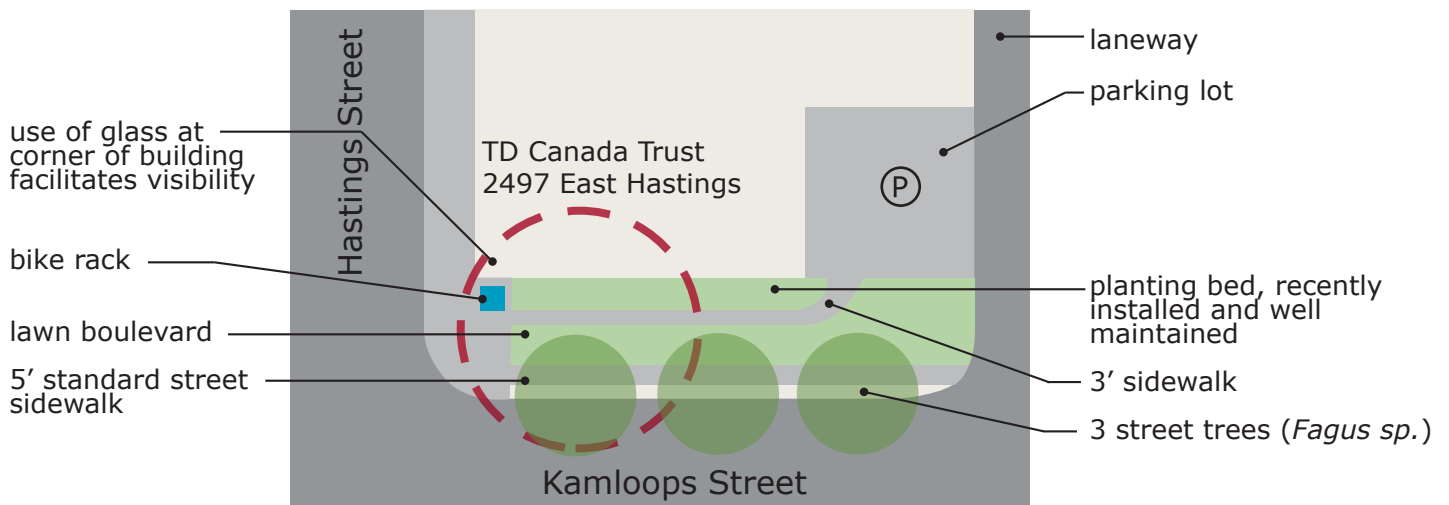


LEGEND

- proposed installation site - phase 1
- bus stop (unsheltered)
- bike rack
- parking lot
- public art
- view corridor

- This intersection has standard 5' paved sidewalks along side streets, with 12' sidewalks (including utility corridor) along Hastings Street.
- Universal access is facilitated with wheel-accessible curbs, audible pedestrian crossing signals, and automated doors for wheelchair users located at the Vancity Credit Union and TD Canada Trust.
- Although there is a predominance of hardscape over softscape, there are vegetated areas on all four corners in a range of states of maintenance.
- Sightlines to the North Shore mountains are partially obscured by street trees and buildings.

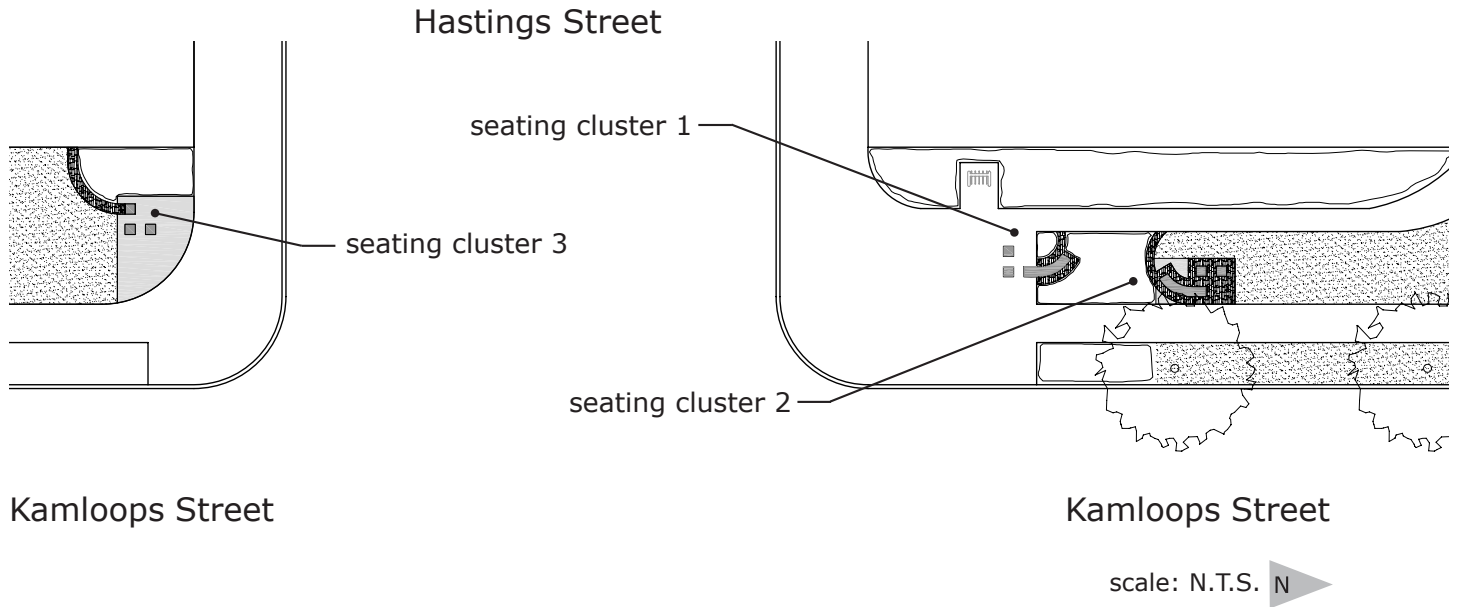
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PROPOSED SITE DESIGN

With Public Art Installation



This will be a multi-phase installation of seating areas that incorporates and reflects local history, engages the local neighbourhood, and enhances the aesthetics of the community.

Sculptural Seating Benches - Details

- tiles inset into the benches and cubes will have text reflecting stories gathered from the local community, reflecting its history
- curved, ramping form of the benches inhibits public sleeping
- cobblestones recycled from the neighbourhood form a banding detail that provides a hardscape surface at the base of the seating benches and cubes to prevent erosion, defines the borders of planted areas, and visually invites one into the space
- the cubes and the level portion of the ramped benches are to be 18"-20" ht., or standard seating height
- durable, long-lasting materials, including concrete and glazed brick
- vandal - resistant coating

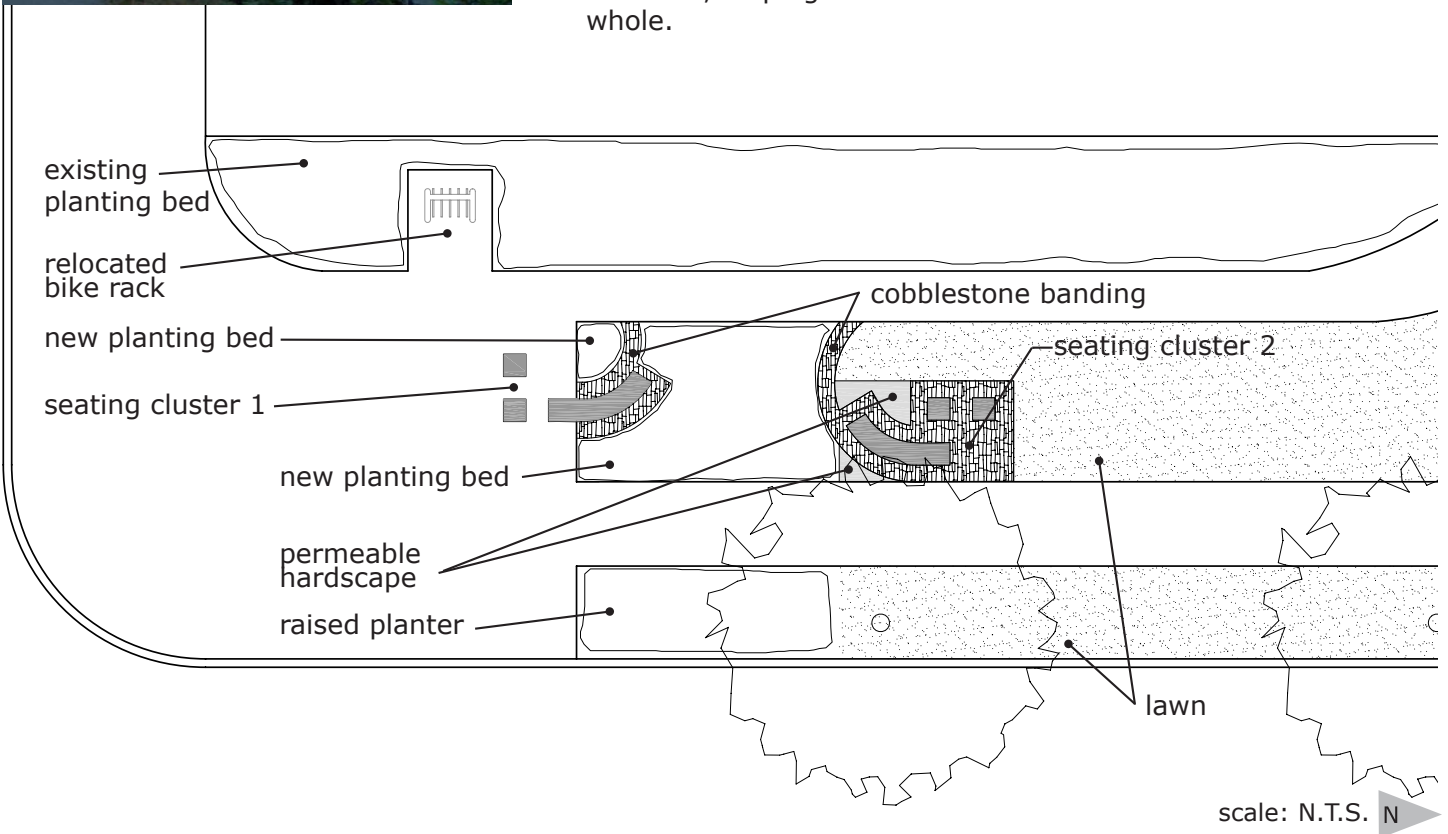
PROPOSED SITE DESIGN

With Public Art Installation - Phase 1



Phase 1

- Two seating clusters will be installed at the NW corner of Hastings and Kamloops Street. The seating areas are composed of curved, ramping benches with individual cubes.
- The first cluster of seating is oriented towards the bustling Hastings Street corridor, and primarily serves the pedestrian shopping community.
- The second cluster is set back from Hastings Street, oriented towards the residential neighbourhood and the view to the mountains.
- A banding detail of recycled cobblestones defines edges and visually invites people into the space
- A new garden bed with low plantings provides a buffer between the seating area and the busy corridor, while maintaining clear sightlines in all directions
- The planting bed visually links the installation with the existing garden bed running parallel to the building, and it deters skate and cycle use around the seating areas
- A portion of lawn in the utility corridor has eroded completely due to pedestrian traffic. A raised planter will be installed in this area, helping anchor the corner installation as a coherent whole.



PROPOSED SITE DESIGN

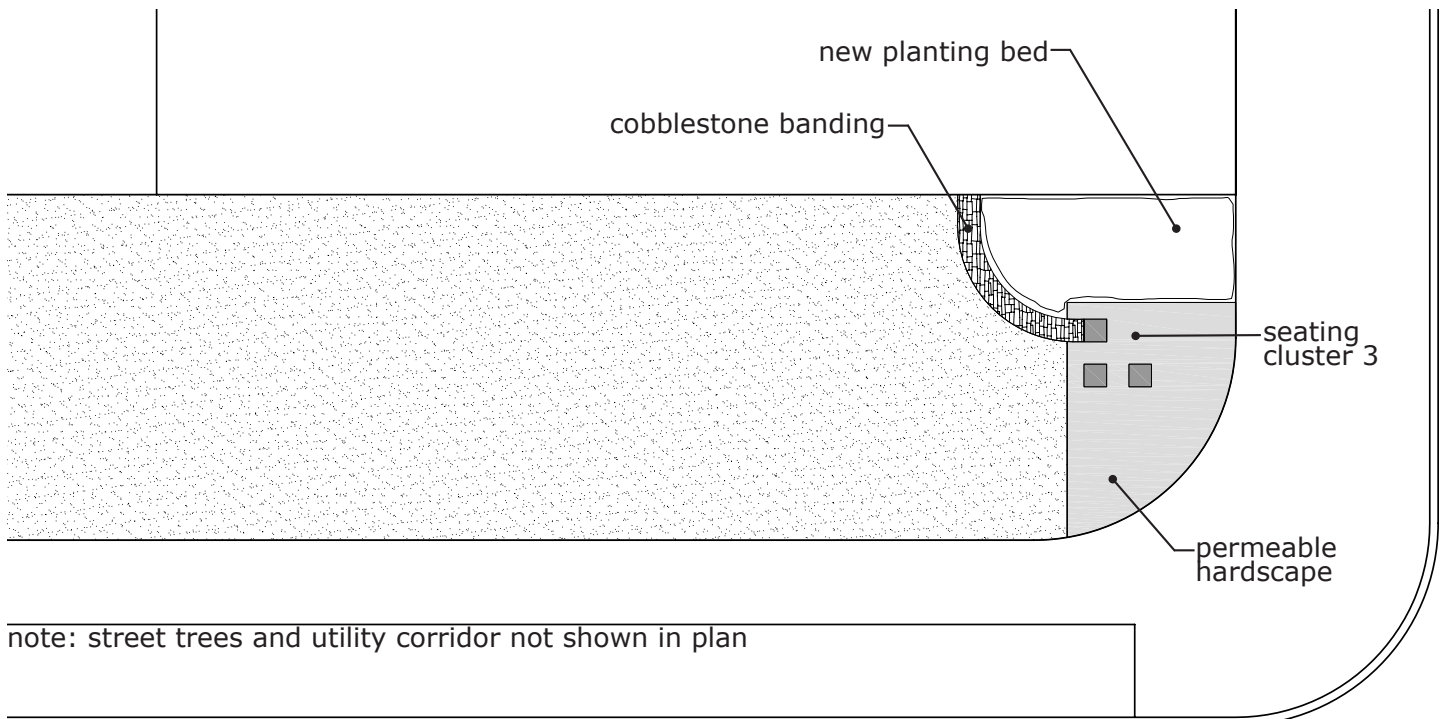
With Public Art Installation - Phase 2



Phase 2

Elements of Phase 1 will be extended across the street in order to visually bridge across Hastings corridor to help anchor the public identity of the intersection.

- A third seating cluster will be installed at the SW corner of Hastings and Kamloops Street. The seating area will be composed of three additional cubes.
- A banding detail of cobblestone and a new planting bed will likewise reflect elements of phase 1 and help form a coherent identity
- A mural composed of graphic elements in silhouette form against a simple, coloured background will be painted on the wall of the Money Mart and TD Bank.
- The murals will create a key vertical element to the installation, visually accessible to vehicular traffic and enhancing the linkages across the intersection.



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