

The assessment ride notes were put together by knowledgeable members of the VACC Van/UBC Committee. However, the VACC doesn't necessarily endorse all recommendations in them. For further information, please contact Committee Chair, Lisa Slakov at lsakov@telus.net.

VACC HELMCKEN GREENWAY ASSESSMENT

From east to west, False Creek Seawall to Burrard St.

19 December 2010. Notes by Michael Alexander, reviewed by Terry Lowe

'Recommend' is consensus of the 10-person assessment group. 'Consider' is suggestion of at least two of the group. Comments of one person are identified by name.

- **BIG IDEAS: LENGTH OF HELMCKEN FROM MAINLAND ST.-> BURRARD ST.**
 - **MODE REBALANCING: Recommend:** reducing each block to one traffic lane and one or two parking lanes, so that each block has one-way vehicle flow; but vary the direction so that no more than two blocks flow the same way. Reallocate some street width to walkways, bikeways and landscaping.
 - Intersection example: Beach and Granville



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- Intersection example: 7th Ave. and Heather (wants to be more attractive)



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- **STREET ACTIVATION:** We noted that almost all blocks needed liveliness. Most activity is oriented to cross streets. **Recommend:** Zone Helmcken to encourage restaurants, coffee houses, and eateries, with patios extending into the street ROW, allowing the sidewalk to meander, but keeping a straight lane for cyclists. Permit street-food vending. Consider some blocks for summer farmers market.
- There are nine hotels on or within a block of Helmcken. **Recommend:** zone and program the street to attract visitors.

- Consider signal timing the length of Helmcken, to match bike speed (but watch for varying speeds, because the street slopes west to east).

BLOCK BY BLOCK

- **FALSE CREEK SEAWALL-> MARINASIDE CRESCENT**
 - Poor pavement differentiation between pedestrian and bicycle lanes. Bike lane should be asphalt.
 - Ramps from Marinaside Crescent to Seawall are designed for disabled only, and have poor sightlines and turns for bicycles.
 - Consider bike lane(s) on Marinaside for commuters.
 - Marinaside needs better-delineated crosswalk markings.
- **MARINASIDE CRESCENT-> PACIFIC (AQUARIUS MEWS)**
 - Aquarius strata is owner of Aquarius Mews.
 - A public easement runs through the mews, connecting the Helmcken-Comox Greenway to the Seawall.
 - The east end is an undifferentiated "Woonerf" space, shared by pedestrians, bikes, cars and service vehicles. A driveway from Marinaside Crescent serves parkades on either side of the mews. At its end, a fire lane turnaround functions as a dropoff for the flanking strata complexes.
 - Walkways alongside the buildings have multiple conflicts with parkade and pedestrian entries.
 - Poor sightlines from Pacific Blvd., because of trees planted across the mews, and confusing multiple walkways around the centre fountain.
 - Aquarius has redesigned the east end of the mews, and is redesigning the west end. Plan is to clarify public passage through west end, with improved sightlines, low landscaping, and ramping a portion of the centre stairs for bikes.
 - Redesign options are limited, because the mews is the roof of a parkade and plantings are in concrete pits.
 - *(Richard Campbell)* Consider using Boathouse Mews for bikes, one block northeast. Connection would be a two-way separated bike lane on east side of Pacific Blvd.
- **PACIFIC BLVD. INTERSECTION**
 - This is the unfinished end of Allan Jacobs' Great Street design for Pacific Blvd.
 - Jacobs calls for narrowing Cambie St. from four lanes to two (it's the only block with four lanes), and bulbing the Helmcken Park sidewalk to shorten pedestrian crossing distances.
 - That creates opportunity to align crosswalk closer to centre walkway/bikeway of Aquarius Mews.
 - **Recommend:** City to complete the Great Streets plan as part of the Helmcken Greenway.
 - **Recommend:** City to realign crosswalk to direct peds/bikes to centre entry to Aquarius Mews.
 - **Recommend:** City and Parks Board coordinate with Aquarius to improve flow between Greenway and Mews.
 - Consider improved bike ramp at stairs on Beatty Walk.
- **PACIFIC BLVD.-> LANE (HELMCKEN PARK)**
 - **Recommend:** Revise landscaping at east end to align Helmcken walkway with improved Pacific Blvd. crosswalk.
- **LANE-> MAINLAND ST.**
 - Appears to be a street, but is a private parking lot with chained bollards crossing the entry to the lane. If negotiations fail, consider expropriation. It's a parkade roof, so there are maintenance and liability issues.
- **MAINLAND ST.-> HAMILTON ST.**
 - Sidewalks are too narrow.
 - *(Richard Campbell)* Recommend closing this block to vehicles, or open for deliveries only.
 - **Recommend:** At Hamilton, turn stop signs so give Helmcken flow the right of way.
 - **Recommend:** bulb-out corners, possibly four ways.
 - **Recommend:** screen dumpsters on Hamilton (see photo below).
- **HAMILTON ST.-> HOMER ST.**
 - **Recommend:** Along with bulb-outs, at NE and NW corners of Hamilton, reconfigure sidewalks to eliminate railings that block peds from reaching intersection. Provide steps, regrade sidewalks, etc.



- At Hamilton end, sidewalks are narrow for 10m, then brick sidewalks are very generous.
- **Recommend:** enliven streetscape of this block.
- Consider bulb-out at SW corner of Homer.
- (Richard Campbell) recommends closing this block to vehicles.
- **HOMER ST.-> RICHARDS ST.**
 - Why a yellow centre-line here, but not in previous blocks?
 - At Richards St., north side of Helmcken, the heritage homes preserved as part of the Aquilini tower project intrude into the sidewalk width. **Recommend:** Recapture that sidewalk width.
 - Consider protecting the Richards bike lane by moving it between the curb and the parking lane, plus door protection.
 - (Richard Campbell) No cars on this block.
- **RICHARDS ST. -> SEYMOUR ST.**
 - **Recommend:** Very good sidewalk space; block is ripe for streetscape improvements. Low height of Jubilee House provides good sun to street.
 - (Richard Campbell) Consider closing to traffic the 1/2 block from Richards to the lane, to protect the Richards St. bike lane.
- **SEYMOUR ST. -> GRANVILLE ST.**
 - **Recommend:** good sidewalk space, 4m on North side; streetscape is ripe for improvements, particularly on NE side along good 1930s brick building, to counter the unattractive Chateau Granville Hotel.
 - (Richard Campbell) Close this block to vehicles.
- **GRANVILLE ST.-> HOWE ST.**
 - Poor sidewalks, variable width on north side.
 - Accommodate or move Seattle bus loading next to Holiday Inn on south side.
 - (Richard Campbell) Close this block to vehicles, too.
 - **Recommend:** recognize Pacific Cinematheque, on Howe south of Helmcken, as a destination, and create good ped/bike access from Helmcken Greenway.
- **HOWE ST.-> HORNBY ST.**
 - Nice articulation of buildings and coffee house plazas on north side of Howe St. intersection, particularly Starbucks plaza at NW corner.
 - At Hornby, no right turn onto Helmcken except for bikes from Hornby separated lane.
 - (Richard Campbell) Suggest closing this block to vehicles.
- **HORNBY ST.-> BURRARD ST.**
 - Sidewalks surprisingly narrow, 3m, and walkway constricted by tree locations, particularly a large tree at NW corner of Hornby, that the sidewalk has circumvented.
- **BURRARD ST.-> COMOX ST.**
 - Dogleg on Burrard from Helmcken to Comox is 41m.
 - Complicated dogleg, with ambulance entry on west side; diamond lanes against west curb, and along east curb at rush hours.
 - If bike lane is added on west side of Burrard, consider adding traffic light at Helmcken, or moving light from Comox,
 - It appears that there are fewer conflicts if the bike lane connecting Helmcken and Comox is on the east side of Burrard. Lower cost, because traffic signal can remain at Comox. Still complicated, and requires engineering analysis.