



Photovoice

APPL 5230 Social Planning

January 2026



Purpose

Photographs are a powerful way of showing lived experiences and the geographic landscape. This photovoice exercise uses photographs from my neighbourhood, Mount Pleasant in Vancouver, to understanding the urban planning challenges and needs of the community. Exercises like these lead to valuable introspection, but can also act as a communication tool which inspires positive change for community wellbeing.



Sharing Streetscapes

A new permanent plaza is being built on Main Street and 14th Avenue. It began as a temporary placemaking exercise likely during the pandemic, and is becoming permanent as part of a wider initiative in the neighbourhood to improve streetscapes. The existence of this project, which also includes sidewalk widening and bus stop improvements, feels like a positive move for the area. As a resident, it feels good to see funding going into improving this historic commercial district which my neighbours and I interact with daily. Year-round, the temporary plaza was well-used and reduced car traffic.

From a planner's eye, the photos demonstrate how project managers have considered pedestrian and car flow during construction. There is fencing and sidewalk features to prevent tripping. I think they have effectively communicated, through signage, where the moved bus stop is, the purpose of the project, and that surrounding businesses are still open. This is done to keep people safe and engaged with the landscape when passing through or stopping for a coffee. The existence of the project and wider funding initiative is an indicator of public interest in improving our streetscapes.





Heritage and Newness

At the end of my street, they have recently demolished an old building on Main which was vacant for a while. I found it exciting that they kept the heritage facade, and look forward to seeing how it molds with the approved six-story mixed use rental building. Many lots like this are transforming along Main Street in Mount Pleasant, which is a designated “village” in the City and will be preserved as commercial with low-rise residential. You don’t often see a facade standing alone, and to me it’s visually appealing. As a training planner and an architecture-lover, this photo tells a story of how Vancouverites prioritize heritage preservation, especially in historic commercial neighbourhoods. It makes me think of the countless heritage homes, some designated and some not, on the residential streets where I live. I wonder how those will transform during the new era of Small Scale Multi Unit Housing. I think as the need for housing grows, public interest inevitably shifts, and heritage may be one thing which is less prioritized.



Kingsway Bus Rides

I saw this great sign while passing a bus stop at Kingsway and Broadway, which talks about how the City is extending bus lanes, relocating bus stops, and improving intersections to prioritize bus traffic along this busy corridor. As someone who frequently experiences bus delays and traffic on the bus there, it's great to see thoughtful, systematic improvements being made. And even better, that it's being publicly communicated! I wouldn't have known about it if I didn't see the sign, and it was smart to place it where riders use those very bus routes. It also has a call-to-action to provide feedback, which is a key part of social planning. On a broader scale, the prioritization of bus traffic speaks to City goals around sustainable transportation and the de-centring of single rider vehicle traffic. Kingsway is a wide road but suffers from traffic at every rush hour. Growing up in Metrotown, I know this struggle well, whether in the car or on the bus.

Fun fact: Kingsway was once an ancestral Indigenous trail



THANK YOU