



July 17, 2025

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Director, Park Planning and Development

SUBJECT : **Downtown Solar Access Guidelines – Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

This memo provides an overview of the upcoming [Council report](#) on City-Wide Design and Development Guidelines – Phase Two Actions for consideration by Council on July 23, 2025.

The report seeks approval for new Solar Access Guidelines for the Downtown Peninsula and consequential amendments to policy documents. The guidelines aim to balance solar access in parks and public places with the unique economic, geographic and development considerations of downtown and were prepared in collaboration with Park Board staff

Background

In July 2024, the Board received the [memo](#) on Solar Access in Parks and Public Views summarizing changes to Solar Access Guidelines for Areas Outside of Downtown, together with changes to public views from parks.

Later in July, Council received the [report](#) on Citywide Development Guidelines Early Actions which introduced updates to the City's public views and the Solar Access Guidelines for Areas Outside of Downtown. Upon approval of Recommendations B and C of that report, staff were directed to report back on area-specific solar access approach for Downtown.

The upcoming report responds to Council's direction in 2024 and proposes additional measures that support several City initiatives aimed at streamlining the development approvals process.

Regulatory Framework

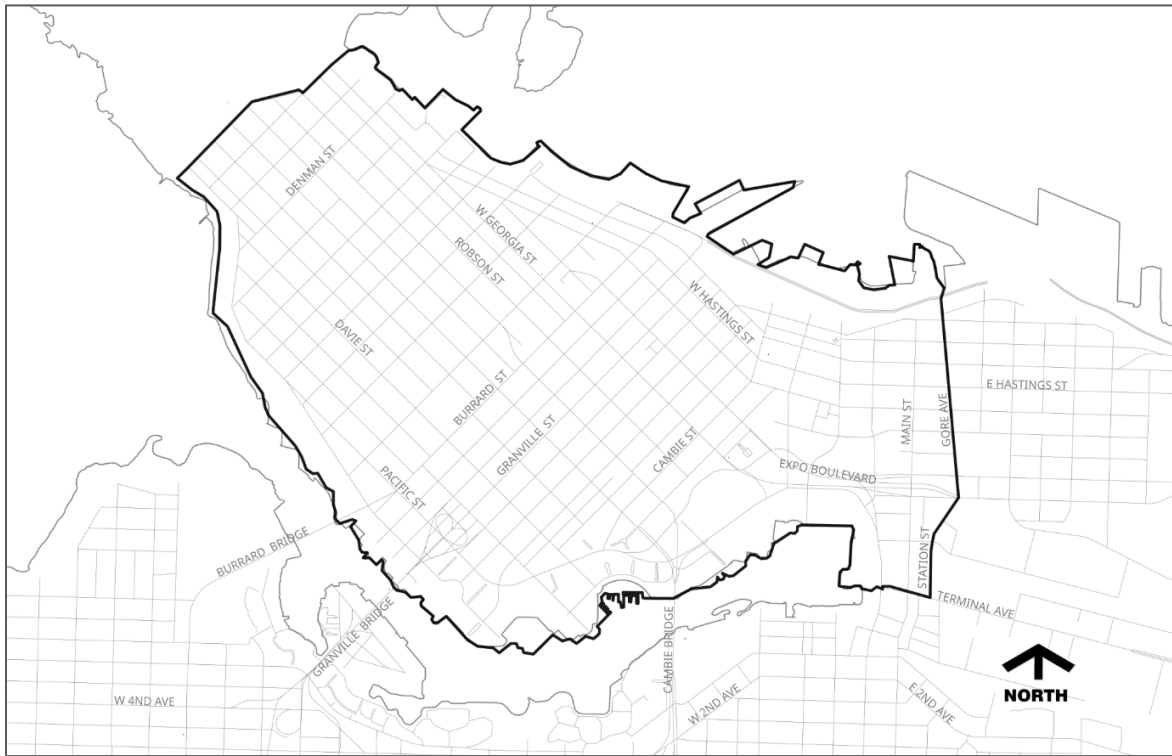
The protection of solar access in parks in Vancouver is under the authority of the Director of Planning, and ultimately City Council, to regulate form of development.

The Park Board does not have authority to regulate building heights and massing, hence its policies address the protection of parks from impacts of development. VanPlay's Goal 2 speaks to the protection of existing parks and recreation spaces from loss, encroachment, and densification; and specifically, that *"shadows from new buildings adjacent to parks can dramatically change the nature of these green spaces and our enjoyment of them. We believe that sunshine is a fundamental building block of our parks."*

Solar Access Guidelines for the Downtown Peninsula

Access to natural light encourages outdoor activity, supports mental well-being, is essential for plant and tree growth, and enhances overall urban resilience. To support liveability and public health in Vancouver's overcast climate, new Solar Access Guidelines for the Downtown Peninsula (see Map 1) are being brought forward for Council's consideration.

Map 1: Vancouver Downtown Peninsula



These guidelines aim to take a more balanced approach to protecting sunlight in key public spaces, such as parks, school sites and plazas, as well as the Davie Village and Robson Village commercial streets (see [Appendix A](#) for the comprehensive list). Whereas existing policies present a more rigid approach to solar access in neighbourhoods outside the downtown peninsula, the proposed guidelines introduce exceptions that provide for greater flexibility and responsiveness in support of affordable housing and public amenities.

The guidelines focus on the fall equinox (September 22) between 10 am and 4 pm PDT, in keeping with established City of Vancouver practice. Generally, developments are not permitted to cast new shadows on public school sites and on Community, Neighbourhood or Local Parks during that timeframe. More stringent protections apply to select public open spaces, including Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Garden and Public Park, and Victory Square on Remembrance Day, in keeping with existing policy.

Where it can be demonstrated that compliance with these guidelines would impact the delivery of affordable rental housing, non-market housing or a major public amenity beyond as required by policy, exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis through a collaborative process involving staff and relevant applicants.



Next Steps

Comprehensive technical analysis is ongoing to inform continued refinement of the Solar Access Guidelines for the Downtown Peninsula as part of the City-Wide Development Design Guidelines initiative, anticipated to be completed by the Spring of 2026.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tiina Mack". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Tiina Mack
Director, Park Planning and Development – Vancouver Parks and Recreation

Copy to: PB Leadership Team
PB Communications
Doug Shearer, Associate Director of Planning and Policy, Park Board
Josh White, GM Planning Urban Design and Sustainability, COV
Jason Olinek, Director, Development Planning, COV
Neil Hrushowy, Director, Community Planning, COV