

VANCOUVER SIGN: An Open Call for Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) Artists for an Integrated Design Opportunity

Summary

Land acknowledgement

The City of Vancouver respectfully acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam Indian Band), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation) who have stewarded these lands, air and waters since time immemorial. We are excited about the opportunity to support xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw, and səliłwətał cultural presence in the public realm through this call. We would like to express our gratitude to local Nations' staff collaborating on this work, and to local Nations' artists.

Deadline for application: 2nd of January 2026 11:59 pm PST.

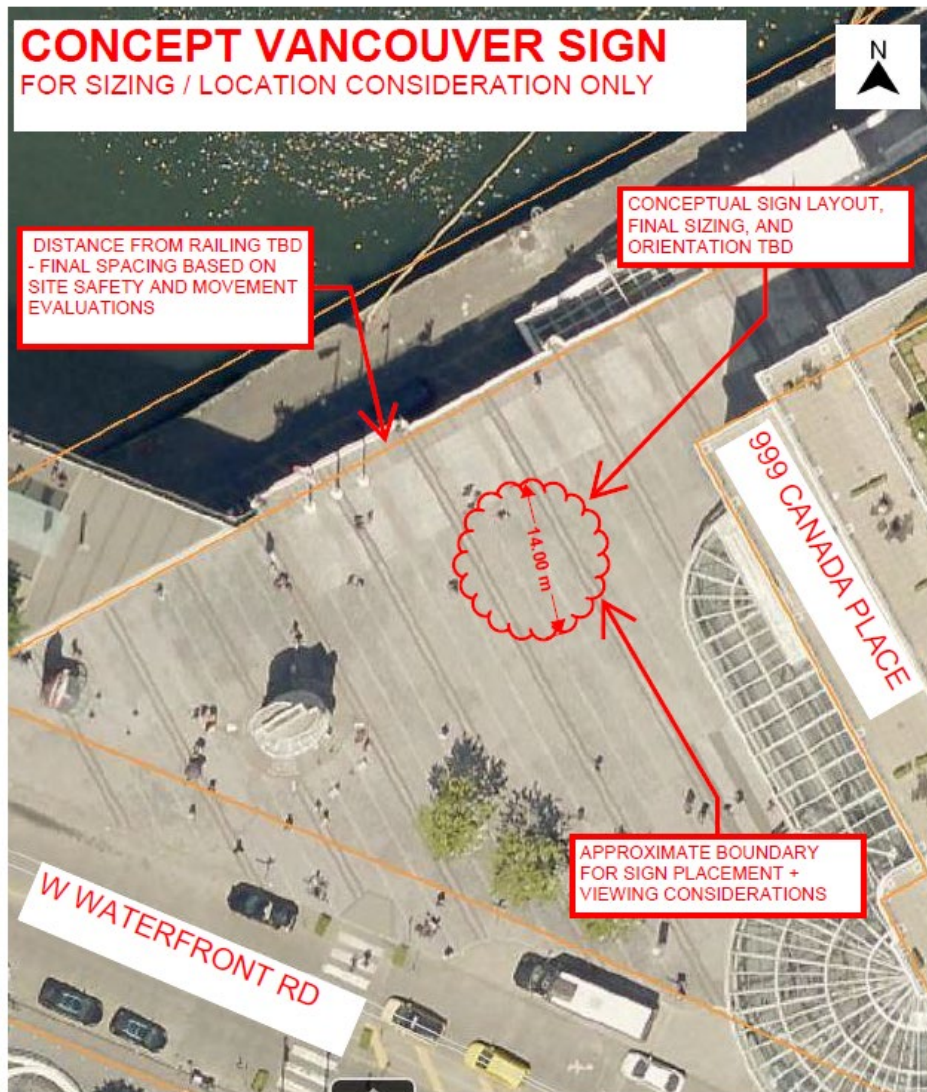
Background

In 2023 and 2024, a temporary VANCOUVER Sign was installed in Coal Harbour. Building upon the success of the temporary sign, City of Vancouver, with support from community partners, Vancouver Convention Centre, Port of Vancouver, Vancouver Hotel Destination Association (VHDA), Destination Vancouver and the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association (DVBIA), are moving forward with a permanent VANCOUVER Sign. The Sign is envisioned to be an iconic addition to the popular tourist destination along the waterfront between the two convention centres and presents an opportunity for xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw, and səliłwətał visibility on their lands. In addition to the Sign, the project will also include the installation of supplemental interpretive signage and explore opportunities for other elements to be added over time.

The location of the VANCOUVER Sign, at 999 Canada Place – East Plaza, has been selected based on several criteria including:

- A sense of place with a connection to iconic Vancouver backdrops including, the ocean, mountains and other city landmarks.
- Ease of access and visibility including locations close to transit, bike and pedestrian infrastructure and tourism connectivity.
- Community partner support, including site ownership, funding, ongoing operations and maintenance, and tourism and branding opportunities.

- Space to safely accommodate groups of people, while easily fitting a large sign into a photo frame.
- Access to infrastructure including utilities, seating, and lighting, among others.



The Opportunity

This call asks for one artist or artist team from Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw to produce original art, using Skwxwú7mesh design form, and be creatively involved in shaping the VANCOUVER Sign project.

The overall intent is to create an equal opportunity for representation and expression from xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw, and səliłwətał on the VANCOUVER Sign. To this end, there will be three separate artist calls to select one artist or artist team from each Nation. Each artist or artist team will work closely with the VANCOUVER Sign project team

– the project design team and City staff – on technical specifications and to meet the project timeline. They will also participate in a scoping workshop with other local Nations artists or artist teams, the project design team and Nation/City staff in attendance. The final deliverables for the selected artist or artist teams are digital files. This call will select an artist or artist team to represent Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw on the VANCOUVER Sign project.

The high-level design criteria of the overall Sign includes:

- Letters spelling “VANCOUVER”
- An opportunity for permanent and prominent expression of cultural visibility from xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw, and səliwətaʔ
- A programmable LED lighting element
- Durable and low maintenance material/design
- A unique to Vancouver design
- As the project is being produced on an expedited timeline, the official preliminary sign concept will only be shared with the successful artist(s).
- The proposed artwork may be cropped so that it may be viewed from specific vantage points (anamorphic sculpture).
- The dimensions of the sign may extend up to 6m (width) x 6m (length) x 10m (height).

Artist Fees: \$25,000 per artist or artist team

Eligibility

For the purposes of this call, the definition of an artist is a regular practitioner who:

- has completed an apprenticeship with an accomplished practitioner in the field, or
- maintains an artistic practice and has publicly shared an independent body of their work for at least two years, or
- is recognized as an artist by arts and culture peers within their community

This call welcomes interest from all registered and established Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw member artists or artist teams

Submitted applications will be checked for eligibility and completeness by City staff with qualifying applications moving forward to the selection panel for adjudication.

Application and Selection Process

The selection process is a single-stage process, wherein the adjudicators will select an artist or artist team to be commissioned to go through the stages of creating the artwork with support provided by technical advisors from the project design team. The stages of creating the artwork and their deliverables are:

- Project Integration Workshop(s) – attendance to up to two, two hour workshops with project design team, Nation/City staff, other local Nations artists/artist teams to coordinate approach and integrate ideas into the VANCOUVER Sign.
- Concept Proposal – narrative document outlining approach to the commission, showing examples or rough sketches of what the final work will look like
- Detailed Design – design document showing artwork to 75%
- Final Design – delivery of digital files to the project team

All costs associated with fabrication and installation are the responsibility of the project team, not the commissioned artists.

The overall project timelines are determined by the timeline of the sign installation, estimated to be complete in late spring 2026. It is anticipated that final digital files for the sign will be completed by early 2026.

By accepting the commission for this artwork, the artist or artist team acknowledges that there may be an unveiling ceremony/event. Community members, staff, and Nation/City leadership will be invited to attend this event.

Criteria for Selection of Artists

The selection panel will score the applications based on:

- Understanding of the project vision and site
- Experience with digital design and/or 2D projects in the public realm
- Quality of past work
- Evidence of previous projects created working with multiple stakeholders
- Nation member status OR Nation member enrollment
- Past work that explores Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw cultural presence

Selection Panel

Applications will be evaluated by representatives from Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw. Panelists will be selected based on previous experience with Public Art and Public Realm design.

Important Dates (subject to change)

Submission closing: 2nd of January 2026 11:59 pm PST

Notification to Applicants: 23 January, 2026

Submission Requirements and Guidelines:

Applicants may only submit once, whether applying individually or as part of a team. The following must be submitted to qualify for consideration:

1. Letter from Artist(s) outlining why you are interested in this project, how it relates to your art practice, and how you propose to approach the project. (One page maximum)
2. Curriculum Vitae detailing professional experience as an artist, prior public art experience, and other relevant information. If applying as a team, please identify all members and provide a brief CV for each. (In either case, three pages maximum for single CV or team CV)
3. Visual Documentation List that clearly outlines the visual documentation that you or your team have provided (see below). For large-scale works indicate dimensions. For previous public artworks include details of title, date, locations, commissioning agent or client, budget, medium, size and a brief description of the work.
4. JPGs of previous public artworks or artworks that relate to the opportunities in this call. Ten images maximum, minimum size of each image being 150dpi. Number each jpeg to correspond with the Visual Documentation List (see above). We will not accept pdf, PowerPoint, or Tiff formats for these images.

This call only accepts applications via e-mail. Please send items 1-3 above as a single pdf whose pages have been formatted to 8.5 x 11 inches. It is helpful to the adjudicators if your name or team's name is evident on each page of the pdf. Please attach the individual jpgs to the emailed application. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Deadline and Further Details for Submissions

Complete submissions must be received by the 2nd of January 2026 11:59 pm PST (Pacific Standard Time). Submissions received after the deadline and those that are found to be incomplete will not be reviewed.

Email submissions to: vancouveresign@vancouver.ca

Subject line: VANCOUVER Sign Artist Call

If you have any questions, please contact: Sara Orchard - vancouveresign@vancouver.ca