

SAPPERTON PLAZA



Established **1977**
Size **0.20 acres**
location **Columbia Street & Knox Street**

Ammenities

- **Mature plants, trees & shrubs**
- **Flowers**
- **Sculpture water fountain**
- **Benches**

Ammenities

- **Designed and constructed to reflect neighbourhood history**

This small urban square was part of the first civic revitalization plan for Sapperton's commercial area along East Columbia Street in 1977 - 1978. Funding for the \$500,000 project was provided in part by the provincial and federal governments under the Neighbourhood Improvement Program. New sidewalks, landscaping and street furniture contributed to a pedestrian promenade between Braid and Keary streets in a major upgrading of East Columbia Street.

The lower section of Knox Street adjacent to the 1891 Knox Presbyterian Church, one of Sapperton's most prominent heritage landmarks, was closed to create the plaza fronting East Columbia Street. It was designed with brick pavers and planters fashioned from split granite. The park provides a community gathering space which is used for local festivals and events in an oasis of trees, shrubs and flowers.

In 2008, Parks and Recreation initiated a complete renovation of the old plaza to provide an open urban outdoor space that is fully accessible, well-lit and attractive at a cost of \$300,000. The new plaza features an original design that considers contemporary urban park needs while retaining historical elements of the former plaza and neighbourhood.

The plaza was designed with a raised centre platform surrounded by wall seats. In the centre of the platform, the former plaza's granite and cobble stones are now shaped to acknowledge the arch designs in the adjacent Knox Church. In addition, the original wrought iron gates from the former Labatt's site now symbolize the neighbourhood's industrial heritage by welcoming visitors into Sapperton Plaza. The plaza design is completed with the addition of trees complemented by perennial and annual plants that unite nature with urbanization.

Behind the Name...Sapperton:



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**There's only one Corps which is perfect - that's us;
An' they call us Her Majesty's Engineers
Her Majesty's Royal Engineers,
With the rank and pay of a Sapper!**

Extract from the poem 'Sapper' by Rudyard Kipling
(1865-1936)

From medieval times to the 19th century, one of the prime functions of the engineers attached to field armies was to assist in siege warfare, by either building or destroying fortifications. The term 'Sapper' originates from the act of besieging the walls of a fortress, laying mines in zigzag trenches dug by hand to breach them. These trenches, or 'saps' (an old French word) were dug progressively deeper as they drew closer to the walls. The whole process was known as 'sapping,' and the persons digging them under the authority of the engineers were called 'Sappers.' The rank of 'Sapper' was conferred onto the private soldiers of the Corps of Royal Sappers and Miners on its amalgamation with the Corps of Royal Engineers in 1856.

In 1858, when the Colony of British Columbia was established and New Westminster was chosen as the capital city, the Columbia Detachment of Royal Engineers set up their camp in the eastern part of the city. Among the corps were many Sappers, or private soldiers. The camp became informally known as Sapperton for "Sappers' Town," and even after the disbanding of the corps this section of New Westminster retained this historic name.