

# Decolonizing coastal adaptation

February 2026

**RISE  
TO  
THE  
CHALLENGE**





The City of Vancouver is on the unceded traditional territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations.

These lands are the foundation of thousands of years of living culture of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples.

We acknowledge hə́'qəmińə́m and Sḵwxwú7mesh as the original languages of these lands.

# Today's Agenda

- The Challenge
- False Creek
- Sea2City Design Challenge & values-based planning
- Outcomes and outputs
- Q+A



# What's the Challenge?

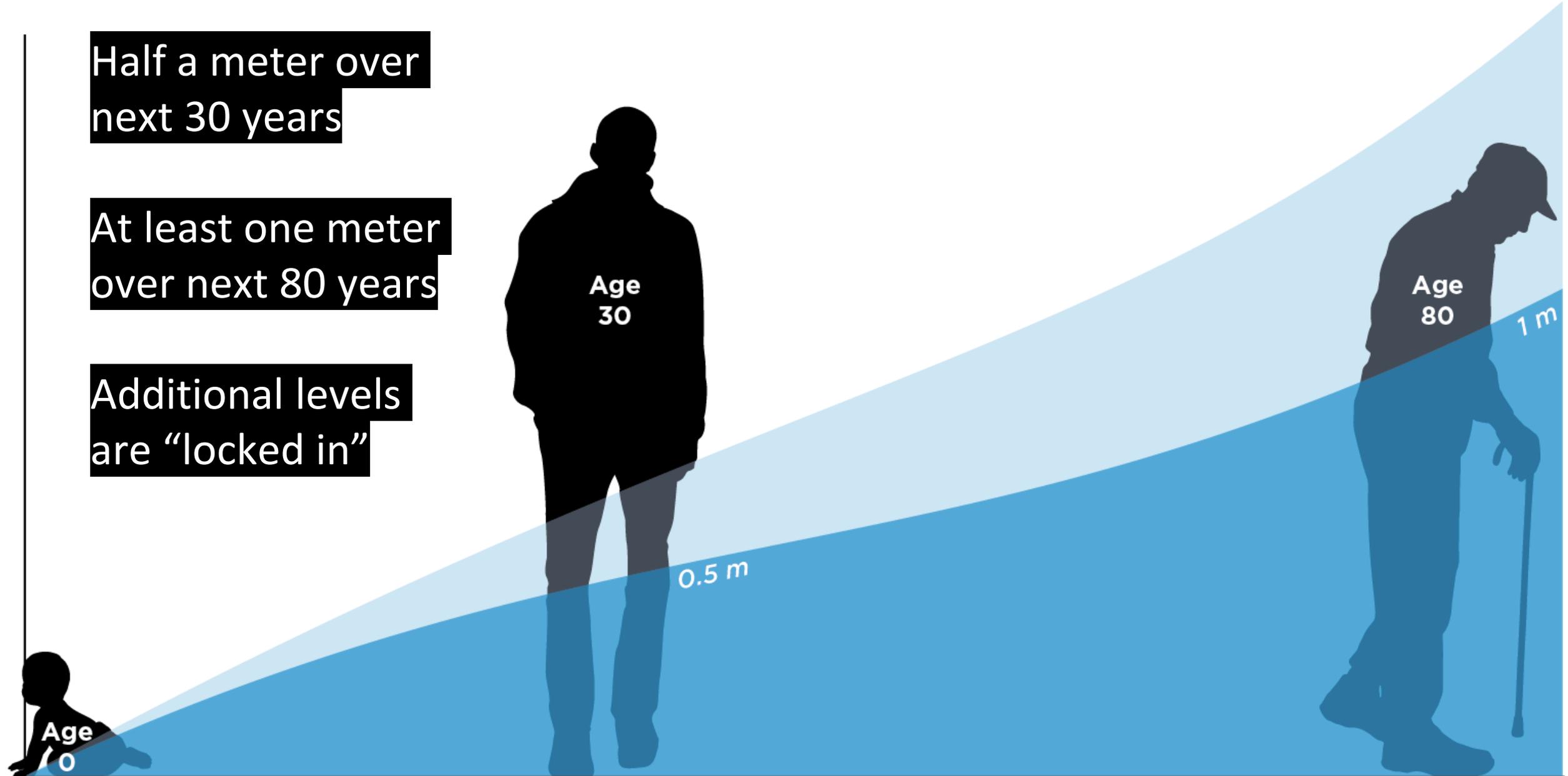
Sea level rise, coastal flooding and overland flooding

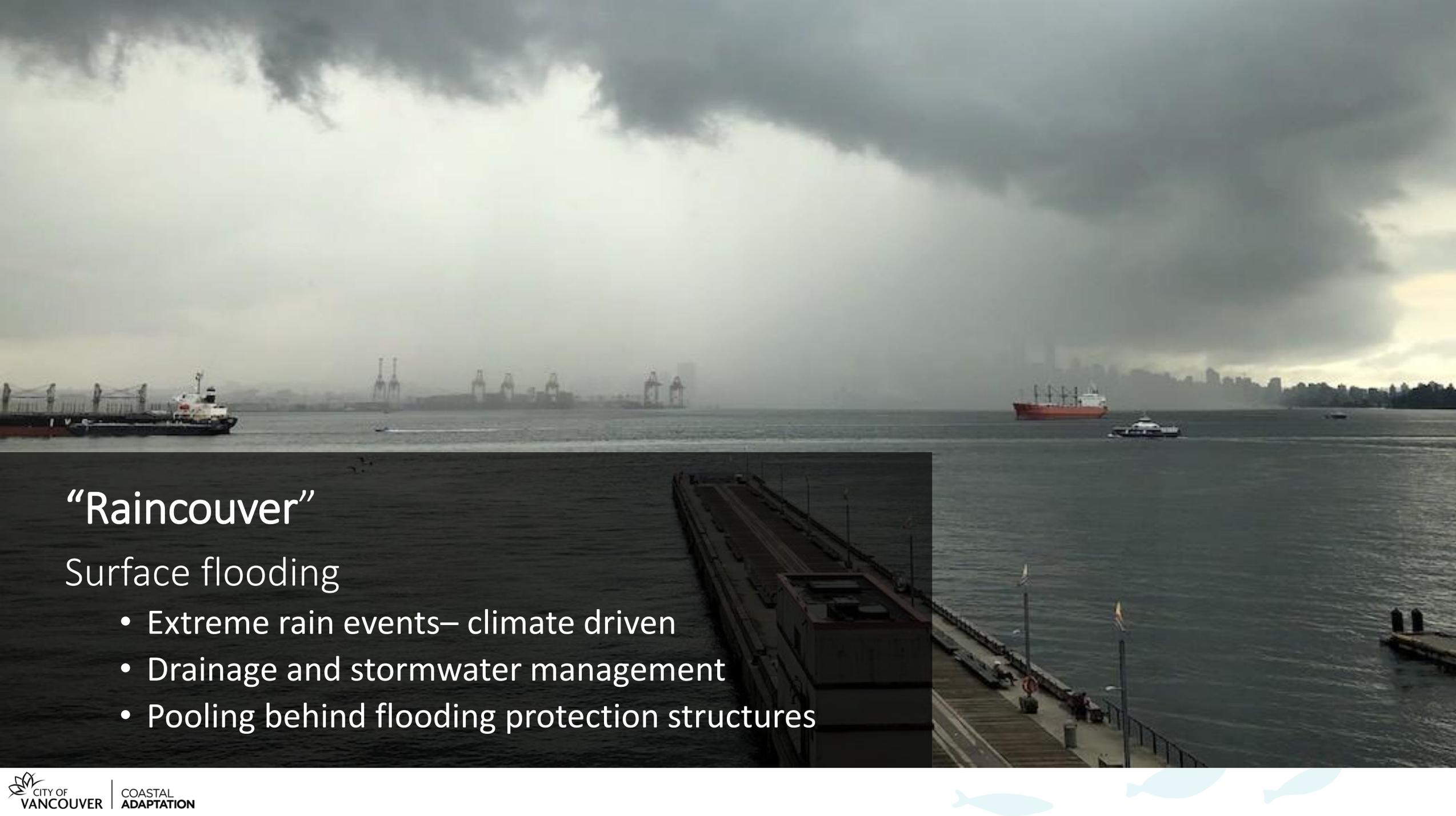


Half a meter over  
next 30 years

At least one meter  
over next 80 years

Additional levels  
are “locked in”





# “Raincouver”

## Surface flooding

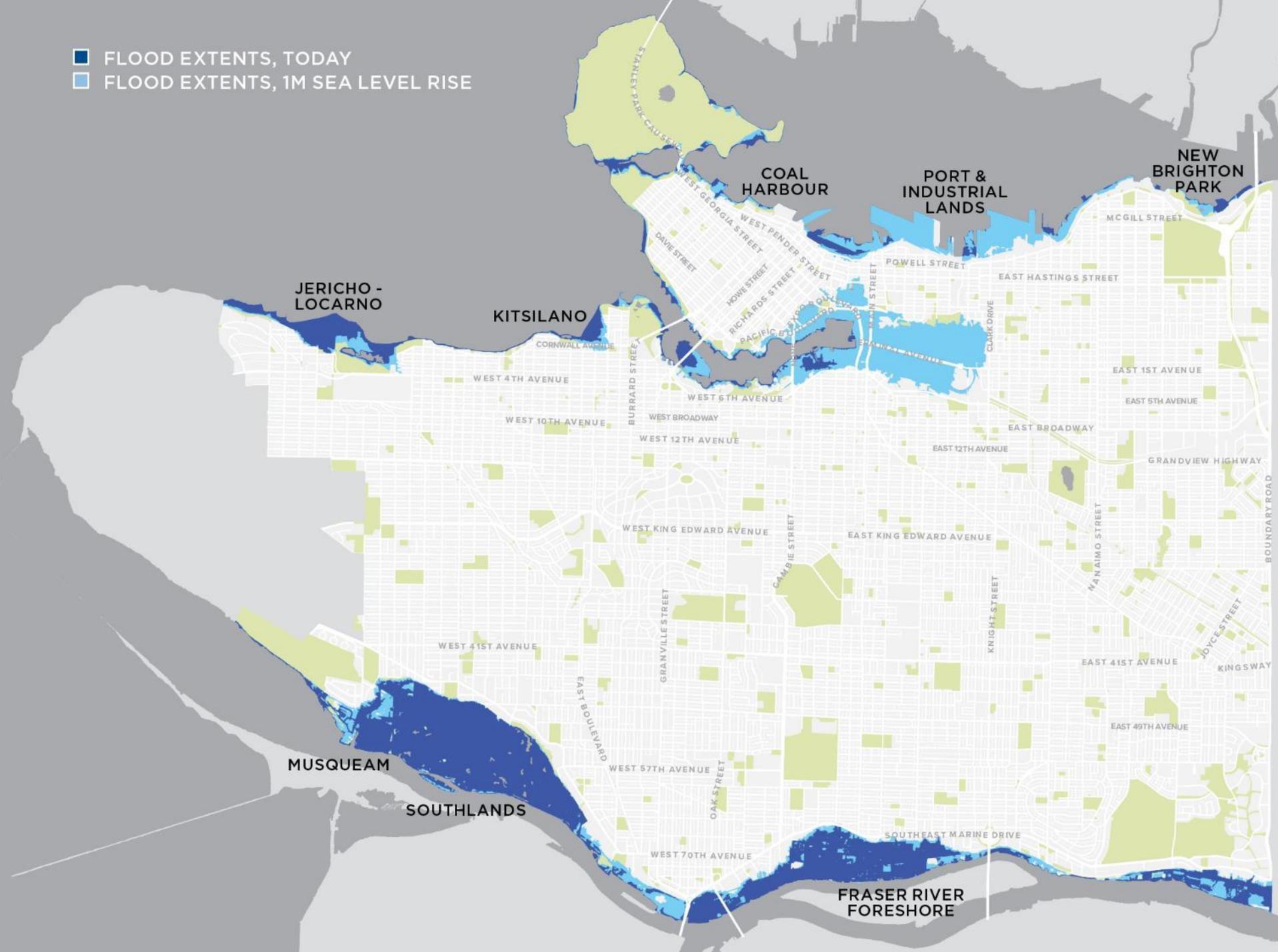
- Extreme rain events– climate driven
- Drainage and stormwater management
- Pooling behind flooding protection structures





Existing high tide

- FLOOD EXTENTS, TODAY
- FLOOD EXTENTS, 1M SEA LEVEL RISE





# Vancouver Seawall Storm Damage



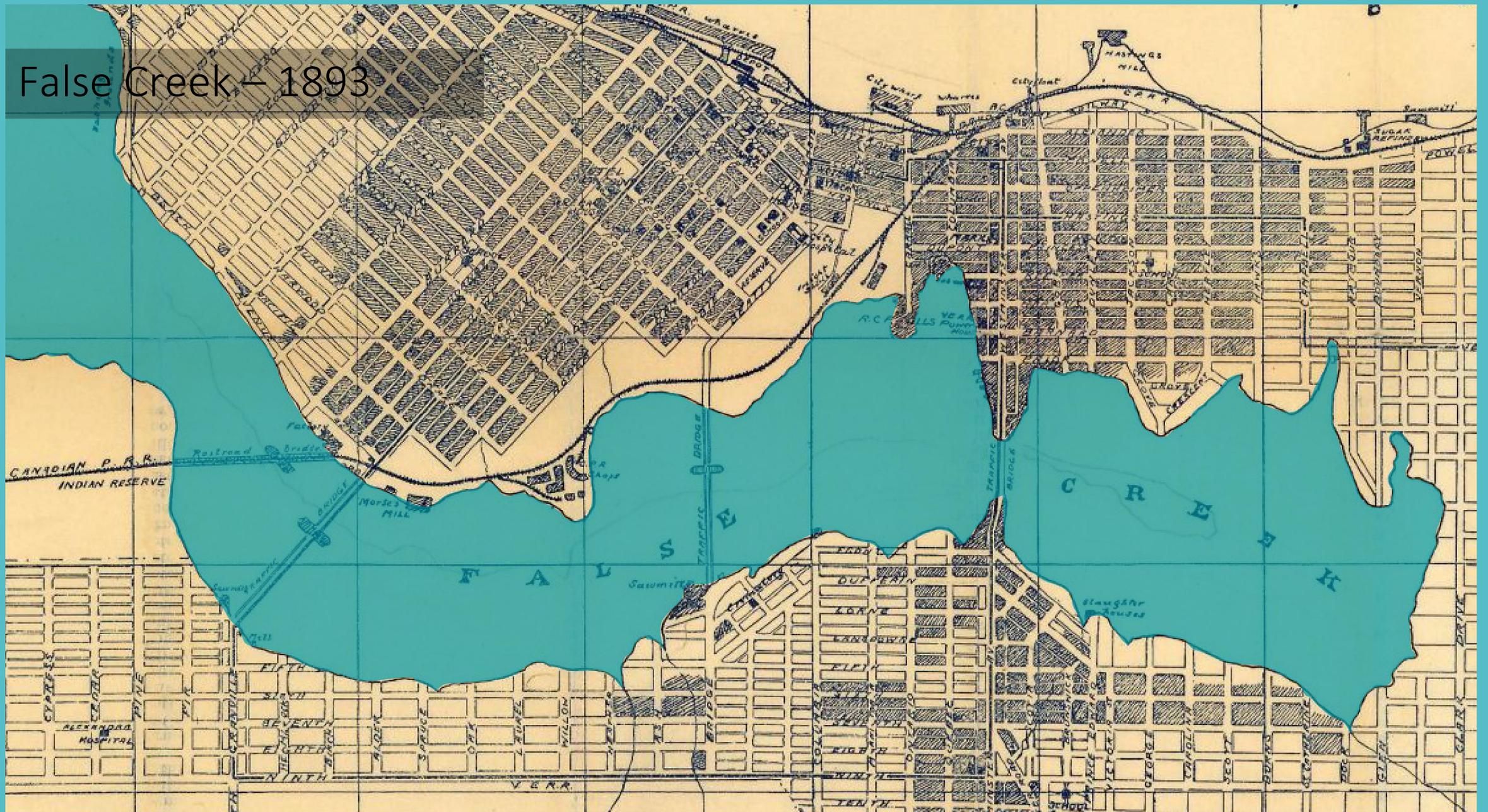
# False Creek

A much-loved urban waterway in the heart of the city

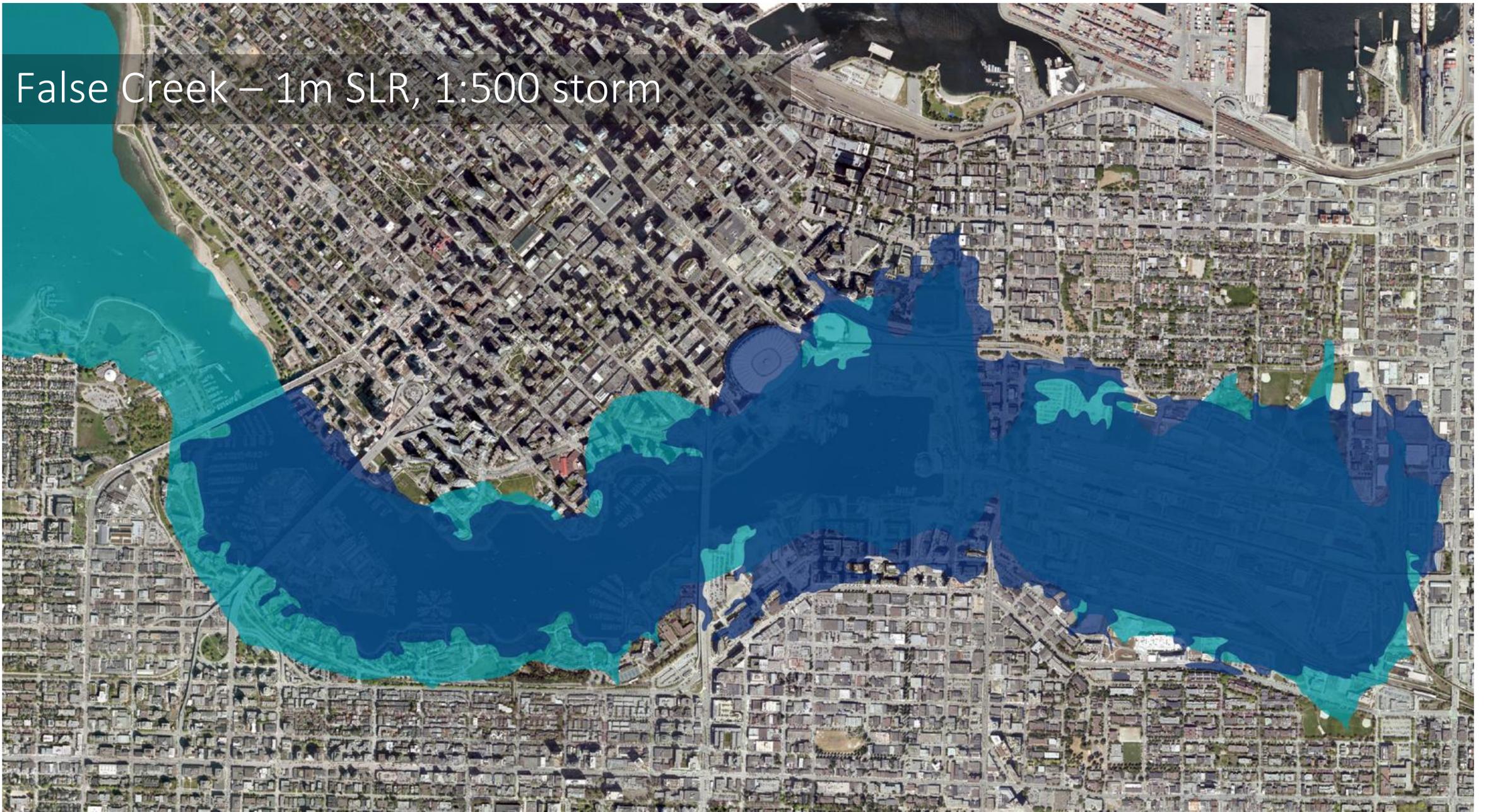




# False Creek – 1893



# False Creek – 1m SLR, 1:500 storm



# Values based planning

Responding to climate change in a way that reflects what matters to community



# A Decade of Coastal Adaptation Planning



**2012+**

Mapping and flood modeling



**2018**

*Coastal Adaptation Plan – Fraser River Foreshore*



**2020**

*Coastal Adaptation Plan – False Creek*



**2021/2022**

 **Sea2City** DESIGN CHALLENGE





# Sea2City DESIGN CHALLENGE

A collaborative design competition



- ✓ Increase public awareness of sea level rise and coastal flooding
- ✓ Explore and develop a coastal adaptation approach that centres reconciliation with Host Nations
- ✓ Examine options for sea level rise of at least two metres
- ✓ Inform next phase of Vancouver's Coastal Adaptation Plan



# Community Values – False Creek



**Communities, People,  
and Homes**



**Health and  
Safety**



**Infrastructure and  
Transportation**



**Environment**



**Local and  
Regional Economy**



**Arts, Culture, and  
Heritage**



**Recreation**



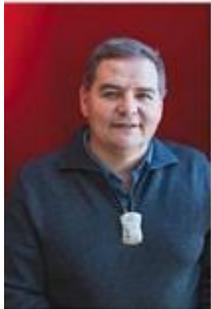
# Indigenous Knowledge Value

- Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and cultural expressions as they see fit.
- Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh history, presence, and culture in and around False Creek is highly valued but could be better shared and celebrated as the Nations see fit.
- Acknowledgement and conservation of archeological sites and objects as well as historic places and objects.
- Learning from Indigenous environmental efforts and projects that are leading the way in understanding and revitalizing local ecosystems and their processes. This work should guide current environmental efforts and projects.
- Support the environmental restoration and remediation of the shoreline and lands of False Creek. This may include daylighting historical creeks where appropriate.
- Support Indigenous use of the waterfront.
- Desire to see knowledge and design elements from Indigenous peoples incorporated into any future coastal flood adaptation work.

# SFU Centre for Dialogue – June 2022



Chief Dr. Frank Brown



Christine Smith-Martin



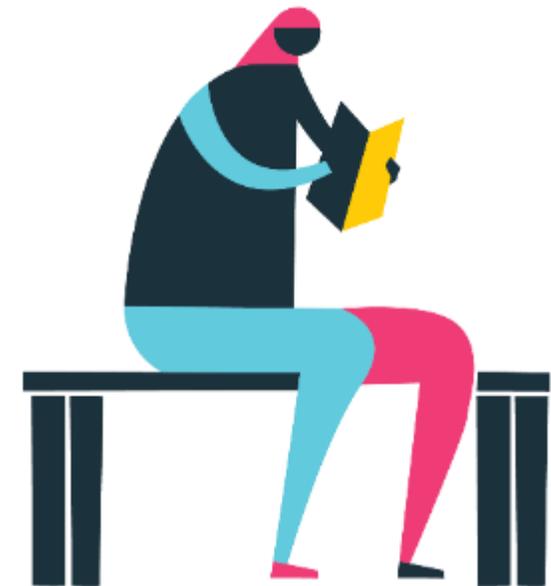
Cory Douglas



Joanne Nelson



Ginger Gosnell-Myers



# Youth Adaptation Lab: adaptation & civic literacy



# Sea2City Outputs

The project produced a range of planning and technical outputs



- Vision
- Commitments
- Adaptation approach language
- Site concepts
- Pilot projects



# CONVENTIONAL APPROACH

Resist

Accommodate

Move/Avoid

“Our existing adaptation approach is a very colonial approach to our relationship with the water. It places people at the top of the value hierarchy and doesn’t really respect the water.”

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ANGELA DANYLUK, SENIOR  
SUSTAINABILITY SPECIALIST,  
CITY OF VANCOUVER

# NEW APPROACH



## **ACKNOWLEDGE**

*Spaces are retrofitted or relocated over time to improve their resilience and better care for and steward natural systems.*

## **HOST**

*A dynamic place where water, nature, and culture are welcomed and stewarded. Human uses are flexible, adaptable, and leave a light-touch. Infrastructure works with nature to enhance resilience.*

## **RESTORE**

*A revitalized and rehabilitated shoreline that restores natural functions, features, and ecosystems and includes improved flood protection for upland communities.*

# A FUTURE VISION

The Salish Sea has risen, and False Creek has transformed. The area remains a vibrant and much-loved place. The naturalized shoreline is a healthy and safe place for people to connect with the water.





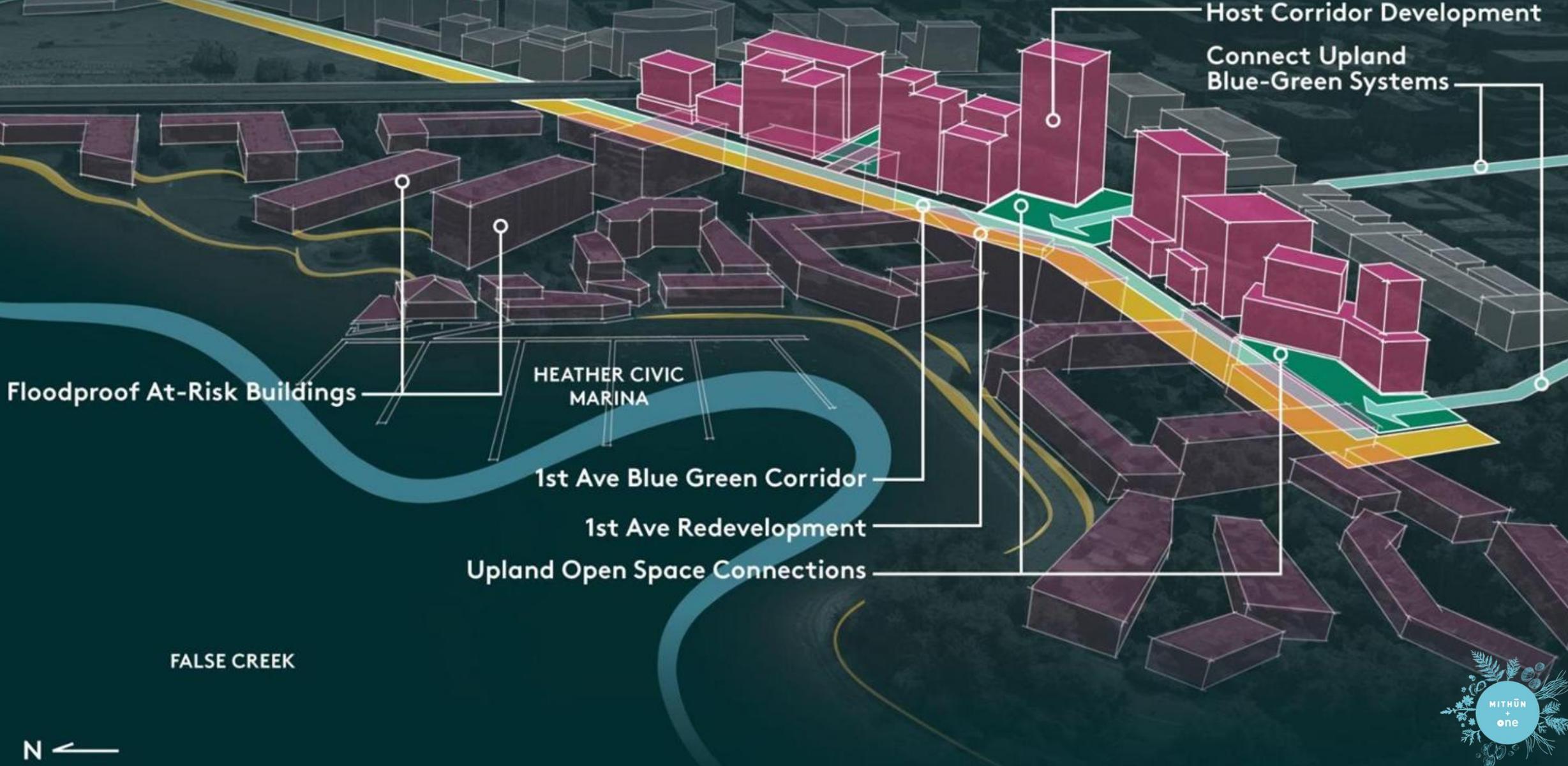
EXISTING GRADE

Flood Construction Level (4.6m)  
2100-1M+500yr (3.94m)

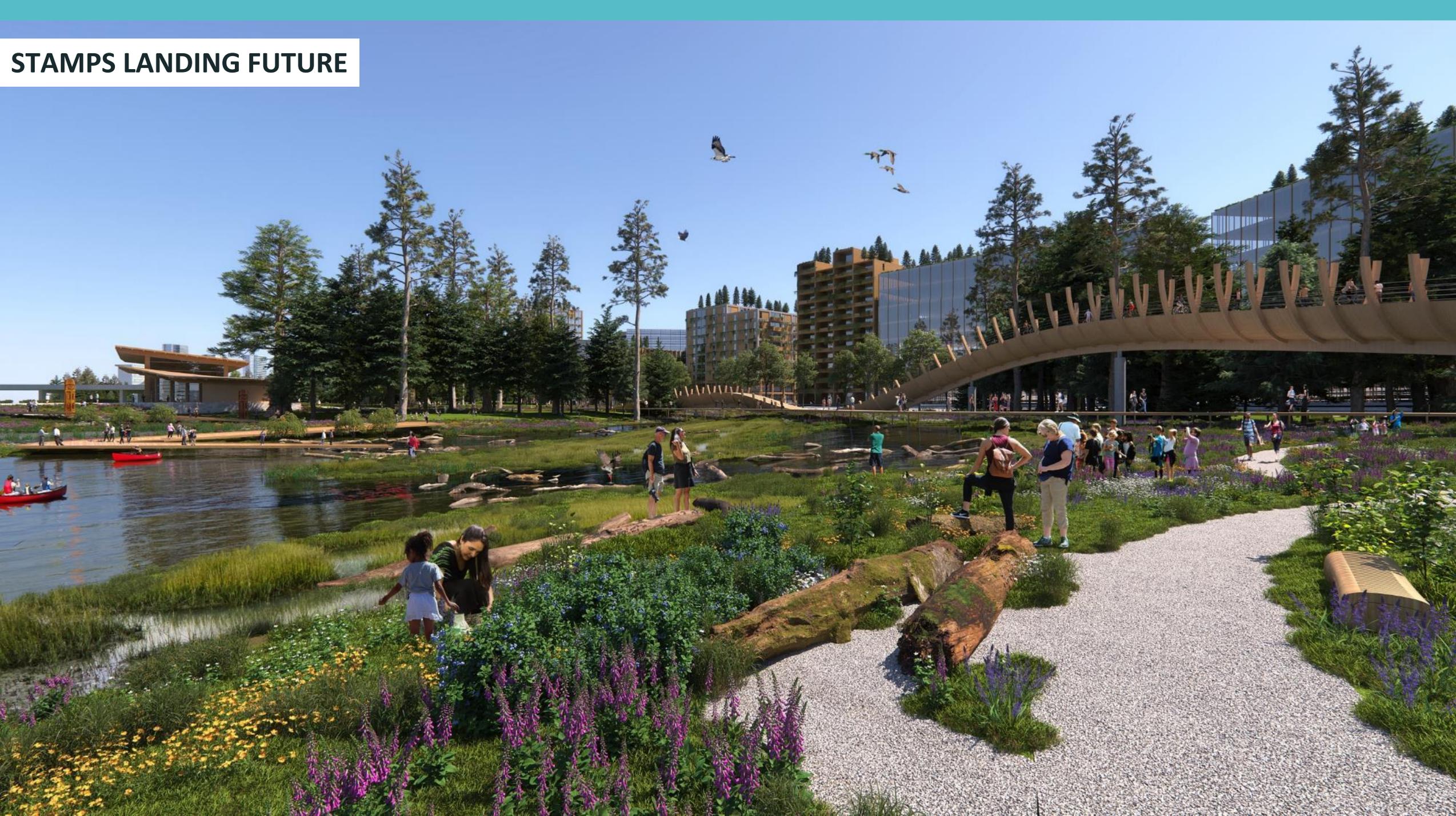
2100 King Tide 2.9m  
2100 High Tide 2.3m  
King Tide (1.9m)  
High Tide (1.3m)  
2100 Mean Water Level 0.9m

Mean Water Level (-0.1m)

### 3 - Blue-Green Corridor + Upland Development



# STAMPS LANDING FUTURE



# Coopers Tidal Terrace

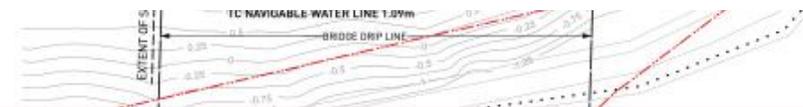
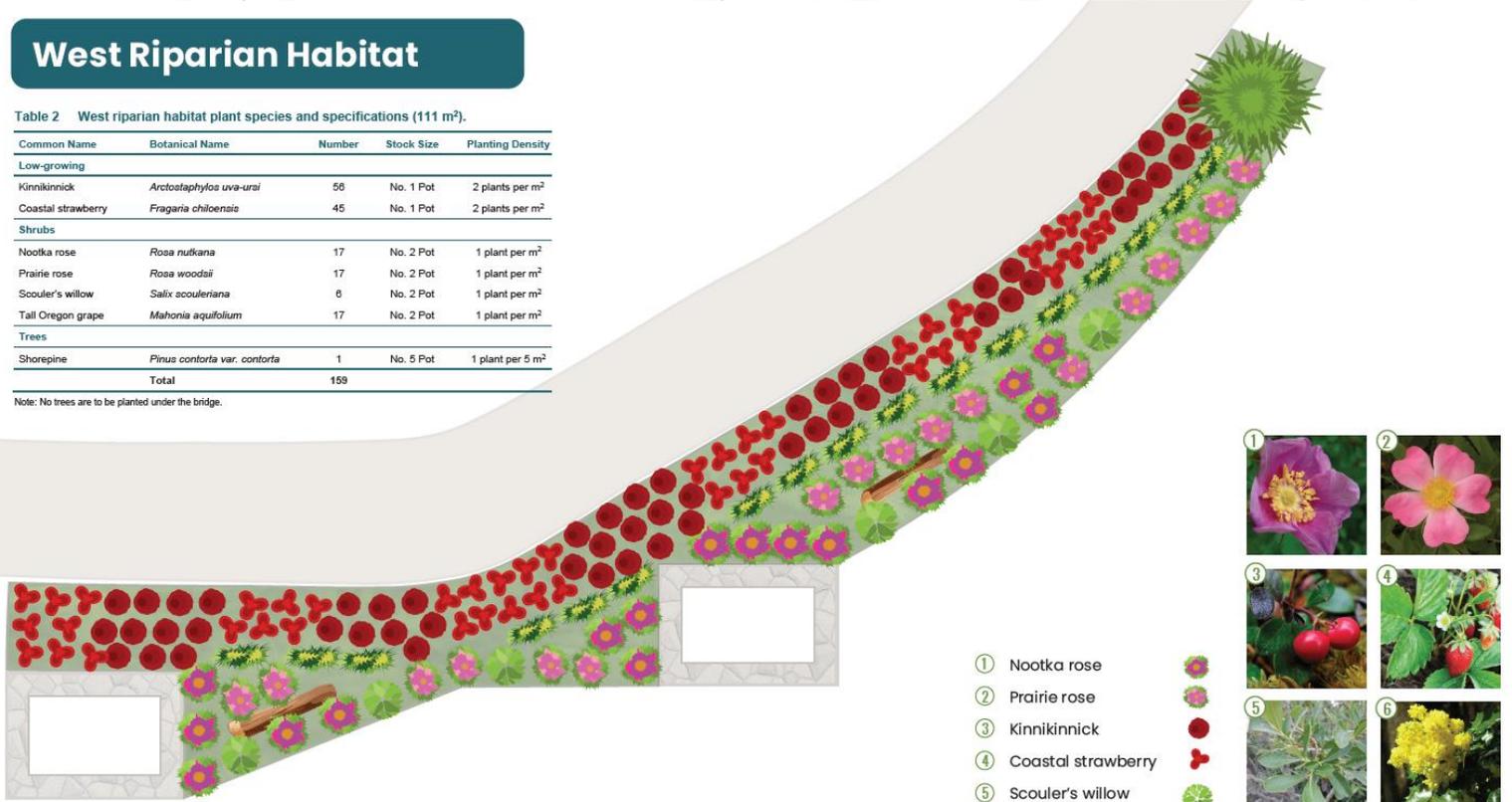
- Converting 150 m of seawall to a terraced design
- Pollinator garden
- Riparian area
- Access to the water
- Construction: 2026-2027

## West Riparian Habitat

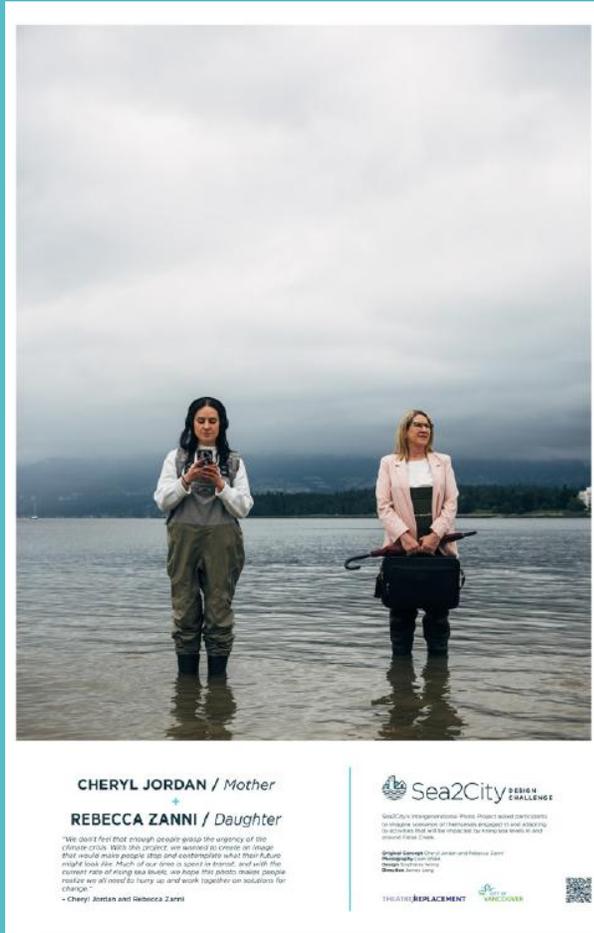
Table 2 West riparian habitat plant species and specifications (111 m<sup>2</sup>).

Common Name	Botanical Name	Number	Stock Size	Planting Density
<b>Low-growing</b>				
Kinnikinnick	<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	58	No. 1 Pot	2 plants per m <sup>2</sup>
Coastal strawberry	<i>Fragaria chiloensis</i>	45	No. 1 Pot	2 plants per m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Shrubs</b>				
Nootka rose	<i>Rosa nutkana</i>	17	No. 2 Pot	1 plant per m <sup>2</sup>
Prairie rose	<i>Rosa woodsii</i>	17	No. 2 Pot	1 plant per m <sup>2</sup>
Scouler's willow	<i>Salix scouleriana</i>	6	No. 2 Pot	1 plant per m <sup>2</sup>
Tall Oregon grape	<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>	17	No. 2 Pot	1 plant per m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Trees</b>				
Shorepine	<i>Pinus contorta</i> var. <i>contorta</i>	1	No. 5 Pot	1 plant per 5 m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Total</b>		<b>159</b>		

Note: No trees are to be planted under the bridge.



# Lessons learned



- Amplify and center Indigenous peoples and perspectives
- Creating relationships takes time, plan to maintain them
- Plan for reciprocity: amplify other people's work, convene and build skills, pay for people's time
- Pay consultants to do new things like participate in reflection dialogues
- When engaging youth incorporate opportunities to build their professional skills and be coached by your consultants
- Work with creatives, designers, biologists and planners in addition to engineers



THANK YOU!

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