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Arbutus Neighbourhood

Developers/Owners (principal rezoning): The Molson Companies, Concert Properties, Intergulf Investment, Bastion Development **Concept Architects** (Rezoning Stage): IBI Group; Robert Lemon (Heritage Consultant) **Principal Architects:** Nigel Baldwin, Roger Hughes, Downs/Archambault, Howard Bingham Hill, IBI Group, Lawrence Doyle, Richard Henry, Graham Crockart

Landscape Architects: Moura Quayle (greenway concept); Durante Kreuk (detailed landscape design)

Principal City Staff: Jacquie Forbes-Roberts (Overview); Patricia French, Harv Weider, Barbara Pringle (Area Planning); Rob Whitlock (Rezoning Planner); Jonathan Barrett, Eric Fiss (Development Planning); Jim Lowden (Park Board); Cameron Gray (Housing) [refer also to p.57]

Principal Resident Representatives: Mark Battersby, Scot Hein, Sean McEwen, Bernie Monaghan

NEIGHBOURHOOD DATA

Gross Area: 10.1 ha (25 ac)

Population: 2,100

Density (upa): 58

Housing Units: 1,450

Non-market Units: 145

Parks/Open Space: 0.9 ha (2.2 ac)

The Arbutus Neighbourhood in Kitsilano is a pivotal example of residential intensification within an existing, predominantly lower density residential district. This comprehensive redevelopment of former industrial lands (a former brewery and factories) has created a vibrant medium-density, low to mid-rise residential precinct that blends compatibly with a well-established single and two-family dwelling neighbourhood.





Public realm – tree grate detail



IBI GROUP ILLUSTRATION

Arbutus Neighbourhood Conceptual Public Realm Plan



Special lane paving with fronting non-market rowhouses



Former brewery heritage recalled in "The O'Keefe" market seniors housing development



"Trio" rowhouses front onto the 11th Avenue greenway

A diverse set of stakeholders with very different goals was involved in planning the Arbutus Neighbourhood. From the outset, the surrounding residents were interested in densification, but not in high rise towers. They wanted to ensure that the neighbourhood was not overrun with traffic. The land owners wanted to optimize their return on investment and create a desirable and marketable new higher-density residential area. City Planning staff wanted to establish an appropriate level of density and contextual fit, and achieve substantial contributions to affordable housing and daycare, as well as experimenting with new street design standards and an innovative public open space network. Recalling the site's industrial heritage was recognized by all stakeholders as an important consideration. Local residents, architects included amongst them, tabled an early design scheme which included:

- pedestrian-oriented lanes based upon the European "Woonerf" model;
- a lineal park/greenway system using the street closure of 11th Avenue;
- the use of the former City Works Yard on 10th Avenue as a small park;
- the retention of specific historic aspects including the railway spurs and archways; and
- building forms which referenced the historical larger industrial brewery floorplates rather than tall point towers (most important for residents).

City staff, working closely with neighbourhood representatives, evolved a final plan which incorporated all these ideas. The implementation of this plan has been widely acclaimed by residents.



Salal Drive looking east through heritage archway



Salal Drive's reduced width and special materials add to street's domesticity

The Arbutus Neighbourhood original study area covers about 10 hectares (25 acres) encompassing nine city blocks, between Vine Street (Connaught Park) to the west and Maple Street (Tennyson School) to the east, from the lane south of 12th Avenue to the lane south of West Broadway. Building densities were kept similar on all sites to ensure equity. In the principal rezoned area west of Arbutus Street, higher building forms were kept to internal sites next to the central dedicated open space, to meet the community's objective for a compatible "fit" on the site's westerly edge adjacent to Connaught Park.

When fully completed, the Arbutus Neighbourhood will house some 2,100 new residents. This mix of street-oriented townhouses and apartments has been achieved with buildings at eight storeys or less, while retaining almost two acres for a central park, and a series of pedestrian routes across the site. About 145 non-market housing units (10% of the total units on the ex-brewery site) are seamlessly integrated into what is otherwise primarily market housing. A seniors housing project (the "O'Keefe"), and the retention of a learning institution (The Fraser Academy) contribute to the creation of a "balanced community". Approximately 25% of the housing units are also suitable for families.

The innovative new street layout is notable in several respects. Closing parts of 11th Avenue and Yew Street has allowed the creation of a greenway which links Lord Tennyson School to Connaught Park and the Kitsilano Community Centre. This has the potential to be linked in the future to the city-wide greenway/bikeway system. In addition, the new internal streets are designed to much tighter urban standards (9 m width including sidewalks vs. 20 m for 'standard' streets), reducing their width and intersection turning radii and providing an enhanced pedestrian environment. The streets are further distinguished through the selective use of a rich palette of materials, which are extended to the pedestrian intersections and at mid-block crossings, including Vine Street at Connaught Park. The two new east/west streets (Salal Drive and Marstrand Avenue) allow streetfront addressing for the ground-oriented townhouses in multi-family buildings while providing for typical lane servicing. The buildings themselves provide diversity and a strong precinct identity for new residents while referencing historical and industrial qualities of the site.



Arbutus Street shops

The development has also energized a three block length of Arbutus Street (between Broadway and West 12th Avenue) into a viable, pedestrian-oriented neighbourhood commercial 'High Street'.

The Arbutus Neighbourhood admirably demonstrates many urban design strategies for successfully intensifying a residential neighbourhood without detracting from its pre-existing character and qualities. Indeed, a claim can be made that the broader neighbourhood has been improved and enhanced with the new developments coming on stream: new parkspace, a new greenway link, and a much improved neighbourhood shopping street are some of the benefits resulting from a meaningful and patient process of comprehensive planning that has balanced the range of stakeholder interests.



"Solo" architectural character recalls industrial heritage of site



"Mozaiek" townhouses on Vine Street facing Connaught Park



Greenway public art references site's industrial past



Park is central focus of Arbutus Greenway

NIGEL BALDWIN ARCHITECTS PHOTO

ROGER HUGHES ARCHITECTS PHOTO

CONCERT PROPERTIES PHOTO