

Developer/Owner:	Reuter Developments Ltd.
Architect:	James Hancock Architects Inc.
Landscape Architect:	Wendy Grandin Ltd.
City Staff:	Bob Adair (Development Planner) Gerry McGeough (Heritage Planner)
Year of completion:	1995

PROJECT DATA

Zoning:	RT-6
Site area:	12,500 sq. ft.
FSR:	0.84
Use:	Residential
Floor area:	9,900 sq. ft.
Height:	35 ft.

This project is a textbook example of residential infill to higher densities while respecting and complementing the basic urban design rules of a heritage neighbourhood context. Mount Pleasant is an older inner-city residential neighbourhood of large houses, usually on 50 foot- wide lots, and well established treed streetscapes.

The City's RT-6 zone, which permits a maximum four units per 50 foot-wide lot, and a maximum discretionary density of 0.75 FSR, was interpreted broadly to save an existing older heritage house and permit the demolition of an adjacent house with no heritage value. The combination of the two adjacent 50 foot lots allowed the architect more flexibility in siting the second principal house and two new coach houses to the rear. A total of eight units are accommodated in the two large houses and two coach houses which, although located at the rear lane, are visible from the street.

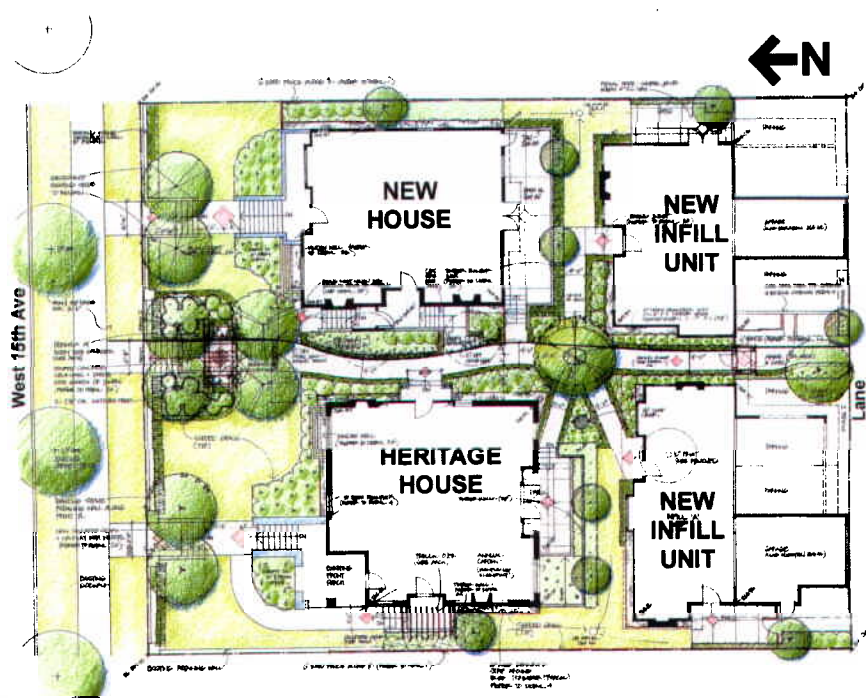
The challenge was to fit new housing into a well-established heritage streetscape, without overwhelming or clashing with the heritage house. The solution was a new house next to the old which references it in many ways including height, massing, front yard setback, colours and materials, but is itself distinct. Particularly successful is the use of the common space between the two main houses as the shared entrance to both the houses and the coach houses at the rear. The RT-6 zoning guidelines for minimum distances between main buildings and secondary buildings has here resulted in very livable private open space between the houses, with good sun penetration.

Use of the roof space over carports for second floor terraces for the coach houses maximizes the amount of private open space for these small units, which offer a range of unit sizes and layouts.

Key urban design successes are:

- careful siting of the new principal house set back from the street in line with the existing heritage house;
- compatibility in massing, architectural forms and details between the old and new ;
- use of shared spaces between buildings to maximize livability, privacy and sunlight; and
- attention to detail in materials, colour palette and landscaping which all complement the sense of permanence, predominant architectural style, and scale of the street.





WENDY GRANDIN ILLUSTRATION

The extension of the original low granite retaining wall along the street edge is a key streetscape design strategy to clearly delineate public and private space, which also serves to tie the two principal houses together across the site's width. The careful layering of landscape elements such as the wall, hedge, steps, and entrance portal are further examples of modest means achieving sound urban design results.

Another important urban design strategy successfully demonstrated here is the exploitation of rear lanes for residential frontage in lower density areas. As the city densifies, the potential to utilize lanes is increasingly being recognized with the introduction of 'coach houses', 'granny suites', and home studios supporting a more diverse population and range of land uses, while maintaining the existing rhythm of houses along the front street. Such units will contribute towards the creation of more complete, sustainable communities with a broader range of income levels, age groups, live-work opportunities and family sizes.

The success of projects developed in this zone requires flexibility in interpretation and application of the guidelines. In the case of this project, that flexibility has resulted in the saving of one fine older house and insertion of a handsome new neighbour on the street and two rear infills, all carefully integrated into the surrounding context in a classic demonstration of good urban design.



Entry pergola



Rear infill unit



15th Avenue Streetscape (heritage building on right)