

## 2. TOPOGRAPHY / NEW GROUND PLANE

### ISSUES

The Marathon site's historic role of linking rail and marine operations has for generations existed on reclaimed flatland at the base of the downtown escarpment. Downtown offices have exploited the prominent overlook to the harbour activity below and accordingly lined the escarpment 'edge', further reinforcing the geographic sense of two completely different places. Since the existing rail and ferry functions are to be removed, the site can be considered a clean slate and an open opportunity to create a special new place. The Bayshore site's historic role as part of the 'gateway' experience to Stanley Park has been possible in part due to its surface parking lot open spaces. Georgia Street commuters have enjoyed panoramic views of the mountains, Stanley Park and Coal Harbour. A slight change in elevation exists between Georgia Street and the Bayshore site that enhances views. What part should the historic topographic differences play in these opportunities?

Key questions are:

- To what extent should the escarpment, a unique part of the present identity of the downtown, be preserved? Should the overall approach to development be to establish a new grade that smooths out the topographic difference between the downtown district and the waterfront?
- How should Coal Harbour be integrated with the downtown and the West End? Are visual connections enough? Pedestrian connections? Vehicular connections?
- Should the site be integrated with the downtown and West End street grids?

### FACTS

The Marathon site is relatively flat, at sea level and distinctively separated from its land surroundings by an escarpment 40 feet high at its easterly end, but declining westward to disappear at Cardero and Georgia Streets. The escarpment has been a traditional 'edge' to the downtown central business district.

The Bayshore site is also flat, with a surface parking lot approximately 15 ft. below the adjacent Georgia Street grade.

The present extent of the natural escarpment is mainly the 2 blocks between Broughton and Bute Streets. East of Bute the original escarpment has been replaced by the rear, below-grade parking walls of commercial office developments.

Bridging of the flatland has occurred with Granville Square and Canada Place, and the approved Waterfront Centre will close the gap existing behind Canada Place.

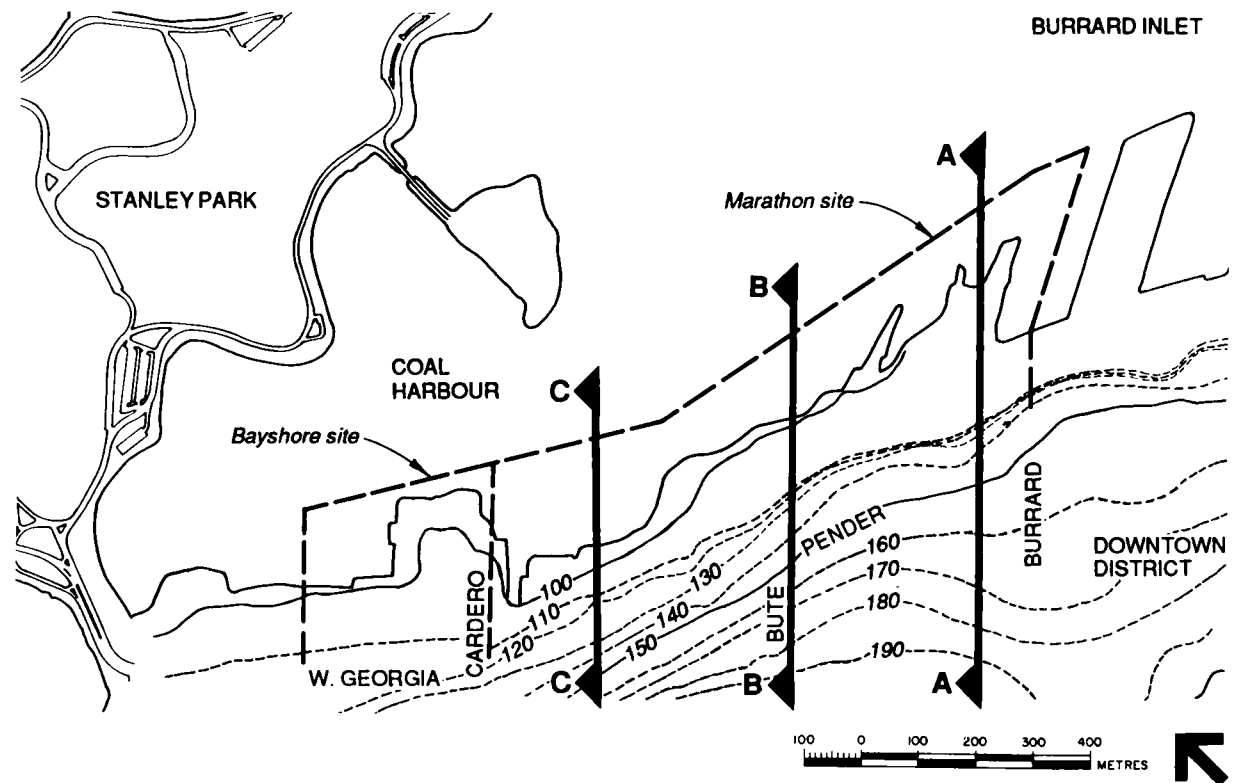


Figure 2. Coal Harbour Topography

## PAST POLICY

No past policy has dealt with preserving the identity of the area in terms of its topography or in terms of maintaining the historic 'edge' to the downtown.

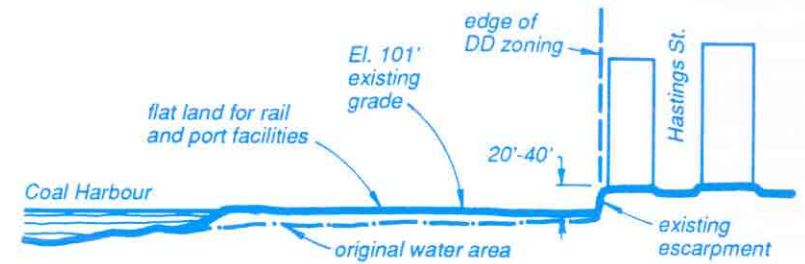
## POLICY

Encourage the linkage of the Marathon site with the Downtown but either preserve some of the former 'escarpment edge' by special landscaping treatment along its existing alignment where appropriate, or express a new 'edge' in association with public open space or street design.

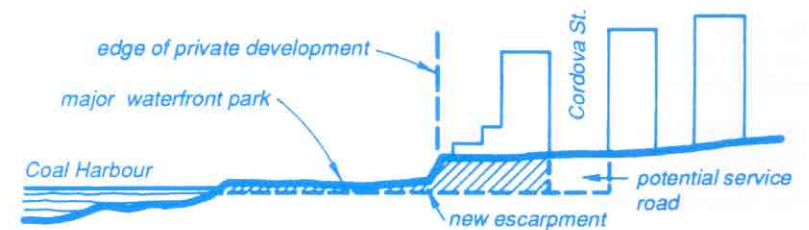
Vary the treatment of the new ground plane to respond to the variable adjacent downtown topographic context, and bring the sense of escarpment closer to the new water's edge where appropriate (see figure 3 below).

In the Marathon Site, develop a new surface grade connecting the top of the escarpment to the waterfront, using the area below for parking, utility areas and a potential service road. This will encourage a more convenient connection of the site with the downtown and a gentler transition to the waterfront.

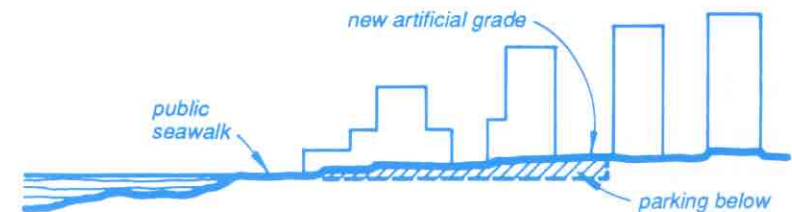
For the Marathon Site, extend the adjacent north-south streets of the downtown into the site to provide vehicular, pedestrian and visual connections.



AA - 'HISTORIC' WATERFRONT CROSS-SECTION  
(Existing west of Burrard)



BB - BUTE STREET CROSS-SECTION  
(Proposed)



CC - JERVIS STREET CROSS-SECTION  
(Proposed)

Figure 3. Coal Harbour Ground Plane Treatments