



# LANGARA GARDENS

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
HISTORIC CONTEXT	3
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE	7
BUILDING TYPOLOGIES	10
RESEARCH SUMMARY	15



Langara Gardens, circa 1970s, City of Vancouver Archives (CVA) File 964-A-4

## INTRODUCTION

The Langara Gardens development, bounded by Cambie Street, West 54<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Neal Street and West 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue, opened in 1970 and has since added one additional residential tower. The site is composed of a mix of nineteen two-storey townhouse/apartment buildings, four high-rise towers, retail establishments and a large amount of landscaped, open space between the buildings.

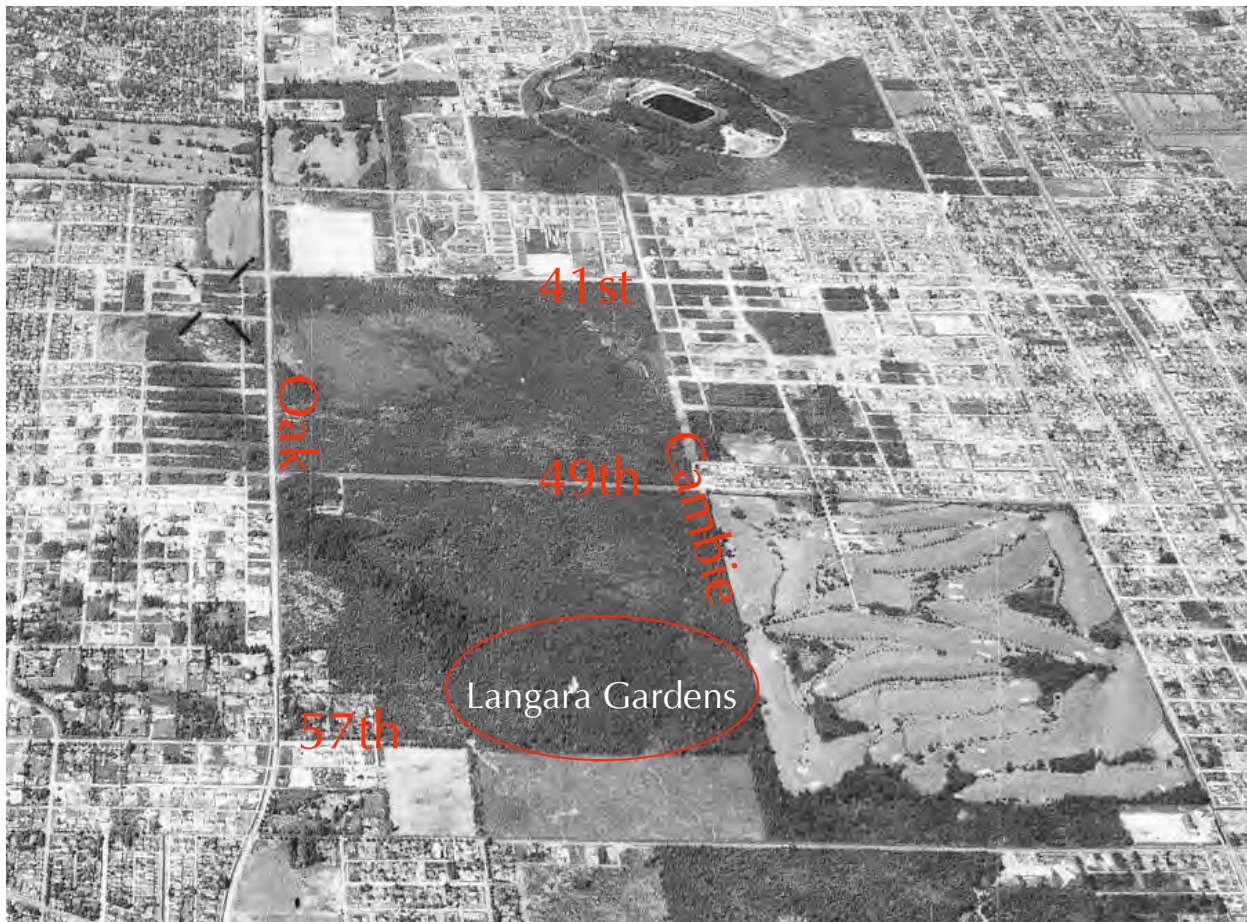


Langara Gardens aerial view, Bing Maps  
(Legend: 1. High-rise towers; 2. Retail podium; 3. Townhouse/apartment buildings; 4. Outdoor amenities)

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

The area that would later become known as South Vancouver was originally part of Musqueam's traditional territory. Since the first transcontinental train made its debut trip into its western terminus in May 1887, Vancouver has been continuously formed, developed, and influenced by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). In exchange for extending the railway into Vancouver from the originally selected western terminus in Port Moody, the CPR was granted vast amounts of land across the city. The CPR established Fairview, Kitsilano and Shaughnessy in its first major forays into the neighbourhood development of Vancouver. As Vancouver's major landholder, the CPR was strategic in its release of land for sale, opening new areas for settlement only when other neighbourhoods were full and demand for land was high.

Until the 1940s, the area south of King Edward Avenue was occupied by brushland and golf courses, interspersed by the occasional school or hospital complex, which had negotiated land acquisitions with the CPR. The CPR's land south of 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue remained bare and undeveloped; in fact, the land "was sufficiently remote for the Vancouver Gun Club's rifle range, which operated [in the area] until the early 1950s<sup>1</sup>."



Aerial photograph showing the previously empty site where Langara Gardens would be built. June 1948, CVA LP 153.2

<sup>1</sup> Davis, Chuck ed. *The Greater Vancouver Book*. 1997. "Oakridge", Michael Kluckner, page 96.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: LANGARA GARDENS, VANCOUVER

Following the Second World War, upon the return of soldiers and the increasing demand for housing, the CPR gradually opened its remaining land holdings on the west side of Vancouver for development. The 112 hectares of land bounded by Oak Street, Cambie Street, 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue were destined to become the premier, modern, postwar neighbourhood of Vancouver, as increasing automobile ownership and a penchant for the latest suburban amenities dictated the form of development.

*Announced in 1955, the newly formed Oakridge community featured 24-metre-wide single family housing lots, many on curving streets, and a small apartment area, next to which was proposed a large shopping mall with Woodward's department store as the anchor tenant<sup>2</sup>.*



**Oakridge area under development, 1958, Vintage Air Photos 58-19**

The new suburban neighbourhood provided both modern living arrangements and urban convenience. The single-family rhythm of the large bedroom community was broken by a handful of higher density apartment complexes, including Willow Gardens, which was constructed on West 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue in 1965. Offering patio entrances and a variety of refined amenities, Willow Gardens, as designed by architect Leonora Markovich, set the tone for a new approach to apartment living. It would serve as a precedent for the Langara Gardens development further south, which began construction three years later.



**Willow Gardens, West 46th Avenue at Tisdall Street, 1965, courtesy Elaine Jong**

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<sup>2</sup> Davis, Chuck ed. *The Greater Vancouver Book*. 1997. "Oakridge", Michael Kluckner, page 96.



**Architect Leonora Markovich, circa 1960s, courtesy George Diack, *Vancouver Sun***

Instead of selling the Langara Gardens parcel, the CPR decided to retain its stake in the land, as it developed the land through its subsidiary 'Marathon' real estate branch, continuing the organization's longstanding tradition of neighbourhood building in Vancouver. Opening in 1970, Langara Gardens was, at the time, the largest comprehensively designed residential project ever undertaken in Vancouver, valued at \$11 million. Langara Gardens would not be the last major real estate exercise for the CPR and Marathon, however, as it subsequently developed the comparable Arbutus Village, and in the 1990s, the high-rise Coal Harbour neighbourhood, representing more than a century of investment in Vancouver.

The VANCOUVER SUN, Fri., June 5, 1970 \*\*\*\*37

# LANGARA GARDENS



You are cordially invited to attend our

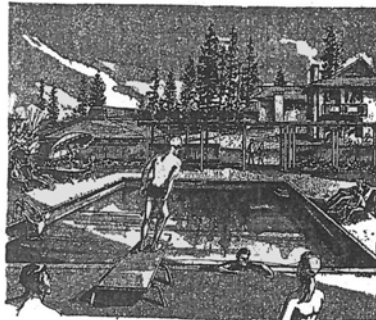
## GRAND OPENING

### SATURDAY, JUNE 6th, 1-5 P.M.

**LANGARA GARDENS** is a joint venture of Marathon and Narod, in the desirable Oakridge area, near 57th and Cambie. It is situated on 20 park-like areas, just across Cambie St. from Langara Golf Course.

**LANGARA GARDENS** is Canada's newest and most up to date Hi/Rise and Garden Apartment complex. It consists of three hi-rise buildings, town house suites and penthouses, 534 units in all!

**RECREATION** The project has three outdoor pools, plus indoor pool for year round use. Other features: Sauna rooms. Games rooms. Keep-fit room, Exquisite Social Lounge Room. Outdoor chess boards. Outdoor putting greens. Recreational functions supervised by the Y.M.C.A.



### GRAND OPENING DAY FEATURES

- Dedication ceremonies will include turning over to the City of Vancouver a 2 1/4 acre park.
- Radio Station CKNW will be broadcasting on the site.
- Many dignitaries will attend the ribbon-cutting ceremony.
- Several Display Suites will be open for inspection.

COME, SEE... FABULOUS LANGARA GARDENS!

If you believe in luxury living... you owe it to yourself to live in Langara Gardens!

### LANGARA SHOPPING PLAZA

For Your Shopping Convenience!  
Thirteen Stores, Such as:-

- Drug Store
- Dry Cleaner
- Gift Shop
- Delicatessen
- Food Market
- Beauty Parlour
- Restaurant
- Ladies' Boutique
- Barber Shop etc.

Vancouver Sun, June 5, 1970

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE



**Name:** Langara Gardens

**Address:** 7051 Ash Crescent, Vancouver, British Columbia

**Opening Date:** 1970

**Architect:** Leonora Markovich

### **Description of Historic Place**

Langara Gardens, located at 7051 Ash Crescent in the Oakridge area of Vancouver, consists of a master-planned community that was originally constructed between 1968 and 1970. The 8.4-hectare site is composed of a mixture of nineteen, two-storey townhouse/apartment buildings and four high-rise residential towers with retail space on the ground floor, all surrounded by large amounts of open space and communal amenities.

### **Heritage Value of Historic Place**

Langara Gardens is valued for: its construction on one of the last vacant, large parcels of land during the postwar expansion of Vancouver; its master-planned, resort-like layout; and its design by prominent local architect Leonora Markovich.



## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: LANGARA GARDENS, VANCOUVER

Langara Gardens, constructed on Musqueam's traditional territory, is valued for its association with the postwar development of South Vancouver. The area between West 54<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the west of Cambie Street offered one of the largest expanses of vacant land in postwar Vancouver, as the dominant landowner, Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), had not yet released all of its holdings in the area for development. As the land was gradually parcelled and sold, the CPR elected to retain ownership of the Langara Gardens site, developing the property through its real estate branch, Marathon, in conjunction with Narod Construction Ltd. The partnership, named Manar Properties, undertook the largest comprehensively-designed residential project ever undertaken in Vancouver at the time, valued at \$11 million. The execution of Langara Gardens underscores the longstanding real estate interests of the CPR, dating back to the foundations of the city.

The design of the Langara Gardens site is based on another large residential project in the area, Willow Gardens, which was completed in 1965 and also designed by architect Leonora Lucyna Markovich. Langara Gardens, like Willow Gardens, is composed of two-storey townhouse/apartment buildings surrounded by landscaped open space with a variety of amenities. The Langara site also incorporates landmark high-rise towers, the first in the immediate area, with retail space on the ground level, thereby rounding out the 'complete community' concept. These resort-like developments became a new residential model that allowed apartment dwellers to enjoy urban convenience, outdoor access and shops and services, all within the same complex. The provision of underground parking beneath both the towers and the compact footprints of the townhouse/apartment buildings is an early application of the technology that was also employed at Willow Gardens. Originally containing 534 units across the site, the only major intervention since the completion of Langara Gardens in 1970 has been the addition of another residential tower.

After designing Willow Gardens, architect Leonora Lucyna Markovich was commissioned for the master-plan of Langara Gardens. Markovich's design intent for the projects developed from her belief that outdoor living, previously relegated to suburban areas, could, in fact, be offered in urban centres to average income residents. A Polish native, Markovich was forced to leave her successful architectural career in Warsaw due to the outbreak of the Second World War. After finding refuge in Vancouver, she began working for the esteemed firm of Sharp & Thompson, Berwick, Pratt. Once obtaining Canadian citizenship, Markovich became the fifth female architect to register with the Architectural Institute of British Columbia. She established her own firm soon after registration in 1949, which became one of Vancouver's most successful practices over the next two decades. Langara Gardens represents not only the largest project executed by Markovich's firm, but also the last major design that she would accomplish, as she passed away just over a month before the grand opening of the complex. Markovich's extensive contribution to Vancouver's built form is embodied by the four high-rise towers of Langara Gardens, which rise above the Oakridge skyline.

### **Character-defining Elements**

The elements that define the heritage character of Langara Gardens are its:

- **Site:**
  - Location between Cambie Street, West 54<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Neal Street and West 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Oakridge area of Vancouver;
  - Continuous residential and commercial use since 1970;
  - Site layout, including clusters of buildings separated by large amounts of landscaped, open space, complete with walkways and custom light standards, and amenities (including three outdoor swimming pools and one indoor swimming pool); and
  - 1 hectare park in the northeast corner that was donated to the City by the developer.
- **Four Towers:**
  - eighteen-storey, high-rise form;
  - square plan;
  - repetitive and uniform window openings and rounded balconies;
  - brick cladding;
  - arched penthouse bay windows extending above the flat roofline;
  - variety of original windows and window openings; and
  - variety of original doors and door openings, including patio doors.
- **Nineteen Townhouse/Apartment Buildings:**
  - two-storey form with gable-on-hip or mansard-style roofs;
  - rectangular plan;
  - entrances within breezeways, which feature flat roofs;
  - large patios and balconies facing the generous landscaping;
  - stucco cladding with wooden trim; and
  - variety of original windows and window openings.

## BUILDING TYPOLOGIES



**Development model, 1960s, CVA File 964-A-4**

There are two historic building typologies at the Langara Gardens site: high-rise towers and two-storey townhouse/apartment buildings. The buildings are clustered around copious amounts of mature landscaping, which is a character-defining element of the site, as illustrated below.





One of three original towers (left) and newest tower (right)

### **HIGH-RISE TOWERS**

The four high-rise towers at Langara Gardens are found at the southeastern corner of the site, along West 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The three easternmost towers, which opened in 1970, are placed on a one-storey retail podium and underground parkade, while the fourth tower to the west was constructed in the 1980s. The high-rise towers characterize the site and are visible from large parts of South Vancouver and Richmond. The rectangular form of each brick tower is relieved by rounded elements on the roof, as well as rounded balconies.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: LANGARA GARDENS, VANCOUVER



**Retail podium along West 57th Avenue**



**Towers rising above the landscaped grounds of the site**



**Apartment building example**

### **TOWNHOUSE/APARTMENT BUILDINGS**

There are nineteen two-storey townhouse/apartment buildings scattered throughout the Langara Gardens site. Each building was designed in one of a handful of schemes and each sits on an underground parkade, which is an early and unique feature of the complex. The buildings feature breezeways with entrances into the units, as well as large patios and balconies that face the generous landscaping found throughout the site.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: LANGARA GARDENS, VANCOUVER



**Apartment building example**



**One of the parkade entrances for residents of the low-rise apartments/townhouses**

## RESEARCH SUMMARY

**Name:** Langara Gardens

**Address:** 7051 Ash Crescent, Vancouver, British Columbia

**Opening Date:** 1970

**Architect:** Leonora Markovich

### SOURCES:

- City of Vancouver Archives
- City of Vancouver Park Board. *Remarkable Women: Honouring Women from Our Vancouver Communities*. Vancouver: 2011.
- Davis, Chuck (Ed.). *The Greater Vancouver Book*. 1997.
- *Vancouver Sun*
- Women in Architecture Exhibits Committee c/o Architectural Institute of British Columbia. *Constructing Careers: Profiles of Five Early Women Architects in British Columbia*. Vancouver: 1996.