

Main and Cordova

305 Main Street, Vancouver

Living Heritage Approach



May 2021

Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge our project site at Main and Cordova is located on the traditional and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷə́yəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples. Before colonial settlement, this place, Kʼemkʼemelá́y, which the xʷməθkʷə́yəm similarly call qəmqəmələtp, meaning place of maple trees, was a notable landmark seen from the waters of the inlet. As current stewards of this land, we are mindful of the values and knowledge we have inherited from past generations and that which we will hand down to future generations.

Project team

Developer

Happy Harvest (Tomo Spaces and Golden Properties)

Architects

MA+HG Architects

EskewDumezRipple

Landscape Architect

Hapa Collaborative

Heritage Consultants

Donald Luxton & Associates

John Atkin History + Research

Indigenous Consultants

Snəwəyət Inc.

Community Engagement

Carolyn Camman and Chris Corrigan

Structural Engineer

Timber Engineering

Mechanical Engineer

Rocky Point Engineering

Electrical Engineer

Nemetz (S/A) & Associates

Artist Consultant

Ken Lum

Planning Consultant

Happy City

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Summary

A Living Heritage Approach for Main and Cordova

What's this project about?

Downtown Eastside urgently needs more affordable housing that is safe and healthy, especially for families. At Main and Cordova (MAC) we have the potential to build 100+ social housing apartments that support wellbeing, integrated with a learning centre, local shops, and non-profit owned theatre space. This 11-storey mixed-use building will be built with mass timber and with a zero carbon building target.

The project began with a review of the heritage integrity of 301 Main Street, a C-listed resource on the Vancouver Heritage Register. A review by Don Luxton and Associates in March 2020 found that the original integrity of the building has been largely lost due to structural damage from a past fire and multiple alterations over time. Structural and code analysis further determined the lack of viability of full retention and façade retention.

What's this approach?

In response to the loss of the tangible heritage and the emphasis in the City of Vancouver's Heritage Program (2020) on the retention of intangible heritage values, the project team has undertaken a living heritage approach to conservation. This approach honours the intangible values inherited from past generations that continues to shape our community today and inform our decision for the future. Our intent in implementing a living heritage approach is to design a building informed by the past and strengthens the continuity of community connections to place.

Our team undertook a three-part approach to living heritage. Each part began with a question to guide our inquiry.

Heritage Value Statement (Part A)

What tangible and intangible values does this place represent?

This led to a deep review of the site's historical context and uses, revealing its role and value as a civic centre, a crossroads, a meeting point, and a place of culture in all its forms as well as a place of advocacy.

Community Engagement (Part B)

How has this corner mattered for the residents of the community, and how could it matter in the future?

Conversations with community members revealed the important themes of: accessibility/belonging, beauty, flow/rest and transition, community-based commerce, interaction, and 'vivomimicry' (nurturing the patterns of life already present).

Design Principles (Part C)

How does a building become a good neighbour in the Downtown Eastside?

A good neighbour hosts exchanges and adds vitality. In Part C, we start to translate intangible values into a tangible building design. We reminded ourselves that this building can't solve the complicated and complex issues in DTES. However, people can move toward a direction of positive change and architecture has the potential to provide the physical conditions, making it easier (or harder). We distilled our learnings into 6 principles and intentional design responses.

Principle 1: Healthy homes for all

- Provide 100+ social housing apartments ranging from micro to 3-bedroom homes
- Provide more than the required 25% of all social housing units as family-friendly units
- Replace and upgrade 20 SROs into self-contained homes
- Provide a range of outdoor spaces for different people and uses

Design principle 2: Create opportunities for exchange

- Explore with BC's leading universities to integrate a learning centre
- Create a micro-market with vendor stalls to support residents' micro enterprises
- Design smaller commercial spaces (800 sf to 2,000 sf) to support local serving retail
- Include "social niches" on each floor to invite neighbours to gather and talk

Design principle 3: Spaces need stewards

- Engage housing partners as well as educational and cultural partners early and on both spatial and operational issues
- Cultivate an artist-led and artist-run process to form "New Harvest" cultural space
- Ensure there are no spaces on our drawings that are ambiguous on stewards

Design principle 4: Transition, not barriers

- Create transitions between public, communal, and private spaces, such as building's and suite's entries
- Create a second-level "sidewalk"
- Place entry to the learning centre on Cordova Street

Design principle 5: Use architecture to daylight stories

- Elevate the New Harvest theatre space to the prominent corner at Main and Cordova
- Design New Harvest theatre space to support emerging community arts groups, including theatre makers and musicians
- Design a "historic scroll" on the ground to highlight stories of people and place

Design principle 6: Nature is economical

- Use mass timber construction, engineered for high strength like concrete and steel but is a more environmentally-friendly substitute as a carbon sink
- Set target of zero carbon building (GCB) under Canada Green Building Council's (CaBGC) Zero Carbon Building Design Standard

Introduction



What is Living Heritage?

Living heritage or the living dimension of heritage is the values, everyday practices, skills, and ways of knowing we have inherited from past generations that continue to shape our communities today and inform our decision for the future.

Following this understanding, our living heritage approach honours the ever-evolving nature of a place and its people by allowing past uses to inform future design. Our goal in implementing this approach is to design a building that serves and strengthens the continuity of community connections to the place where it is rooted.

As heritage places evolve, the continuity of function and community connections are maintained.

International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) (2015). People-Centred Approaches to the Conservation of Cultural Heritage: Living Heritage. Rome: ICCROM

Why a Living Heritage Approach for MAC?

Long before city planners marked this site on a map, a grove of maples stood close to the place where Main Street now meets the Burrard Inlet. This place, *K'emk'emeláy*, which the *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* similarly call *qəmqəmələtp*, was a notable landmark of maple trees. The maple grove no longer stands, but this place continues to represent vitality and connection.

Main and Cordova is a corner that has hosted a range of residential, retail, and cultural spaces. This site is a place rich in heritage, not only tangible, but intangible. A living heritage approach allows us to understand the built environment as a dynamic space where life took and continues to take place.

Our decision to apply a living heritage approach to the development of 305 Main Street stemmed from the findings of the heritage integrity review, paired with an opportunity to apply a new approach to conservation.

The Main and Cordova project began with a review of the heritage integrity of 305 Main Street, a C-listed resource on the Vancouver Heritage Register. The review indicated that, although identified for its heritage value, the original integrity of the building has been largely lost. Most significantly, a fire in 1972 damaged the structure and the top storey, including the wooden-shingle, dual-pitched roof with a small corner turret, which was removed and not replaced. Furthermore, the ground floor has been altered numerous times by various businesses that occupied the space over the years and many second-floor windows have been replaced. This review, completed by Donald Luxton and Associates Inc., is attached.

The results of the heritage integrity review, together with the emphasis in the City of Vancouver's Heritage Program on the recognition of intangible heritage values, presented an opportunity to more broadly consider the social and cultural heritage value of the project site. The first goal of the Vancouver Heritage Program serves as a significant guidepost for the project, as the site is located at the intersection of a rich Indigenous, Chinese-Canadian, and Japanese-Canadian cultural heritage.

“Enable the Vancouver Heritage Program, Heritage Register and Heritage Policies to embrace cultural heritage, including Indigenous Cultural Heritage and of systemically excluded ethnocultural communities”

Goal 1: Recognize a diversity of Heritage values,
City of Vancouver, VHP 2020.

Creating a Living Heritage Approach

In developing the living heritage approach for 305 Main Street, we drew from the field of heritage planning, including the frameworks of **historic urban landscape and intangible culture heritage**. While these frameworks have been applied mainly to urban districts and historic cities (rather than to a site that is half of a city block), the importance of this paradigm shift, regardless of scale, is the emphasis and inclusion of a community's intangible values.

Our process is further informed by the field of **regenerative development** with its emphasis on living systems thinking where place and people are inseparable. Regenerative development methodology is grounded in an understanding that tangible solutions arise from addressing the intangibles such as the uniqueness, the vitality, and the potentials of a place.

We also sought guidance from the **City of Vancouver's Chinatown Transformation Team** that has done much work on identifying intangible cultural values for the neighbourhood's cultural heritage asset mapping and management plan.

Lastly, our living heritage process for 305 Main Street is shaped by our **multidisciplinary team** and its people-centred approach to historical research, community engagement, and design. We engaged John Atkin, civic historian, and engagement facilitators Chris Corrigan and Caroline Camman in research and community dialogue, respectively. By linking research to dialogue, and dialogue to design, we worked in an iterative, non-linear manner, allowing our learnings to continually guide our living heritage approach.

This values-based approach describes the emerging practice of conserving a historic place based on the associated values of the community. Evolving from a material-based approach, the emphasis is placed less on a particular building's age, and more on how the community values it. In this way, while the built environment changes, heritage values may be preserved and passed on from one generation to the next.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization UNESCO (2011). Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape. Paris: UNESCO.

MAC's Living Heritage Approach

Living heritage considers foremost the meaning a place had in the past to its ongoing use and relevance in the present. It embraces the inherent living nature of a place and its continuous process of evolution. Our approach to living heritage can be summarized as looking back to bring forward, looking from the present to the future, and looking to create future heritage.

With this understanding, our living heritage approach has three related components which comprise the three sections of this report.



Part A: Heritage Value Statement

Part A is a look back at the social history of the site and neighbourhood through a Heritage Value Statement. Its focus is the values associated with this site, as seen through its past. This section is produced by John Atkin History + Research.

Part B: Community Engagement Summary

Part B is the community engagement summary, produced by Chris Corrigan and Carolyn Camman, engagement facilitators. It is a look from the present to the future through an ongoing engagement with the community on the project's programming and design. Community engagement will be ongoing and continue beyond the writing of this report.

Part C: Principles for Design

Part C translates the values and emerging themes from the Heritage Value Statement and the ongoing community engagement into tangible design. Incorporating community-based learnings into design is about designing for specific functions as well as creating the conditions for the building to have a generative role in the neighbourhood. Learnings from history and community engagement are distilled into 6 principles and possible design responses. This section is produced by the design and development team members MA+HG Architects, EskewDumezRipple, Tomo Spaces, and Golden Properties.

From Maple Trees to Bruce Lee: Learnings from our Living Heritage Approach

The goal of our living heritage approach is to design a building that serves and strengthens the continuity of community connections to the place where it is rooted. We focus on the continuity of function and uses, seeking to understand the purpose of this corner and how it has served local residents. We also pay attention to lost connections to be uncovered, which one of our interviewees called "daylighting places." For instance, the Squamish names of nearby landmarks refer to maple trees and maple leaves. More recently in the 1970s, the Golden Harvest Theatre on this block was a weekend family gathering place, as it was the only venue in North America which screened Bruce Lee movies.

Approaching the site through the lens of its living heritage has provided key insights that have influenced the project's design development. **What we heard led us to a central question for design:**

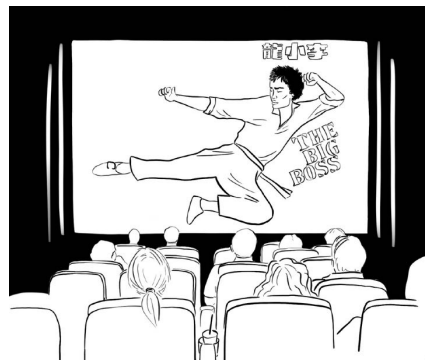
How does a building become a good neighbour?

We arrived at: A building that is a "good neighbour" hosts exchanges and adds vitality.

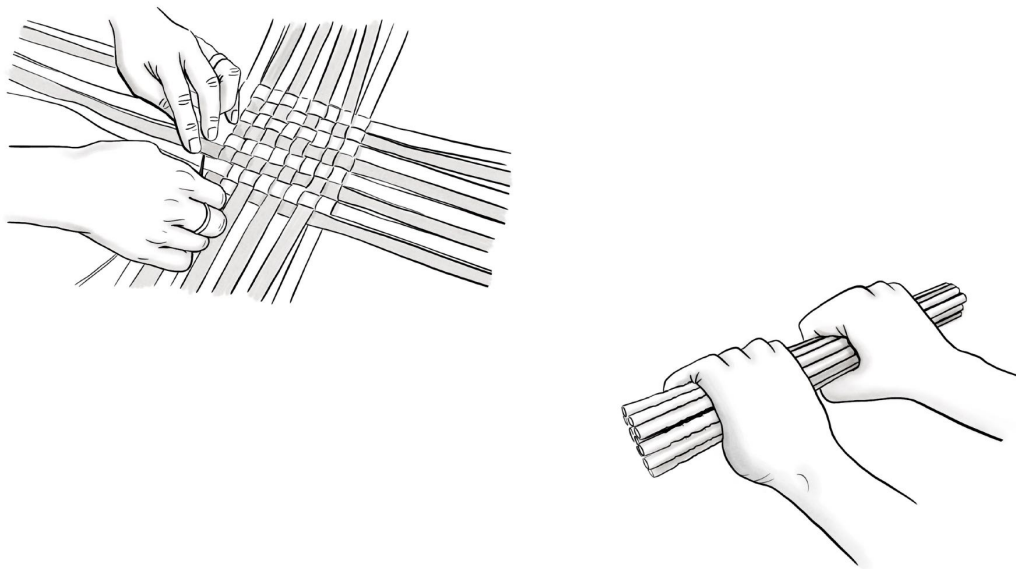
In order to build a healthy neighbourhood for all (DTES Plan 2014), this question about how to become a good neighbour is important, and increasingly critical for the neighbourhood's resilience.

The overarching goal of [the Downtown Eastside Plan] is to make the DTES a more livable, safe and supportive place for all of its diverse residents, in other words, a healthy neighbourhood for all.

Downtown Eastside Plan, 2014



The Three Host Nations tell stories about cedar weaving. The Chinese-Canadians tell the story of bamboo chopsticks. What we learned from these stories is that we are stronger together. A good neighbour is generous. Good neighbours take care of each other. That's the potential we see with this project. We believe mixed-use development isn't simply placing residential use above commercial use, just like being neighbours isn't simply living next to each other. It's about inviting exchanges between people and adding vitality to the whole community to which we belong. **In this way, a building that is a "good neighbour" in the DTES should provide affordable homes for diverse families, offer access to learning and multicultural expression, and create local economic opportunities. Healthy homes are about hosting environments that support people's self-determined path to fulfilling their potential.**



In looking back at the historic urban landscape, John Atkin, civic historian, helped the design team understand that this corner of Main and Cordova has been a civic centre, a crossroad, a meeting point, a scene for cultures in all forms, and an ecosystem for advocacy (Part A).

In conversations with residents and community stakeholders, Carolyn Camman and Chris Corrigan, engagement facilitators, helped the team harvest the values of this corner in the present day: accessibility, belonging, beauty, flow, rest, transition, local retail, supportive interactions, tending to trauma, self-governance, stewardship, and "vivimimicry" (Part B).


The themes that emerged from the heritage value statement and the community engagement describe and highlight the patterns of the place that contributes to its vitality (or aliveness), the generative potentials, and the future building as a contributing instrument toward the life of the neighbourhood.

Translating the intangible heritage values into building design, the design and development team articulated 6 design principles and potential design responses (Part C).

Our process of learning reminded us that a building can't solve the complicated and complex issues in DTES — but people can. Architecture and design have the potential to support people by shaping built spaces that respond to their needs and nurture human solutions. Throughout the process, we remained grounded in our context. **The "here" for this project is Main and Cordova. While nested in the DTES and in Vancouver, this corner is our particular place.**

We see patterns that contribute to the vitality ("aliveness") of Main and Cordova. These patterns emerge from the creative tension between people's aspirations and realities of living in DTES. "Vivimimicry," coined by Carolyn Camman and Chris Corrigan, encourages us to align with "the patterns and structures that enable life, paying attention to those patterns that already exist in the neighbourhood and nurturing them" (Part B).

As we consider a redevelopment here, we acknowledge our intention to be one moment in a long continuum of time. We heard stories from before European contact. We heard stories about Bruce Lee movies. We heard unraveling stories and stories of lives lost to the opioid epidemic, compounded by COVID-19 pandemic. We can design for other futures here, imagining and designing for the seasons and cycles of the next 100 years.

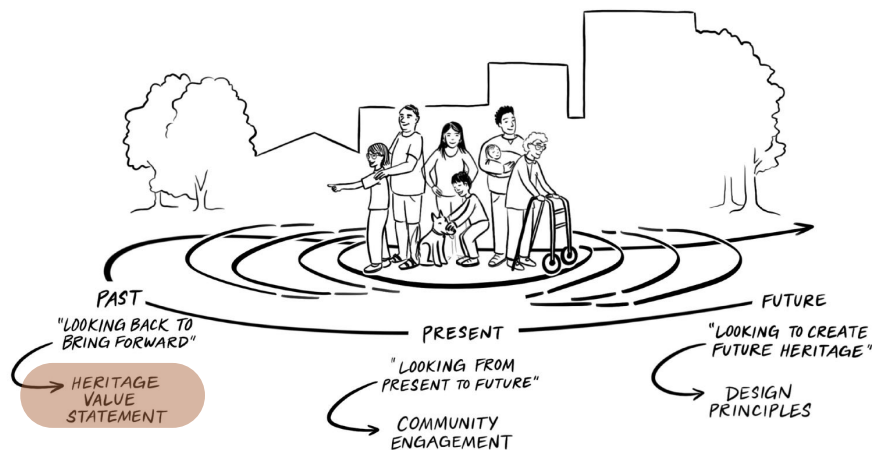


Heritage Value Statement

By John Atkin History + Research

John Atkin is a civic historian, author and heritage consultant. John has curated and designed the Vancouver Museum's City Light: Neon in Vancouver exhibition in 1999/2000, wrote the 2008 Chinatown Lighting Strategy and co-authored with Jeannette Hlavach, the successful 2010 application for Chinatown's National Historic District status. As a heritage consultant, John regularly consults on heritage buildings, writing Statements of Significance, Conservation Plans and Heritage Assessments in the Lower Mainland and the Kootenay region of BC.

Heritage Value Statement



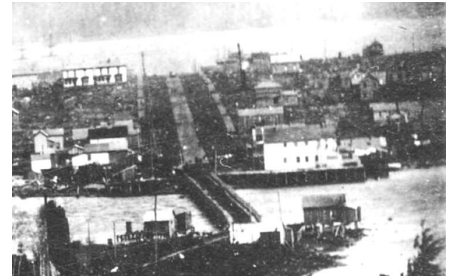
Introduction

The Main and Cordova project is at the intersection of Indigenous trails, the old civic centre, major transportation routes and the vibrant diverse community that makes up the Downtown Eastside. It is a place of gathering, residence and community as seen through its history and development. Throughout this Heritage Value Statement, modern street and place names have been used to provide clarity.

Area History and Site Context

The establishment of the British Columbia and Vancouver Island Spar, Lumber and Sawmill Company, popularly known as the Hasting Mill, in 1865 on an point of land at the foot of today's Dunlevy Street occupied by the village of K'emk'emeláy (Squamish), ḡəmḡémələtp (Musqueam), brought the first non-native settlement to the south shore of Burrard Inlet.

The Mill drew a diverse work force including the local Indigenous population, Chinese, Hawaiian, Chilean, Blacks and others to the Burrard shore. This informal settlement drew Captain John Deighton to the inlet's shore in 1867 where up against the mill's western boundary he built the crude saloon that would become the nucleus of the future city of Vancouver.



The view across False Creek showing the early bridge and the width of Main Street in 1887 CVA photo: Van Sc P60

The first bridge across False Creek was built in the 1870s to span the narrow channel roughly where today's Terminal Avenue intersects with Main Street: the site known as Xáywá7esks or narrow passage. The bridge opened a direct route with the emerging townsite with New Westminster setting in motion the role of Main Street as a major commercial and cultural hub on the peninsula.

With British Columbia's entry into Confederation and the pending arrival to the coast of the transcontinental railroad, a group of Victoria-based investors took a calculated gamble and purchased over 300 acres (121 ha) east of Carrall Street in 1884. That same year the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) began negotiations with the provincial government and private land owners on the terms and conditions which would see the railway terminus be extended from Port Moody to the western end of Burrard Inlet.



The frenzy of real estate speculation brought by the railway announcement only grew with the incorporation of the City of Vancouver in April 1886 and really took off with the opening of streetcar service in 1889. The original loop of Granville to Broadway to Main, Powell, Carrall and Cordova drew development along its length and as a result the immediate area around Main and Cordova became a significant business, civic and entertainment district. The waterfront and its role as a transportation hub for coastal communities prompted the building of a number of hotels aimed at travellers and at the same time supported a number of smaller hotels and rooming houses that provided accommodation for longshoremen, ship's crew and seasonal resource workers.

An Evolving Neighbourhood

By the 1890s, the Hastings Mill was an important and active recruiter of Japanese men to work at the mill which prompted the establishment of the Japanese district centred on Powell Street. Many businesses and organizations could be found in the immediate area including the Japanese Continental Daily News, whose offices were in the 200 block of East Cordova. The Chinese community continued to grow despite the myriad of restrictions placed on immigration and a number of businesses along with Clan and Benevolent Associations could be found in the area outside of what is considered Chinatown today.

The advent of the Second World War brought considerable change as the influx of war workers put pressure on available housing resources and the expulsion of the Japanese population in 1942 forever changed the face of the immediate area. The growth of Chinatown in the post war period with the lifting of immigration restrictions saw significant development in the surrounding area with new restaurants and night clubs prompting interest from Hong Kong investors, specifically in entertainment. By the mid-1970s there were three Chinese language cinemas in the immediate area.



Real estate for sale at the corner of Cordova and Main Street in 1886, months before the city's incorporation CVA photo: Dist P8.1



Japanese Continental Daily News 200 block East Cordova
CVA photo: Bu N329

By the 1950s, the new public safety building was open on the south east corner of Main and Cordova, replacing the venerable Lanning Apartments and the Star Theatre. This period saw significant shifts in transportation with the closure of coastal services offered by the Union and Canadian National steamship companies along with the closure of the cross inlet North Vancouver ferry service. The resulting loss of pedestrian traffic had a huge impact on local small businesses setting in motion the slow decline in the area.



Further change arrived in the area with construction of the Brutalist provincial court building in the 1970s occupying the east side of Main between Cordova and Powell. It was followed by the Remand Centre to the east at Gore. Both projects displaced local business and some Chinese Clan Associations.

Throughout the 1970s community activists took on the condition of the area's single room occupancy hotels (SROs) arguing and pushing for basic safety measures such as sprinklers after a couple of devastating fires. The activism lead to the creation of the Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA) in 1973 to fight for community improvements. This in essence creates what we know as the Downtown Eastside as a defined community.

A Development Chronology of Main and Cordova

1888/1889 Office of Dr. J.L. McAlpine

The first building on the site was the office of Dr. J.L. McAlpine, constructed on Lot 5 in the late 1888/9. The ground floor had two shop fronts, originally housing a drug store and a bakery. The original two storey wood frame building was replaced in 1922, after being condemned by city inspectors, with the single storey brick and timber frame structure that survives today. Dr. McAlpine wore many hats including ship's physician on the Zealandis, City's medical health officer, jail physician as well as the Dominion Immigration Agent and medical inspector for the Port of Vancouver. Aside from his medical work he was involved in real estate in Vancouver and Point Grey and a variety of mining concerns.



Main Street in 1904 looking north from Hastings Street with the 1888 building second from the left
CVA photo 371-2869

c.1894 Mountain View Boarding House/Hotel

The building at the corner of Cordova and Main Street was constructed c.1894 as the Mountain View Boarding House with ground floor retail and sleeping rooms occupying the upper two floors. The ground floor retail on Cordova reflected an evolving neighbourhood with Kiyoshi Negoro's general store in 1908, shoemakers Schutsky and Angel in 1910 and 1912 and Yee Man's tailor shop in the 1920s. The Bank of Montreal branch at the corner of main and Cordova became the Atlas Cafe in 1914, the People's Mission in the 1930s and later a Japanese-run store and a Swedish restaurant.



301 Main Street after the fire of 1972, next door is the two storey 1903 building
John Atkin photo

The rooming house became a hotel in 1905 and over the years a number of owners and name changes, by the 1930s it had become the Yamane Rooms operated by Umeko Yamane until 1942. The original three storey building with a modest corner turret, was badly damaged in a 1972 fire and in the subsequent repairs the top floor with the turret and mansard roof were removed.



Showing the truncated building with the top floor removed after the fire and repairs in 1976
CVA photo CVA790-1918

1902

The third structure was built by local contractors, Baynes and Horie. The two storey timber frame and masonry building on Lot 2 cost \$2500.00 according to the building permit. It had ground floor retail with a nine room boarding house upstairs. The stores were an ever changing mix of retail with a tailor's shop, stationary supplies, an office for an oil company and barber shop.

1910

The last two lots, 3 and 4, were built upon in 1910 with a one storey building with three store fronts. Over the years it was occupied by an ice cream parlour, shoe shine, a real estate office, Ching Yuen, a shoemaker and Mr Tanabe, a watchmaker. In the years after the First World War, the space was occupied by A. T. Martin "the bicycle man" and his cycling store, a Swedish restaurant and the long standing Charlies Market, the last business before the building's demolition in the 1970s.

1922

Dr McAlpine's two storey wood structure was demolished in 1922 and replaced with a one storey building that was home to a diverse group of tenants that included the offices of a seafood distributor, food market and the Home Church of Devine Fellowship. It was incorporated into the revamped Golden Harvest theatre event space as a lobby and entrance.

1974

Lots 3 and 4 were purchased by the Raymond Chow for the construction of the Golden Harvest theatre. After the Shaw organization, Raymond Chow's Golden Harvest Films was the second largest movie-maker in Hong Kong. Shot in Mandarin, every film came complete with two sets of subtitles, one in English and one in Chinese. The 750-seat Golden Harvest introduced Bruce Lee and a host of other Hong Kong stars to Vancouver audiences. The theatre went dark between the 1980s to early 2000s.



The Baines and Horie-built 1902 building in the 1970s
CVA 790-1919 photo



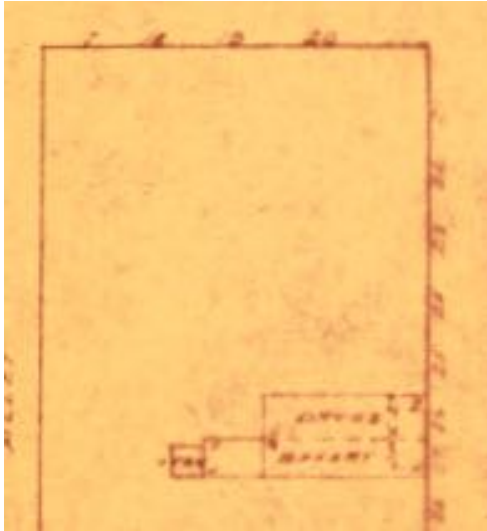
The single storey 1910 building to the left with the Delight Cafe in the 1970s
John Atkin photo



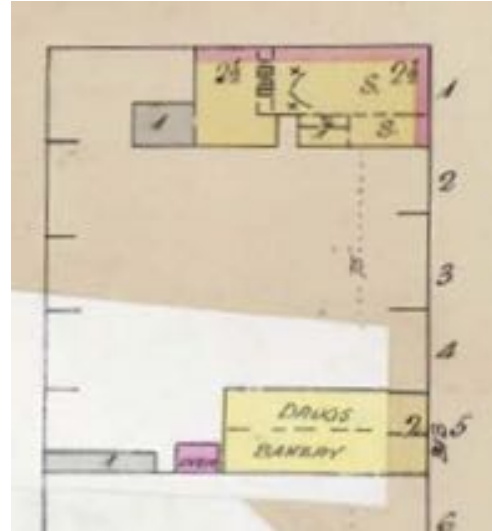
The recently built Golden Harvest theatre in 1976 with the 1922 single storey structure to the right
CVA photo CVA790-1918

The Evolution of the Site from 1889 to 1940

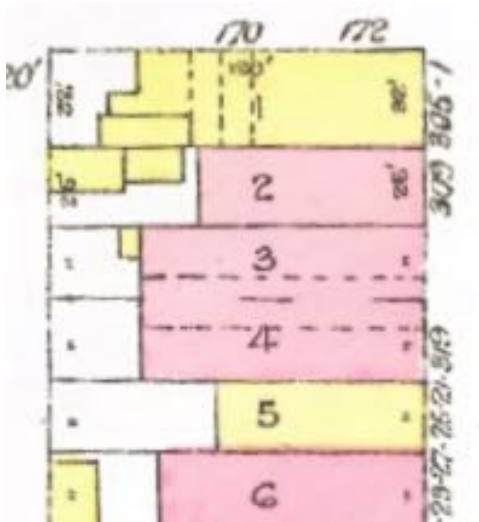
Maps are oriented with Cordova St at the top



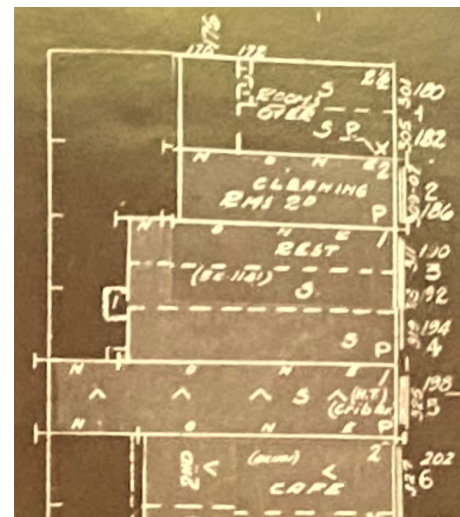
1889 fire insurance plan showing the premises of Dr McAlpine and a bakery



1897 fire insurance plan, updated to 1901, showing the addition of the retail and rooming house at the corner of Cordova Street, built in 1895



1912 fire insurance plan shows the addition of a two storey masonry and timber frame block constructed in 1903



1940 fire plan shows the original building from 1889 on Lot 5 has been replaced with a single storey structure that fills the lot. Nothing changes on the site until 1974 when lots 3 and 4 are redeveloped with the Golden Harvest theatre

An Evolving Area Context



Left: The Happiness Cafe, McLeod's Transfer, Lanning Apartments and the Star Theatre on the block before the construction of the Public Safety building at 312 Main Street
Walter Frost photo CVA 447-321



Left: The Seafarer's building at the north east corner of Cordova and Main Street which was replaced with the provincial court building. Further up Cordova is the Japanese Continental Daily News office
CVA 447-385 and CVA 772-1072



On the north west corner of Cordova and Main Street is the single storey retail building constructed in home to some retail and artists studios
CVA 790-2449 and CVA 772-1074



A Social History of Main and Cordova

It is unclear what specific Indigenous uses the site might have had though it sits at or near the intersection of a number of Indigenous trails through the forest that lead to and from sites of use and habitation on the inlet, Stanley Park and False Creek, as well as the Indigenous trails east along the inlet to Second Narrows and south to the Fraser River. Today the area is home to a diverse urban aboriginal population representing at least ten nations across British Columbia along with members from across the country.

The Settler Population has Always been Diverse

The initial population around the Hastings Mill included the local indigenous population, Chilean, Chinese, Japanese, Black and South Asians among others. That diversity was reflected in the businesses at Main and Cordova. Kiyoshi Negro's clothing store on Cordova Street is first shown in the 1908 directory, Polish shoemaker Edward Shutsky took over the store in 1910, while Ching Yuen made his shoes around the corner on Main Street. Yee Man "Ladies and Gents tailoring, suits properly made at right prices" occupied the Cordova store front in the 1920s.

Shoemakers and shoe repair shops flourished in the area due to the population of resource workers such as loggers and sawmill workers who needed good footwear and like tailoring it was a business that could give many a start.

The Japanese community turned to Motozo Toyama and his Columbia Studio for photographs that captured important moments from weddings and graduation to the Asahi baseball team's many championship portraits. The studio was in business from 1916 until forced to close in 1942, initially at 312 Main Street and then at two locations on the Main and Cordova site.

Restaurants and grocery stores came and went with the ebb and flow of the area and as the early workforce of loggers 'retired' from the woods they found themselves back where they'd spent their seasonal breaks. If there was money then the hotels and rooming houses, many now known as 'buck a day' places offered shelter while the area's myriad of beer parlours and coffee counters offered social space to hang out with friends.



Indigenous trails before non-native settlement based on information collected by City Archivist Major Matthews and early maps. Names are from the Squamish Atlas. (squamishatlas.com)

The interaction between the city and residents is often in "third places" the intersection of the public and the private. Main and Cordova's coffee shops, lunch counters, missions and grocery stores have in one form or another been that place for members of the community to gather outside of the confines of an SRO room.

At Main and Cordova, the corner hosted a variety of places to grab a bite of just coffee. Woo's occupied the corner after the building was rebuilt after the fire and was replaced by Vic's in the early 90s both offering affordable meals and a place to sit. The last iteration of the coffee shop was the Wave's location which in its advertising summed up the idea of the corner as "great for studying, business meetings, or chatting with friends, everyone is welcome."

Outside of the beer parlour or coffee shop others created their own space sometimes on the sidewalks, or the edge of the tracks or the docks. A CBC documentary in the 1950s followed a group of retired longshoremen calling themselves the Cordova Steamfitters Club -an informal community unrecognized by officials or society - who met regularly to drink and socialize.

That lack of real public space was one of the motivations for the years long struggle led by residents to create CRAB (Citizen's for a Real Available Beach) Park on the waterfront. Advocates argued that the demolition of the old finger piers which began in the late 1970s provided an opportunity to create a waterfront park accessible to local residents.

Culture in all Forms and the Community

The Lumiere brothers' Cinematographe made its Vancouver debut in 1887 on Carrall Street, the following year Thomas Edison's new projector and films were premiered at the City Market at Hastings and Main and by 1902 the Electric, Canada's first movie theatre had opened on Cordova Street near Abbott. In short order, the area around Main and Hastings with its transportation connections, nearby train stations and the port became the city's entertainment district with impressive Vaudeville theatres that hosted the major circuits to movie houses small and large such as the Star on the south east corner of Main and Cordova.

“

With a lack public space to gather and socialize the coffee shop provides the space to meet or just sit. The importance of a welcoming space, the warmth of the coffee cup even the noise of patrons provides a sense of belonging or just a place to sit with yourself, or a chance the recharge the phone.

”

Coffee Shops: Exploring Urban Sociability and Social Class in the Intersection of Public and Private Space (2015) Rose Pozos-Brewer

The postwar period saw the closure and demolition of many of the area's theatres but the growth of the Chinese population in that same period saw the conversion of the 1907 Pantages theatre into the Sung Sing showing Cantonese films while the Hong Kong based Shaw and Golden Harvest organizations built their own movie houses. On the Main and Cordova site the Golden Harvest theatre opened on in 1974 and played to audiences until its closure in 1981. The Vancouver theatre was the Golden Harvest company's first foray into North America and it was here that audiences were introduced to martial arts star Bruce Lee.

The opening of the theatre speaks to the historic importance of Vancouver's Chinatown in North America and bookends a period of expansion and growth that saw the opening of night clubs and banquet rooms, such as Forbidden City, Mandarin Gardens and Bamboo Terrace that drew patrons from across the lower mainland while introducing audiences to entertainment from Hong Kong and other Asian centres. The building remained dark until reincarnated first as District 319 in 2007 and then the Imperial, an event space and music venue.

The theatre tradition is kept alive by the Firehall Arts Theatre on Cordova and community-based groups such as Vancouver Moving Theatre with its neighbourhood-centric productions. Since 2003, the company's annual Heart of the City Festival has brought residents, local artists and performers together for a month long celebration of the community.

Art creation takes place in a variety of formal and informal space throughout the Downtown Eastside from carvers on the street to the expressive and pointed graffiti of artists such as Smokey D and in a variety of studio spaces from informal and found spaces, to storefronts and purpose built live work options.



Emerging Themes

A Civic Centre

Before the settlers, there is non-native settlement and land use across the peninsula. In the local area around Main and Cordova there are seasonal uses and settlement along the shore line of the inlet and False Creek. The establishment of the Hastings Mill in the 1860s brought non-native settlement to the south shore of Burrard Inlet, which prompts an unorganized residential and businesses use outside its western property boundary - today's Carrall Street - which in turn leads to the survey of the Granville Townsite and in 1886 the incorporation of Vancouver.

Main and Cordova becomes the civic centre of the emerging city with the police department, fire hall, and courts situated around the intersection of Main and Cordova. Civic institutions are followed by two of the earliest churches in the city, Knox Presbyterian originally built in early 1886 on Cordova Street just west of Main and St James Anglican originally on Alexander at Main prior to the 1886 fire and rebuilt at Gore and Cordova. City Hall, originally on Powell moves to Main and Hastings as the importance of Main as a business and transportation corridor grows.

A Meeting Point

Main and Cordova has always been a place of gathering and social connection. The three nations had a number of seasonal and permanent sites along the shoreline and welcomed groups from the Fraser River and further south along with people from Vancouver Island. Main and Cordova was the meeting point between the Japanese and Chinese districts and with the storefronts supporting Chinese, Japanese, Swedish and Italian businesses over the years. Most importantly, the coffee shops and long time cafes provided non-judgemental space to hang out, relax and meet friends.

Culture in All Forms

From the more recent movie theatres, to vaudeville, Japanese and Chinese newspapers and Fraternal and Clan Associations to the culture of resource workers, visiting seasonally, their eventual retirement and permanent residency that shaped the public perception of the area. An urban aboriginal population representing at least ten First Nations including Katzie, Kwantlen, Matsqui, Musqueam, Squamish, Tsawwassen, Tseil-Waututh, Kwikwetlem, Qayqact, and Semihamoo provides a distinct cultural layer.. And the arts expressed through a number of local events such as the Heart of the City Festival an annual celebration of the area's diverse culture and the Carnegie Centre's many programs and workshop space



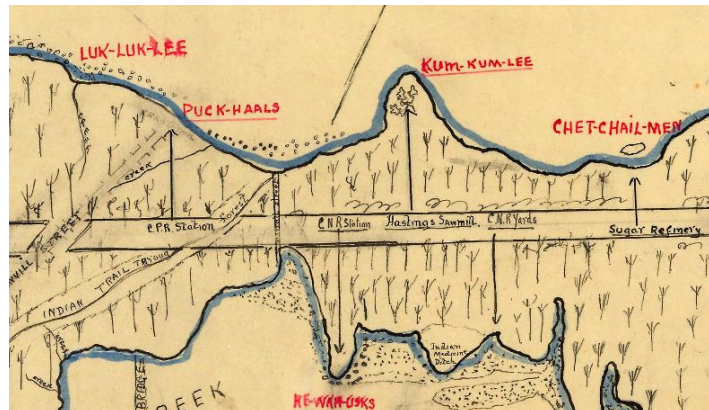
A Crossroad

Today the idea of a crossroads is still there though in different forms. Connections to the waterfront, CRAB Park and the port operations are via the Main Street overpass and Cordova Street is a major transit corridor and transfer point while the Main and Cordova site is situated at the edge of the Gastown historic area boundary and the Downtown Eastside.

Information on Indigenous trails is held by the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil Waututh nations but some early maps provide evidence of a number of Indigenous trails intersecting at or near Main and Cordova. Used by early settlers, these trails would eventually develop into major roads such as Main Street, Kingsway, Alexander Street and portions of Cordova Street. A diagonal Indigenous trail between Burrard Inlet and False Creek that ran across the Main and Cordova site has been lost to the surveyor's grid.



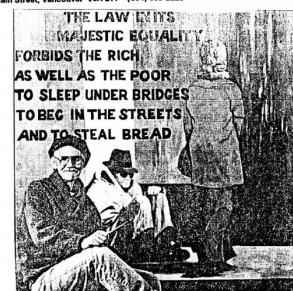
Portion of an 1870s map of the area showing roads based on local Indigenous trails
CVA MAP2_141



Map compiled by the city archivist in the 1930s noting Indigenous trails and points of use in the area of Hastings Mill
CVA Map 56.02

Advocacy

The Downtown Eastside is an active and activist neighbourhood with a long tradition of labour and anti-poverty organizing. Activism and protest concerning neighbourhood improvement was prevalent in the 60s and 70s as activists such as Bruce Erickson fought on behalf of hotel tenants for fire safety measures, tenant's rights and basic amenities. Other advocacy was centred on creating space for residents such as CRAB Park that provided access to the waterfront following a years long effort by residents. These and many other actions created that sense of place and an identifiable space known as the Downtown Eastside.



Bruce Eriksen
1928 - 1997

B

Community Engagement Summary

By Chris Corrigan and Carolyn Camman

Chris Corrigan (he/him) is a principal partner of Harvest Moon Consultants, a small specialized consultancy working with organizations and communities to bring high quality facilitation, strategic thinking and participatory processes to complex challenges. Since 1996 he has worked primarily with governments, not for profits, indigenous communities and social enterprises.

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Community Engagement Summary



Overview

This report provides a summary of the process and progress of the community engagement work undertaken in support of the Main and Cordova development project between July 2020 to February 2021.

The report is structured in three main sections:

1. Focus and direction of community engagement;
2. Emerging themes from community engagement;
3. Engagement process for the COVID-19 context

DTES hosts a complex, multifaceted community with multiple histories and legacies, and continues to be in a state of flux and change. The engagement process is intended to create the foundation for long-term relationships and ongoing dialogue that can continue to inform how the social and community environment of the building develops once the built form is complete. Physical structure can create conditions and opportunities, but it requires people and relationships to create wellbeing for each other and respond to the dynamic possibilities of a space. This work also overlaps and integrates with the heritage work being conducted by John Atkin, as the multiple histories and potential futures of the space interweave in the present-day lives of community members.

Focus and Direction of Community Engagement

How does a building be a good neighbour? What does it mean to be a good neighbour in the Downtown Eastside?

These are the guiding questions in the MAC community engagement process, based on the understanding that the future of the development rests not only on a physical foundation but a foundation of relationships that will be continually built, changed, sustained, and renewed over the lifetime of the building. The relationships will be with the building itself and with those who live, work, and spend time in and around it within the larger context of the neighbourhood. By reflecting on the role of “neighbour”, we acknowledge that there is an existing community in the space and that the building and its occupants will be in relationship with each other and with other people in the neighbourhood, and this relationship entails mutual responsibility to each other and the wellbeing of the whole community.

Physical structures enable particular kinds of experiences and interactions. For the building to be a good neighbour, we need to learn about what kinds of interactions and experiences this building can offer that will add to the wellbeing of DTES community, what aspects of the built form can help enable those, and what other considerations, such as partnerships, programming, and policies, are needed to complement the physical design. The design input is not about optimizing people and behaviours, but optimizing space so that good things have a better chance of happening.

As part of this process, it is essential to ask questions about whose heritage, whose future, whose community and whose wellbeing? In the engagement process we are exploring the multidimensionality of wellness and wellbeing from different individual and cultural perspectives. We are grounded by an awareness of how development projects in the DTES can detract from community wellbeing through the process of gentrification and removing access to space through structural and social barriers,[1] and how planning and engagement processes can be extractive and diminishing.[2] The underlying ethic of both the development project and this engagement work is to centre dignity and wellbeing and build meaningful relationships with community members who will be affected by the presence of the building.

[1] Carnegie Community Action Project, ‘We are too poor to afford anything’: Retail gentrification mapping report, <http://www.carnegieaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CED-REPORT-PRINT.pdf>; University of British Columbia, Gentrification in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, https://wiki.ubc.ca/Gentrification_in_Vancouver%27s_Downtown_Eastside

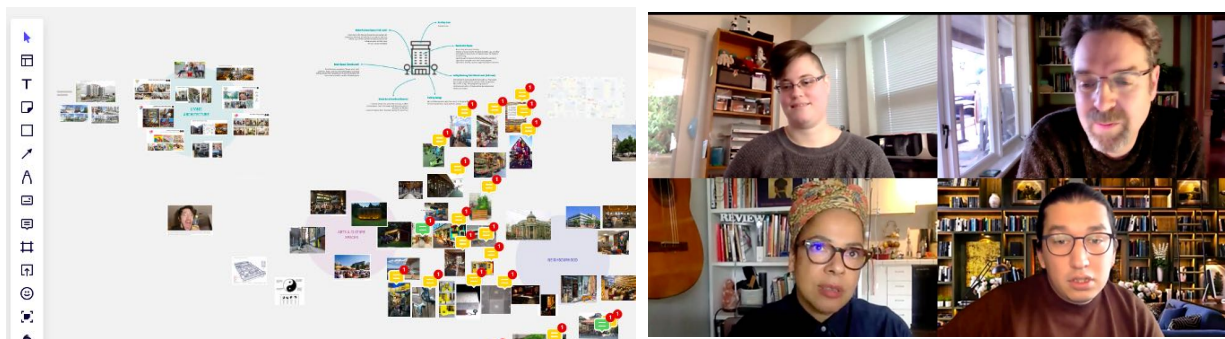
[2] Louise Boilevin, Jules Chapman, Lindsay Deane, Caroline Doerksen, Greg Fresz, DJ Joe, Nicolas Leech-Crier, Samona Marsh, Jim McLeod, Scott Neufeld, Steven Pham, Laura Shaver, Patrick Smith, Martin Steward, Dean Wilson, Phoenix Winter, Research 101: A Manifesto for Ethical Research in the Downtown Eastside, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1M2D6_XAVNI78UjxKJpsmBn2N1ORib9t7uJ6A7y9P3no/edit

We are making a building within a community and a community within a building.

A building is a physical structure that contains a social structure, creating a system. This particular system is embedded in a larger physical and social system with new unique characteristics, unique challenges and a unique past and future.

To function in a way that is aligned with the aspiration and reality of the community, this building needs to be more than a physical structure. The physical structure will influence the social structure both inside and outside of the building. Any new building will create change in the community. Buildings which contribute to gentrification will create conditions of harm and peril for folks living in this community. A building also has the opportunity to effect change in a direction aligned with the community's intention and the overall desire for improved health and wellness in the community.

The aim here is to build a community within the building that uses physical structures that nurture wellbeing so that building residents feel well cared for, secure, and able to live well at Main and Cordova while being good and empathetic neighbours to the people and places around them. We are hearing and learning from DTES Elders, advocates, residents and community workers about the kinds of things that support health and well-being and the pitfalls and dangers in creating structures that exclude, exploit and diminish. Their advice and teachings are guiding us in building river banks that enable the stream of life flowing in and out of MAC to be generative, nourishing and transforming.



Miro board activities from our virtual 'Image Jam' session, January 7, 2021

Emerging Themes from Community Engagement

These six themes come from a series of individual and small group discussions. We asked people about their experiences living and working in the neighbourhood. We invited participants' images and examples to inspire a building design that could have a positive impact on the community. The themes are this community's perspective on why this corner matters and how a new development could become a good neighbour in DTES. The themes are:

1. Accessibility/belonging
2. Beauty
3. Flow, rest, and transition
4. Community-based commerce
5. Enabling good interaction
6. Vivimimicry (nurturing the patterns of life already present)

The first four themes focus on the building's physical design. The fifth theme focuses on social design elements of creating a building within a community and a community within a building. Finally, vivimimicry is an overarching theme addressing both the physical and social architecture of the building.

Accessibility/Belonging

This is a building for all bodies and all ways of moving through a space. While maintaining clear transitions between public and private, the building can offer "zones of inclusion" which leave residents and guests with the sense that everyone belongs here. Prioritizing accessibility and belonging means creating spaces that are meant to be used, shared, and enjoyed together, allowing people to connect with each other in healthy ways that reinforce mutual belonging.

Around the building

Providing covered walkways and resting places on the street level offers shelter and respite and affirms the dignity of community members that come into contact with the building. Benches and tables that allow for folks to rest and meet, with wheelchair accessibility and a place to park a stroller create a safe and welcoming sidewalk culture. Access to drinking water and public washrooms would also address a pressing community need that affects well-being throughout the neighbourhood.[3]

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The idea of a healing building says to me we have people of all social backgrounds and all age brackets,[and] that encourages the interconnection between these people to create its own social environment. ... If we're going to really represent a reflection of the community in a good and healthy way, then we can't exclude any of us, right.

”

Community member,
engagement conversations

[3] Martin, C. & Walia, H. (2019). Red Women Rising: Indigenous Women Survivors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Downtown Eastside Women's Centre.

“

Community kitchens are a bonus. Some place we can go and create a meal for the whole building. Sometimes we have people who just love to cook but have nobody to feed. ... If you look at it in a cultural way, as a people we sit down and share our brightest ideas together, our hopes, dreams, and things that aren't so hopeful, at a breakfast table.

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Community member,
engagement conversations

“

We have a space here that has a little gym on top, people donate their gym pieces, so we need to keep physically strong. They have rooms full of books, so people go and read, that's the mental. We have the elders that come and pray and sing and create safe space. So we have the spiritual. And we have the elders and myself that come in that do the sharing circle, so we've covered the emotional.

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Community member,
engagement conversations

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Tables outside are popular but a lot of them don't have any covers over them. You're going to have people sleeping in front of your building no matter what. So would you rather put a nice table up where they're comfortable and feel more welcomed than to have vagrancy? Do you want to be part of the problem or part of the solution? Let's put up some tables for everybody. And if that means our drug-addicted neighbours need to sit at that table, fine, instead of with blankets and pillows in front of your door. ... You can bar it up and put a bunch of gates around and feel like walking into a jail cell, or you can make it welcoming like a home.

”

Community member,
engagement conversations

Within the building

There is an ever-shrinking amount of space in which community members might meet and plan, learn, celebrate, grieve and connect. Spaces that are open and flexible to be used in a variety of ways while still being beautiful and purposeful. Lesson from the other publicly accessible spaces housed within private buildings include: have a kitchen, a flexible room set up and connection to people working and living in the building. There is also a profound lack of spaces in DTES for Indigenous spiritual and cultural programming [4] (and likely spiritual and cultural programming of all kinds).

— “

The other thing is common rooms that allow people to come together outside of their apartment. Some people don't like people in their apartments. Common rooms, a common kitchen for events. A room that is a healing room, that has one space for private, like one on one, and then also leads to another where you can have group lectures and teachings maybe from medicine people.

” —

Community member, engagement conversations

Beauty

Attending to the small details and design elements at street level can add whimsy or invite curiosity. Bringing colour to the building and its entryways, or planning for outdoor murals and art installations is about engaging, honouring, and intriguing the neighbourhood. Murals, in particular, represent an opportunity not only to incorporate beauty in a space, but also to connect, explore, and communicate shared community values. Murals and public art projects also serve as work opportunities for artisans and learning/training opportunities for students.

Beauty can be brought in permanent ways but also in emergent, and responsive ways, with temporary projects emanating from the maker space. We are advised to avoid standardization and constantly engage with beauty that serves neighbourliness: beauty that is meaningful for the neighbourhood and its residents.

— “

Beauty is a path to being a good neighbour.

” —

Community member,
engagement conversations

[4] Bluesky, K. (2017). Aboriginal Health, Healing, and Wellness in the DTES. City of Vancouver.

Flow, Rest, and Transition

The building needs to enable movement, allowing people to flow, to rest, and to transition across thresholds.

Flow

Community flows around and beside this building on all sides. The alley to the east is an access point to Insite. In some way this is a safe space where help is nearby for people using. That may be a very different idea of safety for many residents and creating ways to make this alley usable and respectful may be both a social and physical design challenge. Attempt to prevent movement through this space would generate conflict and harm and displace the natural flow in unpredictable ways.

Flow is also expressed in the ways the building connects to itself, with elements that reach across different spaces, whether that is visual, like art or greenery cascading from one floor to another, or auditory or olfactory, like music heard from a side room or the lingering scent of a smudge.

Rest

Flow and open movement allow for one kind of safety. Another form that people require is access to private, peaceful spaces for rest. Homes are multi-purpose spaces and do not always afford privacy. Sedicated 'sacred spaces' offer opportunities for processing, release, and reflection. Throughout the building, rest also looks like places to sit and be comfortable, and to have common areas that can support more private gatherings.

Unrestricted, unguided flow can overwhelm. Possibilities like circular paths and opportunities for continuous movement, sightlines through windows, permeable partitions, and moveable walls that can be opened and closed to create different levels of intimacy and openness as needed, could help with finding a balance. Spaces like Saa-ust and the UBC Learning Exchange offer lessons on creating layered spaces that include areas of free, open movement and private places of retreat and rest.[5]

[5] Towle, A., & Leahy, K. M. (2016). The Learning Exchange: A shared space for the University of British Columbia and Vancouver's Downtown Eastside communities. *Metropolitan Universities*, 27(3).

“ Everything we do in healing is circular. I have been in places where a room is created as a circle so you naturally flow that way.

”
Community member,
engagement conversations

“ We all need a space for solace. ... It doesn't have to be big, it can be the size of an elevator, a place to go and retreat.

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Community member,
engagement conversations

“ This is where you're going to want peace. People like me that live in the DTES, I have to live this every day, I have to work this every day. ... I want to come home and re-charge my batteries and sit back and relax and be at home.

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Community member,
engagement conversations

Transition

There is a need for areas between the public and the private spaces of the building that help people make a transition from one context to another, a kind of air lock. It may be a very nice place to sit, read the mail, or take a breath. It can be a place to interact and share news with other neighbours. This space is essential because living in DTES is stressful. This is an opportunity to introduce or co-create rituals for crossing thresholds that hold and express the values of the building.

Boundaries are essential not only in maintaining the distinction between public and private, but also in creating a zone of safe transition and interaction. There may also be ways to safely blur boundaries, allowing a more fluid connection to community, such as having access to outdoor spaces on the roof.

Community-based Commerce

The mixed-use nature of the development also opens up unique opportunities to look at how retail and commercial spaces can contribute to community wellbeing, rather than detract from it through gentrification and exclusion.[6]

The trend in DTES has been for affordable, accessible stores that provide community essentials to be replaced by stores that sell high-priced specialty products. Often in these spaces there are also hostile and discriminatory behaviours toward community residents who are low-income, mentally ill, drug users, as well as toward Indigenous residents. There is a lack of safe vending spaces for artisans and entrepreneurs,[7] and the high cost of rent limits the types of businesses that can afford to operate in the neighbourhood.

Supporting business means providing different levels of opportunity for business owners, from consignment, to market stalls to storefronts. It also means cultivating community amongst commercial tenants and supporting an ethos of service and care while also designing safe and secure spaces. Retail spaces can also be used to create opportunities for employment, training, and livelihood creation within the community. For example, by partnering with employment services agencies like EMBERS Eastside Works and Mission Possible.

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I've been to a place where when you walk in, you have opportunity to smudge, drink a glass of water, whatever ritual is yours. It would be nice if as you walked into the building, there is a room to the side where you have a choice of how you leave the outside behind.

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Community member,
engagement conversations

[6] Carnegie Community Action Project, 'We are too poor to afford anything': Retail gentrification mapping report.

[7] Martin, C. & Walia, H. (2019). Red Women Rising: Indigenous Women Survivors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Downtown Eastside Women's Centre.

— “ —

I [want to see] an indoor market of arts and crafts, because we just don't have enough space and there's a lot of talented people. When I was running the Downtown Eastside Centre for the Arts, it's amazing what some of these women are creating.

— ” —

Community member, engagement conversations

Enabling Good Interaction

How can this building, through the interactions that it has with the community, be a good neighbour? It is not through the physical structure alone but through the community that lives within, the private residences, the retail tenants, the users of the common spaces. Every interaction provides a choice point to be gauged against the question of how we can be good neighbours.

Tending to trauma

Creating a building and a community within DTES with the intention of centering wellness requires a recognition and understanding of the role of trauma within the community, from the past to the present. In light of the realities of conditions in DTES, community members have asked of this development project, how will the community be lifted up? What is the intention of the project? Who will run the community? How will people's needs be cared for? How will people be supported in being together across their differences? It is essential to not throw people together and hope they will figure it out. In the words of a community member, that would be “mixing without fixing.”

Providing a trauma-informed approach to caring for the community in the building would look like, for example, creating gradually nested containers between the public and private spheres, to allow people to self-regulate their emotional responses, and have access to a wide range of spaces and activities within the building, as well as supports aimed at helping people connect with each other with compassion and understanding, and process their own complex responses.

— “ —

We're already a traumatized people, so we don't want our homes to traumatize us. When we have trauma, that means there's a lot of emotional baggage that goes with that, so you don't want to add to that emotional baggage. So if you can, create a space that lifts everybody in the best way possible, which would mean community engagement. The building engaging with one another and creating that safe space to help understand one another.

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Community member, engagement conversations

Creating supportive community

It begins by seeing the people living and working inside the building as a community that requires maintenance to be the best neighbour it can be. Many Indigenous organizations, Elders and community practitioners in the neighbourhood use versions of the medicine wheel as a model of wellness. While specific teachings about this framework vary,[8] the medicine wheel invites a holistic emphasis on caring for the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs of people and communities. Translated into this building, this means caring for residents and commercial tenants by providing spaces in which these needs can be met.

In DTES much activity is programmed and supported as much as possible to make the community work. A building alone cannot be a good neighbor, but it can contain a community of people who are helped to be good neighbours. An idea is the inclusion of a programming manager to manage activities and support the art of community building with residents. There are numerous peer-run organizations throughout DTES. The creation of low-barrier, fairly-compensated, peer-based jobs a core recommendation of the Red Women Rising report.

Creating supportive community means creating a building that is supportive of the community inside it so that it can be supportive of the neighbourhood it's living in. It means having people living in the building who want to advocate in support of their neighbours instead of against them. Whether it is Squamish ideas of blanket or cedar bark weaving, or the Chinese concept of chopstick being unbreakable when bundled together, the idea of deriving strength from careful weaving is important.

“

You have to be open minded to what you're seeing and what you are going to see. And what you're going to see, you're going to need a lot of compassion and prayer. Do you have the skin for it? You can be a part of the problem or a part of the solution

”

Community member,
engagement conversations

[8] Medicine Wheel teachings are not universal and are not a traditional aspect of local Indigenous cultures, but they are used extensively in the inter-National Indigenous community of the Downtown Eastside. Our specific source for these teachings is an interview with Candice Norris, a resident, mother, and peer researcher in the DTES. We recommend working closely with Indigenous Elders and wellness practitioners and teachers in the Downtown Eastside to understand how these teachings are used locally and in the context of work that takes place in Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) territories.

Governance and stewardship

It's not enough to create a built form and offer programming and services to enable good interactions. Attention must also be given to how the vision of the building can translate into a community and culture. Who will make decisions about what happens in the building? As residential and commercial tenants occupy the building, what codes, guidelines, and practices will exist to communicate expectations about how to interact within the building, and how will these be upheld?

This building will stand for a century or more and it will either play a role in a healthy future for the community or it will not. This building will be made with the community whether we want it to be or not. Even in this engagement we are trying to co-generate a set of ideas and images that are coherent with where the community wants to go. Nothing gets built without being changed.

“A lot of times, they have started off well with the ideal and the intention, and then depending upon the board or however it's managed, slowly, it dilutes until finally everybody's on their own. If you're going to strongly emphasize your intention, then everybody, from board to staff, they're going to have to be 100% behind it. Because if they come in with their own agenda, it's not going to work.”

Community member,
engagement conversations

Vivimimicry: The Way Nature Generates Life

Our engagement has begun to focus on what we are calling “vivimimicry” or the patterns of structure that enable life, paying attention to those patterns that already exist in the neighbourhood and nurturing them. The idea is that there are patterns of life in the community, some that serve and others that don't. We seek to emulate the constraints that bring the form of life we desire and to disrupt the form of life that doesn't work. Inspired by the concept of biomimicry, we have called this approach “vivimimicry,” as we aim to understand the conditions of how life is shaped in the neighbourhood over many different time scales. This building aims to contribute to wellness by working to enhance healthy patterns of life rooted in the intersection of nature and culture in the community. Healthy patterns that are noticed and attested to even in the midst of profound struggle and adversity.

What the names tell us about the healthy ancestors of the place

Squamish place names in the neighbourhood reference maple trees that grew in groves along the Burrard Inlet shoreline. The Squamish name for Vancouver - *K'emk'emeláy* - refers to maple trees that grew on the point where the Hastings Sawmill was later located. The name of Skwachays, given to a hotel in Chinatown, refers to a healing spring that flowed along Main Street and down to False Creek, where it joined the sea at a place where Major Matthews was told a “Medicine Ditch” was located.[9] Health and healing is a pattern in this community despite the physical and mental health issues faced by residents now.

[9] Draft map of Indian villages and landmarks, Burrard Inlet and English Bay, before the whiteman came by Vancouver's first archivist James Matthews, 1932. Vancouver Archives AM54-S13-: MAP 56.02

Many people talk about a “spirit” of DTES. Ancestors are very important. Ancestral names and values still live on the land. When community members organize and plan, they do so with an acknowledgement of Indigenous territories and protocols and give local Elders and matriarchs high status in their projects. Chinese and Japanese cultures revere ancestors and teachings. Longstanding values and patterns weave their way through the life of DTES. These patterns give rise to the current forms of life. Things built in coherence with health support health; and those that create disconnection, surveillance, restriction and enclosure create suffering.

— “ —

The land is really special; in the history of Vancouver, it was actually an island with a moat around it, filled in as the city grew. The area around Main Street is infill, and what Chief Ian Campbell talked about, what you can see on the maps, is an area that is the home to a healing spring of spiritual significance for Squamish. There is a deep connection to ancestors, and the healing role of water deserves to be daylighted.

— ” —

Community member, engagement conversations

Disrupting life-depleting patterns

Any building made in this neighbourhood has to confront the reality that it will either contribute to or disrupt the patterns of gentrification. “Whenever land is used to build condos or develop businesses for wealthier people...it no longer becomes a place where a local community-based vision can be implemented. In this sense, gentrification excludes possibilities.”^[10] Engagement in an ongoing way that supports life and wellness relies on connecting with the patterns of life at different points in time in this neighbourhood and in this respect the building and its internal community should work to align over time with these changing patterns.

^[10] Carnegie Community Action Project, Gentrification produces zones of exclusion for low-income residents.

Engagement Process for the Covid-19 Context

The realities of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated impacts on health and service infrastructure in the community (as well as the ongoing opioid poisoning crisis, housing crisis, and other forms of economic and social injustice being experienced in the neighbourhood at this time), have significantly informed our approach to community engagement in the DTES.

In-person gatherings and interactions are not currently possible. A fully digital approach is not desirable as many community residents do not have reliable access to the internet, especially with current service reductions and closures in the community. Many community residents also feel exhausted and overwhelmed while they deal with these challenges. We have responded to the needs of the present context with a twofold strategy: first, accessing existing documented knowledge and perspectives, and, second, slowly building a network of relationships with key community contacts and engaging through individual and small-group conversations.

Existing documentation

We are making use of existing information about community members' needs and perspectives by reviewing recent reports, articles, news media, and social media. In particular, we're focusing on resources that highlight community members' voices and specific interests, having been created by community residents or in significant partnership with them. This form of listening prevents duplication of work and helps us understand what desires the community has already expressed and what is happening in the Downtown Eastside right now.

Key reports and articles that have substantially informed the community engagement work include:

- Bluesky, K. (2017). *Aboriginal Health, Healing, and Wellness in the DTES*. City of Vancouver.
- Carnegie Community Action Project. 'We are too poor to afford anything': Retail gentrification mapping report. <http://www.carnegieaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CED-REPORT-PRINT.pdf>
- Ivsins, A., Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users, Benoit, C., Kobayashi, K., & Boyd, S. (2019). From risky places to safe spaces: Re-assembling spaces and places in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. *Health & Place*, 59.
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Network development

We are developing a network of contacts using a ‘snowball’ sampling approach, beginning with existing relationships and asking the people we speak with to connect us with other potential contacts. This allows us to expand the scope of our engagement in an intentional and trust-based way as we establish relationships with key community contacts. By beginning slowly with individual interviews and smaller group conversations, we reduce the demands being made on community members while also establishing the connections and relationships needed to assist future larger-scale engagement activities. Participation has also been compensated with an honorarium at a rate that acknowledges the high degree of expertise contributed by these consultations

Planned and Proposed Engagement Activities

Further individual interviews and small discussion groups.

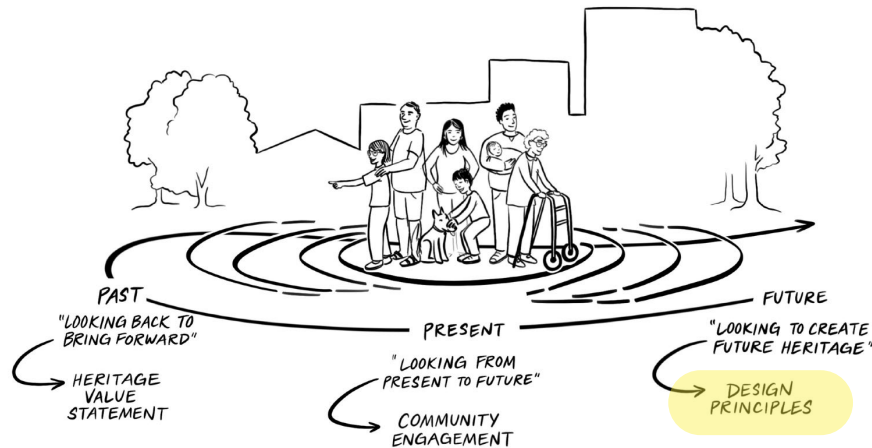
- Interviews conducted up to February 2021 were based on existing relationships and new connections. There are many additional important people and groups to connect with as part of the ongoing engagement work, including representatives of Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tseil-Waututh) and xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam). We will be working with the team from snəw̓ ayəʔ to meet with representatives from these Nations and ensure we follow proper protocols of respect.
- We are also continuing to organize interviews and discussion groups with current DTES residents and organizers working in the neighbourhood. Once possible within pandemic public safety guidelines, larger in-person gatherings and conversations
- Ultimately, we hope to support the formation of an advising group of community residents, representative of the diversity of the neighbourhood, whose role would be to directly advise the development team and provide a point of connection with their community networks for ongoing dialogue.



Design Principles

By MAC design and development team members MA+HG Architects, EskewDumezRipple,
Golden Properties, and Tomo Spaces

Design Principles



MAC Design Principles

In looking back at the historic urban landscape, John Atkin, civic historian, helped the design team understand that this corner of Main and Cordova has been a civic centre, a crossroad, a meeting point, a scene for cultures in all forms, and an ecosystem for advocacy (Part A).

In conversations with residents and community stakeholders in the present day, Carolyn Camman and Chris Corrigan, engagement facilitators, helped the team harvest the values of this corner, as expressed by the people: accessibility, belonging, beauty, flow, rest, transition, local retail, supportive interactions, tending to trauma, stewardship, and "vivimimicry" (Part B).

In Part C, we start to translate intangible values into a tangible building design. We reminded ourselves that this building can't solve the complicated and complex issues in DTES. But people can move toward a direction of positive change. Architecture has the potential to provide the physical conditions, making it easier (or harder) for people to fulfill their potentials. We distilled our reflections into six design principles to guide our decision-making during the design process.

Each principle is expressed in a short phrase to facilitate quick reference during our discussions. Next, the short phrase is expanded with reasoning and research. Finally, the design responses are examples of the ways that what we learned from history and what we heard from community engagement shape our design.

Principle 1: Healthy homes for all

Since c.1894 with the construction of Mountain View Boarding House at the corner of Main and Cordova Street, this site has provided affordable housing above small neighbourhood-serving retail on the ground floor.

This principle, healthy homes for all, comes directly from the DTES Local Area Plan's Focus Areas for Action. The Plan calls for these actions (pp.189 – 191):

- Continue to prioritize the safety of women, children, and culturally-diverse groups
- Address urgent social housing needs
- Increase affordable housing options for all residents
- Improve condition and quality of 1,900 SROs including upgrades

From our non-profit housing partner, we learned that while DTES needs more affordable housing units (homes) overall, the neighbourhood currently has a very limited supply of family-friendly homes with 2- or 3-bedrooms. Therefore, our design should offer diverse housing sizes to support diverse families. We should create an “everyday” building that respects the context and aspires to be welcoming, warm, and optimistic. Our design can be practical and delightful; for example, we can improve the daily experience of coming home.

Design Response

- Build on the continued presence of affordable homes on this site
- Provide 100+ social housing rental apartments, in a range of housing types (a ladder of options) from micro dwellings to studios, to 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom homes.
- Provide more than LAP’s target of 25% of all social housing units as family-friendly units.
- Replace and upgrade 20 SROs into self-contained homes.
- Provide a range of outdoor spaces for different people and uses, from more playful setting for children on level 3 to more contemplative garden on the roof.



Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan
 Focus Areas for Action, p.188

Principle 2: Create opportunities for exchanges

Historically, this corner has been a place of gathering and a crossroads — bringing together diverse people and purposes. From conversations with community stakeholders, we asked “what is a good neighbour?” Many people said a good neighbour is generous, and that there is give and take.

In this way, we should look for ways to support neighbours to be in reciprocal relationships, to take care of each other, and to live with interconnectedness. Our design should invite people and groups to exchange ideas, skills, and opportunities for business and learning. Vancouver’s Healthy City Strategy articulated “lifelong learning” as a goal (LAP p. 8) and DTES Local Area Plan called for “small business and micro-enterprise” opportunities (LAP p. 192).

Design Response

- Explore with BC’s leading universities to integrate 13,000 sf learning centre with the building and the neighbourhood.
- Create a micro-market with 120 sf vendor stalls at the lobby to support residents’ micro enterprises.
- Design smaller commercial spaces (800 sf to 2,000 sf) to support local serving retail.
- Provide 100+ social housing rental apartments, in a range of housing types (a ladder of options) from micro dwellings to studios, to 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom homes.
- Include “social niches” on each floor to invite neighbours to gather and talk

Main and Cordova has always been a place of gathering and social connection. The three nations had a number of seasonal and permanent sites along the shoreline and welcomed groups from the Fraser River and further south along with people from Vancouver Island. Main and Cordova was the meeting point between the Japanese and Chinese districts and with the storefronts supporting Chinese, Japanese, Swedish and Italian businesses over the years. Most importantly, the coffee shops and longtime cafes provided non-judgemental space to hang out, relax and meet friends

John Atkin,
Heritage Value Statement
MAC Living Heritage Report Part A

Principle 3: Use architecture to daylight stories

Our proposal at Main and Cordova is one moment in a long stream of time. This place is blessed with a tapestry of stories from the three local host nations, as well as settler stories from the Chinese-Canadian and Japanese-Canadian communities. Some of these stories have been shared with us during our engagement conversations. These stories are not ours to tell, but our architecture can create prompts, reminders, and invitations for people to tell their stories of this place, and pass that on to the next generation. Many of these stories are everyday stories and memories—not grand events—about the landscape before European contact, about getting one’s photo taken at the studio, about a weekend family outing to see a Bruce Lee film.

Design Response

- Elevate the New Harvest theatre space to the prominent corner at Main and Cordova.
- Design New Harvest theatre space to support emerging and grass-root community arts groups, including theatre makers and musicians, with marginalized voices to tell and amplify their stories.
- Design a “Historic Scroll” on the ground to highlight stories of people and place on this block.

— “ —

The land is really special; in the history of Vancouver, it was actually an island with a moat around it, filled in as the city grew. The area around Main Street is infill, and what Chief Ian Campbell talked about, what you can see on the maps, is an area that is the home to a healing spring of spiritual significance for Squamish. There is a deep connection to ancestors, and the healing role of water deserves to be daylighted

— ” —

community member,
engagement conversation

Principle 4: Transitions, not barriers

We need to be intentional about transitions between public, communal, and private spaces. This building will host residents, guests, customers, learners, and workers. Different roles require different boundaries and differing levels of porosity in the building design. Part of being a good host is to “preload” our design, doing our own homework upfront to clearly communicate where people can go and what is respectful behaviour. This includes valuable yet often overlooked spaces like the alley, parkade, and sidewalks.

Designing transitions in a space point us to reflect on cultural teachings and rituals. In an act that is less about cleanliness and more about respect for the host, Chinese and Japanese people take off their shoes in the home. In Squamish culture, one brushes off what is unhelpful or what is harmful upon entering a space. The practice involves using cedar boughs which are hung over the doorway of a home.

There is a need for areas between the public and the private spaces of the building that help people make a transition from one context to another, a kind of air lock. It may be a very nice place to sit, read the mail, or take a breath. It can be a place to interact and share news with other neighbours. This space is essential because living in DTES is stressful. This is an opportunity to introduce or co-create rituals for crossing thresholds that hold and express the values of the building.

Chris Corrigan and Carolyn Camman
Community Engagement Summary
MAC Living Heritage Report Part B

Design Response

- Create opportunities at building’s and suite’s entries to invite people to reflect on their cultural rituals; for example, we are working with our Indigenous consultants and elders to design posts at entry to express family stories.
- Design a prominent stair and a second-floor lobby that lead people to the New Harvest cultural space.
- Create a second-level “sidewalk” that transitions into commercial spaces on second floor.
- Place the front door of the learning centre on Cordova Street and work with our educational partner to beautify the alley.

“
I’ve been to a place where when you walk in, you have opportunity to smudge, drink a glass of water, whatever ritual is yours. It would be nice if as you walked into the building, there is a room to the side where you have a choice of how you leave the outside behind.

”
community member,
engagement conversation

Principle 5: Spaces need stewards

When we draw a space on paper, we should also ask who will be stewards for that space. Stewards care for, set ground rules, then invite others to use that space. Activating people's capacity (and governance) will allow for continued energy to cultivate the space over many generations.

This notion is important because our aspiration is to create more shared social spaces. However, we've learned that simply labeling a space "shared" without thinking about who will "steward" it often leads to the tragedy of the commons. Stewards ensure that spaces continue to fulfill the purposes for which they were designed over the long term.

Design Response

- Engage housing partners as well as educational and cultural partners early and on both spatial and operational issues.
- Cultivate an artist-led and artist-run process to form "New Harvest" cultural space; our role, as project proponent, is to host these conversations, then invite artists to self-organize and to coalesce into a working group.
- Ensure there are no spaces on our drawings that are ambiguous as to who will use it and who will maintain it

The past decade has seen a noticable growth in local collaboration, sharing of spaces, and a growing commitment to establish affordable and flexible space...Bold moves forward include supporting non-profit space operators to provide affordable space, establishing a fund for community-led, large scale cultural space projects, and supporting further planning and development of a community-led cultural land trust, to secure arts and cultural space in perpetuity.

Goal 3: Support community-led ownership and community-led projects,
Direction 4: Making Space for Arts and Culture,
City of Vancouver, Culture|Shift, Vancouver Culture Plan 2020 – 2029, p. 71.

Principle 6: Nature is economical

We can make design choices that align with nature. Our choices to date, such as mass timber, low-carbon and low-energy targets, adaptable modules, natural light and air, grass-roots governance, and circular economy are examples of our efforts to learn from nature. We want to deliver healthy homes at affordable rental rates. When we make design choices, we should favour the economical options that "work with the grain." There's no waste in nature.

Design Response

- Use mass timber construction, engineered for high strength like concrete and steel but is a more environmentally-friendly substitute as a carbon sink. (Main and Cordova is one of 12 mass timber projects selected for demonstration and funding by the Province.)
- Set target of zero carbon building (GCB) under Canada Green Building Council's (CaBGC) Zero Carbon Building Design Standard; this made-in-Canada framework evaluates the carbon balance of the building across its life-cycle.
- Design using materials with the lowest embodied carbon possible; for example, our first priority is maximizing the use of wood-based products in economical ways, then minimizing the embodied carbon of other building material.
- Acknowledge that under current building code, this 11-storey building is considered a high building and will require significant amount of concrete (e.g. for below-grade parking and above-grade podium), but we will use carbon offsets to achieve the zero carbon building standard.

— “ —
People's relationship to beauty is
profound...Spaces become beloved
when the building says, "I love you,
I'm glad you're here."

— ” —
community member,
engagement conversation

