

ENVIRONMENTAL SITE ASSESSMENTS

This reference guide provides an overview of the types of records from the City of Vancouver Archives that relate to records commonly used for environmental site assessments, including examples of specific fonds or collections. Please keep in mind that additional records may be found among the total Archives' holdings.

Records may be accessed either through record requests submitted for retrieval from our secure storage, self-serve microfiche access copies in the Reading Room, or, if digitized, viewed as a digital copy from our online database. Record retrievals run Monday-Friday, 10:00-4:30.

CITY RECORDS

City records used as primary sources related to City operations and departmental functions in connection to property matters. Particular suggestions for property research are:

- **Water Service Applications ([COV 367](#) and [COV-S293](#)) and Water Service Record Cards ([COV-S294](#))**
 - Used to find the date of the initial and subsequent water applications for determining the approximate date of the completion of a house or other building; water service records also provide the name of the applicant, legal description of lot, and sometimes details on a building's use; from 1888-1993
 - Holdings also include water service records of the former municipalities of Point Grey, 1908-1928 ([COV-PG-S256](#)); and South Vancouver, 1914-1928 ([COV-SV-S230](#))
- **Planning Department Maps, Plans and Drawings ([COV-S445](#))**
- **Electrical and gas line plans ([COV-S354](#))**
 - Includes civic and more prominent non-civic buildings showing location and designs of electrical systems
- **Health Inspection Cards ([COV-S71-3](#))**
 - Records available on microfilm; arranged alphabetically by street name, 1948-1966

PRIVATE SECTOR HOLDINGS

Private records used as primary sources on properties, businesses and organizations, civic structures, prominent residences, and architects. Our holdings of private records, identified as “AM” (or formerly “Add. Mss.” for “Additional Manuscripts”) can be searched using our online database. Suggestions of related fonds are:

- **Fire Insurance Plans**
 - Maps created by fire insurance companies showing details on individual properties, including outline of buildings, underground storage tanks, water hydrants, power sources, building materials etc.
 - Consult our [fire insurance reference guide](#) for more information
- **Greater Vancouver Regional District fonds (AM1257)**
 - Series 26 - GVRD reference maps ([AM1257-S26](#))
 - Map collection used to determine contour and under surface characteristics of large areas of land

PHOTOGRAPHS

City and private photographic records used for showing houses and other buildings, streets, and neighbourhoods. A large amount of photographic material has been digitized to search, view, and download directly from our database. Suggestions of related records are:

- **City of Vancouver Aerial survey Photographs ([COV-S136](#))**
 - Created by the Planning Department, these photographic prints show perpendicular views of parts of the city taken 1950-1991
 - Accessed by cross referencing key maps to identify particular areas
- **City of Vancouver Archives Photograph Collection ([AM1376](#))**
 - Photographs available online from the Archives’ database; includes aerial or “oblique” photographs

CITY DIRECTORIES

Annual directories (1886-1996) produced by private firms listing names of residents, properties, and business listings. Directories can be used to determine names, addresses, years of residency, and occupations of Vancouver residents (some years are B.C. directories). Please note that directories were compiled by private firms for business purposes so they are convenient and broad in scope, but not authoritative and there are demographic omissions. Directories can be reviewed as bound books as well as on microfilm in the Reading Room.

See also our reference guide on city directories for more a more detailed overview. City directories for the years 1860-1955 have also been digitized and can be [viewed online through the Vancouver Public Library](#).

MORE ONLINE RESOURCES

VanMap

[VanMap Viewer](#) is an online GIS (geographic information systems) mapping tool by the City of Vancouver that serves a variety of functions related to property, City amenities, and transportation data. Useful for building research to quickly determine 1) the legal description and 2) the year a structure was built for a property site. VanMap offers a search function that can be set to an Address Search. Once found (highlighted in green), a “Property Report” can be generated that will provide these details for an individual property. Other map data includes property lines, sewer and water mains, contour lines etc.

VanMap also includes a map layer of the 1912 Goad’s fire insurance plan. **See also our fire insurance reference guide** for more information.

Building Permit Database

The Heritage Vancouver Heritage Society offers an [online Building Permit Database](#) to search the Vancouver permit records for the years 1901-1925 as well as pre-amalgamation records of Point Grey and South Vancouver up to 1928. This volunteer transcription project compiled information from the building permit records held by the City of Vancouver Archives. The online database allows for searching by various filters such as year, legal description, address, and name of owner or architect as well as by City.

Project work is ongoing and more transcriptions are continuously added to the database. See the Society’s website for more information

OTHER RELATED RESOURCES

City of Vancouver’s [Development and Building Services Centre](#)

- Permit office for standing properties
- Can request property research and copies of permits for a fee

Search our holdings: <https://searcharchives.vancouver.ca/>

Please contact the Archives for further questions about our holdings or to discuss your research topic with an archivist.

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