HUMAN SETTLEMENT ISSUES

NEW LIFE FROM OLD NEIGHBOURHOODS:
THE PLANNING, DESIGN AND RE-USE
OF BUILDINGS, STREETS AND SERVICES
AT THE URBAN CORE

the centre for human settlements
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18
INVITATIONAL SEMINAR

"NEW LIFE FROM OLD NEIGHBOURHOODS: THE PLANNING, DESIGN AND RE-USE
OF BUILDINGS, STREETS AND SERVICES AT THE URBAN CORE"

MARCH 9, 1981 - 2:00 - 5:30 pm

The Nature of the Urban Fabric at the Core, and its re-use

Prof. H.P. Oberlander UBC

New wine in old bottles: the new art and science of redesigning and rebuilding

Mr. B. Freschi Architect, Vancouver

Old wine in new bottles, or can the poor survive in downtown housing?

Dr. A. McAfee Housing Planner City of Vancouver

Re-making it on your own - a personal case history

Prof. H. Spence-Sales Consultant, Vancouver

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Michael Turner
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Editors Note:

It is the duty of the editor of a professional seminar to make some statement as to the approach taken in the difficult task of deciphering the various comments of the participants. The enthusiasm of the participants and the excitement of the material under discussion has made my work easier than I expected.

I felt that it would be necessary to retain the names of the speakers due to the importance of the positions they held and their specific approaches. It is by looking at these divergent opinions that we can begin to understand the magnitude of the problem and form our own ideas.

The questions and comments of the Chairman are taken out of the main text so as to highlight some of the issues that discussion was directed towards. In addition I felt that it would be helpful if some of the comments and policies of the City Planning Department were brought side-by-side with the discussion, and I thank the Director of Planning, Mr Ray Spaxman for his help and encouragement on this matter.

The problems of conservation need to be tackled with vigour and innovation, and it is my sincere hope that this small contribution will add an important step in the more positive role that conservation of our Heritage can give to the urban environment.

This is all the more important as we approach the centennial celebrations of the City of Vancouver, so that we can look with pride at the evolving physical fabric of the City.
foreword

About a dozen years ago it was fashionable to forecast that Urban Canada was going to multiply by leaps and bounds, in physical terms. The conventional wisdom, strongly held by professionals and academics alike was that, by the end of the century we will have had to build a second urban Canada - 'bricks and mortar'. The 1971 Canada Census gave us the courage if not the incontrovertible data to assume that for every school, every hospital, every house, every office building, for every factory that existed at the time, we would have to build another one so as to accommodate the economic and social growth that everybody assumed was going to occur in Canada. We assumed that the amount of physical construction and the land it occupied, was going to double in order to accommodate the forecast social, economic and demographic future by the end of the century. Ten years later, we are less certain, and there are some good reasons.

First and foremost, the 1971 Census information, by 1976 had proven to be somewhat illusory. Urban Canada had not grown in the way or at the rate that we had anticipated; it has grown differently and in some ways at a decelerating rate. Secondly, Canada is becoming a society that understands three interrelated facts:

(1) The amount of social and physical capital we have invested in our cities, is of such magnitude that we can no longer afford to discard it as we have done in the past, on the presumption that every time we need a new facility, or launch a new program or form a new household, we build a new building. Canada, and
Professor Michael Turner, visiting professor at the University of British Columbia School of Architecture, on leave of absence from the Jerusalem Municipality and the Bezalel Academy Jerusalem, participated in the seminar and acted as editor of the Proceedings. Professor Turner's enthusiastic efforts in shaping the record of the lively and instructive discussion that followed the presentation of the three theme papers makes the current publication unusually appropriate and useful. The Centre appreciates Professor Turner's editorship and the important contribution his photographs and illustrations are making to the success of this Occasional Paper.

The work of the Centre is generously supported by grants from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Ottawa, and the Provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Victoria. British Columbia.

It was a pleasure to convene the seminar and to lead a lively and well-informed discussion on a matter of increasing importance to Urban Canada. The Centre is grateful to all who participated, particularly Bruno Freschi, Ann McAfee and Harold Spence-Sales. Shirley Marcus contributed her skill and experience in typing, re-typing and arranging the manuscript; we owe her special thanks. Knute Buttedahl helped generously in finalising this publication.

Dr. H. Peter Oberlander
Director
Centre for Human Settlements
presentations

Graffiti at Five-Fifty Beatty Street

"SQUAT"
Downtown is the heart of Canada's third largest urban region. It has the greatest concentration of commercial offices, retail stores, hotels (4500 first class rooms), and many entertainment and cultural facilities. The principal streets are Georgia, Burrard, Hastings and Granville.

The Downtown Area contains a number of Character Areas (see diagram). The most easily identified of these are Gastown, Chinatown and the Financial District. In other areas such as the provincial government precinct and Robson Square, and the Yaletown warehouse area, the character will take several more years to evolve. It is one of the goals of the City to strengthen these character areas in order to ensure the vitality and livability of the Downtown.

Downtown is on a peninsula and as a result has special transportation problems. All traffic must use one of 6 bridges and one of four streets in the "neck" of the peninsula to reach the area. Freeways were planned but were not developed as a result of public opposition 10 years ago. Plans for light rapid transit, cross-inlet ferries and commuter rail facilities are under consideration. Significant decisions about these new transportation elements face today's Provincial, Regional and Municipal Governments.

From City Planning Department Publication
OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES or
CAN THE POOR SURVIVE IN DOWNTOWN HOUSING?

ann mcafee

Considerable theory and policy on North American cities addresses the difficulty of enticing upper income households back to inner city residences. In Vancouver the task is reversed. Areas surrounding the downtown have remained attractive residential areas to higher income households. A vibrant western economy and limited development opportunities have resulted in pressure on downtown sites to the point where low and moderate income households are being priced out of downtown housing. This paper addresses the question "Can the poor survive in downtown housing?"

For the purposes of this discussion, 'downtown' is being defined as the area east of Burrard Street, west to Main Street and north of Hastings to Heatley. This is the area which today is predominantly business uses. The majority of buildings housing permanent residents are residential hotels and rooming houses.

I plan to address my remarks to three topics:

-- A brief description of existing downtown housing and downtown residents
-- Suggest a scenario for downtown Vancouver over the next twenty years
-- Indicate the likely impact of this scenario on low income households who presently live in the downtown area and on those who may seek to do so in the years ahead.
DOWNTOWN HOUSEHOLDS AND HOUSING: OLD WINE IN OLD BOTTLES

Downtown areas with a high concentration of substandard hotels and rooming houses which charge minimal rents and cater to the lowest economic groups are often termed "Skid Roads". Within the area are a range of land uses including low cost restaurants, pawnshops, second-hand stores, night clubs and various light industries. These commercial activities together with the Missions which provide free meals, and public institutions such as employment agencies for unskilled workers, and welfare centres, combine to function as the infrastructure which supports the life and channels the behaviour of a significant proportion of downtown inhabitants.

The last census (1976) enumerated 7,620 people in the downtown area. The predominantly male (90%) older population (average age over 50 years) includes pensioners, working poor, the ill, handicapped, the alcoholic and otherwise unemployable. Residence managers estimate that about 5 - 10% of the population in hotels and rooms are 'hard-to-house'. The majority of the hard-to-house group are chronic alcoholics whose behaviour when they are drinking is destructive and/or disruptive. Others are either anti-social or mentally unstable whether drinking or sober.

Surprisingly, the resident downtown population is remarkably permanent. Thirty-eight per cent of the downtown residents have lived in the area for ten or more years. Over one-half have resided in the downtown area for at least five years. These statistics make the downtown population the second most 'stable' community in terms of length of residence of its inhabitants in the City.
The common factor for most downtown residents is an attempt to subsist on a minimal income. Eighty-seven percent of the residents draw some form of pension or government transfer payment. Those who are employed hold extremely low paying jobs. Areas of downtown housing are distinguished by differing employment characteristics. Residents of the Granville corridor are sixty-three per cent employed. In contrast, only twenty-five per cent of Downtown East Side residents work.

Given a choice, the majority of downtown residents indicate that they wish to remain in the area. Most value the proximity to social services and organizations willing to assist when funds or health problems arise. In addition, the area offers the lowest rents, a tolerance toward otherwise socially deviant behaviour and the availability of companionship to the single, the lonely, and the outcast.

The 1976 census suggests there were about 6,300 living quarters in the downtown area (in addition to the tourist-type hotels). More recent surveys by the Social Planning Department indicate that 85% of downtown residents live in sleeping rooms, 11% in housekeeping rooms, and only 4% in self-contained dwelling units. Inspections show that by today's standards most of the housing is inadequate. Most downtown accommodation was built for short-term stays. Gradually, as housing costs have risen, the sleeping rooms have become permanent housing for their occupants.

Most rooms are small, poorly ventilated, inadequately lighted, without food storage or private bathroom, and inadequately wired even for a hot-plate. A survey of conditions in 1979 noted an average of eight violations of current city codes per room. For other rooms, while
meeting minimum public health standards, the operative word is minimum. Current estimates suggest that at the most, there are about 2,000 units of adequate housing for the 6,200 households.

Accommodation is owned and managed by both public and private sources. About 60% of units are private market owner-operated, 29% leased by private operators, 5% run by non-profit societies, and 6% run by governments. Many of the private market units are run by individuals who work for themselves. Long hours and low wages are the price of their independence and possible future gain. Sixteen percent of rooms are attached to licenced beverage lounges.

The combination of social and economic traits of the existing residents and the type and condition of older downtown accommodation, place serious constraints on the ability of the poor to remain in the downtown area once it begins to upgrade.
Prior to 1970, Vancouver's downtown housing, particularly in the Skid Road (Downtown East Side) area, reflected conditions similar to many other downtowns. Housing had deteriorated, fire deaths, violent crime and untreated alcoholism were common. Government employees acting in the area were demoralized, receiving little in the way of positive support from politicians. "Clean up" campaigns, sparked by impending elections, brought occasional actions which were neither co-ordinated nor of adequate duration to make an impact on problems. Otherwise, the area was ignored by those with the funds to effect changes.
Conditions changed markedly during the late 1960's with an influx of private capital to restore and rehabilitate existing structures in the Gastown area. Gastown has since become, through the infusion of public and private monies, a distinctive character area of shops, offices and restaurants in the City's original core. Changing old hotels to office and commercial uses and upgrading of housing resulted in a dislocation of traditional low income residents into adjacent areas.

At the same time, increasing concern about the quality of housing in the City resulted in organizations providing health, recreation, housing, public safety and social services combining in 1972 to form a Skid Road Community Services Committee. Regular meetings of a citizen's Downtown East Side Community Group started in 1972. Vancouver City Council created, in 1973, a Skid Road Housing Committee under then Alderman Michael Harcourt.

Several surveys of demographic and health conditions in the downtown area provided the basis for strategies of public intervention in the area. An integrated program of treatment and prevention was initiated. Public strategies took into account:

-- The realization that a varied program of physical and social actions was needed to counteract existing diverse problems

-- The necessity to combine a treatment or curative aspect with programs for prevention and containment of further deterioration of the residential environment

-- The requirement of a visible demonstration by the City of its commitment to spend funds on a continuing program to improve the community

-- The realization that funding agencies (Canada Mortgage and Housing, Provincial Government) did not place a high priority on assistance to non-family oriented communities.
Specific actions undertaken by the City included:

1. By-law enforcement Programs to upgrade and maintain existing buildings in a safe and healthful condition. All hotels and rooming houses were required to provide sprinkler systems. The City adopted a Standard of Maintenance By-Law in 1975. An upgraded by-law was developed in 1980.

2. Review and consolidation of existing by-laws including Fire, Health and Standard of Maintenance.

3. Designation of a Neighbourhood Improvement Area in the Downtown East Side. This involved Federal and City funding for physical and social services.

4. Re-zoning of the Downtown East Side from port backup industrial to mixed use, focussing on residential.

5. Provision of new and rehabilitated housing.

6. Increased police patrols and lane lighting.

7. Improved health clinic facilities, job training and recreation.

8. Co-ordination of staff activities through a Downtown Housing Implementation Committee.

While public actions during the 1970's clearly improved the quality of life in the downtown area, housing problems have by no means been solved. Code enforcement is a highly volatile mechanism when used in this area. The most common problems evident in both Vancouver and other North American cities during periods of code enforcement, have been dislocation and eviction of tenants, rent increases beyond the capacity of the tenant to pay, and depletion of the lowest cost housing stock.

In cities keeping dislocation records, substantial numbers of households had to be relocated yearly due to demolitions resulting from code enforcement. In Vancouver, as in other cities, the number of units lost exceeded the number of low rental units provided through public programs. Substantial rent increases accrue to dislocated tenants.
A sample of rehabilitation costs necessary to bring downtown Vancouver hotels and rooming houses up to minimum standards suggested that rehabilitation costs will range from $1,800 to $13,000 per unit, with an average cost of $7,500 per room in 1980 dollars. Generally it was found to be less expensive to rehabilitate existing buildings than to build new ones. However, it is possible to build basic housing at a price competitive with the present housing which requires extensive renovations. Downtown residents are found to select the least expensive and usually the least adequate, unrenovated stock because the cheaper rooms allow them more disposable income.

Needless to say, hotel operators are not enthusiastic about the by-law enforcement and publicly funded housing programs. Government housing includes deep operating subsidies to ensure rents are affordable. Not surprisingly, tenants select new government housing over older and more expensive private market units. Vacancies in private sector units combined with declining profits from beer sales, capital outlays to meet city standards, and inflation are making many of the residential downtown hotels increasingly unprofitable ventures. Where ready cash is not available for renovations, mortgages are required. Mortgage companies are hesitant to lend on older and riskier buildings. Interest rates are high and amortization periods are short. Rent increases of a magnitude to service new debt are presently denied by Provincial regulation. Even in the absence of rent control, tenants would not be able to afford the increases. Some owners, when pressured regarding repeated by-law violations find it more expedient to pay the modest fine than improve the premises. For others, given a buoyant market, demolition and redevelopment to a higher intensity use is an attractive alternative.
THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT: 1980's
NEW WINE IN NEW BOTTLES?

Plans to provide a suitable residential environment for the traditional downtown resident may be running in the face of private sector pressures to increase downtown office space and develop higher income accommodation in the core. The 1980's will probably see increased competition between residential and office for land in the core and between higher and lower income residents for downtown housing.

The Competition between Office and Residential Land Uses

A review of public and private sector pressures to develop new office space in the downtown area suggests that the amount of office space in downtown Vancouver could nearly double by 1990 and triple by the year 2000. The demand for housing generated by additional employees will place considerable pressure on a city already developed almost to the maximum allowable density under present zoning regulations.

Several responses including a down-zoning of allowable office development in the downtown area, an increase in residential capacities, and improved transportation services are under consideration. In any event, pressures are already building which will reduce the stock of lower priced housing downtown through demolition and/or extensive renovation. In either case the units will not be affordable to the traditional downtown resident.

The Competition between households for downtown housing

So far in this talk we have focussed on the traditional, lower income, downtown resident. During the 1980's there will be three income groups seeking downtown accommodation.
The traditional downtown dweller will continue to seek low-priced hotel and rooming house type accommodation. How large this population will be is a matter of considerable speculation. During the past twenty years the downtown population has shown a steady decline. Part of this decline can be attributed to aging of the war veterans. A decline in seasonal use of the downtown hotels by resource industry workers (miners, fishermen, loggers) is evident as companies have created year-round towns on resource sites. One scenario suggests that the traditional downtown population will slowly dwindle and alter from Caucasian male and Oriental, to native Indian and female. An alternative scenario might see an increase in this population group as those suffering the ill-effects of drug use and disillusioned members of the post war baby boom generation whose attempts to meet high career goals are frustrated, opt out of society. In either case, the traditional downtown resident will rely on government transfer payments and, as prices rise, be increasingly less able to compete for downtown housing.

Other speakers in this session are discussing the rehabilitation of warehouses and older buildings for a high income inner city oriented dweller. In any competition between income groups for downtown housing, this group will have the effective demand to bid into the market place. Just how large this group will be is again a matter of speculation. In contrast to many larger cities, Vancouver has several highly desirable residential areas within minutes of downtown employment. Should the city decide to increase densities in high amenity areas surrounding the core, there is some question as to how many high income residents will trade views, beach access and community facilities for the noisier in-downtown location.
The third income group which will be seeking downtown accommodation during the years ahead will be the working singles and couples. This group has been typical of many residents living in the West End and around-core locations. Modest and low-income employees account for about 80 per cent of the downtown labour force. Sixty per cent of downtown workers are singles or couples. The low and modest income single or couple household will likely continue to seek accommodation close to the core. Current estimates of new housing costs on downtown land suggest that it will be difficult for the market to provide affordable housing in the downtown for this employee group. The consequences of not housing this group near employment will be increased expenditure on transportation services.

The ability of the poor to reside in downtown housing is not an isolated policy question. City Hall politicians and staff are asking several questions which will impact on the poor:

1. Should mounting pressures to build office space continue to be met in the downtown?

Livable region decentralization of employment proposals are still not attractive to office investors who seek downtown sites. Existing downtown zoning will permit about seventy million square feet of office space (assuming B.C. Place proposals to provide six million square feet are realized). Developed capacity to 1980 is about eighteen million square feet or twenty-five percent of allowable capacity. Projections of office growth to the year 2000 indicate an additional forty-two million square feet may be constructed. Competition for land and increased demand for housing have been noted.

Downzoning might reduce this pressure but will the resulting loss of investment and jobs be an acceptable result?
2. Is there a public responsibility to ensure affordable housing is available close to downtown employment and services?

This question has to be addressed in two parts: for downtown employees, and for the traditional (usually unemployed) downtown resident.

Costs of land and construction in downtown currently exceed government funding program guidelines. Any attempts to house modest income households will require deep subsidies toward land, interest rates, and operating costs. The alternative is deep subsidies toward transportation.

We can anticipate that if present income distributions of downtown workers prevail, that about seventy-five percent of new employees will be receiving household wages of less than the $30,000 (1980 dollars) required to afford new market housing. Subsidies in the order of $400 to $500 per month (1980 dollars) would be necessary to house the typical downtown working household in newly constructed modest one-bedroom apartment units downtown.

Whether the traditional, frequently unemployed, downtown resident should continue to reside in the downtown area is another question. The answer is heavily value laden. Dislocation of downtown residents has the potential of resulting negative impacts on both the displaced individuals and society at large. From the vantage point of the dislocated individual, relocation causes economic and psychological hardships. For the community, shifting low-income downtown residents into other areas increases densities and the decline of the new area. Dislocation merely shifts the socio-economic problems of one area of the city to another with no accompanying benefits.

3. Will downtown be an attractive residential environment?

Typically sought residential amenities such as supermarkets, parks, and physical recreation facilities are absent in the downtown core. Increasing residential densities will require public and/or private expenditures. These funds have yet to be allocated.
THE DOWNTOWN OF THE FUTURE: A WINE TASTING PARTY -- NEW AND OLD WINE IN NEW, OLD AND RECYCLED BOTTLES

It is always enjoyable to speak at an academic gathering. For a few minutes I can pretend I am part of the solution as opposed to part of the problem. Thus I would like to conclude my remarks by sticking my neck out and making several predictions and recommendations concerning housing and households in Vancouver's future downtown core.

1. Some downzoning of office space may be initiated to reduce pressures on the core. However, it is highly unlikely that office investment will be completely curtailed. We can expect an additional fifteen million square feet of office space by 1990. Most of those buildings are already in City Hall seeking approval. After 1990, assuming transit lines are built, I believe we will see a reduction of pressure on the downtown as some offices (given the Toronto example) will decentralize along transit corridors.

2. Pressures during the 1980's will substantially change the area east of Burrard, across Granville into the Yale Town and North Shore False Creek area. Remaining older, inexpensive hotels and rooms will go and be replaced by market housing. I would not suggest extensive public actions to retain the traditional downtown population in this area. I would, however, recommend strong public initiatives to ensure that downtown workers are able to secure affordable housing in this area. This should not necessarily involve new monies for subsidies. A close look at subsidies necessary for transportation and new outlying services which would be required to house these same people outside the core should result in a more informed public debate on the relative costs of suburban versus inner city growth. Either way subsidies or bonus incentives to the private sector are involved. Let us make these subsidies known and rationalize them toward stated public goals.
3. I do not expect office and pressures for higher income housing to extend to the downtown east side (East of Main) during the 1980's. Recent city programs to create a viable community for traditional downtown residents should be able to resist development pressures.

This in effect means a consolidation of traditional downtown residents in one section of the core. Continued public initiatives involving code enforcement, rehabilitation, conservation, new construction, and social and health treatment services will be necessary. We will, however, have to take a realistic look at the demands placed on the private sector to meet broader societal responsibilities for housing the poor. Demolition controls and rehabilitation requirements which place the burden on a few landlords have to be questioned.

I do not expect these activities to be costless. Priorities for public (senior government) funding will have to be altered. However, again I am not sure that we are talking about the need to find new monies. Studies of the cost of band-aid solutions in dealing with the poor indicate that considerable funds are now being spent on non-solutions. I have always thought that it might be interesting to draw a line around the downtown east side and ask all government and do-gooder agencies to leave. But please empty your pockets on the way out. I expect the monies would be more than adequate to provide satisfactory shelter and services for the 5,000 households currently living in inadequate and/or unaffordable housing.

The result of this mix of policies would reflect the variety of wines found at a wine tasting party. The downtown of the future can become the home for a broader range of household types -- the upper income, the working-modest-income household and those who have traditionally called the downtown district home.
Five-fifty Beatty Street is in the Victory Square area of Vancouver. It is within the city core and at a junction or knuckle within the City's various precincts. The project I will describe is actually an historically consistent one, especially when one talks of housing and the development of this city.

It would be appropriate to describe very briefly the central business district, its development and the new pressures on the core, as Beatty Street is somewhat a result of these new pressures.

Vancouver has its origins in the area east of Victory Square, known as Gastown. It is interesting to note that within the intersection of Hastings and Cambie at Victory Square is the original iron pin from which the grid iron of streets was established. Indeed, Victory Square was the original court house.

Like our new third court house, the core area has continued to develop to the West. The central business district has in fact almost saturated the island known as Downtown. The core only continues to develop by infill within the grid of existing streets.

The core has very recently stabilized in its shift westward. Indeed, I would propose that the city core is moving East and in this move, Victory Square is one of the primary knuckles of downtown.
Victory Square has been known in colloquial jargon as "The Hole in the Doughnut". New development and redevelopment has occurred on all its sides, but not within the zone between Dunsmuir on the South, Seymour on the West, Hastings on the North and the False Creek area to the East.

Somewhat coincidentally, I have become involved in a series of projects, which, when listed will clarify my involvement in this project.

In the sixties, we saw the almost disastrous freeway alignment proposed to cross Chinatown, and what is now Gastown. I had the difficult task of defining the 'Aesthetic Criteria' for that alignment and, in the process, identified the rundown area of warehouses on Water, Cordova and Powell Streets. These later became Gastown.

We learned something from that exercise - the essential need for housing within all urban land uses and the appropriateness of the historic buildings for housing.

More recently, I was asked by the City of Vancouver to design a small public park at the corner of Dunsmuir and Richards Streets. In its own way, this park is to provide a small public focus for the surrounding, much hoped for, new developments.

The park now called "Cathedral Square" is the square within "the hole in the doughnut".

Again, we learned the obvious - that housing was the missing ingredient in the development of this area. However, we also proved it was possible and economically feasible.

Even more recently, we have all heard of B.C. Place and Transpo '86, which jointly are responsible for the development of the creek. In addition, the Convention Centre and the entire development of the harbour area
Recycling of warehouses in Gastown giving new life to dying areas of Downtown
from Pier-B.C. to Main Street has been reopened within the related developments of Project 200, Marathon's upland development and the Transit connections to the Canadian Pacific tunnel and the Canadian Pacific station.

In general, one can say that the "hole" continued to persist within a very dynamic doughnut. All the areas surrounding Victory Square, were again redeveloping themselves in the dynamics of urban growth and investment.

Together with this trend in growth or rebirth of downtown and our knowledge of the need for urban housing, we applied the thesis of housing as the essential 'glue' for urban environment. The Victory Square area offered the most promising potential. As a 'hole', it was underpriced. Its streets and buildings were of an urban character. Traffic could be controlled so as not to become a major negative environment.

I should like to add a small but vital point: Many architects are somewhat unhappy with the results of modern architecture, and particularly, its impact on urban space. I felt obliged to include heritage, a necessary parameter of this idea. Victory Square has quasi-heritage or just good old buildings, buildings which could be converted and yet maintain the quality of street heritage and urban form, which has been over centuries characteristic of urban living neighbourhoods. The buildings in this area, combined to create a 'wall' to the escarpment, to the street, and a continuity to the Square.

We surveyed four buildings in great detail and decided to work with a warehouse form, as it provided the greatest space potential. Historic warehouses provide four very exciting opportunities:
a. Usually an overdesigned structure for heavy flow loads,
b. Higher than normal ceiling heights providing more interesting spaces,
c. Heavy timber and masonry construction, both very compatible with housing,
d. Usually some window 'form' old warehouses do not provide parking, and needless to say, we are still bound by the need for the automobile. Usually, the masonry and heavy timber form is not compatible with a parking module. However, we have noticed that with the trend towards the smaller urban car, the warehouse will become compatible.

Five-Fifty Beatty provided most of the basic requirements, and further, was joined by a property across the street which was suitable for a parking garage. We had therefore, within a potential neighbourhood, a building which could be easily converted to a mixed use with a predominant housing quality.

I am suggesting that the "hole in the doughnut" should be developed with a predominance of housing. This then could become a reasonable urban neighbourhood, compatible for housing and a variety of other uses.

The concept of Five-Fifty is to create a rather traditional - and yet modern - urban housing form and to respond to a very urban site. The key aspects which influenced this concept are:

a. Mixed use or horizontal zoning,
b. The building codes,
c. The market, or the user profile,
d. The building in its urban context.
Five-Fifty, as it has become affectionately known in the office, is a traditional phenomenon in North America and some areas of Europe. Loft housing has been happening for most of the twentieth century in isolated cases. It has become most popularized in the United States.

I hasten to add that this form of conversion is quite historic and was a response to 'low cost' housing when nothing else was available. Warehouses, as generic buildings, are indeed great buildings because they are adaptable to uses other than those for which they have been designed. In a sense, they are timeless.
buildings as they can accommodate the unforeseeable. As this has always been true, they have been the basis for conversion and continue to be this in most cities. Five-Fifty is perhaps another of these.

The conceptual parameters mentioned above included mixed use or horizontal zoning. We have defined the lower floors for studio and office uses, compatible with housing. The lower two-and-a-half floors related to Beatty Street on the West and the future development of B.C. Place on the East are suited to these uses. The top five floors are housing.

The second parameter was building codes. These had a major influence on building design. Briefly, these are:

a. STRUCTURE
Upgrading of structure for earthquake design

b. FIRE PROTECTION and separations between units and uses. This proved to be quite complex, indeed we had to employ a special consultant to define the entire structural shell of the building.

c. ACOUSTICS
To provide for appropriate sound insulation between units.

The market, or user, was an exciting surprise. The project has created a very high interest. If I had to define who these people are, they are characterized as urban professionals, generally related to the arts and participants in events in the inner core of the City.

We have discovered a very broad range of interest in our market work. Indeed, I would suggest that this form of housing can be designed to suit almost the entire range of users. The only real constraint to user type is the neighbourhood and street design. Perhaps this is the only area of serious concern and one in which the City, through an urban design plan, could effect a real change of neighbourhood proportion.
Beatty Street warehouses backing on to BC Place.
The building aesthetic and the design of the conversion is of course my primary concern. Five-Fifty is part of an historic edge to the East side, the escarpment overlooking False Creek and Chinatown. The building forms part of a true wall between the book ends of the historic Sun Tower and the Georgia Viaduct. This wall is one of our 'ramparts'; edges will always be of a higher potential for housing because they usually have a view. Five-Fifty is part of a relentless eastern wall. We therefore respected that quality of its form. The masonry facades were not violated.

Beatty Street itself has a unique quality of continuous building in form, and again, we have attempted to preserve this by maintaining the facades of masonry intact. Both elevations form part of a larger continuous urban form.
Internal divisions of the building respect the structural integrity of the building. The apartment units are single, double horizontal and double vertical bays. Within the integrity of the structure, the individual plans are seen to be flexible. We hope most of the units will be uniquely designed.

The window is perhaps one of the most important elements of the building, and of course, all urban housing. It is at this element where we intervened in the design. The window must perform a very complex variety of tasks in addition to providing a beautiful frame to the outside. It must be a balcony and frame, and the second source of light and ventilation.

The traditional bay window inverted achieved most of these objectives. It is designed to reflect the various modules of units and to reflect light, to provide private but minimal outdoor space and to maintain the integrity of the two facades. The inverted bay provided the "porta e finestra" - the "door and window" of Renaissance Architecture. The window frame from the interior maintained the original quasi Georgian vertical proportions. This element became a primary point of departure for most of the interior design.

The floor element became the device through which the acoustic isolation was achieved. All plumbing has been maintained in a raised area of the floor to isolate all the plumbing chases between units. Vertical chases are subsequently isolated in masonry shafts in the corridors. Double floors and walls have given a sound reduction of equivalent and better than frame construction. In addition, all finishing floor construction is three-inches of concrete topping to
to reduce impact sound. The parking garage across the street is a simple concrete structure, and again, to restate its connection to the building, we have borrowed a piece of the building facade to declare the entrance gate. The arch and buttress of the fourth floor is restated as a facade to the garage. The roof of the garage will be a tennis court, with provision for an inflatable roof for all-weather use.
In conclusion, I should like to add some personal observations regarding this experience and how it may be applied to other developments. Firstly, the neighbourhood must be recognized, that is, the streets and space of an area should be characterized, or designed to accommodate mixed use, and particularly, housing. The vital qualities of neighbourhood include:

- A landscape structure to street design
- Sidewalk space to pause, wait, hail a cab, or deliver a parcel
- Space for the sidewalk vendor
- Pedestrian lighting at sidewalk level
- Street level uses for residential services
- Horizontal zoning of buildings to allow for a variety of uses and hours of use, near the street
- Respect and continuity of building facades if possible, that is to maintain the definition of street, square, edge, roof parapet and window.

I would also like to bring to your attention concerns of the various building codes and regulations. The City has, I believe, a very positive intention to this form of building conversion, which will accommodate mixed uses of this type.

With respect to the physical building codes, the City should initiate some incentives in the building code to relax some arbitrary National Building Code constraints. Conversion and heritage buildings require unique regulations. I should like to suggest the following:

1. High rise definition should not apply,
2. All space dedicated to services, chases, chimneys, circulation, should not be in the F.S.R. allowable,
3. A bonus system to be developed for the creation of the appropriate amenities and sidewalk character,
4. Allowances for balcony cantilevers and bay windows over public space.
I must describe the events which drew my wife and I to Vancouver and led to our settling in Beatty Street. When I left McGill University in 1970, we set off for Victoria to complete two commissions which I had undertaken. We found an apartment overlooking Beacon Hill Park and with a distant view of the Olympic Mountains. We set up a studio in a disused warehouse in Langley Street. Our professional pursuits began again. Mary developed her glass work rapidly; my practice grew more quickly than I had expected. We were pleased with our ventures in Victoria. But we grew restive after a time - troubled by the inertias around us, by remoteness from vital urban activities, by a sense of impending decrepitude.

One morning in April 1977, we decided to leave. Victoria was too composed, too complacent. We had to return to the city and to our accustomed habitat. Vancouver was more boisterous, more energetic, more lively. We knew the city. We could re-establish ourselves without difficulty. By September of that year we had moved into 578 Beatty.

To describe the building. It was built in 1902 on a lot measuring 50 x 100 feet along the eastern escarpment of the City Centre. It has four floors below the level of Beatty Street, but it is said to have had an additional floor above Beatty Street which was demolished around 1920 following a fire. The building is now roofed over at the Beatty Street level except for an elevator house and a structure measuring 50 x 30 feet fronting the street.
The Spence-Sales residence at 578 Beatty Street over the Hardware Company warehouse.
I do not know who the first occupants of the building were but Hickman Tye, hardware merchants, acquired the property in 1922 and occupied it until 1945. In 1952, the property was purchased by United Columbia Investments, and soon afterwards it was partly occupied by Ace Containers, a printing and paper box manufacturing company. The company expanded and then contracted and changed its name to Trade Paper Converters. It occupied the two lowest floors of the building. The remaining two floors were used for warehousing and storage purposes for a number of years. Then in 1974, La Bourique, makers of furniture out of wooden barrels, took over the floor below Beatty Street and the structure at street level. They left the premises early in 1977.

We entered the scene in May of that year. To use the two floors occupied by La Bourique for a professional office and a design studio, an application had to be made to the City for a change of use in the building. While few structural alterations were necessary to accommodate us, a considerable amount of work had to be undertaken to satisfy fire escape requirements entailing alternative means of escape throughout the whole structure. The conversion took much longer than expected and cost far more than initial estimates. Nevertheless, we were able to start work in September in fresh surroundings and with a great deal more space.

Our most important achievement was the making of a roof garden. On the southerly side of the building a screen of trees provides protection from traffic moving into the City along the Dunsmuir Viaduct. On a clear day Mount Baker is visible to the east. As the roof is light and cannot carry heavy loads, the garden had to be devised for shallow rooting plants contained in small quantities of soil placed carefully, relative to the structural system of the building. Thus, a geometrical order prevails, dividing the garden into
rectilineal shapes within which textures of gravels and pebbles contain succulents and other shallow-rooting plants.

We settled into our new working world quickly. At that time we lived on English Bay on Beach Avenue. We had a small apartment in a well-kept building facing the entrance to False Creek. The district was convenient, well serviced and enjoyable - above all, our surroundings were beautiful and lively with people. But soon we were confronted with successive rent increases which became so burdensome that to live and work in Beatty Street seemed sensible.

We were hesitant at first because Beatty Street is not in the most salubrious part of the City. Our premises had been broken into three times within a year - we had been molested frequently. But in time we overcame our misgivings, and on the advice of a colleague, we applied in April 1980 for a permit to form a caretaker apartment.

The caretaker apartment was to occupy the part of the building at street level. It was to have a floor area of about 1100 square feet, with access to the floor below and to the roof garden which was to be extended to occupy close to 2500 square feet - altogether a huge increase in the living space to which we had become accustomed in English Bay.

The caretaker apartment and the extensions to the roof garden were completed by October. We benefitted considerably through the conversion. The apartment was sumptuous - spatially and stylistically. The cost of the conversion had exceeded estimates, of course, but it did not amount to more than $36 a square foot which amortised over 20 years meant far less rent than we were paying in English Bay. In addition we had a lovely roof garden.
Life became more settled and orderly. Working and living became intermingled. Surroundings became acceptable. Noise and disturbance seemed to abate.

We became more familiar with the city centre and the pleasures and the services it provides. Occasionally we had to escape from the cocoon. Beatty Street had become our habitat. And then one day we learnt that a building further down our street was to be converted to contain about 30 apartments. We had taken the right steps. And besides, B.C.Place would be emerging soon!

TO CONCLUDE

I would suggest that the case I have described relates to a change in occupancy in an underdeveloped building brought about through particular needs and circumstances.

We moved from one city centre to another city centre.

Our primary needs were for work space. Living space was needed later because it was becoming too expensive to live in a residential part of downtown, namely English Bay. The means through which the conversion was achieved were particular and advantageous because of family interests in the property. The manner and style of the conversion were determined by personal and individual needs.

The case does not illustrate a specific aspect of trends towards inhabiting city centres, but rather the possibility of such isolated happenings occurring occasionally in the city centre where, by chance, close and intimate environmental conditions can be found.

Perhaps the case also suggests that such happenings, though trivial and unrelated to formative influences in urban morphology, are tolerable because of their whimsical contributions to city-scape.
From the City Planning Department's Guidelines for Robson Street.
New thinking on the role of streets in downtown.
Will they be given back to the pedestrian?
1 policy & planning

1.1 CITY POLICY ON HOUSING RETENTION IN DOWNTOWN WITH THE RECYCLING OF NEIGHBOURHOODS AND BUILDINGS

Ford: Well, I think there's a lot in it for the City. There's nobody in this room that does not agree that we want people living downtown and changes to make that possible, hopefully various kinds of encouragement. It's very important to remember that we need to have lower income working people living in the downtown area, if for no other reason than the transportation problems that we will otherwise encounter. The Minister of Lands, Parks and Housing, Mr. Chabot, recently wrote a letter to the Mayor, on the question of reviewing the Provincial Building Code, with the idea of making it easier to retain older buildings. He is particularly interested in the retention of housing. Now this is, as you know, a very complicated business, particularly since we in the City use the National Building Code. I have not yet had reaction from my own staff on this, but it is an extremely innovative concept, and of course the Heritage Committee is very interested in this matter from a heritage point of view. The basic thrust is very exciting, and we at the City Hall will do whatever we can to encourage the idea of recycling neighbourhoods and buildings and using imaginative approaches to keeping people downtown.
Symonds: The total city area is only 44 square miles, and the actual area of the downtown, is not very large; it's just a few square miles. The competition for the use of land in the downtown is tremendous and we have zoning byelaws which say, you are allowed to build to such and such a density, on this or that block providing your design is more or less acceptable. Most developers want only new buildings and according to what Ann McAfee was saying earlier, there are already some tremendous office structures in the works and more to come. Yet we want to see downtown with more attractive streets, wider pedestrian ways, more people living there, more activities for people and even if we can't build family homes for children, we want to create activity areas for children in the downtown that make it pleasant for the children to go there with their families and create that kind of liveliness.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES TODAY?

The following major issues have been identified in recent plans for Vancouver's Central Area:

IN INVOLVING PEOPLE
To what extent should the community be involved in planning and making decisions affecting them?

CONTROL OF GROWTH
Should the growth of employment be controlled and diverted to other centres in Greater Vancouver?

PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES
How can pedestrian amenities be provided? How can buildings be designed with pedestrians in mind?

TRANSPORTATION
Should investment in transit come before more roads and parking facilities for cars?

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES
How can new housing be provided, and existing housing retained, at a price which people can afford?

HISTORIC PRESERVATION
Which buildings and special districts should be preserved as an inheritance for the future?

REDEVELOPMENT
How quickly should the industrial waterfront areas of False Creek and Burrard Inlet be redeveloped, and for what purpose?
But we can only do that if we make very conscious decisions, I thought that this was what planning was all about today, in making those conscious decisions for the future. I don't think we are making enough conscious decisions for the future. This has to be done somehow or other, and the moment that happens, we run up against the people who are concerned with the commercial prosperity of the city. A meagre amount of housing for unemployables or even for modest income employables, may add tremendously to the social fabric of the city and to the psychological impact it has on the rest of us but it doesn't add a great deal to the commercial aspects of the city.

In addition, we are tied in regionally and conventionally with an antiquated system of taxation on property values that cannot be spread out across a region. A few years ago the local regional plan indicated that all the office buildings in the region don't have to be concentrated in Vancouver. There are some that properly belong there, because they belong to people who must meet each other and meet face to face. Ridiculous idiosyncrasies are created when B.C.

CONTROL OF GROWTH
A regional plan for Greater Vancouver is under discussion. It proposes that employment growth be diverted from the Central Area to regional town centres so that more people can live close to where they work.

Regional Reallocation of jobs to 1986

Upper bar represents expected increase in jobs if trends continue (in 000's)
Lower bar represents desired increase in jobs (in 000's)
Telephone put 66 feet between itself and Vancouver -- by moving across the street, because it was told to move out into the region.

We do have these bureaucratic problems, and there is a tremendous amount to be done if we want this exciting kind of downtown where, to use Dr. Oberlander's words:

"we have an endless chain which gives the City its special interests and appeal"

and if we want to use the existing costly plant, there are good psychological reasons why we have to make strong political decisions; we have to withstand strong economic forces, and we have to educate an awful lot of people. Many people have no idea what they're looking at -- they just think that a new building is better than an old one anyway. It is all very well for a few elite like Harold Spence-Sales and Bruno Freschi to talk about exciting possibilities, but they are amongst the very small percentage who can visualise those possibilities. I think the Community Arts Council in the city will agree with me that the need to educate people to a city that just does not consist of an endless series of high-rise buildings is a prime priority if we are going to get this city we want.

From the Quarterly Review;
City Planning Department

Environment

THAT where it has been established that designation would cause economic loss to the owner, then non-monetary means of compensation should be explored before proposing compensation in cash; THAT where non-monetary compensation cannot provide adequate compensation, cash grants should be considered rather than tax exemptions; THAT when future buildings are proposed for designation, the Heritage Advisory Committee outline for Council the measures of compensation, if any, which are necessary and appropriate.

Buildings with important architectural or historical qualities may be designated as 'Heritage Buildings' by Council. Category 'A' buildings are legally protected from demolition and alteration while certain portions of category 'B' buildings are protected. Where designation decreases the value of a property, compensation may be required because of the 1977 Provincial Heritage Conservation Act. Council also requested reports on amendments to the Zoning By-law that would permit relaxation of regulations for heritage buildings and on the legislative changes necessary to enable the City to transfer development potential. The British Columbia Heritage Trust was also requested to submit briefs to the Provincial and Federal Governments on various measures to make the rehabilitation of heritage buildings more economically attractive.

Compensation for Heritage Designation
Oberlander: Hilda Symonds very eloquently talked about the marketplace, and the fact that there are people who live downtown, even as affluent a fellow as Harold, doesn't add much to the commercial world, now is that true? How important is this area, and how important is it what we are talking about to the Downtown Business Association, the downtown merchants, the downtown office accommodation, would you give us the view on that part of the equation?

Keate: What bothers me is that all of these political and planning decisions are made in isolation. For example, Bruno Freschi has designed a very beautiful park across from the Cathedral, that has triggered a fellow-architect, Vladimir Plavsic, to have some exciting ideas about a mundane parking lot across the street. It seems logical to me as a downtown person, that the property south of that new parking lot and opposite the park, which had a bunch of non-descript buildings that are of no significance whatsoever, should have been bought by the City from the property bank, and re-developed to be utilized, perhaps, as shops and houses overlooking the park and Cathedral. Now opposite that, which would be the southwest corner, you have the Sally Ann hostelry which is a sort of half-way house—as I see it. It is the wrong place and the wrong building in the wrong space of time, for a redevelopment in the downtown core. It would be far better to redevelop that building for housing.

I think if you are ever going to have an area with some meaning downtown, you want that class of client out of there, because otherwise you are going to have a park between two beer parlours—Marble Arch and Alcazar. You can figure out for yourselves what that park will become.
What we were required to develop in the parking lot, was not an office block or say a tennis court or some buffer-like function that might serve a downtown purpose, we were required to put in more street-level retail, and on a street that has one of the lowest pedestrian counts, some of the most insignificant retail in the city. Subsequently, one of the few attractions on the street is the old Standard Bank, on the corner of Richards and Hastings, and it is being phased out at the end of this month. Now, there again, you've got another debilitating feature that is tending to down-grade that whole part of the town, that should have been, with this beautiful concept of the park—inspiring.

**Open Space**

Continued efforts are necessary to provide additional open space which contributes to the livability and visual quality of the Central Area.

Recent park development plebeics have been turned down. Alternative open space solutions may include the integration of privately developed space, public rights-of-way and temporarily vacant sites into the open space system.

**CHALLENGE:**

How can an affordable open space system be provided that will meet the diverse needs of the Central Area?

Vest-pocket downtown parks are upgrading the surrounding properties, but are slow to be approved.
Turner: It is very interesting that Bruno Freschi's project took place in the 'hole in the doughnut'. It could not have taken place anywhere else. We have seen this in loft apartments, in Baltimore, in Chicago, and also in other places all over Europe. It only takes place in these twilight areas, where the values are such that they have not reached their speculative downtown value, and they can just about make it. But then it is self-defeating, because the value of the land goes up so much, that we find new pressures on these areas, and we get a new situation so that we have to then try further innovative ideas like land transfer rights.

For those who know London, we might consider Carnaby Street, which is right behind Regent Street, once the sweat-shops of the West-end and now seen as a very important area which has been cleaned up and revitalized as a hive of activity, as far as business is concerned. Professor Nat Lichfield contends that within the next decade, the pressures on that area are going to be such that it will once again be under pressure for demolition. In other words there is a Catch-22 problem with regard to the amount of success that we are dealing with.

The danger of looking at an issue like this is that we conceive it as a building project. We have to achieve a greater understanding and try to integrate the dynamic processes which take place when we start cleaning up a building. The chain reactions need to be re-integrated into our cities through flexible processes and systems, and not rigid plans and designs.
Gibson: There's something else that we should direct our attention to. It seems to me that we should look holistically at what we're dealing with here, and that is - the improvement of the heart of the City, the historic part of the City, the rich part of the City, rich historically, rich artistically, rich socially. If we put our attention to improving that richness, we would do so at the disservice of the city as a whole if we did not subsequently stitch that centre of the city into the suburbs in a better way than we are doing now. This will require public funds.

But we're leaving out of the question of the loose texture of the suburbs, the automobile suburbs, where families would have to be fully integrated into the city, and experience those things that we are concentrating on in the City centre. Together with restoration, re-cycling, and the reconstruction in the City centre, we would have to provide corridors, that are suitably designed to unite the outside of the with the inside of the city, or we will find ourselves doing a very exclusive environment for a small part of the city. So in that regard, I would like to see these policies pushed southward, in a crescent from say Robson Square, along the designs of the Grand Boulevard, right through False Creek and into Kitsilano, because I think we need to pay attention to the whole city in the restoration, not just to the few people who are concentrated in the downtown, or within one or two prestigious projects.
Crickmore: I would like to give a personal perspective. I believe in the downtown, we have a lot of residential activity going on within five blocks of the downtown:
- 38,000 people living in the West End, being different from many other cities,
- a considerable number of people living in False Creek,
- a great opportunity to see new buildings which are going to provide the most efficient and effective way of housing people, with parking probably in the southern slopes of downtown, from Nelson Street southwards.

The Central Area of Vancouver includes a number of special districts, each with different planning problems.

1. Downtown Core
2. West End
3. Gastown
4. Chinatown
5. False Creek
6. Waterfront
7. Downtown Eastside
8. Broadway
9. Fairview

High density commercial centre
High density apartment neighbourhood
Historic area
Heart of Vancouver’s Chinese community
Industrial basin being redeveloped for housing
Industrial area planned for new housing, parks and commercial uses
Older residential area now protected from industrial development
A major regional office centre
Older residential area evolving into mixture of offices and apartments
What we have left is a number of existing buildings which we would like to keep for many purposes. There are going to be some people who can convert them to housing units for a very select, and limited number of people. There is a good strong small market, for the type of accomodation that Bruno Freschi is designing on Beatty Street; not a large market, so you're not going to get a large demand for this type of conversion. But you also have to allow some part of the centre where you can have a lot of sleazy activities occurring because they need some place to go; bookshops that barely make a living. All these type of activities have to locate somewhere, and if they can't be in the centre core of the city, where can they be?

Oberlander: Is there a zone 's' for sleazy? That's a marvellous idea, I didn't realise that was possible!

Terriss: I was disturbed at both Bruno Freschi and Professor Spence-Sales' use of the word 'cocoon' about the environment that they were creating. I would like to think that you did not have to create a cocoon on Beatty Street or whatever place it might be, because in fact Beatty street would be a street that housing could open onto or have a much closer relationship.

I do not know where that should start, but I see it somewhere within the Urban Design/City Planning department picking up the lead on Beatty Street and making that a place in which there is a corner store and other people-oriented activities. You do not just leave your building and head for your BMW and get up to Whistler, you use the street and it becomes alive. That seems to me to be an important factor; these developments just can't be isolated. I was just thinking that if that was a more traditional European street, that you wouldn't perhaps have been in such a cocoon.
Spence-Sales: I was only talking about cocoon in terms of my own privacy, where I am living and working in the same structure. I find myself more enclosed than I used to be; I may be wrong but I sense the cocoon about me. In London I lived in the Inner Temple for a number of years and worked there, and found that exactly the same--I hardly moved, and I loved it.

Freschi: It is a reflection also of the hostility of the street.

Oberlander: I think it is a function of and a reflection of the city. I think the point is that it shouldn't be.

Turner: Perhaps in Yaletown because you have enough basis for this sort of development. And again, this is where it comes into a planning issue. When the planners say we want housing here, the implication is that this area will no longer be considered downtown. Yaletown might be similar to the West End, and the question is then where would be the hole in the doughnut around B.C. Place? One has to look at the dynamics of change, and the first stage must be a conscious decision of the City Fathers to say 'Yaletown is of special quality--for housing and that we could then give enough housing there which would support school structures, and other infrastructure that the Municipality provides, and the pressures of central area commercial functions can be accommodated elsewhere.'

Oberlander: It would have to be a conscious choice, and also large enough to provide a critical mass.
Yaletown is an eight-block area between Nelson, Homer, and Drake adjacent to the B.C. Place site on the north side of False Creek. The area was developed between 1909 and 1913 and has experienced relatively little physical change since that period. However, there has been increasing development interest in the area and the development of B.C. Place is likely to have a considerable impact.

The report identifies elements of Yaletown that merit retention, the existing and potential influences on the area, and actions that could be taken to reinforce the area's unique character.
Keate: Well, because nothing has been done to change the character of the surrounding properties. There are things that could have been done there, a year ago, quite cheaply, but now, I would submit to you that come June when the parking lot is finished and the park begins taking shape, someone's going to say 'that's a very desirable piece of property, property the City could have controlled, and could have bought quite cheaply, a year or two years ago.' There are other properties like that throughout the downtown core, a perfect example being the one bordered by Robson, Smythe, Hamilton and Cambie, where the Minitman Auto Wash is situated. That was available, together with the whole block, for $52 a square foot, a year and a half ago. It was presented to the City Hall as a plan, that if they were to rearrange the alignments on Cambie Street Bridge, there is something that could be bought immediately and would cost relatively nothing to demolish. There might be some ongoing business that would stay there, pay taxes, but this might be part of an overall scheme to include the relocation of the bus station... lots of things might be considered, but the planning seems to end at 5 o'clock. It worries me that they don't take a longer look. I am encouraged by people like Dr. McAfee who has shown a great grasp of what is going on in the City...
Areas downtown with potential as catalyst for upgrading by public intervention.
Ford: What you are saying is that the Property Endowment Fund is functioning separately from the Planning Department. Keate: I think so. The City does not always have to buy land, they can put controls on zoning, and other regulative measures.

Freschi: I contend that what I predicted is in fact happening. All those properties you are talking about have changed hands, more than once, since this park was discussed, even before approval. Most of those properties are not in Canadian's hands, which is a reflection on our own conservatism. A man recently bought a building in the area, or tried to, and was told that if you can't counter offer a proposal from Hong Kong, don't phone back -- that is the reality. People from out of Vancouver are moving far, far faster than the Vancouverites. I am not prepared to condemn planning altogether, yet, it is this little 'hole in the doughnut' that has indeed prompted a great deal of activity around the square, whether it is a good park or not.

Keate: Obviously we're very much concerned about the direction of development in the city. Someone touched on Pier B.C. and the fact that nothing is happening is serious; and together with the absentee landowners, it does absolutely nothing for the development and growth of the city. What we need is the concerned owner; and it is too easy to flip real estate and opt out of having a plan to systematically develop.

For example, we have a situation where the Four Seasons property at Stanley Park, having paid $4 1/2 million for it, and now we've been sitting on it for years. If the City has any clout they could convert that $4 1/2 million into the Minitman Autowash block and then they would have a whole block to have planned. This might have been traded off for something else, but the irony of this is that the opportunities are lost.
Thomson: Many of my associates in the Building Managers Owners Association, have been quietly selling property in Vancouver to Hong Kong or foreign interests, and putting their money into developing their expertise in the United States. Frankly it is because they are tired of the hassle and the delay of trying to live with rigid codes, and where there is no longer the opportunity there used to be of discussion with a building inspector, and trying to reach the intent of the regulations. We are concerned with the older buildings, whereas the written word is built for a 1980 building under construction.

I have recently come from the court of revision, and of some nineteen comparable sales in the last year, the majority of them were either completely vacant, three-quarters vacant or half-vacant. Most of these vacancies are a direct result of people unwilling to try and meet the building code, and therefore just padlocking the premises. From what I have been able to ascertain, these are being flipped by people, most of them are outside the country, mostly from Hong Kong. They are convinced that we are a rube town in a backwater of the world and that if they buy cheap and hold on long enough, they can break the will of Council and then be allowed to put up the high-rise developments and make a spectacular fortune. But this has nothing to do with the restoration of older buildings.

The major owners in the downtown city core who are not Vancouverites, do not believe in the will of the city. They are flipping fairly actively in the market, using land as a form of currency, during this inflation period. Frankly it is disturbing; but most of our people at the last Convention of Building Owners, say the action is not in Western Canada, certainly not in B.C., it's south.
McAfee: Which is precisely some of the figures the planning department has been putting together.

At a Housing Conference recently, many issues came up which discussed the high cost of housing in Vancouver, and how all these nasty foreign investors from Vancouver are now rushing into Toronto to invest there, because relative to Vancouver, prices are cheaper. I would suggest that much of the investment that is coming from out of the country, into Vancouver from Germany, from Hong Kong, sees Vancouver as a reasonably stable environment, where prices are less than they are in their homelands, and where prices are likely to rise, so there's likely to be a stable opportunity for profit-taking. I think the same thing is happening with our investors in B.C., who are heading down to the States, or who headed down to the States in the mid-seventies. It was not necessarily because regulations were tougher here than there. It is just that when you live through what we lived through in the early seventies, you knew very well that you might as well drop down to California and watch the prices rise there with your money in the market, as opposed to sitting with your money in Vancouver, where prices had already gone sky high.

I am a little concerned over everybody saying 'it is the regulations that are so bad here.' If people

The Central Area is the focus of the Region's economy. The economic vitality of the Central Area is influenced by a variety of actions, policies, and expenditures by the City and other governments, as well as decisions by the private sector.

Civic policies and actions which affect the economy of the Central Area include the encouragement of industrial and commercial development, efforts to ensure retail viability, and the provision of facilities to stimulate the tourist industry.

CHALLENGE: What are the priorities for civic actions and expenditures that can stimulate the economic health of the Central Area?
are investing elsewhere, I think the profit-taking is somewhat better elsewhere than in our own market in Vancouver.

Oberlander: Let me just emphasize what Dr. McAfee is saying, from a different perspective. The biggest investors in Montreal now come from Vancouver. Some months ago it was quite different; it is a highly dynamic situation, and money is mobile. I agree, it is the return on the capital, not the regulations that make money really move. Particularly big money. Because big money is not really concerned about the short-term problem of regulations.

Keate: In Canada we have some of the largest land development companies in the world, and many of them are based right here in Vancouver. But in recent years most of them have gone elsewhere, simply because there is an incentive to buy—there are land banks, and tax concessions, there are all sorts of inducements for Canadian-based companies to go into the United States, and to any one of a dozen different cities.

Ford: Mind you, they made the capital here that allowed them to go elsewhere.

Keate: Money follows money—investors are going where the opportunity is; there certainly is no incentive here that I am aware of, for anyone to invest in housing today, and particularly the kind of housing you are speaking about.
1.5 **COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS TO PARKING**

*Keate:* In many downtown areas, had a move been made, say a year or two ago, it would be been possible to control growth and solve some of the problems of traffic movement. For instance, it would have been possible to take a ramp off Dunsmuir underneath the buildings at the corner, giving an integrative solution to the traffic situation and the development might have been stepped back so that you could have had a view of this park from Granville Street.

Perhaps a better example is that two years ago, a group of us combined and formed what we called a Task Force on Parking. That was when the requirement of one space per 4,800 square feet was reduced to 1,000 square feet. Coupled with that was the request that the Planning Department was to report back within 60 days on the 'pay-in-lieu-of' theory, where people are required to build 400 parking stalls within their building application but only wanted to build 250. They would make payment-in-lieu of the other 150, which would go into a central fund for parking where needed in the downtown core. They were to report back in 60 days, that was in April 1979, and they haven't reported back yet!

*Comment:* Sixty days in the life of the City is equal to sixty months....
Turner: The first problem is a definition of 'downtown'. Downtown is where the majority of activity is non-residential. We have got to get out of our minds the idea that we are making another residential community downtown. The real issue in fact is the hard economics and the conflict of interest between residential and commercial development. What we are trying to identify is a demand for innovation. Let us consider parking standards: I think the sort of people who are going to be living there most certainly will not own a car, not that they cannot afford this commodity, because they will just take a taxi. We are dealing with a very different sort of life-style, which will evolve with these new and innovative developments. We must look for different methods whereby we can solve the parking problem, perhaps it is monies which are then paid into the 'in-lieu-fund', for the creation of public parking structures. There is need to have greater control where parking will be made, and this subsequently needs to be integrated in the whole transportation policy and system.

Parking

The City, partly through the Downtown Parking Corporation, has provided short-term parking facilities in the Downtown. Uncertainty on the timing and affordability of an effective transit alternative is resulting in conflicts with present parking policies which reflect long-term transportation goals.

A number of parking studies have addressed existing parking needs in the West End, Gastown, Chinatown, and other areas.

Further effort is necessary to resolve these problems and to coordinate parking policy throughout the Central Area.

There are growing demands for the City to review Central Area parking policies and to provide new parking facilities.

CHALLENGE: How can the City provide an effective interim Central Area parking policy without jeopardizing the development of future transportation alternatives?

From the Quarterly Review; City Planning Department