

Urban Fabric in Transition: Thresholds and Transitions in the Urban Context in Relation to Time

Po Chieh J. Tseng, B.A.S

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture Professional.

CARLETON UNIVERSITY , OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA

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Your file *Votre référence*

ISBN: 978-0-494-40628-1

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ISBN: 978-0-494-40628-1

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Abstract

This thesis explores thresholds and transitions in the urban fabric. I will be defining these as both physical (spatial) and temporal phenomena. The nature and location of thresholds changes over the course of the day, week, year, and most significantly over decades. A neighbourhood used primarily by members of a particular community during the week, for example, may support a broader demographic and a wider range of functions on weekends. A neighbourhood occupied by one group in a particular way in one decade, can be occupied by a different group and in a very different manner in another. Boundaries between users and uses expand and contract continuously over time, transforming the spatial organization of the city and affecting the quality of interaction between its various occupants.

As one moves through the city, one passes through multiple thresholds and boundaries, which both connect and separate neighborhoods and communities. City dwellers spend time in different areas of the metropolis throughout the course of the day; they may live in one neighborhood, work in another, shop in another, and socialize in yet another. Accordingly, transportation plays an important role in both the structure and experience of the city; how one moves about the city (modes of transportation) affect not only the larger organization, but also one's experience and understanding of the urban fabric.

This thesis explores the phenomena of urban thresholds and boundaries through the parallel modes of writing and design. Both apply larger ideas to the exploration of a particular neighbourhood, namely Vancouver's "Downtown Eastside" (DTES), within which, I have selected a specific site. Design exploration at the micro scale permits me to both apply and further explore issues at the macro scale. The site is both highly specific and generic.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my appreciation to my thesis supervisor Benjamin Gianni for his guidance, support and encouragement. I would also like to thank my parents and my brother, Po-Hsun R. Tseng, for their continuous support and love. I want to especially thank the people around me - Meng L., Matthew F. and Andrew M. for keeping my spirits up.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Theory and Thesis Statement

Comprised of neighborhoods, districts, diverse populations and usages, cities are replete with boundaries, areas of overlap, transitions and thresholds. Given the dynamic nature of most cities, these thresholds are in a continuous state of flux -- the smallest increment of which relates to changes in uses and users in various districts over the course of a day. Residential districts empty out while office districts swell. By 5:00 PM, large numbers of people have vacated office buildings and moved to nearby neighborhoods to socialize. By the late evening, people have returned to residential districts to retire for the evening. Even in the relatively limited duration of a day, the nature and location of boundaries change.

Districts can be defined according to use, era, form and/or user. Depending on the criteria used to define them, districts will overlap in a variety of ways. Often, although not always, differences in use is marked by changes in the grain and scale of infrastructure. Modern office districts, for example, are often high-rise and high-density while entertainment districts tend to be street-oriented and lower in scale.

Writ large, I am interested in changes that occur over the course of decades in response to technological, economic and social forces. In the past two centuries, for example, the increased segregation of work from home has had a significant impact both on the form of the city and the way people move through it. This segregation began with industrialization (in the 2nd half of the 19th century) and became even more

pronounced as new modes of transportation – most recently the automobile – enabled the city to breach its traditional walkable scale and flow into the surrounding countryside. As the middle class decamped to suburbs over the course of the 20th century countless inner-city neighborhoods were either razed and redeveloped or handed down to immigrant populations. As these immigrant communities, in turn, became more affluent, they relinquished neighborhoods to increasingly poor and disenfranchised residents. And, where these neighborhoods are within walking distance of key commercial and social infrastructure, they have, more recently, felt the pressures of gentrification.

Of all the factors I will be exploring, I am particularly interested in the impact in changes in transportation technologies on city form. In particular I will look at how cities grew and organized themselves in the era of the streetcar (roughly 1890 – 1930) and again in the era of the automobile (1950 – 1980). While transportation systems affected many if not most cities, the thesis will explore their effect on a particular neighborhood, namely Vancouver's Downtown East Side, and on a particular site. The goal is to understand the site by looking at the larger context in which cities operate and to better understand the forces at play in cities by examining their impact on a particular site.

Particularly in North America larger cities have become more heterogeneous over time – both in terms of their populations and the variety of uses they support. Changes in the structure of work have altered the dynamic between rich and poor, as has deinstitutionalization and the changing structure of the family (both in and of itself

and in relation to work). We all know each other less and are increasingly different from each other. In response to this we have found a way to spread out, to more effectively segregate ourselves within an expanding metropolitan region.

Sprawl, however, is not sustainable and there is a growing interest in living more densely in compact communities. Proximity requires us to deal more directly with diversity. This suggests a need to revisit a number of time-honored mechanisms associated with urban form – strategies for negotiating difference by creating transitions, thresholds and overlaps between different users and categories of space. That said, these strategies must be reinterpreted to reflect conditions in the 21st century – building on the experience of the past two centuries.

And as movement is key to our experience of the city, it is important to distinguish between various modes of transportation. Terms like *gateway*, *threshold* and *transition* differ in relation to scale, time frame and mode of transportation. Urban growth and revitalization are, like movement itself, incremental processes. Cities are perpetually in transition and any attempt to change or otherwise intervene onto an urban space will, itself, be subject to change over time.

Chapter 2: Transformation of Cities

Introduction

Many excellent and exhaustive histories of cities have been written -- several of which I will draw upon for this summary. The goal of this chapter not so much to provide a comprehensive history of the city as to outline key themes, phenomena, technologies and shifts instrumental in understanding how cities have changed over time. This information will, in turn, be brought to bear on interpreting the challenges facing Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and to sketch out a trajectory for change.

It may be helpful to distinguish between cities on the basis of the ways people move about them. Based on modes of transportation, we can identify three main types of cities: the walking city, the streetcar city and automobile city. Implicit in this are distinctions in scale, size of population, and moment in time. Walking cities, for example, have been around since beginnings of urbanity while mechanized transportation is a recent phenomenon; walking cities are normally smaller than both streetcar and automobile cities given the natural limit to the distances one can traverse on foot; finally walking cities tend to be smaller in population due to the limits in density. Additionally, each type implies a different degree of centralization and different distributions of uses and demographics.

It is important to understand how population shifts and transportation technologies affect the spatial organization of the city which, in turn, affects the nature and position of thresholds and overlaps between territories and groups over the course

of time – whether different periods of day, year, or decade. I will need to examine general changes in transportation because transportation systems have, throughout history, had a significant impact on cities in general and on the particular history of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. In order to zero in and propose a design for the neighbourhood, I need to understand both the history of the city and the city’s plans for Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside.

Urban Thresholds

Spiro Kostof states that “There are two fundamental truths about the making of cities – one is that some system of division must be installed for the population at large if the city is to function properly. The other is that this system will fulfill multiple purposes - and will be based on a variety of social groupings.”¹ The most obvious of these divisions are the walls that separate from interior from exterior spaces. But boundaries can also include spaces (e.g., streets, laneways, and plazas) and more ambiguous zones of overlap. Moreover, whenever a boundary is created, some mechanism is required to connect the spaces it divides. This is where gateways and thresholds are so important.

We need also need to remind ourselves that transitions and threshold are temporal as well as spatial phenomena. Therefore the status of boundaries and the quality of urban spaces is a result of a dynamic interaction between spatial and temporal aspects of uses users and form.

¹ Spiro Kostof, The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Through History. (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1992) 103

Throughout the course of the day individuals move through the city for different reasons, constantly passing through thresholds and transitions. Transitions in contemporary urban environments tend to be less abrupt, in great part because the fabric is looser and communities and districts are farther apart than in the past. The growth and density of the medieval city were a function of its walls; inhabitants were either inside or outside the wall, within which there were further separations. The walled portion (or Old City) of Jerusalem for example was divided into quarters to accommodate and separate religious groups (Jews, Muslims, Catholics and Armenians). In areas where religious groups engaged socially, the thresholds and boundaries between districts overlapped. Transitions can be marked physically and/or by municipal or other regulatory boundaries. Within each of the larger divisions are more local boundaries, overlaps and thresholds, like streets that divide different neighbourhoods and usages (e.g., commercial from residential). Traditionally the closer they were to the center (in part a function of density) the greater the overlap between users and uses. Thresholds and boundaries were significantly redefined with the introduction of new transportation modes, which enabled the city to expand and decentralize.

Indeed many of the key distinctions we associate with contemporary (North American) cities were not in evidence in the past, namely the separation by district of rich from poor and of work from home. Until recently work was considered as part of the private realm -- the realm of the family -- and many pre-20th century housing types permitted rich and poor to live directly adjacent to each other. Divisions in the pre-

industrial city had more to do with ethnicity and guilds. Guilds were associations of tradesmen formed to promote mutual interests and maintain standards of craft.

The Wall between City and Country

To explore the idea of threshold and transitions in the pre-industrial city, I examined elements like gateways, arches and boundaries. With a few notable exceptions these cities were scaled to the pedestrian and were walled or otherwise fortified.

Ancient Roman cities were walled enclaves that developed from the centre outward; they were oriented and planned to harmonize with the cosmic order. Roman cities had two principal streets, the north/south *cardo* or *Cardus Maximus* and the east/west *decumanus*.² Gates were placed at the end of the *Cardo* and *Decumanus*. The Roman Forum was located at the intersection of the *Cardo* and the *Decumanus*, close to traffic; as a crossroads feature, it was nonetheless placed just off the crossing of the two axes, or to one side of the main artery that was the stretch of the interurban high road running the length of the city.³

Given the significance of gates to traffic and long-distance commerce and given the ceremonial nature of official portals like the Roman imperial *adventus*, the spaces on either side of the main gates commonly developed into more or less orderly squares.⁴ The *Cardo* was the hinge (axis) of the Roman city. It was named after Cardea -

² Mumford, Lewis. The City in History, its Origins, its Transformations, and its Prospects. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1961) 207

³ Kostof, The City Assembled, 159

⁴ Kostof, The City Assembled, 132

- a nymph who fell in love with Janus, the god of the gateway. Through Janus she became the goddess of thresholds, door hinges and handles, which were seen as protectors of children. Cardea was also the origin of the cardinal directions – north, east, south and west.

Images of Janus were often carved on the keystones of gateway arches. Having two faces, Janus had the ability to view both forward and backward. The notion of viewing in two directions symbolized change and transition -- the progression of past to the future, the transition from one condition to another, from one vision to another, the growing up of young people, and the shift from one universe to another. Accordingly the act of passing through a gateway was symbolic of the transition through time. The Romans believed that infusing spaces with spirits and gods served to link man with the cosmic order and connect it with natural space.

In the Medieval city the distinct boundary between city and country often took the form of a continuous wall with gateways. Access to town and market was controlled at the city gate: both a significant architectural event and the basic instrument of customs collection.⁵ Gateways funneled highway traffic into the city, and were often named for the major centers that lay at the other end of the highway⁶.

⁵ Kostof, The City Assembled, 16

⁶ Kostof, The City Assembled, 36

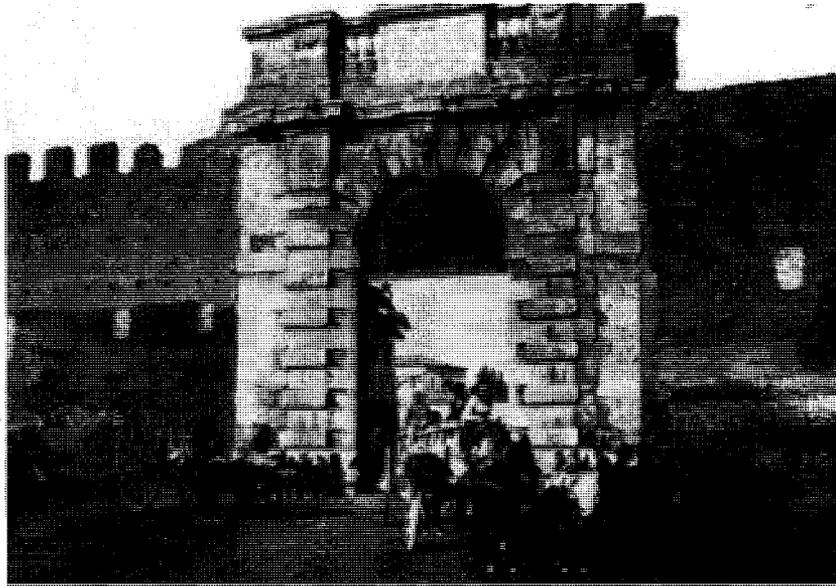


Figure 1 Porta S. Giovanni, Rome. The gate was built in 1574. Note head of Janus on the keystone of the arch.⁷



Figure 2 The wall of Siena divides the well-governed city from the surrounding countryside. Fresco, c.1340 by Ambrogio Lorenzetti. The image shows tightly packed houses and shops within the city wall. Outside, note the paved high road and the fortified villa-farm on the hill. Image from The City Assembled, Kostof, 17.

⁷ Kostof, The City Assembled, 36.

Growth within the wall meant increased density and overlap of uses. Prior to 1800 the maximum girth of a city was related to walking distance.⁸ Given that walking was the primary means of locomotion, cities were organized according to the time required to walk from one destination to another. To this end, significant buildings and spaces were located close to the center.

Cities that could afford to expand often built new and more elaborately fortified walls. Boulevards were laid out on the cleared foundations of and the gates of the older walls were often preserved as monuments and/or separations between neighbourhoods.⁹ These detached portals, in turn, recalled the monumental (often freestanding) gateways designed to commemorate significant events and persons in Roman times. The Arch of Constantine is one such monument; it commemorates Constantine's victory over Maxentius and return of the army. The act of passing through such an arch or gateway became an honorary gesture and a blessing.

While markedly different in their form and origin, examples of ceremonial gateways can be found North American cities, e.g., in traditionally ethnic neighborhoods like Chinatowns. And while thresholds and transitions can be marked by identifiable structures such as gateways, other mechanisms can be used to make transitions between uses, neighborhoods and districts. As noted, streets can act as boundaries and provide zones of overlap between neighbourhoods. Like gateways streets can be said to both connect and divide.

⁸ Kostof, The City Assembled, 59

⁹ Kostof, 37

The form of the traditional gateway privileged the arch, through which people passed. Arches, however, come in various forms. The proscenium arch, for example, is a particular type of opening; like a window, it enables people to interact visually but not physically. The arch separates two realities by positioning them face to face. In doing it has the power to create spectators and spectacles. This phenomenon will be further explored in the design portion of the thesis.

As cities modernized, boundaries became less distinct. By the late 19th century forces conspired to make city walls both problematic and obsolete. In the following section I will examine the open city, beginning with industrialization in the mid 19th century.

The Modern City: an Overview

Until the mid-19th century the city was a dynamic mixture of workshops, commercial and residential uses. As cities grew uses overlapped, recent arrivals mingled with long-time residents; wealthy merchants with the poor. In the 19th century, however, the upper middle class began migrating to residential-only enclaves on the outskirts of the city (e.g., Clapham outside of London) although as a mass phenomenon, suburbanization had to await the revolution of modern transport systems. Railroads and horse-drawn omnibuses appeared in the mid 19th century, followed by streetcars, subways and busses (early 20th century), and finally by networks of arterial roads and limited-access highways after WWII.¹⁰ New modes of transportation not only changed

¹⁰ Kostof, The City Assembled, 59

how we moved through the city, but radically altered the city's form and scale – enabling greater segregation of uses, classes and ethnic groups. Today most people live in neighbourhoods that are primarily if not exclusively residential. Prior to the 19th century, however, workplace and residence were largely integrated, business was a family matter, and apprentices were integrated into the household. “Generally, the business, which was located in the downtown core of the city, was situated directly below the living quarters of the family. Although the owner would handle most of the business, his family would also take part in its running. However, there came a point at which time the intimate connection between family and business was lost. This separation, influenced by overcrowded and unhygienic urban core and a fear of immigrants entering the city, was further encouraged by the development of suburban communities.”¹¹ This resulted in a highly segregated city and fewer opportunities for interaction – for better or worse. Especially in North America the automobile provided mobility, independence, freedom and convenience. This, along with an abundance of land and governmental policies that supported dispersion into the region, encouraged the middle class to abandon the city centre. In Europe, however, where car ownership was lower, government controls tighter and land less abundant, the middle class tended to live closer to the city centre in more integrated and diverse communities.¹² That said, European cities tended to be more demographically homogeneous and disparities in income were tempered by stronger social safety nets.

¹¹Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*. (New York: Basic, 1997) 38.

¹²Harry W. Richardson and Peter Gordon. *Is Sprawl Inevitable? Lessons From Abroad*. (Los Angeles: University of Southern California) 3

The Impact of the Factory on Urban Growth and Development - 19th Century

In the early industrial period (1800 – 1850) factories typically located outside cities – often in remote locations -- adjacent to streams and millraces.¹³ Early industrialists faced high overhead costs, both due to the need to provide housing, schools and other forms of infrastructure for workers, and because of the costs associated with transporting goods to market. Moreover, factories faced challenges attracting sufficient number of employees to support production. And workers in isolated “company towns” were overly beholden to employers, on whom they depended for everything.

James Watt’s modern steam engine, dating to the 1830s, enabled heavier concentrations of both industries and workers in urban areas.¹⁴ Steam engines also powered the locomotives that transported of materials in and out of the city. By the mid-nineteenth century, then, factories followed labor pools to metropolitan centers and vice versa. In most cases rapid growth produced instability as infrastructure (physical and social) was unable to support or keep up with change.

Since reappearing in the Middle Ages, cities have continuously attracted people from the countryside – most of whom had no right to own land and little opportunity to accumulate wealth. In the industrial era, however, cities grew at a much faster rate than ever before. Industrialization contributed to a radical depopulation of the

¹³ Mumford 459.

¹⁴ Mumford 456

countryside and centralization in the city. Populations expanded exponentially in a matter of decades and cities were asked to accommodate new systems and usages. Based traditionally on service and exchange, cities now became centers of manufacturing and production. According to Mumford, “the manic-depressive rhythm of the market, with its spurts and stoppages that made large urban centre so important to industry.”¹⁵ The city provided an abundant supply of cheap, casual labour and the surplus of workers necessary to meet the extra demands in periods of high production. Not bound by stable employment, casual laborers moved from one factory to another depending on job availability.

Industrialized cities not only absorbed populations from the surrounding countryside but attracted immigrants from foreign countries. As a result of increased production and trade, steam-powered vessels made transoceanic crossing more accessible. “A principle motive for the arrival of alien groups is of course for work, specifically small trade and unskilled labor; hence they have little claim to a choice segment of the urban frame.”¹⁶ Local residents had difficulty relating to newcomers, and urban neighborhoods became increasingly segregated along class and ethnic lines. The marketplace responded to the high demand for affordable housing in the inner city by building quickly, poorly and ever-more densely. Living conditions in the city declined precipitously in the 2nd half of the 19th century.

¹⁵ Mumford 457

¹⁶ Kostof, The City Assembled, 108

All factors conspired to promote rapid, and ultimately unsustainable, urban growth.¹⁷ The city became congested, heterogeneous, polluted and increasingly dangerous from a public health perspective. Municipal governments were fragmented: adjacent districts competed with each other and weak central authorities were unable to restrict factories to particular areas or to segregate noxious industries from the neighbourhoods in which their casual labor forces resided.¹⁸ As industrialization predated mass transportation, workers were forced to live within walking distance of factories.

The expanding railway system also spawned new ex-urban residential enclaves. Commuter rail lines enabled a percentage of the (predominantly upper) middle class to settle outside of the progressively more congested and industrialized urban core. "Since stations were some distance apart, American railroad suburbs were deployed like beads on a string. Furthermore, since the stations were their true centre, and most commuters had to walk to and from the station, they tended to be compact."¹⁹

¹⁷ Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History, Its origins, Its Transformations, and, Its, Prospects.* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc, 1961) 455.

¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹ Kostof, *The City Assembled*, 61

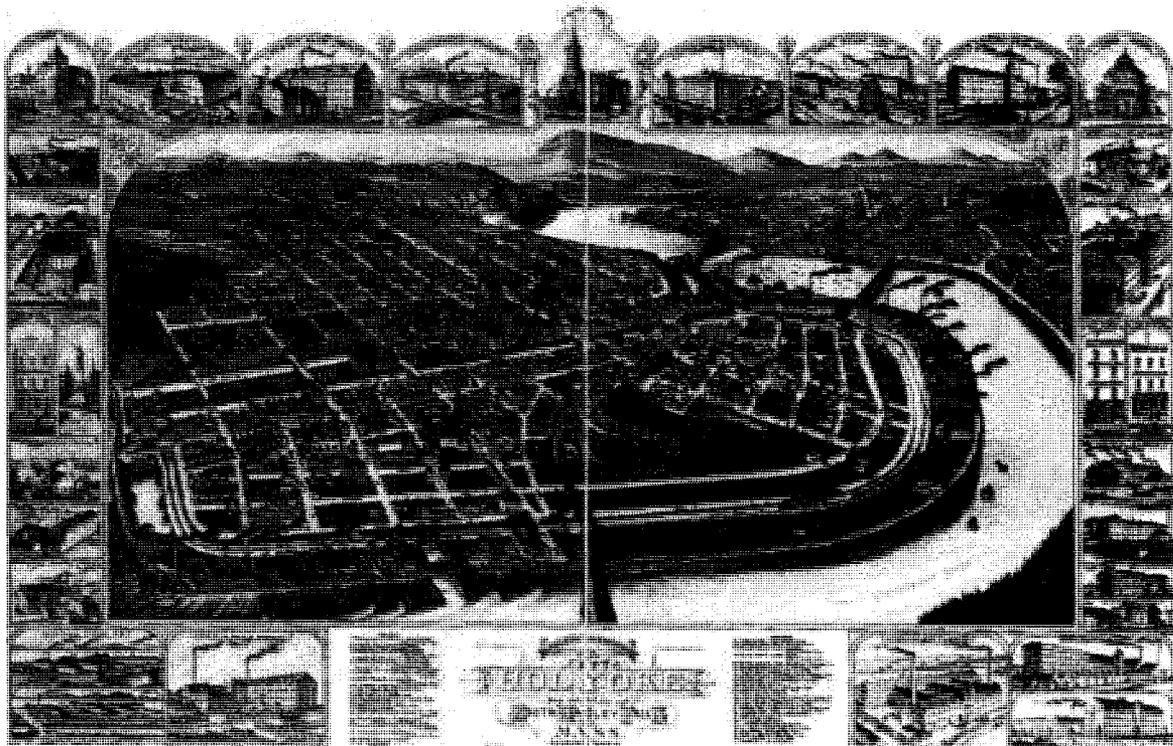
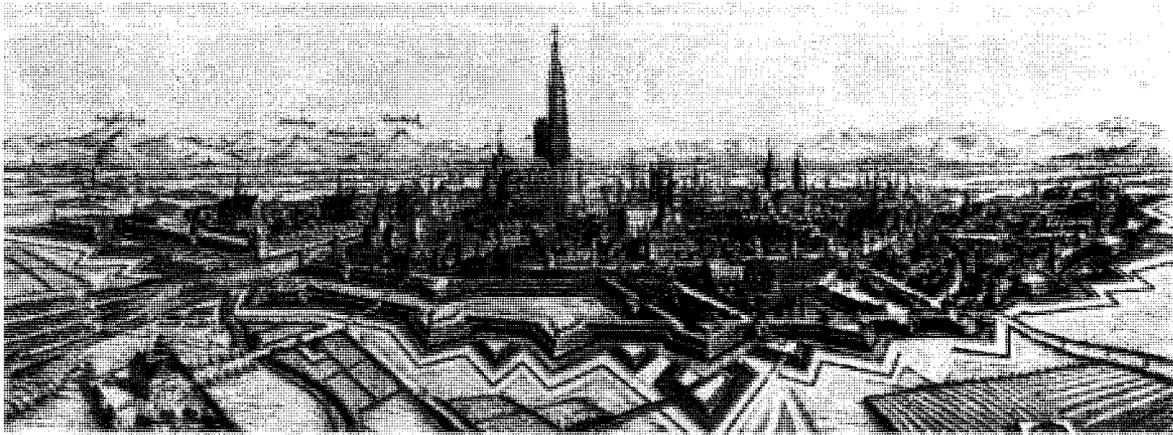


Figure 3 Top: The spatial characteristics of the 17th-century European pre-industrial city, a strongly defined city, and a dense, compact core accented by monumental public structure. Bottom: The industrial townscape, a New England factory town. Manufacturing enterprises, hotels, and other monuments to private capital. The grid of subdivided lots, more densely occupied toward the town centre.²⁰

²⁰ Kostof, *The City Shaped*, 28

The Late 19th Century – the Beginnings of Decentralization

With frenetic growth in the second half of the 19th century, industrialized cities reached a breaking point. The overlap of uses and populations was suffocating the city; boundaries, thresholds, transitions were too close and the city began to fracture under the stress of increased growth and density. With little or no access to horse drawn transport, the working class were forced to settle in the city centre in close proximity to work and everyday amenities. Only those who could afford local transport or commuter railroads had the choice to escape the congested city centre.²¹ Reformers called for new, affordable ways of moving about within the city to disperse the high concentrations of people in the core and leverage less expensive land on the periphery. Steam locomotives provided opportunities for commuting between major cities, but they were too large, noisy, and expensive to serve as inner-city transportation.²²

²¹ Kostof, The City Assembled, 59

²² Kenworthy, Jeff. The Death of the Walking City: Killing the Rights of Pedestrians. (Murdoch: Murdoch University, 2003) 2.



Figure 4 Manchester, from Kersal Moor. Engraving by Edward Goodall.²³



Figure 5 Over London by Rail - Gustave Doré c 1870²⁴

²³ The Goodall Family of Artists <<http://www.goodallartists.ca/images/manchester-from-kersal-moor-wyld-.jpg>>

With the development of the streetcar (electric railway) in the 1880s overlapping urban layers began to separate and segregate; electric rail provided an affordable means to move about and extend the city. For the very first time, the lower middle classes were able to live outside the core and commute to jobs downtown. Streetcar corridors radiated spoke-like from the business centre forming a star shaped city of residential districts tied to the heart of the city.²⁵ As new streetcar lines were laid out, builders lined them with housing for those who could afford the not-inconsequential commuting fares.²⁶ The overall form of the city, however, remained compact and pedestrian oriented;²⁷ development in transit-oriented cities remained close in proximity to rail stations and streetcar stops.

The streetcar suburb represented both a substantial improvement over the industrial city and a successful transition from the pre-industrial city of old to the post-war automobile-oriented suburbs of today.²⁸ While automobile ownership was high in North America by the mid 1920s, cars were used primarily for recreational purposes. Accordingly houses in streetcar suburbs were built close together and lots remained small by post-World War II suburban standards, allowing for a compact neighborhood and convenient access to public transportation (the streetcar line).²⁹ Given the hub-

²⁴ The Victorian Web < <http://www.victorianweb.org/graphics/dore/14.jpg>>

²⁵ Jackson, Kenneth T. *Crabgrass Frontier The Suburbanization of the United States*. (New York: Oxford University Press , 1985), 113.

²⁶ Fischel, William A. *An Economic History of Zoning and a Cure for Its Exclusionary Effects*. (Hanover: Dartmouth College, 2001) 5.

²⁷ City History & City Form Continued. April 26, 2004. City of Salisbury. January 14, 2008. <<http://www.ci.salisbury.nc.us/lm&d/2020/index.htm>>

²⁸ City of Salisbury

²⁹ City of Salisbury

and-spoke structure of the transit system, streetcar lines crossed in the central core making it necessary to pass through the center to get from any point of the city to another. Thus the city was able to expand without challenging the primacy of the core, except now the core is filled with cars and not people.

Streetcar companies in North America often established amusement parks (Trolley Parks) at the ends of trolley lines. These parks were popular destinations on weekends; they increased off-peak ridership and introduced city dwellers to the possibility of life on the periphery. In 1902 the trolley company of Massachusetts owned thirty-one pleasure parks, virtually all of which were on the distant edges of urbanized areas.³⁰ Trolley companies also owned much of the land along the lines they built and raised money by selling it off to builders. The exchange in ownership of these lands subsidized the significant construction and operation costs of streetcar lines – the ridership on which seldom paid for itself (a factor in the ultimate demise of the streetcar system). The streetcar companies were successful, primarily because they expanded the developable area of the city beyond what was accessible by foot. Trolleys provided ordinary citizens the opportunity to escape in-town neighbourhood, explore communities that had previously been as unfamiliar to them as foreign lands, and encouraged movement away from the congested city centre by leveraging less expensive land on the periphery to provide affordable alternatives to in-town neighborhoods.³¹

³⁰ Kenneth T, 112

³¹ Ibid

According to Kostof, “the phenomenon of suburbs is almost as old as cities.” “Where there is tight circumscription, there will be spill. Where people live in close quarters, they will be tempted to rid themselves of noxious but necessary activities and some forms of low life, or else move away from them. To the degree that a city is prosperous and resourceful, it will attract to its periphery outsiders who wish to share its advantages.”³²

With increased migration to the suburbs, the city lost many of the positive qualities associated with the walking city, i.e., the good was sacrificed with the bad. Intimacy and heterogeneity declined as the expanding transit system enable an increasing percentage of urbanites to escape congestion, pollution, and the latest wave of newcomers.³³ This resulted in a widening gap between social classes and a more or less complete separation of residences from work. Prior to 1880, American cities were more integrated and most people walked to work.³⁴ Modern modes of transportation have allowed people to live further and further away from each other and from their places of employment. Commuting distances continue to increase; modern commuters often travel to workplaces well beyond their own districts and cities.

Separation in suburbs was not only physical (suburb from city and one suburb from another) but social, ethnic, and racial. The spread of a mechanically powered,

³² Kostof, 47

³³ Automobile in America Life and Society. 2004. Melosi V., Martin - Dearborn and Benson Ford Research Centre. December 21, 2007.<<http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/>>
http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Environment/E_Casestudy/E_casestudy.htm

³⁴ Fischel 4.

intra-urban transportation system was an important precondition for zoning.³⁵ In the walking city people from different social classes shared the same environment; beginning with the streetcar city, however, the rich and poor drifted further apart. Boundaries between people and uses became more distinct.

³⁵Ibid



Figure 6 Chicago. Commercial vehicles and streetcars tangle at the junction of city centre, ca. 1909.³⁶



Figure 7 Compare these two photographs of major streets in downtown Detroit, left 1915, on the right 1935. The electric streetcars so prominent in the earlier photograph are absent from the second, which instead contains automobiles and buses only.³⁷ (*Images from the Collections of Virtual Motor City. Wayne State University.*)

³⁶ Kostof, *The City Assembled*, 36.

³⁷ *The Automobile Shapes The City*

<http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Environment/E_Casestudy/E_casestudy3.htm#streetcars>

The Automobile City

After World War I, Henry Ford, the father of the modern assembly line transformed the automobile from a novelty to an affordable and reliable mode of transportation for the working class. By the end of the 1940s, automobiles became the dominant form of transportation in many North American cities. Although some streetcar routes continued into the 1950s, overexpansion, congested routes, declining ridership, financial problems, and competition from automobiles doomed the streetcar.³⁸ Ultimately business functions began to deconcentrate and follow the dispersed populations to the periphery. The automobile provided the means to move rapidly from one part of the city to another with convenience, personal freedom and independence. "Migration into metropolitan centers continues unabated, but in the 20th century city changes has brought us to the end of the age of centripetal cities. Both in Europe and in the United States many of the largest urban cores were declining in population. Meanwhile, their outlying regions were flourishing -- in the case of the U.S., at a punishing cost to the inner city. This redistribution of urban vitality has initiated what could be called the era of the middle landscape: that synthesis of city and country, which is quickly becoming more populous than either."³⁹

One of the most common explanations of the changes in city form in the past two centuries is that railroads tended to concentrate growth while automobiles

³⁸ Encyclopedia of Cleveland History: Suburbs. July 9, 1998. Schauffler, Mary. November 10, 2007.<<http://ech.case.edu/ech-cgi/article.pl?id=S25>>

³⁹ Kostof, The City Assembled, 59

dispersed it.⁴⁰ People and businesses were no longer constrained to the fixed-track public transport systems or to the walkable scaled environments of earlier times.⁴¹ In the automobile city, people with stable employment were able to move to more spacious suburbs, escaping inner-city congestion, decay, pollution, and neighborhoods associated with immigrants. Ultimately commercial and employment centers moved with them in the form of Edge Cities. The core, in turn, became increasingly commercial, perforated by vacant lots, and the remaining neighborhoods became more uniformly poor.

The modern suburb was conceived as a dormitory community, that is, one to which you can retire at the end of every working day and a refuge from which to return to work in the morning.⁴² The automobile afforded ordinary middle-class citizens the kind of privacy, mobility, and freedom of choice once only available to the wealthiest citizens.⁴³ The suburb was the answer to the growing city's growing problems; if one could not control the city one could at least escape it.

⁴⁰ Bruegmann, Robert. Sprawl a Compact History (Chicago: The University Chicago Press, 2005) 107.

⁴¹ Kenworthy, 3

⁴² Kostof, The City Assembled, 59

⁴³ Bruegmann, 45.

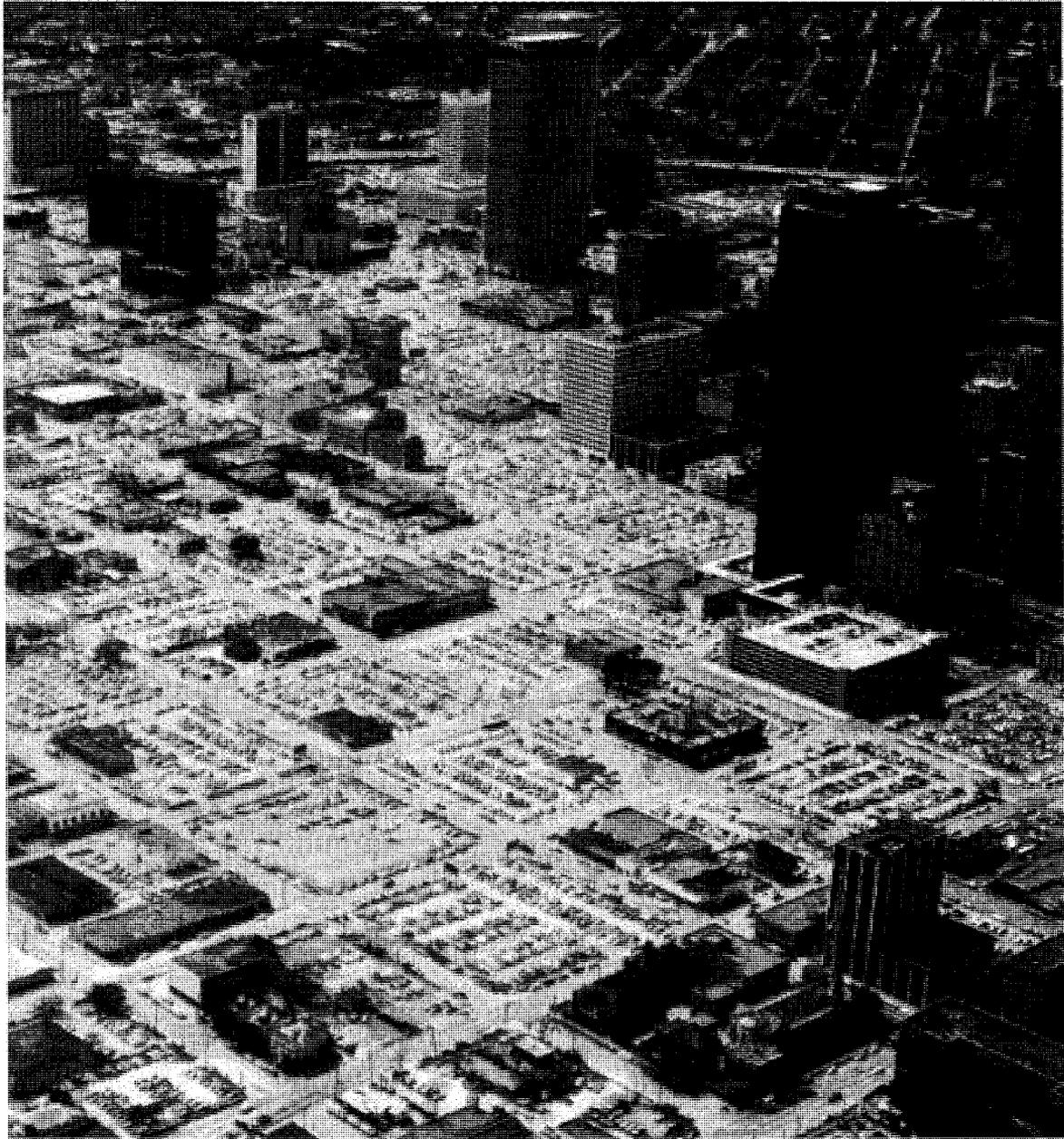


Figure 8 Houston, Texas. The city has come to represent the automobile-oriented city in its purest form. With a vast growth in area and a steady increase in automobile commuting to ever-higher office buildings. Photograph from The City Assembled, 286.

The Fall of the City Core

Many of the factories built in cities date to the late 19th century when industrialization was at its peak. Over time this industrial infrastructure aged and/or became outmoded. Rather than rebuild or upgrade inner-city factories, it became increasingly more cost effective to abandon them. “The industrial era proved to be the unmaking of insular city form. Factories and suburbs leapt the constricting bounds, bringing down city ramparts and with them the fundamental notions of urbanity these had contained.”⁴⁴ Factories were rebuilt at the end of streetcar line, outside the city near the suburbs where land was cheaper and more abundant.

Zoning was one of a number of strategies developed to deal with the dramatic increases in population and density associated with the 19th century city. The goal was to protect single-family areas from commercial and industrial encroachment, while not obstructing the freewheeling, free market system of land speculation and development elsewhere in the community.⁴⁵ “Zoning’s primary goals were to protect investments in real estate and development. It does so by defining urban districts, confining these to specific functions, and spatially segregating incompatible users, like hospitals and wrecking yards.”⁴⁶ Supporters of zoning believed that the segregation of uses would improve the quality of life in the urban environment. Ultimately, however, the low cost of offshore workers encouraged industry to move production to foreign countries and zoning became unnecessary.

⁴⁴ Kostof, 16

⁴⁵ City Salisbury.

⁴⁶ Kostof, The City Assembled, 121

Early building ordinances restricted not only use but ethnicity. For example the “herding of Chinese began in the 1890s in California, when laundries were banned from ordinary neighborhoods as a public nuisance. Since laundries were the main source of livelihood for the urban Chinese, as well as their social centers, the effect was to drive them into several blocks of the less desirable urban land, where they were forced to create those externally picturesque but internally appallingly overcrowded streets we call Chinatown.”⁴⁷

With growth having shifted to the periphery and industry leaving the city, population in city centers declined. Property values dropped and infrastructure crumbled. With affluent residents limited to suburban communities, the city had difficulty generating property tax revenues for schools, services and for infrastructure repair and upkeep. Large areas of city deteriorated and less affluent residents moved in. Less industry in the core meant less job stability and fewer opportunities for advancement for the urban poor.

Return of the Middle Class

Throughout the 20th century the city became less dense as automobility encouraged the separation of residential from commercial districts, rich from poor and ethnic groups from each other. This segregation stands in marked opposition to traditional, dense urban form in which diverse demographics, activities and events were accommodated.

⁴⁷ C. Yip, *San Francisco's Chinatown: An Architectural and Urban History*, PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley 1985.

In the automobile city of the late 20th century the nature of thresholds has changed. Given the radical separation of people and uses, overlaps became ambiguous or non-existent. Dwellers in these new cities no longer needed to learn to negotiate with each other in order to live together. That said, the pendulum has begun to swing back. Young people are waiting longer to marry and raise children; empty nesters are keen to be within walking distance of parks, restaurants and cultural activities. There is a growing desire to live within a convenient distance from the kind of services traditionally associated with the comparatively densely populated inner city. Elements and layers that once overlapped in the city centre, however, have grown so far apart that city has neither the form nor the culture necessary to negotiate interaction between diverse groups who might wish to occupy the same neighborhood.

Demographic Mix

To set the stage for a reunion, this section explores how the rich and the poor lived together and apart in cities throughout time. “Divisions based on economic disparity are in some ways the newest. It is true that the general organization of the pre-industrial city did place the elite in the centre of town, close to the administrative and religious institutions, while the lower classes- artisans and unskilled labourers- and the outcasts were pushed further out. But since, historically, the economic reality of many towns was for the poor, having few other options, to live off the rich -- or to put it in more purely Marxist terms, for the rich to exploit the poor as servants, clients or

renters- the two domains were interlaced.”⁴⁸ This will help us understand the issues of integration and separation of a mixed demographic in neighborhoods like Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (DTES), and explore how architectural design can help accommodate mediate between a mixture of uses and users.

The Rich and the Poor

In the medieval city people from different social classes lived and socialized together. Wealthy merchants and recent serfs jostled together on the streets, marketplaces and cathedrals. The rich might have ridden on horseback, but they had to wait for the poor man with his bundle or the blind beggar groping with his stick to get out of the way.⁴⁹ Cities often had large central spaces that served as gathering places for the rich and poor, open markets for buying and selling goods, and parade grounds for special events. The city centre and central squares were intensive gathering points for people from all social classes, for the purpose of satisfying their varied requirements and needs. In addition, people of different stations often lived together in the same household.

Similarly, in eighteenth century Paris, the rich and poor lived together, sharing many of the same buildings and neighbourhoods. Kostof described that “Class segregation within buildings could be vertical as well. The pattern originating with the medieval mercantile house and evident in Continental European apartment blocks built

⁴⁸ Kostof, The City Assembled, 117

⁴⁹ Mumford, Lewis. The City in History, its Origins, its Transformations, and its Prospects. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc, 1961) 370.

as late as the 1930s, put commercial uses on the ground floor and elite households in the first story above the streets level -- the *piano nobile*. Amenities diminished with longer climbs up the stairway, so that the poorest lodgings and servants' rooms were found in the bleak garret with its incongruously pleasant rooftop view."⁵⁰

The cross section of the building facilitated both the separation and integration of social class. By living together in a single building, people naturally learned to get along.

This natural vertical stratification was undermined by the invention of the elevator at the end of the 19th century; the most expensive apartments were now on the upper floors of the building and the costs diminished the closer one lived to the ground. More to the point the poor could no longer afford to live in the same buildings as the middle and upper classes, nor was there any need for these classes to tolerate the presence of the poor. Whereas for centuries architecture facilitated social integration, the 20th century city became horizontally zoned into geographically separated single-use and single-demographic districts – through and around which one traveled in personalized transportation (cars). Throughout time a variety of mechanisms, strategies and devices were used to negotiate between different users and uses. Among these are walls, fences, streets, plazas, districts, churches, markets, laneways (that accommodated smaller dwellings than those that faced the street), walk-up apartment buildings, high (vs. flood-prone) land, land along the waterfront vs. land well back from the water (and industrial/commercial activity), public transportation,

⁵⁰ Kostof, The City Assembled, 118

rituals and festivals, etc. Presumably these architectural and spatial mechanisms can be brought to bear on a renewed demand for middle class housing in the urban core. The role and nature of these elements will be furthered explored in the proposal for the site.

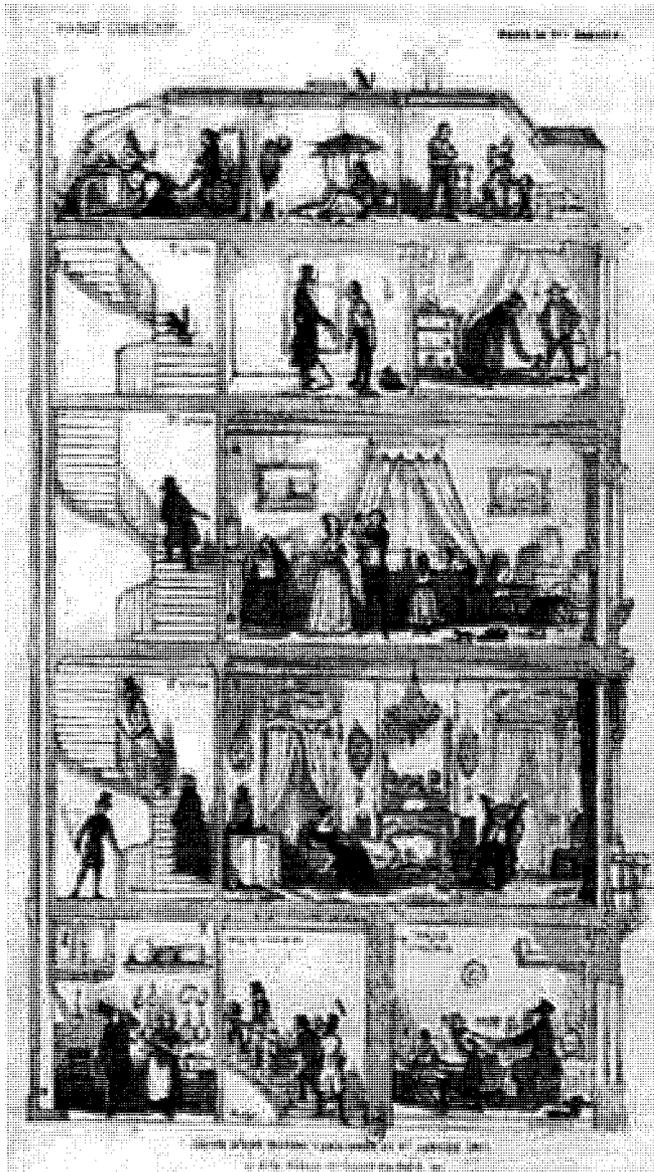


Figure 9 Five Levels of Parisian Life, Illustration from Edmond Texier, *Tableau de Paris*, 1852.

“A cross section of a typical apartment. According to Texier on the ground floor, servants are going about their work and an elderly couple is dancing to music played on a piano by a young girl. On the first floor, two aristocrats lounge in the lap of luxury. One should note the balcony on this level as well, which was characteristic of the buildings designed in the 1820's building boom. On the second floor, a middle bourgeoisie family lives comfortably, if a bit crowded. On the third floor, the rooms are smaller. In the room on the left, a man appears to be being evicted. In the room on the right, a less wealthy elderly couple entertain themselves with a small dog. The fourth floor is divided into three rooms. In the leftmost, two bohemians are celebrating. Next door, a young man sits, with an umbrella to protect himself from leaks in the ceiling. In the far right room live a poor man and woman with three hungry children. A staircase going through the whole building also shows a progression of wealth.”

Chapter 3: Portrait of an Urban Neighborhood in Transition

Site Specific: Vancouver's Downtown Eastside

To more effectively explore transitions and thresholds in the city, I have elected to explore the redevelopment of a site in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES). As noted above, the DTES is located just east of the city's commercial core. In addition to the transient populations that move through the DTES on a regular basis, there is recreation-oriented movement through the district on weekends, tourism from Gastown immediately to the north, and vestigial community activities associated with Chinatown to the south. The combination of neighborhood, site and program presents an opportunity to examine specific issues and characteristics of the city, building both on the general themes outlined in Chapter 2 (e.g., the impact of changes in modes of transportation, suburbanization and the segregation of social classes, etc.) and on my particular interest in thresholds and transitions. Located on the border of Chinatown, the site I've chosen also provides an opportunity to examine the phenomenon of immigration and the 'rise and fall' of ethnic neighborhoods.

Vancouver's Downtown Eastside developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, during the period when the Interurban system of electric railways (trolleys) was expanding. The interurban was an extension of the streetcar line that connected Burrard Inlet to False Creek; among other things, it enabled residential neighbourhoods

to develop outside the central core of the city. Indeed the Interurban was a significant catalyst for community's growth and development as well as the development of the DTES as Vancouver's commercial and transportation hub.

The City of Vancouver has recently identified the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood as key to movement through the city, specifically recreational movement from False Creek to Burrad Inlet. Given the neighborhood's long and diverse history, the path from south to north shore is replete with thresholds and boundaries between uses and users. These zones of transition have developed through the neighborhood's various economic cycles. Less than a decade ago, DTES ranked as the poorest district (by postal code) in Canada and was the last place that anyone would consider moving. In the recent years, however, drawn by depressed land values and its proximity to amenities in the city centre, younger residents and empty-nesters have begun to settle in the Downtown Eastside and Chinatown.

Site History

The Downtown Eastside began life as a working class neighbourhood; local industries attracted laborers from all over the world. The area served a transient community comprised mostly of men, many of whom came in search of jobs and/or to spend the winter while seasonal industries such as lumbering and fishing were closed.⁵¹ "Hastings Saw Sawmills and salmon canneries were among the first major employers to

⁵¹ Reid Shier. Stan Douglas: Every Building on 100 West Hastings. (Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, 2002) 13.

settle along Burrard Inlet in 1865” and formed an industrial waterfront.⁵² The logging industry started a chain reaction of commercial development along Hastings Street. Downtown Eastside’s development was closely linked with the lumber industry and sawmills. The mill attracted workers from different ethnic backgrounds including “native Indians, Chinese immigrants, Scandinavian deserters from the sailing ships, and busted refugees from the gold mines.”⁵³ Chinese workers were imported during the construction of Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s. The establishment of a seaport with industrial operations along Burrard Inlet together with the Canadian Pacific Railway contributed to a mixed demographic neighborhood of permanent and transient residents.

By 1897, Vancouver began to take form as a modern city. Although the city had no formal plan, clearly defined industrial, commercial and residential areas emerged, within which there was some specialization of functions. Wholesaling and retailing operations in the Downtown Eastside separated the well to do in the West End from the working classes to the east.⁵⁴ Separations among uses and people have been practiced through history; of interest to me is what happens as increased densities produce overlaps between various users and usages.

As the population increased with industrialization in the early 20th century, amenities such as a city hall, theatres, a library, offices, banks, department stores and

⁵² Roy, Patricia E. Vancouver An Illustrated History. (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company 1980) 15.

⁵³ The Working Lives Collectives, Working Lives – Vancouver 1886-1986 (Vancouver: New Star, 1985)9.

⁵⁴ Roy,58.

hotels were incorporated into the street fabric. A streetcar terminus was established at the B.C. Electric Building on the corner of Carrall and Hastings Streets. "In 1912, the company's interurban system was the largest in Canada reaching sixty miles up the Fraser Valley to Chilliwack," and the streetcar became a primary method of transportation.⁵⁵ Streetcars provided an affordable mode of transport and for the first time the working class was not limited to residential districts within walking distance of mills and factories. The suburbs that developed along streetcar corridors helped the city to manage growth by facilitating the dispersal of populations over a larger geographic area. The hub and spoke organization of the system, however, kept communities connected to a common core and enabled people to interact as they moved through each other's communities. Moreover sprawl was contained by the logistical need to live within walking distance of a transit corridor. Density along these corridors, in turn, helped to protect the viability of the system.

In 1958 Vancouver's streetcars were replaced by motor coaches and the system began to loosen and decentralize.⁵⁶ Busses were not restricted to transit corridors and automobiles enabled the residents to further segregate themselves from the congested centre. Head offices and department stores began to move west towards Burrard Street to gain exposure to increased business. Given that the West End was wealthier, retail and office usages naturally gravitated there – to distance themselves from the factories

⁵⁵ Harold D. Kalman, Exploring Vancouver 2: Ten Tours of the City and Its Buildings (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1978) 42.

⁵⁶ Downtown Eastside Revitalization: Community History
<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/COMMSVCS/PLANNING/dtes/communityhistory.htm>

and industry of the DTES. Moreover, the building of the Burrard Street Bridge and Granville Street Bridge would have shifted traffic patterns to the west. Office and retail usages didn't need to be near the waterfront. They chose higher locations, more removed from industry. As a result, traffic to the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood decreased by almost ten thousand people a day.⁵⁷ After World War II there was a continuous decline in industry as the city's "central role in warehousing, transportation, and a host of manufacturing operations that relied on or supported hinterland resource extraction began to dim."⁵⁸ Waterfront industries relocated to cheaper land further from the downtown core. As production technologies improved to meet market demands and factories "moved progressively further from the city to the east, local workers were either forced to move with them to search for work, or remained behind in the deteriorating city."⁵⁹ A high concentration of elderly single men remained in the city as they could not afford to live in other parts of the city. They were seasonally employed at logging and mining jobs when they were younger, but now, with permanent unemployment came concentrated alcoholism, homelessness, and vagrancy.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Reid Shier, 31.

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Punter, 276.



Figure 10 Vancouver Lower Downtown Eastside. Photograph by Keetja Allard.⁶¹

By the 1970s, a lack of public funding led to the de-institutionalization of thousands of psychiatric patients, who found the Downtown Eastside to be their only affordable housing option.⁶² The drug situation spiraled out of control in 1980s with the introduction of cocaine, crack and crystal meth in the DTES. These drugs lured new generations of “heroin-dependent young people to move in during the 1980s, bringing with them an increase in crime, prostitution, hepatitis, HIV-AIDS which soon reached an epidemic scale. During the 1990s, the arrival of crack cocaine as a cheaper and more addictive drug deepened these problems.”⁶³ Drug addicts within the community have given the DTES a reputation for being unsafe and dangerous, because they often resort

⁶¹The Walrus- Vancouver: Not So Down
<http://www.walrusmagazine.com/gallery/Vancouver_GAL01_JANFEB08.jpg>

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Punter, 276.

to theft to pay for their habits. Second-hand stores opened to facilitate the exchange of stolen goods, making it very difficult for legitimate businesses to operate. In 1993, citing economic hardship, the flagship Woodward's department store declared bankruptcy.⁶⁴ The closure of Woodward's caused other local businesses to fail and further compromised the image of the neighbourhood. The department store -- one of the largest in Western Canada when it opened in 1903 -- was not only a significant structure but a symbol of more prosperous times in the DTES.⁶⁵ This sequence of events gave rise to a large disenfranchised population in the portion of the neighborhood centered around Hastings Street. Despite its close proximity to downtown Vancouver and to tourist destinations such as Chinatown and Gastown, the Hastings St. corridor has become increasingly isolated and destitute. The DTES is seen as a boundary between downtown and the eastern portions of the city; Hastings St. is also seen as a significant impediment to north/south movement between the industrial-turned-recreational waterfronts of False Creek and Burrard Inlet.

Gastown and Chinatown

Gastown and Chinatown, two of Vancouver's most historical neighbourhoods, are both located in the Downtown Eastside. Vancouver's Chinatown is one of the largest in North America and Gastown is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Vancouver. Prior to the 1950s when the interurban was in operation, DTES was the centre of the city and a major cultural and entertainment district. The streetcar kept

⁶⁴ Reid Shier, 13.

⁶⁵ Harold D. Kalman, 39.

communities connected and enabled people to move through and interact with each other's territories. More to the point the system brought people from other neighbourhoods to and through the DTES on a regular basis. When motor coaches supplanted the trolleys the DTES began to deteriorate. As the city expanded and overall density dropped, boundaries began to dissolve.

The deterioration of East Hastings Street has negatively influenced Chinatown. "Dupont Street (now Pender) was the heart of Chinatown and most Chinese lived on or nearby it. Part of Chinatown's unsavory reputation came from the adjacent white slums where both single men and families -- many of them recent immigrants -- lived in squalor. Some European immigrants eventually moved to more attractive parts of the city, but Chinese remained in what was essentially a ghetto."⁶⁶ Drug use, aggressive behavior, homelessness, prostitution and other problems associated with Hastings spilled into Chinatown and have ushered in a period of decline. The deterioration of living conditions and congestion in Chinatown provided additional incentives for recent Chinese immigrants to locate in suburbs like Richmond, Burnaby, and Coquitlam; shopping malls serving Asian-Canadians now sprout up throughout the greater Vancouver area. Neither the new Chinese suburbs nor the shopping plazas have a cultural or historical connection to Chinatown; Chinese plazas are miniature versions of big box store developments.

⁶⁶ Roy, 63.

Like Chinatowns elsewhere in North America, older immigrants account for the largest proportion of Asians in Vancouver's Chinatown. Newer generations have the impression that Chinatown is not for the young and that it does not cater to their needs. The change of migration patterns from one generation to another has also contributed the decrease in population in the area. Today the DTES suffers from a loss of cultural identity and struggles with gentrification, poverty, and homelessness. Indeed, the area is notorious for being the most marginalized neighbourhood in Canada. Urban legend has it that cities across Canada deal with the problem of homelessness by putting the homeless on the bus to Vancouver – where they all end up in the Downtown East Side.

As noted, the disenfranchised community concentrates along Hastings Street, located midway between Chinatown and Gastown – both of which feel compelled to draw distinct boundaries and design tour routes to avoid Hastings. People are afraid to move through the DTES. Storefronts in the neighbourhood are fortified with protective metal bars that reinforce the boundaries between public and private space; parking lots in the area are heavily secured and fenced. That said, opportunities exist to link Chinatown to Gastown across Hastings and increase the flow of people through the DTES. This opportunity relates, in part, to the development of recreational pathways around the perimeter of the downtown peninsula (for which a connection between False Creek and Burrard Inlet is needed); in part it relates to gentrification. The past two decades have witnessed a continuous movement of young professionals (YUPPIES) into downtown neighborhoods, attracted by the prospect of being within walking distance of work, restaurants, bars, etc.. Local residents are concerned that development pressures

will transform Chinatown into unfamiliar territory and make it increasingly difficult to afford to live there. Thus deterioration along Hastings and gentrification represent opposite but equally disruptive forces.

Revitalization

In the recent years, City of Vancouver has made a concerted effort to reduce drug addiction and crime in the DTES by providing social services and promoting a greater demographic mix. The goal is to raise the profile of Vancouver's oldest neighbourhood in a way that promotes its history, architecture, and the ethnic and social diversity of the community. The goal of the *Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program* is to restore the area to a healthy, safe and livable neighbourhood for everyone from all social classes.⁶⁷

The *Carrall Street Greenway* is a major community-building and infrastructure-upgrade initiative sponsored by City of Vancouver. The objective is to create a 'water to water connection' from north shore of False Creek to Burrard Inlet. The Greenway will complete a seawall loop around Downtown (including Stanley Park), and will connect a

⁶⁷ DTES Revitalization: Strategies & Initiatives, 2000.

<<http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/dtes/strategies.htm>> The City's Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program involves a number of different initiatives and different partners. A collaboration and commitment by the federal government, the province of B.C., and the City of Vancouver to work together to support sustainable economic, social and community development in Vancouver. Although the agreement affects the entire city, the initial focus of work is in the Downtown Eastside. However, no matter what the initiative, the philosophy is the same: that is, the belief that there are no simple solutions to the challenges facing this neighbourhood; that governments and community must work together to address the issues; and that everyone has the same ultimate goal -- to ensure this neighbourhood is a livable, safe and viable community for all.

number of parks, plazas and historic sites in Gastown, Chinatown and Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. This initiative builds on the heritage of these neighbourhoods, promotes the use of the street as a significant public space, and intended as a catalyst for community revitalization.

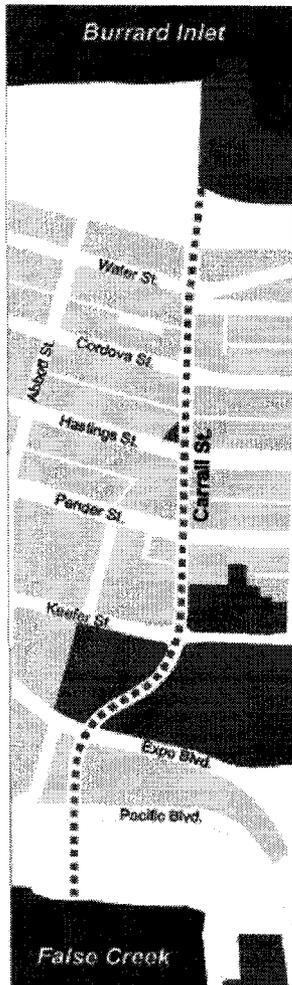


Figure 11 Carrall Street Greenway

<http://vcbia.brinkster.net/images/Carrall-Street.jpg> “The Carrall Street Greenway connects the neighbourhoods of Chinatown, Downtown Eastside and Gastown, accommodating recreational movement between the False Creek seawall and the future Burrard Inlet seawall.

It is proposed to run along Carrall Street from False Creek to Portside Park, and will likely include bike lanes in both directions. The Greenway will connect a number of important cultural, historical, and recreational places along Carrall Street, including Creekside/Andy Livingstone Park, the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Gardens, Pigeon Park, Maple Tree Square and Portside Park.”

Source: City of Vancouver

Vancouver's *Chinatown Economic Revitalization Program* seeks to preserve Chinatown's unique heritage, and bring life into the community.⁶⁸ The goal is to promote business retention and new business development, build on the rich culture and heritage of the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood, and promote diversity in the Downtown Eastside. The Revitalization Committee believes that Chinatown should not be redeveloped as a tourist destination, but as a thriving, multigenerational community comprised of residents and visitors. In recent years there has been a dramatic increase in Vancouver's downtown population, and in the demand for housing within the urban core. According to Inge Roecker, a researcher in the area of Environmental Imperatives, "Vancouver's Chinatown is experiencing a sudden pressure to redevelop more housing. Without careful and thoughtful research into the limitations and potentials of Chinatown's unique urban fabric, there is an inherent danger that Chinatown will be replaced with standard podium point condominium towers, or redeveloped retaining only historic facades as cladding on new buildings, resulting in the loss of the cultural substance of one of Vancouver's oldest neighborhoods."⁶⁹ It is important to prioritize

⁶⁸ City of Vancouver- Chinatown Revitalization Program
< <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/chinatown/program/index.htm> >

"The Chinatown Revitalization Program began in 1999 as part of the City of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program. The goal for the project was to bring together community members to address several key issues in the area, such as safety and economic growth through an extensive community engagement and building process."

⁶⁹ Urban Acupuncture < <http://www.living-lab.org> > "Inge Roecker has lead community outreach design studios in partnership with the City of Vancouver's Chinatown Revitalization Program to explore the possibilities of transforming the historic district into a contemporary neighbourhood through pedagogy of interdisciplinary and in-situ learning. URBAN ACUPUNCTURE: Re-Programming of Vancouver's Chinatown 'Society Buildings' is a Methodology for the Sustainable Rehabilitation of 'Society Buildings' in Vancouver's Chinatown into Contemporary Housing'. The study proposes redevelopment scenarios for four Society Buildings within Chinatown, and develops an economically, environmentally and culturally sustainable approach to the rehabilitation of these buildings into contemporary housing."

and revitalize Chinatown before it deteriorates or is cleared by the developer's bulldozer. The revitalization of deteriorated communities must be understood as a multiphase process that requires time to succeed. Therefore, once Chinatown is stabilized, revitalization efforts can be directed to Hastings.

Chapter 4: Design Development

This thesis supposes that design can be a form of research. In proposing an approach to the redevelopment of a site in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, then, my goal is not simply to apply the research I have undertaken but to build on it. Thus the written and design portions of this thesis are meant to inform and complement each other.

As noted above, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) is a unique neighborhood comprising three relatively distinct communities: the disenfranchised, yuppies, and the Chinese. Although they share a neighborhood, each of these constituencies lives somewhat independently. While projects like the Carrall Street Greenway will upgrade street infrastructure along a key north-south street (plans call for new street furniture, decorative pavement, street lights, and street trees) and facilitate the flow of non-residents through the neighborhood, they will not solve the social issues of DTES. The question is how architectural design might help to accommodate and mediate between constituencies through the provision of new spaces, places strategies and thresholds.

Case Study: Woodward's Mix-use Redevelopment

The Woodward's redevelopment is one of the most ambitious and symbolically important projects currently underway in the DTES; it aims to bring positive changes to the deteriorated neighbourhood without privileging one group of inhabitants over

another. This Woodward's site is located to the northwest of the chosen site.

⁷⁰Understanding how the architects of the Woodward's redevelopment approached the project will help me to be more critical in the approach to my site.

The Woodward's Department Store was a key retail destination when it opened in 1903. For decades it attracted a stable flow of people into the neighbourhood and helped establish the DTES as the city centre. Since closing in 1993, the block on which Woodward's sits has descended into a deep malaise, characterized by dereliction, boarded up storefronts, and dodgy street scenes.⁷¹ The city received several proposals to redevelop the Woodward's site into condominium units and commercial retail space. Meanwhile, a number of homeless people and community groups occupied the building in September 2002, demanding more social housing.⁷² In September 2004, the City of Vancouver awarded the contract to redevelop the Woodward's site to Westbank Project/Peterson Investment Group, with Heriquez Partners as architects. The City believes the proposed design will not only bring the Woodward's building back to life but be a cornerstone for the social and economic revitalization of the surrounding neighbourhood.

The project calls for a mix of up to five hundred market and two hundred non-market housing units (a combination of both family and singles units), with the possibility of an additional thirty-six units specially designed for people with disabilities.

⁷⁰ Project Description and drawings refer to link

<<http://vancouver.ca/corpsvcs/realestate/woodwards/pdf/ProjectDevelopmentReport-W.pdf>>

⁷¹ Heritage Vancouver <http://www.heritagevancouver.org/topten/2007/topten2007_07.html>

⁷² Woodward's – The Story of Woodward's

<<http://vancouver.ca/corpsvcs/realestate/woodwards/story.htm>>

Also included in the proposal are shops, services, community amenity space, public green space, a daycare and a post-secondary education facility.⁷³ Many people see the Woodward's Redevelopment as a social experiment that promotes egalitarianism, and proposes ways in which design and programming of space might enable the well-off and the not-so-well-off to live together.⁷⁴ There are numerous debates and questions about the impact of this project on the Downtown Eastside. Over time it will become apparent if demographic diversity can be sustained in the DTES.

Observation of Downtown Eastside

Due to safety concerns related to higher than average crime rates in the DTES, owners of residential and commercial buildings have erected gates and metal fences around their properties. And as the neighborhood continues to deteriorate, an increasing number of buildings in the DTES are not in compliance with current safety standards. City Building Inspectors have ordered more than half of the buildings along Hastings to be vacated and boarded up. By-laws prohibit the city from repairing private property, and many owners do not have the resources needed for repairs or upgrades. Businesses that remain in operation in the area do so behind layers of steel fences to prevent break-ins and vandalism. The net effect is an increased segregation of private

⁷³Woodward's: Development Proposal - <http://vancouver.ca/corpsvcs/realestate/woodwards/proposal.htm>

⁷⁴ "Development brings together rich and poor," Vancouver Sun, 14 April 2006.

and public space and of social classes. This brings us back to the discussion of the integration of rich and poor in the pre-industrial city. Fences are used in the DTES to separate rich from poor; the bluntness and abruptness of these divisions discourages social cohesion by regulating the type of people that can use or be part of a particular space. At its limit, the use of fences is a transposition of the gated community mentality into the core. Gated communities are “residential areas restricted access in which normally public spaces are privatized. They are designed with designated perimeters, usually walls or fences, and controlled entrances that are intended to prevent penetration by nonresidents.”⁷⁵ The extreme gap between the social classes in DTES has created great differences in urban living conditions, class and social divisions, and distinct separations between rich and poor.

Walls and fences have always been a part of cities; they are not, by definition, bad. Residential squares in London, for example, are organized around gated private gardens. Had these gardens not been fenced off it would neither have been possible to maintain them nor to attract the middle class to locate around them. And while a fence surrounds the garden, it is still visually accessible to the public. This suggests that the issues is not so much the fence, but how it designed, what it communicates, how often they are opened, and around what they are positioned. There are more and less “urbane” ways of dealing with the need to separate space and make distinctions. In Spanish cities, gated openings in the street wall permit passers by a glimpse into the

⁷⁵ Blakely and Snyder. *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*(Fortress America Brookings Institution: Washington) 1997, 2.

private realm of the courtyards within the block (although the design of the passage connecting courtyard and street varies with place and climate). It will always be necessary to distinguish between public and private space and there will always be a need for walls and fences. Given this, I am interested in the nature of the overlaps and transitions between zones that promote connectivity and transition. In the DTES, the fences appear to privatize and block off access to space; it appears that developers are appropriating and privatizing space that belongs to the public realm (e.g., CPR right of way – which we will discuss below).

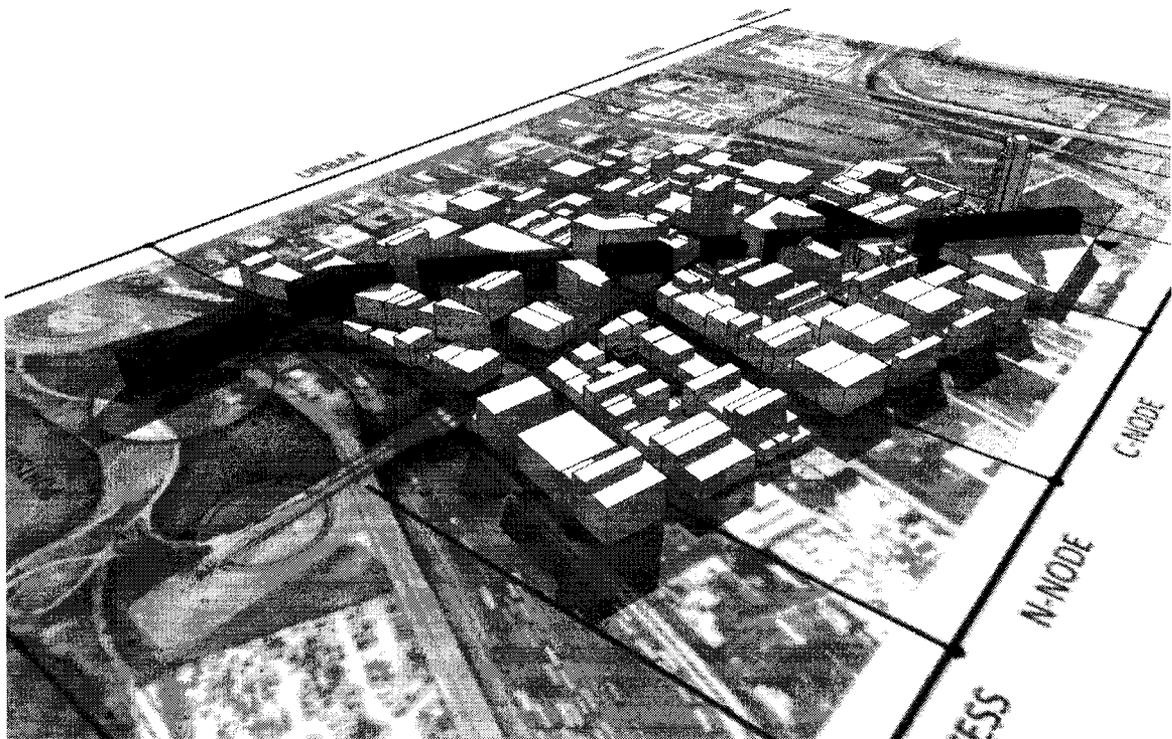


Figure 12 The CPR corridor was once a continuous public thoroughway, have become series of gated gardens and parking lots. Image by author.

Public Space as a Mediator

Arguably the street is the primary public space of the North American city, events happen along the street more often than in distinct plazas. Arguably, with the explosion of automobile usage in the 20th century, the street has been increasingly ceded to the car.⁷⁶

The Romans incorporated piazzas and a central forum into each of their cities to facilitate the public's needs. As a destination space, the forum facilitated arrival and departure of movement. These urban public spaces encouraged gatherings and interactions between various uses (commercial, religious, entertainment, administrative) and social classes. Public spaces in North America tend to be spaces *through* which one moves as opposed to spaces *to* which one moves (i.e., destinations). In North America events and public interaction happens mostly along streets. Urban spaces, when they appear, are often the result of an irregular overlay of streets -- as, for instance, in Manhattan where most of the major "squares" are the result of the diagonal crossing of Broadway with the north/south avenues of the Commissioner's Grid of 1811. The hourglass shape of Times Square is the result of the irregular crossing of Broadway and 7th Ave. Similarly, the triangular shape of Herald and Madison Squares results from Broadway crossing 6th and 5th Avenues (respectively) at a diagonal.

⁷⁶ According to Mumford, "Movement in a straight line along an avenue was not merely an economy but a special pleasure: it brought into the city the stimulus and exhilaration of swift motion...it was possible to increase this pleasure esthetically by the regular setting of buildings..., whose horizontal lines tended toward the same vanishing point..."³⁶⁸.

The space that has been recently carved out to make Toronto's Yonge-Dundas Square marks the crossing of Yonge and Dundas Streets (as the name implies) at a point where Dundas Street jogs irregularly through the street grid.

Likewise the site I have chosen to examine in the DTES is located where the historic Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) right of way cuts diagonally across Hastings St. at Carrall St. The B.C. Electric Railway Company Building sits on this site, which is one of a number of irregular blocks created by the right of way as it cuts diagonally (southeast to northwest) through the DTES. Given that Pender St., which runs along the southern edge of the block in question, is considered to be the main street of Vancouver's Chinatown, the site sits at the threshold between two very different communities, namely the Chinese neighborhood to the south and the disenfranchised populations along Hastings St. to the north. The Electric Railway building was constructed between 1911 and 1912 as the main terminus for the BC Electric Railway Company, which operated the most extensive interurban system in Canada.⁷⁷ As noted above, the interurban system brought as many as ten thousand commuters into the DTES each day, supplying the critical mass required to sustain a lively and diverse community.⁷⁸ The area's decline coincided with the phasing out of the interurban in the mid 1950s. The rail lines through the right of way were removed and portions of the route were ceded to adjacent properties for various uses. While the diagonal cut still exists, fences and barriers along it limit its use as a circulation route.

⁷⁷ Harold D. Kalman, 42.

⁷⁸ DTES Revitalization: Community History: February 29, 2008. City of Vancouver. October 4, 2007. < <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/commsvcs/planning/dtes/> >

Zones of transition are more interesting where the fabric is less regular – as where diagonal streets cross straight ones. Given that the right of way is still largely intact, there is a great potential to redevelop it into a pedestrian thoroughfare and connect a series of parks, plazas and historic sites in Gastown, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and Chinatown. The corridor would provide an excellent venue for Farmer's market, night market, or simply an intimate space for pedestrians. This would be similar in spirit (although by no means identical) to the High Line in New York City.⁷⁹ Indeed abandoned rail rights of way have been used to great effect in many places.

⁷⁹ Reclaiming the High Line, 2002. < http://www.thehighline.org/pdf/dtbook_all.pdf>

The High Line is an abandoned elevated freight railroad in Manhattan, New York. Friends of the High Line, a community –based group, proposed to redevelop the High Line into an elevated greenway. Adaptive reuse of industrial infrastructure will create a unique recreational amenity: a grand, public promenade that can be enjoyed by all residents and visitors in New York City.

Urban Design Strategies

With respect to a design intervention, I first considered doing what was done in other cities, namely, carving out space through selective demolition. Removing the BC Electric Rail Building, for example, would have enabled me to propose a larger, southern lobe to Pigeon Park to the north – especially given that a number of buildings on the block have already been demolished. Together, these two triangular spaces (flanking the intersection of Hastings and Carrall Streets) could create an aggregate, hourglass-shaped space, which would be the largest and most significant of the nodes along the rail line cut. An urban-scaled space at the intersection of Hastings and Carrall would, in effect, open a zone of mediation between the communities, as well as providing a space that could be claimed by Vancouver as a whole for major events and festivities. This, indeed, was the Yonge-Dundas Square model. The presence of such a space in the DTES would both build on and reinforce the City's Carrall St. Greenway initiative, which attempts to make the route through the DTES less threatening to non-residents. A significant urban space along the greenway -- midway between False Creek and Burrard Inlet -- would function both as a terminus and a node through which to pass en route to other destinations. It has the potential to put the Downtown Eastside 'back on the map,' to resurrect (however provisionally in the context of the multi-nodal city of the late 20th century) its historical function as the center of Vancouver.

While in certain cases ripping down aging buildings is a good idea, it really depends on the function and history of the buildings in question. After researching the B.C. Electric Railway Company Building (BCER) – and in deference to its architectural significance -- I determined it would be more beneficial to the community to preserve it. Accordingly I set myself the challenge both of retaining the building and creating a significant space. The B.C. Electric Railway Company Building was once a major transportation hub, through (at street level) and around which trolleys passed. Over the course of the past fifty years it has been passed between users and accommodated different functions. Given that the rail yard behind the building is currently a gated parking lot, the possibility exists to open it to the street (along with the corridor itself), forging new links to and through the surrounding communities.

With respect to how this building (and adjacent buildings) should be occupied, there are generally two approaches to dealing with deteriorated downtown communities. The first responds to the housing market by converting underutilized spaces into condominium units. While this real-estate-driven approach helps build a stable density and shore up local businesses, it can result in the displacement and further disenfranchisement of local residents.⁸⁰ The second approach is to increase the

⁸⁰ In recent decades development in downtown Vancouver (now centered about 20 blocks to the west) has begun to encroach on the Downtown Eastside. Demand for higher-end residential close to the city core has created a clash of cultures and complicated relationships. In recent years yuppies and affluent young immigrants -- lured by the proximity of the DTES to amenities in the heart of the city -- have begun settling in and around the DTES in neighborhoods like Yaletown, Gastown and Chinatown. Homeless shelters and single room occupancy (SRO) apartment hotels in the DTES will soon be surrounded by luxury condos, pricey hotels and high end restaurants. Local residents (and the social service agencies that support them) worry that gentrification will displace and further disadvantage low-income residents.

number of social services and social housing units in the neighborhood. This approach, however, would do little to address the long-term sustainability of the DTES or address the segregation of local residents from each other and from the city at large.

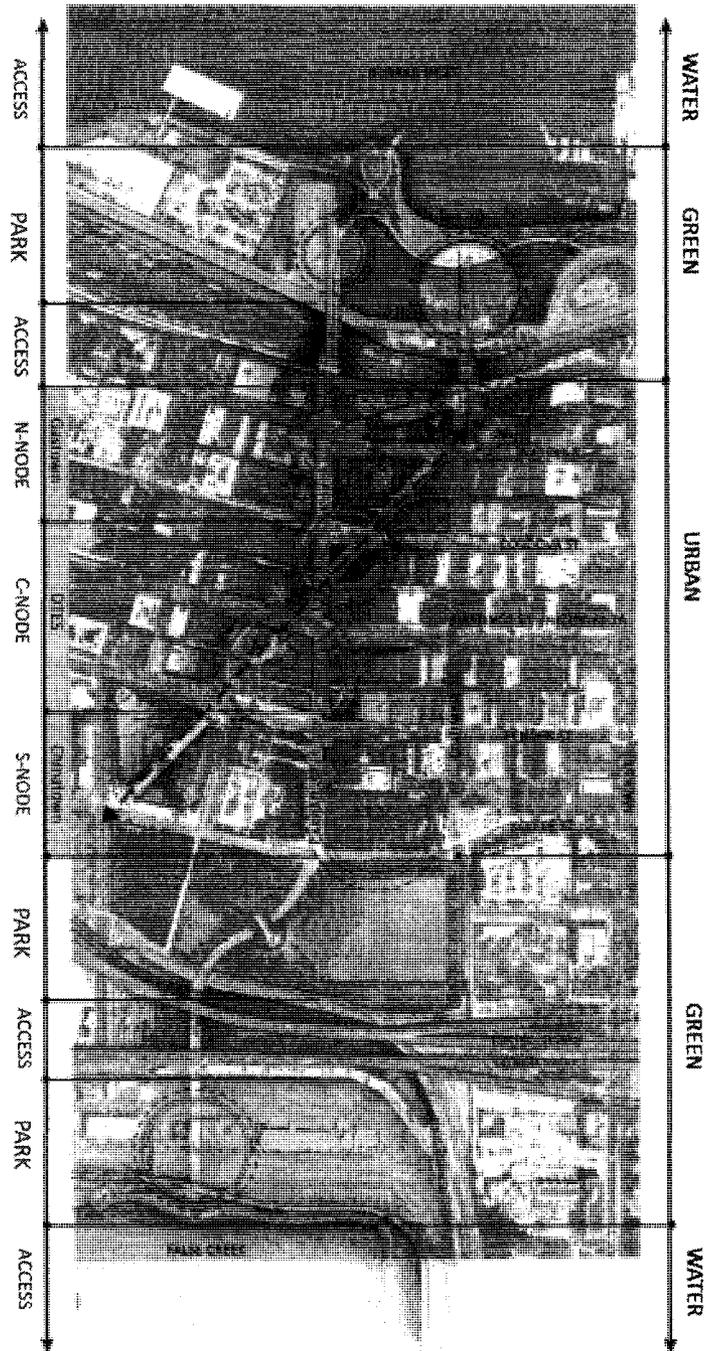


Figure 13 Site plan showing key nodes of Downtown Eastside and two major axes. 1. Carrall Street Greenway, a water to water connection. 2. CPR corridor an old abandoned streetcar trolley line . Drawing created by author.

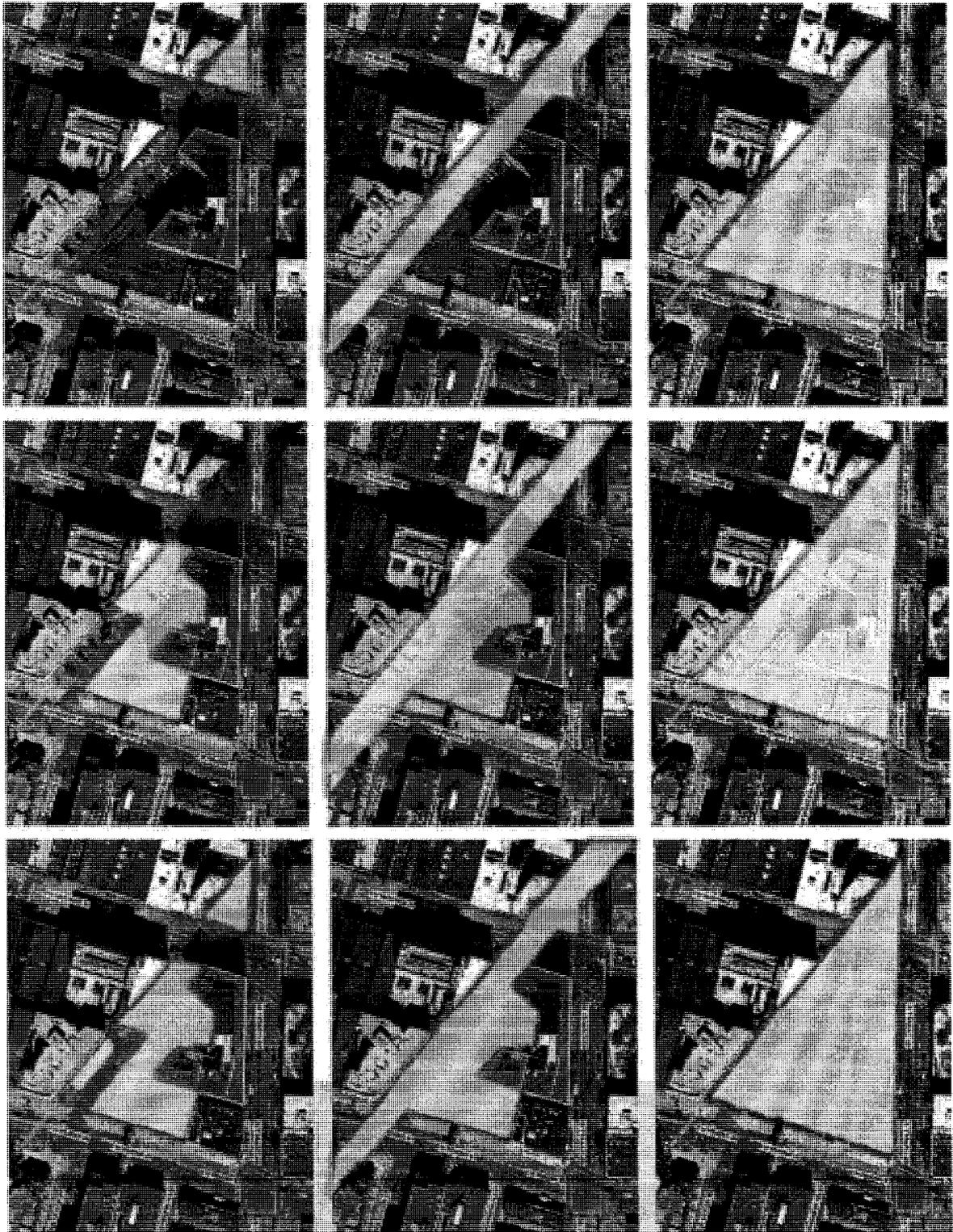
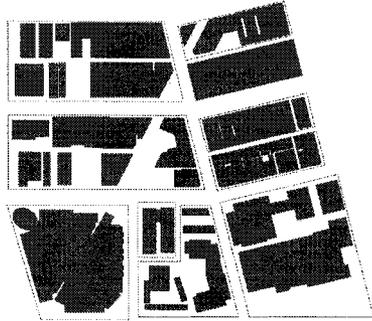
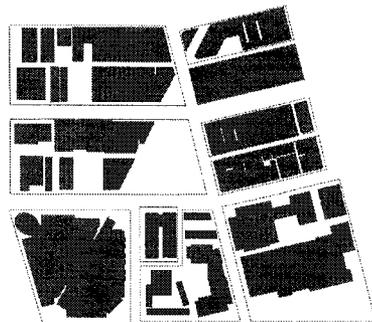


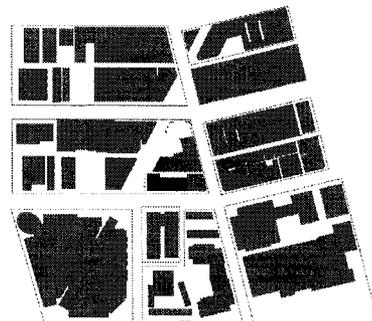
Figure 14 Top: Pigeon Park in relationship with CPR extension. Middle: Vacant space of BCER used as surface parking. Bottom: Highlights gated areas in relationship to Pigeon Park and as part of the larger triangular space. Diagram by author.



Existing Condition



Removing Fabric



Putting Fabric Back

Figure 15 Strategies for redevelopment of BCER site. Image created by author.

- 1. Keep the site as it is and focus on the linear extension.**
- 2. Remove BCER building and create a major civic space (Yonge and Dundas).**
- 3. Put fabric back and add more programs to intensify usages and density.**

The Approach: Addition and Subtraction of Urban Fabric

Having opted against removing a significant building in a neighborhood whose greatest strength is its history and identity, I decided to explore the idea of putting fabric back. Given the percentage of vacancy on the site, the edges of the existing block needed strengthening. With this came the challenge of identifying program that would benefit the long-term health of the neighborhood without further disadvantaging local residents. Rebuilding the block and transforming the abandoned transit corridor into an amenity could attract people to the neighbourhood. In this regard the redevelopment of BCER site could function both as a demonstration project and a catalyst for the development of the series of pockets along the diagonal right of way. As noted, the route along which people once traveled to and through the DTES has degenerated into an ad hoc series of gated gardens and parking lots. It has the potential to become a necklace of nodes connecting False Creek to Burrard Inlet through the DTES – complementing the City’s plans for the Carrall St. Greenway. This corridor could permit unrestricted movement in the form of a pedestrian-friendly connection between Chinatown and Gastown. As a linear amenity it could be used to host street fairs, night markets and temporary art displays. I envision it as an intimate public space connecting a series of urban events – and helping to suture together the neighborhoods around them.

The DTES has a history of being the first community in which immigrants settled; accordingly it has long been known as being ethnically and socially diverse. Arguably,

however, the neighborhood's current constituencies are too distinct – separated by excessively wide social and cultural gaps. The DTES would benefit from residents that could mediate between the (predominantly elderly) Chinese residents, the transient and marginalized peoples along Hastings, the young professionals investing in (fortified) condominiums, and the various tourists who venture into the neighborhood from the fringes. Related to this, design proposals for the DTES must privilege architectural strategies that incorporate thresholds and provide transitions to manage diverse uses and users. To this end I will move to a discussion of a proposal for the BCER building and the site on which it sits.

BCER Site Redevelopment Proposed Programs

The BCER site redevelopment consists of a performance/gallery space, outdoor event space, vertical tower, galleria and married student co-op housing. The idea of transition, negotiation, threshold, and overlap – maintain territory but increase the number of connections. The goal of the proposal is to establish visual and physical connections between nodes, places and people. Also create a triangular space that crosses Hastings Street to Pigeon Park and back to my site, which allow BCER site to operate as a giant public space.

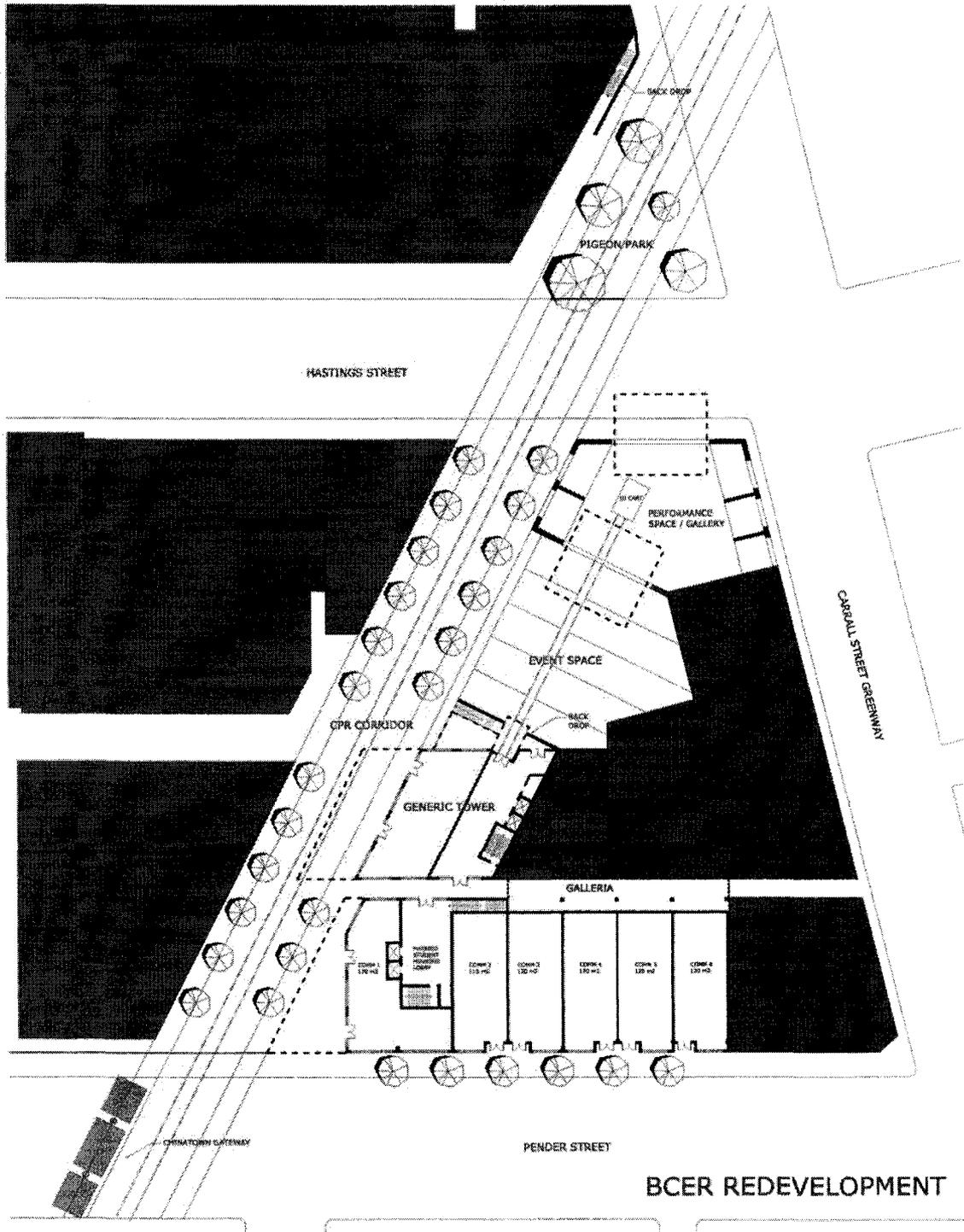


Figure 16 Site Plan of BCER redevelopment showing proposed programs. Image created by Author.

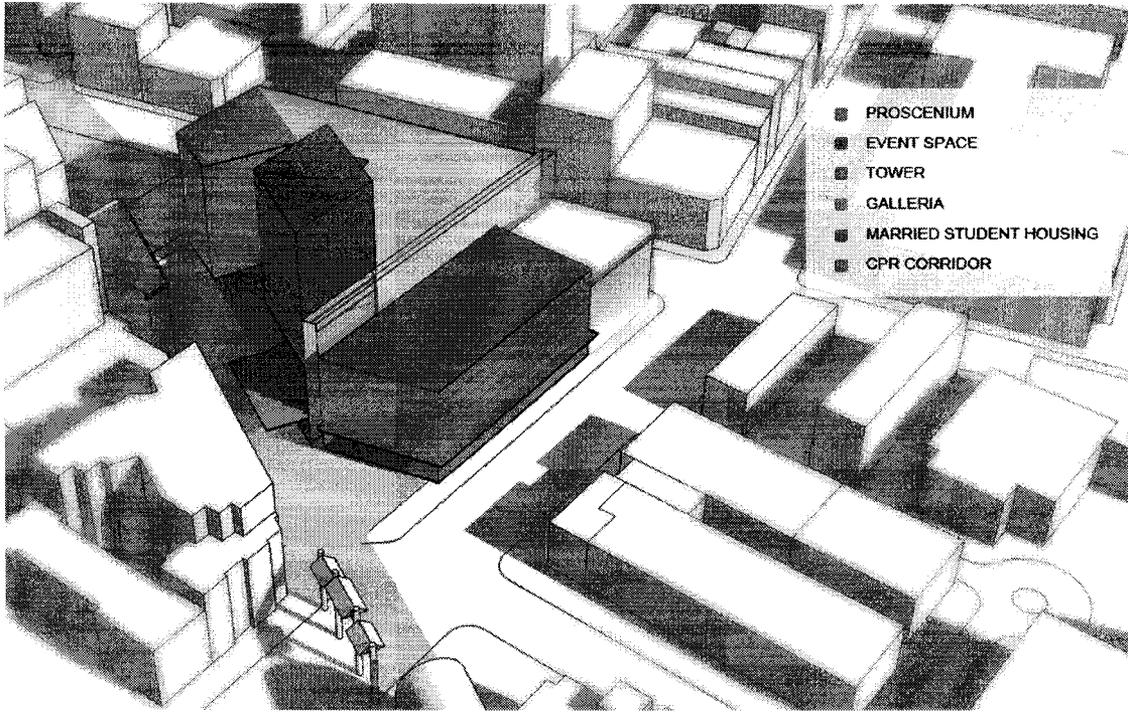


Figure 17 Digital model of BCER redevelopment, showing location of proposed programs. Digital model created by author.

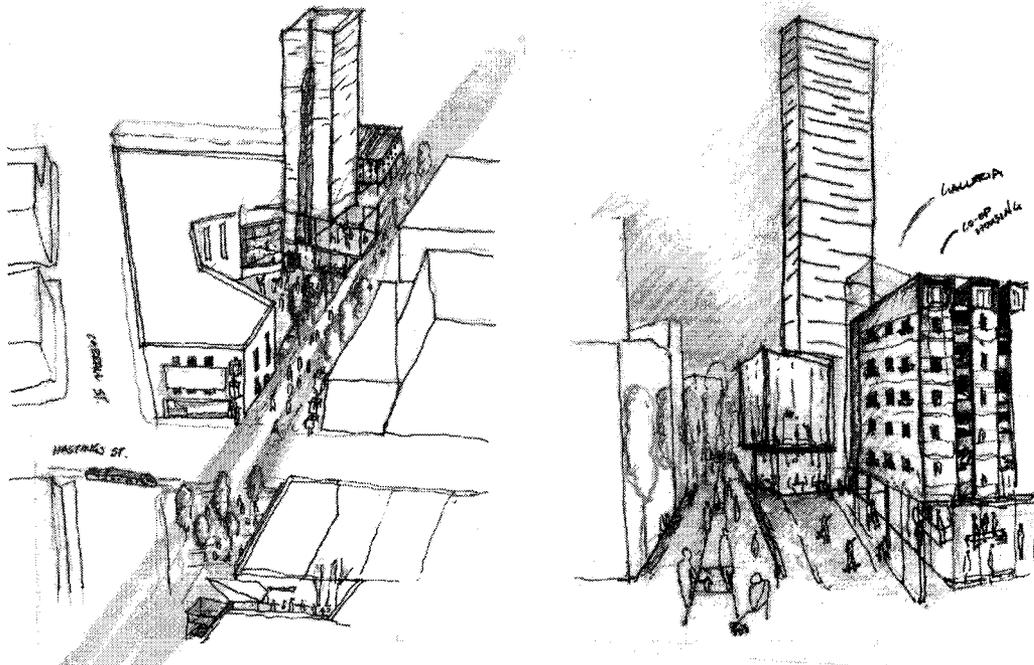


Figure 18 Left: Aerial perspective. Right: Entering BCER site from Pender Street. Rendering by author.

Vertical Tower

The vertical tower will mark the site at the urban scale as a destination along the corridor. In both directions the tower can be seen, people can point to it and guide them along the CPR corridor. DTES is a historical neighbourhood, so there are cornice heights that need to be respected. Since it's in the middle of the block I have more flexibility and an opportunity to use the tower to mark the site. At 2500 square feet per floor the floor plate is generic enough that it can be commercial or residential. The tower will also help offset the cost of redevelopment of the site.

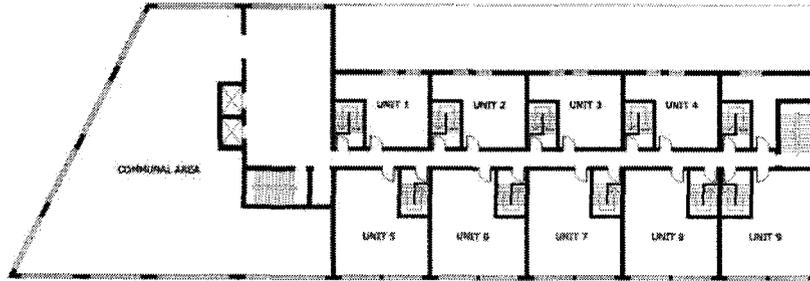
Married Student Co-op Housing

Currently spaces around the BCER Building are used for surface parking, and I wish to put some of the missing fabric back and complete the streetscape along Pender. Introducing married student co-op housing to the site will help mediate and bridge the gap between the yuppies and the disenfranchised. Since graduate students from the University of British Columbia already occupy the ground floor of the B.C. Electric Railroad building, the idea of students in the DTES is not foreign. Married students are in a period of transition in their lives, starting a family, finishing off school and becoming professionals. They have high tolerance for diversity and tend to be accepting and open minded with regard to social issues. Moreover, married student housing can be run as a co-operative, and groups (especially with University backing) can apply to the government for funding. As such, married student housing can be run as a form of

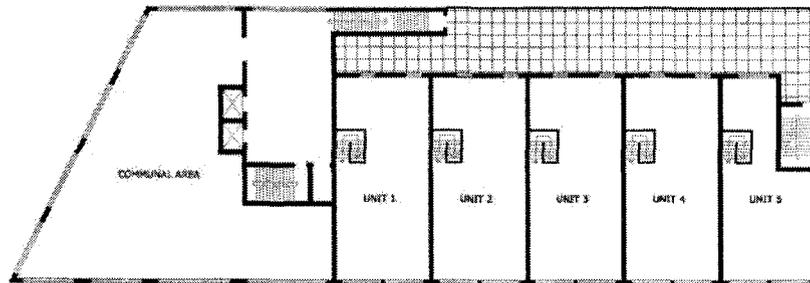
social housing. While it is a form of subsidized housing it's geared to people who are on their way to becoming yuppies.

To qualify for co-op designation, the operation must maintain quotas of units for tenants with different incomes; tenants who can afford to pay more contribute to the larger undertaking and help bring down the costs for others. In co-op housing, then, there is greater range and healthier mix of people than in other forms of social housing. Moreover, tenants in not-for-profit co-ops each contribute to the maintenance of the building and share benefits communally. This promotes community (and attracts tenants interested in the idea of community) on a number of levels. Since the site I am proposing is along Pender St. (Chinatown) and was likely once occupied by a Society building,⁸¹ I wanted to choose a program that was compatible and appropriate with the way the site was used historically —serving occupants a point of transition of their lives.

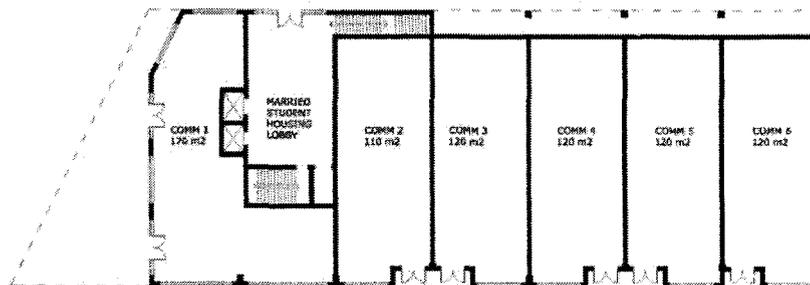
⁸¹ "The family/clan societies and benevolent associations in Chinatown have traditionally served a key role in the social life of Chinese-Canadians, providing mutual help, access to housing and the general welfare of their members", Chinatown Revitalization Program.



Corridor Level

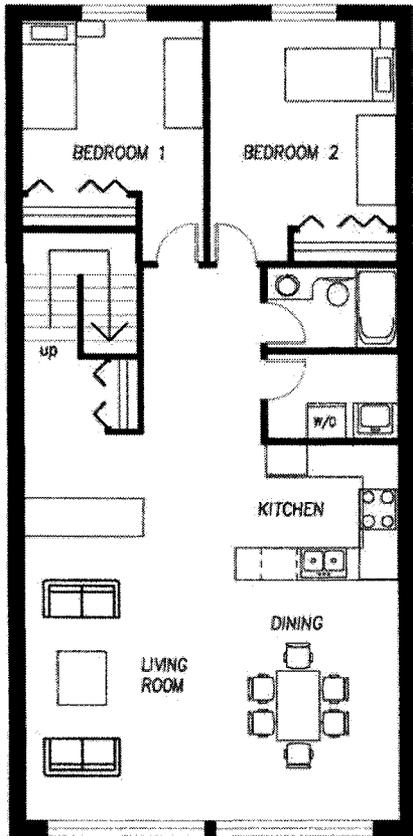


Typical Unit Layout

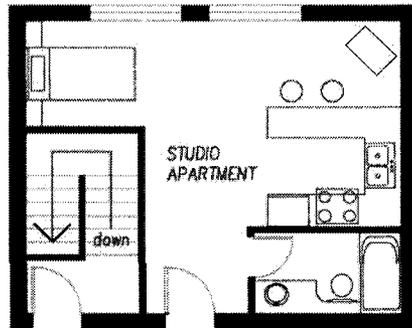


Ground Floor - Retail

Figure 19 Typical floor layout for married student co-op housing. Image created by author.



TWO BEDROOM APARTMENT FOR FAMILY WITH CHILDREN



STUDIO APARTMENT FOR COUPLE WITHOUT CHILDREN

Figure 20 Typical floor plan for married student co-op housing. Image created by author.

Soap Box Theatre: The Proscenium Arch

There has been, throughout time, a connection between streets and theatres. Accordingly the metaphor of theatre might be appropriate when considering how to present various constituencies to each other. In their myriad forms, theatres exploit the idea of thresholds or openings between two realities. The threshold is most literally embodied in the proscenium arch, which simultaneously supports interaction and respects separation. The constituencies that face each other through such an opening are cast into the roles of spectacle and spectator. Roles will depend on who is doing the looking and who is being looked upon – and the degree to which those watched are aware of being watched. Exchanges between spectacle and spectator occur continuously in the urban environment – from the sidewalk café to the “rear window.” At the limit the street itself can be seen as a kind of proscenium across which buildings and spectators look. By hollowing out the ground floor of the BCER Building, I am proposing to create a threshold between Pigeon Park and BCER rail yard that functions as both stage and proscenium.⁸² Indeed the existing opening in the north façade of the building strongly recalls a proscenium arch. In a traditional proscenium theatre the audience is divided from the stage; spectators watch the performance through the proscenium arch. In the case of the BCER building, however, each of the three connected spaces (Pigeon Park, the area under the building, and the open area behind

⁸² The performing stage then becomes a space for students studying at Simon Fraser University School for the contemporary arts (that being incorporated into Woodward’s) to perform to the public and engage the public on an open stage. The stage can also be a presentation or lecture space for the University of British Columbia School Of Architecture that currently occupies the ground level of the building.

the building) could function as a stage for performances. The goal is to provoke a dynamic exchange of roles and a constant shift between spectator and spectacle. From Pigeon Park it is possible to look through the opening to view events in the square (the BCER rail yard). At the same time, individuals in the square can observe spectacles in Pigeon Park. In yet another scenario, both spaces accommodate spectators viewing events staged under the building itself. "Carrall Street between Hastings and Cordova was historically a place for street speeches about civil rights, labour organizing, religion and so on."⁸³ Immediacy rather than permanence is the idea of a contemporary soapbox, an event that is spontaneous and engages the public and the area between Hastings and Cordova provides the right ambiance. Also creates the opportunity for negotiation between people and allows space to overlap. Creating a visual connection through the proscenium opening and physical connection through the CPR corridor, respects the separation and allows different groups to have their turf and turfs begin to overlap. There are overlaps on the horizontal surface (plan) and vertical overlaps (elevations). The overlaps in elevations are accomplished in different ways, through openings in surfaces which allows viewer to see from one surface to another, one space into another. The overlaps deals with transparencies and translucencies of images been projected on surfaces.

⁸³ The Most Exciting Art Opportunity in the City, 20.

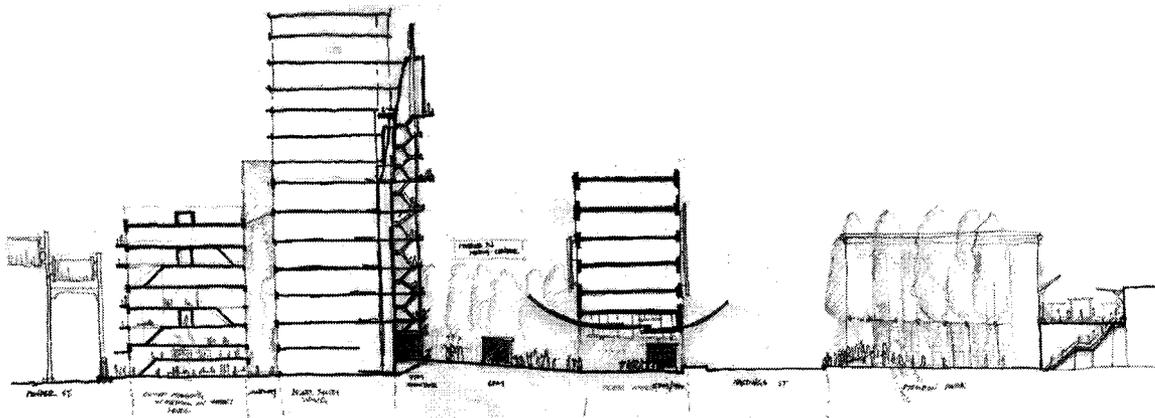
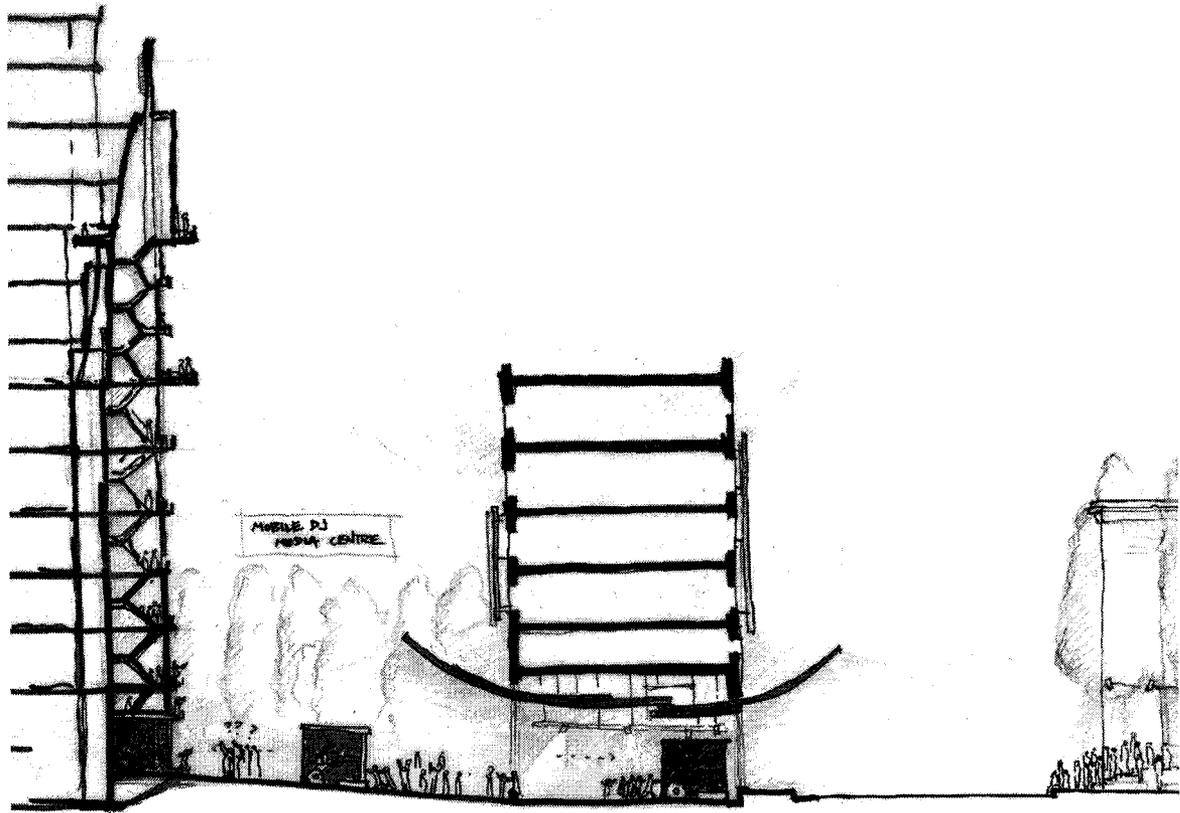


Figure 21 Top: Detail of event space. Bottom: Cross section of BCER redevelopment, showing performer and spectator. There are three theatrical conditions- spectators on both sides watching the performer in the middle, spectators watching people in the courtyard, and spectators watching people in Pigeon Park. The proscenium allows these different readings, exchange of roles, usages and activities to occur. Drawing by author.

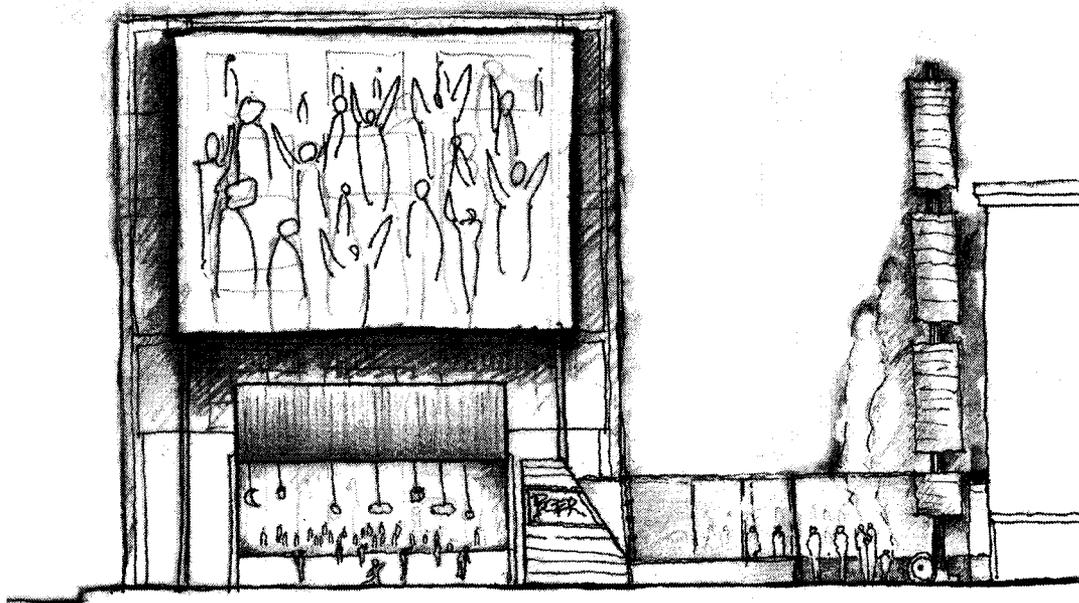
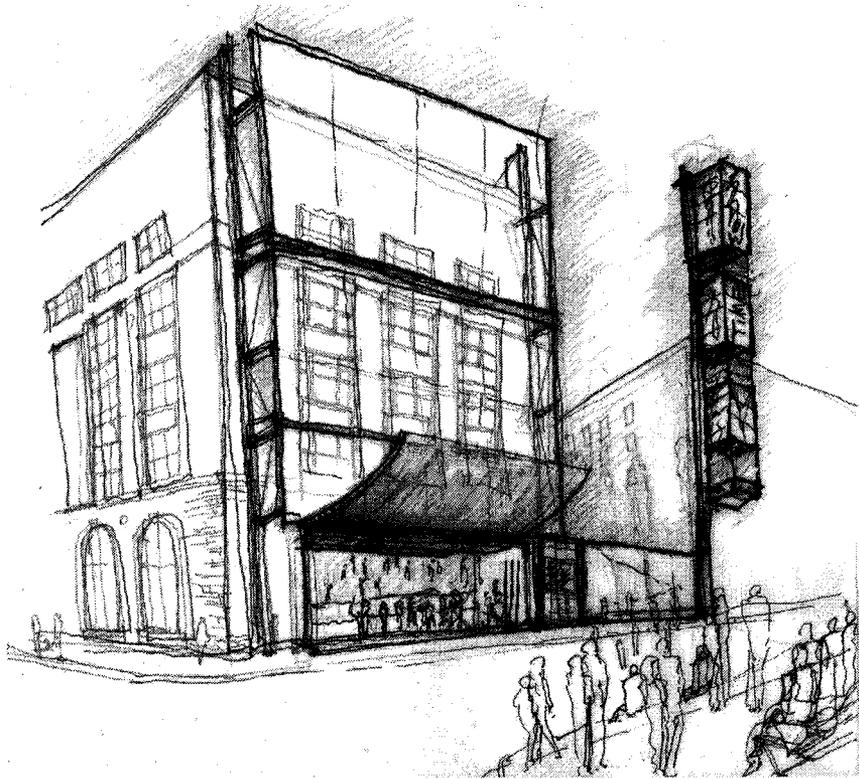


Figure 22 Top: Perspective of the Proscenium from Pigeon Park – Hasting Street. Rendering by author. Bottom: Elevation of the Proscenium from Pigeon Park along Hasting Street. Rendering by author.

Conclusion

This thesis has provided an opportunity to explore the changing nature of thresholds and transitions in cities. In addition to surveying the changing form of cities, I chose to explore the city through a particular site for which (in turn) it was necessary to propose a specific program. While a variety of programs could have been credibly proposed -- for example a social service centre, a condominium apartment, an SRO (Single Room Occupancy) hotel, a drug treatment centre, etc. -- I steered away from programs that were overly specific and grounded in the present in favor of a more generic and flexible approach that dealt more effectively with long-term transitions. Accordingly I proposed a dynamic assemblage of programs for the site, synchronized around the idea of theatre. I sought both to evoke and to blur references to street, passage, threshold, portal, and proscenium arch – all of which both separate and connect. The generic approach to program also relates to the fact that the redevelopment of the BCER site is intended as a prototype for the revitalization of other urban spaces in the DTES -- particularly those along the railroad right of way. I was not only trying to bridge the gap between some fairly abstract ideas (threshold, overlap, transition) and a specific site, but attempting to operate between a number of scales (urban scale and building scale) – both temporal and physical. Specifics aside, the ultimate goal of the thesis was to identify appropriate strategies to accommodate change and mediate between diverse elements of the city. As such the design is proffered as a form of investigation, i.e., an approach more than a solution.

Suggestions and Feedback from the Oral Presentation

The thesis was defended orally on May 16, 2008. While the critics appreciated that the project attempted to address and propose urban design strategies, they felt the final proposal was too focused on the BCER site. As presented, the design investigation was caught between an urban design proposal and an infill proposal for a particular site. To strengthen its impact as an urban design proposal it was suggested that I further exploit the CPR corridor and distribute programmatic elements along its length. If, on the other hand, the investigation was intended as an infill project, it needed to be developed in greater detail. Thus it was recommended that I either focus on the CPR corridor as a whole -- identify multiple nodes along its length -- or treat it as an redevelopment project and explore it a greater level of detail.

I believe the programs and strategies proposed were appropriate – both for the site and for the neighborhood as a whole. I acknowledge, however, that the project should have been better framed. Exploring the Downtown Eastside as a whole, however, was extremely enlightening, whatever the scale of the intended intervention. In studio projects, the exploration of context is often limited to the relation of a proposed design to adjacent buildings. We seldom explore design proposals at the urban scale. As architects I feel we must be more aware of the larger transformations of the environments in which we live and work. It's not just about how architecture looks, but how it will function – in a sustained manner -- as part of a dynamic whole, creating places for people and using spaces to accommodate and negotiate between different users and uses.

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