

# URBAN REGENERATION

3333 MAIN, VANCOUVER  
CANADA

AUCKLAND  
DESIGN MANUAL

TE PŪKA WHAKATATRANGA | TAMAKI MAKAURAU

BUILDINGS + SITES // HOUSING CASE STUDY

3333 Main Street  
Vancouver, Canada

# OVERVIEW

A successful five storey mixed use residential development that created a new pocket park out of a traffic roundabout – located in a busy inner suburb of Vancouver.

## PROJECT SUMMARY

The building is located at the heart of a small retail area, and fronts a busy street and a new pocket park. Development on this site was facilitated by up-zoning along Corridors street and the economy of timber construction in multi-level apartment buildings.

The ground floor of this long building faces the arterial road (Main Street) and is entirely retail. A central arcade running through the building at the ground floor connect to a rear lane. The entrance lobby to the apartments is accessed off this arcade. The development contains 91 single level units of 1, 2 and 3 bedrooms over four floors, with 7 townhouses facing a rear lane.

The building is located at a point where Main Street swings to the east, leaving a wedge of space between the street and the building for half its length. This has been taken to turn this previous traffic island into a pocket park, that the south end of the building fronts. All apartments have large balconies, and residents have access to private landscaped areas on roof tops.

Parking is provided in a basement garage via the back lane built as part of the development. Changes in British Columbia building code enabled the use of timber framing (up to six floors) if provided with sprinklers for fire protection. In this building, the basement parking and the first floor retail areas are of concrete construction, and the four residential floors are constructed using timber framing.

Many units include ‘flex space’, effectively small rooms that can be used as storage, studies or for other uses.

The project makes significant contributions to the public realm and the pedestrian environment, and also exhibits high levels of environmental performance, reflected in the LEED Silver certification.



View of the development from Main Street across the pocket park. The ground floor has shops, with four floors of apartment above.

# KEY PROJECT INFORMATION

HOUSING TYPE  
**MIXED-USE**

DENSITY  
**262 DW/HA**

ARCHITECT & DESIGN TEAM  
**DIALOG DESIGN**

YEAR COMPLETED  
**2012**

SITE AREA  
**3740 M<sup>2</sup> (approx)**

The development sits on a large rectangular site along a main arterial

The Main St Corridor has a mixed use character, comprising of a range of activities including retail shops, cafes and light industry. The area is known for its artistic flair and is currently experiencing a resurgence of popularity. The wider area is predominantly single family dwellings.

PROJECT TYPE  
**4 STOREY MULTI-FAMILY  
RESIDENTIAL ABOVE GROUND  
FLOOR RETAIL**

98 Apartments, including 7 townhouses facing private lane; with retail space on the ground floor fronting Main Street.

Studio apartments start at 45sq.m., one bedroom range from 58-77 sq.m, two bedroom units from 76 – 120 sq.m., townhouses from 98 – 117 sq.m, and penthouses from 84 – 104 sq.m.

PARKING  
**BASEMENT – ACCESS FROM  
REAR LANE**

CLIENT/DEVELOPER  
**BASTION DEVELOPMENT  
COMPANY**

PRICE BAND  
**MEDIUM**

# UNDERSTANDING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The mixed use development is located on Main Street, an arterial route running from central Vancouver southwards. The area is well served by busses running along Main Street, that provide connections to downtown Vancouver, and the transport system. Surrounding the development along this part of Main Street are shops and services, in an area valued for its uniqueness, local schools and parks. The complex is within walking distance to several local park in the Mt Pleasant area, a library, hospital, boutique stores, banks, grocers and food outlets, as well as being in close proximity to schools.

The development is located at a point where Main Street diverts to the east, previously leaving a traffic island between a laneway adjacent to the site and Main Street. This laneway was removed, and transformed into a public park, now fronting part of the new development.

Although more contemporary than existing buildings in the vicinity, this building reinforces the identity of the neighbourhood through reference to the site's historical use as a milk factory, its horizontality, and horizontal brick cladding.



View of the development from Main Street, at a point where it kinks to the east (right in the picture) around what was previously a traffic island, now a small park.

# GETTING IT RIGHT PLACING THE BUILDINGS ON THE SITE

1. View of the development following Main Street of the south-east corner. The ground floor provides retail space along the entire length of the building.
2. Retail spaces at this end open to the new pocket park that separates this part of the building from Main Street. This helps to create activity at the edge of the park, and encourages its use.
3. Four floors of single level, double loaded apartments. Apartments facing east over Main Street all have large balconies.
4. Sun screening to apartment windows on the north facade (sunny side), which limits the amount of sun entering the building in summer, but allows low winter sun into the rooms.



View of the building from the south end, showing the ground floor retail spaces opening at this point to the pocket park..

# GETTING IT RIGHT DESIGNING THE SITE

1. Consideration was given to the existing development surround the long rectangular site. On the western side, a new laneway has been inserted to create a spatial separation from existing 1 and 2 storey houses.
2. The new development is further set back from the laneway by small gardens and landscaping to a row of townhouses at ground floor level. This creates a scaled relationship to the existing houses.
3. The new development rises to a height of five storeys, but this is visually minimised on the western façade by the stepping back of the upper floors.



View down the rear laneway that was created as part of the new development (on the right) showing existing neighbouring houses.

## GETTING IT RIGHT STREET TO THE FRONT DOOR

1. The lane is designed to have similar qualities to a public street. Entrances to the town houses facing the rear lane is via a small garden and garden gate, directly to the front door.
2. The entrances are design to ensure visual surveillance of the street but maintaining sufficient privacy by way of separating the lane from the footpath, and careful landscape planting. This makes the lane attractive, welcoming, overlooked form the houses and safe.



View south showing the townhouses facing the rear lane.

## GETTING IT RIGHT STREET TO THE FRONT DOOR

1. The entrance to the apartments on the upper four floors is from a publically accessible pedestrian lane extended under the building at ground level. An entrance lobby provides access to lifts to each of the residential floors. The pedestrian laneway also leads to the rear lane and the town houses.
2. The lane and entrance way is used to separate the building into two visually distinct building forms. This helps to articulate and define the long mass of the building.
3. The entrance also provides a vertical 'break' and a contrast to the strongly horizontal composition of the building.



View of the public arcade created through to the rear laneway, from which the entrances to the apartments are located.



## GETTING IT RIGHT THE BUILDING

1. The ground floor facing Main Street has a continuous retail frontage to the footpath and street beyond. A curve in the street at the southern end has been transformed into a pocket park. The two main tenants are a large drug store and bank, neither of which generate a great deal of street activity or nightlife.
2. The building has a clear distinction between the ground (retail), middle (apartments) and top (setback). This photo illustrates how the setback of the upper floor



View of ground floor retail spaces facing Main Street across the lower part of the pocket park where it connect to Main Street.

# GETTING IT RIGHT THE BUILDING

1. The narrow end to the long rectangular block. At ground level, this is the side wall to the retail units which require a deep floor plan. Increased glazing at ground level and more landscaping would create a better edge to the street.
2. Townhouses facing the rear lane.
3. The five storey building is stepped back from the boundary on the western side, which is adjacent to existing two storey houses. This helps to moderate the scale between the two buildings, and the increasing setback helps to prevent overlooking and increase privacy. This also allows for large balconies which take advantage of the view from the western side of the building.
4. Apartments on the upper four floors are double loaded around a central access corridor, and face either to the east over the street or west over the lane.



View of north side the building off the side street, with Main Street to the left.

# GETTING IT RIGHT OUTDOOR SPACES

1. All apartments have balconies. Note the solar water heaters on the roof
2. In addition to roof-top landscaped decks available to all residents, the new public park provides an outdoor space immediately adjacent to the building. Unfortunately, the tenant in the retail area adjacent to the park is a bank that creates little street activity and is closed at night. Having a café in this locality would have increased street life and provided an amenity for the pocket park.



View of the southern end of the development across the pocket park.

# GETTING IT RIGHT OUTDOOR SPACES

1. Town houses have small entrance gardens that create a sense of privacy from the public realm.
2. Living rooms at the 1<sup>st</sup> floor level open to private courtyards.
3. The roof of the town houses is a large landscape deck, available as a communal facility for the residents of the apartments. All apartments also have generous balconies.



Townhouses on the western side facing the laneway.

# GETTING IT RIGHT ACCOMMODATING THE CAR

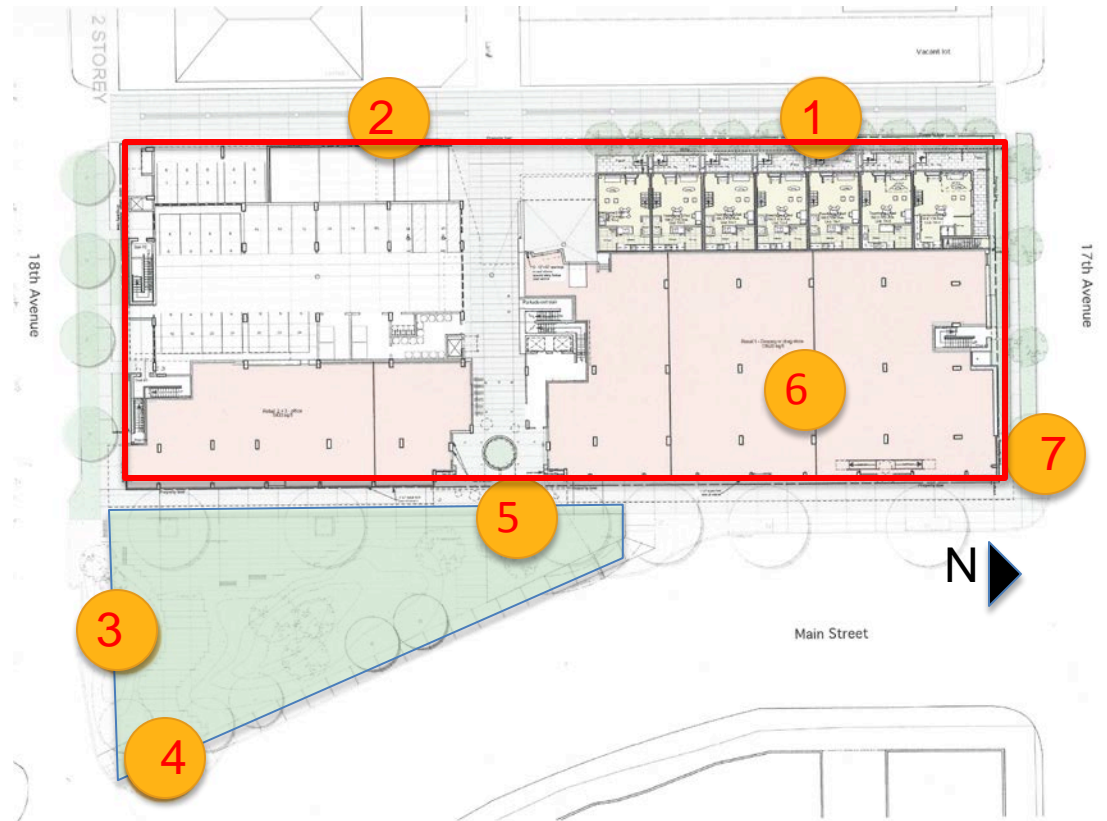
1. Parking is available for the apartments in a basement garage accessed from the rear lane.
2. At the insistence of the bank (one of the main tenants in the retail area), a small number of customer parking space is provided the ground floor at the rear of the building. This creates a blank wall to the side of the lane; and the northern end is a more successful edge to this space.
3. The pedestrian arcade that leads to Main Street, off which the apartments are accessed.
4. The roof of the casual parking area and the town houses have landscaped gardens for the communal use of residents.



View through the arcade leading to Main Street from the rear laneway.

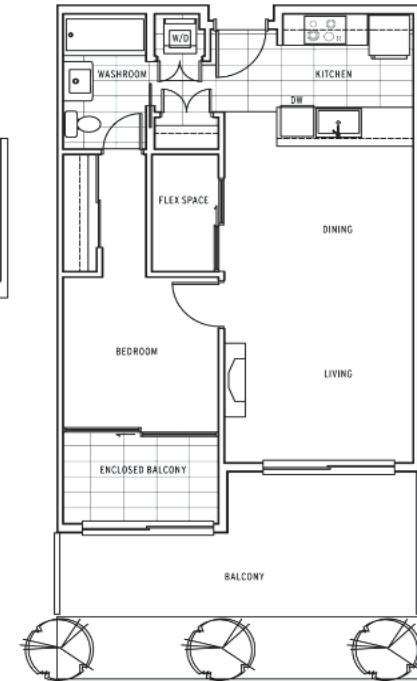
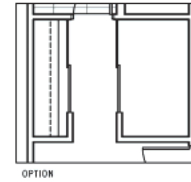
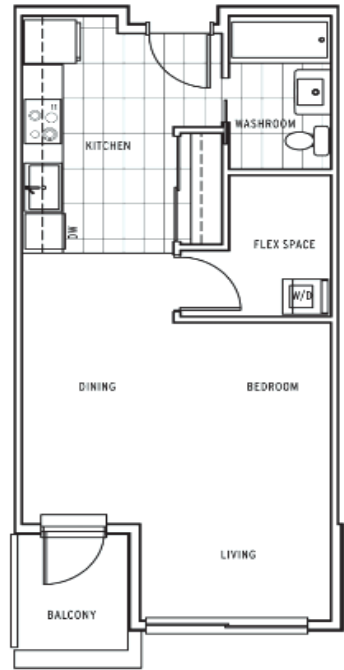
# GETTING IT RIGHT SITE PLAN

1. North-south laneway created to provide separation from existing houses to the west, onto to which seven townhouses front, and provides access to the basement parking garage.
2. Ramp to basement parking. Parking at ground floor level is for retail customers.
3. Pocket park.
4. Main Street.
5. Access to arcade running through the building at a mid-way point, providing access to apartment entrance lobby and rear laneway.
6. Retail space on the ground floor.
7. Site boundary



Location and Site Plan.

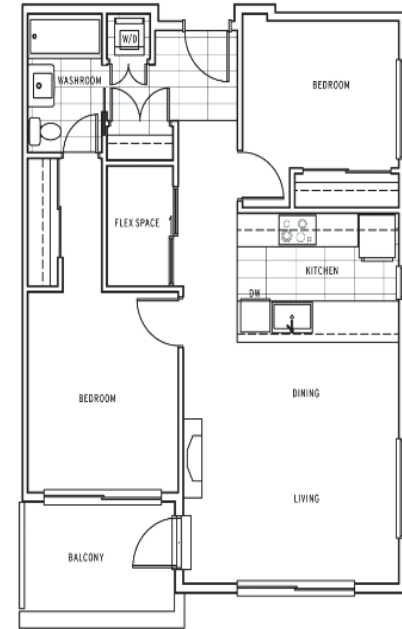
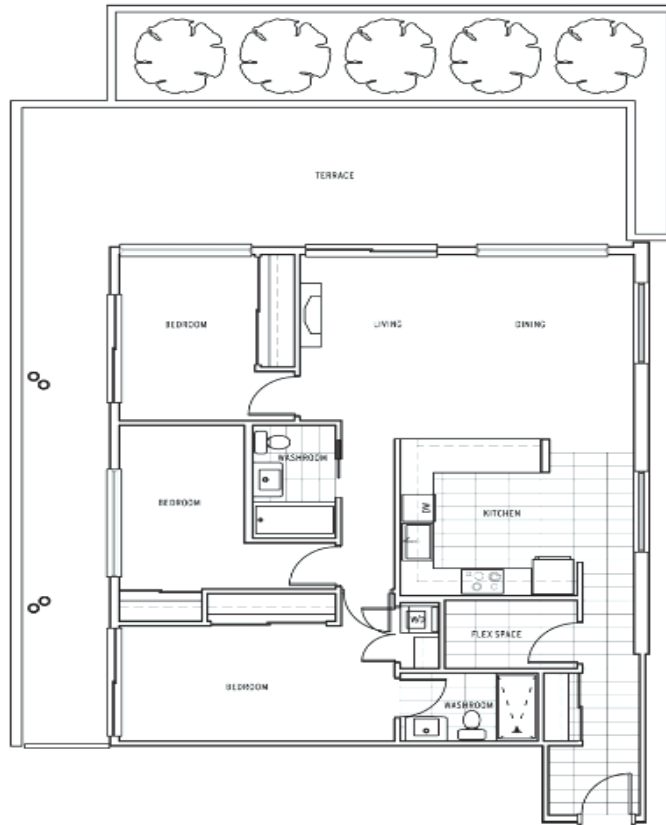
# GETTING IT RIGHT FLOOR PLANS



Typical Studio (51-54 sqm.) and 1-bedroom apartment (70-77 sqm) facing east (towards Main Street). Note provision of balconies and storage space ('flexispace' with options).

Source: <http://www.buzzbuzzhome.com/3333-main/units/townhomes/unit-192>

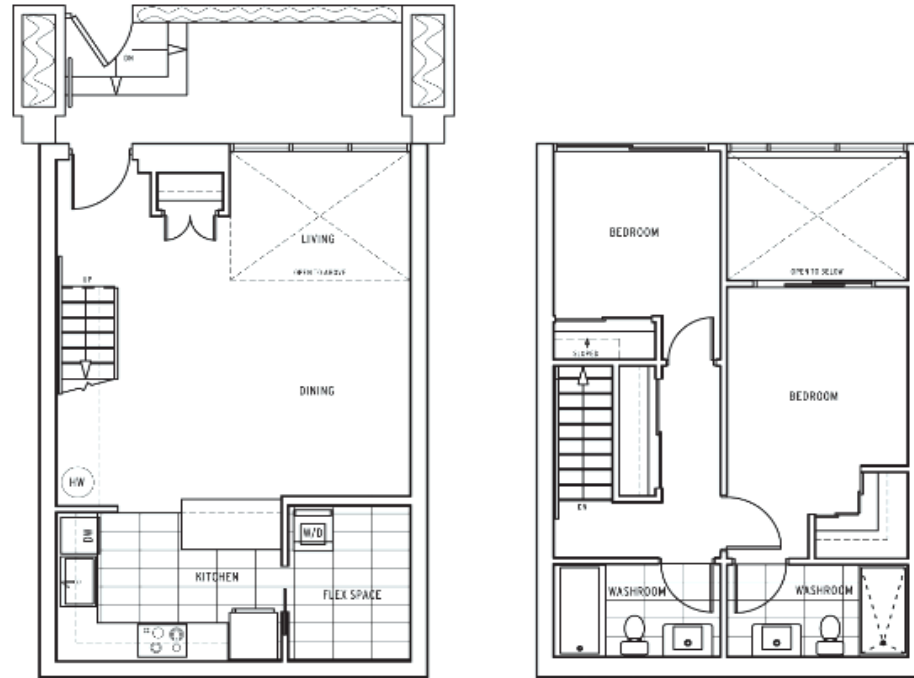
# GETTING IT RIGHT FLOOR PLANS



3-bedroom penthouse (124 sqm) on the top floor, and typical 2-bedroom apartment  
Source: <http://www.buzzbuzzhome.com/3333-main/units/townhomes/unit-192>



# GETTING IT RIGHT FLOOR PLANS



2 floor 2-bedroom townhomes (124 sqm) with access directly off the rear laneway across small garden, with 2<sup>nd</sup> floor bedrooms opening to balcony.

Source: <http://www.buzzbuzzhome.com/3333-main/units/townhomes/unit-192>

## GETTING IT RIGHT REFERENCES

### **Address**

3333 Main Street, Mount Pleasant, Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Latitude 49° 15' 17.44" N

Longitude 123° 6' 5.62" W

### **Information sources**

Joost Bakker, Principal Architect, Dialog Design Architects, Vancouver, BC.

Floor Plans from:

<http://www.buzzbuzzhome.com/3333-main/units>

Case study by Errol Haarhoff and Lee Beattie, School of Architecture and Planning, University of Auckland, 2015.

All photographs are by the authors except where otherwise noted.

# AUCKLAND DESIGN MANUAL

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The Auckland Design Manual provides practical advice, best practice processes and detailed design guidance to enable us to design and build the world's most liveable city. The manual will enable us all to make informed choices, to build houses and develop our streets and neighbourhoods to not only look good but to ensure they are built to last, sustainable and give the best return on investment.

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