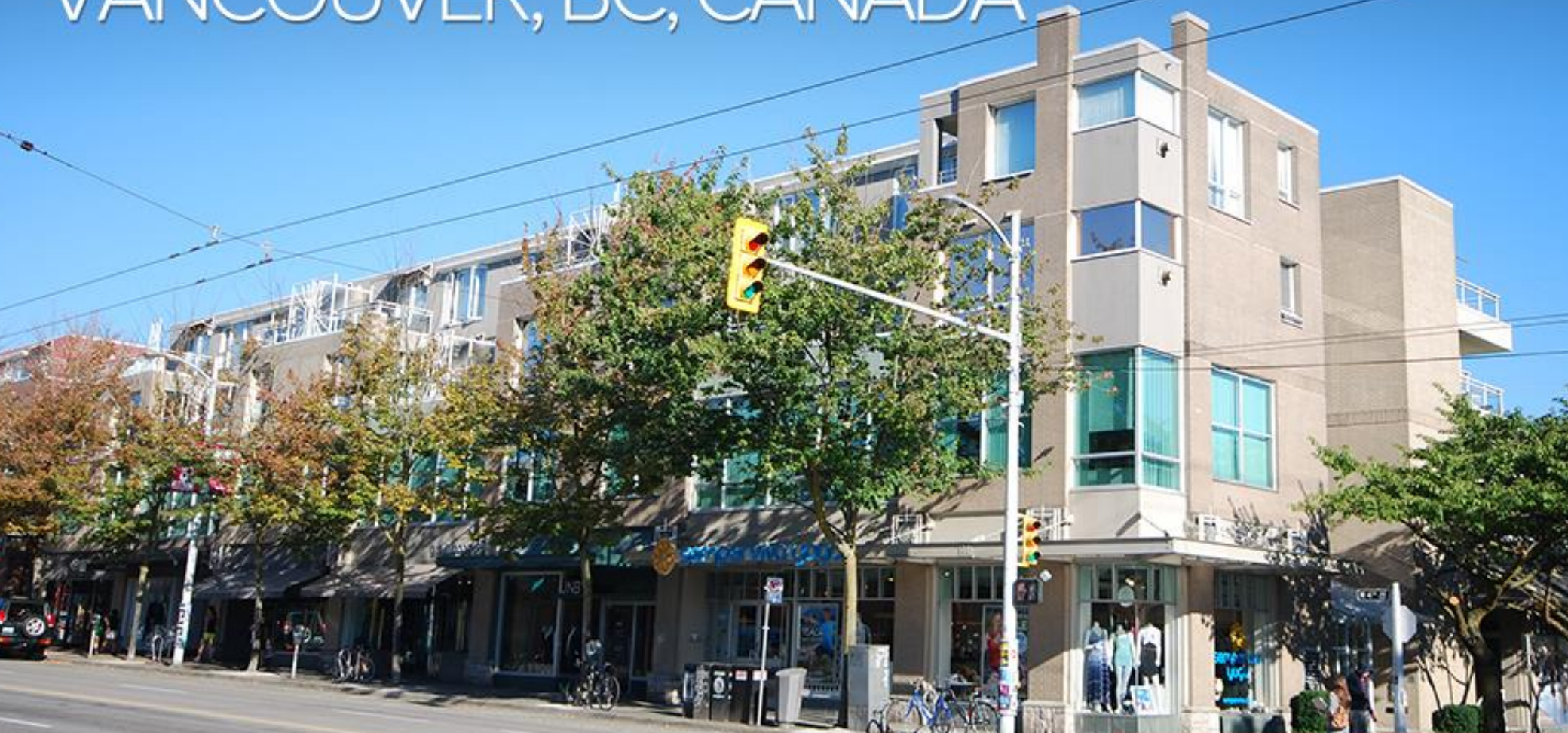


THE CAPERS BUILDING

VANCOUVER, BC, CANADA



BUILDINGS + SITES // HOUSING CASE STUDY

The Capers Building
Vancouver, BC, Canada

OVERVIEW

An example of mixed-use medium density development, accommodating residential units, retail and commercial space enhancing the street life of an established resident area through a continuous retail street frontage and scaled relationship to surround houses.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Capers Building is a successful infill project on a site previously occupied by a motor car dealership. The development provides a high-level local amenity at the centre of a vibrant neighbourhood centre surrounded by single family houses.

The site is a rectangular site with a long frontage to West 4th Avenue, but is relatively narrow across the site. The rear of the site fronts a service lane, and is adjacent to 2-3 storey residential developments.

The ground floor has retail outlets, that includes cafes and restaurants, fronting West 4th Avenue, enhancing the street life and local amenity in this local centre. The first floor accommodates offices, accessed from two semi-public courtyard spaces. The top 2 floors accommodate 78 residential units planned to maximise sun from the south (street side) and views over Vancouver harbour to the north. Basement parking is provided.

The development intensity was supported by Commercial District Zoning zoning (C3A and 3B) that permits retail, commercial and residential usages as corridor development on subdivisions adjacent to West 4th Avenue. Subdivisions beyond those adjacent to West 4th Avenue retain lower densities in the surrounding single family housing areas.

The Capers Building is a successful example of increasing density by skillful integration within the surrounding lower density residential neighbourhood and existing retail shops on the opposite side of West 4th Avenue.



View of the four storey building with retail on the ground floor, office space on the 1st floor, and residential above.

KEY PROJECT INFORMATION

HOUSING TYPE

LOW RISE MIXED-USE

DENSITY

142 DW/HA (plus retail and commercial space).

ARCHITECT & DESIGN TEAM

HOTSON BAKKER ARCHITECTS

YEAR COMPLETED

1994

FAR 2.5

SITE AREA

5,500 M²

PROJECT TYPE

**4 STOREY MIXED USE;
GROUND FLOOR RETAIL, 2nd
FLOOR OFFICE, RESIDENTIAL
ABOVE**

CLIENT/DEVELOPER

**KALICO DEVELOPMENTS LTD &
SALT LICK PROJECTS LTD**

PRICE BAND

HIGH

Gross Building Area: 13,880M²

Retail and Commercial: 7,500m²

78 residential units (ownership by strata title)

PARKING

**BASEMENT – ACCESS FROM
REAR LANE**

UNDERSTANDING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

1. The Capers Building development is located on a busy arterial route known as the Kitsilano 4th Avenue Business Improvement Area (BIA) between Balsam and Fir Streets.
2. The area supports 24,800 residents, 318 businesses and 3100 day-time jobs, of which the Capers Building is a part. It has a mix of old and new development, creating a richly textured physical environment.
3. The continuous retail frontage to West 4th Avenue mirrored the existing the retail development on the opposite side of the road. However, the two side streets at the ends of the site lead into a residential environment, dominated by suburban houses.



View of the Capers Building from West 4th Avenue, showing the continuous retail edge to the street, the offices above, and the top two floors of apartments..

UNDERSTANDING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

1. The success of this mixed use development to a large degree comes from the skilful integration of the large building into the neighbourhood context.
2. The impact of the four storey building with its residential neighbours is mediated by a back lane, and the setting back of the upper two residential floors to reduce the visual appearance.
3. It is a good example of mixed use development responding to up zoning of sites adjacent to arterial roads, where surrounding residential areas remain intact. This adds to the neighbourhood's amenity through an increase of retail outlets, cafes and services to the community as a whole.



View of the Capers Building from Yew Street, showing the integration of the large building into the neighbourhood context via a back lane.

GETTING IT RIGHT PLACING THE BUILDING ON THE SITE

1. Following the long block pattern, the building fronts the main arterial street (West 4th Avenue).
2. The top two floors of residential units are double loaded, facing West 4th Avenue (South) with the other side having long views across the Harbour.
3. The narrow block presents a short facade to the side street leading to the surrounding residential areas.
4. The top floor of the residential building is stepped back, and articulated to reduce visual impact on the street.



View of the Capers Building at the intersection of one of two side streets at each end.

GETTING IT RIGHT PLACING THE BUILDING ON THE SITE

1. The stepping back of the northern facade to the residential development that has excellent views over the harbour, and open to balconies and decks. This reduces the visual impact of the four story building to the two storey residential houses the apartments overlook.
2. Entrance to the basement parking garage. Residential units are connected to the basement by lifts.
3. A less successful end to the building that includes the entry point to the basement parking, mitigated by the the overlooking of this side street by apartments.
4. Access to the back lane that provides servicing to the retail and commercial areas via a service bay at a mid-block position.



The side street at the western end.

GETTING IT RIGHT STREET TO THE FRONT DOOR

1. Existing retail on the opposite side of the street.
2. Retail units in the Capers Building are placed on the site boundary and on the street edge, and reinforce this part of the arterial street as a retail and commercial centre.



View west along W 4th Avenue with the retail shops in the Capers Building to the right, and other retail business on the other side of the street.

GETTING IT RIGHT THE BUILDING

1. The ground floor has retail outlets, that includes cafes and restaurants, fronting West 4th Avenue, enhancing the street life and local amenity in this local centre.
2. The first floor accommodates offices, accessed from two semi-public courtyard spaces.
3. The top 2 floors accommodates 78 residential units planned to maximise sun from the south (street side) and views over Vancouver harbour to the north.



View of the Capers Building from Yew Street.

GETTING IT RIGHT THE BUILDING

1. The well-insulated building is heated by an underground heat pump and heat exchangers that transfer hot and cold air (as needed) between the building's commercial and residential spaces.
2. The building also features extensive use of natural lighting, windows that open and private outdoor decks.



View west along W 4th Avenue with the retail shops in the Capers Building to the right, and other retail business on the other side of the street.

GETTING IT RIGHT OUTDOOR SPACES

1. One of two internal semi-public courtyards are accessed directly off the street side of the building.
2. Staircase and lift access to offices on the first floor facing West 4th Avenue and residential units on the opposite side. Internal stairs and lift (that also connects to the basement parking), provides access to residential units on the 2nd and 3rd floors.



View of the courtyards spaces opening from the street, that provide public access to the commercial and residential units above.

GETTING IT RIGHT ACCOMMODATING THE CAR

1. The entrance and exit to the basement car park is off the western side street. Parking is available for residents and tenants of commercial units.
2. Stepped back residential units, that also view over the side street.



View of the western end of the building, showing the entrance to the basement parking.

GETTING IT RIGHT ACCOMMODATING THE CAR

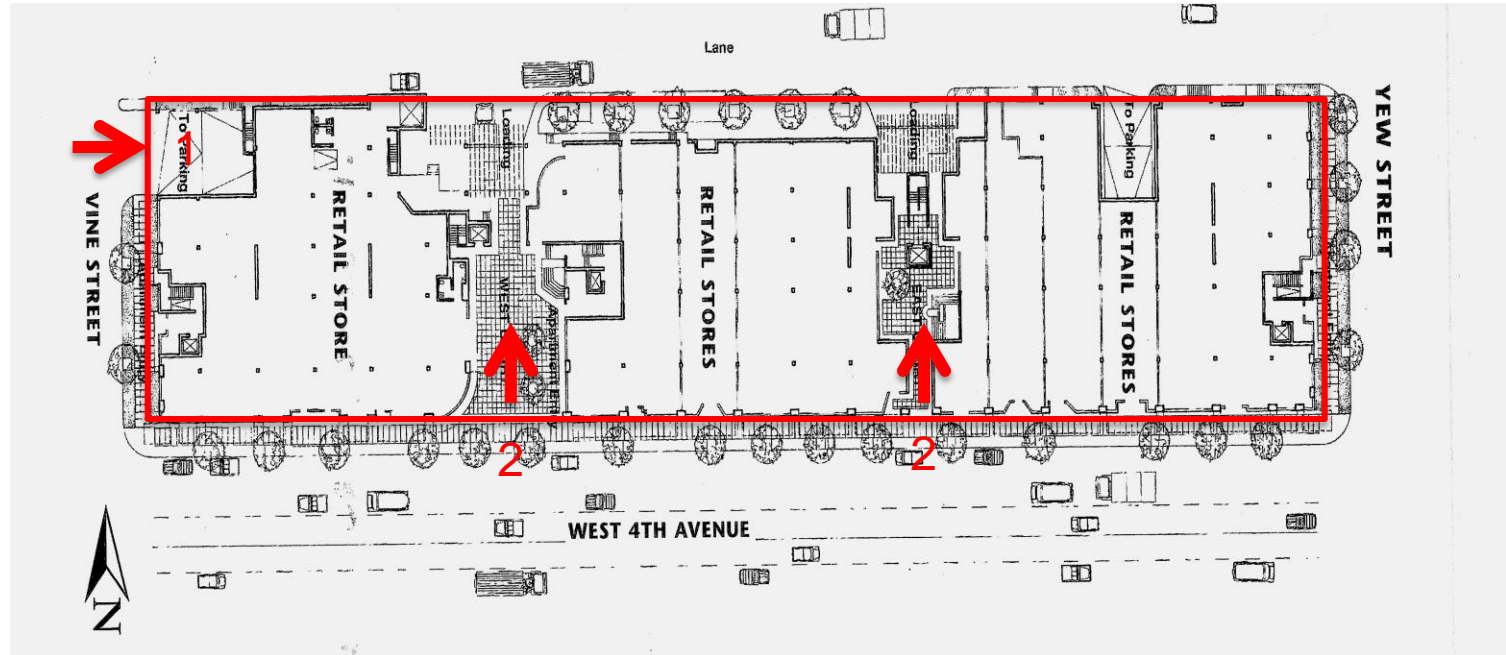
1. The rear service lane.
2. Service bay at mid-block point from where services are provide to the whole building.



View west along the back service lane showing one of two service docks along its length.

GETTING IT RIGHT SITE PLAN

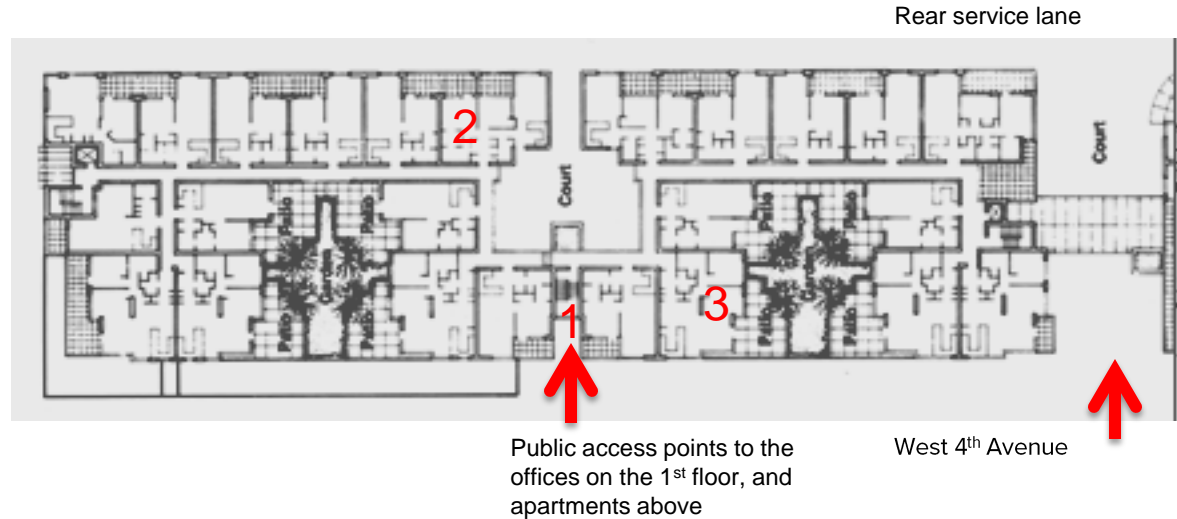
1. Vehicle entrance to basement parking
2. Public access to the 1st floor offices and apartments above via the two courtyards



Ground Floor Plan
Source: <http://www.iisbe.org/abn/capers.htm>

GETTING IT RIGHT FLOOR PLANS

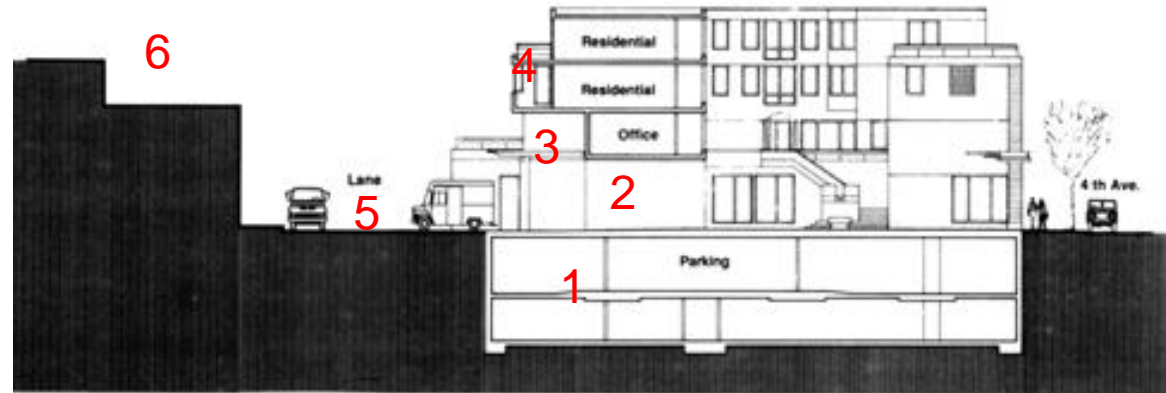
1. Access to from the Court spaces opening to the street.
2. Smaller units are arranged along an internal corridor facing north and spectacular views over the city.
3. Larger units on the southern side are grouped around patios.



3rd Floor Plan showing apartments for part of the building
Source: <http://www.iisbe.org/abn/capers.htm>

GETTING IT RIGHT ELEVATIONS

1. Two basement levels for parking
2. The retail ground floor
3. Offices at the first floor
4. Residential units on the second and third floors
5. The rear service lane
6. Height of adjacent buildings



Elevations.
Source: <http://www.iisbe.org/abn/capers.htm>

REFERENCES

Address

2200-2296 West 4th Street, Kitsilano, Vancouver, BC.

Latitude 49° 16' 6.09" N

Longitude 123° 9' 22.30" W

Information Sources

2006 Kitsilano 4th Avenue neighbourhood profile

<http://www.kitsilano.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/kitsilano-neighbourhood.pdf>

Smart Growth on the Ground

<http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/Publications/Archives/CompactCommunitiesarchives/tabid/83/Default.aspx>

Patrick Condon, Jone Belausteguigoitia, Sara Fryer and Krish Tatebe, Demystifying Density: A comparison of different forms of density in five case studies in the Greater Vancouver Region. Foundational Research Bulletin, No 5, Sept 2007.

http://www.dcs.sala.ubc.ca/docs/sxd_frb_density_sec.pdf

Interesting Capers in Vancouver

<http://www.iisbe.org/abn/capers.htm>

Case study provided 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.

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