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False Creek North

False Creek North (FCN) lies along the northern shore of False Creek, from the Burrard Street Bridge to Main Street on Vancouver's Downtown peninsula. For this description, it includes the lands forming the eastern portion of False Creek.

Before 1986, False Creek, like most of Vancouver's waterfront, was a focus of heavy industry and the supporting railways. Sawmills and factories surrounded this water basin. In a startling transformation, virtually all the industry moved out to be temporarily replaced by the Expo 86 World's Fair. After the World's Fair closed, the lands were sold to private developers and rezoned. Redevelopment has been proceeding ever since. Much of the planned development around False Creek is built out, including most of the former Expo lands, now Concord Pacific Place, and the Citygate development to the east.

The transformation of some 80 hectares (204 acres) of inner city area has taken place over a twenty year period and has changed Vancouver's downtown skyline as well as its waterfront public realm. It has brought a long lost body of water back into public use. FCN is one of the largest urban redevelopment projects in North America, and has created a diversity of new urban experiences. Three distinct False Creek communities are discussed, beginning with Granville Slopes to the west, Concord Pacific Place at the centre, and Citygate to the east. As well, a brief preview of Southeast False Creek, now under planning review, is provided.



Quayside Neighbourhood waterfront walkway and marina



WAITE AIR PHOTO

Downtown Peninsula and False Creek – 1982



WAITE AIR PHOTO

Downtown Peninsula and False Creek North – 2003 (Beach Neighbourhood under construction lower left)

False Creek North

GRANVILLE SLOPES

Urban Design Concept: Civitas Urban Design & Planning (City's consultant)

Principal Architects: James K M Cheng, Henriquez Partners, Bing Thom, The Hulbert Group, James Hancock, Rafii Architects, Lawrence Doyle, Burrowes Huggins, Waisman Dewar Grout, Peter Wardle

Landscape Architects: Chris Phillips (City Park), Vagelatos Assoc.(1000 Beach Plaza)

Principal City Staff: Larry Beasley (Overview); Pat Wotherspoon, Randy Pecarski (Area Planning); Ralph Segal, Jonathan Barrett (Urban Design/Development Planning)

NEIGHBOURHOOD DATA

Gross Area: 10.1 ha (25 ac)

Population: 3,000

Density (upa): 80

Housing Units: 2,000

Parks/Open Space: 0.4 ha (1 ac)



Granville Slopes – early 1980's



Granville Slopes today – from Granville Island



Granville Slopes Park

Granville Slopes is a 10 block area located between the Burrard and Granville Bridges, sloping down from Pacific Avenue to the False Creek waterfront. In the early 1980s pressure to transform the area to higher density residential use led to a zoning plan incorporating two of Vancouver's neighbourhood planning tenets:

- extending the city street grid through the area; and
- extending the waterfront walkway with continuous waterfront access.

However, the initial developments demonstrated that a meaningful urban design concept for the precinct was missing. In the late 1980s, initiating a major shift for the remainder of Granville Slopes and what would become an essential planning tool for subsequent neighbourhoods, the City undertook an urban design study for the upland sites (Beach to Pacific Avenue), including an overall public realm concept. This included a vision for a central park which was implemented in the mid-1990s following land swaps and park development costs borne by benefitting property owners and developers. The urban design vision was one of the first to include rowhouses along the street in combination with slim, point towers as a high density housing model. This has become a cornerstone of Vancouver's strategy to reclaim its streets as part of the public realm.

Several important lessons were learned from the planning of this residential neighbourhood, including:

- the need for comprehensive planning at the outset for a full array of amenities to properly service new residential neighbourhoods;
- the importance of "eyes on the street" and a strong sense of domesticity provided by street-oriented rowhouses;
- the value of protecting public view corridors;
- the need for adequate park space to satisfy residents' needs;
- the need for a coordinated public realm treatment; and
- the need to carefully distribute retail activity so as to ensure its viability.



The 1000 Beach public plaza invites pedestrians to the waterfront

In demonstrating the importance of critically monitoring results in progress, Granville Slopes also taught the value of being able to quickly and effectively adjust course when warranted.

Granville Slopes, now substantially built out, provided a testing ground for a number of the planning and urban design precepts that have helped shape the rest of False Creek North, Downtown South, Coal Harbour and other high density neighbourhoods.



Burrard Street alignment ends in waterfall

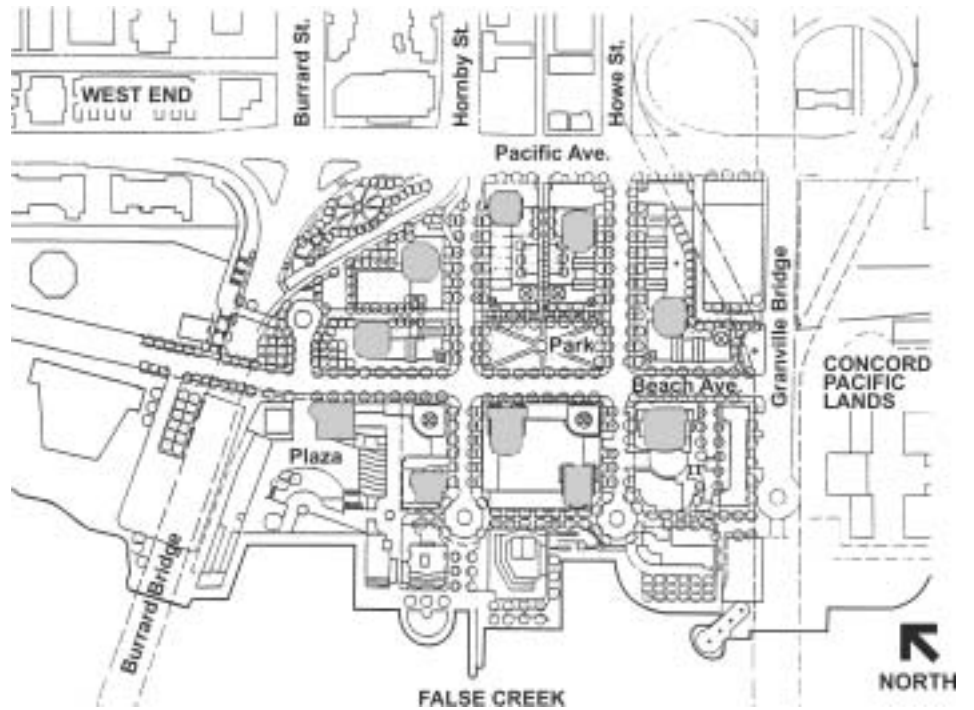


Public open space at water's edge



Tower heights step down to the waterfront and bridges to preserve views

CIVITAS URBAN DESIGN & PLANNING ILLUSTRATION



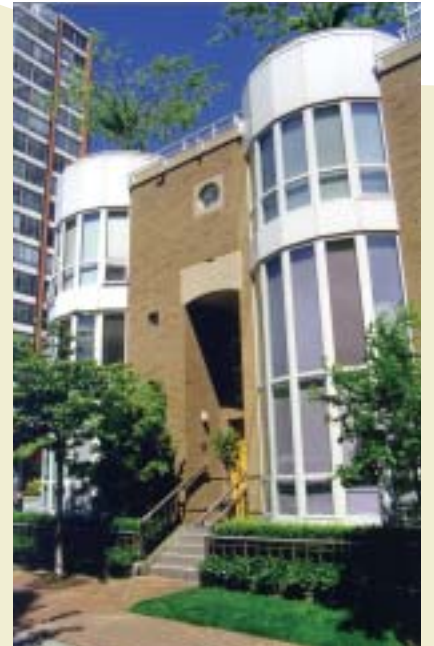
Granville Slopes – Urban Design Concept Plan



888 Beach courtyard provides quiet respite for residences



Granville Slopes' diverse waterfront edge



888 Beach rowhouses

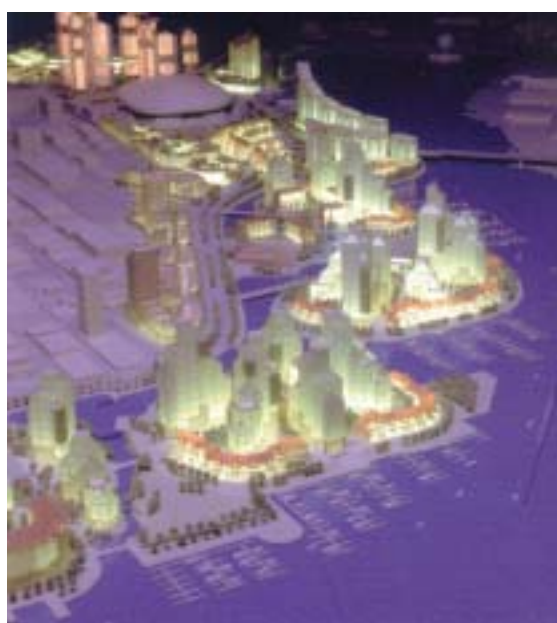
Developer/Owner: Concord Pacific Group Inc. **Concept Architects:** VIA Architecture (formerly Baker McGarva Hart), The Hulbert Group, Downs/Archambault, James K M Cheng, Davidson Yuen Simpson **Principal Architects** (in addition to the above): Hancock Bruckner, Busby & Assoc., Roger Hughes, Hewitt Kwasnicki, IBI Group, Henriquez Partners, Neale Staniszki Doll Adams

Landscape Architects: Don Vaughan Associates (concept), Philips Wuori Long (detailed design)

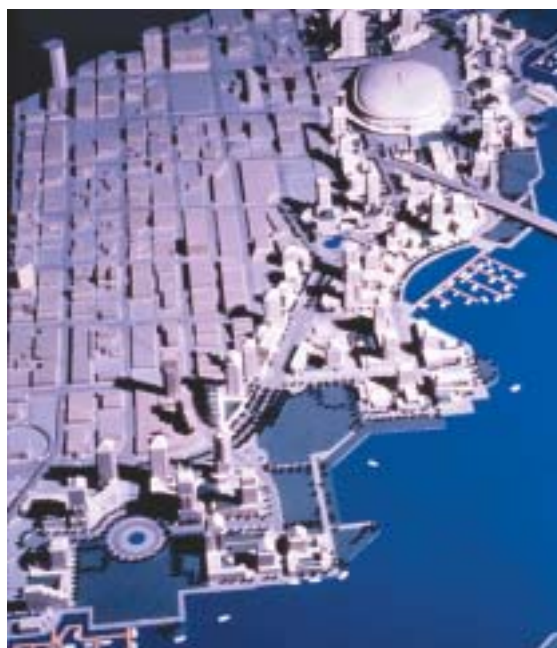
Principal City Staff: Larry Beasley (Overview); Pat Wotherspoon, Ian Smith (Area Planning); Ralph Segal, Jonathan Barrett (Urban Design/Development Planning); Jim Lowden (Park Board); Elaine Duvall, (Housing); Susan Clift, Michelle Blake (Engineering) [refer also to p.57]

NEIGHBOURHOOD DATA

Gross Area: 67 ha (166 ac)
Population: 13,000
Density (upa): 50
Housing Units: 7,800
Non-market Units: 1,380
Parks/Open Space: 17 ha (42 ac)



Early Concord "Lagoons Scheme"



Approved Concord Urban Design Concept

The former Expo 86 site included some 67 hectares (166 acres) of land, stretching along the north shore of False Creek between Granville Bridge and Quebec Street, and north as far as Beatty and Pender Streets. This mile long stretch of land essentially defines the southeastern edge of Vancouver's downtown peninsula, from Pender Street in the north to Beach Avenue in the south. The land was sold by the provincial government to Concord Pacific and underwent several rezonings to permit comprehensive, mixed use, high density development. A portion of the original lands north of the Dunsmuir Viaduct and Expo Boulevard, was sold to Henderson Development to become what is now the International Village neighbourhood.

Planning for this extensive area included the design of new streets, infrastructure, a modified shoreline and the creation of a range of public amenities and park spaces. An initial concept proposed by the developer used False Creek itself as a major organizing element, with the water extending into the site to Pacific Boulevard as a series of 'lagoons' surrounding several island-like housing precincts, creating a 'resort in the city'. Reaction to the "Lagoons" scheme from the public and City staff raised concerns about the privatization of the water body, its segregation from the rest of the city, as well as technical problems with the lagoons water areas. After rejection of the "Lagoons" scheme, the developer agreed to have his design team work closely with the City's team of planners, urban designers and engineers in pursuing a new scheme that more closely reflected the existing shoreline and was better connected back to the adjacent areas.

The resulting master plan incorporated several key urban design strategies, reflecting a set of organizing principles. Prime among these was the desire to create a series of local neighbourhoods along False Creek, each focussed on a bay and separated by a large public park. Another was the decision, simple in hindsight but a radical influence on the emerging urban form, to extend the existing downtown street grid across Pacific Boulevard out towards the water. The simple yet powerful notion of extending the city street pattern and urban fabric to the waterfront repudiated 80



Use of roofdecks as outdoor living rooms

years of urban planning in which the dominant model in Vancouver was a city cut off from its waterfront by an impregnable layer of industry and railways.

The development of Concord Pacific Place affirmed the urban design principle that public streets are the primary ordering device of city building, accommodating incremental development, providing robust flexibility and helping to integrate new development with the surrounding urban structure.

The creation of several distinct precincts helped with the necessary phasing of development as well as addressing the potential deadening effect of a single masterplanned community. Creating distinctive design guidelines for each of the precincts and then employing different architects for the various development parcels, has contributed to a rich variety of built form and public spaces.

Concord Pacific Place also explored new urban design strategies for high density high rise residential living. Vancouver’s now well established requirement for a minimum 80 feet distance between slim residential towers, invented and first tested in Downtown South, was also used here along with other strategies such as staggered tower locations, humanly scaled streetwall housing podiums to “tame” the impact of the towers at the sidewalk and the use of podium rooftops for semi-private courtyards, family outdoor play space, and private patios to achieve a high level of amenity in this dense urban environment.



Townhouses fronting waterfront walkway/bikeway



Non-market housing (Roundhouse Co-op) blends seamlessly into neighbourhood



David Lam Park

One of the most notable achievements of Concord Pacific Place, from the public perspective, is the remarkable range and scope of civic amenities which were required of the developer through the rezoning process. Some 42 acres of public park space have been created, in addition to many more acres of semi-private open space. A continuous 10 m (35 ft.) wide waterfront walkway/bikeway links the parks and street-ends, and substantially completes the public waterfront access loop around False Creek. New policies were codified ensuring that 25% of the housing would be designed for families. Through various funding strategies, the 20% of residential units originally targeted for non-market housing is being gradually achieved, with four of the eleven fully integrated sites now built and occupied. Two elementary schools, four daycare centres, a full-service community centre (The Roundhouse - an adaptive re-use of the railway's historic train maintenance facility), multi-purpose meeting rooms, a sports fieldhouse, parking for the Stadium, and money for 'green links' to adjacent downtown neighbourhoods complete the impressive public amenities package. Vancouver's approach to the planning of waterfront neighbourhoods, perhaps unique in the world, places non-market housing and community facilities such as schools and daycares amongst market residential developments at the water's edge. A public art program is being implemented with each phase of development. These public amenities are all contributing to the creation not of a single use enclave but rather a complete urban community.

Impressive as these statistics are, perhaps the most notable aspect of Concord Pacific Place is what it has done to reinvigorate downtown Vancouver as a vibrant, mixed use community. Concord Pacific Place will add over 20,000 new residents to downtown when it is fully built out and this, combined with many more thousands moving into the other areas undergoing redevelopment on the downtown peninsula, is responsible for Vancouver becoming an international model of inner city revitalization. There is the inherent sustainability advantage that comes from bringing people and their place of work close together: more and more people are walking, cycling or using public transit on the downtown peninsula. Recent surveys now show that over 60% of all downtown trips are done without the use of a private vehicle. Concord Pacific Place is making a major contribution to the emergence in Vancouver of a new urban paradigm.



David Lam Park playground

If there is a criticism of Concord Pacific Place it may be that it suffers to a degree from its own success. So much new development has happened so fast that it does convey a somewhat immutable, untouchable quality, almost too pristine. All great city neighbourhoods develop, over time, a patina reflecting the full diversity of human endeavour and creativity, and this has yet to take hold in Concord Pacific Place. But in the grand scheme of city building this is barely the beginning of time for this major sector of the downtown.

Concord Pacific Place is rapidly coalescing as a model of high density inner city urban living, while demonstrating a remarkable degree of civic amenity. It only remains for time to work its wonders in creating the sense of a truly lived-in community with all its human diversity, colour and complexity.



Townhouses on Marinaside Crescent



Roundhouse Neighbourhood and Yaletown Edge with the Roundhouse Community Centre as its centrepiece (Construction of the waterfront elementary school has now commenced – upper right)



"Yaletown Mews" (non-profit rental housing) with its private courtyard on Pacific Boulevard

DOWNS/ARCHAMBAULT ARCHITECTS PHOTO

VIA ARCHITECTURE PHOTO

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False Creek North CONCORD PACIFIC PLACE

VIA ARCHITECTURE PHOTO



Roundhouse Community Centre
"Neighbourhood Yard"



Rowhouses on Marinaside Crescent



David Lam Park serves residents of surrounding neighbourhoods



Roundhouse and Quayside waterfront from Davie Street public pier



CHRIS DIKEAKOS PHOTO

The "Lookout" public art installation on Marinaside Crescent



DOWNES/ARCHAMBAULT ARCHITECTS PHOTO

Beatty Mews and public plaza resulted from closure of Beatty Street on this block



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False Creek North CONCORD PACIFIC PLACE



Shopping on Davie Street



Families with children are moving downtown



Semi-private gardens provide respite and an attractive overview



Sidewalk cafés animate Marinaside Crescent

DOWNES/ARCHAMBAULT ARCHITECTS PHOTO



Marinaside Crescent, lined with townhouses and now maturing landscape, has achieved intended domesticity



Cyclists and pedestrians crowd the False Creek North waterfront walkway/bikeway



Beach Neighbourhood (left) under construction and Roundhouse Neighbourhood (right) frame David Lam Park (2003)

COLIN JEWELL PHOTO STUDIOS PHOTO

Developer/ Owner: Bosa Development Corp.

Concept Architect: Perkins & Company Architecture and Urban Design

Architects: Perkins & Company (all residential and mixed use buildings), Musson Cattell Mackey (office tower), Gomberoff Bell Lyon (final non-market site)

Landscape Architect: Sharp & Diamond Landscape Architecture

Principal City Staff: Larry Beasley (Overview); Ian Smith (Rezoning Planner); Ralph Segal (Urban Design/Development Planning); John Jessup (Housing)

Neighbourhood Data

Gross Area: 3.7 ha (9.2 ac)

Population: 1,500

Density (upa): 110

Housing Units: 1,000

Non-market Units: 200



PERKINS & COMPANY ARCHITECTS PHOTO

Citygate with 'Science World' at right



Streetwall massing on Main Street incorporating groundfloor retail with market and non-market housing above



RON LOVE ILLUSTRATION

Main Street massing concept framing Thornton Park

Citygate is a pioneering high density neighbourhood development (approximately 9.2 acres in site size) located at the eastern end of False Creek, at the interface between downtown Vancouver and the eastern inner city suburbs. Citygate was conceived and designed as the planning for Concord Pacific Place to the west was commencing. It is separated from the Concord lands by a large stretch of open space which will become a major waterfront park. To the immediate east lies historic Main Street, beyond which are the under-utilized railway yards and industrial lands of False Creek Flats. The site also forms a transitional zone between Chinatown to the north and Mount Pleasant to the south.

This context of indeterminate and transitional character made site planning a challenge. However, the developer, showing considerable foresight, recognized the potential of this site at the edge of False Creek, with its open views to the west, direct access to a SkyTrain station, and proximity to downtown Vancouver. With the contemplated rehabilitation of the False Creek water basin and pending redevelopment of the north shore of False Creek, this undistinguished location would ultimately become very desirable, offering a unique combination of amenities, services and value.

The City also had a vision for this site, that of "framing" and defining the eastern edge of the False Creek basin with a strong built form, and initiating urban repair along historic Main Street. Another key site planning consideration was the presence of the heritage Canadian National (now Pacific Central) Station and Thornton Park to the east. The station, a major landmark building which still functions as a transportation gateway to Vancouver, needed a well defined forecourt. In addition, consistent with its housing policy, the City sought a 20% non-market housing component within the residential portion of the development.



PERKINS & COMPANY ARCHITECTS ILLUSTRATION

Original Site Context plan (1989) envisages Citygate within the future Southeast and Northeast False Creek context



Streetwall on Main Street is punctuated by Thornton Place



Public open space at National Avenue

PERKINS & COMPANY ARCHITECTS PHOTO

The developer's architect, working closely with City staff, created a multi-layered urban design concept. To establish a finer grained urban fabric, the site was broken into smaller blocks by extending three new corridors across the property between Main and Quebec streets: an extension of National Avenue, the introduction of Milross Avenue, and the creation of Thornton Place. The latter aligns with the CN Station entrance opposite Thornton Park, thus acknowledging its physical presence across the park and, along with a strong streetwall on the west side of Main Street, visually tying the two sides of the park together.

The urban design solution includes a row of tall residential towers integrated with street-oriented stacked rowhouses along Quebec Street, and 6 to 15-storey mid-rise elements along Main Street. A commercial component at the southern Terminal Avenue end, originally conceived as a 7-storey galleria astride the SkyTrain station but later converted to an office tower, completes the Quebec Street building frontage. This tower ensemble defines the eastern end of False Creek. The Main Street streetwall, typically six storeys, strengthens the public realm along the street and frames Thornton Park. The Main Street context to the north also influenced the choice of materials (predominantly brick), built form (street wall), and ground floor land use (retail).

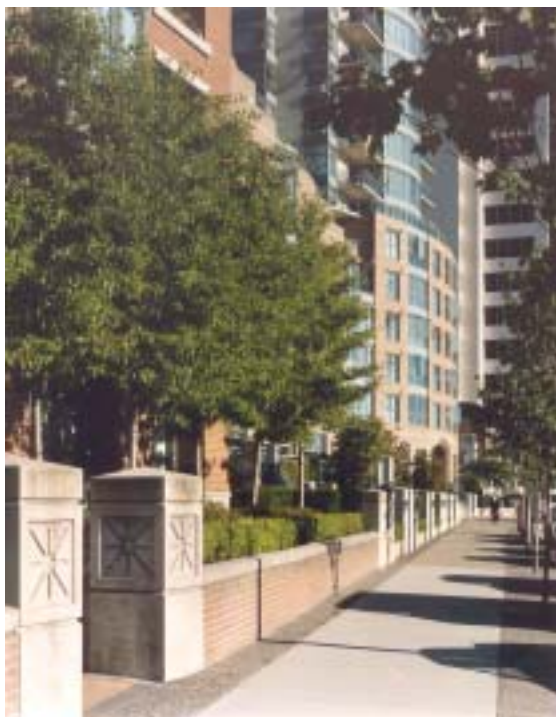


RON LOVE ILLUSTRATION

Original Artist's Rendering of Citygate Design Concept (1989)



National Avenue landscaping features centre treed median



PERKINS & COMPANY ARCHITECTS PHOTO

Public realm incorporates strong landscape with street-fronting townhouses and tower lobbies along Quebec Street

Tower heights are limited along Main Street to a maximum of 52 m (170 feet) to protect views from the south towards the North Shore mountains. The residential built form is generally arranged around the block perimeters, with a series of protected semi-private courtyards behind. The open spaces around the buildings on either side of National and Milross Avenues have also been carefully modulated, with a robust combination of low masonry walls, gates, hedges and display gardens defining the edges of the public and private realms. Rows of trees around the tower bases also help define this edge of the development. National Avenue has been designed with a central landscaped median, which helps soften the urban context of the site.

Other public benefits that were required through rezoning included a financial contribution towards parks, 100 parking stalls for the adjacent Science World, two daycares and subsidized rental housing. Three non-market housing projects interspersed with the market housing as part of the overall development, were built by the developer and then turned over to the provincial housing authority, BC Housing.



Rowhouses on Thornton Place



Two more residential towers (to left of existing) will soon complete Citygate development



Tower base provides scale, definition along Quebec Street

Citygate comprises approximately 132 000 m² (1.4 million sq. ft.) of predominantly residential as well as office, service and retail uses. It helped pioneer high density urban development in downtown Vancouver and has restored the urban fabric in this section of Main Street. It has also strengthened the built form definition of Thornton Park and frames the historic CN Station building. Lastly, it has introduced new urban residents into an area which had been all but abandoned for housing. As Citygate approaches final build-out, it presently stands in relative isolation, awaiting the expected redevelopment activity around it to commence. With the planning for Southeast False Creek well underway (see p.25) and other initiatives playing out to the east, Citygate's role in this area will soon evolve from that of pioneer to anchor of a new East False Creek neighbourhood.



WAITE AIR PHOTO

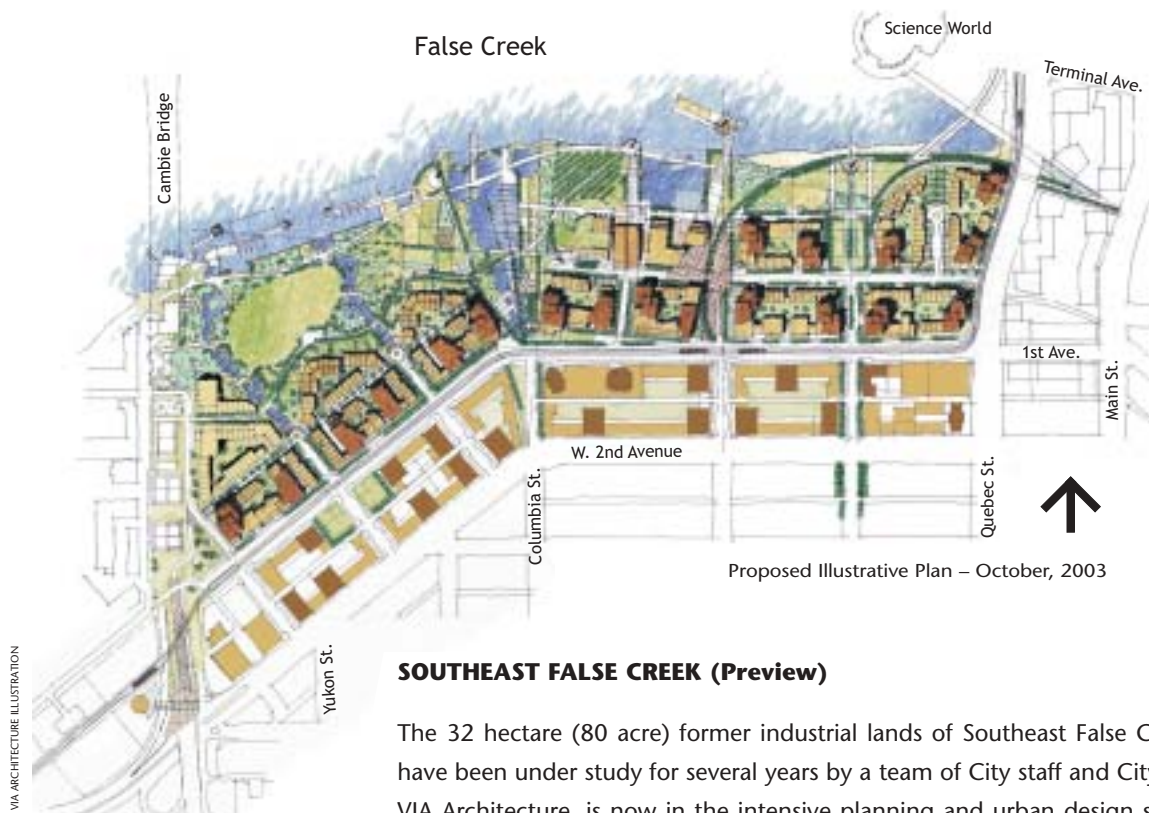
Citygate, now isolated, will soon anchor new neighbourhoods to the south (Southeast False Creek - see opposite and below) and east (False Creek Flats)



VIA ARCHITECTURE ILLUSTRATION

Proposed Southeast False Creek Preliminary Urban Design Concept (VIA Architecture; City's Urban Design / Architect Consultant) - May 2003

False Creek



SOUTHEAST FALSE CREEK (Preview)

The 32 hectare (80 acre) former industrial lands of Southeast False Creek, which have been under study for several years by a team of City staff and City consultant VIA Architecture, is now in the intensive planning and urban design stage. When fully developed into a mixed use predominantly residential community, it will complete the revitalization of False Creek as the core of Vancouver's inner city transformation. The primary objective is to build a state-of-the-art world model for community environments sustainable at an urban, inner city scale. The area is expected to house about 11,000 - 14,000 people, with family housing and a major waterfront park as a priority on the City-owned lands north of 1st Avenue.

In addition to incorporating all the organizing principles that have evolved through Vancouver's almost 20 years of urban neighbourhood planning experience, Southeast False Creek planning will emphasize the need for conservation, restoration and management of local, regional and global ecosystems. This involves initiatives for creative management of energy, wastes, water, and transportation, and the integration of opportunities to grow food in this urban neighbourhood. Buildings will use less energy and create less waste. Demonstration projects will explore innovative technologies, testing their potential application in other areas of the city. The emphasis on learning and education in the planning of this community has already generated changes in the City's corporate approach to development and to the city as a place to live. Southeast False Creek will be a community in which people live, work, play and learn in a neighbourhood that will achieve the highest levels of social equity, livability, ecological health and economic prosperity, so as to support their choices to live in a sustainable manner. Site rezonings and initial development planning for the entire area are now underway. Building construction on the privately-owned lands could begin as early as 2005 with full build-out taking about 10 to 15 years to complete.

With the awarding of the 2010 Winter Olympics to Vancouver, the initial concept for the Olympic Village by VIA Architecture will be developed as the first phase, within the long term overall site plan. The Village is being designed to convert to predominantly family housing immediately following the Games.



Proposed Neighbourhood Village Centre Concept



First Avenue streetscape character