



Old Town Design Guidelines

NEW BUILDINGS AND ADDITIONS TO EXISTING BUILDINGS (2025)

Victoria 2050 OCP Schedule 2H



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Government Street between Bastion and Fort Street, Victoria, BC, 1903 (City of Victoria Archives, Image M07056)

Prologue

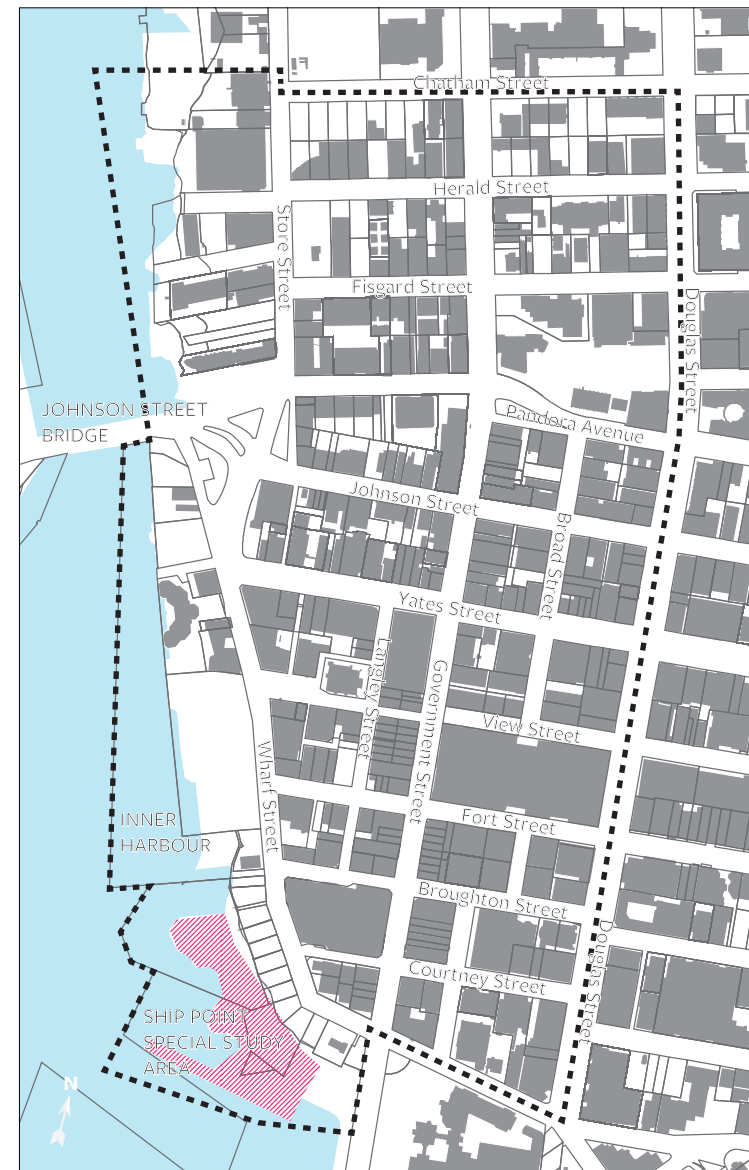
The *Old Town Design Guidelines for New Buildings and Additions to Existing Buildings (2025)* promotes the long term stability of Old Town by encouraging contextually sensitive new buildings and additions. We are stewards rather than curators of the historic environment, which means that new development and new urban spaces will inevitably reflect modern technology and new ways of working, living and playing. This document promotes architecture and design that embodies our modern age, while simultaneously reinforcing the timeless urban design and architectural principles of Old Town, which is key to achieving a “good fit”.

In response to increasing development pressure in Old Town, which is a heritage conservation area, the City of Victoria reviewed and updated the original 2006 Old Town Design Guidelines for 2019 and beyond. This refreshed document builds upon the key directions and objectives from the original document while seeking to provide improved clarity and certainty through more detailed guidelines that address a broad range of design topics for new (infill) buildings and additions to existing buildings.



Janion Building (Reliance Properties/Merrick Architecture) Victoria, BC

Map 1: Old Town Boundary



- Old Town Boundary
- Building Footprints

1. Introduction



1.1. The Future of Old Town

Victoria is widely appreciated for its historic charm, human scale and attractive streetscapes, which locals and visitors closely associate with the historic buildings of Old Town in the heart of the city (SEE MAP 1: OLD TOWN BOUNDARY). Old Town is one of the largest heritage conservation areas in British Columbia and a place of local, provincial and national significance. The area attracts a substantial number of visitors throughout the year. Research finds that visiting historic sites is the number one activity for U.S. visitors to Victoria and the second top activity for other international visitors.¹ Collectively, tourism in Greater Victoria contributes \$1.2 billion to the regional GDP every year.² As Victoria's main hub for tourism, retail and entertainment, the conservation of Old Town's unique character is in its long term interest.

These guidelines are a key part of the City's vision for managing change within Old Town and are an extension of the *Victoria 2050 Official Community Plan (OCP)*. The OCP designates the area as a Heritage Conservation Area (HCA) and directs the majority of new growth and redevelopment to surrounding areas. Its overall objective for Old Town is to protect and revitalize the existing historic buildings and streetscapes while accommodating new development

that respects and enhances the existing historic context with high quality new buildings, building additions, facade improvements and other physical changes.

These guidelines are for new buildings and additions to heritage buildings in Old Town. The preservation and restoration of heritage buildings is not covered, since it is addressed in the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. The design guidelines are premised on the following objectives:

- Support and enhance the unique and rich heritage context of Old Town;
- Contribute to Old Town's human scale character and strengthen the cohesiveness of the area;
- Maintain the authenticity of existing heritage buildings in Old Town by supporting distinguishable new buildings; and
- Respect the heritage values of the existing context.

Applied to individual developments, the guidelines will help ensure that new buildings and additions to existing buildings contribute positively to and strengthen the rich heritage fabric of Old Town that is so valued by locals and visitors alike.

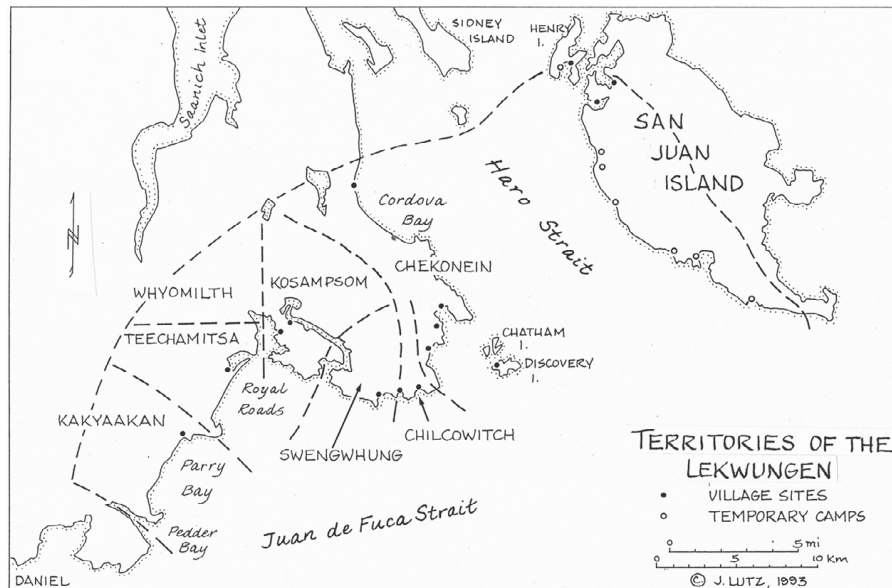
¹ Destination British Columbia. Regional Tourism Profile. May 2017.

² InterVISTAS. Economic Impact of Tourism in Greater Victoria, BC. Tourism Victoria, 2018.

1.2. Importance

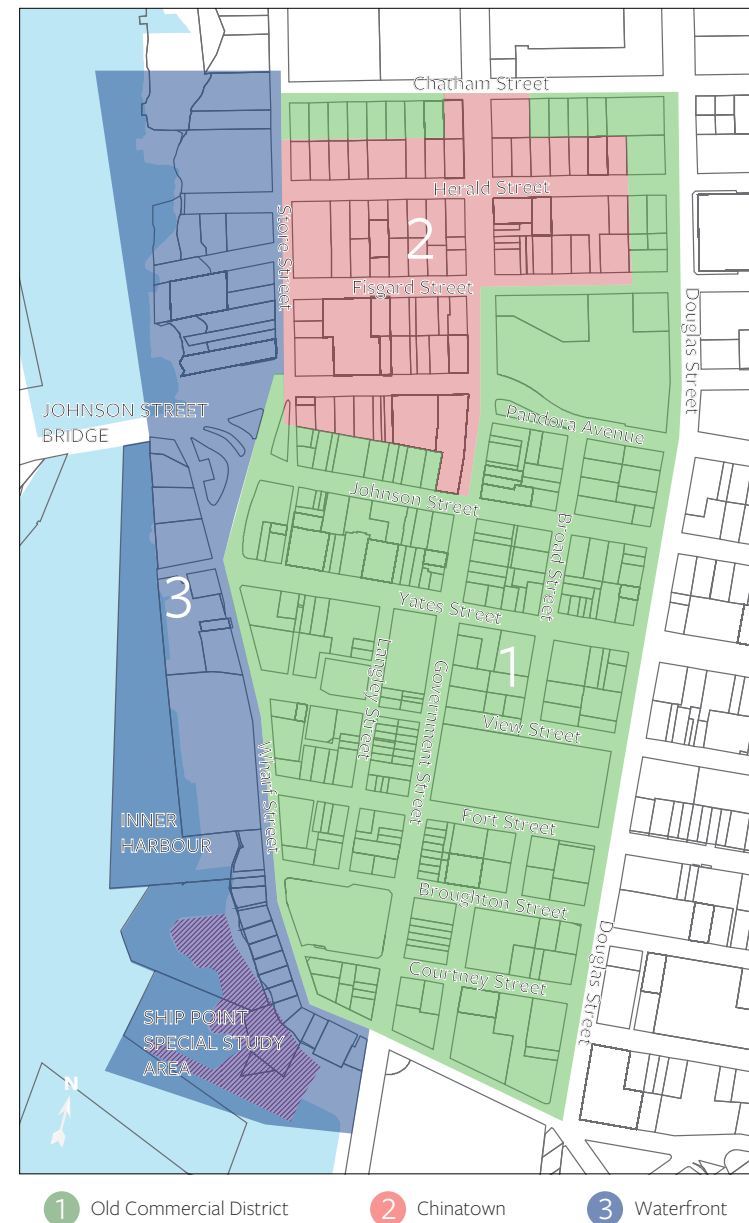
Old Town is an important part of Canadian history and is one of the largest single historic areas in the province. It was established on the homelands of the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations, who have lived on southern Vancouver Island for thousands of years. The map below depicts the historical territories of the original six Lekwungen family groups in what is now the Capital Regional District. Within Old Town are three areas of distinct character; the Old Commercial District, Chinatown, and the Waterfront (SEE MAP 2: OLD TOWN SUB AREAS). The federal government recognized Old Town as a “National Historic Event” in 1990. A national historic event is a “defining action, episode, movement or experience in Canadian history”. Parks Canada recognized the event of Old Town becoming an important port and commercial gateway that linked the Pacific Rim to the interior of British Columbia. The City of Victoria has also identified the heritage significance of many properties through inclusion in the City of Victoria Register of Heritage Properties (SEE MAP 4: OLD TOWN HERITAGE PROPERTIES).

Chinatown in Victoria is the oldest surviving Chinatown in Canada and is recognized as a National Historic Site. In addition to Chinatown, there are nine other National Historic Sites within Old Town. Decisions and actions that affect historic places must protect their commemorative integrity – that is to say, the ability of their physical presence to remind us of their profound cultural importance. New construction has the potential to strengthen, as well as to erode this integrity.



Map displays the homelands of the six Lekwungen Families (Lutz, 2020)

Map 2: Old Town Sub Areas



1.3. Street and Block Patterns

Hudson's Bay Company engineer and surveyor Joseph Pemberton prepared the initial town plan for Victoria by establishing a grid pattern of streets and blocks shown below in the town subdivision plan of 1863, prepared by H.O. Tiedeman. The plan shows a regular pattern of identical lots, 66ft (20m) in width. The present day street pattern of Old Town is clearly visible. Today, the original lot pattern is partially intact within the blocks bounded by Store Street, Douglas Street, Chatham Street and Herald Street. The lot pattern of other blocks has diversified, but with the exception of the Bay Centre site, there are few large sites.



1863 Subdivision Plan

Map 3: Courtyards, Squares and Alleys



- | | | | |
|---|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Square | 1. Centennial Square | 4. Theatre Alley | 7. Commercial Alley |
| Alley | 2. Dragon Alley | 5. Market Square | 8. Bastion Square |
| Building | 3. Fan Tan Alley | 6. Waddington Alley | 9. Trounce Alley |
| Footprints | | | |



Fan Tan Alley



Market Square



Bastion Square

1.4. Courtyards, Alleyways and Squares

A characteristic feature of Old Town is its network of pedestrian-friendly courtyards, alleyways and squares, some of which post-date the pre-WWI era (SEE MAP 3: COURTYARDS, SQUARES AND ALLEYS). The two most significant public squares in Old Town are Centennial Square and Bastion Square, constructed in the 1960s as part of an effort to revitalize downtown. Centennial Square, completed in 1966, was a pioneering effort to stimulate the revitalization of the downtown by combining conserved historic buildings with contextually appropriate modernist architecture. The re-design of Centennial Square rescued old City Hall from possible demolition and provided the template for further downtown revitalization detailed in the City's 1965 Overall Plan for Victoria. The private sector also contributed significantly to the preservation of historic buildings and public space. Developer and heritage preservation pioneer Sam Bawlf and his brother, architect Nick Bawlf, constructed Market Square in the 1970s. The development rehabilitated a full half block of heritage buildings on Pandora Avenue, Wharf Street and Johnson Street arranged around a partially enclosed courtyard with new cafes, restaurants and other retail spaces.

Chinatown features a unique network of alleys and passageways lined with doorways and window openings. Chinatown's alleys were deliberately hard to find and inaccessible to outsiders. They provided some protection for members of the Chinese community, who historically faced prejudice and racism. Fan Tan Alley and Dragon Alley are the most well known. Fan Tan Alley is the narrowest street in North America and spans between Pandora Avenue and Fisgard Street. It measures 0.9 metres (3 feet) in width at its narrowest. Its name refers to the Chinese gambling game 'Fan Tan'. Dragon Alley spans between Fisgard and Herald Street. Dragon Alley is accessed through narrow passages in a pair of buildings, one on Fisgard Street and one on Herald Street. Both buildings were constructed by Michael Hart in the late 1800s. Quan Yuen Yen and Joe Gar Chow bought the buildings in 1911 and constructed an unusual two-storey tenement building

between them, designed by architect Samuel Buttrey Birds. The tenement building housed single Chinese residents. The layout of the tenement created a compact village-like labyrinth of small courtyards and light wells concealed between the larger commercial buildings, a layout that emulated town planning in older Chinese cities.

Multi-functional, pedestrian-friendly alleys are found throughout the Old Town commercial district as well (SEE MAP 3: COURTYARDS, SQUARES AND ALLEYS). Historically they functioned as service spaces, stable areas and secondary access for businesses. Trounce alley, located between Government and Broad Street was named after Thomas Trounce and contains 125 year old gaslights. Trounce constructed the alley in 1859 when the colonial administration sold off a right-of-way (now View Street) to a private owner for development. In response, Trounce opened 'Trounce Avenue' to provide an alternate means of access between Government and Broad Streets for his Broad Street properties. This increased the extent of retail frontage. Trounce Alley is framed by the Green Block, built in 1889 for Alexander Alfred Green, a banker. Trounce Alley was originally framed by a second identical building, however it was destroyed by fire and replaced by the Central building, which is six storeys in height. Waddington Alley, between Johnson Street and Yates Street, is a narrow alley paved with wood blocks. Property owner Alfred Waddington created it to access his three lots and create additional street frontage. It is lined with buildings and mostly closed to traffic.

1.5. Traditional Architecture and Urbanism

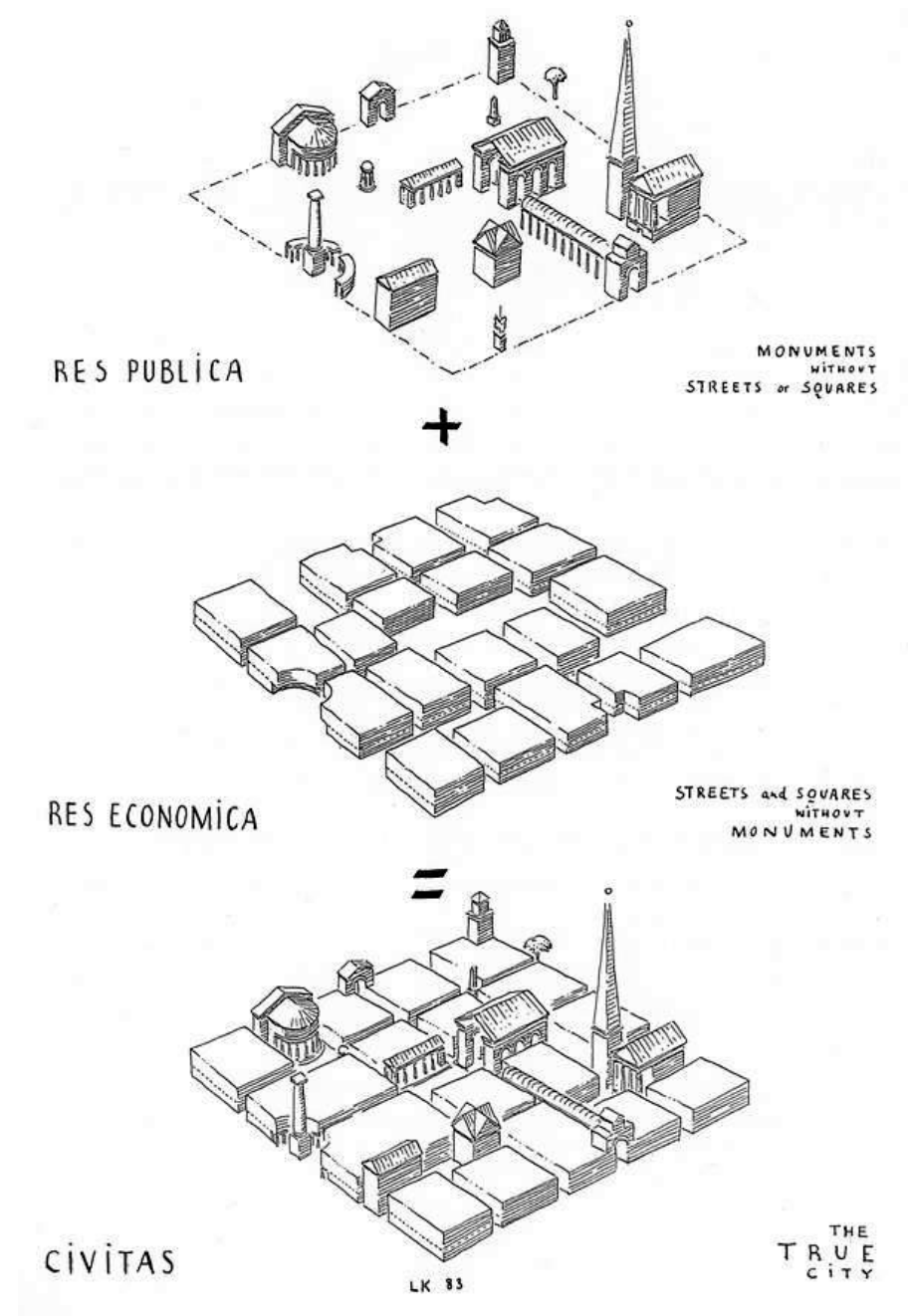
Traditional architecture is designed to a human scale, and references the proportions and geometries of the human body. This was the basis for the classical architecture of Greece and Rome, from which all subsequent western styles were derived. The traditional architecture of Old Town relies on five basic elements: order, proportion, hierarchy, balance and scale³. It is orderly and logical. Interior functions of a building are expressed on the exterior. Traditional architecture is well proportioned. Different individual parts of the building are carefully sized in relation to each other and the whole. Traditional architecture has a clear hierarchy of components. The most important aspects of the design are visually emphasized through size, centering, or framing with ornamentation. Traditional buildings also display balance in the weighting of visual components of the facade. Lastly, individual elements are appropriately scaled relative to one another so the design appears stable.

Traditional urban design, like traditional architecture, uses order, hierarchy and scale to help a viewer interpret and navigate the city. Institutional buildings, such as government buildings and churches, tend to occupy prominent locations, be designed to an impressive scale, and have more elaborate roof lines and designs to make them distinguishable from more commonplace buildings. Commercial and warehouse buildings tended to have flat roof lines and simpler designs that contribute to a larger cohesive urban fabric and framing of more iconic civic, cultural and institutional buildings.

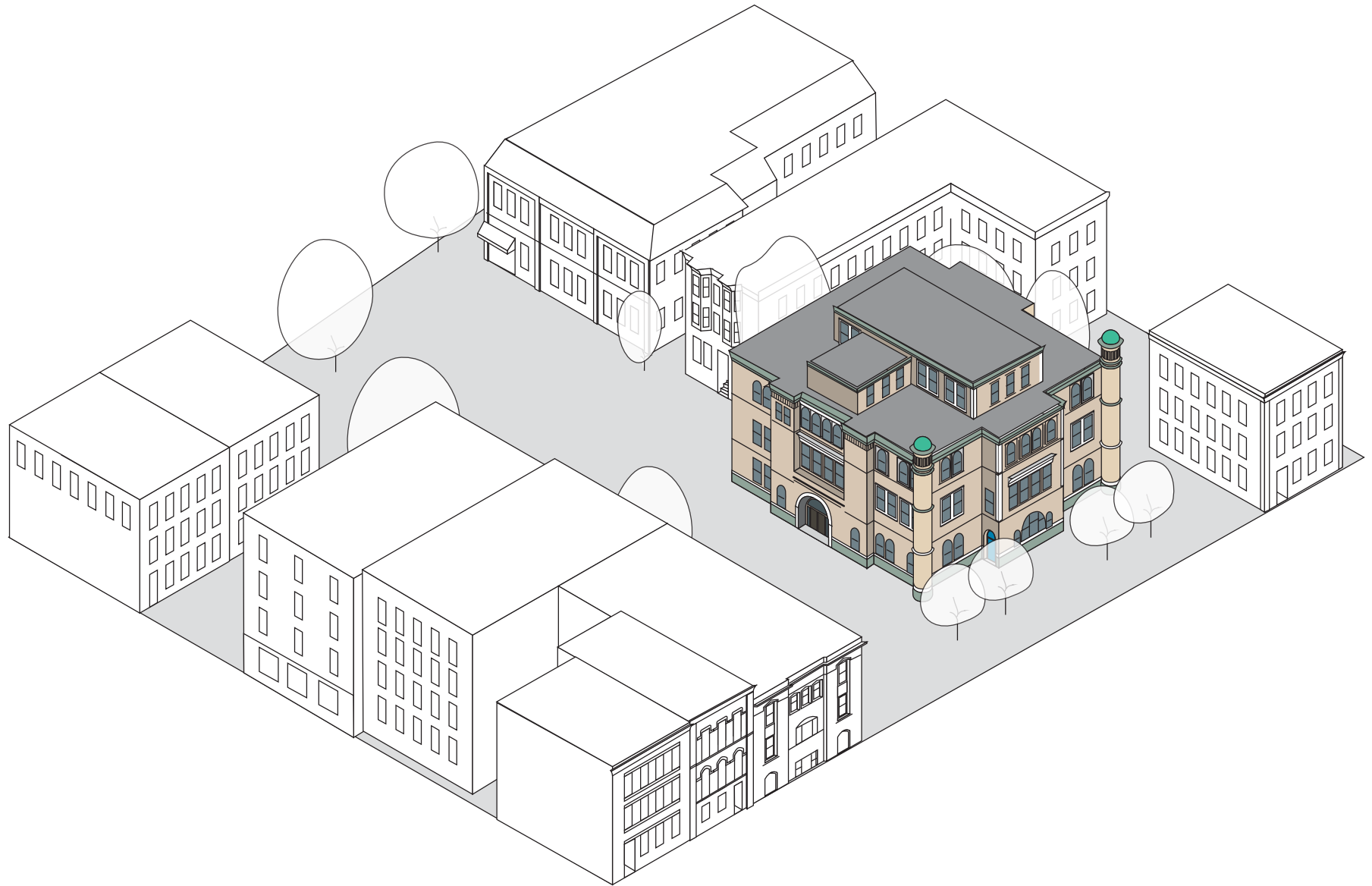
³ Cusato, Marianne & Pentreath, Ben, Get Your House Right, Sterling Publishing Co. Inc, 2007



The Old Provincial Courthouse (c. 1889) Victoria, BC



An illustration by Leon Krier depicting the vocabulary of traditional urban design



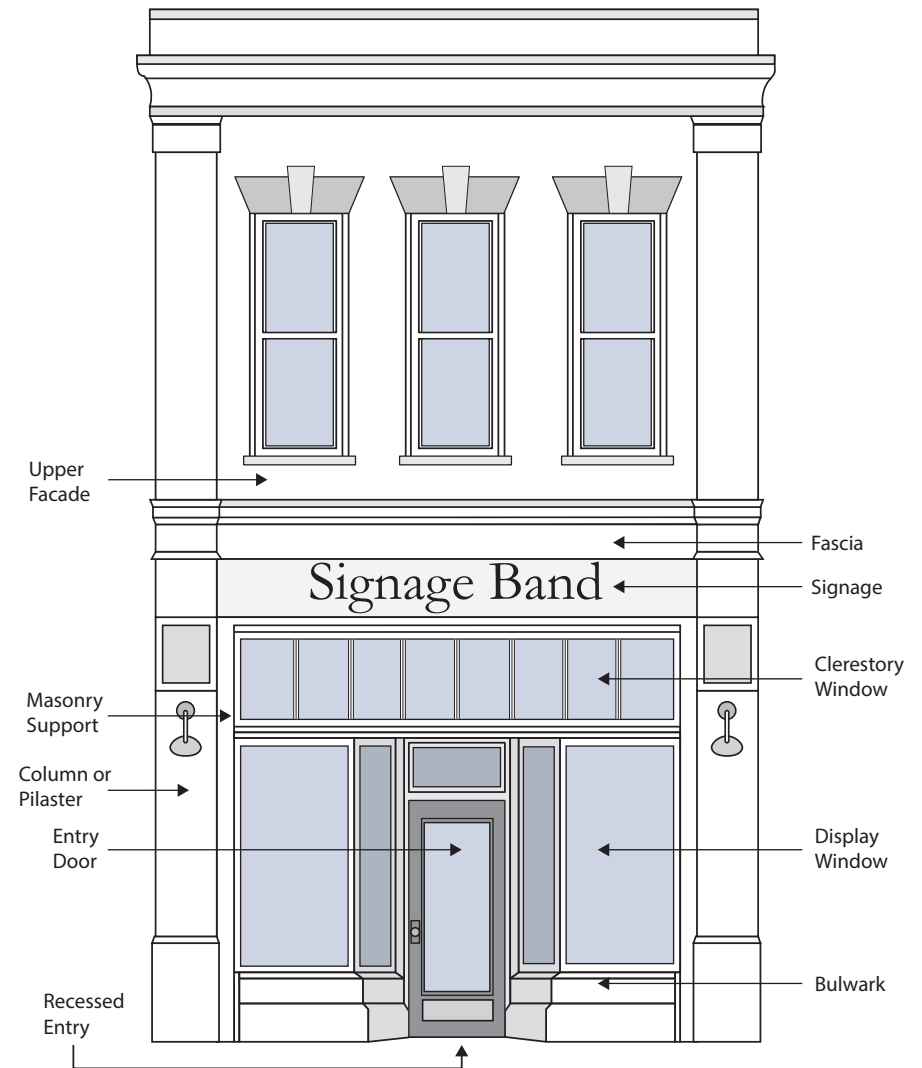
The Old Provincial Courthouse (c. 1889) in Bastion Square, designed by Herman Otto Tiedemann, was a landmark building designed to stand out from the surroundings through its four distinct facades, elaborate detailing and unique roof line punctuated by towers at the corners. The combination of a consistent and harmonious fabric of buildings punctuated by important landmarks made historic cities easier to navigate.

2. Old Town Context

The following section contains statements of significance for Old Town and its three sub-areas: The Old Commercial District, Chinatown and the Waterfront (SEE MAP 2- OLD TOWN SUB AREAS). A Statement of Significance is a summary of the historical, cultural, aesthetic, scientific or educational worth or usefulness of an historic place, whether it is an individual property or an area. It contains a description of the historic place and its key features, a summary of the area's heritage values and a list of character-defining elements. Character-defining elements are the aspects of an historic area that contribute to its heritage value and that should be retained in order to preserve this value. This document includes a statement of significance and character-defining elements for each sub area in Old Town. The guidelines in Chapter 5 should be interpreted with reference to the area's character defining elements and Statement of Significance.



Yates Street Victoria, BC



Elements of the traditional storefront

2.1. Statement of Significance – Old Commercial District

Old Town District of Victoria is significant as the historic nucleus of Canada's first Pacific port city. As a major commercial centre, area of settlement and active port prior to the First World War, the streetscapes of the Old Town District possess valuable association with the early commercial and social growth of Victoria, British Columbia, and western Canada. The location of the Old Town District – around the original site of Fort Victoria – is an important indication of the intentions of the City's first planners to take advantage of the natural geography and to make the best use of the Inner Harbour waterway.

The influence of the British Empire over colonial Victoria is evident in the conventional layout of this historic district and in its various building types. The juxtaposition of law and order (as seen in such buildings as the court house, City Hall, and bank structures) with commercial structures such as warehouses and mercantile buildings – laid out within a grid of streets, alleyways and courtyards– is significant as it reflects the British influence on western Canada and the expectation to maintain protocol throughout the Empire.

The significant architectural styles in the Old Town District embody Victoria's transformation from a gold rush boom town to a permanent port and centre of trade. The confident styles of the commercial architecture in the late nineteenth century (1870 –1900) are valuable as they represent the replacement of the business-minded Hudson's Bay Company by the American entrepreneurs of Victoria's merchant community in this period of rapid growth. This shift to centralized business endeavors in Victoria, which began in the mid-1880s when Vancouver became the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway and climaxed in the early twentieth century, is particularly evident in such structures as the warehouses that line Wharf Street, and the retail and wholesale buildings on Government Street.

Architectural themes in the Old Town District are valuable indications of the trends occurring in Canada before the First World War. The presence of Victorian, Italianate, Edwardian, and Commercial Style structures portrays Victoria as a modern contemporary city (as opposed to a frontier town). Vernacular design elements, such as the adaptation of metropolitan styles to accommodate local building materials and craftsmanship, combined with more traditional elements, form a significant architectural hybrid representative of Victoria as a Canadian outpost of the British Empire.

Map 4: Old Town Heritage Properties



2.2. Character Defining Elements – Old Commercial District

The following building elements are provided as a general representation of the range of architectural features and expressions that are evident throughout Old Town and especially within the Old Commercial District in both heritage and non-heritage buildings. These character defining elements provide the basis for the related design guidelines outlined in this document:

- Classically inspired three part building facades with a clearly defined base, middle and top;
- Vertical facade expressed by use of structural bays, vertical elements and proportions, and punched openings, including upper storey double-hung windows;
- Use of high quality materials such as wood, metal, brick, natural stone and glass;
- Well crafted facade ornamentation and detailing;
- Highly transparent and articulated ground floors incorporating recessed (raked) commercial entryways with large front display windows with
- multi-panelled bulkheads (window base) and continuous transom windows;
- A continuous street wall with chamfered/splayed building corners at street intersections;
- Varied range of low to mid-scale building heights generally ranging from three to five storeys;
- Varied and attractive roof lines along each street that are accented by architectural features such as parapets and cornice lines;
- The prominent use of brick masonry construction, such as the use of arched entryways into brick buildings;
- Prefabricated structural and decorative components of exterior facades of commercial buildings such as wood brackets and tin cornices;
- The presence of pedestrian paths, mews, alleys and courtyards within and through blocks; and
- Architecturally distinctive buildings at street heads.



Lower Johnson Streetscape, Victoria, BC

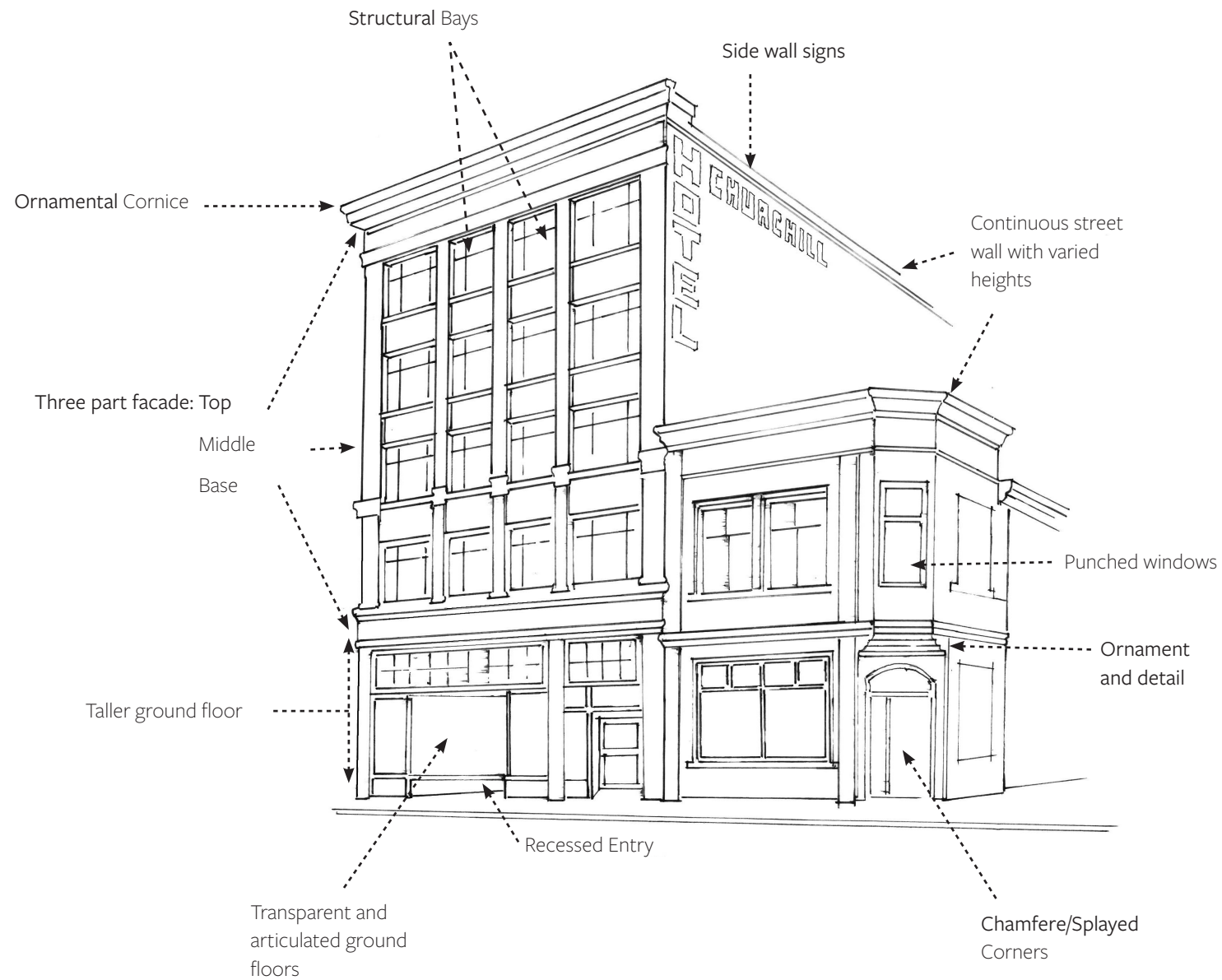
The lower Johnson streetscape displays many of Old Town's characteristics, including attractive and varied roof lines, facade ornamentation and the prevalence of brick masonry construction.



Wharf Street, Victoria, BC

A continuous row of masonry buildings along Wharf Street with varied roof lines.

Old Town – Character Defining Building Elements



2.3. Statement of Significance – Chinatown

The Government of Canada designated Victoria's Chinatown a National Historic Site because it is the oldest surviving Chinatown in Canada. It was the largest urban centre of Chinese population in Canada through the first decade of the twentieth century; it is one of a very few Chinatowns in North America to retain cohesive groupings of heritage buildings.

The heritage value of this site is embodied in the diverse collection of structures within the district, their spatial connections, and ongoing role in commercial, social and institutional activities of the Chinese Canadian community. It speaks to the fact that, for nearly three decades before the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed, Victoria was the first port of entry of most Chinese immigrants and remained an important enclave until after World War II.

2.4. Character Defining Elements – Chinatown

The Government of Canada has identified the following character defining elements as contributing to the heritage value of Chinatown as a National Historic Site:

- The plan, incorporating the standard grid of urban blocks with interconnecting interior alleyways;
- Placement of most buildings tight to the sidewalk, usually abutting one another;
- One and two-storey brick tenement buildings within the inner core area;
- The predominance of brick construction;
- Typically Italianate-inspired, rectilinear massing of two to three-storey, flat-roofed buildings, with large ground-floor shop windows, and upper floors with doorways originally opening onto balconies;
- Surviving balconies;
- Occasional use of Chinoiserie motifs including upturned eaves and tiling, and detailing such as roof ornaments, domes, prominent parapets, pressed metal cornices and flagpoles;
- More elaborate 20th-century designs as illustrated by the Chinese Public School with its square massing elaborated with decorative balcony;
- Upturned overhanging eaves with heavily worked bracketing and roof-top 'pagoda' lantern, and the Gee Tuck Tong Benevolent Association Building with recessed upper floor balcony and "cheater storey" inserted between ground and second floors; and
- Post-1900 buildings with an internal corridor accessing an inner core area; reinforcing late 20th-century buildings including the Chinatown Care Centre and the Chung Wah Mansion housing complex.



The Lee's Benevolent Association Building includes recessed balconies, a tile roof, upturned eaves and Italianate details. Victoria, BC



The Chinese Public School is a landmark with its vibrant colours, lanterns and decorative balcony. Victoria, BC



The Yen Wo Society building features a 'cheater storey' above the ground floor as well as a flagpole. Victoria, BC

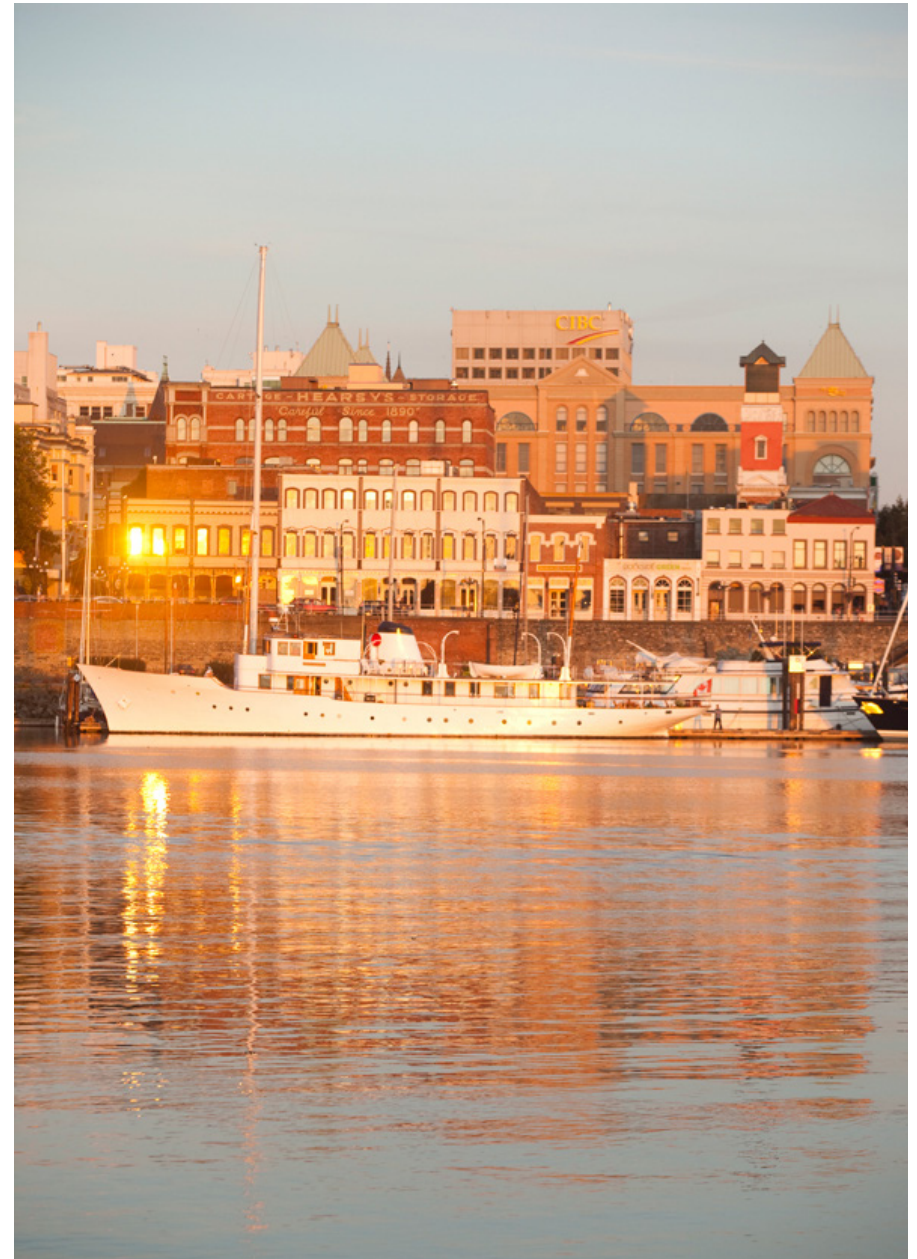
2.5. Statement of Significance – Waterfront

The groups of waterside warehouses and hotels dating to the 1860s and the accompanying landscape of loading docks, retaining walls and wharves along Store Street reminds us of Victoria's role as a commercial seaport and the trans- shipping point for the material, people and supplies that built British Columbia. Coastal marine trade began with First Nations, and continued into the Gold Rush era as tea clipper tall-ships and the first steam ships created trade links with Asia via the Pacific Ocean in the second half of the nineteenth century. The commercial activities of the harbour are valued for the way they have shaped the development of the land beside the water, as are the architectural treatments of buildings and landscape that remind us of these maritime industrial origins.

2.6. Character Defining Elements – Waterfront

- Building types and spaces associated with the functions of a commercial harbour;
- Buildings over the water, vessels, float planes, buoys and marks, wharves, pontoons, piles, boat ramps, davits and ladders, hawsers, bollards, and mooring rings;
- Random rubble stonework, brick masonry, and iron shutters and doors;
- Stone and brick retaining walls;
- Buildings with an industrial aesthetic;
- Dual-aspect structures that present a commercial frontage to Wharf Street and a harbour frontage to the water;
- The rich texture of the land/water edge resulting from conditions including inter-tidal beaches, projecting structures, inundations and reclamations;
- Load-bearing masonry buildings and details and forms that accompany load-bearing masonry surrounded by subordinate lighter wood and metal structures;
- The constantly changing water's edge resulting from the movement of vessels,
- The trans-shipping of cargo and the state of the tide; and
- The glimpses of water seen between buildings, down alleyways and slips and on street axes.

The view of Old Town from the water; defined by a concentration of small scale historic buildings tiering up from the waterfront with a distinct rhythm and rich design quality.



Old Town's topography slopes upward from the water's edge, creating a layered effect of buildings. Visible in the photograph is a rubble stone wall along the shore, and some of the historic buildings on Wharf Street associated with the original commercial functions of the harbour. Victoria, BC

3. How to Use the Guidelines

The guidelines are a resource for designers, architects and property owners who are actively planning or considering a new building or addition to an existing building located within Old Town (SEE MAP 1: OLD TOWN BOUNDARY). They are also an evaluation tool for City staff and municipal decision makers reviewing proposals. The purpose of the guidelines is to clarify how to achieve the broad objectives for the Inner Harbour and Old Town sub-areas of Development Permit Area DPA 2: Downtown Core, and the Old Town sub-area of Heritage Conservation Area HCA 1: Commercial Heritage, as described within Schedule C of the OCP. It is important to note that the guidelines only apply within those portions of DPA 2 and HCA 1. Designers, architects and property owners should reference the guidelines and consider the following questions before undertaking or planning any design work related to new buildings or building additions within Old Town:

- How closely does the design adhere to the principles and intent of the guidelines?
- Where does it depart from them and why?
- Does the design respond to the statement of significance and character-defining elements for the sub-area?

3.1. Design Guideline Structure

The design guidelines provide a range of baseline guiding statements that are intended to be used together to ensure that the design of new buildings or additions to existing buildings result in built forms that are complementary to the context of Old Town and that reflect the design principles outlined in this document.

They provide detailed design intent, criteria and a rationale to guide, evaluate and support decision making on the overall form and character of new buildings and additions. Projects may also be subject to other guidelines depending on the zoning, proposed uses, location, building type and scale of project.

Each design topic is supplemented by a background statement that explains the general rationale for the respective guidelines, an intent statement that describes the overall desired outcome followed by specific design guidelines. Each design topic is also supplemented with photographs and/or illustrations that support the intent statement and that provide examples of how the design guidelines can be implemented. Design guidelines should also be considered with the related statement of significance and character-defining elements described in Chapter 2.

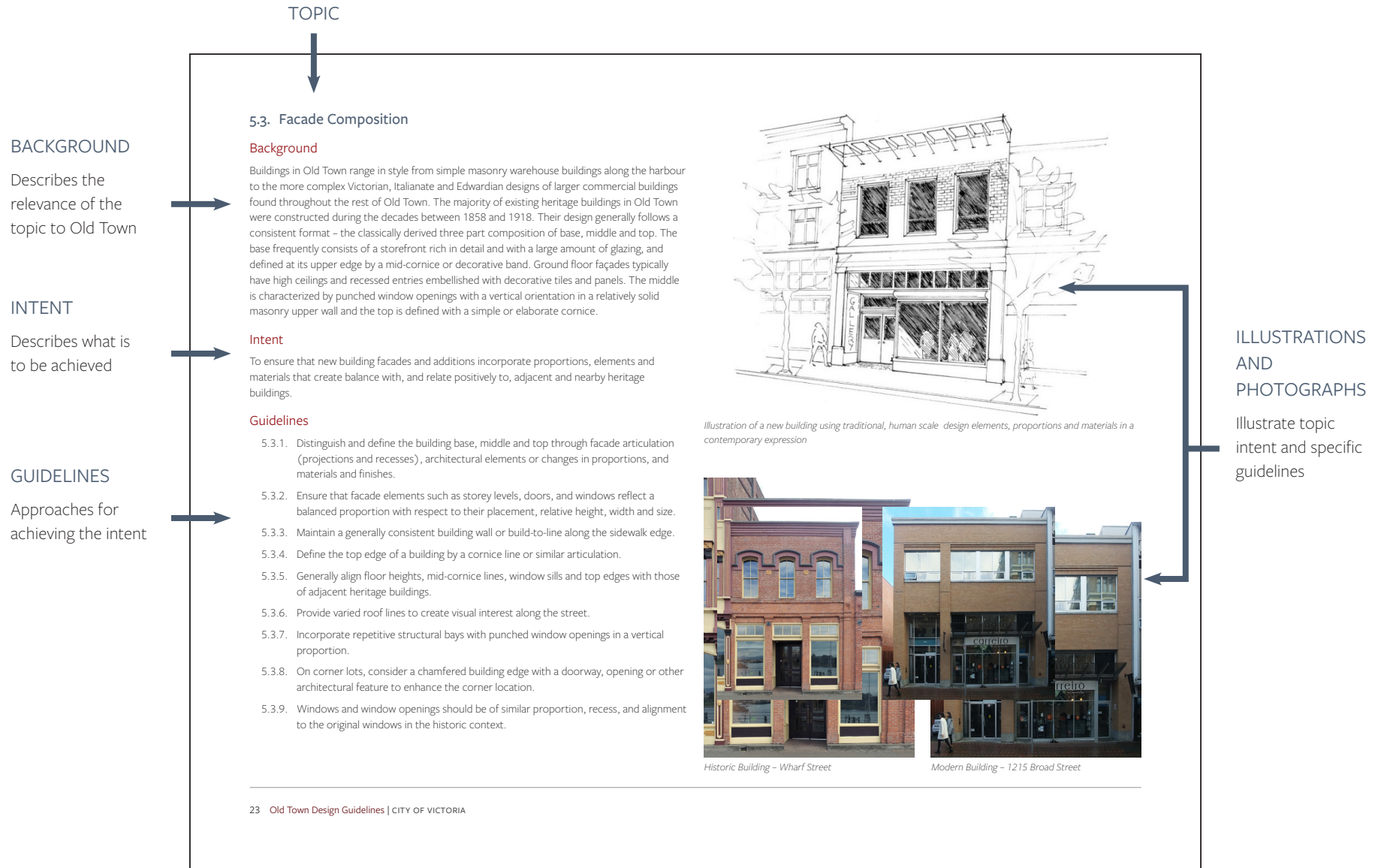
Applicants should clearly demonstrate compliance with all of the applicable design guidelines; however, it is also recognized that the ability to fully meet each design guideline may be influenced by land use, lot size, topography and the overall complexity of the development.



Hudson Mews (Merrick Architecture / Townline Developments) Victoria, BC

The four storey base of the Hudson Mews Development, located adjacent to Old Town, is an example of a modern building with traditional facade details such as punched windows and well defined lintels and sills.

Sample Design Guideline Structure



4. Design Principles

The following design principles provide the basis for the design guidelines in Chapters 5 and 6, which seek to ensure that new buildings and additions are responsive and complementary to the existing historic character, local topography, urban design and sense of place that is evident throughout Old Town.

- **Good Fit:** to foster infill building designs that respect, complement and contribute positively to the historic context of Old Town while encouraging innovative, creative and timeless design solutions.
- **Reinforce Existing Character:** to ensure that new buildings contribute and do not detract from the established character of the area.
- **Human Scale:** to create visual interest and a comfortable urban environment for pedestrians by providing appropriately scaled building mass, articulating facades and incorporating a range of detailed building elements at street level.
- **Cohesiveness:** to ensure that new buildings have a unified architectural composition that relates well to the fronting street and reflects the internal function and use.
- **Authenticity:** to ensure that new buildings are distinguishable from the genuinely historic buildings of Old Town (See Standard 11, Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada), while being sympathetic and compatible to their proportions, mass, scale and rhythm.



PHOTO: COLIN MILLER/ERIC PIASECKI

The Emory (Morris Adjmi Architects) New York, NY

The Emory Building incorporates high quality limestone and glazed gray brick cladding along with modern sash windows and simplified cornices that reference the adjacent buildings.

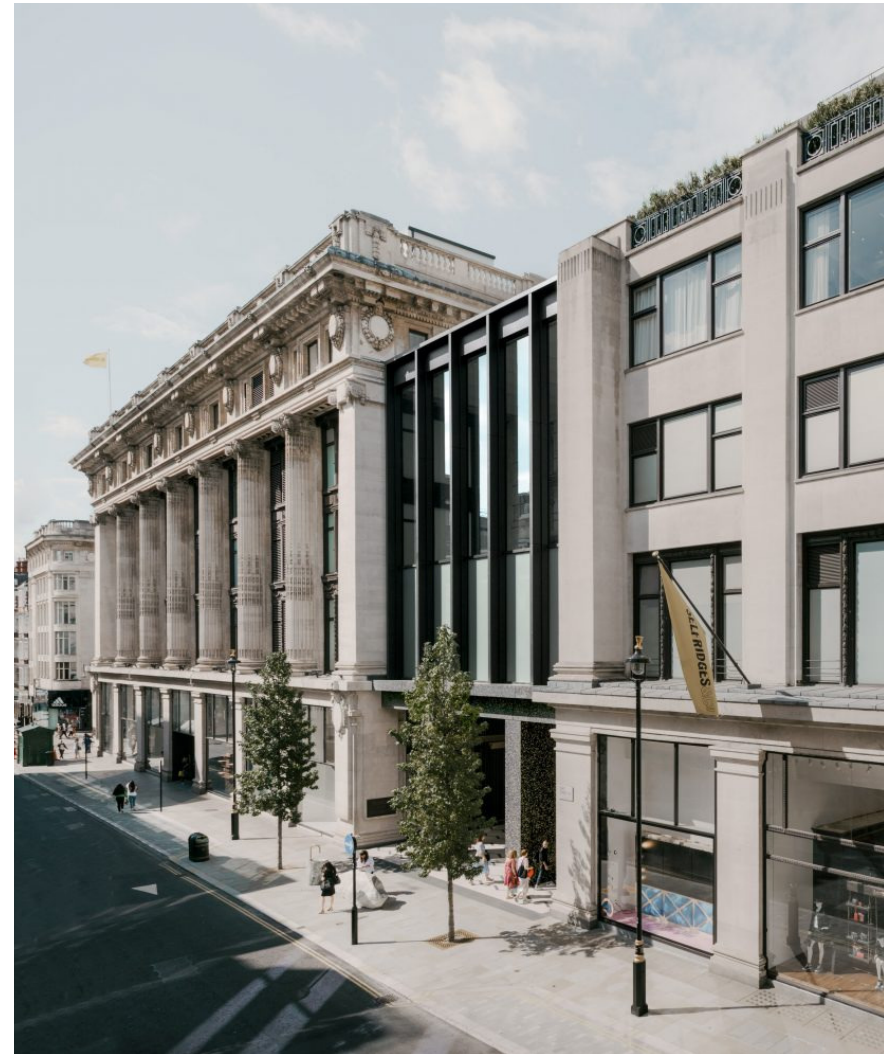


PHOTO: SIMON MENGES

Selfridges Addition (David Chipperfield Architects), London, UK

This addition to the Selfridges building is clearly contemporary, and yet reinforces its context through a pattern of strong vertical elements.

5. Design Guidelines for New Buildings and Additions

5.1. Building Mass, Scale and Siting

Background

The land use policies contained in the Downtown Core Area Plan and the OTD- 1 Zone contained in Zoning Bylaw 2018 both generally limit the height of new buildings and additions in Old Town to a maximum of 15m to protect its human scale, urban form, and the layered effect of buildings rising up from the waterfront toward Douglas Street. Taller buildings are permitted in the areas surrounding Old Town. This approach is intended to create an ‘Urban Amphitheatre’, with a low-scale urban form along the waterfront and throughout Old Town, rising steadily eastward to a concentration of newer, higher density commercial, mixed-use and residential buildings in the Central Business District (Downtown) and the Residential Mixed Use District (Harris Green). These policies and zoning have helped maintain and reinforce the scale established by Old Town’s numerous heritage buildings, 95% of which are five storeys or less in height. In addition to scale, the following guidelines state that new buildings and additions should be located at or close to the front and side property lines in keeping with the historic pattern.

Intent

To ensure the design of new buildings and additions complements the mass, scale, height and street wall pattern of nearby heritage buildings and the immediate context.

Guidelines

- 5.1.1. Locate and site new buildings and additions to create a continuous ‘street wall edge’.
- 5.1.2. Design new buildings and additions to reflect the established proportions, composition and spatial organization of adjacent historic facades.
- 5.1.3. Design new buildings with a minimum building height of two storeys to maintain continuity of the street wall and to provide a comfortable street enclosure.
- 5.1.4. Include a distinct roof line in the building design, through such measures as a simplified or contemporary cornice or parapet.
- 5.1.5. Ensure that the main facade height of a new building does not exceed the facade height of a directly adjacent lower scale heritage building by more than three storeys to avoid drastic changes in scale along the street.
- 5.1.6. Vary the massing of a new building on a corner site to respond to streetscapes with different building heights and scales.
- 5.1.7. Modulate the overall horizontal and/or vertical building mass on large buildings to achieve a scale that is compatible with adjacent buildings.
- 5.1.8. For buildings over 30m in width, incorporate an articulated vertical break in the facade with a patio, courtyard, recessed entryway or other features to help break up the expanse of the facade.
- 5.1.9. Where possible, position new buildings to maintain views of historic “ghost signs” on the sidewalls of adjacent buildings.



Templar Flats (Lintack Architects/Core Urban Inc. Developments) Hamilton, ON

This new building has a traditional facade whose height, window pattern and selection of materials complements the adjacent two buildings.

Waterfront (Additional Guidelines)

- 5.1.10. Orient and scale new buildings to maintain views of the layered pattern of ascending building heights in Old Town visible from the water.
- 5.1.11. Buildings along the waterfront create the foreground for Old Town and nearby areas. Design new buildings to maximize views to Old
- 5.1.12. Town and preserve views of landmark heritage buildings including the Empress Hotel, CPR Steamship Terminal and the Malahat Building.
- 5.1.13. Avoid buildings with a dominant horizontal expression in favour of more compact buildings that reflect the smaller scale vertical expression of existing heritage buildings.
- 5.1.14. Locate and design new buildings along the waterfront to provide direct pedestrian access to the Harbour Pathway where appropriate.



92A Scollard Street (Shim Sutcliffe Architects) Toronto, ON

This contemporary red brick building in the Yorkville Hazelton Heritage Conservation District complements the low-scale character of its surroundings.



The Janion includes a waterfront patio with pedestrian access to the Harbour Pathway. Victoria, BC



The topography of Old Town gradually rises upwards from the waterfront, supporting a layering of buildings. Victoria, BC

5.2. Street Rhythm

Background

Most blocks in Old Town consist of numerous individual buildings and lots, with a rich variety of building widths and heights. This creates a distinctive rhythm and pattern for the streetscapes which supports walkability and fosters a sense of discovery. In general, heritage buildings have strong vertical and horizontal definition as well as depth and relief through projecting details that are visually interesting. They have large ground floor windows framed by pilasters or columns, and topped with transom windows. Cornices mark the ground storey and the top floor. Facades are divided into vertical bays with pilasters or buttresses that project slightly from the main wall. Windows are generally vertically proportioned, punched, aligned horizontally and accentuated at the top and bottom with sills, lintels and brickwork. Recessed entryways are located frequently along the street and there is an evident rhythm of building elements, proportions, and articulation along the street. Brackets, dentils and other architectural details are also frequently present.

Intent

To ensure new buildings incorporate vertical proportions and elements, including appropriately proportioned, spaced and recessed entryways, punched windows and use of structural bays that contribute to the established street rhythm and reflect the historic streetscape pattern.

Guidelines

- 5.2.1. Incorporate frequent entryways at a spacing that reflects the pattern and frequency of entryways that exist throughout the area.
- 5.2.2. Punctuate and emphasize entryways by incorporating recesses and a high level of design detail in the facade and ground plane.
- 5.2.3. Incorporate a rhythm of structural bays, windows, and features.
- 5.2.4. Articulate facades, especially for larger buildings, into a series of intervals, using vertically proportioned windows and bays, to reflect and fit within the established streetscape pattern and, more broadly, within the traditional 66ft (20m) lot and building width pattern that exists throughout Old Town.
- 5.2.5. Provide windows, doors and other architectural elements that are of a scale and proportion similar to the historic architectural pattern and that are designed to support the functional needs of existing and future businesses and residents.
- 5.2.6. Incorporate a variety of roof line heights into larger buildings to provide visual relief and variety of scale.



Illustrative example of a new infill building (in yellow), complementing the existing pattern, placement, spacing and proportions of windows, entries, structural bays and other architectural elements.



The Janion (Reliance Properties/Merrick Architecture) Victoria, BC

The extension to the Janion Building continues the vertical pattern of structural bays.

Waterfront

Design new buildings with a dual frontage that includes an attractive building face toward the street and water where applicable.

Ensure that new waterfront buildings and additions create a complementary foreground to Old Town by reinforcing the existing scale, pattern, articulation and architectural expression of surrounding heritage buildings that are visible from the water.

Articulate the facade facing the water into vertical intervals that reflect the window pattern and proportions of other surrounding heritage buildings that are visible from the water.



Mermaid Wharf, Victoria, BC

Mermaid Wharf has a strong relationship to the water and the adjacent waterfront uses. It is comprised of two parts, one of which reinforces the masonry character of Old Town as viewed from the water. The two-part design also helps minimize the visual effect of the massing.



623 Fort Street (Alan Lowe Architects) Victoria, BC

The ground floor of this new building features a set of three retail spaces with centred, recessed entryways, creating a recognizable pattern along the street.



West Court Jesus College (Niall Mclaughlin Architects) Cambridge, UK

This new project displays a strong sense of rhythm through closely spaced vertical elements. The mass of the building is articulated into smaller units similar in width to the adjacent buildings.

PHOTO: PETER COOK

5.3. Facade Composition

Background

Buildings in Old Town range in style from simple masonry warehouse buildings along the harbour to the more complex Victorian, Italianate and Edwardian designs of larger commercial buildings found throughout the rest of Old Town. The majority of existing heritage buildings in Old Town were constructed during the decades between 1858 and 1918. Their design generally follows a consistent format – the classically derived three part composition of base, middle and top. The base frequently consists of a storefront rich in detail and with a large amount of glazing, and defined at its upper edge by a mid-cornice or decorative band. Ground floor façades typically have high ceilings and recessed entries embellished with decorative tiles and panels. The middle is characterized by punched window openings with a vertical orientation in a relatively solid masonry upper wall and the top is defined with a simple or elaborate cornice.

Intent

To ensure that new building facades and additions incorporate proportions, elements and materials that create balance with, and relate positively to, adjacent and nearby heritage buildings.

Guidelines

- 5.3.1. Distinguish and define the building base, middle and top through facade articulation (projections and recesses), architectural elements or changes in proportions, and materials and finishes.
- 5.3.2. Ensure that facade elements such as storey levels, doors, and windows reflect a balanced proportion with respect to their placement, relative height, width and size.
- 5.3.3. Maintain a generally consistent building wall or build-to-line along the sidewalk edge.
- 5.3.4. Define the top edge of a building by a cornice line or similar articulation.
- 5.3.5. Generally align floor heights, mid-cornice lines, window sills and top edges with those of adjacent heritage buildings.
- 5.3.6. Provide varied roof lines to create visual interest along the street.
- 5.3.7. Incorporate repetitive structural bays with punched window openings in a vertical proportion.
- 5.3.8. On corner lots, consider a chamfered building edge with a doorway, opening or other architectural feature to enhance the corner location.
- 5.3.9. Windows and window openings should be of similar proportion, recess, and alignment to the original windows in the historic context.



Illustration of a new building using traditional, human scale design elements, proportions and materials in a contemporary expression



Historic Building – Wharf Street



Modern Building – 1215 Broad Street



074 Lievehof (360 Architecten) Ghent, BE

This development uses the same window proportions as adjacent buildings and is massed to provide a transition in scale and a varied roofline. Windows are punched and there are window openings along both street frontages at the ground floor. The building maintains a consistent street wall.

- 5.3.10. Consider incorporating recessed balconies in areas where this is an historic characteristic.
- 5.3.11. Blank walls that face public streets and open spaces are strongly discouraged and should be avoided. Where unavoidable, blank walls should be screened or enhanced with design elements appropriate to the context.
- 5.3.12. Locate and screen roof top structures and mechanical equipment so that they are not visible from the public realm.



Magnolia Hotel Victoria, BC

The Magnolia Hotel in Victoria is comprised of a base storey with weather protection canopies and a tall floor-to-ceiling height, a clear middle section, and a modern cornice that demarcates the top of the building. It has a dynamic and visually interesting facade in which high quality materials like brick, stone and tile predominate.

5.4. Relationship to Street and Open Space

Background

Most historic buildings in Old Town were originally scaled, oriented and designed to support pedestrian activity within compact street blocks. Specifically, buildings were built to the property line with little or no setbacks, with richly detailed shop fronts incorporating large areas of glazing and with welcoming entryways located frequently along the street. This was to support and accommodate the high levels of pedestrian activity associated with travel by horse and carriage, and later the street car, which were the predominant forms of transportation that shaped the original use, activity and character of Old Town.

Intent

Buildings should relate positively to the fronting public street or open space by incorporating building elements and details that create visual interest, support pedestrian activity and achieve human scale.

Guidelines

- 5.4.1. Design shop fronts entryways with a high level of transparent glazing along the street level.
- 5.4.2. Incorporate recessed entryways with unique designs and finishes such as transom windows, use of trim details for windows and doors, and attractive finishing materials on entryway flooring.
- 5.4.3. Incorporate a minimum 4.5m ground floor height to support ground floor commercial uses.
- 5.4.4. Ensure that the design and finish of the underside of balconies and soffits are considered and integrated with the overall building design.
- 5.4.5. Vary the planes and textures of storefronts to be similar to nearby heritage buildings.
- 5.4.6. Design facades with architectural details and materials that create shadows and depth to achieve a three dimensional quality.
- 5.4.7. Integrate planned or future lighting and weather protection features to complement the building design and fenestration pattern.
- 5.4.8. Provide architecturally designed lighting elements that are appropriate for the use and scale of the building.
- 5.4.9. Use lighting to highlight building features and illuminate the public realm while avoiding over illuminating the building or projecting light into the sky or onto adjacent properties.



Chophouse Row (Graham Baba Architects) Seattle, WA

The shop fronts of Chophouse Row are highly transparent and have exterior furnishings that enliven the public realm and establish a strong connection between the interior and exterior.



Valentino Flagship Store, Daytime.

(David Chipperfield Architects) London, UK



Valentino Flagship Store, Night time illumination.

(David Chipperfield Architects) London, UK

- 5.4.10. Incorporate pedestrian-scale lighting along the length of the building face.
- 5.4.11. Control the intensity and impact of building and signage lighting through dimming and variation in colours.
- 5.4.12. Design and orient commercial signs so that they are scaled to pedestrians and do not overwhelm the building facade.
- 5.4.13. Limit commercial signage in number, location and size to reduce visual clutter and make individual signs easier to see.
- 5.4.14. Avoid commercial signage above the ground storey.
- 5.4.15. Signage should perform the simple function of identification. Overly busy signs are discouraged.
- 5.4.16. Buildings with a number of businesses are encouraged to use an overall sign strategy to ensure cohesion and limit visual clutter.
- 5.4.17. Individual exterior signage for businesses located on upper floors is strongly discouraged.
- 5.4.18. Preferred sign types include:
 - Projecting two-dimensional or 'blade' type signs;
 - Externally lit signs;
 - External neon signs and small neon signs inside windows;
 - Individual cut out or silhouette letter signs mounted on store fronts; and
 - Restored historic sidewall signs.
- 5.4.19. Back-lit plastic box signs are strongly discouraged and should be avoided.
- 5.4.20. Where functionally appropriate, consider limiting the width of garage entries and driveways to mitigate impacts on the presence of a contiguous street wall along the public realm.
- 5.4.21. Locate, design and site garage entrances to minimize impacts on the pedestrian realm.
- 5.4.22. Ensure that any on-site loading spaces are not visually open to the sidewalk. If the loading space is on site, it should have an attractive door along the sidewalk similar to a garage opening.
- 5.4.23. Minimize the visual impact of security features such as movable gates or roll-down doors by inseting such features into the storefront bay opening.
- 5.4.24. Consider incorporating small setbacks for portions of the facade at street level to accommodate sidewalk cafes, patios and other outdoor seating areas that support animation of the street.

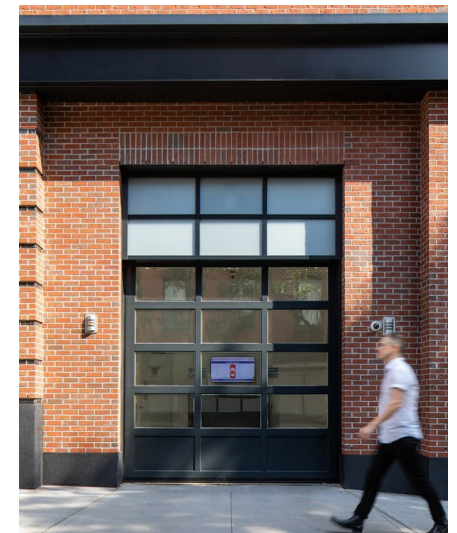


A series of contextually appropriate signs on Pandora Street. Victoria, BC



1310 Gladstone Avenue (Christine Lintott Architects/Fernwood NRG) Victoria, BC

This new building incorporates a modern weather protection canopy.



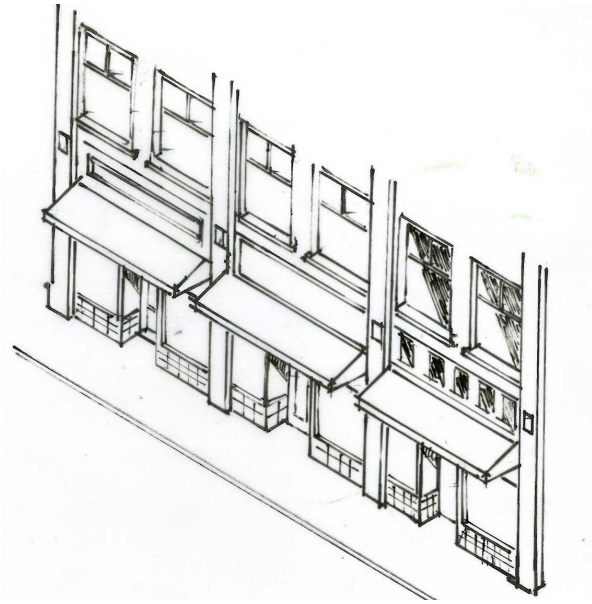
325 Henry Street (BKSK Architects) New York, NY

This roll down door is well integrated with the architecture of the building and has minimal impact on the street.



Buchanan Street, Glasgow, Scotland

This pedestrian friendly street features a mix of old and new buildings with projecting awnings and generous amounts of ground floor glazing.



Frequent entryways, large amounts of transparent glazing, recessed entries and weather protection contribute to the existing streetscape pattern and support pedestrian activity and comfort.



107-111 Greene Street (Joseph Pellombardi Architects) New York, NY

This building in the SoHo Cast Iron Historic District has a three-dimensional facade with recessed windows and projecting horizontal and vertical elements that cast deep shadows in the sunlight. The ground floor features frequent entries and abundant glazing.

Chinatown (Additional Guidelines)

- 5.4.25. Incorporate traditional colours such as red, green and gold in awnings, signs and architectural elements as a means of reinforcing the distinct character of the area. Avoid the use of white as a dominant colour.
- 5.4.26. Signs and awnings should respect the general character of the existing traditional signs and awnings.
- 5.4.27. Colourful signs are encouraged including the use of brightly coloured projecting neon tube signs, signs on storefront windows and front lit signs.
- 5.4.28. Avoid the use of flat wall signs and the use of plastic on the sign face.
- 5.4.29. Incorporate lettering, symbols, patterns and decorative moulding on signs that reflect and evoke the cultural significance of Chinatown.
- 5.4.30. Current and/or historic mid-block alley ways and courtyards should be retained in new development.
- 5.4.31. Incorporate traditional Chinese planting materials and landscape elements within courtyards and walkways.



The Union Building (Ciccozzi Architecture/Anthem Properties) Victoria, BC

The Union building in Chinatown includes a modern transom window with a grid pattern of muntins similar to the transom window on the Chinese Empire Reform Building and the windows of the Yen Wu Tsung Tsin (Hakka) Society Building. The project also incorporates outdoor seating for visitors and a detailed signage band.



Chinatown, Victoria, BC

Doorways in Chinatown accentuated through colour.

5.5. Materials and Finishes

Background

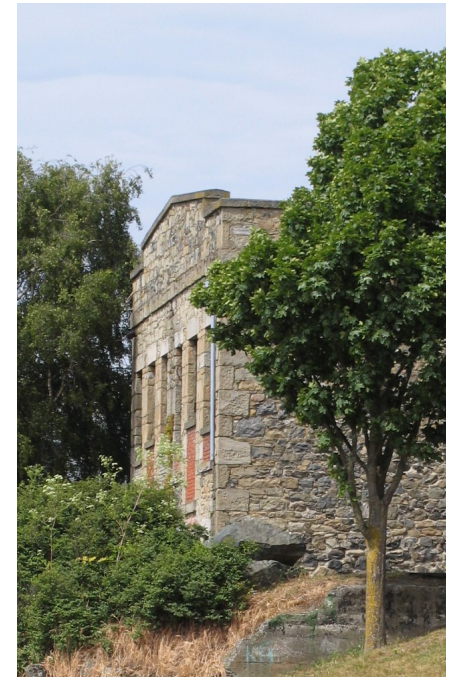
Heritage buildings in Old Town used a variety of high quality materials, finishes and details, which contribute to the visual character, texture, composition and charm of the streetscape, and the area's overall legibility and identity. The choice of materials in new construction has an important influence on the compatibility with the historic character and should be carefully considered.

Intent

To ensure the use of high quality materials, colours and textures are complementary to those found in Old Town.

Guidelines

- 5.5.1. Incorporate high quality, durable materials into buildings, facades and additions.
- 5.5.2. Avoid the extensive use of highly reflective materials.
- 5.5.3. Use materials with textures and patterns that are visually interesting.
- 5.5.4. Avoid the use of paint on previously unpainted brick or masonry.
- 5.5.5. Consider the use of metal for any proposed balconies that face the street.
- 5.5.6. Use high-quality materials for canopies and awnings such as metal, wood, woven fabric, canvas or glass.
- 5.5.7. Use exterior materials and paint colours that reflect local heritage palettes (refer to municipal staff for specific guidance).
- 5.5.8. The use of spandrel and cementitious panels as a primary material is not supported



Heritage buildings in Old Town display a variety of high-quality, durable materials.



Hudson Mews (Merrick Architecture / Townline Developments) Victoria, BC

The Hudson Mews project, near the boundary of Old Town, uses contextually sensitive brick materials and durable concrete lintels and sills. Window details are aluminum rather than vinyl.

Chinatown (Additional Guidelines)

- 5.5.9. Use materials, colours, finishes, patterns and designs for new buildings and additions within Chinatown that are compatible with its cultural context and reinforce its values and status as a National Historic Site.
- 5.5.10. Consider incorporating ornamental paving within courtyards, alleyways and patios within Chinatown.
- 5.5.11. Incorporate balconies on residential buildings that are designed as horizontal recesses or projections to reflect the design of existing balconies in Chinatown.



Glass House (MVRDV Architects) Amsterdam, NL

This project displays an innovative blend of modern glass bricks blending into brown bricks above the second storey.



The Union Building (Ciccozzi Architecture/Anthem Properties) Victoria, BC

The Union Building incorporates recessed balconies, black painted metal and Chinese inspired cultural motifs.



Keefer Block (W.T. Leung Architects) Vancouver, BC

This project in Vancouver's Chinatown uses traditional cultural motifs and colours.

5.6. Liveability

Background

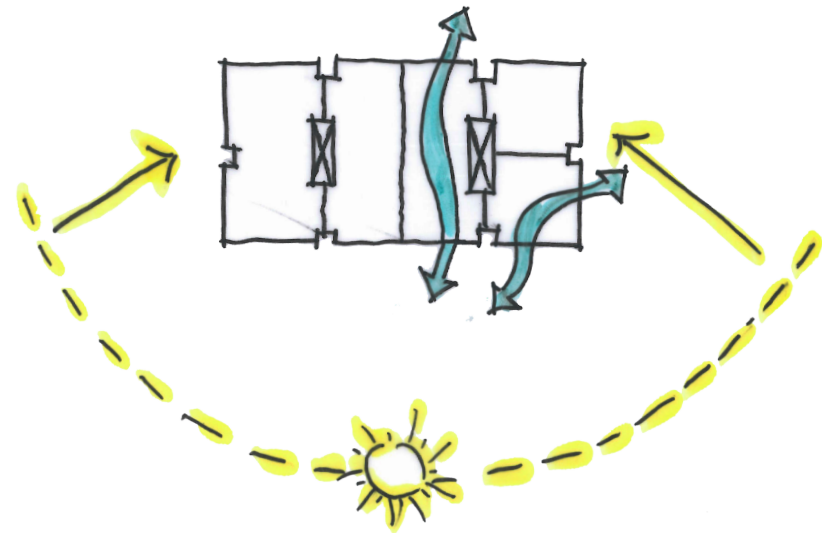
Old Town's low-rise scale means that sidewalks and streets receive abundant sunlight and have open views of the sky while accommodating a mixed use character within a rich concentration of attractive heritage buildings. Old Town's compact streetscapes promote walkability and a comfortable human-scale environment, however, it is also important to ensure that new buildings do not significantly impact residential liveability. The following guidelines provide a basis for considering liveability impacts and potential design solutions.

Intent

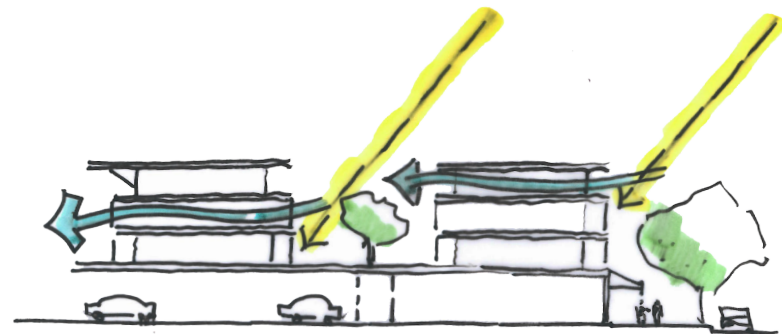
To ensure new buildings and additions maximize access to sunlight, create useable private and semi-private outdoor amenity spaces, and provide privacy for residents.

Guidelines

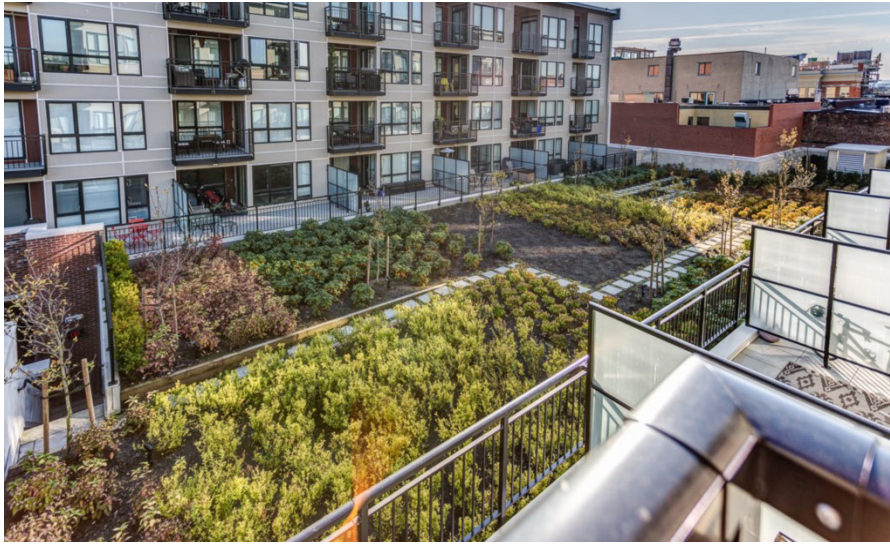
- 5.6.1. Stagger or offset windows and balconies from those on existing adjacent residential properties that share a side or rear property line to improve privacy and liveability.
- 5.6.2. Where feasible and appropriate, incorporate internal courtyards and passageways to increase sunlight access and create semi-private amenity spaces.
- 5.6.3. Provide residential dwelling units with direct access to private and semi-private open space such as recessed balconies, courtyards or terraces.
- 5.6.4. Limit the use of exterior hallways and exterior staircases as a means of mitigating the appearance of large building mass and bulk when viewed from the fronting street.
- 5.6.5. Where a new building or addition includes an exterior hallway or exterior staircase, ensure that they are designed to complement and integrate with the overall building design, the design character of the overall streetscape and not appear purely as a functional component of the building when viewed from the adjacent street.



Providing windows and other openings on multiple frontages helps to improve air circulation and sunlight access.

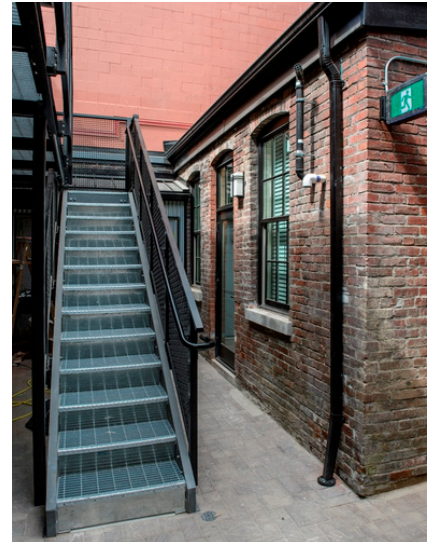


Courtyard buildings enable improved air circulation and sunlight access.



Union Building (Anthem Properties) Victoria BC

The Union Building in Victoria includes a courtyard and garden space that provides significant separation between residential units.



Lum Sam & Lee Chong Building (Le Fevre & Company) Victoria, BC

This rehabilitated inner courtyard of the includes well integrated modern staircases and detailing.



Hudson Mews (Merrick Architecture / Townline Developments) Victoria, BC

Exterior staircases should be designed to complement the building they are part of.

- 5.6.6. Where an exterior hallway or exterior staircase faces directly toward an adjacent residential property, mitigate any impacts from overlook, privacy, noise and light on the adjacent property through strategies such as: architectural screening, light shielding, increased setbacks and the location and siting of these building elements.
- 5.6.7. Where at-grade space is limited, common open amenity spaces are encouraged on roof tops and upper terraces.
- 5.6.8. The residential portion of buildings should be designed to receive daylight and natural ventilation from at least two sides of a building (dual aspect units either front or back, or on two sides for corner units).
- 5.6.9. Provide sound attenuation for rooftop mechanical units.



1315 -1317 Waddington Alley (Le Fevre & Company) Victoria, BC

The rehabilitation of the Morley Soda Factory included an internal courtyard feature.

PHOTO: RUSS HEINL

5.7. Off-Street Parking

Background

It is important that the location and design of parking areas as part of new development not create negative impacts on the public realm or alter the compact character of Old Town.

Intent

To minimize the impact of off-street motor vehicle parking by locating it underground, and away from the active pedestrian street frontage.

Guidelines

- 5.7.1. Locate off-street motor vehicle parking below grade and/or within a building. Off-street surface parking should not be visible from fronting streets and open spaces.
- 5.7.2. Any vehicle entrance and its associated components (doorways, ramps, etc.) should be architecturally integrated into the building so as to minimize its exposure. In particular, recess and enclose entryways and avoid ramps located directly off the street.



The Janion parking garage entry is narrow at the street and set back from the conserved facade of the heritage building.

- 5.7.3. Use high quality materials for parking entrance gates and doors, attractive lighting and low-level landscaping along the street frontage.
- 5.7.4. Locate parking entrances next to service and utility areas to avoid multiple vehicle access driveways and entrances along the street frontage.
- 5.7.5. Ensure that the parking entrance does not dominate the building facade and significantly interrupt the provision of a contiguous street wall.
- 5.7.6. A variance for off-street bicycle or motor vehicle parking may be considered where providing such parking would negatively impact the streetscape.
- 5.7.7. A variance for locating short term bicycle parking on the adjacent public right of way may be considered where it cannot be accommodated on private property, provided it does not impede pedestrian movement.
- 5.7.8. Ensure that off-street parking does not negatively impact or prevent the full conservation of heritage buildings.



2 North Moore Street (Turrett Collaborative Architecture) New York, NY Garage entry with high quality materials.

6. Design Guidelines for Rooftop Additions on Heritage Buildings

There are a variety of rooftop additions to heritage buildings throughout Old Town, many of which were built to accommodate residential units as part of the comprehensive physical rehabilitation and seismic upgrading of an existing heritage building.

The small size of some additions, or their positioning away from visible elevations of the historic building make them nearly invisible to pedestrians. When a new addition is imperceptible from the street, a viewer perceives the historic building as its architect intended. More importantly a viewer can appreciate the building's continuing relevance and functionality. Other additions are inevitably conspicuous and visibly change the scale and appearance of an historic building. Needs evolve, and sometimes those needs dictate more visible change. Conspicuous additions establish a relationship between historic and contemporary styles of design, which reflect the different priorities of their time. The most successful additions conserve a historic building's character-defining elements and in their design visibly display a consideration for them.

The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada classify new additions as a form of rehabilitation, which is one of three conservation approaches described. Unlike preservation, which is the protection and maintenance of an historic place, or restoration, which returns an historic place to its original appearance, rehabilitation involves making strategic alterations to an historic place, usually as a result of a change in use or increase in density. A change in use or density can be an important catalyst for the restoration of missing features, which many buildings in Old Town could benefit from.

Overall, the Old Town Design Guidelines advocate for a minimal intervention approach to rehabilitation projects. If possible, new additions should be avoided, and only pursued once other less invasive options for accommodating new functions are ruled out.

The following guidelines for rooftop additions to heritage buildings are derived from the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada and U.S. National Parks Service Preservation Brief #14.



The Monaco (Moore Paterson Architects) Victoria, BC

PHOTO: STEVE BARBER

6.1. Meaningful Conservation and Enhancement

Background

Many buildings throughout Old Town have been altered over time, especially storefronts. Adding a rooftop addition to a heritage building is often an opportunity to meaningfully conserve and enhance a heritage building through restoration of missing features and the maintenance of existing features. Applicants and design professionals should inquire with the City about original building permit plans and historic photos to use as the basis for an accurate restoration. An addition should meaningfully conserve the historic building to the greatest extent possible, including the side and rear walls. Conservation of original materials in publicly accessible ground-floor interior spaces is encouraged.

Intent

Use new rooftop additions as an opportunity to meaningfully conserve and enhance the heritage character of the historic building.

Guidelines

- 6.1.1. Integrate new rooftop additions sensitively to enable conservation of the entire historic building along with its original window openings and interior configurations to the greatest extent possible.
- 6.1.2. Conserve and reuse original materials within publicly accessible, ground floor interior spaces.
- 6.1.3. Combine the design of a new rooftop addition with the enhancement of the historic building through the restoration of missing original building features and the maintenance of existing features.



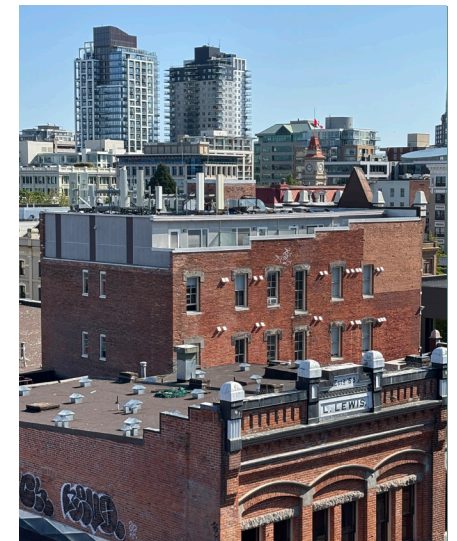
1312 Government Street (Le Fevre & Company) Victoria, BC

In 2014 Le Fevre & Company constructed a one storey addition to the former New England Hotel, which enabled the restoration of the building exterior and conservation and reuse of some original interior elements like this original masonry interior wall.



1312 Government Street (Le Fevre & Company) Victoria, BC

The rooftop addition is not visible from the street.



1312 Government Street (Le Fevre & Company) Victoria, BC

The rooftop addition is concealed behind the parapet.

6.2. Compatibility

Background

Heritage buildings are generally recognized as significant, non-renewable cultural resources, which differentiates them from other buildings. The design of new additions should consider the unique aesthetic characteristics of the historic place and be designed with a high level of care and quality to reflect the irreplaceable value of the historic place they are part of.

Intent

Make new rooftop additions physically and visually compatible with the historic building.

Guidelines

- 6.2.1. Minimize the detailing of rooftop additions and consider using a subdued colour scheme in the same family as the dominant colour of the historic building.
- 6.2.2. Use high quality and durable materials.
- 6.2.3. Design and locate balcony railings, plantings, mechanical equipment, furniture or any other structures associated with a new addition so that they are minimally visible when viewed from the adjacent street.



PHOTO: RAEFF GROHNE

The Hudson addition (Townline/Merrick Architecture) Victoria, BC

The rooftop addition of the Hudson is compatible in colour and materials and is minimally visible from the street because of the significant setbacks used.



PHOTO: JONATHAN WALLIN

21-27 Ninth Avenue (BKS Architects) New York, NY

This rooftop addition in NYC is designed to an appropriate scale and is articulated into three volumes to match the three separate storefront units below.



The rooftop addition to 21-27 Ninth Avenue features simple detailing and complementary modern materials like COR-TEN steel.



The rooftop addition, associated railings and equipment of 21-27 Ninth Avenue are not visible from close range.

6.3. Hierarchy

Background

A new rooftop addition should not compete with a historic building in size, scale or design, and should maintain the visual significance of the historic building within the streetscape. An addition that radically exceeds the size and scale of a historic building, or has a visually dominant design undermines the heritage value of the building and district. Old Town has a uniquely cohesive historic character that new additions should respect. In a heritage conservation area, the success of an addition will be measured by its compatibility both with the building itself and the district as a whole. A rooftop addition that is subordinate to an individual historic building will be subordinate to the district by extension.

Intent

Make new rooftop additions subordinate to the historic building.

Guidelines

- 6.3.1. Rooftop additions should be physically smaller in scale than the building they are connected to.
- 6.3.2. Rooftop additions should be stepped back from the facade of the building that faces a street in order to reduce the impact of the additional building mass on the public street, improve sunlight access on the public street and better distinguish the form and scale of the original heritage building.
- 6.3.3. Use a less dominant colour or lighter shade of colour to reinforce the hierarchical relationship between the two buildings.



Superior Officers Council (BKSK Architects) New York, NY

The rooftop addition to 40 Peck Street is physically smaller than the historic building and uses simple detailing.

6.4. Distinguishability

Background

The importance of distinguishing new construction from a conserved historic building is a key concept in both the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada and the US National Parks Service Technical Preservation Brief #14. Standard 11 of the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada defines “distinguishable” as a balance between “mere imitation of the existing form and pointed contrast”. US National Parks Service Technical Preservation Brief #14 states that a modern addition should be “readily distinguishable from the older work” and not “replicative”. Accordingly, the Old Town Design Guidelines discourage additions that imitate the building they are connected to. A viewer should be able to tell where an historic building ends and a new addition begins, so that there is no confusion over the original appearance of the historic place. New rooftop additions should be designed to modern standards, however still demonstrate consideration for the historic building in scale, proportion, materials and colour.

Intent

Make new rooftop additions distinguishable from the historic building.

Guidelines

- 6.4.1. Design new rooftop additions with contemporary materials and finishes.
- 6.4.2. Use a slightly different ratio of solid to transparent materials than the historic building.
- 6.4.3. Incorporate setbacks from street-facing elevations to maintain the distinction between old and new construction.



KI Residences (Vincent Van Duysen Architect) Ghent, BE

This small scale addition is setback from the front facade and the upper storey is enclosed in a sloped roof angled away from the front facade of the building. The roof is finished in natural stone in a neutral colour.

7. Additional Considerations for Minor Alterations to Existing Buildings

7.1. Exterior Alterations

Intent

To provide guidance for minor exterior alterations to existing buildings within Old Town that have an impact on the character-defining elements of the area and building.

Guidelines

- 7.1.1. Exterior signage should be designed and located to have a minimal impact on the architectural features of the facade.
- 7.1.2. Signage should be small and simple, with the primary purpose of identification without causing confusion.
- 7.1.3. Preferred signage materials are natural, particularly wood and metal.
- 7.1.4. Preferred signage types include:
 - Projecting two-dimensional or 'blade' type signs;
 - Externally lit signs;
 - External neon signs and small neon signs inside windows;
 - Individual cut out or silhouette letter signs mounted on store fronts; and
 - Restored historic sidewall signs.
- 7.1.5. Buildings with a number of businesses are encouraged to have a comprehensive sign scheme.
- 7.1.6. Individual exterior signage for businesses located in upper floors is strongly discouraged to avoid clutter, confusion and obscuring or damaging historic or architectural features.
- 7.1.7. Awnings were historically common on many buildings in Old Town. If proposed to be reinstated, consider the following:
 - Locating awnings so as not obscure architectural features;
 - Ensuring awnings are installed high enough so as to not impact the pedestrian experience or comfort;
 - Carefully considering mounting and functionality so as to avoid possible damage to the historic building; and

- Modern materials may be supportable. Materials should be high quality and durable.

7.1.8. Murals and other public art installations are generally supportable in Old Town, with the following considerations:

- Murals on heritage buildings should not be located on a primary facade or unpainted masonry;
- Murals should not fill the whole surfaces and should instead be pulled back from the edges so that the historic building creates a frame effect around the mural;
- The subject of murals and public art pieces should in some way connect to the history of the building or Old Town more generally; and
- Murals should not obscure or compete with other architectural façade elements or detailing.



A mural on the Tam Kung Temple. Victoria, BC



Gordon Street and Courtney Street looking south, Victoria, BC. Left: Photograph taken in 1903 (City of Victoria Archives, Image M08142). Right: Photograph taken in 2025.



City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6
planning@victoria.ca
victoria.ca