“Revitalizing Forgotten Places: The Power Relations of Architecture and Place in Canadian Inner Cities,” presented by Ulduz Maschaykh
University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany.

Illustrations:
Image 1: Cornerstone Initiative, Victoria, as renovated in 2006
Source: Ulduz Maschaykh

Image 2: Fernwood Inn, Victoria, after 2006 renovations. Source: Ulduz Maschaykh

Source: Ulduz Maschaykh

Image 4: B.C. Electric Railway Company’s building, 1912. Source: City of Vancouver Archives, Reference Code: CAV: AM54-S4-1-: M-14-71

In 1935, Walter Benjamin wrote “Buildings are perceived in a two-fold manner: By use and by perception” (Benjamin, 25). How a building is perceived hinges on its aesthetic value that is often times associated with its intended use. This is especially the case with buildings of powerful corporations, wealthy companies or department stores that represent a certain image of economic soundness and longstanding tradition.

Therefore, these buildings create power relations between their setting and their architecture in a historical context. The word ‘haunted’ relates to the abandoned and deteriorated state of once-flourishing neighbourhoods in Canadian inner cities. How do,

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1 “Bauten werden auf doppelte Art rezipiert: durch Gebrauch und durch Wahrnehmung.” Quote translated into English from original essay.
current architectural developments in Canadian cities turn dead and abandoned areas into desired and vibrant ones? Through the withdrawal of the economically-sound middle-class and working class these areas become ghost towns as many buildings remain empty and suffer in tactile and visual quality.

The renovation and restoration of old and rundown buildings attracts the middle class back to these abandoned neighbourhoods, reviving them from a state of neglect and decline. This urban renaissance can also be understood as gentrification, as the restoration of heritage or “character” buildings are associated with the migration of the middle-class into the inner city

The architectural language of gentrification

The term gentrification was first coined by social scientist Ruth Glass in the 1960s. In its classical sense, gentrification implies the displacement of the lower class from their neighbourhood through the migration of the middle class. In recent years gentrification has been subject of intense research among scholars, mostly in urban geography and sociology. It is a very polarizing term: On the one hand there are scholars – such as Lance Freedman and Frank Braconi - who don’t consider the inner city transformation as disadvantageous for the working- and lower classes. Moreover, they claim that the process of improved urban planning and conversion of deteriorated buildings will lead towards an enhanced living situation for everyone: the wealthy and the poor.
One of the most well known advocates of gentrification is Richard Florida. In *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2004), Florida states that cities need to attract creative people in order to beautify the urban landscape and boost the economy (244). According to Florida, the change in scenery and class that is caused through what he calls ‘creative class’ leads to an improved economy that again affects everyone’s living situation in a positive way (ibid, 289).

Urban geographer David Ley also deals with the subject of inner city change through creative people (Ley 1996). Ley’s pioneers of gentrification are the artists, who despite their low economic value have a high creative value that again attracts the middle-class to the neighbourhoods where the artists reside and work (Ley 2003, 2540). Ley is also one of the very few scholars in gentrification studies to deal with the aesthetics of architecture that is accountable for a neighbourhood’s valorised transformation. He observes that the middle-class has a specific preference for “character buildings” – particularly those built around the turn-of-the-twentieth-century. The aesthetics of these buildings flatters the middle-class’ “appetite to preserve” (Ley 1983, 160). Part of these architectural heritage styles includes the Italianate, the Second Empire Renaissance Style, the Tudor Revival, or Edwardian Style (Barrett, 2002). Neighbourhoods with a high percentage of heritage-designated or registered buildings – commercial and residential – become the setting of massive renovation, conversion and eventually revitalization. Despite their deteriorated and run-down state character buildings are associated with memories of the past, appreciated for their historic significance and aesthetic impact. They
stand for tradition and wholesome values, which make them the ideal space for successful conversion for developers who seek financial opportunities.

And at this point I would like to argue that gentrification can be considered as revitalization and that this process does not always lead to displacement. Moreover, it is a process that revitalizes forgotten places and brings back life to neighbourhoods that were abandoned and lost in oblivion. Haunted places, once symbolically dead eventually come back to life and can help to create an integrated sense of belonging within the community.

In order to emphasise my claim, I will show examine three buildings that are set at historically-significant corners in British Columbia’s Victoria and Vancouver. I chose the depicted case studies based on the building’s architecture as each of them bear elements of turn-of-the-century architectural styles.

**Setting the Cornerstone for Revitalization – The Cornerstone Initiative**

The first case study is called the Cornerstone Initiative – that is the conversion of a formerly rundown and derelict Italianate building that was built in 1911. It is set in one of Victoria’s oldest neighbourhoods, Fernwood and serves as a mixed-use building, with commercial space (yoga studio, offices, and coffee shop) on the first floor and residential occupancies for low-income families on the second floor (figure 1). Victoria is a city that truly has a preference for old buildings: According to Statistics Canada, seven percent of the housing stock in Victoria was built before 1920 and eight percent was built between 1921 und 1945 (Statistics Canada 2006).
Fernwood in particular has a total of 100 buildings that are heritage-registered (R) or heritage-designated (D). Many of the houses are distinct with decorative Italianate buildings, usually two to four storeys in height, that bear architectural elements such as windows with curved arches, ornamentation, shingled wooden facades and other aesthetic attributes that make their architecture associate with that of Victoria’s foundation period.

Figure 1. The corner of Gladstone and Fernwood today.

From Parfitt Building to the Cornerstone Initiative

Fernwood’s urban core started to develop at an accelerated pace around the intersection of Gladstone Avenue and Fernwood Road in the 1890s. Within a decade that

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2 Victoria’s Heritage Register is available online under the City of Victoria’s website: http://www.victoria.ca/assets/Departments/Planning~Development/Community~Planning/Heritage/Documents/Heritage%20Register.pdf
spot became the hub of a vibrant urban and social life that was partly due to the introduction of the electric streetcar in 1880.

Prior to the Cornerstone Initiative, the building was known as the Parfitt Building owned by the five Parfitt Brothers who were well-known and successful building contractors in Victoria. The brothers were reputable for having designed and built many fine residential, commercial and institutional buildings in Victoria (ibid). The building’s location was a key to success as its corner was a busy and prosperous one with several stores, pubs and businesses (ibid). Early on it functioned as a mixed-use building. It continued to be a prime location for many flourishing businesses until the 1990s.

**Fernwood’s Decline in the 1990s**

Fernwood experienced a steep decline from popular and desired middle-class neighbourhood to a rundown and crime-ridden area, which drove business downtown in the 1980s. In a public survey conducted in 1994, remaining residents expressed their wish for Fernwood to be “an integrated complex and a revitalized area” (City of Victoria, 1994, p.19), with an improved sense of community and stronger ties in the neighbourhood. The renovation of the former Parfitt Brother’s building was considered to be critical to Fernwood’s revitalization (Rankin, personal interview).

To this end, the non-profit society Fernwood Neighbourhood Representative Group bought the building from Robin Kimpton, notorious as a “Slumlord of BC” (MacLeod

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3 The survey also revealed that 53% of the participants stated that they don’t mind more non-market housing in their neighbourhood. Source: City of Victoria, 1994, p.19.
2011). At the time of the sale, the building was in a deteriorated and run down condition with unpleasant graffiti covering the entire facade and inside walls (ibid).

Lenore Rankin, Development Director of Fernwood NRG described the situation:

> It was so bad that when we used to sit over there in the [Fernwood] Inn, we looked across the road you could see all of the drug dealers going up and down, people coming up to the door, we also believe there was quite a lot of under-aged prostitution. A lot of bad things like that were happening in this building (Rankin Personal Interview 2012).

The realization of the Cornerstone Initiative was mostly due to the voluntary help, support and involvement of Fernwood’s community. One of the volunteers was Victoria architect Garde Colins who offered his expertise to the society on a *pro bono* basis. As an architect and member of the community who appreciated Fernwood’s historic value..

**From Parfitt Brothers to Cornerstone Initiative**

As it stands today, the building’s exterior is dominated by a translucent glass façade on the lower level and a burgundy red painted brick façade on the upper level. A recessed entry to the coffee shop is a key architectural feature of the Cornerstone building. Most parts of the facade and exterior are original. Two original elements which had been lost are a projecting roofline with widely overhanging eaves that stood out significantly above the façade and heavily ornamented brackets below the protruding.\(^4\) The restoration initiative

\(^4\) At the time of research it was not possible to find out when this alteration took place, but visual materials of the pre-renovation status reveal that the alteration of the roofline must have taken place before 2005.
literally breathed life into the deteriorated building. The heart of the neighbourhood is the Cornerstone Café, placed in the east south side of the building’s ground floor owned and operated by the Fernwood NRG. The coffee shop helps the community in many ways. Along with being a place to socialize, it has created new jobs by hiring staff and serves as an art gallery by displaying and selling art by local artists.

**The changed image of Fernwood**

After the success of the *Cornerstone*, many owners were inspired to restore and renovate other old and deteriorating buildings in Fernwood, which gradually turned the neighbourhood into a magnet which attracted the middle class. Fernwood’s notorious crime rate fell,\(^5\) while real estate prices rose\(^6\) and Fernwood became a creatively designed, beautiful neighbourhood full of life.

On the southwest corner of 1291 Gladstone and 1900 Fernwood, opposite of today’s Cornerstone building, was Victoria’s “Emmanuel Baptist Church” built in 1892 (Adams & Muir, 34). The Shingle Style building is still in a very good condition and has been operating as a local theatre and community space under the name Belfry Theatre (ibid).\(^7\) On the northwest corner of today’s *Cornerstone* stands an Italianate two-storey building that used to be the Imperial Bakery, built in 1911 and renovated in 2006. It is now a successful art gallery. Opposite of the Cornerstone is the *Fernwood Inn*, built in 1885

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\(^5\) In 2004 a total of 4827 calls related to some kind of crime were reported in Fernwood. In 2009 that number significantly dropped to 2944. Source: “911 Calls from Fernwood by call type, 2004 to 2009.” Table 1.

\(^6\) Average House Prices in Fernwood were $350,000 CAD in 2006. By 2008 they almost doubled to $550,000 CAD. Source: “House Prices: City of Victoria vs. Fernwood Core.” BC Assessment, Figure 2.

\(^7\) A Shingle Style originated on the northeastern coast of the United States. Its defining features are continued wooden shingles that contribute to the irregular shingled look of the façade. Most of the time the hipped or gabled roofs are very steep and are featured by asymmetry and irregularity in structure. See, Adams and Muir. *This Old House. Victoria’s Heritage Neighbourhoods*. Vol. I, p. 147.
(figure 2). It is a Tudor Revival building, renovated into a community place and restaurant that serves organic food since 2006 (Macpherson 2011).

Figure 2. Fernwood Inn.

Canada’s poorest code in the country’s least affordable city

In 1946 Fred Lasserre\(^8\) recognized "Vancouver has a God-made setting and a God-chosen location if ever any city had" (Lasserre, 335). Since its foundation in 1886, the city’s remarkable geographical location, bounded by steep mountains, ocean and lush forests have drawn people from all over the world to call Vancouver their permanent

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\(^8\) Lasserre was the first director of the University of British Columbia’s (UBC) ‘Department of Architecture’ founded in 1946.
home. Paradoxically, within “Canada’s least affordable city” (Kotkin 2011)\(^9\) lies Canada’s poorest postal code, Vancouver’s infamous Downtown Eastside, called the DTES for short (Kalache & Sawasan, 2007). DTES’ economic and social decline began in the 1990s with the departure of working-class residents after the local lumber and mining industries shut down (Punter, 2004, p. 277-279).\(^{10}\)

**Downtown Eastside – The Motionless Kaleidoscope**

DTES consists of five parts that are each culturally and economically different: Chinatown, Gastown, Victory Square, Strathcona and the Oppenheimer District. Gastown is the oldest area of Vancouver and was formerly a prime neighbourhood for the working class. Established as an entertainment, business and working-class district for its mostly male residents, the DTES gradually deteriorated into a “motionless kaleidoscope” that had the “lowest voter turnout, highest rate of alcoholism, lowest income levels, highest crime rates and greatest social problems in the city.” (CAV 1973-113). Its socio-economic population changed from working-class to criminals and drug addicts (Punter, 2004, p. 277-279). Because of its many transformations since its foundation, the DTES went from happening hot spot to forgotten ghost town, and is now emerging into the limelight again. Due to its troubled population, the DTES has the largest number of affordable housing rental options, particularly Single Room Occupancy Hotels (SROs): As of 2011 the DTES major housing types consists of non-market rental units (32%), private SROs (24%) and

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\(^9\) The *Demographia International* report released in January 2011 examined the housing affordability of 272 metropolitan markets in Canada, the U.S the U.K Australia, New Zealand and Ireland.

\(^{10}\) According to a study conducted in 1996 the median household income of residents in DTES was on average $11,029, which was more than three times less than that of rest of Vancouver, $35,583. Source: “Downtown Eastside Community Monitoring Report.” City of Vancouver, 1999. p.1.
non-market SROs (9%) and only 29% are rental or ownership housing (“Draft Downtown Eastside” p. 13). These SROs also happen to account for Vancouver’s oldest buildings, many of them are as early as the city’s foundation in 1886.

SRO units are the most basic shelter consisting of very small rooms and shared facilities and are provided by the City or Government for low-income individuals. There is a fine, fragile line between residing in an SRO and being on the street as a homeless person.

Poverty creates Opportunity

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the City started to do massive improvements derived from the premise to replace or renovate the derelict SROs without the displacement of the low-income residents. The aim was also to attract more affluent buyers and residents as possible. These changes have been inspired mainly by two factors. In 2000, former co-director of planning Larry Beasley stated in his “Living First” article that the City of Vancouver will be “[...] insisting on a rich housing mix, including market and non-market housing, mixed incomes […] and unique housing choices. The city has emphasized avoiding the creation of the differentiated ghettos that appear in so many other cities. A strong target is to bring security to low-income people who have long resided downtown” (Beasley 2006). That premise is followed by a number of new by-laws and regulations which are connected to the second factor that wielded influence on the revitalization of the DTES: the 2003 announcement of Vancouver being the host of the 2010 Winter Olympic

\[11\] The remaining six percent are Community Care Facilities.
Games. The latter may have been a stronger incentive as it involved the reputation of Vancouver in front of an international audience. The city needed to look clean, pleasing and attractive for the flux of tourists coming to visit. The challenge was to turn what was then the “poorest postal code in all of Canada” into a beautiful and representative area (Kalache & Sawasan 2007).

The DTES is particularly adaptable towards the revitalization because of its direct proximity to the populous, popular and vibrant downtown core. The DTES offers leisure and nightlife activities, creatively decorated coffee shops and vintage stores that are more affordable than the downtown core as well as inexpensive housing. The DTES comprises richness of heritage buildings and turn-of-the-twentieth-century buildings and is therefore most receptive for change and innovation. Within DTES, Gastown is the neighbourhood in major transition and therefore also called “Crosstown” (Grdadolnik 2006). Because of the changes happening, DTES became a much-debated topic in gentrification studies by Canadian and European scholars alike (Ley 2008; Lees & Wyly 2012; Bloomley 2004).

To match the city council’s goal to “stimulate economic activity and provide a kick start to area wide revitalization” the DTES has undergone massive renovations of its old heritage housing and building stock (D’Agostini, 2). Often, along with a building’s renovation, its purpose and owner changes, too. The redevelopment of the former Department Store Woodward’s (figure 3), at the corner of West Hastings and Abbott Street, is considered a “catalyst for change,” and is at present, the biggest urban redevelopment project in Vancouver (Enright, 59). The building’s redevelopment

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12 Average monthly rent for an unfurnished Bachelor Apartment in the DTES was $ 809, compared to average monthly rent in the rest of the city was $ 881, Source: Draft Downtown Eastside. Locale Area Profile 2012. Print, p.13.
emphasises to what extent the aesthetic value of a building also becomes economically significant.

Figure 3. Woodward’s.

Woodward’s History

Charles Woodward, founder and owner of the Woodward mercantile enterprise opened the first department store in western Canada on Main and Georgia Street in Downtown Vancouver in 1892. The store then moved to on the corner of Abbott and West Hastings Street in the Downtown Eastside in 1903. In December 1945 Woodward’s son, W.C. announced the expansion of the store, expressing the company’s “faith in the city.” (CAV
M10-558-2). The fast growing store gradually expanded vertically to eight floors, and horizontally to the corner of Cordova and Abbott Street CAV M10-558-3).

*Woodward’s* department store offered the then largest floors in food, household items as well as fashion and book articles in all of North America - the store even offered free X-Rays available for their customers (CAV M10-558-1). But it was more than that: Woodward’s stood for an economically sound and prosperous Vancouver: by the 1950s the store employed about 2400 employees (CAV M10-558-3). However, in the early 1990s Woodward’s experienced financial difficulties and was closed for good in 1993 and with that over 7000 employees lost their jobs (Lapointe 2007).

The creation and demolition of the Woodward’s department store is synonymous with the rise and fall of this area. The building stood empty and soulless for almost a decade. In 2003, the City of Vancouver purchased the building for a modest amount of five million dollars and the aim to have it completed by 2009, just before the start of the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games (LaPointe 2007). Vancouver architect Gregory Henriquez was hired as the head architect for the redevelopment of Woodward’s. The former department store became the namesake of the entire redevelopment project, despite the fact that only two facades – Abbotts and Hastings – of the original 1903-Woodward’s department store remained (Enright, 59).

**From Old to New and back Again: the Woodward’s Redevelopment**

The *Woodward’s Redevelopment* is to this date the most prominent mixed-use and mixed-income housing project in all of British Columbia. The massive gentrification protests of DTES residents’ in 2002 – also called “Woodward's Squat” – made the City
have the community of Downtown Eastside be involved in the design process of the new project. The Woodward’s Redevelopment sparked debates on the definition of gentrification, revitalization and displacement of “Crosstown” because of the project’s mighty physical presence and significant impact on the area’s urban development (Slater 2005). However, Henriquez, who believes in a society that is ruled by a “benevolent capitalism,” does not agree that his project caused any gentrification in DTES (Henriquez, personal interview). Moreover, he describes his project “as a lesson of inclusivity where the full spectrum of housing can be accommodated in one single project.” (Ibid).

*Woodward’s Redevelopment* is a major mixed-use building complex – that is roughly over 11,000 square metres in size and consists of four interconnected buildings. It comprises two residential towers: the “W Tower” also known as “heritage tower” is 122 metres high (43 storeys) and looking down to the “Abbott Tower” that is 90 metres in height (Image 2). There is a hierarchy amongst the two towers through the building’s heights. The “W Tower” is triangular, reminiscent of New York’s Flat Iron building, its façade kept in a red brick to suggest ‘oldness’ while the façade of the original four-storey

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Woodward’s department store has been maintained as a reminder of the economic prosperity of this very corner (Grdadolnik, 24).

The redevelopment of the Woodward’s is very similar to Fernwood’s Cornerstone in terms of the impact of heritage architecture that sets the tone for revitalization in a run-down area.

Henriquez’ Woodward’s has a direct impact on the surrounding architecture: The mixed-use housing co-op Lore Krill, placed on 65 West Cordova just diagonally from the redeveloped Woodward’s site, is the architect’s last work prior to Woodward’s, built in 2002. The architectural language used for Lore Krill directly relates to Henriquez’ Woodward’s: The triangular metal tower of the original “W” sign on Woodward’s is also seen at Lore Krill’s roof top garden. Woodward’s turned what was once a “Motionless Kaleidoscope” (CAV 1973-113), haunted by the ghosts of poverty and despair into a vibrant, increasingly popular place to dwell, shop, study and socialize.

From Functional to Cultural: BC Electric Railway Company

Social scientist Sharon Zukin remarks that in an attempt to create images of power and economic prosperity, cities promote their “art museums, and convert old railroad terminals and power stations to cultural complexes” (Zukin, 833). The conversion of the former B.C. Electric Railway Company (BCER) building set on the corner of Carrall Street and West Hastings (no image?) is a case in point. The Second Empire/Renaissance-styled building was designed by Vancouver architects Woodruff Somervell and John
Putnam in 1911 and served as the BCER’s head office and depot until 1955 (Kalman & Ward, 24).

The BCER’s terminus building is placed just one block east from the Woodward’s in the Oppenheimer District. It is set at a historically significant corner, as Carrall and Hastings Street marked the physical locale between the industrial working class neighbourhood east of Carrall Street and the higher-class retail outlets and financial institutions west of it (“Statement of Significance” Carscadden Architects 2007).15

When the interurban services were terminated in the 1950s, the mighty building lost its powerful owner and stood empty for several decades. The entire block around that corner fell into oblivion, too. After changing ownership in the turn of the twenty first century the building has become the location of the Vancouver International Centre for Contemporary Asian Art (Centre A) since 2005 (Hara 2012). Through regular exhibitions on the building’s history the art gallery emphasises the historic references of the building and the memories attached to it.

**Design of Power**

Through the introduction of the electric railway and the streetcar, Vancouver established a solid and well-connected infrastructural system that boosted the city’s population. In its first decades since the formation of the BCER in 1886 the company changed owners and business a few times (Waite 2000). Its first director was Vancouver

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15 A ‘Statement of Significance’ gives a description of a building and defines its historical value; it also summarizes the Key Defining Elements of the building.

Maschaykh.
mayor David Oppenheimer who ran the company as the Power, Light and Streetcar System Company in 1890. The financially-troubled company was almost forced to close down business until it was bought off from English businessmen in 1896 (ibid). From there the London-directed firm became the largest employer in the Downtown Eastside.\textsuperscript{16}

The rapid success of the company required a depot whose architecture reflected this importance in the city. By 1913 the company became one of the largest electrical enterprises in the British Empire that owned and operated a network of street railway lines, six electric interurban lines, gas companies and hydroelectric power facilities (Roy, 240).\textsuperscript{17}

The architectural firm Somervell & Putman managed to reflect the power and significance of the company through architecture (Figure 4). The trapezoidal building is six storeys high and defined as a Second Empire-Renaissance style that became popular in late nineteenth-century Canada reflecting the taste of the bourgeois (Ricketts et al., 91). Amongst other imported and modified European styles to Canada, the Second Empire Renaissance style was a symbol of the “prosperity of the Victorian professional class” (“Canadian Register”).

\textsuperscript{16} Robert M. Horne-Payne was chairman of the board of directors of the British Columbia Electric Railway Company. He and the investors controlled and regulated the company and anything happening in Canada from their London office. Source: Roy, Patricia, 1973.

\textsuperscript{17} In 1918 the company earned a net profit of £881,424 and had a total reserve of £ 924,846. Source: B.C.E.R., Annual Report, 1918.
The building’s principal façade faces east towards Carrall Street. Characteristic for the white brick façade are the eleven rhythmically aligned semi-circular, floor-to-ceiling arched windows that make it so distinctive. The semi-circular ground windows break the building’s dominant linearity and add a dynamic feature to the façade that has a vertical three-part composition: the lower part consists of the eleven arched windows followed by the middle part that consists of square windows horizontally divided by chromatic ornate panels that bear convex and concave textures and vertical pilasters reaching from the second to forth floor. The upper part comprises the fifth and sixth floor with a grid-like organization of smaller windows and wall surfaces. The Vancouver architecture firm Sharp
and Thompson added the sixth floor in 1945 changing the rooftop structure into a less ornate one. Today’s main entrance on the north face of the building used to be the entrance and departure point for the railways to arrive and leave the depot.

Somervell and Putnam’s BCER building exceeds the surrounding buildings in height (approximately 24 metres high) and scale. The presence of Centre A as a cultural institution does have an impact on the revitalization of the surrounding late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century buildings in this block. For example, to the west stands the triangular shaped former Burns Block building that was built in 1909. The five-storey high Edwardian building used to be a mixed-use building run by the successful businessman Patrick Burns who owned a nation-wide meat packing business (Carscadden Architects, “Statement of Significance” 2007). The building was run as an SRO until the City closed it in 2006 due to its deteriorated state. In 2008 Reliance Properties Ltd. bought it, renovated it to a new standard and literally added life into the building. Burns Block today is run as a mixed-use building with a bar, Bitter, on the ground level and micro-loft apartments on the upper floors. The façade’s material – a bright beige glazed(?) brick – corresponds well with the brick façade of the adjacent former BCER building. Between the two buildings run the railway tracks, evidence of the former CPR’s right-of-way (Carscadden Architects, 15). Today that spot stands empty but the views of both buildings have been preserved as an acknowledgment of the CPR’s importance in British Columbia (ibid).

Save-on-Meat is situated only a few meters west of the B.C. Electric Railway building. The diner first opened in 1957 as a butcher store and closed down in 2010 due to lack of business. With the reopening of the building in 2012 the place signals faith in economic soundness and a vital community (Nield 2011). The building’s colourful neon
lights and vintage-styled advertisement boards are reminiscent of the 1950’s when business was flourishing. The vintage theme response to the emerging “old is beautiful and trustworthy” trend that has been already highlighted with the Woodward’s project.

**Conclusion**

Buildings that have stories attached to them have an increased potential for development in derelict areas, which have fallen into oblivion. How a building is perceived hinges on its aesthetic value that often times is associated with the purpose of its use. The economic soundness of an area is closely connected to the socio-cultural status of its residents and their ability to buy, dwell and consume. The urban setting reacts to that demand. Dead areas that were haunted by the destructive nature of despair and poverty experience an urban renaissance through the restoration of important buildings that once stood for economic prosperity, and fostered vivid neighbourhood.

The shared narrative of all of these buildings is the appreciation of their architecture that is being preserved and maintained despite their change in ownership and meaning, or they are redeveloped in order to reemphasise the vintage aspect as seen in the example of the former Woodward’s department store. Cities may change, so do people, but the buildings once built on the foundation of economic success and prosperity may have a lasting effect on neighbourhoods for entire generations to come.
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