



Welcome to Mole Hill

Mole Hill Community Housing Society is the oldest, most intact and fully restored square block of heritage houses in the City of Vancouver, a testament to thousands of West Enders and Vancouver residents who worked hard for over ten years to save the block from a demolition that was to make way for condominiums. Due to their vision, the buildings were restored to their original state, with the highest possible environmental standards available; public spaces, community gardens and native plant wildlife habitat areas were created and affordable rental housing for low and moderate-income singles, couples and families was developed in keeping with the history of the block. Most of the Mole Hill homes have had lodgers and renters in them from the time they were first built in 1888.

The Mole Hill Living Heritage Society, sister organization of the Mole Hill Community Housing Society, is the grassroots community group that actively and successfully fought to preserve Mole Hill along with the coalition "...friends of Mole Hill." The Mole Hill Community Housing Society redeveloped Mole Hill in partnership with BC Housing, an agency of the Provincial Government, and the City of Vancouver. This public trust is now owned and managed by the Mole Hill Community Housing Society through a long-term lease from the city and an operating agreement with BC Housing. The society operates 28 buildings with 178 units of non-profit rental housing and manages the surrounding land including the lane verges and north and south greenways. The Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation operates 24 supportive housing units and a day centre for people living with HIV/AIDS in a new building and heritage house at 1110 Comox Street.

Three principals provide the foundation for Mole Hill: affordable housing, environmental sustainability and heritage preservation. In Mole Hill, affordable housing was retained, improved and expanded. Large amounts of material were diverted from the landfill, buildings were upgraded with state of the art geothermal heating systems, low energy lighting and water saving devices; parking spaces were reduced by over 80 per cent with stalls being reserved for a car co-operative and the lane narrowed for traffic calming and public benefits. Units in the buildings are modest in size, follow original floor plans where possible and are of high density, with about 80 units per acre, so that the grounds could be retained and heritage plants and mature trees preserved for storm water management and public space. Houses were carefully restored to preserve interior, as well as exterior heritage features, with sixty to seventy per cent, on average, of original material per house being retained, unlike most market restorations. Mole Hill can house up to 300 people and is a healthy mix of low end of market and subsidized units.



The public space was created to provide opportunities to view the heritage houses from a variety of angles, promote urban food production, and create naturalized areas. Community gardens were built with discarded materials from the renovations as well as donated materials from local businesses. Mole Hill tenants and local residents, through WERA (West End Resident's Association) partnered to do the actual construction of the garden areas. Tenants, with the assistance of Van Dusen Master Gardeners, volunteered to preserve heritage plants by moving, storing and

care for them in temporary nurseries while construction occurred, then transplanted them back to their original or new locations. Naturalized areas (wildlife habitat areas) were created along the lane verges and in the north greenway to restore the original heritage context: the lane was originally a narrow dirt track with native vegetation bordering it well into modern times. Many of the plants are native shrubs with edible berries to create an organic food source for people without access to specialized stores or gardening opportunities and because the public has always enjoyed picking berries in the Mole Hill lane. The native plants provide habitat for native bee populations and other beneficial insects such as butterflies and ladybugs, and safe habitat and food sources for many bird species, local and migratory, all of which help pollinate the plants in the community gardens. Before the wildlife habitat areas were established, many community gardeners had to hand pollinate their crops. These areas also act as traffic calming measures which allows the Mole Hill lane to be the heart of the community, as it has been throughout its history.



Mole Hill Community Housing Society

MISSION

The Mole Hill Community Housing Society provides and advocates for secure, affordable housing for low and middle income singles, seniors and families within enviro-conscious, intact heritage housing and streetscapes. MHCHS aims to foster community that integrates partnerships and diverse service groups and to create open public spaces for the enjoyment of tenants and the wider community.

VISION

Mole Hill Community Housing Society will ensure the provision of affordable, sustainable, well maintained, safe housing in a vibrant community.

VALUES

We value dignity.

We value ethical conduct.

We value dedication.

We value community and member participation.

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

The development partners of Mole Hill have won many awards for their participation in the success of the project.

- City of Vancouver Heritage Award – 1996 (Blair Petrie and Linda Diano on behalf of the community) and 2004 (Blair Petrie on behalf of the community); Heritage Canada Foundation & Heritage Society of BC Award 2004 (Don Luxton)
- Canadian Construction Association, Environmental Achievement Award – 2004 (Kindred Construction)
- Vancouver Regional Construction Association Award of Excellence - 2004 (Kindred Construction)
- Canadian Society of Landscape Architects Award - 2005 (Durante Kureuk)
- Royal Architect Institute of Canada (RAIC) National Urban Design Award, Community Improvement Projects – 2006 (Hotson Bakker and Sean McEwen)
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation award for Best Practices in Affordable Housing – 2006
- Architect Institute of BC, Lt. Governor of BC, Special Jury Award – 2007 (Hotson Bakker, Sean McEwen, Sandra Korpan)
- Smart Growth Project of the Year in BC - 2007

Mole Hill Partners

Mole Hill has numerous partnerships with community service organizations, including:



Heart House Society

Temporary housing for non-locals recovering from heart surgery at St. Paul's Hospital.



McLaren House

Ten units reserved at Mole Hill for people who are living with HIV/AIDS.



MODO The Car Co-op

Four parking spots reserved for vehicle sharing.



Vancouver Farmer's Market

Saturday market from June to October along the 1100 block of Comox Street.



Watson House

Coast Foundation Society, a live-in program for young people with mental health issues.



West End Resident's Association

Helps co-ordinate garden plots for community residents and oversaw the community project that created the light in the community square.



YMCA Daycare

Main floor and basement of one of the houses.



Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation

Day health program and 24-hour nursing care residence for people living with HIV/AIDS. They also rent some units at Mole Hill.

The Tour



