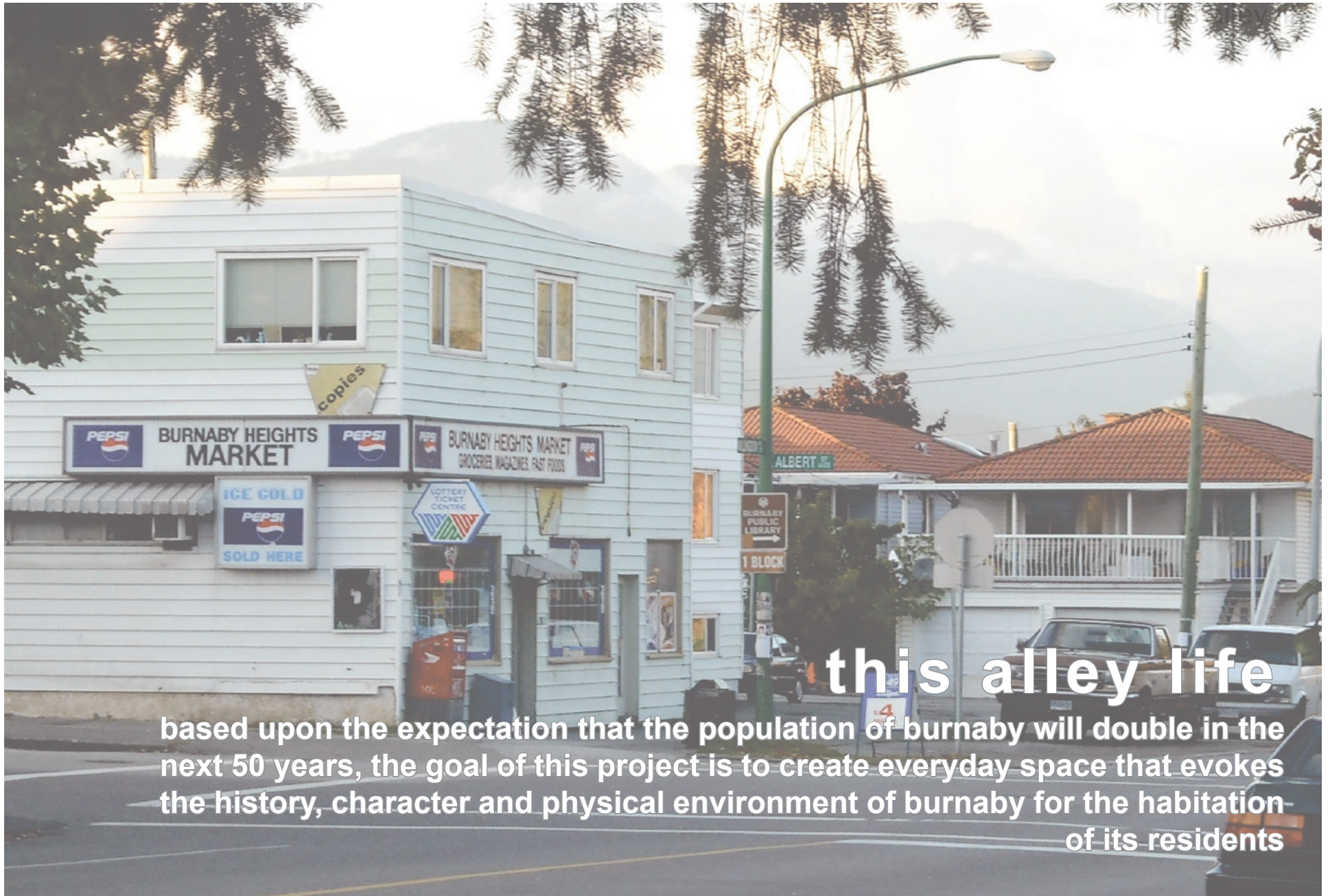


this alley life
elizabeth laing

the hastings experience masterplan : hastings corridor individual design

sustainable urbanism : the hastings corridor

ubc urban studio : fall 2008



this alley life

based upon the expectation that the population of burnaby will double in the next 50 years, the goal of this project is to create everyday space that evokes the history, character and physical environment of burnaby for the habitation of its residents

Paterson states that the notion of the city as community “only emerges when the stones of a place, the *urbs*, and the convictions of its people, the *civitas*, inextricably join together to form the overriding idea” and that the community is a place of humanity, which by nature embodies qualities of “kindness, mercy and sympathy.”¹ Thus, if we envision the physical city of Burnaby in 50 years as sustainable, we must also create space to support the social sustainability, or humanity, of its people.

Quayle observes that “newly configured urban landscape[s] of higher density with less individually owned land threatens the environmental communication” of traditional community values such as “familiarity, restoration, belonging, sense of place and beauty”² essential, like the qualities of humanity, to the good functioning of community. Why is it important to maintain a sense of community? Paterson argues that community is a “fundamental building block in democracy,”³ where people learn to be responsible participants in their own lives and the lives of others. To that end, Roseland reminds us that “democracy is fundamental to sustainability.”⁴ Roseland states that the processes of democratic social interaction and civic life within the community are key for influencing policy outside of the

community and its application to the community. Jacobs described this concept as social capital: “the norm of social responsibility, a corresponding atmosphere of social trust and interconnecting networks of community.”

Often these relationships are built through participation in clubs, organizations, schools or churches. But in the ideal sense of civic life, these processes should occur in publicly owned space that is inclusive of all and physically situated in a place. This space would be one that is created through individual (as part of community) manipulation through time and consequently, would accumulate history and contribute to the identity of the community.⁵ Further, the community process of determining what is acceptable in public space helps the community to establish its sense of identity.⁶

How then does one balance designing a public space through the traditional modes of planning and landscape architecture with the need to incorporate a provision for community manipulation? How does one ensure that they do not create a static landscape? For as Lynch states, “an environment that cannot be changed invites its own destruction.”⁷ To endeavour to apply these ideas to our project in Burnaby, I propose a communal back alley that

invites community and individual manipulation, (through the support of the city, much like a greenway). The alley would adapt through time changing conditions and user needs. Here, residents, not bylaws, would make decisions about paving patterns, or whether it is acceptable to hang laundry between buildings – which in a time of increasing pressure to reduce energy requirements, would perhaps regain some of its value as a process for building social capital and sustainable communities.

(Footnotes)

¹ Paterson, D.D., 1997. Community building and the necessity for radical revision. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 39: 88.

² Quayle, M. and T.C. Driessen, 1997. Growing community: A case for hybrid landscapes. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 39: 103.

³ Paterson, 89.

⁴ Roseland, M., 2000. Sustainable community development: integrating environmental, economic, and social objectives. *Progress in Planning*, 54: 109.

⁵ Quayle, 102.

⁶ Paterson, 95.

⁷ Lynch, K., 1990. *City Sense and City Design: Writings and Projects of Kevin Lynch*. Banerjee, T., Southworth, M. (Eds.). MIT Press, Cambridge. as quoted in Quayle, 1997.



This project is located in the alley between Hastings Street and Albert Street at Willingdon Avenue. The potential of Willingdon to make a grand connection to the waterfront and the adjacency of Confederation Park, the public library, senior's and community centres make this site prime for development, especially as a future heart of the community.



The alley as it exists is dominated by auto-oriented activities of parking, garbage pick up, delivery services and garbage storage.

alleys around the world

this alley life



Alleys are messy landscapes where the processes of life and community are more visible. All of these alleys show signs of inhabitation, but efforts to hide the messiness result in the erosion of the intimate experience of the community.

synthesis principles : 3-dimensional gradient of land use

this alley life

existing

primarily single family residential and one-story commercial



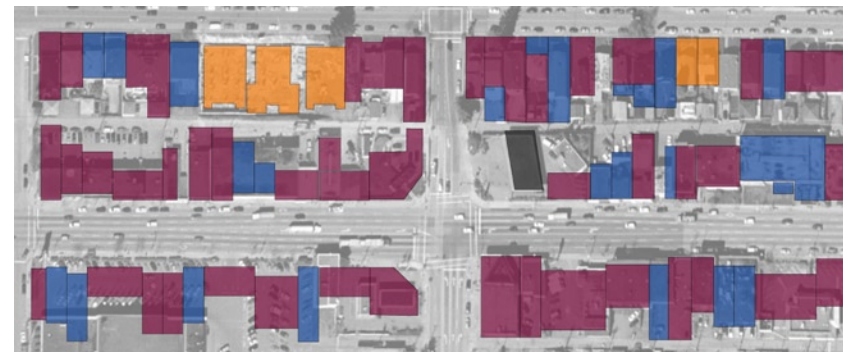
30 years

building orientation to both alley and hastings
move towards multi-story mixed use and mixed employment
more mixed use/commercial along albert street
emphasis on establishing landmark corners



50 years

vertical and horizontal mixed use
mixed employment includes temporary and small-scale
commercial, office space and artisan/light industrial



synthesis principles : infiltration of ecology

this alley life

existing

new street trees on hastings
several valuable mature existing species
stormwater piped to discharge outlet on burrard inlet



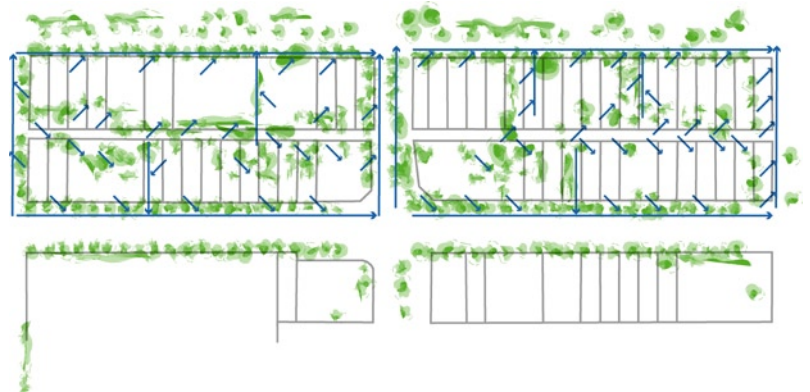
30 years

range of species planted along alley
stormwater in alley infiltrated through permeable pavers
wildlife habitat increased



50 years

trees and gardens maturing
stormwater from alley, hastings and willingdon infiltrated
through basins beneath sidewalks and swales along side
streets

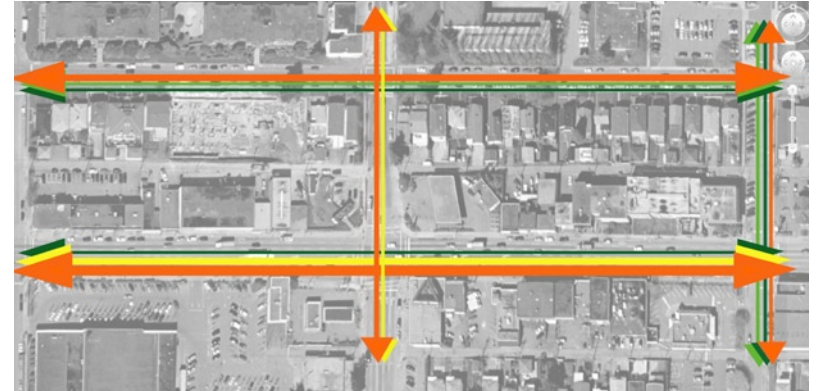


synthesis principles : intentional redistribution of modes of movement

this alley life

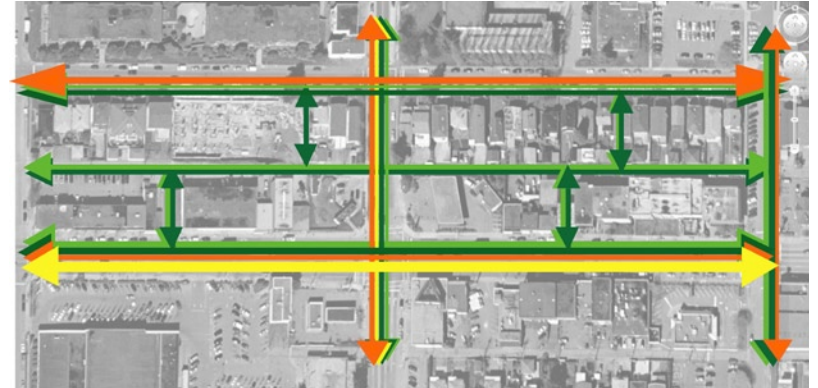
existing

auto domination on all streets
cycling is dangerous on undesignated routes
pedestrian experience is fragmented and unpleasant



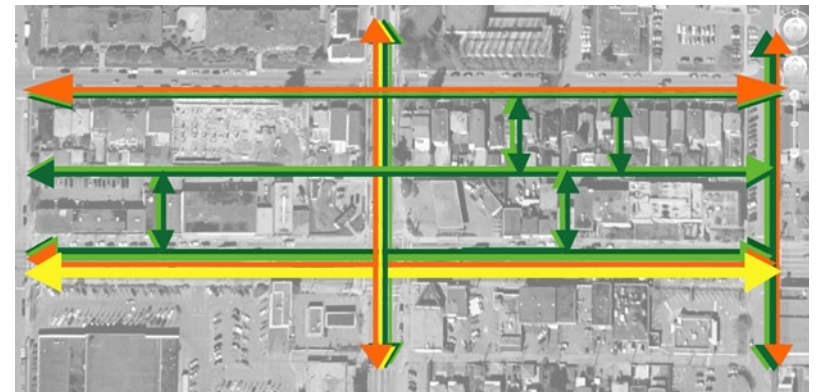
30 years

street car installed on hastings
sidewalks widened and pedestrian routes enhanced through alley and shortcuts
designated cycling lane on hastings



50 years

sidewalks widened and designated cycling lane on willingdon
strong pedestrian connections between hastings and park/library
short cuts change with development



synthesis principles : flexibility for the unexpected

this alley life

existing

alley uses are service oriented
zoning permits little diversity in use
physical barriers between public and private space
public space not necessarily safe



30 years

temporary and small businesses arise
city supports residents to install permeable paving in alley
city and residents plant trees and gardens



50 years

diversity of uses treats alley as communal backyard
row preserved for service access
temporary housing and business permitted
business uses spill into alley





This plan illustrates the development of landmark buildings on three corners of Willingdon Ave. and Hastings St., and a reinvention of the existing Chevron station on the Northeast corner into a rooftop garden and public plaza, which acts as a gateway to the alley. The design generally uses the traditional building footprint, but also allows for a diversity in building sizes. Building uses would develop secondary access or reorient towards the alley. The alley Right of Way is preserved for service access, but it is important to imagine that in 50 years the provision of services might look different. Delivery might occur through the use of mini-trucks, bicycle or with hand dollies. As well, large-scale garbage pick-up might be reduced to take into consideration on-site composting and recycling. Further, in keeping with the idea of making our supporting processes visible, the perception of garbage and delivery might be shifted through the creative reinvention of what those services look like.

Throughways are located along the block to create stronger pedestrian connections to the library, senior's centre and park, as well as to the surrounding neighbourhood.

Finally, similar to the greenway and country lane programs, the city would work with residents to plant appropriate tree species and gardens, to revegetate the alley.

alley site plan at hastings and rosser

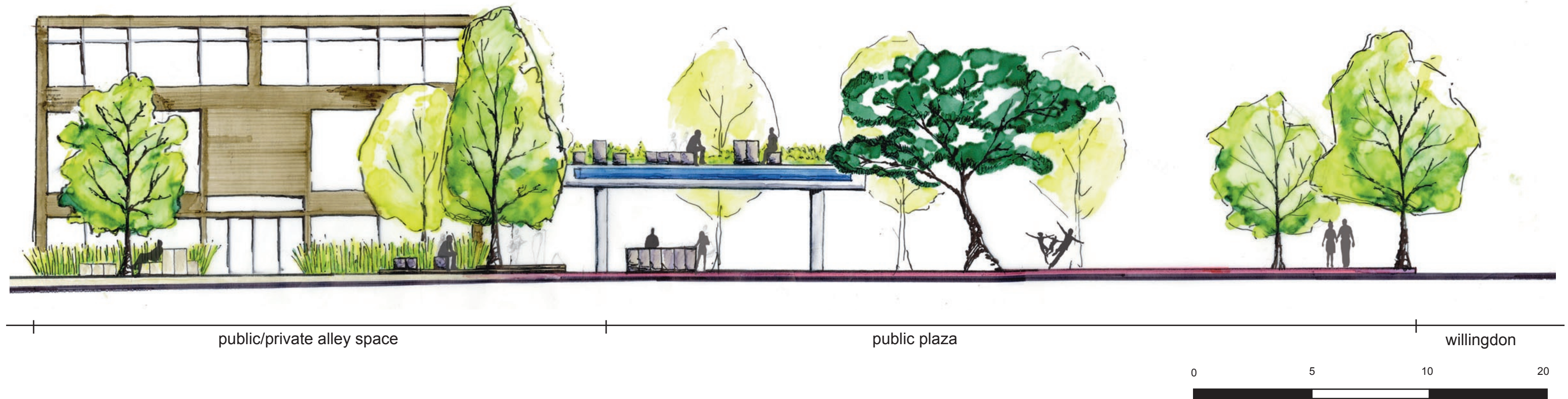
this alley life

The envisioned process of reorienting building uses to the alley would be both formal and informal. Formal reorientation would occur with the addition of a double access when buildings are redeveloped. Informal reorientation would occur when businesses allow for public use of service entrances, or patios. Programming might include a book store, clinic, cafe, youth oriented art studio and wood-working shop. A diverse mix of uses would also provide opportunities for cross programming between business, residential and civic, such as reading programs supported by the bookstore and library, held at the local cafe, or woodworking classes.

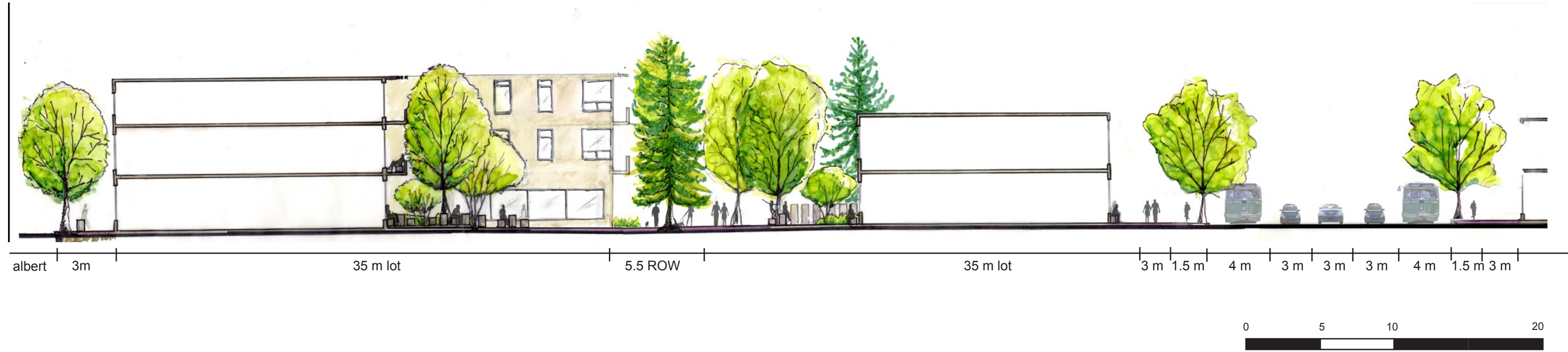
The paving in the alley acts as a visual cue, delineating public and private space. While vegetation starts to define these spaces, a lack of physical barriers between the two help to blur the transition creating a more cohesive public realm while still allowing for a sense of privacy. The project envisions the private spaces being paved with permeable pavers by residents in an incremental fashion with any variety of materials to reflect individual contribution to the community. This process would be supported by the city. Both public and private spaces have the opportunity to be further broken up with small lawns and gardens.

Finally, there are a series of moveable forms that help to create flexible space for public and private uses. These forms start to layer the memory of the community through use.





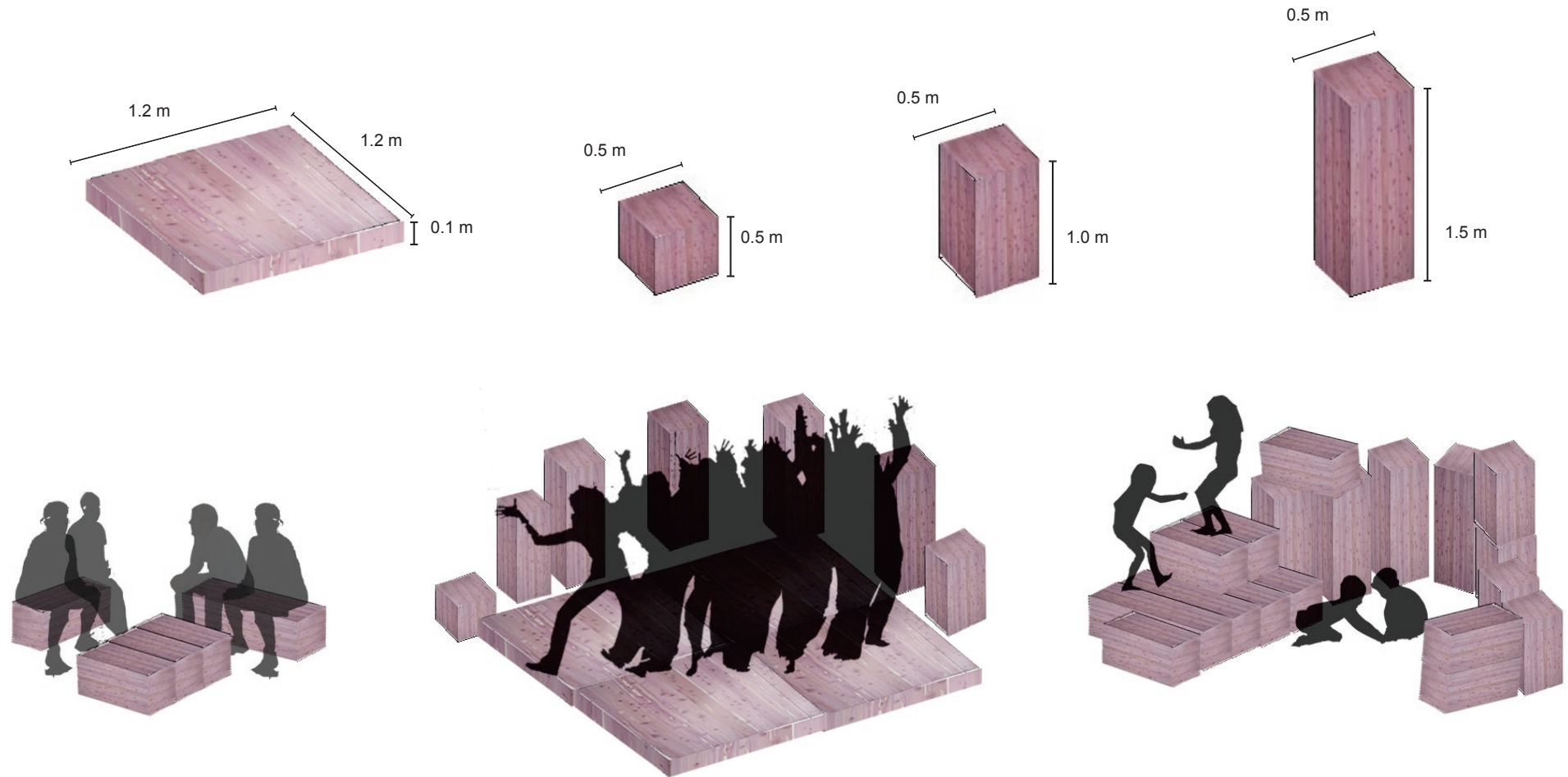
Section BB provides a view of the public plaza on the northeast corner of Willingdon and Hastings, as well as the reinvention of the Chevron station as a roof garden and canopy for public gatherings. This starts to illustrate our ideas of vertical use within the neighbourhood.



This section illustrates how the design works within the existing lot lines and the maintenance of the small-scale character of Burnaby in limiting building heights to four stories. On Hastings, the streetcar has been introduced along the sidewalk to provide a buffer between traffic and pedestrians. As well, the streetcar at this location allows space for dedicated bike lanes on both sides, and a widening of the sidewalk to at least three metres.

space-makers

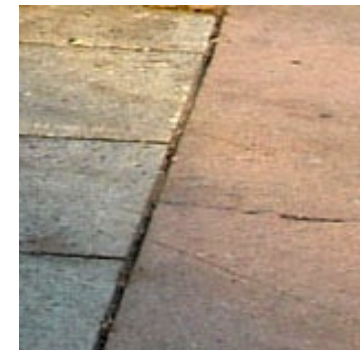
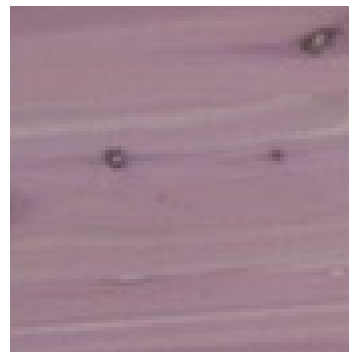
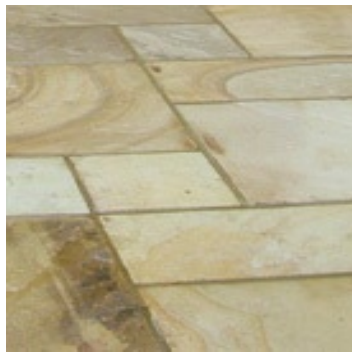
this alley life



The forms are simple, moveable and are constructed from locally harvested cedar plywood to reflect the history of logging and native species of Burnaby. The forms are a platform, for dance parties, that also defines the ground plane; the seat; table; a leaner or screen that could be used to create privacy or enclosure, or could be used to build forts or theatre sets. The forms could also be lit from within to act as wayfinding devices and icons in the alley.

plants and materials

this alley life



The plants selected for the alley are to strengthen the connection to the coastal western hemlock forest in Confederation Park and Burrard Inlet, as well as to the green space in Deer Lake Park. This is to reconnect fragmented habitat patches. Also, the species are intended to create a multi-sensual experience with the smell of the katsura tree, colours, and sound of returning birds. Finally, the dahlias represent the potential of individual gardens within the alley. **Photo bottom left:** Propellor lighting to indicate examples of lighting in the alley, both within the forms and above.



In conclusion, this design imagines the alley as a space of habitation where community and a more intimate life is visible, but also as a space that residents of a high density neighbourhood can treat as their backyard.