

## ***The History Behind the Design of Bill Curtis Square***

Before 1992, the Bill Curtis Square site was used for a parking lot. The City acquired the property during the development of the Concord Pacific lands and an underground parking structure was planned for the site. After an initial design by The Park Board was not approved, Bob McGilvray, architect and landscape architect, was commissioned to develop an alternative plan for the site, later named Bill Curtis Square for a long time City Chief Engineer.

“It was evident that the design needed to be unique and address the historic industrial-urban qualities of Yaletown. The question was what kind of park design would make sense? Many of the elements that made up Yaletown were old brick warehouses with regular punch windows and heavy interior timber structures,” noted Bob McGilvray. Originally an industrial area, Yaletown once had a railroad track running down the middle of Mainland Street with angled cuts out of the loading docks for side access to rail car doors.

These Yaletown elements have been incorporated into the Square’s design including constructing the elevator shaft to resemble an old warehouse with thick brick walls, punched windows, and a heavy timber structure. There is a curving blue line of tiles below the west side curving seat wall symbolizing the original water line that came up to Mainland Street before the site was filled by the CPR and the City of Vancouver . Because this park would be viewed from the high rise apartments surrounding as well as ground level, the pattern of the brick pavers aligns with both the windows of the historic adjacent 5211 Mainland Street building and also the sidewalk bollards and elevator structure which mimic the rhythm of old Yaletown buildings.

This alternative design (generally as built today) was unanimously approved by the Urban Design Panel and The City Planning department. Bill Curtis Square is now enjoyed by people who live work and play in Yaletown. It also hosts the Yaletown Funky Farmers Market and the Yaletown Summer celebration, which attracts over 60,000 people a year. “There is a corner of the park where the sun shines through and it is absolutely gorgeous” Sarah Coleman, Funky Farmers Market vendor.

*Jamie Hoobanoff  
Public Relations Coordinator  
Yaletown Business Improvement Association*

*Bill Curtis Square  
Bob McGilvray MAIBC BC SLA ; Designer  
Downs-Archambault & Partners, Architects ; Construction Documents*