

Market Lands Design Competition: Concept Statement

Our vision for Market Lands is both sensitive and ambitious: to meet the guiding aspirations of the brief, create what the city needs, and deliver extra. We want it to be the best place in town to live, meet for drinks, share great food, buy fresh produce, experience art installations and open-air cinema; the go-to place in the Exchange District and a catalyst for wider regeneration.

The proposal recognizes the ghost creek that cut through the site long before First Nations Settlers, and Modernists came. Inspired by these histories, and connections to trade, we've created an 'eroded soft grid' layout with buildings and spaces that encourage continual flow. Albert Street through Old Market Square is extended diagonally north, the ancient route taken by Browns Creek; flowing water is symbolically exchanged with footfall. Careful consideration of position, function, and character of each building provides flexibility now and in future; the northern plot offers a framework for a variety of footprint sizes, heights, and investment opportunities.

The Plaza is a playful invitation to the public on the south-central portion of the site. It works as a place of social exchange providing year-round transformation: in warm weather, it hosts an extended market and offers services, seating, shade and water; in winter, a realm of fun and games. Year round, the Plaza provides pedestrian access from every direction. The Plaza retains mature trees in the south-west corner but is largely open, with shifts in paving to incorporate furniture, lighting, planting, water, and sound/light installations within the modulated Tyndall stone surface.

Market House is conceptually a carved block of wood with a changing silhouette when seen in the round. The 100-unit building is kept compact to maximize the Plaza. The form is subtle but sophisticated, directing west sunlight into the Plaza and embodying movement. A glassy footprint addresses the needs of the Urban Shaman Gallery and includes two commercial units, with the housing entrance core. On the east, facing Market Hall, is the Gallery entrance, whilst exhibitions can spill out onto the Plaza on the south side. All apartments face east, south, or west. The timber waffle structure provides all residents with big views from full-width sheltered balconies, sustainable Canadian wood.

Market Hall is the dynamic destination on the new diagonal route through the site. The soaring, column-free roof is an engineered timber 'hyperbolic paraboloid' structure, generating movement with economic straight lines and requiring only the support of stairs in two opposite corners. The sculptural rooftop is accessible; the Plaza here is symbolically 'lifted up' to provide an event space for cinema or snowman competitions, depending on the season, with great views. Beneath the big warm roof, the open space of Market Hall is framed by full-height glass façades. This connects to the south and west Plaza, with fixed shops, washrooms, and storage. Above sits a mezzanine bar on the north and east sides.

Deliberately dramatic and intimate, the design is a year-round celebration of civic generosity, activity, and inclusivity.