



Old Town Reunion - Celebrating 50 Years of Revival of Victoria's Original City Centre

Updated Announcement & Invitation: Event Program - Presentations - Feature Panelists

A Gala Event - Tuesday May 24, 7 to 10:30 pm at Open Space Gallery, 510 Fort Street.

We invite you to an evening of recollection, review, and debate - on the past, on current circumstances - and a look at prospects for Victoria's Old Town - please join us for photographs, presentations, panelist commentaries, and spirited dialogue.

The Program for the Evening Event will be as follows:

7:00 - 8:00 p.m. - Old Town - an Ongoing Project

- 'The Way We Were' - photos of Victoria's mid-century Downtown.
- 'The Study' - the Old Town Group is introduced and recalls the Project development.
- 'The Report' - the core content of the Old Town Report is presented.
- 'Old Town Evolves' - Longtime Victoria Heritage Planner, Steve Barber reviews the history of Old Town following the Report, and the development of City policy.
- Victoria's Downtown Plan - Old Town and Chinatown - formally established as 'Districts'.

8:00 - 8:15 p.m. Mid-Evening Break

8:15 - 9:30 p.m. - 'Old Town - Today, and Tomorrow'

A Panel of notable experts, assisted by moderator, Professor Martin Segger, discuss the challenges and the opportunities for Old Town's future:

David Chard - Downtown developer, Chairman Urban Development Institute, Capital Regional District.

Mark Hornell - Planner; former Assistant Director, Community Planning, City of Victoria.

Gene Miller - early Old Town resident; Open Space founder; columnist Focus magazine.

Matt McNeil - business proprietor in Old Town: Bard and Banker, Irish Times.

Robert Randall - former Chairman Downtown Residents Association; artist; urban commentator.

9:30 - 9:45 pm - 'Open Dialogue and Questions' - audience and Panel members.

9:45 - 10:30 pm - 'Mingler' - discussion, debate, and cash bar. Event closing.

Old Town Study Group: John Adams, Historian; Richard Collier, Conservation Consultant;
Chris Gower, Architect, Urban Design Planner; John Keay, Architect; Ken Lane, CA, CPA;
Jim Starck, Designer and Graphic Artist.

Hosted in collaboration with the Architectural Institute of BC, Vancouver Island Chapter and the Planning Institute of BC.

Please arrive early at Open Space Gallery, doors open at 6:45, the evening's proceedings start at 7:00 sharp.

If you have not RSVP'd please do so, and circulate this invitation to those that you think may have an interest in the topic.

The Event will be video taped for a following media production and for other public uses.

Attendance is limited - please RSVP by e-mail to: oldtowngroup2016@gmail.com

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Background:

One half century ago, Victoria's old downtown faced multiple perils and uncertainties. The City was in an era of transition - post-industrial decline was imminent for Victoria and its harbour. Population was spilling to the suburbs, and remote shopping centres were expanding boldly. Victoria's run-down but historic city centre was on the brink of a spiralling commercial decline.

Some projects, including Centennial and Bastion Squares, had just set the stage for new urban innovations. However the jeopardies of extensive demolitions and of proposed new high-rise towers on the harbour-front brought into question the viability, and the continuing existence of a unique vintage downtown district.

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In the spring of 1971 a UBC School of Architecture term project led to the formation of a group tasked to prepare ideas to revive Victoria's aging city centre. This effort led to The Old Town Report - a document that first identified this historic downtown district as a cohesive character area, that confirmed its now-well-recognized title, and that offered plans to help stem a tide of urban neglect and abandonment.

This Report influenced successive decades of issues and initiatives for Victoria's Old Town. The evolution of Old Town continues today, with more challenges, and more opportunities for its future.

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Now the original Old Town Study Group invites you to participate in a Reunion Event which will celebrate the fifty-year history of the revival of Victoria's original downtown. Please join us in Old Town, at the Open Space Art Gallery, 510 Fort Street, 7:00-10:30pm, Tuesday May 24.

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