



**Mole Hill
Mole Hill Community Housing Society
Comox and Pendrell Streets, Vancouver
Heritage Renovation**

The Task

This unique and complex project involved the restoration of 26 City of Vancouver-owned heritage houses on 26 parcels of land on an entire city block in the heart of Vancouver's densely populated West End. The homes include some of the oldest structures remaining from early Vancouver history. This significant heritage resource had been under threat of demolition for many years. The existing residents and surrounding community banded together and approached Terra Housing to develop a plan to save the homes.

Terra's Role

Firstly, Terra determined the feasibility of restoring and converting the City-owned heritage houses in Mole Hill to non-market housing and prepared a comprehensive development plan for the project. Terra devised a two-phased approach to the redevelopment, with each phase involving sub-sets of houses under construction, which maximized the capacity for tenants to remain on site throughout the project. Terra coordinated the lending application and completed due diligence to secure construction financing.

Once financing was secured, Terra managed the phased development of Mole Hill. Many challenges followed: the heritage interiors and exteriors of the houses were carefully preserved; each of the houses was raised, adding proper foundations and an additional storey; the houses were adapted to include energy efficient heating systems, storm water management and re-use of heritage features. Hazardous materials abatement was necessary throughout. Additionally, the project required moving the licensed onsite daycare into new premises within one of the heritage houses.

Terra's most important task may have been managing the relocation of the existing residents of the site and ongoing community engagement. The goal of the tenant relocation plan was to inconvenience residents as little as possible. Many tenants required support during the relocations: many were dealing with mental and physical health issues. Terra worked closely with the Society, who knew each tenant, to ensure a smooth transition.



Terra managed the list of affected tenants and worked with the Society to manage tenant expectations, coordinated information meetings, planned the temporary moves and renovations as necessary, worked with the City and code consultant to minimize the permitting issues, and did the operational planning for rent levels, operating costs, connection fees, moving expenses, suite cleanings,

Finally, as the members were new to the challenge of operating a housing society, Terra assisted in the operational start-up of the project.

The Result

Mole Hill now houses low-income singles and families, as well as market tenants, in 170 studio, one, two and three 3 bedroom units.

Along with the century-old houses, the project also preserved many of the site's mature trees. The public space of the Mole Hill block was reconfigured to allow for private common space for residents and to increase the publicly accessible green space, including community gardens, pathways, benches and a water feature. The introduction of traffic-calming features in the laneway protects the safety of residents and introduced a pleasant walkway for the entire community.

Awards for Mole Hill include the 2004 Heritage Canada Award, the 2004 City of Vancouver Heritage Award of Honour, the Canadian Construction Association's 2004 Environmental Achievement Award and a 2006 CMHC Housing Award for Best Practices in Affordable Housing.