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FALSE CREEK FLATS: WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS?

These posters and the related zine were created on the traditional, ancestral, and stolen territory of the xʷməθkʷə́yəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Stó:lō and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations – so-called Vancouver. These posters concern the development of South Flatz, its relation to Emily Carr University of Art + Design, and its effect on the surrounding neighbourhood(s). We would like to acknowledge this area’s adjacency to/absorption of two known Squamish landmarks as reported by Kwi Awt Stelmexw: Skwácháys at the Mudflats and Xáywá7esks at Main Street Science World.

“FALSE CREEK FLATS” is one map in the “ECUAD DONOR MAP” series connecting some of the biggest donors for our new campus to gentrification and other place-based violence. The series was made by Mickey Vescera and Mickey Morgan. The series is also part of Mickey M.’s gratuation project “Mapping East Van”.

Vancouver, 1910s: caught under the thumb of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) the City of Vancouver (CoV) turned to the Canadian Northern Railway (CNoR) and Great Northern Railway (GNR), who wanted to circumvent the CPR by creating new land. The False Creek Flats (FCF) were deemed disposable enough. The few Indigenous residents left were forcibly removed from the waterfront in 1913. In 1915 the CoV began filling in the flats with scrap lumber, bricks, and industrial waste.

Like it’s ex-neighbour Hogan’s Alley, FCF was a poor area branded as a hub of crime – “home of the working man”. They were constantly targeted by zoning laws and anti-vice campaigns. Fifteen blocks of the FCF’s Strathcona neighbourhood were demolished in the late 1960s, only stopped by the local tenant’s association. Across the street in 1971, Hogan’s was completely destroyed.

FCF’s history of being targeted by the CoV (and whichever companies pull its favour) did not end in the 20th century. Its non-residential lands make up only 10% of Vancouver’s land base, while housing over half it’s jobs. Today, the FCF lands are some of the most expensive in Vancouver. It has industry and artists, making it an ideal target for the CoV to unlock its “economic potential.”

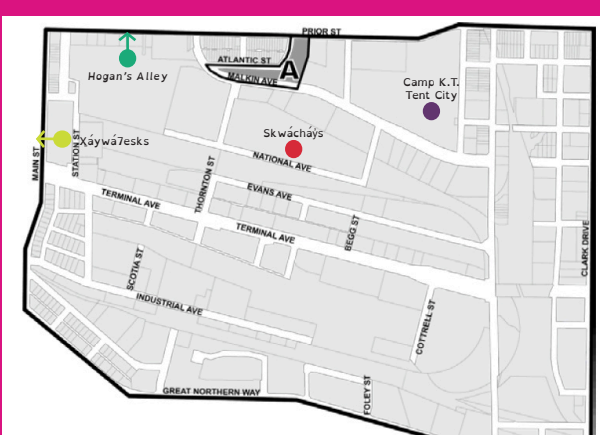
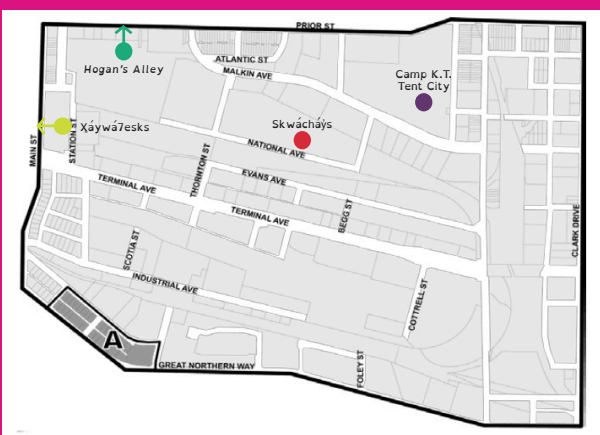
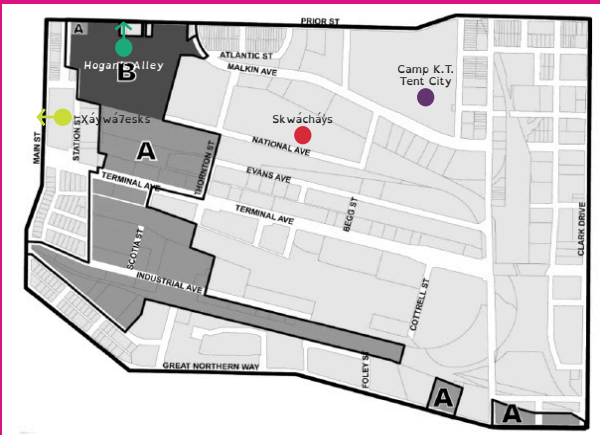
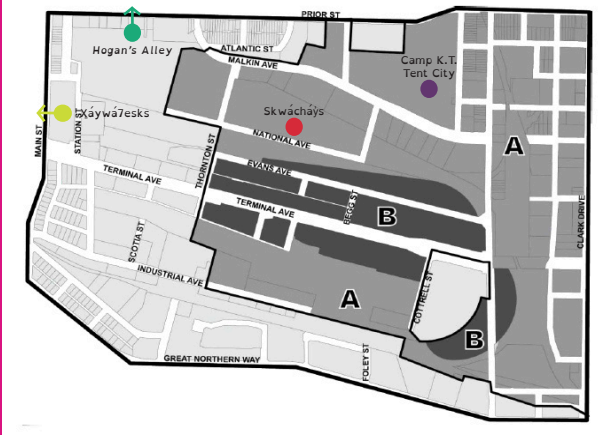
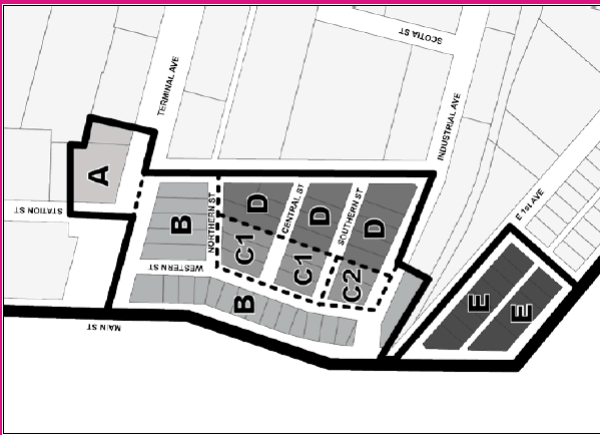
There is a heavy focus on artists being led straight from university into the “innovation hub” at Main St. & Terminal Ave. Here they have the opportunity to work within the same industries that gentrified that area. But after all these galleries and labs are built, where will the Others, the homeless and marginalized, go? Will the people who gather at Thornton Park be pushed out like the tent city in Oppenheimer? In the centre of the FCF, there are unhoused people living and working. Where will they go?

When single resident occupancies, shelters, and mental health and addiction services are underfunded to the point of uselessness, people can’t just leave. We see it in Strathcona Park – the residents of Oppenheimer’s tent city were offered nothing for their displacement, so they relocated. As of this writing (November 2020), the only significant policy change around this tent city is a park “closing time” and restrictions on where tents can go. Instead of help, they are pushed further out, away from a community providing temporary food, shelter, and Narcan.

The plans include some accessible services, but they still want the homeless, the poor, and any Others to not have a space in this neighbourhood. A place that has been historically pushed around by the CoV can finally do so itself.

The task of becoming a “cool” area is worrying. For a city, a “cool” area is never an area that highlights existing artists and activists (especially not if they’re... troublesome). We implore local artists, activists, and business owners to look at the braided histories of “economic potential,” artists, and gentrification in our city and others (eg. Boyle Heights in the USA). A “cool” area is like Main Street in 2020 – expensive faux-bohemia desperately trying to ignore rampant evictions and homelessness.

The FCF do not need coffee shops, galleries, or a walkway connected to the Sea Wall. They need real aid for their at-risk residents. Question why homelessness is not being directly and immediately addressed in the middle of an overdose crisis, in an area half-blocks from Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside (DTES). Question what will happen to those who leave. Question (and push) what “grassroots activations” are actually allowed. Hold the CoV accountable for what they do and who they work with.



FCF Zoning Maps from the CoV (2017)

SOURCES, RESOURCES,
AND LINKS TO
PRINTING YOUR OWN
POSTER/ZINE:



SOUTH FLATZ: COMMUNITY THAT RENOVICTZ

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South Flatz, a development in the FCF, is currently being made by Low Tide Properties and PCI Group. The cringeworthy advertising shouts about being a “community that inspirez” for millennial/Gen Z artists, with flashy artwork of computer glitches and cats in tweed suits. Craft beer pipedreams.

While PCI Group is no angel (several Google reviews describe them as “a nightmare,” with poorly maintained buildings and no regard for tenants without “high-end” image), Low Tide Properties is owned by none other than Chip Wilson.

In 2016, Chip set a goal for his company to acquire \$1.5 billion worth of property by 2026. He has so far been succeeding, buying up multiple independent art spaces and non-profits along the way. This includes Old Viking Hall in 2006, Red Gate Arts Society (East Hastings) in 2018, Index in 2019, Merge in 2019, The Clubhouse in 2019, and several charities in 877 East Hastings in 2016. The majority of these were operating in or near the Downtown Eastside (DTES), a community which South Flatz claims to be a part of (“EAST VAN”). Chip renovicted these spaces, meaning eviction under the pretense of renovation.

These buildings were places for activists and marginalized groups to gather. They highlighted LGBT+ people, people of colour, women, and other artists who struggled to find a place in the Vancouver arts scene. These buildings were where collectives highlighting LGBT+/Black artists (NuZi, Chao, etc.) and people who didn’t “fit in” at predominantly white, cishet, male events found safety, inspiration, and community. Artists would sacrifice their own money to provide for this community (“We have to sacrifice our food money to make these things happen,” - NuZi’s Betty Mulat). When Chip buys out these properties he not only hurts the culture of an area, but attacks the spaces and livelihoods of marginalized people.

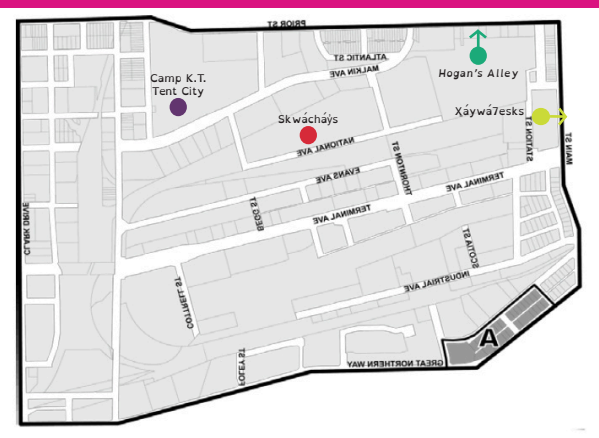
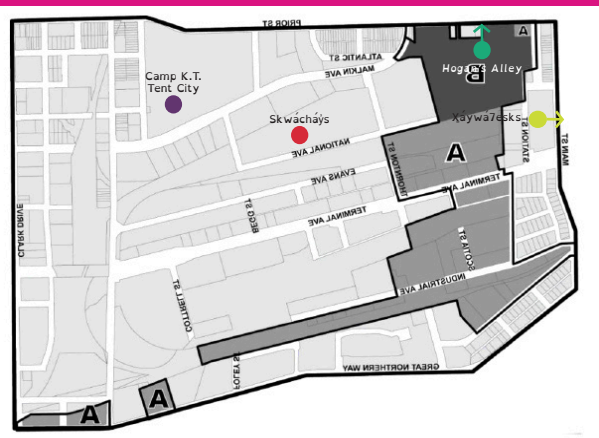
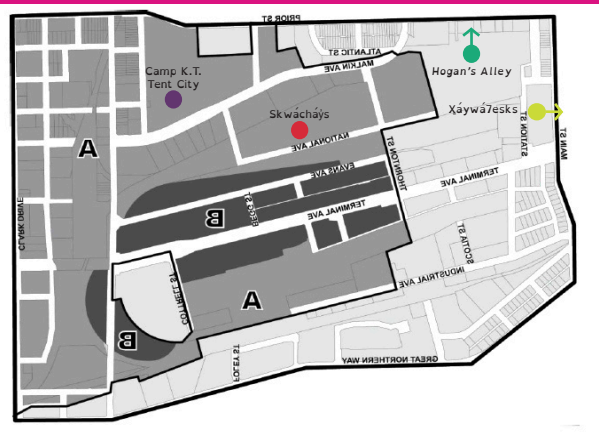
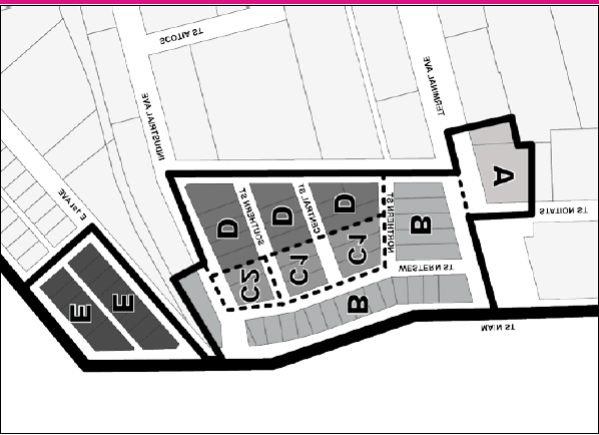
In 2019, a “Rave Against Renovictions” was organized outside Chip’s \$75 million home. Chip told the crowd – which included founders of several spaces he had renovicted – that “the world doesn’t want enough of your product for you to pay the rent”. “But I was paying rent,” replied a demonstrator, at which point Chip walked away.

Low Tide is also a major sponsor of the Vancouver Mural Festival (VMF). With due respect to the muralists, the VMF is a branding scheme lining the pockets of developers and realtors. While community murals reflect a character and purpose unique to that building or area of the city (e.g.: Smokey the Devil), VMF murals are disposable, interchangeable, and speak only in vague gestures. They are used to create an artsy look, a “cool” street.

VMF is funded on the basis of quantity over quality, and landlords/developers have final say over what goes on their buildings. For example, The Belvedere Court was once home to dozens of low-income artists. When approached by the VMF in 2016, the tenants asked that two founders of the space be put in the mural with the phrase “Our Place, Our Home”. Instead, the VMF ceded to the landlord, and it was replaced with two other residents and the phrase “The Present Is a Gift”. Permanent to fleeting. “Enjoy your stay, while it lasts.”

In 2017, The Belvedere began evicting residents en masse. Protests were organized by tenants and the Vancouver Tenants Union and were largely successful. Like the recent protests against evictions at Broadway-Carolina, tenants who didn’t accept payouts were faced with intensified risk/pressure in any future evictions.

Chip Wilson does not care about the arts, and it’s disgusting that his company is trying to make themselves the face of the Vancouver arts scene. Chip, his company Low Tide, and Low Tide’s project South Flatz are not concerned with supporting art. They will simply pave over it, like they’ve done a dozen times before.



FCF Zoning Maps from the CoV (2017)

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