

THE MISSING MIDDLE

“Missing Middle Housing continues to be a form that struggles to take shape across many major metropolitan cities in North America. Alberta is no exception. Less than 8% of Alberta's rental market is 3-bedroom housing. We are very excited about delivering an innovative example of courtyard style row houses with PEAKS + PLAINS, which have an unprecedented demand and overwhelmingly positive response.

Although this project was appealed and initially not supported by neighbours the overall experience and reaction once the form has been stood up has been extremely positive not only by neighbours but all the residents. The combined waste and recycling, parking off the lane with attached garages and courtyard setting has helped establish strong neighbour bonds and a place where children and people connect.”¹

THE LOCATION²

The design process commenced with an urban planning exercise to understand Calgary's current outward growth. The prairies were historically surveyed and divided into sections (1 X 1 mile) of land for farm production. Calgary continues to expand using this large grid, with ever growing road and infrastructure costs. To curb this city planners looked to densify the inner city by creating local ARPs that allowed for pockets of density.

The site is along 16 ST SW in Altadore and zoned to allow 20 residential units. This zoning was done to provide a buffer between the adjacent commercial shopping centre and the rest of the community, mainly single-family houses.

THE RESEARCH³

Missing Middle Housing can be designed into many building forms, but a community is understood by the way it is built and organized, thus, the design process commenced with a stroll through Altadore to document the types of homes already there for a better sense of scale and materials. The walk revealed a mixture of older and newer homes, both with sloped and flat roof lines. This gave way to the idea of PEAKS + PLAINS, coined by the developer, where a sloped roof design could be used along the front street units and a flat roof at the back along the lane, where placing a staked unit over the garage didn't allow much for slopes but did allow for all the parking to stay off the lane and allow for a centre urban space between the buildings.

¹ Project developer. (Unnamed).

² 01.jpg

³ 02.jpg – 03.jpg

THE CONCEPT

The concept was to create social value using architectural design. By use of varying shapes and building materials each multifamily unit feels unique, and a sense of “home” is achieved.⁴ “Buildings and urban spaces provide the framework for urban life and help makes areas attractive. Buildings and urban spaces help promote a better quality of life for citizens, improve social cohesion and can even have a significant branding effect.”⁵

The play between two architectural languages, PEAKS⁶ + PLAINS⁷, ended up giving joy to the people living within but also enriched the texture of Altadore itself. Stop by for a Monogram coffee!

⁴ 04.jpg

⁵ *Danish Association Architecture 2022, Urban Life*: <https://www.danskeark.com/vocabulary/byliv>

⁶ 04.jpg, 05.jpg

⁷ 10.jpg