

# Somerville House Adaptive Reuse for Vancouver School of Theology

UBC DP BOARD SUBMISSION

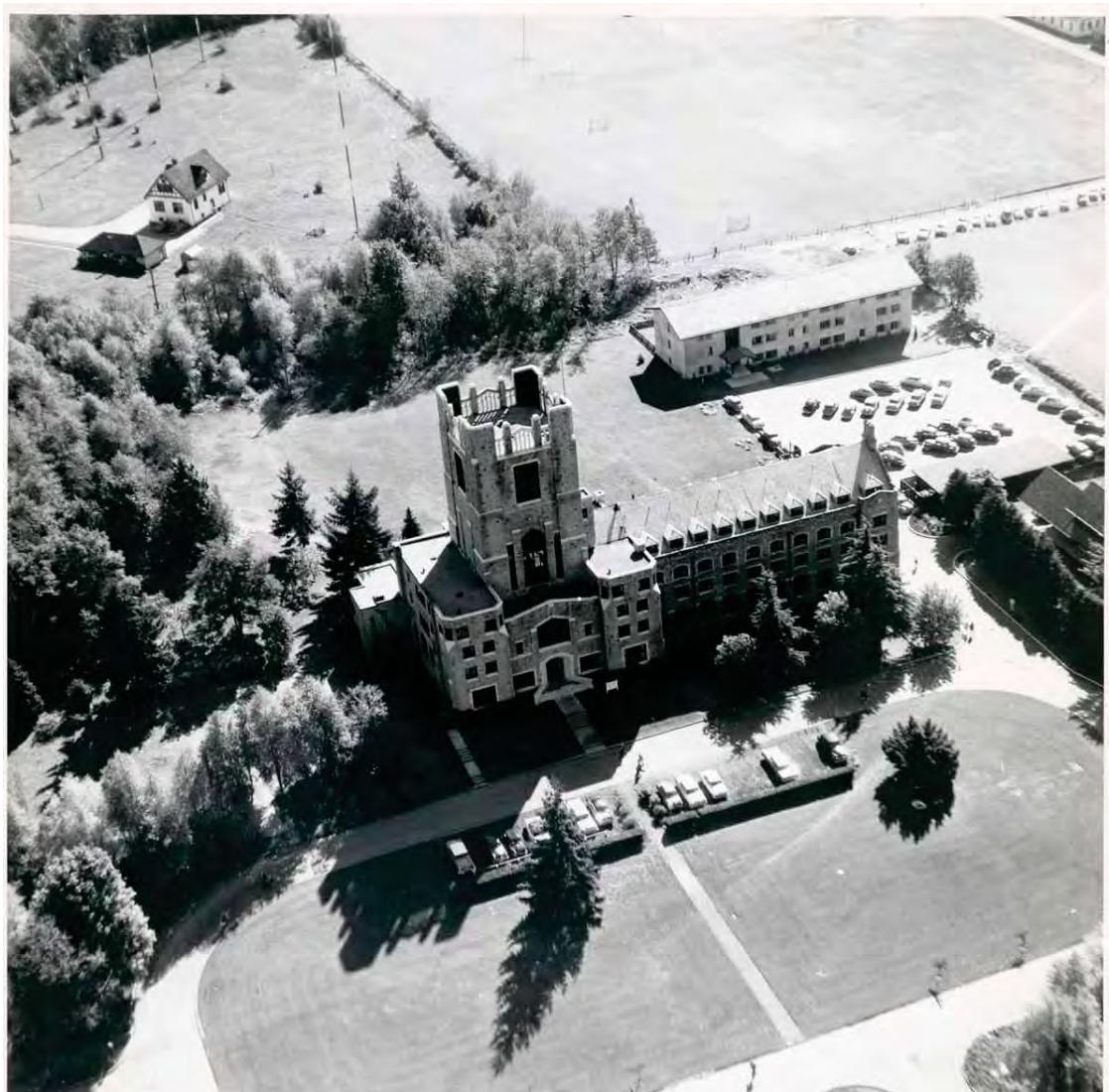


**Task:** Adaptation of an existing four-storey residential building to academic uses for the Vancouver School of Theology



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## HISTORY - VANCOUVER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY



Vancouver School of Theology has been part of theological education in British Columbia for over 100 years - a rich, pioneering tradition upon which to build. VST is a direct descendent of a number of denominational institutions founded in Vancouver over the years.

The Anglican Theological College (ATC) moved into what was called the Chancellor Building on the University of British Columbia campus in Point Grey, Vancouver in 1927.

Also in 1927, Ryerson College, Westminster Hall, and the Congregational College of British Columbia were amalgamated to form the United Church's Union College of British Columbia, housed in the west wing of the Iona Building, constructed that same year. In the 1930s, the tower section was added. In 1959-1960 the east wing was added to the Iona building.

Throughout the 1960s, Union College and ATC held joint classes in several disciplines and began exploring the idea of a new ecumenical theological centre serving the Pacific Northwest. Out of this exploration, Vancouver School of Theology was formed in 1971.

The 1970s and early '80s were exciting years of growth, with students coming from many denominations. With the affiliation of St. Andrew's Hall, the Presbyterian Church in Canada officially became associated with VST.

The School established its partnership with First Nations more than 25 years ago, and offers the innovative Native Ministries Degree Program by extension, reaching out to distant parts of Canada and the western U.S.A.

From the mid-1990s through 2008 VST offered the Canadian Studies Certificate Program co-sponsored with Shizuoka Eiwa College in Japan. Today, the School continues to develop new courses and programs that explore a Christianity that actively engages the world.

As well, VST has established Iona Pacific Inter-Religious Centre. Iona Pacific creates a platform from which VST can engage multiple voices and faiths, and sits alongside the core work of the School.

## DESIGN RATIONALE - CONVERSION OF SOMERVILLE HOUSE



\*\*\*IMAGE UPDATED: 2014-06-06

The conversion of the Somerville House residence to institutional use by the Vancouver School of Theology is supported by the longstanding agreement with the University of British Columbia to maintain the School in this neighbourhood. It is this agreement which enshrines the presence and work of the School and its viability. Relocation from the iconic Iona building necessitates the reconsideration of the form and character of Somerville House's residential façade to more appropriately reflect the institutional use and mission of the School; specifically, to embody the inspiration of its community in form as one of faith.

The proposed design adapts Christian references including a cruciform composed of a strong roof plane intersecting with a vertical element at one end. The vertical component is a frame illuminated by placement of fenestration at the building wall. The horizontal roof is suspended above a glazed fourth floor clerestory expression above a more solid three storey building base. The composition is complemented by distilled vertical frame elements which serve to buttress the east and west facades. Removal of the building's residential scale elements, including canopies, stairs, balconies, fences and tightly composed landscaping, opens up visibility of the building and engenders a more public presence along both neighbourhood frontages – St. Andrew's Walk and the Iona courtyard. The stepping of the building form is also reduced and simplified, reinforcing a clarity of form punctuated by the cruciform expression. Transparency figures prominently, asserting a more porous building edge and a more prominent building presence within the theological neighbourhood.

The proposal dissolves the separation of public and private, asserts an invitation to the broader community to engage the learning environment afforded by the School, and thereby embodies the principles of outreach and service, touchstones of the theological education.

## SUSTAINABILITY FEATURES



The proposed conversion of Somerville House will not seek certification through a specific green building metric. The following features are important design considerations:

- o Reuse of an existing building and re-purposing for long term use;
- o Waste stream diversion of demolition materials from the landfill;
- o Use of high quality, non off-gassing materials and products throughout to ensure optimal indoor air quality;
- o Use of durable, high quality materials for the building fabric, with considerations for maintainability;
- o Compliance with the new energy provisions in the BC Building Code, including envelope performance;
- o Solar management strategies for specific building exposures;
- o Low-tech building systems to promote user engagement of their environment;
- o Natural ventilation strategies where practical;
- o Building system selection to support long term operational viability;
- o Plumbing and lighting fixture selection to ensure operational efficiency;
- o Durable, maintainable indoor finish selections to support operational and maintenance efficiencies.

Proper design of the built environment to deter criminal activity through the application of the principles of territoriality, surveillance, access control, maintenance, activity support and target hardening. The conversion of Somerville House for the Vancouver School of Theology employs the following strategies:



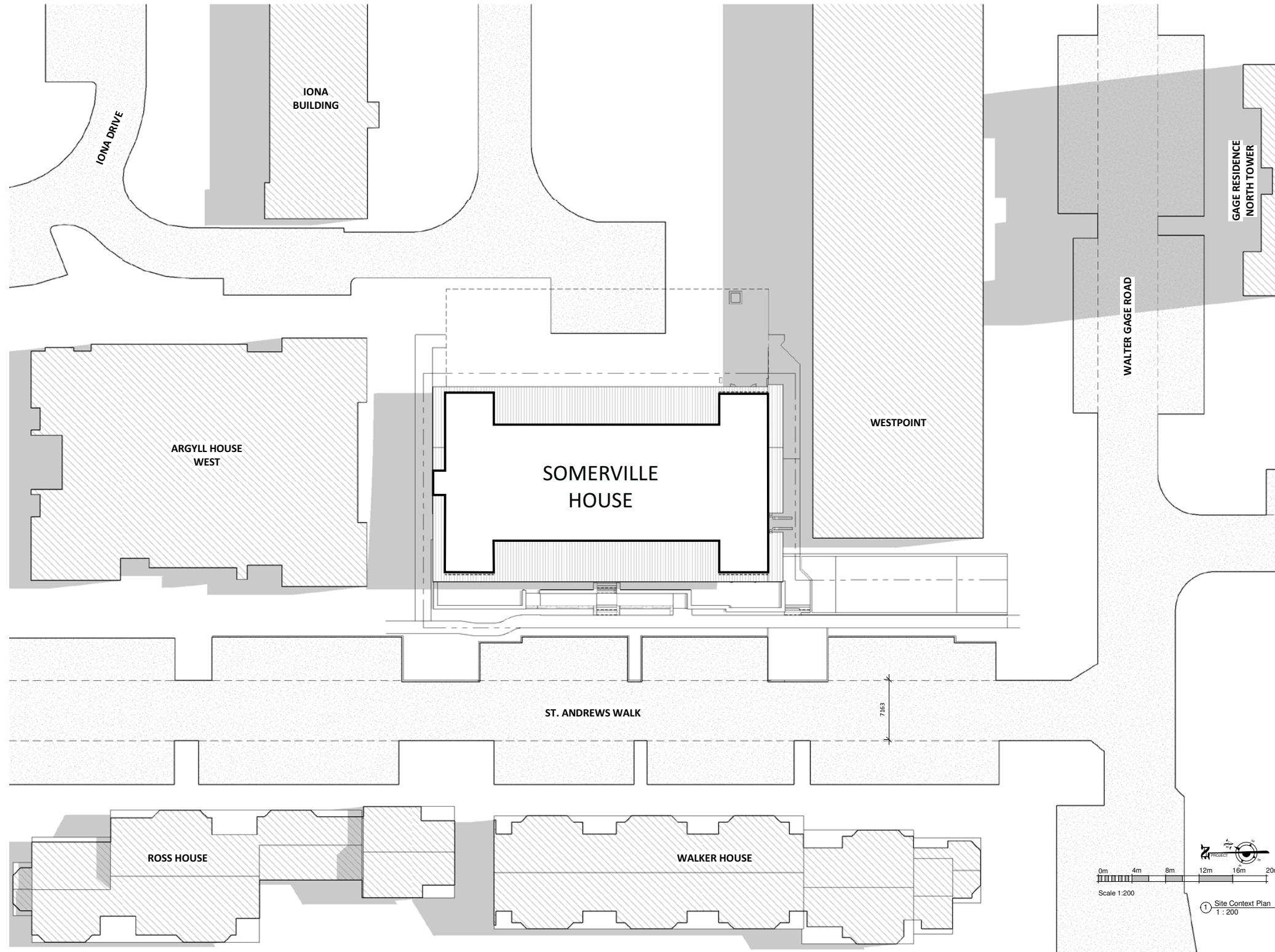
## CPTED PRINCIPLES



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- o Window placement to overlook adjacent sidewalks, courtyards and public open space;
- o Removal of residential privacy screening and vegetation;
- o Open and highly visible building entries from three faces, with a particular emphasis on the east and west;
- o A high degree of visibility at the building entrances through the use of glazing;
- o Application of a comprehensive lighting design to eliminate alcoves and blind spots, as well as the use of low glare fixtures;
- o Creation of outdoor patios and learning spaces for use by the theological community around the building perimeter;
- o Enhanced connectivity to college neighbours, particularly St. Andrew's Hall;
- o Proposed maintainable landscape treatments, with particular attention to building edges and hardscape surfaces;
- o Placement of gathering and high activity uses on the ground floor with direct connection to exterior spaces and a high degree of transparency and overlook.

## SITE CONTEXT PLAN



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