

Video

ULI Case Studies: Woodward's. Vancouver, BC

Date: April 08, 2014

00:00:10 --> 00:00:13: Woodward's is a mixed use urban redevelopment project in Vancouver's

00:00:14 --> 00:00:14: Gastown area.

00:00:14 --> 00:00:16: A rough part of town,

00:00:16 --> 00:00:19: once known for having the poorest Postal code in Canada

00:00:19 --> 00:00:20: for more than a century,

00:00:20 --> 00:00:24: woodwards was a landmark Department store considered the heart of

00:00:24 --> 00:00:28: downtown and a Vancouver tradition for generations that used to

00:00:28 --> 00:00:30: be the place not in like Macy's in the United

00:00:30 --> 00:00:33: States where you'd have the animated Christmas scenes,

00:00:33 --> 00:00:37: moving Christmas scenes in all of the storefront windows,

00:00:37 --> 00:00:39: at least to come here on weekends.

00:00:39 --> 00:00:42: And it was really. A part of middle class that

00:00:42 --> 00:00:46: Vancouver Woodward's closed in 1993 and the store stayed vacant

00:00:46 --> 00:00:49: for 11 years as the area around it started to

00:00:49 --> 00:00:52: deteriorate. It's at idle and then as a result it

00:00:53 --> 00:00:56: reflected perhaps the real desperation of the community.

00:00:56 --> 00:01:00: In 2002 the store was eventually taken over by squatters.

00:01:00 --> 00:01:04: People called the movement. The Woodward squat would squat was

00:01:04 --> 00:01:05: part of sort of,

00:01:05 --> 00:01:09: I guess, sort of a mini revolution down here in

00:01:09 --> 00:01:10: the way we saw.

00:01:10 --> 00:01:12: The development of the site.

00:01:12 --> 00:01:15: It was no longer deemed something that would have to

00:01:15 --> 00:01:17: be solved by the private sector alone.

00:01:17 --> 00:01:20: That was something that somebody some level of

government had
00:01:20 --> 00:01:23: to take a real active leadership role in the City
00:01:23 --> 00:01:24: of Vancouver.
00:01:24 --> 00:01:27: Bought the land from the Province of British Columbia in
00:01:27 --> 00:01:30: 2003 and in 2004 after an extensive bidding process,
00:01:30 --> 00:01:33: the city brought on West Bank projects and Peterson
Investment
00:01:33 --> 00:01:33: Group,
00:01:33 --> 00:01:37: together with Henriquez Partners Architects to design a plan
with
00:01:37 --> 00:01:40: uses that would ultimately set the distressed neighborhood
on a
00:01:41 --> 00:01:41: new course.
00:01:41 --> 00:01:45: Was symbolic of this neighborhood wanting to come back,
00:01:45 --> 00:01:47: wanting to find itself again?
00:01:47 --> 00:01:51: The plan included building 746 residential units in three
buildings,
00:01:51 --> 00:01:54: including five 136 market rate units,
00:01:54 --> 00:01:58: 200 social housing units, and 10 iaccessible units with retail
00:01:58 --> 00:01:59: on the ground level,
00:01:59 --> 00:02:02: a daycare and public space on a 2.3 acre site,
00:02:02 --> 00:02:05: and I figured I'd sort of throw everything on here,
00:02:05 --> 00:02:07: including the kitchen sink, right?
00:02:07 --> 00:02:11: So like whoever expressed any interest of being here,
00:02:11 --> 00:02:13: we draw them in. And in the end,
00:02:13 --> 00:02:15: the day everyone showed up right?
00:02:15 --> 00:02:18: And so the exercise was how to accommodate all this
00:02:18 --> 00:02:21: intense density in this very sensitive historical context,
00:02:21 --> 00:02:23: may became sort of like this giant Rubik's Cube.
00:02:23 --> 00:02:26: What do you put on put on top of what?
00:02:26 --> 00:02:29: And why during development two pivotal things happened.
00:02:29 --> 00:02:31: The city acquired more land to build a second tower
00:02:31 --> 00:02:35: and double the housing and the Simon Fraser University
School
00:02:35 --> 00:02:38: of Contemporary Art signed an anchoring the project.
00:02:38 --> 00:02:41: Had they not committed. I'm not sure the project would
00:02:41 --> 00:02:41: have built.
00:02:41 --> 00:02:46: We needed that. 24/7 vibrancy of student life.
00:02:46 --> 00:02:50: To energize the site, the momentum continued with nesters
market
00:02:50 --> 00:02:51: and London drugs.
00:02:51 --> 00:02:54: If we can get the food store the grocery store,
00:02:54 --> 00:02:57: the drugstore will come along with it.

00:02:57 --> 00:03:00: It's kind of the companion.
00:03:00 --> 00:03:04: Commitment that when they come together then we've got something
00:03:04 --> 00:03:05: that we've got a new heart.
00:03:05 --> 00:03:08: The project is designed around a central atrium open to
00:03:08 --> 00:03:09: the public.
00:03:09 --> 00:03:11: If you live in a small SRO of single room
00:03:11 --> 00:03:13: occupancy hotel in the neighborhood,
00:03:13 --> 00:03:16: you could come to a public space out of the
00:03:16 --> 00:03:18: rain and there be a public right of way that
00:03:18 --> 00:03:21: you were allowed to be there over the entrance of
00:03:21 --> 00:03:24: the atrium is a huge piece of art picturing the
00:03:24 --> 00:03:25: Gastown riots of 1971.
00:03:25 --> 00:03:27: Would squad was too recent for us to sort of
00:03:28 --> 00:03:28: recreate,
00:03:28 --> 00:03:30: so this was something earlier that somehow.
00:03:30 --> 00:03:34: Represented a precursor to the would squat and somehow mark
00:03:34 --> 00:03:37: this place in the world is as being somehow significant
00:03:37 --> 00:03:40: and even though we had a new building here,
00:03:40 --> 00:03:42: it was a way in which we could acknowledge its
00:03:42 --> 00:03:43: history.
00:03:43 --> 00:03:46: The building is a fossil and fossils don't tell stories,
00:03:46 --> 00:03:49: poetry, and as the ability to tell stories overtime,
00:03:49 --> 00:03:52: that thing will be interpreted and I think become more
00:03:52 --> 00:03:53: and more significant.
00:03:53 --> 00:03:58: Overtime. The Woodward's redevelopment is a public private partnership involving
00:03:58 --> 00:03:59: the City of Vancouver,
00:03:59 --> 00:04:01: the Province of British Columbia.
00:04:01 --> 00:04:04: Simon Fraser University and two private developers.
00:04:04 --> 00:04:07: There's a lot of goodwill from all levels of government
00:04:07 --> 00:04:09: to make to make this work.
00:04:09 --> 00:04:12: The city was fundamental in creating some incentives,
00:04:12 --> 00:04:15: but the driver of the whole project was the market
00:04:15 --> 00:04:18: housing and it was more than half of the project.
00:04:18 --> 00:04:21: And as far as economic value.
00:04:21 --> 00:04:23: 80% of the project there was a real fear that
00:04:23 --> 00:04:27: somehow wouldn't be financially viable and that somehow we do
00:04:27 --> 00:04:29: this and no one would show up to buy.
00:04:29 --> 00:04:32: The problem was how to sell market rate condos with
00:04:32 --> 00:04:36: all the problems in the neighborhood coupled with the

affordable

00:04:36 --> 00:04:38: housing component of the project.

00:04:38 --> 00:04:41: But when presales started in 2006 they sold out in

00:04:41 --> 00:04:42: a matter of hours.

00:04:42 --> 00:04:45: The mixes of uses having SFU involved in the project

00:04:45 --> 00:04:50: having neighborhood retail which didn't really exist down here before.

00:04:50 --> 00:04:52: Woodward's was a trademark cultural.

00:04:52 --> 00:04:56: Memory for many Vancouverites and then the pricing was reasonable

00:04:56 --> 00:04:56: as well.

00:04:56 --> 00:04:59: Well, redevelopment was the objective.

00:04:59 --> 00:05:02: Gentrification was a sensitive issue throughout the development.

00:05:02 --> 00:05:05: It's within an impoverished community,

00:05:05 --> 00:05:09: so how one effectively interfaces with that community is critical.

00:05:09 --> 00:05:12: The Authentic engagement factor is really huge in terms of

00:05:12 --> 00:05:16: building incredible bond with the haves and the have nots.

00:05:16 --> 00:05:19: The people obviously buying into these are the haves and

00:05:19 --> 00:05:21: the immediate areas.

00:05:21 --> 00:05:24: I have not area SFU handles the complexities of social

00:05:24 --> 00:05:26: tension that gentrification may bring.

00:05:26 --> 00:05:29: Through a wide range of free events and activities at

00:05:29 --> 00:05:30: the school,

00:05:30 --> 00:05:32: the blend of having the arts brought down here and

00:05:32 --> 00:05:35: they blend of having these venues that they require for

00:05:35 --> 00:05:38: their programs to be also used for communities of perfect

00:05:38 --> 00:05:41: balancing Act. The project was a leap of faith for

00:05:41 --> 00:05:44: the buyers as well as the retailers and everyone involved

00:05:44 --> 00:05:45: in the development.

00:05:45 --> 00:05:48: Everyone was on side right like I have little projects

00:05:48 --> 00:05:51: that are like saving a little community theater on these

00:05:51 --> 00:05:54: side of Vancouver that are harder to do than this

00:05:54 --> 00:05:55: thing was in a weird way.

00:05:55 --> 00:05:57: This took a lot of elbow grease and a lot

00:05:57 --> 00:05:57: of.

00:05:57 --> 00:05:59: People in a lot of hard work,

00:05:59 --> 00:06:04: but everyone collectively as a society decided this was important,

00:06:04 --> 00:06:06: but this is very, very collegial.

00:06:06 --> 00:06:12: The success of what words has accelerated revitalization dramatically in

00:06:12 --> 00:06:16: the area has motivated some other wonderful.
00:06:16 --> 00:06:20: More contemporary at historically honorable projects in this part of
00:06:20 --> 00:06:23: the city you're really seeing it as a catalyst.
00:06:23 --> 00:06:27: Better retail tenants, better office tenants are replica of the
00:06:27 --> 00:06:28: original.
00:06:28 --> 00:06:30: W rotates high above the new woodwards,
00:06:30 --> 00:06:34: a symbol of an important transformation and a great Canadian
00:06:34 --> 00:06:35: comeback story.
00:06:35 --> 00:06:38: Its successes is a product of this statement that if
00:06:38 --> 00:06:40: we all do work together,
00:06:40 --> 00:06:41: we can do amazing things.

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