

# **The Evolution of Vancouver's Laneways:**

**Assessing the Pedestrian Environment of Three Vancouver Laneways Within Regions Zoned to Permit**

## **Laneway Housing**

By

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## OVERVIEW

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Weaving between and behind buildings in cities throughout the world, laneways have long been used as service corridors and are commonly associated with blight and crime (Seymour, 2010). In many cases, however, they are unrealized and highly valuable community assets. In the rapidly growing cities of today, focus has shifted away from vehicle-dependent suburban development towards more sustainable practices featuring higher density levels and pedestrian-oriented strategic plans (Molner, 2011). Laneways located in desirable areas of growing cities such as Vancouver occupy a vast amount of underutilized space, and the implementation of laneway housing and pedestrian friendly design is the next logical step towards a more sustainable future.

The objective of this report is to assess the physical qualities of the built environment related to pedestrianism and walkability in three Vancouver laneways: Mackenzie Lane, Quadra Lane, and Trimble Lane.

## METHODOLOGY

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Using the measuring urban design qualities pedestrian audit tool in conjunction with a document and literature review, the research in this report attempts to analyze the pedestrian environment of three of Vancouver's laneways. Following the audit of all three laneways and the analysis of the results, the report concludes by offering five recommendations regarding how these laneways could be gradually improved upon through design and laneway housing regulations.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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- Focusing on the physical elements of the built environment, what pedestrian features and laneway qualities are either present or lacking in three residential laneways in areas recently rezoned to permit laneway housing in Vancouver?
- How can these laneways be made more walkable and pedestrian friendly, if required?

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Research revealed similar strengths and weaknesses among all three laneways. All five recommendations are therefore applicable to each laneway, and could also be applied more generally to the majority of the laneways throughout the City of Vancouver.

### Recommendation #1

**Enhance pedestrian safety, route choice, and the overall human scale of the lanes by encouraging street level windows on all new laneway houses.**

### Recommendation #2

**Enhance pedestrian safety, route choice, and the overall human scale of the lanes by encouraging street level lighting on all new laneway houses.**

### Recommendation #3

**Enhance the imageability and human scale of the lanes by encouraging the inclusion of small planters on the exterior of new laneway houses.**

### Recommendation #4

**Enhance the imageability and complexity of the lanes by encouraging that new laneway houses be painted in colours unique to the lane in which they're built.**

### Recommendation #5

**Enhance the human scale, transparency, and imageability of the lanes by encouraging that new laneway houses are oriented towards the laneway to create active frontages.**