

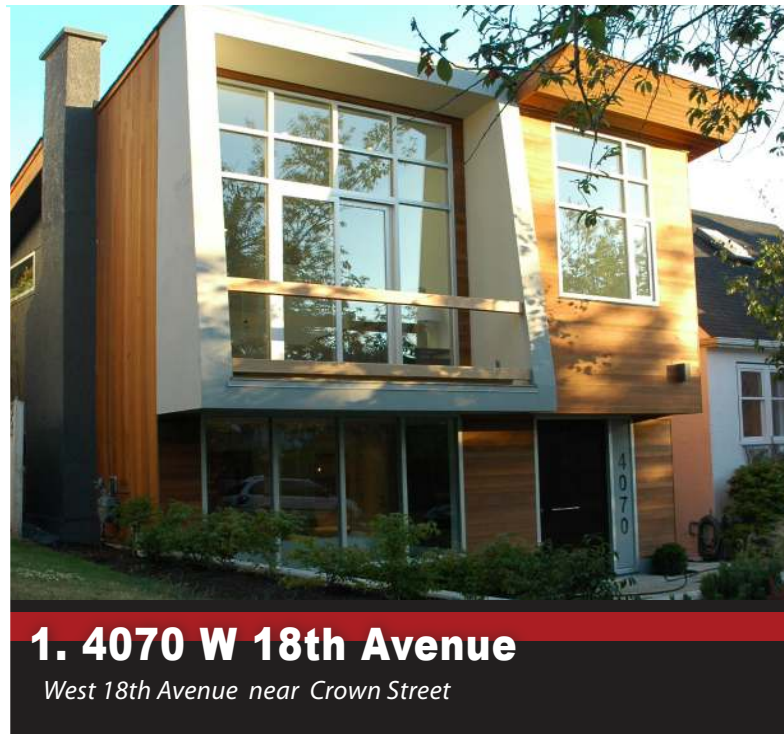
ABOUT the Vancouver Special

The ubiquitous Vancouver Special is a fixture in our city's landscape, predominantly an east side phenomenon. With their flat fronts, boxy shapes, and low pitched roofs, these homes are regionally unique as they were designed to optimize the use of a 33 ft. wide city lot under the RS-1 District Zoning Schedule in the 1960s and 1970s. The Specials first appeared circa 1965 and multiplied to over 10,000 (est.) examples by 1985. The original stock-plan design, probably drafted in collaboration with local builders and often adjusted to adapt to various lot sizes or client needs, maximized the floor space the City's zoning would allow at the time and was sold in vast numbers. In the late 1970s, a house plan for a Special could be bought at a stock plan office for about \$65. In those days, all the information required for a building permit (including elevations) could fit onto one sheet. Given the regularity this design was submitted at City Hall, permits were issued in no time. In the 1960s and 70s it was not unusual for a Special to be built in just a few weeks.

Vancouver Specials first appealed to European immigrants in the 1960s when affordable, modern housing was in demand. The builders of Specials had turned their attention to families who emigrated from post-war Europe to improve the quality of their lives and were now in a position to afford inexpensive new housing on cheaper lots. The house design suited immigrant needs. They could use the first floor for extended family members or rent it out to help pay the mortgage. Initially, Vancouver Specials were constructed by small builders for European immigrant families. As the Special spread, immigrant patterns changed. In the 1970s Asia was becoming the predominant source of immigration, and it was this group that was increasingly building and buying Specials. In 1968, 44 percent of international immigrants to British Columbia came from Europe and 22 percent came from Asia. But by 1988, 66 percent came from Asia and only 17 percent from Europe. As a result, many Vancouver Specials in the 1970s were being built and bought by East Indian and Chinese immigrants.

During the heyday of their construction, Vancouver Specials were criticized as monotonous, flat-fronted boxes that were seen to take over neighbourhoods in an intimidating manner. On the other hand, they were obviously immensely popular as the basic design was continuously and steadily repeated in Vancouver for about 20 years. Today, the Special is still the most common house design in Vancouver and despite its controversial reputation many families are specifically choosing them for their practical construction and layout, and for their straightforward potential to be personalized and updated. More background about the Vancouver Special will continue to be told through the description of the five homes in this brochure.

The five Vancouver Specials on tour, constructed between 1965 and 1978, demonstrate how current owners can achieve a continuing contemporary use of this design. Through repair and alterations, the homes remain valued as modern, efficient, and spacious but boast various levels of personal twists and technical upgrades. Most Specials still have first floor rental suites. According to current preferences for design aesthetics and energy efficiency standards, many Specials don't deliver. Unfortunate elements in the original low-cost construction included single-glazed aluminum windows and roofs that were poorly insulated. Owners have often improved the energy efficiency of the home by replacing windows and doors, upgrading mechanical systems and adding insulation. Some have cosmetically updated their homes with creative but simple, non-invasive ideas such as painting over the ornamental brick cladding with current colour schemes, introducing cedar strip siding, improving the landscaping, toning down the grandiose fences and post ornaments, changing window frames and soffits or adding other details. We wish you an enjoyable and educational day. Make sure to take note of innovative, practical ideas and design solutions – certain to inspire many future Special renovations across the city.



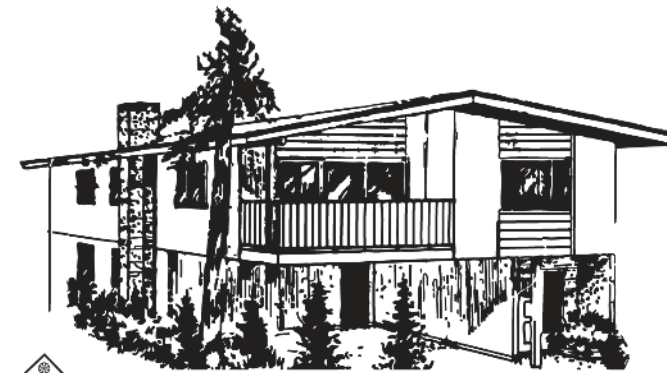
1. 4070 W 18th Avenue
West 18th Avenue near Crown Street

Of the five Vancouver Specials on tour, this is the only one where the word 'renovation' does not go far enough to describe its recent transformation. A radical-reinvention is what occurred here in 2007, when owner/developer Allan Askew teamed with iConstrux Architecture to technologically and philosophically remake the 1968 Vancouver Special standing on the site. Their partnership has since evolved into Make Design + Build, this year's presenting sponsor.

Inspired by the simple lines of the classic Vancouver Special, the goal was to create a truly contemporary home without demolishing the existing building. The existing 2500 sq.ft house is non-conforming (RS-5 permits 1800 sq.ft above ground and a 700 sq.ft. basement). In this case, and in most Vancouver neighbourhoods, the retention of a Vancouver Special actually leaves you with a larger house with more living area above grade than demolishing and building new. Furthermore, in order to achieve the maximum allowable square footage in new construction, one must follow the zoning design guidelines to fit in with the historic character of the neighbourhood which could mean 'faux heritage', a road the owner did not want to take.

De-programming the original stock plan layout (that could incorporate an independent unit on each level), the new plan creates extraordinary breathing space as it benefits from the division of the daily living space on the main floor and all bedrooms on the second floor. All existing windows were strategically re-proportioned, re-placed and enlarged to bring more light into the house. Additionally, clerestory internal windows were added to various upper floor rooms and the existing stairwell was enhanced with a skylight to share the harvested natural light. The augmented and creative use of glazing helped to better relate the outdoor spaces to the interior. An issue perceived by many as a design flaw in the original Special plan is the lack of connection to the front and back gardens.

Contemporary materials like glass, concrete, anodized aluminum commercial glazing frames, wide plank wood flooring, and monochromatic stone counters were introduced. The roof plan was given a 90-degree twist and a new double pitched "zigzag roof". The new roof line is telegraphed into the second floor spaces, providing 13 foot ceilings in many areas of the upper floor. This exceptional project demonstrates how the existing DNA of the Vancouver Special can be used to inspire a new contemporary expression recognizing today's sensibilities, lifestyles, technologies and materials.



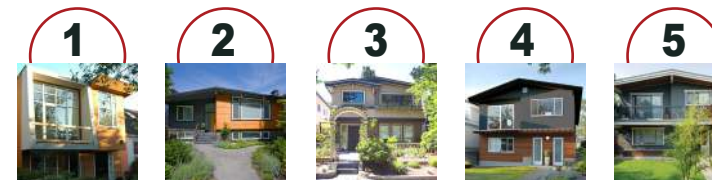
The Vancouver Heritage FOUNDATION VANCOUVER SPECIAL the tour 2009

presented by **make design + build**
saturday september 26th 12-5 pm
www.vancouverheritagefoundation.org

Guidelines for Visitors

Welcome to the 1st Annual Vancouver Special Tour. We know that by choosing to participate in this event, you are someone who respects and values historic buildings. In order to ensure that the tour is successful and problem free, we ask you to adhere to the following guidelines:

- This numbered brochure is your ticket.** For security reasons the passport below will be marked at the entrance to each house. Only ticket holders will be admitted.
- The houses are open for visiting from 12-5 pm in whatever order you prefer. Early birds and latecomers will not be admitted. Expect to line-up outside some of the homes.
- All shoes must be removed before entering Tour houses. We recommend wearing shoes that can easily be removed.
- Interior photography is prohibited except by designated and identified tour photographers.



Vancouver Heritage Foundation 402 - 510 W. Hastings St. Vancouver BC V6B 1L8
tel: 604.264.9642 www.vancouverheritagefoundation.org

WELCOME from the VHF

The Vancouver Heritage Foundation is a registered charity committed to the conservation of Vancouver's heritage buildings. Creating new life for Vancouver's older buildings is important in sustaining the culture, the economy and the environmental well-being of our city. When a historic building is demolished we lose the connection to our past, and we add tons of debris to our landfill.

Through education, public awareness and granting activities, the VHF is helping to create a culture of repairing and reusing Vancouver's older buildings.

THANK YOU



The Vancouver Special Tour 2009 would not have been possible without the tremendous effort of over 100 people who have volunteered their time, expertise and homes. We appreciate their contributions to ensure the success of the Tour.

Event Chair: Liberty Walton
House searchers and researchers: Paula Leyton, John Atkin, Lisa Wrixon, Stephanie Robb
Pre-tour lecture: Architect Kenneth Terriss MAIBC and Allan Askew of Make Design + Build

Presenting Sponsor: Make Design + Build, makedb.com
make design + build

Photography: Martin Knowles, mkphotomedia.com

MARTIN KNOWLES
PHOTO/MEDIA

Floral Arrangements: Full Bloom Flowers, fullbloomflowers.ca



A Special Thanks to the 2009 Homeowners who generously opened their homes!

Volunteer House Captains: Duane Cromwell, Jack Fraser, Jean Fraser, Bonnie Gabel and Paul Nursey.

Volunteers (registered as of September 1st)

Beryl Allen, David Anthony, Carola Brochocka, Carol Bruce, Annalies Camfferman, Anna Camporese, Pat Canning, Won Ying Cheung, Lucy Cotter, David Cyr, Maureen Dyson-Berris, Bob Elwin, Leah Floyd, Sarah Gillies, Brian Gilmour, Carol Gordon, Linda Hall, Joan Hebb, Ingrid Hummelshoj, Elsie Jang, Adrienne Kavanagh, Maureen Kinney, Louise Klassen, Maggi Kneer, Judith Levy, Sheila Lovelock, Bonnie Low, Carol Mak, Geri Martin, Samantha McQuade, Stephanie McWilliams, Betsy Morrow, Elizabeth Murdoch, Adele Oliver, Hilary Ostrov, Sylvia Porter, Caede Pungente, Peter Regler, Erika Rosin, Judy Ross, Heidi Solanki, Charlotte Stenberg, Rosa Stenberg, Bonnie Thiele, Lindsay Wilkinson, Linda Woo, Helen Wood, Wayne Worden and Evelyn Wong.



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2. 2425 W 13th Avenue

West 13th Avenue near Balsam Street

Mr. Jacob Sutt, an Estonian immigrant who started a small company that built early variations of the Vancouver Special, built this house as his family residence in 1965. His company, J. Sutt Construction Ltd., partnered with another Estonian builder in the 1950s and together they went on to build several apartment buildings in the West End. Both families are still in the property development & management business today.

This striking home is a big and early example of the Vancouver Special: 'Big' because it is a 3000 sq. ft. house on a 50 ft. lot when typically Specials were 2400 sq. ft. on 33 ft. lots, and 'Early' because 1965 is the year that this design starts to appear in Vancouver and as time progresses, the basement of Vancouver Specials are at grade whereas this one is partially below grade. It has elements typical of mid-century modern house designs, including the low-pitched roof, asymmetrical plan, clean lines and lack of ornamentation. When visiting this home one can truly sense the direct influence mid-century modern designs had on the Vancouver Special. The construction and layout were generated primarily by function – this home is livable, flexible and unpretentious. While these elements are similar to ranchers and architect-designed homes of the mid-century period, Vancouver Specials don't share the fundamental long, low rectangular form integrated with the landscape, and they lack outdoor living spaces that extend beyond the house.

This home remains under continuous ownership by descendants of the Sutt family and has proved flexible to adapt to contemporary needs. Jacob Sutt's granddaughter, who now resides in the house, oversaw a major renovation in 2007 to replace windows, doors, add insulation, new kitchen and bathrooms, update the exterior finishes with horizontal cedar strip siding, window trim, and a body paint color inspired by the original stacked stone cladding. Original quality interior features include exposed 4 x 12 foot fir ceiling beams, inlay oak flooring, and a restored stone fireplace.



3. 184 W 21st Avenue

West 21st Avenue near Columbia Street

Built in 1978 for Jackson Johan, this Vancouver Special is identifiable by its low-pitched gable roof, entrance at ground level, narrow balcony, and decorative brick. This clearly stylized and updated Special stands next door to a classic "before" picture; a Vancouver Special that has had virtually no exterior alterations at all. Approximately 2400 sq. ft. in size, Vancouver Specials were about double that of the typical 1.5 storey, mass-produced bungalows built between 1945 and 1960, many examples of which can be seen in the immediate area. Moving from a bungalow to a Special in the 1970s was probably a huge improvement in a family's standard and style of living.

One of the main reasons Vancouver Specials were maligned is because they were not custom designed but taken from stock plans. What is often forgotten, is that the majority of working and middle class 'character' homes in Vancouver also came from stock plan catalogues, including most Victorian, Edwardian and Craftsman residences in this and other historic neighbourhoods.

The makeover of this Vancouver Special demonstrates several practical ideas for cosmetic updates such as the monochromatic body paint color, wood fence and trellis, and wide window trim. The narrow second floor balcony and back deck were enhanced with the installation of self-watering flower planter boxes decorated with appliques. The owner, a professional builder, improved the owner's unit by moving the master bedroom and luxurious en-suite to the ground floor so the formal living space on the second floor could be expanded. On the ground floor, triple drywall between the master bedroom and 700 sq.ft. rental suite acts as an excellent sound barrier. Improvements to the energy efficiency of this home include heated floors and Rockwool insulation to R-60 and R-80 values.

Not everyone is comfortable with the modest simplicity of the Vancouver Special design. In this renovation, architectural detail, current colour schemes, a wide range of innovative finishes and international design influences were introduced. These embellishments not only bring a unique character to the home, but often conceal cutting edge mechanical systems and technological innovations desired in today's most up-to-date dwellings.



4. 418 E 22nd Avenue

East 22nd Avenue near Prince Edward Street

Built in 1976 for Ho Yiu Ling, this simple two-storey stucco box on a 33' lot is typical of the 1970s Vancouver Special widely prevalent in east Vancouver. This house is a classic Special – a two-storey house at grade with approximately 1200 sq ft. on each floor. It was built at a relatively low cost and to the maximum floor space the City's zoning would allow at the time, because that's what buyers wanted; an extremely practical and economic house.

Another characteristic of Vancouver Specials is the post ornaments mostly produced by Ital Décor, a company founded in 1957 by Italian-Canadian immigrant Joe Tinucci. Ital Décor (on Hastings Street in Burnaby) still produces traditional moldings, sculptures, decorative plasters and building ornamentations such as lions, pineapples, and balls commonly seen on Vancouver Special fence posts. The two lions on this property (nicknamed Jack and Bill by the current owners) originally flanked the entrance on brick gateposts. Lions were prevalent in front of Vancouver Specials, and were perceived by many cultures to guard the home. Perhaps to compensate for the practical and plain stock plan design of these houses, Vancouver Special fences were often decorated with status symbols such as exotic fruit (the pineapple) or elaborate metal railings like those that would surround a grand estate.

The current owners have recently completed the bulk of a self-managed, painstakingly detailed renovation that compliments and expands on the modern design of the Vancouver Special. Contemporary finishes such as flat-faced tongue & groove cedar siding combined with a chic charcoal grey body colour tone down the traditional Vancouver Special facade. The veranda received the biggest makeover; its unusable, narrow portion above the entrance was removed and replaced with a sleek tempered glass canopy. The balcony railing was replaced with a custom horizontal galvanized steel composition (backed with clear plexi). As a finishing touch the structural beams under the veranda floor were exposed and capped with galvanized steel. Inside, the wall between the kitchen and dining room was removed allowing a breathtaking open plan kitchen/dining/living area to span the entire length of the home providing expansive backdrop surfaces for carefully selected art and furnishings.



5. 3145 E 2nd Avenue

East 2nd Avenue near Lillooet Street

Built in 1972 for the Kam family who had recently immigrated from Hong Kong, this 'Special in a field of Specials' illustrates the sheer quantity of Vancouver Specials that were being constructed in the 1970s; in some areas taking over entire blocks. Interestingly, many of these homes are still owned or lived in by the original owners, as in the case of this home which is today the residence of the Kam's daughter and her young family. The current generation, although initially reluctant to live in a Vancouver Special, has introduced its own contemporary cosmetic improvements while respecting the original modern design.

Typical of a Vancouver Special, the house is long and skinny with its narrow end facing the street. Other characteristics include simple wood-frame construction, first floor concrete slab at grade, low-pitched gable roof, brick facing to dress up the street façade, painted fascia boards, exterior stucco finish, hand-carved entrance door with side-lights, relatively commodious interior, and an open plan. Vancouver Specials usually feature a narrow veranda on the second storey (half, or full width, such as in this case) with decorative aluminum railing.

The current owners began this DIY home renovation in 2006 just prior to the birth of their first child. With time and budget constraints they were forced to come up with easy and straightforward solutions for the updating of the house. Surprisingly simple but wonderfully effective is a contemporary design treatment found throughout the house - the introduction of horizontal cedar strip detailing. Be sure to check out the cedar strip soffits with recessed pot lights, cedar strip shutters which frame the entrance door and bathroom shower and matching screens that provide privacy for the upper floor back deck. The most amazing result was achieved on the original brick fence which was simply encased with the cedar strip siding, creating a completely innovative look without demolishing any of the brick. Many other successful examples of new cosmetic treatments to existing features can be seen throughout, making this a non-invasive renovation (practically no demolition). Other practical improvements include a monochromatic exterior paint color and the introduction of window trim. By removing an interior wall, the open plan kitchen/dining/living area spans the entire length of the home accentuated by an interior palette of soft textures and a range of white finishes.