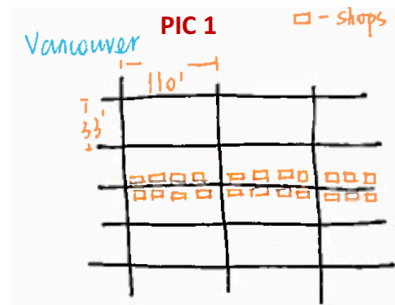


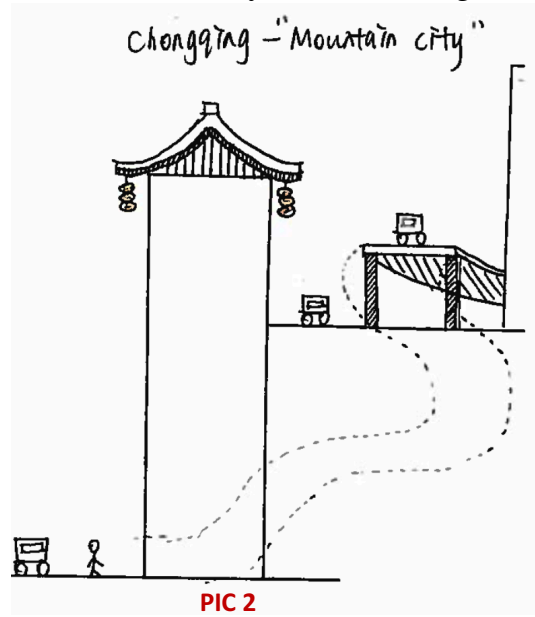
Arbutus village, the section below and left to the intersection of West King Edward Avenue and the Arbutus street attracted me at once when I was looking at the map, trying to find an interesting neighbourhood to do some research on: I was surprised by the dendritic cul-de-sacs



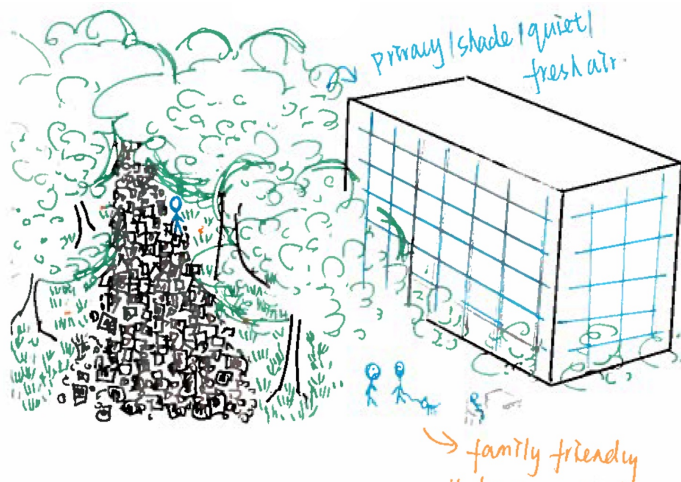
shown on the map. This pattern is striking different from my recognition of Vancouver, which is mostly dominated by perpendicular gridiron-shape arterials and residential streets, neat and uniform 33' x 110' blocks, and shops along the commercial arterial streets. [PIC 1]

This irregular planned streets of Arbutus village remind me of my home city Chongqing, China. Chongqing has extremely complicated three-dimensional road systems and no trace of uniform rectangular blocks. Most of the buildings are built by mountains: I could catch different buses by the first and eighth floor of a building; I always show others the way saying "go

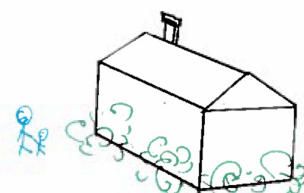
up" and "go down" instead of "go north" and "go east". [PIC 2] Chongqing's special intricate road system is contributed by its mountainous landscape. However, since the Arbutus neighbourhood is located in a relatively flat area, and most of the adjacent neighbourhoods are planned as regular blocks with interconnected streets, a few questions rose in my head: why does the Arbutus village have a dendritic street system; how does the social and spatial sectors influenced each other and built the neighborhood into its current shape?



In order to find possible explanations to my questions, I walked around the area on an after-storm Saturday morning. I chose to start from the noticeable park running through the whole neighbourhood after getting off the 25 bus. I was so satisfied by the wide greenway paved with gravel and the shade provided by the dense canopy above head.



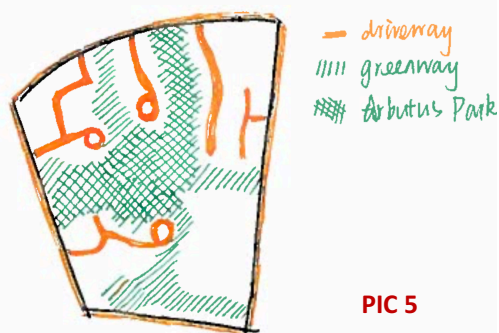
PIC 3 the sketch of the park





PIC 4
My *dérive* round the park.

[PIC 3] I find although the whole neighbourhood is not interconnected by driveways, it is dramatically pedestrian and cyclists friendly: The Arbutus village park and a series of smaller greenways hidden between bushes and hedges provided me with shortcuts to every direction.



PIC 5

[PIC 5] Furthermore, I noticed a pattern that most of the 6-story apartments, which are the densest dwelling types in this neighbourhood, are located aside the linear park. As density increases, the quality of design becomes more important: I find it a reasonable decision since the lofty firs along the linear park provide privacy, security and fresh air to those apartment-residents nearby, while avoid blocking the sunlight for farther located bungalow residents. Furthermore, the spacious

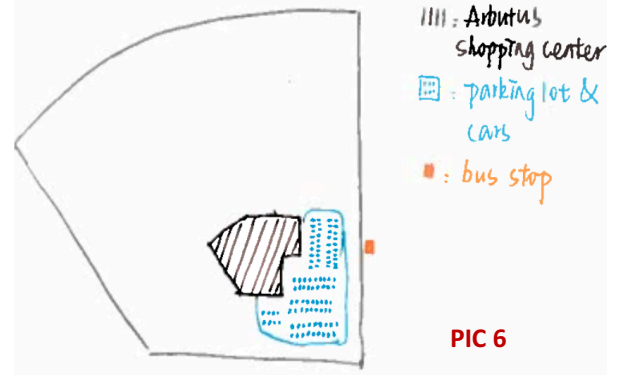
greenspace provided by the park contributes as family-friendly “front-yard” and social space for not only the apartment-residents, but the whole community. [PIC 3] This park also ameliorates the stress generated by the high-intensity multiple-story buildings. Although on an after-storm Saturday morning, most people chose to stay at home, I encountered elders walking dogs, moms laughing with young children along the greenspace. For me, the Arbutus village park looks like a giant green octopus with numerous tender tentacles with veins. The whole neighbourhood thrives

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for the sake of the park.

Another feature I find in the planning of the neighbourhood is the gigantic Arbutus shopping center.

[PIC 6] Most of the other places in the neighbourhood give me a positive suburban sense: the pedestrian friendly greenways and low-density comfortableness. However, the stocky Arbutus shopping center, which is mostly occupied by Safeway, also reminds me of the notorious suburban planning: giant chain stores cluster along the highways or arterials, providing spacious ground parking lots for consumers. I was pleased to enter Safeway from the Arbutus village park side, but was frightened by the shuttling automobiles on the huge parking lot when I was trying to reach the bus stop by the Arbutus street. My unpleasant experience makes me wonder why would this seemingly walkable neighbourhood allowed to build such a pedestrian-unfriendly site.



My wonder coincides with the opinion of the residents. I find that they had a proposal, in the Community Vision Full Report, 2005, to redevelop the Arbutus Shopping center. They agreed on several detailed proposals: convert parking lot space into a new internal shopping street and bring commercial area out to Arbutus street; provide diverse and small local business in the shopping center; encourage pedestrian comfort and safety along routes to and from the shopping centre; provide short-term parking for customers. Interestingly, most of the proposals related to affordable housing, add new high-intensity housing types above the shopping center, and the discouragement of additional automobile-oriented services (gas station, repair shops, etc.) are not approved by the referendum. [PIC 7] While the community showed its commitment on a more



pedestrian-friendly neighbourhood, I also see its resistance on the reduction of automobile use and intensification.

I was so confused by this paradox at first: the dendritic driveways and interconnected greenways benefit the residents' walkability and the suburban lifestyle, while those residents are super opponent to automobile-discouraged planning. I was more relieved after doing the following research. According to Static Canada's 2006 census, the Arbutus village neighbourhood is a low-income neighbourhood. This surprising conclusion contrasts with its housing types, which are mostly deluxe bungalows and townhouses. One possible reason for the mismatch is that this place is excessively adored by ostentatious foreign buyers, who may fail to declare their global income and foreign property. Besides, many residents are the elderly with low retirement pension. Therefore, this actually rich neighbourhood is superficially defined "poor". Since most of the residents are not the youth catching buses for jobs and universities, there is no need to develop interconnected residential streets for commuting public transportation. It would also be detrimental to the current residents in respect of adding affordable and high-density housing, for



PIC 8

the fact that they paid the huge amount of money for the upscale suburban style housing and environment in a busy urban district. Those residents are affordable for two or more [PIC8] cars per dwelling unit, and therefore would not encourage the reduction of auto-oriented services. Since those residents could drive to big-box stores, attracting smaller-scale local stores could boost a cozy and traditional feeling of the community. Furthermore, the community also suggested to add more late-closed stores such as T&T to serve

the growing Asian population. This demonstrates the change of the neighbourhood determined by the change of the demography.

However, after eleven years has passed, I find the neighbourhood is basically the same as the one discussed in the 2005 Community Vision Full Report. Only a new community center was built behind the shopping center while the center itself is still occupied by Safeway, with a huge parking lot in the front. Although I can see the effort been put in the discussion to propel Arbutus village into a more complete neighbourhood, the whole process of pushing though the plan is not as easy as it looks. I find online that the current Arbutus Shopping center site is "undergoing a redesign": it might take more than twenty years to see the real change of the site. Overall, the Arbutus village neighbourhood's dendritic driveway system and interconnected greenways promote those rich residents' privacy, sense of security and suburban-style comfortability. This enclave demonstrates its success and also its resistance to change in the last twenty years.