

As most farm kids do, I grew up seeing things differently - with limited available resources, I learned to innovate and problem-solve. This would later enable me to reconcile historical preservation, environmental sustainability, and supportive development views.

In 2016, my partner and I purchased a 1912 home, in downtown Kamloops, our second fixer-upper project. As with most neglected houses of a certain age, this home felt draughty and inefficient, having been left to its own devices as a rental for over forty years. As all new owners of old houses do, I thought we would need to replace the windows and doors.

It was expensive, so I read. I read about *Energy Star* stipulations and researched the best “new” windows, with the best warranties. My farm kid mentality kicked in when I learned new windows would need replacement again in 10-20 years, even if we used the best new product. I queried why something that would not last, was touted as the most efficient, cost-effective and environmentally responsible option - it was not sensible. Digging into window energy efficiency stats was when what first began as an economic vehicle, graduated to an environmental and social cause. I read more, finding resources such as the *Window Preservation Alliance* and Scott Sidler’s *The Craftsman Blog* (e.g. “Replacement Windows - The Real Story), both rabbit holes filled with a wealth of information on how window replacement industry marketing effectively brainwashes homeowners for profit, at the expense of the environment. Fact - replacement windows are not as efficient as properly maintained and weather-stripped pre-WWII single pane windows with storms. These old windows can also almost always be repaired and are therefore more sustainable. I was upset, and I was hooked.

Electing to study the topic for my MBA Ethics class term paper, my research led me to concept of “pre-existing energy debt”, which neatly tied together the unease I had felt when attempting to mentally reconcile sustainability with preservation. I believed both were important, but my initial approach from a historic preservationist lens had often felt like a roadblock to

accepting progress and change. In broad strokes, pre-existing energy debt means that all products had required energy to be produced, and while that spent energy cannot be recovered, the quantity of energy spent remains constant and is no less valuable so therefore, should not be discarded without thought. This led to a deep personal understanding of value in, and greater respect for, anything man-made, and particularly for products that stood the test of time.

Since this realization, it has become clear that most people have difficulty seeing the difference between quality products and disposable items, particularly in building material and furniture. As the norm has become replacement rather than repair, craftsmanship has been severely threatened in many industries - carpentry being one example. Conversely, the 1920s building guide I frequently reference attests that things should be built to last and be repaired, not replaced. Diving into the differences between then and now construction, and applying the concept of pre-existing energy debt, I mentally shifted to a preservationist view, partially to preserve history, and partially to support environmental sustainability.

As often happens in life, once we think we know things, we are forced to 'think again'. No sooner than I had shifted my mentality, it would need to shift. Next door to our home, twenty pre-WWII homes were scheduled for demolition in Kelson Group's City Gardens project. My initial inquiry to Kelson was solely with the intent to save as much of the material as possible. Even knowing what the additional infrastructure offered economically for Kamloops, I struggled internally to support the project, as I could not understand how it was effective to throw away so much valuable material, and history.

Over 2021, I pursued and was given the opportunity to reclaim significant amounts of building materials from this project. The onsite Hall Environmental team provided much insight on the remediation of lead paint, asbestos and other contaminants, which led to further research and skill development on how to safely recondition and repurpose contaminated material. These

salvage efforts were picked up by CBC Radio, and the resulting story saw others take up salvage work. Thousands of pounds of demolition were diverted from the landfill. The opportunity to spearhead this initiative is still worth the Kelson Group likely thinking that I may be crazy. Even better, this experience again drew my thinking to another related environmental and social issue - urban sprawl and densification.

In early 2021, I had joined the Researcher-in-Residence City of Kamloops and TRU project as a graduate researcher. Since then, my MBA thesis has evolved to address housing, specifically types and choice, from a holistic viewpoint. To date, findings reflect a shift in design has created stagnation in the scale of variety in housing choice. Moving away from notably environmentally aware, 'Missing Middle' housing of pre-WWII, new development almost exclusively addresses single family homes. This shift does not suit preferences or best meet needs, and could be considered even environmentally ignorant and unsustainable, as reflected in the current housing crisis. My thesis research will challenge the status quo, and I hope to find conclusive evidence for a community model that is less car-reliant, with more greenspace, and where thoughtful design replaces excessive square footage and suburban commutes, creating compounded positive impacts on environmental sustainability. Now ironically, the closest thing I have found for what Kamloops needs is the City Gardens project that I had struggled to accept.

In my personal struggle to balance historical preservation, environmental sustainability and economic development, I have learned that it is essential to find a balance between these often-conflicting facets of thinking - they can and should play nicely together. Upon my MBA completion, I plan to pursue additional postgraduate work in planning, to further address how thoughtful design can mediate North American sprawl and related environmental issues. As long as I am able to affect positive environmental and social change, the direction of that work may shift, however the holistic viewpoint will remain, and I cannot wait to learn more.