



Perkins+Will and the University of British Columbia Celebrate the Opening of Orchard Commons

[NEWS]

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Promoting diversity and social connection in a new academic and student housing hub

Perkins+Will and the University of British Columbia (UBC) celebrate the building dedication of [Orchard Commons](#), a new academic and student housing hub promoting diversity and social connection. The second of five mixed-use hubs planned for the University's Point Grey campus, Orchard Commons co-locates student housing, academic uses, and amenities into the same facility, bringing more activity and life to the heart of the campus.

"Orchard Commons is designed to bring together international and domestic students, faculty, and the campus community into spaces that cultivate social interaction," says Orchard Commons's project architect Derek Newby, senior associate at Perkins+Will. "Our intent was for the building to give a sense of invitation, creating a social hub where both residents of the facility and students on campus find welcoming spaces to share."

The facility opened its doors in September, providing over 1,000 new residential beds to the campus for both domestic and international first-year students. It offers semi-private single rooms and accessible suites on every floor, all designed to benefit from unmatched views and daylight. To encourage community, a range of social spaces were integrated into the buildings, including 3-storey interconnected residential lounges with flexible spaces, a kitchen, and floor-to-ceiling windows that command spectacular 270-degree ocean views.

Orchard Commons is also home to UBC Vantage College, an innovative academic program that combines first-year studies with academic English programming for international students. To accommodate a range of learning styles and class types, designers incorporated a mix of teaching spaces and informal study areas into the College. More than classrooms, the facility is a

unique environment designed to shape the lives of students and support their transition to University. Faculty offices are visible and accessible to students, reinforcing the supportive and welcoming character of the College.

“Our desire was to have a setting that matches our aspiration to create great opportunities for students,” says Joanne Fox, principal and academic director of Vantage College. “It is important to us to provide an atmosphere that not only eases their transition as a home away from home, but transforms and enriches their academic experience.”

A defining characteristic of the facility is the façade of the two towers. The shapes of the precast concrete cladding were optimized using computational techniques to maximize repetition while maintaining an interesting and dynamic appearance. This also made the system very cost-effective and accelerated the schedule.

A commons block, defined by its bold wood structure, links the two buildings together, featuring a double-height dining hall for 350 people, and associated amenities and social space.

“We have used wood in highly visible and strategic ways. For example, in shared spaces wood helps to create a sense of invitation, warmth, and generosity to foster social well-being,” says Orchard Common’s project manager [Jana Foit](#), Higher Education practice area leader at Perkins+Will.

At nearly half a million square feet, Orchard Commons embraces a generous walkable outdoor public realm with terraced steps, multi-use lawn and patio, outdoor classroom, and social seating. An outdoor play space accompanies the daycare facility. And, continuing the University’s tradition of sustainable building leadership, the facility connects to the campus district energy system and features a high-performance building envelope. The project is targeting LEED Gold certification.

“Advancing UBC’s social, environmental, and economic sustainability on campus, Orchard Commons provides the latest in academic mixed-use design with stunning architecture, says Andrew Parr, Managing Director of UBC’s Student Housing and Hospitality Services. “We are excited to see a diverse community of students and faculty enjoy the new facility with its dynamic social spaces.”

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