

Introduction

UBC Lower Mall Phase 1

The proposed Phase One of the Lower Mall Precinct is a graduate focused community with approximately 1,513 beds in a mixture of unit types, a 250-seat dining hall, a 37-space childcare and a mix of other amenities and offices. The form of development includes both concrete tower and slab bar typologies, one prototype 8-storey light wood frame and mass timber hybrid building, a common basement and the adaptive reuse of UBC’s heritage Fire Hall. The approximate above grade gross area is 64,249 GSM (691,570 GSF; see figure 1).

Student housing forms the primary program, carefully balanced to accommodate different student preferences and family situations, with a mix of studio units (both with and without kitchens), accessible studios, and larger multi-bedroom units for families or shared living arrangements. The project incorporates a comprehensive suite of supporting amenities that enhance the residential experience. These include shared residence support spaces, commons and activity areas, bookable study rooms, childcare facilities, and a 250-seat dining facility. These amenities are strategically distributed throughout the development to create community hubs and support the diverse needs of graduate students.

The vision for UBC Lower Mall Phase 1 is to create a new residential community that strengthens connections across campus while celebrating its unique site conditions—where city and forest meet. The design brief identifies six key ambitions: to complete the pedestrian realm of University Boulevard, define meaningful community spaces, connect student residences, build on the site’s social and physical foundations, support a diverse graduate community, and bring the forest edge into the everyday experience. These ambitions call for an architecture that is open, inclusive, and embedded within both its campus context and ecological surroundings.

The Lower Mall Phase 1 design proposal carefully interprets and synthesizes the brief into a clear spatial strategy. By splitting and shifting the courtyard, we create two distinct but interconnected spaces: a public square that activates University Boulevard and a woodland courtyard that opens to the forest edge along South Street. This simple move structures the entire project—bridging city and nature, enhancing movement, and shaping a vibrant new graduate community. Each element of the brief is developed through this approach: the edges are activated, the ground floor is porous and inclusive, the courtyards support both social life and calm retreat, and the architecture respectfully blends with the landscape design and surrounding nature.



**This is a conceptual view to show the proposed developments context.*