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Lower Mainland and Whistler edition

makeover

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Cool conversions

Vancouver Heritage House Tour 2010

By Frank O'Brien

The eighth annual Vancouver Heritage House Tour, set for June 6, takes a contemporary break to prove that heritage can be cool.

The 2010 tour features five heritage houses but also two churches, a schoolhouse, a downtown warehouse and an old electric substation – all converted into amazing homes, according to the Vancouver Heritage Foundation, which arranges the annual tour.

Earles Court

When the Earles Street building – now Earles Court – was complete as a BC Electric Railway Company substation in 1912, it was built to last. So when it became redundant three decades ago, the thick concrete walls and heavy industrial interior proved just too expensive to demolish.

Enter architect Linda Baker of West Vancouver, who came up with a brilliant conversion that saw 12 large condominiums built within the concrete shell.

On this year's heritage tour, the 1,500-square-foot home of Earles Court resident Garnet McElree and partner Dave Johnston will open, showcasing one of the coolest heritage conversions in the city.

With its giant arched windows, 12-foot ceilings and expansive open space, the condo has a single wall that splits the grand room and kitchen from the bedroom.

McElree and Johnston added bright colours, modern furniture



TOP: The gothic-revival-inspired 1912 BC Electric substation, designed by Scottish-born architect Robert Lyon, was built in 1912.

ABOVE: The exterior conversion highlighted the giant windows set in thick concrete. A dozen large condos were built inside in 1990 and became Earles Court.

HOUSE TOURS

Earles Court



The Earles Court home of Garnet McElree and Dave Johnston is a colourful collision of heritage and contemporary design. Said McElree: "It was important to choose hues and colours in both paint and art that emphasize the warmth of the light and the expansive space." Warm whites were chosen, with hues of plum in the white paint of the main hallway, all intended to invite guests into this unique space.

and such touches as a massive photograph by artist Adam Blasberg, a portrait by Emily Carr alumnus Shawn Nygren and an oversized Ingo Maurer light bulb that pays whimsy to the building's former owners.

Two Earles Court condos and the rooftop deck with its fabulous views will open on the heritage tour, giving visitors a peek into how this creative and unique conversion transpired.

HERITAGE HOUSE TOUR

The Heritage House Tour is a one-day self-guided tour of 10 historic buildings in Vancouver.

Date: **June 6, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

Cost: **\$35** (plus GST)

Tickets: Phone 604-264-9642 or visit www.vancouverheritagefoundation.org

Win Tickets! See the ad in this issue for a chance to win Heritage Tour tickets.

NEW WESTMINSTER HERITAGE HOME TOUR

The 31st annual New Westminster Heritage Home Tour will be held Sunday, May 30, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., featuring some of the finest historic houses in the Royal City.

Tickets are \$35 and are available at New Westminster Savings Credit Union at 601 Sixth Street; Irving House, 302 Royal Avenue; GardenWorks outlets in Burnaby; and other New Westminster locations.

For full tour details and home photos, visit www.newwestheritage.org.

Beatty Street lofts

Developer Bob MacIntyre was one of the first to see the potential in converting old downtown Vancouver warehouses into stylish loft condos.

In 1980, he teamed with architect Bruno Freschi to conduct the ground-breaking conversion of 550 Beatty Street (a 1908 brick-faced office and warehouse building) into 31 spacious lofts. About half a dozen of these will be open on the Heritage House Tour. Visitors can experience 1,000- to 2,000-square-foot lofts, some on two floors; private roof gardens; eight-foot bay windows; 13-foot ceilings; sandblasted wood beams; exposed brick and granite walls.

