

# User Observation: Learning by Seeing

*A trip to Vancouver's King Edward Village*



User Experience Design | Masters of Digital Media

# My Trip

Where I went: King Edward Village

Day/Time: Monday at 3pm

Types of People: Everyone imaginable,  
from young to old.

# My Trip - Observations

## Outside, what do I see people doing?

- Waiting for the bus in the rain
- Confused that the library is closed
- Trying to find parking/garage with meter maid on their heels
- Lots of confused traffic due to construction
- Lots of trucks barreling down Knight St.

## Outside, what do I *not* see people doing?

- Hanging out either inside or out -- Courtyard and building appears to be somewhat abandoned
- Very few cars in parking lot
- Very few bicycles
- Very few people in general

# My Trip - Observations

## Where does it seem like there might be confusion or pain?

- Finding “King Edward Village” – if that’s what people ever refer to it as!
- Finding underground parking garage
- Figuring out where you are able to park
- Parking on the correct level for store hours
- Locating addresses
- Learning about business hours/days
- Seeing bus stops from a distance
- Waiting for the bus (dangerous, wet, and redundant)
- No place to throw away trash
- Commonly accessed areas/features are in strange locations (mailbox, bike racks, maps)
- Appears to almost be abandoned – why?

# My Trip - Observations

## What works well?

- Store-made signs help ease some confusion
- Visual cues at the corner of Kingsway & Knight give a “commercial” feeling to the building
- Ample free parking (once you find it)

# My Trip - Suggestions

## What non-tech things could easily improve the experience?

- Place colorful posters or window displays in empty storefronts or “coming soon” signs (if there is actually anything coming soon). Fill empty storefronts with activity or at least clean them up.
- Place tables/chairs in courtyard area (with coffee cart?)
- Visible signage indicating the building name and address.
- More clearly communicate hours & which levels/doors are effectively closed
- Create a waiting zone at rounded area at the corner for people to wait for the bus. Even better, cover the fake awning to provide some shelter.
- Place sandwich boards on the sidewalk of main roads (Knight, Kingsway, King Edward) to direct drivers to garage and indicate that it's free parking.
- Provide exits signs above ground and indicate which road/direction are permitted so it's clear to drivers which exit to take.
- Increase the size of the addresses in windows so they're more visible to passing traffic.
- Retailers (TD Bank, Price Smart) with multiple entry points could provide visual cues as to which one is the “main” entrance. Rug, containers and well-lit signs could help with this. Signs could be lit when store is open as well.

# My Trip - Suggestions

## What tech things could improve the experience?

- Create one branded site for all of the commercial building tenants, much like a mall would ([kingedwardvillage.ca](http://kingedwardvillage.ca) appears to be owned by a realtor and focuses on listings).
- Alternately, retail/commercial tenants near the intersection could form something like a business improvement website.
- “Smart” garage signage indicating with a visible and well-lit sign where to enter for parking and how many spots remain.
- Large, well-lit map (interactive?) at each corner of the building.

# My Trip

## A few comments about User Observation:

- By giving yourself time to observe, you will notice things that might otherwise escape you.
- Mentally approaching it with a story can help you discover issues (“My friend asked me to pick up a Citizenship application on my way home from work at 1420 Kingsway.”)
- Simply by breaking out of your own patterns, you can more easily see things from someone else’s perspective. (go by bus instead of walking; walk instead of driving)
- Domino effect: Once you notice something, it tends to snowball. You may need to do a follow-up trip after it generates more questions.
- Also notice what’s not happening, especially if you think it’s supposed to be!



# Finding the Site



## Driving down Kingsway:

- Putting myself in the shoes of someone who is in their car running an errand...
- Like someone who knows the street address of the TD Bank branch but hasn't been there before...
- The building ahead looks like your typical Vancouver condo building. It doesn't register as "retail" as you are driving down Kingsway.

# Finding the Site: Digital Equivalent

## The Search Experience



bank vancouver canada



About 33,100,000 results (0.29 seconds)

Ads related to bank vancouver canada

Why these ads?

[New to Canada/Vancouver? | RBC.com](#)

[www.rbc.com/newcomers](http://www.rbc.com/newcomers)

Special RBC® **Bank** Account Offer with Visa Card. No Credit Check.\*

[A new way to bank | Vancity.com](#)

[www.vancity.com/Good\\_Money](http://www.vancity.com/Good_Money)

Learn how to be good with money while making great things happen.  
3305 Kingsway, Vancouver, BC - (604) 877-7000 - [Directions](#)

[Places for bank near Vancouver, BC](#)

[RBC Royal Bank](#)

[www.rbcroyalbank.com](http://www.rbcroyalbank.com)

[Google+ page](#)

[RBC Royal Bank](#)

[www.rbcroyalbank.com](http://www.rbcroyalbank.com)

[Google+ page](#)

[Bank Of Canada](#)

[www.bankofcanada.ca](http://www.bankofcanada.ca)

[Google+ page](#)

**A** 505 West Broadway  
Vancouver  
(604) 665-8650

**B** 1497 West Broadway  
Vancouver  
(604) 665-5700

**C** 2710-200 Granville St  
Vancouver  
(800) 388-8427

More results near [Vancouver, BC](#) »

[Credit Union](#) - [Locations banks](#) - [Investment banks](#) - [Ing banks](#) - [First Financial](#)

Banks near: [Downtown](#) - [Main Street](#) - [Yaletown](#) - [East Broadway](#) - [Burrard Street](#)

[Banks in Vancouver BC | YellowPages.ca™](#)

[www.yellowpages.ca/search/si/1/Banks/Vancouver+BC](http://www.yellowpages.ca/search/si/1/Banks/Vancouver+BC)

40+ items – Locate and compare **Banks** in **Vancouver** BC, Yellow Pages ...

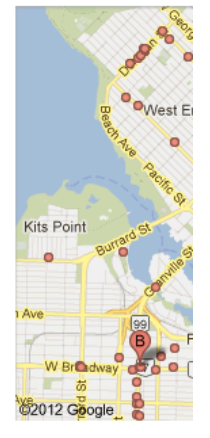
CIBC 1-866-525-8622 Multiple locations view addresses CIBC. For What ...

1 RBC - **Vancouver** 604-665-0341

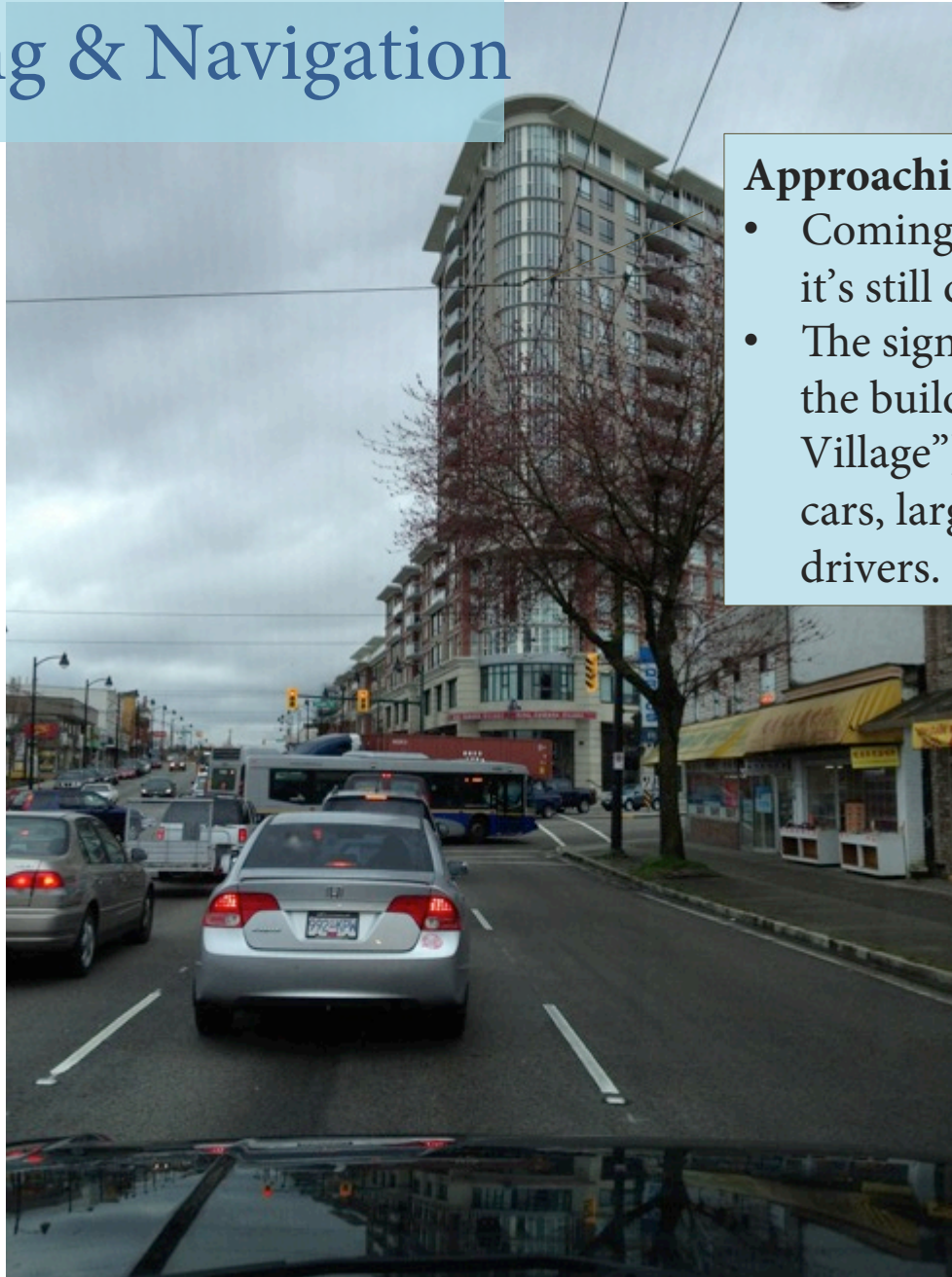
Oak & Laurier

[Personal and Business Banking | Moving to Canada: HSBC Bank ...](#)

Map for bank vancouver



# Wayfinding & Navigation



## **Approaching the Intersection:**

- Coming up to the intersection it's still difficult to tell.
- The signage at the bottom of the building ("King Edward Village") gets lost in a sea of cars, large trucks and erratic drivers.



# Wayfinding & Navigation: Digital Equivalent



## Navigation & Orientation



RBC Royal Bank

Bank Accounts

Credit Cards

Mortgages

Loans

Investments

Advice

Sign In



Online Services

Online Banking



All-inclusive Ban

More Features

More Rewards

# Wayfinding & Branding

## King Edward Village?:

- Rounded signage is easy to miss both from a vehicle as well as from a pedestrian's perspective.
- Where is the street address?
- And what is "King Edward Village" anyway?



# Wayfinding & Branding: Digital Equivalent



## Confusing Branding & Busy Visual Layout

A screenshot of the WE Vancouver.com website. The page is cluttered with various elements. At the top, there are social media icons for Facebook and Twitter. Below that is the website's name "WE Vancouver.com" and a search bar. A navigation menu includes links for HOME, NEWS, ARTS, MOVIES, MUSIC, LIFESTYLE, FOOD &amp; DRINK, OPINION, BC GAMES, CONTESTS, and OBITS. Below the navigation is a "CONTEST" section featuring a banner for a "Tisol Pet Nutrition &amp; Supply Stores" promotion. The banner includes a photo of a dog's face and the text "Tisol Pet Nutrition &amp; Supply Stores" and "CLICK FOR OUR CURRENT PROMOTIONS!". Below the banner is a navigation bar with links for "Welcome drwatson!", "Edit", "Log Off", and "Facebook Connect". At the bottom, there is a footer with links for "Welcome", "Submission", "View Entries", "Vote", "My Account", and "Winners".



# Diversions

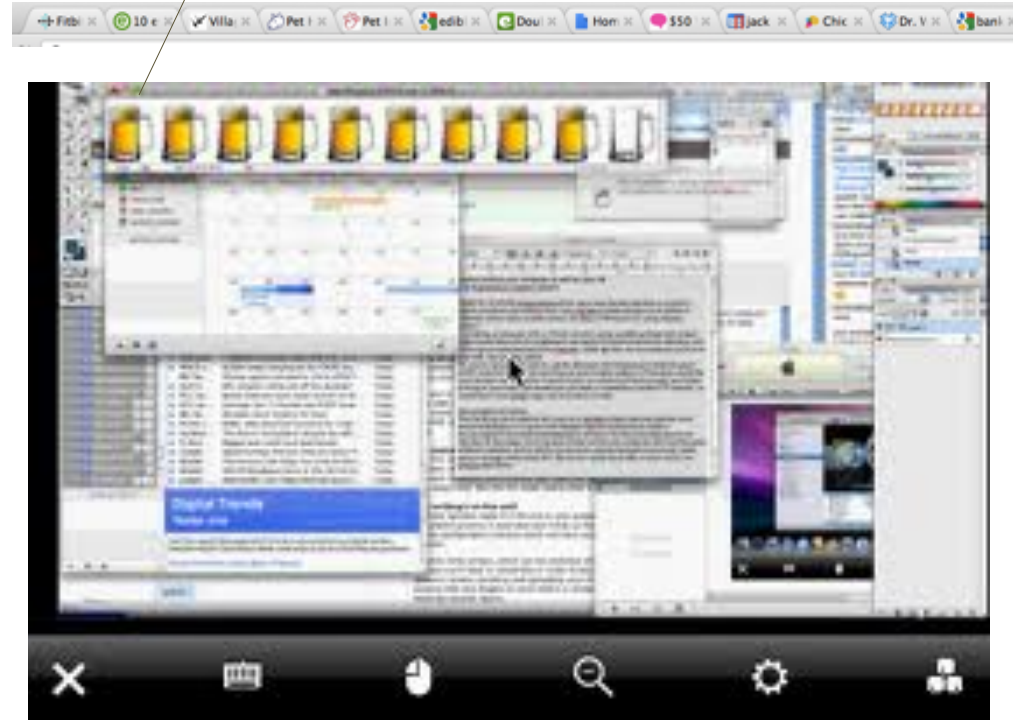


## **Busy Intersection:**

- Kingsway and Knight St is a very busy intersection.
- Safety demands that you divert your eyes to the traffic rather than small signage.

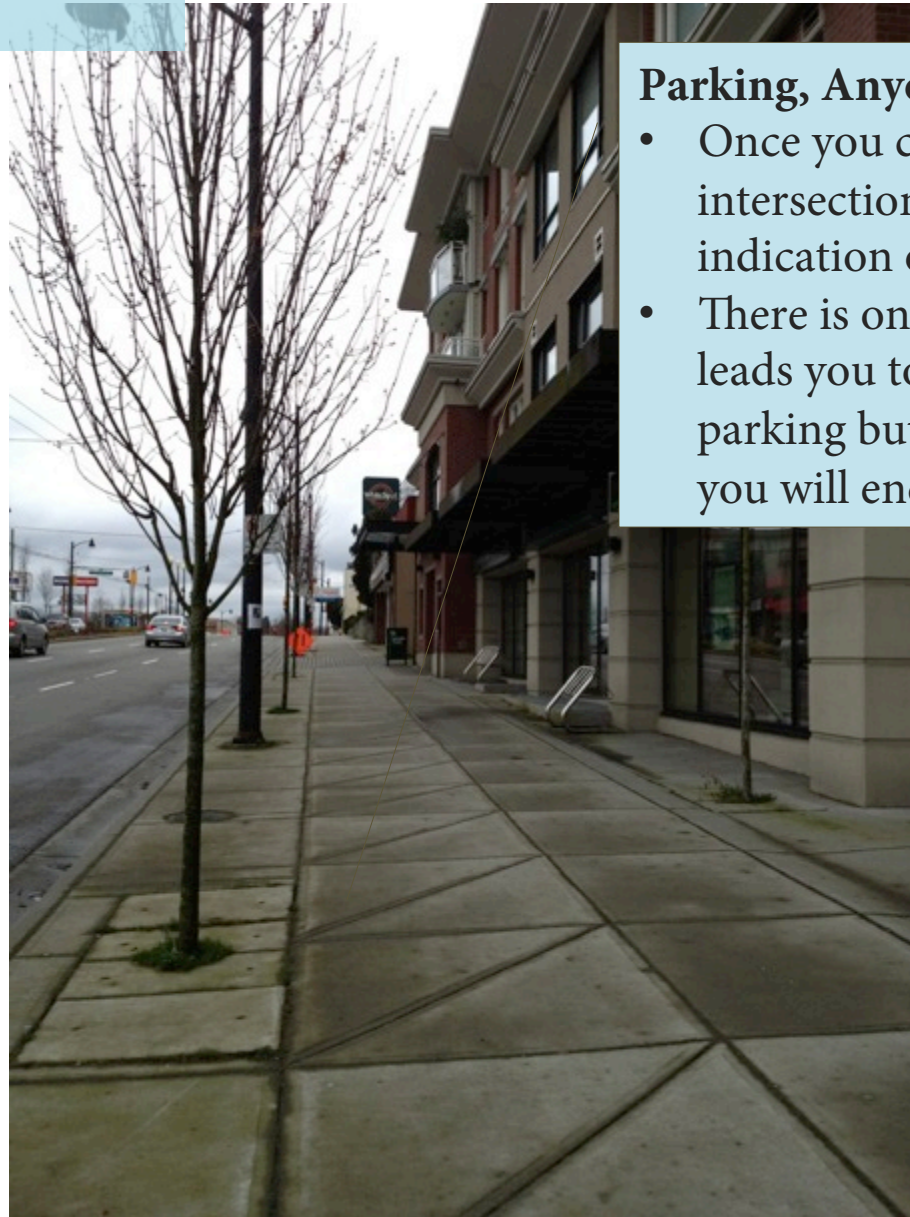
# Diversion: Digital Equivalent

Many applications vying for attention





# Error Prevention



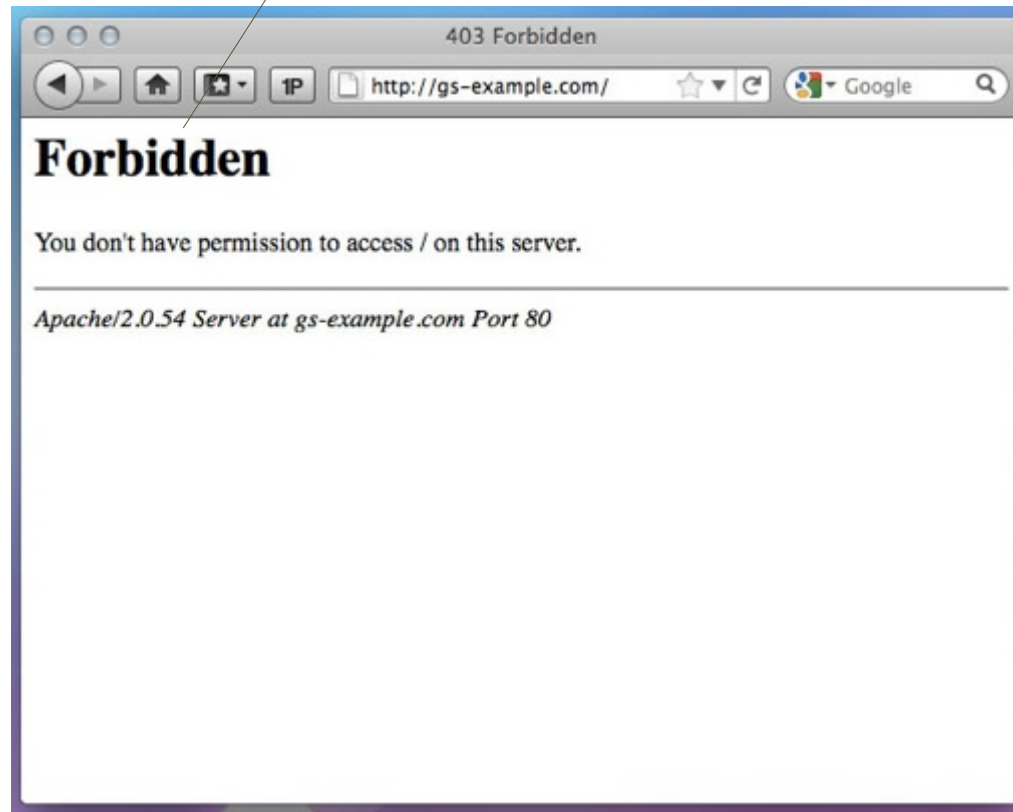
## Parking, Anyone?:

- Once you cross the intersection, there is still no indication of parking.
- There is one small incline that leads you to believe there's parking but if you try to turn, you will encounter a curb.

# Error Prevention: Digital Equivalent



Bad paths or permissions



# Making Mistakes



## More parking woes:

- Headed east/west there is some street parking until 3pm, but none to be found north/south.
- No way to turn into parking lot if you're in opposing lane.
- If you miss the underground parking, there is nowhere obvious to turn due to odd triangular shaped lot.



# Making Mistakes: Digital Equivalent



## Lack of Error Recovery

A screenshot of a Windows operating system interface. The background window is titled "back up files" and contains the following text: "Create backup copies of your files and folders." with a "Back up files" button; "Create a Windows Complete PC Backup and Restore image of your entire computer, which can be used to recover from a hardware failure." with a "Back up computer" button; and "A Windows Complete PC Backup and Restore image has not been created." Below this is the question "Which type of backup should I make?". Overlaid on top of this is a "System Restore" dialog box with a red 'X' icon. The text in the dialog box reads: "There was an unexpected error: The filename, directory name, or volume label syntax is incorrect. (0x8007007B) System Restore will now close." with an "OK" button at the bottom right. At the bottom of the background window, there is a link: "Use System Restore to fix problems and undo changes to Windows."

# Access Issues

## Even more parking woes:

- Street parking is an issue around the entire circumference of the building, especially during rush hour (after 3pm).
- It almost appears as if there is no public parking.

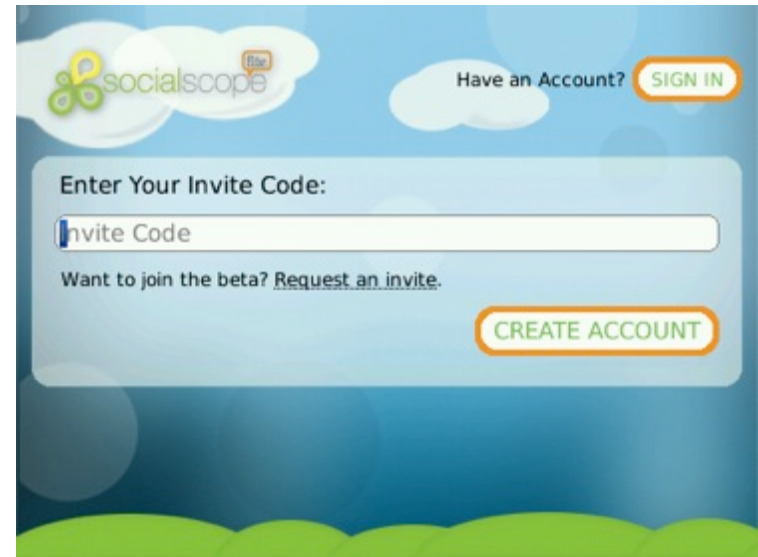
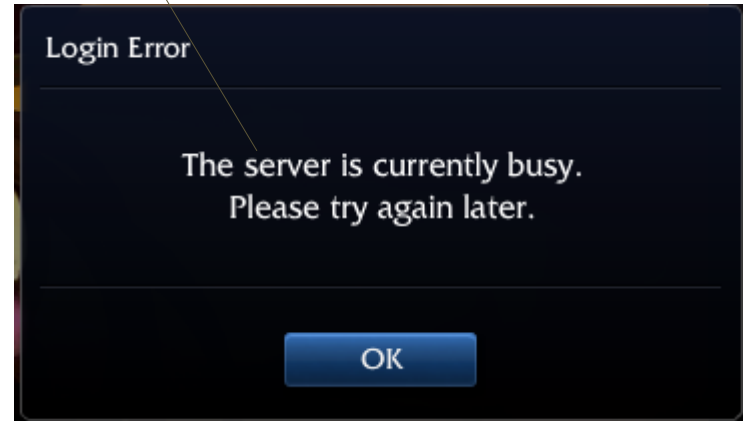




# Access Issues: Digital Equivalent



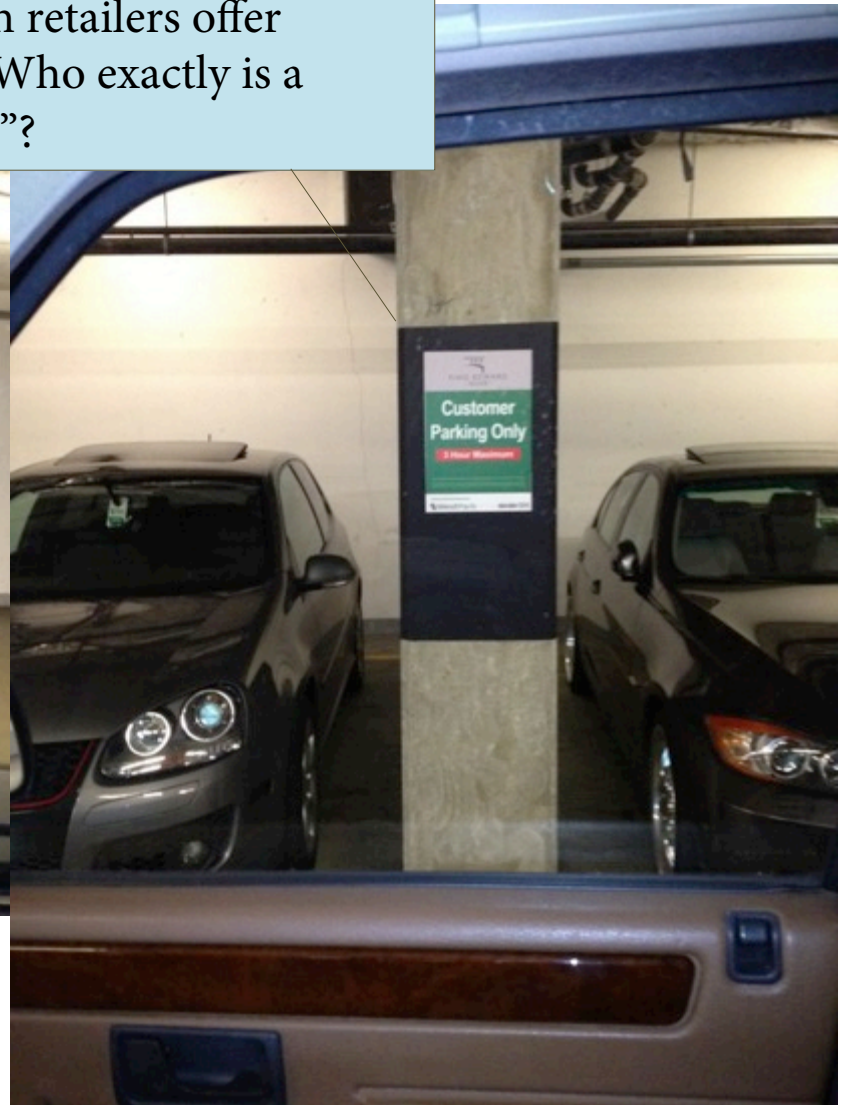
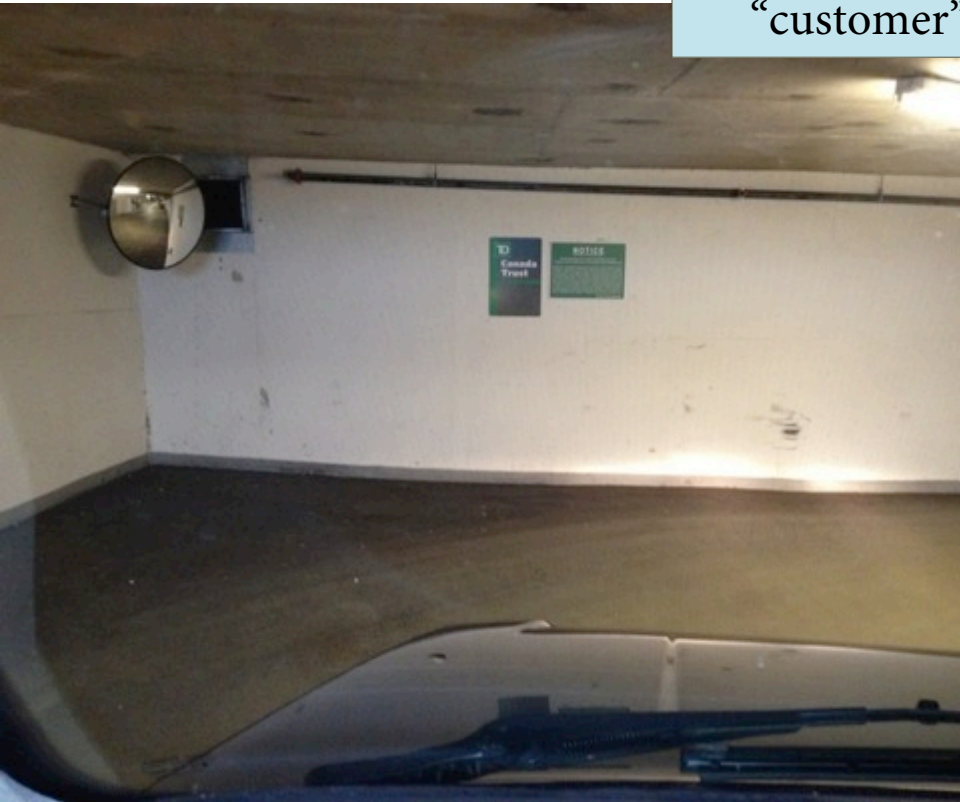
Unable to access a site or service



# Unclear Signs

## Who is a customer:

- Once you do find the parking lot – which retailers offer parking? Who exactly is a “customer”?



# Unclear Signs: Digital Equivalent



Free Shipping – but is there a catch?

**DSW**  
DESIGNER SHOE WAREHOUSE®

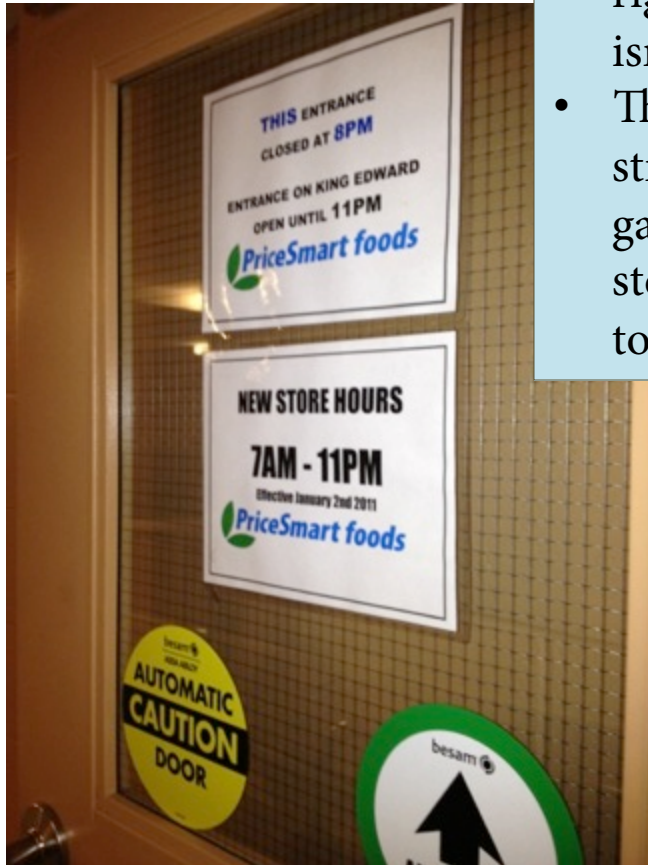
**FREE SHIPPING** [DETAILS >](#)



# Frustrations

## Entrance Rules:

- If you arrive after 8pm, you are out of luck. How to get to the right parking level (P1)? (there isn't a way!)
- There is no indication of this at street-level or as you enter the garage. Only after you park, step out of the vehicle and try to access the elevator.



# Frustrations



## Main Door:

- Despite all appearances, the door at the main intersection is NOT the main door.
- After 8pm this door is no longer open.

# Frustrations: Digital Equivalent



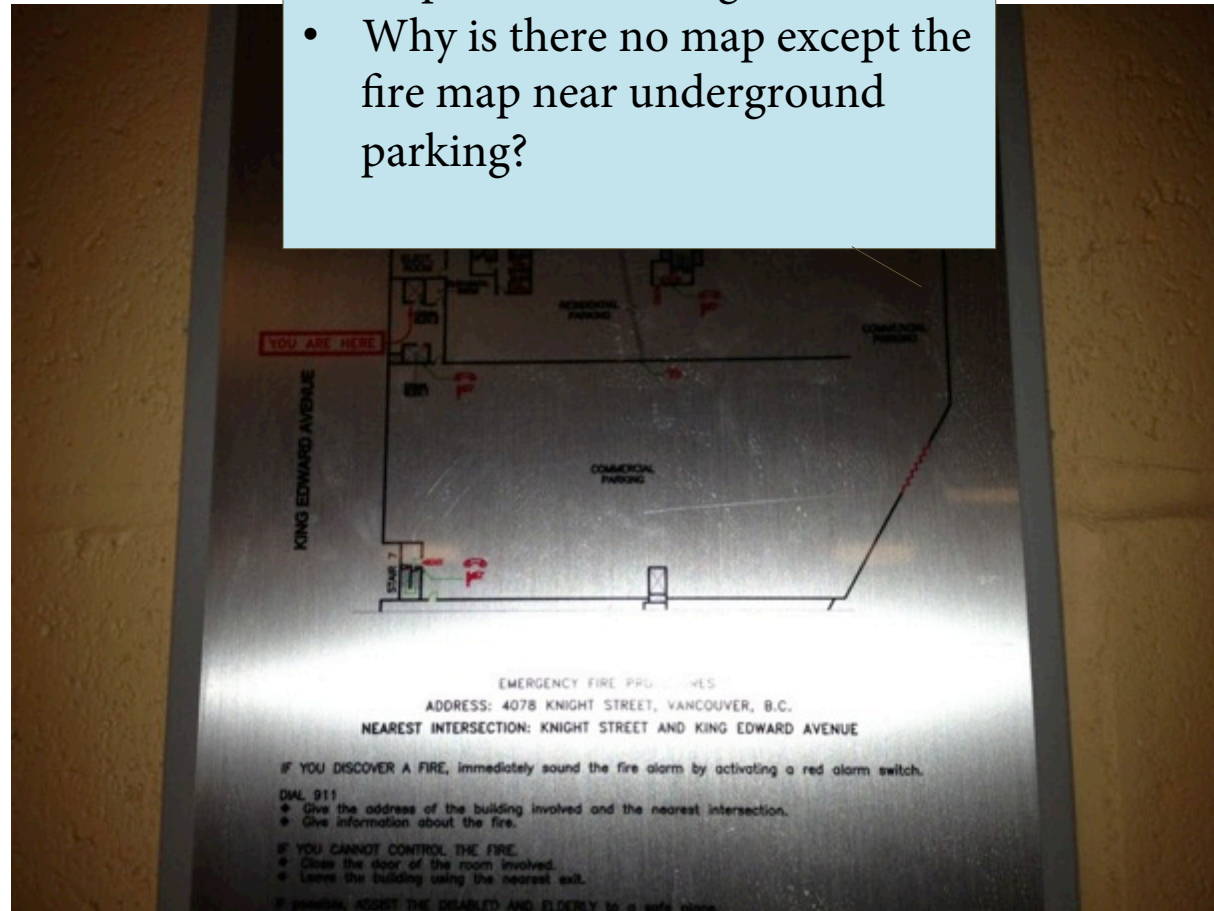
Site or services that “strand” users without a way to navigate back or “undo”



# Orientation

## Where Am I?:

- Adjacent to the elevator door is the only place you will find a map of the building.
- Why is there no map except the fire map near underground parking?





# Orientation: Digital Equivalent



**Obscured Site Map or Navigation**

**MacBook Pro**  
with Retina display

It's a whole new vision for the notebook.



Watch the video

Watch the Keynote



iOS 6  
Coming this fall.  
Get a preview.



OS X Mountain Lion  
This July, the Mac  
makes its next big leap.



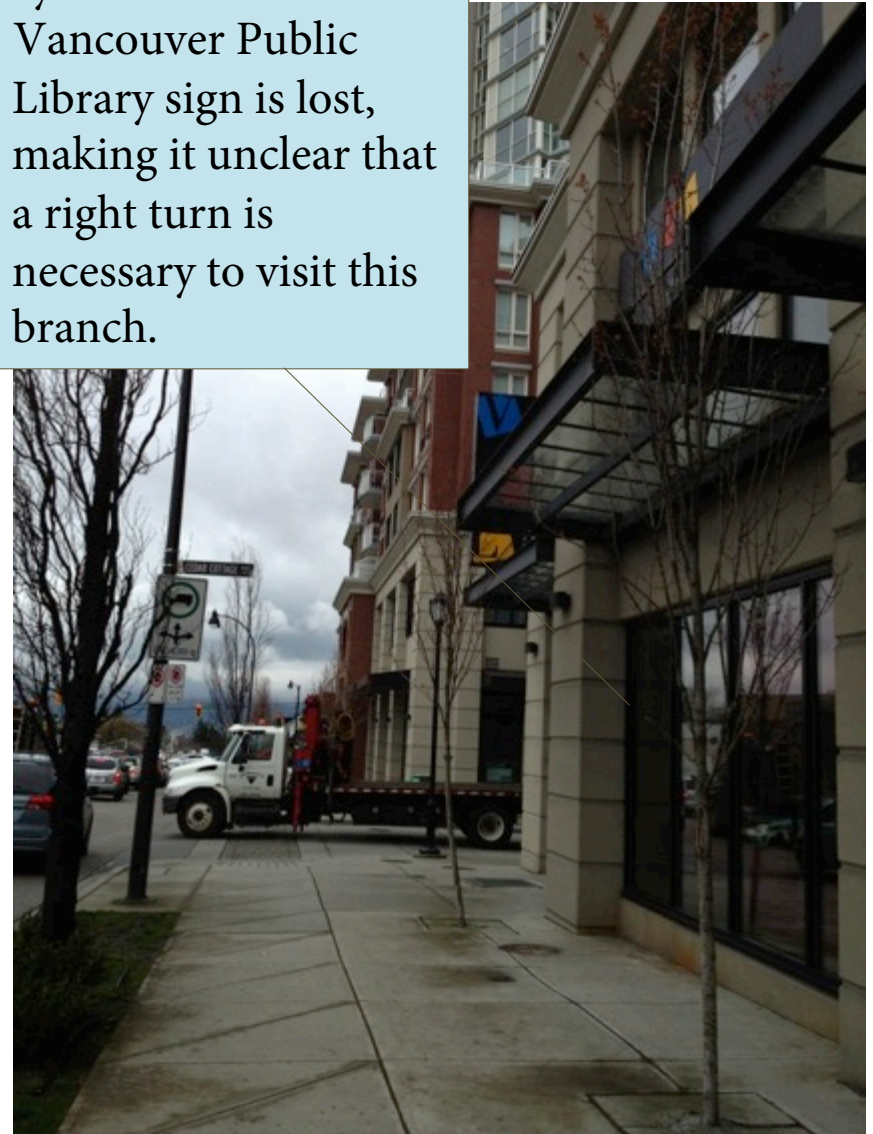
Back to school starts now.



# Obscured Storefronts

## Obscured Storefronts:

- Trucks as far as the eye can see...
- Vancouver Public Library sign is lost, making it unclear that a right turn is necessary to visit this branch.



# Obscured Storefronts: Digital Equivalent

Gated Sites or Obscured  
by Pop-Ups





# Obscured Storefronts

## Hidden storefronts:

- The “courtyard” holds hidden retailers/storefronts not visible from the main street.





# Obscured Storefronts: Digital Equivalent



## Buried Items in Navigation

Item 1		
Item 2		
Folder 1	▶	
Item 3		
Folder 2	▶	Sub Item 2.1
Item 4	Folder 2.1	▶ Sub Item 2.1.1
		Sub Item 2.1.2
		Sub Item 2.1.3
		Sub Item 2.1.4

# Unpopulated Space

What gives?:

- Almost three years later and the main storefronts are... unfinished? Unleased? Abandoned?



# Unpopulated Space: Digital Equivalent



The Dreaded  
“Coming Soon”

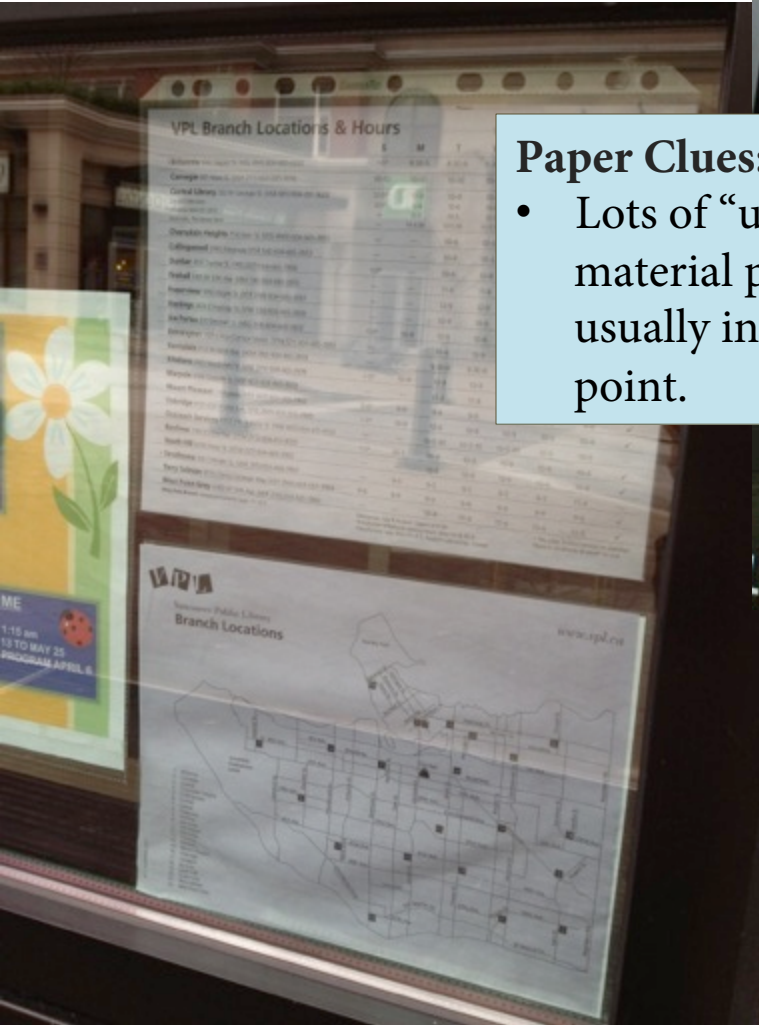




# Band-Aid Fixes

## Paper Clues:

- Lots of “unofficial” printed material posted up is usually indicative of a pain point.



Britannia Branch	1-5 p.m.
Carnegie Branch	10 a.m. - 10 p.m.
Central Library	12-5 p.m.
Dunbar Branch	1-5 p.m.
Joe Fortes Branch	1-5 p.m.
Kitsilano Branch	1-5 p.m.
Mount Pleasant Branch	9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Oakridge Branch	1-5 p.m.
Renfrew Branch	1-5 p.m.
Terry Salmon Branch	9 a.m. - 6 p.m.

# Band-Aid Fixes: Digital Equivalent

**Computers with Post-It info with passwords, URLs, shortcuts etc.**

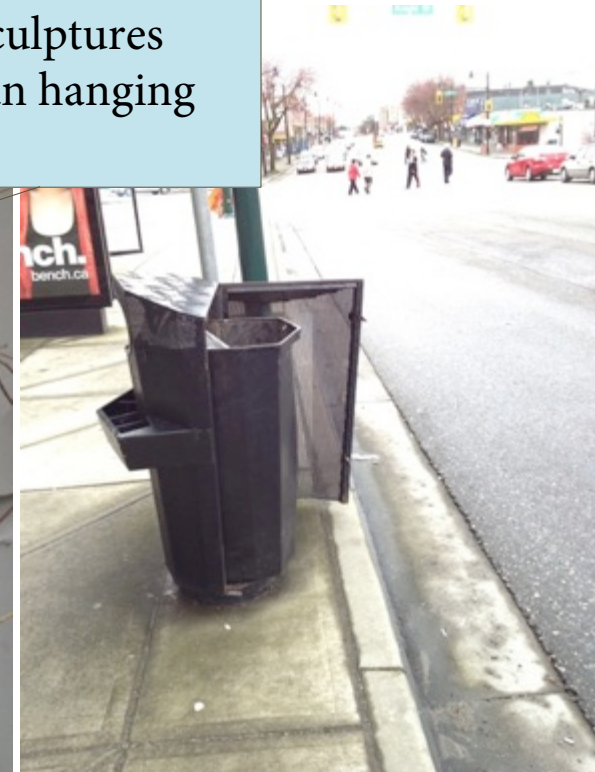




# Unkempt Appearance

## Trash:

- Trash in trees
- Bird poop on sculptures
- Broken trash can hanging into traffic



# Unkempt Appearance: Digital Equivalent



## Spam or Trolls

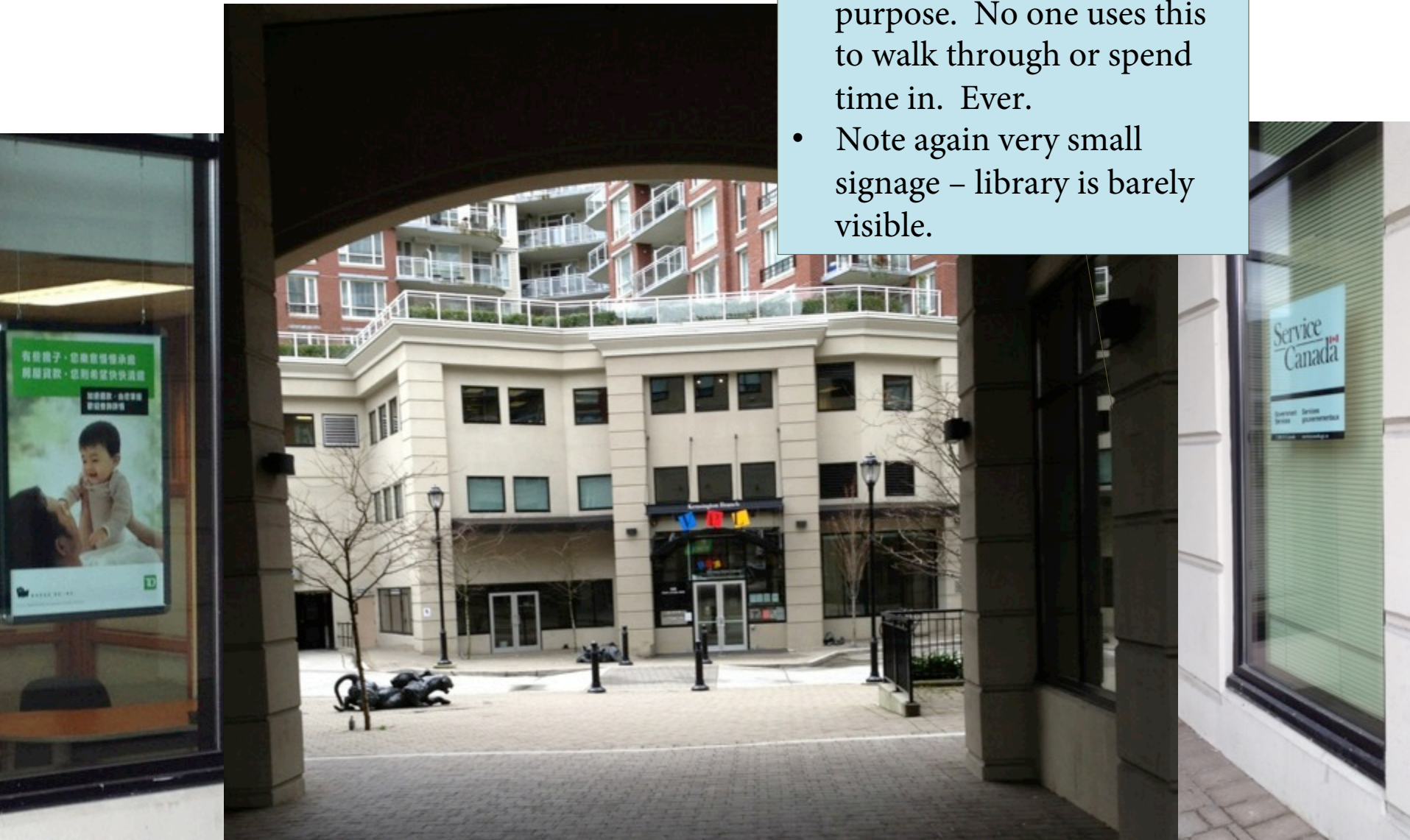
1. rolex watches | [dwac655gfb@hotmail.com](mailto:dwac655gfb@hotmail.com) | [0ep.net/rolexwatches](http://0ep.net/rolexwatches) | IP: [87.228.30.177](http://87.228.30.177)  
rolex watches [rolex watches](#) [url=http://0ep.net/rolexwatches] rolex watches[/url]  
Apr 15, 7:53 AM — [ [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Approve](#) | [Spam](#) | [View Post](#) ]
2. free mp3 ringtones | [bla-bla-bla.us/9-free-mp3-ringtones.html](http://bla-bla-bla.us/9-free-mp3-ringtones.html) | IP: [190.45.21.125](http://190.45.21.125)  
[...] [http://www.timeforblogging.com/?p=3&akst\\_action=share-this](http://www.timeforblogging.com/?p=3&akst_action=share-this) <http://www.timeforblc>  
[http://www.timeforblogging.com/?p=41&akst\\_action=share-this](http://www.timeforblogging.com/?p=41&akst_action=share-this) [...]  
Apr 15, 4:18 AM — [ [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Unapprove](#) | [Spam](#) | [View Post](#) ]
3. free mp3 ringtones | [bla-bla-bla.us/9-free-mp3-ringtones.html](http://bla-bla-bla.us/9-free-mp3-ringtones.html) | IP: [211.171.166.57](http://211.171.166.57)  
[...] [http://www.timeforblogging.com/?p=94&akst\\_action=share-this](http://www.timeforblogging.com/?p=94&akst_action=share-this) <http://www.timeforbl>  
<http://www.timeforblogging.com/2006/11/16/damn-microsoft-outlook-really-sucks> [...]  
Apr 15, 12:15 AM — [ [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Unapprove](#) | [Spam](#) | [View Post](#) ]
4. free mp3 ringtones | [bla-bla-bla.us/9-free-mp3-ringtones.html](http://bla-bla-bla.us/9-free-mp3-ringtones.html) | IP: [189.6.73.100](http://189.6.73.100)  
[...] [http://www.timeforblogging.com/?p=71&akst\\_action=share-this](http://www.timeforblogging.com/?p=71&akst_action=share-this) <http://www.timeforbl>  
[http://www.timeforblogging.com/?p=94&akst\\_action=share-this](http://www.timeforblogging.com/?p=94&akst_action=share-this) [...]  
Apr 14, 7:49 PM — [ [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Unapprove](#) | [Spam](#) | [View Post](#) ]



# Superfluous Elements

## Gratuitous Architecture:

- A courtyard that serves no purpose. No one uses this to walk through or spend time in. Ever.
- Note again very small signage – library is barely visible.





# Superfluous Elements: Digital Equivalent



**Gratuitous UI elements**



# Difficulty Exiting

## The Exit:

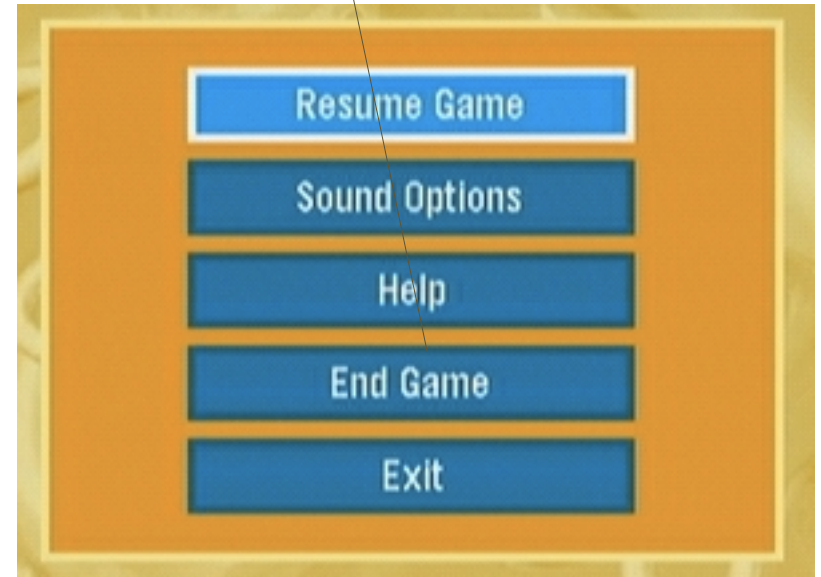
- Exiting is extremely confusing – how do I get onto the street I need to be on?
- All exits/entrances are one-way only.



# Difficulty Exiting: Digital Equivalent



**Not all sites and services offer a graceful way to exit or save your information!**





# Other Observations



## Observed:

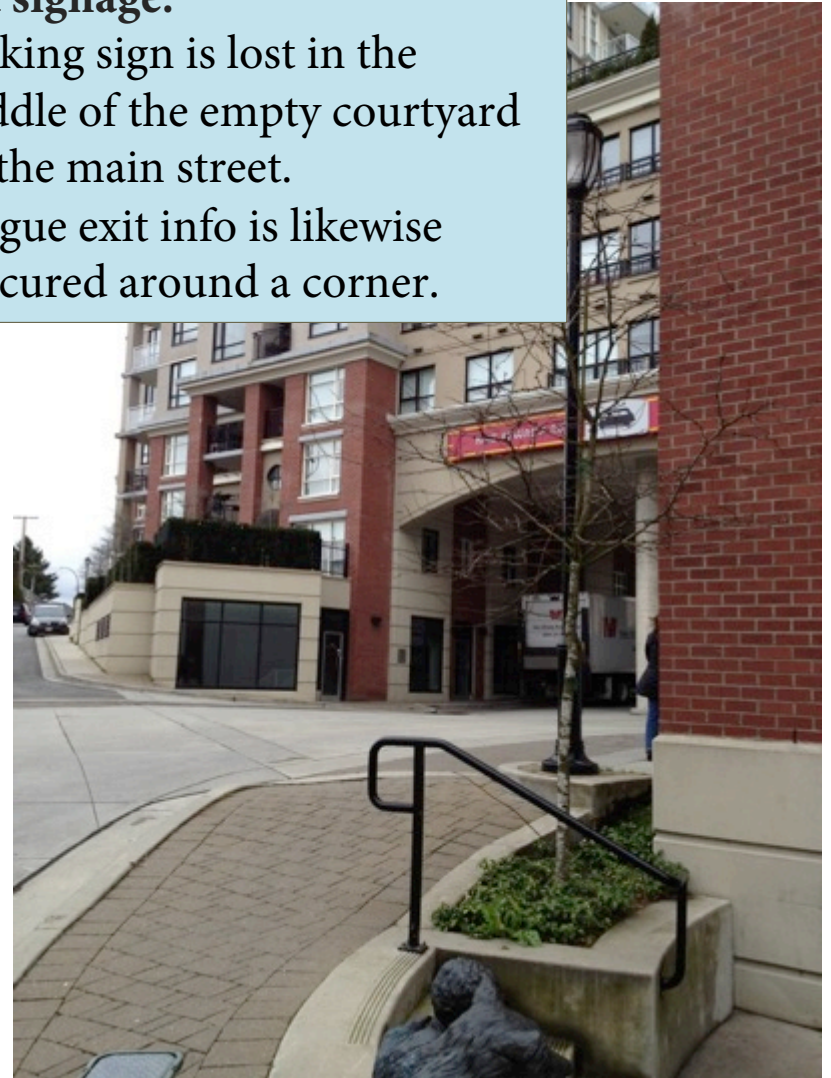
- Car stopped in the middle of traffic (after 3pm!) while the driver hung out of the window trying to read/see the parking signs.



# Other Observations

## Weird signage:

- Parking sign is lost in the middle of the empty courtyard off the main street.
- Vague exit info is likewise obscured around a corner.



# Other Observations

## Signage Problem:

- Even street-facing storefronts are lost due to poor signage.





# Other Observations

## MIA Street Addresses:

- Extremely small addresses and very small street signs= confusion when you're driving.
- Main tenant is empty and just says "Knight St."



# Other Observations



## Bus Stops:

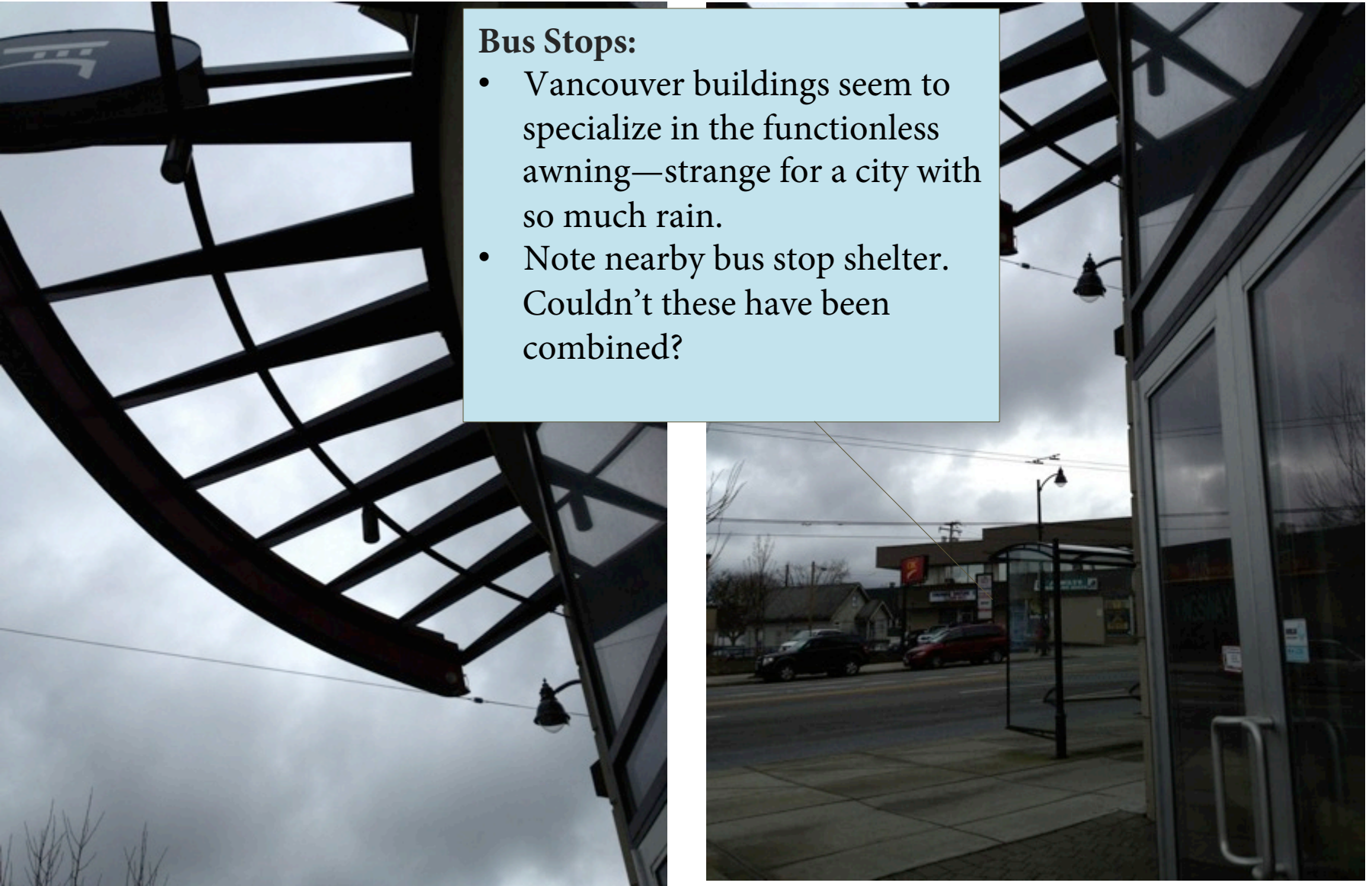
- Poorly marked bus stops that force passengers to wait in the rain. Redundant bus stops half a block away from each other.
- Buses additionally obscure parking entrance.



# Other Observations

## Bus Stops:

- Vancouver buildings seem to specialize in the functionless awning—strange for a city with so much rain.
- Note nearby bus stop shelter. Couldn't these have been combined?



# Other Observations

## Amenities:

- Easily overlooked post box on the building's edge.
- Bike racks that are not near the storefronts.





# Other Observations

## Library Hours:

- Very difficult to tell what spaces are open and closed due to so many empty storefronts, dim lighting and lack of signage.
- For example, you cannot tell when the library is open until you walk up to the door.

