Downtown Vancouver has a brand new office building with the state-of-the-art, 16-storey 980 Howe. Located on the northeast corner of Howe and Nelson Streets, the Manulife Real Estate tower is steps from the city’s iconic Robson Square, Vancouver Art Gallery and the provincial law courts.

“Manulife has always had a long-standing presence in Vancouver,” says Ted Willcocks, global head of asset management, Manulife Real Estate. “For many years, we owned a parking lot on the corner of Howe and Nelson that also included a [RBC] Royal Bank. We waited until we thought the market was solid enough to handle another building development in the downtown area and had the space rezoned.”

This is the most advanced building in Manulife’s portfolio. “A number of the same features can be found in different Manulife properties across the country, but this new building in Vancouver has them all,” adds Willcocks. With amenities like electric vehicle parking, a fitness centre with change rooms, extensive bike storage and facilities like showers, tenants can offer extra perks that are key to attracting and retaining the best employees.

The LEED Gold targeted building was designed by CEI Architecture in association with Endall Elliot Associates. “It's a contextually driven cubic building form that was intentionally designed to be crystalline and crisp,” says John Scott, architect on record with CEI Architecture. “We have incorporated several different types of glass and ceramic frit patterns in response to the exposure of each facade.” Having a glass curtain wall system doesn’t inherently perform well for LEED due to a low R-value and overall heat loss or unwanted heat gain in the summer. The design team was able to overcome that obstacle by installing triple pane systems with low-E coatings.

Scott says the building was not designed with extensive exterior shading devices that would make it difficult to maintain, including window washing. “Manulife wanted a very clean and refined structure that was reflective of their buildings around the world. These are classically contemporary in appearance.”

The level of class is immediately apparent upon entering the building. White marble imported from Italy was used to clad the two-storey main lobby, elevators and other areas of the building. Grey and black granite floors provide balance with the white walk and a wood panelled ceiling finishes the elegant look. The mixture of natural stone and wood elements was carried throughout the building with marble clad columns and granite pavers used on the exterior to create a true West Coast feel.

Part of the LEED requirements dictates that rainwater has to be collected on-site so that was another benefit to the glass curtain wall of the tower. Its smooth surface allows water to run down from all faces of the building and be collected and stored in a cistern in the underground parking garage. The water is then used for irrigation on the landscape elements.

“One of the most important aspects of the overall project was fitting in with the urban context,” says Alan Endall, principal, Endall Elliot Associates. “As the site lies within an important city view corridor, the appearance of the building from a distance was important and the form and massing of the 980 Howe building was designed to relate in scale to other structures on Howe Street. It also provides a backdrop to the glass roof of the law court across the street as people approach from the west.”

LOCATION
980 Howe Street, Vancouver, B.C.
OWNER/DEVELOPER
Manulife Real Estate
PROJECT MANAGER
Pivotal Project Management
ARCHITECT
CEI Architecture Planning Interiors / Endall Elliot Associates
GENERAL CONTRACTOR
EllisDon Corporation
STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT
Read Jones Christoffersen Ltd.
MECHANICAL CONSULTANT
AME Group
ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT
Applied Engineering Solutions Ltd.
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
Sharp & Diamond Landscape Architecture
BUILDING ENVELOPE CONSULTANT
BVDA Facade Engineering Ltd.
COST CONSULTANT
Axiom Cost Consulting
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANT
Pottinger Gaherty
ELEVATOR CONSULTANT
Solucore Elevator Solutions
TOTAL AREA
269,000 square feet
TOTAL COST
Undisclosed