

Vancouver City Planning Commission: Annual Report for the Year 2016

SUMMARY

During 2016, the Vancouver City Planning Commission (VCPC) carried out its work plan comprising dialogues and public events on themes relevant to the future of the city, and engaged on selected current planning topics and initiatives.

Under part A¹ of its mandate, the VCPC organized events on Vancouver's planning chronology and the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)

Under part B² of its mandate, the VCPC provided input to Council on current planning initiatives, and gave consideration to other current planning initiatives in discussion, with particular attention focused on the downtown public realm and the Arbutus Greenway.

EVENTS, DIALOGUES AND PROJECTS

The Vancouver City Planning Commission (VCPC) worked with a number of community partners on several events and projects designed to foster informed dialogue on themes important to the future of the city.

A. A Chronology of Vancouver Planning and Development Milestones

The VCPC has been working with community partners and advisors to compile a list of planning and development milestones from early settlement by First Nations to the present. The result is an online timeline providing snapshots of significant events, including Council decisions, major real estate developments, federal housing investments, regional plans, new transportation technologies, social policy innovations, and environmental restoration. These milestones from the past inform our discussions about the city's future. The chronology project is a unique record of planning and development events, decisions and policies in Vancouver's past and present. It is updated each year with a list of potential milestones which are reviewed five years later with an eye to which ones indeed have been significant.

In early January, the VCPC hosted two brainstorming workshops³ with 40 urban professionals to generate a short list of the defining planning and development decisions, actions and events of 2015 that could prove to be transformative in Vancouver's evolution. Through plenary group reporting, and further comments and discussion, the list was pared down to 15 significant events to take forward for public vetting at an event later in the month.

On January 26, the VCPC hosted a "2015 Year in Review event."⁴ This event featured a panel discussion moderated by CBC Radio's Stephen Quinn, and four panelists actively involved in planning and development in Vancouver who gave their perspectives on 2015 and issues that matter for the future. The four panelists provided their perspectives, while audience

¹ [By-law No. 5064](#), Mandate Section 7 part a): the Commission is directed to "represent ideas and opinions about the future of the city, as citizens of the City of Vancouver."

² [By-law No. 5064](#), Mandate Section 7 part b): the Commission is directed to "consider and report to Council on any proposal likely to have a significant effect on the future of the City."

³ Brainstorming workshops [documentation](#).

⁴ Year in Review 2015 [documentation](#).

participants provided written comments on display panels featuring the proposed significant events, and engaged in moderated discussion with the panelists.

The first edition of the new online planning timeline was featured at a dedicated computer station at the Museum of Vancouver, within the exhibition sponsored by the Vancouver Urbanarium Society, *Your Future Home: Creating the New Vancouver* between January and May, 2016 and is available on line on the VCPC website. The timeline and the year in review events were highly praised by those interested in planning and development in the city. The Commission intends to make this an on-going program.

B. United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)

Over the year, the Commission followed the development of UN Habitat's New Urban Agenda (NUA), a negotiated international agreement to guide urban efforts around the world for the next 20 years. As the host of the first Habitat in 1976, and a City continuing to be at the forefront of change in many fields, Vancouver has a special relationship to Habitat III.

In preparation for Quito the VCPC convened a meeting with others from the broader Vancouver community who were participating or interested in Habitat III. A panel of presenters discussed their organization's work to date towards Habitat III, and their aspirations for the conference and beyond, particularly at the local or regional level. The meeting identified potential synergies within the Vancouver contingent of the larger Canadian delegation who attended the conference in Quito. The VCPC also hosted a preparatory meeting of Vancouver-based delegates in October to discuss strategies and tactics and coordinate logistics and a Habitat III follow-up meeting was held in late November 2016 to share observations and discuss a wider Vancouver follow-up strategy.

The Vancouver Planning Commission sent two Commissioners to the UN Habitat 3 Forum. Co-chair Dr. Nola Kate Seymoar and Commissioner Jennifer Marshall, were included in the official Canadian delegation. Dr. Seymoar participated in a roundtable with federal Minister Duclos (Children, Families and Social Development) as part of Canada's consultations and she participated in an invitational luncheon at the event with the Minister on youth engagement. Both Commissioners played a role in the Women's Assembly in a workshop on the Environment, Climate Change and Resilience. Commissioner Marshall's project for a First Nations Community Hall and Health Centre in Lillooet was chosen for display at the 2016 Panamerican Architecture Biennial being shown in Quito concurrently with the Habitat Forum.

Over the next year, the Commission and partners intend to continue discussion on implementing the priorities and strategies of the New Urban Agenda locally and to convene a Local New Urban Agenda Summit in November 2017 on the 40th anniversary of the VCPC's role as an advisory body with a mandate to engage in long-range planning issues. The VCPC anticipates using the new Urban Agenda to guide efforts over the next 5 years.

CURRENT INITIATIVES AND TOPICS

In addition to considering items on Council's agenda and current planning initiatives, Commissioners also participated actively in discussion of urban issues relevant to the future of the city.

A. Research and Comment

1. Waterfront Hub Framework

The VCPC submitted a memorandum to Council regarding the Waterfront Hub Framework. The memo outlined the VCPC's strong support of the Framework vision, while raising concerns about its implementation.

2. Downtown Public Realm

The VCPC wrote to Mayor and Council drawing attention to the incremental loss of usable public space in downtown Vancouver, requesting that they prioritize completion of a downtown public space inventory and plan (a 'spaces and places' plan) to ensure a proper context to inform sound decision-making and effective stewardship of a very important public asset. In 2017 VCPC plans to contribute to public dialogue on public space issues in the downtown and throughout the city.

3. Arbutus Greenway

The Commission wrote to Mayor and Council to convey its' strong support of the City's foresight in buying the CP land for the Arbutus Corridor. VCPC raised an immediate concern over the safety of cyclists and pedestrians using the corridor who are detoured to existing traffic signals at major road crossings and urged the City to consider options such as signals activated by cyclists or pedestrians, in keeping with the City of Vancouver's overarching transportation strategy of giving planning and design priority to pedestrians and cyclists over motor vehicles.

Co-Chair, Dr. Seymoar, participated in the briefing of the City Manager and senior staff about the independent consultations on the Arbutus Corridor undertaken in 2006.

B. Engagement in City Processes

1. Other Advisory Bodies

VCPC representatives participated in the following on-going processes: the Urban Design Panel; the Heritage Action Plan Advisory Committee; and the Transportation Stakeholders Advisory Group. The perspective of the VCPC were communicated by the Commissioners and relevant new concerns and issues brought back from the advisory committees.

2. Staff Consultations

The VCPC received presentations and provided feedback to staff on the following current planning initiatives as part of staff's consultations with the public, stakeholders and advisory groups:

- False Creek Flats Emerging Directions and Draft Plan
- Introductions to new General Managers of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability, Development Services, and Community Services
- Emergency Preparedness
- Healthy City Strategy

3. Engagement Topics

The VCPC also considered other issues with long-term implications for the City's future in discussion with liaison Commissioners from Council, Vancouver School Board and Vancouver Park Board, including:

- 100 Resilient Cities
- Creekside Paddling Centre
- Development pressure in Chinatown*
- DVBlA Imagining Downtown Vancouver*
- East Fraser Lands Official Development Plan amendments
- First Shaughnessy Heritage Conservation Area
- Greenest City Action Plan update
- Joyce-Collingwood Station Precinct Plan
- Marpole-Oakridge Community Centre
- New Brighton Salt Marsh
- Port Metro Vancouver: Scenario Planning for Vancouver's Future*
- Urban Forestry and Accessible Parks Strategies
- Vancouver School Board Long Range Facilities Plan
- Zero-emissions Building Plan

* Presentations received from speakers.

CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Planning Commissioners attended numerous external conferences, panel discussions and other events on planning and development issues relevant to the City's future. Sharing knowledge and experience from these events formed a part of the VCPC's meeting agendas. In 2016, these events included:

- 800-block Robson Street Update
- A Future We Can't Afford? Young Citymakers and the Cost of Vancouver
- Architecture for Breakfast: New building and housing types
- Better Transit and Transportation Coalition Annual General Meeting
- Book Launch for "PLACEMAKERS: Emperors, Kings, Entrepreneurs—A Brief History of Real Estate Development"
- Book Launch & Discussion: "What a City is For: Remaking the Politics of Displacement"
- Downtown Eastside Community Economic Development Update
- Downtown Seattle Association : Focus Forward - Cascadia Cities: The futures of Vancouver, Seattle and Portland

- DTES Hastings Crossing BIA Community Wise workshops
- Granville Island 2040 Design Workshops and Open Houses
- Heartwood Community Café “Making Space” panel on the future of Vancouver’s social venues
- Heritage Vancouver’s Shaping Vancouver 2016 What’s a Neighbourhood” event
- Joint Advisory Committee session for Grandview-Woodland Plan
- Joyce-Collingwood Station Precinct Review Open House
- Minister Duclos’ Roundtable on Habitat III
- New St. Paul’s Site Development Concepts Workshop
- Our Transportation Challenge: The Good, the Bad, and the Bike Lanes? (KCTS 9)
- Placemaking Conference
- Planning Canada book launch
- Prime Minister’s Roundtable on Affordable Housing
- Pro Walk/Pro Bike/Pro Place 2016: Moving Towards a Healthier World
- Re*Plan Community Land Trust lecture and workshop
- Re:Address Summit (on Housing)
- REFBC Land Awards Gala
- SCARP/SALA Urban Design Forum
- SFU City Conversations on various topics
- SFU Data Cafes
- SFU Rethinking the Region IV: Region Forward Thinking
- SFU Transportation Lectures
- The 8th Annual SCARP Student Symposium - Generations
- The First Annual Larry Bell Urban Forum: Mapping the Hedge City – Vancouver and Global Capital
- UBC SCARP Symposium: [De]Constructing the Pacific Northwest
- Urbanarium Debates on Housing Affordability and Create a City Wide Plan
- Urbanarium Smart Cities Talks: Meet Vancouver’s New Chief Planner
- Vancouver Transportation Plan update for community stakeholders and advisory committee members
- Warren Gill Lecture: The Vancouver Region: Moving Towards World Class But Not There Yet

OPERATIONS AND GOVERNANCE

The VCPC devoted considerable time in 2016 to internal administrative matters. This process of change renewed and reinvigorated the Commission. Key activities included:

- In response to the departure of the Chair mid-term, VCPC elected two new Co-Chairs and added a Secretary-Treasurer to the Executive of the VCPC to allow for a more even distribution of the workload among the volunteer commissioners.
- Recruited two new Commissioners to fill vacancies created by early resignations.
- Recruited a new Executive Director and regularized the position as a part-time staff person within the City Clerk’s Office who reports to the VCPC.
- Created new Nominations, Work Plan, and Habitat III Subcommittees. These join the existing Chronology Subcommittee and Executive Committee as focused working bodies of the Commission.
- Revised the meeting schedule to enable working Commissioners and liaison members to attend at more convenient times (3:00 to 5:00 pm), The new schedule allowed for full

monthly Commission meetings once per month, a full Standing Committee meeting once per month and other subcommittee meetings as required.

- Reviewed the VCPC's administrative, budget and financial systems to separate operating costs from project costs and identify ways to fund the Executive Director's position on a full time basis in the near future.
- Instituted a timesheet system for the Executive Director, as well as a volunteer tracking system for Commissioners in order to give a broader picture of the amount of time and effort dedicated to various aspects of the Commission's work.
- Adjusted the Commission's annual timeline and work schedule to align with the City's timing of reappointments and budgeting.
- Instituted a weekly curation of media stories and upcoming events to keep Commissioners informed about current planning and development issues in Vancouver and the region.

PLANNING COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS TO OTHER CIVIC BODIES

The VCPC has appointments on the following City of Vancouver civic bodies:

1. Urban Design Panel

A Commissioner served on the Urban Design Panel, as prescribed by Council By-law No. 4722. The VCPC appointed Neal LaMontagne to this role.

2. Heritage Action Plan Advisory Committee

The VCPC continued to participate in the Heritage Action Plan Advisory Committee in 2015. The Commission appointed Robert Matas to this role.

3. Transportation Stakeholder Advisory Group

A Commissioner participated as a member of the City of Vancouver's Transportation Advisory Group in 2016. The VCPC appointed Anthony Perl to this role.

COMMISSIONERS DURING 2016

This report covers the work carried out during the year by the following Commissioners:

- Neal LaMontagne [Co-chair]
- Nola-Kate Seymoar [Co-chair]
- Amelia Huang (Appointed July)
- Andy Yan [Commission appointee]
- Anthony Perl [Commission appointee]
- Brad Jones (resigned April)
- Brandon Yan (resigned September)
- Danielle Bauer (resigned May)
- David Crossley
- Jennifer Marshall (Appointed July)
- Karenn Krangle
- Laura Carey (resigned October)
- Lihua Huang
- Melanie Matining
- Robert Matas
- Tl'akwasik'ən Khelsilem (Appointed December)

Commissioners Amelia Huang and Jennifer Marshall were appointed in July to fill the spaces left by the early resignations of Danielle Bauer and Brad Jones. Commissioner Brandon Yan resigned in September and Commissioner Laura Carey resigned in October and was replaced by Tl'akwasik'ən Khelsilem in December.

The following Commissioners served as non-voting members, providing liaison with their elected bodies:

- Councillors Adriane Carr and Andrea Reimer, Vancouver City Council
- Trustee Mike Lombardi, Vancouver School Board (until October, 2016)
- Commissioner Casey Crawford, Vancouver Park Board
- The liaison position for Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability remained vacant

STAFF CHANGES IN 2016

In July, the Vancouver City Planning Commission selected Yuri Artibise as the new Executive Director. Elizabeth Ballantyne, who served as Executive Director for eight years, departed for the UBC School of Community and Regional Planning, where she began her PhD studies in September.

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