

Vancouver City Planning Commission

Annual Report 2013¹

Summary

Following the appointment of three new members, and the re-appointment of three members, for two-year terms, the Commission developed a work plan for the year 2013. The starting point for the work plan was a strategic review of past work to clarify the most effective areas for future initiatives under part a) of its mandate; and a review of current initiatives underway within the City with significant implications for the future, under part b) of its mandate. During the course of the year, the Commission provided comments to Council on three of these current initiatives. The Commission also provided feedback to staff on a number of planning projects and continued its exploratory work relating to the potential benefits of a city-wide plan for Vancouver.

Work Plan Development

After an orientation for new members and a briefing from the General Manager of Planning and Development on work priorities and directions for 2013, the Commission held a series of work planning sessions to scope out the directions for its own work. At the start of 2013, the Commission decided to carry out an extensive review of the Commission's past major projects under part a) of its mandate, looking at their relevance, value and impact, in order to establish criteria for selecting initiatives that will be of significant and lasting value for the city. It was recognized that this would delay the start of a major new initiative.

VCPC Project Review

The Commission established a committee to steer the internal review of the Commission's past work. The resulting process extended over four months during which Commissioners were invited to consider fundamental questions about the role, relevance and value of the City's oldest citizen advisory body, and to share ideas on how to implement the vision for being the citizen advisory body that looks to the future of the city. The Commission conducted two major retreats, and several shorter special sessions, to assess past work, to define the role, relevance and value of the Commission in the 21st century, and to articulate goals for future work. By the end of June, the Commission had developed a draft charter outlining key identity statements, guiding work principles, and an interpretation of the by-law mandate that would assist new Commissioners and working committees. A meeting with Liaison Councillor Tang, and with Councillor Reimer in her capacity as Chair of Council's Standing Committee on Planning, Transportation and the Environment, took place in November to initiate a discussion on future directions for the Commission. Following valuable feedback from the Councillors, it was agreed to resume the discussion in the 2014 following the appointment and orientation of new Commissioners.

¹ This report originally formed the appendix to the Work Plan for 2014, adopted July 2, 2014.

Thematic Focus: City-Wide Planning

In 2013, the Commission continued its exploration of the potential benefits of a city-wide plan for Vancouver, and the disadvantages of not having one. The relationship between city-wide planning and neighbourhood-scale planning has been a topic of major interest for the Commission for several years, and a catalyst for the Commission's "Sustainable City of Sustainable Neighbourhoods" initiative in 2009-2011. Although there was no directive to initiate a new city-wide planning process within the City, Commissioners continued to examine the planning tension at the two scales and explored aspects of the issue in committee work.

a) City-Wide Planning Principles

The Commission explored the city-wide principles that had been articulated by staff for the three community planning processes, in committee work and with staff. The context for the explorations was the idea to develop a framework of 'good planning principles' for the Commission to reference in its work, in order to provide a consistent and credible lens for comments and evaluation.

b) Vancouver Regional Context Statement

The requirement for the City to prepare a Regional Context Statement demonstrating the compliance of its policies with the Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy was a major focus for the city-wide plan committee in 2013. The committee met with staff to a range of themes and issues. Following review of the draft Regional Context Statement, the Commission prepared a statement for Council and delivered it at the public hearing, speaking in support of adoption of the Regional Context Statement.² The statement encouraged the exploration of an updated city-wide planning framework that is accessible and transparent.

Current Initiatives (Mandate b)

Under part b) of its mandate, the Commission considers initiatives currently on the agenda of Council and the Planning and Development Services Department.

a) Comment to Council

The Commission provided written comment statements to Council on three current planning initiatives:³

- Regional Context Statement on the Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy
- Dunsmuir and Georgia Viaducts: Removal and Area Planning
- Community Plans Timeline Extension

The preparation of the comment statements entailed readings, briefings from staff, Commission discussions, and participation in City presentations and engagement events.

b) Staff Consultations

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

- Affordable Housing Options: Interim Rezoning Policy

² [Regional Context Statement: VCPC Statement.](#)

³ Letters of comment can be downloaded [here](#).

- Sign By-Law Review
- Heritage Amenity Density Policy Commissioners also met with senior planning staff to discuss planning for the False Creek Flats, the viaducts and Northeast False Creek.

c) Comments to Staff

The Commission's Transportation Planning Committee prepared a report entitled "Opportunities for Linking Transportation Actions and Ecological Planning," which was submitted to the City of Vancouver's Transportation 2040 Implementation Team. The report responded to two action items in the Transportation Plan 2040 Draft Directions.

d) Other Current Initiatives

In addition to the current planning initiatives listed above, the Commission considered the following topics and issues at its meetings, in committees, or as special projects:

- Engaged City Task Force*
 - City-wide Principles and Community Plans**
 - Healthy City Strategy**
 - Financing Growth through CACs and DCLs**
 - Port Coal Expansion: Prohibition of Coal Handling at Marine Terminals
- * Commission Chair Peter Greenwell participated as a member of Council's Engaged City Task Force
- ** Presentations or briefings received from staff

Other Areas of Focus

As well as the current planning initiatives of the City listed above, the Commission considered the following other topics and initiatives at its meetings, in committees, or as special projects:

- Tourism Master Plan
 - Foreign Investment in Vancouver Real Estate (BTAWorks/Andy Yan)*
 - Neighbourhood Engagement and Social Media (Frances Bula)*
- * Presentations received

Conferences and Events

Commissioners frequently participate in or attend external conferences and events relevant to planning and development issues relevant to the City's future. Sharing knowledge and experience from these events form a part of the Commission's meeting agendas. In 2013, these events included:

- Community Plans (West End, Marpole, Grandview Woodland) – workshops and events
- Foreign Investment in Vancouver Real Estate Market – SFU Woodward's
- SFU Carbon Talks Public Dialogue: Regional Transit
- Jim Green Memorial Lecture – SFU Woodward's
- Mark Kingwell on public space as a public good - SFU Woodward's
- Planning Institute of BC 2013 Conference
- Urban renewal projects 6 cities, Dr. Kate Shaw, U of Melbourne
- The Fourth Wall: Building a Culture of Participation, Dave Meslin, SFU Centre for Dialogue/Engaged City Task Force

- Metro Vancouver: Managing Growth – Integrating Land Use and Transportation Planning
- New urban design centre: Urbanarium Society and UBC SALA
- Regional Homeless Transit Plan Public Forum
- History of Gentrification in Vancouver, Michael Kluckner – SFU Woodward’s
- Vancouver Art Gallery North Plaza Concepts Open House
- Robson Square: Conflicted Space – Viva Vancouver
- Understanding Neighbourhood Engagement Panel – Urban Development Institute
- Spaces of Contestation: Art, Activism and the City – SFU Woodward’s
- Great Northern Way Campus Structure Plan Open House
- Industrial Lands: Availability, Utilization & Intensification – SFU
- 29th Avenue Skytrain Station Panel Discussion
- Own Your City: Public Engagement, Jennifer Keesmaat, City of Toronto Chief Planner
- FCM Convention
- ULI Cascadia Conference
- SFU City Conversation (numerous topics)

In addition to the current City planning initiatives listed above, the Commission considered the following topics and issues at its meetings, in committees, or as special projects:

Commission Appointments to Other civic Agencies: Urban Design Panel

A member of the Commission served on the Urban Design Panel, as prescribed by Council By-law No. 4722.

Commissioners During 2013

This report covers the work conducted during service by the following Commissioners:

Rafael Aquino
 Danielle Bauer
 Louise Blight
 Marian Brown
 Matthew Carter
 Canisius Chan [Commission appointee]
 Caitriona Feeney
 Peter Greenwell, Chair
 Michael Henderson
 Am Johal
 Karenn Krangle, Vice-Chair
 Phil Mondor [Commission appointee]
 John Weldon

Commissioners Matis, Rotin and Zhu concluded their third consecutive terms at the end of December 2012 and were ineligible to apply for re-appointment. The vacancies were filled by Council appointees Danielle Bauer, Matthew Carter and Michael Henderson. The terms of Commissioners Karenn Krangle and John Weldon also ended in December 2012; both were eligible for re-appointment, applied for a subsequent term, and were re-appointed by Council. The remaining seven Council-appointed Commissioners continued on to serve the second year of their term.

Commission appointee Canisius Chan continued on to serve the second year of his term. Phil Mondor was re-appointed by the Commission for a third term.

During 2013, Councillor Tony Tang continued to serve as liaison Commissioner to Council. Commissioner Trevor Loke provided liaison with the Vancouver Parks Board, and Trustee Mike Lombardi provided liaison with the Vancouver School Board.

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Appendix: Commission Background

The Commission is a citizen’s advisory body that serves Council by addressing issues with significant future implications for the future of the city and by reviewing City projects and initiatives through a long-term lens. In the course of its work, the Commission consults with the public to gather input, collaborates with practitioners and thought-leaders on knowledge-sharing and idea generation, and convenes stakeholders and public groups on specific topics.

Past initiatives include:

2010-2011	Sustainable City of Sustainable Neighbourhoods ⁴
2005	21 Places for the 21 st Century Ideas Competition ⁵
2004	Alternative Futures – Housing ⁶

The Commission reports to Council as often as required in carrying out its mandate, and at least annually on its work during the previous year and its future plans and budget request.

The applicable Council policy is **By-Law 5064** creating the Vancouver City Planning Commission to advise the Council on planning matters and outlining the following duties:

7. to assist City Council in an advisory capacity by considering and submitting reports to City Council on matters relating to the planning and development of the City and in particular, but without restricting the generality of the foregoing:
 - (a) to represent ideas and opinions about the future of the city, as citizens of the City of Vancouver;
 - (b) to consider and report to Council on any proposal likely to have a significant effect on the future of the City;
 - (c) to submit annually to Council a suggested budget.

⁴ Sustainable City of Sustainable Neighbourhoods on VCPC [website](#)

⁵ 21 Places for the 21st Century on VCPC [website](#)

⁶ Alternative Futures – Housing on VCPC [website](#)