

# Vancouver City Planning Commission

## Annual Report 2014<sup>1</sup>

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### SUMMARY

Following the appointment of five new members and the re-appointment of two members to the 13-member group, the Vancouver City Planning Commission held a series of orientation sessions for new members and developed a work plan for the year 2014, which was provided to Mayor and Council as an information memo in July. The work plan comprised a number of events relating to the Commission's role as a convener of community dialogues that look at the city's future. These were exploratory or pilot dialogues, generally in partnership with other organizations, intended to form the foundation for broader dialogues in 2015.

During the course of the year, the Commission also provided feedback to staff on a number of planning initiatives, considered topics relevant to the present and future of the city, and continued its exploratory work relating to the potential benefits of a city-wide plan for Vancouver.

### EVENTS, DIALOGUES AND PROJECTS (Mandate part a)

#### Vancouver's Planning Legacy and the City's Future

Under part a) of its mandate, the Commission is directed to "represent ideas and opinions about the future of the city, as citizens of the City of Vancouver." In 2014, the Commission's work included four events that looked both back to the planning legacy that has shaped Vancouver, and forward into the planning challenges of the future. Three of the events involved partners that the Commission has often collaborated with in the past, UBC and SFU, and in the fourth the Commission reached out to past Commissioners and the wide range of perspectives which they have brought to the Commission over time. The dialogues generated a rich and deep pool of ideas and perspectives which the Commission will study in 2015 and develop collaboratively with partners into a forum or series of public events. The ideas and findings will be reported to Council.

#### 1) UBC School of Community and Regional Planning Symposium

Members of the UBC School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) faculty have embarked on a critical examination of Vancouver, 'Vancouverism' and 21st Century Urbanism that is to culminate in the publication of a book of essays. The project combines a retrospective assessment of Vancouver's planning legacy with a look ahead to the city's future and will be a continuing source of valuable ideas for development in future dialogues.

Commissioners participated in the symposium in April entitled Planning the Metropolitan Region: A Critical Perspective, which launched the book project. The Commission sponsored the videography of the presentations of nearly 30 of the region's prominent urban thinkers, professionals and policy-makers. 2 The presenters shared stories, reflections and critiques about the evolution of the City of Vancouver and the region.

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<sup>1</sup> This report formed Appendix A in the VCPC's [Report to Council](#) dated March 25, 2015, which included the VCPC grant request and 2015 work plan.

<sup>2</sup> Planning the Vancouver Metropolitan Region Symposium [videos](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoMbBrzEdXRm_pbPeytJFEg/playlists?view=1&flow=list&sort=da)  
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoMbBrzEdXRm\\_pbPeytJFEg/playlists?view=1&flow=list&sort=da](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoMbBrzEdXRm_pbPeytJFEg/playlists?view=1&flow=list&sort=da)

## 2) Round Table with Past Commissioners

Recognizing that many of the Commission's past members have contributed in a variety of ways to shaping the city, the Commission hosted a round table with past commissioners on June 25 to build on the dialogue initiated at the SCARP symposium. The Commission reached out to more than 50 past Commissioners, and met with 24 of them for a round table discussion on the following question:

*Given changing demographics, climate change, and global economic forces, does the planning legacy of the past adequately prepare us for the future in 2100? What from our legacy will serve us, and what must we yet do?*

The round table discussion generated a wide range of ideas. The key themes will help to shape future dialogues with a broader audience.

## 3) Public Lecture and Panel

The Commission co-presented a public lecture on September 24 with the SFU Vancity Office of Community Engagement, entitled Vancouver in the 21st Century. The lecture, by Commissioner Andy Yan, examined aspects of life in Vancouver through the lens of social statistics and community cartographies and addressed the following question:

*If ideas of 'Vancouverism' framed city-building in Vancouver between 1986 to the present, what might be some of the new ideas on urban life that will lead us into Vancouver's next century?*

A discussion with panellists Matt Hern, Vanessa Timmer and Peter Ladner, moderated by Frances Bula, followed the lecture, and audience members were invited to share their comments at the reception.<sup>3</sup>

## 4) City-wide Planning

The idea of a new city-wide plan for Vancouver has been a topic of discussion at the Commission for many years and often surfaces in public and media comment. With CityPlan nearing the end of its projected 20-year life and in response to discussion leading up to the recent election, the Commission partnered with SFU City Conversations to co-host a public event featuring Ann McAfee, Patrick Condon and Peter Whitelaw as presenters. The event is documented online.<sup>4</sup>

## 5) Chronology Project: Milestones in Vancouver's Planning and Development

The Commission set out to create an authoritative, comprehensive and relevant chronology of significant events in Vancouver's planning and development history after discovering that the Commission's current chronology was incomplete and some dates were inaccurate. When reaching out to potential partners for this initiative, the Commission discovered a strong interest in collaboration on a definitive city chronology of planning and development milestones. The Commission formed an advisory group of some of the city's most eminent historians and accomplished experts to review the work on the chronology. Also, the initiative led to the design of a new course on research methodology at the UBC School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture. Graduate and post-graduate students are carrying out research to identify

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<sup>3</sup> Vancouver in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: [article](#):

<http://vancouverplanning.ca/news/42-news/123-lecture-vancouver-21st-century-yan>

<sup>4</sup> A new city-wide plan for Vancouver? SFU City Conversation November 20, 2014 [presentations](#).

<http://citywideplan.vancouverplanning.ca/city-wide-plan-2014/>

milestones. The project's advisory group is providing guidance to the students. The chronology will be published on the Commission's website.

## CURRENT INITIATIVES AND PROJECTS (Mandate part b)

Under part b) of its mandate, the Commission is directed to consider and report on initiatives "likely to have a significant effect on the future of the City." In addition to considering items on Council's agenda and current planning initiatives, Commissioners also participate actively in discussion of urban issues relevant to the future of the city.

### 1) 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:

- Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan
- Marpole Community Plan
- Healthy City Strategy
- Heritage Action Plan

The Commission also met with Brian Jackson, General Manager of Planning and Development Services, to receive an update on planning initiatives and to review the Commission's current initiatives.

### 2) Urban Design Panel

The Commission reviews development and rezoning applications on the agendas of upcoming Urban Panel Design meetings, and receives a report on the Panel advice given to applications reviewed at most recent UDP meeting(s). Perhaps different than the architects, landscape architects, engineers and other professions on the Panel, the Commission's representative generally seeks to reflect established City regulations, guidelines, plans and policies which apply to any application, as these represent community values and in many instances were adopted following extensive neighbourhood engagement. New concerns and issues, as raised in Commission discussion, are also communicated at UDP by the VCPC representative.

### 3) Other Current Topics

During its bi-weekly meetings, the Commission also considered other issues with long-term implications for the city's future in discussion with liaison members from Council, Vancouver School Board and Vancouver Parks Board, including:

- Vancouver Art Gallery re-location
- Eastern Core and Viaducts Consultation
- Trans and Gender-variant Inclusivity in Parks Facilities
- Pearson Dogwood Policy Statement
- Granville Island Governance
- Grandview Woodland Community Plan Workshops
- City-wide planning – future directions
- Transit and Transportation Referendum
- Community Amenity Contributions and Rezoning
- Vancouver Urbanarium Society\*

- Museum of Vancouver: The Vancouver Project\*
- Vancouver Urban Futures Survey III 2012\*
- Skytrain Upgrade: Broadway/Commercial Station

\*Presentations received from speakers.

## CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Commissioners frequently participate in or attend external conferences, panel discussions and other 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 2014, these events included:

- Suburban Sprawl: Innovative Approaches (Canadian Urban Institute/SFU)
- Dialogues on Our City's Future Lecture Series (UBC University Women's Club)
- University of Melbourne Housing Study Tour
- UBC SALA Forum: Five Critical Decades of City Building
- Will Innovation Save Us: Richard Florida and Ray Kurzweil
- RISE: Ideas Competition Addressing Sea Level Rise in Metro Vancouver (SFU)

## COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS TO OTHER CIVIC AGENCIES

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### 1) Urban Design Panel

A member of the Commission served on the Urban Design Panel, as prescribed by Council By-law No. 4722. The Commission appointed Phil Mondor to this role.

### 2) Heritage Action Plan Advisory Committee

The Commission received a request from the General Manager of Planning and Development Services to provide a representative to participate in the Heritage Action Plan (HAP) Advisory Committee, established as a sub-committee of the Vancouver Heritage Commission to assist in the implementation of the HAP approved by Council in 2013 and 2014. The Commission appointed Matthew Carter to this role.

## COMMISSIONERS DURING 2014

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

Danielle Bauer (Vice-Chair)  
Matthew Carter  
Caitriona Feeney  
Michael Henderson  
Am Johal  
Brad Jones  
Karenn Krangle (Chair)  
Robert Matas  
Phil Mondor [Commission appointee]  
Julia Payson  
John Weldon  
Andy Yan [Commission appointee]  
Brandon Yan

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

Councillor Tony Tang, Vancouver City Council  
Trustee Mike Lombardi, Vancouver School Board  
Trustee Trevor Loke, Vancouver Parks Board

## COMMISSION OPERATIONS

In 2014, as part of the integration of planning and development services in the West Annex (Vancity) building, the Commission was for the first time in its history located in a space separate from the Planning Department. The Commission looks forward to restoring this proximity in future when the re-arrangement of facilities allows.