

Vancouver City Planning Commission Formal Proposal: Milestones and Reimagine VCPC Initiatives (2025-2026 Term)

The mandate of the Vancouver City Planning Commission (VCPC) is to advise City Council on matters relating to the planning and development of the City; and in particular, to represent ideas and opinions about the future of the city and to consider and report to Council on any proposals that are likely to have potential impacts on the city's future. This year's committee is seeking to reimagine their roles and responsibilities as an advisory group to serve both as a voice for the public and provide feedback to City staff, the Mayor and Council.

I. MILESTONES INITIATIVE

1. Mandate

The Milestones Initiative aligns with the Vancouver City Planning Commission's mandate to document, interpret, and communicate significant planning decisions and developmental milestones that have shaped Vancouver. It seeks to make visible the historical trajectory of urban policy, governance, and public engagement practices to inform future decision-making. Milestones that mark significant changes or decisions that shape the city are to be recorded in a chronological timeline that would be available for public viewing on VCPC's website.

2. Objectives

This initiative will focus on three intersecting areas of vital importance to Vancouver's present and future: Housing, Economic Development, and Climate Action. These areas provide a framework to examine the city's planning evolution, offering a thematic coherence that aligns with urgent civic priorities and emerging Council directions.

Objective 1: Contextualizing Vancouver's planning evolution through housing development

Housing remains one of the most pressing challenges in Vancouver. This objective aims to track key historical milestones relating to affordability, zoning reform, land use priorities, and public/private housing policy shifts. The intent is to offer a longitudinal view of how Vancouver's housing discourse and related policy approaches have evolved, and where gaps remain.

Objective 2: Tracing economic development at the neighbourhood and city scale

This objective focuses on the history of economic development strategies, including the evolution of employment lands, small business ecosystems, and commercial corridor policies. Understanding how past decisions have shaped today's business environments provides essential insights for supporting resilient local economies.

Objective 3: Mapping the city's integration of climate action into planning

The climate lens allows us to examine how sustainability, climate resilience, and ecological considerations have been integrated (or omitted) from planning decisions. This objective identifies moments of significant progress, gaps in implementation, and shifts in public and political will.

Objective 4: Providing a public resource that informs policy, advocacy, and education

By compiling these milestones into a publicly accessible platform (website), the initiative aims to serve policymakers, researchers, students, and civic actors seeking to understand how historical patterns inform current challenges. By reflecting on our past we are able to plan for the future.

Objective 5: Establishing a thematic foundation and interlinking the work of the Commission

The Milestones initiative creates a common frame of reference that supports other VCPC priorities, including the Reimagine VCPC initiative (below), enabling a collaborative, coherent and informed future-facing strategy.

3. Approach

The Milestones initiative will utilize multiple analytical lenses:

- Policy Lens: Examining legal, zoning, and regulatory changes.
- Public Engagement Lens: How public voices were incorporated, resisted, or absent.
- Equity Lens: Assessing who benefited or was excluded from past decisions.
- Governance Lens: Understanding decision-making structures and power dynamics.
- Implementation Lens: Evaluating the effectiveness and legacy of adopted plans.

4. Deliverables

- A curated digital timeline hosted on the VCPC or Milestones Initiative website.
- A brief digital report outlining key findings.
- One or more public panel discussion featuring experts in housing, economic development, and climate.

5. Action Plan

Objective	Action Item	Timeline	Expected Outcome	Potential Partners
Housing	Identify at least 10 key housing-related planning decisions	September 2025*	A structured historical timeline with interpretive commentary	COV - PDS
Economic Development	Identification in employment lands and business policies	December 2025*	Exploration of policy/regulatory changes to commercial districts	COV - PDS, Business and Economy Office,
Climate Action	Identify at least 5 key climate policies	June–Sept 2025*	Identify success patterns and missed opportunities	COV - PDS,
Public Resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a digital platform to present findings Public Panel 	Sept–Nov 2025*	Publicly accessible online chronology with filters	
Thematic Foundation	Coordinate with reimagine initiative for shared frameworks	Ongoing	Shared understanding across initiatives	VCPC Subcommittee Members

I. REIMAGINE VCPC INITIATIVE

1. Mandate

The Reimagine VCPC initiative responds to the Commission's mandate to advise Council and foster public dialogue on the future of Vancouver. This initiative aims to critically reflect on how VCPC can strengthen its function as a bridge between the public and the City on planning matters, particularly in enabling public understanding, engagement, and voice. It emphasizes the Commission's civic role in supporting inclusive participation and equitable access to planning discourse while maintaining neutrality and non-partisan integrity.

2. Objectives

The Reimagine VCPC initiative will focus on clarifying the Commission's purpose and function in today's evolving planning landscape by concentrating on the following interrelated objectives:

Objective 1: Clarify VCPC's Strategic Role as a Civic Bridge

This objective aims to rearticulate VCPC's role as a conduit for public insight within planning processes, especially in helping the general public better understand planning issues and participate in civic dialogue. It explores how the Commission can amplify public voices and help demystify planning systems.

Objective 2: Explore Public Engagement Models and Methodologies Used by the City

The initiative will investigate current public engagement tools, practices, and assumptions used by City departments. By understanding the technical and procedural design of civic engagement in planning, VCPC can identify gaps and propose improvements in a neutral, evidence-based manner.

Objective 3: Propose a Framework for Future VCPC Work Planning

VCPC will develop a simple, strategic framework for future Commissions to determine their work priorities in a way that aligns with civic needs, capacity constraints, and influence potential. The framework will integrate learnings from both this initiative and the Milestones work.

Objective 4: Support Early-Stage Civic Dialogue

VCPC will explore how to play a proactive role in convening early conversations with the public, prior to formal consultation processes, as a means of generating civic curiosity, building literacy, and encouraging upstream participation.

Objective 5: Complement and Intersect with the Milestones Initiative

This initiative will draw on insights from the Milestones project to reflect on how past planning governance models have shaped public voice and inclusion. The synergy between both initiatives will deepen analysis and produce a more integrated, legacy-driven contribution.

3. Approach

The Reimagine VCPC initiative will be structured around the following analytical lenses:

- Civic Bridge Lens: How well planning processes connect with public understanding and access.
- Public Engagement Systems Lens: Evaluation of formats, tools, timing, and accessibility in engagement design.
- Mandate Lens: Reinterpreting "advising Council" in terms of meaningful public interface.
- Governance and Influence Lens: Mapping VCPC's positioning within the broader civic planning infrastructure.
- Systems Integration Lens: Identifying how VCPC can help align civic insight with planning processes without duplicating other efforts.

4. Deliverables

- A **VCPC Report** to support future term work planning.

5. Action Plan

Objective	Action Item	Timeline	Expected Outcome	Potential Partners
Identify the VCPC role, and opportunities to align with civic insight in planning processes	Compile scan of City engagement tools, policies, and formats	Q2 2026	Evidence base on public engagement systems	City Communications & Engagement
Milestones Linkage	Reflect jointly on governance gaps revealed by past decisions	Ongoing	Shared insights across both initiatives	Milestones Subcommittee
Dissemination	Submit summary t to City Council	TBC	Public legacy for institutional continuity	City Clerk's Office,