

From: ["van Dyk, Donny"](#)

To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)

Date: 10/20/2025 12:54:23 PM

Subject: Michael Audain receives City's highest honour for lifelong contributions to housing, activism and the arts

Dear Mayor and Council,

The City will be issuing the below news release on October 23, announcing Michael Audain as a recipient of the Freedom of the City Award. Maria will share the Vancouver.ca and social links when these are live.

Thanks,
Donny

Donny van Dyk (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver

City of Vancouver
News Release
October 23, 2025

Michael Audain receives City's highest honour for lifelong contributions to housing, activism and the arts

Vancouver City Council has recognized Michael Audain with the Freedom of the City Award for his extraordinary contributions to housing, social justice and the arts in Vancouver, across British Columbia and Canada.

"Michael Audain is a true Vancouver icon," said Mayor Ken Sim. "His impact stretches from housing and social policy to the arts and culture that shape our city. He's helped build not only homes, but the creative and civic foundations that make Vancouver what it is today. The Freedom of the City is our way of honouring his lifelong commitment to improving lives, supporting artists and strengthening communities here in Vancouver and beyond."

A fifth-generation British Columbian and long-time Vancouver resident, Audain's life and work bridge activism, business and philanthropy. As a young advocate, he led peace marches, joined the Freedom Riders in the American South, co-founded the BC Civil Liberties Association and later became one of Canada's foremost housing policy experts. He went on to establish Polygon Homes Ltd., helping create tens of thousands of homes in Metro Vancouver.

"As a youngster, Vancouver was the city of my dreams. I have lived in many parts of our country and the world, but never discovered a city endowed with more natural beauty,

vibrancy, diversity and opportunity than Vancouver,” said Audain. “What little I have accomplished in life can be largely attributed to my good fortune in making Vancouver my home.”

Together with his wife, Yoshiko Karasawa, Audain has profoundly shaped the province’s cultural landscape. Through the Audain Foundation and the Audain Art Museum in Whistler, they have championed access to the arts, supported education and preserved the legacies of Indigenous and Canadian artists. Their generous gift to the Vancouver Art Gallery represents the largest private donation to the arts in Canadian history, reinforcing Vancouver’s place as a global centre for creativity and cultural exchange.

Audain’s contributions have been recognized with the Order of Canada, the Order of British Columbia and numerous national honours.

The Freedom of the City Award was unanimously approved by Council earlier this year and presented this morning in a private ceremony in Council Chambers.

About the Freedom of the City Award

The Freedom of the City Award, established in 1936, is Vancouver’s highest civic honour. Granted only in exceptional cases, it recognizes individuals whose achievements in the arts, business, or philanthropy have brought distinction to the city. Recipients are celebrated in a ceremony and receive a certificate, the Freedom Medal, a lifetime recreation pass and an entry in the City’s historic Book of Freedoms.

[Learn more about the Freedom of the City Award](#), including past recipients.

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