



## MEMORANDUM

February 18, 2013

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Vancouver City Planning Commission

SUBJECT: Vancouver City Planning Commission - Report of Activities for the Year 2012

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### **PURPOSE**

To provide Vancouver City Council with a report on the activities of the Vancouver City Planning Commission ('the Commission') for the year 2012.

### **SUMMARY**

Following the appointment of six new members and the re-appointment of seven members in March-April, the Commission developed and carried out an abbreviated work plan for the period May-December. The Commission's main focus was on current City initiatives. The Commission provided comments to Council on two of these. The Commission also provided feedback to staff on a number of planning initiatives and explored a number of current topics in committees for possible further development.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Vancouver City Planning Commission was established by Council to assist Council in an advisory capacity by considering and submitting reports to City Council on matters relating to future of the city.

The Commission is making this report to Council pursuant to its mandate outlined in By-Law 5064<sup>1</sup> (1977, replacing earlier by-laws), listing 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; and

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<sup>1</sup> [By-Law No. 5064](#)

(c) to submit annually to Council a suggested budget.

In addition to providing comment and reports to Council on specific topics from time to time, the Commission also periodically makes a more comprehensive report to Council on the full scope of its work, usually on an annual basis.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. WORK PLAN REPORT**

#### **1.1 Work Plan Development**

A work planning session in May followed a period of orientation for the new members appointed by Council in March and for the new members appointed by the Commission in April. In the absence of a Director of Planning, the Commission met with the Deputy Director of Planning for an overview of major areas of planning work for the year.

#### **1.2 Work Plan Topics**

Following the completion of a major multi-year initiative at the end of 2011, and with the late start to the 2012 work year, the Commission developed a modest work plan for the months remaining in 2012. Two topics were selected for specific committee work, with other areas of focus to be selected from current topics as they arise.

##### **1.2.1 City-wide Planning**

The relationship between city-wide planning and neighbourhood-scale planning had been a topic of primary interest for the Commission for several years, underlying the Commission's "Sustainable City of Sustainable Neighbourhoods" initiative in 2009-2011. Although there was no current directive within the City to initiate a new city-wide planning process, Commissioners continued to explore the planning tension at the two scales and explored aspects of the issue in committee work. The Commission also completed the first phase of a pilot project on the topic that was started in 2011.

###### **1.2.1.1 A City-wide Physical Plan for Vancouver? Urbanists' Commentaries Online**

In January 2012, the Commission completed a launch of the outcome of a 2011 project to gather comments of selected urbanists on an important topic and to publish them online.<sup>2</sup> In late 2011, after staff presented the idea of new city-wide physical plan to Council during the Next Community Plans discussions, the Commission worked with staff to prepare a briefing for urban thinkers and professionals on what the city-wide plan might entail. The urban thinkers and professionals were then convened and asked to prepare comments on the idea. These comments were posted on a dedicated website, with the intention that these would be a foundation for future development. Following the departure of the Director of Planning and the shift in immediate City planning priorities, the Commission did not pursue further public commentary on this project in 2012.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://citywideplan.vancouverplanning.ca/>

### **1.2.1.2 Metro Vancouver Regional Context Statement**

The City-Wide Planning Committee studied various aspects of the new Regional Growth Strategy, through readings and discussions with staff on how the City's Regional Context Statement would take shape. Interest focused on the comprehensiveness of the response in terms of incorporating the significant body of policy the City of Vancouver has adopted since the 1999 Regional Context Statement concerning transportation, sustainability, housing and homelessness, and social development.

### **1.2.1.3 City-wide Planning Processes**

The Committee explored processes used in other cities for developing a new city plan, and considered the issues of growth as a possible focus for a city-wide conversation about Vancouver's future, and began to identify urban thinkers to participate in potential public discussions sponsored by the Commission.

## **1.2.2 Transportation: Transportation Plan 2040 and Special Initiatives**

The Committee that was struck to prepare the Commission's comments on the Transportation 2040 Draft Directions selected two topics for closer examination and possible future development.

### **1.2.2.1 Transportation Plan 2040 Draft Directions - review & comment**

The Committee drafted a response on the Transportation 2040 Draft Directions for the Commission's review. The draft was approved by the Commission and submitted to Council.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.2.2.2 A City-wide Network of Greenways and Blueways**

The Committee proposed that greenways and blueways be defined not only as transportation linkages but also as terrestrial or aquatic habitats, and explored the idea that a greenways/blueways network should integrate urban ecology principles into linear parks and transportation routes. The benefits would include both an expansion of green space and promotion of ecological adaptation to climate change.

### **1.2.2.3 The Fraser River Shoreline**

The Committee considered approaches to advancing the concept of integrated public access to the Fraser River Shoreline, with its potential as a land and marine linear park serving many neighbourhoods as well as a riverfront transportation corridor.

## **2. SPECIAL PROJECT: Adequate Housing - A Human Right**

While the Commission follows a work plan, it is ready to respond to special opportunities for dialogue on important planning topics. In 2012, SFU's Vancity Office for Public Engagement approached the Commission with an invitation to host a round table with Miloon Kothari, the

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<sup>3</sup> Letter of comment can be downloaded [here](#).

former Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing for the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The round-table discussion included an overview of Canada's record in meeting its human rights obligations in the area of adequate housing, the upcoming review of Canada's human rights record at the United Nations in 2013, and perspectives on local and regional housing issues. The participants included housing providers, planners, academics, and advocates. The report on the round table was posted on the Commission's website.<sup>4</sup>

### 3. COMMENT TO COUNCIL ON CURRENT TOPICS

The Commission provided written comment to Council on two current planning initiatives:<sup>5</sup>

- Georgia Viaducts: Bold New Concept
- Transportation Plan 2040 Directions

The preparation of the comments involved readings, briefings from staff, discussions, and participation in the City's presentations and consultation processes. Commissioners also took part in an extensive walking tour of the viaducts.

### 4. CURRENT TOPICS - 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:

- Georgia Viaducts: new concept and transportation analysis
- Mayor's Task Force on Housing Affordability: interim report
- Transportation 2040 Plan

### 5. OTHER TOPICS

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:

- Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy and Regional Context Statement\*
- Community Plans Underway (Marpole, Grandview-Woodland, West End)\*
- Community Plans Public Engagement Structures and Processes
- Downtown Public Space Planning and Robson Square\*
- Vancouver Social Indicators and Trends: Census Update\*
- Vancouver Climate Change Adaptation Strategy\*

\*Presentations or briefings received from staff

### 6. 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

<sup>4</sup> <http://vancouverplanning.ca/projects/adequate-housing-right>

<sup>5</sup> Letters of comment can be downloaded [here](#).

experience from these events form a part of the Commission's meeting agendas. In 2012, these events included:

- The Cities Summit - Vancouver Economic Commission
- Climate Wars, Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions
- TransLink, Annual General Meeting
- UBC Energy Workshop for Marpole Community Plan
- Bjarke Ingels Lecture, "Yes is More" - architectural innovation
- PIBC Industrial Lands Panel
- UBC SCARP Symposium "CityPlan 20 Years"
- UBC SCARP Student Symposium "Planning Horizons: The Edge, Future and Potential of Planning"
- Robson Square Block 51 Workshops
- SFU Urban Studies Conference: How We Conceive the Region

## **7. 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.

## **8. BY-LAW AMENDMENT - COMMISSIONER APPOINTMENT TERMS**

In January 2012, responding to a request from the Commission, Council amended the Commission's By-Law No. 5064 to reinstate the pattern of staggered two-years that had been in place prior to an amendment in 2006. Following the 2006 amendment, Commissioners were appointed for one-year or two-year terms, and all terms ended in December of an election year. The 2006 amendment resulted in a loss of continuity of service by Commissioners. Given the complexity of the issues that the Commission is mandated to address, the frequent change-over undermined the Commission's ability to carry out its duties properly. Commissioners are looking forward to the greater continuity in attention to important issues that will be possible in the future.

## **9. FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

A fresh work plan will be the first order of business for the Commission in 2013, including a review of priorities and initiatives that may be continued from 2012.

Commissioners had their first opportunity to meet with the new General Manager of Planning and Development, Brain Jackson, in December. Mr. Jackson provided his perspective on planning priorities and directions for 2013. Discussion about possible areas of focus for the Commission followed.

## **10. COMMISSIONERS DURING 2012**

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

Rafael Aquino  
Louise Blight  
Marian Brown  
Canisius Chan [Commission appointee]  
Caitriona Feeney  
Peter Greenwell, Chair  
Am Johal  
Karenn Krangle  
Arno Matis  
Phil Mondor [Commission appointee]  
Jeff Rotin  
John Weldon, Vice-Chair  
Jiang Zhu

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 terms of Commissioners Krangle and 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 eight Commissioners continued on to serve in 2013.

During 2012, Councillor Tony Tang served 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.

## ***CONCLUSION***

This report is submitted to Council for information. The Commissioners wish to convey their appreciation to Council for this opportunity to serve Council and the city of Vancouver, to City staff and citizens for their support and contributions to the Commission's initiatives, and to our liaison members from Council, the Parks Board and the Vancouver School Board.

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