



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

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Meeting Date: May 16, 2006

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: General Manager of Community Services
SUBJECT: Congress for the New Urbanism 2006 Charter Award

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive the report for information.

COUNCIL POLICY

There is no applicable Council Policy.

PURPOSE

This report informs Council of the Congress for the New Urbanism 2006 Charter Award bestowed upon the City of Vancouver for its Living First Strategy for Inner City Growth and Revitalization: the Central Area Plan.

DISCUSSION

The Congress for the New Urbanism is a major international organisation advancing human-scale, walkable neighbourhoods, cities, and towns. Since its inception 13 years ago, it has helped shape an international conversation about the consequences of formless growth and has advanced an alternate vision for community development and regional sustainability based on the Charter of the New Urbanism (see Appendix A).

The Congress for the New Urbanism sponsors an annual Charter Award which sets the gold standard for urban design and development. The Charter Awards honour exceptional designs that complement, enhance, or even repair their built and natural environments. Winning projects serve as powerful examples for future development.

The Charter of the New Urbanism is a difficult taskmaster and very few projects manage to fulfill all, or even most, of its principles. The winners of the Charter Awards have demonstrated that they do an exemplary job of following the principles of New Urbanism.

With its focus on urban design, the Charter Awards are dramatically different from most architecture awards. Most awards assess buildings in a vacuum, neglecting the context of the surrounding environs. The Charter Awards look at how plans and projects respond to and integrate with their environment and, consequently, how they improve the human experience of blocks, neighbourhoods, and regions.

Each year, the Congress for the New Urbanism convenes a jury of the highest calibre to review submissions and to select the winning entries that embody and enhance the principles of the Charter of the New Urbanism. In 2006, the jury members included foremost urbanists such as designers Leon Krier, Peter Calthorpe, and Barbara Littenberg and development analyst Todd Zimmerman.

Vancouver's Living First Strategy for Inner City Growth and Revitalization through the Central Area Plan was selected as one of five winners under the category entitled "The Region: Metropolis, City, and Town." The category evaluated submissions about comprehensive plans, regional plans, visions, open space and environmental studies, policies, transportation plans, and master plans for existing and new cities and towns. The City of Vancouver award was conferred based on the success with which the Central Area Plan and the development of Vancouver's inner city achieved its objectives, for the quality of the design and planning, and the degree to which it fulfilled and advanced the principles of the Charter of the New Urbanism.

The Congress for the New Urbanism will recognize award recipients, including the City of Vancouver, in press releases, a publication that profiles all winning entries, and at the next Congress in Providence, Rhode Island in June, 2006.

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Charter of the New Urbanism

The Congress for the New Urbanism views disinvestment in central cities, the spread of placeless sprawl, increasing separation by race and income, environmental deterioration, loss of agricultural lands and wilderness, and the erosion of society's built heritage as one interrelated community-building challenge.

We stand for the restoration of existing urban centers and towns within coherent metropolitan regions, the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighbourhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy.

We recognize that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.

We advocate the restructuring of public policy and development practices to support the following principles: neighbourhoods should be diverse in use and population; communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car; cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions; urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice.

We represent a broad-based citizenry, composed of public and private sector leaders, community activists, and multidisciplinary professionals.

We are committed to re-establishing the relationship between the art of building and the making of community, through citizen-based participatory planning and design.

We dedicate ourselves to reclaiming our homes, blocks, streets, parks, neighbourhoods, districts, towns, cities, regions, and environment.

We assert the following principles to guide public policy, development practice, urban planning, and design:

The region: Metropolis, city, and town

1. Metropolitan regions are finite places with geographic boundaries derived from topography, water sheds, coastlines, farmlands, regional parks, and river basins. The metropolis is made of multiple centers that are cities, towns, and villages, each with its own identifiable center and edges.

2. The metropolitan region is a fundamental economic unit of the contemporary world. Governmental cooperation, public policy, physical planning, and economic strategies must reflect this new reality.

3. The metropolis has a necessary and fragile relationship to its agrarian hinterland and natural landscapes. The relationship is environmental, economic, and cultural. Farm land and nature are as important to the metropolis as the garden is to the house.

4. Development patterns should not blur or eradicate the edges of the metropolis. Infill development within existing urban areas conserves environmental resources, economic

investment, and social fabric, while reclaiming marginal and abandoned areas. Metropolitan regions should develop strategies to encourage such infill development over peripheral expansion.

5. Where appropriate, new development contiguous to urban boundaries should be organized as neighbourhoods and districts, and be integrated with the existing urban pattern. Non-contiguous development should be organized as towns and villages with their own urban edges, and planned for a jobs/housing balance, not as bed room suburbs.

6. The development and redevelopment of towns and cities should respect historical patterns, precedents, and boundaries.

7. Cities and towns should bring into proximity a broad spectrum of public and private uses to support a regional economy that benefits people of all incomes. Affordable housing should be distributed through out the region to match job opportunities and to avoid concentrations of poverty.

8. The physical organization of the region should be supported by a framework of transportation alternatives. Transit, pedestrian, and bicycle systems should maximize access and mobility through out the region while reducing dependence upon the automobile.

9. Revenues and resources can be shared more cooperatively among the municipalities and centres within regions to avoid destructive competition for tax base and to promote rational coordination of transportation, recreation, public services, housing, and community institutions.

The neighbourhood, the district, and the corridor

10. The neighbourhood, the district, and the corridor are the essential elements of development and redevelopment in the metropolis. They form identifiable areas that encourage citizens to take responsibility for their maintenance and evolution.

11. Neighbourhoods should be compact, pedestrian-friendly, and mixed-use. Districts generally emphasize a special single use, and should follow the principles of neighbourhood design when possible. Corridors are regional connectors of neighbourhoods and districts; they range from boulevards and rail lines to rivers and park ways.

12. Many activities of daily living should occur within walking distance, allowing independence to those who do not drive, especially the elderly and the young. interconnected networks of streets should be designed to encourage walking, reduce the number and length of automobile trips, and conserve energy.

13. Within neighbourhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community.

14. Transit corridors, when properly planned and coordinated, can help organize metropolitan structure and revitalize urban centers. In contrast, high way corridors should not displace investment from existing centers.

15. Appropriate building densities and land uses should be within walking distance of transit stops, permitting public transit to become a viable alternative to the automobile.

16. Concentrations of civic, institutional, and commercial activity should be embedded in neighbourhoods and districts, not isolated in remote, single-use complexes. Schools should be sized and located to enable children to walk or bicycle to them.

17. The economic health and harmonious evolution of neighbourhoods, districts, and corridors can be improved through graphic urban design codes that serve as predictable guides for change.

18. A range of parks, from tot-lots and village greens to ball-fields and community gardens, should be distributed within neighbourhoods. Conservation areas and open lands should be used to define and connect different neighbourhoods and districts.

The block, the street, and the building

19. A primary task of all urban architecture and landscape design is the physical definition of streets and public spaces as places of shared use.

20. Individual architectural projects should be seamlessly linked to their surroundings. This issue transcends style.

21. The revitalization of urban places depends on safety and security. The design of streets and buildings should reinforce safe environments, but not at the expense of accessibility and openness.

22. In the contemporary metropolis, development must adequately accommodate automobiles. It should do so in ways that respect the pedestrian and the form of public space.

23. Streets and squares should be safe, comfortable, and interesting to the pedestrian. Properly configured, they encourage walking and enable neighbours to know each other and protect their communities.

24. Architecture and landscape design should grow from local climate, topography, history, and building practice.

25. Civic buildings and public gathering places require important sites to reinforce community identity and the culture of democracy. They deserve distinctive form, because their role is different from that of other buildings and places that constitute the fabric of the city.

26. All buildings should provide their inhabitants with a clear sense of location, weather and time. Natural methods of heating and cooling can be more resource-efficient than mechanical systems.

27. Preservation and renewal of historic buildings, districts, and landscapes affirm the continuity and evolution of urban society.

For information: Congress for the New Urbanism; 140 S. Dearborn St., Suite 310, Chicago, IL 60603; 312 551-7300 phone; www.cnu.org

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