



CITY OF VANCOUVER

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OTHER REPORT

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Author: Alan Boniface on  
behalf of VCPC  
Phone No.: 604.873.7269  
RTS No.: 7192  
VanRIMS No.: 08-3000-11  
Meeting Date: May 1, 2008

TO: Standing Committee on Planning and Environment  
FROM: Vancouver City Planning Commission  
SUBJECT: Vancouver City Planning Commission: Request for Operating Budget 2008

**RECOMMENDATION**

- A. THAT Council approve the annual operating grant to the Vancouver City Planning Commission, estimated at \$55,900 for 2008; source of funds to be the 2008 "Other Grants" budget.

**CONSIDERATION**

- B. THAT Council approve an additional project-specific grant of \$18,100 to the Vancouver City Planning Commission to undertake the two initiatives set out in the Council Report entitled 'Vancouver City Planning Commission: Request for 2008 Operating Budget' dated 'March 12, 2008'. Funding to be provided from Contingency Reserve.
- C. THAT Council approve an additional project-specific grant of \$30,000 to the Vancouver City Planning Commission to undertake neighbourhood amenity mapping of two Vancouver neighbourhoods, and provide a comprehensive digital map of the resulting information, through a cost-sharing partnership with Smartgrowth BC. Funding to be provided from Contingency Reserve.

## CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The Vancouver Planning Commission (VCPC) receives an operating grant from the City on an annual basis. In 2008, \$55,900 is provided in the Operating Budget for this purpose.

In addition to the annual grant, VCPC is requesting an additional \$48,100 to undertake project work. Should Council approve the remaining \$48,100 for Considerations B and C (A City Built for Change Series - \$18,100 and Neighbourhood Amenity Mapping project - \$30,000) the source of funds would be the 2008 Contingency Reserve.

With respect to Consideration B, staff have discussed the "Built For Change" thesis with VCPC and are supportive of the VCPC initiative referred to as 'Area 1: A City Built for Change Series. The proposed "Built for Change" public engagement series is compatible with City planning initiatives, including EcoDensity. However, if approved, further discussions with staff will be necessary to ensure that both initiatives in the proposed project do not overlap with existing City initiatives and result in a compatible contribution.

With respect to Consideration C, the proposed cost-sharing project to be completed in partnership with Smartgrowth BC, could have educational value to existing and future City initiatives provided that the proposed project does not duplicate the anticipated work programs relative to EcoDensity and other City initiatives.

It is important for Council to note that there will be other programs that will require a draw on contingency to support Council priorities such as EcoDensity and the Social Development Plan. If Council were to approve Consideration B and C, liaison with staff may require a shift in internal work assignments.

Approval of Recommendation A, and Considerations B and C require 8 affirmative votes of Council.

## COUNCIL POLICY

The *Vancouver Charter*, s. 206(1) indicates that Council may by resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of all its members make grants to specified categories of organizations.

## PURPOSE

The Vancouver City Planning Commission has finalized its workplan for the 2008 mandate. In broad terms the Commission has developed a strategy for assessing current City issues such as density, sustainability, population growth, and for making recommendations towards continuing Vancouver's prosperity and successes, such as walkability and livability, and challenging less successful attributes such as poverty and crime. In the face of ever-increasing change, the Commission has created a thesis of "A City Built for Change". The Commission intends to lead a series of talks, seminars and work sessions around this topic which will include analysis of current City initiatives such as Eco-density. The culmination of this work will be the creation of a 'Change Charter'.

## BACKGROUND

### Annual Commission Grant: \$55,900

The annual grant to Vancouver Planning Commission for 2008 is \$55,900. The Commission intends to apply the grant to cover the following estimated expenses:

1. Support staff salary \$33,000
2. Commissioners and meetings expense \$4,400
3. Website maintenance \$2,000
4. Miscellaneous \$2,000
5. Office/printing/postage/IT \$6,500
6. Communications and publications \$8,000

The Commission is seeking additional project-specific funding from Council to cover work in two areas during this fiscal year, for a total cost of \$48,100, as detailed in the work plan noted below.

### Area 1: A City Built for Change Series - \$18,100

- A. Workgroup 1: Adaptability in the Public Realm and Built Form \$5,000
- B. Workgroup 2: 'Built for Change' public engagement series \$10,000
- C. Intern researchers: \$3,100  
The VCPC requires two or three interns to assist with research in support of the 'City Built for Change' series and has drafted the employment terms of reference which will be distributed to the student community. (The Commission employed 2 interns in 2007 who produced documents on adaptability and 'Built for Change' that assisted in setting the framework for the 2008 workplan.)

### Area 2: Neighbourhood Amenity Mapping Project - \$30,000 (net cost to City of Vancouver)

- A. Workgroup 3: Neighbourhood Amenity Mapping demonstration project in cost-sharing partnership with Smartgrowth BC \$30,000 (net).

### Workgroup 1 Adaptability: The Public Realm and Built Form: Co-Chairs: Sharleen Suszezwiez and Mark Sheih

#### What is adaptable built form?

Jane Jacobs (1916-2006), an influential urban writer and activist who offered her many insights into the way cities work, comments on the issue of adaptability in her acclaimed book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, quoting:

Among the most admirable sights to be found along the sidewalks of big cities are the ingenious adaptations of old quarters to new ones. The town-house parlor that becomes a craftsman's showroom...the garage or brewery that becomes a theatre, the beauty parlor that becomes the ground floor of a duplex, the warehouse that becomes a factory...these are the kinds of minor changes forever occurring where city districts have vitality and are responsive to human needs. (194)

Much of this adaptable space is found in old, or as Jacobs refers to it, aged, buildings. These spaces were not designed with adaptability in mind, but their quality construction, layout and manageable scale have encouraged varied uses over time (Fowler 64). Jacobs explains how aged buildings attract new users and uses, noting:

*Time makes certain structures obsolete for some enterprises, and they become available to others. Time can make the space efficiencies of one generation the space luxuries of another generation. One century's building commonplace is another century's useful aberration. (189)*

Today's challenge is not simply saving old buildings from demolition, but understanding what characteristics of these old structures have made them adaptable to change and then incorporating these features into contemporary design techniques.

"Architecture that is designed for adaptation recognizes that the future is not finite, that change is inevitable, but that a framework is an important element in allowing that change to happen. Adaptable buildings are intended to respond readily to different functions, patterns of use and specific user's requirements [throughout their lifetime]."

Workgroup 1 is seeking to inform an investigation of these same principles with regard to the fabric of the public realm and combine these into an essential component of the proposed 'Change Charter.' An intern will support the Workgroup's work.

Potential output impact areas: livability, Eco-density, tourism, parks and public spaces, festivals and fun, safety and walkability.

### **Workgroup 2 'Built for Change' public engagement series (all members)**

The Commission has chosen to challenge the City's resilience to change. How ready is Vancouver for new societal, economic and environmental factors? Vancouver is already leading edge in the sustainable development field, advocating for walkable, transit-oriented communities, environmental technologies and high density housing; and strives to achieve even higher sustainability standards, encouraging LEED™ rated buildings, green design and new housing options.

Creating an adaptable, resilient city is not just about densifying. It's also about quality, a multi-purpose public realm and buildings, neighbourhood flexibility and the ability to integrate environmental technologies over time. It is also about expanding the development horizon. The City needs to challenge current policies, plans and visions to ensure that adaptability is built-in. How can Vancouver encourage innovation and go beyond what is already being done? What does adaptability mean for the development of buildings and the public realm? What are the principles and guidelines for adaptability? How does Vancouver build a city with resilience rather than with obsolescence?

Workgroup 2 has initiated a 5 part speaker and event series which began with the Robert Liberty lecture on November 20/2007. The 4 remaining events will be comprised of differing formats and audiences, and will focus on public engagement and input. The next event in this series will be in late February and will focus on 'Drivers for Change', in a workshop format. All of the events are intended to work

towards a thorough investigation of the 'Built for Change' theme and result in a contributing piece to the Commission's Change Charter.

Potential output impact areas: Eco-density, long-term sustainability, community engagement, participation and education.

### **Workgroup 3 Neighbourhood Amenity Mapping Project (with Smartgrowth BC)**

The VCPC is requesting that Council fund an important study which may support the Ecodensity initiative, but most certainly will contribute to the Commission's assessment of the public realm and the concept of creating changeable and adaptable public space. The amenity mapping is an essential component of the Commission's work, enabling an important community connection, re-definition and accounting of public space as defined by the residents. The plan is to map two Vancouver neighbourhoods. The commission has drafted the terms of a partnership with Smartgrowth BC which will make a contribution of \$33,405 in in-kind services including GIS mapping for this work pending Council's approval of assistance with funding. The Commission will co-ordinate the work and engage other groups as required (e.g., UBC). The mapping work will be significant and of high quality and will be of significant use to the City over time.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Vancouver Planning Commission is requesting funding of \$104,000 in 2008. \$55,900 for the Commission's annual grant is provided in the 2008 Operating Budget while the remaining \$48,100 for two projects (A City Built for Change Series - \$18,100 and Neighbourhood Amenity Mapping project - \$30,000) would need to be funded by Contingency Reserve.

### **CONCLUSION**

This document represents the current plans of the Commission as at the date of writing. We are grateful for Council's considerations of the Commission's efforts. We wish to note that the Commission expects to increase its profile and make every available effort to create significant research in aid of assisting decision-making in the City that truly reflects the City's diversity and maintains the pursuit of a city, which is livable, sustainable, affordable and beautiful in perpetuity.

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