



CITY OF VANCOUVER

OTHER REPORT

Report Date: November 15, 2005
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Meeting Date: December 15, 2005

TO: Standing Committee on Planning and Environment
FROM: Vancouver City Planning Commission
SUBJECT: Vancouver City Planning Commission - Annual Report for the Year 2005

RECOMMENDATION

THAT this report be received for information.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager submits the foregoing for INFORMATION.

PURPOSE

The Vancouver City Planning Commission (VCPC) is pleased to submit this report to Council which outlines the work undertaken by the VCPC in 2005. It has been an extremely busy and rewarding year with stimulating debate, significant public outreach and a number of major accomplishments.

BACKGROUND

The Vancouver City Planning Commission was established by Council in 1926, before the amalgamation of the Cities of Vancouver, South Vancouver and Point Grey. Its mandate is to advise Council on matters affecting the long term future of Vancouver.

The Commission is composed of:

- 10 members of the general public appointed by Council
- 2 members of the general public appointed by the VCPC
- 2 liaison Councillors nominated by the Mayor, and appointed by Council
- 1 Commissioner appointed annually by the Parks Board
- 1 Trustee appointed annually by the School Board

A list of incumbents in 2005 is attached as Appendix A.

DISCUSSION

For the record, 2005 included:

- 23 formal Commission meetings
- 19 additional subcommittee meetings
- two public events with guest speakers
- one major citizen outreach competition
- one public gallery show of competition finalists
- a major strategic planning workshop
- one major written report to Council and three oral briefings
- detailed research by three graduate planning students, who invested over 400 hours of research on housing topics
- contribution by Commissioners who served as full members of the Urban Design Panel and the Stewardship Group for South-East False Creek
- a total of over 1600 volunteer citizen hours
- a total budget of \$110,000

As a result of our own work planning process in early 2005, the Commission continued with three major existing committees: **Public Realm**, **Neighborhood Engagement**, and **Industrial Lands/False Creek Flats**, and re-introduced **Housing** as a full committee. The substantive work of the Commission is carried out by these committees. The Commission as a whole meets every other week, for two hours over a working lunch. These bi-monthly meetings are used to hear presentations and briefings, and to facilitate discussion, questioning and ideas generation. These sessions are scheduled so that the Commission is well informed and that the work of the committees is expanded and strengthened.

AREAS OF WORK IN 2005 INCLUDED:

1) Public Realm, Ray Straatsma, Chair

The largest initiative of the Public Realm Committee was the successful conclusion of the **21 Places Ideas Competition**. This major initiative invited citizens, schools and community groups to submit their Ideas for improvements to Vancouver's Public Realm. Over 75 entries were received from diverse parts of the city. A "blue-ribbon" jury selected 21 Finalists who had their entries shown at the Urban Gallery after a Gala Opening and Awards Presentation. There was considerable public notice and media coverage of these Ideas, each of which is being subsequently presented to appropriate governing bodies of the city in an effort to have their Idea funded and implemented.

Finalists also presented formally to the Commission on October 12.

The Commission also sponsored a Public Event where local Urban Designer (and past Commissioner and VCPC Chair) Lance Berelowitz spoke on his new book on Vancouver, *Dream City*. His presentation was followed by a Panel discussion and questions from the public.

2) Neighborhood Engagement, Rita Chudnovsky and Leslie Dickout, Co-Chairs

Neighborhood Engagement topics included full Commission sessions with staff and citizens involved with planning for Chinatown (January 5), East Fraser Lands (March 16), Oakridge (March 30 and October 26), and the Vancouver School Board (July 6). These were included to continue our work of promoting a more positive relationship between neighborhoods and the City government.

This Committee's priority has been to complete their Report on Neighborhood Engagement to Council, which was approved on June 5 (after a substantive two previous years work) and the subsequent establishment of the Engagement Task Force, under the co-chairs of Leslie Dickout and Councillor Anne Roberts. The preliminary leadership of the Task Force is currently meeting and will report to Council soon with proposed terms of reference, budgets and timelines for the next phase of their work.

3) Industrial Lands/ False Creek Flats, Bob Williams, Chair

This topic included sessions on the Greenways Overpass (May 25), and an update report from staff (June 22). Commissioners also participated in a number of public events and a formal planning workshop on June 18.

The Industrial Lands and False Creek Flats group has continued to advance consideration of the Flats as a critically important asset of downtown Vancouver and has worked with staff to refine the terms of reference for their Planning study of the area. The Commission has obtained outside expert counsel on matters pertaining to rail transportation and this has proved invaluable in debating alternatives to the existing rail infrastructure in the Flats.

4) Housing, Linda Mix and Marc Lee, Co-Chairs

Following the successful initiatives in 2003 and 2004, Housing again became a major interest for the Commission. In 2005 our Housing Committee decided to investigate opportunities for laneways oriented housing and small suites/small homes housing styles. Three graduate planning students were hired during the summer term to do research on these topics. They reported to us in September with a written summary report, two binders of supporting information and CD's with maps and images of innovative housing designs and styles and an inventory of laneways oriented and narrow lot housing in four Vancouver neighborhoods.. This work was complimented by Commission sessions (June 8 and September 14) and several committee meetings and briefings with staff.

The Housing Committee is also considering some design options and potential locations for a modest complex of small homes, which could be built in varying sizes between 325 and 550 square feet. A pro-forma is being prepared that will show that these small homes can be constructed at a considerable saving from current housing forms. To create this model for affordability in housing, a number of "rules and regulations" will need modification or relaxing by Council.

Consideration of the Laneways topic was prompted by our first public event of 2005, a visit to Vancouver by Professor Brigitte Shim of Toronto. She presented a public lecture at SFU downtown on her laneways research and design work in Toronto. She also led a staff symposium

on the topic and guided a tour of local areas in Vancouver where laneways oriented housing has been effectively integrated into the city. The success of this event was instrumental in encouraging the Commission to further consider of the potential for laneways oriented housing in Vancouver.

5) Sustainable Strategic Planning, Rick Balfour, Chair

More recently, a small group of Commissioners has started to examine the long range implications of some sustainability topics, and the coming changes that will affect future environmental and urban planning. How much do we need to adapt to meet major changing demands on how we live, work, travel, and otherwise use energy, and how sustainable is our city in this changing reality?

This committee plans to expand on this topic with community groups and citizens at large, aiming for more public awareness sessions, which will be further developed in the coming months.

PUBLIC EVENTS

To broaden perspective and advance discussion concerning the above topics, the VCPC hosted guest speakers at public events in 2005:

- **Professor Brigitte Shim**, University of Toronto, Urban Laneways, Design and Potential, at SFU downtown, and at City Hall
- **Lance Berelowitz**, Vancouver: [Dream City](#) at SFU downtown, with panelists **Larry Beasley**, **David Beers**, and **Bob Ransford**

These events were well received by the public with good attendance, stimulating questions and lengthy discussions.

ALTERNATIVE FUTURES WEBSITE

We are particularly pleased with our website www.alternativefutures.bc.ca, which was created in 2004, with additional financial support from Council and the Real Estate Foundation. This site has been expanded and has become an important outreach tool for the Commission for all its activities. Public usage has continued to climb, reaching several thousand per month during busy periods. We plan to continue to develop this tool and to seek additional ways it can help us achieve our mandate, and communicate with citizens, community groups and interested parties.

FINAL OUTPUTS AND REPORTS

The following were the **major outputs** of the Commission in 2005:

- 1) **Neighbourhood Engagement**: Final Report to Council presented June 16 (after a two-year development process)
- 2) **False Creek Flats Recommendations**, presented orally to Council on September 20
- 3) **21 Places for the 21st Century**: Finalists' Presentations to the public on April 15 and to various other civic bodies May to November 2005 including:
 - Vancouver Parks Board
 - Vancouver School Board
 - Vancouver Heritage Commission
 - Vancouver Public Art Committee
 - TransLink staff and managers
 - Southeast False Creek Technical Committee
 - Vancouver City Planning Commission

4) **Small Footprints, Big Steps**, report on Laneways and Small lot housing in Vancouver, September 2005.

EMERGING ISSUES AND PRIORITIES FOR 2006

For 2006 our anticipated priorities include:

- the continuation of work with affordable and innovative housing, perhaps with a major public forum, and the possible consideration of a proposal to build a prototype small-homes complex
- the continuation of our involvement, with staff, on the next round of planning for the False Creek Flats
- a lead role in the Neighborhood Engagement Task Force working with Council
- other topics that Council would like us to address.

When our new members are appointed in the New Year, we will hold a work planning session to set out our specific plans for 2006. Emerging topics of interest to current members include:

- economic development integrated into land use planning
- involvement in the City's review of commercial and office land use which may be "squeezed out" by residential development
- barriers to innovation in housing, especially affordable and infill forms and urban design, including those created by City policies and procedures.

We invite Councillors to provide the Commission with comments on our past work and any long-range planning issues Council would like us to address in the coming year.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing information is presented to Vancouver City Council for information.

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APPENDIX A:

Mr. Richard Balfour	Balfour Architecture
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Ms. Rita Chudnovsky	
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Ms. Leslie Dickout	Sustainable Communities Initiative
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Ms Marta Farevaag	Phillips Farevaag Smalenberg Principal
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Ms Eileen Keenan	Acton Ostry Architects
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Mr. Tom Laviolette	PHS Community Services Society
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Mr. Marc Lee	BC Centre for Policy Alternatives
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Ms. Linda Mix	
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Ray Straatsma	Design Centre for Sustainability (UBC)
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Mr. Robert Williams	VanCity Capital Corp.
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Mr. Glenn Young	IMI International Millwork Industries (Canada) Inc.
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Sam Sullivan	City Council
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Jim Green	City Council
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Kevin Millsip	School Board
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Anita Romaniuk	Parks Board
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Robert Buller	Commission Manager
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