



Vancouver City Planning Commission

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MEMORANDUM

October 12, 2011

TO: Mayor and Council

CC Penny Ballem, City Manager
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting Director, Council Operations
Mairi Welman, Director, Corporate Communications

FROM: Vancouver City Planning Commission

SUBJECT: Vancouver City Planning Commission - Report of Activities for the Period 2009 to 2011

PURPOSE

To provide Vancouver City Council with a report on the activities of the Vancouver City Planning Commission for the period 2009-2011.

SUMMARY

The Commission carried out a work plan that was developed during the first year of its term and implemented over the balance of its three-year term. The major initiative of the work plan was the *A Sustainable City of Sustainable Neighbourhoods* initiative. The Commission also provided comment to Council on three issues, provided feedback to staff on numerous planning initiatives, examined a number of topics in committees, and conducted a review of its internal processes.

BACKGROUND

The Vancouver City Planning Commission (the 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 (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;
 - (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. In the past, this has usually been an annual report. However, since the recent change in the structure of the Commission altering the alignment of Commissioner terms, it has proved more appropriate to make one comprehensive report at the conclusion of the three-year cycle when the terms of all Commissioners end.

DISCUSSION

1. WORK PLAN REPORT

1.1 Work Plan Development

As only two of the Commission members at the outset of this Council's term had continuing Commission experience, the incoming group held a knowledge-sharing and capacity building event in June 2009 with over 30 past Commissioners, along with past and present senior planning staff and Council liaisons. The event focused primarily on the "top issues and priorities as the city looks to its future, and how is the Commission well positioned to address them." The learning outcomes from this event formed the basis for the Commission's work plan.

1.2 Work Plan Topics

Following extensive consultations and committee work, the work plan topics below were selected and presented to Council on June 24, 2010.¹

1.2.1 A Sustainable City of Sustainable Neighbourhoods

This initiative involving consultation with neighbourhood and community organizations was the subject of a separate report² and presentation³ to Council on July 28, 2011. Three points are reiterated here:

1.2.1.1 Integrated Sustainability Framework

At the conclusion of the Commission's early consultations on priority issues for the future, there was broad consensus on the idea that a sustainability perspective should

¹ <http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20100624/documents/penv1.pdf>

² <http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20110728/documents/penv1a-SustainableCityofSustainableNeighbourhoodsProject.pdf>

³ <http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20110728/documents/penv1a-Presentation.pdf>

underpin City's future planning. This project originated in an exploration of the City's existing sustainability-related policies, and the recognition that, in spite of an abundance of sustainability-related policies and plans, there is not an integrated framework that could be helpful in the implementation of these high-level policies on the ground. This was acknowledged in the *Greenest City Vancouver 2020* report, recommending the need for an "over-arching vision and structure" for policy and decision making within an integrated plan to achieve the sustainability goals."⁴ Although this project focused on neighbourhoods, the need for an integrated sustainability framework requires further attention.

1.2.1.2 A City of Neighbourhoods

The Commission's project focus on neighbourhoods was based on the belief that the active collaboration of the neighbourhoods is essential if a shift to consistently sustainable practices is to be introduced successfully. The new city-wide sustainability policies referred to in the Commission's earlier reports are seen as critical to Vancouver's future as a green, economically prosperous and socially inclusive city. They have been led by Council and developed by staff in parallel with neighbourhood-based planning and implementation processes. Although they are consistent with CityPlan directions, they were introduced without broad city-wide consultation on the underlying principles. As a result, the implications of some of these new policies for existing neighbourhood visions and plans have not been explored at the grassroots level. The Commission's project reported on the eagerness at the neighbourhood level to participate in this exploration.

1.2.1.3 Neighbourhood Perspectives - building community

The Commission's report on the project highlights numerous important themes and ideas providing neighbourhood perspectives on sustainability as a neighbourhood and city-wide priority. The theme given the most emphasis was the importance of neighbourhood-based relationships and neighbourhood-initiated processes to creating a culture of sustainable practices in the city. As the City moves ahead with the sustainability agenda, it is important to recognize the capacity and passion for creative ideas and solutions that exists at the grassroots level.

1.2.2 False Creek Flats

The Commission was invited to participate in an initiative of the Vancouver Economic Development Commission to consider directions for the False Creek Flats. This initiative did not proceed, however the Commission recognizes the importance of these lands to a vision for a prosperous and sustainable city with a strong economic core.

⁴<http://vancouver.ca/greeneconomy/PDF/Vancouver2020-ABrightGreenFuture.pdf>, page 25

1.2.3 Internal Review

The Commission set out to focus on three areas for its internal review into governance and operations to identify how the Commission can better provide Council with valuable comment and support in fulfillment of its mandate.

1.2.3.1 Commissioner Term Appointments

The Commission has conducted a review of the impact of the bylaw change in 2006 and prepared a draft report for submission next year.

1.2.3.2 City Sustainability Policies - backgrounder

The Commission reviewed the City's extensive list of sustainability-related policies in the context of carrying the *A Sustainable City of Sustainable Neighbourhoods* project. This background work and notes will be available to future Commissioners.

1.2.3.3 Gathering Informed Perspectives - pilot

The Commission set out to develop a process using online and other tools by which the Commission can bring the informed perspectives of Vancouver's community, business and urban thought leaders into its discussions in the course of developing its own comments on city issues. The Commission has a pilot project underway on the topic of the proposed city-wide physical plan and will publish the outcomes in early December. A website to support this outreach work has recently been given a soft launch.⁵

2. COMMENT TO COUNCIL ON CURRENT TOPICS

The Commission provided written comment to Council on three current topics:

- Historic Area Height Review
- Development Cost Levy Inflationary Adjustment
- Casino Expansion

3. COMMISSION SERVICE WITH 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.

⁵ <http://www.vancouverplanning.ca/>

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:

- Historic Area Height Review
- Downtown Capacity and View Corridors Study
- Northeast False Creek High Level Review
- Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy
- Development Cost Levy Inflationary Adjustment
- UBC Line Rapid Transit Study (Phases 1 and 2)
- Georgia Viaducts and Eastern Core Strategy

5. COMMITTEE WORK AND SPECIAL INITIATIVES

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:

- Urban design in Vancouver (UDP)*
- East Fraser Lands development
- Burrard Inlet Pedestrian/Cyclist bridge
- Future of streetcars for Vancouver*
- Olympics Transportation Plan*
- False Creek Flats
- Hastings Park Visioning*
- UBC Urban Design Studios - Metropolitan Core & 2050 and beyond
- Vancouver Economic Overview (VDEC)*
- Social Housing - Olympic Legacy
- Short Term Incentives for Rental Housing (STIR)*
- City Housing Policy and Rental Housing Strategy*
- City Social Indicators and Trends Report*
- Greenest City Initiative and Talk Green To Us*
- Transportation Plan Update and Pedestrian Planning*
- Vancouver Food Policy Council - overview and issues*
- Historic Area Height Review and Chinatown Revitalization*
- Casino expansion
- Cambie Corridor
- Bartholomew Plan Digital Archive
- Next Community Plans workshops
- Park Board Strategic Planning Forum
- City-wide physical land use plan

*Presentations received from staff (City or civic agency)

6. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

While the Commission has a number of priority issues for further work, given the uncertainty about the composition of the Commission next year, the Commission is not in a position to outline a future work plan at this time. Development of the work plan will be the first task of the 2012 Commissioners.

7. COMMISSIONERS

This report is submitted by the following Commissioners currently serving as members, all of whose terms expire on December 5, 2011:

Celena Benndorf
Elizabeth Bowker
Eileen Keenan, Past Chair
Peter Greenwell, Chair
Karenn Krangle
Ray Lam
Arno Matis
Phil Mondor [Commission appointee]
Jennifer Natland, Vice-Chair
Jeff Rotin
Laura Stannard
John Weldon [Commission appointee]
Jiang Zhu

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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