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MEMORANDUM

March 8, 2018

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Sadhu Johnston, City Manager
Janice MacKenzie, City Clerk

FROM: Vancouver City Planning Commission

SUBJECT: Milestones 2017: Year in Review

On February 5, 2018, the Vancouver City Planning Commission (VCPC) hosted [Milestones 2017](#), our third annual Year in Review forum at SFU's Djavad Mowafaghian World Art Centre. The forum, part of the VCPC's Chronology Project, contributes to the commission's community engagement efforts, particularly reaching out to local urban thinkers, neighbourhood groups and others involved in planning and development in the city.

At the well-attended forum, a dynamic panel of four prominent urbanists explored the potential impact of 2017 policies, events and decisions that might transform the city. The forum was the culminating event in a series of activities undertaken to determine the emerging milestones of 2017, including a brainstorming workshop with engaged urban thinkers, and a survey circulated to planning and development professionals, academics, advocates and community members.

Forum Highlights

The four panellists included former city councillor Gordon Price, Chinatown advocate and blogger Melody Ma, Generation Squeeze founder Paul Kershaw, and Vancouver architect Ouri Scott. Sandra Singh, Chief Librarian at the Vancouver Public Library, served as moderator of the discussion.

According to the panellists, in 2017 Vancouver began talking differently about its most pressing problems. Price said the city figured out how to have difficult conversations without a breakdown in civility. Kershaw said the dialogue in Vancouver on housing in 2017 offered a glimmer of hope, laying the groundwork for change. By his assessment, Vancouver now has the boldest housing strategy of any city in the country. Panellists noted that Vancouver also began to look at new housing proposals and development plans with a simple question in mind: housing for whom? Some panellists felt that recently built condominiums and towers were not designed for families or for local residents.

Everyone agreed that the decision by the Development Permit Board to turn down the application for a proposed development at 105 Keefer Street was a milestone, but not everyone saw the same significance in the decision. Ma considered the decision as an indication that developers would now be required to pay more attention to neighbourhoods, heritage and design standards. But Price was concerned about the challenge to the legitimacy of the Development Permit Board. Insisting that such a decision was political, Price maintained that the decision to turn down the development permit should have been made by City Council, not a board of bureaucrats. Kershaw drew a lesson on mobilizing protest, saying the decision illustrates how politics responds to those who organize and show up.

Looking back 30 years from now, the most significant city council decision in 2017 may be the approval of plans and zoning for the False Creek Flats, Scott contended. Designating an innovation district in the city has focused the discussion of what it means to have an innovation economy, added Ma. Scott challenged the boundaries of the definition of a planning and development milestone, insisting that the response to the fentanyl crisis should be recognized in the Chronology. She questioned why overdose and crisis centres as well as safe disposal sites for needles were not more widely distributed across the city. Price suggested that urban planners should not take the lead in developing fentanyl strategy. However Kershaw said the fentanyl crisis is a health issue with a response that starts with city services (fire, police and emergency social services) and not medical care.

Next Steps

Since the panel discussion, the VCPC's Chronology Committee decided to retain all 15 proposed milestones. These will be reviewed again in five years: Under the Committee's established process, emerging milestones are given a chance to pass the test of time before they are added permanently to the online [Chronology of Planning and Development in Vancouver](#). In a similar fashion, the Chronology Committee recently reviewed [2012 milestones](#) and identified those that will be added to the online chronology.

About the Chronology Project

The Chronology Project is a VCPC initiative to maintain an authoritative, comprehensive and publicly accessible online chronology of milestones in planning and development in Vancouver from the time of first habitation. The VCPC created the chronology as a tool to be used by those involved in public debate, as well as to educators, students and urban enthusiasts. It is intended to enable discussion of contemporary issues to be grounded in an understanding of the legacies of the past.

APPENDIX

The following [fifteen emerging milestones](#) were identified as potentially significant planning and development events of 2017 in Vancouver:

- Burrard Bridge upgraded for all road users
- City changes Chinatown policy to moderate development
- City engineer's authority expanded for first time since 1944
- Collaborative planning process starts for False Creek South neighbourhood
- Development Permit Board turns down an application for first time
- Embracing resilience as over-arching policy
- Emily Carr University's departure from Granville Island opens door for a renewed vision
- False Creek Flats policy initiative and rezoning
- Incentives for retention of character homes
- Increased housing choices in single-family zones
- New policy on parking in West End reflects change in attitude to parking
- New Vancouver Housing Strategy approved
- Short term rental accommodation regulations
- Temporary modular shelter housing begins
- Vancouver Art Gallery North Plaza Rebuilt

In addition to the above shortlist of emerging milestones, several other planning and development activities from 2017 were considered. These activities were determined to be covered in previous years, still in process, or not specifically related to planning and development.

- *Adding "+" to Canada 150.* This was identified as part of a 2016 emerging milestone.
- *Arbutus Greenway.* This was identified as a 2016 emerging milestone.
- *Council Approves Women's Equity Strategy.* This was passed in January 2018; it will be considered a 2018 emerging milestone.
- *Heather Streets Lands redevelopment.* This was identified as part of an emerging 2014 milestone.
- *Houses worth over \$1M now the norm in Lower Mainland.* This was included as a 2015 milestone.
- *Marijuana dispensaries.* Provincial regulations issued in 2015
- *New Emily Carr University of Art + Design campus.* This was part of the 2015 False Creek Flats emerging milestone.
- *Northeast False Creek Plan and St Paul's relocation.* These were identified as 2015 emerging milestone.
- *Park Board amends Park Control bylaw governing cetaceans.* This was not considered to be directly related to planning or development.
- *Places for People Downtown consultations.* Still underway in 2017. Will review for consideration as a 2018 emerging milestone.
- *Planning for Millennium Line Broadway Extension.* This was identified as a 2012 milestone. We will consider recent activities for inclusion in future years.
- *Renaming Siwash Rock.* A final decision was not made in 2017. Will review for consideration as a 2018 emerging milestone.
- *Seaside Greenway Completion.* This was substantially completed in 2016.

- *Small businesses threatened by increasing property rent and tax burden.* We will monitor for future inclusion.
- *TransLink's Transit Fare Review.* Still in progress; will consider for inclusion in future years.
- *Vacant home tax, Community Land Trust, Temporary Modular Housing.* These were identified as an emerging 2016 milestone.
- *VanPlay Community Dialogue.* Still underway.
- *VanSplash Aquatics Strategy.* Update of an existing plan
- *YVR 2037 Master Plan.* Not a City of Vancouver decision or policy.