

## MEMORANDUM

May 6, 2019

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Sadhu Johnston, City Manager  
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk

FROM: Vancouver City Planning Commission

SUBJECT: 2018 A City for All Summit

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### Background

The Vancouver City Planning Commission (VCPC) is mandated to advise the Mayor and Council on planning and development matters affecting the city's future. Following the United Nations' adoption of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) in 2016, VCPC embarked on a strategic plan to address five issues arising from the NUA. We chose Resiliency as the umbrella goal and concentrated further efforts in four areas: Engagement for Real, A City for All, The Design of Places and Spaces, and Financing the Public Good.

VCPC focused on Engagement for Real in 2016 particularly the role and value of Citizen Advisory Boards. In October 2017, in partnership with SFU's Public Square and the 100 Resilient Cities Office, VCPC hosted a one day Summit on Shaping Resiliency: A Summit on Resiliency and Vancouver's Future. The report is available at: <http://vancouverplanning.ca/a-city-for-all/summit-report/>

A Summit on A City for All was held in December 2018. The process design came from an April planning workshop with over 50 representatives from community groups and City Advisory Committees. The Steering Committee was half from VCPC and half from these committees and community groups. In preparation for the Summit we hosted larger monthly gatherings with partners groups. We hired CityHive, a social enterprise, to handle logistics and assist with the program. To supplement our own budget we raised funding from the Vancouver Foundation, the City of Vancouver, Modus, WSP, the Real Estate Foundation of BC and Jordan Cook Associates.

### Goal

The goal of the City for All Summit was to improve Vancouver's Resiliency by building our social capacity to respond to shocks and stresses. 228 people participated, representing organizations from across the city (65% were women). This was a peer-to-peer event, with participants

sharing their knowledge and experiences in 17 roundtables on specific topics, and two tables on mixed topics. The City of Vancouver covered all the registration fees, and with the help of the other sponsors, financial support was available to cover childcare, transportation and honoraria for anyone who otherwise would not have been able to attend the entire day. The Summit was oversubscribed by 40 people. It was held at the Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre in Yaletown.

Rather than coming to agreement on one big set of recommendations, participants explored topics in depth, sharing their experiences in roundtables and, at the end of the day, identifying their key findings and recommendations. At the closing session each roundtable presented their top three priorities to the other groups and to senior City staff and decision makers, VCPC compiled the results in a workbook that is intended to serve as a resource to participants as well as senior staff and Council. The workbook includes each roundtable's key findings and recommendations and information on how to contact the groups participating in the discussions. Participants had an opportunity to vet the contents of their own group's report in the Workbook. While the format is the same for each group, each roundtable spoke in its own voice.

This VCPC report to Council is Part 1 of the Workbook

### **Highlights of the Findings and Recommendations**

Summit participants reflected the larger group of people and organizations in the City who want to make Vancouver A City for All, including Indigenous, Black and other visible minorities, ethnic and marginalized groups, faith groups, service providers, self-help groups, activists, the LGBTQ2+ community, academics, businesses, social enterprises, youth, and seniors. Social justice issues were front and centre.

The goal of **resiliency**, and the overarching frameworks of **intersectionality** and **reconciliation** permeated the discussions at all of the tables. We were impressed by people's passion and engagement on these issues. The concepts were new to some, and perhaps understood superficially by others, but because each roundtable included Indigenous people, women and others who had experienced multiple kinds of discrimination, the concepts were readily explained and understood.

There was a cluster of recommendation around these issues including:

- The need to foreground Indigenous values.
- The need for staff and community leadership training on intersectionality and reconciliation – first using experiential training to sensitize people and help them understand the truth side of the issue, and then to help them see what, in practical ways, they need to do to change systems, as well as their own discriminatory behavior, to better align their and the City of Vancouver's intentions with their effect on others. The workshops on intersectionality being conducted by Women Transforming Cities were viewed as a good example that could be resourced and used more broadly.
- More specific education about Indigenous values, culture and history is needed, and several groups thought staff should have to attend training, write an exam and be held accountable for applying this knowledge to improve the situation.
- Newcomers to the city need an orientation to Indigenous culture and history, and one specific recommendation was to send an updated version of "FIRST PEOPLES: A Guide for

Newcomers” to all households.

- It was recommended that the City of Vancouver mandate ceremonial spaces in new buildings and places using funds from Community Amenity Contributions.

The issue of **colonization and decolonization** was also a hot topic. Here the Indigenous participants seemed to be ahead of most others, whose reactions and understanding ranged from quiet denial, to white guilt, to sophisticated and sympathetic analyses of the nexus between colonialism, capitalism and paternalism. Participants noted that urban Indigenous peoples are refugees of colonialism.

Several recommendations were advanced to address these issues, including;

- Create an Indigenous Commission rather than just an advisory committee. Presumably this would be established by bylaw and have more security of tenure, rotating terms, staff and budget.
- Expand the size and responsibilities of staff dealing with Indigenous affairs, include for example establishing a Department of Indigenous Affairs. One person is not enough.
- Get resources to the people on the ground who are already doing this work. Empower communities and allies to co-create initiatives.
- Establish a permanent Indigenous Ombudsperson.
- Adopt an Indigenous Charter and rewrite the Vancouver Charter to address inequities with Indigenous peoples.

**Inclusion, belonging and engagement** were roundtable topics that overlapped significantly with the **equity** table topics. There was recognition that diversity without inclusion will create social problems, whereas diversity with inclusion can build social capacity and strengthen resiliency.

Highlights of the recommendations about belonging and equity include:

- Focus on empowering neighbourhoods and create a Department of Neighbourhoods mandated to support local initiatives, encouraging community and peer approaches versus traditional professional services, dealing with the whole person rather than specific problems, and improving the safety of spaces.
- Implement the Social Isolation and Loneliness Amongst Seniors Report
- Affordability writ large is the biggest issue to be addressed to improve equity. Affordable housing should be the priority.
- Support a broader range of housing types, using a social connection lens.
- Create an umbrella service or navigation team of about 10 people to help people navigate health and mental health systems.
- Meet basic needs: subsidized housing and education; free or pay-what-you -can counseling;

improve food security.

- Strengthen food security and apply the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Principles (see page 44 of Part 2).
- Strengthen support for affordable child-care, employment, and training, potentially using city's licensing and tax breaks powers.
- Learn from other cities and countries.

Resiliency, reconciliation, intersectionality, belonging and equity are manifest in the physical form of the places and spaces in our city. Participants were not only supportive of a new city-wide plan they want to be active participants. More than other cities, Vancouver has a long history of civic engagement in planning, a wealth of community groups and organization that are broadly experienced in such engagement, and a large community of professionals with expertise in participatory research and design. They want to participate as co-designers, all the way from the neighbourhood to the city-wide level. This will require inventing new forms of participation to replace or supplement traditional consultations and open houses. Officials and staff will have to share power and improve transparency if they are to come close to meeting the appetite and expectations of the groups at the Summit.

Some of the specific recommendations include:

- Create more spaces for informal connections.
- Re-envision Vancouver using a “Longhouse” lens. Create a web of longhouses within the city as welcoming community spaces designed by indigenous people of the longhouse traditions.
- Enhance the use of art and creativity, adding a therapeutic component, providing public studios for artistic purposes similar to a library.
- Improve safety by: adding signs (flags or stickers outside places where people are welcome and feel safe); providing training programs for businesses and community facilities on improving safety; providing free transportation for people under the influence of drugs or alcohol; providing a trained civilian presence downtown on weekends; providing opportunities for people to name their aggressor when they have been harmed.
- Challenge and change the paradigm of housing as a commodity through policy and regulations, incentives and disincentives.
- Allow for pilot projects, experimental use of space, and adaptable space with a plurality of uses. Allow for failures, and build ways to bring successful initiatives to scale.

Please see [Part 2 of the Workbook](#) for the detailed recommendations from all 19 roundtables.

## Conclusions

In conclusion VCPC would like to share some of our learning about ourselves as the result of the Summit and the process leading up to it.

We believe that over the past three years VCPC has come a long way from being a peripheral, reactive organization undertaking one-off events and research, to being proactive and strategic in our activities. Our success has been in large part due to engaging with the other City of Vancouver Advisory Committees. In many ways this year's Summit was a joint project. We would never have been able to tackle topics such as reconciliation, colonization, and community empowerment, nor bring so many Indigenous groups to the Summit without the real help of the Urban Indigenous Peoples Advisory Committee. The same is true for the Seniors Committees, the Women's Advisory Committee, the Persons with Disabilities Committee and many others.

Like VCPC each committee is a network of related groups or individuals committed to the challenge assigned to them. Although they might seem to be single-issue committees, by virtue of the nature of their challenges they have enormous expertise that can enrich one another. The silos of departments, budgets, staff assignments and committee mandates hamper building synergy between our efforts. We cannot stress enough, the value of increasing the conversations between advisory groups.

The breadth of our mandate requires an integrated and collaborative approach. Our success in working over the past few years with specific Advisory Committees led to a remarkably successful Summit. We will be exploring ways to continue our relationships with these groups perhaps by establishing a VCPC liaison committee charged with encouraging collaboration between VCPC and key advisory committees, particularly the Urban Indigenous Peoples Advisory Committee, the Women's Advisory Committee, the Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee, the Seniors Advisory Committee, the Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee, and the Children, Youth and Families Advisory Committee. Whether these committees will be interested in working with us will, of course, be up to them to decide.

To increase our knowledge and understanding of Indigenous issues and planning principles, going forward, the VCPC will be exploring engaging an Indigenous Elder, to teach, and advise us on our path to reconciliation. We will continue our efforts to increase the diversity of our membership, and seek funding to cover child-care, transportation and honorariums for those who otherwise might not be able to participate with us.

The Workbook produced by VCPC and participants from the 2018 Summit is [Part 2](#) of this report. We hope you will find it useful in identifying what groups are already doing to create *A City for All*, and what they need to progress further.

Respectfully submitted,

Nola Kate Seymoar, Chair,  
on behalf of the Vancouver City Planning Commission