



Vancouver

Title of the Initiative	Visionary Vancouver: Creating a Welcoming and Sustainable Place for All
Initiative Duration	2009-2020
Submitted by	Wendy Au, Deputy City Manager, City of Vancouver
Comments by the Jury	<p>The “Greenest City 2020” initiative provides an inspirational vision and ambition with a practical focus, and strong commitment to citizen and business engagement. It builds on the city’s long track record in sustainability, but orienting its policies and practical solutions to serve future generations. It has three framework themes – Zero Carbon, Zero Waste, and Healthy Eco-systems.</p> <p>The new Village built for the 2010 Winter Olympics integrated a range of state of art green technologies including solar heat, passive energy design, electric vehicle infrastructure etc. From this experience, the city is developing higher standards in new areas. The Village was the first complete community certified to LEED Platinum standard. It works with the university and other partners. For the city’s own operations, 4 key priorities now are waste reduction and re-use, local food procurement, and achievement of carbon-neutral operations.</p> <p>The Greenest City 2020 Initiative has ten broad but integrated goals which underpin all municipal policy work within the framework of a clear and coherent vision and backed by a deep commitment and capacity to implement innovative sustainability policies and measures. It compliments other very impressive initiatives on social inclusion and economic development.</p>

Vancouver has a population of 600,000 people and covers a land area of 114 sq km.

Visionary Vancouver: Creating a Welcoming and Sustainable Place for All

Background Information

The City of Vancouver is acknowledged worldwide for its innovative city building. From an early refusal to undertake typical mid-century urban infrastructure projects such as, inner-city freeways and disruptive large-scale urban renewal of existing neighbourhoods, Vancouver has developed a unique discretionary system for development that allows City Council and staff to work to continuously improve the transportation system, reduce waste, conserve water, and support neighbourhood sustainability and affordability.

In late 1988, the city launched one of the first-ever task forces in the world to examine the impact of atmospheric change on municipal planning and activities. The result was the June 1990 release of *Clouds of Change*, a report that described the goals set by Vancouver's Task Force on Atmospheric Change.

In 2003, the city launched the Cool Vancouver Task Force. Its recommendations led to the creation of two 2005 action plans: one to reduce emissions from municipal operations and a second aimed at reducing community-wide emissions.

With this solid foundation, the City of Vancouver launched its Greenest City Initiative in February 2009 involving all levels of city government, citizens and business in a variety of initiatives, forums and outreach programs. Substantive green requirements for new buildings, increasing the diversity of housing, and evolving a flexible planning process, are just a few of the initial steps set to ensure that Vancouver becomes the greenest city in the world by 2020.

In 2011, the City launched the Mayor's Task Force on Housing Affordabil-

ity a major initiative to ensure Vancouver remains an affordable city for all. The Task Force builds on the City's record of facilitating innovative housing solutions throughout the city to ensure that there are no "differentiated enclaves" but a city for everyone.

Goals of the Initiative

Vancouver's continued focus on sustainable development is exemplified in the development of the Village on the south east shore of False Creek. Developed as a mix of medium and low rise buildings with 1,100 market and non-market homes, offices, retail and service uses, the Village hosted the athletes of the 2010 Winter Olympics.

A key component of the development was the full integration of green technologies and environmental strategies including, solar heat, passive energy design, a unique neighbourhood energy utility, grey water systems, infrastructure for electric vehicles and cutting edge wetlands habitat creation. As in earlier planning, most of these initiatives piloted in the Village have since been translated into city-wide policy and programs. The Village was the first major complete community certified to the LEED Platinum standard.

From the Village experience, the City has seen the development industry reach for higher targets than mandated with many new projects achieving LEED Platinum.

To further the agenda and bring new thinking to the City, a number of related initiatives are underway that include:

- the University of British Columbia's innovative summer internship program which sponsors 10 UBC graduate students to work on sustainability projects with the City of Vancouver. Graduate students are partnered with a city team and a mentor to investigate and implement one of 10 projects identified under Vancouver's Greenest City 2020 Action Plan.

- the Vancouver Foundation partnership with the City of Vancouver to offer grants up to \$50,000 for ideas to help Vancouver meet its 2020 goals.

- and for existing homeowners there is a Home Energy Loan Program to

promote and assist in home energy upgrades.

For the City of Vancouver operations there are four high-priority actions that have been identified:

- Plan and implement a comprehensive corporate waste reduction and diversion program for all City facilities.
- Develop a procurement policy and practice that supports the purchase and use of local food in
 - City-run facilities, including community centres and Park Board restaurants and concessions.
 - Look for opportunities to green community events that the City runs, sponsors, and permits.
 - Plan and implement a program to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as fossil fuel use in City-run buildings and vehicles, and achieve carbon-neutral operations.

For the Housing Task Force, public involvement through on line forums such as Talk Housing and recent ideas competition, ReThink: Housing have generated an extraordinary range of ideas on how new housing might be integrated into the existing city fabric.

Innovation for the Initiative

The Greenest City Initiative is the key component in the ongoing evolution of the City of Vancouver's planning and development policies first set in the early 1970s. Those policies set the foundation on which the key principles of livability, inclusiveness, density and sustainability were built upon.

Vancouver has been acknowledged as North America's leader in developing compact, mixed-use communities and there are few cities in the world where density has been utilized so successfully to achieve a livable and sustainable environment. For the city, that means Green House Gas (GHG) emissions have been reduced to 1990 levels and continue to fall, in fact Vancouver has the lowest per capita GHG emissions of any major city in North America. Car journeys within the city continue to decline while transit use has risen by 9% each year

for 2010, 2011 and 2012, one of the largest increases of any city in North America, and bicycle ridership and walking are at all time highs.

The Greenest City Initiative brings a comprehensive focus to the City's ongoing sustainability efforts with three themes; Zero Carbon, Zero Waste and Healthy Eco Systems providing the framework for the plan's implementation.

Vancouver already has one of the greenest building codes in North America where new development must meet a minimum of LEED Gold standard, the City is piloting neighbourhood scale renewable energy projects, innovative densification of neighbourhoods, and with the Mayor's Housing Task Force the City is expanding on its work to ensure Vancouver remains a city for everyone.

Vancouver's innovative housing policies have created unique solutions to housing the disadvantages, families and others in affordable and purpose built facilities. Using a combination of development and conversion fees, leveraging City resources such as property and working with other levels of government Vancouver has been able to replace ageing single room occupancy hotels with new purpose-built accommodation and provide new housing for families. In 2012, over 1400 new units of housing for the hard to house will have been completed under a unique agreement with senior levels of government which forgoes property taxes in perpetuity as long as the resulting buildings remain non-market.

The Mayor's Task Force role is "to examine conditions that exist in Vancouver which may act as barriers to the creation of affordable housing and the steps necessary to protect existing affordable housing, and to identify opportunities for increasing affordable housing."

Benefit to Other Cities

In the past 25 years Vancouver has been acknowledged as North America's leader in developing compact, mixed-use communities and there are few cities in the world where well-designed density and mixed-use has been utilized so successfully to achieve a highly livable and sustainable environment.

Building on the quarter century of innovative planning, Vancouver approved the EcoDensity program in 2008 to guide the city in becoming a "more

ecologically sustainable, affordable, and livable city of neighbourhoods.” The approved EcoDensity Charter commits the City to creating a greener, denser city pattern through “greater densities smartly and strategically in land-use patterns, locations and designs where carbon footprint improvements and environmental gains are highest... and where affordability and livability are also fostered.”

Building on these achievements Vancouver launched the Greenest City 2020 initiative in 2009 with 10 goals to address three larger areas of focus: carbon, waste, and ecosystems.

1. Green Economy
2. Climate Leadership
3. Green Buildings
4. Green Mobility
5. Zero Waste
6. Easy Access to Nature
7. Lighter Footprint
8. Clean Water
9. Clean Air
10. Local Food

With its adoption by Vancouver City Council the Greenest City 2020 action plan has become the foundation for all municipal policy work.

Two thousand people attended the public event that launched the Greenest City 2020 plan. By making use of online and social media support to spread the word, the city engaged more than 35,000 people in web-based and face-to-face activities. At least 9,500 citizens had deep involvement in the action plan process.

Vancouver will continue to be at the fore-front of innovative planning as it understands that the city will always be a popular destination and there will always be pressure on the affordability of housing and the environment. However by being creative with existing resources, leveraging a variety opportunities and taking chances with alternative forms of accommodation, the Vancouver is certainly striving to maintain a vibrant, sustainable and socially diverse city. In other words, a city for everyone.
