

2015

## YEAR IN REVIEW

Almost year ago, NRU sat down with then-head planner **Brian Jackson**, who talked about Metro Vancouver's transportation plebiscite and the future of the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts as the major issues of 2015.

Now Jackson is gone, along with city manager **Penny Ballem**, and the transit plebiscite failed, but the decision to demolish the viaducts was made, certainly council's major decision of the year, and probably the biggest in decades.

NRU had also called 2014 the year of the lawsuit against the city, and the effect of one such suit shook city hall at the beginning of 2015 — at least for a short time.

A B.C. Supreme Court judge's decision in January broadsided the city, making it review a public-hearing procedure and its community engagement and notification policies. And then the appeal court reversed that decision.

That was the Brenhill case, in which the judge ordered a new public hearing and new permit-board review for two



Kings Mill Walk, North Vancouver.

NRU PHOTO

projects across the street from each other in Yaletown after a residents' group argued that the city had not provided enough public information.

The first part of the year was consumed by the unsuccessful efforts of the city, the region and various stakeholder and other groups to raise support for plebiscite on a proposed 0.5

per cent regional sales tax increase to pay for transportation improvements, including a subway under Broadway and light rail in Surrey.

But the fall's federal election results saw new optimism on that front when Liberal leader, now Prime Minister, **Justin Trudeau** promised more funds for infrastructure.

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### Little Mountain

Scheme needs more work, UDP says

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### Langara Gardens

Redevelopment scheme hangs on 'good bones'

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### HAPPY HOLIDAYS

From Novae Res Urbis Vancouver

# UPCOMING DATES

**DECEMBER 28**

Vancouver heritage commission, 11 a.m.

**JANUARY 11**

Development permit board, 3 p.m.

**JANUARY 13**

Vancouver city planning commission, 12:15

Urban design panel, 4 p.m.

**JANUARY 19**

Vancouver city council, 9:30 a.m.

Public hearing, 6 p.m.

**JANUARY 20**

Vancouver city council planning, transportation and environment committee, 9:30 a.m.

**JANUARY 25**

Development permit board, 3 p.m.

**JANUARY 27**

Vancouver city planning commission, 12:15

Urban design panel, 4 p.m.

**JANUARY 29**

Metro Vancouver board, 9 a.m.

**FEBRUARY 2**

Vancouver city council, 9:30 a.m.

**FEBRUARY 3**

Vancouver city council finance and services committee, 9:30 a.m.

**FEBRUARY 8**

Development permit board, 3 p.m.

**FEBRUARY 10**

Vancouver city planning commission, 12:15



# VANCOUVER BRIEFS

Development permit board

Vancouver’s development permit board last week approved two development applications for a combined project with condo building aimed at seniors and church annex despite protests from Dunbar residents that it is too tall and is being “parachuted into a single-family area.

Representatives from the **Dunbar Residents Association** also said the city’s report on the project at Balaclava and 41st was only made public three days before the meeting and did not allow them enough time to read it thoroughly.

Although the board approved the project, its members — senior city staff — agreed that a better effort should be made to get reports out earlier.

“I do think we need to strive to have a longer lead time to get our pages out,” city engineer **Jerry**

**Dobrovolny** said.

**Rositch Hemphill Architects’** development application is for a five-storey, 76-unit residential building, along with an application for a relocated annex to adjacent Knox United Church, which will contain a fellowship centre, community hall and preschool.

Architect **Keith Hemphill** said the building’s larger suites would allow seniors to downsize in their own neighbourhood.

He also noted that the site is sloped, necessitating a fifth storey at one point.

Development planner **Sailen Black** said the building is still consistent with the height approved at rezoning.

Urbanarium

Should all neighbourhoods be open to densification?

The **Vancouver Urbanarium Society** explores the topic with the first of its City Debates

Jan. 20 at the Museum of Vancouver. Two teams of two people will debate how and where Vancouver and the region will accommodate increased population and whether any areas should be off limits to densification. Where do issues of fairness, democracy, ecology and community preservation come in?

On the pro side will be architect **Joyce Drohan**, director of urban design at **Perkins + Will Canada**, and former city planning director **Brent Toderian**, now a planning consultant.

The con side will be represented by **Michael Goldberg**, professor emeritus at UBC’s Sauder School of Business and chair of **Surrey Development Corp.**, and former Vancouver mayor and now MLA **Sam Sullivan**.

Moderator is journalist **David Beers**.

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## Urban design panel

# LITTLE MOUNTAIN 'NEEDS SENSE OF PLACE'

**IBI Group's** rezoning application for the 15-acre Little Mountain site received thumbs-down last week from Vancouver's urban design panel.

Panel members said the building forms did not express a sustainability strategy and did not respond well to the city's strong policy statement for the site, developed in 2012.

"There's a sameness and monotony to it that blocks an ability to create a strong sense of place," **Roger Hughes** said. "Generally, I'd like to see more drama in it to create a sense of place."

"Drill down further into the implications of sustainability in the building form. Bring to the fore what sustainability can mean to placemaking."

Panel chair **Jennifer Marshall** agreed: "I really want to know how the buildings express sustainability."

**Holborn Properties** has applied to rezone the provincially owned site into a mixed-use neighbourhood with up to 1,450 market housing units with another 234 for social housing.

The project on the L-shaped site, bounded by 33rd, Main, 37th and Ontario, includes a new city-owned building for Little Mountain Neighbourhood House, with a 69-space daycare centre and 48 units of affordable housing. The project will also have commercial uses, a park, a community plaza and public open space.

Architect **Martin Bruckner** said some elements of the project were driven by council's policy, focusing on porosity and permeability of the site.

The basic principles of the policy call for a complete, mixed-use community with a variety of housing sizes and typologies, community facilities, retail and service uses, public open space, excellence in urban design and a high degree of sustainability.

Marshall said the project team has the opportunity to "release yourself from some of the drivers that are in the



Rendering of Little Mountain concept looking south from Queen Elizabeth Park.

NRU PHOTO

policy" to create a sustainability plan.

Bruckner said the project team is showing rectilinear building shapes but that there is a lot of opportunity to create variety in the building massing.

But panel member **Ken Larsson**, agreeing with Hughes that the buildings "feel exactly the same," said they were too small and too square.

**Russell Acton** had concerns about building setbacks and materials.

"Stepping back does not produce quality," he said. "The quality materials [tend to] stop at the four-storey level and the Hardie panel and plank start after that."

The panel mostly liked the site layout and landscaping and public-realm schemes developed by **PFS Studio**, particularly a central-spine road and a bioremediation system that would see drain water channelled on the west side. The road, between Ontario and Quebec streets, will run

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# URBAN DESIGN PANEL

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between East 33rd and 36th, exiting on to Main.

Landscape architect **Chris Phillips** said other key elements were a wedge park, a community plaza and community gardens.

He also told the panel that the site contains a number of mature trees and 77 per cent of them are to be retained.

Phillips also said the team hopes city engineering will approve special paving across the site.

Bruckner was not clear on when or whether the site would connect to a district energy system, to the dismay of some panel members.

“I would suggest you go back and look at being more committal on the building envelope,” said **Stuart Hood**, an engineer with an interest in sustainability.

The panel also suggested changes to the distribution of density and changes to building forms around the plaza to improve open space. Panel members also expressed concern about access to daylight.



Model of Langara Gardens currently, with Pearson site at buildout to its left.

## [Langara Gardens: Hard act to follow](#)

Also on the agenda was a non-voting workshop on concepts for the 21-acre Langara Gardens site on Cambie between 54th and 57th, in which the panel was told that what’s already there is difficult to improve on.

Architectural consultant **James Cheng** bluntly said the site, developed in the late 1960s and early ‘70s with high-rise towers and a series of ground-oriented units, has great bones. “The site is unique in Vancouver,” he said. “There isn’t anything like it. It’s a very unique 1960s urbanism.”

Cheng said the property, currently with just 19 per cent site coverage, simply needs some kind of infill, probably to reach about 27 per cent site coverage, but that the park-like setting should remain.

“When we analyzed the site, the biggest lesson is already built,” he said. “Even in 1968, they had the diversity of housing types that planners talk about.

“It’s a humbling experience to find out how good this was.” Hughes commended Cheng on his presentation and added: “The more you build on it, the better it will get.”

Acton added: “What an impressive analysis and set a conclusion that this is great, why fix it.”

City planners are preparing a policy statement on the site,

owned by **Concert Properties** and the **Peterson Group**, to keep it primarily residential, with a central public open space, at least one through road, and improved retail uses.

The site, bounded by 54th, Cambie, 57th and the Churchill secondary school track, consists of all-rental housing in four 18-storey towers (to be retained) and 19 low-rise buildings featuring apartment and townhouse units, for a total of 605 dwelling units.

**Craig Waters**, of Concert, said the intent is not to displace residents in the towers while work is going on, although those buildings will be upgraded.

Planner **Ben Johnson** said basic policy principles include making the site a complete community; respecting existing residents and the “memory” and character of the site; a diversity of housing, a big part of which will be rental units; community connections, including to the Pearson/Dogwood site across 57th, Cambie Park at 54th and surrounding neighbours; and sustainability systems.

Planner **Pat St. Michel** asked the panel to comment on the concept configurations, connectivity of open space, height, massing, built forms and integration with its surroundings.

Cheng presented three similar concept

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# VANCOUVER BRIEFS

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To register: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/city-debate-1-open-all-neighbourhoods-to-densification-tickets-19835569723>

The debate will precede the opening of Urbanarium’s installation at the museum, *Your Future Home: Creating the New Vancouver*, showing 20 future visions of the city, looking at affordable housing, residential density, transportation and public space.

It will be on from Jan. 21 through May 15.

## [New Metro HQ](#)

Metro Vancouver has bought a 29-storey office building in Metrotown from **Ivanhoe Cambridge** for its new headquarters. The regional district paid \$205 million for the year-old Metrotower III and will rent out some of the space to help pay the bills, a release said. Ivanhoe

Cambridge will manage the building for Metro Vancouver.

The regional district plans to sell its two office towers at 4330 Kingsway and 5945 Kathleen Ave., both in Burnaby. [nru](#)

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## VANCOUVER PEOPLE

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The City of Vancouver has appointed **Kathleen Llewellyn-**

**Thomas** as general manager of community services. Previously at the City of Halifax as strategic adviser and director of transportation and public works, Llewellyn-Thomas, a civil engineer, was also commissioner of transportation and community planning in the municipality of York and also served various roles in Toronto.

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# URBAN DESIGN PANEL

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plans for new residential, retail and community uses, heights and density, building forms, sustainability, amenities and public benefits.

Each concept has similar building forms, ranging from three to 20 storeys, with towers of up to 28 storeys, with local-serving retail, a new daycare centre, preservation of significant mature trees and improvements to the Churchill track. A sunken walkway in front of the retail would be brought up to grade, Cheng said.

The concepts differ on the arrangement of buildings and placement of open space, and Cheng wanted panel feedback on a tower-to-park concept versus lower rise closer to a park on the site. Panel members had mixed views on this, although Hughes said it would be interesting to see towers on either side of the landscaping.

Another important difference, Cheng said, is whether the road into the site lines up with the existing road across 57th — in which it would “become like any other street in Vancouver” — or is offset.

Panel members seemed to prefer the offset option.

They also discussed tower forms, how they touch the ground and whether podiums would work, as well as building

heights, retention of open space and the importance of retail uses on the site.

Marshall said the project team is building on both a typology and the topography of the site.

Larsson said the Langara Gardens site is similar to Little Mountain in that the public realm is the driver and that massing and building form “has to catch up” to the ground plane.

But he spoke in favour of the park setting and low site coverage, adding: “I’m looking forward to seeing a memorable and pleasurable walk.”

## [526-548 West King Edward](#)

A third project on last week’s agenda, a rezoning application of a three-parcel site on King Edward near Cambie for a six-storey residential building with four lane townhouses, received unanimous support.

In its second review of **Romses Architecture’s** design, which had been tweaked after calling for design development of the massing, density, landscaping, a breezeway and lane treatment, the panel agreed improvements had been made.

The building is to contain 67 dwelling units, many of them family-sized. [nru](#)

# 2015 IN REVIEW

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Planning began on a number of large sites: Little Mountain, the Oakridge bus barn, False Creek flats, the Joyce station precinct, the third phase of the Cambie Corridor and Langara Gardens, with development soon to start at Pearson/Dogwood, Arbutus Village and Oakridge.

Still to come are planning programs for Jericho and the old RCMP headquarters off 33rd and Cambie.

As well, a controversial development application for a tower by the old CPR station has led to another look at the city's 2009 waterfront hub framework plan.

This past year also saw other coming changes in the city's skyline, with several applications for towers that were a shift — some observers would say a welcome one — from Vancouver's glass high-rises.

And then there was the proposed design for the new Vancouver Art Gallery ....

## 2015 in Review

### JANUARY

#### Brenhill decision

The B.C. Supreme Court strikes down Vancouver city council's rezoning of a downtown site for a 36-storey tower at 508 Helmcken as well as a development permit granted for a related 13-storey social housing building across the street at 1099 Richards, and ordered new hearings. The projects were the result of a land exchange between the city and **Brenhill Developments**, and the judge ruled that the city did not provide enough information for the public.

The city and Brenhill appealed the decision and won in May — but after a new public hearing and permit review had been held.

#### Waterfront tower

A proposal for a striking faceted glass building on the waterfront between two heritage buildings — the old CPR station and The Landing — is widely criticized by the public and not supported by the urban design panel, which felt that the building's configuration did not fit the site.



Faceted tower proposal revives interest in waterfront hub plan.

NRU PHOTO

**Cadillac Fairview's** project, designed by Chicago architects **AS+GG Partnership**, would return to the panel in June for a workshop on conceptual designs, and to a public open house in early December. Meanwhile, the project revived public discussion of the city's 2009 Waterfront Hub framework, meant to encourage development north of the station on the waterfront and an eventual large transportation terminus.

#### Stacked containers

**Atira Women's Resource Society** of the Downtown Eastside proposes a seven-storey social housing project to be made from stacked shipping containers on a tiny 61-by-50-foot site in Strathcona. **Boni Maddison Architects** applied to rezone the site at 420 Hawks for the building with 26 social housing units and an amenity room. The urban design panel subsequently gave the project unanimous support.

#### Beach Towers

The Beach Towers infill redevelopment in the West End gets the okay from the development permit board, but the developer announced later in the year it was not going ahead.

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# 2015 IN REVIEW

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## For the birds

City council adopts a new bird strategy, with building, design and landscape guidelines aimed at protecting birds from collisions with glass, loss of habitat and other urban hazards.

## Arbutus corridor

The B.C. Supreme Court dismisses the City of Vancouver's application for an injunction to stop Canadian Pacific Railway demolishing gardens beside the tracks as it prepares to resume use of the line.

## FEBRUARY

### River District town square

Vancouver's development permit board approves the four projects surrounding the town square in the central area of the new East Fraserlands district in southeast Vancouver. The mixed-use projects, by three different architects and comprising almost 700 dwelling units, are set on two new roads with the town square plaza at the intersection, with commercial and amenity uses facing it.

### Park Royal tower

DIALOG transforms the plan for Larco's two-tower mixed-used project on West Vancouver's old White Spot site at Park Royal into a single tower and a lower "flatiron" building.

### TransLink CEO out

TransLink replaces CEO Ian Jarvis with interim chief officer and former CEO Doug Allen, who remained at the helm until August and a new permanent replacement has not been found. Jarvis has stayed on as an adviser, remaining on full annual salary (\$468,000) until the middle of 2016.

### Bus barn concepts

City planners present three concepts for redevelopment of TransLink's old bus barn site at 41st and Oak into a new, midrise residential district featuring a large park and a variety of housing types. They were later refined into a single concept, but the urban design panel was not impressed.

Council last week approved a policy statement for the site.

## Pearson parcels sold

Vancouver Coastal Health sells two two parcels containing most of the 25-acre Pearson Dogwood site to Onni Group for development. The health authority is keeping 3.2 acres for health and community uses, including a 150-bed residential care home, a health centre, YMCA and a therapeutic pool.

## MARCH

### Heritage plan

The city begins its update of Vancouver's heritage action plan, aimed at updating the city's heritage conservation program and cut down on the demolition of character houses, with a series of open houses. Later in the year, council passed bylaws meant to preserve the character of Shaughnessy and protect older houses.

### False Creek lawsuit fails

The False Creek Residents' Association loses its lawsuit against the City of Vancouver and Concord Pacific over temporary permits granted to operate a condo sales centre on land zoned for a park when a B.C. Supreme Court judge dismissed its petition, which argued that the city did not have the authority to allow such a use on the site.

### City buys land for housing

The City of Vancouver spends almost \$11.5 million for eight properties along Southwest Marine Drive, which will be turned into "affordable rental housing." The lots, which total 34,698 square feet, are to be divided into two projects – each with 50 to 60 units of housing.

### Causeway improvements

The provincial government announces \$7 million in safety improvements to the pedestrian and cycling paths on the Stanley Park causeway. Work begins later in the year.

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## Planning at Fraser-Marine

Planning work begins on commercial site with an “underperforming” motel in southeast Vancouver after receiving a rezoning application for residential, commercial and community uses of 15 to 26 storeys. Staff said the site at 725 Southeast Marine has potential for a new mixed-use development.

## APRIL

### Conflict of interest alleged

A B.C. Supreme Court judge hears two days of arguments on a petition by West End resident and blogger **Randy Helten** and four others claiming that Mayor **Gregor Robertson** and Councillor **Geoff Meggs** were in conflict because they promised members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees that work would not be contracted out. The petitioners asked the court to remove them from office. The judge quickly dismissed the suit.

### Oil spill

About 2,7000 litres of bunker fuel spilled from a freighter off English Bay spread to about 6 km of beachfront along Burrard Inlet, causing the beaches to close. Health advisories were lifted about 10 days later.

### New art school design

**Diamond Schmitt Architects** unveils its plan for the new school for Emily Carr University of Art and Design, a “bisected building” divided into a series of “studio neighbourhoods,” with accents based on the science of colour theory.

### Cambie corridor 3

Vancouver city planners begin work on the third and final phase of the Cambie corridor plan, which focuses on areas east and west of Cambie with a wider range of housing types that are close to transit. Called a “transit-influenced development policy,” phase 3 will involve a transition to neighbourhoods between Oak and Ontario, many still zoned single-family residential.



Model of new Emily Carr University building.

NRU PHOTO

### West Vancouver upper lands

A clustered, village-type community is proposed for Cypress Mountain above the Upper Levels highway in West Vancouver. To be called Cypress Village, the new neighbourhood between Cave and Cypress Creeks would be the main future development in the upper lands, with another possible neighbourhood called Cypress West, between Cypress and Eagle Creeks as a supporting residential community.

### Langara Gardens

Planning begins for Langara Gardens with public open houses on the 21-acre residential site.

Planners, architect **Jim Cheng** and owners **Concert Properties** and the **Peterson Group** worked with city staff to develop three concept plans towards a planning policy statement for the site on Cambie between 54th and 57th, which were presented at the end of the year (see urban design panel story).

### St. Paul's Hospital

The provincial government announces plans to relocate St. Paul's Hospital from Burrard Street in downtown Vancouver to a new 18.5-acre site in the False Creek Flats area near Main and Terminal. The new \$1-billion facility,

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to be operated by Providence Health Care and Vancouver Coastal Health, was described as a campus of medical care, to include residential services for the frail and elderly, a 24/7 integrated care centre staffed by family doctors to divert patients away from emergency departments, mental health and addiction services and research facilities.

The current 1912 heritage-designated, red-brick building on Burrard is expected to be preserved, with the rest of the hospital demolished.

## Davie plaza

The city announces plans to create a permanent pedestrian plaza with public programming on the half block of Bute south of Davie in the West End, with recognition of the area as a hub for the LGBTQ community. Planners and design consultant **PFS Studio** held a series open houses and presented a concept to council Dec. 16, which was approved. The plaza is to be named after community leader **Jim Deva**.

## MAY

### Vacant properties

The City of Vancouver says it will develop a website where residents can report vacant houses and condominiums. Chief housing officer **Mukhtar Latif** told council that the reporting would be used with information from BC Hydro and the 2011 National Household Survey to determine if there is a problem.

### Marijuana dispensaries

The city begins work on amendments to the zoning and bylaw, the Downtown District Official Development Plan and the Downtown Eastside Oppenheimer District Official Development Plan as they relate to retail dealers of medical marijuana with a view to making the dispensaries subject to city zoning and licensing bylaws as any other businesses. Regulations include an annual licence fee of \$30,000, a ban on customers under 18 and minimum distance between stores and near schools and community centres. The proposed amendments drew dozens to a lengthy public hearing but were approved.

### Old post offices

Vancouver city council hears two inquiries about possible rezoning and development of the full-block sites of the two former main post offices downtown. The federal government submitted a rezoning inquiry to redevelop Sinclair Centre at Hastings and Granville with up to one million square feet of office space and a density of 17 to 20 FSR, and **Bentall-Kennedy**, which bought the former main post office at 349 West Georgia in 2013, proposed adapting the building into a mixed-use complex with a public plaza.

### False Creek Flats

The city begins its 18-month planning program for the False Creek flats with an on-site event focusing on the 450-acre area that includes rail yards and industrial uses, along with the Great Northern Way Campus. Planners are looking at current and future uses on the flats with 8,000 jobs, including maintaining the industrial character and route for movement of goods; developing it as a health, technology and innovation centre; enhancing it an arts and cultural precinct; expanding it as a food distribution centre; and creating a public realm plan.

### Joyce-Collingwood precinct

City planners begin a planning review of the area around the Joyce-Collingwood transit station in southeast Vancouver. It is concurrent with TransLink's redevelopment plans for the station and focuses primarily on Joyce Street between Wellington and Crowley and properties fronting the guideway between Joyce and Rupert. Planners are reviewing sites zoned for single-family housing north of Vanness and east of Joyce as a possible transition between houses and larger buildings. Later in the year, residents expressed concern that new development would mean they would be priced out of their neighbourhood.

## JUNE

### Wood high rises

Vancouver architect **Michael Green** enters a scheme for a 35-storey wood-construction building in

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Proposed tower by Kengo Kuma as viewed from lane. NRU PHOTO

the *Réinventer Paris* competition. The mixed-use building, in Paris's Boulevard Pershing in the 17th arrondissement, would include social housing, a hotel, a grocery store and a bus area. Green had already proposed an 18-storey wooden tower at the University of B.C.

## Downtown Eastside market

The city's community services department presents to council plans to use four city-owned lots in the 500-block Powell as a new home for the Downtown Eastside street market. The land at Powell and Jackson is ultimately slated for social housing, but staff said the site could accommodate a market and urban agriculture in the meantime. Staff told council that

many people on the street in the area have asked for more opportunities for vending and low-barrier employment.

## Smithe-Richards park

The park board begins public consultation on a new 0.8-acre downtown park planned for the southeast corner of Smithe and Richards. The site is currently a surface parking lot.

## West Georgia 'gateway' precinct

City hall receives three proposals for striking towers at the western end of downtown near Stanley Park. **Westbank** unveils what it calls the first major North American project by celebrated Japanese architect **Kengo Kuma**, to be built on its site at 1550 Alberni. The 43-storey scooped and carved tower is to be directly across the street from 1500 West Georgia, where owner **Bosa Properties** has engaged Germany's **Buro Ole Scheeren** on a 51-storey residential tower with horizontal elements meant to break up its verticality, and two blocks from **James Cheng's** scheme for a landmark 515-foot tower at 1445-1455 West Georgia, at Pender and Nicola. The urban design panel unanimously supported the Kuma tower earlier this month. The others are still in the inquiry stage.

## JULY

### Plebiscite fails

About 62 per cent of residents who filed mail-in ballots in the provincial government's plebiscite voted against a 0.5 sales tax increase to help fund a 10-year regional transportation plan that would see about \$7.5 billion spent on various projects in Metro Vancouver, including a Millennium Line subway extension along Broadway. Despite a strong coalition of politicians, business groups, unions, residents and others on the Yes side, the No side, led by the **Canadian Taxpayers Association** and supported by people critical of TransLink, prevailed.

### Construction values hit record

The value of building permits in Vancouver at mid-year broke records at almost \$200 million more than the same period in 2014. The city's monthly building-permit

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statistics to the end of June showed a total value of \$1.339 billion, compared to \$1.119 billion for 2014, with large increases in residential development. Values for June alone totalled \$182.5 million, compared to \$114.7 million for June, 2014.

## Regional population projections

Metro Vancouver updates its projections of the number of people expected to arrive, live and work in the region by 2041, with the population increase now expected to be more than one million. The largest amount of population growth continues to be expected in Vancouver and Surrey. Vancouver's 2041 population is now projected at about 765,000 people. The city projects a total of 362,000 dwelling units (339,500 projected in 2011) and expects to have a total employment of 505,000 (482,000 projected in 2011).

## Steam plant redevelopment

**Creative Energy Vancouver Platforms Inc.**, owned by Westbank principal **Ian Gillespie**, proposes a mix of residential and commercial uses on the old Central Steam plant site at Beatty and Georgia, comprising two towers: an office building of 300,000 to 350,000 square feet, and a secured market rental residential building of up to 400,000 square feet, with a plaza with retail facing the stadium. Council gave staff approval to prepare a rezoning application, which has not been filed yet.

## Seaspan expansion

**Seaspan** proposes a new \$30-million head office in North Vancouver. Designed by **DIALOG**, the new 84,000-square-foot building, to be built directly south of the existing office on on Pemberton Avenue, at a cost of \$7.3 million.

## Jackson announces departure

The city announces on a Sunday that head planner **Brian Jackson** plans to retire after only three years at city hall. Jackson, whose job was called "general manager of planning and development," had filled a new role combining the planning department with permits and licences. His tenure saw controversial issues such as higher density proposed in the Grandview Woodland community plan and a tower proposed next to the old CPR station at 555 West Cordova. He left in early November.

## Arbutus village redux

Redevelopment plans for Arbutus Village mall were reactivated after a long hiatus. The first phase of **Larco Investments Ltd's** project is a rezoning application for a mixed-use building with 215 rental residential units (including some non-market suites), Safeway, offices and a restaurant. Council approved the rezoning later in the year.

## Melville tower

A 33-storey "crowned" office building is proposed on Melville between Thurlow and Bute. **Oxford Properties** applied to rezone 1133 Melville from DD (downtown district) to CD-1 (comprehensive development) for the tower, designed by **Kohn Pederson Fox Associates** of New York. The urban design panel did not support the scheme at its first review in October.

## SRO amendments

City council approves amendments to the single-room accommodation bylaw aimed at protecting rooming-house hotel residents who could face eviction during renovations and will also help ensure landlords keep up with repairs.

## AUGUST

### Robson Square

**Stantec's** plan to upgrade the plaza at Robson Square and the entry to the University of B.C.'s downtown campus finally wins urban design panel support after two earlier applications at the end of 2014 and the beginning of this year, plus a non-voting workshop in April. The scheme had been completely redesigned, from curved glass boxes to "pavilions" featuring tree-like columns adding wood and steel. A revised development application was submitted in October, with no permit board date set yet.

### New anchor for Granville/Davie

**Musson Cattell Mackey** proposes a new residential building that is expected to be a future anchor for the corner of Granville and Davie. The project, at 717 Davie, will be a seven-storey building with 94 dwelling units and retail at grade.

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## SEPTEMBER

### City manager leaves

The mayor’s office announces the abrupt departure of city manager **Penny Ballem**, issuing a news release saying council had voted to start a “senior leadership transition at city hall.” That left the city with three vacancies in top management positions, including a city engineer and head planner.

### Jackson’s parting shots

Departing head planner **Brian Jackson** gives a candid speech to the **Urban Development Institute**, in which he lashes out at media, bloggers, former planners and community critics, speaking about the “haters” in the community, gossip and innuendo. He also rejected the much talked-about idea of a city-wide plan, saying the city has policy documents that “are more than enough to guide future growth in Vancouver.”

### Vancouver Art Gallery

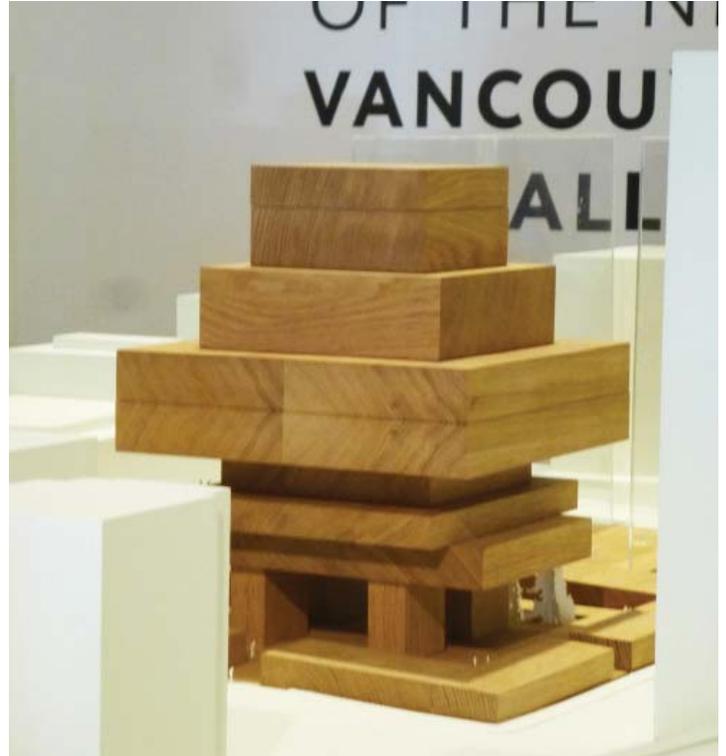
The Vancouver Art Gallery unveils its controversial scheme for a wood-clad building that would be its new home at Larwill Park. Designed by Swiss architects **Herzog & de Meuron**, the building, with 11 overheight levels, is to sit on a core 40 feet above the courtyard. It would have an underground entrance with the galleries and other spaces in floors of varying width. But the project still lacks tens of millions of dollars in funding.

### Bayshore sold

The sale of the Westin Bayshore to **Concord Pacific** leads to speculation over what could be developed on the hotel site.

### Cambie bridgehead project

**Francl Architecture** unveils its striking project proposed for the triangular site between the downtown ramps of the Cambie bridge. Later dubbed Arc, the 29-storey, curvilinear, mixed-use building at 89 Nelson (formerly 998 Expo Blvd.) will have two distinct sections with an arch between. The project, on **Concord Pacific’s** site known as area 5B west, will have 588 residential units, commercial uses at grade, public realm uses including a pedestrian and bike path and public art



Concept model of the proposed new Vancouver Art Gallery

NRU PHOTO

to be shared with its sister site, 5B east, on the other side of the Smithe off-ramp.

### Heritage in Shaughnessy

City council makes Shaughnessy Vancouver’s first heritage conservation area by replacing its official development plan with a heritage conservation area official development plan, a new zoning schedule, a heritage procedure bylaw and a new heritage property standards of maintenance bylaw.

## OCTOBER

### ‘Because it’s 2015’

The Liberal Party, led by **Justin Trudeau**, wins a majority in the federal election and most of the seats in Metro Vancouver. During the campaign, Trudeau had promised to spend \$125 billion on public transit; social needs like

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housing, child care, seniors' facilities and culture and recreation; and "green infrastructure" such as waste-water facilities and clean energy. The new government also promised to re-open the Kitsilano coast guard station "as soon as possible." Three local MPs were appointed to cabinet.

## Viaducts to be demolished

Vancouver city council votes narrowly to demolish the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaduct after hearing from more than 60 speakers over two days. The decision, probably the biggest for the Vision Vancouver-led council, had been years in the making. Council members and staff said the demolition will free up land for housing, parks and community and other uses. The viaducts, a remnant of a planned freeway in the 1960s, will be replaced by a new road network along Georgia and Pacific and then through a still-undecided route in False Creek flats.

## Past planners on the future

Four of Vancouver's former directors of planning reflect on challenges ahead for the city's next new head planner. At a packed panel event at SFU, **Ray Spaxman**, **Ann McAfee**, **Larry Beasley** and **Brent Toderian** agreed their new successor must be able to listen to the public, work with staff as a team, work with the region, not be afraid to speak out and be truthful.

## School board lands

Vancouver school board narrowly approves a motion committing not to sell any school sites or properties. The provincial government had encouraged such sales after its consultant said the school board could net \$750 million if it sold a number of under-used schools.

## Passive House incentives

Vancouver city council approves zoning bylaw amendments aimed at making it easier for house builders to use energy-efficient Passive House standards.

## New city engineer

Former Vancouver transportation director **Jerry Dobrovlny** is appointed general manager for engineering services, succeeding **Peter Judd**, who retired in the spring.

## NOVEMBER

### Active building design

The City of North Vancouver endorses a set of new building-design guidelines aimed at encouraging more physical activity, time spent outside and social interaction. It includes making stairs more inviting, encouraging designers to enlarge staircases and make them more centrally located.

### Renewable energy strategy

Vancouver city council unanimously approves a motion that would see a complete shift to renewable energy in the next 35 years. The plan is to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80 per cent below 2007 levels before 2050.

### Molson sells Kitsilano site

**Molson Coors Canada** announces it has sold its large brewery plant at the south end of the Burrard bridge. The buyer's name was not released.

### Wong house and its rock

A combination rezoning and heritage-designation application that would see retention of philanthropist **Milton Wong's** West Coast Modern house on Cambie, along with a new residential building next door, is supported by the urban design panel.

### Georgia plaza upgrade

City hall revives a plan to upgrade the north plaza of the Vancouver Art Gallery. **Nick Milkovich Architects** heads the project team planning to alter the plaza with new landscaping, resurfacing with concrete and stone pavers and removal of the centennial fountain, retaining walls, a driveway and gates. The urban design panel unanimously supports the scheme in December.

### Little Mountain returns

The Little Mountain redevelopment project is back on the table after a break of about two years.

**Holborn Properties** has submitted a rezoning application to develop the 15-acre, provincially owned

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L-shaped site into a mixed-use neighbourhood with up to 1,450 market housing units plus 234 more for social housing, along with a new Neighbourhood House, a 69-space daycare centre and commercial uses, as well as a park, a community plaza and other public open space. The scheme is not supported by the urban design panel (see separate story).

## DECEMBER

### Paris climate conference

Mayor **Gregor Robertson** attends the COP21 climate change conference in Paris, along other Canadian politicians at all levels. The conference reaches an agreement, to replace the Kyoto Protocol, aimed at holding global temperature rise to less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees C.

### Waterfront hub

City council asks staff to bring back the 2009 central waterfront hub framework for discussion with a view to examining its provisions for development and as a transportation terminus. The framework envisions a northern extension of downtown over the rail yards directly to the east of Canada Place as a future waterfront district with development, mostly offices, of about 1.4 million square feet.

### Coal freighters on the Fraser

**Fraser Surrey Docks** receives permission from **Port Metro Vancouver** to use freighters to transport U.S. thermal coal from its proposed Fraser River facility instead of barging it to Texada Island before exporting it to Asia. The proposed facility could handle at least four million metric tonnes of coal per year delivered by the **Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railway Company**.

### Dump Trump

Mayor **Gregor Robertson** asks developer **Holborn Group** to drop the Trump name from its nearly complete tower on West Georgia. The mayor's comments are part of a chorus of Vancouverites upset over U.S. presidential candidate **Donald Trump's** comment earlier in the month that there should be

a "total and complete shutdown" of Muslims entering that country. An online petition calling on the developer to drop the Trump brand had received more than 50,000 signatures by this past weekend. Holborn says no can do.

### Massey tunnel replacement

The provincial government announces that a 10-lane, three-kilometre toll bridge will replace the Massey tunnel. The project, which includes road expansions, is expected to cost about \$3.5 billion. The government announced in 2013 it would replace the tunnel; critics have called for transit improvements instead.

### New Riverview hospital

The provincial government announces it will repurpose the site of the old Riverview mental hospital in Coquitlam as a new, 105-bed mental-health and addiction treatment centre, along with an adolescent treatment centre. Residential and commercial development will share the site, which currently has 75 buildings on it, some 100 years old. The old buildings were found to be seismically unsafe. The decision comes after a long series of community engagement events in which the majority of participants said some kind of mental-health treatment centre should return to the 244-acre site.

### PM at city hall

Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** visits Vancouver city hall, the first sitting prime minister to do so since his father's visit in 1973. Among the topics of discussion were transit, infrastructure, affordable housing and refugees. [nru](#)



Visit by the prime minister.

SOURCE: CITY OF VANCOUVER