

Chronology Project

WHAT IS A MILESTONE?

The Vancouver City Planning Commission (<http://vancouverplanning.ca>) has created chronology of milestones in Vancouver's planning and development history. This document describes the guiding principles for adding milestones to the chronology.

Contributions to this Chronology identify events, decisions, actions, policy, programs and plans that have contributed to Vancouver's development and have been relevant in shaping the city as a unique urban settlement. We want to identify milestones that have had a transformative effect upon the city's growth and evolution.

Some obvious examples include:

- the founding of the city in July, 1886, the arrival of the CPR in 1887, and its role in shaping the future of the city;
- the amalgamation of the municipalities of Vancouver, Point Grey and South Vancouver in 1929 that put a decisive stamp on the city's geography; and
- the lasting consequences of the protests of 1972 to stop further construction of the freeway system announced in 1967.

These are but a few examples—there are many, many more milestones in Vancouver's urban planning and development that will explain the city we see and experience today.

Four Guiding Principles

The chronology of planning and development milestones is intended to be comprehensive, relevant, accurate and up-to-date.

1. **The chronology should be comprehensive.** By this, we mean the Chronology seeks to identify all the significant events, decisions, actions, policy, programs and plans that explain or account for the Vancouver we see and experience today.
2. **The chronology should be relevant.** The main test of any proposed milestone is relevance. Why does a given event, decision, action, policy, program or plan constitutes a milestone in Vancouver's planning and development history? This means that the Chronology is selective, identifying only the most obviously relevant events, decisions, actions, policy, programs and plans. We are not writing a history.

There are many excellent and interesting histories of Vancouver, such as we find in the works of Alan Morley and Eric Nicol, and these will be helpful sources of information about the changes that have come about in the city, and the actors and factors that account for them. Other helpful resources are investigations and analyses in Walter Hardwick's [Vancouver](#) and John Punter's [The Vancouver Achievement](#).

Especially helpful, informative and useful are the thematic chronologies represented in the work of Chuck Davis [The Chuck Davis History of Metropolitan Vancouver](#) (2011) and Bruce Macdonald's [Vancouver: A Visual History](#) (1992). The scope and depth of these chronologies are vast, encompassing far too many different kinds of events for the VCPC Chronology. We

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don't want to duplicate what has already been well done. However these detailed and broad chronologies may provide a rich source of information for the chronology we have in mind.

3. **The chronology needs to be accurate.** This means the source for every milestone must be clearly identified.

Two kinds of sources can be distinguished. Primary sources are the original material, usually written material, directly related to an event, decision or action. An Act of the B.C. legislature in Victoria that amends the Vancouver City Charter would be a primary source. A staff report to City Council recommending the establishment of a new planning department would also be a primary source. The four books identified above are examples of secondary sources. They are written works that depict events and decisions and are not the authoritative source of information about these events and decisions.

It is most desirable to identify and document the primary sources for significant milestones. The thing to be emphasized regarding accuracy is very simply to say that we want the chronology to be evidence-based. Certainly it is expected that secondary sources will identify milestones of interest, and could be used to make a case for the significance of a milestone. Hopefully these books will have good footnotes and bibliographies to help track down the primary information.

4. **The chronology seeks to be up-to-date.** Every month and every year adds something new to Vancouver's history and some of these will become milestones. In some cases it will be quickly apparent they are significant milestones although the ultimate consequences over time have yet to play out. In most cases, however, some passage of time will likely be necessary for the consequences of actions and decisions to unfold and for the significance of such actions or decisions to be demonstrated.

In some cases, the passage of time can lead to the re-interpretation of events and their significance. Hindsight and delayed consequences, as well as value shifts and attitudinal changes, can result in past events and decisions being viewed differently and more (or less) importantly or significantly. What is seen as a milestone today may turn out to be insignificant in the future.

Insofar as new events and decisions in Vancouver's planning and development history occur month-by-month and year-by-year, the Vancouver City Planning Commission will have the opportunity to use the annual ritual of looking back at the end of each year to invite nominations for milestones of a year just passed to be added to the Chronology.

Examples of Milestones

An excellent example of a set of milestones are the decisions described by authors Mike Harcourt, Ken Cameron and Sean Rossiter in [City Making in Paradise](#) (2007). After summarizing three "acts of conscious city making" in the nineteenth century and then the city's evolution over the first half of the twentieth century, they focus on "nine of the regional decisions made since 1945 that contributed to the transformation of Greater Vancouver into one of the world's most livable cities."

For more examples, see the evolving list of milestones being identified for this project on the [Wiki Milestones](#) page.