

2025 PIBC AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN PLANNING

Kelly Chan, PIBC Manager of Member Programs & Services

The PIBC Awards for Excellence in Planning honour the best in professional planning work undertaken by members in communities and regions across British Columbia and the Yukon. Award winners were celebrated in Vancouver, BC on June 12, 2025, at the PIBC 2025 Annual Conference – *Next Chapter*.

Award for Excellence in Planning Practice City & Urban Areas

GOLD WINNER

Title: **Urban Indigenous Community Prince George**

Organizations: **M'akola Development Services, Aboriginal Housing Society of PG, DYS Architecture, and IDL Projects**

Partners: **BC Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and Ministry of Education and Child Care**

Conceived of, designed with, and built for urban Indigenous people of Prince George and funded by local, Provincial, and Federal partners, Aboriginal Housing Society of PG's Urban Indigenous Community is creating safe, inclusive spaces for urban Indigenous families in Prince George. Master planned by the Aboriginal Housing Society of PG, M'akola Development Services, DYS Architecture, and IDL projects in 2019, the project is comprised of 4 phases:

- Phase 1: 50 townhomes (Rent Geared-to-Income; Indigenous Housing Fund)
- Phase 2A: 57 apartment units (Mixed Income; Community Housing Fund)
- Phase 2B: 40 space childcare (AHSPG Equity and Ministry of Education and Childcare)
- Phase 2C: community centre, digital library, story-telling room, community kitchen, café, gathering hall, meeting room, community living room (Indigenous Services Canada)
- Phase 3: 35 apartment units for Elders and Seniors (Supportive Housing Fund)
- Phase 4: 35 apartment units (Rent Geared-to-Income; Indigenous Housing Fund) and outdoor gathering space

Phases 1 to 3 are now complete, while phase 4 is underway, and the project will be completed in 2026.

The jury appreciated the accessible scale of the project, quick execution, and addressing immediate needs around housing and community, including considerations for strong open space and landscape plan logic, senior housing, and childcare, delivered within budget.



Award for Excellence in Planning Practice City & Urban Areas

SILVER WINNER

Title: **Strategic Support for Non-Market Housing in Saanich**

Organization: **District of Saanich**

Partners: **District stakeholders (Finance Department, Engineering Department, Lands Division, and Parks Department), and Saanich's non-market housing community – developers, consultants, operators, and funders, in particular the Greater Victoria Housing Society, Capital Regional Housing Corporation, Wiser Consultants, and M'akola Development, among other valued partners**

The District of Saanich developed a suite of policy, financial, regulatory, land development, and development process changes that work to attract, incentivize, and rapidly approve non-market housing development in the District, with the goal to increase non-market housing representation from 5% to 10% of the total housing supply.

The policies and regulatory amendments promote the essential role that non-market housing providers play in providing sustained, long-term housing affordability and all the resulting social and wellness benefits that come from people being adequately housed. The key supports developed and implemented in the past 2 years include:

- Official Community Plan Policy,
- Rapid Deployment program,
- Removal of parking requirements,
- Saanich Affordable Housing Reserve Fund,
- Permissive Tax Exemptions, and
- Priority processing of non-market applications, among others.

The jury appreciated the District taking a very focused approach to non-market housing. By listening to non-profits, they solved a long-standing problem which resulted in clear measurable outcomes. Accepting the funder's Housing Agreement, rather than requiring a second one is a game changer, as is the dedicated non-market housing current planner.



Award for Excellence in Planning Practice City & Urban Areas

HONOURABLE MENTION

Title: **The Crises Response Pilot Project: Transforming Planning Practice in Addressing the Three Crises of Homelessness, Mental Health and Substance Use**

Organization: **City of New Westminster**

Partners:

Ministries

(Ministry of Health, Ministry of Housing (BC Housing), Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and Provincial Affordable Housing Leadership Planning Group)

Health Authorities and Bodies

(Canadian Mental Health Association, Fraser Health Authority, First Nations Health Authority, and Northwest Division of Family Practice)

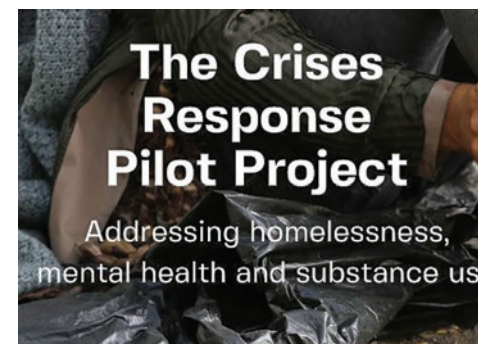
Coalitions

(New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, New Westminster Mental Health and Substance Use Roundtable, and New Westminster Overdose Community Action Team)

Resident and Business Associations

(New Westminster Chamber of Commerce, Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Association, City of New Westminster Residents' Association Forum, Downtown Residents' Association, and Queensborough Residents' Association)

The two-year Crises Response Pilot Project comprises two plans – the Five-Year Prevention, Support and



Transition Services Plan and the Ten-Year Supportive Housing and Wrap-Around Services Plan – and three staff teams, including a non-clinical outreach component, all of which respond to the immediate and longer-term needs of people experiencing the three crises, providing them with hope for a better tomorrow, while addressing the impacts on residents and businesses associated with the three crises.

Although in its first year of implementation, there have been numerous accomplishments:

- Contracted an Indigenous consultant to inform engagement with First Nations, Indigenous organizations, and Indigenous people with lived and living experience;
- Established two working groups with broad representation to inform the pilot project;
- Held a Mental Health and Substance Use Roundtable, which was attended by 50+ participants representing faith-based, non-profit and provincial organizations and teams;
- Informed the development of 10 extreme weather, 25 winter and 50 24/7 shelter beds;
- Informed the development of 52 supportive housing units, with another 60 units in negotiation, including 10 complex care units;
- Secured provincial funding for a sanitation trailer which is averaging about 1,300 visits per month; and
- Secured provincial funding for extended hours for the Health Contact Centre, which provides harm reduction services.



Award for Excellence in Planning Practice Small Town & Rural Areas

GOLD WINNER

Title: **Cycle 16 Trail Project**

Organizations: **Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako and WSP Canada Ltd.**

Partners: **Town of Smithers, Ministry of Transportation and Transit, and the Village of Telkwa**

The Cycle 16 Trail Project represents a transformative planning and design initiative in Northern British Columbia to establish a 3-metre-wide, paved, multi-use pathway between the Town of Smithers and the Village of Telkwa. The trail is located within the Highway 16 right of way but is jointly owned and

operated by the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN) and the Town of Smithers through a regional service initiative. The project is being developed in phases, with Phase 1 (3.7 km) successfully completed in 2023. Upon full completion, the 12-km trail will provide a safe, accessible, and sustainable transportation and recreation corridor connecting three local governments: the Town of Smithers, the Village of Telkwa, and the RDBN.

The jury found this project to be an excellent example and implementation of planning in action. A great amount of public engagement and diverse public processes were utilized, and it was evident the level of effort required of all the stakeholders to see this project come to fruition.



credit: Tony Harris

Award for Excellence in Planning Practice Small Town & Rural Areas

SILVER WINNER

Title: **From Policy to Practice:
Visualizing R-SSMUH's
Integration into Our City**

Organization: **City of Courtenay**

Partners: **EKISTICS (Paul Rosenau and
Steve Bayer) and Hazel Christy**

City staff partnered with EKISTICS to develop an interactive 3D plan from the City's GIS maps to showcase potential housing types on various lot sizes that had restrictive residential zoning within existing neighborhoods. This dynamic flythrough integrated current existing housing with the proposed SSMUH housing types to demonstrate how the proposed housing types in the proposed R-SSMUH zone would complement the surrounding neighbourhood. By illustrating key elements from the proposed SSMUH zone like setbacks, building heights, parking, lane access, and corner treatments, the tool provided a clear, accessible view of how the proposed zoning changes would take shape, fostering greater understanding and informed decision-making. The city had 16 restrictive zones that were consolidated into the R-SSMUH zone which represented 61% of the City's properties. This Visual tool was utilized for discussion with Council and development industry to refine the proposed R-SSMUH zone for implementation.

The jury felt that this project shows how implementation of planning ideas can be shared effectively. The City elevated the integration of SSMUH legislation into their community through visually appealing diagrams and drawings to demonstrate what can be built on a site and how a site can accommodate parking and open space.



Award for Excellence in Policy Planning City & Urban Areas

GOLD WINNER

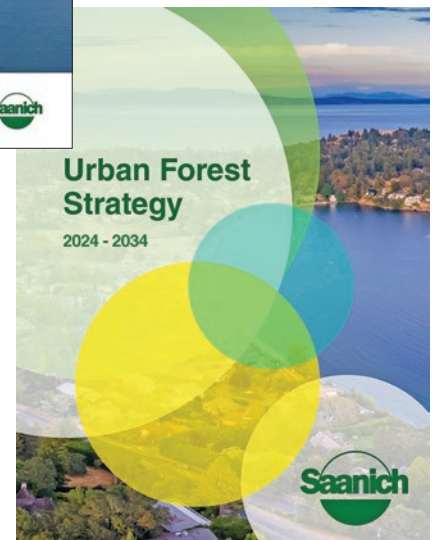
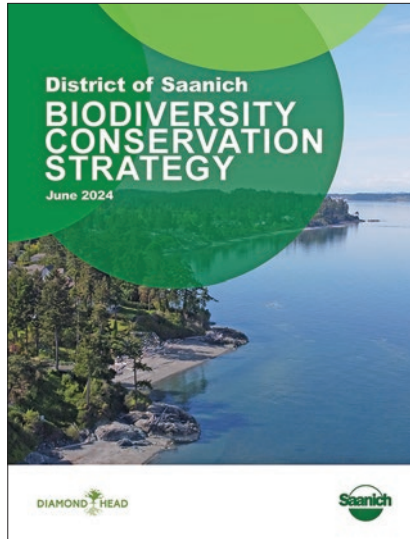
Title: **District of Saanich Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Urban Forest Strategy**

Organizations: **District of Saanich and Diamond Head Consulting Ltd.**

Partners: **PWL Partnership and Resilient Saanich Technical Committee**

In 2020, the District of Saanich launched the Resilient Saanich process, a multi-phase initiative to enhance environmental protection and promote climate resilience. Under this process, Diamond Head Consulting developed the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and the Urban Forest Strategy. These policies guide development and city planning, ensuring consideration of tree canopy, sensitive ecosystems, species at risk, and biodiversity for a more sustainable future.

The jury appreciated the introduction of the 'tree equity score', and that it identified the need for private lot support to achieve target tree canopies. They found the strategies to be comprehensive and easy-to-read, with key indicators well established to monitor progress.



Award for Excellence in Policy Planning Small Town & Rural Areas

GOLD WINNER

Title: **Úxwumixw 2050: Skwxwú7mesh
Generational Plan**

Organizations: **Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw
(Squamish Nation), EcoPlan International,
and Regenerative Design**

Partners: **Sxwpilemaát Siyám / Chief
Leanne Joe, Tiaoutenaat / Roberta 'Jackie'
Williams, Wendy Lockhart Lundberg, and
Yususult / Rosemarie Williams**

The Generational Plan is a long-range community plan guided by Skwxwú7mesh teachings. Through an iterative process that included the whole community including Elders, youth, knowledge keepers, Council, and staff, it was revealed that the usual themes used within community plans could not represent the voices of Skwxwú7mesh People and led to the creation of the Four

Feelings (Trust, Security, Purpose, Belonging). The Generational Plan honours ancestors and traditional knowledge while setting clear, actionable strategies for sustainable development. It is actively guiding Council's strategic planning process, departmental workplans, and on-going communications and engagement. This innovative approach ensures that future generations will inherit a strong planning foundation built on shared values and collaborative decision-making.

The jury found that this plan exemplifies how to plan for all the people it serves, whether living on their land or away by providing a safety net of support through the four-feeling approach to accommodate homes for all generations in a 25-year span. The storyline and resources included in the generations plan demonstrated the efforts made to be inclusive in the design and implementation of the plan.



Úxwumixw 2050 Skwxwú7mesh Generational Plan

MAY 2024



Award for Excellence in Policy Planning Small Town & Rural Areas

SILVER WINNER

Title: **Limits to Growth Policy**

Organization: **District of Tofino (Alex Lader, Nicholas Henderson, Pavel Fetisov, Peter Thicke, and Adam Doolittle)**

Partners: **Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, McElhanney (Jack McKee), Young Anderson (Guy Patterson), and Collingwood, Ontario, SaltSpring, and Lantzville for inspiration.**

Developed in response to a raw water supply deficit identified in early 2024, the Limits to Growth Policy (LTGP) seeks to achieve critical housing and Reconciliation objectives, despite limited water resources. Through a focused, phased policy development process that unfolded over seven months, the LTGP establishes an upper “limit” to new development, a mechanism to track and allocate new water allocation, and identifies priority uses that are eligible for water allocations. The policy provides needed clarity and certainty to residents, Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, and the broader development community on the District’s approach to development in advance of a long-term water supply solution.

The jury felt this policy demonstrates the hard conversations that occurred to address a pressing issue and included an impressive analysis of the water supply issue into a policy to manage future growth for both Tofino and the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations.

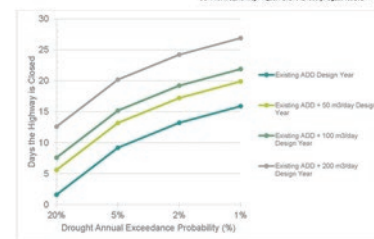


Figure 2: Risk Graph of the Relationship between Drought AEP and Length of Highway Closure under Four Population Growth Scenarios



Estimating Water Demand
Schedule B of the draft policy outlines average daily water usage for different residential typologies, based on observed historical water meter data. The purpose of this Schedule is to establish a transparent and consistent method to estimate the additional water demand required by a particular development proposal to determine whether there is sufficient remaining water supply and to establish the required water volume to be allocated by each Water Allocation Certification (WAC).

A concern was raised at the October 8 Council meeting surrounding the appropriateness of measuring average water demand for different residential typologies on a per dwelling unit basis.

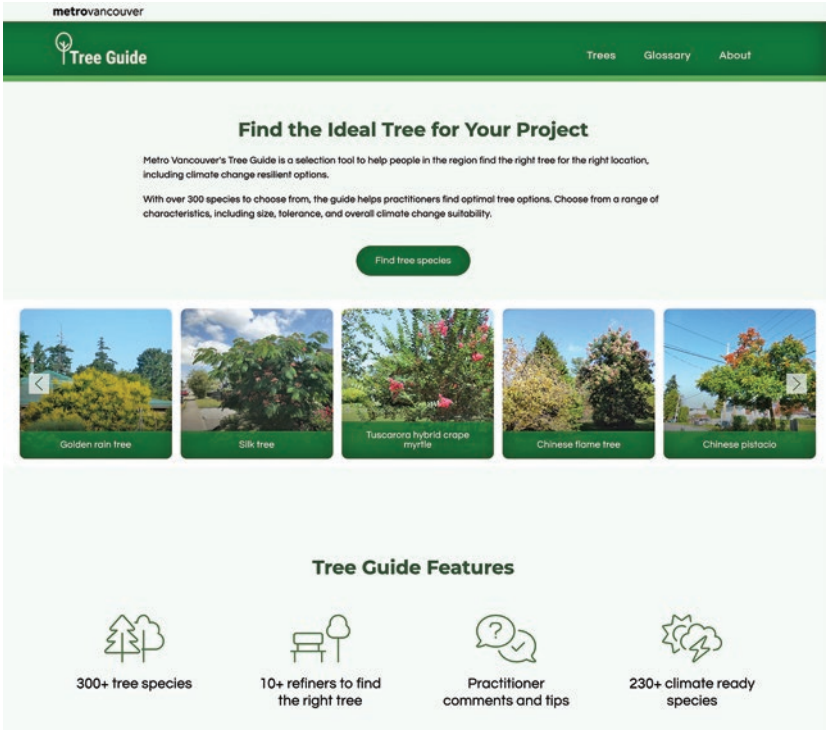


Award for Research
& New Directions in Planning
GOLD WINNER

Title: **Metro Vancouver Tree Guide**
Organization: **Metro Vancouver**
Partners: **Diamond Head Consulting Ltd. and staff and urban forestry practitioners and experts from across the region**

The Metro Vancouver Tree Guide is a user-friendly, online tree species selection tool to help urban forestry practitioners (such as arborists, landscape architects, and urban, park, and environmental planners) identify appropriate climate-resilient tree species based on desired characteristics. Over 300 species can be filtered by climate change-specific criteria — such as overall climate suitability, hardiness and heat zone, drought tolerance, saturated soil tolerance, and flammability — as well as by other relevant characteristics such as size, risks, tolerances, habitat value, and suitable planting locations. The Tree Guide supports climate adaptation, liveability, and tree canopy objectives in local and regional land use plans and processes.

The jury found this an excellent example of the type of forward thinking our profession needs to support. It represents an important climate adaptation strategy, with valuable and collaborative technical input, and a process which is highly transferable to other regions in the province.



Annual Student Fellowship Awards

The recipients of the 2025 Student Fellowship Award presented session CS-34: Fellowship Award Presentations on Friday June 13, 2025.



Amanda Van Hulsen
Vancouver Island University,
Master of Community Planning

Presentation: **Shifting Away From a Resource-Based Economy: Tourism Development and Housing Affordability in Revelstoke, British Columbia**

Over the last two decades, the economic landscape of Revelstoke has greatly shifted away from a blue-collar resource extraction town to a tourism mountain town. In 2007, Revelstoke became one of British Columbia's Mountain Resort municipalities, attracting visitors from all over the world. Seasonality plays a large role in the economic landscape of Revelstoke. As the snow melts away, so do many jobs. These seasonal tourism employment positions are key pillars to sustaining Revelstoke's economy. Without this key demographic of employees, many of the businesses within Revelstoke would struggle to keep the lights on.

As cost of living and tourism rise, Revelstoke's tourism workforce are being priced out. Non-market housing, typically subsidized or operated by government agencies, non-profits, or cooperatives to provide affordable housing for low- to moderate-income individuals and families, is key to keeping Revelstoke's tourism employees within the city and sustaining Revelstoke's tourism economy.



Achilles Sophia Madhi Gnanaprakasam
Vancouver Island University,
Master of Community Planning

Presentation: **Retail Activation: Turning Shopping Fronts into Experiences**

This presentation deals with the hypermarkets and any other individual large stores that are merely for shopping and depressing parking lots and have no connection or sense of placemaking with its surrounding areas. The question arises: how can the spaces in front of these expansive big box structures be transformed into socially engaging and vibrant areas?

Congratulations to this year's winners!

Make a submission for next year's awards program to help us recognize and celebrate the places, plans, projects, and people across our membership contributing to communities and regions across BC and the Yukon.