

2025 PIBC Annual Conference *Next Chapter*

Jared Kassel RPP, MCIP, PMP



The 2025 Planning Institute of B.C. Annual Conference – Next Chapter – was held from June 10 to June 13, 2025, at the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre in downtown Vancouver.

Hosted on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətał (Tsleil Waututh) Nations, the conference was attended by over 425 in-person attendees including planners, government representatives, academics, and industry professionals.

The conference featured 50+ sessions, plenaries, networking receptions, and the gala awards dinner. The conference met its mission as a *premier professional learning event*, and served as a hub for sharing knowledge, inspiration, and collaboration on critical issues like housing affordability, equity, regional growth, and planning governance.





Page 10: Pam Shaw RPP, FCIP, as the 2025 Annual Conference MC

< Dr. Dave Amos combined academic research and humour for an energizing opening keynote on Wednesday, June 11.

Keynote generously sponsored by Young Anderson.

Keynote Speakers

The conference was anchored by two terrific (and yet very different) keynote speakers, Dr. Dave Amos and Dr. Lorna Wánosts'a7 Williams.

Keynote #1 Highlights

Dr. Dave Amos, Assistant Professor of City & Regional Planning at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and creator of the acclaimed “City Beautiful” YouTube channel, delivered the opening keynote on Wednesday morning. He framed his presentation around the idea that planners are essential communicators and educators, both within communities and to broader public audiences

Dr. Amos drew on lessons from his academic research and digital storytelling to explore how planners can leverage media and engaging outreach to shape cityscapes and communities. His presentation highlighted the role of visual narrative in planning discourse, and how visual storytelling in urban planning can influence community perception.

Amos emphasized that the general public often lacks foundational knowledge of planning principles—a gap he bridges through accessible tools. Drawing on his experience briefing community advisory committees, he shared how informative communication empowers more engaged citizens and better decision-making

He spotlighted how planners can harness social media and video platforms to disseminate vital information—ranging from council agendas to policy outcomes—directly into community feeds. He shared examples illustrating how straightforward, consistent content can increase public awareness and civic engagement

Amos recounted launching his YouTube channel in 2017 to fill a void in planning education. Starting with a video on gridded street

grids, he committed to monthly content—now reaching 350,000 subscribers globally with over 30 million views.

Amos described how his time consulting on general plans shaped his dual role. Recognizing the need for research-backed policy, he pursued a PhD and now teaches at Cal Poly. He highlighted his studio-based courses, pairing technical skills with real-world client projects. He also urged planners to meet residents “where they are”—not in council chambers, but through social media—for more accessible, timely civic engagement.

Attendees responded positively, noting how Amos’s insights on communication and engagement align with other sessions championing equity and inclusive planning. Many highlighted his practical examples as highly actionable for both small and large communities.

In summary, Dave Amos’s keynote set an energizing tone for PIBC 2025: a call for planners to be storytellers, educators,





and connectors—reaching beyond traditional forums to engage communities where they live, online and off.

Keynote #2 Highlights

Dr. Lorna Wánosts'a7 Williams delivered the opening keynote on Thursday morning, offering profound insights into reconciliation-informed planning and Indigenous-led frameworks. Drawing from her experience, Dr. Williams emphasized integrating Indigenous

knowledge systems at all planning stages—from engagement to implementation. She urged planners to challenge colonial legacies and engage in respectful, reciprocal partnerships with First Nations.

Dr. Williams centered her talk around the concept of *Ti wa7 szwatenem*, a phrase meaning “*what we know*”. She emphasized the essential role of Indigenous language, stories, and land-based teachings as foundational to all planning work. These knowledge systems, passed through generations, continue to shape community connectivity and stewardship.

As a leading advocate for First Nations language revitalization, Dr. Williams shared both personal reflections and community-led initiatives to breathe new life into ancestral languages. She discussed how language is inseparable from culture and identity—urging planners to support efforts in education, signage, storytelling, and public spaces as tools for lasting systemic change.

Audience members highlighted how Dr. Williams’s blend of language, land, and narrative offered a deeply moving and useful framework—one that’s actionable across all planning scales. It shifted reconciliation

from a policy checkbox into a living, evolving practice embedded in daily planning. Tying into the conference theme, “Next Chapter,” she reframed reconciliation as a continuous story—one that evolves through measurable, respectful action. She asked planners to view themselves as bridge-builders, combining colonial planning frameworks with Indigenous ways of knowing in co-creative initiatives.

Referencing her journey—from personal linguistic reclamation to national leadership—Dr. Williams emphasized the importance of personal narratives in driving collective change. She encouraged listeners to share their own stories and to honour the voices of Indigenous elders, storytellers, and youth. One of her quotes that resonated with the audience, particularly at this conference was, “Reconciliation isn’t a chapter—it’s the theme that guides the whole story.”

In conclusion, Dr. Lorna Williams’s presentation offered a profound inspiration to conference attendees—calling planners to weave Indigenous knowledge, language, and land-based connections into every decision. She set a compelling path toward planning that is respectful, rooted, restorative—and truly reconciled.

Dr. Lorna Wánosts'a7 Williams shared her personal stories and why planners are “bridge-builders” as keynote speaker on Thursday, June 12





PIBC 2025 Annual Conference
Committee Co-Chairs
Jessica Jiang RPP, MCIP and
Amanda Grochowich RPP, MCIP

< The PIBC 2025 Awards
Gala began with a
welcome from Squamish
Nation Chief Sxwpilemaát
Siyám Leanne Joe

Squamish Nation Elder
Xwechtaal Dennis Joseph
honoured the official start of
the annual conference with a
Traditional Welcome

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Overall Conference Impressions

The conference offered a full program designed to address the dynamic relationships between urban planning, equity, and environmental resilience. It also included a presentation on the BC Professional Governance Act, which featured a panel of experienced professionals (outside of the planning profession). This signaled a pivotal moment for planners, discussing the various impacts on planning regulation and professional accountability of potentially joining the PGA (for those readers who aren't familiar with this topic, I would encourage you to read Deborah Jensen's article on page 22 of this issue of *Planning West*).

The overarching theme, "Navigating the Next Chapter," reflected the profession's response to major societal transformations, ranging from the housing crisis to climate adaptation and the push for greater urban equity. Several sessions placed Indigenous voices at the forefront, promoting collaborative and culturally informed approaches to planning. Another central theme was the importance of bridging digital and in-person engagement, underscored by Dave Amos's keynote underscored the value of innovative communication tools and digital storytelling in today's hybrid world, encouraging planners to embrace new methods of



community interaction. Policy and legislative responses also featured prominently, with several sessions examining British Columbia's evolving regulatory environment. Key discussions highlighted the need for reparative and inclusive policy instruments, such as the BC Professional Governance Act, which was explored in depth as a transformative framework for the planning profession.

I would also like to mention that for me, a conference highlight was the Networking and Awards Gala, where planning excellence was celebrated and award recipients were announced. I noticed that engagement across PIBC's regional chapters and committees was strong, with numerous presentations and local insights shared throughout the event. Collectively, these elements underscored a shift toward a more responsive, accountable, and forward-looking planning land in British Columbia.

A heartfelt thank-you to the PIBC 2025 Annual Conference Committee, (with Co-Chairs Jessica Jiang RPP, MCIP and Amanda Grochowich RPP, MCIP), lead by Sophie King and dedicated staff and volunteers. Your tireless efforts—from speaker coordination and logistics to sponsorship engagement—helped deliver a seamless, thoughtful event.

Jared Kassel, RPP, MCIP, PMP is the Editor of *Planning West* magazine. Jared has been a planning practitioner for 22 years, working in both B.C. and Alberta in both the private and public sectors. Currently he is the Manager of Planning at the District of Peachland.

Session CS-01: Delivering Housing & Infrastructure in BC & Yukon: Challenges, Opportunities, and Solutions

Moderator:

Shad Mayne RPP, MCIP
Director of Development at Colliers

Panel:

Brad Jones, Chief Development Officer
at Wesgroup Properties

Josh White, General Manager at City of Vancouver

Henry McQueen, Executive Vice President
at Qualex-Landmark

Maggie Koka RPP, MCIP, Planner at Aplin Martin

Ryan Berlin, Senior Economist
& Vice President at Rennie

Summary by Maya Korbynn
PIBC Student Member &
Communications Committee Member

At a time of shifting regulations, rising construction costs, and declining housing affordability, the panel discussion *"Delivering Housing & Infrastructure in BC & Yukon"* brought together planners, developers, and an economist to explore the forces behind our current housing challenges, what needs to change, and how public and private sectors can collaborate to unlock solutions.

The Housing Market By the Numbers

The panel opened with sobering and familiar context: housing supply has not kept

up with demand. Ryan started the session by quantifying the challenges in our housing market, highlighting that in many Canadian cities, the per-capita gap in purpose-built rental housing is at a 30 year high. Investor-buyers have historically helped fill this gap; in Metro Vancouver investor-buyers were responsible for 80% of the rental supply growth over the past 17 years.

However recent trends are disrupting this status quo. In the past two years, Rennie has investor-buyer shares of pre-sale purchases in Metro Vancouver dropped from 51% to 7%. Additionally, a 10-year low in pre-sale numbers contribute to increased risk for developers, resulting in less large-scale projects (39% less than the 10-year average) coming to market, as developers prioritize smaller projects that are less risky and less costly to build. Developers are being cautious, with many only completing what is already in progress. This is already affecting housing starts (in Metro Vancouver, a 25% decrease since 2024), which will consequently impact housing completions.

Challenge 1: Regulatory Complexity & Overload

One of the session's recurring themes was frustration with regulatory complexity. The layering of different requirements like community amenity contributions, electric vehicle infrastructure, and Step Code requirements contribute to significant cost increases that impact development viability. Brad explained how moving from Step 1 to Step 3 can add \$3 million to a project budget, often at the expense of affordability or community benefits.

Josh noted that in the case of Vancouver, decades of upward trending housing prices had



Welcome Reception at Science World, generously sponsored by B&A.



meant policymakers did not need to weigh the long-term impact of cumulative policy costs. However, that has changed. Maggie said the municipal attitude of “suck it up” regarding these costs no longer works in this new development environment, and Henry urged municipalities to consider stripping out the “nice to haves,” like excessive bicycle parking, to focus on housing provision.

The overall conclusion was that municipalities need to look at the trade-offs for what they want in a housing development, because not every project can deliver every benefit. Brad emphasized that “housing is being asked to do too many things, it can’t do all of the things” and that municipal staff and developers have to agree on project outcomes to have productive collaboration on addressing the housing affordability crisis. The panel agreed that going forward, planners and policymakers need to consciously consider how layered policies affect costs, feasibility, and delivery timelines.

Challenge 2: Lack of Predictability

Regulatory uncertainty poses another financial and logistical challenge for housing development. Brad described his own experience working on 9 projects, none of which were completed under the same set of regulations, and Henry described how bids from contractors were unpredictable because of uncertainty in how to meet changing energy efficiency standards – both are examples that increase overhead costs and risk for projects.

Ryan and Josh both stressed the need for greater certainty and predictability. As Ryan put it, “the fastest rezoning is the one you don’t do at all.” The panel agreed that upfront zoning, calibrated development charges, and

streamlined approval processes are essential to give developers the confidence to proceed.

Challenge 3: Infrastructure Challenges

The panel agreed that one of the biggest barriers to delivering new housing is delivering supporting infrastructure. The cost recovery models for this infrastructure—water mains, sewers, roads—has evolved from developers paying for infrastructure in a pre-determined area, to paying to upgrade infrastructure that spans multiple jurisdictions.

Maggie shared a case study from Grandview Heights, where five neighbourhoods shared a water main. While one community needed only about \$1.8 million in upgrades, because it was being developed first it was asked to pay \$20 million to upgrade the infrastructure serving the whole area. Maggie emphasized that under these sorts of expectations, many developers walk away in favour of other less risky projects, and that there needs to be multi-jurisdictional infrastructure planning to coordinate responsibility for infrastructure upgrades.

Brad elaborated that when developers are expected to front millions in infrastructure costs without a clear path to cost recovery, they choose other investments. He stressed that governments have access to better, cheaper forms of financing—and should use this advantage take on a greater share of infrastructure costs. Josh added that relying on developers alone to fund capital upgrades is not sustainable, but that municipalities cannot shoulder infrastructure costs on their own, partnerships with provincial and federal government are needed.

Solutions

To address these challenges, the panel

proposed several paths forward:

- **Clearer policy priorities:** Instead of trying to gain all community benefits on every project, governments must **identify trade-offs** and focus on the most impactful contributions of each project—whether that’s affordability and climate resilience, public space and infrastructure, or some other combination.
- **Collaborate with the private sector and developers on policy and plans:** Maggie highlighted the North East Albion Neighbourhood Plan, where the City of Maple Ridge brought in a consultant and developers as collaborators and finished a plan in 6 months, with building starting in 2 years.
- **Rethink cost recovery models:** Maggie argued for new financial frameworks that reflect the realities of cross-boundary infrastructure and support more equitable distribution of costs.
- **Federal and provincial partnerships:** Municipalities cannot solve the housing crisis alone. All levels of government need to fund housing-enabling infrastructure and support non-market housing delivery at scales that will make an impact
- **More responsive and indexed policies:** Ryan suggested adjusting incentives like GST rebates and development charges based on market conditions and timelines. Policies should be designed to evolve, not sit unchanged for a decade while conditions shift.
- **Digital permitting and innovation hubs:** Ryan highlighted initiatives to bring technology into development approvals, trial digital permitting systems, and make cities more nimble in policy execution.
- **Pair non-market tools with market delivery:** Josh concluded that we must stop expecting the market to deliver affordability for average workers on its own. Instead, cities must **combine non-market strategies with efficient, predictable, market-based delivery models.**

Final Takeaways

The housing development landscape has changed, and policies that worked before do not work now. To build housing that is affordable, resilient, and sufficient to meet population growth, the panelists agreed that governments must rethink regulatory complexity, expectations of developers, and how infrastructure is funded. This means moving away from rigid, overloaded processes and toward smarter, responsive, and more predictable systems—backed by shared investment across all levels of government and public-private collaboration in policy development.



PIBC volunteers & staff at registration





< Elder Ruth Adams led
The Great Blue Heron Way
(sməḡʷəʔelə), visionary project

TFN Youth
Centre Rendering
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Session MW-06: Reconciliation in Action! mi ce:p kʷetxʷiləm (Welcome) to Tsawwassen First Nation Treaty Lands Tour

Speakers & Guides from Tsawwassen First Nation

Ruth Adams, Tsawwassen Elder

Jessica Adams, Tsawwassen Member

Kris Patel, Engagement Lead

Wenyan Yu RPP, MCIP, Manager, Development
Planning Services, Approving Officer

Kevin Tosoff, Manager, Community Planning
Services, Deputy Approving Officer

Komal Shaikh RPP, MCIP, Director of Lands

Summary by Benafshaw Dashti RPP, MCIP
PIBC Communications Committee Member

On one of the gloomier days (weatherwise) of the conference, one of the most progressive First Nation communities made it bright and sunny with their warm welcome and fresh Bannock and Salmon treats for the tour attendees. Tsawwassen Elder Ruth Adams welcomed us and commenced the tour with a prayer.

Reconciliation can be interpreted in many ways and Tsawwassen has not only defined it but has set the stage for the many nations in the same position or aiming to be in the same position. Tsawwassen First Nation (TFN) initiated the treaty process in the early 1990s. TFN ratified the treaty in 2007 and what was known to be the first modern treaty in the Province of British Columbia (BC)¹. This was over 12 years ago and TFN has come a long way.

The Great Blue Heron Way (sməḡʷəʔelə)

Tsawwassen Elder Ruth Adams and her grand-daughter Jessica Adams walked the group through their lifelong work and their efforts to put TFN on the map. The Great Blue Heron Way is one such initiative. **The Great Blue Heron Way (sməḡʷəʔelə)**, is a visionary project led by Elder Ruth Adams (xʷasteniya) to reconnect, protect, and celebrate the people, land, and waters of the Salish Sea. The vision was to highlight that infrastructure can be more than functional and that it can be sacred. The Great Blue Heron Way envisions a network of walking, cycling, and rolling pathways that link communities through green infrastructure and cultural spaces. These routes will integrate Indigenous art, land-based education, and storytelling, while offering low-carbon transportation options that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote environmental stewardship².

Elder Ruth found her inspiration in the

vision of reconnecting First Nations communities through this shared pathway. She recalled a moment during a visit to Victoria, when she asked her father whether any First Nations had been involved in the creation of the Galloping Goose Trail. His answer was brief, yet revealing: “None.” That response left a lasting impression.

In contrast, a new multi-use trail in Metro Vancouver is taking a different path—both literally and figuratively. **Spearheaded by the Tsawwassen First Nation and developed in partnership with other Coast Salish communities**, this trail follows the traditional travel routes once used by Indigenous peoples, offering a meaningful step toward cultural reconnection and recognition.

Named after the great blue heron - a warrior bird of deep cultural significance symbolizing peace and balance in Coast Salish teachings - the project reconnects people with the land and acknowledges the unceded territories it crosses. More than just a recreational path, the Great Blue Heron Way invites users to engage with Indigenous history, language, and land stewardship practices. As a co-created vision rooted in Indigenous leadership and shared responsibility, it stands as a living, evolving example of what reconciliation can look like when it moves beyond symbolism into meaningful, community-driven action.

The blue heron has a huge nesting site here, hence the very appropriate name. TFN

ancestors fished and paddled in this area and these waters. This project comes a full circle with its intent and vision for TFN and other First Nation communities along its path.

A more detailed description for whoever interested can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HMq0tb89SQ>

Tsawwassen First Nation Elders Centre

The **TFN Elders Centre** is a standout example of blending cultural identity, community needs, and advanced engineering. Located along Great Blue Heron Way on TFN lands, the building's design – by Iredale Architecture and RJC Engineers – was inspired by the image of a bird in flight, symbolizing the great blue heron, a significant figure in Coast Salish culture. The structure is classified



as a post-disaster building, meaning it must remain safe and functional even after a major earthquake. Cultural poles, carvings and other artistic elements will be incorporated throughout the building.

Meeting this standard posed a unique engineering challenge due to the building's distinctive sloped columns. To solve this, the project incorporated Tectonus self-centering friction dampers, which absorb seismic energy and gently return the building to its original position after shaking. This innovation reduced the amount of structural reinforcement needed, lowering both construction costs and environmental impact³.

More than just a resilient structure, the Elders Centre was shaped through deep community consultation, ensuring it reflects Tsawwassen values and traditions. It serves as a cultural gathering place, a symbol of respect for Elders, and a practical step forward in combining Indigenous leadership with modern resilience strategies—a tangible expression of reconciliation and future-focused design.

Tsawwassen First Nation Youth Centre

An award-winning architecture marvel, designed by Dr. Nancy Mackin of Mackin Architects Ltd., the **Tsawwassen First Nation Youth Centre** is a community asset. Inspired by Coast Salish stories of birds descending from the sky and transforming into humans and welcome poles at the entrance designed by TFN artists, this structure is awe-inspiring.

The facility provides a full commercial licensed kitchen, a gymnasium, a soundproof music room, various study areas and a program for after school care. The TFN Youth Centre offers a safe and inclusive environment where young members of the community can take part in a variety of activities that promote personal growth and cultural connection. Through fitness programs, arts and crafts, leadership training, and mentorship, the Centre helps youth develop important skills, foster positive relationships, and deepen their understanding of their heritage. By providing these opportunities, the Centre plays a key role in building the next generation of community leaders.

Tsawwassen First Nation Community Farm

Last but not the least, our tour ended with visiting the **Tsawwassen First Nation Community Farm**. The TFN Community Farm is a local agricultural initiative designed to offer fresh, homegrown produce to the Tsawwassen community. Focused on sustainability, the farm integrates both organic farming methods and traditional practices, helping to ensure a healthy, environmentally conscious food supply. This project is committed to enhancing food security while fostering a deeper connection between the community and the land. The lead farmer Mac Brown provided the positives and negatives of true organic farming.

In addition to providing fresh produce, the



farm acts as a place for community education and engagement, especially for youth. It serves as a platform to learn about farming, food systems, and sustainable practices, creating valuable learning opportunities and fostering a sense of cultural pride for future generations. Produce is shared on a monthly (sometimes bi-weekly) basis depending on the quantity – first with elders and then the rest of the TFN community.

Missed Opportunity – the group unfortunately couldn't make the tour of the Sewage Treatment Plant but maybe it gives Tsawwassen the opportunity to come back at the next conference to provide this (*hint hint!*). The housing development would be another good session. All topics that a planning nerd would love to explore.

Tsawwassen means “the land facing the sea”. They have incorporated Coast Salish designs in their buildings and aim to continue to do so in their future work. As caretakers of the land and water, TFN has set the stage and are expanding the stage by working with other first nation communities and local governments. They are now sharing the stage, the ideas, the culture and traditional knowledge in their projects and daily work. This is truly Reconciliation in Action!

¹<https://tsawwassenfirstnation.com/about-tfn/our-nation/timeline-of-history/>

²Delta Optimist, June 21, 2025

³Tectonus.com

Session CS-19: Making Space for Urban Nature: Designing Natural Systems into Urban Developments

Speakers:

Cassandra Cummings RPP, MCIP,
Biology Manager at Diamond Head Consulting

Camille Lefrançois RPP, MCIP, Environmental
Planning Manager at Diamond Head Consulting

Eva Riccius, Senior Manager of Parks at
District of Saanich

Summary by Heike Schmidt RPP, MCIP
PIBC Communications Committee Member

Urban natural systems play an integral role in the health, resilience, and quality of life within our communities. As cities continue to grow and expand, the need to thoughtfully integrate nature into urban spaces has never been more important. But how can we achieve this goal within the existing built environment, where space is limited and competing priorities often take precedence?

- This article outlines key lessons shared in a presentation by urban planning and environmental professionals during this year's PIBC Conference with a focus on urban natural systems in the urban environment. Presenters featured :Cassandra Cummings,

RPP, MCIP, RPBio, Biology Manager,
Diamond Head Consulting;

- Camille Lefrançois, RPP, MCIP, Environmental Planning Manager, Diamond Head Consulting; and,
- Eva Riccius, Senior Manager of Parks at the District of Saanich.

In construction projects, nature is often treated as an afterthought—a “nice-to-have” rather than an essential element of planning and design. While this trend has begun to shift recently, it still raises an important question: how can we integrate nature in ways that meaningfully enhance the urban experience? According to the presenters, the key challenge is developing a comprehensive and coordinated approach—one that combines strategic planning with regulatory frameworks to ensure nature is thoughtfully incorporated throughout the entire planning and development process.

Cassandra Cummings highlighted that, to truly integrate natural systems, planners must begin with a “nature first” agenda. This agenda asks planners to think about nature from the very beginning, not as an add-on, but as a core part of the city's infrastructure.

For cities to adopt a nature-positive mindset, specific planning considerations need to find the right windows of opportunity to integrate nature, particularly during major land use plan updates or infrastructure projects. Cities also need to approach environmental goals incrementally, with phased strategies like



biodiversity plans. Long-term success depends on broad support from the public, professionals, and decision-makers, which requires active community engagement, professional collaboration, and insight into decision-makers' environmental priorities.

A Case Study: District of Saanich, Capital Regional District

Eva Riccius shared a valuable example from the District of Saanich, one of the largest municipalities in the Capital Regional District. Saanich, which is home to over 170 parks, has long been committed to preserving its natural heritage. However, the municipality is now at a tipping point—urban development continues to encroach on valuable natural spaces, particularly in the urban-suburban boundary areas.

The region is situated in the Coastal Douglas Fir zone, which is considered a sensitive ecosystem. Saanich has been working towards restoring its iconic Garry Oak ecosystems, which face threats from invasive species and urban development. This work was supported by a recent community survey, which revealed that there was strong support for enhancing biodiversity protection not just on public but also on private lands.

One key takeaway from Riccius' work is the growing recognition that quality of life is intrinsically linked to access to natural spaces. As a result, the District of Saanich has recently

launched its "natural intelligence" program to increase environmental awareness, involving residents in nature walks, volunteer programs, and park restoration projects. These efforts help cultivate a deep sense of connection with the environment.

In 2024, Saanich adopted its Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, which outlines a roadmap for preserving and enhancing local ecosystems. The strategy was developed with input from a range of partners, including environmental experts, residents, and First Nations.

The plan's emphasis on First Nations engagement stands out as an innovative approach to planning. Furthermore, Saanich has formalized a relationship with the WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council through a memorandum of understanding, grounding the strategy in Indigenous knowledge and practices. This has helped ensure that Indigenous perspectives are not just a chapter in the strategy but integrated throughout it.

The Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was included into the District's Official Community Plan, which was updated to align with climate mitigation and adaptation goals. Both strategies were designed with the provincial housing mandates in mind, showing the interconnectedness of environmental, housing, and development policies.

The Urban Forest Strategy has ambitious goals, including tree planting on both public and private lands. One critical concept is tree equity scoring, which seeks to address gaps in

tree coverage, particularly in urban areas that are often underserved. This scoring system helps show areas with the lowest tree cover and target them for future tree planting efforts.

Camille Lefrançois focused on the technical aspects of integrating urban nature into land use and zoning decisions. At the site level, urban nature must be protected through development permit areas and tree bylaws. Zoning, subdivision planning, and utility decisions also shape the space available for urban nature to thrive.

The challenge is to balance the need for new housing and urban development with the preservation of green spaces. Lefrançois emphasized that, to retain healthy tree canopy cover, developers need to incorporate landscape and previous area requirements that allow for the growth of trees. These requirements may include setbacks from property lines, designated green spaces, and specifications for tree canopy coverage.

However, current development patterns, especially in low-density housing neighbourhoods, often work against urban nature. As cities continue to expand and intensify, planners must ensure that spaces for urban nature are not squeezed out by higher buildings and more compact developments. Lefrançois pointed to the Tree Canopy Management and Preservation Strategy in Port Moody, as an example of a framework that incorporates tree canopy requirements into residential development, ensuring that trees have enough space to grow and thrive.



One of the most compelling points made by the speakers was the importance of community engagement. For urban nature to be successfully integrated into urban planning, residents need to feel connected to and invested in their natural environment. Whether through nature walks, volunteer programs, or tree-planting events, communities must be involved in the restoration and preservation processes.

The message from the session was clear: urban nature cannot remain an afterthought. Particularly as cities grow and densify, integrating nature into urban planning and design must be a proactive and ongoing effort—one that embeds environmental goals into land use, zoning, and development regulations. Planners, policymakers, and communities must treat nature as essential urban infrastructure that enhances quality of life, supports biodiversity, and strengthens climate resilience. Achieving this will require creativity, collaboration, and a commitment to long-term planning, ensuring that nature remains a vital part of the urban fabric and helps shape cities that are both livable and resilient to future challenges.

Heike Schmidt, RPP, MCIP, DIPL.-ING. is a member of the PIBC Communications Committee and a Senior Planner with the Building, Governance and Innovation Division-Construction Standards and Digital Solutions Branch at the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs.



PIBC Conference attendees networking and participating in conference sessions covering a range of land-use topics.



Industrial Lands and Mega Projects – The Next Chapter

Eric Aderneck RPP, MCIP
PIBC Board Member

I had the privilege of contributing to three industrial lands related sessions at the PIBC 2025 Annual Conference, which brought together experts from planning, development, architecture, and industry.

Throughout my work, as well as preparing for the conference and engaging at the sessions, it's evident that industrial lands and employment uses are top of mind.

Opening Statement

During a time of heightened concern about economic resiliency and employment stability, changes to production sources and trade flows, and renewed interest in natural resource sectors, industrial lands are on the agenda at all levels of government. From the federal government wanting to support manufacturing within Canada and grow trade with Asia through the western ports, the provincial government fast-tracking approvals for major resource projects, regional strategies about industrial lands in Metro Vancouver, to bring-to-market initiatives and local area plans in Maple Ridge and Kelowna, it's an industrious time.

As a primer, industrial lands represent a whole gamut of uses and intensities, which do not all fit into conventional definitions of *heavy* or *light*, or *traditional* and *modern*¹. An industrial use can include everything from large transportation, distribution, and manufacturing facilities to small local-serving producers and suppliers, as well as new sectors like advanced technology, media / design, bio-tech, and e-commerce.

Industrial lands accommodate activities that serve the wider community, yet don't often receive much attention. These industrial businesses and their associated direct and secondary impacts contribute to a diverse and strong economy, and accommodate an accessible workforce with well-paying jobs that support household affordability.

Session CS-05: Industrial Lands Innovation and Intensification Trends

With Carl Funk, RPP, MCIP (Director of Industrial Planning and Development, Beedie), Robert Miles, RPP, MCIP (Long Range Planning Manager, City of Kelowna), Craig Taylor (Founder and President, TKA+D

Architecture + Design), and myself.

The panel addressed the diverse types of industrial land uses and innovative building forms from the perspective to the planner, the developer, and the designer. This included an overview of industrial uses, classification definitions and utilization measures, planning policy context in the Metro Vancouver region, the increasing attention to industrial lands and associated economic and employment needs in Kelowna, explanation about development trends and financial pro forma considerations, and a series of architecturally innovative and intensified building examples.

Accompanying urban 'livability' is 'workability'. Industrial lands and employment uses are an integral part of a community's economy. The session dove into this niche industrial topic which has a disproportional importance for policy planning and economic development matters, ranging from land uses, transportation, business, employment, and taxation, all contributing to the long term, sustainable success of our communities, big and small.

Just like housing typologies, historic land-intensive industrial uses are in some cases moving to urban locations in new multi-level forms, to increase capacity for employment and economic growth. Responding to the changing nature of work and industry, these innovative, higher density building designs provide opportunities to complement surrounding land uses. We presented the opportunities and challenges of industrial intensification / densification, potential integration with other uses, and transportation matters including on-site parking rates.

Industrial isn't just old and boring. Rather, is it an underappreciated land use and asset class. Modernized municipal policies and regulations can help facilitate efficient industrial development.

Session AW-02: Why Mega Projects Matter – Connecting Planning, Resource Investments, and Provincial Prosperity

Moderated by David Block, RPP, MCIP (Director of Development Services, City of Terrace), with Jada Basi, RPP, MCIP (Principal, CitySpaces Consulting), and Jake Brewster (Senior Advisor Land Negotiation, Pembina Pipeline Corporation), and myself.

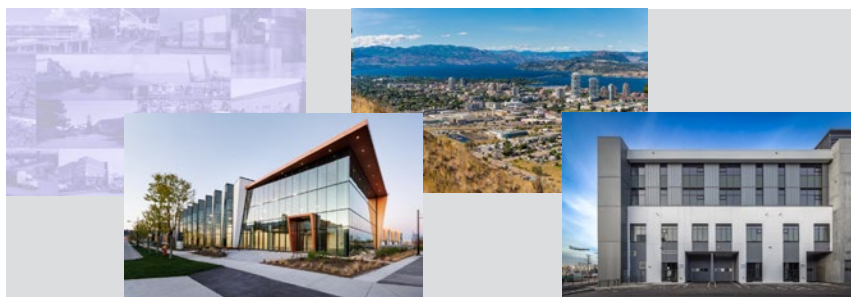
The current economic chapter in British Columbia, fueled by natural resource sector projects, is coming to a close. While many of these 'mega' projects are located in northern BC, their economic importance is province-wide, as they support many more businesses and jobs and contribute to significant government tax revenues, which fund programs in other parts of the province.

Affording livability requires high paying jobs. Local government planners should increasingly attend to this economic prerogative, as they do about housing supply, quality of life, and complete communities.

The standard of living in BC has kept pace with the rest of Canada because mega projects with capital investments in the tens of billions of dollars, such as aluminum production and LNG terminals in Kitimat and other major natural resource projects. Utilities, oil and gas, and mining are amongst the industries that pay the tax bills and also pay the highest salaries.

With many of these projects nearing completion, what will take their place? To understand the past patterns and future potential of the province, we set the stage with an overview of the current macro-economic era, the linkage between mega projects and the standard of living, and the housing and community needs of resource towns.

The unique history of the Kitimat was



Industrial Lands Innovation and Intensification Trends

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showcased, pioneered by Alcan but intended to not be a company town, it was created in the 1950s to accommodate the new aluminum smelter, along with an associated hydro dam, tunnel, underground powerhouse, transmission line, and deep-sea terminal. Intent to attract and retain workers to the brand-new town, using the Garden City concept, the design kept industry separated from residents, with generous community amenities and large areas for expansion. Supporting the major industry projects, the service centre area is focused on business activities that typically fall into light industrial uses.

More recently in Kitimat, the Cedar LNG facility is a Haisla-led project, using the Coastal Gaslink Pipeline which also serves the LNG Canada facility. Powered by renewable energy with low emissions, Cedar LNG is expected to create 500 construction jobs and 100 long-term jobs in operations.

Through further collaboration between public and private sector planners and other land-related professionals, there is the opportunity to sustain community prosperity, support funding of infrastructure and services, grow the workforce and economy, and advance public policy objectives and private sector investments.

Session MW-08: Urban Industrial Densification – Walking Tour of Mt Pleasant Area

With an engaging set of pedestrians, I provided a guide of the industrial lands in the Mt Pleasant area. This walking tour asked participants 'what is industrial' and what uses are supportive and compatible, or conflicting and incompatible, with traditional and/or modern industrial activities in an urban environment.

While the Mt Pleasant area of Vancouver is only blocks away from multiple SkyTrain stations, it's also part of the Metro Vancouver region, which has Canada's largest port, a rapidly growing population, and a limited land base.

Beyond the board room or council chamber, the tour provided an interactive illustration of industrial / commercial buildings and employment uses, ranging from conventional industrial tenants to software and life-science sectors. The eclectic area's profile of jobs has changed over the past few decades, with loss of traditional manufacturing and growth of tech businesses, yet a number of old residential houses along with amenities remain.

These latest industrial development trends are driving new opportunities for densification and intensification, while challenging traditional planning regulations.

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Membership Engagement: An Update on PIBC's Professional Governance Research and Engagement Project

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Chair, RPP Regulation Subcommittee

Author's Note: this is the third article in Planning West reporting on the status of PIBC's Professional Governance Research and Engagement Project.

For more than 60 years, the Planning Institute of British Columbia (PIBC) has been shaping the planning profession in a way that strives for excellence and reflects the broader public interest. Enhancements over the years have improved membership standards and professional conduct, and introduced committees to monitor and provide recommendations on PIBC activities; and to add value to our members.

The BC *Professional Governance Act* (PGA) received Royal Assent in 2018, and PIBC is now considering this legislation and how it might apply to the planning profession in British Columbia. The primary purpose of the PGA is to set out a governance framework for self-regulating professions that protects the public interest from, and reduces the risk of, unethical and incompetent practice. To date, six professions have been regulated under the PGA (agrologists, applied biologists, architects, engineers and geoscientists, applied science technologists and technicians, and forestry professionals), and the landscape architects are voluntarily in transition to moving under the Act.

The PIBC membership is not currently regulated under the PGA, and at this time no action has been taken by either PIBC or the provincial government that would lead to planning professionals being regulated by this legislation. The PIBC Board however realizes the value in fully understanding what regulation under the PGA might mean for PIBC and its members; and so, in December 2023 the Board approved direction to undertake outreach and education about the PGA and its possible opportunities and implications for PIBC and its membership. This process is in no way intended to result in a decision on whether the planning profession should be regulated under the PGA, but rather to gather and analyze information regarding the pros and cons of such a move should it occur, and to provide a comprehensive review to the Board in order

