

World Town Planning Day

“Not Every Profession Gets Its Own Day”

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These were the guiding words spoken by emcee Pam Shaw (PhD, RPP, FCIP) at the World Town Planning Day (WTPD) gala event on November 2, 2024 as Planners from across BC and Yukon gathered at the Pan Pacific Hotel in Vancouver. As the evening’s host, Pam spoke about the importance of this annual celebration that globally highlights how urban and regional planning shape our communities.

WTPD was originally established in 1949 by Professor Carlos María della Paolera from Argentina. He envisioned a day dedicated to increasing public awareness of the role of planning in improving the quality of life for people in cities, towns, and rural areas. Since then, it has grown into an event celebrated in over 30 countries, emphasizing the critical role of thoughtful and inclusive community planning in addressing contemporary issues such as climate change, population growth, and resource scarcity.

Celebrating World Town Planning Day

Celebrations for WTPD vary globally, but they often include conferences, workshops, educational campaigns, and awards recognizing excellence in planning. Universities and

professional organizations host discussions on urban challenges and showcase innovative solutions. Events may also involve interactive activities, such as urban design competitions and guided tours of exemplary city planning projects.

Educational initiatives on this day aim to inspire the next generation of Planners. Students are encouraged to explore careers in planning and learn how their skills can contribute to building better communities.

Membership Presentations

The gala included a welcoming presentation to those seasoned professionals celebrating 25+ years of PIBC membership, as well as congratulating the newest members on their full RPP certification. During these acknowledgements, I reflected on what I believe is the biggest strength of our profession; a diverse and collaborative group of professionals that shares information amongst colleagues in order to successfully navigate the immense challenges we face in our local communities. Being a member of PIBC allows us to exchange experiences through social connection, which provides each of us the opportunity to learn

different approaches to resolving challenging issue associated with community building projects we each work on. This work leaves an indelible impression on both the built and natural environment. Indeed our communities are constantly evolving, due to both internal and external pressures. But planning is more than designing streets, buildings, and green spaces. It is a multidisciplinary effort to ensure that communities function efficiently, equitably, and sustainably. One of the core principles celebrated on World Town Planning Day is the value of community participation in shaping urban spaces.

Our profession has been criticized for making decisions from a top-down perspective, with minimal input from citizens and residents upon which these decisions have significant impacts. In 2024, ensuring meaningful community participation on land use and development projects has become a point of contention for many residents across British Columbia. The planning profession is at the helm of addressing the provincial housing crisis, and Planners from all sectors (whether you work for a private, public or non-profit organization) had to contend with the inherent conflict between ensuring opportunities for effective community participation and ensuring that development proposals proceeded in a timely manner. With the introduction of the new provincial housing legislation (and corresponding regulations), the focus in 2024 has been for municipalities to bring local bylaws and policies into compliance. Through the implementation of this legislation, municipalities have had to further limit the opportunity to receive public input at important junctures of the planning and land use development process. Reducing opportunities for public engagement (particularly during rezonings) helps to overcome the “not in my backyard” (NIMBY) sentiment that can sometimes hinder development proposals such as affordable housing projects. In these situations, Planners are a crucial connection with local community groups, and we have a responsibility to ensure transparency in decision making, and have inclusive stakeholder participation that provides feedback on land use planning decisions. Planners must play attention to local priorities, cultural values and specific technical challenges associated





PIBC members in attendance and receiving recognition at the 2024 World Town Planning Day gala event. Congratulations to the many new and long serving RPPs





with a development site. Ensuring opportunities for effective public input can be difficult, but having it will build trust between governments and communities, reducing conflict and project delays. There is a growing recognition (both at the political and administrative levels) that inclusive and participatory planning leads to better outcomes. No-one should be left behind.

Featured Presentation

The evening featured a presentation by Eve Hou, RPP, MCIP, Senior Manager of Policy Development and Decision Analysis at Translink, who spoke about the unprecedented growth pressures that the Vancouver region is

experiencing, and how TransLink is adapting to this new reality. The regional growth trends draw attention to transit systems that are now required to support broader government policy goals, including climate, housing & affordability, immigration and economic productivity. Add to this that funding challenges are worsening due to external factors such as the capping of fare hikes, the popularity of low emissions electric vehicles (which in turn results in a reduction of gas tax revenue), as well as overcrowding on existing transit networks. Furthermore, inflation has increased all of TransLink's costs. With this as background, *Transport 2050* was developed as a 30-year strategy for regional transportation projects,

policies and programs. If you live in Metro Vancouver, *Transport 2050* will shape how you get around. The document identifies projects, services and policies for the next 30 years in order to create a fairer and more just and inclusive transportation system. The discussion on how technology is creating a dramatic revolution in transportation is particularly interesting. The transformation of electric vehicles, autonomous vehicles, urban aerial mobility and shared mobility are all promising technologies that will support – and not replace – the most sustainable modes of walking, biking, rolling, and transit. As Eve Hou explained during her presentation, the 10-year priorities plan (called the *Access for Everyone Plan* which





describes the priorities for the first 10 years of *Transport 2050*), contemplates building 170 kilometres of rapid transit, including up to 9 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors, a Burnaby Mountain Gondola, and the Millenium Line extension to UBC. This is a bold implementation blueprint to put TransLink on a path to achieving the goals set out in the region's 30-year transportation strategy.

Reflecting on World Town Planning Day

By celebrating the founding principles of WTPD, we are reminded that communities are not haphazardly built—they are carefully planned to reflect the values, aspirations, and priorities of their residents. As urban areas

continue to grow and evolve, the principles of sustainable, inclusive, and resilient planning will be crucial in ensuring a high quality of life for all.

We recognize the vital role of Planners in addressing the challenges of today and shaping the communities of tomorrow. Let us use WTPD as an inspiration to collaborate, innovate, and build a future where everyone can thrive.

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