

# Editor's Note: Planning in Complex Times

/ Maria Stanborough RPP, MCIP

One evening in the summer I was walking my dog on the east side of Vancouver, not far from a 300+ person encampment located in the only large greenspace in one of Canada's poorest neighbourhoods.

Four Indigenous youth were walking with a portable sound system and, I assumed, were celebrating. One of the youth asked me what I thought they were doing. I said it looked like a moving dance party. He told me it was a funeral for their friend who they found dead that morning. They continued walking in the direction of the tent city in Strathcona Park.

The layers of this moment are fairly incredible. The fact that something like this can happen casually on an evening walk is very sad, to say the least.

As an urban planner I look for solutions to bigger societal problems on a local level. I wonder how we can plan a better city, how all levels of government can come together to find solutions. But the hard truth is that zoning and land use policy aren't going to solve these bigger issues.

## So how do we change this? What is the solution?

Certainly there is no quick and easy answer until we adopt a fundamental shift

in priorities. This shift will happen, albeit incrementally. The Black Lives Matter movement is a beautiful example: it is ongoing, it is present, and it has gained momentum.

In this issue of *Planning West*, we have some examples of how to shift the discussion, and what planners can focus on. In her latest installment of "Plan Girl," Emilie K. Adin identifies the need for us to consider a 'just recovery,' one centred on social equity, racial justice, and climate resilience. She explores this in terms of what is happening in Puerto Rico and compares that to what is happening in B.C.

Other articles in this issue explore effective climate change action ("Is Planting Trees *the* Solution...?"; "Accelerate Kootenays"; "Dockside Green") and creating communities for everyone ("Leaving the City Behind"; "Child in the City").

The PIBC Awards also offer examples of innovation that are not from the typical sites of urban planning.

The gold winner for Excellence in Planning for Small Town and Rural Areas was guided by the Naut'sa mawt Tribal Council and had input from 108 First Nations throughout B.C. The final document *Our Sacred Land: Indigenous Peoples'*

*Land Use Planning Handbook in BC* was designed to support First Nation communities taking control of the land use planning process.

The Gold Winner for Research & New Directions was awarded to the Eastside Culture Crawl, a not-for-profit organization that celebrates art through an annual public event and ongoing programming. The organizers of the Crawl, seeing so many artists' spaces being lost to new, unaffordable and non-arts development, took an innovative step to identify what was being lost and how to protect it.

And the Silver Winner for Research & New Directions was a partnership with HUB Cycling and Translink. HUB is a not-for-profit organization that has 20-years' experience dedicated to removing barriers to cycling in Metro Vancouver. Their final report for Translink offers an up-to-date picture of cycling across the region and serves as a benchmark against which future progress can be measured. From a small organization comes a foundational piece of research.

To start creating better communities, we need to look at the opposite of what I would call 'neo-liberal urban planning.' Rather than maximize property value and individual wealth, we can shift to prioritizing community health and well-being. If nothing else, our current world reality would suggest that the status quo isn't working. Fortunately for us there are people committed to positive change, both in and outside of urban planning, who are directing us to a better path.

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Image of tent city in Strathcona Park, Vancouver. Photo courtesy of CBC website