

Between the Bridges

The voice of False Creek South | Jan/Feb 2020

Is False Creek South Really For Sale?

To no-one's surprise, a recent Tyee article by UBC professor Patrick Condon headlined *Vancouver Looks Poised To Sell Off False Creek* generated waves of concern among residents of the Creek.

Market Hill resident Kathryn Woodward contacted Condon directly - then wrote to The Tyee, taking it to task for its "unnecessarily inflammatory headline (that) caused quite a stir here in False Creek South.

"I contacted Mr. Condon, on behalf of the False Creek South Neighbourhood Association, to ask where this information came from," she wrote, "because in all our dealings with the city on lease end issues, the City has always been firm that selling the land of False Creek South is not on the table and will not be on the table in the future.

"Mr. Condon answered me that nowhere in the article does he say there will be sell-off and he is right. Your headline writer made that up.

"Because Patrick Condon is a UBC professor and a man who writes much about planning and other city issues, the headline caused many FCS residents to assume he knew something we

didn't, i.e. that the City was now changing its position on a sell-off. This is unconscionable."

In an earlier "Dear Neighbours" letter to the community, False Creek South Neighbourhood Association president, Wendy Herdin, wrote:

"While we conclude from both our experience and current information that the City has no intention of changing this long-standing position, our future depends heavily on both the nature of redevelopment and the resolution of the lease situation.

"Accordingly, the Association, through RePlan, is accelerating its efforts to convince our elected mayor and councillors of the urgent need to enact public policy that can protect and enhance this neighbourhood.

"To retain and increase the stock of affordable housing, based on the design and social cohesion principles of False Creek South, is a priority concern for all of us."

Inside

Community Planning Workshops	2
Upcoming Events	3
Opinion: Public Art - In Your Face	3
Envisioning Physio	5

Little Mountain	6
Green Retrofits	8
Ripples from the Creek	10
Remembering Gillian Willis	11
Sustainability Panel	12

Community

Planning Moves Ahead

Determined to move ahead in helping to shape the future of False Creek South, the FCSNA through its RePlan Committee is seizing the initiative with its own community planning process and inviting participation at a neighbourhood workshop on January 25 and 29.

Driven by an emerging opportunity for a major innovation on currently underutilized land, this new inclusive process seeks community-wide input and ultimately consensus on a vision for the future and how it can best be incrementally advanced. Presenters at the meeting will demonstrate how future development can both embody and advance the values and virtues of the present and address the key contexts within which planning can provide for both continuity and change. The new proposal will be based on the planning principles that were developed by local residents with City staff and adopted unanimously by City Council in 2018.

The proposal will introduce the concept of an “Intergenerational Hub” that could help to define the neighbourhood going forward, starting with the underdeveloped land near the Olympic Village Skytrain Station. The Hub would include a major expansion and modernization of the current Broadway Lodge care facility and associated housing for seniors and others who can live more independently with appropriate health supports. It would also include a significant expansion of existing co-ops to house

seniors and families with children as well as a considerable amount of workforce housing adjacent to the SkyTrain Station.

False Creek South was developed through a creative partnership of the three levels of government. The purpose of the workshop is to fully inform residents about the new opportunities and widen community discussion so that residents can have a central voice in working with the three governments to retain and expand this highly livable mixed income community. Over 80% of the housing is on land owned by the City and leased to co-ops, non-profit societies or stratas. Implementation will require long term leases for existing and new development.

The larger intention is to develop a coherent plan that will set the planning agenda – including the resolution of lease issues -- for the future of this wonderful neighbourhood. The hope is to work in partnership to create a renewed model for the City’s emergent Vancouver Plan as well as the National and Provincial Housing Strategies. Your thoughts and ideas will be welcome.

RSVP via Eventbrite at jan25cpg.eventbrite.ca or jan29cpg.eventbrite.ca or email Robyn at replan@falsecreeksouth.org.

Upcoming Events

Kids Only Market

Customer Appreciation Day Treasure Hunt

Sunday, January 19

12:00-3:00pm

Granville Island Kids Market

Planning the Future of False Creek South Neighbourhood Workshops

Saturday, January 25

4:30-6:30pm

Lind Hall, False Creek Community Centre

jan25cpg.eventbrite.ca

Wednesday, January 29

7:00-9:00pm

Sitka Square meeting room, 1092 Sitka Square

jan29cpg.eventbrite.ca

Granville Bridge Connector Open Houses

Friday, January 24

12:00-7:00 pm

City Lab, 511 W Broadway

Saturday, January 25

12:00-5:00pm

City Lab, 511 W Broadway

Tuesday, January 28

4:00-8:00pm

Central Library Promenade, 350 W Georgia

RSVP at <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/granville-bridge-connector-phase-3-workshops-tickets-88920067315>

More events at falsecreeksouth.org/events

Opinion: Public Art – In Your Face

by Sharon Yandle (*Marine Mews*)

When I was a kid a man who'd lived through the Great Depression told me that from time to time rich people liked to throw a party called The Washerwomen's Ball, a reference to women who made their living taking in laundry. The party was attended by the very well-to-do, all dressed up as poor people. They had a wonderful time, he said.

Some decades later I was taken to a restaurant in Florida called Po' Folks, part of a national chain owned by Burt Reynolds. Down home food like catfish and grits was served on tin plates, with drinks in canning jars at tables jam smacked with smiling white patrons. The only visible poor folks were the servers, black and unsmiling.

Both those events came to mind when I decided to check out *Spinning Chandelier* twirling under the Granville Bridge.

I like public art. It can lighten up a city often called No Fun and can always start a conversation. I liked *The Stop* because a row of stop signs in Charleson Park was so whimsical. Others couldn't stand it. I liked *Love Your Bean*, the giant jelly beans also set in our park, where kids liked to climb all over them next to the sign that said No Climbing. Some people hated either *Poodle* on the Main Street pole or
(cont. on page 4)

A-Maze-Ing Laughing in the West End, or the stacked cars on *Totem Pole* near Science World, or *Acoustic Anvil: A Small Weight To Forge The Sea* in Leg-In-Boot Square. I appreciated all of them, mostly because they were there - that the City had provided public art for people to enjoy (or argue about) and some artists actually received money for their work.

That was before *Spinning Chandelier*.

I didn't know that paying for public art is part of the deal when a developer like Westbank has a project like Vancouver House - the inverted looking building across the Creek where a buyer who can't afford \$9M for the penthouse may have to settle for a lesser unit for a mere \$6.9M. Whatever companies pay for art is small change tossed by millionaire developers who build housing beyond the reach of most people who live and work here. Who does live in these buildings or, indeed, whether anyone does, is not their business. On to the next one.

I foolishly thought that an independent committee, consisting at least partly of artists, decided which art would be chosen for public display. But Westbank not only paid for the art but got to choose it. And to have its choice installed on public land. And to pool its public art obligations from four of its developments into one pricey monument to itself where all the money that could support a number of artists is paid to only one.

Which brings me to *Spinning Chandelier* as a work of art. Perhaps in another context, one could appreciate the incongruity of a chandelier set under a bridge, a traditional hangout and often home for poor people the world over.

But that's not the context here. Westbank, whose wealth is made by providing housing to the rich, invites us to admire this in-your-face \$4.8M chandelier. There could be no greater symbol of that world and its result, the driving out of the poor and not-yet poor who can't afford to live here anymore. In so doing this developer is no different from the jovial party-goers done up in rags for the Washerwomen's Ball, or the well-served restaurant patrons who cheer each other on with the clink of canning jars.

Envisioning Physio And More

By Susan Harris (Newport Quay)

(First in a **Between The Bridges** series about health services in the Creek)

One of the healthcare jewels of our community, Envision False Creek has a partner clinic on South Granville Street. Founded by Brent Stevenson and co-owned by Harry Toor – both physiotherapists – Envision is truly an interdisciplinary organization, with collaborative practices among physiotherapists, massage therapists, kinesiologists (personal trainers), dieticians, counselors, and physicians.

Treatments offered by the varied and highly skilled cadre of 16 physiotherapists at the False Creek clinic include osteopathic manual therapy, sports physiotherapy, pre- and post-natal therapy for new mothers, IMS (intramuscular) dry needling, visceral manipulation, pelvic health interventions. Clients served at Envision are as varied as the staff, including those with sports injuries, acute or chronic pain, dizziness, incontinence, Parkinson disease, scoliosis/kyphosis or cardiac health concerns. As well, a medical clinic on site (Mainline Wellness) offers intravenous (IV) infusions for clients with iron deficiencies, multiple sclerosis, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

Brent and Harry are also creative and successful authors in the healthcare arena! Brent developed an oft-visited website that morphed into a book now available on Amazon, both entitled "Why

Things Hurt." A collection of true stories and meaningful explanations about how our bodies work and the journeys we travel to maintain them, the book and website provide accessible answers and structured principles on topics such as posture, pain, pregnancy, exercise, footwear and sports. Not to be outdone, Harry has built a free online exercise database (exer-pedia.com) and written and illustrated a children's book, *A Robot Called Zip*, teaching basic fundamentals of physical health.

In addition to attracting clients from the False Creek South community – who often cycle or walk to the clinic – others have travelled to Envision from as far away as Washington state and Winnipeg, having read "Why Things Hurt" and been impressed by Brent's practical explanations of the relationship of physical and emotional health based, in part, on his own personal history as "an injury-prone physical therapist".

When I asked Brent why he had chosen Leg-in-Boot Square as the site of his second (and larger) clinic, he commented first on the beautiful view and serenity of the setting but concluded by plagiarizing Kevin Costner (not entirely tongue-in-cheek): "If you build it, they will come!"

Phone number: 604-876-2344

Web address: EnvisionPhysio.com

The Little Mountain Fiasco: A Cautionary Tale For False Creek South

Two months ago several False Creek South residents attended a demonstration protesting both the destruction of the publicly-owned Little Mountain social housing and the absence of new housing in its place. Their ears perked up when one of the speakers, area neighbour Norm Dooley, cited False Creek South as an important model for affordable housing on public land.

“Government-owned land can be used to support various market and non-market housing on a long-term lease basis”, he said.

“Vancouver residents know full well the stories of how False Creek was re-developed in the ‘70s using public land. The same could be done at Little Mountain if government still owned the land base.”

Very likely Dooley was unaware of the now 8-year attempt by the False Creek South Neighbourhood Association, through its planning committee, RePlan, to work with the City toward a future based on the community’s success story, through retaining and building new affordable housing.

False Creek South may well be a model for the Little Mountain neighbourhood, but Little Mountain may be a cautionary tale for False Creek South.

To recap the Little Mountain story: In 1954 a cooperative agreement with all three levels of government created the Little Mountain social housing project. Thirty-seven buildings housed 700 people in 224 family units.

Some 50 years later the federal government transferred its ownership share to the B.C. Liberal provincial government which, in turn, immediately sold the land to a private developer, Holborn Holdings. While full details of the sale remain shrouded in unusual secrecy, what is known is that the deal placed no timelines on Holborn to begin construction.

As one Little Mountain protester wryly noted, Holborn gave new meaning to the word “Holding” by not building on the property it bought in 2008, even though in 2009 it evicted the tenants and demolished the buildings. The site remained a 15-acre vacant lot for six years until 53 social housing units were built in 2015. The next year the City approved re-zoning of the site to provide for 1573 housing units, of which 18%, or 282 (including the 53 already built), are earmarked for social housing. Except for a temporary modular housing structure, no building has taken place. *(cont. on page 7)*

The still-unrealized plan would provide a 3.8% increase in social housing over that demolished in 2009, something that housing activists like Linda Shuto dismiss as sleight-of-hand.

“The point isn’t whether the developer agreed to a paltry increase in affordable units”, she said.

“Had the land remained in public hands the driving force would be public policy, not private profit. Redevelopment could provide affordable housing in well over a thousand family units.

“As it is, in the Holborn scheme 82% of the new units are designated as not-affordable.

“That’s the point.”

Since then many False Creek South residents have worried that the same thing could happen here, especially after an opinion piece appeared in The Tyee (03 January 2020). Headlined Vancouver Looks Poised To Sell Off False Creek South by Patrick Condon, UBC adjunct professor and first Chair of the university’s Urban Design Centre, the article begins with the statement, “The warning signs are there. Greed may ruin a model for diverse affordability”.

Could this be the City’s plan for our community?

RePlan Chair Richard Evans doesn’t think so.

“That would certainly be the worst possible decision. As the Little Mountain experience shows, the very real opportunities to provide homes within the reach of most people’s incomes are lost, perhaps irretrievably, when public land becomes the private property of developers whose business is, first and foremost, to turn a healthy profit.”

But another plan could be in the works.

“Given the negative attitude of some City staff toward our community”, he continued, “we may have the same problem as Little Mountain but in another, subtler form. The City could retain nominal land ownership but concede development rights with little or no affordability mandate to private interests, resulting in housing that more than half the City’s population could not afford.

“Back in the 1970’s we managed to be creative about these things, and today we have both this rich tradition to draw from, and a community with the demonstrated creative horsepower to help forge a new direction. And the willingness to do so that is in keeping with established City policy.

“What we do not have is leadership to partner with in the creative public policy implementation realm.

“Indeed, where are the politicians?”

Green Retrofitting Our Homes

How long can False Creek South buildings last?

According to architect and long-time resident Monty Wood, traditional wood frame buildings, if built well, properly maintained and adaptable to new Code changes, can be tuned up to last years beyond their anticipated life.

“With its original urban design emphasizing livability, public transit over cars, courtyards over blocks, sound understated architecture, and buildings of mixed affordability, False Creek South was, and still is, way ahead of its time.

“We can be closer to adapting to the projected conditions of 2050 than any other local neighbourhood because of our wood-frame homes.”

Say what?

“Energy-efficient wood buildings are emerging as the ideal.”

There’s certainly evidence to back up that claim. Three years ago the 18-story wood Brock Tower was built at UBC. In Norway a new wood building is 75 stories high. And if the proposed new art gallery is ever built, it will also be made of wood.

New interest in wood construction flows directly from the imperatives of climate change. Concrete can’t be made without cement and steel, and their manufacture emits more fossil carbon than the fuel burned by every plane in the sky. But wood is a renewable resource, trees are carbon sinks, and building with wood extends the timeline of those carbon sinks. Wood buildings have similar lengths of service life as concrete & steel, primarily because wood buildings can be renovated and repurposed more easily.

Monty points to the beautiful wooden churches built in medieval Norway, the pagodas of Japan and the circa 1900 houses in Shaughnessy.

“The wood framing is in great shape. But they have very little insulation and their heating bills and greenhouse gas emissions are huge issues.”

He recalls that a few years after False Creek South was built, the ‘energy crisis’ occurred and building codes called for more insulation, leading to the ‘leaky condos era.’

“The exterior walls were wood frame stuffed with insulation, then sealed upon both the interior and exterior sides. *(cont. on page 9)*

But water eventually got inside the walls by rain leaks and/or by humidity condensation from cooking & washing activities. The moisture puddled on the wood then incubated – and in time, the walls rotted out.

“Green retrofitting is the very opposite of what was done then.

“A wood frame is already ‘green.’ But for much longer service life, it needs the protection of a better exterior envelope system to keep it dried out and rot free. And saving energy reduces greenhouse gasses, both now and for our future generations.”

The major difference, he said, will be improvements in the exterior envelope.

“Over the wood structure there’s a rainscreen, then insulation, then a single air-tight membrane, and finally a ventilation system to manage indoor humidity. New insulated foundations and doors, low-e windows and vents complete the enclosure of the airtight envelope.

“You’re separating the structure from the insulation – and suddenly your heating bill goes way down.

“Add solar panels, and our homes could achieve net-zero status.”

Asked about the infrastructure beyond the building envelope, he replied,

“Sea level rise is an issue, here as everywhere. For electrical, the first task is to move the transformers above the anticipated level. That means 4.7 metres in height measured to the underside of the joists below habitable space. A crawl space and garage can be below that.

“As for plumbing, the good move is toward centralized heat pumps for hot water distribution, distributed enclave-wide via parkades &/or crawlspaces. At present the cast iron storm and sanitary drains are fine. Some hot & cold water copper piping should be replaced with plastic/nylon pipes.

“Green retrofitted buildings can last for a long, long time. And extending the working life of our buildings means, in turn, saving the famous urban design planning of False Creek South.”

But what about the cost? For all its advantages, isn’t green retrofitting one expensive operation?

“Yes, of course. It’s not a cheap job to retrofit and get to net zero. But you have to compare it to the cost of demolishing and building anew and new green builds are a quarter of the cost. There are green incentives and mortgage assistance from all three levels of government and the costs can be amortized over 25 years.

‘For most of us in False Creek South, that depends on lease continuation. Financing depends on that.

“In fact, everything does.”

Ripples from the Creek: The Sockeye Limited Interrupts Creekers’ Sleep

by Kathryn Woodward (Market Hill)

What can be done? wrote a 1982 caller to *The Creek* newspaper.

About the night trains. Two per night. Blowing whistles at 3 in the morning.

The Creek answered with a column, Night Train Nuisance, and informed sleep-deprived Creekers that then City Councillor and Kerrisdale resident George Puil was being equally roused and was insisting the City of Vancouver put the exact same question to BC Hydro Rail.

Two rail lines run along the edges of False Creek. BC Hydro Rail had long leased the north-south line from the CPR. Began in 1902, the Sockeye Limited, connected Vancouver to Steveston’s fishing industry. It ran from the north end of the Granville Bridge over the Kitsilano Trestle, with a stop at Millside on 4th Avenue, then onward towards Marpole and beyond. In 1905, the BC Electric Company (precursor to BC Hydro) took on the line’s lease, continuing to run freight trains and adding a passenger interurban service. By the 50s, the ubiquity of automobiles ended the Interurban system in Vancouver but freight trains continued to lumber along, serving industries like the Carling O’Keefe and Molson breweries until 2001, when Carling O’Keefe was gone and Molson’s stopped receiving cargo by rail. With the line now dormant,

community gardens, walkers and bikers took over the right-of-way. Years of wrangling with the CPR finally produced a 2006 agreement whereby the City of Vancouver purchased the line. Part of it is now the Arbutus Greenway.

A second line, always just a freight line, which the City had already purchased in the late 1990’s, runs east-west along the edge of False Creek South, from Granville Island to the Cambie Bridge along 6th Avenue. Luckily for today’s residents, trains no longer trundle this route, blocking traffic trying to get in and out of the neighbourhood. During the 2010 Winter Olympics, a demonstration streetcar on loan from Brussels used the line to run from Granville Island to the Olympic Village Canada Line station.

Before then and for a few years after, the line also hosted an occasional historic tram, operating as the Vancouver Downtown Historic Railway. The City is now considering using this track for a revitalized interurban streetcar system, although according to resident Graham McGarva, whose architectural firm did a study on the line for the City, the track would need upgrading to meet standards suitable to major long term transportation. Hopefully any option the City comes up with will not be blasting a horn at 2 in the morning.

Remembering Gillian Willis

by Marie-Claude Collins (Harbour Terrace)

Long-time Harbour Terrace resident and our good neighbour Gillian Willis passed away at her home in late December. Gillian loved her False Creek South neighbourhood and participated actively in her community, volunteering for many events. A Neighbourhood Association delegate for Harbour Terrace for many years, Gillian helped make lanterns for the annual carolling event, regularly manned the fort for the Keep Vancouver Spectacular clean-up, and was part of the support team for our two Syrian refugee families. Gillian entered her beloved papillon dogs (her “guys”, as she called them) in the dog agility demonstration at Granville Island every Canada Day.

Gillian had many other interests. She was an accomplished photographer and frequently shared her pictures of flowers and birds. She volunteered for many years with the Vancouver Citizen’s Crime Watch and at the Vancouver Bird Hospital.

Gillian was born in New Zealand where she had trained and worked as a pharmacist, but she’d always had a travel bug. Before settling in Canada she traveled via the Middle East to Afghanistan and India. In Canada she used her pharmacological background to develop a vast

knowledge of the diagnosis and treatment of poisonings and overdoses. She helped establish the Drug and Poison Information Centre (DPIC) in Vancouver, the first of its kind in Canada. But she also kept on with active travel: visiting Antarctica; trekking in Nepal; whitewater rafting on the Zambezi; observing wild gorillas in the Congo; hiking to Machu Picchu.

Gill was planning to go home to New Zealand in March to celebrate her 80th birthday with family. Fearing that her health might not permit it, she tracked the New Zealand travel of friends online to offer information and advice. Those who knew her well cherish how helpful she was to others. Many more will remember her walking in the neighbourhood with her spectacular little “guys” in tow.

Sustainability Panel

Last November 27 the FCSNA Speaker Series presented a panel on “Sustainability and Sea Level Rise in False Creek.” The panel included three experts: Angela Danyluk, the Senior Sustainability Specialist for the City of Vancouver; environmental consultant and local resident Yael Stav; and urban designer Scott Hein.

Angela Danyluk described the City’s approach to the climate emergency, with particular attention to the inevitability of sea level rise (apparently not as bad a threat here as in some other parts of the city). Her emphasis is on planning for shoreline flood protection, working with communities to design creative approaches to adaptation. She announced an upcoming consultation process for False Creek under the Sea2City Coastal Design Challenge that will be part of CityPlan, and invited the audience to keep in touch with the City’s work through its website.

Yael Stav focused her talk on the local and practical things we can do, individually and as a community, to adapt and thrive within a more climate-constrained world. She pointed to the major environmental impacts of practices we often take for granted, such as food waste, and encouraged us to think creatively about how to live more sustainably with and within natural processes.

Through several slides Scott Hein presented examples of what has been done elsewhere and what might be done here to design for environmental resilience through major infrastructure projects. He advocated creative solutions that contribute to ecological security in ways that recognize the history and identity of this place, take advantage of its water setting, and with both beauty and practicality establish distinguished gateways to False Creek and the urban environment.

A lively discussion followed the dense and informative presentations. Although no recording of the event is available, readers can get a fuller sense of the content through the presentation slides at:

<http://www.falsecreeksouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Sustainability-Slides-REDUCED.pdf>