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# Vancouver B.C.'s Role in Sustainable Development

Urban planning represents one sector amongst many attending to climate change. Although development can cause several negative impacts to the environment, there are planners devoted to sustainable urban planning, acknowledging multi-dimensional aspects such as transportation and neighborhood identity to promote pedestrian orientation. Further than planners are entire cities making a commitment to sustainable planning, such is true of Vancouver, British Columbia. In fact, the city has made a devout goal to "becoming the greenest city in the world by 2020," as stated in their Greenest City 2020 Action Plan (GCAP, 2015). This paper will analyze the positive and negative implications of sustainable planning, as exemplified by the city of Vancouver.

Vancouver, B.C. has a long history building to their position as one of the world's greenest cities. Its sustainable conscious originates back in the 1960s when residents of Vancouver's Strathcona neighborhood stopped the construction of a highway, which would have levelled their community and severely altered the shape of the city. To this day, Vancouver has maintained being one of few cities in North America that does not have a major freeway cutting through its core. This active citizen participation was further demonstrated in 1995, when more than 20,000 Vancouverites helped shape the CityPlan strategy adopted by the Vancouver City Council. The plan represented a "shared vision" for the city to be more sustainable and livable (NSV, 2016).

The recognized significance of climate change by the residents of Vancouver has pushed for the planning and maintaining of dense neighborhoods. This urban lifestyle serves as a model for other cities around the world (GCAP, 2015). Urban design promotes a well-functioning place

in which pedestrians are safely integrated due to accessible transit and bicycle routes (Levy, 2013). Studies conducted within the Metro Vancouver area show that increased urban density positively correlate with decreased energy consumption and emissions. This relates to dense mixed-use neighborhoods and their proximity to transit affectively decreasing emissions (Senebel et al., 2013).

Vancouver's False Creek South neighborhood embodies sustainable design due to its mixed-income, emphasize of greenspace and walkable community. This cooperative neighborhood does not permit cars, instead the community borders walking and biking trails leading to Granville Island and downtown. The area is considered "a conscious experiment in neighbourhood-scale urban design, since studied and applauded by planners and architects around the world," due its sustainable planning. However, the first lease of this community expires in 2022, leaving these low-cost rentals at odds until the government takes over the lease of the co-op. Although here is an opportunity to leverage the high-value waterfront, it would implicate the city's supply of affordable housing (Ball, 2014). Either way, current renters are stalled if wanting to sell because buyers are apprehensive to take on a property that will be in lingo once the lease is expired. This False Creek neighborhood highlights the discrepancies associated with sustainable design because attributes such as increased greenspace, mixed housing types and income levels, and pedestrian orientation cause demand in the region to increase. This demand increase relates to less affordable housing available to the residents of the city.

The high-density urban planning in Vancouver has assisted the city in completing 80% of the high priority actions named in the 2020 Action Plan (GCAP, 2015). This success enhances the city's desirability while causing "the city's affordability to deteriorate markedly." In fact, in

2014 the average house price in Metro Vancouver was $670,300, requiring approximately 80 percent of the average median household income to pay for the mortgage. There is a relationship with the city's emphasize on sustainable planning, which promotes great amenities causing more people wanting to live in the area, creating incredibly high cost of homes (Meiszner, 2014). The question becomes how sustainable is an area if it cannot support a diverse population with mixed income levels?

Vancouver, B.C. serves as a leader in green planning, while displaying the ramifications of becoming so desirable. The city prioritizes sustainable planning and gentrification is the result. As impressive as it is for a city to demand practices that combat climate change, the loss of mixed-income housing must be addressed. This is a challenge Vancouver will face for years to come.

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