

COMMENT

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Roundhouse project offers what Victoria needs

BRENT TODERIAN

A commentary by a city planner and urbanist advising cities across Canada and around the world. He was the founding president of the Council for Canadian Urbanism, a frequent global writer and media commentator on better city-making.

Recent coverage regarding Victoria city council's public hearing Thursday for the Roundhouse at Bayview Place in Vic West has inspired me to share a different perspective.

I've been a city planner for 32 years, including almost six years as Vancouver's chief planner. I've advised many cities on better, more sustainable city-making across Canada and all over the world (including many like Victoria), as far away as Auckland, New Zealand, and Oslo, Norway, and as close as Langford and other Island communities.

I occasionally agree to provide advice to private sector projects, and I've been advising the Bayview community-building project for several years.

It's an important site being considered at a really important time, reflecting what I call the "Five Crises" in my advice to cities.

We're in a housing crisis, a climate crisis, a public equity (including classism) crisis, a public-health crisis (fuelled by too much car-dependent sprawl, and built-in inactivity by design), and a public-finance crisis (with big municipal tax increases and brutal per-capita suburban infrastructure costs).

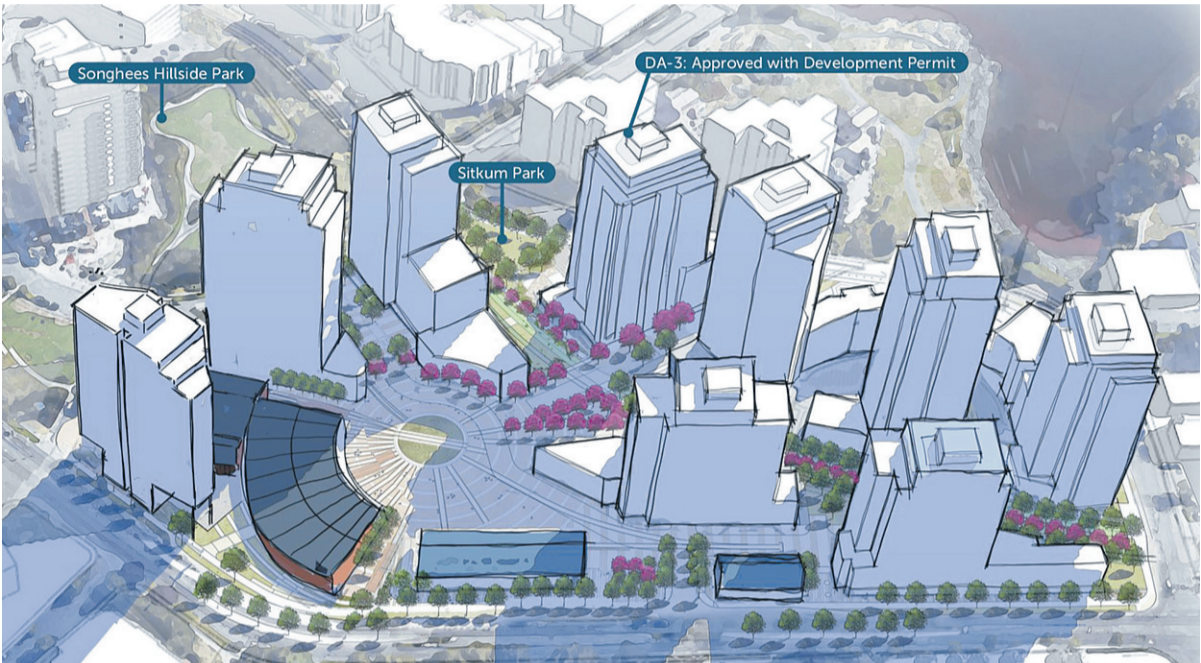
We're also in a time where post-pandemic downtowns like Victoria's are struggling to be the successful economic engines and city hearts we need them to be. Downtowns need a lot more people living in and around them.

Tackling these many overlapping crises in smart, ambitious ways is imperative for our present and future. We need to challenge ourselves to do much more, much better, much faster.

I've watched Ken and Patricia Mariash (the community builders for Bayview) meet with hundreds of community neighbours, reaching thousands over many years, in events and through their "open door" approach and regular public



An aerial view of the E&N Roundhouse site in Victoria West in 2021. CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT



An artist's rendering of the proposed Roundhouse at Bayview Place project in Victoria West, at Esquimalt Road and Kimta Road. VIA FOCUS EQUITIES

lunches in the community. In my experience, that's unusual, and a good thing.

Neighbours who have chosen to participate in the process with the applicants have become better informed with the facts and aspirations about the community-building vision, and have helped shape that vision.

Some who oppose the project are pitching "simple answers" they'd rather see instead, but the truth is that this is one of the hardest Canadian projects I've seen.

Between contaminated soils, exciting but complex heritage buildings with walkable shopping, big aspirations for affordable housing, and a need to build great public places that can also potentially accommodate passenger rail in the future, it has been an incredibly challenging exercise requiring real creativity.

Some objectors have pitted the important heritage aspirations on the site against the amount of density that's needed to make the project actually

work. This is a false choice.

The project needs enough density (which, remember, are homes we badly need) to make financially viable all the expensive public costs and aspirations, including heritage restoration. It also needs the kind of population that will attract retailers to give a vibrant second life to those heritage buildings. And let's be clear — retailers won't provide those local, walkable shops and services without that population density.

Preserving community herit-

Protesting to stop support for war

I read with interest the commentary by Rabbi Lynn Greenhough. Along with people around the world, myself included, she was shocked and horrified by the Oct. 7 massacre of Israeli citizens.

What she did not mention was the fact that since Oct. 7 more than 20,000 Palestinians have been killed in retribution by the Israeli defence forces. This is what the protests are about.

The protesters want fair treatment for the Palestinian people who have been living in a state of quasi-apartheid since 1948. The current escalation of hostilities is in part a consequence of the 2014 Gaza war in which more than 2,000 Gazans died and thousands of children were left physically and psychologically damaged.

This helped create the current generation of militants. The conflict of the past three months will serve to create another generation of militants unless a long-term solution can be found which removes Israel as the occupying power, and treats the Palestinian people fairly.

The UN does not hate Israel, nor are Canadian protesters antisemitic. What they do hate is the unnecessary and indiscriminate killing of women and children.

The protests are not against Jewish people. They are an attempt to convince the Canadian and U.S. governments that continued support of Israel's war machine is not going to result in a solution to this 75-year-old problem.

Rob Waive
Nanaimo

Major voice for peace, murdered by Hamas

Early in the 1970s I got a phone call from a fellow ex-*Ubyssy* scribe, who had pursued a career in journalism, asking if I would be interested in writing a piece about a new enterprise called the Jewish Student Press Service, "since you were associated with Hillel at UBC."

I contacted a young Canadian university student named Vivian Silver, who was one of the founders of the service. I was impressed by her intelligence and her devotion to encouraging Jewish students to work towards peaceful resolu-

tions of the acrimony between Israel and its neighbours.

I followed her career over the years, as she moved to Israel and became a major voice in the attempt to resolve the difficulties between Israel and the Palestinians.

She was murdered by Hamas during their incursion into a peaceful kibbutz in November.

To all supporters of Hamas, think of Vivian when you chant: "From the river to the sea, Palestine must be free."

Ian Cameron
Brentwood Bay

Special thanks for help at Cattle Point

We would like to thank everyone who came to our aid at Cattle Point after both falling when stepping on slippery rocks on Saturday.

It has certainly spurred us to organize a first-aid kit to keep in our car.

Thanks once again to all the kind people who helped us.

John and Carol Smith
Sidney

We should all take better care of our health

Re: "Recruitment team draws 44 family doctors to Comox Valley," Jan. 5.

This story neglected to mention where the wanted doctors came from. Uganda? South Africa? South America? Saskatoon? Toronto?

The self-interest related to this practice is saddening. More doctors for sick British Columbians ... hurrah, but at what cost to others not in B.C.

I don't think there is a surplus of physicians, anywhere in the world, where free health care exists, excepting Cuba perhaps.

So why is it acceptable to poach physicians from countries with greater health problems and more suffering?

Perhaps, instead of demanding a doctor or running to a clinic or ER, British Columbians should be taking better care of our health and thus, require a diminished need for a physician.

Shannon Moneo
Sooke

Conservatives continued health care increases

Re: "Government spending needs a shot of responsibility," editorial, Jan. 5.

The editorial included a questionable statement about the Harper Conservative government's funding of health care. The assertion that "our health care system has never recovered from these recurrent cost cutting sessions" is inaccurate.

In 2004, the Liberal Finance Minister Paul Martin committed that health transfers to the provinces would rise six per cent each year.

This rate of increase was continued by the Conservatives until the Liberals were reelected in 2015.

If we are speaking about federal health care spending cuts, the last time this occurred was in 1995 under the Chrétien Liberals, when they amounted to a drop of 3.8 per cent.

G.K. Schick
Victoria

As our debt grows, we all suffer

Re: "Government spending needs a shot of responsibility," editorial, Jan. 5.

Many people today, especially the younger generation, do not understand the destructive power of debt. The escalating amounts of interest being paid by the federal and provincial governments is hindering their ability to provide services.

As the debt increases due to interest payments and the interest gobbles up a greater percentage of their budgets, they either will have to cut spending or continue to increase our taxes.

I understand that the annual interest on the federal debt is greater than the amount spent on health care.

I recently read about a study that showed that 46 per cent of the average middle-class family's income is taken by the government.

The reason that most politicians don't worry about or understand debt is because they won't be around when the economic mess hits the fan.

Many of our current political leaders are ideologues who enjoy spending other people's money to make themselves look

good. Vanity projects and virtual signaling are in vogue and rampant.

We are living in a society of instant gratification and many politicians are only too eager to encourage dependence on government.

Norman Arden
Langford

Tax is pushing money out of the province

A secondary home of ours in Victoria is for sale. Our retirement dream of having a getaway home in a city of our choice in B.C. is not reachable.

To avoid the speculation tax, we would have to rent the unit out for six months, but this only destroys the unit and causes us more expense.

The government's tax has won and we have moved our money south of the border.

The B.C. government appears to think that this is the correct rule of law to correct the housing shortage, not realizing that to stop immigration temporarily might be the answer.

Money usually will take the easiest route out of the province and other regions or countries will prosper.

We own two condos in the United States.

These properties do not have any speculation tax or empty home tax.

The Canadian tax system allows us to claim one of our U.S. properties as our principal residence when sold.

The B.C. government is just spinning its wheels as the people's money can easily find alternatives that will take away from the economy of B.C.

The B.C. government is not doing the right thing. I would prefer to stay in B.C. but I'm sort of forced to leave.

Carlos Pasqua
Victoria

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