

## Timeline of Oak Bay Densification

### About

This document was researched and assembled by Stephen Bowker of Oak Bay. It merges the timeline of town planning movements that promote infill strategies (**New Urbanism, Smart Growth, EcoDensity**) into the timeline of densification and development trends in Oak Bay since 1700.

An overview of the kind of information that this timeline contains can be gained by reading this short-list of entries: 1930 - Oak Bay; 2003 - Bellingham, 2005 - Venice, 2007 - Smart Growth BC, 2008 - Vancouver, 2008 - Calgary, 2014 - Venice, 2015 - England, and the appendix which quotes an Australian urban planner's comments about Vancouver's EcoDensity plan.

Available by request to the author is the related document "**Analysis of the Timeline of Oak Bay Densification**" which condenses Oak Bay's key issues and suggests solutions.

### Purpose

This timeline was created as an information cross-reference for anyone who is trying to understand or make planning decisions about infill development in Oak Bay. It provides an "in context" view the current "demographic and affordable housing" dilemma and of the strategies being proposed as solutions.

### Sources

Much of the Oak Bay timeline up to 1968 is based upon Mayor Murdoch's "History of Oak Bay" (see: [www.oakbay.ca/sites/default/files/History/murdoch.pdf](http://www.oakbay.ca/sites/default/files/History/murdoch.pdf) ). Entries after 1968 usually cite a source reference to the Internet. Where no references are cited, assume Wikipedia.

### How To Use

The timeline is a long chronology, and will be an interesting sequential read for many residents, however it was created to provide an in-context and orderly cross-reference to pertinent information. It is published in electronic form so that the readers can use "find" keyword searches to scan down through related topics. For example, doing a find on the word "flood" will skip you through the (many) major flooding events in Oak Bay's history, while doing a find on the word "condo" will skip you through the most glaring causes of unaffordable/unsuitable housing.

**Bolding** has been used to highlight keywords to assist speed readers.

**Red** has been used to highlight landmark events.

**Blue** has been used to identify side notes that explain why an entry is important to Oak Bay.

## Year - Place/Organization - Event

**1700 - Oak Bay - The Cascadia Earthquake (between an 8 and 9).** The tsunami is recorded in Japan as being 2-3 meters high - after crossing the entire Pacific. All around the Straights of Juan De Fuca, Puget Sound, and Georgia Straight all coastal towns and villages are destroyed by the tsunami flood tides. The highly populated and civilized trading cultures that were documented by pre-1700 explorers such as Francis Drake, disappeared and had not recovered beyond simple village life by the time post-1700 explorers such as George Vancouver reached the area.

see: [www.wired.com/2010/01/0126northwest-quake-japan-tsunami/](http://www.wired.com/2010/01/0126northwest-quake-japan-tsunami/)

**Of Note: Oak Bay has allowed at least 2,000 houses to be built on the flood plains of the Cascadia tsunami.**

**1880 - Oak Bay** - Almost all land is owned by the Hudson's Bay Company, John Tod, William McNeill, Joseph Pemberton, and Isabella Ross.

**1887 - Oak Bay** - Purchase of land for Victoria's **Exhibition Grounds** and race track. Work begins on the huge building with towers and domes. Building burns down in 1907.

**1891 - Oak Bay** - Approval of the **Oak Bay Beach suburb** - the first large & planned subdivision. As part of the plan, one of Victoria's **tram lines** is extended to Windsor Ave.

**1893 - Oak Bay** - The grand **Mount Baker Hotel** is built on the bay. (Burns down in 1902). The second oldest golf links in all North America is built on a rocky slope facing Trial Island.

**1897 - Oak Bay - Rudyard Kipling** (living at the Mt Baker Hotel) waxes eloquently about Oak Bay's beauty and how once men make their fortunes elsewhere in the Dominion, they retire here - the first record of Oak Bay being considered a **desirable destination community**. Over the decades Oak Bay attracts so many wealthy Scots, that they are said to live behind the "Tweed Curtain" (named after the historic border of Scotland, the River Tweed).

**1900 - Oak Bay - Early tram lines change Oak Bay.** **Infill** subdivision and building projects begin on higher ground along the lines. (Builders shy away from the many low, damp pastures due to evidence of sea floods). By 1945 Oak Bay has 4 tram lines - Oak Bay, Exhibition Park, Uplands, and Foul Bay. All were replaced by diesel buses in 1946.

**1905 - Saanich Peninsula** - there are three **rail lines** up the peninsula. The train from Victoria to Sidney takes 40 minutes. Pre-Panama canal, the fastest route from Hong Kong to New York is by steamer to Prince Rupert, and then a 5 night "Silk and Tea" express train to NYC. With modern progress, today it takes 7-10 nights to go Prince Rupert to NYC by rail and forever to get to Sidney by rail.

**1906 - Oak Bay - incorporated** as a Country Village after a petition by 103 of the 243 landowners (due to the spike in population caused by tram lines). Total assessment of all properties is \$633,000 (the assessment of one small lot today). The first sewer line is built from Elgin Rd to Foul Bay Rd to connect to Victoria's system.

- 1907 - Oak Bay - Uplands garden suburb** is planned by John Robert and Dawson Turner (ranchers from Turner Valley Alberta). Leading landscape architect John Olmsted is hired to design an elegant neighbourhood with estate-sized lots for houses built to impress with sprawling gardens.
- 1910 - Oak Bay - Owners of large estates and farms begin subdividing for infill housing.** Population is now 1,645. Mr. Carlin subdivides his farm into 48 lots. Uplands suburb approved by council. A **great building boom** commences and lasts through 1912.
- 1912 - Oak Bay -** Due to a **housing shortage**, a tent city springs up at the beach end of Estevan Ave, and cottages along Willows Beach are used as bunk houses. They are shut down by a health inspection.
- 1913/14 - Oak Bay -** A crashing bond market **ends the building boom**. Many workers laid off, just in time to sign up for WWI. The Avenue theatre opened (first motion picture cinema on Vancouver Island).
- 1915 - Oak Bay - Jitney drivers** compete with trams for group outings, families, and those with baggage. Tram is a nickel per person. Due to the war shortages and unpaid taxes, all unnecessary building projects are put on hold.
- 1919 - Oak Bay -** Council passes a bylaw disallowing Orientals from running businesses. Uplands Golf Links approved. The **city dump** at McNeill Bay is closed and covered with dirt and a new one opened beside Bowker Creek behind the fire hall.
- 1921 - Oak Bay -** Returning veterans granted lots. Lots taken for taxes during the war are sold to Real Estate firms. A **building boom begins** for infill and subdivision housing. Many streets are renamed to save postal confusion.
- 1921 - Oak Bay -** Drivers ordered to switch from driving on the left to **driving on the right**. The decision is immediately regretted because the "right of way" general rule ceases to work for all situations so more traffic signs are needed.
- 1923 - Oak Bay** now has 4,500 residents. **Recession**, unemployment, **building boom ends**. 500 lots taken for taxes. Make work projects begun. Raising of pigs is banned, cows must be penned to keep them off tram lines. Rejection of **amalgamation** with Victoria. The amalgamation question is asked in every decade thereafter.
- 1924 - Oak Bay - wealthy landowners force council to revise tax system** from rates based on land value only, to rates based on land and improvements (buildings), which transfers the tax load from the large land owners and onto home owning families. This is justified by the proportion of taxes now going to education.
- 1925 - Oak Bay -** Recession continues, and veterans are behind in payments on their lots and taxes. Although the council had grabbed 500 ordinary lots for back taxes, they bail out the **Uplands Company** instead of grabbing their lots. The company is in financial trouble because of the poor quality of water and sewer lines it had installed, which were already failing. The 500 ordinary lots are commissioned to the new developer, **Oak Bay Land Co** for prices between \$65 and \$350, but that company is also in

financial trouble and doesn't keep the bargain.

**1927 - Oak Bay - First Zoning Bylaw enacted.** Work begins on **Oak Bay Beach Hotel** despite complaints by residents about the looming size of the building on the waterfront. **New Building Boom which lasts until 1932.** Population is 5,500 residents. Many streets renamed. Despite the OB Land Co financial troubles they are commissioned 120 more lots taken for taxes.

**1928 - Oak Bay** - continuing crackdown on buildings (mainly garages) built on, or partially on, road allowance. They must be moved. An Uplands lot sells for \$14,000, a price not seen again until 1956.

**1929 - Oak Bay** - Coal **gas lines** reach Oak Bay. Buses from outlying neighbourhoods connect to tram lines. Bowker Creek **dump** is closed and covered with dirt. **Stock Market crash.**

**1930 - Oak Bay - Residents crowd council meeting to complain about a developer's** plans for another waterfront hotel complex. **Complaints include:**

- The waterfront should not be **commercialized**;
- Existing apartment zones were not yet filled up;
- Apartments and hotels **depreciate** surrounding property;
- The **noise and congestion** of traffic would be increased;
- **Views** would be obstructed;
- Oak Bay should be maintained as a **residential neighbourhood**;
- People already here should be considered first, **not outsiders**.

**1930 - Oak Bay** - Unemployment is high, so 36 men hired for work projects. Lot sales were the lowest since 1906 but 226 building permits were issued.

**1931 - Oak Bay** - 15 buildings taken for taxes are condemned and demolished (a first since 1906). Building permits still strong at 201, unlike in other municipalities.

**1932 - Oak Bay** - cost of social services passed down from Federal to Provincial, and Provincial to towns. **Starvation** is a looming problem so more make work projects begin. Hours of regular employees are cut. Building permits drop to 65, lowest since 1925.

**1933 - Oak Bay** - Building permits drop to 59. **Lot sales collapse.** Agreement with Oak Bay Land Co cancelled. 89 families on relief because men too ill to dig ditches. Large **reduction in assessed** values causes mortgage problems. Many residents in arrears on taxes.

**1936 - Oak Bay - Council enacts the Uplands Regulation Bylaw** to make sure that Uplands stays a place of estates rather than normal housing. Police ordered to remove homeless **squatters** from Uplands beaches. Uplands **poor quality infrastructure** is a costly disaster for the village.

**1937 - Oak Bay** - Lots are selling for \$125 -225, and a good house rents for \$8 per month.

**1939 - Oak Bay** - WWII. Oak Bay's road making equipment borrowed to build Pat Bay Airport.

**1941 - Oak Bay** - all properties **reassessed** for improvements, especially in Uplands where

assessments had been kept artificially low to help the Uplands Company. Homeless **squatters** evicted from fairgrounds buildings. **War in the Pacific** begins.

**1942 - Oak Bay** - Permission given for **boarding suites** to house incoming war workers.

Permission given to **grow food** on boulevards. Permission to shoot wild animals that are eating war gardens. Many autos are parked and public trees are being cut for firewood due to **fuel shortages**. Beach Drive declared an arterial highway. Plans for billeting 1,000 soldiers at Willows fairground.

**1942 - Ottawa** - building ban of new houses **exceeding 900 sq ft**. Oak Bay developers complain.

**1943 - Oak Bay** - vandalism rampant. Construction at a near standstill.

**1945 - Oak Bay** - The election became a choice between two slates over the future of Willows Fairground. The anti-horse-racing slate won and tried to evict the Vancouver based gambling syndicate. Proposal for a wartime housing **subdivision rejected** because the buildings and lots did not conform to zoning bylaw. The war ended, and improvement projects began again.

**1946 - CMHC** - The Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation is established to house returning war veterans and to lead the nation's housing programs.

See: [www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/corp/about/hi/hi\\_001.cfm](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/corp/about/hi/hi_001.cfm)

**1946 - Oak Bay** - creates their first **Town Planning Commission**. to work on the fairground problem by drafting single family housing zoning for Willows. **Uplands Park** created out of 65 acres taken from Uplands Company for back taxes.

**1948 - Oak Bay** - Fairgrounds burns down, so land is sold to the village. Tram lines closed and replaced by busses.

**1949 - Oak Bay** - great numbers of basements in **low lying areas flooded** by storm. **Lot sales are still weak** despite the end of the war.

**1950 - Oak Bay** - Cordoba Bay and Gordon Head petition to join Oak Bay. Denied. Korean War.

**1951 - Oak Bay** - first large **post war subdivisions begun**, Carnarvon on the fairgrounds and Lansdown by Hudson's Bay and both **sell well**. Thus to the south of Bowker Ave development is by infill, while to the north it is by suburb. Capital Regional **Planning Board** created by the province.

**1953 - Oak Bay** - Foul Bay Road declared an arterial highway. Retaining wall, outfall tank/pump built on McNeill bay to try to **control flooding** in Monterrey/Windsor flood plain.

**1954 - CMHC** - National Housing Act amendments introduce **Mortgage Loan Insurance** to make home ownership **accessible** to more Canadians and make CMHC responsible for reviewing loan.

See: [www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/corp/about/hi/hi\\_001.cfm](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/corp/about/hi/hi_001.cfm)

**1954 - Oak Bay** - Carnarvon Park created out of profits from the subdivision.

- 1955 - Oak Bay** - great numbers of basements in **low lying areas flooded** by storm. Most of Oak Bay's 50 miles of streets were now paved.
- 1956 - Oak Bay** - **general reassessment discovers 30 illegal duplexes and suites**. They are given 60 days to conform to bylaws. Lansdowne Road declared an arterial highway. Victoria College wants to purchase the northern part of the Hudson's Bay's Lansdowne subdivision lands.
- 1957 - Oak Bay** - petitions from Carnarvon and South Oak Bay about **all the flooding**. Victoria College succeeds in purchasing part of Lansdowne for a campus. Town Planning Commission replaced by **Advisory Planning Commission**. **Building boom continues**, including apartments.
- 1957/63 - England - Supermac** (Conservative PM Harold MacMillan) shocks his own party but is lauded by Labour-run local councils for forcing and funding councils to build **350,000 affordable rental houses a year** suitable for parents raising baby boom children (aka council houses). Planners import **New Urbanism strategies** (from the Marshall plan funded, post war rebuilding of continental cities) so instead of building bleak industrial-age row housing, they build duplexes and quadplexes in garden settings. This plan not only directly attacks the housing shortage, but kick starts a moribund post war construction industry, provides millions of trade/apprenticeship jobs across England, repurposes the still vacant bomb sites from the blitz, and improves the future of a generation of children.  
[Of Note: MacMillan's brilliance was undone by a subsequent Conservative PM in 1976/80\(Margaret Thatcher\). England now needs another Supermac.](#)
- 1958 - Oak Bay** - Council resolved to increase lot sizes to 4/10 acre and houses a minimum of 1500 sq ft. **Building boom continues**.
- 1959 - Oak Bay** - First traffic lights installed. Hudson's Bay plans their next **subdivision - Henderson**.
- 1960 - Oak Bay** - enough students are driving to high school to cause parking problems. The **building boom** continues. A **high rise** apartment along the waterfront was refused. Cadboro Bay and Queenswood petition to join Oak Bay, denied.
- 1960 - UVic - The University Planning Committee** proposed buying the Hudson Bay's remaining land in Oak Bay & Saanich, including land Oak Bay had already approved for 490 homes. This had financial repercussions for the village so **promises were made** to soften the blow - promises that were never kept. The main promise was that a row of high rise rental buildings would be built along a 400 yd strip of UVic land along the north side of Cedar Hill X road. For 50 yrs these buildings would provide income for Oak Bay, but after 50 yrs UVic could claim them for University use.  
[Of Note: In later years UVic petitioned Oak Bay to be released from this commitment, but never was. The apartments were never built.](#)
- 1960 - Spain/Florida - Condominiums** (individually owned apartments) are enabled by law so

that vacationing northerners can be used to finance the development of beach towns. A land rush and building boom begin along the sunny coasts in both places. The term has been in use in Germany since 1715 to describe joint ventures. The first condo apartments were built in 1928 in Hungary.

Of Note: The concerns of existing residents in both places are ignored by officials corrupted by developers seeking huge profits. Small historic towns along the Spanish Costa's are bulldozed in the name of progress and profit and walls of condo towers are built along the coastline.

**1960 - CMHC** - Real Estate agents, builders, and second-mortgage companies conspire to create an early form of "**liar loans**". This includes inflating the stated incomes on the CMHC applications, allowing buyers to do their own decorating in lieu of down payment, and offering hidden & undeclared second mortgages to use for the down payment.

See: [www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/corp/about/hi/hi\\_001.cfm](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/corp/about/hi/hi_001.cfm)

Of Note: Liar loans help inflate the bubble in house prices in the late 1970's which ends in the crash of 1980.

**1961 - Oak Bay** - Environment Canada includes most of Oak Bay in hardiness zone 8 (the most plant friendly in Canada) and declares Quimper Street as the road in Canada with the most number of frost free days.

**1962 - Oak Bay** - the province re-assesses the village and land values leap 40%. **Building permits** at record highs. Storms wash away beach front along Oak Bay, **much flooding**.

**1962 - Australia** - The **UDI (Urban Development Institute)** of Australia is created to **lobby** on behalf of all segments of the urban development industry, including builders and real estate agents. It is distinct from the US organization **ULI (Urban Land Institute)** which was formed in 1936 to lobby for the infill and repurpose of land in urban centers when it is no longer needed for industrial/commercial purposes.

**1963 - Oak Bay** - Rezoning of Victoria and Upland **golf links** so they could not be subdivided.

**1964 - France** - **Timeshares** become the ultimate-profit **Condo development scheme**. First enabled by law in French ski resorts, the timeshare-condo idea reaches Spain in 1965 and Hawaii in 1969.

See: [www.10timesharesecrets.com/timeshare.php](http://www.10timesharesecrets.com/timeshare.php)

Of Note: Condo and Timeshare sales become increasingly dependent on high pressure salesmen offering free meals to tourists.

**1966 - BC Gov** - Enacts the **Strata Titles Act (Condos)** - a first in Canada. Alberta and Ontario are quick to follow.

See: [news.buzzbuzzhome.com/2014/02/canada-condo-history-timeline.html](http://news.buzzbuzzhome.com/2014/02/canada-condo-history-timeline.html)

Of Note: This begins the still existing trend of developers building strata title units to the exclusion of building for-rent units, because selling the parts is far more profitable than selling the whole (the ultimate profit is from building timeshares). This trend is the **underlying cause of Canada's shortage of professionally managed rental units and**



**the affordable housing crisis.**

**1966 - Oak Bay - Politics of the village change from Pro-development to Slow-development.**

Infill and suburb **development slows** to a crawl as supply of empty lots dwindles.

**Property values climb** as demand exceeds supply. **Duplexes removed from zoning bylaw** making existing duplexes legal non-conforming.

**1968 - Oak Bay -** Parking bylaws enacted (e.g.: RV's, boats out of sight.) **Heavy flooding** in low lying areas.

**1970 - Ontario - UDI** is created to lobby for new accounting rules for revenue property. UDI BC was formed in 1972. Over the next few decades the UDI in Canada decentralized to allow local developers to open their own local chapters for lobbying local governments. Victoria now has their own chapter formed by the principals of Abstract Development and other local developers.

See: [www.udicapitalregion.ca/?page\\_id=27](http://www.udicapitalregion.ca/?page_id=27) for a list of directors in the CRD.

**1970's - Portland -** Oregon. A major freeway project is cancelled and planning begins for **Light Rail.**

**1971 - CRD/GVRD - The first condo buildings are townhouses,** but are soon followed by Condo towers. The 1960's boom of building for-rent apartments tapers off to nothing over the next 4 years because there is more profit to be made from selling a building in parts.

See: [news.buzzbuzzhome.com/2014/02/canada-condo-history-timeline.html](http://news.buzzbuzzhome.com/2014/02/canada-condo-history-timeline.html)

**Of Note: Vancouver's housing unaffordability first makes the news in the very next year.**

**1974 - BCAA -** The BC Assessment Authority is created to replace 140 privately run assessment organizations. See: [www.bcassessment.ca/about/Pages/History.aspx](http://www.bcassessment.ca/about/Pages/History.aspx)

**1976/80 - England - Affordable housing sold into the private sector.** Conservative PM Margaret Thatcher Americanizes the English economy by destroying Unions, closing rail lines, building freeways, encouraging auto sales, and forcing the sale of council rental housing (supposedly to long time occupants). She thus undoes the highly successful **New Urbanism strategies** of 1957/63 Conservative PM Harold MacMillan.

By 1980 the trends are:

- population migration to the south, especially to desirable destination coastal towns
- American style suburbia and big box stores are built on farm land near freeways
- Parking shortages everywhere
- New Condos are being built, rather than new rental apartments.
- profiteering and flipping inflate housing prices beyond the means of workers

By 1999 there is a housing bubble and a crisis of affordable housing.

**Of Note: One immediate outcome was the Squatters Movement** where the urban homeless used ancient squatter rights to claim residence in vacant council houses. These houses had been purposefully left vacant by councils (despite the homeless problem) so that they wouldn't be forced to sell them to occupants, or because they



did not have the funds to update them. Thatcher countered the squatters with fear mongering that the squatters were invading private houses, which was used to justify revoking ancient rights and evicting squatters by force.

**1979 - CRD/GVRD - The first condo bubble** includes the inflationary practices of pre-construction-selling, wholesaling-middlemen, never-take-possession-flipping, and paying off officials by setting up flips for them.

See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flipping](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flipping)

Of Note: Luxury condos become a volatile market distinct from CMHC entry level condos.

**1980 - Canada - Real estate market crashes due to 15% mortgage rates.** Young families walk away from their homes and the divorce rate soars. House prices in Oak Bay plunge as much as 40%. Luxury condo prices plunge as much as 70%. The prices stay flat for almost six years, but then begin to jump. The first CRD community to see a recovery in prices is Oak Bay.

**1981 - CMHC - Reports concerns about the poor quality of Condo construction across Canada.** Such concerns have been raised in newspapers ever since 1967 and the earliest of condos. The report is covered up during the leaky condo crisis of 2000.

See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leaky\\_condo\\_crisis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leaky_condo_crisis)

Of Note: Developers have no incentive to balance quality against higher profits because they are not constructing a building for one known owner, but for many future owners.

**1982 - Portland - begins building their light rail network.**

See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MAX\\_Light\\_Rail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MAX_Light_Rail)

**1986 - Vancouver - The first Skytrain line is opened.**

See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SkyTrain\\_\(Vancouver\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SkyTrain_(Vancouver))

**1980's - New Urbanism - movement reaches the USA** from the European movement. It is an architectural movement that promotes walkable neighborhoods containing a range of housing and job types.

See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Urbanism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Urbanism)

See: [bettercities.net/article/four-phases-new-urbanism-21485](http://bettercities.net/article/four-phases-new-urbanism-21485)

See: [www.livablecities.org/articles/reshaping-suburbia](http://www.livablecities.org/articles/reshaping-suburbia)

Of Note: This movement concentrates on inner city neighbourhoods that suffered and were neglected in the rush to suburbia. Their goal is to recreate communities within a 5 mile radius of a major city center (to look and feel more like communities such as Oak Bay).

**1990's - Smart Growth - movement begins in the USA.** It is the New Urbanism movement renamed and repackaged by transportation engineers to include mass transport and higher densities along transport corridors. The new name is needed because New Urbanism is being heavily criticized. (i.e.: smart growth vs. what? dumb growth.) It pushes an urban planning and transportation theory that concentrates growth in

compact walkable urban centers to avoid sprawl. It also advocates compact, transit-oriented, walkable, bicycle-friendly land use, including neighborhood schools, complete streets, and mixed-use development with a range of housing choices. 'Smart Growth' is a North American term. In Europe and particularly the UK and Holland, the terms '**Compact City**' or '**Urban Intensification**' are used .

The **main criticism** of Smart Growth is that in practice it tends (counter-intuitively) to **worsen** the key problems it is designed to solve, **especially affordability**.

See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smart\\_growth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smart_growth)

Of Note: is that **Oak Bay already conforms** to most of the goals of Smart Growth because the early country village was planned around the original tram network prior to cars being common, and because the WWII population boom forced infill measures, especially south of Bowker Ave. The major exception is Uplands, so any planning for Smart Growth infill strategies should be focused there.

**1990's - Portland** - needs to encourage their **light rail**, so an "intuitive" but unproven strategy is lobbied to the public to increase density along rail corridors and to restrict the building of new suburbs. This strategy is based on **Smart Growth**.

**1990 - FCM** - (Federation of Canadian Municipalities) creates the **ACT** (Affordability and Choice Today) program to help overcome planning and building regulatory barriers to the development of affordable housing by funding and promoting practical solutions at the local level. The initiative was funded by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (**CMHC**) and administered and delivered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (**FCM**) with the participation of the Canadian Home Builders' Association (**CHBA**), and the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (**CHRA**).

See: [www.fcm.ca/home/programs/past-programs/affordability-and-choice-today.htm](http://www.fcm.ca/home/programs/past-programs/affordability-and-choice-today.htm)

Of Note: However well meaning, this program has tended to **serve the interests of developers** rather than municipalities. The database has become the go-to place where developers can learn proven techniques of how to trick local governments and their electors into **allowing unwanted or inappropriate developments**.

Of Note: ACT popularized the use of the term Nimby (first coined by the US Nuclear Power Plant industry), to vilify neighbours and ridicule their very real concerns.

**1990 - Canada** experiences a **recession** which hurts the real estate market and house prices. Owners who have been using their houses as bank accounts by borrowing against equity are foreclosed. In Vancouver and Victoria prices stall but do not fall much. Oak Bay prices are quick to recover.

**1992 - Oak Bay** - The provincial registrar of cemeteries refuses to approve Randy Wilson's plan to build 20 houses on the CCBA's **Chinese Cemetery**. Much to the relief of the residents of Harling Point, the plan is dropped.

**1994 - UVic** - Completion of new married and cluster housing for students, meaning that almost 1600 students can live on campus.

See: [ring.uvic.ca/02mar07/housing.html](http://ring.uvic.ca/02mar07/housing.html)

Of Note: This coincides with an off campus student housing registry which tries to steer students away from slum basement suites.

**1995 - BC Gov** - The **BC Building Code** is modified to define "secondary suites" and then relax the building code for suites that fit that description.

Of Note: Local governments cannot set their standards lower than the BC code.

**1996 - Oak Bay** - The **Chinese Cemetery** becomes a National Historic Site.

**1996 - David Foot** - demographer publishes "**Boom Bust & Echo**" which makes the case that all housing, education, and health needs of Canadian communities are completely predictable decades in advance due to pronounced demographic waves. There is no excuse for governments being unaware.

**1996 - GVRD** - (Greater Vancouver Regional District) publishes "**Livable Region Strategic Plan (LSRP)**", which discusses strategies to deal with the anticipated increase of population in the region. The Province of B.C. recognizes the plan under the **Growth Strategies Act**. The primary goal of the plan is to help maintain regional livability and protect the environment in the face of anticipated growth. The LRSP is used by all levels of government as the framework for making regional land use and transportation decisions. The LRSP is linked to Municipal OCPs through the Regional Context Statement.

See: [www.greenpolicy360.net/w/](http://www.greenpolicy360.net/w/)

[Vancouver\\_British\\_Columbia\\_Livable\\_Region\\_Strategic\\_Plan](#)

**1996 - Vancouver** - adopts their **CityPlan**, a major urban planning initiative. It becomes popular and is strongly **supported by residents** of Vancouver because it is broken into "**Community Visions**" where each community is asked to author CityPlan directions in a way and at a scale and pace that suits that community. The CityPlan Community Visions were subsequently revised in August 1999 and again in January 2002. Full document at:

[arcca.info/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/communityservicescityplanrevjan2002.pdf](http://arcca.info/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/communityservicescityplanrevjan2002.pdf)

**1997 - Vancouver** - adopts their **Transportation Plan** as an adjunct to CityPlan. It includes 70 recommendations to reduce the dependence on automobiles.

**1999 - Smart Growth BC** - is created (the first of this movement in Canada) with the credo "Create diverse housing opportunities. People in different family types, life stages and income levels **can afford a home in the neighbourhood of their choice**". Their ultimate goal is to protect and preserve the **ALR** (Agricultural Land Reserve) by restricting urban sprawl through various densification strategies. See: [smartgrowth.bc.ca](http://smartgrowth.bc.ca)

Of Note is that this credo is **unrealistic (and destructive)** for desirable destination communities such as Oak Bay, because their neighbourhoods would be the **first choice of a billion people** in this world.

**1999 - CRD/GVRD** - Height of **Leaky Condo Crisis** involving 900 condo buildings with 31,000 units. It is a construction, financial and legal crisis that rarely effects commercial or for-

rental buildings. Developers blame all levels of government for faulty building codes, zoning bylaws, and inspections. Developers and re-insurers walk away from their warrantee obligations thus transferring the financial and legal crisis to condo owners.

See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leaky\\_condo\\_crisis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leaky_condo_crisis)

Of Note: Damp buildings in damp climates cause black mold to invade walls, which make the buildings unhealthy for inhabitation. Nowhere is the ongoing health cost of condo living documented.

**2000 - CRD/GVRD - findings of Leaky Condo Crisis commission.** Highlights:

Faulty quality assurance (shoddy work by unskilled labour).

Building code that seals for energy conservation is not suited to wet warm climates.

FAR bylaw changes encouraged inappropriate roof and wall design.

Post Modern architecture not suited to wet climates.

Each project was a separate corporation, from which profits were siphoned to safety.

Warrantees were unfunded.

See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leaky\\_condo\\_crisis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leaky_condo_crisis)

Of Note: All of the documented causes point to one underlying cause - with strata buildings there is no overall owner to demand quality during construction. Condo owners buy a finished project and must trust that the developer has not cut corners to maximize profits.

**2001 - ULI** - (Urban Land Institute of Washington DC) publishes "**Urban Infill Housing, Myth and Fact**" that gives examples of successful projects to repurpose industrial inner city land for Infill Housing.

See: [www.bozeman.net/Smarty/files/1c/1ceb247a-86b2-47ac-b72a-13daac75665b.pdf](http://www.bozeman.net/Smarty/files/1c/1ceb247a-86b2-47ac-b72a-13daac75665b.pdf)

Of Note: This is a different infill situation from Oak Bay's, which has neither inner city nor industrial lots. Unlike the UDI which is lobbying councils on behalf of developers, ULI is lobbying developers on behalf of councils.

**2001 - Nanaimo** - The earliest web mention (found so far) of '**gentle densification**' are in the Nanaimo council meeting minutes where a Ms Quayle is trying to build 3 infill houses on one lot. See: [www.nanaimo.ca/UploadedFilePath/Site\\_Structure/Corporate\\_Services/Corporate\\_Administration/2001\\_Council\\_Minutes/C011217M.pdf](http://www.nanaimo.ca/UploadedFilePath/Site_Structure/Corporate_Services/Corporate_Administration/2001_Council_Minutes/C011217M.pdf)

**2002 - UVic** - Documents their next 10yr campus plan. The plan is to add 600 beds to the existing 1576 beds in dorm and cluster housing. The eventual goal is to provide on campus housing for every first year student who applies. There are 4,000 applications. This new housing is to be completed by 2004.

See: [ring.uvic.ca/02mar07/housing.html](http://ring.uvic.ca/02mar07/housing.html)

Of Note: Having all out of town first year students living on campus would not only be the safest housing option for the youngest and most vulnerable of students, but it would lower the pressure on traffic and rental housing in Oak Bay and Saanich.

**2003 - FCM/ACT** - funds studies and single projects to explore the effects and **viability of infill strategies** such as laneway housing, Tri-4plexes, and 5 unit rowhouses with basement

secondary suites ... all on single family lots.

See: [www.fcm.ca/home/programs/past-programs/affordability-and-choice-today/intensification-renewal-and-redevelopment.htm](http://www.fcm.ca/home/programs/past-programs/affordability-and-choice-today/intensification-renewal-and-redevelopment.htm)

Of Note: These projects were not built on desirable lots in destination neighbourhoods, and yet they would have been **un-affordable without subsidies** from government.

**2003 - FCM/CMHC** - funds workshops to convince GVRD councillors and staff to support the legalization of secondary suites. For summaries of presentations see: [fcm.ca/Documents/reports/ACT/Barriers\\_And\\_Solutions\\_Secondary\\_Suites\\_Workshop\\_Rept\\_EN.pdf](http://fcm.ca/Documents/reports/ACT/Barriers_And_Solutions_Secondary_Suites_Workshop_Rept_EN.pdf)

Of Note: One of the workshops is about the **liability risks** to the municipalities, a rare subject in secondary suite publications.

Of Note: The crisis in affordable housing is due to a shortage of built-for-rental units, which is an outcome of decades of developers chasing the higher and immediate profits gained by building condo units. Senior governments hope that secondary suites can band-aid the crises until a true solution is found, but then fail to limit strata developments or encourage built-for-rentals.

Of Note: The crisis in affordable housing is due to a shortage of built-for-rental units, which is an outcome of decades of developers chasing the higher and immediate profits gained by building condo units. Senior governments hope that secondary suites can band-aid the crises until a true solution is found, but then fail to limit strata developments or encourage built-for-rentals.

**2003 - Bellingham** - publishes their comprehensive guide "**10 Essentials for Successful Urban Infill Housing**" which include:

- Make infill a positive outcome for **current residents**, not just the builders and newcomers.
- New housing must **fit well** into old neighbourhoods.
- Design sites for **livability** and functionality.
- Write new development codes that promote **good site and home design**.

See: [www.cob.org/documents/planning/neighborhoods/planning-academy/academy-ii/10-essentials-for-successful-urban-infill-housing.pdf](http://www.cob.org/documents/planning/neighborhoods/planning-academy/academy-ii/10-essentials-for-successful-urban-infill-housing.pdf)

Of Note: After the CRD, Bellingham is the **closest major urban area** to Oak Bay (across the water under the volcano).

Of Note: In 2007 Oak Bay created a loophole in building rules that allowed over-sized houses to replace small houses on small lots. By not immediately closing the loophole, Oak Bay created the public relations disaster which Bellingham warns against.

**2005 - CRD/GVRD** - Class action law suites against **Governments and CMHC for complicity in the Leaky Condo Crisis**. The courts refuse to hear the cases.

See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leaky\\_condo\\_crisis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leaky_condo_crisis)

Of Note: Thus instead of governments at all levels pulling their support away from Condo buildings in favour of built-for-rental buildings, the allure of high profits from building condos continue to create a shortage of affordable rentals suitable to known demographic pressures.

**2005 - BC Gov** - Ministry of Housing encourages the **legalization of secondary suites** by publishing a **how-to-guide** for municipalities. Most of the 66 pages are describing the approaches used by towns who had already legalized some suites: Abbotsford,

Coquitlam, Kelowna, Nelson, New Westminster, North Vancouver, Whistler, and Anmore. The appendices summarize the types of legislation, financing, and enforcement required. In the "what we have learned" section it warns municipalities to focus their efforts on allowing suites in new subdivisions, **rather than tie up resources** trying to legalize and enforce suites in existing subdivisions. It also warns them to consult with residents and **gain their acceptance** before continuing.

The guide is no longer available at its much referenced original web location and has not been updated in ten years even though such suites have become a hot political issue across western Canada.

See: [www.housing.gov.bc.ca/pub/secondary\\_suites.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.bc.ca/pub/secondary_suites.pdf)

Of Note: The crisis in affordable housing is due to a shortage of built-for-rental units, which is an outcome of decades of developers chasing the higher and immediate profits gained by building condo units. Senior governments hope that secondary suites can **band-aid the crisis** until a true solution is found, but then fail to limit strata developments or encourage built-for-rentals.

**2005 - Venice, Italy** - Greater Venice is growing rapidly, yet the historic and touristed central islands are consistently losing population (60,000 and dropping). The council decides to use the **infill strategies** already in use on the mainland to increase the stock of **affordable accommodation** on the (**desirable destination**) central islands for the young and the elderly. This involves easing bylaws that restrict the building of **secondary suites, courtyard houses, and duplexes**, while simultaneously easing the strict **tenant protections**.

Of Note: The central islands of Venice are proof of how infill strategies work in desirable destination communities such as Oak Bay. See 2014 Venice (below) for the outcome.

**2005 - Portland** - Strong **backlash** by suburban residents against "**Smart Growth**" densification strategies due to the (now visible) problems and failures with the strategy. Over a ten year span residents have swung from 62% in favour to 75% against.

See: [www.debunkingportland.com/smart/metrodensityvote.htm](http://www.debunkingportland.com/smart/metrodensityvote.htm)

This swing is mostly due to Smart Growth making housing **less affordable** rather than more affordable as was intuitive.

See: [americandreamcoalition.org/penalty.html](http://americandreamcoalition.org/penalty.html)

**2006 - Vancouver - EcoDensity** plan introduced by newly elected mayor **Sam Sullivan** (who trademarks the name as it is his own version of Smart Growth). It keeps the transportation features of CityPlan, but **gets rid of the custom "community visions"** and replaces them with **generic "infill strategies"**. It is immediately criticized by the communities that had created the custom visions.

Of Note: It is in the direct financial interest of local small developers to lobby strongly for EcoDensity because those infill strategies add many smaller infill projects for them to bid on (as opposed to larger projects where bid competition is between large nation-wide developers).

**2006/08 - Vancouver** - Huge developer/political **lobby campaign** to sell **EcoDensity**.

**2007 - CRD** - publishes their **Regional Housing Affordability Strategy (RHAS)**.

This document is mostly about reducing homelessness and increasing non-market (subsidized) housing but it does mention the shortage of affordable/suitable market rentals and one strategy is to have "pro-affordable" (e.g. secondary suite) bylaws and processes conform across all municipalities in the CRD.

See: <https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/crd-document-library/committeedocuments/planningtransportationandprotectiveservicescommittee/20070200/28-feb-2007---regional-housing-affordability-strategy---attachment-bR.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

**Of Note:** The document does give a good overview of the situation, but is thin on solutions, and makes no allowance for the differences between municipalities in regards to available land and lot prices.

**2007 - Smart Growth BC** - publishes their **Affordable Housing Study**.

In it they warn that: "Affordable rental stock, however, can be lost when a house with a secondary suite is replaced by a **more expensive home** without a suite, when an older rental home is replaced with a **vacation home** owned by a non-resident, or when an apartment building or SRO hotel is replaced by a **high end condominium** development."

And: "Rental housing remains an important part of the affordable housing stock. Rents are not increasing as quickly as is the cost of home ownership. However, the availability of rental units may be decreasing as buildings are **converted to strata units because of high land prices.**"

See: [www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/Portals/0/Downloads/SGBC\\_Affordable\\_Housing\\_Report\\_2007.pdf](http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/Portals/0/Downloads/SGBC_Affordable_Housing_Report_2007.pdf)

**Of Note:** That there is an **extreme risk** of such counter-intuitive outcomes in desirable destination communities such as Oak Bay.

**2007 - Oak Bay - FAR (Floor Area Ratio) rules eased** (against the advice of city managers) in order to allow old houses with low height basements to add more living space. E.g.: Gary Streights home on St. Patrick. News article at:

[www.canada.com/story.html?id=c2fa37b9-3fa0-4786-a98f-dd6e233fd694](http://www.canada.com/story.html?id=c2fa37b9-3fa0-4786-a98f-dd6e233fd694)

**Of Note:** However well meant the change, it becomes a **loophole** used by developers to build over-large new houses on the smallest, cheapest lots (which necessitates the clear cutting of those lots).

**2007 - Vancouver** - Panicked by the rate of **loss of existing rental buildings**, Vancouver, like many other urban municipalities, slaps a moratorium on rental apartment building demolitions or conversions to condos. Demolitions are allowed only if the units are replaced by an equal number of new rental apartment units.

See: <http://renx.ca/this-old-apartment-building-typifies-vancouvers-struggle-to-renew-rental-housing/>

**Almost no built-for-rental** apartment buildings have been built in Vancouver **since**



**1980.**

See: <http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/regional-planning/PlanningPublications/MetroVancouverRentallInventoryandRiskAnalysis8May2012.pdf>

Of Note: This is proof that the affordable housing crisis is due to the profit margins in Condos. Not only are built-for-rentals not being built, but they are disappearing.  
**Permitting secondary suites is a poor band-aid in comparison.**

**2007 - Venice** - Building **boom begins** on the central islands for local small developers. **Tenants displaced** by construction are "temporarily" evicted and must move to outer islands or the mainland. Described in Envision Venice: 2007 Venice Comprehensive Plan.

See: [www.venicegov.com/Files/Plan\\_Zoning/executive\\_summary.pdf](http://www.venicegov.com/Files/Plan_Zoning/executive_summary.pdf)

**2007 - CMHC - Liar Loans make the news again** - Liar loans are being used by the BC development industry to sell overpriced housing to first time buyers (who become crippled by debt) by perverting the CMHC **Mortgage Loan Insurance** program.

See: [/housing-analysis.blogspot.com/2007/01/gong-show-2.html](http://housing-analysis.blogspot.com/2007/01/gong-show-2.html)

Of Note: [Liar loans are blamed for the excesses of the USA Real estate bubble \(below\)](#)

**2008 - USA - Real estate bubble** (caused by easy credit, low interest rates, and mortgage brokers lying on application forms) finally bursts and **real estate prices crash** resulting in a quarter of all mortgages being larger than the value of the house. The "Flipper" condo market is hit first and hardest especially in Florida and Arizona, but eventually every state and all housing forms crash in price. The crash then migrates to all developed countries except for Canada, Australia, and New Zealand whose resource economies are supplying China's booming economy.

Of Note: [In Florida new luxury \\$400,000 beach condos are auctioned at cost - \\$60,000.](#)

Of Note: [By 2010 a thirty year old 3bed, 2 bath bungalow outside of Phoenix can be bought for less than \\$50,000 \(as opposed to 300,000 in Kamloops\). Bungalows a block from waterfront in the desirable beach suburbs north of San Diego are less than \\$300,000 \(as opposed to \\$800,000 in Oak Bay\).](#)

Of Note: [Popular fix-and-flip reality TV shows move out of the USA to Canada and Australia because the strategy does not work without house price inflation.](#)

**2008 - SmartGrowthBC** - publishes their "**Affordable Housing: A Smart Growth Toolkit for BC**".

The purpose of this Toolkit is to describe the eight most common affordable housing policies, programs, and strategies used by local governments and uses specific municipalities as examples. There is an entire section on Secondary Suites.

Issues are mentioned that are ignored by other organizations that are pushing infill strategies. For example:

- changing bylaws to permit secondary suites does not mean there will be applications.
- affordable for the young, the old, and low income, **by definition means rental.**
- the trend of Stratification (Condos) rather than built-for-rentals reduces **affordability**

- the trend of repurposing secondary suites (especially on island communities) for use as vacation rentals **negates the justification** for permitting the suites in the first place.

See: [www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/portals/0/downloads/sghbc\\_affordable\\_housing\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/portals/0/downloads/sghbc_affordable_housing_toolkit.pdf)

Of Note is that they derive **secondary suite numbers** from the 2006 Census. 75% or Saanich rentals are suites. **27% of Oak Bay** rentals are suites.

Of Note: there are **clear warnings** to desirable destination communities about vacation rentals thwarting the outcomes of infill strategies.

**2008 - Vancouver - CityPlan replaced with EcoDensity.** It includes the following infill approaches:

**Invisible Density** - When a 'secondary suite' is added within an existing house, almost no change at all is seen from the street. Additional rental units within a house are popular 'mortgage helpers' and contribute to affordable rentals in established areas.

**Hidden Density** - When a lane cottage is built behind an existing house, it can barely be seen from the street. Lane houses require no new infrastructure and are rapidly being retrofitted into established suburbs. More comprehensive development builds new houses and laneway houses over two or more lots.

**Gentle Density** - Larger than the individual house, 'gentle' development might rise a few extra floors above the retail frontages along a commercial street or introduce rowhouses (townhouses) into a neighbourhood.

Of Note: Developer lobby group UDI has popularized the use of "Gentle Densification" as a label for all of these strategies.

**2008 - Vancouver** - Gregor Robertson elected to replace Sam Sullivan, partially on the promise of getting rid of EcoDensity and going back to CityPlan. Instead, once elected, Robertson **accelerates EcoDensity** with the help of his slate: **Vision Vancouver**.

See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vision\\_Vancouver](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vision_Vancouver)

**2008 - Calgary** - Smart Growth infill potential is studied exhaustively by the planning department. The study states that infill strategies **do not increase affordability** in desirable neighbourhoods. The recommendation is to use infill strategies close to rail stations and in buffer blocks along rail lines and highways.

See: [www.fonvca.org/agendas/may2011/housing\\_afford\\_and\\_smarth\\_growth\\_report.pdf](http://www.fonvca.org/agendas/may2011/housing_afford_and_smarth_growth_report.pdf)

Of Note is that desirable Oak Bay has no rail stations, rail lines, or highways to buffer. If it were in Calgary, it would **not even be considered for infill strategies**.

**2008 - Demographia** - A US planning think-tank publishes extensive study of how **Smart Growth** effects affordability. Quote:

**"Conclusion: Existing Houses:** There is no evidence of any inherent market differences that could account for the substantially higher existing house prices in smart growth markets compared to responsive markets. The data leads to a conclusion that Smart

Growth is associated with **higher existing house prices.**"

See: [www.demographia.com/dhi-us8.pdf](http://www.demographia.com/dhi-us8.pdf)

Of Note is that this study included all types of communities, not just desirable destinations similar to Oak Bay.

**2008 - Nanaimo** - University undergraduate paper about whether EcoDensity would be of use on Vancouver Island. It contains a local **overview of the issues.**

See [newcity.ca/Pages/ecodensity.pdf](http://newcity.ca/Pages/ecodensity.pdf)

**2009 - EcoDensity** - is presented by Vancouver attendees to the **UBCM** (Union of BC Municipalities) as the best solution for "green" growth.

See: [www.civicinfo.bc.ca/practices\\_innovations/eco\\_density\\_initiative--vancouver--2009.pdf](http://www.civicinfo.bc.ca/practices_innovations/eco_density_initiative--vancouver--2009.pdf)

Of Note: Subsequently local developers begin lobbying for infill across most BC municipalities.

**2009 - Portland** - Smart Growth densification strategy **declared a failure** and US think tanks warn other cities not to follow Portland's lead

. See: <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/smartgrowth-plans-are-failure-portland>

Of Note is that Vancouver and the GVRD were already following Portland's lead and were lobbying Portland's failing strategies to the BC Government.

**2010 - EcoDensity** - strategies are incorporated into the "**Housing Strategies of the BC Government**" and are strongly recommended to the **UBCM.**

See: [www.housing.gov.bc.ca/MarketHousing/strategy.htm](http://www.housing.gov.bc.ca/MarketHousing/strategy.htm)

**2010 - UDI** - Because EcoDensity has become a political hot potato in Vancouver, and because the name is trade marked, the urban developers of BC begin lobbying for infill strategies that are profitable for small developers under the name "**Gentle Densification**".

Of Note: This is a re-branding of the infill strategies of EcoDensity and Smart Growth, but taken out of the context of transportation planning (which was the main justification for the infill strategies.)

**2010 - BC Gov** - recommends that municipalities accept and legalize secondary suites. "**Illegal suites**" becomes a political hot potato not just in BC but also in Edmonton and Calgary.

Of Note: Secondary suites are made **legal by Saanich** in areas south of Mackenzie Ave.

Of Note: Despite the safety risk from un-inspected renovations, Oak Bay side steps around the issue of existing illegal secondary suites because are so prevalent, and because they are now recommended by senior government.

**2011 - Oak Bay** - Longtime councilor Nils Jensen becomes mayor. The **new council** does not enforce existing secondary suites safety rules, and does not close the 2007 FAR loophole being used to build new over-sized houses on small lots.

Of Note: Thus various groups of neighbours form loose associations to **fight developer abuses.** They complain not just about the looming size, but also the

associated loss of character houses&gardens&trees as well as the imposition on the existing neighbours. They are dismissed as "nimbys" by council. ("Nimby" was a term coined by the US Nuclear Power industry to belittle neighbourhood dissent against their power plants being built in earthquake zones close to existing towns).

**2011 - Japan - Every tsunami emergency plan in the world is proven ridiculously optimistic** when the most tsunami prepared nation in the world is devastated. The 3m tidal surge sent water inland as far as 5km, flooded land that was 20m above sea level, and left high water marks as high as 130m above sea level.

Of Note: If Oak Bay had suffered this tsunami - the neighbourhoods around Monterrey, Windsor, Bowker Creek, Willows, and Carnarvon would have been inundated, and if it came at night those sleeping in basement suites **would have drowned**.

**2011 - England - Mary Portos publishes her landmark study about the rapid demise of village high street businesses.** The competition is big box retailing, motorway based malls, and the rapid rise of online retailing, but she points to landlords for not helping local retailers be successful, leasing to (clone) chain stores and financial offices, leaving shop fronts empty, being slow to repurpose leased space, and not modernizing the residences above the shops to allow elderly tenants (elevators). She points to councils not putting their high streets in competition with malls by easing parking/restrictions, for not creating public friendly spaces around shops, and for not encouraging events to draw crowds (such as street markets).

Subsequently many government committees are formed but nothing is done, so the media publish expose's about dying high streets.

See: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6292/2081646.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6292/2081646.pdf)

Search Google for: Saving Britain's high streets

Of Note: Oak Bay has an English style high street where retailers are struggling.

**2012 - BC - Municipalities all over BC crack down on illegal suites** - some issuing fines, some forcing removal, and some forcing compliance. Including: Abbotsford, Burnaby, Colwood, Delta, Ft St John, Langley, Merritt, Pitt Meadows, Revelstoke, Surrey, Tsawwassen, and Whistler.

**Issues go beyond fire hazards**, to include **non-resident** owners, suites in **duplexes**, **vacation** rentals, **more than one** suite per building, and non-registration.

Bylaw officers use Craigslist rental ads and real estate sales **ads to target** illegal suites. The organization BCLandlords.ca is created in reaction to the crack down.

**2012 - BC Gov - Building code definition of Secondary Suite.** Revisions to the 1995 building code that made provision for secondary suites - a relaxed version of the code that duplexes must adhere to. (see link below for more details).

**Municipalities cannot set their standards lower than the BC Building code.**

To be allowed to use the relaxed code a suite must conform to:

1. only one secondary suite permitted in the building.

2. it must be located in a building containing only residential occupancy.
3. it is located in or is part of a building containing only one other dwelling unit.
4. its area cannot exceed 90 square meters of finished living area (not including commons).
5. its area cannot exceed 40% of the total living floor space (area) of the building it is located in (not including attached storage garages)
6. it cannot be subdivided from the building it is part of under the Strata Property Act. (Both dwelling units are registered under the same title).

See: [www.mapleridge.ca/DocumentCenter/Home/View/288](http://www.mapleridge.ca/DocumentCenter/Home/View/288)

Of Note: Under the BC Building code, laneway, garden, and carriage suites, and suites in ~plexes, apartments, and condos are not consider secondary suites and therefore must be built to the normal building code rather than the relaxed code.

Of Note: If you use your home to run a non-residential business, then your suite must adhere to the normal code not the relaxed code. This begs the question - is a vacation rental a residential business?

**2012 - Oak Bay - 80% of all houses are bulldozer bait.** When a house is assessed at less than half of the assessed value of the lot, then it is viewed as a tear down by the development industry. In Oak Bay in 1953 a new modest bungalow cost \$11,000 plus \$1,500 for the serviced lot. In 2012 that bungalow is assessed at \$40,000, yet its lot is assessed at \$650,000. The house is a depreciating asset (like a car) while the lot is subject to inflationary speculation.

**2013 - Sam Sullivan** - elected as a BC Liberal MLA for False Creek. He lives in Yaletown where the Community Association is one of the most vocal critics of his EcoDensity.

See: [www.newyaletown.ca/](http://www.newyaletown.ca/)

**2013 - R.D.Nanaimo** - The regional district publishes their **Secondary Suite Study**. It contains the most complete list to date of the issues and pressures, the pros and cons (which are called issues rather than cons), and a long list of references. Only a third of the document is specific to the RD.

**Unfortunately** this report does not list any municipalities that have been lauded for their successful outcomes from permitting secondary suites, nor does it list any best-of-breed examples of municipalities to use as models.

See: [www.rdn.bc.ca/cms/wpattachments/wpID3037atID5452.pdf](http://www.rdn.bc.ca/cms/wpattachments/wpID3037atID5452.pdf)

Of Note: a worldwide search for successful outcomes from permitting secondary suite infill has **failed to find any lauded successful outcomes**. Thus there is **no proof** that it will have a positive outcome in Oak Bay (or in any other desirable destination community).

Of Note: Since the RD contains desirable destination communities, beach towns, and resort towns, (eg: Parksville) it did include the effects of vacation rentals on the pool of affordable rentals. This study is therefore far more applicable to Oak Bay than earlier studies done in communities such as N. Vancouver or Abbotsford.

**2013 - EcoDensity** - is lobbied to **Australia** and **New Zealand** city planners by their local small

developers through their local **UDI**.

**2013 - Oak Bay** - a project begins to replace (rather than evolve) the **OCP**. This despite public outcries about "over-sized" houses and "illegal" suites. The existing "**single family, suburban**" **OCP** is thrown away and replaced with a completely **new "multi-family, urban"** **OCP** which follows the densification recommendations of the BC Government (which follow the controversial and yet unproven EcoDensity strategies adopted by Vancouver).

**2014 - Saanich** - In the four years that **secondary suites** have been allowed south of Mackenzie Ave, 98 permits have been issued, but only 1 is from the estimated 9,000 existing illegal suites.

See: [www.auxiliummortgage.com/legal-suites/](http://www.auxiliummortgage.com/legal-suites/)

Of Note: The legalizing of secondary suites is profitable only for new developments or during major renovations. Otherwise the costs of bringing an existing suite **up to code** are prohibitive.

**2014 - Oak Bay** - The Clive's **affordable apartments** are replaced with much more expensive units with insufficient parking, despite a very strong resistance from Oak Bay residents.

Of Note: The development is unusual in an era when new built-for-rental buildings are rare, and where the trend is towards evicting tenants and converting built-for-rental into condos.

**2014 - Oak Bay** - The new **OCP is enacted** and work begins on adjusting the **Zoning Bylaws** to allow infill housing. A full time town planner is hired away from Nanaimo.

**2014 - Oak Bay - Duplexes** re-added to the zoning bylaw (removed in 1966) - in the last meeting of an outgoing council.

**2014 - Portland** - (a leader in Smart Growth strategies) provides a lesson in the **dangers of densification**.

See: [www.planetizen.com/node/66710](http://www.planetizen.com/node/66710)

**2014 - Australia** - Urban planners are **outraged** by the hard lobbying of **EcoDensity** to Australian cities due to the strategy's autocratic approach, and because in practice the strategies do not to solve the problems they were designed to solve.

See: [cityhallwatch.wordpress.com/2014/01/12/ecodensity-policy-wendy-sarkissian/](http://cityhallwatch.wordpress.com/2014/01/12/ecodensity-policy-wendy-sarkissian/)

Of Note: The pertinent text of this article is **quoted** in the Appendix below.

**2014 - Western Canada** - the **legalization of secondary suites and infill housing** becomes a media issue in the Lower Mainland, Calgary, and Edmonton. Numerous reports in the **media** about how angry existing residents are, especially at laneway housing.

Of Note: **UDI** is often interviewed as if it were an educational think-tank rather than a developer lobby group, and it always pushes "gentle densification" as a panacea (even though by definition basement/laneway suites are not "gentle" but "invisible or hidden" densification).

**2014 - Venice** - **Smart Growth infill strategies** have created an accommodation, population,

and political **nightmare in the central islands of Venice**. The local developers made record profits from an eight year building boom, however:

- The population of the central islands has crashed from 60,000 to 27,000 because there is no longer any affordable accommodation. **Hardest hit are students and young families**.
- Existing tenants who were forced to seek accommodation off the central islands during renovations, cannot afford to return.
- Most of the new suites became **vacation rentals** (e.g. via the web at VRBO.com and AIRBNB.com), as unlicensed and untaxed businesses.
- Those new suites that were allowed **strata-titles** were sold to foreigners and are vacant for most of the year.
- Giorgio Orsoni, the Mayor of Venice, and 35 others are arrested on corruption charges.

See: [www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/the-death-of-venice-corrupt-officials-mass-tourism-and-soaring-property-prices-have-stifled-life-in-10251434.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/the-death-of-venice-corrupt-officials-mass-tourism-and-soaring-property-prices-have-stifled-life-in-10251434.html)

**2014 - Oak Bay** - The newly replaced Oak Bay Beach Hotel-Condo is forced into receivership.

See: [www.timescolonist.com/news/local/oak-bay-beach-hotel-pushed-into-receivership-but-business-as-usual-1.1651091](http://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/oak-bay-beach-hotel-pushed-into-receivership-but-business-as-usual-1.1651091)

See: 1930 - Oak Bay above.

**2015 - San Francisco** - bylaws that funded a registry and a complaint office for vacation-rental-by-owners (AIRbnb) are amended to restrict the number of days per year that such suites can be rented out. The city is in a rental and affordability crises, and locals are being evicted in order to rent to vacationers.

See: [www.cnet.com/news/san-francisco-board-of-supervisors-vote-on-airbnb/](http://www.cnet.com/news/san-francisco-board-of-supervisors-vote-on-airbnb/)

See: [www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-11-10/how-airbnb-makes-property-investors-rich-despite-the-neighbors](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-11-10/how-airbnb-makes-property-investors-rich-despite-the-neighbors)

Of Note: An increasing number of Oak Bay's (illegal) suites are being rented out over the web to vacationers, rather than to students. See 2014 - Venice (above).

**2015 - Calgary** - Council refuses a proposal to legalize **secondary suites** because there is no budget or **staff to govern** them or do compliance checks.

See: [calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/city-council-rejects-proposal-to-allow-secondary-suites-for-inner-city-wards](http://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/city-council-rejects-proposal-to-allow-secondary-suites-for-inner-city-wards)

Of Note: Oak Bay has a half time bylaw officer. See also: 2012 - BC (above).

**2015 - FCM** - Federation of Canadian Municipalities publishes "Seniors and Housing: The Challenge Ahead". which points out that optimally **seniors housing should be in built-for-rental buildings** (so that they can change accommodation as their health situation changes), and that there is a dire shortage of such rentals at all price levels but especially at affordable rents.

See: [www.fcm.ca/Documents/reports/FCM/Seniors\\_and\\_Housing\\_Report\\_EN.pdf](http://www.fcm.ca/Documents/reports/FCM/Seniors_and_Housing_Report_EN.pdf)

Of Note: "house-poor" pensioners in the CRD are not selling their family homes because they cannot find suitable rental accommodation to move into (at any cost). To



them "suitable" includes: professionally managed rental building with elevator and within walking distance of shops and services, and with secure parking. A two bedroom unit with in-suite laundry and a view window.

Of Note: The shortage of independent-senior housing in the CRD would not be so dire if Victoria's Songhees developments had been rental buildings rather than strata buildings.

**2015 - Vancouver** - Twenty different (angry) **community associations** take Vancouver to **court** in separate actions over unwanted developments. Subsequently there is a significant turnover in key staff at city hall.

**2015 - UVic** - Documents their next 10yr campus plan. The last one was in 2002 which resulted in increased campus housing by 2004. This new plan does not propose additional housing.

See: [www.uvic.ca/campusplanning/assets/docs/Campus-Plan-Update-2015/Draft UVic Campus Plan, Oct 14 2015.pdf](http://www.uvic.ca/campusplanning/assets/docs/Campus-Plan-Update-2015/Draft%20UVic%20Campus%20Plan,%20Oct%2014%202015.pdf)

Of Note: The 2002 plan increased campus beds from ~1600 to 2300, but that was still not enough because even back in 2004 there were 4,000 applications for campus housing.

Of Note: If UVic had built the set of high rise apartments along Cedar Hill X road as they had agreed to under the original 1961 land deal with Oak Bay, then 50 years on these apartments could have been claimed for student housing.

**2015 - Oak Bay** - Floor area ratio (**FAR**) review proposes changes to bylaws that will correct the oversized house loophole from 2007.

**2015 - Ottawa** - Stats Canada publishes their latest construction cost report.

See: [www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/cpis04a-eng.htm](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/cpis04a-eng.htm)

Of Note: Victoria's building costs have been in a downward spiral since 2007. Today it costs only 83% as much to build a house in the CRD as it did in 2007. This means that the increase in housing prices is all due to the increase in land prices.

**2015 - GVRD, CRD** - Hot money escaping the stock market and housing crash in **China** comes shopping for property in **desirable destination communities** in BC especially Vancouver. Bidding wars break out in an already over-priced housing market.

**2015 - England** - Multiple studies out of the UK about widows in family homes which explain that what UK councils have **mistakenly** identified as a crisis shortage of housing for **young families**, is actually a byproduct of the true crisis, a shortage of suitable housing for the still-**independent elderly**. Because of this shortage, the elderly continue to live in family sized homes that no longer match their needs, thus those homes are not available for the young families who do need them.

See: [www.theguardian.com/money/2015/sep/23/downsizing-could-free-up-25m-homes](http://www.theguardian.com/money/2015/sep/23/downsizing-could-free-up-25m-homes)

Of Note: England shares similar boom-bust-echo demographics with BC. In the last decade, BC cities may have wasted a lot of time and resources trying to encourage the

infill of single family lots, rather than encouraging **built-for-rental** buildings with elevators and 2 bedroom units.

**2015 - CMHC - Updates their website** page which advocates Secondary Suites and logs municipal trends towards legalization. The latest update was to re-add the concept of "mortgage helper" due to the flip-flop in insured mortgage qualifying rules over the past two years.

This site gives a biased view of the situation by listing advantages while ignoring disadvantages of secondary suites and therefore should not be trusted for sound advice.

Its municipal survey results show that most municipalities permit suites **only in the main building** and set minimums for building size and lot size.

Nowhere does it present a list of communities which have been successful in eliminating affordable housing shortages by permitting secondary suites, or a list of best-of-breed examples for municipalities to use as models.

See: [http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/afhoce/afhoce/afhostcast/afhoid/pore/pesesu/pesesu\\_001.cfm](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/afhoce/afhoce/afhostcast/afhoid/pore/pesesu/pesesu_001.cfm).

### End of the Timeline

#### TO DO LIST

1. Search for desirable destination communities like Oak Bay that have already implemented gentle densification infill strategies and the outcomes were positive and the existing residents are happy with them.

Update: Extensive direct search for communities with positive outcomes has **failed**, however many negative outcomes have been found (the most extreme above in 2015 - Venice). The only positive reports seem to be from developers bragging about specific projects, or about how they got local government approval.

Next: Try an indirect search by finding example communities cited in the many documents that are pushing infill housing, and then follow up to find out the current actual outcomes of those examples.

Update: The indirect search for positive outcomes has **failed**. Either the communities enacted strategies that did not solve the problems (like affordability), or they were not actioned by owners (like existing secondary suites), or they acrimony between existing residents and city hall and developers (the most common).

Next: Try asking town planners in various municipalities if they have any **evidential proof** that infill strategies produce positive outcomes, and ask for the names of the proof-of-concept municipalities that they are using to model their own strategies.

Update: No response yet. Try more municipality planning departments.

2. Query the Federal, Provincial, and Local governments about why they are not actively **discouraging strata** and condo developments while actively **encouraging built-for-rent** projects, since we are now in a demographic era where built-for-rent units are needed quickly and in great numbers.

Update: Unable to find any authoritative or government reference which identifies the absence of new built-for-rent buildings as being the source of the current demographic housing crisis. There was one indirect reference - see above in 2007 - Vancouver.

Glib answer: condos are big business so government is turning a blind eye.

Next: Without references any queries to the governments or media will be ignored, so no choice but to continue the search for authoritative references.

## **APPENDIX**

The following is a quote about Vancouver's EcoDensity plan from an Australian planner:

See: [cityhallwatch.wordpress.com/2014/01/12/ecodensity-policy-wendy-sarkissian/](http://cityhallwatch.wordpress.com/2014/01/12/ecodensity-policy-wendy-sarkissian/)

### **Why EcoDensity is a failure?**

- It arose from a top-down public relations initiative and never had widespread popular or Council support.
- The way it was initiated led to initial mistrust and the ways it was implemented continue to contribute to mistrust.
- It promised much more than it delivered.
- It did not make housing more affordable.
- It did a poor job of improving social equity.
- It did not provide enough new housing units to satiate the demand.
- It contributed to a breakdown of trust between communities and the Council.
- It re-politicized the planning process and destroyed social capital and relationships established through the extensive CityPlan processes.

### **What can we learn from this - in Australia?**

This is a cautionary tale that we ignore at our peril - as communities, planners and governments. First, let's learn from our own experiences, do the relevant research - here and abroad - mine the archives, refresh the institutional memories and learn to think for ourselves.

Second, let's respect our overseas colleagues and engage with them - but as equals, not as supplicants. The City of Vancouver has made many mistakes, as have our larger cities. But it's only a small place with 600,00 residents. We have larger cities and bigger problems - and many smart people to address them.

Third, let's fearlessly face "the cringe" and vow to create our own planning solutions. We can learn from others. Yes. And we can come to our own decisions.

And finally, let's **beware of the spin-doctors**. One recently told an Australian audience packed

full of activists and planners that planners and governments need to “be more creative now about how you ‘brand’ ideas.”

The **spin-doctors have all but ruined planning in Vancouver**. Let’s not learn from them how to do that better. Because if we want learn how to do spin doctoring better, Vancouver is definitely the place to go .” endquote

**THE END**