

The View from the Island: What's on the Horizon for VIU

/ Felicia Fischer, Mark Holland RPP, MCIP, and Pam Shaw RPP, FCIP

This article marks the second in a series of brief insights on ideas emerging from British Columbia's planning schools – the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver Island University (VIU), and the University of Northern BC. In this update from VIU's Master of Community Planning Program, we provide an overview of the program, highlights of student work, and some insight on the "wicked questions" currently being considered by faculty.

A Brief Overview

VIU's Master of Community Planning (MCP) Program was initiated in 2014 and combines research along with applied learning through real-world projects. The Program benefits from strong ties to the local planning community who act as mentors, adjuncts, committee members, and guest speakers, offering their knowledge and expertise to students. The MCP program leverages its location and VIU's strong ties to communities to equip students with a strong foundation of professional and academic skills and develop an extensive professional network.

The Year Ahead

We are welcoming the seventh cohort of MCP students in-person in September 2021. Some highlights of the Program include:

- All students will be engaged in an intensive planning exercise with the South End Neighbourhood Association

during Orientation Week (the first week of classes). This is the first of many practical, applied opportunities to work with First Nations, municipal governments, and community groups across the academic year;

- Students have the opportunity to complete an additional six-course Urban and Regional Planning Certificate along with their degree on a range of specific planning topics. Students can then graduate with a degree and certificate;
- Pat Maloney RPP, FCIP is the Program's Practitioner in Residence, and Dave Witty RPP, FCIP is our Professor Emeritus. The Planning Studio was recently renamed as the Dave Witty Studio to honor his contributions to the Program;
- The student-initiated and managed "Future Plans Journal" (see: <https://www.futureplansjournal.com>) continues to provide students and faculty with a place to publish peer-reviewed articles;



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1 Master of Community Planning Students working in the Dave Witty Studio.
2 Landscape of Vancouver Island University's Nanaimo campus.



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MCP

Highlights of Student Research

Students graduating in Spring 2021 were one of two cohorts to engage in a year of online learning. While online life certainly had some challenges, it also opened opportunities to connect to interesting people from around the world, including an engaging and insightful keynote address from Charles Montgomery at the MCP Grad Celebration. Graduating students continue to contribute to planning research and professional practice through an amazing array of theses and major projects:

Vesa Atanasoff	A small, sustainable, standard: how tiny homes could be realized as accessory dwelling unit infill in Nanaimo	Peter Johnston	Post-Pandemic Resiliency: Exploring Greenbelts, Agricultural Land Reserves in New Brunswick
Jacob Burnley	Improving Rural and Small-Town Public Transit: Best Practices and Strategies for Smaller-Scale Transit Solutions	Isha Matous-Gibbs	Deathscapes in Planning: How Planners Can Create Grief-Friendly Spaces
Hayley Burns	Navigating a New Normal: Planning for resilient tourism on Vancouver Island	Brian McLoughlin	Spirit Squares: Planning for Public Space in Vancouver Island Municipalities
Janet Chen	The Mid-Sized/Aged City Approach to Smart Cities: A Proposal to Create a Smart City Strategy and Practice for Nanaimo, British Columbia	Maureen Nolan	Improving Neighbourhood Livability and Transportation Safety in Nanaimo, BC.
Ian Cox	Rainwater in Trust: Legislation, Policy, and Regulation Governing Catchments, Systems and Use on the Gulf Islands	Aishwarya Pathania	Responsive Cities: Reimagining society's role in shaping its cities in the age of the internet
Sonal Deshmukh	Pluralistic Planning for Multicultural Cities: Exploring Cultural Expression in the Built Environment	Jake Rogger	The Homeless Serving System: A Case Study of Quesnel, B.C.
Felicia Fischer	Walking, dogs, and the built form: An examination of the role of the built environment in supporting dog walking as a form of exercise in Nanaimo, BC	Shalini	Comparing Solid Waste Management Systems of three Regional Districts on Vancouver Island: Regional District of Nanaimo, Capital Regional District and Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District
Celina Fletcher	Assessing the progress of local government greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets on Vancouver Island	Neethu Syam	Repurposing Streets for People: Quick-Builds using Tactical Urbanism
Evans Frimpong	Official Community Plan Assessment in Measuring the Welcoming Capacities of Non-Urban Communities in British Columbia	Bailey Walsh	An Exploration of Factors Contributing to Smooth and Efficient Development Approvals Processes on Vancouver Island
Kira Gill-Maher	Best Practices in a Changing Climate: Investigating the Role of Local Government Planners in Climate Change Mitigation	Zehra Wazir	Rethinking Affordable Housing; An integrated approach for sustainable and equitable living
Samreet Grewal	Food Systems on Campus: A Comparative Study		

- The new Professional Indigenous Lands Management (PILM) Certificate launched in May 2021 in partnership with the National Aboriginal Lands Manager Association's (NALMA) and will be offered again in Summer 2022; and
- The proposed Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA) Certificate, in partnership with the IISAAK OLAM Foundation (www.iisaakolam.ca/aboutus) is currently under internal review and could welcome its first cohort in 2022.

Observations on Planning Education Today

Planning education is going through an exciting renaissance in BC and, as part of that, VIU's program is undertaking a major refinement of curriculum this year. The question of "what do young planners need to know to be effective in the 21st century?" is on the minds of many of us.

This has led to VIU's curriculum refinement with many courses being restructured, content removed or added, add a whole new layer of concurrent certificates, colloquia and partnerships with industry groups, such as the Urban Development Institute (UDI). The intent of this work is to ensure our students have exposure to the widest range of issues and professions that we can.

One of planning's primary roles is "to make order out of chaos" in helping a community grapple with challenges and opportunities. We believe that "planning is the choreography of civilization." The faculty at VIU hope to teach the content and practical skills to the next generation of leaders to have the tools themselves to lead and create positive change.

For more information, check out our website at <https://socialsciences.viu.ca/mcp>. ■

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Ten Questions on the Minds of VIU Faculty



Among many interesting areas of investigation, faculty are currently grappling with the following:

1. **How do we change how humans live to reduce consuming resources at an unsustainable rate?**
2. **How do we address both the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in real and practical ways to create positive change?**
3. **How do we plan for mass movement of communities as a result of the climate crisis?**
4. **How can we create homes for people, along with buildings and public spaces, and stop the relentless climb in housing prices?**
5. **What is the impact of digital platforms and misinformation on our communities?**
6. **How can we create whole places that include industry, ecosystems, recreation and food systems?**
7. **Should we now be considering the "end of the downtown" and the "rise of the (15 minute) neighbourhood" as the basic building block of a region?**
8. **How do we structure communities to both function as part of larger regions accessed by vehicles and as sustainable neighbourhoods that focus on local services?**
9. **How do we create better alignment among all the actors in the development of places and spaces?**
10. **How do we balance planning for cycling with walking and the expensive adaptation of cycling infrastructure for a small percentage of the population?**