Concrete & Cedar

How Greater Vancouver is built — and where it stays wild.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENT, ARCHITECTURE & NATURE IN METRO VANCOUVER | PILOT ISSUE · VOL. 1, NO. 1 | MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2026 · FREE

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COVER STORY · BROADWAY CORRIDOR, VANCOUVER

A college becomes a developer

Vancouver Community College plans to rebuild its Broadway campus, add a second teaching building — and surround it all with seven residential towers. The city is now writing the planning rules for the site, and the final plan goes to council in early 2027.



VCC Broadway campus. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, file “VCC Broadway Campus Building.jpg”.

One of the largest housing proposals in Vancouver right now comes not from a development company, but from a school. Vancouver Community College (VCC) wants to redevelop its Broadway campus at 1155 East Broadway, across the street from VCC–Clark SkyTrain station, in phases: new academic buildings first, then housing, shops and services on the land that is freed up.

The framework is VCC's Campus Plan, approved by the college's Board of Governors in 2019. The catalyst project is the Centre for Clean Energy and Automotive Innovation: an eight-storey teaching building on what is now a parking lot on Great Northern Way. The building carries a $291-million capital cost, of which the province committed $271 million — 93 per cent. After it opens, a second academic building would rise on the east side of the same parking lot. Programs would then move out of the aging Building A, and the southern part of the site, toward Broadway, would be redeveloped with housing together with community, social and commercial space. Renewal of the downtown campus follows in later phases.

The numbers deserve a careful read, because the documents do not all agree. A project concept prepared by a team led by Urban Strategies Inc., with Avison Young and Francl Architecture, describes 264,824 square feet of new academic space and seven residential towers with 1,800 homes, including affordable housing, plus retail and commercial space. An earlier, more expansive vision from 2023 spoke of towers of up to 25 storeys, more than 3,300 homes, and three million square feet of buildable space. The gap is not a contradiction: 3,300 is roughly the maximum the site could hold under the city's Broadway Plan, while 1,800 is the current concept. Which number survives rezoning negotiations is exactly what this paper will track.

One feature of the site makes the politics easier than usual: there is nothing to displace. The campus is teaching buildings and surface parking, not rental homes. VCC president Ajay Patel has pointed to that as a reason provincial and municipal governments are keen to support the project — a large, transit-oriented development with no displacement of existing renters.

VCC is also part of a wider shift. Some of the region's biggest current projects come from institutions rather than traditional developers. TransLink has launched a real-estate arm whose first project is a 30-storey, 200-unit building across from the future Arbutus SkyTrain station. Downtown, the 57-storey Butterfly tower rises beside a social housing project next to First Baptist Church. And the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations — the original stewards of these lands — have become major builders in their own right, with a multi-billion-dollar portfolio and plans for tens of thousands of homes. VCC, a public college that has never built housing before, would join that company.

What happens next is policy, not construction. The City of Vancouver is running a planning program for the campus at the college's request. Phase one engagement ran in spring 2026, with open houses on May 21, May 30 and June 3 and a survey that closed June 9. A second round of engagement, with refined policy directions and a preferred concept, is scheduled for this fall. The final plan is expected to go to council in early 2027. No rezoning

application for the towers has been filed yet — that comes after the policy is set.

> *"It is unlocking the potential to serve the whole region in ways beyond our academic mission."*
>
> — Ajay Patel, president and CEO, Vancouver Community College

THE ENGINEER'S EYE — WHAT TO WATCH

- **The decant.** The campus must keep teaching while its buildings come down. Phasing — new building first, demolition second — is the plan, and it is also the main risk.
- **The rental share.** Patel hopes to make "as many as possible" of the homes rentals, depending on government support. That is an aim, not a commitment. The rezoning negotiation will decide it.
- **The partner.** VCC has never developed housing. The real-estate partner it chooses will shape the design, the tenure mix and the pace of everything that follows.

The week in development

Short items from rezoning applications, council decisions and project updates across Metro Vancouver.

REGION-WIDE

The pipeline is rental now

A development tracker updated October 26 counts 58 rezoning applications across Metro Vancouver proposing 25,465 homes. In its latest update, five projects were added — 1,615 homes — and not one of them is for sale: 1,399 are secured rental and 216 are social housing. The two largest are 1,000 rental homes at 8530–8550 Cambie Street in Vancouver and 216 social housing homes on Boundary Road. The five are approvals from earlier council sittings that a review found missing from the tracker; no Metro Vancouver council decided a rezoning between October 20 and 26.

Source: VancouverDwelling development tracker, Oct. 26, 2026.

VANCOUVER · OAKRIDGE

Oakridge Park wants lighter rules

Developers QuadReal and Westbank have applied to amend the zoning for Oakridge Park, the city's single largest development. They want to drop the requirement for a public car-share fleet and an e-bike fleet, cut the cap on private car-share vehicles in phase one from 42 to 22, and reduce transit-pass reimbursement from two passes per household to one per home. The developers argue the original 2012–13 requirements no longer match city norms — Vancouver removed minimum parking requirements citywide in June 2024. For context: the mall and Time Out Market opened in May 2026, a Safeway flagship followed in August and a Fairleigh Dickinson University campus in September. The first five residential towers — 700 strata condos and 180 social housing units — are expected in early 2027.

Source: zoning amendment application, as reported Oct. 2026.

VANCOUVER · ARBUTUS RIDGE

One staircase, six storeys

Vancouver's first proposal under the city's new single-egress staircase framework is a six-storey wood-frame building at 2150 West 16th Avenue, designed by B Squared Architecture for developer PCube. It would replace a 1944-era house with 24 secured rental homes: 16 two-bedroom units averaging 865 square feet and eight three-bedroom units averaging 1,036 square feet. The site sits about a 12-minute walk from the future Arbutus SkyTrain station. Council approved the framework in December 2025, and the B.C. Building Code has allowed six-storey single-staircase residential buildings since 2024. The idea is simple: more homes on single lots, without complex land assemblies.

Source: rezoning application, as reported Oct. 2026.

SURREY · BURNABY

Stalled projects restart

Two projects that fell into creditor protection earlier this year are moving again. In Surrey, Intergulf has been retained to complete Phase Two of Nova by Mortise Group, a 93-unit condo project. In Burnaby, Townline will complete Moonlight Sonata by Symphony Homes, a 130-unit townhouse project. In the same week, new office construction in Vancouver sat at a 15-year low, with vacancy at 11.8 per cent — the highest since the early 2000s, according to Cushman & Wakefield figures.

Source: Vancouver Real Estate Rundown, Oct. 5–12, 2026.

Building of the week

One building, and why it matters.

VANCOUVER · BEACH AVENUE

Vancouver House: a tower that twists out of a traffic island



Vancouver House, 1480 Howe Street. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, file “Vancouver House – 22.jpg”.

At the foot of the Granville Bridge, where the off-ramps leave a triangle of land most cities would pave over, stands the 49-storey Vancouver House. Designed by Bjarke Ingels Group and completed in 2020, it starts as a triangle at its base and twists into a rectangle at the top — a shape dictated entirely by the site: the tower had to clear the bridge ramps, the view corridors and the neighbours' light, all at once.

It matters for this paper's beat because it is a lesson in awkward sites. Metro Vancouver's easy parcels are mostly gone. What remains are triangles under bridges, lots beside SkyTrain guideways and parking lots behind colleges — the VCC campus included. Vancouver House shows what happens when a constraint is treated as the design brief rather than an obstacle.

Nature corner

The other half of this paper: places in the region that are still wild.

WEST VANCOUVER · POINT ATKINSON

Lighthouse Park: the forest that exists because a lighthouse needed darkness



Point Atkinson Lighthouse, Lighthouse Park. Photo: Clayoquot, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

Lighthouse Park is 75 hectares of mostly virgin coastal rainforest at Point Atkinson, where Burrard Inlet meets Howe Sound — old-growth Douglas fir, granite shoreline, and about six kilometres of easy trails. It is one of the last pieces of untouched forest in the Lower Mainland, and it is here for an oddly practical reason.

The point was named Point Atkinson by Captain George Vancouver in 1792; its original name is Sk'iwitsut, meaning “turn your canoe” — a warning about the hazardous waters offshore. The first lighthouse, wooden, was built in 1874 by Arthur Finney of Nanaimo. In 1881 the Dominion of Canada set aside the forest behind it for two working purposes: a dark backdrop so the light

would stand out, and fuel for the steam-powered foghorn. That reserve became the park. The current hexagonal concrete tower dates to 1912. During the Second World War the station watched Burrard Inlet for submarines and ships, with searchlights and gun emplacements; in 1994 the light station grounds were declared a National Historic Site.

Practically: the park is open 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., dogs are welcome on the trails, and bus 250 runs from Park Royal. The main trail from the parking lot to the lighthouse viewpoint is under a mile, nearly flat — the full loop is longer, but the payoff comes early. Note that the lighthouse itself is fenced and closed; the viewpoint, the rocks and the forest are the visit.

WATCH LIST — DATES THAT MATTER

- **VCC Broadway planning program:** second round of public engagement this fall; final plan expected before Vancouver council in early 2027.
- **Joyce–Collingwood Safeway redevelopment, 3400 Kingsway** (Wesgroup / Crombie REIT, five towers): city question-and-answer period January 13–26, 2027.
- **Oakridge Park:** first five residential towers expected in early 2027.

How this issue was made. Every item is drawn from public documents and published reports: VCC's Campus Plan and the City of Vancouver's Shape Your City page for the VCC planning program; the Avison Young project concept; the VancouverDwelling development tracker (Oct. 26, 2026); Howard Chai's Vancouver Real Estate Rundown (Oct. 5–12, 2026); and the Lighthouse Park Preservation Society. Figures are as reported. Where documents disagree — notably the VCC home counts — both figures are shown, with the reason for the difference.

Corrections policy. If anything here is wrong, it will be corrected in the next issue, plainly and in the open. That is the deal this paper makes with its readers.

Concrete & Cedar · Pilot issue prepared by Muse Spark, assistant to Michael Tsiurtok, for review. Not yet a registered publication. Photographs: Wikimedia Commons (see captions); Lighthouse Park photo by Clayoquot, CC BY-SA 3.0.