

INPUT

LAND AND REAL ESTATE
ISSUES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA



Home on the Lane

Tiny in Nelson

Small House Communities

Meeting Future Needs

INPUT

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



ANDREA FLETCHER
 REIBC PRESIDENT

Welcome to Fall 2015! I am so thrilled to be REIBC's new president, and I am keen to demonstrate REIBC's commitment to its members.

The mandate of the Board of Governors is now to promote the hiring of RIs, and my personal goal is to work closely with staff to promote our highly respected designation by meeting belly to belly with the top levels of the real estate hiring companies in BC. We want our members to stand out from the crowd and be the successful candidates. We are targeting each of the unique categories that make up the broad spectrum of our membership. We welcome your suggestions of any specific employers or consultant hiring agencies that need more information about why they should hire an RI.

As part of this campaign we will be listing each member's name in our monthly REIBC eNews. We will highlight a different industry category each month. If you haven't yet done so, I recommend you update your profile on the website (reibc.org). Remember, potential employers who search using our Find an RI tool can only find you if you make the effort to best represent yourself.

The recent launch of the new REIBC website and our first RI television advertisement have helped us to push our values over the airwaves to the broader public. These methods also promote the RIs who live and work outside of BC, including our colleagues in Alberta, Ontario, the Maritimes, and even the United Kingdom.

Have a great fall, and I'll see you all on December 3, 2015, at the President's Luncheon.



COVER: Small houses face a central green and shared amenity space in a community-focused pocket neighbourhood. See article on page 40. Photo by Ross Chapin.

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October 21, 2015

Meet the Pros (Residential)—BCIT

December 3, 2015

President's Luncheon

December 9, 2015

Vancouver Chapter Holiday Reception

February 18, 2016

Day of Recognition

Spring 2016

AIC-BC & REIBC'S
Valuing Diversity Conference

June 9, 2016

Annual General Meeting
and Recognition Dinner

June 22, 2016

23rd Annual Charity Golf Tournament

For more information on events, visit:

reibc.org

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Please let us know your ideas for upcoming issues and how you like the magazine—and check out our Facebook and Twitter pages for up-to-the-minute information on REIBC activities.

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5



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2 Shirlene Cote, BSc, MEd, is the owner of Earth Apple Farm, which grows over 40 different crops and supplies a CSA (community shared agriculture harvest box program), vends at farmers' markets, and sells to restaurants. Prior to taking on life as a farmer and tiny-home owner, Shirlene apartment hopped while working as a research coordinator at UBC and running the 100-Mile Diet Society.

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3 Heather Evans, MA Plan, MCIP, RPP, works as a planning consultant (Heather Evans Consulting), bringing a practical understanding of local government planning and policy to help create sustainable and healthy communities. Heather is based in Squamish, BC.

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4 Jake Fry started Smallworks in 2005 and became a strong advocate for the introduction of laneway housing. He has worked with the City of Vancouver and other municipalities to help develop zoning bylaws based on his experience and interaction with literally hundreds of potential small-home clients. In 2012, Jake was one of two founding directors of Small Housing BC, a non-profit society, and in 2014 was named Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year in Manufacturing.

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COLUMNISTS

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5 Anne McMullin is president and CEO of the Urban Development Institute (Pacific Region). The Institute represents over 650 corporate members involved in all facets of real estate development in British Columbia.

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6 Bob Ransford, CNU-A, is a founding director of Small Housing BC. Bob has worked in urban development in Canada and the US for more than 27 years. For the past 15 years, he has been a public affairs consultant and urban designer specializing in navigating the complex public processes surrounding urban development issues and complicated land use challenges. At COUNTERPOINT Communications, he strives to combine effective public process, smart land use principles, and leading-edge urban design to add extra value to urban development projects.

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7 Seth Reidy is the lead builder and designer of Nelson Tiny Houses, a locally owned, sustainably produced company that builds superior tiny houses. After 20 years in the construction industry (and three years living in a tipi), Seth views building tiny houses as a place where science meets art, where trade meets craft, and where shelter becomes home.

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Contact Brenda Southam at
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UPCOMING ISSUES:

INFRASTRUCTURE GAP | 2016

HAZARD MANAGEMENT | 2016

AFFORDABLE HOUSING | 2016

FROM THE EO'S DESK



BRENDA SOUTHAM
EXECUTIVE OFFICER
AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

REIBC participated in a recent research project about small housing that considered best practices and lessons learned. This is a topic that has been capturing a lot of interest and we thought it high time that we cover it in *Input*.

Small housing—or tiny homes, as they are so commonly referred to—take a range of forms and vary in size. Our research used the definition of a small home as 200–750 square feet in size, but you'll read in this issue about small homes up to 1,500 square feet. How we understand or feel about size, of course, is relative. We need to recognize that in BC (and North America generally) we live in some of the largest homes in the world.

You will read about laneway and tiny housing, a farmer who had a tiny home built so she could “feel at home” on the farm, the developer perspective, and “pocket neighbourhoods,” which have their own very distinctive characteristics. More and more it seems that the boomers are looking for smaller space as they become empty nesters and their three- and four-bedroom homes are no longer full of children. Affordability is a concern for many, and some are embracing a “living small” philosophy.

We are pleased to have Small Housing BC contribute to this issue of *Input*, as they are a new non-profit formed in 2012 to advance the small-housing movement.

In this issue you will meet the new board members, read a synopsis of the AGM and Recognition Dinner and the 2015 REIBC Annual Charity Golf Tournament (which set a record this year).

We hope you enjoy *Input's* new design. It's a new look, but the same relevant and insightful content you've come to expect from us. Thank you for reading.

>> LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Just a brief note to commend REIBC's editors for devoting an entire issue to the topic of land use and planning issues impacting our province. The individual articles were well focused and provided balanced commentary on critical issues facing BC, its cities and communities, and most importantly its citizens. These are the topics which require in-depth understanding and knowledge by real estate practitioners, and by extension, the public. So much is written about real estate in this province but far too often on an anecdotal, cursory, and self-serving basis, and without perspective, facts, and balance.

Input is increasingly one of the few remaining publications which synthesize critical and topical matters into lively discussions and presentations. The articles are also thought provoking. Individual members can decide whether or not they accept the hypothesis presented and the reasoning behind the articles such as those in Spring 2015 on land use and zoning decisions. Above all, focused editions such as this one provide REIBC's members with further knowledge on which to make their own decisions and to advise their clientele. *Input* is a solid and consistent testimonial to the mandate of the Real Estate Institute of British Columbia.

Respectfully submitted,
William McCarthy, RI

Letters will be considered for printing based on space constraints. Thank you for taking the time to share your ideas, kudos, opinions, and concerns with us.
Submit your letter to the editor: info@reibc.org



THE BIG PICTURE ON SMALL HOMES

Heather Evans

A recent study on tiny homes, *Exploring Best Practices and Lessons Learned with Small Market Units*, explores what is working well—or not—with small market-housing development. Commissioned by five BC agencies interested in housing and development (BC Housing, REIBC, Manufactured Housing Association of BC, Urban Development Institute (Pacific Region), and Small Housing BC), each motivated to explore a common interest in small housing, the study explores this development sector, seeking to find ways to improve small housing in the future.

Each of the partner agencies helped to shape the scope of the study, which includes research questions about

successful design elements, cost and development factors, potential for prefabrication, the market demand for small housing, and community and policy factors. The research team of Heather Evans Consulting, Louise Godard, and Margaret Forbes researched small housing initiatives, projects, and policies in BC and other places in North America; interviewed over 20 professionals in development, building, architecture, market research, and demographics; and gathered perspectives from residents of small homes.

The study defines a small home as a dwelling that is sized to meet occupants' needs with little excess space, which could take any of a number of different forms, including

Design That Adds to Livability in Small Homes

Four Key Design Elements

- Trade Space for Place
- Durability
- Air and Light
- Privacy and Noise Reduction

Storage Spaces

- Rental of storage space is a hit, and ample in-unit storage is critical too
- Make use of wall niches and creative shelving
- ... And avoid accumulating 'stuff'!

Living Spaces

- Keen eye on circulation space
- Sliding doors and walls, flexible and convertible furniture
- Tall ceilings, good ventilation and air circulation
- Access to the outdoors

Sleeping Spaces

- Soundproofing construction, and orient away from outdoor noise
- Murphy beds
- Define a comfortable sleeping area

Eating and Cooking Spaces

- Heart of the home ... full cooking facilities and meal preparation
- Space can fit in a 6-foot linear bank
- Seating nook or bar
- Ample ventilation to avoid odours

Bathroom Spaces

- Preference for conventional bath/shower over euro
- Ample bathroom storage
- High quality and durability

Shared Spaces

- City is the living room - location needs to be very close-by
- Shared amenities and outdoor space are appreciated by some residents
- Sharing is part of small living

apartment (e.g., micro-apartment or mini-suite), detached dwelling (e.g., laneway home), or moveable unit (e.g., tiny house on wheels). The size of a small home can range from under 200 square feet up to 750 square feet. Most of the small homes considered in the study are less than 600 square feet.

LIVING SMALL

Small market housing is driven by housing affordability challenges that are related to the scarcity of land for residential development and home prices growing at a quicker pace than most incomes. Some people are choosing to live in smaller spaces to reduce their housing purchase or rental cost. There is also a growing demographic and lifestyle trend for small households (one or two people), which is the principal market for small homes. In addition, a subset of the population is interested in living an "edited" life with limited possessions and a reduced living footprint.

There is some sense that North America in general has not been keeping pace with the provision of housing to meet our changing household sizes and needs. As a result, many people are living in housing that is bigger than they would prefer, living with others though they would prefer to live alone, or living in small, illegal housing units (that do not conform to local zoning and building codes).

There is the perception that "living small" may be a short-term solution for many people, but the researchers heard from some satisfied small home residents that small homes can work well over the long term; some residents were first-time homebuyers, while others chose to downsize. Residents cite different reasons and circumstances for making the choice to live small. Some who are living small in central locations say that living in a micro-apartment allows them to afford to live—without a roommate—in a convenient, vibrant urban location. Others are choosing to live in a small accessory dwelling (laneway home or accessory suite), which, on larger lots, are often built for the extended family or caregivers.

The study finds that the most appropriate contexts for small housing are generally urban areas that have close access to amenities such as transit, entertainment, and community services. These tend to be places where many people would like to live for convenience but cannot afford a larger home.

Demand for small housing is projected to continue, and further empirical information to characterize the depth of demand could be beneficial.

TRADING SPACE FOR PLACE

Study researchers asked key informants (designers, architects, developers) and small home residents to define the key elements of a small home that ensure its functionality and livability. In a small home one is “trading space for place,” which makes the quality of the space very important. Some key elements identified as improving the functionality and livability of small homes are:

- Efficient and durable materials and furnishings
- Light, air, and access to the outdoors
- Design and building techniques for noise reduction
- Lack of permanent walls
- Fully functional kitchens and bathrooms
- Furniture and spaces that transform into different uses
- Shared facilities (e.g., laundry, lounge space)

Small living experiences heard by the researchers for this study were generally positive, but there are certainly situations that make small living not desirable for everyone, such as residents’ space preferences, possessions, priorities, stage in life, and household size, to name a few.

COST AND DEVELOPMENT FEASIBILITY

On a per-square-foot basis, small homes cost more to build than larger units. Bathrooms and kitchens are just as expensive to build in smaller units and small units often have high-quality construction materials and finishing, and these costs are averaged over a smaller overall area. However, because the space is small, the overall cost to build the unit is lower, and this is reflected in the relatively low cost to buyer or renter.

From a development perspective, to make small market housing feasible it is important to reduce costs where possible, such as by eliminating or reducing parking requirements and making design as efficient and repeatable as possible. The study explores the opportunities and lessons with factory-built construction methods (e.g., modular, manufactured, panel) for small units and found some successful North American examples. These could be explored further to understand the BC context and opportunities.

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS

Some key community considerations about the development of small housing include the commitment to ensuring that livability standards are maintained. Also, there is a need to understand and rationalize the impact of small

market units on the affordability of other housing in the area and neighbourhood fit, and to quantify both the cost and benefit that small housing brings to existing community infrastructure and amenities.

POLICY AND REGULATION

The study finds that communities are taking varied approaches to small housing policy and regulations, and that this is a new area where experience is being gained. Some cities have adjusted policies to accommodate small market housing (particularly micro-apartments) by reducing the minimum dwelling size requirement in the community, while others have pursued “pilot” approaches to small housing. Such approaches have included: constraining the area where small housing is permitted (i.e., changing regulations to permit small housing in just one appropriate area or neighbourhood of the city); limiting the number of small housing units (i.e., setting a maximum number of small housing units that will be permitted in the city, and, once the maximum number is achieved, evaluating impacts to inform the city’s next steps for small housing regulations).

Regulations for small housing encompass objectives and responsibilities related to residents’ well-being (requiring light, air) as well as the neighbourhood (design, parking requirements) and the future community (flexibility to meet future needs). Undefined local policy and regulations can make the process of gaining approvals and building small housing very challenging.

OUTLOOK

As many interviewees for the study pointed out, small housing is suitable for some people, at some times in their lives, and in some contexts. Small market housing will continue to be an opportunity at the forefront given trending small-household demographics, rising costs of land and real estate, and affordability challenges.

Insight gained from the study suggests further work is needed to increase the understanding about small housing from people with experience and perspectives (including building and development professionals, planners, architects, and interior designers) and to share information about the future market, financing parameters, efficient building methods, and successful policies to guide communities.

Exploring Best Practices and Lessons Learned with Small Market Units is available on the REIBC website: reibc.org/small_market_housing.html

Photo by Tammy Strobel, flickr CC.

Infographic by M. Forbes, L. Godard, and H. Evans.



SMALL HOMES MEET THE NEEDS OF THE FUTURE

Bob Ransford

Many forces are shaping change in our North American communities today. However, change in the way we plan, design, and build our housing has been slow coming.

One change affecting housing that has begun to emerge over the last few years is the increasing interest in small format housing. The forces of change sparking this interest include the combined forces of globalization, urbanization, and the mass emergence of a consumer-driven culture in China that is reshaping economies globally and locally, as well as the aging baby-boom generation that is shifting demographics. There is also a growing consciousness, especially among younger people, about humankind's impact on the earth's ecosystems. It is causing many to rethink their own impact, driving some to try to reduce their ecological footprint by modifying the way they live.

The physical and social structure of the traditional North American suburb has failed to live up to the expectations of many who settled in suburban neighbourhoods. Social change is altering the concept of the family; the traditional family is no longer traditional. Singles, single-parent families, combined generations—all are searching for living arrangements that are no longer the alternative, but are becoming the norm.

This is especially the case for baby boomers who are now entering the later stages of their lives. The lifestyle they once enjoyed in their current homes in their neighbourhood—a neighbourhood typically consisting exclusively of relatively large single-family homes on generously sized lots—is not likely a lifestyle that will suit them in the next stage in their lives. The typical three- or four-bedroom home is near empty with their children having left a few years ago. Those living in two-storey houses are beginning to realize that stairs may be daunting when the knees and hips start acting up. Mowing the lawn in a big yard is already starting to become a time-consuming ordeal, competing with more enjoyable retirement activities. Baby boomers are starting to seek new ways to remake suburban living and diversify their housing options.

ADVOCATES FOR SMALLER HOUSING

The current move toward embracing smaller forms of housing is a neo-traditional movement. North Americans have built these smaller homes before. Small Housing BC believes they can be built again today—but better designed, more durable, and more ecologically responsible.

Formed in 2012, Small Housing BC is at the leading edge of this change in suburban living and in the remaking of our settlements patterns and the evolution of our

housing forms to facilitate it. Small Housing BC contributes to research, knowledge transfer, education, and the achievement of excellence associated with small forms of housing and related advanced urbanism. This non-profit advocacy organization supports the development and promotion of small housing as a sustainable housing form, acting as a public voice for the small housing industry, consumers, and citizens who wish to see the benefits of advanced urbanism with the development of small forms of housing.

The physical and social structure of the traditional North American suburb has failed to live up to the expectations of many who settled in suburban neighbourhoods.

We have seen only small changes in the last decade or two in the sizes of homes, despite the fact that statistics show household makeup numbers have been declining. Meanwhile, people have seen their lifestyles transform and are seeking alternatives to housing types, tenure, and size. The demand for smaller forms of housing, or alternative housing design, is not just driven by the desire for more affordable housing, although that is one objective that can be achieved with housing forms we have yet to embrace.

Despite the fact that single-family neighbourhoods with relatively large detached homes became a cultural norm in the last half of the twentieth century, many are beginning to realize that physical changes in their traditional neighbourhoods are needed in order for them, and people just like them, to live there in the future. Many have come to admit that if big single-family homes on large lots can be replaced with a few smaller homes that can share the same setting, different housing options will be created to meet new and different lifestyle needs—their own and the needs of their current and future neighbours.

Small Housing BC is exploring all of these issues, bringing together research and knowledge to identify how



flexibility can be incorporated into existing neighbourhood and community plans and in zoning that will provide for a greater range of housing choices for people at various stages in their lives and at different income levels or with different needs.

One of the first research projects Small Housing BC undertook was to conduct a survey of Vancouver residents who live near laneway houses—a new form of small housing—to determine residents’ opinions of such developments and their neighbourhood impacts. The survey findings proved helpful in identifying design refinements, a number of which were implemented to mitigate impacts on neighbourhoods.

Earlier this year, Small Housing BC completed its second major research project, publishing *Small Houses: Innovations in Small-scale Living from North America*.¹ This report documents a survey of recent innovations in North America where the regulatory regime has been purposefully designed—or substantially reformed—to encourage the development of well-conceived small forms of housing. It is not intended for this resource document to simply sit on the shelves of offices where house builders, planners, architects, municipal councillors, and citizen-activists hang their hats. Small Housing BC hopes, instead, that it will be a toolkit frequently referenced as plans are drawn up and implemented to make way for a

change in the way neighbourhoods are adapted and new housing is designed and built.

Other research projects are underway or in the early stages of planning, including one that will analyze a couple of key case studies that will help inform the development of a model for public engagement. This model will create a precedent for facilitating effective public and neighbourhood engagement around the planning and approval of small housing infill projects in existing single-family neighbourhoods.

Another project that Small Housing BC has started on will explore alternative tenure arrangements, such as shared equity arrangements, rent-to-own agreements, and the registration of undivided interests to make way for local governments and financial institutions to accept these forms of tenure. This will allow more flexibility in the efficient use of land for infill with smaller forms of housing.

Small Housing BC has enjoyed the generous support of a few key organizations, such as the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia and the Bullitt Foundation, which has enabled this valuable work to be undertaken.

Photos by Bob Ransford. Cottage home (model show home) developed by Century Group for the Southlands development in Tsawwassen. The home is a 1,190 sq. ft., 1-1.5 storey 2-bedroom detached home built by Smallworks.

¹ Download at: smallhousingbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SMHT_1stEdition_Feb2015.pdf

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British Columbia



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HOME IS WHERE THE LANEWAY HOUSE IS

Jake Fry

The conversation I recently had with Mary and David, friends who live in my west-side Vancouver neighbourhood, is a typical one that I often have with homeowners who are curious about the option of building a laneway home. We were sitting in their lovely 1920s-era home—a home of which they are rightly proud, having some years ago rehabilitated and updated it with tasteful modern finishes that preserve the home’s charming and distinctive heritage character. Their home is like many in the neighbourhood.



Mary and David have lived in their home since their two daughters were toddlers. Our neighbourhood is one that has made it easy for our families to socialize. We've run into each other often. We've always been able to walk to one of the best coffee shops down the street, drop our dry cleaning next door, and shop at a superb local grocer and carry our bags home.

Our conversation started with us lamenting the planned closure of that grocery store. It's being redeveloped to accommodate a new small condo building. David remarked that while he knows that change is constant, he feels it accelerating in his and Mary's lives and in our neighbourhood. I told him I thought that has a lot to do with age.

Mary and David are now in their early sixties. Their youngest daughter has just left home, after finishing her final year at university. It is this change that has prompted them to look at the realities of their housing needs. Their four-bedroom home seems a little too empty and bigger than they now need. They recently thought of downsizing to a smaller home in a different neighbourhood, until they realized how much they really love where they live.

MANAGING CHANGE

It's loving where they live that is prompting them to think seriously about building a laneway home. They realize that a small house in the neighbourhood they love makes sense. Living in a detached, ground-oriented house seems to them a better option than moving to a condo. They also like the idea of building a home that can be designed to meet their particular needs.

So, our conversation turned from the typical Vancouver casual talk about real estate markets and neighbourhood change to the specifics of building a laneway house on their property that would allow them to downsize and stay in their neighbourhood, while renting out their main house.

The whole conversation has made me think about what is happening in our cities and our neighbourhoods. Consider that issue of aging. The baby boom generation is entering its elder years, just like many of our neighbourhoods are aging. In fact, the neighbourhood where Mary and David and my family and I live is quickly approaching its centennial. Vancouverites are quickly realizing that these almost-century-old neighbourhoods have a lot of character with their stock of lovingly designed homes of another era, large properties, and great high streets that were once our streetcar lines.



But we also have this challenge of meeting the changing housing needs of an entire large population cohort that is aging at the same time.

It seems to me that if we want to be smart about managing change, we need to create more options that allow large older homes to be transformed into multiple dwellings, we need to infill large lots with smaller accessory dwellings—like laneway homes and other small infill dwellings, and we need to encourage smaller homes that make more efficient use of land with more affordable housing types. We also must discourage the demolition and replacement of old homes with larger, expensive single-family homes.

I started in the laneway housing business seven years ago because I was advocating for this kind of approach to managing change and creating housing diversity. The City of Vancouver actually created the opportunity by amending single-family zoning to allow laneway houses to be built in most residential zones in the city. I knew that people, just like Mary and David, were looking for such an alternative.

BOTH ENDS OF THE MARKET

My company, Smallworks, has built or is now completing slightly more than 100 laneway houses across Vancouver, and 80% of our clients live in their laneway home and own the property or are related to the property owner. It might be the mom and dad who own the

property and live in the main house or it's the parents who downsized to the laneway house and rent the main house to their kids. Many of these young people grew up in the neighbourhood, moved away when they finished school, and have now been able to return to the neighbourhood because laneway housing is an option.

Laneway houses meet the housing needs of what I call “both ends of the market.” Sized no bigger than about 1,000 square feet, these highly efficient and space-functional homes work well for empty-nester aging baby boomers looking for an affordable way to have more of what they always had but with fewer obligations associated with maintaining a larger home. Also, young families wanting the benefits of a detached home, but not being able to afford a typical single-family residence, are able to live comfortably with at least one child in a two-bedroom laneway house—and they have the benefit of access to a yard while living in a family-oriented neighbourhood.

We pay real attention to how we design these smaller-footprint homes so that the people who live in them can comfortably live in a small space with minimal compromises and not feel as though space is limited. This means using every square inch by thoughtfully designing plenty of built-in functionality. You see more millwork and cabinets in a laneway home. You see higher-volume spaces with vaulted ceilings and key placement of large windows to connect the indoor space with a sense of the outdoors. And since we are meeting the diverse housing needs of multiple generations, we design homes with the master bedroom conveniently located on the ground floor.



We are also conscious of the cost of constructing a laneway home, realizing that housing affordability is a challenge for everyone. Price per square foot tends to be higher than a typical single-family home because we still need to provide the same features that are in a typical home, but we are measuring the cost using a much smaller footprint. Materials and labour cost less overall because we don't need to consume as much to construct a smaller home.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP

Vancouver has led the way by demonstrating with its city-wide policy that there are creative options to provide housing diversity in traditional single-family neighbourhoods while managing change in a way that the look and feel of the neighbourhood remains largely unchanged. Some call laneway infill housing "invisible density" and it is certainly one form of housing that makes more efficient use of land in neighbourhoods that have many amenities, including transportation infrastructure in place.

There are now a number of municipalities in the region that allow laneway houses and coach houses in limited areas; they are not as ubiquitous as in Vancouver because the areas where zoning permits this kind of housing are limited. Vancouver has used its discretionary zoning process to regulate the development of laneway housing, focusing on the specific design of each home. If we are going to see zones change across Metro Vancouver to make this housing option more widely available, the experience and learning pioneered in Vancouver will need to inform a more standard and efficient regulatory process.

Laneway housing has proved itself to be a very creative and viable way to meet the changing housing needs of a growing region. I believe it makes sense to expand it across Metro Vancouver.

Photos by Smallworks. Photos 1-3, 2997 West 33rd Avenue, Vancouver; photos 4-5, 262 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver.



Change is Here: The Small Housing Movement

Housing preferences are shifting - away from the large home, car-centric community, and toward smaller, more affordable and sustainable homes in location-efficient neighbourhoods.

The Real Estate Foundation has funded the development of an online toolkit, highlighting innovative examples that encourage the development of well-planned small housing.

This, and more resources available at
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>> RANDIP BHANDAL, RI, PQS, ASCT



**PRESIDENT, CONECON CONSULTANTS INC.,
CONECON PROJECTS INC., AND CONECON REALTY INC.**

WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL POSITION?

In my position of real estate development consultant, my services include development feasibility analysis, construction cost planning, and loan monitoring for lenders. I strive to maintain a level of personality with the clients, liaising with them all the way from initial inquiry and engagement, through task assignments and reviewing, to the completion of the project.

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR DAY?

My day starts early with reviewing emails, assigning tasks to the appropriate associates, and planning the rest of my day. At the office, communication is a large part of my job, servicing clients as well as fielding questions from members of my team. The afternoon is the real production time when I review the work completed by my teammates and help them to meet the deadlines toward the end of the day.

WHAT PREPARED YOU FOR THIS ROLE?

A long history of education and experience has prepared me for this role. After working as a realtor in Burnaby for six years, I graduated from the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) in the Building Technology program, and completed exams to achieve my Professional Quantity Surveyor (PQS) designation of the Canadian Institute of Quantity Surveyors (CIQS). Finally, I received my Urban Land Economics Diploma from the University of British Columbia (UBC) with a specialization in Real Estate Development.

WHAT DO YOU FIND CHALLENGING ABOUT YOUR WORK?

The most challenging aspect of my work is the demand of deadlines. Loan monitoring is the major aspect of our services, which is a two-tier process requiring an initial cost planning and budget review and subsequent review

of loan advance applications for a construction project. In a high-demand real estate market, as it has been in BC for more than 10 years, real estate developers have had extremely tight schedules for project design and approvals, arranging of financing, and initial funding. In turn, those time limitations trickle down into our services' critical paths. Frequently, there is very little time left between the approval of financing by a lender client and the completion of land acquisition by a developer client. These deadlines create schedule constraints that must be balanced while maintaining the high standard of quality ConEcon is known for.

WHAT DO YOU WISH PEOPLE KNEW ABOUT THE WORK YOU DO?

Cost planning and management is so critical for the success of every real estate development project, from its concept through to its completion stage. Many projects often don't end up achieving the desired results because developers do not adequately focus on the aspect of budgeting and time management, which we as professional quantity surveyors bring to the table. In that sense, the work we do at ConEcon is such an integral part of shaping the overall success of a project.

IS THE WORK YOU DO TYPICAL FOR YOUR TYPE OF POSITION?

Though some of the work is fairly typical of the industry, my collective background in real estate sales and marketing, and as a municipal building inspector, is what sets the work we do at ConEcon apart. It allows us to understand and pay more attention to the land acquisition process and municipal costs. Whereas most QS firms focus mainly on the hard construction costs, we are able to comprehensively take into consideration the total project costs.

WHAT GOALS ARE YOU WORKING TOWARD?

I have worked hard for a long time and over the years have achieved many milestones. At this point in my career, I am working toward supporting my team of professionals to carry on the legacy of ConEcon.

TINY HOMES in Nelson

Seth Reidy



A number of years ago, I spent a few years living and travelling through Europe. I worked on a cottage in England that was over 600 years old and a house in southern France that had parts of it that were close to 1,000 years old. This experience really helped me see clearly the direction we are going in North America. More and more, we have been building things big, fast, and cheap, and as a result, we get a product that is not unique and does not last a long time. We also create a lot of waste.

As we build bigger and bigger it allows us to build with less and less thought. The smaller we build the more we need to pay attention to things as a builder and as someone living in the space. I like being thoughtful. I think it is one of the things lacking in our current society.

I started doing construction as a teenager in New Mexico, working on a 6,000 sq. ft. house. I like to think I've come a long way since then. It took four guys two years to build that house. This is a big reason why I love tiny houses: the project takes less than four months, and at the end of it you have created a place to live for someone. In my eyes, it really doesn't get much more satisfying than that. And if these tiny houses are a bit on the extreme side, so is a 6,000 sq. ft. house.

The price of housing has gone crazy and at the same time we are getting buried with junk, so the thought of being forced to downsize is appealing to people for multiple reasons. I know how liberating it can be to shed stuff—I've done this myself—and it is a great pleasure to be part of that process with people.

A SMALL BUT GROWING MARKET

I live in a small house with land, and a few years ago I took the waste from a few finished projects to build a tiny house in our backyard. We call it the "in-law suite," but also use it for guests, and some day our kids (as teenagers) will move into it. It was deeply satisfying to build and it got me hooked on constructing tiny homes. I enjoy the challenges that come with building smaller. It keeps things interesting.

When I started my company, Nelson Tiny Houses, demand was low, but small houses have slowly become more and more mainstream and therefore acceptable for people to live in them. We have sold houses to a wide range of people, from first-time homeowners to people who are ready to retire. We have made off-grid cabins and rental units, office spaces and mobile kitchens.

We are always the most excited when our tiny houses stay local because that is a focus of ours—keeping things

As we build bigger and bigger it allows us to build with less and less thought. The smaller we build the more we need to pay attention to things.

local. That being said, we happily transport our houses to Alberta or to the coast or to the northwest United States. So far, Edmonton is the furthest away one of our clients has been located.

For the most part, minimum square footage restrictions are only found within city limits and not all of them have such absurd rules (like Vancouver), and the ones that do are slowly letting go of them. They may have made a bit of sense at one point (for example, to keep mobile homes from going into established city neighbourhoods). Of course, that is not a worry any more. The most frustrating thing for those of us who want to "go tiny" is that there really aren't a lot of solid answers, and when spending a significant amount of money most people do want more security than that. Luckily, a lot of clients are just taking the leap, hoping for the best, and in most cases the best is what they get.

A tiny house, if well built, costs much more per square foot than a larger house. I usually compare them to doing a bathroom or a kitchen. There is hardly any open floor space, which is the cheapest part of a build. While the cost of having a small house built may not save you a ton of money, the maintenance over the years and efficient heating and cooling will save you plenty. If you can manage to use some cool recycled material and not waste much, it's a bonus. I enjoy being part of every aspect of a build and it's nice to feel like you can really do things in a high-quality way, since there is not the large quantity to overwhelm you.

HOW AND WHERE WE BUILD

When we build at our shop (near Nelson), we always have to take transport to the client's site into consideration. Luckily, with the right equipment and the right



permits, you can go pretty heavy and big (for a tiny house). Our houses have weighed between 7,000 and 20,000 pounds and have been up to 10 feet wide and 38 feet long. The height is a pretty serious restriction for transport so sometimes we build a roof that is removable. When it's time to move, we take it down in sections and then put it back as soon as we are on site.

If a client is looking for a secondary structure, it makes sense to keep it small and have us build it on our shop site. That way the noise and mess of a construction site stays at our place and one day, like magic, we show up and drop off or crane onto the site your new house, or office, or studio. For the most part, we prefer to work on our site where we have our shop set up. Usually the cost of the transport and crane to deliver the house to the client's site are offset by the time we would have spent setting up and packing up every day and the time spent travelling.

Once in a while, however, it makes more sense to build on the client's site, especially if they have already invested in the infrastructure (a septic system, for example) required to build with a permit. Projects that we have built on site include turning a section of a big house

into a rentable suite, building a round office space that would have been too wide to transport, and a combination on-site/off-site project where we built the first floor of a house on site and the second floor off site at our shop, which we then transported and lifted into position.

So far, we have only worked within the area of the Regional District of Central Kootenay. This way it is easy for the inspectors who deal with us at our building site to communicate with the inspector who will be working with us at the building's final resting spot. It is all a bit outside their usual box but so far inspectors have gone out of their way to make it work. While most of the inspectors think tiny houses are a bit extreme, I believe they also think it is a movement heading in the right direction.

If giant houses are going to be an option for people, we want to stick around and make sure tiny houses are an option as well.

Photos by Tobias Gray.

ASK A LAWYER

John McLachlan, LLB

Q: *Vancouver seems to be leading the way with laneway housing starts. In a city with intense housing affordability concerns, do laneway homes help address this need?*

A:

Vancouver is touted as one of the best places to live in the world. According to the 2014 Mercer Quality of Living Survey, Vancouver enjoys the highest quality of living in North America and the fifth highest in the world.

However, with those accolades comes the problem of being able to afford to live here. Housing in Vancouver is among the least affordable in the world. It seems that every week Vancouverites are inundated with articles and opinions regarding the high cost of living in Vancouver and how best to make housing more affordable while still retaining the characteristics that make the city so wonderful.

A debate between permitting high-density, high-rise towers and maintaining heritage properties and single-family neighbourhoods has created conflict between the various community interest groups on either side. While most people would agree that there is a need to provide more affordable housing in Vancouver, you would be hard pressed to find a neighbourhood outside of downtown where residents want to have more highrise towers. This leaves the City to consider increasing density with other housing forms.

In the latest step to balance the interests of those wishing to develop and increase density and those that are advocates of heritage preservation, the City of Vancouver recently passed a bylaw creating the city's first ever Heritage Conservation Area in the First Shaughnessy neighbourhood on Vancouver's west side, despite opposition from some homeowners in the neighbour-

hood. The new bylaw now gives the City the power to prevent the demolition of First Shaughnessy homes built before 1940. While these homeowners may be allowed to add density through the addition of secondary suites, coach houses, infill buildings, and multiple-conversion dwellings—thereby maintaining the overall character of the neighbourhood—the restrictions may have the unintended consequence of limiting development and suppressing housing prices in that area.

INCREASING DENSITY

The City of Vancouver is trying to address these competing interests by gradually increasing the allowable density in what have traditionally been single-family neighbourhoods.

The City's mandate of promoting affordable housing through densification can be seen through the zoning bylaw changes that have been implemented over the last few years. Most residential zones now allow for up to three dwelling units on a single-family lot. In most areas homeowners are now permitted to have on their lot a main house, a rental suite or an apartment within the main house, and a separate laneway house in the backyard.

While the City has attempted to balance the provision of housing opportunities with the maintenance of neighbourhood character, even this subtle or "gentle" densification has not been without its critics and there are some questions as to how this makes housing more affordable.

2014 was a record year for laneway homes in Vancouver. Year-end figures show that the city set a record for new laneway housing, with 357 permits issued in 2014. This follows 345 and 350 permits issued in 2013 and 2012.

> mayorofvancouver.ca/2014lanewayhomes

The City of Vancouver website states that laneway houses are an excellent way to increase the diversity of rental units in single-family neighbourhoods by providing, among other things, additional opportunities beyond owning a house or renting a basement suite and more opportunities to live in detached and ground-oriented rental housing. The City states that laneway housing plays an important role in achieving the City's priority to increase the supply of rental housing options across the city. While the addition of laneway housing may serve to increase the supply of rental housing in the city, it does not necessarily mean that it is more affordable.

There are significant costs associated with building a laneway house in Vancouver. In addition to the actual building costs, there are additional permitting costs, landscaping costs, and costs for sewer and water hookup. These costs can bring the total expenditure to upwards of \$300,000. As a result, many laneway homes are commanding rents as high as \$2,000 a month for a one-bedroom, 650 sq. ft. laneway house on Vancouver's west side.

Given the size, laneway homes are also not generally a viable option for young families. In addition, those laneway homes that occupy more than one storey are not a viable option for the elderly or those with mobility issues. In addition, there remain some groups opposed to laneway housing due to concerns over increased street parking, shadowing, and loss of privacy. Further, there are concerns about increased infrastructure costs arising from the population increase in the neighbourhoods and the strain on the infrastructure in place.

CONSIDER SUBDIVISION

As things stand, laneway homes are not able to be subdivided from the main property and can only be rented out. While this may serve to increase rental stock, it does not provide an entry point for people to get into the hous-

ing market. At present, all that is provided is an expensive alternative to renting an apartment or basement suite.

Further, there is a question as to whether the building of a laneway house adds any value to the property, particularly where the main house has reached the end of its economic life or has unused density. In those instances, many prospective homebuyers would simply tear down the house along with the laneway home in order to build a new house with a garage. This is particularly so on the city's west side where many houses are listed in excess of \$2 million and many of the purchasers are not interested in the revenue potential of a laneway home.

Finally, there may be unintended tax consequences associated with the building of a laneway house resulting in an impact on the principal resident's tax exemption.

It would seem that the next step in the process would be to allow for the subdivision of laneway houses so as to provide a more affordable opportunity to purchase a detached living space as opposed to a condo or apartment.

There are no easy answers as to how best address Vancouver's increasing housing needs but it is inevitable that all neighbourhoods will have to adapt to accommodate the need for increased density in order to create more affordable housing options. Laneway housing is certainly a piece of the housing puzzle in Vancouver, though no single housing form can answer the demand for more affordable housing for all demographics.

RI



1

A DEVELOPER'S PERSPECTIVE ON BUILDING SMALL HOMES

Anne McMullin

Small homes and micro-suites are being built in response to the region's housing costs, which have been rising over the past few decades. This housing trend may seem quite modern but it is really a revival of a classic affordability solution. Small laneway cottages and tiny apartments have existed in Vancouver for over a century. What has changed over time is the growing demand for small homes, and the policies that affect their supply.

Some local developers include Reliance Properties, which brought the micro-loft concept to Vancouver in 2011 with the redevelopment of the Burns Block on Hastings Street, consisting of 30 units. In 2014, Tien Sher Homes completed a 56-micro-unit project called Balance, in Surrey. A prominent laneway homebuilder is Smallworks, which

has constructed 100 homes in Vancouver laneways and has 30 more on the way.

REGULATION AND SUPPLY

Municipalities control the supply of small housing; for detached or semi-detached homes, allowances for small and narrow lots and subdivisions depend on municipal discretion. In 2009, the City of Vancouver made a big move to increase small infill housing by allowing laneway homes throughout all RS1 and RS5 zones.

Municipalities also control the supply of micro-lofts. While new micro-loft developments have received plenty of public attention and media coverage in recent years,



2

the development of this product type is actually quite limited. The City of Vancouver has a minimum unit size bylaw, which can make it difficult for a developer to gain special permission to build units smaller than 398 square feet.

One reason why some city officials are hesitant to increase the supply of micro-units is to curb speculation from investors looking to make a purchase-and-flip profit. Some speculators may see micro-lofts as a good investment opportunity, but even investment units would likely be rented out, thereby increasing the rental housing stock. The speculation rates on condos have been decreasing in recent years, particularly for 1-bedroom condos. If micro-loft markets were to follow this trend we can assume that speculation rates would be low.

DEVELOPMENT COSTS

The cost per square foot to build a small home is relatively high. This is because the builder needs to make efficient use of every inch, which involves innovative design solutions and custom finishes to improve the livability of the small space. That said, developers can still make a good profit on building small units because they are able to fit more homes into a buildable area.

One item that can make or break the viability of development is parking requirements. For a small housing development it is critical to have minimal parking to offset the higher construction costs. If the building project is in a central location near transit, the occupants will have less need for parking. The provision of visitor parking is still an important consideration to ensure sufficient access for guests and temporary vehicles.

PURCHASE PRICES

Newly built small homes are generally priced at the target market's rental costs to encourage potential owners to buy rather than rent. Those with a rental budget of around \$1,000 a month would be able to afford to



3

purchase a new micro-loft. In Victoria, Reliance Properties has converted the historic Janion Hotel into 100 micro-units ranging in price from \$120,000 to \$200,000. Projects like this provide a rare opportunity for renters to enter homeownership and to revitalize urban areas.

Laneway homes in the City of Vancouver hold rental occupancy status; they cannot be purchased because they are within the property limits of the principal residence. Rental rates for laneway homes are comparable with similarly sized new condos, averaging around \$1,300 to \$2,300 per month.

EVERYTHING IN MODERATION

There is a large demand for small homes as evidenced by their occupancy rates and sellout times. Increasing the supply of small homes would help address affordability issues for a substantial target market. However, there is also demand for affordable family-oriented two- and three-bedroom units. It is important that planners and builders create a diverse housing supply to meet the full spectrum of housing demands.

Photo 1 by Reliance Properties, Burns Block. Photo 2 by Smallworks. Photo 3 by Tien Sher Homes.





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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND RECOGNITION DINNER



AGM SUMMARY

On June 11, 2015, the Annual General Meeting of the Real Estate Institute of BC was held at the Four Seasons Hotel. There were 32 people present, which met quorum requirements. The auditors of Rolfe Benson LLP were appointed as the auditors for 2015–2016 and one change to the bylaws was made. The change removed the allowance of anonymous complaints; now anyone making a complaint to REIBC must provide their name. All motions were carried unanimously and the meeting concluded at 5:20 p.m.

RECOGNITION DINNER

On June 11, 2015, over 150 people honoured their colleagues' longstanding commitment to the industry at REIBC's Recognition Dinner. President Jason Grant presented members that have been with the Institute for 25,30,35,40,45, and 50 years with their Certificate of Recognition, while each awarded member and all guests participated in a game of trivia that asked the awarded member a question pertaining to the year they received their membership.

A Special Recognition of Achievement award was presented to Nick Johnston for overcoming adversity. Nick is the son of 28-year member Geoff Johnston. Nick's story was featured in the Winter 2015 issue of Input, available at reibc.org.

Ryan Jensen, a student member of REIBC and the outgoing president of the BCIT Real Estate Association, introduced the Award of Excellence, and last year's winner, Judi Whyte, presented the 2015 Award of Excellence to Robert Laing, CEO of the BC Real Estate Association and longtime REIBC member.

Four governors retired from the board this year: Dave Graham and Tracy Wall, who served eight-year terms; Cheryl Wirsz, who was unable to attend the event; and Past President Mandy Hansen, who received her ring, certificate, and binder. President-Elect Andrea Fletcher (now president) presented President Jason Grant (now

our past president) with the 2014–2015 board photo and pen.

Members and many distinguished guests mingled at the beginning of the evening while being entertained by jazz band Swing 2 Beat, featuring Past President Jacques Khouri. And to end the evening, comedic magician Clinton Gray entertained guests with hilarious antics and fascinating magic tricks.

We are excited that this event grows every year. This was our first year at the Four Seasons Hotel—a larger venue—and it was a huge success. We look forward to seeing everyone next year, on June 9, 2016, again at the Four Seasons.



MEMBERS RECOGNIZED

25 YEARS

Leonard Appleby
Denise Barker
Bruce Bennett
Chuck Beymer
Douglas Brock
Donald Burrell
Glen Darough
Michael Fitzsimmons
David Franklin
John Helms
Joseph Kon Chau Ho
Rob Howard
Grace Hwo
Robert Kates
Dave Kingston
Fred Kozier
Robert Laing
David Ma
Stephen Marguet
Tracy McEvoy
Kelly McKnight
Cindy Marie Nesselbeck
Janette L. O'Keeffe
David Podmore
Wayne Popowich
Robert John Pratt
Marilyn G. Sanborn
Robert (Bob) Scott
Gregory Simmons
Jeffrey R. Simpson
Christine Skaley-Reid
Michael A. Taylor
Linda Tom
Carol A.R. Turner
Bob van den Brink
Brian Peter Varney
Karen Waldie
W. Alan Walrond
Alison M. Willoughby
Phil Wooster
Alice Yee
Maureen Zimmerman

30 YEARS

Kim Afinson
Randy Buksa
Larry Buttress
Karin Hilliard
Anthony Letvinchuk
Jessie Lin
Gary McPhail
Robert D. Reichelt
Tracy Wall
Thomas Wong

35 YEARS

Gary Bailey
Donnelly Champion
Harry Chiang
Francis Chin
Ben Gauer
Iain Hyslop
Pat Munroe
Les Otto
Karen Ross
Eric Spurling
Carmen Wachter
Samuel S. Wong

40 YEARS

George Macdonald
Richard Osborne
Candace Watson
Kenneth Blake Wight
Richard Young

45 YEARS

Kenneth A. Johnson
Lloyd Gary Kenwood

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Michael Naish - 46 years
Andrew Pearson - 46 years
Derek Turner - 46 years
Ronald Pope - 47 years
James Tutton - 47 years
Harold Waddell - 47 years
Barry Groberman - 48 years
Vaughan Bruneau - 49 years
Ian Macnaughton - 52 years



BOARD OF GOVERNORS



GOVERNORS BY REGION

Cariboo/Northwest/Prince Rupert

John Phillips, RI

Fraser Valley

Rajan Sandhu, RI

Kootenay

Sean McGinnis, RI

North Fraser

Susan Antoniali, RI

Thompson/Okanagan

Doug Gilchrist, RI

Vancouver

Troy Abromaitis, RI (vice-president),
Andrea Fletcher, RI (president), Jason
Grant, RI (past president), Daniel John, RI
(secretary/treasurer)

Vancouver Island

Greg Steves, RI (president-elect),
Dan Wilson, RI (missing)

NEW GOVERNORS



DOUG GILCHRIST, RI

As divisional director for the City of Kelowna's Community Planning and Real Estate department, I am tasked with providing strategic direction on all matters related to long-term land use planning, real estate investment and disposition, development application processing—including building inspections and permitting, and overseeing the City's parking function.

I have a long history in government, having worked at provincial, federal, and municipal levels during my 17-year real estate career. I have a passion for breaking new ground in government work and am genuine in my belief that the government's role is to lead and not follow the private sector. I attribute my success to the strong teams I've had

the pleasure to work with and adhering to key project management principles.

The historically fast pace of development in Kelowna keeps my team on their toes and allows us the opportunity to advance truly transformative initiatives, such as a LEED Gold Neighbourhood known as Central Green, a number of P3 affordable housing projects, and some targeted revitalization partnerships that are transforming the downtown of Kelowna.

One recent project I led was the regional acquisition of a historical, 50 km railway line running from Kelowna to Vernon. This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and had many challenges to overcome to achieve the goal. We did!

Having spent a few years on the Chapter Board of REIBC, I have made some great contacts and connections. However, I feel that there is an opportunity to help expand the function, profile, and value that the RI offers the industry. Becoming a governor will let me learn from some of the best in the business and allow me to give back something to the industry that has provided me with a rewarding career. I look forward to strengthening the Institute through focused and dedicated work as a governor.



SEAN MCGINNIS, RI

Sean McGinnis is a senior appraiser in the Nelson office of BC Assessment, where he has worked for the past 20 years. He currently leads the Kootenay-Columbia Region IC&I team and has specialized in major industrial and utility properties in the past. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Asian Studies and a Diploma in Urban Land Economics

from UBC. Sean has been involved with the Kootenay Chapter of REIBC since 1995 and was the chapter's chair for several years. He decided to pursue the role of governor in order to help the board achieve its vision of becoming more engaged with its membership and create a highly desired RI designation.

"Taking a more active role in the organization has long been a goal of mine. I have met such great people at the chapter level and by attending some annual events. I feel that my fellow RIs and REIBC staff are among the finest group of real estate professionals that I have ever met. I feel honoured to represent the Kootenays as governor."

In his spare time, Sean enjoys running, skiing, hockey, and writing. His first novel, *Stark Nakid*, a mystery set in Nelson, was published in November of 2014.



DAN WILSON, RI

Dan Wilson is the owner and manager of Wm. S. Jackson & Associates Ltd.—a full-service valuation and consulting firm serving Vancouver Island and the surrounding coastal areas of British Columbia.

Jackson & Associates was formed in 1980 and is based out of the Comox Valley on the northeast coast of Vancouver Island. The firm provides residential, commercial, investment, and recreational real estate valuation and consulting services for a broad spectrum of clients, including lending institutions, development companies, insurance companies, all levels of municipal, provincial, and federal governments, and private individuals.

Dan commenced work with Jackson & Associates in 1994 and has developed a broad range of valuation experience and consulting work. He has a Bachelor of Commerce degree from UBC with a major in Urban Land Economics and received the AACI designation by the Appraisal Institute of Canada in 1999. He has been a Professional member of REIBC since 2000, and in 2012 Dan obtained his CRP (Certified Reserve Planner) designation from the Real Estate Institute of Canada.

His professional career includes extensive volunteer experience in the profession, including a term as president of the Appraisal Institute of Canada from June 2013 to June 2014. He has also sat as a director for the BC Association of the Appraisal Institute of Canada for 11 years (2004 to present), which included two terms as provincial president (2007-2009). He also currently serves on REIBC's Complaint Investigating Committee and has served as vice president of the Comox Rotary Club and BNI Olympic Gold chapter, and president of the North Island Field Lacrosse Association.

Dan is married to Tracy, has two sons, and lives in Courtenay on the east coast of Vancouver Island. Dan has always been an active member of REIBC and is looking forward to serving the members in a volunteer capacity on the Board of Governors.



TINY FARM, TINY HOUSE

REIBC and Shirlene Cote

Shirlene Cote operates a 1.5-acre market garden in Metro Vancouver. She lives on this tiny farm, called Earth Apple Farm, in a tiny home. Built onto a trailer bed, her home is classed as a recreational vehicle. It has a footprint of 160 square feet (8 feet by 20 feet), plus loft. REIBC interviewed Shirlene about choosing and living in a tiny home.



REIBC: How did you come to live in your tiny home?

Shirlene Cote: I started farming five years ago, part time, but after two years of growing a couple of tons of potatoes each year while working another full-time job, I decided to pursue farming full time. I quickly learned that farming was something you commit yourself to wholeheartedly. It isn't a 40-60 hour job. It's a way of living.

I began by commuting from Vancouver each day, which was really only a 15-minute drive, but still it didn't make sense. I needed to be on site all the time. I'd remember—in the middle of the night—that I left the irrigation on, or there would be a windstorm and I'd need to head to the farm to tie stuff down. Then I took on 25 laying hens and five ducks and wanted to be near them to keep them safe from predators. So I moved to the farm.

The decision to buy a tiny home was a two-year process for me, but in the end I wish I had just gone for it right from the beginning. I began by living in the farm's small shed for a few months until I found a small Trillium trailer with a furnace to put on the property. I knew about tiny houses at this time, but it seemed like too much of a commitment and the cost, although completely

reasonable, was seemingly out of my reach. I needed something modular or easily moved, because the site I am currently farming on is a short-term lease. But after about a year and a half of living in the trailer I started to lose it. It wasn't sufficient in meeting my emotional or even just everyday needs. I began to talk to friends about tiny homes and started my research. I decided to purchase from a local company, Tiny Living Homes.

My experience of living in a tiny home is perhaps unique compared to what others may experience as I went from something smaller to something bigger. I spend most of my time outside and my home is used mostly for cooking, sleeping, and escaping from extreme weather.

REIBC: Were you involved in the design process? What features did you look for?

SC: Some of the things I looked for were to be able to buy from a local business and to meet with them in person and see the product before buying. I chose from Tiny Living Homes' three different models and the builder was very accommodating to small changes I wanted to make in terms of the interior, but I was



I spend most of my time outside and my home is used mostly for cooking, sleeping, and escaping from extreme weather... I love feeling like I'm at home.

satisfied with the general template and the exterior. It looked and felt like a home.

The unit I bought only took six weeks to build since they follow the same template each time, with only small alterations based on buyer requests, and I had very few of these. The fact that they had built the same thing over and over appealed to me as it meant they had worked out a lot of the kinks.

I have a double mattress for sleeping, a couch, a table, and a lot of windows. As for design changes, I was interested in having a complete kitchen, as I love cooking and cooking was something I was missing out on in the trailer—at least comfortably—so I wanted a large sink, more counter space, a range hood with fan for cooking, and cupboards. I also wanted the home to be very well insulated so that my energy use would be low.



When the house was complete, Tiny Living Homes moved it onto my property with a one-tonne truck.

REIBC: How did you obtain the home?

SC: As a new, small farmer, I was eligible for micro-financing through a program made available by an alliance between the non-profit organization Farm Folk City Folk and Vancity. Housing for farms was considered an eligible expense, and after submitting my business plan and application I was approved for a loan. I also had some savings and a loan from a friend. The home cost close to \$40,000.

I also learned that it may have been possible to receive a bank loan under the same category as RV purchases, though that's not the route I took.

REIBC: Is the home meeting your needs?

SC: I love feeling like I'm at home. I love cooking and having a friend or two in to share food. I'm enjoying the pine interior—it gives such a warm, cozy feeling. I sometimes find the ladder to the sleeping loft slightly inconvenient in the middle of the night when I have to go to the washroom, and after doing some cooking I realized I should have requested a four-burner stove instead of the

existing two burners, and my wee fridge is a wee bit too small. Luckily, most of my vegetables can stay in the field until I am ready to cook!

I only moved in this spring, so I haven't lived in it through a winter yet. Also, I had decided to go with rough-grade plywood for the loft floor and kitchen ceiling, which meant less up-front cost, but I may decide to refinish those surfaces in the future.

Like an RV, it has its own toilet system, which for this home is a composting unit, and my water supply is a hose connection.

REIBC: How long do you expect to reside in this home?

SC: I can see myself living in this home for a long time. If I meet a special someone, things may need to be reconsidered. He may need to get a tiny home too.

Photos by Shirlene Cote.

REIBC'S 22ND ANNUAL CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT



REIBC's 22nd Annual Charity Golf Tournament, Dinner, and Auction was held on June 24, 2015, at the Northview Golf and Country Club in Surrey. The tournament supports the Make-A-Wish Foundation of BC and Yukon, raising funds to help the Make-A-Wish Foundation grant wishes to children with life-threatening medical conditions. Since 1983, the Make-A-Wish Foundation has granted more than 1,500 wishes throughout the BC and Yukon region. Every year the foundation hopes to grant even more wishes, aiming to enrich the human experience with hope, joy, and strength.

This year's tournament was one of our most successful. As a result of the generous support of our sponsors and participants, we raised \$33,688 to help grant wishes for the coming year. We raised over \$12,000 in live and silent auction prizes and over \$3,000 in raffle tickets.

New to this year, we looked for and secured a celebrity sponsorship. This sponsorship gave a golf team the opportunity to play the course with our emcee, sports-caster and sports director for CTV News Vancouver Perry Solkowski. The Landcor Data Corporation golf team spent the day with Perry and had a blast. We're excited to offer this opportunity again next year!

The George Whyte Award was presented after dinner to this year's winner, Nathan Worbets. Nathan is director of development of Central Canada for Morguard Investments and was president of REIBC for the 2011–2012 year. Created by REIBC's Golf Committee in 2001, the award honours George Whyte, an avid golfer, active supporter of REIBC, and husband of past president Judi Whyte. It is awarded to a person who exemplifies the giving spirit of REIBC and the Make-A-Wish Foundation; Judi presents this annual award to recognize an individual who donates his or her valuable time to charitable organizations.

There were many corporate and individual sponsorships and donations, which allowed us to offer several raffle prizes throughout the evening. These included the grand raffle prize of a new set of Ping golf clubs, and this year's lucky winner was Gareth McDonnell, from BFL Canada Insurance. Sarah Kibugi from Gateway Property



Last year's donation (top); Nathan Worbets receives the George Whyte Award.

Management won the 50/50—taking home almost \$800.

The Golf Committee continues to receive positive feedback from sponsors and participants. With the support of those who golf with us every year, we will continue to raise much-needed funds for the Make-A-Wish Foundation to grant more wishes year after year. The committee would like to extend its thanks to the golfers, the volunteers for their assistance in the organization of this year's tournament, and the corporate and individual sponsors for their support and prize donations. We are looking forward to seeing everyone at next year's tournament.

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First Place: Team 9A - Paladin Security:
Ashley Cooper, Chad Kalyk, Bruce
Tanner, Jon Wellman

Second Place: Team 1A: Randy Brown,
John Lynch, Rob Reichelt, Arnie Riess

Third Place: Team 13A -
Smart Investments:
John Alpen, Rudi Herzog, John
Smart, Andrew Strong

Most Honest Team:
Team 12B - Gateway
Property Management:
Aura Chiriac, Silvia Hoogstins,
Sarah Kibugi, Zoran Zugic

GRAND PRIZE RAFFLE WINNER
Gareth McDonnell, BFL
Canada Insurance

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Ladies' Longest Drive: Natasha Kothlow
Ladies' Closest to the Pin: Myrla Savet
Men's Longest Drive: Ric Halliday
Men's Closest to the Pin: Brent Robinson
Longest Putt: Bruce Engleson

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Tournament is on June 22, 2016.

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PROFILE

ROBERT LAING, RI

CEO, BC REAL ESTATE
ASSOCIATION



Early in his career, before joining the BC Real Estate Association, Robert Laing taught high school English and History. He worked hard to make the subjects interesting to his students. "I spent hours trying to show the relevance of what I was teaching," he says. "It made me a master at Trivial Pursuit." Now CEO of BCREA, Robert is keenly interested in his organization, which is the professional association for more than 19,500 REALTORS® in BC.

"I have worked at BCREA for 15 years and can honestly say that there is always something new to work on so I am never bored," Robert reveals. "The BCREA team and representatives for organized real estate are terrific and the real estate community itself is so dynamic and focused on improvement and professionalism that you can't help but enjoy being part of everything."

Robert credits his professional success to his education, great mentors, and good fortune. "Over 30 years of leading the UBC Real Estate Division and BCREA have been extraordinary," he says. Recent highlights include chairing the CREA Association Executives Council and sitting on the CREA board of directors. "But," notes Robert, "family and friends outweigh any professional achievements."

Though not yet ready to retire, Robert looks forward to volunteering again with organizations and causes important to him as soon as he has more time. For now, he and his husband, Ed, focus on financial support for a few charities: Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research (CANFAR), Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR), QMUNITY, and Take A Hike Youth at Risk Foundation. As a self-described "middle-class white boy living in Canada," Robert wishes that everyone could have the same opportunities and advantages that he has enjoyed. His interest in supporting these four charities reflects the personal experiences that he, his family, and his friends have encountered. "It is our way of supporting those who haven't had the opportunities or good fortune that we have," says Robert.

Travel and fine food are two of Robert's passions. He plans to step on every continent, and has only two more to go. "Despite this," Robert admits, "staying home and having hot dogs and hamburgers on our deck satisfies me completely. As does making a killer brunch for a small group of friends and then spending the afternoon with my daughter, son-in-law, and three grandchildren, seeing the sights of the city."



BETTER TOGETHER

SMALL HOUSE LIVING THRIVES IN A COMMUNITY

Ross Chapin

Small houses and tiny houses have been getting a lot of press the last of couple years. They've captured our imagination, teased our nesting instinct, and enticed us to consider the possibility of living with a smaller mortgage or less rent. Squeezed by the economy and a monoculture housing market, millennials, singles, empty nesters, and elders are thinking small is the answer—or, at least, that “not so big” is key. Tiny-house advocates are helping us refine how we can live large in small spaces, with clever fold-down beds, under-stair storage, niches, and alcoves. Perfecting the small or tiny house, however, isn't enough.



Ben Brown of PlaceMakers, who lived in a 308 sq. ft. Katrina Cottage, concluded that small house living takes a town. He says that “the smaller the nest, the bigger the balancing need for community.” With slightly snug houses, cabin fever can set in without porches and gardens to step out onto, or the park at the end of the block, or the local coffee house—places to be around others with little effort.

Plunked down in the midst of a subdivision of McMansions, a tiny house (under 300 square feet) or small house (300-1,500 square feet) would seem absurd. There would be few neighbours around to chat with, since most of their needs are met behind their grand doors. Context is everything: a small house is better with the companionship of other small houses, within range of great public places to go to—preferably by foot or on a bike.

POCKET NEIGHBOURHOODS

Since the mid-1990s, I’ve been designing and occasionally developing pocket neighbourhoods—small groups of houses around a shared commons. Homes in these micro-neighbourhoods are sometimes small cottages, but they may also include modest family-sized homes. The gist of the idea, though, is that the scale of this sub-community matches our innate human propensity for sociability. In small groups, conversation is spontaneous, happening naturally without effort, while large groups need to

be organized for anything resembling communication. Pocket neighbourhoods are planned with this scale of sociability, where interactions among neighbours are part of the daily flow of life.

Think about most housing subdivisions in North America: dozens or hundreds of individual lots arranged with flanks of garage doors and formal entries to the street—all with no relation to the sociability of the neighbourhood. Houses trend ever larger, with privacy being a key selling point.

In these locations there are two zones—the public realm of the street and the private zone behind front doors. Pocket neighbourhoods, however, create and expand an intermediate zone between the two, a semi-private commons shared and managed by surrounding neighbours. This is where a young child can venture out to play or visit a shirt-tail auntie across the way, and an older person can trust they have caring and supportive neighbours to rely on. An impromptu chat on the way home from work may expand to a potluck around the barbecue. This is the zone where sociability happens naturally.

All this emphasis on community does not mean living without privacy. Strong community requires clear definitions of personal space. Getting that right is the key to cultivating community.

DESIGN PATTERNS FOR POCKET NEIGHBOURHOODS

Pocket neighbourhoods have different qualities and characteristics given their locations: an urban apartment building, an infill housing cluster off of a busy street, a cohousing community planned by its residents, or a group of neighbours pulling back their fences to create a commons in their backyards. There are underlying design patterns, however, shared by all pocket neighbourhoods.



1

1. CLUSTERS OF A DOZEN HOUSEHOLDS

A neighbourhood might contain several hundred households, while the optimum size of six to 12 households in a pocket neighbourhood relates to the scale of sociability. A larger neighbourhood of 50 to 60 households might consist of five pocket neighbourhoods, each with control of its own central common space and connected by walkways.



2

2. SHARED COMMON SPACE

This is the heart of a pocket neighbourhood, what holds it together and what gives it vitality. This space may take the form of a garden courtyard, a play space at the centre of a block, a reclaimed alley, or a community room shared by urban apartment dwellers.



3

3. ENCLOSURE AND PERMEABILITY

Enclosed space taken to the extreme is not good, as in gated communities. A shared common space should have appropriate permeability to the surrounding community. A healthy community “breathes” with its surroundings.



4

4. LAYERS OF PERSONAL SPACE

Community can be wonderful, but too much community can be suffocating. On the other hand, too much privacy can feel isolating. Multiple layers of personal space can help establish the right level of privacy that cultivates community.

These layers occur at public-private transitions. Passing through a trellised entry gateway, a resident will feel a sense of arriving home and an invited guest will feel welcomed, while a stranger will feel they’ve crossed into private territory. This is the first layer of personal space.

Here are five additional layers of personal space from the gateway to the front door: a border of plantings next to the sidewalk; a low fence; a private front yard; the frame of a covered porch with a railing and flower boxes; and a large front porch. Each provides a band of enclosure without being a full barrier.

5. EYES ON THE COMMONS

The first line of defence for personal and community security is a strong network of neighbours who know and care for one another. When active spaces of houses, such as the kitchen and dining room, look onto the shared common areas, a stranger is noticed, young children can be monitored without intrusion, and an elderly person can be checked on if daily patterns are askew.



5

6. ROOM-SIZED FRONT PORCH

The front porch is a particular layer of personal space that needs highlighting. It is perhaps the key element in fostering neighbourly connections. Its placement, size, relation to the interior and the public space, and height of railings is both an art and a science.



6

7. CORRALLING THE CAR

In our culture, nearly everyone has a car, yet cars should not dominate our lives. Start first by locating parking areas to be good neighbours: shield parking areas from the street and the commons. Don't let garage doors greet the guests. Where appropriate, locate parking away from houses, so residents and guests walk through a shared garden to the front door. Or locate parking and garages at the rear of homes with access via traditional laneways.



7

8. NESTED HOUSES

Don't plop down best-selling plans without considering how they dovetail with next-door neighbours. Do not have windows of one house peering into another. Give the entire side yard to the house (no leftover or unusable five-foot side yards). Privacy is best achieved by good design, not distance.



8

9. COMMONS BUILDINGS AND GARDENS

An advantage of living in a pocket neighbourhood is being able to share buildings and gardens. The easiest and least expensive amenity is a common tool shed. How many rakes, shovels, hoes, and lawn mowers do you need in a close-knit neighbourhood? An outdoor barbecue or picnic shelter is another. A four-season common house with a kitchenette, bathroom, and storage room can be used to host community potlucks, meetings, exercise groups, and movie nights. Larger communities of several pocket neighbourhoods may be able to afford a larger common house with a full kitchen and dining hall, guest apartment, workshop, and children's room. And pocket neighbourhoods of any size will enjoy the benefits of a community vegetable garden.



9

For more information and examples of pocket neighbourhoods, visit pocket-neighborhoods.net

Photos by Ross Chapin.

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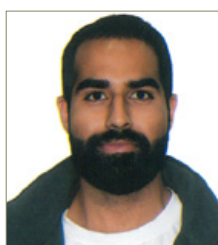
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