

Larry Beasley

I travel for work all over the world. And everywhere I go, whether I meet planners, architects or urban designers, people know about Vancouver. They love what they see and they want to know how we do it. That's why I know there is going to be extraordinary interest in Southeast False Creek.

The main thing that Vancouver is known for is a humane, beautiful, high-density urban environment. It's revered; people come here to study it. Second, there's an expectation about the attitudes we take to the problems of the day. We're expected to be urban design trendsetters, with cutting-edge policy, expertise and implementation.

We are recognized for knowing how to govern at the municipal level. In most of North America, there's a power struggle between the public and private sectors, and the public

has been losing for 25 years. What we've done well, I think, is to take the best of the expertise, skills and inclination of each sector, and combine them into something better. People are shocked when I say it was my job to help developers make more money – but if they made more, they invested more on fine design and the public realm, because our system caused one interest to feed the other. The net effect is that we have millions of dollars of public equities that other communities can't even expect.

This project also illustrates that Vancouverism isn't just one form, tower and podium; it's a way of life, with many forms. I call this "experiential planning" – designing to meet people's experiential expectations. It's about love, it's about an emotional reaction, it's about the positive things you don't

"What we've tried to do with Vancouver urbanism is to develop an experience that you will find fulfilling..."

see in modern cities, which are just machines for living. What we've tried to do with Vancouver urbanism is to develop an experience that you will find fulfilling, in a place – high density – where you least expect it. The SEFC form is going to generate genuine community, because its design causes people to interact with one another. It will be studied and copied around the world.

Of course, you have to be critical even as you celebrate. I feel SEFC doesn't provide enough architectural diversity. And we need to diversify how we subdivide land for development – the subdivision pattern of SEFC is pretty standard.

We also haven't done well on creating a social mix – we must do better on genuine middle-income affordability. When the NPA Council led by Mayor Sam Sullivan pulled back on one-third, one-third, one-

third [an even balance of market, "modest market" and social housing], that was a patently bad, retrogressive step, not in the interest or philosophy of the City. We saved some of the social mix, but it was supposed to be cutting edge in every way, and it won't be.

In the grand scheme of things, however, this project is going to be revered. I hope the City convenes a symposium to look at what we've achieved, and how to improve it in the next phases of SEFC.

Larry Beasley
Former Director of Planning
City of Vancouver

Distinguished Practice
Professor of Planning, UBC

Founding Principal
Beasley & Associates Planning Inc.



Views of the Southeast False Creek seawall. Vancouver Mayor Sam Sullivan officially opened the new seawall on May 28th, 2008 (bottom right).



PROFILE

Jody Andrews

Manager, SEFC and Olympic Village Project Office
City of Vancouver, 2005-2009

The original manager of the City's SEFC Project Office, Jody Andrews' task was to move a grand vision into reality. This meant clarifying relationships and responsibilities across a multi-disciplinary team to develop eight city blocks in three short years – with the world watching.

Roger Bayley, Design Manager for Millennium Water, says Andrews established the collaboration and sustainability ethics that underpinned the project. "He was very even-handed and astute at managing priorities to deliver what the City wanted: innovation and exploration of how to build a better community, a sustainable community. I have immense respect for his passion and energy."

"Jody played a significant role in launching this project," says Shahram Malek of Millennium. "He is as passionate about human and ecological aspects as he is about bricks and mortar."

"Jody Andrews is an elegant manager," says Scot Hein, Vancouver's Senior Urban Designer. "He created a project culture that allowed us to do our best. His leadership style resulted in high quality physical results that are a legacy for the City."

"People loved working with him," says Robin Petri, SEFC Manager of Development for the City of Vancouver. "The project wouldn't be what it is today without Jody."

CHALLENGE

To officials at the City of Vancouver – elected and staff – to lead a gathering of design professionals to assess what has been achieved in SEFC so far, and determine what can be improved in subsequent phases to further enhance Vancouver's urban model and push the parameters of sustainable community development.