

## STUDIO INTRODUCTION

Just recently, the city of New Westminster became the second-densest in Canada after Vancouver. With a population of 78,916 in 2021, the city now estimates that the population will experience a significant increase to 103,871 by 2041.<sup>1</sup> With the continual pressure of population increase, one of the main concerns has been about housing. In response to the housing crisis and in an effort to increase housing options, offer more sustainable modes of transportation, and create mixed-use communities that challenge suburban homogeneity, the province of British Columbia made amendments to the Local Government Act in December 2023 to establish transit-supportive densities adjacent to transit. Transit-oriented development areas (TOD Areas) were established within certain distances from Skytrain Stations, which required minimum building heights and densities, and eliminated the need for off-street residential parking. In the city of New Westminster, there are five TOD Areas designated around the five SkyTrain Stations.<sup>2</sup> About 400 meters from the Skytrain New Westminster station is the Columbia Square Plaza strip mall. The 7.2-acre strip mall at 88 10th Street has been the center of discussion around how to approach TOD Areas in New Westminster, which the current proposal aims to redevelop into downtown New Westminster’s largest transit-oriented development to date.<sup>3</sup> However, many questions remain, including: What ecological, social, and cultural infrastructures will support the increase in housing density? How can these spaces create a more just city that honors the city’s past, its ever-evolving present, and its diverse future? Housing does not come in a vacuum; many other amenities are needed to support these houses, from schools, parks and playgrounds, community centres, and public spaces.

In this studio, we will consider what community spaces are needed as population density continues to grow, and how those spaces can be integrated into the larger master plan that focuses on housing. The studio will begin with an exploration of the site through mapping and analysis, paying close attention to the surrounding ecological, social, and cultural contexts. From this foundation, students will envision a comprehensive master plan for Columbia Square Plaza that integrates housing, commercial uses, and community infrastructure to create a more just city. In the final stage, each student will develop one key social or cultural space in detail, translating broader urban strategies into an architectural resolution.

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<sup>1</sup> City of New Westminster, *Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 7925, 2017*, consolidated April 2023, [https://www.newwestcity.ca/database/files/library/OCPlan\\_BYLAW7925\\_2017\\_Consolidated\\_April2023.pdf](https://www.newwestcity.ca/database/files/library/OCPlan_BYLAW7925_2017_Consolidated_April2023.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> City of New Westminster, *Guide to Transit Oriented Development Areas in New Westminster* (updated November 5, 2024), [https://www.newwestcity.ca/database/files/library/Guide to Transit Oriented Development Areas in New Westminster Updated Nov 5 2024.pdf](https://www.newwestcity.ca/database/files/library/Guide%20to%20Transit%20Oriented%20Development%20Areas%20in%20New%20Westminster%20Updated%20Nov%205%202024.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Chan, “2,400 Homes in Eight Towers Proposed Next to New Westminster SkyTrain,” *Daily Hive Vancouver*, June 12, 2023, <https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/columbia-square-plaza-redevelopment-88-10th-street-new-westminster>

## **ASSIGNMENTS and SCHEDULE <sup>4</sup>**

### **Week 1- 4**

#### **Urban Analysis and Critical Mapping (Groups of 2)**

In the first four weeks, we will begin discovering the site within its context. Through critical mapping techniques and urban analysis, we will gain insight into the site's history, current issues, and future possibilities. With spatial justice as a critical lens in our analysis, we will consider the spatial outcome of multiple injustices, including colonialism, racial discrimination, inequity, and wealth divide. We will study the existing ecological, social, and cultural infrastructure in the neighbouring area, identify gaps in the existing infrastructure, and imagine the potential future needs of the community.

### **Week 5-9**

#### **Urban Layout Master Plan (Groups of 2)**

In the next three weeks, in groups of two, you will design an urban layout for the Columbia Square Plaza strip mall. You will create a conceptual framework for holistic design, which encompasses various housing options for communities with diverse needs, commercial spaces, and the social and cultural infrastructure that supports these spaces and fosters a more equitable and just city.

### **Week 10- 13**

#### **Community Space (Individual Project)**

In the final three weeks, each student will choose one of the social, cultural, and/or ecological spaces proposed in their master plan and design in its details. This part of the project will enable students to think about design on a more detailed architectural level, while still considering the master plan and the larger urban context.

## **TRAVEL**

During the second week of the studio, we will have a site visit to New Westminster's 88 10th Street, about a two-minute walk from SkyTrain's New Westminster Station. We will meet at UBC in our studio and travel as a group to the site.

## **STUDENT ASSESSMENTS**

- Urban Analysis and Critical Mapping | 20 %
- Urban Layout Master Plan | 35%
- Community Space | 35%
- Participation and engagement | 10 %

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<sup>4</sup> We will have some guest lectures throughout the studio schedule. These will be announced as soon as they are finalized.