



SOUNDING BOARD



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Uncovering the Economic Impact of Metro Vancouver's Industrial Land Shortage

POLICY | Assessing Industrial Lands Shortage

In the bustling landscape of Metro Vancouver, where economic opportunities and innovations thrive, one critical resource is silently slipping away—industrial land. The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade (GVBOT) and the NAIOP Vancouver Chapter have joined forces to bring to light the economic repercussions of the dwindling industrial land supply in our region.

The Crucial Role of Industrial Lands

Industrial lands make up just four percent of Metro Vancouver's total land mass, but their significance cannot be overstated. They are the engine that powers our economic growth, driving forward over 450,000 direct and indirect jobs, contributing a staggering \$50.1 billion to the GDP, and generating

an overall output of \$92.5 billion. These industrial jobs often offer wages that surpass the national average by more than 10 percent, underscoring their importance to our local workforce.

The Tipping Point

For years, concerns of an impending crisis in industrial land availability have echoed in our region, mirroring the housing crisis. Recent data leaves no room for doubt—Metro Vancouver has crossed the tipping point and is now at a critical juncture. Vacancy rates have plummeted to around 1.0%, among the lowest in North America. This scarcity has triggered a surge in land prices, with average costs tripling over the last five years. To put it in perspective, average land costs per acre in our region are

now approximately six times higher than those in Metro Seattle or Calgary.

Consequences of the Shortage

The consequences are profound, hindering growth and innovation. Businesses, along with new jobs and investments, are migrating to neighboring jurisdictions such as Calgary, Edmonton, and Washington State. In the past 4.5 years, an estimated 5.1 million square feet of space has been claimed by firms in Calgary instead of Metro Vancouver. This includes companies that have departed the region and others that, despite a preference for Vancouver, have opted for Calgary. The fallout is significant—the loss of 6,300 direct jobs, \$477 million in wages, and nearly \$500 million in GDP.



A Call to Action

We collectively call upon municipalities, Metro Vancouver, and the provincial government to take decisive action. The report's recommendations include:

- Re-focusing regional land use planning to prioritize local housing, local food, and local production and jobs.
- Expanding protection and availability of industrial land, surpassing the current 4% allocation.
- Conducting regular revisions of regional land use plans every three years to ensure an adequate supply of industrial and employ-

ment lands.

To address the critical shortage of industrial land in Metro Vancouver, we are urging all levels of government to collaborate closely with affected stakeholders. By working together we can create a business environment that supports future generations, fostering a thriving private sector and positioning Greater Vancouver as the best place in the world to live and work. ^{5B}

The economic impact study outlines how the costs and shrinking availability of industrial lands is harming our region's competitiveness. Read the report at boardoftrade.com/IndustrialLandReport.

Advancing Diversity and Inclusion: A Year of Impact at the DLC

PROGRAMS | Recapping the 2022-23 year



Rob Chiarello is the Senior Vice President, People and Culture at the Pacific Blue Cross, with over 20 years of experience in strategy, innovation and direction.

A message from Rob Chiarello, Senior Vice President of People and Culture at Pacific Blue Cross (PBC) and outgoing co-chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Council (DLC) at the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade.

Our Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

The DLC, an evolution of the Wom-

en's Leadership Council program, is an inclusive initiative that champions leadership reflecting the diverse makeup of Greater Vancouver. Through a range of programs, initiatives, and events, we offer practical business development education, advocacy, recognition, and networking opportunities to drive inclusive growth.

We are dedicated to investing in underrepresented groups and assisting the business community in achieving their diversity and inclusion objectives.

A Personal and Professional Journey

My career at PBC has allowed me to combine my human resources expertise with my passion for DEI. As a proud member of the 2SLG-BTQ+ community, I've seen DEI's significance grow significantly for organizations over the last decade. What was once a personal commitment has become a pivotal aspect of my professional life, with PBC leading the way in DEI initiatives.

Joining GVBOT's Program Advisory Committees

My journey with the DLC program began with the realization that Pacific Blue Cross was making a meaningful difference. I felt a responsibility to share our experiences, especially with smaller businesses lacking our resources. DEI requires shared best practices, ideas, and tools to drive equity and inclusion.

Professional Growth Through Committee Engagement

Committee involvement has been immensely beneficial for my career. I've connected with extraordinary leaders in Greater Vancouver, and together, we've learned from each other to empower our communities. I've forged lasting friendships and formed connections with industry leaders, providing a support network for ideas and projects. My role in the committee has enriched PBC's DEI initiatives, offering fresh insights and ideas to enhance our efforts.

Highlight: The GVBOT Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Forum

My favorite program event is undoubtedly the GVBOT Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Forum. Launched during my co-chair tenure, it has been a resounding success. The event continues to evolve, with each iteration delivering greater impact. It doesn't just influence businesses but also benefits their employees and customers. I believe this event will leave a lasting legacy.

Impact on the Greater Vancouver Business Community

Over the past year, the DLC program has provided essential resources and tools to Greater Vancouver's business community. Our partnership with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion has granted hundreds of members access to training and resources that may be challenging for smaller businesses to obtain. DEI is a complex, ever-evolving field, and our collective support makes us stron-

ger together.

My proudest accomplishment is the EDI Forum. I genuinely believe it ranks among the top DEI events in the Vancouver area. It's a must-attend event that offers invaluable insights and fosters meaningful connections.

A Message to the Advisory Committee 2023-24

As I hand over the reins to the incoming Advisory Committee for the Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Council in 2023-24, my request is simple: Stay humble and committed to learning. DEI is a journey, and we're all at different stages. This committee excels in learning from each other and engaging in discussions that propel the business community forward. Let's continue sharing resources and explore ways for larger organizations to assist smaller businesses that may lack dedicated DEI resources. ^{6C}

Meet Rob at our upcoming Health Care Forum | Health Equity, presented by Pacific Blue Cross. Register for the event here.

Navigating Economic Challenges in Metro Vancouver

FORECAST | Canadian Survey of Business Conditions for the Region

Metro Vancouver businesses are confronting a series of formidable challenges in the near future, as revealed by the latest data from the Canadian Survey on Business Conditions in Metro Vancouver. Persistent financial pressures, coupled with supply chain disruptions, are threatening the region's economic growth.

Inflation Looms Large

Inflation stands out as the most significant concern, with a substantial number (63.2%) of surveyed businesses expecting it to be a significant challenge in the next three months. As Bridgitte Anderson, President and CEO of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, observes, "Business owners are feeling the squeeze as operating expenses go up, and profitability expectations go down."

Labor Challenges and Rising Costs

Following closely behind, labor challenges (50.2%) and the rising cost

of inputs (45.2%) are top-of-mind for Metro Vancouver businesses. The survey highlights the complex task of recruiting and retaining skilled employees (38%), a critical factor in navigating these challenges.

Operational Pressures

More than half of the businesses surveyed (52.8%) anticipate an increase in operating expenses in the coming quarter. Nearly half of them (41.1%) expect a meaningful decline in profitability, while just over a third anticipate a decline in cash reserves (34.8%).

Transportation Costs Weigh Heavily

Transportation costs and availability have also been significant obstacles. For almost half (43.9%) of Vancouver businesses, these challenges hinder interprovincial trade. A substantial majority (81.8%) report being majorly or moderately impacted by transportation costs and availability. The recent Vancouver Port strike, which disrupted

an estimated \$10.7 billion of trade, compounded these financial pressures.

The Call for Support

Despite record population growth, Metro Vancouver's economy is showing signs of slowing, Anderson emphasizes, "As governments make budgetary decisions for 2024, they need to ensure that our local small businesses are being supported instead of adding more costs, fees, and red tape, which will only add to the uncertainty and cause the economy to deteriorate."

Counting The Costs

These findings come in the wake of a recent report highlighting economic challenges for businesses in British Columbia, critical shortage of industrial land in Metro Vancouver. The report found that between 2022 and 2024, businesses in B.C. will shoulder an additional \$6.5 billion in direct costs imposed by governments as they grapple with what is an already daunting economic outlook.



Building Up the Local Economy

Addressing the challenges posed by affordability, climate change, and geopolitical issues requires a concerted effort to build up the local economy. Metro Vancouver plays a crucial role as the gateway to the western trade corridor, contributing to Canada's reliability as a trading partner. The new results underscore the importance of addressing the industrial land shortage

to lower transportation costs and maximize local benefits.

A Vision for the Future

The report makes it clear that in an intensely competitive global arena, British Columbia and the Metro Vancouver area must proactively seek out investments and create an environment conducive to the growth and prosperity of our local economy. **SB**

Empowering People and Organizations for the Digital Economy

VISION | Transforming Careers, Industries, and Communities

In a rapidly evolving world driven by technology, Canada stands on the brink of a significant digital revolution. As the economy embraces the digital age, the need for a digitally savvy workforce has become increasingly important.

The Digital Innovation and Leadership (DIAL) initiative, established over two years ago, has been at the forefront of this revolution, leading the charge to prepare Canadian employers and individuals for success in the digital economy. So far, the program boasts a remarkable 98 per cent success rate in post-training employment.

Founded by Simon Fraser University's Beedie School of Business in partnership with Canada's Digital Supercluster, DIAL's mission is twofold: to empower individuals in their career journeys and provide organizations the tools and knowledge required to flourish in the evolving digital landscape.

"DIAL is a platform for change that is enabling Canada to stay competitive in the digital economy," says Jennifer Beale, Project Lead at DIAL. "It brings together a large consortium of partners from for-profit, not-for-profit, government and post-secondary that are co-creating a capacity building

solution. At its core, DIAL is about engaging people in education that leads to future of work jobs."

A National Consortium of Change

DIAL's national consortium of partners comprises over 140 organizations across diverse sectors, including major organizations such as Telus, Royal Bank of Canada, Pacific Blue Cross, and more. The consortium's collective mission is to upskill Canada's workforce, positioning the nation as a global leader in talent development. These partnerships have played a pivotal role in the development and implementation of DIAL's transformative programs designed to elevate Canada's digital capacity.

DIAL empowers individuals by opening doors to exciting new job opportunities through short-term digital innovation training. But it does more than that—it also creates systemic solutions. Leveraging government funding opportunities, DIAL spearheads initiatives that drive broader systemic changes within the workforce, enhancing Canada's capacity for digital advancement. By partnering with equity organizations and tapping into various funding avenues, DIAL is transforming businesses, indus-

tries, and the workforce, propelling Canada towards digital excellence.

Nurturing Digital Leaders and Organizations

DIAL offers two distinct programs for workforce development, focusing on upskilling existing staff and nurturing new digital talent. The Digital Transformation Management (DTM) program targets early- to mid-career individuals, imparting essential skills to generate and implement digital innovation ideas and utilize generative artificial intelligence.

The Digital Transformation Leadership (DTL) program is tailored for senior leaders, guiding them through a comprehensive audit of their organization's digital readiness and facilitating the creation of a visionary roadmap for successful digital transformation.

Both programs emphasize the integration of technology and business expertise and create a common language so employees can foster innovation within their organizations.

Results and Future Initiatives

DIAL's impact has been substantial, with 343 participants completing the programs in the first two



In-picture: Suzanne Fuller Blamey, Program Director, Outpatient Services & Holy Family Rehab, Providence Health Care. Helping lead leaders and teams digitally enhance their processes, Suzanne gets a lot of satisfaction from supporting organizations with change management and helping frontline staff make the big leap to focus on digital applications.

years and an additional 142 new participants starting this fall. Gender diversity and equity pathways—such as partnerships with the First Nations Technology Council (FNTC), immigration organizations such as MOSAIC and Immigration Employment Council of BC (IECBC), and veterans' organization WithYouWithMe (WYWM)—have also been integral to the program's success, ensuring an inclusive and representative participant base.

Suzanne Fuller Blamey, a leader in digital healthcare transformation at Providence Health Care, completed the Digital Transformation Leadership program and went on to revolutionize patient care through the digital transformation development at the new St. Paul's Hospital currently being built.

"I was able to apply the course learning to my work seamlessly, which made it easy to see the value of this program," says Blamey. "One of the applications that I worked on was an electronic shift trading and self-scheduling program for my unit."

Blamey's journey is just one of many success stories within the DIAL initiative. Participants from various industries are reaping the benefits by participating in DIAL's programs. Employers are also recognizing the benefits having a digitally skilled workforce. **SFB**

SFU Beedie is leading the flagship strategic Capacity Building Program of Canada's Digital Technology Supercluster with Digital Innovation and Leadership (DIAL) in collaboration with private-sector, public-sector, not-for-profit and educational partners. Learn more about the program here.