

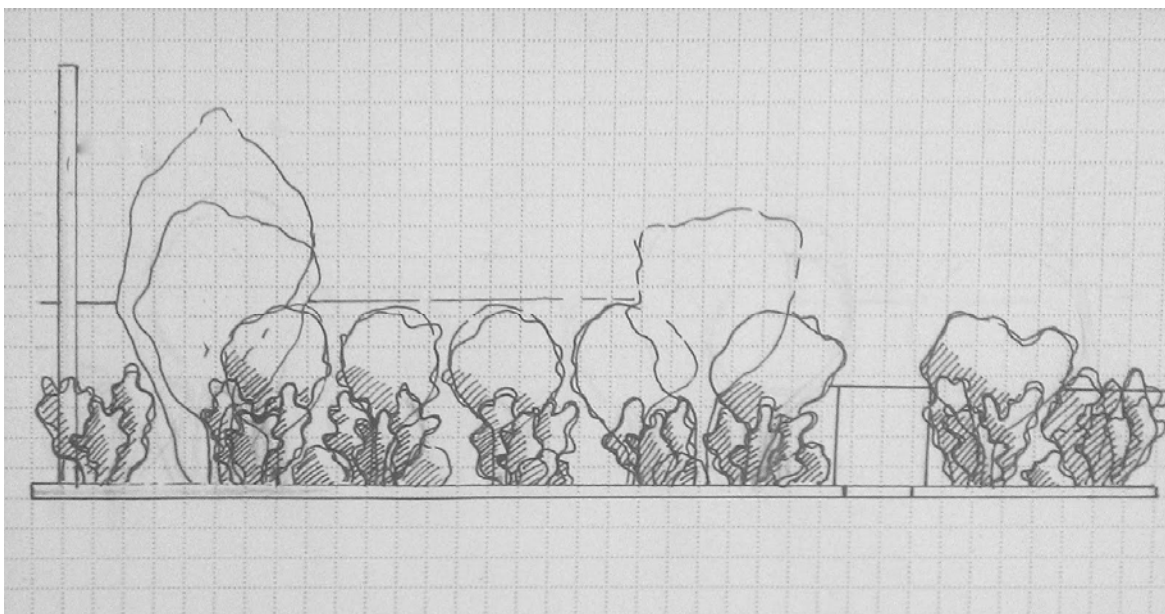


The Urban Orchard Pilot Project

The Urban Orchard Pilot Project is implementing Vancouver's first boulevard orchard.

Rachel Gutman, Caitlin McGinn
Emily Neufeld, Agnes Wisden

December 12, 2012





Urban Orchard Pilot Project Press Release

December 11, 2012

Students to build Vancouver's first boulevard orchard!

CityStudio students from Emily Carr University and UBC have received City approval to break ground on Vancouver's first boulevard orchard. The orchard is a pilot project, contributing to the City's recently passed Council and Park Board motions for an Urban Forest Action Plan, which among other things, aims to increase the number of food trees in Vancouver.

The orchard will feature a variety of trees and fruit bearing shrubs including: dwarf apples, figs, plums, blueberries and currants, as well as a mason bee hive, a variety of native flowers, and compost generously donated by local businesses David Hunter Garden Centre, GardenWorks and Harvest | Fraser Richmond Soil & Fibre. Village Vancouver Transition Network, a Vancouver non-profit dedicated to developing sustainable and resilient communities will be stewarding the orchard site. The organization intends to use the orchard as an educational space for permaculture design and gardening and will be using the produce in its neighborhood potlucks. Ross Moster from Village Vancouver is excited about this initiative: "Community orchards are one way we can increase opportunities for local food production, contribute to building food resilience, and move towards more robust communities in Vancouver. Village Vancouver is involved in numerous neighbourhood based food projects and activities across the city and stewarding a new orchard is a natural fit for us."

The goal of the pilot project is to provide a framework for increasing local food assets in public spaces. According to Rachel Gutman, a fourth year student at UBC and one of the students spearheading this project, "the development of urban orchards is a response to the growing popularity of transforming underutilized public spaces into community food assets. Over twenty-five percent of Vancouver is dedicated to roads, streets and alleys. If we are to move away from a carbon-based economy, we need to develop capacity for streets to be more than just spaces for cars."

The orchard site has yet to be determined and students are currently searching for a suitable boulevard in Grandview Woodlands, Mt. Pleasant, Marpole, and West End neighbourhoods. Homeowners living in these neighbourhoods who are interested in the project can apply to have orchard in their community. Applications can be found on the Parks Board website.

CityStudio Vancouver is an energetic hub of learning and leadership where students design and implement Greenest City projects. CityStudio is co-led by Duane Elverum (Emily Carr University of Art and Design) and Dr. Janet Moore (Simon Fraser University – Centre for Dialogue). The project is a collaboration of the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Economic Commission (VEC), British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), Emily Carr University of Art and Design, Langara College, Simon Fraser University (SFU), University of British Columbia (UBC) and Vancouver Community College (VCC). The project is supported by Vancouver's Campus City Collaborative (C3).

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Contents

Urban Orchard Pilot Project Press Release	1
Introduction.....	4
Project Description.....	4
Contacts.....	4
Team	4
Project Summary	4
Project Details	5
Methodology	5
Outcomes	6
Challenges.....	9
Project Status	10
Stewardship.....	10
Acknowledgements	12
Selected Bibliography and References	15

Introduction

Project Description

The Urban Orchard Pilot Project is working on implementing Vancouver's first boulevard orchard.

Contacts

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Team

Rachel Gutman is in her final semester of the Global Resource Systems program at the University of British Columbia. Caitlin McGinn is in her third year of Communication Design at Emily Carr University of Art and Design. Emily Neufeld is in her fourth year of her BFA in Visual Art at Emily Carr. Agnes Wisden is in her third year of the Critical and Cultural Practise major at Emily Carr University of Art and Design.

Project Summary

The CityStudio students are working to build a small orchard on an undeveloped boulevard as a part of the Urban Forest Action Plan's mandate to seek out opportunities to increase the number of food trees in the city. The students will collaborate with community partners and neighbours to design the orchard layout, fundraise for installation costs, and organize water access. To ensure long-term care for the orchard, the students have partnered with a non-profit community organization who will assume stewardship of the site.

The City of Vancouver's *Greenest City Action plan* aims to make the city a global leader in local food production by 2020. The Urban Orchard Pilot Project contributes to two of goals: Access to Nature and Local Food. We are contributing to the Access to Nature goal of planting of 15000 new trees on City land and other public property by 2014, while simultaneously helping to fulfill the Local Food goal of moving the number of urban orchards from the existing three to the target of ten.

Boulevard orchards provide an opportunity to build food security for the residents of Vancouver as well cultivate stronger communities. They help to catalyze a change in the way we view our streets and demonstrate their use as hubs of urban food production. A street side orchard builds community and creates a place for people to learn about growing fruit and gardening. It also provides gardening space to the many community programs currently in existence in Vancouver which are managed by non-profit groups and urban agricultural projects.

Project Details

Methodology

As is often the difficulty with new and innovative projects, all of our first steps were intertwined, and it was difficult to achieve one level of approval without first gaining help from a different branch which in its turn was reliant on the first approval. However, we persevered and here is a simplified version of our journey:

Step 1: The Paperwork

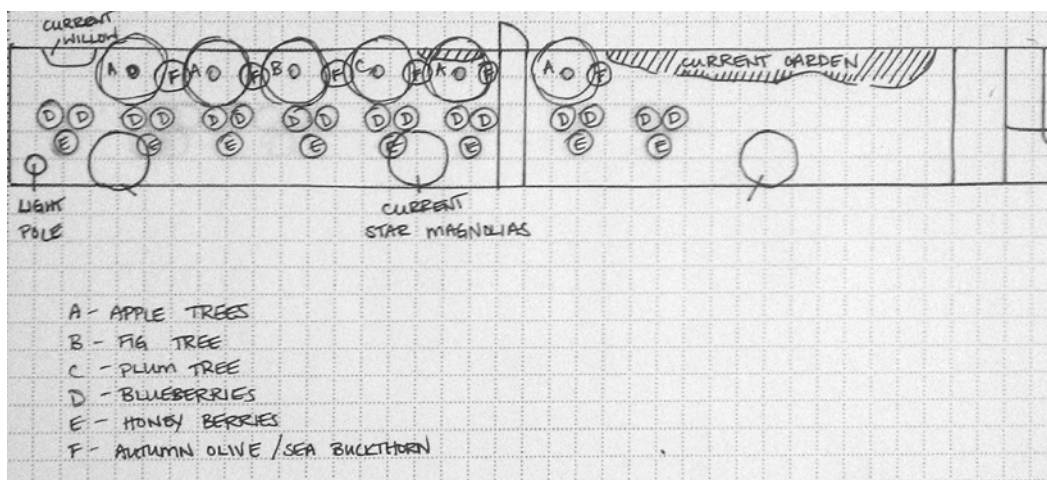
We started out by researching and writing. We researched the Bylaws and Guidelines and created a Project Brief for the Parks Board and for Engineering Services, looking for approval. We looked at all the precedents in Vancouver as well as in the rest of Canada and the world.

Step 2: The Steward

Just when it began to look like we would be unable to find a long term steward, Village Vancouver Transition Society stepped up. The Society's mandate is to engage individuals, neighbourhoods & organizations to catalyse projects that bring us closer to the more sustainable, resilient, connected and livable world. The Transition project aims is to raise awareness of sustainable living and build local ecological resilience in the near future.

Step 3: The Design

We worked with the boulevard's adjacent homeowner, Village Vancouver, a permaculture designer, Engineering and the Parks department to come up with a design for the site that met the needs of all parties involved. We will be planting six dwarf fruit trees, 21 berry bushes, and five nitrogen fixing shrubs, as well as installing a mason bee home and two birdhouses to encourage biodiversity.



Step 4: Community Engagement

We talked to 14 houses in the area about the project and answered all the questions and concerns of the neighbourhood residents.

Step 5: The Plants

From here we called and emailed many nurseries and garden centres looking for donations. GardenWorks, David Hunter Garden Centres and Harvest/Fraser Richmond Soil & Fibre stepped up in a big way and donated most of the plants and supplies we needed.

Step 6: The Digging

We plan on breaking ground in the new year and making our innovative orchard a reality. On this day, all the hard work of Team Orchard, CityStudio, the Village Vancouver Transition Society, the Parks Board, and Engineering Services will come together to create something amazing for our city.

Step 7: The Future

So, how can our project help future orchards take root in Vancouver? We will be presenting the Parks Board with a complete document of precedent projects in our city and other cities, survey results from potential future community partners about their hopes and barriers to creating their own orchards, and a project brief with recommended orchard planting guidelines.



Outcomes

Over the course of the semester, our team attempted to build an orchard on a 40x10m boulevard in Kitsilano. Although the planting of six fruit trees and twenty-one blueberries might seem like a small task, the project was fraught with many barriers, which ultimately prevented the orchard from being planted within the semester. Although our project has yet to take on a tangible form, the following outcomes of our process have led to numerous insights on City policy and best practices for future boulevard orchard projects.

1. Secured Village Vancouver Transition Society as a partner and long-term orchard steward

In order to obtain approval from the City of Vancouver to build an orchard on a boulevard, a long-term partner was first required to steward the site. Our team approached eight different community

organizations, all non-profits, with programming focused on local food and food security. Of the organizations approached, Village Vancouver Transition Society was only one that accepted our offer.

Although we were unable to survey the organizations to determine their specific barriers to stewarding an orchard on a City owned boulevard, there are several conclusions that can be made through our correspondence with these organizations. The non-profit organizations were generally interested in the project in principle, but were unable to accept the offer due to their organizations inability to support the project financially. Some had several large gardens and simply did not have the ability to take on another project without significant financial support.

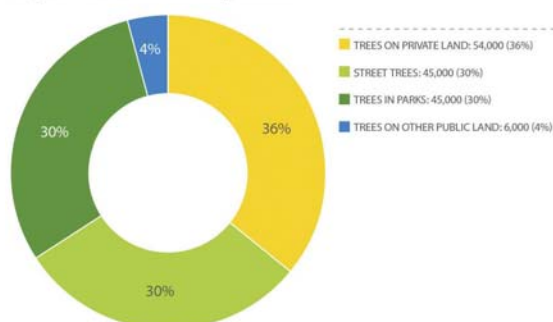
Although our conversations with community groups were limited, the difficulty in finding a steward was very informative. Many of the City staff we spoke with throughout our project were surprised that so few organizations leapt at the opportunity to access free orchard space. So, our work exposed the reality that funding needs to be made available if the City intends on having community organizations be responsible for the planting of fruit trees on public spaces.

2. Obtained City approval to build Vancouver's first street-side orchard

Although there are individuals within the City of Vancouver who have been advocating for the planting of fruit trees along streets, we learned during meetings with the Parks Board and Engineering department that many were still hesitant about the notion. Therefore, in order to receive approval for the pilot project, our team developed a project brief which outlined the global precedence of urban orchards and drafted a policy guideline applicable to boulevard gardens. Using existing Green Streets, Street Tree and Community Garden guidelines, our team compiled all the bylaws that would relate to a boulevard orchard and designed our orchard proposal using this framework. The project brief was submitted and received approval.

The speed at which our group was able to receive approval for this pilot certainly demonstrates an impetus within the City bureaucracy for the development of street-side orchards and the potential for our work to be replicated by other groups in the future. Our research shows that with minor changes to existing blooming boulevard guidelines and certain design considerations made to accommodate visibility and accessibility to utilities, there are few barriers within current City policy that inherently prevents these project from being developed.

Planting an urban forest: a breakdown of where 150,000 new trees will be planted



Food asset growth

FOOD ASSET	CURRENT	2020 GOAL	PER CENT INCREASE
Community Kitchen	69	100	45%
Farmers Market	4	22	450%
Community Produce Stand	3	15	400%
Community Food Composting Facilities	0	5	500%
Community Garden Plots	3,260	5,000	53%
Urban Orchards	3	10	330%
Urban Farms	1	5	400%
Food Hub	0	1	100%
Total	3,340	5,158	54.4%

3. Received over \$5000 dollars of in-kind and cash donations from local businesses and the Neighborhood-Matching Fund

For a variety of reasons, the City of Vancouver was unable to provide our team funding for this pilot project. As such, our team decided to seek grant funding from the Neighborhood Matching Fund and in-kind sponsorship from local nurseries. GardenWorks, David Hunter Garden Centres, and Harvest/Fraser Richmond Soil and Fiber generously donated all the plants and materials in our orchard design. Despite being unable to submit our letters of support required by the Neighborhood matching fund and the eventual loss of our orchard location, we still received \$2100 in funding.

All the funding listed above, was given to us by members of the community. Although the City funds the Neighborhood Matching Fund, the committee which ultimately decides how the money is allocated is made up of community members. The support from the committee and our private sponsors is significant in that it demonstrates community support for our project and the development of street-side boulevards. Unlike City staff who have an incentive to support our project given the recent Urban Forest Action Plan, our team felt honored to receive such encouragement from members of the community.

4. Failed to acquire sufficient neighborhood support to build orchard at 14th and Larch

Three days before our planting date, official letters of complaint were sent to the members of City council, the Parks Board, and City Manager from neighbors near the project site. The letters caused the city to temporarily put the project on hold until the community was consulted in a meeting with City representatives, CityStudio, and Village Vancouver. Nine neighbours attended this meeting and it became clear almost immediately that the neighborhood was unanimously against the project. Although this prevented our team from building the orchard within our desired timeline, what was learned from this setback is undoubtedly the strongest part of this project.

The strong level of resistance from the community is an indicator that a different approach is needed in not only developing boulevard orchards but the City's mandate to plant 150,000 street trees. It became very clear during our consultation that not all communities will support the planting of fruit trees on boulevards. Moreover, although a community consultation is not legally required in the Blooming Boulevards program, it is unlikely that a steward will agree to take part in a project where they are not welcome by the neighborhood. Unfortunately, the City does not have the capacity to undergo a full community consultation for every orchard built on a neighborhood. Therefore, our project demonstrates that in order for fruit bearing trees to be planted along streets in any large scale, it would be much more efficient for the City to create a program where communities can apply for the approval to build an orchard on their boulevard. Similar to programs like community gardens and block parties, the City could send a call out for neighborhoods to apply to build an orchard on their boulevard. The orchard would be approved provided a certain percentage of the neighbors are in support and agree to be long term stewards of the site. Our team will be testing this method next semester and will be sending such a call out through the Greenest City and CityStudio networks.

Due to the fact that there is no precedent in the City of Vancouver for this type of work, the whole project was really quite challenging. The key areas of difficulty we discovered were:

The non-profit organizations in the City are very busy with their programming. While there was a lot of enthusiasm for this project, most organizations lacked the resources and capacity to take on an orchard. Low funding and not enough staff make taking on new projects very difficult for most organizations so more granting tied to projects like urban orchards would certainly help. Most organizations also said that finding volunteer hours was also difficult. Village Vancouver plans to share the produce with the volunteers in order to encourage volunteerism. This has worked for the Harvest Project on the North Shore, a group that harvests excess fruit from private and public lands. The Harvest Project shares the produce and they currently have more volunteer hours than work.

Many of the steps to make this orchard a reality were interdependent. This was confusing and difficult, and groups attempting to replicate our process may find this a significant deterrent. We couldn't get approval without a steward, but we couldn't get a steward without a concrete idea of the project, and that depended on approval. We needed funding to buy the specific plants we wanted, but we needed a steward, approval and community support letters to apply for funding. We had to balance the needs of the steward with the requirements of the City – for example, the City wanted the steward to visit the site every day during the fruiting season, but the steward was worried that this may not be possible – and that was difficult to achieve. Many people from the City were excited and supportive of this project, and yet to please all the interested parties, a daunting amount of acrobatics was required.



3. Community buy-in

The need for community support was not a challenging piece but was just the most over-looked. We think the process would be much more effective if the adjacent homeowner was the person achieving community buy-in. If she or he was the one knocking on neighbours' doors to invite them to participate and to ask for the support of the neighbours, community buy-in would be more likely they would agree to such a project. Students or City staff are not the right people to do this because it seems to imply a university or municipality agenda; however, we believe if a local community member presented an idea, then rest of the community would be much more receptive.

Project Status

The planting of the boulevard orchard has been postponed temporarily, but we will be working with Lindsay Cole to secure a new site in January. Once we have community support for the project, we will be contacting our donors to assess if they are still able to donate the plants. Village Vancouver will continue partnering with us and will steward the completed orchard. The postponement of the planting has allowed for the possibility of a second orchard to be created which uses the recently awarded City of Vancouver's Neighbourhood Matching Fund.

Our greatest asset is our Project Brief that contains important information for the City to further their goals based on the Greenest City Action Plan. In order to achieve the City's goal to plant 150,000 new trees by 2020, innovative projects like this will be required. In the document, we synthesized the different by-laws and guidelines. This, along with the precedent research we performed, provides the City with the necessary guidelines to create more urban orchards in the future.

Stewardship

Kitsilano Transition Village is a part of the greater Village Vancouver Transition Society. It has the most active volunteers of all Village Vancouver neighbourhoods and the highest number of activities and projects on the ground. Village Vancouver Transition Society's mandate is to engage individuals, neighbourhoods and organizations in constructive and positive ways to catalyse projects that bring us closer to the more sustainable, resilient, connected and livable world that we all need so urgently to build together.

Village Vancouver has committed to stewarding the orchard. Within their Village Vancouver community, there are several members with significant experience managing food gardens and fruit trees. The society plans to develop a lead team of these individuals who would be available as the advisor committee of volunteers who will be primarily responsible for advising on the orchard's maintenance and care. They would recruit and train further volunteers to maintain the site.

Village Vancouver has two permaculture food forests planted on private land. They also have helped start two community collaborative gardens in the Kitsilano neighbourhood and are currently in the process of starting two more gardens in Vancouver. In the past four years, they've organized approximately 200 workshops related to gardening, growing and preserving food, and associated topics.

They have a large volunteer capacity and have several thousand people on their mailing list. They have installed and maintained many projects successfully, including Demonstration Neighbourhood Transition Villages at street fairs and festivals in which up to 80 Village Vancouver members created a demonstration neighbourhood with a variety of displays, activities and other features. Over the years, these have included solar panels, bike repair, beekeeping, backyard chickens, the two block diet, permaculture, composting, gardening, workshops, seed libraries, urban farming, emergency preparedness, community currency, children's activities, community visioning, plants, urban homesteading, sustainable libraries, social enterprises, community groups, and much more.



Acknowledgements

This project owes a debt of gratitude to the following people:

Lindsay Cole, Park Planner at the Vancouver Park Board, for her guidance, hard work and dedication to this project.

Ross Moster, President of Village Vancouver Transition Society, for sharing our vision for the future of urban orchards in Vancouver.

Sarah Orchard, Green Streets Coordinator at the City of Vancouver, for her wisdom guiding us through the City of Vancouver's approval process.

Tilo Driessen, the homeowner beside the site, for the offering his boulevard and allowing water access.

Rhys Williams, City Manager of Street Design, for finding us a dump truck to pick up compost.

jil weaving, Coordinator of Arts, Culture and Environment, for her advice and advocacy to the Neighbourhood Matching Fund.

GardenWorks, David Hunter Garden Centre, and Harvest/Fraser Richmond Soil & Fiber for their generous offer of donations to the project.

Urban Orchard Pilot Project



Vancouver's First Boulevard Orchard

We are building a street-side orchard in a residential neighbourhood in Kitsilano as a pilot project for the Urban Forest Action Plan.

Greenest City Action Plan

Local Food

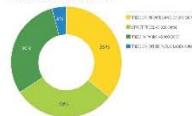
Grow more food in the city
Increase the number of urban orchards from 3 to 10
Encourage the building of 5-6 community gardens and 1 urban farm each year until 2014

Item	2009	2010	2011
Urban orchards	3	3	3
Community gardens	5	5	5
Urban farms	1	1	1
Total	9	9	9

Access to Nature

Planting of 15000 new trees on City land and other public property by 2014.

Planting on urban forest is a breakdown of where 100,000 new trees will be planted



The Team



Agnes Wisden
Critical and Cultural Practices, ECUAD

Caitlin McGinn
Communication Design, ECUAD

Emily Neufeld
Visual Art, ECUAD

Rachel Gutman
Land and Food Systems, UBC

Our Partners

Lindsay Cole
Park Planner, Vancouver Park Board

Sarah Orchard
Green Streets Coordinator, City of Vancouver

Ross Mosier
President, Village Vancouver Transition Society

Why Build an Urban Orchard?

Reimagining Streets

Catalyze a change in the way we view our streets and demonstrate their potential as hubs of urban food production.

Food Security

Improve access to local food for Vancouver residents.

Community Learning

Create educational spaces for communities to reconnect with their food system and learn about orchard care.



Village Vancouver Transition Society



Our steward has a mandate to engage individuals, neighbourhoods and organizations in constructive and positive ways to catalyse projects that bring us closer to the more sustainable, resilient, connected and livable world.



How to Create an Urban Orchard

Step 1: The Paperwork

We created a Project Brief for the Parks Board and for Engineering Services.

Step 2: The Steward

After a three week hunt for a long term steward for the orchard, we partnered with Village Vancouver Transition Society.

Step 3: The Design

We worked with all our partners to come up with a design for the site which met the needs of all parties involved.

Step 4: Community Engagement

We talked to 15 houses in the area and held a community meeting to answer all the questions and concerns of the neighbourhood residents.

Step 5: The Plants

We contacted garden centres looking for donations and GardenWorks, David Hunter Garden Centre, and Harvest/Fraser Richmond Soil & Fibre donated the plants and supplies.

Step 6: The Digging

We hope to break ground on December 8th and make our innovative orchard a reality.



How Can Our Project Help Future Orchards Take Root?

Besides creating a demonstration project, we are also helping to create the Urban Forest Action Plan by presenting the Parks Board with precedent projects, survey results from potential community partners, and orchard planting guidelines.

Acknowledgements

Lindsay Cole Park Planner at the Vancouver Park Board for her guidance, hard work and dedication to this project

Sarah Orchard Green Streets Coordinator at City of Vancouver for her wisdom at guiding us through the City approval process

Ross Mosier President of Village Vancouver Transition Society for sharing our vision for the future of urban orchards in Vancouver

Rhys Williams City Manager of Street Design for donating his time to arrange compost transportation



CityStudio

CityStudio Vancouver is an energetic hub of learning and leadership where students design and implement projects for Vancouver's Greenest City 2020 Action Plan. CityStudio is directed by Duane Rherum (Emily Carr University) and Dr. Janet Moore (SFU Centre for Dialogue). The project is a collaboration of the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Economic Commission, BCIT, Emily Carr University, Langara College, SFU, UBC and Vancouver Community College

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