

Planners wonder: What if two million people moved in?

Competition paints picture of Lower Mainland in 2056

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More than 200 architects, planners and landscape architects had six hours Saturday to figure out how to squeeze another two million people into Greater Vancouver without encroaching on farm and industrial land.

On your mark, get set, go.

The massive imaginary planning exercise was held on the weekend in conjunction with the United Nations World Urban

Forum to help envision a future in which four million people — double the current number — live in the Lower Mainland by the year 2056.

Like a non-computerized version of SimCity, played by highly trained and normally well-paid professionals, the day saw about 30 teams each take charge of one five-kilometre-by-five-kilometre square in the targeted growth areas of the Greater Vancouver Regional District and incorporate the new people, jobs, schools, roads, SkyTrain lines, and parks needed.

In six hours, they drew in new housing on aerial maps, coloured in green spaces, and drew new transportation routes.

The “SuperSaturday” exercise, designed by University of B.C. professor Patrick Condon, is a teaching and design tool to get people thinking about planning according to sustainability rules — like creating a linked system of green spaces and ensuring no resident has to walk more than five minutes to commercial services. It also, he said, forces people to think about the big picture and discover simple ways to incorporate dense housing.

The exercise also provided a glimpse of the possible future for Vancouver residents, whose mayor said Friday he wants the city to develop an “ecodensity”

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[Incomplete article. Full article coming soon]