Density, affordability and climate

Conversations for a One Planet Region

Victoria Public Library
February 13, 2020

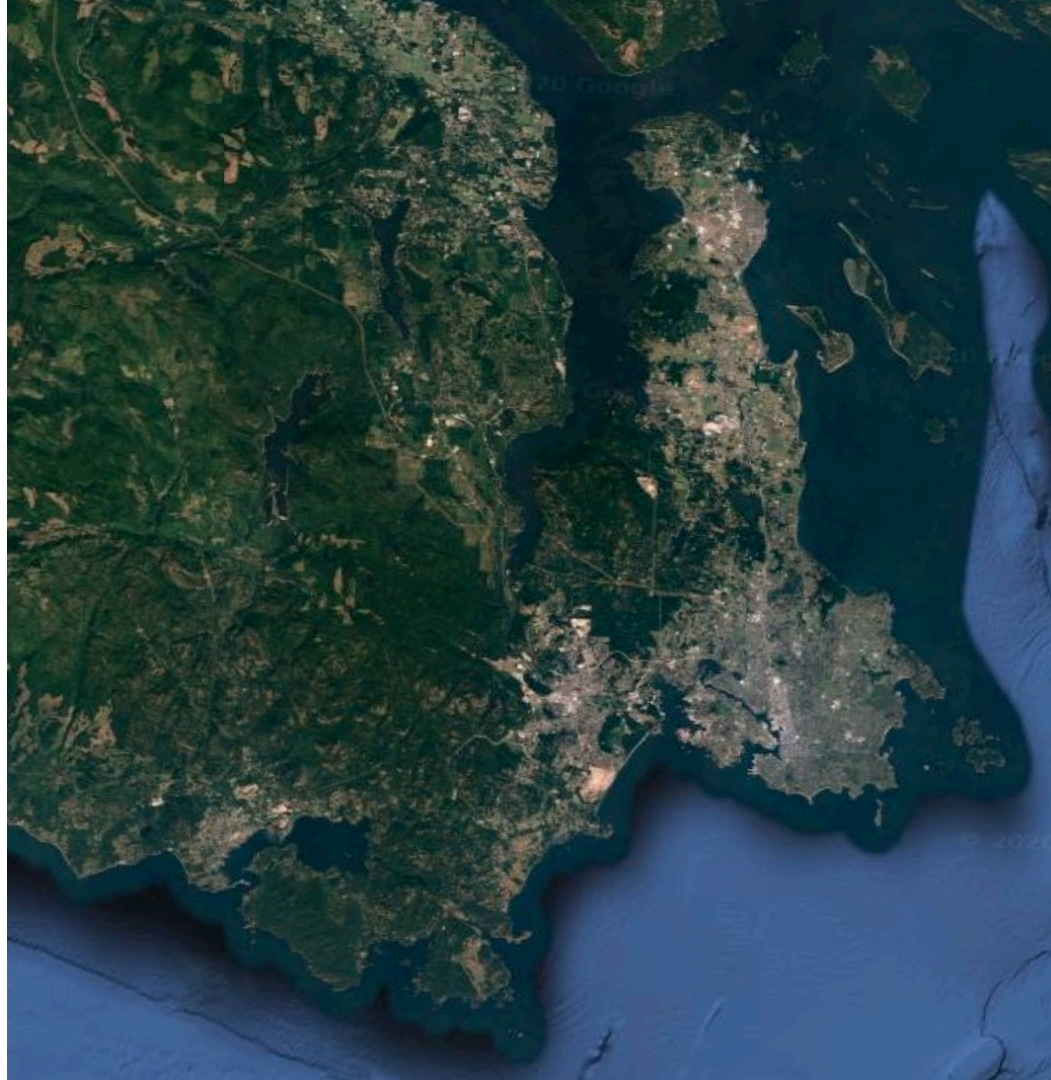Dave Thompson
PolicyLink Research and Consulting - plrc.ca

Outline

- Acknowledgement
- Goal
- Context
- Zoning
- Change

Acknowledgement

- This Region
- Thousands of years of occupation before Europeans
- Esquimault and Songhees First Nations
- Lekwungen peoples
- Coast Salish language group

Goal

PEARL DJANGO
SIMPLICITY

1. STARLIGHT BALLROOM 3:47 David Lange
2. IT'S A SECRET 3:47 Rick Leppanen
3. THE OLD DAYS 4:40 Tim Lerch
4. SIMPLICITY 4:05 Jim Char
5. SNOW IN THE EMERALD CITY 3:19 Michael Gray
6. NOCTURNE 6:07 Jim Char
7. JUST CAN'T STOP 4:15 Tim Lerch
   for Duke Robillard
8. JUNE TUNE 4:29 Rick Leppanen
9. PEARL BOP 4:18 Tim Lerch
10. ALACRITY 4:01 Michael Gray
J. Brahms - interlude from Op. 25 - 4th mvmt.
   "Rondo alla Zingarese"
11. BISCUITS 'N GROOVY 3:12 Jim Char

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PEARL DJANGO
SIMPLICITY

MHR026

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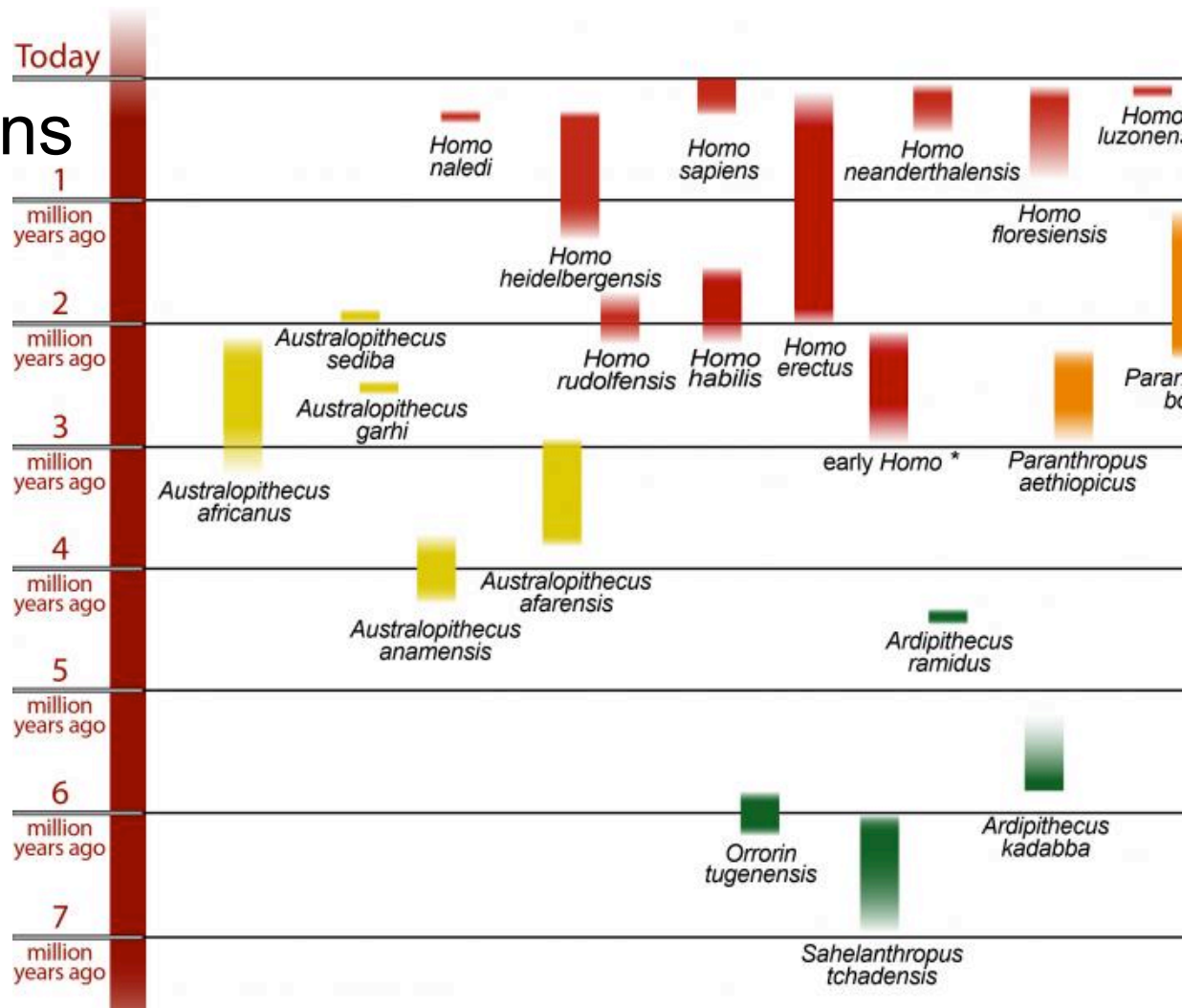PEARL DJANGO
SIMPLICITY

MHR026

Context - affordability

Average housing prices would have to drop by $413,000 or average salaries would have to more than double for Victoria to become affordable. (Black Press File).

Average housing prices would have to drop by $413,000 for Victoria to become affordable

Alternatively, salaries need to increase to $134,000 per year, more than double current levels
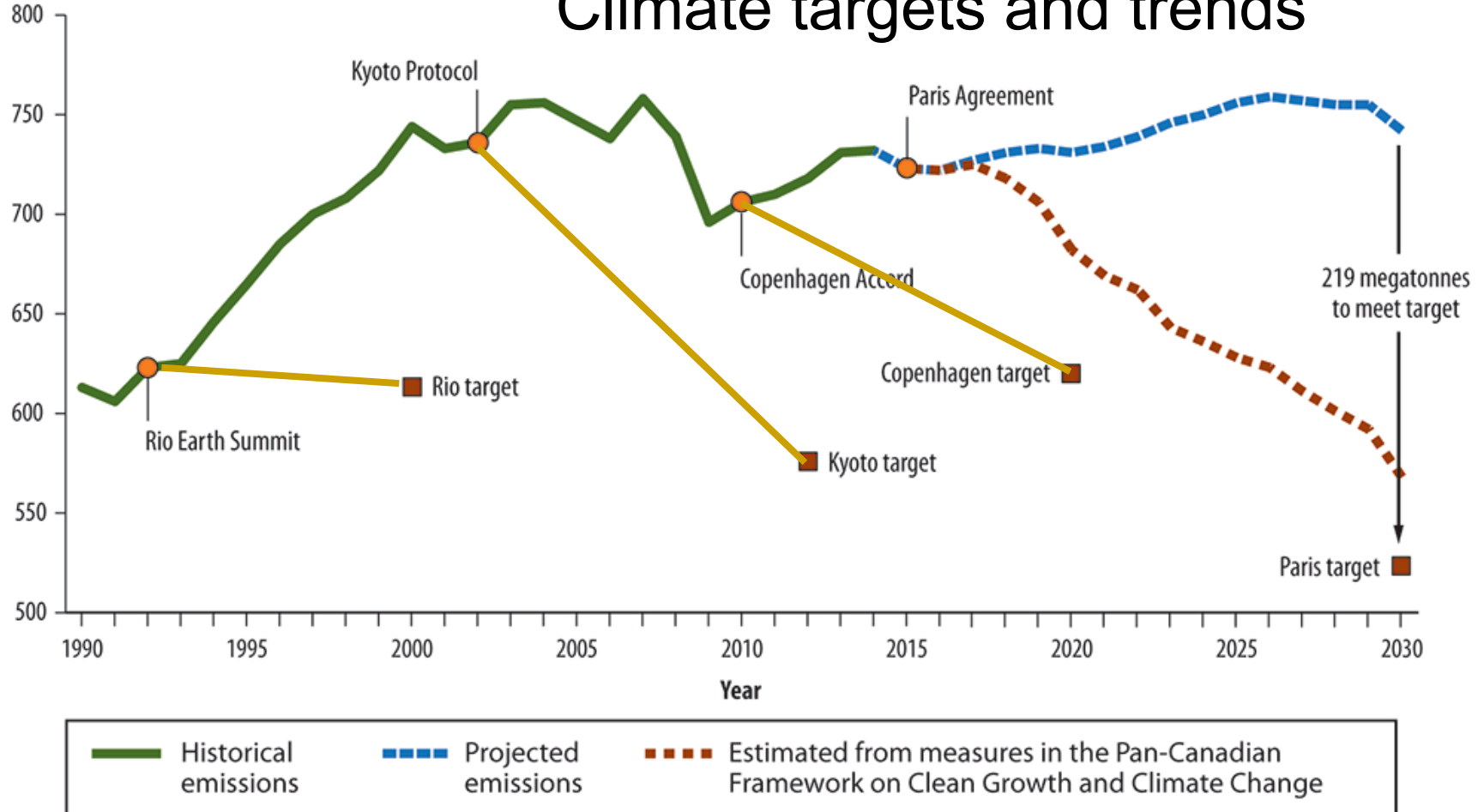
Context - extinctions

Context - societal collapses

- Cahokia
- Easter Island
- Norse colony on Greenland
- Polynesian civilization on Pitcairn Island
- Malden Island
- Flinders Island
- Garamantes
- Carthaginian Empire
- Akkadian Empire
- Hittite Empire
- Mycenaean Greece
- The Neo-Assyrian Empire
- Angkor civilization of the Khmer Empire
- Han and Tang Dynasty of China
- Western Roman Empire
- Izapa
- Maya, Classic Maya collapse
- Munhumutapa Empire
- Olmec

Climate targets and trends

This region: a beacon of hope to North America

Climate

- Normal prescription: "electrify everything and clean up the grid"
- (Omits energy efficiency)
- We are half-way there. Grid is already clean.

Affordability

- Costs are high, but not Vancouver or Toronto high
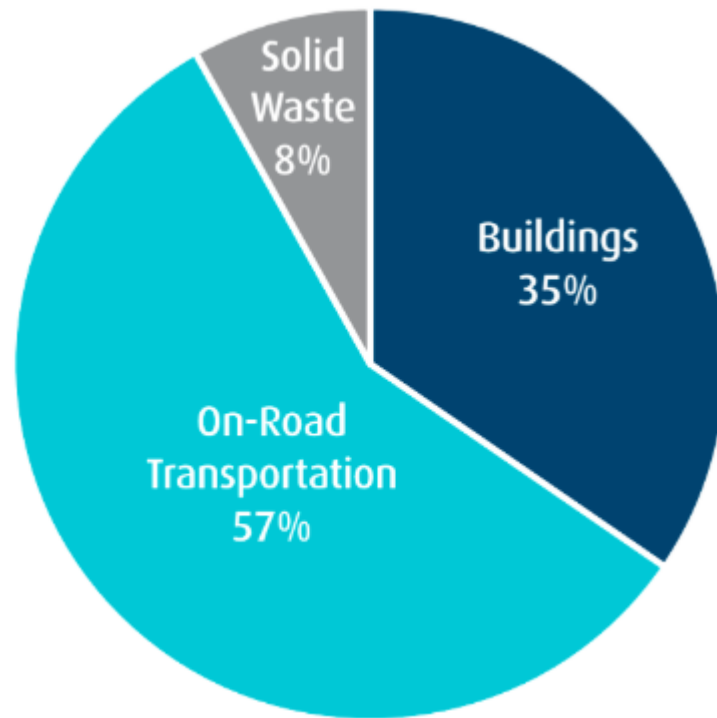- Can provide affordable housing with the stroke of a pen

Affordability, location and automobile dependency

- Sticker price affordability: "Drive until you qualify"
  - Start downtown, drive out through suburbs until you can afford the mortgage
- A distant, automobile-dependent home costs more than sticker price
  - ~ $10,000 per year for each average car
  - ~ $250,000 over period of typical 25-year home mortgage, per car
  - ~ $500,000 for two cars
- Distant suburbs are not very affordable
- True affordability means living closer to the core

Climate change and transportation

Regional GHG emissions

- Transport is the largest
- That's just the tailpipe emissions
- Lifecycle (cradle to grave) higher

Zoning bylaws

- Some good - separation of industry and homes
- But… exclusion
- Reduce supply of housing
- Raise prices
- Cause sprawl
- Cause GHG emissions

How? R1-G example

R1-G zoning bylaw

- Limits on uses - single family (no duplex, triplex)
- Minimum lot area
- Minimum lot width
- Setback requirements (front, back and side yards)
- Height restriction
- Parking requirement
- Floor space to lot ratio
- Floor area limits - depends
- Site coverage maximum - 30 percent. I.e. 70% uninhabitable. Plus roads.

No more than two garage sales per year - not even kidding.

Zoning is not a natural, pre-ordained, order of things

It was added in the early 20th century.

Vannes, France couldn't have developed with these rules.

Changes are possible

Cities and higher-level governments have relaxed the rules:

- Victoria allowed secondary suites, though not duplex, triplex, etc.
- Minneapolis: allowed triplexes and removed parking requirements
- Oregon: allowed duplexes in cities > 10,000 , multiplexes >25,000.
- Potential: California, Maryland, Virginia, Austin

How to make change - the variations and solos

- City Council - stroke of a pen.
- Amend zoning bylaws.
- What needed?
- Votes or dollars.
- Votes.

How to make change

- Organize
  - Forming community groups - there are many forming
  - Encouraging community groups to address zoning
- Advocate
  - Letters to editor
  - Op-eds
  - Social media activity
  - Speaking to councillors
  - Speaking to council and writing
  - Speaking to staff and writing

Conversation… !

Image acknowledgements