

UBC Sustainability Scholars Program 2019

The UBC Sustainability Initiative (USI) is pleased to offer current UBC graduate students the opportunity to work on funded sustainability internship projects. Successful candidates work under the mentorship of a partner organization, and are immersed in real world learning where they can apply their research skills and contribute to advancing organizational sustainability goals.

For more information about the Sustainability Scholars Program and to apply to work on this project, please visit the [Student Opportunities](#) page.

Please review the application guide (PDF) before applying.

Applications close **midnight Monday February 25, 2019.**

Research project title

Small-scale neighbourhood retail in Vancouver: an inventory and assessment of existing stores, and an assessment of current and future opportunities.

Research supports the following City of Vancouver policies -

- Greenest City Action Plan. Specific goal area (s): Green Transportation; Local Food
- Healthy City Strategy. Specific goal area (s): Local Food; Cultivating Connections; Getting Around; Making Ends Meet

Context

In the past, small-scale neighbourhood retail outlets played a much more significant role in local neighbourhoods - providing a place, generally within walking distance, where households could access groceries, household goods, and other services. Post-war era economic and social changes (e.g. increased private automobile ownership, an increase in the number of families with two parents employed, and a growing consolidation of larger-scale shopping areas) contributed to a reduction in the number of small-scale shops, as well as their overall viability.

In recent years, however, there has been renewed interest in these sites, and the potential role that they play in enabling future sustainability, economic, heritage, and community development goals. While overall viability is still a challenge, several stores have demonstrated considerable resilience, renewing and reinventing themselves as small neighbourhood hubs offering goods and services – and, in the process, becoming much-loved anchors in their local neighbourhood (e.g. Marche St. George, Via Tevere Pizza, Cardero Bottega).¹

¹ See, for example, Christopher Cheung. *Vancouver's mom-and-pop stores make a comeback* in [Vancouver Courier](https://www.vancourier.com/news/vancouver-s-mom-and-pop-stores-make-a-comeback-1.13244827). March 28, 2017. Link: <https://www.vancourier.com/news/vancouver-s-mom-and-pop-stores-make-a-comeback-1.13244827>

As noted in various City of Vancouver policies (including Healthy City Strategy, Greenest City, Transportation 2040 and various Community Plans), the creation of compact, walkable and complete neighbourhoods is seen as an important planning objective that will support sustainability goals, strengthen the economy, and improve health and well-being. The availability of local shops and services is a key component of this – and the specific presence of successful small-scale neighbourhood retail suggests that there are lessons that could potentially inform future planning work, including the City-wide Plan, Making Room, and neighbourhood-scale planning initiatives.

Some preliminary research on the requested inventory work has taken place through the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan, and through other City-led initiatives. This will be provided to the Greenest City scholar at the beginning of the project.

Specific Work Program

To support the inventory, the Greenest City scholar will undertake a literature review, conduct field work to inventory and document small-scale retail sites, and potentially conduct interviews to supplement learning about the opportunities and challenges associated with these sites. These primary data will then be the source of further analysis and reporting by the scholar.

This work is particularly important because the City lacks a comprehensive inventory and related analysis of the remaining and/or former retail sites. We know where some exist, but not all. This work will fill an important gap and contribute to a larger work program that seeks to create new planning policy around neighbourhood retail opportunities.

Key Research Questions

The following are research questions guiding this project:

- How many small-scale neighbourhood retail shops remain existing in Vancouver? Where are they located? What are their key attributes, as well as similarities and dissimilarities?
- What are the factors that contribute to the success of small-scale neighbourhood retail outlets? What challenges do they face?
- Are there potential policy interventions that the City could investigate to support existing – or potentially new – small scale neighbourhood retail businesses?

Scope of Work

- Inventory, photo-document and map existing and former small-scale neighbourhood retail sites (i.e. “mom & pop shops”) in Vancouver’s 22 local areas. Work may involve additional research at the City archives.
- Develop a typology of small-scale retail in Vancouver based on key variables (to be determined in collaboration with City staff).
- Undertake a literature review to contextualize the changing economic and social role of small-scale role; and the potential role of these facilities vis-à-vis City goals related to walkable, compact, complete communities.
- Undertake additional research (literature review, interviews, etc.) to determine factors associated with the viability, resilience and longevity of existing businesses.

Deliverables

There will be two key deliverables associated with this project:

- An inventory, photo-documentation and map illustrating the results of field-work/inventorying exercise. Possible interviews and supplemental research, as time allows.
- A report outlining details related to the inventory, the typology of retail spaces, the historic and present role that they play in Vancouver neighbourhoods, and the various factors associated with success (or failure) of these businesses.

Time Commitment

- This project will take **250*** hours to complete.
- This project must be completed between **May 1, 2019 to July 31, 2019**.
- The scholar is to complete approximately **20 hours per week**. There is some flexibility around the specific days of the week, as well as the allocation of the 250 hours - so a final work schedule will be determined in collaboration with City staff.
- If applicable, list dates of any mandatory meetings, etc. ***The project will involve a weekly progress meeting with City staff.***

Skill set/background required/preferred

- Excellent research and writing skills.
- Demonstrated interest in <<insert subject area>>.
- Familiarity with research methodologies and survey techniques
- Ability to work independently
- Demonstrated time management skills
- Deadline oriented
- Project management and organizational skills
- GIS training or experience.
- Familiarity with qualitative research methodologies and implementation
- Familiarity with quantitative research methodologies and implementation
- Comfortable interacting with strangers to conduct public/in person surveys
- Other: Ability to use a digital camera (City to provide)

Applications close **midnight Monday February 25**.

Apply here:

<https://sustain.ubc.ca/student-opportunities>

To learn more about the program here:

<https://sustain.ubc.ca/ubc-sustainability-scholars-program>

Read the application guidelines to confirm your eligibility to participate in the program here:

<https://sustain.ubc.ca/student-opportunities>

Contact Karen Taylor at sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca if you have questions.