

# Vancouver needs more density says urban theorist Richard Florida


**Vancouver is growing more divided as blue collar workers are priced out of the urban core, says author**

By Tricia Lo, [CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 22, 2014 6:32 AM PT

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Richard Florida is a world renowned urban theorist know for his book "The Rise of the Creative Class" (Jaime Hogge)

 **The Early Edition**  
Richard Florida on Vancouver

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Opponents of density are the Luddites of the 21st Century city, says urban theorist Richard Florida, author of the best-selling book *The Rise of the Creative Class*.

In 19th Century England, these textile workers smashed labour-saving machines to try and save their jobs.

"We've got to get over this nimby mentality, 'Not in my backyard. We can't build here.' ... We've got to engage in real city-building," Florida told Rick Cluff on CBC Radio's [The Early Edition](#).

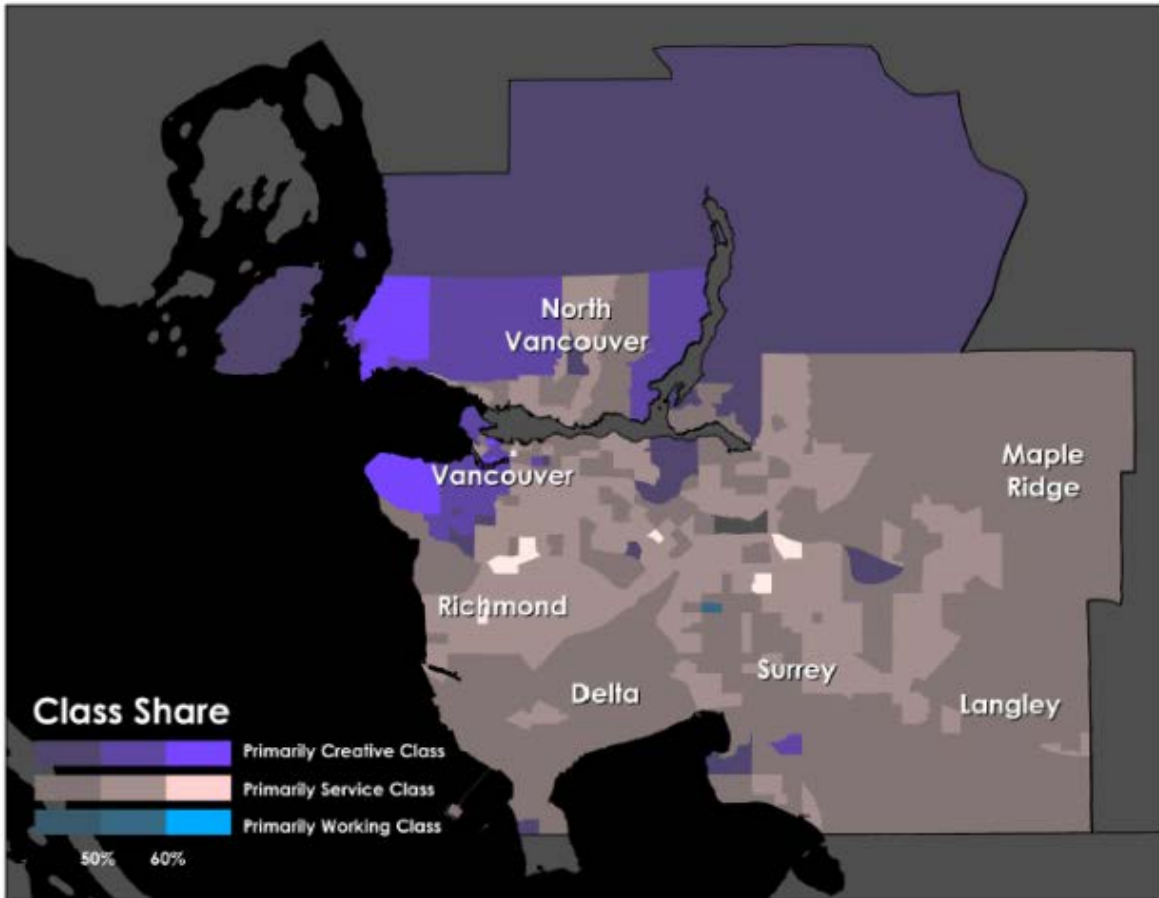
He says Vancouver needs more housing to stop the growing divide between those who have, and those who have not.

### **The good and bad of being a desirable city**

"Any sentient people know that Vancouver is one of the most attractive places to live on the face of the earth," Florida says.

"The good news is that Vancouver is thriving. It has the economic fundamentals."

Florida praises Vancouver's [vibrant creative class](#), which includes scientists, technologists, entrepreneurs, innovators, artists, and business professionals. These knowledge-based workers represent more than one-third of the city's workforce.



[In Vancouver, the creative class is clustered in and around the urban core and the waterfront and also forms a huge wedge to the west and the north around natural amenities like parks and mountains. The class divide in the city is west-east, with the service class pushed toward the east and south. There is just one primarily working class tract in the entire metro. \(Martin Prosperity Institute\)](#)

But our desirability also makes the city an extraordinarily expensive place to live.

"The bad news is...like most advanced countries, [Vancouver is] also becoming more divided," he says.

Those with higher levels of education and better paying jobs are clustering in the city core. At the same time, blue collar workers are being priced out of the city's key areas.

Service and resource industries employ roughly 45 per cent of Vancouver's workforce, he says. Those are the people being squeezed out of the metro area, into the south and east of the Lower Mainland.

## **Bridging the gap**

"The real challenge is, how do we take our wealth, take our innovation, take our knowledge, and make sure that everyone has a fair and inclusive shot at the future?"

Besides density, Florida offers two other answers.

First, people at the bottom need to have a living wage.

"That means higher minimum wage laws...perhaps as high as almost 20 bucks an hour in our big, expensive cities."

Studies show that when workers in low-paid service jobs are engaged in their work, they are better with customers, lead to innovations on the retail shop floor, and drive profits up, he says.

Secondly, Florida calls for better public transportation.

"We need a massive investment in this country in transit to connect our outlying areas, to increase density out in the 'burbs, and make sure people don't have to drive cars to work."

*Florida is the director of the [Martin Prosperity Institute](#) at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. He speaks Wednesday evening alongside inventor and author Ray Kurzweil at Simon Fraser University's [Will Innovation Save Us?](#) event. CBC's Amanda Lang will moderate the event, which begins at 7 p.m at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.*