



REPORT TO COUNCIL

To: **Mayor and Councillors**

Subject: **Metro Vancouver 2050 – Draft Regional Growth Strategy**

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From: Roy M. Beddow, RPP, MCIP
Deputy Director of Development Services

Date: November 29, 2021

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council:

1. Approve the draft letter to Metro Vancouver (Attachment 1) setting out the City's comments on *Metro Vancouver 2050*, the draft Regional Growth Strategy; and
2. Direct staff to send the City's comments to Metro Vancouver.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to review *Metro Vancouver 2050* and to present comments for Council's consideration to provide feedback to Metro Vancouver.

POLICY:

In accordance with Part 13 of the *Local Government Act*, a Regional District "...may adopt a regional growth strategy for the purpose of guiding decisions on growth, change and development..." (Section 429(1)). In developing a regional growth strategy, regional districts must consult with affected local governments (Section 434(1)(b)) whose acceptance is required (Section 436) before the regional growth strategy may be adopted by the regional district's board.

Once a new regional growth strategy is adopted, the affected local governments must prepare "Regional Context Statements" and submit them to the regional board for approval within two years. A Regional Context Statement explains the relationship

between a municipality's Official Community Plan and the Regional Growth Strategy and, if applicable, how the former is to be made consistent with the latter over time.

COMMENTS/ANALYSIS:

1. Background

Metro Vancouver Regional District began a process to update its Regional Growth Strategy, *Metro Vancouver 2040*, in 2019. The process included policy reviews of the major strategies in the existing growth strategy and an exhaustive public engagement campaign modified mid-stream to accommodate the COVID-19 public health restrictions. The draft new regional growth strategy was presented to the Metro Vancouver Planning Committee on June 9, 2021 and referred to member municipalities for comment in July 2021.

Metro Vancouver 2050 is intended as an update to *Metro Vancouver 2040* rather than a "clean sheet" rewrite. The two main goals of the update were to extend the planning horizon to 2050, incorporating the latest growth projections and to fully synchronize the regional growth strategy with the new *Transport 2050* regional transportation strategy simultaneously under development by TransLink.

2. Draft Regional Growth Strategy - Highlighted Changes

The *Metro Vancouver 2050* draft carries forward the framework of five goals from *Metro Vancouver 2040* but renames Goals 3 and 4 for greater emphasis on natural hazards and housing affordability, respectively:

Goal 1: Create a Compact Urban Area

Goal 2: Support a Sustainable Economy

Goal 3: Protect the Environment and Respond to Climate Change and Natural Hazards

Goal 4: Provide Diverse and Affordable Housing Choices

Goal 5: Support Sustainable Transportation Choices

There are a number of changes throughout the draft in response to current issues and concerns including indigenous relations, social equity, housing affordability, climate change and natural hazards. Growth projections for the region, developed in consultation with member municipalities and intended for shared use in *Transport 2050*, have also been updated to 2050.

The following is a list of noteworthy changes for municipalities within each Goal area.

a) Goal 1: Create a Compact Urban Area (pages 24-39)

- 1.2.24 b): Revised actions required of member jurisdictions in response to new urban centre categories and transit development area types
- 1.2.24 b) ix) added: “support the provision of community services and spaces for non-profit organizations”
- 1.2.24 c) iv) added: “encourage neighbourhood-serving community uses”
- Tables 3 & 4 revised: “High Growth Municipal Town Centre”, “Corridor Frequent Transit Development Area”, “Station Frequent Transit Development Area” added as new categories
- Strategy 1.3 Develop resilient, healthy, connected, and complete communities... added (was previously part of Goal 4 in Metro 2040)

b) Goal 2: Support a Sustainable Economy (pages 40-51)

- 2.2.9 a) Mixed Employment lands (*Metro 2040*) renamed “Employment” Lands
- 2.2.9 b) “Trade-Oriented” lands added as new land use overlay in Industrial areas focused on port activities, transportation, logistics and storage
- 2.2.9 d) added for Employment lands: “...consider limited residential uses...on lands within 200 metres of a rapid transit station, and located within Urban Centres or Frequent Transit Development Areas, where appropriate”.

c) Goal 3: Protect the Environment and Respond to Climate Change and Natural Hazards (pages 52-67)

- 3.2.1 added to introduce new regional targets:
 - a) “increase the area of lands protected for nature from 40% to 50% of the region’s land base by 2050; and
 - b) increase the total tree canopy cover within the Urban Containment Boundary from 32% to 40% by the year 2050.”
- 3.2.7 a) requires member jurisdictions “identify local ecosystem protection and tree canopy cover targets, and demonstrate how these targets will contribute to the regional targets in Action 3.2.1;”
- 3.2.7 c) ii) added requiring member jurisdictions to “include policies that...enable the retention and expansion of urban forests....”
- 3.3.1 includes revised GHG reduction targets for the region: 45% below 2010 levels by 2030 and carbon-neutral by 2050
- 3.3.7 a) requires municipalities to “identify how local land use and transportation policies will contribute to meeting...” the regional GHG targets in Action 3.3.1

- 3.4.7 added requiring that member jurisdictions “include policies that...integrate emergency management, utility planning, and climate change adaptation principles when preparing land use plans, transportation plans, and growth management policies”

**d) Goal 4: Provide Diverse and Affordable Housing Choices
(pages 68-75)**

- Single housing strategy (4.1) in *Metro Vancouver 2040* is expanded to three strategies in *Metro 2050*:
- *Strategy 4.1 Expand the supply and diversity of housing to meet a variety of needs*
- More detailed requirements for municipalities to address in their Regional Context Statements include “identifying policies and actions that contribute to the following outcomes...
 - 4.1.8.c) v) integration of land use and transportation planning such that households can reduce their combined housing and transportation costs
 - 4.1.8.c) vi) increased social connectedness in multi-unit housing;
 - 4.1.8.c) vii) Integrated housing within neighbourhood contexts and high quality urban design; and
 - 4.1.8.c) viii) existing and future housing stock that is low carbon and resilient to climate change impacts and natural assets”
- *Strategy 4.2 Expand, retain and renew rental housing supply and protect tenants*
- 4.2.3 added to establish a “regional target of 15% affordable rental housing development within Urban Centres and Frequent Transit Development Areas....”
- 4.2.7 a) added requiring member jurisdictions to “indicate how they will, within their local context, work towards the regional target of 15% affordable rental housing....” in Action 4.2.3
- *Strategy 4.3 Meet the housing needs of lower income households and populations experiencing or at risk of homelessness*
- 4.3.7 b) added: “Member jurisdictions will...identify policies and actions that partner with other levels of government and non-profit organizations to create pathways out of homelessness...;”
- 4.3.8 b) added: “Member jurisdictions will...identify strategies and actions to increase community acceptance and communicate the benefits of affordable and supportive housing development;”

**e) Goal 5: Support Sustainable Transportation Choices
(pages 76-84)**

- 5.1.6 added: “Collaborate with member jurisdictions and TransLink to develop a regional parking strategy that...a) provides guidance to inform municipal parking requirements;”
- 5.1.14 d) added: “Member jurisdictions will...identify land use and transportation policies and actions that support the transition to zero-emission vehicles;”
- 5.2.6 e) added “Member jurisdictions will...identify policies and actions to mitigate public exposure to unhealthy levels of noise, vibration, and air pollution associated with the Major Road Network, Major Transit Network, railways, truck routes, and Federal/Provincial Highways;”
- 5.2.6 f) added “Member jurisdictions will...identify policies and actions that anticipate the land and infrastructure requirements for goods movement and drayage, such as truck parking, zero-emission vehicle charging infrastructure, and e-commerce distribution centres, and mitigate any negative impacts of these uses on neighbourhoods.”

3. Discussion

Since the enactment of the growth strategies legislation in 1995, each successive Metro Vancouver RGS from *the Livable Region Strategic Plan* (1996) to *Metro Vancouver 2040* (2011) to the current draft RGS, *Metro Vancouver 2050*, has, in effect, expanded the definition of “regional interest” by adding increasingly detailed and prescriptive expectations of member municipalities. For example, *Metro Vancouver 2050* identifies some 133 actions or sub actions for member jurisdictions as compared to 91 in *Metro Vancouver 2040*. This is perhaps an inevitable outcome as the region continues to grow and the interactions between its jurisdictions require ever greater coordination at the regional government level. Nevertheless, each new regional growth strategy imposes new requirements on member municipalities that may necessitate new work programs or reduce local autonomy over planning and development decisions.

To ensure that regional growth strategies reflect municipal as well as regional interests, the legislation requires “cross-acceptance” whereby member municipalities must accept regional growth strategies (by council resolution) before the regional board can adopt an RGS. Similarly, the regional board must accept a municipality’s Regional Context Statement before the municipal council can adopt an Official Community Plan.

Throughout the regional growth strategies era, the City of Langley has had a positive and cooperative relationship with Metro Vancouver Regional District. As a compact and efficient urban area with a major commercial centre and a complete range of land

uses, the City and its plans have generally fit very well within the structure of regional planning. A recent example of this general alignment was provided by Metro Vancouver’s review and acceptance of the City’s proposed new Regional Context Statement within Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 3200. Staff believe that the City’s new OCP will also complement the new goals and policies contained within *Metro Vancouver 2050*. Indeed, many aspects of the new RGS from its growth projections and GHG reduction targets to its various measures aimed at linking land use and transportation planning were anticipated and incorporated within the new OCP.

4. Comments & Concerns

Although City staff have some concerns (noted above) with the apparent expansion of the “regional interest” and its impact on municipal planning resources and autonomy, *Metro Vancouver 2050* supports many of the same planning goals as the City’s new OCP and thus presents relatively few material concerns. The table below outlines in point form the comments and concerns discussed at the Council Working Session on November 22, 2021. These points form the basis of the draft letter to Metro Vancouver attached for consideration as official feedback on the draft RGS.

Reference	Comment/Concern
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Metro Vancouver 2050</i> is overly detailed and prescriptive for a regional plan • Identifies 133 actions/sub actions for municipalities (versus 91 in <i>Metro Vancouver 2040</i>) • Will affect municipal work plans and resources • Further expands the “regional interest” into areas of municipal planning • Reduces local planning autonomy
Table 3 Urban Centres & FTDA’s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds more categories to urban centres and Frequent Transit Development Areas • Creates unnecessary complexity for a regional plan • Each new tier reduces clarity and weakens the City’s preferred emphasis on Regional City Centres
2.2.9 d) vi) Employment Land Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing residential uses in Employment lands (within 200 m of rapid transit station) not consistent with City’s new OCP • May increase speculation and inflate Employment land values • Encourages OCP amendment proposals • Preferred approach is to adjust the land use designation mapping where appropriate rather than weaken the Employment land policies

<p>3.2.7 a) Ecosystem Protection & Tree Canopy Targets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land base protected for nature – increase from 40-50% • Tree canopy cover – increase from 32% to 40% within UCB • Aspirational goals for region • May not be realistic or achievable when accommodating one million additional residents in the region • City of Langley is fully developed and has very limited capacity to add lands for conservation • Redevelopment at higher densities and lot coverages typically reduces existing tree canopy area • Concerted tree planting program required to ‘add back’ and ultimately enhance the tree canopy • Urban Forest Strategy required to determine achievable tree canopy cover target for the City
<p>4.2.7 a) Affordable Rental Housing Target</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% affordable rental housing development target (based on median household income) • Market component of affordable rental units difficult to measure and monitor • Does not reflect existing local context • City had highest proportion of tenant households in the region living in subsidized housing according to 2016 Census • Affordable Housing Strategy update required to determine appropriate City contribution to regional target
<p>Map 2 Regional Land Use Designations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires amendment to reflect revised Mixed Employment/General Urban areas in new OCP Bylaw No. 3200

5. Adoption Procedure and Schedule

Upon receipt of comments from municipalities, neighbouring regional districts and TransLink, Metro Vancouver is proposing to adopt the new regional growth strategy in step with the following timeline:

- December 2021 - Compile comments and finalize RGS into bylaw form
- January 2022 - Introduce RGS bylaw and consider for 1st & 2nd readings
- February 2022 - Hold public hearing and consider RGS bylaw for 3rd reading
- Mar–May 2022 - Refer RGS bylaw to municipalities, regional districts and TransLink for acceptance
- June 2022 - Consider RGS bylaw for adoption

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

Metro Vancouver 2050 identifies a number of municipal actions that could require the City to undertake additional planning work and studies. The additional work will need to be incorporated into departmental plans and budgets.

SUMMARY:

Metro Vancouver 2050 builds upon the goals and strategies of the existing RGS and presents a strong vision for the management of growth in the region. The draft RGS shares and supports many of the same goals as the City's new Official Community Plan. While staff have concerns with a few specific provisions in *Metro Vancouver 2050* and the increasingly prescriptive tone of regional growth strategies in general, it is recommended that the draft RGS be supported and the proposed City comments contained in Attachment 1 be approved and sent to Metro Vancouver.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Provide revised comments to Metro Vancouver on the draft regional growth strategy.
2. Do not provide any comments to Metro Vancouver on the draft regional growth strategy.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Deputy Director of Development Services

Concurrence:



Carl Johannsen, RPP, MCIP
Director of Development Services

Attachment(s):

1. Draft City of Langley Letter to Metro Vancouver
2. Metro Vancouver July 14, 2021 Referral Letter
3. *Metro Vancouver 2050* – Draft Regional Growth Strategy

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S COMMENTS:

I support the recommendation.



Francis Cheung, P. Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer