



REPORT TO COUNCIL

To: **Mayor and Councillors**

Subject: Metro 2050 – Regional Growth Strategy
Acceptance

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

Date: June 6, 2022

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy, titled *Metro 2050* (“Metro Vancouver Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1339, 2022”), be received for information;
2. THAT the proposed *Metro 2050* Regional Growth Strategy (“Metro Vancouver Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1339, 2022”) be accepted, as presented, pursuant to section 436 of the *Local Government Act*, and
3. THAT staff be directed to forward the Council resolution of acceptance of *Metro 2050* Regional Growth Strategy (“Metro Vancouver Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1339, 2022”) to Metro Vancouver Regional District.

PURPOSE:

To consider *Metro 2050*, a new regional growth strategy for Metro Vancouver, for acceptance.

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. Upon receipt of a regional

growth strategy (RGS) formally referred by a regional district board before third reading of the bylaw, affected local governments must either accept or refuse to accept the RGS by Council resolution within 60 days. In the latter case, the resolution must identify the provisions to which the local government objects and the reasons for its objection.

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. A draft new regional growth strategy was presented to the Metro Vancouver Planning Committee on June 9, 2021 and referred to member municipalities for comment on July 14, 2021. Langley City Council reviewed the draft RGS at a Working Session on November 22, 2021 and resolved at the Regular Meeting on November 29, 2021 to send a letter with the City’s comments to Metro Vancouver (see Attachment 4).

Metro Vancouver received thousands of submissions from member local governments, adjacent regional districts, First Nations, government agencies, non-governmental organizations and the general public on the draft RGS. The submissions were compiled in a 561-page comment-response table that was presented to Metro Vancouver Board on January 14, 2022. The comment-response table provided the basis for revisions to *Metro 2050* that were subsequently incorporated into “Metro Vancouver Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1339, 2022”. Bylaw No. 1339 was formally introduced at the Metro Vancouver Board meeting on March 25, 2022 and received first and second readings. The bylaw was considered at a public hearing on April 20, 2022 and referred to local governments to consider for acceptance in accordance with the *Local Government Act* on May 3, 2022 (Attachment 1). Under the growth strategies legislation, the City must respond to the referral on or before June 30, 2022.

2. New Regional Growth Strategy - Highlighted Changes

Metro 2050 (Attachment 2) 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.

Metro 2050 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, Address Climate Change, and Respond to Natural Hazards

Goal 4: Provide Diverse and Affordable Housing Choices

Goal 5: Support Sustainable Transportation Choices

There are a number of changes throughout the proposed new RGS 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 26-41)

- 1.2.24 b): Revised actions required of member jurisdictions in response to new urban centre category
- 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” added as new category
- Strategy 1.3 added: “Develop resilient, healthy, connected, and complete communities with a range of services and amenities” (was previously part of Goal 4 in Metro 2040)

b) Goal 2: Support a Sustainable Economy (pages 42-51)

- 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) v) added for Employment lands: “...do not permit residential uses except for:...limited residential uses (with an emphasis on affordable, rental units) on lands within 200 metres of a rapid transit station and located within Urban Centres or Frequent Transit Development Areas, provided that the residential uses are located only on the upper floors of buildings with commercial and light industrial uses, where appropriate and subject to the consideration of municipal objectives and local context”.

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 Protect tenants and expand, retain and renew rental housing supply*
- 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, contribute toward the regional target of having at least 15% of newly completed housing units built within Urban Centres and Frequent Transit Development Areas combined, to the year 2050, be affordable rental housing units....”
- *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...adopt Regional Context Statements that support the transition to zero-emission vehicles;”
- 5.2.6 e) added 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 proposed, *Metro 2050*, has, in effect, expanded the definition of “regional interest” by adding increasingly detailed and prescriptive expectations of member municipalities. For example, *Metro 2050* identifies some 132 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 new Regional Context Statement within Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 3200 on November 20, 2021. Staff believe that the City’s new OCP will also complement the new goals and policies contained within *Metro 2050*. Furthermore, 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 City’s new OCP.

4. Draft Metro 2050 Comments and Metro Vancouver Response

The City’s letter of December 7, 2021 (Attachment 4) to Metro Vancouver identified six areas of concern with the *Draft Metro 2050*. Metro Vancouver staff responded to the City’s comments in its Issue-Response Table (excerpts in Attachment 5) as follows:

Sec.	City of Langley Comment/Request	Metro Vancouver Response	MV Recommended Edit
General	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 the City generally endorses the draft new RGS, it is concerned with the increasingly detailed and prescriptive expectations of member municipalities. Each successive Metro Vancouver RGS from the Livable Region Strategic Plan (1996) to Metro Vancouver 2040 (2011) and the current draft RGS, Metro Vancouver 2050, has imposed greater requirements on members, in many cases necessitating new work programs or reducing local autonomy over planning and development decisions.	In accordance with Local Government Act 429 (3), Metro 2050 covers planning topics that have been identified by member jurisdictions through the Board-approved project scope as "regional matters," and works towards the objectives set out in LGA 428 (2).	No changes required.
Table 3	Table 3 adds new urban centre and Frequent Transit Development Area categories to the RGS. In the City's view, the proposed framework of centres and overlays is unnecessarily complex for a regional plan. In this light, each new category reduces clarity and weakens the City's preferred emphasis on Regional City Centres which have provided the foundation for regional planning policy in Greater Vancouver since the 1970's.	Support removal of the new FTDA subtypes from Metro 2050. Instead of the proposed "Corridor FTDA's" and "Station Area FTDA's" there will simply be "FTDA's", which is the Metro 2040 status quo.	Remove all references to Corridor FTDA's and Station Area FTDA's.
2.2.9 d) vi)	Metro 2050 includes a new exemption to allow residential development on Employment lands in urban centres located within 200 metres of a rapid transit station. This exemption is at odds with the City's land use policies in its recently adopted Official Community Plan (OCP) which permit only caretaker's dwellings in Mixed Employment areas (RGS Employment lands). The City believes that the proposed exemption may increase speculation, inflate Employment land values and encourage OCP amendment applications. The City's preferred approach would be to adjust the land use designation mapping where appropriate rather than weaken the Employment land policies with	This new provision can be used in select cases that meet the defined criteria. This is an optional tool available for use by the member jurisdiction should they wish to exercise it to advance local planning objectives. The text has been refined for clarity and consistency.	Replace policy text with: d) include policies for Employment lands that... v) do not permit residential uses, except for: • an accessory caretaker unit; or • limited residential uses (with an emphasis on affordable, rental units) on lands within 200 metres of a rapid transit station and located within Urban Centres or Frequent Transit Development Areas, provided that the residential uses are located only on the upper

	exemptions.		floors of buildings with commercial and light industrial uses on the ground floor, where appropriate and subject to the consideration of municipal objectives and local context."
3.2.7 a)	The new ecosystem protection and tree canopy targets identified in the draft RGS are attractive, aspirational goals for the region. While the City applauds the goals, it would caution that the specific targets may not be realistic or achievable in a region projected to grow by one million inhabitants. In the City's case, as a fully urbanized and developed municipality, there is very limited capacity to add to the protected land base. At the same time, continuing redevelopment at higher densities and lot coverages will require a concerted tree planting program to replace and ultimately enhance the tree canopy. An Urban Forest Strategy is required in order to determine an achievable tree canopy targets for the City.	The tree canopy cover target is an aspirational regional target (i.e. average) within the Urban Containment Boundary, and the intent is that all member jurisdictions will aim to increase canopy cover in urban areas where people live, to reduce climate change-related heat extremes and heat-related health impacts, attenuate noise, and provide many other critical ecosystem services. To increase tree canopy cover, member jurisdictions are encouraged to set local targets, develop an urban forest management plan, plant climate-resilient tree species on public land, and provide support for residents to do so on private lands.	No changes required.
4.2.7 a)	The City supports the goal of achieving a 15% affordable rental housing component within new development or redevelopments in the region. However, while non-market affordable housing units can be measured, monitored and secured through housing agreements, the affordable rental units offered through the housing market are not easily identified and can only be measured reliably at five-year intervals with Census data. In addition, the regional target makes no allowance for existing conditions at the local level. In 2016 for example, the City of Langley	The aspirational regional target for affordable rental housing will track newly completed purpose-built rental units near transit. It is recognized that each member jurisdiction has different markets, and will have different capacities, opportunities and challenges to working towards this regional	No changes required.

	had the second lowest shelter cost for rented dwellings and the highest proportion of tenant households in subsidized housing in the region. An update to the City's Affordable Housing Strategy will be required in order to determine an appropriate contribution to the regional target.	target.	
Map 2	The regional land use designations shown in Map 2 should be revised to reflect the City's recently adopted Official Community Plan and Regional Context Statement (see attached Regional Land Use Designations Map from OCP Bylaw No. 3200).	The regional land use changes contained in the City of Langley's recently accepted Regional Context Statement will be reflected on the updated Metro 2050 land use maps.	No changes required.

While the responses did not address all of the City's concerns, the recommended edits and the noted mapping update listed above (see Attachment 3) were subsequently included in the final bylaw version of *Metro 2050*. In addition, with respect to the City's comments on Policy 4.2.7 a), it should be noted that, although Metro Vancouver's response above was "no changes required", the wording around the regional affordable housing target was, in fact, modified to improve clarity in the bylaw version of *Metro 2050* as described in bullet # iii. under report section 5. below.

5. Revisions to Metro 2050

Staff applaud Metro Vancouver for reviewing and responding to each of the thousands of comments received on the Draft RGS. Reflecting the comments and concerns with the Draft RGS, Metro Vancouver prepared a revised version of the RGS for formal consideration by the Board and introduced it as "Metro Vancouver Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1339, 2022" at the March 25, 2022 Board meeting. The revised RGS includes a number of minor wording changes to improve clarity and the following substantive revisions intended to address the concerns of member jurisdictions and others:

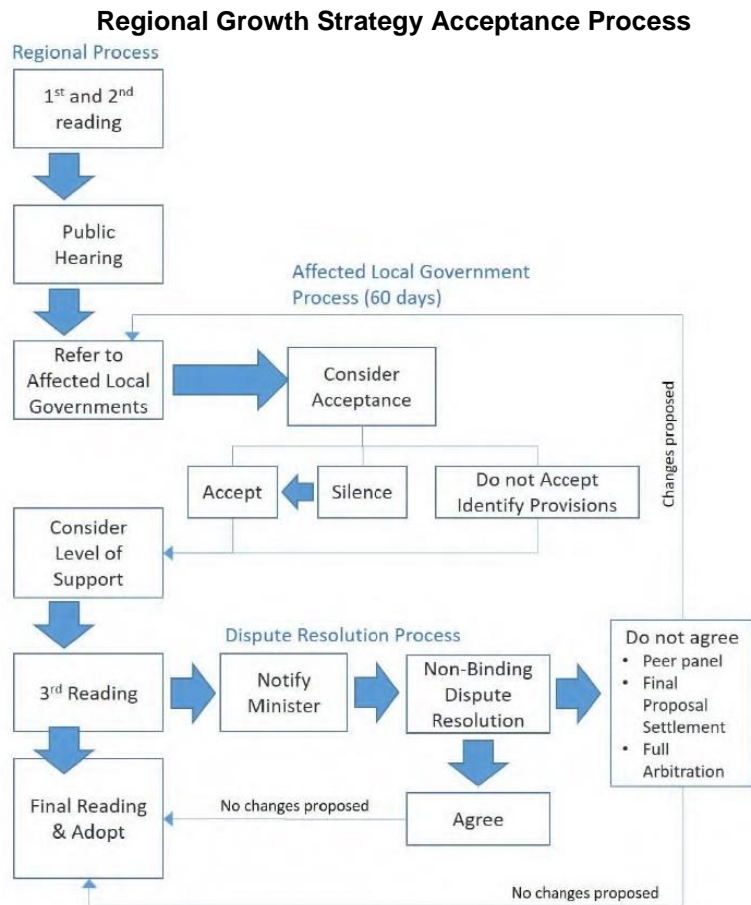
- i. Removal of Frequent Transit Development Area subtypes – "Corridor FTDA's" and "Station Area FTDA's" removed in response to several comments received that these categories added needless complexity (Strategy 1.2, Table 3)
- ii. Additional content related to Indigenous perspectives and priorities – responding to comments from First Nations and other organizations (throughout RGS)
- iii. Refinement of the regional affordable housing target – to clarify that the target will be measured on a regional scale and not applied to individual municipalities or centres (Strategy 4.2)

- iv. Refinement of policy allowing limited residential uses on Employment lands – wording revised to clarify that this only an option for Employment lands adjacent to rapid transit stations and not a requirement (Strategy 2.2)

Staff believe that the many revisions to *Metro 2050* from the draft circulated in July 2021 are improvements to the plan and generally represent a reasonable compromise on regional versus local interests. Staff are satisfied with Metro Vancouver’s responses to the City’s initial comments and concerns.

6. Adoption Procedure

Upon receipt of responses from affected local governments, Metro Vancouver will consider the level of support for *Metro 2050* at the July 29, 2022 Board meeting and determine whether the bylaw may be considered for third reading and adoption on that date. Sections 439 to 442 of the *Local Government Act* set out the procedures for resolution of local government refusals to accept the RGS. Under the *Act*, the Minister may require a non-binding dispute resolution process or settlement through a peer panel or other arbitration process (see flowchart below).



BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

Metro 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, and considered by Council through annual Financial Plan processes.

SUMMARY:

Metro 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 proposed new RGS shares and supports many of the same goals as the City's recently adopted Official Community Plan. While staff have some concerns with the expectations imposed on member municipalities and the increasingly prescriptive tone of regional growth strategies in general, it is recommended that *Metro 2050* be accepted.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. THAT Council refuse to accept *Metro 2050* Regional Growth Strategy ("Metro Vancouver Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1339, 2022") and that Council identify the provisions it objects to and reasons therefore pursuant to Section 436 of the *Local Government Act*.

Respectfully Submitted,



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

Concurrence:



Carl Johannsen, RPP, MCIP
Director of Development Services

Attachment(s):

1. Metro Vancouver referral letter to City of Langley;
2. Metro 2050 – “Metro Vancouver Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1339, 2022”;
3. Regional Land Use Designation Map – City of Langley Closeup
4. City of Langley letter to Metro Vancouver re: Draft Metro 2050;
5. Issue-Response Table Excerpts re: Draft Metro 2050.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER’S COMMENTS:

I support the recommendation.



Francis Cheung, P. Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer