

Ms. Serena Trachta	Senior Manager, Climate Action, Planning, and Development
Ms. Harji Varn	Chief Financial Officer and Director of Finance
Mx. Katie Stobbart	Committee Clerk

*Denotes virtual attendance.

1. **CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Mayor Johnstone opened the meeting at 1:02 p.m. and recognized with respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. He acknowledged that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. He recognized that, as a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

2. **PRESENTATIONS**

2.1 **Presentation, David Bell and Justin Barer, Urban Systems (Deferred from February 13, 2023)**

Blair Fryer, Senior Manager, Economic Development and Communications, introduced David Bell and Justin Barer, Urban Systems, who provided a presentation titled “New Westminster Retail Strategy.”

In response to questions from Council, Messrs. Bell, Barer, Fryer, and Carolyn Armanini, Senior Planner, Economic Development, advised:

- The COVID-19 pandemic was a catalyst for existing trends (e.g. retail becoming a blend of online and brick-and-mortar, movement away from the classic power mall to more walkable spaces);
- Prioritize the Downtown, as New West’s “living room” and working centre, then follow with other retail areas;
- Engagement included door-to-door visits to businesses, distribution of postcards with survey links, phone calls to significant commercial property owners, and Be Heard. Staff engaged business owners or senior staff whenever possible;
- Lease rates have risen dramatically across many Metro Vancouver markets over the last five years;
- Caution against using per capita rates (i.e. residential to commercial ratio) in favour of examining the balance between demand and supply conditions;

- Safety is taken into account when identifying challenges and success factors for retail businesses, and is addressed in other strategies (e.g. the Downtown Livability Strategy);
- There is an opportunity to revisit retail design guidelines, which has a big impact on experiential retail;
- As New West is a compact city, there is a need to avoid overdoing commercial retail within neighbourhoods given proximity to commercial streets;
- The City's role is not curation but to be aware of the types of innovative businesses and look to staff to remove barriers to accommodate these businesses; and,
- An anchor for the east end of Downtown need not be a retail anchor. Artist collectives are notoriously unable to pay market rents but are important to an area's identity and vitality.

Council had the following comments arising from discussion:

- The Queensborough Transportation Plan engagement process is underway and should link to the Retail Strategy;
- Dark stores and dark kitchens tend not to bring liveliness to the streetscape and compete with local restaurants;
- It is worth looking at underused outdoor mall spaces in New West, as they occupy large spaces;
- Emphasized the importance of design and ensuring new retail fits with the character of the location;
- The overall retail environment should be improved without detriment to local multicultural businesses' ability to thrive;
- In the next phase, provide more tactical ideas about how to implement these strategies;
- Acknowledged that the presence of police and security does not always create feelings of comfort and safety for everyone; and
- There is an interest in exploring how to make it more affordable for arts, culture, and entertainment uses.

2.2 Report: Retail Strategy - Phase 2 Workshop (Deferred from February 13, 2023)

The purpose of this report was to provide Council with an update of the Retail Strategy work to date and elicit feedback for the development of the draft Phase 2 report.

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT Council direct staff to incorporate the following comments and feedback from the March 6, 2023 workshop discussion on the Retail Strategy – Phase 2 Workshop report and proceed with next steps as outlined in this report:

- Provide tactical advice for carrying out the strategy;
- Seek to improve the overall retail environment without limiting opportunities for multicultural businesses to thrive;
- Emphasize the importance of retail design in enhancing the character and liveliness of the area as well as utility for retailers; and,
- Identify opportunities to maximize the use of underused outdoor mall spaces.

Carried.

All members present voted in favour of the motion.

3. END OF THE MEETING

The meeting ended at 2:21 p.m.

Patrick Johnstone

MAYOR

Lisa Spitale

Acting Corporate Officer