

Attachment 3
Draft Written Comments

Attachment #3: Draft Written Comments

November __, 2021

Chair Sav Dhaliwal
Metro Vancouver Regional District
Metrotower III, 4515 Central Boulevard
Burnaby, BC, V5H 0C6

Dear Chair Dhaliwal and the Metro Vancouver Regional District Board,

The City of New Westminster Council received the referral of the draft update to the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), Metro 2050, on July 22, 2021.

The City strongly supports the directions taken in this updated strategy to bring the key issues of our region into sharper focus and provide coordinated policy responses. Climate and resiliency, reconciliation, equity, and housing affordability are all issues that member jurisdictions are grappling with as key determinants of livability, health and wellbeing today and into the future. Integrating these issues more deeply into the regional plan, and including regional targets that are measurable, will help ensure we collectively move in the right direction.

We appreciate that following the adoption of an updated RGS, Metro Vancouver's regional planning function will continue to undertake research into how we can make further progress in achieving collective regional goals. The reflection, action and relationship-building that is needed to advance climate, reconciliation and equity extend beyond plan adoption.

New Westminster supports the added attention the updated plan gives to housing affordability and diversity, and is supportive of the concept of a region-wide aspirational target for affordable rental housing. The City encourages Metro Vancouver to consider refining the regional affordable housing target to better address and support the development of affordable housing in a wide range of contexts, including, for example, in shoulder areas and neighbourhoods with access to transit, services and amenities. The City also supports more focus on finding ways to better achieve affordable housing goals, such as building regional services to support implementation of inclusionary housing policies, build community acceptance of affordable housing proposals, and provide continued regional analysis and innovation around funding transit-oriented affordable housing.

The City supports the draft updated RGS's support for transit-oriented development and for the creation of complete communities. The calls to focus growth in close proximity to frequent transit are consistent with New Westminster's Official Community Plan. The introduction of TransLink's new Major Transit Network into the RGS is a positive step towards integrating transit and land use planning, and these provide a useful growth

organizing framework. The City supports regional targets for accommodating growth, as well as for focusing growth in transit-oriented locations. However, local land use and transportation network context also inform policy decisions around where to specifically focus growth. Introducing a growth corridor concept, and mapping these corridors, risks signaling support for transit-oriented development to land speculators and the development community, whereas local and regional policies and plans may not support significant densification of these areas. To help address this risk, the City would support removing the map of Major Transit Growth Corridors from the regional plan, and retaining higher level guidance on focusing growth near the Major Transit Network.

Alongside focusing growth in centres and transit-oriented areas, walking and cycling infrastructure improvements are needed to ensure that getting to transit is as easy, safe, convenient and comfortable as possible. New Westminster has the benefit of being served by several rapid transit stations, and our particular challenge is ensuring that all community members have access to this mode of transportation. The City supports including actions around improving “first and last mile” connections in the regional plan.

The City also encourages Metro Vancouver to ensure the actions proposed for member jurisdictions, especially when it comes to supporting sustainable transportation, are as clear and actionable as possible. There are multiple jurisdictions that influence the way we move, and we wish to ensure that the City and region are set up for success by having clear policy that we are able to implement and advance.

New Westminster remains committed to the productive collaboration that happens at regional tables, and is supportive of advancing the strong regional planning framework that the updated RGS provides. Together we can hold each other accountable and build a region that is as resilient, equitable and livable as possible going forward.

Regards,

Mayor Jonathan Côté

cc. New Westminster City Council
Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer
Emilie K. Adin, Director of Climate Action, Planning and Development