

REPORT

To: Economic Development Advisory
Committee

Date: May 25, 2023

From: Economic Development Office

Subject: **Retail Strategy – Draft Phase 2 Report**

Enter Your Recommendation Here

PURPOSE

To provide Economic Development Advisory Committee members with the draft Phase 2 report and gather feedback into the report.

The following questions are posed to help guide the discussion:

1. Do members have any comments on the general recommendations (page vi-ix)?
2. Do members have comments on the proposed responsibilities/timeframes?
3. Do members have any comments on the key planning/policy recommendations by sub area (page xiv-xvi)?

SUMMARY

The intent of the Retail Strategy is to build on the principles, and help implement the goals, of both the Official Community Plan (OCP) and the City's Economic Development Plan, to ensure a healthy retail sector, vital to the well-being of the city and local neighbourhoods it serves. Phase 1 of the project focused on background research and data collection, preparation of a city-wide retail inventory, and gathering community and stakeholder input. Phase 2 focuses on the development of options and recommendations for consideration by Council, City committees and stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

Retail Strategy Goal

The Retail Strategy is intended as a guide for informed decision-making around long-range commercial land use planning, strategic commercial area interventions, and proactive tenant retention and attraction. When complete, the Strategy will support the

OCP's visions for New Westminster's Great Streets, and provide recommendations regarding the optimal mix of uses, as well as the most suitable development forms, for the City's commercial districts.

Phase 1

The first phase of work centered on data collection and analysis, as well as outreach to the business community and New Westminster residents. The following items were included in Phase 1:

- Current conditions review, including buildings, land use patterns, policies and regulatory framework, and commercial rents.
- Analysis of anonymized cell phone mobility data to understand shopping patterns. This also informed trade area delineation.
- Retail inventory for all commercial districts.
- Regional competitive supply review, as input into projection assumptions.
- Survey outreach to the business community and residents.
- Focused engagement through door-to-door and phone-based interviews, aiming to reach businesses operated by seldom heard populations (e.g. newcomers, English language learners, racialized, etc.).
- Municipal scan of best practices, including policy, regulation, incentives, entrepreneurship, and design.
- Area-by-area retail opportunity projections by category and reconciled this against the inventory data.
- Check-ins with City's internal Culture and Economic Development Task Force and external Economic Development Advisory Committee.

The Phase 1 report (*see Attachment 1 for a comprehensive summary*) provides detailed discussion and analysis of both city-wide and area-specific demand (by category), supply (by category), and notable implications for land use and related policy.

DISCUSSION

Phase 2: Key Directions & Recommendations

Building from the research and analysis conducted as part of Phase 1, recommendations have been created in the draft Phase 2 document. Attachment 2 includes the Phase 2 document, with a summary of highlighted key findings and recommendations provided below.

City-wide Recommendations

- Ensure zoning flexibility to allow innovation for new business models
- Continue with OCP direction of 'right-sizing' of commercial space supply to demand
- Limit at-grade uses in core areas of Great Streets to 'active uses'
- Ensure alignment with area-specific retail principles when reviewing redevelopment / rezoning applications

- Support businesses at all stages of their life cycle by establishing a dedicated Business Growth Support Coordinator
- Support for existing businesses/tenants during redevelopment or relocation
- Continue to invest and prioritize the public realm to contribute to an active commercial area experience.
- Ensure transparent frontages of at-grade spaces to enhance the public realm.

Retail Sub-Areas Key Opportunities

Downtown - Serves a dual role as both a local-serving and specialty destination market

- Demand analysis suggests opportunity for increased array of comparison retail and broader array of destination restaurants as well as arts and culture venues and performance spaces

Uptown - Current retail-commercial business mix is healthy and aligned with its role as the city’s primary community-serving commercial corridor

- Opportunity for growth in comparison retail and restaurant food & beverage

Queensborough - Serves a vital role as a comparison goods shopping node

- Area in transition, with clear opportunities to:
 - Become a stronger neighbourhood-oriented retail and service area supporting the local Queensborough population
 - Broaden its mix and become more of a hybrid retail-service centre

Upper 12th Street - Eclectic mix of independent specialty foods, restaurants and lifestyle retailers

- Commercial composition change over time should focus on enhancing its specialty role
- Given competitive pressures facing 12th Street from surrounding commercial areas, there are opportunities for new development without at-grade commercial requirements in select locations that do not break up the flow of street activity

Sapperton - Serves both the local neighbourhood and an expanded RCH

- Primary new retail opportunities will be focused in new mixed-use developments, including Sapperton Green near Braid SkyTrain Station
- Only modest recommended shifts in commercial mix by category

Policy opportunities by sub-area are outlined on pages xiv-xvi of Attachment 2.

NEXT STEPS

Staff and consultants will continue development of a Phase 2 report, integrating input from EDAC. A complete draft will be brought for Council review in early June, before a final round of consultation:

- Draft brought to Council for review (early June)
- Draft to be posted online for public comment
- Final report brought to Council for endorsement in June/July 2023.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Retail Strategy Phase 1 Executive Summary

Attachment 2 – Phase 2 Draft