

REPORT

Climate Action, Planning and Development

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: June 12, 2023

From: Jackie Teed, Acting Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development
File: 13.2525.02

Item #: 2023-396

Subject: 22nd Street Station Area Bold Vision Relaunch

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council direct staff to proceed with the proposed 22nd Street Station Area Bold Vision process as outlined in this report, with a dual focus on First Nations collaboration and building climate resilience.

PURPOSE

To seek Council direction on the relaunch of 22nd Street Station Area visioning.

SUMMARY

The 22nd Street Station area has been identified as an area that could accommodate growth in a compact, transit-oriented form. After declaring a climate emergency in 2019, the City identified the opportunity to plan this area as a climate-friendly or “eco” neighbourhood. Planning was put on hold through the pandemic, with further operational-related delays. In anticipation of relaunching the project in 2023, staff reached out to First Nations to gauge the level of interest in participating in the project. Early expressions of interest from several First Nations communities have created an opportunity to explore closer collaboration with them in this planning process, and embed reconciliation as a fundamental project focus along with climate resilience aspirations. Should Council confirm the project relaunch, a next step would be to engage First Nations further to understand how they wish to participate, to discuss capacity funding, and to seek their feedback on the preliminary project plan of running an ideas challenge and visioning process through 2023 and 2024.

BACKGROUND

The intention of creating a high-density transit-oriented neighbourhood around 22nd Street Station area is included in the Official Community Plan (OCP), which was developed from 2015 to 2017. The OCP identifies this intention by designating the area Comprehensive Development (CD), and identifying the requirement that a Master Plan be created, including public consultation and a number of technical studies. While the OCP includes a map of proposed land use designations for the area, these are conceptual in nature, and were intended to be confirmed through the master planning process. As a final step in the planning process for the area, an OCP amendment is required to replace the CD designation with specific land use designations for each property, only after which may rezoning applications be considered for future development.

Following adoption of the OCP, a master planning process began, which included a preliminary transportation study and analysis on how to finance growth; detailed studies and analysis are still required. Attachment 1 is a backgrounder that was created through the first launch of the master planning process, including a summary of what we heard from the community at that time.

Previous Council Direction

At Council's February 24, 2020 meeting and as an outcome of its 2019 declaration of the climate emergency, Council endorsed pivoting the master planning process to first create a bold vision for a climate friendly neighbourhood at the 22nd Street SkyTrain Station. The bold vision would respond to the climate emergency, and the City's Seven Bold Steps for Climate Action, while also incorporating other Council priorities such as affordable housing, reconciliation, equity, and inclusion (see Attachment 2 for more of a discussion on the bold vision scope).

Originally scheduled to proceed in March 2020, the City postponed the planning process to focus resources on pandemic response and recovery efforts. In December 2021, Council endorsed a work plan for a relaunch, recommitting to the ideas competition and bold vision concept, and the project budget was included in the 2022 City budget. In June 2022, as part of the management of staff shortages and pandemic workload impacts, Council supported pausing a range of City projects, including 22nd Street Station visioning. Funding for the project remains in the 2023 budget.

Project Team and University Collaboration

In December 2021, a request for expressions of interest was published. In February 2022, the top five submitting teams were invited to participate in a Request for Proposals. The leading team out of that process was Modus Planning, Design and Engagement. Modus has experience with running ideas competitions as well as neighbourhood planning processes. They have assembled a team of sub-consultants to bring added subject matter expertise to the process, on topics like transportation, climate adaptation and mitigation, and Coast Salish culture.

Modus has been engaged to review background information and develop more detailed community engagement, ideas competition, and First Nation engagement strategies. Should Council support the recommendation of this report, staff would continue working with Modus on the station area visioning.

A professor from Simon Fraser University, Dr. Meg Holden, has also offered to bring academic expertise and research capacity to the visioning and vision implementation process. Staff and Modus are exploring possibilities for collaboration, including engaging students in a test run of the ideas challenge.

First Nation Engagement

In anticipation of relaunching the project in early 2023, and to gauge interest amongst First Nations with an interest in New Westminster lands, City staff reached out to six First Nations (Kwantlen, Qayqayt, Kwikwetlem, Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish, and Musqueam First Nations). All six Nations have expressed interest, ranging from interest in receiving updates, to interest in shaping the planning process. This high level of interest presents an opportunity to shift from consulting First Nations to planning in closer collaboration with Nations. Taking this approach is in line with the City's commitments to develop a deeper understanding of First Nations histories and connections to New Westminster lands and to advance reconciliation in meaningful ways. It also supports the intention of Council's proclaimed Year of Truth.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities Plan

Advancing a vision for 22nd Street station area is in alignment with the Strategic Priorities Plan. Firstly, the project approach has been informed by the strategic lenses identified in the Strategic Priorities Plan:

- As noted above, taking a collaborative approach with First Nations on the station area planning would be in alignment with the reconciliation lens, and provide an opportunity for capacity building. Engagement with urban Indigenous people as part of community engagement will also be important.
- There are opportunities to explore a built form and policy landscape that supports climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as environmental restoration, whether that is through high performing buildings, transit-oriented development, zero emission vehicles, green infrastructure, or other approaches.
- The diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism lens to the process and vision will be critical to ensuring that the vision's success for all community members.
- Engagement (including building off what we have heard from community members over time) will be top of mind, and central to the "how" of the visioning.

22nd Street station area visioning would also directly advance multiple strategic priorities:

- **Homes and Housing Options:** One of the desired outcomes is More Homes Near Transit, including advancing planning for transit-oriented development with a climate lens. There is the potential to unlock a variety of housing forms, tenures and affordability levels at the station area, meeting needs for different individuals and household types.
- **Asset Management and Infrastructure:** Early consideration of asset management potential will ensure infrastructure is renewed through development (and careful consideration of financing growth).
- **Safe Movement of People:** Focusing growth by rapid transit and a regionally significant bus loop is tightly connected to shifting to sustainable modes of transportation. Consideration will also be given to opportunities to improve the transportation network in the neighbourhood.

Planning for 22nd Street station area will also be informed by the City's Housing Needs Report, both in terms of types of housing needed, and the potential scale of units that could be enabled.

Unlocking the significant housing opportunity that exists at the station area would also be in alignment with the province's Homes for People Action Plan. This provincial plan focuses on opportunities to rapidly increase housing supply, and specifically speaks to enabling housing near transit.

Visioning Process Concept

The visioning process, as currently imagined, could include the phases described below. Taking a collaborative approach with First Nations means that the City's approach will need to be flexible, and early discussions with Nations may reveal opportunities to change and improve process (i.e., phases 2 to 6 may shift).

1. First Nation Collaboration Planning and Confirmation of Process: First Nations collaboration planning would entail inviting First Nations to discuss the project, how they would like to engage throughout the process, and capacity funding options. Early discussions could also include:

- seeking input on proposed visioning process and goals;
- exploring whether there are stories about the station area that could be shared to ground planning in First Nations context; and
- starting conversations on ways to advance reconciliation through the project.

As noted above, the outcomes of this step would inform steps 2 to 6, including both the process and how First Nations engage with each step.

2. **Ideas Collection:** The next phase of the project would entail hosting an ideas challenge, inviting submissions from global experts on climate resilience and community planning, students, and members across the community to provide creative ideas about how to achieve the project goals. The intent of the challenge is to tap into a wide range of bold ideas, many of which can then inform the vision.

Community engagement would run concurrently with the ideas challenge, to ensure early visioning is shaped by aspirations of the community. Community engagement could include ideas workshops, pop-ups, online engagement, and targeted efforts to reach lesser-heard voices.

3. **Ideas Evaluation and Iteration:** The evaluation and shortlisting of ideas would include both expert analysis and community and First Nation input, as well as a public showcase and celebratory event. Shortly after the ideas challenge and community consultation phase, a three-day design charrette would be held, to start integrating the ideas and input.
4. **Vision Development:** Staff and the consulting team would further develop the ideas and concepts that come out of the design charrette, draft a vision, and seek interdepartmental review of that vision.
5. **Vision Refinement:** The draft vision would be brought to Council for discussion and endorsement to seek community input on the draft. Input would be sought from City committees and community members. A revised vision would be brought back to Council for consideration of endorsement.
6. **Vision Implementation:** Once the vision is endorsed by Council, an implementation process would be determined, based on identified next steps and priorities. Implementation would likely include further developing financing growth strategies to deliver required amenities and infrastructure, transportation network options, and/or design and public realm guidelines.

It is anticipated that the phases outlined above would take place through 2023 and 2024. The ideas challenge would be targeted to take place in the fall or winter, with visioning through the spring and public review of the vision later in 2024.

NEXT STEPS

Should Council direct staff to relaunch visioning for the 22nd Street Station area, with a dual focus on collaboration with First Nations and building climate resilience, staff would proceed with step #1 noted above.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The 2023 Approved Multi-Year Capital Budget – 22nd Street Station Bold Vision, includes \$360,000 for this project of which approximately \$72,000 has been spent and committed as of May 15, 2023. The remaining \$288,000 will be allocated as follows:

- consultation – which allows us to bring in subject matter expertise, and a deep level of engagement, including efforts to bring new voices into the conversation, significant online engagement, speakers or panelists at events, graphic design support, and additional creative events;
- compensation of First Nation's representatives time and participation; and
- all other minor project costs.

The 2023-2027 Approved Five Year Financial Plan – 22nd Street Station Bold Vision, estimates planned spending for the implementation planning phase of \$115,000.

Depending on the scope of First Nations' desired involvement, additional funds, such as capacity funding, may be needed and is yet to be determined. Staff would report back on any additional financial implications for Council's consideration before making additional financial commitments.

A 22nd Area Station area vision may result in additional growth. Visioning and implementation would need to include careful consideration of how additional services needed to ensure a livable neighborhood can be provided through development, to limit any impacts to the City's financial resources.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

Staff across multiple departments will be engaged in the station area planning process:

- The City's Indigenous Relations Advisor and museum and archive staff would continue to have an advisory role;
- Transportation staff have already been involved with early transportation study and would continue to be engaged;
- Climate Action staff would be involved with evaluating ideas and ensuring climate measures are implementable and aligned with City plans;
- Parks and Recreation staff would be involved with discussions of amenities in the area; and
- Infrastructure planning staff would help ensure that the necessary upgrades are identified early and considered in the implementation process.

OPTIONS

The following options are presented for Council's consideration:

1. That Council direct staff to proceed with the proposed 22nd Street Station Area Bold Vision process as outlined in this report, with a dual focus on First Nations collaboration and building climate resilience.
2. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommends Option 1.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1 - 22nd Street Master Plan Backgrounder

Attachment 2 - Bold Vision Scope & Goals

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
Meredith Seeton, Senior Policy Planner

This report was reviewed by:
Lynn Roxburgh, Supervisor of Land Use Planning
Christina Coolidge, Indigenous Relations Advisor
Demian Rueter, Acting Senior Manager of Climate Action, Planning and Development
Harji Varn, Director of Finance

This report was approved by:
Jackie Teed, Acting Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development
Lisa Leblanc, Acting Chief Administrative Officer