

# NEW WESTMINSTER RETAIL STRATEGY

*CITY COUNCIL*

JUNE 12, 2023



**ON TABLE**  
Council Workshop  
June 12, 2023  
re: Item 2.2

# PURPOSE

## DISCUSSION ON THE DRAFT PHASE 2 REPORT

Phase 2 work leveraged outcomes of the Phase 1 research and analysis to develop recommendations that seek to strengthen New Westminster's retail environment.

- **Recommendations** to support pursuit of City-wide and area-specific opportunities.
- **Key opportunities and priorities** by commercial sub-areas

# KEY MESSAGES

## KEEPING PACE WITH EMERGING TRENDS

As the retail sector continues to evolve, strategies are needed for maintaining and enhancing the vibrancy of retail areas

- **not requiring more retail floorspace** than is supportable. New Westminster has a diversity of commercial areas within walking distance of most residential neighbourhoods .
- **investing in placemaking** such as public realm improvements and events
- working closely with **business associations** to support new business models and ideas
- using zoning and signage regulations and development permit area guidelines to focus **active uses** and ensure streetfronts provide a vibrant **pedestrian experience**
- being **strategic** during **development application review** to encourage integration of commercial use categories identified as opportunities for different commercial areas.

# QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL

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

# CITY-WIDE | LAND USE AND RELATED POLICIES

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
1. Undertake a review of the Zoning Bylaw to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Ensuring flexibility to allow changes of use, accommodate ‘combination stores’ (e.g., production with retail sales and on-site consumption), and permit emerging retail / service concepts where appropriate;</li> <li>b. Limiting at-grade uses in core areas of Great Streets to ‘active uses.’</li> </ul>	Planning/ economic development	Immediate and ongoing
2. Strengthen commercial and mixed-use Development Permit Area guidelines by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Integrating more detailed commercial retail unit design guidelines, to ensure functionality for a range of business types, and</li> <li>b. encouraging inclusion of storefronts with a mix of widths, sizes and configurations in new mixed-use and commercial developments, to facilitate the inclusion of small independent businesses and incubation.</li> </ul>	Planning	Immediate
3. Ensure the Retail Strategy findings inform future planning for Lower Twelfth and Sharpe Street and Bent Court.	Planning	As needed
4. Manage the pace of change to existing commercial areas by continuing to give careful consideration of rezoning applications	Planning	Ongoing
5. Ensure alignment with area-specific retail principles when reviewing redevelopment / rezoning applications.	Planning	Immediate and ongoing
6. Continue to allow for a range of uses in redevelopment of sites within 400m of SkyTrain stations, including arts, culture, entertainment venues, and residential	Planning	Ongoing

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
7. Ensure land use policy (e.g. Temporary Use Permits) is not a barrier to pop-up retail and / or temporary use of vacant lots	Planning/ economic development	Immediate and ongoing
8. Review other land use and related policies to reduce barriers to adaptive-use of buildings, especially on a temporary basis.	Planning	Short-term and ongoing
9. Continue to further streamline business-related permitting processes	Planning, Building, Business Licensing, Economic Development	Immediate and ongoing
10. Advocate to the Province to provide municipalities with the ability to apply a Commercial Vacant Property Tax and explore applicability within each local commercial area.	Council, Economic development	Short-term



# CITY-WIDE | BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
1. Establish a dedicated business growth support staff role within Economic Development, to provide support to existing businesses in navigating City regulations, policies and procedures and develop tools and processes to better meet the needs of small business.	Economic development	Next 1-2 years
2. Continue to make investments in quality public realm and related maintenance and programming. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Safety and cleanliness</li><li>ii. Compact walkable areas</li><li>iii. Quality interface between public realm and commercial spaces</li><li>iv. Re-establish street entertainment program</li><li>v. Cycling infrastructure</li></ul>	Planning, Economic Development, Transportation and Parks & Recreation.	Immediate and ongoing
3. Continue to disseminate information and collaborate with business partners on workshops, webinars, etc. to help businesses understand the regulatory framework and key business requirements and encourage information sharing among individual BIAs, chamber of commerce and other business associations.	Economic development and business partners	Immediate and ongoing
4. Consider opportunities for incubation through space provision (e.g., business incubator spaces, cultural, non-profit and community-serving hubs) through rezoning amenity	Planning, economic development.	Next 1-2 years

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
5. Explore business incentives and fiscal tools as outlined in Section 4.8	Ec Dev	Immediate and ongoing
6. Support local businesses' ability to pivot to omni-channel business model (e.g. production and retail sites with onsite consumption)	Ec Dev and partner organizations.	Immediate and ongoing
7. Prioritize commercial tenant building permit applications to reduce permitting times for business and consider conditional business licence approval for low risk uses.	Ec Dev and departments involved with business licensing.	Immediate and ongoing
8. Continue to consider building compliance plans during Building Permit review that allows a phased implementation of building upgrades during to offer a sensitive and flexible approach to business operators.	Council, Economic development	Short-term
9. Develop Commercial Tenant Assistance policy applicable at the time of rezoning to support businesses during redevelopment and rezoning scenarios	Ec Dev, Planning, business stakeholders	Immediate and ongoing
10. Explore provision for micro grants in the City's granting process to encourage public space activation and beautification ideas in commercial areas	Economic Dev and Legislative Services	Next 1-3 years
11. Ensure expectations around routine maintenance of buildings and properties are clearly articulated to property owners, and that ground level commercial units are filled in an appropriate and timely manner.	Ec Dev, Business Licensing and business stakeholders	Immediate and ongoing
12. Amend the Sign / Business License Bylaw to encourage the visual connection between passersby on the street and interior uses provide an engaging streetscape experience (e.g. limit opaque window treatments.)	Economic Development	Immediate



# DOWNTOWN

1. Encourage and support emergence of a micro-retail cluster through redevelopment scenarios or other opportunities, ideally towards east end of Columbia.
2. Support emergence of new small to medium scale entertainment venues through redevelopment scenarios or as other opportunities arise.
3. Explore opportunities for shared arts/culture and non-profit spaces above/below grade (e.g., basement units, second floor units)
4. Consider a pilot program to create affordable space through rezoning negotiations.
5. Support and promote opening of new destination restaurants through economic development advocacy efforts.
6. Expand active transportation infrastructure, including creating an e-bike share hub
7. Actively promote patio program to new businesses during business licensing process, and through outreach to existing businesses who do not currently have a patio
8. Continue to support integration of higher density mix of uses within 400m of SkyTrain stations in redevelopment scenarios; where possible, integrate new restaurant and entertainment venue space.
9. Focus new hotel development in the Downtown near transit. Where possible, integrate new restaurant and entertainment venue space.
10. Require active uses on Columbia Street at-grade in new buildings and work with property owners of existing buildings to encroach a similar approach.

# UPTOWN

1. Focus on public realm improvements (pocket parks, lighting, seating) –aligned with Uptown Streetscape Vision
2. Fully leverage the City's investments in new active transportation infrastructure, including creating an e-bike share hub as part of a larger City-wide system.
3. Require active uses for at-grade commercial space between 7th and 5th Avenues, to support 6th Street's role as a Great Street; office and other less-active uses to be focused on upper floors or outside of the priority retail stretch.
4. Encourage highly active uses for high-profile corner locations (e.g. restaurant with patio) in redevelopment scenarios
5. Encourage and support integration of arts and culture-supporting retail and service businesses to better leverage and connect to Massey Theatre, through economic development marketing activities and planning policy.

# 12<sup>TH</sup> STREET - UPPER 12<sup>TH</sup> STREET (BETWEEN 10<sup>TH</sup> AVE & 6<sup>TH</sup> AVE)

1. Retail space supply and demand analysis supports allowing for residential-only redevelopment opportunities at the north end of upper Twelfth Street, consistent with the land use designations in the Official Community Plan.
2. Require active uses at-grade between Eighth and Seventh Avenue.
3. Support retention of prime corner locations for the most active uses (e.g., restaurants with patios).
4. Encourage redevelopment or repurposing of existing automotive service spaces for more active retail, restaurant and service uses over time.
5. Explore place making opportunities such as:
  - Actively promote patio program to new businesses during business licensing process, and through outreach to existing businesses who do not currently have a patio.
  - Explore location(s) for future e-bike share hub(s)
  - Consider opportunities for unique cross-walk treatments
  - Explore opportunities to support festivals and events on upper Twelfth Street
6. Give particular attention along upper Twelfth Street to the following City-wide directions:
  - Manage pace of change to existing commercial areas by continuing to give careful consideration of rezoning applications.
  - Create a commercial tenant assistance policy applicable at the time of rezoning.
  - Encourage inclusion of storefronts with a mix of widths, sizes and configurations in new mixed-use and commercial developments, to facilitate the inclusion of small independent businesses.
7. Consider exploring the cultural and community importance of the cluster of businesses along upper Twelfth Street through a cultural value assessment of the Great Street to inform a further policy response.

## 12<sup>TH</sup> STREET — LOWER 12<sup>TH</sup>/SHARPE STREET

8. Leverage the unique commercial / industrial zoning mixture to support opportunities for ‘combination businesses’ which are not easily accommodated elsewhere in the city. These include:
  - Micro distilleries with on-site tasting rooms (e.g. Odd Society in Vancouver)
  - Additional urban wineries or micro breweries with tasting rooms and patios
  - Artisan businesses merging small-scale on-site manufacturing with sales and demonstrations (e.g. woodwork, metalwork, etc.)
  - Small or micro commercial cluster(s) of artisanal food and beverage(and related) businesses.
  - Live/work opportunities for operators of businesses listed above.
9. Dark stores are not appropriate uses for the Lower Twelfth / Sharpe Street area
10. Allow for emerging uses that are in line with the manufacturing-orientation and mixed-use intention of the precinct, such as ghost kitchens, through appropriate policy.
11. Encourage and support conversion of former automotive commercial buildings and properties for adaptive re-use and repurposing to the types of uses listed above.

# SAPPERTON

1. Future retail integration at Sapperton Green should complement East Columbia Street core commercial district by focusing on retailers and categories that are underrepresented along East Columbia Street north of Major Street, such as:
  - Full-scale supermarket
  - Full-format multi-department pharmacy
  - Commercial fitness
  - Larger daycare centre
2. Require active uses at-grade from Keary Street to Sapperton Park on the west side of East Columbia Street, and from Sherbrooke Street to Braid Street on both sides of East Columbia Street.
3. Focus temporary pop-up event and festival core activity in a central and accessible Sapperton location
4. Along the west side of East Columbia Street, between Alberta and Cumberland Streets, should be a primary focus area for improvement of pedestrian and cyclist safety, comfort and accessibility.



# MCBRIDE

1. For future redevelopment east of McBride Avenue, support reduction in overall commercial footprint to best support existing retail cluster west of McBride Avenue.
2. Maintain the commercial footprint as part of any future redevelopment at the commercial node on the west side of McBride and Eighth Avenue.
3. Explore enhanced pedestrian and cycling crossing of McBride Avenue.

# CONNAUGHT HEIGHTS

1. Focus on local-serving lifestyle convenience retail / service commercial uses in new development in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Street station area.



# NEXT STEPS

- Council workshop – June 12, 2023
- Integrate Council into Phase 2 report
- Consultation with stakeholders through online means
- Final report & endorsement by Council – July 10, 2023