

# REPORT

## *Climate Action, Planning and Development*

**To:** Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council  
**Date:** August 28, 2023

**From:** Serena Trachta, Acting Director,  
Climate Action, Planning and  
Development  
**File:** 01.0185.20

**Item #:** 2023-536

**Subject:** **City of Surrey Fraser Heights Metro 2050 Amendment Application**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** Council direct staff to send a letter to Metro Vancouver commenting on the City of Surrey's application to change the regional land use designation of lands in the Fraser Heights area from Industrial to General Urban designation, specifically encouraging consideration of opportunities for housing choice by the City of Surrey.

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### **PURPOSE**

To provide Council with detail regarding the City of Surrey's proposed amendments to the Regional Growth Strategy, Metro 2050, in the Fraser Heights area.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The City of Surrey has submitted to Metro Vancouver a request to amend the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), changing the regional land use designation of a 10.2 hectare site from Industrial to General Urban. The application has been referred to the City for comment.

While the protection of Industrial lands is a key strength of the regional plan, the viability of industrial uses at this location is limited. City staff advise that the City put forward no formal objection to the change from Industrial to General Urban.

The proposed form of development is single detached dwellings, along with significant park dedication, at the edge of an existing low-density residential area. Given the regional goals of creating diverse housing options and creating compact urban areas, City staff encourage the City of Surrey to consider missing middle housing in this location, which would align with the proposed General Urban Metro Vancouver designation.

## **BACKGROUND**

Earlier in 2023, Metro Vancouver received a request from the City of Surrey to consider an RGS amendment for a 10.2 hectare site at 11420 – 157A Street, in Surrey's Fraser Heights area. The proposed regional land use designation change would redesignate the site from Industrial to General Urban, to accommodate a residential development of 38 single detached lots on the subject site.

Surrey's proposed amendment is considered a Type 3 Amendment under the regional plan, which requires that an amendment bylaw be passed by the MVRD Board by a 50% plus one weighted vote.

At its June 30, 2023 meeting, the Board of Directors of Metro Vancouver gave first, second and third readings to the amendment bylaws, and directed staff to refer the amendments to affected local governments for notification.

On July 11, 2023, the City received the referrals from Metro Vancouver (see Attachment 1). The City of New Westminster is invited to provide written comments on the City of Surrey's application by September 15, 2023.

### **Site Context**

The subject site is 10.2 hectares in size, and is bounded by the South Fraser Perimeter Road (Highway 17) and Canadian National Railway yard to the north, Surrey Bend Regional Park to the east, suburban single detached dwellings and City owned parkland to the south, and Highway 17 and City owned parkland to the west.

The subject site is currently designated Industrial in the City's Official Community Plan (OCP) and zoned One-Acre Residential Zone and Light Impact Industrial Zone in the City's Zoning Bylaw.

The site, outlined in red below, is undeveloped, though since late 2021, significant site disturbance and tree removal has occurred as part of the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project.



**Proposal**

The proposed amendment to Metro 2050 would change the regional land use designation from Industrial to General Urban (see Attachment 3 for a depiction of this change). The City of Surrey would also consider amendments to the OCP and Zoning Bylaw to allow residential uses on the site, specifically, 38 single-detached lots.

**DISCUSSION**

Attachment 2 describes the City of Surrey’s proposed amendment and provides regional analysis of the amendment request, including an overview of the trade-offs. Regional staff conclude that, on balance, the proposed amendment is supportable for the following reasons:

- the proposal would utilize land that is unsuitable for industrial uses because it lacks access to the adjacent highway and industrial lands due to a steep slope escarpment;
- the proposal would allow for 38 single-detached lots;
- the proposal would result in a net increase in tree canopy cover over the long-term; and
- the proposal is consistent with the adjacent residential land uses to the south.

City staff reviewed the referral package, reached a similar conclusion, and advise that the City put forward no formal objection to the change from Industrial to General Urban. Given the regional goals of creating diverse housing options and creating compact

urban areas, City staff encourage the City of Surrey to consider missing middle housing in this location, which would align with the proposed General Urban Metro Vancouver designation.

### **Supporting a Sustainable Economy**

Regional staff's assessment of the application notes that in the context of a shortage of industrial land and a desire to keep industrial areas within the Urban Containment Boundary, "applications to redesignate such lands must have a very strong rationale to be supported." The subject site is contiguous with other Industrial parcels, but severed from them by the South Fraser Perimeter Road escarpment. Further, the subject site does not have highway access despite being adjacent to Highway 17. It is also disconnected from industrial lands north of the highway by a steep escarpment with no potential for future connection.

Allowing this currently undeveloped site to develop for industrial uses could create potential conflicts with adjacent residential uses, unless the range of permitted industrial uses were significantly restricted.

City staff concur with the regional assessment that an amendment from Industrial to a different land use designation in this context would not increase pressure for further conversions. Current industrial land values also reduce this risk.

### **Protecting the Environment**

The RGS includes a goal on protecting environment, addressing climate change, and responding to natural hazards. The subject site is undeveloped, with the potential to serve ecological and resilience functions. However, the site has been disturbed and subject to tree removal as part of the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion project. The proposal being considered includes dedicating 54.6% of the site to the City of Surrey for riparian, biodiversity and open space protection purposes. Significant tree replacement is also proposed, and the regional assessment suggests this would advance the regional goal of expanding the tree canopy cover.

### **Providing Diverse and Affordable Housing Choices and Creating a Compact Urban Area**

The RGS aims to support the creation of a compact urban area with diverse and affordable housing choices. The subject site is at the edge of existing low-density residential development, where higher density residential development may not be appropriate or viable. However, missing middle housing could be a suitable option that is better aligned with the housing goals of Metro 2050. As the City of Surrey processes the related Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw amendments, they are encouraged to consider opportunities to increase housing choice.

**NEXT STEPS**

Following the comment period for affected local governments, local First Nations and the public, Metro Vancouver staff will bring summarized comments and the amendment request back to the Regional Board for their consideration of final reading.

**OPTIONS**

The following options are provided for Council's consideration:

1. That Council direct staff to send a letter to Metro Vancouver commenting on the City of Surrey's application to change the regional land use designation of lands in the Fraser Heights area from Industrial to General Urban designation, specifically encouraging consideration of opportunities for housing choice by the City of Surrey.
2. That Council decline to comment on the City of Surrey's Fraser Heights RGS amendment request.
3. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommend Option 1.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Metro 2050 Amendment Referral Letter – City of Surrey (Fraser Heights)

Attachment 2: Metro Vancouver Staff Report to Regional Planning Committee

Attachment 3: Current and Proposed Regional Land Use Designations

**APPROVALS**

This report was prepared by:  
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This report was reviewed by:  
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