

REPORT

Climate Action, Planning and Development

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: January 22, 2023

From: Jackie Teed, Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development
File: Doc#2414789

Item #: 2024-19

Subject: 22nd Street Station Area Bold Vision: Ideas Gathering

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive this report for information.

PURPOSE

To update Council on 22nd Street SkyTrain Station Area visioning, including reporting back on the first round of community engagement, and the launch of the regenerate ideals challenge.

SUMMARY

The City has launched a visioning process to imagine the future of the neighbourhood around the 22nd Street SkyTrain station. The first phase of community engagement was ideas gathering and has been completed. Through this phase, the project team heard from a diversity of residents, and interested and impacted parties, who explored the current state of the neighbourhood and aspirations for its future. To gather further input, an ideas challenge was launched in mid-November which will be open until the end of January. The ideas challenge is primarily focused on climate-friendly neighbourhood design. This report updates Council about the findings from community engagement, and on-going collaboration with First Nations as well as consultation with external agencies.

BACKGROUND

Planning for the area around 22nd Street SkyTrain station was relaunched in the summer of 2023. The aim of this work is to create a bold vision for a climate-friendly neighbourhood that would advance the City's goals around increased housing, climate

action, and collaboration with First Nations. Staff reported to Council on September 11, 2023, providing a project outline and soliciting input on the proposed engagement process.

Since then, the first round of community engagement has been completed, and the reGENERATE ideas challenge has been launched. Recently, the Province released new legislation which requires accommodation of certain minimum densities around transit stations and hubs (see the Provincial press release included in Attachment 1). Elements of the new legislation will apply to the 22nd Street Station area and as such will be integrated into the planning process.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The first round of community engagement and ideas gathering took place from September to November 2023. A second round is anticipated for late 2024 when the draft vision has been prepared. This current round of engagement solicited broad input on the state of the neighbourhood (assets and challenges), aspirations for the future, and ideas for how to create a climate-friendly neighbourhood where everyone can thrive.

General outreach was to neighbourhood and city-wide community members and businesses. Targeted outreach efforts were made to connect with youth, seniors, urban Indigenous community members, and other equity-denied groups and lesser-heard voices.

The sections below summarize engagement activities and findings; these are detailed further in the Ideas Gathering Engagement Summary included as Attachment 2.

Engagement Activities

A range of engagement activities were undertaken, including:

- *Community Survey and Ideas Board:* A closed-ended survey was hosted online, as was an ideas board, where community members could provide open-ended ideas and comments.
- *Idea Jams:* A launch event with speakers and facilitated table activities was held at Anvil Centre at the beginning of the engagement period, and a similar event was held virtually the following week.
- *Focus Groups, Workshops and Meetings:* Four focus groups and workshops were conducted with residents and organizations serving equity-denied groups, including newcomers, people with lived and living experience of homelessness, youth ageing out of foster care, and middle school youth. Two meetings with individuals representing organizations serving urban Indigenous community members were held, to share about the project, encourage member participation, and listen to priorities and ideas from the organizations. In addition to engaging with equity-denied organizations, staff connected with post-secondary students and staff at Douglas College for a virtual ideas-gathering workshop.

Staff also attended a joint meeting of the Connaught Heights and West End Residents Associations early on in the engagement period. Staff provided an update on the relaunch of visioning, and listened to concerns and early input on the process.

- *Pop Up Booths:* Pop up booths were organized across different locations in the city for people to learn about the project, ways to engage, and share ideas. This strategy of “going to where community members are at” was used to connect with community members who may not have been able to attend a separate scheduled event. Locations included the 22nd Street SkyTrain station, Connaught Heights Elementary School, the farmers market, Grimston Park, Century House, and the library. A pop-up was also held at a Chamber of Commerce “Coffee Talks” event.
- *Open House:* Towards the end of the engagement period, an open house was held within the project area, at Connaught Heights Elementary School, where engagement highlights were shared and additional ideas were gathered.

Outreach Methods

Online engagement activities and project updates were (and continue to be) shared on the Be Heard New West project page. A postcard about engagement opportunities was mailed to residents of Connaught Heights and the West End, and delivered in-person to businesses along 20th Street. Engagement opportunities were also advertised in online newsletters, in local newspapers, through the City’s social media channels, on City billboards, bus shelters and digitally at City facilities. Focus group discussions were arranged by reaching out to organizations directly.

What We Heard

Staff heard from over 700 people encompassing both event attendees and online engagement responses. Key themes include:

- *Managing the transportation network:* Traffic congestion remains a key concern for residents, primarily along 20th Street and Stewardson Way. Many residents stressed the importance of giving careful consideration to the transportation network before accommodating significant growth in the area. Some community members encouraged consideration of a car-light area around the station, and supporting car-light lifestyles by enhancing car share options, making the most possible use of SkyTrain, and the region-serving bus loop and cycling connections through the neighbourhood.
- *Expanding housing:* There were many expressions of openness to exploring more density, including high-rise forms, especially near the SkyTrain station, and significant interest in affordable housing and diversity of housing typologies.
- *Enhancing amenities and services:* Many community members raised the lack of amenities and commercial services in the neighbourhood, and expressed a desire for development to include a mix of uses, especially in the immediate vicinity of the SkyTrain station. There was also significant interest in expanding spaces to gather, especially outdoor space.

The input gathered echoed much of the feedback received through past planning processes in the area, with a recognition that the housing and climate crises have worsened in recent years and more bold action is needed on these fronts. Feedback from equity-denied community members highlighted the need to include non-market housing, public services such as washrooms and indoor and outdoor gathering spaces, and easily accessible commercial services.

Advisory Planning Commission

Two reports on 22nd Street area visioning have gone to the Advisory Planning Commission (APC):

- A September 19, 2023 report provided a project outline and solicited input on key considerations for achieving the project objectives. APC expressed interest in incorporating a mix of housing tenures and affordability, streamlining application review processes, ensuring concepts were financially viable, and planning for school capacity.
- A January 16, 2024 report updated the Commission on community engagement and invited participation of an APC member on the reGENERATE ideas challenge jury. In addition to the APC jurist selected on January 16, a youth member will provide local representation. Additional jurists were selected to bring expertise on climate, community planning and equity.

The Commission will continue to be engaged as this project advances.

REGENERATE IDEAS CHALLENGE

In addition to community engagement activities described above, the City is hosting an ideas challenge for community members and thought leaders, to tap into bold ideas on climate-friendly neighbourhood design. The reGENERATE ideas challenge was launched on November 20 and is open until January 31, 2024. Registration is available until January 15. The Challenge Brief, which includes more details on the framing and evaluation criteria for the challenge, is included as Attachment 3 and is available on the reGENERATE page of the City's website.

FIRST NATIONS COLLABORATION

Parallel to community engagement, staff have been engaging with First Nations as rights-holders. This engagement will continue throughout the project. Outreach was initially to six First Nations that have expressed an interest in collaborating with the City: Musqueam, Kwantlen, Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish, Kwikwetlem and Qayqayt. The latter two First Nations have advised that at this time, they prefer to be kept up to date only. To date, staff have had seven meetings with four First Nations and have continued to invite all six local Nations to events, provide project updates, and offer of further collaboration. The four collaborating First Nations have been invited to provide a representative to sit on the ideas challenge jury.

A staff-to-staff workshop is planned for February. The focus of the workshop would be identifying opportunities to highlight within the vision, the Coast Salish context of the lands. The project consultant has secured a \$5,000 grant from the Real Estate Foundation of BC to enhance this workshop; this funding is anticipated to be used to rent an appropriate venue to host the workshop, provide catering by an Indigenous company, and/or provide additional facilitation support.

Ideally the conversation, ideas, and priorities shared at this workshop will inform the design charrette tentatively scheduled for early March. First Nations will also be invited to that event, but early feedback from Nations was that a smaller separate event would be more respectful of their capacity.

CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES

Concurrently with community engagement and First Nations collaboration, staff has engaged with external agencies who could be impacted by the area's development. These conversations will inform and ground the concepts developed at the design charrette. Meetings to date include:

- As the neighbourhood is adjacent to an intersection with a controlled-access highway and the Queensborough Bridge, staff met with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, to understand plans for provincial infrastructure and explore options for collaboration on transportation management.
- Staff has also met with an interdepartmental team at TransLink for early discussions on rights of way, the BC Parkway, the SkyTrain station and the bus loop.
- Early discussions with BC Hydro have focused on potential uses within BC Hydro rights of way, and the possibility of undergrounding or moving transmission lines.
- Staff have also met with City of Burnaby staff to explore cross-boundary considerations for neighbourhood visioning, Burnaby's OCP update process, the development of Southgate City, and the update to the Edmonds Town Centre plan that is currently underway.

Follow-up meetings are anticipated for the New Year with all of the above agencies.

Staff continue to communicate regularly with the School District about expected growth in this neighbourhood, and will continue conversations as visioning advances, to ensure that revisions to population projections are incorporated into school planning and opportunities for additional school sites or expansions to existing schools are considered.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

Regular discussions are taking place with staff across multiple departments. As outdoor gathering space emerges as a priority amenity for the neighbourhood, and transportation considerations remain critical to community members, collaboration with

Parks and Transportation staff has been increasing. Engineering will also be involved as the density and financing growth implications of the provincial legislation and the vision are explored.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposed 2024-2028 Capital Plan includes \$389,000 in 2024 and \$155,000 in 2025 for visioning, First Nations collaboration, community partners and public engagement activities. A \$5,000 grant has been secured to offset some of the expenses of these activities.

NEXT STEPS

In conjunction with advancing conversations with external agencies, staff is reviewing the housing and transit oriented development legislation announced by the Province in November and policy manuals released in December, and giving consideration to how these new requirements can be integrated into the vision. A workshop will be held with Council to discuss all of the new Provincial housing legislation and the implications to New Westminster’s planning framework.

Following the close of the ideas challenge, submissions will be evaluated through February. Highlights and themes will be brought to Council for its information. All the work to date will be considered further at a multi-day design workshop, anticipated to be held in March. A vision will then be drafted and refined, and made available for public review later in 2024.

OPTIONS

The following options are presented for Council’s consideration:

- 1. That Council receive this report for information; or
- 2. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommends Option 1.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Provincial Press Release Regarding Transit Oriented Development
- Attachment 2: 22nd Street SkyTrain Station Engagement Summary Report
- Attachment 3: reGENERATE Ideas Challenge Brief

APPROVALS

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