

REPORT

Climate Action, Planning and Development

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: April 8, 2024

From: Jackie Teed, Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development
File: EDMS #2464015
Item #: 2024-171

Subject: Metro 2050 Amendment Application: City of Maple Ridge

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council advise Metro Vancouver that the City of New Westminster has no formal objection to the City of Maple Ridge's application to amend the regional land use designation of 13 properties known as "the Yennadon Lands" from General Urban and Agricultural to Industrial and Conservation, and include them within the Urban Containment Boundary; and,

THAT Council direct staff to send a letter to Metro Vancouver following this meeting providing:

- a. Council's resolution on Maple Ridge's amendment application,
 - b. a summary of Council's related discussion, if any, and meeting minutes,
 - c. feedback on the application related to removal of lands from the Agricultural Land Reserve, and
 - d. staff's recommendations, as detailed in the Recommended Feedback section of this report.
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PURPOSE

To provide Council with information on the City of Maple Ridge's proposed amendment to the Regional Growth Strategy, Metro 2050, and staff's proposed response.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Maple Ridge submitted to Metro Vancouver a request to amend the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), which has been referred to the City of New Westminster for comment.

The proposal would change the regional land use designations of a 25.4 hectare site in Maple Ridge from General Urban and Agricultural to Industrial and Conservation and Recreation in order to accommodate additional employment lands. The amendment would also expand an Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) by approximately two hectares. The amendment would facilitate protection of 7.4 hectares of ecologically sensitive lands as well as allow businesses in the technology sector, light manufacturing companies, and professional offices.

Staff recommend that the City of New Westminster put forward no formal objection to the amendment. While there is a loss of agricultural land in favour of supporting increased industrial land and green space, this is effectively a tradeoff between achieving different regional goals. Staff recommends that the City indicate support for retaining agricultural land within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), and provide additional feedback related to enhancing the provision of the proposed green space at the centre of the site.

BACKGROUND

Amendment Process

Metro Vancouver received a request from the City of Maple Ridge to consider an amendment to the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), Metro 2050, for 13 properties known as the Yennadon Lands. The City of Maple Ridge's proposed amendment is considered to be a Type 2 Amendment under the regional plan, which requires a two-thirds weighted vote from the regional Board for approval. Movement towards this application began in 2019.

At its January 26, 2024 meeting, the Board of Directors of Metro Vancouver gave first, second and third readings to the amendment bylaws (none opposed), and directed staff to refer the amendments to nearby local governments and local First Nations. On March 1, 2024, the City received the referral from Metro Vancouver (see Attachment 1). The City of New Westminster is invited to provide written comments on the proposal by April 18, 2024.

The City of Maple Ridge has yet to make an application to the Greater Vancouver Sewerage & Drainage District related to utility servicing of the site and connection to the regional sewerage system.

Site Location and Context

The subject site (outlined in red in Figure 1 below) is 25.4 hectares in size and comprises 13 properties located at: 22913 127 Avenue, 22992 127 Avenue, 22870 127 Place, 22948 128 Avenue, 22990 128 Avenue, 23008 128 Avenue, 23154 128 Avenue, 12640 228 Street, 12639 232 Street, 12685 232 Street, 12759 232 Street, 12761 232 Street, and 12791 232 Street.

The site is bounded by the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) to the north and east, and an existing low density residential neighbourhood to the south and west. The subject site is adjacent to 128 Avenue and 232 Street which are existing Major Road Corridors, as identified in Maple Ridge's Proposed Major Road Corridor Network Plan in their Official Community Plan (OCP).



Figure 1: Yennadon Lands (Maple Ridge) Site Context Map

Red: Site outline of the Yennadon Lands

Yellow: Lands proposed to be added to the UCB

Green: Proposed area for environmental conservation

Current Land Use

Regionally, the subject properties are currently designated General Urban and Agricultural in the RGS. Locally, the subject properties are designated as Agricultural in the City of Maple Ridge's Official Community Plan (OCP). They are currently zoned RS-2 Single-Detached Suburban Residential and RS-3 Single-Detached Rural Residential. The existing uses range from single-detached dwellings to vacant land.

PROPOSAL

The proposed amendment to the Regional Context Statement (RGS) has two parts. Firstly, the amendment proposes to expand Maple Ridge's Urban Containment Boundary (UCB). The majority of the site is already within their UCB, except for two

parcels in the northeast corner: 23154 128 Avenue and 12791 232 Street. These parcels are highlighted in yellow in Figure 1 above. These two sites comprise approximately two hectares and represent 8% of the total site size.

These parcels are currently designated as Agricultural in both the RGS and Maple Ridge's OCP. These parcels were also recently removed from the ALR by the Agricultural Land Commission (June 2023), citing unsuitability for agriculture.

Secondly, the amendment would change the regional land use designations of the site as follows:

From: General Urban and Agricultural
To: Industrial, and Conservation and Recreation

See Attachment 3 for the full designations and map of locations. Should the RGS amendment be approved, the City of Maple Ridge would then need to amend their OCP and Zoning Bylaw in order for development to proceed.

The intent of the amendments is to allow businesses in the technology sector, light manufacturing companies, and professional offices within the areas designated for Industrial. Part of the proposal would also see the protection of 7.4 hectares of ecologically sensitive lands at the centre of the site. That represents 29% of the total site size. This area is highlighted in green in Figure 1 above, bisecting the site, roughly north-south.

DISCUSSION

Regional Analysis: Support

Regional staff concluded that, on balance, the proposed amendment is supportable, as the proposal would:

- add an additional 18 hectares of industrial land to support a growing region with limited industrial lands;
- create an employment area in close proximity to goods movement corridors, which further contributes to employment and economic growth;
- re-designate land to Conservation and Recreation which supports biodiversity, and which would have otherwise not have been protected under the existing RGS land use designation; and
- be guided by the Yennadon Lands Employment Park Design Guidelines, which include Agriculture Edge Planning Guidelines and other buffer/edge considerations, which are an important element in managing the interface between industrial uses and environmental land.

Staff Analysis: Balance of Trade-offs

The changes to the Yennadon Lands would result in the loss of agricultural land and would see an expansion of an urban containment boundary. As a general principle, staff would not typically support such a proposal, in favour of the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) goals of protecting agricultural lands in the long term, as a vital asset for both the economic viability of the region and for local food production.

The proposed changes to the Yennadon Lands support two other important regional goals. Firstly, they would facilitate creation of industrial use lands, which are regionally scarce and needed for a sustainable economy. Secondly, the designation of nearly 30% of the total site for green space would support several RGS goals related to climate, biodiversity, and increasing ecological assets, by providing provide vital ecosystem benefits for both people and wildlife, and supporting climate action (e.g. cooling, carbon capture, rainwater interception).

On balance, staff considers that the tradeoff between the loss of ALR land and expansion of the UCB, vs. the increase in industrial and protected environmental lands is reasonable.

RECOMMENDED FEEDBACK

City staff generally support the analysis and conclusions of regional staff, and recommend Council advise Metro Vancouver that the City of New Westminster has no formal objection to the recommendation of support for Maple Ridge's proposed Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) amendments related to the Yennadon Lands.

Staff considers that the designation of nearly 30% of the lands for "Conservation and Recreation" and the provision of industrial lands to be key factors in supporting the proposal. Staff recommends the City provide the following feedback, related to enhancing and protecting the lands being designated for Conservation and Recreation, and facilitating the success of the industrial designated lands:

1. Edge Conditions

The RGS identifies a need to pursue strategies and actions to minimize conflicts between agriculture and other land uses. The industrial uses proposed on the site would bracket both sides of the conservation/recreation area, and be immediately adjacent to the surrounding agricultural lands at the north and east, and residential lands to the west. As such, edge planning will be an important factor in the area's success; both to protect the conservation/recreation and agriculture lands from industrial impacts, and to buffer the industrial lands from the residential area. Regional staff highlighted this as well, and design guidelines are being considered by Maple Ridge as part of the proposed amendment.

Staff recommends that feedback be provided stating that application of the guidelines and enhanced edge design to any development on the Yennadon Lands should be required as a condition of Metro Vancouver's approval.

2. Tree Retention

The RGS has a goal to increase the total regional tree canopy within the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) from 32% to 40% by the year 2050. In support of that goal, and in support of the site's existing biodiversity, tree retention should be prioritized, especially in the area proposed to be designated for environmental conservation, and in edge design. If removal is required, it is encouraged that replacements be planted in appropriate locations which can support tree growth and eventual large canopies.

Staff recommends that feedback be provided stating that tree protection and replacement for any development on the Yennadon Lands, as well as protection and enhancement of the urban forest within the conservation/recreation lands and edge design, should be required as a condition of Metro Vancouver's approval.

3. Green Space Linking

The RGS seeks to strategically link green spaces, both in and between urban and rural or agricultural areas, into a region-wide network that sustains ecosystem services and movement of wildlife across the landscape. This can be accomplished at the sub-regional level as well. The proposal should indicate how the area selected for the conservation designation aligns with other or future surrounding green spaces, which should similarly be considered in the anticipated future design and development of surrounding land, in order to create such corridors and connections.

Staff recommends that feedback be provided stating that connectivity between the conservation/recreation areas proposed on the Yennadon Lands, and immediately adjacent conservation/recreation lands that are also protected in some form, be confirmed and/or established by Metro Vancouver prior to approval.

4. Legal Protection of Green Space

Regional staff recommend that the City of Maple Ridge should strengthen the protection of the lands proposed for the Conservation and Recreation designation. This could be achieved through legal mechanisms such as conservation covenants or parkland dedication. This is important to ensure one of the primary benefits of this application is not lost in future.

Staff recommends that feedback be provided stating that legal protection of the lands proposed for the Conservation and Recreation designation on the Yennadon should be required as a condition of Metro Vancouver's approval, consistent with Metro Vancouver staff's recommendation.

NEXT STEPS

A response to the referral from Metro Vancouver is requested by April 18, 2024. Provided in the response would be: Council's resolution related to this amendment; a summary of their conversation (meeting minutes); and staff's comments as detailed in the "Recommended Feedback" section above, pending Council's endorsement.

Following the close of the comment period for local governments, 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. Should the amendment be approved, further changes to Maple Ridge's OCP and Zoning Bylaw would be required prior to development proceeding.

OPTIONS

The following options are provided for Council's consideration:

1. That Council advise Metro Vancouver that the City of New Westminster has no formal objection to the City of Maple Ridge's application to amend the regional land use designation of 13 properties known as "the Yennadon Lands" from General Urban and Agricultural to Industrial and Conservation, and include them within the Urban Containment Boundary.
2. That Council direct staff to send a letter to Metro Vancouver following this meeting providing:
 - a. Council's resolution on Maple Ridge's amendment application,
 - b. a summary of Council's related discussion, if any, and meeting minutes,
 - c. feedback on the application related to removal of lands from the Agricultural Land Reserve, and
 - d. staff's recommendations, as detailed in the Recommended Feedback section of this report.
3. That Council decline to comment on the City of Maple Ridge's Yennadon Lands RGS amendment request.
4. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommend Option 1 and 2.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Metro 2050 Amendment Referral Letter – City of Maple Ridge
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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