

REPORT

Planning and Development

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: September 9, 2024

From: Jackie Teed, Director,
Planning and Development
File: #2516347

Item #: 2024-502

Subject: **reGENERATE: Big Moves for a Vision for the 22nd Street Neighbourhood**

RECOMMENDATION

1. **THAT** Council provide feedback on the big moves and strategy highlights in reGENERATE, a Vision for the neighbourhood around the 22nd Street Station.
 2. **THAT** Council direct staff to undertake round two of public engagement for the Vision, as detailed in this report.
-

PURPOSE

To seek Council's input on the big moves and strategy highlights in regenerate, a Vision for the neighbourhood around the 22nd Street Station, and to seek Council's direction to undertake public engagement.

SUMMARY

This report brings forward big moves and strategy highlights for a multi-generational Vision for the neighbourhood around 22nd Street SkyTrain Station. The Vision is informed by Council's Strategic Priorities Plan, responding to the climate emergency, the City's commitment to truth and reconciliation, new legislation mandating minimum densities around SkyTrain stations, as well as a unique planning process that featured an Ideas Challenge and significant public engagement. This project is one of seven initiatives in New Westminster supported by the Housing Accelerator Fund program, established by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

The Vision considers how to appropriately implement the provincial density framework in the Connaught Heights and West End neighbourhoods, creating the kind of green network and opportunities for social connection that will maintain and enhance livability as the neighbourhood grows and the climate crisis advances. This neighbourhood is envisioned as one with housing choice for a wide range of residents, including those in greatest need, and where buildings are energy efficient, low carbon, comfortable and safe through extreme weather. The neighbourhood includes commercial and community services that ensure residents can meet many daily needs in close proximity to home, and empowers them to live comfortably car-free. The Vision includes opportunities to advance First Nations priorities throughout, such as by providing space for ceremony, and supporting cultural revitalization in the public realm.

This report seeks Council's feedback on the big moves and strategy highlights, and direction to bring these to community members for review and feedback, prior to Council's consideration of the final Vision document at the end of the year.

BACKGROUND

Timeline and Previous Council Direction

The area around the 22nd Street SkyTrain Station is identified in the Official Community Plan (OCP, 2017) as an area intended to accommodate higher density development, with good access to transit and amenities.

As an outcome of its 2019 declaration of the climate emergency, in February 2020 Council endorsed creating a bold vision for a climate friendly neighbourhood centred around the 22nd Street SkyTrain Station. It was directed that the Vision should 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, equity, and inclusion. Following a pause during the Covid-19 Pandemic, work on a Vision was relaunched in the summer of 2023. At that time, Council directed the Vision to have a dual focus on climate action and closer collaboration with First Nations, in alignment with the City's A Year of Truth.

This project is one of seven key initiatives to be completed through the City's participation in the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). HAF provides financial support that enables the City to advance initiatives aimed at improving the housing approval process, increasing housing supply, and expanding housing choice.

New Provincial Legislation

Partway through visioning, in early 2024, the Province brought forward new housing legislation for Transit Oriented Development areas (TOAs), establishing a minimum density framework for residential lands within 800 meters of SkyTrain stations. This framework expanded the geographic scope of the Vision and informed the density and housing forms anticipated. The Province also introduced new planning legislation

pertaining to housing needs reports, OCP updating timelines and financing growth tools (i.e. new amenity cost charge, expanded scope for development cost charges) which are also being considered by the City alongside this planning work.

Most recently, the Province brought forward housing targets for New Westminster and other municipalities (released in July 2024), through the new *Housing Supply Act* and related regulation. This information, as well as data gathered for an upcoming update to the City's Housing Needs Report, informed the approach to housing supply in the Vision.

Council's Strategic Priorities Plan

Council's Strategic Priorities Plan (SPP) informed the visioning process from the outset, and has served as a guide as the Vision's scope has grown and changed, with new legislation introduced. The SPP informs this and other long range planning work, setting direction for housing goals, community connection and belonging, safe movement of people, people-centred economic development, and asset management and infrastructure. These focus areas, together with the foundational lenses of reconciliation, climate action, and public engagement, underpins the Vision as well as the unique elements of the planning process.

Vision Process

A number of processes informed the Vision:

- On-going conversations with four First Nations who expressed an interest in collaborating on this Vision: Musqueam Nation, Kwantlen Nation, Tsleil-Waututh Nation, and Squamish Nation;
- a robust community engagement process from September to November 2023;
- the reGENERATE Ideas Challenge, from November 2023 through January 2024;
- a design charrette in early March 2024; and
- additional analysis and consultation with external agencies.

Attachment 1 provides more information on these processes and outcomes from each.

VISION HIGHLIGHTS

reGENERATE is a long range, multi-generational and high level Vision, crafted with full neighbourhood build-out to TOA density in mind. Full build-out, if it were to occur, could translate to over 30,000 new residents. The pace and extent of redevelopment of the neighbourhood, will in part be determined by the market. As per best practices with long range planning, the policies which implement the Vision, such as the Official Community Plan (OCP) are expected to be updated periodically.

Big Moves for a Bold Vision

Building on the reGENERATE Ideas Challenge themes, in alignment with Council's Strategic Priorities Plan, and integrating priorities from First Nations, the Vision calls for the following big moves:

- *A Transit Village:* A high-density mixed-use core centered around a regional transit hub, where residents' daily needs can be met in close proximity to home. This move to a more complete, less vehicle-dependent community, supports climate goals by reducing transportation-related emissions.
- *Increased Housing Capacity and Choice:* A neighbourhood of abundant housing with a mix of tenures and affordability levels, and somewhere for everyone to call home. Growth is focused around transit facilities with, local commercial uses, employment opportunities and well-served by community amenities, will support climate goals of enabling car-free living in energy efficient, low carbon buildings.
- *Transforming Streets to be for People:* A well-connected place with a range of safe, sustainable, and enjoyable mobility options that reduce vehicular dependence and lower transportation-related emissions. Sustainable transportation choices are supported through improved bike and pedestrian facilities, car-share and EV charging opportunities, and bus speed and reliability measures. High vehicle volume streets are tamed with enhanced pedestrian environments, and new roads or lanes are added where needed to ensure emergency and service vehicle access and enhance connectivity.
- *Green Networks:* A diverse system of ecologically-rich, resilient public green spaces and corridors, supported by green private and semi-private spaces. This network includes the BC Parkway, options for enhancing the BC Hydro right of way as a green corridor, and connecting these with a network of green streets and lanes, including a "park street" along a portion of Twenty-first Street. Opportunities for expanded and new parks would also enhance the green network, collectively supporting climate adaptation through rainwater management, reduced urban heat island effect, and improved air quality in the neighbourhood.
- *Coast Salish Cultural Contributions:* A community that celebrates the Coast Salish context of the land, and where opportunities for cultural revitalization and reconciliation are provided, including through places for ceremony, cultural visibility in the public realm, and inclusion of housing and economic opportunities for First Nations and indigenous people.
- *Social Connectedness:* A vibrant and inclusive community with a range of social spaces where diverse people can gather, connect, and support each other – through community spaces like a Neighbourhood House (multipurpose facility), public realm design, and sociable building design. There are spaces to build community capacity and knowledge about climate action.

- *Climate-Friendly Buildings:* Low-carbon, low-emissions buildings, powered by clean and renewable energy, and designed to provide safety and comfort through extreme weather, support reduced energy consumption, and minimize waste. Clean and renewable energy powers the neighbourhood, and community members are empowered to conserve and reduce their own energy use.
- *Fiscally Responsible Approach:* A livable neighbourhood that balances growth and long-term municipal financial resilience, where “growth pays for growth” to the degree possible. City-wide infrastructure modelling is anticipated over the next year, as the City adapts to the new financing growth framework the Province has established. Modelling will include consideration of the growth envisioned in the 22nd Street neighbourhood. Amenity priorities in the Vision (such as park expansion and a Neighbourhood House) will also be considered in city-wide amenity planning. This city-wide work will inform detailed density framework and rezoning policies during the implementation phase.

Further details on the above big moves, as well as full-concept, mobility, and green network maps are provided on the draft community engagement boards, included as Attachment 2.

NEXT STEPS

Community Engagement – Round 2

Should Council support the recommendation of this report, the big moves would be brought forward for community engagement in the coming weeks. The goal of this second round of engagement would be to show community members the results of the work they informed, and ensure that their inputs and aspirations are accurately captured in the finalized vision.

The following engagement activities are proposed:

- On-line engagement through the project’s Be Heard New West page;
- A drop-in engagement session in the neighbourhood;
- Targeted outreach and meetings with previously engaged groups; and
- Consultation with the City’s Advisory Planning Commission.

Staff will also circulate to external agencies including TransLink, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, New Westminster School District, and BC Hydro. The work will be shared as part of continuing conversations with the four Nations that have been involved to date, as well as Qayqayt Nation and Kwikwetlem First Nation.

Endorsement of Vision

The input collected from community engagement, First Nations review and comment, external agency consultation, and additional analysis would inform the final Vision. The Vision would be brought forward for Council’s consideration of endorsement at the end of the year.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Expenses related to the second round of community consultation as well as the remaining design and drafting work by the consultant team are accounted for in the 2024 Capital Plan Budget. New Westminster was awarded an \$11.4 million grant from the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) program, established by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). The 22nd Station Bold Vision was a project identified in the City's HAF application and the project costs will be offset by this funding. Separately, \$155,000 for Vision implementation actions has been included in the five-year budget projection, and is anticipated to be included as a 2025 Capital Budget request.

OPTIONS

The following options are presented for Council's consideration:

1. That Council provide feedback on the big moves and strategy highlights in reGENERATE, a Vision for the neighbourhood around the 22nd Street Station;
2. That Council direct staff to undertake round two of public engagement for the Vision, as detailed in this report; or
3. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommends options 1 and 2.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1: Vision Process Summary

Attachment 2: Big moves and strategy highlights from the reGENERATE Vision for the 22nd Street Station Neighbourhood

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:

Stephanie Mak, Planning Assistant II

Meredith Seeton, Senior Policy Planner

This report was reviewed by:

Britney Dack, Supervisor, Land Use Planning

Lynn Roxburgh, Manager, Housing and Land Use Planning

This report was approved by:

Rupinder Basi, Deputy Director, Planning

Serena Trachta, Acting Director, Planning and Development

Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer