

REPORT

Climate Action, Planning and Development

To: Mayor Cote and Members of Council **Date:** December 13, 2021

From: Emilie K Adin, MCIP **File:** 01.0185.20
Director, Climate Action, Planning and
Development

Item #: 2021-606

Subject: Metro 2040: Land Use Designation Amendment Requests

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council direct staff to send the attached letter to Metro Vancouver as City comment on Surrey's proposed amendments to the Regional Growth Strategy land use designations for properties in the South Campbell Heights area.

PURPOSE

To seek direction from Council regarding the City of Surrey's proposed amendments to the Regional Growth Strategy, Metro 2040.

SUMMARY

The City of Surrey has submitted to Metro Vancouver three requests to amend Metro 2040:

1. to facilitate the development of the new Cloverdale Hospital and Cancer Centre;
2. to enable the development of medium-density residential and commercial uses and an assisted living facility in the Douglas area; and
3. to expand the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) and enable the development of mixed employment uses in South Campbell Heights.

The City of New Westminster has the opportunity to provide comment to Metro Vancouver on the above proposed amendments.

The first two proposed amendments are seen to be minor in nature and, if approved, are not anticipated to increase pressure for further land use amendments nor any changes to the UCB. Therefore, staff advise that the City put forward no formal objection on either of the proposed amendments.

The proposed amendments to the South Campbell Heights area are more substantial in nature. Although the area has been subject to a historical Special Study Area overlay, staff advise that sufficient justification for the need for additional employment lands in this location has not been provided and there is a policy concern that climate implications of the proposed extension of the UCB. On balance, the proposed amendments are not in alignment with the goals and policies of Metro 2040, nor the City's Seven Bold Steps for Climate Action. Staff is seeking Council's direction in advance of the January 7, 2022 deadline for comments from member jurisdictions.

BACKGROUND

In July 2021, the City of Surrey submitted the following requests to amend Metro 2040:

1. Amending the designation of an approximately 9 ha site at 5510 – 180 Street from Industrial to Mixed Employment to allow for the development of the new Cloverdale Hospital and Cancer Centre;
2. Amending the designation of an approximately 2.5 ha site at 228 175A Street in the Douglas area of south Surrey from Mixed Employment to General Urban to enable the development of medium-density residential and commercial uses and an assisted living facility; and
3. Extending the UCB by 223.7 ha within a Special Study Area in South Campbell Heights and amending land use designations from Rural to Mixed Employment (160.8 ha), Conservation and Recreation (55.5 ha) and Agricultural (12.1 ha); and redesignating 13.4 ha of Mixed Employment lands within the UCB to Conservation and Recreation.

All three of Surrey's proposed amendments are considered to be Type 3 minor amendments under the regional plan, which means they require a simple majority support from the regional Board, and no regional public hearing will be held.

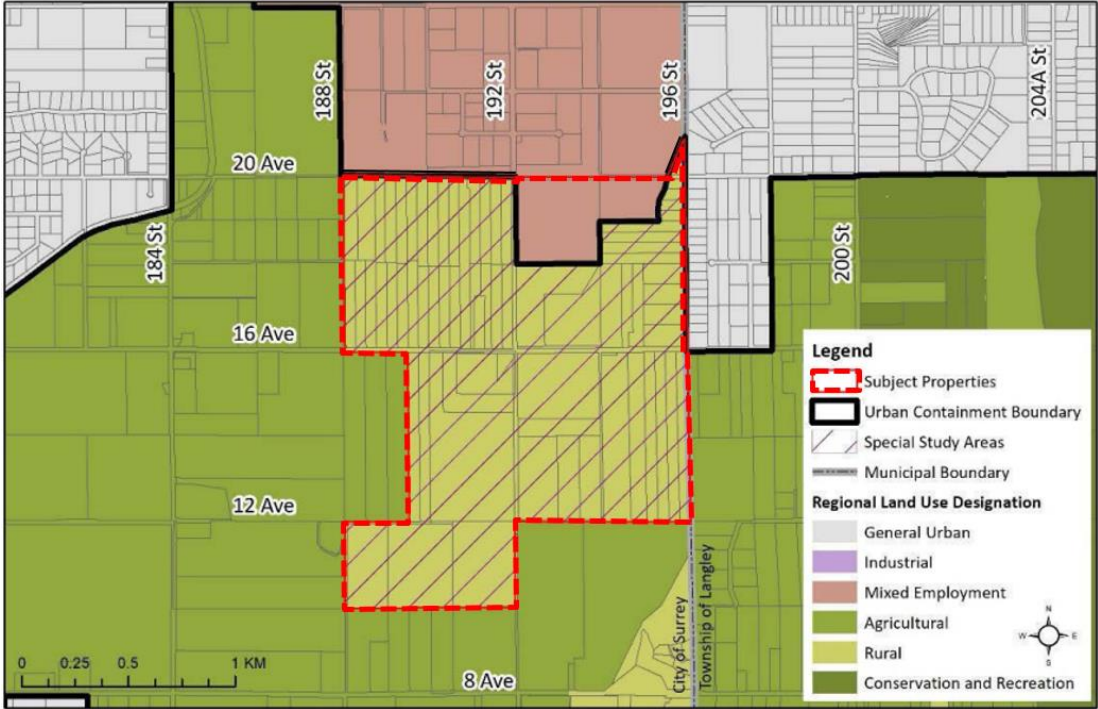
At its October 29, 2021 meeting, the Board of Directors of Metro Vancouver gave first, second and third readings to the amendment bylaws, and directed staff to refer the amendments to affected local governments and local First Nations.

On November 10, 2021, the City received the referrals from Metro Vancouver (see Attachments 1, 2 and 3). The City is invited to provide written comments on the City of Surrey's proposals by January 7th, 2022.

South Campbell Heights Proposed Amendments

The diagrams below provide a visual depiction of the proposed changes to the South Campbell Heights area (red dashed outline). The first diagram shows the current extent of the Mixed Employment designation (shown in pink) and the UCB (thick black line) which is generally aligned along the edge between neighbouring Township of Langley’s General Urban development (grey) and Agricultural (green) or Rural (hatched light green) lands.

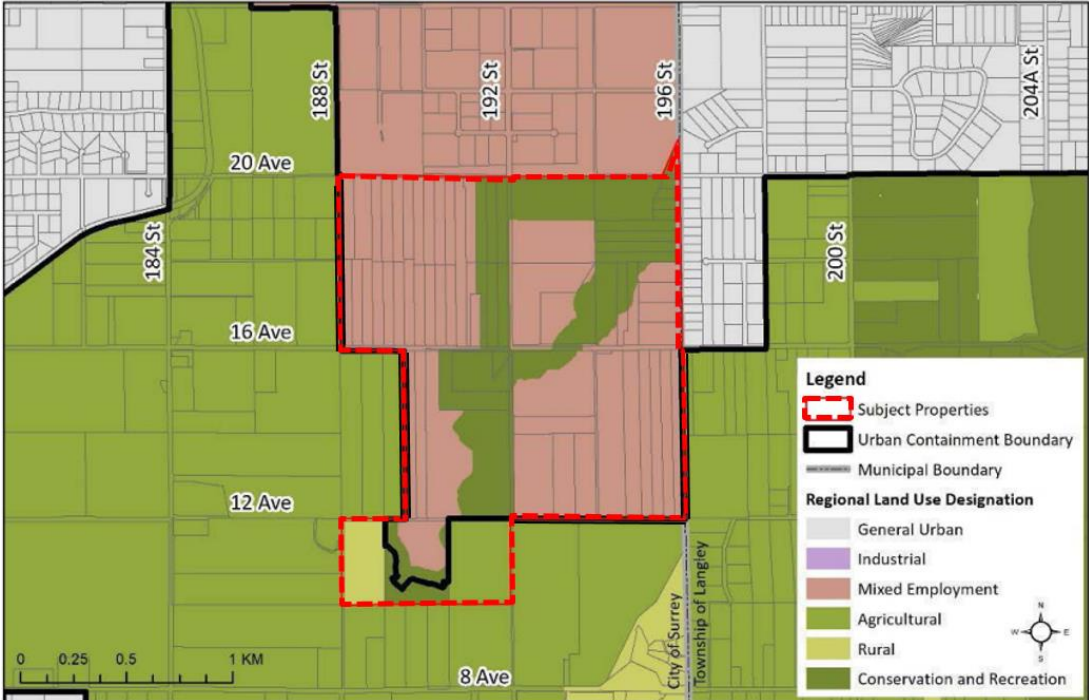
Current Regional Land Use Designations, UCB & Special Study Area



(source: Metro Vancouver)

The second diagram shows City of Surrey’s proposal to convert predominantly Rural lands (shown below in light green) within the Special Study Area (hatched) to predominantly Mixed Employment (pink), with Conservation and Recreation designations proposed primarily along the riparian corridor (green), and one parcel in the southeast corner converted from Rural to Agricultural (green). The UCB (thick black line) is proposed to be extended to include the new Mixed Employment area. It would extend further south than any portion of the current UCB alignment east of the Redwood Heights area of Surrey, creating a significantly larger protrusion into the Agricultural lands.

Proposed Regional Land Use Designations & Urban Containment Boundary



(Source: Metro Vancouver)

DISCUSSION

Just as municipal Official Community Plans need to be amended from time to time, as all land use opportunities cannot be fully anticipated at the time these plans are drafted, Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) amendments which enable emerging opportunities can also be appropriate where the changes are in alignment with the principles and policies of the plan.

Attachments 1, 2 and 3 describe the City of Surrey’s proposed amendments and include detailed regional analysis of the amendment requests, including overviews of the trade-offs implicit in the amendment requests.

City staff have reviewed the referrals, and concur with the regional analysis that the amendments for the Cloverdale Hospital and Cancer Centre site as well as for the mixed-uses and assisted living facility in the Douglas area are, on balance, in alignment with the regional plan. These amendments relate to relatively small sites, located within the UCB, and would enable the development of needed services and amenities in locations consistent with the regional plan.

Staff suggest, however, that Council may wish to consider providing additional comment expressing reservations on the proposed amendment for the South Campbell Heights area. Attachment 4 provides a draft letter to the regional Board suggesting that the proposed changes would be significant in nature and contrary to the goals of the RGS. The sections below provide further discussion of these points.

Addressing the Climate Emergency

One of the goals of Metro 2040 is to protect the environment and respond to climate change impacts. The draft updated RGS, Metro 2050, features climate action and resilience more prominently. Increasingly impactful climate change impacts and continued extreme weather events in the region reconfirm the need for this focus on planning for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Land use decisions have a major climate impact. Rural, Conservation and Recreation, and Agricultural lands serve important climate resilience functions through carbon sequestration and storage, stormwater management and infiltration, and food production. Further, ensuring that people are able to live near where they work is critical to carbon-heavy trip reductions and reducing emissions, as well as improving quality of life.

Located on the edge of the urban area, extension of the UCB down into the South Campbell Heights area is not considered to be aligned with the regional goals of creating a compact urban area and responding to climate change impacts. Although the proposal also includes designating some riparian areas along the Little Campbell River as Conservation and Recreation lands, it represents a net loss of non-urban lands due to the significant increase in urban land use designations and the extension of the UCB. Regional staff note that there is capacity to accommodate job growth within existing urban areas of the region. City staff suggest that the capacity to accommodate these uses in existing Urban Centres and Frequent Transit Development Areas may grow, given the significant impacts and changes to business operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further, there are particular environmental considerations in the South Campbell Heights context, notably the underlying unconfined Brookwood aquifer, which is vulnerable to contamination and reduced recharging through development. Surrey's staff report notes it is "an important resource as it is used for potable and irrigation water. It also directly supplies flows to the Little Campbell River which has native salmon runs and Species at Risk". Some environmental analysis has been undertaken, and more work is scheduled for a future planning phase, to prevent negative impacts from development. It has not yet been demonstrated how a business park development could occur without impacting the resilience of this system.

Preventing Further Pressure on the Urban Containment Boundary

The UCB is a critical regional planning tool to help focus growth appropriately, make efficient use of infrastructure investments, prevent sprawl, support healthy communities, and mitigate climate change. Staff advise that any expansion to the UCB should be given careful consideration, regardless of whether the extension is in a Special Study Area. This is particularly true of proposed changes that may open the door to further

expansion. Changes, like the one proposed, that create new protrusions into rural, agricultural or conservation and recreation lands create a strong likelihood of increased land speculation and additional UCB expansion applications.

The expansion proposed in South Campbell Heights would bring the UCB into closer proximity with the boundary of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). This may also increase speculative pressure on the ALR.

Supporting Industrial Uses

The need for additional industrial lands within the region was put forward as part of the case for the amendments by the City of Surrey. Metro Vancouver's staff report to Regional Planning Committee notes that "[t]he recently-completed Regional Industrial Lands Strategy documented the extremely limited supply of industrial lands in the region, the consistently strong demand for industrial space, and the few opportunities to add more lands to the regional market."

Notably, Surrey's regional land use designation proposal for the urban areas is to redesignate to Mixed Employment rather than to Industrial. The Mixed Employment designation specifically provides flexibility to municipalities to allow for a broader range of potential uses, including the creation of auto-oriented low density commercial centres. These uses would be better located in alternative-transportation-oriented centres and frequent transit development areas. Metro Vancouver's report notes "it will be incumbent on the City of Surrey to ensure that the land uses in this area support industry and do not compete with major trip-generating uses that are more appropriately located in Urban Centres". This may be difficult to achieve due to the range of uses contemplated in Surrey's South Campbell Heights local area plan, including industrial, institutional, business and office uses.

If the goal is to enhance the industrial lands supply, staff concur with Regional Planning Committee's determination that, to protect the lands for industrial uses, the land use designation applied should be Industrial, not Mixed Employment. In this case, the application would need to be updated to reflect an intent of conversion to Industrial lands. With an amended proposal, a different evaluation of trade-offs would be needed, including consideration of industrial options within the UCB given the changing nature of commercial uses as the region recovers from the pandemic.

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 requests 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 the attached letter to Metro Vancouver as official City comments on the City of Surrey's RGS amendment requests for the South Campbell Heights area.
2. That Council decline to comment on City of Surrey's RGS amendment requests.
3. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommend Option 1.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Metro Vancouver 2040 Land Use Designation Amendment Request from the City of Surrey – Cloverdale Hospital Site

Attachment 2: Metro Vancouver 2040 Land Use Designation Amendment Request from the City of Surrey – 228 175A Street

Attachment 3: Metro Vancouver 2040 Land Use Designation Amendment Request from the City of Surrey – South Campbell Heights

Attachment 4: Draft Letter to Metro Vancouver regarding the City of Surrey's Metro 2040: Land Use Designation Amendment Requests

APPROVALS

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