

Attachment 1
Staff Memo

MEMORANDUM

Climate Action, Planning and Development

To: Emilie K Adin, MCIP
Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development
Date: May 30, 2022

From: Jackie Teed, Senior Manager, Climate Action, Planning and Development
File: 01.0185.20

Subject: **Att 1 - Staff Memo.docx**

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Director forward this memo and the following resolutions to Council for consideration:

1. **THAT** the proposed Metro 2050 Regional Growth Strategy (*Metro Vancouver Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1339, 2022*) be accepted, as presented, pursuant to section 436 of the *Local Government Act*; and
 2. **THAT** staff be directed to forward the Council resolution of acceptance of Metro 2050 Regional Growth Strategy (*Metro Vancouver Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1339, 2022*) to Metro Vancouver Regional District; and
 3. **THAT** staff be directed to include in the letter conveying acceptance of Metro 2050 that the City of New Westminster encourages further consideration of including municipal-scale population and housing targets in regional plans going forward.
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PURPOSE

To seek Council acceptance of the updated Regional Growth Strategy, Metro 2050.

SUMMARY

Metro Vancouver, in consultation with member jurisdictions, has prepared an updated Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), Metro 2050. From July to November 2021, Metro Vancouver provided a comment period on the draft, during which the City submitted a letter expressing substantial support and offering minor comments. Revisions based on these and other comments were then made to the draft, and in March and April the regional Board gave first and second reading and held a public hearing for the RGS bylaw that would repeal Metro 2040 and replace it with Metro 2050.

This memo describe the changes that were made to the draft, and reconfirm the alignment between the regional strategy and New Westminster's Official Community Plan and Strategic Plan. Although most of the comments offered by the City did not result in changes to the RGS, staff advise that, on balance, the regional plan provides a strong framework to guide growth in the coming decades.

The City had encouraged Metro to reconsider replacing municipal population, employment and housing projections with sub-regional projections, and to consider changing nomenclature from projections to targets. These changes were not made to the draft, but conversations on the topic will likely continue at the regional and provincial level, given senior governments' interest in BC's growth areas better meeting existing and expected housing demand.

Staff recommend that the City accept the updated RGS, and that the City also convey to Metro Vancouver an abiding interest in including municipal-level population and housing targets in regional plans going forward.

BACKGROUND

In 2019, Metro embarked on a 10 year update to the Regional Growth Strategy, Metro 2040. Staff participated in the development of the draft through Intergovernmental Advisory Committee meetings, during which verbal and written comments were provided chapter by chapter. At their regular November 1, 2021 meeting, Council received a report on the draft updated RGS, and directed staff to provide formal comments to Metro Vancouver. These included substantial support for the draft, which was seen to be in alignment with New Westminster's land use and planning framework, and offered minor comments regarding the regional affordable housing target, the Major Transit Growth Corridor concept, and clarifying member jurisdiction actions.

After the comment period, Metro Vancouver updated Metro 2050. The final strategy can be downloaded at <http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/regional-planning/metro-vancouver-2040/metro-2050/Pages/default.aspx>. At its March 25 meeting, the MVRD Board gave first and second reading to the RGS bylaw. A Public Hearing was held on April 20, and Metro Vancouver subsequently sent letters to member jurisdictions seeking acceptance of the updated RGS within a 60 day window (see Attachment 2). Third and final reading of the bylaw by the MVRD Board is anticipated for July, 2022.

ANALYSIS

Revisions to Metro 2050

The updated Metro 2050 has not changed substantially since the draft was considered by Council in November. Metro Vancouver staff provided a comprehensive summary of all comments received, provided responses to each, and noted resulting changes to the Strategy. The only change resulting from New Westminster's comments relates to planning for "first and last mile" connections to transit (full responses to the City's comments are provided in Attachment 3 to the Council report). The overall changes from the draft to the final Strategy can be summarized as follows:

- Simplification of the Frequent Transit Development Area (FTDA) concept through removal of the corridor and station area sub-types and replacement with guidance notes encouraging members to tailor the urban form of an FTDA to suit the transportation service provided;
- additional content related to Indigenous perspectives and priorities;
- clarification that the Regional Affordable Housing Target is intended to be measured at a regional scale, and not applied to individual municipalities, individual developments, or individual Urban Centres or FTDA's; and
- clarification that the policy enabling limited residential uses on Employment lands adjacent to rapid transit stations is an option for member jurisdictions, not a requirement.

Alignment with Principles and Values of New Westminster's Planning Framework

In their review of an RGS, local governments must consider the Strategy in the context of their OCP. The City will be required to prepare a Regional Context Statement (RCS), identifying the relationship between the OCP and the content of the RGS, and how the two are consistent or how the OCP will be made consistent over time.

As discussed in the November 1, 2021 report to Council, Metro 2050, with its stronger focus on climate, equity, reconciliation, and housing, is seen to be consistent with the principles and values that inform the City's Official Community Plan and Council's Strategic Plan. Regional land use designations have not changed in the update, and continue to be consistent with OCP land use designations. Developing an RCS that responds to some of the ways Metro 2050 is different from Metro 2040, such as new regional affordable rental housing, tree canopy, and natural areas targets, and updated regional overlays, will require some analysis and consideration. Staff anticipates the City will be able to prepare an updated RCS that shows strong alignment and local contribution to regional goals.

Although most of the comments the City had provided did not result in the requested changes to the RGS, staff considers there to be strong alignment between the regional and municipal planning frameworks. Some of the City's advice, such as shifting from growth projections to targets, are part of conversations that can continue over time.

Regional Distribution of Growth

The City of New Westminster has been committed to accommodating growth, in recognition of the growing regional population, the housing crisis, and the importance of focusing growth in urban parts of the region. In the City's comments on the draft RGS, the City had requested Metro reconsider the shift from municipal to sub-regional population and housing projections, as this shift away from municipal estimates makes it unclear whether member municipalities are accommodating their share of regional growth. Further, the City had advocated for shifting the nomenclature from projections to targets. These changes were not made to the RGS.

While this lack of update to the final draft of the new RGS runs counter to Council's stated interest, staff recognizes and advises that it would be challenging to otherwise achieve consensus amongst member jurisdictions. Further, a shift towards harder municipal targets would also ideally be preceded by the provision of new regulatory tools by the Province. Senior government funding for municipalities to undertake the planning work necessary to more proactively address housing supply and to hit hard targets would likely be needed. Staff therefore advises the City to not withhold its acceptance of the RGS. Further, staff proposes that the City convey to Metro Vancouver a continued interest in exploring a shift towards setting municipal targets.

NEXT STEPS

Member jurisdictions have 60 days from receipt of the updated RGS to consider its acceptance. Should all member jurisdictions accept the Strategy, the regional Board is anticipated to consider adoption of the bylaw in July.

Following adoption of an updated RGS, the City will have two years to update its RCS. To inform this update, staff will undertake additional analysis to determine response options to the updates to the RGS, and the ways the City can contribute to meeting new regional targets.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

The Transportation and Climate Action Divisions were consulted on this memo.

OPTIONS

The following options are provided for Council's consideration:

1. That the Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy, titled Metro 2050 (Metro Vancouver Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1339, 2022), be received for information;
2. That the proposed Metro 2050 Regional Growth Strategy (Metro Vancouver Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1339, 2022) be accepted, as presented, pursuant to section 436 of the Local Government Act;
3. That staff be directed to forward the Council resolution of acceptance of Metro 2050 Regional Growth Strategy (Metro Vancouver Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1339, 2022) to Metro Vancouver Regional District;
4. That staff be directed to include in the letter conveying acceptance of Metro 2050 that the City of New Westminster encourages further consideration of including municipal-scale population and housing targets in regional plans going forward; or
5. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommend Options 2 to 4.

APPROVALS

This memo was prepared by:
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