



CITY OF VANCOUVER

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POLICY REPORT  
DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING

Report Date: April 15, 2008  
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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Director of Planning in consultation with Director of Housing Centre,  
General Manager of Engineering Services, and General Manager of  
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT: Metro Vancouver's Options for Growth Management - City Comments

## RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council endorse staff comments in this report and forward the report to Metro Vancouver staff as input into developing the draft Regional Growth Management Strategy.

## GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services recommends approval.

## CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval.

## COUNCIL POLICY

In 1994 Council endorsed the Greater Vancouver Regional District's (now Metro Vancouver) Transport 2021 as a long range strategic transportation plan for the Region.

In 1995 Council endorsed the Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP) and its key objectives to protect the Green Zone, Build Complete Communities, Achieve a Compact Metropolitan Region, and Increase Transportation Choice. (The LRSP subsequently became accepted as the regional growth management strategy under Provincial legislation.)

In 1999 Council adopted the City's Regional Context Statement Official Development Plan that illustrates how City plans and policies contribute to implementing the Livable Region Strategic Plan. (Regional context statements are required from each municipality within a regional growth strategy area.)

## SUMMARY

The Metro Vancouver Board released a discussion paper, *Choosing a Sustainable Future for Metro Vancouver - Options for Metro Vancouver's Growth Management Strategy*, to initiate a review and update of the 1996 Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP). The Options discussion paper proposes a regional vision, goals, strategies, and implementation options. (See Appendix A.) Responses to the Options discussion paper are being used by Metro Vancouver staff, working with the Metro Board's Land Use and Transportation Committee, to prepare a draft regional growth management plan, anticipated for release this summer.

Implementation options: The implementation options in the discussion paper are about how much control the region should have over municipal decisions, in order to achieve the desired regional vision and goals. An understanding of the implementation options provides a background to reviewing the discussion paper proposals as a whole.

City staff grouped the 30 options into three types of approaches: (a) Goal Approach, (b) Maps/Targets/Guidelines Approach, and (c) Designation/Requirements Approach. The Goal Approach generally represents a step backward from the LRSP. The Maps/Guidelines/Targets Approach is more desirable because it continues a partnership which provides regional guidance, while also ensuring opportunities for municipalities to do locally relevant planning implementation. The Designation Approach should continue to be used with limits and with care, since it sets regional land use boundaries within municipalities and any changes to these boundaries mean changes to the regional plan, via Metro Vancouver Board public hearing and approval, and thus would appear to pre-empt local municipal processes and decision-making. The LRSP's current designation is the Green Zone. The Options paper discusses extending this approach to a variety of other designations.

Overall regional proposals: The proposed goals and strategies are the basis for the regional plan directions. These are largely consistent not only with the LRSP, but also with existing and emerging City policies. For each goal, with its accompanying strategies and implementation options, City staff have identified several comments and questions, including:

- Goal 1: Compact Metropolitan Structure - Clarity is needed about which land use(s) should take precedence when a rapid transit station is located in, or adjacent to, an industrial area: jobs and housing at transit (Goal 1); or protect industrial (Goal 3); or a hybrid of commercial and industrial jobs but without housing? The City has been working to increase job growth near these transit stations while also protecting industrial land, as well as providing a diversity of job opportunities in the city, and needs further discussion of these challenges as part of drafting the regional plan, to ensure consistency of local and regional

- policy. City examples include Grandview Boundary I-3 rezoning policies and Marine Drive station area planning on the ex-ICBC site.
- Goal 2: Diverse and Affordable Housing Choices - The City has accepted the concept of targets as part of Housing Action Plans in a separate Council report on the Regional Affordable Housing Strategy and this is reaffirmed in this Council report. However, thorough analysis and consultation with municipalities is needed to set meaningful targets that reflect local circumstances.
  - Goal 3: Diverse Regional Economy - Protection of industrial land is a welcome new addition to regional growth management discussions. What is the best approach (Goal; Map; or Designation) and how will this affect Vancouver decisions, such as large format retail rezoning policies, I-3 zoning, and Marine Drive station area planning?
  - Goal 4: Natural Assets - A key question in this section is whether the regional plan's current designation of the Green Zone should be taken a step further to add a schedule of permitted uses, and how this would reflect some of the more urban uses that already exist in Vancouver Green Zone parks, such as the Aquarium and restaurants.
  - Goal 5: Sustainable Transportation - Staff comments in this section include the need to identify the Broadway corridor as distinct from Hastings and 41<sup>st</sup> in its transit service needs; the need for an adequate supply of transit to serve existing demand; more emphasis on walking and cycling; goods movement options of short haul rail and short sea shipping; and the need for more connection between land use and transportation planning.

Sustainability theme: City staff welcome the new references to sustainability in the Options discussion paper. However, staff feel that the environmental imperatives do not resonate strongly enough. Staff believe that sustainability should be an over-arching theme throughout the paper. This is not mainly a question of different content, since the proposals as a whole do address many aspects of sustainability, but more a question of being more explicit about the sustainability connections that are already there. The regional plan needs to be strong on not just what it is doing and how to do it, but on why. This can help to build the public consensus and ownership that are needed to implement a regional plan.

Population projections: The projections included in the Options paper are being updated, and will reflect a higher population projection for Vancouver than shown, to better reflect Vancouver's trends and current zoning and policy.

Beyond current zoning and policy, EcoDensity provides the opportunity to ask, with public discussion, if current capacity for growth in zoning and policies is the right amount, the right types, and in the right places. In terms of rate of growth, it may be difficult to actually increase the city's recent rate over the longer term, because the past opportunities for growth on large scale sites on essentially vacant land are becoming much more limited. However, EcoDensity could allow Vancouver to sustain its growth and to achieve more growth than would otherwise be the case, to improve long term sustainability.

## PURPOSE

This report provides an overview and commentary on Metro Vancouver's *Choosing a Sustainable Future for Metro Vancouver - Options for Metro Vancouver's Growth Management Strategy*. Metro Vancouver is drawing on responses to this discussion paper as input into

preparing a new draft growth management strategy, to replace/update the current growth management strategy, the Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP).

## BACKGROUND

Metro Vancouver update of the regional growth strategy: The Metro Vancouver Options discussion paper, *Choosing a Sustainable Future for Metro Vancouver*, notes that business as usual is unlikely to deliver a livable and sustainable future in the face of the multiple challenges facing this region: climate change, a growing and aging population, traffic congestion, housing affordability, and the region's ties to a global economy. Revision of the LRSP is intended to manage the 25-year projected growth of over 800,000 people and 400,000 jobs, strengthen the region's economic competitiveness, enhance local communities' well-being, and preserve the ecological assets of the region.

The new regional growth management strategy is to provide a long-term land use plan, and related transportation policies, to 2031, that define a framework for future residential, commercial, and industrial growth compatible with the protection of the region's natural assets and green space. It is also intended to provide a link between long term land use and transportation planning, noting that TransLink is working on a long term plan called Transport 2040 and a new 10-year plan.

Metro public process to date: At the end of last year and into the early part of this year, Metro staff engaged in a public consultation process seeking responses to their Options discussion paper. They provided website information and opportunity for on-line input; held public meetings in locations throughout the region; and made presentations to municipal councils where requested. There were two public meetings in Vancouver as well as a Sustainability Dialogue and a Sustainability Breakfast. Metro staff made a presentation to Vancouver City Council on January 15, 2008.

Legal background on regional growth management: Regional growth strategies were enabled through Provincial legislation in 1995 to provide a local government framework for collaborative regional planning and growth management. A regional growth strategy, or amendments to it, must be approved by the regional board. The process includes a regional public hearing. The required vote needed for approval is a unanimous vote, but is being reconsidered as part of this plan update, and has temporarily been changed by a Provincial Order in Council to a 2/3 weighted vote for certain elements.

Once a regional growth strategy is adopted, all subsequent regional district bylaws and their work and services must be consistent with the strategy. Member municipalities must draft Regional Context Statements that demonstrate how their official plans are consistent with the regional plan. (In the case of Vancouver, a Regional Context Statement is an Official Development Plan that demonstrates how our zoning and policies are consistent with the regional plan.) Regional Context Statements must be approved by a 50% +1 weighted vote of the regional board (without a Metro Vancouver Board public hearing).

## DISCUSSION

Since the Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP) is now nearly a decade and a half old and new issues have arisen, it is very timely to have a review and update of our regional growth

strategy. Metro Vancouver's Options discussion paper proposes an updated regional vision, goals, and strategies, and a set of options for achieving each strategy. To describe and comment on this material, the discussion in this report is organized into the following sections:

1. Highlights of Options Discussion Paper
  - a. Vision, Goals, and Strategies
  - b. Implementation Options
2. Staff Comments
  - a. Implementation Options
  - b. Overall Proposals
3. Population Projections
4. Next Steps

## 1. HIGHLIGHTS OF OPTIONS DISCUSSION PAPER

### a) Description of Vision, Goals, and Strategies

The five proposed goals and 11 strategies in the Options discussion paper are listed in Table 1 below. (The Vision statement is included in Appendix A.) The proposed vision, goals, and strategies contain many of the same themes and elements as the 1996 LRSP, as noted in the Options discussion paper:

*“Regional growth management has a long legacy in Metro Vancouver, with successive regional plans guiding growth and development for over 40 years. The themes of these plans have endured: connect land use and transportation by building a network of centres connected by transit and roads; build strong, complete communities with jobs close to home; build in a compact way; and take care of agricultural land, green spaces, and waterways.”*

Beyond this general commentary on similarities to past regional growth management, City staff note that some of the key differences in the Options paper, versus the LRSP, are:

Sustainability: The Options discussion paper acknowledges sustainability more explicitly than the LRSP and introduces the key issues of climate change and energy use.

Affordability: Goal 2 directly addresses housing affordability. Even though this topic was included in the 1996 LRSP, it was not nearly as prominent and did not include discussion of implementation strategies.

Economy: Goal 3 is a completely new goal statement for the regional plan. As one part of this goal, there is a new strategy to protect industrial land. This is a topic that was not addressed at all in the LRSP. There is also more prominence in the Options discussion paper than in the LRSP on locating commercial jobs in centres and thus curbing the trend of dispersed commercial growth that has occurred since the LRSP.

**Table 1:  
Proposed Regional Goals and Strategies in Metro Vancouver Options Discussion Paper**

Proposed Goals	Proposed Strategies
1. Accommodate growth in a sustainable and compact metropolitan structure	1. Focus regional growth in centres and along transit corridors
	2. Establish defined areas for urban growth
2. Offer diverse and affordable housing choices	3. Increase housing supply and diversity including the supply of housing for low and moderate income households
3. Support and strengthen a diverse regional economy	4. Maintain an adequate supply of industrial land to meet the needs of the regional economy
	5. Facilitate the location of major commercial (retail, office, entertainment) activities in centre locations to enhance access for workers and customers and build prosperous, attractive centres in every subregion
	6. Maintain the agricultural land base for food production through supportive land use and development policies
4. Protect and enhance the region's natural assets	7. Ensure the long term protection of critical habitat areas, drinking watersheds, riparian areas, parks, recreation corridors, forests and agricultural lands
	8. Ensure the protection and enhancement of ecological and recreational connectivity across the region
5. Create a sustainable transportation system	9. Increase transit supply throughout the region and promote walking and cycling
	10. Advance a regional network of roads and highways that prioritizes goods movement, transit operations and high-occupancy vehicles
	11. Manage transportation demand

### **b) Description of Implementation Options**

Each of the 11 proposed strategies in the Options discussion paper has two to three options presented for guiding the implementation of the plan: 30 options in total. (The Options are included in Appendix A.) The options are about how to ensure municipal actions will individually and collectively achieve the proposed goals and strategies. The options provide a continuum from loose to strong, of regional guidance and regional control over municipal land use decisions. City staff have grouped the options into three types of approaches. Each is briefly described below:

**Goal Approach:** With this implementation option, the regional plan would state only a general goal for each strategy (e.g., focus growth in centres; promote affordable housing; protect industrial lands; increase transit use). Implementation would be left to each municipality and would be described in the municipality's Regional Context Statement.

All of the 11 strategies but one include this approach as Option A. (The one exception is strategy 7 where Option A is to formally designate a Green Zone, which is already in the LRSP.)

Maps/Targets/Guidelines Approach: With this implementation approach, the regional plan would include reference maps and/or targets and/or guidelines for achievement of the various strategies (e.g., map the general locations of centres and corridors for growth focus; set targets for housing affordability; map the general location of industrial areas for protection; set transit, cycling, and walking targets.) Details would be filled in by each municipality and described in their Regional Context Statement. (Much of the LRSP is similar to a Maps Approach.)

Six of the 11 strategies include this approach as one of the implementation options -- usually as the middle option, Option B.

Designation/Requirements Approach: This approach would entail regional designations and regional requirements. The designations would be regional land use designations. They would be parcel-based - i.e., maps with specific detailed land area boundaries (e.g., for centres, station areas, and/or industrial lands). These boundaries would be designated at the regional level, in addition to policies established at the municipal level. Designation requires each municipality to adhere to these boundaries in its local policy and zoning, and to obtain regional board approval of any changes whether major or minor.

For some Goals, this approach would include region-wide requirements other than land use: e.g., a uniform regional approach to affordability (parking regulations, development cost charges, inclusionary housing requirements); and specific transportation demand management strategies at the local level (transit priority measures, parking supply measures.)

Almost all of the strategies (eight of 11) include this approach as one or more of their implementation options, often as Option C.

## 2. CITY STAFF COMMENTS

### a) Comments on Implementation Options

Goal Approach: Generally staff do not support using the approach of having the regional plan depend for its implementation on simply stating a goal without any further maps, targets, or guidelines. In many cases it would be a step backward from the current LRSP. The Goal Approach acknowledges the wide range of individual municipal differences across the region, but provides little, if any, assurance that there will be consistency in achieving regional planning objectives.

Maps/Targets/Guidelines Approach: Generally staff support this type of approach. Using generalized maps and guidelines provides much more specific regional guidance to each municipality than the Goal Approach, while still providing for each municipality to have a strong role in filling in the details at the municipal level, and 'reporting back,' so to speak, to the Metro Vancouver Board for approval of each municipality's Regional Context Statement.

Along with generalized maps and guidelines, one component of this approach for some of the strategies is to set targets (e.g., targets for housing and jobs around transit; targets for

affordable housing; and/or transportation mode split targets). Targets can be very useful to measure need and monitor progress. Vancouver in the past has accepted population and employment targets in regional planning processes, and Vancouver sets mode split targets in its transportation planning.

However, a great deal of background work is generally needed to set meaningful targets, both in terms of technical analysis and collaboration with member municipalities. It would be a worry if regional staff set targets themselves without full municipal participation.

Designations/Requirements Approach: Staff support for this approach is very limited because it means that the regional plan sets precise land use boundaries on behalf of municipalities. The current LRSP designates the existing Green Zone and a de facto urban growth boundary outside the Green Zone. This type of designation is important in shaping a compact region, and should be continued.

However, to extend this approach across the region to new types of additional designations poses difficulties because this is a large and greatly varied region. It would be a challenge for regional staff to have the required local knowledge and regional staff resources, and it would have significant implications for local municipal processes and decision-making.

This approach means that any changes to regionally designated land uses in municipalities are actually changes to the regional plan. This requires a full plan amendment process at the regional level, including regional public hearing. This also requires a change to the municipality's Regional Context Statement, through another public hearing, this time at the City level. If a zoning change is also needed, this would also require a City public hearing for the specific land use change related to the Zoning By-Law.

The example of designating station areas at all station locations across the region demonstrates the difficulties that would be encountered with this approach. It is difficult to imagine that regional staff could draw specific parcel-based designations of land around every transit station in the region in order to designate station areas for growth, including specific properties inside and outside of these regionally-designated zones and appropriate land uses and densities within each zone. It would require examining locally-varied factors such as existing land uses, lot and site sizes, ownerships and assemblies, age and size of existing buildings, topography, surrounding development and context, urban design impacts, etc. The region would be unlikely to have the knowledge or resources for this work, and in advance of a local planning processes and municipal zoning decisions, it appears to be replacing and pre-empting local consultation and municipal decision-making.

Similarly, with another example -- regional requirements to require a uniform regional approach to affordable housing. This does not recognize the variation in context across the region, and the fact that uniform responses will not respond to housing sub-markets and their local realities. Municipalities need to retain control over the process of affordable housing development because affordable housing is achieved through negotiation on a case-by-case basis, usually in partnership with senior governments. In addition, affordable housing achieved through development processes is negotiated in conjunction with other community amenities, such as parks, child care facilities, etc. Municipal control over these negotiations is required to ensure that amenities reflect local economic realities and needs. It is important that tools such as inclusionary zoning, bonusing, infill, and other innovations be developed regionally through a partnership between Metro Vancouver and its member



municipalities, but it is also important that each municipality retain the flexibility to adapt these tools and models to its own circumstances.

### **b) Comments on Overall Regional Proposals**

Stepping back from the specific implementation options, the basis for the regional plan directions is the vision, goals, and strategies. As proposed in the Options discussion paper, these are largely consistent not only with the existing regional plan (the LRSP), but also with existing and emerging City policies.

The new emphases in the Options paper, as compared to the LRSP, on sustainability, affordability, and the economy, are welcome, and are reflective of new emphases at the City level as well -- with initiatives underway like the Green Building Strategy, EcoDensity, Metro Core Jobs and Economy Land Use Plan, and the Rental Housing Strategy, among others.

While this Council report does not provide detailed comments on all 11 strategies and 30 options, it does provide highlights of questions and comments related to each goal area, as follows. Many of these are likely to involve further discussion through the draft plan stage.

#### **GOAL 1 - COMPACT METROPOLITAN STRUCTURE**

City staff strongly support the need for a compact growth and a contained urban footprint for the region. A key strategy of Goal 1 is to locate growth in centres and along transit corridors. This generally reflects much of Vancouver's current zoning and policy. Staff support a Maps/Guidelines/Target Approach (Option B), but have some additional comments and questions about how this would be applied especially in the Vancouver context:

Corridors vs centres: The Options paper calls for growth in centres and along transit corridors. Transit corridors may make sense where there are frequent stops (i.e., local bus), but seem to make less sense where there are infrequent stops (i.e., rapid transit, rapid bus). There can also be trade-offs between locating growth on corridors versus at centres or nodes, because development may then be dispersed instead of concentrated. Regional staff say that the intention is for the regional plan to identify a limited number of strategic corridors and allow each municipality to organize growth along these in appropriate local ways. This should be acknowledged in the plan. Areas identified for growth on generalized regional maps should appear consistent with local policy, to avoid being confusing for developers and the public.

Corridors and centres vs major projects: In Vancouver there have been and will continue to be significant opportunities for growth through major projects (e.g., current sites include Arbutus shopping centre and Little Mountain). These projects are not necessarily located in regionally-identified centres or on a rapid transit or rapid bus corridors (although most of Vancouver is close to good bus service). If generalized regional maps show growth only in specified centres or corridors, would this make it appear that growth on major project sites is inconsistent with the regional plan?

Residential vs commercial: The map accompanying Goal 1 in the Options paper shows growth and development along corridors, but does not distinguish type of land use. In Vancouver, there are some locations along transit corridors in which the emphasis is job growth, not residential growth. As with the comment above, the more that the regional plan is consistent with local policy, the more that misinterpretation will be avoided.

Growth at transit vs industrial areas vs commercial: There are a variety of interrelationships among Goal 1 (Compact Structure) and Goal 3 (Economy) when it comes to the location of different types of growth. City staff are unclear about the complete intention, as follows:

- Goal 1 says to focus housing and job growth in centres and at transit - but Goal 3 does not want "major" commercial job growth at transit (unless it is a "major" centre). This is confusing as to what level of job growth is desired at non-centre transit stations.
- Also Goal 3 seeks to maintain industrial lands, but when a rapid transit station is located directly on industrial land, it is not clear which takes precedence: Goal 1 jobs and housing?; or Goal 3 industrial jobs only?; or a hybrid of commercial and industrial jobs but without housing?

The reason these questions are especially important for Vancouver is that we have rapid transit stations which fall right into the middle of these questions. These are stations in or adjacent to industrial areas: Grandview-Boundary industrial area; Marine Drive industrial area ICBC site; and False Creek Flats I-3. The City has been holding the line on residential growth on industrial lands, but seeking commercial growth close to the stations, while also seeking to protect industrial close by. The City has been trying to balance the appropriateness of job growth near transit with the protection of industrial land, as well as with the diversity of job opportunities in the city. The nuances of these challenges aren't captured in the Options paper. City staff feel that these are some of the real challenges addressing land use policy-making and that need to be fully discussed and clearly addressed.

How many centres in Vancouver: In the LRSP and in the Options discussion paper, there are three types of centres: the Vancouver Metropolitan Core; Regional Town Centres, and Municipal Town Centres. For Vancouver, the LRSP identifies the Metropolitan Core as the only centre in the regional plan. More recently, Vancouver has also considered Oakridge as a Municipal Centre in Oakridge planning, and the Options discussion paper recognizes this additional centre.

Vancouver also has policy for the development of many Neighbourhood Centres, which are not identified specifically in on regional plan maps, being at a level below a Municipal Centre. Regional staff acknowledge that municipalities are free to add more Neighbourhood Centres into municipal plans without needing to have them identified in the regional plan. This was recognized in the LRSP, and presumably will again be recognized in the new regional plan.

Vancouver may also wish to consider whether we have any other centres of a scale that qualify to be identified in the regional plan through the Maps/Guidelines Approach, and what would be the benefits of including them in regional plan maps. This would entail identifying a more specific hierarchy of centres within the city; this may be difficult to fully ascertain at this time, in advance of Neighbourhood Centre plans, station area plans, and EcoDensity.

## **GOAL 2: DIVERSE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING CHOICES**

City staff strongly support increasing supply and diversity for a variety of housing types and incomes, and this is consistent with existing and developing City policy. It is important for Vancouver's economic sustainability that it accommodates the range of incomes of those that work in the city and in the downtown. Vancouver is still the primary downtown for the region and its household income profile ought to be the same or close to the regional household income profile.

As previously stated, Option C (the Designation/Requirement Approach) does not recognize the significant variations across the region in economics, housing sub-markets, and housing need. Municipalities need to retain control over the processes of affordable housing production, because those processes are based on case-by-case negotiations and local economic realities. Formulaic approaches to housing production are not effective and often counterproductive.

Option B (the Map/Guidelines/Targets Approach) is most closely aligned with Council's motion of Oct. 2, 2007 in the Report from the Director of the Housing Centre on the Metro Vancouver Regional Affordable Housing Strategy. Specifically this option entails setting targets for housing supply and affordable housing across the region and having each municipality develop a Housing Action Plan to respond to those targets.

Setting targets: City staff note that the increased profile for housing in the regional plan discussion paper, the establishment of supply targets, and the development of municipal Housing Action Plans represent an important opportunity to improve housing affordability across the region. However, staff are concerned that this opportunity could be wasted if Metro Vancouver does not provide sufficient analytical support for the development of targets and does not approach this work as a partnership with member municipalities. In the October 2007 Report to Council, City staff stressed the importance of developing a comprehensive regional Housing Action Plan along with municipal Housing Action Plans through a collaborative process and partnership among all levels of government, the private sector, the public, and community partners. Regional staff should provide the analytical basis for regional, sub-regional, and municipal targets, and targets should be refined through an iterative process with member municipalities. This is a substantial task that will require the commitment of resources and time.

Through the Housing Sub-Committee of the municipal-regional staff Technical Advisory Committee, City staff have seen preliminary regional and sub-regional housing targets developed by Metro Vancouver. City staff are concerned that these initial targets are not based on sufficient analysis, do not reflect variation in local situations across the region, and have not been developed in partnership with member municipalities. As noted above, a great deal of background work is generally needed to set meaningful targets. Metro Vancouver needs to provide detailed analysis in support of targets and work with municipalities to refine those targets so that they reflect local circumstances.

### **GOAL 3 - DIVERSE REGIONAL ECONOMY**

Goal 3 includes Industrial land protection as a completely new topic for the regional growth strategy as compared to the LRSP. City staff welcome this. Staff share Metro's concern that conversion of industrial land to other uses is non-reversible and can threaten economic viability and sustainability. Because the current LRSP does not contain any direction on industrial land, this is a real opportunity to discuss the best approach.

Goal Approach?: Even the Goal Approach (Option A) would be an improvement over no approach at all. However, it is worth exploring a stronger approach.

Maps/Guidelines Approach?: The Map/Guidelines Approach (Option B) would provide for a reference map (generalized) to be included in the new regional plan. This would require the City, and other municipalities, in their Regional Context Statements to demonstrate how each will achieve protection of the industrial lands within the general areas shown on the regional

plan map. The Metro Vancouver Board would then need to consider whether to accept the each municipality's interpretation, as part of the approval process of each Regional Context Statement.

This would better protect industrial land than the Goal Approach. But it could well mean a challenge to local decisions in Vancouver related to industrial land. Although Vancouver policy is strong about protecting industrial land from residential uses, the emphasis in the Options discussion paper is also on not using industrial land for free-standing retail or office. Vancouver has a variety of commercial uses allowed in industrial zoning, or under consideration in current planning work. These are the types of policies that would have to be supported by the Metro Board to obtain approval of the City's Regional Context Statement -- such as:

- I-1 zoning that permits free-standing office, although only to a portion of total density
- Large Format Area Rezoning Policy for Marine Drive, including large formal retail policy
- I-3 rezoning policy at Grandview-Boundary
- Metro Core study and False Creek Planning which may consider opportunities for diverse office space in the western I-3 Flats for large format, non-tower office forms
- Station Area Planning at Marine Drive which is considering commercial land uses on the ex-ICBC site.

Designation Approach?: The Map/Guidelines Approach could be insufficient to protect industrial lands, and one might argue that going all the way to the Designation Approach is necessary if the region is to really protect industrial. Since this approach would highly impact local decision making, City staff feel that it could only be supported following a much more thorough analysis to demonstrate the need for this level of regional control and a fuller consultation process with municipal, private sector, community, and senior government stakeholders.

There is also likely a more multi-faceted strategy that could be developed than only a regional "stick." Such a strategy could include research, awareness, and incentives. For example, building on Metro Vancouver's recent work to raise awareness of the industrial issue, and to monitor and research industrial land supply and demand, can be a powerful influence on local awareness and decision making across the region. This type of research and monitoring may lead to making a case for eventual designation of industrial land in the future; or may show that the Map/Guidelines Approach is sufficient; and/or may show that other strategies can be developed to strengthen the protection of industrial land. A regional economic development plan would also be a useful context.

#### **GOAL 4 - NATURAL ASSETS**

This is one Goal where the Designate Approach (Option A) is already in place is the LRSP, through the Green Zone which includes public areas (parks, watersheds, and other public-owned green places), as well as private lands in the Provincial Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). City staff continue to support Green Zone designation.

For Vancouver, the current Green Zone consists of major parks (Stanley Park, QE Park, Everett Crowley Park); waterfront walkways and associated parks; golf courses; Still Creek, Renfrew Ravine, and Camosun Bog; BC Parkway; the ALR areas of Southlands; and the Arbutus Corridor and Grandview Cut. Some specific comments on the Options discussion paper follow:

Accuracy of Green Zone map: Metro Vancouver has relatively recently been converting the LRSP Green Zone into a detailed parcel-based map for use in the new regional plan. There are still anomalies that need to be corrected before this map accurately reflects Vancouver's Green Zone lands as approved for the LRSP.

Addition to Green Zone: Vancouver staff have for many years intended to include John Hendry Park in the Green Zone, due to its large size and ecological significance. It is the only lake in Vancouver and includes wetlands and marshes.

Uses allowed in Green Zone: One of the issues that affects Vancouver directly is whether the regional plan should take the Designation/Requirements Approach a step further, to also add a schedule of permitted uses for the Green Zone (Option B). This would need to recognize some of the more urban uses that already exist in Vancouver Green Zone parks, such as the Aquarium and restaurants. In Vancouver, some corridors in the Green Zone also have a transportation function. If due care is not taken in listing permitted uses, Vancouver could be in the position of needing to request an amendment to the full regional plan, as well as amending our own Regional Context Statement, in order to allow or change uses permitted in our parks and other Green Zone areas.

Separate Green Zone and Agricultural Zone: There is a related proposal in Goal 3 (Economy) to separate the Green Zone into Green Zone and Agricultural Zone (in addition to the Provincial ALR designation which would remain). The idea behind this is, in part, to better specify the uses allowed in each and as a recognition of agriculture as an economic function. City staff are as yet uncertain about the full range of pros and cons related to this. If it were to take place, the ALR lands in Southlands would likely become Agricultural Zone instead of Green Zone. The specified uses would have to clearly recognize that the area in its current uses and zoning has a semi-rural, equestrian, and limited agricultural nature, and is not used for the farming activity described in the Options paper.

## **GOAL 5 - SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION**

City policy strongly supports the move towards more sustainable transportation modes. City staff have reviewed the strategies and options for Goal 5 and generally support a Maps/Guidelines/Targets Approach for implementation. Staff also offer the following additional comments:

The transit network concept: The transit map in the discussion guide identifies three corridors (Hastings, Broadway, and 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue) for future rapid transit (bus or rail). Given existing and projected transit ridership in Vancouver, staff have concluded that buses cannot meet the demand for transit service on the Broadway corridor. In fact, rail transit must be implemented on Broadway in the near term if we are to meet our existing transportation and sustainability targets. Therefore the Broadway corridor should be identified as a category different from the Hastings Street and 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue corridors, highlighting the need for rail transit by 2020 or earlier.

Targets for increasing transit share: It has been typical for past plans to include the objective of reducing the use of single occupant vehicles (SOV's) by shifting more people to transit. In Vancouver the fastest growing modes for the journey to work are "work at home", walk, and bike, all three of which are more sustainable than transit. Staff would like to see more support for walking and cycling. In addition, staff note that the achievement of transit mode share targets is dependent on an adequate supply of transit capacity. In some areas of

Vancouver the limited transit supply has effectively 'capped' the transit mode share at levels below the desired targets. Staff, therefore, strongly support increasing transit supply to accommodate demand. And, consideration should be given to a more specific goal for the region to reduce the SOV mode share by increasing walking and cycling modes.

The connection between transportation and land use: Vancouver has seen positive trends in transportation over the last ten years, accommodating a 20-25% increase in trips with 7-10% fewer motorized vehicles entering the Downtown and the city. Much of this success is due to effective land use planning, focusing housing close to job centres, supporting the development of neighbourhood centres, and requiring pedestrian friendly urban design. Staff believe that these policies are key to supporting more sustainable transportation modes. There should be more coordination between the development of the new regional growth strategy and the development of new regional long-range transportation plans. Staff are concerned that the proposed growth strategies have not been tested with the proposed transportation networks. Staff also support the region considering the development of more sophisticated and integrated tools for analyzing growth interactions between transportation and land use.

Goods movement to support the economic hub: Vancouver has seen significant growth in goods movement through its Ports. Currently 50% of the container traffic leaving the South shore terminals on Burrard inlet is moved by rail and 50% is moved by truck. In general, goods that are moved outside of the region are moved by rail and those staying within the region are moved by truck. As the links for Asia Pacific trade expand and the throughput of goods through Vancouver's Ports continues to grow, it will become more challenging to accommodate the increased goods movement on Vancouver's roadways. Transportation strategies to help accommodate this economic activity should focus not only on roadway improvements but also to more sustainable goods movement measures such as short haul rail and short sea shipping.

#### **GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE SUSTAINABILITY THEME**

City staff welcome the new emphasis in the Options discussion paper on sustainability, and the acknowledgement of climate change and GHG reduction targets. However, staff feel that the environmental imperatives do not resonate strongly enough throughout the Options paper, including in the Vision and goals. Staff believe that sustainability should be more of an over-arching theme. This is not mainly a question of different content, since the proposals as a whole do address many aspects of sustainability, but more a question of being more explicit about the sustainability connections that are already there.

This is important because achievement of a regional growth strategy is not just dependent on the implementation tools, but on connecting with the public and building a strong public ownership - by showing how integral the regional growth strategy is to addressing the issues of climate change and energy use that are on everyone's minds (as well as addressing broader concepts of sustainability). The regional plan needs to be strong on not just what it is doing, but why. Broad public consensus and ownership can be a powerful basis for implementation.

In addition, regional responses to climate change consequences such as rising sea level, habitat loss, and storm mitigation are largely absent from the Options discussion paper, and there is little acknowledgement of a regional role in energy reduction through compact growth and land use planning.

### 3. POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Population projections to 2031: The Options discussion paper provides projections for regional growth (p. 7). To do these projections, Metro staff identify regional growth expectations for 20-30 years based on demographic projections (births, deaths, migration, etc.) and gross domestic product (economic) projections, and then allocate these regional projections among the municipalities based on local growth rates. Metro staff work with municipalities to determine whether the projected growth can be accommodated within each municipality under existing zoning and development plans.

The projections shown in the Options paper are based on previous discussion between Metro and City staff. They are being updated, and will reflect a higher population projection for Vancouver than shown in the Options paper, to better reflect Vancouver's trends and current zoning and policy. (These projections to 2031 are not the same as determining how much growth could be accommodated within the City under existing zoning and policies - this would yield a higher number over a longer period of time.)

Future population growth and the role of EcoDensity: Vancouver has grown at a faster rate than ever over the last two decades (one of few municipalities to grow more than projected in the LRSP). There has been significant growth especially in high density development on large assembled sites, replacing former industrial lands and replacing low density commercial districts (e.g., Arbutus lands near 12<sup>th</sup> Ave, Collingwood Village at Joyce-Vaness, Coal Harbour, Downtown South, False Creek North.) On these types of essentially vacant sites, fast growth and a high net gain of population were relatively easy. Development planned for these types of areas (including SE False Creek and East Fraserlands) will continue to build out for a decade or more to come, continuing to contribute to Vancouver's anticipated growth.

Over the longer term, the question will become: How will Vancouver -- as a mature, increasingly fully-developed city --continue to grow and accommodate a range of people and housing needs, and a share of regional growth?

Some of the answer under current zoning lies in continued development in C-2 districts (housing above shops). Another aspect under current policy is the planning and development of Neighbourhood Centres (housing around shopping areas), other housing identified in Community Visions, and station area planning. Growth will also come through additional large sites that are yet to be planned (e.g., Arbutus Village, Little Mountain, former Transit Bus Barns in Oakridge).

EcoDensity provides the opportunity to not only realize housing potential of the Visions, but also to ask, with public discussion, if current capacity for growth in our zoning and policies is the right amount, the right types, and in the right places.

It may be difficult to actually increase the city's recent rate of growth over the longer term, because the past opportunities for growth on large scale sites on essentially vacant land are becoming much more limited. However, EcoDensity could allow Vancouver to sustain its growth and to achieve more growth than would otherwise have been the case, to improve long term sustainability.

The regional plan will not be able to fully anticipate Vancouver's growth, since EcoDensity is yet to unfold through planning and consultation over time. This may well mean that

Vancouver may find that its actual growth will be beyond what the regional plan will project; this circumstance would be similar to what has happened since the LRSP.

#### **4. NEXT STEPS**

Metro Vancouver staff are receiving and assembling comments on their Options discussion paper from a variety of meetings, on-line input, and reports from municipal councils, such as this report. They are using this input to prepare a first draft regional growth management strategy. The timing for the draft depends on review and 'go ahead' by the Metro Board Land Use and Transportation (LUT) Committee before it goes to the full Board. The next LUT meeting is on May 2. Metro staff expect the draft plan could be released by June.

Once this first draft plan is released by the Metro Board, there will be further consultation with municipalities and other stakeholders. There will likely be much to work out and resource demands for City staff. If proposals differ from existing City policy, public and stakeholder consultation could also be required.

The last step, the Final Draft, will initiate a formal approval process including a Metro Board public hearing and a defined time limit for municipalities to sign off on the plan. Final approval of the regional growth management strategy will require unanimous approval of the Metro Vancouver Board. (Under revisions that will likely form part of the new plan, a lower vote may be proposed (e.g., 2/3 weighted vote.) Once approved, municipalities will have a two year period in which to prepare and submit their Regional Context Statements for Metro Board consideration and approval.

#### **FINANCIAL AND PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no immediate financial implications ensuing from Metro Vancouver's growth management review, but resources may be required in the future, for example, to develop a Housing Action Plan or further evaluate industrial lands for designation.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

This report includes discussion of the important relationship of regional land use planning to environmental issues, such as climate change and energy use; and to the key social issue of housing affordability.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

There are no implementation or communications implications from this report.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Metro Vancouver has requested a response to their discussion paper, *Choosing a Sustainable Future for Metro Vancouver - Options for Metro Vancouver's Growth Management Strategy*, for input into preparation of a draft regional growth management strategy.



This report provides an overview of the Options discussion paper and provides City staff comments on key aspects, for endorsement by City Council, to convey to Metro Vancouver staff.

\* \* \* \* \*

Information from:

*Choosing a Sustainable Future for Metro Vancouver - Options for Metro Vancouver's Growth Management Strategy*

**Proposed Vision: A livable and sustainable region.**

Metro Vancouver will be a livable and sustainable region. It will be a region of well-designed, connected and diverse communities where people of all ages, incomes, and origins can live, work and play in safety and comfort. The conservation of land, water and energy resources will drive regional decision-making. Valuable farmland and natural areas will be protected and enhanced. An affordable and efficient transportation system will support economic prosperity, healthy living, and community well-being.

Proposed Goals	Proposed Strategies	Summary of Proposed Implementation Options * = Similar to current plan (LRSP)
1. Accommodate growth in a sustainable and compact metropolitan structure	1. Focus regional growth in centres and along transit corridors.	A. State the general goal B. Identify centres and transit corridors on a map in the plan and provide guidelines on land uses to encourage in these locations * C. Designate centres, station areas, and corridors on a map; provide housing and job targets, transit service expectations, minimum density guidelines, and maximum parking guidelines
	2. Establish defined areas for urban growth.	A. State the general goal B. Designate an Urban Area and a Green Zone on a map in the plan * C. Add a new designation, of a Rural Zone, to reduce the size of the Urban Area
2. Offer diverse and affordable housing choices	3. Increase housing supply and diversity including the supply of housing for low and moderate income households.	A. State the general goal * B. Establish targets for subregions and require municipalities to prepare Housing Action Plans C. Establish region-wide requirements for a uniform approach to aspects such as parking regulations, development cost charges, and inclusionary zoning
3. Support and strengthen a diverse regional economy	4. Maintain an adequate supply of industrial land to meet the needs of the regional economy.	A. State the general goal B. Identify the region's significant industrial lands on a map in the plan C. Designate industrial lands on a map and include specific guidelines as to permitted uses. Do not permit stand alone office and retail buildings.
	5. Facilitate the location of major commercial (retail, office, entertainment) activities in centre locations to enhance access for workers and customers and build prosperous, attractive centres in every subregion.	A. State the general goal * B. Designate the Metro Core and centres on a map in the plan and include development objectives, such as commercial and residential densities C. Establish policies that encourage "major" commercial in "major" centres (such as reduced parking and reduced development cost charges) and policies that discourage major commercial outside of centres.

	6. Maintain the agricultural land base for food production through supportive land use and development policies.	<p>A. State the general goal</p> <p>B. Separate the designated Green Zone into Green Zone and Agricultural Zone (in addition to Provincial ALR).</p> <p>C. As in B - plus require municipalities to have policies to address issues of agricultural/urban interface to address challenges of farming adjacent to urban areas.</p>
4. Protect and enhance the region's natural assets	7. Ensure the long term protection of critical habitat areas, drinking watersheds, riparian areas, parks, recreation corridors, forests and agricultural lands.	<p>A. Designate a Green Zone *</p> <p>B. As in A - plus define permitted uses for the Green Zone</p>
	8. Ensure the protection and enhancement of ecological and recreational connectivity across the region.	<p>A. State the general goal *</p> <p>B. Identify ecological and recreational corridors on a map in the plan and provide regional guidelines</p>
5. Create a sustainable transportation system	9. Increase transit supply throughout the region and promote walking and cycling.	<p>A. State the general goal</p> <p>B. Identify a frequent transit network on a map in the plan and set regional targets for increasing transit trips</p> <p>C. As in B - plus sub-regional targets, density guidelines, and targets for cycling and walking</p>
	10. Advance a regional network of roads and highways that prioritizes goods movement, transit operations and high-occupancy vehicles.	<p>A. State the general goal</p> <p>B. Identify the roads and highways on a map in the plan and state general principles *</p>
	11. Manage transportation demand.	<p>A. State the general goal</p> <p>B. Identify demand management strategies to provide specific strategies at the local level, such as bus lanes and parking policies, and perhaps road pricing</p>