

## MOTION

### 5. **Corner Stores in 21st Century Vancouver: Achieving Complete Communities and Food-Friendly Neighbourhoods**

At the Council meeting on June 23, 2020, Council referred the following motion to the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities meeting on June 24, 2020, in order to hear from speakers.

Submitted by: Councillor Kirby-Yung

#### WHEREAS

1. Vancouver committed to six big moves in its efforts to tackle climate change, including the objective of Walkable Complete Communities where 90% of people live within an easy walk/roll of their daily needs by 2030;
2. Vancouver is made up of a number of smaller neighbourhoods and communities that reflect the distinct culture and character of the different areas of our city and its diverse population (*Note: it's commonly understood to be 23 distinct geographical areas in the city*);
3. The City of Vancouver uses community plans to provide clear but flexible frameworks to guide positive change and development in neighbourhoods, with each plan considering long-range and shorter-term goals and the broader objectives established for the entire city and at regional and provincial levels;
4. The City of Vancouver supports food-friendly neighbourhoods that provide all residents with easy access to fresh, healthy foods, and the means to sustainably dispose of food waste;
5. The Vancouver Food Strategy is the City's plan to create a just and sustainable food system for the city. It builds on years of food systems initiatives and grassroots community development, considering all aspects of the food system;
6. Traditional corner stores played a key role in creating social connection in neighbourhoods, as well as supporting daily needs. Traditional corner stores have been declining in number for decades due to changing consumer patterns and, critically, due to zoning restrictions;
7. To ensure food-friendly neighbourhoods are supported throughout the city, Vancouver has committed to planning for the unique aspects of each area when implementing the Food Strategy. "Healthy corner stores" figure prominently among the requirements cited on the City's website for building and maintaining strong food systems across the city;<sup>1</sup>

8. Expressions of the City's commitment to food-friendly neighbourhoods include farmers markets that have grown dramatically in number and popularity in recent years, with plans prior to the COVID-19 pandemic to continue to expand them to supply locally-grown foods into neighbourhoods across the city;
9. Community Food Markets, i.e., small pop-up markets that sell fresh fruits, vegetables, and other foods, represent another expression of the commitment to food-friendly neighbourhoods. These markets are typically offered in neighbourhoods with few food stores nearby, or where residents' mobility may prevent them from getting to stores. They emphasize low prices and good quality and are indicative of a community need that is not being met in some of Vancouver's neighbourhoods. The Vancouver Food Strategy Goal to increase Community Food Markets from four to 15 by the year 2020 has not been met; <sup>ii</sup>
10. At the February 23, 2016, Council Meeting, amendments to the *Zoning and Development By-law* and *Business License By-law* regarding Urban Farming were adopted on consent, including allowing Urban Farming - Class A in residential districts and Urban Farming - Class B in commercial and industrial districts;
11. As part of the Urban Farm Guidelines Review led by Arts, Culture, and Community Services, staff are currently considering the implications of allowing on-site sales from Urban Farm – Class A in residential zones;
12. The City has embarked on an Employment Lands and Economy Review to develop a long-range land use policy plan that will ensure an appropriate supply of land for businesses and jobs to support the future growth of our city's economy;
13. In November 2018, Council directed staff to undertake scoping to expedite development of a city-wide plan. Subsequently, in November 2019, City Staff embarked on the Vancouver Plan planning and engagement process and began asking the public questions to better understand the challenges and priorities of residents; <sup>iii</sup>
14. On March 19, 2020, the City of Vancouver declared a local state of emergency in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic and is now developing a ReStart Smart Vancouver plan to support economic and community recovery, with a focus on supporting local business and rebuilding for the future emphasizing access to community-based services;
15. In April 2020, the City of Vancouver declared farmers markets to be an essential food source and took steps to ensure they could function as access points for fresh and prepared foods;
16. During the height of COVID-19 restrictions, restaurants and cafes in many cities began selling grocery and produce – often to support their business viability, but also to address gaps in small-scale neighbourhood food access;

17. The world that emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic with more people working from home than ever before, will inevitably result in a greater need for neighbourhood amenities and local food infrastructure of coffee shops, restaurants, services, and shopping including the need to access goods right in their own neighbourhood. Local corner stores once filled this role in Vancouver neighbourhoods, providing a place where locals bought fresh milk, cheese, some staples, while also serving as a social gathering place for community;
18. Policies to retain existing small-scale, neighbourhood commercial retail spaces (on and off of arterials) – ones that could help to achieve food-friendly neighbourhoods and complete communities – can apply to different classes of businesses including to some legally conforming and some non-conforming businesses. The Grandview-Woodland Community Plan for example, incorporated policy to support the retention of such small-scale spaces and staff are currently exploring ways to expand this policy to other neighbourhoods. As a first stage, an inventory of relevant sites in the city was undertaken in 2019 and is currently being used as a basis to identify potential retention approaches. Specific planning responses that may emerge could vary depending on the status of a business as well as the prevailing zoning in the neighbourhood (i.e., RS, RT or RM). In the short-term, staff have recommended approval of site-specific rezonings, such as the recent rezoning of the Caffè La Tana site on Commercial Drive;
19. With reference to policies to support the creation of new small-scale neighbourhood commercial retail spaces (on and off of arterials), ones that could help to achieve food-friendly neighbourhoods and complete communities include exploring ways to ensure convenient access to these daily needs as part of the Complete Communities component of the Vancouver Plan and the Climate Emergency Response (Big Move #1) – including looking at a variety of retail, commercial service spaces and ‘third spaces’ where people spend time between home (‘first’ space) and work (‘second’ space) to exchange ideas and build relationships – a role corner stores once played in many neighbourhoods;
20. Staff have identified various elements of a work plan that would enable the retention and creation of new small-scale neighbourhood commercial retail spaces to achieve food-friendly neighbourhoods and complete communities, namely:
  - Engagement with various communities regarding neighbourhood assets and a complete communities strategy;
  - A review of the *Zoning and Development By-law* and related district schedules;
  - Addressing considerations around parking and loading, as well as other COVID-19 recovery measures (e.g. street reallocation);

- Discussions with Development, Buildings, and Licensing around permitting questions;
  - Exploration of various potential solutions: e.g., amendments to the *Zoning and Development By-law*, broader city-wide policies, possible rezoning policies, and potential amendments to the *Building Code*;
21. The Vancouver Plan will ultimately set new directions to guide the city’s future priorities into 2050 and beyond, including where new housing forms and densities to satisfy the “missing middle” will be located and where local services and 21<sup>st</sup> century corner stores will be needed; and
22. There are several examples of modern shops in the city, such as Le Marché St. George in Mount Pleasant, the Federal Store on Quebec Street and the Wilder Snail on Keefer Street, which each represent successful 21st Century embodiments of the corner store experience and in many ways satisfy the role corner stores once served and could serve again in new and reimagined forms with appropriate neighbourhood-friendly zoning and supports to achieve the goal of complete communities and food-friendly neighbourhoods.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct staff to include, as a prominent part of the Vancouver Plan public engagement process, questions related to the emerging needs of communities and neighbourhoods in the city that could potentially be met by a resurgence and reimagining of corner stores in a post-pandemic context, consistent with the City’s commitment to achieving complete communities where residents live within an easy walk/roll of their daily needs, as well as food-friendly neighbourhoods that provide all residents with easy access to fresh, healthy foods, and other retail and commercial amenities;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to report back in Fall 2020 with a preliminary overview of early actions and potential policy directions Council could pursue in the short-term and/or include as part of the Land and Economy Action Plan and the Vancouver Plan process with respect to promoting food-friendly and local store supported neighbourhoods, including neighbourhood-friendly zoning options and other considerations such as options for small-scale commercial retail spaces on and off of arterials, that could support a resurgence of corner stores and other local food amenities and infrastructure as we shift into recovery and a new reality.

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<sup>i</sup> Corner stores figure alongside Community and collective gardens, Farmers and community markets, Food storage facilities, and Community composting facilities in achieving food-friendly neighbourhoods and building and maintaining strong food systems across the city.

<sup>ii</sup> Community food markets address accessibility challenges that are sometimes associated with regular farmers markets, such as physical access or affordability. Neighbourhood houses, BC Housing sites, community centres, and other social serving organizations can organize and

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manage community food markets. Community food markets can operate year-round. For market locations and times, visit the market websites.

- [Cedar Cottage Food Network External web site, opens in new tab](#) - Saturdays year-round, multiple locations
- [Westside Community Food Markets External web site, opens in new tab](#) - Thursdays, June to September
- [Gordon Neighbourhood House External web site, opens in new tab](#) - Multiple locations and days of the week
- [Kiwassa Neighbourhood House External web site, opens in new tab](#) - Often on the third Friday of the month. Check Kiwassa's website to confirm

iii At the March 11, 2020, meeting of the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities, Council received a update on Phase 1 of the Vancouver Plan process. Background and context information was included in the Staff presentation and the following points were noted as to why there is a need for a plan and why now:

- It's a moment in time for Vancouver
- High level of public anxiety about present and future
- The power of a unifying vision and action strategy
- Leveraging regional alignment and partnerships
- Framework for better decision-making
- Reforming ongoing civic engagement and building trust

The thoughts that have been gathered during the process are considered to be valuable and will guide the next phase of the Vancouver Plan process and conversations on "The Future We Want."

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