

MOTION

13. Improving the Circularity of Vancouver's Economy

At the Council meeting on October 6, 2020, Council referred the following motion to the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities meeting on October 7, 2020, to hear from speakers.

Submitted by: Councillor Wiebe

WHEREAS

1. According to the World Economic Forum, a circular economy is an industrial system that is restorative or regenerative by intention and design. It replaces the end-of-life concept with restoration, shifts towards the use of renewable energy, eliminates the use of toxic chemicals, which impair reuse and return to the biosphere, and aims for the elimination of waste through the superior design of materials, products, systems, and business models;
2. Indigenous peoples have lived according to such concepts for thousands of years, abiding by laws of nature relating to tides and seasons, waters and ecosystems to ensure longevity, abundance and reciprocity;
3. Cities around the world have adopted citywide circular strategies, including Paris, London, Seoul, Copenhagen, Rotterdam, Helsinki, Brussels, Tel Aviv, and Cape Town. For the City of Vancouver, improving circularity could offer a post-COVID “solution to the growing problem of waste, while also offering an opportunity to generate economic growth, increase the number of local green and inclusive jobs, encourage innovation, reduce GHG emissions, and contribute to the city’s goal to be the greenest city in the world.” ^[i]
4. According to the Ellen Macarthur Foundation, there are various policy measures city governments can use to bring about circular economy transitions including, urban planning, regulations, public procurement, capacity building, engagement, awareness raising and financial support. These policies are “underpinned by a transition to renewable energy sources, the circular model builds economic, natural, and social capital. It is based on three principles: design out waste and pollution; keep products and materials in use; regenerate natural systems.” ^[ii];
5. Key circular economy strategies include reuse and repair models, waste minimization and elimination, circular supply-chains, materials recovery, product life extension, more efficient use of goods and assets, renewable energy generation, blue-green infrastructure, and technological innovations. Many departments in the City have already successfully implemented circular models in their operations such as generating energy from our sewage, asphalt recovery, and gas capture from landfill to power City vehicles;
6. Vancouver is one of the signatories of C40 Cities and has committed to the following goals to help move towards circularity:

- a. Reduce the municipal solid waste generation per capita by at least 15% by 2030 compared to 2015;
 - b. Reduce the amount of municipal solid waste disposed to landfill and incineration by at least 50% by 2030 compared to 2015;
 - c. Increase the diversion rate away from landfill and incineration to at least 70% by 2030;
7. Council approved the Climate Emergency Action Plan, Healthy City Strategy, and the COVID Recovery Plan, all of which identify the need for local, sustainable, circular models to address the current climate crisis, enhance local food security and bolster economic recovery;
8. The City of Vancouver continuously updates its Green Demolition by-law to increase the rate of deconstruction, reuse, recycling, and salvaging of building materials such as old growth lumber;
9. Council approved the False Creek Flats Plan and the Flats Economic Development Strategy on May 17, 2017, that includes recommendations for enhancing circular economy activity in this central industrial area to increase resilience, shorten supply chains, adopt innovative solutions, densify industrial lands, decrease long range transportation needs, and increase green jobs;
10. Recently Metro Vancouver Board of Directors unanimously passed the region's Industrial Land Strategy and Council approved the motion Accelerating Action on Industrial Affordability that directed staff to undertake actions that will serve to protect the loss of industrial land in the city, improve accessibility and affordability of industrial spaces, support greater circular economy activity; and
11. Growing evidence shows that the transition to a more circular economy drives job growth, specifically green and inclusive jobs, because managing and handling materials for reuse requires manual labour and more complex processes than simply landfilling or incineration of waste resources; "for every 10,000 tonnes of resources that is recycled instead of being incinerated, 36 additional jobs are created." ^[iii].

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct staff to prioritize the following circular principles and objectives in citywide decision making and include this information in reports to Council:

- i. Design out waste and pollution;
- ii. Keep products and materials in use;
- iii. Regenerate natural and Indigenous systems;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to:

- i. Collaborate with local First Nations and urban Indigenous communities to apply learnings of decolonization in designing circular policies and models that work in balance with the natural world;
- ii. Apply the objectives of the circular economy to prioritize steps and projects that align with existing City of Vancouver policies, strategies, and actions;
- iii. Report annually to Council, with the VEC, on progress made toward a circular economy through ongoing City policies, strategies, and actions. The report should include identification of areas, policies and programs that would benefit from additional attention, be it staffing, resourcing, new partnerships, or other forms of support that would serve to grow or accelerate circularity;
- iv. Work with VEC to track and record circular economy strategies, policies, and programs in other jurisdictions and Nations that can serve as inspiration for advancing Vancouver's circular economy; the record should include intelligence from C40, World Circular Economy Forum, Sitra (Finland), Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Circular Economy Solutions Series (from Delphi Group), The Natural Step Canada, Circle Economy, and more as identified over time;
- v. Support and facilitate ongoing circular work and models being delivered by local green innovators, First Nations, businesses, and organizations, including: de-construction hub, local food rescue and food waste recovery, share repair reuse models, materials recovery hubs, textile recovery, refurbishing, material repurposing and refurbishing;
- vi. Explore COVID-19 Recovery opportunities with other orders of government to identify economic and funding opportunities to increase circularity in Vancouver, such as training, skills development and employment opportunities for individuals experiencing barriers to meaningful employment; integrated localized energy, waste and water management systems, materials recovery and conversion.

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^[i] [*Municipality-led circular economy case studies*](#), C40 Cities, January 18, 2019,

^[ii] <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/our-work/activities/circular-economy-in-cities/policy-lever>

^[iii] https://www.vancouvereconomic.com/blog/vecs_take/creating-a-circular-economy-in-vancouver-through-government-action/