

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

2. Catalysing Planning for the Future of Central Waterfront District

Submitted by: Councillor Fry and Councillor Dominato

WHEREAS

1. Vancouver's Central Waterfront is a natural focal point for the city: with commanding views of the ocean and mountains; where the central business district and historic old city meet; a gateway to Vancouver for hundreds of thousands of cruise ships and convention centre tourists; and the busiest transportation hub in the region with the convergence of air, marine and rail transportation alongside over 18 million public transit passengers a year travelling by SeaBus, Skytrain, and the West Coast Express;
2. From its incarnation as the Pacific terminus for the CPR transcontinental railway in the early twentieth century, the Central Waterfront district has been contemplated for massive urban renewal and planning around transportation by sea and by rail. The 1960s Project 200 waterfront freeway plan contemplated an automobile-oriented approach that was ultimately supplanted with the introduction of the SeaBus in the 1970s; with further transformational change in 1986 and the introduction of the SkyTrain Expo line and Canada Place, followed by the Helijet and seaplane terminals, the West Coast Express, and the Canada Line in later decades;
3. Today, the Central Waterfront planning area involves a number of landowners and interests including the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority (Port of Vancouver), TransLink, PavCo/Vancouver Convention Centre, CP Rail, GHD Equity Holdings, Cadillac-Fairview, and across all levels of government including the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh host nations, Federal government, Provincial government, Board of Parks and Recreations, and City of Vancouver;
4. In 1979, the City of Vancouver approved the Central Waterfront Official Development Plan.¹ In reviewing stakeholder positions both port and rail functions indicated an interest in co-existing and co-operating with the City's objectives, summarized thus:

"The basic objectives of the City in planning the Central Waterfront are to make the area more accessible and enjoyable to the people of Vancouver while maintaining a viable port operation and, to ensure future development of the area is compatible with the adjacent Downtown and Gastown. The introduction of urban uses such as commercial, recreational and light industrial in the Central Waterfront, integrated with essential port and rail operations would be most appropriate to achieve these objectives."

5. In July 2009, Council endorsed the Central Waterfront Hub Framework ² to supplement existing policy and guide future planning for the area, with direction for staff to develop a strategy for seeking the support and involvement of senior levels of government, area landowners, and other stakeholders for implementation of the Waterfront Hub framework;
6. In October 2017, Council approved the City Core 2050 and Related Planning Programs ³ report, which directed a Central Waterfront Review to focus on the iconic northern shore of Vancouver's downtown waterfront, one of the most diverse and multi-modal transportation nodes in the world. Building on the Central Waterfront Hub Framework (2009) and exploring the broader waterfront interface with the Port Lands and Convention Centre activities, working together with Port of Vancouver and TransLink, on a work plan to:
 - a. Clarify the extent of waterfront lands to be included in the review;
 - b. Identify optimum infrastructure to service changing demands;
 - c. Explore ways to better integrate transit services and increase capacity to meet growing needs;
 - d. Explore ways to transform the hub into a world-class transportation interchange and a dynamic extension of the downtown to the waterfront; and
 - e. Advance a framework for a possible larger master plan process (future phase);
7. July 2019, Council approved Expanding Downtown Eastside Greenspace and Waterfront Access ⁴, which included staff direction to work with the Port, Park Board, host nations, and urban indigenous communities to identify planning and partnership opportunities, including the development and construction of an indigenous-focused healing, wellness and/or cultural centre at CRAB Park, as part of an overall goal to expand waterfront access;
8. To date, there remains confusion and uncertainty about the future of the Central Waterfront with a number of incompatible and competing aspirations for the area. Recent public forums with Simon Fraser University, and Vancouver City Planning Commission led by the Downtown Waterfront Working Group (DWWG) have engaged and inspired stakeholders, community members and other interested parties to re-imagine the future of the Central Waterfront District; ⁵
9. A February 4, 2022, memo from the General Manager, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability outlined work between City of Vancouver and Vancouver Fraser Port Authority since a 2018 Letter of Intent to work together on a planning framework for the Central Waterfront. The first phase of this work has so far identified common goals, opportunities, and necessary infrastructure improvements – and engaged key stakeholders (landowners and agencies) including CP Rail, GHD Equity Holdings, Cadillac-Fairview, PavCo and TransLink.

The memo concludes with acknowledgement that commencement of a comprehensive planning program for the Central Waterfront is not currently funded or resourced within the Planning and Engineering departments' 2022 work programs but, "the City is well-placed to launch a full program in 2023, pending Council direction to do so";

10. The City of Vancouver does not have jurisdiction over the entire Central Waterfront District, however, the City is uniquely empowered with the authority and mandate to convene, collaborate, and envision complex land use decisions and development proposals with senior governments, landowners, and stakeholders as part of comprehensive area planning. The Central Waterfront presents an opportunity for world class city-building and benefits to Vancouverites and visitors for generations to come; and
11. Advancing plans for the Central Waterfront District serves many city goals related to liveability that include: increasing public spaces, enhancing pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, climate change resilience, reconciliation, connecting East Vancouver waterfront, and supporting tourism and the local economy.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council re-affirms the intention to embark on planned regeneration and renewal of the Central Waterfront in collaboration with federal and provincial levels of government, the three host nations, private and community sectors;

FURTHER THAT this intention and planning inform future development proposals for the Central Waterfront District.

- B. THAT Council direct staff to re-engage partners, stakeholders, and the public with the intent to reinvigorate a comprehensive plan for the Central Waterfront District;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to report back with necessary budget and resourcing to commence a comprehensive planning program for the Central Waterfront District in the 2023 budget.

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1. Central Waterfront Official Development Plan (1979)
<https://bylaws.vancouver.ca/odp/odp-central-waterfront.pdf>
2. Central Waterfront Hub Framework (2009)
<https://guidelines.vancouver.ca/policy-plan-central-waterfront-hub-framework.pdf>
3. City Core 2050 and Related Planning Programs (RTS No. 11562, 2017)
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20171017/documents/rr2.pdf>

4. Expanding Downtown Eastside Greenspace and Waterfront Access (as amended, 2019)
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20190710/documents/pspc20190710min.pdf>
5. Downtown Waterfront Working Group
<https://vancouverwaterfront.org/>