

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

4. Supporting and Expanding Vancouver's Tech Hubs, Clusters, and Districts

Submitted by: Mayor Sim

WHEREAS

1. The City of Vancouver is widely recognized as the economic and cultural centre of the rapidly growing Metro Vancouver region, with globally recognized strengths in many key tech sectors including film and television, clean-tech and climate solutions, life sciences, tourism, arts, and culture;
2. Vancouver is home to 34 percent of the region's jobs and has more than 1,100 high tech businesses representing 40% of all high tech businesses in the region, with the largest cluster located in downtown Vancouver accounting for 1/5 of all high tech businesses in the region;
3. Technological innovations are fundamentally changing the relationship between employment, productivity, and how industrial and employment lands are occupied and used;
4. Many emerging tech and industrial tech businesses and their land use do not fit neatly within the traditional paradigm of 'heavy' or 'light' industrial use and may also be less impactful in terms of external nuisances while exhibiting and supporting non-traditional levels of employment density;
5. The tech sector encompasses a wide range of activities including light manufacturing, media and digital entertainment production, clean-tech and biotech, software and hardware design, and various other uses;
6. The city of Vancouver is quickly becoming known as a preeminent North American tech hub with "world-class talent and few immigration headaches" as well as "great views in a convenient time zone.";
7. Tech companies of all shapes and sizes, including "major players" like Microsoft, Amazon, Apple, Cisco Systems, Samsung, SAP, and Zenefits, are choosing Vancouver as a place to do technology business;
8. According to British price-comparison website Money.co.uk, Vancouver was recently ranked as the No. 7 tech city in world, reportedly higher than any other city outside the U.S., based on earnings, number of startups, and pedigree of local universities. The quest for educated workers, and access to top-tier universities, is one of the factors that give Vancouver competitive edge over other cities as a global tech hub;
9. The space needs of tech businesses can vary widely, but typically require a diversity of spaces at different scales, including offices, production space, and logistical facilities;

10. High tech hubs and clusters drive innovation and entrepreneurship supported by access to capital, knowledge, and talent;
11. Vancouver's tech sector is supported by a first-class education system that is graduating tomorrow's tech leaders and innovators from top-calibre institutions and speciality schools;
12. Vancouver is an emerging centre for Artificial Intelligence (AI) with over 64 AI companies thanks to an already established talent pool in visual computing and graphics;
13. Some of the best schools for software development and AI are located in Vancouver, including UBC which is ranked as the number 2 tech school in Canada, and in the top 25 in the world according to the QS World University Ranking;
14. The City of Vancouver, as part of a unified vision for future land use in the city, notably as articulated in the Vancouver Plan and Broadway Plan, is committed to protecting, expanding, and supporting industrial and employment land areas, business districts, campus institutions, and a broad and diverse base of jobs and services in the city;
15. As the preferred location for employers in the region, and with more than half of the city's jobs located on only 10% of the land, Vancouver's employment lands – particularly the city's industrial lands – are under tremendous pressure from competing needs for space which has led to rising commercial and industrial rents in high demand areas;
16. City staff have indicated that efforts currently underway to support the tech sector and preserve employment and industrial lands and spaces supported by transit (particularly regional rapid transit initiatives), not only include the Broadway corridor but are also reflected in the Rupert and Renfrew industrial lands planning processes;
17. In November 2021, the then Mayor and Council received an update memo from the General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability (*Industrial Modernization and Intensification Framework*) regarding staff's ongoing program of work toward the development of a comprehensive policy framework for modernizing and intensifying Vancouver's industrial areas and advancing key directions identified in the City of Vancouver's *Employment Lands and Economy Review* ("ELER"), as well as key directions in the *Metro Vancouver Regional Industrial Lands Strategy* ("MVRILS");
18. The economic well-being of our city and its ongoing future success, prosperity, and sustainability require that we not only have strategies to provide for, expand, and maintain lands and spaces to accommodate traditional industrial activities and businesses, but that we also ensure that we secure spaces for the integration and growth of high tech hubs and clusters in the city that drive innovation and entrepreneurship in the city's tech ecosystem and are well-supported by access to capital, knowledge, and talent.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct staff to explore strategies to facilitate and aggregate new and existing tech hubs and clusters in the city and for staff to report back by the end of Q3 2023 with recommendations and strategic directions for Council to consider to ensure that spaces for integrating and growing high tech hubs and clusters in the city, whether they be in the city's traditional industrial lands or located in new and/or renewing areas, are suitably reflected in the City's planning processes so that Vancouver can sustainably attract and support 21st century economic activities to drive innovation, collaboration, and entrepreneurship within and surrounding the city's evolving tech ecosystem;

FURTHER THAT staff be directed to co-ordinate their recommendations and strategic direction advice to Council, and otherwise integrate these within, the context of staff's ongoing program of work toward the development of a comprehensive policy framework for modernizing and intensifying Vancouver's industrial areas and advancing key directions identified in the City of Vancouver's *Employment Lands and Economy Review* ("ELER"), as well as key directions in the *Metro Vancouver Regional Industrial Lands Strategy* ("MVRILS").

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