

To: Mayor and Council

Subject: Regional Context Statement - Public Hearing June 11, 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments on the Regional Context Statement. The Vancouver City Planning Commission ('Commission') is a citizen advisory body to Council on the city's future.

At the Public Hearing, the Commission is speaking in support of adoption of the Regional Context Statement. We have provided numerous detailed comments to staff on the draft Regional Context Statement. Tonight, we will restrict our comments to two general aspects of the Regional Context Statement, and to the City's overall planning framework as outlined in the Regional Context Statement.

The Commission recognizes that the Draft Regional Context Statement identifies how Vancouver's existing plans and policies previously adopted by Council support the five goals of the Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy:

- Create a compact urban area
- Support a sustainable economy
- Protect the environment and respond to climate change impacts
- Develop complete communities
- Support sustainable transportation choices

A. Comments on the Regional Context Statement

1. The revised population growth estimates represent changes in development capacity over the last two years since the Regional Growth Strategy was approved in 2011. These estimates to 2040 are based on existing policies and trends that are subject to change; however, given that adaptation to climate change is a specific goal of the Regional Growth Strategy, there may be more consideration given to potential impacts of climate-driven migration regarding future population estimates.
2. There is a requirement for amendments to the Regional Context Statement to be updated and amended that is not well known, and there is a benefit in having this spelled out more clearly to the public.

B. Comments on the City's planning framework

The Regional Context Statement indicates the complexity of the current Vancouver planning framework based on policies and plans in effect since 1974. We commend City staff for integrating a complex array of policies and plans developed over the last 40 years.

For all other municipalities in Metro Vancouver, there is a legislative requirement to have an Official Community Plan. For all other municipalities, the Regional Context Statement links the implementation of the Official Community Plan to the Regional Growth Strategy; the Regional Context Statement is generally an appendix or schedule within the Official Community Plan. In the case of the City of Vancouver, the Regional Context Statement is an appendix to what? On the Metro Vancouver website,¹ CityPlan – with a timeframe of 1995-2015 – is provided as the Official Community Plan for the City of Vancouver.² The Regional Context Statement before you references how the City will meet the goals of the Regional Growth Strategy, and there is much City policy that goes far beyond the goals set out within CityPlan, “a framework for decisions on City funding, programs, and actions over the next twenty years.”³

The report to Council dated April 16, 2013⁴ states that the Regional Context Statement provides “a foundation for planning policy in the City,” and that “as such it could be a useful tool to initiate a discussion about identifying and prioritizing future planning in the City”. The current framework is a patchwork of many policies developed over a lengthy time span. One can see, for example, the evolution of values and goals relating to environmental sustainability from City Plan to the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan. The Commission feels that there is indeed a need to “initiate a discussion about identifying and prioritizing future planning,” and hopes that this is a broad statement on a discussion about an over-arching city-wide planning framework rather than a narrow statement on a discussion about landing density, for example.

The Commission encourages the exploration of an updated city-wide planning framework, one that is accessible and transparent, retaining the best of our existing policies while exploring new ideas and best practices in other cities. The Commission looks forward to being at the heart of these discussions.

The Commission believes that the Regional Context Statement is a good compilation of existing policy and we hope that it can serve as a foundation for fuller discussion of future planning needs.

Yours truly,



Peter Greenwell, Chair, on behalf of
The Vancouver City Planning Commission

*A Council-appointed advisory body with a mandate to consider planning matters
affecting the city's future*

¹ <http://www.metrovancouver.org/planning/development/strategy/Pages/RegionalContextStatements.aspx>

² 'Vancouver OCP': <http://former.vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/cityplan/Visions/index.htm>

³ <http://former.vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/cityplan/cityplan.htm>

⁴ <http://former.vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20130423/documents/p1.pdf>