

NO: R095

COUNCIL DATE: May 3, 2010

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## REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **May 3, 2010**  
FROM: **General Manager, Planning and Development** FILE: **0450-01**  
SUBJECT: **Comments on "Metro 2040 – Shaping our Future" -  
Draft Regional Growth Strategy**

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## RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Development Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report as information; and
2. Authorize the City Clerk to forward a copy of this report and the related Council resolution to Metro Vancouver as additional input from the City of Surrey.

## INTENT

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the status of Metro Vancouver's draft Regional Growth Strategy and to outline areas of concern with the current draft of the RGS that are shared by staff in a number of Metro Vancouver municipalities, including the City of Surrey.

## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Under the provisions of the *Local Government Act*, regional districts are required to prepare a regional scale land use plan, called a Regional Growth Strategy (the "RGS"). The RGS must represent a period of at least 20 years, and include a comprehensive statement on the future of the Region, including social, economic, and environmental objectives, population and employment projections, and actions proposed with regard to housing, transportation, regional services, parks and natural areas, and economic development.

Once an RGS has been adopted by a majority vote of the Regional Board, the *Local Government Act* requires that each municipality within the regional district prepare and adopt a Regional Context Statement as a part of its OCP. The Regional Context Statement must explain the relationship between the municipality's OCP and the RGS, and how the OCP will be made consistent with the RGS.

Within two years of the adoption of the revised RGS all municipalities within Metro Vancouver will be required to update their Regional Context Statements to work toward achieving the strategies in the RGS. The current draft of the RGS specifies approximately 40 areas where each municipality will be required to include specific policies and maps in its OCP consistent with the direction of the RGS.

## **BACKGROUND**

Metro Vancouver is engaged in the process of replacing its current Regional Growth Strategy, entitled the "Livable Region Strategic Plan" (the "LRSP"), with a new regional plan entitled "Metro Vancouver 2040 – Shaping our Future". A draft of this new RGS was circulated to Metro Vancouver member municipalities for comment in November 2009.

On January 11, 2010, Council considered Corporate Report No. R010, which discussed the November 2009 draft of the RGS. By adopting the recommendations of that report, Council expressed support for the Vision of the region and for the overall goals and strategies as set out in the draft RGS, but also identified several concerns with the draft RGS. The main concerns were related to the greater degree of Regional oversight in local land use planning decisions that the draft RGS included and the complicated and time-consuming process for amending the RGS and the Regional Context Statement (which describes the way in which local Official Community Plans conform to the RGS).

In addition, Surrey expressed concern that the draft RGS did not adequately address the relationship between effective municipal financial management and effective land use planning decisions nor the equitable distribution of jobs to population by sub-region.

Metro Vancouver staff is currently drafting changes to the November 2009 draft RGS, based in part on local government responses received during the January 2010 round of municipal consultation. These proposed changes are being discussed with municipal staff representatives on the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and will be brought to the Regional Planning Committee in due course. Following discussion and endorsement by the Regional Planning Committee, the amended draft RGS will be forwarded to the Metro Board for consideration and adoption of a by-law that contains the finalized RGS.

Surrey staff has been in discussion with and received correspondence from staff in several other Metro Vancouver municipalities who share common concerns with the November 2009 draft of the RGS. These concerns are similar to those outlined in Corporate Report No. R010.

## **DISCUSSION**

Formal responses from the member municipalities of Metro Vancouver to the November 2009 draft RGS suggests that there is broad agreement on the five proposed goals in the plan. However, the common concerns expressed by several of the municipalities echo those of the City of Surrey. These concerns focus on:

- The degree of oversight by Metro Vancouver on land use decisions that have traditionally been the purview of local municipalities;
- The implementation of the RGS, including its adoption and amendment processes; and
- The distinction between Industrial and Mixed Employment designations in the draft RGS, which impose a finer level of land use designation than the previous RGS and than the Surrey OCP.

Staff holds the view that further amendments are required before the draft RGS can be endorsed by the City of Surrey; it is apparent that a number of other Metro municipalities share this same position.

The following is further elaboration on areas of concern:

**1. The roles of Metro Vancouver and local governments in managing and implementing the RGS.**

The most significant change between the existing and proposed RGS is a shift toward a more regulatory approach by the Region. The Draft RGS proposes a greater degree of Regional oversight on municipal land use decisions within the Urban Containment Area than the LRSP. Further discussion and decisions are needed regarding Land Use Designations, the Goals, Strategies and Actions, Implementation and Monitoring of the RGS in relation to the needs and interests of member municipalities.

**2. The proposed Adoption and Amendment processes.**

The implementation section of the draft RGS sets out the process for adopting and amending the draft RGS. This process is complex and potentially time consuming. Municipalities such as Surrey, which are expected to accommodate the majority of anticipated growth, require growth management processes that are efficient, effective, and reflective of local circumstances.

Regional staff has proposed significant changes to this section of the draft RGS, but the adoption and amendment proposals in the draft RGS and the proposed relationship between the Metro Vancouver Board and Local Council responsibilities need to be revisited.

Clarification is required on such issues as the integration of TransLink's comments on certain land development applications, the timing of concurrent Metro Vancouver and local government consultation and plan amendment processes, distinctions between major and minor/housekeeping amendments to the approved RGS and voting procedures on various types of amendments. A working group of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has been struck to find common ground in the area of implementation procedures. Surrey staff is represented on this working group of TAC.

**3. Land use categories and the authority implied by "Designation".**

Further discussion is required on the implications of land use designations contained in the draft RGS, including the distinction between "Industrial" and "Mixed Employment" uses, and the degree of regional oversight implied by "Designation" and the detailed parcel-based maps. This level of detail is significantly greater than that in the existing LRSP.

While Surrey has not concurred with the need for both the "Industrial" and "Mixed Employment" designations, preliminary maps for these designations and suggested Special Study Areas have been submitted to Metro Vancouver staff to ensure that employment lands are protected and flexibility in land use decision-making is provided in relation to Surrey's industrial and employment areas.

**4. Metro Vancouver and Municipal Responsibilities for Maintaining Industrial Lands.**

Goal 2 in the draft RGS focuses on two aspects of the economy -- the preservation of agricultural lands and the preservation of industrial lands. The preservation of agricultural lands is a long standing regional direction, supported by the Provincial Agricultural Land

Reserve. The Draft RGS differentiates "Industrial" and "Mixed Employment" lands and proposes regional controls on the supply and use of Industrial lands.

The City of Surrey has demonstrated a strong commitment to protecting its industrial land base. Council approved the Employment Lands Strategy in 2008, including recommendations for ensuring an adequate supply of industrial land. While there may be a role for Metro Vancouver to ensure an equitable approach to protecting industrial land among its member municipalities, this role should respect traditional local land use planning authority.

## **5. Municipal Responsibilities for Implementation**

Expectations for local government actions are included in the draft RGS. Several of these expectations may involve municipal expenditures in areas of responsibility not traditionally the purview of local government. "Municipal Actions" to respond to the future demand for affordable housing, greenhouse gas assessments and mitigation measures and vulnerability assessments and mitigation measures need further clarification to ensure appropriate areas of responsibility are retained .

## **CONCLUSION**

The City of Surrey has expressed its support for the overall Vision, Goals and supporting Strategies of the draft RGS.

While many of Surrey's detailed suggestions, comments and concerns have been addressed in the process of refining the draft RGS to date, staff remains concerned by the increased level of Regional oversight on land use planning and development approvals, and with the cumbersome and complex proposed implementation approval process. It is apparent that a number of other member municipalities share these concerns.

Staff will continue to work with Metro Vancouver staff to address these concerns and to develop a regional plan that can be supported. It is recommended that Council authorize the City Clerk to forward a copy of this report and the related Council resolution to Metro Vancouver as additional input from the City of Surrey.

*Original signed by*  
Jean Lamontagne  
General Manager  
Planning and Development

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