



MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 14, 2023

TO: Chair Ledell and Planning Commission members

FROM: Rebecca Kennedy, Deputy Director; Dominique Martinelli, Senior Long-Range Planner, Community Development Department

RE: **Phase I Update – Our Vancouver**

Intent

Provide Planning Commission with a high-level overview of the work that's been completed during the initial phase of the Comprehensive Plan Update. This includes draft Equity, Community Partnership, and Goals Frameworks, and reviewing community visioning work and project engagement that informed the development of these guiding documents.

Background

The City of Vancouver's Comprehensive Plan provides the overall long-term vision and policy direction to manage the built and natural environment in Vancouver and provide necessary public facilities to achieve that vision. The City adopted its first comprehensive plan under Washington's Growth Management Act in 1994 (Chapter 36.70A RCW), with a major re-write occurring in 2004, and a less substantive update occurring most recently in 2011. On February 27, City Council endorsed a chartering framework for the Comprehensive Plan process, which included a framework for goals within the overall plan – to ensure policies, regulations, and implementation methods are rooted in an articulated purpose.

Purpose of Plan Frameworks

On February 27, City Council endorsed a project charter for the Comprehensive Plan process. A project charter is implemented for projects that are long-term in nature and in which decisions are iterative and at each phase build off those made in the previous one. This included three initial frameworks to be finalized during the initial phase of the project:

- **Equity Framework** – Establishes a structure for ensuring disproportionately impacted and historically marginalized communities drive the policy design process.
- **Community Partnership Framework** – Provides details on how we inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower co-creative partners and members of the public during the plan development process. Also provides overall community engagement goals and objectives, and provide details on the who, what, where and why of engagement.

- **Goals Framework** – provides an overall framework and structure for goals within the plan, including the outline of plan chapters, key themes that will inform the development of specific goals, and chapter specific vision statements, to influence the Land Use Scenario Process and Policy development phases of the plan update.

Since the kickoff of the plan update in May of 2023, in partnership with the project’s Equity team, draft versions of the three frameworks have been developed, and reviewed by City Council during workshops in June, July and October. Following review by Planning Commission, the three frameworks will be updated as appropriate and formally adopted by Council via resolution before moving into the next phase of the project, in alignment with the previously endorsed project charter.

Equity Framework

The equity framework formally identifies a definition of equity for the plan effort, identifies a set of equity principles, and establishes three initial priority equity outcomes for the plan effort:

1. As Vancouver grows, anyone who wants to can afford to live in the city in safe, stable housing.
2. Public transportation is a viable alternative to owning a personal vehicle and offers connectivity across destinations in Vancouver.
3. The project identifies reparative policies that account for the ongoing harm caused by past discriminatory and racist policies, including those related to land use, housing, and the criminal legal system.

The framework at its core establishes a process for evaluating proposed policies and decision-making processes during the planning effort, and implementation of the plan following the conclusion of the planning process.

Community Partnership Framework

The community partnership framework provides an overview of the co-creative process outlined in the public involvement plan, highlights the key advisory groups engaged in the project, the public involvement goals, and the tools that will be used throughout the project to engage community members. It also describes how input will be tracked and inform the overall process and ensure transparency in decision-making.

Community Partners

The Community Partners, which are the core committee of City residents who are tasked with co-creating policy with the City, held their first meeting in June. Over the course of six meetings, the Community Partners have helped develop the overall goals framework, provided input on the community partnership framework, and established the equity priority outcomes outlined in the equity framework.

Engagement & Visioning Process

Over the summer and early fall, the City engaged community members across 20 events on the Comprehensive Plan, creating awareness of the plan update effort and talking with residents about their hopes for the future, what they would like to see more of in their neighborhoods, what would make Vancouver a more equitable and inclusive place to live and how issues such as housing and transportation are affecting them and people they know. Community members were also asked to identify the places, spaces and things that help them feel a sense of belonging in our community. Feedback gathered during these conversations was highly consistent with what was heard during the community visioning process and engagement conducted throughout 2022 and 2023, which is described further below.

The City conducted a robust visioning process, which engaged more than 1,015 community members between June 2022 and February 2023. Since then, staff have engaged more than 1,200 additional community members through one-on-one and small group conversations, Council Community Forums, online engagement and tabling at community events.

During this process, community members were asked about their hopes, needs and concerns, and their big ideas for the future of Vancouver. Some of the most frequently mentioned concerns included public safety, economic opportunity (jobs, education, business development and growth), housing affordability, houselessness, and climate change. Some of the most frequently mentioned hopes for the future include safety in all forms, economic prosperity, affordable housing and preventing displacement, community and neighborhood connections (between places and between people), environmental stewardship and climate resiliency, and care for parks and public spaces.

A detailed summary of themes from the visioning effort was shared earlier this year with members of the Strategic Plan Advisory Committee to help inform their work. Following additional conversations with community members and groups throughout 2023, staff developed a draft community vision statement, which reads:

“Vancouver is an equitable and prosperous community, which ensures that all residents, businesses and organizations benefit from the growth and advancement we make together. Vancouver will be recognized for our quality of life, as evidenced by affordable housing in vibrant, safe and walkable neighborhoods, access to jobs and economic opportunity for all, and resilience to the impacts of climate change.”

Goals Framework

To help ensure alignment and cohesion between the Comprehensive Plan and the Strategic Plan, the draft goals framework was developed from the draft visioning statement, feedback received during the community visioning process, and input from the community partners. The framework includes chapters, represented in **bold text**, along with core goals and desired outcomes that will, once finalized, guide the Comprehensive Plan update going forward.

- **Introduction:** Our Community’s Core Values + Focus Areas
- **Community Feel and Vision:** Inclusive + Affordable + Safe + Shared Prosperity + Walkable

- **Land Use and Development:** Emphasize Mix of Compatible Uses + Increased Livability + Compact and Strategic Infill + Transit Oriented Development + Preservation of Critical Areas and Environmentally Sensitive Lands + Adaptive Reuse + Social Infrastructure
- **Housing:** Affordability + Universal Resident Needs + Culturally Appropriate Housing + Neighborhood Cohesion + Keep Existing Housing Affordable + Focus on Missing Middle Housing Types
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Inclusive and Reparative Policies + Land Use Impacts On Health + Universal Access to Resources (Shelter and Food) + Nurturing and Valuing All People
- **Climate, Environment, Community Health, Sustainability, and Resiliency:** Equitable and Just Transition + Increase Tree Canopy + Stewardship + Supporting Holistic Cycles of Consumption and Production + Waste Diversion + Access to Healthy Food + Physical Health Through Walkability + Response and Resilience to Natural and Manmade Events
- **Economic Opportunity:** Support Businesses and Industry + Facilitate Startups + Innovation + Equity and Inclusion + Circularity+ Creative Vitality
- **Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Community Well Being:** Enhance Walkability + Increase Green Spaces + Inclusive Public Spaces + Increase Health Opportunities Through Recreation
- **Transportation and Mobility:** Reliable and Frequent Public Transit + Walkability + Multi-Modal Streets
- **Infrastructure, Public Facilities and Services and Utilities:** Targeted Approach to Infrastructure Provision + Expand Services and Programs + Serving More Residents With Less Infrastructure Through Strategic Land Use
- **Annexation:** Sustainable Growth + Maintain Levels of Service
- **Implementation:** Actionable Policies + Alignment with Strategic Plan + Local and Regional Coordination + Accountability

Next Steps

Following this work session, the Goals, Equity, and Community Partnership frameworks will be updated to reflect feedback from the Planning Commission and be further refined with the Community Partners. Following this, staff will bring forward a resolution for formal Council endorsement of the three frameworks. In the next phase of the Plan update process, these frameworks will inform and shape the development of land use alternatives that outline how and where growth could occur over the next 20 years. Each alternative will reflect Council's core policy priorities of safety, equity and climate action and the final version of the draft vision statement included above. Starting early next year, Planning Commission will take part in several upcoming workshops, including a joint work session with the City Council, to inform and ultimately choose a final alternative to include in the updated Comprehensive Plan. The project team anticipates seeking formal Planning Commission and Council endorsement of a preferred alternative in June or July of 2024.

Memo Title

Date

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Staff Contact

Domenique Martinelli (she/her), Senior Long Range Planner, Community Development
Domenique.martinelli@cityofvancouver.us

Rebecca Kennedy(she/her), Deputy Director, Community Development
Rebecca.kennedy@cityofvancouver.us

Attachment(s):

- Presentation
- Engagement and Visioning Process Summary
- Equity Framework
- Community Partnership Framework