



MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 14, 2024

TO: Chair Adigweme and Planning Commissioners

FROM: Dominique Martinelli, Senior Long-Range Planner, Community Development Department; Nicole McDermott, consultant project manager, WSP

CC: [OUR VANCOUVER](#) – **Engagement Updates, Chapter Vision Statements, Connected and Accessible Neighborhoods**

Intent

Provide Planning Commission with an update on the following:

- Draft vision statements for each chapter of the plan’s goals framework, the process by which they were developed, and how they are intended to inform policy development.
- The proposed definition of Connected and Accessible Neighborhoods.
- An overview of insights received from recent community engagement efforts, including the community survey.

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. The existing Comprehensive Plan builds its policy approach off of a Centers and Corridors strategy, which designates key areas where the City will grow and develop in the future, and an anticipated timeframe for these areas to develop on a short, medium and long term basis. The Centers and Corridors identified in this approach determine where the City undertakes more detailed subarea and district level planning.

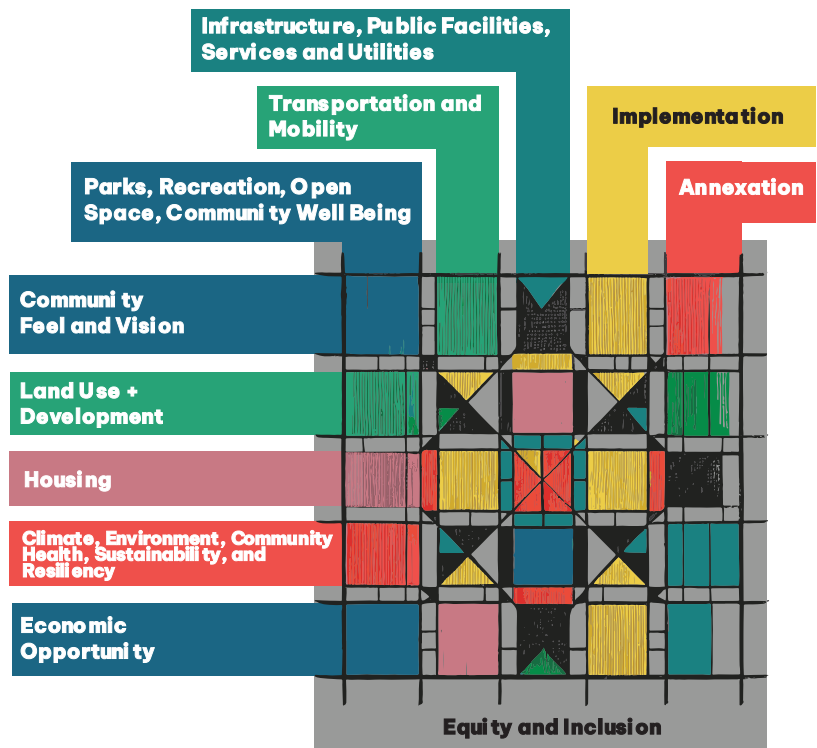
As demographic changes, market conditions, council priorities and other factors have shifted since 2011, it's necessary to re-imagine the existing growth strategy as part of the next Comprehensive Plan. The project team is in the process of developing three distinct growth strategies (called land use possibilities) that respond to current needs and reflect the overall plan vision that was established for **OUR VANCOUVER** during the first phase of the project. The Council-endorsed community vision statement reads as follows:

“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.”

Chapter Vision Statements

Draft vision statements for each chapter of the goals framework were developed through a co-creative process with the Community Partners group, City of Vancouver technical and policy staff, and the project management team for Our Vancouver. The vision statements will serve as a foundation for the goals and policies that are developed for each chapter of the Comprehensive Plan, in the same way that the community vision statement sets the foundation for the overall plan. There are twelve total vision statements, which are aligned with existing

adopted policy documents and City Council’s core policy priorities of equity, community safety, and climate action. Each vision statement includes a set of *key themes* that will serve as a driver for the individual goals, and the resulting policies that are developed from them. The process of developing the vision statements was as follows:



- Small group meetings with a subset of Community Partners were held for each one of the goals framework categories above (figure 1). These meetings provided space for conversations won key themes, core values and priorities, existing assets and gaps, and the impacts of historic investment decisions in each area,

which were compiled and used to draft initial versions of chapter vision statements.

- Drafts were reviewed and discussed by Community Partners individually and as a group. The group discussion focused primarily on the equity vision statement and emphasized its fundamental importance in laying the foundation for equitable plan policies and future outcomes. Community Partners reviewed other draft statements individually and sent feedback to the project team.
- Based on these discussions, the project team and other members of City staff refined one draft statement for each element/plan chapter. These reflected Community Partner discussions as well as adopted policy goals and priorities from the City of Vancouver Strategic Plan, Transportation System Plan, Climate Action Plan, Housing Action Plan, Urban Forestry Management Plan, Reside Vancouver Anti-Displacement Strategy, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Comprehensive Plan, the recently developed community wide vision, as well as the Our Vancouver Goals and Equity frameworks already endorsed by the Vancouver City Council.

The full text of the draft vision statements, as well as information about how they relate to the previously endorsed Goals Framework, is provided in Attachment A. Draft vision statements will be reviewed with City Council at a workshop on June 10, 2024, and staff anticipate that final versions will be endorsed via Council resolution at a subsequent meeting.

Connected and Accessible Neighborhoods

Feedback was received from City Council, the community partners, and the general public about the need to communicate additional aspects about the types of neighborhoods and communities that the Comprehensive Plan is intending to design. Based on this input, a new concept of *Connected and Accessible Neighborhoods* is being proposed to replace the language of 15-minute neighborhoods in the Comprehensive Plan. The concept focuses on two key aspects – accessibility and connectivity.

- **Accessibility**
Accessibility in this context is intended to communicate both *where and whom* - what services and amenities are people able to access within a 15-minute walk, bike or roll, as well as whom they are accessible to. Accessibility focuses on universally designed places, and the ability for all residents regardless of physical or neural capabilities or incomes to be well served by their built environment. If neighborhoods have high connectivity but the infrastructure doesn't match the capabilities of all individuals, many will be left out. The City can begin to address these disadvantages through planning and policy guided by the principal of accessibility. Accessibility is also further defined by physical and financial accessibility:
 - *Physical Accessibility*

The most prevalent example of accessible design within cities is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations including design standards principally for those who use mobility devices like walkers and wheelchairs or with vision impairments, but these requirements also benefit other user groups. For example, ADA requires all intersections to have curb-cuts at crosswalk locations to ensure that those using a wheelchair or walker experience a similar level of service to those on foot. However, those requirements also benefit everyone by making the built environment more safe and increasing accessibility for other user groups like people riding skateboards or pushing strollers. These design standards and policies ensure that new or renovated infrastructure is designed so that those with physical impairments can move around, interact, and experience the same level of access awarded by public spaces. Age is another important component of accessibility. Effective urban design ensure that people at any stage of life feel comfortable, safe, and that the city has been designed for them.

- *Financial Accessibility*

Financial accessibility includes the capacity for those with different incomes to interact with the built environment. Financial access includes access to a personal vehicle, transit fares, or other limitations on transportation. Planning for accessibility in transportation works to remove these barriers to the furthest extent possible by promoting a variety of transportation options. For Land Use Planning, this can mean focusing on distributing affordable housing along already well-connected transit corridors via Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and distributing land-use types evenly throughout the city.

- **Connectivity**

Connectivity is intended to communicate how people are connected to services and amenities in neighborhoods, as well as how neighborhoods connect and inter-relate to one another. The measure of connectivity that has been used to date is the 15-minute city standard which examines how well the city distributes common daily amenities across the city. Fifteen minutes, typically $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 mile) has been understood as that maximum time/distance you can reliably encourage someone to opt to walk, bike, or roll instead of taking a car (Duany & Steuteville, 2021). The topic has been relentlessly studied, and broadly finds the same conclusion – that a neighborhood with more amenities within a 15-minute distance result in a higher percentage of trips being done through walking or other means of active transportation (Abbiasov et al. 2024). The City will retain this metric as a standard means of evaluating the connectivity of focus areas and neighborhoods in the Comprehensive Plan, but the language that is used will reflect more encompassing themes highlighted in the Connected and Accessible Neighborhoods language. This approach focuses on maximizing mixed uses, improving multi-modal transportation options, and active transportation networks, consistent with policy outlined in the Transportation System Plan. These strategies bring amenity locations within an easy walk, roll, or bike trip,

and lead to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from single occupancy vehicles and improving health. Through this approach, the City will begin to undo current land use patterns of disconnect housing, amenities and services and negatively impact community health, climate, and equity.

Engagement

Since the beginning of the update process in May 2023, the following engagement work has been conducted on the Comprehensive Plan:

- One open house event held in December (middle housing forum co-hosted with the Department of Commerce)
- An interactive mapping exercise on the project BeHeard Page that received a total of 150 engagements
- 19 community tabling events during the summer of 2023
- A community wide survey that was available from December 2023 to March 2024, which received 1,017 responses
- A number of small group educational sessions including:
 - ESD 112's Project Voice with local teachers
 - Clark County Food Bank
 - The City of Vancouver's Civic Minds Youth Program
- Meetings and workshops with the project's Community Working Groups (CWG's), which include:
 - The Community Partners – 12 meetings
 - Community Based Organization (CBO) Working Group co-convened with the Southwest Washington Equity Coalition (SWEC) – 2 meetings
 - Climate Community Working Group, co-convened with Alliance for Community Engagement – 2 meetings
 - Housing Community Working Group – 1 meeting
 - Business Leaders Working Group, co-convened with Identity Clark County and the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce – 3 meetings
 - Transportation Community Working Group, co-convened with Cycle Vancouver – 1 meeting
- Four public mapping exercises accessible to the general public to develop the land use possibilities.
- One virtual mapping exercise to develop the land use possibilities.
- In addition to conducting mapping exercises in large community workshops and with the Community Working Groups, mapping workshops were done with the following small groups:
 - Civic Minds Youth Program
 - The Foundation and Evergreen High School Black Student Union Board Members
 - May Climate Pub, in coordination with the City's internal Climate Team

Once the three land use possibilities have been developed in June, engagement will be conducted that communicates the main takeaways and key tradeoffs of each of the three possibilities. This phase of engagement will include the following methods:

- Continued conversation with the Community Partners group;
- Continued conversation with Community Working Groups (CWG's);
- An online interactive storymap highlighting the three possibilities and corresponding survey questions;
- Education, communication, and options for providing feedback on the three possibilities during community tabling events during the summer of 2024;
- Survey questions for in person tabling events;
- One virtual and one in-person open house on the three possibilities and the scope of the EIS.

Engagement Findings and Key Takeaways

Throughout the effort to update the plan, we've received feedback and input from community partners, nonprofits, community based organizations and the general public on topics for all the categories listed in the plan's Goals Framework. The table below shows common themes from each chapter of the goals framework.

Comp Plan Chapter	Common Themes in Community Engagement
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing affordability • Housing availability • Variety of housing options • Houselessness • Housing policy and services • Housing purchasing and renting stipulations
Transportation and Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian and Bike Facilities • Roads and multi-modal transportation • Transit • Parking • Safety and noise
Infrastructure, Public Facilities and Services and Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public utilities • Water/Sewer/Stormwater facilities • Law enforcement • Emergency and health services • Public transportation accessibility • Safe streets
Land Use and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walkability • Density • Continuity with existing development

Community Feel and Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atmosphere and aesthetics • Feelings of connection and belonging
Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Community Well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire for increased access to public facilities • Appreciation for existing facilities • Cultural inclusion
Equity and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally specific resources • Education and community events • Sense of belonging • Safety
Economic Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce development and support • Job availability • Support for small / local businesses
Climate, Environment, Community Health, Sustainability and Resiliency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air, Water, and Noise pollution • Accessibility of health and wellness services • Appreciation and conservation of green spaces including shade and native plants
Annexation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for accelerating timeline for annexation • Opposition to annexing new neighborhoods
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency of limitations • Remove accessibility barriers

As we continue our work with communities, the project team is tracking different outreach and engagement methods to better refine our practices of providing equitable access with priority communities.

- Key methods that have resulted in a higher engagement rate of priority communities include;
- Partnering with local groups and organizations that are already trusted by priority communities.
- Providing translated materials and interpretation services.
- Using social media as a primary outreach tool.

Next Steps

Planning Commission will review the three proposed Land Use Possibilities during a work session on June 25. A “no build” scenario will be included to compare alongside the three possibilities that assumes no changes to zoning or land use designations other than the minimum elements required under state law. Each alternative will reflect Council’s core policy priorities of safety, equity and climate action and themes from community vision statement. Each alternative will also feature an analysis that looks at how they reinforce the chapter vision statements that were co-created with the Community Partners and technical staff and informed by existing City policy guidance. Each of the Alternatives may emphasize certain elements or key themes more highly than others or maintain an even balance between all the vision statement themes. Once feedback on the three possibilities is received, they will be refined and then evaluated under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. A draft EIS will be conducted on the three possibilities, followed by a public comment period. This will inform the development of a preferred possibility that will be presented to the community, Council, Planning Commission, and other stakeholder groups and assessed through a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The preferred possibility will become the basis for the policy development phase of the project and the re-write of Vancouver Municipal Code Title 20 - Land Use and Development. It is likely that the preferred possibility will contain components of each of the three possibilities in response to community input, rather than a discrete selection of one over the others.

Attachments:

Goals Framework and Vision Statements

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