About Metro 2050

Metro Vancouver is updating Metro Vancouver 2040: Shaping our Future (Metro 2040), the regional growth strategy. Since its adoption in 2011, Metro 2040 has been a strong and effective tool representing the regional federation’s collective vision for livability and managing growth anticipated to come to our region over the long term.

Having a regional growth strategy allows Metro Vancouver and member jurisdictions to prevent urban sprawl by focusing growth (i.e., new homes and new jobs) in transit-oriented locations to support the development of livable neighbourhoods, with a range of housing, jobs, and amenities. The strategy also protects the region’s vital agricultural, ecologically important, and industrial lands. These efforts support the provision of affordable housing, a diverse economy, and mobility for all, and they help prepare the region for the impacts of climate change.

Metro 2040 was co-created and supported by all municipalities in the region, Tsawwassen First Nation, TransLink, adjacent regional districts, and the Metro Vancouver Board. The direction provided by the strategy recognizes the region’s collective vision for the future and the importance of cooperation among member jurisdictions to create that future together.

The regional growth strategy is being updated. Though many of the goals, actions, and tools that are working well in Metro 2040 will remain unchanged, updates will extend the strategy to the year 2050 and allow the region to better respond to critical and emerging issues such as climate change, social equity, resilience, and housing affordability. Updates will also align the strategy with Transport 2050 (TransLink’s new regional transportation strategy) and implement policy improvements in a number of areas. The updated strategy, anticipated to be completed in 2022, will be called Metro 2050.
The purpose of the Rural regional land use designation is to protect the Metro Vancouver region’s rural areas from urban development, and limit the scale, form, and density of growth outside the Urban Containment Boundary.

Lands with a Rural regional land use designation comprise 2.6% of the region. Most (90%) of the rural lands are located in the municipalities of Maple Ridge, Township of Langley, Pitt Meadows, Surrey, and Anmore. These lands are located outside the Urban Containment Boundary and are generally not eligible for urban infrastructure / services such as sanitary sewers or transit, and are not intended for future urban development.

Existing land uses in Rural areas, with the percentage of the total in brackets, include:

1. low-density residential or rural residential (69%)
2. recreation, open space and natural areas (10%)
3. road rights-of-way (7%)
4. undeveloped (6%)
5. industrial (3%)
6. agricultural (3%)
7. other (2%)

One of the challenges in implementing Metro 2040 has been the lack of clarity of intent of the Rural designation. This situation has led to an increase of small lot subdivisions and development densities outside the Urban Containment Boundary, with accompanying expectations for urban levels of infrastructure / services for these areas.

1. Source: 2016 Generalized Land Use Classification
WHAT’S CHANGING

The following changes to rural policies are recommended:

1. Improve the definition of the Rural regional land use designation
2. Consider actions to retain / protect sensitive ecosystems in Rural areas

Recommendation #1: Improve the definition of the Rural regional land use designation

In Metro 2040, a lack of clarity about what constitutes Rural use has contributed to increasing expectations for greater urban forms of residential densities and amenities in these areas. This undermines the well-established regional growth management principle of urban containment.

The recommendation will help maintain the distinction between rural and urban areas. Not only will this support the integrity of the Urban Containment Boundary, but it will also encourage new development and higher density forms of residential uses to locate in urban areas. Following the established regional planning principle of urban containment makes it more cost effective to provide urban infrastructure, primarily utilities and transit, to the intended growth areas of the region.

Recommendation #2: Consider actions to retain / protect sensitive ecosystems in Rural areas

Rural areas contain open space and natural areas beyond those included within the Conservation and Recreation regional land use designation. Improving the protection of sensitive ecosystems in rural areas is a broadly supported idea.

The recommendation seeks to protect the natural areas and sensitive ecosystems in Rural areas, and is consistent and supportive of recommendations in the Metro 2040 Environment Policy Review. Creating more tools to protect sensitive ecosystems throughout the region will help support public health benefits and ecosystem services while bolstering climate change resilience, through such outcomes as flood management, wildlife habitat protection, and mitigation through carbon storage.

BENEFITS

These changes will provide the following benefits:

- Support the integrity of the Urban Containment Boundary and the cost efficiencies of providing urban utilities, transit, and other community services
- Better protect agricultural areas from urban densities and forms of development
- Better protect natural areas that contribute to public benefits
- Support climate action
NEXT STEPS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK

Member jurisdictions have had opportunities to provide feedback on these recommendations through Metro Vancouver’s Regional Planning Advisory Committee, Regional Planning Committee, and Board. Member jurisdictions may submit questions or request a presentation from Metro Vancouver staff by sending an email to regionalplanning@metrovancouver.org.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit metrovancouver.org/metro2050

REGIONAL PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The recommended changes align with Metro 2040’s established core regional planning principles to:

- Put growth in the right places (centres and corridors)
- Protect important lands (agricultural, ecologically important, industrial)
- Support complete communities
- Create diverse and affordable housing, better mobility, and a prosperous economy
- Enable efficient urban infrastructure (utilities, transit).