

RE: THE VANCOUVER CORE PLAN

MUNICIPAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:

1. *THAT the recommendation of the Director Planning & Building Inspection be adopted.*

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ITEM 4
MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 65
COUNCIL MEETING 1983 10 31

TO: MUNICIPAL MANAGER 1983 October 26

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING &
BUILDING INSPECTION

SUBJECT: THE VANCOUVER COREPLAN

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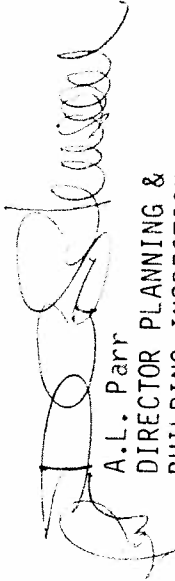
RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT this report be received for the information of Council.

R E P O R T

Council, at its meeting of 1983 October 03, requested the Planning & Building Inspection Department to prepare a brief setting out this Municipality's perspective as related to the draft Vancouver Coreplan.

The attached material was submitted to the Vancouver Council meeting on 1983 October 25 as an initial Municipal response to the various issues and proposals outlined in the Coreplan report. A representative of the Planning & Building Inspection Department attended the meeting to respond to questions relating to the brief and was advised that Vancouver Planning staff would be maintaining a liaison with Municipal staff with respect to both the Coreplan review and a fuller discussion related to our brief.


A.L. Parr

DIRECTOR PLANNING &
BUILDING INSPECTION

JSB/mcb
Attach:



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Telephone (604) 294-7400



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1983 October 20

City Clerk
City of Vancouver
Vancouver City Hall
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, B. C. V5Y 1V4

Dear Sir:


Re: The Vancouver Coreplan

The Burnaby Municipal Council, at its meeting of 1983 October 03, requested the Planning Department to prepare a brief setting out this Municipality's perspective as related to the draft Vancouver Coreplan.

The Burnaby Municipal Council is appreciative of the invitation to express the Municipal viewpoint on this subject as outlined in the attached brief given its regional significance and hopes that a continuing dialogue and exchange of views can be maintained to ensure that the best course of action for all concerned is effected.

Would you please arrange for this material to be included within the Council agenda for the meeting to be held on 1983 October 25 with respect to the draft Vancouver Coreplan.

Yours truly,


A. L. Parr
Director Planning &
Building Inspection

JSB/jce
Attach.

cc: Mr. R. Spaxman, Director of Planning
City of Vancouver

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THE VANCOUVER COREPLAN: A BURNABY PERSPECTIVE

A brief submitted to the City of Vancouver by the Corporation of the District of Burnaby, 1983 October 25.

Burnaby Planning &
Building Inspection Department

1983 October 20

THE VANCOUVER COREPLAN: A BURNABY PERSPECTIVE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This brief is submitted in response to the invitation to provide comment on the draft Vancouver Coreplan document. The Burnaby Municipal Council has indicated its appreciation for the opportunity to express its views, both as an adjacent neighbour and a regional partner, in that the future development of the City of Vancouver will have a profound effect on the remainder of the region.

2.0 THE COREPLAN: THE CURRENT CONTEXT

Over the past three decades the development of the Vancouver region has been characterized by an increasing centralization of employment opportunities within the City of Vancouver and a corresponding decentralization of residential development to the outlying municipalities. This somewhat typical suburban growth trend has seen the City of Vancouver's share of the metropolitan population decrease from about two-thirds in 1951 to one-third in 1981. On the other hand, between 1971 and 1981 the number of jobs is estimated to have increased by about 26 percent, while population decreased about 3 percent. This demonstrates the disproportionate growth of employment to population in the City that has been occurring.

In 1981, it is estimated that just over one-half of the City's total employment was located within the defined core area boundaries. It has been further estimated that in 1981, 35 percent of workers in the core also lived in the core, 30 percent of the employees live in the City of Vancouver but outside the core and the remaining 35 percent commute to their core area jobs from homes outside the City of Vancouver. This employee distribution pattern has resulted in a core-oriented commuter transportation system for the region which traditionally has been plagued with congestion and delay problems. Recent trends have indicated an accelerated employment growth in the core area together with lower than anticipated labour force expansion in the City. This has resulted in an even more unbalanced jobs to labour force ratio throughout the region. The net result has been to reinforce the commuter pattern into and through the inner municipalities and to increase traffic congestion and problems associated with spill-over traffic entering low density residential neighbourhoods.

3.0 THE COREPLAN: A BURNABY CONTEXT

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The Coreplan document presents the range of core-related issues and problems facing the City and the region in a straight-forward, comprehensive and candid manner. The review of the Coreplan has resulted in this Municipality gaining a broader insight into the issues facing the City and general agreement with the objectives underlying the strategy proposed. However, along with that insight, is a higher level of apprehension relating to potential future problems that are outlined, particularly as related to significant growth in commuter travel predicted for the future, should the Coreplan strategy prove to be ineffective over the longer term.

The background materials to the draft Coreplan indicate that core area employment could grow by a further 50,000 to 100,000 jobs over the next two decades. Of these new jobs it is further estimated that 41 to 80 percent will be filled by workers who commute from homes outside the City. This scenario with its growing imbalance between employment and labour force growth vis-a-vis Vancouver and the surrounding outlying municipalities would generate a dramatic growth in commuter travel. Without major improvements to the transportation system or other actions being taken, it is predicted that this commuter travel growth would increase congestion, travel delays, travel costs and neighbourhood disruption along major access corridors to the city and the downtown peninsula.

It is recognized that there will be many divergent and often conflicting issues that will have to be addressed in the best interests of both the City and the region as a whole. Our comments that follow are intended to provide the City of Vancouver with a better understanding of our concerns when finalizing its plans for the core area.

3.1 REGIONAL TOWN CENTRES

Without question the Vancouver downtown core will continue to absorb substantial future office space growth in its role as British Columbia's major administrative and financial centre. The core is, by many orders of magnitude, the largest concentration of employment and commuter destinations in the region. This will clearly be reinforced over the foreseeable future.

Within this context, the Greater Vancouver Regional District and its member municipalities have been promoting the development of a complementary series of regional town centres. It is intended that these centres will not only increase the urban self-sufficiency of their respective service areas, but as well, provide for the development of attractive and efficient centres as suburban foci for transportation, particu-

larly transit. This is to also help increase the rate of suburban office employment growth relative to downtown growth. This strategy seeks to improve the livability of the suburban municipalities and to help reduce the need for additional core-related commuter transportation facilities by attracting proportionately more employment to suburban town centre locations in close proximity to the region's labour force.

The present and future development prospects of this Municipality's regional town centre - Burnaby Metrotown - are considered bright. Furthermore, there exists a renewed consensus that the evolution of the various suburban 'downtowns' is a desirable objective which is in the best interests of the individual municipalities, the region as a whole, and perhaps most particularly the City of Vancouver, as part of their solution, in addressing the various Coreplan issues.

3.2 TRANSPORTATION

Transportation system improvements in Burnaby are guided by Council adopted transportation policies and a Comprehensive Transportation Plan adopted in 1979. The thrust behind the policies and plan is expressed by the following fundamental transportation goal:

"to facilitate the movement of people and goods within and through the municipality in a manner that is both cost effective and efficient while at the same time endeavouring to maintain and improve the integrity and environment of residential neighbourhoods"

Given Greater Vancouver's unique geographical situation and Burnby's location immediately adjacent to the City of Vancouver, the distribution of present and future residential and employment growth in Vancouver impacts in a substantial way on the adequacy with which the Municipality is able to address this transportation goal. The transportation system in Burnaby is proposed to continue to provide Burnaby residents with access to job opportunities in Vancouver (and vice versa) as well as accommodate through traffic movements between the City and eastern municipalities.

A principal problem faced by Burnaby under present conditions is insufficient road capacity to accommodate demand by commuters using private cars. In South Burnaby, recent and proposed road improvements and the construction of the ALRT system will ensure that in the short to medium term future, road congestion will be a localized problem rather than an area wide one. In North Burnaby the situation is somewhat different. Peak period congestion on existing east-west routes,

which include the Freeway, Lougheed Highway and Hastings Street, is sufficiently severe for commuters to use residential streets in preference to the main arterials. This is a problem that the Municipality shares with the City of Vancouver, as evidenced by the concerns of residents along Oxford Street and Cambridge Street in Burnaby and Vancouver Heights respectively.

The long-run scope for improvement to this growing problem is limited by the few available opportunities for increasing arterial network capacity. Traffic management measures such as signal synchronization are attractive because they generally have a low cost relative to benefits, but the real capacity increase is marginal. The most significant means to increase capacity to cope with increasing demand for road traffic would come from widening the Freeway. However, regional traffic projections indicate that by the year 2000, regional traffic congestion in North Burnaby will be worse than it is now even with this improvement and commuter rail in place.

Because the east-west arterials in the Municipality are already operating at high congestion levels, the growing imbalance of jobs to labour force in the City resulting in increased commuter flows are going to continue to be a matter of heightened concern for this Municipality. The implications in the future could be particularly severe. This is because even marginal increases in the volume of traffic using an already congested road network can impose disproportionately high social and economic costs on the whole traffic flow in terms of fuel economy, travel time and irritation to drivers and neighbourhood residents alike.

4.0 THE COREPLAN STRATEGY AND BURNABY

The foregoing discussion has served to demonstrate that the Municipality of Burnaby has a keen interest in maintaining an ongoing liaison with the City in its deliberations concerning the Coreplan. The following initial comments are made with respect to those elements of the recommended strategy considered to have implications for the Municipality of Burnaby.

4.1 CORE EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

Strategy Element

Continue to accept office development and employment growth consistent with present potential levels, but not to expand that potential through new zoning.

From the regional transportation and regional town centre perspective, it would be particularly beneficial to Burnaby if the City discouraged the continued growth of employment opportunities within its boundaries. As such, it is somewhat difficult to support the strategy to maintain the status quo in core commercial zoning given the acknowledged doubt that the present and planned City and regional systems - especially transportation - could cope with that level of concentrated development even with modest gains in residential development.

The Coreplan suggests that there exists the opportunity to replace surplus core office potential with uses that could help alleviate the future implications of concentrated employment growth. Particular reference is made to the potential for "near-term residential redevelopment at suitable densities" in the south downtown area and in the neck of the downtown peninsula extending from B.C. Place. This is considered to offer a positive, albeit relatively minor, policy response to the core employment issue that should be more fully evaluated. Similarly, the proposal to eliminate non-ancillary commercial activity as a conditionally approved use in industrial areas to help preserve an industrial presence in the eastern core area is supportable as a positive policy action.

On two previous occasions (1982 March and 1983 May), the Burnaby Municipal Council has expressed to the City its serious concerns with the potentially high concentration of commercial office space at B.C. Place particularly in relation to the balance of jobs to labour force, transportation and regional town centre objectives within the Livable Region Program. In our report of 1982 March 22, the following comment was presented which supports fully the recommended strategy to maintain core office potential at its present level within the Vancouver downtown area:

"It is recommended that Council advise that, from a policy viewpoint, it would prefer to see the office component potential substantially reduced to at least the 2.5 million square ft. ceiling mentioned, but that this represent the final rather than first stage total for the project. It is further recommended that if the City of Vancouver considers this site to represent a beneficial office development area within the downtown area, then the City of Vancouver be requested to consider reducing its office zoning potential elsewhere in the core area by an equivalent amount provided for at B.C. Place with housing opportunities being given priority as the replacement use."

It is hoped that our interpretation of the recommended strategy is correct and that it would result in a continuing effort to realize a much greater commitment to providing housing, rather than office, opportunities at B.C. Place.

4.2 REGIONAL TOWN CENTRES

Strategy Element

Continue to support Regional Town Centres outside Vancouver but with reduced and more realistic short-term expectation.

A survey of major developers undertaken by the GVRD in 1980 identified two factors considered to be critical when locating new offices. The first related to prestige with the conclusion that downtown will remain the prestige location for the foreseeable future. The second related to existing concentrations of other offices and support services in the downtown area where the convenience of face-to-face contact and necessary services are readily available. Prestige locations and high concentrations of other offices are mutually reinforcing elements which will tend to reinforce the continued dominance of the Vancouver downtown relative to the region's office floor space distribution. Tempered with this reality, the Municipality of Burnaby nevertheless remains optimistic about its future prospects for attracting commercial office space to its Burnaby Metrotown area. Three factors have contributed to this optimism. The first is the substantial retail (56,000 sq.m), office (77,000 sq.m) and residential (8,900 units) development existing in the town centre. The location of the GVRD headquarters in Metrotown will also provide additional impetus. The second recognizes the construction of the ALRT system which will link Metrotown to the downtown core with a travel time of 12 minutes. This should immediately help make the centre a more attractive and viable business location. The third relates to the increased short term prospects for the development of a regional scaled retail complex within the Metrotown core area. This will not only serve to improve the support service and critical mass for the centre but, as well, vastly improve the overall attractiveness of Metrotown as a business centre. With these and other Municipal initiatives, it is considered that Metrotown will offer an attractive, higher order suburban office location that should achieve modest gains in the near future.

A further initiative identified in the developer's survey that would directly assist the emergence of regional town centres was a greater support by governments in locating their own offices in those centres. The Municipality of Burnaby has frequently reminded the Provincial and Federal governments of

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the office decentralization objectives of the Livable Region Program and how the location of their office space to a regional town centre location could be of both real and symbolic value. The City of Vancouver's support with respect to regional town centre locations for B.C. Hydro and Federal office buildings would provide a positive regional contribution, as would the scaling down of potential office space development at B.C. Place.

The Municipality of Burnaby would welcome assistance from the City of Vancouver in helping solicit appropriate prospective regional town centre tenants as is discussed on page 33 of the Coreplan report. This would greatly assist in broadening the awareness of development and leasing advantages and opportunities in regional town centres.

4.3 CORE HOUSING

Strategy Elements

Accommodate the implications of employment growth first through expansions in housing stock near the core and only secondly through improvements to the transportation system;

Increase housing potential in more areas of Vancouver that minimize the costs of growth for the city and maximize benefits to potential residents.

The Coreplan reports have indicated that core employment could grow between 50,000 and 100,000 workers over the next two decades. However, the present capacity for additional housing in the City would allow for the accommodation of only 20,000 of these workers based on the City's remaining zoned potential for 35,000 new housing units. The objective to establish a ten-year target for increasing the City's housing development potential by 50,000 units to help address this projected imbalance is therefore regarded as a highly positive growth management action.

The fact that the Coreplan strategy relies heavily on this new housing initiative makes even more critical the question of whether it can be achieved. The designation of areas where housing potential can be increased to meet the target objective will be a challenging phase and at its conclusion will only have dealt with future potential. The degree to which that potential is actually developed and occupied by core area employees will ultimately dictate the success of the strategy.

4.4 TRANSPORTATION

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Strategy Elements

Improve the transportation system through traffic management and other efficiency measures before constructing major capital projects beyond ALRT;

Promote transit usage before providing additional capital-intensive automobile facilities;

Reserve the option for major new transportation facilities should core employment grow beyond the ability of the city to accommodate that employment through more housing and through transportation efficiency improvements.

In view of the many uncertainties associated with the likely timing and success of the housing element, it is our belief that transportation system improvements should be initiated at an early stage.

As was indicated previously, traffic management measures such as signal synchronization and intersection improvements are attractive and should be pursued on a co-ordinated regional basis. However, the real capacity increases relative to the existing and projected volumes is considered to be marginal. A broader transportation push is regarded as essential even in the short term.

Given that there will continue to be growth in employment opportunities in the Vancouver core, it is in the City's and region's interest that the transit modal share of travel continue to grow. In particular, it is desirable to maximize the use of the large capacity reserve for travel that is offered by ALRT. A fuller and earlier use of the ALRT capacity will be realized if priority is attached to proceeding with the extensions to the North-East Sector and Surrey as a matter of urgency. Similarly, continuing growth in the core, coupled with east-west road congestion in North Burnaby, mandates renewed efforts leading to the early implementation of a commuter rail service along the Burrard Inlet foreshore.

It is not enough to discourage car usage through an active support of public transit. We will continue to have congestion, particularly in the core area, as long as individual car drivers underestimate the cost of travelling by car and escape from having to pay the social cost of congestion. Price is the most efficient mechanism for matching demand and supply and the City may well wish to pursue the road pricing experiment (possibly for Expo '86) mentioned in the Coreplan document with some seriousness.

Although road pricing may still be considered too novel, it must be recognized that pricing of parking is already used in the core area to implicitly, if not explicitly, regulate demand. Probably the single most effective measure that the City can undertake to reduce car usage for trips to the core is to limit the supply of parking. This is a recognized practice in many European cities. It could best be effected by a tax on core area parking stalls or, a minimal requirement for on-site parking related to new development. It would follow that the price for parking would reflect the available market supply.

Notwithstanding our belief that the Coreplan strategy should be active in encouraging transit and discouraging private car usage, there will be a need for improvements to the present road network. Traffic management measures, particularly ones which offer priority to high occupancy vehicles, are being proposed by the City but they will not be enough.

From Burnaby's perspective, a priority project is widening of the Freeway and its extension to the Second Narrows bridge. Amongst other benefits, these measures would help maximize the east-west capacity potential of the North Burnaby Corridor and divert commuters from residential neighbourhoods back to the appropriate arterials. Similarly, we support an arterial standard continuous port road in Vancouver. This project stands on its own merits, but its provision would be a prerequisite should a waterfront route in Burnaby (between the Second Narrows bridge and the Barnet Highway) become a future necessity.

The Coreplan proposals for the future are ones which will affect the impact of downtown growth on the transportation infrastructure in Burnaby. From this perspective, it is desirable to increase the emphasis on encouraging public transit, particularly the ALRT extensions and the implementation of commuter rail, as well as discourage car usage primarily through the pricing and curtailment of parking supply. Additionally, the City in concert with other municipalities and the Ministry of Transportation and Highways should co-ordinate their efforts to ensure that required improvements to the regional road network are implemented.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The central issue faced by the Livable Regional Program in the 1970s was an accelerating imbalance between the distribution of jobs and labour force within the region, together with the range of associated transportation and social costs. As is stated in one of the Coreplan background reports, "the challenge of the early 1970s is repeated once more".

The principal strategy, as presented in the Coreplan, to address this challenge is to attempt to attract a proportionately larger segment of the labour force to the central employment centre. As was mentioned previously, the Municipality of Burnaby recognizes the realities of this position and supports the general concept. However at the same time we are left with a feeling of apprehension should, over time, the Coreplan strategy prove ineffective in helping to counteract the continuing job and labour force distribution trends. It is for this reason that Burnaby welcomes the Coreplan's proposal to initiate a comprehensive monitoring program to assess how well the City's strategy is meeting its objectives. To help increase the effectiveness of this endeavour, it is recommended that the Regional District, the Ministry of Transportation and Highways and those municipalities adjacent to the City (i.e. Burnaby, Richmond, North Vancouver and West Vancouver) be invited to participate in the monitoring program to help in the assessment of trends relating to regional town centres and major corridors approaching the City of Vancouver. Information on these trends would be useful as input in the City's ongoing refinement of the Coreplan strategy. If necessary, actions could then be taken in line with the alternative growth management strategy as presented in the Coreplan:

Prepare to manage or deflect core employment growth should housing and transportation improvements prove unattainable or insufficient.

Burnaby is an adjacent neighbour who will be affected by the future development of the Vancouver core, particularly with reference to transportation and regional town centre matters. The following summary of actions, as discussed in this report, are considered from the Burnaby perspective to be particularly worthy of approval or further consideration in conjunction with the monitoring program:

1. To reduce core commercial zoning potential when new commercial zoning is permitted.
2. To replace existing core office potential with other uses, particularly residential, where such opportunities can be realized.
3. To take action to concurrently encourage the retention of industrial uses in the core industrial areas and to discourage their replacement by core office employment uses.
4. To reduce the limit of office space potential at B.C. Place to a maximum of 2.5 million sq. ft.

5. To ensure that commercial zoning for offices at B.C. Place does not increase the overall office development potential of the core area, the City of Vancouver reduce its office zoning potential elsewhere in the core area by an equivalent amount provided for at B.C. Place, with housing opportunities being given priority as the replacement use.
6. To receive assistance from the City of Vancouver in helping solicit prospective regional town centre tenants as described in the Coreplan report.
7. To receive City of Vancouver support with respect to securing regional town centre locations for future major Provincial (e.g. B.C. Hydro) and Federal office buildings.
8. To increase as a ten year target the housing development potential of the City of Vancouver by 50,000 units and strive to maximize the realization of that potential.
9. To accelerate the implementation of traffic management measures on major arterials, within and approaching, the City, on a co-ordinated regional basis.
10. To obtain support for the priority extensions of the ALRT facility to North-East Sector and Surrey to help realize a fuller and earlier use of the ALRT capacity.
11. To undertake renewed efforts leading to the early implementation of a commuter rail service along the Burrard Inlet foreshore.
12. To further review and implement parking policy initiatives designed to help encourage greater transit usage and discourage commuter auto trips to the core.
13. To provide for the early widening of the Freeway and its extension to the Second Narrows bridge.
14. To make provision for the future development of an arterial standard continuous port road in Vancouver capable of being integrated with a waterfront route in Burnaby (between the Second Narrows bridge and the Barnet Highway).

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15. To invite the Regional District, the Ministry of Transportation and Highways and those Municipalities adjacent to the City (i.e. Burnaby, Richmond, North Vancouver and West Vancouver) to participate in the monitoring program to help in the assessment of trends relating to regional town centres and major corridors approaching the City of Vancouver.

