
TO: CITY MANAGER **DATE:** 2014 April 22

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING **FILE:** 71000 01

SUBJECT: PROPOSED REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY (RGS) AMENDMENT FOR LANDS WITHIN THE CORPORATION OF DELTA KNOWN AS SOUTHLANDS

PURPOSE: To request that Council provide comments to Metro Vancouver on the proposed amendment to the Regional Growth Strategy (*Metro 2040*) for lands within the Corporation of Delta known as Southlands.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Metro Vancouver Board be advised that the City of Burnaby does not support the proposed amendment to the Regional Growth Strategy (*Metro 2040*) for lands within the Corporation of Delta known as Southlands, as outlined in this report.
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to the Corporation of Delta.

REPORT**1.0 BACKGROUND**

At its meeting of 2014 April 14, Council received correspondence from Metro Vancouver regarding "Notification of a Proposed Amendment to *Metro Vancouver 2040: Shaping Our Future (Metro 2040), the regional growth strategy – Type 2 Amendment (Southlands)*". A copy of the Metro Vancouver correspondence containing the Corporation of Delta's bylaw on the matter has been provided to Council under separate cover. Metro Vancouver has circulated the proposed amendment for comment by affected local governments and has requested a response by April 29, 2014. This report summarizes the key aspects of the proposal, comments on the Metro Vancouver review of the regional land use planning implications, and comments on the impacts of the proposal on the City of Burnaby. In summary, the purpose of this report is to:

- provide an assessment of whether the proposed amendment supports the regional land use planning objectives set out in *Metro 2040*;
- advise whether there are any implications of the amendment for the City of Burnaby; and
- outline recommendations for submission to Metro Vancouver for Council's consideration.

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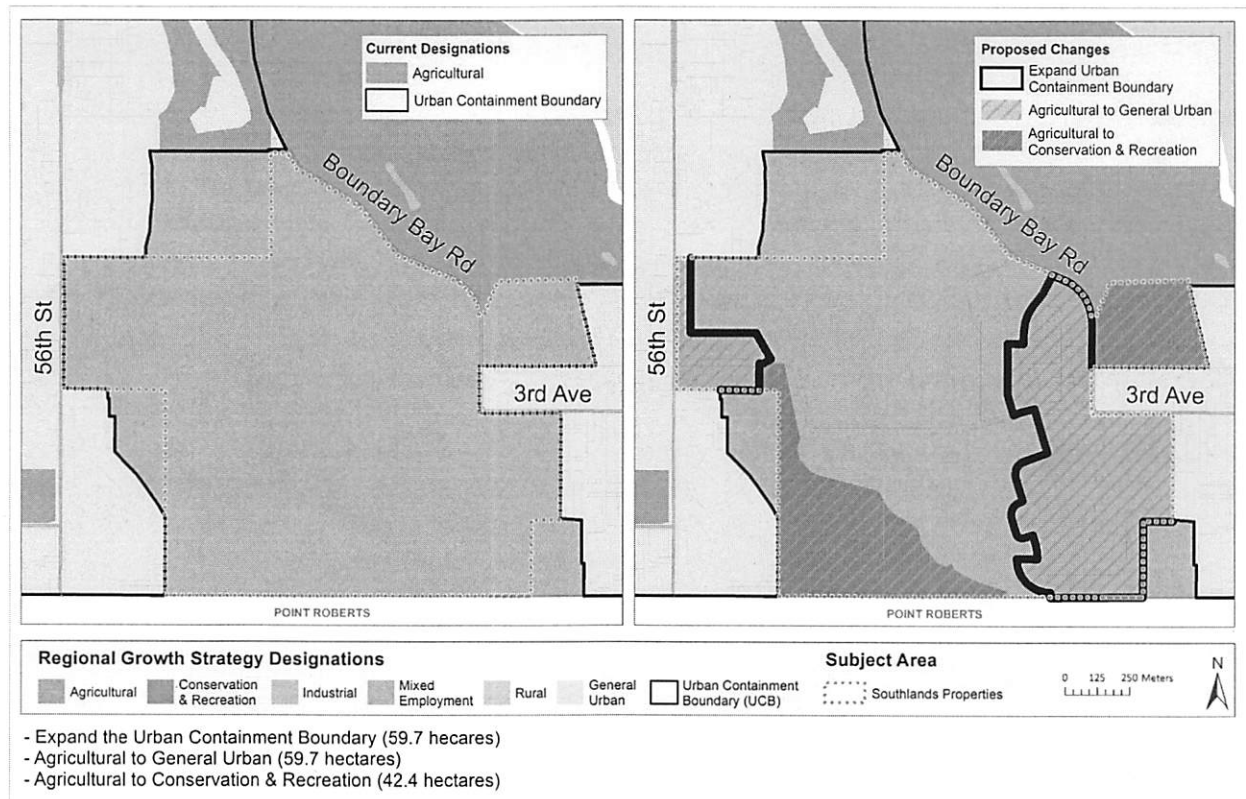
2.0 REQUEST FROM CORPORATION OF DELTA TO AMEND METRO 2040

2.1 Delta Request for an RGS Amendment

In 2014 January, the Corporation of Delta submitted a request to amend the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) to accommodate a request for development of a site known as “Southlands”. Delta held a public hearing and gave third reading to Official Community Plan and Zoning amendment bylaws to allow for residential and commercial development on a portion of the site.

The site is designated in the RGS and in Delta’s Official Community Plan as “Agricultural”. Delta has requested that the RGS land use designation be amended for portions of the site to “General Urban” and “Conservation and Recreation”. An extension to the RGS Urban Containment Boundary would also need to occur in order to accommodate the land use designation changes. The site is not located in the Agricultural Land Reserve (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Proposed RGS Land Use Designation Amendments



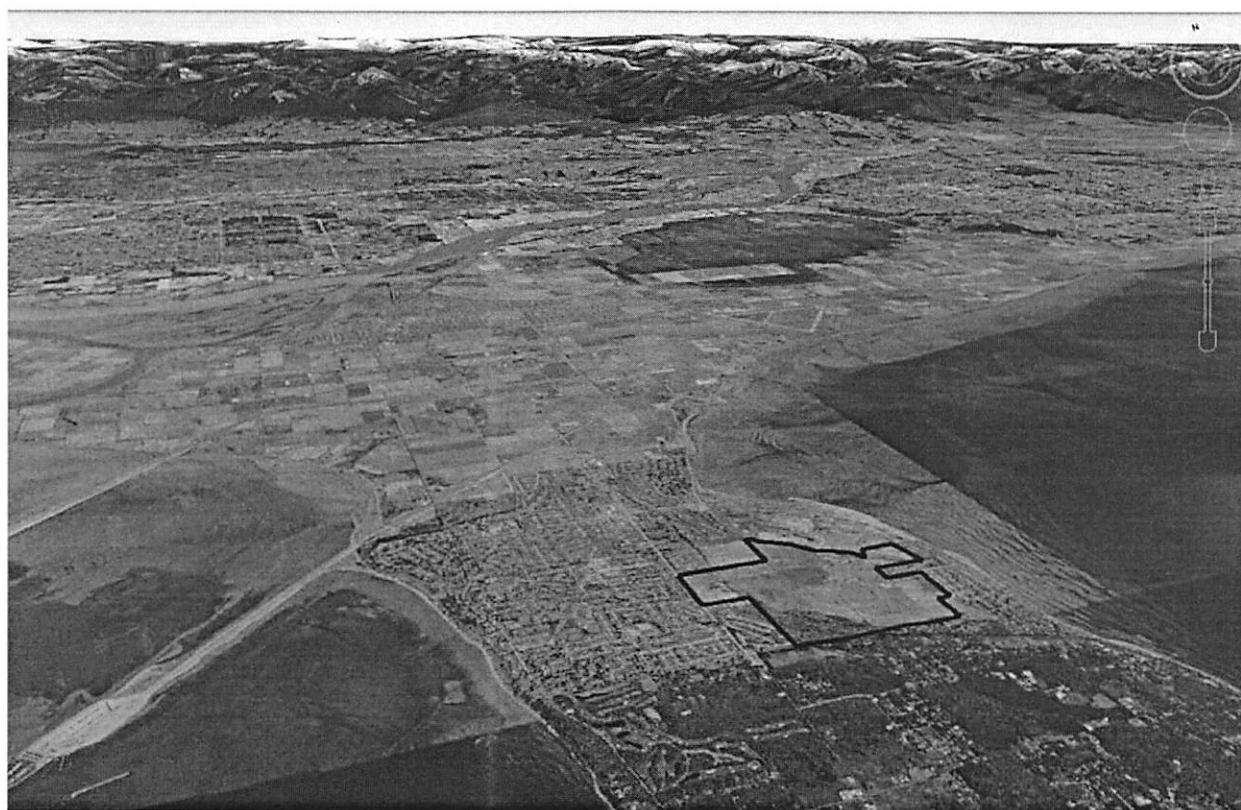
2.2 Summary of Proposed Development

The Southlands site is located in the southwest corner of the region in the community of Tsawwassen. The site is 217.5 hectares (537.4 acres) in size. The owner has applied to the Corporation of Delta to develop a mixed use development of 950 residential units, and

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approximately 80,000 square feet of commercial space on approximately 20% of the site area. The proposal includes provisions for 80% of the site (172 hectares or 425 acres) to be transferred to the Corporation of Delta to be held in public ownership. Of the 172 hectares (425 acres) proposed to be transferred to Delta, 115.6 hectares (285.7 acres) would be for Agricultural, 42.2 hectares (104 acres) would be for Conservation and Recreation, and the balance, 14.2 hectares (35 acres), would be for General Urban uses (community/public space, local parks, local greenways, etc.). The owner also proposes to provide \$9 million to improve agricultural drainage and irrigation on the site.

Figure 2: Location of Southlands Site in the Metro Vancouver Region (site boundaries outlined in black)



3.0 METRO VANCOUVER RGS: AMENDMENT PROCESS

A full description of the amendment, site context, development proposal and regional land use planning analysis by Metro Vancouver is contained in the Metro Vancouver staff report titled, “Corporation of Delta Proposed Regional Growth Strategy Amendment for Southlands” dated February 21, 2014. As noted, due to its size, this has been provided to Council under separate cover. It is also available at the following link: [Corporation of Delta Proposed RGS Amendment for Southlands](#). Amendments to the RGS “Agricultural” and “Conservation and Recreation” land use designations and to the Urban Containment Boundary are considered a Type 2 Amendment to the RGS. Type 2 amendments must receive a two-thirds weighted vote of

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the Board and a public hearing must be held in order for the bylaw amendment to be adopted. On 2014 March 28, the Board gave first and second reading to the bylaw, with the two-thirds voting requirement being met. The public hearing is scheduled for 2014 May 1. After the close of the public hearing, the Board would consider third reading and final adoption, potentially at its meeting at the end of 2014 May.

4.0 METRO VANCOUVER RGS: REGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The RGS was adopted in 2011, and as part of the adoption process, was accepted by all of Metro Vancouver' member municipalities. The acceptance and adoption of the RGS by Metro Vancouver and member municipalities represents an agreement by all signatories on the goals and strategies for managing growth, development and land use in the Metro Vancouver region.

Metro Vancouver provided a thorough analysis of the proposed development, using the five RGS Goals and associated strategies as criteria for its assessment. The regional planning considerations are summarized below:

Goal 1 – Create a Compact Urban Area

Consideration 1: Urban Containment

Metro Vancouver staff considered whether the proposal supports the RGS's goals for urban containment. Delta's Regional Context Statement indicates it can support projected growth in Tsawwassen within the existing urban area. Metro Vancouver's assessment was that expanding the Urban Containment Boundary to accommodate the proposed additional residential and commercial development would result in a dispersed pattern of growth.

Consideration 2: Focusing Growth in Urban Centres

Tsawwassen is considered a Local Centre in the RGS and is the focal point for increased growth, mixed uses and higher density residential development in the Tsawwassen Area Plan. Metro Vancouver notes that expanding the Urban Containment Boundary and expanding the urban area to accommodate growth in a location 1.3 km away from the existing town centre may not support the policy objectives for the Tsawwassen Town Centre.

Consideration 3: Risk of a Proliferation of Associated Proposed Amendments to Metro 2040

Metro considered whether amendments to the Urban Containment Boundary may result in growth pressures on neighbouring properties. In the case of the Southlands site, it is bounded by General Urban uses on two sides, a regional park, and other lands that would be held in public ownership. Therefore, the likelihood of areas immediately surrounding the site being proposed for further urban development is low.

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Goal 2 – Support a Sustainable Economy

Consideration 1: Protecting the Supply of Agricultural Land and Promoting Agricultural Viability

The development proposal includes the transfer of 115.6 hectares (285.7 acres), or 54% of the site to the Corporation of Delta, and this portion would retain an Agricultural designation. Delta has experience with the ownership and lease of agricultural lands. As part of the proposal, the developer would contribute \$9 million to be directed towards the improvement of agricultural irrigation and drainage for the site.

The Metro Vancouver analysis notes that despite retaining 115 hectares (285 acres) of land for agriculture, nearly the same amount, approximately 102 hectares (252 acres) or 46%, will be lost to agriculture, clearly not supporting the RGS goal of protecting the supply of agricultural land. The report also notes Delta’s ownership and experience with leasing agricultural lands, and the improvements to irrigation and drainage that would support agricultural viability and acknowledges that public ownership is of benefit to agriculture. Burnaby staff note that public ownership of the land reduces the possibility that the lands would be converted from agricultural to urban uses in the future. However, public ownership does not necessarily provide for a direct benefit to agricultural viability, as the ability to achieve active farming on the site would not necessarily be secured through public ownership.

Consideration 2: Managing the Agricultural-Urban Interface

The report notes that while the proposal to improve agricultural viability and integrate the “community agriculture” component into the new community is positive, management of the interface of the remaining conventional agricultural component to the new residential area has not been addressed. The Ministry of Agriculture has also expressed concerns about the edge planning for the proposed site (Ministry of Agriculture correspondence is provided with the Metro Vancouver submission).

Consideration 3: Economic Development Opportunities for Agriculture

The Metro Vancouver report notes that a “Market Square” component is proposed for the site, and concludes that this is a positive opportunity to provide economic support for agriculture.

Consideration 4: Fragmentation and Non-Farm Use of Agricultural Land

In addition to the loss of 102 hectares (252 acres) of agriculture land, the remaining agricultural lands will be bisected by a road, thus contributing to fragmentation, contrary to the goal of the RGS.

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Goal 3 – Protect the Environment and Respond to Climate Change Impacts

Consideration 1: Protecting Conservation and Recreation Lands

The proposal would result in 42.2 hectares (104.2 acres) of agricultural land to be designated as Conservation and Recreation and to be placed in public ownership. This is a regional benefit for conservation lands and secures the future use of those lands for conservation purposes.

Consideration 2: Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The Metro Vancouver report notes that the location of the development far away from employment centres and major commercial centres and the lack of public transit would result in most trips being made by car and thus more greenhouse gas emissions. A traffic study supplied by the landowner indicated that there would be 16% more trips during the morning peak and 12% more trips during the afternoon peak for this development compared to development in the Tsawwassen Town Centre. The proposal does not indicate any development practices that would result in a form of development that was more energy efficient, which is also an objective of the RGS.

Consideration 3: Climate Change Impacts and Natural Hazards

Metro Vancouver notes that the development will be located in an area that is subject to flooding. The development would be built to a flood construction level of 4.2 metres, which is less than the Ministry of Environment's recommended level of 6.2 metres.

Goal 4 – Develop Complete Communities

Consideration 1: Diverse and Affordable Housing

Metro Vancouver notes that the proposal would increase the diversity of housing options in Delta, noting that no provisions to support affordable housing options or rental housing are proposed.

Consideration 2: Healthy and Complete Communities

The proposal provides for trail networks, community space, connections to recreational opportunities and local-serving commercial development, all of which support the principles of healthy and complete communities. Metro Vancouver notes that employment opportunities are not close to the proposed development, resulting in more trips being made by car, which does not support the general principles of healthy and complete communities.

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Goal 5 – Support Sustainable Transportation Choices

Consideration 1: Coordination of Land Use and Transportation

As noted above in the comments regarding greenhouse gas emissions and healthy and complete communities, the location of the development, the location of other land uses (employment, community services), and the lack of transit services would result in more trips being made by car. Metro Vancouver’s report notes that no information has been provided as to how the development proposal would support sustainable transportation choices.

Consideration 2: Safe and Efficient Movement of Goods and Passengers

Metro Vancouver notes that congestion is anticipated to increase at key intersections in Tsawwassen, which would potentially impact goods and passenger movement; however, the increased congestion would be a result of all development in South Delta, and could not be solely attributed to the Southlands development.

In summary, Metro Vancouver staff concluded that the donation of 80% of the site to public ownership for agricultural, conservation and recreation use was a benefit locally and to the region. However, they also concluded that when assessed against the RGS, the proposal would result in a substantial loss of agricultural land and was detrimental to advancing other RGS objectives.

5.0 DISCUSSION

Burnaby has considered a number of RGS amendment requests from Metro Vancouver, and through those reviews, has indicated its support for the RGS goal of protection of the region’s agricultural lands. In response to an amendment request from the Township of Langley, on 2013 September 09, Burnaby Council made the following resolution:

“THAT Burnaby City Council express opposition to the request from the Township of Langley to make amendments to the Regional Growth Strategy Land Use Designation Map, where the specific purpose, in the case of two of the three amendments, includes removing agricultural land from a protected area and designating it for general urban use.”

Other local governments such as Burnaby have the opportunity to provide comment on proposed amendments to the RGS. Burnaby can consider the amendment from the perspective of whether it supports the objectives of the RGS, and whether there are impacts for Burnaby or its residents. As the site is located in a portion of the region distant from Burnaby, there are no direct measurable land or transportation impacts on this community, other than those that arise collectively affecting the region as a whole.

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The Metro Vancouver staff report represents a thorough assessment of whether the proposed development advances or detracts from the planning objectives set out in the RGS. It considered 14 regional planning objectives and concluded that the development did not support or advance regional planning goals for containing urban growth, supporting development in Urban Centres, protecting the supply of agricultural land and other goals to support agricultural viability, lessening the impact of greenhouse gas emissions of new development, avoiding development in areas with natural hazards, advancing affordable housing, and supporting more sustainable transportation options.

On question of the positive regional implications of the proposal, the Metro Vancouver assessment concluded that the development did not put development pressure on surrounding non-urban areas, that there were benefits to agriculture in the form of public ownership of the site and funds being made to support agriculture infrastructure; there was economic development support for agriculture; there was a benefit to the region's conservation and recreation areas; that there were aspects of the development that supported healthy and complete communities, and that while auto trips would increase, future congestion on major road infrastructure in Tsawwassen could not be attributed solely to the development.

Burnaby staff generally agree with the regional assessment of the proposal. However, the overall impact on agricultural lands is clear: the loss of 102 hectares (252 acres) of agriculturally designated land to residential, commercial and conservation and recreation uses is of significance. Transferring the remaining agricultural land to the Corporation of Delta in public ownership may be of benefit, however this is likely not to be a significant improvement as the site already has a municipal and regional Agricultural land use designation that protects it for agriculture, and deems the land may be used for those purposes.

The planning process undertaken by the landowner, the community and the Corporation of Delta was lengthy, thorough and considered many other trade-offs besides the agricultural issue identified above. The regional assessment provided by Metro Vancouver, recognizes that local and regional considerations were made before the development proposal was forwarded to Metro Vancouver for consideration. However, while it is beneficial to know that there are many positive aspects of the project from a local perspective, it is not the role of local governments to comment on whether the local benefits outweigh those to the region. Rather the region has asked local governments to comment on the degree to which the proposal meets the objectives of the Regional Growth Strategy.

In this regard, staff agree with the Metro Vancouver staff assessment that while some aspects of the proposal meet regional planning goals, on balance, it is contrary to many of the RGS objectives, most importantly to the goal of containing urban growth and protecting the supply of agricultural land. Therefore staff recommend that Council consider advising Metro Vancouver that it does not support the amendment.

Furthermore, there are long term regional planning implications should the Metro Vancouver Board approve the amendment. The development proposal represents a trade-off between

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developing a portion of agricultural land in exchange for protection of a portion of a site and other improvements and benefits. Overall, however, it results in a significant net loss in agricultural lands. If the Board approves this amendment it would be setting a precedent for other agricultural or non-urban lands that these trade-offs would be considered.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Burnaby has been requested by Metro Vancouver to comment on a proposed amendment to the Regional Growth Strategy to allow a development known as Southlands, located in the Corporation of Delta, to proceed. The proposed amendment is to change the regional land use designation from "Agricultural" to "General Urban" and "Conservation and Recreation" in order for a mixed use residential and commercial development to occur on the site. Although 80% (172 hectares or 425 acres) of the site would be transferred to public ownership for the purpose of agricultural, conservation and recreational use, the proposal would result in almost half of the site (102 hectares or 252 acres) being re-designated from agricultural to other non-agricultural land uses. An Urban Containment Boundary adjustment would also need to occur to accommodate the request.

This report reviews the Metro Vancouver assessment of the regional planning implications of the proposal. In conclusion, the proposal does not meet or advance a number of regional planning objectives, and importantly, does not support urban containment nor protect the supply of agricultural lands. Therefore it is recommended that Burnaby respectfully advise the Metro Vancouver Board that it does not support the proposed amendment.



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cc: Deputy City Managers