

# RR-1



## CITY OF VANCOUVER

### POLICY REPORT URBAN STRUCTURE

Report Date: 20 November 2007  
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Meeting Date: November 27, 2007

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Director of Planning in consultation with Manager of the Sustainability Group, General Manager of Engineering Services, Director of the Housing Centre, Director of Social Planning, Director of Development Services, Managing Director of Cultural Services, Director of Real Estate Services, and General Manager of the Park Board

SUBJECT: Next Stage of EcoDensity Public Consultation: Draft Charter and Draft Initial Actions

#### RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive this report on the “Draft Vancouver EcoDensity Charter and Draft Initial Actions,” and refer the drafts to further public consultation, including a Special Council Meeting on February 26, 2008, to hear from the public.

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*Recommendations for February 26, 2008 Special Council Meeting subject to revisions brought forward by staff as a result of public input:*

*THAT Council adopt the Vancouver EcoDensity Charter (draft contained in Appendix A).*

*THAT Council approve the Initial Actions 2008-09 (draft shown on the next pages); and instruct staff to report back on priorities, timing and resources for those Actions that involve further work.*

## Draft EcoDensity Initial Actions (2008-2009)

### Part I: Raising green standards

- 1. Greener buildings (4 storeys and over)**  
 Achieve a new green standard in rezonings, effective immediately, by requiring at least LEED Silver equivalency for rezonings for buildings to which LEED may be applied (i.e., larger than 600 square meters; typically, these buildings are 4 storeys and over) with an emphasis on the City priorities (e.g., energy efficiency); and consult with the development industry about moving to LEED Gold equivalency or better at an appropriate time.
- 2. Greater sustainability for Large Site developments**  
 Where planning policy or rezonings are undertaken for Large Sites or significant changes to existing CD-1 zones, allow consideration of development beyond the density and/or scale set out in Community Vision Directions or other area policies when the proposal shows exemplary leadership in environmental performance while also addressing affordability, and community amenities.  
  
 This policy to be immediately effective for rezoning inquiries and applications for which policy development is initiated.
- 3. Incentives for Green Design**  
 To encourage design considerations that improve green performance in the short term, investigate potential energy performance incentives through floor space exclusions that directly relate to green design and technologies, in advance of more detailed strategies through the Green Building Strategy.
- 4. EcoDensity demonstration in lower density areas**  
 Encourage projects that demonstrate an exceptional level of leadership in innovative green design and sustainable practices, by adopting in principle the concept of an Interim EcoDensity Rezoning Policy, that would allow projects that meet specified green criteria to be considered for site-specific rezoning in advance of area planning. Projects would conform to Vision Directions about type, location, and scale.  
  
 The specific Rezoning Policy would need to be reported back to Council for approval.
- 5. EcoDensity leadership on City land**  
 To show City leadership and to improve understanding of, and generate interest in, emerging sustainability practices, develop a proposal to use City land for one or more EcoDensity demonstrations, at potentially varying scales and that could include a variety of EcoDensity and related features, such as deep green design, renewable energy sources, alternative parking standards, affordable housing, and urban agriculture.
- 6. Priority to applications with green leadership**  
 To encourage the development industry to build at an exemplary level of green, investigate the creation of a prioritised application review system for ultra-green projects to be implemented post-2010.

<b>Part II: Developing options for new housing types</b>	
<b>7.</b>	<b>More options for secondary suites within buildings</b> Develop options to require, allow and/or encourage secondary suites in buildings at all scales, from single family and duplex to apartments in order to increase the density of housing units within current housing forms, as well as create lower-cost rental housing.
<b>8.</b>	<b>New options for backyard laneway infill housing</b> Develop options to create a new type of lane-oriented infill, involving features such as implementation on 33' lots without loss of existing houses; low scale forms; green performance; and rental tenure.
<b>9.</b>	<b>New options for arterial mid-rise housing</b> Develop options to create new models of mid-rise arterial housing rather than the current 4-storey model In order to provide more housing close to shops, services, and transit.
<b>Part III - Developing supporting tools</b>	
<b>10.</b>	<b>Enabling District Energy</b> Develop a City-wide renewable energy strategy, including district energy systems, and evaluate specific regulatory and implementation opportunities through consultation and research projects using existing operating budget and contributions by other stakeholders.
<b>11.</b>	<b>Amenity tools</b> Pursue additional policy tools for obtaining public benefits through development and for providing public benefits in order to ensure that growth is accompanied with adequate community amenities.
<b>Part IV: Moving toward a long-term more sustainable city pattern</b>	
<b>12.</b>	<b>Plan for the longer term</b> Develop a program that will provide a city-wide context for determining where and how to make land use changes beyond existing plans and policies, in order to further improve sustainability, affordability, and livability - the program to start with mapping the city's existing development pattern and plans, as a base for broad public discussion of additional opportunities and options.
<b>13.</b>	<b>Amenity strategies for the longer term</b> Develop a program, involving all City departments, for a comprehensive amenity strategy review, starting with documenting existing standards, delivery mechanisms, capacities, and plans, and using this as a base to evaluate and develop new strategies, with public input.

<b>Part V: Accountability</b>	
<b>14. Measurement tools</b>	Continue to investigate and develop tools to measure ecological footprint performance at various scales and contexts, and indicators to assess and report on Vancouver's progress.
<b>15. Panel</b>	Set up a Panel of advisors comprised of Vancouverites including academics, builders, interest groups, and residents from across the city, to provide advice as needed to further the goals of EcoDensity.
<b>16. Progress Report Structure</b>	Prepare a structure to assess progress and success in meeting the commitments of the EcoDensity Charter which may include an occasional EcoDensity 'summit' and a report card prepared at arms-length.

#### **CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS**

The City Manager RECOMMENDS approval of the foregoing

#### **GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS**

The General Manager of Community Services RECOMMENDS approval of the foregoing.

#### **COUNCIL POLICY**

On July 18, 2006 Council unanimously supported the initiation of the EcoDensity program, and on November 16, 2006 approved a specific Terms of Reference, budget, and process for this work. The process was to focus on community information and outreach, and to engage the public and stakeholder groups, and solicit ideas leading to an EcoDensity Forum in June 2007, and then to a report to City Council in Fall 2007 with a proposed EcoDensity Charter and a set of draft initial Actions/next steps.

By initiating the EcoDensity program, Council clearly acknowledged the powerful role that well designed "green" density can play as part of, and in sync with, a wide range of related City sustainability and affordability initiatives.

#### **SUMMARY AND PURPOSE**

As with the rest of the world, Vancouver's future is not certain. Climate change is scientifically documented. Non-renewable energy to heat our buildings and power our vehicles is becoming more limited and expensive. We are using resources at a rate greater than they can be replenished. In short, our ecological footprint is greater than the planet's ability to sustain us, as a city, a region, and ultimately as a planet.

Faced with such serious challenges, we can take action to improve our environmental sustainability with the tools available to us at various levels of government and as individuals, corporations and neighbourhoods. Some of the most effective sustainability measures that can be made are possible at the municipal level.

Density -- high quality, green in design, strategically located, and properly implemented -- provides cities with a powerful opportunity to improve environmental sustainability, along with affordability and livability. This is a tool we cannot afford to ignore -- to improve environmental resilience, and maintain and enhance the quality of life.

By unanimously initiating the EcoDensity program a year ago, City Council clearly acknowledged the powerful role that green density can play as part of, and in sync with, a wide range of related City sustainability and affordability initiatives. Council challenged staff to consult openly, think boldly, and develop meaningful principles, tools, and ideas that go beyond 'business as usual'.

This report describes the EcoDensity public consultation process and idea development that occurred over the past year, and moves forward with a new draft EcoDensity Charter and a set of draft Initial Actions.

These products, the draft Charter and Actions, reflect a wide range of comments we heard during the public process, including ideas from those who are eager to move forward with EcoDensity, as well as concerns from those who worry about what these changes would mean.

The recommendation in this Report is for Council to receive these drafts and refer them for further public consultation, including a Special Council Meeting on February 26 next year. During the months between now and the end of February, staff will use a variety of communications methods to make people aware of these proposals and to provide information and seek additional discussion. This will also include meetings with interested groups.

The draft Charter and Actions are a first generation of EcoDensity deliverables. This is still part of the beginning for EcoDensity, not an ending. EcoDensity will roll out over successive stages of public involvement and city building -- city building that we set in motion with new commitments and directions in the face of new environmental imperatives.

The proposed Charter calls for a City commitment to use density, design, and land use strategically to improve environmental sustainability, affordability, and livability. Fortunately for Vancouver, we have already come a long way through previous plans and policies. At the same time, environmental threats have been mounting faster than anticipated.

The draft Charter commits to follow through on existing plans and policies that improve sustainability, and also to expand on them to achieve even greater gains. The draft Charter's overarching philosophy places environmental objectives prominently among the City's top planning directions, and at the same time emphasises the continued importance of livability and affordability.

The draft Charter contains the following specific themes:

- An over-arching environmental priority
- A green land use pattern

- A range of housing types, needs, and costs
- Green and livable design and a sense of place
- Green and livable support systems
- An eco-city

The draft Charter also makes a commitment to the importance of continuing public dialogue and engagement.

The draft Actions are ways to build on and accelerate the city's movements along the path set out in the Charter. The draft Actions are in five themes:

- Raise green standards
- Develop tools for new housing types
- Develop new supporting tools
- Move toward a long term more sustainable city pattern
- Accountability

The draft Actions are about raising the bar for green performance, putting into place demonstration projects, and developing options for new types of zoning that people expressed interest in, but that we don't currently have zoning schedules for. The draft Actions are also about adding to our tools for providing alternate energy, improving affordability and providing amenities. The draft Actions also propose developing a program for the longer term - how to look at the city as a whole and consider, with public involvement, where new zoning for a wider variety of denser housing types would make sense, and what amenity strategy would accompany growth.

Ultimately, EcoDensity is about plan-making extending into the future to create a more sustainable, resilient city with a high quality of life. Its power will be as a shared commitment to find the steps, both short term and longer term, to make the city more sustainable, affordable, and livable, by using density, design, and land use. The status quo is not a lasting option. Even now in communities across the city, as household sizes shrink there are many blocks that have fewer people living on them than five years ago. There are new, ever more expensive single-family homes replacing smaller, more affordable houses.

In the long term, EcoDensity is a vision of city-building and place-making, to create high quality, compact, vibrant communities. These are communities with diverse and more affordable housing; buildings with renewable energy and green design; neighbourhoods that are attractive and livable; diverse streetscapes that include a sense of history and identity; and communities that are supported by amenities and cultural facilities, community gardens, and safe parks and public places for relaxation and social interaction. Residents of denser neighbourhoods support stronger local shopping areas, walk and bicycle more, and drive less. Transit works better in denser communities. Density uses less land to house more people, can provide a range of different housing choices and prices, and reduces pressure on the region to sprawl over agriculturally productive land. Higher density buildings consume less energy and water, especially when combined with green design.

This is a vision of a resilient city, ready to face future change while maintaining a high quality of life. Creating this type of city in the face of serious environmental change is our challenge and opportunity.

## BACKGROUND

Important steps are being taken in Vancouver to create the framework for a livable city of neighbourhoods and compact, mixed-use, walkable communities - through the Central Area Plan, CityPlan, Community Visions, the Vancouver Transportation Plan, and the Downtown Transportation Plan.

There are also many related City policies and initiatives pertaining to affordable and social housing, sustainable transportation strategies, environmental protection, park provision, food policy, green building strategy, climate change action plans, heritage conservation and building reuse, social sustainability, and neighbourhood energy utilities. Many sustainability initiatives are already moving forward faster than originally anticipated as EcoDensity and sustainability permeate all departments at City Hall.

## DISCUSSION

This main section of the report is divided into the following:

1. What is EcoDensity
2. Community involvement: Generating dialogue and ideas
3. Community involvement: What we heard
4. Moving forward: The proposed Charter and Actions
5. Related City sustainability and affordability initiatives

The Communications Plan for ongoing outreach on EcoDensity is described at the end of the report. Appendix A provides the proposed Charter. Appendix B provides EcoDensity Questions and Answers.

### 1. WHAT IS ECODENSITY?

One of the most significant challenges throughout the EcoDensity work program has been the difficulty of defining the term itself. At times the wish to specifically define EcoDensity, particularly as a project type by being able to point to examples, has preoccupied the public and stakeholder dialogue.

Although EcoDensity was defined, in brief, at its launch in 2006 as high quality and strategically located density to make Vancouver more sustainable, affordable, and livable, it has required a longer process to begin to develop a more thorough definition. Our intent initially has been to define it more as an idea and a dialogue, before it can be defined in action, policy or project-type terms.

Thus the first definition of EcoDensity as an idea was the recognition that density when planned and designed well, has a powerful positive effect on our City's ecological footprint, and that strategic densification of the City beyond what has been planned in the past, would be a key to reducing our city's and region's footprint while also improving affordability and livability.

EcoDensity is also a dialogue with the citizens and stakeholders of Vancouver, with 2-way education, and sharing of ideas, approaches and concerns regarding densification, with the goal of environmental sustainability as an assumed starting point.

As the dialogue has progressed, ultimately EcoDensity has been gradually shaped into draft principles, policies, tools and actions, based on the idea and flowing from the dialogue, that density done well can move us toward the goal of greater sustainability and a smaller ecological footprint.

Only lastly, ultimately, will EcoDensity be defined as a project type, a built form and pattern at the city, neighbourhood and building scale. Although many have been impatient and have wanted us to start with this definition, we could not, as the definition will ultimately flow out of all the steps before. We are not there yet, and have much work ahead of us before we will be.

To clarify the initial idea however, it is important to explain the relationship between the three goals of EcoDensity - environmental sustainability, affordability, and livability. Rather than illustrating these goals as strictly equal, as 'three legs of a stool' for example, they have been presented to the public with the metaphor of a tricycle, where the larger driving wheel with the pedals is environmental sustainability (which suggests a priority), while the side wheels that keep it up and allow movement, are livability and affordability. Although there has been support for this approach, many have asked if this suggests that environmental sustainability over-rides affordability, livability or other broader city goals. This is not the intent. Although a reason for prioritizing sustainability is the recognition that our environmental future will form the basis for continued affordability and livability, it is strongly felt that these three goals should be complementary, not competing forces. Strategies and solutions flowing out of EcoDensity, even with a sense of environmental priority, must respect all three goals and find 'win-win-win's', given that (to continue the metaphor) a tricycle with no back wheels cannot move forward.

Briefly, the wheel of *environmental sustainability* emphasizes those aspects of environmental health and energy performance with implications for our ecological footprint at the scale of the city, neighbourhood and building. Although there are many environmental health issues that are related to city-building, public comment particularly focused on the implications of climate change. The *affordability* wheel relates to how supply, unit type, government programs, tenure (rent vs. own), location, size, mortgage helpers, energy cost and automobile ownership issues relate to the affordability of housing in the city. Lastly, the *livability* wheel encompasses all aspects of quality of life as density increases, from neighbourly design to mitigate the issues of new development; to the matching of amenities to population; to the vitality, diversity and safety issues and opportunities around more neighbours; to the 'resilient livability' issues of how climate change and the end of cheap energy will effect the livability assumptions of current and future generations.

It is equally important to clarify aspects of sustainability that were not considered within the scope of EcoDensity. Many aspects of our city's ecological footprint are directly related to density, design and land use (i.e., building energy), and many are strongly influenced by such factors (i.e., transportation energy). Many aspects, though, are somewhat "density-neutral" or somewhat un-related to the focus of EcoDensity, being density, design and land use. These might include examples such as consumption of meat, air travel, and even plastic bag usage. Although many participants spoke of such issues, these comments have been carefully noted

and diverted to the broader sustainability work programs across City Hall. EcoDensity has remained focused on that substantial portion of the sustainability picture that is specifically determined or strongly influenced by density, design and land use.

## **2. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT - GENERATING DIALOGUE AND IDEAS**

Over the past year, staff engaged people across the city in a wide-ranging and vigorous dialogue. Information was provided through a primer, website, speakers, and tours. Meetings, workshops, and events were set up for discussion and participation. In turn the public contributed a wide range of creative and varied ideas and comments, and also identified their concerns about how to do it right, as well as their worries. The list below summarizes the key events during this process.

- **Preliminary Consultation**

In the fall of 2006, the EcoDensity dialogue was initiated with interest group meetings involving CityPlan (Community Visions) committees from neighbourhoods across the city; not-for-profit housing groups; academic experts on climate change and ecological footprint; NGOs and government agencies; and the development industry.

- **EcoDensity Primer**

Also in the fall, the EcoDensity Primer, widely available through the website and distributed at meetings, provided information about the City's environmental role and existing policy, and how land use, affordability, transportation, and amenities can relate to successful density. A brochure was also widely available as an introduction to EcoDensity.

- **Official Launch and Website**

EcoDensity was officially launched in February 2007 with a media tour. The City also launched a new website which was unprecedented in its design and interactivity. As the program progressed, the website added information and input. Over 450 people registered online to be kept up to date on EcoDensity events and news. Numerous media stories helped educate and inform.

- **Ideas Fair**

In March, approximately 1,000 people attended the two-day EcoDensity Fair at Riley Park Community Centre. They viewed movies screenings, read informational boards about ecological footprint, and exchanged ideas with other residents and with staff. Over 1,500 ideas and comments were received through the interactive displays, collected and reviewed by staff, and made available on the website.

- **Speaker Series**

Between March and May, a number of renowned speakers participated in the EcoDensity Speaker Series. Stimulating keynotes and thoughtful questions from the audience resulted in lively dialogue about the possibilities for EcoDensity. About 850 people attended the Speaker Series, and video recordings were made available on the EcoDensity website and GVTV.

- **Community Workshops on Draft EcoDensity Charter and Emerging Ideas**

An early draft of the Charter and a compilation of the many promising ideas were presented to the public for comment at several workshops in May, involving over 300 people. This

included the EcoDensity Community Conversation, a youth workshop, and a focus group discussion with CityPlan (Community Visions) Committees.

- **EcoDensity Forum**

The EcoDensity consultation culminated in the EcoDensity Forum in June 2007. The Forum was the first opportunity for Council to hear directly from the public regarding the draft EcoDensity Charter and suggested ideas. This professionally facilitated event, attended by approximately 230 people, allowed both the public and Council to express their hopes and fears for EcoDensity in an open forum. It was a remarkable dialogue among Vancouverites -- among neighbours -- sharing and exchanging points of view.

In addition to these specific events, the EcoDensity team met with dozens of interested individuals and groups, and received many e-mails. The ideas and comments generated through the consultation process have directly informed the draft EcoDensity Charter and Actions put forward in this report to City Council.

For outreach in languages other than English, the initial brochure was available in Chinese as well as English. The media briefing was covered by the Chinese media, which continued their coverage throughout the program. All the events (Fair, Community Conversation, Forum) were advertised in community papers, including Chinese and South Asian community papers. At the EcoDensity Fair in March, display boards and comment sheets were translated into Chinese, and staff who could speak Chinese were present. Staff also liaised with the Social Planning Department to have e-mail updates sent to a diversity of contacts.

### **3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: WHAT WE HEARD**

The EcoDensity program stimulated a dialogue - serious, exciting, challenging - across the city. Opinions varied considerably. During this discussion, many participants said that they believe change, done right, is necessary and positive. Many Vancouverites see change as a way to improve their livability or protect it for their children. This may be because of climate change, or because they have seen density work well before and bring community benefits with it, or because of a personal wish to build a coach house for their children to stay in the neighbourhood. The status quo is not working for them.

Many spoke urgently of the price of inaction, of failing to confront and be prepared for the consequences of climate change and the end of cheap energy. They expect City government not to wait and react, but to plan and manage change now.

Others though feel that change in Vancouver is not necessary or desirable. They worry that density may diminish the city's quality of life, and their own. They either prefer the status quo or feel that if change is necessary, it should be done in the right way and for the right reasons. Many simply did not support EcoDensity.

More specifically, the top ten themes we heard were these:

- The environment is important - and many people are optimistic about how density can help improve the environment.
- There is a wide interest in new housing types and locations.
- There needs to be ample community involvement in detailed decision-making.

- The City should allow more green technology, or even require it.
- The City should reduce barriers and create incentives for more sustainable development.
- Amenities must accompany density in order to ensure Vancouver is accessible and liveable.
- More and better sustainable transportation options are needed (transit, cycling and walking opportunities).
- Development cannot just be for developers' benefit/profit.
- Affordability must be planned to match EcoDensity, and many people are still not sure how EcoDensity can help improve affordability.
- The City should show leadership and courage in its actions.

There were also many specific ideas about how to “do” density, including backyard infill housing, row housing, and multiple suites; locating density in neighbourhood centres, around transit stations and along main streets; requiring greener design, such as through greater energy efficiency in developments, reduced water use through water metering, and reduced parking; providing requirements and incentives for environmental performance; and initiating demonstration projects. There were also ideas for ways to accompany density with improved parks and public realm, community centres, and community spaces; with more opportunities for community gardens and places to grow food. Ideas also went beyond density and development, for example to include composting facilities or ban plastic bags.

While many people supported the concept of EcoDensity, many also had questions of one type or another. An EcoDensity Questions and Answers is attached as Appendix B.

#### **4. THE PROPOSED CHARTER AND ACTIONS**

This report provides the first generation of EcoDensity deliverables. These are still a beginning for EcoDensity, not an ending. EcoDensity will build on past successes and roll out over successive stages of public involvement and city building - through the actions that we start in motion now.

Public involvement, ownership and community capacity building has long been a basis for planning in Vancouver. The proposed Charter and Actions are intended to reflect the enthusiastic ideas, and to address the concerns and worries that we heard during the public consultation process.

##### **A. Draft Vancouver EcoDensity Charter**

The draft *EcoDensity Charter - How Density, Design, and Land Use Will Contribute to Environmental Sustainability, Affordability, and Livability*, is attached in Appendix A. It focuses on the role of density, green design, and strategic land use patterns, as a key piece of the City's many other sustainability, livability and affordability-related initiatives.

The draft Charter is a statement of commitment to a set of directions and principles. The draft Charter recognizes that environmental concerns are serious, but also that through density, the City has a powerful tool to improve environmental sustainability, affordability, and the overall quality of life. The draft Charter has seven themes:

- An over-arching environmental priority
- A green land use pattern
- A range of housing types, needs, and costs

- Greener and livable design and a sense of place
- Green and livable support systems
- An eco-city
- Process principles

The draft Charter respects progress already made, but also acknowledges that environmental change has accelerated faster than anticipated, and that we need not only to follow through on our current plans and policies, but also expand on them to improve environmental performance.

## **B. Draft EcoDensity Initial Actions**

The draft Initial Actions recommended in this report are a first generation of EcoDensity actions, setting us on a path to improved sustainability, affordability, and livability, in line with the commitments of the draft Charter. The 16 Actions are divided into the following groups:

- Part I - Raising green standards through rezoning policies and demonstration projects
- Part II - Developing options for new housing types
- Part III - Develop new supporting tools - renewable energy and amenities
- Part IV - Moving toward a long term more sustainable city pattern
- Part V - Accountability

Each draft Action is discussed in the pages that follow. After Council has considered and approved Actions in February 2008, staff will report back on priorities and timing for those which need further work.

### **Draft Actions Part I: Raising green standards**

#### **1. Greener buildings (4 storeys and over)**

Achieve a new green standard in rezonings, effective immediately, by requiring at least LEED Silver equivalency for rezonings for buildings to which LEED may be applied (i.e., larger than 600 square meters; typically, these buildings are 4 storeys and over) with an emphasis on the City priorities (e.g., energy efficiency); and consult with the development industry about moving to LEED Gold equivalency or better at an appropriate time.

In the EcoDensity public consultations, people told the City they would like to see density projects be required to provide a higher level of green performance. Staff are already working on a Green Building Strategy (GBS) that will see new buildings that are larger than 600 square meters meet a green standard somewhat above LEED Certified equivalence. These are typically concrete buildings with four or more storeys. (“LEED” refers to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design building rating system which applies only to buildings of this size or greater.)

Presently staff discuss green objectives with rezoning applicants, but there is no Council-adopted objective (except in SEFC). However, Council approval of Action 1 will go beyond the GBS and current practice, to put in place higher standards immediately for rezonings for buildings to which LEED equivalency may be applied.

Rezonings provide the opportunity to establish a higher standard for buildings that require rezoning. LEED Silver equivalency with an emphasis on the areas of most priority to the City is an achievable level of performance at this time. Because green requirements are continually becoming more feasible, staff will also examine, in consultation with the building industry, increasing the rezoning standard to LEED Gold equivalency or better at an appropriate time.

The GBS will also be working on environmental standards for lower scale, wood frame buildings. The LEED program does not apply to these buildings, and thus a new system will be established and integrated into City by-laws. Meanwhile, Action 4 below addresses lower scale buildings. These initiatives all take us along the path toward the City's commitment to carbon neutrality for all new buildings by 2030.

## **2. Greater sustainability for Large Site developments**

Where planning policy or rezonings are undertaken for Large Sites or significant changes to existing CD-1 zones, allow consideration of development beyond the density and/or scale set out in Community Vision Directions or other area policies when the proposal shows exemplary leadership in environmental performance while also addressing affordability, and community amenities.

This policy to be immediately effective for rezoning inquiries and applications for which policy development is initiated.

Rezoning applications for Large Sites (as identified in Community Visions) or existing CD-1 zones proceed as site-specific applications. Examples of such sites include the Oakridge bus barns, Little Mountain site, Arbutus shopping centre, and the RCMP lands. Some Community Visions and other adopted area planning policies generally describe the scale of development that should be considered (e.g., a Vision direction for a four-storey height limit).

This Action allows consideration of options even if they have a density or scale beyond that currently supported by community planning policy. The purpose is to provide an opportunity to consider these sites in much more detail than at the level of a Community Vision, to explore options to achieve exemplary green performance exceeding best practices, as well as more affordable housing and community amenities. Considerable public engagement will continue to be a strong component of these rezoning processes.

Large Sites provide special opportunities to achieve greater sustainability and affordability, and put into practice many of the ideas contributed through the public process. For example, buildings on a Large Site can share energy facilities, storm and waste water systems, and car-share vehicles and can cooperate on transport demand management programs. They can also target affordable housing provision. Community amenities such as child care or parks are necessary to make the proposed densities livable. They will continue to be an integral part of evaluating these rezonings, alongside objectives for neighbourhood fit and environmental sustainability.

This Action will apply to sites that come forward for planning or rezoning after the adoption of the recommendation. It is not intended that those that have recently received Council approval of planning policies or rezonings be reconsidered.

**3. Incentives for Green Design**

To encourage design considerations that improve green performance in the short term, investigate potential energy performance incentives through floor space exclusions that directly relate to green design and technologies, in advance of more detailed strategies through the Green Building Strategy.

Many participants believe that there should be a combination of requirements and the removal of barriers to enable green design. There are potentially immediate or short term changes that could be put into place to do so. An example that has been suggested is to exclude space for 'green' mechanical equipment from a developer's floor space ratio calculations. This would encourage the developer to provide the equipment necessary for more efficient heating systems (e.g., radiant heat powered by a central boiler) and would help make the building ready for future connection district energy.

This and other possibilities will have to be assessed in terms of implementation approaches and implications to staffing and workloads.

**4. EcoDensity demonstration in lower density areas**

Encourage projects that demonstrate an exceptional level of leadership in innovative green design and sustainable practices, by adopting in principle the concept of an Interim EcoDensity Rezoning Policy, that would allow projects that meet specified green criteria to be considered for site-specific rezoning in advance of area planning. Projects would conform to Vision Directions about type, location, and scale.

The specific Rezoning Policy would need to be reported back to Council for approval.

Demonstration projects were a frequently-mentioned idea during the public process. The proposed rezoning policy would allow rezoning applications to be considered *in advance of area planning* provided the project displays an exceptional level of environmental sustainability and fosters experimentation, learning, and a broader interest in uptake by others (i.e., developers, consumers). The project would also have to conform with Community Visions directions for housing type, locations and scale. These are the housing types identified as 'approved' or 'uncertain' in the Visions. Other considerations would be site appropriateness in terms of heritage, existing affordable housing, etc. Location distribution would be considered for this policy.

Upon Council approval of this concept, staff will do the further work to consult with experts and stakeholders to develop the specific green performance criteria that meet or exceed current best practices (e.g., in energy efficiency and building envelope design; renewable energy; water efficiency; and materials and waste), and yet are feasible to evaluate and deliver. A specific Rezoning Policy would then be presented for City Council approval.

**5. EcoDensity leadership on City land**

To show City leadership and to improve understanding of, and generate interest in, emerging sustainability practices, develop a proposal to use City land for one or more EcoDensity demonstrations, at potentially varying scales and that could include a variety of EcoDensity and related features, such as deep green design, renewable energy sources, alternative parking standards, affordable housing, and urban agriculture.

During the public process, we heard many suggestions for using City-owned land to demonstrate EcoDensity. A demonstration project could occur on one or more sites, and at varying scales, and would demonstrate green practices that are cutting edge, yet could become replicable by the development industry. This provides the opportunity to incorporate a variety of EcoDensity and related goals. Depending on the specifics of the project(s) this could include deep green design, renewable energy sources, lower or unbundled parking, affordable housing, and/or urban agriculture. The demonstration would generate interest and understanding among the general public, development industry, and marketplace consumers.

Upon Council approval of this concept, staff will develop a more detailed proposal, including identification of environmental and other performance criteria, suitable location(s) and scale(s) of development, options for selecting design (e.g., design competition), and a process for selecting developer(s) (e.g., issue an RFP for an industry-built, green project on the subject site). The Property Endowment Fund would make available a site, or sites (either a currently-held or purchased for this purpose). The site(s) would be made available at market value (based on current zoning), but the additional revenue arising from rezoning the site would fund the features that demonstrate EcoDensity.

**6. Priority to applications with green leadership**

To encourage the development industry to build at an exemplary level of green, investigate the creation of a prioritised application review system for ultra-green projects to be implemented post-2010.

The City may be able to spur on superior green performance in new development by providing prioritised service, especially in light of the additional complexity of such projects. A “Green First” system could give priority to green projects over other projects (based on minimum criteria), but would not reduce the level of oversight applied to application review. For practical reasons, a green priority system would not commence until after 2010.

Upon Council direction staff will investigate this Action, including minimum green criteria, staffing implications, and how prioritisation will work vis a vis other projects that have already been given priority by City Council (i.e., social and rental housing, heritage, cultural projects).

## Draft Actions Part II: Developing options for new housing types

Many of the ideas from the public process were about how to add new housing types (new densities), in various communities across the city. Many of the often-mentioned housing types can be thought of in categories of density, in terms of how much they impact the physical character and appearance of a neighbourhood. For example: ‘invisible’ density (e.g., a secondary suite in a house); ‘hidden’ density that is visible from the lane but not the street (e.g., a rear yard, lane-way coach-house); and ‘gentle’ density that is visible from the street but similar in scale to single family housing (e.g., rowhouses). There were also suggestions for larger scale density, such as multi-storey buildings along arterials in neighbourhood centres.

In each of these categories of density, the City already has zoning schedules for some housing types, and locations where these are being built. But in each of the categories, the public process yielded important ideas where work needs to be done to develop new zonings, by addressing issues such as design and compatibility; access for fire safety; parking requirements; impacts on existing stock of affordable rental housing or on heritage buildings; requirements for rental vs. strata tenure; etc. The following Actions (7, 8 and 9) initiate the work needed.

### **7. More options for secondary suites within buildings**

Develop options to require, allow and/or encourage secondary suites in buildings at all scales, from single family and duplex to apartments in order to increase the density of housing units within current housing forms, as well as create lower-cost rental housing.

More options for suites were a frequently raised idea in the public process. Suites are a form of ‘invisible’ density in terms of their impact on the physical character and appearance of a neighbourhood. Yet, they have environmental and affordability benefits. Suites reduce the demand for land, materials, and even operating energy. In many cases, suites can be fitted into existing housing, thereby making more efficient use of materials and space. Moreover, they provide lower cost housing suitable for low- and moderate-income renters. Single-family houses across the city are currently allowed to include one secondary suite, and less stringent regulations have been adopted to make it easier to accommodate suites in existing houses. However, the City could do more to promote rental suites in a variety of housing types.

Upon Council approval of this Action, staff would report back on options, such as making it easier to create a legal suite in a house by reducing regulatory barriers; allowing two-suite houses; requiring all houses to be suite-ready; allowing suites within duplexes, rowhouses and apartments; and seeking financial incentives for legal suites (in conjunction with senior governments). The work will include looking at how to resolve Code issues, retain livability, ensure rental status, minimise the loss of existing affordable units or heritage buildings, and deal with parking.

**8. New options for backyard laneway infill housing**

Develop options to create a new type of lane-oriented infill, involving features such as implementation on 33' lots without loss of existing houses; low scale forms; green performance; and rental tenure.

The EcoDensity consultation found significant community interest in infill housing forms such as coach/carriage houses, laneway housing and granny flats. Infill housing supports EcoDensity objectives by using land efficiently and contributing to neighbourhood housing diversity.

Current city regulations already allow one type of infill housing which is suitable for and successful in some communities; however, the type of infill housing that many people described in the public process is very different in several key ways. The new infill concept would be more in the category of 'hidden' density than the existing infill zoning in the city. The new infill concept will be looking for options that are homeowner-driven rather than redevelopment-driven; that would be allowed on 33-foot lots and retain the existing house (even if they don't have the side yard width required for current fire access regulations); that would be low-scale and minimize shading their neighbours' yards (i.e., with a reduced parking requirement so that dwellings are not built above garages); that are green in performance; and that might be rental instead of strata.

These are exciting possibilities for infill. Given Council approval of this Action, staff would develop options to achieve these features, and would evaluate the impacts of such development opportunities on other community and city objectives.

**9. New options for arterial mid-rise housing**

Develop options to create new models of mid-rise arterial housing rather than the current 4-storey model in order to provide more housing close to shops, services, and transit.

The public process generated ideas for denser housing on arterial streets, especially in support of local shopping areas. Current arterial zoning for housing above shops is for development of three to four stories. In a few locations in the city, new forms of arterial housing have more recently been built, illustrating a more European model of development. Council approval of this Action would lead to staff examining economic feasibility; compatibility with adjacent residential areas; and other urban design aspects, such as what types of built forms are possible, and relationships to different arterial street widths.

**Draft Actions Part III: Developing supporting tools****10. Enabling District Energy**

Develop a City-wide renewable energy strategy, including district energy systems, and evaluate specific regulatory and implementation opportunities through consultation and research projects using existing operating budget and contributions by other stakeholders.

The EcoDensity consultation process indicated a community desire to address the environmental damage due to our energy consumption (e.g., depletion of non-renewable supplies, greenhouse gas emissions). Initial research has found that after building design, district energy systems provide the next most significant opportunities to reduce reliance on non-renewable energy. District energy refers to a small-scale local energy production and distribution system shared among a number of buildings.

A recently completed study on district energy opportunities in Vancouver found that the key factor dictating the financial viability of these systems is the demand for energy in a compact area. Other factors included the rate of demand growth, opportunities to install system elements in conjunction with other planned work, and the proximity of stable, cost effective green energy sources. To be feasible, large-scale district energy systems, such as the Neighbourhood Energy Utility in South East False Creek, rely on high densities and fast demand growth. However, smaller scale district energy systems are also feasible at lower densities. By locating sufficient levels of residential densities in suitable locations, EcoDensity would help create the conditions for expanding the use of district energy in Vancouver at a variety of scales.

Upon Council approval of this Action, the work would include: develop a City Energy Strategy that analyzes the success of other cities in implementing extensive district energy systems, identifies the key roles for the City, and helps to prioritize opportunities; evaluate whether the City should regulate how new buildings in Vancouver are heated so as to make them compatible with district energy systems; and study the opportunities and challenges of adding density at strategic locations which are also adjacent to potential heat sources, such as parks designed specifically to accommodate both recreational uses and ground source heat pump loops (this last part would be included with work on Action 12).

**11. Amenity tools**

Pursue additional policy tools for obtaining public benefits through development and for providing public benefits in order to ensure that growth is accompanied with adequate community amenities.

One of the top things heard from the public was that density requires adequate amenities to meet community needs and deliver true sustainability. This includes child care, parks, urban agriculture, community centres, neighbourhood houses, cultural venues, seniors' facilities, public art, greenways and bike routes, affordable housing, heritage protection, natural habitat restoration and green performance. The City already has policy for meeting the

amenity needs for growth (i.e., Financing Growth) which includes, among other policies, a requirement for all developments pay a per square foot Development Cost Levy; however, additional tools will be needed to keep up with growth, especially in light of EcoDensity's environmental emphasis. Upon approval of this Action, staff will commence an amenity tool review, including looking at examples from other municipalities, such as density bonus zoning schedules that yield payments to be used for specified community amenities.

## **Draft Actions Part IV: Moving toward a long-term more sustainable city pattern**

### **12. Plan for the longer term**

Develop a program that will provide a city-wide context for determining where and how to make land use changes beyond existing plans and policies, in order to further improve sustainability, affordability, and livability - the program to start with mapping the city's existing development pattern and plans, as a base for broad public discussion of additional opportunities and options.

The community consultation on EcoDensity generated many ideas for new denser, greener housing types, as well as conditions for amenities and services, and for public involvement in planning that will affect communities. Some of the Actions described earlier in this report lead to immediate, or near-term, on-the-ground change, while others respond by creating demonstration projects and developing the new tools that would be necessary to implement ideas.

Once new tools have been developed, the next question is: where and how across the city would changes best be made? To answer this in a strategic way, a city-wide context would provide a way to judge whether one type of change will better achieve objectives than another, where, and when.

For example, if infill housing is allowed in areas that are later determined to be better for rowhouses, it will be difficult to achieve rowhouse redevelopment after new investment has already been made in infill. Or, if many arterials are rezoned to higher density at the same time, it will be more difficult to focus growth around shops, services, and transit, or where amenities exist or can more easily be provided. As a result, the phasing of new density needs to be done carefully. Also, many of the ideas overlap with policies already approved through Community Visions, so without a city-wide context, it is difficult to determine where we go ahead as before, versus where different kinds of change are needed.

Council approval of this Action would mean that staff will report back on a proposal for a program for long-term plan development. Staff already have some ideas of what to incorporate in such a program. It would include creating a base of information by mapping our current city pattern, and also mapping the pattern embodied in approved plans and policies but not yet built. It would include a strong public consultation component. It would involve developing criteria with which to evaluate options and illustrate trade-offs. The base mapping would be a way to place new options in context, in terms of where additional density would most strategically achieve sustainability, affordability, and livability. Essentially, this program

revisits or adds a layer to, the existing CityPlan. While such planning is usually a long term process, a city-wide context can also show where some Actions make sense in the shorter term.

**13. Amenity strategies for the longer term**

Develop a program, involving all City departments, for a comprehensive amenity strategy review, starting with documenting existing standards, delivery mechanisms, capacities, and plans, and using this as a base to evaluate and develop new strategies, with public input.

Many people during the public process endorsed the value of more density to improve environmental sustainability. At the same time, community members often raised the need to accompany growth with amenities. Many City departments have also been doing extensive work over recent years on developing priorities and strategies for various types of community facilities. It is the intention of this Action to bring all of this together so that there is a city-wide amenity context (just as, in Action 12, there is a city-wide land use and transportation context). This context will provide a way to take stock and see where new strategies are needed, and to implement the tools developed in Action 11.

**Draft Actions Part V: Accountability**

**14. Measurement tools**

Continue to investigate and develop tools to measure ecological footprint performance at various scales and contexts, and indicators to assess and report on Vancouver's progress.

Measuring improvements in sustainability performance at the small scale is not straightforward. Some tools measure household energy use, but do not take into account location features that affect transportation use. City staff have been working with consultants and academics to better develop tools that would be most relevant to Vancouver's context. This work needs to continue.

**15. Panel**

Set up a Panel of advisors comprised of Vancouverites including academics, builders, interest groups, and residents from across the city, to provide advice as needed to further the goals of EcoDensity.

There are many committed residents across the city, as well as innovative green builders, and academic experts. All of these people have contributed to the EcoDensity work so far. Establishing a Panel would facilitate their continued contribution. The Panel could, for example, provide comment on the criteria for preparing a report card on EcoDensity. The Panel will be in addition to and will be expected to participate in the broader consultation required for EcoDensity.

**16. Progress Report Structure**

Prepare a structure to assess progress and success in meeting the commitments of the EcoDensity Charter which may include an occasional EcoDensity ‘summit’ and a report card prepared at arms-length.

Regular evaluation of the EcoDensity Initiative’s progress will help maintain an ongoing pressure on the City to meet the policy commitments of the Charter, and will allow for learning and improvement as implementation moves forward. The Panel of advisors (see Action 15, above) could play a key role in reporting on progress.

**5. OTHER CITY INITIATIVES ON SUSTAINABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY**

The draft EcoDensity Charter has zeroed in on the contribution of density, design, and land use to environmental sustainability, affordability, and livability. In doing so, the draft Charter also commits EcoDensity to align with the many other City initiatives that are working toward environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability from many different directions and departments. Indeed, as EcoDensity and Sustainability permeate the City organization, it has generated momentum for many of these related initiatives. Many of these directions also reflect ideas that people put forward during the EcoDensity public consultation and staff have passed these on to these other departments.

- **Green buildings:** The Green Building Strategy, presently underway, will ensure that all new buildings offer better environmental and health performance. This strategy will include mandatory and optional strategies to achieve greener “baseline” building performance. New green Building Code standards will be brought forward for Council’s consideration in the early new year. The City has also resolved to achieve carbon neutrality in all new buildings by 2030. As well, all new civic buildings greater than 500 square meters (including retrofits) are required by City policy to achieve LEED Gold certification.
- **Climate Protection:**
  - Vancouver has adopted very aggressive greenhouse gas reduction targets for 2012, 2020, and 2050.
  - Vancouver has also started construction of the Neighbourhood Energy Utility for South East False Creek. By capturing heat energy from the sewer system and distributing it through a system of hot water pipes to individual buildings, the related greenhouse gas emissions for this development will be reduced by over 50 percent. The City is also evaluating opportunities for district energy in the East Fraser Lands development;
  - The land fill gas recovery program captures harmful greenhouse gas emissions and utilizes them to generate heat and power. The program continues to be a model within the region. The landfill is currently taking part in a pilot to look at new ways to utilize the gas and additional markets that could be developed for it;
  - The Community Climate Change Action Plan provides a blueprint of how business, industry, residents and institutions can work together to cut down on energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions;

- Vancouver's Corporate Climate Change Action Plan sets an ambitious goal of reducing its own greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent of its 1990 levels by 2010 by targeting its operations within Civic Facilities, Corporate Fleet, Street/Park Lighting and Traffic Control Signals, Corporate Waste Reduction and Landfill Gas Recovery, and Corporate Demand-Side Management; and,
  - Vancouver was among the first signatories to BC Climate Action Charter pledging a cooperative approach between local and Provincial governments on climate change, and committing local governments to carbon-neutral operations by 2012.
- Food security: To further a just and sustainable food system, the City recently adopted the Vancouver Food Charter. The Charter sets out Vancouver's commitment to the development of a coordinated municipal food policy, and engages the community in conversations and actions for food security. As part of the Green Building Strategy, Urban Agriculture Guidelines have been developed which will create opportunities for urban agriculture to be incorporated as part of the amenity package in new developments.
  - Waste and recycling: The City has a user pay system for garbage collection which provides an incentive to reduce waste; collects recyclable materials and yard trimmings separately; makes available low cost compost bins; supports a demonstration garden and composting facility, and has recently implemented a demonstration project to compost fruit and vegetable waste from a major grocery store chain in cooperation with Metro Vancouver.
  - Southeast False Creek (SEFC): Consisting of both City-owned and privately-owned lands, SEFC is being developed as a community that incorporates principles of energy-efficient design and demonstrates a model sustainable community. The development includes a network of paths and streets designed for pedestrians, cyclists and transit; building design for efficient use of energy resources and water; parks and open space that meet ecological objectives; projects with advanced environmental technologies, such as renewable energy supplies, water management, green building design and urban agriculture. Construction of a Neighbourhood Energy Utility in SEFC is also underway. By producing heat in a community energy centre, using heat pump technology to capture heat energy from the sewer system and distributing it through a system of hot water pipes to individual buildings, the related greenhouse gas emissions for this development will be reduced by over 50 percent.
  - Transportation: The Province and region are preparing a new long-range region-wide Transportation Plan. The City and TransLink are working to improve rapid transit service (e.g. Canada Line, Millennium extension, new Rapid Bus routes) and are examining a bike sharing program. The City continues to upgrade walking and biking infrastructure. It has also recently reduced some parking requirements as well as encouraged co-op cars in some developments. In addition, the City is also pursuing *Vancouver Charter* amendments that would allow consideration of ecological sustainability in determining off-street parking requirements as well as the mandatory requirement of unbundled parking.
  - Affordable Housing: The City now allows secondary suites in all single family neighbourhoods; considers rezonings for social housing in advance of neighbourhood plans; adopted rate of change regulations to manage the loss of the older purpose built rental stock; buys sites or provides capital grants for social housing; and is working with MetroVancouver on its proposed Affordable Housing Strategy, which recommends comprehensive policy frameworks for housing in each municipality.

- **Heritage:** The City works with the Heritage Commission to conserve and protect existing places of significance which advance cultural sustainability, sense of place, and the ecological sustainability of existing buildings and materials.
- **Parks:** The Park Board creates and maintains Vancouver's public green spaces and protects our natural environment. It provides facilities that support wellness and bring people together. The first of the five strategic directions in Park's 2005-2010 Strategic Plan "Greening the Park Board" is for the development of sustainable policies and practices that achieve environmental objectives while meeting the needs of the community in the development and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities as well as Park Board's corporate practices.
- **Social Infrastructure and Social Development Plans:** The City has initiated a Social Infrastructure Plan to guide investment and location decisions for social infrastructure throughout the city. It will be a key component in building social sustainability and developing complete communities. An overarching Social Development Plan is also underway which will provide a framework for wide-ranging social policy and social sustainability in Vancouver.
- **Economic sustainability:** The City has an Industrial Lands Strategy to protect needed industrial land, and is finalizing the Metro Core Jobs and Economy Land Use Plan to ensure adequate land supply for future job growth and economic activity in the Metro Core. The City has adopted Guiding Principles for Economic Development in Vancouver. The Vancouver Economic Development Commission has been working on a business climate strategy and set up a Blue Ribbon Council for Vancouver's Business Climate (BRC). The City is also working on a new Arts and Culture Plan which will inform the City's role in the creative economy as well as enhancing liveability.

## **FINANCIAL AND PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial or personnel implications at this time.

## **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

Upon Council referring the draft Charter and draft Initial Actions to further consultation, staff will put in place a communications program to make people aware of the draft ideas, and how to get more information about them. This will include newspaper ads, website information, e-mail notifications, and meetings with interested groups. Individuals and groups will be encouraged to provide their comments via e-mail, at meetings, and/or by appearing as a delegation at Council.

The consultation will include up to four public workshops throughout the city to allow for additional learning and community feedback on the attached drafts in a collaborative manner. Furthermore, the City will convene a Special Council Meeting at the end of February to hear public delegations.

## CONCLUSION

This report describes the EcoDensity concept and the initiation of the EcoDensity program of public outreach, information, and idea-generation. Based on comments through that process, this reports puts forward a draft EcoDensity Charter and draft Initial Actions, and asks City Council to refer them for further public consultation including public workshops and a Special Council meeting February 26, 2008 before Council makes decisions.

\* \* \* \* \*

***DRAFT***  
**The Vancouver EcoDensity Charter**  
**How Density, Design, & Land Use**  
**Will Contribute to Environmental Sustainability, Affordability, & Livability**

**WHEREAS in the City of Vancouver:**

- **Increasing climate change and the use of resources faster than the planet can replenish them** represent serious threats to our future livability.
- **Environmental sustainability is critical for Vancouver's long term resiliency** and is the foundation for future social, cultural, and economic sustainability.
- **Important steps have been taken over many years to create a livable city of neighbourhoods and compact, mixed-use, walkable communities.**
- **The need for deeper and more rapid change has become clear as our achievements are being challenged** by accelerating environmental threats.
- **We need to do more, for ourselves and future generations,** and as our contribution to efforts being made around the globe.
- **We have the opportunity to influence change, by using density, design, and land use to create more sustainable and affordable communities that are great places to live.**

**THEREFORE, the City of Vancouver makes a commitment to:**

**AN OVER-ARCHING ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITY**

- **Make environmental sustainability a primary consideration in decisions about density, design, and land use** - that will at the same time improve affordability and livability.
- **Follow through on existing plans and policies that improve sustainability, and build on them** to achieve even greater gains.
- **Improve environmental performance across the city** in all communities and in individual projects, while enhancing affordability across the city.
- **Emphasize environmental sustainability now where existing policies allow, and develop new policies, rules or standards to overcome current barriers.**

#### A GREEN LAND USE PATTERN

- **Locate new density strategically by continuing to reinforce walking, biking, and transit, and in further support of accessible local jobs, shops, and services, and consider new green criteria for location, such as shared energy efficiencies.**
- **Contribute to economic prosperity and ensure adequate space for diverse jobs and economic activity close to home as the city grows, including protection of key commercial and industrial districts for economic activity rather than housing.**

#### A RANGE OF HOUSING TYPES, NEEDS, AND COSTS

- **Accommodate density of different types and scales to meet a full range of housing needs, including singles, families, empty-nesters, and seniors -- ranging from continued high density downtown; to new opportunities outside the downtown for a variety of housing types, from high and medium density apartments, to rowhouses, duplexes, small houses, coach-houses, and suites.**
- **Use density to enable greater housing affordability through a generally increased supply of more inherently affordable housing, and through consideration of how new development can help achieve social housing objectives; and by reconciling new development with the retention of existing affordable rental units.**

#### GREENER AND LIVABLE DESIGN AND A SENSE OF PLACE

- **Design density with new and existing architecture that meshes greener performance, with values for neighbourhood context, character and identity, for high quality and neighbourly buildings and developments, at all scales.**
- **Combine respect for heritage conservation, and for the sustainability inherent in retention/reuse of existing structures and materials, with greener technology and denser development.**
- **Apply ecological best practices for public realm design to achieve green, beautiful, safe, accessible, adaptable, and engaging streets, parks, and public places in all communities.**

#### GREEN AND LIVABLE SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- **Facilitate greener energy systems, in all density contexts, in recognition that density generates the users to make new systems more feasible.**
- **Work to provide the amenities, services, and infrastructure needed to support new and existing density levels, using existing and new financial tools, with continued contributions from developers, City budgets, and other sources.**

## AN ECO-CITY

- **Champion new, holistic ways to align density, design, and land use with** other tools for environmental, economic, social, and cultural sustainability, to achieve mutual benefits -- including strategies for transportation and parking, green building strategies, heritage conservation, affordable housing strategies, urban agriculture and food policy, recycling, new energy systems, social development planning, and the many other related City initiatives.

### **AND the City of Vancouver will continue to respect and apply these process principles:**

- **Engage and consult** with the broad public and with communities to prepare plans and policies to guide change and to build and reflect broad community ownership and capacity-building for a sustainable, resilient city; tie planning processes to community capacity building that supports communities' distinct approaches to meeting their needs.
- **Bring to bear the needed resources and timeframes** for responsible, thorough, transparent, and successful planning and consultation.
- **Base actions on Council-approved plans and policies, rather than ad hoc decisions; and plan and implement actions suitable for the short, medium and long terms;** encourage experimentation and look for ways to reward innovation; move further ahead as more is planned, known, and doable.
- **Work with other municipalities and levels of government;** seek partnerships with senior levels of government necessary to achieve goals; learn from others; and create models that will provide leadership for others.

## ECODENSITY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

EcoDensity is about how density that is well-designed, well-located, and carefully-implemented provides a powerful tool to improve environmental sustainability, affordability, and livability. The questions and answers below reflect this approach.

- **How does density help the environment?**

Two key contributors to climate change are transportation and building energy use. EcoDensity can help reduce both. Well-located density puts people close to shops, jobs, amenities and services, meaning more trips are made by walking, biking and transit, instead of by car. This also creates a larger customer base for local shopping areas, supporting a wider array of shops and services, which in turn, means that even more needs can be fulfilled close to home. Similarly, putting people close to transit means more trips are made using transit, and makes better transit service more feasible.

Density also reduces building energy use. Housing with shared walls uses less energy. Density also makes renewable energy sources more feasible and affordable. Systems like neighbourhood energy utilities generate energy with little or no greenhouse gasses. And, density combined with green building features, will go even further to reduce greenhouse gases, as well as to conserve water, reduce waste, and provide other environmental benefits.

Containing sprawl also minimizes the regional impacts on vital agricultural and conservation lands.

- **How does density help affordability?**

Density can contribute to affordability by adding more inherently affordable housing types and tenures (i.e., smaller units, rental units); if demand nonetheless outpaces supply, increasing supply helps to moderate the price increases. Density also has the potential to facilitate more affordable living arrangements (i.e., reduced car ownership, lower energy costs and mortgage helpers such as secondary suites, coach houses).

In addition, density can help provide deeper affordability through large scale rezonings that can provide social housing. While increased supply is a necessary foundation to affordability, it cannot replace funding from the Federal and Provincial governments to achieve the most affordable units.

In a built-up city like Vancouver, affordability is extremely complex with many factors outside City control. EcoDensity goals suggest the balancing of new supply with retention of existing affordable rental. One example is the City's recent rate-of-change by-law to protect rental housing in apartment zoned areas throughout the city where there is a large stock of older affordable rental housing.

- **Who might housing density benefit?**

Well planned density means providing more housing types for new residents as well as for people to stay in their own neighbourhoods. This includes today's children who will become young people looking for suites and their first apartments; families wanting housing similar to, but more affordable than, a single family house; and new choices for people as they

grow older and wish to downsize from their single family home. And, more housing choices also means more opportunities for people who work in the city to live in the city.

- **How is density connected to livability?**

Livability encompasses many aspects of life -- neighbourly development; retention of neighbourhood character, heritage buildings, and a sense of place; safe and attractive parks and public places; needed communities amenities and cultural facilities; and a generally

Well-planned, well-located, and well-designed density can maintain and enhance livability. For example, local shopping areas can be strengthened through density, and public places made safer. Other aspects of livability, particularly providing needed amenities, are challenges that density must meet to be successful. EcoDensity also challenges all of us to see that the status quo is not one of the options; the city has and will continue to change. Finally, EcoDensity challenges us to think about the subjective aspects of livability, and asks what will our livability be like if we don't make changes?

Perhaps most importantly, density done well provides ecological sustainability benefits that assist in maintaining our long term livability in the face of climate change threats and the end of cheap energy.

- **Does more density just mean more developer profits?**

Through City policies and by-laws, developers contribute to the cost of providing amenities to serve the population they build for. Every new development in the city pays a per square foot Development Cost Levy (DCL,) used to help pay for new parks, child care, social housing, and transportation-related improvements. Last year developers paid \$21 million to the City in DCLs; in 2007 to date, DCL revenues already exceed \$53 million.

In addition, large scale rezonings provides additional opportunity for developers to contribute significantly more amenities in addition to the DCLs. Downtown rezonings have long illustrated the high quality of amenities, from school sites to cultural facilities to parks and seawalls that are provided as part of the development contribution. Outside the downtown, two recent rezoned developments along Kingsway are examples: as part of a rezoning at the corner of Knight and Kingsway, the new development is contributing space for a new Kensington branch library; the development at Nanaimo and Kingsway the development is providing a fully-outfitted child daycare facility, as well as start-up and endowment fund contributions.

- **Does more density mean more traffic?**

Although the city has been growing, there are fewer vehicles entering the city than there were 10 years ago, and average distances being driven by Vancouver registered passenger vehicles were down almost 30% between 1993 and 2002. When density is well-located close to shopping areas and community amenities, more people can travel without a car to obtain goods and services. These non-work trips are the fastest growing types of trips. And, while not everyone can live close to their work, locating more housing close to transit increases the number of work trips that are not by car.

- **Does rezoning mean higher property taxes?**

Property assessments, and thus property taxes, can increase for some properties more than the average for various reasons, including market attractiveness of neighbourhoods, as well as due to rezoning.

The specific example people have asked about recently is the area around Kingsway and Knight. This was the first area to be rezoned by the City about a year ago to small house/duplex zoning, and to courtyard-rowhouse zoning, as part of the Neighbourhood Centre Program. One of the issues that caught public attention early this summer was property owners in the area receiving tax bills from the City with very large tax increases. The City had made an error in omitting the area from the usual three-year averaging program. This has since been corrected and people have been refunded.

After the issue of the three-year averaging had been sorted out, the question remained: how much of a property assessment increase occurred in the area and what was it due to?

In discussion with the BC Assessment Authority, City staff estimate that the average property assessment increase due to the rezoning was in the range of \$20,000 to \$25,000. This amount was a portion of the total assessment increase of \$146,000. The difference was due to general market forces which had much more of an impact in this area last year on property values than did the rezoning.

The tax increase due to the rezoning translated into an average annual tax increase of \$37 for that year. Future taxes will depend on market forces (both general and due to rezoning) and City tax rate decisions. Due to the low scale nature of the new zoning, staff expected that the rezoning impact would be small. However, it will be important to monitor the situation.

- **Are Norquay and other Neighbourhood Centres already EcoDensity?**

The Neighbourhood Centre Program was initiated several years ago as a way to implement the housing and shopping area directions contained in approved Community Visions. The first Neighbourhood Centre was successfully completed a few years ago in the area around Knight and Kingsway.

The second Centre, Norquay Village has been underway over a year and a half, with a process involving newsletters in two languages (three in the shopping area), newspaper ads, banners in public places, open houses attended by hundreds of people, two resident working groups putting together proposals for the housing area and the shopping area, and a survey asking community opinion on these proposals. Planning work in the area is continuing, to develop a final proposal that will best reflect community input. During the process, good questions and suggestions have been raised that will help to improve the Neighbourhood Centres Program for its next round. Council will receive a separate report to update the Neighbourhood Centre Terms of Reference before planning for the next two Centres begins. In all, there are about 18 Neighbourhood Centres identified through Community Visions.

EcoDensity is a different program from Neighbourhood Centres. It was initiated much after Neighbourhood Centres was already underway. Up until now, EcoDensity has been in a dialogue and idea-generating phase. Many of the ideas overlap and potentially expand upon

Neighbourhood Centres and Community Visions. This November 27 Council Report does not suggest changes to Neighbourhood Centre planning.

- **How is EcoDensity different from what the City has already been doing?**

The EcoDensity Charter acknowledges the progress Vancouver has made over many years of planning to build a livable and sustainable city. However, with environmental threats mounting faster than anticipated, more work is needed. The Charter commits to follow through on existing plans and policies that improve sustainability, and expand on them to achieve even greater gains.

- **What is in the EcoDensity Plan that has been approved and how will it change my neighbourhood zoning?**

There is no EcoDensity 'plan', nor any immediate zoning changes. The EcoDensity program was established by City Council a year ago as a dialogue -- an idea generating phase, not a plan-making phase. The next proposed phase of EcoDensity is described in the November 2007 Council Report. A new draft Charter has been prepared for further discussion; and to respond to many of the ideas suggested by the public, the report recommends Actions including demonstration projects and developing a range of tools for new kinds of zoning and tools for amenities, renewable energy, etc. After this, likely starting in 2009, the EcoDensity dialogue will be about plan-making -- where and how to best use these new tools. Like any long-range planning for the city, this will take time and will include public involvement to identify short term and long term changes to overlay and update our existing plans and policies.

- **Are communities going to be involved in EcoDensity?**

The proposed EcoDensity Charter contains a commitment to public engagement, consultation, and ownership. These have been a cornerstone for Vancouver planning over the years. It is always a challenge in planning to engage and hear from all voices, and programs often develop new approaches to best suit the circumstances. Some decisions are made at a city-wide level (e.g., single family zoning was changed to allow legalized suites across the city a few years ago). And some decisions are based on more detailed community-level planning (e.g., Community Visions). In all cases, there is also a strong city-wide framework (e.g., CityPlan) which has been developed based on the needs and voices of many people across the city.