

# Metro 2050

## IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINE Regional Context Statements

September 2023

## Preamble

The successful implementation of [Metro 2050](#), the regional growth strategy, depends on ongoing cooperation and collaboration between Metro Vancouver and member jurisdictions. *Metro 2050* represents consensus among member jurisdictions to work collaboratively on meeting five long-term regional planning goals:

1. Create a compact urban area
2. Support a sustainable economy
3. Protect the environment, address climate change, and respond to natural hazards
4. Provide diverse and affordable housing choices
5. Support sustainable transportation choices

The Regional Context Statement is the linking document that identifies how local aspirations expressed in Official Community Plans or their equivalent, align with and support the regional federation’s aspirations expressed in *Metro 2050*. A Regional Context Statement must identify the relationship between the Official Community Plan and the Regional Growth Strategy, and if applicable, how the Official Community Plan will be made consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy over time.

This *Metro 2050* Implementation Guideline provides guidance to member jurisdictions on the Regional Context Statement development, submission, and acceptance process. The Implementation Guideline will be updated periodically to ensure the most current information is available to member jurisdictions. This guideline should be read in conjunction with *Metro 2050* and the [Local Government Act](#), and does not replace or supersede the requirements set out in those documents. For relevant sections in the *Local Government Act* see Appendix A.

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# 1.0 DEVELOPING REGIONAL CONTEXT STATEMENT

## CONSISTENCY WITH *METRO 2050* AND THE *LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT*

A Regional Context Statement (RCS) must be included as part of an Official Community Plan (OCP). [Section 6.2.6](#) of *Metro 2050* sets out expectations for general consistency between RCSs and *Metro 2050* goals, strategies, policies, and targets, as well as the regional land use designations.

## TIMELINE FOR DEVELOPING REGIONAL CONTEXT STATEMENTS

*Metro 2050* was adopted on February 24, 2023. The *Local Government Act* stipulates that member jurisdictions have two years after the adoption of the regional growth strategy to develop and submit a RCS. As such, member jurisdictions are requested to submit their RCS to the Metro Vancouver Regional District (MVRD) Board for consideration by **February 24, 2025**.

## EARLY ENGAGEMENT WITH METRO VANCOUVER AND OTHER PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Member jurisdictions are advised to engage with Metro Vancouver staff early in the RCS development process to ensure that RCS acceptance procedures and contents are clearly understood. At this stage, Metro Vancouver staff can advise member jurisdictions on potential timelines, and how best to populate the RCS Template.

Similarly, member jurisdictions are advised to connect with TransLink to discuss components that may have an impact on regional transportation systems or priorities. Member jurisdictions can also request Metro Vancouver staff and TransLink staff provide early feedback on any proposed Frequent Transit Development Areas (FTDAs).

## CONTENTS OF A REGIONAL CONTEXT STATEMENT

### Policy Alignment between the OCP and Metro 2050

Metro Vancouver expects that RCSs will address the member jurisdiction actions identified in *Metro 2050*. The applicable member jurisdiction actions and targets are identified throughout *Metro 2050* in sections titled “Member Jurisdictions Will.” To demonstrate alignment between OCP policies and *Metro 2050*, an RCS should acknowledge the regional targets and actions for member jurisdictions set out in *Metro 2050*, including specific references to corresponding OCP policies. If a member jurisdiction is unable to respond to a particular policy, the RCS should explain why and how the member jurisdiction’s OCP will be made consistent over time. In instances where a *Metro 2050* action is not applicable to the member jurisdiction, the RCS should note that those actions do not apply. For example, if a member jurisdiction does not contain certain regional land use designations within its boundaries, there is no need to incorporate those land use designations or policies in the RCS.

### Applicable Maps: Urban Containment Boundary, Regional Land Use Designations, Regional Overlays and Special Study Areas

[Sections 1.1.9\(a\)](#) and [1.2.24\(b\)](#) of *Metro 2050* require that the RCS contain maps depicting the Urban Containment Boundary, regional land use designations and applicable overlays. All applicable regional land use designations can be shown on one map. The maps may be contained in the main body or in an appendix. The Urban Containment Boundary, Regional land use designations, and overlays must not be identified by referring to maps outside of the RCS (e.g. may not be identified by referring to a map elsewhere in the Official Community Plan, or in a Local Plan or Area Plan). Member jurisdictions are requested to also submit a Geographic Information System (GIS) digital file to Metro Vancouver when submitting a RCS.

Metro Vancouver maintains the Urban Containment Boundary and parcel-based regional land use designations in a GIS database, and can provide the maps electronically and at appropriate scale. Where there are mapping differences or inconsistencies, the member jurisdiction will provide Metro Vancouver a map depicting the inconsistencies, and provide an explanation on how they will be resolved.

*Metro 2050* contains an Urban Containment Boundary, parcel-based regional land use designations, and a series of overlays. These establish the regional land use framework and illustrate the geographic areas that are subject to regional policies. The intent statements for the regional land use designations and overlays are to be read in conjunction with applicable strategies and actions under each goal and are to be supported by member jurisdictions in their RCS. There are also maps included for reference only.

*Urban Containment Boundary:* The Urban Containment Boundary is intended to be a stable, long-term, regionally-defined area for urban development that protects Agricultural, Conservation and Recreation, and Rural lands, supports the efficient provision of utility infrastructure, and limits auto-oriented, dispersed development patterns. *Metro 2050* Section 1.1.9(a) requires member jurisdictions to adopt RCS that “depict the Urban Containment Boundary on a map, generally consistent with the Regional Land Use Designations map.” The Urban Containment Boundary and General Urban Lands are identified in Map 3 in *Metro 2050*.

*Regional Land Use Designations:* *Metro 2050* contains six regional land use designations: General Urban, Industrial, Employment, Rural, Agricultural and Conservation and Recreation. Descriptions of each land use designation are provided in Section D of *Metro 2050*. Regional land use designations are generally parcel-based. Parcel boundaries for land use designations in RCSs should be the same as those shown in *Metro 2050*. The Regional Land Use Designations are identified on Map 2 in *Metro 2050*.

*Regional Overlays:* *Metro 2050* also identifies four regional overlays. Descriptions of each regional overlay are provided in Section D of *Metro 2050*.

**Urban Centres and Frequent Transit Development Areas (FTDAs)** are intended to be the region’s primary focal points for concentrated growth and transit service. Within the Urban Containment Boundary, Urban Centres and FTDAs may be overlaid on any regional land use designation. Urban Centres and FTDAs and their boundaries are identified by member jurisdictions in a RCS according to characteristics generally consistent with the guidelines in Table 3. The location and boundaries of Urban Centres and FTDAs must be shown on a map in the RCS. Table 4 lays out the criteria required before a new FTDA or Urban Centre can be considered. It also lays out the requirements and process for any proposed reclassification from one type to another.

The **Trade-Oriented Lands Overlay** is intended for Industrial lands that are required to support goods movement in, out, and through the Metro Vancouver region. Member jurisdictions can choose to include this overlay on Industrial lands that are proximate to highway, port or rail infrastructure with supportive characteristics (e.g. large and flat sites) to indicate that these lands are intended for trade-oriented uses such as logistics, warehouses, distribution centres, or intermodal terminals, and that the lands are not intended to be subdivided into small lots or stratified.

The **Natural Resource Areas Overlay** is intended to illustrate existing provincially-approved natural resource uses within the Conservation and Recreation regional land use designation that may not be entirely consistent with the designation, but that continue to reflect the intent of the Conservation

and Recreation designation. It is provided by Metro Vancouver for information only and is not required to be in a RCS.

**Special Study Areas** identify locations where, prior to the adoption of the last regional growth strategy, a member jurisdiction expressed an intention to alter the existing land uses after undertaking further planning work. It is intended to be a temporary measure that indicates the likelihood of proposed regional land use designation amendment for the area. To reflect this, the amendment threshold for special study areas moving from non-urban regional land use designations to urban designations is lowered from a Type 2 to a Type 3 amendment. The RCS should contain the planned timeline and process for resolving / completing the Special Study Area. No new Special Study Areas are permitted.

#### Applicable Projections: Population, Dwelling Unit and Employment Projections

*Metro 2050* includes projected future population, dwelling unit, and employment growth at the regional and the sub-regional scales. The projections are intended to establish general agreement among regional agencies and member jurisdictions on anticipated growth for the region, and to provide the basis for planning transportation and infrastructure improvements and investments at the regional and local levels. Growth projections at the member jurisdiction scale are provided as a service by Metro Vancouver to support local planning and RCS development, and can be found on the Metro Vancouver website.

Regional and sub-regional projections are provided by decade to the year 2050 in Table 1 of *Metro 2050*. The regional and member jurisdictional growth projections are published annually on the Metro Vancouver website, and are expected to be used as guidance. It is expected that each member jurisdiction will provide a statement in its RCS that references member jurisdiction projections published by Metro Vancouver as it relates to local projections to determine general consistency with this provision.

[Section 1.1.9\(b\)](#) of *Metro 2050* requires member jurisdictions adopt RCSs that “provide member jurisdiction population, dwelling unit, and employment projections, with reference to guidelines contained in Table 1, and demonstrate how local plans will work towards accommodating the projected growth within the Urban Containment Boundary in accordance with the regional target of focusing 98% of residential growth inside the Urban Containment Boundary.” An RCS should illustrate efforts to align the OCP with the member jurisdiction, sub-regional, and regional projections over time. RCSs should indicate growth projections for the same time periods as indicated in *Metro 2050*: i.e. to 2030, 2040, and 2050.

Targets for dwelling unit and employment growth for Urban Centres and Frequent Transit Development Areas are provided in Table 2 of *Metro 2050*. These are policy targets to focus growth in regionally-significant, priority transit-oriented growth areas. These targets are intended to support the future expansion of frequent transit service and utilities.

[Section 1.2.24\(a\)](#) of *Metro 2050* requires member jurisdictions adopt RCSs that “provide dwelling unit and employment projections that indicate the member jurisdiction’s share of planned growth and contribute to achieving the regional share of growth for Urban Centres and Frequent Transit Development Areas as set out in Table 2.” With the general guidance provided by Table 2 of *Metro 2050*, RCSs will indicate the amount of dwelling unit growth and employment growth that a member jurisdiction is targeting for the Urban Centre(s) and Frequent Transit Development Area(s) within its

boundaries. Although not required, member jurisdictions may also include dwelling unit projections for General Urban areas and non-urban areas in their RCS. An RCS may also include employment projections for areas outside of Urban Centres and FTDAs

Metro Vancouver can assist member jurisdictions with projections for population, dwelling unit, and employment, as well as other regional datasets. Metro Vancouver can also provide input from a regional utilities perspective.

These targets will be reviewed from time-to-time in response to updated growth forecasts, accepted RCSs, and the outcomes of strategic planning processes undertaken by Metro Vancouver, TransLink and member jurisdictions. Metro Vancouver will work with member jurisdictions, in consultation with TransLink, and offer technical assistance to jointly develop projections that reflect local planning considerations and meet the federation's regional growth management objectives.

#### Member Jurisdiction Flexibility Provision

[Section 6.2.7](#) of *Metro 2050* provides member jurisdictions with the flexibility to adjust the boundaries of regional land use designation within the Urban Containment Boundary under certain circumstances without triggering an amendment to the RCS. To utilize the provisions in this section the RCS must include language permitting amendments to the OCP to adjust the boundaries of regional land use designations, and must cite the circumstances outlined in Section 6.2.7 where this can occur. Section 6.2.8 of *Metro 2050* provides member jurisdictions with the flexibility to amend the boundaries of Urban Centres and Frequent Transit Development Areas without triggering an amendment to the RCS. Member jurisdictions must include appropriate language within their RCS in order to have this flexibility.

If a member jurisdiction includes language in its RCS that permits flexibility as laid out in sections 6.2.7 and 6.2.8, the adjustments described above do not require a new RCS or consideration by the MVRD Board. All other adjustments to regional land use designation boundaries do require an amendment to the member jurisdiction's RCS, which must be submitted to the MVRD Board for acceptance in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act*.

#### **REGIONAL CONTEXT STATEMENT TEMPLATE**

A [RCS Template](#) has been developed to aid member jurisdictions in demonstrating alignment between their OCPs and *Metro 2050*, and to encourage consistency in how RCSs are prepared across the region. To maintain fairness, ease of review, and comparability, member jurisdictions are requested to generally follow the format of the RCS Template. The template is intended to assist member jurisdictions in preparing and organizing their submission, and to assist Metro Vancouver in reviewing the RCS for consistency with *Metro 2050*. The RCS Template is available on the [Metro Vancouver website](#).

#### Using the Regional Context Statement Template

*Targets:* The RCS template includes a consolidated targets section at the front end of the document. The same target section is included at the beginning of each goal area. The same information should be referenced in both these sections. Member jurisdictions are encouraged to provide supplementary information to describe other local policies or strategies that further support regional target aspirations. References to local policies should be high-level, and should not reference specific policy numbers/text.

*Goal Introduction:* The RCS template provides member jurisdictions with an opportunity to include additional information at the beginning of each goal. Member jurisdictions are encouraged to demonstrate how the OCP and other supporting plans contribute to the specific Goal as a whole.

*OCP Policies:* Each member jurisdiction action should be substantiated by relevant OCP policies. The OCP policy number and text should be listed next to the corresponding *Metro 2050* policy.

#### **UPDATING AND REVISING REGIONAL CONTEXT STATEMENT CONTENTS**

[Section 448](#) of the *Local Government Act* states that member jurisdictions must review their RCS every five years after acceptance to determine its continued alignment with *Metro 2050*.

## **2.0 REGIONAL CONTEXT STATEMENT SUBMISSION PROCESS**

### **SUBMITTING A REGIONAL CONTEXT STATEMENT**

A member jurisdiction may submit an RCS to the MVRD Board for acceptance any time after first reading, but before giving final reading to their OCP bylaw. Member jurisdictions are encouraged to submit their RCS to Metro Vancouver after the local public engagement process has been completed, specifically after the public hearing and third bylaw reading of their OCP bylaw. Submitting the bylaw to Metro Vancouver before a public hearing may introduce the possibility that the RCS will need to be re-submitted to Metro Vancouver to accommodate any bylaw changes made after the public hearing. Submitting an RCS after third reading reduces this possibility, and is aligned with Metro Vancouver's practice to not be ahead of a member jurisdiction's community engagement process.

### **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

At minimum, a member jurisdiction's RCS submission to Metro Vancouver for consideration of acceptance should include:

*Cover Letter:* A letter stating a member jurisdiction's intent to update their RCS. The letter should include the relevant council resolution and bylaw readings and public hearing dates. A sample letter is provided in Appendix B for reference.

*Member Jurisdiction Staff Report:* The staff report to the council outlining the OCP/RCS development process including a council resolution on submitting the RCS to Metro Vancouver.

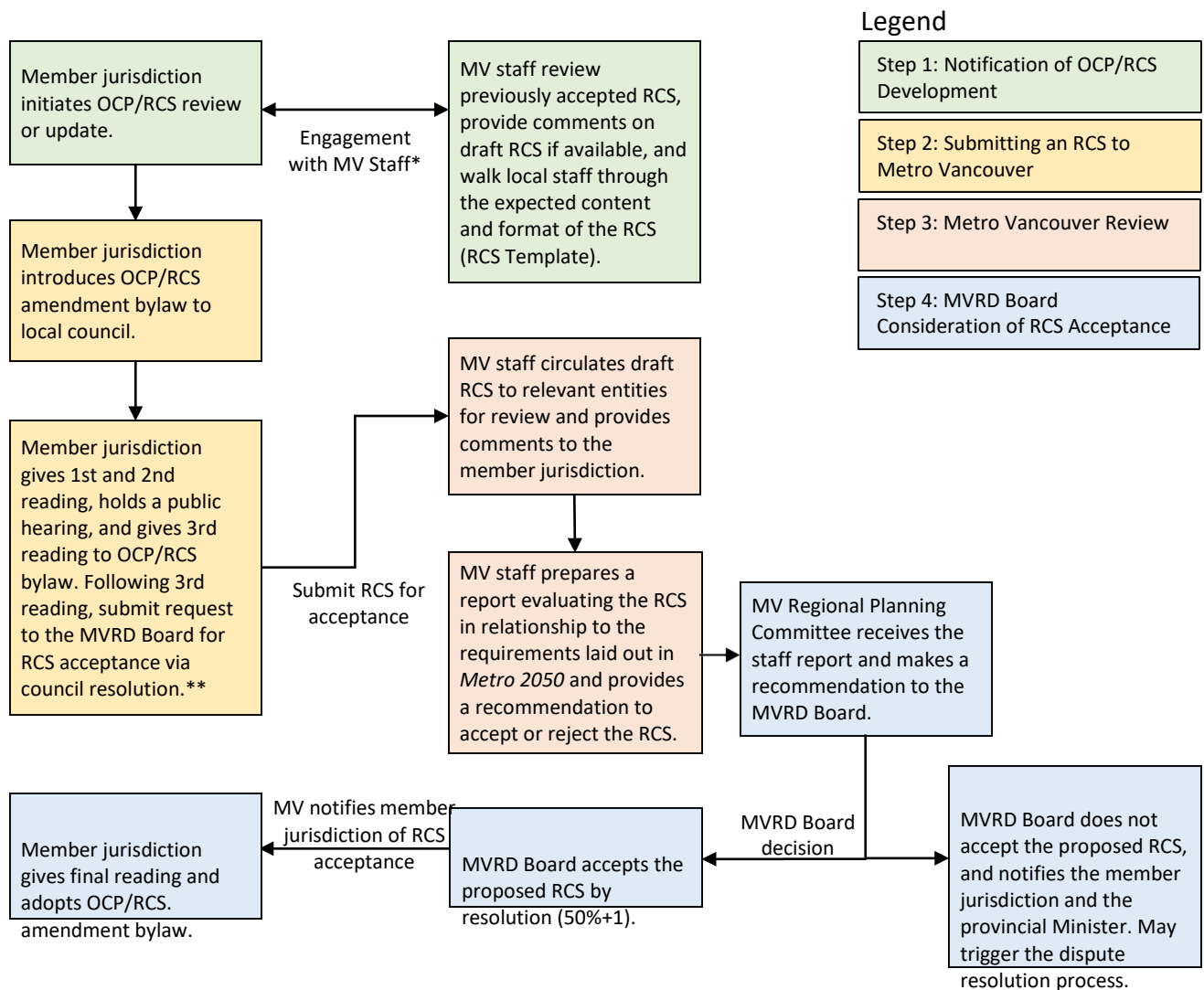
*Regional Context Statement:* The complete RCS outlining the relationship between local policies and *Metro 2050's* goals, strategies, policy actions, and targets, along with required maps and projections. RCSs are an integral part of a member jurisdiction's OCP.

### 3.0 REGIONAL CONTEXT STATEMENT ACCEPTANCE PROCESS

#### ACCEPTANCE OF REGIONAL CONTEXT STATEMENT

RCSs are accepted by resolution of a 50% + 1 weighted vote of the MVRD Board. A regional public hearing is not required. Metro Vancouver must respond by resolution within 120 days of receiving a proposed RCS from a member jurisdiction indicating whether or not it accepts the RCS. In accordance with [Section 448](#) of the *Local Government Act*, if Metro Vancouver does not respond within 120 days, the MVRD Board is deemed to have accepted the RCS. If the MVRD Board opts to ‘not accept’ a RCS, it must indicate each provision to which it objects and the reason(s) for the objection. The general process for RCS acceptance is outlined in Figure 1 with additional information on each step provided in Table 1. The *Local Government Act* sets out a process for resolving any dispute between a regional district and a member jurisdiction regarding the acceptance of a RCS (Sections [435](#), [438](#) to [442](#), [444](#), and [450](#)).

**Figure 1: Regional Context Statement Acceptance Process**



\* Metro Vancouver staff will meet with member jurisdiction staff as frequently as desired.

\*\* Member Jurisdictions have the option to submit their RCS/OCP bylaw to Metro Vancouver at any time before final reading. However, submitting the bylaw before a public hearing may introduce the possibility that the RCS will need to be re-submitted to Metro Vancouver to accommodate any bylaw changes made after the public hearing. Submitting an RCS after third reading reduces this possibility.



**Table 1: Steps for submitting a Regional Context Statement**

<p><b>Step 1: Notification of OCP / RCS Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Member jurisdiction initiates the OCP review and/or the RCS development process.</li><li>• Member jurisdiction notifies Metro Vancouver of the OCP review/RCS development and discusses anticipated timelines.</li><li>• Metro Vancouver staff reviews the previously accepted RCS to identify any past regional issues or policies that may still be relevant in the development of a new RCS, and provides comments to the member jurisdiction.</li><li>• Metro Vancouver collaborates with the member jurisdiction on the expected content and format of the RCS.</li><li>• Member jurisdiction develops the draft RCS, including relevant maps and projections.</li><li>• Member jurisdiction is encouraged to provide an early copy of the draft RCS to Metro Vancouver for initial review and feedback.</li><li>• If applicable, the member jurisdiction identifies Frequent Transit Development Areas (FTDAs), in consultation with TransLink, and requests TransLink to review and provide written comment on proposed FTDAs.</li></ul>
<p><b>Step 2: Submitting an RCS to Metro Vancouver</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Member jurisdiction gives first and second reading to their OCP/RCS bylaw and holds a public hearing.</li><li>• After the public hearing, the member jurisdiction gives third reading to the OCP/RCS bylaw, and submits the RCS with a resolution to the MVRD Board for consideration of acceptance.</li><li>• If applicable, the member jurisdiction forwards written comments from TransLink on any proposed FTDAs to the MVRD Board.</li></ul>
<p><b>Step 3: Metro Vancouver Review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Metro Vancouver circulates the proposed RCS to relevant Metro Vancouver departments for review. This review informs Metro Vancouver’s comments to the member jurisdiction.</li><li>• Metro Vancouver prepares a staff report evaluating the RCS in relation to the requirements set out in <i>Metro 2050</i> and provides a recommendation on whether to accept or not-accept the RCS.</li></ul>
<p><b>Step 4: MVRD Board Consideration of RCS Acceptance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Metro Vancouver’s Regional Planning Committee receives the staff report and makes a recommendation to the MVRD Board.</li><li>• The MVRD Board considers acceptance of the RCS and provides a response within 120 days of receiving the RCS. If Metro Vancouver does not respond by resolution within 120 days, the MVRD Board is deemed to have accepted the RCS.</li><li>• If the RCS is accepted by the MVRD Board, the member jurisdiction then gives final reading to and adopts the OCP/RCS bylaw. If the RCS is not accepted, a rationale will be provided to the member jurisdiction and a dispute resolution process may be initiated.</li></ul>

## APPENDIX A: LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT REFERENCE

The *Local Government Act* establishes the requirement for local governments to prepare RCSs. [Section 446](#) states:

*“446 (1) If a regional growth strategy applies to all or part of the same area of a municipality as an official community plan, the official community plan must include a RCS that is accepted in accordance with this Division by the board of the regional district for which the regional growth strategy is adopted.*

*(2) After a regional growth strategy is adopted, the requirement under subsection (1) must be fulfilled by the applicable council submitting a proposed RCS to the board within 2 years after the regional growth strategy is adopted....”*

Furthermore, [Section 447](#) of the *Local Government Act* sets out the purpose of RCSs as follows:

*“447 (1) A RCS must specifically identify:*

*(a) the relationship between the official community plan and the matters referred to in section 429 (2) [required content for regional growth strategy] and any other regional matters included under section 429 (3) [additional content], and*

*(b) if applicable, how the official community plan is to be made consistent with the regional growth strategy over time.*

*(2) A RCS and the rest of the official community plan must be consistent.”*

In accordance with section 446 of the *Local Government Act*, member jurisdictions must prepare and submit an RCS within two years of the adoption of a Regional Growth Strategy.

After an RCS has been accepted by the MVRD Board there are instances in which member jurisdictions are required to submit a new RCS:

1. When a new OCP is developed, with consequential changes to the RCS.
2. When amendments to an existing OCP are proposed that are not consistent with the previously-accepted RCS or *Metro 2050*.
3. When a member jurisdiction applies for an amendment to *Metro 2050* involving a regional land use designation amendment that would also have to change in the RCS.

[Section 448](#) of the *Local Government Act* states that member jurisdictions must review the RCS every five years after acceptance to determine its continued alignment with the regional growth strategy.

## APPENDIX B: SAMPLE COVER LETTER

The Sample Cover Letter is provided as a reference only.

Member Jurisdiction Letterhead

*Date*

*Corporate Officer*

*Metro Vancouver*

*Metrotower III, 4515 Central Boulevard*

*Burnaby, BC V5H 0C6*

*Dear Corporate Officer,*

***RE: [Member Jurisdiction] Metro 2050 Regional Context Statement***

*Introduction (Heading not required)*

The [Member Jurisdiction] is pleased to submit its Regional Context Statement in accordance with section 446 of the *Local Government Act* to the Metro Vancouver Board for consideration and acceptance. On [Date], at our council [Meeting], [Member Jurisdiction] council passed [Resolution or Bylaw name or number] to submit the [Member Jurisdiction's] Regional Context Statement for acceptance to the MVRD Board.

On [Date], at the Council [Meeting Title], [Member Jurisdiction] Council approved recommendations in the [Report Title]. This included recommendations to give first and second readings to the Bylaw and instructed the [Member Jurisdiction] Clerk to set a date for Public Hearing. On [Date], at Council – [Public Hearing Meeting], [Member Jurisdiction] Council passed a Bylaw to give third reading to the proposed [Member Jurisdiction] OCP Bylaw and endorsed referring the Bylaw to Metro Vancouver.

*Summary of the Regional Context Statement (Heading not required)*

Optional section providing a summary of key highlights related to the Regional Context Statement.

*Summary (Heading not required)*

The [Member Jurisdiction] requests that Metro Vancouver Regional District Board consider and accept the [Member Jurisdiction] Regional Context Statement. Should Metro Vancouver staff require any additional information regarding this matter, please contact [Member Jurisdiction Contact Name, Title], at [Phone Number] or at [Email Address].

Yours,

*Signature*

[Name]

[Title]

[Department]

Attachments

[Title of Attachment, Date]