



**POLICY  
REVIEW  
SUMMARY**

# Industrial and Mixed Employment

## About Metro 2050

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

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

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

The regional growth strategy is being updated. Though many of the goals, actions, and tools that are working well in *Metro 2040* will remain unchanged, updates will extend the strategy to the year 2050 and allow the region to better respond to critical and emerging issues such as climate change, social equity, resilience, and housing affordability. Updates will also align the strategy with *Transport 2050* (TransLink's new regional transportation strategy) and implement policy improvements in a number of areas. The updated strategy, anticipated to be completed in 2022, will be called *Metro 2050*.



## Policy Review Summaries

Content for *Metro 2050* is being developed through a series of 11 themed Policy Reviews scoped to address specific policy topics in the regional growth strategy like Agriculture or the Environment. Each Policy Review is looking at the current policies in *Metro 2040* related to the topic area, identifying gaps and opportunities, engaging with stakeholders and others, and developing policy recommendations to be integrated into *Metro 2050*. Upon completion of the Policy Reviews, Metro Vancouver is producing Policy Review Summaries to support a broad understanding by decision makers and interested stakeholders of the issues and updates proposed that will guide the drafting of amended and new policy directions for each topic area in *Metro 2050*.



# Industrial and Mixed Employment Land Use Designations

Industrial lands are crucial to supporting a prosperous and sustainable economy. Industrial lands, while comprising only 4% of this region's land base, accommodate over one-quarter of total employment, and contribute to the region's economic well-being, along with connections to transportation, trade, and government tax revenues.

'Industrial' represents a wide spectrum of uses and intensities including manufacturing, repair, processing, and trade. Many jobs and businesses are also connected to national and international trade through the Port of Vancouver and Vancouver International Airport, which require industrial lands for the handling of goods.

*Metro 2040* includes two land use designations to protect the supply of employment lands: Industrial and Mixed Employment. These land use designations work in concert with local land use policies to manage the permitted uses in these areas to promote industrial and commercial activities and prevent the encroachment of residential or other incompatible land uses. For the past decade these designations have been an effective tool that protects the limited supply of industrial and employment lands in the region.

As part of the update to *Metro 2040*, Metro Vancouver has undertaken an Industrial and Mixed Employment Policy Review. The purpose of the Policy Review is to explore and identify the challenges and opportunities to enhance the associated regional policies taking into account policy research, current best practices, emerging trends, and stakeholder engagement.

The Metro Vancouver region is experiencing a critical shortage of industrial land. Continuing population and employment growth, along with ongoing conversion pressures from non-industrial uses, and demands for lands for housing, commercial and agricultural uses, all in a constrained geography, have contributed to the challenges we are facing today. Coupled with the strong demand for industrial space, many businesses are finding it increasingly difficult to secure suitable space to operate and expand.

The main challenges facing Metro Vancouver's industrial lands are:

1. A Constrained Land Supply
2. Pressures from competing land uses (i.e. residential and commercial development)
3. Site and Adjacency Issues
4. A Complex Jurisdictional Environment

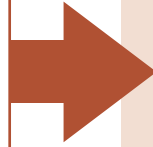
These challenges were identified through the preparation of the Regional Industrial Lands Strategy, approved by the Metro Vancouver Board in July 2020. The Strategy has helped shape the Industrial and Mixed Employment Lands Policy Review.



## WHAT'S CHANGING

The recommended changes to the regional growth strategy, as received by the MVRD Board, are:

1. Update the definition of industrial uses
2. Strengthen regional policies to protect Industrial lands
3. Introduce some flexibility for Mixed Employment lands by rapid transit
4. Encourage industrial intensification / densification
5. Undertake a regional land use assessment
6. Improve climate action



## BENEFITS

These changes will provide the following benefits:

- More consistent implementation of policies across the region
- Improved protection of industrial lands and uses
- Greater flexibility for employment lands in certain cases
- Increase the industrial capacity of lands
- Optimize the locations and uses of lands
- Advance greenhouse gas reduction, climate change mitigation, and natural hazard resilience

### The six recommendations are as follows:

These recommendations should be considered as a package; the responses should be holistically reviewed as a balancing set of trade-offs, rather than as individual or stand-alone items or options.

#### Recommendation #1: Update the definition of industrial uses

A clearer and stronger definition of 'Industrial' uses will provide for more consistent implementation across the region, while recognizing that different types of industrial activities require different types of spaces with different features and attributes. As informed through the development of the Regional Industrial Lands Strategy, updated definitions will use current terms to reflect new and emerging technologies.

#### Recommendation #2: Strengthen regional policies to protect Industrial lands

A priority action from the Board-endorsed Regional Industrial Lands Strategy is to strengthen regional growth strategy policies to protect industrial land in the region. Through extensive engagement, this was seen as the most effective and viable action of the Strategy's 10 priority actions. The recommendation includes exploring a higher voting threshold for amending lands with a regional industrial land use designation, as well as developing a new regional overlay for trade-oriented lands, which may include restricting strata tenure and unit sizes.

#### Recommendation #3: Introduce some flexibility for Mixed Employment lands by rapid transit stations to accommodate higher job density and other regional objectives

Some lands in proximity to rail rapid transit stations are facing increasing pressures to develop to higher values and densities. To accommodate higher job density and other regional objectives (such as affordable, rental housing), this recommendation explores more flexible policies for lands with a Mixed Employment regional land use designation in areas close to rail rapid transit stations (for example within 200 metres) to accommodate higher employment densities and some residential uses above industrial and commercial uses, if it advances other regional and local objectives, such as transit-oriented development and affordable rental housing.



### Recommendation #4: Encourage industrial intensification / densification

Where contextually appropriate to the activity and location and considering urban form and the interface with other uses, industrial intensification / densification will increase the industrial capacity of lands, and accommodate new and emerging industrial forms and uses. By creating more space for industry, lands can be used more efficiently, improve capacity for businesses to grow and co-locate operations, support greater employment opportunities, and provide a better connected and more efficient transportation system.

### Recommendation #5: Undertake a regional land use assessment

In a region with a constrained land base, there is significant pressure among competing land uses. A regional land use assessment, considering all land use classes, will proactively identify the 'best' locations for different land uses based on a developed set of criteria (e.g. location, adjacent uses, lot size, proximity to the goods movement network).

The results will identify opportunities for optimized locations and uses of lands in order to support regional and local policy objectives and to assist planners and decision makers as changes are considered.

### Recommendation #6: Improve climate action

Exploring opportunities to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change on industrial and employment lands could include adjusting policies to better consider the impacts and opportunities over the long term. This will include considering: the impacts of rising sea levels and seasonal flood events (given that much of the region's industrial and port-based lands are located at sea level); enhancing resilience to natural hazards, including through incorporating ecosystems services and green infrastructure; and advancing greenhouse gas emission reductions.

## REGIONAL PLANNING PRINCIPLES

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

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

## NEXT STEPS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK

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

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit [metrovancouver.org/metro2050](https://www.metrovancouver.org/metro2050)

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