



Planning Commission Meeting Agenda

March 10, 2026
5:00 PM

City Hall Aspen Conference Room

415 W. 6th Street | Vancouver, WA

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Dial: +1 347-941-5324

Meeting ID: 257 335 320 116

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

2. Approval of Minutes

Adoption of Minutes – February 10, 2026

3. Workshop

Comprehensive Plan Update: Code Details Pt. 3 |
Rebecca Kennedy, Deputy Director | Mark Person, Senior
Land Use Planner, Community Development Department

4. Break 6:00 – 6:30 pm

5. Community Forum

To provide public testimony, please see instructions below.

6. Workshop

**Comprehensive Plan Update: Draft Community
Experience, Equity & Inclusion and Annexation
Chapters |** Rebecca Kennedy, Deputy Director |
Domenique Martinelli, Senior Long-Range Planner,
Community Development Department

7. Staff and Chair Communications

Adjournment

Members

Patrick Adigweme
Chair

Zach Pyle
Vice Chair

Nena Cavel
Sandra Beck
John Jay
Alyssa Wheeler
Kate Castenson

Community Development Department

415 W. 6th Street
P.O. Box 1995
Vancouver, WA 98668
360-487-7800
Relay: 711
cityofvancouver.us

Community Forum Instructions

The public is invited to speak regarding any issue. Members of the public testifying are asked to limit testimony to three minutes. There are three ways to provide comments:

1. Writing: Public comments can be submitted in writing (name, address, contact information and comments) via email to PlanningCommission@cityofvancouver.us by noon on the day of the meeting.
2. Remotely: Complete the [online form](#) before noon the day of the meeting and join via phone or Teams (details on each agenda). Staff will call on you to speak when it's your turn.
3. In Person: Complete the [online form](#) before noon the day of the meeting or a speaker request form in person prior to the start of the Community Forum portion of the meeting.

City Hall is served by C-TRAN. Route information and schedules are available online at www.c-tran.com. You also may reach C-TRAN at (360) 695-0123 for more information on times, fares, and routes.

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To request accommodation or other formats, please contact:

Community Development Department | 360-487-7813 | Relay: 711 | PlanningCommission@cityofvancouver.us

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 10, 2025

5:00 p.m.

City Hall Council Chambers

415 W. 6th Street | Vancouver, WA

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 pm

Commission Members Present: Patrick Adigweme, Zach Pyle, Nena Cavell, Alyssa Wheeler, John Jay, Kate Castenson

Commission Members Absent: Sandra Beck

Motion by Commissioner Pyle, seconded by Commissioner Wheeler to excuse the absence of Commissioner Beck. Motion carried unanimously.

Staff Present: Rebecca Kennedy, Deputy Community Development Director and Planning Commission staff liaison; Becky Rude, Deputy City Attorney and Planning Commission staff attorney; Maricsa Acosta, Support Staff

Approval of the Minutes: Motion by Commissioner Cavell, seconded by Commissioner Jay to approve the January 27th meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

Workshop: Comprehensive Plan Update: Draft Introduction, Equity & Inclusion, Climate & Environment, Parks & Recreation, Transportation & Mobility, and Public Facilities & Services chapters

Presenter: Rebecca Kennedy, Deputy Director, Community Development Department

Staff presented a high-level overview of sections of the draft Comprehensive Plan, including the Plan Introduction, and Equity & Inclusion, Climate & Environment, Parks & Recreation, Transportation & Mobility, and Public Facilities & Services. The workshop focused on how the chapters are structured, how statutory requirements are being met, and how equity, climate, and growth-related considerations are integrated across the plan. Staff emphasized internal consistency between chapters, reliance on data-supported assumptions, and alignment with other adopted plans and growth targets. Formatting, mapping, and refinements will continue as the draft moves toward publication and adoption.

Key Themes Discussed

- Comprehensive planning is guided by state law and requires consistency across all plan elements, supported by population projections, existing conditions analysis, and growth capacity assumptions.

Members

Patrick Adigweme
Chair

Zach Pyle
Vice Chair

Nena Cavell

Sandra Beck

Alyssa Wheeler

John Jay

Kate Castenson

Community Development Department

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- Equity is applied as a plan-wide lens, with each chapter addressing impacts on equity priority communities and incorporating community engagement outcomes.
- Several policy areas, including climate action targets and mode-shift goals, are intentionally coordinated with separate implementation frameworks – i.e., the City’s Climate Action Framework and Transportation System Plan - rather than fully resolved within the Comprehensive Plan.
- Chapters are designed to move from context and analysis to policy direction and implementation, balancing accessibility with technical requirements.

Chapter Highlights

- **Equity and Inclusion:** Establishes equity as a guiding framework across the plan and aligns required housing, environmental justice, and disparate impact analyses with implementation tools.
- **Climate:** Addresses resilience, mitigation, and environmental justice in response to increasing climate risks, while coordinating with the City’s Climate Action Framework rather than setting sector-specific targets within the plan.
- **Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services:** Emphasizes access to parks, trails, and cultural resources as essential infrastructure for growth, and plans for future updates to level-of-service standards.
- **Transportation and Mobility:** Aligns with the adopted Transportation System Plan and introduces multimodal level-of-service standards, with additional mode-shift targets deferred to future climate planning efforts.
- **Public Facilities and Services:** Demonstrates the City’s ability to serve growth through coordinated infrastructure and services, supported by 1-6 year and 7-20 year capital facilities plans and project lists.

Staff outlined the upcoming schedule, including submission of the draft plan to the Washington State Department of Commerce for the required 60-day review, public release of the draft plan, and upcoming engagement sessions. Planning Commission review of the Final Plan, Map and Code is anticipated to begin in April, followed by City Council consideration in May.

Commissioner Discussion and Staff Responses

Commissioner Wheeler - Expressed strong overall support for the draft, noting that incorporation of community feedback was clear, prominent, and well presented. She stated the document was readable, well structured, and effectively demonstrated that public input is being heard and reflected.

She highlighted appreciation for Equity Policy 2, which emphasizes welcoming new residents, and noted this framing as important for creating a livable and sustainable city. She also praised the Climate chapter for its holistic approach, particularly the emphasis on urban form and its role in reducing climate impacts. She expressed strong support for the Transportation chapter, especially its attention to non-automobile travel and the lived experience of people who get around without cars.

She raised concern with language in the Equity chapter regarding “embedding community benefits” into private development, noting that the phrasing could imply that growth is not valuable unless additional benefits are provided. She emphasized that growth itself provides benefits, including increased tax base, economic productivity, and welcoming new neighbors, and suggested clarifying the intent of that language. She also suggested that Policy 66 on community streets could include consideration of long-term or seasonal pedestrianization of streets, such as Main Street or waterfront areas, as a future concept for the City to explore.

Staff acknowledged the emphasis on welcoming future residents and noted that this framing was raised by the Commission during the previous workshop. Staff confirmed that this lens has since been applied across chapters and that commissioners should see small but meaningful updates reflecting that direction. Staff also stated they would take a closer look at the pedestrianization suggestion.

Commissioner Jay - Commented on the Equity chapter, noting that while state requirements focus on racially disparate impacts, the chapter could more fully integrate other equity priority communities throughout the document. He specifically cited people with disabilities, noting that disability is referenced in goals but not as prominently in the body of the chapter, which focuses primarily on race and income.

He recommended better integration of disability considerations throughout the document, specifically suggesting that the Washington School for the Deaf and the Blind be referenced in the Introduction due to its historical and community significance. Additionally, he also suggested stronger emphasis on veteran and elderly populations, noting that long-term demographic trends, such as an aging population and declining birth rates, will have significant implications for school enrollment, City revenues, and future service demands.

Q: How is the City accounting for long-term demographic shifts, particularly an aging population and lower birth rates, in planning for future revenues and service needs? Staff summarized the feedback as a request to broaden the Equity chapter's focus to fully reflect all equity priority communities identified in Council policy, rather than concentrating primarily on race and ethnicity, and confirmed they would work on that.

Staff agreed that including the Washington School for the Deaf and the Blind in the Introduction chapter is a strong suggestion and acknowledged it as an oversight. Staff thanked Commissioner Jay for raising the issue and stated it would be addressed.

Commissioner Castenson –Echoed fellow commissioners' appreciation for the thoughtfulness of the draft chapters. She highlighted that this is the first comprehensive plan in the City's history to include an intentional focus on equity and expressed appreciation for the depth of that work. She noted that the engagement with community partners was substantive and well explained, and that the discussion of equity priority communities and the equity index effectively demonstrated how data-driven decision-making is paired with community input. She stated that the equity chapter told a compelling and cohesive story rooted in both data and lived experience.

She raised questions across several draft chapters. In the Climate chapter, she expressed support for increasing tree canopy as a critical climate strategy and asked how the City plans to achieve substantial canopy expansion in denser neighborhoods with limited space for planting or preservation. In the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services chapter, she asked what the ongoing community engagement process will look like as actions are developed to implement policies related to community outcomes in new park development, acknowledging historic inequities in park access. She also asked, in relation to the Transportation and Mobility chapter, whether traffic calming and natural buffering strategies are addressed within the Comprehensive Plan or are primarily handled through the Transportation System Plan during the City's transition to multimodal transportation.

Staff stated that the Climate chapter could be reviewed to better clarify how tree canopy goals will be advanced and emphasized the importance of tree canopy in addressing heat islands and extreme heat. Staff noted that implementation tools include development code requirements for tree planting and landscaping,

incentives for preserving mature trees in private development, and public-side design guidance for projects such as complete streets. Staff added that these topics would be discussed further in the next presentation.

Staff also noted that traffic calming is one tool used to achieve desired levels of traffic stress by facility type and stated that additional clarity could be provided on the range of tools available to support transportation and mobility goals.

Commissioner Cavel – Suggested that housing type be added as an additional equity lens. She expressed concern that residents in multifamily housing, such as apartments, can sometimes be disproportionately exposed to negative impacts like noise, pollution, or heat, effectively serving as buffers to protect nearby single-family neighborhoods. She noted that while renter status is already addressed in the equity framework, housing type itself may warrant more explicit consideration.

Staff asked for clarification on whether the concern related to housing size, tenure, or the distinction between rental and ownership housing, noting that renters are already included as an equity indicator. Commissioner Cavel clarified that his concern was specifically about not treating apartments or multifamily housing as acceptable buffers for environmental impacts. Staff acknowledged the clarification and indicated they understood the distinction being raised.

Vice Chair Pyle – expressed appreciation for the Public Facilities and Services Chapter, noting particular interest in its discussion of funding and budgeting. He observed that while this chapter addresses costs and capital planning, other chapters, especially Transportation and Parks and Recreation, do not clearly address how priorities will be funded, which he felt created a policy gap.

Q: Why does the plan not address budgeting and revenue generation more explicitly across other chapters, particularly given the equity implications of how revenue is raised and allocated? Staff explained that many funding elements are consolidated in the Capital Facilities and Services Chapter, with additional details to be provided in a forthcoming Capital Facilities Plan appendix. That appendix will list specific projects, timelines, costs, and funding sources for one to six-year and seven to twenty-year horizons, including transportation and parks projects. Staff acknowledged that revenue generation itself is a policy decision and agreed that the absence of an explicit policy framework for budgeting and revenue is a gap worth addressing.

Q: In Goal 25 related to resilient and dispersed infrastructure, why are energy and water mentioned but not sewer or stormwater, particularly given the centralized nature of wastewater treatment? Staff acknowledged the omission and noted that decentralized approaches are already being considered through related efforts such as urban forestry and nature-based infrastructure. Staff described recent internal changes to right-of-way vacation reviews, which now include parks and urban forestry staff to consider opportunities for tree planting, depaving, and long-term maintenance. Staff agreed this approach could be more clearly reflected in the plan.

Vice Chair Pyle expressed support for Commissioner Wheeler’s comments on pedestrianization and suggested expanding the discussion to include right-of-way vacation as a related strategy.

Chair Adigweme – Emphasized the importance of clearly articulating how an equity lens is applied across the Public Infrastructure, Parks, and Transportation chapters. He noted that some equity callouts, particularly in the Transportation chapter, appear to restate state requirements rather than articulate a distinct city-led vision.

Q: How can the plan better explain the why behind tools such as the equity index, ADA transition plan, and other referenced frameworks, rather than simply stating that they will be used in the future? Staff agreed that while the plan often describes what actions will be taken, it does not always clearly articulate the value-based rationale behind them. Staff noted that strengthening this vision-oriented language would help clarify the city’s intent, particularly in sections discussing equity tools and accessibility planning.

Chair Adigweme noted that the Public Facilities Chapter contains extensive factual information but does not clearly demonstrate how equity considerations are applied throughout. He expressed interest in seeing clearer connections between equity analysis and service provision.

Q: How will level-of-service standards be defined and communicated so that residents can understand what acceptable service looks like in their own neighborhoods? Staff shared that they are reviewing examples from other cities, including a table-based approach that clearly lists level-of-service standards by service area. Staff agreed that consolidating this information could help residents better understand how policies translate into on-the-ground conditions and experiences.

Chair Adigweme concluded by praising the inclusion of state legal requirements at the beginning of the presentation, noting that it helped clarify the purpose and drivers of the plan, and thanked staff for the discussion.

Community Forum Testimony

Speaker: Mary Keltz – a long-time Vancouver resident, thanked staff for their work on the Comprehensive Plan and emphasized the importance of avoiding past planning mistakes that separated land uses. She advocated for integrating residential areas with nearby recreational or open spaces and suggested including small “visual breathing spaces” like pocket parks or plazas to support rest, relaxation, and social interaction, especially in denser housing areas. She noted that such shared spaces are common elsewhere and enhance quality of life. Keltz also expressed concern that the public may not yet fully grasp the practical implications of the plan as it moves toward implementation, and she concluded by thanking staff for their professionalism.

Workshop: Comprehensive Plan Update: Code Details Pt. 2

Presenter: Rebecca Kennedy, Deputy Director | Mark Person, Senior Land Use Planner, Community Development Department

Staff presented an overview intended to familiarize and remind the Commission about the major structural and policy elements of the draft zoning code prior to public release and adoption. The presentation provided a brief recap of previously reviewed material, introduced new zoning code components, and outlined next steps. Staff emphasized the relationship between the Comprehensive Plan and zoning code, recent state law requirements, and the City’s goals of simplifying regulations, increasing housing flexibility, and supporting mixed-use, connected neighborhoods while addressing transitions between different zoning districts and overall neighborhood livability.

Key Themes Discussed

- The zoning code update implements the Comprehensive Plan and must respond to projected population growth, housing needs, and state legislative mandates related to housing supply, affordability, and climate.

- A significant restructuring of the code is proposed, shifting many dimensional standards from zoning districts to building typologies, with greater emphasis on building form and site design.
- Recent and pending state law changes require increased housing flexibility, reduced parking requirements near transit, allowances for permanently supportive housing, and proportional impact fees.
- Council feedback has informed refinements related to neighborhood transitions, notification procedures, parking policy, and flexibility in building standards.
- The code is intended to balance development feasibility with protections for low-scale neighborhoods through buffers, setbacks, landscaping, and height transitions.

Zoning Code Highlights

- **Comprehensive Plan Context:** Staff reviewed the Comprehensive Plan as a 20-year growth management framework, noting progression from analysis to community engagement and land use alternatives through environmental review and the current policy and code phase.
- **State Law Requirements:** Recent legislative changes were summarized, including middle housing requirements, parking reductions near transit, affordability provisions, allowances for permanently supportive housing, and progress toward enabling single-stairway buildings.
- **Goals for the Zoning Code:** Key goals include simplifying the code, reducing cross-references, supporting mixed-use development, increasing housing variety, focusing on form-based standards, and allowing existing legal nonconforming uses to continue.
- **Draft Zoning Code Framework:** The proposed framework shifts most dimensional standards to building typologies, while zoning districts regulate permitted uses, minimum density, and maximum height. Increased mixing of uses, elimination of most parking minimums, and street-oriented building placement were emphasized.
- **Zoning Districts and Preferred Alternative:** New zoning districts aligned with Comprehensive Plan designations were reviewed, including residential, mixed-use, employment and industry, and open space zones, consistent with the Council-adopted preferred alternative land use map.
- **Density and Height Standards:** Maximum density limits are removed, minimum densities retained, and building height regulated primarily by feet rather than stories, with a proposed three-story limit above grade in low-scale neighborhoods.
- **Council Feedback:** Staff summarized Council direction related to notification procedures, manufactured housing standards, parking adjustments, setbacks in low-scale neighborhoods, and avoiding overly prescriptive building-type requirements.
- **Buffers Between Zoning Districts:** Proposed buffer standards include setbacks, landscaping, and height step backs where higher-intensity zones abut low-scale neighborhoods, with simplified rules compared to the existing code.
- **Bicycle Parking:** New bicycle parking requirements were introduced, with exemptions for middle housing (six units or fewer), reductions for affordable housing, and allowance for on-street public bicycle parking to count toward requirements.
- **Landscaping and Tree Preservation:** Updates include clearer tree preservation standards, increased landscaping island size and frequency, and irrigation requirements aligned with climate and sustainability goals.
- **Nonconformities:** Existing legal nonconforming uses and structures would be allowed to continue and expand under defined conditions, including expansion beyond current footprints.
- **Development Notice Updates:** Proposed changes include reduced reliance on mailed notice, expanded use of large-format site signage, aligning Type 1 procedural processes with SEPA

exemption thresholds, and updated pre-application and comment requirements based on project size.

Next Steps - Staff stated that draft plan and zoning code documents would be released in mid-February and submitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce for the required review period. Additional workshops will address remaining sections still under development. Staff anticipate returning to the Commission in April to review public, Council, and agency feedback and discuss proposed revisions, with Council adoption likely extending into early June. Community outreach, both virtual and in person, is planned.

Commissioner Discussion and Staff Responses

Commissioner Cavel - Acknowledged that buffer and setback requirements are included in the draft code, noting her prior opposition to them. She stated her intent to register that concern for the record and thanked staff for the presentation.

Q: Did staff estimate the impact of buffers—particularly height step backs and setbacks—on development capacity, such as loss of units or bedrooms? Staff clarified that buffers between zoning districts were always intended, consistent with the existing code, particularly where base districts share a property line and represent significant intensity changes. While staff has not conducted a capacity analysis specific to buffers, they noted that Council has consistently directed staff to maintain meaningful separation between districts. Staff added that buffers are expected to reduce capacity far less than broad height reductions, which would be the primary alternative.

Vice Chair Pyle

Q: The proposed notice requirements appear focused on residential projects. What are the notice requirements for nonresidential development? Staff explained that notice thresholds for nonresidential projects are intended to align with SEPA exemptions. Currently, nonresidential projects of 12,000 square feet or more are Type II and require notice. Under the proposed changes, that threshold would increase to approximately 30,000 square feet, consistent with SEPA, meaning projects above that size would be Type II and noticed.

Vice Chair Pyle raised two primary concerns related to development notice and building form. First, he noted that while notice requirements are generally tied to project scale and form, certain commercial uses can have disproportionate impacts even at smaller scales in low- and medium-scale neighborhoods. He suggested considering whether notice requirements should also account for use type, regardless of whether a public comment period is required. Staff clarified that under the proposed code, all Type I applications, both residential and nonresidential, would receive notice through a large-format on-site sign. The sign would provide basic project information and direct the public to the applicant, with staff available to address process-related questions.

Second, he expressed concern about the draft density and height table for medium-scale neighborhoods, noting a potential mismatch between the intended five-story building form and the maximum height allowance, which could allow taller, box-style buildings. He suggested clarifying intent through additional language or notation to better align height and story expectations with desired building form. Staff confirmed their understanding of the concern and agreed that further discussion is needed to ensure the code clearly communicates the intended development outcomes.

Chair Adigweme

Q: Why is only the low-scale base district regulated by story count, and under the proposed code could someone construct an extremely tall single-story building, such as a 110-foot-tall structure, in a mixed-use base district? Staff explained that the

City evaluated options for regulating commercial density but did not identify a clear or effective tool. The primary density issues the code update is intended to address is residential unit capacity, which is why the focus has been placed on residential density minimums. The City does not currently regulate floor area ratio (FAR) and does not intend to introduce it, as FAR would be the primary mechanism for regulating commercial floor area relative to site size.

Q: Would a 75-foot-tall single-story building be theoretically allowed under the proposed code? Staff confirmed that for residential development, minimum density requirements would effectively prevent that outcome. For commercial development, staff noted that such a structure would be technically possible but highly unlikely due to the significant cost of constructing a single-story building at that height.

Additional Staff Response (related to Vice Chair Pyle's earlier question):

Staff acknowledged that the distinction between height and story count is a valid concern and warrants further discussion. While staff expressed hesitation about regulating stories more broadly due to implementation challenges, they noted that limiting story regulation solely to low-scale neighborhoods may be difficult to justify. Staff added that the distinction between low- and medium-scale districts is informed by construction typologies, particularly the point at which concrete construction is typically required. A five-story threshold generally aligns with more cost-effective construction methods, supporting housing affordability despite added regulatory complexity.

Vice Chair Pyle

Q: What is the City's intended or "hopeful" outcome for medium-scale neighborhoods, and how can the code be structured to achieve that outcome rather than allowing unintended results that could generate public backlash? Staff explained that the City is attempting to balance flexibility for housing production with livability and community expectations. Staff emphasized the obligation to accommodate approximately 38,000 new housing units citywide and noted that overly restrictive regulations would make that goal unattainable. At the same time, staff acknowledged the importance of avoiding outcomes that could undermine public trust, describing this balance as "threading the needle."

He clarified that his question was less about whether a six-story building is acceptable in general, and more about whether medium-scale neighborhoods are the appropriate locations for that level of intensity based on how those areas have been presented and understood by the public. Staff agreed that location is a key consideration and noted that development outcomes are strongly influenced by market conditions. In many medium-scale neighborhoods, current rents support lower-density construction, such as three-story wood-frame walk-up buildings. While the code allows additional flexibility, staff indicated that near-term development is more likely to align with the building typologies shown in public materials, with flexibility intended to accommodate future market changes.

Commissioner Jay - Noted that Commissioner Wheeler had raised a similar concern. He questioned the need for bicycle parking requirements, observing that Vancouver does not show high demand, unlike cities with strong cycling cultures, and that such requirements could increase project costs by 2–3 percent. He emphasized that policy decisions require prioritization, cautioning that additional mandates could reduce housing production. Drawing on personal experience storing his bike indoors, he expressed skepticism about shared bike rooms due to theft and abandoned bicycles and stated that without strong evidence that these policies significantly boost cycling, the cost trade-off is not justified.

Chair Adigweme - Shared an anecdote from a community member in unincorporated Clark County who learned about a nearby development solely because of an on-site notice sign, underscoring the effectiveness of visible signage.

Q: Can staff explain what the proposed buffers between zoning districts look like in practice, including how setbacks, landscaping screens, and height reductions work together? Staff explained that the buffer concept combines setbacks, required landscaping or screening, and stepped height reductions to manage transitions between districts. This approach is similar to existing practices but is being clarified and standardized in the updated code to better address larger scale differences between adjacent zones.

Q: How does a buffer that includes a setback and a six-foot landscaping screen compared to a pocket park, and how much flexibility exists to transform buffer space into community gathering areas? Staff stated that buffers and pocket parks serve fundamentally different purposes. Buffers are intended as controlled, transitional spaces rather than publicly accessible gathering areas. Once a space becomes publicly accessible, it introduces issues related to access, security, operations, and maintenance that are not compatible with the intent of required buffers.

Q: Is there an opportunity to design buffers in a way that supports community-building elements, such as seating or courtyards, even if they are not fully public parks? Staff explained that while buffers are not intended to function as public community spaces, developers often use private open space creatively to support social interaction for residents, such as courtyards, barbecue areas, dog-walking spaces, or seating areas. These spaces can foster community without being publicly accessible. Staff noted that requiring such features in code could become overly prescriptive.

Q: Does the code or plan address where and how community gathering spaces are created outside of buffers, particularly for higher-density residential development? Staff indicated that higher-density developments often include shared amenities to remain competitive in the market. While the code does not require publicly accessible open space by building type, it does include private open space and landscaping requirements. Staff also noted that broader open space strategies are being addressed through master planning rather than site-specific buffer requirements.

Q: Are there specific definitions or standards for what constitutes a “large sign” for development notice, and are there visibility requirements? Staff stated that while exact dimensions are not currently codified, the intent is to require significantly larger signs than those currently used, potentially around four feet by four feet. The final code will include requirements that ensure signs are clearly visible from the public right-of-way and not obscured by landscaping or placed in inaccessible locations.

Q: How will residents who do not participate in neighborhood associations, or whose associations are inactive, receive notice or access information about development proposals? Staff explained that neighborhood associations are referenced because they are currently included in the code and the City maintains an official roster. However, pre-application meetings are open to anyone, and any member of the public may sign up for notifications and attend. Staff emphasized that the long-term goal is to create a more inclusive, opt-in notification system that is not limited to neighborhood associations.

Q: Is the City considering future systems that allow residents to opt in to development notifications for specific geographic areas rather than citywide? Staff confirmed that this is an implementation goal but noted that current technology limitations prevent full automation. Staff stated that improving access to information, especially for users with accessibility needs, is part of an ongoing evolution of the City’s notification and engagement practices.

Staff & Commissioner Communications

- Staff noted that while meetings will not be doubled up in February or March, there is a possibility of additional or paired meetings in April. Commissioners will be notified as early as possible.
- Staff will notify the Commission when the published draft is released for review. Due to the tight timeline leading up to adoption, Commissioners are encouraged to submit comments via email as



Comprehensive Plan/Title 20 Update Planning Commission Workshop: Code Details Pt. 3

Rebecca Kennedy (she/her), Deputy Director, Community Development

Mark Person (he/him), Senior Planner, Community Development

March 10, 2026

Agenda

- Recap
 - Comprehensive Plan
 - Code Framework
 - Council-endorsed Preferred Land Use Alternative and Council feedback
- Zoning Code Details
 - Feedback
 - Child Care
 - Virtual and In Person Meetings
 - Development notice updates
- Coming Up + Discussion

Purpose

Get your feedback
on additional details of
the draft zoning code



OUR VANCOUVER Comprehensive Plan

- A guide for the city’s growth and development over the next **20 years** (2025-2045).

	2024	Growth	2045 Targets
Population	~200,000	+ 81,000	~281,000
Housing Units	~86,000	+ 38,000	~124,000
Jobs	~100,000	+ 43,100	~143,100

Vancouver is an equitable and prosperous community, which ensures that all residents, businesses and organizations benefit from the growth and advancement we make together.

Vancouver will be recognized for our quality of life, as evidenced by affordable housing in vibrant, safe and walkable neighborhoods, access to jobs and economic opportunity for all, and leading-edge efforts to address climate change.

Learn about our community

Develop alternatives

Understand potential impacts

Refine map, policies, & code

Adopt plan and code



New State Laws

- At a minimum, allow up to 4 units per residential lot and up to 6 units per residential lot if near transit or if at least 2 units are affordable.
 - ➔ Standards for middle housing cannot be more restrictive than those for detached single-family homes
- Make room for set numbers of housing units in all income levels – over 30,000 total new units citywide
 - ➔ Including permanently supportive housing

- Account for racially disparate impacts
- At a minimum, allow 2 ADUs per residential lot
- No parking minimums for affordable housing and no more than 0.5 per unit for all other housing
- Only one stairwell required for residential buildings 6-stories or less
- Align impact fees to size of housing
- Allow for permanently supportive housing



Draft Zoning Code

All areas will have a **Base District**

- Minimum density
- Maximum height
- Allowed **building types**
 - ➔ Lot standards
 - ➔ Building and parking placement
 - ➔ Pedestrian access
 - ➔ Lot coverage
 - ➔ Frontages
 - ➔ Landscaping and public space
- Allowed **uses**
 - ➔ What can go in the various allowed building types

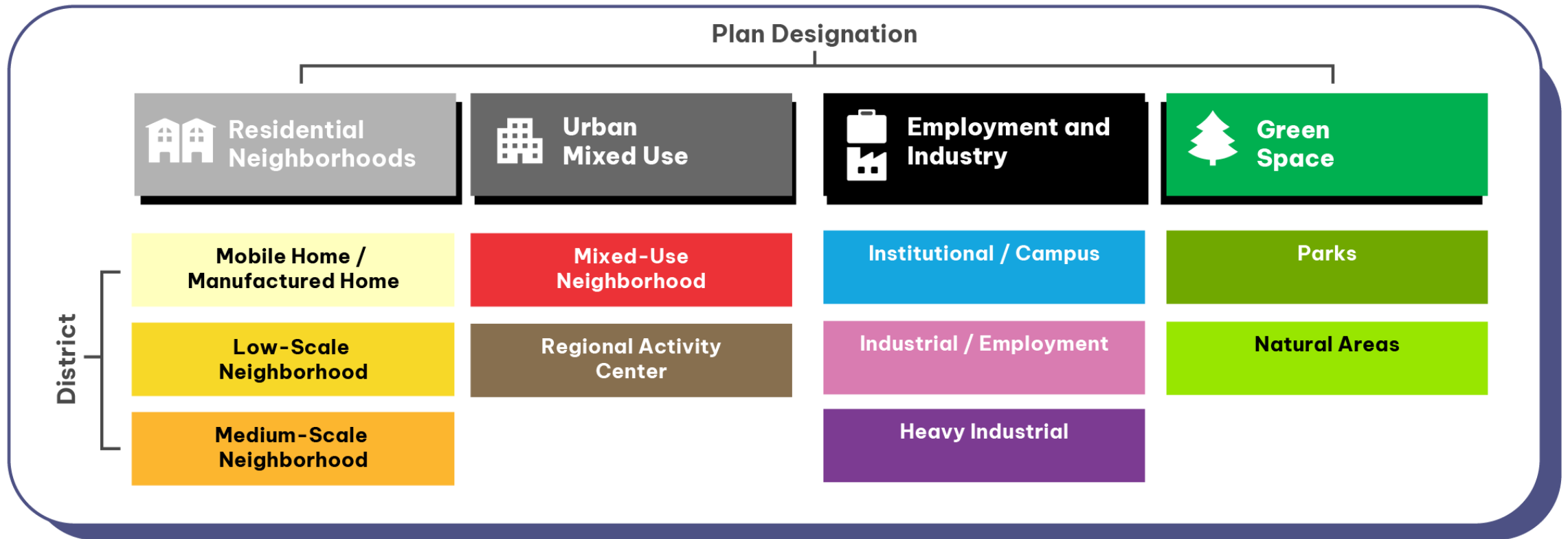
Some areas will also have an **Overlay**

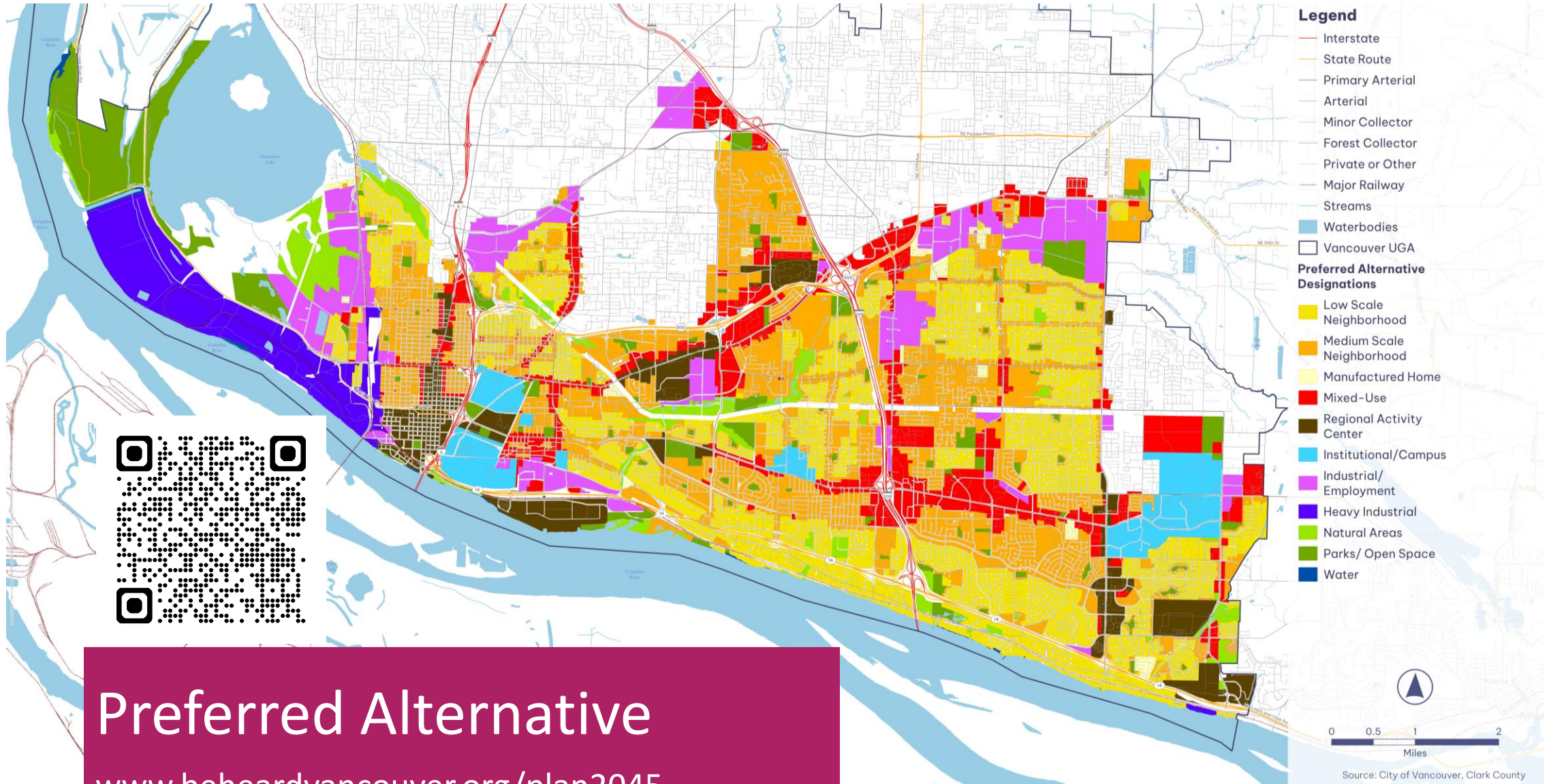


	Existing Code	New Code
Uses	Allowed or prohibited	Mixing uses allowed/required
Density	Focuses on density maximums	Focuses on density minimums
Building Height	Maximums	Maximums
Parking	Minimums	No minimums
Building placement	Lot coverage, setbacks	Relationship to the street, build-to lines, building types

Note: Heavy Industrial zoning district will be fundamentally different from all other districts.

Plan Designations and Zoning Districts





Preferred Alternative
www.behardvancouver.org/plan2045



Draft Densities and Heights

Base District	Minimum Residential Density (units/acre)	Maximum Height
Manufactured Home	None	2 floors (35')
Low-Scale	8	*3 floors (45')
Medium-Scale	16	5 floors (75')
Mixed-Use	32	8 floors (110')
Regional Activity Center	64	None
Institutional/Campus	None	None
Employment/Industrial	N/A	12 floors (150')
Heavy Industrial	N/A	None

No maximum density or minimum heights in any district.

**Low-Scale Neighborhood is only district where max number of floors is proposed to be regulated*



Buffers Between Districts

Adjacent Site -> Project Site	Manufactured Home	Low-Scale	Medium-Scale
Manuf. Home	None	None.	None.
Low-Scale N.	General landscaping	None.	None.
Medium-Scale Neighborhood	10' & 6' screen planting 10'-20': 35' max height	3' screen planting	None.
Mixed-use Neighborhood	10' & 6' wall planting 10'-20': 35' max height	15' & 6' screen planting 15'-20': 45' max height	10' & 3' screen planting 10'-15': 75' max height
Regional Activity Center	10' & 6' wall planting 10'-20': 35' max height	25' & 6' screen planting 25'-30': 55' max height	15' & 6' wall planting 15'-20': 75' max height
Institutional / Campus	10' & 6' wall planting 10'-20': 35' max height	25' & 6' wall planting 25'-30': 55' max height	15' & 6' wall planting 15'-20': 75' max height
Industrial / Employment	25' & 6' screen planting 25'-30': 35' max height	35' & 6' berm + planting 35'-40': 45' max height	15' & 6' wall planting 15'-20': 75' max height
Heavy Industrial	25' & 6' screen planting 25'-30': 35' max height	45' & 6' berm + planting 45'-50': 45' max height	45' & 6' berm + planting 45'-50': 45' max height

There are also buffers for Industrial/Employment and Heavy Industrial properties when adjacent to Mixed-use Neighborhood, Regional activity Center, or Institutional / Campus. See attachment.



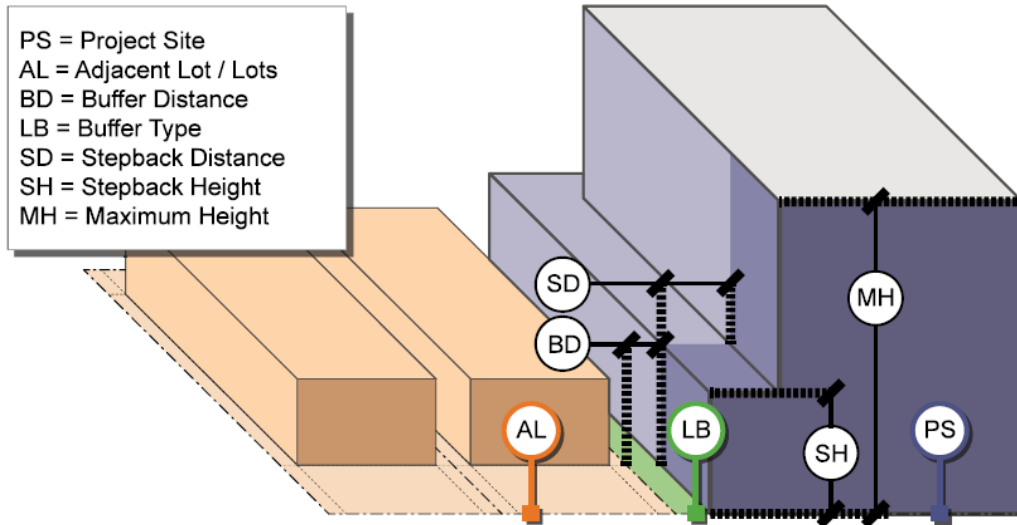
Buffers Between Districts

Table 10.410.200.4-1: Lot Buffers by Zoning District

20.410.200.3 Overview of Lot Buffers

The following diagram provides a brief overview of how lot buffers are intended to work for the development along with an associated way to measure and account for the buffer, stepback height limitations, and stepback distance associated. This diagram is purely an example for illustrative purposes.

Diagram 10.410.200.3-1: Lot Buffer Diagram



		Adjacent Lot or Lots (AL)										
		LS	MS	MX	RA	IC	IE	HI	MH	PO	NA	
Project Site or Sites (PS)	LS	None.							LB=L1	None.		
	MS	BD=10' SH=45' SD=15' LB=L2	None.							BU=10' SH=35' SD=20' LB=L3	None.	
	MX	BD=15' SH=45' SD=20' LB=L3	BD=10' SH=75' SD=15' LB=L2	None.								
	RA	BD=25' SH=55' SD=30' LB=L4	BD=15' SH=75' SD=20' LB=L3	None.					BU=10' SH=35' SD=20' LB=L4	None.		
	IC			None.								
	IE	BD=35' SH=45' SD=40' LB=L5	BD=20' SH=75' SD=30' LB=L4	BD=15' SH=75' SD=20' LB=L3		None.			BD=25' SH=35' SD=30' LB=L3	None.		
	HI	BD=45' SH=45' SD=50' LB=L5			BD=35' SH=75' SD=50' LB=L4		None.			None.		
	MH											



February 23 Council Feedback

- Manufactured Home Parks District should be more clear
 - ➔ Clarify the overall intent of the Manufactured Home Park zoning district, which is intended to preserve existing MH park developments.
 - ➔ In the building type table, add direction to other use standards that outline what this is.
 - ➔ Make it clearer that manufactured or modular homes, as defined in the code, are allowed anywhere that residential is allowed if they meet development standards for that zone.
 - ➔ Clarify that the code is agnostic construction type.
- Clarify that bicycle parking can also include small mobility
- Buffers
 - ➔ Update references to make buffer definitions clearer
 - ➔ Update buffer graphics in section 20.410.200 to increase clarity
- Childcare: SB 5509 requires allowing childcare facilities by right everywhere except industrial zones
 - ➔ Council direction to allow childcare in all zoning districts everywhere except heavy industrial zones, both in home and childcare centers, and defer to Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families on capacity limits and other regulations



Development Community Feedback

- Ensure transparency requirements by building type work with WA Energy Code
- Floor to ceiling heights in Active Ground Floor Required and Ready overlays- clarify if this is floor to finished ceiling or floor to structural ceiling
- Minimum density requirements in MX and RAC – won't work for townhomes, could there be a variance process to reduce density
- Bike parking- don't be overly prescriptive; in unit requirements may not be what people like/want
- Tree preservation requirements could be challenging / overly prescriptive
- Street standards
 - ➔ Problematic for maximizing site utilization for middle housing
 - ➔ Driveway space requirements challenging for townhomes/rowhouses
 - ➔ Fire access / turnaround limits options
- Utility requirements may be challenging
 - ➔ Setbacks from foundation and property lines to drywells for stormwater
 - ➔ Competing uses of street frontage



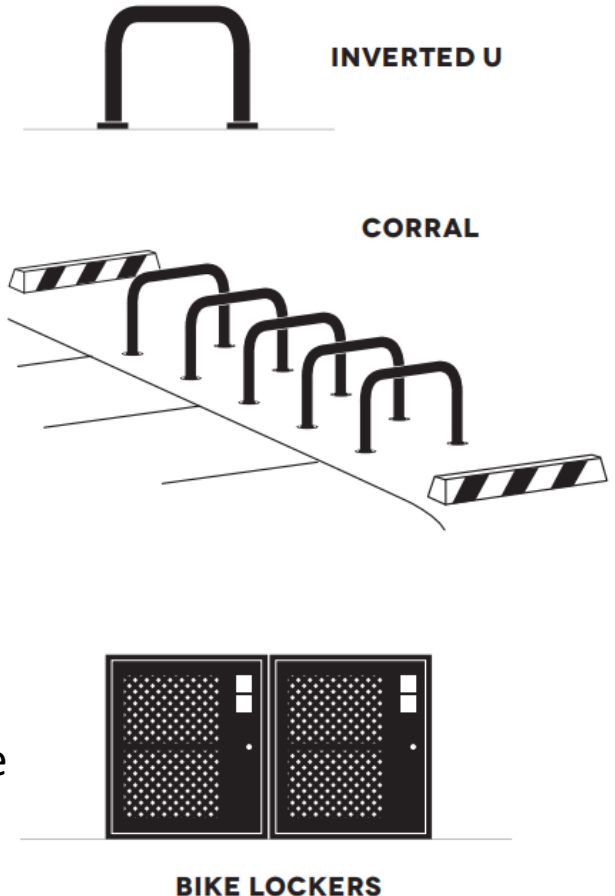
Community Feedback

- Questions on the rationale for applying base districts in the Preferred Land Use Map
 - Desire for existing single-family zones to stay Low Scale Neighborhood
- Questions about outreach and why people haven't been aware of or engaged in the process thus far
- Questions on nonconforming development
- Desire for code to recognize Conditions, Covenants and Restrictions (CC&Rs)
- Concerns with enforcing regulations on long term parking in the Right-of-Way
- Confusion about building types versus allowed uses
- Questions about source of best practices / where data comes from
- Questions about how different state requirements applied and what regulations are meeting what requirement
- Questions about fire / life safety in single stair buildings



Bicycle Parking

- Existing code has standards but does not *require* bicycle parking. Draft code requires for new and full re-development.
- Requirements for both short-term and long-term parking
- Number of spaces
 - ➔ Based on use
 - ➔ Not required for 6 units or less on parent parcel (middle housing)
 - ➔ 50% reduction allowed when at least half of units are affordable to people making 100% of the area median or below
 - ➔ Can count on-street public spaces to meet required short-term
- Space size and access
 - ➔ 6 feet by 3 feet by 2 feet, with 5 feet clearance leading up to the space, 6 feet for lockers
 - ➔ Minimum access pathway of 32 inches (matches ADA minimum) that connects to right of way. Can include elevators.
 - ➔ Allowances for in-unit spaces and shared facilities.



Landscaping and Tree Preservation (for reference)

- Updated landscaping and tree preservation requirements in alignment with the Climate Action Framework and best practices.
 - ➔ Increase preservation requirements for trees in fair and good condition 12-inch diameter at breast height (DBH) or larger onsite
 - ➔ Increase landscape parking islands and tree cover/shade for surface parking lots
 - ➔ Automated irrigation system required



Development Notice Updates

Development	Notice
3-6 units	No notification per state law. (Same as single-family and duplex)
7-200 units	Large sign. Adding pre-app for 7-19 units.
>200 units	Large sign. Mailed notice to occupants and owners within 300'. + Public comment period
Subdivisions	Large sign. Mailed notice to occupants and owners within 300'. + Public comment period

Neighborhood Notice

- ➔ For subdivisions and when 7+ units
- ➔ Community members/groups can get pre-app notices.
- ➔ Neighbors may attend pre-app and ask questions as time allows.
- ➔ Applicant to send notice to neighborhood associations prior to land use submittal.



Coming Up

- Draft of Plan & Code
 - ➔ April 14: Planning Commission
 - Changes based on feedback on draft plan and code
- Initiate Adoption Process
 - ➔ April 28 PC Meeting – Public Hearing
 - ➔ May (Council)
 - Supported by Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS)



Thank you!

www.beheardvancouver.org/plan2045

OurVancouver2045@cityofvancouver.us





MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 10, 2026
TO: Chair Adigweme and Planning Commissioners
FROM: Rebecca Kennedy, Deputy Director, Community Development Department
Domenique Martinelli, Senior Planner, Community Development Department
RE: **OUR VANCOUVER – Draft Comprehensive Plan Chapters – Community Experience (CE) and Annexation (AN)**

Intent

This is the final work session in a series of three workshops focused on the draft Comprehensive Plan chapters. The intent of these workshops is to provide Planning Commission with review, consideration and comment on each of the draft chapters.

Today’s workshop is focused on the draft Community Experience (CE) and Annexation (AN) chapters. Staff is looking for review and comment on the draft chapters broadly as well as the following:

- Layout, readability, information presented
- Completeness and legibility of information presented, including vision statement, community feedback, supporting analysis and data, and goals and policies.
- Gaps and areas needing further clarification or refinement

This memo summarizes the legal framework guiding each chapter, the key issues identified through technical analysis and community engagement, the overarching policy strategies, and how each chapter is organized to support implementation.

Background

The City of Vancouver’s Comprehensive Plan provides the overall long-term vision and policy direction to manage the built and natural environment in Vancouver for the next 20 years and provide necessary public facilities to achieve that vision. The City adopted its first Comprehensive Plan under Washington’s Growth Management Act in 1994 (Chapter 36.70A RCW), with a major re-write occurring in 2004, and a less substantive update occurring more recently in 2011. As demographic changes, market conditions, council priorities and other factors have shifted since 2011, it’s necessary to re-imagine the existing growth strategy as part of the current Comprehensive Plan Periodic Review cycle.

The City began the process of updating the plan in late 2022, and has conducted a multi-phase, equity-centered community engagement process to inform the Plan’s vision and goals

and overall policy direction. Engagement included hundreds of in-person and virtual conversations, extensive survey and mapping activities, sustained collaboration with Community Partners representing equity-priority populations and community working groups representing specific interest groups, and multiple City Council and Planning Commission workshops at key milestones. Input gathered across visioning, alternatives development, Draft EIS review, and refinement of the Preferred Land Use Alternative directly informed the draft policies and growth concept.

Since 2023, several foundational technical analyses have been prepared to inform this update, including the Housing Needs Assessment, Economic Conditions and Opportunities Analysis, Equity Analysis, Climate Vulnerability Assessment, and Health Impact Assessment. This work is reflected in each chapter narrative related to analysis and data, as well as the goals and policy sections.

Problem Statement and Input from Engagement

Across both chapters covered in this workshop technical analysis and community engagement revealed a consistent set of interrelated challenges shaping Vancouver’s future. Vancouver is growing rapidly and becoming more diverse, yet the systems that shape daily life and governance have not always kept pace. Smaller household sizes, rising cost burdens, and demographic change are reshaping how residents connect to one another and participate in civic life. Community feedback consistently emphasized the importance of parks, libraries, neighborhood business districts, arts and cultural spaces, and inclusive public environments that foster belonging and safety. At the same time, many residents—particularly those from historically marginalized communities—do not consistently experience equal access to welcoming, culturally affirming spaces. The Community Experience chapter responds to these conditions by centering belonging, safety and inclusion in daily life.

Beyond the city limits, Vancouver’s Urban Growth Area (VUGA) is nearly the same geographic size as the City, has a population of approximately 170,000 people, and has developed at urban intensities but is not consistently served by infrastructure built to urban standards. The Growth Management Act anticipates annexation of urban growth areas into cities, yet fiscal constraints and infrastructure gaps complicate that transition. The Annexation chapter establishes a coordinated framework for future annexation decisions as the City and VUGA continue to add residents.

Community Experience (CE)

Legal Requirements - The Community Experience chapter is not a mandatory element of the Comprehensive Plan under RCW 36.70A.070. Instead, it is included as a foundational, cross-cutting framework that the City is using to guide how policy is developed and evaluated across the rest of the plan. As stated in the draft chapter, Community Experience is intended to function as an experiential lens for policymaking that asks: “What is it like to live here and represent this place?” While not mandated, the chapter is written to support internal plan consistency by explicitly linking decisions on housing, transportation, public spaces, and other plan topics to the end user experience.

Policy Direction- The Community Experience chapter establishes that Vancouver’s growth strategy must be evaluated not only by physical outcomes, but by how decisions shape daily life—belonging, safety, visibility, connection, and access to places where civic life happens. The chapter frames Community Experience as a citywide priority and a lens that should be applied everywhere in the plan, particularly for residents who face barriers due to income, race, language, age, disability, gender identity, renter status, or health vulnerability.

The policy direction is grounded in the chapter’s context about demographic change and social connection. The chapter notes Vancouver’s substantial growth (over 56,000 new residents between 2000 and 2023), an aging population (65+ increasing from 13% to 19% between 2011 and 2021), and household trends that increase the importance of “third places” and neighborhood institutions as social infrastructure (smaller household sizes and more one- and two-person households)

Chapter Organization - The Community Experience chapter is organized to establish the “community experience lens,” provide supporting context on changing conditions, and then define the goals and supporting policies that carry the chapter forward:

- **Introduction** – Defines Community Experience as a lens for policymaking focused on daily lived experience, belonging, safety, and community identity.
- **Vision: Community Experience** – Sets the chapter’s vision focused on affordability, safety, access, belonging, honoring diverse histories, and repairing past harms.
- **Changing Demographics** – Summarizes demographic and household shifts and explains how these trends affect social connection and civic participation.
- **Social Infrastructure** – Describes the role of community spaces and institutions as the platforms where connection, trust, and belonging are built, and ties this to growth and redevelopment over the planning period.
- **Community Design and Aesthetics** – Frames design quality, public realm character, and cultural visibility as core factors shaping lived experience and belonging.
- **Applying a Community Experience Lens** – Establishes how the lens should be applied across the plan, including the evaluative questions the City should ask when making decisions.
- **Goals** - The chapter’s goals are as follows:
 - **CE-1: Social Infrastructure** – Strengthens and expands the network of community spaces, institutions, and gathering places that foster connection, belonging, and civic participation.
 - **CE-2: Inclusive and Affirming Environments** – Ensures that public spaces, policies, and investments create welcoming, accessible, and culturally affirming environments for all residents.
 - **CE-3: Community Safety** – Promotes physical, emotional, and environmental safety through thoughtful design, coordinated services, and community-centered strategies.
 - **CE-4: Innovation** – Encourages creativity, experimentation, and forward-thinking approaches that enhance quality of life and reflect Vancouver’s evolving identity.
 - **CE-5: Community Pride & Identity** – Celebrates and elevates the histories, cultures, and unique characteristics that shape neighborhood identity and civic pride. This goal also supports policies around increasing access to spaces for artists, creatives, and expanding representation in public storytelling, and elevating the voices of underrepresented populations in community art.

Annexation

Legal Requirements - The Annexation chapter is not a mandatory element under RCW 36.70A.070; however, annexation is directly governed by Washington State statute and shaped by the Growth Management Act (GMA). Under the GMA, urban growth areas (UGAs) are designated with the expectation that urban development will occur within cities and that cities will serve as the primary providers of urban services. Annexation within counties planning under the GMA is generally limited to territory inside an adopted UGA and must occur in a contiguous and orderly manner. State law (RCW 35A.14) establishes multiple annexation methods, including property owner petition, election-based annexation, annexation of unincorporated islands, interlocal agreement annexation, and municipal-purpose annexation. Each method carries specific procedural and approval requirements. Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) further guide annexation sequencing, coordination between cities and counties, and the transition of urban services. The GMA anticipates annexation of designated UGAs within the 20-year comprehensive planning horizon and reinforces that counties should not serve as long-term providers of urban services in these areas.

Policy Direction – The Annexation chapter establishes annexation as the primary mechanism for transitioning urbanized areas within the Vancouver Urban Growth Area into the City in a coordinated, orderly, and fiscally responsible manner. Vancouver’s UGA is the largest in the state by population, with approximately 170,000 residents, and full annexation would make Vancouver the second largest city in Washington. The scale and level of existing development within the VUGA create both opportunity and constraint. Annexation offers the opportunity to align governance, land use regulation, infrastructure planning, and service delivery across a unified urban area. At the same time, many portions of the VUGA consist of residential neighborhoods with infrastructure that does not yet meet urban standards, creating significant fiscal and capital investment challenges.

The Annexation chapter is written to ensure consistency with these statutory and regional frameworks, while maintaining internal consistency with the Land Use, Public Facilities and Services, Transportation, and Housing elements to ensure that annexation supports planned growth patterns and adopted levels of service. Importantly, the Annexation chapter does **not** develop a phased annexation schedule or specify where and when annexation of the Vancouver Urban Growth Area (VUGA) will occur. While a 2007 Annexation Blueprint Plan attempted to establish such a schedule, changing economic conditions and structural fiscal constraints limited its implementation. Instead, this chapter establishes policy guidance and evaluation criteria to inform future annexation decisions as opportunities arise.

Chapter Organization - The Annexation chapter is organized to move from context to evaluation framework, establishing why annexation matters, how it works under state law, and how Vancouver will evaluate future annexation proposals:

- **Introduction** – Defines annexation and explains its role under the GMA, including the expectation that UGAs will transition into cities over the 20-year planning horizon
- **Vision: Annexation** – Articulates the City’s commitment to orderly, fiscally sustainable annexation that maintains adopted levels of service and integrates annexed areas into the City’s urban fabric.
- **Key Annexations (Historical Context)** – Summarizes major annexations since the 1990s, illustrating the City’s incremental approach and the mix of population-serving, employment-based, and municipal-purpose annexations.
- **Annexation Process and Methods**– Describes statutory annexation methods and core evaluation factors, including GMA consistency, fiscal sustainability, infrastructure readiness, logical boundaries, and service delivery considerations.
- **Intergovernmental Coordination and Service Transitions** – Explains coordination with Clark County, utility districts, and special purpose districts, and outlines the importance of service transition planning and interlocal agreements.
- **Adapting to Changing Conditions** – Acknowledges prior phased annexation efforts and changing economic conditions, clarifying that annexation will be evaluated based on current fiscal and service realities rather than a fixed schedule.
- **Community Feedback** – Summarizes public input reflecting both interest in representation and concerns about taxes, traffic, growth, and service impacts.
- **Goals and Policies** – Establishes the annexation goals and supporting policies that guide evaluation and implementation.
 - **AN-1: Facilitate Annexation of the Urban Growth Area (UGA)** – Specifies that any future transition of urbanized areas within the VUGA into the City will occur in a coordinated, orderly, and timely manner that promotes contiguous growth, efficient service delivery, and logical jurisdictional boundaries.
 - **AN-2: Fiscally Sustainable Annexations** – Ensures annexations are fiscally responsible, maintain adopted levels of service, and support long-term financial and infrastructure sustainability for both existing and future residents.

Next Steps

The Draft Comprehensive Plan and implementing Title 20 Land Use and Development Code have now been released for public review and formally submitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce for the required 60-day review. The statutory review clock is running, and staff will monitor and respond to Commerce comments to ensure alignment with state requirements and the June 2026 adoption deadline. Community engagement is underway and includes public presentations, an online draft exploration tool, and a feedback form to identify any gaps or issues prior to finalization.

City Council and Planning Commission review is anticipated to occur as follows:

- **March 10:** Planning Commission – Comprehensive Plan Annexation and Community Experience Chapters, continued review of Development Code
- **March 16:** City Council – Comprehensive Plan -Annexation, Community Experience Chapters
- **April 13:** City Council – review of proposed Plan and code refinements
- **April 14:** Planning Commission – review of proposed Plan and code refinements
- **April 27:** City Council – continued review of proposed Plan and code refinements
- **Late April / early May:** Planning Commission recommendation

- **June:** City Council Adoption

Adoption will be supported by issuance of the **Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS)**, ensuring environmental review requirements are satisfied prior to final action. Over the coming months, staff will continue refining draft language based on public input, Council direction, Planning Commission feedback, and Commerce review comments to ensure the final Plan and Code are internally consistent, legally compliant, and ready for adoption within the required timeline.

Staff Contact

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Attachments

- Draft Annexation Chapter
- Draft Community Experience Chapter



Community Experience

1

OUR VANCOUVER

Introduction

This chapter is intended to be a lens for considering how decisions about the built and natural environment will impact the way people feel in their day-to-day experience in the city. It encompasses the social connections that shape daily life, the aesthetics and visual identity of neighborhoods, the public spaces where people gather, and how the built environment impacts people’s sense of belonging and safety and the identity of the city overall. It is an experiential lens to inform policy making that asks the following question: *What is it like to live in this place?*

This chapter sets the foundation for the Comprehensive Plan by framing the human experience as a central planning priority. It focuses on what it feels like to be in Vancouver, to encounter one another and to move through shared spaces, and places community experience at the heart of achieving policy outcomes related to safety, equity, inclusion, and social well-being.



Vision: Community Experience

We envision a city that is affordable, safe, accessible, vibrant, and prosperous, where all community members feel valued, included, and honored. Our city is made up of authentic places that reflect our different histories and lived experiences and help strengthen social bonds and connections to each other. We recognize that our histories include big accomplishments and important milestones, as well as individual and collective trauma and systemic injustice, and we will work to intentionally repair past harms and limit future ones. We uplift individuals and communities to collectively build a future where we not only survive but thrive, so that every person can lead a fulfilling life and truly belong.

Changing Demographics

Vancouver's demographic landscape is shifting in ways that directly shape how people participate in civic life and form social connections. The city added just over 56,000 residents between 2000 and 2023, a 39 percent increase that has expanded the scale and diversity of the community. This growth has been accompanied by an aging population and changes in household composition that influence how residents engage with one another. The share of residents 65 and older increased from 13 percent to 19 percent between 2011 and 2021, while the share of youth under 20 declined from 25 percent to 20 percent over the same period. At the same time, the city's largest age cohort—residents aged 20 to 34, who make up 24 percent of the population—is also the group most likely to be newcomers to Vancouver, renters, or early-career workers whose civic engagement patterns are often still forming. These shifts mean Vancouver now includes larger proportions of older adults at increased risk of social isolation, as well as young adults who may lack long-term social networks, extended family nearby, or established pathways into community life.

Household patterns reinforce these dynamics. The Housing Needs Assessment shows that Vancouver's average household size has decreased from 2.4 to 2.3 persons over the last decade, with a seven-percentage-point decline in households with children and corresponding increases in one- and two-person households. These trends reflect broader shifts in aging, affordability pressures, delayed household formation, and diverse living arrangements, and they carry implications for civic and social life. Smaller households have fewer built-in social networks and tend to rely more on community centers, third places, and neighborhood institutions to build connection and access information. Vancouver's racial and ethnic diversity also continues to grow—communities of color increased from 24 to 33 percent of the population from 2011 to 2021—which brings cultural vibrancy but also requires civic systems that are linguistically and culturally accessible to ensure full participation. Economic disparities further shape engagement conditions. Vancouver's median household income—\$70,000, compared to the county's \$84,000—creates a higher share of residents who are cost-burdened, renters, or working multiple jobs. Residents facing financial stress have less discretionary time for civic involvement and may have fewer resources to participate in leadership roles, neighborhood associations, or volunteer opportunities.

Together, these demographic realities reveal a community where social connection is unevenly distributed and where barriers to civic participation are often tied to age, income, renter status, language, cultural identity, and the availability of accessible gathering spaces. Older adults may experience isolation if mobility or fixed incomes limit their access to community life. Younger adults may experience disconnectedness during transitional phases in work or housing. Immigrant and multilingual households may face linguistic or cultural barriers that impede civic involvement unless outreach is tailored. These trends underscore the importance of robust social infrastructure as the connective tissue of a rapidly growing and increasingly diverse city, and underscores the importance of parks, libraries, plazas, community centers, local businesses, cultural hubs, and informal gathering spaces that serve as the everyday platforms where civic life becomes possible, trust is built, and social isolation is countered.

Social Infrastructure

Social infrastructure—the network of physical places and community institutions where people regularly interact—is one of the most powerful tools the City has to counter isolation and build connection. In Vancouver, this includes neighborhood parks and trails, libraries, community centers, schools, cultural and faith-based institutions, small businesses and cafés, arts and performance venues, and the streets, plazas, and civic spaces that knit them together. Throughout the engagement process, residents consistently described these places as the heart of community life: parks, the waterfront, community centers, and local events were repeatedly celebrated as the spaces where people build relationships, find recreation, and feel a sense of belonging. Downtown, the Waterfront, Esther Short Park, and historic neighborhood main streets were often characterized as the city’s “living rooms” and everyday third places—sites of casual encounters, cultural activities, and shared community identity.

Over the next 20 years, Vancouver will add an estimated 38,000 new housing units to meet projected population growth, with an emphasis on more diverse housing types in already urbanized areas. This scale of investment represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to strengthen social infrastructure alongside new homes. As new multifamily buildings, middle-housing types, and mixed-use centers are built, the Comprehensive Plan will guide their design to help facilitate communities with a variety of activities, businesses, events, and publicly accessible gathering spaces. This includes small plazas, courtyards, and community rooms within new developments; co-located housing and services for older adults; and flexible spaces that can host childcare, cultural programming, and neighborhood-led activities. By planning housing and social spaces together, the City can help ensure that new residents are moving into connected neighborhoods rather than isolated complexes.

The City has already begun investing in this kind of community-oriented public realm. The Main Street Promise project and similar efforts are reshaping key corridors into safer, more walkable, tree-lined main streets that support small businesses and everyday gathering. Investments in parks, trails, and community centers have expanded year-round opportunities for recreation, cultural events, and youth programming. Partnership-based initiatives in areas like Fourth Plain and Fruit Valley are demonstrating how culturally specific services and neighborhood-run facilities can create hubs of activity that reflect the communities they serve. The success of the Arts Hub and momentum behind arts-focused spaces is a poignant reminder of the critical importance of art and culture in our lives. These efforts show how public investment can seed the kinds of places where residents naturally come together.

Community Design and Aesthetics

Design and aesthetics shape how people understand and move through the city, influencing whether neighborhoods, business districts, and open spaces feel welcoming, walkable, and reflective of the people who live in and use them. As Vancouver grows and transitions into a more connected and compact city, the quality of its public realm—its streets, parks, buildings, and everyday gathering places—plays an increasingly important role in shaping the lived experience of residents. Community members consistently emphasized that design matters: attractive streetscapes, comfortable

pedestrian environments, engaging storefronts, trees and landscaping, and public art contribute to how people feel in their neighborhoods and whether they feel a sense of connection to place.

Smaller households, remote work, long commutes, and car-dependent development patterns make it more difficult for chance encounters outside. These trends are not just a result of changing social dynamics and technological advances—they're also shaped by land use. When homes, shops, schools, and parks are spread far apart and separated by environments where it's difficult to walk or navigate without a car, it becomes harder to casually meet one another, linger in public spaces, or feel a sense of shared ownership over our neighborhoods.

As Vancouver accommodates significant new housing over the next 20 years, carefully shaping how new development integrates into the city is critical. Experience is also shaped by whose histories, cultures, and identities are made visible in the built environment. Vancouver's engagement process underscored that many communities—particularly Indigenous, Black, Latine, immigrant, refugee, LGBTQ+, and youth communities—do not consistently see themselves reflected in public art, architecture, or civic spaces. Residents expressed a desire for a public realm that celebrates the city's cultural diversity and acknowledges histories that have historically been excluded from dominant narratives. The Comprehensive Plan incorporates these sentiments by enacting policy to support it, primarily through Chapter 2, Equity and Inclusion, and Chapter 3, Land Use and Development.

Community Feedback

- Need to foster belonging, safety, and stability for all residents, including physical safety, emotional and mental safety, allowing community members to feel relaxed and respected.
- Desire for spaces, services, and information that are accessible—physically, culturally, and financially.
- Value of and desire for places, events, and organizations that reflect their individual identity, allowing them to express themselves and connect with others who share that identity.
- Appreciation for Vancouver's existing feel and community spaces.
- Including parks and trees, access to nature, events, local art, food trucks, and community hubs like libraries, faith centers, and the waterfront.
- Mixed feelings about future growth and change, with interest in retaining the things people appreciate about Vancouver today.
- Desire for more places, programs, and processes that support social ties, involvement, and lifelong learning.
- Strong interest in high-quality spaces that incorporate greenery and public art and are well-maintained and context-sensitive.

Applying a Community Experience Lens

This chapter establishes a lens that extends beyond this section of the plan. While goals CE-1 through CE-5 focus directly on social infrastructure, inclusion, safety, innovation, and community identity, their intent is to shape how all planning decisions are made across the Comprehensive Plan.

Applying a community experience lens means evaluating policies, investments, and regulations not only by what they produce physically, but by how they affect daily life—especially for residents who face barriers due to income, race, language, age, disability, gender identity, renter status, or health vulnerability. It asks:

1. Who benefits from this decision?
2. Who may be excluded or burdened by it?
3. How will this change feel to someone moving through their neighborhood on foot, by transit, or without financial flexibility?
4. Does this action strengthen a sense of belonging, dignity, and social cohesion?

Goal: CE-1

Social Infrastructure

Vancouver community members live in vibrant, active, and engaged neighborhoods with supportive social ties, where collaboration and mutual care create a sense of belonging.

Social infrastructure refers to the places, relationships, and systems that help people feel connected, supported, and rooted in their neighborhoods and community. In Vancouver, this infrastructure takes many forms—community centers, parks, cultural and creative spaces, arts venues, privately owned event spaces, and the informal networks that emerge in everyday life. These spaces and relationships are essential to community well-being: they strengthen trust, reduce social isolation, support mental and physical health, and help neighbors mobilize to help themselves and others during emergencies or climate-related events.

As Vancouver grows and becomes more diverse, social infrastructure plays a critical role in maintaining belonging and resilience. Many residents—especially low-income households, renters, older adults, youth, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, and LGBTQ+ community members—experience barriers to participating in civic life or accessing culturally relevant gathering spaces. The Comprehensive Plan seeks to reduce these barriers by expanding access to free and low-cost spaces; increasing opportunities for artists, creatives, and community organizations; and inviting future users of these spaces to help shape design and programming.

The plan also encourages reactivating underutilized or unconventional spaces—such as vacant parcels or areas under bridges—to bring community, cultural, and environmental programming to areas that currently lack access. This goal also recognizes the need for public spaces that support climate resilience by offering shade, cooling, clean air, and refuge during extreme heat and smoke events, given the prevalence of these events today and their projected increases by 2045.

Events and cultural celebrations further contribute to vibrant, welcoming neighborhoods by creating opportunities for connection across cultures and generations. Together, these strategies build a city where every resident has access to the social supports they need and where collaboration, mutual care, and belonging are fundamental to everyday life.

Applying this Lens across Chapters

- The Land Use and Development chapter shifts away from isolated, low-density patterns toward a network of centers and corridors with mixed uses, services, and amenities within walking distance. This supports CE-1 by enabling “third places”—cafés, libraries, parks, childcare, and neighborhood businesses—that were historically missing in many parts of the city.
- The Housing chapter policies prioritize locating new homes near essential services, such as education, healthcare, grocery stores, childcare, and recreation opportunities. CE-1 clarifies that this is not only an efficiency strategy, but a social connection and well-being strategy that reduces isolation and strengthens neighborhood life.
- The Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services chapter identifies parks, community centers, trails, cultural spaces, and greenways as essential spaces that contribute to physical, mental, and community health. CE-1 positions these places as core civic infrastructure that enable gathering, mutual support, and everyday interaction.
- The Transportation and Mobility chapter commits to an equitable, connected network of streets, paths, and transit that links people to essential resources and opportunities. Under CE-1, those routes are understood as social connectors that link residents to schools, parks, libraries, and commercial districts—not just corridors for throughput.

Supporting Policy	Description	No	Related Goals
Center Impacted Voices in the Development of Community Spaces	Engage community organizations and individuals representing diverse lived and cultural experiences in the planning, design, and programming of community spaces.	26	CE-1, CE-5 EI-1, EI-4, PR-4
Climate Resilient Spaces	Incorporate elements of climate resiliency into new public spaces.	29	CL-1, CE-1, PR-1, PFS-3, LU-3

Event Programming	Continue to support and expand local gatherings, festivals, and special events that uplift community, reflect diverse histories and lived experiences, and create a sense of civic pride.	56	CE-1, CE-5, PR-4
Inclusive Engagement	Foster inclusive, community engagement rooted in inclusion, trust, and long-term relationship-building, and centering the voices of those who are most directly impacted by outcomes of City processes.	69	EI-4, CE-1
Increase Access to Community Spaces	Facilitate and provide access to community gathering spaces, with a focus on populations vulnerable to social isolation.	75	CE-1, EI-2, LU-1
Increase Access to Space for Artists and Creatives	Establish partnerships that increase access to shared, affordable spaces serving artists and arts and cultural organizations.	76	CE-1, PR-4, CE-5
Program Underutilized Spaces	Encourage the thoughtful reuse and activation of underutilized lands—such as space beneath freeway viaducts, oddly shaped parcels, utility corridors, temporarily vacant lots, and other non-developable remnants typically under 1 acre—by establishing public-private partnerships to program them to serve community, cultural, and environmental needs.	105	CE-1, CE-4, LU-4, PR-2
Support Neighborhood Organizations	Support the growth and stability of neighborhood associations as key partners in establishing local pride, connection, and representation within Vancouver’s distinct neighborhoods.	148	CE-1, CE-5, EI-4

Goal: CE-2

Inclusive and Affirming Environments

Vancouver’s public spaces and facilities are inclusive and affirming across race, class, age, sex, gender identity, ability, religion, national origin, and citizenship status, creating a sense of belonging and safety.

Inclusion is the foundation of a community where everyone feels safe, welcomed, and able to fully participate in civic life. For Vancouver, this means creating public spaces, services, neighborhoods, and cultural expressions that honor residents’ identities across race, class, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, religion, national origin, and citizenship status. It also means recognizing how past and present inequities have shaped access to opportunity and belonging—and actively working to repair harm while building a more just future.

This goal emphasizes a holistic approach to inclusion that goes beyond removing barriers. It calls for culture-building, trust-building, and the intentional design of environments where historically excluded and marginalized communities can see themselves reflected, respected, and supported. This includes ensuring that City programs and services are delivered using trauma-informed practices, so that community members—particularly those who have experienced violence, displacement, or systemic harm—can engage with public institutions safely.

A welcoming and affirming city also requires shifting from transactional interactions toward deeper, relational connections between the City and residents. This means supporting new and long-term residents alike, investing in community-led networks of care, and ensuring that people at greatest risk of exclusion are empowered to play a key role in community building and shaping how our spaces are designed. Cultural representation is another key pillar: public art, cultural installations, and the design of public spaces should reflect the full diversity of Vancouver’s communities, telling stories that have historically been left out of the city’s physical landscape.

To support accessibility and equitable participation, the City will expand multilingual, culturally competent services and improve communication channels so community members can meaningfully access information, programs, and decision-making processes. Creating inclusive environments also extends to the built environment and housing. Supporting culturally specific and identity-affirming housing models—whether for immigrant and refugee communities, LGBTQ+ residents, Indigenous

communities, or others—ensures that people can live in places that reflect their cultural identities, family structures, and community relationships.

Applying this Lens across Chapters

- The Equity and Inclusion chapter establishes that historic policies created disparities in access to safe transportation, amenities, and healthy environments, particularly for communities of color, low-income households, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ residents. CE-2 operationalizes this by shaping how places are designed, programmed, and experienced.
- Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services policies commit to inclusive, safe public spaces that reflect the diversity of the community, remove cost barriers, and support culturally responsive programming. CE-2 reinforces that public spaces should feel welcoming across language, culture, age, and ability.
- Public Facilities and Services planning emphasizes equitable access to infrastructure, services, and community facilities. CE-2 ensures that facilities, such as libraries, community centers, and civic buildings, are designed and located in ways that foster belonging, representation, and dignity.
- Land Use and Development policies support mixed, inclusive neighborhoods with access to services and amenities while preventing displacement and protecting vulnerable residents. CE-2 extends this to the experience of belonging in those spaces, including culturally responsive design, public art, and identity-affirming places.

Supporting Policy	Description	No	Related Goals
Culturally Responsive Design	Develop standards for public spaces and buildings that incorporate culturally specific design principles and art installations and reflect the diverse history and heritage of Vancouver communities.	41	CE-5, CE-2, PR-4
Culturally Specific and Identity-based Housing	Work with partners to facilitate and fund housing that reflects the cultures, identities, and needs of Vancouver's unique population groups, and for the equity priority communities identified in this plan.	42	H-2, CE-2, EI-1, H-4
Expand Representation in Public Art	Ensure publicly funded art projects and installations reflect and incorporate the experiences of historically excluded and underrepresented voices in the physical and cultural landscape of the city.	57	CE-5, CE-2, PR-4
Language Access and Culturally Responsive Services	Ensure all city services are accessible in high impact languages spoken throughout the city and delivered with cultural competency.	82	CE-2, EI-4,
Trauma-informed Services	Ensure City programs and policies are designed and delivered using trauma-informed care principles.	155	CE-2, CE-3, EI-2
Welcoming and Supportive Community	Build a community that welcomes and invites all community members to participate in civic life through inclusive practices, programs, and public spaces.	160	CE-2, EI-1

Goal: CE-3

Community Safety

Vancouver is a community where safety is prioritized, people look out for one another, and strong social ties ensure that all residents are well prepared to respond to challenges and disruptive events.

A safe community is one where people not only feel protected from harm, but also supported, connected, and equipped to respond when challenges arise. Safety is understood as both a physical and a social condition—rooted in well-designed public spaces, strong community relationships, accessible emergency services, and systems that help residents anticipate, withstand, and recover from disruptions. Vancouver faces increasing risks from extreme weather, flooding, wildfire smoke, seismic hazards, and large-scale social or economic disruptions. Strong social ties—neighbor-to-neighbor relationships, community organizations, and trusted local messengers—are essential components of resilience and are explicitly supported through this goal.

The built environment also plays a critical role. Safe street designs, active public spaces, good lighting, and visible community activity can reduce opportunities for crime and create environments where people feel comfortable moving through their neighborhoods. Land use and transportation patterns that make walking, biking, and transit safer contribute to both public safety and climate resilience, reinforcing the city’s broader goals for health and sustainability.

Public safety and emergency services—fire, police, and emergency medical response—remain core components of a resilient Vancouver. This goal supports investment in facilities, staffing, and coordinated planning to ensure these services keep pace with population growth and changing community needs.

Applying this Lens across Chapters

- Transportation and Mobility policies identify safety as a primary goal and focus on correcting systems historically built for vehicle movement rather than people walking, rolling, or using transit. The Transportation and Mobility chapter prioritizes safety for people walking, rolling, biking, and taking transit, recognizing that past vehicle-oriented design produced high collision risk and inequitable mobility. CE-3 connects these policies to lived experience by framing traffic safety, lighting, visibility, and accessible crossings as community safety outcomes. Safe routes to schools, parks, and services reduce risk while supporting independence for youth, older adults, and people with disabilities.
- Housing stability is foundational to safety. The Housing chapter addresses homelessness, overcrowding, and cost burden—all conditions linked to physical, mental, and economic insecurity. CE-3 connects housing policy to community safety by recognizing that stable, affordable, and appropriate housing reduces exposure to unsafe living conditions, displacement, and crisis. Locating housing near essential services also improves access to healthcare, food, and support networks during both everyday life and emergencies.
- Public Facilities and Services planning links infrastructure investments to emergency services, climate resilience, and community needs. CE-3 reinforces that safety includes equitable access to facilities, reliable infrastructure, and trusted community spaces.
- The Climate and Environment chapter documents that extreme heat, smoke, and flooding disproportionately affect neighborhoods with lower tree canopy, older housing, and socioeconomic disparities. CE-3 situates emergency preparedness, cooling and clean air centers, and resilient infrastructure as community safety and dignity issues, not only environmental concerns.

Supporting Policy	Description	No	Related Goals
Coordinate with Fire and Police	Coordinate with the Vancouver Fire Department and Vancouver Police Department to plan for expected growth, equitably serve the community, and facilitate emergency response.	38	CE-3, PFS-3
Crime Prevention through Environmental Design	Foster a safe community by encouraging street level activity and thoughtful building and infrastructure design that enhance public safety and community well-being.	40	CE-3, LU-2
Disaster Recovery and Emergency Response	Develop plans and resources to ensure effective emergency response and equal access to emergency services and recovery resources, mitigating risks from natural disasters, climate-related hazards, and social disruptions.	43	CE-3, CL-1, PFS-3
Public Safety	Support public safety through investment in emergency services, facilities, infrastructure and coordinated preparedness efforts that strengthen community resilience and response.	108	CE-3, PFS-3
Reduce VMT and GHG Per Capita	Implement land use patterns that reduce vehicle miles traveled, traffic congestion, and associated greenhouse gas emissions per capita, while improving safety and air quality.	117	CL-3, CE-3, TM-2
Trauma-informed Services	Ensure City programs and policies are designed and delivered using trauma-informed care principles.	155	CE-2, CE-3, EI-2

Goal: CE-4

Innovation

Vancouver community members are empowered to test and explore creative solutions, innovative methods, entrepreneurship, calculated risk-taking, and bold solutions that drive progress, address systemic inequities, and improve quality of life within neighborhoods.

Vancouver's future depends on its ability to identify and embrace new ideas and methods for addressing challenges. This goal sits within the **Community Experience** chapter to establish innovation as an overall community mindset, and way of approaching challenges, designing services, building neighborhoods, and working together as a community. It affirms that creative problem-solving belongs to everyone, not only entrepreneurs or industry leaders, and that the City has a responsibility to cultivate environments where residents feel empowered to test ideas, learn from failure, and pursue solutions shaped by lived experience.

Innovation is a powerful tool for addressing systemic inequities and improving quality of life, particularly when driven by the communities most impacted by those inequities. This goal supports inclusive, ethical approaches to technology that intentionally reduce bias and expand access—ensuring that smart tools, digital platforms, and data practices uplift rather than marginalize. It also advances experimentation across City systems, from decentralized infrastructure that reduces strain on centralized networks, to streamlined development processes that support small businesses, to creative mobility solutions that prepare Vancouver for emerging technologies while maintaining safety and equity.

This goal also recognizes that innovation happens at many scales. At the neighborhood level, pilot projects—temporary demonstrations, low-cost activations, and flexible interventions—allow residents to test ideas before the City makes long-term investments. These projects help generate community buy-in, reveal what works in practice, and create opportunities for people to directly shape public space. Similarly, the reuse of underutilized or unconventional spaces offers fertile ground for experimentation, enabling partnerships that bring cultural programming, environmental projects, and community services to areas that lack amenities or investment.

This goal also elevates the importance of workforce pathways, entrepreneurship support, and business development. By supporting training, skill-building, and opportunity across all communities—especially those historically excluded—Vancouver can support its social and economic fabric simultaneously.

Applying this Lens across Chapters

- The Economic Opportunity chapter prioritizes innovation in business and industry, development of a green economy, and reducing barriers for historically excluded groups. CE-4 frames innovation as a tool for improving quality of life and addressing inequities, not only economic growth.
- The Housing chapter calls for expanding the range of housing types, supporting non-traditional design and ownership models, and allowing emergency, transitional, supportive, and culturally specific housing. CE-4 frames this as housing system innovation—updating regulatory, financial, and design approaches so the housing market can respond to demographic change, affordability pressures, and multigenerational living patterns. It supports piloting new housing forms, shared housing models, and incremental neighborhood-scale infill as tools for both supply and social resilience.
- The Transportation and Mobility chapter moves beyond a vehicle-priority model toward multimodal access, small mobility devices, and integrated hubs. CE-4 frames this as mobility innovation—expanding travel choices, testing new technologies and service models, and reducing financial and physical barriers to movement. It supports pilot programs, adaptive street design, and flexible use of public right-of-way to respond to changing travel behavior.
- Climate policies emphasize both mitigation and adaptation, requiring new approaches to building performance, land use patterns, and infrastructure systems. CE-4 supports innovation in green infrastructure, urban forestry, stormwater systems, and energy-efficient buildings, as well as neighborhood-based cooling, shade, and resilience strategies. It recognizes that responding to climate impacts requires testing new tools and working across sectors rather than relying solely on traditional infrastructure models.

Supporting Policy	Description	No	Related Goals
Emerging Mobility	Prepare for emerging technologies by updating City policies and operational requirements for shared mobility and emerging mobility vendors, including Autonomous Vehicles. Create data standards, data sharing agreements, and vendor requirements.	46	TM-2, CE-4
Ethical and Fair City Processes	Promote ethical and fair governance by embedding accountability in City processes, ensuring access for historically excluded communities, mitigating bias, and fostering ethical use of technology and digital practices.	55	EI-4, CE-4
Facilitate Job-creating Business Growth and Investment	Support businesses that create high-quality jobs by reducing barriers to growth, streamlining development processes, and ensuring access to necessary resources and infrastructure.	59	EO-2, EO-4, CE-4
Housing Innovation	Promote and remove regulatory barriers to new financing methods, homeownership models and design and construction techniques.	67	H-1, CE-4
Inclusive Use of Technology	Utilize an equity lens to evaluate, assess, develop, and implement use of smart technologies to reduce embedded biases and provide inclusive and accessible access.	70	EI-4, CE-4
Pilot Projects	Encourage the use of short-term pilot projects for park, transportation, and general infrastructure improvements before making long-term investments to foster innovation, test feasibility, and increase community buy-in.	102	CE-4, PR-2, TM-2, CL-1

<p>Program Underutilized Spaces</p>	<p>Encourage the thoughtful reuse and activation of underutilized lands—such as space beneath freeway viaducts, oddly shaped parcels, utility corridors, temporarily vacant lots, and other non-developable remnants typically under 1 acre—by establishing public-private partnerships to program them to serve community, cultural, and environmental needs.</p>	<p>105</p>	<p>CE-1, CE-4, LU-4, PR-2</p>
<p>Support Decentralized Infrastructure Systems</p>	<p>Support decentralized local energy and water solutions while strengthening community adaptability to environmental, social, and economic changes.</p>	<p>144</p>	<p>PFS-1, CE-4, PFS-3</p>
<p>Vancouver as an Innovation Hub</p>	<p>Position Vancouver as a center for innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship through public investment and attracting entrepreneurial talent.</p>	<p>158</p>	<p>CE-4, EO-2</p>
<p>Workforce Development and Career Pathways</p>	<p>Expand access to career pathways, workforce training, and entrepreneurship opportunities that lead to living-wage jobs and wealth creation, with a focus on underrepresented communities.</p>	<p>161</p>	<p>EO-1, EI-1, CE-4</p>

Goal: CE-5

Community Pride & Identity

In Vancouver, people are part of a distinct community that welcomes and supports diverse identities, cultures, and histories. Through engagement in cultural events, volunteering, and civic life, residents relate to a collective identity and sense of pride.

A strong community identity is essential to how people understand the community they live in, how they relate to one another, and how a city is understood regionally and even nationally. Cities with clear, authentic identities—whether rooted in culture, history, creativity, or shared values—attract and retain people who feel aligned with that character, shaping what it *means* to be part of a place. For Vancouver, cultivating a distinct sense of identity is not only about pride; it is a strategic advantage that helps draw and keep residents, businesses, and talent who see themselves reflected in the city’s values and cultural landscape. Community identity helps create belonging, fosters connection across difference, and provides a shared narrative that anchors residents to one another and to the neighborhoods they call home.

In Vancouver, community pride is rooted in the stories, cultures, histories, and creative expressions that shape neighborhoods and bring residents together. This goal affirms that these cultural elements—whether reflected through public art, historic preservation, small business districts, or everyday traditions—are vital to a thriving community and should be elevated, protected, and made visible throughout the city’s public spaces and civic life.

Civic engagement and shared experiences further strengthen the fabric of community life. Local festivals, cultural celebrations, volunteer events, and community storytelling deepen residents’ connection to one another and help build lasting traditions. Goal CE-5 encourages these opportunities, recognizing that pride emerges not only from physical surroundings but from the relationships and collective experiences that give neighborhoods their character.

Preserving Vancouver’s historic and cultural resources is another key component of this goal. Protecting significant sites, buildings, landscapes, and artifacts honors the people and communities who shaped the city and ensures that future generations can see themselves in Vancouver’s past, as well as its future.

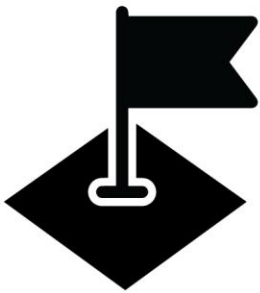
Applying this Lens across Chapters

- The Equity and Inclusion chapter documents how historic exclusion shaped present disparities in access to amenities, safe environments, and opportunity. CE-5 complements this by focusing on cultural visibility and belonging—ensuring that public spaces, civic processes, and neighborhood investments reflect the histories, cultures, and identities of communities who have been underrepresented. Pride is tied to recognition, representation, and repair.
- Housing policy supports culturally specific, multigenerational, and diverse housing forms. CE-5 connects this to identity by recognizing housing as a place where culture, family structures, and traditions are expressed. Stable, affordable housing allows residents to remain in neighborhoods over time, sustaining social networks and cultural continuity.
- The Land Use and Development chapter describes neighborhoods and centers as places that provide housing, services, amenities, and destinations. CE-5 emphasizes that these places should have distinct character and reflect local history, culture, and community narratives, rather than producing uniform development. Corridor reinvestment, mixed-use centers, and neighborhood nodes become settings for community life and shared identity.
- From a public facility and services standpoint, libraries, community centers, schools, and civic buildings are more than service points; they are civic anchors. CE-5 highlights their role as visible symbols of shared investment and places where community life unfolds—from cultural events to civic engagement. Their location, design, and programming influence whether residents see themselves reflected in public life.

Supporting Policy	Description	No	Related Goals
Align Place Based Investment with the Growth Concept	Align City investments, incentives, and programs to reinforce key centers identified in the growth concept as points for local economic development efforts and community investment.	15	CE-5, EO-3
Center Impacted Voices in the Development of Community Spaces	Engage community organizations and individuals representing diverse lived and cultural experiences in the planning, design and programming of community spaces.	26	CE-1, CE-5 EI-1, EI-4, PR-4
Culturally Responsive Design	Develop standards for public spaces and buildings that incorporate culturally specific design principles and art installations and reflect the diverse history and heritage of Vancouver communities.	41	CE-5, CE-2, PR-4
Event Programming	Continue to support and expand local gatherings, festivals, and special events that uplift community, reflect diverse histories and lived experiences, and create a sense of civic pride.	56	CE-1, CE-5, PR-4
Expand Representation in Public Art	Ensure publicly funded art projects and installations reflect and incorporate the experiences of historically excluded and underrepresented voices in the physical and cultural landscape of the city.	57	CE-5, CE-2, PR-4
Historic and Culturally Significant Resources	Protect and preserve significant cultural, historic, archeologic, and ecologic community resources. Promote preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of historic and architecturally significant structures.	66	CE-5, CL-1, CL-2, PR-4

<p>Increase Access to Space for Artists and Creatives</p>	<p>Establish partnerships that increase access to shared, affordable spaces serving artists and arts and cultural organizations.</p>	<p>76</p>	<p>CE-1, PR-4, CE-5</p>
<p>Strengthen Neighborhood Business Districts</p>	<p>Ensure neighborhood business districts are safe, vibrant, and accessible hubs of economic activity through strategic public and private investment, and reflect a sense of community identity.</p>	<p>140</p>	<p>EO-4, CE-5</p>
<p>Support Locally Made Products and Art</p>	<p>Support and elevate Vancouver’s local makers, artisans, and creative production sectors by promoting the use of locally sourced and recycled materials, strengthening small-scale manufacturing, and advancing a circular economy that contributes to community pride and place-based identity.</p>	<p>146</p>	<p>CE-5, EO-3</p>
<p>Support Neighborhood Organizations</p>	<p>Support the growth and stability of neighborhood associations as key partners in establishing local pride, connection, and representation within Vancouver’s distinct neighborhoods.</p>	<p>148</p>	<p>CE-1, CE-5, EI-4</p>

Annexation



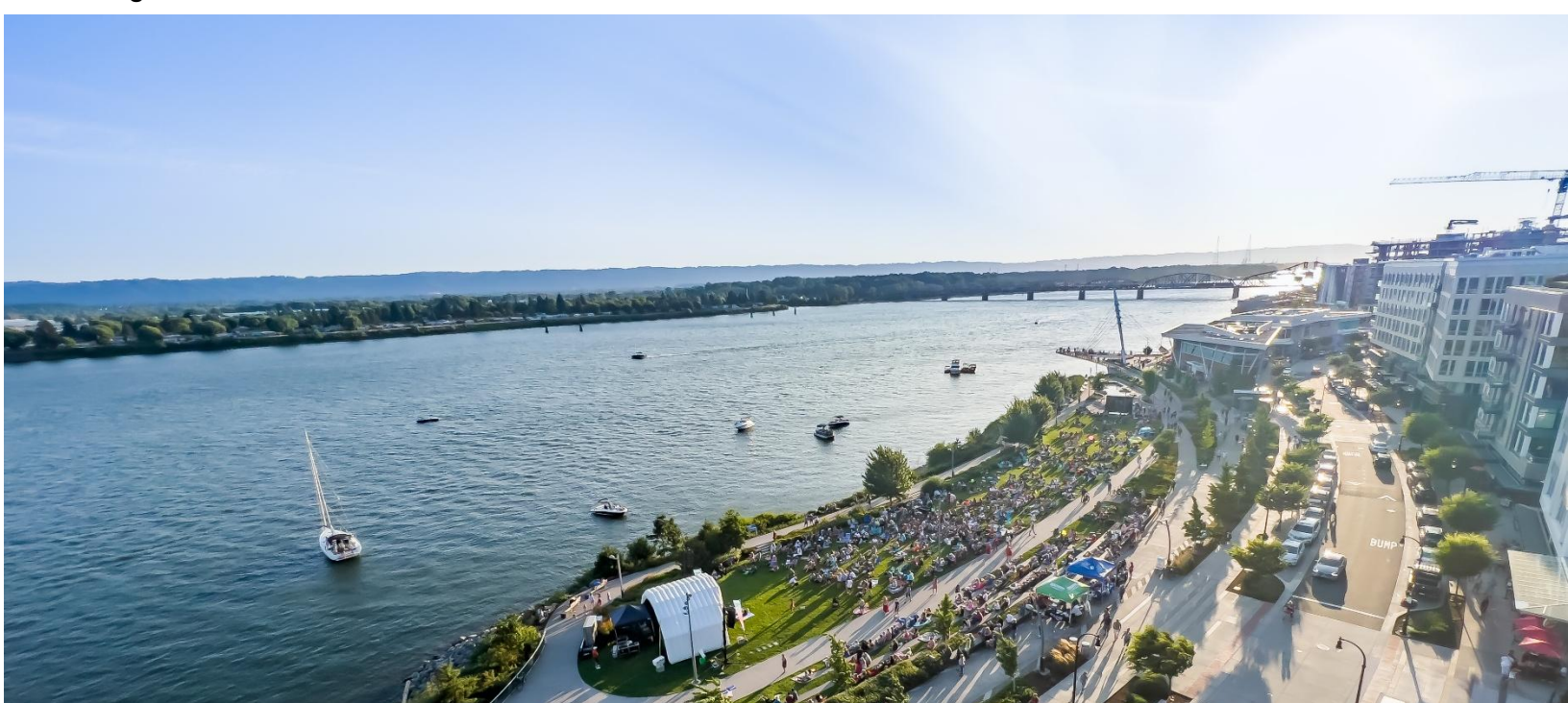
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OUR VANCOUVER

Introduction

Annexation is the process by which cities add land to their boundaries to accommodate growth and provide public services. The GMA anticipates that designated UGAs will become part of cities over the 20-year time horizon of the Comprehensive Plan, and that cities are the appropriate provider of urban services.

The VUGA is the largest in the state by population, with an estimated 163,000 residents. Annexation of the full VUGA would make Vancouver the second largest city in the state. The scale and complexity of Vancouver's UGA and the extent that it is already developed to urban densities presents both opportunity and challenge. Annexation is an opportunity to align land use and infrastructure planning across a larger area to meet key community and policy objectives and more efficiently deliver services. However, the City will bear the cost of serving annexed areas, addressing deferred maintenance and upgrading substandard infrastructure. Fiscal sustainability is a major challenge to large-scale annexation of VUGA.



Vision: Annexation

Vancouver will continue to manage urban growth by annexing urbanized areas within the Vancouver Urban Growth Area in an orderly way that is fiscally sustainable and maintains adopted levels of service. By coordinating with partners, addressing baseline conditions, and making targeted investments that support smooth service transitions, Vancouver will successfully integrate future annexed areas into the City's urban fabric and strengthen our shared sense of identity.

From a fiscal perspective, annexation has historically been most feasible in areas with a strong commercial or employment base that can help offset the cost of serving adjacent residential areas. However, large portions of the VUGA consist of single-family residential neighborhoods with auto-oriented development patterns and public infrastructure that needs to be upgraded to urban standards. In these areas, the long-term cost of providing urban services can significantly exceed anticipated revenues, making annexation difficult to justify without additional funding mechanisms or phased service strategies.

Key Annexations

Since the mid-1990s, the City has pursued annexation incrementally. Annexations during this period reflect a mix of large, population-serving annexations and smaller, targeted annexations for municipal or employment purposes.

- **East Vancouver (1997)**

One of the City's largest annexations, East Vancouver nearly doubled the population of the City and represented a major step toward implementing the UGA concept. This annexation established a precedent for coordinating service delivery and infrastructure investment in urbanized areas previously under county jurisdiction.

- **Section 30 (2008)**

Annexation of this area supported industrial and employment uses, strengthening the City's economic base and aligning land use regulation with infrastructure and service provision.

- **Alcoa/Port of Vancouver Remnant Parcels (2009)**

These targeted annexations brought key employment and industrial parcels into city limits, improving regulatory consistency and supporting port-related economic activity.

- **Vancouver Operations Center (2023)**

This recent annexation reflects the continued use of annexation for municipal purposes, ensuring that the new City operations center currently under development is strategically located to serve the existing community, as well as future growth.

- **Van Mall North (2017)**

This annexation incorporated a large, mixed residential and commercial area, adding approximately **5,500 residents**. Van Mall North illustrates the City's emphasis on annexing areas that combine residential areas with nearby commercial and employment uses.

Smaller Annexations and Boundary Refinements

Over time, Vancouver has also completed smaller annexations in response to property owner requests. While these annexations typically added little or no population, they result in small, incremental jurisdictional boundary adjustments.

Annexation Process

Annexation in Washington State is governed by state statute and shaped by the GMA, which together establish where and how cities may expand their boundaries. In counties planning under the GMA, annexation is generally limited to areas within a designated UGA and must occur in a coordinated, contiguous, and orderly manner. These requirements reinforce the GMA's intent that cities serve as the primary providers of urban services and that counties avoid long-term provision of urban services within UGAs. Washington law provides multiple methods for annexation, each with distinct initiation requirements, approval processes, and applicability depending on local conditions.

Methods

- **Property-owner petition methods**, most often requiring owners representing a threshold of assessed property value to initiate annexation
- **Election-based annexations**, which require approval by voters within the proposed annexation area
- **Annexation of unincorporated islands**, a streamlined process for enclaves that are largely surrounded by city limits
- **Annexation by interlocal agreement**, allowing cities and counties to negotiate annexation terms for urbanized areas
- **Municipal-purpose annexations**, used to incorporate City-owned property needed for public facilities

Key Evaluation Factors

Regardless of the annexation method used, proposed annexations must be evaluated against a consistent set of planning and service considerations:

- **Consistency with the Growth Management Act**, including the requirement that annexations occur within UGAs and support planned urban growth patterns
- **Alignment with countywide planning policies**, which establish expectations for coordinated growth, annexation sequencing, and transition of urban services
- **Fiscal sustainability**, including the City's ability to fund expanded services, address infrastructure deficits, and maintain adopted LOSs without adverse impacts to existing residents
- **Infrastructure readiness**, including the capacity and condition of transportation systems, utilities, parks, and other public facilities
- **Logical boundaries and service areas**, avoiding fragmented jurisdictions, irregular boundaries, or inefficient service delivery arrangements

These considerations help ensure that annexation decisions advance long-term planning objectives rather than responding solely to short-term development or boundary pressures.

Intergovernmental Coordination and Service Transitions

Coordination with Clark County and affected service providers is a foundational element of the annexation process. Prior to annexation, counties often adopt development regulations that are consistent with the City, while cities plan for eventual assumption of service responsibility. Annexation requires careful planning to ensure continuity of services, such as public safety, transportation, utilities, and land use regulation. State law and administrative guidance encourage the use of interlocal agreements to manage these transitions, particularly where annexation will affect special purpose districts, such as fire, utility, or library districts. These agreements may address service timing, infrastructure standards, revenue impacts, and phased transitions to City service provision. Countywide planning policies further guide this coordination by establishing shared expectations for how annexation supports regional growth management objectives.

Community Feedback

- Strong need for clear, transparent information about annexation—how it works, when it will happen, and what it means for services, zoning, taxes, and growth targets.
- Mixed ideas on whether and where annexation should occur.
- Concerns that annexation could increase traffic, pollution or taxes and change the feel of suburban and semi-rural areas.
 - Others feel “in limbo” outside city limits and want representation and consistent services.
 - Desire for annexation to support sustainable, balanced growth with urban level services, logical boundaries, and coordination with the county to ensure adequate police, fire and infrastructure.

Adapting to Changing Conditions

The City adopted an Annexation Blueprint Plan in 2007 that identified a phased annexation schedule, but this was quickly followed by the great recession and it largely went unimplemented. Since that time, on the ground conditions in the VUGA have continued to evolve, as have state rules that govern annexation processes. Vancouver’s approach to annexation recognizes this evolving context and acknowledges structural deficiencies that make annexation difficult to pursue. The City will continue to evaluate annexation opportunities using available statutory tools while emphasizing coordination, fiscal responsibility, and transparent decision making. Annexation is viewed not as a single event, but as a planned transition of governance and services that must align with long-term growth management, infrastructure investment, and community expectations.

Goal: AN-1

Facilitate Annexation of the Urban Growth Area (UGA)

The annexation of urbanized areas within the Vancouver Urban Growth Area into city limits will occur in a coordinated, orderly and timely manner.

Goal AN-1 establishes annexation as the primary mechanism for transitioning urbanized areas within the VUGA into the city in a coordinated, orderly and timely manner. Lands designated within the UGA are planned to accommodate urban development and, over time, to be incorporated into the city so that governance, land use regulation, and service delivery align with urban conditions and community expectations.

Under this goal, annexation is intended to support a cohesive and efficient urban environment by establishing clear and logical jurisdictional boundaries. The City prioritizes annexation patterns that promote contiguous growth, reduce fragmented governance, and create functional service areas capable of supporting urban levels of service. Larger, coordinated annexations are emphasized where they improve regulatory consistency, streamline long-term service provision, and advance annexation within the planning horizon anticipated by the GMA. At the same time, property-owner-initiated annexations adjacent to city limits will continue to be facilitated when they are consistent with these broader principles and contribute to orderly growth.

Implementation of Goal AN-1 relies on sustained coordination with Clark County and other service providers. Annexation is viewed not as a single boundary action but as a planned transition of governance and services that must be carefully sequenced and managed over time. This includes coordinating land use designations, infrastructure standards, and service responsibilities so that areas expected to urbanize can do so in a predictable and well-managed manner.

Through clear sequencing, service transition planning, and intergovernmental collaboration, the City will pursue annexation that supports long-term regional planning objectives, strengthens regulatory consistency, and integrates future annexed areas into the City's urban fabric. Goal AN-1 reinforces the City's commitment to managing growth proactively and transparently, ensuring that annexation contributes to a unified, well-governed city over time.

Supporting Policy	Description	No	Related Goals
Annexation Agreements Prior to Service Extensions	Continue to require developing or developed unincorporated areas to agree to future annexation as a precondition of the extension of City services.	18	AN-1, PFS-1
Annexation Appropriateness	Evaluate potential annexations to ensure they support the City’s ability to provide and maintain adopted levels of service. Annexations should proceed only when they do not result in a reduction of service levels for existing residents and when necessary urban services can be provided in a timely, efficient, and financially sustainable manner.	19	AN-1
Annexation Boundaries	Annexation agreements should promote large annexations, efficient service delivery, the provision of necessary infrastructure, and clear jurisdictional boundaries. This includes contiguous areas and both sides of roads and streets and associated rights-of-way. Individual property owners should not be prevented from pursuing annexation, and requests should be facilitated when immediately adjacent to Vancouver city limits.	20	AN-1, AN-2
Intergovernmental Coordination of Annexation	Work with Clark County to facilitate annexation of the unincorporated Vancouver Urban Growth Area in a coordinated and orderly manner. Coordination should include County adoption of development regulations and infrastructure standards for the VUGA that are consistent with those of the City of Vancouver, agreements to maintain existing infrastructure prior to annexation, community engagement in annexation planning and implementation, and generally advance Vancouver as a provider of urban services and Clark County as a provider of social and regional services.	80	AN-1
Limit UGA Expansions	Rigorously review any requests for future VUGA expansions to those clearly necessary to address forecasted population growth and associated housing and job needs, to reduce future annexation burdens, and to foster efficient long-term urbanization given finite countywide land supplies. Modeling of growth and associated land capacity needs should utilize generally	83	AN-1, AN-2

Supporting Policy	Description	No	Related Goals
	acceptable best practices and reflect reasonable assumptions.		
Service Areas	Work with Clark County, utility districts, and other regional service providers to ensure reasonable, efficient and fiscally sustainable service area boundaries and provide urban levels of service throughout planned annexation areas.	128	AN-1
Service Transition	Identify strategies for facilitating phased transition of urban services, particularly public safety, transportation, parks, utilities, and land use review. This should include exploration of early application of land use regulations and infrastructure standards to ensure urban level of service in areas developed to urban densities within the VUGA.	130	AN-1, PFS-1
Timing of Annexation	Coordinate with Clark County to establish annexation sequencing, agreements and timelines that facilitate annexation of the full Vancouver Urban Growth Area within the 20-year time horizon anticipated in the Growth Management Act.	152	AN-1

Goal: AN-2

Fiscally Sustainable Annexations

Facilitate balanced annexations that are fiscally sustainable for both the county and the city. Future annexations will support fiscally sustainable and quality service delivery for both existing and future residents.

Goal AN-2 ensures that annexation decisions are implemented in a fiscally responsible manner that maintains adopted LOSs for both existing and future residents. As annexation expands the City's responsibility for public services and infrastructure, careful evaluation of costs, revenues, and service capacity is essential to avoid unintended fiscal impacts. Under this goal, annexation proposals are evaluated based on infrastructure readiness, service demands, long-term operating costs, and the City's capacity to provide and sustain urban LOSs. Particular attention will be given to baseline conditions in annexed areas, including deferred infrastructure needs and capital investments required to meet City standards. Annexations should proceed only when they do not diminish service levels elsewhere in the City and when service transitions can be managed efficiently.

Recognizing that fiscal constraints can limit annexation feasibility, the City will work collaboratively with Clark County and regional partners to pursue additional funding mechanisms and implementation tools. This state-level advocacy is intended to support more balanced annexations over time, particularly in areas where service needs and revenue capacity are misaligned. Through this approach, Goal AN-2 supports equitable, sustainable annexation that strengthens the City's long-term financial and service delivery capacity.

Supporting Policy	Description	No	Related Goals
Annexation Boundaries	Annexation agreements should promote large annexations, efficient service delivery, the provision of necessary infrastructure, and clear jurisdictional boundaries. This includes contiguous areas and both sides of roads and streets and associated rights-of-way. Individual property owners should not be prevented from pursuing annexation, and requests should be facilitated when immediately adjacent to Vancouver city limits.	20	AN-1
Fiscal Sustainability of Annexation	Evaluate proposed annexations to ensure they are fiscally sustainable and support the City’s ability to provide, operate, and maintain adopted levels of service over time. Annexations should proceed only when they do not reduce service levels for existing residents and when required urban services can be delivered in a timely, efficient, and financially sustainable manner.	60	None
Limit UGA Expansions	Rigorously review any requests for future VUGA expansions to those clearly necessary to address forecasted population growth and associated housing and job needs, to reduce future annexation burdens, and to foster efficient long-term urbanization given finite countywide land supplies. Modeling of growth and associated land capacity needs should utilize generally acceptable best practices and reflect reasonable assumptions.	83	AN-1

OUR VANCOUVER

OUR FUTURE 2045

Comprehensive Plan – Draft Chapter Review (pt 3)

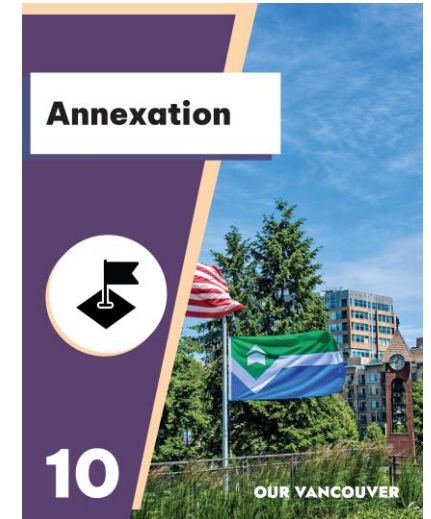
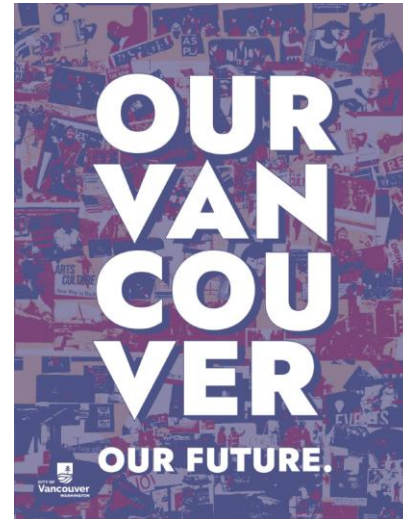
Rebecca Kennedy (she/her), Deputy Director, Community Development
Domenique Martinelli (she/her), Senior Planner, Community Development

March 10, 2026

Welcome

Purpose / Agenda

- Provide a high-level overview of draft chapters currently under development
- Discuss *why* each chapter is organized the way it is
- Highlight legal requirements, policy direction, and chapter organization
- Seek Planning Commission input on overall direction, clarity, and alignment
- Review next steps / discussion



Legal Framework: GMA

- Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA) establishes:
 - ➔ What elements must be included in a Comprehensive Plan
 - ➔ How those elements must relate to one another
- Implemented through:
 - ➔ RCW 36.70A – statutory requirements
 - ➔ WAC 365-196 – detailed guidance and Commerce checklists
- The Plan must demonstrate:
 - ➔ Internal consistency
 - ➔ Data-supported assumptions
 - ➔ Capacity to accommodate growth through 2045
- All chapters must be informed by analysis and coordinated with required elements



Legal Requirements by Chapter

- **Community Experience**

- Non-mandatory element.
- Functions as a plan-wide lens to support internal consistency under RCW 36.70A
- across required elements
- Reinforces GMA goals related to quality of life, public facilities, health, equity, and environmental protection
- Must remain coordinated with Land Use, Housing, Transportation, and Capital Facilities elements

- **Annexation**

- Non-mandatory element, but governed by annexation statutes (RCW 35A.14)
- Annexation limited to territory within an adopted Urban Growth Area (UGA)
- Must occur in a contiguous, orderly manner consistent with the GMA and Countywide Planning Policies



Chapter Organization

Context → strategy → implementation

- Each chapter is designed to move the reader through:
 - ➔ Historical context & current conditions
 - ➔ Vision Statement
 - ➔ Identification of key challenges and trends the policy strategy is responding to
 - ➔ Community feedback to support the claims
 - ➔ Equity Lens – relevant supporting data and fact finding – how are equity priority communities impacted, and how do we address from a policy standpoint?
 - ➔ Goals and policies to address those challenges and guide future decisions
- This structure ensures:
 - ➔ Policies are grounded in data and lived experience
 - ➔ Council and the community can clearly see how decisions today affect long-term outcomes



- CE-1** Social Infrastructure
- CE-2** Inclusive and Affirming Environments
- CE-3** Community Safety
- CE-4** Innovation
- CE-5** Community Pride and Identity

Comm Experience Policy Approach

- Establishes Community Experience as a plan-wide lens to evaluate how growth decisions shape belonging, safety, and daily life – evaluates each chapter and how to apply the lens.
- Identifies social infrastructure (parks, libraries, community centers, arts, neighborhood spaces) as essential community infrastructure that deserves investment – relation to third spaces & Connected and Accessible Neighborhoods (LU-1)
- Centers inclusion to ensure historically marginalized communities experience equitable access to welcoming environments
- Aligns design, safety, and public investment decisions to reinforce identity, connection, and long-term community stability



Annexation – Policy Approach

AN-1

**Facilitate Annexation of
the Urban Growth Area**

AN-2

**Fiscally Sustainable
Annexations**

- Provides a framework for implementing the Growth Management Act expectation that urban areas transition into cities through orderly annexation
- Prioritizes fiscal sustainability and maintenance of adopted service levels before annexation occurs
- Requires evaluation of infrastructure readiness, long-term capital obligations, and service delivery impacts
- Establishes policy guidance and evaluation criteria rather than a phased annexation schedule



Next Steps

- **Draft of Plan & Code**
 - ➔ Mid-February: released for public comment
 - Simultaneous Department of Commerce 60-day review
 - ➔ March: PC review of Community Experience, Equity & Inclusion, Annexation and Implementation Chapters + Code
- **Adoption Process**
 - ➔ April: Initiate Planning Commission review of proposed Plan and Code refinements and recommendation process
 - ➔ May: Initiate Council adoption process
 - Supported by Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS)
 - ➔ **June 1: Targeted Adoption Date**



Past Community Presentations

- **Thur, Feb 19**
- **Thur, Feb 26**
- **Sat, Feb 28**
- **Wed, Mar 4**

Draft Comprehensive Plan and Code are accessible now on beheard:





Questions and Discussion

www.beheardvancouver.org/plan2045