

**FALSE CREEK FLATS  
PHASE 1.2: BUSINESS, LANDOWNER, AND TRANSPORTATION INTERESTS  
A SUMMARY**

**1. OVERVIEW / PURPOSE / PARTICIPANTS**

The City is undertaking a two phase Work Program for land use and transportation planning in the False Creek Flats. Gathering an understanding of different stakeholders' views, concerns, issues, wishes and desires is a key step in the Phase 1 process. The goal of the scoping task is to develop a working list of issues, ideas, opportunities and constraints which will serve as input to later scheduled multi-stakeholder workshops.

In addition to four community meetings, the City organized a series of preliminary interest-based discussions with the following participants (see Appendix A for full list). The City identified people/businesses most likely to be affected by planning decisions including existing businesses, major landowners in Flats and transportation interests.

This report provides a brief summary of some of the issues and ideas obtained from the one-on-one discussions with the participants. It is only intended to provide an overview of the various interests that were expressed with city staff as background information and a common foundation for the multi-stakeholder workshop. As such, no issue or idea preference, exclusion or weighting is intentional nor should be derived from this summary.

**2. ISSUES & IDEAS**

**2.1 Freight and Passenger Rail**

- Strong support exists for retaining rail and allowing room for growth for rail services, both freight and passenger. Rail yards are being used for storage and staging to allow freight trains in and out of the Flats, waterfront area, and beyond.
- There is concern about any potential elimination of rail in this area because the rail yards are basically an extension of Port operations. The Port requires rail tracks in close proximity to be able to serve its terminal operators. Displacing the Flats rail yards to Surrey or Coquitlam are not feasible alternatives.
- Rail is preferred as a sustainable transportation choice, both for freight and passenger movement. If development scenarios envision a loss of rail, the pressure goes to moving containers/commodities to other Ports and locally by truck. These trucks would be using city trucking routes to the Port and would be in addition to the goods that will always be carried by truck.
- While most of the rail growth will occur regionally at Deltaport, an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 sq. ft of additional track in either the waterfront or Flats is potentially needed. A more coordinated rail operation also needs to be explored to accommodate Port growth projections.
- All passenger rail companies have plans to increase their operations and service (VIA, Rocky Mountaineer, and AMTRAK). Although this does not necessarily

require more rail tracks, there is some concern that increasing freight and passenger service will require close attention.

- Examining the efficiency of the rail footprint in the Flats including access to the waterfront and along the joint section is a subject worthy of attention. The existing rail footprint was laid out many years ago, and the efficiency of this configuration is a question for some. For example, trains are getting longer, requiring longer tracks. Not all rail yards or reconfigurations are equal.
- There is a sense of the need to step back and look at the overall efficiency and layout of rail operations serving the inner harbour. More specifically, BNSF intends to re-locate their barge operation from the waterfront which raises the question of how necessary is their south yard in the Flats or whether there is an opportunity to re-locate this rail with no net loss of rail.
- Maintaining stable industrial lands is seen as important as they are compatible with rail operations. When determining if other land uses adjacent to rail are appropriate, the vibration and noise impacts of a 24 hour, 7 day a week rail operation will need to be considered.

## 2.2. Business & Industry

- Strong support exists for Council's direction for maintaining and strengthening industry in the I-2 and I-3 areas of the Flats. There is also an overall interest in increasing the diversity of activity in the Flats.
- There is a question of how to best support these areas as stable industrial lands. The cost of land and rent are identified by businesses in the area as the cornerstones of location planning; keeping these costs reasonable for these businesses is a primary concern.
- Parking related improvements appear to be the most pressing need and the area of improvement desire by most of the businesses. Policies to allow businesses room to expand would be welcomed by a sizable minority of existing businesses.
- It is noted that the City's Metropolitan Core Jobs and Economic study is an important piece of work in determining what is needed to support places of work. There have been many conversions of industrial and office space to residential space in the downtown, and it is important to answer the question of "what land capacity is needed" both in the Vancouver context and at the regional level.
- Regarding the I-2 light industrial area, which allows for light manufacturing, warehousing, food distribution services, and other city-serving support services, these businesses provide important entry-level jobs for the city.
- Regarding the I-3 area, there is some support for continued support of industry but looking at a broader range of uses with a view to introducing flexibility. Ideas range from mixing light industrial and high-tech which could possibly allow for some residential live-work and 'vibrant' urban uses, to expressly permitting offices, to a cluster of health care services, research facilities, bio-technology and pharmaceutical firms, and to creating a mixed use community/village focussed on technology, education, and health.
- In all these 'visions' for I-3, there would be an argument against development being 'weighted' toward residential uses, so as to drive out other uses. Other

concerns about location of live-work/residential uses include the proximity to rail, and the potential for creating conflict between residential and rail.

- Vision ‘references’ mentioned include the Pearl District, Portland; Mission Bay, San Francisco; Mars Discovery District, Toronto; Zhuhai, China.

## 2.3 Movement & Mobility

(please also see above, Freight and Passenger Rail)

- Strong support for more pedestrian, bike, and transit linkages into and through the Flats planned out in advance of any major land use/development decisions
- Some concern was expressed about shorter-term plans to connect the Central Valley Greenway from Clark Drive to Science World in terms of visibility, accessibility, and safety, and that major initiatives, such as a bridge, are being put on hold until the completion of the land use and transportation planning study.
- Support for more programs that alert people to alternatives to cars, including federal money for these initiatives (i.e. Urban Transportation Showcase)
- Some businesses specifically choose the Flats location because of its proximity to the Main Street SkyTrain station for employees
- Requests for more transit services along Great Northern Way to decrease isolation of the campus as well as Terminal Avenue, even if its just a community shuttle service to/from Main Street SkyTrain
- Connecting Glen Drive from Terminal Avenue to Great Northern Way could provide a good linkage for existing pedestrian/bike demand as well as more transit access to the new VCC Millennium Line SkyTrain
- Moving forward with the extension of the Millennium Line further into the Flats and to the RAV line and Central Broadway was noted as a transit priority even though it was noted that it was beyond the scope of this study
- Good support for integrating the west/south with the surrounding area by providing new transit into the Flats with the Downtown Streetcar, including realigning 1<sup>st</sup> Ave and Industrial (at Main) and Station Street (at Terminal)

## 2.4 Major Landowners

Providence

- Providence Health Care are planning for their health care services over the next 25-30 years in the central part of Vancouver. To meet the identified future demands, they are considering two options: remaining at the current St. Paul’s site and doing a major upgrade and expansion there; or building a new hospital and research facility on a new site on the western part of the False Creek Flats. No decision has yet been made regarding these options. A business case is being developed that, once complete, will be forwarded to the provincial government for their review and direction.

## Great Northern Way Campus

- Four academic partners – BCIT, Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design, SFU, and UBC – have committed to work together to build a unique and integrated centre of excellence in teaching/learning, research, and entrepreneurship at the 7.6 hectare parcel of land on the north side of Great Northern Way.
- The existing buildings are currently being used for a mixture of teaching and research activities, and by a few commercial tenants, as an interim measure. The Strategic Academic Plan that outlines a proposed direction for the campus to 2020 when it will serve approximately 4,000 students.
- Three areas identified in the Plan for possible initial development are: Urban Sustainability, Transforming Arts and Culture, and Digital Entertainment

### **3. PROCESS/NEXT STEPS/FINAL REMARKS**

Business, landowner, and transportation interests that the City met with made it clear that they want to be continuously informed about and involved in the Flats planning process. Participants indicated that they wanted to be consulted at various points in the planning process before decisions were finalized. Individuals were recommended for the June workshop participation.

Near future steps include:

- Multi-stakeholder Scoping Workshop (Phase 1, Step 3)
- Preparation of a Terms of Reference for Phase 2 (Phase 2, Step 4): July (draft) September/October (Council)
- Visioning Process (Phase 2): October/November

**APPENDIX A: Business, Landowner, and Transportation Participant List**

Vancouver Port Authority  
Providence Health Care  
Great Northern Way Campus  
Canadian Pacific Rail (CPR)  
BNSF Railway Company  
VIA  
Discovery Park  
CN  
Rocky Mountaineer  
Vancouver Economic Development Commission  
Angio-Tech Pharmaceuticals  
Translink  
BEST  
Amtrak  
NAIOP  
Two Focus Group Meetings with Landowners (June)  
Industrial Business Survey (141 businesses replied)