



LAND USE REGULATIONS & POLICY

Land Use And Development - Policies

Step 1: Understanding Yesterday and Today

Metropolitan Core Jobs & Economy Land Use Plan

Highlights

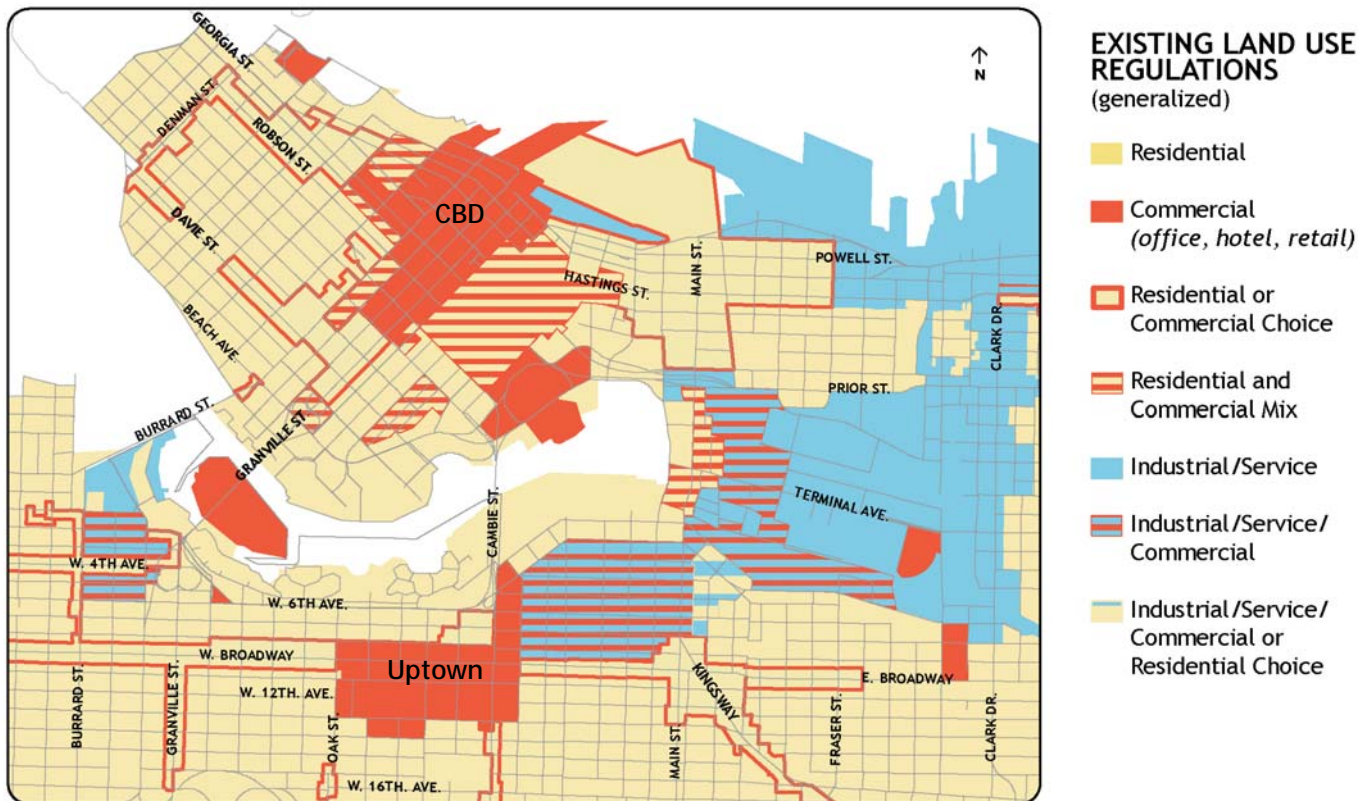
- Existing land use regulations reflect the vision of the 1991 Central Area Plan: two major office districts (downtown CBD and Uptown/Broadway); mixed use and residential neighbourhoods surrounding the office districts; and industrial/service areas on the edges.
- Continuing residential success has created pressure for new residential development in employment areas.
- In response, City Council adopted policies in 1997 and 2004 to protect needed commercial land from being displaced by residential.
- In 2005 City Council also approved Terms of Reference for this Metro Core Jobs/Economy Land Use study to ensure continued land supply for employment.



WHAT LAND USES ARE PERMITTED?

Land use regulations, under existing zoning, provide for a variety of land uses and land use combinations (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Generalized Land Use Regulations in the Metro Core



Notes: (i) There are also development regulations (e.g., height, density) not included in Figure 1, as well as policies related to heritage bonus and transfer of density, etc. (ii) Interim Policies are in place to limit new residential development in the CBD and adjacent Residential/Commercial Mix areas during this study (see next pages).

WHAT IS THE UNDERLYING VISION?

The Central Area Plan Goals and Land Use Policy, approved by City Council in 1991, is the policy framework for the land use regulations shown in Figure 1.

When the Central Area Plan was adopted, much of the area was still underdeveloped. Building on work underway to transform the waterfronts from old industrial to new neighbourhoods, the Plan created a new vision for future land use:

- Two compact, focussed areas for office districts: the region's major office core in the CBD, and a medical-civic district in Uptown Central Broadway. (An area east of the CBD was also designated for future CBD expansion.)
- Expanded residential opportunities in distinctive and liveable new high density residential neighbourhoods surrounding the office districts and extending along the waterfronts.
- "Choice of use" and "mixed use" areas in several locations, combining residential and commercial.
- A network of street-oriented shopping districts to help create a walkable city and reinforce the streets as public places.
- Retention of industrial areas at the edges, to provide for related activities not accommodated in the growing residential and office districts.

The underlying purposes of this Central Area Plan land use policy are: to create a lively and liveable downtown; and to improve the balance between employment growth and transportation capacity - by putting more residents close to jobs, and by concentrating jobs in areas well served by transit.

Specific zoning changes were made to implement the policy framework, including revising the zoning to create new residential neighbourhoods south of the CBD, and to not permit residential in the CBD. (Figure 1 on page 1 is a summary of current regulations.)

WHAT ARE THE LAND USE CHALLENGES?

The policies and related zoning regulations led to the development of successful new residential areas, while preserving office and industrial districts for employment.

The residential success also created new challenges. Residential has grown even faster than anticipated and "choice of use" areas have also seen substantial new residential development.

There has been concern that strong pressure to develop new residential could displace commercial potential in areas that the Central Area Plan identified as providing employment.

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE POLICY RESPONSES?

The following two policies were adopted by City Council to protect needed commercial land.

(a) CBD Policies for 20-Year Office Supply

In the CBD, residential is not a permitted use in the zoning. However, due to requests for rezoning, in 1997 a policy was approved by Council that specifies that residential rezoning should only be considered:

- To achieve key public objectives - primarily heritage retention, and
- When it is confirmed that the unused office inventory in the CBD is maintained for a projected 20-year office space demand.

Under this policy, two rezonings were approved in the CBD to permit developments which are not primarily commercial. Both were based on the work of independent real estate consultants who confirmed, at the time, a 20-year future office land capacity.

- The Shangri La, at Georgia and Thurlow, now under construction, will provide commercial (hotel) and live-work. This rezoning achieves protection of a heritage building and provision of a public sculpture garden.
- The Hudson, Granville at Dunsmuir, also under construction, will provide commercial (office) and live-work. This rezoning protects heritage buildings and provides universal access to the nearby SkyTrain station.

(For more information on "live-work," see text box on next page.)

(b) Downtown District Interim Policies for New Residential

In 2004, Council approved an Interim Policy that further limits market residential in the CBD and in mixed use areas to the east and west of the CBD.

This additional policy was adopted because there was increasing pressure for residential development in these mixed use areas - areas that the Central Area Plan had designated for future CBD expansion. Due to the mixed use zoning, substantial residential development could occur without rezoning - by developing the residential component only.

Also, staff noted that altering some key assumptions of the CBD 20-year office land supply studies, based on the most recent residential development trends, resulted in significant changes to the study results, leaving questions about whether future supply would be adequate for the longer term job growth.

When approving the Interim Policy, City Council also requested a report on a Terms of Reference for a broader study to resolve the long term land supply questions. In 2005, Council approved the Terms of Reference for this Metro Core Jobs and Economy Land Use Plan study, to resolve the long term land use questions in the full Metro Core context.

Living and Working in the Same Unit

Existing regulations and policies that allow live and work in the same unit have been evolving in the city. There are a variety of approaches. Key examples are the following:

- For all residential in the city, the zoning has long permitted work under certain conditions (e.g., no employees; no sales).
- In site-specific rezonings downtown over the last few years, there have been some that provide for "live-work" units in new developments, such as the Shangri-La and Hudson discussed above. "Live-work" units have the flexibility to be used for specified types of work, or for residential, or both.
- Expanding on the site-specific experience, recently approved zoning, for several specified streets downtown, at grade-level, (outside the CBD), and in several heritage areas, allows the building of new "live-work" units.

More information will be provided in a separate Information Sheet.

Sources / Contacts

For detailed information on regulations and policies, see <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/BYLAWS/bylaw1.htm>

This Information Sheet was published by the City of Vancouver. It is one in a series of Information Sheets produced for the Metropolitan Core Jobs and Economy Land Use Plan. The purpose of this initiative is to develop a long term land use policy plan to accommodate future economic activity and jobs in the Metro Core. For further information, please e-mail corejobs@vancouver.ca or visit the website www.vancouver.ca/corejobs