

From: **"Mochrie, Paul"**

To: **"Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"**

Date: 1/31/2024 2:13:12 PM

Subject: Preliminary Update - Modernizing the City's View Protection Guidelines to Unlock New Housing and Economic Opportunities

Attachments: Memo to Mayor & Council - Preliminary Update - Modernizing the City's View Protection Guidelines to Unlock New Housing and Economic Opportunities.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

The attached memo from Doug Smith is in response to the request for a preliminary update on View Cones per RTS 16061. In October 2023, Council directed staff to review the City's View Protection Guidelines. The motion references Framed Views, seeking to assess the potential for increased development, encompassing additional housing, job space, hotel space, and public benefits, by re-evaluating the relevance of specific Views. The memo includes background, scope, related work, analysis and next steps for this work. Staff will be following up with more detail in a Council Brief in mid-Q2 2024.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact Doug Smith (doug.smith@vancouver.ca) or Jason Olinek, Director of Development Planning (jason.olinek@vancouver.ca).

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

January 29, 2024

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager
Maria Pontikas, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Andrea Law, General Manager, DBL
Jesse Goranson, Associate Director, BPPS
Alex Wallace, Senior Associate - Strategic Advisory, BPPS
Jason Olinek, Director Development Planning, PDS
Neil Hrushowy, Director Community Planning, PDS

FROM: Doug Smith
Acting General Manager, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

SUBJECT: Preliminary Update - Modernizing the City's View Protection Guidelines to Unlock New Housing and Economic Opportunities

RTS# RTS 16061 (related to RTS 16062)

PURPOSE

In October 2023, Council directed staff to review the City's View Protection Guidelines or Vancouver View Cones Policies (VVCP). The motion references Framed Views, seeking to assess the potential for increased development, encompassing additional housing, job space, hotel space, and public benefits, by re-evaluating the relevance of specific Views.

The VVCPs are intertwined with various aspects of the City's regulatory framework, development capacity models, and guidelines making it challenging to separate one from the other. Therefore, to augment the review, the process is being conducted in parallel with the development of the first-ever City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines (CWDG) – more detail on page 4. This parallel approach aligns with the goals of the Process Improvement Program (PIP), the interdepartmental streamlining of the approvals and permitting processes.

This memo describes how staff propose to undertake the upcoming work. A follow-up Council Briefing is scheduled in Q2 2024 for a more comprehensive work plan with project objectives, deliverables, schedule, and resource allocation for both early actions and the final report.

BACKGROUND

History of View Protection

In 1978-79, in response to public interest, the City initiated the identification of views to be prioritized for preservation. However, it was not until 1989 that the initial VVCP were adopted, encompassing 26 protected view corridors. By 2007, the demand for growth in downtown prompted a reassessment leading to the last comprehensive update approved by Council in 2011. Subsequent improvements and updates have occurred such as a digitization effort (2015-18) and the recent Broadway Plan Implementation actions (2023). The Broadway Plan streamlined protected views of City Hall from eight to two points: Cambie Bridge's pedestrian path and a new Seawall Plaza at Marinaside Crescent. A development capacity assessment ensured minimal impact on future sites. Council approved these views for easier administration and consistency, adding them to the official protected public views list. For a timeline, please refer to **Appendix A**.

SCOPE

This project's main objective is to refine the VVCP as part of creating a single, modernized CWDG. The goal is to balance protected views contribution to public space, the city's brand and its culture while facilitating essential urban growth and an improved development process. Staff have incorporated Council's directives into a work plan as described below.

- **Define Obsolete and Functionally Relevant:** Confirm operational criteria for defining obsolete and/or functionally relevant views including ones permanently blocked or obscured or having limited access or availability.
- **Identification of Obsolete and Irrelevant View Cones:** Identify view cones that are obsolete or not functionally relevant according to the definition above.
- **Assess Current View Cones:** Conduct a review of all existing view cones, to assess the amount of additional housing, job space, hotel space and public benefits, that could potentially be built on sites currently impacted by view cone restrictions focusing on obsolete or not functionally relevant views. See **Appendix B** for list of all view cones.
- **Recommendations for Modifications:** Recommend modifications to the VCCP and the CWDG to be based on the assessment of both relevance and development capacity. These changes could involve eliminating outdated view cones, adjusting boundaries or vantage points, managing vegetation, or applying policies for development to occur within a view cone.
- **Removal of Barriers to the Delivery of Housing:** One primary objective of this work is to improve the delivery of housing so that will be considered in any recommendations.
- **Process Improvements:** Another primary objective of this work is to support the development process improvement work.

RELATED WORK PROGRAMS

Council has instructed staff to evaluate how the VVCP aligns with the objectives of the Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability (PDS) work plan. Below is a description on each PDS work plan item that is directly aligned with this scope of work.

Provincial changes to Vancouver Charter

In December 2023 the province of BC announced changes to the Vancouver Charter, including new minimum heights and densities in Transit Oriented Areas (TOAs). Staff are working with the province to determine the implications of the TOA legislation on view cones and are expecting more clarification through policy manuals this spring.

Permit Improvement Program (PIP)

The PIP is a collaborative initiative involving various City departments, aiming to streamline the permitting process and enhance customer service. Lead by the City Manager's Office, the program encompasses the Development, Buildings & Licensing, PDS, and the Engineering department. The CWDG and VVCP work is being staffed and managed by the same teams as under the PIP umbrella. In conjunction with PIP, dedicated teams, including the Regulation Redesign and Development Process Redesign (DPR) teams, are actively addressing policy and regulatory framework refinement. Their efforts are focused on cleaning up and streamlining approval processes for Rezoning and major Development Permit Applications.

The City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines (CWDG)

The scope of this project includes a review of more than 70 built-form guidelines. The primary focus of this work is to refine these guidelines, enhance their readability, simplify them for the benefit of the development community and to increase housing. Recent Council Motions such as review of the City's Shadow Impact Criteria and Guidelines and maximum allowable Floor Plate Size for residential towers are also included. The expected outcome of this project will be recommendations to Council for repeal or consolidation forming a single, unified, and modernized set of city-wide urban design guidelines.

This work is complimentary to the PIP objectives for process improvement and regulatory clean up and will be incorporated into a single work plan and project team in so much as it speeds the delivery of outcomes. The City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines is a PDS initiative run under the Process Improvement Project.

Vancouver Plan Implementation and City-Wide Official Development Plan (ODP) Development

Work continues on the first city-wide Official Development Plan (ODP), with adoption no later than Spring 2026. The ODP will be based on the Vancouver Plan, approved July 2022, and will comply with the province's recent legislative changes. Several work program items, including the VVCP review, will be coordinated with the ODP to streamline staff resources and align public engagement.

ANALYSIS

Schedule – View Cones, floor plates, shadows, etc. are intertwined throughout the City's policies. The last comprehensive Council Report (2011) on view cones took three plus years to complete. This project is expected to deliver quick wins in mid-2024 and a comprehensive Council Report with recommendations in mid-2025 (18 months total).

Public Engagement – Staff are consulting with the Communication Team and are in the process of developing an engagement strategy. This will be included in the Q2-2024 memo.

NEXT STEPS

1. Q2 2024 – Council Memo - Terms of Reference and Public Engagement Strategy.
2. Q2 2024 - Council Briefing - Criteria and process for evaluating view cones and a preview of early actions as well as the larger work plan.
3. Q3 2024 – Report to Council with early actions and quick wins. Public engagement and the remainder of the work plan will proceed after this Report.

SUMMARY

The proposed initiative aims to compliment the transformation of the city's design and development process, aligning it with current priorities, ensuring adaptability over time, and prioritizing the well-being of residents. This approach is essential for creating a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable city for today's as well as future residents. Staff will brief Council in Q2 2024 with an early actions report later in Q3.

If Council requires further information, please feel free to contact me at Doug.smith@vancouver.ca

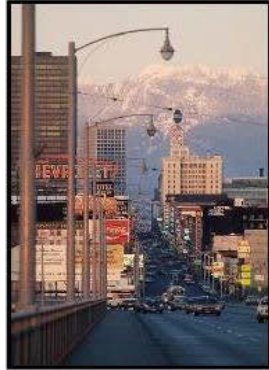


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Appendix A

Brief Timeline – Vancouver’s Protected Views



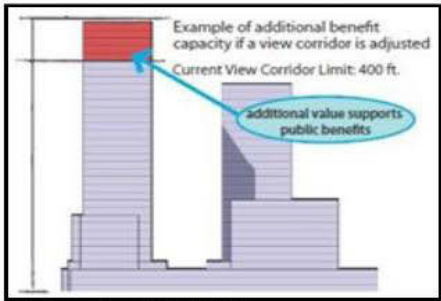
1970s Granville St. Bridge capturing Mount Seymour and Mount Elsey with Rector Peak

In response to public interest, in **1978 and 1979** the City began identifying views the community would come to prioritize for preservation.

However, it wasn't until **1989** that the City approved the first View Protection Guidelines containing 26 protected view corridors.

Vancouver Views: Council Approved View Cones Cambie St. to North Shore mountains		9.1
<small>Photograph date: June 1990</small>		

View Cone 9 - Cambie St. Views
Council Approved 1989 (Photo 1990)



Development Capacity Model - 2007

By **2007**, continued growth demand in Downtown lead to a reassessment demonstrating a short-term benefit capacity of approximately 3 million square feet.

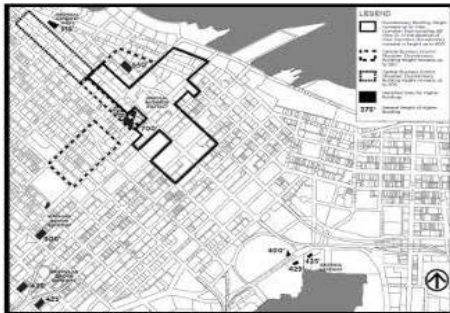
The subsequent updates to View Cones and the Higher Building Policy were ultimately adopted in early **2011**.

In 2013 as part of the West End Community Plan, Council Amended the Higher Building Policy.



QEP Views amended 2023

In March **2023**, Council approved the most recent amendments through Broadway Plan Implementation.



Map of Where Higher Buildings are Permitted 2013

Appendix B

Current State Assessment of Vancouver's Protected Views

Summary of Vancouver's Protected Views:

- 26 views (30 if include sub-divided views) original adopted protected views - **1989**.
- 8 views added - Council Report **2011**.
- Clean-up of 9 views (2 formalized and 7 repealed) Broadway Plan - **2023**.

Current State View Descriptions:

- 16 framed/picture views.
- 24 panoramic views.
- 6 with vantage points within roadway right of ways.
- 15 vantage points currently being partially or fully obstructed.

ID	Name	View Subject	Type	Adopted	Obstruction	In Roadway
10	Granville Island	Hollyburn and Mount Strachan	Panoramic	1989	Unobstructed	No
12.1.1	Granville Bridge	Grouse	Framed	1989	Unobstructed	No
12.1.2	Granville Bridge	Crown	Framed	1989	Unobstructed	No
12.1.3	Granville Bridge	Crown	Framed	1989	Unobstructed	No
12.2	Granville Bridge	Seymour	Framed	1989	Unobstructed	No
20.1	Granville Street	North Shore Mountains	Panoramic	1989	Unobstructed	Yes
20.2	Granville Street	North Shore Mountains	Panoramic	1989	Unobstructed	Yes
21	Commercial Drive	North Shore Mountains	Panoramic	1989	Partially Obstructed	Yes
22	Main Street	North Shore Mountains	Panoramic	1989	Unobstructed	Yes
27.1	Trout Lake	Lions	Panoramic	1989	Partially Obstructed	No

27.2	Trout Lake	North Shore Mountains	Panoramic	1989	Partially Obstructed	No
3.1	Queen Elizabeth Park	Downtown Skyline	Panoramic	1989	Unobstructed	No
3.2.1	Queen Elizabeth Park	North Shore Mountains	Panoramic	1989	Partially Obstructed	No
3.2.2	Queen Elizabeth Park	North Shore Mountains	Panoramic	1989	Unobstructed	No
3.2.3	Queen Elizabeth Park	North Shore Mountains	Panoramic	1989	Unobstructed	No
3.2.4	Queen Elizabeth Park	North Shore Mountains	Panoramic	1989	Unobstructed	No
3.2.4a	Queen Elizabeth Park	North Shore Mountains	Panoramic	1989	Partially Obstructed	No
9.1	Cambie Street	North Shore Mountains	Panoramic	1989	Unobstructed	Yes
9.2.1	Cambie Street	North Shore Mountains	Panoramic	1989	Unobstructed	Yes
9.2.2	Cambie Street	North Shore Mountains	Panoramic	1989	Partially Obstructed	Yes
A	Alder Terrace	Mount Seymour	Framed	1989	Unobstructed	No
B1	Charleson Seawall	Lions	Framed	1989	Unobstructed	No
B2	Charleson Seawall	Crown/Grouse	Framed	1989	Unobstructed	No
C1	Laurel Landbridge	Lions	Framed	1989	Partially Obstructed	No
C2.1	Laurel Landbridge	Crown/Grouse	Framed	1989	Obstructed	No
C2.2	Laurel Landbridge	Crown/Grouse	Framed	1989	Obstructed	No
D	Heather Bay	Lions	Framed	1989	Unobstructed	No
E1	Cambie Bridge	Crown/Grouse	Panoramic	1989	Unobstructed	No

E2.1	Cambie Bridge	Mount Seymour	Panoramic	1989	Unobstructed	No
E2.2	Cambie Bridge	Mount Seymour	Panoramic	1989	Unobstructed	No
E3	Cambie Bridge	City Hall	Framed	2023	Unobstructed	No
F1.1	Choklit Park	Grouse	Framed	2010	Obstructed	No
F1.2	Choklit Park	Mount Seymour	Framed	2010	Obstructed	No
F1.3	Choklit Park	Mount Seymour	Framed	2010	Obstructed	No
G1.1	Olympic Shipyard Pier	North Shore Mountains	Panoramic	2010	Unobstructed	No
G1.2	Olympic Shipyard Pier	North Shore Mountains	Panoramic	2010	Unobstructed	No
H1	Olympic Plaza Stage	Grouse/North Shore	Panoramic	2010	Partially Obstructed	No
J1.1	Creekside Park	Lions	Panoramic	2010	Obstructed	No
J1.2	Creekside Park	Lions	Panoramic	2010	Obstructed	No
K	Drake Street	City Hall	Framed	2023	Unobstructed	No