

From: "White, Josh" <Josh.White@vancouver.ca>

To: "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"

Date: 4/2/2026 11:42:11 AM

Subject: Memo - Higher Buildings Policy Review and Public Engagement

Attachments: Memo to Mayor & Council - Higher Buildings Policy Review Public Engagement.pdf

Mayor and Council,

Please see attached memo outlining upcoming work to review the Higher Buildings Policy, last updated in 2011. The review will explore opportunities for taller buildings to support housing, job space, public amenities, and city-building objectives in Downtown Vancouver, while balancing architectural excellence, livability, sustainability and the protection of public views. The memo also advises Council of upcoming public consultation dates and conveys key project messages to support Council conversations with media, residents and stakeholders.

If you have any questions, please reach out to me.

Josh White M.Pl. (He/him)

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

April 2, 2026

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Donny van Dyk, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager
Chris Freek, Director of Civic Engagement & Communications
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Teresa Jong, Administrative Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office

FROM: Josh White
General Manager, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

SUBJECT: Higher Buildings Policy Review Public Engagement

RTS #: N/A

Summary

This memo provides an overview of upcoming work to review the Higher Buildings Policy (HBP) and phase one engagement activities. The memo outlines the intent of the review, highlights how taller buildings could contribute to public benefits and broader city-building objectives, and advises Council of upcoming public consultation dates. The appendix includes key messages and facts to support Council conversations with media, residents, and stakeholders.

Purpose

The purpose of the HBP review is to consider how the policy can reflect new opportunities and city priorities that have emerged since it was last reviewed and updated in 2011. The current review responds to increased market interest in developing taller downtown buildings in a highly built-up downtown peninsula and aims to provide clear, current policy direction to guide future proposals.

The HBP review will explore how increased height allowances in key areas of Downtown Vancouver could enable additional development contributions to help fund major infrastructure projects, support housing, job space, and amenities, and advance key initiatives, including the

Granville Street Plan.

The HBP review is also an opportunity to intentionally shape Vancouver's skyline, supporting architectural excellence while balancing livability, sustainability and protection of public views. Protected public views form an important overlay informing where and where not higher buildings are appropriate and will not be reviewed or updated as part of this work.

Public Engagement

As a first step in the review, City staff will launch a public engagement process to gather ideas, perspectives, and aspirations for the future of tall buildings in Vancouver.

The following is a summary of Phase One engagement activities:

Pop-ups: Staff will host several pop-ups throughout April, subject to weather conditions. The pop-ups listed below will take place regardless of weather:

- Queen Elizabeth Park (at "The Photo Session" sculpture): Sunday, April 26, 1-4 pm
- Crab Park: Monday, April 27, 4-7 pm
- Jericho Beach Viewpoint: Tuesday, April 28, 4-7 pm
- Queen Elizabeth Park (at "The Photo Session" sculpture): Wednesday, April 29, 4-7 pm

Open House and Exhibit: Hosted at the Vancouver Lookout at Harbour Centre, typically a ticketed venue, the event will be free for B.C. residents. Participants will explore city views to better understand building scale and skyline impacts, learn about the Higher Building Policy Review, and provide feedback.

- Sunday, May 3, 2-6 pm
- Wednesday, May 6, 6-9 pm
- Saturday, May 9, 2-6 pm

Shape Your City: A survey will be open from May 1-29.

Ideas Competition: The City will host an international "Ideas Competition" inviting local and international design experts to explore tall buildings through a design-focused lens. The competition will generate made-for-Vancouver design ideas to inform approaches to taller buildings.

- Competition dates: June 2026 – January 2027
- Public launch event: June 1, 2026, 7-8:30 pm, Vancouver Playhouse

The "Ideas Competition" will conclude Phase One of public engagement for the HBP Review. Phase Two, anticipated in late 2026, is expected to introduce draft policy directions or options for public feedback and subsequent Council consideration. Input from upcoming consultation activities will inform this work, along with an assessment of potential benefits, tradeoffs, and impacts. Staff will continue to keep Council informed as the review advances.

Should you have any questions, please contact me.

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J White', with a stylized, cursive script.

Josh White
General Manager, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability
604.307.2263 | josh.white@vancouver.ca

Key Messages

Why are we undertaking this review

- Vancouver has grown and changed significantly since the Higher Building Policy was last reviewed 15 years ago.
- Thoughtfully designed taller buildings have the potential to contribute to an interesting skyline and help deliver city-building objectives and public benefits.
- Growing market interest in taller buildings in a highly built-up downtown highlights the need to proactively develop clear, up-to-date policy direction to guide future proposals.

What the engagement is about

- This engagement focuses on hearing ideas, perspectives, and long-term vision for tall buildings in downtown Vancouver.
- We are not proposing specific projects – this is about shaping policy direction.
- Protected public views form an important overlay informing where and where not higher buildings are appropriate and will not be reviewed or updated as part of this work.

How feedback will be used

- Public feedback will help inform a draft policy update or policy options.
- Any proposed changes would return for further public input before being presented to City Council.

Community benefits

- When buildings are approved through rezoning, they contribute funding toward public benefits such as childcare spaces, cultural facilities, parks, public plazas, and affordable housing.
- Allowing more height can create opportunities for additional development contributions, helping fund community infrastructure and amenities.
- This investment and activity can also support a more lively and economically resilient downtown.

Design and livability

- Any new tall buildings would be expected to meet high design and sustainability standards.
- Design would prioritize a strong street level experience, including pedestrian-friendly features, welcoming entrances, and spaces that support social connection.
- A key focus of the policy review is to ensure building heights and locations are appropriate for Vancouver's unique context as a city in nature, taking a balanced approach that maintains protected public views.

Scale and pace of change

- Change would be gradual.

- Even with updated height allowances, only a limited number of sites are expected to deliver buildings of this scale over time.
- Each proposal would continue to be reviewed and evaluated on its own merits through the rezoning process.

Key Facts

Vancouver's Higher Building Policy currently allows buildings up to 600 feet, with one location allowing up to 700 feet.

Tallest buildings in Vancouver

- Living Shangri-La – 201 m (659 ft)
- Paradox Hotel Vancouver – 188 m (616 ft)
- The Butterfly – 179 m (586 ft)

Selected tallest buildings in other Canadian cities

- First Canadian Place, Toronto – 298 m (978 ft)
- Brookfield Place East, Calgary – 247 m (810 ft)
- Stantec Tower, Edmonton – 249 m (817 ft)
- 1250 René Lévesque, Montreal – 227 m (743 ft)
- Two Gilmore Place, Burnaby – 216 m (708 ft)