



What We Heard:

External Advisory Group Meeting #4

Employment Lands & Economy Review

The City of Vancouver is reviewing land use policy to ensure the city has an appropriate supply of land and business space to support jobs and the growth of the economy. As part of this review, the City is engaging with a range of stakeholders and economic sectors to collect feedback to help inform the review.

About the External Advisory Group

The City of Vancouver has assembled an External Advisory Group (EAG) to help inform the Employment Lands & Economy Review. The EAG consists of a diverse range of perspectives including industry associations, labour representatives, Indigenous groups, not-for-profit organizations, representatives from the development industry and businesses from all economic sectors. The role of the EAG is to provide input and insight at key milestones throughout the planning process identifying issues and challenges; and, co-creating emerging policies and directions.

Session #4

The fourth meeting of the External Advisory Group (EAG) was held on July 29, 2020 online to accommodate the COVID-19 pandemic physical distancing measures. The meeting included a plenary by staff before transitioning into three break-out groups to discuss draft recovery actions and policy. The policy options were organized into the three themes of “Equity, Diversity & Resilience”, “Retail Commercial Areas”, and “Industrial Spaces and Office & Hotels” with staff presenting a more detailed presentation for each policy theme. Participants were asked to provide feedback on the draft policies and general feedback. Feedback was recorded by note-takers during the discussion, the online chat, and a follow-up survey circulated after the meeting.

MEETING SUMMARY

50 participants in attendance representing all of Vancouver’s economic sectors.

The workshop was hosted on the Cisco WebEx Training platform to accommodate the break-out group sessions. The following feedback to the meeting platform and format was received from some participants. Of those who responded to the feedback survey:

- All respondents ranked their overall experience with the platform as either “Good, the platform was easy to use” or “Satisfactory, I was able to participate”.
- Only two attendees had issues with the platform and staff were able to resolve both issues
- A few attendees found the 3 hours too long for the amount of information provided.
- All responses indicated they liked the format.
- Feedback indicated the meeting was well facilitated and hosted and the information provided was relevant and useful.

The Plenary

Overview:

Staff presented a plenary updating the status of the project, the alignment with the Vancouver Plan, COVID19 impacts, and introduced policy areas: *Equity, Diversity, and Resilience; Retail, Commercial Areas; Industrial Spaces; and, Office & Hotels.*

Plenary presentation link: <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/eag-meeting-4-plenary-presentation-july-29-2020.pdf>

Plenary Feedback:

- Concern raised that changes due to this pandemic were not adequately addressed.
- Key economic drivers and strategies for the future remain largely the same.
- The City needs to see the response to COVID-19 as an opportunity to be more imaginative alongside its citizens emerging as a leader in proactive response, instead of reacting to perceived trends and previous economic status quo.
- Not everyone understands the full impact of COVID-19 as being with us beyond the short term until a vaccine is broadly available.
- Fundamental behaviours are evolving and will continue to into the future, so policies need to reflect this.
- Policies should be “flexible” and “creative” so as not to “box” ideas into a rigid framework.
- Although study is not about housing, housing is a significant component of the economy.
- There should be a real estate and development group specifically for the Vancouver Plan as the scope is completely different.

Break-out Groups

Following the plenary presentation the meeting split into three smaller groups for a more detailed presentation on the four policy themes and an opportunity to provide feedback through discussion.

Group 1: Equity, Diversity and Resilience

The group 1 presentation outlined the overall recovery actions and long-term directions addressing equity, diversity, and resilience. Draft policies were presented for discussion and feedback. The subsequent section includes the feedback received.

Group 1 presentation link: <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/eag-meeting-4-breakout-group-1-presentation-july-29-2020.pdf>

Group 2: Retail Commercial Areas

The group 2 presentation outlined the overall recovery actions and long-term directions addressing retail, commercial areas. Draft policies were presented for discussion and feedback. The subsequent section includes the the feedback received.

Group 2 presentation link: <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/eag-meeting-4-breakout-group-2-presentation-july-29-2020.pdf>

Group 3: Industrial Space and Office & Hotels

The group 3 presentation outlined the overall recovery actions and long-term directions addressing both Industrial Spaces and Office & Hotel policy areas. Draft policies were presented for discussion and feedback. The subsequent section includes the the feedback received.

Group 3 presentation link: <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/eag-meeting-4-breakout-group-3-presentation-july-29-2020.pdf>

1 Equity, Diversity and Resilience feedback

Specific Feedback

Impacts of COVID

Non-profit Organizations

- NPOs provided and delivered a large volume of services while experiencing reduced revenues due to the pandemic.
- NPOs (especially smaller ones) are losing spaces due to the pandemic.

Youth

- Most job opportunities lost over the summer for young people.
- Loss of first year of career for those starting out will have longer impact over the next couple of years.
- Large impact on youth well-being.
- COVID-19 increased challenges for families with summer camps (used for childcare) cancelled.

Social enterprises

- Social enterprises depend on sectors hardest hit by the pandemic, such as hospitality and retail, for revenues.
- Social enterprises have struggled to maintain their programs that create revenue and these are needed in order to provide services and maintain operations.
- Social enterprises provide entry-level training. People's housing and employment are impacted by losing this revenue stream.
- Concern about the long-term continuity of social enterprises, and the impact of losing entry-level jobs they provide.
- Social enterprises came together quickly to collaborate and support the Downtown Eastside (DTES) community while communicating with the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC).
- Social enterprises reacted fast at the early stage of the pandemic. However, the lack of funding meant a lack of food going to SROs and senior care homes. Some social enterprises had partnerships with private sectors for funding.

- Social enterprises are adaptable and can adapt quickly but lack funding.
- Social enterprises could collaborate with the other sectors to work around funding gaps.
- Social enterprises support peer networks for food distribution.
- Support for social enterprises should be a recovery action.
- Social enterprises should have their impacts and importance elevated.
- Social enterprises that stayed open to provide services were not represented in the Vantage Point statistics.
- Social enterprises required and depended on lots of fundraising to respond to community need.

Other recovery actions

Racialized communities

- Racialized communities are overrepresented in front line work.
- Consider specific patio support for racialized businesses such as restaurants.

Disproportionately affected groups

- Support is not stable for informal vendors.
- Use participatory budgeting to get money to impacted groups.
- Continue CIRES' community stewardship budget.
- Work with Realize Strategy and co-budget on further measures to help.
- Consider alternative revenue sources to offset the cost of business licenses or explore new revenue streams to support businesses.
- Ensure to update vendors about the Unpermitted Vending Study.

1 Equity, Diversity and Resilience feedback (*continued*)

Long term ideas

“Special economic area”

- Designate DTES as a “Special Economic Area” or create rezoning policy that will help the development and implementation of social procurement, informal street vending, and other actions.
- Create a special designation for Downtown-Eastside/Oppenheimer District (DEOD) with the aim to expand into other areas of DTES in the future.

DTES Research Manifesto

- Use the DTES Research Manifesto as a way to instruct the most vulnerable groups while also creating opportunities in community participation through peering communities.
- The DTES Research Manifesto should inform or be incorporated in the Employment Lands & Economy Review work.
- Consider culturally-sensitive engagement with the community.
- The City can fill the intermediary role between community and industry.
- Create opportunities for community participation.

Equity components

- Add the Women’s Equity Strategy to the equity lens in the ELER.
- The ELER needs to address the gender equity strategy and the larger equity framework the City is working on.
- COVID-19 has really brought language access into focus as an important cross-cutting lesson for recovery.

Childcare

- As part of the research and monitoring, continue ongoing research and assessment of childcare needs.
- Consider referencing the \$10/day childcare pilot as the current framework, until a formal framework is adopted.

Sustainability

- Ensure sustainability components are included with policy for the film and tourism sector.
- Consider at-risk employment lands (e.g. flood plain and sea level rise area) as an option for temporary affordable housing.
- Consider policy ideas on use trade-offs for the employment lands at risk of floods, such as temporary structures, uses, activities.

Building on COVID response

- Mitigation responses in the DTES should be documented as lessons learned and published to share those experiences and learnings around mitigation.
- COVID-19 responses through Emergency Operations Centre could be incorporated into recovery actions that transition into long-term policy.

2 Retail, Commercial Areas feedback

Specific Feedback:

Relocation policy for businesses

- Interest in any planned policy to address displacement—specifically any relocation policy or program.
- Interest in the idea of a longer notification process and how it would work.

Zoning

- Businesses request for more flexibility to have workshops in commercial zones.
- City should relax zoning restrictions, such as uses that accommodate both maker and seller functions.

Patios

- Temporary patios should be made more permanent.
- Expedited patio permit process needs to continue.
- Alleys and rooftop activation should be done to add public realm function and help with business resilience and expansion.

Commercial sub-class

- Interest in how the commercial sub-class approach would work.
- Question why the commercial sub-call option is considered under short term actions.

Population density

- Population density is too low to sustain the commercial use in some areas.
- City should build population outside the arterials so that people could walk or roll to commercial areas.
- Participants were interested in the options staff raised regarding commercial uses off arterials, such as local-serving commercial areas; changes to zoning to increase density to facilitate walking and rolling; affordable housing for employees and customers; presence of retail anchors; piloting new outdoor markets supporting innovation; and more support in the permitting process.

Consumer confidence:

- Retail sales have been impacted by the trend towards online shopping.
- A lot of interest in the proposals to address the trend towards online shopping such as the role of BIAs in winning back the consumer confidence to avoid economic decline (as people will drive further to receive better services); seeking federal funding for delivery of digital transformation of businesses; and opportunities to increase floor areas for sales and less for storage.

Safety for small businesses

- Participants were interested in how the ELER will address the safety issues. The following observations were made:
 - The ELER will not be leading the work addressing small business districts safety issues.
 - Other City groups are already leading safety issues including the Vancouver Police Department, ACCS and other City groups.
- The ELER highlights safety as an economic issue as well.

Parking

- Concern for lack of parking.
- Interest in exploring the use of EasyPark as a potential solution for lack of parking.
- Staff indicated that the parking focus is developing destination businesses for local residents. In response, participants raised the issue of parking for businesses in low density areas, where businesses cannot exist without a parkade. Participants also suggested tying it closely with transit routes.
- EasyPark can be involved more to invest in areas less served by transit, that have potential to redevelop in future.
- For parking policy, include the recommendation to assist people with mobility issues.

2 Retail, Commercial Areas feedback (*continued*)

Transit

- Concern about TransLink service cuts due to budgeting issues.
- Ensuring safe travel of people to work places is important.

Strategic communication

- Support for area marketing and messaging about consumer responsibility needed.
- The City should continue to seek feedback from BIAs.
- The City needs to develop a strategy around the tone of messaging to reduce fear rather than increase it (fear of second wave).
- The City needs the support of a communication specialist.

Legacy Business Program and Social Impact Assessment

- Support is needed for long-term legacy businesses that cannot survive on their own. A legacy business is the one that adds value to the community (cultural or service role).
- There are the opportunities to relocate the legacy businesses in case of redevelopment.
- The definition of 'social' has been expanded to include local-serving small businesses

General feedback

- Non-profit social enterprises should be added in objectives for Vancouver Plan.
- Sanitation issues are more urgent now, across the city of Vancouver.
- Ensure people feel safe in light of emerging social issues.
- The City should fast-track changes needed over the next 6 months, as we could see a big wave of vacancies.

3 Industrial Spaces and Office & Hotels feedback

Specific Feedback:

Protecting Industrial

- Protecting industrial is important since only 7% of our land base is industrial and will need to be allowed to function appropriately.
- “Job-only areas” seems to be archaic approach leading to 9-5 office areas, office parks and inactive, underutilized industrial areas.
- Important to have diverse employment spaces near transit.
- Many companies do not want to locate in sterile business parks.
- Mixed-use areas are more vibrant and attractive for employers and employees.
- The mixed use nature of industrial already in some areas of Vancouver is what makes the city more global in its appeal.
- Given the majority of industrial in the City is light industrial, there should be a focus on how the industrial sector can work with the tech sector.
- Consider the impact of taking away restrictions of specific 1 FSR industrial requirements (that are more restrictive than outright approval use) when making industrial uses in mixed use industrial developments more inclusive.

Intensive Industrial

- Staff support could play a significant role in redevelopment viability for existing development projects that seek to amend zoning while promoting intensive industrial development.
- Interest in regulation changes with respect to intensified industrial developments, such as maximum heights and whether the review process will be case by case.
- Recommend performing analysis on the financial feasibility of multi-level industrial on its own without other mixed-uses (e.g. office, residential) particularly with the other objective to seek affordability.
- The City should consider how to address site specific industrial land constraints to bringing in more industrial development.

Worker housing

- One of the largest issues facing small and large industrial business is finding local employees, especially employees not travelling from outside Vancouver.
- Warn against the introduction of residential uses e.g. artist studios as they may inhibit industrial uses.

Future logistics

- Transportation and logistics hubs are important to shift to cleaner vehicles in urban areas.
- Strongly support the involvement of the Urban Freight Council in consultations.
- Tourism depends on industrial lands as part of their supply chains (laundry, commissary, etc.).
- Local commercial vehicle depots are needed to avoid parking outside of Vancouver while mitigating the issues of congestion, operational costs and pollution.

Hotels

- Protecting the existing hotel room stock through the pandemic continues to be challenging.
- The need remains for increased hotel room capacity to meet future demand growth at 2019 levels that may be reached in 4-6 years.
- Recommend monitoring supply and demand of hotels.
- Hotel market is under considerable strain at present.
- Net increase in hotel rooms needs to be a target.
- Consider applying the interim hotel policy more creatively, such as applying it to sites without a hotel use.

3 Industrial Spaces and Office & Hotels feedback (*continued*)

Office

- Affordability of new office spaces is an issue.
- Concern for appropriate office sizing.
- Concern about actual capacity at Grandview Boundary for more office.
- Cluster and explore more mixed-use office combinations to increase density.
- Flexibility in zoning should be provided in order to provide adaptability in case of an economic downturn.

General Feedback

- Consider requiring more density to support local commercial outside the Central Business District (CBD).
- The ELER outlook is too long-term.
- COVID-19 has had unprecedented negative impact on our economy with impacts just beginning to appear.
- Recovery will likely take many years but should recognize and aid - in the short term - impacted projects.
- The vision of the ELER policies should “think bigger”. Current policy approach is underwhelming.
- The ELER should consider connecting with the Mayors group.

General Feedback for the ELER

Business viability

- Closures continue as businesses continue to be adversely affected by the pandemic.
- Many businesses especially in tourism and retail sectors may not survive to the other side of the pandemic.
- Cash flow remains an issue for most businesses.

Work-from-home transition

- Many organizations were not ready for the transition from office to home.
- Not all work can transition to work-from-home.

Demand for space

- Health guidelines have increased the demand for operational space across sectors with indoor work.
- Inequitable distribution of impacts.

Follow-up Survey

EAG meeting #4 was held on the Cisco WebEx Training Platform. How did you find the overall experience?

- Good, the platform was easy to use.
- Satisfactory, I was able to participate.
- Neither good nor bad experience.
- Less than satisfactory, I was able to participate but did not find it intuitive.
- Bad, I had a poor experience using this platform.

Please comment on your experience: *open responses*

EAG meeting #4 held a plenary followed by smaller break-out groups for discussion. Did you like this format?

- Yes, I strongly liked the format
- Yes, I liked the format
- I neither liked nor disliked the format
- No, I disliked the format
- No, I strongly disliked the format

Please explain your response or provide suggestions: *open responses*

Please provide any comments or questions about the ELER Project Update:(plenary presentation link) *open responses*

Please provide any comments or questions about Economic Impacts of COVID-19:(plenary presentation link) *open responses*

Please provide any comments or questions about Group 1: Equity, Diversity, and Resilience:(Link to presentation) *open responses*

Please provide any comments or questions about Group 2: Retail, Commercial Areas:(Link to presentation) *open responses*

Please provide any comments or questions about Group 3: Industrial Spaces, and Office & Hotels:(Link to presentation) *open responses*

Please provide any general feedback or input you have not been able to provide elsewhere: *open responses*