

Burnaby 2050 Policy Directions

Environment

Overview

Burnaby is home to vibrant ecosystems, including conservation areas such as Burnaby Mountain, Barnet Marine Park, Burnaby Lake, Deer Lake, Central Park, the Fraser Foreshore, that support mature forests, wetlands, meadows, and salmon-bearing streams.

To protect these areas, the City aims to address climate change, support the diversity of wildlife and plant life, and balance the pressure to increase development to accommodate population growth with the overall health of the environment.

The goals of this policy area are to:

- Support the diversity of wildlife and plant life and adapt to climate change by considering the impact of land use planning on nature.
- Provide services in a way that protects our natural assets, including trees, plants, green spaces, rivers, creeks and streams.
- Find ways for the community to be involved in protecting and taking care of the environment.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges:

- Limited funds and limited land base to purchase land for conservation.
- Uncertainty about the long-term impacts of climate change.
- Impacts of provincial regulations to increase housing density on environmentally sensitive areas.
- Not enough staff to monitor and enforce rules for private properties or maintain natural areas.
- Potential delays to project timelines because of environmental requirements.
- Difficult to coordinate and recruit volunteers to protect and care for the environment.

Opportunities:

- New municipal regulatory and finance tools to protect environmentally-sensitive areas.
- Innovative solutions that use nature to improve water quality.
- Undeveloped City-owned land could be turned into conservation land.
- Agreements and opportunities to work with host Nations on environmental protection.
- Public land can be used in many ways, such as recreation and managing rainwater.

Engagement Findings

- Residents value having access to parks and green spaces and want them to be protected in the future.
- Residents are concerned about the impacts of climate change, loss of green space, reducing waste and waste management.

- The community’s top priorities related to the environment include:
 - Adapting and responding to climate change.
 - Sustainable infrastructure.
 - Healthy and accessible parks, green spaces and ecosystems.
 - Environmentally friendly transportation options, including reducing cars and traffic, improving transit, and building more walking and bike routes.
 - Planting trees on streets to improve air quality.
 - Clean and visible streams, not hidden, buried or diverted.

Policy Directions

Nature and Land-use Planning	
Policy Directions	Why We Are Proposing These Policies
1. Increase the total area of protected natural and conservation areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Explore ways to work with host Nations to protect and care for natural areas. b) Purchase land with sensitive ecosystems or that are prone to natural hazards to add to the conservation land base. c) Direct new development away from forested areas and sensitive ecosystems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Phase 2 engagement, community members shared that they want to protect parks and green spaces (see figure 1) and are concerned about over development. • Healthy natural areas provide clean air and water, cool areas, spaces for recreation, wildlife habitat and reduce GHG emissions. • These policies consider the well-being of water, plants and wildlife across various scales, from individual neighbourhoods to city-wide and regional levels. • New provincial legislation will increase density near important streams in Burnaby. Increasing density should increase housing for people as well as create more spaces for fish and other wildlife (see figure 1). • More development and densification are increasing demand on limited public land. New development should consider the impact on the ecosystem and use public land in multiple ways to provide environmental benefits.
2. Continue to approach growth in a way that considers the impacts on water and ecosystems, especially in the future redevelopment on the north shoreline of Burrard Inlet and the Still Creek and Fraser River floodplains.	
3. Use Development Permit Area (DPA) and Guidelines, to better protect natural areas and reduce the risk of natural hazards and disruption of archaeological sites. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Protect mature trees and environmentally sensitive areas with flexible development setbacks. b) Find ways to increase park or conservation land to protect streams in areas that will have high density or industrial use. 	
4. Use public spaces to achieve multiple community goals, such as addressing climate change, creating gathering places, offering recreation, and managing rainwater.	

Use Nature to Address Climate Change	
Policy Directions	Why We Are Proposing These Policies
5. Keep areas near rivers, streams and creeks as natural as possible and look for ways to uncover streams that had previously been hidden, buried or diverted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment creates the opportunity to restore rivers, creeks and streams to their natural state. • Protecting water quality and groundwater is important, especially during drought. • Increasing the flow of rainwater to downstream areas and into the ground will improve water quality and reliability, especially during drought. • Burnaby needs more cool and shady spaces since we are experiencing hotter weather each year.
6. Continue to manage rainwater on public and private lands in a way that considers environmental impacts. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Replace surfaces that do not allow water to flow through with ones that do, such as rain gardens and drainage channels with plants. b) Create policies to reduce the amount of runoff rainwater, improve water quality and restore groundwater. 	
7. Make and update policies and by-laws to help grow and improve trees and green spaces, on both public and private land. These policies should protect older trees, make sure everyone has access to cool, shady areas, and increase the variety of types of trees.	

Manage Natural Assets	
Policy Directions	Why We Are Proposing These Policies
8. Explore ways to pay for upgrades, improvements and maintenance of infrastructure and natural areas to adapt to climate change, such as through new developments, utility fees or taxes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burnaby needs more reliable funding to adapt to climate change, and finding new ways to pay for improvements can help leverage more funding from the provincial and federal governments.
9. Recognize the benefits and importance of natural assets, such as trees, plants, green spaces, streams and more, and invest in maintaining them. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Find ways to support the diversity of wildlife and plant life, such as managing species that are not native to the area, using plants that are native to the area and can adapt to climate change, protecting soil quality, and reducing noise, light, air and water pollution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees, wildlife, and natural water sources are valuable. They prevent erosion, improve air quality and provide recreation. • Many natural assets, including trees and water sources, can't be replaced by man-made infrastructure.

Environmental Education and Stewardship	
Policy Directions	Why We Are Proposing These Policies
<p>10. Recognize and prioritize Indigenous knowledge and leadership in protecting the environment.</p> <p>a) Identify and address each host Nation’s priorities for land use and protecting wildlife and plant life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host Nations are the original stewards of the land we live on and have valuable knowledge about how to care for the environment. • Ensuring host Nations and Indigenous people living in Burnaby can continue accessing the land for traditional uses will advance reconciliation. • Education and volunteerism are important ways to protect the environment, but volunteers and non-profits have limited time and resources. • Since the Fraser River Flood in 2021, the provincial government, federal government and industry have been working to restore ecosystems on agricultural land. • There are opportunities to improve water quality and fish habitat while flood infrastructure is being built. • Agricultural practices impact the water quality of streams in the area, which creates challenges for wildlife.
<p>11. Explore agreements and opportunities with host Nations and Indigenous people living in Burnaby to grow and harvest traditional foods, medicine and plants or wildlife that have cultural significance (e.g., large cedars for carving).</p>	
<p>12. Find resources and new ways to involve the public, volunteers and partners in environmental education, scientific research and protecting and caring for the environment.</p>	
<p>13. Work with landowners and other groups to improve rivers, creeks and streams around Agricultural land near the Fraser River to improve water quality and fish habitat.</p>	

Glossary

Development Permit Areas (DPA) and Guidelines: a set of regulations that apply to specific areas with related requirements and considerations for any development or alteration of land. The *Local Government Act* provides authority to municipalities to create development permit areas and guidelines and can cover a range of topics such as hazardous conditions, natural environment and form and character for development.