

Assignment 2 - Neighborhood Plan Scope of Work Assessment
 APPL 5220 Urban and Rural Planning | Langara Spring 2026
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Introduction

Cities around the world, including those in Metro Vancouver, are facing many intersecting challenges alongside urban growth and change. New Westminster is one such city: a historic heart of British Columbia located along the north arm of the Fraser River, within the unceded territories of Halkomelem speaking peoples.

This report provides a recommended scope of work for a new Connaught Heights Neighbourhood Plan. The area is bordered by Tenth Ave to the north, 20th Street to the east, Marine Way/Trapp Road to the south, and Fenwick Avenue to the west. **The objective of this report** is to highlight potential issues and opportunities that the City should consider when creating a plan for significant population growth and densification.



Connaught Heights, New Westminister dimensions and area. Source: New Westminister CityViews GIS.

Assumptions

Recommendations are based on the following data and assumptions for New Westminster:

Current City-wide population	90,200
Current neighbourhood population	1,800
Potential neighbourhood population build out	25,000
Current City transportation mode shares	Walking: 15% Cycling: less than 1% Transit: 20% Driving: 65%
Targeted transportation mode shares	Walking, Cycling, Transit: 60% Driving: 40%
Added vehicle capacity to the Queensborough Bridge or 20th Street	None

Issues to consider

Legislative requirements

While the City of New Westminster has already been planning to densify the 22nd St SkyTrain area through Comprehensive Development land use,¹ new provincial legislation is pushing the envelope for what's required. Transit Oriented Development (TOD) legislation was formally introduced by the Province of British Columbia in 2023. The TOD approach to land use aims to locate high-density, mixed-uses within walking distance from frequent transit to promote complete, sustainable, and livable communities.²

For New Westminster, this means:

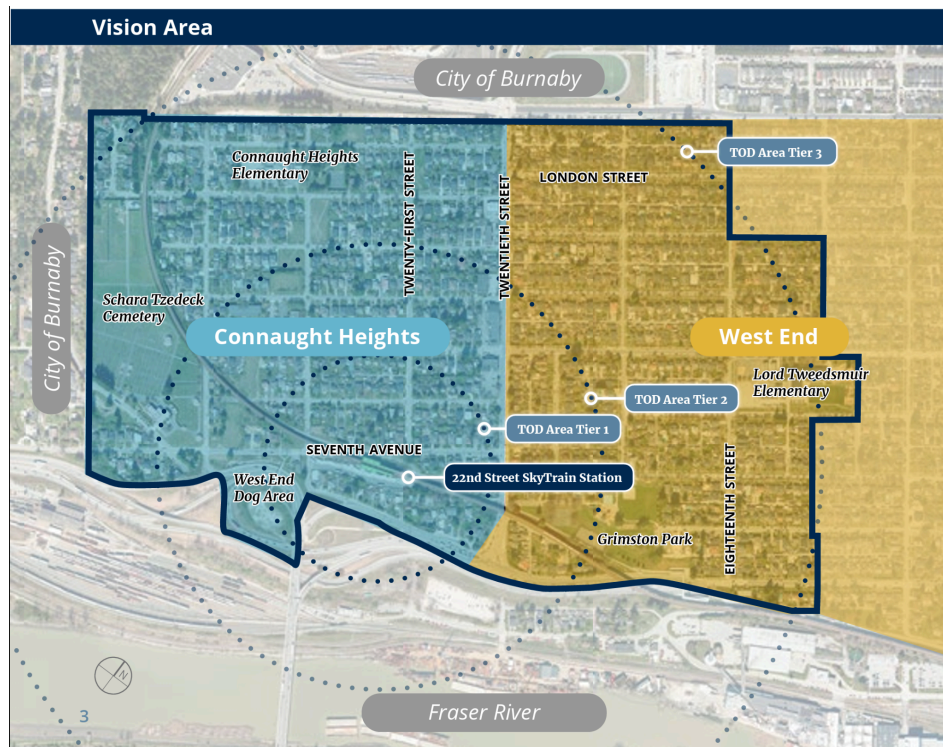
- The City must designate TOD areas by bylaw
- These are areas that are:
 - within 800 metres of SkyTrain stations
 - within 400 metres of a bus exchange
- Housing must meet a minimum density within these areas
- Off-street parking minimums must be eliminated

¹ "OUR CITY 2041."

² "Transit Oriented Development Areas - Province of British Columbia."

Transit Hub Type	Prescribed Distance	Minimum Allowable Density (FAR)	Minimum Allowable Height (Storeys)
Sky Train/ Canada Line (Rapid Transit Stop)	200m or less	Up to 5.0	Up to 20
	200m – 400m	Up to 4.0	Up to 12
	400m – 800m	Up to 3.0	Up to 8
Prescribed Bus Exchange or West Coast Express Station	200m or less	Up to 4.0	Up to 12
	200m – 400m	Up to 3.0	Up to 8

Minimum densities and building heights which apply to New Westminster as part of the provincial TOD legislation.³



TOD area (with tiered buffers) for Connaught Heights and West End.⁴

³ “Attachment 3: Bill 47 Transit-Oriented Development Areas Distances, Transit Stations and Densities by Category.”

⁴ “reGENERATE.”

A potential population buildout of 25,000 residents in Connaught Heights, which is over 13 times the current population, is significant. A community like this centred around the SkyTrain would rival the density of Downtown New Westminster once fully realized. There are several concerns to address in a neighbourhood plan.

Existing residents

The 2023 New Westminster Official Community Plan (OCP) designates Connaught Heights with two main land uses: “(RD) Residential - Detached and Semi-Detached Housing” and “Comprehensive Development”.⁵ The Comprehensive area is closest to the SkyTrain station, which indicates the City was already working towards higher density and mixed use in this zone even prior to provincial TOD legislation.

The City must also consider the Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing (SSMUH) legislation. For this neighbourhood, it means that the RD designated areas **must allow multi-unit housing per lot**. It should be noted that some areas in New Westminster are already compliant with this.⁶

The transition to a high-density network of comprehensive development, including high rises, will be a major change for those living there; not just for those whose homes will become towers, but for the houses which will remain as-is at first during the multi-decade process of developing such a community. The City, in creating a neighbourhood plan, should incorporate **tenant protection policies, clear communication channels, hands-on engagement opportunities, and due process** for informing residents of construction. A continuous process of accommodation and communication can ensure a smooth transition for the community as it evolves.

Utilities

For any significant densification, major utilities like sewers and drainage must be evaluated. If utilities cannot support development, it cannot be built. Typically, the developers of each property pay for utilities improvements and road dedication, but the network for the entire study area must be evaluated holistically, and in relation to regional utility management and capacity. Many of New West’s sanitary mains were built in the 1970s (Source: CityViews), and may not be able to handle the capacity of such a significant, dense increase in population.

New Westminster is one of the densest municipalities in the country. With relatively small streets and blocks compared to the region, **major upgrades would require disruptive construction** projects which divert traffic for several weeks at a time. This all must be taken into consideration, on top of the feasibility to make the upgrades in the first place. While less potable water infrastructure would be needed to service high rise apartments compared to a sprawled detached homes (which there’s no room for anyways,) the City should consult Metro Vancouver to ensure proper water supply can be provided to the neighbourhood.

⁵ “OUR CITY 2041.”

⁶ “Small Scale Multi Unit Housing.”

Environment

Environmental surveys should be conducted as part of the baseline assessment for the neighbourhood plan, unless up-to-date data exists already. Analysis should be done around **greenhouse gas emissions, stormwater management, green infrastructure, urban heat islands, hazardous slopes, and other factors** that are unique to the area. Understanding the environmental risks and ethical implications of housing 25,000 people in this small area is critical.

Transportation

Driving

There are noticeable daily traffic delays on the Queensborough bridge and along 22nd St. This doesn't just impact single-passenger traffic, but bus times.⁷ For this report, we are assuming that there will be no added vehicle capacity to the Queensborough Bridge or 20th Street, therefore traffic patterns should be considered in relation to an increased population.

New Westminster has implemented and continued to assess needs for traffic calming.⁸ The creation of a neighbourhood plan for Connaught Heights should holistically consider what traffic calming features will keep people safe and help achieve the City's goal to create people-centred streets. A high increase in population will inevitably mean more cars, so currently quiet streets will need to be properly managed for pedestrians.

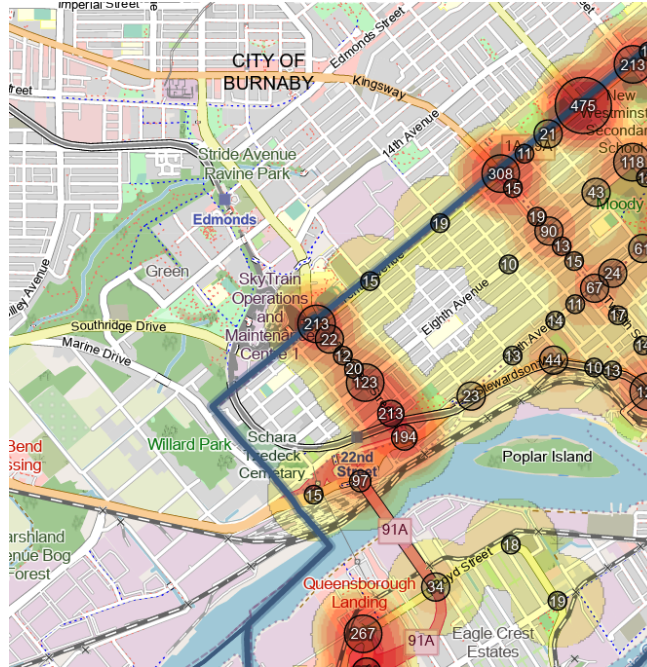
Transit and Active Transportation

This report assumes the city's target transportation mode shares are 60% walking, cycling, and transit (from current 36%), and 40% driving (from current 65%). With this shift in mind, foot traffic from the SkyTrain and bus stops will increase, and human safety and convenience of travel is important to the City already. For major arterial streets, **improvements to the sidewalks and bikeways** should be considered to create a safer, more pleasant public space for active transportation.

Although it is already relatively accessible to walk or roll to the SkyTrain station from within the neighbourhood's TOD zone, demand for bus services will likely increase. The City should collaborate with TransLink and the Ministry of Transportation to **ensure bus service is reliable**.

⁷ "NEW WESTMINSTER BUS SPEED AND RELIABILITY STUDY."

⁸ "Transportation Plans and Studies."



Total vehicle collisions from 2015-2019.⁹

Parking

The TOD legislation prohibits minimum requirements for off-street parking spots (i.e. those on housing development sites) for residential uses. This means if developers include little or no parking, then demand for street parking will increase. Even if the legislation deters people from driving, cars will not be completely eliminated. This must be considered in the design of new or improved streetscapes.

Schools

Connaught Heights currently has one elementary school. High school students go to New Westminster Secondary or Burnaby's Byrne Creek Secondary. To accommodate a growing population that includes families with children, the City should collaborate closely with existing schools and consider opening new schools as part of the neighbourhood plan, such as an **“urban school” in the TOD area** which integrates into comprehensive development. Even with current population numbers and a newly rebuilt secondary school, the City as a whole is already struggling with school capacity.¹⁰

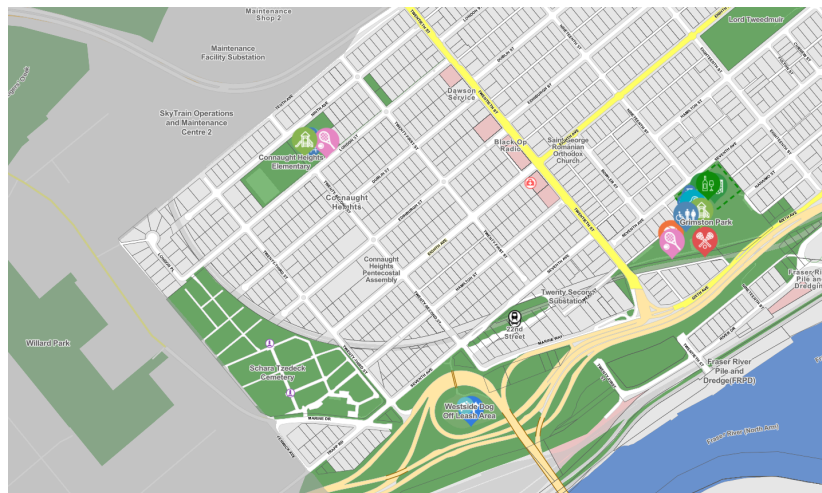
Parks

While there are a couple parks in Connaught Heights, there is a gap in the centre of the neighbourhood. As part of a new plan, **integrating pocket greenspaces** should be considered in addition to private ones at the base/roofs of residential buildings. As part of this planning,

⁹ “Heat Maps.”

¹⁰ “New Westminster Schools Can’t Keep up with Population Growth, but There’s Hope.”

running **recreational programming** is another key dimension for social and physical health. Like schools, integrating community spaces into comprehensive development is an option.



Parks in the area (Source: CityViews GIS).

Heritage

New Westminster has some of the oldest settler heritage structures in the region. The majority of homes in the 22nd St SkyTrain area were built before the 1960s, so some may have heritage value.¹¹ There are no residential homes listed in the Heritage Inventory¹², nor on the GIS system for official designated sites by bylaw.¹³ Still, the City should consider the implications for development proposals, such as **delayed development due to heritage applications**. Finding ways to **integrate certain structures** into development sites may be worth considering.

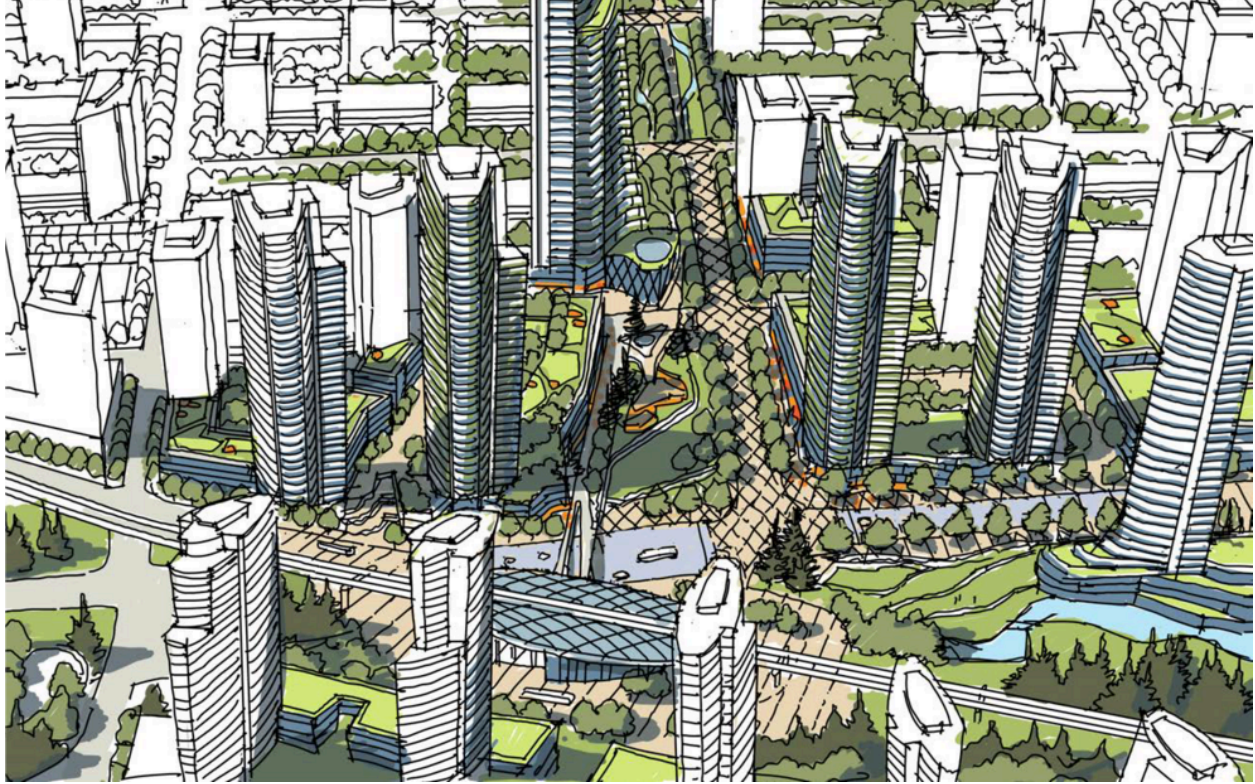
Emergency Services

With more residents, demand for emergency services will increase. The ability of emergency vehicles to access properties, and for professionals to access dwellings are key for community wellbeing. Ensuring there are **appropriate road and curbside access** for vehicles should be considered as part of the broader road and pathway network. This could include **additional street and lane connections** to major roads. The City may also wish to create a **new fire hall**.

¹¹ “reGENERATE.”

¹² “Heritage Inventory | City of New Westminster.”

¹³ “Heritage Designation.”



Concept drawing around 22nd St Station (Source: City of New Westminster)

Opportunities

The projected population growth for this neighbourhood scenario is significant. Potential growth would bring New West's total population from 90,200 to at least 115,000, nearly a quarter increase. It would create a bigger community around 22nd St station, distinct from downtown New West while undeniably connected to it. New West is not a large city by area, and is the second most dense municipality in Canada. Connaught Heights is only about 56 hectares (139 acres) in area.

Although this report has discussed issues the City and community will face when developing for this growing population, there are some major potential benefits:

- Vibrant public realm and streetscape
- Green infrastructure
- Better community amenities and services
- Sustainable movement
- Social connection
- Health and wellbeing
- Housing supply
- Long-term utilities improvements

Expertise required to complete a neighbourhood plan

If the City executes a neighbourhood-scale plan for Connaught Heights in New Westminster, the consulting team creating the plan should include the following expert contributions:

- **Indigenous consultant** to provide holistic, collaborative recommendations throughout the process to ensure Indigenous voices and priorities are incorporated into the plan
- **Public engagement specialists** to plan and facilitate engagement with the existing community, ensuring they are informed on important information and their feedback is integrated into the neighbourhood plan
- **Urban designers, architects**, to visually represent the plans and communicate them to stakeholders throughout the process
- **Communications coordinators** to manage public relations and communications plans
- **GIS analysts/technicians** to create maps and perform spatial analysis which empirically support plan-making
- **Social, housing, and economics experts** for creating baseline assessments, projections, and recommendations
- **Transportation planners** for creating baseline assessments, projections, and recommendations
- **Qualified Environmental Professionals (QEPs)** for performing geotechnical surveys and preparing recommendations

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