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CP16#0068

March 28, 2014

Chair Tom Mielke
Commissioner David Madore
Commissioner Steve Stuart

Subject: City of Vancouver Comments on Countywide Employment Forecast

Honorable Commissioners:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the selection of a long term countywide employment forecast for the upcoming County Comprehensive Plan update. We appreciate the consultation in this process to date.

As you know local economic development depends on a range of factors, particularly having appropriately sized and located properties that have adequate public services. In terms of a total jobs forecast, we recommend selecting a 2035 target of 219,000 jobs countywide to begin this update process. This is the third and most ambitious scenario provided in Scott Bailey's January 31, 2014 memorandum, and as he states it would represent a conscious effort to increase the ratio of jobs to housing countywide.

We believe this is preferable to the more recently added and more aggressive forecast option of 232,500 jobs countywide. That forecast does not appear realistic, as it would require adding 91,000 new jobs, or almost two new jobs for every new household in the next 20 years. This would require more than doubling the existing county ratio of 0.8 jobs per household.

More importantly, choosing a 232,500 jobs target can have negative consequences for the region's ability to efficiently provide services, as the forecast number will be used for transportation modeling and other capital facilities planning purposes. An unrealistically high number can distort model results, estimates of projects needed, and funding projections. This very concern was discussed at a March 20 meeting of employment stakeholders.

The adopted forecast also must be used to determine land supply needs. While it appears that existing Urban Growth Areas countywide have adequate supplies to accommodate 91,000 new jobs, the development assumptions have not been finalized, and an unrealistically high forecast could also trigger UGA boundary expansions, with limited analysis of the real employment potential of the lands that are added.

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The last point bears emphasizing. At this time the City of Vancouver is focused on serving and developing existing urban areas, and does not envision proposing expansions to the Vancouver UGA in this update. We have heard similar thinking from other cities, although some have expressed interest in keeping options open for strategic property opportunities as the process moves forward. We therefore recommend that if there are to be UGA expansions, they only be done "bottom up", in response to specific sites identified as having uniquely strong employment potential, not "top down" as large areas colored on a map simply to meet an overall target.

We suggest that this is best done by selecting at the start of this planning process an aspirational but realistic jobs forecast of 219,000 jobs for 2035. This could be adjusted before June 2016 if demonstrably warranted by specific lands involved.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



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McCall, Marilee

From: Snodgrass, Bryan
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2014 12:54 PM
To: McCall, Marilee; Orjiako, Oliver; City IT Auto-Replies
Subject: Vancouver letter for 4/1 BOCC hearing
Attachments: City ltr BOCC on jobs fcast 14 03 31 fnl.pdf

Our letter. I will probably come and submit