

This information from the Closed Council meeting of January 29, 2024, was released to the public on February 15, 2024.

CLOSED COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, January 29, 2024

Surrey Economic Strategy 2024: Investing in Our Future

That Council:

1. Authorize the Mayor to disclose information contained in the Strategy at the State of the City Address; and
 2. Authorize the General Manager, Community Services to release the Strategy following the State of the City Address.
-



Investing in Our Future

A Roadmap to Realizing the Opportunities of Tomorrow

City of Surrey Economic Strategy 2024



Mayor Brenda Locke

Message from the Mayor

City of Surrey is forging ahead to create a modern, world-class city, and I'm immensely proud of how our community has risen to this challenge. Surrey's reputation as a regional economic powerhouse is a testament to our collective determination. As we know, Surrey is one of the fastest growing municipalities in the province and we will soon overtake Vancouver as BC's most populous city.

Surrey is a city for families and we are building a community for today and for the future. As we grow, our focus remains firmly on the people – cultivating job opportunities, enriching livability, and addressing the needs of our ever-growing population.

The newly unveiled 2024 City of Surrey Economic Strategy stands as a pivotal milestone, guiding us toward a future where Surrey continues to thrive as a vibrant hub, fostering a robust business environment and driving us toward a remarkable future in which individuals can live, work and play in our great city. The development of this strategy has been shaped by the invaluable insights of our business partners, academic leaders, and diverse community stakeholders in Surrey. I extend my gratitude to our partners for their vital contributions to the 2024 Economic Strategy.

As your City Council, our dedication to this incredible city knows no bounds. From attracting substantial investments that generate high-quality jobs to championing

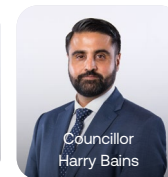
local enterprises, the prospects for Surrey shine brightly. We are building an inviting and livable community with boundless investment opportunities for our residents and businesses. I look forward to witnessing the remarkable achievements that the next five years will bring. I am confident in our shared vision and commitment to propel Surrey to even greater heights. .

Brenda Locke, Mayor

City of Surrey Councillors



Councillor
Linda Annis



Councillor
Harry Bains



Councillor
Mike Bose



Councillor
Doug Elford



Councillor
Gordon Hepner



Councillor
Pardeep Kooner



Councillor
Mandeep Nagra



Councillor
Rob Stutt



Message from the Chair

The 2024 Economic Strategy stands as the cornerstone of economic planning and development in the City of Surrey, delineating our City's economic vision for the next five years through a roadmap packed with definitive, impactful actions, and viable solutions. As Surrey strides forward on its trajectory to cement its status as a global city, our steadfast ambition is to transform Surrey into a nationally acclaimed epicenter for innovation with unfettered opportunities accessible to all.

As chair of the City's Investment, Innovation, and Business Committee, I look forward to working with members of the committee as well as the rest of City Council to realize this strategy. It is through bold decision making, collaboration, and innovation that we will be able to ensure Surrey is globally positioned for the opportunities of today and the future.

Harry Bains, Councillor

Investment, Innovation and Business Committee Members



Brenda Locke



Dean Barbour



Bill Brooks



Joanne Curry



Robert Helsley



Anita Huberman



Ed Michielsen



Anita Parker



Pierre Poulain

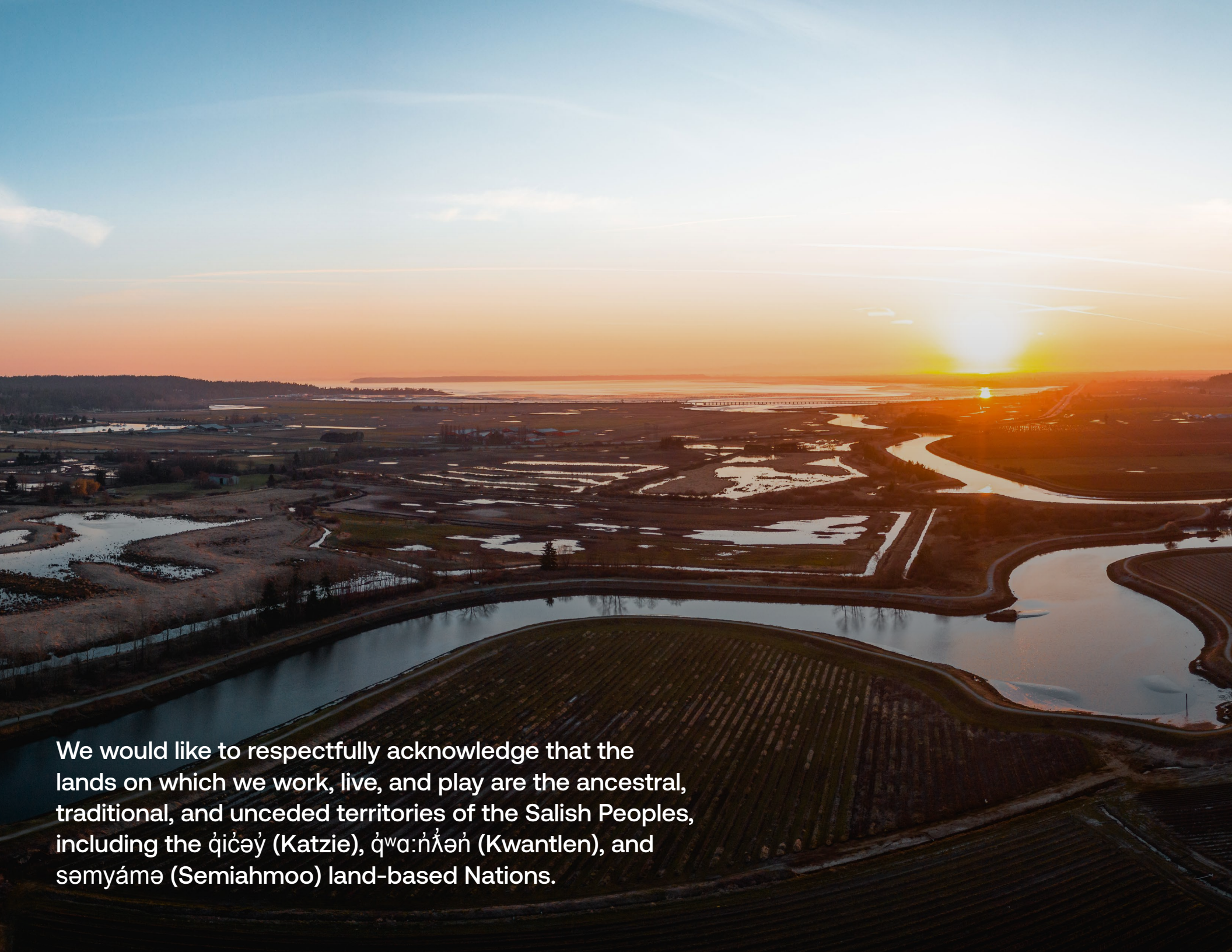


Peter Smailes



Councillor Harry Bains

Chair of the Investment, Innovation and Business Committee



We would like to respectfully acknowledge that the lands on which we work, live, and play are the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territories of the Salish Peoples, including the ǵícəy̓ (Katzie), ǵʷɑ:ńłəń (Kwantlen), and səmyámə (Semiahmoo) land-based Nations.



Our Partners

It takes strong partners to build a fast-growing city. We would like to recognize the various organizations that informed the creation of the 2024 Economic Strategy.

We are grateful for the support and expertise of individuals, businesses, organizations, and community groups who continuously contribute to the development of our economic vision and priorities for Surrey. Such collaborative efforts have been instrumental in shaping our strategic priorities for the next five years and have significantly enriched the quality and depth of this strategy. The diverse perspectives and expertise contributed by our partners have truly made the strategy a testament to collective innovation and partnership. **Key partners that have contributed to this strategy include:**

- B.C. Centre for Agritech Innovation
- BC Hydro
- Canada's Global Innovation Cluster
- Cloverdale Business Improvement Association
- Cloverdale District Chamber of Commerce
- Consider Canada City Alliance
- Destination BC
- Discover Surrey
- Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association
- Fleetwood Business Improvement Association
- Foresight Canada
- Fraser Health Authority
- Global Affairs Canada
- Government of British Columbia
- Government of Canada
- Health and Technology District
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
- Innovate BC
- Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
- Invest in Canada
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills
- Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation
- Newton Business Improvement Association
- Next Generation Manufacturing Canada
- Pacific Economic Development Canada
- Quantum Algorithms Institute
- Simon Fraser University
- South Asian Business Association of British Columbia
- South Surrey and White Rock Chamber of Commerce
- Surrey Board of Trade
- Surrey City Development Corporation
- Surrey Hotel and Motel Association
- Trade and Invest BC
- TransLink
- University of British Columbia





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Executive Summary

Recent projections show that Surrey will cross the one-million-person mark in the not-too-distant future.

The most aggressive projection shows that we'll reach that milestone as early as 2042, suggesting very rapid growth from today's estimated population of 610,900. This forecast is both inspiring and galvanizing. It's a testament to the appeal of our diverse city, but it's also a signal that we must prepare. Rapid growth brings many benefits, but it also brings pressures. We need to adapt and accelerate our development as a city to accommodate this growth. This will be key to achieving our vision of becoming a modern, highly-livable, world-class city and investment destination.

This strategy describes our approach from an economic perspective. There's one main goal that guides economic development activities at the City of Surrey: achieving a ratio of one job per resident worker.¹ For a population of one million people, that equates to a total of over **540,000 jobs** — 309,000 more than exist in Surrey now. Creating this number of jobs in just under twenty years demands bold action today.

Mayor, Council, and City staff understand the scale of the challenge, and are committed to meeting the moment. Over the next five years, the City is determined to be proactive and to position Surrey for this growth, while working closely with business, academic, and regional partners as well as senior levels of government.

1. This goal was first established in the City of Surrey's Official Community Plan

Four Strategic Priorities

This economic strategy comes amid global and national conditions that have changed dramatically since we released our last strategy in 2017. Recent economic headwinds, major shifts in global order, and updated provincial and federal government priorities have introduced new challenges – and also new opportunities.

This strategy's priorities and actions are designed to adapt to changes in the world and leverage our considerable assets to capitalize on emerging trends to create the jobs we need as we grow.

We focus on four strategic priorities:

- Priority 1. Investment Attraction and Readiness
- Priority 2. Employment Lands Optimization
- Priority 3. Innovation, Talent, and Workforce
- Priority 4. Local Business, Vibrancy, and Distinct Communities

Priority 1. Investment Attraction and Readiness ●

To accelerate job creation, we need to attract transformative investments to Surrey. We define transformative investments as those that – in addition to creating high-quality jobs – will increase business-supporting assets (e.g., hotels or a convention centre), bolster our innovation ecosystem, enhance infrastructure, or are in a priority sector. To succeed, we also need to enhance our investment readiness –



that is, the state and availability of various elements that companies require to set up operations and thrive in a location. We want sites to be fully ready for company operations within 18 to 24 months of an investment decision being made. Importantly, investment readiness actions are also designed to support the expansion of existing Surrey businesses.

Key actions related to attracting transformative investments include targeting priority markets to increase qualified investment leads suitable for Surrey, streamlining permitting, and refreshing the Invest Surrey brand to support promotion activities.

Priority 2. Employment Lands Optimization ●

We must be strategic about how we leverage one of our biggest assets: our employment lands. Decisions made today about their use will have profound effects on Surrey's economic growth, resilience, and vitality in the decades to come. This strategy is designed to optimize our industrial, office, commercial, and agricultural lands in order to support job creation, economic diversity, and resilience.



Executive Summary



Key actions include bringing more industrial land online; prioritizing investments on industrial sites that intensify activities (i.e., grow the number of jobs or value produced per square foot) and densify buildings (i.e., increase floor area through additional building height or volume); supporting the development of high-quality, pure office space to attract large investments in target sectors; adding more commercial space across the city to match the city's growth; protecting agricultural land; and seeking out opportunities to connect agricultural businesses with innovators.

Priority 3. Innovation, Talent, and Workforce ●

Innovation and talent development are key to creating jobs and future-proofing the economy. We have a significant innovation community, including excellent entrepreneurs and outstanding post-secondary institutions such as Simon Fraser University (SFU), Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU), and the University of British Columbia (UBC). Other important assets include our diverse and talented workforce,

researchers in key sectors, and advanced technology labs and institutes. We need to support our entrepreneurs and innovation community. One key way to do so is to develop a significant workforce with skills in computer science, engineering, mechatronics, finance, medicine, and trades, among other disciplines for the roles that are in demand in Surrey today as well as those we anticipate to be in demand going forward.

Key actions focus on supporting innovative scale-up companies, relaunching Innovation Boulevard as a new and enhanced brand, advocating for more post-secondary seats, creating skills bootcamps and micro-credentialing programs, and supporting skilled immigrants to more easily attain Canadian credentials in their fields.

Priority 4. Local Business, Vibrancy, and Distinct Communities ●

As the city and economy grow, we must also ensure that all Surrey communities benefit and remain vibrant and great places to live. This means that they must have enough transportation infrastructure, community spaces, and social infrastructure like medical clinics, public schools, post-secondary institutions, and child care spaces to meet the needs of a growing population.

Key actions include working with senior levels of government to expand social infrastructure and attracting health care services and medical offices to communities across Surrey. We will also engage with local businesses and business associations

to develop programs that encourage commerce throughout the city and increase the appeal of each major community as a destination. A prominent action under this priority is the initiation of the development of two new Entertainment Districts in City Centre and Cloverdale.

See the Strategic Action Plan for full list of actions for each priority above.²

Managing Growth and Collaborating to Build a Modern City

Woven throughout the entire strategy are several major themes. Each priority is designed to contribute to creating quality jobs, enhancing livability, improving investment readiness, and bolstering economic resilience. These themes emerged in our engagement activities and heavily influenced the design of the strategic pillars and actions.

While developing Surrey's economy will require a citywide effort, involving numerous City departments, executing this strategy successfully will also require continued collaboration and consultation with business, academic, government, and non-government agency partners. We will seek out opportunities to work with each, and together prepare Surrey for its future as a modern, highly-livable, world-class city.

² City of Surrey Economic Strategy 2024 Strategic Action Plan.



Big Bold Moves

01

One job for every resident worker.

02

Building Surrey into a modern, world-class city.

03

Strengthen the City's investment into Invest Surrey and investment attraction.

04

Prioritize transformative investment opportunities.

05

Increase Surrey's inventory of investment ready sites (18-24 month target).

06

Enhanced service for development partners that elevate our employment lands.

07

Increase support for scale-up and expanding businesses.

08

Relaunch Innovation Boulevard 2.0.

09

Build Entertainment Districts and increase vibrancy.

10

Invest in Surrey-specific modelling and data frameworks.



Part 1

Becoming a Modern World-Class City in a Changing World

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Becoming a Modern World-Class City in a Changing World

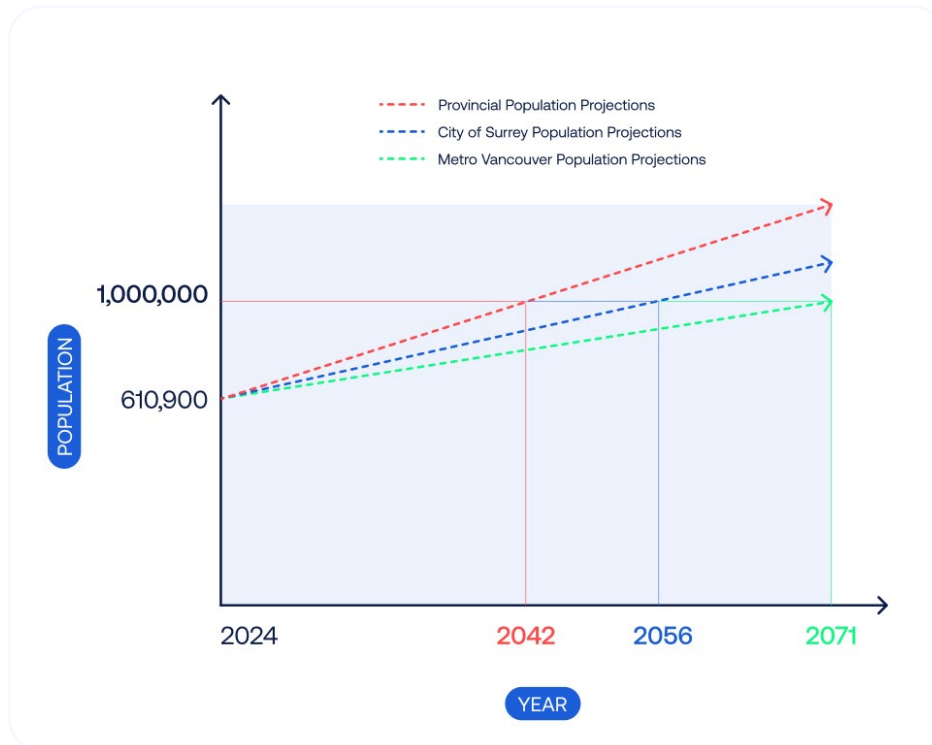


Figure 1. Population growth projection scenarios for the City of Surrey by BC Stats, Metro Vancouver, and City of Surrey

Recent projections for Surrey's growth show that the city will become home to a million people within the next two to three decades, with the earliest forecast anticipating that our population hits this milestone by 2042 (figure 1).³

This new reality means that we must accelerate our economic development work if we're to achieve our vision of becoming globally-recognized as a modern, highly-livable city and world-class destination for investment. Creating that future on an accelerated timeline demands bold action today. In fact, it will require a coordinated, whole-of-society approach, including efforts that focus on environmental sustainability, social development, infrastructure, and the economy. This strategy describes our preparations for that future from an economic development angle.

The objective that guides our economic development activity, as first established in City of Surrey's Official Community Plan,⁴ is **to have one job in Surrey per resident worker**. That goal remains unchanged. But these new projections mean that we must now be prepared to meet that objective for a city of a million people in just under twenty years. To put it into numbers, it means that we need to have a total of over **540,000** job opportunities by then, representing **309,000** more jobs than exist here today.⁵

Mayor, Council, and City staff understand the scale of challenge, and are committed to meeting the moment. Over the next five years, we will be proactive in positioning Surrey for this growth, while working closely with partners in the business community, academic institutions, and other levels of government.

3. Projections vary by source. Projections by BC Stats put Surrey's population at one million by 2042. The City of Surrey's internal projections calculate that milestone to arrive in 2056. Metro Vancouver's projections show Surrey crossing the one-million-person mark in 2071. For BC Stats' calculation, see Government of British Columbia Data Catalogue, BC Sub-Provincial Population Estimates and Projections and calculator. For Metro Vancouver's projection, see Metro Vancouver Population Projections.

4. According to the 2021 census, Surrey has 0.75-jobs to resident workers ratio.

5. According to the 2021 census, 54.2% of Surrey's total population is in the workforce (308,190 people). These are people who are of working age, currently working, or actively looking for work. Our methodology for projecting our future job requirements applies the proportion from the 2021 census to a population of a million people. The result is a total of 542,000 jobs.



Becoming a Modern World-Class City in a Changing World



Fortunately, Surrey has an abundance of assets that serve as a foundation for growth. We have a diverse and highly-skilled local workforce.

We attract experienced professionals, with new residents predominantly working in health care, technology, or financial services and having a post-secondary education. We have the largest share of the Metro Vancouver region's industrial lands at 22%.

We're home to campuses of major post-secondary institutions – **Simon Fraser University (SFU)**, **Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU)**, and soon **University of British Columbia (UBC)** – which together produce a steady supply of talented graduates in advanced technologies, manufacturing, and health care, among other disciplines.

We're located next to the border and at the nexus of key transportation infrastructure, including ports, international airports, and major highways. Our innovation ecosystem is continuously adding new and valuable assets, like the **Quantum Algorithms Institute** and SFU's Fuel Cell Research Lab and new Smart Manufacturing Hub. These all set the stage for success going forward.

To achieve our vision, we need to be deliberate and strategic about how we capitalize on these assets. We must realize their full potential to attract investment, develop talent, and contribute to job creation. This requires a strategic framework that maintains a clear-eyed focus on fundamental economic principles and today's hard facts while also keeping an eye to the horizon and the opportunities that may arise as promising new trends emerge.

To adapt and succeed, we'll have to go beyond the typical economic development activities of investment attraction, local business expansion, research, and marketing. Attracting transformative investments and creating the jobs that we need require that we also focus on enhancing investment readiness and livability in Surrey over the next five years. Actions in this plan reflect this expanded purview.

Surrey is a city of possibility. Today's circumstances demand that we be ambitious and accelerate our progress to prepare for the coming decades and grow into the vibrant, modern, and premier metropolis that we all envision.



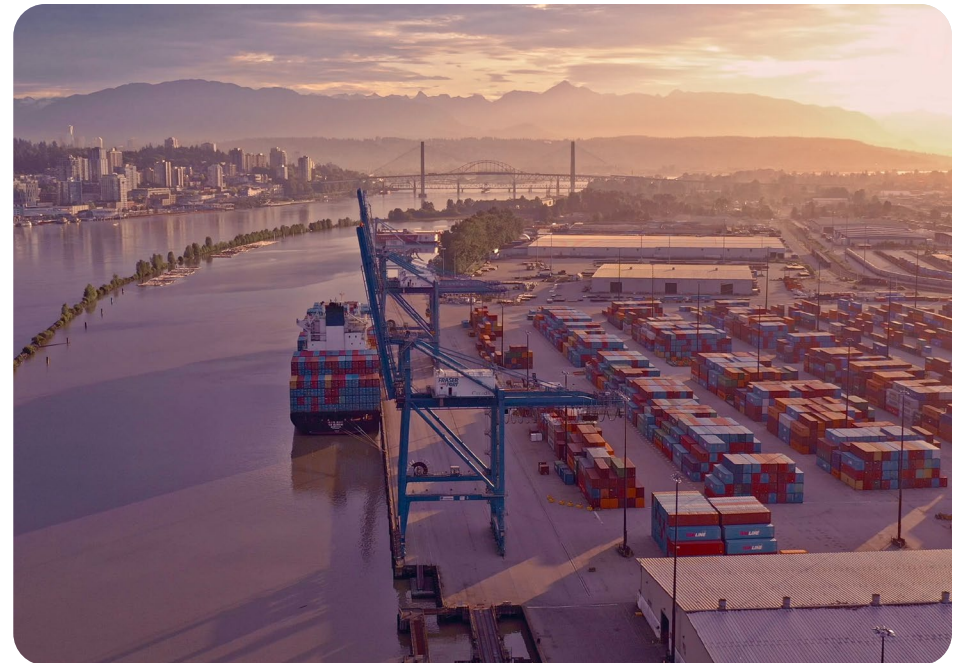
Challenges and Opportunities in a New Global Environment

Since we released our last economic strategy in 2017, global and national conditions have shifted dramatically. Recent economic headwinds, major shifts in global order, and updated provincial and federal government priorities have introduced new challenges and opportunities.

Regarding economic conditions, economists have projected that Canada's real GDP growth may decelerate as the country and its major trading partners adjust to a higher interest rate environment.⁶ The Federal Government has cautioned that the rapid monetary tightening by central banks over the past two years can create uncertainty, including surprise disruptions with major negative impacts (also known as black swan events). This uncertainty can change the calculus when it comes to major investments by manufacturers, building developers, and other businesses,

and can result in hesitation, delay, or abandonment of projects altogether. We must use the levers that we have – policy, coordination with other levels of government, and our network of businesses and partners – to enhance certainty where we can and make the city attractive for investment and expansion, even in the face of current macroeconomic challenges.

On the global stage, the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions, and challenges to the global rules-based order have precipitated profound changes in international trade and investment. The pandemic and major conflicts have exposed strategic vulnerabilities, which has spurred companies to prioritize 'friendshoring' to stable democratic jurisdictions and national governments to strengthen supply chains of critical goods and rebuild domestic capacity in strategic sectors. This presents a window of opportunity for Surrey to attract major investments by companies that are looking for new safe harbours – and we must be prepared. To capitalize, we need to ready our sites for investment, add needed infrastructure, and ensure sufficient talent is available. Once the action settles and investment decisions



are made, this window will have closed and the jurisdictions that gained investments will enjoy the social and economic benefits that accompany them for decades to come. It's crucial that Surrey attracts its share of these investments and the high-quality jobs they create.

One way we can do this is by aligning our investment attraction priorities with

new federal and provincial priorities that designate certain sectors as strategically important to Canada's economic growth. Both levels of government have established programs and incentives to support companies in sectors like agritech, cleantech, and health care (also referred to as the care economy).

6. Government of Canada. Budget 2023. A Made-in-Canada Plan: Strong Middle Class, Affordable Economy, Healthy Future



Challenges and Opportunities in a New Global Environment



Figure 2. Snapshot of some of the existing strategies and plans in the City of Surrey.

Consider the drive to build Canada's clean economy, which the Federal Government has described as a new national priority.

To spur growth in the sector, the Federal Government is providing cleantech manufacturers with access to low-cost financing, tax credits, and targeted investments, including those made through its major innovation support program, the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF).⁷

BC's Economic Plan can amplify the impact of these federal programs as it delivers on elements of CleanBC: Roadmap to 2030, including its focus on BC's Hydrogen Strategy and InBC Investment Corp., a \$500-million strategic investment fund designed to foster cleantech innovation. If we align our investment attraction and readiness efforts with the priorities articulated by senior levels of government, we can leverage their funds and programs to act as a tailwind for our economic growth and the creation of high-quality, future-ready jobs here in Surrey.

Within the City of Surrey, many plans and strategies have also been developed or are underway to support the growth of Surrey. These strategies

together make up the City's vision for a green, vibrant, and thriving city (figure 2).

“Situated near the US border and along the Fraser River, Surrey is a prime location to move goods in and out of BC. Our strategic location has not gone unnoticed.

Whether it is a small family run business, government office, company headquarters or provincial distribution hub, more and more businesses are relocating to Surrey or expanding operations here.

With ample space to accommodate a wide range of businesses and access to a highly educated workforce, there are numerous advantages for setting up shop in Surrey. I invite you to explore all that Surrey has to offer.”

– Brenda Locke, Mayor, City of Surrey

7. Specific vehicles to spur growth in the cleantech space include the Investment Tax Credit for Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage, Investment Tax Credit for Clean Hydrogen, Investment Tax Credit for Clean Technologies, Investment Tax Credit for Clean Electricity, Investment Tax Credit for Clean Technology, and the recently announced Canada Growth Fund.



Strategic Themes: Quality Jobs, Enhanced Livability, Improved Investment Readiness, and Economic Resilience

Key themes are interwoven throughout this plan: job creation, livability, investment readiness, and economic resilience. These themes emerged in our engagement consultations and heavily influenced the design of the strategic priorities and actions.

Creating Quality Jobs

Job creation is the primary objective of our economic development efforts. But our efforts must go beyond sheer numbers alone. We must also focus on creating the types of high-quality jobs that will position Surrey for the future. We need to prioritize job creation that aligns with the talent emerging from our post-secondary institutions, and prepare our workforce for emerging technological developments, including artificial intelligence and advanced automation.

It's also vital that the jobs we create allow residents to lead enriched personal and professional lives here. Because of its paramount importance, we will always view our investment attraction, business expansion, talent development, and asset optimization efforts through the lens of job creation.

“The economic opportunities that will shape our future are here today. We must be investment ready and as such, the City will do its part to ensure we are able to accommodate the needs of our local companies seeking to expand or major international firms looking to establish their Canadian HQ right here in Surrey.”

– Councillor Harry Bains, City of Surrey





Strategic Themes: Quality Jobs, Enhanced Livability, Improved Investment Readiness, and Economic Resilience

Enhancing Livability

Growth can bring pressures to infrastructure, services, and cost of living that can affect quality of life. We need to ensure that the livability of our city grows in lockstep with the population. Livability refers to the quality of life that residents feel as a result of several interrelated factors, including vibrancy, public safety, access to services, entertainment options, spaces supporting active social lives and community participation, and elements of social infrastructure (e.g., health care services, K-12 education, housing access, child care, etc.).

Surrey's livability is crucial to its economic development and competitiveness as a place to do business. Company leaders want to make investments in cities where their employees will enjoy living and building families, and Surrey's six major communities must retain their unique and attractive characteristics amid our rapid growth to remain viable places for small and boutique retail and dining establishments to thrive. We've considered impacts on livability throughout this plan and included actions directly related to it in *Priority 4: Local Business, Vibrancy, & Distinct Communities*.

processes, and suitable land use policies are among them.

To attract major investments in key sectors – that is, those that align with federal and provincial priorities, can leverage our assets, and will produce high-quality jobs – we need to ensure that the conditions in Surrey are ready for them. We focus heavily on this in *Priority 1: Investment Attraction and Readiness*, but it's also a priority that's threaded throughout the rest of the plan, with actions related to talent and livability also enhancing our investment readiness.

local suppliers. Actions in *Priority 4: Local Business, Vibrancy, and Distinct Communities* are specifically designed to address this.

A third approach is to ensure that our employment lands are optimized, meaning they're used by high-value businesses that employ large numbers of people in high-quality jobs, as *Priority 2: Employment Lands Optimization* dives into further. Throughout the strategy, we've considered how our priorities and actions can help us take an uncertain future into our own hands as much as possible to ensure that we stay on track regardless of whatever external shocks tomorrow may hold.



Improving Investment Readiness

To be investment ready means to have all of the elements a company needs to set up and thrive prepared or available ahead of time. There are a few items that commonly show up on investment readiness checklists: a skilled and diverse labour force, land availability, site readiness (e.g., sufficient power infrastructure), a well-designed transportation and public transit system, smooth local government

Bolstering Economic Resilience

Surrey's economy must continue to grow and add jobs even in the face of global and macroeconomic change and uncertainty. There are a few ways that we can bolster our resilience against potential negative economic surprises.

One way is to ensure that we have a diverse economy – a key reason for our focus on several new priority sectors. Another way is to increase the strength of local supply chains and promote

“Handling critical project cargo for the Province’s key infrastructure projects, Fraser Surrey Docks enhances the region’s international trade profile, fosters economic resilience, and positions Surrey as a growing center for commerce and innovation.”

– Douglas Smith, Chief Executive Officer,
DP World Fraser Surrey



Surrey at a Glance

Our Vision

The City of Surrey will become a modern, highly-livable, world-class city, and a recognized investment destination and innovation centre.

Our Mission

To create a vibrant business ecosystem that catalyzes the development of well-paying jobs, transformative investments, and innovation.



Economic Growth

- Home to over 20,000 businesses
- 3,000+ new businesses added in 2023
- A 23% growth rate in businesses since 2017
- Over \$12 billion worth of new construction in Surrey since 2017



Education and Research Capabilities

- Currently, over 28,000 students enrolled at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) Surrey campuses receiving education and training in fields including mechatronics engineering, computing science, business, trades, health, and interactive arts and technology
- New University of British Columbia (UBC) at Surrey presence soon providing training in health care including physical therapy, occupational therapy, and midwifery disciplines
- Dedicated research and testing capabilities at Foresight Cleantech Accelerator Centre, Powertech Labs, and Surrey Memorial Hospital



Surrey at a Glance



Dynamic Demographics

- 2023 population: 610,900
- 2nd highest population in BC with a 9.7% growth rate
- Soon to become the largest city in British Columbia
- Approximately 23% of the population is 19 years of age or under
- 100+ languages spoken
- 45% of Surrey's population comprises of immigrants



Global Connectivity

- Three international airports within 45 minutes (YVR, YXX, and BLI)
- Home to the largest modern, multi-purpose marine terminal on the West Coast of North America with convenient access to the Port of Vancouver
- Direct access to major east-west and north-south highways
- Two international border crossings (United States)



Major Employers

- Fraser Health Authority
- Surrey School District #36
- RCMP
- City of Surrey
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Coast Capital Savings
- ICBC
- Sunrise Farms
- Teal Jones Group
- Coast Mountain Bus
- Genesis Security Group
- FortisBC
- Prospera Credit Union
- LMS Reinforcing Steel Group Canada
- LifeLabs



Collaboration is Key: Involving Surrey's Business Community and Partners

We developed this strategy with valuable input from Surrey's business, academic, and community stakeholders. Over the course of developing this plan, we engaged with more than 1,300 individuals and 90 organizations.

At the centre of our consultation process were three targeted engagement sessions, designed to provide the City with insight on three important topics:

1. Surrey's innovation ecosystem
2. Industrial land and manufacturing
3. Local business vibrancy and support

These sessions deepened our understanding of the priorities that stakeholder groups hold and heavily influenced the themes of this strategy. Executing this plan successfully will require continued collaboration and consultation with these partners. For more information, refer to the Economic Strategy 2024 Engagement Report.

Collaboration will also extend to other organizations. While developing Surrey's economy will require a citywide effort, involving numerous City of Surrey divisions, some priority actions in this plan go beyond the purview of the City, and will require decisions from non-municipal agencies or other levels of government to achieve. We will seek out opportunities to work with each and will advocate for actions by presenting ideas and initiatives, coordinating stakeholders, and providing data and analysis from the business community.





Our Four Strategic Priorities

01

Investment Attraction and Readiness

To attract transformative investments and increase our investment readiness to create well-paying jobs and secure the growth of strategic industries in our community.

02

Employment Lands Optimization

To ensure that Surrey has sufficient industrial, office, commercial, and agricultural space, optimized to create jobs, support priority sector companies and expanding local businesses, and future-proof our economy for emerging trends.

03

Innovation, Talent, and Workforce

To build a robust innovation ecosystem, support the scaling up of innovative companies in priority sectors, and create more opportunities for talent development, attraction, retention, and upskilling.

04

Local Business, Vibrancy, and Distinct Competitive Communities

To establish a resilient economy, enhance livability for residents as we rapidly grow, and develop each of Surrey's business communities into vibrant and distinct places.



Part 2

Strategic Priorities

- 23 Priority 1: Investment Attraction and Readiness
- 33 Priority 2: Employment Lands Optimization
- 45 Priority 3: Innovation, Talent, and Workforce
- 57 Priority 4: Local Business, Vibrancy, and Distinct Communities



Priority 1: Investment Attraction and Readiness

Objective

To attract transformative investments and increase our investment readiness to create well-paying jobs and secure the growth of strategic industries in our community.

Rationale

- Enhancing investment readiness is vital to attracting major corporations and supporting the expansion of existing local businesses.
- Transformational investments, as defined in this section, represent catalytic opportunities that can create jobs and rapidly accelerate Surrey's growth into a modern, world-class city.

Key Actions

1. Intensify Surrey's global investment attraction activities for priority sectors and markets.
2. Increase qualified investment leads suitable for Surrey.
3. Refresh and expand the Invest Surrey brand and marketing strategy.
4. Increase the number of investment-ready sites (ready for construction on 18–24-month timeline).
5. Explore new partnership framework with utility providers to enhance site readiness in Campbell Heights.
6. Advocate for increased transportation investments to connect our employment lands.
7. Streamline permitting processes to improve speed and efficiency.
8. Initiate first steps to unlock employment land opportunities in Bridgeview/South Westminster.



Investment Attraction and Readiness

We must attract major transformative investments into the city to create the jobs that we require. When companies choose to do business in Surrey – whether by expanding an existing presence, setting up their first Canadian operations, or partnering with local companies – they deliver immense benefits to our economy.

Apart from job creation, domestic and foreign direct investment (FDI) can strengthen local supply chains, anchor clusters in emerging sectors, introduce existing businesses in Surrey to new knowledge and techniques, and signal the city's appeal to other Canadian and global firms.

Investment attraction has always been a core economic development activity for the City. The work we've done over the last five years has laid a solid foundation for the ambitious approach that we must now undertake to ensure we're positioned to attract global and domestic companies to invest here.

That work involved the creation of the Invest Surrey brand to promote investment opportunities and showcase our assets, successes, and story as a fast-growing metropolitan city (visit investsurrey.ca to find marketing materials and related digital tools).

Since the launch of the 2017 Economic Strategy, we've raised the Invest Surrey banner at hundreds of engagements, both in Surrey with visiting international delegates and on missions abroad with the **Canadian Trade Commissioner Service and Trade and Invest BC**. We've also been admitted to the **Consider Canada City Alliance (CCCA)**, a partnership of the fourteen most prominent city-region investment attraction agencies in Canada.

This has all had a measurable impact.





Investment Attraction and Readiness

In that timeframe, Surrey has seen a tripling of qualified investment leads – from 46 in 2018 to 146 in 2022 – and several prominent companies establishing a presence here, including **McKesson Canada** (United States) and **CTK Bio Canada** (South Korea) to name only two.

Going forward, we need to intensify these investment attraction activities. We also need to add new ones focused on investment readiness, which refers to the availability and preparedness of the various elements that companies need to set up operations and succeed. Our aim is to assure companies making major investment decisions that the sites they choose in Surrey will be fully ready for their operations within 18 to 24 months of their decision to invest.

Actions in this Priority section will be key to ensuring that Surrey is the best option for the investments we're targeting and is well-known as such.

What is a Qualified Investment Lead?

Not all investment opportunities are the same. A qualified investment lead is one that the City has determined is ready, sizeable, positive for the local economy, and has the potential to create high-quality jobs. **Below are elements that the City considers when evaluating leads and the level of support that the City of Surrey should provide:**



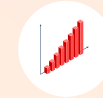
Size of Investment

Is the investment significant?
How much detail is the company willing to disclose?



Time

How soon does the company need to begin operations and what is driving this timeline?



Type

Does the investment align with Surrey's priority sectors? Will it produce positive economic spin off and job creation opportunities in our community?



Job Creation

Does the opportunity create quality well-paying jobs for Surrey residents?



Budget

Does the company have the necessary resources and investment partners to realize their project?



Experience

Is it the company's first expansion project or have they already successfully executed a similar expansion elsewhere?



Support

Can we help the company identify creative solutions to their site selection requirements?



Sources of Surrey's Investment Leads

It's no surprise that companies expanding into British Columbia consider Surrey to be an attractive investment option.

Surrey is strategically-located and relatively affordable for staff compared to elsewhere in the Metro Vancouver region. It should also come as no surprise that most of Surrey's investment interest comes from our largest trading partner to the south, the United States.

Recently, we've been seeing more companies come from farther afield. Over the past three years, Surrey has seen significant investment interest from companies in Europe (e.g., Germany, France, and the UK) and Asia (e.g., Taiwan and South Korea) as business leaders seek safe harbours amid global uncertainty and find Canada's political stability and progressive immigration framework attractive (figure 3).

We'll proactively work with our local businesses, expatriate communities, and government partners to build stronger trade relations with countries in these regions and promote investment opportunities to companies there.

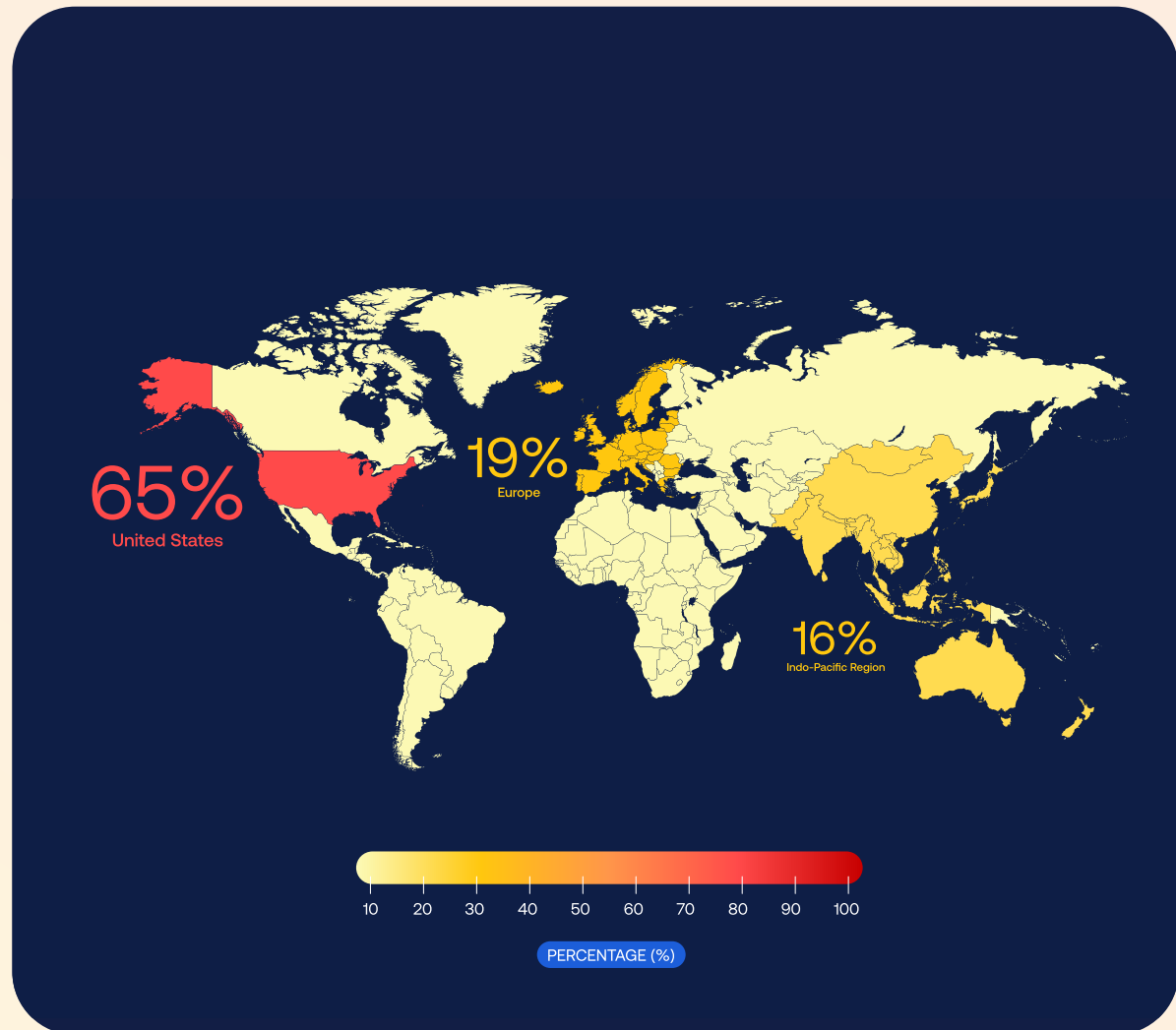


Figure 3. Major Foreign Direct Investment Interest by Global Region 2021-2023



Attracting Transformative Investments to Surrey



While 80% of new job growth typically comes from existing businesses,⁸ we'll need more than that to meet our job creation goals for a population of a million. We'll need to attract major, new transformative investments.

We consider transformative investments to be those that not only create many high-quality jobs, but that also:

- are in a priority sector (as described below)
- enhance infrastructure (e.g., support development of new power capacity)
- increase business-supporting assets (e.g., hotels, a convention centre, coworking spaces)
- or add to innovation ecosystem infrastructure (e.g., research labs).

Attracting these transformative investments will provide benefits beyond job creation alone, as they also have the potential to increase the resilience of Surrey's economy and enhance the diversity of our industry (figure 4).

Surrey's Priority Sectors of Focus

We've identified certain sectors as priorities for investment attraction. These have been chosen for one or more of the following reasons: they can bolster our current economic clusters, have significant growth potential, align with federal and provincial priorities, or will enhance livability and social infrastructure. In developing the priority sectors, we focused on promising emerging sectors while also remaining deeply connected to prominent existing sectors in Surrey – those that have powered Surrey's growth to make it into the city it is today. While our future will include innovative ideas and companies of the future economy, it will also continue to feature the industrial companies and competitive manufacturing and assembly that has been the cornerstone of Surrey's economic past.

The priority sectors for investment attraction include:

Cleantech

This refers to companies that develop or produce technologies or processes that enhance environmental

sustainability, mitigate climate change, or reduce negative environmental impacts. This can include a focus on electric vehicles, battery storage, waste recycling, renewable energy production, or carbon capture, among other technologies and processes. Surrey is already home to several important cleantech assets, including the new **SFU Sustainable Energy Engineering** facility and **PowerTech Labs** with its industry-leading focus on hydrogen technologies. Examples of Surrey's homegrown cleantech companies include **Ensol Systems, CIMTech Green Energy, BI Pure Water, and Ocion Water Science**.

Healthtech

This refers to companies that develop or produce technologies that improve health care processes or outcomes. Products can range from software that optimizes hospital staffing to AI-driven diagnostic tools to robotics used in surgical operations. Driven by our growing strengths in robotics and sensor technologies, companies such as **Target Tape, Scanbo, Oncocyte, and Conquer Experience** are leading this sector's growth in Surrey.

8. University of Florida website. Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Programs: Why Existing Businesses Are Important. Authors: Derek Farnsworth, Jennifer L. Clark, and Henry Cothran.



Attracting Transformative Investments to Surrey

Advanced Manufacturing

This refers to companies with products or processes that integrate novel technologies that improve the manufacturing process. Also referred to as Industry 4.0, common advanced manufacturing technologies include machine learning, automated robotics, and the Internet-of-Things (IoT). This remains Surrey's flagship sector, with prominent existing companies including **Genesis Advanced Systems, Automation West Technologies, Apex Motion Controls, and Nanak Foods.**

Agritech

This refers to companies developing technologies that improve or manage farming and agriculture. Examples include information technology that automates or analyzes agricultural processes, autonomous agricultural robotics for harvesting or pest management, and sensor technology for monitoring soil moisture. Surrey is home to the **B.C. Centre for Agritech Innovation (BCCAI)**, along with innovative companies such as **LED Smart, Argus Controls, Eteros, and BC Greenhouse Builders.**

Digital/ICT

This primarily refers to companies with a focus on software and application development but also includes those focused on advances in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and interactive arts and technology. Surrey is home to the **Quantum Algorithms Institute**, along with companies such as **Safe Software, Numerix/Fincad, Wallero, INEO, Vaisala, and Fluxwex.**

Care Economy

This refers to organizations focused on primary and allied health services. Family physicians, specialist doctors, pharmacies, and other allied health providers are all part of the care economy. Surrey is home to the **Fraser Health Authority's** headquarters, and a large segment of our resident workers are employed in this sector.

Entertainment

This refers to companies and facilities that can host major entertainment and business events or provide everyday leisure options for a growing population. Investments could include major sports complexes, theatres, and businesses that attract and support tourism.

We aim to attract long-term commitments from large international and domestic companies in these sectors, and we will also encourage regional companies in these sectors to explore expansion opportunities here. This will require us to be bold, as we'll be competing with many other major cities for the rush of friendshoring-driven investments. That's why we'll intensify our promotional activities with partners, and show global companies the opportunities they have in Surrey, the next modern, world-class city. We'll

also refresh the Invest Surrey brand and design a new marketing content strategy that showcases Surrey's value proposition to these companies, our success stories, and the city's growth trajectory.





Defining Transformative Investments

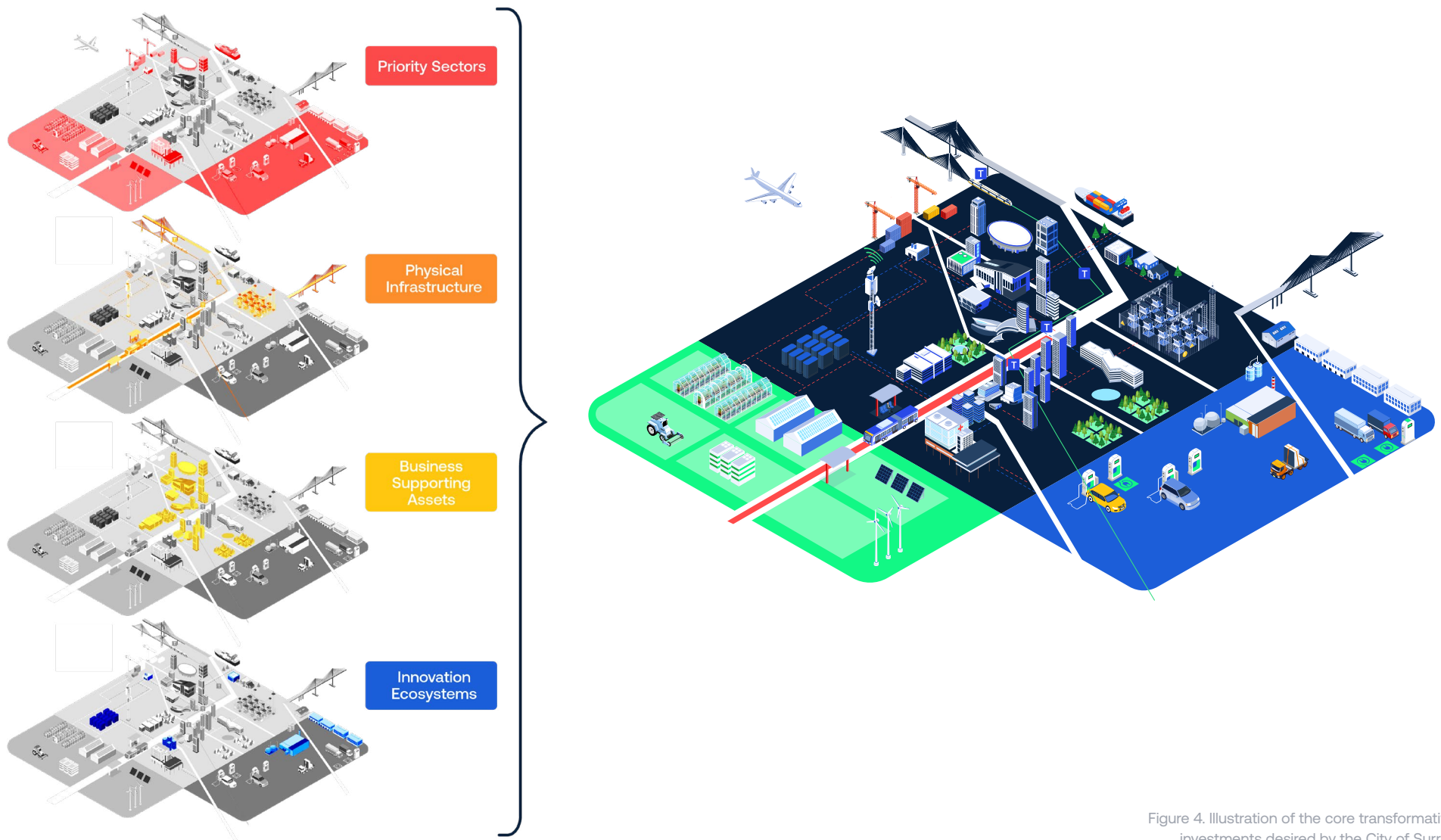


Figure 4. Illustration of the core transformative investments desired by the City of Surrey



Garaventa Lift and a Steadfast Commitment to Surrey

Garaventa Lift, a company with roots tracing back to Switzerland, established its presence in Surrey during the 1970s, having secured a significant contract to construct the Grouse Mountain Skyride. Captivated by the beauty and economic opportunities of the region, the company made a deliberate commitment to establish its home base in Surrey. Garaventa later shifted its focus to the manufacturing of accessibility solutions, pioneering innovative solutions to create a more accessible world.

As it looked to expand, the company maintained its steadfast commitment to Surrey, citing strategic advantages such as border accessibility, proximity to the port, a diverse labour force, and a rich cultural experience. And as Surrey undergoes dynamic growth today, Garaventa Lift remains a strong leader in the manufacturing sector, specifically noted for its excellence in producing home elevators. The company is an enduring, important, and valued presence in Surrey's industrial landscape.

Growing Sectors that will Enhance Our Economic Diversity and Resilience

Enhancing our economic diversity and resilience will require strengthening certain sectors in Surrey, including professional, scientific, and technical services; health; advanced manufacturing; and retail. It will also require focusing on priority and emerging sectors in order to enhance and future-proof our economy. This isn't to overlook the major drivers of Surrey's economy today — which include construction, manufacturing, and the general service sector — all of which we expect to remain key drivers of the economy going forward (figure 5).

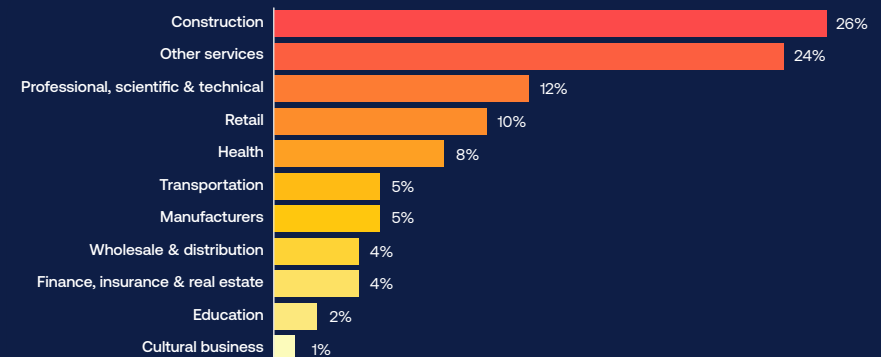


Figure 5. Distribution of businesses by NAICS sector in Surrey, City of Surrey business license directory, 2023



Increasing Surrey's Investment Readiness

To attract transformative investments, we need to assure companies that suitable sites will be ready for their operations within 18 to 24 months of making a major investment decision.

By the time decisions are made, these companies have typically lined up the financial resources required for the investment and are looking to get operations underway in short order. We want to ensure they have confidence that they'll be able to do so in Surrey.

At the site level, we have notable strengths already. For example, there is ample access to fibre optic broadband across the city, with continued investment into futureproofing our community being made by major telecoms like Telus and Rogers. But there are also major gaps that exist. Many sites lack sufficient power infrastructure for large-format or high-intensity operations. Other sites lack physical infrastructure that's built to modern specifications (e.g., large enough truck courts, a mix of office and warehousing space). These need to be addressed.

Several actions in this strategy focus on preparing our industrial land sites for targeted investment. For instance, we'll explore establishing a new partnership framework with **BC Hydro** and private development partners to identify creative ways to increase power capacity to sites in Campbell Heights, where industrial land is available. This will support the attraction of heavy power users in sectors like advanced manufacturing and cleantech. It will also add to significant related work that is already happening elsewhere in the city, including over \$104 million in

capital and customer projects, and commitments to support electrification and load growth.

We also want to prepare for the medium and long term. Land in Bridgeview/South Westminster has significant potential investment value, considering it's next to key infrastructure like Scott Road SkyTrain Station and is Surrey's last remaining developable waterfront area. But detailed study of the complex geological and environmental characteristics of the area must precede any planning or development. We'll perform a needs assessment here, taking the first step to determine how we can unlock that land's value.

We'll also focus on the medium-term in Cloverdale. With the construction of the new Cloverdale Hospital, we expect there to be increased demand nearby for medical office space. We'll identify suitable sites for the building of employment space in the area, so that it's ready to go as that locality comes online as Surrey's newest health care hub. We'll also work with the newly-established **KPU Communities Trust**, a subsidiary of **Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU)**, to create opportunities for companies to co-locate around KPU Tech Campus in order to foster strong industry-academic partnerships that can create value for those companies and jobs for the community.

Beyond site preparation, investment readiness means that companies also have access to a diverse and skilled labour force, that there's a well-designed transportation and public transit system to get people to work, that government processes are smooth and predictable, and that the local community is highly livable.



Bus Rapid Transit is Coming

Surrey will soon be getting a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, which will provide greater transit accessibility to residents and workers here.

With dedicated bus lanes and rail-like stations along King George Boulevard, BRT will connect the city's north end with South Surrey and beyond, supporting residential and commercial growth along this corridor and providing an estimated 133,000 additional Surrey residents and workers with fast, frequent, and high-capacity transit service. The City will begin working with TransLink on the service and infrastructure concept designs in the first half of 2024.



Increasing Surrey's Investment Readiness

This strategy includes actions related to these. For example, we'll streamline permitting processes to improve speed and efficiency by adding target timelines and dedicated issues managers. We'll also enhance transportation options for workforces in the city, including through preparations for new bus rapid transit along King George Boulevard. Other priorities in this strategy – including those focused on talent and livability – will also contribute to enhancing our investment readiness. Finally, we'll also create a new investment readiness index that will help us gauge our current investment readiness state, measure our progress, and enable us to direct attention to the highest-impact activities.

“In a construction project like [ours] there are always some changes, there's always a miss somewhere, but the City of Surrey was super accommodating, and that was part of the success.”

– Jean-Philippe Blouin, Senior Vice President of Pharmaceutical Distribution and Operations, McKesson Canada

Reducing Red Tape and Increasing Permitting Speeds

Add Target Timelines and Dedicated Issues Managers

To accelerate the permitting process, we'll establish new target timelines that aim to ensure responses to applications come in a reasonable timeframe. If the response time exceeds established timelines, then new dedicated issues managers will step in to identify roadblocks, coordinate with the teams involved, and usher the application through the remaining stages and toward the finish line. Priority will be given to rezoning, development, and building permits.

Revamp the Certified Professional Program

We will review and refine the Certified Professional Program (CPP) standards and the list of Certified Professionals to ensure that it streamlines permitting processes and speeds up reviews, as it's intended to do. The CPP complements the City permitting process by allowing registered architects and professional engineers who have completed the

Certified Professional Course and its exams to provide building code reviews for project design work and liaise between the City of Surrey and stakeholders in a project.

Use Artificial Intelligence to Speed Up Permitting

We will aim to speed up permitting through the use of AI tools that can fill education gaps and enhance communication about the development process. We'll explore large language model applications that can answer questions about bylaw compliance and other topics. We'll also explore machine vision applications that can review drawings and provide feedback on their compliance with BC building codes.

Create a Citizens Portal

We'll create a Citizens Portal that will increase transparency by allowing applicants to see where their applications are in the development stream and review which tasks remain.



Priority 2: Employment Lands Optimization

Objective

To ensure that Surrey has sufficient industrial, office, commercial, and agricultural space, optimized to create jobs, support priority sector companies and expanding local businesses, and future-proof our economy for emerging trends.

Rationale

- Employment lands should be used in ways that contribute to the City's long-term goals.
- Sufficient employment space is needed to create the number of jobs that we require.
- Developing Surrey's downtown requires continued investment in commercial and office space.
- Protecting our industrial and agricultural land advantage is vital for our growth and resilience.
- Decisions made today about how our employment lands are used will have a profound effect on Surrey's economic growth, resilience, and vitality for decades to come.

Key Actions

1. Industrial:

- Bring more industrial land online.
- Prioritize investments that intensify activities (i.e., grow the jobs or value produced per square foot) and densify buildings (i.e., increase floor area through additional building height or volume).
- Develop policy frameworks that support high intensity use of industrial zoned spaces.

2. Office:

- Promote pure office development projects to major public and private sector companies in office-heavy sectors, while recognizing market trends for office.
- Leverage new health-related investments to incentivize office space development.
- Work with developers to increase the viability of pure office projects by securing much-needed pre-lease requirements.

3. Commercial:

- Add commercial space across Surrey to increase vibrancy and support local businesses and necessary services in all major communities.
- Explore a live-work classification that's right for small business entrepreneurs to operate from their homes.

4. Agricultural:

- Protect agricultural land uses and promote food security through agri-innovation and the attraction of high value agri-industrial companies to Surrey.
- Encourage the clustering of agri-food and agritech companies to cluster in industrial areas near the Agricultural Land Reserve.



Employment Lands Optimization

Our employment lands are among our most important assets, and to meet the employment requirements that we know are coming, we must be strategic about their use. Decisions made today will have a profound effect on Surrey's economic growth, resilience, and vitality for decades to come.

Surrey has 22% of the region's industrial land base (the largest share in the region)⁹ and a growing city core, giving us a relative advantage in a region suffering from acute scarcity. Employment lands optimization – ensuring lands are used in ways that contribute to the City's long-term goals – goes hand-in-hand with our investment attraction activities and support for local business expansion. Our actions will focus on optimizing Surrey's industrial lands, creating office and commercial spaces, and protecting important agricultural land.

9. Metro Vancouver. Metro Vancouver 2020 Regional Industrial Lands Inventory: Technical Report. 2021.



Industrial Lands: Surrey's Land Advantage

To realize our goals, we need to bring more industrial land online, and prioritize investments that intensify activities (i.e., grow the jobs or value produced per square foot) and densify buildings (i.e., increase floor area through additional building height or volume).

Across the region, industrial land is in short supply. Consider: according to Colliers International, a healthy vacancy rate for industrial lands is between 3% and 5%.¹⁰ Metro Vancouver's stood at 1.4% in Q4 2023. Surrey's market is only slightly better, with a vacancy rate of 1.7% in Q4 2023.¹¹ Naturally, competition has become fierce for available land and asking rental rates have soared as a consequence. This has a major impact on our economic growth as a city. It affects how attractive we are as an investment destination, makes it more difficult for companies in priority sectors to find sites when they need them, and creates an impediment for successful Surrey companies looking to expand.

Addressing this scarcity requires bringing more industrial land online and ensuring, to the greatest degree possible, that its use aligns with the City's goals. Recognizing the challenge, the City has already resolved to open approximately 340 acres of new employment land in South Campbell Heights (slated to come online by 2026), which can translate into an estimated 8.5 million sq ft of building floor area.



As more land becomes available, we will focus our attention on seeking investments by companies that have high-value operations and that require buildings that maximize floorspace (e.g., through multi-level, mixed-use facilities). We'll facilitate this by engaging Surrey businesses to uncover ways that we can plan and adapt regulations to improve the feasibility of such buildings, attract companies, and encourage the

expansion of local companies in our priority sectors that require this format. Echoing actions related to investment readiness, we will work with local developers to advocate to provincial utility providers for new and needed infrastructure so that these sites are ready for high-intensity operations.

10. Colliers Canada. Website article. Too Much or Not Enough? 2023

11. Ibid.



Figure 6. Illustration of a sample high-intensity industrial facility based on an aggregation of solutions-based manufacturers site selection criteria in Surrey, City of Surrey, 2023

Industrial Land Intensification and Densification

Encouraging the development of higher-density industrial facilities is already a practice in other jurisdictions where land is scarce, including in Hong Kong, the San Francisco Bay Area, and even elsewhere in the Metro Vancouver region. Developing high-density industrial-format buildings isn't just about maximizing land. It's also about creating more efficient workflows that leverage next-generation Industry 4.0 technologies and robotics to increase productivity.

We're beginning to see demand for this in Surrey. We've seen a rising number of inquiries for higher-density industrial buildings in Bridgeview/South Westminster, and have also seen developments in Campbell Heights pursue underground parking, a rarity in the industrial market.

Walmart Canada recently opened a 300,000 sq ft robotic distribution centre, that leverages vertical space so its robots can pick and place more goods within the facility. This all falls under the idea of optimizing industrial land.

We've worked with numerous medium-sized manufacturers that are seeking a new, more flexible type of space — one that would allow them to manufacture within a smaller warehouse footprint with office-type workspaces on a second or third floor to accommodate software engineers, programmers, and researchers (figure 6). Companies such as **Nexe Innovations**, which produces compostable single-use coffee pods, and **LED Smart**, which manufactures specialized LED lighting for transit systems and greenhouses are two examples of companies that are operating in such facilities here in Surrey.

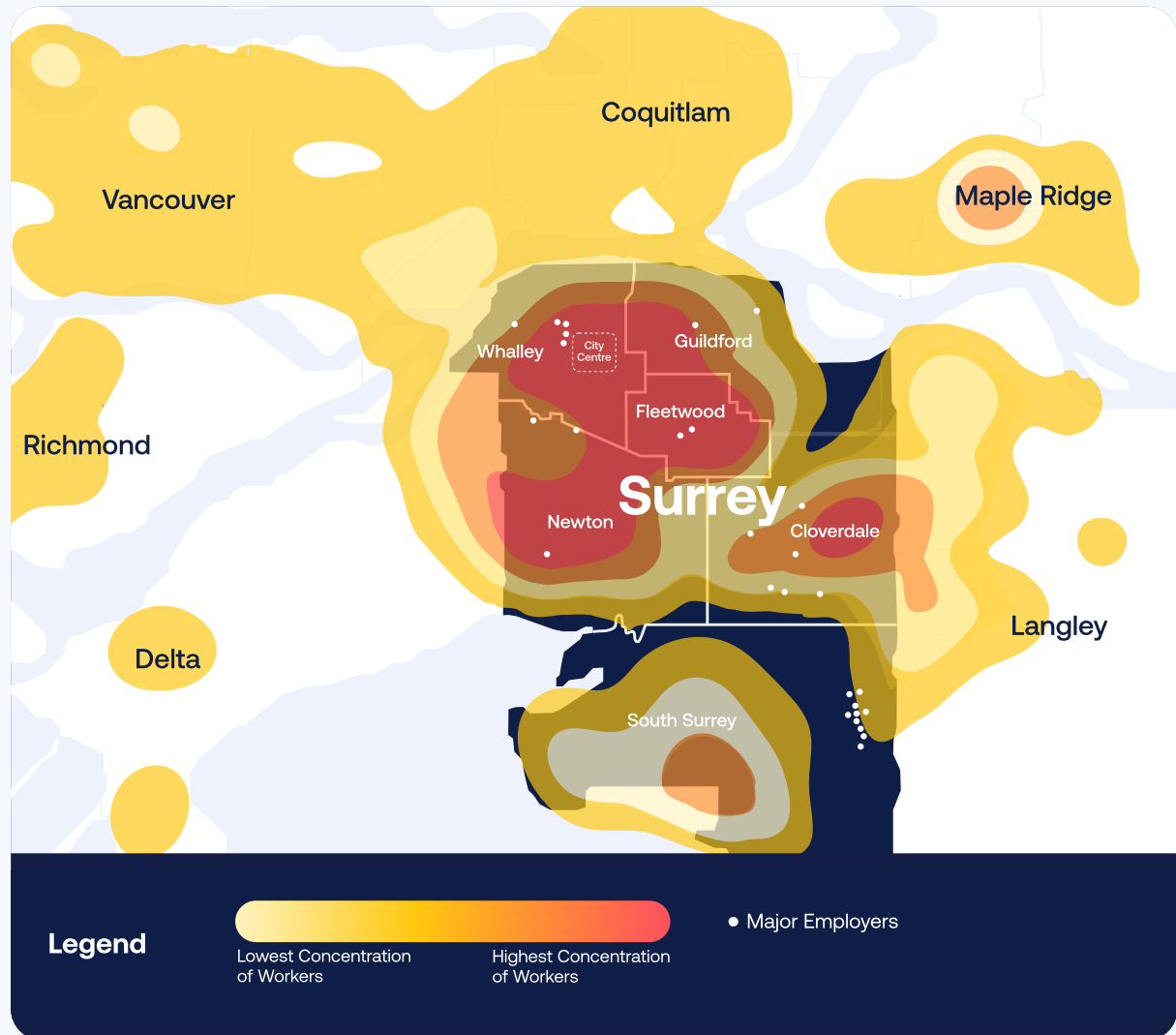
This is a trend that fits well with this strategy. We'll look to attract more companies seeking higher-density industrial facilities for high-value operations and encourage the design of more efficient spaces to accommodate them. To support this further, we'll work with the private sector to determine how we can ensure our zoning and land use plans can better fit with these market-driven changes.



Retaining Surrey's Resident Workers

Over the past decade, Surrey has seen a rise in the number of people who both live and work in the city. Between 2016 and 2021, the percentage of people whose commutes take more than 60 minutes decreased by 4.9%, while the percentage of residents with employment less than 30 minutes from home increased by 4.3%. Showing a similar trend, the percentage of people who commuted within Surrey rose by about 3% from 2016 to 2021.¹²

We expect this trend to persist. As our economy continues to evolve from primarily production-based to one that's more balanced with professional and solutions-based companies, we expect that there will be more opportunities for highly-skilled talent to both live and work in Surrey. In fact, a recent study looked at where employees of over 30 major Surrey employers live, and – no surprise – most already live here (figure 7).



¹². Statistics Canada Census of Population 2016 and 2021.

Figure 7. Concentration of where Surrey's workers live. Source: City of Surrey, 2022.



Case Study

Nanak Foods is Embracing Growth, Innovation, and Community Impact

Nanak Foods is the largest food processor of traditional South Asian dairy-based foods in North America, with product sales in over 14 countries. They operate in a 56,000 sq ft manufacturing facility in South Newton, a community that's home to many mid-sized manufacturing businesses. Their success has led them to expansion and a new chapter in another part of Surrey. Soon, Nanak Foods will move into a sprawling, 293,000 sq ft facility in the Campbell Heights Industrial Park.

The new facility in Campbell Heights will feature state-of-the-art, automated processing lines, which will significantly enhance production capacity for their diverse range of 55 food products. While a globally recognized brand, Nanak Foods is deeply committed to its Surrey roots and is proud to be a major employer in the community. 300 people will have full-time jobs in the new facility, which will provide amenities like daycare, reflecting the company's dedication to the well-being of its workforce. Nanak Foods is also the recipient of a \$7.5 million manufacturing jobs grant from the Province of BC to support their expansion efforts.

"Our expansion project allows us to modernize our operations and produce more food locally, while creating jobs and opportunities for our dedicated team to grow with us." – Gurpreet Arneja, President and Co-Founder, Punjab Milk Foods



Case Study

Delta Controls Is Powering Surrey's Global Technological Footprint and Sustainable Innovation

Delta Controls, a subsidiary of Delta Electronics based in Taiwan, has become an excellent example of economic success in Surrey, having established a global network of partners spanning over 80 countries in its 40-year history here. Delta Controls is a leader in the development of cutting-edge automation systems for the commercial, health care, hospitality, education, and retail sectors, excelling in research, manufacturing, technical support, software, firmware, and marketing. Leveraging Surrey's robust academic institutions and diverse talent pool, the company attracts highly-skilled professionals in finance, engineering, and software development.

Delta Controls has seen significant growth over the past five years, prompting a \$100 million investment for further expansion. This initiative includes adding parking to accommodate a growing workforce and the construction of a new multi-level facility. Beyond its commercial success, Delta Controls contributes to smart building innovation for a sustainable future, aligning its technology with efforts to tackle global environmental challenges.

A key player in industry standards development, Delta Controls plays an important role in Surrey's economic growth story.



Office Space: Preparing for the Future amid Office's Changing Role

The COVID-19 pandemic caused society to rethink how people work. As work-from-home became a new norm, millions of square feet of office space throughout the world were left vacated.

The debate around what the future of work will look like rages on. Some prominent companies have mandated more in-office work days for their employees. Others have completely abandoned their office presences. What the future of the office exactly looks like remains unclear.

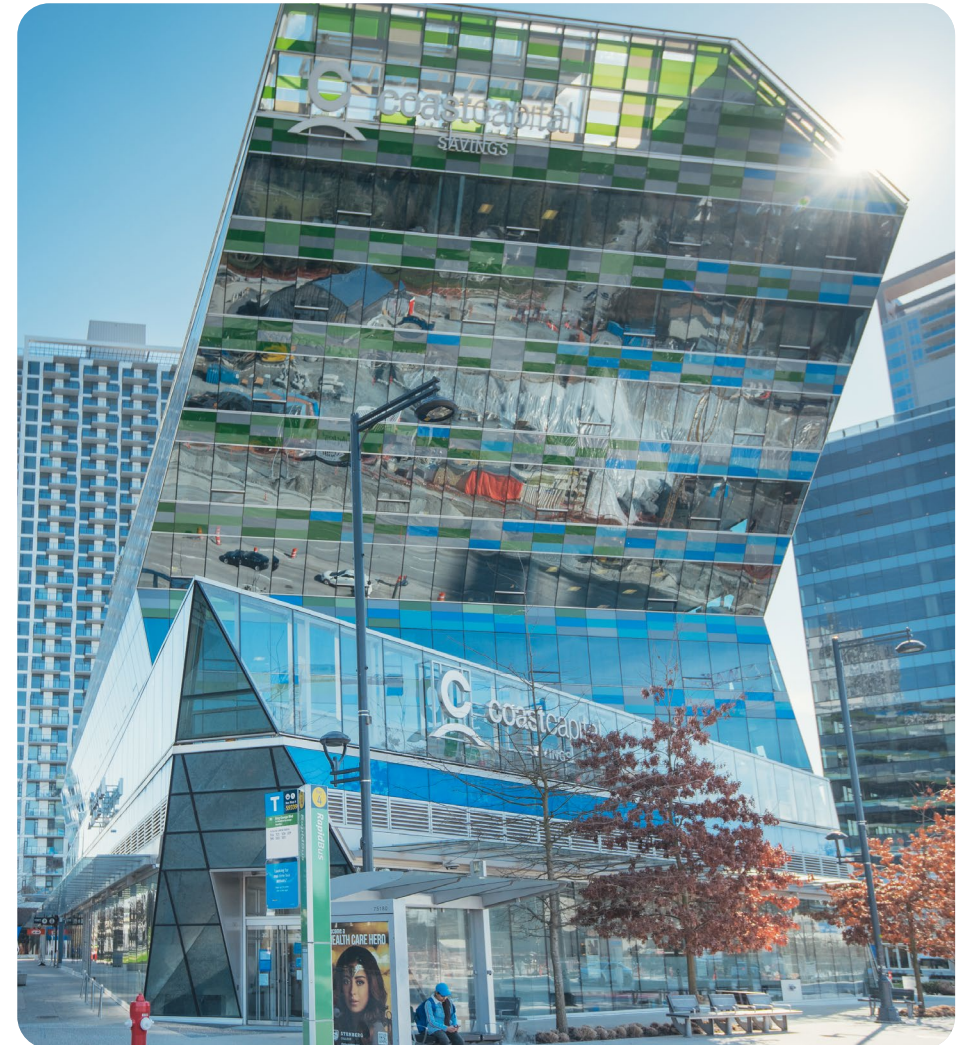
At the same time, our research and surveys of major companies, pension funds, and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) have shown one thing to be notably constant: people need social interaction and physical places to share ideas and collaborate in their work lives.

Our roadmap to becoming a world-class city with strong economic growth and jobs for a million residents includes becoming an investment destination for traditionally office-heavy firms, like those in health care, information technology, and high-value services. Our ambitions to attract headquarters in the public and private sectors have also remained resolute. While recognizing there has been a shift in the market, we expect that the office will continue to play a role for these types of companies going forward.

As of Q4 2023, Surrey had 6.3 million sq ft of office space¹³ (with 2.1 million located in Surrey City Centre)¹⁴ and nearly 470,000 sq ft of new space under construction.¹⁵ To attract our target investments towards Surrey, we'll need more space.

Prioritizing Major Office Pre-Leases for New, Pure Office Developments

Conditions for new developments are challenging today. Office utilization rates and market conditions have taken a downturn due to the rise in hybrid and work-from-home arrangements



13. Colliers Canada. Vancouver Office Market Report Q4 2023. 2024.

14. City of Surrey, 2022.

15. Downtown Surrey BIA. Surrey City Centre Development Update. December 2023.



Office Space: Preparing for the Future amid Office's Changing Role

and higher financing costs. In its fight to subdue inflation, the Bank of Canada rapidly increased interest rates. Despite recent drops in financing costs, new developments are still much more expensive to build than they were before these shifts occurred. The combination of a softer market and more expensive financing has had a predictable effect when it comes to new developments: a dampened willingness to take on new risk.¹⁶

To be ready for the future, we need to support office development today, especially in our downtown core. Global pension funds and REITs with a focus on office portfolios have clearly told us that in order to stimulate the build out of our downtown, high-quality pure (i.e., standalone) office projects will need to achieve a minimum level of pre-leases (figure 8). While podium (i.e., mixed-use) office space is a component of the City Centre land use framework, we've heard that there is now a strong preference for the high-quality space that pure office developments provide.

In our attraction activities, we can provide support by steering large

public and private sector office-space users toward development projects that are committed to pure office spaces. We will establish a list of development partners committed to building the office space required by major investors, and work with these developers to increase the viability of these projects by securing much-needed pre-lease requirements.

The City's investment attraction team has experience helping companies seeking office space. For example, the City had an active role in supporting the site selection of **Pacific Economic Development Canada (Pacifican)**, the **Government of Canada's** economic development agency, to headquarter in Surrey. Other organizations, such as **Westland Insurance** and the expanded **Canada Revenue Agency** presence, are also examples of office users that we welcomed to the city.

In addition to the efforts above, we'll also leverage new health-related investments to incent office space development and focus on creating office space in South Surrey to accommodate growth in the number and size of companies trading with partners south of the border.

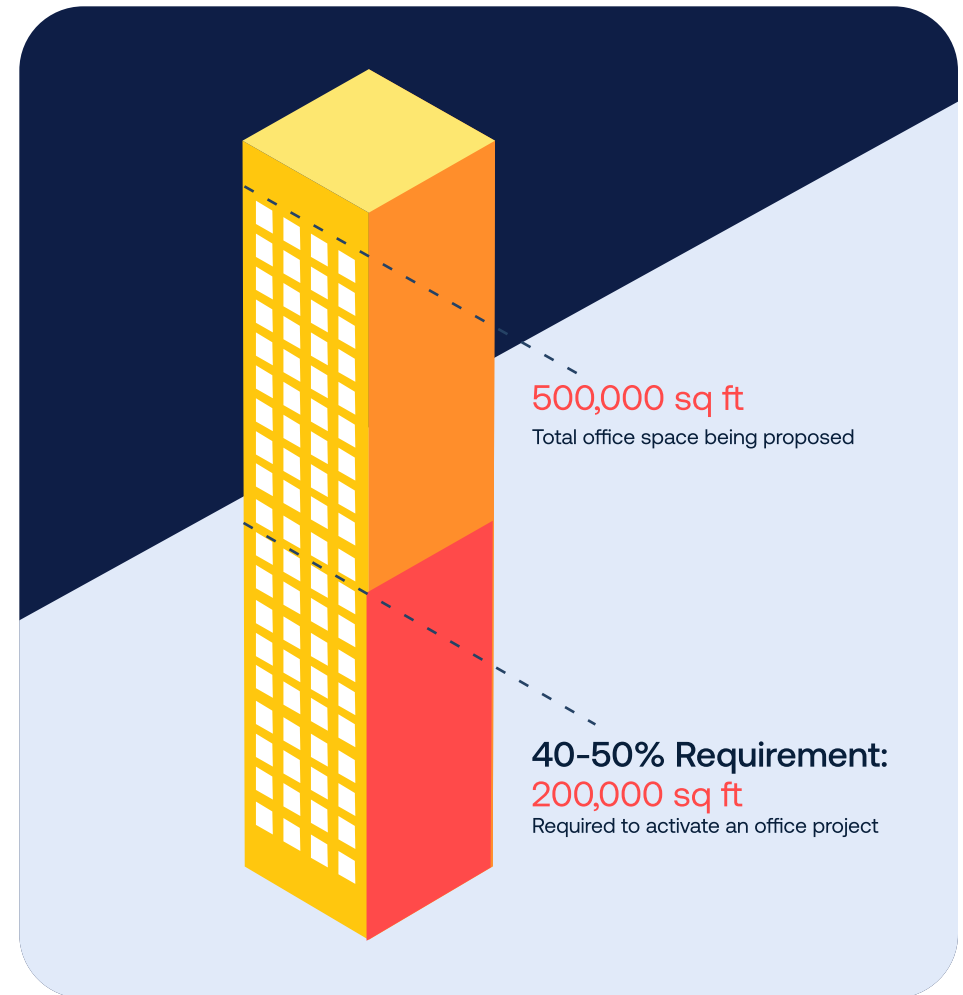


Figure 8. Example of minimum pre-lease requirement for pure office tower

¹⁶ City of Surrey – NBLC. City Centre Office Developer Market Insights Study, 2023.



Leveraging Health Investments to Create More Employment Space

Recent announcements illustrate how Surrey is becoming a centre for health-related training. This includes news that Simon Fraser University (SFU) will establish a new medical school in Surrey (anticipated to begin accepting students in 2026) and that the University of British Columbia (UBC) will launch a new Surrey campus near Surrey Memorial Hospital.

Working with academic and medical institutions in Surrey, we can leverage these investments and promote the talent emerging from these institutions to attract more companies that specialize in medical services, research, technology, and innovation. An increased demand for office by health-related companies can incent development of new space. We'll also focus on establishing more office space for health care services near the new Cloverdale Hospital, as demand will likely increase in the area upon the hospital's completion.

"UBC is excited to expand its presence in the City of Surrey, the fastest growing community in Metro Vancouver. We look forward to bringing the strengths of one of the world's leading research universities to the Surrey community, and helping the region advance its goals in education, health, economic development and innovation." – Robert Helsey, Associate Provost, University of British Columbia



Relaunching Surrey City Development Corporation

In 2023, Mayor and Council re-operationalized the Surrey City Development Corporation (SCDC) to advance strategically important projects in three specific focus areas of the City: City Centre, Newton, and Campbell Heights. A top priority is Surrey City Centre, where SCDC has two active projects. This includes the first phase of the Centre Block project, an up-to two million square foot mixed-use development that will practically double the amount of office and institutional space in Surrey City Centre when fully built out.

Another current SCDC initiative in City Centre will see the development of an 1,800-unit, master-planned community adjacent to the Gateway SkyTrain station. This multi-phase project will provide more housing choices for Surrey residents, and will set the bar for quality market rental in this emerging new neighbourhood. As in the past, SCDC will be partnering wherever possible to leverage partner resources and effectively deliver impactful projects that neither the government nor the private sector can deliver solely on its own.



Commercial: Increasing Business Opportunities Across Surrey

It's important that each of Surrey's six communities have sufficient commercial and retail space.

As the city grows, we'll seek to add more of this space in order to increase vibrancy, support the establishment of new restaurants and shops, and ensure that providers of necessary services for the community have places to set up shop.

This is in line with our ambition to have each Surrey community be self-sufficient, as inspired by the 15-minute city concept, even as our population rapidly grows. These commercial and retail spaces will be increasingly evident over the next decade as a growing number of mixed-used developments with ground floor retail come online in Surrey.

One area that's ripe for more retail and commercial opportunities is Fleetwood, a community in the midst of transition. With its strategic location along the Fraser Highway and the arrival of the

new SkyTrain extension, we expect a significant amount of new high-density, mixed-use commercial and retail space to be established.¹⁷ Optimizing commercial space in the community means planning for a rising population, more visitors, and new and varied businesses. It also means ensuring that enough spaces are available for the amount of necessary services that are required to serve a growing community. To support existing small and medium retailers during this transition period, we will work with the **Fleetwood Business Improvement Association (FBIA)** to identify and promote shop-local opportunities.

Another project will involve feasibility studies for new live-work zoning classifications. These will aim to support small businesses and solo entrepreneurs, particularly those in creative industries. Strictly commercial space may not be the most suitable option for all of these small businesses, especially people who wish to operate studios, art galleries, or similar businesses. Providing a classification that's right for these situations can enhance local commerce and add to area vibrancy.



More Options Mean More Resident Spending in Surrey

Internal surveying has shown that restaurant dining and entertainment businesses are the two top retail categories that, if expanded, would entice residents to spend more here in Surrey.

Today, those two categories show high amounts of retail spending leakage, a term used to describe the proportion of spending by residents that occurs outside of the city. According to our latest consumer insights surveys, Surrey residents spend more than \$703 million on goods and services monthly, \$52 million of which is spent outside of Surrey or online for entertainment, recreation, and restaurant dining.¹⁸

With more retail and commercial space available here to support such businesses, a portion of that spending could be redirected back to Surrey, adding to the commercial activity and vibrancy of our communities.

17. City of Surrey. Fleetwood Plan.

18. The W Group. Consumer Insights Survey. 2023.

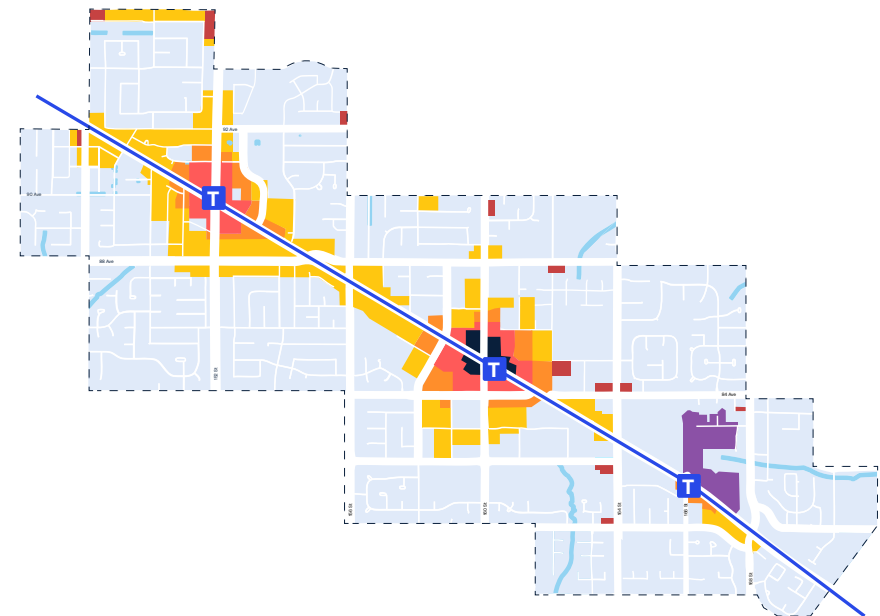


Transit-Oriented Development of Commercial Space along the SkyTrain Extension Line in Fleetwood

Areas near SkyTrain stations will require more than 360,000 sq ft of additional commercial space by 2050 to accommodate restaurants, services, and retail shops (figure 9).¹⁹ We expect new commercial uses to transition away from single-level plazas and vehicle-oriented retail to denser, mixed-use retail which will contribute to a more vibrant and cohesive community.¹⁹

“With 3 SkyTrain stations and 1000s of new units being proposed, Our Fleetwood will move from having a distinct town centre to having 3 new neighbourhoods and 30,000 new residents. There will be some pain to get there but the existing businesses will have access to more new customers and there will be enough space to add more businesses and jobs.” - Dean Barbour Executive Director, Fleetwood Business Improvement Association

Similarly, the “Clayton Plan” will see an equal significance and the emergence of new urban centres in that area. In March 2022, Council identified that the Clayton Corridor Plan would begin following the adoption of the Fleetwood Stage 1 Plan. The Clayton Corridor Plan is tentatively targeted to be brought forward for Council consideration in 2024.²⁰



Legend

■ Skytrain Line	■ Low-Rise
■ Fleetwood Centre	■ Commercial
■ High-Rise	■ Mixed Employment
■ Mid-Rise Transition	

Figure 9. Fleetwood Plan Land Use Concept. City of Surrey, 2022.

19. City of Surrey, Fleetwood Plan.

20. City of Surrey, Clayton Corridor Plan, 2024.



Agricultural: Protecting the Agricultural Land Reserve and Promoting Innovation

Despite being an urban centre, one third of Surrey's land base is within the agricultural land reserve (ALR). These lands are intended for the preservation of local food production and are protected from development.

Surrey has a vibrant agriculture sector, underpinned by the production of fruits and vegetables (including potatoes, carrots, leafy greens, tomatoes, and herbs) and the raising of poultry.

Long-standing agricultural businesses are key contributors to Surrey's economy and community. Consider **Evergreen Herbs**, which started in Surrey and is now Canada's largest grower of fresh herbs. There's also **Surrey Honeybee Centre**, which is a tourist attraction, but also plays an active role in raising honeybees that help local farmers pollinate their fields. Surrey also has the largest producers of strawberries and raspberries, and one of the top producers of blueberries in **Surrey Farms**. In dairy, Surrey's home to large organic dairy farms like



Nicomekl Farms, and grass-fed dairies such as **Donia Farms**, **Rondriso Farms**, **Bose Farms**, and **Heppell Farms** are just a few of the family-based farms that have also defined Surrey's agricultural sector, and continue to support innovation to improve farming, reduce food scarcity, and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Supporting Agri-Innovation

Agri-innovation is important in Surrey. The new **B.C. Centre for Agritech Innovation (BCCAI)** is located here, and our local farming community has been instrumental in allowing local researchers and innovators to get access to much-needed industry know-how. This helps innovators ensure that the technologies and

processes they're developing are relevant to the challenges of today's farmers.

Surrey's ALR lends itself well to supporting agricultural innovation pilots, which can help the development of viable technologies that can later be made commercially-available in larger markets. In 2021, **Bose Farms** welcomed **Stratus Aeronautics**, a Burnaby-based drone company, to test their ground-penetrating sensor technologies to better understand the mineral composition of the land and adjacent buildings. The willingness of our local agricultural community members to explore new solutions with innovators is a testament to how forward-thinking they are about agri-innovation in Surrey.

Recent changes allowing for vertical farming on ALR lands have also seen Surrey become an area of interest for major vertical farming companies across North America. We'll continue to direct companies seeking to expand their vertical farming operations to opportunities here.

Agri-Industrial Processing

Increasing agricultural competitiveness in the 21st century requires having a robust agri-industrial sector that ensures locally-grown foods can be stored or processed to extend their shelf life. Surrey is already a hotspot for plant-based protein companies such as **No Meat Factory Inc.**, **Boosh Food**, **Alliance Principal Ingredients**, and **Maple Wellness Products**, all of which are located in industrial areas adjacent to the city's agricultural land base. We'll seek out opportunities to bring new companies that can leverage Surrey's existing agricultural strengths (e.g., juicing, flash freezing, and other value-added industries).





Priority 3: Innovation, Talent, and Workforce

Objective

To build a robust innovation ecosystem, support the scaling up of innovative companies in priority sectors, and create more opportunities for talent development, attraction, retention, and upskilling.

Rationale

- Developing the innovation ecosystem and innovative companies will enhance our economic resilience and position Surrey for emerging trends and opportunities.
- Encouraging innovative companies emerging from our ecosystem to stay in Surrey can deliver significant economic benefits, including the creation of high-quality jobs.
- Developing, attracting, and retaining highly-skilled talent is necessary to support the growth of strategic industries and the expansion of businesses in Surrey.

Key Actions

1. Relaunch an expanded Innovation Boulevard 2.0 to promote Surrey's ecosystem.
2. Support entrepreneurs and companies by facilitating connections and collaboration within the innovation community.
3. Leverage Surrey's innovation assets to attract, grow, and retain innovative scale-up companies.
4. Advocate for funding for more academic seats at major academic institutions to match increasing demand.
5. Partner with post-secondary institutions to develop bootcamps and skills micro-credentialing programs.
6. Support skilled immigrants to navigate the Canadian credentialing programs to more easily enter Surrey's workforce.



Innovation, Talent, and Workforce

Innovation and talent development will be key to achieving the economic growth and job creation that we need in Surrey. It's vital that we continue training and retaining talent in Surrey.

It's also important that we prepare our workforce for emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and augmented and virtual reality. Additionally, we need to continue building an ecosystem conducive to the success of innovative companies. We're particularly focused on companies in the growth stage with validated business models, regular revenue, and an expanding workforce – companies otherwise known as 'scale-ups'.





Surrey's Innovation Ecosystem

Surrey has developed a considerable innovation ecosystem, anchored by excellent post-secondary institutions.

The city is now home to two major post-secondary campuses – **Simon Fraser University (SFU)** and **Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU)** – with the **University of British Columbia (UBC)** also soon to expand here with a new campus site.

Each post-secondary institution provides a strong pipeline of top-tier talent in key disciplines. SFU's Siemens Mechatronic Systems Certification Program and Master of Engineering in Smart Manufacturing and Systems, supported by their new Smart Manufacturing Hub, are providing students with training at the cutting edge of advanced manufacturing and robotics.

KPU's Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems program and trades programs are equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in jobs that will drive Surrey's future economy. UBC has expanded its Internal Medicine Residency Program at Surrey Memorial Hospital and is exploring programs at the intersection of health and data that can prepare people to succeed in roles at Surrey-based healthtech companies.

Other key elements of the ecosystem include large anchor companies in agritech, advanced manufacturing, and cleantech (figure 10). Renowned researchers in advanced fields including hydrogen energy and quantum computing have also made Surrey their place of work. A strong base of



Figure 10: Surrey priority sectors based on existing innovation ecosystem assets. City of Surrey, 2023.

experienced professional services providers exists here as well, ready to serve innovative technology companies.

Collaborative spaces, like the new SFU Innovation Plaza, provide dedicated places for academia, government, and industry to come together and collaborate. The Innovation Plaza hosts important innovation organizations like the **Quantum Algorithms Institute** (of which University of Victoria, SFU, and UBC are academic members) and the **B.C. Centre for Agritech Innovation (BCCAI)**, which has funded

projects at the University of the Fraser Valley, KPU, and SFU.

A new addition to the ecosystem is **Circle Innovation**, a non-profit that helps connect stakeholders and supports innovative companies to commercialize their technologies and scale up. Outside of City Centre, valuable health and biology research is taking place at KPU's Applied Genomics Centre in Newton.

This network of organizations and talented people provides an excellent foundation for supporting innovative companies going forward (figure 11).



Supporting Innovative Scale-Up Companies



The City's role in the innovation community is to provide support to entrepreneurs and companies.

To create the conditions that will attract and support scale-ups, we'll take actions to facilitate the development of more assets and increase connection

and collaboration in the community. For instance, to support life sciences and cleantech companies, we'll work on the creation of critical wet lab space in City Centre's **Health and Technology District**, presenting an opportunity for companies looking to expand and set up operations on the West Coast of Canada.

We'll also promote our innovation ecosystem and its outstanding assets to growth-stage companies by leveraging our Innovation Boulevard program. Innovation Boulevard, which originally focused on healthtech, will expand its focus to include other priority sectors such as cleantech, agritech, and advanced manufacturing. Since its inception over a decade ago, the Innovation Boulevard brand has become strongly associated with innovation in Surrey. Once fully relaunched, this brand can serve to tie together all of the companies, programs, and assets that comprise our innovation ecosystem. Under Innovation Boulevard 2.0, we can better foster strong industry-academic partnerships and bring local businesses to the attention of potential global partners.

Also, to further build the community and attract target companies, we'll provide a one-stop concierge service for businesses looking for opportunities to leverage our innovation ecosystem, while maintaining a strong connection to provincial and international developments such as the Cascadia Corridor.

Actions elsewhere in this strategy are also designed to support scale-ups and company growth. Examples include efforts to create and optimize employment lands, which will make more space available for companies in priority sectors. Another example is our plan to streamline permitting, an important concern for companies. We're also committed to ensuring that capital projects initiated by our academic and government partners are prioritized and expedited so that Surrey can more quickly realize the full economic benefits of such investments.

"I truly believe that Surrey is a place that is forging B.C.'s future. As we look towards the future and new ways for SFU and Surrey to grow together—including the establishment of the SFU Medical School—I am excited to work with the City of Surrey, Surrey businesses, non-profits and residents to create an inclusive and sustainable future for all."

– Dr. Joy Johnson, President & Vice-Chancellor, Simon Fraser University



Legend

- Academic/ Institutional Assets
- Notable Innovation Companies

City Centre

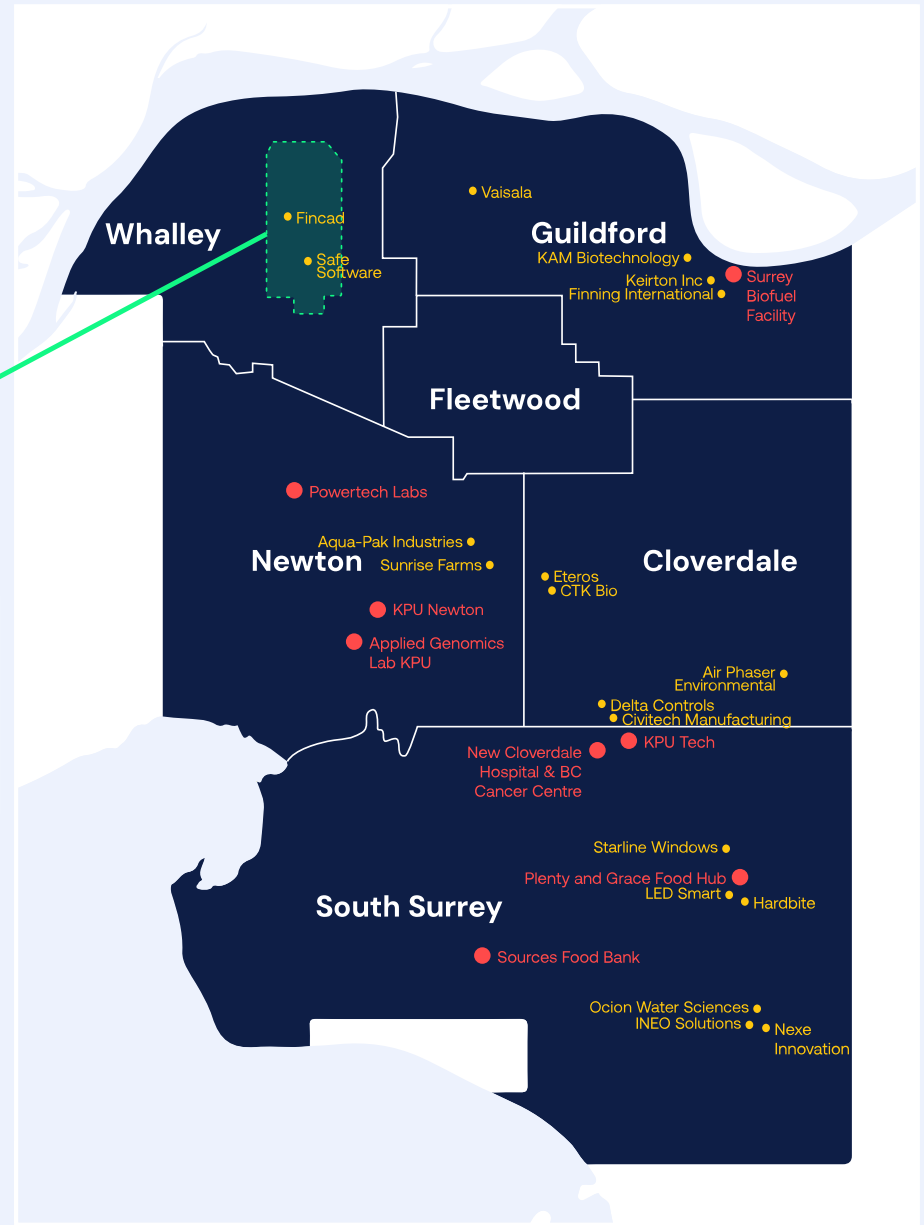


Figure 11. Innovation Assets in Surrey



An Expanded and New Innovation Boulevard 2.0

INNOVATION
BOULEVARD

Since Innovation Boulevard's inception, it's grown to become a brand that's synonymous with all things innovation in Surrey. Now, in line with the City's focus on scale-up companies across many sectors, the Innovation Boulevard brand will stretch beyond healthtech to encompass all tech-driven innovation and entrepreneurship across the economy.

Beginning in 2024, the City of Surrey and SFU will relaunch Innovation Boulevard 2.0 (IB 2.0), with a focus on the following:

- **Expanding industry-academic collaboration.** We'll create opportunities for universities and companies in Surrey's priority sectors – specifically healthtech, cleantech, agritech, and advanced manufacturing – to connect, share ideas, and work together.
- **City-wide services and partnerships.** IB 2.0 will focus on creating community value by extending the reach of Surrey's existing innovation assets and services across the entire city.
- **Retaining intellectual property (IP) locally.** SFU, its graduates, and other local institutions can be excellent sources of intellectual property with significant commercial value. We will work to retain growing companies with valuable IP emerging from post-secondary institutions in Surrey.
- **Strengthening supply chains and innovation production.** IB 2.0 will focus on connecting Surrey's innovation assets with our industrial base to encourage industry consortiums to sell Surrey-made innovations and participate in global supply chain opportunities.
- **Solving real-world problems.** Innovation should have a purpose. We will share the most pressing challenges and opportunities we're hearing about with our partners, giving our innovation community and industrial base an opportunity to devise commercial solutions.



Talent Development, Retention, and Upskilling



Talent availability will be a major driver of our future economic growth. Surrey's workforce is currently in a state of transition that's aligned with the broader economic transformation happening across the city.

While Surrey has always been known for its industrial base, the number of engineering, technology and technical professionals has grown over the last several years. According to the 2021 census by Statistics Canada, Surrey has seen a 25% increase in the number of people working in the professional, scientific, and technical services industry since 2016.

The demand for more health services has also resulted in a significant increase in related talent, with the number of people in the health care industry growing by 21% since 2016.²¹ Our surveys of Surrey's workforce have shown that Surrey also has strengths in skills related to computer science and engineering, coding and programming, and cloud computing, with 30% of surveyed people skilled in at least one of these areas.²²

Growing the number and diversity of people with professional, scientific, technical, and trades education and skills will be key to attracting and building companies in priority sectors, supporting innovative scale-ups, and increasing the performance of existing companies in Surrey.

21. Statistics Canada Census of Population 2016 and 2021.

22. The W Group. Surrey Talent and Workforce Survey. 2023.



Developing and Retaining Talent

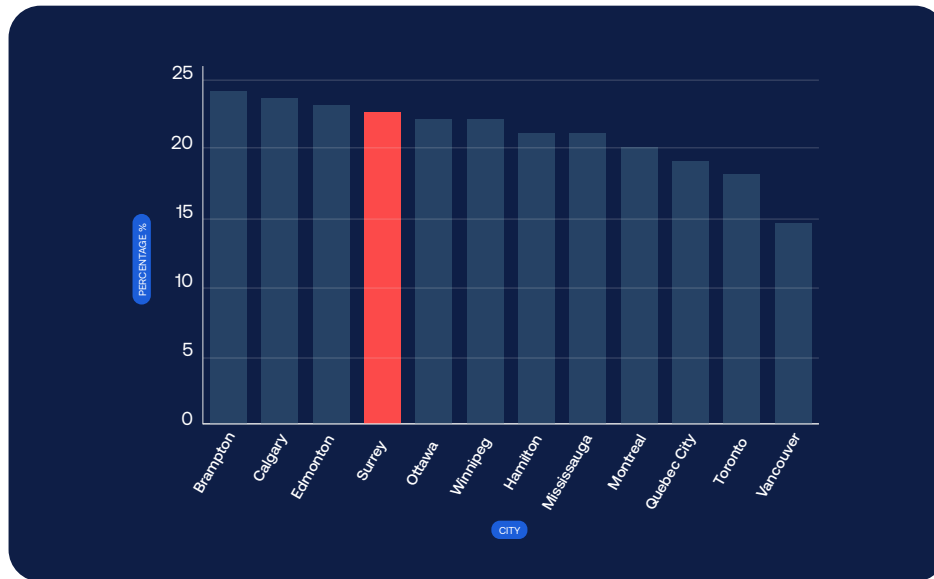


Figure 12. 19 and younger population in large Canadian cities (population > 500,000).
Source: Statistics Canada Census 2021.

To support Surrey’s future economy and to respond to disruptive technological developments, we have to focus on developing a large workforce with skills in computer science, engineering, mechatronics, finance, medicine, and trades, among other disciplines.

For the City, this will involve analyzing labour market trends and working with universities to identify programs that can help fill today’s local in-demand roles and the anticipated ones of tomorrow.

We’ll also take actions to increase capacity in our post-secondary institutions. Surrey is already home to the largest and fastest-growing school district in the province, and as our young population grows, more

and more high school students will be transitioning to university – and competing for a limited number of academic seats (figure 12). We’ll work with SFU, KPU, and UBC to advocate to the Province for funding for additional academic seats so that every student has an opportunity to continue studying in Surrey as the city grows.

It’s also important that we retain the talent that’s trained here. To support talent retention, we’ll create opportunities to bring skilled post-secondary students together with Surrey companies that are in need of their talents and that can provide career-shaping experiences. For example, we’ll promote the talent emerging from SFU and KPU advanced industrial programs to local businesses engaged in smart manufacturing – particularly medium-sized businesses – who can themselves promote local co-op, internship, and job opportunities to these students and graduates. Companies in Surrey such as **CIMTech Green Energy, Genesis Advanced Technology, Starline Windows, and LED Smart** are just a few of the many innovative organizations that are hiring co-op students into full time roles upon graduation.

We want to create more opportunities for this to occur. We’ll also drive greater awareness of co-op programs within the business community by connecting local companies with co-op advisors and faculty that are seeking capstone projects for their students.

“The KPU Communities Trust prioritizes reconciliation with Indigenous communities, sustainability, placemaking, and resilience in its development projects and will work closely with the City of Surrey to achieve common economic and growth objectives. In strategic locations where major infrastructure investment is occurring, such as Cloverdale, the Communities Trust will work with industry and key partners to facilitate collaboration with academia, support innovation, and create employment hubs.”

– Jaret Lang, President, KPU Communities Trust



Developing and Retaining Talent

Trades are also vital for the future economy. In fact, trades occupations in Surrey saw the largest increase in opportunities in the most recent census, showing a 34% growth rate over the previous census period.²³ The KPU Tech Campus in Cloverdale is well-known for developing highly-skilled tradespeople, and we will enhance connections between these graduates and companies seeking apprentices in order to support the continued development of this talent pool and its retention here in Surrey. We'll also explore opportunities to promote other trades credentialing programs, such as BC Hydro's Pre-Apprentice Power Line Technician Program.

This work requires collaboration with important and trusted partners, and so we will coordinate our efforts with the **Surrey Board of Trade, the Cloverdale District Chamber of Commerce, and the South Surrey & White Rock Chamber of Commerce** to advance these actions.

We will also prioritize development of talent in professional services, finance, and health care disciplines. Surrey is already home to major professional services firms such as **PwC and Fasken** as well as banking headquarters including **Coast Capital Savings and Prospera Credit Union**. More commerce and significant companies in the city will mean more demand for talent in business consulting and banking. From a health care perspective, we understand that our growing population will create demand for more health services. As home to the headquarters of BC's largest health authority, the **Fraser Health Authority**, and the proposed new SFU Medical School and UBC at Surrey campus, Surrey

residents have growing opportunities to train and work in health-related careers here.

We're aware that talent retention efforts must go beyond these initiatives alone. Retaining talent also requires having sufficient opportunities for advancement. It's also influenced by the city's affordability, livability, and housing availability. While Surrey has some advantages – for instance, the cost of housing is relatively affordable in Surrey compared to other major cities (figure 13) – there remains significant work to be done. Other parts of this strategy (particularly *Priority 4: Local Business, Vibrancy, and Distinct Communities*) and complementary City and provincial plans will support efforts at addressing these issues and contribute to retaining the talent that is trained here in Surrey.

“In tandem with Surrey’s rapid growth and diversity, we eagerly anticipate the expansion of our hospital and community services, along with innovative solutions to enrich people’s care experiences. Furthermore, as the largest employer in Surrey, Fraser Health drives economic vitality by creating employment opportunities, supporting education and training, and nurturing local businesses, all in line with our commitment to a healthy and thriving community.”

– Dr. Victoria Lee, President & CEO, Fraser Health Authority



City	Average rent for a 2-bedroom apartment (CAD)
Surrey	\$2,598
Toronto	\$3,450
Seattle	\$3,573
Vancouver	\$3,834
Los Angeles	\$4,216

Figure 13. According to our surveying, housing access and affordability is one of the top reasons why people move to Surrey. Data sourced from Rentals.ca (for Canadian cities) and Zumper.com (for US cities) as of November 2023



Case Study

Surrey's Current and Future Labour Force

Surrey's workforce is becoming increasingly skilled and educated, with the latest census profiles showing an increase in the share of the workforce employed in professional, scientific, and technical service occupations. According to the census profiles, Surrey has seen a 25% increase in the number of people in these roles since 2016.²⁴ Analysis from the same census also shows that the number of people in health care-related jobs has increased by 21% in Surrey since 2016. These structural shifts in our workforce are driving economic growth in Surrey.

Looking to the future, the British Columbia Labour Market Outlook 2023 shows that about 75% of all job openings between 2023 and 2033 will require some level of post-secondary education, training, or management or supervisory experience.²⁵ Surrey's workforce is trending in the right direction here too. From 2016 to 2021, the number of people with a post-secondary education grew by 18%.²⁶

Seizing an Opportunity: Pharmacists and New Prescribing Powers

Recently, the Province of British Columbia joined other jurisdictions in Canada to expand the scope of practice for nurse practitioners and pharmacists, allowing them to prescribe medicines for minor ailments. These changes are just a beginning, as the Province and the College of Pharmacists continue to explore new legislation and policies that allow additional scope of practice.

This is excellent news for Surrey. There are currently 176 pharmacies across the city,²⁷ and significant opportunities exist to encourage more independent and chain pharmacies to locate in Surrey to support our growing population's primary health care needs. Our analysis shows that there are particularly significant opportunities to increase the number of pharmacies in Cloverdale, Fleetwood, and Guildford (figure 14).

Over the next several years, the City will work with pharmacy industry stakeholders to help localize more of these businesses in Surrey. We will also work with institutions like UBC to locate advanced pharmacy and other professional health training programs in Surrey to help accelerate the buildout of Surrey's social infrastructure needs.

Community	Pharmacies per 10K pop.
Cloverdale	1.8
Fleetwood	1.9
Guildford	2.5
Newton	3.2
Surrey City Centre	5.0
South Surrey	2.5
Whalley	1.1
Grand Total	2.6
Comparator: City of Vancouver	3.0

Figure 14. Distribution of existing pharmacies in Surrey.
Source: City of Surrey, 2024.

24. Statistics Canada Census Profiles 2021 and 2016.

25. WorkBC. Government of British Columbia. B.C.'s Labour Market Outlook: 2023 Edition.

26. Statistics Canada Census Profiles 2021 and 2016.

27. College of Pharmacists of British Columbia. Licensed Community Pharmacies Directory, 2023.



Upskilling our Workforce and Increasing Credential Recognition



While developing our next generation of talent is crucial, so is supporting our existing workforce to enhance their skills so that they can capitalize on emerging local opportunities.

And there is demand for it. According to a recent study conducted by the City to better understand current skills-gaps and upskilling opportunities, 51% of survey respondents indicated that they are actively seeking upskilling opportunities to advance their careers or to enter a new industry or technology-related field.²⁸

Acknowledging that education is a provincial responsibility, we will work in partnership with the relevant ministries and agencies to ensure that Surrey is prioritized in terms of service and program delivery, and we will promote those programs within our community. We will encourage employers and employees to leverage existing, funded upskilling programs (e.g., StrongerBC Future Skills Grant) in order to bring new value to their respective operations and careers.

We will also support smart manufacturing bootcamps and micro-credentialing in partnership with post-secondary institutions, with a particular focus on making programs available in Campbell Heights. Additionally, we'll facilitate experiential learning opportunities for Surrey-based post-secondary computer science students including hackathons and challenge dialogues that will let them put their skills to practice.

Supporting skilled immigrants is another important priority. Many new immigrants have credentials that aren't recognized in Canada, and we can provide support that can help them gain the Canadian equivalents faster and more efficiently.

Navigating the programs involved in earning Canadian credentials can be onerous, confusing, and time-consuming, resulting in opportunity costs for these individuals as well as the local companies that could use their skills.

Some local organizations, including the **Surrey Board of Trade**, have done excellent advocacy work aimed at solving this problem. We'll collaborate with them, as well as other immigrant-focused organizations, to develop a program that presents all relevant training and government supports in one place, including the streamlined pathways created by the Province's International Credentials Recognition Act.³⁰ We will also work with our partners to connect immigrants with local businesses looking for their skills so that they can accelerate their journeys to employment in their fields of expertise.

28. The W Group. Surrey Talent and Workforce Survey, 2023.
30. Government of British Columbia. Office of the Premier. New act streamlines credential recognition for internationally trained professionals [News release]. 2023.



Attracting Highly-Skilled and Specialized Talent to Surrey

We will require specialized talent to advance Surrey into the economy of the future. Through business outreach efforts, we've learned that talent availability is often the largest impediment to the growth of specialized manufacturers involved in robotic systems, bioenergy, and food processing.

Moving forward, the City will work with companies in these industries to access the Federal Skilled Worker (Express Entry) Program and expedite processes with **Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)**.

In 2019, the **Government of Canada** announced the exploration of a Municipal Nominee Program (MNP) – modelled after the popular Provincial Nominee Program – which would allow municipalities to directly sponsor highly-skilled permanent immigrants in their communities. We will continue to work with **IRCC** to advance this program to ensure that Surrey is well-positioned to leverage the new policy framework and attract the specialized talent needed to grow our economy. Furthermore, through the City's Social Action Plan and the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership, we will ensure that these newcomers will have access to wraparound support so that they can thrive while settling here.

To support companies in attracting specialized talent living elsewhere within the Metro Vancouver region, we will create promotional materials that employers can use to highlight Surrey's strengths and show potential hires the benefits that come with building their professional lives here.





Priority 4: Local Business, Vibrancy, and Distinct Communities

Objective

To establish a resilient economy, enhance livability for residents as we rapidly grow, and develop each of Surrey's business communities into vibrant and distinct places.

Rationale

- Our communities must be self-sufficient and vibrant places to live, work, and play as we grow.
- Livability, affordability, and social infrastructure are key to investment attraction and job creation.
- Leveraging the distinct characteristics of each of Surrey's six communities can increase vibrancy throughout the city.

Key Actions

1. Grow the care economy by attracting health care services and medical offices in each community to improve health access to residents.
2. Explore the development of new Entertainment Districts in City Centre and Cloverdale.
3. Explore strategic partnership projects with our Boards of Trade, Chambers of Commerce, and four Business Improvement Associations to increase the vibrancy of each community.
4. Develop a new Social Infrastructure Strategy focused on increasing resident access to social services including housing, education, child care, and health care.



Local Business, Vibrancy, and Distinct Communities

Surrey is six big communities in one big city, with each centre possessing its own charm.

Some of Surrey's communities boast population bases larger than those of other regional municipalities. Compare Newton (population: 159,918) to Coquitlam (population: 148,625) or Cloverdale (population: 74,777) to West Vancouver (population: 44,122).³¹ And like small cities, each community has its own distinct characteristics and needs.

As we grow our overall economy, we must also ensure that residents across the entire city benefit. We can do this by leveraging and adding to the unique cultural, commercial, and built assets in each community. We want to see each area develop into an even more dynamic, livable, and lively location, where people want to live and work and companies want to invest and do business.

Recently, we've made strides in our efforts to enhance Surrey's communities. For example, we established Focus Newton, a project to enhance the beauty and vibrancy of the Newton community over the next three years with features like pleasing public spaces, gathering areas, and public art. Council has also directed staff to develop Focus Cloverdale, a similar project that will solicit public feedback to increase area vibrancy and entertainment options. In South Surrey, home to two of the region's busiest land border crossings (Pacific Highway and Peace Arch), we intend to pursue opportunities that will further develop the area into a hub for cross-border economic opportunities.

"We need economic jewels throughout Surrey to promote the uniqueness of Surrey's brand as an opportunity city."

– Anita Huberman, President & CEO, Surrey Board of Trade

31. Statistics Canada 2021 Census of Population.



South Surrey's Strategic Location

South Surrey's reputation as a burgeoning, upscale neighbourhood with ocean views along Crescent Beach is well-known. What's less known is the community's strategic importance to growing American companies looking for expansion opportunities in Canada.

Consider: at the Regus co-working space in South Surrey, numerous American Fortune 500 companies fill their office spaces. The location allows Seattle-based senior managers that are overseeing Canadian expansion to have a presence north of the border without needing to deal with traffic congestion or commutes deep into Metro Vancouver. Busy executives can easily travel back and forth between Washington State and South Surrey on the same day to conduct in-person cross-border business.

As major companies expanded into the region and took up permanent spaces, their suppliers have followed. Working in partnership with **Trade and Invest BC**, the City has welcomed companies such as **Peopletech**, a Redmond-based generative AI company, and **Wallerio**, a provider of secure vertical desktop infrastructure and cloud solutions, both of which have established a presence in Surrey. Other major US companies such as **Skechers, Walmart, and Wayfair** have also seen the strategic benefits of locating in the Campbell Heights area of South Surrey.

Bolstering the strategic value of our city's location is the recent announcement by the U.S. Biden administration of US\$6.1 billion in funding for a high-speed rail system from Portland, Oregon to British Columbia. Surrey is poised to benefit greatly, as two of the three modeled terminus scenarios involve locations near Surrey City Centre.



Listening to the Community, Leveraging Data to Support Local Business Growth

Surrey residents spend the majority of their disposable income within the city, according to recent research on Surrey resident consumer insights commissioned by the City.³²

Residents spend an estimated average of \$703 million each month on goods and services, with 28% of that spent outside of Surrey or online. Our residents have also clearly indicated that if there were more restaurant and dining, entertainment, recreation, and grocery options in Surrey, they would likely increase their local spending (figure 15).³² This represents an opportunity, and we will continue to collect this market intelligence and make it available to leaders of small and medium businesses who wish to understand the local economies and market trends within various communities.

We will also continue to support small and medium businesses through SPARKBIZ, our business retention and expansion program. **SparkBIZ** helps local businesses navigate City processes pertaining to permitting and licensing, connects them with government programs and key contacts, and enables them to more easily communicate their challenges and opportunities to City staff. The program awarded a Silver Award from the **International Economic Development Council** in 2022.³³

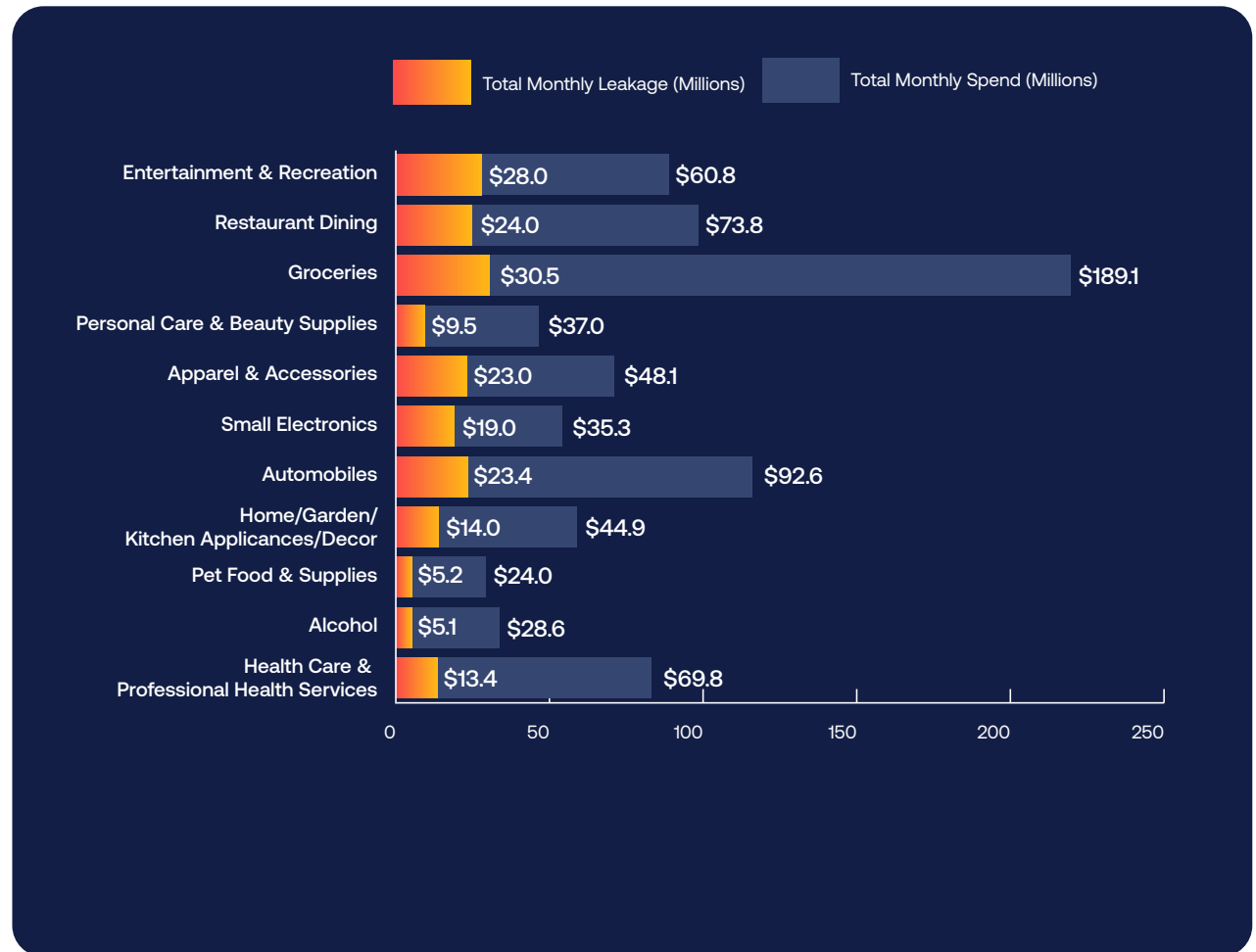


Figure 15. Distribution of Surrey household spending inside and outside of Surrey.
Source: The W Group. Consumer Insights Survey, 2023

32. The W Group. Consumer Insights Survey, 2023.

33. City of Surrey. City of Surrey Wins Two International Awards for Economic Development Programs [News release], 2021.



What We Heard: What Surrey Residents and Businesses Want in Each Community

Whalley/City Centre

- Arts and culture centres
- Medical service businesses
- Space activation businesses (e.g. markets or food trucks)
- Conference/event centres
- Nightlife and entertainment businesses

Guildford

- Restaurants and dining
- Nightlife and entertainment businesses
- Medical service businesses

Fleetwood

- Restaurants and dining
- Medical service businesses

Newton

- Restaurants and dining
- Retail businesses
- Medical service businesses
- Conference/event centres

Cloverdale

- Breweries
- Live music venues
- Manufacturing space

South Surrey

- Restaurants and dining
- Manufacturing space
- Hotels
- Retail businesses
- Medical service businesses
- Conference/event centres
- Office space
- Arts and culture centres

Figure 16. Results from the Economic Strategy 2024 community engagement.



Community Partnerships to Build Tourism and Entertainment Destinations

We'll explore ways to build up our communities as destinations. This will include strategic partnership projects with our Boards of Trade, Chambers of Commerce, and four Business Improvement Associations to increase the vibrancy of each community and promote each as a destination that people should visit to dine, shop, or relax.

To add vibrancy to communities, we'll also explore how we can activate underutilized spaces. We'll study the feasibility of establishing a container market, pop-up markets, and street festivals in areas that are seasonally or perennially vacant. Container markets such as **BOXPARK** in the United Kingdom and **STACKT Market** in Toronto provide examples of the kind of exciting retail, food, and entertainment hubs these initiatives can create. We'll explore how we can bring these types of experiences to Surrey.



AI-generated rendering of an entertainment district



Community Partnerships to Build Tourism and Entertainment Destinations

Establishing Surrey's Two New Entertainment Districts

We heard from residents and the business community that new spaces, including convention centres, entertainment facilities, and hotels, would boost the number of business events held in Surrey and support our vision of becoming a modern, world-class city. This inspired our plan to establish **two Entertainment Districts**, designed to feature nightlife, theatre, dining, hotels, and retail, and to offer residents, visitors, and business travellers alike places to explore, gather for daytime activities, or have a fun night out.

Focus Cloverdale. The heritage assets and western-themed architecture in Cloverdale, Surrey's historic centre, give the place a unique charm. Our plan is to refresh the community while maintaining its distinct buildings and historic character, turning it into a walkable and picturesque hub that features many cafes, restaurants, shops, music venues, and bars. As an entertainment destination, Cloverdale will be a beautiful, vibrant, cultural hub for friends or visitors to eat, drink, and have fun.

Additionally, we plan to position the Fairgrounds as the new Surrey Entertainment Complex.

The Fairgrounds is already a growing regional entertainment hub, with regular events and exhibitions, such as the Van Gogh Immersive Experience, the 5K Foam Fest, and the Cloverdale Rodeo. Reinvigorated, it will become a branded destination for tourism with live shows, restaurants, bars, and hotels, optimizing this already-popular area for entertainment and growing tourism.

Sports and Entertainment District in Surrey City Centre. Mayor and Council have directed City staff to begin a feasibility assessment related to building a major sports and multipurpose events centre in City Centre and another related to the attraction of a major professional sports team. This will not only bolster Surrey as a destination city but will also create spaces that can increase City Centre's day and night time foot traffic, which will support local small businesses to thrive and grow.

Beyond drawing tourists and business travellers, these dynamic entertainment districts can provide the city with important ancillary benefits as services for the districts' businesses set up and consolidate around the areas. It can also induce investment in new hotel development and boost the number of conventions, trade shows, and other major business events in the city.

In City Centre, we'll work to attract major hotels, adding important accommodation to the area as it continues to develop into a modern downtown core with the capacity to host major conventions and business events. We understand that these investments require a strong business case and visionary leadership. As such, Mayor and Council have directed City staff to begin a feasibility assessment related to building a major multipurpose sports and events centre in City Centre and another related to the attraction of a major professional sports team.

These bold actions will not only bolster Surrey as a destination city, but will also create spaces that can increase City Centre's day and night time foot traffic, supporting local small businesses to thrive and grow. This proposed investment opportunity is part of a broader vision of transforming Surrey into an entertainment destination.



Enhancing Livability and Social Infrastructure

For residents and businesses alike, livability matters. Residents want to love where they live. Surrey businesses want their employees to be able to afford to live and work in Surrey.

Companies looking for new places to invest have told us that they look for cities where their employees feel they have a good quality of life and where students from local universities want to stay after they graduate. Maintaining and enhancing livability as the city moves toward the million-resident mark is vital for our future economy, and it requires that actions are taken today to ensure infrastructure, convenience, and access to necessary services will all keep up.

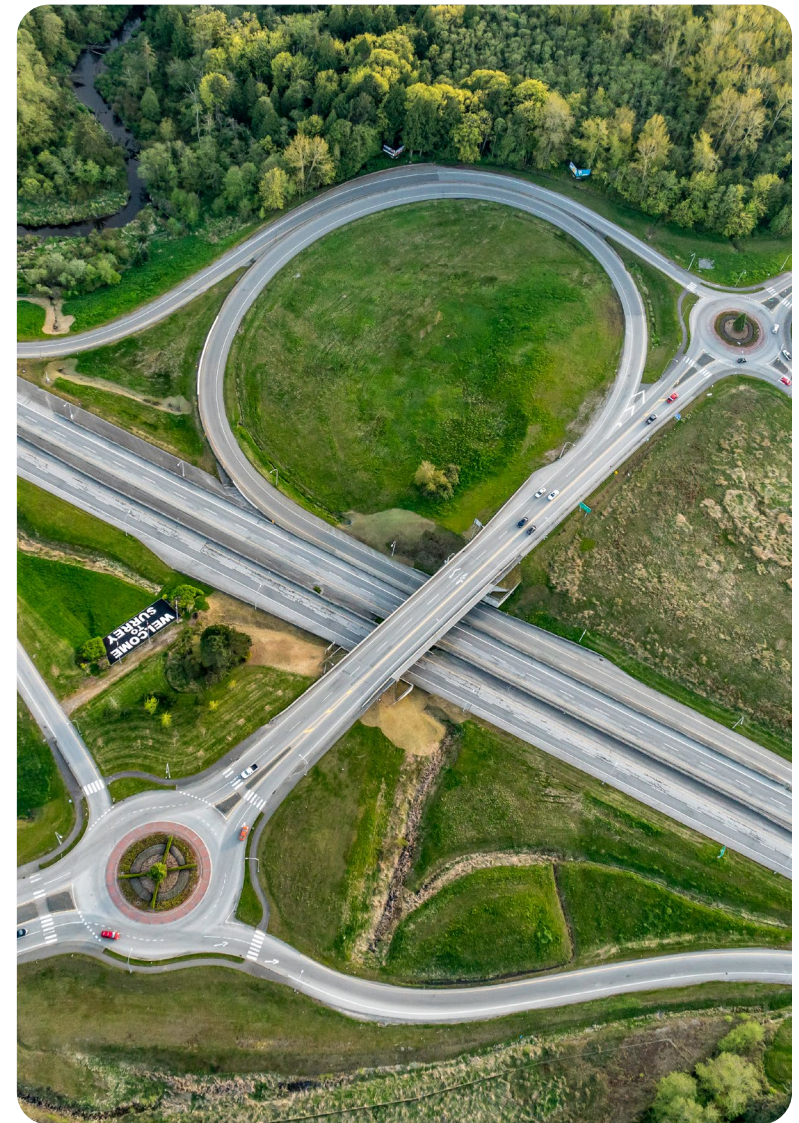
Investments in Transportation

The City has already begun work on transportation to prepare for the future. We've recently made important progress on transportation service and infrastructure that will make it easier to move around Surrey.

This includes the planning of several arterial and intersection upgrades that will increase capacity, such as the widening of portions of 72nd Avenue and 80th Avenue to five lanes and portions of 132nd Street to four lanes. The City has also expedited other projects including road-widening work in Fleetwood along 160th Street from the Fraser Highway. Another recent infrastructure-related highlight was TransLink's announcement that it had selected a Surrey corridor for further planning work on Bus Rapid Transit. That corridor will connect King George Boulevard with South Surrey and beyond, serving an estimated 133,000 additional residents with "fast, frequent, and high-capacity transit".³⁴

Investing in Social Infrastructure

Surrey will increase its focus on developing the City's social infrastructure. As noted earlier, social infrastructure refers to the mix of interconnected social programs, services, and facilities in a city (as well as the processes involved in developing, implementing, and monitoring them) that are designed to serve residents' needs and support quality of life. Examples include medical clinics, public schools, post-secondary institutions, and child care spaces.



34. City of Surrey, Surrey Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), 2023.



Enhancing Livability and Social Infrastructure



To manage existing social infrastructure, its enhancement, and the addition of more, we'll establish a new livability index with concrete measures that can help us determine Surrey's current state, inform our planning, and monitor the progress of projects and policies aimed at improving quality of life here.

In the coming year, we'll also begin developing a new Social Infrastructure Strategy that will focus on increasing resident access to social services including housing, education, and health care. This will include analyzing data that supports the case for more provincial funding for services. To facilitate this, we'll establish new data and information-sharing procedures with the Province to acquire updated data regarding health care access in Surrey and adjacent communities.

Investments in Parks, Recreation and Culture

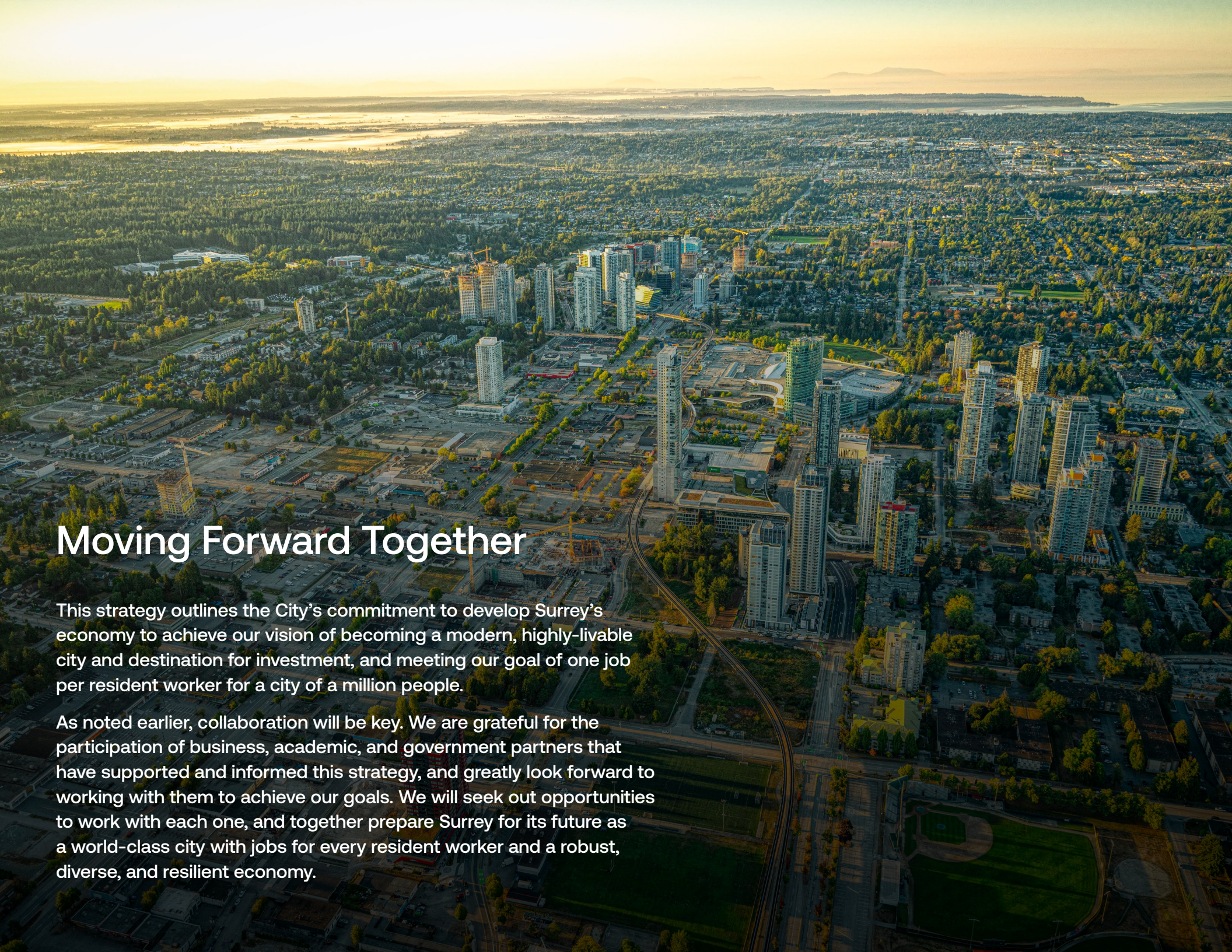
We're known as the "City of Parks." That's no surprise, considering we have 570 active and passive parks and 207 natural-area-only parks within Surrey. And we continue to invest in new parks and facilities. This includes a new \$27.5 million stadium at Bear Creek Park, the construction of the Hadden Mill and Oxbow zones of the Nicomekl Riverfront Park, and the relocation of the UrbanScreen to Civic Plaza. Expanded programming is also being pursued at cultural facilities across the city, including at the Museum of Surrey. In 2023 alone, the Museum of Surrey saw over 1,000 residents participate in family-oriented exhibits like LEGO "Everything is Still Awesome" and "Giants, Dragons, and Unicorns" (borrowed from the National Museum of American History).

New and expanded recreation facilities are also being explored and planned across the City. This includes the Newton Recreation Centre in Newton and the two new sheets of ice are already under construction in the Cloverdale Sport & Ice Complex. This is in addition to the North Surrey Sport & Ice Complex, which is a hub for community hockey attracting an

average of more than 174,000 visitors each year.³⁵

Katzie, Kwantlen, and Semiahmoo First Nations also reside in Surrey, along with BC's largest urban Indigenous population. In 2023, **Totest Aleng: Indigenous Learning House**, a collaboration between the City and Katzie, Kwantlen, and Semiahmoo First Nations, opened. With a dedicated artist studio space and covered pavilion, it was created to support Indigenous cultural practices and programming. The City is also working with these First Nations stakeholders to design, initiate, and finalize the construction of an Indigenous learning venue in North Surrey. These are just some of the examples of how the City is engaging with Indigenous Peoples in Surrey to strengthen our bond and educate our residents on their communities and culture.

35. City of Surrey, 2023.



Moving Forward Together

This strategy outlines the City's commitment to develop Surrey's economy to achieve our vision of becoming a modern, highly-livable city and destination for investment, and meeting our goal of one job per resident worker for a city of a million people.

As noted earlier, collaboration will be key. We are grateful for the participation of business, academic, and government partners that have supported and informed this strategy, and greatly look forward to working with them to achieve our goals. We will seek out opportunities to work with each one, and together prepare Surrey for its future as a world-class city with jobs for every resident worker and a robust, diverse, and resilient economy.



Invest.
Innovate.
Thrive.