



November 17, 2021
Presented by Mayor Linda Buchanan
Event organized by the North Vancouver Chamber of Commerce

Good morning everyone, thank you for joining me for this year's State of the City address. It's an honour to once again have this opportunity to speak with you and highlight the work we've done over the last year to create a healthier, more vibrant, and more prosperous community for all people.

When I delivered my first virtual State of the City address last year, I was very much hoping it would also be my last virtual address — but here we are again!

I'd like to start by acknowledging that I am speaking to you from the traditional and unceded territories of the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam peoples. These Nations remain deeply connected to their lands and waters. As we build and foster community here it's critical we acknowledge that this has been the home of the Coast Salish people since time immemorial. I thank them for sharing this land with us and for their ongoing partnerships with the City on shared priorities.

I'd like to extend my thanks to the North Vancouver Chamber of Commerce for organizing today's State of the City address. I also want to thank the Port of Vancouver for sponsoring this event.

I'd like to acknowledge North Vancouver-Seymour MLA Susie Chant, North Vancouver School District Trustee Cyndi Gerlach, and City of North Vancouver Cllrs. Angela Girard and Jessica McIlroy, I appreciate you taking the time to join us this morning.

When people think of the City, they think of the Quay, the SeaBus, and now, the Shipyards.

This covered and outdoor space has ice skating in the winter, a splash park in the summer, festivals, art installations, and many more activities. In fact, our goal is to have this space active 365 days a year.

This summer the City was pleased to welcome Shipyards Live — an 8 week-long festival with live music, artisan vendors, food trucks, and more — to the community, and we were able to welcome back the Shipyards Festival in September after a pandemic-related hiatus. There hasn't been a day in the past year I've visited the site and it hasn't been lively and vibrant.

And we know that the Shipyards is getting the attention it deserves. The City has won two prestigious awards in the past year. In March we took home top honours from the British Columbia Economic Development Association — winning the Community Project Award — which recognizes development initiatives that provide significant economic benefits to a community.

We also came out on top this summer in the Excellence on the Waterfront Awards Program from the Waterfront Centre, who recognize top-quality planning, design and development work from around the world.

Our small City beat giants such as London. This is something we can all take pride in. This space is a reflection of our community and its triumphs represent the resilience and strength of the people who make up this great City.

The Lower Lonsdale community has gone through a dramatic transformation in the past 20 years. The amenities and community we've built at the foot of Lonsdale is our City's crown jewel. We have long been shaped by a rich history and well established industries, such as the port, and I'm so glad that we continue to honour our roots at our waterfront.

When I spoke to you last year, I mentioned that we had convened the Mayor's Business Advisory Working Group in response to the pandemic. Since then we have conducted dozens of roundtable dialogues with businesses of all sizes and industries which have informed City-focused recommendations to support local business through and beyond the pandemic.

Unfortunately, we do not have the time for me to present each recommendation in full, but you can see the recommendations on the slide here as well. I encourage you to check out the City's Business Roundtable Report that was published in December 2020. There you will find many more details about the future of economic development in the City.

As you can see, the recommendations include creating an Economic Investment Strategy, streamlining permits and licences, and implementing business-enabling technologies.

The number one recommendation was the Economic Investment Strategy. This strategy will feed into other work underway at the City, such as the Wellbeing Strategy, the Safe Mobility Strategy, and the Climate and Environment Strategy. It will position our economy to grow and ease the process of doing business in the City.

As a precursor to this strategy, the City commissioned a Current Situation Assessment to give us a snapshot of our local economy. This assessment looked at our strengths, weaknesses, assets, and growth sectors so that our Economic Investment Strategy is well-informed.

The Strategy will provide implementable actions to achieve economic resiliency and a path forward to sustain and grow a diverse and prosperous local economy. It will leverage the progress, assets and investments that have already been made in the City and identify gaps in the economy that should be filled to create more diversity and resiliency.

A piece of this larger work that we did complete this year was the implementation of Gateway. People always tell me, and some of you are on this Zoom call, that cities can improve the permit and licensing process, and I agree. That's why we've implemented Gateway, our new client services counter, as part of our upgrades. Gateway is a one-stop shop to quickly and easily access information and services related to licenses, planning, and permits. It's a new virtual service centre for residents, contractors, business owners, tradespeople, and builders.

The City is looking to make regulations simpler and more effective, reduce processing times, and deliver a wider range of services through this new online portal. There is also a client service desk in City Hall that triages inquiries and requests for those doing business in-person.

We are redesigning how we liaise with businesses — including an overhaul of our website, digital services, procedural bylaws, and more — so that doing business with us is more user-friendly. I look forward to sharing more details with you all in the spring when the City is ready to launch these exciting changes.

We are working towards building a directory of businesses in the City available on our website so that it's easy for residents to support local and not have to leave the community.

Economic investment will be crucial in building back a better economy from this pandemic. We have an obligation to look to the future and build a robust, inclusive, and equitable economy that shares prosperity much more broadly across all the people.

Metro Vancouver is laying the foundation for regional prosperity with the launch of Invest Vancouver, of which I'm proudly Vice-Chair. Invest Vancouver is an economic development leadership service with the goal of amplifying economic opportunity and prosperity for all the residents across the region.

The City has an abundance of potential in this regard — particularly if you look at cleantech industries, health services, and marine-supporting industries.

In September I had the pleasure of meeting Peter Bach, the Chief Technology Officer at FTXT Energy Technology. FTXT is mainly engaged in the development, production, and sales of fuel cell and hydrogen storage systems and components. They are in the process of setting up their offices here in the City, despite that most fuel cell companies are located in Burnaby.

Peter told me that our geographic location, the livability of the City and the business environment we were cultivating within the City, made us a more attractive place to lay roots for employees and international business partners. I'm proud that our City is taking steps to ensure that cleantech industries can come here to innovate and diversify our economy.

This pandemic has highlighted the economic potential in health and related industries. Creating an Economic Health Cluster — meaning a collection of health and technology businesses and services around the Lions Gate Hospital campus —would transform the central Lonsdale area.

By responding to the anticipated growth in healthcare and technology, we can play a critical role in both the delivery of improved care as well the delivery of a new economic driver for the region as a whole. Prior to the pandemic this is something I was pushing for with Vancouver Coastal Health, and I look forward to resuming those conversations in the near future.

This May I was pleased to see the polar icebreaker contract returned to BC. The procurement of two new Polar icebreakers, one of which to be built in BC, signifies a new chapter in shipbuilding that will create many family-supporting jobs.

Shipbuilding is part of our community's identity. Unfortunately, for too long BC has not been given the same opportunity as other provinces to fulfill these contracts. That's why I championed the project, and wrote to the provincial and federal governments advocating for the icebreaker to be built here in BC.

The City has long been committed to ensuring this industry endures on the North Shore for generations to come.

Our economy is nothing without people. Our childcare workers, our truck drivers, our architects, our baristas, and our landscapers to name a few, are all vital in our economy.

When I think about the people who keep our economy moving I think about Andrew and Cecilia at La Cerveceria Astilleros. They opened a craft brewery in Lower Lonsdale in the midst of a global pandemic.

Their optimism, and their faith in our community inspires me. La Cerveceria Astilleros, or 'The Shipyards Brewery' strives to bring the colourful, rich Mexican culture straight into the heart of North Vancouver in the form of delicious cold craft beers and tacos – just like there sign says and what my husband says is the best sign in town. What more can you ask for!

But they have also created a space where they are training the next generation of craft brewers, and where other businesses, such as a winery, can co-use their space allowing everyone to scale up.

A few weeks ago I had an opportunity to tour a few of the craft breweries in Lower Lonsdale, and let me tell you it was a blast! Craft breweries are social hubs where local flavors are enjoyed over conversations with neighbours. But for too long craft brewing was overlooked by many. Today the industry has proven it contributes to a prosperous, dynamic, and vibrant community.

The Canadian beer industry contributes \$13.6 billion to Canada's GDP and revenue generated from BC craft beer sales grows year after year, reaching \$319 million in 2020, up from \$240 million in 2016.

Craft brewing supports thousands of jobs in BC while animating commercial areas. Our local tourism association, Vancouver's North Shore, along with Destination BC bring visitors from near and far to our local Ale Trail. The brewers often work together and co-create new ways to advance the City's brewery district.

And people aren't just coming here for the beer. We have many recreation destinations that are drawing in more and more tourists.

This past year our hotel and accommodation sector was busy. So busy in fact that hotels on the North Shore were reporting higher occupancy rates month over month than Vancouver itself.

To encourage further growth in our tourism sector I would love to see another hotel in the community, and dare I say I would love it if one day we were home to a satellite campus for the Vancouver convention centre. Being just a 12 minute SeaBus ride away from downtown is a well of potential I want the City to draw from.

The City has historically been a multi-modal community. Ferries, busses, and streetcars, have all played a vital role in our growth. And as many of you are likely well aware, transportation continues to be a priority as delays in the movements of goods and people hurt our wellbeing, environment, and economy.

People tell me that improving mobility and transportation on the North Shore is their top priority. I get it. We all want to spend less time commuting, and more time living. We want our goods to get from point A to point B without being held up for hours.

We are home to many growth industries and family-supporting jobs; but the people who keep our economy moving have limited options for getting to the North Shore.

For too long cities have been designed with the car in mind leaving many without safe and efficient options for getting around. That's why the city is working hard to deliver innovative transportation options that work for everyone.

Just last month we launched North Shore Connects, a partnership between the City of North Vancouver, Squamish Nation, District of West Vancouver, Tsleil-Waututh Nation, and District of North Vancouver, with the number one goal of advancing rapid transit across the Inlet. This is an evolution of the Integrated North Shore Transportation Planning Project, also referred to as INSTPP. We are now working in implementing the upgrades that were identified.

Delivering rapid transit to the North Shore is a priority. North Shore Connects released an economic benefits assessment last month which found that rapid transit over the Inlet would shift approximately 50,000 daily vehicle trips to transit and create many more job opportunities for those on and off the Shore.

People need more, and better, options for moving to, through, and from the North Shore. That's why North Shore Connects is making the case for rapid transit across the Inlet. We need the people who live, work, and play on the North Shore, along with businesses big and small, to join the call.

We simply cannot wait any longer for this investment. I hope I can count on all of you to join me in saying the North Shore must be next for a rapid transit investment.

At the local level we're redesigning Esplanade to enhance goods movement and make it a better experience for pedestrians. We are taking a Complete Street approach to ensure that people of all ages and abilities are able to move comfortably and safely and that they can access the shops and services they need within minutes from their homes.

People are changing how they move for the better and our infrastructure must support their needs. To that end the City made history this summer by launching the first all-electric bike share of its kind in BC. These e-bikes fill a critical gap in our transportation network.

And just last month, it was made clear to us how important it is to create these options for people. On a day when traffic stood still as urgent repairs on a single pothole took place on the Ironworkers Memorial Bridge, we saw the highest use of the Lime e-bikes to date. When we make it easier for people to access other transportation options, they use them. Providing options makes it easier for all of us to move.

Staff at the City know that e-mobility is opening doors for people and for the business community. That's why the City is exploring the use of e-cargo bikes for home delivery. The City wants to be a

prosperous, sustainable, and dynamic community. Delivering new solutions such as allowing for e-cargo bike delivery fleets is part and parcel to that vision.

I had a great conversation with the team down at Larry's market about e-bikes and grocery delivery, and I'd welcome a conversation with any business interested in exploring delivery vehicle alternatives.

Another key component to the City's economic development is ensuring that the workers who keep our economy moving can also call our community home.

This year we completed the Balanced Housing Lab, an innovative partnership that I convened between the City of North Vancouver, District of West Vancouver, and Squamish Nation. Together we co-created diverse housing solutions that make it possible for middle-income earners at different stages of life to live and work on the North Shore. We are now prototyping some of the ideas to come out of the lab process; including piloting an alternative development approval process and re-examining land use designations.

The City is exploring many solutions to our housing challenges, and among them is the rent-to-own home financing model. The cost to buy a home these days is astronomical. To pay rent and save for a down deposit at the same time is nearly impossible.

You all know that attracting and retaining staff is a huge challenge, in large part because of the cost of housing on the North Shore. We have been in a housing affordability crisis that has left the middle-income workers who keep our economy moving without the housing options they need.

We've seen job growth across the North Shore, but as workers commute from the far parts of the region, our congestion problems worsen. That's why I brought forward a motion to Council directing staff to research rent-to-own models. Staff will report back with ideas on what the City can do to foster more of these homes being built.

We know there is demand for these types of programs. Last year Council approved 8 rent-to-own homes in a new building and the developer has since received over 800 applications. 800.

Delivering more rent-to-own homes in condos, apartments, and townhomes for young professionals, young families, and newcomers, will alleviate some pressure on the purpose-built rental stock and further Council's goal of being an inclusive, prosperous, and diverse community.

Creating a more equitable housing market is critical in growing our economy. The City has always been a place that people from all means and backgrounds have been able to come and lay roots. We must ensure this continues to be the case.

The homes we deliver must work for people, and they must also work for our environment. Embracing low carbon technologies and offering rebates for retrofitting is essential as we move forward.

The City has long been a leader in innovative and progressive climate policies. From step code requirements for new builds, to low-carbon requirements for single-family detached housing, to the

top up rebates we offer residents who are retrofitting their homes with electric heat pumps, we are supporting the greener choice.

Earlier this year I was pleased to attend the grand unveiling of Crest by Adera in Central Lonsdale which is one of the largest residential mass timber projects in the City to date. And we saw the completion of number 1 Lonsdale, a mass timber commercial building built to rigorous Passive House design standards, featuring a main floor restaurant with two floors of office space above, constructed in only 10 days! I'm very interested in this technology, and these are examples of where the industry needs to go. It's more sustainable, it has a quieter and quicker construction process, mitigates dust from concrete, and supports BC forestry jobs.

This summer made the effects of climate change very real to people in a new way. In July, the 'heat dome,' as it has come to be known, raised serious and urgent questions around if our home infrastructure can truly keep us cool and healthy during the summer.

Over 500 people died during the heat dome alone from heat-related illness. Most of them seniors or people with underlying conditions, many of them living alone. On a personal note, my mother-in-law is among those who died this summer. She was elderly, and the heat was just too much. So retrofitting decades old homes to remain cool during the summer has become personal for me as I've experienced the human loss that comes along with our changing climate.

We must reconsider if the homes being delivered will meet today's climate context. While there is time to turn the proverbial ship around on a climate disaster, there are environmental changes that have become permanent as a result of inaction and will require mitigation. Among them is building homes that will get people through intense heat waves.

Climate change is also having a profound impact on our economy. This must become a priority for our business community. Just this week a storm has knocked out power across the province, washed away a part of the Coquihalla highway, taking out the rail line that is vital for goods movement, and has flooded the Fraser and Nicola valleys resulting in mass evacuations. It will take months to fix these damages. In some cases, people and businesses will never be able to rebuild what they've lost. Upgrading critical infrastructure has been put on the back burner for too long and we are now paying the price. We need wide sweeping upgrades delivered as soon as possible.

On a more positive note, this year we've embarked on several large civic infrastructure projects that will promote healthy people, and in turn support a healthy economy. I want to quickly take you through a few of these projects...

Just last month Council unanimously approved moving forward with a new North Shore Neighbourhood House. It is very seldom that I get teary during a Council meeting, but as we discussing this project as a Council I couldn't help but feel overwhelmed. This project represents an investment in seniors day and night respite care, a significant increase in the City's deeply affordable housing stock, and a new social hub for youth, families, and vulnerable people. This project represents who we are as a community.

This past year we have also approved many new child care spaces. In fact, since the start of my mandate as Mayor we have approved more child care spaces than ever before as a City. Accessing

affordable and licensed child care is a huge challenge for young families. For too long our community has not had enough child care spaces, resulting in many parents, often women, leaving the workforce. This is inequitable and unsustainable within our economy.

The City is committed to working in partnership with non-profits and senior levels of government to create new spaces that support the wellbeing of children and the lives of working parents.

The new centre I am most excited about is the City child care facility we are building at Mahon Park. Scheduled to open in 2023, the City will create a total of 37 new licensed child care spaces. The centre will specifically support newly landed immigrants and refugees in the community.

Maximizing the potential of our parks is critical. This May Council gave direction to begin the process of designing a new master plan for Waterfront Park. This iconic park is ready for renewal and this presents us with some exciting opportunities.

I've encouraged staff to think outside the box and consider how this park can be a place where people can touch water. Being adjacent to the SeaBus and the Shipyards, Waterfront Park is the perfect location for recreation investments such as a seawater pool.

Re-imagining our cities in a post-pandemic context is opportunity to build back better. I want the City to consider what is possible, versus what is not. In March I penned an op-ed for the Vancouver Sun and Province outlining why we should consider building a park over the highway.

Highway 1 — an enormous piece of car-oriented infrastructure which has steadily widened — divides our community into two, creating a north and south side. But this doesn't have to be the case.

In Boston and New York, transportation infrastructure that divided cities is being redesigned to create parks that connect communities and fuel economic development.

Covering Highway 1, for even just one block either side of Lonsdale, would both stitch our community back together and would create a very large new park and enhance access to businesses in the Central Lonsdale area.

I brought forward a motion to Council this spring for staff to research this kind of infrastructure and I look forward to their report. It's time to be bold and build a better City.

This past year we also hit many important milestones in the delivery of a new, state-of-the-art Harry Jerome Community Recreation Centre. I am so pleased to say that after 22 years of planning and engaging, the City is finally moving ahead with a new centre that will deliver exceptional experiences, programs and services to all community members.

The centre is on track to start construction mid-2022, with project completion anticipated for 2025. We are advancing this project with minimized financial risk as it represents the single largest capital investment ever made by the City.

As part of this project we are delivering a new Silver Harbour Seniors Centre, a new lawn bowling facility, a new home for Flicka Gymnastics, child care, housing, and more. There will also be an arena with seating for 500 spectators, with ice for fall and winter sports and lacrosse in the spring.

The City has been working with the Squamish Nation on naming the arena so that it recognizes the traditional lands it's on, the history and culture of the Squamish Nation and the game of lacrosse, and reflects our City's commitment to building relationships with Indigenous peoples and governments.

Reconciling with Indigenous, First Nations, and Metis people is a priority for Council. This year Council passed a motion around advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and reconciliation. This work won't be easy, but it is necessary.

We should all be aware there was once a residential school here in the City of North Vancouver. It was the St. Paul's Indian Residential School and it was on Keith road.

The values we promote within our community today — inclusivity, diversity, equity, justice — were simply not upheld throughout our history. As a community we must face this hard truth.

It was my honour to have been invited to witness the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations announce their investigation of this site and surrounding area. As a City and as Council we support this work unequivocally.

Together we must ask ourselves what more we can be doing as we walk the path of reconciliation. As business owners, elected people, community members... We all have a greater role to play.

Before we wrap up, I want to take a moment to look ahead to 2022 and to the world we are building as we rise from the ashes of this pandemic. Richard Florida, urbanist and author, put it best when he said "I think what we are going through is a great urban reset and it's not just the pandemic. It's a series of overlapping crises."

So, how do we take this once in a century opportunity?

How we live, shop and go about our everyday lives will not be the same as it was before the pandemic. Now it's time to build the communities we want and can be proud to leave for future generations.

The last almost two years have been difficult for all of us. But it has also given us the space, time and opportunity to look at how we must do things differently.

Now we can see what we believe to be the end of the pandemic, but we cannot just go back to what's comfortable. We have these overlapping crises and going back to what was is frankly not good enough.

In the past year we have accomplished so much as a City, and as a Council. The road ahead of us will certainly bring about new challenges, but I am excited to continue this work. There is so much more to do to build a more equitable and healthy community... and I am just getting started.

As I said to you all last year, we are positioning the City to work at the intersection of health and the economy. We will continue to be a community that anyone can call home with vibrant people-oriented places.

The North Shore is a wonderful place to live, work, and play. Council's priorities reflect our commitment to advance the City North Vancouver as a forward thinking, ambitious, and competitive City for generations. Our shared goal is to make our community a place where residents, visitors and businesses alike consider it as the place to be.

Thank you and I look forward to taking your questions.