

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee

Date: 2025-07-10

From: Riley Smith, Planner I

Subject: Regional Industrial Lands Inventory Update

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RECOMMENDATION

This report is being brought forward for the Board's information and there is no staff recommendation.

BACKGROUND

This Regional Industrial Lands Inventory is part of a broader set of economic initiatives outlined in an April 2025 staff report¹, which together contribute to a deeper, more informed understanding of the **Fraser Valley Regional District's** (FVRD) economic landscape and highlight the importance of industrial land and the growing pressures it faces.

FVRD staff have been developing a comprehensive, high-level inventory of industrial lands across the **region's** member municipalities and electoral areas. This report updates the Board on the progress of this ongoing work, which provides a region-wide snapshot by identifying the location, supply, and current use of industrial lands, including where non-industrial activities may be occurring.

The Regional Industrial Lands Inventory aligns with the policies and implementation of the *Fraser Valley Future 2050* Regional Growth Strategy, relating to **Policy 2.1, "Protect and support employment lands" under Goal 2.0, "Economic Strength and Resiliency"**. It was also identified in the *FVRD 2023-2026 Strategic Plan* as an action item. It is designed to complement existing plans, policies, and reports by member municipalities by providing a regional perspective.

¹ 2025 Regional Economic Review and Related Initiatives, April 10, 2025: <https://pub-fvrd.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=30902>

DISCUSSION

Context

Industrial land is essential to the FVRD's economy, which is strongly rooted in goods-producing sectors like construction, manufacturing, transportation, and warehousing. These sectors, along with the region's growing agri-food and agri-tech industries, depend on access to suitable industrial land to operate and expand. As the region faces challenges such as population growth, affordability issues and a diminishing supply of suitable industrial land, protecting and expanding the industrial land base is critical to ensuring long-term economic resilience and growth.

The shortage of industrial land supply is a Lower Mainland issue. According to Metro Vancouver's *2020 Regional Industrial Lands Strategy*, the last of their effective industrial land supply is expected to be absorbed sometime between 2028 and 2035.² While some vacant land remains, much of it is less viable due to size, location, or servicing constraints, making it difficult to accommodate larger distribution or manufacturing facilities. As a result, businesses are increasingly looking beyond Metro Vancouver, with the Fraser Valley seen as a more viable and affordable option.

However, available industrial land is also becoming scarce in the Fraser Valley. Many of the region's industrial and business park locations are nearing build-out, with a noticeable decline in readily available land. Additional constraints including a large portion of land in the Agricultural Land Reserve, geographical and environmental limitations, and urban growth pressures, restrict the potential to expand the industrial land supply.

Approach

Industrial lands included in this inventory are those designated as industrial in local Official Community Plans (OCPs), zoned as industrial in local bylaws, or both. Lands that meet this definition are assessed on a parcel-by-parcel basis for site-specific OCP designation, zoning, actual land use, and area.

The analysis builds on previous FVRD work and draws on existing municipal and regional inventories to inform a consistent and repeatable methodology. **Categories describing a site's current or actual use draw from those used in the City of Abbotsford's *Industrial Land Capacity Analysis* (2017) and Metro Vancouver's *2020 Regional Industrial Lands Inventory*.** They include lands developed for industrial and quasi-industrial purposes as well as industrial lands used for non-industrial activities such as commercial, residential or agriculture. The inventory also identifies land that is completely vacant.

As part of this work, staff have developed a series of in-house GIS **models using Esri's ArcGIS software**. These semi-automated tools streamline data processing, significantly reduce manual effort, and ensure a consistent and repeatable approach. As a result, the inventory can be more efficiently

² Metro Vancouver Regional Industrial Lands Strategy, June 2020: <https://bit.ly/4ktoOhm>

updated with new information and will allow for future monitoring of lands and assessment of land use changes over time.

The scope of the inventory includes all FVRD jurisdictions, though industrial lands are not present in every member municipality or electoral area. Industrial lands located on First Nations reserves are not included due to data availability constraints. However, this inventory provides a foundation for work that may incorporate First Nations communities and lands at a future date.

Status

The bulk of spatial data processing is complete, with initial results currently under review. FVRD staff are reaching out to municipal staff to share inventory progress and confirm that the objectives, methodology, and preliminary findings accurately reflect each municipality.

Differences in OCP designations and zoning bylaws between municipalities present challenges for conducting a consistent inventory of industrial land across the region. Discussions with municipalities are key to helping determine the final scope of the inventory and assess how current municipal OCP work can inform and strengthen it moving forward.

The completed inventory report will provide a detailed regional snapshot of industrial lands and include municipal-level breakdowns. It will present total figures for developed and vacant lands, further categorized by designation and zoning, actual land use, and average parcel size. The report will also include a description of the methodology, highlight key findings, and feature detailed maps.

Once the baseline inventory is complete, there are a number of directions this initiative can go, including developing a broader employment lands inventory, identifying potential expansion opportunities, including an assessment of brownfield sites around the region, and undertaking further economic analysis, including land supply and demand forecasting. From a Regional Growth Strategy perspective, the inventory will allow for better monitoring of land use change over time.

COST

The costs of the Regional Industrial Lands Inventory are incorporated in the Regional Strategic Planning and Initiatives (601) budget.

CONCLUSION

The Regional Industrial Lands Inventory provides a high-level assessment of industrial land across the FVRD, building on previous work by FVRD staff and drawing from existing municipal and regional inventories to support a consistent and repeatable methodology. It is part of a broader set of economic initiatives undertaken by the FVRD **to develop a greater understanding of the region's economic landscape and the pressures facing industrial and employment lands.**

This inventory establishes a foundation for ongoing monitoring and supports future initiatives aimed at protecting and expanding **the region's** industrial land base. Future work may build on this foundation to include a broader employment lands inventory, land supply and demand forecasting, identification of potential expansion opportunities, or assessment of industrial brownfield sites.

Ultimately, this work strengthens long-term planning and policy development, offering a valuable resource for municipalities, enabling collaboration, and supporting advocacy when engaging with provincial agencies.