



# Land Use in Greater Vancouver

**Issue:** Greater Vancouver's available land base is shrinking, which is pushing up housing prices and making urban densification more difficult to achieve. It makes sense, therefore, to look carefully at the 70 per cent of land in Metro Vancouver that is currently fenced off from development as part of the Green Zone. The Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), which covers some 20 per cent of the GVRD, calls for particular scrutiny.

- Background:**
- While Greater Vancouver's industrial land base shrinks, its population continues to rise. But more people occupying more land means there is less room for the jobs they will need to stay here. The industrial land base shrank 13 per cent between 1996 and 2005, while regional population continued to rise at the same rate.
  - Although it is home to one of Canada's biggest and fastest-growing metropolitan areas, only about a quarter of the Metro Vancouver is urbanized. Most of the region (70 per cent) is set aside in the Green Zone, with 21 per cent reserved for agricultural use.
  - While land within the ALR may have agricultural potential, that does not mean it is actually being farmed. In reality, much of the more than 60,000 hectares of ALR in Metro Vancouver is not being used for agriculture or is sitting vacant. Richmond's unfarmed ALR land is equal in size to two-thirds of the city's total urban-residential area, 180 per cent of its total industrial area, and 400 per cent of its industrial-designated areas that are not yet in industrial use.
  - Recent applications to remove land from the Green Zone demonstrate the challenges of getting such lands out of the ALR, even when compelling community benefits can be expected.
  - B.C. needs to stop addressing today's problems with yesterday's tools. The ALR was intended to preserve a balance between agricultural and non-agricultural uses. The ALR may have represented effective policy for the Lower Mainland more than three decades ago when it was created, and may well still represent effective policy in other parts of B.C. today. But the current ALR system is not resulting in the best or most sustainable outcomes within what is now a severely land-constrained metropolitan area.

**Position:** It is time to begin a public dialogue about how critical the supply of land is to the goal of affordable housing for the Lower Mainland population of the future.

*The Independent Contractors and Businesses Association (ICBA) is the voice of B.C.'s construction industry.*