



## Report to Council

**To:** Mayor and Council  
**Date:** September 2, 2025  
**From:** Trisa Atwood, Manager, Community Planning & Sustainability  
**Subject:** Official Community Plan – Council Review

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### **Purpose:**

For Council to review the proposed Official Community Plan and to direct Administration to prepare Bylaw 6200 for consideration.

### **Recommendation:**

THAT Administration prepare the Official Community Plan Bylaw for consideration.

### **Background:**

On November 30, 2023, the *Local Government Act (LGA)* was updated by the Province through the Housing Statutes Amendment Act (Bills 44, 46, 47) that requires local governments to take a more proactive, long-term approach to land use planning. One of the requirements of the updated *LGA* is that local governments must update their OCPs to reflect the 20-year housing demand identified in their Housing Needs Reports by December 31, 2025.

The current Official Community Plan (OCP) was adopted 2013, and updating the OCP was identified as a key goal of Council's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. On [January 8, 2024](#) Council and Administration initiated the review of the Official Community Plan (OCP) in tandem with the Transportation Plan on a 2-year timeframe.

### **Engagement Strategy:**

In March 2024, Council endorsed the public engagement strategy for the OCP update process that involved three phases of engagement, with regular Council updates and workshops. The first three phases of engagement were presented to Council and summarized in reports:

- [Phase 1 – What We Learned Report](#)
- [Phase 2 – What We Learned Report](#)
- [Phase 3a – What We Learned Report](#)

A summary of the key findings in the engagement reports and the relevant sections of the OCP that address the findings is provided as Attachment 1.

Phase 3b involved the referral of the OCP document to 16 external agencies and local governments, internal departments and Senior Management Team, and three Council committees during the month of July 2025.

External Agencies and Local Governments:

- Okanagan Indian Band
- Regional District of North Okanagan
- District of Coldstream
- District of Lake Country
- Okanagan Basin Water Board
- Greater Vernon Water
- School District 22
- Interior Health
- Agriculture Land Commission
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs (Planning and Land Use Management Branch)
- Ministry of Transportation
- BC Transit
- BC Hydro
- FortisBC Gas
- Vernon Branch of the Okanagan Regional Library

City Divisions and Departments:

- Active Living Centre
- Administration
- Community Recreation
- Corporate Administration
- Current Planning
- Engineering Development Services
- Finance
- Fire Department
- Human Resources
- Infrastructure
- Community Planning (Long Range)
- Operations
- Parks Projects and Community Initiatives
- Planning and Community Services
- Protective Services
- Recreation Services
- Roads, Drainage, and Airport
- Tourism Vernon

Council Committees:

- Advisory Planning Committee
- Affordable Housing Advisory Committee
- Climate Action Advisory Committee

Administration incorporated the majority of referral comments, Council committee comments, and departmental and divisional feedback where it aligned with the purpose of an OCP and maintained a balanced approach across city-wide objectives.

The process thus far has led to the creation of the draft OCP (Attachment 2) that includes 7 chapters, 3 appendixes, maps, and a glossary. The document accommodates the projected housing needs identified in the Housing Needs Report, incorporates technical studies, reflects the priorities and values identified through public engagement, and addresses emerging issues and trends in planning and development.

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7
Foundation	Context	Growth Management	City-wide Policies	Land Use Policies	Development Permit Areas	Actions and Implementation

*Table 1: OCP Chapter Numbers and Titles*

## **Overview:**

### **a. Rationale:**

The Official Community Plan (OCP) is a long-term strategic planning document that guides how and where growth and development will accommodate 20,000 more residents and over 11,000 new housing units over the next 20 years. It is meant to shape the physical, environmental, economic, and social evolution of the community, while embracing the values and priorities identified through public engagement. The goal of the OCP is to provide a broad vision and direction that can be further regulated through the creation of strategies, bylaws, policies, and actions to regulate growth and development. One of the key regulatory tools that supports the vision of the OCP is the Zoning Bylaw, which translates the high-level direction and land use policies of the OCP into detailed regulations by defining permitted uses, building heights, setbacks, lot coverage, parking requirements, and others based on zones.

## **Big Moves:**

There are a number of “Big Moves” that represents an evolution from the current 2013 OCP and they are intended to address issues identified through engagement and technical studies. The five big moves are summarized as follows with relevant OCP section numbers included in brackets for reference:

1. Growth Management, Transit Oriented Development, and Mixed-Use:
  - a. The Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) is introduced in the Growth Strategy (3.3) and identified on Map 1.2. The UCB will be the City’s principal tool for limiting sprawl, growing sustainably, and supporting a robust economy by directing urban growth to within the UCB, and limiting growth outside the boundary. This includes discouraging development on hillsides that are designated as rural and protecting the Agricultural Land Reserve. The UCB is further refined with the introduction of a Focused Growth Area (Map 1.3) where medium to high density growth will be encouraged, and most public investment will be directed. These two growth areas link land use planning with sustainable transportation planning to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and foster resilience to climate change.
  - b. Transit Oriented Development is introduced in this OCP in the Growth Strategy (3.3) by establishing two Transit Oriented Development Areas (TODAs), as defined through provincial legislation, within the Focused Growth Area and designating them as Urban Centres (Map 5.1). Urban Centres are described in Section 5.1 as places where high-density housing,

mixed-use buildings, and a variety of commercial, community, and recreational uses will be supported.

- c. This OCP introduces objectives and policies to encourage mixed-use development in Urban Centres (5.1), Village Centres (5.2), and Urban Neighbourhoods (5.3). Integrating commercial uses at a variety of scales throughout Centres and Urban Neighbourhoods can create vibrancy, livability, support local business and the economy. Encouraging medium to high density housing combined with commercial uses near transit routes, transit stops, and transit exchanges can support improvements to transit frequency and usage, thereby reducing the amount of GHGs produced by single-user vehicles.

## 2. Housing:

- a. Building more housing that is affordable, inclusive, and diverse is a strong theme in this OCP that was identified through the Housing Needs Report (2.2), public engagement, and provincial directives. This means housing for everyone, including seniors, families, youth, singles, couples, and those who require housing with supports or have special needs. This housing will range from accessory dwelling units to large-scale apartment buildings, and includes non-profit housing, below-market and subsidized rental housing, and various ownership models. This plan includes objectives, policies, and action items (4.1 and Table 7.1) to facilitate the delivery of housing; to streamline processes, provide financial incentives, and improve regulations with the goal of meeting the 5-year provincial housing target order and 20-year housing demand.
- b. This OCP includes reimagined Form and Character Design Guidelines (Appendix C) based on building typology. This will add clarity and set expectations for development applications and help streamline the review process and housing approvals. The guidelines are built on a foundation of core design principles, unique to Vernon, that include fostering inclusive and social streetscapes; supporting attainable and cost-efficient communities; preserving and working with natural features; designing for climate resilience; and people-first planning and design. Specific guidelines for zero carbon and high-performance buildings as well as accessible and adaptable design were created to align with priorities identified through public engagement.

## 3. Climate Action:

- a. The integration of the Climate Action Plan (2021) with the OCP is the third Big Move of this plan. Concepts and actions from the Climate Action Plan are threaded through the Vision (3.1), Values (3.2), and Growth Strategy (3.3) of this OCP, and are incorporated into the City-Wide Policies (Ch 4) to apply a climate lens to all aspects of the city. The Land Use Policies (Ch 5) guide land use decisions to further support the Climate Action Plan. The primary goal of the climate-related policies and actions is to reach a 100% reduction in GHG emissions by 2050.

#### 4. Parks and Public Access to the Waterfront:

- a. A shift in how riparian areas on private property are managed is included in this OCP (4.4) by requiring a 15 m to 30 m wide dedication of riparian areas at time of property development to enhance oversight and management of these areas, and to provide greater public access to the waterfront and creeks. This is supplemented by policy to acquire land for proposed linear trails (Map 4.1) at the time of property development, with the long-term objective of creating publicly accessible linear trails along all waterways.
- b. This OCP introduces policies and actions to support and expand active parks, natural areas, and linear trails in Section 4.4 Parks and Recreation. Top priority action items for Parks include developing a Park Acquisition Strategy and a Park Acquisition Fund to expand and create new parks within the focused growth area, and to strategically acquire more land along Okanagan Lake to promote public access. This is further supported by actions to implement a Development Cost Charge (DCC) program for new development, working toward a park provision standard between 2.0 ha and 3.0 ha of new park land per thousand people in population growth.

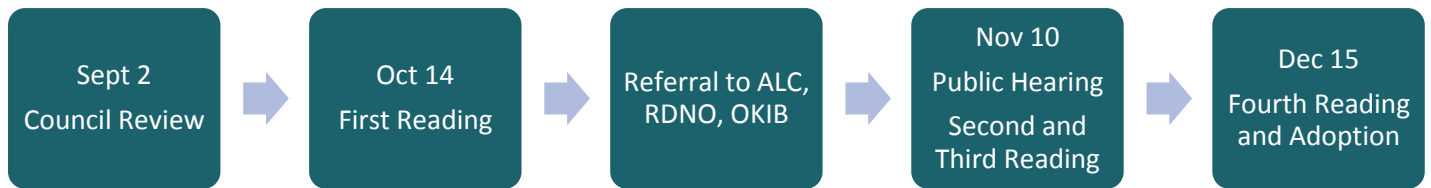
#### 5. Environmental Mapping and Policy Framework:

- a. A technical study was completed to create a new Environmental Management Area map and update associated policies to enhance protection of terrestrial ecosystems, aquatic ecosystems, and to identify ecological connectivity corridors (Maps 3.3 and 6.1). The development permit policies (Ch 6) and regulatory guidelines (Appendix B) are based on findings from the technical and mapping study and align with the community's value of protecting natural areas. The regulatory guidelines of Appendix B are categorized into terrestrial ecosystems, aquatic ecosystems, hillside development, wildfire hazard, and flood hazard to help reduce risks and ensure community safety.

The OCP will continue to grow, adapt, and evolve alongside the city. As new trends emerge, community priorities shift, or strategic initiatives are identified, Administration will recommend updates to ensure the plan remains relevant through to 2045. In addition to routine maintenance and minor amendments, a comprehensive review, guided by public engagement and updates to the Housing Needs Assessment, will be conducted every five years, in accordance with the Local Government Act.

#### Next Steps:

Should Council direct Staff to prepare the Official Community Plan Bylaw 6200, the bylaw will be brought forward for first reading on October 14, 2025. This will lead to a Public Hearing on November 10, 2025, with adoption targeted for December 15, 2025, to meet the LGA requirement of adoption prior to December 31, 2025.



b. Relevant Policy/Bylaws/Legislative Authority:

- Council Strategic Plan 2023-2026
- Official Community Plan Bylaw 5470
- Local Government Act Division 4

c. Council's Strategic Plan Alignment:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Governance & Organizational Excellence | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Livability |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recreation, Parks & Natural Areas      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vibrancy   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental Leadership               | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable        |

**Financial Implications:**

Staff have begun work on a major update to Development Cost Charge Bylaw 5233. This update will establish the infrastructure cost of accommodating the growth scenario presented in the draft Official Community Plan (OCP). The infrastructure categories being proposed as part of this update include roads, sanitary treatment, sanitary collection, storm sewer, parks and fire protection. Staff from Transportation, Infrastructure, and Parks have modelled population numbers and distribution as estimated in the draft OCP and are in the process of creating and costing a comprehensive list of projects necessary to meet the growth-based demands on their respective infrastructure categories.

Staff are aiming to complete project costing by mid-September, and will then refine project lists, costs, and benefit factors to develop a draft Development Cost Charge (DCC) program and rates. Staff are aiming to bring the draft DCC program to Council in October as part of a DCC workshop, where a technical consultant will provide a refresher explaining the rules and roles of DCC's, and where we will obtain initial feedback from Council on the draft program and rates.

**Alternatives & Implications:**

THAT Administration consider including (*to be cited by Council*) in the draft Official Community Plan document presented on September 2, 2025.

Should a member of Council identify a change they wish to be incorporated into the draft OCP document, a resolution outlining the specific change is required. Administration will review the resolutions and, if appropriate, incorporate them into the Official Community Plan Bylaw that will be presented on October 14, 2025.

**Communication:**

The Official Community Plan was uploaded on [Engage Vernon Website](#) on August 21, 2025 for Council and Public Review.

**Attachments:**

Attachment 1: Summary of Engagement and OCP Policy

Attachment 2: Draft Official Community Plan

Attachment 3: Presentation of Draft Official Community Plan

Reviewed by: Roy Nuriel, General Manager of Planning

Reviewed by: Terry Barton, Director of Planning and Community Services

Reviewed by: Kevin Poole, Director, Corporate Administration

Approved by: Peter Weeber, Chief Administrative Officer