

Engagement Strategy and Communications Plan Joint Review of the Official Community Plan and Transportation Action Plan

Engagement Vision

Administration proposes the following **vision statement** to guide both engagement and communications for the Official Community Plan and Transportation Action Plan (OCP/TAP):

We will encourage the full and meaningful participation of the community in the process of reviewing our Official Community Plan and Transportation Action Plan to the extent possible within the provincially regulated timeline. We will ensure that the contributions of all community members that participate within the project timeline are heard and valued. We commit to ensure that these plans are informed and enriched by the results of the community engagement process.

Engagement Context: Constraints and Importance

The Province mandated that all BC municipalities must complete their first review and update of their Official Community Plan (OCP) based on an interim Housing Needs Report by December 31, 2025. The Province also made changes to the *Local Government Act* that reflect a shift to “a more pro-active, long-term approach to planning...where public engagement takes place earlier in the land use development process” ([BC website](#)). New regulatory changes put more limits on public engagement at the site-specific level and the emphasis is now on public engagement during the review of Official Community Plans. The Province also mandated that OCPs be reviewed every five years. There will be more time for engagement in future review cycles; however, currently, the length of the public engagement period is constrained by the deadline for completion.

Engagement Workplan

We propose to conduct engagement in three phases:

	Timeframe	Activities
Phase 1: Needs Assessment	Spring and Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media Launch and Community Call to Participation Community engagement on values, needs, and priorities Council Workshop 1
Phase 2: Growth Options Analysis	Fall to Winter 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community engagement to validate growth strategy and transportation improvements Council Workshop 2
Phase 3: Document & Map Review	Spring and Summer 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community feedback on draft OCP/TAP documents, Development Permit Guidelines and Land Use Maps Formal agency referrals of draft documents Council Workshop 3
Phase 4: Plan implementation	Spring 2026+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate the impacts of the new plans to the community

Given the tight timelines, Phase 1 would take place concurrently with the production of the background studies. Administration proposes to integrate Phase 1 engagement findings with the technical outputs of the background studies into draft growth options, to bring to the public in Phase 2. These timelines will ensure that a draft document will be presented to Council in Fall

2025 to begin the formal review and adoption process, so that the project is complete by December 31, 2025.

Engagement Objectives

The following eight **objectives** were distilled from conversations with the community about how they wanted to be engaged in the OCP/TAP process:

1. Ensure that all community members have the opportunity to participate (see **Attachment 2** for a set of Inclusive Engagement principles to support this objective)
2. Build community trust, understanding and participation over time
3. Help community members understand the significance of their participation
4. Provide community members with clear and accessible information
5. Accommodate diverse engagement preferences
6. Make participation fun
7. Make participation safe for staff and community members
8. Be transparent in how community feedback is being gathered and used

Target Audiences

Our proposed approach to engagement has been developed to reach out to the following audiences:

- General public
- Community-based organizations
- Individuals and groups that represent diverse communities
- Indigenous communities
- Other agencies and interested parties specified in the Local Government Act
- City Administration, and
- City Council (see Engagement Workplan for workshop dates).

Engagement Topics

The OCP and TAP include and integrate a variety of topics that together will comprise the long-term vision for development and growth in Vernon over the next 20 years. The public will have the opportunity to explore each of the following themes and the interconnections between them in all engagement opportunities in the community and online:

- Community Vision and Values
- Housing
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Climate, Nature, Parks and Trails
- City Centre and Neighbourhoods
- Economic Development & Investment

The public will have the opportunity to explore these topics through questions such as:

- How do we make room for more neighbours?
- How do we move around our community?
- How do we prepare to be a more climate ready and climate friendly community?
- What does our City need to do to support growth?

In the Community

- Going to where the community is at pop-up events
- Presence at major community events

In Person

- Open House
- Workshops with diverse groups and interested parties
- Support community member-based organizations with information to extend project reach, equity and inclusion

Online

- Ongoing presence at EngageVernon.ca/ocp-tap
- Storytelling videos and engagement options by topic
- Links to all relevant background studies
- Social media engagement opportunities

Engagement summaries will be posted to EngageVernon.ca after each Council Workshop, to provide timely feedback to the community on the results of the engagement and how their feedback is being integrated into the development of the Official Community Plan and Transportation Action Plan. These summaries will also present key information on the reach and success the engagement phase by reporting on the number of engagement events and the estimated number of people engaged across all demographics of our community.

Engagement with Indigenous Governments

The Local Government Act requires the City of Vernon to consider consultation with interested parties, including First Nations in this region. The Okanagan Indian Band (“OKIB”) is the primary interested party, has reserves adjacent to municipal boundaries and is the owner of fee simple lands within the municipality. Administration reached out to OKIB to determine how they would like to be engaged in the OCP and TAP Joint Review.

Respondents speaking on behalf of the Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB) observed that:

- The community as a whole may not understand the significance of their participation
- The community has invested significant recent time and resources in community planning
- OKIB has a Land Use Plan and is currently developing a Comprehensive Community Plan (supported under Indigenous Services Canada, a CCP serves a similar function as an OCP)
- Capacity is a significant concern for OKIB and funding is required to assist participation in OCP/TAP
- The City may use the CEDI Working Group as an engagement channel at the political level, if they reconvene
- Administration-led engagement is best co-facilitated with OKIB Staff Liaisons
- OKIB community members prefer engagement in person and/or on the land, and
- Any educational/engagement materials for OKIB should be vetted by OKIB Staff Liaisons to make sure they reflect OKIB values and language.

Administration proposes the following engagement values/commitments:

1. We will acknowledge our shared history and role in Reconciliation
2. We will provide the resources needed to support participation
3. We will help the community understand the significance of their participation
4. We will listen and learn
5. We will prioritize safety and respect for everyone involved
6. We will engage in locations where OKIB is most comfortable to participate
7. We will work with OKIB Staff Liaisons to provide clear and accessible information
8. We will be transparent in how community feedback is being gathered and used
9. We will seek to build community trust and understanding through the OCP/TAP process and beyond
10. We will look for ways to create shared benefits through this project and beyond.

Communications and Education Plan

The communications and education plan for this project will target both internal and external audiences and be guided by the following vision:

Build shared understanding about the project, the opportunities for community engagement and a sense of collective opportunity and responsibility to help shape the future of Vernon.

Communications Objectives

1. Help staff and community members understand the significance of their participation
2. Provide education on value and benefits of OCP/TAP, and
3. Drive participation to modes that capture feedback at in person events, in the community, or online.

A media strategy to support the communications vision and objectives will be developed in collaboration with the Communications Division. A variety of communications methods will be used to support the strategy, including but not limited to:

- A project presence on engagevernon.ca
- Project email newsletters with a sign-up on engagevernon.ca
- Storytelling campaign of videos integrated with social media
- Interactive booths for pop-up engagement in the community, and
- Digital, print and radio news advertising