



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

Staff Report

To: Council

File No.: 6480-20-2501/OCP00022

From: Acting Director of Development Services

Date: October 1, 2025

Subject: Official Community Plan Review – Recommended Directions

PURPOSE:

For Council to receive, in accordance with Bill 44 provincial housing legislation requirements, information on the analysis, findings and recommended directions, or 'big moves', from the Official Community Plan (OCP) review process in preparation for the next phase of public and interest-holder engagement.

BACKGROUND:

In response to the new provincial housing legislation introduced under Bill 44 (*Housing Statutes (Residential Development) Amendment Act, 2023*), all municipalities in British Columbia are required to review their Official Community Plans (OCPs) and Zoning Bylaws to demonstrate that they have the necessary housing policies and zoned land capacity to meet the 20-year housing needs identified in their latest Housing Needs Report. Where non-compliant with the legislation, municipalities must update said bylaws by December 31, 2025. The intent of this requirement is to ensure communities are planning proactively to accommodate expected population growth and housing demand, by aligning land use policy with local housing needs.

At the July 30, 2025, Regular Council Meeting, Council received a Briefing Note identifying that:

- Courtenay's Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 3070, 2022 (OCP) and Zoning Bylaw No. 2500, 2007 meet minimum provincial requirements for sufficient land designation, existing zoning capacity and housing policy requirements.
- Improvements to both bylaws could help achieve the diversity of housing needs more effectively and that the 2007 Zoning Bylaw needs modernization.
- The timelines for the OCP and Zoning Bylaw updates have been adjusted to be adopted early in 2026 as they are no longer restricted by the December 31, 2025, legislative deadline.

At the April 23, 2025, Regular Council Meeting, the Consultation and Communications Strategy for the OCP update was adopted by Council and the scope of the OCP update was identified as follows:

- The vision that "Courtenay is responsible for the future, supporting high quality of life, with a low-carbon footprint for all" and that the cardinal directions (Reconciliation, Climate-Action, Equity and Community Well-being), and the eight OCP goal statements would continue to guide this OCP update.
- Focus on analyses and deliverables that support Bill 44 requirements for housing supply and growth management.
- Build on the 2024 Complete Communities Growth Assessment, with further GIS analysis to ensure land use designations support the Housing Needs Report as well as other community land use needs such as sufficient employment lands, sufficient park lands and recreational uses.

- Policy review respecting each class of housing needs required to be addressed from the Housing Needs Report. This work will be coordinated with the regional Housing Action Plan currently underway.
- Land economic evaluation to assess the viability of implementing Inclusionary Zoning and a Density Bonus (Benefits) policy to deliver more affordable housing options and other amenities, as permitted by new legislation.
- Analysis of infrastructure to identify capacity for housing in the near term and what future investments are required to support long-term growth.
- Coordinate OCP and Asset Management objectives as part of infrastructure capital planning to inform the financial plan.
- Establishing a local area planning framework to direct more detailed neighbourhood-level planning in the future, building on the successes of the concurrent Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan.
- Review of Development Permit Area (DPA) Guidelines for protection of the natural environment, protection of farmland, protection from steep slope hazards, and form and character. Consideration of new DPAs for flood hazards and wildfire hazard risk.
- Development of an OCP implementation, monitoring and reporting administrative structure and procedure to ensure OCP objectives are considered and incorporated into reports to Council, and capital planning.

DISCUSSION:

The OCP review analysis confirmed that broadly speaking, the existing 2022 OCP Bylaw No. 3070, despite being originally developed for a 2030 planning horizon, features sufficient development capacity and supporting policies required by new provincial legislation for Courtenay to accommodate 20 years of expected growth, including a population of 42,415 residents by 2041. Directing the majority of growth into seven primary and secondary growth centres, with more incremental residential intensification in infill areas, remains an appropriate urban framework concept for accommodating this growth. No municipal boundary extensions are called for in this 2025 OCP review cycle.

However, there are notable changes in how growth will be allocated within this framework. Specifically, OCP Bylaw No. 3070 allocated 70% of the then-projected 10 years of residential growth into the primary and secondary growth centres, with the remaining 30% allocated to Urban Residential infill areas. Under the 20-year growth outlook, the already established primary and secondary growth centres are projected to accommodate 56% of growth (42% within primary and 14% within secondary) and the infill areas are projected to accommodate 44%. A significant reason for this shift is the introduction of Small-Scale Multi Unit Housing (SSMUH) legislation and zoning bylaw updates that now allow increased residential density within traditionally lower density neighbourhoods.

The three core land use concepts informing the OCP 2022 will continue to inform the updated OCP, and future growth are:

- Mixing land uses in growth centres to support complete communities and 10-minute walkable neighbourhoods.
- Increasing densities throughout the community as introduced through the provincial small-scale multi-unit residential (SSMUH) zoning requirements for traditionally lower density neighbourhoods, with the highest residential and employment densities being located within the growth centres.

- Supporting high-quality urban form and design through comprehensive community planning, connectivity, streetscape presence, place making and architectural design through the use of form and character Development Permit Areas for larger developments.

The OCP review found there is a major opportunity afforded by Bill 44 to approach the work of community planning in a more comprehensive, predictable and iterative way. This means that multiple policy instruments, strategic and capital plans, financial tools and ultimately the annual budget and service delivery of the City of Courtenay are working in a more integrated way to support implementation. This finding aligns with the intent of the provincial housing and land use legislation generally branded under the provincial “proactive planning” framework.

Nine recommended directions or “Big Moves” are presented here as strategic interventions across the City’s variety of community planning, asset management and service delivery tools. These directions achieve the intentions of the legislation while recognizing the unique context of Courtenay. They are summarized as follows and described in more detail below:

1. **Align Corporate Efforts to Support a Proactive Planning Cycle**
Foster internal coordination to ensure community and financial planning processes are forward-looking and aligned with the 5-year planning cycle now required by legislation.
2. **Refine Land Use Policies Based on Growth Management Principles from the 2022 OCP**
Build upon the foundational strategies of the 2022 Official Community Plan (OCP), enhancing land use policies to better manage growth.
3. **Clarify OCP Land Use Policies to Guide Zoning Bylaw Updates**
Strengthen the connection between land use designations and zoning regulations to improve consistency and implementation.
4. **Monitor Market Conditions to Ensure Policy Relevance**
Continuously assess economic trends to keep planning policies aligned with current realities.
5. **Develop Tailored Housing Strategies to Reflect Diverse Community Needs**
Create responsive policies that address the full spectrum of housing types and affordability levels.
6. **Ensure Infrastructure Investments Match Growth and Land Use Context**
Coordinate infrastructure planning with growth patterns to support complete and livable communities.
7. **Modernize the Approach to Parks, Open Spaces, and Amenities**
Update strategies for public spaces to reflect evolving community needs and expectations.
8. **Integrate Green Infrastructure with Natural Asset Management**
Plan for infrastructure that supports ecological resilience and complements natural systems.
9. **Establish a Community Engagement and Partnership Framework**
Create a structured approach to collaboration with residents, interest-holders, and partners.

Many of the recommendations are tailored to answer two overarching questions:

- How can we achieve the established OCP Bylaw No. 3070 Vision through growth?
- How do we work with the tools we have, and the new ones enacted by the province, to iteratively plan for growth more proactively and holistically?

Several technical recommendations are included within each “Big Move” to better reflect growth, new housing legislation, and the services and amenities required to ensure a complete and livable Courtenay. The recommendations are informed by feedback from members of the public and interest holders through the consultation process to date and include recommended policy revisions following an evaluation of existing OCP policies against Courtenay’s updated population and housing profile. Key recommendations are summarized under each “Big Move” heading, with more detail provided in Attachment 1 (Courtenay OCP Update: Technical Study Findings & Recommended Updates).

Nine “Big Moves” to inform the OCP update

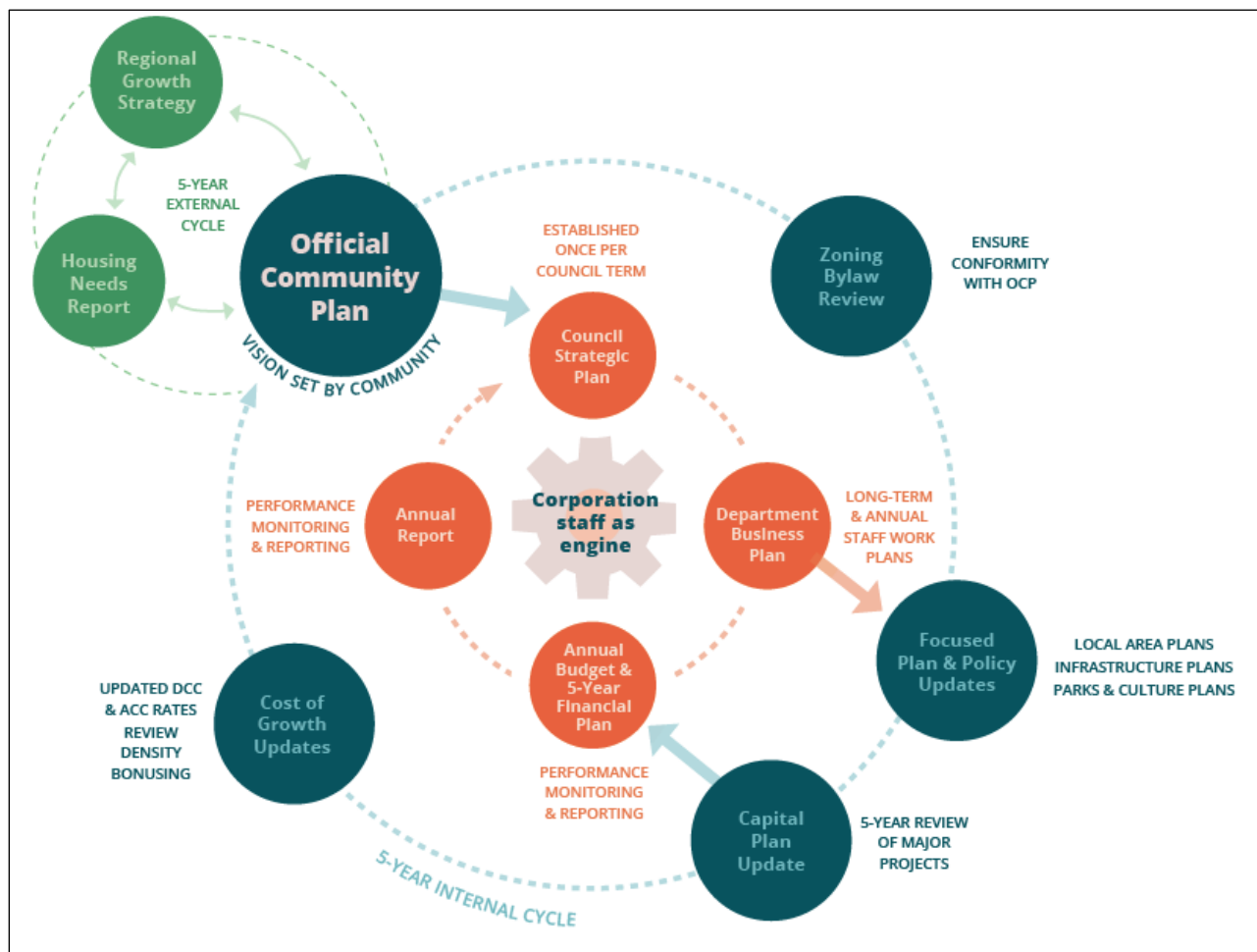
1. Align Corporate Efforts to Support a Proactive Planning Cycle

The new provincial planning legislation emphasizes long-term planning to ensure that enough land is designated and pre-zoned to meet future housing needs. Key changes for proactive planning include updated requirements for Housing Needs Reports (HNRs), OCPs, Zoning Bylaws, and the updated public hearing process. Moving forward, all local governments must update their HNR by the end of 2028 to incorporate the latest national 5-year census (2026), and every five years thereafter. Similarly, subsequent OCP reviews are required every 5 years with deadlines staggered to allow for the Census and HNRs information to become available. All municipalities must then also align their Zoning Bylaws with their OCPs and HNRs, every 5 years, to pre-zone for the total amount of housing growth their community needs. Courtenay’s next OCP and Zoning Bylaw review cycle will be required by the end of 2030. OCPs and Zoning Bylaws need only be updated if the review indicates that they are not meeting the legislative requirements although it is expected that a 5-year review cycle will generate housekeeping amendment and will therefore offer a regular cycle for these to occur. OCP and Zoning Bylaw amendments may continue to occur at any time outside of the 5-year cycle.

Infrastructure and amenities are critical to servicing new development and ensuring a complete community. As such, the proactive planning cycle can and should also be used to build more certainty and predictability in the review, adoption and construction of; infrastructure servicing through the planning tools of strategic servicing plans (water, sanitary, integrated rainwater management, multi-modal transportation, parks and recreation, cultural services), capital construction plans, development financing tools (i.e. Development Cost Charges (DCCs) and Amenity Cost Charges (ACC) bylaws) and other servicing and regulatory bylaws.

Figure 1 builds on the OCP implementation cycle found in the 2022 OCP Bylaw (existing elements shown in orange) to incorporate the proactive planning cycle legislative requirements and the recommended actions to corporately steward the proactive planning cycle (new elements shown in green and blue).

Figure 1: The 5-year Proactive Planning Cycle



Key recommendations within the Big Move to corporately align with the proactive planning cycle include:

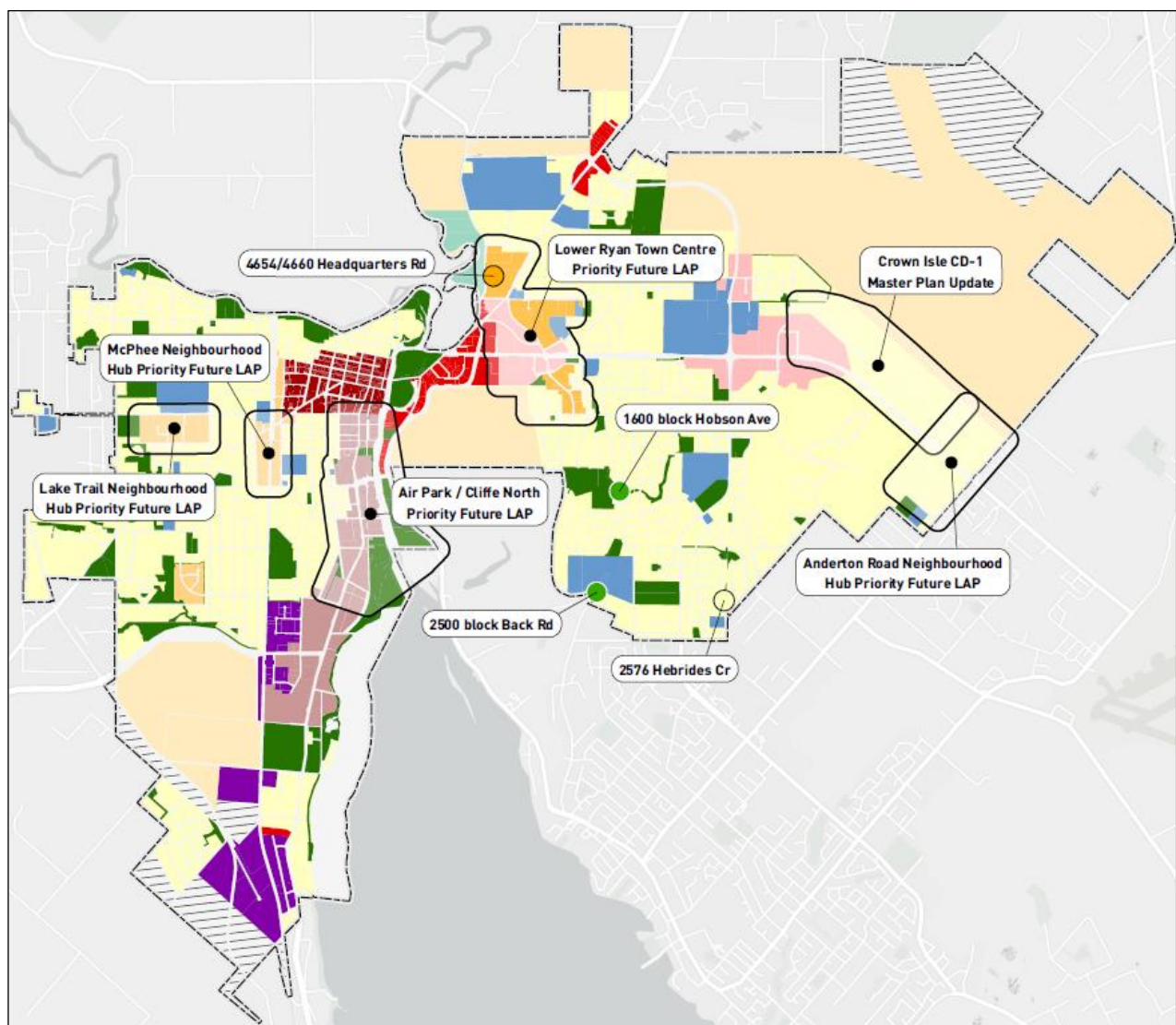
- A. Develop a framework and assign responsibility to coordinate the proactive planning cycle across departments and jurisdictions (e.g. regional service delivery model with CVRD).
- B. Standardize the population projections used, where they are sourced, when they are collected, and what purposes they are used for, to ensure clarity of how they relate to other projections sourced (i.e. housing needs, infrastructure planning, DCCs including of CVRDs). Currently, it is recommended the City rely on projections prepared by BC Statistics, which also serve as the baseline for the Housing Needs Report (5-year intervals) and can be consulted annually in preparation for specific infrastructure studies that require recent projections.
- C. Develop a clear and detailed framework of development infrastructure finance tools and when they are to be used as a policy tool separate and complementary to the OCP, so they can remain responsive to change (late comer agreements, local service areas, DCC and ACCs, grants, borrowing and property taxation).

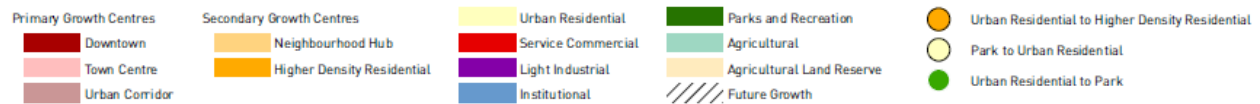
- D. Move towards a framework where OCPs are more directive and visionary with less specific implementation policy in future OCP cycles, recognizing that the other planning tools will fulfill that function.

2. Refine Land Use Policies Based on Growth Management Principles from the 2022 OCP

As part of this OCP update process, analysis was conducted to evaluate land demand and capacity to identify where land use adjustments may have been needed to accommodate growth. While the analysis found that no major changes are currently required to meet Courtney’s 20-year housing need, it did identify several minor revisions for policy consistency and areas for further study, as outlined in **Error! Reference source not found..**

Figure 2: Proposed Future Land Use Designation Changes and Priority Areas for Future Local Area Plans.





Through further community, interest-holder and statutory referral engagement, this map may change prior to the OCP being presented for bylaw readings. Recommendations in this section also respond to emerging priorities such as airport-related height restrictions, infrastructure servicing constraints, and the need for more consistent application of Local Area Plans (LAPs) and monitor for the application of new Development Permit Areas (DPAs).

Key recommendations within the Big Move to refine land use policies include:

- A. Identifying a framework for municipal boundary extension in alignment with the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), to clarify boundary extension priorities in future OCP review cycles or coincident with significant growth pressures. Extensions will be contemplated in accordance with growth, asset management and natural area protection policies as contained within the RGS and Courtenay’s OCP. This will require further engagement with the RGS Technical Advisory Committee through the OCP engagement process.
- B. Implementing a Local Area Plan (LAP) framework to guide more detailed neighbourhood-level planning, including more community engagement for key growth centres identified in the OCP. This framework will standardize how Courtenay plans for areas of greatest change by establishing clear guidelines and expectations for:
 - When each plan is required.
 - How each plan integrates with the OCP and other plans.
 - How each plan may be modified based on the location, size, and primary use of the lands in the LAP.
 - Outlining key elements to be included in the preparation of each level of plan including an emphasis on infrastructure (including green infrastructure) and place making opportunities.

Key to this recommendation is the commitment to conduct two or three LAPs per 5-year OCP review cycle. Once LAPs for the required areas are completed, the LAP process should transition to reviewing and calibrating the LAPs to be consistent with updated OCP policy and to offer increased implementation direction.

- C. Monitor the need to update and create new Development Permit Areas in the OCP with specific attention to:
 - Wildfire hazard interface DPA alongside regional wildfire risk reporting reflecting increased risks due to climate change.
 - Flood hazard when the Floodplain Bylaw is reviewed (2026), in alignment with the Flood Management Strategy.
 - Airport overlay to recognize noise impacts within the aerial influence of the Comox Airport and 19 Wing Comox (Canadian Forces Base).
 - Subdivision design requirements on very large parcels and/or under single ownership to inform road layout to optimize passive design opportunities on individual lots (DPA for the purposes of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reductions).

3. Clarify OCP Land Use Policies to Guide Zoning Bylaw Updates

The new proactive planning framework streamlines the previous approach to housing planning and approvals, which relied primarily on individual rezoning processes and community engagement for each site. The new framework calls for public consultation at a more encompassing level, through the 5-year OCP review cycles, to receive community input on how to accommodate the specific housing needs within the community's identified growth locations.

With regards to the Zoning Bylaw, 20 years of housing must be permitted through as of right zoning permissions (not including density benefits provisions, where they exist) which the OCP/Zoning Bylaw analysis confirmed is currently the case. The role of public hearings has changed with the new legislation so that zoning bylaw amendment applications for residential development (that are also consistent with the OCP) *may not hold* a public hearing, and any other zoning amendment applications that are consistent with the OCP *do not require* (although Council may elect to hold) a public hearing. In both instances, public notice is provided to inform the community that the zoning bylaw amendment is moving through the decision-making process. Together these legislative reforms are intended to avoid uncertain rezoning processes by focusing on long-term planning (OCP and LAPs), streamline the delivery of housing, and allow for more predictable infrastructure planning.

Key recommendations within the Big Move to better direct Zoning Bylaw updates include:

- A. Ensure OCP Future Land Use Designations reflect desired built form and housing densities to set clear expectations about what will be permitted (a) as of right, and (b) through density benefits (formally referred to as density bonus) policies. This includes:
 - setting a standard of four storeys as of right for multi-residential apartment development across applicable land use designations and zones; and
 - utilizing Floor Space Ratios (FSR)/Floor Area Ratios (FAR) to regulate density to allow for increased flexibility in building design and form to meet site conditions.
- B. Clarify expectations for mixed-use development to ensure a balanced mix of residential and commercial (employment) uses in designated areas and identifying specific locations (e.g. along major roads and in primary growth centres) where ground-floor commercial uses are required.
- C. Include policy on the use of and content of Development Agreements for more complex rezonings (e.g. what triggers certain studies or infrastructure).

4. Monitor Development Market Conditions to Ensure Policy Relevance

Development Cost Charges, Amenity Cost Charges, Density Bonusing, and Inclusionary Zoning for affordable housing, are among the tools available for local governments to enact and implement to ensure that communities have the funds, resources, and ability to plan for complete community needs as they grow. The application of these tools however must not deter development and must be used so as not to duplicate a financial requirement to new development. This Big Move is principally a technical exercise that is recommended to be initiated at regular intervals within the 5-year planning cycle to maintain accurate information on local development conditions. Ensuring staff and the development community are working with similar information will allow for expectations regarding development related costs to be better aligned. This information would also be communicated to the public to educate and engage on the cost of delivering housing and growing our community.

Key recommendations within the Big Move to monitor development market conditions include:

- A. Establish regular communication with the development community to gather feedback on market conditions, development challenges, and policy evaluation.
- B. Develop Density Bonus and Inclusionary Zoning policy frameworks and identify areas where they should apply.
- C. Conduct financial feasibility testing as part of the 5-year planning cycle at minimum to maintain accurate information and inform discussions with the development community.
- D. Review financial requirements and expectations for the development of additional infill dwelling units, such as the application of DCCs to additional accessory dwelling units.

5. Develop Tailored Housing Strategies to Reflect Diverse Community Needs

Based on the findings of the 2024 Housing Needs Report, there is an existing and projected demand for all types of housing and housing tenure over the next 5- and 20-year periods with a strong emphasis on the need for below-market housing. OCP Bylaw No. 3070 contains the requirements for policy response to the seven types of housing identified in legislation and yet there remains a need to further support affordable and diverse forms of housing.

Section 7.2 of Attachment 1 (Courtenay OCP Update: Technical Study Findings & Recommended Updates) identifies the housing toolkit available to local governments to advance affordable housing and concludes that each housing policy tool presents both opportunities and trade offs that affect the economics of development. For example, streamlined zoning and application efficiencies can reduce uncertainties and catalyze the permitting process but may raise concerns around transparency resulting from limited public input opportunities. Financial incentives offered by the community would need to be offset by other funding sources or grants from upper levels of government. Municipal investment and partnerships have the potential to support the development and provision of affordable and supportive housing but rely on public resources and external coordination. And the newly established tool in BC, Inclusionary Zoning, helps to secure affordable units but can reduce project profitability, potentially discouraging development. Section 8 (Land Economics Analysis) of Attachment 1 identifies that Inclusionary Zoning is not viable in Courtenay's current context and therefore is not a tool to be enacted in this OCP review cycle. Its applicability is recommended to be reviewed in future OCP review cycles.

The implementation of any policy tool therefore requires comprehensive analysis and consideration by the City to ensure that it can balance delivery of housing and financial feasibility. In Courtenay, the context for delivering housing is evolving with new opportunities both local (e.g. CVRD Housing Entity, Regional Housing Action Plan and Regional Homelessness Assessment and Plan including regional Winter Shelter Strategy) and from senior governments (e.g. recent announcement of the Federal Build Canada Homes program and ongoing commitments from the Province through BC Housing).

This Big Move recognizes the complexity and context of the City's emerging role to include the following strategic recommendations to advance this topic (more detailed recommendations in Attachment 1 Section 9):

- A. Apply the Density Bonusing policy described in Big Move 4 (Monitor Market Conditions) to build on the base densities identified in Big Move 3 (four storeys as of right for multi-residential apartment development) so that additional density equivalent to two additional storeys of residential development may be available subject to a density bonus rates (\$10 to \$20 per square foot on

additional density above the base density). These funds would be collected into a housing reserve fund to be used at the discretion of the City to support affordable housing, and as directed by policies identified in a Courtenay specific affordable housing plan (next strategic recommendation).

- B. Develop an affordable housing plan for the City that dovetails with the RGS Housing Action Plan and forms the suite of implementation-oriented plans such as strategic servicing plans to provide clarity on the City’s role and direction to staff on partnership opportunities as they arise and role in relation to the newly forming regional Housing Entity; locational clarity on where affordable housing supports from the City will align with the urban growth framework; further incentives for affordable housing including expanding the Revitalization Tax Exemption program to support certain building forms, locations, and bedroom counts; incentives to avoid demolition and retain existing housing; renter tenant protection tools as per Bill 16; and the review cycles of short-term rentals in Courtenay.
- C. Identify criteria for the location of affordable and supportive housing so that it is located within or in proximity to growth centres and allows for residents of such housing to conveniently access daily needs through more affordable forms of transportation than private automobiles, such as walking, biking, and transit.

6. Ensure Infrastructure Investments Match Growth and Land Use Context

According to the land use analysis, Courtenay has the land use capacity to meet it’s 20-year housing targets, but infrastructure investment and service levels are not yet aligned with this growth. As development intensifies, especially in strategic growth areas, infrastructure systems (including water, sewer, rainwater management, transportation and parks) must be upgraded and expanded in a coordinated and context-specific manner.

This Big Move emphasizes the need to align infrastructure planning with land use and housing delivery, ensuring that investments are prioritized based on growth pressures, serviceability, and community needs. It also recognizes that different development contexts – greenfield versus brownfield/infill – require tailored servicing responses. A strategic and integrated approach is needed to update infrastructure plans, improve asset management, and coordinate with regional partners.

Key recommendations within this Big Move to align infrastructure planning with land use include:

- A. Ensure growth contributes equitably to infrastructure costs. This includes regularly updating DCCs and introducing ACCs to reflect the true cost of servicing growth; establishing a clear framework of when to use development cost levies balancing financial feasibility with the need to fund infrastructure upgrades; and leveraging new servicing authorities under Bill 16 to expand off-site infrastructure requirements.
- B. Align infrastructure investments with housing needs including developing a prioritization framework for capital planning and coordinating infrastructure upgrades with housing delivery timelines.
- C. Strengthen asset management practices to integrate lifecycle costing into infrastructure planning and increasing budget allocations to reflect long-term infrastructure liabilities.

- D. Improve regional coordination by aligning infrastructure planning with CVRD, neighbouring municipalities and rights-holders including K'ómoks First Nation (KFN).

7. Modernize the approach to parks, open spaces, and amenities

As Courtenay grows and urbanizes, the need for high-quality, accessible parks and amenities becomes increasingly important. While Development Cost Charges support parkland acquisition, new tools like Amenity Cost Charges enable funding for development of recreation and cultural facilities. This Big Move focuses on updating parkland policies, improving standards, shifting the form of open space to meet more urbanized needs, emphasizing the opportunity for placemaking practices, and integrating amenities into the urban fabric to support livability, equity, and complete communities. Together these strategies will support the OCP goals that speak to the quality of built environment with a focus on placemaking that represents unique neighbourhoods.

Key recommendations within the Big Move to modernize parks and amenities strategies include:

- A. Expand and diversify park supply and development strategies to include, refining distribution standards to account for accessibility (e.g. sidewalks, terrain); exploring land swaps and co-location with public utilities (e.g. stormwater ponds); prioritizing programming and quality of parks along side quantity; and identifying opportunities to incorporate more small-scale place making open space opportunities such as underutilized streets and small parcels of public land. This strategy would include also capitalizing on the Neighbourhood Networks strategy to ensure residents are engaged in the place making opportunities.
- B. Utilize the Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw to direct parks development requirements with an attention to delineation of trail types and standards to support passive and local-scale recreational purposes and those for multi-modal transportation requirements.
- C. Enact an Amenity Cost Charge (ACC) policy framework and rates to support the development of recreational amenities. Section 7.2 of Attachment 1 identifies an ACC program and rate structure that is relatively low per unit and intentionally modelled with the density bonus charge referenced in Big Move 5 (affordable Housing) to ensure that both can be supportable in the current development context. A subsequent staff report will be presented to Council on the specific projects and rates for consideration and to move through the ACC bylaw adoption process in coordination with the DCC bylaw adoption process.
- D. Integrate park planning with asset management and service standards including requiring that operations and maintenance considerations be factored into major park dedications.

8. Integrate Green Infrastructure with Natural Asset Management

As Courtenay grows, urbanization places increasing pressure on natural systems. Climate action and community well-being, which are core directions of the OCP, depend on protecting and integrating natural capital and ecosystem services across public and private land and including it in the core service delivery of the City. While the City has developed various tools to support ecological resilience, they are often applied in isolation and do not reflect the reality that natural systems exist across private property and jurisdictional boundaries. New tools to manage ecosystem resilience have been adopted since OCP Bylaw No. 3070: Integrated Rainwater Management Plan and Flood Management Strategy. This Big Move focuses on creating a coordinated, ecosystem-based approach to green infrastructure planning and natural asset management across public and private lands and within a regional context.

Key recommendations within the Big Move for green infrastructure with natural asset management integration include:

- A. Link and align the various strategies, tools and design standards that impact and implicate ecosystems, natural capital and green infrastructure such as landscape standards, integrated rainwater management, flood mitigation, parks planning, environmental development permit areas, tree bylaw and subdivision and development servicing bylaw to provide coordinated direction for protecting and leveraging ecosystem services.
- B. Monitor changes in land cover, establish a system to measure and report land cover changes, impervious surfaces, vegetation loss, and climate change impacts to natural systems and use monitoring data to inform updates on environmental policies as part of the 5-year proactive planning cycle.
- C. Improve operations and maintenance understanding and delivery for green infrastructure to ensure that sustainable levels of service delivery may be maintained. Engage the public in their stewardship of natural capital and green infrastructure on private land and explore opportunities to engage public effort on the management of public natural assets where appropriate (e.g. Neighbourhood Networks strategy to encourage neighbourhood greening initiatives). This also includes developing a policy framework for evaluating when environmentally sensitive areas should come under the ownership of the City's asset management portfolio.

9. Establish a Community Engagement and Partnership Framework

With the introduction of a legislated 5-year proactive planning cycle, and the loss of opportunity to hear from the public on spot rezoning applications, Courtenay has an opportunity to embed proactive, consistent, transparent, and inclusive engagement practices into its planning processes. Building on the Courtenay Engagement Strategy which identifies what types of engagement methods may and should be used in different contexts, this Big Move would establish cycles of regular engagement into ongoing policy and plan development, monitoring and implementation across City initiatives that will be underway throughout the 5-year proactive planning cycle. Engagement would include targeted methods to work in partnership with housing developers, including small-scale developers, and other critical partners to assist in delivering the housing supply.

Key recommendations within the Big Move to engage and partner include:

- A. Establish a consistent engagement cycle aligned with the 5-year planning framework. This includes scheduling regular engagement opportunities across planning topics, refreshing engagement tools and methods as new technologies and practices emerge and based on local preferences and use engagement findings through these regular processes to prepare for future OCP updates, Local Area Plans and other initiatives. This also includes a dedicated process to communicate and engage K'ómoks First Nation and off-nation Indigenous interests.
- B. Track and communicate growth-related trends and planning outcomes at regular intervals particularly on topics of housing, infrastructure, and demographics. Use the information to support proactive engagement and improving the Annual Report to include information on how Courtenay is achieving key goals (housing targets, major investments, tracking community change). This can allow the public to remain regularly updated on the OCP implementation and other key updates

including communication on housing needs to make sense of the data and established targets for public understanding and partnership attraction.

- C. Strengthen engagement with the development community as a key housing partner including regular forums and touchpoints to discuss partnership opportunity and centralized clear resources on the development process.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

Bill 44 – Housing Statutes (Residential Development) Amendment Act requires that municipalities:

- Adopt Housing Needs Reports forecasting a community’s housing needs for 5- and 20- year intervals.
- Review their Official Community Plans (OCPs) and Zoning Bylaws to demonstrate that they have the necessary housing policies and zoned land capacity to meet the 20-year housing needs identified in their latest Housing Needs Report. Where non-compliant with the legislation, municipalities must update said bylaws by December 31, 2025.

Courtenay’s Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 3070, 2022 (OCP) and Zoning Bylaw No. 2500, 2007 meet minimum provincial requirements as they relate to sufficient land designation, existing zoning capacity and housing policy requirements. The timelines for the OCP and Zoning Bylaw updates have been adjusted to be adopted early in 2026 as they are no longer restricted by the December 31, 2025, legislative deadline.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Through a competitive bid procurement process, B&A Studios Inc., in partnership with Aplin Martin Consultants and City Squared Consulting have been retained to work directly with staff and lead the technical review and consultation of the OCP update. The overall budget for the OCP in the 2025 budget is \$250,000 with \$85,000 provided through Local Government Housing Initiatives Capacity Funding provided by the province in 2024.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

The OCP update project is being delivered with a combination of staff resources from the Development Services Department and external consultants. Regular input and support from all City departments is ongoing and required in the development and implementation of the OCP update.

Project timeline as listed below. A new phase 4 has been identified to distinguish the plan refinement (Phase 3) from formal adoption (now Phase 4) processes.

- Phase 1 (March – April): Background Review & Engagement Plan (**complete**)
 - Stage 1 Communications and Consultation: Engagement Planning
 - Council approval of Communications and Consultation Plan (April 23, 2025)
- Phase 2 (April – July): Technical Analysis & Policy Review (**complete**)
 - Stage 2A Communications and Consultation (May-June): Project Introduction and Interest-holder Outreach (complete)
 - Stage 2B Communications and Consultation (June – July): Public Engagement (complete)
 - Council receipt of OCP Interim Update (July 30, 2025)

- Phase 3 (August – November): Plan Refinement (**in process**)
 - Council receipt of ‘What we Heard Report’ on public and interest-holder engagement and proposed OCP recommended directions (October 1, 2025)
 - Communications and Consultation (August – October):
 - Online engagement (ongoing)
 - Public Open House (October 20)
 - Development community workshop (October 21)
 - Interest-holder meetings (October 27 – October 31)

- Phase 4 (December 2025 – March 2026): Bylaw Adoption Process
 - Council receipt of ‘What we Heard Report’ from October engagement and OCP Bylaw for formal bylaw reading process
 - Public Hearing
 - Adoption at separate meeting

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

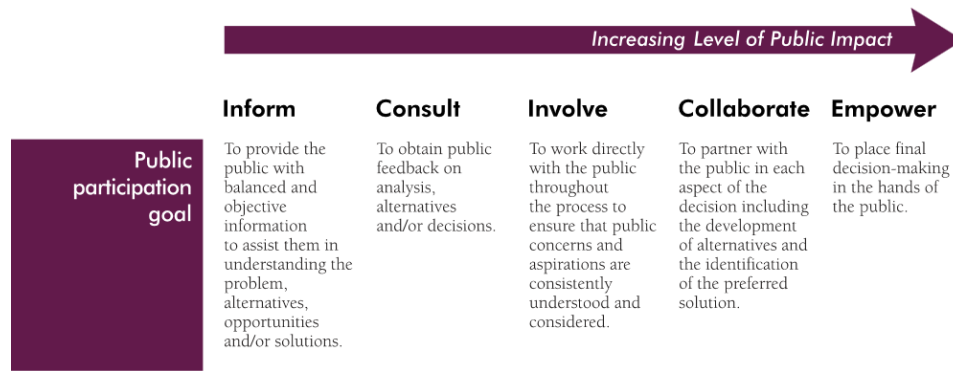
- Buildings and Landscape - Review and update land use regulations and bylaws for consistency with OCP
- Local Economy - Complete a Community Economic Development Analysis, including community engagement and review of land availability
- Good Governance - Establish an OCP Implementation Townhall Forum
- Good Governance - Explore and establish a partnership approach with SD71 on mutual interest topics: active travel and traffic planning, shared facilities, community use of schools, climate, reconciliation, child care and youth engagement
- Social Infrastructure - Develop measures and criteria to track progress for the OCP's four cardinal directions: reconciliation, community well-being, equity, and climate action

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Council approved the consultation and communications strategy for the OCP update at the April 23, 2025, regular council meeting, providing consultation opportunities for the public and interest holders that primarily fall within the “inform” and “consult” categories along the IAP2 spectrum of public participation.

Documentation and analysis of the public engagement is provided in Section 2 (Public and Interest-holder Engagement) of Courtenay OCP Update: Technical Study Findings & Recommended Updates (Attachment 1).

Staff provided a briefing note on the scope and process of the OCP update to KFN staff in February and presented to KFN Chief and Council in May to discuss the desired consultation approach. City staff have circulated the October 1 and July 30 Council reports to KFN for feedback. Where warranted, a government-to-government meeting may be arranged in advance and support of the formal referral process that will occur once the OCP is presented to Council for bylaw readings later this year.



© International Association for Public Participation www.iap2.org

OPTIONS:

1. THAT Council receive the October 1 Staff Report “Official Community Plan Review – Recommended Directions” for information and direct staff to proceed with the third phase of public and interest-holder engagement.
2. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Courtenay OCP Update: Technical Study Findings & Recommended Updates

Prepared by: Nancy Gothard, RPP MCIP, Manager of Community and Sustainability Planning
Reviewed by: Patricia Maloney, RPP FCIP, Acting Director of Development Services
Concurrence: Geoff Garbutt, M.Pl., MCIP, RPP, City Manager (CAO)