



Official Community Plan Review 2023-2024

Summary Report

**Policy Review with Advisory
Planning Commission and
Council Committees**



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A. OVERVIEW

As part of the Official Community Plan (OCP) review, the Village is reviewing OCP policy with the Advisory Planning Commission (APC) and Council Committees. The policies reviewed fall within the APC's and Committee's mandates and include land use planning and land development, heritage conservation and development in the downtown core, housing options and housing affordability, accessibility, social inclusion and equity. The work of the Committees and the APC are part of preparing for Phase 2 of the OCP review and will support the Village in developing policy options and growth scenarios for discussion with the public during the second round of public engagement on the OCP. The second round of public engagement is planned for later this spring.

This report summarizes the discussions with the APC and Committees. Extracts of the meeting minutes that pertain to the discussion of OCP policy are appended to this summary report.

B. SUMMARY

Advisory Planning Commission – Growth Scenarios

Over the July 13, 2023 and August 8, 2023 meetings, the APC reviewed and refined draft vision statements and goals that were reflective of the input received from the community during the first round of public engagement in May 2023.

The APC also developed criteria to guide the development and evaluation of possible growth scenarios to be further explored with the public. The criteria consider economic sustainability, character, climate, social inclusion and equity, ecosystem and connectivity.

Potential strategies identified to achieve the criteria are an urban containment boundary, urban densification, and reduction of new development in the wildland-urban interface.

Heritage Committee – Heritage Conservation Policies

At the September 21, 2023 and January 18, 2024 meetings, the Heritage Committee discussed goals for heritage conservation and identified the following challenges to heritage conservation in the Village:

- a lack of incentives for heritage conservation,
- communicating that heritage is not just about buildings but also about a sense of place,
- a lack of flexibility for restoring or adapting heritage buildings in the downtown core.
- redevelopment pressure on lots with older heritage buildings due to new provincial legislation which will permit four units on residential properties between an acre and 280 m² in size.

The Committee identified the need for the following OCP updates:

- stronger acknowledgement of First Nation presence prior to settlement and continued presence

- an update to the Heritage Conservation Area (HCA) guidelines that apply to the downtown core to include:
 - fire smart requirements
 - requirements to lower the climate impact of new buildings
 - acknowledgement of and support for the eclectic nature of the downtown core
 - encouragement of a diversity of colours to reduce proliferation of the Cumberland “red”
 - acknowledgement that heritage conservation is also about cherishing and sharing the stories of the past, not just conserving the physical heritage structures
 - more permissive setbacks to diversify the streetscape
 - requirements to reduce massing on upper storeys to maintain the human scale of the downtown, allow sun on the sidewalks, and not have new builds overpower lower heritage buildings
- recognition of heritage conservation as a tool to encourage social inclusion
- additional tools to help maintain neighbourhood character such as narrow lanes and streets (e.g. when updating the Subdivision and Development Bylaw).
- a policy to review other Village bylaws and their impact on the preservation of heritage character of neighbourhoods and heritage buildings.
- consideration of additional HCAs for residential neighbourhoods with a common form and character

With regards to where additional growth and densification should be directed, the Committee discussed the following:

- Extending the downtown commercial mixed use land use designation which is intended for development of commercial units on the ground floor and residential units above, makes sense from a housing perspective (more people living in and close to downtown) but impacts low density heritage homes on the edges of the existing downtown core.
- If the downtown commercial mixed use designation is extended, should also extend the HCA as surrounding areas have more older heritage buildings than the downtown core.
- If the commercial mixed-use designation is extended up to 6th Street or past Village Park, should avoid a higher density land use designation on north side of Dunsmuir Ave where the Bevan Houses are. The south side doesn’t have heritage buildings and is OK to densify from a heritage conservation perspective.

Homelessness and Affordable Housing Committee – Housing Policy

At its July 19 and August 16, 2023 meetings, the Homelessness and Affordable Housing Committee reviewed draft housing needs report data and progress toward achieving the strategic actions in the Affordable Housing Implementation Frameworks, 2016. The Committee recommended the following for inclusion in the new OCP:

- Actions from the Implementation Framework to be completed or to continue:

- Action 4: Develop affordability guidelines for housing agreements with developers that protect designated units in perpetuity.
 - Action 5: Develop an “Affordable Housing in Cumberland” or web page on how the Village supports market and non-market developers in the development process.
 - Action 8: Support applications to senior government for funds (e.g. CMHC, BC Housing).
 - Action 9: Develop regulations to protect existing rental market housing stock
 - Rephrase Action 10 to: Develop Land Bank *and build up* the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund through affordable housing contributions.
- Additional updates or policies to recommended for inclusion in the OCP are:
 - Develop a clear definition of affordable housing
 - Support regional affordable housing initiatives.
 - Support a regional coalition on affordable housing.
 - Focus on supporting the development of non-market housing over other types of housing.
 - Add affordable housing to municipal properties through partnerships and as part of a civic building replacement plan.
 - Seek opportunities to acquire properties for affordable housing through the development process.
 - Support and partner with non-profit organizations
 - Reduce parking requirements in residential zone based on criteria such as proximity to transit/alternative transportation corridors, income levels in the units.
 - Allocate land in the Village that could be used for container housing.
 - Support lower cost housing, trailer parks / mobile homes
 - Explore permitting short-term residence in RVs and Tiny homes.
 - Advocate for a review of the BC Building Code to permit different standards for tiny homes.
 - Advocate for provincial legislative changes on rent controls.

Accessibility and Social Inclusion Committee

The Accessibility and Social Inclusion Committee provided input on OCP policies at their December 5, 2023 and February 5, 2024 meetings. The Committee recommended adding policies related to:

- Incentives for accessibility and universal design in housing
- support for the provision of seniors housing and opportunities to age in place
- support for rental housing for people with disabilities
- education of home owners and builders on accessible design

- support for an inclusive community, through better access to transit, safer cycling routes, improved transit loops to Cumberland's business core
- high colour contrast for changes in elevation and slopes on sidewalks
- use of suitable policy language when talking about equity, social opportunities, and marginalization
- removal of barriers to cultural customs in housing forms to permit intergenerational family units, live-in caregivers
- a diversity of housing to meet the needs of different age groups
- opportunities to learn from different cultures
- tax credits for multi-generational homes
- ways to prevent isolation of people with disabilities within the community
- partnerships and consultation with Immigrant Welcome Centre and the Early Years Collaborative on integration of seniors with children
- access to outdoor spaces, inclusive recreation and programming
- education for municipal and school district staff to ensure staff have disability and general inclusion lens on emergency planning, employment and hiring practices, integration into how public works does day to day jobs
- use of an inclusive lens at project planning stage to become radically inclusive
- hiring practices and employee supports for employees with disabilities
- incentives for accessible short term (tourism accommodation) and long term housing
- 2LSGBT2+ population, gender neutral bathrooms, gender inclusive recreation, hiring practices and employee training,

C. APPENDICES – MEETING MINUTES

The following are extracts of the meeting minutes that pertain to discussions on the OCP review and OCP policy. For complete meeting minutes, visit <https://cumberland.ca/meetings/> Note that the minutes for a particular meeting are in the agenda package for the subsequent meeting.

ADVISORY PLANNING COMMISSION

July 13, 2023 meeting minutes

4.1 Official Community Plan Review – Phase 1 Public Engagement Report

Staff presented the preliminary phase 1 public engagement report for discussion and comments.

DISCUSSION

Vision Statements

- The term Village-feel came up in a few public comments. Change (b) from “Village-living” to: “Village-feel”. Village-feel conveys a place where people feel connected.
- Backyard food gardens – can be anywhere in the yard. Change (i) to: food gardens
- Find wording under (j) to mean “truly” net-zero in terms of greenhouse gas emissions – not through cheap offsets
- More important than (l) reducing energy and water consumption is switching way from fossil fuels
- Take language from climate action planning
- Add a statement about financial health and sustainability or long-term financial health. This was mentioned in online submissions.
- With regards to (m) “new development is green” ensure meaning of “green” is clear.

Goals

- “(6) A uniquely-Cumberland downtown core” is a new goal not in the existing OCP.
- The downtown core is central to Village’s identify. Importance of community, small businesses, shared office and business spaces and growing the mixed uses downtown.
- Downtown has potential to support financial health/revenue of Village
- Key question - how can downtown be vitalized, how to we support economic growth downtown?
- Animating the side roads, increasing walkability, extending the downtown core, vibrancy and affordability are all important.
- The Zoning Bylaw update following OCP adoption should consider reducing parking requirements for commercial spaces
- Growth scenarios – explore where commercial growth should go to.
- Add to “that ties into the rest of the Comox Valley” to (8) A safe and interconnected alternative transportation network.
- Each goal will include a statements of intent to clarify meaning.
- Importance of greenspace came up in a lot of comments. Add a goal related to:
 - Create new/support existing public parks and greenways – diverse outdoor recreation, park amenities for children, all ages,

- Diverse parks – some wild/integration with natural spaces, not a designed park, some with amenities, pocket parks in neighbourhoods
- “(3) Climate-resilient community” does not include mitigation of emissions, resilience suggests adaptation – change to climate action or climate change mitigation and adaption
- “(2) Healthy and diverse ecosystems” - describe better
- Importance of arts and culture, night-life, how can you bring that kind of culture to the community that supports late shows and events.
- Add a goal related to
 - A vibrant arts and culture community / artists and musicians

General comment

- “Eastern block lands” were mentioned several times. Need to consider how Cayet-owned lands are considered in the OCP review.

August 8, 2024 meeting minutes

3. OCP Review

a) Data and trends affecting land use planning

- Karin reviewed data provided in agenda package and additional supporting slide deck

b) Criteria to guide development and evaluation of planning scenarios

- What are the ends (objectives) we are trying to meet? These will serve as design criteria to assess future planning efforts.
 - **Economic sustainability** (not necessarily growth, residential/commercial/industrial tax base, long term infrastructure management, access to municipal services, cost to service lots/infrastructure, municipal capacity and resources available, more commercial office activity in the village/ increase local employment opportunities/more people working locally vs commuting, water and wastewater system capacity)
 - **Character** (village feel, heritage, visual/sensory interest, vibrancy, arts, culture, building form, private open spaces, diversity of building form)
 - **Climate** (reduce sprawl, reduce wildfire risk, increase tree canopy, reduce GHG emissions)
 - **Social inclusivity and diversity** (social diversity, economics, accessibility, housing affordability, equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI), aging in place, housing options)
 - **Ecosystem** (preservation and creation of environmental/natural assets, watershed protection, water use reduction, wildlife, biodiversity)
 - **Connectivity** (walkability, within the community and commuting to the CV, alternative transportation options, leverage trail network, proximity to employment, distance to schools, recreation, parks, pedestrian and cyclist safety)
- Potential strategies to achieve the objectives above:
 - Urban containment boundary
 - Downtown/urban/housing densification

- Wildfire interface (reduce development in wildfire interface areas)
- What are the means (tools) we have to meet these ends?
 - Housing development/containment
 - Commercial and industrial development
 - Transportation (transit, roads, sidewalks)
 - Environmental assets (trails, parks)
 - Taxes and fees
 - Development design criteria (design for climate adaptive circumstances e.g. design to 1 in 100 year storms)
- c) Further data and mapping needs
 - Aging in place data (trends in terms of elders moving out of rural areas and into areas where specialized medical care is available)
 - Demand for commercial and industrial land
 - Infrastructure costs
 - Tax revenue per lot (which buildings are making/losing money) e.g. is Stoneleigh Crescent sustainable compared to the rest of Coal Valley?

HERITAGE COMMITTEE

September 21, 2023 meeting minutes

4.3 OCP Review – Public Engagement on Heritage

- The August 14 staff memo outlines existing heritage work completed by the Village, heritage protection tools available to municipalities, an extract of the Village's existing heritage policies from the OCP for reference, and a few possible policy updates for discussion.
- ***Top obstacles or challenges to heritage conservation in the Village:***
 - There are no incentives for heritage conservation.
 - Heritage is more than built structures, it's also about a sense of place too.
 - Lack of flexibility for heritage buildings within the VCMU-1 zone.
- ***Suggestions for updates to heritage policies, the Heritage Conservation Area (HCA) guidelines, and zoning:***
 - There could be different zones within the downtown core, respecting different needs of new and old buildings. Alternatively, there could be more flexibility within the VCMU-1 zone to accommodate different setbacks, parking availability on lots with heritage buildings.
 - HCA guidelines need to allow for eclectic buildings, as downtown buildings do not represent a single era.
 - Need to re-imagine what heritage is in the downtown, it's more than a date stamp or an era, there is a need to communicate what heritage is in a way that resonates with people – every building has a story, it's not just about the physical structure.

- People want sun on the street, don't want a tunnel of high buildings, not a monolithic main street. Need more permissive setback and/or requirements for reduced massing on upper storeys.
- As we talk about heritage, don't want a car centric community.
- What compromise are we willing to make to preserve land?
- Can't replicate what's here, important to incorporate the old and the new and promote diversity in building style and type.
- With regards to climate change and building materials, e.g fire smart, include more language to that effect in the HCA guidelines. Move to best practices for climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Encourage variety in colours – not every building has to have the “Cumberland red”.
- HCA guidelines to place emphasis on the importance of eclectic nature of downtown core.
- Re-write introduction on Cumberland's history to acknowledge First Nation presence on the land before arrival of the settlers.
- Consider completing SoS's for zones or neighbourhoods. People like being part of a neighbourhood. HCA's could support neighbourhood identities.
- Heritage preservation as a tool to promote social inclusion.
- Subdivision standards may move Village to a more suburban look. E.g. when older neighbourhoods are re-developed is it a requirement to update the lane to a new standard? Is the requirement within the Master Municipal Construction Document standards (MMCD's) or Village bylaws?
- A key OCP policy is to review the zoning bylaw and subdivision servicing bylaws and their impact on preservation of heritage character of neighbourhoods and heritage buildings.

January 18, 2024 meeting minutes

3.1 Official Community Plan Review

- Karin provided an overview of the recent provincial legislative changes that will come into effect June 30, 2024. Under those changes, up to four units will be permitted on properties zoned for single family residential use.
- The Committee discussed the implications of those changes to heritage conservation. The changes will put redevelopment pressure on older heritage homes, especially those that have not been well maintained and where repairs or adaptive use would be more costly than redevelopment.
- As the Village cannot require owners to restore heritage buildings, it is increasingly important to communicate the value of heritage conservation.
- The current Heritage Conservation Area (HCA) is a good thing to have, it raises awareness and encourages voluntary approaches to conservation.
- Heritage design guidelines are only part of the picture. Also need to incentivize retention of heritage buildings.
- The Committee discussed OCP heritage policies

- Can Complete Communities Assessment consider heritage?
- Can there be more commercial in Coal Valley Estates
- From a heritage perspective just extending the downtown commercial core doesn't make sense, from a housing perspective makes sense – the downtown is close to where people live.
- If the downtown commercial area/land use designation is expanded, should also expand the HCA.
- However, the HCA does not align exactly with the downtown commercial core. It is larger. Only have four buildings in VCMU-1 that date to 1922.
- Surrounding areas have more heritage buildings that are older.
- Should a broader area be included, or further HCAs be created?
- If the commercial core is expanded to go up to 6th street or past Village Park, should avoid a higher density land use designation on North side where the Bevan Houses are. South side of road doesn't have heritage buildings, would be OK to include.

Moved by: Borecky

Seconded by: Harris

That residential neighbourhoods with common form and character be considered as additional Heritage Conservation Areas as part of the OCP review.

Carried Unanimously

HOMELESSNESS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

July 19, 2024 meeting minutes

4.1 Official Community Plan Review – Housing

The Committee reviewed updated housing needs data, the factsheet that communicated the 2020 housing needs report data, and a progress update of the strategic actions in the Affordable Housing Implementation Frameworks, 2016.

DISCUSSION

- Some of the housing needs data, in particular definitions, need to be clarified:
 - household type, one couple vs couple without children
 - 'subsidized housing' needs to be explained. Also, is a breakdown available of different types of subsidies?
 - building types need to be provided, e.g. apartment/duplex refers to secondary suites and duplexes. Preferable to use terms as used in Cumberland, rather than the Stats Can term.
- Housing criteria (unaffordable, unsuitable and inadequate) are self-reported. No standard criteria.
- Provide explanation of what the dwelling demand is based on.

- Housing starts data still to be provided.
- Statistical community profile to be posted for public:
 - Population/demographic info
 - Employment – participation rate, unemployment rate
 - Employment industries
 - Number of households and average household size
 - Housing demand – by unit and by unit type (number of bedrooms)
 - Number of households, percent owners/renters, average household size, household composition types
 - Housing costs relative to income
 - Core vs extreme housing need
- Other data needed: how many owners receive a homeowner grant, how many do not – this will allow Village to know how many properties are second properties or investment properties.
- Homeowner grants are a subsidy to property owners.
- Need to support housing for a diverse community
- Key concerns:
 - Who is Cumberland losing as housing costs increase and how can we retain those residents.
 - Gentrification and its impact on housing affordability.
 - Housing affordability affects employees in low paying service sector jobs. If they can't afford to live here, businesses can't recruit employees.
- Discussion on OCP Housing policies deferred to next meeting.

August 16, 2024 meeting minutes

4.1 Official Community Plan Review – Housing

The Committee continued their discussion on progress to implement affordable housing actions, review of existing OCP policies and identification of gaps started at the July 19, 2023 meeting.

DISCUSSION

- Good progress has been made to implement the strategic actions identified in the Village's Affordable Housing Implementation Framework, 2016.
- A number of actions that have not been entirely completed or are ongoing remain relevant and should be considered for inclusion in the new OCP:
 - Action 4: Develop and enact affordability guidelines for housing agreements with developers that protect designated units in perpetuity
 - Action 5: Develop an "Affordable Housing in Cumberland" brochure [or web page] on how the Village supports market and non-market developers in the development process

- Action 8: Support applications to senior government for funds (e.g. CMHC, BC Housing)
- Action 9: Develop regulations to protect existing rental market housing stock
- With regards to Action 10 – rephrase to: Develop Land Bank *and build up* the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund through affordable housing contributions.
- Other important policies to consider for inclusion in the OCP are:
 - Develop a clear definition of affordable housing
 - Support regional affordable housing initiatives, such as a regional housing corporation and employee housing initiatives.
 - Consider a separate Coalition on affordable housing. The Coalition to End Homelessness has a lot on their plate dealing with homelessness issues.
 - Support non-profit housing societies in their work to provide affordable housing units.
 - While all housing types are important, put focus on supporting the development of non-market housing from the housing options along the housing spectrum.
 - Provide municipal properties for affordable housing/mixed use. Enter into partnerships with non-profits and developers and BC Housing – as part of a civic building replacement plan.
 - Seek opportunities to acquire properties for affordable housing through the development process.
 - Redevelopment could extend to any property, including bare land
 - Partner with non-profit organizations
 - Develop a policy to reduce parking requirements in all residential zone based on certain criteria, e.g. proximity to transit/alternative transportation corridors, income levels in the units.
 - Allocate land in the Village that could be used for container housing, e.g. Maple Pool in Courtenay.
 - Support lower cost housing, trailer parks / mobile homes
 - Explore permitting short-term residence in RVs and Tiny homes. For example, explore temporary use permits for RV's like in Valemont to permit campers in people's yards.
 - Advocate for a review of the BC Building Code to permit different standards for tiny homes.
 - Advocate for provincial legislative changes on rent controls, and to facilitate affordable housing.
- As part of discussions with the public, provide a narrative of the current situation in Cumberland.

ACCESSIBILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION COMMITTEE

December 5, 2023 meeting minutes

3.1 Official Community Plan Review

Ms. Albert presented the Official Community Plan review and process, housing and land use designations, opportunities to include policy on equity, diversity and inclusion, and accessibility, as well as development permit requirements for the business core and multi-family development form and character.

Discussion took place on ways to incentivize accessibility and universal design in housing, seniors housing and opportunities to age in place, rental housing for people with disabilities. Ms. Albert advised that provincial changes will result in no new single family development, and density usually means building up which is challenging for accessibility. Discussion on making first floor access no step and bedrooms on first floor, and opportunities for small elevators, desire to inspire better practices for inclusive community, and if there is ability to control internal building form as that is provincial jurisdiction.

Discussion took place on long term vision, transportation and transit planning related to development, safe cycling, improving transit loops for seniors to reach Cumberland business core. Suggestion to use high colour contrast for changes in elevation and slopes.

Discussion took place on using suitable language in policy, such as the terms equity, social opportunities, and marginalized. Suggestion to expand advisory committees for active presentation and better feedback and whether there will be more open consultation on the review.

Discussion took place on barriers to cultural customs, intergenerational family units, to ask seniors if seniors prefer all-senior housing or mixed units with all ages. Suggestion for housing spaces for live-in caregivers, and opportunities to learn from different cultures, tax credits for multi-generational homes, plain language policies, ways to prevent isolation of people with disabilities within the community. Ms. Albert noted that there is a shift away from single family housing to diversity in housing. Opportunities to consult with Immigrant Welcome Centre and the Early Years Collaborative on integration of seniors with children.

Discussion on renaming committee to the Equity, Diversity and inclusion Committee.

Ms. Albert noted that she could attend a future committee meeting and in the interim members can submit further comments.

February 5, 2024 meeting minutes

4.1 Official Community Plan Review - Karin Albert, Senior Planner

The following discussion took place:

- Access to outdoor spaces, inclusive recreation and programming,
- Education for municipal and school district staff to ensure that staff have disability and general inclusion lens on emergency planning, employment and hiring practices, integration into how public works does day to day jobs,
- To include inclusive lens at project planning stage to become radically inclusive
- Hiring practices and employee supports for employees with disabilities,
- Tourism accommodation, and opportunity for incentives to make exceptions for accessible short term and long term housing,
- 2LSGBT2+ population, gender neutral bathrooms, gender inclusive recreation, hiring practices and employee training,