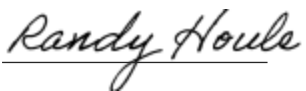




To: Mayor and Council	File: PR 24-12
From: Randy Houle, Director of Development Services	Date: October 17, 2025
Subject: Official Community Plan Bylaw	

Prepared by:  Randy Houle, Director Devel. Serv	Report Approved:  Jordan Wall, CAO
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RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER:

1. THAT Council give first and second reading to Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2054.
2. THAT Bylaw No. 2054 be confirmed as being consistent with Comox Financial Plan Bylaw No. 2046 as required by the *Local Government Act*.
3. THAT Bylaw No. 2054 be referred to a Public Hearing to be scheduled on November 12, 2025, at 5:00 pm at d'Esterre Seniors' Centre, 1801 Beaufort Avenue, and advertised as required by the *Local Government Act*.
4. THAT Bylaw No. 2054 be referred to the Agricultural Land Commission for comment to confirm compliance with the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*.

PURPOSE

This report provides an update on the Official Community Plan process, including minor revisions to address ongoing OCP analysis and public feedback, and recommends first and second bylaw readings.

Major Items For Consideration

Council is being asked to provide direction on two key items:

1. Whether to require mandatory ground-floor commercial as part of specific mixed-use developments:

The draft policies require that ground floor commercial shall be mandatory in the Downtown along Comox Avenue, in northeast Comox along Pritchard Road, and at major intersections. An exemption policy is included in all areas except the Downtown where a land economist provides a report identifying that additional commercial floor space would not be financially viable at the time of development. This provision would need to be included in the zoning bylaw for it to apply on lands currently zoned for mixed-use development.

2. Whether to require a minimum of three-stories for mixed-use developments at prominent intersections:

This will help to ensure that future development contributes to the desired urban form as opposed to single-storey commercial strip-mall type developments at prominent intersections. A recent example is the single-storey development under construction at the corner of Anderton and Guthrie. This provision would need to be included in the zoning bylaw for it to apply on lands currently zoned for mixed-use development.

STRATEGIC PLAN LINKAGE

The 2022-2026 Strategic Plan identifies the following project/initiative that contributes to the Balanced Community Planning Strategic Priority:

- Update the OCP through community consultation to develop a vision for the future growth of Comox.

BACKGROUND

The Comox Official Community Plan Bylaw 1685 (OCP) was adopted on July 20, 2011. Council held an OCP Scoping Workshop on December 13, 2023 to provide direction for a review and update. Urban Systems Ltd. was hired to assist with the project began working with staff in July 2024. There are six project phases as shown in Figure 1. Phase 5 has been completed, and the project is now in the final Completion phase.

At the Regular Council Meeting on April 16, 2025, Council provided direction on the draft OCP Vision and Guiding Principles and Land Use Map, key potential development sites, and the approach to meeting requirements of provincial legislation.

At the Regular Council Meeting on July 16, 2025, Council provided direction on the draft OCP Land Use Map following the Open House held June 24, 2025.

At the Strategic Planning Council Meeting on September 10, 2025, Council supported the Draft Development Permit Areas in principle, and they were subsequently posted to the Engage Comox Valley OCP Update webpage for public review, and sent to agencies with referral letters.



Figure 1: OCP Update project phases.

Community Engagement

Engagement summaries and materials have been posted to the Document Library on the [Engage Comox Valley Comox OCP Update](#) webpage throughout the project. Public, First Nation, and agency engagement on the OCP has included the following:

- K'ómoks First Nation: Letters sent throughout project to inform of process and propose meetings if desired.
- Community Survey: November 12 – December 10, 2024
- Community Pop-Up: November 22, 2024
- Interest Holder Focus Groups: April 1-2, 2025
- Community Open House: June 24, 2025
- Community Open House online feedback (Open House Boards posted online with feedback form): June 24-June 30, 2025
- Public Comment Period: September 15-October 1, 2025
- Development Community Development Permit Area referral: September 15 – September 26, 2025
- Agency Referral: September 15-October 1, 2025

Following the September 10, Regular Council meeting, social media posts notified residents that the draft OCP and Development Permit Areas were posted to the project webpage and to provide comment via email if desired. A summary is provided as **Attachment B**.

The most common themes in emails received were environmental protection, infrastructure and services and building heights. Respondents want to ensure that infrastructure and services keep pace with growth, including municipal and senior government infrastructure. While Comox grows, there is also a desire to ensure that this is balanced with protection and enhancement of the natural environment. These have been common themes throughout the development of the OCP and have received extensive focus to be well-integrated.

Building heights continued to be a concerned raised through the most recent comment period. Some respondents were not aware that land use designations that supported building heights above six

storeys have been removed as directed by Council on July 16, 2025, following the Open House in June 2025.

Many respondents are opposed to building heights above four storeys. The proposed OCP includes Mid-Rise Residential and Mixed-Use (6-storey) land use designations in the Downtown Centre and Harbour View Corridor (along Comox Avenue). Permitting six storey buildings in and around Downtown Comox can increase the pace of new housing supply which will help to meet the housing targets of the Federal Housing Accelerator Fund and the impending housing targets from the Province. Permitting six storey buildings in and around the downtown also links back to infrastructure and environmental protection. By providing for additional density in core areas, there is less pressure to grow outwards into rural and natural areas. Providing more housing close to existing services and amenities also provides more opportunities for reliance on public and active transportation. In addition, there are infrastructure servicing efficiencies associated with higher density development (more units per metre of road frontage), and financial feasibility analysis completed for the DCC and ACC Bylaw have shown that financial feasibility is challenging for 4-storey buildings, and better for 6-storey buildings. In terms of building form, taller buildings may also provide the potential for narrower buildings that can be utilized in strategies to retain mature trees and view corridors.

Other themes from the most recent comment period, that are consistent with past engagement and addressed in the guiding principles, objectives, policies, and actions of the proposed OCP, include:

- Economic development (e.g. business health, job growth, hotel space, tourism)
- Community character and aesthetics
- Support for seniors
- Housing affordability and accessibility
- Public amenities and recreation

ANALYSIS AND ISSUES

Revisions Based on Public Feedback

Seniors' Services

During the most recent public review period, staff received a high volume of emails from seniors in the community requesting that the land use designation of d'Esterre House Seniors' Centre be amended from Mid-Rise Mixed-Use to Institutional, and that policies be added to the OCP to speak to the Town's support for the retention of the Seniors' Centre. The land use designation has been amended accordingly, and the following policy has been added to the Community Connection and Wellness section of the OCP:

Recognize the importance of d'Esterre House Seniors' Centre in supporting the physical, emotional and general well being of seniors and continue to support the operation of a seniors' centre in Comox.

Comox Golf Club

The Comox Golf Club requested additional language in the OCP to clarify the ownership and operational frameworks to contextualize applicable OCP policies. The Comox Golf Club is designated Parks and Open Space in the OCP. Text has been added to the introductory section of the Parks and Open Space land use designation as follows:

Policies that refer to the Comox Golf Club should be read with the context that the Town does not own the land or operate the course; rather the Town is the majority shareholder in Courtenay Golf Club Ltd., which owns the land that the Comox Golf Club operates on. The land is leased by Courtenay Golf Club Ltd. to the Comox Golf Club, which is a non-profit organization that owns the improvements and operates the golf course and facilities. In addition, policies related to the Comox Golf Club are complementary to those in the Parks and Trails Master Plan and Downtown Enhancement Action Plan.

Refinements Based on Continued Analysis

Staff have continued to refine the OCP since it was last presented to Council on July 16, 2025. This section brings key changes to Council's attention.

Mixed-Use Land Use Designation Policies

Mixed-Use land use designation policies have been revised to provide more development flexibility for most parcels within this designation. The designation provides for residential, commercial, and institutional uses. New developments can be any one of these uses, or a combination of them, except in the areas listed below **where additional restrictions apply depending on area:**

Comox Avenue in Downtown Comox: Policies require commercial uses at grade fronting Comox Avenue within Downtown Comox to retain it as an important shopping street.

Prominent Intersection: Prominent intersections include arterial and major collector road type intersections, such as the intersection of Guthrie Road and Anderton Road, and Noel Avenue and Pritchard Road. New buildings are required to be a minimum of three storeys **with mandatory ground floor commercial**. An exemption policy is included to allow the Town to exempt commercial requirements where a land economist provides a report identifying that additional commercial floor space would not be financially viable at the time of development.

Northeast Comox: Mixed-Use parcels in northeast Comox are intended to provide some commercial uses to ensure that future residents have better access to daily needs within walking distance. Policies have been added to **require mandatory** commercial or institutional floorspace fronting Pritchard Road. An exemption would be available where a land economist report determines that there is insufficient market size to support additional commercial floorspace at the time of development.

Density Bonus and Inclusionary Zoning

Provincial legislation requires the Town to update or replace the Affordable Housing Amenity Contribution Policy (CCL-069) to comply with updated density bonus and inclusionary zoning legislation by June 2026. The associated bylaw review and analysis will be completed as a subsequent project to the comprehensive Zoning Bylaw review currently in progress. Recent financial analysis completed for the Development and Amenity Cost Charge Bylaw update revealed that there may not be sufficient residual land value at OCP land use designation building height limitations of 4 storeys to support affordable housing and amenity contributions. A policy has been added to the OCP that would support consideration of OCP land use heights as base heights, with additional bonus height/density where affordable housing or amenities are provided. The policy addition is as follows:

For the purposes of future density bonus and inclusionary zoning bylaws, maximum heights outlined in OCP land use designations may be considered as base heights, with additional storeys permitted in exchange for affordable housing, or the provision of or contribution to amenities that provide a substantial benefit to the community.

Development Permit Area Amendments

The following Development Permit Area (DPA) amendments have been made following Council's review of the draft DPAs on September 24, 2025.

Northeast Comox DPA: Parcels zoned R3.3 Single-Family – Large Lot fronting Knight Road have been added to the Northeast Comox Development Permit Area. This DPA is focused on stormwater management, and these parcels have been added to the DPA because they should be within the northeast Comox stormwater management catchment if additional development takes place. An exemption has been added to this DPA for the alteration of land on parcels 2500 square metres or less due to minimal stormwater management implications.

Sensitive Ecosystems DPA: This DPA is focused on the protection of sensitive ecosystems in the Town. Additional refinements to the DPA map have been made to ensure that parcels that have already been developed or are unlikely to have sensitive ecosystem impacts resulting from development are excluded.

Urban Forest Lens

The Draft OCP and Development Permit Areas were referred to the Town's Urban Forest Management Strategy consultant, Diamond Head, for review. Recommended updates to harmonize the OCP with the forthcoming Urban Forest Management Strategy have been made and include minor updates to the Guiding Principles; Parks, Trails, and Open Space policies; Environment and Climate Action policies; and Development Permit Areas guidelines and exemptions.

OCP: Guiding Principles 6 and 7 have been updated to emphasize the urban forest alongside the natural environment, reflecting its critical role in climate resilience and community health.

The urban forest has been identified as a key component of the Town's parks, trails, and open spaces within the OCP, and there is recognition of the challenges of climate change on the urban forest.

Language has been added to encourage the principle of "right tree in the right location" to prevent future conflicts with utilities, infrastructure, and building foundations.

OCP Development Permit Areas: References to "mature tree stands" have been broadened to include single mature trees, which can be further defined as healthy or otherwise suitable for retention.

A guideline was added to encourage site layouts that consider viable planting sites for medium/large trees in the adjacent public realm.

A guideline has been added to encourage the use of green infrastructure such as soil cells to provide adequate soil volumes for medium and large trees where softscape space is limited, in line with the Town's Climate Resilient Landscaping Standard

Legislative Compliance

After first reading of an OCP bylaw, local governments must consider the proposed OCP in conjunction with their financial plan and any waste management plan under Part 3 of the *Environmental Management Act* that is applicable in the municipality or regional district. There is not currently a waste management Plan under Part 3 of the *Environmental Management Act* that applies to the Town.

After first reading of an OCP bylaw, local governments must refer the OCP to the Agricultural Land Commission for comment. The Draft OCP was referred to the Agricultural Land Commission in September to provide a longer review period. Should Council give OCP Bylaw No. 2054 first reading, it will once again be referred to the Agricultural Land Commission as required by the *Local Government Act*.

NEXT STEPS

If Council gives first and second reading to Bylaw No. 2054, staff will schedule the required public hearing for November 12, 2025, and advertise the public hearing as required by the *Local Government Act*. Following the public hearing, staff will bring Bylaw No. 2054 back to Council for consideration of third and final reading prior to the end of 2025. Schedule revisions may be required if Council provides direction for amendments to OCP Bylaw No. 2054.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Draft OCP Bylaw No. 2054

ATTACHMENT B: OCP Consultation Summary