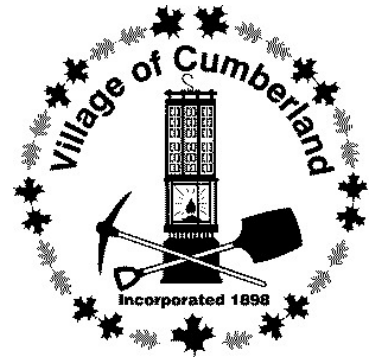


COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE REPORT



REPORT DATE: 10/15/2024

MEETING DATE: 11/4/2024

File No. 6480-01 OCP Project Documents

TO: Mayor and Councillors

FROM: Karin Albert, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Official Community Plan Review – Phase 2 Public Engagement and Policy Directions

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the Official Community Plan Review - Phase 2 Public Engagement Report to the Committee. Also presented are recommendations of the Advisory Planning Commission (APC) on the urban containment boundary and future land use map.

Based on a review of the diverse feedback received, data presented in the 2024 Housing Needs Report, the Complete Communities Assessment, and good planning practice, staff recommend key policy updates to the OCP for discussion. Any changes to policy direction proposed in this report or any new policy requires direction to staff through a motion from the Committee.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

Date	Resolution
July 24, 2023	THAT Council receive the “Official Community Plan Review – Phase 1 Public Engagement Report”, dated July 14, 2023. THAT Council direct staff to include into the scope of the Complete Communities Project an analysis of the long-term servicing costs of different development patterns such as single-family compared to multi-family and include that information in the Official Community Plan review.
April 11, 2023	THAT Council endorse the “Official Community Plan Review Process and Community Engagement Plan 2023-2024”, dated March 30, 2023.

BACKGROUND

Complete Communities Assessment

The Village was successful in obtaining Complete Communities program grant funding from the Province late last summer and awarded the contract for the work to Urban Systems in January 2024. The work under that program has supported the OCP Review through data collection, geospatial analysis, land use scenario building, community engagement, and policy development.

Based on the vision statements, goals, and hot topics shared by the community during Phase 1 engagement (see [Phase 1 Engagement Report](#)), the growth scenarios explored with the

community this past May and June were informed by values such as containing urban growth, preventing sprawl into the surrounding natural areas, improving active transportation, and reducing community greenhouse gas emissions. Development patterns that would result in urban sprawl appear counter to what most residents expressed they wished to see and, therefore, were not explored.

At the May 2024 open houses, Complete Communities [mapping](#) showed walking distances from the centre of the Village to surrounding residential areas, infrastructure service areas, and transportation options. The mapping and associated geospatial analysis presented at the open houses informed the location of an urban containment boundary, one of the key updates proposed for the OCP.

The intent of the urban containment boundary is to:

- Contain residential growth while meeting the projected housing need (see the Draft Housing Needs report presented to Council at their May 13, 2024 meeting, [agenda item 7.1](#)) and the updated Housing Needs report in the May 13, 2024 agenda package (item 4.1)).
- Create a complete community where most residential areas are located within walking distance of services and/or areas that can be efficiently serviced by transit and active transportation corridors.
- Reduce the impact of new development on the lifecycle maintenance and replacement costs of Village infrastructure.
- Focus the infill development mandated by the Province under the new Small Scale Unit Housing (SSMUH) legislation to areas within walking distance of the Village core (without urban containment boundary, SSMUH would apply to all residential lots under 4050 m² in size regardless of their location, when Cumberland's population reaches 5,000).

Housing Need

Due to the provincial SSMUH legislation, all single-family areas within Cumberland within the urban containment boundary will be able to develop their properties with up to four units, once the Zoning Bylaw is amended following the OCP Review.

While Cumberland already has an infill residential area which permits up to three units (a main home, secondary suites and an accessory dwelling unit), SSMUH will cover the entire area within the urban containment boundary and permit up to four units. The Complete Communities analysis assumes nine percent of properties per year over the next 20 years will be new SSMUH units over the next 20 years. This would meet approximately 1/3 of the Village's housing need. The remaining projected 20-year housing need can be met through multi-family residential development on larger vacant properties within the Village's urban core (e.g. land to be developed as part of the Coal Valley Estates build-out, behind the firehall, on Ulverston Avenue, off Union Road, etc). The land use development pattern resulting from SSMUH, lands proposed to be designated for multi-family residential, and an urban containment boundary will support more financially sustainable long-term infrastructure maintenance and replacement costs.

A final report on the Complete Communities Project is presented to Council on the same meeting agenda as this report. The report includes the analysis completed underlying the mapping presented at the open houses and the urban containment boundary, as well as a comparison of

relative costs of different development patterns. The latter information will assist in drafting OCP policy to guide the review of applications to amend the urban containment boundary in the future.

Phase 2 Community Engagement

Community Engagement Activities

The goal of the second phase of public engagement on the OCP review was to explore OCP topics and identify goals and policy updates. In preparation for Phase 2 community engagement, staff reviewed the hot topics identified by residents during Phase 1 community engagement, the Housing Needs report, recommendations and implementation actions in existing plans and policies, such as the 2020 Age-Friendly Community Plan, the 2019 Urban Forest Management Plan, the (then draft) 2024 Climate Action Plan, and the (then draft) 2024 Transportation Master Plan. Based on that review, staff identified topics and key questions for discussion with the community.

In-person community engagement activities took place in May 2024 and included two open houses and one workshop to review growth scenarios and future land use for Cumberland as well as possible policy updates related to housing, the local economy, arts and culture, heritage protection, environmental protection, parks and greenways, food security, social inclusion, diversity and equity. Eighty residents attended the open houses and 31 participated in the local economy workshop.

Following the May engagement events, the Village posted two OCP surveys on the growth scenarios and possible policy updates at engagecomoxvalley.ca. The surveys were open from June 21 until July 22, 2024. Survey 1 asked questions on the growth scenarios, housing, heritage preservation, parks and greenways and solicited 133 responses. Survey 2, with questions on industrial and agricultural land uses, environmental protection, arts and culture, food security, diversity, social inclusion and equity, received 78 responses.

The second engagement phase is now complete and the public feedback received is summarized in the Official Community Plan Review - Phase 2 Engagement Report (Attachment 1). A complete transcription of all the comments and survey results is provided in the appendices to the report.

Advisory Planning Commission Engagement

Following the community events and feedback received on the growth scenarios and urban containment boundary, land use planning staff created a proposed OCP future land use map (Attachment 2). The map was discussed with the Advisory Planning Commission (APC) at their August 26, 2024 meeting (Attachment 3).

The APC made the following recommendations:

- a. Include the residential lots (grey area north of the proposed urban containment boundary) and the service commercial and light industrial lots on Cumberland Road within the urban containment boundary.

The APC is concerned about giving property owners in that area within the Village the same development opportunities as elsewhere. If the urban containment boundary is applied to all types of land use, not just residential, the Bevan industrial area would have its separate containment boundary.

- b. Review the residential lots (grey area) along Bevan, Wellington, Hope, Mill Street, and Cumberland Road and add a combination of designations such as infill, multi-family and service commercial in that area, with consideration to avoiding access from Cumberland Road.

The APC wants to see more mixed use within that area as it is still fairly close and walkable from the Village core.

- c. Change most of the proposed Service Commercial area north of Cumberland Road back to Industrial and move more Service Commercial closer to the centre of the Village if possible - except for the lots that are currently in use as Service Commercial.

APC members want to see businesses that draw a significant number of customers be located within walking distance from most residential areas, especially uses such as grocery store or fitness studio.

- d. Do not change the land use designation of the area near the interchange lands from Institutional to Service Commercial because that location is not within walking distance from many parts of the Village.

- e. That the Interchange Lands are removed from within the eastern area of the urban containment boundary.

The reason discussed for both (d) and (c) is that those lands are outside walking distance of most services and residential areas in the Village.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DRAFT OCP

Based on an analysis of the community feedback, APC discussions, provincial requirements to meet the projected 20-year housing need, and good land use practices, planning staff is recommending the following key updates to the OCP. These updates would be incorporated into the new draft OCP and be presented to the community for feedback during a last round of engagement later this fall and prior to the start of the formal bylaw review process.

OCP Updates

Vision and Goals

Edit the vision statement to ensure the following are incorporated:

- green infrastructure, clean air, clean water and healthy people
- decolonization
- keeping growth within the limits of infrastructure capabilities and the natural world
- site adaptive planning
- embracing diversity through a variety of housing options.

Include within the goals, or the intent statements explaining the goals, language on heritage, climate resilience, creating a complete and compact (walkable/bikeable) community, and fiscal responsibility.

Urban Containment Boundary

Residential Areas

Adjust the urban containment boundary (UCB) to include the seven properties on the east side of Bruce Street between Cumberland Road and Mill Street.

- The properties on Bruce Street are similar in size to the ones across the street and would benefit from having access to the provincial regulations allowing up to four units (Note this adjustment is reflected in the proposed future land use maps (Attachment 2)).

Keep the northeast boundary of the UCB as proposed at the open houses and in the survey.

- Although the APC recommended extending the urban containment boundary (UCB) to include the large properties on Cumberland Road, Wellington Street and Hope Road, the projected 20-year growth can be met within the proposed boundary, especially since Cumberland will be implementing the new provincial Small Scale Multi-Unit Housing (SSMUH) regulations that only apply to properties inside the UCB. As proposed, the UCB focusses development on infill on already disturbed lands. The lands that the APC recommends including within the UCB are generally less developed and contribute to the Village's forest canopy cover. The larger properties within that area could be reserved for possible future multi-family development when housing need warrants changing the land use designation, subject to a future community process to review the vision for that area. If included in the UCB now, the new provincial regulations would apply to that area and the lots could be redeveloped with up to four units, losing the potential for greater density when needed in the future.
- The intent statement for the UCB will acknowledge the development potential of that area in the future to facilitate an amendment to the UCB as more need for multi-family residential is demonstrated.

Commercial and Industrial Areas

Apply the UCB to residential lands only.

- Although the APC recommended including commercial and industrial lands within the UCB, specifically along Cumberland Road, this change is not included in this report. Given the location of Cumberland's industrial lands in the Bevan area and along Cumberland Road and the Comox Valley Parkway, the UCB would have to be so extensive that it would fail to focus residential growth on the Village core.

Residential and Mixed Land Use

Multi-Family

Retain the multi-family residential land use designations in the locations shown at the open houses and in the survey but create a single multi-family designation and leave the distinction between low and medium multi-family to the Zoning Bylaw.

- This leaves more flexibility to create zones to fit a particular site and respond to changing housing need. To address concerns about Cumberland's character, review the form and character guidelines in the multi-family and mixed-use development permit areas to ensure the guidelines provide adequate direction to developers.

Mixed-Use

Create a new Mixed-Use Civic Facility land use designation to permit future redevelopment of municipal facilities with a residential use component.

- There was a lot of support for this new designation at the open houses and in the survey. It provides flexibility to enter into partnership with the Province and/or developers to add housing, including affordable housing, above municipal facilities.

Revise the general mixed-use designation on Derwent and Penrith between First and Fourth to better describe the desired uses.

- There was limited support for the concept of shifting density from Dunsmuir Avenue to Penrith and Derwent.
- The Heritage Conservation Area guidelines will be updated to speak more clearly to building massing and design to ensure new buildings fit into the existing streetscape.

Building Height

Do not set a maximum building height in the land use designation in the OCP but leave this to the specific zones.

- This provides more flexibility to match a zone to site conditions and constraints and/or ensure multi-family residential development is financially viable. Currently the maximum building height for multi-family in the downtown core and the MU-1 Mixed Use zones is 15 metres.

Commercial and Commercial-Mixed-Use Land Use

Retain the Service Commercial areas presented during Phase 2 engagement, as mapped in Attachment 2 – Proposed Future Land Use Maps .

- The intent statement for the Service Commercial land use has been edited to clarify the types of uses to be included, focussing on services and retail-oriented uses that require loading areas, large areas for storage and handling of goods and equipment, and can generally not be accommodated in downtown spaces.

Downtown Heritage Conservation Area (HCA)

HCA Guidelines

Review the guidelines and the Zoning Bylaw (following adoption of the OCP) to permit more flexible building setbacks in the downtown core to accommodate outdoor seating and public areas.

- This proposal received strong community support.

Update the HCA guidelines.

The Heritage Committee reviewed the HCA guidelines and provided input on updates.

Heritage in Other Parts of the Village

Include a Heritage Neighbourhoods map in the OCP.

- Due to mixed support for additional heritage conservation areas in the downtown core and uncertainty around what this may mean for homeowners, planning staff has reviewed this item with the Heritage Committee. At their August 15, 2024 meeting, the Committee recommended including a map of heritage neighbourhoods in the OCP to increase awareness of those areas and to inform potential policies and design guidelines in development permit areas.

Housing Affordability

Rental Tenure

Add policies to add a rental tenure component to a zone when properties are pre-zoned to meet provincial regulations to meet housing need, as well as at time of rezoning to a multi-family use.

- More rental and more affordable housing came up as priorities at all community engagement sessions and in the survey.

Non-market Housing

Add policy to explore a non-market housing component as part of future redevelopment of civic properties and more rental tenure zoning.

Add policy to reduce parking requirements for non-market housing and seek additional transit connections into Courtenay.

- The above updates seek to reduce barriers and costs to develop non-market housing.

Active Transportation Network, Conservation Lands, Parks and Trails

Update the Active Transportation Network, Conservation Lands, Parks and Trails map presented at the open houses and in the survey to include any additional areas identified by residents that were not mapped.

Include policy language to identify a safe bike path to Courtenay and a multi-use trail to Comox Lake as priorities for active transportation.

- These updates reflect the community comments received.

Local Economy

Add policy to review zoning to allow a diversity of spaces to support business start-ups, shared spaces, live-work artist and artisan studios, a broad range of home occupations and staff housing.

Add policies to reduce parking requirements for new commercial tenants in the downtown core and, at the same time, continue to work toward better transit and bike infrastructure.

Add policy to support affordable, rental and non-market housing to support staff housing.

- The above policies received support at the Local Economy Workshop and in the survey.

Arts and Culture

Include policy to support arts and culture venues, such as gallery and youth art space, provide flexibility for start-up and small businesses, and permit live-work artist studio space in some zones that also permit light industrial processes.

Support affordable housing which is key to a strong arts and culture community.

- The above reflects the suggestions made during public engagement.

Mural Art on Buildings in the downtown Heritage Conservation Area

Add policy to establish a separate review process with an external review committee for murals in the downtown core.

- Community support for Council or staff review of murals was not strong. An external committee review process received the most support.

Industrial Land Use Designations

Keep the industrial area at Bevan in a single industrial land use designation as in the current OCP.

- The Local Economy workshop highlighted the importance of a supportive business climate. A single industrial land use designation supports new trends and innovation when it comes to industrial uses. It leaves more flexibility to respond to potential new industrial uses not contemplated in existing industrial zones without requiring an amendment to the OCP in addition to a rezoning when a new use is proposed.

Agricultural Land Use Designations

Review possible areas for an agricultural land use designation.

- Having an area of land outside of the Village core designated for agricultural use is important to provide opportunities for larger agricultural operations (aside from the small market gardens and urban agriculture uses permitted in the Village core). While the soils are not sufficiently fertile for soil-based farming in most areas of Cumberland, non-soil based agriculture is possible. The area currently designated for agriculture would have road access through a residential area. Other potential areas will be reviewed with the public during phase 3 of community engagement on the OCP.

Add policy to explore permitting greenhouses in light industrial zones when the Zoning Bylaw is updated.

- Greenhouses can be compatible with light industrial uses and adding greenhouses as a permitted use would open additional opportunities within light industrial areas in the Village.

Interchange Lands

Update the proposed statement of intent for the interchange land use designation to add the desire for parkland dedication in that area (Attachment 3 –Intent Statements – OCP Land Use Designations).

- This update supports the community feedback received and is in keeping with the Comprehensive Development agreement which includes a requirement to dedicate parkland.

Environmental Protection

Implement the environmental protection tools discussed during the public engagement sessions, including adding greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and key climate actions from the 2024 Climate Action Plan to the OCP. Ensure urban biodiversity, tree retention, climate preparedness, water conservation and wildfire risk reduction are included in the implementation.

- This update reflects the feedback received during the community public engagement activities.

Environmental Development Permit Area Guidelines

Update the Environmental Development Permit Area regulations with the provisions reviewed with the community during the engagement activities.

Add policy on tree protection, wetland protection, protection of connectivity corridors, water conservation, and protection of water quality of Comox Lake.

- These updates reflect the feedback received during the community public engagement activities.

Social Inclusion, Diversity and Equity

Strengthen language in the OCP in support of social inclusion, diversity and equity.

- This update reflects the feedback received during the community public engagement activities.

Food Security

Update OCP policy on food security, including the importance of community gardens close to multi-family residential development, food access programs, regional emergency planning for food security, local and regional food infrastructure, a permanent facility for the Cumberland Food Share, education on food preparation, awareness around food waste, ways for farmers and small-scale growers to sell directly to the public.

- This policy update reflects the feedback received during the community public engagement activities.

Next steps

Next steps in the OCP review process are to:

- write OCP policy to reflect the recommended updates above or as amended by Council
- present the policy updates to the public for a final round of engagement for feedback.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND CONSULTATION

Community engagement events were promoted in Cumberland, on social media, through posters, on the Village website and Village email news posts, and via engagecomoxvalley.ca/Cumberland. The Village also issued a news release which resulted in a radio interview with the mayor.

In-person engagement included two open houses, on May 22 and 23, 2024, drawing 80 community members, and a workshop on the local economy on May 30 with 29 participants, composed of local business owners and residents.

Online engagement was conducted via two surveys, open from June 21 to July 22. The surveys were available online and in paper format. Survey 1, which explored topics of broad interest, received 133 responses, and survey 2, which explored more specialized topics, received 78 responses.

Advisory Planning Commission

The APC will continue to be involved in the project and will be asked to review draft policies in the next phase. With the recent resignation of one APC member, there are now six members. The Advisory Planning Commission Bylaw No. 999, 2014 states that the Commission shall consist of a minimum of five and a maximum of seven appointed members. Staff plan to advertise for a new member in 2025 after the APC involvement in the OCP review is complete since it could be challenging to introduce a new member to this planning project mid-stream. Introducing a new member at this time would require staff resources for training and bringing them up to date on the on the project and APC involvement so far.

ALTERNATIVES

1. The Committee may provide feedback and direct staff to change the recommended OCP updates by Committee motion.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

- ☒ Diverse and Healthy Community
- ☐ Sustainable Service Delivery and Asset Management
- ☒ Community Planning

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The OCP review project is fully funded in the 2023-2026 Financial Plan. Additional funding of \$150,000 was received in August 2023 for data collection and mapping from the provincial Complete Communities grant. The Complete Communities Assessment is presented to Council at the same meeting as this report.

OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The OCP review process is coordinated by the Senior Planner with the involvement of other Development Services as well as Operations, Legislative Services and Financial Services staff. The graphic communications components of the project were also supported by a graphic design consultant.

The Development Services Department has limited capacity to begin other new policy projects during the OCP Review.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

Climate action planning is a key topic in the OCP review. Based on the Village's new Climate Action Plan, accepted by Council at their June 24, 2024 meeting, the climate section in the OCP will provide specific actions to move the Village away from dependence on fossil fuels and achieve reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in the building, transportation, energy, and solid waste sectors. The OCP will also include policy and actions to adapt to climate change.

ATTACHMENT

1. Official Community Plan Review - Phase 2 Public Engagement Report
2. Proposed Future Land Use Maps – Village Core and Entire Village
3. Intent Statements - OCP Land Use Designations

CONCURRENCE

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Respectfully submitted,

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