

Part 1

Introduction

1. INTRODUCTION

Section 1.0

1.1 The Official Community Plan – What is it?

An Official Community Plan (OCP) is a statement of the City’s long term vision of the community for the future. It establishes a strategy through policies that guide Council in their decision making role. This includes economic, environmental, social and cultural policies in addition to land use patterns, servicing and transportation. It will become an important reference for residents, businesses, community organizations and other levels of government.

It sets the direction for future locations of commerce, recreation, institutional and residential uses. It will influence daily living patterns and strive to minimize travel patterns, costs and environmental impacts. The plan will strengthen the City as a viable and liveable community.

1.2 Scope of the Official Community Plan

Section 877 of the *Local Government Act* outlines content of an Official Community Plan. The *Act* outlines the framework for community goals, objectives and policies. A Community Plan must be flexible to provide adaptability to meet changes in the community. The planning horizon is 5 years in the short term and 15 to 20 years for longer term considerations.

1.3 Basis of the Official Community Plan

This Community Plan provides a great deal of respect for community values and goals. The Plan provides a community vision for Courtenay that reflects values and priorities which have been articulated by Council and the general public. The Community Plan was prepared following local consultations which included public surveys, discussions with Council, focus groups and meetings.

1.4 Interpretation

An Official Community Plan means a Community Plan as defined in Section 875 of the *Local Government Act* and adopted by Council in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act*.

Any proposal for development or redevelopment shall be reviewed according to the policies embodied in the text of this bylaw. All rezoning proposals and bylaws enacted shall be consistent with the Official Community Plan.

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1.5 Our Community

The City of Courtenay was incorporated in 1915 with a population of 700 and has grown to include an area of 2,517 hectares (6,219 acres) with a population of 21,500 (2004 estimate). It is the largest municipality of the Comox Valley.

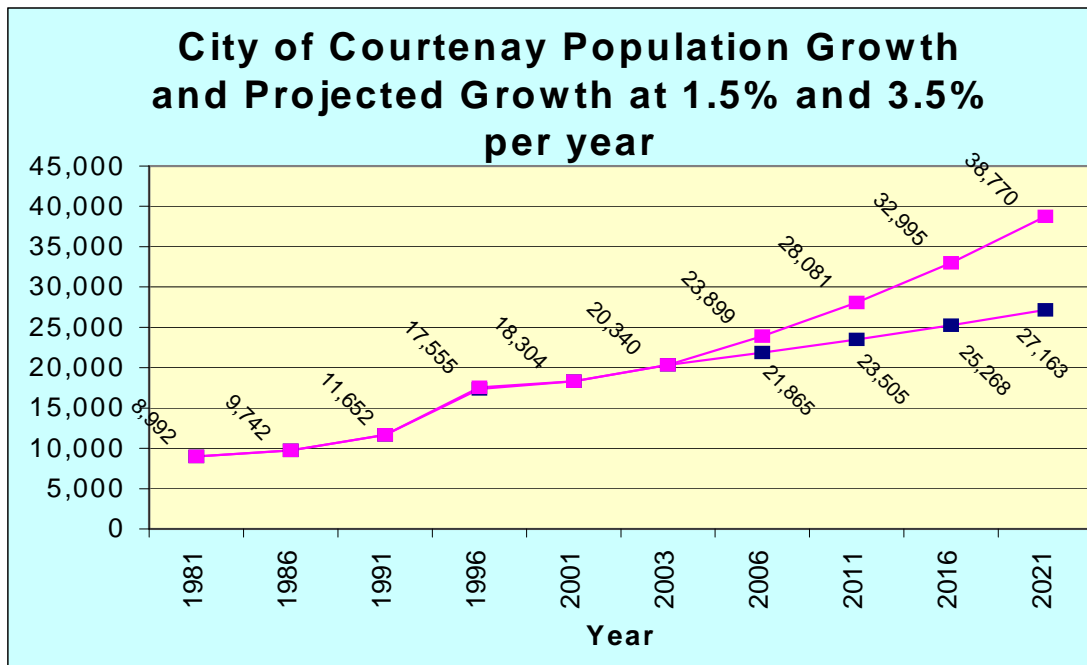
Incorporation:	1915
Number of Properties:	9,445
Residential:	8,485 (6,109 single family residences – 72%)
Non Residential:	797
Civic:	160

Percent of property tax assessments to residential property:	77%
Percent of property tax assessments to non-residential property:	23%

1.6 Population

The population for the City in 2001 was 18,304, which was a 5.5% increase from 1996. The City’s rate of growth has levelled off since 1996-97 (4.5%) and the very rapid growth of 48% experienced from 1991-96 (11,698 to 17,335). However, since 2001, the City has continued to show significant growth with a 2004 population estimate of 21,500. This gain includes the 824 people annexed into the City in 2002. This again is also reflected in building permit values which have gone from \$29 million in 2001 to \$63 million in 2004.

In the table below, a projection of 1.5% and 3.5% annual growth is illustrated. Boundary adjustments will add to the range of projected increases.



1.7 Community Changes

The existing OCP was adopted in 1994 and has been amended 55 times. The community has also experienced the following significant changes:

- opening of the Inland Island Highway and completion of the Comox Valley Parkway to 29th Street (1999);

- Westjet flights into Comox Valley from Alberta (2001) and new airport terminal (2004);
- opening of Inland Island Highway to Campbell River in September 2001;
- expansion of commercial land base with addition of Anfield Retail Centre at Cliffe Avenue and Anfield Road, Safeway Retail Centre at Cliffe Avenue and 17th Street (2003) and Home Depot on Lerwick Road (2003).
- completion of Courtenay Middle School (opened September 2001) and additions to Puntledge Elementary, Glacier View Elementary, Valley View Elementary and Lake Trail Junior Secondary. Nine schools now within City boundaries plus North Island College;
- boundary extensions of over 1000 hectares;
- completion of civic projects which included the Library and Firehall, renovation of former Post Office into Museum and ownership of Native Sons Hall. The City has also commenced the renovation of the Old Fire Hall into an Arts Gallery and to renovate City Hall and is working to complete Simms Millennium Park. All of these projects are within the downtown core of the City.

As a result of these changes, the strategy in this Plan will be to continue to provide a sense of direction for the development of a balanced community that will contribute to the well being and civic pride of the residents of the City and also for future generations.