



# Official Community Plan Draft Policy - Summary Document Stakeholder Engagement Sessions



## Introduction

Between winter 2020 and summer 2021 a series of focused virtual stakeholder sessions were held on a variety of OCP topics. City of Courtenay staff determined the session topics based on the drafted OCP policies that were in need of further stakeholder consultation. These topics were:

- Affordable Housing
- Arts, Culture & Heritage
- Age-Friendly Community Planning
- Land Development and Construction
- Social Infrastructure
- Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce Round Table
- Low Carbon Transportation Planning
- Food Systems
- Nature Policy and Environmental Development Permit Area Guidelines
- Community Amenity Contributions

Stakeholders were identified from a staff generated stakeholder contact list, and invited to targeted sessions based on stakeholder mandate. Many of the stakeholders had also participated in the brainstorming events a year prior. Generally speaking, stakeholders included other levels of government, community organizations and neighbouring jurisdictions. Up to two members of Courtenay Council were invited to attend each session as were OCP Advisory Committee members whose areas of expertise aligned with the session topic. The OCP Advisory Committee chair, deputy chair and youth representatives were also invited to all sessions. The K'ómoks First Nation and the City of Courtenay have established a concurrent and separate engagement process for the OCP.

The City of Courtenay generally organized the virtual stakeholder sessions that all took place over ZOOM and ran between 1.5 and 2h each. In a couple of instances City staff were invited to stakeholder arranged meetings, such as in the case of the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce Round Table. 130 individuals participated across all the sessions; a number of individuals represented multiple organizations and some individuals attended more than one session. Staff and consultants are not included in the participation numbers but OCP Advisory Committee and members of Council are.

The objectives of the sessions were each tailored to the topic area, and each session contained slight variation in format and presentation materials given. In general, City staff circulated drafted OCP materials, such as theme-specific policy chapters, in advance of a stakeholder session and sought feedback on the general impressions and specifics of the drafted material, whether the introductory information for any policy adequately captured the Courtenay context, whether there were unclear or missing policies, and whether there were partnership opportunities on topics of mutual interest. Stakeholders were invited to submit comments in writing and discuss proposals further with staff in addition to participating in the stakeholder sessions, although very few did.



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The following document provides a summary of the key points raised at each session. The summary points are numbered for the purposes of easy reference.

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## Affordable Housing

- Session held virtually December 8, 2020
- In attendance: 9 participants representing local development industry representatives, non-profit housing advocates and providers, OCP advisory committee members, two members of City Council.

### Summary of points raised:

1. Would like to see precedents of other communities so can contextualize feasibility of proposals. Looking for more emphasis on mixed use/home based businesses such as Tin Town.
2. Question of how to support more variety of market housing (not just rentals) remains of interest to Council.
3. Homeownership could be of higher focus. Otherwise overall feels as though the document is reflecting what the Housing Coalition has been advocating for, appreciates the non-profit role and emphasis. Staff champion/dedicated role very important. March 2020 [Point in Time Count now published](#), homelessness is increasing: 132 up from 117 in 2018.
4. The document has much on incentivizing what we want private sector to do, why not do ourselves as public sector? All that time spent on tweaking incentives could be spent on supplying publically. Housing Authority seen as a critical tool, one to get on right away, regional approach.
5. Let's respond to trends of demand – e.g. more people expected to be living alone. Smaller units, high quality units, glad to see emphasis (and building currently) of rental. Support for regional Housing Authority.
6. Appreciate the partnership strategy. Much could be done with coordination of sectors. Kamloops includes City involvement, guidance (mandate?) for partnerships. Availability of land is at issue for developers. Where does this aspect of land, and permitted uses, factor into the strategy? Difficult to comment without considering cost of land.
7. The Strategy is accessible in terms of 'plain language', the Community Amenity Contribution (CAC) document is not. Advise that effort be made to explain the document once being finalized or when consulting with non technical audiences. Ensure opportunities to include equity voices. How does this work integrate within a regional context?
8. Housing Authority/Corporation is worth seriously considering. Tofino, Ucluelet, Capital Regional District as island examples. Don't forget urban indigenous housing needs, of people living off reserve, not of the K'omoks First Nation. [Aboriginal Housing Management Association recent report](#) highlights this gap broadly. Could local governments have right of first refusal of any rental properties that are being converted to stratas? (similarly to Montreal). REITs (Real Estate Investment Trusts) are coming to the Comox Valley, resulting in renovations, raising rents. Need a clearer picture of how much of our housing stock is social housing. The National Housing Strategy's [Community Housing Transformation Centre](#) indicates a goal of 10% of social housing nation-wide (currently at ~3%). Where are we at? What is our goal?
9. Are Community Amenity Contributions significant affordability/cost drivers? (Staff response):
  - a. Likely not at the rates they are today in the City.



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- b. Discussion of City's current CAC approach: First priority is to secure affordable units through rezoning negotiation process. If not successful, second priority is to seek the Housing Amenity contribution amount of \$1000/unit as described in the OCP. Those funds go into the Affordable Housing Amenity Reserve Fund which contains approximately \$800,000. It is not much to do significant work with. To date has been accessed to support servicing and DCC costs of the Braidwood affordable housing projects.
  - c. Looking at the Density Bonus formula as incentive to have affordable units constructed.
  - d. Reminder of the [Community Amenity Contribution Provincial document](#)
10. Securing affordable housing units within luxury homes may not be the right fit. Also, support scaling the contribution of the Housing Amenity contribution based on the size of the home (not per unit).
11. Agree that Affordable Housing should be a Regional Issue and any action should be coordinated with all four local governments. Private enterprise has a very small role in Affordable Housing. This important need should be handled through public housing associations supported by all levels of government.
12. Reminder that ~600 rental units are anticipated to be achieving occupancy in Courtenay within the 2019-2021 timeline – this represents a significant jump in this product.
13. What makes for successful partnerships?:
  - a. Over communicating. E.g. just learned of the City's Housing Reserve Fund. We could be working with those funds right now.
  - b. Takes a coalition, lots of skills at different stages of the process. We can get stuck looking at policy – there are many people who can physically make it happen. It takes out of the box thinking. E.g. container housing that's being built right now in the Comox Valley. Where is the land use permission for more of that?
  - c. The Coalition to End Homelessness has wished for the City to establish an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with BC Housing for some time. Was proposed when Braidwood was being constructed, but elected officials of the day were not supportive. Nanaimo has such an MOU and they are getting housing. The Coalition at one point had a housing development team, but no longer. Could activate that subcommittee again. Support for internal staff champion policy. Remember too that Housing Authorities can act as land trusts.
14. Co-op housing could have a place here, especially employee co-op housing (e.g. School District co-ops). It's important that we be able to replicate our successful initiatives. E.g. could the John Howard Society Junction project replicate? On Air BnBs, owner occupancy should be enforced. On single family housing, many people are 'overhoused', a single person living in a large home. Could these be repurposed to allow more units?
15. At the Regional Board level we could establish an MOU to guide inter-jurisdictional collaboration on affordable housing, similar to how the Regional Integrated Transportation Advisory Select Committee has recently established an MOU for transportation planning. It would be great if we could make this information more accessible to the general public, aspirational, get excited.
16. The Regional Homelessness Support Service (HSS) seems as a good place to begin for this regional collaboration. It's being reviewed.



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17. If we have permission to be controversial, I'd like to point out that Kamloops allows supportive housing in residential zones and that we should be considering that as well.
18. Emphasize the importance in including the voices of those who will be living in these homes right from the beginning. E.g. there were some neighbourhood integration challenges with the Junction. Some of those issues could have been proactively addressed if the residents were involved from the beginning.
19. Like the use of the weighted wheelhouse in the strategy, flows well from the Housing Needs Assessment.

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## Arts, Culture & Heritage

- Sessions held virtually February 4, February 18 and March 11, 2021 at regular informal City of Courtenay cultural round table meetings with cultural service providers.
- In attendance: 6 participants representing cultural partners with which the City has service contracts, OCP advisory committee member.

## Summary of points raised:

1. Ensure KFN and other local indigenous voices are included. If the plan states that reconciliation is a lens, it needs to be more apparent. So far it isn't. Don't forget about the KFN Cultural Heritage Policy. Cultural groups work on topic of reconciliation day to day and are passionate about this.
2. Need a bolder statement of Courtenay's role in the world as a centre for the arts. The Art Gallery (Centre for the Arts) has international ambitions.
3. Arts and culture should be integrated into all other aspects of the OCP. It's part of our community's identity and values.
4. The preamble to the chapter could recognize the broader cultural context in which this OCP is situated. It also needs to reflect better our identity. Avoid rote language. Group offered to help with language drafting.
5. Tourism is a huge part of local economic development and arts and culture are a major draw for tourism.
6. Arts and culture are important parts of social infrastructure.
7. Opportunity to work on topics that bring together diversity of people. E.g. natural history (showcased at the museum) is very popular across a wide cross section. Let's invest more in these stories about Courtenay that bring people together.
8. Would like to see the buildings chapter of the OCP as it affects the cultural facilities (e.g. Sid Theatre, Museum, etc) and the economic development chapter.
9. Important to include land use permissions for small cultural venues in all neighbourhoods. Noise and licensing events can be barriers to cultural events.
10. The land near Central Builders on the water is ripe for a cultural precinct, as is identified in the Downtown Courtenay Playbook.
11. Be sensitive of colonial language, and colonial names of public places. Could names be changed to honor the local land keepers?
12. Public art policy is very important, such as obtaining through land development. Then it can become a routine part of new projects and spread throughout the city.
13. A cultural scorecard is identified as a valuable business planning, monitoring and evaluation tool in the [Courtenay Cultural Services Report \(2019\)](#) in order that tracking of progress on identified arts and culture goals can occur.
14. A dedicated community arts space is needed.
15. Opportunity to meld more arts and culture with nature and built environment, through urban design guidelines.



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16. The policy work is high level, it has a role in an OCP, but we also need more detailed guidelines on implementing these ideas. The practical implications need to be identified.
17. Duncan Commons remains an important cultural facility, it should be implemented.

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## Age-Friendly Community Planning

- Sessions held virtually March 24 and April 7, 2021
- In attendance: 14 participants representing Island Health, Comox Youth Climate Council, Comox Valley Family Services, Immigrant Welcome Society, Social Planning Society, John Howard Society, Comox Valley Early Years Collaborative, Comox Valley Health Network, Courtenay Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission, Evergreen Club and Courtenay Recreation Association, Beaufort Association, Comox Valley Seniors Society, BC Transit, BC Healthy Communities, OCP advisory committee members, member of City Council.

### Summary of points raised:<sup>1</sup>

1. **Within the built environment:** More public realm spaces wanted with amenities like washrooms and benches; accessibility audits are needed to understand current context; many parks and public recreation and cultural facilities are well loved, but there is limited parks programming; ability to linger downtown and in the malls; walking trails and bike lanes don't always feel safe including when alone and at night.
2. **Regarding transportation:** Most seniors drive a personal vehicle, however that option often decreases with age; public transit could be more seniors friendly including better accommodation of mobility devices; multi-modal transportation needs to be better accommodated and promoted, recognizing that if someone is trying it for the first time later in life, it will feel very foreign; HandyDart is used, but there are challenges with access and timing; seniors' priority parking, including for mobility devices for scooters, would be helpful; ride hailing services would be welcomed; school aged residents find their bike routes to school are unsafe with blind corners and busy streets.
3. **Regarding housing:** Diversity of housing types is needed; many seniors are 'over housed' and there is a lack of options to downsize; in particular low income / long term care housing is lacking; senior home owners have a sense of security; renters on fixed incomes are concerned about rising costs; there are limited family friendly housing options and that include pets (rental); there is a concern of future generations struggling with housing affordability; wish to incentivize diversity of housing from developers; need more ability to age in place, which is also a systemic health intervention.
4. **Regarding social participation:** A number of programs and places tailored to seniors are available and appreciated (e.g. Evergreen club); Courtenay still has a small town friendly feeling; the newcomers group is very popular; places to accommodate more programming are limited, especially during peak times; people face social exclusion for many reasons (homelessness, multi-cultural or language barriers); need to develop more

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<sup>1</sup> Discussion was facilitated around the eight community planning dimensions listed, as recommended by the World Health Organization for Age-friendly cities.





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intergenerational programming and incorporate a reconciliation lens with Indigenous Elders to educate the wider community.

5. **Regarding respect and inclusion:** Inclusivity is very important for the Courtenay community, there is a feeling of a general 'friendliness' of the community; group recognized that wider community needs to do a better job at coming together to care for the most vulnerable; social isolation is a common fear; gender inequities increase poverty to older women, reducing agency and independence, quality of life and health, all while women generally live longer than men; loss of drivers license, or mobility more widely, can lead to social isolation; many seniors have pets but there are no dog parks or places to memorialize them.
6. **Regarding civic participation:** There is a strong local culture of volunteerism; people experience discrimination related to ageism, race, ethnicity, gender, income and other factors; language barriers may exist for Indigenous Elders; need to create space for marginalized people at the table; clubs are popular organizations and well used in Courtenay.
7. **With respect to communication:** Not all seniors are technologically literate so paper communication is still important and being able to speak to someone directly is better still; word of mouth can work in a smaller community like ours, but that requires strong social and community networks; there is no centralized organization that coordinates and connects services for seniors; people experiencing homelessness are often excluded from conventional communication channels.
8. **With respect to community support and health services:** Finding appropriate roles for City and Island Health to work together and coordinate is important; need to better co-locate health services with other seniors' destinations; mental wellbeing is equally important as physical; food security expected to be an issue of increasing importance for seniors; the food bank is not conveniently accessed by transit; personal social supports are critical to one's health; there are no support options for children and youth after hours outside of the RCMP and there are limited supports for people after hours in general; recognition that many people don't ask for help when they need it.



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## Land Development and Construction

- Session held virtually April 21, 2021
- In attendance: 17 participants representing local developers, land development consultants, Vancouver Island Home Builders Association, OCP advisory committee members, member of City Council.

### Summary of points raised:

1. Why is there no mention of tiny houses? Could there be more on small lot policies to encourage more small lots? Smaller lots more affordable. (staff response: there are no minimum size limits for homes in Courtenay. Building Code often restricts options for tiny homes. Wondering what minimum lot size the market is interested in. As small as in old orchard?).
2. The development processes and support materials from Campbell River are good, the City should have similar type of materials and processes.
3. Appreciate the vision and concept of the series of neighbourhood and town centres. Usually civil infrastructure is a constraint – how is the OCP addressing that? (staff response: servicing infrastructure remains a constraint in many areas. The City is undertaking master servicing plans to understand these needs better and would target investment in these areas as per draft OCP policy, although must also balance with other priorities such as risk assessments. Development Cost Charges (DCC) bylaw will be changing in next 12-18 months to reflect these capital servicing needs).
4. Are there incentives being offered for green building? (consultant response: incentives are limited, but the City can lobby the Province to create more incentives or financing access such as PACE financing (Property Assessed Clean Energy). There are funds and rebates available to build green, although they are not well coordinated, have different sunset clauses, can be hard to find. Making existing funding easy to access would be a helpful role for City).
5. Feel that this work is not connected to 'boots on the ground'. We have an affordability issue in our community, I feel that this will add costs. Could this add up to 20-40% to new construction? (consultant response: nothing is effectively bringing down the cost of housing, high demand is challenging to local affordability. Energy savings can occur down the road, but it's a longer pay back. Should be thinking of affordability more holistically.)
6. Could more land be pre-zoned? Counter point: pre-zoning drives up land values.
7. Fear of endless bureaucracy with added requirements (staff response: looking to limit rezoning and development permit requirements for certain uses. E.g. secondary suites proposed to be permitted everywhere (no rezoning required), duplexes and secondary residences only require a very basic development permit (quicker turn around). Clarity of Community Amenity Contributions, including phasing of increases, also allows applicant to factor into proforma early on and adjust what willing to pay for land).
8. One developer shared that in working on 3 major projects in the City in recent years that the City has been great to work with. To make projects happen quickly both the local government and the applicant have to be rapidly reviewing and responding to concerns, there has to be diligence on both sides. Some projects are more controversial than others and that creates delays and uncertainty. Concern that more policy means more layers,



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and feels that the more governments come together to solve emerging community problems, that the more it is deterring and discouraging development. The costs get passed down to the consumer. All important issues and in the end the policies result in good development, but in the short term it is difficult to develop. At the core there is risk in developing the remaining lands identified in the OCP, harder to assemble and develop. Demand is outpacing supply so need to bring these lands online as quickly as possible. There are lots of lands in the shopping centre designation that if freed up for residential would assist with supply. Need more 'build ready' land through adequate servicing capacity in place and pre-zoning. These issues are not unique to Courtenay (consultant response: the OCP provides more options for development in areas that historically did not allow options. Greenfield will not be as available, but more lands within infill areas will be permitted to have more options.)

9. Unfortunate that senior governments are not more supportive of affordable housing. Like with mental health, local governments are being downloaded upon. There is a lot of effort into the OCP, as is normal, but would be good to see some effort go into examining costs of implementing it. As a society we're good at adding costs, but not good at taking away. (consultant response: the affordable housing policies in the OCP focus on what the local governments can do and identify areas where the City can lobby senior governments).
10. Time is \$ and if it takes 2-3 years or 4-5 years to get a project built, if the goal posts are changing, then this is a problem. Does it come down to the City needing more staffing to process applications? I would support that. Great ideas, but am concerned we can't make them happen. (staff response: Courtenay development application processing timelines are within reasonable time limits as compared to other communities. 12-13 months is not uncommon for a rezoning application, not multiple years. The delay can come from the applicant not submitting info in a timely manner).
11. Bringing the zoning bylaw up to date will be a significant assistance to making land more available. Feels that the question is whether to do a lot of work now to get regulations all updated, or do little bits of update to regulations later over a longer time. Support the former.
12. Could the City have a more coordinated intake process on development applications? I hear that projects can get held up on the subdivision phase. Have seen other places on the island successfully combining mixed uses.



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## Social Infrastructure

- Session held virtually April 29, 2021
- In attendance: 15 participants representing Island Health, Comox Youth Climate Council, Comox Valley Family Services, Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness, Immigrant Welcome Society, Comox Valley Social Planning Society, John Howard Society, Comox Valley Early Years Collaborative, Comox Valley Health Network, OCP advisory committee members, two members of City Council.

## Summary of points raised:

1. Introductory context info to chapter captures the expression of Courtenay.
2. Happy to see that an early years lens is included.
3. Appreciate that quality of life is clearly embedded as a municipal responsibility.
4. Find the tone inconsistent. Some passive language used that takes the pressure off being an advocate. Have to be leaders on these issues. Don't feel comfortable with the term 'vulnerable populations'. The Social Determinants of Health as described are hard to understand.
5. Find the introductory info a bit confusing. Needs to be concise, shorter.
6. Important to write this – and the entire OCP – in plain language. The four lenses include equity - that should be included in the communications approach. Reconciliation is not shining through. Some other chapters have targets – would like to see targets included here.
7. Instinct is to advise that much is missing from this chapter, that we need more action and now. However, also appreciate that this is a big step for the City to include so clearly this topic and its complexity. Feel that climate change needs to be better identified in this chapter.
8. Chapter feels like an amalgamation of lists, people likely to glaze over. May need more graphics. Structure the concept as city built into livable nodes, building blocks of social infrastructure.
9. Feel that there should be more focus on access, equity and inclusion.
10. Expect to see more indigenous voices and context included in this chapter.
11. Also don't support the term vulnerable as it frames as a victim stance. Focus more on the assets and resilience and strength of people. So many other topics intersect with this one – food, arts and culture, affordable housing, relationship to land. Need to thread the topics together throughout the OCP to help people understand how everything is connected.
12. Needs a better definition of social infrastructure itself. Is the term even correct? Offer to help in drafting language.
13. Social infrastructure is tangible and intangible. The City provides assets and services. Maybe those are logical ways to organize the policies within the chapter.
14. There are social determinants of health and of education too. Community schools are a model that can be strengthened to ensure everyone has inclusive access to lifelong learning opportunities right in their neighbourhoods.



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15. Emergency responses are best coordinated at the neighbourhood scale. Trust is crucial. Neighbourhood house model, neighbourhood associations, all of these things help to build that neighbourhood resilience. Need more empowering action language for the City's role in this. Need to reclaim public space for inclusive public use (e.g. [City repair](#) ideas).
16. Social infrastructure vs Social capital. We are trying to build the latter by investing in the former. This is very important to a range of community challenges and not very expensive.
17. Social determinants of health are a good framework, but needs to connect to climate better.
18. Some concepts need more citations, or less 'apple pie' type of statements. Contextual language needs to be better rooted in experience.
19. Also don't support the term vulnerable as its exclusive language. Reads like "us and them". Equity-deserving or equity-seeking also feels patronizing. The Social Planning Society is advocating for the term equity-priority.
20. The welcoming communities initiatives should have higher profile in this chapter.
21. Other topics such as the substance abuse strategy and the community justice centre are assets that are not mentioned here and should be.
22. From a Councilor perspective, want to see strong statements of our intention. We need to acknowledge clearly the inequities in our community. Really name it. People are not on a level playing field and this document will work towards leveling that field. Need more than just words. Need as a municipality to recognize that social fabric is as important as the physical fabric of our community. Work with terms like 'asset-based community development' as these remove the stigma.
23. The Immigrant Welcoming Society has recent surveying data of newcomers that we would like to share.
24. Reminder that the Ministry of Education is taking childcare under its mandate. Therefore there is a link emerging between child care and school as all part of a wider social learning system. How to work with Ministry on this?
25. Feel differently about the term vulnerable. I feel it's important to use the language so that people who are not immersed in this topic can understand what we're talking about (e.g. vulnerable is a commonly used term). Asks if we could acknowledge that we are all vulnerable at different times in our lives. It's more circumstantial rather than a sentence. Assistance-oriented social infrastructure is there to support during those times, not all the time. We really need the community to be reading this document. We cannot use such politically correct language that it becomes obscure about what we're talking about.
26. Agree with these statements about vulnerability. I was vulnerable at a time in my life. Also would like to point out that on vagueness of policy statements – sometimes there is value in that as it allows for room to maneuver, especially when we're still figuring out how to tackle these complex and evolving social challenges.



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## Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce Round Table

- Session held virtually May 6, 2021
- In attendance: 10 stakeholders including members of local business community, OCP advisory committee members.

### Summary of points raised:

1. Land use vision is exciting, however with increased population am concerned about increase in traffic.
2. Wish to ensure that accessibility – equity, special needs – are incorporated into everything.
3. The regional inconsistencies are challenging. E.g. different development standards. Understand the need to protect diversity of the communities, but local governments must find a way to work together better. Reference to need for a regional governance review.
4. Nature, recreation are part of our heritage. Happy to see those elements being included.
5. Glad to see the airpark included as important to Courtenay's future, tourism potential. Appreciate the depth of the GHG work and believe attention to climate action will fuel innovation.
6. Ensuring the downtown remains an anchor in Courtenay's future is important, it is an important historical anchor.
7. Don't forget the need for sound buffers between significant commercial entities and residential neighbourhoods.
8. Recognize that this has a strong environmental focus. Affordability of making this plan a reality is important. Whenever economy and environment are in a dogfight, economy wins. Have to find a different way to accommodate both successfully.
9. Many supported the concept of growth node infill development and pointed out that the plan represented a significant amount of work.
10. Affordable housing and homelessness are increasingly a topic on the Chamber's radar. Not a traditional role for us, but it's a real challenge: employees accessing housing, unhoused people not having sufficient supports and impacting negatively the downtown. Housing affordability and homelessness are strongly linked when many people are living pay cheque to pay cheque. The Connect Centre is a much needed and valued centre, but it needs to be bigger and a different location may be more suitable.
11. Other ways of increasing affordability for employees and the community identified: regional poverty reduction strategy, better supported child care, multi-modal transportation, taxation to support equity distribution.



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## Low Carbon Transportation Planning

- Session held virtually May 7, 2021
- In attendance: 13 participants representing Ministry of Transportation, School District 71, Island Health, BC Transit, Comox Valley Regional District, Comox Valley Cycling Coalition, Comox Valley Electric Vehicle Association, OCP advisory committee members, two members of City Council.

### Summary of points raised:

1. Details in gaps on transportation maps is important to functional connectivity. Would like to know more about specifically what road standards will be changing.
2. Appreciate the focus on transit supportive land use densities to be achieved through the various neighbourhood and town centres. The land use mix and density is critical to making transit work, especially in a smaller town.
3. Feel that there is a good comprehensive understanding of land use and transportation integrated planning in the policy chapter, it clearly supports active modes.
4. “Permeability” of the transportation network is very important to ensuring people actually walk and bike (including to transit). This means that pathways, cul-de-sac cut throughs, shorter blocks, and grid block road layout are needed to support these active modes. This is about land use and urban design.
5. Language on complete streets could be stronger. It’s being described without actually being named. People understand this concept.
6. Other land use implications like zero-lot-lines (no yard setbacks) are important to creating a friendly space for pedestrians and cyclists. This should be included in the zoning bylaw.
7. Need more bike parking, not just sign posts. Need to integrate bikes better into the urban realm so doesn’t look junky.
8. Beyond the concept of complete streets across a wide variety of roads, dedicated pedestrian streets are needed to create street destinations. Should be linked to commercial land uses to support local shopping.
9. Electric Vehicles are increasing in demand. They may not emit GHGs, but they still have a big impact on land use (e.g. sprawl).
10. The policy chapter is multi-faceted, well thought out and presents a hopeful vision. The School Districted staff appreciate this work. We wonder how it will be monitored.
11. With the School District, we are also working on reducing GHGs in our buildings and working with kids and youth – they are a strategic demographic in the community to support active travel behaviours for life.
12. Elementary students are often within neighbourhood catchment schools. Opportunity for walking and biking as we don’t offer bus services if they’re close enough. Would like to work with City on this through the already started Active School Travel Plans and Safe Routes to School program. The work we already did shows that the fine grain micro connections need to be addressed. One missing piece like a x-walk in an overall walking and cycling network can mean people don’t use it, don’t trust it for their children. We have a culture of very attentive parents and so they are extra concerned about allowing their kids to walk/bike to school without very safe infrastructure. Kids supporting kids in active travel is also important.



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13. High school students may access more 'programs of choice' throughout the region and therefore are more likely to drive/be driven or take the bus. Seamless connections over the pinch points like the bridges is critical to their commutes. A solid spine of cycling route is needed.
14. School District faces challenges from some of the public on topics like students using BC Transit busses to get to school, who believe this is not a good use of tax funds.
15. Appreciate the complementary lenses of the OCP (equity, climate, community wellbeing and reconciliation). Believe that not all modes should be supported in the future. E.g. private automobiles should be disincentivized, the language should be bolder on that. We know that there are many costs to society of private automobiles that extend beyond environmental – e.g. crash risk. These costs to society should be more apparent.
16. Being too bold in language can alienate people. Better to bring them along than tell them what to do. E.g. cars belong in our community, especially for doing long distance activities, heavy loads or for people who cannot take other means. But they should not be the only or dominant mode.
17. This topic has so many touch points to the health sector. We know at Island Health that the incremental benefits of even just a very small amount of activity (such as a walk to a store a couple blocks away) has significant health benefits from a sedentary life. Therefore must get people incorporating activity as a natural part of daily life. Schools are an ideal place to establish good active transportation behaviours.
18. The chapter has a good balance of vision with specifics. This is a challenging task. For cycling community, the east-west Courtenay connection is so critical to a functional network. Consider how to use the data collecting support of the Cycling Coalition and various data sources (apps) that allow the City to understand travel behavior and patterns. What to build is important, but also how. E.g. with the bridge renovation, it's important to consider how to limit noise, impact to traffic, business, etc. Many details to be considered.
19. Good to restrict parking within the zoning requirements. Would like to see more pre-zoned land as rezoning applications take up a lot of City time.
20. Glad to see the focus of the chapter is not just on EVs. Walking, cycling and transit are important from an equity perspective for those who cannot afford vehicles. Am concerned that the neighbourhood centres could result in gentrification and displace people who have been living there, and exclude diverse communities within these areas.
21. Wish to see more focus on risk assessments to infrastructure due to climate change. E.g. active networks need shade in the summer for people to use. More on accessibility is needed too.
22. Working on public education campaigns, I am aware that there is a lot of regional effort to encourage people to take active and transit modes. However, the infrastructure is the key to this. A strategic action would be to prioritize which schools to create a seamless 1-2km active route around. Drivers also need to be educated on how to share the road with cyclists.
23. E-bike tourism an opportunity for our region. Rental businesses, seamless routes, secure charging all needed.
24. Bike route signs (shared road) are not helpful infrastructure. Should not bother with those.
25. E-bike education is also needed. They are fast and can be intimidating to other users on a path. Wonder if cyclist licensing would be valuable so that there is a guarantee of training and ability to enforce traffic infractions.





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26. Pedestrian focus and accessibility are age friendly considerations too. EVs are so quiet that they can surprise people. Good to hear that they are being required to be designed with some noise built in.
27. Really important to link the neighbourhoods together. Could neighbourhood specific, 'playful' signage for instance be used to signal that you are entering a new neighbourhood?
28. From an EV advocacy perspective, believe that Level 1 chargers should be the priority. Level 2s are only needed when powering up for longer distances or a commuting culture.
29. Important to celebrate when new thresholds of active/transit commuters are achieved. Celebrations like car free days also can raise awareness.
30. This topic connects to other OCP chapters such as arts and culture, nature protection. Hope to see the integration of chapters across the OCP to communicate how many aspects of city building are connected.
31. From an elected official perspective, believe there are a few key communication points: that there is capacity to relieve congestion within the existing transportation network if more trips are shifted from personal vehicles to other modes; that we're working to reduce the amount of land dedicated to cars and make more land available for people; and this is not about taking away choice but rather providing more choices, for everyone.

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## Food Systems

- Session held virtually May 19, 2021
- In attendance: 12 participants representing Island Health, Comox Valley Regional District, Ministry of Agriculture, Comox Valley Health Network, LUSH Valley Food Action Society, Mid Island Farmers Institute, OCP advisory committee members, member of City Council.

### Summary of points raised:

1. Not sustainable to rely on food from afar. Local food production is important, but it won't happen without dedicated attention. Would like to see stronger language that identifies the problems with conventional industrial agriculture. E.g. globally, half the world is fed on small plot production which is more sustainable.
2. Concerned about water availability and watershed protection for long range agricultural production.
3. Important to work with other regional/island entities working on climate adaptation.
4. Development Permit Area designation for the protection of farm land are advised as regulatory tools to ensure suitable interfaces between agricultural and non-agricultural land. This will become especially important in the long term as the city grows closer to agricultural land. They can be a good reason for someone developing to get to know their farmer-neighbours. The buffers can be designed to support pollinators.
5. Draft OCP policies are well aligned with the Regional Growth Strategy. OCP policy should be definitive that ALR exclusions are not supported. Some highlights from Regional District: working on a [Food Hub Feasibility Study](#), food production in parks being explored through regional parks study. Many of these issues are regional, the Regional District knows that a Regional Food Systems Strategy would be beneficial to understand regional food issues from seed to waste.
6. Agricultural elements in cities can be place-making features, allows for community celebration, food brings people together. Opportunity for expressing and practicing reconciliation too.
7. Think the language in the preamble of the document could be more focused on the ecological and climate change implications of and to our local agricultural sector. Agricultural is also solution – permaculture and regenerative agriculture as carbon sequestration. The federal government is supporting these approaches.
8. Implementation is key to all of this. Policy is good, but will it happen?
9. Appreciate the systems type of thinking and approach in the chapter.
10. Food precinct idea – would like to learn more. Where will it be located? How can it be better integrated as a local economic development strategy? LUSH Valley has a similar vision and is right now looking for a permanent location. Ensure that the zoning will support it to support these concepts.
11. Think that the old Thrifties site downtown could be a good food hub.
12. Don't forget food sovereignty as an important value and objective. Contributes to resilience. Food security means having access. Sovereignty means having access to what one wants to eat (e.g. culturally appropriate).
13. These ideas suggest that Courtenay is a small farm town, an agrarian city, now growing up. What does that look like? We have an opportunity to make this an important part of our identity to share with others. KFN call this place 'the land of plenty', food is part of who we are.



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14. Local food distribution into local institutions and businesses is so critical to local circular economy. It's very difficult, still, to get a local potato into the local hospital. These barriers need to be overcome.
15. Excited to see the bigger grocery chains beginning to include local products – trends are changing, this is good.
16. Economic development policy should be clear on what kinds of businesses Courtenay is striving to attract.
17. Don't forget that land development displaces traditional food plants and medicines. Can we inventory those so that they can be harvested before removed? Or retained as part of a new development?
18. Thrilled the chapter is included, wish it to be even bolder. What would it take to get food production scaled up everywhere? Also recognizing that agriculture within urban areas serves more the objectives of connecting people to food, place making and social connections than it does calorie production.
19. Direct access to food in the form of 'you-picks' and farm stands are important to support and maintain.
20. Love the idea of an agricultural park and seeing more food systems education in parks. McPhee Meadows could serve as such a park, already has the orchard. LUSH Valley is working on a lease as a community orchard.
21. Who is not at the table? Indigenous views and experiences on local food important to include. Youth are not represented in this discussion – the future looks dire for them, they need to inform these ideas as they will be implementing them.
22. Qualities of food production are important too – e.g. organic.
23. Food security is becoming a more common public topic, strongly supported. At the same time Vancouver Island is becoming less secure.
24. ALR must be protected for food production and there should be incentives or requirements to use the land for food production, not estate homes or horses. Discourage speculation of the land – limit the number of dwelling units. Even 2 is too much. Foreign ownership of ALR should not be permitted.
25. Environmental protection and agriculture values are often competing, but not always. Farmers know that working with the land is a better strategy than fighting it. The Ministry has Environmental Farm Practices Plan program which should be promoted.
26. Am aware that the biodiversity corridors proposed could mean that there is conflict with wildlife and agriculture in those areas if larger animals are using the corridors.



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## Nature Policy and Environmental Development Permit Guidelines

- Session held virtually July 14, 2021
- In attendance: 21 participants representing BC Ministry of Environment and Forest, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, BC Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Comox Valley Conservation Partnership, Coastal Douglas Fir and Associated Ecosystems Partnership, local land developers and consulting biologists, Vancouver Island Home Builders Association, OCP advisory committee members, member of City Council.

### Summary of points raised:

1. Ministry clarified that for Riparian Area Protection Regulations (RAPR) reports that a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) designation is required, whereas the City is requiring Registered Professional Biologist designation for the Environmental Development Permits (EDP), could be confusing to applicants.
2. Ministry supports the 30m minimum stream setback but cautioned that the classification of a hardship (and therefore exempt from 30m) could be unclear. Very clear exemption language will be needed so that applicants have a very good idea of what they can do before hiring a Biologist.
3. Ministry points out that not requiring a Ministry RAPR report/process due to the City 'meeting or exceeding' those regulations through their EDP will save time for applicants.
4. Consultants reminded that as much black and white regulation and certainty of City decisions as possible is ideal to assist applicants in understanding the viability of a development proposal.
5. Discussed pros and cons of relying on definitive mapping information. It would be ideal to definitively have all Environmentally Sensitive Areas mapped, however things change and the City does not have those resources to ground truth all lands therefore it is a prudent option to assume there are ESAs on all larger parcels and require the property owner to prove they aren't.
6. Nonprofit sector identified that new Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory mapping would be coming in soon.
7. Nonprofit sector reminded that they need capacity (funding) to do their streamkeeping and other conservation work. E.g. providing referral comments takes time, should be resourced.
8. Discussed the importance of a central repository of all environmental assessments and mapping products, including those that are provided as part of a development application. BC Conservation Data Centre identified as that repository. City should require proof of the data uploading as part of permit conditions.
9. Development sector cautioned that there appears to be some conflicting guidelines in the EDPA policy. Are senior permits required? Does developing on the other side of a street within 30m of a creek trigger an EDP? Ensure there is no inconsistency in the final draft and don't duplicate other regulatory efforts.
10. Flooding is a major concern and not a lot of policy language in the materials circulated. Must be clear on the expectations. Flood management and soft shores approaches can be in conflict with each other sometimes. Be clear on the community values and acceptable risks and land uses. The City of Duncan's flood management work is a good and relevant precedent to consult.



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11. Would like to learn more about how the biodiversity corridors would be identified on the ground (staff response: biologist would conduct assessment to inform of protection requirements and development opportunities. City's mapping of corridors is used as opportunities to be reviewed in the biologist report).
12. Nonprofit sector noted they feel the work shifts the needle to be more environmentally protective in the future. Blanket EDP area makes sense. Restoration and connection are strong values in the plan that are appropriate for what nature needs. Would like to understand better how the various chapters of the OCP interrelate as the environment is part of all decisions, in particular the rainwater management policy.
13. Concern over the cost of these ideas. Why aren't we costing all ideas? Who is going to maintain the green infrastructure? (staff response: not appropriate to cost all policies in an OCP, cost is a multi-faceted question (social, environmental, economic cost, time horizons) and most of the OCP policies direct future work therefore further exploration will be required. OCP sets direction and affirms community values).
14. Other participant pointed out that there is a cost to inaction when it comes to environment. Ecosystem based solutions rarely cost as much as hard infrastructure solutions and an ounce of prevention through ecological protection is usually worth the pound of cure of restoring them. When flooding occurs, funding pours out for those emergency services. Better to plan to avoid emergencies than to pay for them later. That is strategic investment.
15. Appreciate the cross sectional dialog, opportunity to learn from and educate each other.



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## Community Amenity Contributions

- Session held virtually July 20, 2021
- In attendance: 13 participants representing local developers, non-profit housing developer and land development consultants, Comox Valley Regional District and OCP advisory committee members.

### Summary of points raised:

1. Question of how is the wider Courtenay citizenry contributing to affordable housing? (staff response: CVRD Homelessness Supports Service tax levy; City partners with non-market housing providers in the form of contributing land or funds).
2. The proposal highlights are not all comparing apples to apples. The value of units vs monetary amounts is not the same. Units are needed but ensure that the operator is able to actually manage them.
3. This is another increase in taxes to development. I find this type of approach repugnant. The idea that new development is diminishing quality of life and that the community needs to extract value from the new development to offset those negative impacts doesn't make sense to me. Need a long hard look at how to make the OCP sustainable. I have no sense from this work how to make these policies sustainable in the long term. I feel strongly that affordable housing services and community amenities should be paid for by the general tax base and that indeed our taxes should go up, but not extract only from development. CACs feel like a Ponzi scheme. (staff response: CACs are not taxes, they are incorporated into development proformas and go on to influence the amount one is willing to pay for land. That is how CACs work in other communities and we would expect that here as well. Should there be a chapter on taxation in the OCP? Perhaps) (consultant response: it's important to understand that there is an economic analysis underpinning the monetary contribution amounts proposed by the City. The question that is being solved for in a CAC calculation exercise is: 'assuming one didn't pay more for the land than one had to, how much in amenities could be provided to the community while also ensuring a developer retains a minimum 15% profit?'. Provided that the CAC amounts are phased in with sufficient warning so that developers can factor it into their proformas before they purchase land, an expectation is that the market for land (willingness to pay) will adjust. We see that in the lower mainland. This should also remove the speculation factor out of the value of land. CAC development economics calculations also recognize that it is the community (through Council) that confer the land development rights that allow for the developer to sell the product they seek. These land development rights result in a 'windfall' of value of which we think it's fair to factor that the community receives 50% of that windfall. The CAC calculations in this work assume 50% of that windfall.)
4. Would like more clarity on what amenities the City is seeking to obtain and those costs. In other larger communities this has provided more transparency on where the funds are going, and that they are actually being used. (staff response: the intention is that a future CAC update will occur in which the community amenities inform the desired CAC contributions. However, the City does not have a comprehensive understanding of the costs of desired amenities and infrastructure therefore we can't provide that now. What



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often happens with the existing CAC funds is they are drawn upon and the City contributes from budget line items to complete projects.)

5. Using the lower mainland as a comparable example is a mistake. The market is entirely different. (consultant response: I mentioned the lower mainland only to give an example that the speculative element of land valuation appears to be diminishing there due to clear CAC policy, and that those principles of how markets respond should translate to any size community.)
6. How reasonable is it to expect that the land economics evaluations reflect Courtenay's context? Are these ideas applicable in a rural context? (consultant response: we've done work in rural and smaller communities as well and the evaluation for Courtenay was based on current local market trends. It is Courtenay specific.)
7. It feels that the OCP is not development friendly. I am very concerned about this. We will lose our ability to contribute supply of housing that contributes to the affordability of housing through adequate supply. (staff response: supply alone has proven not to bring down cost of housing as highlighted in the regional housing needs assessment from last year. Targeted efforts are needed to support a range of housing options such as higher density, more affordable, housing closer to community services. The OCP will support that kind of development even more than it does now.)
8. I also think this is a repugnant approach. Feels like back room taxation, taxing those who are taking the risk. I'm surprised and concerned that CAC monetary contributions are becoming mainstream approaches in communities. I don't think Courtenay should follow that approach only because others are.
9. Feels like City wishes to avoid taxing the wider public. Is this because developers only have few votes? (staff response: acknowledge that we work within a democratic system.)
10. I agree that it's not fair for the developer to shoulder the risk. E.g. when a developer still has to go through a rezoning, there is risk that they will not receive those development rights. Risk should be shared with the wider community when providing these amenities such as affordable housing.
11. I'm concerned that even when City collects CAC funds that they don't collect enough to actually do anything with them. I would love to see a plan for the funds that are collected. We seem to be talking mainly about affordable housing, but what about other community amenities? I've heard that the City uses the affordable housing reserve fund to pay for paving a lane of an affordable housing project. That is not going to housing, that's not a good use of funds. I think the OCP needs an analysis of its economic sustainability.
12. Fairness is a vital question in this debate. I feel that a holistic evaluation of financing and taxation policy should be part of this work to ensure principles such as fairness are factored in and decided upon explicitly.
13. Agree that we need more global taxation reform for these issues.
14. My advice in making this work successful is to be clear on what the funds are for, ensure there are multiple streams of funding to those amenities. Be transparent in this.