



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF COURTENAY

BRIEFING NOTE

To: Council

File No.: 6480-01

From: Interim Chief Administrative Officer

Date: October 5, 2020

Subject: Official Community Plan (OCP) - Stakeholder Sessions and Online Public Survey Results

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this briefing note is to provide Council with a summary of the full reports of the virtual stakeholder brainstorming sessions held in July and the online public survey that closed September 10th.

ISSUE:

The stakeholder brainstorming session and the online public survey were major milestones of the OCP update project. All feedback and information collected are valuable resources for the project team to develop policies in the next phase.

Stakeholders virtual brainstorming sessions

The themes selected were: community wide land use concept; transportation spectrum; housing choices for all; local economic development; love for local places; supporting basic needs, enhancing quality of life, and a city for everyone. Across the eight thematic sessions, a number of key inputs were provided. In each session, staff asked participants about their general view toward climate change. Climate change is a widespread common concern among community stakeholders, while some interests include climate considerations are more core to their work than others. Participants continued to share their own unique experience and specific issues relate to climate change with other participants. Not surprisingly, the pandemic was mentioned quite frequently. Many commented that the pandemic changes the way we view the future individually and collectively. While some feel it has been negatively impacting our community and individual lives, it provided an opportunity to talk about things more openly and consider ways to do things differently, value what is critically important, and build back better. Many mentioned that integrated approaches are needed to be effective in community actions on a variety of topics. The approaches should include forging new partnership models across jurisdictions, community stakeholders, and individuals. Staff heard frequently that social equity considerations and concerns are becoming more important, and also that planning for climate action has many public health co-benefits, particularly in the domains of access to nature, active travel and sense of belonging. There seems a strong consensus that the natural environment is one of the greatest assets the community offers.

Online Public Survey

The objective of the survey was to seek input from the public on a draft vision, goal statement, and emerging future growth concept for the OCP update. The result indicates that there is very strong support for the draft vision:

The world is changing, and with it so will Courtenay.

We will reach net zero emissions by 2050, doing our part to address the climate crisis head-on, while also preparing for its impacts. Our commitment to a safe climate is not just an environmental one; by taking action on and preparing for climate change we achieve many co-benefits that make Courtenay a great community to call home.

Courtenay will be responsible for the future by being more thoughtful, strategic, and efficient in all resources that we use whether it be land, energy or public infrastructure, to ensure that actions deliver on multiple goals of economic resilience, social equity and ecological health.

We protect the natural spaces and life sources we love and upon which our lives depend. We are a city for all people, created for and by residents with diverse identities, experiences, and aspirations. We are a city for being together in community.

We are also a city of choice, in which residents have options across the city for homes, amenities, destinations, jobs and business, transportation, and spaces for gathering with friends, families, neighbours, and people not yet known to us.

Being responsible means recognizing that uncertainties are part of our future, and that our best strategy is to invest in individual, neighbourhood and community wide resilience. For Courtenay, this means we safeguard the unique qualities of our city that we cherish, we work in partnership across silos, and we remain open to new ways of being and doing in order to respond creatively to our changing world.

The strongest average rating of 4.5/5.0 was for “protection of nature” followed by the other four components of the vision statement (i.e. “responsible for the future” (4.4), “city of choice” (4.3) “city for all people” (4.2), and “net zero GHG emission” (3.8)).

There is also very strong support for the goal statements, with the strongest average rating of 4.5/5.0 for the “More space for and Time in Nature” goal statement followed by other six goals (i.e., “Housing Choices for All” (4.1), “Strong Neighbourhoods” (4.2), “Functional Transportation Choices” (4.2), “Love for Local Places” (4.2), “A City of Everyone” (4.1), “Economic Success Emerges from Community Values and Place” (4.3), “Investing in Relationship” (4.2), and “Land is a Valued as Precious Resource” (3.9)).

There is good support (3.6/5) for the proposed “growth focus areas” in the future growth concept (see attached map). While most participant comments expressed overall support for intensification or infill in established neighbourhoods, some comments expressed desires such as that potential transportation impacts be well managed, existing neighbourhood character is maintained, and networks and spaces for biodiversity be expanded. In terms of development types/approaches that could potentially accommodate the anticipated growth in the proposed growth focus areas, the result suggests that participants rated and spoke favourably of images that included ample greenery, cycling facilities, pedestrian-oriented public

spaces, and infill with a 'human-scaled' character. Comments provided through the public online survey were considerably in alignment with what staff have heard in the past public consultations.

BACKGROUND:

Staff conducted a series virtual meetings with community stakeholders to discuss challenges related to climate change and identify key policy issues and opportunities for the next phase of the project. Representatives from 25 community stakeholder groups were identified and invited to 8 different themed sessions. Some individuals participated in multiple sessions, while some participated in a single session. The participants discussed concerns around climate change as well as direct and indirect impacts they experience within their specialized fields. A follow-up survey indicates that the sessions were well received and considered good opportunities to mutually learn what challenges other community stakeholders are facing. A full transcript of the sessions is available on the project website (www.courtenay.ca/ocpupdate).

The project team launched an online public survey from August 4th to September 10th on the City's website. The objective of the survey was to collect public feedback on draft planning visions and goals, a future growth scenario containing 7 potential growth nodes, visual images design options for the potential growth nodes. In addition to two newspaper advertisements, staff notified members of the public through the project website, social media, and local radio. An e-mail notice was sent to those who registered for the OCP update e-newsletter. As a result, a total of 782 participants offered input. Over 1830 comments were provided. A summary of the survey is also available on the project website (www.courtenay.ca/ocpupdate).

Information collected from these two events will be further reviewed and analyzed for the purpose of developing policies in the next phase of the project. Staff thank all those who provided valuable contributions to the sessions and the online public survey.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS/NEXT STEPS:

Staff will conduct a full review of all the feedback and information collected for developing policies in the next phase. Survey results and inputs will also be shared during neighbourhood consultations to discuss site specific issues and opportunities.

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