

# Courtenay's Official Community Plan (OCP)

## Project Summary

# COURTENAY'S NEW CITY-WIDE PLAN

## An Overview

### WHAT IS AN OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN (OCP)?

An Official Community Plan (OCP) is a city-wide policy document that influences how people live, work, shop, play, and move around the community. An OCP is one of the most powerful tools a municipality has to manage change in a way that helps a community meet its goals.

With the input of residents and stakeholders, the City of Courtenay has created a new draft OCP and is seeking community input before it is finalized!

### WHAT WILL THIS OCP DO?

At its heart, the OCP is about land use and growth management. This means that it dictates the location, type, and intensity of different uses. These uses include homes, businesses and services, industry, agriculture, public facilities, and parks and open space.

It also provides direction for transportation, natural area protection, infrastructure, affordable and rental housing, and greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

As of the last available census, Courtenay's population was 25,595. This OCP will guide development and change as Courtenay reaches its projected populations of 30,085 by 2031. It also provides a longer term vision and several strategies for the City as it is projected to grow to 32,502 people by 2052. The OCP planning time-frame is until 2030, however if Courtenay grows more quickly, the OCP may need to be updated before then.

### WHAT IS ITS REACH?

The OCP applies to all lands within the City of Courtenay boundaries, and provides direction and support for many other City plans and policies.

While many voices contributed to the vision and directions contained in the OCP, it cannot and does not represent any commitments from First Nations, other governments, or organizations to act according to its objectives and policies.

## How Does an OCP Impact You?



Our gathering spaces, both formal and informal



Our community character



Protection of our ecological and agricultural areas



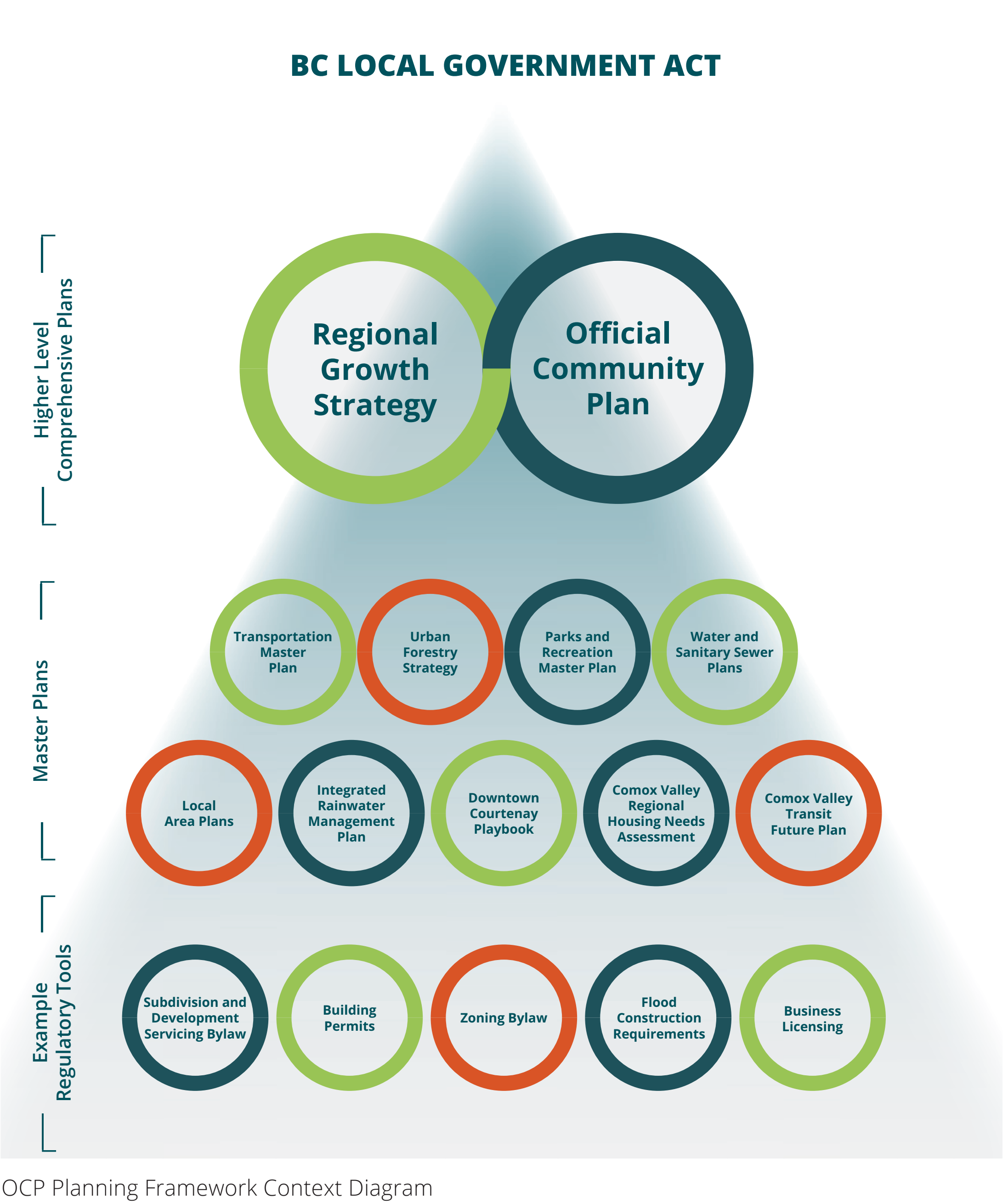
Our downtown and the neighbourhoods in which we live, including the homes we build, places we shop, and the parks in which we play



Our transportation choices, whether it's walking or cycling, taking transit, or driving – which in turn affects our health



Our pocket books, including how much it costs us to pay for City services such as sewers and roads



**HOW DO I SHARE MY INPUT?**

Complete the online survey by March 8:  
[https://dialogdesign.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_erjcfVYBfnEi4YK](https://dialogdesign.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_erjcfVYBfnEi4YK)

Learn more and stay in touch: [www.courtenay.ca/OCPupdate](http://www.courtenay.ca/OCPupdate)



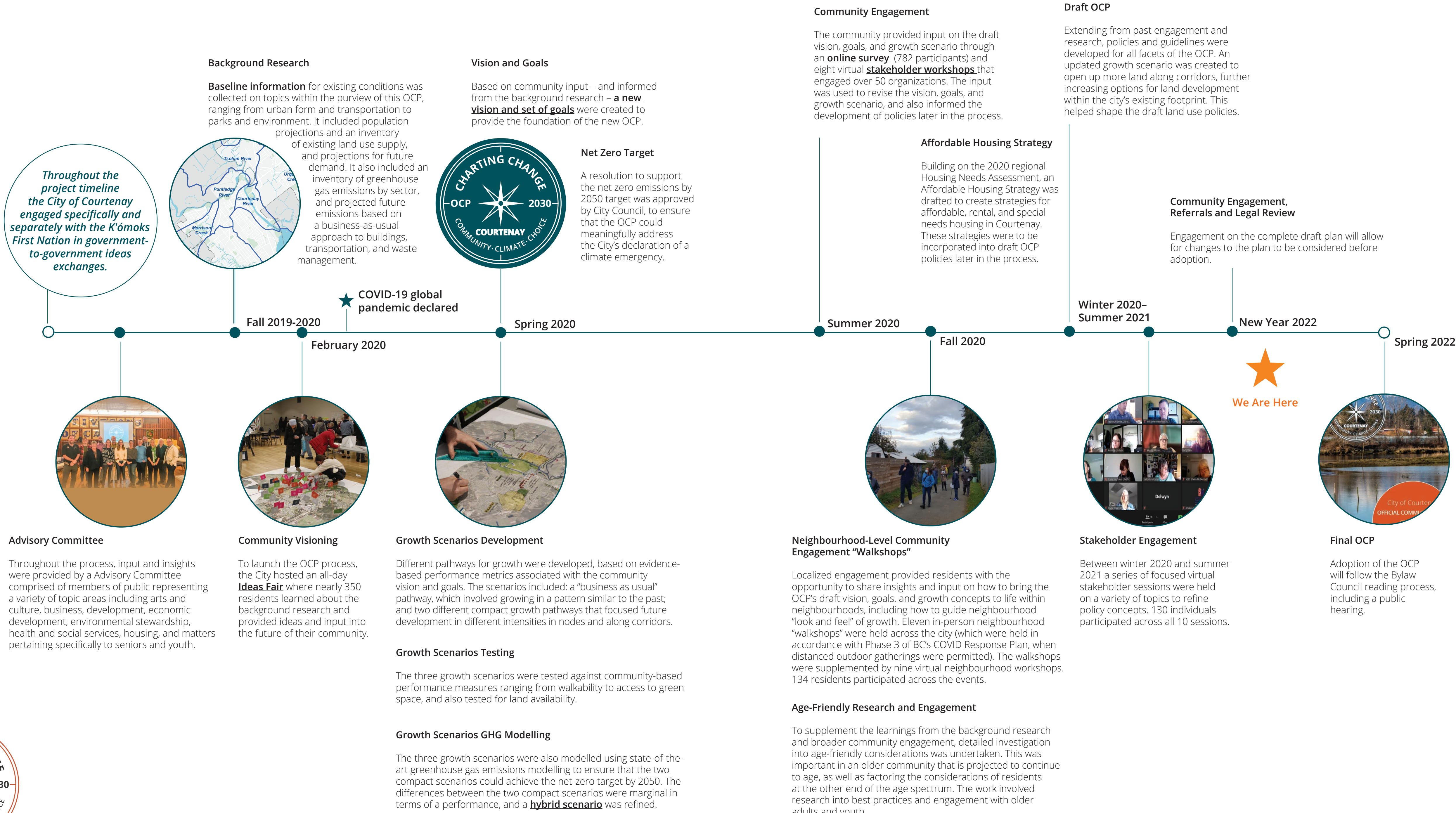
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## Project Summary

# CREATING THE OCP A True Community Effort

### HOW THE OCP CAME TOGETHER

The City of Courtenay thanks all participants who contributed their voices, values and ideas to the OCP process. The OCP update is truly a community effort. Regular advertising for the OCP process occurred through a dedicated e-newsletter, social media posts, advertisements in the paper for consultation opportunities, posters, through stakeholder networks, and was featured prominently on the City's website.



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# Courtenay's Official Community Plan (OCP)

## Project Summary

# WHAT WE HEARD

## Feedback from Community & Stakeholders

### KEY THEMES FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The OCP process has been ongoing for more than two years, and engagement with the community, stakeholders, and partners has been paramount in shaping the plan. These are some of the key themes we heard:

- **Reconciliation** is very important
- **Social equity** is very important
- Wide range of **housing choices** needed
- Land use planning should promote **compact growth**
- **Natural assets** are widely cherished, provide important services, and must be protected and restored
- Transportation planning and urban form should focus on people **walking, cycling, and taking transit**
- People places, gathering spaces, and **sense of community** are important
- Tackling **climate change** involves many concurrent strategies and delivers many co-benefits
- **Integrated approaches** are needed to be effective in community actions on a variety of topics
- Strong desire for **ongoing community dialogue** and stakeholder collaboration



### Creating this Plan

The creation of this Plan was informed by hundreds of voices in the community, integrating aspirational visioning with robust analysis and modelling.



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## Project Summary

# CARDINAL DIRECTIONS, VISION, AND GOALS

## Feedback from Community & Stakeholders

### CARDINAL DIRECTIONS

The world is changing, and the OCP has been created to respond to the great challenges and opportunities of our time. A compass has been used to as the visual identity for the OCP process, with the understanding that this plan is a tool to navigate through change.

1

RECONCILIATION

The City commits to incorporating Indigenous perspectives into its work and decision-making process, and to providing equitable and inclusive services that benefit Indigenous peoples. The City will seek guidance from Indigenous partners in how to make this commitment a reality.

2

CLIMATE ACTION

Courtenay is responding to this call to action. The City has committed to achieving a 45% reduction in community-wide GHG emissions (from 2016 level) by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050. This OCP includes strategies, actions, and measures to reduce emissions to target levels while saving on energy costs and improving quality of life for Courtenay residents.

3

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

This OCP accounts for the diverse and complex ways in which the urban environment impacts well-being. It takes a systems-based approach to well-being, considering the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of individuals and communities, and the ecosystems of which we are all a part.

4

EQUITY

This OCP challenges some traditional planning practices that can result in policies, programs, and regulations that disproportionately impact and stymie the progress of some equity-priority groups. Through policies on topics ranging from affordable housing to public participation, this OCP applies an equity lens and seeks to honour the lived experiences of all of Courtenay's peoples.

CHARTING CHANGE

OCP 2030

COURTENAY

RECONCILIATION

CLIMATE ACTION

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

EQUITY

### VISION

**COURTENAY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FUTURE, SUPPORTING HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, WITH A LOW-CARBON FOOTPRINT FOR ALL.**

The following vision describes what we want Courtenay to be in the future. It embodies the values, priorities, and aspirations of the community. It charted the course for development of policies, guidelines, and actions in this OCP, and is strengthened by the “cardinal directions” and goals described elsewhere in Part A of this Plan.

- WE PROTECT THE NATURAL SPACES** 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.
- 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 fiscal responsibility, economic resilience, social equity, and ecological health.
- 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, and we remain open to new ways of being and doing in order to respond creatively to our changing world.

### GOALS

Guided by the four cardinal directions, Courtenay's OCP goals provide markers as the community moves towards its vision.

1. Land is Valued as a Precious Resource

"Protect outlying areas and green areas for generations to come!"  
- Courtenay Resident

2. Housing Choices for All

"Please more low income housing and support for our homeless population. These people have a right to safe and stable housing. We need to support our vulnerable community members."  
- Courtenay Resident

3. Strong Neighbourhoods

"Strong neighbourhoods are important [and] require some serious investment in the development of neighbourhood identities, hubs, and shared spaces."  
- Courtenay Resident

4. Functional Transportation Choices

"Today's cities are defined by the transportation networks that run through them. A busy street can destroy a neighbourhood. A gentle bike lane can enhance a neighbourhood. I believe that safe, secure, affordable transportation... is the best way to have strong, diverse communities."  
- Courtenay Resident

5. More Space for and Time in Nature

"If we want to stay a vibrant community with nature at our back door, [protection of nature] is imperative."  
- Courtenay Resident

6. Love for Local Culture and Places

"They say a small corner lot with a tree will create a lot of buzz in a densely built-up area. Diversity is key in nature, so why not follow that same powerful rule?"  
- Courtenay Resident

7. A City for Everyone

"Everyone should be welcome to thrive in our community."  
- Courtenay Resident

8. Economic Success Emerges from Community Values/Place

"Affordable living means people have money to live & spend in their local communities."  
- Courtenay Resident

9. Investing in Relationships

"I would like to see partnerships with First Nations, BIPOC communities, the homeless, rural constituents, [and] our food providers/farmers."  
- Courtenay Resident



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# Courtenay's Official Community Plan (OCP)

## Project Summary

# POLICY FOUNDATIONS

## High Quality of Life with a Low-Carbon Footprint

### QUALITY OF LIFE

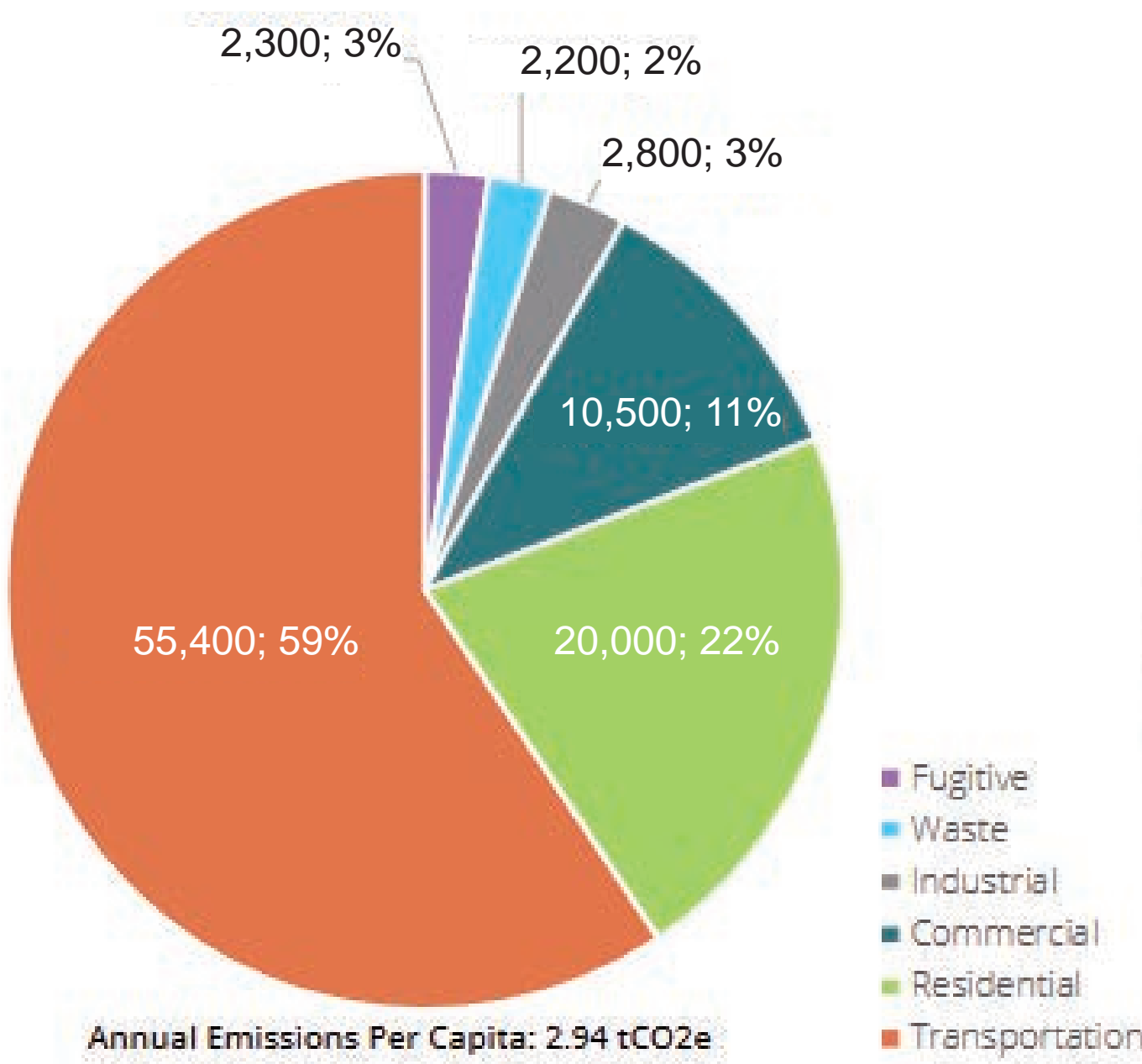
The OCP's policies have been designed to support a high quality of life in Courtenay, which is closely tied to social determinants of health. These are non-medical factors that influence individual and collective health outcomes.



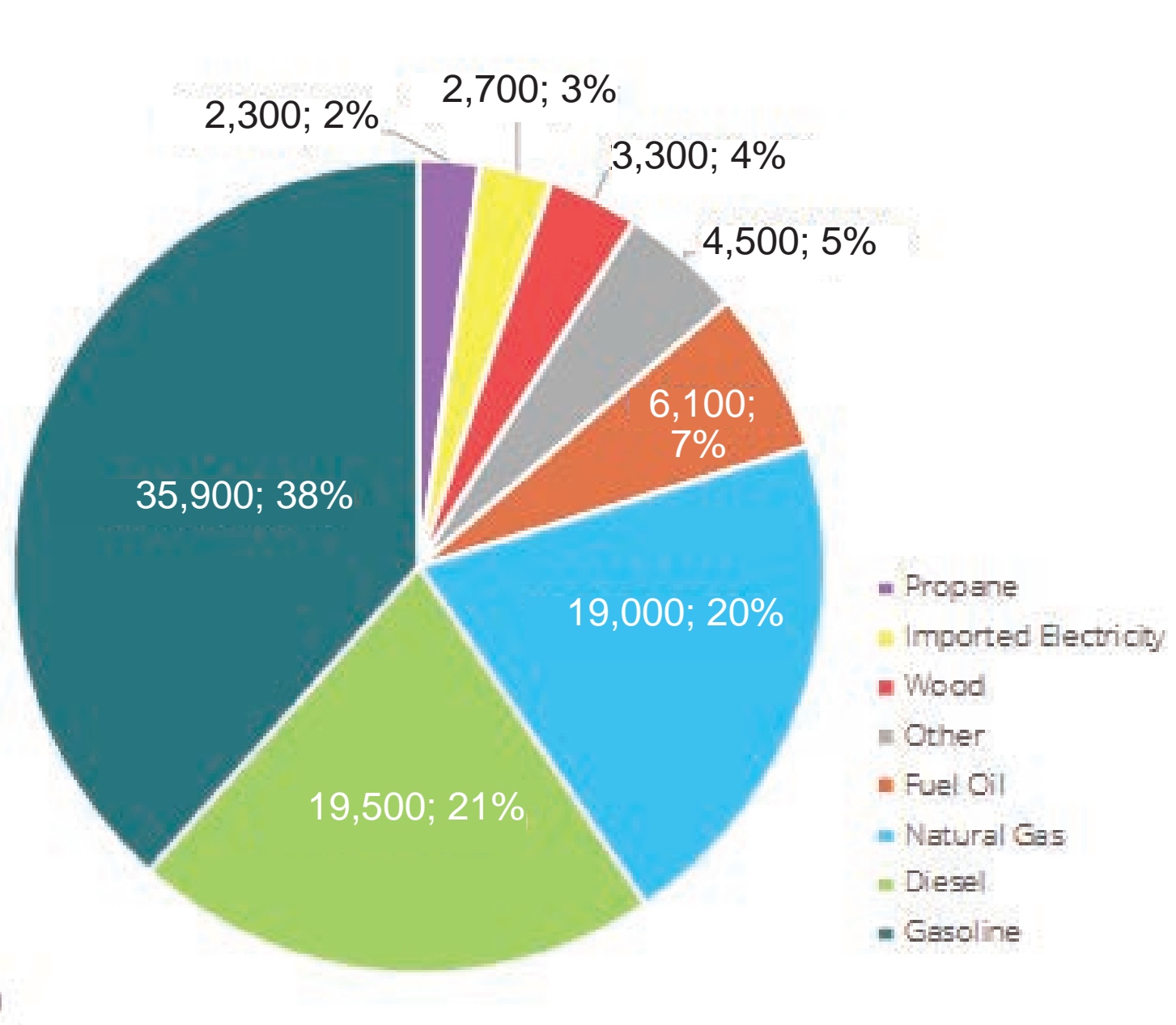
The social determinants of health (presented here) have a strong influence on quality of life.

### COURTENAY'S GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

High quality of life must also be achieved with a shrinking and eventually eliminated carbon footprint by 2050. The first step was understanding where Courtenay's greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) stand today, with a focus on the elements that fall within the City's boundaries and jurisdiction. Courtenay's total community emissions in 2016 – at the time of the last Census – were 93,200 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e). These emissions resulted from energy use in buildings, transportation, infrastructure, solid waste, and wastewater decomposition.



Courtenay Emissions By Sector for Baseline Year 2016. Source: Sustainability Solutions Group, 2020.



Courtenay Emissions By Source for Baseline Year 2016. Source: Sustainability Solutions Group, 2020.

### COURTENAY'S LOW-CARBON APPROACH

The approach to reducing and eliminating emissions is to:

- **AVOID** or reduce energy demand as much as possible;
- **IMPROVE** energy efficiency;
- **SWITCH** energy supplies to low-carbon sources.

Examples of **AVOID** include reducing the amount of waste that gets produced, and replacing a single-occupancy vehicle trip with carpooling, walking, cycling, or transit.

Examples of **IMPROVE** include retrofitting existing buildings and replacing ageing infrastructure so that both are highly energy efficient.

Examples of **SWITCH** include switching building heating systems from natural gas to heat pumps, and replacing a conventional car with an electric vehicle.

The sequence of the approach is important: by avoiding energy consumption (**AVOID**), retrofit requirements (**IMPROVE**) and the need to generate renewable energy (**SWITCH**) are both reduced.

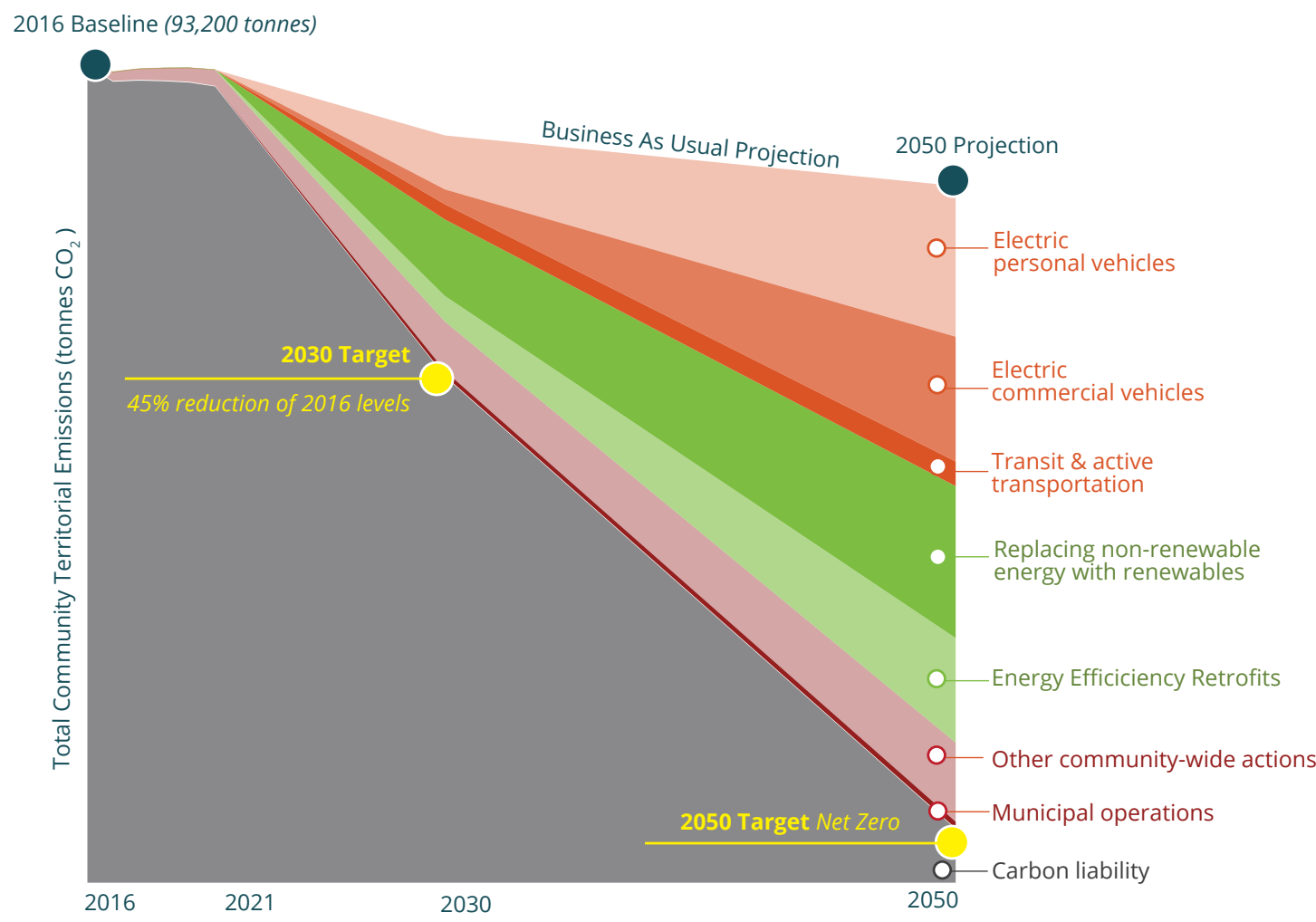
### COURTENAY'S GHG EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS TARGETS

Courtenay is committed to reaching net zero emissions by 2050, as well as to reaching interim targets.

### MEETING OUR TARGETS

To understand which policies Courtenay could enact to reach our targets, energy and emissions modelling was performed for this OCP. The following diagram shows how the modelled emissions reductions would occur in different actions areas. It demonstrates how actions related to transportation and buildings have the greatest impact on reducing emissions.

Target Year	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
tCO <sub>2</sub> e Reduced from 2016	-15,543	-37,642	-58,585	-77,073	-86,600	-92,662
Percentage emissions reduction from 2016	-15%	-45%	-60%	-80%	-90%	-95%



Modelled Emissions Reductions: a "wedges" diagram showing the modelled emissions reductions of achieving success within key OCP energy efficiency and emissions key action categories.

### CLIMATE FRIENDLY FEATURES IN THE CITY

This is what climate friendly features could look like in our built environment and public spaces:

- ✓ Enhanced street tree canopy
- ✓ Traffic calming
- ✓ Electric Vehicle charging stations
- ✓ Covered, secure bike parking
- ✓ Wide sidewalks
- ✓ Protected bike lanes
- ✓ Permeable paving
- ✓ Rain gardens
- ✓ Biodiversity gardens
- ✓ Urban agriculture
- ✓ Multi-stream waste receptacles
- ✓ Solar shading
- ✓ Green roofs and/or rooftop gardens
- ✓ Water cisterns
- ✓ Solar panels
- ✓ Efficient building envelopes
- ✓ Plazas and rest areas
- ✓ Gradual and gentle forms of infill residential development (e.g. secondary suites).
- ✓ Mixed use developments that allow people to walk and bike to daily needs



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# Courtenay's Official Community Plan (OCP)

## Project Summary

# GROWTH MANAGEMENT

## WHERE & HOW WE GROW

### GROWTH ONLY WITHIN COURTENAY'S BOUNDARIES

How we manage growth is one of the most important determinants in whether we can realize our vision and meet our goals. In particular, it helps achieve the goal of valuing land as a precious resource.

All future growth of homes, shops, and other development will take place within the existing Courtenay boundary. Boundary extensions will only be considered for the purpose of creating commercial or industrial employment opportunities. Limiting Courtenay's boundaries helps protect environmentally sensitive areas, agricultural lands and other open spaces, while keeping growth compact and helping the city run more efficiently.

### FOCUSED GROWTH

Most new growth will take place in expanded town centres and along important corridors (called primary growth centres/corridor in the map below), and in neighbourhood centres (called secondary growth centre/corridor in the map below). This growth includes a mix of uses including shops, services, offices and homes in buildings that are up to four storeys in the secondary centres and up to six storeys or more in the primary centres. Municipal infrastructure planning and investment will align with the Urban Framework Growth Concept.

This will support 10-minute neighbourhoods, where residents can meet most of their daily needs within a 10-minute walk or bicycle ride. Future neighbourhood planning will provide more detailed direction on new development in key growth areas.

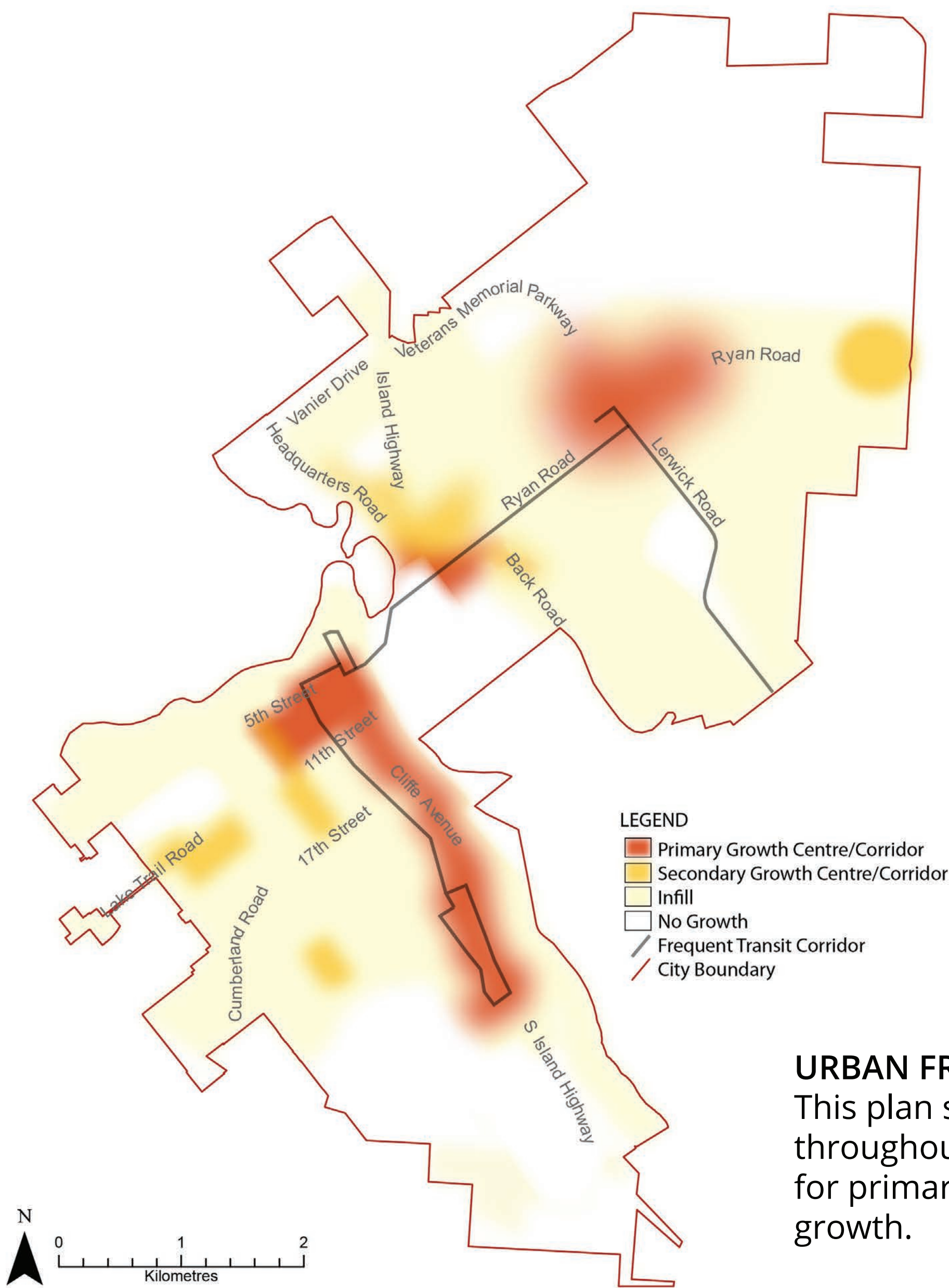
Moderate infill development such as new homes and some shops and services will occur across the entire city outside of growth centres. This will ensure that more housing choices are available everywhere and provide opportunities for residents to stay in their neighbourhood as their housing needs change.

### SUPPORTIVE OF REGIONAL GROWTH IN THE COMOX VALLEY

The Comox Valley Regional District has a Regional Growth Strategy in place that provides a framework for future growth and land use, and sets basic direction for planning, policies, and actions for all of its member municipalities, including Courtenay. The vision for the CVRD is as follows:

The Comox Valley will continue to evolve as a region of distinct, well-connected and well-designed urban and rural communities. As stewards of the environment, local governments, the K'ómoks First Nation, public agencies, residents, business, and community and non-governmental organizations will work collaboratively to conserve and enhance land, water, and energy resources, and ensure a vibrant local economy and productive working landscape.

This OCP is directly aligned with the Comox Valley Regional District's Regional Growth Strategy's vision and its policies for growth management.



**URBAN FRAMEWORK GROWTH**  
This plan shows areas throughout the city targetted for primary, secondary, and infill growth.



# Courtenay's Official Community Plan (OCP)

## Project Summary

# LAND USE

## Concepts & Strategies

The way land is used within Courtenay is paramount in managing growth, and in bringing the vision and goals to life. The OCP focuses on three important land use concepts:

### MIXING LAND USES

Land use mix refers to the diversity of land uses (e.g. homes, shops, industry, institutions, agriculture, etc) within a given area. Mixing important destinations and jobs close to home allows residents to live, work, shop, play, and learn close to home. Mixing land uses also means mixing housing choices and housing types.

This OCP prioritizes a mix of uses within growth centres and corridors, and a diversity of housing choices and types throughout the city.

### INCREASING DENSITIES

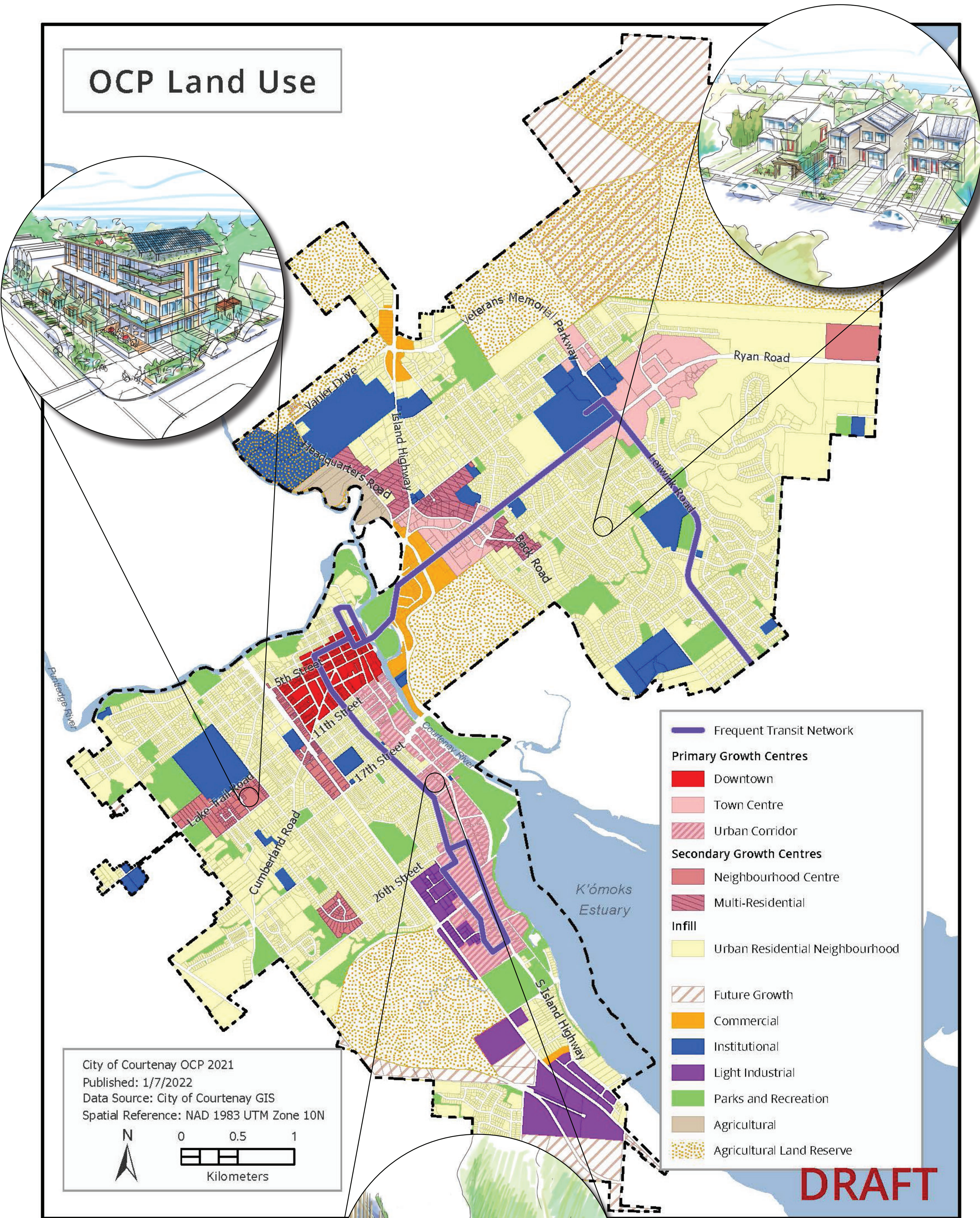
Density refers to the number of people, homes, or jobs within a certain area. Higher residential densities, often in the form of multi-unit homes, can result in: energy savings; lower per capita municipal infrastructure and service costs (e.g. roadways, water and sewer infrastructure, transit, fire stations, recreation centres, etc); greater housing choices and affordability; more vibrant street life and public spaces; a greater proportion of trips taken by foot, bike, and transit; and, as a result, reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

This OCP supports higher densities throughout the city, while prioritizing density in growth centres and corridors.

### HIGH-QUALITY URBAN DESIGN

Urban form and design refers to the physical structure and appearance of a city. It determines how open spaces, transportation networks, ecological systems, buildings, and humans relate to each other in physical space. Urban form and design should also communicate a community's values, reflect its heritage and character, and make a space a place people want to be.

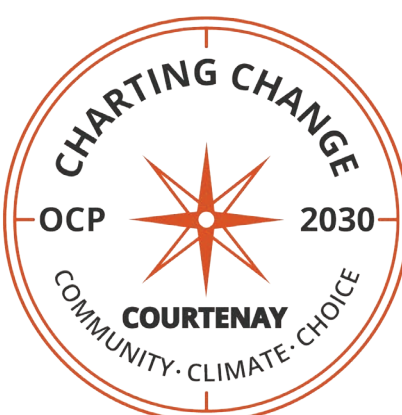
This OCP supports high-quality urban form and design to ensure that mixed use, higher density centres throughout Courtenay are thoughtfully designed to complement and enhance the neighbourhoods in which new development will occur.



More detailed land use and growth management policies are included in the OCP. To learn more about them, visit:  
<https://www.courtenay.ca/assets/Departments/Development-Services/OCP-Update/Growth%20Management%20chapter-sm.pdf>



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# Courtenay's Official Community Plan (OCP)

## Project Summary



# MORE CHOICES FOR GETTING AROUND

### POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

- By creating better land use patterns, managing existing infrastructure, and investing in walking, cycling, and transit, the high costs of vehicle transportation-related infrastructure can be reduced.
- City budgets will significantly shift in support of a 2030 target in which 30% of all trips are taken by walking, cycling, and transit use.
- The City will work with School District 71 to establish “Safe Routes to School” and “Active School Travel” planning programs.
- Electric vehicle (EV) charging will be required as part of new parking stalls across all land uses.
- In general, fewer parking stalls will be required across all land uses to reflect the shift from a car-dominated transportation network to a network with many modes and choices.

### COURTENAY TODAY

- Transportation is Courtenay's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to 59% of community emissions.
- Development patterns are often car-centric, built with the assumption that most people will have access to a private vehicle. This has reduced choices for people getting around.
- Only 15% of trips are taken by walking, cycling, and transit. This has been due to gaps in sidewalk and cycling networks, unsafe or inconvenient crossings for pedestrians and cyclists, and inconvenient transit service due in part to low residential densities.

### MEETING OUR GOALS THROUGH TRANSPORTATION

- Creating better sustainable transportation options is one of the most important steps that Courtenay can take to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.
- Creating great public spaces and destinations that integrate with improved transportation networks means that Courtenay could be best experienced at the scale of a person traveling on their own power.

- Diverse and affordable transportation choices influence equity, allowing greater access to and within Courtenay for all residents and not just those who are able-bodied, or have a car or are old enough to drive one.
- Electric cars will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, however providing greater options for active transportation provided many more benefits. These include active living and health, community character, street life, neighbourliness, household affordability, and economic vitality for businesses that benefit from foot traffic.



### TRANSPORTATION OBJECTIVES

- ST1. 30% of trips are by walking, cycling, and transit by 2030
- ST2. Transportation investments prioritize walking, cycling, and transit
- ST3. Street standards include attention to safety, accessibility, and comfort at the pedestrian scale
- ST4. Excess existing road space is re-purposed to support public life and green infrastructure
- ST5. Zero emissions, electrified transportation is supported and increasingly the norm
- ST6. The amount of land dedicated to parking is minimized
- ST7. Parking standards reflect electric vehicle and cycling needs
- ST8. New development integrates multi-modal transportation network planning into site design
- ST9. Educational programs to support transit use, walking, cycling, and car sharing are widely available
- ST10. Opportunities for innovation in transportation are explored
- ST11. The City shows corporate leadership in the City's fleet and on City properties



A total of 26 policies are included in the “Streets and Transportation” chapter of the OCP. To learn more about them, visit: <https://www.courtenay.ca/assets/Departments/Development-Services/OCP-Update/StreetsTransportation%20chapter-sm.pdf>



# Courtenay’s Official Community Plan (OCP)

## Project Summary



# GREENER BUILDINGS & LANDSCAPES

### POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

Wherever the City of Courtenay has jurisdiction, new homes and buildings will be built to a “net zero emission standard”, and the highest BC Energy Step Code energy efficiency building requirements will be mandated 2025 for all buildings - seven years sooner than the provincial requirements. Energy efficient and net zero emissions buildings will be made possible through passive building design, renewable energy, and green technologies.

New large buildings will require green roofs, renewable energy, and high water efficiency standards.

The City of Courtenay will demonstrate leadership in green buildings for both new and existing municipal buildings.

The City will establish and promote incentive programs such as rebates or financing mechanisms that support homeowners and other buildings owners to decarbonize.

### COURTENAY TODAY

Buildings in Courtenay are collectively a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to 36% of community emissions, mostly due to space and water heating.

Buildings and landscapes also consume a lot of water, with summer peak water use nearly doubling due to irrigation.

The BC Energy Step Code establishes minimum energy efficiency standards for buildings, however it does not as of yet set standards for greenhouse gas emissions.

### MEETING OUR GOALS THROUGH BUILDINGS AND LANDSCAPES

OCP policies can help reduce building emissions and energy bills through well thought out development, better energy efficiency standards for new buildings, and support for energy efficiency retrofits to existing buildings.

Greener buildings can also improve air quality and lower energy costs, thereby influencing human health and long term affordability.

Stronger attention to design can also support universal accessibility, as well as beauty and local character.

Landscape design can also eliminate the need for irrigation and chemical inputs, and help shade buildings and clean water.



### BUILDINGS AND LANDSCAPES OBJECTIVES

- BL1. Municipal buildings and site design demonstrate high energy and water efficiency, net-zero emissions, and energy production
- BL2. New private buildings are highly energy, and water efficient, perform at a net-zero emissions standard and produce energy
- BL3. Living landscape elements are incorporated for water and energy conservation purposes
- BL4. The design of new buildings integrate with neighbourhood character, showcase Indigenous designs, and are universally accessible
- BL5. Existing buildings are upgraded for high energy and water efficiency, net-zero emissions, and renewable energy production
- BL6. Innovation in building energy, water, and materials performance is encouraged



A total of 18 policies are included in the “Buildings and Landscape” chapter of the OCP. To learn more about them, visit: <https://www.courtenay.ca/assets/Departments/Development-Services/OCP-Update/Buildings%20chapter-sm.pdf>



THEME

3

# MORE HOUSING CHOICES FOR ALL

### POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

Existing rental homes will be protected. Purpose built rental housing will not be permitted to be stratified or re-developed into non-rental housing.

Supportive housing will be allowed in all neighbourhoods subject to a rezoning application. This will help meet the housing needs of those in Courtenay who need it the most. Supportive housing combines homes and services for those who face complex challenges, including individuals and families who experience homelessness, poverty, and persistent issues such as physical and mental health challenges, disabilities, and substance abuse disorders.

Two homes will be permitted on all residential lots that are currently regulated for single-detached houses. Depending on the size of the lot – as well as other characteristics – this could include secondary suites, carriage homes (i.e. detached suites), and duplexes.

Four-storey multi-residential buildings will be generally supported in all neighbourhoods, subject to a rezoning application.

The City of Courtenay will explore creating a municipal, regional, or other type of housing organization to lead development and operations of future non-market or below-market housing.

The development process will be improved to improve clarity and transparency about requirements and expectations for developers, to make it easier to build diverse and affordable housing.

### COURTENAY TODAY

There are 11,705 households in Courtenay as of the last available census. The average number of people living in each home is 2.1.

Courtenay's aging population means that households are getting smaller, and so there is a need for smaller housing options in all neighbourhoods.

In recent years, Courtenay has seen a rapid increase in housing prices and rental rates, making housing less affordable overall, and making it unaffordable for a greater number of people.

The private market is not able to provide housing for a significant portion of the local and regional populations. There is a need for more subsidized, supporting, and emergency housing.

### MEETING OUR GOALS THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Over the next five years, 1000 new homes of diverse sizes will help meet the needs of residents: 30 bachelor homes; 65 1-bedroom homes; 345 2-bedroom homes, and 570 3-bedroom (or larger) homes, where the larger units are particularly needed in the rental market.

More rental, below-market, and non-market homes in all neighbourhoods, including a variety of sizes and buildings types, will help meet local housing needs.

The City has a role to play in providing incentives, partnerships, regulations, and education to help meet local affordable housing goals.



### AFFORDABLE HOUSING OBJECTIVES

- AH1. Partnership approaches are in place to deliver and manage non- or below-market housing
- AH2. The City continues to actively support the creation of non-market housing
- AH3. The City provides incentives to create below-market housing
- AH4. A variety of housing options are permitted and positively integrated in all neighbourhoods
- AH5. No net loss of rental housing
- AH6. Development application approval processes are streamlined, transparent, and easy to understand



A total of 22 policies are included in the “Affordable Housing” chapter of the OCP. To learn more about them, visit:

<https://www.courtenay.ca/assets/Departments/Development-Services/OCP-Update/AffHousing%20chapter-sm.pdf>



# Courtenay's Official Community Plan (OCP)

## Project Summary



# MORE SPACE FOR AND TIME IN NATURE

### POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

- A biodiversity and green infrastructure network will create more habitat spaces and connect more people with nature in the city. This involves nature corridors that includes spaces for walking, cycling, and other active ways of getting around.
- All new development must be set back at least 30 meters from all watercourses.
- Remaining natural shorelines will be conserved. Armored shorelines will be restored to their natural state to the maximum extent possible.
- Impervious surfaces that prevent for water infiltration will be limited on both private and public lands. This means that parking lots, driveways, and other surfaces should be designed to allow for water infiltration.
- The City of Courtenay will continue to participate in regional water and air quality programs.
- More tree planting will be undertaken on public lands, and will be encouraged on private lands.
- The City of Courtenay will partner with others to educate the public and promote nature conservation, restoration, and stewardship.

### COURTENAY TODAY

- One of the strongest themes from the city-wide engagement for this OCP process was that **nature is loved for its intrinsic value and beauty**, as well as its ability to help people recharge, recreate, and connect with one another.
- Sensitive ecosystems in Courtenay are diverse and include freshwater creeks and rivers and their riparian zones, wetlands, low-lying floodplain, and estuarine environment, and mature forests ages 60-100 years.
- Sensitive ecosystems dominated the region only 150 years ago, however by 2014 had been reduced to only 7% of the region.
- Courtenay's watersheds have been heavily altered by urbanization, agriculture, and infrastructure such as highways, ditches, and other drainage systems.
- Human-made green spaces, nature parks, and the urban forest (which provides an estimated 33% city-wide canopy cover) also form part of Courtenay's ecosystems.
- MEETING OUR GOALS THROUGH NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
- Nature provides vital services such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, water retention and infiltration, and air and water purification.
- Nature is also fundamental to human well-being, and it is important that all residents have access to nature within walking distance of home.
- Courtenay can bring the city back into balance with nature in part through green infrastructure (e.g. rain gardens that naturally infiltrate rainwater), reclaiming and restoring natural areas and the ecological connections between them, and urban design that helps connect people to nature.



### NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OBJECTIVES

- NE1. Remaining sensitive ecosystems are protected; lost or degraded sensitive ecosystems are restored
- NE2. The K'ómoks Estuary is 'kept living' (Q'waq'wala7owkw) and environmental, Indigenous, subsistence and recreational values are protected and restored
- NE3. Courtenay's air, water, and soil are clean
- NE4. The urban forest is healthy and growing towards a 34-40% canopy cover target
- NE5. Development practices meet ecosystem health and site adaptive design objectives
- NE6. Information and opportunities are in place for the wider community to play an active role in the protection, restoration, and stewardship of the natural environment



A total of 40 policies are included in the "Natural Environment" chapter of the OCP. To learn more about them, visit:

<https://www.courtenay.ca/assets/Departments/Development-Services/OCP-Update/NatEnvironment%20chapter-sm.pdf>



CITY OF  
COURTENAY





# Courtenay's Official Community Plan (OCP)

## Project Summary



# STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS & LOVE FOR LOCAL PLACES

### POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

Local culture, arts, and heritage assets will be recognized as foundational to Courtenay's community identity.

The design of new buildings and spaces will **incorporate arts, culture, and heritage**. Importantly, this includes K'ómoks First Nation arts, culture, and heritage.

The City of Courtenay will collaborate with K'ómoks First Nation to **conserve, promote, and build appreciation for local archaeological sites** and other important places.

Diverse identities and contributions will be supported in artistic expressions in public spaces (e.g. public art) and cultural programs, activities, and more.

Underutilized lands near parks, schools, community facilities, and other public spaces near active transportation networks will be **reclaimed for place-making, informal gathering, and active travel**.

More partnerships and volunteer opportunities will be supported to meeting goals for parks and recreation.

A program will be developed for **community gardens and other small-scale food production spaces** such as orchards or beehives across the city.

### A COMBINED EFFORT

Two of Courtenay's OCP goals are: supporting unique and delightful neighbourhoods that support daily needs; and fostering spaces that spark public life in the downtown, in neighbourhoods hearts, and throughout the city.

All policy areas are important in meeting these goals, however this panel focuses specifically on parks and recreation, food systems, and arts, culture, and heritage.

### FOOD SYSTEMS OBJECTIVES

- FS1. All residents have access to affordable, healthy, and local food outlets
- FS2. Residents have access to food growing opportunities
- FS3. Lands supporting traditional foods are protected and traditional practices are celebrated
- FS4. Agricultural lands are protected and are compatible with urban uses
- FS5. Food processing, warehousing, and distribution activities are permitted in urban areas of Courtenay
- FS6. Food security actions are regionally coordinated



### PARKS & RECREATION OBJECTIVES

- PR1. Parkland in the form of natural areas, open spaces, and outdoor recreation is of sufficient amounts, is well-connected, equitably distributed, and is of high quality to enhance livability throughout the city
- PR2. Recreation amenities, services, and programming are expanded and enhanced to support increased health, wellness, and social connections for all residents
- PR3. Parks, greenways, and streets are better integrated to create a seamless and enjoyable active transportation system
- PR4. The parks and recreation system exemplifies leadership in reconciliation, climate action, equity, and community well-being through its service, programs, and partnerships
- PR5. Partnerships are in place to achieve parks and recreation objectives

### ARTS, CULTURE, & HERITAGE OBJECTIVES

- ACH1. Residents and visitors know they are in K'ómoks First Nation territory by the prominent tangible and intangible celebration of their culture and heritage
- ACH2. Local art, culture and heritage, including natural heritage, are showcased throughout Courtenay
- ACH3. Courtenay has a reputation as the regional centre for arts and culture
- ACH4. Community cultural and heritage assets are identified, preserved, and celebrated
- ACH5. Identities expressed in the public realm and cultural programming are representative of Courtenay and the region
- ACH6. Community access and participation in arts and culture is strong and widespread



A total of 74 policies are included in the "Parks and Recreation", "Arts, Culture, and Heritage", and "Food Systems" chapters of the OCP. To learn more about them, visit:

<https://www.courtenay.ca/assets/Departments/Development-Services/OCP-Update/ParksRec%20chapter-sm.pdf>

<https://www.courtenay.ca/assets/Departments/Development-Services/OCP-Update/Arts-Culture-Heritage-chapter-sm.pdf>

<https://www.courtenay.ca/assets/Departments/Development-Services/OCP-Update/FoodSystems%20chapter-sm.pdf>



# Courtenay's Official Community Plan (OCP)

## Project Summary



# A CITY FOR EVERYONE & ECONOMIC SUCCESS FROM COMMUNITY VALUES AND PLACE

### POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

High quality public spaces will promote social connections, and include amenities that support all ages and abilities such as public washrooms, seating, and drinking fountains.

An audit of public facilities, spaces, and transportation services will be undertaken with the community to evaluate accessibility. The outcome will be to better understand how to provide barrier-free options.

Neighbourhood-driven initiatives that focus on community strengths will be supported to promote social connections, climate action, and community resilience.

The Comox Valley Regional District's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2021) will be locally supported to meet its target of reducing poverty by 25% over the next four years.

People-centred forms of economic development such as including affordable housing and childcare in economic development strategies will be supported.

Community-based business development will be supported, included through arts and culture, local food processing, specialty forest products, and other value-added product manufacturing.

Green and low-carbon construction and building retrofit programs will be supported as significant economic development opportunities.

The impacts of climate change on local businesses will be considered in policies and programs. This includes seasonal events, recreation, tourism, and agricultural activities.

### COURTENAY TODAY

Poverty and lack of affordable housing are at the heart of complex social challenges in Courtenay.

Immigrant newcomers' experiences indicate that affordable housing, public transportation, and access to jobs and community connections are needed to help make Courtenay home.

For equity-priority groups (such as women, seniors, youth, Black, First Nations, Inuit, Metis, people of colour, LGBTQIA2S+ and people with physical and/or development disabilities), barriers to social and economic participation are often higher due to discriminatory systemic practices that do not consider or provide for the needs of all people.

The largest employment type in Courtenay is retail, followed by health care and social assistance, and public administration.

With the COVID-19 pandemic still underway, the local economy will continue to face many unknown challenges. Regional businesses and entrepreneurs have identified the diverse priorities for a strong economy recovery, ranging from affordable housing and transportation connectivity, to childcare and streamlining regulatory processes for businesses.

### MEETING OUR GOALS THROUGH SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE & LOCAL ECONOMY

Recognizing that social infrastructure is as critical to community well-being as roads and pipes can result in greater supports for people who have unmet needs. Social infrastructure refers to facilities and services that help individuals, families, groups, and communities meet their social needs, maximize their potential for development, and enhance well-being.

Structural inequities can be reduced through affordable housing, safe and accessible public space, social programming, and more representation in civic decision-making.

The most attractive places for the next generation of workers must have a thriving downtown core, inclusive neighbourhoods with a strong sense of place, a wide range of housing and recreational options, a vibrant arts and culture scene, and an openness and celebration of cultural and population diversity.

Policies that support the local economy include a focus on a sustainable economy, investment opportunities, progressive municipal government services, unique and delightful public places, and inclusive spaces and programs.



### SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE OBJECTIVES

- SI1. All Courtenay residents experience equitable access to services
- SI2. Coordinated, inclusionary, and systems-based responses are in place to address evolving complex social issues
- SI3. Physical spaces are designed with the needs for social connection and accessibility in mind
- SI4. Neighbourhood and community development-based organizing are leveraged as a source of community capacity and resilience

### LOCAL ECONOMY OBJECTIVES

- LE1. Business retention, development, and investment are increasingly green, low-carbon, climate resilient, and equity-responsive
- LE2. Local economic development opportunities are regionally coordinated
- LE3. Municipal regulations and services are supportive of economic development within the long-term vision of environmental and social responsibility
- LE4. People are at the heart of local economic development and are able to access adequate supports to participate in the economy.

A total of 42 policies are included in the "Social Infrastructure" and "Local Economy" chapters of the OCP. To learn more about them, visit:

<https://www.courtenay.ca/assets/Departments/Development-Services/OCP-Update/SocialInfrastructure%20chapter-sm.pdf>  
<https://www.courtenay.ca/assets/Departments/Development-Services/OCP-Update/LocalEconomy%20chapter-sm.pdf>



CITY OF  
COURTENAY





# Courtenay’s Official Community Plan (OCP)

## Project Summary



# MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

### POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

Local and regional programs will significantly **decrease the amount of waste being created**, including waste diversion and recycling, single-use plastic restrictions, landfill bans on materials that have viable local diversion options, and providing kitchen organics service to residences.

Community **water consumption will be reduced** through outdoor water restrictions, universal water metering, rainwater harvesting, and conservation-oriented water rates.

Rain and stormwater management will **support both watershed health and public safety**.

Ecological services provided by **natural systems will be used wherever possible**. This means accounting for these ecological services in City Asset Management planning.

Fossil fuel energy use, including **natural gas, will be discouraged** in all development applications.

**More renewable energy generation** will be encouraged in Courtenay.

### COURTENAY TODAY

Courtenay’s water is provided by the Comox Valley Regional District, **sourced from Comox Lake and collected from the Puntledge River** at the BC Hydro Penstock.

The City’s sewer utility infrastructure includes **over 150 km of sanitary sewer mains and nearly 7000 individual connections**.

**Solid waste curbside collection includes garbage, recycling, and yard waste. A regional organics composting facility is being established in Campbell River and will serve the Courtenay area in the near future.**

Distributing water, treating wastewater, and collecting and treating solid waste all require **energy efficient management**. Unless management practices change, this **energy demand will continue to grow**.

Furthermore, like in all cities, the reliable functioning of this complex network of infrastructure in Courtenay is **threatened by climate change impacts**. For example, increased risks of flooding, and more frequent and severe storms and rainfall events will add strain and threaten municipal infrastructure systems.

### MEETING OUR GOALS THROUGH MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Decisions made today about Courtenay’s growth and infrastructure will affect its future fiscal performance. **Higher density, better connected neighbourhoods are less costly to service**.

Applying a **“full cost accounting” approach** to infrastructure means that so-called external costs associated with climate change impacts, air pollution, motor vehicle collisions, and other health and sustainability impacts are better accounted for in decision making.

**Letting nature “do the work” of infrastructure** – like rain-gardens and green spaces that infiltrate rainwater – is not only ecologically beneficial, it offers financial benefits in the long run.



### MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE OBJECTIVES

- MI 1. Infrastructure and services are resilient to risks and impacts of climate change
- MI 2. Infrastructure investments are guided by a multiple bottom line decision-making approach: this means energy efficient, fiscally responsible, equitably distributed, sustainable levels of service that protect public health, safety, and the environment
- MI 3. Natural and engineered forms of green infrastructure are integrated to manage rainwater resources, protect water and air quality, maintain ecosystem function, provide flood control, and address and adapt to climate impacts
- MI 4. Solid waste, potable water, sanitary sewer and rain and stormwater infrastructure life-cycle costs are minimized by increasing conservation actions and reducing or delaying the need to develop new infrastructure capacity
- MI 5. Third party utility providers such as energy and communications utilities are low carbon and reliable



A total of 23 policies are included in the “Municipal Infrastructure” chapter of the OCP. To learn more about them, visit: <https://www.courtenay.ca/assets/Departments/Development-Services/OCP-Update/MuniInfrastructure-sm.pdf>



# Courtenay's Official Community Plan (OCP)

## Project Summary

# IMPLEMENTATION

## How We Start & Next Steps

**WHERE TO FROM HERE?**

The OCP is a collective vision and it is a collective action. Its implementation will be a collective journey.

PROGRESS THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS	CITY OF COURTENAY IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES
<p>The OCP is a facilitative policy instrument that provides both direction for the City of Courtenay as well as identifies where collaboration and support by other sectors are needed to achieve stated objectives. <b>Key relationships will need to be invested in and nurtured to turn Courtenay's vision into reality:</b></p> <p><b>Between the City of Courtenay and K'ómoks First Nation</b> to cooperate on topics of mutual interest.</p> <p><b>With developers</b>, to promote and support developments that contribute to Courtenay's vision of growth.</p> <p><b>Intergovernmental relations:</b> local, provincial, and federal.</p> <p><b>Partnerships</b> with neighbouring jurisdictions, other levels of government, stakeholders, academic institutions, and with private and non-profit organizations.</p> <p><b>With community</b> through the use of appropriate participatory engagement approaches that provide residents and stakeholders with opportunities for public input.</p>	<p>As a high level policy instrument, the OCP cannot predict the exact sequencing of actions that are outside of the City's direct control, nor should it provide detailed costing for all actions that will occur over a 10 year timeframe. Many implementation actions will require further investigation, consultation, and resourcing.</p> <p><b>Priority implementation actions are proposed to provide a foundation for and enable a number of other actions identified in the OCP. These are:</b></p> <div><div>1. Develop a corporate OCP implementation, monitoring, and reporting administrative structure and procedure to implement the OCP.</div><div>2. Update the Municipal Climate Action Plan</div><div>3. Create a Reconciliation Framework</div><div>4. Develop a Local Area Plan for Harmston Avenue Civic Precinct</div><div>5. Identify roles for the City in the delivery of:<div><div>a. Social infrastructure</div><div>b. Local economic development</div><div>c. Food security</div></div></div><div>6. Explore and establish a partnership approach with School District 71 (SD71) on topics of mutual interest.</div><div>7. Update key land use regulatory tools to reflect the OCP:<div><div>a. Zoning Bylaw</div><div>b. Building Bylaw</div><div>c. Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw</div><div>d. Flood Management Strategy &amp; Flood Management Bylaw</div><div>e. Development Cost Charges</div><div>f. Affordable Housing Policy</div></div></div><div>8. Create development application support system/tools to assist in navigating land development process with an emphasis on supporting affordable housing.</div></div>

### DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION TOOLS

**Development Permit Areas** are proposed to continue to provide an implementation-oriented framework to ensure that development decisions support the OCP. Developments for infill development and large buildings will have to meet form and character requirements, and developments proposed for near environmentally sensitive areas, near agricultural lands, or on steep slopes will be required to obtain a permit prior to development, or demonstrate that their development meets all protection requirements.

**Community Amenity Contribution policies** are also included in the draft OCP to provide guidance on priority community amenities when Mayor and Council are considering approving rezoning applications.

Learn more on Development Permit Guidelines here: [www.courtenay.ca/OCPupdate](http://www.courtenay.ca/OCPupdate)

Learn more on implementation approach here: <https://www.courtenay.ca/assets/Departments/Development-Services/OCP-Update/Implementation-sm.pdf>

## Integrating the OCP at the City

Integration of the OCP into the City of Courtenay's budgeting and activities will be an ongoing incremental activity that will take place over the next decade.

