

STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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DATE: November 23, 2022

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Deanna Wasnik, Director of Planning and Development

SUBJECT: Official Community Plan Review Project

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council DIRECTS Administration to proceed with the Official Community Plan Review as described in the report dated November 23, 2022, from the Director of Planning and Development, titled “Official Community Plan Review Project”.

PURPOSE:

Administration is proposing to update the Official Community Plan (OCP) and will be engaging citizens on many important topics, including land development, social development, the economy, and the environment. This report seeks Council’s direction to initiate the project as identified within this report.

BACKGROUND:

The OCP establishes a framework for planning and land use in the City of Prince George. The OCP gains its “official” status once Council has adopted it through enactment of a bylaw. The OCP applies to all areas within the City of Prince George jurisdictional boundaries and includes statements and map designations for residential, commercial, community facilities, industrial, agricultural, recreational, and utility land uses, and comprises contextual information, objectives, and policies.

On June 25, 2012, Council adopted *City of Prince George Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 8383, 2011*. The OCP is intended to be reviewed and revised every 5 years to 10 years. While several minor amendments have occurred since its adoption and a monitoring report was received by Council on January 22, 2018 ([Agenda Package](#)), a comprehensive review has not been undertaken.

DISCUSSION:

The OCP is a statement of objectives and policies to guide decisions on planning and land use management within the City. Although the OCP does not commit or authorize a municipality to proceed with any project specified in the OCP, and does not have an immediate effect on property rights (i.e., existing zoning regulations continue to apply unless a separate zoning bylaw amendment is adopted), the OCP can have consequences that may increase the regulatory burden of developing a property (e.g., designation of development permit areas) and may assist decision makers to determine what is in the public interest. Additionally, once an OCP Bylaw is in place, all bylaws enacted or works undertaken by Council must be consistent with the relevant plan.

As a critical planning tool, Council, staff, and citizens use the OCP to help make decisions on things such as where we locate housing, what our transportation priorities are, which lands we protect from development (i.e. identify environmentally sensitive areas, how we protect ourselves from hazards, and how we provide services for more sustainable development over the next 15 years. An OCP is not intended to be a static document but should adapt to new trends within society and respond to changing circumstances.

The OCP goals, objectives, policies, land use designations and guidelines must be reviewed to ensure their continued relevance to the unique characteristics and development trends in the City of Prince George. As such, Administration is proposing to proceed with a review of the current OCP.

Project Scope

The primary objective of the OCP Review Project is to renew and align the OCP with current land use planning and infrastructure considerations to meet the needs of a growing city. Subject to Council direction, Administration will seek consultant services to lead the OCP review. Administration will consider proposals from qualified consultants experienced in community engagement, progressive land development, and in OCP and bylaw preparation. A report and presentation to Council on the successful proponent's workplan, public engagement plan and schedule will be provided in the second quarter of 2023. The OCP Review Project is anticipated to begin in 2023 and continue into 2024.

The OCP Review Project will require a technical review and analysis of relevant plans and documents, comprehensive engagement with the community and stakeholders, and phased deliverables including analysis reports, consultation summaries, draft OCP, and refreshed mapping.

As directed by Council at the regular meeting on October 3, 2022, the proposed OCP Review Project will consider the proposed Massey Drive and Foothills Boulevard Road extensions and designation of "Ginter's Meadow" from 18th Avenue to Ferry Avenue as Parks and Open Space.

Further, as directed by Council at the regular meeting on December 5, 2022, the proposed OCP Review Project will also consider greenspace and tree protection.

These items will be incorporated into the technical review and analysis, and community engagement process.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK:

The *Local Government Act*, Section 473 outlines the content and process requirements that must be included within an OCP and Section 474 outlines policy statements regarding what may be included within the OCP. Section 475 sets out requirements for consultation during the development of an OCP.

An OCP must address many important topics for the community:

- ✓ **land use and anticipated growth** (residential development required to meet anticipated housing needs over a period of at least 5 years and present and proposed commercial, industrial, institutional, agricultural, recreational and public utility land uses);
- ✓ approximate location and area of sand and gravel deposits suitable for **future sand and gravel extraction**;
- ✓ location and type of present and proposed **public facilities**, including schools, parks and waste treatment and disposal sites;
- ✓ restrictions on the use of land subject to **hazardous conditions** or that is **environmentally sensitive** to development;
- ✓ approximate location and phasing of any **major road, sewer and water systems**;
- ✓ **housing policies** respecting affordable housing, rental housing and special needs housing;
- ✓ targets for the **reduction of greenhouse gas emissions** and policies and actions of the local government in achieving those targets.

Optionally, OCPs may address:

- ✓ **social** needs, social well-being and social development;
- ✓ a **regional context statement** (established from the Regional District's regional growth strategy) of how matters from the regional growth strategy and OCP apply in a regional context;
- ✓ maintenance and enhancement of **farming** on land in a farming area or designated **agricultural** use; and
- ✓ preservation, protection, restoration and enhancement of the **natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity**.

However, this optional content is limited by what the City has the authority to do, and the OCP can only set general objectives for the optional content listed above, or other topics not listed.

Administration and consultants working on this project will carefully consider the legislative framework throughout the preparation of the proposed OCP Review Project.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Initiation of the OCP Review Project has been identified within Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2024 and within the 2023 Corporate Workplan to ensure infrastructure meets the needs of a growing city by developing an implementation roadmap for the 2024 OCP renewal process.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Administration anticipates that project costs could be covered with existing 2023 operating budget, however an update on the project costs, funding requirements and detailed project plan will be provided to Council following the procurement process to ensure fair market sounding.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

Administration requests that Council direct Administration to seek consultant services to lead the OCP Review Project which will engage citizens on shaping an outlook for our community's future on topics such as, land development, social development, the economy, and the environment.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Deanna Wasnik, Director of Planning and Development

PREPARED BY: Kali Holahan, Planner II

APPROVED:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting Date: 2022/12/19