



Shape Your Future Victoria

Land Use Management

Definition and Description

An Official Community Plan (OCP) is a statement of goals and policies to guide local government decisions on planning and **land use management**. Municipal planning deals with land, resources, facilities and services. Land use management includes the types and location of uses, development, improvements, layout of a community and the conservation of sensitive areas. It balances the individual interests of property owners and the needs and concerns of the entire local population.

Why Is This Topic Important?

Land use management shapes and guides the physical development of a community. In a sustainable community, it addresses local environmental, economic and social needs and concerns. For example, land use management considers the protection of sensitive ecosystems, land base and building types required for growth industries, and walkable neighbourhoods.

Mixed uses, city layout and containment of urban boundaries are strategies that can achieve complete and compact communities. Compact development

is essential to achieve targets for lower greenhouse gas emissions that are now a legal requirement for all local governments in British Columbia.

As a signatory to the provincial *Climate Action Charter*, the City of Victoria affirmed its commitment to creating a complete, compact and energy efficient community and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). This involves using land use management techniques that reduce car dependency, reduce energy use, increase density and reduce sprawl.

Did You Know?

Land use management is a local and a regional issue. The City of Victoria supports the Capital Regional District's **Regional Growth Strategy** (RGS). The City of Victoria's OCP implements the goals in the RGS at the local (i.e. community) level.

The vision for land use in the existing Victoria OCP is strong **neighbourhoods** and a strong **Downtown**.

Part 26 of the B.C. **Local Government Act** is the legal basis for planning and land use development in communities in British Columbia and deals with issues, such as housing, agriculture, parks, schools and commercial, industrial and institutional uses.

Land use zoning divides a community into zones that regulate:

- use and density of land, buildings and other structures
- the location of uses on land and within buildings and structures
- the siting, size and dimensions of buildings and structures

Victoria's population is approximately 82,000 and is projected to increase to 101,000 by 2041. This is **18,000** new residents over 33 years, increasing the demand for new housing in the city.

The organization of **land use** and **transportation networks** in a community is directly related to greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). In particular, transportation is the largest source of GHG emissions in British Columbia which are rapidly growing.¹

Compared to low-density single-use development, compact, mixed-use communities reduce the amount people drive by 20 to 40 per cent. This translates into an **18 to 36 per cent reduction** in GHG emissions.¹

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Conserving and enhancing urban ecology can strengthen the **adaptive capacity** of communities facing the threat of climate change. For example, parks, green spaces and street plantings absorb carbon dioxide and reduce local levels of GHGs.²

Issues and Trends

Human needs and liveability:

- Sustainable communities have well-designed compact neighbourhoods that meet the needs of people to work, shop and play close to home. They have a mix of uses including but not limited to residential, office, retail and recreation. Downtown is one neighbourhood in Victoria where zoning encourages a mix of retail and other active uses at ground level with housing on the upper storeys of existing and new buildings.
- There is a need for residential land use to address the full range of household types, life stages and income levels within a community. Housing affordability is a major issue in land use management. The 2006 Census reported that 27 per cent of households in Victoria were paying more than 30 per cent of their total income for shelter.

Sustainable infrastructure:

- Connecting land use and transportation is also essential for sustainable communities. This includes infrastructure for walking, cycling

and transit in addition to car co-operatives, ride-sharing and single occupancy vehicles. 46 per cent of travel trips in Victoria that were reported in 2006 involved sustainable transportation, including public transit, cycling or walking.

- The most effective and efficient use of land is to encourage growth in existing communities that do not require new infrastructure, such as roads and water and sewage systems. At the same time, however, large portions of Victoria's road, water and sewer systems were built prior to the 1920s and will need to be replaced over time.

Urban ecology:

- Preservation of natural beauty, landscapes, gardens and ecologically sensitive areas contributes to the quality of life for present and future generations and conserves the capacity of the urban environment to absorb carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Victoria's Beacon Hill Park and Topaz Park are two larger areas that help to reduce GHGs levels in the community.
- Urban green spaces are also a productive land base that can help to increase food security. Victoria has five community allotments for gardening with two in Fernwood, two in James Bay and one in Victoria West. Approximately 50 homes have chickens in the backyard.

The City in Action: What We Do Now

An OCP is the blueprint for land use management and change. Land use policies in the existing Victoria OCP support and are consistent with the eight goals of the RGS. These are:

1. keep urban settlement compact
2. protect the integrity of rural communities
3. protect regional green and blue space
4. manage natural resources and the environment sustainably
5. build complete communities
6. improve housing affordability
7. increase transportation choice
8. strengthen the regional economy

Victoria's OCP is currently implemented through city-wide and neighbourhood level policies and zoning regulations. Land use goals address issues such as but not limited to: compact, mixed-use development; environmental protection; heritage conservation; infrastructure; parks and recreation; arts and culture; public facilities; and affordable housing.

Share your thoughts and ideas:

The new *Official Community Plan* can guide Victoria to a future that is different from today through policies that provide more or new directions for sustainable land use management.

- Would you describe your neighbourhood as compact and complete? Why or why not?
- In the context of the CRD, what would you change about Victoria's land use policies?
- How can the City slow and adapt to climate change through land use management?



1. BC Climate Action Toolkit www.toolkit.bc.ca/solution/land-use-solutions
2. International Institute for Sustainable Development www.iisd.org

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

- Additional topic sheets are available online at www.shapeyourfuturevictoria.ca/research-facts