

# Shape Your Future Victoria

# Neighbourhood Planning



## Definition and Description

**Neighbourhood Plans** are plans that focus on a specific geographic area of a city, and may address many planning topics including services, amenities, and urban design.

Planning practices for neighbourhood plans vary with different cities taking different approaches to selecting boundaries and topic areas to address in their plans. A **Neighbourhood Planning Program** is a municipality's approach to neighbourhood-level planning. Overall it deals with how neighbourhood planning is structured, administered, and delivered and addresses the planning process, community engagement techniques and the scope of work.

## Why Is This Topic Important?

Neighbourhoods are often the scale of community with which residents and local businesses are most familiar, bridging the gap between the individual household and the greater city. The development of plans at a scale that residents know well allows for a meaningful level of engagement, a key element of sustainable community planning.

Neighbourhood plans help to articulate more general city-wide goals and guidelines expressed in an *Official*

*Community Plan* in greater detail according to the needs, conditions, and aspirations of the neighbourhood. For example, city-wide goals such as the provision of affordable housing or reduction of greenhouse gas emissions can be translated into action in a way that fits the neighbourhood.

## Did You Know?

Council has directed staff to develop a **single neighbourhood planning program** as part of the OCP update. This will provide a consistent and clear approach to the development of new neighbourhood plans.

Victoria has **13 neighbourhoods**, of which 12 have plans. These plans were adopted between 1986 and 2002. The most recently adopted plan was the Gonzales Neighbourhood Community Plan.

Between 1991 and 2006, nine neighbourhoods increased in population. Four neighbourhoods experienced a population decrease (James Bay, Fairfield, Rockland, and Gonzales).

Victoria's **existing neighbourhood plans** address a range of different topics at different levels of detail. Commonly addressed topics include land use, heritage, parks and open space, as well as transportation.

The purposes of neighbourhood planning programs in other cities include implementing the **city-wide plan**, focusing neighbourhood reinvestment, building community capacity, and resolving key issues.

11 of 13 neighbourhoods have more renter-occupied dwellings than **owner-occupied dwellings**. Overall the percentage of rental occupied dwellings ranges from 78 per cent in Downtown to 33 per cent in Gonzales.

## Issues and Trends

The issues and trends outlined have been derived from the an exploration of neighbourhood planning approaches in other cities, as well as town hall meetings on neighbourhood planning in April 2008 and May 2009, where citizens provided their ideas on how neighbourhood planning could be changed in Victoria.

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A full report on neighbourhood planning is available on the City of Victoria's website for the *Official Community Plan* review at:  
[www.ShapeYourFutureVictoria.ca](http://www.ShapeYourFutureVictoria.ca)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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### Scope of Neighbourhood Planning

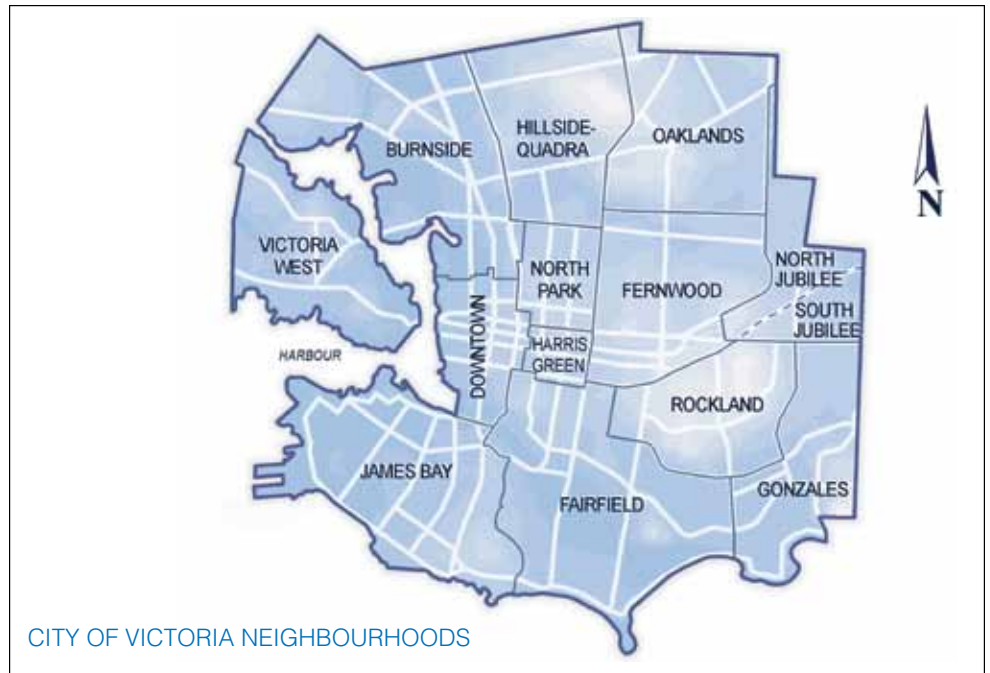
- Citizens expressed interest in linking neighbourhood planning to a more comprehensive, strategic vision for the City and the bigger regional and city-wide picture.
- Neighbourhood plans in Victoria have traditionally focused on land use. Other communities have started to shift towards a more holistic approach that integrates a range of environmental, social and economic considerations.
- The inclusion of external agencies, such as the school board or harbour authority, was seen by citizens as a critical element of neighbourhood planning.

### Neighbourhood Planning Process

- Citizens noted community engagement could be enhanced in neighbourhood planning processes through engaging a broader cross-section of the community, integrating community-driven initiatives, clarifying the role of neighbourhood associations, and using web-based technology.
- The integration of neighbourhood plans within the City's planning system, through both linkages with the OCP, other master plans, and zoning bylaw regulation was not as strong in Victoria as it was in other case study cities.
- The discussion paper identified coordination with other City departments in plan preparation and implementation as an area of exploration.
- Other cities have developed a clear and consistent purpose and rationale for the neighbourhood planning program to ensure consistency in content and alignment amongst plans.

### Sustainability of Neighbourhood Planning:

- Some stakeholders felt neighbourhood plans, which are currently adopted by resolution, did not provide an adequate level of certainty on how change is managed in neighbourhoods.



- Citizens noted the current set of neighbourhood plans lack clarity and are inaccessible to some.
- Other cities are developing neighbourhood plans that have implementation strategies that address things such as capital budgeting.
- A key challenge in case study cities was the development of a neighbourhood planning process which allowed for the sustainable allocation of staff and financial resources.

### The City in Action: What We Do Now

The City of Victoria guides and responds to changes in neighbourhoods through a number of policy and regulatory tools. The OCP sets the strategic vision, the general land use framework and the policy priorities for the City. Neighbourhood plans often provide more detailed policy and land use guidance, while the Zoning Bylaw establishes specific parameters for development on a site by site basis. Other City plans and strategies also provide guidance and direct capital investment in neighbourhoods.

### Shape Your Future Victoria

Neighbourhoods are the geographic unit with which citizens most often identify. Developing an approach to neighbourhood planning that ensures the planning program is sustainable, citizens are engaged in a meaningful way, and residents and businesses are able to address issues that are vital to their future is critical.

Share your thoughts and ideas:

- How could we improve social, economic, and environmental conditions in your neighbourhood?
- What are some ways a neighbourhood planning program could be detailed in the OCP to ensure alignment with a city-wide vision, optimization of public engagement, timely completion, and ongoing value?
- How should the goals and strategies in a neighbourhood plan be put into action?

### WANT TO LEARN MORE?

- Additional topic sheets are available online at [www.shapeyourfuturevictoria.ca/research-facts](http://www.shapeyourfuturevictoria.ca/research-facts)