

Context and Challenges

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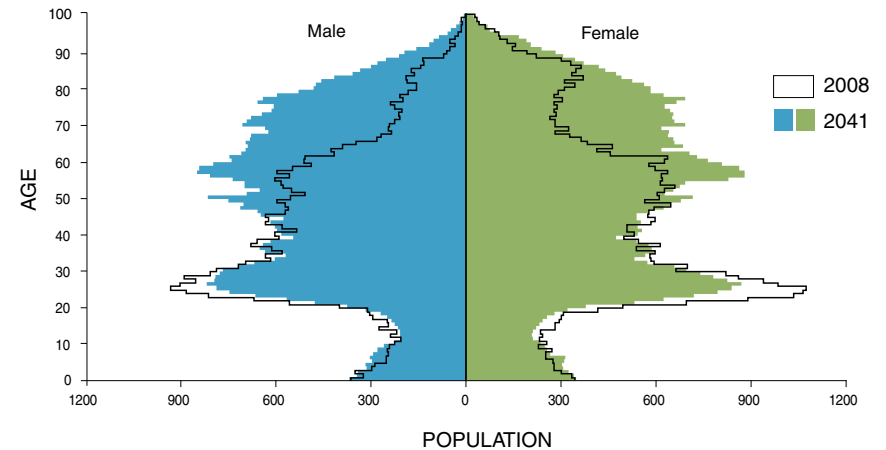
OVERVIEW

The issues that face Victoria over the next 30 years, such as climate change and population change, provide the context that shapes and informs the plan's goals, objectives and policies. This section outlines the trends identified in 2011 as major challenges or opportunities for the whole plan and individual policy areas specifically, and the public engagement activities that helped to inform the development of this plan.

POPULATION GROWTH AND CHANGE

Victoria's population is expected to increase by approximately 20,000 new residents taking the city population to roughly 100,000. As shown in Figure 4, the proportion of Victorians over the age of 65 is anticipated to increase dramatically, from 17% to 29% of the total population. At the same time, the proportion of children is declining and the concept of the family is changing.

Figure 4: Population by Age and Sex, 2008 and 2041



POLICY CHALLENGES

Land Use Management

Population growth is expected to absorb Victoria's capacity for new ground-oriented housing under existing zoning and exceed that for apartments, running the risk that homes will be increasingly more expensive as available land is built upon. High to medium densities in Victoria's urban core, town centres and urban villages are needed to satisfy widespread demand for housing that is affordable and shops, services and amenities within walking distance of households.

Transportation and Mobility

Many Victorians will be over the age of 65 and more dependent upon mobility alternatives to the automobile. Also, commuters from neighbouring jurisdictions who travel to Victoria for work will increase road congestion and transportation emissions of greenhouse gases without higher residential densities along rapid and frequent transit corridors in the city and the region.

Placemaking

Victoria has a compact, dense urban form that is characteristic of larger cities, yet has access to nature, open spaces and a quality of life often associated with smaller communities. The challenge for new development is to create new memorable places, while embracing older special character areas through urban design, heritage conservation and animation of the public realm.

Parks, Recreation and Culture

Victoria has a network of parks, recreational and cultural facilities that supports a high quality of life for citizens in neighbourhoods throughout the city. Maintaining and enhancing these amenities and access to arts, culture and recreational programming is needed in response to urban growth within the constraints of the City's infrastructure deficit.

Environmental Management

Less than two percent of the Garry Oak ecosystem that existed in Victoria in 1800's remains today. Development has also highly modified the marine environment with contamination to the harbour and changes to the natural shoreline. As Victoria grows it will be challenged to maintain ecosystem services and to keep citizens connected to nature and natural processes.

Infrastructure

The City faces important decisions about aging infrastructure that must be replaced at significant cost and the provision of sufficient capacity for increasing densities in the downtown, town centres and urban villages. Infrastructure, such as storm sewers, must also adapt to impacts of climate change that are projected to include more frequent and intense precipitation.

Climate Change and Energy

Greenhouse gas emissions in Victoria contribute to global warming impacts such as more frequent and severe windstorms. The city's emissions are projected to increase three percent from 2007 to 2020 unless private vehicle use and energy consumption is reduced and renewable energy is a priority.

Housing and Homelessness

High rental and ownership housing costs in Victoria make **housing affordability** a challenge for people of different income levels. There are long waitlists for supportive and subsidized rental units for families, seniors, people with disabilities and low-income singles of all ages. Approximately 1,500 people are living without a home in the Capital Region, many in Victoria, and need access to adequate housing with appropriate support services.

Economy

Victoria's tourism sector faces the challenges of a strong Canadian dollar, stringent cross-border security and high fuel costs. There is also expected to be limited growth in government employment over the timeframe of this plan and the city has competition from suburban municipalities with greater supply of commercial and industrial land, and major retail centres.

Community Well-Being

The demographic shift in Victoria presents a dual challenge: meeting the shifting service, housing and mobility needs of an older population, while enhancing the housing, facilities and affordability needed to retain a younger workforce and their families.

Food Systems

Vancouver Island imports the vast majority of its food, creating concerns for the stability of the food supply in the face of rising energy costs and climate change. Within Victoria, the demand for **allotment gardens** exceeds supply given the number of **apartment** dwellers in the city who lack access to land.

Emergency Management

The top two natural hazards for Victoria are earthquakes and severe windstorms. There is a 32% likelihood of a damaging earthquake event in the city before 2054. A disaster of this level is a major threat to life and property. Infrastructure, including buildings such as the City’s fire halls, hospitals and bridges, as well as structures related to utilities and underground services, may require extensive reconstruction in community recovery after a disaster.

ENGAGEMENT IN PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The broad objectives and policies in this plan were developed based on background research, public input and staff analysis. Public engagement was designed to both inform the public about the OCP and to gain an informed sense of the perspectives, values, goals and ideas of community members to shape the content in this Plan. As illustrated in Figure 5 below, the OCP process engaged more than 4,700 citizens and diverse stakeholders representing organizations and groups including some considered “hard to reach”, such as single parents, urban poor and youth.

Figure 5: Official Community Plan Engagement Process

