

# Victoria 2050 – Big Moves

Key Directions for the Official Community Plan 10-year Update



# About the OCP 10-year Update

## Background

The Official Community Plan (OCP) is the most important policy document in the City, and all bylaws enacted and works undertaken by the City must be consistent with the OCP pursuant to the *Local Government Act*. The City's zoning bylaws and the OCP are the primary tools used to manage the city's land – a core function of local governments. The Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw and Development Permit Area guidelines further support land management. These tools need to be regularly reviewed, updated and aligned to plan for newly anticipated growth, latent demand in the housing market and emerging infrastructure needs in the face of climate change.

## Purpose

The OCP 10-year Update process, directed by Council in 2023, is intended to provide meaningful solutions to the housing crisis and climate emergency by modernizing the City's approach to land management and service provision. It emphasizes a citywide approach to long range planning with an emphasis on implementation.

## Major Deliverables

The process has several key deliverables, as summarized below.

**Updated Official Community Plan** that provides adequate housing and commercial land use capacity out to 2050 and aligns climate, housing, and mobility objectives (see the *Victoria 2050 Emerging Policy Framework* for more). Updates will include a modernized development permit area framework and new or updated guidelines.

**Modernized zoning framework** based on the current Zoning Bylaw 2018 to reduce complexity of the Zoning Regulation Bylaw and better align zoned capacity, particularly for housing, with OCP land use capacity and objectives on climate-forward development.

**Modernized Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw** to ensure housing, mobility, urban forest, public realm and infrastructure objectives can be achieved.

New or updated mechanisms to deliver amenities will be considered where amenities cannot otherwise be realized through existing policy and regulation.

## About this Document

This document highlights the key policy directions and outcomes (often referred to as “Big Moves”) proposed in this process. These moves will be realized primarily through updates to one or more of the City tools identified above. Additional details can be found in the *Victoria 2050 Emerging Policy Framework* document.



# Housing

## Unlocking Land Supply

The OCP's proposed land use framework, simplified and integrated, envisions that a new urban structure will evolve in Victoria over the next three decades – one that will enable the city to keep up with future housing need and catch up with the need that is outstanding today. This evolution requires change in all areas of the city as Victoria continues to be the heart of the greater region. **The OCP update proposes to enable low to mid rise multi-unit buildings in any residential area of Victoria and contemplates greater residential intensity in key Mobility Hubs.**

## Enabling the Next Generation of Rental Housing

The tandem effort to modernize the Zoning Bylaw provides opportunity to facilitate the faster realization of new rental housing through the Housing Opportunity Zone, which is focused on encouraging the realization of secured rental at a viable scale. **The proposed Housing Opportunity Zone would reduce the process and timelines required for building mid-rise, secured rental housing.** It can be leveraged together with the City's Rental Incentives Program, providing more opportunities for builders to respond to the City's rental housing targets. Meanwhile, the Provincial *Residential Tenancy Act* and the City's *Tenant Assistance Policy* will continue to work to support renters at risk of being displaced.

## Encouraging More Non-Market Development

The rapid realization of below market and near market housing will have the greatest ability to deliver deep affordability for people with low to moderate incomes. **The OCP will continue to provide additional flexibility in scale and built form for non-market projects.** This approach, together with the City's ongoing work to develop partnerships and prioritize non-market housing applications, will boost the delivery of affordable housing. Further, **multi-unit buildings are proposed to be a permitted use in all residential zones, expanding the reach of the City's Accelerated Affordable Housing Process** (previously referred to as Rapid Deployment of Affordable Housing).

## Advancing Solutions to the Housing + Transportation Cost Burden

The proposed OCP identifies new Town Centres along the Frequent Transit Network. In these areas, the OCP contemplates higher and denser forms of diverse housing. Existing and newly proposed **Town Centres are aligned with Transit Exchanges and Mobility Hubs where transit corridors, shared mobility and active transportation intersect – aligning diverse housing options with affordable transportation options.** Town Centres are identified at two locations along the Douglas RapidBus Corridor (Mayfair and Midtown), at Hillside Centre, Oak Bay Junction and Jubilee Centre at Fort and Foul Bay. Citywide, the updated OCP and its supporting policy and regulatory tools will emphasize a focus on shared mobility services and parking resources, cycling and transit infrastructure (including specifically for mass transit services,) accessible pedestrian amenities and reducing emphasis on moving privately-owned single occupant vehicles quickly around the city.

## Encouraging Innovative Solutions in the Market

Recognizing the current constraints in the housing market, **a key direction of the OCP Update is to provide flexibility in scale, use and built form for innovative, climate-forward housing solutions and alternative tenures, such as mass timber development, community land trusts, housing cooperatives and affordable homeownership**, where proposed development aligns with the City's principles of good urban design.

## Improving Family Housing Options

As the city evolves to embrace more multi-unit housing forms, ensuring diverse options that are suitable for families will become increasingly important. The proposed OCP continues to encourage denser ground-oriented forms, such as townhomes, throughout the city that can support larger family households. **The zoning modernization approach proposes to require a minimum number of three-bedroom units in new multi-unit developments, particularly low- and mid-rise apartment forms. Emerging policy directions will encourage tools that support high-quality family-friendly design.**

## Renewing Victoria's Heritage Approach

Heritage has a key role to play in adding housing capacity and addressing the climate crisis while maintaining community identity. Heritage tools such as heritage conservation areas, designations, inventories, incentives and design guidelines can encourage the conservation of heritage buildings while ensuring adjacent redevelopment is context sensitive and responsive. As Victoria plans for new growth and change, **a key direction of the OCP Update is to examine the City's existing heritage program to address gaps and better represent the entirety of the community.** Together with the community, we will explore expanding the heritage values framework and ways to recognize intangible heritage.



## Recognizing Victoria's Blue-Green Networks

The proposed integrated land use framework identifies Blue-Green Networks intended to support a climate forward city. **The Networks provide guidance for realizing a sustainable urban forest in a growing city, protecting our shorelines and urban watersheds to leverage social, recreational, and ecological benefits, transforming streetscapes to prioritize environment and low carbon mobility, as well as identifying and enhancing natural assets in response to climate change and loss of biodiversity.**

## Low Carbon Growth

Buildings account for 51% of Victoria's GHG emissions. Thoughtful consideration of the form, design, and materials of new development will minimize the carbon impact of new growth in Victoria. **Emphasizing building forms that enable wood-frame or mass timber construction, with reduced high-carbon features such as underground concrete parking, will reduce the carbon emissions associated with materials production for new development.** Furthermore, as energy-inefficient aging buildings are replaced with efficient homes that no longer use fossil fuels, Victoria will see a reduction in per capita emissions from buildings.

On-road transportation accounts for 40% of Victoria's GHG emissions. Locating housing near sustainable mobility options will further spur low-carbon mode choice within the city. And, importantly, **making room for housing and employment in the Capital Region's urban core will have the greatest impact on regional emissions by reducing the need for long commutes and mitigating urban sprawl outside our local boundaries.** Data indicates that Victorians have lower vehicle ownership rates and use more mobility options than other residents in the region, providing a clear path to achieving GHG reduction goals. The City will continue its focus on car-light / EV supported development with shared mobility options and high-quality amenities to encourage walking, rolling, cycling and public transport.

## Growth That Embraces Climate Adaptation

To weather the impacts of climate change, the City will need to find ways to better manage rainfall on-site and mitigate extreme heat, including through redevelopment on private property and investments in public infrastructure. **The proposed zoning framework seeks to ensure that new development provides sufficient and quality open site spaces. This open site space makes room for the City's development permit area guidelines to more reliably advance urban forest and integrated rainwater management objectives on private property. The proposed linear park concept prioritizes street rights-of-way to the same end in the public realm.** Ensuring this space is available throughout the city allows Victoria's *Tree Protection Bylaw*, *General Urban Design Guidelines*, and *Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw* to have the greatest impact.

## Maximizing Green and Open Spaces to Meet Environmental Objectives

Victoria is a largely built out city where land costs are high and existing land is under pressure to meet multiple objectives. Public and private green spaces will be required to realize both social and environmental outcomes. **A key direction of the OCP Update is to manage and update existing parks and open spaces and tactically acquire new spaces in a manner that supports population health, biodiversity, ecosystems, and water management.**

## Enhancing Natural Assets and Green Infrastructure in a Growing City

Much of Victoria's built infrastructure is aging. Climate change is increasingly moving cities to protect and enhance their natural infrastructure, like the urban forest and naturalized shorelines, and look for opportunities to mimic nature using green infrastructure, like rain gardens and bioswales. As the city grows, increased capacity, functionality and resilience of both built and natural infrastructure will be required. **New development enabled in the proposed land use framework will contribute to infrastructure upgrades on the surface and underground, including through development cost charges, amenity cost charges, and development permit and servicing requirements.** The planned approach to updating the City's *Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw* will guide, enable and encourage climate forward solutions for public space and mobility. In addition, the City will explore opportunities to utilize environmental development permit areas where appropriate.

## Improving the Blue Network

Victoria is a coastal city and water is an important part of our identity. The shoreline provides significant environmental, cultural, economic, and recreational benefits and has the potential to support new mobility options. A network of watersheds also plays a significant role in shaping the city's ecological systems. Land use and development impact on shoreline, ocean and watershed health. The updated OCP will consider the impacts of sea level rise and seek to **embrace and integrate natural shoreline management as well as the outcomes of the forthcoming integrated rainwater management plan** (anticipated in 2025).

## Prioritizing Livability in a Changing Climate

The foundational approach to advancing solutions to climate change is enabling more compact and mixed-use communities. For this approach to be effective though, Victoria needs to be a comfortable and enjoyable place to live. **Updated design guidelines will seek to manage risks and align climate objectives with livability objectives by encouraging high-performance, energy efficient buildings that integrate a range of at grade and upper storey outdoor amenity spaces,** by incorporating higher quality, secure storage solutions for bikes and other e-mobility devices, by facilitating permeable ground cover and accessible green roofs and by encouraging building and open space design that allows for sunlight and airflow to the public streetscape and outdoor amenity areas.



## Community Mobility

### Land Use That Supports Transit Investment

The scale and location of development influences transit service levels and infrastructure design, the success of shared mobility and active transportation and the passenger amenities that can be realized. The integrated land use approach emphasizes an alignment of mobility, housing, and employment objectives. **A key direction of the OCP Update is to enable housing intensification and additional density within mobility hubs and along and adjacent to transit priority corridors, which in turn can support the business case and rationale for improved levels of service and new transit service technologies.** This direction is complemented by multi-partner infrastructure investments that support an efficient and diverse transit system that is integrated with active and shared mobility networks.

### Embracing Waterways as Part of Mobility Networks

For generations, Victoria's waterways have served many functions and continue to be a part of the city's identity today. A key direction of the OCP Update is to **support the development of a waterways network and water-based transportation that is integrated with the broader Mobility Network, including transit service.** This network would consider access to docks, integration with water taxis and public transit services, and improvements to key mobility features such as waterway access and the experience and function of Dallas Road and Ogden Point.

### Incrementally Repurposing Road Space

Nearly a quarter of the City's land base is public right-of-way with the remaining either park space or private land. The majority of public right-of-way is reserved for the movement and parking of private vehicles, much of it unrestricted, costly to maintain and allocated at the expense of realizing safety and public realm objectives. Reallocating space to low-carbon and shared mobility options, urban forest growth and linear parks will support climate resiliency and provide new opportunities for people to recreate, socialize and move sustainably throughout the city. **A key direction of the OCP Update will be to incrementally and creatively repurpose road space for sustainable transportation and a network of linear parks, where new approaches to streetscape management and design will help realize social and environmental objectives.**

## Community Spaces and Amenities

### Maximize Parks and Public Spaces

Victoria is fortunate to have a strong inventory of large and small parks, publicly accessible green spaces, and urban plazas. As the city grows, and more people live in multi-unit housing, the need for publicly accessible parks and open spaces will also grow. Flexible approaches will be necessary to expand, enhance and diversify the parks and public space network to sustain intensified use. With limited opportunities to purchase or re-purpose land that is in high demand, **a key direction of the OCP Update will be to encourage strategic, equitable and innovative land acquisition where possible and emphasize other approaches like the repurposing of road space and more on-site amenities in new development to complement existing assets, while focusing investment on high-quality design and programming of current park and open spaces.**

### Flexibility for Co-Location of New Housing and Amenities

By leveraging valuable civic lands for co-location of two or more uses of public benefit, such as affordable housing and community serving spaces, the City can advance multiple priorities and spur community vibrancy in high-opportunity areas. Creating new affordable housing in tandem with day cares, community centres or other shared amenities delivers multiple social benefits and improves access to amenities that increase social connectedness. **The OCP will continue to provide flexibility in scale and built form for non-market housing projects and utilize new funding tools (e.g., Amenity Cost Charges) to support amenities in co-location partnerships that advance multiple City objectives.**

### Supporting More Community Placemaking

Victoria has a strong history of grassroots placemaking and community-led space activation. This history is visible across the city today, including in Fernwood Square, the Spirit Garden in Jubilee, Kings Road / Oakland Rise in Oaklands, and the community gardens in our parks, on vacant land and boulevards. These places, shaped and stewarded by community members, are what make Victoria a special place to live and visit. The City supports the community in these efforts through grant programs such as the *My Great Neighbourhood Grant* and *Growing in the City* as well as through the *Placemaking Toolkit*. As the city grows and densifies and there are fewer opportunities to add new public spaces of significant scale, smaller spaces, designed by and for the community, will become increasingly important. **The OCP Update process will consider opportunities to expand or improve upon existing programs for placemaking, with an emphasis on climate resiliency and inclusion.**



## Embracing Privately Owned Public Spaces

Privately owned but publicly accessible spaces (sometimes called POPS) are a form of open space available for public use year-round. POPS are an amenity secured through legal agreements with private property owners as part of a development-approval process. Many cities worldwide, including leaders like Auckland, New York, and Vancouver, have turned to this solution to increase provision of publicly accessible open spaces in urban settings. Spaces such as plazas, atriums, trails and waterfront paths increase the open space provision in constrained parts of the city, for the health and wellness of residents, visitors and the environment. **A key direction of the OCP Update is to recognize the role of private public spaces and provide direction for the provision of these spaces, particularly in larger redevelopments.** POPS will play a key role in providing new open spaces and connectivity in underserved areas across the city, complementing existing and planned parks, open spaces and natural areas.

## Enabling and Encouraging More Private Amenity Spaces

Prioritizing on-site amenities in multi-unit developments enhances living environments and contributes to the overall health and well-being of residents. Since these amenities can be in the form of green spaces, they also often contribute to environmental outcomes such as improved biodiversity, permeability and community gardens. **Proposed open space site requirements in zoning, combined with updated design guidelines will seek to align climate objectives with livability objectives. Design guidelines will also encourage shared green roofs and terraces for residents, and opportunities for play and social gathering incorporated at ground level and on upper terraces and roof tops.** Balconies and patios are also important components of on-site amenities for individual homes, enhancing liveability and fostering resilience.

## Arts, Culture and the Local Economy

### Enabling More Neighbourhood Commercial and Community Spaces

While an ongoing aim of the OCP is to retain and enhance the vibrancy of the city's villages and centres, there is also a need for more immediate access to social and community-serving spaces near home. **The modernized zoning approach will allow for appropriate, small-scale commercial uses in residential areas.** With this direction, corner stores, coffee shops and other small businesses will add vibrancy and interest to our neighbourhoods and help meet daily needs, accessible by walking, rolling, cycling and transit. Small scale commercial uses throughout residential areas also help support shared mobility resources and provides employment opportunities close to where people live.

### Preserving and Creating Arts and Culture Spaces

There are many diverse spaces in the city that serve Victoria's arts and culture scene, whether dedicated spaces for performance or production, or spaces like community halls or places of worship that host arts and culture. In addition to contributing to a vibrant Victoria, these places are an important part of the City's economy. At the same time, these spaces may be threatened by development pressure and the high cost of land. **A key direction of the OCP Update is to identify strategies that will maintain or renew existing arts and culture spaces and to add new spaces to meet the community's needs.** City strategies such as *Create Victoria Arts and Culture Strategy* and the *Victoria Music City Strategy* identify expected future needs for arts and culture space and conversations with the community will help to prioritize these needs as Victoria grows. Outcomes may inform or advance other programs or incentives.

### Enabling Innovative Land Use Approaches for a Diverse Economy

Industrial lands are in exceedingly high demand. Meanwhile, the global economic landscape and working patterns are shifting, with evolving technologies and sectors, new work from home trends, and growing demand for space that serves traditional uses, like processing and manufacturing, in cleaner and more efficient ways. In this evolving context, **a key direction of the OCP Update is to maintain and expand the city's employment lands - supporting industrial intensification in the proposed Urban Industrial Land Reserve, and encouraging an innovative mix of uses in employment areas to enable redevelopment that increases space for diverse employment sectors and relies on shared infrastructure solutions.** In this approach, people will have places secondary to their homes where they can engage in diverse work, interact with colleagues and cultivate their sense of purpose.