

## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION TO THE OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

### 1.1 OVERVIEW

Municipalities in British Columbia are permitted to adopt an Official Community Plan (OCP) through the Local Government Act (LGA), which describes what must be included in the OCP, what may optionally be included, and what process steps need to be followed before the OCP is adopted. This OCP has been developed in accordance with the LGA.

In general terms, an OCP is a long-term vision and physical blueprint for the community's future. Given this long-term, strategic focus, it is expected that the OCP will not be revised regularly, although it will be reviewed from time to time - usually every five years with a major review every 10 years. It is intended that this revision of the OCP will guide the City's development to the year 2030 and beyond, with periodic updates to ensure consistency with the community vision and to keep up with changing circumstances. This OCP applies to all the lands within the boundaries of the City of Williams Lake as shown and designated on the Land Use Designation Map in Chapter 6 of this OCP.

While land use plans and policies are a key component of an OCP, it will also describe the community's broad objectives in other policy areas. It reflects the ideas and input of OCP process participants, including residents, businesses, community stakeholders, neighbouring communities, senior levels of government, and Williams Lake staff and Council. This OCP integrates land use with social, cultural, economic, and environmental sustainability objectives, and creates a strategy for directing growth and development while protecting and enhancing the community's quality of life. The OCP deals specifically with land use densities, uses, and form; transportation; the reduction of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions; environmentally sensitive area protection; infrastructure, parks and open spaces; present and future housing needs; public facilities; neighbourhood character; social services; economic development; general design guidelines for buildings and landscaping; and the general regulation of development.

Because conditions change, new challenges and opportunities emerge, and resources are finite, the Local Government Act (LGA) does not commit the City to implementing all of the policies contained in the OCP. All Bylaws or projects undertaken by Council after the adoption of the OCP must, however, be consistent with its general directions.

This OCP is unique in that it was developed in conjunction with an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) called *[Imagine Our Future](#)*, which is the overarching policy document for the City. The ICSP describes the community's long range sustainability vision, strategic priority areas and actions, and includes a sustainability-based decision evaluation framework for assessing documents such as the OCP. The relationship between the OCP and the ICSP, which is the City's overarching policy document, is outlined in Chapter 3.

## 1.2 PUBLIC PROCESS

Creating Our Future was the result of an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) and an Official Community Plan (OCP) Process, which included the following process steps:

<b>Component</b>	<b>Event/Description</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
ICSP	“Imagine Williams Lake” Community Assessment Process	June 2008
	Online Survey	March - October 2009
	“Kitchen Table” Meetings	Spring/Summer 2009
	“Hot Spot Listening Posts”	Spring/Summer 2009
	Performance in the Park Outreach Event	June 2009
	Outreach at Community Event	June 2009
	Community Partners Café I	June 2009
	Meetings with City Standing Committees and Community Organizations and Groups	September - October 2009
	Great Adventure: Williams Lake	October 2009
	Youth Digital Story Telling Workshop and Video Project	October 2009
	Community Partners Café II	November 2009
	Community Partners Café III - ICSP Launch	May 2010
OCP	Innovators’ Summit on Land Use and Economy	March 2010
	Land Use Suitability Mapping Focus Groups	March- April 2010
	Land Use Suitability Mapping Surveys	March 2010
	Draft Suitability Mapping Open House	May 2010
	Community Engagement and outreach through organization, committee and community group meetings, Hot Spots, and information displays on the Draft OCP	February and March 2011
	OCP Public Hearing	June 2011

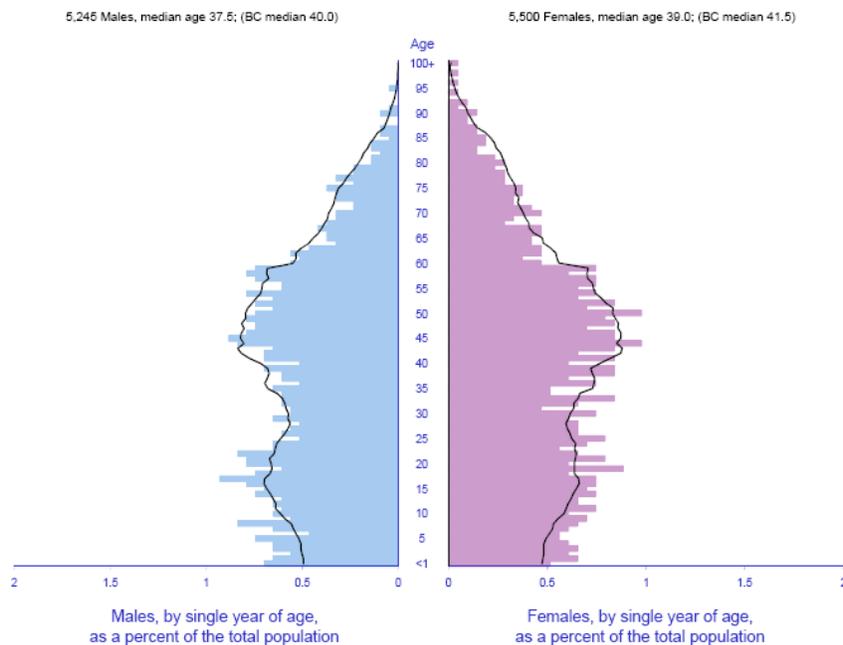
### 1.3 CONTEXT FOR PLANNING

The [Williams Lake and Area Community Profile](#), which is available from the City or online on the City’s web site, provides background information on the demographics, labor force, payroll costs, higher education, transportation, industrial land use, utilities, housing, government, business support services, taxation, international resources and quality of life. Basic history and information on the City’s current characteristics are Chapter 2.

Specific trends and information relevant to the development of this OCP include:

**Population and Demographic Shift.** Williams Lake had a stable population of approximately 11,000 residents in 2010 which, if it follows the projections for the Cariboo Regional District, will grow slowly by about 5% in the period to 2030<sup>1</sup>, or to approximately 11,500 residents. This number may vary considerably depending on a number of factors, including economic initiatives. It should be noted that the city is also a regional service centre for the Cariboo and serves a population over twice this size, which creates additional demands for infrastructure and services.

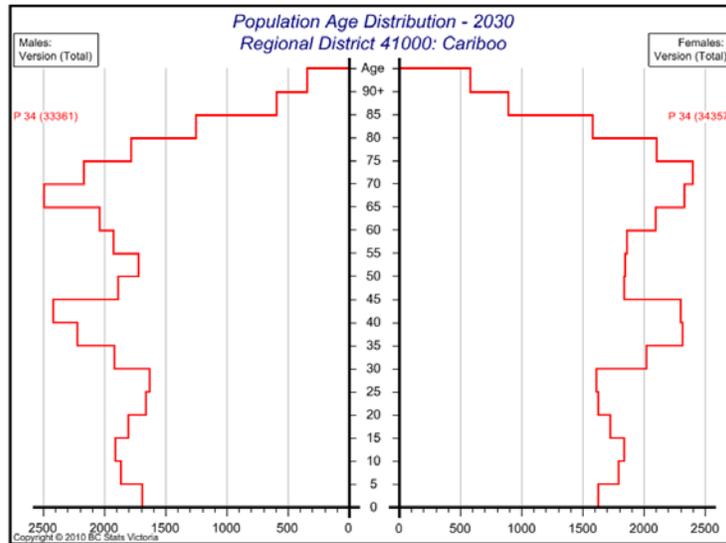
The age distribution in the area will, however, change dramatically in this period. In 2006, the majority of the population was in the 35-65 age category, as shown in the graphic below:



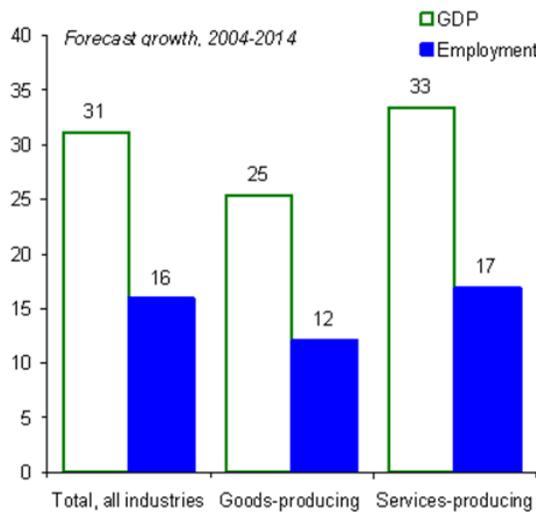
As with the rest of British Columbia, the birth rate per capita is low and a significant proportion of the population are “baby boomers,” meaning that there will be a major shift in the age distribution and the community will need to accommodate a similar number of children and youth in coming years (which is counter to the provincial trend), but also a significantly larger

<sup>1</sup> BC Stats 2006-2036 Population Projections for Cariboo RD

number of seniors, from the current 15% of the population aged 65 or older in the Cariboo to as high as 25% of the population in 2031.<sup>2</sup>



**Economic Shift.** As population demographics are shifting, so is the economy. A larger proportion of the population will be living on pensions in the future, more opportunities will be available in the service sector to accommodate an increasing senior population, tourism and recreation will be important economic drivers, and traditional, resource-based industries will be augmented by clean, knowledge-based industries. Sustainability will become a cornerstone of the economy, with the community seeking to create stable, well-paying jobs and new businesses increasingly seeking to utilize renewable resources and minimize environmental impacts.



Source: COPS forecast

**A Focus on Sustainable Development.** Over the past generation, society has become increasingly aware that “Business As Usual” was not sustainable in the long run. In the post-war era, jobs were plentiful, the population was younger, and our communities had become

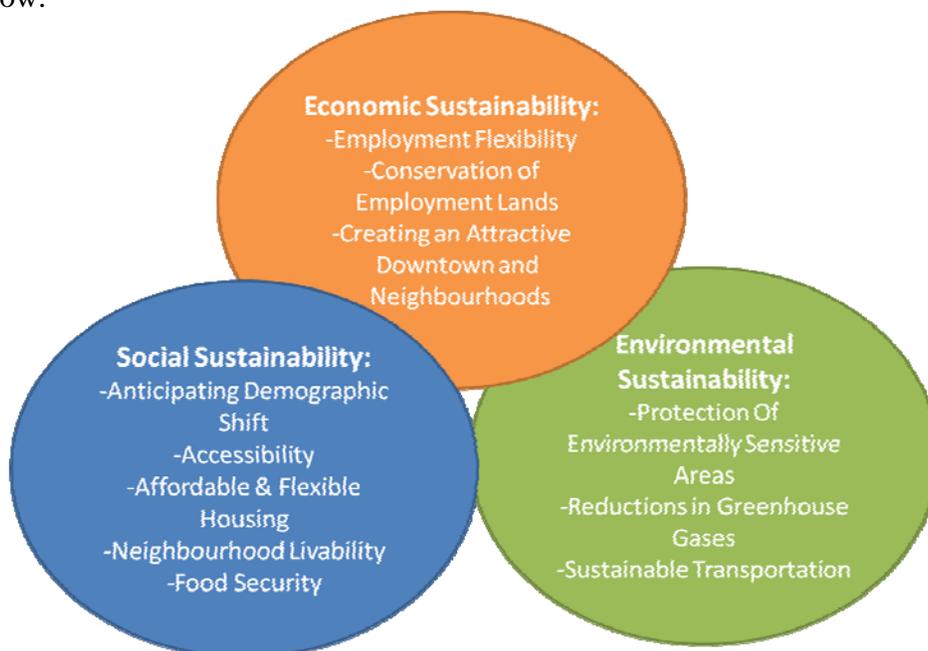
<sup>2</sup> BC Stats 2006-2036 Population Projections for Cariboo RD

increasingly dependent on abundant resources, particularly cheap energy and non-renewable resources. There was little regard for the wastes that society created or concern for future demographic patterns, such as the “baby boom.” As health care costs for the aging population soared, economic disruptions began, resource prices escalated, a series of increasingly severe environmental catastrophes appeared in the media, and a global movement for “sustainable development” began. In brief, communities are now planning to ensure that, while meeting their needs, they do not impact the ability of future generations to meet their needs, and that they consider social, cultural, economic, and environmental sustainability in their decision making processes. Community land use and development, along with a range of other policies such as transportation and social well-being, have been identified as major determinants of sustainability at the local and global level.

We see these same types of sustainability issues in Williams Lake, with social concerns over issues such as unemployment and caring for a growing local senior population, economic concerns over the long term viability of non-renewable resource industries, and environmental concerns over the impacts of resource extraction and Greenhouse Gas emissions leading to climate change.

**1.4 KEY THEMES**

Although the OCP chapters and sections are organized around the community’s Strategic Priority Areas from the Imagine Our Future process concerning sustainability and land use planning, a number of themes have emerged that will be covered in a number of locations within the OCP, which are grouped according to social, economic, and environmental sustainability themes in the sections below.



### 1.4.1 Economic Sustainability

The anticipated economic shift will have far-reaching impacts for the community. As with social issues, the OCP cannot address these impacts alone, but can contribute to community economic resiliency by creating strong policies that support development by maintaining generous amounts of well-located, properly serviced, and flexibly zoned lands for commercial and industrial employment purposes, while promoting an attractive community for new businesses and employees. Policy themes related to economic sustainability are addressed in a number of policy sections, including:

- Social Well-being;
- Resilient Economy;
- World Class Recreation;
- Local Food and Agriculture; and
- Distinctive Arts, Culture, and Heritage.

Specific economic themes addressed in the OCP include:

#### ***Employment Flexibility***

While the future economy is difficult to predict, it is understood that there is a general shift towards a more service-based economy in B.C. To accommodate a range of employment opportunities in the future, the City must be flexible. Flexibility requires that the infrastructure be in place to serve a range of economic activities, including education, transportation, utilities and support for the new economy, including high capacity communications systems, such as high speed internet services. This theme will be addressed under Social Well-Being, Resilient Economy, Land Use and Development, and Development Permit Area Guidelines.

#### ***Conservation of Employment Lands***

Similarly, when it comes to employment lands, which includes land supporting all types of employment, such as industrial, institutional, services, and retail and office commercial employment, it is unknown how various economic sectors will evolve over time. In such an environment, it is prudent to maintain a large land base for employment that is compatible with nearby uses, including institutional, office and retail commercial, and light and heavy industrial. This theme will be addressed under Resilient Economy, Land Use and Development, and Development Permit Area Guidelines.

#### ***Creating an Attractive Downtown and Neighbourhoods***

It is now well understood that employers and employees are looking for communities that are attractive and provide for a high quality of life. Simply put, communities that create this livable environment will be better placed in the future economy than those that don't. Fortunately, the principles of livable community design are also well understood and are reflected in Lively Downtown, Affordable Housing and Livable Neighbourhoods, World Class Recreation, Land Use and Development, and Development Permit Guidelines.

## 1.4.2 Social Sustainability

Anticipated shifts in both population demographics and the local economy, combined with concerns over environmental issues, particularly climate change, may have important impacts on our social systems. While an OCP cannot address all of these issues alone, it can make significant contributions in areas under local jurisdiction and create a framework for working with other stakeholders and levels of government. Policy themes related to social sustainability are addressed in a number of policy sections, including:

- Social Well-Being;
- Partnering with First Nations;
- World Class Recreation;
- Affordable Housing and Livable Neighbourhoods;
- Local Food and Agriculture; and
- Distinctive Arts, Culture, and Heritage.

Specific social sustainability themes addressed in the OCP include:

### *Anticipating Demographic Shift*

A dramatically changing age profile will have major implications for the community, including the need for increased accessibility, a range of social services, and new housing options. The OCP will address these issues through policies such as the promotion of a wider range of affordable housing types in locations that are accessible and close to services and amenities under Social Well-Being, Active and Convenient Transportation, and Land Use and Development.

### *Accessibility*

Providing access for children, youth, seniors, and those with special needs is an increasingly pressing issue. Accessibility is a multi-disciplinary field, and this will be addressed under Social Well-Being, Active and Convenient Transportation, and Land Use and Development.

### *Affordable and Flexible Housing*

Housing is a basic human need and contributor to a high quality of life. While a range of affordability to accommodate different household incomes is important, so is a range of housing types that accommodate different lifestyles, support those with special needs and allow people to age in place. This theme will be addressed under Social Well-Being, Affordable Housing and Livable Neighbourhoods and Land Use and Development.

### *Neighbourhood Livability*

There are many elements to creating livable neighbourhoods, including parks and open space, good urban design, a mix of affordable housing types, and convenient access to services, employment, education and recreation. This theme will be addressed under Affordable Housing and Livable Neighbourhoods, Transportation, Land Use and Development, and Development Permit Area Guidelines.

## ***Food Security***

While food production and processing is also an economic driver, food security is a basic human need and requirement for healthy living and a high quality of life. The OCP will promote food security through encouragement of community food production, protecting agricultural areas, and providing convenient access to healthy food. This theme will be addressed under Social Well-Being, Local Food and Agriculture, and Land Use and Development.

### **1.4.3 Environmental Sustainability.**

Policy themes related to environmental sustainability are addressed in a number of policy sections and chapters, including:

- Cherished Local Ecosystems
- World Class Recreation;
- Local Food and Agriculture;
- Land Use;
- Energy, GHG Emissions, and Resources; and
- Development Permit Areas.

Specific environmental themes addressed in the OCP include:

#### ***Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Areas***

Williams Lake includes and is surrounded by sensitive lakes, streams, forests and other ecosystems, including marsh lands. These ecosystems have not only ecological value, but are widely regarded as an important component of the livability of the City. This theme will be addressed under Cherished Local Ecosystems, Land Use and Development, and Development Permit Area Guidelines.

#### ***Reductions in Greenhouse Gases (GHGs)***

Climate change, through GHGs created by humans, is one of the greatest challenges of our time and it could have dramatic impacts on many of our social, economic, and environmental systems. While local governments influence only a portion of GHG production and have direct control over a fraction of these emissions, a significant contribution to reducing GHGs can be made locally. This theme will be addressed primarily under Transportation, Land Use and Development, and Energy, GHG Emissions, and Resources.

#### ***Sustainable Transportation***

Transportation serves many roles, including the provision of access to needs, recreation, and support for the economy. Transportation also has many impacts on community livability, health, and environment. As energy security and climate change become crucial issues, there is clearly a theme of creating a more sustainable transportation system, which will be addressed under the Transportation policy section and the Land Use and Development chapter.

## 1.5 DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

The following table introduces the OCP’s chapters, what their role is, and the information contained in them.

Chapter	Role	Questions Answered
1. Introduction	This chapter explains the purpose of the OCP and how it will achieve this purpose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is an OCP?</li> <li>• How was the OCP developed?</li> <li>• What are the key themes to be addressed?</li> <li>• How is the document organized?</li> </ul>
2. Williams Lake	Provide historical, geographic, community profile information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the context for planning in Williams Lake?</li> <li>• Who are we planning for?</li> </ul>
3. Imagine Our Future	This chapter explains how the City’s overarching policy direction in the <i>Imagine Our Future</i> Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) is reflected in the OCP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are our community sustainability priorities?</li> <li>• How will these be supported in the OCP?</li> </ul>
4. General Policy Areas	The sections in this chapter reflect the Priority Areas (PAs) of the ICSP.	<p>What are our policies that support our priorities of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Well Being</li> <li>• Lively Downtown</li> <li>• Active and Convenient Transportation</li> <li>• Affordable Housing and Livable Neighbourhoods</li> <li>• World Class Recreation</li> <li>• Cherished Local Ecosystems</li> <li>• Distinctive Arts, Culture and Heritage</li> <li>• Partnering with First Nations</li> <li>• Resilient Economy</li> <li>• Local Food and Agriculture</li> </ul>

Chapter	Role	Questions Answered
5. Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Targets, Policies, and Actions	This chapter will address the City's commitments to the Climate Action Charter, the Green Communities Act, and Natural Step principles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the City's GHG reduction targets?</li> <li>• What policies and actions will be used to meet these targets?</li> <li>• How we will reduce our energy consumption and move to renewable sources?</li> <li>• How will we reduce resource consumption, move to renewable resources and limit waste products?</li> </ul>
6. Land Use	This chapter will present desired future land use patterns within the City and how development should proceed, including how it will be serviced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What types of land uses are desired in different areas?</li> <li>• What mixes of land use are permitted in these areas?</li> <li>• What is the general form and character of the use?</li> <li>• How should the City be developed, i.e., what should develop first and what are the priority development areas?</li> </ul>
7. Development Permit Areas	This chapter will outline, where there are differences in development in different areas of the City, how development in these areas will proceed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What areas in the City have a special character?</li> <li>• What measures do developers need to consider in order to respect this character?</li> <li>• What areas have special needs in terms of ecological sensitivity or hazards that must be addressed?</li> <li>• What design guidelines are in place to ensure community quality and livability?</li> </ul>
8. Infrastructure and Municipal Services	This chapter will explain how desired development patterns and land uses will be serviced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we and how will we provide infrastructure services?</li> <li>• Where will we place services and facilities?</li> <li>• How will we accommodate future infrastructure to support the community?</li> </ul>
9. Implementation	This chapter will describe how the OCP's policies and plans will be implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What actions will be used to implement the OCP?</li> <li>• Who is responsible for implementing the OCP?</li> <li>• When and how will we amend the OCP?</li> </ul>