

Built Environment/Urban Design

Draft Objectives and Policies

Growth Management

Objectives

- Strengthen residents' connection with natural elements and urban landmarks.
- Support downtown revitalization.
- Make downtown and neighbourhood centres more attractive and more pedestrian-oriented, attracting residents, businesses, and encouraging economic development.
- Reduce growth-related costs and support investment in infrastructure maintenance and renewal.
- Create land-use patterns that are supportive of convenient walking, cycling, and transit – to improve health, air quality, and climate mitigation efforts.
- Reduce development pressure on valuable resource lands and protect environmentally sensitive areas, hazard areas, and steep slopes.

Policies

Growth Management

1. Encourage residential and commercial growth within urban designations and in serviced areas, and discourage it elsewhere.
2. Affirm and strengthen the role of local centres and corridors play in creating identity in the city by encouraging growth within them.
3. Allow and encourage mixed use development downtown, within local centres and along major streets. Consider mixed use along major streets in business and institutional districts, especially where there is residential use on the opposite side of the street (e.g. 15th avenue near Ospika).
4. Allow and encourage office uses downtown, and restrict them outside the downtown. Office uses outside the downtown should be limited to those professional services that are regularly used by individuals, for whom nearby access is important, such as medical and dental offices. Office development in service commercial or industrial areas is not supported, except where the office use is ancillary to the primary use.
5. [policy to be completed following growth management discussion]

Urban Structure and Form

6. Recognize the role of downtown, Highway 97 and Highway 16, the rivers, and prominent hills, cutbanks, and escarpments in defining the structure and shape of the city.
7. Protect and strengthen key views to landmarks and defining natural features. Views may be strengthened by setting aside key viewpoints, and by framing views with buildings. Landmarks include City Hall, UNBC, and the industrial stacks at pulp mills on the Fraser River. Defining natural features include rivers, cutbanks, and steep hills like Connaught Park (see map, Heritage section).
8. Complete a landmark and view study to confirm views and landmarks that are important to protect, and to define view protection measures appropriate to the physical, community, and market context.
9. In city planning and implementation activities such as neighbourhood planning, street renewal, parks and open space planning, and others, affirm and support the urban structure shown in Map ## by prioritizing projects and planning efforts within priority growth areas.
10. Within local centres, establish maximum block sizes of 1.5 ha when considering subdivision applications, and encourage mid-block connections in existing blocks to achieve the equivalent block size for pedestrian and cyclist movement.
11. Outside local centres, require 1.5 ha block dimensions except where it is impossible due to topography or other significant constraint. In such cases, strongly encourage trail connections to provide the same level of pedestrian connectivity.

Streets

For the purposes of this discussion, “streets” refers to the space bounded by building frontages, including the public right-of-way and private open space.

12. Update street design standards to reflect context-sensitive¹ design. Downtown and in local centres, designs should prioritize pedestrian and bicycle travel and transit use over car use on collectors and arterials. This includes at a minimum

¹ This approach to design recognizes that the priority function – and therefore design – of streets changes along its length. For more information, see ITE’s Context Sensitive Solutions guide at <http://www.ite.org/css/>. For a winter city example, see Ottawa’s [Road Corridor Planning and Design Guidelines](#).

reducing carriageway and lane widths, reducing turning radii at intersections, providing on-street parking, and inviting frequent intersections and pedestrian and bicycle crossing points.

13. Adopt “great streets” principles to guide street design and private realm design. While these apply throughout the city, they are particularly important for development downtown and in local centres:

- (a) Good urban design is premised on the principle that “community takes place on foot”. As such, streets should be places for people to walk leisurely or with a purpose, and should have a pleasing experiential and social dimension.
- (b) Building frontages along urban streets are the strongest determinants of the character and quality of a neighbourhood or district. Continuous frontages create interesting and attractive walking environments while providing friendly and animated streetscapes.
- (c) Streets should provide physical comfort. A sense of physical comfort derives from both a perceived sense of security and the design elements of the street and sidewalk.
- (d) Streets require definition. Streets should have clear boundaries, or “walls”, that define an outdoor room. These “walls” are typically buildings but trees may also provide a sense of enclosure.
- (e) Streets require transparency. Windows at eye level are inviting, engaging, sociable, and provide for natural surveillance, helping to create socially vibrant and active streets.
- (f) Streets require qualities that engage the eye. Visual interest at the human scale adds to the experiential dimension and in particular, the identity of the street.



14. Implement street renewal, using context-sensitive design and great streets principles, with priority for downtown and local centres and in conjunction with transportation network priorities.

15. Implement the Urban Forest Strategy, increasing coverage of street trees, with priority for downtown and local centres.

16. Investigate ways to reduce the dominance of Highway 97 and Highway 16 west as barriers to pedestrian movement in local centres. Consider options for narrowing them visually, landscaping to provide visual refuge for pedestrians, moving frontage roads closer to the highway near intersections, removing “pork

chop” right turns, and encouraging buildings closer to the highways along intersecting streets.

17. Strengthen Massey Drive as a key path between downtown and Pine Centre Mall. Add as many residents as possible along the corridor, and enhance the street as a pedestrian- and cyclist- oriented space.
18. Ensure street and intersection standards adhere to Universal Design principles and guidelines. As part of sidewalk improvements, integrate upgrades to Universal Design standards.

Built Form

19. Implement succinct, easy to understand, and practical design guidelines based on “great streets” principles, good urban design practice, myPG sustainability goals, and on the positive and authentic elements of place that define Prince George. Ensure guidelines mesh with updated street design standards. See Part III for Development Permit Area designations and objectives.
20. Ensure that buildings at corners of major intersections (i.e. intersections between collectors and arterials) locate on both fronting property lines, in order to create comfortable spaces for pedestrians at these intersections.

A Downtown Heart

Objectives

- Revitalize downtown as the commercial, cultural, and civic heart of the community.
- Strengthen the sense of place and identity downtown, incorporating natural and cultural elements.
- Make the downtown more attractive to new residents and businesses.
- Maintain downtown as the central business district and primary location for offices.
- Support a diverse, socially integrated population.

Policies

General

1. Connect downtown with the riverfront experience through a strong park connection, incorporating a significant water feature if possible.

2. Provide public art and signage that connect viewers with unique elements of downtown's natural and cultural heritage, and reflects diverse cultures.
3. Support expression of First Nations identity and culture through building styles, art, signage, street and public space names, and through other similar means.
4. Support a permanent farmer's market and associated public marketplace downtown. Through an adaptive learning process, develop and implement supportive policies for street vendors, buskers, outdoor social spaces (e.g. chess/checkers tables), etc.
5. Develop a strategy to infill downtown surface parking lots, with a target of 10% of downtown land area as surface parking, and 10% of downtown as public parks and plazas.
6. Support provision of facilities for diverse needs. These include supportive non-market housing, affordable market housing, social services, community kitchens, seniors' and family recreation, and similar services.
7. Support a wide range of commercial spaces, from business incubators through conventional office and retail, and related services.
8. Prioritize the downtown as the preferred location for festivals and encourage regular use of both indoor and outdoor spaces downtown for public events of all kinds.

Streets

9. Design streets for multiple functions, in keeping with Great Streets principles and Winter City design guidelines. Downtown streets should be designed as "complete streets" that accommodate vehicle, pedestrian, and cyclist movement, and balance the needs for movement with the need for pedestrian comfort, business access, amenity space, snow storage and runoff management.
10. Implement green streets designs on downtown streets as generally indicated in the Smart Growth on the Ground Prince George Downtown Concept Plan, incorporating street trees, temporary parks and gardens, and green edges. (see also policy 1.4.12, Transportation chapter)
11. Explore the development of downtown streets as Ceremonial Boulevards, Retail Streets, Major Arterials (with cycling lanes), and Commuter Cycling Streets, in keeping with the design vision in the Smart Growth on the Ground Downtown Prince George Concept Plan.

12. Develop and use consistent street design elements that unify the downtown public realm.

Built Form

13. Accommodate building forms from 2-3 storey to mid- and high-rise mixed use buildings. For taller forms, incorporate 2-4 storey podiums to define a street wall, and step towers back to maintain a human scale at street level.
14. Encourage extensive greening of buildings, such as rooftop gardens, patios, planters, and public spaces. Monitor progress and adjust programs to achieve a total equivalent imperviousness of 45%.
15. Update the zoning bylaw to allow for reduction of private open space requirements where public park spaces are available within 400 m.
16. Encourage high performance buildings through incentives and education.
17. Strongly encourage re-use, adaptation, and renovation of existing buildings, responding flexibly to creative proposals.
18. Allow for the following building forms, where an appropriate fit with neighbouring areas is made, and as further described in Policy 1.2.19:
 - (a) Carriage house infill;
 - (b) Courtyard townhomes;
 - (c) Stacked townhomes;
 - (d) Townhouse lofts;
 - (e) 3-4 storey mixed use commercial/residential and retail/office;
 - (f) Mid-rise residential, mixed-use, terraces, and townhouse courtyards; and
 - (g) Podium/point tower buildings.
19. Encourage the following building forms, with reference to the Smart Growth on the Ground Downtown Prince George Concept Plan:
 - (a) River Park/Quebec Corners: Residential towers with 2-4 storey podiums providing a continuous streetwall. Podiums may consist of townhouses, residential amenity spaces, and/or retail spaces.
 - (b) Market and Cultural Core: Infill and redevelopment in keeping with the scale of adjacent buildings, typically 2 storeys or less with retail frontage at grade, and apartments and/or offices above.
 - (c) Vancouver/Victoria Flex/Transition: 3-4 storey mixed-use buildings facing Victoria, with retail at grade and residential above. Residential buildings behind, transitioning in scale to buildings envisioned in the Crescents Neighbourhood Plan between Vancouver and Winnipeg.

Local Centres

Objectives

- Strengthen shopping areas as “people places” with strong pedestrian orientation, walkable amenities, and comfortable, safe open spaces.
- Distinguish different scales of commercial activity.
- Increase the mix of uses, with an emphasis on adding residential uses within easy walking distance of daily needs and amenities.
- Act as an anchor and draw for the local community.
- Support more efficient energy and transportation systems.

Policies

General

1. Encourage infill and redevelopment of existing vacant and underused sites, with an emphasis on enhancing the pedestrian experience.
2. Allow a diverse range of building types, having maximum heights of 4 storeys and accommodating a mix of retail and residential uses.
3. Explore the potential to develop a central public open space in each local centre. This space may be a redesigned street segment, a new space, or an adaptation of an existing open space such as a mall parking lot. The space should be strongly supported by a diversity of surrounding uses and activities, and should be located on one or more pedestrian, transit and cycling routes.
4. Require all new retail space to be oriented to the street or a central public space, with parking on the street or at rear.
5. Pursue public access through existing large blocks to provide a fine-grained network for pedestrian movement, and ensure this network is safe and comfortable.

Neighbourhoods

Objectives

- Ensure change in existing neighbourhoods is in keeping with existing character and scale.
- Infill and redevelop vacant and underutilized sites to meet the anticipated needs of an aging population.

Policies

General

1. Remove regulatory and other barriers to infill and redevelopment in existing neighbourhoods.
2. Develop a housing typology that meet the needs of Prince George seniors and that would be suitable for redevelopment of existing neighbourhoods.
3. Encourage and facilitate pilot housing projects to test and establish new housing types that fit within the Prince George context.
4. Maintain scale of housing, by limiting the size of new buildings and encouraging ground-oriented multi-family forms.
5. Encourage incremental, small-scale redevelopment whose immediate impacts are relatively minor.
6. Explore required upgrades to lanes to make them realistic primary access points for more intensive residential development.
7. Retain green spaces to ensure that residents continue to have good access to local recreation despite increased populations.

Business and Institutional Districts

Objectives

- Clearly distinguish commercial and business areas by use, scale, and physical orientation.
- Support on-going commercial and industrial growth.
- Transition well to adjacent areas.

Policies

General

1. Classify areas having commercial and business uses as follows:

Area	Commercial Uses	Scale	Orientation	Location
Local Centres				
Local	Retail and professional office	Small	Pedestrian	Paths
Neighbourhood	Retail and	Medium	Pedestrian	Paths

	professional office			
Commercial Centres	Retail	Large	Automobile	Edges
Business Districts	Commercial services	Large	Automobile and commercial vehicles	Edges, maybe paths
Institutional Districts	Institutional and ancillary	Large	Pedestrian and automobile	Either/both
Industrial Districts	Industrial and ancillary	Large	Commercial vehicles	Edges

2. Require street-orientation of all buildings in local centres.
3. Provide for efficient vehicular access and strong traffic management for commercial centres, business districts, and industrial districts.

Notes: