

Part A Plan Overview

DRAFT

The City of Prince George Official Community Plan

1.1 Purpose, scope and duration

This Official Community Plan (OCP or the Plan) establishes a framework for planning and land use in the City of Prince George. The OCP gains its “official” status once Council has adopted it through enactment of a bylaw. The OCP includes statements and map designations for residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, agricultural, recreational, and public utility land uses, and comprises contextual information, objectives, and policies.

As a critical planning tool, Council, staff and citizens use the OCP to help make decisions on things such as where we locate housing, what our transportation priorities are, which lands we protect from development, how we protect development from hazards, and how we provide services for more sustainable development over the next 15 years. As a general rule, it is reviewed annually and revised every 5 years to 10 years.

1.2 Intent, application, and interpretation

The OCP is a statement of objectives and policies to guide decisions on planning and land use management within the City.

Although the OCP does not commit or authorize a municipality to proceed with any project specified in the plan and does not have an immediate effect on property rights (i.e. existing zoning regulations continue to apply unless a separate zoning bylaw amendment is adopted), the OCP can have consequences that may increase the regulatory burden of developing a property (e.g. Designation of development permit areas) and may assist decision makers to determine what is in the public interest.

The *Local Government Act* tells us that all bylaws enacted or works undertaken by Council after adoption of the OCP must be consistent with the plan. An OCP, however, is not intended to be a static document, but should adapt to new trends within society and respond to changing circumstances. As such, following appropriate public consultation and careful consideration by Council, policies and land use designations in an OCP may be revised by an amending bylaw pursuant to provisions outlined within the *Local Government Act*.

The policies and maps in an OCP are not intended to function as a zoning map. Instead the Plan includes present and long term designation maps. The Zoning Bylaw and zoning maps, in contrast, permit, regulate and limit land use, density, buildings and other matters, and include significantly greater detail.

1.3 City jurisdiction and scope of interest

The purpose and content of an OCP is formally outlined in Part 26 of the *Local Government Act*. Section 875(1) of the *Local Government Act* states: “An official community plan is a statement of objectives and policies to guide decisions on planning and land use management, within the area covered by the plan, respecting the purposes of local government.”

Section 877 of the *Local Government Act* outlines the required content of an OCP, and states:

- “(1) An official community plan must include statements and map designations for the area covered by the plan respecting the following:
- (a) the approximate location, amount, type and density of residential development required to meet anticipated housing needs over a period of at least 5 years;
 - (b) the approximate location, amount and type of present and proposed commercial, industrial, institutional, agricultural, recreational and public utility land uses;
 - (c) the approximate location and area of sand and gravel deposits that are suitable for future sand and gravel extraction;
 - (d) restrictions on the use of land that is subject to hazardous conditions or that is environmentally sensitive to development;
 - (e) the approximate location and phasing of any major road, sewer and water systems;
 - (f) the approximate location and type of present and proposed public facilities, including schools, parks and waste treatment and disposal sites;
 - (g) other matters that may, in respect of any plan, be required or authorized by the minister.
- (2) An official community plan must include housing policies of the local government respecting affordable housing, rental housing and special needs housing.
- (3) An official community plan must include targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the area covered by the plan, and policies and actions of the local government proposed with respect to achieving those targets.”

Within Section 878 of the *Local Government Act* OCPs may optionally address the following, provided it only states the broad objective of the City related to the matter:

- “(a) Policies of the local government relating to social needs, social well-being and social development;
- (b) a regional context statement [established from the Regional District’s regional growth strategy];
- (c) policies of a local government respecting maintenance and enhancement of farming on land in a farming area or in an area designated agricultural use in the community plan; and
- (d) policies of a local government relating to the preservation, protection, restoration and enhancement of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity.”

1.4 Structure of the plan

The OCP is organized in five Parts, as shown in the diagram below. It is structured to reflect the myPG Integrated Community Sustainability Plan and City strategies developed subsequent to the Sustainability Plan.

Part A: Plan Overview orients readers to the plan, the process of producing it, and how it relates to the City's other plans and policies.

Part B: Vision and Concept gives readers a summary of the plan, beginning with basics like planning principles, a description of how the plan sees the regional context for city-wide planning, and relationships with the Lheidli T'enneh. It then focuses on the community's Vision for the future and the big moves the plan makes to achieve the vision.

Part C: Objectives and Policies is the main body of the plan. It describes how the City intends to achieve the community's vision by stating objectives (specific, discrete goals), and listing the policies it adopts to meet them. The plan can only set policies for things within its jurisdiction (i.e. within its power to do). This section also identifies ways the City will implement its policies, for example through updates to regulations.

Part D: Implementation describes broadly what the City's will do to act on the objectives and policies.

Part E: Definitions is a glossary of some technical terms.

1.5 Relationship to other plans and policies

myPG Sustainability Plan

The myPG Sustainability Plan developed by the community in 2010 has provided significant guidance on the community's "objectives" for economic, environmental, social and land use development, and was utilized to frame the vision and goals of this OCP. The myPG Sustainability Plan is underway with advancing its Implementation since 2010. An implementation item includes identifying key indicators for measuring progress and reporting on them with our partners in the community. The OCP does not include land use indicators, as the myPG process will be identifying these.

Below is a comparison between the two plans, an OCP and myPG Sustainability Plan (ICSP):

OCP	Sustainability Plan
City's Plan	Community's Plan
Limited in Scope (Land Use & Planning)	Broad in Scope (Environment, Economic, Social)
City's Jurisdiction (Limited by <i>Local Government Act</i>)	Multi-jurisdictional
Medium Term (5 - 15 years)	Long Term (20-100+ years)
Approval by Council (Bylaw)	Approval by Council and Community Partners
Strategic and Tactical	Visionary and Strategic

Financial Plan

Each year, municipalities must adopt by bylaw, a five-year financial plan that includes capital and operating items. Furthermore, Council must consider the financial plan prior to adopting the OCP.

Key issues within this Plan that may impact the financial health of the City include:

- a) avoiding urban sprawl and ensuring that development takes place where adequate facilities exist or can be provided in a timely, economic and efficient manner,
- b) settlement patterns that minimize the use of automobiles and encourage walking, bicycling and efficient use of public transit,
- c) maintaining the integrity of a secure and productive resource base, including agricultural land reserve,
- d) economic development that supports the unique character of this community,
- e) reducing and preventing air, land and water pollution
- f) providing adequate inventories of suitable land and resources for future settlement, including sufficed lands and amenities such as public facilities, waste treatment and disposal, parks and recreation,
- g) settlement patterns that reduce the risk associated with hazards, and
- h) planning for energy supply and promoting the efficient use, conservation and alternate forms of energy.

Parks and Open Space Master Plan

The Parks and Open Space Master Plan serves as a guide for the use, acquisition, development, and disbursement of parks and open spaces. The Parks and Open Space Master Plan Implementation Strategy includes certain recommendations for changes which are reflected in this Plan.

Regional Solid Waste Management Plan

Solid Waste Management Plans are long term visions of how each regional district would like to manage their solid wastes, including waste diversion and disposal activities. The City continues to support the objectives of the Regional Solid Waste Management Plan.

1.6 Map interpretation

Where a designation boundary is shown on the Plan maps as approximately following, immediately parallel to, or as an extension of a property line, the City boundary, the high water mark of a watercourse or body of water, or a topographical contour line, it follows that line. Where a designation boundary follows a high water mark it shall be construed to move with the high water mark in the case of slow and imperceptible change.

However, in some cases, the boundaries of these growth management designations are defined differently, as follows:

- The Environment section establishes interpretation, conditions, and limitations for boundary lines for hazardous conditions and environmentally sensitive areas, and apply to the Growth Management map where these boundaries are used to distinguish growth areas.
- For Growth Priority Areas:
 - Corridor boundaries are located either at the rear property line of a parcel adjacent to the street at the centre of the corridor, or 40 m from its front property line, whichever is less.
 - Local Centres are defined by a circle having a 400 m radius. For the purposes of applying objectives and policies, any property having a greater area within the Local Centre boundary than outside it is considered to be in the Local Centre.
 - Boundary lines defining Urban Boundary classifications are approximate, as they reflect estimations of existing and potential future servicing locations and costs.
 - Typically, the boundary between the Urban Area and adjacent Growth Management designations for large parcels is established approximately 40 m outside the Urban Area: the depth of a standard urban lot serviced from an adjacent right of way.
 - Growth Management boundaries will be further defined on the basis of detailed servicing studies.

The location of services and systems reflected in the maps are approximate. Additional improvements or works may be required which have not been identified on these maps and should be verified independently for each development. The maps and accompanying information are intended to provide guidance for decision making at a planning-level, and are not intended to be used as the only tool for site-specific design and construction. Moreover, applicable conditions, regulations and interpretations are subject to change with time as further studies and plans evolve. Thus, the City is not liable for any claims or actions arising from the use or interpretation of this data, and does not warrant or guarantee its accuracy or reliability.

1.7 Goals and Principles of Engagement

An engaged and transparent OCP process is inevitably a more successful one. With this front of mind, the City identified specific community consultation goals for the OCP process:

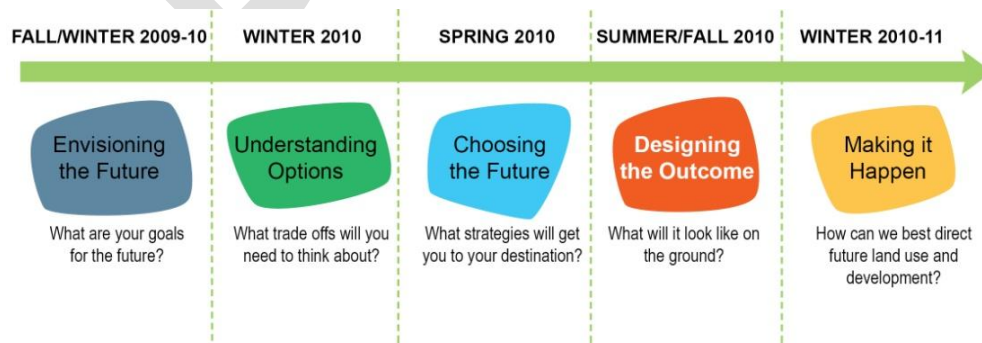
- **Use broad community outreach** to ensure key OCP principles for public engagement are implemented, and OCP outcomes and opportunities to participate are brought to the attention of the community.
- **Catalyze and coordinate partnerships** for effective strategy development and to support implementation success.
- **Ensure an evolving, learning process** to challenge our mindsets and open the opportunity for innovation and creativity.
- **Be transparent, diverse and progressive.** Transparency through broad outreach. Diversity by focusing on key stakeholders. Progressive by showcasing the products of each phase and showing evolution through the project.
- **Communicate consistently, and have clear objectives** by working with a consistent set of materials so that outcomes can be fairly compared.

The OCP principles for engagement directed the process to be:

- **Inclusive** - Engagement is our foundation for success. All voices are invited to participate, and will have opportunities to contribute meaningfully throughout.
- **Reflective** – We are learning together from each other in this process. Our shared community learning will guide myPG as well as future communications with the City.
- **Action oriented** – City council, staff, community partners and stakeholders are committed to implementing the plan in a timely manner and catalyzing immediate actions.
- **Creative** – Changing our mindset about the possible future for PG, and acting on that, while change and challenges occur.
- **Innovative** – We are trying new things to ensure effective, productive engagement and responsive plan and policy.

1.8 Process

OCP engagement involved several points of focused outreach from October 2009 – March 2011. The following is an overview of the key techniques and outcomes. More detailed reports of engagement process and results can be reviewed by contacting Long Range Planning.



1. **Envisioning the Future, myPG ICSP.** Prince George’s Sustainability Plan (myPG ICSP) sets a specific framework of goals and strategies that guide the OCP. ICSP engagement began by asking people about their vision of the future and how to get there using a survey and “kitchen table” workbooks. 1,907 people contributed to the development of 20 community goals.
2. **Understanding Options and Choosing the Future, myPG ICSP** - A series of five public strategy workshops followed in the next phase to explore how to achieve the vision, building on community ideas and existing plans, programs and initiatives. 250 community stakeholders worked together to weave a range of recommended actions that could achieve myPG goals. Draft material was presented for public review, using a mall display, the library, other displays, website, and workbooks. Review meetings were held with shareholders such as developers, major landowners and community organizations. The final ICSP was approved June 2010.
3. **Designing the Outcome, myPG OCP - priorities confirmation.** Citizens were asked to prioritize among a short-list of specific OCP-related goals that had previously been identified through the myPG sustainability planning process. Four techniques were used to gather input on the short-listed priorities: (1) an online “Sustain-a-bucks” Survey, (2) a Canada Day Bean Count, (3) stakeholder meetings and (4) an “Asset Mapping” activity at two large community events. 203 citizens responded to the survey to prioritize OCP-specific ICSP actions, approximately 388 people spent a total of 3,875 beans to explain their priorities at the Canada Day event, and a total of 11 stakeholder meetings were held representing 43 organizations in Prince George to delve deeper on those priorities.
4. **Designing the Outcome, myPG OCP - Draft policy review and growth options survey.** Based on priority directions previously confirmed, staff introduced initial draft policy to stakeholders and the general public for their feedback, and presented four residential development options for directing growth over the next 15-20 years. The public was invited to provide feedback through the following avenues: (1) 283 citizens responded to an Options for Growth Survey, (2) 26 citizens sat with City staff to discuss these in-depth at an Options for Growth workshop, (3) three youth-focused Options for Growth workshops and/or survey booths (4) nine topic-specific stakeholder meetings and on-request presentations to stakeholder groups representing 39 organizations in Prince George and a number of private citizens, (5) booths at local events.
5. **Making it Happen, myPG OCP.** Citizens and relevant agencies were then invited to review the compilation of these pieces in a full review of the draft OCP

Beyond the specific engagement tools designed to incorporate a broad range of public input, a variety of communications channels were used to ensure that citizens and stakeholders were aware of the engagement opportunities. These included (1) the mypg website, (2) email advisories to an extensive stakeholder list of over 700, (3) use of the existing networks of cooperating community organizations, student unions, and other partners (4) radio, television, and newspaper media

coverage, (5) Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, and You Tube presence, (6) local events presence, (7) and finally the myPG Fave photo contest to draw attention and enthusiasm into the process.

1.9 Results

While a number of our surveys were anonymous, we estimate over 2,000 unique individuals were actively engaged in the myPG process through surveys or stakeholder meetings from beginning to end. This included representation from 97 organizations within the public, private and non-profit sectors of Prince George.

DRAFT

2 The Context for Planning

Geographical and historical setting

The City of Prince George is located within the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation (LTFN). The LTFN has a long and proud history in the Prince George area. The word Lheidli means "where the two rivers flow together" and T'enneh means "the People". LTFN has a vast traditional territory stretching over 4.3 million hectares from the Rocky Mountains to the interior plateau. The LTFN community occupies four Indian Reserves totaling approximately 677 hectares within and adjacent to the City of Prince George. An additional 237 hectares of federal Crown land and 3,361 hectares of provincial Crown Land are being considered for future acquisition by the LTFN within the Lheidli T'enneh Final Agreement. By managing their resources in a sustainable manner and seeking new economic opportunities, this First Nation's community is keen to expand their participation in the region and the wider global economy.

Source: LTFN Website: <http://www.lheidli.ca/mainoffice.htm>

Principal influences on City form and character over the last 120 years include:

- The early settlement at the confluence of the Fraser and Nechako Rivers by First Nations and Hudson's Bay Company employees at the Fort George IR #1 (established in 1894). This reserve was later purchased by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (GTPR), and developed into what is now the downtown and major rail yards of the city. During this early period, two other town-sites were also speculatively developed in response to economic opportunities – South Fort George and Central Fort George.
- The "formative period" of the city's development occurred from 1908 to 1915, which marked European settlement, and extensive growth generated by the construction of the GTPR. The city was incorporated in 1915. The GTPR lands were planned according to the "City Beautiful" design principles popular at that time, resulting in a legacy downtown of grid and crescent streets, axial connections from City Hall to the rail station and rivers, off-set street alignments, parks and a prominent boulevard (Patricia Boulevard) to mark the civic area. This land use concept remains central to the character of the city today. Over time, the other townsites eventually became less prominent, resulting in the abandonment of Central Fort George, and in South Fort George becoming a much smaller community.
- The period following World War II (1946-1969) marked two decades of rapid growth and urban expansion, which largely occurred in a sprawling and unmanaged form, resulting in many sparsely populated areas both within and outside city boundaries.
- From the late 1960s to the early 1980s, the city developed greater control of land use planning during a steady period of growth. This included adoption of two versions of the Official Community Plan (1969 and 1979), with increasing emphasis on infill, limits to unserviced residential developments, promotion of neighbourhood plans, and an orderly progression of services. These issues still face the city today.
- In 1975, the Provincial government mandated the most significant boundary extension, with very large areas of lands surrounding Prince George being added to the city boundaries. These

lands, previously under the jurisdiction of the Fraser-Fort George Regional District, increased the city's land base to the boundaries still in place today. The rationale for this extension was the rapid growth outside the city boundaries, and the need to have a more comprehensive approach to growth management and utility servicing.

Source: Understanding A City's Form and Function: The Development and Planning History of the City of Prince George (Jason Llewellyn, 1999)

Contemporary situation and trends

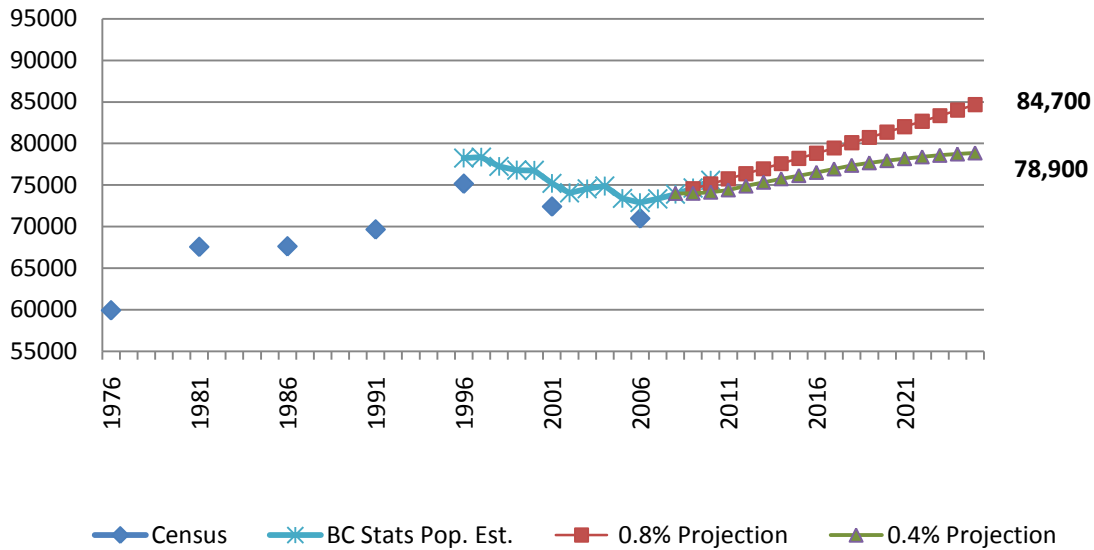
This Official Community Plan (OCP) has a planning horizon of 15 years. Its purpose is to guide the City's policies for land use, transportation, and other matters in the City's jurisdiction in that period, in support of the community's vision and goals. The OCP works to address trends and issues affecting the community at the time of writing, aiming to maximize community benefit. This section describes some key trends and issues the plan addresses.

2.1 Demographics

Prince George has grown dramatically since it was first established, with the most significant periods of growth in the 1960's and 1970's. "The downturn in the forest sector in the mid-eighties and early nineties was responsible for much of the net outmigration from the area at that time. In the mid-nineties the area received large net inflows of migrants. The population has aged more quickly than the provincial population, adding over nine years to its median age since the mid 1980s, compared with a provincial gain of 7.2 years. Nonetheless, Fraser-Fort George Region has a young population, with a median age three years younger than the provincial median. Fertility has decreased over the last twenty years, but remains above provincial levels. Child dependency ratios have declined sharply since the mid 1980s, but also remain higher than ratios for British Columbia as a whole. Conversely, the ratio of elderly (aged 65 and over) to working age population is lower than the provincial ratio despite doubling in the last two decades. The dependence on the forest sector and the male dominated employment in the industry is likely the reason for a sex ratio that is weighted in favour of males. Relatively high fertility, together with a younger age structure, is responsible for the significant, but declining, excess of births over deaths." Source: Ministry of Labour, Citizens' Services and Open Government 2010

The future is expected to broadly reflect these trends. The biggest change will be the aging population, following a pattern typical of North American communities. As baby boomers continue to age, the population of seniors will grow, and that of working age people will be reduced. By 2018, about 1 out of 6 Prince George residents will be over 65, and the number will grow to fully 1 out of 4 by 2038. These residents will require accessible housing, located near shops, services, and amenities; and having fixed incomes, affordability will be a key issue for many. The shape of a city that meets these needs is very different from the city we know today.

Figure ## Census (1976-2006), BC Stats Estimates (1996-2010) and Various Projections (2008-2025)



Overall, Prince George’s population is projected to grow from 75,568 (2010 BC Stats) to between 78,900 and 84,700 by 2025, at an average rate of 0.4 - 0.8% a year. Annual growth will vary, depending on global economic conditions – for example, growth in 2009/10 was estimated at about 1.2%/year.

With this population increase and aging households getting smaller, housing demand will outstrip growth. Some 3,600 to 6,600 housing units will therefore be needed to meet community needs by 2025, which equates to an average of 280 to 440 units per year. By contrast the average number of housing units built over the last decade was 160 units per year. If unit types reflect historical preferences for single and multi-family in each age group, then slightly more single-family units will be needed than multi-family. However, if trends observed in other similar BC communities with older populations hold, then the vast majority of new housing will need to be multi-family, or at least senior-friendly.

These future projections reflect available data and trend-based modeling techniques. However, the world is complex, and many factors will come to play, resulting in a reality that may exceed or fall short of these predictions. This OCP takes these projections as a reasonable starting point for planning, and responds to the uncertainty by taking an adaptive management approach that adjusts policies in case of higher or lower growth. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly for the community, the OCP recognizes the role that growth can play in making Prince George more sustainable (as identified in the myPG sustainability planning process), and includes specific policies to support that growth. While the forecast must be taken as the best foundation for policy, the expectation is that economic development will help the community exceed it.

2.2 Existing uses and zoned capacities

The existing Land Use Map shows the existing residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, agricultural, recreational, and public utility uses currently in the City. The following summarizes existing uses and current capacities:

- About 19 ha (47 acres) of additional commercial land will be required to meet the needs of Prince George's growing population over the next 15 years. A simple analysis of commercially zoned lands in Prince George estimated a total of 298 ha (737 acres) of vacant or underutilized commercial land, far in excess of demand.
- The City has made more than 725 ha (1,790 ac) of designated, but undeveloped industrial land, far more than will be needed over the next 15 years.
- UNBC has secure reserve lands and a phased Master Plan for its lands.
- As noted in section 2.1, 3,600 to 6,600 new housing units may be needed to meet demand. Currently, the City has zoned vacant or underutilized land with capacity for more than 30,000 units, with a further 6,600 units in new neighbourhood plan areas.

Simply put, there is ample land available to accommodate potential growth over the plan horizon, even if the trend-based projections included in this Plan are found to be overly modest.

2.3 Infrastructure renewal

The historical pattern of growth in Prince George is typical of many places in Canada. It initially grew around a small downtown core and key industries, with a grid of walkable streets providing access to shopping streets and amenities. The rapid growth that followed emphasized suburban housing separated from amenities, employment and services. Access to these relied on automobile travel, using high-speed arterials and highways.

Over the last 10-20 years, cities across North America have been coming to terms with the hidden costs of this rapid, low-density growth. Road, water, sewer, and storm sewer infrastructure is now wearing out, with very costly replacements needed soon. On a per-capita or per-unit basis, low-density development located far from jobs, amenities and services is much more expensive to maintain and replace than high-density development with easy, local access to these needs. In Prince George, the cost of maintaining basic services over the lifecycle of our assets is vast. There is a need to minimize further infrastructure expansions now and instead to focus City spending on addressing existing capacity limitations, as well as the renewal and rehabilitation of existing infrastructure to attract investment and ensure a high quality of life with adequate levels of service aligned to manageable fees and taxes.

2.4 Community identity

A second result of the rapid, auto-oriented growth of the 1960's-1980's is a lack of identifiable character in much of the city. In 2010, Prince George residents were asked to identify places they loved and places they didn't like, with interesting results. The most loved locations were parks and open spaces, especially Fort George Park, as well as individual homes. Downtown was valued as a focus of identity for many, but was disliked by others because of concerns about air quality, crime and other social issues. Places least liked were distributed around the city. Most notable was the fact that aside from downtown, individual homes and Pine Centre Mall (valued for good shopping),

no developed urban place in Prince George was identified as a place that residents loved. This may have resulted from the rapid, auto-oriented growth of much of the city.

Prince George does have many strong elements of identity. Both the people and the place are defined by the rivers, the cutbanks and hillsides overlooking them, the surrounding lakes and forests, and the immediate access to the outdoors. Despite its current challenges, downtown has a strong formal structure laid out by the original “City Beautiful” town plan and great potential for development. Finally, a number of neighbourhood centres and connecting streets have potential to act as powerful structural elements, helping shape great, accessible neighbourhoods. Carefully planned, growth can make Prince George into a community where residents can easily access the outdoors that they love so much, as well as urban places that are comfortable, humane, and welcoming, and preferably beautiful and enticing as well.

2.5 Major plans and initiatives

Much work has been done to support an enhanced community over the 10 years since the last OCP update in 2001. Most recent among these is the myPG Sustainability Plan, which established a strong community vision and goals, and identified a host of potential initiatives to achieve them. The OCP is an early step in implementation of that plan, establishing policies to guide City action on the ground. It is also an opportunity to formally implement a host of other major initiatives for example:

- Energy and Greenhouse Gas Management Plan – 2007
- Parks and Open Space Master Plan – 2008
- Airport Light Industrial Plan – 2008
- Smart Growth on the Ground Downtown Concept Plan – 2009
- Flood Risk Assessment and Flood Control Solutions – 2009
- Active Transportation Plan (draft) – 2011
- Mayor’s Task Force for a Better Downtown (now the Downtown Partnership) – on-going
- Air Quality Management Plan Phase 2 - Phase 3 plan is in process
- Asset Management Planning – on-going

2.6 Key issues

The OCP addresses a number of key issues arising from the current situation, trends, and previous work, including:

- Implementing the community vision of sustainability;
- Implementing Council’s Strategic Plans;
- Addressing the housing and access needs of an aging population;
- Focusing development to maximize benefits to the community;
- Using development as a lever to enhance the city, attracting new growth;
- Improving air quality;
- Minimizing infrastructure costs, helping to keep taxes low;
- Enhancing key elements of the community’s current identity, including downtown; and enhancing potential new elements such as neighbourhood centres; and
- Strengthening transit, cycling, and walking networks.