

Part B *Vision and Concept*



3 Vision



(Photograph courtesy Chris Leboe)

The Vision of our community

The OCP Update process began with the development of an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (myPG Sustainability Plan) that would form a guiding framework for the OCP. Through the myPG process and previous complimentary processes (described in more detail above in ‘Community Engagement’) a series of community goals were established and from these, a vision for Prince George’s future:

Our Vision of Prince George in 2040

“As BC’s northern capital, Prince George is a model for sustainable Canadian cities. The local environment is healthy, supporting a robust economy and an enviable quality of life for residents. Everyone has housing they can afford, good food on the table, and a strong, supportive network of friends and co-workers. Built on regional assets, the economy is strong and stable. A vibrant downtown, great community, affordable lifestyle, and spectacular natural setting are Prince George’s greatest strengths.” (myPG, an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan for Prince George, p.2)

The vision provides a foundation for the policies in this OCP.

Principles for planning and decision-making

Over many years, many decisions large and small should add up to achieve the community vision. In a sense, ***every decision counts***. For this reason, principles for planning and decision-making are critical. Developed through the Smart Growth on the Ground Downtown Prince George Concept Plan, the myPG Sustainability Plan process and OCP development, the following principles should be considered by the City in its decision-making:

- **Respect:** respect the Lheidli T’enneh First Nation’s history and rights in this place that is part of their traditional territory;
- **Adaptability:** plan for more than one eventuality, and set up processes to identify and adapt to expected and unexpected change;
- **Fairness:** treat all citizens fairly;

- **Engagement:** engage the public and stakeholders broadly and authentically in decisions, providing for open and transparent dialogue;
- **Performance orientation:** keep sight of the community’s performance goals in all decisions, measuring progress towards the vision at every step;
- **Accountability:** communicate clearly the reasons for and impacts of decisions, and the efforts and results of engagement activities;
- **Action focus:** don’t get bogged down in unnecessary plans and projects;
- **City leadership:** lead the way to encourage action by the private sector and the community; and,
- **Create “people places”:** in planning and design decisions, aim to make beautiful, attractive places for people first and foremost.
- **Aim for complete communities:** make it easy for people to shop, play and work close to home.
- **Emphasize options to the car:** support a range of attractive mobility choices, including walking, cycling, and transit.
- **Work in harmony with natural systems:** respect, maintain, and restore the natural functioning of the landscape.
- **Develop greener, smarter buildings and infrastructure:** develop in ways that reduce environmental impact and cost less over their lifetimes.
- **Provide housing to meet the needs of the whole community:** especially with an aging population, aim to provide housing for many different households and abilities.
- **Honour the spirit of each community:** work to strengthen residents’ sense of place.

Commitment to cooperation and communication

With this Plan the City continues to reinforce its commitment to ongoing cooperation and communication *with Federal, Provincial, Regional* and First Nations governments whose areas of jurisdiction overlap with, or are adjacent to the City of Prince George. This approach is particularly important for the land use and planning objectives and policies found in this Plan, which have long lasting and far reaching impacts on, not only the geographical area of our community and matters under the City’s jurisdiction, but also our neighbouring communities, the region, and other levels of government.



4 Concept & Strategies

The myPG Sustainability Plan vision for Prince George highlights a strong, stable economy, a vibrant downtown, great neighbourhoods, affordable lifestyle, and spectacular natural setting. The OCP concept describes this vision more fully, with an emphasis on the physical layout of the community, as described in the next few pages. Subsequent chapters detail how the City plans to support this vision, listing specific objectives and policies that should guide its actions and those of citizens and businesses in the community.

A vital economy

Prince George is the ‘capital’ of BC’s North, acting as its administrative, business, educational and commercial centre. This role, coupled with its key location on global transportation routes and the resource base of the region, promises a robust economy over the long term. Increasing diversification in the local economy has already made the economy more resilient, stabilizing it through dramatic regional and global changes. Collaboration among economic players locally helps maintain an effective strategy for long-term health. The Plan takes a broad approach to ensuring continued economic prosperity, including business attraction and retention, diversification, regional integration, and other related efforts. More than that, the Plan integrates economic, social, environmental, and place-making strategies to support a community that is economically resilient over the long term. Economic policies are contained in Chapter 5.

A city defined by nature

One of the greatest aspects of Prince George is access to nature in and around the city, and the environment is one of the community’s greatest assets. The Plan protects valuable environmental areas and avoids environmental hazards. It goes further than previous plans, recognizing and protecting the rivers, cutbanks, and significant hillsides as critical physical elements that create and reinforce our sense of identity and the place in which we live, reminding us that Prince George’s structure is defined by the confluence of the Nechako and Fraser rivers. Environmental policies are contained in Chapter 6.



(Photograph courtesy Shawn Haines)

Valuable rural resources

Green spaces are also valuable as resources, and form a critical part of a sustainable resource economy. As the local climate warms, agriculture may become a bigger part of our local economy. The growth of the biofuel industry and renewable energy makes forests an increasingly valuable resource. Aggregates (sand and gravel) also remain important resources for construction, road building and maintenance of vital infrastructure and building components. These areas are protected from fragmentation and urban development, ensuring a strong resource

base for the future. Policies in Chapters 5, 6, and 8 address the management of these resources.

A supportive city

The City has a key role to play in ensuring the health of the community, in the context of all levels of governments who play the most important roles. Planning for social well-being is multi-faceted, covering everything from housing to health, food, diversity, and community engagement. The City has a significant role in addressing housing needs in particular. However, in all areas, the Plan supports an explicitly collaborative and integrative approach, endorsing strong relationships with others. Building on the myPG Sustainability Plan, the OCP takes the approach that the most effective and efficient way to improve well-being is by addressing root causes, such as the social determinants of health. Social policies are contained in Chapter 7.

A growing city

Building on the assets of the city and region, economic development efforts, and initiatives to enhance the city, Prince George should see continued growth over the next 15 years. A key challenge of this Plan is to ensure that new growth strengthens the community’s economy, social fabric, and natural and built environments. There is tremendous capacity for growth within the existing urban area, and the City plans to focus that growth and accompanying investments to make Prince George even more attractive for prospective residents and businesses. Downtown and neighbourhood centres contain good development opportunities and anchor this growth, leading to a more diverse and accessible community. In case growth outstrips projections and creates stresses, areas have been identified and planned in advance as future development areas. Additionally, future areas have been identified to ensure that these portions of our community are reserved for urban settlement as opposed to rural, low-density development. [*Growth management policies are contained in Chapter 8, Section 8.1*].

A memorable city

Beyond the downtown and area, the OCP aims to strengthen the form and structure of the city by designating neighbourhood centres and major corridors. This change should make it more legible by bringing out unique characteristics of different neighbourhoods, and by making it easier to know when you are in a quiet area, or a more exciting, active centre. To strengthen these areas, new development should be encouraged, the city should focus investment to enhance public spaces, and the Plan should guide development to create “people places” that are safe, comfortable, attractive, and unique. Development of the City should also celebrate it as a “winter city” defined in part by the cold, snow and ice of the winter months. [*Urban Form and Structure policies that support development of Prince George as a “great place” are contained in Chapter 8, Section 8.2*].



