

Kelowna Chamber

City of Kelowna OCP 2040

Final Submission

Oct 26, 2021

ABOUT THE CHAMBER

The Kelowna Chamber of Commerce is a federally incorporated not-for-profit organization that is dedicated to connecting, serving, and empowering the business community primarily in the City of Kelowna but also in the communities of West Kelowna and Lake Country. The Chamber provides numerous services to its 1,000 members and the broader business community including educational seminars, major events, member benefits, and government advocacy. The Chamber invests 100% of the revenue it receives back into programs and services that continually add value to members and the communities we serve. In 2021, the Kelowna Chamber is celebrating its 115th year and it continues to be recognized as one of BC's leading business associations and among the leaders in the Canadian Chamber network. It is one of only a handful of Accredited Chambers in the Province of B.C. under the Canadian Chamber Accreditation Program.

OUR MISSION

We exist to foster a positive business environment by providing members and the community with leadership, advocacy, and services of value.



Growing the people who power the Okanagan

Oct. 25, 2021

Mayor and Council
City of Kelowna
1435 Water Street
Kelowna BC V1Y 1J4

The Kelowna Chamber recognizes the draft Official Community Plan for the City of Kelowna represents the culmination of an extensive community engagement process and the Chamber applauds City staff for the years of work and community engagement that have gone into crafting the new OCP. We also thank the City of Kelowna for allowing us to be a partner at the table in ongoing preparation of the 2040 plan.

We have previously provided a lengthy submission on the draft so this letter is meant to convey to Mayor and Council our appreciation for the engagement and raise a few points for Council to be aware of as you shift from planning to implementation.

As you are aware, the Kelowna Chamber represents the broad business and economic interests of our members and the business community. We recognize and value that certain sector-based associations have specific concerns and perspectives that they have shared, particularly the Urban Development Institute Okanagan Chapter (UDI) and the Canadian Home Builders Association Central Okanagan (CHBACO). We defer to their expertise in those specific areas.

Overall, we believe the City's engagement process has resulted in a better final product, an engagement process that was no doubt made more difficult because of the pandemic. We recognize the many positive aspects of the draft plan far outweigh any of the concerns we continue to have and expect Council will be supportive of the document as proposed.

With that said, as Council moves closer towards adopting the plan, there are a few issues we wish to bring to Council's attention that are relevant in the context of:

- > How the City implements the new OCP; and,
- > How you prepare for the next iteration of the OCP.

We recognize that adoption of the OCP is only the beginning of a process. We look forward to continued collaboration as the plan is implemented, evaluated, and adjusted over the next twenty years.

We also appreciate the OCP is a high-level planning document but would offer that it is not a tablet that has come from the mountains and etched in stone never to be altered. As we have seen through the pandemic, being agile so as to respond to emerging issues is an attribute that has helped us deal with COVID-19 and it will also help us ensure the future prosperity for the next generation by being open to adjusting the OCP when and if necessary.

Changing environments and evolving demands in a growing region is likely why the Canada/BC Expert Panel in Affordable Housing recommended five-year life spans for OCP's in growing regions as opposed to the traditional twenty-year approach.

We wish to further note seven specific areas that we would appreciate Council considering now and into the future when evaluating the OCP recognizing staff will implement this document, but it is the elected leaders who are responsible for the accountability of its effectiveness in delivering on the policy objectives contained within. Council should also not be adverse over time to identifying policy areas that may be lacking in the OCP and amending it as those issues arise.

1. Pro-growth Plan/Land Use

There is value to current residents inherent in growth and that value should be recognized within the OCP, such that the financial benefits that flow to a community from new investment are recognized. We would have liked to have seen a clear policy statement that recognizes the benefits that flow to all current citizens from new growth and reinforces the City is "open for business".

2. Affordable Housing

There continues to be a need for ongoing multijurisdictional collaboration to address the high cost of housing (market based) and we believe part of that effort should be to examine the revenue that all levels of government extract from housing and how infrastructure for that housing is paid for. While this is a broader political and governance issue beyond the constraints of the OCP, we don't believe the goals for affordable market housing will be met unless all three levels of government rethink their role and policies with respect to housing in Canada.

The Canada/BC Expert Panel on the Future of Housing Supply and Affordability Expert Panel tabled its Final Report earlier this year and it include 23 recommendations to improve housing conditions for British Columbians. The Chamber is supportive of many of them including a focus to streamline decision making, allow for delegated authority to get affordable housing to market faster, and a call for scraping amenity agreements and similar local government fees associated with development that are simply driving up the cost of market-based housing. As we have stated previously, development costs are inevitably passed on to the eventual buyer, so it is not surprising that new housing costs are climbing and as a result are influencing market forces that are also leading to escalating costs for existing housing stock.

We also believe the senior levels of government need to be providing greater financial support for infrastructure funding as continued reliance on Development Cost Charges is simply a receipt for more of the same and continued escalation of housing costs. Focusing purely on increasing density will not be the magic bullet (as well demonstrated in Metro Vancouver) for it fails to take into consideration consumer choice.

In growing regions like ours, consumers will almost always choose housing affordability over transportation costs and the “drive to you qualify” scenario will unfold in our region just as it has in Metro Vancouver and the Greater Victoria area. In our view there is very little in the draft OCP that will change that reality as the missing middle looks to adjacent communities Lake Country, West Kelowna, etc. if housing is too expensive in the City of Kelowna. It is why we believe Transportation Planning is as important as land use planning and applaud the City’s choice to blend those current planning processes.

3. Transportation

We appreciate the significant policy focus on active transportation and the importance of transit as noted under the OCP’s transportation section but believe as the economic hub for the entire region, there could be additional policy focus on ensuring:

- > Infrastructure that better serves the movement of goods within and through the city.
- > The war on automobiles doesn’t result in reduced attention to investing in an efficient road network.

The City of Kelowna is well positioned as a commercial logistics hub for the entire region. We continue to believe adding one or more policies which recognize the need for an integrated transportation system that has as a top priority, the efficient movement of goods, should be considered. On that issue, we look forward to the results of the regional Transportation Goods & Services Plan slated to be undertaken soon and would encourage Council to ensure the results of that study are fully incorporated into the 2040 OCP.

We would also suggest that continued demand for better roads for vehicles will continue for the life of the OCP. This is where aspirational goals of the OCP can conflict with the practical realities that the majority of residents in the city and region rely on their vehicle to get around, to get to work, and to participate in all aspects of society. It is likely why there are such large surface parking lots around the City. The reality is people have invested in their automobiles and like it or not, those vehicles are not disappearing.

We don’t believe it is a stretch to say that the majority of vehicles currently on the road will be here for the life of the current OCP and thus we would suggest continued investment in roads, particularly along the north-south routes (i.e. doubling capacity of Glenmore) along with continued focus on charging stations, incentivizing alternate forms of transportation and regional inter-community high speed transit system.

It is worth restating that we believe the OCP and TMP should encourage a robust transportation system that:

- > **Serves a regional workforce** – recognizing those in the service sector often can't afford to live and work in the same area.
- > **Allow for more efficient movement of commercial vehicles** around and through the city and region; that means working with the province to improve the highway corridor by reducing the number of controlled intersections and planning for a second crossing of Okanagan Lake.

4. Industrial Lands

The Chamber sees value in a diversified tax base and would like to ensure Industry isn't forgotten and, that there is enough identified developable industrial land set aside for future needs. This industrial land base will generate jobs for a growing Kelowna and is essential to our future stability as a jobs centre. It is critical that these industrial lands both be zoned and be kept industrial, and then serviced to meet growing business needs. As we have not had the time or resources to undertake a deeper dive on this issue, we are not able to comment if the proposed OCP will adequately ensure the availability of industrial land to meet future market demands.

5. A Growing Urban Region

We recognize that in the long term there will be no separation between municipalities in the Central Okanagan. Current municipal borders will become irrelevant and give way to the need for greater cooperation, planning and development across the Central Okanagan. Trends are showing that as urbanization continues in Canada and around the world, transportation systems are becoming the backbone that is driving development and region wide planning is more effective in managing land use in that context. The evolution of TransLink in Metro Vancouver is a good example as increased density and development at hubs along the route are creating opportunities for growth and investment from Burnaby to Coquitlam and further afield. While not addressed in the preparation to this OCP, we would suggest the next iteration should:

- > Be a regional wide OCP
- > Recognize that there are commercial clusters throughout a city and not just a single "downtown".
- > Linear community development (along major transportation corridors) where municipal borders become irrelevant will become more relevant as growth occurs.

6. ALR Lands

The City is encouraged to continue its development of strong relationships with the agricultural industry and commit to ongoing full-time agricultural land planning on its staff, while maintaining a consistent presence at ALR hearings. We support City planning when it says it is not enough to recognize the importance of agriculture to our economy but also acknowledge that agriculture needs to be viable going forward. That means being flexible in land-use decision making.

7. Regulatory Burdens – Policies that work.

We understand that UDI has raised concern about the breadth of the OCP document and the potential for conflicts within the document or by those who attempt to interpret it. While the OCP is sensibly broken into pertinent sections, it is possible that staff and industry alike could be challenged to navigate and interpret it adequately. This is an issue that Mayor and Council should consistently monitor and adjust as needed.

On behalf of the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce, thank you for your consideration of these points.

*Submitted by the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce
by the Chamber Policy Advisory Committee*

October 26, 2021

