

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Growth management is the practice of planning for and guiding the location, density and type of land use and development in a community.

Growth can be an engine for a prosperous community, but unplanned and unfocused development can lead to inefficiencies and sprawl which is wasteful of land. Continuous suburban development is inherently unsustainable since our land base is finite and it is essential to retain significant and connected land areas for agriculture and wildlife. However, affordability problems will result if we do not accommodate local growth to some degree. The compromise is allowing for higher density development in existing centres where people and services are already located that may go more "upwards" instead of "outwards", and allowing for a range of housing types such as suites, carriage houses or ground- entry "plexes" or row house developments and apartments. In particular, creating zoning that allows for fee-simple row housing development in certain areas could provide lower-cost housing purchase options, without bringing significant or harmful character and traffic impacts into those areas.

Despite the focus on higher density and compact development, there is still an environmental cost to developing and constructing new buildings. Construction materials contain embodied or upfront carbon which refers to carbon emissions released before the building is used (i.e. energy consumption in the mining, extraction and manufacturing processes and transportation of the materials). Addressing upfront carbon is a critical and urgent focus and where possible the focus should be on renovating or retrofitting existing buildings and on low-carbon, local low-impact construction materials for new builds and energy efficient buildings.

Focusing development in areas that can absorb growth efficiently has the added benefit of concentrating service delivery and taking maximum advantage of the servicing and facilities we have in place. Development will take place in existing centres and in certain built forms to meet social well-being and environmental goals. Growth, development and land-use decisions should be socially just, and incorporate environmentally regenerative features at every opportunity

According to the World Green Building Council, buildings are currently responsible for 39% of global energy related carbon emissions: 28% from operational emissions, from energy needed to heat, cool and power them, and the remaining 11% from materials, construction and demolition.

('Bringing Embodied Carbon Upfront' report by the World Green Building Council)

This OCP confirms the assertion of the 2011 OCP that a departure from suburban single-family subdivisions to more compact, higher density growth in existing centres close to shops, services and infrastructure is needed. This "focused growth" approach means that more land can be protected and regenerated to provide for food production and protection of natural areas that foster biodiversity and ecological health.

Focused growth provides for a range of tenures (co-ops, co-housing, strata, fee-simples and rentals) in addition to a variety of forms to accommodate all ages and abilities (e.g. young families seeking private yard space, seniors who wish to 'age in place', young people in university or embarking on their career and people needing accessible housing units). See Chapter 5 which includes information on housing.



Meets social justice and equity principle by providing a variety of housing forms close to services to offer more affordable options than single family homes.

3.1 ASSIGNMENT OF GROWTH

This OCP guides growth away from historical patterns of development in North Cowichan. While the communities of Chemainus, Crofton and the University Village/ South End were identified as growth centres in the 2011 OCP, development has not necessarily taken place in those locations. Some significant growth has taken place in other areas still lying within the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) but outside of these preferred centres. Development in North Cowichan over the past 60 years has largely been car-oriented, suburban/rural residential, and with a high degree of separation between residential uses and shops, services and employment lands, resulting in poor walkability and high servicing and maintenance costs to taxpayers.

Through thoughtful growth management, we can limit environmental impacts, build social connections, build resilience to the climate emergency, and provide a diverse and affordable range of housing options.

Key elements of the new land use plan include:

- A revised UCB which concentrates growth and development in areas with adequate infrastructure capacity for development providing a mix of housing types that meet the needs of residents.
- A policy context for residential and rural residential neighbourhoods (including Maple Bay village) which accommodates site-specific zoning proposals for small commercial or service uses that contribute to liveability and walkability.
- A mix of commercial, employment, industrial lands that contribute to the economic well-being of citizens.
- Parks, open space, civic, agricultural and natural areas that promote social and environmental well-being.
- Well-connected networks that promote active transportation and access to transit.



Concentrating growth can reduce per capita carbon emissions since residents can walk to access services and can promote equity for those who can't afford a car, don't want a car, or aren't able to drive due to health issues.

URBAN CONTAINMENT BOUNDARY

North Cowichan's UCB sets a boundary between developed or serviced urban areas and undeveloped or non-serviced rural and natural areas. Many areas outside of the UCB have access to municipal water service, but further development and fragmentation is either discouraged or restricted. (See also Chapter 9: Infrastructure).

By focusing growth where density can be increased, the UCB assists North Cowichan to guide the community towards actions such as:

- Village core growth and revitalization.
- Creation of mixed-use walkable, complete communities with active transportation and transit options.
- Protection of environment and agricultural areas.
- Improved management and efficiency of municipal infrastructure assets and services such as water, sewer and recycling pickup.
- Protection of areas for First Nations to engage in cultural practices including hunting, fishing, cultural and spiritual uses, and gathering traditional foods and medicines where appropriate.

Urban containment boundaries are lines drawn on a planning map around developable areas showing where urban and suburban lands end and rural and natural lands begin. Generally the areas within the UCB are connected to municipal water and sewer systems and areas outside use septic systems and well water.

3.1.1 Defining Success | Objectives

Focus development to the reduced urban containment boundary to protect rural and natural areas from expanded residential development (See Map 2 - Growth & Land Use) and prevent residential intensification that necessitates extension of road networks and increases automobile dependency.

3.1.2 The Municipality will strive to:

- a. Direct growth inside the UCB, resisting growth elsewhere.
- b. Only support significant UCB alterations as part of a comprehensive OCP review, or implementation of a secondary local area or neighbourhood planning process.
- c. Not support extension of municipal services beyond the UCB to accommodate new residential or commercial development.
- d. Not approve bylaws, works or projects that would facilitate significant densification beyond the UCB.

GROWTH CENTRES

This growth management approach focuses the majority of growth and development in designated Growth Centres lying within the urban containment boundary, taking a more restrictive approach to subdivision and development outside of these areas.

These Centres have an adequate supply of serviceable residential land to meet projected housing and community service needs. They are the core areas of the Chemainus, Crofton, University Village, Bell McKinnon and Berkey's Corner communities and contain municipal services, commercial/retail activities, schools and other facilities that are the foundation of community. Key features include:

- A broad range of uses typical of a village and urban centres (e.g. shopping services, financial and business uses, government and institutional uses, clinics, leisure and recreational facilities, cultural and residential uses).
- Residential uses mainly in the form of multi-family units to make efficient use of land.
- Pedestrian-oriented and multi-modal transportation focus.

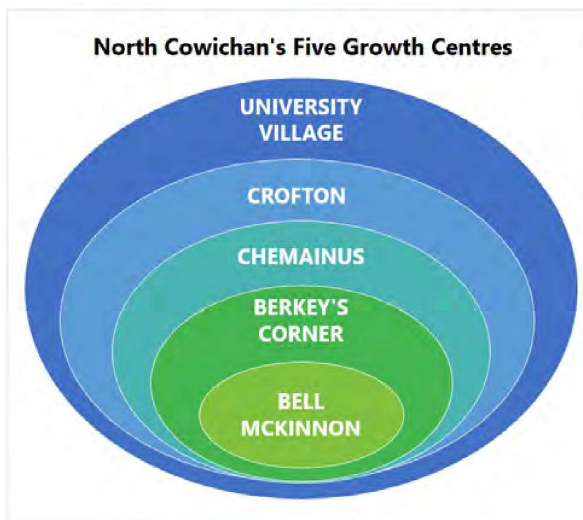


Figure 3.5: The Five Growth Centres.

The Growth Centres are:

- Chemainus
- Crofton
- University Village
- Bell McKinnon
- Berkey's Corner

The Growth Centres are defined by two significant land use designations which may also be supplemented by Local Area Plans:

- Village Core
- Village Residential

These two designations provide the right mixture of uses and the residential densities to support them in meeting the Municipality's housing needs. Other commercial and civic land use designations may also be applied to specific sites within the Growth Centres. Outside of these Centres, the UCB is more tightly-drawn, and further densification is discouraged. However, residential neighbourhoods within the UCB still offer opportunities for "gentle densification" that maintains neighbourhood character through suites, duplexes, carriage houses, and other lower-density housing typologies.

While most Growth Centres are in existing urban locations, the Bell McKinnon Growth Centre is presently undeveloped and will require substantial investments in infrastructure and community amenities. To facilitate its development, a phasing and implementation plan for development in the Bell McKinnon Growth Centre will be prepared to ensure:

- a. The urban design vision promised to the community is realized in each phase and that piecemeal or scattered growth in the plan is avoided.
- b. That growth occurs in a logical, incremental manner respectful of the social, economic, environmental and climate objectives of the District as a whole.
- c. That infrastructure costs are recovered to the greatest extent possible and any future financial burdens associated with infrastructure are minimized.

3.1.3 Defining Success | Objectives

Objective: Manage growth and designate a variety of land and water uses that strengthen our community, maintain individual character, preserve natural and rural areas and foster climate-friendly and active ways to move around.

Progress will be measured by:

- Increase in number of housing units constructed within the UCB and in Growth Centres in particular, as a percentage of total housing units built.

- i. Implement guidelines related to form and character of new buildings.
- j. Encourage integration of water and energy conservation design features, as well as opportunities for small- and micro-scale urban agriculture.
- k. Consider permitting childcare facilities within all residential and commercially zoned parcels.
- l. Require all applications for zoning amendments for increased density to include a walkability assessment.

3.1.4 The Municipality will strive to:

- a. Direct significant growth to identified growth centres inside the urban containment boundary.
- b. Require development in centres to make effective use of land by controlling lot sizes, development types and setting density ranges.
- c. Discourage all low-density auto-dependent subdivisions and make existing areas less auto-dependent by integrating small scale service uses that increase walkability.
- d. Require development within the UCB to have high standards of site-adaptive and urban design.
- e. Encourage development that creates compact communities and provides active climate-friendly ways to move around, social interactions, and a sense of community.
- f. Update the zoning bylaw to contain zones reflective of local plan designation and that align with the OCP land use designations. This may entail creation of new zones and zoning standards to address specific interests or goals that will allow development of a greater variety of residential and commercial services.
- g. Prioritize infrastructure investment and capital projects to Growth Centres where growth and development is expected.
- h. Support efforts to renovate or retrofit existing buildings using only low-carbon, local low-impact (e.g. wood versus concrete) construction materials for new builds and energy efficient buildings and consider creating a Green Building Policy.

3.1.5 Where appropriate the Municipality will ask developers and landowners to:

- a. Develop land in a low-impact, site-adapted manner, integrating natural features and ecological systems.
- b. Make the most effective use of land and provide a variety of housing unit sizes and types within development proposals.
- c. Contribute to improve quality of life in North Cowichan as part of rezoning approval for commercial or higher density residential use (e.g. community amenity contributions as may be beneficial and appropriate).
- d. Incorporate low-carbon, local low-impact construction materials and energy-efficient design into both new and retrofitted development.

3.1.6 The Municipality will work with others to:

- a. Advocate for the development of a regional growth management strategy that complements the growth management strategy of this Official Community Plan.
- b. Include perspectives of First Nations on whose traditional land development lies, by creating referral agreements.