



## 1. Managing Change and Diversity

The Coquitlam Citywide Official Community Plan (CWOCP) is a comprehensive plan intended to guide future land use and servicing provisions in ways that sustain its citizens' values. It replaces and consolidates the four existing area plans and one neighbourhood plan that were approved by bylaw as OCPs. The CWOCP provides a broader framework for considering and managing future change, including policies to implement the framework and address related needs for amenities, services, and infrastructure support. In doing so, the plan acknowledges area and neighbourhood plans as an important approach for future land use change and community consultation.

## 1.1 The Planning Framework for Managing Change

### ISSUES

#### PROTECTING COMMUNITY ASSETS

Coquitlam has undergone prolonged rapid growth within a region where future growth pressures will likely continue. Yet the community has indicated its desire to balance sustainability, choice and quality of life. So how is this achieved in the face of these challenges? The simple answer is to manage these challenges in ways that preserve and enhance those assets that are valued most.

What are those assets, then? Residents have specified that they include: a friendly, safe, family-oriented community; a range of attractive and affordable housing choices; a green and healthy natural environment; and a high quality array of community facilities and services. To manage them appropriately, the City's response will involve:

- Building on the framework already set by earlier Coquitlam plans;
- Identifying and addressing recent trends; and
- Arriving at a comprehensive, "next generation" strategy for managing change, which includes measures to help support these core assets.

#### BUILDING ON EARLIER COQUITLAM PLANS

Planning in Coquitlam initially began with the development of plans area by area: the Southwest/Town Centre OCP; the Northwest OCP; and the Northeast OCP. A neighbourhood-scale plan was also developed for Maillardville.

While these plans have a localized focus, all reflect the municipality's strategy for managing change and implementing regional growth management goals. But recent transitions have created new issues, raising the need to refine and update the City's overall land use strategy.

#### RECENT ISSUES TO ADDRESS

Challenges and opportunities that the updated strategy must consider include:

- Shifts in population composition, creating new service needs;
- Regional economic conditions, affecting land markets and employment patterns;
- Fiscal realities affecting all levels of government including a continued need for fiscal prudence and a strong tax base to pay for desired services;

*Plans made 20 years ago helped ensure that green corridors could remain as growth occurred.*

- The relatively developed state of all serviced parts of the City, and the longer term potential to accommodate some new single-family and multiple family infill;
- Transportation investments which provide opportunities for traffic and growth management;
- Greater focus on local and global environmental issues; and
- Recent and anticipated changes to senior government legislation with a significant impact on municipalities.

In addition, the updated strategy must continue to work towards the broader regional planning goals contained in the *Livable Region Strategic Plan* (LRSP) of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). Section 1.3 of this chapter explains in more detail how this will be achieved.

### **THE COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE AND PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

The CWOCP is not the first response to these evolving issues, but it is an important part. The most recent efforts to manage change were shared with Coquitlam's *2000 Corporate Strategic Plan* (CSP), which was developed through extensive community consultation and identified core values and areas of concern for the community. The CSP also set some broad goals to achieve while the City conducts its business as an organization. But the CSP always anticipated that a second level of planning would need to be done, to allow for more precision in achieving community goals. The CWOCP is one of these more precise blueprints, joined by other financial and infrastructure plans for the City.

The CWOCP thus responds through its own framework to manage change, focussing on land use and related services. The CWOCP also contains specific provisions to implement the CSP by articulating the following overall goals:

1. Responding to both internal and broader regional growth pressures by consolidating Coquitlam's status as a compact, complete community, and by improving links between individual communities within the city;
2. Respecting Coquitlam's natural resources and further enabling an integrated approach to environmental management;
3. Providing a range of housing choices in a manner that ensures neighbourhood quality and stability;
4. Encouraging the development of a vibrant and healthy local economy, with jobs and businesses of good quality, choosing to locate in Coquitlam;
5. Supporting the development of economically, socially and environmentally sustainable transportation choices; and
6. Enabling community access to a range of facilities and services that meet changing needs, to ensure Coquitlam remains a place where people choose to live, work and play.

## 1.2 Interpretation and Hierarchy of Plans

As a broad guide to Coquitlam's future, the CWOCP, adopted by bylaw under the Provincial *Local Government Act*, has status as a legal document. It works in concert with other legal and less formalized documents, and also relies on actions and investments by the City, other agencies, businesses and individuals for implementation. The following section clarifies this legal dimension and describes its relationship to other city plans, policies and bylaws.

### WHAT AN OCP DOES – THE LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

Under the *Local Government Act*, all municipalities must develop one or more plans for the City's social, economic and physical future. Among other things, an OCP must address how the City will accommodate anticipated housing needs (including affordable housing, rental housing and special needs housing) over at least five years, and designate the approximate location for various economic and recreational land uses. In addition, the City must spell out the approximate location and phasing of any major road, sewer and water systems, as well as the approximate location and type of public facilities. An OCP may also, but is not required to, include social policies, environmental policies, and agricultural policies. Finally, the OCP of any GVRD member municipality must include a Regional Context Statement which indicates how the OCP will further regional goals.

### HIERARCHY OF PLANS AND RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER CITY PLANS, POLICIES AND BYLAWS

Compared with local plans, the CWOCP addresses wide-ranging community issues and help sets priorities for the City as a whole. Area and neighbourhood plans address issues that are generally specific to those locations, including future land uses. Coquitlam's area and neighbourhood plans have been included within the CWOCP; and from both a legal and functional perspective, are now an integral part of the CWOCP.

Because all future land use designations are specific to areas and neighbourhoods, the interpretation of future land uses remains as it always has. However, because policies will still exist for both these local areas as well as on a citywide basis, it is important to clarify which one takes precedence in the event of a potential conflict. Where a policy conflict is found to exist between the CWOCP and any of its embodied Area or Neighbourhood Plans, the Neighbourhood Plan policies shall take precedence. In areas where there are no Neighbourhood Plans in place, the Area Plan policies shall take precedence.

**LEVEL OF OBLIGATION CREATED**

The CWOCP will guide Council in future decision-making, ranging from short- to long-term investments, programming, and land use changes.

The *Local Government Act* provides that no council is permitted to make a decision that contravenes its OCP. However, Council is not obligated to implement OCP policies. Of course OCPs may be changed from time to time, and under the present *Act*, amendments must go through a public consultation process, including a formal public hearing. Amendment procedures shall be consistent with approved City procedures.

## 1.3 Regional Context Statement

### 1.3.1 Origin and General Commitments

*The City in the Region*

The City shares its economy and destiny with 19 other municipalities in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). Most Coquitlam residents have jobs elsewhere in the region, outside the City, and many depend on regional roads and transit to travel between home, work and play. The GVRD also provides "wholesale" water supply, liquid and solid waste disposal, and regional park services to its member municipalities. In recent years, the GVRD's regional planning role has become more important, as member municipalities have realized that problems such as air pollution, water quality, waste disposal, and traffic congestion require joint policies and actions.

*Livable Region Plan – 1970s*

A *Livable Region Plan* was generated in the mid-1970s to manage the Region's rapid growth. It sought to maintain the Region's livability by an equitable distribution of population and job growth; by concentrating growth at designated Town Centres, linked by rapid transit; and by protecting "green" areas from development pressures. This strategy has been successful in fostering Regional Town Centres and in helping to protect regional open spaces. It has had more limited success in encouraging a better balance between the locations of homes and jobs throughout the region. While the plan helped to stimulate a rapid transit system now linking four Regional Town Centres, a connection to Coquitlam's Regional Town Centre is still outstanding.

*Livable Region Strategic Plan – 1996*

The strategy was updated in the 1990s, and adopted by the GVRD's Board in January 1996 as the *Livable Region Strategic Plan* and declared an applicable Regional Growth Strategy by the Province in February 1996. It is organized around four principal strategies:

- **Protection of a Green Zone** composed of parks, open space, resource lands, watersheds, environmentally sensitive areas, farmland, and which defines the boundary of the urban growth area;
- **Encouragement of Complete Communities** offering a better balance between jobs and housing; a choice of affordable housing types; and a wide range of commercial and public services and facilities, including choices for transportation. This is to be achieved in part by focusing much of the Region's growth in specified Town Centres, one of which is Coquitlam's Regional Town Centre. The Town Centres are planned to be connected by rapid transit;
- **Provision of More Transportation Choices** by placing higher emphasis on public transit, walking, cycling and goods movement, and also taking measures to reduce and manage the demand for travel; an important component of this is the expansion of rapid transit to  
Coquitlam's Regional Town Centre;

- **A Compact Region.** Much of future growth is to go into a Growth Concentration Area consisting of the Burrard Peninsula, North Surrey/Delta, the Northeast Sector including Port Coquitlam, Port Moody and Coquitlam. Higher densities are needed to support transit and make protection of the Green Zone possible.

While not officially part of the Regional Growth Strategy, the GVRD has developed a Growth Management Scenario which suggests long-term population and job targets for member municipalities as one means of implementing the LRSP.

Although the targets for Coquitlam envisage substantial growth, the City has committed to the regional vision for the following reasons:

- Growth is driven by many factors which the City cannot control, and the pressures to accommodate growth will affect the City in any event;
- Without an effective regional framework to manage growth, the livability of the whole region, including the City, will be degraded by vehicular congestion, air pollution, and loss of green space;
- Residents of the City have said, through a comprehensive 1994 public opinion survey done by the City, that their greatest present need is for improved transportation. At the same time, the decision makers on regional transportation investment have made it clear that investment in major facilities such as rapid transit is subject to the commitment of benefiting communities to accept the growth sharing that makes such investment justifiable.

City Council has endorsed the *Livable Region Strategic Plan* but in doing so, made it clear that City growth:

- Will occur by incremental changes to the City's community plans, tied to the regional transportation capacity available to the City;
- Will be at a rate at which change can be reasonably accommodated; and
- Will need to be supported by the Region and Province, not only in terms of transportation, but in other ways, e.g. provincial funding for new schools.

Another important component of the regional context is the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority/TransLink which will plan, manage and operate a regional transportation system aimed at supporting Greater Vancouver's regional growth strategy, air quality objectives and economic development. Created under the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act, the new authority is responsible for a regional transportation system including public transit, a major regional roads network, regional transportation demand management and the Air Care program. The authority, particularly through Coquitlam Council's and community involvement, will play an important role in implementing the CWOCP.

*The City's Commitment  
to a Livable Region*

*Greater  
Vancouver  
Transportation  
Authority/  
TransLink*

### **1.3.2 Citywide OCP Directions in Support of Regional Goals**

This section provides more explicit detail on how the CWOCP will implement each of the four LRSP goals.

#### **PROTECTION OF A GREEN ZONE**

The main role of the Green Zone is to provide an urban containment boundary, and thus promote regional compactness. Local lands to be protected as part of the Green Zone were nominated by Coquitlam City Council in 1993. As agreed at that time, these lands have undergone some refinement, as anticipated land use planning exercises have taken place in areas such as the Northeast, and as may occur in future.

Lands currently identified as Green Zone areas within the City of Coquitlam are shown as Attachment 1 to this OCP. These lands are protected through compatible land use designations found in each of the area plans embodied in the CWOCP. A small number of lands nominated as part of the Green Zone (but not shown in Attachment 1) will require further implementation measures. These are listed in Attachment 2 of the CWOCP.

Additional direction in the CWOCP to support the Green Zone includes provisions in the Healthy Environment chapter which:

- Reaffirm the City's commitment to protecting the Green Zone and exploring other opportunities to preserve additional environmentally sensitive areas that have been identified through a balanced and fair approach;
- Provide for sustainable land use and development near Coquitlam watercourses, while balancing other community needs and goals;
- Work towards an effective approach to managing Coquitlam's environmentally sensitive areas and other lands with significant ecological features through effective partnerships with other municipalities, senior governments, landowners and interested public groups; and
- Develop a responsive, appropriately balanced system of parks, open spaces, pathways and waterway corridors throughout the City that addresses community needs at all levels of the park hierarchy and ensures passive and active park and open space opportunities for all.

Green Zone integrity will also be fostered through efforts to encourage complete communities and achieve a compact metropolitan region.

## **ENCOURAGING COMPLETE COMMUNITIES AND ACHIEVING A COMPACT REGION**

Achieving a compact region requires a growth management approach that will eventually provide for intensification of some areas. The complete communities concept helps promote livability as such changes occur, by providing opportunities for people in all life stages to live, work and play.

To achieve these two interrelated goals, the CWOCP contains provisions to:

- Direct future development in a manner that fosters completeness within Coquitlam and its network of smaller, complete communities, and helps improve Coquitlam's overall jobs to labour force balance;
- Provide opportunities to add ground-oriented housing through sensitive infill and intensification in lower density neighbourhoods, through appropriate planning and consultation;
- Direct future public sector investment in a manner that continues to foster community completeness;
- Develop an attractive and safe multi-modal transportation system that strengthens Coquitlam's network of compact, complete communities;
- Promote local cohesion and continuity through varied services and an aesthetic approach that celebrates Coquitlam's neighbourhoods while enhancing local streetscapes and pedestrian amenities.

## **PROVISION OF MORE TRANSPORTATION CHOICES**

Transportation choices and systems are fundamental to community livability, and to enabling the related goals of complete communities and achieving a compact region. Providing for these choices are a challenge given that many aspects of service delivery are outside the City's control. Nevertheless, there are many steps the CWOCP will take in facilitating greater transportation choice, including provisions for:

- Continued transportation emphasis on Coquitlam Regional Town Centre;
- Mixed use transit-oriented developments around SkyTrain Station Areas (Lougheed, Burquitlam, Falcon, Coquitlam Central/West Coast Express and stations on the Pinetree Corridor); and
- Enhanced access to major employment areas from local and regional generators.

### 1.3.3 Fostering Achievement of the *Livable Region Strategic Plan*

While generally consistent with the intent of the regional growth strategy, the CWOCP does not provide for development potential over the full time period of the regional growth strategy, to the year 2021. The purpose of this schedule is to set out the Council's intent for the processes and actions to provide for greater plan consistency with the regional growth strategy over time. It is the Council's intent to promote consistency in a number of respects.

In its 1997 set of Regional Context Statements, Coquitlam Council enshrined the following commitment:

*" The City will restructure its community plans to provide at a strategic level, a generalized plan for the City as a whole, with a twenty-year outlook, and at a tactical level, more detailed plans for these neighbourhoods subject to growth pressures, with a five-year outlook."*

At that time Council also committed to updating the plan for the Northeast, and to complete work toward the consolidation of existing policies in its four separate plans into a single, Citywide OCP. The latter commitments have been met, and will continue to be fulfilled through Plan implementation.

Where existing general policy is in need of updating, or does not extend to the year 2021 consistent with the regional strategy, the City will, through consultative planning processes, develop further general growth management policies in the areas of:

- A broad distribution of incremental population and jobs, by sectors of the City, which will relate to targets associated with the *Livable Region Strategic Plan*. It is the intent that those projections will provide for not less than the 169,000 "estimated population capacity" referred to in the *Livable Region Strategic Plan*, but that the City will also use its best efforts to identify reasonably feasible additional capacity, in order to meet targets suggested by the GVRD for the City's population, local employment, and number of households, for the year 2021, which are:
  - population – 206,000
  - households – 85,000
  - local jobs – 71,000
- Broad land use designations, relating to the above projections and to the City's desired structure, and providing mixed land uses and a wide array of facilities and services in the City's Regional Town Centre and other major sub-centres;
- General transportation policies, including linkages to land use policies, and with emphasis on providing a choice of modes for trips, and management of travel demand;

- General policy prescriptions in regard to active public and private recreational lands, open space, agricultural lands, environmentally sensitive assets, and regional green space linkages;
- Phasing and sequence of anticipated growth;
- General implications in terms of infrastructure for transportation, utilities, education, leisure and public safety;
- Policy guidelines for development of more detailed neighbourhood plans; and
- General economic development and social development strategies.

Certain qualifications to achieving these policies were noted by the Council in their 1994 Resolution No. 389 endorsing the regional strategy, including:

1. That in regard to the Strategy's specific targets for dwelling units, the City believes it may be difficult to achieve the year 2021 target for 'ground-oriented units', but that the City is prepared to work further on this issue with GVRD staff;
2. That in regard to the Strategy's targets for jobs, the City believes it can meet or exceed the target, but only if an appropriate rapid transit system, with reasonably direct connection to other Town Centres, is built to Coquitlam's Town Centre;
3. That the City's willingness to plan for growth at a rate exceeding that of the metropolitan area as a whole is conditional always on appropriate regional-scale transportation facilities being put in place in time to support such growth;
4. That the City believes the Province must make a reliable commitment to those municipalities asked to bear the burden of high growth, that Provincial funding for education, health and other services will be delivered in a predictable and timely fashion.

Concurrent with the work described above, and as an input to that work, the City will continue ongoing work on more detailed neighbourhood plans and other related plans, studies and implementation strategies.

These plans:

- May, depending on local circumstances, have a shorter timeframe than the general CWOCP, and may therefore involve one or more updates prior to the year 2021;
- May not cover all areas of the City, but will be directed at neighbourhoods experiencing or expected to experience, significant pressures of growth, or neighbourhoods where other local issues warrant more detailed planning;
- Will include:
  - detailed land use designations;
  - prescriptions and guidelines for the form and character of development;
  - policies for access and transportation choice within the neighbourhood; and
  - other relevant local policy, including such as may be required to accommodate and support station locations for the rapid transit system prescribed by the Region's strategy.

In completing these Plans, the City will:

- Provide ample opportunity for participation and comment by residents, businesses, landowners and other interest groups, as well as where relevant, other governments and agencies;
- An incremental sequencing of work, recognizing limitations on the resources that can reasonably be brought to bear;
- Periodic monitoring by the City of its progress on the community plan program described above, as well as of annual City growth relative to the year 2021 targets suggested by the GVRD.

## 1.4 Citywide OCP Format

The CWOCP is organized into chapters that reflect the six overarching community goals that form Coquitlam's framework for managing change. Each chapter includes sections that address different aspects of its goal, and these sections include:

- Broad objective guiding the City's response to each issue; and
- Specific policies to help achieve the objective in question.

These goal-related chapters are followed by a chapter on plan implementation and monitoring, and then by chapters containing Coquitlam's area and neighbourhood plans. The final component includes additional attachments.