

7. TOWARD AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND COMMUNITY

KEY DIRECTIONS

Focus on: environmental sustainability and biodiversity, and related conservation, air and water quality policies, given the pressures of population growth; ecology and preservation of natural habitat, namely Garry Oak and Arbutus habitat, which defines the natural landscape character of Victoria and is a factor in the tourist economy; the importance of green space in neighbourhoods, Downtown and around the harbour; the need to preserve views and streetscapes as part of Victoria's heritage.

A. GENERAL

Within the *Official Community Plan*, environment includes the natural and built environment. The quality of the environment is an important community value which has an impact on a number of urban policy planning areas, and implicates all levels of government. The City of Victoria recognizes the increasing pressure on the environment and the need for policies to protect the urban environment which are within the control of its municipal mandate. City Council has recommended a proposed amendment to the B.C. *Municipal Act*, Section 945, to give environmental policies the same stature as social planning within community plans, so that they may include policies of the local government relating to environmental needs, environmental well being, and ecologically sustainable development. Council has also established an official sub-committee to make recommendations to the Environment and Public Works Advisory Committee on policies for the *Official Community Plan*.

Environmental issues impact many aspects of our lifestyle. Evidence is in the trends to: devote more resources to transit; reduce the loss of natural resources, such as indigenous habitat, air and water quality, views and vistas; reduce the loss of built heritage and natural landscape; reduce municipal servicing costs. The impact of these trends is acknowledged by the inclusion of environment related policies throughout the chapters of this *Official*

Community Plan. Reduced dependence on the automobile is encouraged by advocating more human-scale development, with accessible community services and facilities within walking distance on streets that are pedestrian and cyclist friendly. These values and policies are reflected in the following chapters, *Toward a Liveable Community*, *Toward an Accessible and People Friendly Community*, and *Toward a Viable Community*. They are implicit in the development of a healthy and efficient urban structure and in the concept of mixed-use development with a neighbourhood clustering of services.

The importance of greenspace and natural resources are identified in policies contained in chapters on *Toward a Harbour Community* and *Toward an Accessibly Serviced Community*. The inter-relationship between water uses and the upland is an important aspect of shoreline land uses. Within the community itself, streetscapes, land around buildings, parks, school grounds and in many instances, parts of the site of important institutional buildings, all contribute to a greenspace system within the City. This is an essential part of Victoria's general character and a significant contribution to the community's liveability.

Complementary to the greenspace system is the overall pattern, density and form of development. This reflects the origins of the City from the earliest days of Colonial settlement when the street pattern was laid out, to the turn of the century, when much of the building style and form was established. This does not diminish the significance of new development. It does emphasize the importance of conserving the best of our heritage through buildings and, where possible, the basic style and form of the community.

The City of Victoria supports the goals of reducing local contributions of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere and ensuring clean air for its citizens. The City is concerned about the need to improve air quality and to maintain healthy standards, both to ensure good quality of life for residents and to maintain a strong economic base dependent on tourism.

Much of the energy consumed in North America is in the form of products which we use and which make up a significant part of our lifestyle. By reducing our material consumption, through refuse recycling, we reduce the energy required to produce new materials. We also save the energy we would otherwise need to dispose of our garbage. This both reduces carbon dioxide emissions and improves local air quality.

TOPIC (1) – GENERAL

OBJECTIVE

- (a) To complete the process to update this *Official Community Plan* chapter in consultation with the Environment and Public Works Advisory Committee on policies within the scope of the existing *Municipal Act*.
- (b) To further update the *Official Community Plan* in consultation with the Environment and Public Works Advisory Committee, as legislative amendments to the *Municipal Act* occur.

POLICIES

THE CITY SHOULD:

- (i) Incorporate amendments resulting from the approved review.
- (ii) Monitor changes to the *Municipal Act* and update the *Official Community Plan* as required.

TOPIC (2) - AIR QUALITY

OBJECTIVE

- (a) To promote air quality in accordance with contemporary standards.

POLICIES

THE CITY SHOULD:

- (i) Pursue the policies supporting alternative transportation, as described in the chapter *Toward an Accessible and People Friendly Community*.
- (ii) Review regulations on wood and waste burning.

TOPIC (3) – WATER QUALITY

OBJECTIVE

- (a) To improve water quality in offshore and inland waters, including the Outer, Inner and Working Harbour reaches.
- (b) To provide an adequate and pure source of potable drinking water.

POLICIES

THE CITY, CRD AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

- (i) Cooperate to achieve a high standard of water quality in Juan de Fuca Strait and Victoria Harbour.

THE CITY AND CRD SHOULD:

- (ii) Monitor policies to ensure an adequate and pure source of drinking water.

TOPIC (4) – BIODIVERSITY AND GREENSPACE

Note: see also *Toward a Harbour Community* and *Toward a Well Serviced Community*, for details on greenspace and parks.

OBJECTIVE

- (a) To maintain and restore, where possible, the City's natural bio-diversity.

POLICIES

THE CITY SHOULD:

- (i) Identify and preserve, enhance and restore remaining significant natural landscape features and natural indigenous habitats.

THE CITY, IN COOPERATION WITH THE CRD, SHOULD:

- (ii) Develop new parks and greenspaces.

THE CITY, WITH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS AND GROUPS, SHOULD:

- (iii) Review the existing landscaping guidelines for City parks, play lots and recreation areas, to encourage environmentally-sensitive practices.

THE CITY, IN COOPERATION WITH VARIOUS INTEREST GROUPS, SHOULD:

- (iv) Develop an inventory of significant flora and fauna, and develop initiatives to protect and provide appropriate habitat within the City.

TOPIC (5) – URBAN DESIGN**OBJECTIVES**

- (a) To identify the distinctive character and form of Victoria.
- (b) To establish policies and implementation techniques that manage the development of urban activities and direct development pressures in a manner that enhances the City's desired character and form.

POLICIES**THE CITY SHOULD:**

- (i) Seek public access to significant natural features such as the waterfront and hilltops where panoramic views can be obtained.
- (ii) New developments should respect natural surroundings such as the waterfront, skylines, distinctive trees, and vistas and topographical features.
- (iii) New developments should contribute to the human scale of Victoria.
- (iv) Ensure that special attention is paid to the visual scale, proportion, continuity and character of street facades.
- (v) Public works (municipal buildings and structures) should be uncluttered, of reasonable scale, and pleasing to pedestrians.
- (vi) Maintain appropriate settings for architectural and historical landmarks and districts.
- (vii) Create landmarks along major access routes to give a sense of arrival and for orientation.
- (viii) Continue the creation of urban squares and walkways, with due regard for visibility, public safety, sunlight and wind effect.

- (ix) Seek to avoid abrupt changes of character and form of urban development at the boundaries of adjacent municipalities.
- (x) Encourage the restoration of character when older buildings are being remodelled.
- (xi) Encourage the use of detail, form, texture, colouring and scale for new development that is in keeping with the established surroundings.
- (xii) Areas with special characteristics, opportunities and problems should be the subject of design control pursuant to established design guidelines.
- (xiii) Both the established design guidelines and the list of areas subject to special controls should be regularly reviewed, and updated as required.
- (xiv) Encourage well-maintained private gardens and landscaped areas as a means of enhancing the City's character.

TOPIC (6) – WATERFRONT

Note: Harbour waterfront objectives and policies also included in *Toward a Harbour Community*.

OBJECTIVES

- (a) To preserve and enhance the character of the beach and foreshore of Gonzales Bay.
- (b) To avoid encroachment upon the character of the Juan de Fuca shoreline.

POLICIES**THE CITY SHOULD:**

- (i) Sustain the land use controls applied in 1983 adjacent to Gonzales Bay.
- (ii) Maintain current parks improvement programs with continuing work, particularly at Holland Point, Beacon Hill and Clover Point parks.
- (iii) Consider development of a breakwater to reduce wave action on the sea wall and improve recreational potential of Ross Bay.

THE CITY, CRD AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

- (iv) Cooperate to achieve a high standard of water quality in Juan de Fuca Strait.

TOPIC (7) – RECYCLING AND RESOURCE CONSERVATION

OBJECTIVE

- (a) Extend recycling programs further to include all material which can be recycled.

POLICIES

THE CITY AND SENIOR GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:

- (i) Support federal and provincial initiatives to encourage all forms of recycling.

TOPIC (8) – HERITAGE

OBJECTIVES

- (a) To encourage the preservation and conservation of those sites, buildings and structures that are of architectural and historical significance.
- (b) To provide, in cooperation with local heritage agencies, financial and other incentives which will encourage the conservation of heritage resources.
- (c) To maintain and develop regulatory controls that will assist in the conservation of natural and built heritage resources, including view corridors (see also *Toward a Harbour Community*).
- (d) To promote public awareness, understanding and appreciation of heritage resources and a commitment to their conservation.
- (e) To maintain and develop principles and guidelines for the rehabilitation of heritage resources.
- (f) To maintain, develop and utilize comprehensive heritage management plans for the protection and revitalization of individual heritage resources and heritage areas.

POLICIES

THE CITY SHOULD:

- (i) Maintain and develop programs for the identification of significant heritage resources, including the *Heritage Registry*; to review and update the Registry where required; and to publicize this information through information pamphlets and publications.
- (ii) Maintain and develop regulatory controls such as heritage designations, Development Permit Areas, Heritage Conservation Areas, temporary heritage protection orders and other mechanisms, including view corridor designations, for the protection of significant heritage resources and areas.
- (iii) Maintain, develop and provide financial incentives for heritage conservation in cooperation with the Victoria Heritage Foundation and the Victoria Civic Heritage Trust; and to utilize senior government programs where available.
- (iv) Provide other economic incentives, such as use and parking relaxations and density bonuses consistent with heritage conservation standards or transfers to assist in the revitalization of heritage resources.
- (v) Consider planning policies that advance heritage conservation objectives for each neighbourhood.
- (vi) To provide established design guidelines and rehabilitation principles and guidelines according to recognized professional standards, to assist in the regulation of rehabilitation and restoration of heritage buildings and to guide new development in heritage conservation areas.

THE CITY AND LOCAL HERITAGE GROUPS SHOULD:

- (vii) Promote public awareness of heritage conservation in cooperation with other local heritage groups through publications, walking tours, displays, awards programs, interpretive programs, educational programs and presentations, or other means.

**THE CITY, SCHOOL BOARD, CRD, GOVERNMENT
BODIES AND SENIOR LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT
SHOULD:**

- (viii) Seek the cooperation of senior levels of government to encourage the identification, protection and rehabilitation of heritage resources owned by them and their crown corporations, including the Capital Regional District, the British Columbia Buildings Corporation, the Provincial Capital Commission and other semi-autonomous, quasi-governmental agencies such as school boards, hospitals, etc.