

## 8. TOWARD A HARBOUR COMMUNITY

### KEY DIRECTIONS

*There is support for an active Working Harbour with mixed-use activities, provided all uses, including residential, recognize and are compatible with harbour traffic activities. Emphasis is on the need for integrated waterfront planning and relationship to surrounding neighbourhoods, while maintaining balance between public access and marine priorities.*

The water and shoreline of the harbour is an invaluable public resource. There is a need to perceive the harbour waterfront as an entity and plan for the role of the harbour. Problems can arise from the fragmentation of interests and policies, and it is important that planning for the harbour is consolidated. In 1994, the City undertook "to consolidate its harbour-related policies with a view to assuring the effective management and use of the features and attributes of Victoria's harbour and its adjacent lands". These policies, reflected in assorted documents dating from 1986, form the context for planning policies for the harbour.

The harbour is part of the heritage and cultural heart of Victoria. Physically, it offers an aesthetic and intimate public space, which, because of its configuration and human scale, lends itself readily to public venues. In this regard, it has the potential to be reminiscent of great urban spaces which have aged gracefully over the centuries.

At the same time, it must be borne in mind that Victoria itself exists because the harbour is one of a few natural harbours along the coastline and future plans for the harbour should ensure the needs of marine based activities and industries receive consideration.

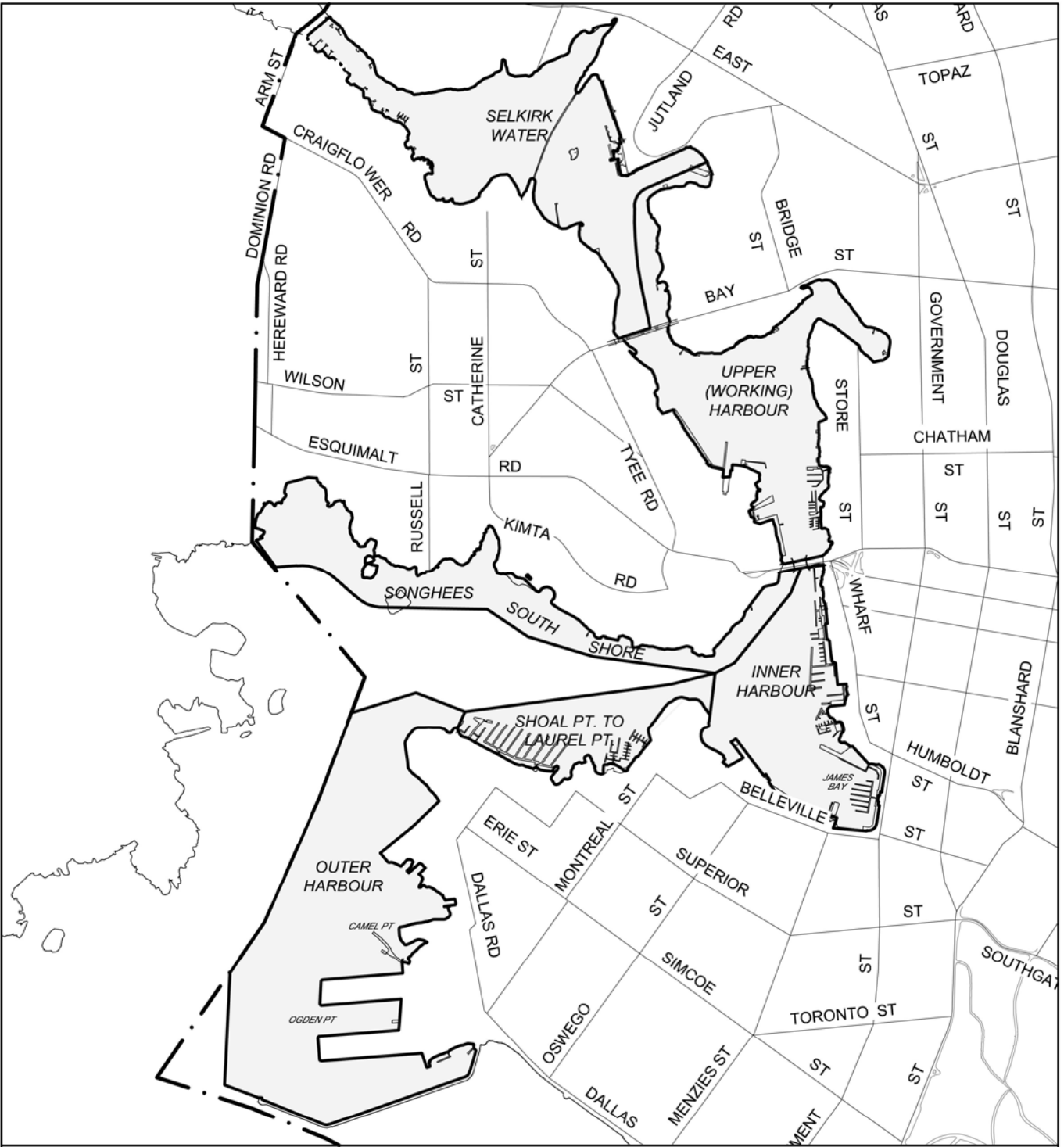
Influencing the potential development of the Harbour are the complexities of numerous jurisdictions and owners, as well as the options available for a management structure. The City of Victoria is only one actor among several public and private sector interests. Therefore, while the issue is extremely relevant to Victoria's vision and the Official Community Plan policies, collective government action is required which is beyond the scope of this document.

Within the harbour planning area, six sub-areas have been identified based on geographical and other characteristics (see Map 8). These are the following harbour reaches: Outer Harbour, Shoal Point-Laurel Point, Inner Harbour, Upper (Working) Harbour, Selkirk Water and Songhees-South Shore. The policies dealt with in this chapter, however, apply on a harbour-wide basis, unless there is a policy unique to one area. Planning for the harbour and the mix of activities must take into account its natural extension into other areas of jurisdiction.

*Victoria Harbour, defined as a 'working harbour', would be developed as a mixed-use harbour that provides a haven for ships and boats; a sea transportation and cargo terminal; a base for maritime and water-dependent industries; a stimulating living environment; and community access for enjoyment and celebration.*

This chapter provides a policy framework for a local plan to be prepared in much greater detail.

h:\gis-2000\planning\lcp maps\lcp maps 1-9.dwg, map 8 Last Updated: May 11, 2004



# OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN, MAP 8

## Harbour



## A. CHARACTERISTICS

Victoria Harbour bisects the City, affording a sheltered body of water and 11 kilometres of shoreline from Ogden Point to Portage Inlet. Against the backdrop of the Olympic Mountains, the Harbour provides visitors with a grand entrance to Victoria and the first impressions of the city. The stepped Harbour shoreline allows some activities and development to be accommodated at a grade between the perimeter road and waterline without detracting from the vistas of heritage buildings and upland natural landscape features.

Visually, the shoreline development presents both formal and informal stretches of cultural and heritage buildings, as well as an array of contemporary residential buildings, tourist accommodation and related commercial activity. Essentially, the Inner Harbour now represents a residential, tourist, recreational and transportation resource. Other parts of the harbour, namely the Upper Harbour and Outer Harbour, continue to exhibit the characteristics of a working harbour with industrial marine related land uses. The harbour is a significant multi-modal transportation node within Victoria. While the transportation of goods has declined, the transportation of people by water taxi, ferry, charter boat, cruise ship, helijet and float plane, generates a steady set of harbour activity. Together with the marinas for the fishing fleet and recreational sailing vessels, there is a notable level of water traffic.

The economic and financial characteristics of the harbour are derived from all levels of government and a mix of ownership and land uses. Annual revenues and financial viability are key to protecting the status of the port and harbour, and successfully implementing any of the harbour management options. Cooperation and a comprehensive solution and vision for the harbour are essential if a successful plan is to be achieved and implemented.

## TOPIC A (1) – THE NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### OBJECTIVES

- (a) To improve the Inner Harbour as an important and visually pleasing entrance to the City and Region, complimentary to the character of downtown Victoria.
- (b) To realize the aesthetic and recreational potential of the harbour.
- (c) To define and conserve public view corridors to the Olympic Mountains, Parliament Buildings, Inner Harbour Causeway, and harbour entrance.
- (d) To protect the significant natural features of the physical environment, as identified in local plans.
- (e) To ensure that new development respects key views to the waterfront and landmarks within the area, and building heights and block sizes respect Victoria's historic waterfront.

### POLICIES

#### THE CITY SHOULD:

- (i) Compile an inventory of important natural areas, vistas and view windows to be identified in local plans.
- (ii) Development permits will be used to regulate form, character and design in sensitive areas.

## TOPIC A (2) – CULTURAL HERITAGE

### OBJECTIVE

- (a) To retain and enhance the buildings and features that support the City's heritage, by pursuing a program to preserve the harbour's cultural heritage and Victoria's marine heritage.

### POLICIES

#### THE CITY SHOULD:

- (i) Preserve heritage buildings in the shoreline area.
- (ii) Preserve and enhance the cultural and marine heritage significance and visitor oriented character of the Inner Harbour waterfront, and integrate the harbour with Old Town through zoning and Development Permit system.

**THE CITY AND FIRST NATIONS BAND COUNCIL SHOULD:**

- (iii) Preserve Halkett Island as a native cultural and spiritual site.

**TOPIC A (3) – ECONOMIC BASE**

**OBJECTIVE**

- (a) To realize the harbour's economic potential, as part of diversifying Victoria's economy.
- (b) To encourage the development of docks and moorage for a wide variety of ships and boats; to develop marine services that will encourage fishing fleets to select Victoria as their home port; and, to develop zoning to encourage marine industries to locate in the harbour.

**POLICIES**

**THE CITY AND SENIOR GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:**

- (i) Work collectively with harbour stakeholders to review economic opportunities for the harbour as part of a comprehensive economic development strategy for the City.
- (ii) Encourage fishing fleets and marine industry to locate in Victoria to support economic diversification.

**B. USE ACTIVITIES**

The harbour is a vibrant focal point for multi-purpose activities, including places for commerce and industry oriented to the waterfront. It provides users, residents and tourists, with an opportunity to experience different water-oriented activities in a quality environment. The harbour is a public resource and waterfront properties command high values. These properties should be aesthetically pleasing and functioning properly, while still being able to capitalize on the investment.

Victoria Harbour is already established as a community resource, and public attitudes have to be considered in developing a comprehensive plan. Public access to the waterfront has been a priority in developments to date, and there is a need to preserve or create access where it is affected by new developments.

People-oriented waterfront uses that are safe and attractive for visitors, should incorporate continuous linear public space, provide access to the water's edge and provide centres for community activities and events.

The public ceremonial space afforded by the Inner Harbour hosts a number of public festivals throughout the year, with activities both land and water based. These include the Victoria Symphony Splash, Swiftsure, Classic Boat Festival, and harbourfront festivals such as those held during the Commonwealth Games. The harbour is a natural stage for these events and identification of opportunities to extend ceremonial and festive space around the harbour should be prominent.

Over the last decade, residential development, especially condominium construction, has become an increasingly significant component of waterfront land use along the harbour shoreline. The location offers many attractive features for residents - proximity to downtown, harbour activities, mountain and water vistas, and access to public recreational facilities on their doorstep. However, harbour residents must accept 24-hour activity and reasonable noise levels associated with normal harbour activities. Through urban design guidelines, the City can control the development of the site and built environment. Given the growing pressures for residential development along the harbour shoreline and competing land uses, new development should be compatible with adjacent development. There is the opportunity for quality marinas for visiting yachts to co-exist with residences. A harbour plan should assess the desirable level and role of residential development as an element of an overall land use strategy for the harbour.

The Upper Harbour, also known as the Working Harbour, is susceptible to transition from marine related industries to a contemporary mixture of commercial, institutional and industrial waterfront uses. The under-used waterfront on either side of the Working Harbour should be revitalized. The redevelopment of former shoreline "industrial" lands will increase interest in

additional development pressures. To date, this harbour reach has represented the most important concentration of waterfront industrial development in the region. The continuing presence of industry on the Working Harbour should be encouraged in recognition of its important role in the regional economy. Viable industry should be supported through policies ensuring long term tenancy for industrial users and creating incentives and mechanisms to permit industry to compete with residential and other non-industrial uses to generate a mixed-use harbour. Emerging marine technology may provide opportunities for industrial expansion in this area of the harbour. Water uses such as small boat marinas, float homes, marine restaurants and pubs associated with new upland commercial uses are supported.

The harbour is a destination point for many travellers. The Inner Harbour services multi-modal traffic arrivals and has the potential to continue as a regional traffic centre. It can accommodate shallow draft passenger vessels and pleasure craft. Ogden Point is a deep-sea marine terminal at the mouth of Victoria Harbour and accommodates cruise vessel requirements. The character of the Outer Harbour as the maritime gateway to Victoria should be enhanced.

In the absence of a neighbourhood plan for the harbour, the objectives and policies included in this section are atypical in the level of detail required for an *Official Community Plan*.

## **TOPIC B (1) – PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION LANDS**

### **OBJECTIVES**

- (a) To improve the quality and opportunity for public use and participation in harbour-oriented activities.
- (b) To improve public access and interest in the entire Outer Harbour shoreline.
- (c) To redevelop the South Songhees shoreline with adequate public access and parkland, as part of the approved Songhees development.
- (d) To enhance tourist services and facilities along the waterfront.

- (e) To assess opportunities for additional public festivals, gatherings, and exhibits.
- (f) To revitalize under-used waterfront on either side of the Working Harbour, securing public access wherever feasible.
- (g) To improve opportunities for recreational use of Selkirk Waters and the shoreline.

### **POLICIES**

#### **THE CITY SHOULD:**

- (i) Improve public access to the waterfront, including vista points at key locations.
- (ii) Acquire land to serve public access and protect shoreline areas, and to connect gaps in the present waterfront pathway and park system.
- (iii) Facilitate pedestrian and bicycle paths close to the harbour shoreline.
- (iv) Below the level of Wharf Street, the development potential for structured parking, walkways and public open space should be realized.
- (v) Utilize landscape treatment to enhance gateways and waterfront pathways in the Inner Harbour.
- (vi) Provide small-scale parking along the shoreline to permit public access.
- (vii) Maintain and improve visitor information services in key locations, especially the Inner Harbour.
- (viii) Designate appropriate areas as "mixed use shoreline" to include public recreation, small craft launching and moorage, marine restaurants and pubs and clusters of float homes.
- (ix) Secure, by easement or acquisition, the remaining lands required to link public access from Lime Bay to the Esquimalt boundary.
- (x) Continue to undertake parks and beach improvements to public waterfront as an amenity for both the Victoria West community and the City at large.
- (xi) Develop City property at Arm Street and between Burleith and Coventry Avenues as lookout parks on the Gorge.

- (xii) Develop a footbridge from the Gorge Road Hospital to the southern shoreline of Selkirk Waters as a component of a loop walkway around both shorelines.
- (xiii) Establish a continuous walkway from Gorge Road Hospital grounds to link with a natural valley parkway to Burnside Road.
- (xiv) Establish a waterfront footpath between Banfield and Arm Street Parks.
- (xv) Investigate securing the trestle bridge across Selkirk Water for public use.

**THE CITY WITH PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD:**

- (xvi) Identify sites for public activities and festivities in new locations.

**THE CITY, PROVINCE AND PRIVATE SECTOR SHOULD:**

- (xvii) Develop a continuous waterfront promenade from Johnson Street Bridge to Laurel Point by adding links between existing walkways.
- (xviii) Redevelopment of the Inner Harbour's south shore should recognize the development potential for integrated parking, pedestrian walkways, open space and ferry terminals.

**TOPIC B (2) – RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**OBJECTIVE**

- (a) To ensure the type, density and location of residential development within the harbour and provide community services that are compatible with planned industry and transportation.

**POLICIES**

**THE CITY SHOULD:**

- (i) Continue to refine harbour urban design guidelines for site and built environment, and use the Development Permit system. These would be part of the neighbourhood plan for the harbour.

- (ii) With the Federal Government, negotiate a policy supportive of float homes with the intention of designating specific areas of the harbour for this purpose.
- (iii) Ensure that the harbour's residents, including live-aboards and float home residents recognize 24-hour harbour activity and reasonable noise level.

**TOPIC B (3) – COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL USES**

**OBJECTIVES**

- (a) To undertake an economic development study to develop suitable marine-related economic activity and an incentive program to encourage development for the Upper Harbour, focusing on City-owned land, as part of an early neighbourhood plan for the harbour.
- (b) To encourage the establishment of industry that is environmentally compatible with adjacent residential and tourist-oriented development.
- (c) To retain the shoreline from Laurel Point to Ogden Point of the Outer Harbour for marine industrial, marine commercial and marine service uses in a manner that is compatible with the James Bay neighbourhood.
- (d) To sustain and enhance major marine industries which are vital components of Victoria's economic base.

**POLICIES**

**THE CITY SHOULD:**

- (i) Through zoning, accommodate marine industry and services supportive of the Working Harbour, and retain and encourage marine industries that require waterfront access in appropriate harbour locations.
- (ii) Provide buffers between industrial and other uses via zoning or development permit measures.
- (iii) Sustain land use controls in James Bay confirming continued maritime industrial and service uses.

- (iv) On the James Bay shoreline consider performance standards for new industrial development to encourage industry and compatible marine oriented commercial activities and improve public access to waterfront, where practical.

**THE CITY, PROVINCE AND PRIVATE SECTOR SHOULD:**

Retain and refine industrial and commercial land use controls on the Dockside shoreline and, where possible, re-plot poorly subdivided areas to assist in redevelopment and to improve public access to the shoreline.

**TOPIC B (4) – TRANSPORTATION**

**OBJECTIVES**

- (a) To promote the harbour as a multi-modal transportation centre.
- (b) To ensure shoreline uses are compatible with the safe operation of harbour traffic.

**POLICIES**

**THE CITY, WITH SENIOR GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:**

- (i) Work to sustain and improve the regional ferry services, promote the establishment of a heliport at Shoal Point and redevelop the Ogden Point area to improve cruise ship facilities and tourist services.
- (ii) Manage activities to complement the safe operation of ferries and float planes, through zoning and land management.
- (iii) Discourage shoreline uses that are incompatible with safe operation of the ferries and float planes.

**C. HARBOUR MANAGEMENT AND STAKEHOLDER INTEREST**

The involvement of numerous jurisdictions and legislation, including three levels of government, in the Port and City activities creates a highly sensitive planning environment. This situation, combined with one where there is no single overall harbour management agency, does not facilitate a coordinated strategy for waterfront redevelopment.

As a port, Victoria has limited revenues from cargo shipping, and with declining transportation of goods, there is concern over the reduction of the port's status. Its major source of income is from land and water rentals and berthage fees.

The issue of harbour revenue and administration is beyond the scope of this document. However, it has been studied and discussed extensively in recent years and there are indications that options (Harbour Commission, Port Corporation, Local Authority) for a more autonomous port administration are under active consideration. If agreed upon and established, such an authority would be in a position to consolidate the planning, control and marketing of the port facility.

**TOPIC C (1) – REVENUES**

**OBJECTIVE**

- (a) Increase port revenues.

**POLICIES**

**THE CITY, IN COOPERATION WITH SENIOR GOVERNMENTS, SHOULD:**

- (i) Promote and market the Port of Victoria.
- (ii) Work collectively with other levels of government to enhance the image and marketability of the port.
- (iii) Cooperate to establish detailed policies for harbour development within the general framework of land use controls, including budgets for capital improvements such as walkways, roof decks, piers, parks, services, etc.

**TOPIC C (2) – MANAGEMENT**

**OBJECTIVE**

- (a) Consider establishing a port management agency.

**POLICIES**

**THE CITY, IN COOPERATION WITH SENIOR GOVERNMENTS, SHOULD:**

- (i) Work cooperatively with other levels of government to identify the best form of port administration.

#### **D. A SUSTAINABLE HARBOUR RESOURCE**

The natural environment of the harbour includes the water, shoreline, natural landscape and habitat. Recognition in an inventory of the significant natural features, such as vistas and remaining natural habitats, would help assure their preservation through land and resource management planning.

There are increasing pressures to redevelop waterfront lands. It is important to preserve the natural features of the landscape and shoreline with their respective habitats, including wetlands; particularly as the harbour is seen as a community resource and public access and open space is a major element of planning interest.

With the harbour operating primarily as the commercial/industrial focus of the City for a large part of this century, the issue of the environmental condition of waterfront properties must receive consideration. The legislative and financial implications of redevelopment have to be considered where relevant.

Future planning for water-oriented land use needs to consider the integration of land and water use.

#### **TOPIC D – PRESERVE THE SHORELINE AND SIGNIFICANT NATURAL SHORELINE FEATURES**

##### **OBJECTIVES**

- (a) To protect and preserve significant natural landscape features and natural habitats, as identified in local plans.
- (b) To plan responsibly to preserve the quality of the shoreline for future generations.

##### **POLICIES**

###### **THE CITY SHOULD:**

- (i) Compile an inventory of significant shoreline features, vistas and view corridors, and natural habitats to be identified in local plans.
- (ii) Protect important remaining shoreline.
- (iii) Fill over shorelines only when public amenity is improved, or where development has been negotiated through the local plan review process.

- (iv) Minimize storm sewer contamination of the harbour.

###### **THE CITY AND BC GOVERNMENT SHOULD:**

- (v) Identify soil contamination sites prior to development approval.

###### **THE CITY, CRD AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD:**

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