Victoria’s New Official Community Plan Moves Forward to Public Hearing

Date: Friday, April 13, 2012 For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — A public hearing scheduled for June 27 at 7:30 p.m. will be the final opportunity for Victoria citizens to provide input on the city’s new Official Community Plan before Council considers it for adoption as a bylaw.

Last night, Council gave first reading to the new Official Community Plan bylaw, the first step in moving the plan forward to formal adoption. The June public hearing will be an opportunity for the public to provide written or verbal feedback directly to Council for their consideration, prior to bylaw adoption.

Work to update the plan has been underway since early 2010. The City’s plan was last updated in 1995.

The new plan brings forward a more current and sustainable approach to guide Victoria’s growth and change over the next 30 years. It incorporates input the community expressed about what was most important to them.

The proposed new plan has been shaped by a wide variety of community input, involving more than 6,000 people. Individuals representing neighbourhood associations, businesses, developers, service providers, First Nations, heritage, arts and culture groups, recreation services, and youth organizations have participated and helped ensure that the new plan is reflective of the community’s values.

The proposed Official Community Plan is available on the project website www.ShapeYourFutureVictoria.ca. Two public information sessions are planned for early June to allow people to learn more about the plan prior to the public hearing. A special information session for the design and development community will also take place.

— 30 —

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ENCLOSED

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Background Information - Victoria’s Official Community Plan

- In January 2010, the City of Victoria began a comprehensive process to update its Official Community Plan. The City’s plan was last updated in 1995.

- The proposed new plan has been shaped by a wide variety of community input from more than 6,000 people. Citizens have participated through activities such as kitchen table workshops, Citizen Insight Councils, community forums and direct correspondence with staff. Staff attended markets, coffee shops, community centres, schools, and meetings with various interest groups in an effort to capture a diverse range of thoughts and opinions.

- Over the next 30 years, Victoria is expected to grow by approximately 20,000 new residents and create 10,000 new jobs. The new Official Community Plan will guide growth and change in the years ahead, while maintaining and preserving the special places and features that are unique and valued in the community.

- Council, staff, and the community will use the plan as a guide for decisions such as where to locate housing and businesses, what the communities transportation priorities are, and how to address aging infrastructure.

- The new plan also reflects new provincial legislation, requiring Official Community Plans to include policies that address affordable and special needs housing, as well as to establish targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

- While the new Official Community Plan is a 30 year plan, it will act as a living document that will be updated regularly, ensuring it responds to emerging trends and priorities.

Key elements in the proposed Official Community Plan include:

- A focus on vibrant, walkable villages and town centres
- Downtown core as the heart of the region
- Recognition of unique neighbourhood character and sense of place
- Strategically focused local area plans
- Emphasis on sustainable transportation such as walking, cycling, and transit
- Increase in housing options to accommodate different needs
- A more resilient city with support for reducing greenhouse gases emissions, seismic upgrades to buildings and infrastructure, and local food production

Since the public review of the draft Official Community Plan in 2011, some changes have been made to incorporate public and stakeholder feedback. Changes include:

- Addition of a new Arts and Culture section
- More focus on the harbour throughout the plan
- Changes to Urban Place Designations and clearer guidance for land management decisions
- Refinement of local area planning priorities and improved clarity around the local area planning process
- Addition of Development Permit Areas and Heritage Conservation Areas