THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON
REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBMITTED BY: Matt Faucher, Acting Manager, Long Range Planning & Sustainability

COUNCIL MEETING: REG ☐ COW ☒ I/C ☐
COUNCIL MEETING DATE: December 9, 2024
REPORT DATE: November 26, 2024
FILE: 6480-02 OCP Growth Scenario

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDED GROWTH SCENARIO

PURPOSE:

To provide Council with a recommend growth scenario based on community feedback received in Phase 2 of engagement for the Official Community Plan (OCP) and Transportation Plan (TP) review project.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council support in principle the recommended growth scenario as outlined in the report titled "Recommended Growth Scenario" dated November, 26, 2024, and respectfully submitted by the Acting Manager, Long Range Planning & Sustainability.

ALTERNATIVES & IMPLICATIONS:

N/A

ANALYSIS:

A. Committee Recommendations:

N/A

B. Rationale:

1. Background

At the Committee of the Whole Meeting on October 28, 2024, Administration presented Council with a proposed growth scenario. This plan included legislative requirements and offered various options for how Vernon could support the projected population increase identified in the Housing Needs Report (HNR).

Council requested additional information on two aspects of the presentation:

1. A map illustrating the estimated housing capacity by neighbourhood; and
2. Information on the number of housing units constructed over the past five years.

The requested information has been provided in Attachment 1 for Council's review.

As part of Phase 2 of public engagement, these optional components were shared with the community through a survey and a public open house to gather feedback. When planning for Vernon's future growth, it's important to consider recent changes in provincial housing legislation that set baseline density levels the City must permit.

The two main components are:

1. **Small Scale Multi-Unit Housing (SSMUH):** Requires the City to allow a minimum level of housing density on lots traditionally occupied by single-detached homes.

2. **Transit-Oriented Development Areas (TODA):** Mandates that areas near the Downtown and Village Green Mall transit exchanges must permit certain building heights and densities.

While the provincial legislation provides a framework for growth, the City has the opportunity to shape the community in ways that reflect local values and priorities. Feedback from Phase 2 of public engagement has been invaluable in guiding the development of a recommended growth strategy.

Community members provided feedback on several key options:

- Building Heights in Downtown and Village Green TODAs (Tall Buildings)
- Building Forms in Public Transit Corridors
- Establishing Village Centres
- Hillside Development

2. Options Review: TODAs

The Province has required the City to designate areas surrounding the Downtown and Village Green bus exchanges as TODAs. This mandate sets minimum building heights and densities that the City must permit and prohibits establishing minimum parking requirements for housing uses in these areas. The City can choose to establish regulations that exceed these minimum thresholds or designate additional areas as TODAs.

Approved TODAs: Downtown and Village Green

On June 24, 2024, the City adopted Zoning Bylaw 6000 which designated the two required TODAs in Schedule B. During Phase 2 of the Official Community Plan (OCP) engagement, the public was asked for feedback on building heights within these approved TODAs, specifically regarding the possibility of tall buildings (defined as 18 storeys or higher). Buildings over six storeys require changes in materials and other considerations under the BC Building Code, increasing construction costs. To make such projects financially viable and secure necessary financing, these additional costs need to be offset by increased height and density.

The community was asked to indicate their preferred approach for building heights in these two areas. The results are summarized in Table 1:

Table 1: Survey and Open House Results for TODAs

Approach	Downtown TODA		Village Green TODA	
	Survey	Open House	Survey	Open House
Streamline policy to allow development of tall buildings	37%	31%	46%	36%
Assess building height on a case-by-case basis	42%	41%	38%	45%
Do not allow tall buildings	21%	28%	16%	19%

Based on the responses, the community is open to the development of tall buildings within the two TODAs. The Village Green TODA received stronger support for streamlining policies to allow tall buildings, while the Downtown TODA showed a preference for evaluating building heights on a case-by-case basis. However, there were concerns about replicating the development patterns of larger cities, especially in the Downtown TODA, and a desire for a mix of building heights in both areas.

Proposed TODAs: Polson Mall and Okanagan Landing Road (Commercial Area)

In the proposed growth scenario, Administration identified two future TODAs: one in the Polson Mall area and another in the commercial area on Okanagan Landing Road. There is land allocated for a future transit exchange south of Polson Mall, making it well-positioned to support increased density under TODA guidelines. The commercial area on Okanagan Landing Road is along a transportation corridor with existing businesses, near schools and services, and could serve as a midpoint hub between Downtown and the waterfront area where multiple transit lines could intersect.

In the current OCP (Bylaw 5470), both areas are designated as Neighbourhood Centres. Aligning with this designation, Administration recommends identifying these areas as future TODAs in the recommended growth scenario. This approach ensures that future development has a transit focus and guides future transit plans by indicating that increased services to and from these areas are desirable.

It's important to note that identifying these areas as future TODAs does not immediately enact the legislative TODA requirements. The regulations would only take effect once a transit exchange is established and TODA status is confirmed by the Province. The goal of this designation is to signal the City's intent to enhance transit services in these areas and to encourage development that would build the ridership necessary to support frequent transit services.

3. Options Review: Transit Corridors

To enhance transit services and connectivity between key locations in the city, Administration proposes establishing three transit corridors that connect the approved and future Transit-Oriented Development Areas (TODAs). These corridors align with existing major roads and provide a framework to focus future development and transit network improvements.

During Phase 2 of public engagement, the community was asked to indicate their preferred building forms along these corridors. The results are summarized in Table 2:

Table 2: Survey and Open House Results for Building Forms in Transit Corridors

Build Form	Survey	Open House
Townhouses and small urban infill	28%	32%
4-6 storey wood frame	17%	17%
7-12 storey concrete	15%	12%
A mix of all forms	56%	39%

Note: Respondents could select more than one option, so total percentages exceed 100%.

Based on the feedback, the majority of respondents expressed a desire to see a mix of housing forms along the transit corridors.

In the proposed growth scenario presented to Council and the public for consideration, three transit corridors were identified:

- **East-West Corridor on 25th Avenue:** Connecting Downtown and Paddlewheel Park.
- **North-South Corridor to Northern City Boundary:** Extending from Downtown to the northern boundary with the Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO).
- **North-South Corridor along Kalamalka Lake Road:** Extending from Downtown to the southern city boundary with Coldstream.

In the recommended growth scenario, Administration proposes shortening these routes to concentrate on establishing ridership and improving transit frequency between TODAs. This focused approach serves as an initial phase, which can be expanded in the future once the corridors between TODAs are successfully established.

4. Options Review: Village Centres

Establishing Village Centres aims to create more walkable neighborhoods and provide diverse housing options to meet the needs of Vernon's residents. Unlike TODAs, these centres would not be governed by provincial TODA legislation, allowing the City to maintain control over building heights and densities.

In the proposed growth scenario, four potential Village Centres were identified:

1. **Anderson Ranch** (North Vernon)
2. **Alexis Park** (including the area surrounding the Active Living Centre)
3. **Waterfront** (from Marshall Field Park to Paddlewheel Park)
4. **Hospital District** (areas surrounding Vernon Jubilee Hospital and connecting to Downtown)

During Phase 2 of public engagement, the community provided feedback on these proposed Village Centres through a survey and an open house. The results are summarized in Table 3 and Table 4:

Table 3: Survey Results for Village Centres

	Village Centre	Hospital District	Alexis Park	Anderson Ranch	Waterfront
Survey	**Strongly Support**	47%	41%	33%	40%
	Somewhat Support	28%	29%	26%	22%
	Neutral	13%	15%	21%	10%
	Somewhat Oppose	6%	6%	8%	10%
	Strongly Oppose	4%	4%	7%	15%
	Unsure / No Opinion	3%	4%	6%	3%
	Support Total	**75%**	**71%**	**59%**	**62%**
	Oppose Total	**9%**	**10%**	**15%**	**25%**

Table 4: Open House Results for Village Centres

Open House	**Strongly Support**	61%	60%	43%	42%
	Somewhat Support	31%	28%	28%	22%
	Neutral	1%	6%	12%	2%
	Somewhat Oppose	4%	3%	5%	10%
	Strongly Oppose	3%	2%	13%	25%
	Unsure / No Opinion	-	-	-	-
	Support Total	**92%**	**88%**	**71%**	**64%**
	Oppose Total	**7%**	**5%**	**18%**	**35%**

Note: Numbers have been rounded to whole numbers, so totals may not exactly total 100%.

Based on the feedback received, there is general support for the concept of establishing Village Centres. The Hospital District and Alexis Park areas received strong support in both the survey and open house, with relatively low levels of opposition. While Anderson Ranch and the Waterfront also received support, these areas exhibited higher levels of opposition.

Considering these findings, Administration recommends proceeding with designating the Hospital District and Alexis Park areas as Village Centres (shown as Urban Village Centres in the recommended growth scenario). Focusing on these areas with the greatest community support allows for the development of tailored policies and designations, creating opportunities for review and refinement as development progresses.

Anderson Ranch and the Waterfront areas are designated as Future Urban Village Centres in the recommended growth scenario. This designation allows for future consideration of these areas through the current OCP review and subsequent review cycles. These locations have more complex environmental conditions and transportation considerations that require comprehensive review and strategic policy development informed by professional studies and analysis. Additionally, both the Waterfront area and North Vernon have adopted neighbourhood plans from 2008 (updated in 2011) and 1999, respectively. These neighbourhood plans will need to be reviewed and considered during the development of the future land use map and policies for these areas in the OCP update.

5. Options Review: Hillside Areas

With approved developments already established and growing interest from landowners and developers to expand neighborhoods in the hillside areas surrounding the city core, both the survey and the open house sought to gauge community interest in further hillside development.

The question posed was:

How should the City approach reviewing applications for further development in hillside areas outside of currently approved developments?

The options were:

1. Honour existing development plans and discourage further development;
2. Cautiously review further development proposals on a case-by-case basis; or
3. Encourage further development.

Table 5: Survey and Open House Results for Hillside Areas

Option	Survey	Open House
Honour existing developments and discourage further development	39%	56%
Case-by-case review of applications	44%	34%
Encourage further development	17%	11%

Based on the responses, there is a strong sentiment in the community that hillside areas—particularly environmentally sensitive zones—should be protected from sprawling developments. However, there is also recognition that further hillside development could be considered on a case-by-case basis. This highlights the need for careful policy development for the City's hillside areas to ensure the natural environment is protected, while not completely ruling out the potential for future developments that provide broader community benefits. Such benefits might include providing emergency access to existing neighborhoods or securing significant environmentally sensitive lands through dedication to the City for protection and enhancement of natural systems.

In the recommended growth scenario, future growth is directed and encouraged within the City's core lands, as outlined by the focus growth area. Hillside areas with existing approvals in the current OCP would be transitioned to the updated OCP. Administration is currently awaiting the results of professional studies on the City's sensitive ecosystems inventory, riparian areas, and natural asset inventory. These studies will form the basis for future policy development regarding hillside areas within the City.

6. Options Review: Other Refinements Made

Based on feedback received from the community and Council, Administration has made additional changes to refine the recommended growth scenario:

- **Lands South of Okanagan Avenue (Hesperia):** This area has been changed from a medium-density neighborhood to a low-density neighborhood.
- **Highway Commercial Areas:** These have been reassigned from "Industrial/Highway Commercial" to "Commercial-Forward Mixed-Use." The industrial category is now designated separately.
- **Lands West of 34th Street:** This area has been reassigned from the Hospital Village Centre to "Commercial-Forward Mixed-Use."

7. Conclusion

While the growth scenario is not tied to a specific timeline and may take decades to fully realize, its purpose is to provide clear direction for Vernon's future. It will guide the creation of policies and plans that move the City toward achieving the community's shared vision.

The growth scenario will inform the development of the Future Land Use Map and supporting policies in the OCP and the TP. This process aims to translate Vernon's long-term vision into foundational components needed over the next 20 years.

The first three to four months of 2025 will be dedicated to drafting the OCP. Once complete, the draft will be presented to Council and the community for review and feedback during Phase 3 of public engagement in spring 2025.

C. Attachments:

Attachment 1 - Council's Request for Information: Estimated Housing Capacity by Neighbourhood Map & past 5-year Building Permits for Housing Units.
Attachment 2 - Recommend Growth Scenario Map

D. Council's Strategic Plan Alignment:

☒ Governance & Organizational Excellence
☒ Recreation, Parks & Natural Areas
☒ Environmental Leadership
☒ Livability
☒ Vibrancy
☐ Not Applicable

E. Relevant Policy/Bylaws/Resolutions:

1. Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 5470
2. 25 Year Master Transportation Plan

BUDGET/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

N/A

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

☒ None ☐ Budget Previously Approved ☐ New Budget Request
(Finance Review Required)

Prepared by:

X _____
Signer 1
Matt Faucher
Acting Manager, Long Range Planning & Sustainability

X _____
Signer 2
Terry Barton
Director of Planning & Community Services

Approved for submission to Council:

_____
Peter Weeber, CAO

Date: _____

REVIEWED WITH

- ☐ Corporate Services
  - ☐ Bylaw Compliance
  - ☐ Real Estate
- ☐ RCMP
- ☐ Fire & Rescue Services
- ☐ Human Resources
- ☐ Financial Services
- ☐ COMMITTEE:
- ☐ OTHER:
- ☐ Operations
  - ☐ Public Works/Airport
  - ☐ Facilities
  - ☐ Utilities
- ☐ Recreation Services
- ☐ Parks
- ☐ Current Planning
- ☒ Long Range Planning & Sustainability
- ☐ Building & Licensing
- ☐ Engineering Development Services
- ☐ Infrastructure Management
- ☒ Transportation
- ☐ Economic Development & Tourism

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ATTACHMENT 1

CITY OF Vernon

ESTIMATED HOUSING CAPACITY BY NEIGHBOURHOOD

Description	Code
Agricultural & Rural	A&R
Small Scale Housing	SSH
Medium Scale Housing	MSH
Total Units	TOTAL

Bella Vista Ran.	
A&R	69
SSH	0
MSH	0
TOTAL	69

Turtle Mountain	
A&R	38
SSH	636
MSH	455
TOTAL	1,129

Alexis Park	
A&R	48
SSH	1,354
MSH	1,348
TOTAL	2,750

Blue Jay	
A&R	16
SSH	211
MSH	0
TOTAL	227

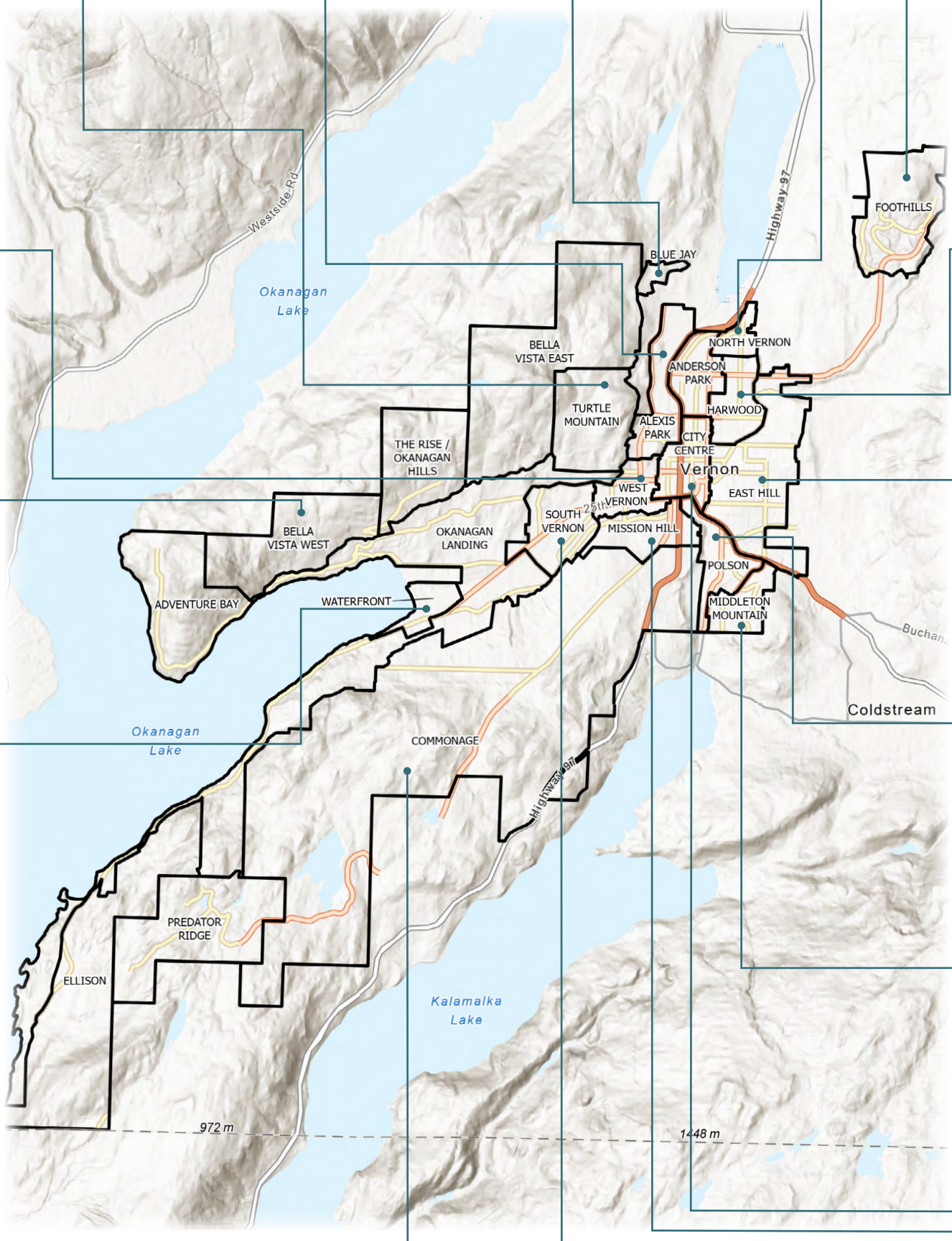
North Vernon	
A&R	2
SSH	431
MSH	1,993
TOTAL	2,426

Foothills	
A&R	44
SSH	2,822
MSH	305
TOTAL	3,171

West Vernon	
A&R	0
SSH	64
MSH	8,217
TOTAL	8,281

Bella Vista West	
A&R	33
SSH	854
MSH	500
TOTAL	1,387

Waterfront	
A&R	0
SSH	748
MSH	0
TOTAL	748



Harwood	
A&R	5
SSH	2,897
MSH	3,165
TOTAL	6,067

East Hill	
A&R	85
SSH	11,707
MSH	1,495
TOTAL	13,287

Polson	
A&R	0
SSH	5
MSH	451
TOTAL	456

Middleton Mtn.	
A&R	0
SSH	1,800
MSH	296
TOTAL	2,096

City Centre	
A&R	0
SSH	90
MSH	2,451
TOTAL	2,541

Ok. Landing E	
A&R	147
SSH	3,965
MSH	943
TOTAL	5,055

Ok. Landing N	
A&R	245
SSH	4,483
MSH	0
TOTAL	4,728

Ok. Landing S	
A&R	215
SSH	1,052
MSH	0
TOTAL	1,267

Commonage Area	
A&R	484
SSH	63
MSH	0
TOTAL	547

South Vernon	
A&R	17
SSH	4,487
MSH	1,681
TOTAL	6,185

Mission Hill	
A&R	0
SSH	2,795
MSH	2,471
TOTAL	5,266

5 Year Building Permit: Housing Unit Counts

Year	Number of Housing Units
2019	458
2020	331
2021	371
2022	473
2023	443
Total	**2,076**
5 Year Average	**415.6**
2024 (To November 26)	168

ATTACHMENT 2

CITY OF Vernon

GROWTH SCENARIO

