

*"We can't predict the future. Flexibility and adaptability is what is going to help us through all the changes. Values last longer than plans, we can't prepare for everything in the future."*

*-comment from an Imagine Kelowna participant*

## Introduction

*Imagine Kelowna* is a vision for building an inclusive prosperous and sustainable city in the face of an uncertain future. The result of an unprecedented level of public engagement, *Imagine Kelowna* is a vision created by the community for the community.

We need this new vision because a lot has changed since the City of Kelowna completed its last comprehensive visioning exercise in 1991 and 1992. That exercise led to the City's 1992 Strategic Plan that in many ways laid the foundation for the thriving city we experience today. The plan was called *Choosing our Future* and it laid out specific objectives along with strategies for achieving them. It focused on managing growth by providing direction for land-use planning and today's residents have greatly benefited from the results.

For example, the plan emphasized the need to densify existing urban areas and protect agricultural land. It also set the stage for the revitalization of Bernard Avenue (Kelowna's Main Street), the creation of Stuart Park, upgrades to the City's pedestrian system of sidewalks and urban trails, and the development of a network of bike paths. But a lot of the changes that would occur over the next 25 years -both locally and globally- could not be foreseen by the people who crafted the plan.

For instance, looking back now it's easy to see how over the last 25 years, information and mobile technologies have dramatically changed the way people live, work and play. But in 1992, the Internet was mainly the domain of academics and smartphones weren't around yet. The fact that the 1992 Strategic Plan didn't anticipate the seismic social and economic changes that would accompany these technological developments is not a slight against the plan. It was the right plan for its time.

But now it's time for a new vision, one that can help us thrive in a world where technology continues to disrupt and transform our society and economy in ever-faster and unpredictable ways. *Imagine Kelowna* provides this vision by identifying the community's core values, principles and goals. Instead of providing specific policy directions the way the 1992 plan did, *Imagine Kelowna* provides a philosophical foundation to make us more resilient and guide future decision making. The goals of *Imagine Kelowna* are also aligned with the [United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals](#), linking what we're doing locally with larger global efforts to make the world a better place.

Under the banner of *Imagine Next*, the City will use *Imagine Kelowna* to help shape its priorities and provide the foundation for future strategies and projects such as the Official Community Plan (*Our Kelowna as we Grow*), the Transportation Master Plan (*Our Kelowna as we Connect*), and unify existing plans and strategies (e.g. Healthy City Strategy, Cultural Plan, etc.) and future ones. But because *Imagine Kelowna* is the community's vision, it is also meant to be used by the city's businesses, organizations and individuals so that collectively, we can all help to ensure a vibrant future for our amazing city. Building a future that we all want will require us to work together.

### [Kelowna's history part I: A First Nations' perspective by Jordan Coble - Curatorial and Heritage Researcher at the Sncəwips Heritage Museum](#)

The Okanagan Valley has been home to the syilx /Okanagan people since time immemorial. This territory is unceded, which means there has never been any formal forfeiture of title or rights through a treaty or any other agreement. The vast majority of the land in the Okanagan has been appropriated without consulting the syilx /Okanagan people. Prior to their contact with Europeans, the syilx people had a very high quality of life and a very complex and comprehensive governance system that ensured all Nation members were provided for in times of need and that everyone fulfilled their responsibilities.

After the Indian Act passed in 1876 and the reserve system was forced upon the sqilx/Okanagan people, the First Nation people were forced onto reserves with many policies and laws that restricted their contributions to the developing area. The impact of these restrictions are still felt today and affect the development and progress of First Nations people.

## Kelowna's history part II: A settler's perspective by Wayne Wilson – former executive director of the Kelowna Museum Society

The first European settlers arrived here in the mid-1800s. They were mostly missionaries, farmers and cattle ranchers. Agriculture flourished in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as did supporting industries such as packinghouses, box factories, canneries and a railway. Post World War II transportation improvements connected Kelowna to the rest of Canada and the world. These included an airstrip that would eventually become Kelowna International Airport (1947), the Hope-Princeton Highway (1949), a floating bridge across Okanagan Lake (1958), the Coquihalla Highway and the Okanagan Connector (1990).

The local economy started shifting in significant ways after the war as well. Kelowna's industrial base diversified and tourism began to grow in importance. In the 1980's, the wine industry grew in importance, adding a new dimension to both agriculture and tourism.

### Not a small town anymore

Kelowna is growing up. When the 1992 Strategic Plan was created, Kelowna still had a small town feel to it. The city had a reputation as a farming community and was becoming known as a popular retirement destination. Over the next 25 years however, Kelowna's population grew close to 70 per cent and in 2017, it stood at more than 129,500 people. The 2016 Census pegged Kelowna as the fastest growing city in B.C. and the sixth fastest in Canada. And it's not just baby boomers nearing retirement

age who are coming here. The largest demographic group moving to Kelowna is now made up of 25-to-34-year-olds. Meanwhile, by 2041, Kelowna is projected to grow to close to 180,000 people.

Farming remains an important part of Kelowna's economy and identity. However, the economy has become much more diversified with health care and technology now sitting as the region's top employment sectors. The growth of the technology sector has been especially notable and Kelowna is developing a reputation as an important high-tech hub. In 2015, the tech sector's economic impact on the Okanagan was \$1.3 billion, a 30 per cent increase in just three years. This growth is part of a broader shift towards a knowledge-based economy that is also being driven by growth in Kelowna's service, public administration, education and health care sectors.

Kelowna is now home to two high-caliber post-secondary institutions (UBC-Okanagan and Okanagan College) while over the last decade, the city's hospital has undergone a major expansion. Kelowna General Hospital now has more than 700 beds, a state-of-the art heart and surgical centre, perinatal unit and a clinical academic campus. Meanwhile, Kelowna International Airport has gone from seeing roughly 300,000 passengers go through its gates in 1992 to more than 1.7 million in 2017, making it the 11 busiest airport in Canada.

### Growing pains

Kelowna is definitely not a small town anymore but it isn't a major metropolis either. Kelowna is kind of like a teenager. It's at an awkward point in its growth and what exactly it will be when it fully grows up is not yet clear. For many Kelowna residents, the transition away from being a small town is scary, while for others it's an exciting opportunity. But the reality is, there's no going back to the way things were. Growth is happening and Kelowna is experiencing both its challenges and its benefits. We need to embrace that growth so we can shape it to the benefit of the whole community.

Kelowna is a successful community. It has natural beauty, an entrepreneurial spirit and it has done a good job of adapting to past change. However, we now live in a world where change is happening faster than ever before. This pace of change brings with it greater uncertainty and unpredictability. So, while we are already experiencing significant changes as a result of the shift towards the knowledge economy, increasing digitalization (the integration of digital technologies into everyday life), emerging automatization (i.e. driverless cars, robot caregivers and cashier-less grocery checkouts), e-commerce, and the shared economy (services like car sharing, co-working and online vacation home rentals), it's impossible to know yet how all of this will ultimately reshape our city. It is against this backdrop that Kelowna is going through growing pains that are manifesting in the areas of urban form, transportation, housing affordability, community cohesion and social inequality. What worked for Kelowna when it was a small community will not necessarily work in the future, requiring us to rethink how we do things.

## Imagine Kelowna

*Imagine Kelowna* is our response to the forces of change. It is a vision developed by the community and it is a vision that will be owned and delivered by the community as a whole, with local government only one of the many players involved. *Imagine Kelowna* represents the voices of the people who live here including but not limited to: expert academic advisors, community thought leaders, students, youth, elders, members of local First Nations, and residents. If we have learned anything about Kelowna on this journey, it is that our community is not homogenous. The people who live here come from all over the world and have diverse perspectives. Kelowna is at a pivotal time in its evolution, one full of great opportunities, but also one full of great challenges.

## Unprecedented engagement

*This initiative is a historical opportunity to direct the future of our community, and is incredibly important for citizens of all ages to get involved and share their vision for Kelowna. In the coming years, we'll see significant shifts in economy, technology,*

*resources, climate and people that will influence our community's future. By participating in this process, we can all contribute to creating a thriving community for current and future generations.*

*-Kelowna mayor, Colin Basran, kicking off Imagine Kelowna in May 2016*

The *Imagine Kelowna* vision and its accompanying values, principles and goals come out of the largest public engagement effort in the City of Kelowna's history. That effort kicked-off during a popular neighbourhood event in 2016 called Rutland May Days. Since then, the outreach and level of citizen involvement across the city has translated into thousands of interactions through face-to-face conversations, community events and a robust online presence.

The results of this unprecedented engagement include: close to 30,000 web page views, 195 on-line submissions, 400 comments on sounding boards, 500 postcard submissions, 40 community events, 30 in-depth stakeholder discussions, 533 youth submissions, two workshops with Westbank First Nation elders and youth, 25 presentations to local organizations, agencies and institutions, four co-sponsored On-Point community events and 266 tweets during a Town Hall twitter event with Mayor Basran.

This engagement has not only guided the development of *Imagine Kelowna* but it will also be used as the foundation for the plans and strategies developed under the banner of *Imagine Next*.

### **Kelowna's identity**

What is clear from this project's extensive public engagement is that this is a community with a multidimensional identity that is not easily defined.

Among *Imagine Kelowna* participants, there is extensive identification with Kelowna's geography, especially Okanagan Lake. The city's agricultural lands, natural areas and nearby mountains are also identified with to varying degrees. But beyond geography -which Kelowna largely shares with its regional neighbours- there is little consensus as to what defines Kelowna.

Many longtime residents still think of Kelowna as a farming community. Newer residents however, are more likely to think of Kelowna as a technology city or an entrepreneurial city. For some people, Kelowna's identity as a resilient and caring community was forged in 2003 when the city came together in response to the devastating Okanagan Mountain Park wildfire. In some circles, Kelowna is becoming known as a popular university or college town, while in others, what defines this city is its lifestyle opportunities.

In short, because Kelowna is growing and evolving, its identity is not easily pinned down. Rather than trying to do so, let us embrace our evolving identity as a unique city that is not easily mistaken for anywhere else. It is a place of incredible beauty and infinite possibilities whose people strive to balance economic development with environmental preservation.

## Imagine Kelowna Vision and Community Values

The following vision and values lays out the community's aspirations while the principles and related goals outlined in the next section work together as a system to help the community achieve its vision and ensure a vibrant future for Kelowna:

For thousands of years the syilx / Okanagan people have protected the beautiful lands and waters of the Okanagan, nurturing a healthy and sustainable balance. The first arrivals of European descent fell in love with the beauty here and today we continue to celebrate all the Okanagan has to offer. In 2040, Kelowna is a thriving mid-sized city where people lead active and healthy lifestyles. It is a community that respects the natural wonders that shape its identity. As a place with deep agricultural roots, Kelowna understands the need to protect our environment, manage growth and be resilient in the face of an unpredictable future. Kelowna is a community that:

- **puts people first:** What is good for people is at the front and centre of our decision making. We welcome people from all backgrounds because inclusivity and diversity makes us a stronger and more innovative community.
- **values its history:** We celebrate our heritage, but we also acknowledge past injustices and learn from our mistakes to help us build a better future.
- **encourages curiosity and creativity:** We are constantly learning so we can effectively respond and adapt to rapid change. We find innovative ways to meet social, economic and environmental challenges.
- **recognizes the changing roles of individuals, businesses, governments and community organizations:** The well-being of our city is a shared responsibility and everyone needs to do their part to meet the challenges of the future.

By embracing these values, in 2040, Kelowna is a community with the capacity to respond, learn, adapt and grow with change.

## Imagine Kelowna principles and goals

Principle 1 – Connected: A community where residents are connected to their neighbours, their city and the wider world.

- **Goal: Embrace diverse transportation options to shift away from our car-centric culture**

*"Build more roundabouts, focus on making strategic investments, and discourage development that does not support transportation options/corridors."*

*-comment from an Imagine Kelowna participant*

Kelowna grew up during the golden age of the automobile. For decades, development happened in ways that required people to drive everywhere they went. As a result, in 2017, Kelowna was one of the most car-dependent cities in Canada, with over half of its carbon emissions coming from transportation. And with well over 80,000 new residents expected to move to the region by 2040, our



current level of car-dependency cannot be sustained. While some progress is being made to provide residents with more choices to get around through investments in transit and active transportation, increasing traffic volumes and congestion are a risk to physical health, economic growth and overall quality of life.

In the City's 2017 Citizen's Survey, traffic flow management was identified as an investment priority by 66 per cent of residents, putting it in second place among the top-five priorities. Traffic congestion is a by-product of how a city grows. As such, it cannot be solved just by building more roads. For starters, the land acquisition and construction costs would be huge and require big tax increases or service cuts to pay for them. In addition, just building more roads has been shown to actually make traffic problems worse. New roads give people more incentive to drive and quickly fill up.

Instead, we need to make sure future development can easily be serviced by mass transit, shared transportation services, and active transportation networks. There is a strong business case for providing these kinds of services and infrastructure in dense urban centres, but in areas with sprawling development and fewer people, they become less financially feasible. Thankfully, 50 per cent of Kelowna residents and 80 per cent of the city's jobs are already within a five-minute walk of frequent transit service, and if we make it easy to get around without a car, we can help make the city more affordable and inclusive.

Transportation was one of the most important issues for *Imagine Kelowna* participants. At the community forum in April 2017, participants showed a lot of enthusiasm about the idea of prioritizing investments in infrastructure that support options like cycling, walking, transit and shared mobility, over investments that encourage driving. Similarly, at an On Point Upside Down Town Hall where members of the public discussed transportation, one overwhelming theme emerged: "Let's design our

future with the pedestrian, cyclist and transit-goer in mind.” As one participant put it, “driving should not be the first choice. Choices for everyone city wide – multi-modal paths, reliable clean transit.”

There are a lot of unknowns when it comes to the future of transportation. For example, we don’t know how shared economy services like ride-sharing and car-sharing will evolve and impact transportation in the Kelowna region. But the biggest unknown is what effect the introduction of autonomous vehicles will have. This technology has the potential to be very disruptive with effects that will ripple through our city and our society. While no one knows for sure what they will be, we still need to be ready to deal with them. As an *Imagine Kelowna* participant put it, “transportation is about to be turned on its head.”

Possible ways that ***Imagine Next*** can address this goal include local and regional transportation plans, (titled *Our Kelowna as we Move* and *Connecting our Region* respectively). But because how people get around is closely connected to how the city is laid out, transportation plans will be aligned with the Official Community Plan (*Our Kelowna as we Grow*) as a part of a coordinated approach to growth. But meeting this goal will also require residents and other community partners to come up with *Imagine Next* initiatives of their own.

- **Goal: Create great public spaces that bring people together**

*“Provide public space to have discourse.”*

*-comment from an Imagine Kelowna participant*

Public spaces are a city’s common ground, places where people from all backgrounds can come together. They can be both indoor or outdoor spaces and include areas like parks, plazas, sidewalks and streets – and people in Kelowna want more of them. During the April 2017 community forum, participants loved the idea of building great public spaces such as parks, plazas and community centres in each urban centre.

The City is trying to do its part. In 2015, Kelowna's newly developed Stuart Park won the Canadian Institute of Planner's Great Public Space in Canada award. The jury called the park and its civic plaza, "a year round destination and the cultural and civic heart of Kelowna." In 2014, the City completed a \$14.3 million revitalization of Bernard Avenue (Kelowna's "Main Street") that transformed it into a more people-centred destination with wider sidewalks, street furniture and public art. The City has also made significant investments to upgrade four public spaces in the Rutland area: Gerstmar Park, Roxby Square, Mugford Park and Rutland Recreation Park. And the work is not done yet – there are long-term plans to build more parks, community centres and recreation facilities throughout the city.

Government cannot do it alone however. Providing great spaces that are accessible to everyone is a shared responsibility. Recently, the City began working with businesses and other stakeholders on placemaking initiatives that reclaim unused or underutilized public spaces. The first project to come to fruition was the Bernard Avenue Laneway project. It turned an underused laneway into a key public space in the heart of downtown Kelowna where people can walk, socialize or buy food and drink from an on-site concession.

Developers can play a role too, by incorporating public space -like plazas or small parks- into their projects. It's important however, that these privately-owned publically-accessible spaces be truly open to everyone and not just select members of the public, and that they complement rather than replace publicly-owned spaces.

Possible ways that ***Imagine Next*** can address this goal include the City's infrastructure and capital plans, the Official Community Plan (*Our Community as we Grow*) and the Urban Centres Road Map. Developers and others involved in land-use can also come up with their own *Imagine Next* initiatives.

- **Goal: Provide opportunities for people of all ages, abilities and identities**

*"Part of our brand is how we look after each other."*

*-comment from an Imagine Kelowna participant*

Inclusivity and diversity have been shown to boost a community's health, resiliency and economic prosperity. In other words, we all benefit when economic, recreational and cultural opportunities are available to everyone, regardless of age, ability, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion or national origin.

Kelowna has a reputation as a city lacking in diversity. However, according to the 2016 Census, Kelowna is slowly changing. *Imagine Kelowna* participants largely expressed a strong desire to see that increasing diversity continue, along with a desire to see people from different cultures openly celebrating and sharing their cultures, both in their everyday lives and through festivals and other events. As one participant put it, "cultural awareness is improved through exposure. Our relative lack of diversity is a barrier but will improve with time."

But diversity is about more than ethnicity and culture. People also have a diverse range of physical and mental abilities and these abilities change with age. Through its Community For All Action Plan, the City has identified 31 actions to help create a city that is healthy, safe, active and inclusive for seniors, children and those with diverse abilities. As a result of the plan, during the summer of 2017, the City assessed the accessibility of 157 parks and 76 buildings. Again, the City cannot do this work alone. Other organizations in Kelowna need to assess the accessibility of their programs and events, and take steps to ensure that they are open to as much of the community as possible.

Ensuring everyone has the opportunity to get an education, earn a living and afford decent housing was also important for *Imagine Kelowna* participants, as rising economic inequality can lead to increased poverty, homelessness, crime, and other social problems. One On Point Upside Down Town Hall

participant put it this way: "I would like to see our community become more concerned with 'sharing and spreading the wealth' ... emphasis on a healthy happy community ... 'quality of life' goes beyond financial wealth."

Possible ways that **Imagine Next** can address this goal include the City's Healthy City Strategy which includes the Community For All Action Plan and the Healthy Housing Strategy. But it can also be addressed through other initiatives such as the City's Cultural Plan and Journey Home, the homelessness strategy the City is working on with a number of community partners. Community partners are also expected to use this goal in their strategic plans.

- **Goal: Cultivate an accessible and engaging arts and culture scene**

*"Keep on supporting culture in Kelowna. Parks alive, amphitheatre, etc."*

*-comment from an Imagine Kelowna participant*

There is a close relationship between a rich arts and culture scene and a city's economic vitality. Many young professional, in a wide-range of industries, can choose where they want to live and work and are increasingly making their choices based on quality of life. And as we heard during the *Imagine Kelowna* engagement, arts and culture are key contributors to a city's quality of life.

At the community forum in April 2017, the need to support arts and culture regularly came up during discussions about how to support innovation and drive Kelowna's entrepreneurial spirit. As one participant put it, "you want an inclusive, vibrant community – support the arts." Arts and culture can bring people together, provide intellectual and emotional stimulation and help make our city a place where people want to live.

Kelowna is home to a multitude of theatres, live music venues, galleries, performing arts companies, festivals and arts organizations. In any given week, this city hosts a slew of shows, readings and other events. Meanwhile, a number of organizations offer classes and workshops that give members of the

community the opportunity to participate directly in artistic and creative enterprises. Kelowna also has a variety of education institutions and programs that offer training to those who are pursuing careers as professional artists and creators.

Arts and culture delivers direct economic benefits to our city, creating jobs and generating an estimated \$145 million in annual economic activity. Artists, designers and other creators also work in sectors like the tech industry, while Kelowna is home to a number of award-winning studios and talented production crew, putting the city at the centre of the Okanagan's growing film and animation industries.

The challenge we face now is how to continue building up our arts and culture scene and get more people participating in it. We need to support a wide-spectrum of opportunities from grassroots initiatives to professional endeavours so that everyone can find something that interests them to engage in. As a community, we also need to invest in the infrastructure that supports arts and culture.

Possible ways that *Imagine Next* can address this goal include the City's Cultural Plan, Arts & Culture grants and Public Art program. But this goal also needs to be embraced by community groups and the private sector. Partnerships will be key to financing and delivering new arts and culture infrastructure like a performing arts centre.

**Principle 2 – Smarter: A community that is willing to learn, adapt and grow so we can thrive in the face of rapid change.**

- **Goal: Support innovation that helps drive inclusive prosperity**

*"We need better, less precarious jobs and we need to encourage employers to hire young workers."*

*-comment from an Imagine Kelowna participant*

While Kelowna is well-known for its agriculture, tourism and real-estate industries, it has also become a technology hub. Locally, the technology sector has grown into a 1.3 billion-dollar industry with more than 600 companies employing about 7,600 people. There is still lots of room to grow, provided companies can find the talent and support they need. And while innovation is synonymous with technology, it is also increasingly important in many other parts of our economy and society including agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, healthcare, education and the delivery of public and social services.

The City is helping to grow the tech sector with its fibre optic network that was purposely built with extra capacity that is leased to local businesses and institutions. Kelowna is among only a handful of B.C. cities that offer this service and this affordable telecommunications infrastructure helps make this city an attractive place to run a business with large data needs.

One of the big challenges Kelowna faces is that we do not have the critical mass of talent needed by the tech sector, so companies are recruiting people from elsewhere. But that is challenging as well, as people who want to relocate here often have a hard time finding somewhere to live, given that Kelowna has serious housing affordability issues and often has a low vacancy rate. In this way, our economic and innovation goals are intimately connected to our housing goals.

We also need to do a better job of getting the word out about the career opportunities available here. In a survey of Canadian young professionals commissioned as part of *Imagine Kelowna*, career opportunity was identified as the most important factor when assessing possible cities to relocate to. However, only 21 per cent of respondents gave Kelowna a positive rating as a place that offers good career opportunities.

Another important way to help meet the local talent challenge is to provide training and education opportunities to people who already live here, something many *Imagine Kelowna* participants called for.

As one contributor told us, “We need to create partnerships between industry and learning institutions to provide students with work opportunities and industry with the opportunity to grow.” At the April 2017 community forum, participants rallied around the idea to “support business growth by linking the education system to employers to make sure that today’s students are learning the skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow.”

This work is already underway. Both UBC Okanagan and Okanagan College work closely with the business community and are centres of academic excellence that produce high-quality research and graduates. And increasingly, those graduates are choosing to stay here after they complete their education. Meanwhile, the non-profit organization, Accelerate Okanagan, has become a resource hub for the tech industry, providing mentorship and support for entrepreneurs and innovators while the Okanagan Centre for Innovation provides space for nurturing ideas, incubating start-ups and building partnerships.

But more still needs to be done to fill the large gaps in the city’s labour force. At the same time, it’s vitally important that we create opportunities for people from all socio-economic backgrounds. Otherwise, we risk becoming a community divided by the social problems that have been shown to accompany increased economic inequality. These include increased poverty, more homelessness, lower levels of trust, weaker community cohesion and increased crime.

And innovation isn’t something that is restricted to the economic sphere. During the *Imagine Kelowna* engagement, we heard a lot of enthusiasm for the idea of social entrepreneurship – using the techniques of entrepreneurs and start-ups to develop solutions to social and environmental problems.

Possible ways that *Imagine Next* can address this goal include the City’s annual contribution of more than \$600,000 to fund regional economic development efforts along with its ongoing relationships with



the Okanagan Innovation Centre and academic institutions. But Kelowna really needs entrepreneurs and other community stakeholders to embrace *Imagine Next* and take this goal to heart.

- **Goal: Take action and be resilient in the face of climate change**

*"Encourage and enforce sustainable design of infrastructure to strengthen protection and conserve resources."*

*-comment from an Imagine Kelowna participant*

In 2017, Kelowna experienced one of its most extreme weather years ever. Historic spring floods impacted approximately 3,200 residents and caused tens of millions of dollars in damage to private and public property and infrastructure. This was followed by the driest summer ever recorded, which contributed to a devastating wildfire season that blanketed Kelowna in smoke. As global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions continue to grow, these types of extreme weather events are expected to occur more regularly and Kelowna needs to implement measures to mitigate their impacts. At the same time, we need to reduce our GHG emissions in order to become more sustainable and provide hope for the future. The bulk of Kelowna's GHG emissions come from vehicles (55 per cent) and buildings (36 per cent) making these the areas where we can make the most difference.

Climate change was top of mind for *Imagine Kelowna* participants who shared lots of ideas for addressing it. Some of the more popular ones were: require the construction of more energy-efficient buildings; upgrade our infrastructure; improve transit and active transportation options; and create incentives to reduce the use of water, electricity and other resources. Participants also identified actions individuals can take including: install LED lights; buy local; compost; and bike, walk and take transit more often. But while there was a wide acknowledgement of the importance of individual actions, there was a strong desire to see government take the lead.

There is no question climate change is going to create some challenges. By 2050, the Central Okanagan's average annual temperature is predicted to increase nearly two degrees, which will result

in significantly more heatwaves and periods unseasonably warm temperatures, as well as shorter winters with 14 per cent less snowfall. But despite hotter temperatures and less snow, it is predicted the Okanagan will actually see a 10 per cent increase in overall annual precipitation, with more frequent major rain events. According to these projections, more rain in the spring will increase the risk of flooding while hotter and drier summers will increase the risk of droughts and wildfires.

But there are also opportunities to make sure we adapt as the climate changes. For example, changing temperatures may mean some new crops become viable to grow locally. We can also protect and enhance our “green infrastructure.” These natural assets like our agricultural land and extensive network of streams, retain rainwater, help prevent flooding and recharge aquifers. And as many *Imagine Kelowna* participants pointed out, we have a vibrant tech sector that is well-positioned to develop some innovative solutions. “Kelowna has the tech industry to champion green tech. Host a green tech summit,” said one participant, echoing the sentiments of many.

Possible ways that *Imagine Next* can address this goal include the City’s Community Climate Action Plan, updates to the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, the creation of a Community Climate Adaptation Strategy, the Transportation Master Plan (*Our Kelowna as we Move*), and the Official Community Plan (*Our Kelowna as we Grow*.) But achieving this goal will require the whole community to embrace it.

- **Goal: Build healthy neighbourhoods that support a variety of households, income levels and life stages**

*“Housing affordability is not a nail. You can’t solve the problem with a hammer. Solving complex problems is about many small wins.”*

*-comment from an Imagine Kelowna participant*

In 2017, housing prices soared in Kelowna. At the same time, an extremely low vacancy rate made secure rental housing harder to find and drove up rents. The result is a city facing serious housing affordability and availability issues.

Kelowna actually has one of the highest rates of home ownership in the country at 74 per cent and 35 per cent of home owners are mortgage-free. But the steady climb of housing prices is putting the traditional dream of home ownership out of reach for many people, especially those with young families. And as mentioned under the innovation goal, Kelowna's housing situation – especially its lack of rental housing – is making it hard for some companies to recruit talent. All in all, it's getting harder for both individuals and families to find adequate housing that they can afford, even families with two full-time working adults. All of this is contributing to unprecedented housing and homelessness challenges. One *Imagine Kelowna* participant told us, "I have a full-time job but I have to move at the end of the month and I am almost homeless because I cannot find something within my budget."

We need to build a healthy and resilient housing system with the following key characteristics: diversity of form and tenure; affordability and accessibility; and inclusiveness and coordination. We also need to take into consideration the wide range of supports our community's most vulnerable need to access and maintain housing that meets their unique needs. But we are not starting from scratch as the work to do these things has begun with the City's Healthy Housing Strategy and Journey Home, which is an effort by the City and a number of community partners to create strategies to address housing and homelessness. Kelowna is also starting to see more rental housing getting built, thanks in part to tax incentives offered by the City.

Housing was clearly important to *Imagine Kelowna* participants. The On Point Upside Down Town Hall focused on housing was the most well-attended of the four On Point events. The message that came out of the discussion on housing was, "we are open to change within our neighbourhoods. Let's shape that change together."

There is no magic bullet to solve our housing challenges. However, there are a number of possibilities that can be explored in the search for solutions that fit our unique needs. Over the years, Kelowna has

been a leader in allowing new forms of housing like laneway houses and stacked townhouses. We can continue this trend by allowing other new forms like tiny houses, narrow homes and lock-off suites in apartments. Along with multi-family housing and carriage homes, these forms of housing could help densify neighbourhoods that currently only feature single-detached dwellings.

We can also look into allowing new kinds of housing tenures like co-housing (a community where residents own their own units but share common amenities with their neighbours, like a kitchen, workshops or guestrooms), and fee-simple row housing (row housing is usually strata-titled.) At the April 2017 community forum, *Imagine Kelowna* participants expressed strong support for ideas related to supporting new housing types in established neighbourhoods and encouraging new forms of housing tenure.

Possible ways that *Imagine Next* can address this goal include the City's Healthy Housing Strategy, Journey Home, the Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw and the Official Community Plan (*Our Kelowna as we Grow*). But realizing this goal will require the entire community support its implementation in their neighbourhoods. It will also require people and organizations involved in housing to embrace *Imagine Next* when developing their projects.

**Principle 3 – Responsible: A community where social and environmental concerns are prioritized and where decisions are made ethically.**

- **Goal: Concentrate on growing vibrant urban centres and stop facilitating urban sprawl**

*"Council needs to be strong about not permitting sprawl or degradation of our natural environment."*

*-comment from an Imagine Kelowna participant*

Historically, the City encouraged low-density, car-dependent development to spread outward into natural and agricultural areas, largely in the form of single family homes and strip malls. This kind of urban sprawl does not pay for itself over the long term. These developments require expensive

infrastructure and services that end up being subsidized by residents in other parts of the city. Other consequences associated with urban sprawl include: increased pollution; higher taxes; increased traffic congestion; loss of open spaces and natural habitats; increased social isolation; and negative health outcomes like higher rates of obesity and chronic diseases.

To counter urban sprawl, the City has established a permanent growth boundary and created five urban centres (Downtown, Rutland, Capri-Landmark, Midtown and South Pandosy.) The City has also mandated that roughly 40 per cent of future growth should happen within these urban centres. To help make it this easier, the City has developed the Urban Centres Roadmap. Other planning efforts to support urban centre revitalization include: the 2016 Civic Block Plan, the 2014 Bernard Avenue Revitalization Project, the 2012 Downtown Plan and the 2018 Capri-Landmark Urban Centre Plan.

During the April 2017 community forum, *Imagine Kelowna* participants expressed tremendous support for five ideas related to developing vibrant urban centres: focus new housing in our urban centres; make urban centres the easiest places in the city to get around without a car; build great public spaces (parks, plazas, community centres) in each urban centre; attract and encourage a variety of businesses, services and amenities in each urban centre; and encourage housing opportunities for a full range of income levels in each urban centre.

Clearly there is support for growing our urban centres while limiting the amount of development that is allowed in natural or agricultural areas. What's more, in denser neighbourhoods it's easier to develop a business case for amenities like parks, community centres, transit, and paths for walking and cycling.

And thanks to the shift towards a knowledge-based economy, urban centres are increasingly places where economic innovation happens and new jobs are created, especially in sectors like technology and research and development.

At the same time however, single-family homes remain popular which creates a demand for more sprawl development. As well, people who live in neighborhoods filled with single-family homes can be resistant to densification efforts if they feel the character of their neighbourhood is threatened. But ultimately, denser, vibrant urban centres can improve our quality of life by reducing our dependency on cars and making it easier for people to live, work, shop and play in the same neighbourhood.

Possible ways that *Imagine Next* can address this goal include the City's Urban Centres Roadmap, neighbourhood plans for individual urban centres like the Capri-Landmark Plan, the Healthy Housing Strategy, the Housing Needs Assessment, the Official Community Plan (Our Kelowna as we Grow) and the Transportation Master Plan (Our City as we Move.) But *Imagine Next* also needs to be embraced residents, developers, neighbourhood groups and other community partners.

- **Goal: Preserve Okanagan Lake as a shared resource**

*"Try to improve access to the lakefront but try to maintain the natural environment."*

*-comment from an Imagine Kelowna participant*

Okanagan Lake is the jewel that makes Kelowna sparkle. It is our greatest asset, drawing people here for lifestyle and recreation opportunities. It is also an important source of water for drinking, irrigation and fighting fires. As well, many of the waterfront areas that people like to visit are also important wildlife and flora habitats.

Because much of the lakefront is privately owned, the City has been buying waterfront properties as they become available, turning the foreshore into public land and putting the rest back on the market.

The City is also trying to responsibly manage the water supply through the City-owned water utility, the 2017 Kelowna Integrated Water Supply Plan and its participation in the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

Protecting the lake and maximizing public access are critical to maintaining a high quality of life, not only in Kelowna but throughout the Okanagan Valley.

Okanagan Lake was very important to *Imagine Kelowna* participants who repeatedly made two key points: we need to improve public access to the lakefront and; we need to protect Okanagan Lake and its surrounding environment. At the April 2017 community forum, there was overwhelming support for the idea to “protect natural streams and the storm water system that feeds into Okanagan Lake to maintain higher water quality.” Participants were also enthusiastic about the idea to “balance recreational and quality of life opportunities with environmental protection, water quality and public ownership of the waterfront.”

The challenge is turning these popular ideas into concrete proposals that can earn consensus from the many stakeholders who have an interest in Okanagan Lake’s future.

Possible ways that *Imagine Next* can address this goal include the City’s 2017 Kelowna Integrated Water Supply Plan, the City’s participation in the Okanagan Basin Water Board, and the Official Community Plan (Our Kelowna as we Grow.) But it will also take community-led initiatives to truly make it a reality.

- **Goal: Strengthen the protection of our land, water and air resources**

*“Our natural environment is really the underpinning of everything in our community.”*

*-comment by an Imagine Kelowna participant*

As Kelowna has expanded over the years, valuable natural space has been paved and built on. Kelowna also has one of the lowest per-person fresh water availabilities in Canada, especially during the summer. And while Kelowna’s per-capita water use has been steadily declining over the past decade, our summertime water consumption is still well above the national average, thanks largely to outdoor irrigation. As for air quality, some Kelowna neighbourhoods regularly experience higher concentrations of particulate matter because of vehicle emissions and wood smoke.

The 1992 Strategic Plan emphasized the need to protect the environment and since then the City has put important policies in place to protect and enhance environmentally sensitive areas like riparian zones and the foreshore of Okanagan Lake. It is also working to create a resilient water system through the 2017 Kelowna Integrated Water Supply Plan and is trying to help improve the region's air as a partner in the Regional Air Quality program. These actions have contributed to the healthy culture of environmental awareness has taken root in the community over the last 20 years. However, as climate change reduces water availability and development pressure consumes more land, the way we use our resources today remains unsustainable, even with the protections already being implemented. Ultimately, our ability to survive and thrive in the future will require residents to change their behaviours, as well as changes to our development patterns.

The good news is that it's not too late to save our natural ecosystems and *Imagine Kelowna* contributors had lots to say about how to do that. They repeatedly told us they want to see important natural areas protected and if necessary, restored. At the April 2017 community forum there was overwhelming support for the idea of restoring important natural areas and streams to a healthy state. "Healthy natural areas and streams are essential to healthy communities," is how one participant put it.

There was also overwhelming support for the idea of strengthening the protection of our sensitive natural areas from development. Meanwhile, there was a lot of resistance to the idea of implementing premium fees and charges for sprawl development in sensitive areas, with participants mostly indicating they didn't want this kind of development at any price. "Don't just charge fees for development in sensitive areas – prohibit!" said one participant.

Some of the other ideas we heard from *Imagine Kelowna* contributors included use solar panels, replace lawns with xeriscaping, install rain barrels, ban bottled water, and use grey water for tasks where potable water isn't needed. While most of these are actions individuals can take, like with climate



action goal, contributors generally want to see government take the lead by banning destructive practices and providing incentives to adopt better ones.

Possible ways that *Imagine Next* can address this goal include the City's Community Climate Action Plan, the creation of a Community Climate Adaptation Strategy, the 2017 Kelowna Integrated Water Supply Plan, the Regional Air Quality Program, the Pesticide Bylaw, the Transportation Master Plan (Our Kelowna as we Move), and the Official Community Plan (Our Kelowna as we Grow.) But responsibility for protecting our environment also needs to be embraced by the entire community.

- **Goal: Protect agricultural land and promote sustainable farming**

*"Keep as much agricultural as possible. I don't think any land now in the ALR should ever be taken out and used for anything else."*

*-comment from an Imagine Kelowna participant*

Farming has been a foundation of Kelowna's local economy and identity for over a century. Over that time, agriculture shaped Kelowna's development pattern, as neighbourhoods sprouted up around the area's orchards and other prime tracts of farm land. Agriculture's influence on Kelowna was strengthened in 1973 with the establishment of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR.) Agricultural land is also a key component of our green infrastructure (natural assets that retain rainwater, help prevent flooding and recharge aquifers) and contributes to our stunning scenery.

More than 40 per cent of Kelowna's land base is within the ALR, where provincial regulations require it to be preserved for agricultural use. About 55 per cent of the city's land base is zoned for agriculture (including both ALR and non-ALR-land), yet this land is also often attractive for urban development as it tends to be flat, affordable and well located. Vigilance is needed, even to protect land in the ALR, as City Council is regularly asked to support requests from land owners who have compelling arguments for why they should be allowed to use their ALR land for non-agricultural purposes or remove it from the ALR altogether.

Even though agriculture may no longer be as central to Kelowna's identity as it was in the past, it will continue to be a prominent feature of this community's character well into the future. The feedback we received during *Imagine Kelowna* made it clear that agriculture is important to the community as a whole. "Keep as much agricultural as possible," one participant told us, articulating a sentiment shared by many. "I don't think any land now in the ALR should ever be taken out and used for anything else."

That support often leads to skepticism for proposals that would change what kinds of activities are permitted on agricultural land. At the April 2017 community forum, participants were wary of the idea to "reimagine how agricultural land is used to create more value-added products." One participant said they were "very much against 'reimagining' how agricultural land is used because this usually translates to agricultural land disappearing and being used for tourism, manufacturing etc." The challenge for new ideas meant to support agriculture is to show that they truly will protect the land and encourage farming, and not covertly allow the land to be converted to non-farming uses.

The City, in concert with local and provincial partners, is making strong efforts to protect our valuable agricultural land while encouraging a vibrant, sustainable agricultural industry. A new agricultural plan was endorsed by Council in 2017 and all agricultural development applications are reviewed by an Agricultural Advisory Committee prior to their consideration by Council. This committee is made up of representatives from the agricultural community and acts as a liaison between that community and Council. These kinds of efforts will be even more vital in a future where food security is challenged by the impacts of a changing climate.

Possible ways that *Imagine Next* can address this goal include the City's Agricultural Plan, the Official Community Plan (Our Kelowna as we Grow), and the City's participation in regional and provincial initiatives. But it's also important for people in Kelowna's agricultural embrace *Imagine Next* with their own initiatives.

Principle 4 – Collaborative: A community where people of all backgrounds work together to meet collective challenges.

- **Goal: Engage with the Okanagan’s traditional past and heritage as foundations for building a fair and equitable community**

*“We need to dialogue with local First nations about how to implement recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.”*

*-comment from an Imagine Kelowna participant*

Kelowna has a rich heritage with lots to celebrate and be proud of. But there are also darker, under-told chapters to our history that we need to grapple with if we want to fully understand the inequalities and social challenges our community faces. For example, as we learned in the earlier section on First Nations history, the syilx/Okanagan people who had been living here for millennia before the arrival of Europeans, never ceded their territory through a treaty or any other agreement. And yet, Aboriginal people were displaced from their land and onto reserves, and their children were sent away to residential schools where they were often abused. Today, many residential school survivors are sharing stories about their experiences and how the abuse they suffered resulted in intergenerational trauma that continues to impact not only First Nations people, but the community at-large.

One of the issues that came up during the *Imagine Kelowna* engagement was how Aboriginal people make up a disproportionately large percentage of our homeless population. About 25 per cent of the Kelowna’s homeless are people of Aboriginal descent even though they make up only about 5.5 per cent of the city’s total population. “With our population, if they went to residential school or if they were in the Sixties Scoop, then they’re still impacted. I call them the walking wounded,” said Edna Terbasket, executive director of the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, which provides homelessness and outreach services.

To effectively address homelessness, poverty and other social issues that disproportionately affect Aboriginal people, we need to follow the syilx/Okanagan Nation’s lead in grappling with our history so

we can collectively find ways to move forward. For Kelowna's non-Aboriginal leaders and residents, that starts with learning about the local First Nations whose territories we live in. Jordan Coble is the cultural and operations administrator of the Snc̓wips Heritage Museum. In a special *Imagine Kelowna* blog post he wrote:

In order to build respect for one another within our own community we need to become better educated as far as historical and cultural impacts that continue to play a large role in how our community develops. I believe all community partners would benefit from better engagement with the First Nations communities in which they are situated.

It's not only people of Aboriginal descent who want us to address this history and its present-day legacies. We heard similar calls from non-Aboriginal *Imagine Kelowna* participants as well along with calls for the City to partner with local First Nations on issues of mutual concern such as protecting Okanagan Lake.

Possible ways that *Imagine Next* can address this goal include the City's efforts to work with First Nations partners on projects like Journey Home and community efforts to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's "Calls to Action." To realize this goal governments and non-aboriginal individuals, businesses and organizations will need to reach out to local First Nations and follow their lead onto a path of reconciliation.

- **Goal: Nurture a culture of entrepreneurship and collaboration**

*"I feel proud that Kelowna is innovative, entrepreneurial and idealistic."*

*-comment from an Imagine Kelowna participant*

Successful entrepreneurs are creative, collaborative and are able to keep going in the face of hardship. These are the same kinds of talents that we need to draw on as a community to be able to adapt to a changing world. Entrepreneurship is weaved into Kelowna's cultural fabric. Our city has one of the

highest rates of self-employment in the country and in 2016, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business named us the Top Entrepreneurial City in Canada.

The big challenge for our community is one that is faced by all successful entrepreneurs – resisting the urge to rest on our laurels. We need to continue striving to find better ways of doing things so that we are able to adapt to an unpredictable future. Entrepreneurs can help ensure that Kelowna has a diverse economy with opportunities in a range of sectors. This is important for the community's resiliency by putting us in a position to successfully deal with turmoil in the global economy.

One of the reasons entrepreneurs are so successful here, is they don't have to work in isolation from each other. There are a lot of resources that bring entrepreneurs in Kelowna together, from post-secondary programs to co-working spaces to business incubators and mentorship programs. During the *Imagine Kelowna* engagement, we heard calls to not only continue supporting these kinds of programs but to create more of them, something that will require co-operation between multiple levels of government and community partners.

One of the hallmarks of an entrepreneur is that they see opportunity where other people see a crisis or a problem. So, as the world grapples with climate change and other serious environmental issues, our entrepreneurs are well-situated to develop innovative solutions. "We have an opportunity to be a world leader in green energy and living, making a huge difference in our part of the world and across the globe. We could become the standard, starting with our entrepreneurs," is how one *Imagine Kelowna* participant put it.

Social entrepreneurship (the use of entrepreneurial techniques to address social, cultural, or environmental issues) is growing in popularity and a number of *Imagine Kelowna* participants said they would like see more of it. During a discussion about entrepreneurship at the April 2017 community forum, the most popular idea was: "Support social entrepreneurs to drive change."

Possible ways that *Imagine Next* can address this goal include the City's annual contribution of more than \$600,000 to fund regional economic development efforts, its ongoing relationships with the Okanagan Innovation Centre and academic institutions, as well as through policies that support both economic and social entrepreneurship. But government can only support entrepreneurship. It is up to entrepreneurs themselves, as well as other community stakeholders to embrace *Imagine Next* and take this goal to heart.

- **Goal: Foster resident-driven solutions**

*"The City could creatively ask citizens to help out more. Many hands make light work."*

*-comment from an Imagine Kelowna participant*

Meeting all of a community's needs is a big job and government can't do it alone. In fact, residents or community-based organizations are often in a better position to find solutions to their communities' challenges and sometimes just need a little support to put them into action.

The City is already trying to nurture small-scale initiatives through its neighborhood grants program. Delivered through a partnership with the Central Okanagan Foundation, the grants support resident-led neighbourhood enhancement projects. Many residents also help improve our collective quality of life through a myriad of volunteer activities and the City tries to publically recognize these efforts through programs like the Civic Awards and Snow Busters (which acknowledges people who help their neighbours with snow removal.) The big challenges for the future -which are also opportunities- include finding ways to get even more residents involved in community efforts, and coordinating all the different community-initiatives to make sure they complement each other and don't work at cross-purposes.

The City also partners with a number of organizations, individuals and companies to help provide community facilities, programs and services without increasing general taxation. There is an

opportunity to do more, as *Imagine Kelowna* participants were cautiously supportive of the City pursuing more partnerships. It was easy for many participants to see how well-managed partnerships could deliver great community benefits and save taxpayers money. But it was also easy for them to see how poorly-managed partnerships could be expensive for taxpayers and harm the community if each partner's roles and responsibilities were not clearly defined. "There is a risk of getting locked into long-term contracts that are very costly to the City," is how one participant articulated their concerns.

Technology presents another challenge for the future, as well as another opportunity, with Citizen to Citizen services. Social media and sharing-economy apps have given residents more tools to help them share information and collectively organize. For example, during the 2017 spring floods in Kelowna, residents from all over the city used social media to communicate with people in affected neighbourhoods and coordinate their relief efforts. Social media has been used in similar ways by Kelowna residents during wildfires.

Technology also makes it easier for residents to connect with each other to do things like buy and sell goods, organize events, rally around political or social causes, carpool, exchange services, create communities around shared interests, and much more. But as we've seen already with short-term rentals (such as Airbnb) and ride-sharing services (such as Uber or Lyft), the challenge is finding the right balance between facilitating and regulating these kinds initiatives in order to maximize the community benefits while minimizing negative disruptions and conflicts.

Possible ways that *Imagine Next* can address this goal include the City's Strong Neighbourhoods program (including the neighbourhood grants), the City's bylaws and regulations, and through the City's partnerships with individuals, organizations, academic institutions, companies and other levels of government. But ultimately, it is up to residents to embrace this goal with their own innovative initiatives.

## Next steps – From Imagine Kelowna to Imagine Next

Under the banner of *Imagine Next*, the City will use *Imagine Kelowna* to help shape its priorities and provide the foundation for future strategies and projects such as the Official Community Plan (Our City as we Grow), the Transportation Master Plan (Our City as we Move), Intelligent City Strategy, and many others. The principles and goals of *Imagine Kelowna* will guide the development of these plans and other initiatives, which will also draw on the rich database of public input that was compiled from the extensive *Imagine Kelowna* engagement.

At the same time, *Imagine Next* will unify strategies and projects that already exist or are underway to make sure they work together to build the kind of community Kelowna residents want. Examples include the Health City Strategy, Journey Home, the Community Climate Action Plan and the Agriculture Plan.

*Imagine Next* doesn't only involve the City. It also provides direction for our other partners, including other levels of government, to change the way we work together, how we make decisions, and how we engage with Kelowna residents.

But ultimately, *Imagine Kelowna* is the community's vision, which means it is also meant to be used by the city's businesses, organizations and individuals so that collectively, we can all help to ensure a vibrant future for our amazing city. The City will facilitate this by working closely with community partners and through initiatives like the neighbourhood grant program. If the *Imagine Kelowna* vision is going to be realized, we all have to be part of *Imagine Next*.