



# Facts in Focus



2018

FACTS IN FOCUS

DID YOU KNOW?

## Agriculture & Rural Areas

Farm and rural lands add beauty. They are the green between the blue of the mountains and water. Kelowna's farms, orchards, vineyards and hillsides frame the city and are a key component that makes Kelowna beautiful and unique. Kelowna's agricultural and natural areas are rare within BC and even in Canada. They are part of what makes Kelowna a destination for travel, outdoor activity, food and wine.

Farming is an essential element of Kelowna's history and identity. A significant portion of the City's land base is agricultural, with 55 per cent of its land base zoned for agriculture, and almost 40 per cent of the City in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The crops that are produced here distinguish Kelowna from the rest of the province, Canada, and increasingly, the world. The Okanagan is notable as one of only three major fruit growing regions and one of only two grape growing regions of Canada<sup>i</sup>. Agriculture is an anchor and foundation of our community. As an economic driver, it brought in over \$100 million dollars in gross income through the Central Okanagan in 2016<sup>ii</sup>.

Similarly, Kelowna's rural lands contain some of the rarest ecosystems in the province<sup>iii</sup>. Our farm and rural lands lie outside the City's Permanent Growth Boundary (PGB). The PGB distinguishes urban from rural and agricultural lands. Development is directed to lands within the PGB, whereas lands outside the PGB are prioritized for protection of resources, including agricultural land and natural areas.



**The Okanagan is notable as one of only three major fruit growing regions and one of only two grape growing regions of Canada<sup>i</sup>.**



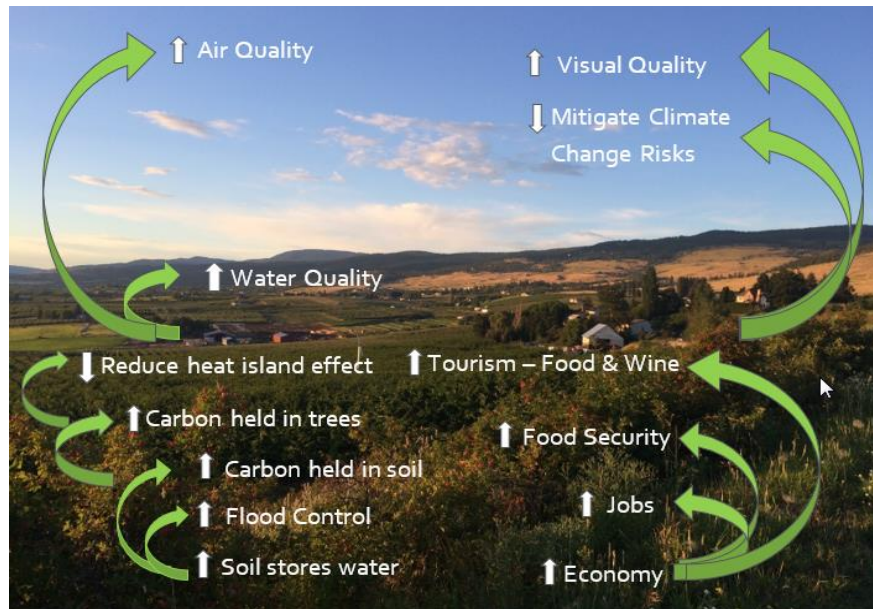
**Agriculture is an anchor and foundation of our community.**

## CURRENT INITIATIVES

There have been many initiatives related to Agriculture since the 2011 OCP. The following are either in progress or endorsed:

- Agricultural Compliance and Enforcement Strategy (2015)
- Agri-tourism Accommodation Amendments (2016)
- Temporary Farm Worker Housing Amendments (2017)
- Agriculture Plan (2017)
- Agricultural Plan Implementation Amendments (2018)

## Functions of Agricultural and Rural Land



Agriculture and rural lands provide many alternate benefits to the community, including stormwater attenuation, flood and wildfire risk mitigation. They help reduce the heat island effect, mitigate climate change, and function as a cornerstone of food security in the community. They draw tourism, support the wine and food industry, and are a backdrop for many cycling, running and relay events through the calendar year. However, benefits expand beyond these factors, and are an integral part of our community identity. They provide assurance for BC's food security, which in turn translates into higher self-sufficiency and less dependency on external resources, climate, transportation and political influences abroad.

While agricultural and rural lands serve many positive functions, there are many competing interests for this land. Kelowna's farm land is among the most expensive in Canada. Yet, it is the least expensive land in Kelowna when compared to land zoned residential, commercial, or industrial zoned land. This creates pressure to use farm land for other uses. While the Agricultural Land Reserve was formed to keep farmland for farming, the need to protect against 'use creep' through enforcement for illegal uses is a notable challenge.

Similarly, rural areas outside the PGB face increasing development pressures. These lands are typically not protected by the Agricultural Land Reserve, and therefore are under greater pressure for the expansion of greenfield development.

Kelowna's agricultural and rural lands present both a gift and a responsibility. Protecting agricultural land is supported by the community, as shown in a 2017 survey where 96 per cent of respondents affirmed that policies to protect farm land were important or very important<sup>iv</sup>. The competition for this non-renewable resource – typically the valley bottoms with the most productive agricultural soils and a highly desirable location, make this a critical responsibility for local governments to maintain the productivity of these lands for future generations.

### Current Direction of the 2030 Official Community Plan

In 2011, the citizens of Kelowna outlined a vision for a sustainable city, one that struck a balance between environmental protection, economic growth, social development and cultural vibrancy. The objectives for agricultural and rural lands included:



## DID YOU KNOW?



The rising cost of agricultural land due to estate homes can be a significant impediment to entering the business of agriculture.



Historically, agriculture has been vulnerable to many changing environmental and economic factors.



For wine grapes, harvesting machines are available which eliminate the need for pickers. Machines that pick apples are now in the prototype stage.

- ▶ **Contain urban sprawl**<sup>v</sup>. The Permanent Growth Boundary (PGB) was established and directs urban uses only to lands within the boundaries.
- ▶ **Protect and enhance local agriculture**<sup>vi</sup>. The OCP establishes clear policy to protect agricultural land from further urban encroachment.
- ▶ **Preserve productive agricultural land**<sup>vii</sup>. The existing OCP supports limiting the impact of permanent structures on productive farmland.

Through Farm Protection and Natural Areas Development Permits, landowners are required to build in accordance with farm protection policies. The Permanent Growth Boundary was introduced to prevent further sprawl into agricultural and rural lands and, for the most part, has remained largely intact since its inception.

### Strategic Direction from Imagine Kelowna

The City and community partners recently undertook the most extensive public engagement process to date to create a new community vision for the future. Imagine Kelowna is a vision for building a prosperous and sustainable city in the face of an uncertain future. The City will use Imagine Kelowna to help shape its short and long-term planning priorities and provide the foundation for future strategies, plans and projects. The wording of the Imagine Kelowna draft goals may change, however, the overall direction of the goals was supported by City Council at the March 12, 2018 City Council meeting. Key draft directions from Imagine Kelowna include:

#### Principle: Smarter

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

#### Principles: Responsible

- Concentrate on growing vibrant urban centres and limit urban sprawl
- Strengthen the protection of our land, water and air resources
- Protect agricultural land and promote sustainable farming

Continued bold leadership and commitment will be required to protect farm and rural lands in the face of growth and economic pressures, to uphold to the policies of the Permanent Growth Boundary, withstand pressure to develop for non-farm uses, and serve a critical role to respond to climate change.

### Looking Ahead: Future Trends

Historically, agriculture has been vulnerable to many changing environmental and economic factors. These uncertainties will continue into the future. Changing political frameworks and trade agreements, such as the uncertainty around NAFTA, climate change and globalization present a constantly moving framework for farm businesses. It is therefore important that policies focus on stabilizing the security of this land base, to justify capital investments and ensure sufficient returns on

## FAST FACTS

96%

According to a 2017 survey, 96 per cent of respondents affirmed that policies to protect farm land were important or very important<sup>iv</sup>.

55%

A significant portion of the City's land base is agricultural, with 55 per cent of its land base zoned for agriculture.

40%

Almost 40 per cent of the City is in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).



these investments. Notably, capital investments will be less likely to occur if agricultural land is seen as a reserve for future urban development and subject to real estate speculation.

- ▶ **Larger Farm Operations:** One trend in the last decade has been to larger farm operations, with multiple parcels of land. Cherries have increased in demand and become more profitable in recent years. Apple varieties such as ambrosias and honey crisp are in demand, where Spartans and MacIntosh apples are on the decline. There have been technological changes as well. For wine grapes, harvesting machines are available which eliminate the need for pickers. Machines that pick apples are now in the prototype stage. The land base needs to remain flexible to accommodate changes over time.
- ▶ **High Land Costs:** As land values rise, the pressure on agricultural and rural lands for development will increase. Locally, the affordability of farm land is increasingly becoming a barrier to entry. The use of farmland for estate homes has increased over the last decade<sup>viii</sup>, dramatically increasing the costs of farms with large homes.

## Current challenges of the 2030 Official Community Plan

Farm and rural lands are still under pressure from development and illegal uses. The rising cost of agricultural land due to estate homes can be a significant impediment to entering the business of agriculture. As well, the illegal use of agricultural and rural lands for commercial and industrial uses continue to put pressure on enforcement resources. Additionally, farm land is threatened by 'use creep' where non-farm uses are expanded beyond what is permitted. Further, conflicts between farm uses and urban development remain an issue, and there is a need to explore a land use designation that addresses a transition to agriculture.

## Key Directions for the 2040 Official Community Plan

Planning for the next twenty years will require leadership on land use policy and implementation, strategic decisions with respect to infrastructure and transportation planning, and action towards mitigating and adapting to climate change, if Kelowna is to have a healthy agricultural land base and future food security.

Using the foundation of the lessons learned through the successes and challenges in delivering previous agricultural policy, and the more up-to-date call to action from Imagine Kelowna, the following key directions emerge to help inform our action for the next 20 years:

- ▶ **Protect Agricultural and Rural Land.** Pressure to develop lands outside the PGB will continue, as urban land prices increase and the supply of undeveloped land decreases. Agricultural land is an easy target for urban expansion and must be protected with clear, consistent policy and regulation,



relying on the stability of the Permanent Growth Boundary. Inaction risks a gradual erosion of farm land, increased sprawl in rural areas, and increased conflicts between residents and farmers along the farm/urban edge, with a consequential reduction in farming. This in turn, will result in the increased cost of farmland due to speculation, and act as a barrier to attracting young farmers to the industry.

- ▶ **Adapt to a changing climate.** Climate change will likely bring early and warmer springs, more intense weather events, drought, and potential flooding. It is vital that we optimize the role that agricultural lands play in flood mitigation and stormwater management.
- ▶ **Use our water resources wisely.** Population growth and climate change will challenge our water resources. If agriculture is to have a long and successful future in Kelowna, a sustained community effort for water conservation will be needed.
- ▶ **Support local markets.** As agricultural product markets grow and change, the City can be responsive by looking for opportunities to support local markets for agricultural goods.

Kelowna is one of the few cities in Canada to have the majority of their land base in agricultural and rural lands, while having a vibrant, growing urban centre, all set beautifully between the water and mountains. Kelowna's ability to grow a great variety of fruit and vegetables, together with its rare natural ecosystems, sets it apart, and positions itself well in the future for sustainability and food security in the long term. However, with these gifts come responsibility. Strong leadership and commitment to preserve the farm lands, forests and hillsides that frame our city is required. Kelowna is in a unique position to lead on many of these efforts. The updated 2017 Agriculture Plan set a solid foundation for which policy direction can be inspired by to promote the practice of farming to adapt and evolve to meet the changing social, economic and environmental demands. However, this will need to be balanced to ensure that uses today do not preclude the options of future technological innovations for this industry. The preservation of the City's agricultural landscape ultimately achieves the overarching goal to foster a more compact, compete community and ensure the longevity of this precious, non-renewable resource.

Explore the Story Map: [Agriculture & Rural Areas](#) or visit [kelowna.ca/ImagineNext](http://kelowna.ca/ImagineNext) to see how you can influence *Our Kelowna as we Grow*, the Kelowna 2040 Official Community Plan update.

i City of Kelowna, 1998. Agriculture Plan, Planning and Development Services

ii Census of Agriculture, 2016. Revenue in the Central Okanagan.

iii Iverson, K. 2008. [Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory, Kelowna, 2007. Volume 1: methods Ecological Descriptions, Results, and management Recommendations.](#)

iv City of Kelowna, August 2017. Agriculture Plan

v City of Kelowna, 2011. Kelowna 2030 Official Community Plan, Chapter 1 p. 1.3

vi City of Kelowna, 2011. 2030 Official Community Plan – Greening our Future – Chapter 5 Objective 5.33

vii City of Kelowna, 2011. 2030 Official Community Plan – Greening our Future – Chapter 5 Objective 5.34

viii Ministry of Agriculture, 2014. Agriculture Land Use Inventory – Central Okanagan, 2004 to 2014.

ix City of Kelowna, August 2017. Agriculture Plan