



Interior Health  
Every person matters

August 27, 2021

Robert Miles  
City of Kelowna - OCP Project Manager  
1435 Water Street, Kelowna BC  
V1Y 1J4

sent via email to: [RMiles@kelowna.ca](mailto:RMiles@kelowna.ca)

Dear Robert Miles,

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**Re: City of Kelowna – Official Community Plan 2040**

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Thank you for the opportunity to review and discuss the City of Kelowna's Official Community Plan from a population health and equity perspective. Thoughtful and well-planned communities contribute to positive health outcomes for community members. Revising the Official Community Plan (OCP) presents an opportunity to improve the future health status of Kelowna community members by promoting healthy built environment principles through long range planning. Healthy communities include transportation networks that prioritize and support active transportation, are designed so that neighbourhoods are complete, compact and connected, provide diverse housing options available for all community members, support access to healthy food and connect people to natural environments.

**Planning Principles for a Healthy Built Environment:**

Health evidence, as found in the [Healthy Built Environment Linkages Toolkit](#), consistently shows that healthy built environments (HBEs) are planned and built in ways which positively impacts people's physical, mental and social health. In a 'healthy' community, people can easily connect with each other and with a variety of day-to-day services. Community members can easily walk and/or cycle to daily amenities, such as schools, workplaces, recreational facilities and grocery stores, and roads and pathways are perceived to be safe, accessible, aesthetically appealing and well connected. Local, healthy foods are accessible to everyone and natural elements are protected and incorporated into the built environment. Including these principles in community planning, at a population level, increases physical and social activity, and consumption of healthy foods, which decreases stress, body mass index and unintentional injury, and increases social cohesion and mental health.

In addition, including HBE principles in community planning supports health equity. Health inequities are differences in health status resulting from the unfair distribution of health resources between different population groups, arising from social, political and economic factors that influence day-to-day life. The BC Centre for Disease Control [Fact Sheet: Supporting Health Equity Through the Built Environment](#) outlines that equitable communities consider the unique needs of equity-seeking populations<sup>1</sup> when planning interventions to

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<sup>1</sup> **Equity Seeking**

Equity-seeking groups are communities that experience significant collective barriers in participating in society. This could include attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation and transgender status, etc. Equity-seeking groups are those that identify barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination and actively seek social justice and reparations. (<https://equity.ubc.ca/resources/equity-inclusion-glossary-of-terms/>)

the built environment. Local governments can play a foundational role in implementing and championing equity in their community. One important way to reduce health inequities is through the OCP, as this document guides the development of policy related to land use, transportation, food, housing and social economic and sustainability policies. Because of this holistic approach, OCPs informed by a health equity perspective provide important direction on how to best create the conditions for health for all members of the community.

### **Kelowna's OCP and HBE Planning Principles:**

HBE planning principles are included throughout Kelowna's OCP community vision, objectives and policy statements. As such, the OCP provides the framework that will allow the community to achieve the vision of a thriving and welcoming community that supports active and healthy living in vibrant, connected neighbourhoods with affordable, appropriate and accessible housing. The Future Land Use Designations, based on the 10 pillars include specific design features to support the creation of HBEs and bring the community vision to life. In particular, the investment in urban centres and village hubs create pedestrian-focused environments that minimize urban sprawl and embrace the concept of complete and connected neighbourhoods. The intended development and design of these areas encourage active transportation, provide a diversity of housing types and provide spaces for community members from diverse groups, to interact in meaningful and healthy ways.

Equity considerations woven throughout the plan and a dedicated chapter explicitly committing to building a fair and just community for every community member demonstrates a commitment to creating equitable governance. For example, objectives and policies relating to accessible community services, safety net supports, displacement mitigation, and protection of rental housing stock provide clear direction intended to address the needs of equity seeking groups.

Another very important feature of Kelowna's OCP is the plan administration approach that includes implementation actions and a monitoring strategy for key indicators. Implementing such an approach will provide the City of Kelowna and community members the confidence in knowing whether the hard work of the community is achieving the goals and visions outlined in the plan; and if not, the ability to make timely. This makes this approach invaluable.

Interior Health would welcome the opportunity to further our relationship with the City of Kelowna by co-operatively working to support implementation of the OCP and partnering with the municipality to determine and evaluate more opportunities for collaboration in planning. We are also able to provide letters of support for funding opportunities, present HBE principles, participate in stakeholder working groups, and provide a health perspective on policy documents, such as a revised Zoning Bylaw and land development proposals.

Overall, it is great to see that throughout the OCP health is integrated with all aspects of the community. This plan will position Kelowna well for achieving a community that looks out for one another and protects the environment. We look forward to working with you to help you achieve your vision of a healthy community that is "responsible, smarter, collaborative and connected".

Sincerely,



Kelly MacDonald, BA, MA  
Healthy Communities – Community Health Facilitator

**Bus:** (250) 819-7655  
**Email:** Kelly.macdonald2@interiorhealth.ca  
**Web:** www.interiorhealth.ca

POPULATION HEALTH  
505 Doyle Ave.  
Kelowna, BC, V1Y 0C5