

Report to Council



Date: September 11, 2023
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Urban Centre Planning Framework
Department: Policy & Planning

Recommendation:

THAT Council receive the report dated September 11, 2023 regarding the Urban Centre Planning Framework, for information.

Purpose:

To provide Council with an update on Urban Centre Planning initiatives between 2023 and 2026.

Background:

The 2040 Official Community Plan (OCP) identifies the development of Urban Centre Plans as implementation actions to provide more detailed policy guidance for those neighbourhoods. Urban Centre Planning efforts have proven to be costly and resource consumptive processes. Staff have also found that the rapid pace of change in Kelowna has meant that portions of the plans often date themselves quickly.

Discussion:

This report introduces a new framework to deliver these plans in a more efficient and responsive manner. Under this scenario, Urban Centre planning efforts moving forward would focus first on developing a refreshed and updated comprehensive data inventory of all five Urban Centres, to create a continually updated decision-making 'dashboard', followed by the development of targeted action plans for each one.

Nearly 50% of future residential growth is targeted in Urban Centres, and they are signaled to grow as the largest employment and activity hubs in Kelowna. For Urban Centres to be successful, they need to include the ingredients that provide a high quality of life for residents and solidify them as attractive places to visit and work. These ingredients include a variety of public and private amenities, local shops and services, transportation options, and job opportunities. While the OCP provides the high-level guidance for these elements, Urban Centre Plans are intended to build on the direction outlined in the OCP to provide more detailed guidance to achieve this success.

Undertaking Urban Centre Plans can be a time and resource intensive process, meaning careful consideration must be made in how those plans are scoped and delivered. Staff have been evaluating

ways to make the planning process for Urban Centres more efficient and responsive, with consideration of the following context:

Kelowna and our Urban Centres are growing quickly and in a changing context, as outlined in the 2022 OCP / TMP Progress Report, the 2022 Community Trends Report and the 2023 Housing Needs Assessment;

- City growth management was identified as a secondary area for improvement in the 2022 Citizen Survey;
- Council has adopted their 2023-2026 priorities, which include affordable housing, transportation and climate and environment;
- Upcoming planning initiatives, such as the Pandosy/Richter Corridor Study and Downtown Transportation Review will be examining a longer-term understanding of the mobility needs to support population and employment growth beyond 2040; and
- The 2040 OCP and Zoning Bylaw have recently landed a robust policy and regulatory framework for Urban Centres.

Proposed Urban Centre Planning Framework

In keeping with the context outlined above, Urban Centre planning would be undertaken in two stages:

- A new “Urban Centres Dashboard”, to provide more *immediate guidance* for the City and other community and government partners to inform decision making; and
- “Urban Centre Action Plans” which focus on the *implementation* of identified actions for a specific Urban Centre.

Urban Centres Dashboard. The Urban Centres Dashboard would be an online, interactive, data-driven mapping tool that would provide *immediate* guidance for decision making on land use, transportation and infrastructure projects in Urban Centres and, in some cases, Transit Supportive Corridors ahead of more detailed Urban Centre planning work. This Dashboard would draw from existing policy documents, the new Zoning Bylaw, ModelCity and updated data to address several questions to be considered in decision making in Urban Centres such as:

- What are the major strengths, opportunities and challenges that characterize each Urban Centre?
- Are we meeting our unit, density and employment targets? Do we need to update those targets?
- How do we balance our residential growth with continued employment growth?
- What new transportation or infrastructure considerations are needed to support our growing Urban Centres?
- Are there any key livability ingredients, such as community services, food access, or greenery, that are missing in our Urban Centres ?
- How can we shape Urban Centre growth to be more climate resilient and environmentally sensitive?

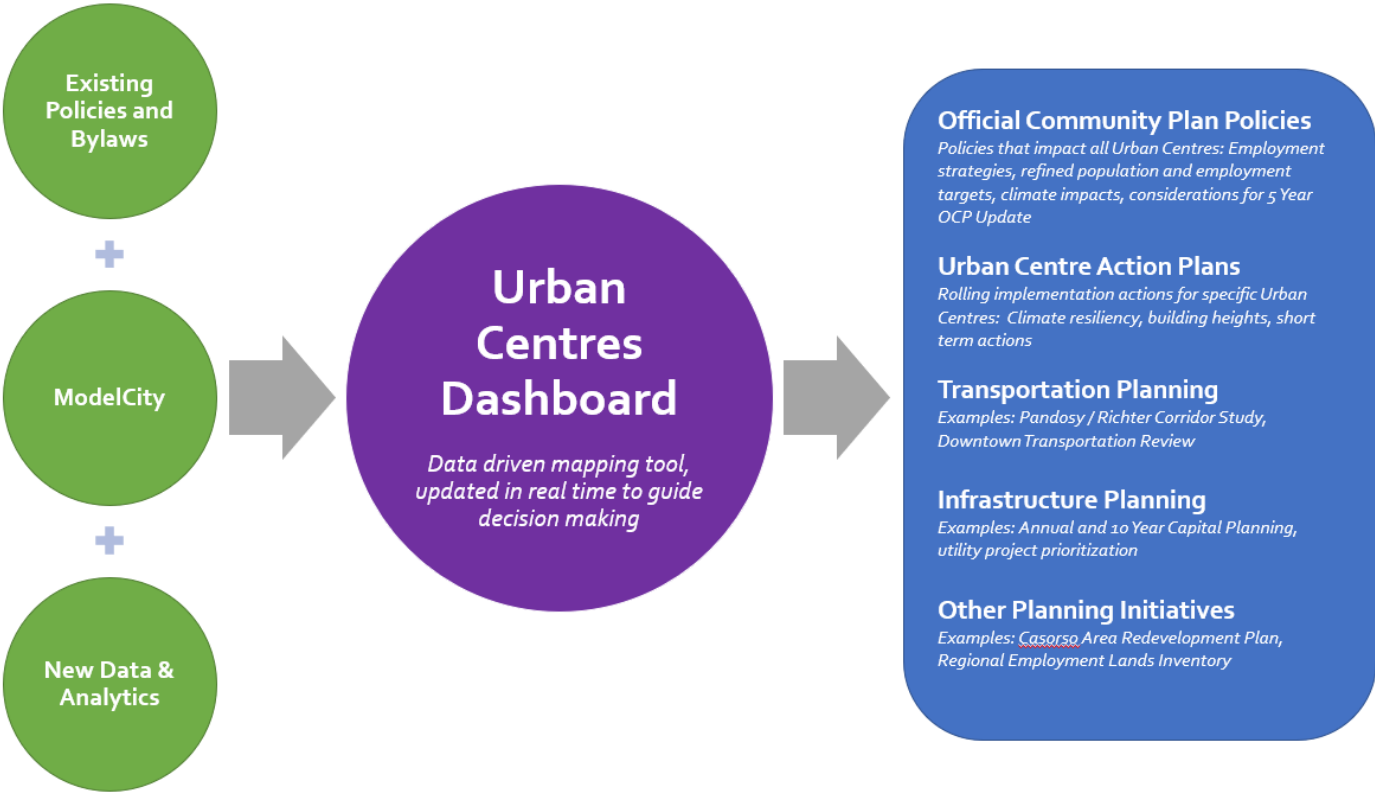
The initial findings of this work will be provided to Council in the 2023 Community Trends Report, which will focus on how our Urban Centres have evolved in recent years and what is emerging on the horizon. This will be followed with a policy and priority review of Urban Centre policies to respond to that report.

Importantly, while that Community Trends Report and the Urban Centres policy and priority review will provide a guidance for the Urban Centres at a point in time, the Urban Centres Dashboard itself will not be a static document. Rather it will be continuously updated in real time to reflect development activity, new statistical data, or new City policies and projects, making it a much more valuable tool for decision making in times of rapid change.

Examples of how the Urban Centres Dashboard would guide upcoming planning initiatives include, but not limited to:

- Pandosy / Richter Corridor Study, Downtown Transportation Review (City of Kelowna): Population and employment data for the Downtown and Pandosy Urban Centres that project beyond 2040 would inform longer-term travel demand for these two planning initiatives.
- Regional Employment Lands Inventory (Regional District of Central Okanagan): More robust job and commercial space targets and policy considerations would inform discussions on office and retail employment in our Urban Centres.
- Casorso Area Redevelopment Plan (should Council authorize the ARP process): Refreshed population and employment projections identified early in this process would inform technical analysis and scoping for this planning work.
- Urban Centre Action Plans (City of Kelowna): The Urban Centre Dashboard would accelerate the development of Urban Centre Action Plans (outlined later in this report) by completing what would normally be early-stage work for each Urban Centre Plan all at once.

Figure 1: Urban Centres Dashboard



Urban Centre Action Plans. While the Urban Centres Dashboard, along with the accompanying Community Trends Report and policy review, will provide a broader context for all Urban Centres, dedicated planning exercises tailored to each specific Urban Centre are still needed. Building on the fundamentals of the Urban Centres Dashboard, Urban Centre Plans would be repurposed as Urban Centre *Action Plans*. These action plans would act as focused implementation plans for each Urban Centre that could be updated more regularly, responding to changing contexts. The plans would address topics that include, but are not limited to:

- Identification of any updates needed to policy and regulation in key documents like the OCP and the Zoning Bylaw;
- Needed transportation service and infrastructure improvements, including capital projects;
- Actions needed on topics like climate resiliency, tree canopy expansion, parks planning, equity and inclusion, and others;
- Refined land use direction, including Core Area lands adjacent to the Urban Centre, building heights and adjacent Transit Supportive Corridors;
- Short-term actions the City, residents' associations and other community partners can take to improve quality of life in the Urban Centre.

The scale of each Urban Centre Action Plan would depend on the context of the Urban Centre itself, with some plans being smaller and more targeted to specific implementation actions while others may take a more comprehensive look at topics like land use or even incorporate larger study areas. One Urban Centre Action Plan may be initiated during development of the Urban Centres Dashboard depending on the findings of earlier phases. More details on approaches to subsequent Urban Centre Action Plans would come alongside future reports later in this process.

Project Process and Phasing

The process outlined in this report would take place between the remainder of 2023 through to the end of 2026 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Project Process and Phasing



Conclusion:

Planning processes need to serve their communities as they grow and change. As Kelowna’s transformation continues and its context shifts, our approach to Urban Centre planning will modernize to reflect our changing context. The framework outlined in this report will deliver a planning process that makes more efficient use of staff time and resources, leverages tools like ModelCity to make data-driven decisions and provides the opportunities to engage with residents and community partners to discuss the futures of Urban Centres.

Internal Circulation:

Integrated Transportation
Development Planning
Development Engineering
Communications
Climate Action & Environment
Parks & Buildings Planning
Real Estate

Considerations applicable to this report:

Existing Policy:

The 2040 Official Community Plan identifies the creation of Urban Centre Plans for Pandosy and Rutland as short-term implementation actions. A Midtown Urban Centre Plan is identified as a long-term implementation action.

The Urban Centres framework outlined in this report would further advance Council’s 2023-2026 priorities, particularly:

- *Affordable Housing:* Urban Centre planning advances and streamlines processes to accelerate housing in the areas where 50% of future housing units are targeted.
- *Transportation:* The Urban Centres Dashboard will inform upcoming transportation projects.
- *Climate and Environment:* Urban Centre planning will explore opportunities to make our Urban Centres low-emission and more resilient to the effects of climate change.

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

The City has applied for \$149,500 of grant funding from the Complete Communities Program, administered by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) to assist with this process. Should the application be successful, the 2023 Financial Plan would be amended to include the receipt of funds. These funds would supplement the \$75,000 of annual funding for Urban Centre Planning identified in the Policy and Planning base budget. Should the City not be successful in the Complete Communities Grant application, staff would explore options to continue Urban Centre planning work, with possible 2024 budget considerations.

Submitted by:

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Approved for inclusion:



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