

Report to Council



Date: March 10, 2025
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Thriving Urban Centres: Project Update and Trends Report
Department: Long Range Planning

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from Long Range Planning dated March 10, 2025, with respect to Thriving Urban Centres: Project Update and Trends Report.

Purpose:

To receive an update on Thriving Urban Centres and upcoming public engagement.

Council Priority Alignment:

Affordable Housing
Economy
Climate and Environment
Transportation

Background:

Thriving Urban Centres (formerly called the Urban Centres Framework) aims to provide a new, more resource efficient approach to neighbourhood planning for Kelowna's five Urban Centres: Downtown, Pandosy, Capri-Landmark, Midtown and Rutland. Funded largely through a UBCM Complete Communities grant, the project aims to provide more responsive guidance sooner with more real time data than can be achieved in a traditional Urban Centre plan.

Launched in late 2023 with the approval of the UBCM grant, Thriving Urban Centres is now well underway and the following three key deliverables will be completed by this summer as illustrated in Figure 1:

1. A trends report outlining the status of our Urban Centres today;
2. An interactive online mapping and dashboard tool to assist with future decision making; and
3. A report on future directions to make Kelowna's Urban Centres thrive.

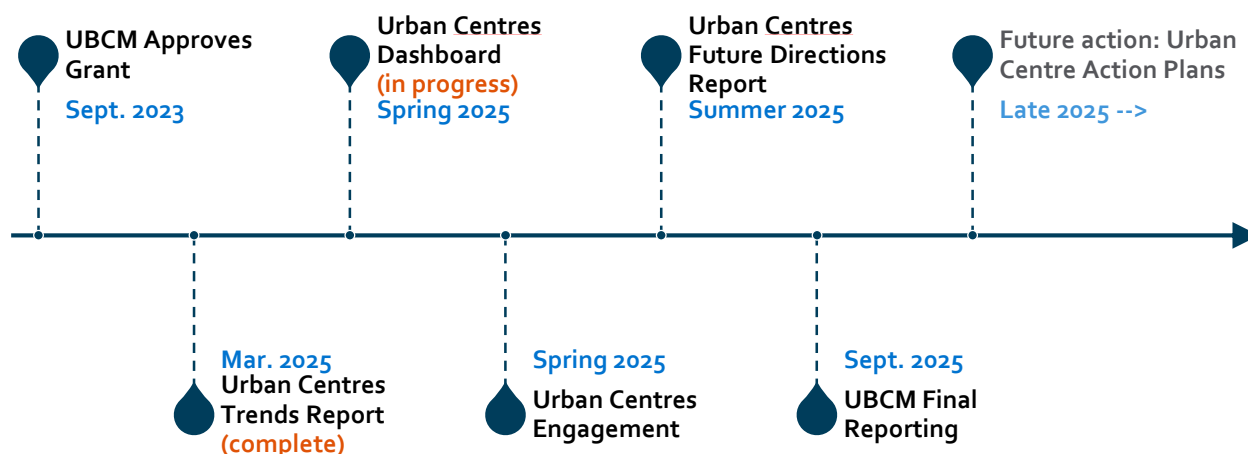


Figure 1: Thriving Urban Centres project timeline

Previous Council Resolution

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

Discussion:

Growing Kelowna's Urban Centres into vibrant hubs of activity is one of the major goals of Imagine Kelowna and the 2040 OCP. For Kelowna's Urban Centres to thrive as they grow, they must provide a high quality of life for residents and be vibrant destinations for visitors and workers. Attachment A, *Thriving Urban Centres: 2024 Trends in Urban Centres* report, provides a snapshot in time of each of the five Urban Centres, examining the people, housing, daily needs, transportation, and climate and environment. The report also looks at current trends in growth and highlights potential future influences.

Some of the key findings of the report include:

- **Urban Centres are positioned for continued growth.** Over the past five years, the populations of Urban Centres have increased more rapidly than the city's overall growth rate. Rapid residential development in Urban Centres has accompanied this growth, with nearly 47 per cent of all residential building permits issued between 2021 and 2024 being in Urban Centres which is consistent with the OCP's growth strategy. Analysis of building permits, development applications and residential development potential demonstrates that Urban Centres will continue to be areas of significant growth in the coming decades.
- **Urban Centres are significant hubs for employment.** Over 40 per cent of all Kelowna daytime workers (who work at a fixed location) are employed in Urban Centres. Downtown employs the most workers, while Rutland employs the least, indicating that future employment policy will need to be context sensitive to ensure a balance between residents and jobs.
- **Urban Centres have gaps in access to support daily needs.** Urban Centres do not currently provide consistent access to all daily necessities (such as work, schools, daycare, groceries, recreation and social and cultural necessities) to support those who live, work and visit. For example, Midtown and Downtown don't have easy access to schools and Capri-Landmark only has one full-service grocery store.

- **Urban Centres travel habits are different.** Urban Centres have more infrastructure to support walking, cycling and transit, and as a result these areas see a higher percentage of people using these modes compared to other areas of the city. These alternative transportation options, along with more energy efficient multi-unit homes, allow for Urban Centres to play a pivotal role in helping reduce community GHG emissions.
- **Urban Centre households are less affluent.** The median household income in Urban Centres is nearly 23 per cent lower than the citywide median. Urban Centres, however, have more rental housing and home purchase prices tend to be less expensive compared to the city overall. Together with the ability to be less reliant on vehicles (as employment, services and amenities are in closer proximity) often make Urban Centres a more affordable option than their suburban counterparts.
- **Urban Centres need more trees.** Urban Centres, characterized by extensive pavement and developed surfaces, are more susceptible to urban heat island effects compared to suburban and natural areas. Urban Centres, however, have lower tree canopy coverage than the rest of the community, and some lack park and green space. Trees and green space act as cooling sinks for neighbourhoods, while also offering places to bring community together, beauty and a sense of place.
- **Urban Centres are influenced by adjacent growth.** New provincial housing legislation, City planning initiatives and developments adjacent to or between Urban Centres will all influence how Urban Centres continue to develop. For example, the proposed Burtch/Harvey Area Redevelopment Plan will see significant development adjacent to Capri-Landmark; the Hospital Transit Oriented Area could see higher density development between Pandosy and Downtown, and the Richter Corridor study is assessing ways to improve people-moving capacity along the corridor and will provide direction on how to enhance linkages between Downtown and Pandosy. These types of initiatives suggest that future Urban Centre planning will need to explore directions beyond the Urban Centre boundaries and consider visions for larger corridors.

While the key findings listed above highlight the trends of all Urban Centres, diving deeper into the Trends Report reveals that Urban Centres are not all the same. There are substantial differences in how each contributes to providing a high quality of life for residents, workers and visitors. In the coming weeks, staff will bring forward two additional reports highlighting the uniqueness of each of the five Urban Centres.

Next steps:

With the completion of the Trends report, staff are now focusing efforts on other aspects of Thriving Urban Centres including:

- **Urban Centres Dashboard:** ESRI Canada has been retained to assist with the development of an interactive web-based dashboard to provide guidance on land use, transportation and infrastructure projects ahead of more detailed Urban Centre planning work. This new tool will leverage the City's existing data, policy and mapping to provide the most-up-to-date information available on things such as current and future development, demographics, housing, climate and amenities. The dashboard is anticipated to be available for use later this spring.
- **Urban Centres Engagement:** An engagement process will be launched this spring to help understand the community's perspective on strengths, challenges and opportunities across the five Urban Centres. The information provided will build on the quantitative information collected for the Trends Report and will help inform new directions for policies and projects.
- **Urban Centres Future Directions Report:** This final report to meet UBCM commitments, is targeted for summer 2025, and will outline proposed new policy directions alongside actions that are necessary to continue to grow Urban Centres into complete communities. The Future

Directions Report will be informed by the Trends Report, the Dashboard, community engagement and additional analysis that is underway including:

- *Growth projections:* A revised growth scenario is being developed as part of the provincially mandated 2025 OCP update and will determine where Kelowna will be able to accommodate this growth. Based on the existing zoned capacity of the five Urban Centres, they are well poised to accept a significant share of our city's growth.
- *Employment projections:* An analysis is being completed to understand the types and amount of employment growth that can be anticipated in each Urban Centre. This work also includes research to examine future potential employment densities and will consider policy options to support Urban Centre employment growth. This work is being coordinated with the outcomes of the recently released Regional Employment Lands Inventory by RDCO.
- **Urban Centre Action Plans** (to be completed post project): Thriving Urban Centres will be used to inform future Urban Centre Action Plans. These Action Plans will focus on implementation tools that can help the City respond to the evolving growth context of each Urban Centre.

Conclusion:

Kelowna's approach to Urban Centre planning is adapting to reflect the changing context of how Kelowna is growing, with strong evidence that Urban Centres are in high demand. The work completed and to come as outlined in this report will deliver a planning process that makes more efficient use of staff time and resources, while leveraging tools like ModelCity to make data-driven decisions supplemented with input and direction from the community.

Internal Circulation:

Climate Action & Environment
 Communications
 Cultural Services
 Development Planning
 Housing Policy and Programs
 Integrated Transportation
 Parks Planning & Design
 Real Estate
 Social Development
 Urban Forestry

Considerations applicable to this report:

Existing Policy:

- 2040 Official Community Plan
 - Objective 4.1 Strengthen the Urban Centres as Kelowna's primary hubs of activity.
 - Objective 4.4 Reinforce Downtown as the Urban Centre with the greatest diversity and intensity of uses in the City
 - Objective 4.5 Promote more residential development to balance employment uses in the Capri-Landmark Urban Centre
 - Objective 4.6 Support infill and redevelopment to promote housing diversity and enhanced services and amenities in the Pandosy Urban Centre
 - Objective 4.7 Focus new development in Rutland strategically to create a new high-density business and residential hub to support improved services and amenities

- Objective 4.8 Support modest residential development to transition Midtown into a transit-supportive neighbourhood
- Policy 16.3.1 OCP Implementation Actions.
 - Action 17 – Develop a Rutland Urban Centre Plan (short term)
 - Action 18 – Develop a Pandosy Urban Centre Plan (short term)
 - Action 19 Develop a Midtown Urban Centre Plan (long term)
- 2023-2026 Council Priorities
 - 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.
 - Economy: Urban Centre planning allows for a strategic approach to growing employment in Kelowna’s busiest activity hubs.

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

The City has received \$149,500 of grant funding from the Complete Communities Program, administered by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) to assist with this process. These funds supplement the \$75,000 of annual funding for Urban Centre Planning identified in the Long Range Planning base budget.

Consultation and Engagement:

Public engagement will help inform the final deliverable of the Thriving Urban Centres process. The public will be able to provide input on actions that could improve quality of life in each of the Urban Centres through a mix of online survey and inperson engagement opportunities. In addition to public engagement, staff will also be hosting workshops and meetings to gather input from a variety of interested and affected parties including those representing development and building; economic development; major employers; and service providers.

Communications Comments:

Engagement opportunities will be posted on the City’s [Get Involved Kelowna](#) site and promoted using a variety of City-owned channels, digital ads, print ads, and social media.

Considerations applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Submitted by: T. Guidi, Planner Specialist

Approved for inclusion: R. Miles, Long Range Planning Department Manager

Attachments:

Attachment A: Thriving Urban Centres: 2024 Trends in Urban Centres