

# Report to Council



**Date:** November 19, 2015  
**File:** 1200-40  
**To:** City Manager  
**From:** James Moore, Long Range Policy Planning Manager  
**Subject:** 2015 Community Trends Report

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## **Recommendation:**

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from the Long Range Policy Planning Manager dated November 19, 2015, with respect to Kelowna's 2015 Community Trends Report.

## **Purpose:**

To introduce "Our Future in Focus: 2015 Community Trends Report".

## **Background:**

*Our Future in Focus: 2015 Community Trends Report* examines data and key trends in four subject areas in Kelowna, including: Our People, Our Economy, Our Homes and Our Environment. Last year was the inaugural year of the Community Trends Report, and as such the report at that time provided a thorough examination of the state of the community. This year, the focus is on reviewing several important trends that are likely to become established in Kelowna in the near future.

The Community Trends Report is one of several analytical reports produced by the Policy and Planning Department. While other reports focus on specific areas, such as housing, development statistics or Official Community Plan implementation, the Community Trends Report provides readers with a broad picture of community direction and explores a selection of major trends whose impacts will be felt in Kelowna. Ultimately, the aim of the Community Trends Report is to equip the City, business, and community partners with the information needed to respond to a changing and evolving community. This supports the Council priority to *focus on planning excellence*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> City of Kelowna, September 2015. Open for Opportunity: Council Priorities 2014-2018: "Council wants to ensure a strong foundation is in place so the short- and long-term needs of the community are met. This will require a focus on long-term planning. Excellent long-term planning requires thoughtfulness and innovation. Council is committed to a process of evidence-based decision making with respect to planning, which is rooted in a best practices based approach."

Each year, data from the previous year (2014) is gathered and analyzed. Where available, data from the current year (2015) is also used. Information was obtained primarily from Statistics Canada, BC Stats, Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation and City of Kelowna, among other sources.

### **Discussion:**

Overall, 2014 was a good year for Kelowna, and early indications from 2015 are also positive. From modest improvements in economic measures and decreases in the crime rate to a buoyant housing market, Kelowna is recovering from the economic downturn and residents are feeling they have a good or very good quality of life.

Highlights from the report include:

- Projected population growth is consistent with OCP figures and higher than the provincial average;
- The share of Kelowna's population aged 65 and over will increase over the next decade;
- Median income continued to rise, and the unemployment rate is lower than provincial and Canadian rates;
- Building and construction activity has returned to the levels seen before the recession (2008 and earlier);
- Passengers traveling through Kelowna International Airport continued to increase, exceeding 1.6 million passengers;
- The number and value of building permits have increased steadily since 2011;
- Housing market activity saw a marked increase, leading to higher prices both in the ownership and rental markets.

Using this data, along with other sources, it is possible to identify a number of key trends whose impacts will be felt in Kelowna over the coming years. Of these trends, five were selected for analysis in this year's report:

Aging community - As the share of seniors in Kelowna increases over the coming decade, the City, businesses and community partners will need to work together to find new approaches that will foster a high quality of life for citizens of all ages.

Feeling congested - Traffic congestion continues to be an issue for Kelowna residents, and the issue is not likely to go away anytime soon; but, contrary to popular belief, the answer does not lie in building more and wider roads.

Tech accelerates - The Okanagan technology sector, centered in Kelowna, has grown to become a major contributor to the local economy. Ensuring the success of this sector will require the concerted efforts of both industry and all levels of government.

Growing up - Recent data suggests that demand for multi-unit development is returning, supported by changing demographics and a limited supply of undeveloped land.

A Changing climate - Climate projections show a hotter, drier Kelowna in the decades to come, impacting everything from agriculture to forests and streams. Local efforts will be needed to respond to this global phenomenon.

Improving our understanding of the current landscape and of the community trends outlined in this report assists the City in identifying priorities and increases the community's capacity to respond to change and to build upon its strengths. Some of these more far reaching trends will be incorporated, through more rigorous research, into the next Official Community Plan review. Other trends are already being addressed through actions by the City, including:

- Preparing an Age-Friendly Strategy as one project under the umbrella of the Healthy City Strategy, in partnership with IHA and UBC;
- Opening up regulations to allow for new housing forms in the Urban Core through projects such as the Infill Challenge;
- Introducing programs to curb water consumption, building on the success of our water metering and user-pay water rates programs;
- Promoting wildfire mitigation through the development process and through major fuel modification projects; and
- Planning and building new infrastructure to encourage walking and cycling with plans like the Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan and projects such as the Ethel Street Corridor.

However, it is important to recognize that the City alone cannot take on the responsibility of addressing the impacts of these trends. Committed involvement will be needed from all sectors of the community. The recent Healthy City Partnership between UBC Okanagan, the Interior Health Authority (IHA), and the City of Kelowna is an example of a major interdisciplinary effort to promote community health from all perspectives. Moving forward, partnerships like this will be vital to bring to bear the diverse resources necessary to ensure that Kelowna thrives through these coming changes.

By monitoring these and other trends, the City of Kelowna will be well positioned in future years to proactively address emerging issues and to dedicate its human, financial and technological resources to key programs, policy initiatives and services.

**Internal Circulation:**

Community Planning & Real Estate Div. Director  
Airport Director  
Executive Director of Business and Entrepreneurial Development  
Regional Planning Manager  
Communications Consultant  
Community & Neighbourhood Services Mgr  
Infrastructure Divisional Director  
Transportation & Mobility Manager  
Suburban & Rural Planning Manager  
Community Planning Department Manager

Urban Planning Manager

**External Agency/Public Comments:**

Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission  
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

**Communications Comments:**

The 2015 Community Trends report can be found on kelowna.ca/about. The report will also be highlighted through corporate communications channels and distributed to key stakeholders and the broader community.

**Considerations not applicable to this report:**

Alternate Recommendation:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Existing Policy:

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

Personnel Implications:

Submitted by:



James Moore, MCIP, RPP  
Long Range Policy Planning Manager

Approved for inclusion:



D. Noble-Brandt, Policy & Planning Department Manager

Attachment: *Our Future In Focus: 2015 Community Trends Report*

cc:

Community Planning & Real Estate Div. Director  
Airport Director  
Director of Business and Entrepreneurial Development  
Regional Planning Manager  
Communications Consultant  
Community & Neighbourhood Services Mgr  
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Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation  
Central Okanagan Foundation