

OCP Update FAQ



*Nelson 2050
Leading the way, together.*

Why is this project called an “update” and not a “new” OCP?

A new collective vision for Nelson in 2050 has been created, but the project team is not starting from scratch. Not all the policies in the current Official Community Plan (created in 2013) will need to be removed. This “update” requires the project team to review all the existing OCP policies to ensure they align with the new 2050 vision and today’s best practice. Policies may need to be adjusted or outdated/completed policies may need to be removed. Policy gaps will also be assessed which may require new policies to be drafted so any gaps can be filled. Proposed changes, or proposed new policy, will need to be highlighted to the public during public engagement.

What is the role of the Advisory Committee?

The Advisory Committee is the project team’s sounding board. They are kept up to date on how the project is progressing and what materials are being drafted for the public. The Committee is expected to share materials with their professional and informal networks. The Committee relays what they hear in their communities to the project team and provides input on improving communication methods and engagement tactics to get public feedback. When the project team needs input, the Advisory Committee is used as a focus group and their recommendations are considered. Having members from City Council on the Committee helps ensure that City Council is in the loop on project communication, engagement and milestones.

Why did the OCP’s vision need to be updated?

The 2013 OCP explains that it was staying true to the vision created for the 2008 OCP. It also used the principles from the Path to 2040 Sustainability Strategy (created in 2010). A new vision was required so that today’s priorities for Nelsonites, and today’s best practices, are accurately reflected. All existing OCP policies will be evaluated to ensure they are aligned with the new 2050 Vision.

How was the Nelson 2050 Vision crafted?

The Nelson 2050 Vision was created by combining and distilling the Four Foundational Values (representing public feedback) and the Three Guiding Principles (representing best practice). It reflects the city that Nelsonites aspire to live in as we lead the way to 2050 and use the OCP to guide decisions on growth and change.

Why is the OCP's Nelson 2050 Vision set so far away?

The policies in an Official Community Plan are meant to be aspirational. These are not regulations enforced daily, such as the zoning bylaw which is used to regulate development (how tall a building can be, how close a building can be to the lot line, what a specific building can be used for, etc.). Rather OCP policies are meant to guide decisions that will have long-term impacts.

For example, buildings built today will typically be around for the next 40-50 years. If we need to densify to accommodate expected growth over the next 25 years, then we need to make sure we are building dense housing today. An OCP can say where density should go by directing low-density, medium-density, and high-density through policy which would be used to inform any rezonings that go before City Council. If a lot is currently zoned for low-density, but the OCP has direction for medium-density in that area, a developer who is proposing medium-density will have an easier time getting approval from City Council to rezone from low-density to medium-density. This direction translates to all the areas that an OCP touches, not just the built environment. Having a 25-year vision for the future ensures that the city bylaws, plans, strategies we create today, the city resources we implement today, and all the decisions that City Council must make, are working to achieve the same long-term outcome.

Why didn't more people take the Nelson 2050 Vision Survey?

The Nelson 2050 Vision Survey received 642 responses! This is only around 6% of the population and is not statistically significant, but it is a massive win for OCP engagement. Asking people to provide feedback on high-level long-range policy is not an easy feat. Compared to our contemporaries:

- Vancouver: in 2020 Vancouver's OCP project received 9,708 distinct inputs during their phase one online survey and in-person community interviews (approximately <1% of the population).

- Central Saanich: in 2021 Central Saanich’s OCP project received 242 responses to their online survey Priorities and Community Character (approximately <0.02% of the population).
- Kelowna: from 2019 to 2020 during Kelowna’s two round 5-month OCP Visioning community engagement the city received a total of 6,500 distinct inputs from various tactics including an online survey (approximately <0.5% of the population).
- Castlegar: in 2023 the Castlegar OCP project received 626 workbooks that were mailed to over 4,000 addresses, handed out at in-person open houses and available online. This result is comparable to the Nelson 2050 Vision Survey with approximately 7% of the population providing input.

While it can be tempting to merely look at the number of responses as a sign of success, it is just as important to look at who we are hearing from. If we are only receiving responses from one sector of the population, then we aren’t getting representative feedback. We need to ensure that all voices are aware of the opportunity to engage and that barriers for their engagement are removed. It's important that resources are being put into hearing from those who are “hard to reach” such as single parents, individuals facing poverty, houselessness, and/or unemployment, BIPOC, newcomers, renters, seniors, and youth 30 and under. By targeting these communities with communication methods and engagement tactics, equitable measures can be taken to ensure that the feedback received represents the diversity of Nelson’s population.

Why is the Phase Two What We Heard & Crafted Report so long?

The Phase Two What We Heard & Crafted Report is extensive because it includes a thorough analysis of every survey question, excluding the solution question, which will be analyzed in Phase 3. This process prioritizes transparency for the public. The full analysis is accessible for those seeking a comprehensive understanding of the feedback collected. Alternatively, the executive summary provides a quick overview, highlighting the main themes from the public feedback used to develop the 4 Foundational Values and the Nelson 2050 vision statement.