

Report

City of Merritt
REGULAR Council Meeting
May 24, 2022

File Number: 3900-2336

To: Sean Smith, Chief Administrative Officer
From: Don McArthur, Director of Planning & Development Services
Date: May 18, 2022
Subject: Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2336, 2022

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council give First Reading to Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2336, 2022

And

THAT Council give Second Reading to Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2336, 2022

And

THAT Council direct staff to schedule a Public Hearing.

Background:

City staff, in collaboration with WSP, embarked upon the Official Community Plan Update project in Spring, 2020. Following four rounds of public engagement, the final OCP Bylaw is ready for Council consideration (see Attachments A, B, and C).

Legislative Compliance

The *Local Government Act* (LGA) outlines procedures for adopting an Official Community Plan.

As per Section 477 of the LGA, following First Reading of the proposed Bylaw, the City must:

- Consider the proposed OCP in conjunction with its Financial Plan and any waste management plan; and then
- Refer the document to the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) for comment; and then
- Hold a Public Hearing.

In addition to the procedures outlined above, the TNRD Board of Directors must “accept” the Regional Context Statement that is included in the proposed Official Community Plan, prior to adoption of the Bylaw, as per Section 446 of the LGA.

An OCP may be adopted on the same date as receiving Third Reading.

Financial Plan Alignment

Over the next 20 years, the City of Merritt is expected to grow by 3,000 people, providing significant benefits to the community, but also putting pressure on the City to finance and build new infrastructure to support this growth. The decisions around where these residents are encouraged to live in Merritt will determine the infrastructure that will be required and the financial impact to the City and taxpayers. Funding is needed to support the projected growth, for the provision of parks, sewer and water services, roads and active transportation, climate change adaptation measures, among other needs.

Financing the infrastructure and services to support the growth outlined in the OCP will require multiple sources of funding, including property taxes, Development Cost Charges (DCCs), grants, and other funding streams.

The City’s Financial Plan (see Attachment D) outlines the financial path to ensure the needed infrastructure and services are provided for the City’s growing population, as envisioned by the OCP. This includes funding for active transportation to ensure residents can move around the community, the use of DCCs to help fund infrastructure projects, as well as property tax and grant funding allocated to capital projects, and the funding of municipal facilities, such as the Nicola Valley Aquatic Centre and Memorial Arena, for the enjoyment of existing and new residents.

Given that the Financial Plan addresses the City’s needs for land use, parks and recreation, infrastructure, transportation, emergency services, and climate action, it is well-aligned with the proposed OCP.

Waste Management Plan Alignment

The City adopted the Liquid Waste Management Plan (LWMP) in 2005, with plan approval from the Province. The LWMP is attached (Attachments E and F).

While the LWMP outlines specific processes, whereas the OCP is a high level document, there are several ways in which the documents are aligned.

Appendix F of the proposed OCP shows the location of the wastewater treatment plant, the rapid infiltration basins, and the biosolids disposal sites. These facilities and sites are described in detail in the LWMP. The OCP envisions maintaining these important waste management infrastructure pieces. Due to the 2021 Coldwater River flood, both the RI Basins and the Wastewater Treatment Plant were damaged. However, staff anticipate funding from other levels of government will enable the City to rebuild those facilities in the existing locations.

The City adopted the Sanitary Sewer Utility Master Plan (SSUMP) in 2012 (see Attachment G). This Plan did not supersede the Liquid Waste Management Plan but was intended to complement it. While the LWMP focuses on the processing of liquid waste, the SSUMP analyzes the entire sanitary sewer system and proposes potential improvements based on several growth scenarios.

The SSUMP identified eight critical sections of sewer main in the city. Improvements to those sanitary sewer mains would enable development of the North Bench, Gateway 286, as well as infill development in existing neighbourhoods.

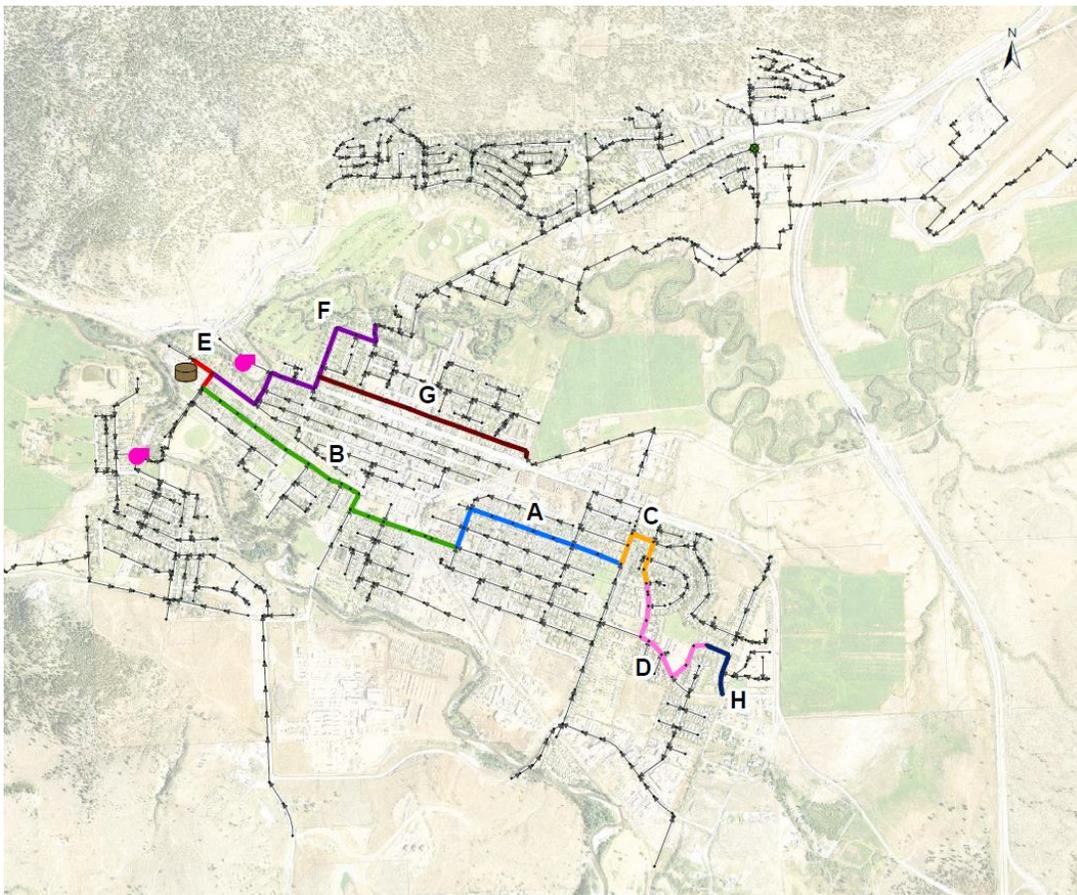


Figure 1: Critical Sewer Main Sections (Sanitary Sewer Utility Master Plan, 2012)

Below is a table outlining how the proposed OCP and SSUMP are aligned.

SSUMP Recommendations	OCP Policy/Proposed Works	OCP Section
Critical Section A (Coutlee & Blair)	Upgrade Coutlee and Blair mains.	Appendix F
Critical Section B (Coldwater Ave)	Upgrade Coldwater Ave main from Voght to Blair. The main from Voght to the Wastewater Treatment Plant has already been upgraded.	Appendix F
Critical Section C (Menzies, Granite, and Douglas)	Upgrade mains on Menzies, Granite and Douglas.	Appendix F
Critical Section D (Clapperton and Menzies)	Upgrade mains on Clapperton and Menzies.	Appendix F
Critical Section E (Main and Quilchena)	Upgrade mains on Main and Quilchena.	Appendix F
Critical Section F (WWTP to Second Ave siphon)	Upgrade mains from Wastewater Treatment Plant to Second Ave siphon.	Appendix F
Critical Section G (Lane between Nicola and Mamette)	Upgrade main in lane between Nicola and Mamette.	Appendix F
Critical Section H (Bann and Scott)	Due to a proposed realignment of the Gateway 286 sanitary sewer main, which would connect to Critical Section D rather than H, this section was deemed to not need an upgrade.	Appendix F

ALC Review

The draft OCP was provided to the ALC earlier this month. The proposed document will be provided to the ALC following First Reading. Any comments provided to the City by the ALC prior to adoption of the OCP will be presented to Council for review.

TNRD Acceptance

The OCP, including the Regional Context Statement, has been provided to the TNRD for review. TNRD staff have indicated that they plan to present the City's Regional Context Statement to the TNRD Board as soon as possible.

Public Hearing

Following acceptance of the Regional Context Statement by the TNRD Board, staff will schedule a Public Hearing.

Other Referrals

As a courtesy, the City has also referred the document to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and BC Transit. The draft document was also shared with local First Nations for review and comment. Feedback received was incorporated into the final Bylaw.

Options / discussion

1. THAT Council give First and Second Readings to Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2336, 2022, and direct staff to schedule a Public Hearing;

OR

2. THAT Council make any amendments deemed necessary to the proposed Bylaw and give First and Second Readings to the amended Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2336, 2022, and direct staff to schedule a Public Hearing;

OR

3. THAT Council receive this report as information.

Financial / Risk Implications:

Financing the City's needed infrastructure improvements over the coming years and decades will be a challenge. It will require multiple sources of funding. The new Development Cost Charges (DCCs) Bylaw will need to be structured so that development funds a fair share of the new and upgraded infrastructure.

To be more financially efficient, the City will also need to transition to higher density residential and infill development. In existing neighbourhoods, infill development can connect to existing infrastructure, reducing the capital costs for new development. In suburban areas, the same infrastructure does not exist, requiring major up-front capital costs to extend services and roads to peripheral areas of the city. By optimizing growth, the City can make efficient and effective use of infrastructure, ensuring a better return on investment for taxpayers and supporting the growth of complete communities.

The proposed OCP outlines several concepts that will enable the City to remain financially self-sufficient:

- Allocate resources to ensure capital is, as a priority, invested in established neighbourhoods, including the City Centre and Urban Villages;
- Create financial structures that will support the aim of having 52% new medium and high density (townhouses and apartments) and 22% new mixed-use residential;
- focus on residential development in the City Centre and Urban Villages to make more efficient use of existing infrastructure and transportation networks;
- Fund, design, construct, and maintain transportation infrastructure to meet the needs of users with a focus on active transportation and transit.

Looking ahead 20 years, Merritt will be challenged to provide resources for the many critical issues facing the City. Issues such as affordable housing and homelessness will need to be balanced with infrastructure replacement and emergency response associated with wildfires or floods. The City's greatest challenge in planning and budgeting for the future is to optimize our resources to maintain basic services while responding to the expanding needs of our growing population.

Others Consulted:

The proposed OCP has been reviewed by City staff from each department. It has also been provided to the following external parties:

- Agricultural Land Commission
- BC Transit
- Ministry of Transportation
- Thompson-Nicola Regional District
- Local First Nations (Coldwater, Cook's Ferry, Lower Nicola, Nooaitch, Shackan, Upper Nicola)

Attachments:

Attachment A: Official Community Plan Bylaw 2336, 2022

Attachment B: Official Community Plan Bylaw Schedule A (OCP document)

Attachment C: Official Community Plan Bylaw Schedule A (Appendices)

Attachment D: Financial Plan Bylaw 2332, 2022

Attachment E: Liquid Waste Management Plan (Stage 1)

Attachment F: Liquid Waste Management Plan (Stages 2 & 3)

Attachment G: Sanitary Sewer Utility Master Plan

Respectfully submitted,

Don McArthur

Director of Planning and Development Services