

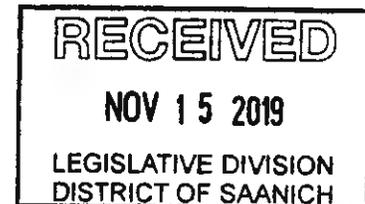


The Corporation of the District of Saanich

Report

C 25 NOV 2019.

To: Mayor and Council
From: Sharon Hvozanski, Director of Planning
Date: November 13, 2019
Subject: Check-in on Local Area Plan Updates
 File 2310-20



RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council receive the Report for information.
2. That Council direct staff to continue with pre-established community planning work plan priorities.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress and lessons re-confirmed or learned from initial Local Area Plan update processes in Cadboro Bay and Cordova Bay.

BACKGROUND

Council's 2015 - 2018 Strategic Plan provided specific direction to, "Commence a multi-year project to update the 12 Local Area Plans". In responding to this direction, a key point of consideration was how the Local Area Plan updates could be undertaken while still continuing work on other important community planning initiatives, such as the Garden Suite program, an infill housing policy, support for work on affordable housing, public art projects, heritage policy renewal, etc.

In advance of commencing work on the Local Area Plan updates, it was essential that the entire work program of the Community Planning Section be looked at, to determine where and when to focus available resources. By resources we not only mean those of the Municipality, but also the ability of the residents and other key stakeholders to be able to participate in numerous ongoing District of Saanich initiatives without becoming overburdened or burnt out.

Prior to developing the work program to update the Local Area Plans and continuing work on key community planning initiatives, Planning staff undertook a substantive consultation process with Neighbourhood Associations. This included three separate workshops with representatives from all Saanich Neighbourhood Associations. The workshops explored options to undertake Local Area Plan updates and more broadly how to most effectively apply Community Planning resources.

The workshops worked through a series of options and tested levels of support through secret ballots at each workshop. Generally, three approaches to community planning work were explored:

- Dedicating the majority of resources to Local Area Plan updates;
- Dedicating the majority of resources to “Centre”, “Village” and Corridor Plans; and
- Balancing resources between Local Area Plan updates, “Centre”, “Village” and Corridor Plans, and Policy Initiatives.

Feedback from Neighbourhood Associations indicated a desire to balance resources between streams of work (Local Area Plan updates, “Centre”, “Village” and Corridor Plans, and policy initiatives). This preference was ultimately reflected in the approach that was endorsed by Council that provided dedicated planning attention “Centre”, “Village” and Corridor areas as part of Local Area Plan updates and retained capacity for Policy Initiatives.

Council Direction on the Community Planning Work Plan

First Council Meeting

Council considered a staff Report which outlined a number of work plan options to complete:

1. Local Area Plan updates;
2. “Centres”, “Villages”, and Corridor plans;
3. Policy Initiatives; and
4. Retain capacity for other baseline community planning work.

The staff Report recommended a balanced approach to undertaking the three streams of work. With the complement of staff available at that time, the timeframe for the recommended work plan was fourteen years. In response to the staff Report, Council passed the following motion:

“That staff be requested to provide an additional option based on additional resources and an expedited timeline.”

Second Council Meeting

At a subsequent Council meeting, in response to a presentation from the Cordova Bay Village Vision Group, Council passed the following motion:

“That staff be requested to bring forward a report, at their earliest opportunity that would provide options for expediting the Cordova Bay community in the Local Area Plan, Villages, Centres and Corridors update.”

Third Council Meeting

Based on Council direction to develop an expedited option and the assignment of additional resources, namely an additional Planner and Senior Planning Technician, staff outlined two possible options for Council’s consideration:

- Option 1 - Prioritize the update of Local Area Plans, incorporating focused planning attention on “Centre”, “Village”, and Corridor areas as part of the Local Area Plan update process; and

Option 2 - Prioritize the development of stand-alone “Centre”, Corridor, and “Village” Plans. The update of Local Area Plans would follow after completion of “Centre”, Corridor, and “Village” Plans.

In response to the staff report, Council passed the following motion:

“That Council endorse Expedited Option 1 Work Plan as outlined in the report of the Director of Planning dated August 1, 2017.”

The work plan endorsement, included an approach for sequencing of Local Area Plan updates (see Figure 1), as well as retention of capacity to work on key policy initiatives at the same time.

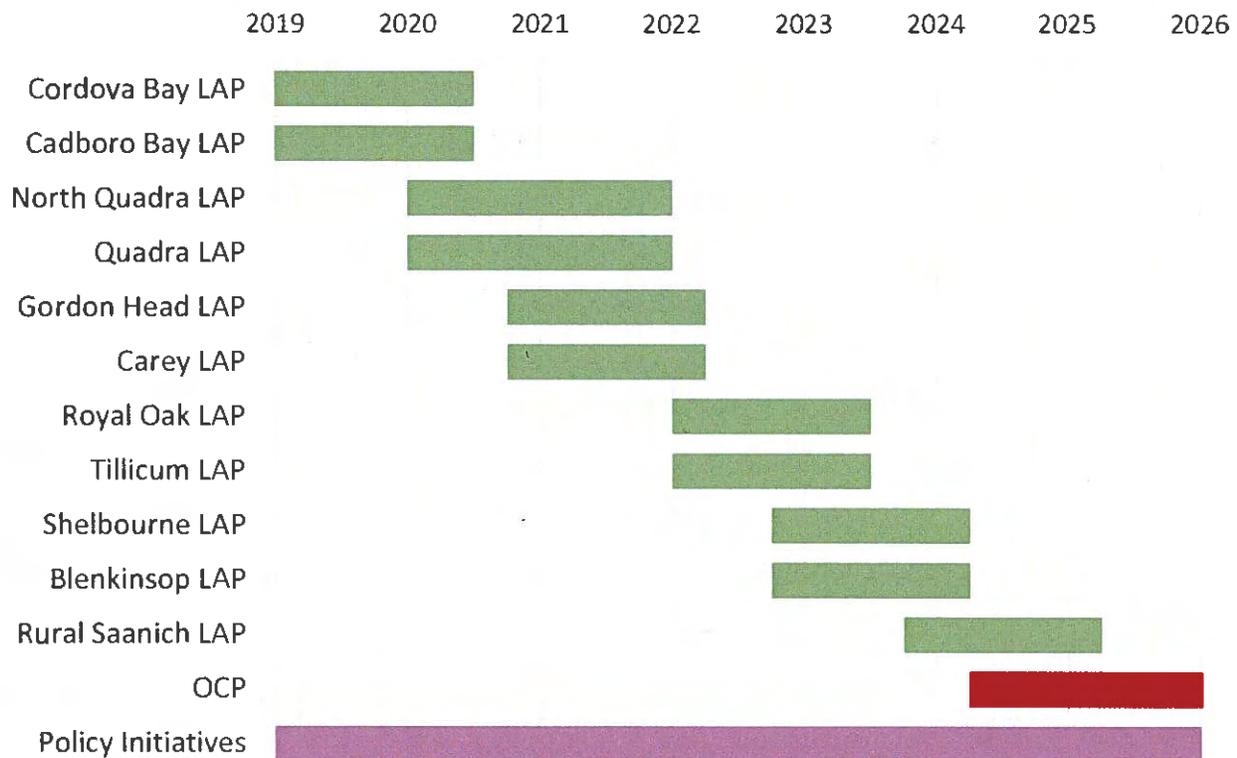


Figure 1: Sequencing of Local Area Plan Updates

CURRENT STATUS - COMMUNITY PLANNING INITIATIVES

A number of community planning initiatives are underway or planned for the upcoming year. The following provides an overview of work that is either currently underway or will be initiated by the end of 2020.

1. Local Area Plan Updates

Cordova Bay and Cadboro Bay Local Area Plan Updates

On November 27, 2017 Council approved Terms of Reference for the update of the Cordova Bay and Cadboro Bay Local Area Plans. Work on these plans was initiated in early 2018 and both projects have passed several milestones, including:

- Formation of Project Advisory Committees;
- Completion of analysis of baseline conditions;
- Community Visioning including community survey, open houses and stakeholder interviews;
- Multi-day Village Design Charrettes;
- Workshops to explore policy options related to housing and land use, transportation and mobility, parks and natural areas, and community amenities;
- Historic meeting with the WSANEC Nations as part of the Cordova Bay Local Area Plan update; and
- Completion of preliminary drafts of updated Local Area Plans and associated “Village” design guidelines.

The next phases will involve a public review of the Draft Plan. The updated Plans will then be refined based on public comments and presented to Council for their consideration in the first half of 2020.

Quadra and North Quadra Local Area Plan Updates

Terms of Reference for a process to update the Quadra and North Quadra Local Area Plans will be brought forward to Council shortly, with substantial public engagement occurring in 2020. The Local Area Plan update is proposed to include a focused study of the full Quadra Corridor (Pat Bay Highway to Tolmie Avenue) and also address the remainder of the Saanich Core Local Area not addressed in the Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan.

Carey and Gordon Head Local Area Plan Updates

Starting near the end of 2020, preliminary background data collection and analysis for Carey and Gordon Head Local Area Plans will begin.

2. “Centre”, “Village” and Corridor Plans

Uptown Douglas Corridor Plan

A comprehensive Draft Plan has been developed for the Uptown-Douglas Corridor (UDC), presenting a vision for transforming this area that is anticipated to see the greatest amount of population and employment growth of anywhere in Saanich. The UDC Plan will also serve to update the majority of the Saanich Core Local Area Plan.

Staff are currently incorporating feedback received from the public and stakeholder groups as part of the Draft Plan review. A Proposed Plan will be brought forward to Council in early 2020 for review and consideration. Once adopted, some resources would be required to support Plan implementation.

“Centre”, “Village” and Corridor Planning in Local Area Plan Updates

Sub-area plans and new Village Design Guidelines for the Cadboro Bay “Village” and Cordova Bay “Village” will be a component of the updated Local Area Plans. Planned work in Quadra and North Quadra will include a focused study of the full Quadra Corridor (Pat Bay Highway to Tolmie Avenue).

Shelbourne Valley Action Plan Implementation

Staff continue to support implementation of the Shelbourne Valley Action Plan, including construction of Phase 1 of the Short Term Mobility Actions.

3. Policy Initiatives

Garden Suite Study

A comprehensive public process to develop regulations to permit garden suites is concluding. On October 21, 2019 Council provided direction on a regulatory framework to permit garden suites. Staff are now working on formal Zoning Bylaw changes that will be brought forward to a Council meeting in the near future. Once the formal changes are enacted, a rollout of regulatory changes will occur and be supported by user guides and communications materials.

Garden Suite Study Supplemental Report

A Supplemental Report is being prepared for Council's consideration with information on tiny homes (homes without permanent foundations) as an alternative to garden suites and the potential to permit both secondary suites and garden suites on the same lot.

Agriculture and Food Security Plan Implementation

Phase 1 Priority Actions of the Agriculture and Food Security Plan are currently being worked on, including initiatives related to the establishment of a regional food and farmland trust, permitting farm gate sales in urban areas and the development of regulations for farmworker housing.

Amenity Contribution and Inclusionary Zoning Policy

Work is being undertaken to provide information and analysis that will respond to Council's direction to explore options for a structured amenity contribution system and inclusionary zoning policy.

4. Baseline Community Planning Work

Housing

Work continues to be undertaken to develop a sound information base to inform housing policy decisions, including through:

- Completing a Housing Needs Assessment in partnership with the CRD and member municipalities, to satisfy legislative mandates and provide detailed housing data;
- Providing information and data to the Mayor's Standing Committee on Housing Affordability and Supply; and
- Participating as part of the Regional Housing Action Committee.

Public Art

Public art projects are managed by staff in addition to fielding inquiries, managing mural applications, participating in initiatives and overseeing maintenance programs. Specific projects planned for the upcoming year include:

- Finalizing a brochure and interpretive materials for Earth Drums at Cedar Hill Park;
- Co-leading a process to introduce First Nations public art at the Municipal Hall; and
- Working with Engineering to explore and initiate a process to include a public art component at Fire Hall #2.

Heritage

Heritage applications and files are reviewed and processed on a regular basis and work is undertaken with the Saanich Heritage Foundation to support initiatives and programs.

Agriculture

Staff provide advice, respond to inquiries and liaise with stakeholders on issues, initiatives and opportunities related to agriculture.

Regional Context Statement

Work is underway to develop and proceed through the approval process for an updated Regional Context Statement to meet the legislated March 2020 deadline.

As part of the previous process to determine Community Planning's work plan, Council provided additional resources. As of September 2019 all identified positions have now been filled. These resources will provide a significant contribution towards the ability to run concurrent processes and enable them to be completed in a timely fashion.

LESSONS RE-CONFIRMED OR LEARNED - LOCAL AREA PLAN (LAP) UPDATES

Many lessons can be re-confirmed or learned from the first two LAP update processes. These lessons can be applied to future Local Area Plan updates or be used to inform the adjustment of the community planning work plan. In general, the first two processes have been successful with respect to community involvement and the development of policy directions that respond to contemporary planning issues and matters unique to each neighbourhood.

The following includes lessons learned solely from the perspective of staff and are based on experiences with the first two Local Area Plan updates, as well as experiences in the development of the Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan and Shelbourne Valley Action Plan. It is important to note that the first two Local Area Plan areas have unique characteristics, both from a demographic and geographic perspective. Therefore, lessons learned should be not necessarily be considered universal to all contexts.

Informed Engagement is Essential to a Successful Outcome and Takes Time

Being able to understand underlying statistics, trends and influences (i.e. existing policy/regulations) is essential to informed community discussion. Residents who do not feel adequately informed are often reluctant to get engaged. Additionally, the ability for residents to see a progression of ideas and have multiple feedback loops, enables dimensions of an issue to be explored, and concepts to be refined to gain support from a broader range of citizens. In turn, broad support for a Local Area Plan provides greater clarity for the development community.

Local Area Plans are a Valuable Tool to Align Municipal Initiatives and Work Programs

Given the comprehensive and integrative nature of Local Area Plans they provide the opportunity to consider broad municipal priorities and understand community perspectives. Additionally, the long-term predictability of Local Area Plan update phasing, has enabled partner departments to plan future transportation, infrastructure and parks planning initiatives to align with and build on outcomes of local area plan updates.

Processes can be Standardized and Made More Efficient over Time

Many of the formats for documents, public engagement materials, and events have been established and can be replicated in future processes with minimal adaptation. This will create efficiencies in future processes. For example, tools developed to help understand the menu of infill housing options possible in a neighbourhood will be useful in subsequent processes.

Discussions in the Broader Context Help to Inform Conversations in Areas of Higher Anticipated Change

The discussion of land use change is often challenging in established communities. Examining change within the broader neighbourhood context helps to solidify the rationale why certain parts of the local area (i.e. walking distance to services and amenities, on transit routes) are most suitable for future growth. Additionally these conversations help to illuminate potential benefits of additional growth as a means to provide a complete community and broaden the range of housing options.

The Local Area Plan Process Helps to Increase Receptiveness to Potential New Housing Options

Supported by a robust community process, there has been an increased understanding and acceptance amongst area residents and stakeholders to potential new housing forms. Workshops that have explored housing concepts have been an important tool for residents to understand potential options and provide feedback on what forms would fit best within their neighbourhoods. This also reflects the primacy of housing affordability and supply as a community concern.

Interdepartmental Implications Need to be Accounted for in Advance

The development of Local Area Plans requires both significant inter/intra-departmental collaboration and support to ensure policies can be effectively and efficiently implemented, and sufficient analysis is undertaken in their development. In particular, collaboration with Engineering, Parks and other Divisional staff within Planning has been integral to ensuring potential ideas are vetted and creative solutions are developed. Going forward, ensuring sufficient staff resources are available and related projects are aligned, will be critical to the success of Local Area Plan updates.

Issues or Areas of Neighbourhood/Resident/Stakeholder Interest May Not be Immediately Apparent

Initial staff research and analysis pinpoint a number of key issues in the community. However, early stage engagement and testing of data helps to provide a broader understanding of community issues and emerging challenges. Through testing ideas and assumptions in public engagement, new issues or novel solutions have been identified. This iterative process is invaluable, but takes time.

PROGRESS AND MOVING FORWARD

The first two Local Area Plan updates have provided an opportunity to reflect on progress to date and confirm whether the approach being used to address community planning priorities is the most appropriate moving forward.

With respect to area planning initiatives completed or nearing completion, collectively the Shelbourne Valley Action Plan, Uptown-Douglas Corridor Plan, Cordova Bay Local Area Plan and Cadboro Bay Local Area Plan address:

- 24% of Saanich current population.
- 59% of Saanich's estimated population growth.
- 63% of Saanich's estimated employment growth.

When you add in areas to be covered by the North Quadra and Quadra Local Area Plan updates (next in the queue), those numbers are:

- 44% of Saanich current population.
- 73% of Saanich's estimated population growth.
- 75% of Saanich's estimated employment growth.

As identified above, the current phasing of planning work has allowed the areas where the majority of growth and change is anticipated to be addressed in the shorter term. This was intentional as the Shelbourne Valley, Uptown-Douglas Corridor and Quadra Corridor are highlighted in the Official Community Plan framework of "Centres", "Villages" and designated Corridors as high priority locations for future population and employment growth. Additionally, policy resources have been focused on developing regulations to permit garden suites.

ALTERNATIVES

Given staff's awareness of recent discussions at the Mayors Housing Affordability and Supply Committee, staff have included potential alternatives should Council wish to adjust Community Planning work plan priorities.

At present, a clear work plan is laid out to guide resource allocation and prioritization of future initiatives. Currently, four planners are focused on Local Area Plans and one is focused on policy initiatives. Additionally, the aforementioned planners complete baseline work on other portfolios, including heritage, public art, agriculture, housing and regional planning.

If Council has interest in making adjustments to current policy priorities / the Local Area Plan update process, staff can report back on options available to adjust current priorities and resource allocation towards new initiatives.

Possible options, should Council wish to adjust priorities include:

- **Re-allocating resources from Local Area Plan updates to Policy Initiatives.** This would enable issues that are common across neighbourhoods, such as affordable housing and infill housing, to be addressed in a more expeditious manner. However, it would slow down the rate that local area plans are updated.
- **Shifting the planning approach from Local Area Plans to Centre, Village and corridor plans.** This approach would allow planning processes to be scaled back and focused on a smaller geographic area where significant change / future growth is anticipated to occur. This could enable these areas to be addressed more quickly, but would result in many areas of Saanich that would not receive localized planning attention.
- **Re-allocating community planning resources to assist with development processing.** Council has expressed an interest in expediting the processing of development applications. Some community planning resources could be allocated to assist with the processing of applications. One potential opportunity is to assign community planning staff to manage garden suite applications, so that this new stream of development would not impact current planning workloads. An implication of re-assigning resources is that it would impact the rate that community planning projects are delivered.

- **Focus on Key Policy Work Priorities.** Currently, Community Planning policy work is prioritized based on issues that emerge through the Strategic Planning process and through initiatives identified by Council on a case by case basis. This results in an ever growing list of work that cannot reasonably be completed inside this Council's term.

Given Council's focus on housing and the establishment of the Mayor's Standing Committee on Housing Affordability and Supply, it may be worthwhile to clearly indicate that existing policy resources should be allocated towards housing initiatives. This could include the development of a housing strategy, infill policy or other housing-related initiatives. In doing this, key issues would be addressed, however, other policy issues would not be worked on until the housing initiatives are completed.

CONCLUSION

Staff believe the current approach to community planning's work plan should be maintained and delivered according to the previously approved schedule. The foundation laid with the first two Local Area Plans will help enable future processes to be delivered more quickly and efficiently. Significant work has been undertaken to build the infrastructure needed to deliver the plan updates and partner departments have structured their work programs to align with the Local Area Plan update schedule.

Local Area Plans remain an essential planning tool to provide a greater level of certainty to residents, stakeholders and the development community about the type of change that is desired and supported. Local Area Plan update processes take a comprehensive approach to developing policies that allow a full spectrum of issues to be addressed. Having said that, the work plan has been sequenced to address high change areas sooner, with a strong emphasis on "Centre", "Village" and Corridor areas that are the foundations of the Official Community Plans growth management framework. In particular, the focus on "Village" areas in Cordova Bay and Cadboro Bay has proved successful in catalyzing conversation on how these areas can become complete communities.

As noted in the lessons re-confirmed and learned section of this report, informed public engagement is critical to a Plan's success. These community conversations take time, but ultimately provide good value to the community as the updated Local Area Plans provide a comprehensive and clear picture of how local areas will grow and change into the future. Given the positive experience with the first two LAP reviews and expectations in the community built on current Council direction staff recommend continuing with pre-established community planning work plan priorities. The current Community Planning work plan focuses on Local Area Plan updates, but also retains capacity for policy initiatives, which address pressing issues that are common across local areas, such as affordable housing. The foundation for future updates has been strongly established and continuing forward in a predictable manner will provide a number of benefits to the organization and community with respect to planning for future change.

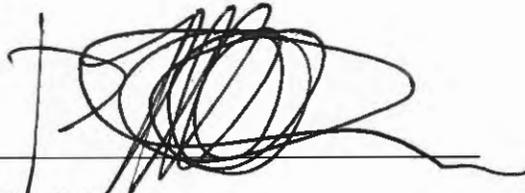
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CS/jsp

ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS:

I endorse the recommendation from the Director of Planning.


Paul Thorkelsson, Administrator