

# Request for Decision



To: Committee of the Whole  
From: **Planning and Development**  
Date: May 9, 2022  
Subject: Draft for Engagement - Official Community Plan Bylaw 2089, 2022  
Recommendation: **THAT Committee of the Whole recommends to Council to receive for consideration the draft Official Community Plan Bylaw no. 2089, 2022; and further,**  
  
**THAT Committee of the Whole recommends to Council to instruct staff to undertake community engagement and agency referrals in preparation for the formal bylaw adoption process.**

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## Purpose

For Committee of the Whole to review and provide consideration of the draft Official Community Plan and scope of public consultation and legislated referrals before adoption.

## Background - Scope of OCP Update

The City of Grand Forks Strategic Plan 2019 indicated that revising and updating the OCP based on emerging issues is a strategic priority. In August of 2020, Council participated in a workshop which explored this strategic priority, and considered various themes for investigation in the OCP update process.

The original scope was identified to be a major amendment focused on core themes identified by Council, requirements of the Local Government Act, and community priorities. In late 2020, Council directed staff to undertake four key topic areas (Market District, Housing, Form and Character and a number of housekeeping items for a major update of the OCP:

**R242/20/10/05 THAT Council accepts the proposed scope and process of updates to be made to the Official Community Plan (Bylaw No. 1919, 2011); AND THAT Council directs staff to proceed with the proposed scope and process of updates.**

1. Legislated and Related Requirements
  - a. Housing needs
  - b. Infrastructure (including active transportation)
  - c. Natural hazards / environmentally sensitive to development
  - d. Other requirements (greenhouse gas objectives and strategy)
  
2. Council Priorities (areas of particular emphasis within OCP)
  - a. Market district concept

- b. Housing, including social and supportive housing
    - Supplemental marketing materials for attainable infill options in the OCP
  - c. Setting form and character definitions and expectations
  - d. Active transportation policies and objectives
3. General Housekeeping
- a. Improve clarity, brevity, utility and specificity of intent, objective and policy statements
  - b. Simplify and streamline OCP document structure
  - c. Update and align density regulations in the OCP with Zoning Bylaw
  - d. Provide direction for alignment of OCP elements in Zoning Bylaw and other planning documents
  - e. Develop implementation plan for existing amendments and current updates

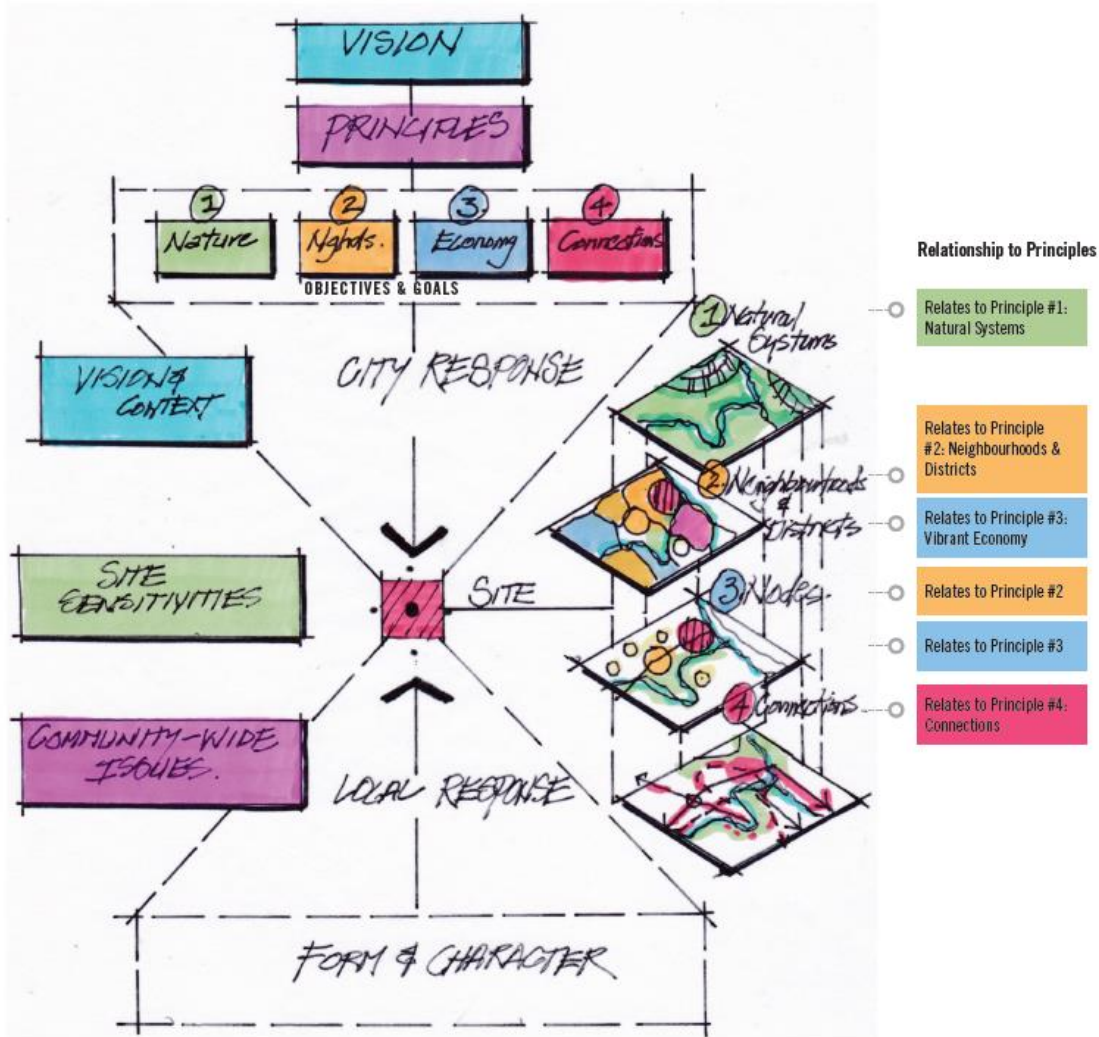
### **Scope refinement and initial feedback**

In February of 2021, Staff identified that other planning projects aligned with the OCP update provided an update memo on the OCP that aligned several projects (OCP update; Wayfinding Strategic Plan; Development Cost Charges Bylaw update; and OCP, Zoning and Park Dedication bylaw amendments related to land use changes under the Flood Mitigation Program.) The memo identified the items in the proposed OCP scope that were either directed by the above resolution, or were legislated requirements, grant requirements, Strategic Plan directives, or other council resolutions. As a result, the scope of the OCP update moved more towards a major re-write with a new structure.

The OCP project team (MVH Urban Planning and Design) and staff undertook an engagement and planning program, as identified in the attached 'What-we-heard' report. Early project feedback identified from initial engagement complemented and reinforced the Council priorities.

- 1) More housing options, including innovative housing ideas for everyone (all ages, household types & incomes)
- 2) Preservation of heritage, neighbourhood character, and trees
- 3) Community cohesion and togetherness
- 4) Trail systems, improving trail connections, and making moving through the community easier
- 5) Creating a downtown vibe as a community hub which is pedestrian friendly, offers a variety of services and stores, and supports local businesses.

The geographic character of the community itself became an organizing principle for the new OCP: the relationship and connections between the Market District, Greater Downtown, Community Hubs and 'Neighbourhood Nodes' – focusing new investment and density where infrastructure, transportation corridors, and existing density make for natural connections and 'place-making'.



Two other key themes form organizing principles for the OCP: the experience of the 2018 flood and the City’s evolving understanding of its natural assets, hazards, and sensitive ecosystems; and the importance of focusing growth and development to make best use of and enhance the sustainability of our infrastructure and community connections.

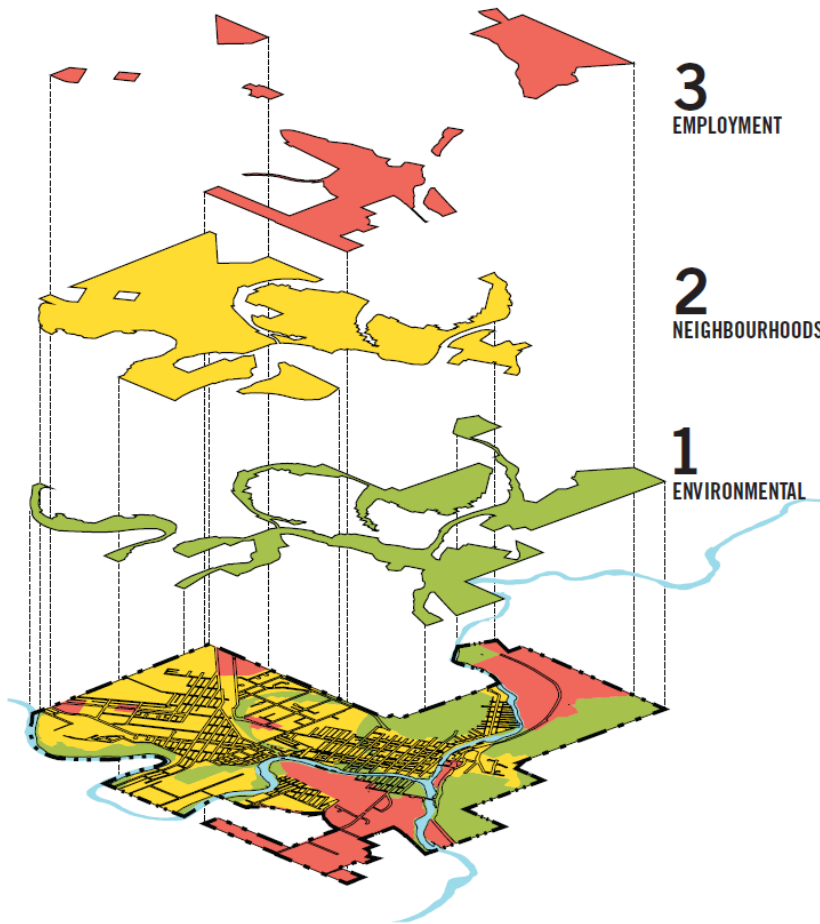
**Environmental policies: natural assets and natural hazards**

The new understanding of flood hazard in the community due to the 2018 flood and completion of flood hazard studies, new floodplain mapping, and the flood mitigation program studies has indicated the need to conserve natural assets and manage exposure to hazards in the community.

The draft OCP is structured to highlight the role of green infrastructure, specifically the connectivity between the community and the function of ecosystems including wetlands, forests, grasslands, floodplains, parks, soil, and interactions with the aquifer.

This focus now forms a core basis for long range planning in the OCP. New policies and updated Development Permit Areas work to enhance natural assets and protect sensitive ecosystems from negative impacts of development, while protecting the community and public and private assets from natural hazards such as flooding, erosion and fire.

In some cases this means there will be more constraints to land development that would need to be addressed by qualified professionals before parcels (in floodplains, near wetlands, and on steep slopes, for instance) may be developed.



### **Community development infrastructure policies**

This major theme recognizes and enhances the structure and function of the community within this landscape, notably the role of downtown, core neighbourhoods, community hubs and neighbourhood nodes.

This creates the following structural and policy elements for the draft OCP:

- Recognition of specific policy areas for downtown / market district, community hubs, neighbourhood nodes, and the highway corridor
- Focusing development and infill in and around these hubs and nodes
- Supporting and enabling infill and redevelopment at a moderate density throughout neighbourhoods
- Major new focus on active transportation and walkability, and connecting neighbourhoods to community, recreation, and natural areas
- Framework for ongoing improvements in asset management, greenhouse gas emission reduction, “connecting the community” and enabling long-term financial sustainability for provision of infrastructure and utilities

The OCP team also completely updated the maps and graphics in the OCP, bringing them into alignment with the City’s brand and reflecting community priorities identified through the engagement program.

## **Engagement Program**

### **Legislative Requirements for Consultation and Engagement**

The Local Government Act (s. 475) requires that a community undertaking an OCP “provide(s) one or more opportunities it considers appropriate for consultation with persons, organizations and authorities it considers will be affected”

Broadly, affected members of the public include residents of the City and surrounding rural area, in addition to regional government services, School District 51, local irrigation and improvement districts, provincial agencies, and regional First Nations. There are also numerous non-profits in the region that represent specific interests in the community. The upcoming engagement program will reach out broadly to the community and specifically to agencies, government organizations, non-profits and First Nations.

In addition, Council’s responsibilities during an OCP adoption are several:

- An affirmative vote of the majority (4) of all Council members at every reading
- Consideration of the impact and interaction of the City’s Financial Plan and any waste management plan
- Referral to the Agricultural Land Commission after first reading and before public hearing
- Document these steps by resolution so it is recorded in meeting minutes; or as recitals in the OCP bylaw

### **Previous Engagement**

During development of the draft OCP, the planning team undertook outreach with several specific engagement opportunities, including:

- Broad community outreach through the Community Circles kits (more than 600 distributed), as advertised in the Gazette, on Facebook, and the City website, as well as at in-person events

- Workshops on wayfinding to support downtown development and trail connections
- Booth at Grand Forks Farmer's Market
- Public open house at City Park
- Market Avenue Roundtable
- 'Thought Exchange Forum' with business community held through Community Futures Boundary

While not specifically directed at the OCP, the North Ruckle Floodplain Restoration Charrette also engaged community members and stakeholders, who provided input about floodplain land use and restoration priorities. The results of that process will be provided in a separate report.

### **Proposed Engagement for completion**

The planning team is proposing the following engagement over the coming weeks in support of completion of the OCP:

- Feedback survey (advertised broadly and sent specifically to participants from 2021 engagement sessions): link to be shared May 9th
- Hybrid online and in-person open house, with presentations from the planning team, Q&A, and feedback opportunities (date TBD)
- Internal and agency referrals to gather staff and government organization feedback
- Formal public hearing process

These activities are targeted to be complete by May 24th to enable the team to compile results and prepare the drafts for first and second reading.

### **Scope of decision**

Committee of the Whole is being requested to consider the draft OCP and refer the document to Council to initiate the community engagement program with this draft.

### **Next steps / Timeline**

If Council directs, staff would be able to bring the following formal steps for adoption of the bylaw.

- 1) Draft release for Community Engagement (May 9th)
  - a. Agency and internal referrals (April 29<sup>th</sup>)
  - b. Public survey May 9-21
  - c. Open House (date to be announced by May 9)
  - d. Preparation of results of engagement and draft for First Reading
- 2) First and Second Reading (May 30)
  - a. Formal Agricultural Land Commission Referral (informal sent already)
  - b. Formal Advertisement for Public Hearing (June 1 and June 8)
- 3) Public Hearing (June 13<sup>th</sup>)
  - a. Third Reading option for June 13
- 4) Third Reading (if not given June 13) and Adoption (June 27)

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## Benefits or Impacts

### General

Provides an updated framework for long range planning in Grand Forks, promoting growth and development while safeguarding natural assets and making smart investment in infrastructure.

### Finances

- As future City bylaws, policies and projects are required to be consistent with the OCP, careful consideration should be given to potential financial impacts on the capital plan, staffing levels, or new contracted work that may be required in implementation
- Property owners within Development Permit Areas may have increased requirements to obtain professional reports from engineers, geoscientists, biologists or others

### Strategic Impact

- Revise and update the OCP, considering emerging issues
- Support initiatives to revitalize, beautify and improve Grand Forks
- Implement a strategy for supporting various forms of housing
- Increase support for active transportation

### Risk Assessment

Compliance: Local Government Act

Risk Impact: Moderate to high. Not following the legislative procedures and required consultation could open the City to challenge on the OCP. Further, as future City bylaws must be consistent with the OCP, care must be taken to ensure the scope of works and regulations considered in this OCP are within the means and capacity of the City to undertake.

Internal Control Process: internal and external consultation; legal review

### Attachments

- Draft Official Community Plan Bylaw no. 2089
  - o Schedule 'A' Official Community Plan
  - o Schedule 'B' Map Package
- Draft Repeal Bylaw no. 1919-R to repeal the current OCP and all amendments
- 'What we heard' report from summer 2021 engagement

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## Recommendation

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## **Options**

1. Committee of the Whole could choose to recommend to Council to extend the community engagement period on the draft plan to receive further feedback on the proposed plan before it is brought back for first reading. This could have a benefit of providing further opportunities for engagement but could also risk extending the bylaw adoption well into July or August.
2. Committee of the Whole could choose to recommend to Council to give first reading of the bylaw at the May 9<sup>th</sup> meeting then proceed with public engagement. Staff has not recommended this as there are still several policy areas to consider that would benefit from the consultation, stakeholder engagement and legal review to clarify language before first reading.