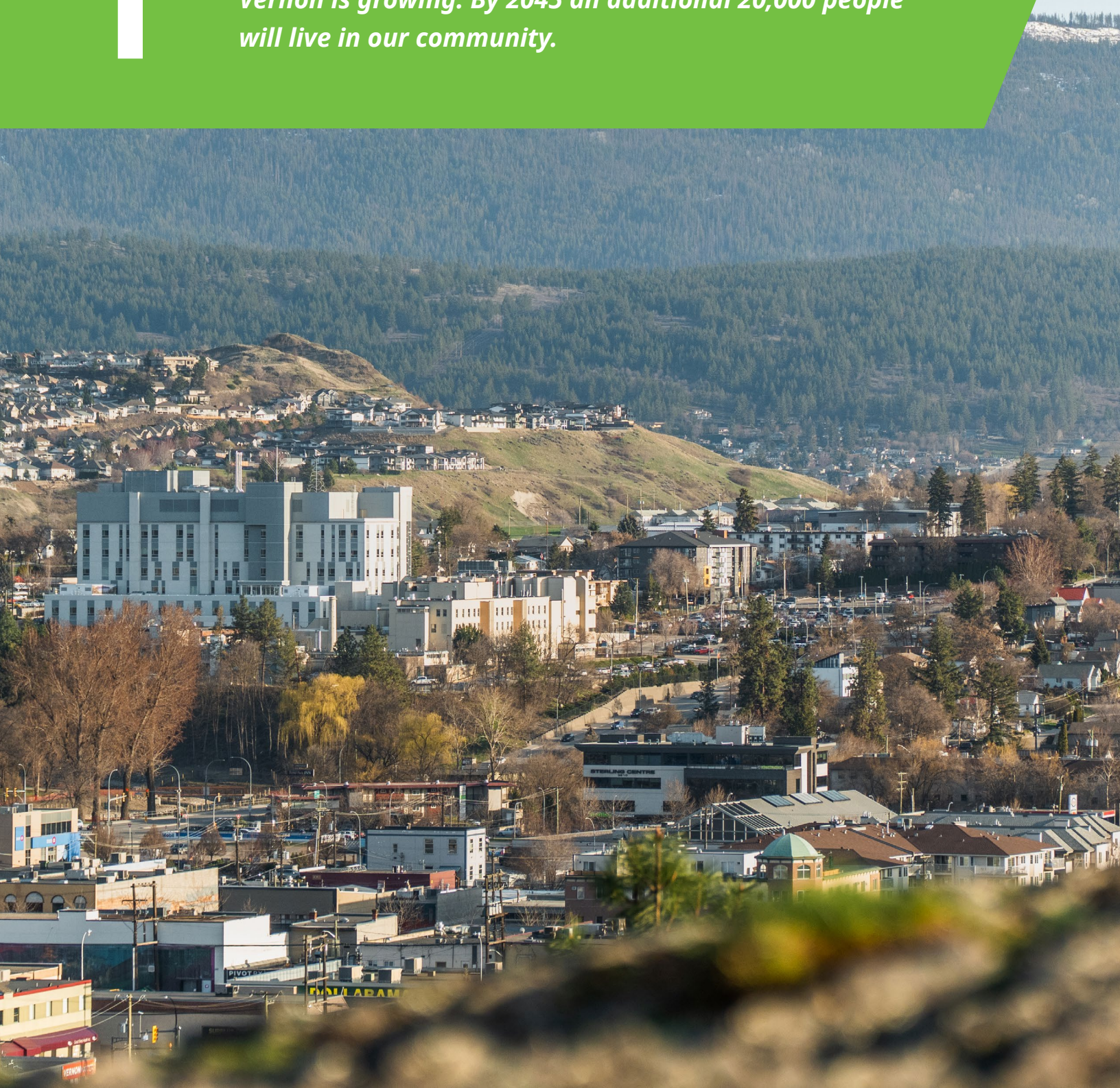


1

FOUNDATION

Vernon is growing. By 2045 an additional 20,000 people will live in our community.



1. FOUNDATION

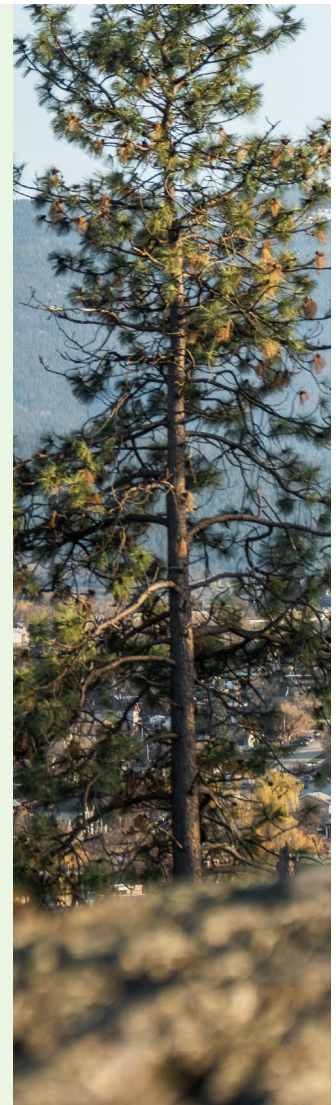
This Official Community Plan (OCP) sets out Vernon's strategic framework for managing the City's growth and development to 2045. It reflects the aspirations of thousands of residents, businesses, and organizations that contributed to its development, and a shared commitment to creating a city that is affordable, diverse, accessible, and sustainable. This Plan will inform City Council's decisions on land use, housing, transportation, economic development, environmental protection and climate change, community well-being, and many other aspects of life in Vernon.

This Chapter presents the purpose of this Plan (1.1) and how it is meant to be used by everyone (1.2). It also describes how this Plan works together with other City initiatives (1.3) and how it meets provincial and regional requirements (1.4). Finally, it describes how this Plan was developed (1.5).

Vernon's history of growth and development

Vernon was first a wintering ground for the syilx Okanagan people. It then became a trading post for the North West Company; a transportation hub for the Canadian Pacific Railway; a training ground for the Canadian Armed Forces; and an agricultural hub for ranchers and orchardists. As Vernon gradually urbanized, it adapted to social, economic, and environmental change. This resilience will help the City to continue adapting to growth and development without compromising the qualities that make Vernon an exceptional place to live, work, play, and visit.

Situated on the shores of Okanagan Lake, Vernon is the largest city in the North Okanagan and the second largest in the Okanagan Valley. Over decades, population growth altered the landscape, upwards and outwards from the valley floor towards the hillsides, first with acreages and then subdivisions. Today, Vernon extends across 96.4 km² and is renowned for its extraordinary natural beauty, year-round recreational opportunities, distinct neighbourhoods, and high quality of life. Vernon is also a popular destination, with easy access to mountains, valleys, rivers, and lakes; farms, orchards, and wineries; and lively arts and cultural activities.



1.1 Purpose

This Official Community Plan (OCP) is a long-term strategic planning framework to guide how and where growth and development in Vernon will be accommodated to 2045. Built on the 2013 OCP, it takes into account trends and projections for population growth and housing, anticipated demand for transportation and infrastructure, and community-identified priorities to ensure that the City's

neighbourhoods, infrastructure, and networks can support the next 20 years of change. It provides a comprehensive and coordinated set of policies built on a collective community vision for the future, and includes specific objectives and actions to be implemented by City Council and City staff, as well as residents, business owners, developers and property owners, community groups, and many other partners.

1.2 A Plan for Everyone

This OCP is for and about the entire community:

Residents

See where the community is headed, be informed about the ideas and actions for managing short- and long-term change, and understand how the City is preparing.

Business owners

Understand how the City is directing growth and development to support Vernon's economy, job creation, and innovation.

Developers and property owners

Be informed about the strategic and intentional locations of new growth, housing, and investment.

Community groups

Plan for the facilities and services that are needed to support Vernon's growth and development.

This OCP will also be used by City staff to inform strategic land use and infrastructure planning, and by City Council to guide its decisions on land use applications and resource allocations, in alignment with evolving community needs.

1.3 Related Plans

There are many plans, strategies, and bylaws that work together to support the implementation of the OCP (Figure 1.1). For example, this Plan adopts the land use-related policies from the [Transportation Plan](#) to ensure

that land use and transportation decisions are integrated and aligned with the city’s collective vision for the future ([Chapter 3.1](#)).



Figure 1.1 Official Community Plan and related plans, strategies, and bylaws.

1.4 Legislative Framework

Provincial requirements

Under British Columbia's *Local Government Act*, all municipalities must have an Official Community Plan (OCP) to guide long-term planning and land use decisions. City Councils must adopt the OCP as a bylaw and update it every five years. The Act also directs that all future City Council decisions be consistent with the OCP.

This Plan aligns with all requirements, as it:

- Establishes policies and objectives for all lands within the City's boundary (S. 471)
- Identifies the approximate location, amount, type, and density of residential development and other land uses, infrastructure, public facilities, and more (S.473)
- Includes housing policies that address the need for affordable, rental, and **special needs housing** (S. 473), based on the City's most recent [Housing Needs Report](#)
- Promotes the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (S. 473)
- Includes social and economic policies that support community well-being (S. 474).

Regional context statement and requirements

The City of Vernon recognizes that as many people live, work, play, and move around the region, complementary policies and initiatives are essential for balanced, sustainable growth, development, and investment.

Vernon is one of several communities in the Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO), which is comprised of six municipalities and five electoral areas (see [Figure 1.2](#)).

RDNO Municipalities

- Armstrong
- Coldstream
- Enderby
- Lumby
- Spallumcheen
- Vernon

Electoral areas

- B – Swan Lake/Commonage
- C – BX/Silver Star
- D – Rural Lumby
- E – Cherryville
- F – Rural Enderby

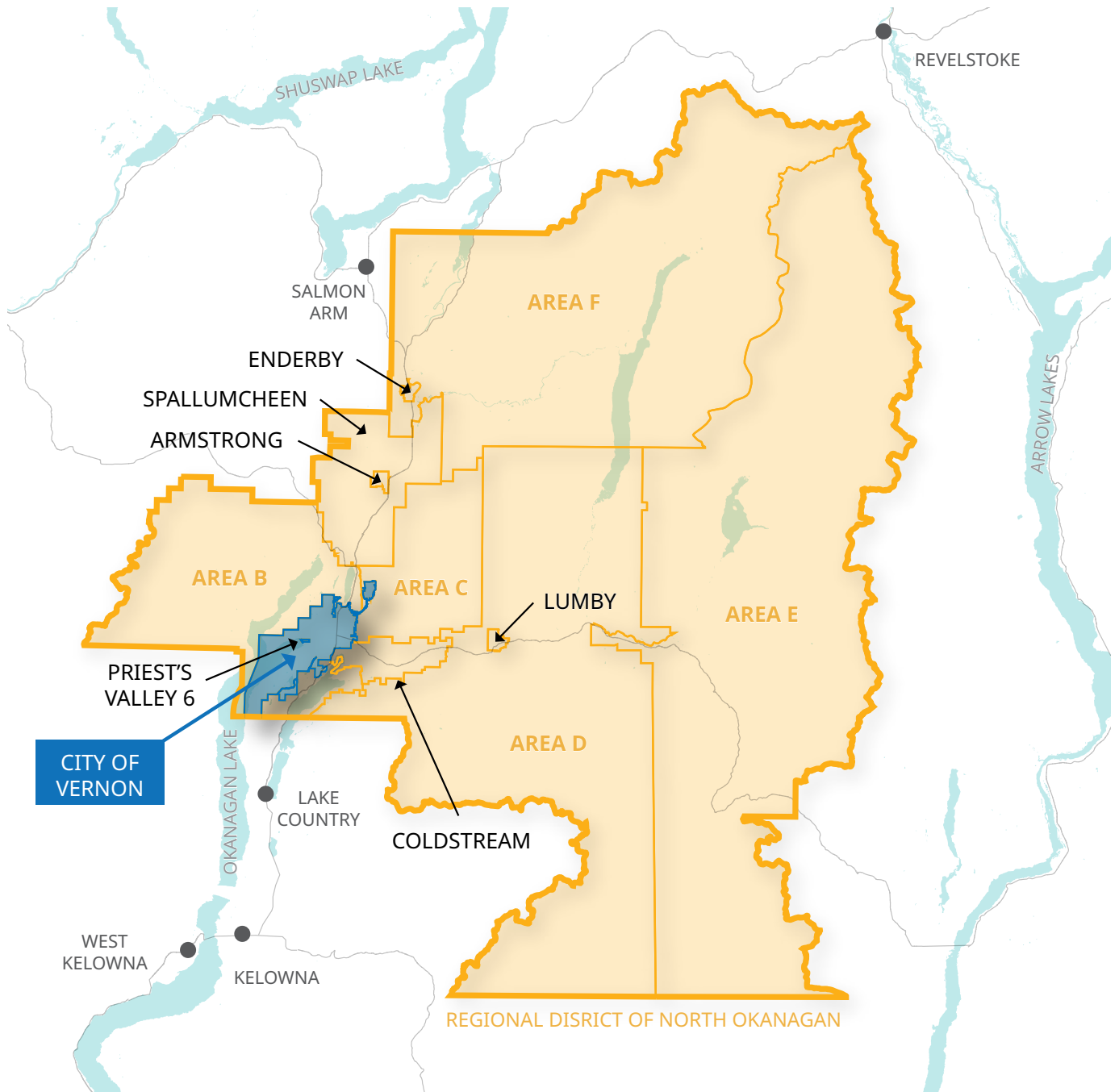


Figure 1.2 City of Vernon and neighbouring municipalities in the Regional District of North Okanagan.

The *Local Government Act* (S. 446) requires that Vernon prepare a Regional Context Statement ([Appendix A](#)) to identify the relationship between this OCP and the RDNO's Regional Growth Strategy.

The **Regional Growth Strategy**

provides an integrated growth management framework and specific objectives that prioritize regional cooperation, protect rural and agricultural lands, and facilitate rural and urban lifestyle choices through designated growth areas. It also identifies a **Rural Protection Boundary** ([Map 1.1](#)) that distinguishes lands with access to water and sewer infrastructure from those limited to rural service levels. The boundary protects rural areas from urban sprawl, encouraging more compact development in urban areas, and supporting safe, healthy, walkable, and sustainable communities.

Vernon's OCP shares the RDNO's vision for sustainable growth outlined in the Growth Strategy in [Chapter 3.3](#), the City-Wide Policies in [Chapter 4](#), and the Land Use Policies in [Chapter 5](#). Highlights of the alignment of this OCP with the Regional Growth Strategy are:

- Managing growth through the implementation of an **Urban Containment Boundary** ([Map 1.2](#)) that directs urban growth to areas where infrastructure already exists, and is refined in a **Focused Growth Area** ([Map 1.3](#)) where intensive urban growth and public investment is directed

- Protecting rural and agricultural lands by designating lands within the Regional Growth Boundary as "limited growth" or "protection areas" including Suburban Limited Neighbourhoods, Rural, and Agricultural Land Reserve ([Chapter 3.3](#), [Chapter 5.4](#) and [Chapter 5.5](#))
- Protecting the natural environment through the implementation of Development Permit Areas for Aquatic, Terrestrial, Wildfire Hazard, Flood Hazard, and Hillside Development ([Chapter 6](#), [Map 6.1](#), [Map 6.2](#), [Map 6.3](#))
- Promoting climate resilience, emergency preparedness, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through policies and building design ([Chapter 4.2](#) and [Appendix C](#))
- Encouraging diverse housing choices and complete and vibrant neighbourhoods in each of the future land use designations within the **Urban Containment Boundary** ([Chapter 5](#))
- Supporting a diverse regional economy that acknowledges Vernon as an economic hub of the region ([Chapter 4.3](#)) and encourages collaboration with government, institutional, and regional partners ([Chapter 7](#))
- Supporting a regional approach to the transportation network by considering links to nearby communities, maintaining regional transportation corridors and highways, and collaborating with the RDNO, BC Ministry of Transportation and Transit, and BC Transit on strategic transit plans ([Chapter 4.7](#)).

See [Appendix A](#) for the comprehensive Regional Context Statement.

1.5 Development of This Plan

This Official Community Plan (OCP) is built on the 2013 OCP; analyses of population trends and projections, and housing supply and demand; technical studies and growth scenarios; related plans and strategies; and extensive feedback from residents, business owners, community groups, community members, and external agencies such as RDNO, BC Transit, and Ministry of Agriculture.

In early 2024, City staff launched a three-phase engagement process ([Figure 1.3](#)):

Phase 1: Vision and Values

January–July 2024

Engagement focused on meeting Vernonites where they are at, whether online or on the street, to shape a collective community vision, values, and objectives for Vernon's growth and development. Identified priorities included:

- Housing affordability and diversity to ensure housing options are available, connected, and safe for all community members
- Natural resource management, protection, and access to green spaces
- Economic development, social services, and community well-being
- Safe and connected transportation and infrastructure networks.

Phase 2: Growth Options

August–December 2024

Engagement involved asking community members to identify priorities for where and how growth should be directed. Identified priorities included:

- A preference for sustainable growth and densification over sprawl
- The need for [attainable homes](#) in a variety of building types
- The enhancement of parks, greenspaces, and public amenities
- The preservation of natural landscapes, hillsides, and cultural heritage.

Phase 3a: Policy Drafting

January–June 2025

Engagement focused on gathering community feedback on draft land uses and associated policies proposed under the Plan. Key outcomes included:

- Strong support for the proposed Urban Centres (Uptown and Downtown) and Village Centres (Alexis Park, Jubilee Hill, and Waterfront)
- An interest in revitalization, livability, and housing diversity in each Centre.

Phase 3b: Fine Tuning

July–December 2025

City staff presented a draft plan to the public and City Council committees, and to external agencies for comment. Feedback was incorporated into this OCP and presented to City Council for approval.

Monitoring and Reporting

On-going

Following adoption of this OCP, City staff will monitor progress and report to City Council on its implementation ([Chapter 7](#)).

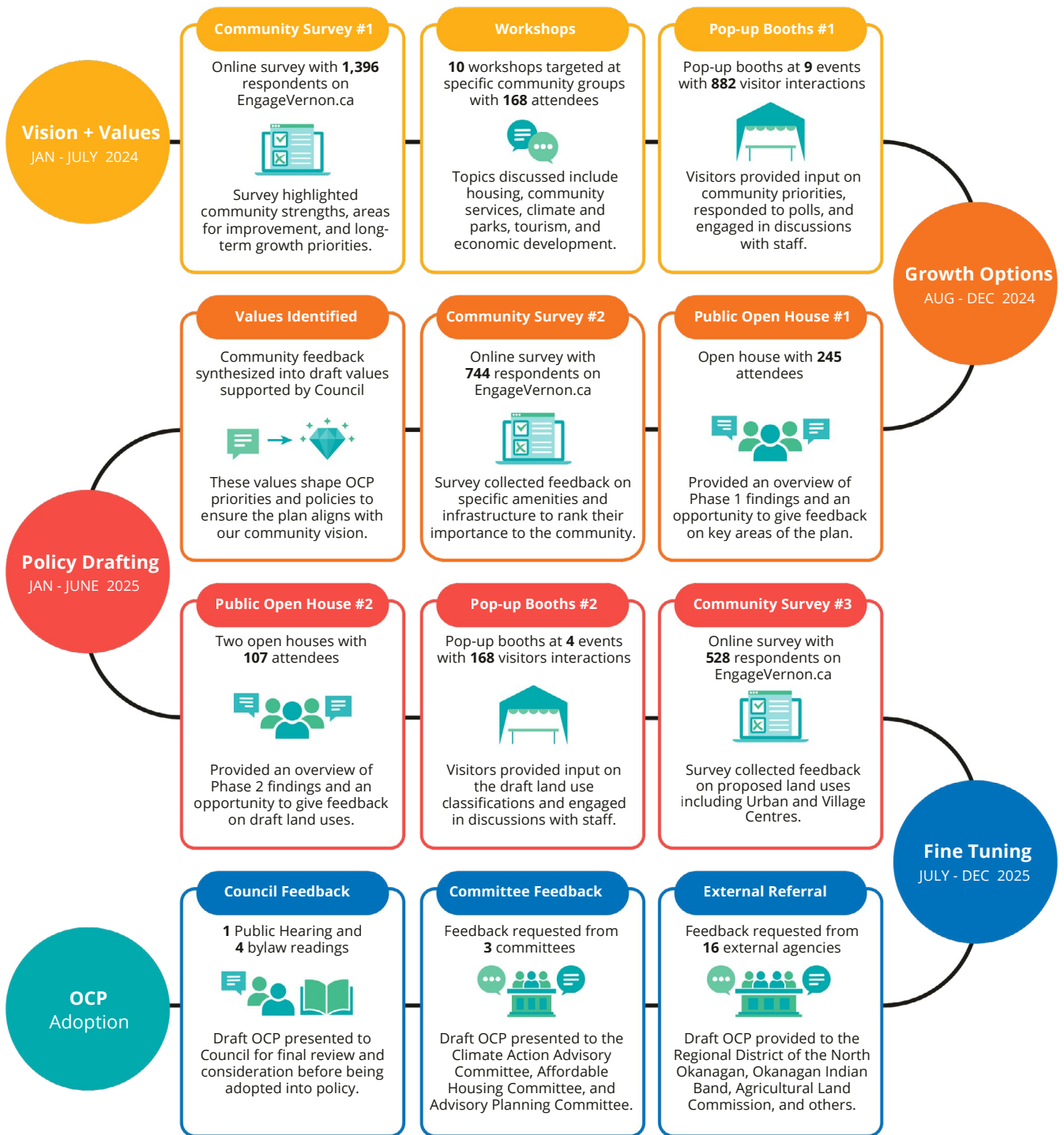


Figure 1.3 Plan development milestones and community engagement sessions.

