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DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREAS

Vernon is developing. Development Permit Areas ensure sensitive areas are protected and everyone stays safe.



6. DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREAS

Development Permit Areas (DPAs) provide regulatory guidelines to protect people and the natural environment; regulate the form and character of intensive residential development; commercial, industrial, or multi-family residential development; and promote energy conservation, water conservation, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

This Chapter provides the planning purpose, justification, and objectives for each of Vernon's DPAs, aligned with all requirements of the *Local Government Act* (LGA). See:

- [Table 6.1](#) for the sections of the LGA that apply to each DPA.
- [Appendix B](#) for the regulatory guidelines for DPAs 1 to 5, including any permit exemptions.
- [Appendix C](#) for the regulatory guidelines for DPA 6 (Form and Character).
- [Map 6.1](#), [Map 6.2](#), [Map 6.3](#), and [Map 6.4](#) for the defined boundaries of each DPA.

Development and Building Permits

If land is within a DPA, any alteration or improvement, such as subdivision, vegetation removal, land clearing, or construction, may require an approved development permit before work can occur.

If construction is planned for the site, a separate building permit is also required.

If land is subject to more than one DPA, a single, combined development permit application is required. The development permit application will be subject to the requirements of each applicable DPA.



Middleton Mountain

The *Local Government Act* (S. 488.1) gives municipalities authority to designate a Development Permit Area for one or more of the following purposes:

- To protect the natural environment, its ecosystems, and its biological diversity;
- To protect development from hazardous conditions;
- To revitalize an area in which commercial use is permitted;
- To establish objectives for the form and character of intensive residential development; and
- To establish objectives for the form and character of commercial, industrial, or multi-family residential development.

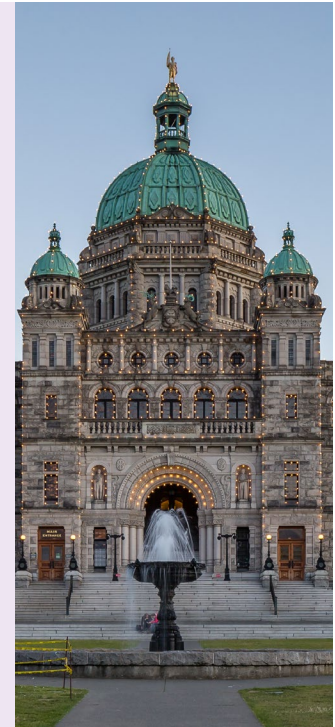


Table 6.1: Alignment of Development Permit Areas and Local Government Act

Development Permit Area (Number – Name)	Local Government Act – Section 488(1) (Subsection)
1 – Terrestrial Ecosystem	(a) Natural Environment (b) Hazardous Conditions
2 – Aquatic Ecosystem	(a) Natural Environment (b) Hazardous Conditions
3 – Hillside Development	(a) Natural Environment (b) Hazardous Conditions (f) Commercial, Industrial, Multi-Family Form and Character
4 – Wildfire Hazard	(a) Natural Environment (b) Hazardous Conditions
5 – Flood Hazard	(b) Hazardous Conditions
6 – Form and Character	(f) Commercial, Industrial, Multi-Family Form and Character (h) Promote Energy Conservation

6.1 DPA 1 – Terrestrial Ecosystem

Purpose

The purpose of DPA 1– Terrestrial Ecosystem ([Map 6.1](#)) is to protect the natural environment, its ecosystems, and its biological diversity, pursuant to Sections 488(1)(a)(b) of the *Local Government Act*.

Justification

DPA 1 seeks to protect land-based **environmentally sensitive areas** (ESAs), which facilitate natural ecological processes, increase community climate resilience, and provide habitat for a variety of wildlife, including rare and endangered species with limited habitat ranges. ESAs include areas such as mature forests and woodlands, rocky outcrops, and sensitive grasslands. The Terrestrial Ecosystem DPA range was identified through a combination of regional *Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory Projects* undertaken from 2002–2013, the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program *Biodiversity Conservation Strategy Project* undertaken in 2014, and refined through the City of Vernon's *Environmentally Sensitive Areas Mapping Study* undertaken as part of the OCP update process in 2025.

Development can contribute to the degradation of natural areas through the loss of trees, vegetation, and wildlife. As a result, ESAs with a value of Very High, High, or Moderate have been incorporated into the Terrestrial Ecosystem DPA to define areas where a site visit by a Qualified Environmental Professional is necessary to ensure that potential impacts of new and redeveloped sites on land-based ESAs are minimized.

Objectives

- To identify and protect land-based **environmentally sensitive areas**.
- To prioritize avoidance of negative impacts to **environmentally sensitive areas** over mitigation and compensation.
- To promote and support land use that prioritizes the conservation of rare and at-risk ecosystems.
- To protect the ecological characteristics and socioeconomic benefits prevalent in all **environmentally sensitive areas**.
- To preserve **environmentally sensitive areas** in mostly natural condition while accommodating land use that meets wider community needs.
- To carefully plan land development and new subdivisions in ways that protect and connect **environmentally sensitive areas**.
- To protect **environmentally sensitive areas** by establishing buffer zones.
- To identify and protect viable **ecological connectivity corridors** that connect core conservation areas and critical habitats.

6.2 DPA 2 – Aquatic Ecosystem

Purpose

The purpose of DPA 2 – Aquatic Ecosystem ([Map 6.1](#)) is to protect the natural environment, its ecosystems, and its biological diversity, pursuant to Section 488(1)(a) of the *Local Government Act*, the *Riparian Areas Protection Regulation*, and the *Water Sustainability Act*.

Justification

The Aquatic Ecosystem DPA seeks to protect water-based **environmentally sensitive areas** (ESAs), which facilitate natural ecological processes, increase climate resilience, provide habitat for a variety of wildlife, and provide **ecosystem services**, including water quality improvements, flood prevention, and erosion control. Water-based ESAs include streams, lakes, and wetlands, which alongside their **riparian areas** link water to land by creating and directly influencing fish habitat. The Aquatic Ecosystem DPA range was identified through a combination of municipal and provincial mapping data.

Development can contribute to the degradation of aquatic ecosystems through the loss of trees, vegetation, and wildlife. As a result, the Aquatic Ecosystem DPA defines areas where a site visit by a Qualified Environmental Professional is necessary to both ensure alignment with provincial legislative requirements and minimize the impact that new and redeveloped sites may pose on water-based ESAs.

Objectives

- To identify and protect water-based **environmentally sensitive areas**.
- To protect natural features, functions, and conditions that support fish life processes.
- To prioritize avoidance of negative impacts to water-based **environmentally sensitive areas** over mitigation and compensation.
- To protect, restore, and enhance riparian and wetland ecosystems to maintain their ecosystem functions and capacity for sustaining wildlife.
- To protect, restore, and enhance **ecological connectivity corridors** to maintain ecological integrity, biodiversity, and sustainable ecosystem functioning across the landscape.
- To safeguard ecological characteristics and socioeconomic benefits prevalent in all **environmentally sensitive areas**.
- To protect development from water-related natural hazards such as flooding.

6.3 DPA 3 – Hillside Development

Purpose

The purpose of DPA 3 – Hillside Development ([Map 6.2](#)) is to protect development from hazardous conditions, protect the natural environment, and establish objectives for the form and character of development, pursuant to Sections 488(1)(a)(b)(f) of the *Local Government Act*.

Justification

Many of the remaining undeveloped lands in Vernon are on steep slopes and hillsides, including future phases of development in existing hillside communities. The Hillside Development DPA seeks to protect hillside development from hazardous conditions, including consideration for drainage patterns, slope stability, and environmental impacts. It also seeks to ensure development is sensitively integrated into hillsides to maintain the vibrancy of our unique landscapes.

Residential and commercial developments located on hillsides can be disruptive to the landscape. As a result, retaining significant undisturbed portions of land and concentrating development on less sensitive or less sloped areas is strongly encouraged. As a result, areas with slopes of 30% or greater have been incorporated into the Hillside Development DPA to define areas where geotechnical expertise is necessary to ensure safe and concentrated development can occur while minimizing impact to the surrounding landscapes.

Objectives

- To complement the scenic character of Vernon by integrating development with the city's unique natural features and hillside landforms.
- To promote development that respects the terrain, vegetation, drainage courses, and natural constraints of the site.
- To achieve sensitive neighbourhoods that limits the visual impacts of hillside development and promotes a high standard of design.
- To enhance the livability of hillside developments through public trail connections and parks.
- To minimize the risk of erosion, landslip, or rockfall hazards.
- To preserve steep slope areas to protect natural vegetation and sensitive ecosystems.
- To achieve adequate access and egress for day-to-day emergency use as well as for the provision of services such as snow clearing and garbage collection.
- To support mixed-use communities with a variety of densities and a variety of housing opportunities.
- To minimize infrastructure maintenance requirements and costs, thereby enhancing the financial sustainability of proposed development.

6.4 DPA 4 – Wildfire Hazard

Purpose

The purpose of DPA 4 – Wildfire Hazard ([Map 6.3](#)) is to protect development from hazardous conditions and protect the natural environment, pursuant to Sections 488(1)(a)(b) of the *Local Government Act*.

Justification

While wildfire plays a natural role in the forest and grassland ecosystems in the Okanagan Valley, development along the urban-natural interface increases public exposure to wildfire risks. The notable rise in wildfire events over the past decade underscores the threat to community safety and well-being. The Wildfire Hazard DPA seeks to alleviate the strain placed on first responders, risks to community safety, and the potential for property damage during wildfire events by reducing the opportunity and risk of wildfire. As a result, the Wildfire Hazard DPA applies to all areas within Fire Interface Areas 2 and 3, where additional preventative measures are necessary to minimize wildfire risk for new developments and large additions.

Objectives

- To minimize the risk to people, property, and natural areas from wildfire hazards.
- To promote development that reduces wildfire hazards while addressing environmental issues, such as through the inclusion of fire-smart landscaping with native, drought tolerant vegetation.
- To promote development that reduces the risk of fire spread from a structure to the natural environment, such as through the inclusion of natural trails as firebreaks.
- To support development that adheres to the Vernon's [Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan](#) and [FireSmart BC](#) guidelines.
- To ensure development is only approved in areas where the water infrastructure can support fire protection.

6.5 DPA 5 – Flood Hazard

Purpose

The purpose of DPA 5 – Flood Hazard ([Map 6.3](#)) is to protect development from hazardous conditions, pursuant to Section 488(1)(b) of the *Local Government Act*.

Justification

Key water features, including streams and lakes, make some areas of Vernon susceptible to potential flooding hazards during extreme weather events. The Flood Hazard DPA recognizes this risk and seeks to protect the community from potential flood hazards that may threaten people or property. The Flood Hazard DPA was identified through a combination of regional Floodplain Mapping undertaken by the Okanagan Basin Waterboard in 2020 and detailed flood mapping and risk analysis studies undertaken by the City from 2020–2022.

The Flood Hazard DPA works in conjunction with the Floodplain Management Bylaw, which provides the detailed requirements for development activities within floodplain areas. As a result, the Flood Hazard DPA applies to all properties where any portion overlaps with a floodplain, where additional considerations may be needed to ensure the safety of people and structures during a flood event.

Objectives

- To minimize the risk to people and property from flood hazards and mitigate increasing the impacts of flooding within already developed areas.
- To encourage safety in the construction, location, and manner of development.
- To avoid increasing the hazard to or vulnerability of others on the floodplain.
- To promote a natural floodplain regime.

6.6 DPA 6 – Form and Character

Purpose

The purpose of DPA 6 – Form and Character ([Map 6.4](#)) is to establish objectives to guide the form and character of intensive residential, mixed-use, commercial, and industrial, and to promote energy conservation and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, pursuant to Sections 488(1) of the *Local Government Act*.

Justification

Vernon is a growing community experiencing and planning for growth, new development, and redevelopment of existing areas throughout the city. Recognizing this, the Form and Character DPA seeks to ensure high-quality design that is inclusive, efficient, attainable, and sustainable that will strengthen placemaking and wayfinding within the community. This includes considering how new development can positively contribute to the public realm, promote a wide variety of housing types, and encourage designs that complement Vernon’s community character.

The Form and Character DPA works in conjunction with the Form and Character Design Guidelines ([Appendix C](#)) that provide direction for site planning, street-facing design, massing and scale, landscaping, materials, and site connectivity. The Form and Character DPA applies to all areas of the city for intensive residential, mixed-use, commercial, and industrial development.

Objectives

- To clearly communicate the design expectations for intensive residential, mixed-use, commercial, and industrial projects.
- To facilitate the fair and consistent application of design objectives.
- To foster balanced, high quality design that encourages community togetherness, social inclusion, and a safe, accessible and welcoming public realm.
- To promote energy conservation, water conservation, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through sustainable design considerations.

