

3

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Vernon has a vision. Our growth strategy is based on shared values.



3. GROWTH MANAGEMENT

This Official Community Plan (OCP) builds on the successful components of the 2013 OCP. It considers the social, economic, physical, and environmental factors that will create an affordable, diverse, accessible, and sustainable city to 2045. Thoughtful allocations of land uses and development that balance residential, commercial, agricultural, industrial, and park space supports compact growth that enriches neighbourhoods, strengthens the local economy, and ensures a sustainable future.

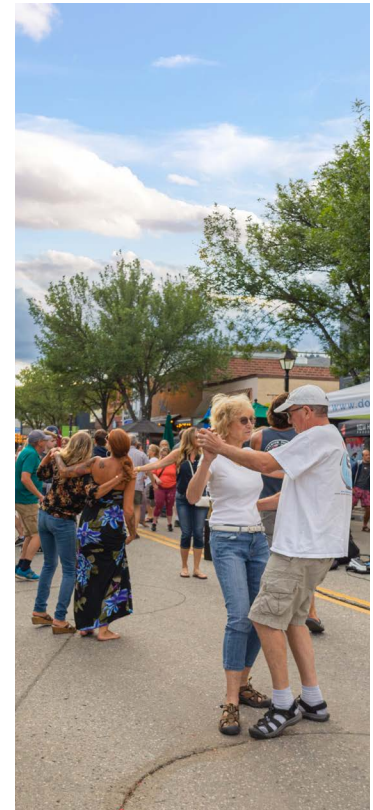
The Chapter presents the collective vision for Vernon's future growth and development ([3.1](#)), the values that inform the policies and objectives in this OCP ([3.2](#)), and the City's growth strategy to 2045 ([3.3](#)).



Becker Bike Park

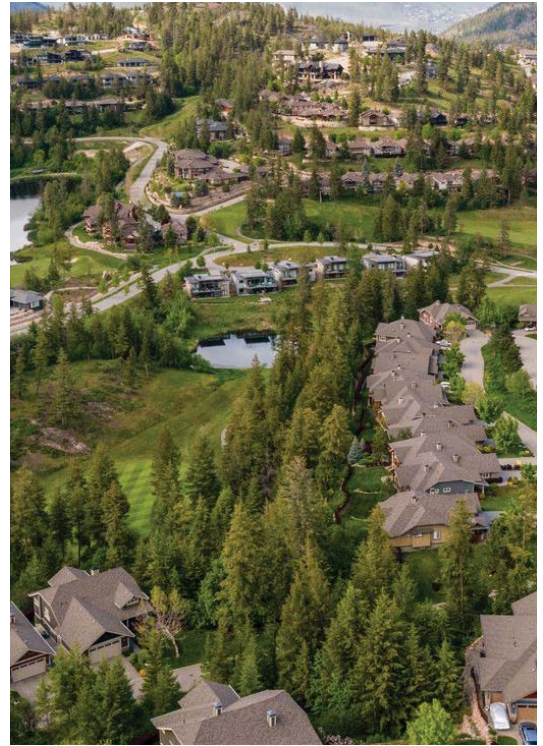
3.1 Vision

In 2045, Vernon is a vibrant, welcoming community, where people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds are thriving. Rooted in care for one another, the environment, and the economy, lasting progress has been achieved by listening, engaging, and working together. As Vernon welcomed 20,000 new residents, the city grew intentionally, guided by the voices of the community, while maintaining the landmarks and historical buildings that make Vernon special. Together Vernonites are committed to honouring and protecting the natural landscape while promoting sustainable growth and resilience in the face of a changing climate. A leader in climate action, Vernon has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 75% and is well on the way to a 100% reduction by 2050. This makes the city a desirable place to live, work, play, move around, and visit.



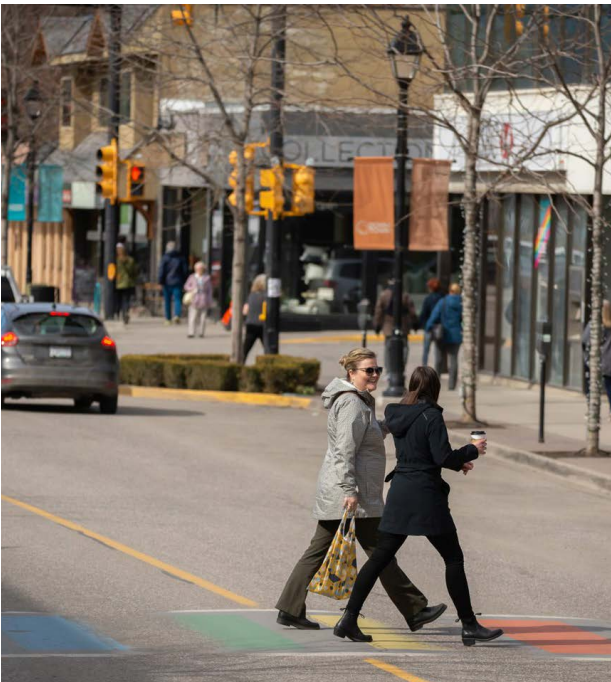
Vernon is a connected, complete, and resilient city, where incremental urban infill in the valley bottom complements surrounding rural and agricultural lands, natural areas, and mountain landscapes. Higher-density housing, mid-rise buildings, and mixed-use developments along key corridors, village centres, and urban centres provide diverse living options for the growing population. A vibrant urban core serves as the city’s hub, supported by a mix of housing, services, green spaces, and transportation choices. Key corridors like 48th, 43rd, and 39th Avenues, 27th Street, Alexis Park Drive, and Highway 97 have shaped growth and strengthened connectivity.

Vernon offers people choices in how and where they want to live, and how they want to experience the community. Housing is abundant, affordable, attainable, and supportive of those who need assistance. A variety of housing types and tenures are available in neighbourhoods across the city, and Vernon has met the housing targets identified in the Housing Needs Report to provide for all residents. Greater densities, including apartments and rentals, are concentrated in areas that have the infrastructure, facilities, and services to support it.



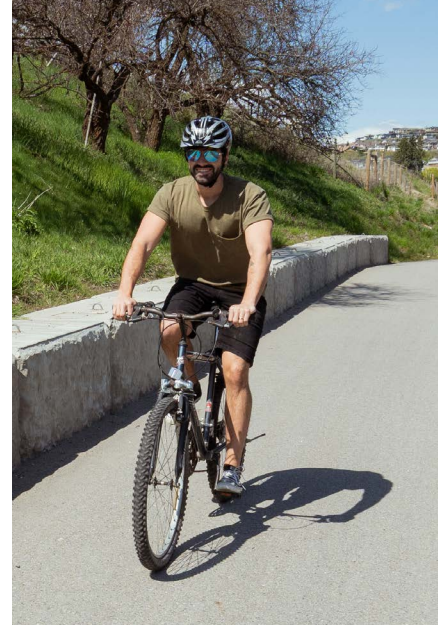
Vernon's neighbourhoods and centres are vibrant, lively, and safe, with small-scale local shops and cafes, expanded home based businesses, increased residential density, and pedestrian-friendly, tree-lined streets. Cohesive character is built in through careful planning and guidance, including renewed and improved infrastructure. Buildings feature designs that balance quality architecture with accessibility, efficient and low carbon energy, and affordability. Placemaking and wayfinding are established by distinctive buildings and colourful art that help residents of all ages navigate the community. A vibrant arts and culture scene honours Indigenous and historical roots.

Vernonites make play a part of daily life. Greater Vernon is the Trails Capital of BC and the City of Vernon is the 365-day adventure capital of the Okanagan, and Vernon's parks system plays a large role in helping residents stay active and enjoy the healthy lifestyle they value. Flagship parks, including Polson Park, Marshall Fields, the DND Sports Fields, Kin Race Track Park, and Civic Memorial Park, remain central to community life, supported by new green spaces to serve expanding neighbourhoods. Riparian areas along creeks and Okanagan Lake are being restored, the public has access to the waterfront through a strategic parkland acquisition strategy, and a trail network connects people along waterways, hillsides, and throughout the city.



Vernon's economy supports local businesses and jobs are close to home. The number of working-age Vernonites who commute long distances to other communities or provinces has been reduced through the realization of effective economic development strategies and policies that create more jobs locally. Childcare opportunities are ample, and every resident has access to a family doctor, assisting with employee recruitment and retention.

Vernonites have choices in how they move around the city, with connected multimodal options for pedestrians, cyclists, rollers, transit users, and drivers that will help Vernon reach the goal of no net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Multi-family apartment buildings are present along transit corridors and near transit stops to increase ridership and support a frequent transit network that connects key landmarks such as the Active Living Centre to neighbourhoods throughout the city.



Vernon prioritizes well-being and the strength of community. The goals and actions of plans and strategies that support youth, families, seniors, and equity seeking groups have been achieved, and the City has made strides in individual and collective commitments to reconciliation with Okanagan Indian Band and the syilx Okanagan peoples. In 2045, Vernon is an inclusive, accessible, and equitable city where people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds are welcomed.

With its wide geography and distinct neighbourhoods, Vernon's future depends on continually strengthening physical, social, and cultural connections. Strategic investments in mobility and infrastructure support movement by car, bike, transit, and foot, creating a more inclusive, sustainable, and livable city for generations to come.

3.2 Values

This Official Community Plan (OCP) is built on seven community-defined values. The values inform the City-Wide and Land Use Policies ([Chapters 4](#) and [5](#)) in this Plan and will shape Vernon's future growth and development as this OCP is implemented over the next 20 years.



Housing is diverse, affordable, sustainable, and guided by inclusive policies that address the needs of residents at every stage of life.



Natural areas are protected through policies that restore and enhance sensitive ecosystems, improve community climate resilience, and grow the tree canopy.



The local economy thrives through policies that support and diversify business, tourism, and the agricultural industry, and encourage new investments and locally owned enterprises.



Active living, arts, and culture are celebrated in a vibrant community that invites residents and visitors to gather, engage, and enjoy shared experiences.



Community and individual well-being are enhanced through inclusive policies that address social inequities in the community, build relationships with local Indigenous Nations, and advance Truth and Reconciliation.



The community is prepared for emergencies and is resilient to climate change with plans and services in place to keep the community safe and ready for emergency events.



Balanced growth is promoted by focusing development where infrastructure already exists, near urban services, vibrant community spaces, and multimodal transportation networks.

3.3 Growth Strategy

Coordinated, planned growth and development will ensure the very qualities that make Vernon an attractive place to live, work, and play are supported over the long term. The City of Vernon's growth strategy is to promote balanced, sustainable growth ([Figure 3.1](#)) by:

- 1. Increasing housing in designated areas** where infrastructure exists or is planned (Urban and Village Centres, and Urban, Suburban, and Resort Neighbourhoods);
- 2. Discouraging growth in Limited Growth Areas and Preservation Areas;** and
- 3. Protecting natural features** (steep slopes, rock outcrops, wetlands, creeks, lakes, and sensitive ecosystems) that contribute to the beauty, health, and resilience of Vernon.

Encouraging development in the right locations will also help Vernon reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement the [Climate Action Plan](#).



East Hill

AREAS OF GROWTH

Primary



Secondary



Community Feature

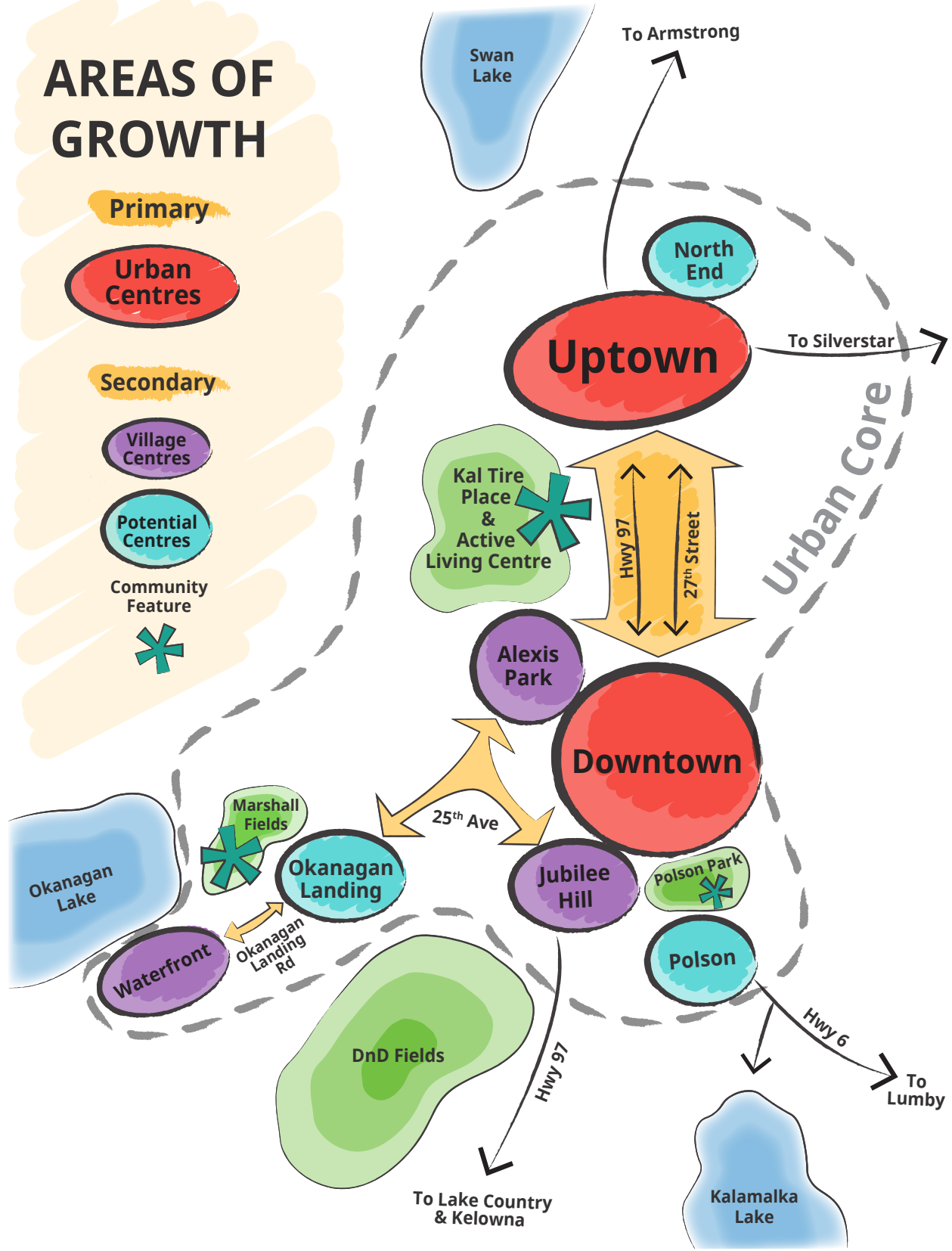


Figure 3.1 Growth strategy concept.

Meeting the need for more housing

A lack of housing supply is putting pressure on housing affordability in Vernon, the Okanagan, and communities across BC and Canada. To ensure housing is accessible to all Vernonites, an increase in the supply of all types of housing is crucial, including [market](#), rental, [special needs](#), and [affordable housing](#).

The federal government has acknowledged the need for more housing in *Canada's Housing Plan*. The Province also publishes five-year housing targets for BC municipalities to achieve, and requires them to demonstrate regular monitoring and annual progress. Vernon's housing target establishes the number of units that are needed in the city each year, and was used to inform the density allocations and future land use designations in this OCP.

Vernon's [Housing Needs Report](#) identifies the need for 11,484 new housing units over the next 20 years to accommodate current residents, growing families, and new residents. It also recommends a greater diversity of built forms (apartments, mixed-use, and higher density multi-family options), including 1- and 2-bedroom homes. The growth strategy and future land use designations in this OCP are capable of accommodating more than this anticipated housing need based on an initial [Housing Development Capacity Analysis](#) presented to Council on October 28, 2024.

This analysis showed that over 65,000 housing units could be achieved on lands designated for small-scale or medium-scale housing, without taking into account the potential number of

housing units that could be achieved on lands designated for mixed-use or tourism.

This Plan provides policies ([Chapters 4 and 5](#)), regulatory guidelines ([Chapter 6](#)) and actions ([Chapter 7](#)) that focus on building more housing in the right places, making it easier to own or rent a home, and helping those who cannot afford a home, aligned with federal and provincial policies and targets. This Plan also recognizes that new housing must be managed and directed in a way that puts sustainability at the forefront and ensures everyone can continue to live, work, play, and move around the city.

Managing growth to 2045

Vernon's growth and development is shaped by a [Rural Protection Boundary \(Map 1.1\)](#), [Urban Containment Boundary \(Map 1.2\)](#), and [Focused Growth Area \(Map 1.3\)](#). The future land use designations ([Map 5.1](#)) and associated policies ([Chapter 5](#)) provide the framework and guidance to foster balanced and sustainable growth and development that is aligned with Vernon's values ([Chapter 3.1](#)).

3.3.1 Urban Containment Boundary

The **Urban Containment Boundary** (UCB) (Figure 3.2 and Map 1.2) is the City's principal tool for limiting sprawl, growing sustainably, and supporting a robust economy. It links efficient land use planning with sustainable transportation planning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and foster resilience to climate change. Reducing the distances between where people live, work, and play, can also help create jobs and retain skilled employees.

Lands within the UCB are earmarked for growth at a variety of densities, from low to high, depending on existing and planned infrastructure. Areas outside the UCB are constrained by challenging topographies, sensitive environmental areas, lack of servicing, the **Rural Protection Boundary** (Map 1.1), and the Agricultural Land Reserve (Chapter 5.5). The City will continue to work with the Regional District of North Okanagan on alignment between the UCB and the **Rural Protection Boundary** through the implementation of Vernon's Growth Strategy and the Regional Growth Strategy.

Within the UCB, high-density growth will be encouraged in the **Focused Growth Area** (FGA) (Figure 3.2 and Map 1.3), where the City will direct the majority of public investment into transportation and infrastructure, parks, and amenities. The FGA identifies lands that have access to transit, community sewer and water services, are within a 10-minute fire response time, and are ideal for medium- to high-density growth, employment, and investment.

Within the FGA, density is directed to primary and secondary areas (Urban and Village Centres) and along **transit corridors** and **major streets**. These locations are foundational to balanced and smart growth that promotes sustainable, efficient, and livable communities across the city while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

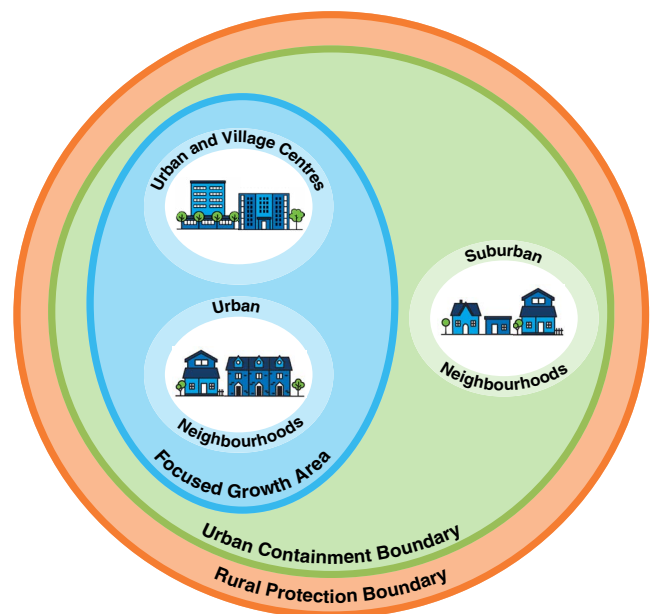


Figure 3.2 Urban Containment Boundary concept, with Focused Growth Area.

3.3.2 Urban Centres

Urban Centres ([Map 5.1](#)) are places where people actively live, work, play, move, shop, access services, and gather. Typically compact and walkable, they feature higher housing densities and mixed-use buildings, with higher volume intersections, transit exchanges, and community amenities.

Downtown and **Uptown Urban Centres** are the focus of high-density mixed-use development. To achieve the residential and employment density required to support a thriving and sustainable city, these Centres are Vernon's target areas for the most growth and reinvestment.

Mixed-use development will play a pivotal role in shaping Vernon's future as a compact, balanced, and sustainable community. By embracing this type of development, the places where Vernonites live, work, and play are located closer together, creating a more walkable community. Vibrant centres support housing opportunities, employment, and business prosperity; shortened vehicle trips and expanded multimodal transportation options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and are aligned with principles of [Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design](#).

High-density housing typically looks like apartments and high-rises, with commercial units at street level. Parking is accommodated in enclosed and structured parking, wrapped with active uses (e.g. retail stores, offices, townhouses), and back-of-house items are hidden from public view. Pedestrian movement and high-quality public amenities are prioritized, and a higher level of streetscape design is encouraged in prominent locations.

Mixed-use development is best where multiple land uses are integrated into one building or onto one site (e.g. a residential building with a ground floor and street-facing restaurant; or two separate buildings).

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design is a multi-disciplinary approach that uses urban design and architecture to reduce crime and fear of crime (e.g. "eyes on the street", lively public spaces, well-maintained landscaping and lighting, building orientations that allow for clear sightlines).

The Downtown and Uptown Centres are designated as **Transit-Oriented Areas** (TOAs). The goal of TOAs is to create walkable and bikeable centres where the majority of daily trips do not require a car. They are planned to provide excellent transit options and expanded multi-use pathways, giving residents choices in how they like to move around.

By increasing residential density near desired transportation and **transit corridors** (e.g. 25 Avenue, Alexis Park Drive, 29 Street, 30 Street), the City can work toward sustainable development by reducing dependence on single rider automobiles. Growth along transportation corridors will look like medium-density apartment buildings, mixed-use buildings, and standalone commercial buildings, with daily services integrated throughout.

Potential Transit-Oriented Areas

are places where two or more transit routes intersect, and may evolve such that the frequency of transit service is 15 minutes or less. Currently, there are several potential TOAs that could become centres and support compact commercial hubs and medium-density housing in the mid-term future (e.g. North End, Polson, Okanagan Landing in [Figure 3.1](#)).

Transit corridors are generally connections between the primary and secondary areas that exist along higher capacity transportation corridors, such as arterial and collector streets, and feature transit routes. Transit corridors can support residential, mixed-use, commercial, and community-use developments. This type of growth along transit corridors encourages transit use, which can help to expand and improve transit service by increasing the number of riders and users of the transit system. Continuing investment in expanding transit service through partnership with BC Transit will ensure compact urban growth and reduce sprawl.

3.3.2.1 Downtown

Downtown Urban Centre is the heart of Vernon's civic life, commerce, and culture. With its historic street grid, active storefronts, and a mix of uses, it provides a strong foundation for intensification of residential density and commercial activity. Increasing the residential population Downtown will support local businesses, help to create more jobs, activate streets beyond daytime business hours, and create a more inclusive city centre. Investing in Downtown will help revitalize underutilized spaces, enhance the public realm, and build community togetherness. Downtown will continue to be a place to celebrate Vernon's arts and culture by preserving the historic feel while promoting revitalization.

3.3.2.2 Uptown

Uptown Urban Centre includes the Village Green Mall and surrounding areas, including properties fronting Anderson Way. Uptown holds a prime opportunity for redevelopment into a business district with high density residential, and a more complete, mixed-use primary growth centre. Currently dominated by auto-oriented retail and large surface parking lots, this area is reimagined to be a modern centre that features apartments, mixed-use buildings, a business district, public spaces, and the integration of transit. Large land parcels make it highly suitable for phased development that brings together new residents, services, and infrastructure.



30 Avenue

3.3.3 Village Centres

Village Centres ([Map 5.1](#)) are secondary areas for medium-density, mixed-use development, each with identifiable character. They offer a diverse mix of housing options and commercial opportunities, local services, and public spaces within a community-oriented setting. They will grow to be walkable and bikeable, where most trips can be accomplished on foot and biking is convenient and safe. Expanding transit to and in these areas will help fill the gaps where walking or biking is not always sufficient, making car ownership a choice, rather than a requirement.

These secondary growth areas can offer people the opportunity to live and work close to daily needs, play in green spaces, and move about the city using a variety of modes that prioritize pedestrians, rollers, and transit users.

Medium-density, mixed-use centres

can support moderate, sustainable growth that reinforces housing diversity, mobility options, and neighbourhood vibrancy with:

- Large apartment buildings where land assemblies are achievable, and single stair egress buildings on smaller lots and constrained sites.
- Apartments are supplemented with townhouses and small-scale infill to provide sensitive transitions to the existing fabric of nearby neighbourhoods.
- Commercial units are incorporated into apartments at street level or as standalone developments.



Alexis Park

3.3.3.1 Village Centres

Alexis Park Village Centre is a connected neighbourhood that benefits from defined arterial and collector streets such as Alexis Park Drive, existing multi-family housing, the new Vernon Active Living Centre, and access to schools and parks. Being near transit routes and amenities makes Alexis Park well suited for modest infill and incremental density such as townhouses, apartments, and small-scale mixed-use.



Jubilee Hill Village Centre is strategically positioned on the south side of Downtown and along both sides of Highway 97. It will grow to support the Vernon Jubilee Hospital with medium-density housing, [workforce housing](#), mixed-use buildings, short-term accommodation, and institutional and cultural opportunities. A mixed-use and multimodal corridor along 33 Street will help support a balance of housing, mobility options, and public spaces to reinforce it as a compact community hub.



Waterfront Village Centre is located on the shores of Okanagan Lake, one of Vernon's defining features. The Waterfront Village Centre Plan has been incorporated into this OCP to create a distinct, destination-oriented area that blends urban life with access to nature. With careful planning to protect environmental values, cultural values, and archaeological sites, this area will grow to support medium-density residential development that respects the operational height limits of Vernon Regional Airport ([Map 3.2](#)). Incorporating small-scale retail, cafes, public spaces, and tourist-oriented uses will activate the waterfront and improve public access. Taller buildings will be strategically located along [transit corridors](#), such as Okanagan Landing Road.

3.3.4 Neighbourhoods

Urban; Suburban; and Resort Area Neighbourhoods (Map 5.1) will absorb residential growth and development through **gentle density** and strategically located apartments (Figure 3.3). These small-scale and typically ground-oriented units will help boost housing supply, offering flexibility, accessibility, and adaptability, without significantly altering the character of the neighbourhood.

Gentle density refers to adding attainable “missing middle” housing, such as secondary units, infill housing (duplexes, fourplexes, heritage infill, townhouses), and small apartment buildings onto properties.



Figure 3.3 Examples of gentle density (“missing middle”) housing.

3.3.4.1 Urban Neighbourhoods

Urban Neighbourhoods are often the original neighbourhoods of the region and have been incorporated into the City of Vernon over time (Map 3.1). They have established **streetscapes**, historical context, and a sense of identity. They provide transitions between Urban Centres, Village Centres, and Suburban Neighbourhoods in terms of location and scale. Often, Urban Neighbourhoods have original housing that may be decades old alongside newer infill developments. These neighbourhoods are well connected to Centres by transit or multi-use pathways and will accommodate higher levels of residential density and commercial activity than Suburban Neighbourhoods (Figure 3.4).

Some apartments may be suitable on **major streets, transit corridors**, or near parks and transit stops in these neighbourhoods, while most of the density will be in the form of infill housing, such as duplexes or fourplexes, and townhouses. Small-scale and local commercial opportunities and community services will be encouraged to help meet the day-to-day needs of the residents.

3.3.4.2 Suburban Neighbourhoods

Suburban Neighbourhoods are farther away from the Downtown and Uptown Centres and are largely car dependent. Growth will include **gentle density** (missing middle) housing, home-based businesses, and small-scale commercial development to support the daily needs of residents, such as cafes, convenience stores, or food stores. Suburban Neighbourhoods will be connected to Centres through multi-use pathways, collector and arterial streets, and transit that is improved over time in response to demand.

3.3.4.3 Resort Area Neighbourhoods

Resort Area Neighbourhoods draw tourists and year-round residents for the same reason – easy access to outdoor adventure and natural areas that make Vernon a desirable place to live, work, play, and visit. These areas will include a mix of housing types and tenures including short-term rentals. Commercial and **community uses** will be available to support the needs of the tourism sector and for year-round residents who value a unique lifestyle option.



Figure 3.4 Examples of an Urban Neighbourhood (top) and a Suburban Neighbourhood (bottom).

3.3.5 Limited Growth Areas

Suburban Limited Neighbourhoods; **Hillside Neighbourhoods;** and **Rural Areas** ([Map 5.1](#)) have low-density land uses, such as single detached homes, and may be suitable for accessory dwelling units or infill housing. Growth is typically discouraged due to limited servicing, steep slopes, and environmental constraints.

3.3.5.1 Suburban Limited Neighbourhoods

Suburban Limited Neighbourhoods are mostly located outside of the **Urban Containment Boundary** and have been identified for limited growth due to constraints in expanding community water and/or sewer servicing. These neighbourhoods have the potential for increased growth in the future as community water and sewer capacity is expanded and transit frequency is improved.

3.3.5.2 Hillside Neighbourhoods

Hillside Neighbourhoods designated as Suburban, Suburban Limited, Resort Tourism, or Rural are not suitable for intensive residential growth due to challenging topographies with 30% slopes, sometimes lacking community water and sewer services, and the presence of substantial **environmentally sensitive areas**. Previous neighbourhood plans that have been used to guide development decisions in the past have been integrated into the Future Land Use Designation Map ([Map 5.1](#)) to honour the land uses, parks and open space areas, densities, servicing, and road alignments of these plans. New **Hillside Neighbourhoods** will be discouraged and only considered where

there is demonstrated public benefit. This could include dedications of substantial park or open space, conservation of **environmentally sensitive areas**, off-site infrastructure improvements, affordable or rental housing, inclusion of commercial and daily services, or other benefits that align with OCP objectives ([Public Benefit Policy 4.1.5.1](#)).

Environmentally sensitive areas

are lands with specific and identified environmental values that require a higher level of protection. They serve key ecological functions in the community, promoting habitat connectivity ([Map 3.3](#), [Map 6.1](#)) and biodiversity conservation.

3.3.5.3 Rural Areas

Rural Areas often have challenging topographies, sensitive ecosystems, or are adjacent to the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Rural lands can help provide a necessary buffer between agriculture and urban residential uses to reduce conflicts due to farming activity that can produce noise, dust, and other nuisances. Residential homes in rural lands can benefit from proper setbacks and buffering to ALR properties. Limited growth in the forms of secondary suites or accessory dwelling units may be possible in these areas based on

servicing requirements and lot size, provided that **environmentally sensitive areas** remain protected.

Generally, new development proposals in Rural Areas will be discouraged, recognizing that there is minimal infrastructure in place, public investment in streets and transit is limited, and protecting the environmental and ecological value of these lands is a community value ([Figure 3.5](#)).

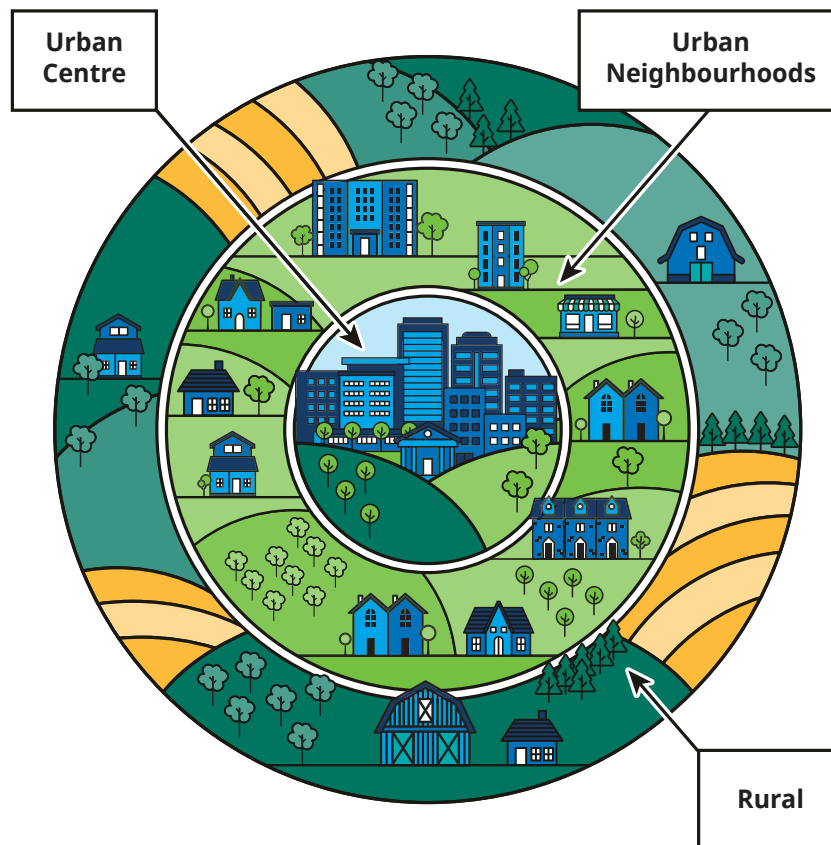


Figure 3.5 Urban-rural relationship, illustrated.

3.3.6 Preservation Areas

Agricultural Land Reserve; Parks, Open Spaces, Natural Areas; and Community Uses ([Map 5.1](#)) have the lowest density land uses and are areas where growth and development is discouraged or prevented by regulation.

3.3.6.1 Agricultural Land Reserve

The **Agricultural Land Reserve** will be protected and preserved to support agriculture, the economy, and local farmers by discouraging residential, commercial, or industrial encroachment into agricultural lands and limiting non-farm uses on agricultural lands. Residential growth and other uses on agricultural lands is limited by the provincial Agricultural Land Commission. Agricultural areas will be serviced primarily with rural streets that respect agricultural activities, with limited transit, biking infrastructure, and sewer expansion.



Bella Vista

3.3.6.2 Parks, Open Spaces, Natural Areas, and Community Uses

Parks, Open Spaces, and Natural Areas will be protected, and where feasible will be expanded to promote regional habitat connectivity ([Map 3.3](#)) and increase public access to natural areas, including north-south and east-west connections and trails ([Map 4.4](#)).

Community Uses are lands that are intended to provide institutional services such as childcare facilities, libraries, and civic buildings.



Pottery Ravine Park

