

8.0 Commercial

Goals

Clearly define the roles of the commercial areas in the city (City Centre, neighbourhood centres, community commercial areas, tourist commercial areas, mixed use areas) and define the range of permitted uses for each area.

Provide for a variety of business types and sizes to support the economic health of the City.

Encourage the design and mix of uses to facilitate the creation of complete communities and support transportation demand management strategies.

Guiding Principles Met

Foster prosperity for people, business and government

Protect and preserve green spaces and sensitive areas

Create a culture of sustainability

Protect agricultural land

Create strong, compact and complete neighbourhoods

Provide alternative transportation

Revitalize the Downtown

Create a youth friendly city

Context

Vernon has traditionally been the commercial centre of the North Okanagan region, and with changes in office, retail and service trends over the last century, the city has adapted to ensure that residents are able to have access to the commercial uses that they need. There is greater potential, however, to further enhance Vernon's commercial areas while at the same time using changes in the commercial landscape to promote sustainable development. Key to this strategy is the recognition that the commercial needs of both the city and the region are complex, and therefore require a variety of commercial areas to address these varying needs. By understanding the unique roles that each commercial area plays, the City can facilitate the appropriate use, form and scale of commercial development in those areas to make them more competitive, sustainable and vibrant places. These areas are the City Centre, neighbourhood centres, community commercial areas, tourist commercial areas and designated mixed use areas. Home based businesses also have a role to play in Vernon's commercial landscape.

City Centre

Vernon's City Centre is the historic, cultural and economic heart of the city. The City Centre is home to a wide variety of shops, offices, restaurants and cultural facilities, and has seen a high degree of public investment in streetscape improvements and heritage revitalization. The area is intended to be a compact centre with a mix of housing, employment and shopping opportunities in close proximity to one another. Highly specialized and niche businesses make the City Centre a special place. Public spaces, heritage buildings and the design of future developments would further contribute to an overall sense of excitement, activity and vibrancy in the City Centre.

Efforts need to continue to ensure that the City Centre serves as the focal point of the community. The City Centre is intended to accommodate a significant proportion of future office and retail uses so as to ensure that it remains a major employment destination in Vernon. New office buildings and the completion of the library have helped meet this goal. The City Centre will feature a pedestrian scale with walking being the priority for transportation planning in the area. The addition of more public spaces is vital to bringing people downtown and encouraging them to stay. Future high density residential development will contribute to more activity on the streets and the potential for longer operating hours for businesses. The objective is to have a City Centre that is healthy, pleasant, accessible, diverse, affordable, attractive and pedestrian-friendly. The City Centre Neighbourhood Plan provides detailed policy direction for this neighbourhood.

The City Centre includes lands designated as Mixed Use - High Density Commercial and Residential and Mixed Use - Medium Density Commercial and Residential. Both of these designations allow and encourage a mix of commercial and residential uses, with commercial uses at street level. Future development may be entirely commercial but not entirely residential. More detailed policies are found in the City Centre Neighbourhood Plan.

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Neighbourhood Centres and Mixed Use - Medium Density Commercial and Residential

The neighbourhood centres are envisioned as mixed use medium density centres with commercial uses that are more suitable to daily or weekly trips. These commercial uses will be integrated with medium density residential development such as rowhouses, townhouses and small apartments, where appropriate. Neighbourhood centres will act as hubs for alternative transportation, and will therefore be easily accessed



by public transit, have a high quality cycling facilities and be pedestrian-oriented in design. By providing commercial uses closer to more residents and offering options for travel choice, fewer people will need to drive to get basic services and can instead walk, cycle or take transit. Neighbourhood Centres will be highly integrated with their surrounding communities to promote easy access.

This Official Community Plan includes four neighbourhood centres: Polson, Okanagan Landing, Waterfront and Foothills. For each of these neighbourhood centres to function, they need to be attractive destinations for local residents and have an appropriate retail and office mix. Neighbourhood planning processes have been undertaken for the Waterfront and Foothills neighbourhood centres. A neighbourhood plan will be developed for the Okanagan Landing Neighbourhood Centre.

Lands outside of neighbourhood centres designated as Mixed Use - Medium Density Commercial and Residential are intended to provide a mix of commercial and residential uses, with commercial uses at street level. Future development may be entirely commercial but not entirely residential. Development in lands with this designation must conform to the design guidelines outlined in Section 28.

Community Commercial

In addition to meeting local commercial needs through the City Centre and neighbourhood centres, Vernon also meets the needs of the North Okanagan through its community commercial areas, most of which are located in the north part of the city and along major traffic corridors. These areas are characterized by big box development, shopping centres and other forms of



large format retail. As opposed to neighbourhood centres, the types of retail in these areas are better suited for less frequent trips and are often more automobile oriented. The City will continue to accommodate these large scale uses in these areas while encouraging site and building designs that are more consistent with the Guiding Principles. The City will work to improve transit service to these areas while also investing in greater pedestrian and cycling access to reduce reliance on the single occupant vehicle. Medium density residential will also be encouraged in surrounding areas so as to bring people closer to these services.

Tourist Commercial

Vernon's natural beauty and historic charm contribute greatly to the tourism industry in the city. Vernon is fortunate to have three lakes, many beaches, skiing facilities, agritourism, provincial parks and extensive hillside trails, such as the Grey Canal, all near or within City limits. These attributes provide great potential to further develop the tourism industry in Vernon, but many are underutilized at this time.

This designation supports tourist-oriented uses such as hotels, restaurants and shops, as well as full and part time residential living. Many tourist commercial areas are located in Neighbourhood Plan Areas, so more detailed policies can be found in each of those neighbourhood plans.

There are opportunities to improve the aesthetics of Vernon's two main gateways at each end of Highway 97, provide more and higher quality tourist accommodation, create attractive tourist commercial areas and further leverage the beauty of natural areas, such as the Okanagan Lake waterfront, for example. Development of these types of uses can build on the tourist facilities already in place in Vernon.

Home Based Businesses

Home-based businesses play a significant role in Vernon's commercial landscape. The challenges that such businesses present, however, are the possible increases in traffic, parking issues, noise associated with the business and a change in the residential character in the neighbourhood when signage is installed. The City will continue to ensure that home based businesses function in a way that minimizes these impacts while allowing appropriate business in these areas.

Supporting Policies

- 8.1 Implement the City Centre Neighbourhood Plan.
- 8.2 Development in the City Centre District shall be consistent with the policies outlined in the City Centre Neighbourhood Plan.
- 8.3 Support and implement the Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre Plan.
- 8.4 Development in the Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre shall be consistent with the policies outlined in the Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre Plan.
- 8.5 All areas designated as Community Commercial, Neighbourhood Centre, Tourist Commercial, Mixed Use - High Density Commercial and Residential and Mixed Use - Medium Density Commercial and Residential are designated as Development Permit areas, subject to Sections 26, 27, 28 and 29 of this plan and are required to conform to the design guidelines outlined in those sections, or where applicable, to the design guidelines outlined in the appropriate neighbourhood plan.
- 8.6 The City of Vernon will work closely with the Economic Development Advisory Committee, Downtown Vernon Association, the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce and other key stakeholders in developing detailed plans for commercial areas.
- 8.7 The City will facilitate movement in the City Centre in the following order of priority: walking, cycling, public transit, automobiles.

- 8.8 The City will implement street systems and pedestrian ways that provide convenient access to transit, parking and support safe and comfortable patterns of pedestrian movement. Pedestrian oriented buildings which include window display space and have interesting facades are especially important within the key pedestrian activity areas.
- 8.9 Access to convenient and safe parking in the City Centre is considered a priority. The management of both short term and long term parking, including parkades, is important to the economic health of the City Centre, and must be managed in a way that promotes alternative forms of transportation, but still provides the parking that customers and employees need for businesses to remain economically viable. In particular, the City shall examine the possibility of requiring new and expanding businesses in the City Centre not currently required to provide on-site parking to contribute to adequate parking by way of a cash in lieu contribution. This would then be used to acquire and develop additional parking in the area.
- 8.10 The City supports the provision of neighbourhood centres which may provide general retail facilities, offices, community and institutional uses, as well as multiple family housing within or separate from the commercial buildings.
- 8.11 To ensure the long term success of the neighbourhood centres, the City will engage in a neighbourhood planning process for each of the neighbourhood centres (Polson, Okanagan Landing, Waterfront and Foothills) that:
- a. Sparks economic development by attracting new investment and job creation.
 - b. Respects and restores any natural habitat and provides clean and healthy water.
 - c. Incorporates the principle of universal accessibility.
 - d. Demands a superior quality of development.
 - e. Offers a wide variety of activities and facilities that complement each other and work together.
- 8.12 To foster a better overall appearance of community commercial areas, new development will be required to provide well designed, irrigated and maintained landscape strips of not less than 3 metres along all major roads and 1.8 metres along local roads.
- 8.13 To facilitate the development of attractive, vibrant, pedestrian friendly tourist commercial areas that remain active throughout the day and into the evening, the City of Vernon will permit tourist commercial land uses including motels, hotels, resorts, restaurants, cafes, commercial recreation, entertainment venues, park and natural areas and small retail, such as gift shops and boutiques, within selected strategic areas throughout the city, such as areas in the Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre, the City Centre, 48 Avenue and Highway 97.