



City of Coquitlam

## ***Citywide Official Community Plan - Part 1***

# **Introduction and Regional Context Statement**

*Managing Change and Diversity*

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**Coquitlam**  
Planning &  
Development

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## COQUITLAM CITYWIDE OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

### SECTION 1 – MANAGING CHANGE AND DIVERSITY

#### 1.1 Citywide OCP Summary and Format

The Coquitlam Citywide Official Community Plan (CWOCP) is a comprehensive plan intended to guide future land use and servicing decisions in ways that sustain its citizens' values. The CWOCP provides a broader framework for considering and managing future change, including policies to implement a framework and address related needs for amenities, services, and infrastructure. In doing so, the plan acknowledges area and neighbourhood plans as an important approach for future land use change and community consultation.

Part 1 introduces the CWOCP and contains the Regional Context Statement (RCS).

Part 2 of the CWOCP is organized into chapters that reflect the six overarching community goals that form Coquitlam's framework for managing change. Each chapter includes sections that address different aspects of these goals, and these sections include:

- › Broad objective guiding the City's response to each issue; and
- › Specific policies to help achieve the targeted objective.

These goal-related chapters are followed by a chapter on plan implementation and monitoring.

Part 3 contains chapters for Coquitlam's area and neighbourhood plans, which provide more detailed policy and land use direction for specific areas and neighbourhoods.

Part 4 focuses on urban design and contains development permit guidelines, and Part 5 includes additional attachments.

#### 1.2 The Planning Framework for Managing Change

##### 1.2.1 Protecting Community Assets

Coquitlam has undergone prolonged rapid growth within a region where future growth pressures will likely continue. The community has indicated its desire to balance sustainability, housing choice and quality of life. Future challenges will be managed in ways that preserve and enhance those assets that are valued most.



Community assets include: a friendly, safe, family-oriented community; a range of attractive and affordable housing choices; a green and healthy natural environment; and a high quality array of community facilities and services. To manage and enhance these assets, the City's response will involve:

- › Building on the framework already set by earlier Coquitlam plans;
- › Identifying and addressing recent trends; and
- › Arriving at a comprehensive, “next generation” strategy for managing change, which includes measures to help support these core assets.

### **1.2.2 Building on Earlier Coquitlam Plans**

Planning in Coquitlam initially began with the development of plans area by area: the Southwest/Town Centre OCP; the Northwest OCP; and the Northeast OCP. A neighbourhood-scale plan was also developed for Maillardville. While these plans had a localized focus, all reflect the municipality's strategy for managing change and implementing regional growth management goals.

Since the CWOCP was originally adopted in 2001 the City has also adopted an updated City Centre Area Plan (CCAP) and Southwest Area Plan (SWCAP). Neighbourhood level plans have also been developed for Lougheed, Burquitlam and Austin Heights, and four new neighbourhoods in Northeast Coquitlam. These local area plans are an integral part of the CWOCP and help to further reinforce both the City's and the region's growth management goals

The City has also focused on broader improvements to planning processes and plan structure that are reflected in amendments to the CWOCP.

### **1.2.3 Issues to Address**

Challenges and opportunities that the CWOCP must consider include:

- a) Shifts in population composition, creating new service needs;
- b) Regional economic conditions, affecting land markets and employment patterns;
- c) Fiscal realities affecting all levels of government including a continued need for fiscal prudence and a strong tax base to pay for desired services;
- d) The relatively developed state of all serviced parts of the City, and the longer term potential to accommodate new development, including redevelopment of existing areas;
- e) Transportation investments which provide opportunities for increasing mode shift from single-occupant vehicles to walking, cycling and transit and improved overall traffic demand management;
- f) Greater focus on local and global environmental issues; and
- g) Recent and anticipated changes to senior government legislation with a significant impact on municipalities.



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In addition, as per legislative requirements, the CWOCP will work towards the broader regional planning goals contained in Metro Vancouver's *Regional Growth Strategy* (RGS). Section 1.4 of this chapter explains in more detail how this will be achieved.

## 1.2.4 The Comprehensive Response and Planning Framework

Coquitlam's Corporate Strategic Plan (CSP), which was developed through extensive community consultation and updated regularly, identifies core values and areas of concern for the community. The CSP also sets broad goals for the City; the CWOCP is an important tool to help the City achieve those goals in collaboration with other strategic plans for Coquitlam.

The CWOCP is based on a policy framework to manage change, focusing on land use and related services. The CWOCP also contains specific provisions to implement the CSP through the following overall goals:

- a) Responding to both internal and broader regional growth pressures by consolidating Coquitlam's status as a compact, complete community, and by improving links between individual communities within the city;
- b) Respecting Coquitlam's natural resources and further enabling an integrated approach to environmental management;
- c) Providing a range of housing choices in a manner that ensures neighbourhood quality and stability;
- d) Encouraging the development of a vibrant and healthy local economy, with jobs and businesses of good quality, choosing to locate in Coquitlam;
- e) Supporting the development of economically, socially and environmentally sustainable transportation choices; and
- f) Enabling community access to a range of facilities and services that meet changing needs, to ensure Coquitlam remains a place where people choose to live, work and play.

## 1.3 Interpretation and Hierarchy of Plans

As a broad guide to Coquitlam's future, the CWOCP, adopted by bylaw under the Provincial *Local Government Act*, has status as a legal document. It works in concert with other legal and less formalized documents, and also relies on actions and investments by the City, other agencies, businesses and individuals for implementation. The following section clarifies this legal dimension and describes its relationship to other city plans, policies and bylaws.



### **1.3.1 What an OCP does - the Legal Perspective**

Under the *Local Government Act*, all municipalities must develop one or more plans for the City's social, economic and physical future. Among other things, an OCP must address how the City will accommodate anticipated housing needs (including affordable housing, rental housing and special needs housing) over at least five years, and designate the approximate location for various economic and recreational land uses. In addition, the City must spell out the approximate location and phasing of any major road, sewer and water systems, as well as the approximate location and type of public facilities. An OCP may also, but is not required to, include social policies, environmental policies, and agricultural policies. Finally, the OCP of any Metro Vancouver member municipality must include a Regional Context Statement which indicates how each municipalities OCP relates to and works towards regional plan goals.

### **1.3.3 Hierarchy of Plans and Relationship to Other City Strategic Plans, Policies and Bylaws**

The CWOCP addresses wide-ranging community issues and help sets priorities for the City as a whole. Area and neighbourhood plans are intended to deal with issues that are generally specific to those locations, including future land uses. Coquitlam's area and neighbourhood plans have been included within the CWOCP; and from both a legal and functional perspective, are an integral part of the CWOCP.

Where a policy conflict is found to exist between the CWOCP and any of its embodied Area or Neighbourhood Plans, the Neighbourhood Plan policies shall take precedence. In areas where there are no Neighbourhood Plans in place, the Area Plan policies take precedence.

### **1.3.4 CWOCP as a Guiding Document**

The CWOCP assists in guiding Council in future decision-making, ranging from short- to long-term investments, programming, and land use changes.

The *Local Government Act* provides that no council is permitted to make a decision that contravenes its OCP. However, Council is not obligated to strictly implement OCP policies. An OCP may be amended from time to time, and amendments must go through a public consultation process, including a formal public hearing.

## **1.4 Regional Context Statement**

The City of Coquitlam is a member municipality of Metro Vancouver and Council has endorsed the *Regional Growth Strategy* (RGS), which was adopted by the Metro Board on July 29, 2011. Coquitlam's Regional Context Statement consists of Citywide Official Community Plan Section 1.4 (1.4.1 to 1.4.3) and Attachment 1 (Summary of Municipal Actions in support of the RGS, Population and Employment Projections, and associated maps).

## 1.4.1 Statutory Context

The City is required under the *Local Government Act* to include a Regional Context Statement (RCS) in its Official Community Plan. This legislation establishes that the function and requirement of the Regional Context Statement is to identify the relationship between the Official Community Plan and Metro Vancouver's RGS and, if applicable, identify how the City may explore making the OCP more consistent with the RGS over time.

The City may amend this Official Community Plan to adjust the boundaries of the City's regional land use designations, Urban Centres or Frequent Transit Development Areas (FTDAs) within the Urban Containment Boundary, in a manner consistent with the requirements in the RGS.

## 1.4.2 Regional Growth Strategy Goals

Coquitlam's CWOCP was adopted in 2002 and also contains a number of Area and Neighbourhood plans that provide greater planning direction for specific areas of the City. The CWOCP and its Area and Neighbourhood plans are generally consistent with the five goals of the RGS.

The following section describes the relationship between the CWOCP and the RGS. For a detailed list of all policies that demonstrate consistency with RGS goals please refer to Part 5 of the CWOCP, Attachment 1, Table 1.

### *Goal 1: Create a Compact Urban Area*

The CWOCP, including the various area and neighbourhood plans, contain growth management and land use policies that direct future development and redevelopment in a way that creates a compact urban area and supports this RGS goal. The CWOCP also restricts urban uses and development outside the urban growth boundary, and directs residential and commercial growth towards an evolving network of localized, complete communities that supports the RGS goal of creating a compact urban area.

This network of compact, complete communities supports the regional goal to focus growth in Urban Centres that provide for a mix of housing, retail and office space. Coquitlam currently has two regionally significant Urban Centres; Coquitlam Regional City Centre is the primary Urban Centre in the City and will be the focus of growth over the next several decades. Lougheed Municipal Town Centre is the City's secondary Urban Centre and is focusing growth and development around the existing Lougheed SkyTrain station. The designation of Burquitlam as a Frequent Transit Development Area (FTDA) further supports the creation of a compact, complete neighbourhood centre around the future SkyTrain station and provides an additional area for focusing growth. These compact, complete communities, linked together by rapid transit, can also assist in a transportation mode shift to transit, cycling and walking.

The CWOCP seeks to manage growth to achieve an efficient and compact urban area with 44% of residential development to 2041 directed to Urban Centres and FTDAs. Coquitlam further refines its urban structure of Urban Centres and FTDAs with a network of local centres with a significant portion of the growth outside of Urban Centres and FTDAs is directed to local centres. This approach preserves the character of established low density neighbourhoods outside of urban and local centres. This pattern of compact, complete communities forms Coquitlam's network of centres.



### ***Goal 2: Support a Sustainable Economy***

The Vital Economy sections of the CWOCP and various Area Plans place strong emphasis on supporting the RGS goal of sustainable economic activity. The CWOCP protects employment lands for economic activity, seeks to intensify and diversify activity in these lands, encourages office development within centres and creates a positive investment climate.

The CWOCP also recognizes and designates industrial land in Coquitlam, which is strategically located within the region and well connected to the regional transportation and goods movement corridors. The City's urban structure of compact, complete communities, enhanced by transit and improved pedestrian connectivity supports businesses within centres and supports the RGS goal of supporting a stable economy.

### ***Goal 3: Protect the Region's Environment and Respond to Climate Change Impacts***

The environmental management and climate action policies in the CWOCP preserves natural areas for conservation and recreation, protects and enhances ecosystems and habitats, and manages land use and transportation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This supports the RGS goal of protecting the region's environment and responding to climate change.

The CWOCP reinforces the RGS conservation and recreation areas through the establishment of an urban containment boundary. Future growth is directed to established urban centres through coordinated land use, transportation and infrastructure planning to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

The CWOCP and other strategic plans also support integrated watershed management planning, and infrastructure investment towards urban centres and seek to minimize climate change and natural hazards risk.

### ***Goal 4: Develop Complete Communities***

A key focus of the CWOCP is to establish a network of compact, complete communities, which is consistent with this RGS goal. All of Coquitlam's Area and Neighbourhood plans contain policies to support improvements to urban centres, as defined in the RGS, and foster the creation of new urban centres to fill gaps in the urban structure.

The CWOCP leverages growth to provide more diverse housing options and create additional community amenities and public spaces. These mixed-use urban centres enable residents to meet their day-to-day needs close to home. Jobs, services and amenities are concentrated in these centres, in conjunction with transit and a wider diversity of housing options. Compact, complete communities can improve housing affordability and health outcomes, through supporting active living and universal accessibility.



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## ***Goal 5: Support Sustainable Transportation Choices***

The CWOCP supports this RGS goal by fostering coordinated land use and transportation planning to provide improved transportation choice and enable a mode shift to sustainable options, and providing for safe and efficient goods and vehicle movement. The CWOCP's network of compact, complete communities, centered on the future Evergreen Line stations, provides for a connected urban form that supports walkable communities, and encourages cycling and transit use. Transportation demand management (TDM) policies enhance regional access and support people and goods movement.

The City's *Strategic Transportation Plan* (STP) promotes walking, cycling, transit, goods movement, and carpooling rather than relying solely on private vehicle use. Policies found in the STP, along with the CWOCP's urban structure of a network of compact, complete communities can provide people with travel options and help to meet mode shift targets and supports the RGS goal of encouraging sustainable transportation choices. The City will integrate the policy directions of the STP into the CWOCP through future planning processes.

The *Transit-Oriented Development Strategy* (TDS) provides a high-level vision to pro-actively guide 'Transit-Oriented Development' around future Evergreen Line stations. This form of development will be higher-density, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly, and located within walking distance of rapid transit. The TDS supports growth and fosters increased transit use in the Burquitlam FTDA. The TDS will support and guide upcoming local area planning processes and TDS policies will be incorporated into the CWOCP through future CWOCP updates. Additional FTDAs may be designated through future planning processes, in conjunction with TransLink.

### **1.4.3 Municipal Actions in support of the RGS**

For a detailed list of the CWOCP policies that demonstrate consistency with the municipal actions contained in the RGS, as well as new policies the City may consider developing to support consistency with the RGS, please refer to Part 5 of the CWOCP, Attachment 1.

## **1.5 Future CWOCP Updates**

The city is continually evaluating and updating the CWOCP through it's area and neighbourhood planning processes as well as more general housekeeping amendments.

The City may explore requesting an amendment to the Urban Containment Boundary for lands to the north of the current boundary, generally along Pipeline Road, west of the Coquitlam River, and are within the GVS&DD sewerage service area, that are currently used for sand and gravel extraction, following a land use study for that area, as these resources are exhausted.