



2021 Business Plan Planning Services (1005)

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Working in partnership with communities large and small to offer local, sub-regional, and regional services to ensure that the Cariboo Chilcotin is a socially, economically, and environmentally desirable region

Department/Function Services

The Planning Services Department has undergone some significant change through 2020. The previous department manager departed the CRD in early Spring. Management of Development Services was split into Building and Planning Departments. Nigel Whitehead was promoted from Senior Planner to Manager of Planning Services. The Senior Planner position is currently posted and will be filled during the remainder of 2020. The existing Planning Services team continues to mesh together, with the department expected to hit its stride in early 2021, with the Senior Planner position filled and the prospective appointee getting up to speed in the position.

Splitting the Building and Planning functions under dedicated managers allows for continued coordination between the two services, yet more direct management and oversight of day to day activities in each department.

The Planning Services Department is involved with two divisions of planning: current and long-range planning. In late 2018, long range planning activities were brought in-house with the addition of the Senior Planner position. By decreasing reliance on external consulting in undertaking long range planning projects, a higher level of project control will better reflect the unique needs of Cariboo residents during the production of long-range planning documents. Further, an in-house long-range planning focus will allow for better integration of long-range planning policy with day-to-day current planning activities.

Current planning involves responding to inquiries for current zoning information; current Official Community Plan designations; information respecting Agricultural Land Reserve status, policies and applications; information regarding subdivision and development of private lands; and Crown land referrals and database maintenance. Current planning also

involves applications to amend Official Community Plans and/or zoning/rural land use bylaws, applications for temporary land use permits, development permits or development variance permits and applications under the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*.

Long-range planning consists of the preparation, implementation, amendment and administration of land use policies to guide future growth and development over an expanse of land. Generally, long-range planning pertains to the Official Community Plans (OCP). Long range planning also involves special planning projects that might include neighbourhood plans, drafting design guidelines for neighbourhoods, and planning studies.

Statutory Authority for Planning Services was originally provided to the Regional District by way of a Supplementary Letters Patent No. 5 in 1969.

All Electoral Area Directors are responsible for the governance of this service.

Business Plan Goals, Rationale & Strategies

Year 2021 - Goals

- 1. Goal:** Complete the Bouchie-Milburn Neighbourhood Plan.

Rationale: This is a pilot project to develop a detailed long-range land use plan tailored to the neighbourhood level. Neighbourhood plans may be formed as a subset of an existing OCP or as a stand-alone document where an OCP is not in place. The plan will provide a framework for future development and quality of life improvements desired by the community.

Strategy: This project is ongoing and nearing completion. Community input was gathered throughout 2019 and into early 2020. A draft plan was completed in early 2020. Final community engagement steps were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, will be completed through late 2020 and into early 2021 (*2019 Goal - Ongoing*)
- 2. Goal:** Improve and streamline development processes.

Rationale: Staff occasionally receives complaints/concerns from the public regarding the development application process, mapping errors and language in regulations and definitions in zoning/rural land use bylaws. This goal falls under tactical plan item 2.4.1, under strategic objective 2.4, to “Improve development approval process to serve needs to development applicants.”

Strategy: This is an ongoing project, started in 2020. Six months of general phone inquiries to the Associate Planner were tracked, totaling nearly 300 inquiries. This data will be analyzed in an effort to highlight common themes where public facing information can be improved. Inconsistencies with zoning language are tracked

on an ongoing basis for the next housekeeping amendments. Substantial updates to the department's digitized application processing system (CityView) have been completed, with ongoing improvements expected to continue through the remainder of 2020 and into 2021. Planning and Building Services will work together on fulfilling Information Technology's (IT) business plan goal to upgrade CityView to permit online, digital building and planning application submissions. This will significantly improve application processing, particularly for regular applicants, such as landowner agents and building contractors.

This project will be carried out in a series of steps outlined below:

1. Improve language and insert process flowcharts in all development services guide brochures that will explain in detail the process involved for each application type.
2. Bring qualitative improvements by amending the zoning and rural land use bylaws for better clarity in language and consistency with provincial requirements (i.e. housekeeping bylaws).
3. Coordinate with IT staff to correct the inaccurate or incomplete data entered in CityView and GIS mapping system.
4. CityView implementation – Online portal / digital application submissions upgrade.

3. Goal: Floodplain Mapping – Screening Level Flood Hazard Mapping for specific rivers.

Rationale: This is the ongoing next step in comprehensive flood risk assessments and mapping within the CRD. Grant funding of \$150,000 for this project was approved by UBCM in September 2020. Results of this project will further inform long-range planning policy, land use regulation development, building inspection requirements, and emergency operations decision making. This project falls under Tactical Plan item 2.4.2, under Strategic Objective 2.4 (“Incorporate emergency management requirement in OCP updates/revisions”).

Strategy: A professional consultant will continue building on the work completed over the past few years on establishing floodplain mapping within the CRD. This project will focus on development of flood hazard mapping of river systems determined to be of highest priority for risk to public and private infrastructure, based on 2020's flood risk prioritization study. This project will be co-coordinated between the Planning Services and Protective Services departments.

4. Goal: Geotechnical/Landslide Hazard Regulatory Review.

Rationale: As the 2020 Spring Freshet event transitioned into a geohazard (landslide) event, it became evident to staff of the need for a coordinated approach to risk management, land use regulation, and emergency operations decision making with respect to landslide risk, particularly to private residential land. This project falls under Tactical Plan item 2.4.2, under Strategic Objective 2.4 (“Incorporate emergency management requirement in OCP updates/revisions”).

- Strategy:** This is a coordinated multi-department project involving Planning Services, Protective Services, and Corporate Administration departments. This will include seeking legal advice/review of existing regulations, best practices research, and harmonization of land use regulations in geotechnically hazardous areas across the CRD.
5. **Goal:** South Cariboo / District of 100 Mile Housing Needs Assessment.
Rationale: With the anticipated completion of the City of Williams Lake and Central Cariboo housing needs assessment at the end of 2020, CRD staff plan to collaborate with the District of 100 Mile House staff to work on the remaining project for Electoral Areas G, H, and L. Housing Needs Assessments are a legislated requirement under recent *Local Government Act* amendments, and the first round of reports must be complete by April 2022. This project will continue to be funded primarily through the Cariboo Strong funding stream.
Strategy: CRD and District staff will create an RFP and select a consultant to work on this housing project.
6. **Goal:** Shipping Containers Regulations
Rationale: Based on Board direction, staff will undertake development of regulating the placement of shipping containers within the CRD.
Strategy: Regulations will be drafted for Board review. They will be referred to Advisory Planning Commissions and the general public for feedback. Subsequent amendments to the zoning and rural land use bylaws will then be undertaken.
7. **Goal:** Temporary Use Permit Policy for RVs Implementation - OCP Harmonization.
Rationale: As discussed at the June 18, 2020 Committee of the Whole Meeting, although a Temporary Use Permit Policy for seasonal RV use was endorsed by the Board in 2015, permissive OCP language to allow Board consideration of such permits is not universal throughout the CRD. Accordingly, staff will work to harmonize TUP enabling language within the OCPs and RLUBs.
Strategy: Policy amendments will be drafted for Board review. They will be referred to Advisory Planning Commissions and the general public for feedback. Subsequent amendments to the OCPs and RLUBs will then be undertaken.
8. **Goal:** Development Variance Permit Analysis.
Rationale: The Board has requested an analysis of DVP applications, in order to determine if zoning and rural land use bylaw regulations are reasonable. Staff will also bring an analysis of broader considerations regarding issuance of DVPs (i.e. legalization) for existing non-conforming structures, as well as structures built without permits.
Strategy: Conduct research of past years' permits, analyze data, present to Board, consider refinements to zoning and rural land use bylaws.

Future Years' Business Planning Goals

Future business plan goals are provided below to assist the Board in anticipating future projects. Background research and preparation for undertaking these goals will be conducted as time and resources permit. This background research will inform the development of a strategy in prioritizing and completing the goals. Future goals may be further refined or replaced in the lead-up to the following year's business plan.

- 1. Future Goal:** Interlakes OCP Review.
Rationale: The Interlakes Area Official Community Plan (OCP) is now the oldest OCP within the region, completed in 2004. In preparation for a future review, background land use analysis was completed in 2016. Although this OCP is ready for review, it was the last one completed with in-house planning staff and has stood up well to the test of time.
- 2. Future Goal:** Zoning Bylaw Updates – Post-Bouchie-Milburn Neighbourhood Plan.
Rationale: Upon completion of the Bouchie-Milburn Neighbourhood Plan (BMNP) comprehensive zoning bylaw amendments are recommended to align current zoning with the plan's vision.
- 3. Future Goal:** Zoning and Rural Land Use Bylaw Harmonization/Consolidation
Rationale: With six zoning and rural land use bylaws across the region, sharing relatively common language, there is potential value in harmonizing and/or consolidating these into fewer bylaws. Zoning Bylaw consolidation is a leading practice at some regional districts elsewhere in the province. It would allow for common zoning regulation across the region, significantly streamlining customer service and overall bylaw maintenance.
- 4. Future Goal:** OCP Harmonization/Consolidation..
Rationale: Regional planners elsewhere in the province are also finding value in harmonizing and consolidating OCPs across their jurisdictions. For example, much of the regulatory language and broad policy statements are very similar across the CRD's seven OCPs, and between the three RLUBs. Maintaining uniform regulation in relation to best practices or changes in provincial legislation becomes unwieldy when having to simultaneously amend seven bylaws, each with their own public consultation process.

Staff recognize the importance of ensuring community identities and development visions remain unique to each area of the region. Staff will carefully assess the results of the Bouchie Milburn Neighbourhood Planning process, as that may represent a better strategy in supporting the unique identities of individual communities, while housing broader policy that is applicable region-wide under fewer, larger OCPs.

- 5. Future Goal:** Short Term Rental (STR) Monitoring.
Rationale: Staff will continue to monitor public complaints and impacts of unlawful short-term rental accommodations throughout the Cariboo. This future goal earmarks a broader project to be undertaken if concerns surrounding this land use increase.
- 6. Future Goal:** Planning Policies Review & Update.
Rationale: There are a number of old and outdated Board Policies with respect to the Planning Services function. At this point they are not causing significant challenges with conducting day to day business in the department, but they should be comprehensively reviewed and updated in the future.
- 7. Future Goal:** Long Range Agricultural Planning.
Rationale: As the Agricultural Land Commission regulations continue to evolve, zoning and rural land use bylaws should be reviewed to ensure that they remain consistent with provincial legislation. Also, given the ALC's increased reliance on local government long range planning policies when considering ALR applications, ongoing agricultural land use planning is prudent. Further recognizing the economic stability and importance of the agricultural sector in the Cariboo, continued long range planning should also consider the impacts of a changing climate on both negative impacts and opportunities in agriculture, ensuring that land use regulations are future-ready. There are opportunities to collaborate with local Ministry of Agriculture staff with their completion of Agricultural Land Use Inventories across the region.

Overall Financial Impact

The 2021 requisition shows a baseline increase of 2.5% when compared to previous year 2020. This accounts for expected wage and inflationary increases. Also included in the budget is the \$150,000 grant received from UBCM for further flood mapping work. The Planning Services budget remains stable.

The total number of development applications from September 2019 to August 2020 is forty-two (42), a decrease of 24% when compared to fifty-five (55) applications from September 2018 to August 2019. This decrease is attributed to a reduction in development activity in the spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A reduction in 2020 planning application fee revenues is expected to be offset by a reduction in travel expenses. Application revenues and associated department expenses are anticipated to return to normal in the 2021 budget.

Significant Issues & Trends

With significant department staff turnover throughout years 2014 to 2020, the department is continuing to prioritize refinement and establishment of clear work processes, improved customer service, and procedural streamlining. Coordination with Corporate Services and IT Departments is ongoing in the quest to reach full digitization of planning application procedures and records management.

Continued changes at the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) are anticipated. Staff will continue to monitor and analyze pending changes, and provide information and advice to landowners and the Board as necessary.

The impacts of climate change are becoming more evident, leading to wildfires, drought, flooding, landslides, etc. Staff are acutely aware of the resulting impacts on existing and future public and private infrastructure. Planning Services should work towards achieving a point where climate resiliency is considered in all planning applications. This is a complex and evolving area combining risk management, land use planning, protective services, and landscape-level mitigation projects. Planning staff will continue to collaborate with Protective Services to investigate additional funding options available for continued consulting assistance in identifying ongoing geohazard risks. This further involves ongoing monitoring of progress and future land use planning requirements under the *BC Emergency Program Act* modernization.

Measuring Previous Years' Performance

- 1. Project:** CRD Screening-level flood hazard mapping and flood risk prioritization. Staff worked collaboratively with flood mapping consultants and Fraser Basin Council staff to create “screening-level” flood hazard mapping of key river systems within the Thompson River Watershed. This project was completed in 2020 and includes flood hazard mapping of Bridge Creek (Areas H and L). Based on approval of an expanded grant application, the project scope was expanded to include clear-water flood hazard risk prioritization mapping of all mapped streams, creeks, lakes, and river systems throughout the entirety of the CRD. This expanded project scope was fully grant funded through UBCM (\$150,000) and completed in October 2020. *(2020 Goal – Completed)*
- 2. Project:** Bouchie Lake Neighbourhood Plan. This project is ongoing and nearing completion. Community input was gathered throughout 2019 and into early 2020. A draft plan was completed in early 2020. Final community engagement steps were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, will be completed through late 2020 and into early 2021 *(2019 Goal - Ongoing)*

- 3. Project:** City of Williams Lake and Central Cariboo Housing Needs Assessment.
Kick-off of this project was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was started in August 2020 and is being undertaken by a consulting team. The project schedule anticipates completion at the end of 2020. *(2020 Goal – Ongoing)*
- 4. Project:** Evaluating agricultural land capability in Ruth Lake area.
Staff have coordinated with the Agricultural Land Commission and professional agrologists association and has advised the CRD to evaluate arable lands towards the south side of Ruth lake area in the South Cariboo Area. This was identified as one of the project tasks of South Cariboo Area Official Community Plan implementation. Staff investigation has determined that there are very few qualified professionals in the Interior of BC who can meet the ALC's certification standards for such a project (one in Prince George, and one in Vernon). It would be best to consolidate this into a larger project, rather than a piecemeal study. This individual project has been abandoned and will be rolled into a more comprehensive long-range agricultural planning task as part of Future Goal 7 (described above).
- 5. Project:** Improve and streamline development process.
This is an ongoing project further described under 2021 Goal 2. Completed tasks in 2020 are listed below:
- Reinforcement of consistency and accuracy during staff training is ongoing.
 - Tracking phone inquiries revealed nearly 300 discrete requests for assistance over a six-month period (Sept – Feb).
 - Over 50 desirable zoning bylaw amendments were identified to improve readability and resolve minor bylaw inconsistencies.
 - Ongoing digitization of planning processes.
 - Ongoing automation of planning form letters.