

History of the Revision of the Official Community Plan

The Official Community Plan (OCP) underwent a major revision. It was originally created in 1981, and the last major revision was in 1997.

On July 27, 2012 Oak Bay Council appointed six residents (Gloria Back, Patrick Frey, John Graham, Mike Lloyd, Jan Mears and Will Moore) to the OCP advisory committee. Councillors Pam Copley, Cairine Green and John Herbert were also members, as well as the Chief Administrator.

Council never provided any information as to how the resident representatives were selected or what qualifications they cited in their applications.

Concerns with the direction of the Council and the OCP Committee

There were numerous concerns with Council's behaviour and process relative to the former OCP and the development of a new OCP.

Council claimed that the former OCP was 31 years old

Council claimed that the former OCP had *"not been comprehensively reviewed for 31 years."* In fact, the former OCP had been extensively reviewed and revised in 1995-97. The former OCP bylaw described the response rate by residents during that review were very high, showing *"obvious interest by Oak Bay residents."*

Council acted in contravention of the existing OCP

Council acted in contravention of the former OCP and zoning bylaws when [spot-zone for duplex development](#) and permitting [redevelop an apartment building](#) to proceed. As well, Council passes almost all zoning variance proposals submitted to them (a history of 97% approval rate).

Questionable public consultation process on land use decisions

The new OCP should have adopted a more detailed and transparent way to consult the public and obtain valid input. This is because land planning and use decisions require detailed consideration of the "pros" and "cons" of nuances of land use at a public meeting. This allows residents to have a voice on issues and developments that

can impact and change their property rights and enjoyment. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Instead, council decided to contract a third party, which came up with a structurally “biased” set of questions that were submitted electronically to residents. The response rate of the contracted survey was low, not really reflecting residents opinions on important issues.

Actions and rhetoric were clear indicators that Council wanted to make major changes to the OCP relating to densification. Oak Bay has historically maintained a slow, controlled growth policy. We are primarily a single-family residential community and we are close to the national average in the number of children and families. Our property tax revenue were fairly well balanced with our expenditures. It seems that this no longer will be the case, as the new OCP has enabled the city’s bureaucracy and council to work on a budget full of inconsistency, ones that will lead to raising taxation of residents.

Although Council (in their election promises) had committed to maintaining Oak Bay’s character with gradual, sustainable growth, their language, actions and decisions proved otherwise. Land use protections in the former OCP were substantially reduced or eliminated, opening the door to rapid high-density development. They finally succeeded with a densification agenda that will do little to meet unrealistic goals and will only benefit their political agendas and the development community.

Council selected a Vancouver-based consultant to drive the OCP revision process

The OCP consultant’s verbal presentation to the OCP advisory committee omitted any reference to the existing OCP. Her written submission to Council was not provided to the public in spite of repeated requests. Back then, there were plenty of discussion at Council and the Committee level about the content of “other” municipal community plans. What they missed is that Oak Bay is a much more desirable place to live and that an OCP based on the reality of other communities would lower all the standards that has taken the community years to raise.

Oak Bay is unique and has not experienced many of the significant livability issues plaguing other communities. This includes avoiding substantial property tax increases and user fees while maintaining a high level of municipal service. These factors and our environment are why people want to move to Oak Bay.

Extensive public input occurred in the revision of the former Plan, making it absolutely legitimate, reflecting the needs and wants of our community.

During 1995 a questionnaire was distributed to every household and business within the District of Oak Bay. Additionally, a special youth survey was distributed to all students between grades 7-12 in Oak Bay schools. This large distribution was done to ensure that everyone interested in the Plan would have the opportunity to make their feelings known.

The response to the questionnaire was very high with approximately 38.5% of all general questionnaires being returned showing an obvious interest by Oak Bay residents in the planning of their community.

Between October 1995 and June 1996, technical updates to the community plan were completed and a draft of the revised document was distributed to every home and business in Oak Bay.

In June of 1996, a series of public meetings were held to canvass the views of residents. Throughout the summer of 1996 written submissions were received from the public.

Following the general municipal election in the fall of 1996, the new Council held six more public meetings to obtain more input from the public.

The document that is now called the old community plan reflected many of the suggestions that were made through the written submissions and oral presentations.