



REPORT TO COUNCIL

To: **Mayor and Councillors**

Subject: Explanatory Report: Bylaw No. 3200 Official
Community Plan and Nicomekl River District
Neighbourhood Plan

File #: [Required]

From: Carl Johannsen, RPP, MCIP
Director of Development Services

Doc #:

Date: May 26, 2021

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receives this report as information.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to present Bylaw No. 3200, which proposes to repeal Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2600 and replace it with a new Official Community Plan ('OCP') and its Appendices, the Nicomekl River District Neighbourhood Plan ('Nicomekl NP', Appendix A) and District Policies (Appendix B). The creation of the new OCP and Nicomekl NP are key implementation actions arising from Council's *Nexus of Community* vision, and these strategic documents chart out a vision for focusing new growth around SkyTrain, fostering a broader range of housing, enhancing social equity and quality of life, strengthening the economy, protecting the environment and reinforcing the Nicomekl River as the City's 'green heart' and ecological jewel.

POLICY:

The *Local Government Act* (LGA, Section 471) enables local governments to adopt an OCP, which is a statement of objectives and policies that guide City Council's decisions on planning and land use management.

In short, an OCP is a long-term vision for shaping future population and employment growth; OCPs include a land use plan and policies that help to ensure appropriate housing and employment areas, transportation networks, schools, parks, community facilities, social, cultural and protective services, infrastructure and protected areas, among other items of local/regional importance, are provided as the community grows.

It is also important to note that while an OCP identifies land uses that apply to specific properties, the adoption of a new OCP does not change the existing zoning (permitted uses, densities, etc.) of these properties, which is regulated by the City's Zoning Bylaw. Once an OCP is in effect property owners can choose to apply to Council to 're-zone' their property to a different use or density (typically according to the OCP land use), and Council will then use the OCP when considering this rezoning, noting the LGA requires 'all bylaws enacted or works undertaken by Council must be consistent with' the OCP.

The City's current OCP Bylaw has been in effect since 2005, and the City's current Zoning Bylaw dates back to 1996. Although these Bylaws have been amended over the years, in 2018 Council initiated the process to update the OCP and Zoning Bylaw, and create a Neighbourhood Plan for the Nicomekl River area, to action key recommendations in the *Nexus of Community Recommendations and Implementation Report*. As identified in the *Nexus* documents, updating and modernizing the OCP and Zoning Bylaw and creating new neighbourhood plans is necessary to provide a greater range of housing options, preserve valuable greenspace, prepare for the arrival of SkyTrain and meet the needs of a growing, evolving City.

COMMENTS/ANALYSIS:

Under development since early 2019, and following extensive public consultation, a new draft OCP and its Appendices are ready for Council's consideration and are attached to this report as a part of Bylaw No. 3200. This Bylaw consists of three components, as listed below and described in the following commentary:

- 1. OCP (Main Document);**
- 2. Nicomekl River District Neighbourhood Plan (Appendix A); and**
- 3. District Policies (Appendix B).**

1. OCP

The OCP is structured around a Vision that calls for future growth to be shaped around rapid transit, Downtown and the City's greatest natural asset, the Nicomekl River system and floodplain, and over 150 policies that collectively aim to achieve this Vision. These policies are organized under 'Five Big Themes' and broadly summarized below:

1. Affordable Living and Diverse Housing for all Generations
 - Policies support a broad range of housing, including apartments, 'missing middle' townhomes, du/tri/quad-plexes and gentle infill, a healthy mix of strata and rental tenure housing, and affordable housing partnerships. These policies also respond to the 2021 Housing Needs Report, which identifies a need for a broader range of ownership and affordable housing in the City.
2. A Highly Connected City Aligned with Rapid Transit
 - Policies support aligning new growth with transit, creating pleasant, multi-modal streets, modernizing parking, and preparing for more electric vehicles.

3. A Safe and Inclusive Community Rich with Cultural Destinations

- Policies support improving social equity and cultural inclusiveness through greater access to community services and facilities, strengthening relationships with First Nations, upgrading schools, creating ‘great and safe public places’ and new amenities that enhance quality of life, including parks, child care facilities and arts and culture destinations, among others. The OCP’s Development Permit Area Guidelines complement this Theme by emphasizing the use of design elements that enhance pedestrian safety, and the District Policies also support creating safe public spaces and locating a community/transit police office near the 203 Street SkyTrain station.

4. A Responsive Community that Creates New Jobs

- Policies support strengthening the City’s industrial and employment base, enhancing the Historic Downtown, catalyzing new tech, research and innovation industries, and expanding post-secondary education.

5. Environmental Solutions to Fight Climate Change

- Policies include targets for reducing emissions that cause climate change, protecting environmentally sensitive areas, supporting green infrastructure and innovative waste reduction, and strengthening the City’s tree canopy. OCP policies will also reduce automobile dependence and building energy usage over time, which will reduce emissions that cause climate change.

The proposed OCP land use plan seeks to accommodate about 13,400 new residents and 5,900 new jobs by 2050 (totalling over 41,000 residents and over 22,000 jobs by 2050), through these key elements:

- focusing the highest densities, tallest buildings and greatest mix of uses around the 196 Street and 203 Street SkyTrain stations and along Fraser Highway;
- locating new ground-oriented, attached housing, such as townhomes and ‘plexes’, along frequent bus routes including 200 Street and 208 Street;
- creating an “Innovation Boulevard” on Glover Road to support KPU expansion, encourage student housing, tech businesses, start-ups, and maker spaces;
- identifying five new neighbourhood commercial nodes for small scale shops; and
- enabling gentle infill housing types, like smaller single detached home lots and new secondary suite options north of Grade Crescent.

The OCP land use plan also supports the Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), and directs the majority of future growth into the Langley Regional City Centre, which Metro Vancouver identifies as a regional growth node served by rapid transit.

The OCP’s Urban Design Principles complement the land use plan and seek to create safe, pedestrian-friendly and high amenity public spaces and buildings as the City grows, and these Principles underpin the OCP’s Development Permit Area Guidelines

for guiding the design or ‘form and character’ of new developments. These Guidelines also provide direction for reducing the environmental impact of new developments and how new development is to respond to environmentally sensitive and steep slope areas.

The OCP document concludes with a section outlining Engineering Services policies that aim to maintain and enhance the City’s infrastructure as the City grows, as well as an Implementation section that outlines key future actions that need to be undertaken to effectively implement the new OCP, including the creation of a new Zoning Bylaw, an updated Parks Recreation and Culture Master Plan, Transportation Master Plan and DCC Bylaw, updated Servicing Master Plans, a Community Safety and Policing Strategy and the Glover Road Innovation Boulevard Strategy, among others.

Lastly, the OCP includes a framework to measure implementation of the OCP, including the creation of an annual summary that details development activity and alignment with the OCP land use plan, and a Comprehensive OCP Implementation Report that measures progress according to the OCP’s Five Big Themes and related policies.

2. Nicomekl River District Neighbourhood Plan (Appendix A)

The Nicomekl NP includes more detailed land use policies that apply to the Nicomekl River floodplain and surrounding neighbourhoods. While its ‘Living River’ Vision and policies generally align with the OCP, the key intent of the Nicomekl NP is to protect the floodplain area and environmentally sensitive areas, enhance recreational, social and historical values, ensure it is a safe place enjoyed by all users, and guide the creation of attractive, amenity-rich residential and mixed-use developments. A ‘Four Room’ policy approach is also utilized to frame how residents and visitors will use, experience and relate to this key green space and environmental area in the years to come.

The Nicomekl NP’s more specific land use direction supports redevelopment that ‘pulls up’, and in some places, ‘pulls away’ from the Nicomekl River’s 1 in 200 year flood level. This redevelopment is envisioned to include high-quality, ground-oriented townhomes and du/tri/quad-plexes along the edge of the floodplain and strategically placed, mixed-use nodes with small scale, pedestrian-friendly retail and multi-family homes that take advantage of their riverfront location and include amenities and attractions, including cafes/restaurants, outdoor patios and seating areas, and enhanced park spaces.

It is also important to note that since areas around the Nicomekl River are already developed with housing, redevelopment will involve existing residential properties and will occur on a slower, incremental basis (ie. smaller projects), compared to ‘greenfield’ areas in the Township of Langley and City of Surrey, where multiple, multi-acre developments are being constructed simultaneously in previously undeveloped areas.

Beyond land use, the Nicomekl NP is primarily a public realm and environmental enhancement strategy that emphasizes stewardship of the Nicomekl River’s ecological

assets, enables people of all abilities and ages to experience the River's recreational values, and celebrates the rich history of First Nations and European settler use. Key elements of this enhancement strategy include 'Three Big Moves Across the Plan':

1. All Season Path
 - Proposed for the north side of the Nicomekl River, the path will be accessible, cycle friendly, and connect to a loop through Downtown;
2. Trailhead Improvements
 - Includes new interpretive signage, plazas, seating, lighting and public art improvements at 'enhanced trailhead' locations; and
3. Lookout Platforms
 - Starting with a platform near Brydon Lagoon in the Garden Wild Room, lookouts are envisioned to provide views of the river landscape and create interesting public destinations along trails and the All-season Path.

Additional key elements of the Nicomekl NP include:

- a new path along the south side of the Nicomekl River in the Garden Wild Room;
- a new pedestrian bridge connecting the proposed south side path noted above with the existing path on the north side of the Nicomekl River;
- undertaking ecological restoration initiatives, such as planting additional trees and shrubs to protect fish habitat and create new river channel habitat areas;
- creating 'cultural pavilions' in the Living Room, including one associated with the Michaud House, that tell the story of the Nicomekl River and Langley City, including the history of First Nations use, the experience of European settlers and recent immigrant communities;
- partnerships with Kwantlen First Nation, KPU, Langley heritage, arts and environmental groups to create an interpretive strategy (signage, public art, open space features, programs) that tells the story of the Nicomekl River; and
- Development Permit Area and Public Realm Guidelines that ensure new development and public realm improvements express a distinct 'riverside' character that reflects and integrates into the Nicomekl River context.

3. District Policies (Appendix B)

The OCP's District Policies provide additional direction for key growth areas, and focus on guiding property assembly and identifying new streets, lanes, access points and required public open space improvements, among other items. Key policies include:

- Downtown Langley: distills and modernizes key land use and design elements of the City's Downtown Master Plan, continues to maintain and enhance the Historic Downtown's character, and provides direction for major redevelopment parcels and new civic facilities and amenities;
- Major transit-oriented development nodes: applies to new high-density growth areas around the 196 Street and 203 Street SkyTrain stations and along Fraser Highway, and emphasizes the creation of high-rise, mixed-use neighbourhoods with significant public amenities;

- Innovation Boulevard: provides interim guidance for the creation of a dynamic research corridor linking a growing KPU campus with the Downtown, 203 Street SkyTrain Station and Logan Avenue employment area, prior to the creation of the more detailed Glover Road Innovation Boulevard Strategy; and
- 200 Street and 208 Street Corridors: guides new growth along these high traffic and transit-served corridors, including townhomes and du/tri/quad plex forms, with an emphasis on integrating new growth into existing neighbourhoods, creating safer, improved streetscapes and supporting incremental redevelopment through strategies that enable smaller-scale development applications.

Process and Public Consultation

As noted above, the OCP and Appendices, including the Nicomekl River District NP, have been developed through an extensive Four Phase public consultation process that has spanned two and a half years, beginning in early 2019 and culminating in a public engagement survey and virtual public open houses in February 2021. Despite the pandemic, which eliminated in-person engagement from April 2020 to present, this process has included over 1,445 interactions with residents, businesses, community organizations, external agencies and the development community.

The OCP and Nicomekl River District NP have also greatly benefitted from consultation with the Kwantlen First Nation (KFN) throughout this process, as reflected in key policies that support new and strengthened partnerships, revival of the traditional hə́nqəmihə́m language used by the KFN (including using the traditional nəqəməqəl spelling in the title of the Nicomekl NP), and acknowledgements of traditional and unceded territory.

The development of the OCP and Nicomekl River District NP, in addition to the Background Research Report (December 2019) and Key Directions Report (June 2020) that informed the final draft OCP documents, reflects public input obtained from a series of public consultation events, including:

- 'Community Pop-ups' at Community Day and Arts Alive festivals (summer 2019);
- Nicomekl River District Workshop and Public Open House #1 (June 2019);
- OCP Design Workshop and Public Open House #1 (December 2019);
- Online Survey #1 (December 2019);
- Stakeholder workshops (January 2020);
- Nicomekl River District Public Open House #2 (March 2020);
- Online Survey #2 (January - February 2021)
- OCP Public Open House #2 (virtual, February 9, 2021)
- Nicomekl River District Public Open House #3 (virtual, February 10, 2021)

The draft OCP, the Nicomekl NP and District Policies were posted on the City's website in January 2021, to seek feedback from the public and external agencies through an online survey, virtual 'Zoom' public open houses and informal agency referrals.

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Detailed results from the survey and virtual open houses, as well as feedback from external agencies, are summarized in the attached Phase 3 Engagement Summary, along with recommended changes to refine these plans in response to feedback.

Staff have since updated and finalized the draft OCP, the Nicomekl NP and District Policies based on the feedback and recommendations in the Engagement Summary; these updates also include policy and technical refinements that reflect Council input and further staff review. These updates are listed the Table of Recommended Changes on pages 34-39 of the attached Engagement Summary.

Based on public and agency feedback that indicates majority support for the OCP, Nicomekl NP and District Policies, these finalized draft plans are now being presented to Council as Bylaw No. 3200, for consideration of 1st and 2nd Reading. If Council gives 1st and 2nd Readings, next steps include official referral to external agencies and a Public Hearing, which will provide an opportunity for public input on the finalized plans.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

Bylaw No. 3200 does not have direct financial implications, as the LGA states that an OCP 'does not commit or authorize a municipality, regional district or improvement district to proceed with any project that is specified in the plan.' However, proceeding with the implementation of OCP, Nicomekl NP and District Policies, including projects by the City, will require funding approval by Council as a part of relevant future Financial Plans, capital works programs and departmental budgets.

Staff note that an initial Infrastructure Servicing review indicates a likely need for future water main and sanitary main upgrades to support development in new growth areas identified in the new OCP. The detailed scope and cost of these upgrades will be further investigated as a part of Water and Sanitary Master Plan updates the City will be undertaking following adoption of the new OCP, and potentially integrated into a new updated Development Cost Charge (DCC) Bylaw in the future.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Direct staff to makes changes to Bylaw No. 3200.

Respectfully Submitted,



Carl Johannsen, RPP, MCIP
Director of Development Services

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Attachment:

1. Phase 3 Engagement Summary (Official Community Plan and Nicomekl River District Neighbourhood Plan)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S COMMENTS:

The new OCP and Nicomekl River District Neighbourhood Plan will implement key recommendations of Council's *Langley City: Nexus of Community* vision and help to ensure Langley City is well prepared for the future. Once Bylaw No. 3200 is adopted by Council, an updated Zoning Bylaw will be developed and brought forward for public consultation and Council's consideration.



Francis Cheung, P. Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer