FLOURISH TOGETHER

Official Community Plan Update 2020-21

BACKGROUND REPORT

Merritt
FLOURISH UNDER THE SUN

Table of Contents

Appendices

1. Community Context

Merritt covers a land area of approximately 26 km^2 and features a population of 7,139 residents as of 2016 (Statistics Canada). This translates to an approximate population density of 274 people per square kilometre. The Community Context section illustrates the baseline information that informs the development of Merritt's OCP update, focusing on key metrics and data that are critical to developing an understanding of Merritt's current state and expectation for future growth. This information will be used to create policies for Merritt's future.

The key pieces of information presented in this report include the following:

- Population and Growth;
- Individual and Household Income; and
- Employment.

This information is based on Merritt's 2016 Census Profile and projected growth rates from the Province of British Columbia's population projections (October, 2019).

1.1. Population and Growth

In 2016, Merritt had a total population of 7,139. Since 1991, the population has remained largely stable, with an increase of approximately 3.49% over the previous 25 years. During that time, the City has experienced periods of growth (1991-1996) and decline (1996 – 2001). See **Figure 1**.

Merritt has traditionally experienced a low rate of growth and development. However, with recent changes to zoning regulations, density allotments and expected increases in infill development types, Merritt's growth rate is expected to increase significantly in the coming 20 years.

FIGURE 1 – Projected Population Change (1991 – 2041)
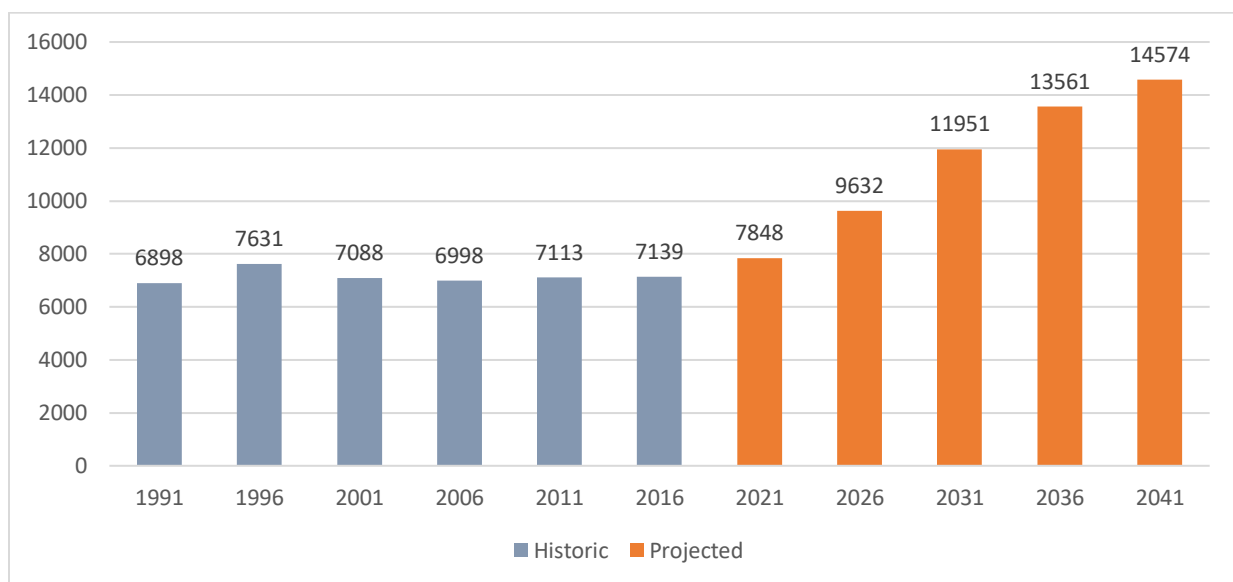
Rather than using the historic growth rate, this report uses the growth rates provided by the Province of British Columbia as a baseline. This rate takes into account births, deaths and net migration using a Component/Cohort Survival method. Additionally, triggered by the recently adopted Zoning Bylaw, the City received several multi-family development permit applications and rezoning applications for higher density development, plus a major neighbourhood plan which is currently in the adoption process. It is expected that these up-coming development may add over two thousand units to the housing market in the next 20 years. It is also expected that people moving from Lower Mainland and people brought by new jobs generated by the future light industrial development in Merritt area would be the major cohorts absorbing these new residential units. The expected growth from these up-coming housing projects has been added to projected annual population figures to provide a more accurate view of Merritt's future.

Using this data, Merritt is projected to reach a population of 14,574 by 2041. This represents a population increase of 104.14% over the next 25 years. This would suggest the population will increase at a much faster rate than it has in the past. This population projection best reflects the expected growth in Merritt over the next 25 years and will be used throughout this document.

Merritt's projected population was estimated for several different scenarios. See **Figure 2**. The following figure shows the population increase over the next 25 years using three separate growth rates, based on the existing projected population. The *medium* growth rate utilizes the growth rates provided by the Province of British Columbia. The *high* and *low* growth scenarios represent +0.5% and -0.5% growth rate changes, respectively.

FIGURE 2 – Projected Population Scenarios (2016 - 2041)
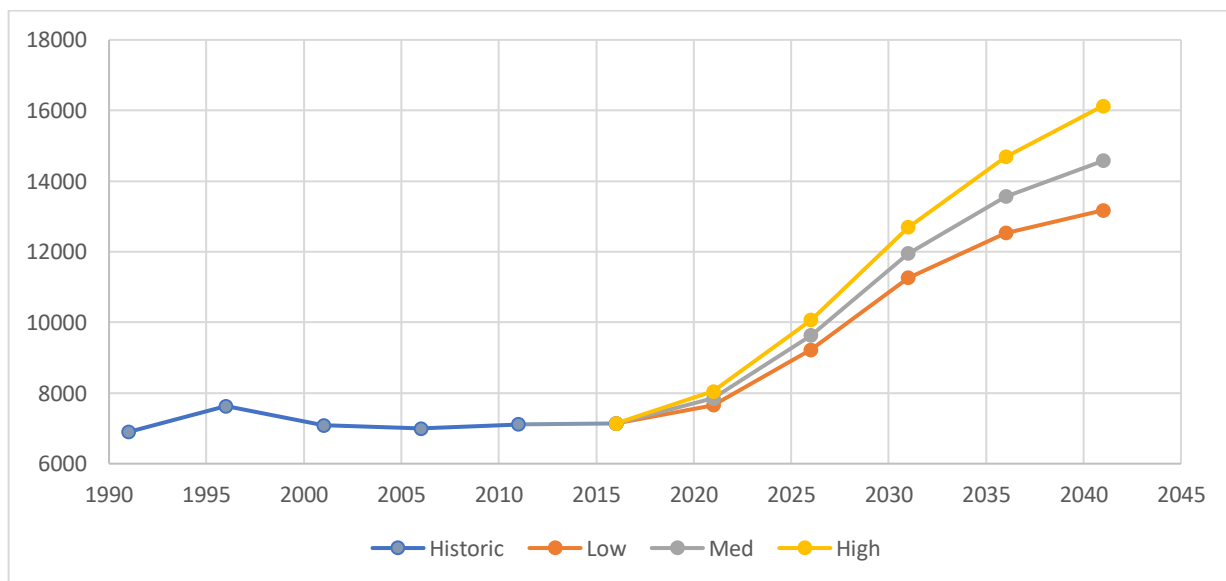
In order to increase the population beyond 14,574 by 2041, additional efforts would be needed to attract businesses and residents to the community. For example, to achieve a population of 30,000 in 20 years, 9,461 jobs would need to be created, in addition to the jobs required for the 14,574 residents, based on current demographics. Approximately 10 – 20% of those jobs could be part-time, for the 15 to

24 year old age groups, while most would need to be full-time positions. Furthermore, 2025 new apartments, 1012 townhomes, 810 single family homes, and 202 carriage homes or secondary suites would be required to house the additional residents, in addition to the development that is currently planned. However, this growth scenario would require several hundred hectares commercial and industrial lands and similar amount of residential lands. Further land needs assessment could be needed to verify if there are enough available vacant lands in the city to support this growth scenario.

Merritt has a well distributed population under the context of age, with a high proportion of residents falling within the "boomer" cohort. See **Figure 3.** As of 2016, the average age in Merritt is 43.9 years old, with a median age of 46.5, which is only just higher than the provincial average. Approximately 61% of Merritt's population fall within the 15 to 64 age cohort.

FIGURE 3 – Population Distribution by Age (2016)
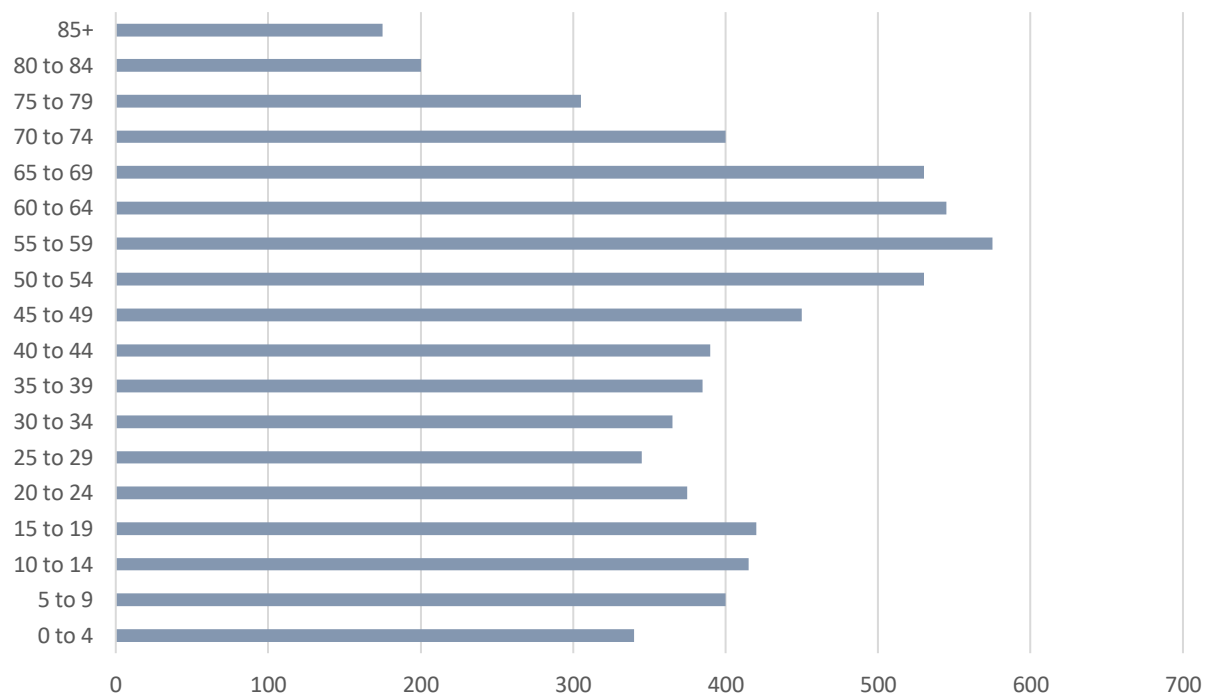
Additionally, there are approximately 1,575 residents that are of aboriginal identity (based on 25% sample data, Statistics Canada, 2016). Of these, 1,095 identify as First Nations, 415 identify as Metis, 15 as Inuit and 45 were multiple responses or not included elsewhere.

1.2.   Household and Individual Income (2015)

According to the 2016 census, the median household income for Merritt in 2015 was $62,544, slightly lower than the provincial median of $69,995. The following figure shows the household income distribution with the City of Merritt for the 2015 fiscal year.

Merritt
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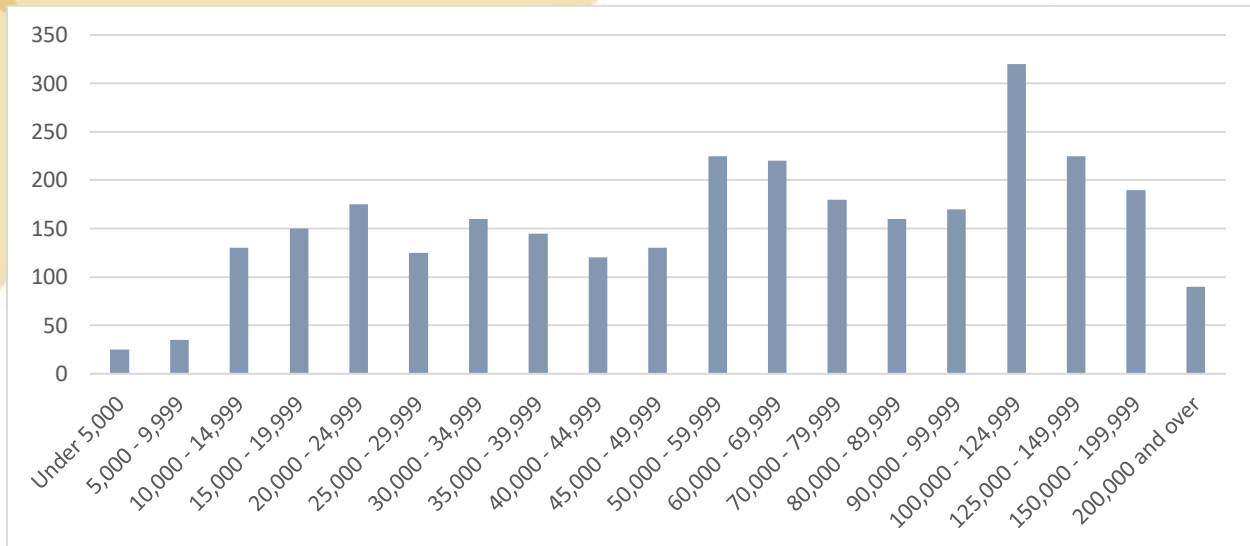
The following table represents the annual income for individuals (over the age of 15) in Merritt.
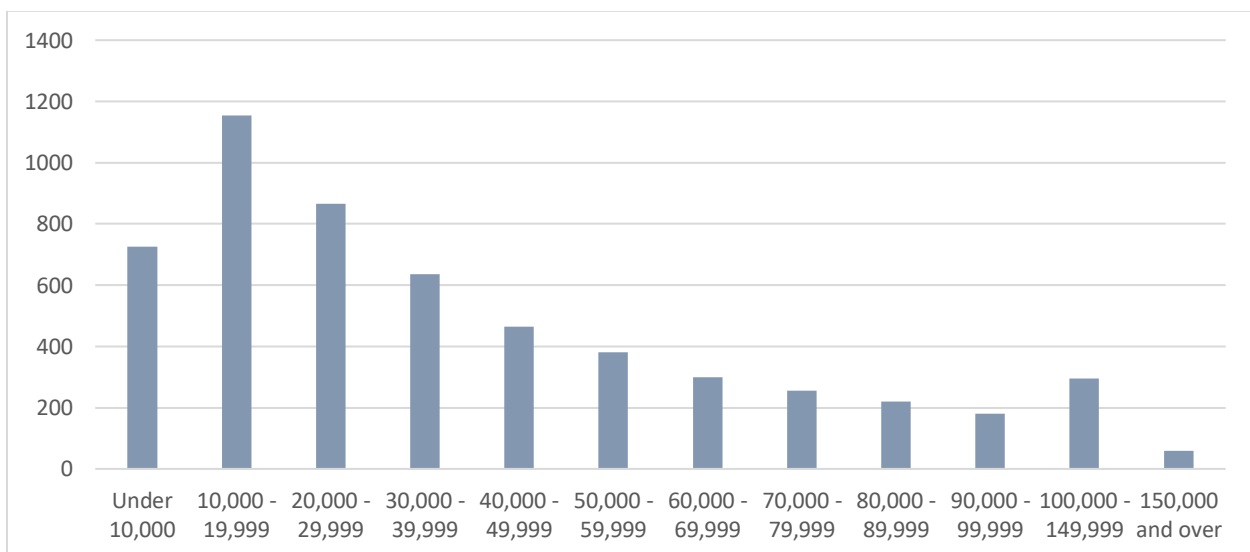
This chart also highlights those in Merritt of working age that are below the poverty line. This includes those with an income less than $20,000[1]. These include some 1,880 individuals, representing approximately 26% of Merritt's total population.

1.3.   Employment

The table below identified the occupation, labour force numbers and their percentage of total jobs within Merritt. Occupations that encompass the highest percentage of total jobs include Manufacturing, Retail, Health Care and Accommodation.

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[1] BC Poverty Reduction

Occupation	Total Labour	% of Total Jobs
Agriculture	240	7%
Mining	110	3%
Utilities	25	1%
Construction	290	9%
Manufacturing	410	13%
Trade	45	1%
Retail	415	13%
Transportation	120	4%
Information and Culture	40	1%
Finance	30	1%
Real Estate	30	1%
Professional	50	2%
Management	0	0%
Administrative	120	4%
Education	280	9%
Health Care	360	11%
Arts and Entertainment	55	2%
Accommodation	320	10%
Other	150	5%
Public Administration	140	4%

2. Opportunities & Challenges

This preliminary analysis regarding the opportunities and challenges that Merritt currently faces is based on a preliminary discussion with the City's Administrative staff and multidisciplinary background research. Through upcoming community engagement events, additional information will be provided to assist in verifying and updating the final OCP document to address the challenges identified in this report.

2.1. Community Growth

One of the top priorities to be addressed within the OCP is community growth. Understanding growth requires the development of a plan forward that addresses how to grow sustainably. This is referred to as "Smart Growth", which will be a key theme within this background review report, further informing the development of the final OCP document.

2.1.1. Population Growth

Overview / Challenges

Since 1991, Merritt's population has remained largely stable, with an increase of approximately 3.5% between the years 1991 and 2016. Throughout this 25-year timeframe, the city has seen small periods of population growth and decline, which is discussed in further detail in **Section 1.1** of this report.

In speaking with the City of Merritt, this slow but mainly stable population growth could be partially attributed to the outsiders' 'small town perception' of the city, and because of this perception, potential investors and developers may not have acknowledged Merritt as a viable location to invest. Policy limitations, such as land use and development requirements may also need adjustment in order to draw development and investment into the city, which could also help boost the growth of the community. For example, locations which exist along some of the City's highways could be an excellent staging area for industrial and commercial operations. Strategies like these should be explored and communicated to help promote future investment and subsequent population growth.

Other challenges experienced within the city that may also attribute to its slow population growth include the city's relatively remote location, between mountains, where it is assumed by many to be cold and snowy. However, in truth, although the weather can be windy in Merritt, it is very similar to the weather in Kelowna or Kamloops.

Overall, both internal and external perceptions of the city need to be improved. The Official Community Plan's development process, which will engage the community and stakeholders, could help change the narrative of the city. The final Official Community Plan could also provide the City with tools and strategies to support growth and in turn, boost the population.

Opportunities:

A number of opportunities exist for the City of Merritt that could be used to facilitate future population growth. These strategies regard densification, rebranding, increasing housing affordability, development

process changes, and the development of Merritt as a 'regional' hub. A detailed explanation of each of these strategies is located below:

Densification of the city's existing residential land should be encouraged. This strategy would provide the option of allowing existing developed areas in the city to accommodate additional development, as well as vacant undeveloped lands. The City's Zoning Bylaw could be updated to permit higher development densities within the city in certain locations, or provide strategies such as density bonusing. The updated Official Community Plan could also support higher-density area through a mixed-use development designation, which further aids in developing a complete community.

Rebranding strategies could be implemented to help change the perception of Merritt from a small city to a regional hub. Topics that could be explored through this rebranding strategy could include:

- The weather – that Merritt has very similar weather to Kelowna and Kamloops and it is not as snowy and cold as people think;
- Its natural features – that Merritt offers a beautiful landscape for families to explore, which lends itself to a multitude of year-round activities and sports;
- That there exists a wealth of development opportunities for industrial and commercial operations; and
- That the community has pride and passion, and its residents are involved in many aspects of the community, and are inspired to be part of the community's change.

The development of more affordable housing within the city could also assist with the growth of the community by attracting new residents. Policy adjustments as well as changes to the mill rate and servicing strategies could entice investment for the development of more affordable housing options in Merritt's competitive landscape. Providing more affordable housing within Merritt could contribute to the City's economic development by providing a variety of housing types that would support a variety of people working within differing sectors of the labour force.

Strategies could also be explored to streamline the development process, providing an additional way to promote development and attract investment to Merritt, in turn promoting the growth of the community. For example, although the development approval process with the City is already one of the most efficient ones in BC, the increasing development applications would require additional staff resources to process so to ensure that potential development does not go elsewhere due to the development application backlog. In addition, the City's development related bylaws could be updated, which include the Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw (1987), and the Development Cost Charges Bylaw (2007).

Lastly, the City could re-position Merritt as a 'regional hub' by strengthening its recreation planning efforts. This could include updating policies within the Recreation, Facilities, and Arts and Culture Plan (2017), and the promotion of the rich arts and culture that Merritt's local Indigenous community provides. Re-positioning Merritt as a regional hub would help general awareness and interest in the community, which may lead to additional population attraction.

2.1.2. Business Attraction/Diversifying Economy Base

Overview / Challenges:

Known as a forestry and former mining city, Merritt has a strong history of employment through the local industry, namely through sawmill-supported employment opportunities, alongside ranching and farming, and the tourism/recreation-supported industry. These uses are separate both in nature, and in proximity to the downtown core.

In recent years, a number of the community's lumber operations have folded. There are opportunities for diversification of the economy which would assist in the creation of additional employment opportunities, and create a driver for population growth and economic diversity. These opportunities are explored in the section below.

Opportunities:

Merritt's location lends itself to be an optimal location for regional and commercial industrial development. The city is located at the confluence of three major highways, Highway 5, Highway 5A – Coquihalla, and Highway 8. This location provides the city with an excellent opportunity for the location of uses requiring high visibility such as storage and distribution centres, uses requiring access to major transportation routes, or other commercial uses that support the travelling public.

Merritt offers a number of local post-secondary educational and training opportunities through the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, which provides education and training to Merritt's local population as well as the First Nations who live within and nearby the Merritt area. These education and training opportunities have the potential to grow Merritt's local work force and may assist with business attraction and retention within the community of Merritt.

Other opportunities to develop / diversify Merritt's economic base include the development of industry friendly policies that encourage the growth of the community's industrial base through policies based within the updated Official Community Plan. These policies could jump-start potential opportunities to diversify the economy, and foster opportunities to support renewable energy, additional health care services / business that could provide services and support to Merritt's existing hospital, and tourism opportunities that take advantage of Merritt's climate and natural features. The Official Community Plan land use map could also be updated to encourage the development of more 'light industrial' land uses which would support most of Merritt's potential economic diversification opportunities, through the re-zoning of some of the City's heavy industrial designated lands (M2) as per the City's current Zoning Bylaw. Teck's Highway Valley Copper Mine, which is located northwest of Logan Lake, will also continue to be a strong economic driver for Merritt, and should continue to be supported by the City.

There are about 30% of the City's land zoned as Agricultural. Diversification of the agricultural industry could also bring opportunities for economic development. The City could work with the Thompson Nicola Regional District (TNRD) and Nicola Valley landowners to promote new opportunities, such as orchards and vineyards within the region.

The City could also explore potential tools to provide incentives for local business improvement areas and tax exemption programs, which could help support existing business and attract new business investment into the community. The City could consider to develop a business hub/incubator accelerator program to help small businesses to start-up. The Official Community Plan's Economic Development chapter could be updated to encourage the City to update its current Economic Development Action Plan, which could specifically outline the different tools the municipality could use to support business. The Economic Development Action Plan could include the business incubator initiative and further studies such as an industrial gap analysis, retail gap analysis and tourism marketing strategies, as well as other policies that could specifically target Merritt's other potential economic development opportunities (i.e. health services and renewable energy).

The creation of a Downtown Revitalization Plan could also be used to help foster and support economic development within Merritt's downtown area. The development of this type of plan could also be encouraged through the Official Community Plan.

2.1.3.   Downtown Revitalization

Overview / Challenges:

Development in the downtown area of Merritt has been stagnant in recent years, despite the small number of vacant lease spaces. This may be in part due to the location of several box-type stores (Canadian Tire, Walmart, Extra Foods) and service-oriented commercial (hotels, gas stations, and restaurants) on the northwestern edge of the city. There are also very few residents living in the downtown area, which prevents retail businesses from realizing their potential. In considering the 24-hour city, there must be both housing opportunities and draws that bring people to a specific location. The lack of attractive commercial opportunities and housing are two current challenges that impede the downtown's ability to grow, thrive and strengthen its unique atmosphere as an attractant for locals and visitors to the city.

There is unrealized potential in Merritt's downtown area; there are a few storefronts currently within Merritt's downtown (Save on Foods and Pharmasave) that are very popular and well-utilized. These storefronts could act as anchors, attracting customers to future new businesses that could be located within Merritt's downtown. Considering this potential, revitalization efforts should be continued, and attention paid to the enhancement of the public realm and support of the unique visual aesthetic that gives Merritt its unique flavour.

Opportunities:

With untapped potential sitting idle, the downtown area represents a fantastic opportunity to revitalize and capitalize on a neighbourhood that could become a pedestrian mecca and community hub. Developing a specific Downtown Revitalization Plan will provide a strong foundation from which downtown specific policies could be employed and the public realm transformed.

Bringing residents into the downtown with opportunities for densification or mixed-use development could foster the development of an attractive environment to live, work, and play, and decrease the

dependence on vehicular travel. The downtown represents a wonderful canvas upon which to develop local-scale commercial nodes with coffee shops, restaurants, breweries and stores in a variety of storefronts, ultimately supported by an enhanced pedestrian realm strengthened with landscaping, wayfinding elements and attention to the pedestrian experience.

The densification required to achieve this downtown vision profile can be achieved using strong policy direction in the Official Community Plan and the development of a Downtown Revitalization Plan and Zoning Bylaw amendments to facilitate and encourage development of this nature. The downtown area represents a wealth of opportunity and should be considered an economic engine to fuel the city as a whole.

2.1.4.   Land Use Fiscal Sustainability (Residential vs. Non-residential)

Overview / Challenges

Merritt's tax base is heavily supported by the industrial land use sector. Approximately 54% of the tax base is supported by residential uses, where other surrounding municipalities rely on 64% from residential. While a 50/50 split is often what municipalities strive to achieve, residential development in Merritt is somewhat constrained by limitations on available lands for development. These constraints include land in the flood plain, landslide risks, wild fire DPA and constraints on ALR land. Where density in residential development is lacking, the industrial land uses in the City make up for this discrepancy. While this is workable for the foreseeable future, in order to grow and flourish as a city, Merritt must offer increased housing options and choice for existing and new residents of the community.

Opportunities:

Despite the lack of developable land opportunities, residential land uses can be increased through densification of existing land. From a perspective of financial sustainability, this strategy will build on the opportunity to make room for growth in the absence of large swaths of easily developable land.

While the City has existed for many years using the current split of tax revenue, the City may explore establishing a target tax base split ratio for residential and vs. non-residential development. The ratio can be considered when undertaking land use planning exercises in the future. Ultimately, this ratio can be developed using a high-level fiscal analysis, drawing on the typical lot assessment value / property tax for each residential zone (single house, duplex, townhomes and condo/apartment), and the assessment value / property tax by area for commercial lands (downtown development and suburban big boxes) and industrial lands (light and heavy). Such analysis can support the future land uses allocation in the OCP document, and provide solid ground for Council to make decisions regarding development applications in the future.

2.2.   Servicing the Future Growth

Overview/Challenges

Like most communities in the interior of British Columbia, much of the infrastructure in Merritt is approaching or past its expected life span. This poses challenges for accommodating the existing population and planning for future growth. There are approximately 78km of roadways, 75km of watermains, 60km of sanitary sewer mains, and various drainage infrastructure systems throughout the City, with a range of installation dates and conditions.

Merritt has been, and will continue to be, proactive in the replacement and upgrading of its important public infrastructure. Master Plan Reports exist for all major utilities that detail requirements to maintain, replace, and expand existing systems as they approach the end of their useable life and to prepare for future growth. The vast majority of water and sewer infrastructure was installed in the 1960s and has reached, or will soon reach, the end of its expected life. It will be important in the future that capital replacement programs are appropriately determined and adequately funded to avoid a substantial infrastructure backlog and increased emergency repairs.

Additionally, as climate continues to change, disruption and damage to infrastructure and the subsequent costs needed to maintain a state of good repair will increase, requiring new investment for replacement ahead of its anticipated lifespan, further exacerbating the infrastructure deficit. In general, capital replacement programs are moderately funded and may not be sufficient to maintain the existing infrastructure levels of service over the long term without support from higher utility rates and / or taxes or through the use of Development Cost Charges (DCCs) or senior government grant funding or through a combination of these funding mechanisms.

Understanding and planning for growth will be a key factor in decisions regarding the City's key infrastructure that will need to be rehabilitated and / or replaced. Development that creates additional demand on the existing systems can provide important resources for necessary capital improvements to road and utility corridors. The current DCC bylaw will require regular review to ensure that applicable projects are identified and funded through anticipated development.

Opportunities:

There are several opportunities that are either currently underway or on the horizon to address infrastructure renewal planning and funding. Some of the City's guiding documents are somewhat outdated and fail to accurately reflect the colourful community fabric that makes Merritt such a wonderful place to live, work, and recreate. It is imperative that the City's guiding policies and plans do an excellent job of reflecting the collective direction. In particular, the City's Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw is over 30 years old and environmental standards and municipal legislation have changed significantly over these years.

The alignment of several guiding bylaws must be considered parallel to the OCP update to ensure that the review and update is comprehensive. In addition to the OCP, the City has expressed an interest in advancing several other plans including the Active Transportation Plan (on-going project), a review and

update of the Zoning Bylaw (completed September 1ˢᵗ), a new Subdivision Bylaw (planned for 2021), a Downtown Revitalization Plan, an Airport Plan, a North Bench Neighbourhood Development Plan (on-going project), and other proactive initiatives. Additionally, the following opportunities may help in preparing the City for future growth and sustainable infrastructure systems:

- Pairing the existing Asset Management Database with condition assessment data to systematically inform capital investments (i.e., 10-Yr Capital Plan).
- Review future growth neighbourhoods and compare anticipated needs with modelled needs in the current Water and Sanitary Sewer Utility Master Plans.
- Conducting Neighbourhood Stormwater Modelling to establish baseline pre-development flows for various neighbourhoods to size downstream infrastructure and guide future development.
- Development Cost Charge Bylaw No. 1964, 2007 should be updated and reviewed regularly to truly reflect the anticipated costs of and allocation to future development.
- Regularly analyzing and adjust utility rates and taxation rates to ensure that the infrastructure deficit does not grow.
- Identifying and securing senior government grant funding as it becomes available.

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2.3. Transportation and Active Transportation

Overview / challenges

The city has a small, well-developed urban core and supporting road network that serves its current population. However, there is a mismatch between the denser, infill growth the City intends for its future population and its existing transportation network, which better supports traditional, car-dependent sprawl. Merritt is a relatively small city with high vehicle ownership.

Most recent growth has been in the form of single-family detached units built further from the urban street grid and into the hills on the north side of city. These suburban areas are too isolated from non-residential land uses such as jobs and retail for routine pedestrian and cycling trips so residents are reliant on private automobiles to make most routine trips to work, school, and the grocery store. According to the 2016 census, 88% of commuting trips are by car and take less than 15 minutes.

If this growth pattern is left unchallenged, the City's 2041 goal of 8,000 – 10,000 new residents will require those residents to be primarily be housed near the edges of the urban boundary, in the north and southeast areas of the city. Supporting retail zones may be created to support these residents, but the overall effect of isolated pockets of growth will be further dependence on single-vehicle trips, ever-longer drives between destinations, and the release of more greenhouse gases per household.

Opportunities

The City has recently undertaken several initiatives to remedy this.

- Completion of a new Zoning Bylaw that permits greater infill development and mixed-use development in the urban core; almost 90% of the City's targeted growth could be accommodated within its newly-rezoned downtown core.
- Active Transportation Plan to enhance sustainable travel infrastructure and uptake.
- Coordination with BC Transit's Transit Futures planning program.

These initiatives can be further supported by land use and transportation planning and policies that focus more development in established areas with lowered levels of vehicle dependence, resulting in fewer car trips per person per day. With fewer roads to build and maintain and far-flung homes to bring utility service to, this outcome will be financially more sustainable to the City and its taxpayers.

The City can continue on this path by undertaking the following measures:

- Develop a full Transportation Master Plan to identify specific improvements to its active transportation network in a manner consistent with its intended growth objectives – not by extending historic development patterns into the future.
- Strengthening its zoning and development bylaws to incentivize denser, taller, mixed-use development in its downtown area. This could include parking minimum reductions, tax incentives, and/or simultaneous disincentives to developing detached lots in the northern urban boundary areas.
- Revisiting its transit network to better address both existing and potential rider needs

- Developing its current Active Transportation Plan recommendations, including short trips within the City and enhanced connections to schools, retail areas, parks, and trails.
- Update the Active Transportation Plan in future to include pedestrian/walking initiatives
- Undertake an active transportation facility and infrastructure assessment to identify existing and needed facilities, such as bike parking, benches, etc. (on-going project).

2.4.   Poverty Reduction

Overview/Challenges

Poverty is a reality of life across all communities in the Province. Statistics Canada data shows that in 2016, 557,000 people in British Columbia were living in poverty, 99,000 of them were children[2]. In 2018, the province of British Columbia issued its first-ever Poverty Reduction Strategy, which identified several common themes and challenges that united communities across the Province. The 2018 strategy also set ambitious targets for reducing poverty in general, and particularly for children. Grants from the Union of BC Municipalities have been made available to connect this provincial approach to on-the-ground realities, including planning documents such as OCPs. The challenge through this scope of work will be to connect these province-wide issues and targets to City of Merritt specific community needs.

Key priorities identified in B.C.'s Poverty Reduction Strategy include:

- Housing and Homelessness
- Supports for Children and Families
- Financial Security and Income Supports
- Mental Health and Addictions Services
- Food Security
- Access to Health Care
- Education and Training
- Employment and Jobs
- Access to Services
- Safe, Affordable Transportation
- Access to Justice
- Discrimination and Stigma

Opportunities

Through the OCP update, there is a unique opportunity to create a lens over the entire Plan that focuses on poverty reduction. Key policy areas that could incorporate specific poverty reduction measures, may include but are not limited to:

- Housing
- Food Security
- Economic Development
- Parks and Recreation
- Transportation

Throughout the background review, it was apparent that affordable housing is the most constant and pressing issue across the province. It will be important to engage with non-profit organizations,

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[2] https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/initiatives-plans-strategies/poverty-reduction-strategy/togetherbc.pdf

government agencies and community members, including those currently living in poverty, to discuss this issue in the context of the City of Merritt and work together to identify ways that the OCP policies can help to address this urgent need.

There are six First Nations bands located near Merritt, including Nooaitch, Ntsla'tko (Coldwater), Sxe'xn'x (Shackan), Shulus (Lower Nicola), Spaxomin (Upper Nicola) and Cook's Ferry, with members accounting for approximately 25% of the city's population. Throughout the OCP update, the project team will connect with these communities to discuss their unique challenges and opportunities as they relate to poverty reduction and work together to identify solutions that can be reflected in the OCP.

2.5. Food Security

Merritt's unemployment rate is 42% higher than the provincial average (Statistics Canada, 2017). The city is also 35% above the BC average of homeowners spending more than 30% of their household income on housing. Given these statistics, food insecurity is likely a significant challenge faced by many residents. Further, with increased variability in climate, long-term impacts of COVID-19, and other external factors, communities are increasingly becoming more aware of the fragility of the food system and are interested in developing strategies to prepare for and recover from natural and human disasters, to protect farmland and to support the local food and agriculture sector. In these ways, both household and community food security are key considerations in community planning.

Food will not solve hunger. The drivers of food insecurity are largely systemic and there are many factors impacting food security at the household and community levels. Some issues are created by systemic factors such as state of the economy, climate change, and level of economic opportunity in a community, while other issues are influenced by more local factors such as food processing capacity and food gardening skills. Potential key issues in Merritt include but are not limited to:

- Poverty, unemployment and low income
- Lack of walking distance to a grocery store
- Lack of affordable housing
- COVID and added pressure on food banks and other front line services
- Lack of food skills for healthy and year round enjoyment of local food
- Increased costs for farmers and independent local food businesses
- Lack of food storage and processing infrastructure
- Natural and market emergencies
- Lack of farm labour
- Climate change impacts on agriculture
- Water demand for increasing market gardening and agriculture in the region

While local governments have many ways to increase food security and interact with many dimensions of the food system, they are limited in their ability to directly address some of the core drivers of food insecurity such as poverty and low-income status of residents. However, there are many areas where local governments influence some of these areas of food insecurity. For example, affordable housing and local economic development, agriculture planning, and working with community organizations, as implemented through policy, regulation, incentive, and land use planning, can jointly increase household and community food security.

Potential key opportunities in Merritt include but are not limited to:

- Community cold storage facilities
- Shared kitchen space (community and enterprise)
- New community gardens

- Supporting local food champions
- Backyard and front yard gardening, urban agriculture and edible landscaping
- Food trucks and farmers markets
- Farm stands and food sharing
- Local food gardening demonstrations
- Learning about indigenous food sovereignty and history of indigenous food systems
- Building food culture
- Regional food and agriculture planning/ sector development
- Promotion and marketing of local food
- Emergency preparedness and recovery
- Climate change adaptation in food and agriculture

2.6. Climate Change

Overview/Challenges

Climate change and extreme weather present a wide range of risks to the City of Merritt's infrastructure, economy, natural environment, and community. As the impacts of climate change continue to intensify, Merritt faces both challenges and opportunities in reducing emissions and preparing for climate change hazards and impacts.

The following table summarizes some of the future climate trends for the City of Merritt, obtained from the Climate Atlas of Canada.

Climate variable	Trend	Example climate impacts
Temperature	Increasing	Shifting growing season, change in thaw cycles and freeze-thaw, more rapid snow melt, etc.
Heat waves	Increasing	Increasing health risks, higher energy demand/costs for air conditioning, etc.
Precipitation	Increasing in all seasons except summer	Increase in river levels and flood risk, wear on infrastructure and transportation systems Water shortages and decreased water quality in summer
Heavy precipitation (>20mm)	Increasing	Increase in flash flood risk, evacuation and blocked access, road washouts, etc.
Storm events	Increasing	Increase in storm damage and debris, power outages, lightning impacts, etc.
Growing season	Longer	Greater volatility of growing conditions,
Forest fires	Increasing	Increased spread of wildfire, evacuation, infrastructure damage, etc.
Freeze-thaw cycles	Decreasing in spring and fall, will be more concentrated in the winter months	Damage to infrastructure; hazardous conditions

Emissions in the City of Merritt are driven by some of the following sources:

- Transportation: Single vehicle occupancy trips, car dependency, airport, etc.
- Residential: Heating, cooling, etc.
- Industry: Mining, construction, resources, etc.
- Agriculture and forestry: Deforestation, logging, farm equipment, etc.

Opportunities (future)

The Official Community Plan is one of the most effective municipal policy tools for advancing action on emissions reductions and climate change resilience. Throughout the OCP, the City can set overarching targets, policies, and processes that help build capacity and institutionalize the continued integration of climate change into daily business and decision-making. The OCP can set direction for land use planning,

growth management, zoning, procurement, asset management, emergency preparedness, and other influential policies that can drastically influence the City's response to climate change. Plans and policies with long-term implications such as land use, zoning, and asset management should be prioritized, to avoid lock-in of decisions that cannot be altered for decades.

It is recommended that climate change is integrated into the OCP as an overarching theme, with connections to various relevant sectors within infrastructure, economic, social, and environmental theme areas. Throughout the OCP, consideration should be given for both emissions reduction and climate resilience.

Theme/Sector	Climate Change Objectives	Theme/Sector	Climate Change Objectives
Overarching Official Community Plan	Mainstream climate-informed decision-making across all departments, planning and policy.	Environment	Protect and enhance natural environment and preserve ecosystem services such as carbon storage, stormwater management, air purification, groundwater filtration, etc.
Energy Use and Emissions Reduction	Set strong targets and direction to achieve emissions reductions for the City and community.	Community Health and Wellbeing	Foster more equitable, connected and prepared communities. Identify vulnerable populations in the community and establish measures to help build resilience.
Adaptation and Resilience	Highlight priority risks and identify measures to adapt to climate change impacts and extreme weather.	Economic Development	Address potential costs or losses due to climate change impacts. Maximize opportunities associated with the transition to a low carbon economy.
Financial/Capital Planning	Ensure the City can account for current and future costs of climate change on city assets, programs, business, and budgeting (including operational and capital planning). Establish financial programs to incentive the reduction of emissions and increase resilience at the community level.	Parks and recreation	Ensure parks, recreation, and facilities are low carbon. Identify climate-related risks to parks, recreation and facilities and take adaptive measures to minimize risk of damage, disruption, or loss of the assets.
Land Use	Land use is a primary driver of emissions and exposure of communities to climate hazards. Ensure future development and growth planning serves to reduce emissions and minimizes exposure to climate risks, locking in long-term community design that promotes more dense and complete communities.	Emergency Management	Promote preparedness and response to extreme weather, forest fire and flooding and other risks.
Infrastructure	Ensure that built systems are energy efficient and can withstand the current and future impacts of climate change and extreme weather.	Food Security	Support access to local food for all, helping to reduce transportation emissions and support resilience and self-reliance within the community.
Transportation	Expand the transportation system within existing urban form, and increase opportunities for active transportation and multimodal alternatives helps to lower emissions and improve community resilience.	Poverty Reduction	Support equitable access to energy and protect vulnerable populations from impacts of climate change and extreme weather.

Theme/Sector	Climate Change Objectives	Theme/Sector	Climate Change Objectives
Asset Management	Understand the impact of climate change on asset lifecycle and lifecycle costing, and manage and reduce the GHG emissions of City assets.	Regional and Indigenous Collaboration	Work with other municipalities, regional entities, and Indigenous partners to identify opportunities to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change outside of the jurisdiction of the municipality.
Water, Stormwater and Wastewater	Efficiency and reduction of wastewater helps reduce energy use and emissions. Promote the conservation of water to reduce energy use in the treatment process and to minimize the risk of water supply challenges. Take into consideration future levels of precipitation and flood risk, and prioritize the use of natural and green infrastructure systems.	Agriculture	Support the agricultural community in methods to improve sustainable and low carbon farming practices, and adapt to changing growing conditions.

2.7.   Other Planning Considerations

2.7.1.   Complete Communities

Overview / challenges

Merritt is currently defined spatially and socially by its 12 sectors. These sectors are each unique in their composition and location within the City. The majority of Merritt's residential sectors are single-family / low density in nature, and most are separated from neighbourhood-scale commercial uses. This lack of proximity to services increases the community's dependency on vehicle travel and increases the number of trips out of the neighbourhood to fulfill basic needs.

Opportunities

With established sectors already in place, Merritt represents a unique opportunity to employ a '15-minute community' by combining similar sectors and establishing larger neighbourhood nodes. A '15-minute community' is defined as any residential area in which all day-to-day needs can be acquired within a 15 minute walk. Using this perspective, establishing a series of neighbourhood hubs which are connected by parks and trails will allow for the location of services in proximity to many homes in a manner that is feasible for successful commercial opportunities.

Developing community nodes that are populated with residential land uses and well-placed community commercial land uses will improve the walkability of neighbourhoods, and increase community members' ability to live, recreate and access basic services within their own neighbourhoods. Although it may be unfeasible to develop each sector as a neighbourhood node, through the use of well-connected parks and trails systems, these services can be easily accessed on foot or on bicycle where services and development are deemed feasible. In addition, multi-residential opportunities are lacking in most sectors and implementation opportunities to develop higher density community nodes would provide services, transit and housing options for more people.

2.7.2.   City Entries

Overview / challenges

Merritt is uniquely positioned at the intersection of three major highway routes, Highway 5, Highway 5A and Highway 8. With these routes providing key transportation infrastructure into and out of the City, challenges arise with ensuring that City entrance opportunities represent the intended look and feel of Merritt. Entrance points into Merritt provide the City's first opportunity to demonstrate the visitor experience. Ensuring that attention is paid in the development of City entrances is integral to setting the look and feel of the city, letting travellers know what to expect in this City. A major challenge to address will be ensuring that all entrance points are considered integral to promoting the City's brand and vision.

Opportunities

As entrances to the city are not zoned appropriately and lack curb appeal, this does not convey the Merritt that is intended to be showcased. While existing industrial and commercial land uses cannot be relocated, considering opportunities for redevelopment in proximity to these entries through the development of a gateway land use could create an entrance through built form. The transformation of entrance points will occur slowly over time as redevelopment occurs and the intended effect has been achieved.

In considering the curb appeal of entrance points, the aesthetics of these areas must be considered as a priority. Opportunities to integrate parks, trails, unique elements such as art or lighting features, and landscaping that depicts the City's focus on active lifestyles and beautification could be explored. These efforts could be combined with the Wayfinding Strategic Plan (2016) to create signage that depicts Merritt as intended, and commencing at entrance points, this same strategy could be carried throughout the City on small and large scales.

The entry from Kamloops (Exit 290) is decently represented, the Lower Nicola Entry (Hwy 8) highlights heavy gravel operations, and the Kelowna entry (Exit 286) is focused on service commercial and a large mill. There is room for aligned enhancement at all entrance points into the City.

2.7.3. Winter City

Overview / challenges

Although Merritt is warmer and less snowy than other mountain communities in British Columbia, it receives more snow than its neighbours in Kamloops. This perception of Merritt being a snowy city is both a challenge and an opportunity – challenging because Kamloops may seem like a better alternative to visit during the winter, but an opportunity to develop spaces and activities that continue to support locals and visitors alike, even when the snow falls.

Opportunities

Using the Winter City guidelines developed by the City of Edmonton, the following principles can be considered key in developing a policy environment that supports multi-seasonal usage, and the ability to thrive as a winter city:

- Incorporate design strategies to block wind
- Maximize exposure to sunshine through orientation and design
- Use colour to enliven the cityscape
- Create visual interest with strategic use of creative lighting
- Provide infrastructure that supports the desired winter life

Designing Merritt to embrace its winter season to capitalize on opportunities could strengthen the local economy through winter tourism, in addition to providing a walkable, usable cityscape across all seasons. Prioritizing walkways and bike lanes to be safe and enjoyable to use despite the weather contributes to a healthy liveable city.

Winter City principles are important for residents and visitors alike, to develop a comfortable, enjoyable city atmosphere. These principles are implemented in the physical design of space to make outdoor activities enjoyable in colder months, to integrate colour and public art into the winterscape, to use lighting to draw interest to outdoor activities, and to ensure that mobility in the winter months is not impeded by snow or inclement weather. This outcome can be achieved through the integration of Winter City design and policy principles within the OCP. Winter tourism opportunities are plentiful in the area and by embracing the winter season in programming and community design, winter will become a time that is enjoyed and looked forward to by residents and visitors alike.

2.7.4.   Emergency Services

Overview / challenges

Merritt's current emergency services centre is over 40 years old and is becoming cramped from an operational standpoint. Its location is such that it can easily provide emergency personnel from its location to all areas in the city, but a second emergency services site would assist in providing increased coverage, especially important in the face of continued city growth.

Opportunities

Developing an understanding from emergency services of future station needs is an important part of planning through OCP land uses to set aside dedicated space for this specific use. The 2012 Fire Station Location Study identified a series of recommendations including two items specifically related to land use within the OCP. These include considering adding a second station in the Pooley Avenue area and considering a training site at or near the airport, in partnership with the Ministry of Forests and/or other agencies with consideration for a later third fire station while planning for this training site.

3. Summary

The growth scenarios and the potential opportunities and strategies included in Section 2 of this report will be further discussed through the stakeholder workshops and public engagement launch events.

The detailed background review reports in regards to planning, servicing, transportation, climate change, poverty reduction and food security can be found in the Appendices of this report.

APPENDIX

A

PLANNING DOCUMENT REVIEW – MERRITT OCP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN, 2011

Merritt's current Official Community Plan (Bylaw No. 2116) was adopted in 2011. The City of Merritt's Official Community Plan (OCP) is a guiding document that provides an updated vision for the future of Merritt and a framework for carrying that vision forward to the year 2030. The OCP provides Council and the public with direction for development and a basis upon which to evaluate proposals to ensure they align with the plan's vision. The intent of the OCP is to provide direction but to also allow for flexibility to customize development. The plan provides a community vision, goals, objectives and policies that the City has looked to, to shape its decisions over the past 10 years. Policy areas include city-wide, regional and fringe areas, umbrella and sector (neighbourhood) policies, and directions on development permit areas with an implementation plan.

The City's vision for "The Ideal Future We Are Striving For" includes:

- A Healthy Economy
- A Great Place to Live
- A Thriving Downtown
- A Progressive Image
- Room to Grow
- A great Place to Visit
- Viable City Finances
- Well-Managed City Assets

The guiding principles of this OCP include:

- Leadership by Council
- Setting a Positive Tone
- A blended Approach for Handling New Development
- Partnering with Others
- Communication in all Directions
- Emphasis on Results
- Investing in the Future
- Capitalizing on our Strengths
- Working with Nature
- Celebration, Recognition and Appreciation
- Integration with Other Projects

Relevance to OCP Update: While the 2011 OCP needs an update, several principles and policies within it still ring true in the City. In addition to the similarities carried from the previous OCP, the accomplishments of the 2011 OCP should be celebrated while the community moves forward to shaping an updated vision and growth direction for the City.

2   ZONING BYLAW, 2015 & 2020

The Zoning Bylaw (Bylaw No. 2187) was adopted in 2015. The document contains development specifications for residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, institutional and recreational are separated into land use districts to achieve a specific "look and feel" in each. In addition to these specific district specifications, specific use regulations are included, in addition to screening and landscaping, and parking and loading regulations. These "rules" tell a user what they can or cannot do in their land use district, or what requirements are related to each type of land use.

Many of the regulations in the 2015 Zoning Bylaw were no longer conducive to creating the vibrant, growing community that Merritonians would like the community to become. Residents and developers indicated that the previous bylaw needed a refresh. As a result, Zoning Bylaw No. 2284, 2020 was adopted on September 1, 2020. The new Bylaw is intended to aid in the creation of additional housing options for current and future residents, provide more flexibility for business owners, and help attract development and investment to the community.

The following 26 land use districts are included within the 2020 Zoning Bylaw. Based on the new zoning map, the area for each zone is also included as a base information for the fiscal analysis for the OCP document.

FID	ZONE		Area_Ha	%	By Category	Area_Ha	%
0	AR1	Agricultural	691.45	29.90%	Agricultural	691.45	29.90%
1	C1	Recreation Commercial	45.92	1.99%	Commercial	163.60	7.07%
2	C2	Tourist Commercial	2.56	0.11%			
3	C3	Regional Commercial	13.87	0.60%			
4	C4	Corridor Commercial	30.00	1.30%			
5	C5	Neighbourhood Commercial	0.17	0.01%			
6	C6	City Centre District	20.19	0.87%			
7	C7	Service Commercial	23.65	1.02%			
8	C8	Airport Commercial	27.23	1.18%			
9	CD	Comprehensive Development	122.35	5.29%	Comprehensive	122.35	5.29%
10	FD	Future Development	550.54	23.80%	Future	550.54	23.80%
11	M1	Light Industrial	73.72	3.19%	Industrial	187.11	8.09%
12	M2	Heavy Industrial	113.39	4.90%			
13	P1	Parks & Cemetery	54.25	2.35%	Community use	171.00	7.39%
14	P2	Institutional & Public Use	99.03	4.28%			
15	P3	Post Secondary Educational	17.72	0.77%			
16	R1	Single Family Residential	193.04	8.35%	Residential	426.79	18.45%
17	R1A	Large Parcel Residential	28.30	1.22%			
18	R2	Low Density Residential	133.32	5.76%			
19	R3	Small Parcel Residential	2.19	0.09%			
20	R4	Residential Modular Home	3.42	0.15%			
21	R5	Mobile Home Park	18.52	0.80%			
22	R6	Strata Parcel Residential	3.79	0.16%			
23	R7	Medium Density Residential	29.65	1.28%			
24	R8	High Density Residential	13.11	0.57%			
25	RC1	Residential Care Housing	1.45	0.06%			
Total			2312.82	100.00%		2312.82	100.00%

Relevance to OCP Update: The zoning bylaw relates directly to the growth areas and objectives ultimately identified in the Official Community Plan by specifically regulating the form and function of land uses. The zoning bylaw will shape the aesthetic of the development planned in the OCP, guided by high-level principles for development.

3   CITY CENTRE IMPROVEMENT PLAN, 2008

Approved in 2008, the City Centre improvement plan update reviews the vision, strategies and goals of the original 2005 City Centre Plan. The objective of the plan update is to identify projects within the downtown to be realized, including streetscape, murals, public works, private development and other projects. The plan identifies the need for amendment or preparation of project planning, development policy and other drivers of downtown enhancement.

The objectives of the plan are as follows:

-        Confirm the currency of the City Centre Plan with respect to vision, strategies and goals

-        Review the original action plans to identify completed, pending and remaining projects

-         Identify possible projects within the downtown over the next five years including streetscape, murals, public works, private development and other projects and identify opportunities to coordinate and expand implementation of City Centre objectives within these

-        Review nad identify the need and direction for possible amendment or preparation of project planning, development policy or other tools applicable to downtown enhancement

-        Review the operation of the CCB in relation to the present mandate nad potential addition of economic development and tourism marketing functions

-        Define and prioritize a five-year program for initiatives and budgets related to on-going improvement of the City Centre.

Relevance to OCP Update: This plan is fairly old and objectives identified within this plan should be recognized as complete our outstanding, and this result translated into the OCP policy directions for city centre. This plan should be considered in line with the downtown plan and policies related to downtown revitalization.

4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN, 2014/2015

The Economic development plan lays out the groundwork for the City of Merritt to work towards an enhanced economy by consulting the community, identifying strengths and qualities of the community, identifying priorities and targets for economic development and providing recommendations to move forward and implement the directions of the plan.

Merritt's unique selling points include:

- A conveniently located transportation hub

- Future development opportunities – downtown

- Semi-arid climate for year-round activities

- An identifiable "country" lifestyle

- Year-round recreational opportunities

- Proximity to large population base

The outcome areas of this plan include enhancing and expanding quality of economic development, communicating a collaborative approach for real outcomes, marketing Merritt as a vibrant and competitive community, increasing awareness and enhancing tourism.

Relevance to OCP Update: One of the pillars of a successful community is a strong economy. Combining the strategies and outcome areas of the economic development are achievable directly through the update of the OCP. These two plans function very closely, with the priority areas of the economic development plan guiding policies and themes within the OCP.

5   PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE MASTER PLAN, 2017

The parks, recreation and culture master plan follows the vision to provide a system of inclusive, accessible and diverse parks, trails, recreation and cultural opportunities, which promote a healthy and active lifestyle for residents and attract visitors. The plan includes a series of principles relating to the overall vision. Divided into sections, the plan reviews parks, trails, recreation and culture facilities and planned future service delivery.

The plan's vision is as follows:

-        "To provide a system of inclusive, accessible and diverse parks, rails, recreation and cultural opportunities which promote a healthy and active lifestyle for residents and attract visitors.

The plan's principles include:

-        Park, recreation and cultural facilities are accessible and affordable to people of all ages, abilities and income levels.\

-        Efforts are focused on individual health, family togetherness and community well-being

-        A healthy and active lifestyle is encouraged and is an integral part of daily life

-        All leisure facilities are linked through a network of greenways, walkways and trails

-        Park, trail, recreation and cultural facilities nad programs attract visitors, encourage tourism and stimulate the economy

-        City infrastructure is clean, safe, affordable and energy efficient

-        Diversity, mix of culture and community heritage are celebrated

-        The community is a partner in both the ongoing assessment and delivery of services and programs

-        Residents have pride in the community and a strong sense of belonging

-        The environment is respected, protected, enhanced and contributes to the quality of life in the community

-        Staff, volunteers, visitors and partners are valued

-        Inter-agency partnerships are encouraged

Relevance to OCP Update: This plan represents three major theme areas that are included within the OCP update. Alignment between the OCP and this plan is paramount as the recreational and cultural needs of the City will have been reviewed in detail to craft the master plan. In using this detailed information, the OCP can work to support the objectives of the plan, and promote the identified priorities within their anticipated timeframes.

6   AIRPORT MASTER PLAN, 2019

Merritt's Airport is an Aerodrome used to service General Aviation (GA) users, as well as Air Ambulance and Forest Fire Fighting fixed wing aircraft. The master plan contains recommendations to proceed with development on and around the airport designated lands.

Relevance to OCP Update: The airport plays an important role in the recreation, safety and security of the City of Merritt. The current and ongoing requirements of the airport are an important consideration in regulating and limiting development in proximity to the runway, in addition to ensuring uses are compatible. The vision of the airport when developed can play into the vision of the OCP.

7   AGE FRIENDLY ACTION PLAN, 2016

With more than one third of Merritt's population considered aging residents and significant growth in this age cohort (65+) projected in the coning years, this plan reviews the conditions for this demographic within the City and provides recommendations for improvement. Ultimately, the City must respond to the needs of the aging population, with this plan providing a framework. The plan is focused on active aging by building an age friendly city. The main focus areas within the plan are outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, communication and information, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, and community supports and health services.

The plan's vision is as follows:

-        Our vision for Merritt is to be an age-friendly community in which residents of all ages, cultures and backgrounds feel welcomed and recognized for their contributions to the city and are encouraged to lead active, safe and enriched lives. The City of Merritt will ensure that the community remains an age-friendly place to live by continuing to nurture strong social connections; foster inter-generational inclusion and respect; ensure safe and accessible environments; and expand important programs and services for older adults.

The goals of the plan include:

1.   Sidewalks, pathways and pedestrian crossings will be safe and accessible for all residents

2.   Local businesses respect aging residents and accommodate for their distinct needs

3.   Aging residents can easily access programs and services both locally and regionally using safe and reliable transportation options

4.   Residents of all ages will have access to affordable and diverse housing options

5.   Home maintenance services and renovation options are affordable and available to aging residents

6.   Local events and activities will be affordable and accessible to all residents:

7.   Outreach will be available to older residents at risk of social isolation

8.   Intergenerational programming will be encouraged and promoted

9.   Learning opportunities will be available to all residents

10.   The City of Merritt will provide clear and transparent information to aging residents of the community

11.   Aging residents will have the opportunity to obtain meaningful employment

12.   Aging residents have access to adequate community services, programs and healthcare

Relevance to OCP Update: Considering the aging population in the update of the OCP will be paramount. Using the OCP as the conduit for the age-friendly policies identified in this plan, the City will be better positioned to prioritize the directions and recommendations set forth in this plan, and implement them within its high level policy.

8 WAYFINDING STRATEGIC PLAN, 2016

Several types of signs exist, including gateway signs, wayfinding signs, facility signs, orientation maps and general local character and identify elements. Many considerations are at play when designing and placing signage that both creates a City identity while increasing the ease in which the City can be navigated. Signage has a unique quality to it in that it can convey cultural or heritage significance in the City of Merritt, while also acting as an information piece for several user groups (i.e. pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, users requiring accessibility accommodations).

The objectives of the plan include:

- Inform and direct visitors and residents downtown towards cultural, historic and recreational amenities; to local businesses and services.

- Create signage that will meet the needs of residents and visitors whether traveling through Merritt as a pedestrian, in a motor vehicle, or by transit or cycling.

- Establish a high-quality design that captures local character and is coherent and attractive.

- Consider graphic standards established by the City of Merritt focused on local identity and aesthetic.

- Understand key entrances and gateways to Merritt, including decision points and sites where navigation information is suited.

- Give sign placement guidance for specific corridors or areas of the community.

The ley principles of the plan include:

1. Connect places – This strategy helps people to travel between destinations and develop an increased sense of how walking, cycling, transit and driving can support mobility.

2. Use consistent names - Consistent use of agreed names helps people to confidently use wayfinding signage to reach destinations.

3. Keep information simple - Information should be presented to users in a manner that is clear, logical and brief – making it easy to understand while still in motion so that one does not need to interrupt a journey in order to orient oneself.

4. Place information at decision points - If information is placed at logical decision points an individual's anxiety when traveling is significantly reduced and their experience is more positive.

5. Progressive disclosure – Provide information one stage of a journey at a time as it is needed. This approach mirrors the way people make travel based decisions; provide broader destinations first (e.g., Downtown), and as you get closer provide the next major destination information (e.g., Visitor Information Centre, Aquatic Centre).

6. Help people learn – A wayfinding system to serve multi-modal transportation should help people to understand what is accessible as well as how to navigate a network. This approach serves those who want to walk or cycle to replace a journey by car or explore on foot upon arriving by transit or car.

Relevance to OCP Update: The Official Community Plan will include several aspects relating specifically to wayfinding, both in supportive policies and in conveying the Merritt brand throughout the City. Additionally, the importance of integrating local Indigenous culture and translations into wayfinding signage will be an important piece.

9   INTEGRATED GROWTH STRATEGY, 2010

The integrated growth strategy establishes a 20-year vision to guide how and where growth will occur in the community. The strategy establishes a framework for development that includes guiding principles for growth and engagement related to community growth. Directions are based on projected population growth and availability of land for residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development. In addition, these locations were chosen based on the availability of supportive infrastructure and community support of infill development. Issues identified that would hinder growth are explored within the plan and guiding policies developed to respond to these challenges.

Relevance to OCP Update: This plan has been in effect for 10 years. Many of the theme areas and directions established to guide growth and development in the City still ring true and it will be important to align the OCP with the directions in this plan.

10 TNRD REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY, 2013

To align Regional Districts and their member municipalities, the province adopted the Growth Strategies Amendment Act in order to ensure that intermunicipal planning considerations would become a required part of municipal planning activities. The intermunicipal planning considerations that are to ensure sustainable planning include development and settlement issues, coordination of land, public facilities and other shared resources, encouragement of economic opportunities, land choices and quality of life attributes in an affordable and efficient manner, and protection/conservation of environmental and natural amenities. The context of the plan is developed using the housing, population and economic forecasts in the region.

The plan's vision is:

- The TNRD is a unique region of diverse urban and rural communities, wilderness and natural resource opportunities, and a vibrant economy. Through intermunicipal planning initiatives, growth can be jointly planned for and efficiencies achieved.

The goals of the plan include:

- Promote and encourage local and regional economic development

- Protect and enhance the natural environment

- Protect and maintain access to the resource base

- Preserve the rural and wilderness character of the region

- Protect farmland and encourage farming

- Ensure adequate and appropriate services are provided

- Maintain mobility throughout the region

- Ensure adequate range of housing opportunities are available

- Promote regional collaboration on common issues

- Cooperate with First Nations in planning and servicing matters

Relevance to OCP Update: Intermunicipal planning is an important consideration in planning for the Official Community Plan. The goals and objectives of planning the Merritt Community Plan align with the theme areas within the TNRD Regional Growth Strategy including forecasting based on population, housing and the economy. The issues discussed within an OCP align with those within the regional growth strategy including environmental protection, aligned energy and transportation systems, open space planning and alignment of cultural and other sites for joint use. Many of the intermunicipal planning policies could be realized through the drafting of the OCP.

11 TNRD RGS MONITORING REPORT, 2017

The Local Government Act requires Regional Districts that have adopted an RGS to establish a program to monitor the implementation and the progress made towards the objectives and actions of that Strategy (developed in 2013), and then to report on that progress. Monitoring RGS success requires gathering information to gauge the progress towards meeting the goals and objectives we have established.

- Population
- Housing
- Transportation
- Economy
- Employment
- Environment
- Health
- Agriculture
- Agricultural Protection
- Waste Generation & Diversion

After extensive government and stakeholder consultation, the Board approved the 10 indicators that are examined in this report. The first monitoring report was released in 2015. This report reconsiders the same 10 indicators based on new data gathered from a variety of sources including 2016 census data.

Relevance to OCP Update: The regional growth strategy monitoring report ensures that initially developed goals and objectives remain relevant to the region. Given that the 2016 census data is included in the monitoring report, this ensures that new information is taken into account. As the 2016 census data informed the most recent update, an update will likely inform the next monitoring update. These updates are important to consider in the development of the OCP as they provide a review of the same objectives that inform the OCP, and the information gathered can be piggybacked upon to form Merritt-specific policies and directions, based on research and evaluation by the board.

12 FIRE STATION LOCATION STUDY, 2012

The Fire Station Location Study develops a report that assesses how the City's anticipated growth patterns will impact Fire and Emergency service delivery, and includes options and recommendations for Council's consideration. The existing fire station is both antiquated and at capacity. Although the existing station will remain in its current location, an additional location will assist with decreased response times and wider coverage of the City in line with projected population growth and increase in housing.

The study yielded the following recommendations:

1.   Merritt Fire Rescue Department should consider adding a second Station in the Pooley Avenue area

2.   Merritt Fire Rescue Department should consider renovation of the existing Fire Station

3.   Merritt Fire Rescue Department should consider adding an additional career Officer to assist with the intensified training and growing response demands of the community.

4.   A training site should be considered at or near the airport, in partnership with the Ministry of Forests and/or other agencies, as discussed within this report. Consideration for a later third Fire Station should be included when planning for this training site.

5.   Merritt Fire Rescue Department should engage in a process to continue Strategic Planning to clearly identify current realities and establish a path to the future, in harmony with the goals and objectives of the City of Merritt.

Relevance to OCP Update: In determining anticipated growth patterns and locations for future land uses, the OCP can work closely with the City's future fire suppression requirements both from a spatial and policy perspective.

13 COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN, 2020

The objective of this update is to summarize wildfire risk recommendations from 2006 that have been implemented; identify the current main risk factors related to wildfire and provide recommendations to address communication and education, structure protection, emergency response and fuel management. To assess the risk, a Geographic Information System (GIS) model called the Wildfire Risk Management System (WRMS) was used in addition to completion of Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Wildfire Threat Assessment Worksheets (as required by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM)).

The Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Program was created in British Columbia (BC) to aid communities in developing plans to assist in improving safety and to reduce the risk of damage to property.

The CWPP update consists of five general phases:

1.   Background research - general community characteristics, such as demographic and economic profiles, critical infrastructure, environmental and cultural values, fire weather, fire history, relevant legislation and land jurisdiction.

2.   Field work - site visits to the area allow for 1) meetings with City staff; 2) fuel type verification; 3) completing hazard assessment forms, and 4) identification of site-specific issues.

3.   GIS analyses - digital fuel typing and mapping of probability and consequence of fire, and community wildfire risk.

4.   Report and map development - identification of City challenges and successes, identification of measures to mitigate risks, and recommendations for action.

5.   Report review - by City staff, representatives from the Thompson Nicola Regional District, Cascade Forest District, BCWS, Lower Nicola Indian Band and Coldwater Indian Band.

Relevance to OCP Update: The 2020 update of the CWPP is an important consideration in its recommendations to both wildfire development permit areas, and in providing general policy recommendations for implementing firesmart development in the City. This update includes 5 new areas for subdivision development. These considerations are an important inclusion in future areas slated for residential growth expansion.5 Year

14 FIVE YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN, 2020

The 5-year financial plan is a guiding document that plans in 5-year increments, providing rationale for spending based on both income and expenditures. These projects include large capital projects.

Relevance to OCP Update: The 5-year financial plan, and its revisions each 5 years following, are considered hand in hand with the OCP. The short-medium term objectives identified in the OCP must be financially realized in this plan.

APPENDIX

B

SERVICING BACKGROUND REVIEW – MERRIOT OCP

This is a summary of the available utility and infrastructure master plans, assessments, and studies that were reviewed in preparation for drafting the 2020 Merritt Official Community Plan (OCP). It is intended to provide a high-level overview of the content of these reports, in order to quickly understand what information is available and may be relevant to the overall challenges and opportunities facing the City of Merritt (the City) in the coming years.

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

In this section, the following reports were reviewed:

— **Road Corridor Assessment (2018), Tetra Tech**
— **Bridge Inspection Report (2015), Watson Engineering**
— **Voght Corridor Traffic Study (2005), Urban Systems**

The City of Merritt's transportation network consists of approximately 68 kilometres of paved roads and lanes, 10 kilometers of gravel roads, 4 vehicle bridges, and 2 pedestrian bridges (Road Corridor Assessment, 2018; Bridge Inspection Report, 2015). These roads range from good to very poor in condition, with an average of 79% of the network rated fair or better and 21% of the roads in backlog (i.e., poor to very poor condition). The City's bridges are generally in good structural condition with some maintenance required. The Bridge Inspection Report provides estimated replacement costs for the structures with no indication of remaining lifespan, while the Road Corridor Assessment recommends increasing the current annual $500k maintenance program to $850k in order to maintain existing levels of service.

With the exception of the Voght Corridor Traffic Study (2005), none of the reports comment on expansion of capacity to accommodate future development. The Voght Corridor study projects a 1.2% growth rate, based on census population date from the last 30 years; this report recommends intersection improvements, and, in particular, the addition of left-turn bays along the route at a cost of $500k to minimize delays in the future growth condition. Notably, it recommends the eventual 4-laning of the Voght St corridor at an anticipated cost of $2.72M and/or the creation of a Voght/Garcia One-Way Couplet at a cost of $4.8M in order to maintain existing delay level of service beyond the 20-year study horizon (2025+). Given recent (2019-2020) road improvements along the Voght St Corridor, it is not expected that either of these notable two recommendations will be implemented.

Bullet point summaries of the general report contents are included below:

— **Road Corridor Assessment, 2017**
    — Collected and analyzed road corridor data
    — Reports the existing paved and gravel road and sidewalk conditions
    — Determines funding required to maintain the paved road network at current service levels
    — Does not talk about future growth – only maintaining existing roads

- Conclusion is that current funding of $500k per year will result in an infrastructure backlog cost of $13.5M by 2038 with road conditions significantly deteriorating. Funding would need to increase to approximately $850k per year to maintain existing conditions
- **Bridge Condition Assessments, 2015**
  - Concludes that all the City bridges are in good structural condition
  - Some maintenance concerns are identified but not costed
  - Replacement costs are projected, but expected remaining life is not included, making a time-sensitive financial plan not feasible to calculate.
- **Voght Corridor Upgrades Report, 2005**
  - Highlights the OCP focus of the corridor as the "Northern Gateway" into City
  - Critical link from Coquihalla and Hwy 5A to City Centre
  - Access to numerous commercial, residential, recreational, and institutional developments

In summary, there is not an integrated plan to address the transportation requirements of the future and the current funding for road maintenance is inadequate to maintain the existing level of service.

WSP is currently working with the City to develop an Asset Management Plan and 10-year Infrastructure Capital Plan that will inform and provide for a road maintenance program; however, further consideration will likely need to be given to a comprehensive update to the existing DCC bylaw and capital improvements plan to fund future transportation projects necessitated by future growth.

It is understood that the City has commissioned an Active Transportation Master Plan that is currently being developed. It is not known if this report will be available for consideration in this OCP process; however, it is well-understood that the importance of a robust active transportation network within a growing community is critical and will most certainly warrant consideration in the OCP.

WATER SYSTEM

In this section, the following reports were reviewed:

- **Water Utility Master Plan (2012), Opus DaytonKnight**
- **Well Assessment and Asset Evaluation (2012), Western Water Associates**
- **Source Water Assessment and Protection Plan (2017), Associated Environmental**

The City obtains water from a groundwater aquifer beneath the City; five wells pump water through approximately 75km of watermains, with five storage reservoirs. Of the five wells, 4 are relatively shallow and at higher vulnerability due to the unconfined nature of the aquifer and the high groundwater table. Based on this vulnerability, the City has established a groundwater protection zone; recommendations for protection are detailed in the Source Water Protection Plan (2017), but it is unclear how these recommendations have been enacted or are enforced. The Well Assessment Report (2012) concludes that the City's wells are generally in good conditions, but require some regular maintenance and monitoring.

The Water Utility Master Plan (2012) outlines two growth scenarios (1.1% and 3.5%) for the City and provides a financial model to fund the improvements necessary to maintain the level of service for the project growth under several supply scenarios. It concludes the existing system has sufficient supply capacity to meet the 1.1% growth scenario but not the 3.5% scenario, with several improvements to the distribution system required in either case – with the primary limitations in the system being fire flow capacity. Recommendations for funding maintenance and replacement costs with rate payer fees are presented, requiring an approximate investment of $3.735M for anticipated capital costs through to 2030.

- **Water Utility Master Plan, 2012**

- Provides the City with a long-term plan for decision making
- Assesses the existing water treatment, storage, and distribution system in terms of its capacity to meet the future development plans for the next 20 years
- Provides recommendations for the necessary upgrades to meet those requirements based on the established level of service
- Reviews: source supply, source quality, storage, and fire protection
- Outlines a financial model to estimate the sustainable price for water to ensure continuous operation for the 20 year horizon period and beyond
- **Well Assessment Report, 2012**
  - Merritt owns and operates an effective groundwater supply system
  - Has taken proactive steps to ensure an adequate supply of groundwater is available for the future
  - Recent well maintenance and redevelopment projects have demonstrated that the well performance tends to decline as pumping continues year to year, and that redevelopment can restore some but not all of the lost capacity
  - Provides recommendations for system capital improvements and maintenance
- **Source Water Protection Plan, 2017**
  - Identifies and ranks hazards that may threaten the quality of the groundwater supply system
  - Develops recommendations to reduce or mitigate the hazards
  - Provides costs and timelines for recommendations to help with planning and budgeting
  - Drywells pose a potential concern for contamination of the water supply

In summary, the current and future needs of the water supply and distribution system are generally well understood. The foundations for establishing a sustainable financial model for the utility are in place, with utility rates requiring regular review. Options for developer-paid funds for needed capital improvements should be regularly explored, particularly for future growth areas requiring greenfield capital expansions to the network (i.e., DCC Bylaw review).

SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM

In this section, the **Sanitary Sewer Collection System Master Plan (2012), GeoAdvice Engineering** was reviewed. The City's sanitary sewer network comprises of approximately 60km of pipe, including two siphons and two lift stations. The report measured and modelled the network flows, finding that groundwater infiltration represented about one-third of the base flow, which does present an opportunity for improvement as the system components are upgraded over time.

The report analysed the capacity of the existing system under two growth scenarios: 1.1% and 3.5% growth. It could be noted that at the time of the report, the 2020 population projections under these scenarios would be 8,127 and 10,276 people respectively; this may be compared to current data to assess which scenario reflects the more applicable growth scenario. The report highlights several proposed developments at the time and OCP defined growth areas, modeling some more detailed population allocations that may be of interest to the OCP process.

The conclusion of the report is that increasing revenues in proportion with the expected growth and inflation generates is sufficient to fund the maintenance and replacement of the infrastructure, with capital improvements being funded through DCCs.

DRAINAGE AND STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

In this section, the Integrated Stormwater Master Plan (2014), Associated Engineering was reviewed. The report discusses the drainage implications from Merritt's transition from a ranching and farming community in the early 1900s to an urban centre with developing industries, commercial, and residential

neighbourhoods. The City has a long history of river-flooding, ice-jams, and erosion that have impacted the design and operation of the City's drainage infrastructure.

The main goal of the report was to 1) identify recommendations for alleviating drainage, erosion, and flooding concerns within the City in a way that remediates water quality issues as well as protects and restores riparian and aquatic habitat; and 2) provide an implementation and funding plan for the recommended works.

The report acknowledges the primary concern of protecting the City's drinking water aquifer source (see Source Water Protection Plan, summarized above in the "Water" section), also highlighting the importance of raising awareness, interest, and support for managing stormwater runoff in an environmentally sustainable manner; the report strongly recommends the inclusion of a "Groundwater Protection Zone" in the OCP, which as been implemented.

In conclusion, the report provides a list of projects to be completed within the next 20 years, to remediate and plan for future development, at a total cost of approximately $9M. Funding sources are suggested and include: capital construction program, DCCs, and grant funding. The report also provides several suggestions for updates to the Zoning Bylaw and the Subdivision and Development Bylaw.

APPENDIX

C

Transportation Background Review – Merritt OCP

1.0 What's the existing picture of commuting and travelling in Merritt?

Provided for in Statics Canada 2016 Census[1]. Below are tables concerning:

- Main Mode of Commuting
- Commuting Duration
- Time Leaving for Work

Main mode of commuting

Characteristic	Merritt				British Columbia			
Main mode of commuiting	%	Total	Male	Female	%	Total	Male	Female
Total - main mode of commuiting for the employed labour force aged 15 years and over in private households with a usual place of work or no fixed workplace address - 25% sample data	100%	2,815	1,535	1,285	100%	2,093,145	1,087,655	1,005,490
Car, truck, van - as a driver	77%	2,160	1,190	980	70%	1,475,585	803,485	672,095
Car, truck, van - as a passenger	6%	180	105	80	5%	114,580	49,075	65,500
Public transit	1%	30	20	15	13%	274,205	117,830	156,375
Walked	12%	335	165	170	7%	142,310	62,395	79,920
Bicycle	2%	65	40	20	2%	51,350	32,665	18,680
Other method	1%	35	15	20	2%	35,115	22,195	12,915

Commuting duration

Characteristic	Merritt				British Columbia			
Commuting duration	%	Total	Male	Female	%	Total	Male	Female
Total - Commuting duration for the employed labour force aged 15 years and over in private households with a usual place of work or no fixed workplace address - 25% sample dataCensus data footnote 176	100%	2,815	1,535	1,280	100%	2,093,140	1,087,650	1,005,490
Less than 15 minutes	73%	2,055	1,015	1,040	29%	601,950	276,005	325,950
15 to 29 minutes	14%	385	225	155	33%	689,520	353,590	335,925
30 to 44 minutes	4%	100	60	35	20%	425,680	237,995	187,685
45 to 59 minutes	4%	125	95	30	9%	184,690	104,220	80,465
60 minutes and over	6%	155	135	20	9%	191,305	115,840	75,470

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[1] https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5933006&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=Merritt&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&TABID=1&B1=All

Time leaving for work								
Characteristic		Merritt				British Columbia		
Time for leaving work	%	Total	Male	Female	%	Total	Male	Female
Total – Time leaving for work for the employed labour force aged 15 years and over in private households with a usual place of work or no fixed workplace address - 25% sample dataCensus data footnote 177	100%	2,815	1,530	1,285	100%	2,093,140	1,087,650	1,005,490
Between 5 a.m. and 5:59 a.m.	9%	265	195	70	7%	142,370	101,315	41,050
Between 6 a.m. and 6:59 a.m.	15%	420	285	135	16%	342,500	214,795	127,700
Between 7 a.m. and 7:59 a.m.	18%	510	310	205	25%	526,485	271,110	255,375
Between 8 a.m. and 8:59 a.m.	26%	725	225	500	22%	470,210	202,910	267,295
Between 9 a.m. and 11:59 a.m.	10%	295	120	175	14%	292,185	125,470	166,715
Between 12 p.m. and 4:59 a.m.	21%	585	385	200	15%	319,400	172,045	147,355

2.0 What's the maximum density and population the new zoning bylaw permits downtown? How many square feet X max housing type?

BACKGROUND ZONING RESEARCH

Previous Zoning Bylaw No. 2187, 2015
- Previous downtown Central Business District (C2) limited buildings to 3 ½ stories. Medium density residential uses were required to have commercial space on the first floor.

Proposed Zoning Bylaw No. 2187, 2020

Main Changes
- High Density residential areas would be permitted in the newly renamed City Centre Zoning District (C6), previously Central Business District (C2), without density limitations.
  - The previous bylaw permitted Two Family Dwellings in the district while the proposed bylaw provides allowances for multiple unit apartments and multiple unit townhomes
  - Maximum height raised from lesser of 3 ½ storeys or 14 metres to 6 stories or 25 metres.
- It appears that density is not restricted in the new C6 area for residential use, although the parcel coverage and building height requirements will limit the number of dwellings possible.

Notes below:
- The City Centre Zoning District (C6), includes a variety of principle uses, among them including high density residential and mixed use development. They can be built on the condition that they are located above or below the main floor or behind the commercial uses and have separate entrances. Principle uses include:
  - Dwelling Multiple Unit Apartment;
  - Dwelling, Multiple Unit Townhome.
- Several secondary residential uses are also permitted
  - Dwelling, Semi-Detached;
  - Dwelling, Single Detached;
  - Secondary Suite.
- Maximum Height: Lesser of 25 metres or 6 stories
- Maximum Parcel Coverage: 95%
- There doesn't appear to be a maximum density limitation from the Zoning Bylaw.
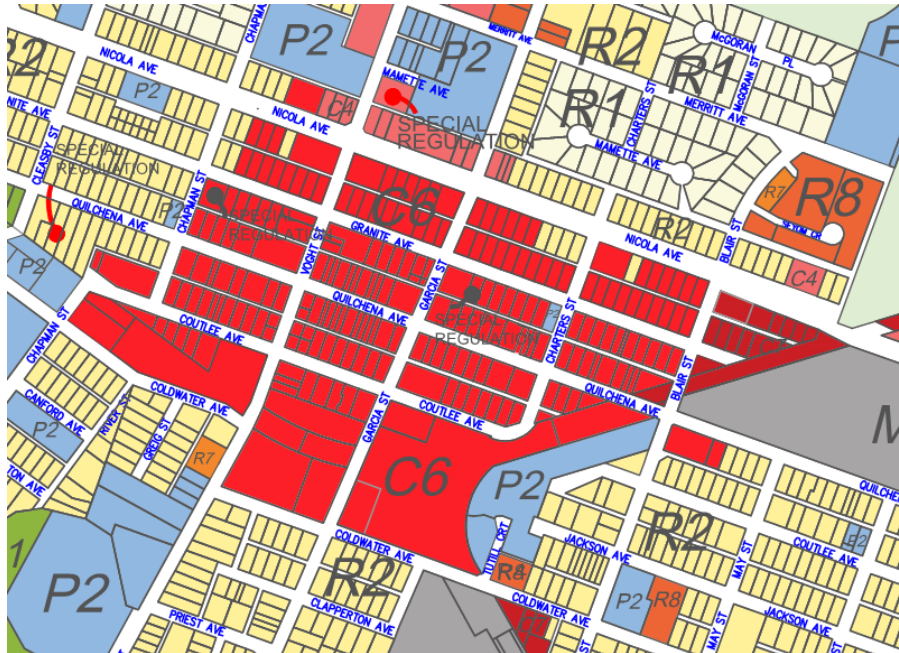
CALCULATIONS

Estimated maximum population of approximately 7000 people, with up to approximately 3000 dwelling units are possible in the City Centre area. Note that this is a theoretical maximum assuming full buildout with all buildings containing first floor commercial and 5 stories of apartment dwellings. This value may be increased with height increase allowances. The following calculation assumptions were used:

- As the City Centre zoning area does not have a maximum density, allowing for high density apartment and townhomes, the maximum density of an apartment building in the High Density Residential (R8) of 150 units/per hectare was taken. This is reasonable since:
  o Buildings in the City Centre are limited to 6 stories. As the first story must be commercial, up to 5 stories can be high density residential can be built. Likewise, apartments in the High Density Residential area are limited to 5 stories
  o The City Centre has a higher parcel coverage of 95% compared to 80% for High Density Residential, which can mean potentially an even higher density. However, this has been ignored.
- Based on the proposed zoning map, approximately 20.2 hectares of land are within the City Centre zoning area.
- The average household size is 2.3 people (2016 Canada Census)
- Height bonuses have been ignored

3.0   Does the new Zoning bylaw roughly comply with the policy and strategy outlined in the City Centre Improvement, Integrated Growth Strategy, and Regional Housing Needs reports? Does it allow for sufficient density per those policy documents?

  o **City Center Improvement Plan 2008**
      ▪ Plan goals meant for 5 year horizon (until 2013). Should be complete, however.
  o **Integrated Growth Strategy (2010)**

- Established a 20 year Vision for the community
- The Official Community Plan has considered a significant area of Merritt to be potentially available for future development (Figure 2.3).
  - The area is equivalent in size to 10,587 hectares of land, which, if considered to be 100% developable, could potentially support over 17,000 single-family homes with an average lot size of 450 square metres.
  - This potential land base currently within the community represents a combination of Greenfield and infill potential, but does not take into consideration numerous constraints upon the land which may limit development
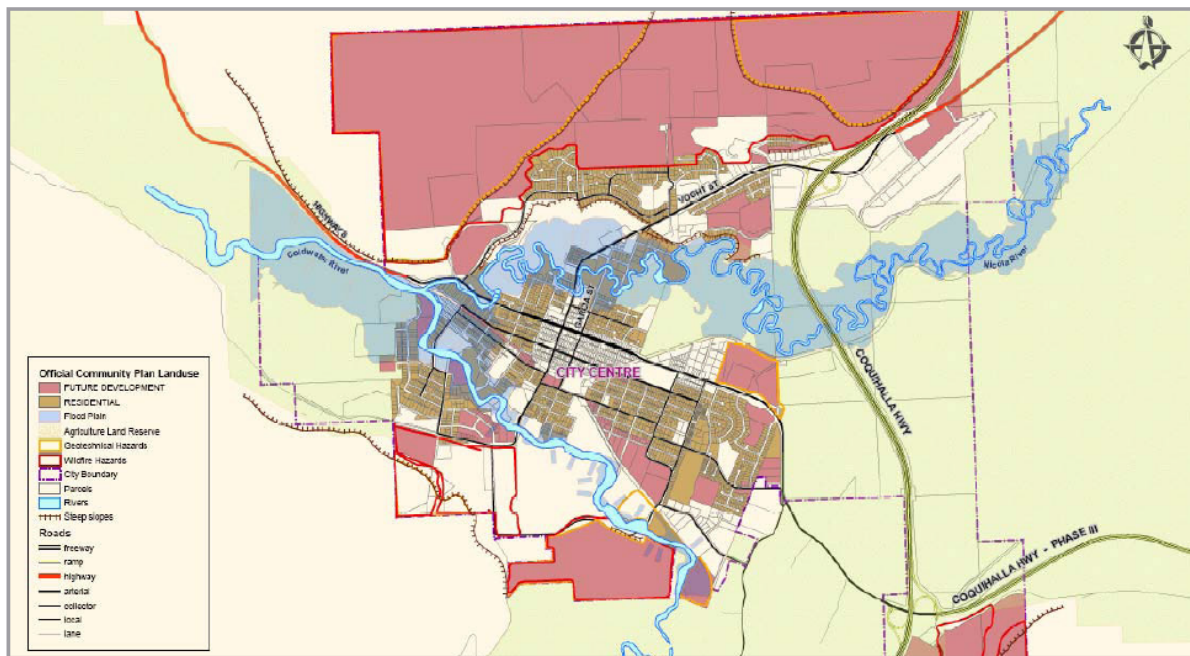
Figure 2.3: Official Community Plan Land Use

- Vision Statement for 2030 (Relevant statements)
  - Merritt is a clean, recreation-based, energy self-sufficient community interconnected with multi-use greenways and a range of housing for 15,000 people;
  - Merit continues to grow up in density instead of out through urban sprawl;
- Community Vision, based on stakeholder consultation by MMM group (including Merritt Mayor and Councillors)
  - **Community Size:** Ideal population of 15,000 people
  - **Growth Areas:** Infill development before new development along perfieries. The Bench and Collettville were mentioned often as the most logical areas for continued residential growth. Active Mountain,

Diamondvale and the Okanagan Connector Area were considered more appropriate for the longer term

- **Type of Growth:** Stakeholder preferred a mixture of single-family homes, condominiums, multi-story apartments and commercial developments in Merritt
- **Housing:** Range of housing with greater emphasis on higher density and lower maintenance including strata developments

- **TNRD Regional Growth Strategy (2013)**
  - Report is a co-operative strategy for achieving a sustainable future in the region, which provides framework for development and settlement issues in the Regional District and coordinate over the next 25 years
  - Population Forecast
    - Regional District population expected to grow at an average rate of 0.8% per year yielding an increase of 29,000 residents over 25 years
    - Of the 29,000 new residents, 85% of them will likely locate in the two largest cities, Kamloops and Merritt
  - Housing Forecast
    - Demand for housing is expected to grow at an annual rate of 1.1% per year. 18,000 additional housing units are expected to be built over 25 years, with 60% of those units being detached single family dwellings
    - Of the 18000 housing units to be built over the 25 years, 75% of those units will likely be located in Kamloops and Merritt

- **Merritt OCP 2011**
  - Creation Initiative 1 – The Sustainable Community
    - Council plans for residential growth such that 75% is in medium density forms including townhouses, multi storey apartments (condominium and rental), quadraplexes, triplexes and similar; and 25% is in family form including small lot or narrow single family, regular single family, and semi detached units
  - Creation Initiative 3 – The "Village" and the "Three Storey City Centre"
    - Council wants to grow a strong and properly development downtown that will support and service a city with and ideal population of 15,000 people
    - The OCP had two initiatives for the Downtown area including:
      - Initiative 1: Create a "Village" designation within the City Centre, to help make downtown vibrant, healthy, and attractive to tourists.
      - Initiative 2: Promote and permit a minimum of three storey developments in all sectors of the City Centre with part of Quilchena Avenue, the main St, maintaining and 2 story profile
        - Residential use would dominate the upper floors to create residential presence in the core

4.0 What urban design and/or active transportation items are specifically mentioned in those reports (i.e. parking maximums, cycle network, curb build outs, etc.)?

Age Friendly Action Plan (2016)
- Goals identified by the plan include:
  - Sidewalk, pathways and pedestrian crossing will be safe and accessible for all residents
  - Local business respect aging residents and accommodate for their distinct needs (e.g. accessibility standards met such as push buttons)
  - Aging residents can easily access programs and services both locally and regionally using safe and reliable transportation options – the community identified difficulties when using public transportation (i.e. limited regional services)
  - Residents of all ages will have access to affordable and diverse housing options – specifically seniors specific housing facilities was identified as a need
- Identified locations for improvements including crosswalk timing improvements, sidewalk improvements, wheelchair drop-improvements, and new sidewalks.
- It is also noted that when improvements are made to existing roadways, provisions for sidewalks and bike lanes should be incorporated in the roadway cross section

Note: When improvements are being made to existing roadways, provision for sidewalks and bike lanes should be incorporated in the roadway cross section.

- Several Transportation improvement areas were identified, especially for the aging population:
  - Specialized transportation services needed (i.e. HandyDART). BC Transit does not provide the service to the area (as of 2016)
  - Aging residents desired more public transportation options, as such, increased BC Transit servicing (i.e. Sunday Service) would be beneficial
  - All local bus stops should follow accessibility standards (i.e. benches, sheltered areas, etc.) as residents voiced concern over safety and ease of use of public transit for aging residents and those with mobility issues

PARKING
Proposed Zoning Bylaw Parking Requirement
- Downtown parking can be reduced by providing funds to the City's Active Transportation and Parking and Infrastructure Reserve Fund, this can go above 50% of the total spaces required
- Additionally, the standard parking requirements can be reduced by 0.25 spaces per dwelling for parcels in the City Centre Parking Zone

5.10.2 In lieu of providing the required number of off-street vehicle Parking Spaces on Parcels in the City Centre Parking Zone, as illustrated in Figure 5.10, an owner may provide to the City a sum of money, for deposit to the City's Active Transportation and Parking Infrastructure Reserve Fund, in the amount of $1.00 per space for up to a 25% reduction, an additional $100.00 per space for up to an additional 25% reduction, and an additional $1,000.00 per space for any additional reduction beyond 50% of the total Parking Spaces required.

Figure 5.10: City Centre Parking Zone

BC Transit City of Merritt Transit Service Review, 2016

5.0   Are there any specific requirements in the sub-development bylaw for transit or transit service?

Sub-Developments Bylaw
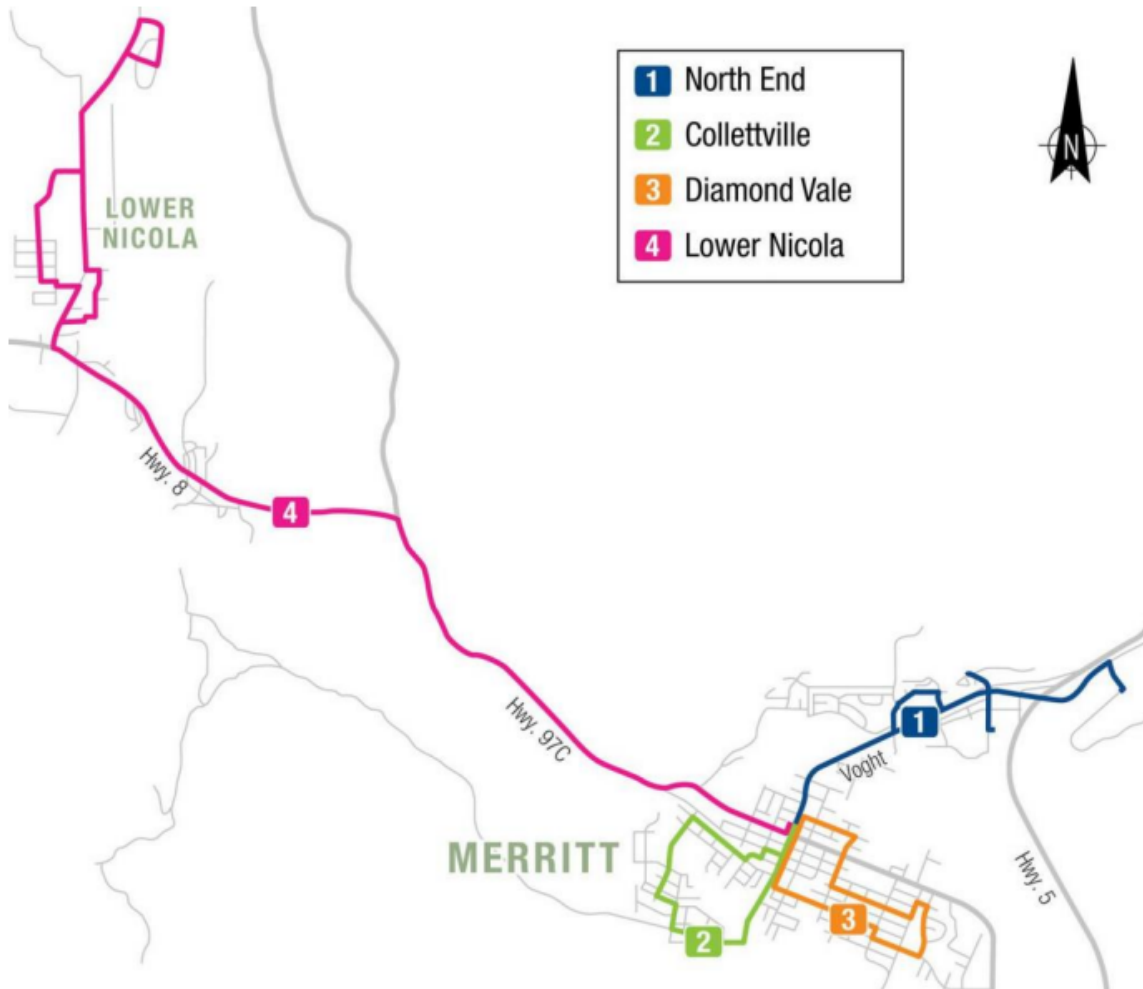- No references to transit or transit services were found in the document. This makes sense considering the incredibly low transit mode share in Merritt (1%).

BC Transit City of Merritt Transit Service Review, 2016
- Report provided several proposed service change options for the immediate (Spring 2017), short-term (Winter 2018), mid-term (2 to 5 years), and longer-term (5+ years) recommendations.

#	Proposed Service Change Option	Proposed Implementation Timeline	Integration with Local Plan	Infrastructure Requirements
1	Include Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) stop on first outbound Route 1 North End trip	Immediate-Term		
2	Alter schedule for Route 4 Lower Nicola to address schedule reliability issues	Immediate-Term		
3	Address Route 3 Diamond Vale safety concern	Immediate-Term		
4	Implement Sunday service, later service, and additional trips to Lower Nicola	Short-Term		To be determined
5	By Request Service for Improved Transit Service Accessibility	Short-Term	Age Friendly Action Plan (Action 2.1)	Additional Bus Parking Space at City Hall
6	Provide on-demand service to Nicola Meadows, the Florentine, and the Nicola Valley Hospital and Health Centre	Short-Term		
7	Alter 3 Diamond Vale Routing to address left turn from Merritt Ave. onto Voght St.	Short-Term		To be determined
8	Revisit routing and consider adding or altering locations of certain bus stops on Route 4 Lower Nicola	Short-Term		Yes
9A	Service expansion to Coldwater Reserve	Medium-Term		Yes
9B	Add trips to Routes 2 and 3 to provide consistent hourly service	Medium-Term		
10	30-minute service frequency on Routes 1, 2, and 3	Long-Term		

#	Proposed Supporting Action	Proposed Implementation Timeline	Integration with Local Plan	Infrastructure Requirements
1	Utilize BC Transit's Development Referral Program	Immediate-Term		
2	Integrate Fare Review recommendations with Service Review	Immediate-Term		
3	Improve transit infrastructure and information at key transit stops	Short-Term		Yes
4	Implement bus stop infrastructure guidelines	Short-Term	Age Friendly Action Plan (Action 2.2)	
5	Create a bus stop database, conduct an infrastructure assessment, and prioritize bus stop infrastructure improvements	Short-Term	Age Friendly Action Plan (Actions 2.2 & 2.3)	
6	Implement Google Transit	Medium-Term		
7	Consider altering Merritt's Snow Removal Policy and Procedure Bylaw to prioritize transit routes and infrastructure	Medium/Long-Term		
8	Adopt Service Standards and Performance Guidelines	Short-Term		

North End — 1
Collettville — 2
Diamond Vale — 3
Lower Nicola — 4

LOWER NICOLA

MERRITT

Hwy. 8

Hwy. 97C

Voght

Hwy. 5

APPENDIX

D

Climate Change Background Review – Merritt OCP

Climate change and extreme weather present a wide range of risks to the City of Merritt's infrastructure, economy, natural environment, and community. As the impacts of climate change continue to intensify, Merritt is looking to implement plans and policies to reduce emissions and prepare for climate change hazards and impacts.

The following table summarizes some of the future climate trends for the City of Merritt, obtained from the Climate Atlas of Canada.

Climate variable	Trend
Temperature	Increasing
Heat waves	Increasing
Precipitation	Increasing in all seasons except summer
Heavy precipitation (>20mm)	Increasing
Storm events	Increasing
Growing season	Longer
Forest fires	Increasing
Freeze-thaw cycles	Decreasing

Climate change and extreme weather impacts in Merritt

Forest fires are expected to increase across Canada, which can increase fire risk particularly in the region's Wildfire Hazard Area. Wildfire smoke may also cause increasing health and safety impacts.

Increasing year-round temperatures can mean the survival of pests throughout the winter, such as the mountain pine beetle – which has caused significant damage to trees in the surrounding region, exacerbating wildfire risk.

Dry conditions and drought have been a long-standing challenge throughout the Thompson-Nicola Regional District. As development continues, temperatures rise, and summer precipitation declines, there is an increasing risk of limited water supply for agriculture, drinking water, and the environment.

Winter snowfall and ice storms have contributed to severe and dangerous conditions throughout the region. As precipitation and extreme weather increase under climate change, winter storm events can cause even more infrastructure damage and health and safety impacts, particularly for users of the Coquihalla Highway.

Warmer temperatures and increasing spring precipitation can mean earlier snow melt, leading to high water levels and more frequent flooding of the Nicola and Coldwater Rivers – a risk that has impacted Merritt and led to multiple evacuations in recent years.

Ice jams on the Nicola and Coldwater Rivers during ice freeze-up and breakup can cause rapid floods, erosion, and infrastructure damage. Earlier spring thaw and increased precipitation can increase the risk of ice jams and associated damage.

GHG Emissions in Thompson-Nicola Regional District

1,072 tCO2e

corporate emissions in 2018

2011 COMMUNITY TARGETS

10% from 2007 levels by 2020

33% from 2007 levels by 2050

(Thompson-Nicola Regional District Growth Strategy)

EMISSIONS SOURCES

Transportation

Single vehicle occupancy trips, airport, etc.

Residential

Cooling and heating

Mining, Construction and Industrial processes

Agriculture and Forestry

Deforestation, logging, agricultural industry

Waste

Landfill gas and waste treatment emissions

Document Review

To establish an understanding of gaps and opportunities for integrating climate change into the Official Community Plan and other municipal plans and policies, several municipal, regional, and provincial plans and policies were reviewed.

Provincial Context

The Province of BC aims to be carbon-neutral ready by 2032, and has produced a suite of tools and resources that can enable communities in supporting this goal. While many of the initiatives are voluntary at the municipal level, more communities are looking to align with provincial targets and recommendations.

Provincial Plan or Policy	Description	Relevance for City of Merritt OCP
BC Climate Action Charter, 2007	A voluntary agreement between the B.C. government, Union of B.C. Municipalities and each local government signatory to measure, report on and reduce GHG emissions.	The City of Merritt is a signatory to the charter, demonstrating its long-standing interest in addressing climate change locally.
Local Government (Green Communities) Statutes Amendment Act, 2008	Requires GHG emission reduction targets in local Official Community Plans and Regional Growth Strategies, and supporting policies and actions. The act also grants local governments with the authority to waive or reduce development cost charges for projects that increase affordable housing, reduce GHG emissions and promote compact development. Allows local governments to create Development Permit Areas (DPAs) for new developments and rehabilitation projects, which contain requirements for GHG emission reduction, and energy and water conservation.	TNRD Regional Growth Strategy and the 2011 Merritt OCP first included emission reductions targets in response to this amendment. Merritt may use the regulatory tools identified in the Act to implement requirements for energy efficiency, land use, and climate resilient developments.
BC Building Code and update	The 2014 update introduced new energy-efficiency requirements for houses and small buildings. The Building Code is being updated currently for additional energy efficiency and resilience considerations.	Merritt is subject to this provincial regulation.
BC Energy Step Code	An optional component of the BC Building Code which local governments may use to incentivize or mandate a level of energy efficiency in new construction that goes above and beyond the requirements of the BC Building Code, towards net-zero energy ready by 2032.	Merritt can adopt and implement requirements and incentives outlined in the BC Energy Step Code.
Landfill Gas Regulation, 2016	Establishes criteria for landfill gas capture from municipal landfills, aiming to maximize reductions of landfill gas emissions and increase landfill gas recovery.	While waste management falls under TNRD jurisdiction, emissions reductions at sites in Merritt can help reduce the City's emissions.
CleanBC Plan, 2018	Sets future direction for emissions reduction targets and initiatives across sectors; identifies incentive and programs that will support municipalities in reducing emissions and adapting to climate change	Merritt can adopt and align with CleanBC targets and recommendations. The Plan also initiated various funding streams for renewable energy and infrastructure.

Thompson Nicola Regional District

As a signatory to the BC Climate Action Charter in 2007, the TNRD pledged to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in its Regional Growth Strategy. Along with emissions reduction targets, the regional Growth Strategy and other regional plans include targets, actions and programs that seek to reduce emissions and waste, some of which are reflected within the City of Merritt's existing OCP.

Regional Plan, Strategy or Policy	Relevance for City of Merritt OCP
Regional Growth Strategy, 2013	Sets Region-wide GHG emission reduction targets of 10% from 2007 levels by 2020, 33% from 2007 levels by 2050. The Strategy sets out a list of actions to support emissions reductions under Section 2.0, *Integrate energy and transportation considerations with land use and settlement planning to achieve conservation, mobility, and efficiency goals.* The Regional Growth Strategy states that Regional Context Statements identifying the relationship between the RGS and municipal OCPs will be identified, specifying any actions required to make their goals and policies consistent within two years of adoption of the RGS.
Regional Growth Strategy Monitoring Report	The report establishes goals and actions to reduce emissions and improve air quality through energy efficiency standards, wildfire prevention measures, environmental protection, and compact community design. It also establishes goals and actions to increase waste diversion across the Region.
Nicola Valley Evacuation Plan, 2013	Identifies risks and hazards for the region based on a hazard, risk and vulnerability analysis. The plan identifies the population at risk, the potential frequency and severity of hazards and the process involved in conducting a safe, orderly evacuation. While climate change is not referenced, the Plan addresses climate-related impacts such as flood and forest fire.
Solid Waste Management Plan, 2018	The plan includes strategies and actions to promote a zero-waste approach across the Region, and increase waste diversion, particularly for the ICI and Construction and Demolition sectors. Climate change is not referenced, but policies to support waste diversion and improve efficiencies in waste management are a driving component of reducing emissions. The City of Merritt implements waste management policies and programs in alignment with this Plan.
Merritt Nicola Tourism Plan, 2014	The plan identifies the desirable characteristics and opportunities for the TNRD tourism sector, including the City of Merritt. It emphasizes the importance of local food and recommends improvements to the public realm in Merritt to increase tourism, encouraging longer stays. The Plan makes no reference to climate change or climate-related risks but identifies numerous events and industries that may be impacted by extreme weather and shifting climate conditions.
Nicola Water Use Management Plan, 2014	The plan discusses challenges in water availability due to continued development and climate change. It provides recommendations for the region, agriculture sector, and local municipalities on conserving water and preventing water shortages during summer.

Municipal Context

Following the path of other British Columbia municipalities, the City of Merritt is looking to advance action on climate change through its Official Community Plan and other municipal plans and policies. To date, most of the City's documented direction on climate change is found within the Regional Growth Strategy, the City's 2010 Integrated Growth Strategy and 2011 Official Community Plan, which established preliminary emissions reduction targets and actions for the City. However, since the development of the OCP, the City has advanced numerous programs and initiatives in response to climate change, mostly focused on reducing emissions.

Recent City climate change initiatives

Since the development of the 2011 OCP, the City participated in the Province of BC Community Action on Energy and Emissions Program, adopting a policy authorizing staff to advance energy efficiency for the community. The OCP and the zoning bylaw were reviewed and opportunities to strengthen energy efficiency policies were identified, which resulted in the creation of incentives such as EnerGuide for new homes.

In 2018, the City completed the 2018 Climate Action Revenue Incentive Program (CARIP) Public Report as required by the Province of BC. The Report identified multiple initiatives the City has taken to improve energy efficiency, promote more compact development, and protect natural areas. Highlights include:

- ✓ Completion of a 2018 community GHG inventory
- ✓ Converted street lights and lights at City facilities to LEDs

- ✓ Requirement for low flow plumbing fixtures and water meters in new construction
- ✓ Ongoing replacement of fleet with more efficient vehicles
- ✓ Subdivision Servicing Bylaw is being updated with consideration for efficiency requirements in lighting.

- ✓ Commissioning of UV system for municipal water system
- ✓ Encouraging compact community design through a revitalization exemption for increased density in new construction and rehabilitation projects
- ✓ Expansion of transit service in the region

- ✓ Initiated work on storm drain master plain for rainfall and runoff

Municipal Plans and Policies

A small proportion of key municipal plans and policies currently include considerations for climate change. The list below briefly overviews the City's current consideration of climate change within plans and policies, and identifies gaps and opportunities for future update and/or plan development.

Plans and policies with direct reference to climate change or climate impacts

Integrated Growth Strategy: Most of the City's initial direction on climate change is documented in the 2010 Integrated Growth Strategy. The Strategy established a list of recommended growth management policies that would help the City encourage emissions reduction and energy self-reliance, protect of natural areas, and improve air quality. The Strategy also included parameters for limiting development in wildfire hazard areas and floodplains. The recommendations were intended to inform the 2011 OCP update.

2011 Official Community Plan: The OCP established the City's first commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as per the Provincial commitment at the time, 10% by 2020. Fifteen actions were established related to water conservation, energy efficiency, waste diversion, land use planning and zoning. Through the Regional Context Statement, the OCP also adopted the TNRD's Regional Growth Strategy recommendations for water conservation and environmental protection, and compact community design.

Plans and policies with indirect reference to climate change or climate impacts:
- *The Integrated Stormwater Master Plan* identifies risks to the stormwater management system including forest fire and ice jams, and recommends an update to the region's floodplain mapping.
- *The Municipal Emergency Plan* includes emergency response requirements for wildfire and flooding (and other hazards).
- *The Fire Station Location Study* identifies opportunities to improve wildfire preparedness and response capacity
- *The Community Wildfire Protection Plan* identifies high risk areas for wildfire, and actions to manage fuel and minimize the spread of wildfire into the City

- *The Zoning Bylaw* includes some parameters limited floodplain development and encourages revitalization projects, though not explicitly connected to energy efficiency or climate risk reduction.
- *The City Centre Improvement Plan* promotes "green development," multimodal and active transportation to improve the sustainability and liveability of the City.
- *The Asset Management Investment Report* does not consider climate change risks or GHG impacts of assets, but includes a recommendation to include climate considerations in future lifecycle analysis.

The remainder of the policies, plans and strategies reviewed did not include reference to climate change. In addition to the policies reviewed, the following policies do not exist currently, and are recommended for future development, which can be leveraged within the OCP if desired.

- Flood Mitigation Plan (under development)
- Storm Drain Master Plan (under development)
- Community Energy and Climate Resilience Plan
- Community Evacuation Plan
- Water Supply and/or Drought Response Strategy
- Transportation Demand Management Plan

Future opportunities

The OCP update presents an opportunity to identify priorities for plan updates or amendments to include consideration for climate change.

Some plans and policies have greater influence on emissions reduction and resilience than others. In general, plans and policies with long-term implications such as land use, zoning, and asset management should be prioritized for update, to avoid lock-in of decisions that cannot be altered for decades. The plans and policies marked with a blue arrow are priority areas for inclusion of climate change, due to their influence over land use, infrastructure, financial planning, and resilience to high-risk impacts such as flooding and wildfire. Moving forward, best practice will be to address the relevance of climate change within each new plan development process.

🟢	Official Community Plan, 2011 ➡
🟢	Integrated Growth Strategy, 2010
🟢	Integrated Stormwater Master Plan, 2014 ➡
🟡	Municipal Emergency Plan, 2006 ➡
🟡	Fire Station Location Study, 2012 ➡
🟡	Community Wildfire Protection Plan, 2020 ➡
🟡	Zoning Bylaw, 2015, 2020 ➡
🟡	City Centre Improvement Plan, 2008 ➡
🟡	Asset Management Investment Report, 2016 ➡
🔴	Permissive Tax Exemption Policy, 2014
🔴	Airport Master Plan, 2019 ➡
🔴	Age Friendly Action Plan, 2016
🔴	Wayfinding Strategy Plan, 2016
🔴	Housing Needs Report, 2019
🔴	5-year Financial Plan, 2020 ➡
🔴	North Bench Neighbourhood Development Plan, 2020
🔴	Water Utility Master Plan, 2012 ➡
🔴	Complete Circle Water Report, 2020
🔴	Sanitary Sewer Utility Master Plan, 2012 ➡
🔴	Voght Corridor Upgrades Report, 2005
🔴	Economic Development Action Plan, 2014 ➡
🔴	Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan, 2017 ➡
🔴	Merritt Well Asset Report, 2012

🟢 Includes explicit and intentional reference to climate change or extreme weather

🟡 Includes inexplicit reference to climate change or extreme weather

🔴 Includes no reference to climate change or extreme weather

➡ Recommendation to include climate change considerations (emissions reductions and resilience) in future update

Mainstreaming Climate Change into the City of Merritt's Official Community Plan

The Official Community Plan is one of the most effective municipal policy tools for advancing action on emissions reductions and climate change resilience. Integrating measures that advance the City's clean energy transition and climate resilience across all municipal planning, operations and decision-making is known as *mainstreaming* – a recognized best practice provincially and internationally. Incorporating strong direction on climate change directly within the OCP will have a "trickle-down" effect, putting a climate "lens" onto all sectors. Through the OCP, the City can set overarching targets, policies, and processes that help build capacity and institutionalize the continued integration of climate change into daily business and decision-making. The OCP can set also direction for land use planning, growth management, zoning, procurement, asset management, emergency preparedness, and other influential policies that can drastically influence the City's response to climate change. A sample of influential policy tools to leverage climate change action through the OCP and other municipal plans and policies are identified below.

Bylaws	Zoning, Development Permit Areas, Subdivision Service Bylaw, etc.
Codes and standards	Building and infrastructure design requirements, Green Standards, Efficiency standards, etc.
Growth and Density requirements	Community design, downtown and neighbourhood planning, transportation network expansion
Financial tools	Incentives, tax or tax exemption, procurement policy, reserve funding, etc.
Strategic Plans and Policies	Area and/or sector master plans (or plan updates)

Opportunity Areas for Climate Change in the OCP

It is recommended that climate change is integrated into the OCP as an overarching theme, with connections to various relevant sectors within infrastructure, economic, social, and environmental theme areas. Throughout the OCP, consideration should be given for both emissions reduction and climate resilience. An overview of the key sectors and opportunities are identified below and will be further detailed as this project progresses.

Theme/Sector	Climate Change Objectives	Theme/Sector	Climate Change Objectives
Overarching Official Community Plan	Mainstream climate-informed decision-making across all departments, planning and policy.	Environment	Protect and enhance natural environment and preserve ecosystem services such as carbon storage, stormwater management, air purification, groundwater filtration, etc.
Energy Use and Emissions Reduction	Set strong targets and direction to achieve emissions reductions for the City and community.	Community Health and Wellbeing	Foster more equitable, connected and prepared communities. Identify vulnerable populations in the community and establish measures to help build resilience.
Adaptation and Resilience	Highlight priority risks and identify measures to adapt to climate change impacts and extreme weather.	Economic Development	Address potential costs or losses due to climate change impacts. Maximize opportunities associated with the transition to a low carbon economy.
Financial/Capital Planning	Ensure the City can account for current and future costs of climate change on city assets, programs, business, and budgeting (including operational and capital planning). Establish financial programs to incentive the reduction of emissions and increase resilience at the community level.	Parks and recreation	Ensure parks, recreation, and facilities are low carbon. Identify climate-related risks to parks, recreation and facilities and take adaptive measures to minimize risk of damage, disruption, or loss of the assets.
Land Use	Land use is a primary driver of emissions and exposure of communities to climate hazards. Ensure future development and growth planning serves to reduce emissions and minimizes exposure to climate risks, locking in long-term community design that promotes more dense and complete communities.	Emergency Management	Promote preparedness and response to extreme weather, forest fire and flooding and other risks.
Infrastructure	Ensure that built systems are energy efficient and can withstand the current and future impacts of climate change and extreme weather.	Food Security	Support access to local food for all, helping to reduce transportation emissions and support resilience and self-reliance within the community.
Transportation	Expand the transportation system within existing urban form, and increase opportunities for active transportation and multimodal alternatives helps to lower emissions and improve community resilience.	Poverty Reduction	Support equitable access to energy and protect vulnerable populations from impacts of climate change and extreme weather.
Asset Management	Understand the impact of climate change on asset lifecycle and lifecycle costing, and manage and reduce the GHG emissions of City assets.	Regional and Indigenous Collaboration	Work with other municipalities, regional entities, and Indigenous partners to identify opportunities to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change outside of the jurisdiction of the municipality.

Water, Stormwater and Wastewater	Efficiency and reduction of wastewater helps reduce energy use and emissions. Promote the conservation of water to reduce energy use in the treatment process and to minimize the risk of water supply challenges. Take into consideration future levels of precipitation and flood risk, and prioritize the use of natural and green infrastructure systems.	Agriculture	Support the agricultural community in methods to improve sustainable and low carbon farming practices, and adapt to changing growing conditions.

APPENDIX

E

POVERTY REDUCTION BACKGROUND REVIEW - MERRITT OCP

Poverty is a reality of life across all communities in British Columbia. Statistics Canada shows that in 2016, 557,000 people in B.C. were living in poverty and 99,000 of them were children. In 2018, the Province issued its first-ever Poverty Reduction Strategy, which identified several common themes and challenges that united communities across B.C. The 2018 strategy sets ambitious targets for reducing poverty, particularly for children.

Grants from the Union of BC Municipalities have been made available to connect this provincial approach to on-the-ground realities. A goal of the 2020 Merritt OCP Update will be to add a poverty reduction lens to the updated document and connect province-wide poverty-related issues and targets to Merritt's specific community needs.

To establish an understanding of the gaps and opportunities for adding a poverty reduction lens to the OCP, several relevant plans, guiding documents and statistics were reviewed. The Background Review sheds light on key OCP policy areas that could incorporate poverty reduction measures, such as:

- Housing needs and policies;
- Public facilities, including schools, health care, etc.;
- Social policies;
- Economic development; and
- Transportation, water and wastewater infrastructure.

Opportunity for All - Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2018)

In 2018, Canada released its first-ever Poverty Reduction Strategy, entitled Opportunity for All. Opportunity for All sets the foundation for future government investments in poverty reduction based on three pillars:

Dignity: Lifting Canadians out of poverty by ensuring basic needs – such as safe and affordable housing, healthy food and health care – are met;

Opportunity and Inclusion: Helping Canadians join the middle class by promoting full participation in society and equality of opportunity; and

Resilience and Security: Supporting the middle class by protecting Canadians from falling into poverty and by supporting income security and resilience.

For the first time in Canada's history, the Strategy sets an official measure of poverty: **Canada's Official Poverty Line**, based on the cost of a basket of goods and services that individuals and families require to meet their basic needs and achieve a modest standard of living in communities across the country. The basket includes items such as healthy food, appropriate shelter and home maintenance, and clothing

and transportation. It also includes other goods and services that permit engagement in the community, particularly for children, youth, parents and seniors. The cost of each item in the basket is directly linked to the prices of these items in communities across Canada. Canada's Official Poverty Line reflects poverty thresholds for 50 different regions across the country, including 19 specific communities. Whenever individuals and families are living across the country, if they cannot afford the cost of this basket of goods and services in their community, they are living below Canada's Poverty Line or living in poverty.

Opportunity for All also sets ambitious and concrete poverty reduction targets: **a 20% reduction in poverty by 2020** and a **50% reduction in poverty by 2030**.

Key Investments

The following chart illustrates key federal Government investments that have be made to help lift Canadians out of poverty and support the middles class. These investments were included in the federal Government's 2016, 2017 and 2018 budgets.

Initiative	Projected New Investment
Canada Child Benefit	Budget 2016 introduced the Canada Child Benefit, which represents new investments of over $25 billion over five years, including the value of indexing the benefit beginning in 2018–19.
Guaranteed Income Supplement	Budget 2016 increased the Guaranteed Income Supplement top-up for single seniors with new investments of over $7 billion over 10 years.
National Housing Strategy	Budget 2017 introduced a National Housing Strategy. The 10-year, $40-billion plan will give more Canadians a place to call home and includes $16.1 billion in federal investments in provincial and territorial housing programs, including $2.1 billion for Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy.
Indigenous Housing	Through investments made in Budget 2017 and Budget 2018, the Government announced dedicated funding of over $1.7 billion for Indigenous housing, including: • $600 million over three years to support housing on reserve as part of a 10-year First Nations Housing Strategy; • $240 million over 10 years as announced in Budget 2017 to support housing in Nunavut; • $400 million over 10 years to support an Inuit-led housing plan in the Inuit regions of Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and Inuvialuit; and • $500 million over 10 years to support the Métis Nation's housing strategy.
Public Transit Infrastructure	Budget 2016 announced $3.4 billion over three years to upgrade and improve public transit systems across Canada. Budget 2017 announced an additional $20.1 billion over 11 years in public transit infrastructure to transform the way that Canadians live, move and work. A further $5.0 billion was announced in

	Budget 2017 for public transit projects that will be funded through the Canada Infrastructure Bank.
Early Learning and Child Care	Budgets 2016 and 2017 announced combined investments of $7.5 billion over 11 years to improve the affordability, quality and accessibility of early learning and child care, including for Indigenous early learning and child care.
Labour Market Transfer Agreements	Budget 2017 provided additional investments of $2.7 billion over six years through agreements with provinces and territories to help Canadians prepare for, find, advance in and keep good jobs.
Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program	Budget 2018 introduced the new Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program to replace the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy with an incremental investment of almost $450 million over five years and nearly $100 million per year ongoing.
Canada Workers Benefit	Budget 2018 introduced the new Canada Workers Benefit to strengthen and replace the Working Income Tax Benefit with new investments of $3 billion over five years, which includes measures to improve access to the Benefit.
Home Care and Mental Health	Budget 2017 provided $11 billion over 10 years to support better home care mental health initiatives through agreements with provinces and territories.

Working with Provinces, Territories and Communities

The Government of Canada realizes that strong partnerships with the provinces, territories and communities are essential to implementing a poverty reduction strategy that works for all Canadians. The Government is committed to working with the provinces, territories and communities to coordinate current and future poverty reduction initiatives with a focus on addressing gaps in programming, preventing duplication and making sure programs are coordinated.

Working with Indigenous Peoples

The Government of Canada is committed to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and a renewed relationship based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership. Poverty is experienced differently among First Nations, Inuit and Metis, largely due to Canada's colonial history, in which Indigenous peoples have been subject to policies and actions that have had direct negative consequences on their standard of living and perpetuated cycles of poverty and marginalization over many generations.

TogetherBC - British Columbia's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2018)

In 2018, the province of British Columbia released its first-ever Poverty Reduction Strategy, entitled TogetherBC. TogetherBC establishes a path to **reduce overall poverty in B.C. by 25% and child poverty**

by 50% by 2024. B.C. currently has one of the highest rates of poverty in the country, with over 40% of people living below the poverty line being part of the workforce.

With investments from across all levels of government, TogetherBC reflects the government's commitment to reduce poverty and make life more affordable for British Columbians. It includes policy initiatives and investments designated to lift people up, break the cycle of poverty and build a better B.C. for everyone.

Built on **the principles of Affordability, Opportunity, Reconciliation, and Social Inclusion**, TogetherBC focuses on six priority action areas:

- More affordable housing for more people;
- Supporting families, children and youth;
- Expanding access to education and training;
- More opportunities, more jobs;
- Improving income supports; and
- Investing in social inclusion.

Key Priorities

The strategy includes several key priorities, as outlined below, which were identified through engagement with the public and stakeholders across the province:

Housing and Homelessness: Overwhelmingly, the most constant and pressing issue across the province is the lack of affordable housing.

Supports for Children and Families: Specifically, the lack and cost of child care has historically prevented many parents, particularly single mothers, from getting and keeping a full-time job.

Financial Security and Income Supports: Government financial support services – from RAP; SAFER and other rental assistance programs to income and disability assistance rates – have historically not kept pace with B.C.'s cost of living.

Mental Health and Addictions Services: No matter the community, people reported the same problems – services are hard to access, wait lists too long, and supports too late coming.

Food Security: People are more and more concerned about how the lack of quality healthy and affordable food makes their lives harder and puts their family's health at risk.

Access to Health Care: Too many people simply can't afford the medicine they need, a trip to the dentist, or other medical supplies and services that are outside MSP coverage – and even more so in remote and Indigenous communities.

Education and Training: While education is frequently cited as a key to breaking the cycle of poverty, its cost puts it out of reach for too many families and young people in poverty.

Employment and Jobs: Many people spoke of being trapped in precarious employment, with low wages and unpredictable hours – making it virtually impossible to adequately support their families.

Access to Services: There is an ongoing need identified for public services to modernize – in terms of meeting the diversity of B.C.'s population, improving both online and face to face access, and improving integration of services – so that B.C.'s most vulnerable people can better take advantage of services the Province provides.

Safe, Affordable Transportation: For work, family and recreational purposes, people need reliable and affordable transportation options, particularly as they are forced to move further out of urban centres due to the high cost of housing.

Access to Justice: Unresolved legal problems can cause serious and sustained financial and emotional issues for people living in poverty, and too often B.C.'s most vulnerable do not have access to the justice services that protect their safety and rights.

Discrimination and Stigma: Living in poverty is challenging enough without being judged for it. Discrimination and stigma are significant barriers preventing people from accessing opportunity and breaking the cycle of poverty.

What We Heard About Poverty in B.C. - B.C. Poverty Reduction Strategy Engagement Report (2018)

The development of TogetherBC was informed by a comprehensive public engagement process conducted by the Province of B.C. The intent of the public engagement process was to ask British Columbians how the Province should work with communities to combat poverty and inequality.

The Province consulted widely, capturing as many voices as possible and discovering the unique needs in different communities – rural and remote, as well as larger urban centres. The Province wanted to hear from local governments and community leaders, from service providers and advocates, from business and labour organizations, and from people experiencing systemic barriers to participation in their communities. They wanted to hear from people of colour, Indigenous peoples, women, LGBTQ2S+ people, non-binary and transgender people, refugee and immigrant communities, and especially from those who are living in poverty today.

There were 28 public meetings held throughout the province with over 2500 people in attendance, a website where people could contribute their thoughts, sponsored 100 small-group discussions for community organizations (2786 participants), and a call out for telephone, mail and voicemail submissions.

Key Themes

Throughout the public engagement events, several key themes emerged in every part of the province, representing the broad topics raised by stakeholders, as well as during the community meetings, roundtables and discussions. The key themes are included in TogetherBC and described in detail in the TogetherBC summary above.

Throughout the consultation, it was also very clear that poverty and discrimination are linked.

Indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty as other people. Refugees and immigrants also experience high rates of poverty, as do people of colour, single parents, women, queer, non-binary, and transgender people. People in these groups are also more likely to

experience difficulties finding employment, housing and accessing the services they need. This discrimination makes it more difficult to escape poverty.

For these reasons, improving affordability can't be the only solution to poverty. The Province also needs to create opportunity, promote social inclusion and take real action on reconciliation.

People of all backgrounds consistently identified the same challenges and the same solutions for breaking the cycle of poverty. These included **the need for more affordable rental housing, increased supports for children and families, and greater income supports**.

Merritt 2018 Report on Homeless Count

In the spring of 2018, the Province of B.C. funded homeless counts in 12 B.C. communities, including the City of Merritt. The Homelessness Services Association of B.C., Urban Matters and B.C. Non-Profit Housing Association coordinated these counts to inform B.C.'s Homelessness Action Plan and provide a baseline to measure progress.

The infographic below illustrates the findings from Merritt's 2018 Homeless Count, providing a snapshot of the state of homelessness in the City. According to the infographic, there were 11 individuals who identified as being homeless in 2018. A second count was conducted in March 2020. During this count, 43 people identified as being homeless, including nine who identified as being "sheltered" and 34 who identified as being "unsheltered".

For the purposes of the 2020 count, an individual was considered homeless if they identified as having:

- Stayed overnight on the night of the count in homeless shelters, including transition houses for women fleeing violence and youth safe houses, people with no fixed address (NFA) staying temporarily in hospitals, jails or detox facilities (defined as "sheltered"); or
- Stayed outside in alleys, doorways, parkades, parks, and vehicles or were staying temporarily at someone else's place (couch surfing) and/or using homelessness services (defined as "unsheltered").

While the numbers show a 291% increase from the 11 individuals who identified as homeless in 2018, to the 43 who identified in 2020, the Province has since changed the criteria for identifying those who are homeless. Of the 34 identified in 2020, 19 would not have been counted in 2018, as they were couch surfing at the time. An excerpt from a February 20, 2020 article in *The Merritt Herald* suggests that the 2018 Homeless Count may not have been a fair representation of what's going on in the community, as a count can only include those present and willing to connect with representatives during the one-day count.

The purpose of conducting the homeless counts is to provide the Province with a clearer understanding of what homelessness looks like so that all levels of government can work together to better support some of the most vulnerable people in B.C. communities.

Community Profiles - Merritt
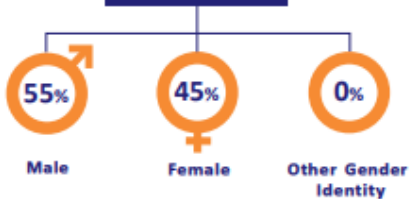## 2018 Report on Homeless Counts in B.C.[1]

Highlights

This infographic includes data from the Merritt homeless count conducted on the evening of April 3 and during the day of April 4. This data provides an overall snapshot of homelessness in Merritt, informs B.C.'s Homelessness Action Plan, and will provide a baseline to measure progress.

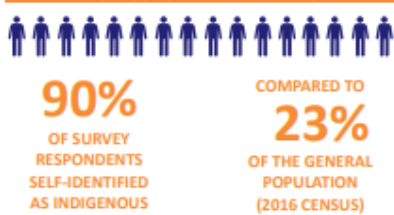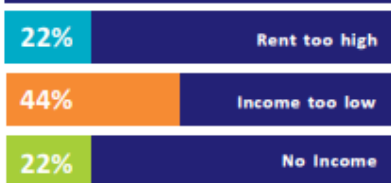**11**

People were identified as experiencing homelessness

0% Sheltered
100% Unsheltered

GENDER IDENTITY

55% Male

45% Female

0% Other Gender Identity

AGE BREAKDOWN

0% Youth (Under 25 years of age)

9% Seniors (55 years of age and over)

40% Had been in foster care, a youth group home, or under a youth agreement

INDIGENOUS OVERREPRESENTATION

90% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS SELF-IDENTIFIED AS INDIGENOUS

COMPARED TO **23%** OF THE GENERAL POPULATION (2016 CENSUS)

MAIN BARRIERS TO ACCESSING HOUSING

22%	Rent too high
44%	Income too low
22%	No Income

SOURCES OF INCOME

40% Income assistance

20% Disability benefit

30% No Income

20% Employed

LENGTH OF TIME HOMELESS

27%	had been homeless for one year or more
73%	had been homeless for less than one year

HEALTH CONDITIONS

88% Addiction

13% Medical Condition

38% Mental Illness

25% Physical Disability
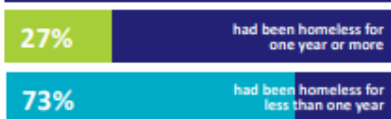
50% reported two or more health conditions

LENGTH OF TIME LIVED IN COMMUNITY

64%	lived in community ten years or always
9%	lived in community one year to less than ten years
27%	lived in community less than one year
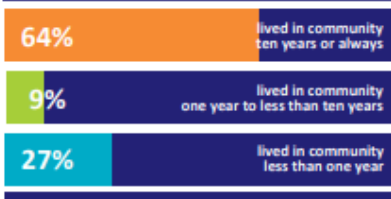
1 Percentages are based on the number of people who responded to survey questions and not the total number of people identified as experiencing homelessness.

Income, Employment and Housing Snapshot - 2016 Canada Census, City of Merritt

Using information retrieved from Statistics Canada's 2016 Census and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), the following paragraphs explore income, employment and housing statistics in Merritt as they relate to the Province of B.C. and Statistics Canada's Low-income measure, after tax (LIM-AT). As defined by Statistics Canada, the Low-income measure, after tax, refers to a fixed percentage (50%) of median adjusted after-tax income of private households. The household after-tax income is adjusted by an equivalence scale to take economies of scale into account.

Low-Income

According to the 2016 Census, of the 6,880 Merritt residents to whom low-income concepts were applicable, **1,200 individuals were living in low income** based on the Low-income measure, after tax (LIM-AT), equating to **17.4% of the population**. Of these 1,200 individuals, **24.5% were under the age of 18**. As is the case across many communities in B.C., income distribution in Merritt is heavily weighted on both the low and high household income levels. Approximately 35% of Merritt households have an after-tax income of under $40,000 (below Canada's Official Poverty Line) while approximately 24% of households have an after-tax income of over $100,000.

Un-Employment

In terms of employment, in 2015 (according to the 2016 Census), Merritt had an **unemployment rate of 9.5%**, in comparison to the Province of B.C., which had an unemployment rate of 6.7%.

Affordable Housing

Statistics Canada surveyed a sample of 25% of Merritt's total owner and tenant households with household total income greater than zero, to gain an understanding of how much residents are spending on shelter, using a shelter-cost-to-income ratio. According to Statistics Canada, a shelter-cost-to-income ratio of less than 30% is required to deem housing affordable, and anything higher is considered unaffordable. In Merritt, 2,985 owner and tenant households were included in the survey sample, with 2,305 households (77%) spending less than 30% of their income on shelter costs and 680 households (23%) spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs.

Vacancy Rate and Affordable Housing Stock

According to CMHC, Merritt has a vacancy rate of 2.2%, which is lower than the Canadian average of 2.4%. A CBC article from January 19, 2019 states that Merritt's need for affordable housing recently caught the attention of the Anhart Housing Community, a non-profit group committed to preventing homelessness. While exploring the potential to develop affordable housing units in Merritt, the organization conducted a survey of 400 residents. Fifty percent of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their current accommodations. Respondents complained of living in old, rundown rentals. Specifically, the survey showed that both the senior and student population have had difficulty finding housing they can afford and which also meets certain requirements, such as accessibility.

APPENDIX

F

Food Security Background Report

PART 1 FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT | CITY OF MERRITT OCP UPDATE
SUMMER 2020

Prepared by Urban Food Strategies for WSP on behalf of the City of Merritt

Draft 1 Aug 21, 2020

Table of Contents

Food Security Background Report- Summer 2020
City of Merritt OCP Update

Summary

Food security is, "*A situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximize community self-reliance and social justice".[1]* In recognition of the importance of food security in Merritt, the City is undertaking an assessment of food security in Merritt in order to engage stakeholders in inventory assets, and assessing opportunities and challenges.

Many people and households in Merritt are food insecure. Average income in Merritt is 17% lower than the rest of the province at $74,977. With 35% more than the BC average of homeowners in Merritt spending more than 30% of household income on housing coupled with 42% more unemployment in Merritt as compared to the rest of the province, food insecurity is likely a significant challenge facing many residents.[2] The Nicola Valley Food Bank has experienced a 75% increase in membership in 2020 compared to 2019.

There are many food assets in Merritt including community gardens, grocery stores, restaurants, garden centres, and food programs. Despite these many assets, the vast majority of people do not have walkable access (i.e. 5minutes walking distance) to a grocery store. There are approximately 640 hectares of AR-1 (Agricultural) land in Merritt. If agricultural land was optimized to feed the community, Merritt theoretically has the capacity to become 12% self -sufficient.

There are many issues and opportunities for strengthening food security in Merritt. Potential key issues and opportunities are summarized below. Next stages of the research and engagement will further explore these and base OCP recommendations on these findings.

Key Issues	Key Opportunities
☒ Poverty, unemployment and low income	☒ Community cold storage areas
☒ Lack of walking distance to a grocery store	☒ Shared kitchen space (community and enterprise)
☒ Lack of affordable housing	☒ New community gardens
☒ COVID and added pressure on food banks and other front line services	☒ Supporting local food champions
☒ Lack of food skills for healthy and year round enjoyment of local food	☒ Backyard gardening, urban agriculture and edible landscaping
☒ Increased costs for farmers and independent local food businesses	☒ Food trucks and farmers markets
☒ Lack of food storage and processing infrastructure	☒ Farm stands and food sharing
☒ Natural and market emergencies	☒ Local food gardening demonstrations
☒ Lack of farm labour	☒ Learning about indigenous food sovereignty and history of indigenous food systems
☒ Climate change impacts on agriculture	☒ Building food culture
☒ Water demand for increasing market gardening and agriculture in the region	☒ Regional food and agriculture planning/ sector development
	☒ Promotion and marketing of local food
	☒ Emergency preparedness and recovery

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[1] Hamm, M.; Bellows, A. (2003).Community Food Security and Nutrition Educators. Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior 35 (1): 37–43.

[2] Merritt Community Health Profile. Accessed Aug 4, 2020:
http://communityhealth.phsa.ca/HealthProfiles/HealthReportHealthStatusAndChronicDisease/Merritt

Key Issues	Key Opportunities
	☒ Climate change adaptation in food and agriculture

Introduction

The City of Merritt is currently updating the Official Community Plan (OCP). As part of this, a *Food Security Assessment* is being conducted in order to effectively assess and integrate food security into the OCP to support the City in playing a role in increasing community food security. Through this process, the project team will be reaching out to key individuals and groups to help shape the recommendations.

This *Food Security Background Report* is the first part of the assessment and includes key concept definitions, summary of the role of local government in food security and food system planning, the local planning context, and inventory of existing food assets in Merritt, key organizations and players, and the beginnings of identifying issues and opportunities. The second part of the food security assessment will complete the issues and opportunities analysis and provide recommendations to be considered and included in the larger OCP development and engagement process.

With increased variability in climate, long-term impacts of COVID 19, and other external factors, communities are increasingly becoming more aware of the fragility of the food system and developing strategies to prepare for and recover from natural and human disasters as well as protect farmland and work to support the food and agriculture sector. In these ways, both household and community food security are key considerations in community planning.

Key Concepts

There are five key concepts to clearly define at the outset of this planning process. These concepts provide an important starting point for assessing food security in Merritt.

Community Food Security

Community food security is defined as:

> *A situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximize community self-reliance and social justice.*[3]

This term assumes that the interconnected systems and organizations that impact human, ecological, and economic health are aligned to generate long lasting and sustainable solutions. Individual or household food insecurity looks more closely at the health of the individual on a nutritional and food access basis, aiming to move people vertically from low to high food security.

Household Food Insecurity

Household food insecurity occurs when a household worries about or lacks the financial means to buy healthy, safe, personally acceptable food. Household food insecurity can occur at three levels: marginally food-insecure; moderately food insecure; severely food insecure.[4,5]

While local governments have many ways to increase food security and interact with many dimensions of the food system, they are limited in their ability to directly address some of the core drivers of food insecurity such as poverty and low- income status of residents. However, there are areas where local

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[3] Hamm, M.; Bellows, A. (2003).Community Food Security and Nutrition Educators. Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior 35 (1): 37–43.

[4] Li N, Dachner, N, Tarasuk, V, Zhang, R, Kurrein, M, Harris, T, Gustin, S, Rasali, D. Priority health equity indicators for British Columbia: Household food insecurity report. Vancouver, BC: Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA)2016.

[5] Tarasuk, Valerie, Andy Mitchell, and Naomi Dachner (2012). Household Food Insecurity in Canada 2012. PROOF.

Food Security Background Report- Summer 2020
City of Merritt OCP Update

governments do have influence in some of these areas of food insecurity. For example, affordable housing and local economic development, often priorities for local government as implemented through regulation, incentives, and land use planning, can positively impact household income and food security.

Goals of Food Security

The Population and Public Health program at BC Centre for Disease Control outlines the goals of food security as:

> *Increase[ing] physical, social, and economic access to nutritious, safe, personally acceptable food with a focus on increasing availability of healthy food produced in a sustainable manner.[6]*

This food security goal encompasses a broad scope of food security definitions, including the UN Food and Agriculture Organization FAO definition,[7] community food security [8] and individual and household food insecurity.[9]

Food System

A food system consists of the inter-related stages that food goes through from the natural soil, water, and air resources that enable us to grow/raise/hunt/fish/forage food to the personal and commercial practices of harvesting, processing, storing, distributing, buying, selling, eating, celebrating, and recovering waste. These stages make up the basic elements of a food system. Education, governance and capacity building are key supports for the food system. Food systems exist at multiple scales including local, regional, provincial, national, and international. Six elements of a food system may be described as: 1) Primary food production 2) Processing and storage 3) Distribution and transportation 4) Buying and selling, 5) Eating, culture, and celebration, and 6) Waste recovery.

Figure 1 depicts a simplified view of a food system. There are many food system diagrams and models that describe the elements somewhat differently, but the core ideas are largely consistent.

A sustainable food system [10] furthers the ecological, social, and economic health of a community, region, province, country, and world and can be reproduced over multiple generations. Characteristics of a sustainable food system include, but are not limited to the list below. A sustainable food system:

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[6] Provincial Health Services Authority. Food Sec[...] [cited 2016 Sept 25]

[7] FAO. World Food Summit. United Nations; 199[...] http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp[...]

[8] Hamm MW, Bellows AC. Community Food Sec[...] Behaviour. 2003; 35:37-43

[9] Li N, Dachner, N, Tarasuk, V, Zhang, R, Kurrein[...] for British Columbia: Household food insecurity[...] (PHSA)2016

[10] de la Salle, Janine (2008). City of Edmonton F[...] from: Pothukuchi, K. and Kaufman, J.L. (1999) F[...] Municipal Institutions in Food Systems Planning.

Figure 1: Food and Agriculture System. Source: Urban Food Strategies   6

Food Security Background Report- Summer 2020
City of Merritt OCP Update

- Is **secure**, and therefore reliable and resilient to change (including climate change, rising energy prices, etc.) and accessible to all members of society;
- Is energy efficient;
- Is an **economic generator** for farmers, whole communities, and regions;
- Is environmentally beneficial or benign;
- Uses creative **water reclamation and conservation** strategies for agricultural uses;
- **Balances** food imports with local capacity;
- Adopts **regionally-appropriate** agricultural practices and crop choices;
- Contributes to both community and ecological health;
- Builds soil quality and farmland through the **recycling of organic waste**;
- Supports multiple forms of **urban as well as rural food** production;
- Ensures that food **processing facilities** are available to farmers and processors of all scales;
- Is **celebrated** through community events, markets, restaurants etc;
- **Preserves biodiversity** in agro-ecosystems as well as in the crop selection;
- Has a strong **educational focus** to create awareness of food and agricultural issues; and
- Is **socially just** and **fairly traded** by providing a fair wage to producers and processors locally and abroad.

Food Assets [11]

Food assets are places, programs, policies, businesses, and organizations that play a role in the food system. Local governments and communities have access to and influence with many food assets. Generally, food assets can be understood in eight major categories- Table 1 presents these categories and provides examples of food assets.

Table 1: Food Assets and Examples	
Food Asset	**Examples**
1) Food production, hunting, fishing, foraging	☒ Rivers, lakes, and streams ☒ Farmland, grasslands ☒ Urban gardening- Community gardens, edible landscaping, backyard gardening
2) Community and commercial processing facilities	☒ Packing houses ☒ Community kitchens ☒ Cold storage ☒ Commercial and commissary kitchens
3) Community food culture	☒ Harvest festivals ☒ Food trucks and mobile food markets ☒ Plazas and open spaces for food celebration ☒ Agritourism
4) (Healthy) food sources	☒ Grocery stores, drug stores ☒ Farm stands, farmers' markets, Restaurants, caterers, pubs, and cafes ☒ Food hubs
5) Emergency food relief	☒ Charitable food organizations ☒ Meal and hamper programs

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[11] There is no common definition of "food asset". The consultant has developed this definition based on the understanding of how it is being used in other jurisdictions and planning processes.

Food Asset	Examples
	☒ School breakfast and lunch programs
6) Learning environments	☒ School and community cooking classes/courses
	☒ Business startup incubators
	☒ Community gardens
7) Food recovery systems	☒ Cold storage
	☒ Collection and distribution networks
	☒ Processing facilities
8) Macro supports for food security	☒ Affordable housing
	☒ Employment and business opportunities
	☒ Social connectedness
	☒ Walkable communities
	☒ Leadership and management

Table 1: Food Assets and Examples

Roles in food security

There are many distinct and overlapping roles in planning for food and agriculture systems. This complex web is somewhat simplified by focusing food and agriculture plans at one level of jurisdiction. Often times, food and agriculture system planning occurs at the local government level, including regional and municipal governments. However, there are many other roles that can become an important part in plan creation and implementation. These roles are briefly described below.

Federal and Provincial Levels of Government

The federal government has jurisdiction over trade agreements, health inspection and food regulation, among other things. The activities of Agrifood Canada: *range from the farmer to the consumer, from the farm to global markets, through all phases of producing, processing and marketing of farm, food and bio-based products.*

The Provincial Government in BC and the Ministry of Agriculture also have jurisdiction on regulating farming and has passed legislation that regulates land use in the Agricultural Land Reserve and are involved with economic development initiatives.

Health Authorities

There are six Health Authorities in BC. Merritt is in the Interior Health Region. Increasingly, community nutritionists and Medical Health Officers are engaging in community planning exercises like creating Official Community Plans. This in turn, can provide an important link between Health and food and agriculture system planning.

Community Sector, Schools, and Post-Secondary Institutions

Volunteers and staff in the community and non-profit sector are critical partners in developing and implementing food system plans. Schools and post-secondary institutions can also be part of providing food system education in the classroom and program development.

Industry Associations and Business Sector

There are many industry associations and business sector interest groups that are also a key part of creating and implementing food system plans. The BC Cattleman's Association, the Small-Scale Processors Association, Business Improvement Associations, Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development agencies are all examples of resources and stakeholders in food and agriculture system planning.

Local Government

Often local governments will be the primary facilitator for and lead on food and agriculture system planning processes. While local governments have many ways to increase community food security and interact with many dimensions of the food system, they are limited in their ability to directly address some of the core drivers of household food insecurity such as poverty and low- income status of residents. However, there are areas where local governments do have influence in some of these areas of food insecurity. For example, affordable housing and local economic development, often priorities for local government as implemented through regulation, incentives, and land use planning, can positively impact household income and, indirectly, food security.

Other specific ways that local government can intervene and engage with food security and work to increase food assets and access to them include, but are not limited to are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Food Assets and Local Government Leverage Points	
Food Asset	**Local Government Leverage**

Food production, hunting, fishing, foraging	• Agriculture in the ALR
	    o Agriculture planning and policy (OCPs, ZBLs)
	    o Managing/ regulating increasingly complex issues on farmland
	• Urban Agriculture and Farming
	    o Ensure urban agriculture is allowed and supported in public and private lands (OCPs, ZBLs)
	    o Managing potential conflicts (e.g. wildlife)
	    o Encouraging / requiring food assets including urban agriculture in development projects (tax breaks, requirements, design guidelines).
	    o Providing education and resources
	    o Collaborating with community partners
	• Indigenous Food Systems (water, land, air)
	    o Establishing teaching, learning, and stewardship centres/programs
	    o Responding positively to land management needs.

(Healthy) food sources	• Planning and policy to support walkable (800m) access to heathy food assets (e.g. grocery store, farm stand, community garden, farmers market) • Supporting food hub testing and development • Support Farmer's markets • Zoning for food districts, light industrial for agriculture sector (Locate outside of the ALR) • Zoning for food retail especially healthy options • Adopting food truck policies and creating permits • Purchasing relationships with local producers and caterers • Transportation planning
Learning environments	• Provide information on new food-security related initiatives. • Be open to requests/applications for new facilities to support educational programs
Community food culture	• Providing space and programming for food celebrations • Collaborating with community partners to deepen food culture • Providing signage, communications, and marketing of food assets, where appropriate • Designing public spaces to support a lively streetscape (e.g. patios, spill-out onto the sidewalk, street trees, plazas)

Table 2: Food Assets and Local Government Leverage Points	
Food Asset	**Local Government Leverage**
Capacity for social connectedness and emergency food relief	• Working with food banks to find appropriate facilities • Preparing for emergencies (education, planning, preparation)
Food Recovery Systems	• Working with food gleaning programs to find facilities • Working with businesses to find processing facilities • Business license rules • Partnership programs • Developing internal programs to reduce food waste within local government operations • Regional organic diversion policies and programs
Research, knowledge creation, and policy	• Conducting baseline food assessments (e.g. food security, local food economy assessments, food hub feasibility) • Conducting best practice research from other jurisdictions • Engaging with stakeholders and the general public • Developing food and agriculture strategies and plans
Macro supports (food insecurity)	• Local governance and management systems (e.g. Food Policy Councils) • Protecting and restoring the environment (e.g. Link to indigenous food systems, OCP policies and requirements) • Implementing affordable housing strategies • Attracting livable wage job opportunities

Planning Context

Indigenous History and Traditional Food Systems

The City of Merritt is located in the unceded territory of the Nlaka'pamux and Syilx Nations. Today there are five Indigenous Communities in or near Merritt. At this time, the project team is endeavoring to learn more about traditional food systems, issues, and opportunities through the lens of indigenous people.

The recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission regarding health as well as the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)[12] provide a foundation for informing the update of the OCP. In November of 2019, the Province of BC passed legislation to implement UNDRIP[13], which has further elevated the process of decolonization and reconciliation in local and provincial government policy.

A recent community highlight included headlines about a 19-year old Indigenous man from Merritt who raised $5,000 for the Nicola Valley Food Bank by running a marathon.[14]

Agricultural Land Reserve in and Around the City of Merritt

Merritt is situated in an agricultural area with ranching and forage crops being the predominant form of agriculture. As such, there are large areas of Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in and near to Merritt. Figure 2 provides a regional context map showing ALR lands in the region and Figure 3 shows ALR within the town boundaries. Currently there are 639.5 hectares of AR-1 land in Merritt.

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[12] https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html
[13] https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/indigenous-people/new-relationship/united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples
[14] https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/indigenous-teen-overcomes-past-and-raises-5000-for-local-food-bank-with-ultra-marathon

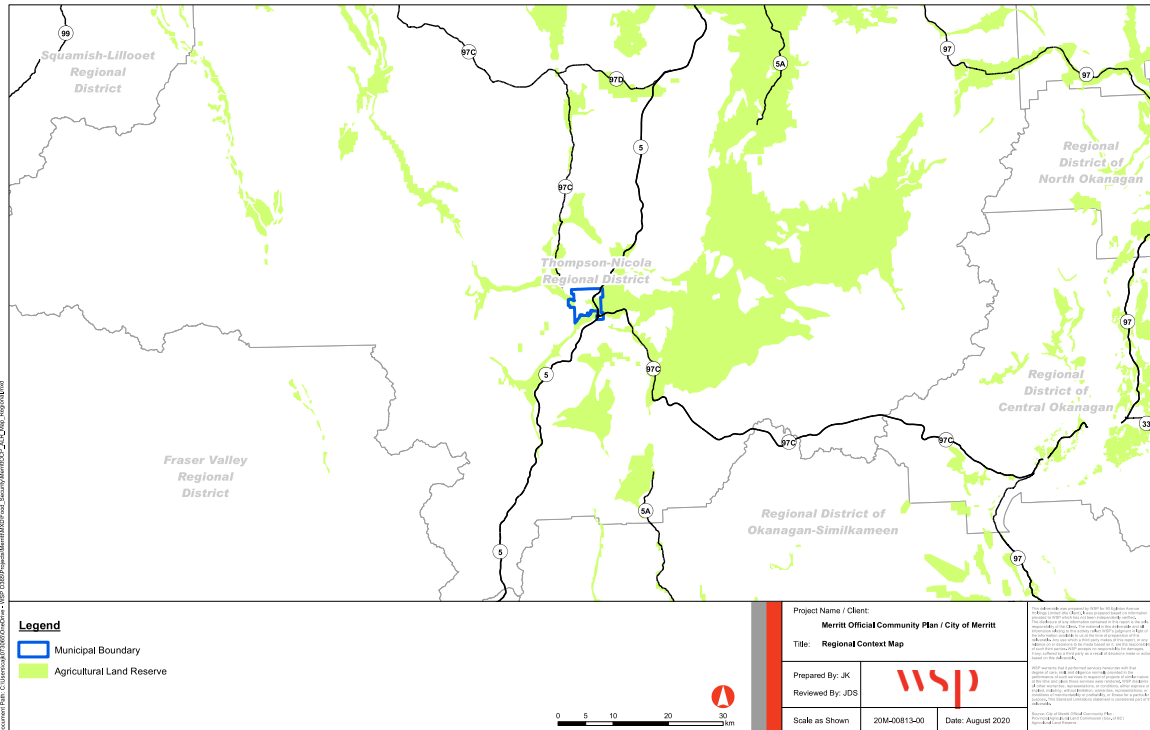Food Security Background Report- Summer 2020
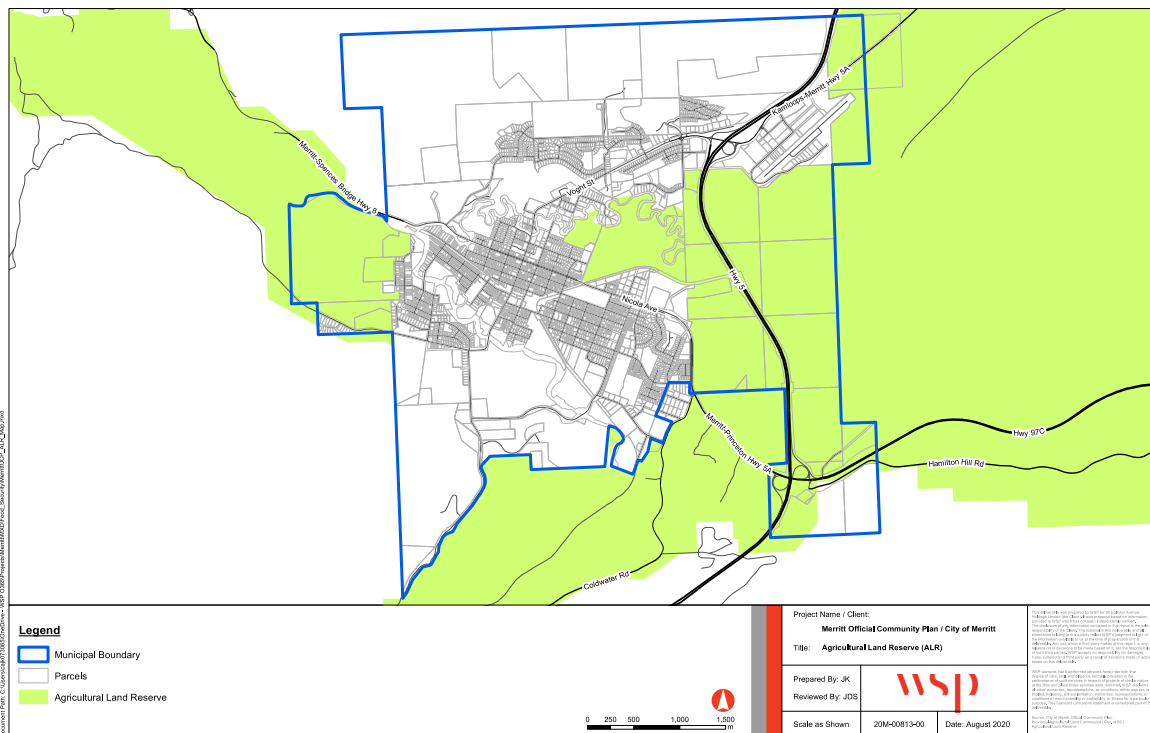City of Merritt OCP Update

Figure 2: Regional ALR Lands

Figure 3: ALR within Boundaries of City of Merritt

Food Security Background Report- Summer 2020
City of Merritt OCP Update

When overlaying the ALR lands within Merritt and the areas that are designated as AR1 (Agricultural) in the proposed Zoning Bylaw (No. 2284, 2020), there are areas where the zoning and ALR do not overlap. Figure 4 provides an analysis of areas that are in the ALR but not zone AR1 or are AR1 but not ALR. This could indicate an inconsistency to be further examined with the idea of ensuring all ALR lands also have an AR1 zoning designation. AR1 zoning may be present without being in the ALR. In rare and specific cases, special study areas may be established to indicate lands that require a unique policy and regulatory approach.
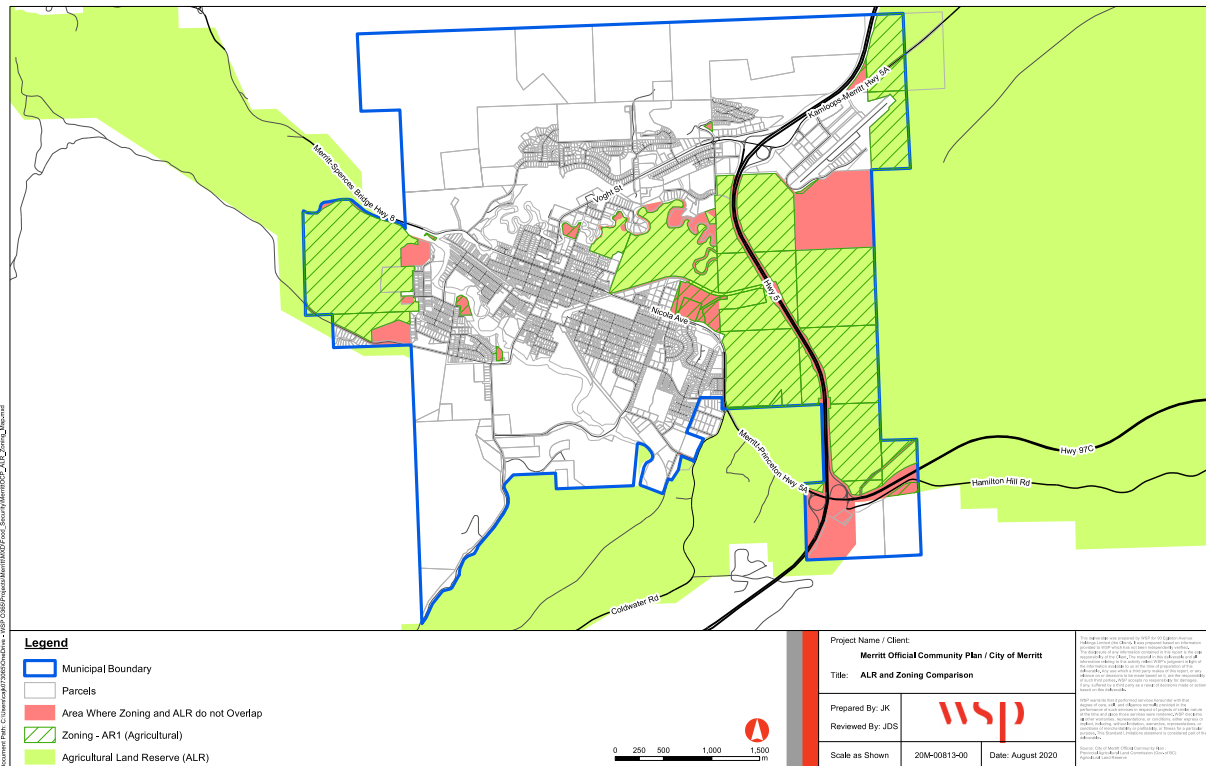
Figure 4: Overlay of AR1 on ALR

Walkable Access to the Grocery Store

There are three main grocery stores in Merritt in addition to several smaller grocers and corner stores. Using the main grocery stores as anchors for where most people access food (including healthy food), many residential areas in Merritt do not have walkable access to a healthy food source. Approximately 6% of residences are within a 5-minute walk of a main grocery store. Figure 5 provides an analysis of walkable access to grocery stores.

Food Security Background Report- Summer 2020
City of Merritt OCP Update

Figure 5: Analysis of walkable access to main grocery stores

Demographics and community health information

Population

According to the 2016 Census, there are 5,321 people living in Merritt.

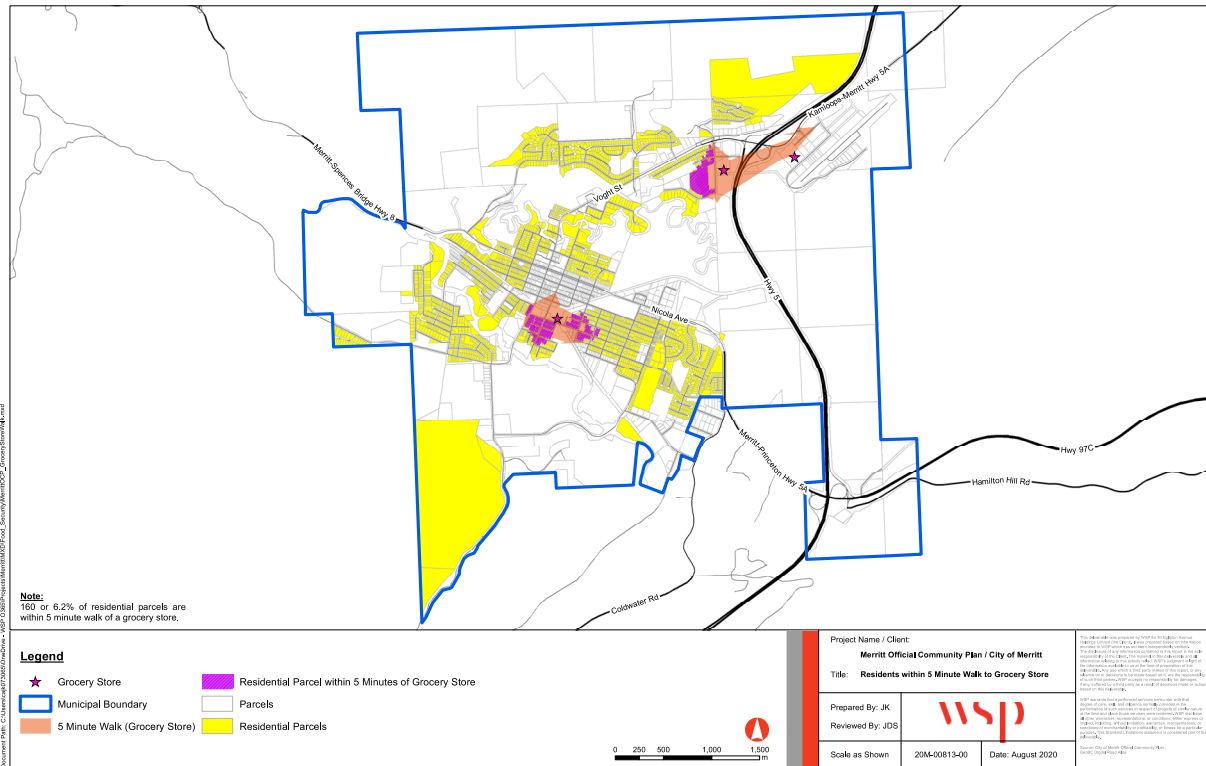**Age**

Similar to many communities in BC and Canada, the vast majority of people are over the age of 15. The average age of people in Merritt is 44 years and the average life expectancy is four years below the provincial average at 78.4 years.

Table 3: Ages of people in Merritt

Age	Number of people	% of total community
0-14	815	15%
15-64	3,335	63%
65+	1,170	22%

Seniors often face economic challenges and many can experience household food insecurity. With an aging population in Merritt consideration of how to enable seniors to be food secure is an important consideration.

Income

Average income in Merritt is 17% lower than the rest of the province at $ 74,977. With 35% more than the BC average of homeowners in Merritt spending more than 30% of household income on housing

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Food Security Background Report- Summer 2020
City of Merritt OCP Update

coupled with 42% more unemployment in Merritt as compared to the rest of the province, food insecurity is likely a significant challenge facing many residents.[15]

Health

As in most communities in BC, Food related illnesses such as some cancers, heart disease, and diabetes affect people in Merritt. Mental health also impacts people in Merritt and their ability to be food secure. Health indicators for Interior Health region are lower than in the rest of the province. This indicates residents are experiencing higher than normal challenges with chronic disease and vulnerability in early childhood (including diabetes and heart failure).[16] Also within the interior health region, school-aged children who eat 5 or more servings of fruit and vegetables is less than the provincial average with the exception of grade 3-4, who eat 14% more produce than the provincial average.

Language

According to the 2016 Census, most people in Merritt speak English with the exception of 35 people who speak Indigenous and Salish languages, and those who speak both English and French.

Food bank use

According to a recent Vancouver Sun article, the use of the Nicola Valley Food Bank has increased 75% over the last year.[17]

Existing approach to food security in Merritt's Zoning Bylaw

There are already provisions within the City of Merritt Zoning Bylaw (ZBL) to enable residents to grow their own. In Merritt, backyard hens and bees are permitted in R1, R1A, R2 and R3 residential zones (Proposed ZBL No. 2284, 2020). The Animal Control Bylaw[18] provides regulation of these permitted uses.

Urban Agriculture is defined in the ZBL and is a secondary permitted use in Single Family Residential (R1), Low Density Residential (R2), Small Parcel residential (R3), Large parcel Residential (R1A), Institutional and Public Use (P2), Post-Secondary Educational (P3). Greenhouse agriculture is permitted in Light and Heavy Industrial (M1, M2) zones. The ZBL defines urban agriculture as:

> *AGRICULTURE, URBAN means the cultivation of a portion of a Parcel for the personal or commercial production of food for human consumption only, including but not limited to eggs, fruits, honey, herbs, nuts, and vegetables. Activities that cause a Nuisance are prohibited. This Use includes Backyard Hens and Beekeeping, but excludes fur bearing animals or other livestock and fungi.*

The ZBL defines agriculture and agriculture greenhouse as:

> *AGRICULTURAL USE means the indoor or outdoor growing, rearing, producing, harvesting, or sale of agricultural crops, fur bearing animals, poultry or other livestock, and includes processing of primary agricultural products harvested, reared or produced by the farming operation, and the storage of farm machinery*

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[15] Merritt Community Health Profile. Accessed Aug 4, 2020:
http://communityhealth.phsa.ca/HealthProfiles/HealthReportHealthStatusAndChronicDisease/Merritt
[16] Merritt Community Health Profile. Accessed Aug 4, 2020:
http://communityhealth.phsa.ca/HealthProfiles/HealthReportComparisonToBC/Merritt
[17] https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/indigenous-teen-overcomes-past-and-raises-5000-for-local-food-bank-with-ultra-marathon- does this include covid?
[18] https://www.merritt.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/bylaws/2241_animal_control.pdf

implements and agricultural supplies, and repairs to farm machinery and implements used by the farming operation.

AGRICULTURE, GREENHOUSE means the indoor growing, producing, harvesting, or wholesale of agricultural crops, and includes processing and packaging of products harvested or produced by the farming operation, and the storage of farm machinery implements and agricultural supplies, and repairs to farm machinery and implements used by the farming operation, but excludes fur bearing animals, poultry or other livestock, and fungi.

Food Assets in Merritt

There are many food assets in Merritt. The categories of food assets from the above section have been customize to be relevant to Merritt. An inventory of physical food assets is included in Appendix 1. Some food security assets are not only physical but can also include knowledge, relationships, programs, culture, and local economics. These food assets in Merritt include but are not limited to:

- Merritt's location in a historic ranching and agricultural area
- School meal and backpack programs, including extended service during pandemic
- Food skills and knowledge of residents
- Nicola Valley Farmers Markets that offers the BC Farmers Market Nutrition Program
- Nicola Valley Community Gardens
- Nicola Valley Food Bank
- Community Support Programs (e.g. Community Inclusion, Safe Spaces, and the Family Service Program)
- Local butchers and bakers
- Backyard gardening
- Farmland within the town boundaries

Table 4 below provides an estimate of the type and number of physical food assets in Merritt.

Table 4: Physical Food Assets in Merritt

Physical Food Assets	# in Merritt
Bakery	1
Breweries/distilleries	3
Butchers	2
Community Gardens	1
In town farms (AR1 zone)	?
Regional farms	17
Farmers markets	1
Food banks	1
Garden Centres	5
Grocery Store	6
Programs that could include healthy food	9
Restaurants and cafes	20

Estimating Self-Sufficiency in Merritt

Estimating self-sufficiency is not intended to suggest that the farmers produce a specific mix of products, distributed exclusively within the region. Rather, estimating self-sufficiency provides a theoretical estimate of the potential for the land base to feed the local population.

In 2006, the BC Ministry of Agriculture produced BC's Food Self Reliance Study. The report included a model to measure food self-sufficiency within BC communities. The model estimates that 0.524 ha of land (irrigated and non-irrigated) is required to produce an adequate and healthy diet for one person to live for one year in BC.

This model can be used in conjunction with population statistics and other data to estimate the number of people that Merritt's agricultural land base could feed if the system was completely localized (i.e. if all food produced in and around Merritt was consumed in the Boundary). The model is a high level estimation but is useful in providing an indication of potential self-sufficiency.

The BC Ministry of Agriculture estimates that 0.524 ha of land (irrigated and non-irrigated) is required to produce an adequate and healthy diet for one person to live for one year in BC. Merritt's 2016 population was estimated at 5,321[19] people. Using these figures, there would need to be 2,788 ha under production (with the potential to be irrigated) to be food self-sufficient. This would assume that all food being produced would remain within the region for local consumption.

In addition to agriculturally zoned land in the agricultural land reserve, there is also potential growing spaces in rural and urban residential areas. As shown in Table 5, there are other areas in addition to the ALR that permit and are suitable for agriculture purposes. Currently this analysis includes only an estimation of backyard space in addition to AR-1. However many other zones in Merritt also permit agricultural activities i.e. R1, R1-A, R2, R3, R4, R5, R7, R8, P1, P2, P3. These zones have not been included at this time. After combining AR-1 and an estimation of area of backyards in residential areas, 339 ha is theoretically available for some form of agriculture activity. Table 5 summarizes these area calculations.

Table 5: Area Calculations for Zones that Support Agriculture in Merritt

	TOTAL AREA		THEORETICALLY AVAILABLE LAND*	
ZONE	*Acres*	*Hectares*	*Acres*	*Hectares*
AR-1	1580	640	474	320
Backyards	157	63	47	19
Total	**1736**	**703**	**521**	**339**

* Estimate based on subtracting 50% of the total area of AR-1 and 70& of backyards to account for roads, buildings, setbacks and other uses other than primary agriculture and backyard garden space.

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[19] Statistics Canada (2016). Retrieved on-line Aug 4, 2020: https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=POPC&Code1=0529&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&SearchText=Merritt&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=0529&TABID=1&type=0

When combined with the Ministry of Agriculture estimate of how much land is required for one person for one year, the theoretical maximum level of self-sufficiency in Merritt is estimated at 12%. That is, under maximum agriculture conditions, Merritt has the land base to meet up to 12% of its community food needs. This indicates that regional, provincial, and national food systems are likely to remain an essential resource for food security in Merritt. Table 6 provide the data and calculations used.

Table 6: Theoretical Maximum Level of Food Self-Sufficiency Estimated for Merritt

Merritt Current Population	5321	people
Amount of land required to produce an adequate and healthy diet for one person to live for one year in BC.	0.524	ha (1.3 ac)
Estimated amount of land required for Merritt to be self-sufficient.	2788	ha (9,240 ac)
Total amount of land available for some form of agriculture in Merritt	339	ha, (521 ac)
Theoretical maximum level of food self-sufficiency in Merritt		**12%**

Key Issues and Opportunities for Strengthening Food Security in Merritt

Key Issues

Food will not solve hunger. The drivers of food insecurity are largely systemic and there are many factors impacting food security at the household and community levels. Some issues are created by systemic factors such as state of the economy, climate change, and level of economic opportunity in a community, while other issues are influenced by more local factors such as food processing capacity and food gardening skills. Potential key issues in Merritt include but are not limited to:

- ☒ Poverty, unemployment and low income
- ☒ Lack of walking distance to a grocery store
- ☒ Lack of affordable housing
- ☒ COVID and added pressure on food banks and other front line services
- ☒ Lack of food skills for healthy and year round enjoyment of local food
- ☒ Increased costs for farmers and independent local food businesses
- ☒ Lack of food storage and processing infrastructure
- ☒ Natural and market emergencies
- ☒ Lack of farm labour
- ☒ Climate change impacts on agriculture
- ☒ Water demand for increasing market gardening and agriculture in the region

To be further developed in future phases. Requires stakeholder engagement to detail

Key Opportunities

Links with poverty reduction and economic development

- ☒ Community cold storage areas
- ☒ Shared kitchen space (community and enterprise)
- ☒ New community gardens
- ☒ Supporting local food champions
- ☒ Backyard gardening, urban agriculture and edible landscaping
- ☒ Food trucks and farmers markets
- ☒ Farm stands and food sharing
- ☒ Local food gardening demonstrations
- ☒ Learning about indigenous food sovereignty and history of indigenous food systems
- ☒ Building food culture
- ☒ Regional food and agriculture planning/ sector development
- ☒ Promotion and marketing of local food
- ☒ Emergency preparedness and recovery
- ☒ Climate change adaptation in food and agriculture

To be further developed in future phases. Requires stakeholder engagement to detail

Recommendations for the OCP

To be developed in future phases

Appendices

Appendix 1: Food Assets in Merritt

Food Asset	Name
Bakery	Brambles Bakery and Café
Breweries	Empty Keg Brew House Ltd.
Breweries	Merritt Brewing
Breweries	After Dark Distillery
Butcher	The Local Butcher
Butcher	Nicola Valley Meats
Community gardens	Nicola Valley Community Gardens
Farm within town boundaries	Farm in town boundaries
Farmers markets	Nicola Valley Farmers Market
Farmers markets	Farmers market coupon program
Food banks and meal programs	Nicola Valley and District Food Bank
Garden centres	Walmart Garden Centre
Garden centres	Purity Feed Co
Garden centres	Klassen Landscape Supply
Garden centres	Community kitchens?
Garden centres	Soup kitchen?
Grocery store	Save on Foods
Grocery store	Extra Foods
Grocery store	Walmart Supercentre
Grocery store	Bobs Mini Mart
Grocery store	Treehouse Health Foods Inc
Grocery store	Coldwater Corner Market
Programs that could include healthy food	Caring Dads
Programs that could include healthy food	Community Inclusion
Programs that could include healthy food	Children and Youth with Special Needs
Programs that could include healthy food	Safe Spaces
Programs that could include healthy food	Teen Centre
Programs that could include healthy food	Family Preservation Program
Programs that could include healthy food	Youth Justice- Case Aid
Programs that could include healthy food	Family Service Program
Regional farms	Millers Farm
Regional farms	Baird Cattle Co.
Regional farms	Cattle Lower Nicola
Regional farms	Nicola Valley Apiaries

Food Security Background Report- Summer 2020
City of Merritt OCP Update

Food Asset	Name
Regional farms	Chutter Ranch Ltd.
Regional farms	Tusjast Icelandic Horse Farm
Regional farms	Rey Creek Ranch
Regional farms	Spius Creek Hatchery
Regional farms	Nicola Ranch
Regional farms	Iron Mountain Ranch
Regional farms	3 Bar Fams
Regional farms	Winsome Meadows
Regional farms	Can A Mex Farms
Regional farms	Blue Sky Ranch
Regional farms	Douglas Lake Ranch
Regional farms	Clapperton Ranch
Regional farms	Little Beaver Ranch
Restaurants and cafes	Kekuli Café Coffee and Bannock
Restaurants and cafes	Mongos- Mongolian Grill
Restaurants and cafes	Home Restaurant
Restaurants and cafes	Mughal Garden
Restaurants and cafes	Diary Queen
Restaurants and cafes	Whitespot
Restaurants and cafes	Coldwater Café
Restaurants and cafes	Mary Browns Chicken and Taters
Restaurants and cafes	Yaki Joes Pizza
Restaurants and cafes	Canada Café
Restaurants and cafes	Panago Pizza
Restaurants and cafes	Grand Pub and Grill
Restaurants and cafes	A &W
Restaurants and cafes	Garden Sushi
Restaurants and cafes	New Town Sushi
Restaurants and cafes	Roaster Barn
Restaurants and cafes	Boston Pizza
Restaurants and cafes	Mary's Corner Café and Catering
Restaurants and cafes	Subway
Restaurants and cafes	Burger King
Restaurants and cafes	McDonalds
Restaurants and cafes	Bamboo Panda
Restaurants and cafes	Jin Japanese and Korean Restaurant
Restaurants and cafes	Game on Sports Bar and Grill

Food Asset	Name
Restaurants and cafes	Denny's
Restaurants and cafes	Coldwater Hotel
Restaurants and cafes	Nanas Hitch'n Post Restaurant
Restaurants and cafes	Crystal Gardens Chinese Restaurant

Appendix 2: Schedule A: Merritt Zoning Map

Food Security Background Report- Summer 2020
City of Merritt OCP Update