

- .9 Promote the conservation of fish habitat along streams within the municipal boundary as defined under the Riparian Areas Regulations as part of the Fish Protection Act.
- .10 Exercise its powers to implement the Riparian Areas Regulation of the Fish Protection Act.
- .11 Conserve lands, structures and artifacts where possible that have cultural and heritage values.
- .12 Continue to recognize ranching, mining, forestry and the former railroad as an important part of the cultural heritage of the City and the surrounding Nicola Valley.
- .13 Protect open space amenities (including grasslands) where possible for passive and recreation use and enjoyment.
- .14 Recognize where lands that are subject to flooding, the construction and siting of buildings and mobile homes to be used for habitation, business or the storage of goods damageable by floodwaters shall be proofed to standards specified by the appropriate Ministry.
- .15 Minimize land use conflicts between sand and gravel operations and neighbouring properties by ensuring operations are conducted in an appropriate manner.

### **3.4 Working with Other Agencies**

One of Council's stated principles in pursuing the vision of "making the economic pie bigger" is to partner with others to increase the City's leverage. The City prefers not to do it alone. These partnerships must be strong in order to establish a foundation for an enduring partnering relationship of mutual benefit.

It is Council policy to:

1. Undertake partnering, where practical, purposeful and useful, with the following:
  - Thompson Nicola Regional District (TNRD); First Nations; neighbouring municipalities; private development, business and industry; provincial and federal government ministries and agencies; Land and Water BC Inc.; Provincial Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs); and Federal Members of Parliament (MPs)

### **3.5 Handling New Development in Merritt**

Council's guiding philosophy for handling new development in Merritt is based on a blending of two key objectives:

- By taking full advantage of opportunities to expand the economy and encourage tourist-oriented developments as outlined in Section 3.1.
- By committing to undertaking a partnering approach with other agencies and stakeholders in the community as outlined in Section 3.4.
- By creating a Development Facilitation Board / Technical Planning Committee to ensure timely and consistent regulatory and permitting processes as outlined in Section 7.3.

#### **4.1.4 Environmental Protection**

The City of Merritt supports environmental protection as outlined in the Regional Growth Strategy. The City recognizes and supports the TNRD's goals to protect and enhance the environment through the adoption and co-operative use of stewardship principles. The OCP supports the environmental protection goals of the Regional Growth Strategy as follows:

- By "working with nature" to permit uses that do not degrade the natural environment, as well as to conserve and to protect the region's natural resources, amenities and attributes as outlined in Section 3.3 and Section 5.0.
- By designating environmentally sensitive areas and preventing development that would negatively impact environmentally sensitive areas as outlined in Section 5.0 and 6.0.
- By recognizing the importance of protection of ground water resources which provide water to residents as outlined in Section 3.2.
- By providing policies for business attraction, retention and expansion.

#### **4.1.5 Open Space and Cultural Heritage**

The City of Merritt supports the TNRD's commitment to protect the open space, rural character and unique heritage features of the region. The OCP supports the open space and cultural heritage goals of the Regional Growth Strategy as follows:

- By partnering and working with Crown land agencies with respect to future development of Crown-owned lands to address open spaces and parks issues as outlined in Section 3.4 and 5.0.
- By encouraging conservation of areas and structures that have cultural and heritage value as outlined in Section 3.3.
- By continuing to recognize ranching, mining, forestry and the former railroad as part of the cultural heritage of the City and the surrounding Nicola Valley as outlined in Section 3.3.

- By identifying and preserving areas within the City that have open space and natural amenities as outlined in Sections 3.3 and 5.0.
- By continuing to partner and work with our First Nations neighbours to celebrate this culture and history in the Nicola Valley as outlined in Section 3.4.

#### **4.1.6 Co-Operation and Process**

The City of Merritt will continue to implement the Regional Growth Strategy through the establishment of ongoing co-operative processes. The OCP supports this co-operative process as follows:

- By working with the TNRD in a partnering relationship to achieve the goals and policies of the Regional Growth Strategy as outlined in Section 3.4.
- By working with the First Nations, the Crown and private landholders to develop Sector Gateway 286 as outlined in sections 3.0, 5.0 and 6.0.

#### **4.2 Fringe Area Policies**

Since the Collettsville boundary extension when most existing fringe area development was incorporated within City boundaries, there has been very little development activity in the fringe areas outside current City boundaries. There are two areas, however, where there is potential for significant development which would have a direct bearing on the City because of their location and size.

The first is the Active Mountain events and development proposals in South Merritt. While portions of this development lie within existing boundaries; a significant portion, about 121 ha (300 acres), lies south of the City boundary.

The second is the Joeyaska Indian Reserve #2 (Lower Nicola Indian Band), located adjacent to the south entry into the City. While there are no definite plans for development, this area's size, prominent location, exposure to the Coquihalla Highway and favourable topography indicate a significant potential for major development.

Even though these areas lie outside the current boundaries, the City has a major interest in their development. Both could have significant implications for the City's infrastructure (e.g. water, sewer, roads) and delivery of services (e.g. fire protection, police protection, recreation amenities). Also, they could contribute significantly to the City's strategy for making the

from the moment they enter the City and as they move throughout the community. As such, signage has the potential to communicate information, and to create a positive image of Merritt. It is Council policy to:

- .1 Ensure signage is not visually intrusive and yet interesting, attractive and a vital part of the design of the building and business it represents and is at a scale complementary to adjacent land uses and surrounding buildings.
- .2 Ensure consistency of appearance and quality of materials and craftsmanship.
- .3 Encourage signage that reflects the heritage and character of the community.
- .4 Promote communication that is clear and presented in a simple and straightforward manner.
- .5 Ensure that signage is maintained to the highest standard throughout the year as supported by a maintenance schedule.

#### **5.4 Sector Specific Policies**

The intent of this section is to provide policies that reinforce the qualities that make each sector unique. For each sector, the following is provided: description of the existing situation; direction for future development; policies specific to each area; and sector map outlining land use designations.

By undertaking a sector approach, land use designations are defined according to the particular features of each sector within the City. The direction for future development for each land use designation is indicated as per the vision defined for each sector. This means that the intent of land use designations may differ from sector to sector. For example, the vision for residential development in one sector may differ from another sector of the City, yet both sectors indicate a “residential” land use designation.

##### **5.4.1 Bench**

###### **5.4.1.1 Description of Existing Situation**

The Bench sector encompasses the area north of Voght Street on the benchlands above the City. It is primarily a quiet, residential neighbourhood surrounded by grasslands and forest. Due to the ecology of the surrounding Douglas Fir and Ponderosa Pines, this sector is considered to be within an urban wildfire interface area.

This neighbourhood is situated at the highest elevation in Merritt and is primarily comprised of low density single family dwellings with large, landscaped lots, curving streets and spectacular views of the Nicola Valley. One exception is a multiple density apartment complex located at the eastern end of this sector. The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) campus is located in this area and provides a central venue for post secondary education programs. In addition, affordable housing units are located on Belshaw Street south of the NVIT campus. A significant amount of undeveloped Crown land, known as the "North Bench", exists directly north of this neighbourhood. Lower portions of this area are serviceable by the existing water system, but a large proportion is too high in elevation to receive service without upgrades to existing pressure.

#### **5.4.1.2 Direction for Future Development**

Where possible, the City will encourage the development of existing vacant parcels within the serviced areas of the Bench before expanding onto steeper slopes or areas outside existing development. Future expansion of residential development is anticipated to the north, but new development will need to be carefully considered since this area will require extensive infrastructure expansion. It is expected that new development will consist primarily of single family homes compatible with existing development. The City has identified 40 ha (100 acres) of this area as suitable for residential development or technical park development and the expansion of the Bench neighborhood. The City will work with the Crown to make this land available for development.

Some expansion of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) has been completed. More expansion will be encouraged on the site of the existing campus for expanded facilities and student housing. The area surrounding the campus has the potential to accommodate multiple family residential housing.

It is Council policy to:

- .1 Maintain the primarily single family residential character of the neighbourhood and support compatible and complementary medium density residential, institutional, parks and recreational land uses and secure more park dedication within the neighbourhood.
- .2 Retain the institutional uses in the area including the NVIT campus, schools and the cemetery and consult with them on new programming ideas.
- .3 Encourage new residential development primarily within existing serviced areas. Once development is exhausted in areas already serviced, the next phase of development could occur within the existing water pressure zone where servicing can be extended.

- .4 Ensure new residential developments are sited and designed so as to take advantage of, preserve and integrate special site features such as mature vegetation, landscaping, topography, adjacent development and scenic views where possible.
- .5 Encourage multiple family residential development and student housing in areas adjacent to the NVIT campus.
- .6 Prevent development within areas designated as hazardous slopes or unstable soils where hazards cannot be mitigated. These include areas adjacent to steep slopes with grades of 30% or greater, areas of soil subsidence, rock fall, land slip or erosion hazards which are known or suspected.
- .7 Ensure geotechnical evaluations are conducted for development in areas greater than 20% slope.
- .8 Ensure consultation with appropriate ministries prior to advancement of new development within or adjacent to potential wildfire interface areas.
- .9 Include wildfire standards in subdivision design where appropriate to safeguard proposed and existing developments.
- .10 Work cooperatively with Crown land agencies with respect to future expansion of areas in the northern area of the Bench. This may include the preparation of a neighbourhood development plan or a comprehensive development plan that would address the following: land use and density, infrastructure requirements, wildfire interface issues, transportation (including an east-west link between Belshaw and Juniper Avenue to provide support and access to Voght Street), open spaces and parks, existing habitat and vegetation, and design guidelines for form and character of development

#### ***5.4.2 River Ranch and Grassland***

##### **5.4.2.1 Description of Existing Situation**

Much of the natural vegetation of the Nicola Valley includes semi-arid grasslands with varying agricultural capabilities. The River Ranch and Grassland sector is an extension of this natural landscape and lies to the east of the City. It is bisected by the Coquihalla Highway which runs north and south and the Nicola River which runs east and west. This area is largely flat and undeveloped, with wide, open, natural spaces and some agricultural related activities that contribute significantly to the natural setting of the community. Much of the area is flat and lies within the Nicola River floodplain and may be subject to periodic flooding.

Agricultural operations currently are actively conducted in this sector especially on the River Ranch lands. River Ranch has a long history as an integral component of the agricultural