

A Guide to Community Planning in Sidney



This document focuses principally on the municipal planning process in Sidney and provides an overview of the key elements of community planning, which include:

- **Official Community Plan**
 - Downtown/Downtown Waterfront Local Area Plan;
 - West Side Local Area Plan;
- **Zoning Bylaw;**
- **Overview of the Town's planning system and process;**
- **The public engagement process; and**
- **Development in Sidney during the past two decades.**

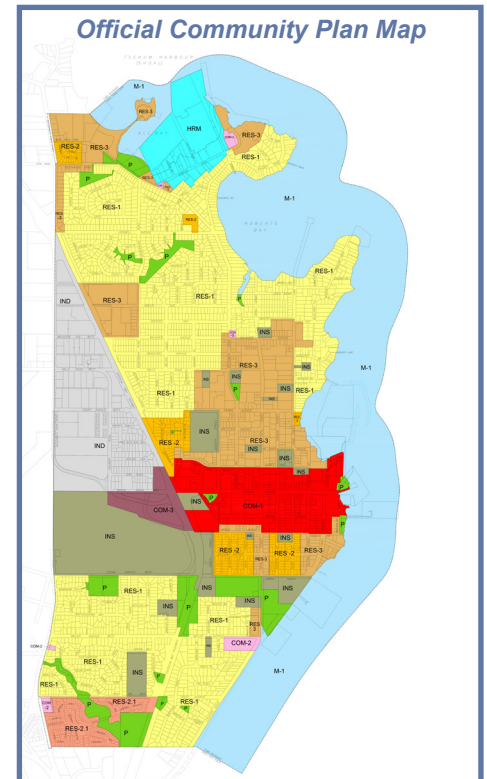
This information has been compiled by our Planning staff in a format that provides the reader with a clear and simple outline of Sidney's planning and development process. If, however, you wish to receive more detailed information, please feel free to visit the Town's website or drop into the Town Hall as our professional and helpful Planning staff are always more than willing to assist and answer questions.

After the global recession of 2008, development in Sidney slowed to a near standstill. Our once vibrant and growing community seemed to be on hold. However, that has since turned around and Sidney has once again become a desirable community for new development opportunities. Council has heard from some residents and local business owners that they are happy to see this turnaround as it means prosperity, opportunity and sustainability for our community.

Other residents have expressed concerns about new development and how it may change Sidney. No matter what your stance on the current development climate in Sidney, the accompanying information will assist you in better understanding the often complex process of municipal planning and development.

As some recent developments have required amendments to the Zoning Bylaw and Official Community Plan (OCP), people have suggested it is time for an OCP review. Council recently undertook four projects that will lead into an OCP review, which is planned for 2019. These projects include:

1. **The West Sidney Local Area Plan;**
2. **The Downtown Waterfront Vision;**
3. **Downtown Streetscape & Urban Design Standards; and**
4. **Establishment of a Bonus Density & Community Amenity Contribution Policy.**



In This Guide:

- **Development in Sidney**
(Page 2)
- **What is an Official Community Plan?**
(Page 3)
- **What is Zoning?**
(Page 4)
- **Sidney's Planning System & Process**
(Page 5)
- **How to Get Involved**
(Page 6)



Development in Sidney

Sidney has seen significant change since it was first settled. In more recent years, development has followed the cyclical movements of the economy.

With finite boundaries and little remaining undeveloped land, most development in Sidney is infill on previously developed sites.

Sidney has always seen a significant amount of development activity. That said, over the last couple of years, development activity has increased above previous levels, especially in the Downtown Core.

The graph below provides an overview of the number of OCP and Zoning amendments approved by Council each year since 1997.

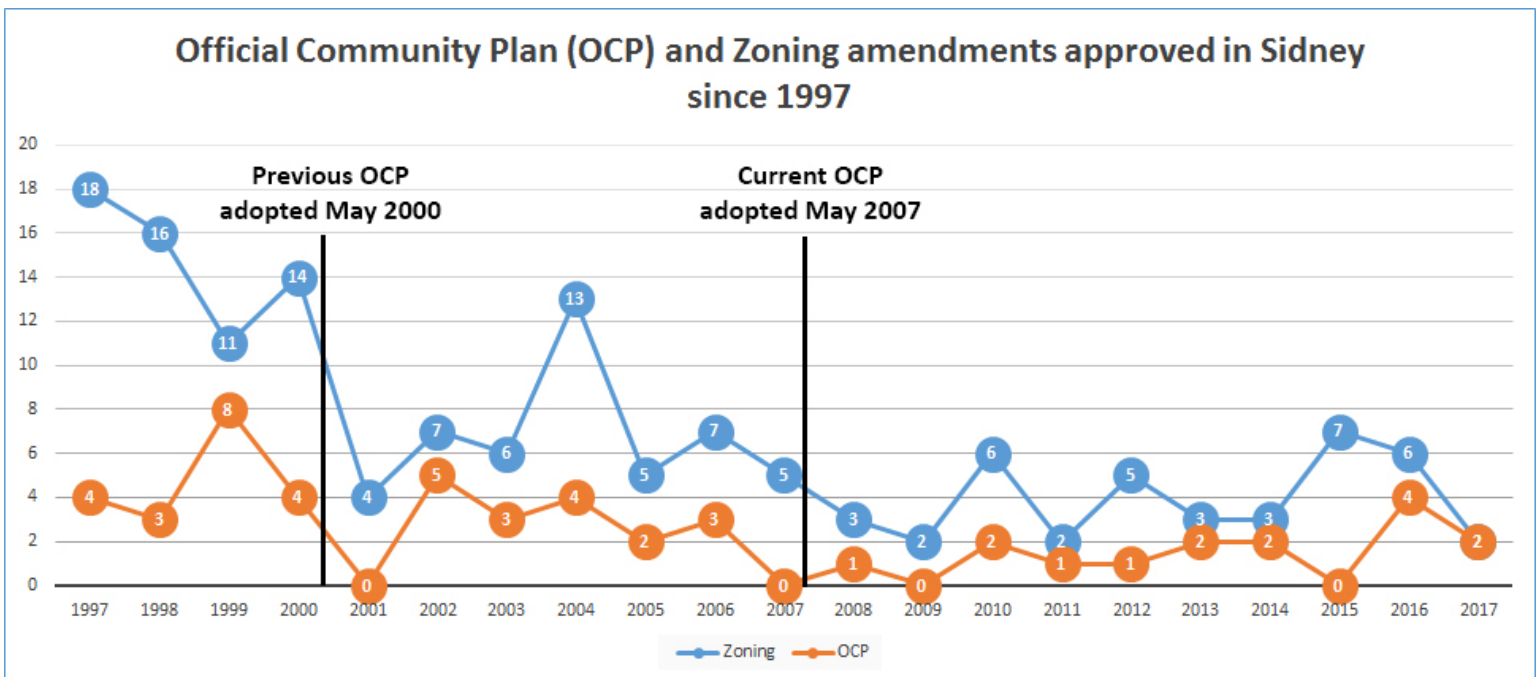
Reasons to Consider Development

Development in Sidney provides many benefits. In addition to providing the homes we live in, development supports the tax base, economic development and employment, infrastructure renewal, beautification and a host of other benefits.

Development and Community Amenity

Development activity has been responsible for some of Sidney's most loved amenities.

Photos on the right, from top to bottom: The Waterfront Walkway, Oceanspray Park and the First Street sidewalk, and the Sculpture Walk were all paid for in part or whole by development





What is an Official Community Plan?

An Official Community Plan (OCP) is a statement of objectives and policies that sets out a long-term vision for the community, including land use management and planning decisions.

Sidney's role as a growth centre on the Saanich Peninsula is reinforced by the CRD's Regional Growth Strategy, which identifies the Town as a Sub-regional Node for its role as an employment and population centre. This function is important in keeping urban settlement compact and protecting the character and quality of rural areas.

All municipal policies, plans and regulations should be consistent with the OCP Bylaw, which makes it a powerful guide for the Town's decision-making.

An effective OCP provides clear direction, and should be respected to the fullest possible extent; but it is not meant to be "set in stone": changes to the plan, in response to new information or evolving circumstances, are common in most municipalities and are clearly allowed through legislation. These changes are often consistent with the overall vision of the OCP, but allow the Town to take advantage of new ideas, acknowledging that no OCP is perfect and complete. In this way, an OCP is often considered a "living document."

Sidney's OCP (and LAP) was developed with significant involvement of the public, stakeholders and businesses and was adopted in May 2007.

The Downtown/Downtown Waterfront Local Area Plan (LAP) is a schedule to Sidney's OCP.

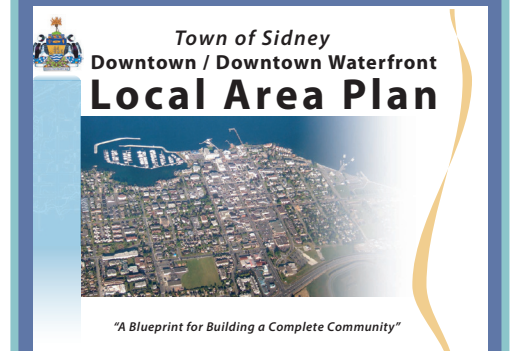
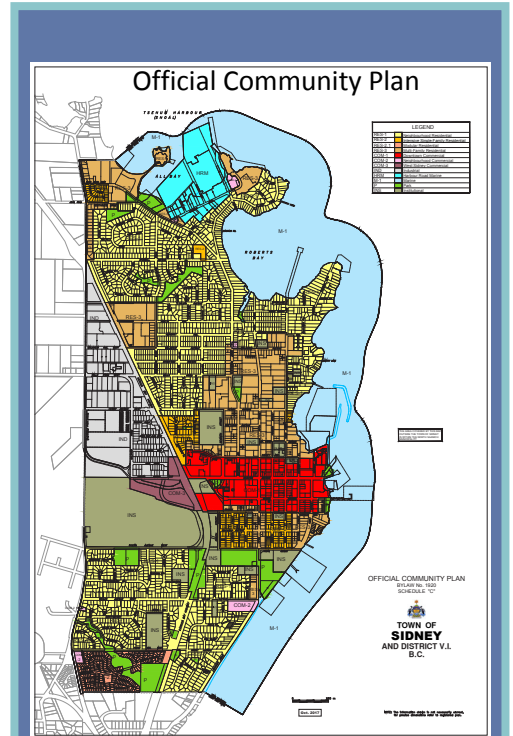
The LAP is a specific plan for the revitalization of the downtown core and waterfront area. It contains specific goals and guidelines for how the neighbourhood will develop, including:

- a strong focus on a high level of urban design
- improved pedestrian, cyclist and vehicle connections
- more residents living in Sidney's downtown area
- policies to help strengthen the local economy and business

The LAP guides other planning documents such as the Downtown Streetscape & Urban Design Standards, as well as future planning processes such as the Active Transportation Plan.

The West Side Local Area Plan (WSLAP) provides detailed policies and recommendations to guide the future of the West Side neighbourhood over the next 30 years. The primary focus of the plan is on future transportation infrastructure (public investment) and land use (private investment) in the area.

It was developed through extensive community consultation and adopted by Council on October 23, 2017.





What is Zoning?

Zoning regulates how a property can be used, what type and size of buildings may be constructed, and the size of lots that can be created.

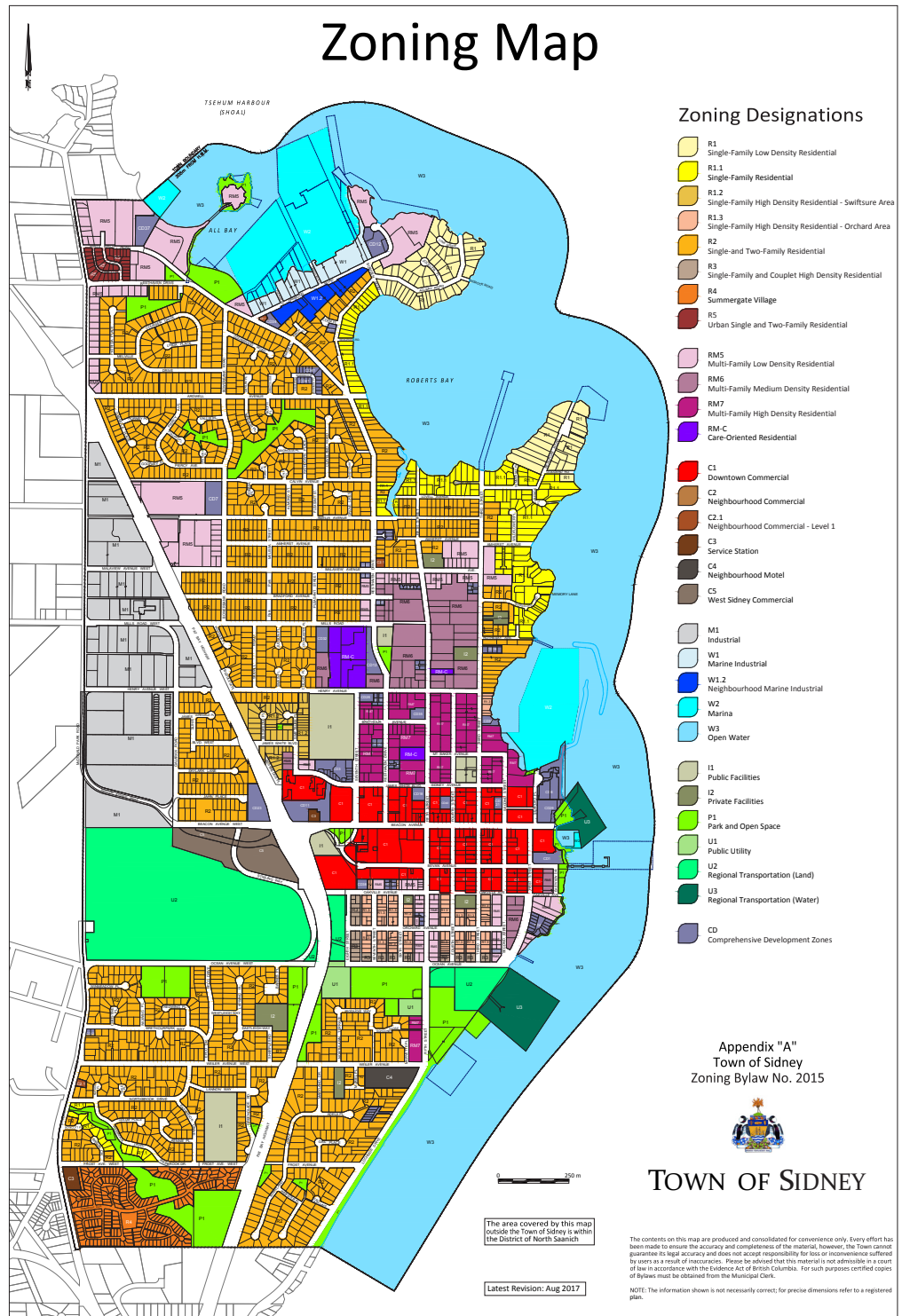
The Local Government Act gives municipalities the authority to designate (“zone”) a property for specific uses (e.g. commercial, single, or multi-family residential, etc.) and to determine building parameters (e.g. height, setbacks, etc.).

Zoning is meant to be compliant with the Official Community Plan. As zoning often comes after the OCP, it may not yet be in alignment; until it is, a property owner may use the property as zoned.

Zoning may be amended through a legislated process laid out in the Local Government Act. Amendments must be consistent with the OCP.

Zoning specifics such as height, lot coverage, or setbacks may be relaxed through a Development Variance Permit.

Development Variance Permits are reviewed on a case by case basis. The Town is not focused on the number of requested variances or how many are approved, but rather the overall value each project brings to the community. The Zoning Bylaw is not intended as a “one size fits all” document, so changes are expected over time.



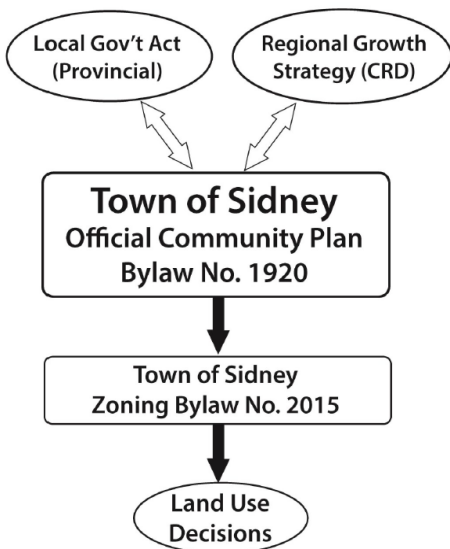


Sidney's Planning System & Process

Sidney's Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw work with other levels of legislation to ensure a predictable and coordinated land use planning system.

In BC, each level of the land use planning system must be in compliance with the level above it. Generally, policies and regulations start out being very broad at the regional level, and become more specific at the local (Zoning Bylaw) level.

Public involvement is legislated into every step in the planning and decision-making process. The public is also engaged early on in the formation of land use plans like Sidney's Downtown/Downtown Waterfront Local Area Plan (e.g. steering committee, planning charrette, surveys, etc.) Further community input is provided on an ongoing basis by the Town's Advisory Planning Commission.



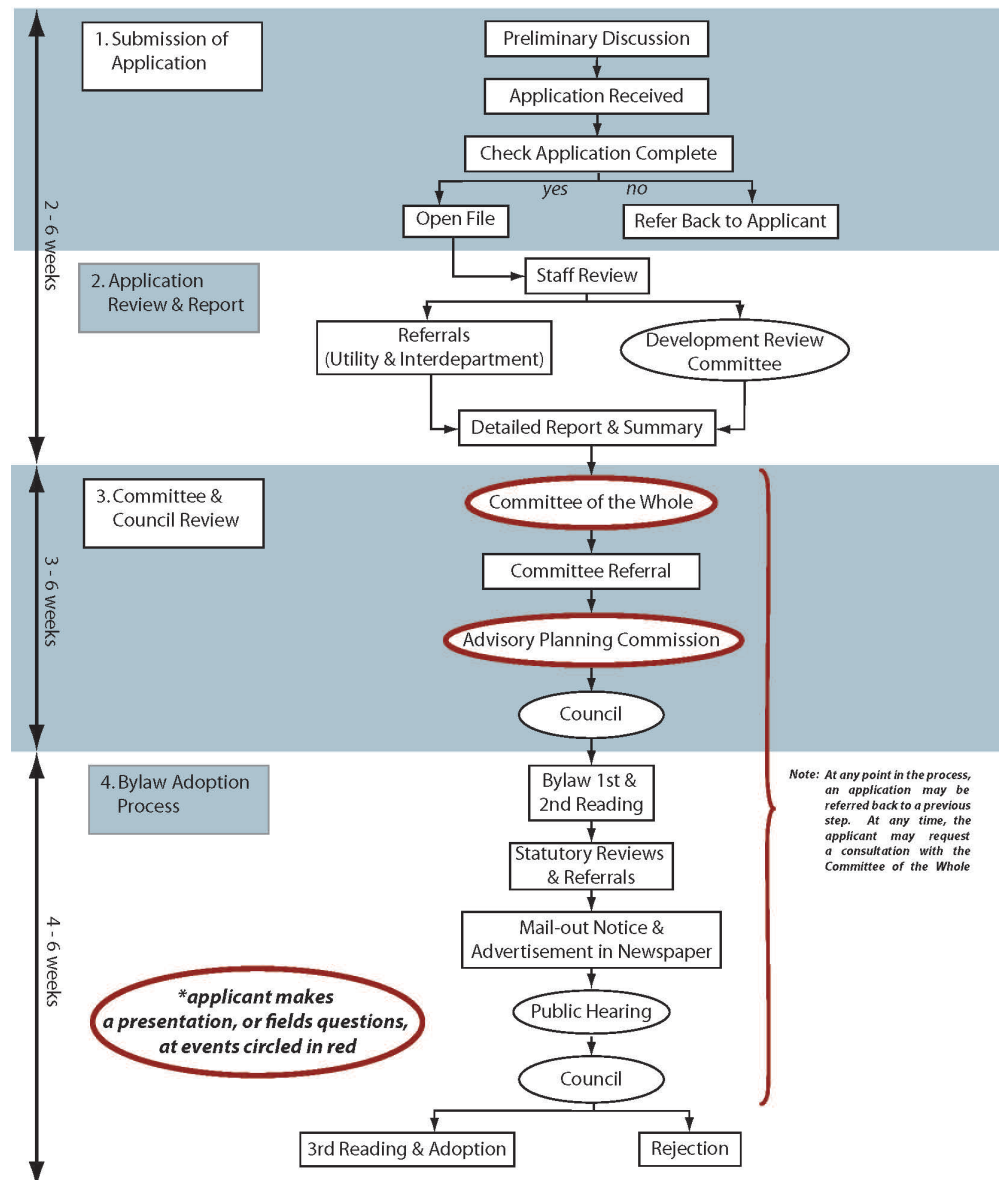
The Decision-Making Process

Land use change or the consideration of major development applications involving an OCP or Zoning amendment within a community must follow a specific, legislated process laid out in the Local Government Act and further regulated by the Town's Land Use Procedures Bylaw.

The Land Use Procedures Bylaw specifies the process an application must follow in order to be given final consideration by Mayor and Council.

Not all applications make it to stage 4 of the process outlined in the graphic below.

Timeline and Process of an OCP/Zoning Amendment Application





How to Get Involved

There are many opportunities for residents to get involved in the planning and land use decision-making process, and they all start with communication with Council and staff.

Mayor and Council are committed to making the development approval process open and accessible to public input. In order to increase community awareness, applicants for an OCP and/or Zoning amendment are required to post a sign on the property advising the public of the application(s). In addition, the Town mails out a notice to nearby residents, property owners and businesses when an OCP and/or Zoning Amendment application has been received, and invites anyone interested to visit the Town Hall or the website to see plans and other information.

A public participation period is included in the Committee of the Whole meetings where an OCP or Zoning amendment is being considered.

Applications for OCP Amendments, Zoning Amendments, Development Variance Permits and Development Permits (major) are considered and decided upon by Council at Regular Council meetings which are open to the public. Each Regular Council meeting starts with a Public Participation period where any member of the community is welcome to give comments to Council. For details on Council meeting procedures and schedules, please contact the Administration Department.

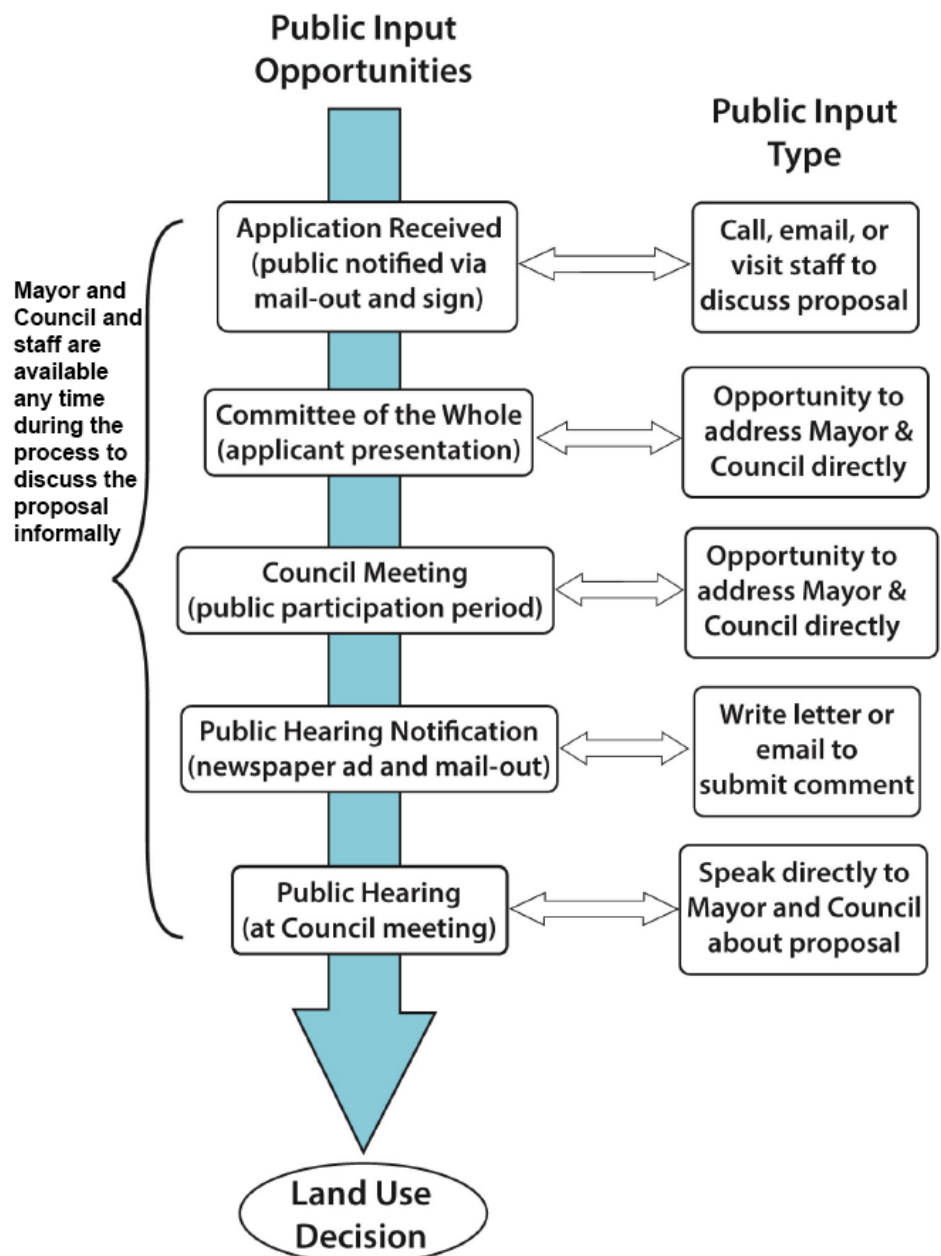
The Town of Sidney is committed to ensuring that everyone has a chance to voice their opinion and make their views known regarding a proposal.

All comments and suggestions received are closely evaluated by Town staff and, where appropriate and possible, incorporated into the proposed development or planning process.

In addition to the public's views, Mayor and Council must consider many other factors when making their decision on a proposal, such as:

- Rights of the property owner
- Corporate (Town of Sidney) objectives
- Long-term health and sustainability of the community and its economy

Opportunities For Input During an OCP or Zoning Amendment Application



To learn more about any active or completed development applications in Sidney, please visit the Town's Active Development Applications webpage.