



FACT SHEET

Planning Tools to Reduce GHGs

What planning tools can be used to reduce GHG emissions?

A variety of land use planning tools can be used to develop climate change Official Community Plan (OCP) policies and meet the requirements of Bill 27. Because the primary responsibility of Local Trust Committees is land use, we are uniquely positioned to take leadership on reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by using these tools in new and innovative ways.

Zoning

Zoning regulations determine where specific types of development occur, as well as building size, setback, and height. An LTC can adjust zoning bylaws to eliminate disincentives and encourage energy efficient building construction and retrofits in a number of ways. For example, an LTC can:

- Exclude features designed to increase energy efficiency from floor area limits
- Reduce or eliminate building regulation to encourage construction of thicker walls
- Accommodate renewable energy
- Make zoning approval subject to site specific requirements related to GHG emissions

Density Bonus

Established through zoning bylaw, a density bonus allows developers to surpass the allowable density in exchange for the provision of community amenities. A community amenity is broadly defined as features that a LTC considers of value to its residents. Amenities related to GHG mitigation could include: energy efficient and green building design, use of an alternative energy system, public walking and bicycle trails, tree preservation, and ecosystem restoration. Amenities can be provided on-site or off-site.

Density Transfer

Density transfer is tool that allows the voluntary transfer of the development potential of one property (the 'sending property') to another property (the 'receiving property'). Density transfer can be used to help an LTC gradually move towards a sustainable development pattern and low-GHG build-out plan (e.g. concentrating future development in nodes to increase density, reduce transportation needs, and preserve forested lands). 'Sending' and 'receiving' areas are identified or described in an OCP, and density transfers are carefully considered on a case-by-case basis.

Design Guidelines

Design guidelines are a set of land use principles established by an LTC to help shape development in a specific area. If desired by an LTC, design guidelines can include an emphasis on energy efficient and low GHG development. While such guidelines are not binding on developers, they can be an effective tool – particularly when designed to complement and expand on zoning requirements.



Development Permit Areas

A development permit area (DPA) is an area identified in an OCP within which all subdivisions, new construction and building additions, or land alteration require a development permit. In order to receive a permit, developers must conform to a set of development requirements determined by an LTC. Bill 27 allows local governments to establish DPAs specifically intended to reduce GHG emissions and promote energy and water efficiency. Permit requirements within these DPAs may include stipulations around site landscaping (e.g. natural shading, insulation, and wind-breaks to reduce building energy consumption), siting of buildings, exterior form and design of buildings, equipment and systems external to buildings and other structures, and restrictions on type and placement of trees and vegetation. Requirements such as parking stalls for small electric vehicles and plug-ins can also be required through DPA guidelines. DPAs address land use and exterior building design only, and cannot influence construction standards and interior building design. Changes to the BC Building Code are addressing more energy and water efficient features within buildings.

Parking Requirements

LTCs have bylaw authority to determine the amount, size, design, surfacing of off-street parking required by a building. Bill 27 expanded parking requirement authority: LTCs can now reduce off-street parking requirements for development that is in proximity to alternative transportation services, and can also require developers to provide cash in lieu of required off-street parking for development of walk ways, bicycle paths, public transit and other alternative transportation infrastructure.

Comprehensive Development Zones

Comprehensive Development Zones (CD zones) are zones in which an LTC can establish guidelines and requirements for all aspects of development in a coordinated and integrated way on a case-by-case basis. This tool can be used to mitigate GHG emissions in a number of ways – for example, CD zones can:

- Allow an LTC to establish specific and detailed zoning requirements that support sustainable land use patterns.
- Create opportunity for a LTC to extract commitments for community amenities such as tree retention, green infrastructure, and energy efficient buildings from a developer
- Allow an LTC to cluster development in one area of the development zone to minimize site disturbance and create compact land form

Development Cost Charges (DCCs)

While LTCs do not have jurisdiction over DCCs, they can encourage regional districts to execute DCC authority. DCCs are one-time charges levied on new subdivision and buildings to cover the cost of off-site infrastructure required to service the new development. Bill 27 allows local governments to waive or reduce DCCs for small-lot subdivisions and construction that advances low-GHG development patterns.

Advocacy and Partnerships

Advocacy statements, initiatives, and partnerships can be effective OCP policies that play an important role in reducing GHG emissions where authority or jurisdiction falls to another level of government or is exercised by individuals within the community.