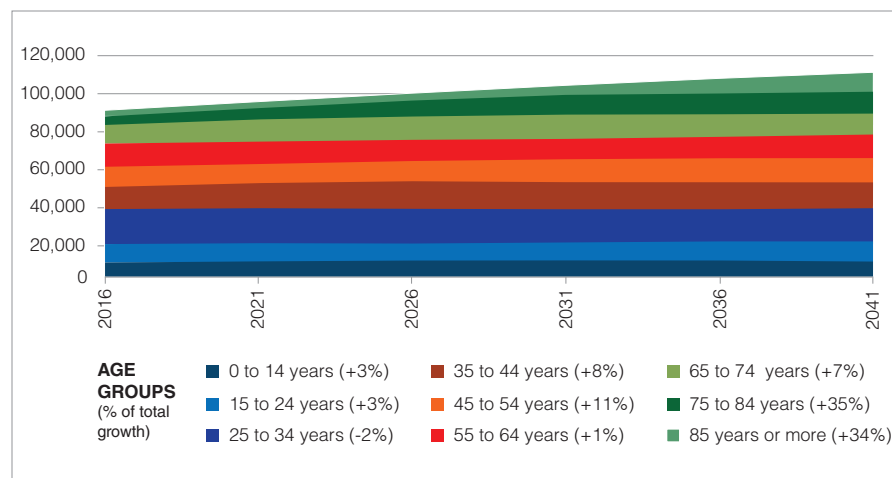# Context and Challenges

4

OVERVIEW

The issues that Victorians face, including the climate emergency, the housing crisis, and demographic shifts, shape this plan's goals, objectives and policies. This section outlines trends, challenges, and opportunities that effect the plan and specific policy topics, and the public engagement activities that helped to inform the development of this plan.

POPULATION GROWTH AND CHANGE

Victoria's population is expected to increase to approximately 111,000 by 2041. As shown in Figure 5, most age groups are anticipated to grow as the population increases, but the shares will shift. As the city's population ages, the share of older residents is expected to increase dramatically. Between 2016 and 2041, the share of those age 65 and over is projected to increase from 20% to 30%, while the share of younger residents is expected to decrease. Notably, the only age group projected to see a decline in total numbers is the group aged 25 to 34.

Figure 5: Population Projections by Age Group to 2041

AGE GROUPS (% of total growth)		
■ 0 to 14 years (+3%)	■ 35 to 44 years (+8%)	■ 65 to 74 years (+7%)
■ 15 to 24 years (+3%)	■ 45 to 54 years (+11%)	■ 75 to 84 years (+35%)
■ 25 to 34 years (-2%)	■ 55 to 64 years (+1%)	■ 85 years or more (+34%)

POLICY CHALLENGES

Land Management and Development

As a built out city, new housing needs will be met primarily through higher density forms of development. A diversity of housing forms will be required to support a diverse population. High to medium densities in Victoria's Urban Core, Town Centres and in and near Urban Villages are needed to satisfy widespread demand for housing that is more affordable and suitable to diverse lifestyles, and to support shops, services and amenities within walking distance of households.

Transportation and Mobility

An increased number of walking, biking and transit trips need to be accommodated within the existing street network. An increase in the number of regional commuters who travel to Victoria will increase road congestion and greenhouse gas emissions unless rapid and frequent transit corridors and associated supportive densities are enhanced in both the city and the region.

Placemaking

Victoria has a compact, dense urban form that is characteristic of larger cities, yet has access to nature, open spaces and a quality of life often associated with smaller communities. The challenge for new development is to create new memorable places, while embracing older special character areas through urban design, heritage conservation and animation of the public realm.

Parks and Recreation

Victoria has a network of parks, open space and recreational facilities that supports a high quality of life for citizens in neighbourhoods throughout the city. New approaches will be needed to be inclusive and balance the many different roles that these assets play, and to ensure that they respond to a growing population and aging infrastructure.

Environment

Less than two percent of the Garry Oak ecosystem that existed in Victoria in the 1800's remains today. Development has also highly modified the marine environment with contamination to the harbour and changes to the natural shoreline. As Victoria grows, it will be challenged to maintain remnant ecosystems and environmental quality.

Infrastructure

The City faces important decisions about aging infrastructure that must be replaced at significant cost and the provision of sufficient capacity for increasing densities in the Downtown, Town Centres and in and near Urban Villages. Infrastructure, such as storm sewers, must also adapt to impacts of climate change that are projected to include more frequent and intense precipitation.

Climate Change and Energy

Greenhouse gas emissions in Victoria contribute to global warming impacts. Greenhouse gas emissions must be rapidly and aggressively cut before deadly and costly weather extremes get even worse. In Victoria and cities across the globe, efficient land management and complementary building and mobility policies are needed to support reductions.

Housing and Homelessness

High housing costs, both for rental and ownership, in Victoria make housing affordability a challenge for people of different income levels. A lack of diverse family-oriented housing contributes to the loss of residents aged 25-34. Additional purpose-built rental housing is required to address persistently low rental vacancy rates, and much of the existing supply of rental housing is approaching the end of its lifecycle. Many people in the city and region are experiencing homeless or precariously housed.

Economy

Victoria's economy is shifting, with a growing share of technology sectors, and opportunities to embrace its location through marine innovations and connections to the Asia-Pacific market. However, vital industrial lands are scarce with high rents and low vacancy rates. Meanwhile, other important sectors, like tourism and local businesses are susceptible to shocks and ever-shifting trends.

Community Well-Being

The projected demographic shift in Victoria presents a dual challenge: meeting the shifting service, housing and mobility needs of an older population, while enhancing the housing, facilities and affordability needed to retain a younger workforce and their families. Social and cultural inequities are increasingly daylighted, highlighting the unique needs Victoria's diverse population. The City will need to work with many different partners in order to achieve a community that is accessible, equitable, inclusive and safe, and where everyone's basic needs are met.

Arts and Culture

Arts and cultural industries remain an important part of Victoria's economy and identity but the sector continues to face the challenge of insufficient public and private funding. While Victoria remains the regional centre for arts and culture facilities, events and activities, the arts community faces relatively high costs for rental space, and limited availability of suitable venues.

Food Systems

Access to land for household food production is often limited for those living in apartments or rental housing. Local food infrastructure such as shops, services and other food businesses need to be encouraged as part of a complete community. A growing number of residents are food-insecure and rely on charitable food services.

Emergency Management

The top two natural hazards for Victoria have historically been earthquakes and severe windstorms. There is a 32% likelihood of a damaging earthquake event in the city before 2054. A disaster of this level is a major threat to life and property. Infrastructure, including buildings and structures related to utilities and underground services, may require extensive reconstruction in community recovery after a disaster. Meanwhile, the impacts of climate change are increasingly felt through more regular extreme weather events.

Engagement in Plan Development

The objectives and policies in this plan were developed based on background research, public input and staff analysis. Public engagement was designed to both inform the public about the OCP and to gain an informed sense of the perspectives, values, goals and ideas of community members to shape the content in this plan. As illustrated in Figure 6 below, the OCP process engaged more than 6,000 citizens and a diverse range of stakeholders, including groups who work with people who are harder to reach such as people who are experiencing homelessness, living on low income, youth and single parents.

In 2023 this plan was updated to reflect several other citywide plans and policies that were developed through comprehensive community engagement processes.

Figure 6: Official Community Plan Engagement Process

PRESENTATIONS
> Talks to groups such as youth, neighbourhood associations, and the development community

COMMUNITY SURVEYS
> Mobile kiosks to raise public awareness
> Online opinion survey on urban growth options

WORKSHOPS
> Visioning with community stakeholders
> Review of draft policy with topic experts

COMMUNITY CIRCLES
> "Kitchen table discussions" among groups of self-organized citizens with public input to City.

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
> Community experts guiding the OCP review
> Advice on staff materials and participants in OCP events

CITIZEN INSIGHT COUNCILS
> Focus groups with randomly selected individuals
> Two in-depth sessions: sustainable communities and local area planning.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT
> Workshop with the Victoria Youth Council
> Community Circles and Workshops with Victoria High School class
> Community Cafés led by young adults.

COMMUNITY FORUMS
> Open house to launch the project
> Open house with workshops where participants helped to develop OCP
> Four open houses to discuss draft OCP with public

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ENGAGEMENT
> Feast hosted by Esquimalt First Nation
> Meetings with representatives from provincial government ministries, regional government, and neighbouring municipalities.