



4.2 AGRICULTURE

Farming has played a primary role in the settlement and growth of Pitt Meadows. It continues to contribute to the quality of life for both rural and urban residents in a number of ways. As a result of the agricultural industry, large expanses of open space are within walking distance of many of the neighbourhoods in Pitt Meadows, providing respite from the more busy urban neighbourhoods and roads. The farm areas or more specifically, the ALR, have contained the extent of urban development, enabling the creation of a concentrated towncentre and a community identity.

Agriculture remains the predominant land use in Pitt Meadows, with substantial areas in production for berries, horticultural products, greenhouse crops, grazing, dairy farming, and other farm activities. However, productive agricultural land is threatened by development trends such as “estate” homes in the rural farming areas. The City of Pitt Meadows and the Agricultural Land Commission recognize agriculture as a priority use in rural areas over residential.

The policies of this Plan are intended to confirm the City’s commitment to agriculture as a land use.

4.2.1 ALR Land for Productive Uses

Land speculation on ALR lands creates tension for the agricultural community and can create unrealistic land values for farm use. An important part of encouraging a viable and progressive agricultural industry that optimizes the use of agricultural land is by protecting ALR lands from conversion to other uses.

Policies

- a) Lands designated as Agriculture on Schedule 3A and 3B are intended to be used for agricultural production purposes;
- b) The City is committed to updating agricultural regulations and policies that support and encourage farming in Pitt Meadows;



- c) All uses and subdivision of Agricultural Land Reserve land, except those exempted under Section 11(1) of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, shall be in accordance with the provisions of the Act, regulations thereto and orders of the Commission;
- d) The *Agricultural Land Commission Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation* shall prevail where any part of this Plan pertaining to Agricultural Land Reserve and is inconsistent with or contrary to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*;
- e) A “no net loss” policy shall apply to lands in the Agricultural Land Reserve. However, the City may consider exceptions in cases where removal of land from the reserve is supported by the Agricultural Land Commission and significant community benefits are provided by the proposed alternative use;
- f) With the exception of the operations lawfully in existence as of the date of adoption of this Plan, any development of new golf course facilities, driving ranges and other commercial recreation uses are not supported on agricultural lands.

4.2.2 Larger Agricultural Parcels

Pitt Meadows’ agricultural lands consist of both small and large acreage parcels, with extensive large parcels located in the southwest and northeast portions of the City. The retention of larger agricultural parcels is generally desirable as part of creating economically viable farm units and discouraging land speculation that can lead to pressure for conversion to non-agricultural uses.

Policies

- a) The City supports the retention of large land holdings, the consolidation of small parcels of land and the creation of long-term land leases to enable investment to occur within agricultural areas as part of helping to maintain and establish economically viable farm units;
- b) Fracturing or subdivision of agricultural parcels is not supported. However, the City may consider severance of a home-site parcel where the applicant has continuously owned and lived on the property prior to and since December 21, 1972, no previous subdivision of the property has occurred, and the minimum lot requirements of the City’s Land Use Bylaw are met.



4.2.3 Housing in Agricultural Areas

In Pitt Meadows, as in many communities, land within the ALR is owned by both farmers and non-farmers. A growing trend, particularly in areas close to urban centers, is the use of agricultural lands for rural estate use. Characteristics of the many rural estates are houses that are large in size with little or no agricultural use of land. The City recognizes the attractive lifestyle offered by these rural estates, but believes that restricting their proliferation, including by controlling building size, is an important part of ensuring the long-term viability of the agricultural industry in Pitt Meadows.

In recognition of the growing use of transient seasonal labour on farms in Pitt Meadows, the City also wants to ensure that any on-farm housing provided for this labour is of an appropriate standard and only used as intended.

Policies

- a) Zoning regulations for residential dwellings on agricultural land that establish a building placement envelope at set distances from front and side lot lines and create building height restrictions will be considered. The City will also consider restricting the size of dwelling units.
- b) All seasonal farm labour housing must conform to health and fire code regulations and not create housing opportunities for non-farm workers.

4.2.4 Urban – Rural Conflicts

There is a healthy respect for agriculture among the urban population in Pitt Meadows. However, normal farm practices can create odours, noise, light or other impacts that may offend some non-farm residents. Issues of concern are not limited to farm practices. For example, the quality and quantity of water run-off from the urban area can affect agricultural land. The City wishes to ensure that land use conflicts are minimized where agricultural and non-agricultural activities are in close proximity.



LOCAL CROP FARM

Policies

- a) An agricultural impact assessment prepared by a professional agrologist is required by the City quantifying the impacts of any proposed development that may affect agricultural activity, such as a non-farm use on farmland or rezoning or subdivision on lands adjacent to farmlands;



- b) In support of Provincial Right to Farm legislation, agricultural lands shall be buffered from urban uses that could have negative impacts on farm activities. Developers of land close to agricultural areas shall provide appropriate building setbacks and landscape buffering using the current standards of the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission and the City and shall also place restrictive covenants on title that outline the potential disruptions encountered when living or working close to agricultural areas (e.g. noise, odours, crop spraying, slow moving traffic).

4.2.5 Diversifying the Agricultural Economy

The City of Pitt Meadows supports a viable and progressive agriculture industry and the need to continuously explore options for expanding the range of agricultural businesses.

Policies

- a) Value-added agricultural business initiatives in appropriate locations, including on-farm sites, are encouraged;
- b) Agri-tourism is encouraged that is developed in conjunction with agricultural operations.