

2.0 Context

2.1 Plan Area

The Cariboo Regional District is located in the central interior of British Columbia. It encompasses an area of 80,262 km². The majority of the population is concentrated in a central corridor roughly defined by the Fraser River Basin and Highway 97. Three main urban centers have developed along Highway 97, the southernmost being the District of 100 Mile House. Quesnel is located at the north end of the Regional District and Williams Lake is located halfway between the two. To the east and to the west of this “urban corridor” is a large, sparsely settled area where the economy and way of life are largely dependent on the natural resource potential of the land.

European exploration in the Cariboo took place in the 1790’s and early 1800’s, which led to fur trading. This gave way to ranching, which became established in the Cariboo during the Gold Rush in the 1860’s. Roadhouses were established along the Gold Rush trail to serve the miners travelling to and from the gold fields in the North Cariboo. The roadhouses serviced the early demand for agricultural products and included mixed farms with dairy, poultry, livestock, equine and vegetable production. Ranch operations were subsequently established throughout the Cariboo, mainly in areas that offered grazing opportunities on Crown land.

The agriculture industry expanded during the early 1900’s after the building of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway (now part of CN Rail). This led to the building of a stockyard in Lone Butte to ship cattle by rail to the Lower Mainland and dairy production in Forest Grove and Canim Lake that was sent by rail to a creamery in Quesnel. While the mix of agricultural production has changed over time, agriculture remains a key economic driver. This includes forage, berry and vegetable crops as well as equine, beef, sheep, poultry and rabbit production.

There are ten core communities within the South Cariboo Area. The communities are 108 Mile Ranch, 103 Mile, Forest Grove, Horse Lake, Gateway/Buffalo Creek, Lone Butte, Canim Lake, 97/93 Mile, Ruth Lake, and Simon/Straight Lakes. Detailed information is provided in the Residential section.

2.2 Demographics and Population Projections

As of the 2011 Census, the total population of the South Cariboo Area was 7,600. This represented approximately 12% of the total CRD population of 62,390. In comparison, the District of 100 Mile House, the largest service centre of the South Cariboo Area, has a much smaller population of 1,885.

The age group characteristics of neighbourhoods have planning implications to ensure appropriate services such as schools and parks are provided, and to ensure that sufficient amount of housing options is available. Overall, approximately 51.9% of the population is male, while 48.1% is female. In the Official Community Plan Area, the 50 to 69 age cohort makes up the most significant proportion of the population, particularly in comparison to the number of residents aged 20 to 39.

A sizeable share of children, youth, and seniors over 65 are likely to be socially and/or economically dependent on working-age people. The demographic dependency ratio measures the size of the “dependent” population to the “working age” population.

The dependent population includes the youth population 0 to 19 years and senior population 65 or older. The working-age population is generally considered to consist of the 20 to 64 age groups. The Official Community Plan Area has a higher demographic dependency ratio compared to both the Cariboo Regional District and British Columbia. A ratio of 66.96 implies there are 67 dependents for each 100 workers in the South Cariboo Area. The CRD is slightly lower at 64.57 and BC is at 59.49.

Current population projections by BC Stats indicate a slow but steady population decline of approximately 9% or 1,300 people over the next 25 years (2015 – 2040) for the Local Health Area 25. The geographic boundaries of Local Health Area 25 most closely approximate the South Cariboo OCP Area but also include the District of 100 Mile House, Lac la Hache and 70 Mile House.

The latest 2016 census data, released in February 2017, indicate the population decline has reversed or stabilized since 2011. There was a significant population increase from 1,569 to 1,784 people or 13.7% in Electoral Area ‘H’. Area ‘H’ includes Forest Grove, Canim Lake and Gateway/Buffalo Creek. Electoral Area ‘G’, which includes 108 Mile, 103 Mile, and Simon/Straight Lakes, showed a smaller increase of 4.1% or 200 people - from 4,955 to 5,156. Electoral Area ‘L’ showed a nominal increase of 0.6% from 4,177 to 4,204 people. Area ‘L’ includes Lone Butte, Horse Lake and 93/99 Mile areas.

2.3 Housing

Within the South Cariboo OCP area there is approximately 9,900 hectares of land zoned for residential purposes. A current breakdown of the built area cannot be provided as valid data from the 2011 National Household Survey is not available. However the built environment consists overwhelmingly of single family dwellings with modular & manufactured homes, and duplexes making up the remainder. For more detailed information on the built environment of each community, please see Appendix A of the South Cariboo Area OCP Technical Background Report.

Soils within the South Cariboo OCP area, as a general rule, do not hinder development except for some occurrences where they are very poorly drained such as swampy areas. Therefore, the strongest limiting factor to residential development remains slope gradients.

2.4 Economy

The South Cariboo Area is largely a resource-based economy although tourism also provides an important contribution.

Forestry

According to BC Stats, 83% of jobs in the Cariboo region in 2013 were related to the forest products manufacturing industry. This observation conveys the level of economic dependency that the region has on Forestry. With this in mind, the Cariboo and South Cariboo in particular have experienced substantial impacts as a result of the Mountain Pine Beetle outbreak that swept across the province beginning in 2000. Although the spread of the beetle has subsided, it has left millions of hectares of standing dead pine on the landscape. Changes on the landscape are not only represented by economic changes but other impacts include changes in hydrology, increased fire risk and magnitude, and changes to Annual Allowable Cuts (AAC) throughout pine dominant regions in BC.

The total area of 100 Mile House Timber Supply Area (TSA) is about 1.24 million hectares. The main communities within the TSA are 100 Mile House, 108 Mile Ranch and Clinton; smaller communities include Lac La Hache, Forest Grove, 70 Mile House, Lone Butte and Bridge Lake. The 100 Mile House Natural Resource District administers the TSA.

Before the uplift in 2006, the forestry sector provided 1,488 direct, indirect and induced employment (and before the Community Forest Agreement was removed from the TSA). This figure increased to 1,757 people employed from 2007 to 2011 based on the average harvest (employment gains from the increased harvest levels were partially offset by efficiency gains by industry). The employment is expected to drop to 593 by 2022 without a mitigation scenario although it is expected that the community forests will contribute to the employment of 6 additional people.

Of the total forest sector jobs, 31% are involved with harvesting and silviculture, 45% are in timber processing and 24% are indirect plus induced jobs generated by the forest sector.

Agriculture

Cattle ranching and forage production are the primary agricultural activities in the Cariboo. The region produces approximately 20% of the beef cattle in the Province. Ranching became established in the Cariboo during the 1860's Gold Rush and spread from Fort Alexandria (south of Quesnel) along the Cariboo Wagon Road to service the early demand for agricultural products. Ranch operations have subsequently been established throughout the Cariboo, mainly in areas that offer grazing opportunities on Crown Land.

A large proportion of land within the South Cariboo Area plan area is in the ALR as documented in Schedule 'E'. The agriculture capability of land available for cultivation ranges from Class 3 to 6, but is dominated by lower capability Class 5 soils (59% or 13,156 ha). Most Class 5 soils are not cultivated but

are important for pasture and grazing purposes. Typical limitations are stoniness and or topography, which are generally not considered to be improvable. Over half (54% or 1,445 ha) of the land that is currently cultivated (i.e. forage and pasture) occurs on Class 3 land that is primarily limited by an adverse climate.

A high percentage of ALR land is privately owned. There is potential for future farm development through irrigation, as shown in the 2015 Agriculture Water Demand Model.

Tourism

The Cariboo-Chilcotin tourism potential is linked to its outdoor recreation and wilderness setting which features a wide variety of fish and wildlife, extensive mountain ranges, grasslands, forests, and an abundance of lakes and rivers. Because of its close link to the land base, tourism can be successfully integrated with other land uses such as agriculture, recreation, forest harvesting, renewal, and settlement.

The South Cariboo Tourism Portal website was created to highlight tourist attractions, accommodations and restaurants local to the South Cariboo region. The portal was created through a partnership between the District of 100 Mile House, Village of Clinton, 100 Mile Development Corporation, Cariboo Regional District and Thompson Nicola Regional District. The site is the primary marketing tool for the South Cariboo Tourism Development and Cooperative Marketing Program that was established in 2001. Tourism is the second largest industry in the area and this program was designed to facilitate economic growth locally.

Tourism has the potential to increase within the South Cariboo area because of its close proximity to natural, historical and cultural resources. Although the summer months are considered “high time” for tourism, there are a number of tourism opportunities that take place in the fall and winter months within the area. These activities include cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, ice fishing, dog sled races and guide outfitting.

Commercial Services

The District of 100 Mile House is clearly defined and established as the commercial heart of the South Cariboo. The fringe areas' commercial services either complement these services or supply a locally-oriented type of servicing. Several neighbourhoods located within the South Cariboo OCP area contain retail commercial uses, a gas station or a restaurant.

2.5 Community Direction

Consultation with residents took place through two rounds of Open Houses (held in 108 Mile Ranch, Forest Grove and Lone Butte), a booth at the Garlic Festival and three community surveys. When asked to select the top three things aspects they like the most about living in the South Cariboo Area, the following were identified (ranked from highest to lowest):

- Rural lifestyle (29%)
- Access to nature and recreation opportunities including lakes (26%)
- Friendly and welcoming community (16%)
- Affordable housing (8%)
- Agricultural and ranching opportunities (5%)
- Cost of living (4%)
- Availability of commercial, health and social services in the South Cariboo (4%)
- Opportunities to work nearby (3%)
- Resource opportunities (e.g., forestry) (2%)
- Infrastructure services (e.g., water, garbage, recycling) (2%)
- Other (1%)

Out of a list of nine possible options, the main challenges facing the South Cariboo Area, were identified by respondents as:

- Commercial and economic development (17%)
- Declining regional population (15%)
- Improving transportation options and connections (13%)
- Protecting the natural environment (12%)
- Maintaining and protecting agricultural lands (10%)
- Enhancing social services (10%)
- Other (10%)
- Improving and expanding infrastructure services (e.g. water) (9%)
- Supporting regional arts & culture (3%)
- Housing and residential development (3%)

When asked about the concerns they have about their specific community in South Cariboo Area, the following aspects were identified (ranked from highest to lowest):

- Limited work opportunities (21%)
- Availability and range of commercial services (17%)
- Limited transportation options (16%)
- Limited social services such as medical services (16%)
- Climate change impacts (8%)
- Other (8%)

- Pollution and environmental degradation (5%)
- Limited housing choices (5%)
- Infrastructure services (e.g. water, garbage, recycling) (4%)
- Housing affordability (1%)

Overall, key themes included concern over economic development opportunities in the area, how to retain/encourage residents to the area, a desire for increased services (e.g. medical, commercial and transportation focused) and the protection of the natural environment.

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