



Regional Collaboration Framework BACKGROUND

MAY 2018



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Acknowledgements

The Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) acknowledges that it is part of the traditional, unceded territories of the Cowichan, Ditidaht, Penalkut, Halaht, Stz'uminus, Lake Cowichan, Lyackson, and Malahat First Nations.

This Backgrounder was completed with the support of the CVRD's internal Regional Collaboration Framework Task Force whose members included:

- Brian Carruthers, Chief Administrative Officer
- Ross Blackwell, General Manager, Land Use Services
- Mike Tippet, Manager, Community Planning
- Rob Conway, Manager, Development Services
- Amy Melmock, Manager, Economic Development
- Cynthia Lockrey, Manager, Strategic Services
- Bev Suderman, Senior Planner, Community Planning
- Keith Batstone, Community Planning Coordinator

The Regional Working Group, established to support the Regional Collaboration Framework process, met three times over the course of its development and were instrumental in its creation. In addition to the CVRD members highlighted above, the Regional Working Group included participation from:

- Peter de Verteuil, CAO, City of Duncan
- Emmett McCusker, Director of Public Works & Development Services, City of Duncan
- Michelle Geneau, Manager of Planning, City of Duncan
- Danica Rice, (temporary) Manager of Planning, City of Duncan
- Natalie Anderson, Cowichan Tribes
- Clarissa Peter, Treaty Communications, Cowichan Tribes
- Melissa Tokarek, Lands, Cowichan Tribes
- Evette Elliott, Land Use Planning Intern, Cowichan Tribes

- Sharon Brahams, Property Tax & Land Management Administrator, Cowichan Tribes
- Tom Rutherford, Cowichan Watershed Board
- Kate Miller, Manager, Environmental Services, CVRD
- Coralie Breen, Senior Planner, Community Planning, CVRD
- Janae Enns, Economic Development Intern, CVRD
- Jack Smith, Halaht First Nation
- Caitlin Kenny, Halaht First Nation
- Raven August, Halaht First Nation
- Shannon Waters, Medical Health Officer for the Cowichan Valley, Island Health
- Ann Kjerulf, Regional Planning Manager, Northern Team, Islands Trust
- Eric Nicholls, Manager, Planning & Land Use, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Ted Swabey, CAO, Municipality of North Cowichan
- Kyle Young, General Manager, Planning, Municipality of North Cowichan
- Natasha Horsman, Community Planning, Municipality of North Cowichan
- Scott Mack, (former) General Manager, Planning Municipality of North Cowichan
- Chris Hutton, Community Planning, Municipality of North Cowichan
- Guillermo Ferrero, City Manager, Town of Ladysmith
- Felicity Adams, Director, Development Services, Town of Ladysmith
- Joe Fernandez, CAO, Town of Lake Cowichan
- James Van Hemert, Planner, Town of Lake Cowichan
- Michelle Staples, Executive Director, Social Planning Cowichan
- Christy Villiers, Social Planning Cowichan
- Rosalie Sawrie, Social Planning Cowichan
- Summer Golden, Social Planning Cowichan
- Cindy Lise, Coordinator, OUR Cowichan

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Executive Summary

The Cowichan 2050 Regional Collaboration Framework (the Framework) was initiated by the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) in September 2017. In part, the project grew out of the CVRD’s 2016 Corporate Strategic Plan, which identified a need for a regional planning strategy or framework to support more “sustainable and coordinated growth and development in the region.”¹

The Framework also grew out of the realization that by 2050, the Cowichan region will be a very different place. While the coming changes are uncertain, over the next 30 years we can expect our population to grow by at least 30%, potentially straining services and increasing development pressures across the region. It is also clear that the impacts of climate change—many of which are already being felt—will pose more serious challenges in the future, with a warmer, drier climate and more extreme weather events impacting everything from our water supply to our region’s local economy. Climate change is also driving sea level rise, which will hit low-lying coastal areas particularly hard (by 2050, ocean levels are projected to rise 50 cm, or 1.5 feet). Other anticipated changes include an evolving local governance context as First Nations expand their land management authorities, capacities and opportunities; significant demographic shifts; and, a rising cost of living (see Textbox on page 7).

Developed against this backdrop of change, and within a context of increasing interdependence and complexity, the Framework offers a way forward for local governments in the Cowichan region to:

- Build more collaborative regional working relationships;
- Improve communications and information sharing;

- Support more coordinated planning on critical, region-wide issues; and
- Establish clear and measurable indicators of progress around regional livability, sustainability, and resilience.

As both a process and a commitment, the Cowichan 2050 Framework provides a statement of recognition that cross-cutting challenges such as those associated with climate change adaptation and population growth (e.g., sprawl, service delivery) cannot be effectively addressed in isolation by any one local government or organization. Moreover, it presents a clear opportunity for the communities of the Cowichan region to take hold of the future by beginning the process of creating a more proactive, collaborative and collective impact approach to regional planning. A new approach will enable the Cowichan region to more effectively address current issues, plan for emerging challenges, and achieve significant and positive collective impacts.

The Framework currently includes the following three core components; it will be expanded upon and further developed as the process moves forward:

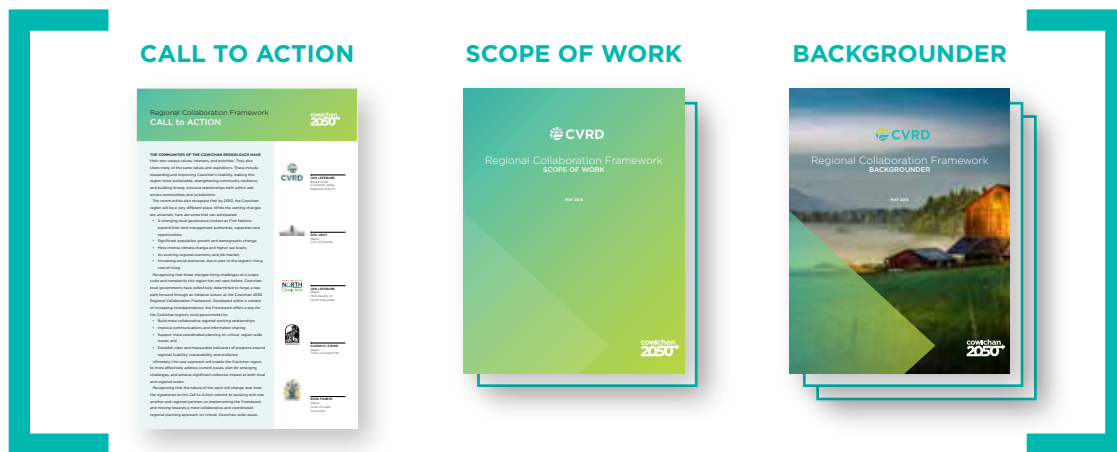
- **Cowichan 2050 - Call to Action:** A statement of commitment to regional collaboration that grounds the Framework and informs the collective and independent action necessary to protect and steward the Cowichan region going forward to 2050.

¹ Under the strategic focus area of “Excellence in Regional Land Use Planning.”



- **Cowichan 2050 – Regional Working Group**
Scope of Work: A scoping document that provides some structure around how regional collaboration will take place moving forward².
- **Cowichan 2050 – Backgrounder** (this document): A regional “primer” that:
 - Identifies shared regional aspirations (sustainability, livability, resilience, relationships and reconciliation);
 - Characterizes Cowichan region issues and challenges;
- Pulls together common policy themes from CVRD, local government Official Community Plans (OCPs), and regional organizations; and
- Outlines opportunities for more proactive, collaborative action across different regional planning areas (e.g., Housing, Growth Management, Ecosystems and Biodiversity, Transportation, First Nations Relations and Reconciliation, Climate Change Adaptation).

FIGURE: Cowichan 2050 Regional Collaboration Framework - components



2 Local government staff are core members of the Regional Working Group, but will be joined by First Nations, region-serving community organizations and other agencies and levels of government who have an interest in the Cowichan region and are a necessary part of any collective, collaborative action

While the CVRD, local municipalities and other regional players are already collaborating in many ways, there are also areas where collaboration and coordination has been limited at both the political and staff levels. Importantly, the two areas where regional collaboration is currently most limited are also the areas where coming changes are expected to be most significant:

- **Growth Management:** Effective growth management demands a regional perspective and lens. Currently, all municipal OCPs state their support for a regional growth strategy, while several of the Electoral Area OCPs include statements about how the impacts of growth are experienced on a regional scale. Growth management is clearly tied to several planning areas, notably ecosystems and biodiversity, transportation, services and infrastructure, and climate adaptation.
- **Climate Adaptation:** Given provincial legislation that emphasizes greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation (i.e., reducing GHG emissions in communities and corporately), the past decade has seen less of a focus on adaptation than on mitigation at the local government level. However, as climate

change impacts become more apparent and hazards and risks from sea level rise and coastal flooding increase, there is a critical and pressing need to re-focus efforts on regional adaptation, to build on and increase the scope of adaptation work that is currently underway. Some possible next steps include undertaking a collaborative, region-wide climate vulnerability and risk assessment to better understand and link climate hazards across the region, and developing a coastal flood management strategy around sea level rise.

Other areas where there are unmet regional planning challenges and opportunities for additional collaboration include:

- **Ecosystem Stewardship and Biodiversity Conservation:** As one of the most biologically rich areas in Canada, the Cowichan is well known for the diversity and natural beauty of its ecosystems. Due to the interconnected challenges related to population growth, urban development, and climate change, these natural assets are currently under significant pressure, and more must be done at both local and regional scales to protect them. Opportunities include developing a

A “NEW REGIONALISM” APPROACH

Emerging and contemporary planning and governance challenges are often best addressed through the creation of cross-sectoral coalitions that can facilitate coordinated planning and action at multiple scales (neighbourhood, local, regional, etc.). Importantly, this work requires both interjurisdictional collaboration and the engagement of stakeholders from outside the local government realm, which in turn places new demands on local governments to develop the capacities necessary for successful collaborative governance.

The Regional Collaboration Framework recognizes these considerations. Its development was informed by an emerging approach to regional planning sometimes referred to in planning literature as “new regionalism.” Common elements of this approach include:

- *Focusing on governance, not government (i.e., establishing goals and setting policies to achieve them);*
- *Focusing on process instead of (organizational) structure (e.g., strategic planning, building consensus);*
- *Building cross-sectoral coalitions that vary with the issue being addressed*
- *Emphasizing collaboration and voluntary agreement; and*
- *Building trust as a binding element in relations among regional interests.*

Collectively, such a “new regionalism” approach will help develop a culture of collaboration at the staff and political level, and support the Cowichan region in better planning for and accommodating change and future challenges.



regional conservation strategy to improve connectivity between ecosystems and to allow for the movement of species between them. Existing OCPs could also be better linked and harmonized around region-wide conservation and stewardship.

- **Watershed Management:** Regional watersheds are facing increasing pressure from development, contamination, depletion, population growth, and climate change. The good news is that many Cowichan communities are aware of these issues and already working collaboratively to address them, including leading edge collaborative efforts such as the work being coordinated by the Cowichan Watershed Board. Other opportunities remain for developing coordinated watershed management plans for regional watersheds currently lacking plans (e.g., Shawnigan Lake watershed) and to enhance work with First Nations and other management partners on the development and implementation of existing and new watershed management plans.
- **Transportation:** The Cowichan is very auto dependent with 90% of travel done via personal vehicles in the region. This auto dependence is responsible for generating

the majority of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the region (72% versus 58% provincially), but is also linked to limited mobility options for the young, the old, and those unable to afford a private vehicle. Early work by the CVRD identified an opportunity for developing a broad, regional transportation plan that identifies areas of partnership and collaboration around core regional transportation issues (e.g., transit, active transportation connections and facilities).

- **First Nations Relations and Reconciliation:** First Nations with reserve lands in the Cowichan are continuing to enhance and expand land management authorities, capacities and opportunities. Some are also expanding their land base through the BC Treaty process. While the CVRD and local governments have worked and partnered with different First Nations on a range of initiatives - from watershed management to local economic development projects - more collaborative land use planning projects have been relatively limited. Experiences from other regional districts (such as Alberni-Clayoquot, Powell River, Capital, and Comox) clearly show the value of building fuller relationships and partnerships with First Nations in the spirit of reconciliation.

Background

IN 30 YEARS, the Cowichan region will be a very different place with climate change, population growth, and transformative changes in regional governance driving considerable and complex challenges and opportunities (see text box). While the scale and scope of change is uncertain, we can expect many more people to call our region home. At the low end, the region is looking at a population increase of more than 25,000 people – the equivalent of adding the population of about five new Duncans. This growth will bring development pressures that—depending on the decisions we make today—will impact Cowichan landscapes and communities for better or worse. We can also anticipate that the impacts of climate change will be more heavily felt by all. For example, by 2050, sea levels are expected to rise 50 cm (1.5 feet). Combined with more frequent and intense storms, this will likely result in both temporary and permanent flooding of some coastal neighbourhoods, businesses, infrastructure, and critical foreshore ecosystems.

Regional governance will also likely be very different soon. First Nations, some of whom will likely be new orders of government as Treaty Nations, will be active partners in regional land use planning and decision-making. Some may choose through their Treaties to become members of the CVRD. There may also be a new local government in the region's fast growing south, while Duncan and North Cowichan may be amalgamated as a single new local government.

Developed against a backdrop of increasing environmental, economic, and social change, and within a context of increasing interdependence and complexity, the Regional Collaboration Framework offers a way forward for Cowichan region local governments to:

- Build more collaborative regional working relationships;
- Improve communications and information sharing;
- Support more coordinated planning on critical, region-wide issues; and
- Establish clear and measurable indicators of progress around regional livability, sustainability, and resilience.

As both a process and a commitment, Cowichan 2050 is a statement of recognition that cross-cutting challenges like climate change adaptation and the implications of population growth (e.g., sprawl, service delivery) cannot be effectively addressed in isolation by any one local government or organization. Moreover, it presents a clear opportunity for the communities of the Cowichan region to take hold of the future by beginning the process of creating a more proactive and collaborative approach to regional planning. A new regional approach will enable the Cowichan region to more effectively address current issues, plan for emerging challenges, and achieve significant and lasting social change.

The Framework is grounded by a Call to Action and supported by a Regional Working Group Scope of Work that provides some structure around *how* regional collaboration can take place going forward. Local government staff are core members of the Regional Working Group, but will be joined by other partners (e.g., First Nations, organizations, agencies and other levels of government) who are a necessary part of any collective, collaborative planning action in Cowichan. This Backgrounder is the third component of the Framework. It outlines opportunities for more integrated action across different region-wide planning concerns.

COWICHAN 2050: PLANNING IN A CONTEXT OF CHANGE

By 2050, the Cowichan region will be a very different place. While the coming changes are uncertain, here are some that we can anticipate:

Growth



- **More people, more development.**
 - At least 25,000 more people are expected
 - Depending on the form and density of development, potential challenges include sprawl, mounting infrastructure and servicing costs, impacts on sensitive ecosystems habitats, and changes to the region's much-loved rural landscapes and character.

Climate Change



- **A warmer, drier climate with more extremes.**
 - Summer precipitation expected to decrease by 18%
 - Snowfall is expected to decrease by 46%
 - Regional water supplies, agriculture, and forests will be impacted



- **Rising sea levels.**
 - Sea levels expected to rise about 50 cm (1.5 feet)
 - Inundation, erosion, and salt water intrusion will impact homes and businesses, infrastructure and services, and habitats
 - Low lying areas will be particularly hard hit, including Cowichan Bay, Mill Bay, Chemainus, Ladysmith, Cowichan Tribes and the Cowichan Estuary

Other expected changes include significant demographic shifts, a rising cost of living, and an evolving regional governance context as First Nations continue to enhance and expand their land management authorities, capacities and opportunities.



Purpose and Organization

THIS BACKGROUNDER is one component of the larger Cowichan 2050 Regional Collaboration Framework. As a supporting document, the Backgrounder:

- Identifies shared regional aspirations;
- Characterizes regional issues and challenges;
- Pulls together common and consistent regional planning directions and supporting policy themes from plans and strategies developed by CVRD, member local governments and regional organizations;
- Highlights past, present, and ongoing regional initiatives and programs; and
- Outlines opportunities for future collaborative action across different regional planning areas.

The Backgrounder is designed to support and inform a range of users, with an emphasis on local government staff and elected officials from CVRD municipalities and electoral areas. For the CVRD in particular, it is anticipated that this document will:

- Support the orientation of local and regional government staff and elected representatives, including CVRD staff and Board members;
- Encourage discussion and collaboration around region-wide issues; and
- Enable the identification of policy gaps, planning challenges, and potential initiatives that could benefit from greater regional coordination and collaboration.

This Backgrounder is organized into three main components.

- **Vision:** An overarching regional vision developed through Social Planning Cowichan's Visions 2020 process, and confirmed through the Cowichan 2050 process.
- **Aspirations:** Four guiding aspirations, or cornerstones, that support the regional vision.
- **Regional Directions:** A summary of common and consistent regional planning directions and supporting policy themes from plans and strategies developed by the CVRD, member local governments and regional organizations. They are organized into the following categories:

■ **Our Commitments:** First Nations Relations and Reconciliation; Climate Change Adaptation.

■ **Our Communities:** Housing; Growth Management.

■ **Our Natural Environment:** Ecosystems and Biodiversity; Watershed Stewardship.

■ **Our Community Infrastructure:** Water; Liquid Waste; Solid Waste; Transportation.

■ **Our Livelihoods:** The Regional Economy; Agriculture.

■ **Our Wellbeing:** Health, Safety, and Emergency Planning; Food Security; Recreation; Heritage; Arts and Culture.



Development

THE BACKGROUNDER WAS DEVELOPED through a participatory process with staff from local governments, First Nations, and region-serving community organizations. It was developed over a nine-month period ending in June 2018. Project engagement and development included the following:

- **Regional Working Group.** A Regional Working Group made up of staff (e.g., planners, CAOs, lands and resources) from local governments, First Nations, region-serving community-based organizations, the Province, and other agencies was established to support the development of the Regional Collaboration Framework. The group met three times over the course of the developing this document and supporting materials. Participation was voluntary, and it grew and shifted over the course of the project as additional members participated.

Three regional community organizations also participated in the Regional Working Group: Social Planning Cowichan, Our Cowichan Communities Health Network, and the Cowichan Watershed Board. These organizations have deep roots in various Cowichan communities, and strong linkages to other community-based organizations. Their work and their networks make them vitally important to the Cowichan 2050 process.

Over the course of the project, three of eight First Nations with reserve lands in the CVRD participated in the Regional Working Group, including Cowichan Tribes, Halalt First Nation, and Stz'uminus First Nation.

- **Project Task Force.** A group of senior staff from the CVRD met regularly over the course of the project to guide the project between Regional Working Group meetings.
- **Elected Officials Forum.** The CVRD supported a workshop with elected officials from the region. The event took place on May 11th and was attended by participants from the CVRD and local governments. The forum confirmed elected officials interest in the Cowichan 2050 process; explored how the Regional Collaboration Framework could be endorsed by local governments; coordination and further development of the Regional Working Group going forward; and, Cowichan 2050 phasing and implementation. Elected officials also expressed a strong interest in expanding future forums to include First Nations leadership. The possibility of appointing elected official representatives to the Regional Working Group was also discussed.
- **Presentations to local governments and First Nations.** CVRD staff supported Cowichan 2050 presentations to local councils (North Cowichan, Duncan, Ladysmith, and Lake Cowichan) and a presentation to the Cowichan Tribes Environment and Lands Committee. CVRD staff also presented to the Cowichan Valley School District 79. Two project presentations were also made to the CVRD Board of Directors. Ladysmith staff brought the project to a joint planning group meeting with Stz'uminus First Nation.
- **Stakeholder Interviews.** Project consultants met with senior planners and representatives from regional community organizations at the project outset. These were followed up on with a series of telephone interviews during different project phases.

The Cowichan Region

THE COWICHAN VALLEY REGIONAL DISTRICT (CVRD) is part of the traditional, unceded territories of the Cowichan, Ditidaht, Penalkut, Halaht, Stz'uminus, Lake Cowichan Lyackson, and Malahat First Nations.

The region stretches from the Pacific Coast of Vancouver Island to the Salish Sea (Strait of Georgia) and the Southern Gulf Islands to the east. It reaches north of Ladysmith and south to the Malahat/Mill Bay area, covering a land area of 3,473 km².

Over 80,000 people live in the region, with the majority of the population along the eastern side of the Island. The CVRD is comprised of nine electoral areas and four municipalities: the City of Duncan, the Town of Lake Cowichan, the District of North Cowichan, and the Town of Ladysmith. In addition, there are several unincorporated communities, and a number of Southern Gulf Islands, including Thetis, Penelakut, and Valdes. The eight First Nations with reserve lands in the CVRD include Cowichan Tribes, Halaht First Nation, Lake Cowichan First Nation, Lyackson First Nation, Malahat First Nation, Penelakut Tribe, Ditidaht First Nation, and Stz'uminus First Nation. Each Nation is responsible for administering its own affairs with support from the federal government.





MAP: The Cowichan Region



Vision

THE REGIONAL WORKING GROUP confirmed the vision developed through Social Planning Cowichan's *Visions 2020* process as the overarching vision for this project. First developed in 1992 through a participatory process that involved many community members and regional organizations, this vision has been revisited and reaffirmed on several occasions over the past two decades. It will be updated in the coming years through Social Planning Cowichan's upcoming *Visions 2050* project, which will launch in 2018/2019. It is anticipated that the updated vision will replace the one below.

The people of the Cowichan Region work together to collectively take responsibility for a caring, safe, prosperous, diverse, ecologically sound community and ensure opportunities for current and future generations.

- *Visions 2020,*
Social Planning Cowichan

VISIONS 2020

In 1992, a group of Cowichan residents came together to talk about what they valued about living in the Cowichan Region and what they would like to see preserved for future generations. This conversation, led by FutureCorp Cowichan, resulted in a new endeavor called Visions 2020.

This process facilitated extensive consultation with community members that led to the creation of a global vision statement and six sector-specific statements. These were ratified by residents at a public forum held on March 16, 2006. The other purpose of the forum was to formally hand over the reins of Visions 2020 to Social Planning Cowichan, concluding that "under the expert guidance of Social Planning Cowichan, community residents will continue to implement the vision of the community we would like to be living in, in the year 2020."

Regional Aspirations

FOUR GUIDING ASPIRATIONS, or cornerstones, underlie the regional vision and speak to the CVRD's core directions. The guiding aspirations can be found in multiple regional and local government plans and strategies, and were reviewed by the Regional Working Group.

SUSTAINABILITY

Make our region more sustainable.

The Cowichan is currently experiencing steady population growth, and it is anticipated that growth pressures will continue to be a significant factor over the coming decades. This challenge will only be exacerbated by impacts associated with climate change, which will place further stress on our watersheds, ecosystems, food systems, and communities. Within this context, supporting sustainable, coordinated growth that facilitates continued environmental stewardship is a cornerstone goal for our region.

LIVABILITY

Keep our region livable.

Our region is one of the most livable places in Canada. We boast a great climate, a vibrant and prosperous economy, incredible outdoor recreation options, high quality community services, great infrastructure, and so much more. However, in part because of this appeal, housing and food costs are on the rise, and we're also experiencing an influx of newcomers. Our test will be to maintain and improve livability in the face of this growth. Key challenges include tackling housing affordability issues, managing growth so that our communities retain the qualities that make them special and unique (e.g., our rural character and community connectedness), and making sure that our built environment supports the health and wellbeing of all residents.



RESILIENCE

Strengthen our adaptive capacity.

Our region is already dealing with chronic stresses such as rising unaffordability, economic volatility, and water supply issues. In the coming years, we anticipate seeing these stresses increase and experiencing new stresses such as an aging population and sea level rise. As climate change accelerates, we also expect to become more exposed to sudden, acute shocks such as coastal flooding and more frequent and intense storms. In light of this diverse array of challenges, we must improve our region's overall resilience by strengthening the adaptive capacity of our communities and supporting systems. This will require us to work together as a region to identify and address our vulnerabilities proactively so we can survive and thrive no matter what stresses and shocks come our way.

RELATIONSHIPS

Build strong, inclusive relationships.

Social belonging and engagement are key components of community wellbeing. This concept and commitment is alive and well in the Cowichan Valley, which is home to 350 active volunteer-led organizations, as well as strong arts, culture and heritage sectors committed to making positive change. However, our region's income gap is growing, housing insecurity is on the rise, and vulnerable populations such as Indigenous peoples, visible minorities, and female lone-parent families face systemic barriers such as poverty, difficulty accessing employment opportunities, and pay gaps. To address these challenges, our region is committed to improving diversity, inclusivity and social equity in all spheres of community life. Building stronger relationships between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians through the ongoing journey of reconciliation is also key. In turn, these commitments will enable us to continue the hard work of further expanding relationships in the Cowichan region, both across and within communities.

Regional Directions

THIS SECTION PROVIDES A SUMMARY of common and consistent regional planning directions and supporting policy themes from plans and strategies developed by the CVRD, member local governments and regional organizations. They are organized into the following six thematic categories:

Our Commitments: First Nations Relations and Reconciliation; Climate Change Adaptation.

Our Communities: Housing; Growth Management.

Our Natural Environment: Ecosystems and Biodiversity; Watershed Stewardship.

Our Community Infrastructure: Water; Liquid Waste; Solid Waste; Transportation.

Our Livelihoods: The Regional Economy; Agriculture.

Our Wellbeing: Health, Safety, and Emergency Planning; Food Security; Recreation; Heritage; Arts and Culture.

All of the regional directions are organized in the same fashion.

- **Background:** A short synopsis of the current planning context.
- **Collaborative Initiatives:** An overview of current and past regional initiatives addressing the particular issue area.
- **Directions from Across the Region:** An overview of consistent and common policy themes from CVRD and local government Official Community Plans (OCPs) and other plans and strategies related to the issue area.
- **Looking Forward:** A brief description of opportunities to better address the issue area going forward.

Our Commitments

First Nations Relations and Reconciliation

Regional First Nations are continuing to create ways to expand their land management authorities, capacities and opportunities. Some are also expanding their land base through the BC Treaty process. While relationships with each of the eight Nations with reserve lands in the region are unique, the benefits and value of collaboration and cooperation are consistent across communities. Experiences from other regional districts (such as Alberni-Clayoquot, Powell River, Capital and Comox) also clearly show the value of building fuller relationships and partnerships with First Nations in the spirit of reconciliation.

A clear component of building a new relationship between Indigenous peoples is based on acknowledging the past and its present-day impact, reconciliation and healing for past injustices, and moving toward a better future for all. Reconciliation is not just an issue for the Cowichan region, but for all of Canada; collective efforts from all people are necessary to revitalize the relationships between Indigenous peoples and Canadian society. Reconciliation is a goal and a process that will take the commitment of multiple generations, both in the Cowichan region and across Canada. When it is achieved, it will make for a better, stronger Canada and Cowichan region.

THE WALK OF NATIONS

This annual event was created as a legacy for the 2008 North American Indigenous Games, which were held in Duncan and became a key turning point in bringing together First Nations and non-Indigenous community members. The Walk of Nations invites community members to walk together through downtown Duncan as a symbol of understanding, acceptance, respect and compassion, followed by music, food and celebration. The event is organized in partnership with the Cowichan Intercultural Society, Hiiye-yu Lelum (House of Friendship Society) and an organizing committee.

REGIONAL FIRST NATIONS SNAPSHOT

- **There are 8 First Nations in the region, and 34 reservations.** First Nations include Cowichan Tribes, Lake Cowichan, Ditidaht, Penelakut, Malahat, Stz'uminus, Halalt, and Lyackson.
- **Cowichan Tribes is the largest First Nation Band in B.C.** It has over 5,000 members and is also one of the largest employers in the region.
- **A relatively young and large portion of Cowichan region residents identify as Indigenous.** In 2016, approximately 12% of the region's total population identified as Indigenous. Of these, 45% are under 25 years of age. As a comparison, less than 5% of all Canadians identify as Indigenous.
- **Some collaborative agreements already exist.** For example, Cowichan Tribes is part of a Joint Utilities Board that collaboratively operates the Joint Utilities Sewage Lagoons with the City of Duncan and District of North Cowichan.
- **Regional First Nations are moving through the BC Treaty Process.** Malahat First Nation is currently in stage five (Final Agreement negotiations) of the six stage BC Treaty process while Ditidaht and the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group (Stz'uminus, Cowichan Tribes, Halalt, Lake Cowichan, Lyackson, Penelakut) are in Stage 4 (Agreement in Principle negotiations).



COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	TIMELINE	LEAD	PARTNERS	PURPOSE
Cultural Connections	Ongoing	Social Planning Cowichan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CVRD Quw'utsun' (Cowichan) Elders 	Offers a multi-phase process to build relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members. Events and programs include Understanding the Village, a decolonizing workshop, and Cowichan 101, gatherings to learn about Cowichan culture.
Memorandum of Understanding: Lower Cowichan / Koksilah Rivers Integrated Flood Management	2010	CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cowichan Tribes City of Duncan District of North Cowichan 	<p>Guides integrated flood management to protect the health and wellbeing of Cowichan citizens and watersheds.</p> <p>Builds on the Bridge Building Protocol as a further statement of collaboration.</p>
Cowichan Valley Bridge Building Protocol Agreement	2003	CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cowichan Tribes City of Duncan District of North Cowichan 	<p>Formally recognizes the benefit of building closer ties and working collaboratively between Cowichan Tribes and neighbouring governments.</p> <p>Outlines a mutual relationship focused on social and economic development in the region.</p>

DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

There is a wide range in the extent to which First Nations are mentioned, considered and included in OCPs from around the region. A couple of OCPs include sections on the history of First Nations in the region and the importance of building relationships with them today, while other OCPs merely mention that First Nation lands are not included in the plan.

Of all OCPs and CVRD strategy documents, roughly half highlight the following directions:

- ✓ General objectives or goals to build and maintain collaborative partnerships with local First Nations
- ✓ An aim to collaborate with neighbouring First Nations to protect important archeological sites

Several OCPs and CVRD strategy documents also highlight the following additional directions:

- ✓ Sections or statements acknowledging the history of First Nations in the area, and valuing their ongoing presence and culture
- ✓ Policies to work together with First Nations to ensure effective provision of services (e.g. water, sewer)
- ✓ Recognition of the importance of the shoreline, water sources, and seafood to local First Nations, with policies to collaborative with them to protect these resources
- ✓ Goals to work collaboratively with First Nations towards economic development

LOOKING FORWARD

As First Nations in the region continue to expand their land management authorities, capacities and opportunities, it will become increasingly important and mutually beneficial to continue building strong and respectful relationships between communities. Some potential options for future work to support regional reconciliation include:

- Supporting additional community accords and protocol agreements between local governments and First Nations, such as that between Ladysmith and Stz'uminus First Nation (Naut'sa mawt - Working Together Community Accord)
- Encouraging future OCP updates to expand upon and include additional considerations of First Nations interests and objectives to collaborate and partner with neighbouring First Nations
- Continuing to support important and successful community-led reconciliation and relationship-building initiatives

NAUT'SA MAWT (WORKING TOGETHER) COMMUNITY ACCORD

In 2007, the town of Ladysmith and Council members of the Stz'uminus First Nation signed a Community Accord which pledged to strengthen their relationship and work together on matters of common interest. These commitments were renewed and updated in 2012 in the form of the Naut'sa mawt Community Accord. Its purpose is to provide a framework for community leaders to partner and pursue initiatives and opportunities to the benefit of both communities.

Climate Adaptation

As with the rest of the world, Cowichan's climate is changing due to global warming. This projected warming will have serious implications throughout the entire region and across multiple planning considerations and sectors. Water quality and quantity will be impacted along with services and infrastructure which will, in turn, impact agriculture, businesses and residents. Biodiversity and ecosystem health will be particularly hard hit with multiple expected impacts on the natural environment and natural systems. As a region with significant low lying coastal areas and floodplains, sea level rise will present multiple land use planning challenges across the region.

Against this backdrop, local governments and regional organizations have begun to work on climate adaptation initiatives, beginning first with vulnerability assessments to determine what is at risk, how, and when the hazards can be expected. This work includes local level neighbourhood resilience planning work to improve the capacity of communities to withstand the shocks and challenges that climate change will pose.

The CVRD's recent report, *Climate Projections for the Cowichan Valley Regional District* clearly identifies the critical importance of regional collaboration in preparing for the changes ahead. Provincial and regional governments, municipalities, local agencies, environmental and social benefit organizations will need to work together in developing an integrated local and regional approach.

CLIMATE CHANGE SNAPSHOT (BY 2050)

- **Work has focused primarily on mitigation, not adaptation.** Given overarching provincial legislation, the past decade has seen more of a focus on greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation (i.e., reducing GHG emissions in communities and corporately) than on adaptation (i.e., preparing for and accommodating the impacts of climate change on communities). However, as climate change impacts (e.g., rising temperatures, droughts, more frequent severe weather) become more apparent and hazards and risks from sea level rise and coastal flooding increase, there is a critical and pressing need to re-focus efforts on regional adaptation.
- **Coastal flooding, including permanent inundation of some areas will increase.** The province has advised municipalities to plan for 1 metre (3 feet) of sea level rise by 2100 and the region could experience 50 cm (1.5 feet) of sea level rise by 2050. Low lying areas in Mill Bay, Cowichan Bay and Chemainus are among the places likely to be most impacted by coastal flooding, salt water intrusion into groundwater, and erosion, with some areas vulnerable to permanent inundation.
- **Temperatures are rising.** Climate models project an increase in annual average temperature of almost 3°C in our region by the 2050s. There will be a doubling in the number of summer days above 25°C, from an average of 16 days per year to 39 days per year. This will impact future water and cooling demands, and translates into changes that are important to our ecosystems, watersheds, and communities.
- **There will be reduced precipitation and changing weather patterns.** Overall precipitation amounts are expected to decline by about 5%, with more of it expected to fall during extreme rain storm events. There will be a decrease in the amount of summer precipitation of 17%, with dry spells increasing by about 20%, from 22 consecutive days to 26 days.

COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	TIMELINE	LEAD	PARTNERS	PURPOSE
New Normal Phase 1	2018	CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cowichan Watershed Board • Social Planning Cowichan • VIHA 	Provides detailed projections of how climate change will affect the Cowichan and will support the next two phases of the planning process - a Vulnerability and Risk Assessment and an Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy.
Climate Adaptation in the Cowichan Valley - Social Policy Toolkit	2014-2017	Cowichan Climate Change Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Planning Cowichan • Cowichan Tribes • Municipality of North Cowichan 	Supports residents across the region develop neighbourhood climate change adaptation, or resilience plans.
Climate and Agriculture Strategy	2013	BC Agriculture & Food, Climate Action Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVRD • Canada • Pacific Institute for Climate Initiatives 	Identified priority impact areas for regional agriculture and outlined a preliminary adaptation strategy.



COWICHAN CLIMATE CHANGE COLLABORATION

The Cowichan Climate Change Collaborative was established in 2014, in response to a community need for a collective, organized approach to tackling the challenges the region will be faced with in coming years, due to a changing climate. It is comprised of more than 20 environmental and social benefit organizations, local government and First Nations, faith organizations, and provincial government agencies. The group has been involved with researching and participating in local, hands-on solutions to building resilience in the region, with a particular focus on identifying vulnerabilities within communities and developing adaptation strategies to improve community resilience to climate change.



DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

Climate change is clearly identified in all OCPs from the region as a critical and growing concern. Recognizing the legislative framework which commits local governments to achieving GHG reduction targets, all OCPs contain associated targets and similar mitigation policies.

Some OCPs highlight additional policy directions around climate adaptation, but, for the most part they are relatively general and very high level.



LOOKING FORWARD

In line with provincial GHG reductions requirements and targets, all OCPs in the Cowichan Region have already set targets for GHG reductions as part of mitigation efforts. In order to make the necessary shift towards focusing more on adaptation, some possible next steps include:

- Undertaking a collaborative, region-wide climate vulnerability and risk assessment to better understand regional climate hazards. This work would include identifying and mapping areas affected by increased climate sensitivity (e.g., flooding, erosion, and landslides) to assist in identifying specific risks.
- Incorporating climate projections around precipitation into all engineering and water security plans.
- Developing sea level rise land use management zones or development permit areas.

Collaborating with and supporting the Cowichan Climate Collaboration to work with communities to better understand local values which can be used to evaluate and prioritize coastal flood management options (i.e., protect, accommodate, retreat)

Our Communities

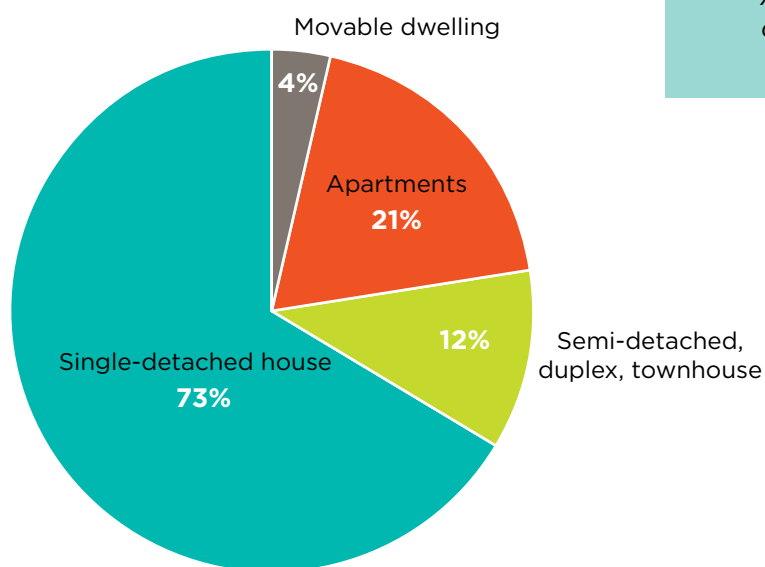
Housing

Like many regions across BC, the Cowichan region is facing the challenges of rising housing costs, insufficient rental stocks, and homelessness. More urban areas such as Duncan and North Cowichan are particularly affected, but in general, affordability issues are a concern for all communities in the region. Housing is also a key determinant of many aspects of health, wellbeing, and economic prosperity. As a core land use planning issue, housing is an area where more coordinated planning across the region can have a significant impact.

REGIONAL HOUSING SNAPSHOT

- **Housing costs are rising.** In August 2017, the benchmark price for a single-family home in Duncan was \$408,000, an increase of 15% in one year.
- **Renters are facing affordability challenges.** The average rent in the CVRD is \$853 per month³. Roughly 52% of renters in the Cowichan are in unaffordable housing situations, meaning they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs. Approximately 22% of residents are renters.
- **There are persistent homelessness issues in the Cowichan region.** In the 2017 homelessness count, roughly 250⁴ people were categorized under absolute or relative homelessness, or in precarious housing.

FIGURE: Mix of dwelling types, CVRD 2016



AFFORDABILITY NEEDS IN THE REGION

*The following needs were identified in the CVRD's **Regional Affordable Housing Needs Assessment (2014)**:*

- *Housing for youth, students and young adults*
- *Housing for low-income families*
- *Housing for seniors*
- *Housing for vulnerable groups*
- *Permanent and affordable housing for homeless*
- *Improvements to conditions of private market rental housing*
- *Housing for low-income homeowners in rural communities*
- *Culturally appropriate housing for First Nations in rural and urban areas*
- *Affordable homeownership opportunities for families*

³ Canadian Rental Index. <http://rentalhousingindex.ca/#>. N.p. 2015. Web. 21 Mar 2017

⁴ Awai, Greg and Worton, Jane. *Cowichan Region Homelessness Report February 2014*. Duncan: Social Planning Cowichan, 2014.

COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	TIMELINE	LEAD	PARTNERS	PURPOSE
Cowichan Coalition to Address Homelessness and Affordable Housing	Initiated - 2017	Aboriginal Community Advisory Board, Cowichan Housing Association, Social Planning Cowichan, Our Cowichan Community Health Network, Mental Health & Substance Use Collective Impact Initiative, Cowichan Division of Family Practice, United Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVRD • District of North Cowichan • City of Duncan • City of Ladysmith • Various other community organizations 	<p>Focused on developing a region-wide strategic plan to address homelessness and lack of affordable housing.</p> <p>Engaged in communications and advocacy, funding and resource procurement, homelessness response and prevention, and affordable housing.</p> <p>May result in the establishment of a new regional housing function, which will be determined by referendum in November 2018.</p>
Close to Home: Housing First for Youth in the Cowichan Region	Initiated - 2016 Draft plan released - February 2018	Cowichan Housing Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Cowichan Community Health Network • Cowichan Division of Family Practice • Social Planning Cowichan • Mental Health and Substance Use Collective Impact Initiative • Various other community organizations 	<p>Provides a framework for a Housing First Approach to address youth homelessness and affordable housing in the Cowichan Region.</p> <p>Based on a gap analysis and needs assessment conducted by the Cowichan Housing Association in 2017.</p>
CVRD Affordable Housing Needs Assessment	Assessment released - 2014	CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMHC • Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia 	Identifies the current and emerging housing needs in the Cowichan region and examines housing gaps and issues.
Cowichan Region Affordable Housing Strategy	Strategy released - 2010	Social Planning Cowichan		Includes eight broad-based strategies to improve the affordable housing supply in the CVRD.

DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

Although the scope and range of policy directions vary across the region, OCPs are nonetheless consistent in recognizing housing as a fundamental component of healthy, livable communities.

Nearly all OCPs in the CVRD highlight the following policy directions:

- ✓ Ensure communities provide a range of housing options and tenures for all incomes and life stages.
- ✓ Support the protection of existing and development of new affordable housing options⁵.

Some OCPs in the CVRD highlight these additional policy directions:

- ✓ Support provision of housing to people with special needs and seniors, including the ability to age in place.
- ✓ Guide residential development in such a way as to support efficient services delivery and easy access to a range of amenities.
- ✓ Support housing that is consistent with the context, including character of existing neighbourhoods and rural areas.

LOOKING FORWARD

As the Cowichan's high quality of life and relative affordability (compared to the Victoria region and Metro Vancouver) continue to attract new residents, demand for housing will likely only grow. Some potential options for future work could include:

- Looking for opportunities to include the Town of Lake Cowichan in the Cowichan Coalition to Address Homelessness and Affordable Housing.
- Looking for opportunities to incorporate the information provided in "The Heartbeat of Cowichan" housing snapshot (developed by Social Planning Cowichan) in assessing regional housing needs, opportunities and gaps.
- Taking sea-level rise into account when updating OCPs to determine capacity (and risks) for future residential growth in coastal flood hazard zones.



EXPLORING NEW HOUSING MODELS IN NORTH COWICHAN

North Cowichan has partnered with the Community Land Trust Foundation of BC to explore affordable housing projects on two municipally owned properties. The Community Land Trust is a non-profit society that develops land and manages housing for the co-operative and non-profit housing sector and for community partners whose purpose is to foster the creation of affordable housing.

Together, the projects would create 82 new co-op, affordable rental and supported living units. If the projects move forward, North Cowichan's role will be to provide a long-term lease of the properties to the Community Land Trust. The Community Land Trust's role will be to finance, build, and operate the housing projects over many years.

⁵ The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) defines housing as affordable when a household spends less than 30 per cent of its gross (before-tax) income on acceptable shelter.

Growth Management

Many issues facing communities today can be traced to poorly planned growth (e.g. congestion, urban sprawl). However, growth is not inherently a bad thing; when planned properly, it has great potential to benefit communities.

Unlike many regional districts in BC, the CVRD does not have a regional growth strategy. Despite this absence, many local governments are individually working on managing (primarily) residential growth and development through OCPs that include defined growth areas. Directing growth to regional and local town and village centres is a commonly shared objective in the Cowichan region that goes hand-in-hand with protecting the region's important agricultural land base and environmental assets.

REGIONAL GROWTH SNAPSHOT

- **Our population is increasing.** A conservative estimate suggests that about 25,000 additional people are expected to live in the Cowichan region by 2050. This number represents a 31% increase over the current population of approximately 83,000, and is the population equivalent of adding five new Duncans to the region.
- **Residential growth is driving land development.** Depending on the density of future development, the addition of 25,000 new residents to the region could also be equivalent to developing an area twice the size of the Town of Ladysmith (2,400 hectares). This kind of growth could significantly change the landscape and feeling of the Cowichan region.

- **The total number of residential building permits is increasing.** The total number of residential building permits across the Cowichan region has increased significantly over the last five years. Between 2016 and 2017 alone, there was a 9.7% increase, as shown in the chart below.

COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

Coordinated growth management between local governments (including First Nations) in the Cowichan region has been limited.

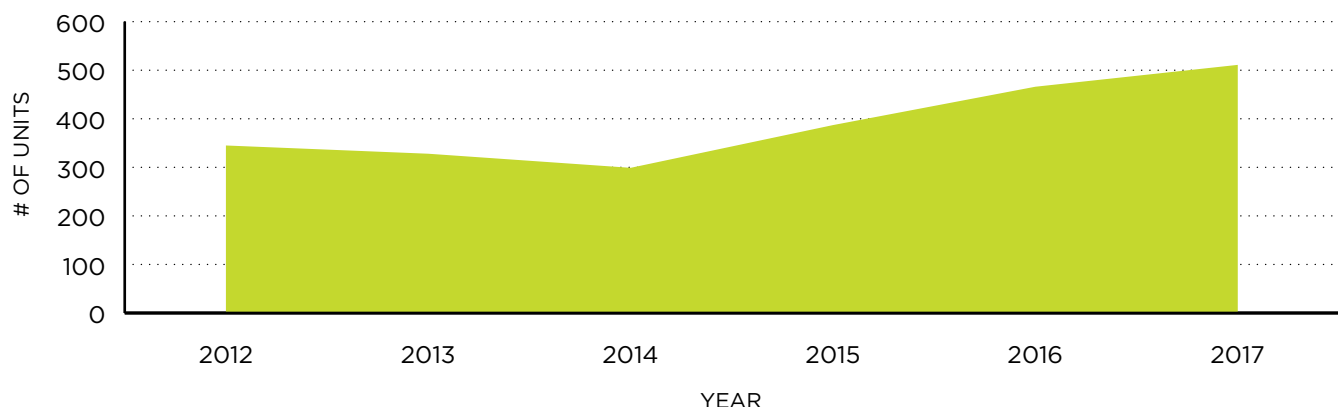
DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

OCPs are consistent in recognizing growth management as a fundamental component of creating complete, healthy, livable, and efficient communities. While some OCPs have explicit growth management goals and policies, others have growth management-related policies more implicitly woven throughout other sections. Only the explicit policies are summarized below.

All of the region's OCPs include:

- ✓ Policies to concentrate growth in areas that are already developed in order to preserve rural, agricultural, and environmentally significant lands, as well as to effectively and efficiently use existing infrastructure and save costs.

FIGURE: Total # of Residential Building Permits





Some of the OCPs also include:

- ✓ Explicit references to Smart Growth principles, which encourage mixed land use, redevelopment and infill, diverse housing and transportation options, concentrating growth in compact neighbourhoods, and community engagement. Some OCPs include similar principles without explicitly calling them “smart growth”.
- ✓ Growth area boundaries (either urban or village containment boundaries) that restrict development within a limited area. Seven of the OCPs already have these boundaries, and two OCPs indicate their intention of developing them in future OCP updates. As the only “city”, Duncan considers its jurisdictional boundaries to be growth boundaries.

Other regional goal-setting frameworks touch upon growth management in the following ways:

- ✓ The CVRD Corporate Sustainability Strategy (2012) includes a Human Settlement priority area that states: “Our communities are developed in balance with our regional ecology, such as through compact communities and density that respects the environment’s carrying capacity.” It also contains the following milestone: “regional urban containment boundaries defined”.

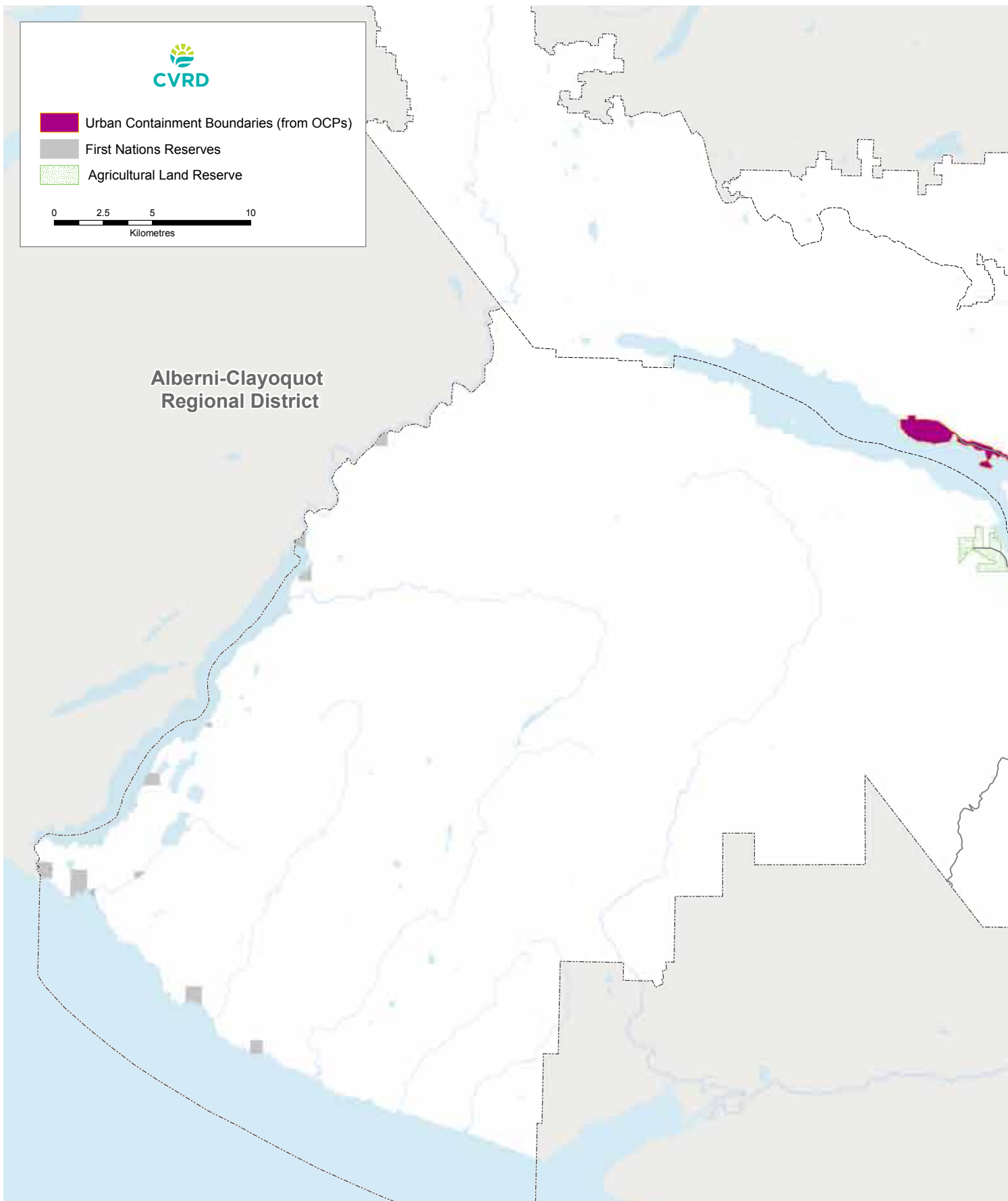
LOOKING FORWARD

All of the region’s municipal OCPs state their support for a regional growth strategy, while several of the Electoral Areas’ OCPs include statements about how the impacts of growth are experienced regionally.

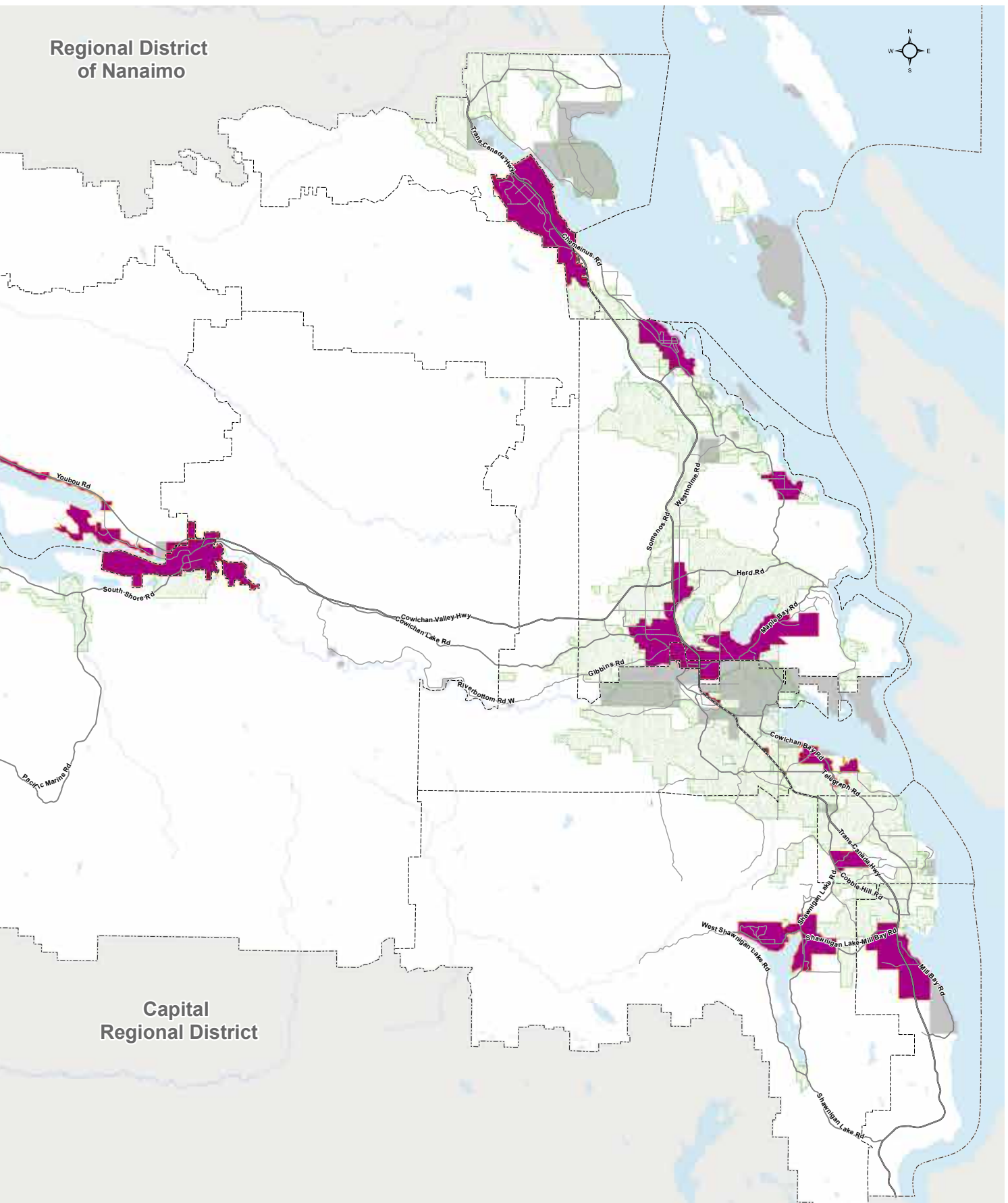
As the CVRD moves to harmonize regional Electoral Area OCPs, there is a potential regional opportunity to standardize or harmonize how regional OCPs project future residential capacity. The *Local Government Act* (s 14.473) states that an official community plan must consider how residential development will meet anticipated housing needs for at least the next five years. Currently, how this is calculated varies across OCPs, with measures ranging from the area (hectares) of developable land, to projected population growth, to space for additional dwelling units. Standardizing how each OCP projects their capacity to accommodate future growth could simplify the process of estimating growth capacity at the regional scale.

The City of Duncan is working to “[make] living in Duncan the preferred choice for newcomers to the Valley” in order to concentrate urban density and protect the rural environment (City of Duncan Official Community Plan, 2004).

MAP: Existing urban containment boundaries in the Cowichan



**Regional District
of Nanaimo**



**Capital
Regional District**

Our Natural Environment

Ecosystems and Biodiversity

The Cowichan region is well known for the diversity and natural beauty of its ecosystems. As one of the most biologically rich areas in Canada, the region consists of a complex mosaic of rare bio-geoclimatic zones, habitats, and species. However, due to challenges related to population growth, urban development, climate change, and invasive species, our natural assets are under significant pressure.

Protecting the natural environment is a high priority for Cowichan residents, and most communities in the CVRD have robust policies in place to support this objective. At the same time, recent updates to the CVRD's State of the Environment Report suggest that there is a lot more that must be done at both local and regional scales to ensure that highly valued ecosystems and species continue to survive and thrive for generations to come.

REGIONAL ECOSYSTEMS AND BIODIVERSITY SNAPSHOT

- **Development has severely impacted sensitive local ecosystems.** In the Cowichan region, sensitive ecosystems include Garry oak woodlands (one of the most endangered ecosystems in Canada), wetlands and riparian areas, and old growth forests. Today, less than 5% of Garry oak ecosystems remain in near-natural condition. Dry coastal western hemlock ecosystems in the eastern portion of the region are also threatened, as are remaining unprotected old growth stands.
- **There are limited and declining undisturbed lands in the region.** Lands impacted by forestry and development total about 275,000 hectares, over 75% of the region's 360,000-hectare land area. Disturbed and developed land alters natural functions, affects the provision of natural services (e.g., watershed functions), and impacts many important ecological values.
- **Many native species are at risk.** More than 100 species of plants, mammals, reptiles, birds, butterflies and other insects are currently officially listed as at risk of extinction in Coastal Douglas fir ecosystems, and coho and chinook salmon stocks have crashed over the past century.





COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	TIMELINE	LEAD	PARTNERS	PURPOSE
Invasive Plant Species Strategy	2014 Noxious Weeds Control Bylaw adopted - 2016	CVRD		Identifies the nine most important plant species for regional action and outlines regulatory and non-regulatory approaches for managing invasive plants, including a regional bylaw. Led to the adoption of a region-wide Noxious Weeds Control Bylaw and a public awareness campaign for Giant Hogweed.
12 Big Ideas	2008	CVRD Environment Commission		A re-organization and distillation of the 2008 Draft Strategy, based on community input and feedback. Focused on the natural environment generally, with some specific ideas for improving the protection, health and functioning of local ecosystems.
Draft Environmental Strategy	Draft released - 2008	CVRD Environment Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cowichan Tribes • North Cowichan • Cowichan Green Community 	Contains 26 immediate and long-term ideas for achieving more sustainable communities.
CVRD Environment Commission	Established - April 2007	CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cowichan Tribes • North Cowichan • Cowichan Green Community 	Established to provide strategic guidance on priority environmental issues and responses for the CVRD.

DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

Cowichan communities are working at both local and regional scales to protect and enhance ecosystem health and biodiversity. Most OCPs in the region emphasize the need to manage growth and development in ways that support appropriate stewardship of natural assets and maintain healthy ecosystem functions.

Nearly all of the region's OCPs highlight the following policy directions:

- ✔ Promote responsible environmental stewardship (e.g., through the protection of ESAs and the establishment of guidelines for riparian areas).
- ✔ Promote an integrated approach to planning and development that is based on sustainable development principles (e.g., direct growth away from environmentally sensitive areas, minimize built environment impacts, integrate natural functions in development activities, restore ecosystem function and health).

Several OCPs also highlight the following additional policy directions:

- ✔ Address threats to biodiversity.
- ✔ Identify and connect ecologically sensitive lands and green spaces through greenway system development.
- ✔ Promote environmental stewardship education.
- ✔ Base land use decisions on the best available information and ensure that relevant environmental issues are appropriately considered during development review processes.
- ✔ Support community involvement in environmental stewardship and conservation (e.g., by promoting activities that protect and restore ecosystem integrity).

LOOKING FORWARD

Stewarding, protecting and restoring Cowichan region ecosystems and biodiversity will remain an ongoing challenge and require renewed focus going forward in an era of climate change and continued population growth. Potential options for future work include:

- Developing a regional conservation strategy to improve and protect connectivity between sensitive ecosystems, parks and protected areas and allow for the movement of species between them.
- Linking and coordinating OCPs and land use decision making around conservation and stewardship.
- Promoting environmental best practices in regional agriculture and resource areas (i.e., private forest lands).
- Continuing to work with local First Nations on the development of coordinated and collaborative research and conservation programs, particularly as more First Nations in the region take on additional stewardship responsibilities with increased land areas under their authority.

Watershed Stewardship

Due to our reliance on water resources, watershed stewardship is critical to human wellbeing. This is particularly true as we move into the future, as our watersheds face increasing pressure from development, contamination, depletion, population growth, and climate change. The good news is that many Cowichan communities are aware of these issues and already working collaboratively to address them.

REGIONAL WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP SNAPSHOT

- **Water demand is outstripping supply.** Nearly 80 million cubic metres of water is drawn from surface and ground water sources in the Cowichan Basin every year. With a changing climate and population growth, water conservation and consumption is crating conflicts between user groups (e.g., residents, industry) and threatening environmental flows which are critical to riparian ecosystem health.
- **The Cowichan River fishery is near collapse.** Less than 3% of salmon are returning to spawn as a result of land use modifications in the watershed, stormwater impacts (e.g., sedimentation, increased organic loading and pollution) that change water temperature and destroy habitat, and side channels that no longer function effectively. Low river water levels during the summer months and recent drought events have also greatly impacted salmon.
- **Watershed management is improving, but some watersheds lack adequate protection.** Two watershed management plans are currently in place in the region, however some watersheds lack sufficient management (e.g., Shawnigan Lake watershed) and have been threatened by recent industrial activities.
- **Forestry operations continue to impact watershed health.** Forestry remains a critical and ongoing management issue in some watersheds, impacting hydrologic characteristics of these watersheds.



COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	TIMELINE	LEAD	PARTNERS	PURPOSE
Bonsall Creek Watershed Management Plan	Completed - 2016 Initiated - 2014	Municipality of North Cowichan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisory Working Group included representatives from Penalakut Tribes, Halalt First Nation, Province, TimberWest 	Intended to address the particular needs of agriculture with respect to access to water, drainage and control, water use efficiency, and water quality.
Cowichan Watershed Board Governance Manual	Revised - 2016 Initially released - 2010	Cowichan Watershed Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See list below 	Presents a governance model intended to support collaborative, local decision making at the regional/watershed-scale within the existing institutional and legal water framework.
Cowichan Watershed Board	Initiated - January 2010	14 member board with reps from CVRD, Cowichan Tribes, community members-at-large, and members recommended by the federal government and BC Ministry of Environment		With no regulatory authority, its responsibilities include advocacy and engagement; providing guidance, advice and expertise to decision makers; gathering information; coordinating the implementation of Watershed Management Plan; securing funding for water management activities; and supporting outreach and education.
Cowichan Basin Watershed Management Plan	Completed - March 2007 Progress Report 2015	CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BC Ministry of Environment Fisheries and Oceans Canada Catalyst Paper Corporation Cowichan Tribes Pacific Salmon Commission 	With principal goals of maximizing water efficiency and managing to meet both human and environmental needs, plan includes 56 actions, many of which have been completed since plan adoption.
Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable	Founded - 2002		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cowichan Watershed Board CVRD Fisheries and Oceans Canada Ministry of Environment Municipality of North Cowichan Cowichan Tribes BC Parks Local MP and MLA 	Provides a forum to share information, develop partnerships, identify projects, pool intellectual resources, and use collaboration and innovation to solve long-standing problems The objective of the group is to identify common interests around the Cowichan and Koksilah watersheds and to implement projects and processes to further those interests.



DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

Nearly all OCPs and CVRD strategy documents highlight the following policy directions:

- ✓ Conserve, manage and protect water supplies for human use.
- ✓ Protect sensitive environmental areas and ecological functioning within our watersheds.

Several OCPs and CVRD strategy documents also highlighted the following additional policy directions:

- ✓ Encourage the rehabilitation of damaged natural aquatic spawning and rearing areas in consultation with the local and senior levels of government, community groups and property owners.
- ✓ Work in partnership with other stakeholders to better understand and protect the region's water resources and promote sustainable water use.
- ✓ Ensure that development and land use activities support the natural water balance model.

LOOKING FORWARD

Stewarding, protecting and restoring Cowichan region watersheds will require continued collaboration in the face of growing climate change impacts, continued population growth, and other development pressures, including forestry and mining. Potential options for future work could include:

- Developing coordinated watershed management plans for regional watersheds currently lacking plans (e.g., Shawnigan Lake watershed).
- Continuing to collaborate with First Nations and other management partners on the development and implementation of both existing and new watershed management plans.
- Working with provincial and federal partners to update existing management plans based on observed climate changes.

Our Community Infrastructure

Water

Community and individual water systems in the Cowichan region rely on both surface water and groundwater. Water is provided to residents and businesses through a variety of supply systems, including 19 community water systems operated by the CVRD; municipally operated systems in Ladysmith, North Cowichan, Duncan and the Town of Lake Cowichan; and 19 systems operated by improvement districts and private utilities.

In the region, the majority of homes and businesses (including both industry and the agricultural community) rely on groundwater sources, drawing from one or more of the 45 aquifers in the CVRD. Aquifers differ in the extent to which they hold water depending on the type of rock and soil and groundwater recharge rates, which have been impacted by our changing climate.

There are several threats to our water supply, including climate change, population growth and land use.



REGIONAL WATER SNAPSHOT

- **Climate change is driving drought conditions.** The hot, dry summer of 2017 led the province to declare level 3 (Very Dry) drought conditions on Vancouver Island, with the Cowichan region receiving less than 10% of normal summer rainfall. Drought conditions led to very low water levels in local rivers and streams, an extreme fire risk across the region, and falling groundwater levels in some aquifers.
- **Water conservation programs have had some success.** Various local governments, water utilities and the Cowichan Watershed Board have supported a range of public education initiatives around residential water conservation. From 2013 to 2016, consumption was reduced between 3% and 30%.
- **The Town of Ladysmith leads the region in water conservation.** In 2003, the Town switched from a monthly flat rate fee structure (\$39 per quarter) to a metered

water rate system (user pay) which saw water consumption drop 25% between 2003 and 2014, while the population grew almost 20%.

COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

The CVRD and regional partners work closely together to coordinate water use restrictions and conserve regional water supplies. Currently, Stage 1 water use restrictions are harmonized for the City of Duncan, the Municipality of North Cowichan, the CVRD, Cowichan Tribes, the Town of Lake Cowichan, the Town of Ladysmith, the Diamond Improvement District, Stz'uminus First Nation, the Mill Bay Water District, and Cowichan Bay Waterworks between May 1st and October 31st.

INITIATIVE	TIMELINE	LEAD	PARTNERS	PURPOSE
Cowichan Basin Watershed Management Plan	Completed – March 2007 Progress Report 2015	CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BC Ministry of Environment Fisheries and Oceans Canada • Catalyst Paper Corporation • Cowichan Tribes • Pacific Salmon Commission 	With the main goals of maximizing water efficiency and managing to meet both human and environmental needs, the plan includes 56 actions, many of which have been completed since plan adoption.
Cowichan Water Challenge	Launched 2014	Cowichan Watershed Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ladysmith • CVRD • North Cowichan • Duncan • Lake Cowichan • Mill Bay Water Works • Cowichan Tribes • Cowichan Bay Water Works 	A public awareness and education campaign to reduce annual average residential water consumption by 20% or more through metering, fixing leaks, watering restrictions, public education, and more.

DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

Nearly all OCPs and CVRD strategy documents highlight the following policy directions:

- ✓ Conserve, manage and protect water supplies for human use and environmental flows.
- ✓ Promote and support water conservation measures with residents, business owners, and industry (e.g., xeriscaping, water audits).

Several OCPs and CVRD strategy documents also highlight the following additional policy directions:

- ✓ Work in partnership with other stakeholders, including industry groups and business, to conserve and protect the region's water resources and promote sustainable water use.
- ✓ Ensure that development and land use activities support the support the natural hydrologic cycle, including groundwater recharge.

LOOKING FORWARD

With a growing population and climate change impacting water resources and cycles, water conservation will remain a significant ongoing challenge. While the region boasts some commendable achievements, average regional residential water consumption is still above the Canadian average consumption rate, which

is already among the highest in the world. By comparison, some European countries have average residential water consumption rates that are at less than half the average CVRD residential consumption rates (~120 litres per day in contrast to ~250 litres per day). Some potential options for future work to support additional water conservation include:

- Supporting ongoing water metering programs across the region, particular the retrofitting of existing businesses and residences with water meters (currently, Ladysmith has completed a retrofit program and Duncan has an ongoing program).
- Continuing to support the Cowichan Watershed Board in promotion and uptake of efficient agricultural water use techniques, such as drip irrigation instead of spray irrigation.
- Promoting the use of rainwater harvesting techniques (e.g., rain barrels, cisterns, dugouts, retention ponds) and greywater reuse (Action 1b-3b, Cowichan Basin Water Management Plan).
- Continuing to review local government practices to reduce water consumption, particularly in parks and recreation areas and public facilities.

Liquid Waste

Liquid waste is managed in the region through community sewer systems and wastewater treatment facilities operated by the CVRD (16 systems in total), and municipally operated systems in Ladysmith, North Cowichan (Crofton, Chemainus, Maple Bay), Lake Cowichan, and Duncan. A special Joint Utilities Board operates sewage treatment lagoons that are jointly owned by Duncan, CVRD and the Municipality of North Cowichan. Treatment facilities range in treatment and disposal methods (i.e., ground disposal, marine discharge, river discharge).

REGIONAL LIQUID WASTE MANAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

- **Capacity is an issue.** Some treatment plants are at or nearing capacity and require expansion and or amalgamation with neighbouring utilities. Population growth will continue to drive up the need for increased capacity.
- **Facility replacements and upgrades are necessary.** Many utilities are reaching their end of life and require replacement and/or upgrading to meet provincial standards. While some local governments have completed recent upgrades or are in the process of upgrading specific utilities, funding (provincial and federal) is limited.
- **Wastewater discharges are impacting marine and terrestrial environments.** Across the region, studies have indicated negative environmental impacts associated with current discharges into the ocean (Ladysmith) and Cowichan River (Joint Utilities Sewage Lagoons), while other systems require upgrading to meet current standards and to comply with the Ministry of Environment's regulations (e.g., Mesachie Lake).

COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

While a Joint Utilities Board collaboratively operates the Joint Utilities Sewage Lagoons, other regional collaboration has been limited. A 2017 CVRD Water & Wastewater Utilities Review and Assessment suggested the exploration of additional consolidation of wastewater (and water) utilities operated by the CVRD and potentially other local governments, and establishment of a regional utility operator to support improved planning and service delivery.

DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

Nearly all OCPs and CVRD strategy documents highlight the following policy directions:

- ✓ Plan and carry out effective wastewater treatment.
- ✓ Direct development to designated areas (i.e., village centres, urban containment areas) with existing sewer services and generally discourage the expansion of municipal sewer services beyond those areas.

Several OCPs and CVRD strategy documents, particularly for the local governments partners on the Joint Utilities Board, also highlight the following additional policy directions:

- ✓ Continue cooperating with partners – Municipality of North Cowichan, City of Duncan, Cowichan Tribes, CVRD Electoral Areas D and E – to manage the South End wastewater treatment plant and seek innovative approaches to the long term management and funding of the facility.
- ✓ Seek improvements and upgrades to existing wastewater systems that will reduce the environmental impacts of treated wastewater discharges on the Cowichan River.
- ✓ Support continued efforts to upgrade or replace the Joint Utilities Board wastewater treatment facility, including options for energy re-use and waste heat capture, as well as the feasibility of bio-gas production and septage pump-out facilities.



LOOKING FORWARD

In the face of increasing service needs, a changing regulatory environment (i.e., new and higher provincial wastewater standards), and the need for considerable capital improvement, effective, efficient and sustainable liquid waste management will continue to be an ongoing challenge for the entire region. Some potential options for future work include:

- Developing a long range regional utility plan or strategy with partners to effectively plan for upgrades, expansion, and infrastructure replacement.
- Supporting more integrated regional land use planning to direct growth and development to those areas (i.e., village centres, urban growth areas) with sufficient capacity to accommodate additional growth, while maintaining operational efficiency and financial sustainability.
- Continuing to explore options for the re-use of grey water

Solid Waste

Solid waste management is a regional function. Currently, the CVRD is updating its Solid Waste Management Plan, which was last updated in 2006. The revised plan will be implemented starting in 2019 and will contain revised management principles, goals and targets. Options for managing all forms of waste will be reviewed.

REGIONAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

- **Local solid waste management capacity is very limited.** Currently, the CVRD lacks local solid waste disposal capacity. Garbage is exported to the Roosevelt Regional Landfill in Washington State.
- **Expanding organics processing/composting capacity is nearing capacity.** While regional composting capacity has grown significantly, some facilities are nearing capacity as capture increases for existing collection and organics collection expands. Facility and collection expansion will be required to expand organics collection and processing to the industrial and commercial sectors and multi-family units in the region.

DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

Because solid waste management is a CVRD function, local government OCPs have relatively few local policies on solid waste management. However, all local government OCPs include policies on working with the CVRD to reduce the overall waste stream, including through recycling and composting.

Some local OCPs have policies about exploring other forms of waste recovery, including energy generation.

LOOKING FORWARD

Regional solid waste management will continue to be managed by the CVRD under its Solid Waste Management Plan. A recent (March 2018) solid waste management system overview identified several areas the region could improve services going forward. Some of these included:

- Enhancing and increasing access for programs for reuse and reduction, including building local food rescue capacity, implementing reuse platforms such as repair cafes, tool libraries, reclamation of building supplies, and banning use of disposable plastic shopping bags.
- Improving Southern CVRD services: Approximately 20% of the population lives in the south end of the CVRD (Electoral Areas A, B, and C) where there are currently no public depots. Residents contribute to the region-wide services through taxation but do not have access to these services. There are no public curbside collection programs for garbage or organics in the south end.
- Developing local solid waste management capacity. Opportunities for local waste management, including a regional landfill or other type of facility could be explored.
- Develop consistent region-wide policies for privately run recycling centres on industrial lands (odour management).

Transportation

Cowichan residents depend on a municipal and provincial transportation network for work, recreation and day-to-day travel, while the local economy depends upon the network for safe and efficient goods movement. While the vast majority of travellers rely on private vehicles to move around the region, BC Transit provides a network of relatively low volume inter-regional connections with supporting local neighbourhood routes and services. More urban centres, including Duncan-North Cowichan and Cowichan Tribes, are working to improve local pedestrian and cycling connections and mobility options.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SNAPSHOT

- **The region is auto dependent.** 90% of travel is done via personal vehicles in the region, versus 1.1% for transit, 6.5% for walking and less than 1% for cycling.
- **Transportation is the leading generator of greenhouse gases in the region.** 72% of regional greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are generated by vehicles and transportation, versus 58% provincially.
- **Transit improvements are coming.** BC Transit recently invested \$15 million to support and boost regional transit, with the funding to support new transit vehicles and facilities.

COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	TIMELINE	LEAD	PARTNERS	PURPOSE
Transportation Plan Scoping Study	2015	CVRD		Made preliminary recommendations on potential elements of a regional transportation plan and identified partnership areas and needed investments to improve regional transportation.
Transit Future Plan	2012	BC Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVRD • Local governments 	A 25-year that identified phased investments and transit improvements to improve regional transit service and efficiency and triple annual transit ridership to 1.2 million by 2036.
Trans Canada Highway Corridor Management Plan	2005	BC Ministry of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Cowichan • City of Duncan • Cowichan Tribes • CVRD 	Identified potential medium-term and long-term improvements to maintain or improve level of service for the Trans Canada highway corridor through Duncan and North Cowichan's South End.

DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

All OCPs highlight the following core transportation policy directions:

- ✓ Design and operate a transportation network to accommodate all modes of transportation (pedestrian, cyclist, transit and auto).
- ✓ Improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to support more active transportation choices.
- ✓ Improve pedestrian and cycling connections both to and through town and village centres.

Several OCPs and CVRD strategy documents also highlight the following additional policy directions:

- ✓ Support more sustainable and efficient goods movement.
- ✓ Encourage, promote and adopt “complete streets” standards.
- ✓ Support emerging mobility options, including vehicle sharing and electric vehicles, by providing preferential parking, charging facilities and other supportive infrastructure.

Some OCPs, notably North Cowichan’s, explicitly recognize the regional nature of effective transportation planning and the importance of working with other jurisdictions to ensure safe and efficient connections between and through regional centres and to improve other common services, such as transit.

LOOKING FORWARD

Over the Cowichan 2050 lifespan, transportation services and technologies are likely to change considerably. From new transit investments, vehicle sharing, electric vehicles, e-bikes, emerging goods movement models, and the rapid growth of autonomous vehicle technologies, local governments and key transportation partners (Ministry of Transportation, BC Transit) face a number of policy challenges and corresponding opportunities to improve regional mobility. Some potential options for future work to support regional transportation include:

- Developing a regional transportation framework (or plan) that identifies areas of partnership and collaboration around core regional transportation issues (e.g., transit, active transportation connections and facilities).
- Developing harmonized complete street standards for the larger region.
- Supporting ongoing implementation of the Transit Future Plan.
- Engaging with the Ministry of Transportation to develop regional standards and policies on autonomous vehicles and other emerging transportation technologies with local level implications.



ISLAND CORRIDOR FOUNDATION (ICF)

ICF is a non-profit that owns all former Canadian Pacific and Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway (E&N) track on Vancouver Island. It is a partnership of the various local governments and First Nations communities along the railway, including local governments and First Nations in the CVRD. The group’s mandate is to reinstate passenger train service on Vancouver Island, beginning with a commuter train to Victoria from Duncan. The City of Duncan has been identified for its inherent potential as a key node, drawing more potential customers for the rail service and providing supporting infrastructure that would link a potential station to other transportation modes.

Our Livelihoods

Regional Economy

A strong, healthy and diverse economy is one of the key building blocks for a complete and sustainable community. Complete communities⁶ help attract new jobs, support existing industries, and fund a solid tax base. This goes hand-in-hand with sustainability and livability, as a community's ability to provide local services, jobs, and food decreases auto dependence and contributes to a more vibrant social setting.

Within the CVRD, economic development functions are managed by Economic Development Cowichan (EDC). EDC serves as the only regional function within the CVRD's Land Uses Services Division. EDC has developed a new strategic plan that responds to changes in sector development in the region. Forestry, is a sector in transition, where emphasis is shifting toward value-added design firms rather than traditional sawmill operations. Region-wide, an industrial land use study currently underway is demonstrating the need to identify future lands for advanced manufacturing and food processing – two emerging sectors in Cowichan. The convergence of agriculture and tourism and an increasingly sophisticated food, wine and craft beer culture is evident in the region, and Cowichan is also home to a growing number of aquaculture and aquaponics operations.

Within its 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, Economic Development Cowichan has recognized that the cohesive development of the regional economy will rely on collaboration between partners, sustainable development of traditional sectors like forestry and agriculture, and emerging sectors like tech and tourism. The strategy also recognizes that village centre and sub-regional strategies for economic development will be required in order to build upon the unique characteristics and First Nation partnerships that are emerging throughout Cowichan.

REGIONAL ECONOMY SNAPSHOT

- **Local businesses are optimistic.** A 2016 regional Business Leaders Survey found that the business community is optimistic about growth.
- **There is a lack of skilled labour.** The same survey identified a regional skills shortage as the top obstacle for local business.
- **Services, construction and tourism are growing.** According to the last census, the service industry (health care, social services, transportation, warehousing, finance & insurance), construction and tourism are the fastest growing employment sectors in the region.
- **Our economy is regionally interconnected.** Many Cowichan region residents, particularly in Area D, Duncan, and Ladysmith, work outside of the region in the Victoria or Nanaimo area.

⁶ Complete communities are defined as communities that meet people's needs for daily living throughout an entire lifetime by providing convenient access to an appropriate mix of jobs, local services, a full range of housing, and community infrastructure including affordable housing, schools, recreation and open space for their residents. Convenient access to public transportation and options for safe, non-motorized travel is also provided.

COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	TIMELINE	LEAD	PARTNERS	PURPOSE
Economic Development Cowichan Strategic Plan	2018-2022	Economic Development Cowichan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local governments Business partners and sector advisory groups Community organizations 	<p>Developed to “build connections between community, business, and local government.”</p> <p>Five goals: Business retention, expansion and attraction; Sector development; Strengthening communities; Communicating our story; Aligning with CVRD strategic activities</p>
Cowichan Lake Region Tourism Action Plan	January – July 2018	Community Futures Cowichan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Western communities Leadership Team of local business owners, citizens, elected officials, etc. 	Aims to grow and sustain the tourism sector, with a focus on tourism product and infrastructure development (e.g. hiking and cycling trails)
Sustainable Economic Plan	2011		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cowichan Economic Development Commission 	Eight goals: Increase Cowichan’s capacity as a place for business; Increase competitiveness of the region; Create a unique sense of place; Community of choice for green business; Cowichan creative and cultural; Thriving and diverse agriculture; Support Tourism Cowichan; Lead by example

**Community
Futures**



COMMUNITY FUTURES COWICHAN

A non-profit community business financing organization that supports small- and medium-sized enterprises throughout the region, for example by providing business loans and planning advice. It supports community economic development by collaborating with local and regional leaders and supporting and investing in local activities and projects, such as a “Business Leaders Round Tables and Breakfast.”



DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

Economic livelihood varies throughout the Cowichan Region, which is reflected in how each OCP addresses economic development. Regardless, each OCP provides for strengthening its existing economic base while expanding and diversifying its economy in one way or another.

Nearly all OCPs in the CVRD highlight the following policy directions:

- ✓ Emphasize environmentally sustainable development of resources and value-added activities (including forestry, mining, and aggregates).
- ✓ Encourage tourism and recreational opportunities (ranging from promoting the wine industry to maintaining good hiking trails and camping facilities).
- ✓ Support and attract commercial and industrial industries and ensure there is adequate space (i.e., appropriate zoning) for them.

Roughly half of the OCPs in the CVRD highlight these additional policy directions:

- ✓ Maintain and protect the agriculture sector (particularly in the Electoral Areas).
- ✓ Encourage local employment to increase quality of life and reduce auto-dependency and greenhouse gas emissions.
- ✓ Encourage home-based businesses.
- ✓ Promote marine and harbour industries.
- ✓ Explore opportunities related to energy efficiency (e.g., renewable energy technology, green building as growing industries).

LOOKING FORWARD

Economic Development Cowichan, the CVRD's economic arm, will continue to move forward with its mandate to build connections between community, business, and local government. As the region's population continues to grow and its economy further diversifies, potential options for future work could include:

- Pursuing and advancing partnership opportunities with regional First Nations (some OCPs include this already, such as Duncan and North Cowichan).
- Considering region-wide buy local purchasing and procurement policies (some local OCPs already support this).
- Supporting related economic development initiatives, including affordable housing initiatives that would support service sector wage earners with more sustainable housing options.

Agriculture

With the warmest climate in Canada, the Cowichan region has rich and fertile soils that are well-suited to agriculture. Farming has been a key component of the Cowichan's economy and community since European settlement in the 1850s. Today, agriculture continues to bring many benefits to the local economy, as a key sector for local employment, and spin-off effects for agriculture processing and agricultural tourism sectors. Additionally, the community benefits from locally-produced food.

However, in line with trends around the province, the sector is facing increasing challenges. These include a declining agricultural land base, the development pressures that accompany population growth, regulatory challenges, environmental constraints (e.g., a declining water supply), and competition from Mainland farms.

REGIONAL AGRICULTURE SNAPSHOT

- **Agriculture is a major land use.** Designated agricultural lands account for 5.5% (19,016 ha) of the CVRD's total land area, as of 2017.
- **Access to water for irrigation is a concern.** Approximately 80% of the region's prime agricultural land requires irrigation to produce high-value crops, but only about a quarter of this land is currently irrigated.
- **The total number of farms is decreasing.** In 2006, there were 700 farms; in 2016, there were 632 farms. Of the latest number, 19 farms reported organic products for sale.
- **The value of total farm receipts is increasing.** Between 2006 and 2016, there was a 20% increase in the value of farm receipts. This represents the income received from the sale of agricultural commodities as well as direct payments made to support or subsidize the agriculture sector.
- **The cost of agricultural land is rising.** The rising cost of land poses challenges for both emerging producers and established farmers who seeking either expansion of their land base or succession opportunities.

FIGURE: Total Value of Gross Farm Receipts (\$ in millions)





COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	TIMELINE	LEAD	PARTNERS	PURPOSE
Options for Agriculture Extension Services in the Cowichan Valley Region	2014	BC Agriculture & Food Climate Action Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada • BC Ministry of Agriculture • Cowichan Agricultural Adaptation Project Team and Working Group 	Identifies options for sustainable local agricultural extension services (i.e. technical support for climate change adaptation) suitable for the Cowichan context. Aims to increase extension support and expertise in the region, especially for new farms and farm businesses in transition.
Agriculture Water Demand Model Report for the CVRD	2013	BC Ministry of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVRD • Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada • BC Conservation Foundation 	Provides current and future agricultural water demands for the region by combining property-by-property water usage to assess total water demand by watershed area.
Cowichan Agriculture and Climate Adaptation Strategy	2013	BC Agriculture & Food Climate Action Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVRD • Advisory Committee • Agricultural organizations 	A pilot project of the BC Climate Action Initiative that outlines potential impacts from climate change to agriculture. The strategy suggests adaptation actions for the sector.
Cowichan Region Area Agricultural Plan	2009	CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Planning Cowichan • Cowichan Agricultural Society • Municipality of North Cowichan • City of Duncan 	<p>A charter document to proclaim signatories' support for:</p> <p>Ensuring everyone has access to sufficient high-quality food;</p> <p>Local farmers and food producers; and</p> <p>Increasing collaboration and awareness building around food security.</p>

COWICHAN GREEN COMMUNITY

Since its inception less than a decade ago, Cowichan Green Community has become a major player in supporting local agriculture and food security in the region. They operate a cooperative (Cow-Op) involving more than 40 producers from across the region, provide commercial kitchen space for value-added producers, and are developing a seed incubator and agricultural equipment library. Working in partnership with the Young Agrarians and local government, Cowichan Green Community also hopes to be a partner in creating an land leasing program in Cowichan.

DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

Although the agricultural sector plays a larger role in some of the smaller municipalities and electoral areas than it does in more urban centres like Duncan, all OCPs acknowledge the ongoing importance of agriculture in the region.

Of all OCPs in the CVRD, roughly half contain the following policy directions:

- ✓ Protect and maintain agricultural land for agricultural purposes such as food production, and prevent uses that would hinder future agricultural use.
- ✓ Encourage diversity in the sector and secondary agriculture (e.g., wineries, dairy farms, agritourism, organic produce farms, local processing).
- ✓ Promote food security (e.g., healthy local diet, access to local food markets and buying locally).

Several OCPs from areas that have a strong agricultural base also highlight the following directions:

- ✓ Minimize conflict between agricultural and non-agricultural stakeholders and land uses.
- ✓ Recognize and preserve the region's agricultural heritage and character.

Of areas without a significant rural agriculture sector, three contain policy objectives to:

- ✓ Support urban agriculture, or small-scale production (e.g., community gardens) within residential areas to support food security.

LOOKING FORWARD

The agriculture sector is evolving, as it is both diversifying and encountering new challenges. As it continues to be a key foundation for regional livelihoods, new directions for regional agricultural policy will be required. These could include:

- Developing strategic agriculture plans for areas with a significant agricultural sector. The plans could be similar to North Cowichan's, which is used to guide agricultural policy for the jurisdiction.
- Supporting and promoting sustainable farming practices and innovative technologies, especially given increasing water usage for agricultural purposes within the forecasted context of warmer, longer summers and lower precipitation.
- Increasing support for farmers and farming businesses. (e.g., north Cowichan has a policy directly related to this).



Our Wellbeing

Health, Safety and Emergency Planning

There is a wide range in how health, safety, and emergency planning are framed in various reports, strategies, and OCPs from across the region, yet the importance placed on health and safety is universal. There are various challenges to health, safety, and emergency preparedness in the Cowichan region, ranging from the risks of earthquakes, wildfires, and flooding, to crime and domestic violence, to air pollution. At the same time, the region's strong sense of community goes a long way towards enhancing its resilience against such challenges.

REGIONAL HEALTH, SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PLANNING SNAPSHOT

- **Many health-promoting community assets exist, yet specific health challenges persist.** These include high rates of child hospitalization for injuries and poisoning, as well as respiratory disease, high rates of heart disease, and high numbers of alcohol-related deaths.
- **Most residents feel safe in their own neighbourhoods.** According to the 2014 Cowichan Community Health Survey, 71% of respondents reported feeling safe in their neighbourhood, while less than 5% reported feeling not very safe.
- **The opioid crisis has affected the Cowichan Region.** Like many communities in BC, the region is grappling with opioids as overdose deaths continue to rise. Between January 2016 and June 2017, there were 25 overdose deaths in the region.
- **Emergency preparedness will become both increasingly complex and more important.** The Cowichan sits in a larger region prone to earthquakes, forest fires, and flooding. As the impacts of climate change accelerate, more extreme and less predictable weather patterns will require an even more robust approach to ensuring that communities are prepared for these conditions.
- **Poor air quality is related to rising incidence rates of respiratory illnesses.** The Cowichan region's topography, mixed with its historic reliance on the forest industry and wood burning, has led to the Cowichan Valley area in particular as having some of the poorest air quality in BC.

COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	TIMELINE	LEAD	PARTNERS	PURPOSE
Barefoot in the Park: 2017 Safe Needle Disposal Toolkit	2017	Community Safety Advisory Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duncan • CVRD • North Cowichan • RCMP • School District 79 • Social Planning Cowichan • VIHA 	A regional safety strategy to address safe needle disposal that includes an overview of needle usage in the Cowichan.
The Heartbeat of Cowichan Community Snapshots	2017	Social Planning Cowichan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Cowichan Community Health Network • CVRD 	Snapshots in time of various community wellbeing factors, using social indicators of health.
Cowichan's Regional Airshed Protection Strategy	2015	CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cowichan Tribes • Ministry of Environment • Island Health • Our Cowichan • School District 79 • Catalyst Paper • University of Victoria • City of Duncan • Town of Ladysmith • Town of Lake Cowichan • Municipality of North Cowichan 	Outlines a regional airshed strategy to respond to growing air quality concerns.
Cowichan Communities Health Profile	2014	Our Cowichan Communities Health Network		<p>Provides an overview of health in the region based on the Canadian Public Health Agency's 12 key determinants of health.</p> <p>Measures how the region compares to provincial and Island-wide averages, and how sub-regions compare to each other, and maps selected health indicators.</p>
Making the Links: A Tool Kit for Engaging Local Neighbourhoods	2009	Safer Futures		<p>Provides information about improving community capacity with a focus on safety and personal wellbeing.</p> <p>Builds on safety audits, research, and community engagement done previously in partnership with local governments in the region.</p>

INITIATIVE	TIMELINE	LEAD	PARTNERS	PURPOSE
Cowichan Region Safety Lens	2008	Community Safety Advisory Committee		Provides elected officials, planners, and developers with a tool to assess community safety factors for proposed developments.
Community Health and Safety Action Plan	2006	Community Safety Advisory Committee	• CVRD	Reports the results of previous ten years of safety audits planning, identifying next steps for addressing community health and safety.

DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

Nearly all OCPs and CVRD strategy documents highlight the following policy directions:

- ✓ Promote the health and safety of all residents.
- ✓ Protect communities from natural hazards and risks through emergency preparedness.
- ✓ Enhance and protect air quality.

Several OCPs and CVRD strategy documents also highlighted the following additional policy directions:

- ✓ Foster social inclusivity and safety regardless of age, gender, race, or cultural background.
- ✓ Cooperate with other agencies and governments to enhance emergency preparedness.
- ✓ Support community capacity, education and awareness surrounding emergency preparedness.
- ✓ Promote safety through environmental design and the built environment.



COWICHAN REGIONAL AIR SHED ROUNDTABLE

Maintaining good air quality is one of the challenges that most depends on regional collaboration. The Cowichan Regional Air Shed Roundtable was formed to address air quality issues in a collaborative, systemic way. Its partners include the Island Health Medical Health Officer, representatives from local governments, the CVRD, First Nations, the Ministry of Environment, NGOs, and industry. Together, they are working to understand air quality issues, identify goals and actions, and coordinate the activities of key organizations to carry them out.

OUR COWICHAN COMMUNITIES HEALTH NETWORK

Our Cowichan is a good example of true regional collaboration in both its organizational structure and mandate. It is comprised of local health organizations, non-profit societies, volunteer groups, and government representatives. Together, their mandate is to “create change by identifying local health issues and bringing together the people and resources bet able to develop community-based solutions.”

LOOKING FORWARD

As knowledge of the links between health, safety and both built and social environments continues to deepen, more opportunities emerge to integrate health and safety into planning. This includes looking at ways to create an environment for our children and youth to thrive and to help promote mental health at a community level. As the region continues to grow, it will become increasingly important to collaborate regionally to account for the impacts of development and population growth on the area’s ability to withstand emergencies and other challenges to community health and wellbeing.

Some potential options for future work could include:

- Extending neighbourhood resilience planning, such as that carried out by Social Planning Cowichan, to include additional neighbourhoods and areas, especially as the risks posed by climate change increase.
- Building on the 2014 Cowichan Communities Health Profile to continue implementing its recommended actions towards improving regional health.
- Encouraging the use of specific lenses towards health, safety, and emergency planning in future OCP updates.



SAFE YOUTH COWICHAN

This group is comprised of youth from the region who are concerned about issues of violence and safety and carry out various projects in collaboration with local schools and organizations, as well as local governments and First nations. Members also sit on various local government committees to bring a youth voice to decision makers.

Photo: Social Planning Cowichan

Food Security

Food security has been defined by the Cowichan Green Community Society as when “all members of the community have access to enough nutritious, safe, ecologically sustainable, and culturally appropriate food at all times.” Despite being an agriculture hub, challenges to food production in the region are growing. These include the rising cost of land, an aging community of farmers, climate change (drought, water supply issues), and development pressure on farm lands. Climate change in particular is expected to impact both local food production and agriculture in areas where food is imported from, which will likely drive food costs higher and potentially lead to supply issues for some foods. At the same time, a growing appreciation for local producers and farmers markets provides some positive momentum towards enhancing the region’s food security.

REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- **Food insecurity impacts the population unevenly.** A study done by the University of Victoria’s School of Public Administration found that 14% of Cowichan residents face food insecurity, impacting low-income households and households headed by a single female parent most significantly.
- **Food prices are rising.** Between 2013 and 2016, the average cost of a healthy food basket⁷ for a family of four rose by 12%.
- **Various local initiatives are working towards zero hunger and healthy food choices.** These include five registered food banks throughout the region, various farmers markets, the Farmer’s Market Nutrition Coupon program, and the Salvation Army’s food hampers.

COWICHAN FOOD SECURITY COALITION

Founded in 2008, the Cowichan Food Security Coalition is a network of food security stakeholders from around the region who work together on regional food projects and initiatives. The Coalition is hosted by the Cowichan Green Community, a non-profit organization that has been focusing on environmental sustainability across the Cowichan Region, with an emphasis on improving food security.



⁷ A healthy food basket is a grouping of around sixty nutritious and balanced food items that is used to monitor the cost of healthy eating.

COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	TIMELINE	LEAD	PARTNERS	PURPOSE
Cowichan Food Security Report Card	Updated annually	Cowichan Food Security Coalition		Highlights challenges and successes within the Cowichan's food system.
Cowichan Food Security Plan	Developed 2007 Updated 2010	Cowichan Green Community VIHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Planning Cowichan • Cowichan Agricultural Society • Municipality of North Cowichan 	Intended to be used as an educational tool and to help support and guide the community in its ongoing work to create a more food secure Cowichan.
Cowichan Food Charter	2009	Cowichan Green Community VIHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Planning Cowichan • Cowichan Agricultural Society • Municipality of North Cowichan • City of Duncan 	<p>A charter document to proclaim signatories' support for:</p> <p>Ensuring everyone has access to sufficient high-quality food;</p> <p>Local farmers and food producers; and</p> <p>Increasing collaboration and awareness building around food security.</p>

DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

Given the prominence of agriculture and farming in the Cowichan Region, this sector is strongly supported through various strategy documents and policies in almost every OCP. While local agriculture is of course linked to food security, fewer OCPs have policies or goals explicitly tied to food security itself.

Around half of the region's OCPs and CVRD strategy documents highlight the following policy direction:

- ✓ Promote food security, such as by supporting a healthy local diet, access to local food markets and buying locally.

Several OCPs and CVRD strategy documents also highlight the following additional policy directions:

- ✓ Support urban agriculture and encourage community gardens.

LOOKING FORWARD

As challenges to food security persist, continued dedication and collaboration will be required to ensure the region can feed itself healthily and affordably while supporting its local farmers and food producers. Potential options for future work could include:

- Sharing knowledge and information between municipalities about how to create policies that are supportive of urban agriculture and food production, such as community gardens and backyard chickens.
- Encouraging municipalities and areas that haven't yet done so to adopt the Cowichan Food Charter.

Heritage

Across the Cowichan region, heritage resources from historic buildings and sites to broader rural agricultural landscapes are deeply valued. Heritage resources include physical, cultural or social resources that are unique to, and valued by, a community. In the Cowichan, there are several different types of heritage resources that residents are invested in protecting, including historic buildings and monuments, and natural features and heritage landscapes, and sites of cultural significance (e.g., traditional use sites). Several communities have developed objectives and policies specifically designed to protect both built environment features (i.e., historic buildings and sites) and other heritage resources and values (e.g., landscapes, views).

REGIONAL HERITAGE SNAPSHOT

- **The CVRD has provided heritage conservation services to electoral areas since 1999.** This work has included the development of a Community Heritage Register, which documents significant historic buildings and places. The register was established to promote local tourism, support conservation and planning, and increase public awareness.
- **Heritage conservation is increasingly recognized for its economic benefits.** The Town of Ladysmith is just one community that views the presence of historic buildings and a strong cultural heritage as a key driver behind its attractiveness as both a tourist destination and a potential home for new residents.
- **Heritage landscapes, including rural agricultural areas are increasingly valued.** Low-density development (i.e., sprawl) has been identified as a threat to the Cowichan's rural character.
- **Indigenous cultural sites are increasingly recognized.** While registered archeological sites are formally protected, local governments in the region are increasingly recognizing the need to work with First Nations to identify and protect sites of cultural significance that do not show physical evidence of human use.

COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

Several heritage-focused initiatives have taken place or are underway at local levels, but regional collaboration in this area has been limited. An exception is the ongoing acquisition, maintenance and enhancement of public parklands at both community and regional scales, which is addressed in the next section (Recreation).

DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

While regional collaboration in this area has been limited, the region's OCPs all include objectives and policies pertaining to the preservation of community heritage. Specifically, these OCPs all have some version of the following objective in common:

- ✓ Protect, enhance and celebrate our heritage values, areas, and/or resources.

Several OCPs also identified the preservation of the Cowichan's rural character and setting as a key principle or objective, with related objectives including things like:

- ✓ Protect rural landscapes and seascapes for their visual values.
- ✓ Preserve our unique heritage resources and landscape vistas.
- ✓ Recognize and preserve the agricultural heritage and character of the Plan area, while minimizing conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural resources.



Other common objectives included:

- ✓ Identify and protect archaeological sites and resources.
- ✓ Work with local First Nations to develop better protocols for archaeological protection and related issues concerning the referral of development applications.
- ✓ Encourage and develop community awareness and support for heritage preservation.
- ✓ Invest in the preservation and restoration of heritage buildings.
- ✓ Recognize and protect heritage tourism as a form of economic development.
- ✓ Recognize culture, context and heritage in built form design.

LOOKING FORWARD

Looking forward, the challenge of heritage preservation will be both the protection of tangible resources (i.e., buildings, monuments) and more intangible heritage resources (e.g., landscapes, views) in the face of encroaching development and population growth. For many communities, the continued preservation and restoration of historic buildings will be a big part of this, but it is also clear that intangible heritage values related to the rural and natural environment are critical aspects of what makes the Cowichan region so special. Protecting these resources will likely be more challenging and require more coordinated and collaborative planning. Some possible next steps include:

- Developing and implementing a regional growth strategy to reduce development pressures on rural and natural landscape.
- Working more closely with local First Nations to identify and understand the cultural heritage resources that are of importance to their communities. This will help to minimize the potential for conflict (e.g., when development applications are put forward) while also strengthening relationships.
- Creating a region-wide heritage register.
- Applying a heritage lens to parks and trails planning and land development, where this is not already occurring.

Recreation

The Cowichan region is well known for the high quality of its recreation services and facilities, particularly its parks and open spaces. Given that access to such services is a key contributor to community wellbeing, it is no surprise that the region continues to attract high numbers of new residents and visitors each year.

At the same time, this influx puts pressure on the region's recreation services, including trails and treasured natural landscapes. For many Cowichan residents, the protection, maintenance and enhancement of valued recreation locations and assets is a key concern, as is the need to increase recreation services to meet growing demands.

REGIONAL RECREATION SNAPSHOT

- **Almost 800 hectares of land is managed under CVRD's Regional Parks and Trails program.** This includes six regional park sites and the Cobble Hill Mountain Regional Recreation Area. Parkland acquisition continues to be an important objective for both the CVRD and local municipalities.
- **Regional connectivity is improving, but much work remains.** Trail linkages and greenway corridors have been identified and, in recent years, significant strides have been made to improve trails within and across jurisdictions. Still, much work remains to improve, expand and connect local and regional trail networks.
- **Recreation and trails planning is progressing.** Across the region, several jurisdictions have recently updated guiding recreation planning documents, including the Municipality of North Cowichan which completed a comprehensive Parks and Trails Master Plan in 2017 and the Town of Ladysmith which completed a Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan in 2016. In the CVRD, Electoral areas A, B, C and D recently adopted Community Parks Master Plans.



COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	TIMELINE	LEAD	PARTNERS	PURPOSE
Regional Recreation Planning Project	Initiated - 2017	CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town of Lake Cowichan • Town of Ladysmith • City of Duncan • Municipality of North Cowichan • CVRD 	To assess the current state of recreation services, and provide information that can be used to inform future decision making and planning projects.
Cowichan Valley Trail Initiative	Completed - 2015	Island Coastal Economic Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVRD • Town of Lake Cowichan • Municipality of North Cowichan • Town of Ladysmith 	A multi-use trail that is part of The Great Trail (Trans Canada Trail). It runs from the Capital Regional District boundary through the CVRD to the Regional District of Nanaimo. The majority of the trail is wide and flat with some sections running along roadways.
Trail Network and Cycling Plan	2001	CVRD City of Duncan Municipality of North Cowichan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Province 	Developed to support the creation of a network of trails to enhance quality of life and support economic development. Organized around development of the proposed Trans Canada Trail network through the region, along with neighbourhood connector trails, and a cycling commuter network around North Cowichan and into Duncan.

DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

While the communities in the Cowichan emphasize different recreation priorities and policies in their OCPs, in general, they all agree that there is a need to:

- ✓ Provide a variety of high quality recreation services, facilities and amenities, including a comprehensive system of parks, trails and open space; and
- ✓ Ensure that all ages and user groups have access to a diversity of safe and barrier-free recreational opportunities.

Several OCPs also emphasized the following additional objectives:

- ✓ Collaborate with neighbouring jurisdictions and other levels of government to improve regional parks and trails infrastructure;

- ✓ Establish and/or improve greenways and transportation corridors linking parks, amenities, forests, and open spaces;
- ✓ Promote active living; and
- ✓ Involve residents in the planning, development, and stewardship of parks and greenspace.

LOOKING FORWARD

Jurisdictions without up-to-date parks and trails master plans should complete this work so that opportunities to collaborate across jurisdictions can be identified and acted upon. Continue building on past success by completing the Regional Recreation Project and by continuing to look for opportunities to further improve regional connectivity by integrating trail development, natural areas protection and parkland acquisition.

Arts and Culture

The Cowichan region has a vibrant arts and culture scene that contributes significant benefits to local residents, businesses and communities. At a regional level, the CVRD provides an arts and culture service that was established to offer opportunities for eligible arts organizations to apply for regional grants-in-aid, and to increase collaboration and partnerships among arts and cultural organizations across multiple scales (local, regional, provincial, national). The CVRD arts and culture function also provides annual funding for sub-regional arts councils, of which there are five: the Chemainus Valley Cultural Arts Society, the Cowichan Valley Arts Council, the Cowichan South Arts Guild Society, and the Cowichan Lake Arts and Culture Society.

REGIONAL ARTS AND CULTURE SNAPSHOT

- **There are over 200 self-identified artists located in the Cowichan.** Local artists include actors, carvers, ceramicists, dancers, digital artists, fibre artists, jewelers, mixed media artists, painters, photographers, print makers sculptors, woodworkers, writers, and more.
- **The Cowichan region boasts over 270 arts and culture resources, which include both organizations and spaces.** This includes over 25 local not-for-profit organizations that provide advocacy, information and other services related to arts and culture.

COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE	TIMELINE	LEAD	PARTNERS	PURPOSE
Cowichan Culture Project	Initiated - 2012 Report released - 2013 Inventory development - ongoing	CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cowichan Valley Arts Council • Cowichan Tribes • Ministry of Culture, Sport and Community Development 	<p>Focused on assessing and communicating current strengths, needs and opportunities; developing priorities and strategies for moving forward; and establishing a baseline for monitoring progress over time.</p> <p>Involved the development of an arts and culture inventory and an interactive online database that houses information about Cowichan's arts, culture and heritage resources and assets (can be accessed at cowichanculture.ca).</p>
Cultural Connections	Ongoing Initiated - 2008	Social Planning Cowichan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVRD • Quw'utsun' (Cowichan) Elders 	Offers a multi-phase process to build relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members. Events and programs include community gatherings where participants learn about Cowichan culture



DIRECTIONS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

Only a handful of the region's OCPs include objectives and policies pertaining to the preservation of arts and culture as distinct from heritage and recreation. *Some examples of arts and culture objectives highlighted in Cowichan OCPs include:*

- ✓ Ensure that arts and culture can flourish.
- ✓ Recognize and support artistic and cultural pursuits and activities.
- ✓ Foster community partnerships in support of arts and culture.
- ✓ Strengthen relationships with area First Nations.
- ✓ Integrate arts and culture into community planning, recreation programming, and economic development.

Several OCPs addressed arts and/or culture through more general objectives, such as:

- ✓ Encourage a strong community identity and pride through arts, culture, heritage and recreation.
- ✓ Provide comprehensive parks, recreation and culture services which are supported by the community.

LOOKING FORWARD

Arts and culture is an area that is lacking clear policy direction in several Cowichan jurisdictions. Yet, research shows that integrating arts and culture with planning can help to strengthen community identity; encourage engagement and participation in civic life; and provide a medium for education and communication across demographics. Arts and culture also contributes to community wellbeing and economic growth, as places with vibrant arts and culture communities are often the best places to live, work, and visit.

Looking out to 2050, key next steps will primarily involve continuing to both engage and encourage the sector by further developing a positive arts and culture environment. Greater regional collaboration can support these efforts by providing opportunities for local governments and the CVRD to discuss what they are doing and identify shared priorities. Specific recommendations for future work include:

- Continuing to provide support to the Cowichan Culture Project and the development and maintenance of the Cowichan Culture directory.
- Continuing the community-focused work of Cultural Connections.

In addition, communities without arts and culture specific objectives and policies in place may find it beneficial to develop these.



Appendices



Regional Collaboration Framework

CALL to ACTION



THE COMMUNITIES OF THE COWICHAN REGION EACH HAVE

their own unique values, interests, and priorities. They also share many of the same values and aspirations. These include stewarding and improving Cowichan’s livability, making this region more sustainable, strengthening community resilience, and building strong, inclusive relationships both within and across communities and jurisdictions.

The communities also recognize that by 2050, the Cowichan region will be a very different place. While the coming changes are uncertain, here are some that can anticipated:

- A changing local governance context as First Nations expand their land management authorities, capacities and opportunities;
- Significant population growth and demographic change;
- More intense climate change and higher sea levels;
- An evolving regional economy and job market;
- Increasing social pressures, due in part to the region’s rising cost of living.

Recognizing that these changes bring challenges of a scope, scale and complexity this region has not seen before, Cowichan local governments have collectively determined to forge a new path forward through an initiative known as the Cowichan 2050 Regional Collaboration Framework. Developed within a context of increasing interdependence, the Framework offers a way for the Cowichan region’s local governments to:

- Build more collaborative regional working relationships;
- Improve communications and information sharing;
- Support more coordinated planning on critical, region-wide issues; and
- Establish clear and measurable indicators of progress around regional livability, sustainability, and resilience.

Ultimately, this new approach will enable the Cowichan region to more effectively address current issues, plan for emerging challenges, and achieve significant collective impact at both local and regional scales.

Recognizing that the nature of the work will change over time, the signatories to this Call to Action commit to working with one another and regional partners on implementing the Framework and moving towards a more collaborative and coordinated regional planning approach on critical, Cowichan-wide issues.



JON LEFEBURE
Board Chair
Cowichan Valley
Regional District



PHIL KENT
Mayor
City of Duncan



JON LEFEBURE
Mayor
Municipality of
North Cowichan



AARON D. STONE
Mayor
Town of Ladysmith



ROSS FOREST
Mayor
Town of Lake
Cowichan

Regional Collaboration Framework

SCOPE of WORK

CONTEXT

The Cowichan 2050 Regional Collaboration Framework (the Framework) was initiated by the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) in September 2017. The Framework includes three core components, all of which will be expanded upon and further developed as the process moves forward:

- ***Cowichan 2050 – Call to Action***
- ***Cowichan 2050 – Regional Working Group Scope of Work***
- ***Cowichan 2050 – Background***

PURPOSE

The primary role of the Regional Working Group is to support the further development and implementation of the Cowichan 2050 Regional Collaboration Framework, by establishing a forum for Cowichan region local governments and community partners to:

- Build more collaborative regional working relationships;
- Improve communications and information sharing;
- Support more coordinated planning on critical, region-wide issues; and
- Establish clear and measurable indicators of progress around regional livability, sustainability, and resilience.

REGIONAL WORKING GROUP PRINCIPLES

The principles of the Regional Working Group include:

- ***Be open.*** Listen and communicate honestly.
- ***Be inclusive.*** Start with learning about each other and recognizing each other's place in the region.
- ***Be patient and flexible.*** Respect the different reasons for coming to the process and different ways of working.
- ***Be transparent.*** Support open and clear discussion process.
- ***Be respectful.*** Recognize resource capacity and organizational mandates.
- ***Be determined.*** Recognize that the regional challenges ahead demand action across a range of scales, communities and sectors.

REGIONAL WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Local government staff are core members of the Regional Working Group. They will be joined by First Nations, region-serving community organizations (e.g., Our Cowichan, Cowichan Watershed Board, Social Planning Cowichan) and other agencies and levels of government who have an interest in the Cowichan region and are a necessary part of any collective, collaborative action. It is anticipated that while the participation of core members will remain consistent, broader participation will be adaptive and flexible, evolving over time with the topics being addressed. Membership structure will be determined through a future Terms of Reference.

REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ACTIONS

The Regional Working Group will do their best to carry out the following actions, recognizing that everyone may have resource and capacity limitations:

- Convene Regional Working Group meetings on a quarterly basis, and as required (Regional Working Group meetings will be organized and convened by the CVRD).
- Encourage cross-cultural learning opportunities regarding one another's roles, rights, responsibilities, governance systems, laws, culture and history.
- Develop a guiding Terms of Reference for the Regional Working Group.
- Identify opportunities to coordinate and align planning on Cowichan-wide challenges.
- Explore and harness funding opportunities as a region for projects addressing Cowichan-wide challenges.
- Develop a roadmap and action plan for next steps on areas of potential regional collaboration outlined in the *Cowichan 2050 – Background*.

BACKGROUND

The Cowichan 2050 Regional Collaboration Framework (the Framework) was initiated by the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) in September 2017. In part, the project grew out of the CVRD’s 2016 Corporate Strategic Plan, which identified a need for a regional planning strategy or framework to support more “sustainable and coordinated growth and development in the region.”¹

The Framework also grew out of the realization that by 2050, the Cowichan region will be a very different place. While the coming changes are uncertain, over the next 30 years we can expect our population to grow by at least 30%, potentially straining services and increasing development pressures across the region.² It is also clear that the impacts of climate change—many of which are already being felt—will pose more serious challenges in the future, with a warmer, drier climate and more extreme weather events impacting everything from our water supply to our region’s local economy. Climate change is also driving sea level rise, which will hit low-lying coastal areas particularly hard (by 2050, ocean levels are projected to rise 50 cm, or 1.5 feet). Other anticipated changes include significant demographic shifts, a rising cost of living, and an evolving regional governance context as First Nations continue to enhance and expand their land management and governance opportunities.

Developed against this backdrop of change, and within a context of increasing interdependence and complexity, the Framework presents a clear opportunity for the communities of the Cowichan region to begin the process of establishing a new regional approach—one that will enable the Cowichan region to more effectively address current issues, plan for emerging challenges, and achieve significant collective impact. As both a process and a

commitment, it also provides a statement of recognition that Cowichan-wide challenges cannot be effectively addressed in isolation by any one local government or organization.

The Framework includes three core components, all of which will be expanded upon and further developed as the process moves forward:

- **Cowichan 2050 - Call to Action:** A statement of commitment to regional collaboration that grounds the Framework and informs the collective and independent action necessary to protect and steward the Cowichan region going forward to 2050.
- **Cowichan 2050 - Regional Working Group Scope of Work:** This document is intended to provide some structure around how regional collaboration will take place moving forward.
- **Cowichan 2050 - Backgrounder:** A regional “primer” that:
 - Identifies shared regional aspirations;
 - Characterizes regional issues and challenges;
 - Pulls together common and consistent regional planning directions and supporting policy themes from plans and strategies developed by the CVRD, member local governments, and regional organizations;
 - Highlights past, present, and ongoing regional initiatives and programs; and
 - Outlines opportunities for future collaborative action across different regional planning areas.

¹ Under the strategic focus area of “Excellence in Regional Land Use Planning.”

² At least 25,000 more people expected, or the equivalent of adding five new Duncans, which depending on the form and density of development, equivalent land area of adding two Ladysmiths (2,400 hectares).



Document prepared with the assistance of:
EcoPlan International
208-131 Water Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 4M3
www.ecoplan.ca

