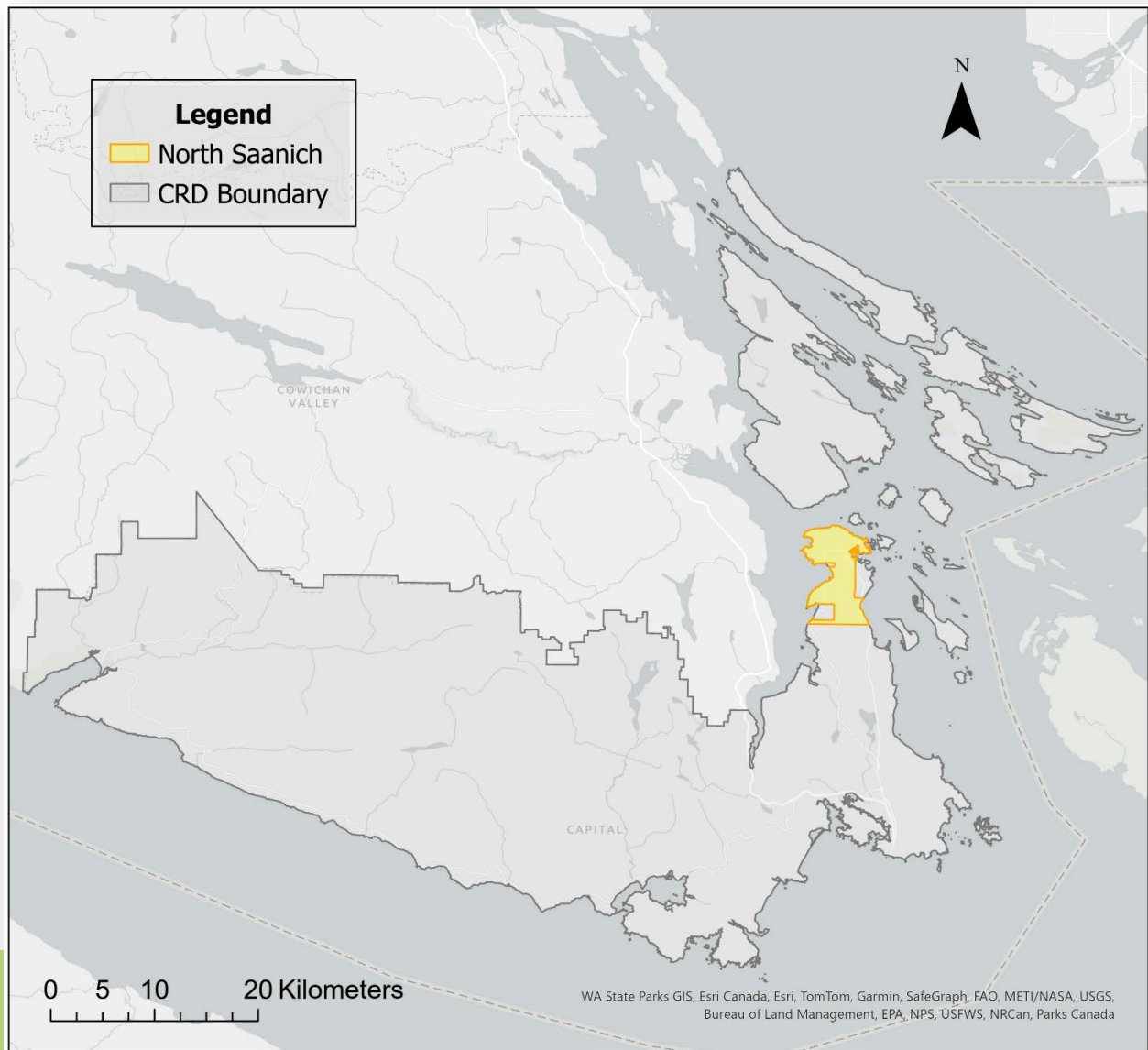


# 2 REGIONAL CONTEXT STATEMENT



## 2.0 REGIONAL CONTEXT STATEMENT

Sections 446 to 449 of the *Local Government Act* establish the requirements for the preparation, acceptance, and settlement of a regional context statement.

A municipal OCP must include a regional context statement (RCS). A municipal council must submit a regional context statement for Capital Regional District (CRD) Board approval within two years of Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) adoption. A regional context statement must identify the relationship between the OCP and the RGS, and if applicable, how the OCP is to be made consistent with the RGS over time.

A council must:

- a) submit a proposed regional context statement for CRD Board acceptance;
- b) submit any amendments to the regional context statement for CRD Board acceptance; and
- c) review the regional context statement at least once every 5 years and if no amendments are proposed, submit the statement for its continued acceptance.

A RGS is a strategic plan that directs long-term planning for municipal OCPs. The CRD's RGS Bylaw No. 4017 (Attachment 1) sets out a 20-year vision for the future of the capital region, guiding decisions on regional issues such as transportation, population growth, and settlement patterns. The RGS promotes the long-term livability of the region with policy intended to enhance social, economic, and environmental performance.

The strategy was co-created by the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area and the thirteen municipalities (Colwood, Central Saanich, Esquimalt, Highlands, Langford, Metchosin, North Saanich, Oak Bay, Saanich, Sidney, Sooke, Victoria, and View Royal) with input from citizens, First Nations, school district boards, community stakeholders, and other provincial and federal agencies. All affected local governments must accept the RGS before the CRD Board can adopt it as a bylaw in accordance with Part 13 of the Local Government Act.

The RGS sets out a long-term vision that will guide growth and change toward common objectives as follows:

- a) Significantly reduce community-based greenhouse gas emissions;
- b) Keep urban settlement compact;
- c) Protect the integrity of rural communities;
- d) Protect, conserve, and manage ecosystem health;
- e) Deliver services consistent with RGS objectives;
- f) Create safe and complete communities;
- g) Improve housing affordability;
- h) Increase transportation choice;
- i) Strengthen the regional economy; and,
- j) Foster a resilient food and agriculture system.

These ten objectives are underpinned by supporting policies, targets, and indicators. One of the key objectives of the RGS is to keep urban settlement compact. A designated Urban Containment Policy Area (UCPA) aims to keep urban areas compact and to keep growth largely contained within its boundaries. Growth outside of the growth boundary is to be kept to 5% or less of the regional total.

The District of North Saanich updated its RCS and adopted the RCS, amending the District's OCP on February 3, 2020. The changes were to reorganize the structure of the RCS to align with the RGS, including new sections on food systems and climate action, strengthened the policy alignment with in-text references, and provided mapping updates for simplification, clarification and to reflect present infrastructure and development.

A RGS is developed in partnership by municipalities and the regional district and provides a framework for guiding decisions on regional issues such as transportation, growth, and settlement patterns.

The role of North Saanich in the region as outlined by the CRD's RGS is to:

- a) Maintain working landscapes including agriculture, forestry and outdoor recreation activities that contribute to the region's economy;
- b) Avoid the creation of future urban areas through development patterns that complement rural form, density, and character;
- c) Minimize impacts to the natural environment and surrounding working landscapes; and



- d) Accommodate a slow to moderate rate of growth, contributing to no more than 5% of the region's new residential units<sup>1</sup>.

## 2.1 Managing and Balancing Growth



A key target in the RGS is to accommodate a minimum of 95% of the region's new dwelling units within the UCPA [as designated on Map 3a: Growth Management Concept Plan of the 2018 RGS]. The District remains located entirely outside of the UCPA.

The RGS has **two main policy area designations** that apply to the District, the consistencies are outlined below:

1. **Rural/Rural Residential Policy Area** is intended for lands which are of a form, density, and character to support rural working landscapes. Rural lands are intended to provide a buffer between residential development and agricultural uses and when not within the ALR they are intended to

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<sup>1</sup> it is worth noting that the Provincial Housing Targets prescribed by the Provincial Government run counter to this.

accommodate hobby farms, small-scale farm operations and small acreage residential uses within an agricultural setting with a minimum lot size of 4.0 hectares.

Country Residential lands are intended to provide for larger estate lots or smaller acreages with lot sizes ranging from 0.4 hectares to 1 hectare. General Residential lands are for single family residential development with lot sizes ranging from 1400m<sup>2</sup> (~0.33 acres) to 2000m<sup>2</sup> (~0.5 acres).

Policy 5.11.3 requires any development of non-farm uses and/or subdivision within 100 metres of ALR lands to provide confirmation that there will be little to no impact on surrounding agricultural uses including and may include a report prepared by a professional Agrologist.

2. **Renewable Resource Lands Policy Area** includes land within the ALR and Crown forest lands and envisions the long-term use of these lands as renewable resource working landscapes. Agricultural lands include areas with a potential for a wide range of agricultural production and includes lands within the ALR. The minimum lot size is 20 hectares which limits subdivision potential. Most of the ALR lands are designated as Agricultural within the OCP and identified within the Renewable Resource Lands Policy Area.

### 2.1.1 Keep Urban Settlement Compact

One of the main comments that was heard from the community during the public consultation period was that the rural character and integrity of the community had to be protected. It includes landscape and environment, natural features, such as open spaces, farmland, forests, and ecosystems, as well as the rural built environment, including barns, farmhouses, and agriculture. Rural character includes community and people and the social fabric of the community including the relationships between residents, their shared history, and cultural traditions including First Nations. Character includes economic activity such as traditional and non-traditional agriculture practices, lower density residential development, and lower population densities compared to urban areas. Sense of place for North Saanich refers to the feelings, memories, and personal



meanings that people associate with the Peninsula, an identity, a belonging where people connect with the place where they live, work, and spend their time. Sense of place is influenced by both the physical environment and the human experiences within it, including the visual aspects as well as cultural and historical significance of North Saanich, including the traditions, values, and stories that are passed down through generations.

It is important that the OCP's goals and objectives protect the rural character, agricultural character and the ALR by supporting farming initiatives and working landscapes which is consistent with continued long-term use of renewable resource working landscapes of the Renewable Resource Lands Policy Area within the RGS.

Character is protected through preserved lot sizes and agriculture use of the land, both in ALR and non-ALR areas. OCP policies and objectives that support preserving rural character can be found throughout including in Table A: Land Use Designations including Agriculture, Rural, and Country residential.

The District does not support extensive new commercial or industrial development or intend to play a significant regional role in providing new commercial and industrial services, as these are readily available on the airport lands, in the Town of Sidney and



the District of Central Saanich within the subregional nodes, and nodes which are within the UCPA of the RGS. Any commercial development allowed contemplates accessory multifamily Residential.

## **2.2 Environment and Infrastructure**

### **2.2.1 Protect, Conserve and Manage Ecosystem Health**

The District is committed to the protection, and where possible the restoration of the natural environment, and the enhancement of the District's parks, land, air, and water qualities. The District recognizes the use of parks to foster an awareness of the natural environment and the desire to preserve green spaces, blue spaces, and ecologically sensitive areas.

The RGS Capital Green Lands Policy Area applies to ecological reserves, national parks and historic sites, provincial and regional parks, and lands used by municipalities as parks. The RGS Capital Green Lands Policy Area corresponds with the lands designated as Parks within the District's OCP. The regionally significant parks within the District include Horth Hill Regional Park, McDonald Provincial Park, and John Dean Provincial Park.

The OCP establishes policies and guidelines for protection of environmentally sensitive areas including key water resources, waterfowl habitat and other special environmental areas. The OCP has the following objectives regarding environment and climate change:

- a) Protect and restore ecosystem integrity and natural habitat connectivity across land uses using best practice nature-based solutions first.
- b) Preserve and enhance the tree canopy in the District.
- c) Create resiliency to climate changes including sea-level rise and wildfire risk through appropriate development criteria.
- d) Deliver energy efficient and zero carbon new and existing buildings that support affordable, energy efficient, zero carbon transportation.
- e) Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from community waste.
- f) Deliver carbon neutral corporate operations.

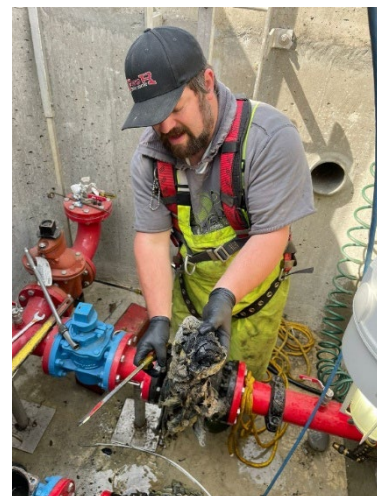
The OCP proposes a “no-net-loss” tree retention policy that would have to be reflected in changes to the Tree Bylaw. All development within the District must take into account

impact on the natural environment and be designed to prevent pollutants from entering any water system, including surface water runoff channels, aquifers, groundwater areas, wetlands, and the ocean.

The District recognizes that more data is required to create baseline information so that policies can accurately reflect and protect the environment. Baseline studies are required to identify terrestrial and marine ecosystems (such as pocket beaches, wetlands, and riparian areas) in their natural and restored state, including through inventorying and mapping of connectivity corridors (Policy 5.1.1). The District will monitor and report on progress toward ecosystem integrity targets, including ecosystem connectivity corridors for conservation and restoration in concert with neighbouring municipalities (Policy 5.1.2) and work towards a ‘net gain’ of biodiversity/ecosystem elements. Policy 5.1.3 supports development adhering to the Develop with Care: Environmental Best Management Practices for Urban and Rural Land Development as published by the B.C. Ministry of Environment or any provincial guidelines intended to supersede these guidelines. Policy 5.1.4 requires the protection and preservation of the tree canopy and density of trees within the municipality with associated amendments to the Tree Bylaw, to achieve a no net tree canopy loss target and, 30 percent tree canopy cover in all neighbourhoods.

### 2.2.2 Manage Regional Infrastructure Services Sustainably

The NSSA includes lands currently being serviced by sewer and those that could be considered to be serviced by sewer. The NSSA includes select residential, commercial, and industrial lots. The District will not further extend sewer services outside of the NSSA, except to address pressing public health concerns, to provide fire safety, or to service agriculture, which is consistent with the RGS or serve Provincial Housing Orders. The District is in the process of developing new Sewer and Water Master Plan and a Water System Master Plan which will inform a new development cost charge bylaw which will allocate costs to new developments regarding infrastructure requirements needed to service the Provincial Housing Order over the next 10 - 20 years. In the meantime, the development community shall be directly responsible for all off-site





and on-site costs for new development in order to prevent the residents of North Saanich from having to shoulder the costs associated with the new housing mandates.

The OCP includes general development policies 5.2.1 - 5.2.23 addressing the following:

- a) Green stormwater infrastructure;
- b) Sewage disposal systems;
- c) New roads, utility corridors;
- d) Applicable infrastructure plans, such as the Liquid Waste Management Plan, Active Transportation Plan, Saanich Peninsula Stormwater Bylaw, and Drainage Master Plan.
- e) Consistency with all infrastructure planning in the District.

## 2.3 Housing and Community

### 2.3.1 Improve Housing Affordability

The Province has mandated a total five-year housing target of 419 units to be met by July 31, 2029, and annual cumulative housing targets. In addition, the District must consider the results of its Housing Needs Report and plan for the creation of 2493 new units over the next 20 years. The housing targets run contrary to the RGS's target to accommodate 95% of the region's new dwelling units within the UCPA, whereas 5% or less of the regional total is intended to be in the Rural/Rural Residential Policy Area.

The District has committed to providing a variety of housing in order to achieve a healthy, sustainable, and affordable community through focusing growth in strategic areas that are served by transit, away from hazards, and near daily needs. North Saanich envisions strategic growth that preserves the rural feel of the municipality, respecting the unique neighborhoods, and that also happens in tandem with supporting infrastructure.

Through policies 5.4.1 - 5.4.23, the District of North Saanich shall support the following:

- a) Secondary suites and/or (depending on designation) additional dwelling units.
- b) Allowing for flexibility in regulatory bylaws including amenity bonusing, in compliance with Section 482 of the *Local Government Act*.
- c) Implementing development financing tools like development cost charges, amenity contribution charges, density bonus as well as inclusive zoning.

- d) Partnering with affordable housing societies and supporting affordable housing with funding partners.
- e) Ensure housing densities and height are compatible with the surrounding context and built form.
- f) Encouraging diversity of housing types and tenure to promote social mix, and to support collaboration between nonprofit and private sector developers to achieve greater affordability.
- g) Exploring opportunities to address affordable home ownership, including strata ownership of accessory residential dwellings where appropriate.
- h) Supporting accessory residential use in specific commercial and industrial and community/institutional designations.
- i) Requiring a component 10-20% of all new multi-family units are affordable residential housing (or equivalent in cash-in-lieu).
- j) Requiring a minimum of 5% of any proposed hotel units as staff housing units.
- k) Requiring that a minimum of 10% of the total of any proposed bare land or strata single family residential subdivisions are affordable housing lots as defined by the North Saanich which would be enforced through covenants, housing agreements.

### 2.3.2 Create Safe and Complete Communities

The District has existing engineering data regarding sea level rise and areas identified as at risk of flooding, however policies regarding these areas shall take the form of a separate policy bylaw rather than being implemented through a development permit area in order to address the many issues and intricacies around existing municipal infrastructure, homes as well as future development requirements and construction in order to adhere to RGS policies regarding managing and constructing climate change adaptive and risk adaptive infrastructure and utilities.

This OCP includes a development permit area for lands with slopes exceeding 30% over a minimum 6 metre run to ensure public safety and prevent damage to property and lands considered to exhibit hazardous conditions.

## 2.4 Transportation

### 2.4.1 Improve Multi-Modal Connectivity and Mobility

The District of North Saanich has an Active Transportation Plan which is a roadmap for a community to promote and improve walking, cycling, and other human-powered transportation options, aiming to create safer, more accessible, and sustainable transportation networks. The District shall deliver a multi-use transportation system that prioritizes walking, cycling and transit use and is safe, attractive, and reflects the District's rural character. The OCP support use of alternative (not fossil fuel based) energy sources in buildings and transportation.

The District's policies prioritize transportation infrastructure and network upgrades that support a safe, attractive, and connected active transportation network with consideration for vehicle use, agricultural vehicles, including maintaining and implementing the Active Transportation Plan (Schedule D). (Policy 5.8.4).

The District supports upgraded public transportation infrastructure and services to increase ridership including frequent and rapid transit to serve business areas and areas of higher housing density and enable North Saanich access with key destinations in the region (Policy 5.8.5)



including exploration of on-demand, service residents can access to their daily needs.

Through Policy 5.8.6, the District encourages residents and businesses to use zero emission vehicles (ZEV) and machines and support ZEV infrastructure. New development shall include alternative transportation infrastructure at a scale appropriate to the density of the development, including but not limited to electric vehicle charging stations; secure bike and e-bike parking; and car-shares.

Policy 5.10.6.4 (d) encourages alternative transportation by implementing separated and convenient pedestrian and cycling facilities throughout the development.

## 2.5 Economic Development

This OCP supports the Regional Growth Strategy by promoting local agriculture, marine industries, and sustainable tourism. It encourages economic activities that are compatible with the rural character of the community, such as small-scale farming, agri-tourism, and home-based businesses. The plan also emphasizes the importance of protecting agricultural land and supporting local food systems, which aligns with the RGS objective of fostering a resilient food and agriculture system.



North Saanich supports both the agri-food sector, which is composed of operations that produce and sell food commodities as well as other farm activities. The District continues to have the highest average annual farm sale revenues of any municipality on Vancouver Island. There is potential for growth and revitalization in the agri-food sector depending on both macroeconomic and consumer demand factors. There are opportunities for value added, intensive, niche and scaled up production of agri-food products and related agri-tourism and food-related retail business development. Section 5.2 of the OCP outlines policies to support the OCP objective to support the economic viability of agriculture.

North Saanich boasts a thriving boating industry, particularly around Tsehum Harbour and the Saanich Inlet, with the North Saanich Marina serving as a central hub. The area supports a variety of boating activities, including sailing, cruising, and other marine leisure pursuits. Additionally, North Saanich is home to the Sidney North Saanich Yacht Club, a community hub for sailing enthusiasts. In particular, policies 5.5.10-5.5.13 of this OCP support marine-based commercial uses.

Traditional commercial development of retail, business and personal services plays a lesser role in the District's land use pattern. There are several commercial uses that are integrated with marina developments, such as yacht sales and maintenance/repair, marine pubs, and restaurants. Currently, traditional light industrial uses such as warehousing or manufacturing are located on the Airport Lands and are under the control of the Victoria Airport Authority. De Havilland Aircraft of Canada primarily manufactures aircraft and aircraft parts, including components for engines. The company, located at Victoria



International Airport, focuses on aircraft assembly and upgrading, along with supplying parts for older aircraft and components for other manufacturers. The District does not support extensive commercial development or intend to play a significant regional role in providing regional commercial services, as these services are focused in Sidney and Central Saanich. Section 5.5 of this OCP contains policies that address commercial and industrial development.

There has been increased home business activity in North Saanich due to the changing nature of the workplace and information technology as well as increased agri-tourism and short-term rentals.

This OCP supports the following RGS Policies:

1. Collaboratively build on the region's economic, environmental, and quality of life advantages to position the region as a highly desirable location for investing in existing and new businesses.
2. Prioritize the attraction of new businesses to appropriate areas and attracting investment that prioritizes climate action and a low carbon footprint, while supporting the retention and growth of existing businesses and economic activities in the region.
3. Policies that support farming within the Agricultural Land Reserve.

## 2.6 Food Systems

### 2.6.1 Foster a Resilient Food and Agriculture System

A major goal of the OCP is to foster a sustainable food culture that is rooted in historical and First Nation knowledge, viable local production, and environmental stewardship. A key objective in the OCP is to preserve and use agricultural lands. The OCP has specific policies to support community gardens in parks and in residential developments to encourage food security and expanded use of greenhouses on smaller residential lots to promote food security as well as requirements for new multifamily developments to include community gardens Policy 5.10.6.3(iii).



## 2.7 Climate Action

### 2.7.1 Significantly Reduce Community-Based Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The District's OCP sets targets for community-wide GHG emissions reductions and goals [OCP Section 5.1 Environment and Climate Change]. In keeping with *Local Government Act* section 447 (1)(b) in order to identify how the OCP is to be made consistent with the RGS over time, Policy 5.1.5 supports reducing community-wide and corporate (District operations) GHG emissions and be resilient to climate impacts, including by integrating climate change considerations into all decision-making, by maintaining and implementing a District Climate Strategy and providing incentives to residents. The District's goal is to be carbon neutral in operations, reduce community GHG emissions from 2007 levels by 45% by 2040 and transition to 100% renewable energy by 2050. Policy 5.1.6 supports monitoring and report on progress toward climate goals and targets and Policy 5.1.7 supports maintaining accurate data climate risk and vulnerability assessments and integrate findings into decision-making and implementation actions. Policy 5.1.8 includes support for energy and zero carbon step code requirements in the District's Building bylaw and 5.1.9 incorporates climate change and sustainability considerations in development permit areas.