

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

The Local Government Act defines an Official Community Plan as a general statement of the broad objectives and policies of the local government respecting the form and character of existing and proposed land use and servicing requirements in the geographical area covered by the Plan.

The purpose of the Electoral Area ‘H’ Official Community Plan (OCP) is to provide a comprehensive set of guidelines and policies for managing existing and future uses of land, coastal areas and the surface of the water within the Plan Area. The objectives and policies contained in this OCP are a reflection of community values and the regulations of the local, provincial, and federal government with interests in the Plan Area.

The Electoral Area ‘H’ Official Community Plan Area includes approximately 28,615 ha of land and is bordered by the Regional District of Comox Strathcona to the north, Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District to the west, the Strait of Georgia to the east, and Electoral Area ‘G’ to the south. The Plan Area includes the neighbourhoods of Deep Bay, Bowser, Qualicum Bay, Qualicum First Nation Reserve, Dunsmuir, Shaw Hill/Baylis Area, Spider Lake, and Horne Lake. The Plan Area is shown on Figure No. 1.
Currently, it is estimated that approximately 3,100 people live within the Plan Area. Based on provincial growth projections for Electoral Area ‘H’, it is expected that with a modest growth rate of 2% on average, approximately 6,150 people will live in the Area by 2026.

This growth has the potential to translate into demand for an additional 150 to 200 dwelling units in Area ‘H’ over the next five years. It is anticipated that housing needs over this time period will generally be accommodated in the village centres and through the infill and subdivision of existing Rural and Rural Residential Lands.

It is important to distinguish the OCP from land use and subdivision bylaws. The OCP acts as a guide for the RDN Board, land developers, consultants and other agencies in determining ‘best practice’ community desired uses for land and water surfaces in the community. The Plan provides direction and a basis for the preparation of related bylaws to regulate land use and development. In addition, the Plan will also provide criteria from which development proposals will be considered by the community and the RDN Board.

The Electoral Area ‘H’ Official Community Plan has been prepared based on the direction provided by the community in the “Community Values Statement”. In addition, this OCP has benefited from past work from the previous ‘Shaw Hill Deep Bay Official Community Plan’ and the Region’s Growth Strategy. The Plan will guide development in a manner that reflects the “Community Value Statement” and “Development Guidance Criteria Statement” drafted by the people of Electoral Area ‘H’.

The intent of this OCP is to provide direction on how the Plan Area will grow and change over the next 5 to 10 years. However, with changes in legislation, growth projection expectations, changing attitudes of the residents and landowners, and amendments to the Regional District of Nanaimo Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), it is recommended that the Plan be reviewed, as necessary.

1.1 **Public Consultation**

The Electoral Area ‘H’ Official Community Plan is the result of a comprehensive public consultation strategy that was designed to directly and effectively engage a wide cross section of the people that make up the communities in Electoral Area ‘H’. The public process focused on input from both the general public and a group of interested volunteers in the form of the Community Planning Working Group. This Working Group had representation from all Area ‘H’ neighbourhoods, various stakeholder groups, and Water Improvement Districts, and represented local social, economic and environmental perspectives. Starting in January of 2003 the public was engaged using a number of methods including a series of Public and Working Group Meetings, an Agency Forum, Newsletters, Flyers, an Internet Website, an Area Site Office, Public Information Meetings, and the Public Hearing on the OCP held January 5, 2004. Using these methods, the community as a whole came together to discuss key issue areas, to establish community priorities and to outline the vision for the future development of the area in Community Values and Development Guideline Criteria Statements.

The Regional District recognizes the need for ongoing public consultation through the implementation of this Plan. The community will continue to be consulted through public information meetings (PIMs) held on development applications and through other ongoing RDN consultation initiatives.
1.2 **COMMUNITY VALUES STATEMENT**

Area ‘H’ is made up of distinct neighbourhoods that have a diverse range of activities and interests but share many common values. Over the years, the area has developed to accommodate a broad mix of rural, residential, recreational, tourist, small scale commercial, and resource uses with an emphasis on mutual respect and diversity. The combination of climate, spectacular natural environment, outdoor recreation opportunities, water resources, entrepreneurial spirit, and the progressive attitude of residents have resulted in a highly desirable and vibrant community.

Given the attributes of the area, the residents of Area ‘H’ recognize that there will be pressure for change and development in their neighbourhoods. As the future unfolds, the residents of Area ‘H’ will embrace compatible development, while at the same time maintaining the values that are fundamental to the health and prosperity of the community. These values have been formed based on the input and priorities of the residents who make up the neighbourhoods of Electoral Area ‘H’ and will be used to help guide future decisions on development proposals, environmental protection initiatives, and infrastructure development for the community, the Regional District of Nanaimo and senior government agencies. These values include:

1. Protect rural character and contain urban development to village nodes;
2. Identify and protect watersheds and aquifers from degradation, inappropriate development and pollution to ensure a continued safe water supply;
3. Recognition that the sustainable development of the area must be linked to groundwater quality and quantity for all residents;
4. Protection and promotion of natural, environmental, and geographic features;
5. Support for development regulations to protect environmentally sensitive areas, natural hazard lands, the marine/freshwater foreshores, and aquifer recharge areas;
6. Recognition that a comprehensive approach to managing sewage/septage is required;
7. Recognition that a comprehensive approach to stormwater management is required;
8. Support for a diversified economy, focusing on small scale commercial, human service sectors, and tourism within the village nodes;
9. Support for economic diversity in new and existing developments that compliment the rural integrity of Area ‘H’;
10. Recognition of the importance of home based businesses in the growth and diversification of the area;
11. Consultation with First Nations to develop approaches to issues of mutual interest;
12. Protection of resource lands for suitable resource uses;
13. Minimize the encroachment of incompatible land uses;
14. Recognition of Horne Lake as a unique recreational opportunity;
15. Support for environmentally responsible shellfish aquaculture, recreational and commercial fishery, and salmon enhancement;
16. Recognize and support Deep Bay Harbour as a viable commercial and recreational port;
17. Preservation and enhancement of green space, access to public lands, integrated trails and beaches;
18. Recognize the need for and continued support for Electoral Area ‘H’ local schools and community centres;
19. Promotion of a mixed community providing economic opportunities, affordable housing, and services for all residents;
20. Recognition and support for enhanced transportation corridors; and
21. Require comprehensive public consultation with respect to decisions about the future development of all lands and services within our communities.

1.3 **Regional Context Statement**

Area ‘H’ is one of eight electoral areas within the Regional District of Nanaimo. These electoral areas, in partnership with the City of Nanaimo, the City of Parksville, the Town of Qualicum Beach, and the District of Lantzville have agreed to limit sprawl and contain development through the adoption of a Regional Growth Strategy. The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) articulates a vision of a desirable, future Region and sets out eight goals for attaining this vision. In response to the RGS goals, the Electoral Area ‘H’ OCP does the following:

**Strong Urban Containment** - designates urban containment boundaries to define the limits of three village centres, Bowser, Qualicum Bay and Dunsmuir and limits the expansion of urban services outside these designated areas. Amendments to these boundaries shall be considered at intervals resulting from applications, according to the process and criteria outlined in the Urban Containment and Fringe Area Management Implementation Agreement.

**Nodal Structure** - directs growth into three village centres, encourages a mix of higher density, residential and commercial uses within these areas, and provides for collaboration with local communities in determining the size, scale, and design of these areas. The OCP supports the location of new commercial and institutional developments within the village centres and the maximization of these centres as the focal points of Electoral Area ‘H’.

**Rural Integrity** - identifies the different lands within the Plan Area that are considered rural and provides policies for protecting and enhancing the rural lifestyle that makes the Area ‘H’ communities special. The Plan ensures that changes, which may occur on these rural lands, contribute to, rather than damage their rural integrity. The retention of large rural land holdings is encouraged, as is the use of Resource Lands (particularly those in the Agricultural Land Reserve) for agriculture.

**Environmental Protection** - identifies the different types of natural features present within the Plan Area and provides policy direction which supports protecting and enhancing these natural features with particular focus on watercourse and groundwater protection. Particular attention is focused on the Area's aquifers, and development permit areas have been established to minimize any damage to these important features.

**Improved Mobility** - identifies existing and potential modes of transportation within the Plan Area and provides policy direction for alternate pedestrian and cycling routes between neighbourhoods and schools. In addition to existing road networks, the Plan notes the importance of the rail line through the Plan Area and identifies mixed use trail corridors that will safely provide for a range of mobility options.

**Vibrant and Sustainable Economy** - identifies and supports a range of economic activities within the Plan Area including Home Based Business, service/commercial and tourism and provides policy direction to ensure that the type and scale of these economic activities is compatible with surrounding land uses. The OCP also supports the provision and improvement of infrastructure to attract desireable economic development.
Efficient Services - establishes a framework for providing community parks, schools, facilities, community water, community sewer services and stormwater management and recognizes that community sewer services are the key to managing growth within the plan area.

Cooperation Among Jurisdictions - provides general policy direction to facilitate better communication and a high level of inter-jurisdictional cooperation with the Comox-Strathcona and Alberni-Clayoquot Regional Districts, Municipalities of Nanaimo, Lantzville, Parksville and Qualicum Beach, improvement districts, as well as other electoral areas and provincial and federal government agencies.

1.4 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Electoral Area ‘H’ Official Community Plan has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of Part 26 of the Local Government Act, implementing Regional District policies for land use and development. All bylaws, permits issued and works undertaken within the Plan Area shall be consistent with the provision of this Plan. The Community Plan may be implemented by regulatory bylaws of the Regional District including the “Regional District of Nanaimo Land Use and Subdivision Bylaw No. 500, 1987”.

It is noted that the Development Permit Areas attached to and forming part of this OCP (Appendix A) are considered ‘regulatory’ bylaws pursuant to the Local Government Act. In addition, the Bowser Village Centre Plan forms a part of this OCP. The Bowser Village Centre Plan applies to all land use decisions within the Bowser Village Centre Plan Area as shown on Map No. 5.1

This Plan Area is a development approval information area pursuant to “Regional District of Nanaimo Impact Assessment Bylaw No. 1165, 1999”.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The Electoral Area ‘H’ Official Community Plan includes text and corresponding maps. The Plan is organized around the key issue areas identified during the Official Community Plan public consultation process. The Electoral Area ‘H’ Official Community Plan contains Appendix A-Development Permit Areas. In addition, Appendix A titled Development Permit Areas, is considered part of the Electoral Area ‘H’ OCP and contains regulatory bylaws pursuant to the Local Government Act.2

The Bowser Village Centre Plan forms a part of this OCP. The location and boundary of the Bowser Village Centre Plan is shown on Map No 5 Land Use Designations.3

Each section of the Plan contains objectives and policies. Objectives express the community’s values and long term aspirations. They are the community’s statements of what is important to

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1 Bylaw No. 1335.03 adopted June 8, 2010
2 Bylaw No. 1335.03 adopted June 8, 2010
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the residents and land owners of Electoral Area ‘H’. Policies express the community's response to these objectives. The policies are the 'how to' for each objective and provide specific direction to the RDN Board, the community, land developers, and provincial and federal agencies on future uses in the Plan Area. Abbreviations used in this Plan include the following:

- **RDN** - Regional District of Nanaimo
- **RGS** - Regional Growth Strategy
- **ALR** - Agricultural Land Reserve
- **MOT** - Ministry of Transportation
- **DPA** - Development Permit Area
- **OCP** - Official Community Plan
- **PIM** - Public Information Meeting
- **ALC** - Agricultural Land Commission
- **DFO** - Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- **MWLAP** - Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase in this Bylaw is for any reason held to be invalid by the decision of any court, such section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase may be severed from the remaining portion of this Bylaw.