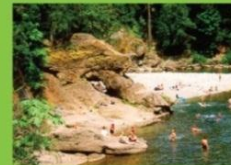




 REGIONAL  
DISTRICT  
OF NANAIMO



# *Shaping Our Future*

REGIONAL  
G R O W T H  
S T R A T E G Y  
NOVEMBER 22 • 2011

**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO**

**BYLAW NO. 1615**

*(Consolidated for convenience only up to and including .03)*

**A BYLAW TO ADOPT A REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY  
FOR THE REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO**

WHEREAS the *Local Government Act* provides for a regional district to undertake the development, adoption, implementation, monitoring and review of a regional growth strategy under Part 25,

AND WHEREAS a review of “Regional District of Nanaimo Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1309, 2003” was initiated by resolution, pursuant to Part 25, section 854 of the *Local Government Act*;

NOW THEREFORE, the Board of the Regional District of Nanaimo, in open meeting assembled, enacts as follows:

1. “Regional District of Nanaimo Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1309, 2003” is hereby repealed.
2. Schedule “A” attached to and forming part of this Bylaw is hereby designated as the “Regional Growth Strategy for the Regional District of Nanaimo”.
3. This Bylaw may be cited as “Regional District of Nanaimo Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1615, 2011” and takes effect on the date adopted.

The Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw was introduced and read two times on the 28th of June, 2011.

Second reading was rescinded and the Bylaw was amended on the 23rd of August, 2011.

The Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw was read a second time as amended on the 23rd of August, 2011.

Second reading was rescinded and the Bylaw was amended on the 13th of September, 2011.

The Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw was read a second time as amended on the 13th of September, 2011.

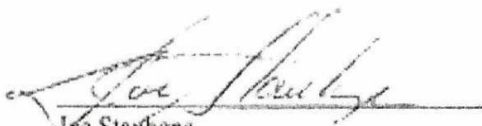
The Board conducted a public hearing on the Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> days of October, 2011.

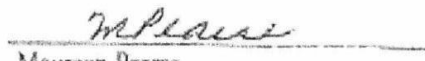
“Regional District of Nanaimo Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1615, 2011” was accepted, by resolution as follows:

- City of Nanaimo on the 31<sup>st</sup> day of October, 2011;
- City of Parksville on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of November, 2011;
- District of Lantzville on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2011;
- Town of Qualicum Beach on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2011;
- Comox Valley Regional District Board on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2011;
- Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District Board on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2011;
- Cowichan Valley Regional District Board on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2011.

Read a third time this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of November, 2011.

Adopted this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of November, 2011.

  
Joe Starthope  
Chairperson

  
Maureen Pearse  
Sr. Mgr., Corporate Administration

# Schedule “A”

## REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY BYLAW NO. 1615

**November 22, 2011**

**Consolidated: February 2019**

Regional District of Nanaimo  
Strategic and Community Development  
6300 Hammond Bay Road  
Nanaimo, BC  
V9T 6N2

Phone: 250-390-6510

Fax: 250-390-7511

E-mail: [growthmanagement@rdn.bc.ca](mailto:growthmanagement@rdn.bc.ca)

[www.rdn.bc.ca](http://www.rdn.bc.ca)

## **List of Tables**

- Table 1: Regional District of Nanaimo Population, 1986-2006
- Table 2: Regional District of Nanaimo Growth Rate, 1986-2006
- Table 3: Summary of Studies and Implementation Actions Arising from Goals and Policies

## **List of Figures**

- Figure 1: Regional Growth Strategy – Participating Jurisdictions
- Figure 2: Relationship of Regional Growth Strategy to Other Legislation, Plans and Bylaws
- Figure 3: Georgia Strait – Puget Sound Basin
- Figure 4: Projected Population Growth Within the RDN
- Figure 5: RDN Employment by Industry
- Figure 6: Policies and Actions to Address Climate Change

# Table of Contents

<b>1.0</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Purpose of the RGS .....	1
1.2	Relationship with Official Community Plans and Other Bylaws .....	1
1.3	Strategy Preparation Process .....	2
1.4	Timeframe of the Regional Growth Strategy .....	3
1.5	Amendment Approval Process.....	4
1.6	Monitoring of the RGS.....	5
<b>2.0</b>	<b>CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1	RDN Mandate.....	6
2.2	Regional Geography.....	9
2.3	Demographic Trends.....	11
2.4	Economic Trends.....	12
<b>3.0</b>	<b>VISION AND SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES .....</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1	Vision.....	14
3.2	Sustainability Principles.....	15
<b>4.0</b>	<b>GOALS AND POLICIES.....</b>	<b>16</b>
4.1	Goals .....	16
4.2	Policies .....	17
<b>5.0</b>	<b>ACCOUNTABILITY – EDUCATION, AWARENESS AND IMPLEMENTATION .....</b>	<b>45</b>
5.1	Education and Awareness .....	45
5.2	Implementation .....	45
5.3	Targets .....	48
5.4	Key Indicators.....	48
<b>6.1</b>	<b>LAND USE DESIGNATIONS.....</b>	<b>50</b>
	<b>GLOSSARY</b>	<b>54</b>

## **Table of Contents Continued...**

### **Appendix A: Maps**

- Map 1: Sensitive Ecosystems and Parks
- Map 2: Regional Transportation Facilities
- Map 3: Growth Management Framework
- Map 4: Land Use Designations
- Map 5: Agricultural Lands

### **Appendix B: Maps of Growth Containment Boundaries**

### **Abbreviations**

Abbreviations used in this document include the following:

ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
GCB	Growth Containment Boundary
GHG	Green House Gas
MOTI	Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
OCP	Official Community Plan
RDN	Regional District of Nanaimo
RGS	Regional Growth Strategy





## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose of the RGS

A Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) is a strategic plan mandated by the *Local Government Act* for the purpose of establishing a consistent and coordinated approach across a region in order to foster socially, economically and environmentally sustainable communities. The RGS is adopted by bylaw by the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Board after first being accepted by affected local governments – the City of Nanaimo, City of Parksville, Town of Qualicum Beach and District of Lantzville.

The RDN adopted its first RGS in 1997 in response to residents' concerns about the impacts of rapid population growth and development in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Following its adoption, the RGS was reviewed and updated in 2003. Since then new concerns have risen to the forefront including climate change, food security and affordable housing. In addition, the provisions of Bill 27, the *Local Government (Green Statutes) Amendment Act, 2008* require that Regional Growth Strategies:

- include policies, actions and targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; and,
- establish a process for minor amendments.

This current revision of the RGS addresses the requirements of Bill 27 and integrates better with other initiatives that will help us respond to these concerns and achieve our vision for a socially, economically and environmentally healthy and sustainable region.

### 1.2 Relationship with Official Community Plans and Other Bylaws

The policies and land use designations in this RGS are only one component of managing growth in the Regional District of Nanaimo. They provide the general framework for directing growth and land use activities throughout the RDN. The detailed policies and regulatory framework that define permitted land-uses will continue to be found within the Official Community Plans (OCPs) and zoning bylaws of the local governments.

Section 866 of the *Local Government Act* sets out the procedure and requirements for ensuring consistency between a RGS and an OCP. A municipal OCP must include a Regional Context Statement that identifies the relationship between the OCP and the matters addressed in the RGS, and if applicable, how the OCP is to be made consistent with the RGS over time.

Unless there has been a prior corresponding amendment to the RGS the Board will not accept Regional Context Statements or proposed amendments affecting the following land use designations:

- I. Lands which are designated Resource Lands or Open Space are proposed to be designated to other uses in the Regional Context Statement;
- II. Lands which lie outside the Growth Containment Boundary are proposed to be redesignated as Urban Area; and
- III. Additions or deletions to lands designated Urban Area.

All bylaws, including OCP's for electoral areas, adopted by a regional district board and all services undertaken by the board must be consistent with an adopted RGS. A RGS does not commit or authorize a regional district to proceed with projects specified in the strategy.

### 1.3 Strategy Preparation Process

A comprehensive review of the RGS was initiated in 2007 in response to:

- Direction from the RDN Board's 2006-2009 Strategic Plan to 'provide leadership in creating sustainable communities'; and
- The 2007 State of Sustainability Project which was initiated to monitor progress towards achieving RGS goals and to inform future changes to the RGS.

A community engagement process was launched in 2008 to seek input on potential revisions to the RGS. During 2008 and 2009, public concerns about sustainability and growth in the region and suggested changes to the RGS were identified through a series of discussion papers, surveys and public events. Provincial agencies were also asked to provide comments and suggestions regarding potential policies that should be included in the new RGS.

*"Improving sustainability and our quality of life requires that we recognize the interrelationships in our society, environment, and economy, and that we harmonize our approaches to these areas in order to achieve long-term sustainability for all beings."*

*Recommendations for a Sustainable Future, RDN, 2007*

Based on the input received and requirements of Bill 27, numerous changes to the RGS were identified. The most significant changes include:

- Basing the RGS on a set of clearly stated sustainability principles;
- Establishing a clear and transparent process for making changes to the RGS and including the requirements for the amendment process in the RGS;

- Identifying how the RGS will be implemented and establishing a public reporting process;
- Including targets and measures for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing energy use, improving air quality, and other regional objectives; and
- Setting clear direction for the RDN and its member municipalities on their respective roles in:
  - providing affordable housing;
  - supporting farming and food production;
  - coordinating land use planning with transportation planning;
  - determining how designated growth areas will be serviced;
  - preparing for climate change adaptation (potential sea level rise, water deficits, wildfires, etc.);
  - reducing energy consumption;
  - coordinating sustainable economic development with land use planning, transportation planning and planning for utility infrastructure; and
  - establishing education and communication programs regarding the purpose of the RGS and actions that help realize sustainability objectives.

Many of the same principles and policies established in the previous RGS and already carried forward into OCPs, have been reaffirmed. These include:

- Containing growth within designated areas;
- Linking development with servicing;
- Creating complete, compact communities;
- Protecting environmentally sensitive areas;
- Protecting resource lands and open space – including agricultural and forestry lands;
- Supporting economic development; and
- Promoting regional cooperation.

#### **1.4 Timeframe of the Regional Growth Strategy**

The RGS provides direction and guidance to manage growth and change in the region over the long-term. Growth has been forecast for a period of 30 years in order to determine requirements for land to accommodate growth and development. Although the RGS takes a long-term perspective, it will be important to monitor, assess and review key policies at least every five years in order to determine if adjustments need to be made.

## 1.5 Amendment Approval Process

Bill 27 of the *Local Government Act* makes provision for the amendment of a Regional Growth Strategy in one of two ways. Regardless of the amendment process used, amendments may only be made through bylaw. All amendments to the RGS considered to be major must be accepted by all affected local governments in accordance with the provisions of Section 857 of the *Local Government Act* and must follow the same process that is required to adopt the RGS. The *Local Government Act* also allows for minor amendments where a process has been established pursuant to Section 857.1 that includes:

- Criteria for determining whether a proposed amendment is minor for the purposes of allowing the process to apply;
- A means for the views of affected local governments regarding a proposed minor amendment to be obtained and considered; and
- A means for providing notice to affected local governments regarding a proposed minor amendment.

### 1.5.1 Criteria for Minor Amendments

The following outlines the criteria for considering minor amendments to the RGS.

1. Criteria under which a proposed amendment to the RGS may be considered a minor amendment include the following:
  - Amendments resulting from a full Electoral Area or Municipal Official Community Plan review process;
  - Text and map amendments required to correct errors or as a result of more accurate information being received;
  - Amendments to incorporate changes to tables, figures, grammar, or numbering that do not alter the intent of the Regional Growth Strategy; and
  - Addition or deletion, or amendment to Section 5.4 Key Indicators.
2. Although not considered as an exhaustive list, the following types of amendments are not considered minor:
  - Those that lead to adverse changes to the health and ongoing viability of sensitive ecosystems and water sources;
  - Those that will negatively impact agricultural lands or land in the Agricultural Land Reserve;
  - Those related to a development that would require significant works to address a natural hazard;
  - Those that require the provision of new community water and sewer systems outside the Growth Containment Boundary; and,

- Those that are not consistent with measures and or policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality.

### 1.5.2 Process for Approving Minor Amendments

1. On receipt of a request from a member municipality or an Electoral Area Planning Committee to amend the RGS, RDN staff will prepare a preliminary report for review by the Sustainability Select Committee. Committee comments and recommendations will be forwarded to the Regional Board.
2. A land use or development proposal or text amendment will be assessed in terms of the minor amendment criteria. The Board may resolve, by an affirmative vote of 2/3 of the Board members attending the meeting, to proceed with an amendment application as a minor amendment. Where the Board resolves to proceed with an amendment application as a minor amendment, the Board will:
  - Determine the appropriate form of consultation required in conjunction with the proposed minor amendment;
  - Give 45 days written notice to each affected local government, including notice that the proposed amendment has been determined to be a minor amendment. The notice shall include a summary of the proposed amendment and any staff reports, other relevant supporting documentation and the date, time and place of the board meeting at which the amending bylaw is to be considered for first reading; and
  - Consider the written comments provided by the affected local governments prior to giving first reading to the proposed amendment bylaw.
3. The bylaw may be adopted without a public hearing after second reading in the event that the amending bylaw receives an affirmative vote of all Board members attending the meeting.
4. Consider third reading and determine whether or not to adopt the amending bylaw.
5. Minor amendment bylaws shall be adopted in accordance with the procedures that apply to the adoption of a RGS under Section 791 of the *Local Government Act*.

### 1.6 Monitoring of the RGS

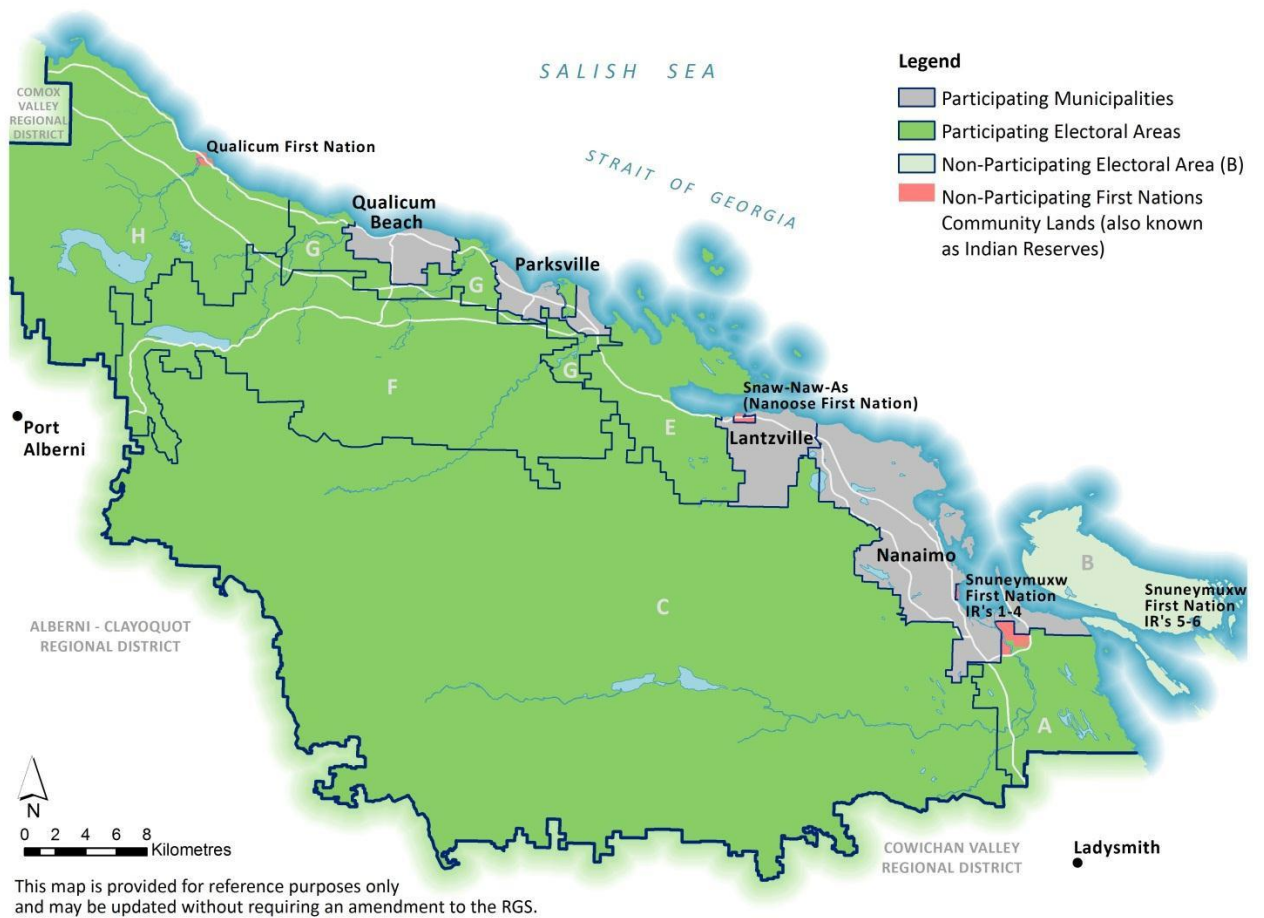
A monitoring program will be established in collaboration with member municipalities and appropriate provincial government agencies to track progress in achieving RGS goals, including GHG emissions reductions. Reports will be made to the RDN Board and public on an annual basis. The details of the monitoring program are outlined in Section 5.2.

## 2.0 CONTEXT

### 2.1 RDN Mandate

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) is a federation of municipalities and electoral areas that deliver a variety of regional and local services that enhance the environmental, social and economic well-being of residents. The RDN Board is comprised of elected representatives from four incorporated municipalities and seven unincorporated electoral areas. Each local government is represented by one member except for the City of Nanaimo which has seven members that sit on the Board.

**Figure 1: Regional Growth Strategy – Participating Jurisdictions**



The four municipalities are the City of Nanaimo, the City of Parksville, the Town of Qualicum Beach and the District of Lantzville.

The seven electoral areas are:

- A: Cedar, South Wellington and Cassidy;
- B: Gabriola, Decourcy and Mudge Islands;
- C: Extension, Nanaimo Lakes, East Wellington/Pleasant Valley;
- E: Nanoose Bay;
- F: Coombs, Hilliers, Errington;
- G: French Creek, San Pareil, Dashwood, Englishman River;
- H: Bowser, Qualicum Bay, Horne Lake, Spider Lake.

Although Gabriola, Decourcy and Mudge Islands (Electoral Area B) are represented on the RDN Board, the RGS does not apply to them because, for land use planning purposes, they fall under the jurisdiction of the Islands Trust (see Figure 1).

There are several First Nations whose traditional territories lie within the area subject to the RGS. Within these lands are six reserve areas that come under the jurisdiction of:

- Snuneymuxw First Nation (Nanaimo I.R. 1, 2, 3 & 4 );
- Snaw-Naw-As (Nanoose First Nation);
- Qualicum First Nation.

In addition to the reserve lands noted above, it is recognized that additional lands within the RDN may be transferred to First Nations or corporations fully owned by First Nations through Treaty Settlement processes. The RGS will be updated to reflect these changes in jurisdiction over land as determined by Treaty Implementation Agreements.

The RDN will continue to pursue building respectful and collaborative relationships with First Nations with Traditional Territories adjacent to or within the RDN's boundaries. This will help ensure that common concerns and interests are addressed to achieve mutually beneficial social, economic and environmental goals.

A Protocol Agreement has been signed with the Snuneymuxw First Nation which will establish processes for future partnerships and collaborations. Similar agreements are not yet in place with other First Nations governments and currently there are no First Nations representatives on the RDN Board.

**Figure 2: Relationship of Regional Growth Strategy to Other Legislation, Plans and Bylaws**



The Regional Growth Strategy is one of two coordinating documents that link land use planning and servicing plans (Figure 2). The RDN Board of Directors also approves three year strategic plans that establish broad strategic goals for the region and identify actions and programs to implement plans. Together these two plans ensure that regional and local service delivery remains consistent with regional objectives, manage the impacts of growth, and create livable communities.

The Regional District delivers a variety of regional services that are common to both the electoral areas and municipalities, such as sewage treatment, district recreation, regional parks, solid waste disposal, and transit. The Regional District also provides local services to electoral areas, such as community planning, watershed protection, community recreation, community parks, and utilities. Member municipalities provide similar services within their own jurisdictions.

Senior levels of government also provide services and funding that are crucial to realizing growth management and sustainability objectives. For example, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) is responsible for the construction and maintenance of roadways within electoral areas. The RDN and MOTI must work collaboratively to ensure that the design standards for roads and pedestrian facilities serve to reinforce broader land use and mobility objectives for the region, particularly in rural village centres that are intended to accommodate growth.



## 2.2 Regional Geography

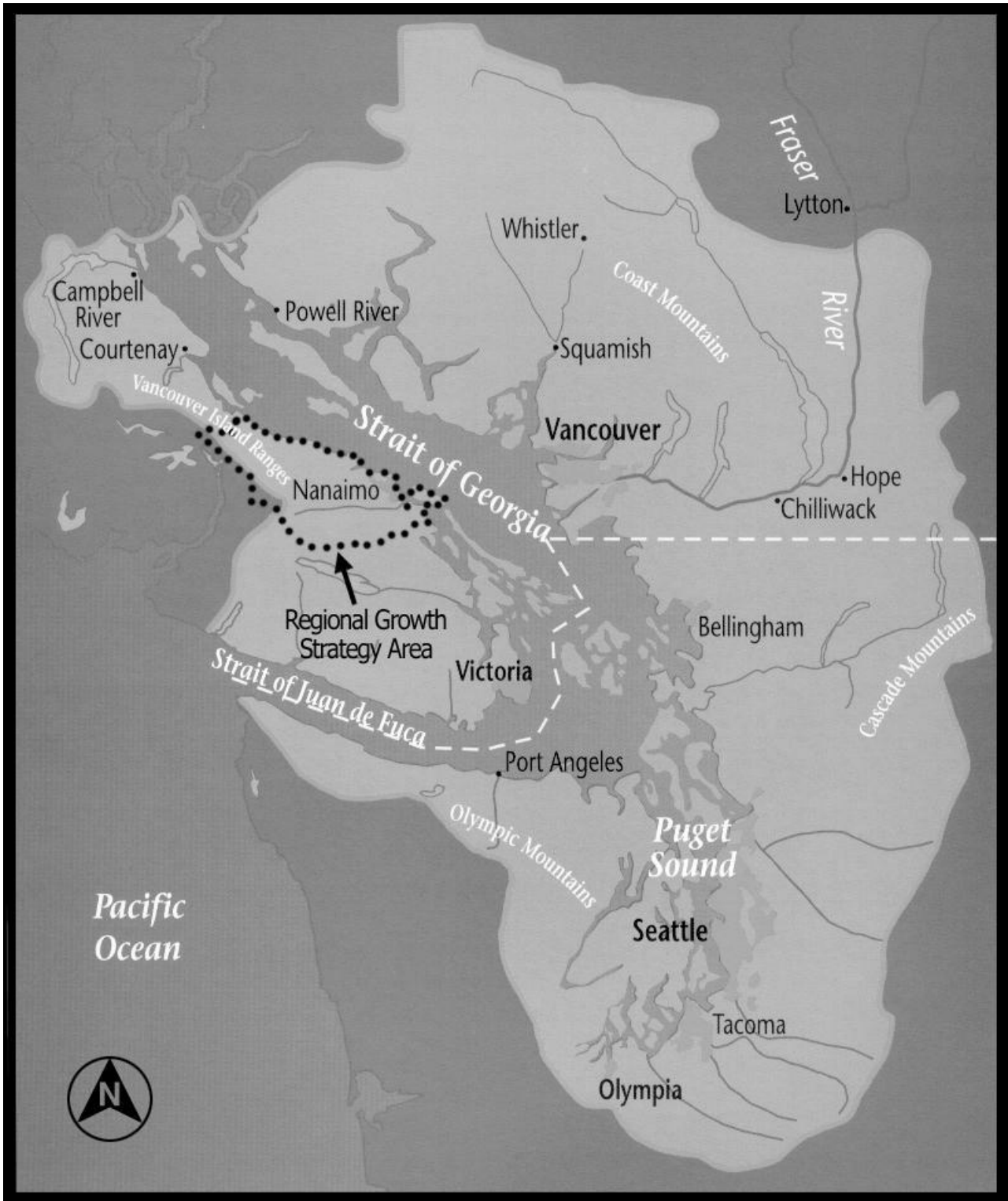
The Regional District of Nanaimo covers an area of approximately 207,000 hectares on the central east coast of Vancouver Island, in the Georgia Strait-Puget Sound Basin, as illustrated in Figure 3.

The Georgia Strait and Puget Sound areas together form one ecological unit or natural bioregion (also known as the Salish Sea). This bioregion runs north-south along a coastal corridor, stretching from Campbell River and Powell River to the north in British Columbia, through to Olympia, Washington in the south, and extending as far east as Hope, British Columbia and the Cascade Mountain Range.

The ecosystems of the area are threatened by the impacts of growth. Of great significance are the rare Coastal Douglas Fir ecosystems which have been heavily impacted by human activity. Population growth and associated development continue to pose a threat to remaining Coastal Douglas Fir ecosystems along with other ecosystem types. Two thirds of British Columbia's population is clustered in the Basin's urban areas of Greater Vancouver and Greater Victoria, and in smaller urban centres in the Lower Fraser Valley, on Vancouver Island, and along the Sunshine Coast north of Vancouver.

In 2000, approximately 38% of the total area of the RDN was recognized as the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve (MABR) by the Man and Biosphere Program of the United Nations' Education, Science, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The MABR includes the watersheds of Vancouver Island's Mount Arrowsmith and adjacent marine areas (see Map 1 Appendix A).

Figure 3: Georgia Strait-Puget Sound Basin (Source: Environment Canada)



### 2.3 Demographic Trends

The population of the RDN increased from 84,819 residents in 1986 to 144,317 residents in 2006, an increase of 70% as illustrated in Table 1. During this time the region experienced two distinct periods of growth as illustrated in Table 2: annual population growth of over five percent during the late 1980s and early 1990s followed by growth of less than one percent per year in the latter half of the 1990s and early part of the 2000s. In the mid-2000s growth averaged about two percent per year.

Table 1:  
Regional District of Nanaimo  
Population, 1986-2006

Year	Population
1986	84,819
1991	104,465
1996	126,375
2001	132,414
2006	144,317

Source: Urban Futures, 2007

Table 2:  
Regional District of Nanaimo  
Growth Rate, 1986-2006

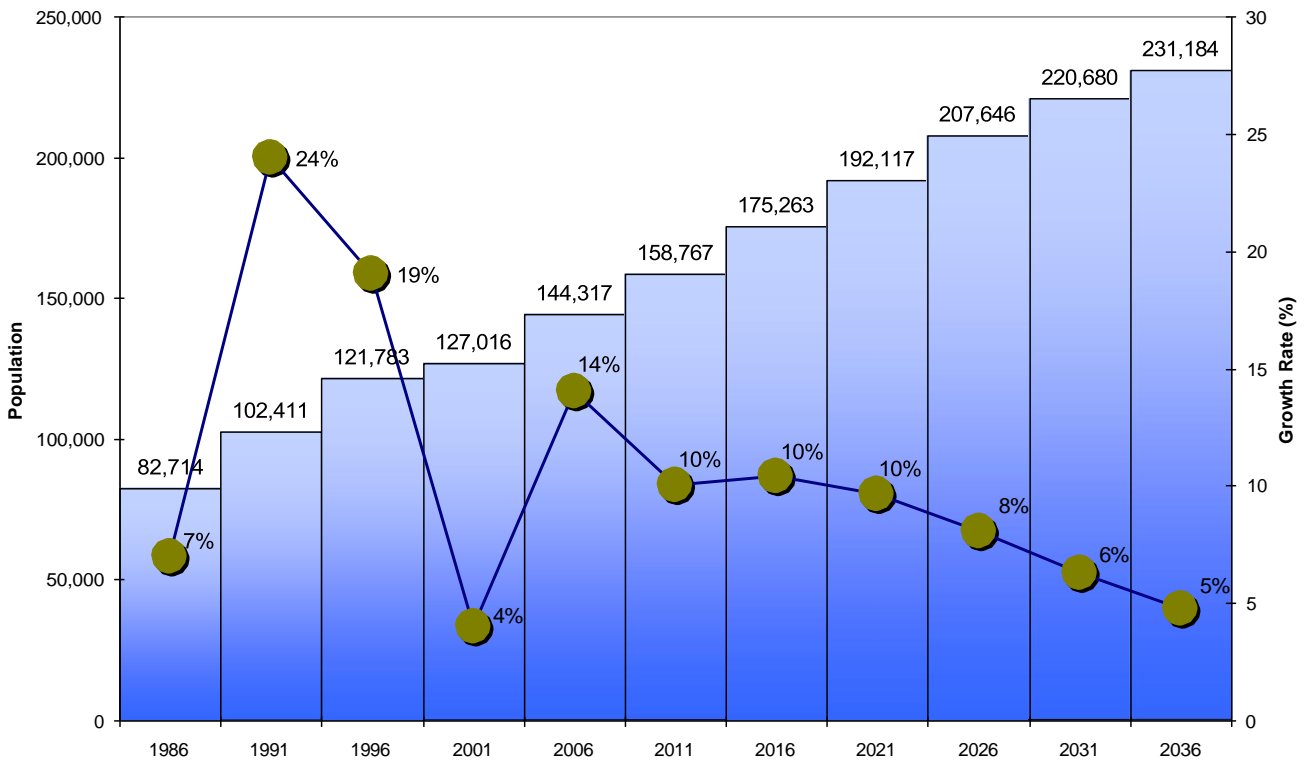
Census Period	Growth Rate (%)
1986-1991	23 %
1991-1996	21 %
1996-2001	5 %
2001-2006	9 %

Source: Urban Futures, 2007

Of more importance is the change in composition of the population. The region's population has aged significantly since 1986 with the majority of the population now over the age of forty-five. The fastest growing age group between 1986 and 2006 was the sector of the population over the age of sixty-five. This trend is expected to continue which has significant implications for land use, housing, services and employment.

The Georgia Strait-Puget Sound Basin area is expected to increase in population from approximately seven million people in 2005 to more than nine million by 2025. Vancouver Island's population is forecast to increase from just over 721,698 to about 899,981 in the same time period. The population for the RDN is projected to increase from 144,317 residents in 2006 to 231,184 residents by 2036 (Urban Futures, 2007). This represents a 60% increase in population in the RDN between 2006 and 2036, at a projected rate of approximately 2% per year on average.

**Figure 4: Projected Population Growth within the RDN**

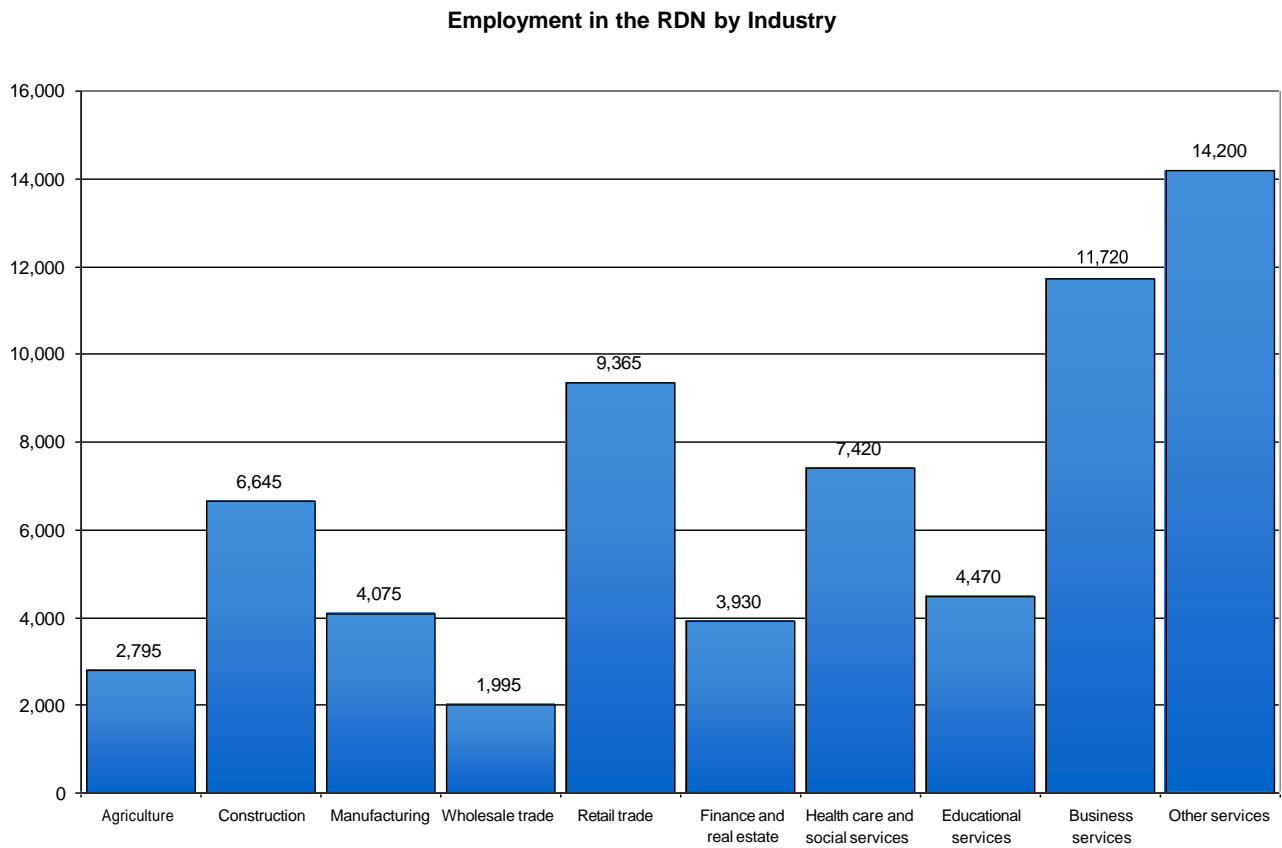


Source: Urban Futures, 2007 and Statistics Canada, 2006

## 2.4 Economic Trends

Similar to national trends, the nature of the regional economy is shifting from natural resources and processing to sales and services. This is related to both external influences, such as the market for raw resources, and the changing composition of the population. The population profile report for the region, “Population and Housing Change in the Nanaimo Region, 2006 to 2036” prepared by Urban Futures concluded that the greatest growth will be in the population cohort over fifty-five years. This cohort will grow in both absolute and relative terms - leading to a reduced labour supply at the same time that more demands will be placed on social and health care services. This trend is one that is being faced across the country and may be experienced to a greater degree in the RDN because of the attraction of the area for retirees.

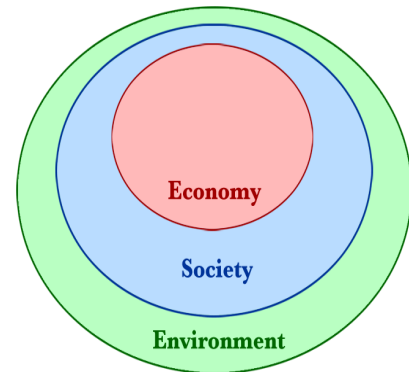
Figure 5: RDN Employment by Industry



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006

### 3.0 VISION AND SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES

Moving quickly towards a more sustainable pattern of human activity is likely the most challenging and urgent problem of our time. In many cases, the scale, speed, and scope of human impacts has reduced the assimilative and regenerative capacities of natural systems. Greater care is needed in all levels of decision-making – individual, community, regional, provincial, national and international. Having a regional forum, such as the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN), in which to develop potential solutions is an enormous benefit and creates opportunities to address issues that cut across local boundaries in innovative ways.



The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) is based on the belief that all decision-making and actions undertaken by the RDN must be founded on sustainability principles. Fundamentally, sustainability means that the interrelationships between the environment, society and economic activity are recognized, understood and respected. It is based on the understanding that the ecosystem includes humankind as well as all other living beings and natural systems. Further, the social and economic life of human communities must be based upon a deep respect for the environment that is reflected in actions and decisions that enhance the vitality of the environment and reduce or eliminate harm because the well-being of our communities is directly reliant upon a healthy and vital environment. The truth of this situation is becoming clearer every day as, for example, the consequences of global climate change impact natural and human systems in new and challenging ways.

*'...sustainability recognizes that our economy exists, within society, that society exists within the environment, and that the environment surrounds and supports society.'*

*State of Sustainability Report  
(2006)*

#### 3.1 Vision

The region will be recognized for an outstanding quality of urban and rural life that is grounded in a strong commitment to protecting the natural environment and minimizing harm to life-sustaining ecological systems. Working in partnership with interested organizations, the RDN and its member municipalities are committed to achieving:

- High standards of environmental protection that preserve habitat, enhance ecological diversity, and maintain air and water quality;
- Enhanced food security in the region;

- Urban development that is contained and distinct in form and character from rural development;
- Complete, compact communities designed to provide housing that meets the needs of all households, and that provide excellent access to nearby workplaces, goods and services, learning institutions, recreation opportunities, and natural areas;
- Expansion and enhancement of mobility options that reduce automobile dependency;
- A strong and resilient economy based on agriculture, natural resource assets, tourism, and information age industries and services, such as health and education; and
- Efficient, state-of-the-art servicing, infrastructure and resource utilization.

### **3.2 Sustainability Principles**

The goals and policies of this RGS are grounded in sustainability principles. These principles weave through all of the goals and policies to create a framework intended to guide decision-making regarding the future life of the region – resulting in actions and decisions that are mutually-supportive and that as a whole will move the region towards a more sustainable way of life.

The RGS is based on the following sustainability principles:

- Decisions and actions have regard for local and global consequences;
- The interconnectedness and interdependence of natural and human systems are recognized and respected;
- The healthy functioning of ecological systems is nurtured;
- The qualities of place that create pride and a sense of community are nurtured;
- Efficiency, including the concept of zero-waste, is optimized;
- Equity amongst all citizens and across generations, including future generations is ensured;
- Decision-making processes are based on participation, collaboration and co-operation with citizens, other authorities and organizations; and
- We are accountable for our decisions and actions.

## 4.1 GOALS AND POLICIES

The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) is based upon 11 goals and related policies that will help guide the growth of the region toward the desired future established in the vision statement.

The policies combined with maps establishing the location of the Growth Containment Boundary (GCB) and land use designations provide a program of action for the RDN, member municipalities and other interested parties to achieve the desired future for the region.

The numbering of goals and policies is simply for organization of the document and as such, does not indicate any particular priority or ranking.

### 4.1 Goals

1. **Prepare for Climate Change and Reduce Energy Consumption** – Reduce GHG emissions and energy consumption and promote adaptive measures to prepare for climate change impacts.
2. **Protect the Environment** – Protect and enhance the environment and avoid ecological damage related to human activity.
3. **Coordinate Land Use and Mobility** – Ensure land use patterns and mobility networks are mutually supportive and work together to reduce automobile dependency and provide for efficient goods movement.
4. **Concentrate Housing and Jobs in Rural Village and Urban Growth Centres** – Establish distinctive activity centres and corridors within growth containment boundaries that provide ready access to places to live, work, play and learn.
5. **Enhance Rural Integrity** – Protect and strengthen the region’s rural economy and lifestyle.
6. **Facilitate the Provision of Affordable Housing** – Support and facilitate the provision of appropriate, adequate, attainable, affordable and adaptable housing.
7. **Enhance Economic Resiliency** – Support strategic economic development and link commercial and industrial strategies to the land use and rural and environmental protection priorities of the region.
8. **Enhance Food Security** – Protect and enhance the capacity of the region to produce and process food.
9. **Celebrate Pride of Place** – Celebrate the unique natural beauty, culture, history, and arts of the region.
10. **Provide Services Efficiently** – Provide efficient, cost-effective services and infrastructure.
11. **Enhance Cooperation Among Jurisdictions** – Facilitate an understanding of and commitment to the goals of growth management among all levels of government, the public, and key private and voluntary sector partners.



## 4.2 Policies

The policies in this strategy are mutually supportive and work together to ensure that growth can be accommodated in a manner that enhances the sustainability of the region's natural, social and economic systems.

**Goal 1 – Prepare for Climate Change and Reduce Energy Consumption** – Reduce GHG emissions and energy consumption and promote adaptive measures to prepare for climate change impacts.

Bill 27, enacted by the Province of British Columbia in 2008, requires a Regional Growth Strategy to address how the RDN will provide direction and take action to reduce GHG emissions across the region. The Province has also set a target to reduce GHG emissions to 33% below 2007 levels by 2020 and 80% by 2050. The amount of GHG emitted is influenced by many factors. The RDN and member municipalities can directly and indirectly influence the level of emissions generated due to land use patterns, housing form, transportation systems, construction standards, and landfill operations. The RDN and member municipalities can also be instrumental in:

- Recognizing the role sustainable forestry practices play in offsetting GHG emissions by storing carbon;
- Helping to slow global warming and supporting adaptation to the impacts of climate change by protecting the health of ecosystems (see Section 4.2.2 Environmental Protection); and
- Promoting and supporting the use of renewable energy and district energy systems.

*Climate change scenarios indicate that when faced with stresses, intact ecosystems are the most resilient. Carbon sequestration research tells us that these ecosystems are already the best tool in our kit when dealing with climate change. Maintaining the integrity of these ecosystems – through investment in conservation and rehabilitation – is vital for human [Quality of Life].*

*([www.communityintransition.org](http://www.communityintransition.org))*

Energy consumption is strongly influenced by regional land use patterns, density and mobility choices. Subdivision design, site planning, building design, and construction technologies are also significant factors in the amount of energy consumed. Reducing energy consumption means building compact, complete communities that are not auto-dependent, increasing the number of multi-unit dwellings, supporting (near) net-zero building design and construction, and supporting the use of renewable energy and district energy systems.

The RDN is in the process of preparing a Community Energy & Emissions Plan that will provide a framework for reducing energy consumption and GHG emissions in the region and establish specific targets for the reduction of emissions in specific areas – for example, building construction, transportation, and energy sources. Strategies for overcoming barriers to building 'green' will also be developed. This plan will provide specific policies, tools and targets that will help implement the objectives of the RGS related to the creation of complete, compact, connected communities.

It is also important to plan for adaptation to the potential impacts of climate change. In

particular, the RGS includes policies that address the need to adapt to potential sea level rise, water deficits, flooding, wildfires and other hazards.

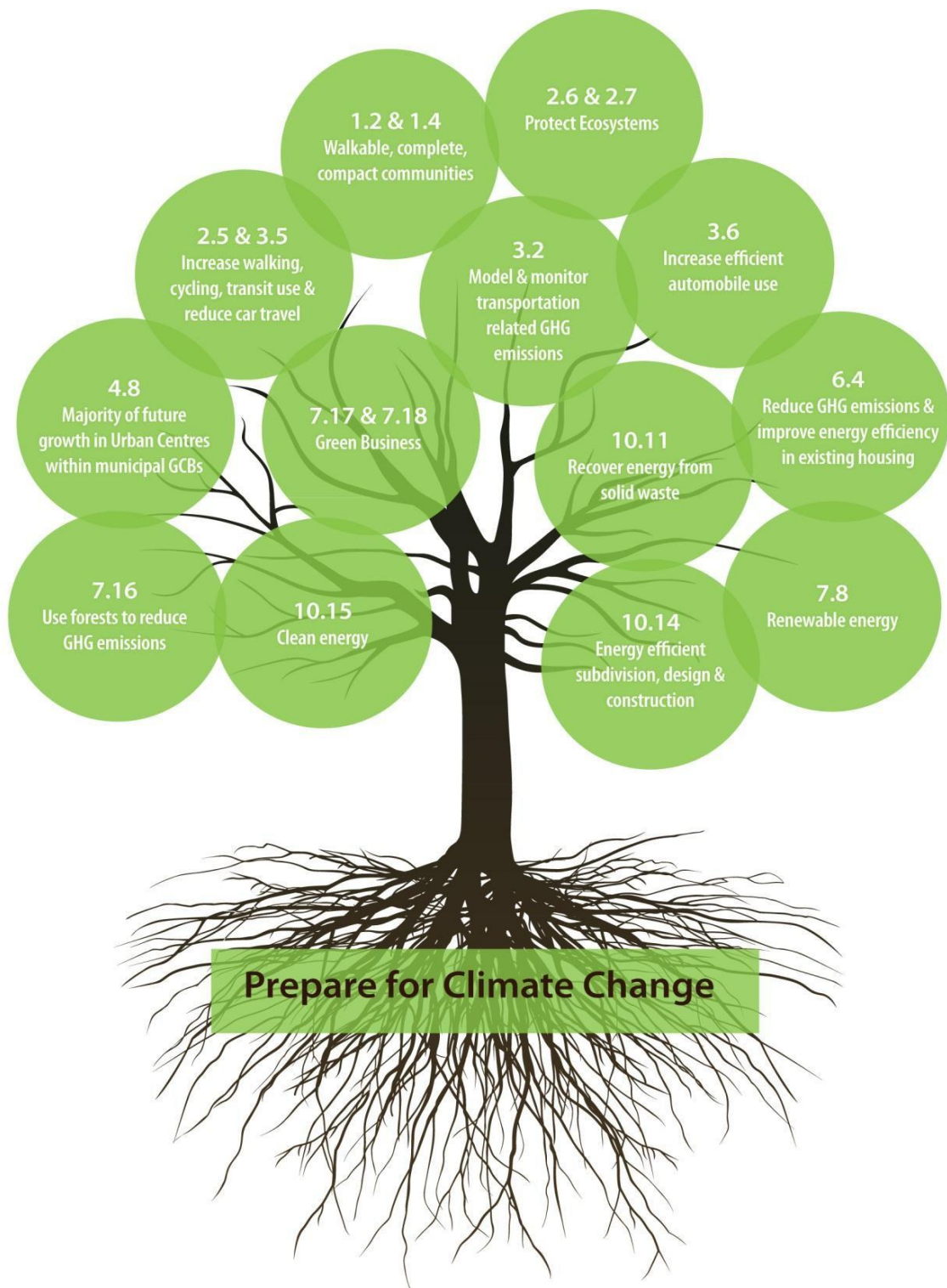
## **Policies**

The RDN and member municipalities agree to:

- 1.1 Initially use the established Provincial targets to reduce GHG emissions 33% below 2007 levels by 2020 and 80% by 2050. These targets may be revised once the RDN's Community Energy & Emissions Plan is finalized. The RDN's Community Energy & Emissions Plan will establish both regional and local targets to reduce GHG emissions and include key strategies to achieve those targets.
- 1.2 Work towards achieving GHG targets by implementing the policies and actions to reduce GHG's contained within the RGS. Figure 6 identifies examples of the policies and actions contained in the RGS to reduce GHG emissions.
- 1.3 Encourage, wherever possible, land use patterns and transportation systems that will improve lifestyle and behaviour choices based on sustainability principles. Key strategies include:
  - Locating most housing, jobs, goods and services, and amenities in compact, complete rural villages and urban areas that are accessible without the need to drive;
  - Encouraging greater housing diversity within Growth Containment Boundaries;
  - Conserving lands located outside of Growth Containment Boundaries primarily for:
    - agricultural, forestry and other primary economic activities
    - recreation and environmental protection purposes
  - Encouraging water-efficient, energy-efficient, and more sustainable subdivision and development;
- 1.4 Support adaptation and emergency planning measures to mitigate the potential impacts of climate change such as sea level rise, water deficits, flooding, wildfires, etc.
- 1.5 Ensure land use planning encourages the development of healthy, compact and walkable communities that promote safety through environmental design and smart growth principles, natural hazards protection and FireSmart principles, and provisions for seniors and handicapped accessibility. This will be pursued in the review and updating of Official Community Plans.

- 1.6 Work in partnership with the forestry industry, appropriate provincial and federal government agencies, and non-profit organizations to investigate ways to recognize and support the role forest lands and urban forests play in:
  - storing carbon;
  - protecting watersheds; and,
  - supporting healthy ecosystems.
- 1.7 Continue to collect GHG emissions related to landfill operations and continue efforts to convert emissions into energy.
- 1.8 Support and promote the development of local, renewable and clean energy and transmission systems.
- 1.9 Consider the use of fuel-efficient vehicle fleets or alternative modes of transportation in local government operations.
- 1.10 Encourage the use of fuel-efficient vehicle fleets or alternative modes of transportation throughout the Region through effective and efficient transportation and land use policies.

**Figure 6: Policies and Actions to Address Climate Change**



Note: Figure for reference only. Numbers relate to relevant section in the RGS.

**Goal 2 - Protect the Environment** – Protect and enhance the environment and minimize ecological damage related to growth and development.

The Regional District of Nanaimo lies within the Georgia Strait-Puget Sound Basin – one of the most ecologically diverse bioregions in the world. This includes a variety of interconnected habitats ranging from marine, coastal, rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, and estuaries, to fertile forests and mountainous sub-alpine ecosystems - that support an abundance of terrestrial, aquatic and marine life (Map 1). A significant portion of the RDN lies within the Coastal Douglas Fir zone – one of the rarest ecosystem complexes in BC. The important values of this endangered ecosystem resulted in over a third of the RDN being designated as the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve.

The rich diversity and health of the region is threatened by a combination of human activities that result in pollution and fragmentation of habitats and water sources.

The following policies set out a broad framework for coordinating efforts across the region to protect, restore and enhance ecosystems that provide ecological functions and resources that are essential to the long-term sustainability of our region.

*‘Healthy riparian zones can effectively store carbon dioxide, put water vapour back in the air, and help slow global warming.’ Living Water Smart*

## Policies

The RDN and member municipalities agree to:

### Water

2.1 Work in collaboration with property owners, developers, businesses and appropriate provincial and federal agencies to protect the life-supporting qualities of both fresh (surface and ground) and sea water from degradation and depletion. Key strategies include:

- Protecting the function of watersheds including capacity of groundwater to recharge;
- Protecting the quality and quantity of groundwater and surface water resources;
- Undertaking watershed-based planning which is integrated with the protection of environmentally sensitive areas, including wildlife corridors;
- Participation in Source Water Protection projects that protect sources of drinking water on a watershed basis;
- Promoting best management practices in water conservation, surface water/groundwater management and ecosystem protection;
- Considering supply and sustainability of water resources in land and resource use decisions;

- Education and awareness programs;
- Preventing soil erosion;
- Participating in integrated rainwater management projects that treat rainwater as a resource;
- Preventing contamination and pollution from entering water systems;
- Preventing development adjacent to water bodies from causing inappropriate interference with water flows and ecosystem habitats;
- Monitoring water quality and quantity; and
- Restoring damaged ecosystems.

2.2 Protect streams and streamside areas in accordance with applicable provincial and federal legislation.

2.3 Advocate for provincial and federal government support that assists local governments in developing and implementing measures that protect streams and streamside areas.

2.4 Advocate for provincial and federal government support that assists local government in developing and implementing measures that result in a reduction of pollution from all sources entering the ocean.

#### **Air**

2.5 Promote measures to maintain good air quality in the region. Key strategies include:

- Increasing opportunities for walking, cycling, and taking transit;
- Reducing the need for automobile travel;
- Supporting and promoting the use, generation and transmission of clean, renewable energy;
- Encouraging the Province to provide regular reports about air quality;
- Undertaking other initiatives that improve air quality.

*Ideas for local initiatives that improve air quality:*

- *Promote efficient wood-burning fireplaces;*
- *Restrict backyard burning.*

#### **Land**

2.6 Work with the federal and provincial government to identify and protect open spaces that are representative of the region's ecosystems. These spaces reflect the region's character, and form systems of interconnected areas and natural corridors capable of sustaining native plant and animal communities.

- 2.7 Recognize the importance of conservation areas and parks together with related planning initiatives, in protecting the long term sustainability of the region's ecosystems including core areas of the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve (MABR).
- 2.8 Conserve and enhance biodiversity and ecological services through the protection of ecologically important features and corridors including floodplains, shorelines, intertidal areas, stream systems, aquifers, and urban forests.

### **Coastal Zone**

- 2.9 Preserve and protect remaining natural segments of the coastal zone by promoting greater public awareness of the importance and sensitivity of coastal areas, wildlife and coastal processes (e.g. geological, environmental and biological).
- 2.10 Minimize impacts of development in coastal zones by ensuring use of low impact development.

### **Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs)**

- 2.11 Prepare a complete bio-inventory of regionally significant environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs), species at-risk, and the natural biodiversity of the region.
- 2.12 Encourage the provincial and federal governments to conduct or financially support field checking and updating of ESA information, data entry and collection methods, and to make their databases available and affordable.
- 2.13 Consider the ecological structure and function of the land base in land and resource use decisions and require an environmental review for projects with the potential to negatively affect ESAs, the coastal zone or environmental quality.
- 2.14 Adopt Official Community Plans and Parks Plans that include strategies and policies to protect and conserve ESAs. Strategies and policies could include:
  - Prioritizing lands that should be protected;
  - Identifying mechanisms to protect lands;
  - Protecting connectivity corridors to ensure that movement of wildlife between critical habitat areas is protected;
  - Establishing appropriate buffers between ESAs and development;
  - Establishing criteria for identifying areas that should be publicly accessible and methods by which public access can be provided;
  - Protecting riparian areas from run-off from farms, industrial areas, residential areas and other forms of land use and development;
  - Establishing education and awareness programs regarding the significance of ESAs to the health and vitality of the region; and



- Establishing Development Permit Areas to protect groundwater aquifers and environmentally sensitive areas from the impacts of development.
- 2.15 Discourage development from locating in areas that are at high risk to potential natural hazards such as soil erosion, sea level rise, and flooding.
- 2.16 Work in collaboration with appropriate provincial and federal government agencies and property owners to ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place to protect property and life from potential natural hazards including flooding, slope instability, soil erosion, wildfires and sea level rise.
- 2.17 Continue to improve coordination in environmental protection and management in the region.

**Goal 3 – Coordinate land use and mobility** – Ensure land use patterns and mobility networks are mutually supportive and work together to reduce automobile dependency and provide for efficient goods movement.

Land use patterns and mobility networks have many significant impacts on the environment, the economy and quality of life. For example, dispersed settlement patterns and low-density rural and urban areas that are auto-dependent contribute to air pollution, create traffic congestion, require additional driving time, contribute to reduced levels of physical activity, and limit access to goods, services and amenities for those who do not have access to a car. Creating more practical options for people to live, work, play, learn and shop in places that can be easily accessed without the need to drive requires the close coordination of land use and mobility network decisions. Convenient, frequent and cost-effective transit service is only possible when development is concentrated within a network of mixed-use activity centres located strategically throughout the region. Walking and cycling can be promoted within each centre when the built form, public realm and transportation infrastructure are designed with the needs of pedestrians and cyclists in mind (Map 2).

The RDN serves as a trans-shipment hub for Vancouver Island and a regional gateway for tourism. Locating businesses and industries where they can take best advantage of the economic opportunities offered by the numerous transportation facilities and services in the region – deep water harbours, seaports and ferry terminals, railway, airport and highways - and services - ferries, transit, and rail - should be a key consideration in land use decisions.

Responsibility for land use decisions lies with local authorities while the design of transportation facilities and the provision of ferry and transit service rests with a number of local, regional, provincial and federal government authorities. Better coordination between and amongst these various authorities regarding land use and mobility network decisions is crucial in order to ensure that wise choices are made to support a more sustainable region.



## Policies

The RDN and member municipalities agree to:

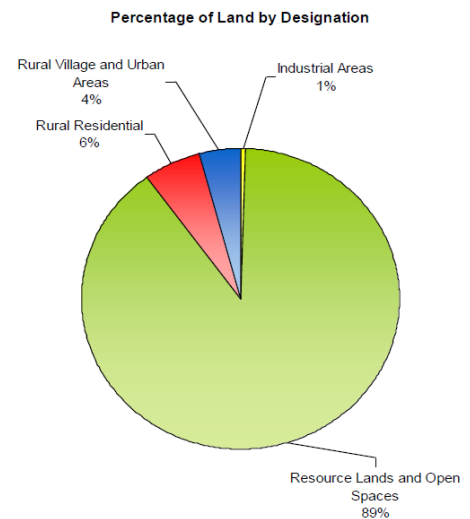
- 3.1 Work together and partner with the appropriate provincial and federal authorities to prepare a mobility strategy that will contribute to achieving the goals and policies of the RGS.
- 3.2 Work together and partner with the appropriate provincial and federal authorities to collect and analyze transportation data that will allow for traffic modeling and monitoring of transportation-related GHG emissions.

### *Major Regional Transportation Facilities*

- *Highways 19, 19A, 4 & 4A,*
- *Duke Point Harbour and ferry terminal,*
- *Nanaimo Harbour and Departure Bay ferry terminal,*
- *French Creek Harbour, Deep Bay Harbour,*
- *Nanaimo Airport, Qualicum Beach Airport,*
- *E&N Railway.*

- 3.3 Organize development in a network of distinctive growth centres that provide ready access to places to live, work, play and learn according to the following:

- Regional urban centre – City of Nanaimo;
- Urban centres – City of Parksville, Town of Qualicum Beach and District of Lantzville;
- Rural village centres – mixed-use centres located in electoral areas including Bellevue/Church Road, Bowser, Cassidy, Cedar, Coombs, Dunsmuir, Errington, Extension, Fairwinds, French Creek, Hilliers, Qualicum Bay, Qualicum River Estates, and Red Gap. (See Section 4.2 Policies 4.10-4.11).



- 3.4 Give consideration to industrial development in locations that:

- Facilitate efficient movement of goods;
- Are located within GCBs or Industrial Areas;
- Minimize environmental impacts (e.g. upon aquifers and other Environmentally Sensitive Areas);

- Have potential as a multi-modal hub and/or distribution centre;
  - Have access to heavy rail;
  - Have appropriate site conditions (e.g. level site); and
  - Will have minimal impact on the quality of life in residential areas.
- 3.5 Reduce the need for automobile travel and increase opportunities to walk, cycle or take transit. Key strategies include:
- Adopting official community plans and zoning bylaws that support the development of places to live, work, learn, play, shop and access services within a walkable area and located in designated mixed-use centres inside Growth Containment Boundaries;
  - Directing the location of commercial land uses to mixed-use centres that are well-served by transit;
  - Reviewing engineering, building and development standards in order to identify ways to reduce the area of land required for roads and parking, provide the infrastructure necessary to encourage and support walking, cycling and transit, and to accommodate vehicular traffic in a manner appropriate to the land use and mobility objectives of the specific area;
  - Informing the public about alternatives to automobile travel and the potential environmental, economic and social benefits of these alternatives;
  - Exploring other methods of reducing the need for automobile travel.
- 3.6 Increase the efficiency of automobile use and reduce GHG emissions by:
- Promoting car-pooling and car-sharing;
  - Promoting Transportation Demand Management strategies;
  - Supporting the use of alternate-fueled vehicles (e.g. electric vehicles).
- 3.7 Adopt Official Community Plan policies that recognize the importance of the E&N Rail corridor as a strategic transportation facility and right-of-way and ensure its protection as a transportation corridor for the long-term.
- 3.8 Recognize the importance of major seaports, commercial harbours, and airports as significant economic assets in the region and, where relevant, adopt Official Community Plan policies that ensure their long-term viability as industrial and commercial activity areas.

**Goal - 4 - Concentrate housing and jobs in growth centres** – Establish distinctive activity centres that provide ready access to places to live, work, play and learn.

Containing growth within well-defined activity centres is one of the most significant ways the RDN can become more sustainable. Areas intended to accommodate most of the growth attracted to the region will be inside Growth Containment Boundaries (GCBs)

within rural village centres (electoral areas) and municipal urban centres primarily located near major highway corridors that form the ‘backbone’ of the region. Approximately 70% of the region’s population currently lives within a GCB. In order to achieve goals related to greater sustainability and reduction of GHG emissions, a greater proportion of growth needs to be located inside GCBs and especially within mixed-use centres that can provide lifestyle choices that allow individual households and businesses to reduce their impact on the environment.

Concentrating growth in cities, towns and rural villages generates numerous benefits:

- More efficient provision of services, such as transit, water, wastewater, and solid waste disposal;
- More efficient use of schools, libraries, and recreation facilities;
- Enhanced feasibility of district energy systems, especially in higher density mixed-use neighbourhoods; and
- Reduced consumption of land for development resulting in fewer impacts on environmentally sensitive areas and water sources.

How communities are designed reflects social equity and fairness values. Community design that promotes walking, cycling and transit use, creates safe places to live, and fosters active social life enhances access to jobs, goods, services and amenities for an aging population, those who are differently-abled and/or who have low incomes. Promoting the provision of adaptable, accessible, affordable, and attainable housing is another important way social equity and fairness can be enhanced.

The Regional Growth Strategy continues to recognize all of the areas that were identified in the previous Regional Growth Strategy as Rural Village Centres. However, questions have been raised about the ability of some of these areas to accommodate growth because of the significant costs associated with providing community sewer and water services. A region-wide study is needed to identify those centres which have the most potential to evolve into complete, compact communities that warrant the investment required to serve them with community water and wastewater facilities and public transit.

*‘Growth Containment Boundaries’ were formerly referred to as ‘Urban Containment Boundaries’ in the 2003 RGS*

Existing village centres that are determined to be less feasible as potential rural growth centres could be recognized as local service centres. These smaller scale service centres would provide a limited range of goods and services intended to meet the needs of the surrounding rural community. OCP policies could make provision for limited additional small-scale development in areas designated as local service centres, provided the proposed development is appropriate to the needs of the local community, contributes to the rural character of the area and can be adequately and safely served with on-site water and wastewater facilities.

## Policies

The RDN and member municipalities agree to/that:

### Growth Containment Boundaries

- 4.1 Designate Growth Containment Boundaries consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy in their Official Community Plans for the purpose of defining Urban Centres and Rural Village Centres. In cases where the two containment boundaries are not consistent, the municipality will ensure that its' Official Community Plan:
  - Recognizes the GCB as shown in the RGS;
  - Identifies an Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) that clearly defines its urban area; and,
  - Addresses the difference between the two containment boundaries in the Regional Context Statement.
- 4.2 Except for minor amendments, review and if necessary, amend Growth Containment Boundaries (GCBs) only every five years in conjunction with a review of the Regional Growth Strategy, or at an interval specified in an official community plan. The RDN and member municipalities agree that all potential GCB changes should be considered according to the process and criteria set out in Section 1.5 of this plan.
- 4.3 Proposed expansion of Growth Containment Boundaries (GCBs) should be supported by:
  - A land inventory demand and supply analysis that assesses the need for additional land to be included within the GCB and the impact the proposed expansion would have on the development of land inside GCBs located elsewhere in the region;
  - A land use concept plan;
  - An environmental impact assessment that identifies environmentally sensitive areas;
  - A surface water or hydro-geological study that assesses the availability and quality of water to service the proposed development with a community water system, and the potential impacts of development on watershed function, including recharge capacities and surface runoff, as well as, on long term water supply to existing development and undeveloped lands located within GCBs;
  - A study that identifies how wastewater disposal will be addressed and what the impacts will be on the capacities of existing treatment facilities;
  - An evaluation of the impacts on community vulnerability to disasters and impacts upon the provision of emergency services;

- An inventory of aggregate deposits within the proposed boundaries of the GCB;
- A transportation study that identifies:
  - Existing road traffic conditions;
  - Downstream impacts of additional traffic resulting from the proposed development;; and
  - Demand for transit service.

### **Housing Diversity**

- 4.4 A broad range of housing types and unit sizes should be encouraged within GCBs. Special consideration should be given to the housing needs of an aging population, those who are differently-abled, and those with moderate or low incomes.

### **Mixed-Use Centres**

- 4.5 Mixed-use centres shall only be located within GCBs and locations for mixed-use centres should be designated in OCPs.
- 4.6 Mixed-use centres designated in OCPs should be planned and designed as pedestrian-oriented and transit-supportive, compact, complete neighbourhoods that are compatible in character with their rural village or urban context.

### **Urban Centres**

- 4.7 Areas designated as Urban Area on Map 4 are to be fully serviced with community water and sewer systems, (consistent with servicing areas identified in official community plans) and contain the broadest range of urban land uses and densities.
- 4.8 Urban centres comprise the primary locations for accommodation of growth and development in the region and are only located within the GCBs of a municipality.
- 4.9 Urban centres include one or more mixed-use centres and are intended to be complete, compact communities with places to live, work, learn, play, shop, and access services.
- 4.10 Nanaimo, as the Regional Urban Centre, is identified as the major urban centre in the region given its larger scale, complexity, function and urban lifestyle, as distinct from the other Urban Centres, as well as the rural areas of the region.

### **Rural Village Centres**

- 4.11 Undertake a region-wide study to review the designation of Rural Village Centres (RVCs) in order to identify those locations that have the most potential for evolving into mixed-use centres. In addition to the provisions of Policy 4.6, RVCs should be able to:

- Attract and support local commercial development;
- Attract and support local community services and amenities (e.g. schools, community centres, libraries, etc.);
- Support regular transit service; and,
- Demonstrate how their development will contribute to the goals of the RGS.

All Regional District members will be invited to provide input on the Terms of Reference for the study.

4.12 Existing Rural Village Centres that are considered to have limited potential to evolve into mixed-use centres (as a result of the region-wide study set out in Policy 4.11) may be recognized as ‘local service centres’. OCPs may make provision to accommodate small-scale development in these locations provided that it is:

- Intended to serve the needs of the local population;
- Will not directly compete with services and retail development that have a broader customer base;
- Is in keeping with the rural character of the area;
- Can be serviced with adequate, long-term, on-site water and wastewater treatment facilities without harming the environment or degrading water sources.

**Goal 5 – Enhance Rural Integrity** – Protect and strengthen the region’s rural economy and lifestyle.

Most of the region is comprised of lands intended for agricultural, shellfish aquaculture, forestry and other primary industries and activities conducted in a rural environment (Map 5). A key focus of this strategy is to protect the long-term viability of these industries. Complementary uses that are also located in rural areas include rural residential, parks, open space, environmental protection and recreation. New residential development that is not associated with natural resource based economic activities, such as farming and shellfish aquaculture, needs to be carefully considered in order to reduce potential land use conflicts. Note that issues and policies regarding agricultural lands are also addressed by policies for Goal 8 Food Security.

Rural areas are characterized by large parcel sizes, on-site servicing, limited transportation infrastructure and a limited range of community services (e.g. fire protection). Typically, rural residents travel to urban communities to gain access to a broad range of goods and services though a limited range of goods and services may be offered at a nearby rural village centre.

One of the challenges the region faces in becoming more sustainable is the large number of rural residential lots that have the potential to subdivide and create new housing located in areas that require residents to depend upon private automobiles to meet their daily needs

for basic services, amenities and facilities (e.g. schools, grocery stores, employment opportunities, medical services). Traditional patterns of rural residential development are typically not consistent with effective growth management policies guided by sustainability principles. Achieving more sustainable development patterns requires a concerted effort to focus more of the region's growth inside GCBs. Increasing the proportion of growth within GCBs has proven to be very difficult while abundant low-density residential development opportunities still exist in rural areas.

Promoting alternative approaches to subdivision and development, such as conservation design, clustering or density transfer, for lands already zoned for rural residential development, can reduce some ecological impacts and land use conflicts. For example, appropriate siting of housing can reduce fragmentation of ecological systems and land use conflicts can be reduced with the provision of buffer zones between incompatible land uses (e.g. rural residential and agriculture, forestry, shellfish aquaculture, and aggregate mining).

Finally, changing economic conditions gives rise to the need to pay particular attention to the long-term viability of the forestry industry. This will require a collaborative effort with the industry, First Nations and the Province to ensure that potential land use issues can be addressed in a manner that protects the long-term value of the lands for forestry, ecological conservation, recreation, greenspace, and other compatible uses.

### **Policies**

The RDN and member municipalities agree to/that:

- 5.1 Land intended for rural forms of land use and development on large land holdings are designated on Map 4 in one of the following categories:
  - Resource Lands and Open Space; or
  - Rural Residential.
- 5.2 The minimum parcel size of lands designated Resource Lands and Open Space or Rural Residential, will not be decreased below the minimum size established in the relevant official community plan in place at the time of adoption of this RGS.
- 5.3 A change of designation from Resource Lands and Open Space to Rural Residential is not supported.

### **Resource Lands and Open Space**

- 5.4 Lands designated as Resource Lands and Open Space are primarily intended to accommodate agricultural activities, forestry, aggregate mining and other primary industries, and for recreational and/or environmental protection purposes.
- 5.5 Encourage land uses that complement agricultural, forestry, primary natural resource uses and recreation provided such uses enhance the economic viability of the primary uses and/or contribute to the protection of environmentally sensitive lands. Such uses may include, but are not limited to, nature-based tourism activities and development, small-scale food processing industries and value-added wood product industries.

## **Forestry**

- 5.6 Work collaboratively with the forestry industry, First Nations, the Province and other stakeholders to identify ways to protect the land base to ensure the long-term viability of forest management activities.

## **Aggregate Resources**

- 5.7 Seek an agreement with the Province regarding where aggregate resource development should take place.
- 5.8 Small and large scale aggregate resource development will only be supported on land designated by the RGS as Resource Lands and Open Spaces and when it is designed to minimize impacts on watercourses, sensitive ecosystems, and adjacent land uses.
- 5.9 Reclamation plans should be in accordance with provincial requirements and should restore natural ecosystems, wildlife habitat, and watercourses.
- 5.10 Small-scale aggregate removal will only be permitted on lands designated as Rural Residential, Rural Village Area, or Urban Area where the removal is part of an approved land use development (i.e. building or structure).

## **Rural Residential**

- 5.11 Lands designated as Rural Residential are intended to accommodate residential development on larger parcels of land that may or may not be serviced with community water and sewer systems.
- 5.12 Official Community Plans should include provisions that prevent the designation of additional Rural Residential lands.
- 5.13 Notwithstanding policy 5.2, in order to limit sprawl, reduce fragmentation of ecological systems and encourage more sustainable forms of subdivision on lands already zoned for rural residential use, an OCP may make provision to allow for smaller minimum parcel sizes outside the Growth Containment Boundary in the RGS Rural Residential Land Use Designation provided there is no increase in the overall density or the potential number of new lots, and provided that the new parcels can be served with potable water and wastewater disposal systems in a manner that does not degrade the environment or water sources. Potential options may include rezoning of land, clustered development, and/or density transfers. OCP policies that provide opportunities for alternative forms of rural residential development shall require the conservation of residual lands in perpetuity for agricultural, forestry, environmental or ecological purposes, or other public good purpose. Options for alternative forms of development shall be consistent with the sustainability principles and growth management policies of this RGS.



### Rural-Urban Interface

- 5.14 In the spirit of neighbourliness, new land use designations that abut a GCB should acknowledge the potential for conflict between rural and urban land uses. The rules governing development in the new land use designation should ensure that appropriate measures are taken to minimize the potential for negative impacts on existing land uses and development located on the other side of the existing GCB.

**Goal 6 – Facilitate the Provision of Affordable Housing** – Support and facilitate the provision of appropriate, adequate, affordable, attainable and adaptable housing.

An adequate supply of suitable, affordable housing is integral to individual and community well-being. It directly impacts personal health and the economic health of a community or region. A region-wide housing needs study prepared in 2009 confirms that there is an insufficient supply of affordable housing throughout the region.

Solutions to address the shortfall in the supply of affordable housing require an integrated and collaborative approach and should build upon the results and direction of the 2009 regional housing needs study, the RDN's 2010 Housing Action Plan, the City of Nanaimo's 2008 Response to Homelessness Action Plan, as well as the initiatives of the City of Nanaimo's Working Group on Homelessness and the Oceanside Task Force on Homelessness.

The participation of all levels of government, housing support agencies, member municipalities and the RDN, and local community and business groups is required to create a seamless network of housing options tailored to meet the unique needs of people living in the region.

### Policies

The RDN and member municipalities agree to:

- 6.1 Prepare a strategy to increase the range of affordable housing options in the region for seniors, youth, those with special needs, those with moderate or low incomes, and the homeless.
- 6.2 Adopt official community plans and zoning bylaws that increase the range of housing options available, especially in mixed-use centres that are well served with transit.
- 6.3 Adopt official community plan policies and zoning bylaws that make provision for incentives to build affordable housing units and encourage adaptable housing design.
- 6.4 Explore opportunities to retrofit existing housing stock to reduce GHG emissions, improve energy efficiency, and enhance affordability.

**Goal 7 – Enhance Economic Resiliency** – Support strategic economic development and link commercial and industrial strategies to the land use and rural and environmental protection priorities of the region.

There are currently three major dynamics at play that influence the economic well-being of the region:

- Growth in the service sector, especially health, education and retail, which is largely due to tourism and the in-migration of pre-retirees and retirees. Both of these economic drivers are very sensitive to quality of life factors and the physical attractiveness of the region.
- Significant challenges facing the natural resource sector – especially forestry and commercial fin fishery.
- Labour force shortages primarily due to an aging population and cost of living for low and moderate-income workers. Major contributors to the high cost of living are the cost of housing and the necessity to operate a car.

Looking to the future, the region should take full advantage of the benefits of the beauty of its natural setting and its industrious workforce to position itself as a centre of innovation for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Key areas for potential future economic growth could include:

- Food processing;
- Eco-tourism;
- Eco-industry;
- Renewable energy production; and
- Carbon management.

In addition, the region should continue to:

- Support growth in the shellfish aquaculture, agricultural and forestry sectors in a manner that is consistent with the environmental goals of the RGS;
- Recognize the significant economic benefits arising from aggregate mining and processing; and
- Support growth in the service sectors - especially health, social services, education, and technology.

To better position the region on a competitive basis, an economic development strategy should be prepared. The strategy should be supplemented with comprehensive industrial and commercial land demand and supply studies and forecasts. These studies would also provide valuable information that will help better coordinate land use and mobility decisions.

## **Policies**

The RDN and member municipalities agree to:

- 7.1 Coordinate economic development initiatives in the region. The RDN and member municipalities agree to work as partners and individually on strategic economic development related projects, including the preparation of an economic development strategy.
- 7.2 Support and encourage types of economic development that can help make the economy more vibrant and sustainable. To this end, the RDN and member municipalities agree to work as partners and individually to:
  - update and provide information about economic development opportunities in the region;
  - market the region as an attractive, business-friendly location for new businesses and industries;
  - identify opportunities to diversify the economy;
  - ensure that sufficient land is available in appropriate locations for desirable economic development activity;
  - develop plans and agreements with the appropriate authorities to improve infrastructure and access to the region (e.g. communication networks, airports, ferries, servicing, ports) for the purpose of attracting desirable economic development;
  - streamline regulatory and approval processes.
- 7.3 Protect the land and coastal waters that support the capacity of the region to generate agricultural, shellfish aquaculture, and other primary economic activities from the impacts of urban and sub-urban growth and development.
- 7.4 Adopt official community plans and zoning bylaws that include provisions to encourage and support a broad range of industrial, commercial and institutional development in appropriate locations.
- 7.5 Recognize the value of appropriate investment in public infrastructure and facilities in fostering economic growth and development in the region.

## **Industrial**

- 7.6 Collaborate in the preparation of a regional industrial land supply strategy and ensure that the region remains competitive in its ability to attract industrial development.
- 7.7 Limit the potential for retail and office commercial development on lands intended for industrial development.
- 7.8 Encourage the development of renewable energy facilities.

### **Service Sector**

- 7.9 Collaborate in the preparation of a commercial (retail and office) land strategy to ensure that the supply, location, distribution, form and type of commercial development is consistent with the sustainability and growth management objectives of the RGS and supports the continued vitality of the sector.
- 7.10 Support and promote the development of the region's health and education sectors.

### **Tourism**

- 7.11 Enhance the attractiveness of the region for tourism by:
- Supporting the provision of new tourism facilities and developments that attract new tourists and increase length of stay; and
  - Promoting the region as a destination for eco-tourism and sports tourism.
- 7.12 Support small-scale agri-tourism and aqua-tourism activities and development as secondary activities on lands that are actively used for agriculture, aquaculture, and related research and education.

### **Aggregate Resources**

- 7.13 Recognize the importance of aggregate mining and processing to the region's economy. To this end, the RDN and member municipalities agree to:
- Support the extraction of aggregate resources where significant deposits exist in locations that have minimal impact on environmentally sensitive areas, watercourses, and existing residential communities; and
  - Limit aggregate removal on lands designated for Rural Residential, Rural Village Area, or Urban Area to that required as part of an approved development (i.e. building or structure).

### **Agriculture**

- 7.14 Recognize the importance of agriculture to the region's economy. To this end, the RDN and member municipalities agree to:
- Support the management of the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR) by the provincial government;
  - Encourage the provincial government to protect the agricultural land base through the ALR;
  - Support the agricultural use of ALR lands within designated Urban Areas or Rural Village Areas except in instances where urban land uses have already been established at the time of the adoption of this RGS;
  - Recognize that all ALR lands will be subject to the regulations of the Agricultural Land Commission;

- Support the preparation of a study of agriculture in the region for the purpose of identifying the issues and needs (both immediate and future) of the agricultural sector;
- Encourage and support value-added agricultural industries; and
- Enhance opportunities for agricultural activity on lands not in the ALR.

### Shellfish Aquaculture

7.15 Recognize the importance of shellfish aquaculture to the region's economy and environment. To this end the RDN and member municipalities agree to:

- Support the management of the Shellfish Aquaculture leases by the provincial and federal governments;
- Work collaboratively with the provincial and federal government to protect the shellfish aquaculture leases from wastewater or industrial runoff contamination;
- Encourage and support value-added shellfish aquaculture industries;

### Forestry

7.16 Collaborate with the provincial government and private forestry companies to develop strategies that will enhance the long-term economic stability of the forestry sector by recognizing the role forestry lands play in:

- Supporting the health of ecological systems;
- Removing GHG emissions from the atmosphere; and
- Providing recreational opportunities.

### Green Business

7.17 Encourage and support the development of green businesses (e.g., businesses that use or produce biodegradable, recyclable, and reusable products and materials) in appropriate locations.

7.18 Adopt official community plan policies and zoning bylaws that facilitate and support the development of eco-industrial networks and business parks in appropriate locations.

**Goal 8 - Food Security** - Protect and enhance the capacity of the region to produce and process food.

Most of the food we eat comes from other parts of the world. A study conducted by the Region of Waterloo Public Health in Ontario (M. Xuereb, 2005) found that *'Imports of 58 commonly eaten foods travel an average of 4,497 km to Waterloo Region'*. Although there are currently no regionally specific studies estimating the distance food travels to reach our plates, it is safe to estimate that many of the foods we regularly consume travel on average at least 2,400 km to reach us (a widely quoted figure for North America, based on research conducted in Iowa by R. Pirog, et al 2001).

Despite ongoing debate about the environmental benefits of 'buying local' food versus making dietary changes (C. Weber and H. Scott Matthews, 2008), it is clear that our dependence on imported foods means that our access to food is vulnerable to the effects of weather and political events that may occur thousands of kilometers away. As well, world energy prices play a large role in the cost of food production and distribution. Greater food security means that more food is grown locally and therefore is not as susceptible to events occurring outside the region.

Local food production generates numerous economic, environmental and social benefits. Agriculture employs almost 3,000 people and generates a flow of income into the region. Local sources of food help reduce the region's carbon footprint by reducing transportation-related GHG emissions. In addition, the nutritional content of locally produced food is often greater than imported food – providing a healthier choice of food for residents.

Ensuring the long-term viability of farming and agricultural activity in the region requires a coordinated effort on the part of local, provincial and federal authorities. In addition to the provisions of Policy 5.4, the RDN and member municipalities can undertake a number of actions to support and enhance the viability of food production in the region as set out in the following policies (See Map 5 – Agricultural Lands).

Protecting the agricultural land base is a key requirement for enhancing food security. The Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) established by the Province in 1973 has largely been effective in reducing the loss of agricultural lands. Since 1974 the percentage of land protected under the ALR in the RDN has decreased approximately 12%, from 10.10% of the total land base to approximately 8.85% ([www.alc.gov.bc.ca/alr/stats](http://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/alr/stats)).

The majority of ALR lands in the RDN are located in rural Electoral Areas, with smaller portions located within the boundaries of municipalities. This RGS recognizes and supports the jurisdiction of the ALC over all ALR lands and strongly supports the retention and use of all ALR lands for agriculture. The RDN will continue to endorse the Agricultural Land Commission's efforts in preserving agricultural lands. Other actions that would enhance food security in the region include:

- Supporting improved access to sustainable water supplies for irrigation;
- Encouraging best water management practices in agriculture;
- Providing drainage infrastructure for flood-prone lands that do not include environmentally sensitive areas;

*The '5 A's' of food security:*

- *Available – sufficient supply*
- *Accessible – efficient distribution*
- *Adequate – nutritionally adequate and safe*
- *Acceptable – produced under acceptable conditions (e.g. culturally and ecologically sustainable)*
- *Agency – tools are in place to improve food security*

*(J. Oswald, 2009)*

- Improving infrastructure to provide agricultural services and processing; and improving access to markets.

### **Policies**

The RDN and member municipalities agree to:

- 8.1 Encourage and support the Agricultural Land Commission in retaining lands within the ALR for agricultural purposes.
- 8.2 Discourage the subdivision of agricultural lands.
- 8.3 Include provisions in their official community plans and zoning bylaws to allow for complementary land uses and activities that support the on-going viability of farming operations.
- 8.4 Establish agriculture as the priority use on land in the ALR.
- 8.5 Minimize the potential impact non-farm land uses may have on farming operations and include policies in their official community plans and zoning bylaws that reduce the opportunity for land use conflicts to occur.
- 8.6 Encourage and support agricultural activity on lands that are not within the ALR. This may include small-scale home-based agricultural businesses.
- 8.7 Recognize the importance of value-added agricultural uses and complementary land use activities for the economic viability of farms. To support complementary farm uses, official community plans should consider:
  - The provision of appropriately located agricultural support services and infrastructure;
  - Reducing impediments to agricultural processing and related land uses;
  - Allowing compatible complementary land use activities (e.g., agri-tourism);
  - Allowing farmers' markets and other outlets that sell local produce to locate in all parts of the community.
- 8.8 Encourage urban agriculture initiatives and support activities and programs that increase awareness of local food production within the region.
- 8.9 Support the appropriate use of water resources for irrigation of agricultural lands.
- 8.10 Support the provision of drainage infrastructure to flood-prone lands that do not lie within environmentally sensitive areas.
- 8.11 Work in collaboration with federal and provincial agencies, adjacent regional districts, and agricultural organizations to improve access to markets for agricultural products.

- 8.12 Support partnerships and collaborate with non-profit groups to enhance the economic viability of farms.
- 8.13 Support farms that produce organic agricultural products and use sustainable farming practices.
- 8.14 Support the production, processing, distribution and sale of locally grown produce (including shellfish).

**Goal 9 - Pride of Place** – Celebrate the unique beauty, culture, history and arts of the region.

The outstanding natural beauty, rich cultural history and thriving arts communities of the Regional District of Nanaimo are the region’s greatest assets. Communities in the RDN will work together to express the pride residents feel in their region and actions may include;

- Protection of natural environments;
- Provision of an extensive network of regional and local trails and parks;
- Attention and care of the built environment;
- Promotion of public art;
- Protection of cultural and historical resources; and
- Support for artistic and cultural events.

#### **Policies**

The Regional District of Nanaimo and member municipalities agree to:

- 9.1 Adopt official community plans that include strategies and policies that will:
  - Identify and protect important historic and cultural resources and cultural sites; and
  - Enhance natural and man-made amenities that contribute to the unique character of the community and the region.
- 9.2 Adopt official community plans that include strategies and policies that:
  - Promote excellence in architectural and urban design; and
  - Promote and support artistic and cultural endeavours.

**Goal 10 - Efficient Services** – Provide efficient, cost-effective services and infrastructure.

The Regional District delivers a variety of services that are common to both the electoral areas and municipalities, such as wastewater treatment, recreation, solid waste disposal and transit. In addition, the RDN provides a range of local services to electoral areas, such as community planning, watershed protection, parks, water, and other utilities. Member municipalities provide similar services within their own jurisdictions.

The provision of community water and wastewater services is one of the most powerful tools the RDN and member municipalities have to direct and manage growth in the



region. Areas served with community water and sewer systems are intended to support rural village and urban forms of development at densities that support the efficient use of land and that are capable of funding the long-term maintenance and operating costs of the systems. Provision of community services to future growth areas should be based on long-term land use planning consistent with the goals and objectives of this strategy. The RDN and member municipalities should also ensure that the financial capacity to fund services based on life-cycle costing is in place at the time land use approvals are granted.

Improved coordination of land use planning and service provision is intended to direct growth to designated growth areas inside GCBs. However, there are numerous low-density residential developments existing in rural areas that would benefit from the provision of community wastewater systems due to threats to public health and/or environmental degradation. Provision of services to these areas requires the agreement of local property owners and/or businesses to accept the costs of receiving the service. Safeguards should also be put in place to prevent the future approval of additional development rights in areas that are outside of designated GCBs.

The RDN has a two-pronged approach to reducing GHG emissions related to landfill operations. First, the RDN is investigating alternative technologies such as waste-to-energy for residual disposal. It is anticipated that at least 75% of annual GHG emissions from landfill disposal will be collected and turned into energy by 2028 – the expected lifespan of the facility. Secondly, the Zero Waste program recovers materials from the residential and commercial waste streams through recycling and composting – resulting in further GHG emissions reduction.

The RDN and member municipalities also have a role to play in reducing energy consumption. For example, energy-efficient subdivision and building design and construction, alternative energy sources, and less reliance on the automobile all contribute to a more efficient use of energy on a region-wide basis.

These combined efforts also increase the capacity of the existing landfill to meet the region's future needs for solid waste disposal.

## **Policies**

The RDN and member municipalities agree to:

### **Water and Wastewater**

- 10.1 Prepare a strategy for the provision of community water and wastewater services to lands located inside Growth Containment Boundaries consistent with official community plans.
- 10.2 **Not** support the provision of new community water and/or sewer services to land designated as Rural Residential or Resource Lands and Open Space. Exceptions may be made:
  - in situations where there is a threat to public health or the environment due to the domestic water supply or wastewater management method being used; or

- for providing services to developments in Electoral Area H supported by Policy 5.13.

The RDN and member municipalities will continue to work in partnership with appropriate provincial agencies and the community to develop solutions that address situations where there is a threat to public health or the environment.

The provision of community water and/or wastewater systems may be permitted provided that the:

- full cost of service provision is paid by property owners; and
- level of development permitted does not increase beyond the level supported by Policies 5.2 of this Regional Growth Strategy; or
- level of development does not increase beyond the level supported by Policy 5.13 and it is in Electoral Area H.

10.3 Only support new community water and wastewater systems that are publically owned. New community water and wastewater systems that are privately owned may be permitted provided that they:

- are for the purpose of servicing developments supported by Policy 5.13 and within Electoral Area H.

10.4 Support the provision of services to industrial development outside of the Growth Containment Boundary that may pose a potential threat to environmental and/or public health, at the property owner's expense.

10.5 Support more efficient use and conservation of water. Under the RDN's Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Plan, complementary local goals and action items will be established for reducing water use and waste and ensuring a sustainable water resource.

10.6 Develop and update, as required, capital plans to meet the servicing needs of the projected population for regional services (i.e. regional parks, solid waste disposal, liquid waste management, water provision, transit, emergency planning). Capital plans will address the infrastructure requirements necessary to accommodate projected population. The RDN will collaborate with the member municipalities and applicable government ministries and agencies in the development and update of these capital plans. The RDN and member municipalities request that the Province develop and update, as required, capital plans to meet the servicing needs of the projected population for services that are delivered in the region by the Province (e.g. roads, ferries, health care).

10.7 Not rezone lands to implement official community plan policies for higher density development until community water and sewer services can be provided to support the intended development. Rezoning to implement official community plan policies for higher density development without community water and sewer may be permitted in Electoral Area H for:

- lands within village centres or;
- development supported by Policy 5.13.

- 10.8 Support the servicing of urban and rural village centres with wastewater systems that minimize waste and use resources more efficiently. The *Liquid Waste Management Plan* may consider the recovery of energy, water and materials from wastewater that could be used to service public and private facilities.

#### **Solid Waste Recycling and Processing Facilities**

- 10.9 Pursue an approach to solid waste management that focuses on waste reduction, with the ultimate goal of eliminating the need for waste disposal (i.e. a “Zero Waste” approach).
- 10.10 Ensure that all new high density developments are designed to support full recycling that includes food waste collection and materials prohibited from entering the RDN landfill.
- 10.11 Recognize the benefit of integrating solid waste and wastewater disposal streams with private sector initiatives for the recovery of resources, where appropriate. The *Solid Waste Management Plan* may co-locate solid waste facilities with compatible industries to promote partnerships that recover resources from solid waste disposal.
- 10.12 Recognize the impact solid waste disposal and processing may have on adjacent land uses and locate future recycling, composting and residual waste disposal sites in locations that minimize the impact on residential communities and the natural environment.
- 10.13 Consider the potential for aggregate mining sites to be reclaimed for future solid waste disposal sites, if necessary.

#### **Energy**

- 10.14 Support and promote energy-efficient subdivision, site, and building design and construction.
- 10.15 Support and promote the use of clean energy technologies to support growth and development (e.g. district-energy systems, geo-thermal, solar, wind).

#### **Emergency Planning**

- 10.16 Undertake integrated, coordinated emergency preparedness planning on a regional basis, including strategic planning for fire protection services and natural hazards management.

**Goal 11 - Cooperation Among Jurisdictions:** Facilitate an understanding of and commitment to the goals of growth management among all levels of government, the public, and key private and voluntary sector partners.

Implementation of the *Regional Growth Strategy* (RGS) requires collaboration with all levels of government and especially between regional, local and provincial authorities. At the local level, commitment to implementation will be expressed in the

Regional Context Statements included in an official community plan and through the adoption of other policies and strategies. Collaboration with provincial agencies is crucial to being able to realize the goals of this plan. Cooperating with First Nations governments is also required because there are many common economic, environmental, social and growth management issues which must be addressed. The RDN also recognizes the significant contributions made by various private and voluntary sector organizations and will continue to work in collaboration with them to achieve the goals set out in this strategy.

## **Policies**

The RDN and member municipalities agree to/that:

- 11.1 Every municipality and electoral area in the region will make provision in their official community plan and all necessary land use and other regulations to fully implement the RGS.
- 11.2 Recognize the key and often primary roles, played by the private and voluntary sectors in such areas as development, tourism and environmental protection. Consider partnerships and strategic alliances with groups and organizations prepared to invest in and/or support the goals and policies of the RGS.
- 11.3 Recognize the need to coordinate planning with First Nations. The RDN wishes to involve First Nations in its planning processes in the same way that it involves other levels of government. To this end, the RDN will:
  - Encourage First Nations membership on the RDN's Intergovernmental Advisory Committee;
  - Invite and encourage First Nations participation in growth management initiatives;
  - Continue dialogue with First Nations regarding land use planning in the RDN (i.e. the RGS, official community plans and other land use regulations) and in neighbouring lands under First Nations jurisdiction for the purpose of building a mutual appreciation and understanding of land use planning processes;
  - Consider amendments to the RGS, after the settlement of treaties with First Nations, for the purpose of harmonizing plans for land use in the region;
  - Request First Nations to formally accept the *Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw*; and
  - Pursue the development of implementation agreements with First Nations that reflect a commitment to respecting the vision, goals, and policies of the RGS as decisions are made and future plans or regulations are developed.

## 5.1 ACCOUNTABILITY – EDUCATION, AWARENESS AND IMPLEMENTATION

### 5.1 Education and Awareness

A public that is well-informed is more likely to participate in decision-making processes and to work with others to achieve common goals. During the public consultation process, participants identified a desire to become better informed regarding:

- The role and purpose of the RGS;
- How the RGS relates to other planning documents and processes;
- How decisions are made; and
- How implementation occurs and which government agencies are responsible.

As a result, the RDN will undertake a broad outreach and education program targeted to the general public, schools, stakeholder groups and other interested parties.

### Policies

The RDN and member municipalities agree to/that:

1. Ensure that decision-making is transparent and is clearly communicated to the public.
2. Establish a communication and outreach strategy focused on communicating:
  - The role and purpose of the RDN and the RGS;
  - How the RGS relates to other planning documents and processes;
  - How decisions are made; and how implementation occurs and which government agencies are responsible.

### 5.2 Implementation

Being accountable for progress towards achieving the goals of this RGS requires a commitment to implementation, target-setting, establishing indicators, and monitoring. Implementing projects identified in this RGS will be subject to available budgets, departmental work plans and in some cases financial contributions from RDN partners. While some projects may be funded solely through the RDN's Regional Growth Management function, with no additional costs to member municipalities, others may require financial contributions from the member municipalities.

Irrespective of wording in this RGS that refers to "agreement" by the RDN and member municipalities to follow a course of action, neither the RDN nor individual member municipalities will be bound to undertake or participate in any projects identified in this RGS. This is consistent with the direction of the *Local Government Act* which states that "a RGS does not commit or authorize a regional district to proceed with projects specified in the strategy."

The intent of conducting joint projects and studies is to provide a coordinated approach to reaching shared goals, address issues of regional significance and to provide economies of scale that would not be possible if each RDN partner pursued projects independently. Those municipalities who choose to opt out of participating in projects or studies may not receive the full benefits that result from them.

## **Policies**

The RDN will work in partnership with member municipalities, provincial and federal governments and others to:

1. Prepare an annual report on implementation and progress towards the goals and objectives of the RGS.
2. Review the need to revise or amend the RGS at least once every five years.
3. Prepare and adopt a Master Implementation Agreement within two years of adoption of the RGS that gives effect to key RGS actions and establishes procedures for its maintenance and periodic update. The agreement will also address the role of the RDN in coordinating implementation of the RGS, including public investments, equitable approaches to financing regional growth and development, agreed criteria for defining regionally significant development initiatives, and effective procedures for initiating processes for inter-jurisdictional review.
4. Establish a process and program to identify and establish targets to achieve key policies set out in this RGS within one year of adoption of this RGS.
5. Establish a process and program to monitor, evaluate and periodically report on regional economic, population, social and environmental trends and progress towards achieving RGS goals and policies and the targets to be established as set out in Policy 4, within one year of adoption of the RGS.
6. Reach agreement with each member municipality, within two years of adoption of the RGS, on how the Regional Context Statements contained within their respective official community plans will implement their RGS commitments.
7. Establish a Corporate Implementation Strategy within one year of adoption of the RGS that demonstrates how all the RDN's bylaws, services, and spending are consistent with the adopted RGS.
8. Coordinate with neighbouring regional districts and the Islands Trust to ensure that long term planning, development policies and initiatives in those jurisdictions are compatible with the vision, principles, and policies of this RGS.
9. Undertake a series of studies and actions as identified in Table 3 which identifies specific goals, actions, primary responsible agency and expected timeline for completion.
10. Include sustainability and strategic policy implications in discussions and decision-making within development approval processes.

Table 3 - Summary of Studies and Implementation Actions Arising from Goals and Policies

Goal	Action	Responsible Agency	Timeline
1. Climate Change	Complete Community Energy & Emissions Plan	RDN	2011
	Initiate discussions with forestry industry and Province re sector vitality and carbon storage (also applies to Goals 5 and 7)		
2. Environmental Protection	Advocate for provincial and federal government support to update and maintain SEI databases	RDN, member municipalities	2010-11
	Encourage the Province to regulate groundwater, require reporting on water use and protect water resources on a watershed basis		
3. Coordinate land use & mobility	Initiate discussions with provincial and federal transportation authorities to share data collection and analysis and prepare mobility strategy	RDN, member municipalities	2012
	Prepare industrial land supply and demand study and strategy (also applies to Goal 7)		
	Prepare commercial land supply and demand study and strategy (also applies to Goal 7)		
4. Concentrate housing & jobs	Prepare region-wide study of rural village centres	RDN	2011
5. Rural integrity	Initiate discussions with forestry industry and Province re sector vitality and carbon storage	RDN	2011
6. Affordable housing	Identify next steps to addressing affordable housing issues	RDN, member municipalities	2011
7. Vibrant, resilient economy	Prepare region-wide economic development strategy	RDN, member municipalities	2012-13
8. Food security	Prepare study of agriculture in the region to identify issues and present future needs of the agricultural sector	RDN, member municipalities	2011-12
9. Efficient services	Prepare strategy for servicing rural village centres (See Goal 4)	RDN	2011-12
11. Cooperation among jurisdictions	Continue outreach initiatives to First Nations including signing of protocol agreements	RDN, member municipalities	Ongoing

### 5.3 Targets

Targets are tools that flag the level of effort required to achieve desired goals. Effective targets have the following characteristics:

- Are measurable against baseline data;
- Are easily understood and monitored;
- Are clearly linked with policy objectives (e.g. increase housing diversity or achieve X new secondary suites by 2020);
- Have political, community and staff 'buy-in';
- Be challenging yet achievable; and
- Are consistent with one another.

Targets may be directional (e.g. increase the share of transit ridership during the pm peak) or may be quantitative (e.g. increase transit ridership to 10% of pm peak trips). Targets are used in combination with indicators in order to evaluate the efficacy of RDN and member municipality actions. Both expert research and analysis and public consultation are necessary to develop targets and indicators related to RGS goals and policies. Staff and expert advice is used to establish initial baseline data which is then 'tested' through public consultation. Setting targets to monitor progress towards achieving the goals of this strategy is a high priority implementation action.

### 5.4 Key Indicators

Indicators provide a means for monitoring and reporting on progress towards the achievement of goals. Over time they provide a useful gauge of the efficacy of policies and can help flag problem areas. Key indicators may include:

#### **Climate Change**

- Reduction of GHG emissions and energy consumption indicators and targets will be established in the Community Energy and Emissions Plan.

#### **Environmental Protection**

- Water quality and quantity (surface and groundwater);
- Air quality;
- Amount of new ESA lands and riparian areas protected.

#### **Coordinate Land Use & Mobility**

- Commute to work travel mode share;
- Total length of regional trail network;
- Share of population growth within GCB;
- Share of net new dwellings located within GCB;



- Number of households within GCB that are walking distance of transit;
- Diversity of land uses within designated mixed-use centres served by transit.

#### **Concentrate Housing & Jobs in Growth Centres and Corridors**

- Housing densities inside GCB;
- Net new dwellings located in the City of Nanaimo and major urban centres;
- Share of net new dwellings in electoral areas located within rural area GCB;
- Share of new jobs located in the City of Nanaimo and urban centres;
- Share of new jobs in electoral areas located within rural area GCB.

#### **Rural Integrity**

- Net change in land area of forestry lands (lands designated Resource Lands and Open Space excluding ALR and designated open space lands);
- Net change in land area of ALR;
- Number of new parcels subdivided in ALR lands;
- ALR range of parcel sizes;
- Gross farm receipts and number of farms by gross farm receipt category;
- Density outside the GCB.

#### **Affordable Housing**

- Housing diversity by unit type;
- Number of new affordable housing units constructed;
- Subsidized housing wait lists;
- Level of homelessness.

#### **Resilient Economy**

- Number of new jobs in the region;
- Share of jobs by economic sector.

#### **Culture, Arts and Recreation**

- Number of inventoried heritage resources;
- Kilometers of public trails and pathways.

#### **Efficient Services**

- Per capita disposal of solid waste;
- Average per capita consumption of potable water;
- Per capita length of water and sewer lines in areas with community services;
- Per capita road length.

## 6.1 LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

This RGS includes maps that show land use designations and Growth Containment Boundaries:

1. Map of Land Use Designations and Growth Containment Boundaries (Map 4).
2. Larger scale sections of the Growth Containment Boundaries (Appendix B).

The Map of Land Use Designations designates land for uses deemed appropriate between now and 2036 to achieve the vision of the *Regional Growth Strategy*. It represents the desired future pattern of land use in the region.

The Map of Land Use Designations designates land into one of five different land use categories:

1. Resource Lands and Open Space
2. Rural Residential
3. Urban Area
4. Rural Village Area
5. Industrial

The Map of Land Use Designations and the Maps of Growth Containment Boundaries designate the Growth Containment Boundaries.

### Resource Lands and Open Space

The Resource Lands and Open Space land use designation includes:

- Land that is primarily intended for resource uses such as agriculture, forestry, aggregate and other resource development; and
- Land that has been designated for long-term open space uses.

This designation includes:

- Land in the Agriculture Land Reserve;
- Crown land;
- Land designated for resource management or resource use purposes, including forestry, in official community plans;
- Recognized ecologically sensitive conservation areas;
- Provincial parks;
- Regional parks;
- Large community parks;
- Cemeteries;
- Existing public facilities outside of areas planned for mixed-use centre development;

- Destination Resorts; and
- Golf courses.

Resource activities on land in this designation should be encouraged to operate in ways that do not harm the functioning of natural ecosystems. Land use control, and resource management of lands in this designation is shared between landowners, local, provincial and sometimes federal government. Much of the forest land is privately owned. Forest companies, farmers, shellfish aquaculture (and associated research facilities) and aggregate resource development companies are recognized to have the right to operate on land within this designation in compliance with local, provincial and federal government regulations.

No new parcels that are smaller than the size supported by the official community plan in effect at the date of the adoption of this *Regional Growth Strategy* may be created on land in this designation.

### **Rural Residential**

Land that is intended to accommodate primarily rural residential development is designated as Rural Residential.

This designation mostly includes land that has already been subdivided into relatively small parcels for a rural area. It also includes land where modest future rural residential subdivision development could occur without affecting the rural economy or environmental quality.

Except as provided for under Policy 5.13, the minimum parcel size of lands designated as Rural Residential will not be reduced below the minimum parcel size established in official community plans in place at the date of the adoption of this *Regional Growth Strategy*.

### **Urban Area**

Land located within the Growth Containment Boundaries of a municipality that is primarily intended for urban development is designated as Urban Area.

Land in this designation should be served with community water and sewer systems and accommodate a broad range of urban land uses at urban densities, or have commitments in place to service it and develop the land to urban densities.

Urban Areas should include public or privately owned open space that includes protected natural areas, water and coastal features, public parks and gardens, playfields, golf courses, public greens and plazas, agricultural areas (including community/allotment gardens), woodlots, and vegetated walkways and bikeways.

New development on land designated as Urban Area should primarily be focused into mixed-use centres adjacent to development that is designed to support its commercial vitality, and provide direct, convenient multi-modal access to the centre.

An Urban Area should include one or more mixed-use centres intended to be complete, compact neighbourhoods that include places to live, work, learn, play, shop, and access services. Local jurisdictions may define and create a wide variety of different types of mixed-use centres in Urban Areas to suit community conditions.

### **Rural Village Area**

Lands located within Growth Containment Boundaries within an electoral area are designated Rural Village Area. These lands are intended to include a mix of housing, services and amenities that are serviced with community water and sewer systems or have commitments in place to be serviced.

Characteristics that distinguish Rural Village Areas from mixed-use centres in Urban Areas are as follows:

- Rural Village Areas will generally have less variety in terms of different types of housing, places to learn, shop, work, play, and access services;
- Rural Village Areas may be smaller in size;
- Rural Village Areas may have fewer residents;
- Rural Village Areas primarily serve the people who live in the village and the surrounding rural area;
- Some Rural Village Areas may represent the beginning of future incorporated local government entities.

### **Industrial**

In electoral areas and the Town of Qualicum Beach, land that is primarily intended for industrial use is designated as Industrial. This designation includes all land on which industrial uses are supported by an official community plan. Most industrial lands located within a municipality are included within the Urban Area designation as shown on Map 4.

Land that is designated as Industrial should only be used for industrial uses. The introduction of commercial, residential, or other uses would reduce the inventory and attractiveness of the lands for industrial purposes.

Industrial uses on land designated as Industrial should be developed in a way that minimizes potential conflicts with surrounding land uses and minimizes damage to the natural environment.

### **Growth Containment Boundary**

The Growth Containment Boundary (GCB) is a line that defines where growth is intended to be directed. The GCB is intended to control urban sprawl and to encourage the development of compact, complete communities within municipalities or within a Rural Village Area in electoral areas. Development within GCBs is intended to be diverse and provide places for people to live, work, learn, shop and play and may include lands intended to be conserved to support ecosystem functions or other green space purposes. Land situated outside GCBs is intended primarily for rural purposes that require only limited infrastructure and services to be viable.

**ALR Lands within Urban and Rural Village Areas**

While the majority of ALR lands are within the Resource Lands and Open Space land use designation, some ALR lands are within other land use designations. All ALR lands within Urban and Rural Village Areas are intended for agricultural use except in instances where urban land uses have already been established at the time of the adoption of this RGS. These lands are recognized as **ALR Lands within Urban and Rural Village Areas** on Map 4, Land Use Designations and Map 5, Agricultural Lands of this OCP.

## **GLOSSARY**

### ***Affordable Housing***

Affordable housing consumes no more than 30% of a household's gross, pre-tax income and may be owned or rented.

### ***Agricultural Lands***

Agricultural lands describe 'the land base upon which agriculture is practiced. Typically occurring on farms, agricultural activities are undertaken upon agricultural land to produce agricultural products. Although agricultural land is primarily required for the production of food for human and animal consumption, agricultural activities also include the growing of plants for fibre and fuels (including wood), and for other organically derived products (pharmaceuticals, etc).'

[http://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/alr/What\\_is\\_Ag\\_Land.htm](http://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/alr/What_is_Ag_Land.htm)

Note that the use of the term 'Agricultural Lands' includes but is not limited to lands designated as Agricultural Land Reserve by the Agricultural Land Commission.

### ***Attainable Housing***

Attainable housing refers to "... market housing that is:

- Affordable to households with a range of incomes, but most often at the low or moderate end of the scale;
- Provided without ongoing senior government subsidy". (Government of BC)

### ***Capital Plan***

Capital plans outline the method of obtaining the financial resources necessary to provide a service or infrastructure.

### ***Community Sewer Service***

Community sewer service is a communal method of wastewater management. It consists of a wastewater treatment plant, recycling the treated liquid or releasing it to a waterbody or to the ground, and utilizing or disposing of the solid residues in an environmentally sound and approved manner.

### ***Community Water Service***

Community water service is a communal method of providing domestic water. Community water systems typically include a water source (ground or surface water), treatment and/or disinfection facilities, and storage and distribution facilities.

### ***Goal***

A goal is an end state that policies and implementation actions strive to achieve.

### ***Growth Containment Boundary***

Growth Containment Boundaries (GCBs) are geographically-based lines shown on RGS maps that define where growth is intended to be directed. The Growth Containment Boundary is intended to control urban sprawl and to encourage the development of compact, complete communities within municipalities or within a Rural Village Area in electoral areas. Land situated outside the GCBs is intended primarily for rural purposes that require limited infrastructure and services.

### ***Housing Diversity***

To accommodate the diverse housing needs of residents, communities should strive to include a broad range of housing types including single detached, semi-detached, duplex, multi-unit attached housing, apartments, secondary suites, etc.

### ***Implementation Agreement***

An implementation agreement is an agreement respecting the coordination of activities related to the implementation of a regional growth strategy. The *Local Government Act* empowers local governments to enter into these agreements with the Provincial government and its agencies, the federal government and its agencies, other local governments, First Nations, school district boards, greater boards, improvement district boards and other local authorities.

### ***Intergovernmental Advisory Committee***

The Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (IAC) is the committee responsible for advising local governments on the development and implementation of a regional growth strategy, and facilitating coordination of Provincial and *Local Government Actions*, policies and programs as they relate to the development and implementation of a regional growth strategy. The membership of the IAC is to include the following: the planning director of the regional district (or another official appointed by the Board); the planning director (or another official appointed by the applicable council); senior representatives of the Provincial government and Provincial government agencies and corporations (determined by the minister after consultation with the Board); and representatives of other authorities and organizations if invited to participate by the Board.

### ***Land Use Regulation***

Land use regulations are rules governing the use of land contained in bylaws. Land use regulations include, but are not limited to, the following: zoning bylaws, subdivision bylaws, sign bylaws, and noise bylaws.

### ***Member Municipality***

The Regional District of Nanaimo has four member municipalities. They are the City of Nanaimo, the City of Parksville, the Town of Qualicum Beach and the District of Lantzville.

### ***Mixed-use centres***

A mixed-use centre accommodates places to live, work, play, learn and shop within a walkable area.

### ***Official Community Plan***

The *Local Government Act* defines an official community plan as “a statement of objectives and policies to guide decisions on planning and land use management, within the area covered by the plan, respecting the purposes of local government” (Section 875(1)). The *Local Government Act* further states that, “to the extent that it deals with these matters, an official community plan should work towards the purpose and goals referred to in Section 849 [Regional Growth Strategy Goals]” (Section 875 (2)).

Section 877 of the *Local Government Act* says that an official community plan must include statements and map designations for the area covered by the plan respecting the following:

- The approximate location, amount, type and density of residential development required to meet anticipated housing needs over a period of at least five years;
- The approximate location, amount and type of present and proposed commercial, industrial, institutional, agricultural, recreational, and public utility land uses;
- The approximate location and area of sand and gravel deposits that are suitable for future sand and gravel extraction;
- Restrictions on the use of land that is subject to hazardous conditions or that is environmentally sensitive to development;
- The approximate location and phasing of any major road, sewer and water systems;
- The approximate location and type of present and proposed public facilities, including schools, parks and waste treatment and disposal sites; and
- Other matters that may, in respect of any plan, be required or authorized by the minister.

An Official Community Plan must include housing policies of the local government respecting affordable housing, rental housing, and special needs housing.

An Official Community Plan must include targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the area covered by the plan, and policies and actions of the local government proposed with respect to achieving those targets.

An Official Community Plan for a municipality must include a regional context statement in accordance with the provisions of Section 866 of the *Local Government Act* (see definition for Regional Context Statement). Official community plans for electoral areas must be consistent with the regional growth strategy in accordance with the provisions of Section 865 of the *Local Government Act*.

### ***Policy***

A policy is a statement of action regarding how an objective or goal is to be achieved. Policies are intended to provide direction to official community plans, zoning bylaws, and other decisions and actions.

### ***Regional Context Statement***

A regional context statement is a statement accepted by the Regional District Board that is included in an official community plan for a municipality to identify the relationship between the official community plan and the content of a regional growth strategy, and, if applicable, how the official community plan is to be made consistent with the regional growth strategy over time. The *Local Government Act* (Section 866) establishes the requirements for regional context statements.



### **Regional Growth Strategy**

The purpose of a regional growth strategy is “to promote human settlement that is socially, economically and environmentally healthy and that makes efficient use of public facilities and services, land and other resources” (*Local Government Act*, Section 849 (1)).

Regional growth strategies are to work towards, but not be limited to, the following:

- Avoiding urban sprawl and ensuring that development takes place where adequate facilities exist or can be provided in a timely, economic and efficient manner;
- Settlement patterns that minimize the use of automobiles and encourage walking, bicycling and the efficient use of public transit;
- The efficient movement of goods and people while making effective use of transportation and utility corridors;
- Protecting environmentally sensitive areas;
- Maintaining the integrity of a secure and productive resource base, including the Agricultural Land Reserve;
- Economic development that supports the unique character of communities;
- Reducing and preventing air, land and water pollution;
- Adequate, affordable and appropriate housing;
- Adequate inventories of suitable land and resources for future settlement;
- Protecting the quality and quantity of ground water and surface water;
- Settlement patterns that minimize the risks associated with natural hazards;
- Preserving, creating and linking urban and rural open space including parks and recreation areas;
- Planning for energy supply and promoting efficient use, conservation and alternative forms of energy; and
- Good stewardship of land, sites and structures with cultural heritage value. (*Local Government Act*, Section 849 (2)).

A board may adopt a regional growth strategy for the purpose of guiding decisions on growth, change and development within its regional district (*Local Government Act*, Section 850 (1)).

A Regional Growth Strategy must cover a period of at least twenty years from the time of its initiation and must include the following:

- A comprehensive statement on the future of the Region, including the social, economic and environmental objectives of the Board in relation to the Regional District;
- Population and employment projections for the period covered by the Regional Growth Strategy;

- To the extent that these are regional matters, actions proposed for the regional district to provide for the needs of the projected population in relation to housing, transportation, regional district services, parks and natural areas, economic development and reductions in GHG emissions;
- In addition to the above, a regional growth strategy may deal with any other regional matter;
- A Regional Growth Strategy may include any information, maps, illustrations and other material. (*Local Government Act* Section 850 (2)).

### ***Regional Urban Centre***

A regional urban centre is a municipality that accommodates the greatest mix of land uses and highest densities in the region.

### ***Rural Village Centre***

Rural village centres are communities in electoral areas that are defined by Growth Containment Boundaries and intended to accommodate a limited range of land uses and development compatible with rural village character.

### ***Urban Centre***

Urban centres accommodate a broad mix of land uses and medium to high density development within a municipality.

### ***Vision Statement***

A vision statement is a statement about the future desired for a particular area or an organization. The vision statement in this regional growth strategy describes the future desired in the Regional District of Nanaimo. It frames the sustainability goals for the region and sets basic direction for planning, policies and actions.

## References

Agricultural Land Commission. *Agricultural Land Reserve Statistics*. January 2010. [www.alc.gov.bc.ca/alr/stats/Statistics\\_TOC.htm](http://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/alr/stats/Statistics_TOC.htm)

Oswald, J. *Planning for Urban Agriculture*. Plan Canada. Summer 2009: Vol. 49, No. 2

Pirog, R., et al. *Food, Fuel, and Freeways: An Iowa perspective on how far food travels, fuel usage, and greenhouse gas emissions*. 2001. Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University, Ames Iowa. January 2010. [www.leopold.iastate.edu](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu).

Xuereb, Marc. *Food Miles: Environmental Implications of Food Imports to Waterloo Region*. Region of Waterloo Public Health. November 2005.

United States, Environmental Protection Agency: Website, Last updated on Wednesday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006  
[http://www.epa.gov/r10earth/psgb/indicators/population\\_health/what/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/r10earth/psgb/indicators/population_health/what/index.htm)