

5.0 Creating a Local Food System

A food system is local when it allows farmers, food producers, and their customers to interact either face-to-face at the point of sale or through community partnerships or initiatives which encourage local products. It also supports the notion of farm to plate by encouraging farm products to be grown, stored, processed, sold, and handled locally.

Electoral Area 'A' has deep agricultural roots and strongly desires to maintain, enhance, and promote the plan area as an agricultural community. plan area residents wish to support agriculture and become leaders in local food production as stated in the Community Vision. Significant changes are required to achieve this vision.

Vancouver Island is heavily dependent on imported foods to meet daily nutritional requirements. Estimates indicate that only about five to six percent of the food consumed locally is grown on Vancouver Island.

Dependence on external food sources combined with the fact that Vancouver Island is isolated from the mainland and does not have large volumes of food storage capacity creates vulnerabilities in the local food supply which can be mitigated through the creation of a local food system.

Over half of the plan area is located in the ALR which has a favourable climate for producing many agricultural food products. Although the soils in the plan area are varied and water for irrigation in some areas is needed, Electoral Area 'A' has potential to significantly increase local food production.

"If you eat, you're involved in agriculture."

Wendell Berry,
(Author, farmer, and philosopher)

Sustainability Implications

Groundwater Resources

Water is a limiting factor for many agricultural operations. Several interests compete for groundwater in Electoral Area 'A'. At this time we do not have data on how much water is used by agriculture in the plan area. The largest groundwater users in the plan area are the Harmac Pulp Mill located in the City of Nanaimo followed by the North Cedar Improvement District. Managing groundwater resources should ensure that water is available to support the ecosystem while recognizing the needs of agriculture, industrial, and residential uses.

Commercial Agriculture

The current industrial agricultural system is heavily dependent on fossil fuels. Natural gas is the main ingredient used in nitrogen fertilizer and petroleum is the foundation of industrial pesticides. Both are essential in obtaining the crop yields currently expected in commercial agriculture. In addition, equipment used to sow, manage, harvest, process, and transport crops is also, in many cases, heavily dependent on fossil fuels. The cost of food is expected to rise as the input costs of producing and transporting agricultural products increases.



Food Security

Much of the produce eaten in British Columbia comes from distant lands. Many of these areas are experiencing an increase in severe weather events which are threatening crops and creating additional vulnerabilities and price fluctuations in the food system.

Climate Change Implications

Industrialized agriculture is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions through deforestation, livestock production, application of chemical fertilizer and manure, and from the use of fossil fuels in the sowing, harvesting, processing and transport of agricultural products. Creating local food systems reduces the distance food must travel and as a result reduces greenhouse gas emissions and transport costs.

In addition to warmer average temperatures, climate change is expected to shift precipitation patterns and increase the frequency of severe weather events which may increase the risk of extreme drought and crop failure. Local food systems help mitigate the impacts of climate change by building resiliency into the system and becoming more self-reliant.

Food Accessibility

Access to fresh nutritious food is critical for maintaining a healthy population. All area residents should have access to affordable, fresh, nutritious, culturally appropriate food, which is locally produced. Access to healthy food can help combat rising rates of obesity and chronic illnesses that can be partially addressed by improvements to diet and exercise.

Strategic Direction and Goals

Section 5.0 helps achieve the Community Vision by contributing towards community Goals 1, 6, 7, 13, 15, 16, and 17. Please refer to Section 3.3 for a list of community goals.

5.1 Agricultural

The Agricultural Land Use designation applies to all land located in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) at the date of adoption of this plan. These lands occupy approximately fifty-five percent of the plan area and are generally characterized by parcels, greater than 2.0 ha in area. Lands within the ALR are intended for agricultural production. These lands contribute to the economy and are of critical importance in helping Electoral Area 'A' become a leader in local food production.



Objectives and Policies

Section 5.1	Policy/Objective
Objective 5.1.1	Protect ALR land from non-agricultural development.
Policy 5.1.1	Lands within the Agricultural Lands designation are shown on Map No. 3.
Policy 5.1.2	Agriculture shall be the priority use on lands located within the Agricultural Lands designation.
Policy 5.1.3	Uses within this designation shall include agriculture and uses which are compatible with agriculture and contribute towards making it more productive.
Policy 5.1.4	Rezoning may be supported, subject to the approval of the Agricultural Land Commission to allow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Value added agricultural uses; b. ‘Permitted use’ as defined by the ALR, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation (BC Regulation 171-2002), as amended or replaced from time to time; or, c. Agricultural education and/or demonstration of agricultural technologies.
Policy 5.1.5	This plan supports the creation of an agricultural zone which applies to all lands within this designation.
Policy 5.1.6	Removal of lands from the ALR, which are capable of agricultural production, is considered contrary to the Community Vision and is not supported by this plan.
Policy 5.1.7	Subdivision of land within the ALR, which does not result in a net benefit to agricultural production as determined by a qualified professional, is considered contrary to the Community Vision and is not supported by this plan.
Policy 5.1.8	The RDN should consider providing comments to the Agricultural Land Commission on all applications for non-farm use, subdivision, and exclusion.
Policy 5.1.9	If land is removed from the ALR, the land should continue to be designated ‘Agricultural Lands’ and should not be considered for additional development potential.
Policy 5.1.10	This plan supports ongoing consultation with the Agricultural Advisory Committee, the Agricultural Land Commission, and the Provincial Ministry responsible for Agriculture to find ways to encourage agriculture and make it more productive.
Advocacy Policy 5.1.11	The RDN shall work with the MOTI to discourage the creation of new public roadways ending at lands located in the ALR to reduce the future demand for further non-agricultural development of ALR land.



Implementation Actions	Timing (Immediate, Short Term, Long Term, Ongoing)
Designate DPA's on land adjacent to the ALR to ensure adequate buffers are provided and to reduce the impacts of non-agricultural development on agricultural land.	Immediate
Work with the Agricultural Advisory Committee, the Ministry responsible for Agriculture, the Agricultural Land Commission, and the community to develop an agricultural zone and identify opportunities to increase diverse agricultural activity. Amend RDN Land Use and Subdivision Bylaw No. 500, 1987 to include the new zone.	Short Term
Review the current board policy on commenting on applications made to the Agricultural Land Commission and consider the potential role of the Agricultural Advisory Committee. Write a report to the Board with recommendations.	Short Term
Work with the Provincial subdivision approving officer, Ministry of Agriculture, and the Agricultural Land Commission to minimize the impact of subdivision on lands within the ALR.	Ongoing

Objective 5.1.2	Support and promote sustainable agriculture on ALR lands.
Policy 5.1.12	The minimum parcel size for lands located within the Agricultural Lands designation shall be 8.0 ha.
Policy 5.1.13	<p>Despite policy 5.1.12 above, subject to approval from the Agricultural Land Commission, and subject to being consistent with the RGS, the RDN may support the creation of more compact residential clusters through a rezoning or Development Variance Permit (DVP) on lands within this designation which may include smaller parcels and/or a subdivision pursuant to the Strata Property Act subject to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal must include a significant agricultural component which would contribute towards making Electoral Area 'A' a leader in local food production. The proposal does not result in more dwelling units and/or parcels than what is permitted by the zoning in place at the time the application is made. The overall density and/or number of parcels shall be determined based on the buildable area of the subject property and not the total site area as determined by the RDN. The proposal is consistent with ALR, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation (BC Regulation 171/2002). Residential development should be located on the least fertile portions of the subject property. Residential development must include a vegetated buffer designed and constructed in accordance with the Ministry of Agriculture "A Guide to Edge Planning Promoting Compatibility Along Urban-Agricultural Edges" published in 2009 by the Ministry of Agriculture as amended or replaced



	<p>from time to time.</p> <p>f. No parcel of less than 1.0 ha shall be created.</p> <p>g. All development must be serviced with onsite methods for treating wastewater and water systems.</p> <p>h. The proposal includes a report from a professional Agrologist outlining how the proposal would be more efficient from an agricultural perspective than a traditional subdivision and certifying that the proposed residential development is located on the least fertile portions of the land and is necessary to support the proposed agricultural use.</p> <p>i. The remainder must be protected against further subdivision and non-agricultural uses through covenant and/or zoning.</p>
Policy 5.1.14	This plan supports the use of conservation covenants for the preservation of environmentally sensitive features. However, it is recognized that agricultural considerations must be taken fully into account when the use of a conservation covenant for the preservation of environmentally sensitive features is being contemplated.
Policy 5.1.15	This plan supports a feasibility study looking at the use of conservation covenants and transfer of development credits for the preservation of farm land.
Policy 5.1.16	Property owner initiated zoning to reduce subdivision and preserve large parcel of agricultural land is supported.
Policy 5.1.17	The use of agricultural practices which minimize the impacts on the environment, improve water use efficiency, reduce the use of chemical fertilizers, and reduce dependence on fossil fuels, such as permaculture, shall be encouraged.
5.1.18	The use of water for irrigation on agricultural lands to boost local food production is supported.

Implementation Actions	Timing (Immediate, Short Term, Long Term, Ongoing)
Conduct a public process for considering implementation of minimum parcel sizes.	Please refer to Appendix 3 for more information
Conduct a feasibility study looking at the use of conservation covenants and transfer of development credits for the preservation of farm land.	Short Term

Objective 5.1.3	Create opportunities for local food markets
Policy 5.1.19	This plan supports collaboration, cooperation, and flexibility to support agricultural operations looking at investing in agriculture and/or attempting to resolve issues which are limiting agricultural production in Area 'A'.
Policy 5.1.20	The RDN shall work with other levels of government and other agencies to develop financial incentives to preserve farm land and encourage young families to get in to farming.
Policy	This plan supports the use of public land for community gardens and farmers



5.1.21	markets where appropriate.
Policy 5.1.22	Proposals for the establishment of a cold storage facility and provincially licensed meat processing facility may be supported within the plan area in consultation with the ministry responsible for Agriculture, Agricultural Land Commission, the farming community, and the community at large.

Implementation Actions	Timing (Immediate, Short Term, Long Term, Ongoing)
Work with the farming community and the Agricultural Advisory Committee to develop strategies which support and encourage agriculture in Electoral Area 'A'.	Ongoing
Amend 'RDN Land Use and Subdivision Bylaw No. 500, 1987' to permit community gardens and farmers markets. Develop a process for managing the use of these lands for community agriculture.	Short Term

Objective 5.1.4	Support and Encourage Agricultural Education.
Policy 5.1.23	This plan supports the preparation of an Agricultural Plan for Electoral Area 'A' which should at minimum provide an overview of the local food system, its relative food security, capacity, opportunities for enhancing the food-related economy, and recommendations for increasing the sustainability of the food system.
Policy 5.1.24	The RDN should provide perspective purchasers, developers, and land owners with information on living in rural agricultural communities.
Policy 5.1.25	The RDN should work with the Nanaimo and Cedar Farmers Institute, ministry responsible for Agriculture, RDN Advisory Committee, Agricultural Land Commission, Nanaimo Foodshare, and School District 68 to develop an agricultural education program aimed at elementary and high school students.

Implementation Actions	Timing (Immediate, Short Term, Long Term, Ongoing)
Prepare an agricultural plan which is consistent with the plan prepared for the Cowichan Valley Regional District.	Immediate
Develop informational brochures to distribute to prospective property owners as well as existing Area A residents.	Short Term
Work with the Agricultural Advisory Committee to establish an agricultural education program.	Short Term



5.2 Creating a Local Food System

A successful local food system requires the right conditions to be in place for both producers and consumers. Both require reliable and steady access to markets offering products at affordable prices. Local food systems also require a reliable means to store and process products before being sent to market.



This plan recognizes that creating a successful, local food system goes beyond the scope of this OCP and requires cooperation and involvement from all levels of government as well as farmers and consumers. This section outlines the community's preference on how the RDN could improve the local food system in Electoral Area 'A' and the actions senior governments and other agencies could consider.

Objectives and Policies

Section 5.2	Policy/Objective
Objective 5.2.1	Create and enhance opportunities to buy locally produced agricultural products
Policy 5.2.1	Support and encourage farmers markets by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Making farmers markets and non-industrial agricultural uses exempt from DPA requirements and supporting temporary and/or seasonal farmers markets in any land use designation; b. Waiving and/or significantly reducing building permit and development application fees for the construction of produce stands, farmers markets, and other agricultural markets that sell locally produced agricultural products; and, c. Supporting the Nanaimo Foodshare, Nanaimo and Cedar Farmers Institute, and other agricultural group's educational programs that introduce people to growing their own food and buying locally grown food.
Policy 5.2.2	Community gardens are supported in all land use designations.
Policy 5.2.3	The integration of edible landscaping in all new development is strongly encouraged.
Policy 5.2.4	The provision of community gardens may be considered a community amenity in conjunction with a proposed development.



Section 5.2	Policy/Objective
Policy 5.2.5	The development of a local cold storage facility, licensed meat processing facility, and value-added agricultural uses which utilize raw products produced on local farms are strongly supported.
Policy 5.2.6	The RDN should work with the Agricultural Advisory Committee, local producers, and potential consumers to explore ways of expanding markets for local agricultural products.
Advocacy Policy 5.2.7	The RDN should work with the local farming community and other agencies to consider the feasibility of establishing a composting facility whereby dairy manure and other organic material could be processed in to a viable alternative to raw manure and chemical fertilizers for use on local fields.
Advocacy Policy 5.2.8	The RDN should help control the spread of noxious weeds by working with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to ensure frequent cutting of roadside vegetation adjacent to farming areas.
5.2.9	The RDN may support the provision of community water on lands outside of the GCB for the purpose of facilitating increased agricultural productivity.

Implementation Actions	Timing (Immediate, Short Term, Long Term, Ongoing)
When considering a rezoning application, the RDN shall encourage the applicant to incorporate provisions for local food production in the design.	Ongoing
Amend ' RDN Land Use and Subdivision Bylaw No. 500, 1987 ' to permit farmers markets and community gardens in all zones.	Immediate
Approach the Cowichan Valley Regional District, Nanaimo and Cedar Farmers Institute, Nanaimo Foodshare, and other agricultural groups to partner on the development of an updated local food map showing locations where locally grown food can be purchased in the Region and the timing of various locally produced crops.	Short Term

