

The following is a consolidated copy of the Comox Valley Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 120, 2010 bylaw and includes the following bylaws:

Bylaw No.	Bylaw Name	Adopted	Purpose
120	Comox Valley Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 120, 2010	March 29, 2011	Regional Growth Strategy
539	Comox Valley Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 120, 2010, Amendment No. 1	December 18, 2018	Text amendments to Schedule A of the RGS
810	Comox Valley Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 120, 2010, Amendment No. 2	March 17, 2026	To update the bylaw with current data without altering the overall vision, objectives, policies, or growth management framework

This bylaw may not be complete due to pending updates or revisions and therefore is provided for reference purposes only. Titles and whereas clauses may be different than in original bylaws to make this consolidated version more clear and identify historical changes and conditions. THIS BYLAW SHOULD NOT BE USED FOR ANY LEGAL PURPOSES. Please contact the corporate legislative officer at the Comox Valley Regional District to view the complete bylaw when required.

COMOX VALLEY REGIONAL DISTRICT

BYLAW NO. 120

A bylaw to adopt the Comox Valley regional growth strategy

WHEREAS the *Local Government Act* provides that a regional board may develop, adopt, implement, monitor and review a regional growth strategy under part 25 of the Act;

AND WHEREAS the board of Comox Valley Regional District initiated the preparation of a regional growth strategy by resolution dated March 25, 2008;

AND WHEREAS the board gave written notice of the initiation to affected local governments and the Minister of Community and Rural Development on April 7, 2008;

AND WHEREAS the board established an intergovernmental advisory committee for the regional district when the regional growth strategy was initiated;

AND WHEREAS the board adopted a consultation plan on January 27, 2009 to provide opportunities for early and ongoing consultation in accordance with the Act, and during the development of the strategy the board provided the opportunities for consultation required by the Act;

NOW THEREFORE the board of the Comox Valley Regional District in open meeting assembled enacts as follows:

Adoption of regional growth strategy

1. Schedule 'A' attached to and forming part of this bylaw is adopted as the "Regional Growth Strategy for Comox Valley Regional District".

Severability

2. If any section, subsection, clause or phrase of this bylaw is for any reason declared invalid by a Court of competent jurisdiction, the decision shall not

affect the validity of the remaining sections, subsections, clauses or phrases of this bylaw.

Bylaw citation and effective date

3. This Bylaw No. 120 may be cited as “Comox Valley Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 120, 2010” and takes effect on the date adopted.

Schedule A
Comox Valley Regional Growth Strategy
Bylaw No. 120, 2010



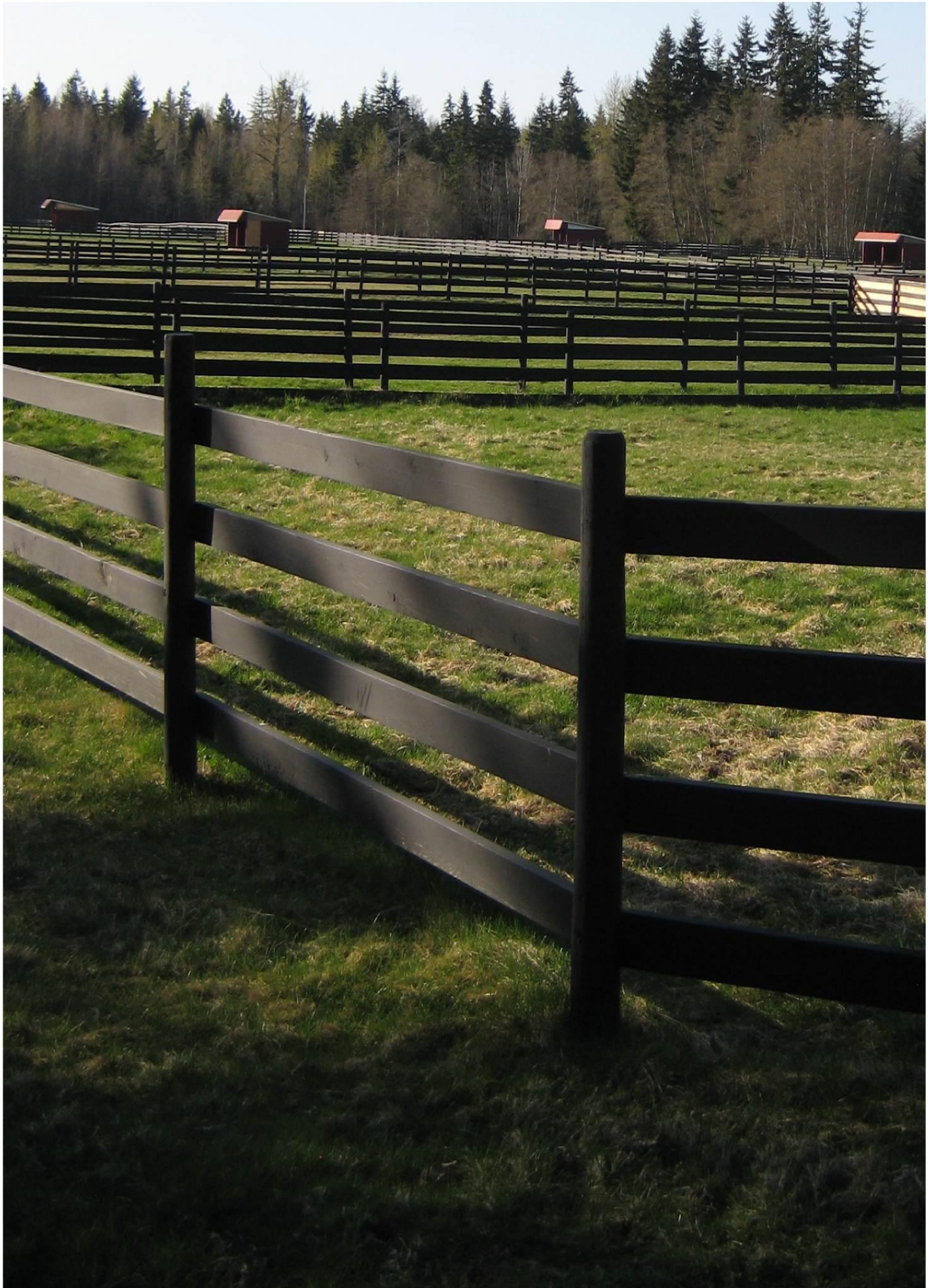
Comox Valley

REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

Comox Valley Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 120, 2010

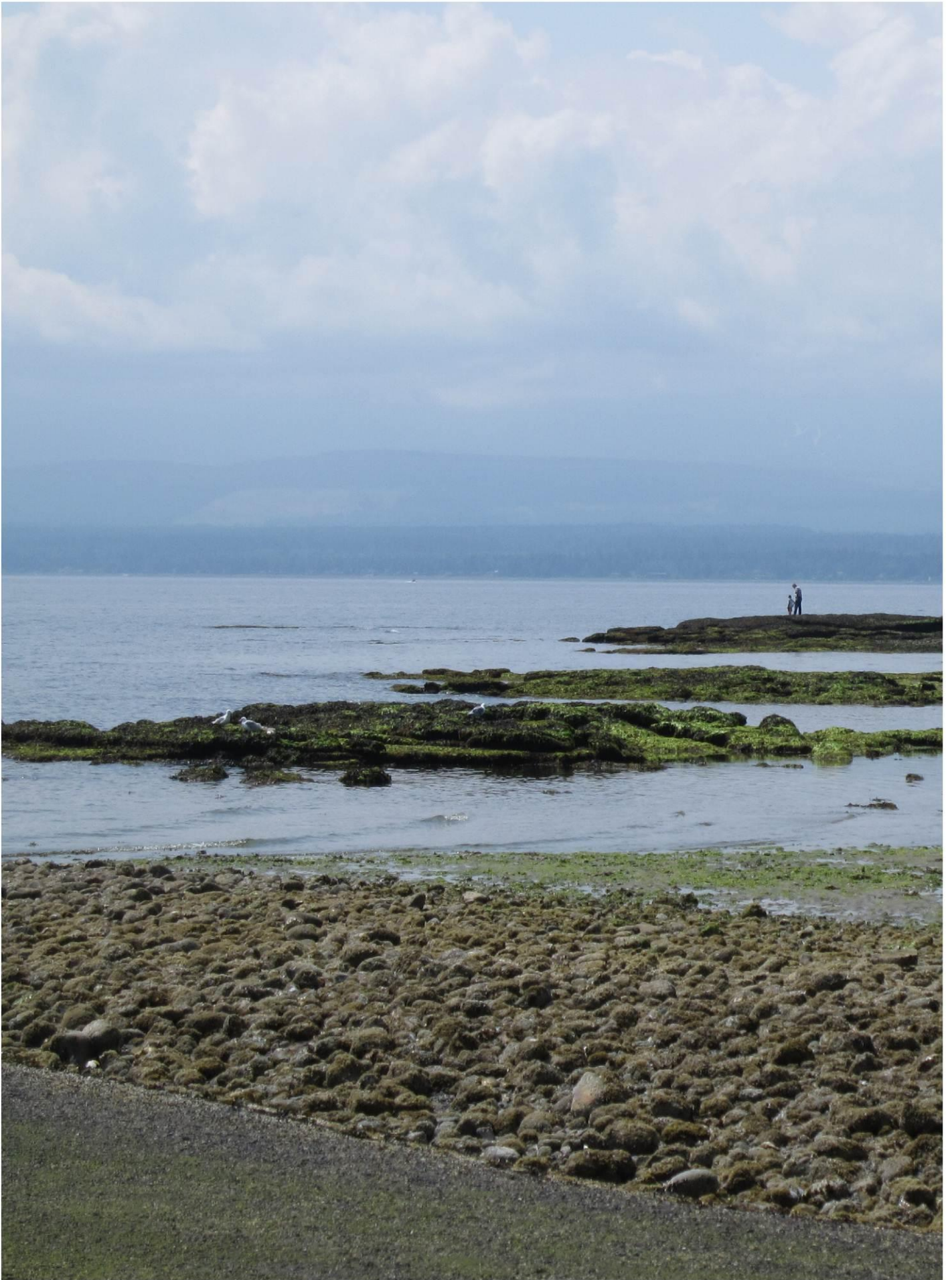
Prepared for Comox Valley Regional District

Prepared by Urban Strategies Inc.
Ecoplan International Inc.
Ear to the Ground Planning



List of Acronyms	2
Part 1: Introduction	4
Part 2: Context	8
2.1 Setting the Stage (2008 – 2009)	8
2.2 K’ómoks First Nation	8
2.3 Major Trends	10
2.4. Population, Demographics and Employment	15
Part 3: Regional Policies	24
3.1 Vision	24
3.2 Policy Areas	24
1. Housing	27
2. Ecosystems, Natural Areas and Parks	38
3. Local Economic Development	47
4. Transportation	56
5. Infrastructure	61
6. Food systems	70
7. Public Health and Safety	78
8. Climate Change	83
Part 4: Managing Growth	93
4.1 A Strategy for Managing Growth	93
4.2 Collaborative Regional and Local Planning	93
4.3 Linking Growth Management and Regional Conservation	93
4.4 Growth Management Principles	94
4.5 Land-Use Categories and Designations	96
Core Settlement Areas	96
<i>Municipal Areas</i>	98
<i>Settlement Nodes</i>	99
<i>K’ómoks First Nation Lands</i>	101
<i>Settlement Expansion Areas</i>	102
Rural Areas	106
<i>Rural Settlement Areas</i>	106
<i>Agricultural Areas</i>	108
Resource Areas and Parks	111
<i>Resource Areas</i>	111
<i>Provincial Parks</i>	112

Part 5: Implementation and Monitoring	115
5.1 Implementation Process	115
Review OCPs, Prepare and Include Regional Context Statements	116
Develop and Adopt Implementation Agreements	116
Develop action plans to guide implementation of RGS goals	119
Create Monitoring and Evaluation Programs	119
Plan for Five-year Reviews	120
Undertake Additional Studies and Projects	120
5.2 Amendments to the RGS	121
Standard Amendments	121
Minor Amendments	121
Criteria for Minor Amendments	122
Minor Amendment Process	123
5.3 Roles and Responsibilities	126
Glossary	128
Appendices	138
APPENDIX A: Principles/Policy Objectives Matrix	140
Maps	i
Map No. 1: Context Map	ii
Map No. 2: K'ómoks First Nation Traditional Territory	iii
Map No. 3: K'ómoks First Nation Lands	iv
Map No. 4: Regional Conservation Framework Concept	v
Map No. 5: Growth Management Map	vi



List of Acronyms

ALC*	Agricultural Land Commission
ALR*	Agricultural Land Reserve
BC	British Columbia
CEEI*	Community Energy Emissions Inventory
CVRD	Comox Valley Regional District
EFP*	Environmental Farm Plan
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area
GHG*	Greenhouse Gas
IA*	Implementation Agreement
ISMP*	Integrated Stormwater Management Plan
OCP	Official Community Plan
RCS*	Regional Context Statement
RGS	Regional Growth Strategy
SC	Steering Committee
SEI*	Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
WSA	Water Sustainability Act
WSP	Water Sustainability Plan
ZND*	Zero Net Deforestation

* Terms with asterisks are defined in the Glossary

01 Introduction

Part 1: Introduction

The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) was established in February 2008. The CVRD encompasses the Village of Cumberland, the Town of Comox and the City of Courtenay along with the electoral areas of Baynes Sound (A), Lazo North (B), and Puntledge-Black Creek (C)¹ as shown on *Map No. 1 Context Map*. Within the region's boundaries there is a population of approximately 71,300 people as of 2021. As of 2023, most of this population resides in the municipal areas (49,450 or 69 per cent), but there is also a growing population in the electoral areas of Baynes Sound, Lazo North, and Puntledge-Black Creek (21,850 or 31 per cent).

By 2041, it is estimated that the population in the Comox Valley will grow to 92,790 people. This growth comes with associated needs and impacts that require regional coordination on issues that cross local government boundaries. These regional issues include provision of a range of housing options, protecting and enhancing the health of the natural environment and ecological connections, supporting the local economy, developing an efficient multi-modal transportation network, providing regional services, ensuring food security, public health planning and addressing climate change. Part 3 of this plan sets out goals and strategies for addressing these issues. The purpose of the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) is to promote coordination among the municipalities and regional district on these issues that cross municipal boundaries and create clear, reliable links with the provincial ministries and agencies whose resources are needed to carry out projects and programs to help implement the RGS.

The Comox Valley RGS reflects a partnership between the CVRD, the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox and Village of Cumberland. Adopted in 2010, the RGS was informed by a draft *Regional Water Supply Strategy*, a draft *Regional Sewer Strategy*, and a draft *Sustainability Strategy*. The RGS serves to inform the provincial government of local priorities and objectives to encourage them to align their program delivery in support of these local priorities.

The purpose of the RGS is to build consensus among local governments

¹ Denman and Hornby Islands (part of Electoral Area A) are not included in the Comox Valley RGS. Land use planning for these areas is managed by the Islands Trust. (Some data includes Denman and Hornby Islands due to data source methodology; these instances are clearly identified.)

on future policies regarding land use activities and development over a 20-year period, as legislated by Part 13 of the *Local Government Act* (RSBC, 2015, c.1). The RGS provides a framework for decision-making and land use with the aim of preserving the region's high quality of life. Specifically, the following key elements form the RGS as required by Provincial legislation:

1. a vision statement on the future of the region over a 20-year time frame;
2. population and employment projections for the region; and,
3. actions to be taken in relation to specific matters: housing; ecosystems, natural areas, and parks; local economic development, transportation, infrastructure, food systems, public health and safety, and climate change.

The RGS comprises five parts with supporting maps. Parts 1 and 2 introduce the RGS process, context, and summarize the issues that the RGS policies address. Part 3 provides the eight RGS goals with associated policies and explanatory text. The explanatory text is provided to bring further clarity and intent to the policies, and they form part of the RGS bylaw. Part 4 provides direction on managing growth through the specific regional land use designations associated with *Map No. 5: Growth Management Map*. Part 5 provides details on the implementation and monitoring process of the RGS. Each of the Parts to the RGS are linked and should be read together as a single comprehensive policy framework for managing growth throughout the Comox Valley. Most specifically, the growth management policies in Part 4 must be read together and understood within the context of the Part 3 policies that provide guidance on the eight main goals of the RGS and Part Five policies that provide guidance on how to implement the RGS.



02 Context

2.1	Setting the stage	8
2.2	K'ómoks First Nation	8
2.3	Major trends	10
2.4	Population, demographics and employment	15

Part 2: Context

2.1 Setting the Stage (2008 – 2009)

The RGS process required substantial intergovernmental support and interaction. The partnership and working process to develop the RGS included provincial representation and guidance. All four Comox Valley local governments were involved through a technical advisory committee (TAC), a steering committee (SC), and an intergovernmental advisory committee.

The RGS issues and policies were also developed through ongoing consultation. In addition to focus group meetings with non-profits, businesses and service providers, a series of three public open houses and working sessions were held in each of the local government areas throughout Comox Valley during the day and evening. Following the open houses, materials were toured to civic centres throughout the Comox Valley. A series of workshops were also held in local high schools to engage youth in the long-term planning and thinking about their communities. Through video, photography and mapping, youth worked together to tell their own stories about places they care about in their communities. Issues were captured on video and displayed at the first round of open houses. Materials related to the RGS, including the youth workshops, open houses and three videos that documented the RGS process and public feedback are available on the CVRD website at www.comoxvalleyrd.ca.

2.2 K'ómoks First Nation

The CVRD acknowledges and respects that boundaries of the regional district reside entirely within the traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation illustrated on *Map No. 2 K'ómoks First Nation Traditional Territory*. The K'ómoks First Nation traditional territory extends from the south side of the Englishman River drainage, north along the height of land on the Vancouver Island Range, east along the height of land on the north side of Salmon River Valley, across the Johnstone Strait to Call Inlet, and southeast down the centre of the Strait of Georgia back to the south side

of the Englishman River, including islands and portions of the mainland. The Province of British Columbia's Consultative Areas Database identifies the following Nations with overlapping traditional territory: We Wai Kai First Nation, Wei Wai Kum First Nation, Tla'amin Nation, Da'naxda'xw/Awaetlala First Nation, Tlowitsis Nation, Mamalilikulla First Nations, Homalco First Nation, Qualicum First Nation and Kwiakah First Nation.

K'ómoks First Nation ratified their Treaty on March 8, 2025. This significant milestone is an important step toward self-governance. The CVRD recognizes that a future review of the RGS will require close collaboration with K'ómoks First Nation as their Treaty Lands will form an important part of growth and development in the region. While the ratification process with the provincial and federal governments will continue over the next several years, the CVRD will continue to work alongside the K'ómoks First Nation during the transition to self-government. This includes ensuring that our planning documents remain nimble and able to incorporate input in future. The federal and provincial governments will proceed with their respective ratification processes through legislation. The K'ómoks Treaty will be signed and come into effect on Effective Date in 2028. K'ómoks First Nation reserve lands within the CVRD are identified on *Map No. 3 K'ómoks First Nation Reserve Lands* and *Map No. 5: Growth Management*.

The CVRD acknowledges the importance of the K'ómoks First Nation in the RGS process and its role as a unique rightsholder and has worked to engage and inform K'ómoks First Nation throughout the RGS process.

Treaty settlement lands are outside of the RGS legislative authority and K'ómoks First Nation's title and rights are respected. The CVRD's lands are adjacent to K'ómoks Treaty Lands and the CVRD is committed to ongoing engagement with K'ómoks to understand the Nation's interests in the growth of the rural areas and how the regional management of this growth, including infrastructure, can impact the management and planning of K'ómoks lands.

The CVRD Board has identified Indigenous Relations as a strategic priority. In January 2020, the Board adopted an Indigenous Relations Framework to support Indigenous relations and promote greater cultural

awareness. To support this commitment, the CVRD remains committed to building relationships with Indigenous peoples and advancing reconciliation through the RGS and other governing policies.

2.3 Major Trends

The following trends were identified in the RGS background paper *Understanding Our Choices*, released in the spring of 2009. The background paper provided an overview of the RGS goals and included a summary of related trends, findings and policy recommendations. The following major trends should not be read as policies, but rather as background information informing the specific goals and policies contained in this RGS. To ensure that the RGS stays relevant and responds to the changing issues of the Comox Valley, these trends should be revisited every five years as part of the RGS review (see Part 4, Implementation and Monitoring for the five-year review process).

- 1. The Comox Valley is a growing region.** In 2021, the population of the CVRD was 71,300, representing a nine per cent increase (+5,715) from 2016. This growth rate was higher than the seven per cent increase (+4,027) recorded between 2011 and 2016. When the RGS was being prepared, it noted that the existing settlement pattern was still relatively compact and the overall housing stock was diverse. However, recent trends show a shift toward a more dispersed settlement pattern, made up mostly of low-density housing forms. If this trend continues, it will lead to significant urban and rural sprawl—putting pressure on the valley’s natural areas and ecological functions, increasing reliance on automobile travel, and undermining the character and livability of both rural and urban communities. Development must therefore be directed in a way that supports a sustainable, long-term pattern of growth, using land and infrastructure as efficiently as possible.

Since the adoption of the RGS in 2011, the proportion of new housing units located within settlement nodes has increased to between 84 and 94 per cent (2020–2023), up from 65 per cent in 2006. This indicates that the trend toward sprawl has been mitigated.

- 2. The population is rapidly aging.** While an aging demographic is a

phenomenon taking place throughout BC, it is an exaggerated trend in the Comox Valley (except for the Village of Cumberland, which has a growing youth demographic). The climate, natural areas and opportunities for recreation have made the valley an extremely attractive place for retirees. In 2021, there were 19,490 people aged 65 years and over, an increase of 20 per cent (+3,265) from 2016. This growth rate was lower than 24 per cent increase (+3,200) recorded between 2011 and 2016. We need to account for this reality and respond to the types of living environments, mobility choices and health/social services required by an older population. The significance of this demographic trend is also evident in the funding of infrastructure. Specifically, we need to look beyond the short-term needs of young seniors (which will likely predominate over the next 10-20 years) and be sure that the overall land-use pattern we are creating will allow them to maintain a high quality of life as they age.

3. **Affordability is a growing issue.** The cost of home ownership has undergone a dramatic increase since 2001, while the average household income has been stagnant. The median home price rose by 64 per cent between 2019 and 2022, nearly double the 33 per cent increase from 2016 to 2019. Such increases outpace the median household income growth of 23 per cent from \$62,992 in 2016 to \$77,500 in 2021. (Note that income data includes Denman and Hornby Islands.) While multi-unit residences have increased in recent years, they remain a small portion of overall housing supply. The result is that the cost of owning a home is now over seven times greater than income. Taken together with the fact that few alternatives to single-household dwellings have been provided, a wide variety of people have an ever-smaller choice of housing options or are required to spend a significant proportion of their income on housing. This is not a sustainable pattern. Targets and policies are required to ensure a diversity of housing type, form, tenure and price are provided.
4. **Working with the environment.** Over the past 150 years, the functioning of the local natural systems in the Comox Valley has been impacted by a variety of land development decisions. The growth strategy can be a powerful tool for achieving the goal of understanding and working with the local ecological features and natural systems at a regional scale, identifying principles for

conservation and providing guidance and direction on how to implement conservation strategies through official community plans (OCPs) and other means. Protecting our waterways and wetlands ensures clean water for fish and adequate supplies for homes, businesses and agriculture and aquaculture. Encouraging interest in, and personal responsibility for, the natural systems around us helps public health by drawing residents and visitors to go walking or hiking while promoting environmental well-being. Finally, the local natural beauty and environment attracts tourists from around the globe.

5. **Job creation is a challenge.** The ratio of jobs to population is relatively low at 0.51 jobs per person. Job growth is also not keeping pace with population growth. This trend is expected to continue as there will be more people in the Comox Valley living off the wealth, they have accumulated in the past than current paid employment. Therefore, while the RGS must ensure that it facilitates local economic development, its focus should not be solely on targets for jobs or economic sectors. Rather, there should be a framework for local economic development by means of coordinating regulations; encouraging entrepreneurship; increasing value-added production; and, supporting local businesses so that wealth is maintained and circulated within the valley.

Since 2011, the employment rate (the number of employed people as a percentage of the population aged 15 and older) decreased since 2011:

Census Years	2011	2016	2021
Comox Valley Employment Rate (includes Denman and Hornby Islands)	54.8%	52.3%	51.3%

6. **A concerted effort is required to increase transportation choices.** There are few transportation choices in the Comox Valley. The overwhelming majority of trips are made by private automobile. While this is typical of a rural area, the public transit modal share of less than 1 per cent is half that of similar regions in BC. This presents a major obstacle to achieving serious reductions in greenhouse gas emissions as transportation accounts for 57 per cent of all emission in the valley.

Working with BC Transit, significant investments will need to be made in public transit and coordination of land-use patterns that supports transit use. Similarly, strategies that facilitate walking and cycling as options (especially for non-work trips which are an increasing majority of trips) are required.

7. **Water is a scarce resource with many competing demands for its use.** The *Comox Valley Water System Water Efficiency Plan*, originally adopted in 2009 and updated in 2021, has likely played an important role in the trend of improved water conservation. This plan will be updated in 2025 to include all the CVRD's water systems. In 2016, the *Water Sustainability Act (WSA)* came into effect in BC, significantly reforming water management. The WSA introduced groundwater licensing and new area-based tools, such as Water Sustainability Plans (WSP) and WSA Objectives, to support watershed planning, regional water management and watershed governance. Water Master Plans were created for Union Bay (2022) and Black Creek-Oyster Bay (2023) and currently underway for the Comox Valley water system (2025), analyzing the systems' current water supplies, fire flow capabilities, water demands and requirements for future growth.

8. **A strong local food system is becoming critical.** Within the Comox Valley there is a regional interface of the urban and rural areas. People living in the urban areas have access to local food and country character, while people in the rural areas benefit from easy access to municipal services and a local market. This interface is critical in supporting a strong local food system. The extent of shoreline areas and lands contained within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) has meant that food production has been an important component of the local economy and culture. This is an important asset to build upon as food security and access to locally grown and harvested food is becoming increasingly important. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted significant vulnerabilities in global food supply chains, further emphasizing the need for local resilience. Rising gas prices and the environmental impact of transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions are also creating a greater awareness among consumers as to the origin of what they eat and how it is produced. As a result, there is an increased demand for local food production – whether that is in the form of agriculture, aquaculture or community and private

gardening.

9. **A response to climate change is required.** In 2010, countries around the world have committed to reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) by 80 per cent by 2050 and the G8 has recently set out an ambitious target to restrict increases in global temperatures to two degrees. The Province of BC has created the most ambitious policy framework within North America for achieving GHG reductions and combating climate change. The Province is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 16 per cent below 2007 levels by 2025, 40 per cent by 2030, 60 per cent by 2040 and 80 per cent by 2050. The framework requires that local governments monitor and reduce emissions related to transportation, energy consumption by buildings, land use change and solid waste. At a local level, we are beginning to plan for a carbon shift that will see reliance on oil and non-renewable, polluting resources decline as the economy focuses on clean and renewable energy sources. This will have a significant impact on the communities we build, the buildings we construct and the transportation investments we make. In addition to reducing GHG emissions, there must also be plans in place to mitigate the current and growing effects of climate change.

Since the adoption of the RGS in 2011, the CVRD has implemented a range of strategies, projects, and initiatives to reduce regional greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and plan for climate adaptation. These include the Corporate Energy and Emissions Plan and various GHG reduction measures. As of June 2025, a regional biological carbon sequestration study is underway to identify sources, opportunities to protect and enhance them, and to provide recommendations for action. This study contributes to the goal of achieving net-zero corporate emissions by 2050.

The CVRD is also a signatory to the BC Climate Action Charter. As a signatory, the CVRD is eligible for a conditional grant through the Local Government Climate Action Program. In return, we commit to working toward carbon neutrality in our corporate operations, measuring and reporting our GHG emissions, and supporting the creation of complete, compact, and energy-efficient rural and urban communities.

10. Improve and plan for long-term public health and safety. Land use patterns and activities have a variety of impacts on public health and safety – ranging from decreased levels of physical activity and higher incidences of obesity, increasing homelessness, limited means of accessing health care and emergency services, fire and police services, and ensuring safe drinking water. This broad range of public health and safety issues should be addressed through consideration of how services are accessed and provided and active transportation strategies (such as walking and cycling with associated infrastructure and connections) that will facilitate more active lifestyles and improve the long-term health of people in the Comox Valley.

11. Support economic development opportunities for the K'ómoks First Nation. As the K'ómoks First Nation proceeds through the treaty settlement process and toward settlement of outstanding legal claims, they may have access to both lands and financial resources. Coupled with a strong desire to engage in local economic activity, there is considerable potential for increased participation by K'ómoks First Nation in business and job creation in the region. Support for K'ómoks First Nation economic objectives and initiatives is embedded within the RGS.

2.4. Population, Demographics and Employment²

Looking toward 2041, the RGS is required to make a series of forecasts, including population, households and labour force. These forecasts are provided as 'targets' to guide policy development but do not establish a cap or limit on overall growth. The table below summarizes RGS forecasts. More detailed information is provided in the sub-sections.

² Unless otherwise mentioned, statistics in this section do not include Denman and Hornby Islands.

Summary CVRD Population, Housing and Employment Projections

	2021 Estimate	2026 Forecast	2041 Forecast	2021-2041 Change
Population	71,300 ³	76,815	92,790	+21,490 (+30%)
Households	30,795	34,275	42,260	+11,465 (+37%)
Labour Force⁴	34,120	35,123	38,130	+4,010 (+19%)

Population

Between 2016 and 2021, the Comox Valley experienced an annual average population growth rate of 1.7 per cent, reaching a total of 71,300 residents in 2021. This growth varies among local municipalities, with the Village of Cumberland witnessing the fastest rate in the valley. Projections indicate that by 2026, the population will rise to 76,815 and is forecasted to reach approximately 92,790 by 2041. This represents an increase of about 21,490 residents since 2021, amounting to a potential 30 per cent growth from 2021 to 2041. As the Comox Valley is a popular destination for vacations and second homes, part-time residents are not included in these figures.

Historical Population Trend

In the early 1990s, the Comox Valley was among the fastest-growing regions in the province, with a 25 per cent increase in population between 1990 and 1995. The late 1990s saw slower growth, likely due to a downturn in resource-based economies across BC. While significant growth is projected up to 2041, the rate of growth in five-year intervals is expected to gradually soften over time.

The CVRD has experienced a positive net influx of people, with notable shifts in migration trends since 2014:

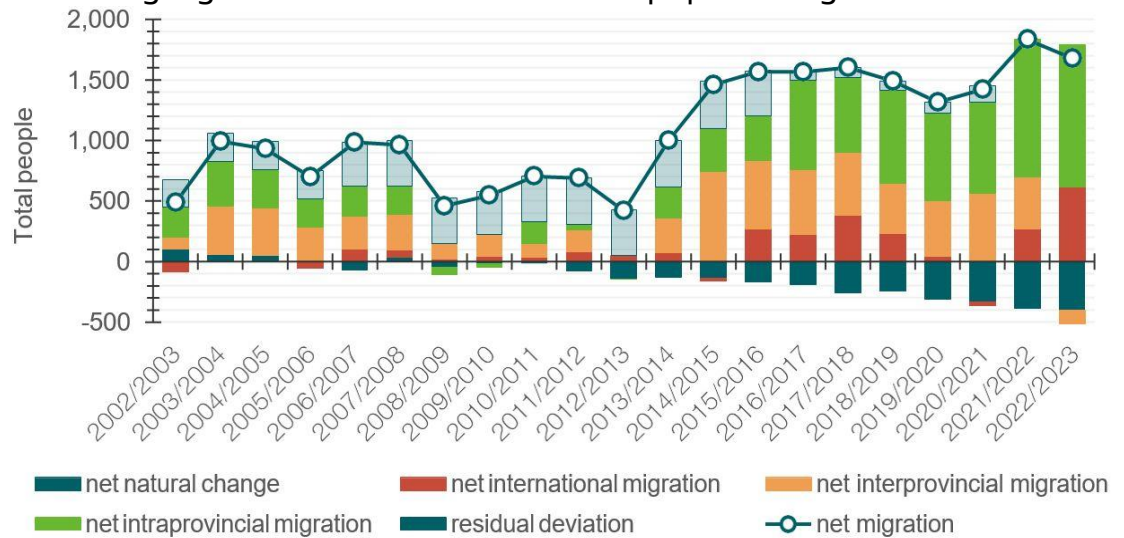
- **Annual Migration Rates:** From 2014 to 2023, the CVRD saw an average

³ From CVRD Regional Housing Needs Report, August 2024.

⁴ Labour Force data include Denman and Hornby Islands.

of 1,550 new residents annually, a substantial increase from the 740 people per year between 2002 and 2014.

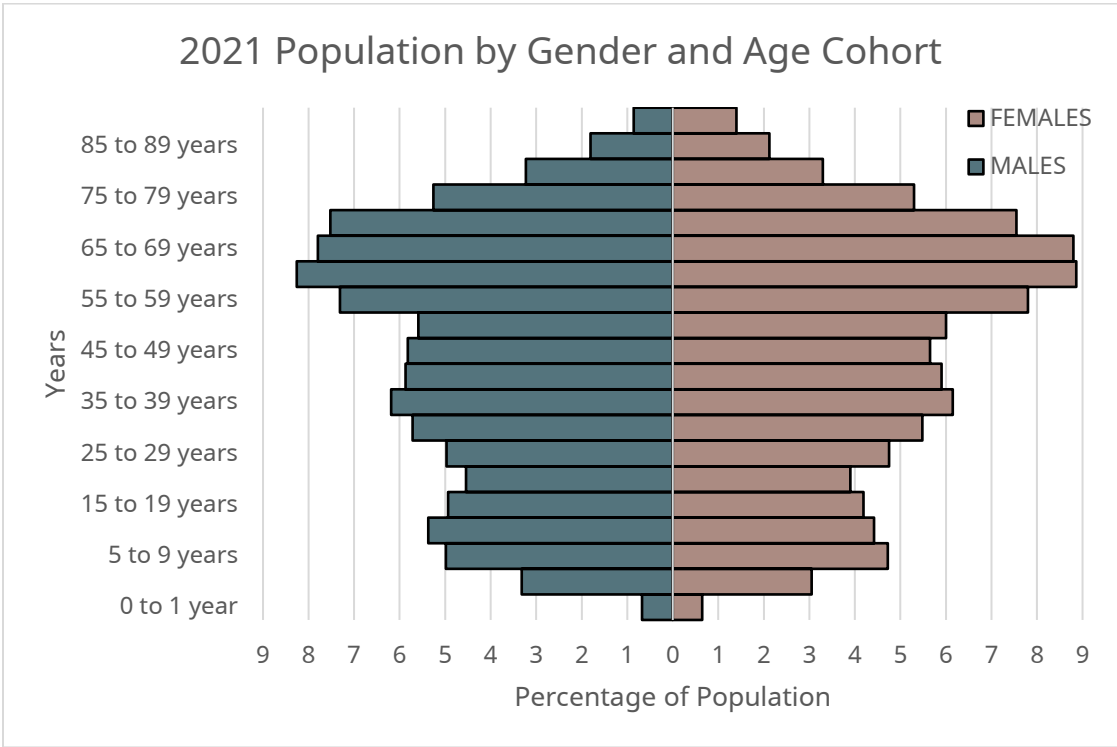
- **International Migration:** Historically minimal, international migration saw spikes between 2015–2019 and 2021–2023. In 2022/23, international in-migration peaked, coinciding with the first net loss of migrants from other provinces in two decades.
- **Origins of Newcomers:** New residents primarily originated from other regions within BC, supplemented by in-migration from other provinces. This pattern shifted in 2022/23, with changes in the sources of new residents.
- **Natural Population Change:** Since around 2011, an expanding senior population has led to higher death rates compared to birth rates, causing a gradual decline in net natural population growth.



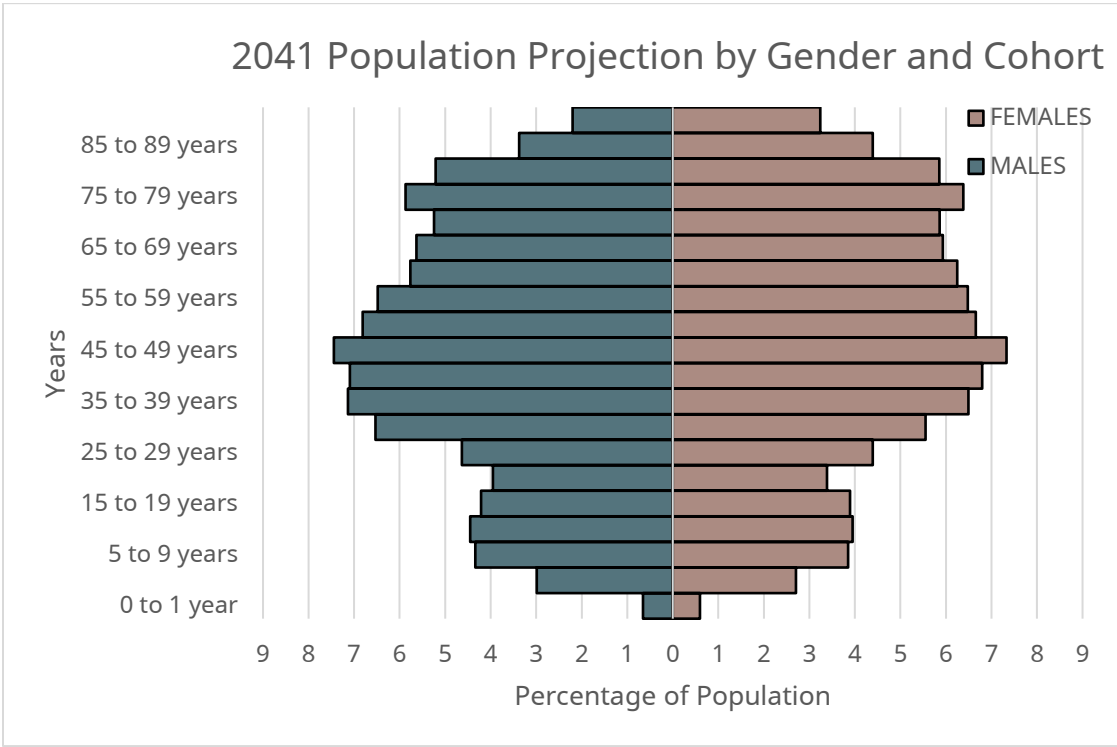
Source: Statistics Canada¹

¹ Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0140-01 Components of population change by census division, 2016 boundaries. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1710014001-eng>

Annual Demographic Change Related to Migration
(Source: 2024 CVRD Regional Housing Needs Report)



* Census data includes Denman and Hornby Islands



* Census data includes Denman and Hornby Islands

Housing

Like many Canadian communities, the CVRD has faced increasing housing pressures, notably rising costs. Recognizing the importance of up-to-date insights, the CVRD commissioned a Regional Housing Needs Report in 2020 and updated in 2024 to provide a current assessment of housing needs and projections for future demand.

The report highlights several key housing trends. Nearly one-quarter of the CVRD's dwellings were built in the 1990s, a period of significant growth not matched by construction in recent years. Currently, approximately 77 per cent of households in the CVRD are owner-occupied. From 2019 to 2022, the median home price surged by 64 per cent, a sharp rise compared to the 33 per cent increase recorded from 2016 to 2019. By 2023, an estimated 795 units in the area were operating as short-term rentals, further impacting local housing availability.

In terms of housing need, approximately 9 per cent of households were classified as in Core Housing Need in 2021, with higher rates among renters, single individuals, lone parents, Indigenous households, transgender or non-binary persons, and refugees. The report projects that the CVRD will require an additional 17,750 housing units by 2041 to meet anticipated demand and help stabilize the market. By 2026, around 5,320 new units may be needed, mostly in market housing, yet there is a critical need for below-market and deeply affordable housing options for both owners and renters.

Employment and Job Forecasts

An analysis of census data from 2011, 2016, and 2021 reveals employment trends across 20 industry sectors. Sectors like professional services, manufacturing, construction, healthcare, utilities, finance, and accommodation and food services have experienced growth. Conversely, sectors such as real estate, wholesale and retail trade, public administration, education, mining, and agriculture have declined.

These industry trends are influenced by various demographic factors. An aging population is driving increased demand for healthcare services, while potentially leading to a decline in physically demanding sectors like

agriculture and mining. A rising workforce is fueling growth in professional services roles. Declining birth rates may lead to a decrease in demand for education services. Population growth from in-migration is contributing to increased demand for construction and utilities. The rise of e-commerce is impacting the retail and wholesale trade sectors.

Employment Estimates and Forecasts

	Census Years			Avg. Change / Yr	Avg. Change/ Yr %	Forecast**	
	2011	2016	2021			2026	2041
Professional, scientific & technical services	1790	1580	2390	60	3.08%	2690	3590
Manufacturing	790	1140	1040	25	2.90%	1165	1540
Construction	2725	3080	3405	68	2.25%	3745	4765
Health care & social assistance	4120	4425	4970	85	1.89%	5395	6670
Utilities	150	65	155	0.5	1.79%	158	165
Finance & insurance	660	795	745	8.5	1.25%	788	915
Accommodation & food services	2155	2530	2330	17.5	0.81%	2418	2680
Other services (except public administration)	1370	1350	1470	10	0.71%	1520	1670
Transportation & warehousing	1260	1380	1340	8	0.62%	1380	1500
Admin., waste mgmt. & remediation services	1375	1330	1445	7	0.50%	1480	1585
Arts, entertainment & recreation	885	885	925	4	0.44%	945	1005
Information & cultural industries	410	400	425	1.5	0.36%	433	455
Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting	1845	1975	1820	-2.5	-0.13%	1808	1770
Retail trade	4580	4280	4470	-11	-0.24%	4415	4250
Mining, quarrying, & oil & gas extraction	405	380	380	-2.5	-0.63%	368	330
Educational services	2510	2240	2305	-20.5	-0.84%	2203	1895
Public administration	3085	2570	2750	-33.5	-1.11%	2583	2080
Wholesale trade	655	465	575	-8	-1.14%	535	415
Real estate & rental & leasing	665	515	535	-13	-2.11%	470	275
Management of companies & enterprises	0	15	30	3	N/A	45	90
All industries*	31440	31390	33505	206.5	0.64%	34538	37635

* Census data include Denman & Hornby Islands

** Forecast projected from 2021 using average annual changes



03 Regional Policies

3.1	Vision	24
3.2	Policy Areas	24
	<i>1. Housing</i>	<i>27</i>
	<i>2. Ecosystems, Natural Areas & Parks</i>	<i>38</i>
	<i>3. Local Economic Development</i>	<i>47</i>
	<i>4. Transportation</i>	<i>56</i>
	<i>5. Infrastructure</i>	<i>61</i>
	<i>6. Food Systems</i>	<i>70</i>
	<i>7. Public Health and Safety</i>	<i>78</i>
	<i>8. Climate Change</i>	<i>83</i>

Part 3: Regional Policies

3.1 Vision

The RGS vision statement describes the desired future for the region and sets the basic direction for planning, policies and action. The vision for the Comox Valley has been developed through ongoing community consultation throughout the RGS process.

The Comox Valley will continue to evolve as a region of distinct, well-connected and well-designed urban and rural communities. As stewards of the environment, local governments, the K'ómoks First Nation, public agencies, residents, businesses and community and non-governmental organizations will work collaboratively to conserve and enhance land, water and energy resources and ensure a vibrant local economy and productive working landscapes.

Many of the strategies in the RGS require cross-jurisdictional collaboration. To plan for long-term growth that is sustainable and sensitive to the unique character of the local communities within the Comox Valley, local governments and the K'ómoks First Nation will need to work together, and in partnership with other orders of government, to achieve the goals set out in the RGS.

3.2 Policy Areas

The following goals will help to guide long-term growth in the Comox Valley. The goals reflect rightsholders, interested parties and public input and respond to the identified challenges and opportunities that the Comox Valley will face over the next 20 years from 2011. These goals are organized into eight inter-related policy areas:

Goal 1: Housing:

Ensure a diversity of housing options to meet evolving demographics and needs.

Goal 2: Ecosystems, Natural Areas and Parks:

Protect, steward, and enhance the natural environment and ecological connections and systems.

Goal 3: Local Economic Development:

Achieve a sustainable, resilient, and dynamic local economy that supports Comox Valley businesses and the region's entrepreneurial spirit.

Goal 4: Transportation:

Develop an accessible, efficient, and affordable multi-modal transportation network that connects Core Settlement Areas and designated Town Centres; and links the Comox Valley to neighbouring communities and regions.

Goal 5: Infrastructure:

Provide affordable, effective, and efficient services and infrastructure that conserves land, water, and energy resources.

Goal 6: Food Systems:

Support and enhance the agricultural and aquaculture sectors; and increase local food security.

Goal 7: Public Health and Safety:

Support a high quality of life through the protection and enhancement of community health, safety, and well-being.

Goal 8: Climate Change:

Minimize regional greenhouse gas emissions and plan for adaptation.

Each RGS goal contains six components:

Issue overview

Provides a general description of the issue.

Current situation

Localizes the issue within the regional context based on background research in *Understanding Our Choices* and supporting regional strategies (*Comox Valley Sustainability Strategy, Comox Valley Water Supply Strategy, and Regional Sewerage Master Plan.*)

Objectives

Specific objectives related to the policy issue.

Targets

Provides a series of targets at interval years to monitor the effectiveness of the RGS policy implementation.

Measures

Types of data that will be used to monitor the achievement of targets, such as census data, the production of studies and data from local municipalities

Supporting policies

Policies that will help to achieve the objectives and meet the targets set out in the RGS.

Each of the goals, objectives and supporting policies found in Part 3 inform and provide guidance on interpreting and implementing the growth management policies found in Part 4 of this RGS.

GOAL 1: HOUSING

Ensure a diversity of affordable housing options to meet evolving regional demographics and needs.

Issue overview

Housing location, type, affordability, and choice play a central role in supporting more complete communities and can have long-term impacts on a region's economic health, environmental performance and overall sustainability. Housing can be located to help reduce infrastructure costs and improve its efficiency, support public transit services, and support more active, healthier transportation choices like walking and biking. Affordable housing can also attract employers and working households and permits families to invest more time and energy in other aspects of community life. Housing diversity allows people and families to live and stay in the Comox Valley regardless of their age, lifestyle interests, household arrangements, or financial situation.

Current situation

In the past several years, the Comox Valley has experienced almost every type of residential development. Ranging from multi-household infill in downtown centres to rural and suburban subdivisions, this development has increased housing supply and housing choice. Much of this growth occurred within and around the municipalities of Comox and Courtenay. Almost three-quarters of Comox Valley residents live in one of the three local municipalities or within one kilometre of their boundaries.

Some of the major housing trends and issues include:

- **Growing housing demand:** The CVRD may need an additional 17,750 housing units to be built by 2041 to meet anticipated demand.
- **Housing supply:** Under the 2023 Provincial Bill 44, a minimum of two dwellings must be allowed per lot across member municipalities and electoral areas. Lots smaller than 0.4 hectares—

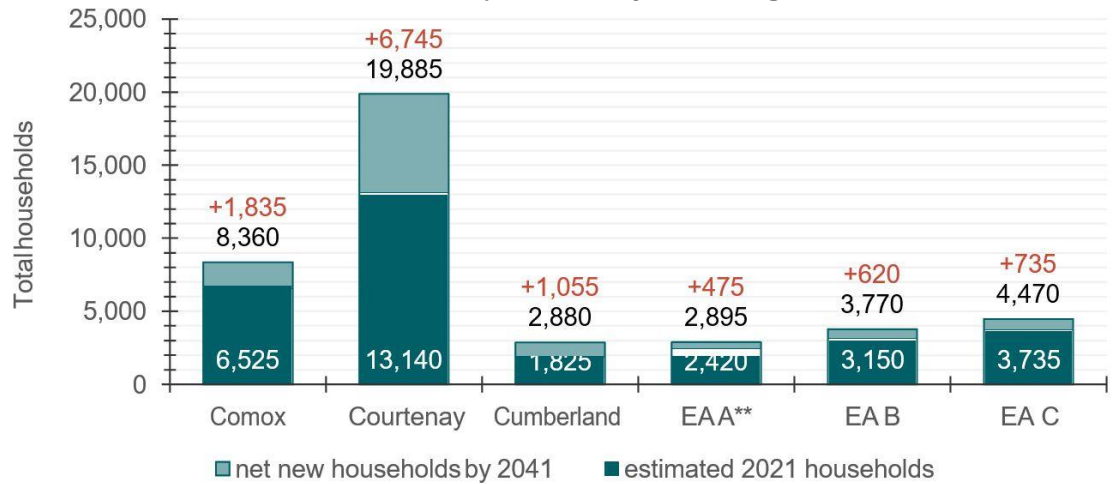
or those zoned as such—that are connected to both public water and sewage systems (and are not otherwise exempt) must allow a minimum of three or four dwelling units. Additionally, in areas near “frequent” bus services, once transit improves to meet population growth, a minimum of six dwelling units for lots greater than 281 square metres (As of January 2025, the Comox Valley Transit System does not meet the Provincial frequency measure). Member municipalities and the CVRD have amended their Zoning Bylaws to align with these legislative requirements. This proactive approach helps to increase housing supply, especially as infill within existing developed communities.

Note that for properties within the Agricultural Land Reserve (i.e., lands designated as “Agricultural Areas” and “Agricultural Areas within Municipal Areas”), residential development is regulated by the Agricultural Land Commission Act and the ALR Use Regulation. These regulations already permit limited residential density, including a principal residence of up to 500 square metres, a secondary suite within that residence, and one additional residence: up to 90 square metres for parcels 40 hectares or smaller, or up to 186 square metres for parcels larger than 40 hectares. Accordingly, the number and size of dwellings on ALR parcels must not exceed what is permitted under these regulations.

- **Dispersed housing locations:**⁵ In 2021, the CVRD had approximately 30,795 households, reflecting a nine per cent increase from the 2016 Census count of 28,245. Historically, the communities of Courtenay and Cumberland have shown the highest growth rates, a trend anticipated to continue over the next two decades. Growth is expected across all CVRD communities, with total households projected to increase by 37 per cent between 2021 and 2041, reaching approximately 42,260. This would mean an addition of approximately 11,465 new households in the Comox Valley by 2041.

⁵ 2024 Regional Housing Need Report

Figure below illustrates each community's 2021 estimated total households and the anticipated 20-year net growth in households.



* CVRD does not include the Denman and Hornby Island Trust Areas
 ** Electoral Area A does not include the Denman and Hornby Island Trust Areas Source: Statistics Canada, BC P. E. O. P. L. E. estimates, BC P. E. O. P. L. E. projections

Historical and Anticipated Households, Net Anticipated Change of Households Since 2021

(Source: 2024 CVRD Regional Housing Needs Report)

- Limited housing choice:**⁶ In 2021, single-detached homes formed most of the housing supply in the CVRD, with a total of 20,225 units. Apartments, including duplexes, represented 14 per cent of the housing stock, amounting to 3,225 units.
- Affordable housing:**⁷ The housing landscape is changing significantly, with population and household growth from 2016 to 2021 driving sharp increases in home prices and rental costs. From 2019 to 2022, median home prices rose by 64 per cent, and apartment rents increased by 36 per cent, exacerbating housing affordability challenges.

In 2021, approximately nine per cent of households experienced Core Housing Need, affecting renters, single individuals, lone parents, Indigenous households, refugees, and transgender or non-binary persons disproportionately. To support vulnerable populations, an estimated 3,934 below-market and 747 deeply

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

affordable units may be needed over the next 20 years. The CVRD may need an additional 17,750 housing units by 2041 to meet demand and stabilize the market, with about 5,320 units needed by 2026. While most demand will be met by market housing, there remains a need for both below-market and deeply affordable housing options for owners and renters.

- **Homelessness Situation:** The 2023 Homeless Count identified 272 individuals experiencing homelessness in a 24-hour period, more than double the 132 counted in 2020. Of those counted, 65 per cent were sheltered and 35 per cent were unsheltered. Adults aged 25 to 54 made up the majority (65 per cent), followed by seniors (27 per cent) and youth under 25 (8 per cent).

Indigenous people were disproportionately represented at 28 per cent, compared to 7 per cent of the general population. Among them, 67 per cent reported personal or generational experience with residential schools.

Key drivers of homelessness included inadequate income (56 per cent), substance use (31 per cent), and mental health issues (27 per cent). Chronic homelessness was prevalent, with 77 per cent homeless for over a year. Multiple health concerns and unstable shelter arrangements, including shelters, vehicles, and outdoor locations, were commonly reported.

Objectives

Objective 1-A: Locate housing close to existing services

More complete and sustainable communities typically locate residential development near services, amenities, and jobs. As of 2006, most of the population resides in the urban areas (65 per cent) with a smaller, yet growing, population in the rural areas (35 per cent). Housing in a complete community is developed with densities sufficient to support frequent local and regional transit. The proximity and density make more effective use of infrastructure and public resources, and supports healthier transportation choices, like walking and cycling. More compact, efficient residential development also allows environmentally sensitive

and working landscapes to be better protected (see Goal 6 Food Systems).

MEASURES	Baseline (2006)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium-term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
Per cent of new housing units in <i>Core Settlement Areas</i>	65%	90%	90%	90%	Statistics Canada and BC Stats (2006)

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies

- 1A-1 Based on RGS growth management strategy locate housing close to existing services and direct 90 per cent of new, residential development to *Core Settlement Areas*.
- 1A-2 The focus of higher density and intensive developments shall be within the existing *Municipal Areas*. Within the *Municipal Areas* densification and intensification of development is required including infill and redevelopment.
- 1A-3 Identify specific *Town Centres* in *Municipal Areas* through the OCP review process. These *Town Centres* are to be developed as walkable and complete communities, providing for a range of housing types focusing on medium and high-density housing, employment and commercial uses. There will be a minimum of one *Town Centre* in the City of Courtenay, one *Town Centre* in the Town of Comox and one *Town Centre* in the Village of Cumberland.
- 1A-4 Within *Settlement Nodes* densification and intensification of development is required however it will be less intensive than in *Municipal Areas*. These nodes are to be developed with centres that are walkable and limited to local services with a range of housing types focusing on low density multi residential and medium density.
- 1A-5 Revise OCP land use policies that unnecessarily restrict infill and redevelopment in *Core Settlement Areas* and *Town Centres* to

maximize housing potential in those locations. The mix of land uses in *Settlement Nodes* will be reviewed through the OCP process.

- 1A-6 Increase housing opportunities in existing residential areas in *Core Settlement Areas* by encouraging multi-household conversions, secondary suites, and small lot infill.
- 1A-7 *Settlement Expansion Areas* are areas of potential growth subject to several conditions as set out in Part 4 of the RGS. Growth in *Settlement Expansion Areas* will occur in a phased and orderly manner and will undergo a public planning process to determine the appropriate scale and form of development. Until such a public planning process has occurred and the conditions of Part 4 are met, any development in *Settlement Expansion Areas* will be subject to a minimum lot size of 4 hectares.

Objective 1-B: Increase affordable housing options

A scarcity of affordable housing can force households to overextend their finances or relocate to a different community. Often these households are composed of the working people who provide essential services to the public and to other community members. Housing is considered affordable when the total shelter costs, including utilities and taxes, amount to less than 30 per cent of a household's gross annual income. Affordable housing is realized in many forms, ranging from moderately sized and apportioned market housing to secondary suite rentals to subsidized and cooperative housing.

MEASURES	Baseline (2006)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium-term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
Per cent of household paying more than 30% of their income on housing	Renters: 43.4%	Renters: 35%	Renters: 30%	Renters: 20%	Statistics Canada and BC Stats (2006)
	Owners: 22.7%	Owners: 15%	Owners: 10%	Owners: 10%	

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies

- 1B-1 Adopt the following definition of affordable housing: household and shelter costs equate to less than 30 per cent of total before-tax household income.
- 1B-2 Encourage residential multi-unit or multi-lot developments to contribute to affordable housing options including, but not limited to a range of unit sizes and types, lot sizes, multi-household or attached-unit buildings, rental units, and secondary suites. These contributions could take the form of land, cash, buildings or other such items as supported by the local governments.
- 1B-3 Coordinate opportunities for developers to provide market and non-market affordable housing, such as rezoning contributions, inclusionary zoning, or reduced application fees.
- 1B-4 Consider the development of a *Regional Affordable Housing Strategy* to be used as a common resource and strategic plan by the regional district and the three municipalities. The strategy could review and coordinate affordable housing policies, while allowing each jurisdiction to address their unique affordability issues.
- 1B-5 Require local governments to have provisions for developing affordable housing in new OCPs and other bylaws.

1B-6 Explore a delivery mechanism for a provincial non-profit program and assist local governments in the provision of non-profit housing, in their jurisdiction.

Objective 1-C: Develop and maintain a diverse, flexible housing stock

Over the medium and longer-terms, the Comox Valley will need to provide housing opportunities to a wide range of households and families, including a growing population of seniors and the workers who will provide services for them, young families, retirees, and individuals with special needs. Housing can also be planned and designed for adaptability. This means that in the future, they can be easily expanded or converted for changing household types or additional households.

The following targets for the short, medium and long term provide targets for the mix of housing built within a given time frame.

MEASURES	Baseline (2006)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term 2010- 2015	Medium-term 2015- 2020	Long-term 2025 - 2030	
New housing mix in municipal areas	Low 75%	Low 65%	Low 55%	Low 40%	OCP review process
	Medium 20%	Medium 20 %	Medium 25%	Medium 30%	
	High 5% ⁸	High 15 %	High 20 %	High 30%	

MEASURES	Baseline (2006)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term 2010- 2015	Medium-term 2015- 2020	Long-term 2025 - 2030	
New housing mix in settlement nodes	Low 90%	Low 80%	Low 60%	Low 50%	OCP review process
	Medium 10%	Medium 15%	Medium 30%	Medium 35%	
	High 0%	High 5%	High 10%	High 15%	

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

⁸ Estimate based on Stats Canada 2007, 2006 Community Profiles, 2006 Census. Note that percentages range within each of the municipalities.

Supporting policies

1C-1 Provide a diversity of housing types in the *Municipal Areas* using the following housing type targets for new development by 2030: These targets are for all *Municipal Areas* in aggregate.

40% Low Density

- Single dwelling unit, town homes, semi-detached, secondary suites
- 4-24 units per hectare

30% Medium Density

- Low-rise multi-unit up to four storeys
- 24-74 units per hectare

30% High Density

- Over four storey multi-units
- Minimum 74 units per hectare

1C-2 Provide a diversity of housing types in the *Settlement Nodes* using the following housing type targets for new development by 2030: These targets are for all *Settlement Nodes* in aggregate.

50% Low Density

- Single unit residential, town homes, semi-detached, secondary suites
- 4-24 units per hectare

35% Medium Density

- Low-rise multi-unit up to four storeys
- 24-74 units per hectare

15% High Density

- Over four storey multi-units
- Minimum 74 units per hectare

1C-3 Encourage both rural and urban alternative housing forms that provide housing at lower costs and with lower environmental impacts.

- 1C-4 Encourage infill units and secondary suites in residential zones in the *Core Settlement Areas*.
- 1C-5 Encourage multi-unit housing, and small-lot housing in the *Core Settlement Areas* wherever it can be supported by regular transit and infrastructure services.
- 1C-6 Assess housing needs as part of OCP update or review processes to ensure adequate housing is provided to support for current and future needs (e.g., seniors, households with children, and young adults) and ensure related policies are incorporated (e.g., local housing stock targets and location suitability).

Objective 1-D: Minimize the public costs of housing

Housing requires a long-term investment of public resources. Housing located in hazard areas require special protective and support services or structural mitigation. Housing that consumes too much energy or water requires bigger and more costly infrastructure and have a larger impact on the health of natural resources.

Supporting policies

- 1D- 1 Direct most of the new housing to areas that are or will be serviced through publicly owned water and sewer systems.
- 1D- 2 Direct new housing away from high-risk natural hazard areas such as flood plains, areas exposed to sea-level rise, fire hazard areas, and steep and unstable slopes.
- 1D- 3 The electoral areas OCPs will be updated to provide a range of 4 to 20 hectares lots within the *Rural Settlement Areas*; however, lots as small as 2 hectares may be permitted if agriculture is the principal use on the property.

1D-4 Encourage green building design through green building standards for new residential development that include water and energy efficiency practices.

GOAL 2: ECOSYSTEMS, NATURAL AREAS AND PARKS

Protect, steward, and enhance the natural environment and ecological connections and systems.

Issue overview

Ecologically, the Comox Valley is one of the most diverse in Canada. Comox Valley's natural beauty derives from the stunning mix of glacier, mountains, sea and almost everything in between, from globally rare temperate rainforests to Garry Oak meadows to complex wetlands and rich estuaries. This rich and diverse landscape has supported the equally rich cultural heritage of the K'ómoks First Nation and the valley's more recent settlers and newest residents. Recognizing the importance of these landscapes, each of the local governments promotes environmental protection and enhancement through specific policies such as the provision of corridors, protection of environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs) and guidelines for riparian areas.

The landscape is an intricate balance of natural systems. All ecosystems are the product of formative systems (e.g., hydrology, winds, and coastal currents). To protect ecosystems, it is necessary to understand and protect the systems that create and sustain them. For example, when protecting a wetland by setting it aside within a development, it is also important to design the development to maintain the water source that feeds the wetland.

Although local governments have several initiatives underway to protect the environment, there is a strong need for a regional and coordinated approach to environmental protection and enhancement that emphasizes protection, enhancement and connectivity. In recognition of this, the CVRD Board endorsed the concept of regional conservation put forward in the *Nature Without Borders Regional Conservation Strategy* (July 2008).

Further, in 2022, the CVRD Board established a Regional Parks and Trails Service to help protect regionally significant natural areas and to support opportunities for people to connect with nature through nature-based

recreation. The *Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan* (November 2024) will guide the delivery of this service over the next 20 years.

The goals of the *Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan* are:

1. Work together with K'ómoks First Nation to plan and manage
2. Protect regionally significant natural areas
3. Increase environmental and community connectivity
4. Provide opportunities for nature-based recreation
5. Strengthen stewardship and community partnerships
6. Manage in a proactive and sustainable manner

Note: This plan applies specifically to regional parks and trails. Electoral Area community parks are guided by a separate document, the *Rural Comox Valley Parks and Greenways Strategic Plan* (2011), which contains different goals.

Current situation

The ecological diversity of the Comox Valley is protected through several local government policies. However, development pressure continues to impact natural systems. The goal over the next 20 years will be to manage population growth in a way that enables both human and non-human life to flourish. This means striving to balance the human need for resources, recreation, enjoyment and aesthetics with the need to protect, conserve and restore natural areas and biodiversity. This requires an understanding of the natural and formative systems that create the local landscape, so that we can guide development to work with the environment and ensure the natural landscape will continue to provide the resources necessary for many generations to come.

Providing parks and trails close to where people live encourages physical activity and promotes mental health obtained from walking, cycling or riding in natural areas away from busy streets. Depending on their use and management, parks and recreational trails that are intended for human enjoyment, can also contribute to the protection and conservation of nature.

Currently, municipal parks provide space for public assembly and sports fields, such as Simms Millenium Park and Lewis Park as well as large

nature reserves such as Hurford Hill, Roy Morrison, Lerwick, Sandwick and Millard Nature Parks. Electoral area community parks and the BC Hydro recreation area provide for extensive trail systems close to where people live such as Seal Bay, Nymph Falls and BC Hydro's Puntledge River Recreation Area. Strathcona Provincial Park has outstanding subalpine natural areas and backcountry recreation opportunities. There are also several smaller provincial parks such as Kitty Coleman Beach Park, Kin Beach Park, Rosewall Creek Park and Miracle Beach Park.

Extensive backcountry recreation provides both local and tourist activity and takes place throughout the Comox Valley on private forest land. As the population grows, the demand for this kind of recreational activity will grow as well.

The following policies, in combination with the other goals set out in the RGS, provide a land use framework that positions regional conservation as an integral component of growth management. To be successful, the region must be viewed as an interconnected system where land use decisions have a long-term impact on the health of ecosystems.

Objectives

Objective 2-A: Identify and map areas for conservation.

Loss of natural areas and renewable resource productivity (i.e., fisheries, forestry, agriculture and aquaculture) is often the result of a lack of data and understanding of the local landscape and formative systems.

Currently there are gaps in environmental data, including a lack of detail in provincial and federal Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory (SEI), mapping data for marine ecosystems and limited access to data on upland resource areas. Obtaining more detailed and complete information on ecosystem location and function will facilitate improved growth management decisions for ecosystem protection.

The *Regional Conservation Framework Concept Map No. 4* provides information based on the principles of *connecting habitats* to support biodiversity and *precautionary growth* wherein local governments and the development community should work to share information and ground-truth ecosystems moving forward. The following components and implementation guidelines provide a starting point for local governments to incorporate into OCPs. These components will collectively be referred

to as regional *conservation areas* within the policies of this chapter.

Estuaries: A semi-enclosed coastal body of water with one or more riverine or streams flowing into it, and with a free connection to the open sea. Due to their marine and river influences, they contain many biological niches within a small area and are so associated with high biological diversity. Estuaries offer biodiversity and migrating fish corridors that allow movement of aquatic species from the ocean to upland rivers and streams and back to the ocean. The K'ómoks Estuary is one of only eight Class 1 estuaries in BC. It provides habitat for numerous species of birds, plants and fish.

Riparian areas: Riparian areas describe the distinct ecology that surround streams and wetlands. These ecosystems vary in width depending on the associated watercourse, vegetation and landforms. Riparian areas are noted on Map No. 4 but are not specifically mapped due to the scale and detail of the *Regional Conservation Framework Concept Map No. 4*.

Sensitive ecosystems: Sensitive ecosystems are areas that may contain rare, threatened and fragile ecosystems and support high levels of biodiversity. Land management policies should include practices like the removal of invasive species, re-introduction of native plant and animal species, ongoing maintenance and monitoring, and restricting human activity as required. These sensitive ecosystems were identified through the SEI that identifies remnants of rare and fragile ecosystems (on land).

For these areas, policies should follow a spectrum from low to high human activity and access commensurate with the size of the protected area and level of ecological sensitivity. In select circumstances, this may include limited development opportunities in specified locations or access to resources (e.g., fishing, and selective harvesting of berries and trees)

Other important ecosystems: Other Important ecosystems include second growth forests and seasonally flooded agricultural lands.

Critical watersheds: The Browns, Tsable and Oyster Rivers, and Comox Lake are critical watersheds in the Comox Valley. In addition to providing drinking water sources, these watersheds provide linkages for wildlife

from the east coast of Vancouver Island to the west coast, via Strathcona Park.

Biodiversity corridors: Biodiversity corridors link natural features and create linkages for wildlife and plants to move between sensitive ecosystems, parks and protected areas but does not allow for public access on private lands. Creating regional linkages or corridors promotes the concept of 'connectivity' for a healthy regional conservation network. The *Regional Conservation Framework Concept Map No. 4* illustrates how biodiversity corridors could create connectivity throughout the region, running north/south and east/west. Through more detailed study, policies should be developed to focus conservation efforts in these areas and to cross-jurisdictional stewardship. As a starting point, the conceptual biodiversity corridors could be implemented in the *Resource Areas* where it can be ensured that the corridor can be protected if it exists. Recognizing that these corridors will traverse privately owned working landscapes, participation by private landowners would be voluntary and will not interfere with farm practices.

Existing parks and proposed parks and greenways: These are the municipal and electoral area community parks identified through the OCPs and the provincial parks. These areas are protected from development and may serve multiple uses, ranging from sports and recreation to nature conservation. These areas should be managed to support natural system functions where appropriate. All OCPs have provisions for parks and greenways; the goal will be to connect these areas to other conservation areas to form a network that balances human needs with biodiversity protection.

Supporting policies

- 2A-1 Local governments should individually or jointly adopt regionally consistent terminology, as set out above, to create a policy framework to support protection of conservation, environmental features and watersheds in OCPs.
- 2A-2 All local governments are encouraged to either individually or jointly regularly update environmental mapping. This will facilitate the production of mapping that depicts critical

information such as sensitive ecosystems, watercourses and riparian areas, parks and greenways, and working landscapes including ALR.

- 2A-3 Use a sensitive environmental atlas as a common method of collecting and displaying conservation and environmental information.
- 2A-4 OCP updates should include mapping of regional environmental features.
- 2A-5 Ground-truthing and mapping should be considered as part of the planning updates and development approvals process. OCPs, rezonings and other permitting processes, should seek to collect such information wherever possible.
- 2A-6 Working with private landowners, environmental organizations and upper-level governments, local governments should encourage and assist in the sharing of mapping and ground-truthing.
- 2A-7 Work with the K'ómoks First Nation so that environmental mapping reflects K'ómoks First Nation's unique traditional ecological knowledge, cultural heritage and traditional use of the area.
- 2A-8 Recognize the ecological and cultural significance of the K'ómoks Estuary. The K'ómoks Estuary Management Plan was collaboratively developed between 2009 and 2013 with the participation of the K'ómoks First Nation, senior government, local governments, and various interested parties. This plan is recognized as a supporting document within the K'ómoks First Nation's Comprehensive Community Plan 1.0, adopted in 2014.
- 2A-9 The RGS supports the implementation of local government parks and greenways plans and policies to establish a network of interconnected local and electoral area parks and greenways to protect recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat and natural ecosystem functions.

For lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve, Section 22 of the *Agricultural Land Reserve Use Regulation* permits open land parks only for purposes related to biodiversity conservation, passive recreation, heritage, wildlife, or scenery viewing. Proposed parks or trails that do not meet these criteria will require approval from the Agricultural Land Commission.

Objective 2-B: Frame environmental protection and policies around the principles of precaution, connectivity and restoration.

To address the loss and fragmentation of sensitive ecosystems, a set of overarching, guiding principles for growth management and land-use practices is needed. The following principles are to be considered regarding specific development proposals which significantly impact sensitive ecosystems. Collectively applied, they will help maintain the region's biodiversity.

Precaution: Where the environmental outcomes of a specific development proposal will significantly impact sensitive ecosystems err on the side of caution and require documentation as to impact, mitigation, and restoration or limit the action to avoid significant impact.

Connectivity: Recognize the issue of connectivity regarding potential impacts on the integrity and functionality of sensitive ecosystems.

Restoration: Where cost effective, consider the restoration or creation of natural systems to provide sustainable environmental services (e.g., storm water ponds for improving water quality; tree cover for capturing carbon; and reducing GHG emission).

Supporting policies

- 2B-1 Local governments should work together to adopt consistent actions and policies for environmental and natural resource protection, through OCPs, zoning and other mechanisms, that promote the principles of precaution, connectivity and restoration.

- 2B-2 OCPs should explore the development of clear definitions and guidelines for *ecological greenways* and to work with neighbouring local governments to create region-wide linkages.
- 2B-3 Explore and encourage the practice of restoration of urban and rural ecosystems to increase ecological functions.

Objective 2-C: Promote environmental best practices in *Agricultural and Resource Areas*.

Agricultural and Resources Areas provide many opportunities to contribute to healthier ecosystem functioning and offer important habitat for some animal and plant species. At times, there will be competing interests within these areas between private owner interests, conservationist goals and the production of agricultural goods. The following policies aim to support production within *Agricultural and Resource Areas* as economic industries while also recognizing the importance of environmental best practices in these areas.

Supporting policies

- 2C-1 Encourage landowner contact and education programs and, where feasible, require landowners to protect the sensitive environmental and unique natural features on their land.
- 2C-2 Explore additional opportunities for habitat restoration and conservation covenants on agricultural and forestry lands. (Note that conservation covenants that restrict agriculture on land in the ALR have no force and effect unless approved by the Agricultural Land Commission (Section 22 of the Agricultural Land Commission Act.))
- 2C-3 Implement 400-hectare minimum parcel size in Resource Areas to retain large, contiguous areas.
- 2C-4 Support continued application and uptake of BC Environmental Farm Plan.

- 2C-5 All local governments will ensure appropriate buffers and transition zones between working landscapes and residential areas to minimize negative impacts from residential development on farm and resource land. Buffer and transition zones will be promoted to support ecological connectivity and ecological system functions. Local governments should also reference the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's *Guide to Edge Planning (2015)*, which includes guidelines on setbacks and buffering. In general, setbacks and buffers should be located on the non-ALR side and required regardless of whether the adjacent parcel is actively used for agriculture.
- 2C-6 Implement best practices in creating trails in *Agricultural Areas* as set out in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's *Trails in Farm and Ranch Areas*.
- 2C-7 As part of the Comox Valley Agricultural Plan update (see 6E-3), explore incentives for conservation on agricultural lands.
- 2C-8 Support increased water availability for agriculture while ensuring natural systems remain healthy and functioning.

Objective 2-D: Ensure access to parks, recreation areas.

Increased access to parks and recreational greenways provides wide-ranging community health, economic and quality-of-life benefits. Ensuring recreational opportunities enables community members to actively and passively experience the region's spectacular natural and cultural heritage and encourages tourism and the growing field of eco-tourism.

Supporting policies

- 2D-1 All local jurisdictions should work together to coordinate local and regional greenway network connections.
- 2D-2 Require new developments to link to, improve or expand the existing greenway network.

GOAL 3: LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Achieve a sustainable, resilient, and dynamic local economy that supports businesses and the region's entrepreneurial spirit.

Issue overview

A healthy, strong and diverse local economy is one of the cornerstones of more sustainable and complete communities. Complete communities not only attract new investment and jobs, but they also help retain existing jobs, encourage entrepreneurship and create a solid tax base to better support local service delivery. Without a strong local economy, Comox Valley local governments may have difficulty funding important services, residents may be forced to work further from their homes, and overall community liveability may suffer.

The RGS provides an opportunity to encourage and support the development of a more diverse and healthier local economy, which in turn will help support the Comox Valley on its journey to become a more sustainable region.

Current situation

The Comox Valley's regional economy is relatively diversified compared to other North Island communities. In 2021, health care, retail, construction, and public administration were dominant labour force sectors. Most employment is centered in-and-around the Courtenay-Comox hub. The 2021 ratio of jobs-to-population was relatively low at 0.51 jobs per person.

Like the broader provincial and global economies, the Comox Valley experienced steady growth from 2002 to 2007. However, this growth stalled in 2008 due to the recession. Despite this setback, the region's strong fundamentals supported an eventual return to economic health. After 2008, recovery was driven by growth in tourism, construction, and service industries. The COVID-19 pandemic subsequently disrupted the economy, severely affecting tourism, hospitality (such as restaurants), and small businesses facing supply chain challenges. Although tourism has

gradually recovered, inflation and economic uncertainty continue to challenge businesses and residents in the region. Some of the major economic sectors and opportunities include:

- **Tourism:** Year-round tourism is supported by the region's natural beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities with unique opportunities in each of the local jurisdictions. Additionally, Mt. Washington Ski Resort has engaged in a long-term plan to become a year-round destination resort. The proximity to major local, Canadian and U.S. markets (e.g., Vancouver, Victoria, Washington State, and Alberta), and excellent air, water and land transportation links support ongoing tourism development. The region has also embraced emerging tourism markets, including agritourism and cultural tourism.

Starting in 2023, the CVRD launched a comprehensive tourism strategy with a 10-year outlook. This Comox Valley Tourism Strategy Plan will serve as a roadmap to guide tourism development in a way that supports long-term economic growth while prioritizing the health of the environment and the well-being of local communities. The draft plan will be presented to the CVRD Board in summer of 2025.

- The **Comox Valley Airport** has dramatically improved transportation options for the region and is a considerable economic development opportunity. The Town of Comox has created an industrial area adjoining the airport for air services-related businesses. The airport and the new air services industrial land base could help attract new businesses to the region.
- **Agriculture and aquaculture:** Agriculture is an important economic engine and over the longer-term it is expected to increase as the demand for locally produced foods and value-added foods grows. Growing food security concerns will also help drive the growth of this sector. The shellfish industry remains a major and growing employer in the region. The area is the hub of BC's oyster farming sector. The K'ómoks First Nation have a rich tradition of aquaculture in Comox Valley. Pentlatch Seafoods Ltd. is owned by the K'ómoks First Nation and has sites located in the

Comox Harbour, Royston and Baynes Sound, possessing 7 intertidal tenures totaling 64.3 hectares.

In December 2024, the Comox Valley Agricultural Plan was presented to the CVRD Board. The updated plan provides a strategic framework for strengthening the region's agri-food sector in the face of current challenges and future uncertainties.

Developed through broad engagement with producers, local government, and community partners, the CVAP outlines 21 actions under five goals: water stewardship, land protection, economic growth, climate resilience, and public awareness. While it does not directly address household food insecurity, the plan supports a resilient agricultural economy that contributes to community food security. Rooted in the region's rich agricultural history, including Indigenous food systems, the plan envisions a future where diverse farms thrive, new farmers are supported, and agricultural land and water are protected. Implementation will require sustained collaboration, shared leadership, and investment over the next decade.

- **Public sector employment:** As the largest public sector employer in the region, the Canadian Forces air base has long been a regional employment anchor and will likely remain so for the future. North Island Hospital Comox Valley, a regional hospital opened in 2017, is the second major public sector employer in the region.
- **Forestry and other resource industries:** While the region's historic economic drivers have declined significantly, major, long-term opportunities remain for value-added forestry in the region. Mining and metals processing has also recently re-emerged as a potential longer-term employer with new mine development proposals. Renewable energy generation has the potential to be an emerging industry in the Comox Valley.
- **Retail and human services:** Courtenay-Comox is a regional hub for shopping and services which also draws some business from neighbouring regions. Opportunities exist to diversify and expand the range of services available, particularly in health care with the

new hospital, and, potentially, in post-secondary education services for the North Island. Given the aging demographics, additional employment within the social service sector is also anticipated to occur.

- As **K'ómoks First Nation** moves toward settlement of outstanding legal claims, it is expected that they will have access to both lands and financial resources coupled with a strong desire to engage local economic activity. There is considerable potential for their increased participation in business and job creation in the region.

Objectives

Objective 3-A: Support local business retention, development and investment

Through Comox Valley Tourism Service, and in collaboration with local government economic development strategies or action plans, create a positive business-enabling environment through cooperating on policies and procedures that help to support and retain existing businesses and attracts new businesses and investment.

Supporting policies

- 3A-1 Encourage responsible expansion of the economic base of the Comox Valley with the intent of enhancing wealth and employment opportunities.
- 3A-2 Ensure the creation of regional economic development plans include multi party process involving all local governments and economic development interested parties, including the K'ómoks First Nation, and relevant non-government.
- 3A-3 Promote supportive development and business-permitting standards.
- 3A-4 Focus investment and business development in *Town Centres*.

3A-5 Support economic objectives and initiatives of the K'ómoks First Nation, including future economic opportunities, where appropriate, on K'ómoks First Nation lands.

Objective 3-B: Increase regional job base

Complete communities with a healthy balance of people and jobs tend to have a ratio of approximately 0.65 jobs per resident. The region's growing senior population makes achieving such a high ratio difficult, but a goal of 0.55 jobs per resident is realistic over the longer term. This ratio will help create a diverse, dynamic and self-supporting local economy and will make it possible for the valley's younger population to find work and remain in the community.

MEASURES	Baseline (2008)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium- term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
Job-to- population ratio	0.45	0.48	0.52	0.55	Census Canada, BC Stats

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies

3B-1 Support the intensification of mixed-use office, retail and other commercial employment activities in *Town Centres* located within *Core Settlement Areas*.

3B-2 Protect and enhance ALR lands with the intent to grow and diversify the base of agricultural activities.

3B-3 Preserve designated *Resource Areas* forestry lands for sustainable and value-added forestry and agroforestry purposes and discourage conversion of forestry lands for residential development.

3B-4 Explore initiatives that support value-added, community-based business development, including, but not limited to, local food processing, specialty forest products and other value-added

product manufacturing.

- 3B-5 Monitor the supply of readily serviced industrial land in the region with the objective of maintaining sufficient capacity to meet the needs of the regional economy.
- 3B-6 Utilize an eco-industrial networking approach for industrial land development (i.e., work to co-locate businesses that can create collaborative networks to more efficiently and effectively use resources, such as materials and energy).
- 3B-7 Encourage green jobs and technology to locate in the Comox Valley.
- 3B-8 Investigate opportunities to support the expansion of regional employment where proposals are consistent with the policies of the RGS.
- 3B-9 Encourage tourism, including cultural and eco-tourism opportunities, within the Comox Valley.

Objective 3-C: Support resource-based employment opportunities

Forestry, fishing and agriculture remain important regional economic activities. It is anticipated that agriculture, aquaculture and value-added forestry will continue to grow in the future. Mining and aggregate extraction presents other longer-term opportunities as well provided environmental and human health issues are appropriately managed. Each sector could support additional employment and generate additional local revenues, particularly if a value-added approach was taken with any future resource development initiative. Real and growing food security issues will help propel local agriculture over the longer term.

MEASURES	Baseline (2008)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium- term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
Agriculture & resource-based employment*	1,400 (5%)	1,650 (5%)	1,800 (6%)	2,200 (6%)	Census Canada, BC Stats

*Note: based on 2% average annual growth over 2008 baseline

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies

- 3C-1 Work with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and the Agricultural Land Commission to develop strategies and actions to increase the amount of actively farmed agricultural lands and reduce barriers to agricultural viability in *Agricultural Areas*.
- 3C-2 Encourage the development of infrastructure to help increase agricultural production such as irrigation water and regional drainage improvements.
- 3C-3 Work to develop suitable policy and regulations that limit country estate residential impacts while supporting small scale agricultural operations on smaller lots to enable new farmers to enter the industry.
- 3C-4 Recognize the long-term economic development potential represented in forestlands in designated *Resource Areas* and restrict residential development on them.
- 3C-5 Support public education activities to raise awareness of the region's resource sector and the value-added opportunities contained therein.
- 3C-6 Encourage value-added, community-based forest use applications in *Resource Areas*, including, but not limited to, community-owned woodlots, eco-forestry enterprises and home-

based value-added forest product manufacturing.

- 3C-7 Support regional aquaculture industries and collaborate with them on developing foreshore land use and water management policies that protect and steward on-shore and off-shore shellfish beds and marine water quality. Policy development should include community input to address impacts (e.g., visual, waste, noise, public access, and navigable waters).
- 3C-8 Support the development of *Resource Areas* for resource uses in addition to forestry and agriculture, provided that environmental values and sensitive ecosystems and wildlife habitat is protected.
- 3C-9 Encourage renewable energy generation and related jobs.
- 3C-10 The provincial government and any potential mining operators in the Comox Valley should work with local governments to minimize negative impacts of mining and aggregate extraction on the human or natural environment.

Objective 3-D: Promote designated *Town Centres* as regional employment centres.

Mixed-use, compact and accessible employment centres (i.e., accessible by foot, transit, bike, and car) tend to retain, attract and encourage new business development better than a more dispersed and scattered local job base, single use downtowns, or office parks. Town centre-based employment areas also tend to be less expensive to service and maintain.

MEASURES	Baseline (2008)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium- term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
% jobs located in town centres*	Cumberland: 5%	Cumberland: 6%	Cumberland: 7%	Cumberland: 7%,	Census Canada, BC Stats
	Comox: 25%	Comox: 26%	Comox: 27%	Comox: 28%	
	Courtenay: 55%	Courtenay: 56%	Courtenay: 57%	Courtenay: 58%	

***Note:** baseline estimate from, *Understanding Our Choices RGS Background Report, 2009*
[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies

- 3D-1 Update OCPs and implement zoning that supports intensification of mixed-use office, retail and other commercial employment activities in designated *Town Centres* located within *Core Settlement Areas*.
- 3D-2 Retain and attract new businesses, investment and employment in designated *Town Centres* located within *Core Settlement Areas*. Revitalization tools and policies should be linked to RGS environmental and green development/building objectives
- 3D-3 Examine development cost charges rates, tax structures and land use regulations to ensure development in *Town Centres* results in reduced costs that are realized by the municipalities.
- 3D-4 Partner with BC Transit, the province and the federal government to encourage better public transportation to, through and between designated *Town Centres* located within *Core Settlement Areas*.
- 3D-5 Encourage major public sector employers to coordinate their future facilities and development plans in support of the intensification policies of the RGS.

GOAL 4: TRANSPORTATION

Develop an accessible, efficient, and affordable multi-modal transportation network that connects Core Settlement Areas and designated Town Centres; and links the Comox Valley to neighbouring communities and regions.

Issue overview

Comox Valley residents depend on a municipal and provincial transportation network and services for work, recreation and day-to-day travel, while the local economy depends upon the network for safe and efficient goods movement. The following policies set out a long-term strategy for strengthening the regional transportation system with an emphasis on creating more opportunities for sustainable, efficient and effective transport options and networks. Increased efficiency in transportation will also help to decrease GHG emissions and non-renewable energy use (see Goal 8).

Current situation

The transportation system in the Comox Valley is made up of several distinct elements operated and managed by different levels of government and a variety of authorities. Major components and operators include two major provincial highways, a network of local roads, the Comox Valley Airport, BC Ferries, BC Transit, and interregional transportation operators.

Note: Where new roads or active transportation routes (e.g., multi-use paths) are proposed within the Agricultural Land Reserve, only certain upgrades are permitted outright under Section 18 of the *Agricultural Land Reserve Use Regulation*. Development of new transportation infrastructure generally requires approval from the Agricultural Land Commission.

Objectives

Objective 4-A: Increase public transit use.

Supportive land use policies and actions will be critical in achieving ridership and mode share targets in the Comox Valley. Although ridership has increased in the past several years through improved transit service, ridership growth cannot be sustained unless there are some fundamental changes in land use. Transit oriented land use planning considers the location of density, a mix of uses, and the design of road networks. Medium and higher density nodes ensure that there are more people within walking distance of transit routes, and still allows for lower density areas. Additionally, mixed-use development tends to generate bidirectional travel and travel throughout the day. Transit also needs to be considered when designing road networks. These should be designed so that there is a direct route for transit through the centre of a population or employment area, without the need for circuitous routing.

Transit use in the rural areas requires strategies that consider the lower density nature of rural residential development, the cost of transit, and nature of daily trips. Specialized services such as smaller community bus programs can help to tailor transit service to rural areas.

MEASURES	Baseline (2006)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium-term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
Transit mode share	1%	1.5%	2%	2.5%	BC Transit

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies

- 4A-1 Implement the growth management strategy, as outlined in Part 4, as an overall framework for transit-supportive land-use planning throughout the Comox Valley.
- 4A-2 Local governments should work with BC Transit to ensure that bus schedules facilitate access between *Town Centres* to K'ómoks First Nation IR Lands, CFB Comox, North Island Hospital Comox

Valley, connections with Mount Washington, North Island College, the Comox Valley Airport and *Settlement Nodes*.

4A-3 Major public institutions and employment uses should be in *Core Settlement Areas* and served by frequent transit and active transportation infrastructure (e.g., bike lanes and walking trails).

4A-4 Develop specific public transportation options for *Rural Settlement Areas*, reflective of the unique needs and challenges in providing cost effective service to rural communities.

4A-5 Through municipal OCP reviews develop strategies to reduce parking requirements in *Town Centres* to encourage better use of land resources and shift to more public transit use.

4A-6 Local governments should work with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit, and BC Transit to pre-plan bus routes and develop road standards that will accommodate future bus route requirements.

Objective 4-B: Improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to increase the use of active transportation options.

Ensuring that people can carry out daily activities using safe, efficient and enjoyable cycling and pedestrian routes will help to encourage a higher rate of active transportation. An increase in active transportation will help improve community health, reduce air pollution and improve the region’s overall quality of life.

MEASURES	Baseline (2006)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium-term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
% Bicycle & pedestrian commuters	Walk/Cycle= 9%	Walk/Cycle= 10%	Walk/Cycle= 11%	Walk/Cycle= 20%	Census Canada

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies

- 4B-1 Promote and encourage cycling plans and programs through ongoing local and regional initiatives and actions.
- 4B-2 Local government parks and greenways plans will be coordinated to provide linkages to, through and between the *Core Settlement Areas*.
- 4B-3 Ministry of Transportation and Transit should work with local governments to review road standards and subdivision design so that the Subdivision Approvals process prioritizes pedestrians, cyclists and transit use and support longer term regional transportation networks.
- 4B-4 OCPs should identify regionally important, priority street connections for pedestrian and cycling improvements and require that connections be established as a condition of redevelopment.
- 4B-5 Local governments should develop consistent, region-wide street, sidewalk and intersection standards to manage automobile traffic speeds, improve pedestrian and cyclist safety, accessibility, and support healthier, and more active transportation choices.
- 4B-6 Ensure bicycling amenities and infrastructure are included in all public developments and larger-scale private developments (e.g., bike racks, signage, shower facilities, bicycle lockers or secure bike storage).

Objective 4-C: Develop and maintain an inter-regional transportation system that efficiently and safely facilitates the movement of people and goods.

A well-maintained, integrated regional transport system will help to efficiently move people and goods, reduce the cost of infrastructure, and encourage public transit use. Through leveraging the existing air, water and land transport infrastructure in the Comox Valley, tourism, trade and

daily trips can be made more efficiently.

Supporting policies

- 4C-1 The Approving Officers, local government and Ministry of Transportation and Transit road planning and maintenance, and local government subdivision and development servicing standards should recognize and reinforce (1) the RGS and (2) local government sustainability principles, plans, standards and policies including the impact of development on transportation route infrastructure.
- 4C-2 Support ongoing improvements and upgrading of services at the Comox Valley Airport and BC Ferries terminals.
- 4C-3 Promote and support the improvement of the Island Rail Corridor infrastructure to protect the corridor and potential stations.
- 4C-4 Increase frequency and timing of public transit service connections with inter-regional services such as the Comox Valley Airport and BC Ferries terminals.
- 4C-5 As part of the long-term inter-regional transportation plan, protect any existing corridors and explore the potential for a rail/pedestrian corridor extending north to Campbell River.
- 4C-6 Collaborate with BC Transit, BC Ferries, the province and the federal government to improve inter-regional transportation, including improved rail service and expanded marine transportation opportunities.

GOAL 5: INFRASTRUCTURE

Provide affordable, effective, and efficient services and infrastructure that conserves land, water, and energy resources.

Issue overview

The planning of infrastructure is directly linked to land use planning. The more dispersed the settlement patterns, the more that servicing infrastructure must be extended, which is more expensive to build, operate and maintain and comes with greater environmental impacts. Key goals of the RGS include avoiding urban and rural sprawl and ensuring that development takes place where adequate facilities exist or can be provided in a timely, economic and efficient manner. Infrastructure extensions should be guided by an understanding of where and how growth should occur, considering natural capacity, environmental impact, costs and efficiency, and to resolve health risk implications from failing onsite systems.

The CVRD also provides regional district services to users in the Strathcona Regional District (SRD) who rely on the regional district services for water supply and solid waste. The SRD should be considered and consulted with on an ongoing basis with regards to long-term planning for relevant service provisions.

Current situation

Water: Water is of utmost importance for the future of the Comox Valley. Communities throughout the region extract their water from lakes, rivers, and groundwater sources via wells.

The regional district distributes water directly to five Water Local Service Areas within the three electoral areas, and supplies bulk water to Courtenay and Comox, which in turn distribute it to residents through their respective municipal delivery systems. The Village of Cumberland obtains its water from five lakes located in the Cumberland Creek and Perseverance Creek sub-watersheds, along with a groundwater source at Coal Creek Historic Park.

Water Master Plans for the Comox Valley's water systems provide long-term strategies for domestic water supply. These plans assess available sources, water quality and treatment, distribution system capacity, and infrastructure needs to support community growth. Master plans were completed in 2022 for the Union Bay water system and in 2023 for the Black Creek–Oyster Bay water system. The Comox Valley Water Master Plan will be completed in 2025.

As of June 2025, approximately 60,000 people are serviced by CVRD-managed water systems in the Comox Valley. While per capita water consumption varies widely between systems, significant progress is being made to reduce overall consumption through education, outreach, rebates, and watering restrictions.

Stormwater: Stormwater is the component of runoff that is generated by land development that alters the natural water balance. When vegetation and soils are replaced with roads and buildings, less rainfall infiltrates in the ground, less gets taken up by vegetation and more becomes surface runoff. Integrated Stormwater Management has become the standard practice for rural and urban communities in BC. The focus is to achieve environmental as well as drainage objectives. To help achieve these dual objectives there are several shifts in the way in which stormwater management is planned such as integrating green or naturalized infrastructure into the design of a community.

Sewer: There are currently four community sewer systems operating in the Comox Valley. The CVRD owns and operates three systems—one serving the participating jurisdictions of Courtenay and Comox, and two others serving the Jackson Drive and King Coho local service areas. The Village of Cumberland operates the fourth system.

As of June 2025, planning work is underway to advance potential community sewer systems in Saratoga/Miracle Beach, Royston, and Union Bay to address environmental and public health concerns in and around those areas.

Solid Waste: The CVRD and local municipalities have been proactive in encouraging waste reduction through changes to curbside service levels

and the construction of the Comox Strathcona Waste Management-funded Regional Organics Compost Facility. Recycling depots support rural waste diversion on Denman Island, Hornby Island, at the Comox Valley Waste Management Centre (CVWMC), and in Oyster River. Expanding rural diversion opportunities is a key focus of the ongoing Solid Waste Management Plan renewal process.

Curbside recycling, along with food scrap and yard waste pickup, is available in all three member municipalities, helping to reduce materials sent to the landfill. Royston also benefits from curbside recycling pickup. Local municipalities, the regional district, and the Strathcona Regional District rely on the CVWMC for solid waste disposal. The CVWMC features a modern engineered landfill with advanced leachate and landfill gas collection and treatment systems.

Note: For land in the Agricultural Land Reserve, certain linear infrastructure, such as force mains, trunk sewers, gas pipelines, and waterlines, is permitted within existing dedicated rights-of-way under Section 25 of the *Agricultural Land Reserve Use Regulation*. However, development of new infrastructure such as sewage, water, or stormwater systems may require approval from the Agricultural Land Commission. Section 22(2)(b) specifically prohibits the creation of wetlands to manage urban runoff or waste within the Agricultural Land Reserve.

Objectives

WATER

Objective 5-A: Promote water conservation and efficiency throughout the Comox Valley.

In the Comox Valley population growth coupled with consumption levels have placed a strain on water supply and delivery systems. Based on findings in the *Regional Water Supply Strategy*, aggressive water conservation measures should mitigate risks and uncertainty associated with water ownership, effects of climate change and economic and environmental costs over the long-term.

MEASURES	Baseline (2008)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium- term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
Daily total water consumption per capita	500-600 litres	20% reduction	30% reduction	40% reduction	CVRD water services

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies

- 5A-1 Most of the growth should be focused in *Core Settlement Areas* where appropriate publicly owned water servicing systems already exists.
- 5A-2 For existing developments outside of *Core Settlement Areas*, where there are demonstrated onsite health related issues, publicly operated water services should be made available.
- 5A-3 Encourage smaller lot development and higher density development in *Core Settlement Areas*, to make efficient use of water servicing infrastructure.
- 5A-4 To provide an incentive to reduce water use a program and accompanying water rate structure based on the user pay principle should be implemented throughout the Comox Valley as part of the agreed upon water efficiency plan.
- 5A-5 OCPs should contain maps with the location and phasing of trunk water services to guide future planning and development decisions.
- 5A-6 Investigate policies to permit grey water plumbing in new construction and retrofits.
- 5A-7 All local governments work towards preparing development permit guidelines for low water usage xeriscaping in multi-unit residential, commercial and industrial areas, and encourage low water usage landscaping in single household residential areas

- 5A-8 Encourage local governments and farmers to work together to reduce use of -potable water for irrigation on farmland.
- 5A-9 Over the longer term, encourage all local governments to work towards finding a permanent alternative to the use of potable water for irrigation purposes.
- 5A-10 Discourage the commercial use of groundwater for export purposes.
- 5A-11 Prepare IAs for water services once the RGS is finalized.

Objective 5-B: Protect the quality of water sources.

Drinking water in the Comox Valley is extracted from lakes, rivers and aquifers. These water sources are all vulnerable to contaminants that come from several sources including stormwater runoff, forestry activities, recreational activities in and around lakes, and encroachment from development.

Supporting policies

- 5B-1 Manage development based on precautionary principles within drinking watersheds. This will require development proposals to include reports by appropriate professionals to study potential impacts on water quality and quantity, including a peer review of professional findings and recommendations.
- 5B-2 Support the development of plans that protect drinking water for the Comox Valley.
- 5B-3 Work with other rightsholders, interested parties and agencies to identify areas for aquifer protection and develop OCP guidelines for their protection.
- 5B-4 Where development is proposed in a drinking watershed that is controlled politically by one jurisdiction, but where the lake provides a water source to other jurisdiction(s), the jurisdiction responsible for approving development within the watershed will

formally consult with the jurisdictions receiving water from the watershed.

- 5B-5 Require an aquifer protection development permit for electoral areas at time of subdivision, which would require groundwater quantification, vulnerability and protection measures prepared by a qualified professional with quantification and ensure that there are no other impacts on adjacent wells.

Objective 5-C: Stormwater is managed to preserve ecosystem and watershed health.

The collection and management of stormwater is an important component of ensuring the overall health of the Comox Valley waterways and natural areas. As tree cover is removed and impermeable areas increase, stormwater management becomes a larger concern. There is a critical threshold when there is over 10 per cent impervious area within a watershed or drainage catchment. Modern management techniques are moving engineered solutions towards green infrastructure approaches which seek to replicate natural systems in the impoundment, infiltration and cleansing of stormwater (e.g., naturalized ponds and bioswales).

Supporting policies

- 5C-1 Local OCPs should include policies that encourage permeable surfaces within the design of new developments and public spaces.
- 5C-2 In watersheds of water supply lakes, local governments and the Ministry of Transportation and Transit should work cooperatively towards a target of less than 10 per cent⁹ impermeable surfaces.
- 5C-3 In *Rural Areas* the regional district should work with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit to develop guidelines for an Integrated Stormwater Management to be used in the subdivision approval process.
- 5C-4 To ensure a sustainable aquaculture industry, local OCPs should include policies that require the cleansing of any stormwater

⁹ A guide for British Columbia Stormwater Planning, May 2002.

draining into Baynes Sound.

SEWER

Objective 5-D: Encourage sewage management approaches and technologies that respond to public health needs and maximize existing infrastructure.

The cost of servicing is directly related to density, with higher densities located close to treatment stations being much more cost effective than larger lots located further away from treatment centres. The *Comox Valley Sewer Service Liquid Waste Management Plan* will set out a long-term strategy for sewer expansion that is aligned with other regional strategies, including this RGS.

MEASURES	Baseline (2010)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium-term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
Percentage of new growth serviced by sanitary sewer	n/a	90%	90%	90%	CVRD

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies

- 5D-1 The majority of growth should be focused in *Core Settlement Areas* where appropriate sewer servicing already exists.
- 5D-2 New development will replace and/or upgrade aging sewer infrastructure or provide cash-in-lieu contributions for such upgrades through Development Cost Charges or similar financial contributions.
- 5D-3 Promote eco-industrial development that turns wastes into resources.
- 5D-4 For existing developments outside of *Core Settlement Areas*, where there are demonstrated onsite health related issues,

publicly owned sanitary sewer services should be made available.

5D-5 Prepare an IA for sewer services once the RGS is finalized.

SOLID WASTE

Objective 5-E: Reduce regional solid waste and improve landfill performance.

As the region’s population increases and landfill capacity decreases, the diversion of solid waste from landfills through recycling and other methods becomes more important. The CVRD and local municipalities have been proactive in encouraging waste reduction and the provision of multi-material drop off depots throughout the Comox Valley to facilitate the collection of recyclable materials. There is also curbside recycling in all three municipalities and regular yard waste pickup, which contributes to a reduction in materials going to the landfill. These efforts should be encouraged and built upon to reduce solid waste and employ sustainable uses for waste management sites. The policies in the RGS will be received within the context of the *Regional Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP)*.

MEASURES	Baseline (2010)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium-term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
Solid waste diversion rate	48%	55%	65%	75%	CVRD

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies

5E-1 The regional *Solid Waste Management Plan* (approved in 2013) is being updated to reflect best practice and the evolving realities of solid waste management. This regulatory document considers waste management issues and trends and technology in the management of waste that include, but are not limited to, the following issues: solid waste collection, private burning of land

clearing and solid waste, waste reduction programs, waste diversion, construction waste management, product stewardship, and waste to energy/Integrated Resource Recovery options.

GOAL 6: FOOD SYSTEMS

Support and enhance the agricultural and aquaculture sectors; and increase local food security.

Issue overview

In the Comox Valley, a range of microclimates and soil qualities enable farmers to produce a variety of food products, including dairy, beef, grain, forage, vineyards and small fruits, all of which have supported a vibrant farming community that continues to this day. There is also a long history of gathering food from the shoreline and surrounding ocean that has created a successful aquaculture industry.

K'ómoks First Nation has a cultural and economic tradition of harvesting along the shoreline and in the waters for fish and shellfish. Fishing weirs in the K'ómoks Estuary are signs of this continued and important cultural and economic practice.

Protecting farmland and shoreline areas for food production helps support stronger local economies protects a long-standing way of life and ensures that future generations have better access to affordable and nutritious food. If planned properly, protection of these areas can also contribute to the preservation of open space and the valley's rural character.

Current situation

The Comox Valley's food production system generates significant economic value and underpins long-term food security in the region. The Comox Valley Agricultural Plan provides a strategic framework for strengthening the agri-food sector in response to current pressures and future uncertainties. Rooted in the region's agricultural history, including Indigenous food systems, the plan sets out 21 actions under five goals: water stewardship, land protection, economic growth, climate resilience, and public awareness. While it does not directly address household food insecurity, it supports a resilient agricultural economy through land-based, marine-based, and value-added food systems. The following areas

remain critical to protecting and advancing food production in the Comox Valley:

- **Agricultural Land Reserve:** The ALR has played a key role in preserving farmland and supporting farming as a viable economic activity in the Comox Valley. Covering roughly between 12 and 13 per cent of the Comox Valley, the ALR has remained relatively consistent between 23,059 hectares in 2010 to 23,353 hectares in 2021¹⁰, since its initial boundaries were drawn. The valley's farmlands are mainly located within the ALR boundaries on the plain between the coast and the Beaufort Mountain foothills. Most farming activities take place in the regional district's three electoral areas, but there are also small portions of ALR in the City of Courtenay and the Town of Comox.
- **Rural Areas:** Additional farming occurs in non-ALR rural areas. There is the potential for innovative agricultural enterprises and location of agricultural-supported activities in these areas, such as food processing plants, storage and distribution centres (e.g., farmers markets).
- **Shoreline areas:** The Comox Valley has 368 hectares of shellfish farm tenures in 2024. These farms are clustered in Baynes Sound and the Comox Harbour area. With little room for additional tenures and shellfish farms, existing farms and tenures should be protected with no net loss.

Objective 6-A: Protect land for existing and future agriculture and associated activities and allow for the growth and expansion of such activities.

With a few exceptions, agricultural uses in the Comox Valley are within the ALR. The ALR makes up 13 per cent of the land in the Comox Valley at 23,353 hectares in 2021.¹¹ The bulk of the land within the ALR is privately owned. With settlement areas intensifying along the borders of the regional district, these areas are likely to see the greatest pressure from

¹⁰ Includes Denman and Hornby Islands.

¹¹ Includes Denman and Hornby Islands.

urbanization. The ALR has proven to be an important means of preserving agricultural land in the Comox Valley. The RGS should reinforce the existing ALR boundary to protect and cultivate agricultural activities.

MEASURES	Baseline (2010)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium-term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
No net loss of zoned farmland in the ALR	23,059 hectares	= or > 23,059 hectares	= or > 23,059 hectares	= or > 23,059 hectares	Agricultural Land Commission, Local governments

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies

- 6A-1 The existing ALR and its associated policies are recognized in the RGS growth management approach and will be reflected in OCPs and Zoning Bylaws.
- 6A-2 Work towards ensuring that development does not result in negative impacts on adjoining farmlands or shellfish tenures by affecting the volume and quality of ground and surface water, in particular storm water discharge.
- 6A-3 All local governments will ensure appropriate buffers and transition zones between working landscapes and residential areas to minimize negative impacts from residential development on farm and resource land. The need for and extent of buffers and transition zones will be site specific.
- 6A-4 Where possible contiguous areas of agricultural land should be preserved and severance by recreation, parks, and transportation or utility corridors should be avoided except for ESAs.
- 6A-5 OCPs should include criteria to guide locations for agricultural support infrastructure (e.g., processing, production research, and market development facilities). For parcels in the Agricultural Land Reserve, locations for such infrastructure should be consistent with the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and its

regulations or by a decision of the Agricultural Land Commission.

6A-6 OCP policies should be developed to guide the location of residential development on agricultural parcels to preserve the agricultural capacity.

Objective 6-B: Protect shoreline areas for existing and future aquaculture and associated activities

The shoreline and shore area of Baynes Sound and Comox Harbour are already locations with shellfish farm tenures, and it is uncertain whether any further tenures or farms can be created. Existing tenures and farms should be protected to ensure no net-loss of farming activity. Additionally, consideration should be made to consider upland aquaculture support facilities.

MEASURES	Baseline (2010)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium-term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
No net loss of aquaculture farm tenure	470 hectares	470 hectares	470 hectares	470 hectares	Ministry of Agriculture & Food

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies

6B-1 Land used for aquaculture and related activities should be maintained where appropriate for such uses and recognized in OCPs.

6B-2 Aquaculture and fisheries are important to the K’ómoks First Nation from both a food systems perspective and from a cultural perspective. The interest of the K’ómoks First Nation in existing and expanded aquaculture activities should be supported where appropriate.

6B-3 Where appropriate, encourage the development of shellfish

support infrastructure such as processing facilities, production research, and market development.

6B-4 Promote sustainable aquaculture practices and environmental stewardship in cooperation with agencies, rightsholders and interested parties.

6B-5 Where there are documented public health issues in existing residential areas, sewer services will be considered for existing areas to protect the marine environmental health of the area.

Objective 6-C: Improve and expand agricultural irrigation practices and infrastructure

The availability of water is fundamental to agricultural productivity. Moreover, an increase in local food production will result in a shift in agricultural production to more intensive forms of agriculture, in particular the growing of fruits and vegetables. These forms of agriculture rely largely on irrigation and for this shift to occur it is essential that an adequate supply of water is made available. In 2013, the agricultural Land Use Inventory that 28 per cent of farms in the Comox Valley were using irrigation.

MEASURES	Baseline (2010)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium-term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
Percentage of farms with access to irrigation water	>5%	10%	15%	25%	Agriculture Land Commission

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies

6C-1 Local governments and farmers should work together to increase irrigation water supply to support agricultural activities.

6C-2 Local governments, agricultural groups and farmers should work together to increase non-potable irrigation water to farmland.

Objective 6-D: Increase farming activity in the Comox Valley

Agriculture’s importance to the local economy will grow as its future potential is realized with the increasing awareness and consumption of locally produced foods. Aging demographics within the existing farm community and the relative high cost of land of agricultural land are potential barriers to maintain and increase the level of farming activity. Supporting value-added practices (including food processing and agri-tourism) will become increasingly important to support the existing agricultural industry and to create incentives and supports for younger farmers to enter the industry.

MEASURES	Baseline (2002/2006)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium-term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
Farm receipts	\$32,975,655 ¹² (2006)	\$40,000,000	\$45,000,000	\$55,000,000	Census Canada
Shellfish production value	4,535,923 kg (2002)	5,443,108 kg	6,803,885 kg	9,071,847 kg	Comox Valley Land Use Survey

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies

6D-1 Support and encourage organizations in promoting the Comox Valley as a good place to enter the farming industry (e.g., Comox Valley Farmers Institute, Mid Island Farmers Institute, and Comox Valley Farmers Market Association).

6D-2 Support the ‘value chain’ of agriculture through development of

¹² All figures are in 2010 dollars and for monitoring purposes all values should be adjusted for inflation.

agricultural policies and uses in OCPs, to encourage food processing plants, storage and local markets.

- 6D-3 Regularly consult with farmers, farm businesses, and agricultural groups on issues that may impact their ability to productively farm local lands.
- 6D-4 Support the availability of local agricultural products through encouraging local procurement at schools, grocery stores, and government offices.

Objective 6-E: Raise awareness of the regional importance of the local food system

Raising awareness of the importance of healthy food and the local economy can be generated through several means. Value added agricultural activities such as agritourism and farm gate sales help to educate people as to the importance of farming activities. Buy-local campaigns, farmers markets and a central resource centre can also help to raise awareness of the important role of agriculture and aquaculture among residents of the Comox Valley and increase local demand. Additionally, Environmental Farm Plans (EFPs) should be encouraged among local farmers both to raise awareness of conservation benefits on farmland and to promote sustainable practices throughout the Comox Valley.

Supporting policies

- 6E-1 Support the development of a coordinated regional food security strategy. This would include a review of existing policies and agricultural opportunities such as urban gardening, community orchards and community supported agriculture programs.
- 6E-2 Support programs to educate and encourage farmers in carrying out Environmental Farm Plans (EFPs).
- 6E-3 Update the *Comox Valley Agricultural Plan* on a regular basis (every five years) so that it responds to and makes policy

directions based on the current agricultural context.

- 6E-4 Review regulatory bylaws to support an appropriate level of agriculture and related uses as considered appropriate by the Agricultural Land Commission.

GOAL 7: PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

Support a high quality of life through the protection and enhancement of community health, safety, and well-being.

Issue overview

Public Health

There is a large body of research that suggests a significant relationship between urban and rural form and population health outcomes. There are particularly strong links between personal transportation choices and health risk factors, such as between the lack of physical activity and obesity, which in turn are linked to chronic diseases, notably cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, diabetes and cancer. It should be noted that physical activity is one of the most significant modifiable behavioural factors that can influence the likelihood of becoming overweight or obese and, by extension, developing a chronic disease or dying prematurely.

While there are many factors that influence population health outcomes in the Comox Valley (i.e., access to clean air and water, affordable housing, recreation, education, and healthy food), this RGS gives primary consideration to active transportation strategies because it can help to facilitate more active lifestyles and physical activity, thereby improving the long-term health status of individuals in the Comox Valley. This focus on active transportation in no way discounts the importance of the other health influences, but recognizes that of all the health factors, it is perhaps most closely related to regional land use planning.

Safety

The regional district administers nine fire protection service areas¹³ and has working arrangements with member municipalities and improvement districts within the regional district to provide fire protection. Service is determined through fire protection areas and not all areas in the regional district have fire protection. New development in rural areas bordering on

¹³ Includes Denman and Hornby Islands

forest lands increases the demand for these services. Added to this is the potential increase of wildfires due to climate change, with drier summers. The location of new developments and provision of services should be considered in the location of new developments.

Current situation

Despite the region's considerable outdoor recreation opportunities, rates of obesity in the CVRD have climbed dramatically while physical fitness levels have declined. This trend is apparent across the population from youth to seniors and parallels provincial and national trends. Exposure to air pollutants has also increased and with it, childhood asthma rates. Some specific local public health and safety highlights include:

- **Increasing physical inactivity and obesity:** In 2019 and 2020, about 27 per cent of population aged 18+ in the North Vancouver Island Health Service Delivery Area are considered obese. This was a drop from 30 per cent in 2015 and 2016.¹⁴
- **Rising chronic disease rates:** Chronic diseases like cardiovascular and respiratory disease, diabetes and cancer, are all on the rise in the CVRD which could be related to increasing risk factors like the lack of physical activity and obesity.
- **Auto dependence:** The percentage of residents driving cars for their primary mode of work transportation is above BC averages in both our rural and urban areas. The number of residents taking transit is also well below provincial averages (1.9 per cent versus 9.3 per cent in 2021).
- **Regional Hospital:** As a major destination for a variety of trips, the location of the regional hospital has significant land use planning and public health implications.
- **Increasing wildfire risk:** New development and growth pressure is pushing development further from fire services. In areas bordering on forest lands, the risk of wildfires has grown over the years.

¹⁴ Comox Valley Vital Signs

Objectives

Objective 7-A: Increase the number of pedestrians and cyclists in the Comox Valley.

The number of active pedestrians and cyclists is strongly influenced by land use planning and a community's built form. Street network connectivity, land use mix and density all influence individual transportation choices (i.e., whether to walk, bike, take transit or drive). These choices, in turn, directly impact public health outcomes (e.g., rates of obesity and diabetes, injuries and fatalities from motor vehicle accidents, and incidence of asthma). Well-designed, compact communities tend to have higher mode shares for pedestrians and cyclists and boast more active, healthier residents. (See also Objective 4-B).

Supporting policies

- 7A-1 Support the creation and coordination of local government bicycle and pedestrian plans with local-level strategies to improve active transportation connections to, through and between designated *Town Centres* located within *Core Settlement Areas*.
- 7A-2 Ensure bicycling amenities and infrastructure are included in all public developments and larger-scale private developments
- 7A-3 Identify regionally important, priority street connections for improvements and/or mandate that connections be established as a condition of redevelopment and subdivision approval where feasible.
- 7A-4 Use tools such as B.C. Recreation and Parks Association's "Built Environment and Active Transportation Neighbourhood Assessment Tool" and BC Active Transportation Design Guide (2019) to identify active transportation gaps in and between designated *Town Centres* located within *Core Settlement Areas*.
- 7A-5 Support the promotion of healthy lifestyles and invigorating

community spirit through physical activity.

- 7A-6 Ensure that all new public institutions are accessible via active transportation routes (e.g., bike and greenway network) and public transit.

Objective 7-B: Increase public education and awareness around the links between population health and land use planning

Building awareness of the connections between population health and the physical layout and design of our communities is critical to achieving healthier built environments and maintaining the region's high quality of life. Re-engaging health professionals in land use planning and educating residents and the planning/development community on healthy built environments is equally important.

Supporting policies

- 7B-1 Consider the public health impacts of larger-scale development in consultation with the Provincial Health Services Authority, regional health authorities and involved interested parties.
- 7B-2 Link regional recreation providers and health professionals through a healthy built environment advisory committee to promote and engage residents in indoor and outdoor physical activities, more active transportation choices, and to advocate for healthy change in the community.
- 7B-3 Support local governments to modify current planning practices to better count active transportation (e.g., by improving analysis of non-motorized modes in travel surveys) and value its benefits (e.g., by considering benefits such as roadway and parking cost savings, consumer cost savings, and improved health).
- 7B-4 Support the inclusion of the K'ómoks First Nation in discussion among land-use planners, recreation providers and public health professionals to address health, wellness and safety concerns among K'ómoks First Nation members.

Objective 7-C: Improve regional fire safety

In 2017, the CVRD completed a Community Wildfire Preparedness Plan to assess and map fire risks. This mapping was limited to the CVRD's electoral areas. As of 2024, the CVRD is updating this plan with a Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan, which will encompass all areas within the CVRD, including municipalities. The updated plan is expected to be completed by spring 2025. This work is critical to maintaining the highest standards of public safety. It is also important to acknowledge that there are individuals and groups outside the CVRD who rely on its fire protection services.

Supporting policies

- 7C-1 Improve fire safety in the region through fire hazard mapping to identify high-risk development areas and limit development in them and ensure that development is managed to recognize this factor.
- 7C-2 Support coordinated efforts to identify and eliminate fire service gaps in the region.
- 7C-3 Continue consultation with and consideration of interests of system users who are outside of the CVRD.
- 7C-4 Planning for all new development areas should include considerations for the provision of public health and safety services through the approvals process.

GOAL 8: CLIMATE CHANGE

Minimize regional greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and plan for adaptation.

Issue overview

Combating climate change is one of the most critical issues being addressed by governments around the world. According to the 2021 United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on climate change, human influence on the climate system is clear, as evidenced from increased greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, positive radiative forcing, and higher average temperatures, among other effects. The world must take ambitious climate action now and through 2020s to keep warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The crisis calls for “deep, rapid, and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.” That means decreasing global carbon pollution by 48 per cent from 2019 levels by 2030, reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, and thereafter achieving net-negative carbon emissions.

The *Comox Valley Sustainability Strategy* has adopted a long-term target of 80 per cent reduction of GHG emissions from 2007 levels by 2050, with a mid-term target of 50 per cent reduction by 2030. The RGS has adopted the same target as the *Comox Valley Sustainability Strategy*. It sets out policies, targets and measures that work to achieve the provincial target and the long-term targets of the Sustainability Strategy, with a specific 2030 reduction target of 50 per cent from 2007 levels by 2030.

Current situation

Addressing climate change requires actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to respond to climate changes that are already taking place. Planning policies and regulations need to consider issues such as creating wildfire resistant communities, increased frequency and scale of storm surges in low lying coastal areas, landscaping that can withstand extreme temperatures and storm water management to accommodate for higher levels of water runoff.

Creating development forms that work to reduce GHG emissions is another important means of addressing climate change. Provincially, GHG emission reductions are being addressed through *Climate Change Accountability Act* (2007) and CleanBC Plan (2018), BC is committed to a 16 per cent reduction in GHG emissions from 2007 levels by 2025, 40 per cent by 2030, 60 per cent by 2040 and 80 per cent by 2050.¹⁵ In 2008, the *Local Government (Green Communities) Statutes Amendment Act* mandated that all local governments incorporate GHG reduction targets and create policies and actions to achieve those targets into their OCPs and RGSs.

To help local governments monitor and evaluate their reduction targets, the province has developed a Community Energy and Emissions Inventory. On an annual basis, GHG emissions for the transportation, solid waste, buildings and land use categories are calculated. These estimates provided the baseline data for the long-term reduction goals established in this section and are now being tracked within the Comox Valley by the CVRD through the CVRD Community-Wide GHG Emissions Inventory.

Objectives

Objective 8-A: Reduce GHG emissions created by the building sector.

BC’s Community Energy and Emissions Inventory divide the building sector into residential, commercial and industrial buildings. Each category includes the number of connections to energy sources, the amount of actual energy consumed (e.g., electricity [kWh] and natural gas [Gj]) and the resulting emissions. GHG reductions in this area will require a multi-faceted approach to reduce energy consumption in new buildings and retrofit older buildings to make them more energy efficient.

MEASURES	Baseline (2007)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium-term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
Building GHG Emissions	33,662 tonnes CO2e	20% Reduction	33% Reduction	50% Reduction	CEEI

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

¹⁵ [Province of BC's Climate Change Section](#)

Supporting policies:

- 8A-1 Establish green building priorities and policies in OCPs, such as LEED design, retrofitting with low environmental features.
- 8A-2 Local governments should explore opportunities to establish green building incentives, to encourage developments to adopt green building practices.
- 8A-3 To encourage green building construction, examine DCC rates, tax structures and land use regulations to ensure reduced costs realized to the local government through the construction of green buildings are passed onto the development.
- 8A-4 Local governments should work to create development permit area policies that encourage green site design.
- 8A-5 Local governments should develop GHG reduction strategies for the operation, maintenance and construction of their buildings in the Comox Valley.

Objective 8-B: Reduce GHG emissions created by the on-road transportation sector

In the Comox Valley, on-road transportation accounts for approximately 55 per cent in 2007 and 45.7 per cent in 2021 of the Region's total emissions. Given that transportation is the largest contributor to GHGs in the Comox Valley, developing more pedestrian, cycling, and transit-supportive land uses will be critical in reducing GHGs. Whereas the Transportation chapter focuses long-term planning for the regional transit system, the following targets and policies focus on strategies to promote transportation options with low and no-emissions.

MEASURES	Baseline (2007)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium- term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
On-road transportation GHG emissions	199,311 CO2e(t)	20% Reduction	33% Reduction	50% Reduction	CEEI

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies:

- 8B-1 Support and promote transportation programs and patterns of development that increase walking, cycling, and transit use in the rural and urban areas (see Public Health Safety and Transportation Goals).
- 8B-2 Support the creation and coordination of local government bicycle and pedestrian plans that are integrated with local-level strategies to improve active transportation and transit connections to, through and between identified *Town Centres* and activity nodes to reduce GHG emissions.
- 8B-3 Ensure bicycling amenities and infrastructure are included in all public developments and larger-scale private developments (e.g., bike racks, signage, and bicycle lockers).
- 8B-4 Local governments should work with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit to ensure that road standards and subdivision design prioritize pedestrians, cyclists and transit use.
- 8B-5 OCPs should identify active transportation gaps in existing developments and neighbourhoods and develop policies to address those gaps.
- 8B-6 Local governments should develop anti-idling policies, bylaws and campaigns¹⁶.
- 8B-7 To promote the use of electric vehicles, local governments should develop incentives and infrastructure for low-emissions

¹⁶ [Idle Reduction Bylaw - BC Climate Action Toolkit](#)

vehicles such as recharging infrastructure and priority parking.

Objective 8-C: Reduce GHG emissions in the solid waste sector.

As the region’s population increases and landfill capacity decreases, the diversion of solid waste from landfills through recycling and other methods become more important. In 2007, solid waste comprised 19 per cent of total GHG emissions in the Comox Valley, with 61,605 tonnes of CO₂e of waste delivered to Comox Valley Waste Management Centre annually. Due to changes in data measurement methodologies over time, the 2021 Comox Valley Community-Wide GHG Emissions Inventory reports emissions from the solid waste sector as 24,756 tonnes of CO₂e—an increase from 22,861 tonnes in the previous reporting period. Further efforts to reduce waste combined with the Comox Valley Waste Management Centre expanded facility that will capture methane gas, will help to reduce these amounts.

MEASURES	Baseline (2007)	TARGETS			Data sources
		Short-term (2015)	Medium-term (2020)	Long-term (2030)	
Solid waste GHG emissions	61,605 CO ₂ e(t)	20% Reduction	33% Reduction	50% Reduction	CEEI

[Visit RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the latest performance measures.](#)

Supporting policies

- 8C-1 Develop a Valley-wide solid waste management strategy that reduces garbage landfill through recycling and composting to achieve a 75 per cent diversion rate by 2035.
- 8C-2 Support the development of a bio-fuels strategy in partnership with technology providers and interested parties who have access to organic waste streams, like Comox Valley Waste Management Centre site (see Infrastructure chapter).

Objective 8-D: Reduce GHG emissions created by deforestation (land use change)¹⁷.

BC is one of the first jurisdictions in the world to introduce a zero net deforestation goal in legislation. In March 2010, the province created a *Zero Net Deforestation Act* which encourages an equal area of trees to be planted for carbon storage to offset any forest land that is permanently cleared for another use. The goal of the Act is to achieve zero net deforestation by December 31, 2015. The three keys to achieving zero net deforestation are to avoid, minimize and mitigate deforestation. (Note that this Act passed in June 2010, but not in force.)¹⁸

As of 2007, deforestation comprised 18.6 per cent of the GHG emissions in the Comox Valley, second only to transportation-related emissions. Just under half of the agricultural land in the Comox Valley is in privately owned forests or woodlots. To increase the productivity of agriculture in the Comox Valley, this land will likely be deforested. However, increasing local agricultural production has other benefits in relation to climate change such as decreasing the transportation distance of our food and feed crops and biofuels. Therefore, regarding tracking deforestation the environmental benefits of producing food locally versus deforestation for agricultural production has been considered in the following policies.

Supporting policies:

8D-1 Promote the conservation of forest areas through focusing future development in *Core Settlement Areas*, as set out in Part 4 of the RGS.

8D-2 To preserve large contiguous tracts of forested areas, establish 400 hectares as a minimum lot size in *Resource Areas*, through OCPs. Residential uses will be restricted in *Resource Areas*, as set out in Part 4 of the RGS.

¹⁷ For the purposes of the CEEI, deforestation/land-use change is defined as “the direct human-induced conversion of forested land to non-forested land.” Sustainable Forest harvesting, including clearcutting, is not considered deforestation, as the land-use does not change and the land cover is expected to regenerate to forest.

¹⁸ [From Climate Action Legislation of Province of BC site.](#)

8D-3 Because of the significant environmental benefits provided by a healthy local farming industry and the fact that ALR lands are regulated by the Province, the loss of forests within ALR lands due to increased farm activity will not be calculated as part of the regional community energy and emissions inventory data for the purpose of tracking deforestation.

Objective 8-E: Plan for renewable energy generation

Planning for energy systems can be directly linked to GHG reduction targets. As the population increases and there is growth in industry, there will be an increase in demand for energy that needs to be addressed. In addition to reducing GHG emissions and our carbon footprint, renewable energy generation also offers economic development benefits that can be nurtured through strategic planning.

Supporting policies:

8E- 1 Encourage efforts to increase the use of cost competitive renewable energy.

8E- 2 Encourage efforts to increase the use of cost competitive district energy systems.

8E-3 In reviewing OCPs consider inclusion of cost competitive renewable energy generation policies and development permit guidelines.

8E-4 Encourage local governments to review land use and development bylaws to support sustainable infrastructure including on-site energy production.

Objective 8-F: Plan for climate change adaptation.

Even with strong mitigation measures, there will be changes in climate conditions due to past emissions and feedback cycles. Therefore, in addition to mitigation efforts, planning for climate change adaptation must also be a priority.

Supporting policies

- 8F-1 Each local government should create a climate change adaption plan as part of their future local planning process.
- 8F-2 Promote inclusion of climate change modeling and impacts in future infrastructure and resource studies.
- 8F-3 Promote water conservation and efficiency both to reduce water and energy use and to prepare for adapting to impacts of climate change (such as erratic availability of water and energy due to floods and droughts).
- 8F-4 Encourage the creation of local adaptation and management programs for *Resource Areas*.
- 8F-5 Local governments should consider a regional approach to floodplain mapping and management to account for climate change sea level rise and to ensure consistent application of development controls within floodplain and coastal areas.
- 8F-6 All new development within established floodplains should be discouraged and redevelopment of lands within floodplain areas should only be supported where technical analysis by a qualified professional has been undertaken to ensure that lands are safe for use, development will not impact floodplain functions, and construction levels include safety factors to account for climate change and potential sea level rise and associated extreme storm surges.
- 8F-7 Address fire protection needs for developments in the interface areas where there is a high risk of forest and wildfires.



04 Managing Growth

4.1	A Strategy for Managing Growth	93
4.2	Collaborative Regional and Local Planning	93
4.3	Linking Growth Management and Regional Conservation	93
4.4	Growth Management Principles	94
4.5	Land-Use Categories and Designations	96
	<i>Core Settlement Areas</i>	96
	<i>Municipal Areas</i>	98
	<i>Settlement Nodes</i>	99
	<i>K'ómoks First Nation Lands</i>	101
	<i>Settlement Expansion Areas</i>	102
	<i>Rural Areas</i>	106
	<i>Rural Settlement Areas</i>	106
	<i>Agricultural Areas</i>	108
	<i>Resource Areas and Parks</i>	111
	<i>Resource Areas</i>	111
	<i>Provincial Parks</i>	112

Part 4: Managing Growth

4.1 A Strategy for Managing Growth

Part 3 of the RGS sets out a vision and policy directions for long-term growth in the Comox Valley. The goals, objectives and Supporting policies in Part 3 recognize that the Comox Valley consists of urban, rural and K'ómoks First Nation settlements that are supported by a strong local economy, productive working landscapes and a remarkable network of natural areas. They also articulate a future for the valley in which these distinct elements are to be supported and enhanced in a sustainable manner. To do this requires managing growth and land-use activities in a manner consistent with the vision, goals, objectives and Supporting policies set out in Part 3. Such a strategy for managing growth is provided in this section of the RGS.

4.2 Collaborative Regional and Local Planning

The strategies, policies and schedules contained in Part 4 are only one component of managing growth in the Comox Valley. They provide the general framework for directing growth and land-use activities throughout the Comox Valley. The detailed policies and regulatory framework that define land-use permissions will continue to be found within the OCPs and Zoning Bylaws of the local governments. Such OCPs and Zoning Bylaws will be consistent with the RGS as outlined in Part 5 – Implementation and Monitoring.

4.3 Linking Growth Management and Regional Conservation

Regional conservation in the Comox Valley will be rooted in the principles of *precaution*, *connectivity* and *restoration* to maintain and enhance the region's biodiversity. Local governments, environmental organizations, agricultural workers, the resource industry and the public have all made significant efforts to protect and enhance the natural areas within the Comox Valley. The good work that has been underway for several years

can be further supported through a regional conservation vision that builds upon the policies and principles in local government OCPs and outlined in principle in the Nature Without Borders report, 2008.

While each local government has specific policies to address protection and enhancement of natural features, it is also important to address conservation on a region-wide scale. The *Regional Conservation Framework Concept Map No. 4* identifies a network of natural areas, at a regional scale, as a conceptual basis for regional connectivity. As the growth management strategy and policies of Part 4, and the associated *Map No. 5 Growth Management Map*, are applied, the regional conservation framework should be considered. *Map No. 4 Regional Conservation Framework*, along with additional data and information when available, should be used to help establish appropriate and specific land-use designations and associated policies within OCPs and Zoning Bylaws.

4.4 Growth Management Principles

Long-term growth management in the Comox Valley will respond to the specific trends, issues, values and priorities that have been established through the RGS process. This strategy is unique and specific to the circumstances within the Comox Valley. It is based on the following principles. These principles build on the goals, objectives and policies contained in Part 3, as illustrated in the matrix contained in Appendix A.

1. Protect key natural and ecological features throughout the Comox Valley.
2. Take actions to address public health and environmental issues as they are identified and, where possible, before they arise.
3. Recognize the distinctiveness of existing communities and ensure the needs of both urban and rural areas are met.
4. Recognize that K'ómoks First Nation ratified their Treaty on Mach 8, 2025, and that there should be ongoing collaboration and cooperation between the local governments and K'ómoks First Nation.

5. Promote the efficient use of land, provide greater transportation choices, reduce public servicing costs and achieve environmental benefits through compact growth.
6. Ensure the efficient use and financial viability of existing and planned investment in public infrastructure.
7. Promote intensification, compact growth and supportive public transit services throughout *Municipal Areas* as the primary means of accommodating population and employment growth.
8. Limit the number of existing and planned *Settlement Nodes* outside of the *Municipal Areas* and ensure that such nodes are developed in a compact and transit-supportive manner.
9. Identify areas of existing development on the fringes of *Municipal Areas* that should eventually be incorporated through boundary extensions and provided with publicly owned water and sewer services to address existing public health and environmental issues.
10. Identify areas for new development on the fringes of *Municipal Areas* that should eventually be incorporated through boundary extensions and provided with publicly owned water and sewer services to allow for new long-term growth opportunities in a phased and orderly manner.
11. Protect the character of *Rural Areas* as primarily working landscapes, including agricultural and aquaculture areas, so that such functions can remain economically viable and grow.
12. Promote and support growth within *Rural Areas*, provided that the rural character and primary rural functions are maintained.
13. Maintain resource areas as primarily working landscapes for resource extraction.
14. Promote and support the overall economic viability of the municipal areas so that they can continue to provide primary base for residential, commercial and institutional activities.

4.5 Land-Use Categories and Designations

Map No. 5 Growth Management illustrates the overall growth management framework for the Comox Valley. It is based on three general land use categories and nine specific designations as set out below.

The following sections set out policies for managing growth in the following land use designation areas.

1. Core Settlement Areas:

- (a) *Municipal Areas*
- (b) *Settlement Nodes*
- (c) *K'ómoks First Nation*
- (e) *Settlement Expansion Areas*

2. Rural Areas:

- (a) *Rural Settlement Areas*
- (b) *Agricultural Areas*

3. Resource Areas and Parks:

- (a) *Resource Areas*
- (b) *Provincial Parks*

The growth management policies in Section 4.5 must be read together and understood within the context of the Part 3 policies that provide guidance on the eight main goals of the RGS and Part 5 policies that provide guidance on how to implement the RGS.

1. Core Settlement Areas

MG Policy 1.1 – Definition of Core Settlement Areas

There are four designations in *Core Settlement Areas*: *Municipal Areas*, *Settlement Nodes*, *K'ómoks First Nation Lands*, *Sports and Education Node* and *Settlement Expansion Areas*.

Municipal Areas are defined by the boundaries of the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox and Village of Cumberland.

Settlement Nodes reflect the planned settlement areas in Union Bay, Saratoga Beach and Mount Washington.

K'ómoks First Nation Lands consist of IR Lands and lands transferred to the K'ómoks First Nation through the treaty settlement process, and other lands that may be identified through negotiated agreement between the Province and the K'ómoks First Nation. While these lands are outside of the RGS legislative authority, it is important for CVRD to advance the commitment in building relationship with Indigenous peoples and advance reconciliation. To support Indigenous relations as a strategic driver, the CVRD adopted Indigenous Relations Framework to deliver core services with an Indigenous relations lens and promote greater cultural awareness within its authority.

Settlement Expansion Areas are fringe areas located on the edges of *Municipal Areas* that have been identified because:

(1) they contain existing settlements with private or public water and/or sewer servicing that will eventually require the extension of publicly owned water and sewer services, coincident with boundary extensions, or satisfactory servicing agreements, to address public health and environmental issues before they arise; or,

(2) they have the long-term potential to accommodate future growth subject to boundary extensions and the provision of publicly owned water or sewer services, provided that appropriate phasing policies are established, new development does not detract from compact growth options within *Municipal Areas* and that infrastructure capacity is available and financially sustainable. Any growth in *Settlement Expansion Areas* will occur in a phased and orderly manner and will undergo a public planning process to determine the appropriate scale and form of development.

MG Policy 1.2 – Development within Core Settlement Areas

A minimum of 90 per cent of the growth within the Comox Valley will be directed to *Core Settlement Areas*, to promote the efficient use of land and public infrastructure, provide densities supportive of alternative transportation choices, and achieve environmental benefits resulting from compact growth. Additionally, directing growth to *Core Settlement*

Areas will limit sprawl and curtail urban encroachment into *Rural Areas*, working landscapes and natural areas.

MG Policy 1.3 – Town Centres

Town Centres will be identified within all *Core Settlement Areas*. These *Town Centres* are to be developed as walkable and complete communities, providing for the broadest range of housing, employment and commercial uses. *Town Centres* should support transit oriented development through the establishment of minimum densities, in the range of 100-150 combined residents and jobs per hectare with a reduced minimum of 75 combined residents and jobs per hectare for ground orientated housing, within the OCPs.

1. (a) Municipal Areas

Municipal Areas are comprised of the City of Courtenay, the Town of Comox and the Village of Cumberland, as defined by their jurisdictional borders. *Municipal Areas* have considerable capacity to accommodate growth through both intensification (by means of secondary suites and infill development) and new compact development. They will develop somewhat differently based on each community's unique characteristics, needs and visions.

CITY OF COURTENAY

The City of Courtenay is the largest urban area in the Comox Valley and, as such, is home to several major businesses, commercial/retail areas and cultural facilities. It is also the location for the North Island College Comox Valley campus and many recreation facilities including the Comox Valley Sports Centre and Comox Valley Exhibition Grounds. The City of Courtenay should develop and grow consistent with its function as the Comox Valley's largest urban area. New development should provide for a wide diversity of housing and employment opportunities and should allow for the highest densities within the Comox Valley.

TOWN OF COMOX

The Town of Comox is well known for its harbour and main street downtown. There is a large senior population that will require more senior-friendly services as the population grows and ages. The

Town is also home to CFB Comox, the Comox Valley's single largest employer, and is the location of the Comox Valley Airport, which provides links to domestic and international locations. The Town of Comox will continue to grow but will remain a small urban area within the Comox Valley. New growth will occur largely through intensification and development in new areas.

VILLAGE OF CUMBERLAND

The Village of Cumberland has the smallest population of the three municipalities but has the greatest number of designated lands to accommodate new residential and employment growth. The Village of Cumberland also contains the largest supply of vacant designated industrial land in the Comox Valley. Cumberland is unique in its concentration of young families and new development should support the needs of this group. The Village main street is a local and regional draw for its unique local meeting places and artisan shops. The forest areas within Cumberland provide local and regional recreation opportunities in all seasons.

MG Policy 1A-1 – Municipal Areas

Municipal Areas are defined by their jurisdictional boundaries. Specific land-uses, designated *Town Centres*, conservation features, parks and rural or resource areas should all be determined through OCPs. The local OCP review process should articulate how the RGS policies are to be achieved through land-use designations and/or other policy considerations.

1. (b) Settlement Nodes

Settlement Nodes have been identified to accommodate compact forms of development but are not contiguous with *Municipal Areas*. *Settlement Nodes* consist of defined areas around Union Bay, Saratoga Beach and Mt. Washington. These *Settlement Nodes* are established through local planning policy documents around existing communities with significant planned capacity to accommodate new growth. Each *Settlement Node* is unique and will develop based on its characteristics and Local Area Plan. New *Settlement Nodes* can only be created through amendment to the RGS.

UNION BAY

Union Bay is in Baynes Sound – Electoral Area A – and includes the planned development of Union Bay Estates. A seaside community, this was formerly a major shipping port for the coal mines. The economy is now geared toward the shellfish industry and tourism. Further north along the coast, Union Bay will see considerable growth with the development and build-out of Union Bay Estates.

SARATOGA BEACH

Saratoga Beach is in Puntledge-Black Creek – Electoral Area C. Its boundaries generally follow the historic Local Area Plan and include both rural and country residential lots. Saratoga Beach is part of the water service area and should be serviced by sewer. As a *Settlement Node*, growth would be largely geared toward coastal tourism and residential housing. An improved transit connection with the Campbell River area should be developed.

MT. WASHINGTON

Located in Puntledge-Black Creek – Electoral Area C – Mt. Washington provides its own water and sewer services and has long-term development plans in place that will see it grow substantially as a resort and recreation area. Long-term considerations for this area at the regional level will need to focus on health and safety issues such as provision of adequate fire protection and establishing public transit linkages with *Town Centres* and inter-regional connections.

MG Policy 1B-1 – Settlement Nodes

Settlement Nodes shall accommodate growth through a balance of new development, intensification and improvements to public infrastructure. Infrastructure improvements will need to include the provision of appropriate water and sewer services along with enhanced public transit and active transportation options.

MG Policy 1B-2 – Uses within Settlement Nodes

Settlement Nodes will be identified within the CVRD OCP and will have a Local Area Plan that provides for specific land-uses and development

criteria.

MG Policy 1B-3 – New Settlement Nodes

Designation of any new *Settlement Nodes* will require an amendment to the RGS.

MG Policy 1B-4 Adjustments to Settlement Node Boundaries

Should minor adjustments to existing Settlement Node Boundaries be identified through a Local Area Planning process, such boundary adjustments shall be permitted subject to a minor amendment to the RGS.

1. (c) K'ómoks First Nation Lands

The K'ómoks First Nation currently has three IR Land holdings within CVRD as illustrated on Map No. 3 and identified as K'ómoks First Nation Lands on Growth Management Map No.5. Additionally, the K'ómoks First Nation ratified its Treaty on March 8, 2025, marking a significant milestone in its journey toward self-governance and a revitalized relationship with all levels of government. The federal and provincial governments will proceed with their respective ratification processes through legislation. The K'ómoks Treaty will be signed and come into effect on an agreed-upon date. One of the results of the treaty settlement process will be the transfer of lands to the K'ómoks First Nation for the purposes of supporting economic development objectives and opportunities.

MG Policy 1C-1 – K'ómoks First Nation Lands

Lands identified as K'ómoks First Nation Lands on Map No. 5 consist of K'ómoks First Nation IR Lands and land transferred to the K'ómoks First Nation through the treaty settlement process, and other lands that may be identified through negotiated agreement between the Province and the K'ómoks First Nation. These lands are outside of the RGS legislative authority and therefore it is important to ensure a cooperative and collaborative government-to-government relationship where communications are improved, concerns are addressed as they may arise and there is an awareness and understanding of K'ómoks First Nation title

and rights as well as recognition of the importance of land development in creating economic development opportunities for the K'ómoks First Nation. A First Nations Growth Management IA may be undertaken, as outlined in Part 5 of this RGS, to recognize K'ómoks First Nation Lands and future economic development opportunities.

MG Policy 1C-2 Purpose of the First Nations Implementation Agreement

One of the purposes of the First Nations IA may be to learn about K'ómoks First Nation's principles, plans, and intentions for the development or protection of K'ómoks First Nation Lands. K'ómoks First Nation and local governments will also work together, through the IA, to ensure that identified land uses can be properly serviced, where possible, in an environmentally and financially sustainable manner.

MG Policy 1C-3 – Additions to K'ómoks First Nation Lands

As lands are formally identified through the Treaty Settlement Process and transferred to the K'ómoks First Nation, they may be illustrated on Map No. 5 pursuant to the terms of the Treaty Settlement and in accordance with any applicable policies or processes as set out in Part 13 of the *Local Government Act*.

1. (e) Settlement Expansion Areas

Settlement Expansion Areas are located on the fringe of *Municipal Areas*. Any growth in *Settlement Expansion Areas* will occur in a phased and orderly manner and will undergo a public planning process to determine the appropriate scale and form of development. They have been identified for either, or a combination, of the following:

(1) they contain existing settlements with private water and/or sewer servicing that will eventually require the extension of publicly operated water and sewer services, coincident with boundary extensions, or satisfactory servicing agreements, to address public health and environmental issues before they arise; or,

(2) they have the long-term potential to accommodate future growth subject to boundary extensions and the provision of publicly owned water

or sewer services, provided that appropriate phasing policies are established, new development does not detract from compact growth options within *Municipal Areas* and that infrastructure capacity is available and financially sustainable.

There are several existing neighbourhoods, such as Marsden/Arden and Royston, located on the fringes of the *Municipal Areas*. For the most part, these neighbourhoods were built without full municipal infrastructure – in other words, they contain on-site servicing such as septic systems and/or private well or private/public water systems. Many of them are built at densities that today would be considered too high for such private servicing systems because of water quality and public health issues. Experience has shown that private septic and water systems need ongoing maintenance to prevent failure. While most landowners are responsible and keep their systems maintained, over time such systems have proven to fail and need to be replaced at considerable costs to landowners. More typically, several systems will fail at the same time (given that they have similar life cycles), creating pressure to extend publicly operated water and sewer services into the affected area.

Given the number and density of private systems located on the fringe of *Municipal Areas*, there is a need to develop a long-term strategy to prevent public health concerns before they arise. Private wells, watercourses and the marine foreshore within the Comox Valley could be seriously compromised should enough septic systems fail in the coming years prior to detection. As a result, it is the long-term intention of the growth management strategy that existing neighbourhoods within designated *Settlement Expansions Areas* will eventually be provided with publicly owned water and sewer services. Such provision of services will be coincident with a boundary extension that incorporates the settlement expansion area into a municipal area, or a satisfactory servicing agreement, as detailed in the corresponding OCP.

The *Settlement Expansion Areas* designation also includes lands on the fringe of *Municipal Areas* with little or no existing development. Such areas have been identified as ‘reserve areas’ to help accommodate the long-term growth demands within the Comox Valley. Their proximity to *Municipal Areas* means that future growth in these areas will help achieve many of the same benefits as growth within *Municipal Areas*. Namely, if

developed in a compact form and in an orderly manner that does not detract from compact growth options within *Municipal Areas*, they will promote the efficient use of land, provide greater transportation choices, reduce public servicing costs and reduce sprawl into rural areas.

MG Policy 1E-1 – Boundary Extensions within Settlement Expansion Areas

It is the intention of Local Governments in the Comox Valley that *Settlement Expansion Areas*, as identified on *Map No. 5*, shall become part of a *Municipal Area* through a boundary extension. Local governments will work cooperatively regarding such boundary extensions and ensure that the policies of the RGS are maintained.

MG Policy 1E-2 – Identification of Settlement Expansion Areas within OCPs

Settlement Expansions Areas, as identified on *Map No. 5*, shall be identified within the CVRD OCP and within the OCP of the *Municipal Area* intending to incorporate it. Such OCPs shall contain policies for *Settlement Expansion Areas* consistent with MG Policies 1E-3 through 1E-6.

MG Policy 1E-3 – Water and Sewer Services within Settlement Expansion Areas

Publicly owned water and sewer services will, in the long-term, be provided within *Settlement Expansion Areas*, coincident with boundary extensions, or mutually satisfactory servicing agreements, and infrastructure capacity in a financially feasible manner. Nothing shall however compel a local government or service provider to enter into a servicing agreement. Service agreements will take into consideration issues around taxation, service delivery, cost recovery and future initiatives to address inequities in the provision of service other than water and sewer.

MG Policy 1E-4 –Public Health and Environmental Issues in Settlement Expansion Areas

Where a demonstrated public health or environmental issue has been

identified due to failing private water or sewer systems within *Settlement Expansion Areas*, local governments will work together to expedite the provision of publicly owned water and sewer services to such areas in a financially feasible manner.

MG Policy 1E-5 – New Development within Settlement Expansion Areas

New development within *Settlement Expansion Areas* will be phased in an orderly manner to ensure that appropriate infrastructure capacity is available, that new development does not detract from compact growth options within *Municipal Areas*, and that the financial stability of *Municipal Areas* is not negatively impacted. As such, a four-hectare minimum lot size shall be established in *Settlement Expansion Areas* until such time as the following criteria are met:

- a. the area has been incorporated into a *Municipal Area*;
- b. publicly owned water and sewer services are provided;
- c. phasing policies as established within the relevant OCP are satisfied;
- d. a *Local Area Plan* is prepared (a commitment should be made to prepare the Local Area Plan within 12 months of the boundary extension; and
- e. in the case of Royston, a new *Local Area Plan* should be prepared, and the Royston community should be actively engaged with the planning process.

MG Policy 1E-6 – New Settlement Expansion Areas

Designation of any new *Settlement Expansion Areas* will require an amendment to the RGS.

2. Rural Areas

The *Rural Areas* are comprised of designated *Rural Settlement Areas* and *Agricultural Areas*. Supporting the rural character and function of these areas, including the working agricultural land base and aquaculture areas, will be prioritized in planning considerations. As part of the overall growth management strategy to promote a compact form of growth within the *Core Settlements Areas* and reduce sprawl, new development in the *Rural Areas* will accommodate a maximum of 10 per cent of overall growth within the Comox Valley. New development within *Rural Areas* is to accommodate housing, employment and commercial needs in smaller communities through development that is sensitive to the surrounding rural and agricultural context. It is not to be urban or suburban in form. Limits on lot sizes and restrictions on permitted uses will be established through the Comox Valley Rural OCP to ensure that *Rural Areas* develop appropriately.

MG Policy 2.1 – Rural Areas

The Rural Comox Valley OCP will provide a policy framework for managing and allocating rural growth geographically throughout the *Rural Areas* and to maintain the other goals of the RGS such as protection of rural character, protection of environmentally sensitive features, and focusing intense urban development in urban areas.

2. (a) Rural Settlement Areas

The *Rural Settlement Areas* encompass all lands within the electoral areas outside of *Core Settlement Areas* that are not otherwise designated as *Agricultural Areas*, *Agricultural Areas within Municipal Areas*, *Resource Areas*, or *Provincial Parks*. To maintain the rural character and function of these areas, it is important to establish appropriate policies regarding land uses and lot sizes.

Regarding lot sizes, there is existing and ongoing pressure to subdivide lands within *Rural Areas* for the purposes of creating small lots of less than 4 hectares in size. A preponderance of such lot sizes will make it increasingly difficult to maintain medium and large-size farm enterprises in the Comox Valley and will begin to change the character of *Rural Areas* as they become denser. The biggest concern is that small lots will result in

the unintentional conversion of *Rural Areas* into estate residential areas, with ongoing conflicts created between residential and agricultural uses.

MG Policy 2A-1 – Rural Character of Rural Settlement Areas

All new development within *Rural Settlement Areas* must maintain the rural character of its surroundings and support the function of a working rural landscape. This requires careful consideration of the permitted uses, the form and scale of development and lot sizes.

MG Policy 2A-2 – Minimum Lot Sizes in Rural Settlement Areas

The Comox Valley Rural OCP shall establish minimum lot sizes in Rural Settlement Areas ranging between 4 hectares and 20 hectares, subject to soil conditions, ground water capacity, extension of existing subdivision areas, interface fire hazards and suitability of lands for rural development.

MG Policy 2A-3 – Alternative Minimum Lot Sizes for Agricultural Purposes

In limited circumstances, OCP policies that allow for lot sizes less than 4 hectares, but no smaller than 2 hectares, may be considered where it is demonstrated that such lot sizes will create opportunities for small-scale, land intensive and entry-level farming. Conditions will be established for all subdivisions less than 4 hectares to secure that such lots will be used for farming purposes, and maintained as such over time, and will not become estate housing.

An overall cap on 2 hectare lots within Rural Settlement Areas should also be established. There should be regular monitoring of farm sizes to ensure that 2-hectare lot sizes are being used for farming and that there is an adequate supply of larger farm parcels (20 hectares or more). To assist with implementation, an inventory of all Rural Settlement Area parcel sizes should be conducted as part of the agriculture plan review to ensure a balanced distribution of parcel sizes that maintains the rural nature of these areas and determines the success of developing small scale agriculture operations through 2-hectare subdivisions.

MG Policy 2A-4 – Land Uses within Rural Settlement Areas

The Comox Valley Rural OCP shall establish a range of permitted uses within *Rural Settlement Areas* as follows:

- (a) Agriculture and related uses shall be permitted. Such uses include food processing establishments, distribution centres, farmers markets and agricultural research facilities.
- (b) Lots smaller than 4 hectares, but not smaller than 2 hectares, may be permitted provided lands are farmed and agriculture is the primary use on the property. The OCP policies should provide direction and definition for farming to set these conditions.
- (c) Non-residential and non-agricultural-related uses shall be limited to land and servicing capabilities. These will mainly be associated with on-site businesses, home-based businesses, small-scale accommodations, small-scale tourist-related uses. Commercial uses should be clustered within specific service areas (e.g., Merville, Black Creek, and Fanny Bay).
- (d) Resort developments shall be permitted subject to restrictions on the overall size of development and conditions that such development do not include full-time residential uses, is not located in drinking watersheds and do not locate adjacent to the Inland Highway.
- (e) Renewable energy infrastructure and facilities (e.g., windmills and solar farms) shall be permitted on all lots, as determined by CVRD.

2. (b) Agricultural Areas

Agriculture is an important aspect of the Comox Valley's economic and cultural landscape and should be protected and enhanced. *Agricultural Areas* have been established using the ALR boundaries. ALR lands within *Municipal Areas* are shown with a hatched shade and included within the land use designation of *Agricultural Areas* to recognize their function as working landscapes. *Agricultural Areas* cover approximately 13 per cent of the Comox Valley in 2021. In 2013, 24 per cent was farmed both actively

and inactively,¹⁹ which leaves the potential for significant expansion of agricultural activities.

With regards to growth management, it is the intent of the RGS to reinforce the policies and procedures within the ALR to support agricultural practices.

MG Policy 2B-1 – Agricultural Areas

OCPs shall contain policies for Agricultural Areas that are consistent with the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and regulations established under the Act, including the establishment of adequate buffers that ensure abutting farm and non-farm uses do not conflict and that non-farm uses do not impede agricultural activity within the ALR. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food's *Guide to Edge Planning* should be referenced to establish buffers in accordance with best practices that support the long-term viability of agricultural use.

MG Policy 2B-2 – Re-designation of Agricultural Areas

If lands are removed from the ALR by the Agricultural Land Commission, the *Agricultural Areas* and *Agricultural Areas within Municipal Areas* designation in the RGS shall remain. In such cases, a redesignation of such lands will require a minor amendment to this RGS, as detailed in Part 5, to establish an appropriate new land-use designation.

MG Policy 2B-3 – Environmental Protection within Agricultural Areas

Policies regarding environmental protection must be applied with careful consideration in *Agricultural Areas* and *Agricultural Areas within Municipal Areas*. New environmental regulations should require further consultation and collaborative planning with the agricultural community and local governments. Any new policies respecting the Regional Conservation Framework set out in this RGS must recognize the environmental, social and economic benefits provided by a strong local agricultural industry in the Comox Valley. In particular, the participation of private landowners in *Agricultural Areas* and *Agricultural Areas within Municipal Areas* within

¹⁹ [Comox Valley Regional District Land Use Inventory Report, Summer 2013](#); includes Denman and Hornby Islands

biodiversity corridors should be on a voluntary basis.

3. Resource Areas and Parks

Resource Areas and Parks identify lands that are predominantly natural resource areas, where residential settlement is prohibited. These are areas where large lot sizes should be preserved to facilitate resource production and/or to retain connectivity of ecosystems throughout the *Resource Areas and Parks*. *Resource Areas and Parks* are comprised of two land use designations *Resource Areas* and *Provincial Parks*.

3. (a) Resource Areas

Resource Areas encompass areas designated as Upland Resource Areas in historic OCPs. Mainly located to the west of the inland Highway 19, this area is primarily covered by privately managed working forests. For the most part, these lands fall under the “Class 7 Managed Forest Land” category of the BC Land Classification and must comply with the Private Managed Forest Act.

MG Policy 3A-1 – Resource Areas

Lands within *Resource Areas* should be protected and used for resource-focused and related value-added uses to support local economic development. To maintain the integrity of these forested areas, the following policies shall apply and be established through OCPs:

- (a) a minimum lot size of 400 hectares will be established;
- (b) residential uses are restricted, except to permit owner/operator residences related to the resource activity;
- (c) subject to Policy 5B-1 and 5B-4 protecting the watershed of water supply lakes, resort developments are permitted subject to a minor amendment of this RGS, as detailed in Part 5, and subject to restrictions on the overall size of development and conditions that such development do not include full-time residential uses and do not locate adjacent to the Inland Highway; and
- (d) recreational trails and supporting infrastructure, but not including commercial or residential buildings, are permitted within Resource

Areas.

MG Policy 3A-2 – K'ómoks First Nation Tourist Commercial

Notwithstanding the Resource Policies above, should the ownership of lands legally described as Lot 1, Section 30, Township 9, Comox District, Plan EPP30513 (PID: 029-911-559) and Lot A, Section 30, Township 9, Comox District, Plan EPP30512 (PID: 029-911-290) be transferred to K'ómoks First Nation, the RGS will permit the development of tourist commercial uses with the allowance for temporary staff housing subject to OCP and zoning approvals.

3. (b) Provincial Parks

There are six provincial parks within the CVRD (excluding Denman and Hornby Islands). These parks include Strathcona Provincial Park, Wood Mountain Ski Park, Miracle Beach Park, Kitty Coleman Beach Park, Kin Beach Park and Rosewall Creek Park. These areas are protected and run by the Province. They provide opportunities for greenway linkages and recreation throughout the region.

MG Policy 3B-1 – Provincial Parks

The Provincial Parks located in the Comox Valley and identified on *Map No. 5 Growth Management Map* shall be recognized and appropriately designated with OCPs.



05 Implementation and Monitoring

5.1	Implementation Process	115
	<i>Review OCPs, Prepare and Include Regional Context Statements</i>	116
	<i>Develop and Adopt Implementation Agreements</i>	116
	<i>Create Monitoring and Evaluation Program</i>	119
	<i>Plan for Five-year Review</i>	120
	<i>Undertake Additional Studies and Projects</i>	120
5.2	Amendments to the RGS	121
	<i>Standard Amendments</i>	121
	<i>Minor Amendments</i>	121
	<i>Criteria for Minor Amendments</i>	122
	<i>Minor Amendment Process</i>	123
5.3	Roles and Responsibilities	126

Part 5: Implementation and Monitoring

This chapter sets out the tools and partnerships that will help to implement the RGS and a strategy for monitoring its performance in meeting its objectives. The RGS is a strategic guide to future land use and services, developed in accordance with the *Local Government Act*. The operational issues related to implementing the RGS include:

- establishing local government policies and actions that are consistent with and further the goals, objectives and policies of this RGS, as set out in Part 3;
- working cooperatively at the local government level to manage growth and land-use activity in a manner that is consistent with and furthers the growth management strategy, as set out in Part 4; and,
- developing processes for ongoing communication and cooperation between local governments, provincial and federal agencies and the K'ómoks First Nation in a common commitment to responsible land-use planning and management.

5.1 Implementation Process

Once the RGS has been adopted, all subsequent regional district and member municipality bylaws, works and services undertaken by the regional district and municipalities must be consistent with the RGS.

The RGS implementation process involves the following tasks:

1. Review OCPs, prepare and include regional context statements
2. Develop and adopt IAs
3. Develop action plans to guide implementation of RGS goals
4. Create monitoring and evaluation program
5. Plan for five-year reviews
6. Undertake related studies and projects

1. Review OCPs, Prepare and Include Regional Context Statements

OCPs are an essential means of implementing the RGS. Once the RGS has been adopted, municipalities have two years to update their OCPs and adopt Regional Context Statements, as required by Section 446 of the *Local Government Act*. The Regional Context Statements are prepared as an OCP amendment and will:

- identify the relationship between the OCP and the content of an RGS; and,
- specify how the OCP and the RGS will be made consistent over time.

These statements are to be reviewed and accepted by the regional district. To ensure that the OCP and RGS remain compatible over time, the context statement is required to be referred to the regional district for acceptance every five years.

The CVRD electoral areas must conform with the RGS and update the Comox Valley Rural OCP within one year of the adoption of the RGS in the following manner:

- All bylaws adopted by a regional district board after the board has adopted an RGS, and all services undertaken by a regional district after the board has adopted an RGS, must be consistent with the RGS.

In doing so, other policies may need to be amended as appropriate and eventually zoning bylaw changes may also occur.

2. Develop and Adopt Implementation Agreements

IAs provide operational tools for implementing the RGS policies and growth strategy. These agreements will identify processes and activities to implement certain provisions of the RGS.

The IAs provide for the development of collaborative land use planning processes and relationships with a focus on the following implementation objectives:

Growth Management IA

To resolve specific issues related to the application of the RGS growth management strategy.

- Prepare an RGS IA on *Managing Growth* – Continue the role of the TAC, SC and Elected Officials Forum²⁰ through an IA that further defines the way long-term settlement growth and development will be encouraged consistent with the RGS. This will focus on preparation of Regional Context Statement to be included with the OCPs and the role of *Map No. 5: Growth Management Map*. The IA should also identify how *Settlement Expansion Areas* will be incorporated in the OCPs.
- Continue using the round table format (i.e., the Elected Officials' Forum) on a regular basis as a means for continued cross-regional communication and coordination.

First Nations Growth Management IA

To further develop effective dialogue and working relationships with the K'ómoks First Nation. K'ómoks First Nation Treaty Settlement Lands are IR lands, Treaty Settlement lands and other lands that may be identified through negotiated agreement between the Province and the K'ómoks First Nation would be outside of the RGS legislative authority and, therefore, it is important to ensure that all local governments have a cooperative and collaborative government-to-government relationship with K'ómoks First Nation. This includes an understanding of K'ómoks First Nation's Rights and Title as a Treaty Nation as well as recognition of the importance of land development in creating economic development opportunities for K'ómoks First Nation.

Initiate an RGS IA on *First Nations Land Use Planning and Development* – An IA between the CVRD and member municipalities and K'ómoks First Nation should establish an arrangement for information exchange and the identification of mutually-beneficial agreements and protocols.

²⁰ These committees were established through a Memorandum of Understanding in July 2008 to develop the RGS. The TAC consists of senior planning staff from the four local governments; the SC consists of the Chief Administrative Officers from the four local governments.

- On March 8, 2025, K'ómoks First Nation ratified their Treaty. The federal and provincial governments will proceed with their respective ratification processes through legislation. The K'ómoks Treaty will be signed and come into effect on an agreed-upon date.
- At any time during this process, additional discussions, planning (and land use harmonization) may be required for lands adjacent to or impacted by any identified treaty settlement lands. The RGS may be amended, as appropriate and in accordance with the applicable statutory process, due to the treaty settlement process. The content of the IA will be developed with K'ómoks First Nation.
- Core services delivered by the CVRD will apply an Indigenous relations lens and promote cultural awareness, consistent with the CVRD's commitment to advancing the Indigenous Relations Framework. Through the IA, K'ómoks First Nation and local governments will collaborate to ensure, where possible, that identified land uses are serviced through existing CVRD and local government community systems. In the interim, between the implementation of the RGS and the effective date of any final K'ómoks Treaty, water and sewer servicing for lands identified in partnership with K'ómoks First Nation may be incorporated into the IA.

Ministry of Transportation and Transit Implementation Process

To ensure a collaborative planning process between local governments and Ministry of Transportation and Transit to implement the goals and policies of the RGS. In the electoral areas, the Ministry is the approving officer for plans of subdivision. Therefore, to achieve the goals and objectives of the RGS related to regional growth management, it is important that Ministry work cooperatively with the CVRD.

- Prepare an RGS IA with Ministry of Transportation and Transit on subdivision approval to address RGS policies and interests of local government including road network planning, stormwater management, cycling infrastructure, alternative infrastructure standards, transit infrastructure and road design standards.

- RGS policies and goals will frame the IA and the principles outlined in Appendix A of the RGS.

Other IAs

To continue to identify additional IAs with rightsholders and interested parties, as needed.

3. Develop action plans to guide implementation of RGS goals

Goal-specific action plans will be developed to implement existing action items in the RGS bylaw. Each plan will provide a clear pathway to achieving the RGS goal statements by outlining specific work plan items, assigned roles, and the relevant policy basis. These plans will align with the Board's strategic priorities to ensure a shared understanding of policy direction and practical application for decision makers and partners. Designed with a five- to seven-year time horizon, the plans will be adaptable to evolving Board direction and community input. Key metrics will be tracked in the RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard and updated regularly.

These action plans will serve as a framework for local government staff and decision makers, helping to advance both regional and municipal priorities while improving coordination across the region, as envisioned in the RGS.

4. Create Monitoring and Evaluation Programs

Monitoring and evaluation have two purposes – to measure progress in the RGS implementation and to measure substantive improvements that result from RGS policies.

To facilitate the monitoring and reporting process, the RGS policies have Targets and Measures that will be used to measure overall implementation of the RGS. Data sources and reporting procedures will be specified in the Monitoring and Evaluation Program.

Within one year of the adoption of the RGS, a Monitoring and Evaluation Program will be established that will monitor, evaluate and periodically report on regional economic, population, social and environmental trends

and progress towards achievement of RGS vision and objectives. The process and program should include the following:

- the four local governments will meet and agree on the best form of monitoring (consideration should be given to hiring a third party to perform the assessment);
- development of additional targets and measures as needed;
- preparation of annual reports on implementation and progress toward the goals and objectives of the RGS;
- assessment of longer-term trends in conjunction with five-year RGS reviews; and,
- commitment to conduct all reviews and progress reports within a larger, open public process as required in Section 434 of the *Local Government Act*.

Annual RGS reports were prepared until 2022, when the CVRD introduced the RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard. This platform provides regional partners with accessible data for decision-making and analysis, updated regularly with new information, such as Census data, as it becomes available. The dashboard enhances communication, helps identify trends, and supports the annual RGS reporting requirements.

5. Plan for Five-year Reviews

To ensure that the RGS continues to respond to current issues, the RGS should be reviewed every five years from the adoption of the RGS pursuant to Section 452 of the *Local Government Act*. As part of this review process, a report on current trends and issues should be prepared that will inform the review of the RGS. Key to the review will be performance based on objectives in the plan. Subsequent amendments to the RGS may be required to ensure that it reflects and adequately responds to changing circumstances of the Comox Valley.

The 2025 amendment is undertaken as a minor amendment aimed at modernizing information while maintaining existing objectives, policies, and growth management framework.

6. Undertake Additional Studies and Projects

To facilitate the implementation of RGS goals and objectives, action plans may be developed for each of the eight goals. Where applicable, the

outcomes of these plans will be shared through the RGS Performance Monitoring Dashboard to keep the public informed of progress.

5.2 Amendments to the RGS

1. Standard Amendments

An amendment to the RGS may be proposed by a member municipality, the Electoral Areas Services Committee, or the board, including on behalf of an external agency or private landowner. Unless determined by board resolution to be a minor amendment, an amendment is a standard amendment and will follow the same process that is required to adopt an RGS as set out in Part 13 of the Local Government Act. The process that is required to adopt a minor amendment is as set out in Section 5.2(4). The RGS Summary Chart summarizes the processes for the adoption of a standard and minor amendment.

2. Minor Amendments

Recognizing that the RGS will require some flexibility to respond to changing conditions in the region, the minor amendment process will provide a more streamlined amendment process for minor changes, while ensuring that amendments which substantially change the vision and direction of the strategy remain subject to acceptance by all affected local governments.

The CVRD and member municipalities will work to ensure OCP policies are consistent with the goals, objectives and policies in Part 3 and with *Map No. 5: Growth Management Map*, or provide for a process that will lead to consistency over time, recognizing the economic, social and environmental benefits of compact community development, preservation and connection of natural features, and ongoing land use planning cooperation, collaboration and harmonization with K'ómoks First Nation.

Amendments to the RGS may only be made by bylaw. Under the *Local Government Act*, an RGS amendment bylaw, other than one that is a minor amendment, must follow the same process that is required to first adopt the RGS. The *Local Government Act* enables minor amendments where a process has been established pursuant to Section 437 that includes the

following:

- 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 respecting a proposed minor amendment to be obtained and considered;
- a means for providing notice to affected local governments respecting a proposed minor amendment; and
- procedures for adopting the minor amendment bylaw.

3. Criteria for Minor Amendments

Criteria under which a proposed amendment to the RGS may be considered a minor amendment include the following:

- a. Where a land use or development proposal is inconsistent with the RGS, and, in the opinion of the CVRD Board:
 - is not to be of regional significance in terms of scale, impacts or precedence;
 - contributes to achieving the goals and objectives set out in Part 3; and,
 - contributes to achieving the general principles contained in the growth management strategy of Part 4.
- b. Text and map amendments which are not directly related to enabling specific proposed developments may be considered minor if, in the opinion of the board, the amendment is not of regional significance.
- c. Boundary extensions for the purposes of incorporating designated *Settlement Expansion Areas* into a *Municipal Area or Agricultural Area within a Municipal Area*, consistent with MG Policies 1E-1 through 1E-6, shall be deemed in conformity with the RGS and not require either a minor amendment or standard amendment. Under such circumstances, the RGS designation and other CVRD planning regulations will continue to apply until such time as the local jurisdiction amends its OCP, at which time the RGS designation will change to *Municipal Area or Agricultural Area within a Municipal Area*.
- d. For boundary extensions beyond the *Settlement Expansion Areas*, an

RGS amendment will not be required. However, under such circumstances the *Municipal Area* undertaking the boundary extension must adopt OCP policies that are consistent with the RGS designation for such lands. At such time, the RGS designation will change to *Municipal Area* or *Agricultural Area within Municipal Area*, as applicable. Should the *Municipal Area* seek to adopt OCP policies that differ from the policies of the RGS, at either the time of the boundary extension or at a future date, then a standard amendment to the RGS will be required to follow the regular process as outlined in Part 13 of the *Local Government Act*.

- e. Any proposal that does not meet the criteria set out above would be considered a standard amendment and will be required to follow the regular process as outlined in Part 13 of the *Local Government Act*.

4. Minor Amendment Process

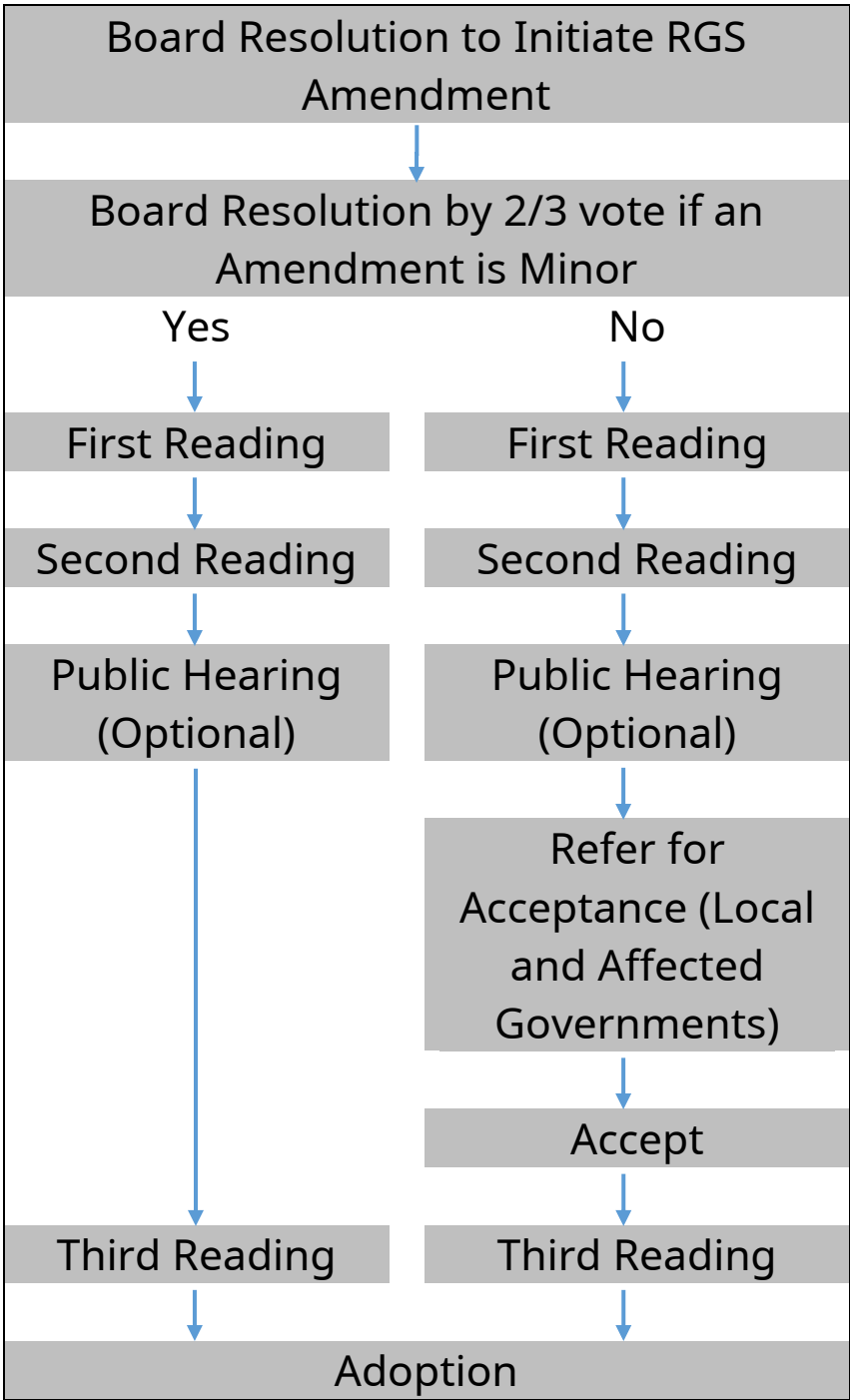
Where an amendment to the RGS has been proposed by a member municipality, the Electoral Areas Services Committee, or the board, and the board has, by resolution, initiated the amendment, the process for the board to determine if the amendment is minor, and then to consider it as minor, is as follows:

- Upon a board resolution to initiate an amendment, the regional district will set up a TAC meeting for review and discussion of the proposed amendment. The TAC will provide comments, in the form of a report prepared by regional district staff, to the SC.
- Upon receipt of a report from the TAC, the SC will meet to review and discuss the proposed amendment. The SC will provide its comments and recommendations to the CVRD Board via a report prepared by regional district staff. The SC's report will assist the board in its decision on whether the proposed amendment should be processed as a minor amendment.
- The board will assess any proposed amendment in terms of the minor amendment criteria. The board may resolve, by an affirmative vote of 2/3 of the board members present, to process the proposed amendment as a minor amendment. Where the board resolves to process an amendment proposal as a minor amendment, the board

will:

- Refer the application to TAC for comment.
- Determine the appropriate form of public consultation required in conjunction with the proposed minor amendment.
- Give 30 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.
- Direct staff to prepare a report on the minor amendment with an analysis that examines the benefits of the proposed change, and how the proposed change is consistent with the principles and goals of the RGS and the relationship between targets and performance measures.
- Consider the written comments provided by the affected local governments prior to giving first reading to the proposed amendment bylaw.
- At the time of consideration of first reading, the board will determine whether a public hearing on the RGS minor amendment bylaw is required.
- Any minor amendment bylaw shall be adopted in accordance with the procedures that apply to the adoption of a RGS under Section 437 of the *Local Government Act* and CVRD Procedure Bylaw No. 1, 2008

RGS Amendment Summary Chart



5.3 Roles and Responsibilities

The success of the RGS depends on ongoing cooperation and collaborative planning efforts between the local governments, provincial and federal agencies and the public.

To implement the RGS, the CVRD Board, working in partnership with its member municipalities, the province, the federal government, K'ómoks First Nation and others, will:

- maintain a collaborative, agreement-seeking regional strategic planning program directed to work towards achievement of the long-term objectives of the RGS;
- commit to ongoing communication with the public including on the RGS review process (i.e., annual and every five years), minor amendment and amendment processes;
- commit to consultation with and consideration of the interests of areas serviced outside the CVRD; and,
- commit to consultation with and consideration of the interest of the SRD with respects to potential impacts of inter-regional services, including the solid waste service and service to Electoral Area D, water service through the Black Creek/Oyster Bay Water Local Service Area and fire protection through Black Creek/Oyster Bay Fire Protection Local Service Area.



Glossary

Action Plan

An action plan is a structured framework that guides the implementation of specific goals within a defined time frame. In the context of the RGS, it outlines key actions, assigned roles, and policy foundations to support decision-making and coordination. Aligned with strategic priorities, action plans have a five- to seven-year horizon, adapt to Board direction and community input, and track progress through the RGS Performance Monitoring Hub. They help local governments advance regional and municipal priorities while improving collaboration across the region.

Affordable housing

Affordable housing refers to housing where total shelter costs, including utilities and taxes, amount to less than 30 per cent of a household's gross annual income.

Agricultural Areas

Agricultural Areas are designated based on the ALR boundaries. These areas are defined to protect and enhance their role as working landscapes. In the Comox Valley, *Agricultural Areas* encompass approximately 13 per cent of the region.

Agricultural Land Commission (ALC)

The ALC is the administrative body of the ALR. It is an independent provincial agency responsible for administering the Province's land use zone in favour of agriculture, through the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*. The purpose of the Commission is to preserve agricultural land; encourage farming in collaboration with other communities of interest; and, to encourage local governments, First Nations, the government and its agents to enable and accommodate farm use of agricultural land and uses compatible with agriculture in their plans, bylaws and policies.

Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR)

The ALR was established in 1973 as a provincial zone in which agriculture is recognized as the priority use. Farming is encouraged and non-agricultural uses are controlled. The ALR covers approximately 4.6 million hectares as of January 2024 and includes both private and public lands that may be farmed, forested or vacant, but where agriculture is recognized as the priority use. It is administered by the ALC.

Aquaculture

Aquaculture is the farming of freshwater and saltwater organisms and aquatic plants. This process implies some form of human intervention in the rearing process to enhance production, such as regular stocking and protection from predators; it also implies individual or corporate ownership of the stock being cultivated.

Biodiversity

The variety of life on earth in all its forms including genes, species, and ecosystems and the natural processes that link and maintain them.

Community Energy and Emissions Inventory (CEEI)

The CEEI is an initiative of the BC Ministry of Energy and Climate Solutions. The CEEI represents energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions from community activities in on-road transportation, buildings and solid waste. Estimates of land-use change from deforestation activities are also available at the regional district level.

Comox Valley Regional District Board (CVRD)

The CVRD has a board of 10 directors, comprising electoral area directors who are elected directly by rural area voters and serve four-year terms, and municipal directors who are first elected to a municipal council and are then appointed by council to the regional district board for a maximum term of four years. Annually, the board elects its chair who established committees to deal with issues such as land use planning, environmental management, and water supply.

Contiguous

Describes objects such as land parcels that adjoin and share a common border.

Core Housing Need

Core housing need refers to whether a household's housing falls below at least one of the indicator thresholds for housing adequacy, affordability, or suitability. A household is considered to be in core housing need if it would have to spend 30 per cent or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable.

Core Settlement Areas

Within the RGS, *Core Settlement Areas* are comprised of four land use designations: *Municipal Areas*, *Settlement Nodes*, and *Settlement Expansion Areas*. A minimum of 90 per cent of the growth within the Comox Valley will be directed to *Core Settlement Areas*, to promote the efficient use of land and public infrastructure, provide densities supportive of alternative transportation choices, and achieve environmental benefits resulting from compact growth.

Density

A measure of urban and rural form, expressed through various metrics such as the number of people, jobs, or buildings within a specific area.

Ecosystem

A complete system of living organisms interacting with the soil, land, water, and nutrients that make up their environment. An ecosystem is the home of living things, including humans. An ecosystem can be any size - a log, pond, field, forest, or the earth's biosphere - but it always functions as a whole unit. Ecosystems are commonly described according to the major type of vegetation - for example, old-growth forest or grassland ecosystem.

Ecosystem functions

The physical, chemical and biological processes that keep an ecosystem operating. Examples include infiltration of surface water, evapotranspiration and nutrient cycling.

Environmental Farm Plan (EFP)

The EFP is a collaborative federal-provincial initiative that assists farmers in voluntarily assessing the environmental aspects of their agricultural operations. Through this process, farmers identify environmental strengths and areas for improvement, developing action plans to mitigate potential risks. Support is provided to complete the EFP and implement these action plans, with grants available to partially fund specific environmental enhancements on the farm.

Estuary

An estuary is a partly enclosed coastal body of water with one or more rivers or streams flowing into it and a free connection to the open sea.

Estuaries form a transition zone between river environments and ocean environments and are subject to both marine influences, such as tides, waves, and the influx of saline water; and riverine influences, such as flows of fresh water and sediment. These conditions make estuaries among the most productive natural habitats in the world.

Greenhouse gas (GHG)

GHGs are gasses in an atmosphere that absorb and emit radiation within the thermal infrared range. This process is the fundamental cause of the greenhouse effect. The main greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere are water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and ozone. The burning of fossil fuels since the beginning of the Industrial revolution has substantially increased the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. GHGs are typically generated from the use of fossil fuels to light, heat, cool and ventilate buildings (including homes and offices) and to power motorized vehicles, municipal operations, and industrial processes, and the decomposition of organic waste in landfills.

Ground-truth

In the earth sciences, the facts that are confirmed in an actual field check that is done at a location, specifically the determination of facts by examining the ground for patterns revealed by remote sensing or aerial photography.

Habitat

The area or natural environment where an organism or biological population lives, grows and interacts.

Implementation Agreements (IAs)

An IA is a partnership agreement between a regional district and other levels of government, their agencies or other bodies which spells out the details of how certain aspects of a RGS will be carried out.

Improvement Districts

Improvement Districts are autonomous local authorities governed by elected trustees, focused on providing services to local landowners (e.g., water provision). They are granted powers by the Province to enact and enforce regulations and charges, to assess and collect taxes, to acquire, hold and dispose of lands, to borrow money and to expropriate lands

required to carry out its functions. Within the Comox Valley there are five Improvement Districts: Comox Fire Protection District, Courtenay Fire Protection District, Fanny Bay Waterworks District, Schmidt Improvement District (on Denman Island), and Ships Point Improvement District.²¹

Integrated Stormwater Management Plan (ISMP)

An ISMP is a stormwater management plan that will result in no net loss of environmental quality and protect communities from localized flooding. The process actively seeks and uses input from rightsholders and various interested parties within each watershed and brings together planning, engineering, ecology, and flood and erosion protection within an adaptive management methodology.

Municipal Areas

Municipal Areas are comprised of the City of Courtenay, the Town of Comox and the Village of Cumberland, as defined by their jurisdictional borders. *Municipal Areas* have considerable capacity to accommodate growth through both intensification (by means of secondary suites and infill development) and new compact development.

Natural systems

A set of interacting and interdependent entities forming an integrated whole. Properties of systems include they have structure, behaviour, interconnectivity and functions or groups of functions. Natural systems (e.g., the solar system) are different from *designed* systems, which are designed by humans (e.g., transportation system).

Provincial Parks

There are six provincial parks within the CVRD (excluding Denman and Hornby Islands). These parks include Strathcona Provincial Park, Wood Mountain Ski Park, Miracle Beach Park, Kitty Coleman Beach Park, Kin Beach Park and Rosewall Creek Park. These areas are protected and run by the Province. They provide opportunities for greenway linkages and recreation throughout the region.

Publicly owned

An organization supplying a service operated by a private corporation under government regulation or by the government directly.

²¹ [CivicInfo BC](#)

Regional Growth Strategy (RGS)

The RGS is a regional vision that commits affected municipalities and regional districts to a course of action to meet common social, economic and environmental objectives. It is initiated and adopted by a regional district and referred to all affected local governments for acceptance.

Regional Context Statement (RCS)

The RGS forms a portion of a municipality's OCP and sets out the relationship between the RGS and the municipality's plan. This statement is prepared by the municipality and referred to the regional district for acceptance.

Resource Areas

Resource Areas encompass designated Upland Resource Areas in historic OCPs. They are mainly located to the west of the inland Highway 19 and fall under the "Class 7 Managed Forest Land" category of the BC Land Classification and must comply with the Private Managed Forest Act.

Rural Areas

Rural Areas are comprised of designated *Rural Settlement Areas* and *Agricultural Areas*. Supporting the rural character and function of these areas, including the working agricultural land base and aquaculture areas, will be prioritized in planning considerations.

Rural Settlement Areas

The *Rural Settlement Areas* encompass all lands within the electoral areas outside of *Core Settlement Areas* that are not otherwise designated as *Agricultural Areas*, *Agricultural Areas within Municipal Areas*, *Resource Areas*, or *Provincial Parks*.

Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory (SEI)

The SEI is a federal and provincial government mapping project to systematically identify and map rare and fragile ecosystems in each area. The SEI is intended for use in a variety of land-use planning processes to identify remnants of rare and fragile ecosystems (on land) and to encourage land-use decisions that will ensure the continued integrity of these ecosystems.

Sensitive Ecosystems

Sensitive ecosystems are areas that may contain rare, threatened and fragile ecosystems and support high levels of biodiversity.

Settlement Expansion Areas

Settlement Expansion Areas are located on the fringe of *Municipal Areas*. They have been identified for either or a combination of the following: (1) they contain existing settlements with private water and/or sewer servicing that will eventually require the extension of publicly operated water and sewer services, coincident with boundary extensions, or satisfactory servicing agreements, to address public health and environmental issues before they arise; or, (2) they have the potential to accommodate future growth subject to boundary extensions and the provision of publicly-owned water or sewer services.

Settlement Nodes

Settlement Nodes reflect the planned settlement areas in Union Bay, Saratoga Beach and Mount Washington, as established through historic Local Area Plans. They are areas where there is planned growth to accommodate urban forms of development, but they are not contiguous with *Municipal Areas*.

Town Centres

Town Centres are located within the *Core Settlement Areas* and are to be developed as walkable and complete communities, providing for the broadest range of housing, employment and commercial uses. *Town Centres* should support transit oriented development through the establishment of minimum densities, in the range of 100-150 combined residents and jobs per hectare with a reduced minimum of 75 combined residents and jobs per hectare for ground orientated housing, within the OCPs.

Transit oriented development

Transit oriented development is an approach to land use planning that locates high-density, mixed-use development within walking distance from frequent transit services. Transit oriented development typically incorporates a variety of land uses, including residential, commercial (such as, grocery stores and retail) and community amenities (such as childcare and community centres). Transit oriented development

promotes the creation of complete, liveable, and sustainable communities by building more homes near transit and services.

Treaty negotiations

A treaty is a negotiated agreement that will spell out the rights, responsibilities and relationships of First Nations and the federal and provincial governments. The negotiation process is likely to deal with far-reaching issues such as land ownership, governance, wildlife and environmental management.

Watershed

An area of land that contributes runoff to a specific delivery point, such as the mouth of a river. Large watersheds may be composed of many smaller sub-watersheds, each contributing runoff to various streams and rivers that ultimately combine at a common delivery point.

Xeriscaping

Xeriscaping refers to landscaping and gardening in ways that reduce or eliminate the need for supplemental irrigation. It is promoted in areas that do not have easily accessible supplies of fresh water and is gaining acceptance in other areas as climate patterns shift.

Zero Net Deforestation (ZND)

Legislated by the BC government in March 2010, the goal of the Act is to achieve ZND by December 31, 2015. The Act sets the ZND goal in legislation, defines key terms and sets out the reporting requirements for government. Encourages an equal area of trees to be planted for carbon storage to offset any forest land that is permanently cleared for another use. Measured by area, the amount of afforestation is not less than the amount of deforestation. Note that this *Zero Net Deforestation Act* was passed in June 2010, but not in force.

Zero Net Deforestation Act

Legislated by the BC government in March 2010, the goal of the Act is to achieve ZND by December 31, 2015. The Act sets the ZND goal in legislation, defines key terms and sets out the reporting requirements for government. Note that this Act was passed in June 2010, but not in force.



Appendices

**Appendix A: Principles/Policy Objectives
Matrix**

140

Appendix A

Principles/Policy Objectives Matrix

APPENDIX A: Principles/Policy Objectives Matrix

Policy Objectives		Growth Management Principles													
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Housing	1A			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
	1B			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		
	1C			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		
	1D					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Ecosystems, Natural Areas and Parks	2A	✓	✓		✓										
	2B	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	2C	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓		✓		
Local Economic Development	3A			✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	3B				✓			✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
	3C			✓										✓	
	3D					✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓
Transpor- tation	4A			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓
	4B			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
	4C			✓		✓	✓								✓
Infrastructure	5A		✓			✓	✓			✓	✓				
	5B	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
	5C	✓	✓			✓									
	5D		✓			✓	✓			✓	✓				
	5E	✓	✓			✓	✓								
Food Systems	6A			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	6B			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	6C			✓			✓					✓			
	6D			✓								✓	✓		
	6E			✓								✓			
Public Health and Safety	7A		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
	7B		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
	7C		✓	✓			✓								
Climate Change	8A		✓	✓	✓										
	8B		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
	8C		✓	✓	✓		✓								
	8D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	
	8E		✓	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	
	8F	✓	✓	✓	✓										

GOAL 1: HOUSING

Ensure a diversity of affordable housing options to meet evolving regional demographics and needs.

Objective 1-A: Locate housing close to existing services

Objective 1-B: Increase affordable housing options

Objective 1-C: Develop and maintain a diverse, flexible housing stock

Objective 1-D: Minimize the public costs of housing

GOAL 2: ECOSYSTEMS, NATURAL AREAS AND PARKS

Protect, steward, and enhance the natural environment and ecological connections and systems.

Objective 2-A: Identify and map areas for conservation.

Objective 2-B: Frame environmental protection and policies around the principles of precaution, connectivity and restoration.

Objective 2-C: Promote environmental best practices in *Agricultural and Resource Areas*.

GOAL 3: LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Achieve a sustainable, resilient, and dynamic local economy that supports businesses and the region's entrepreneurial spirit.

Objective 3-A: Support local business retention, development and investment

Objective 3-B: Increase regional job base

Objective 3-C: Support resource-based employment opportunities

Objective 3-D: Promote designated Town Centres as regional employment centres.

GOAL 4: TRANSPORTATION

Develop an accessible, efficient and affordable multi-modal transportation network that connects Core Settlement Areas and designated Town Centres; and links the Comox Valley to neighbouring communities and regions.

Objective 4-A: Increase public transit use.

Objective 4-B: Improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to increase the use of active transportation options.

Objective 4-C: Develop and maintain an inter-regional transportation system that efficiently and safely facilitates the movement of people and goods.

GOAL 5: INFRASTRUCTURE

Provide affordable, effective, and efficient services and infrastructure that conserves land, water, and energy resources.

Objective 5-A: Promote water conservation and efficiency throughout the Comox Valley.

Objective 5-B: Protect the quality of water sources.

Objective 5-C: Stormwater is managed to preserve ecosystem and watershed health.

Objective 5-D: Encourage sewage management approaches and technologies that respond to public health needs and maximize existing infrastructure.

Objective 5-E: Reduce regional solid waste and improve landfill performance.

GOAL 6: FOOD SYSTEMS

Support and enhance the agricultural and aquaculture sectors; and increase local food security.

Objective 6-A: Protect land for existing and future agriculture and associated activities and allow for the growth and expansion of such activities.

Objective 6-B: Protect shoreline areas for existing and future aquaculture and associated activities

Objective 6-C: Improve and expand agricultural irrigation practices and infrastructure

Objective 6-D: Increase farming activity in the Comox Valley

Objective 6-E: Raise awareness of the regional importance of the local food system

GOAL 7: PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

Support a high quality of life through the protection and enhancement of community health, safety, and well-being.

Objective 7-A: Increase the number of pedestrians and cyclists in the Comox Valley.

Objective 7-B: Increase public education and awareness around the links between population health and land use planning

Objective 7-C: Improve regional fire safety

GOAL 8: CLIMATE CHANGE

Minimize regional greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and plan for adaptation.

Objective 8-A: Reduce GHG emissions created by the building sector.

Objective 8-B: Reduce GHG emissions created by the on-road transportation sector

Objective 8-C: Reduce GHG emissions in the solid waste sector.

Objective 8-D: Reduce GHG emissions created by deforestation (land use change).

Objective 8-E: Plan for renewable energy generation

Objective 8-F: Plan for climate change adaptation.

Growth Management Principles

1. Protect key natural and ecological features throughout the Comox Valley.
2. Take actions to address public health and environmental issues as they are identified and where possible, before they arise.
3. Recognize the distinctiveness of existing communities and ensure the needs of both urban and rural areas are met.
4. Recognize that K'ómoks First Nation ratified their Treaty on March 8, 2025, and that there should be ongoing collaboration and cooperation between the local governments and K'ómoks First Nation.
5. Promote the efficient use of land, provide greater transportation

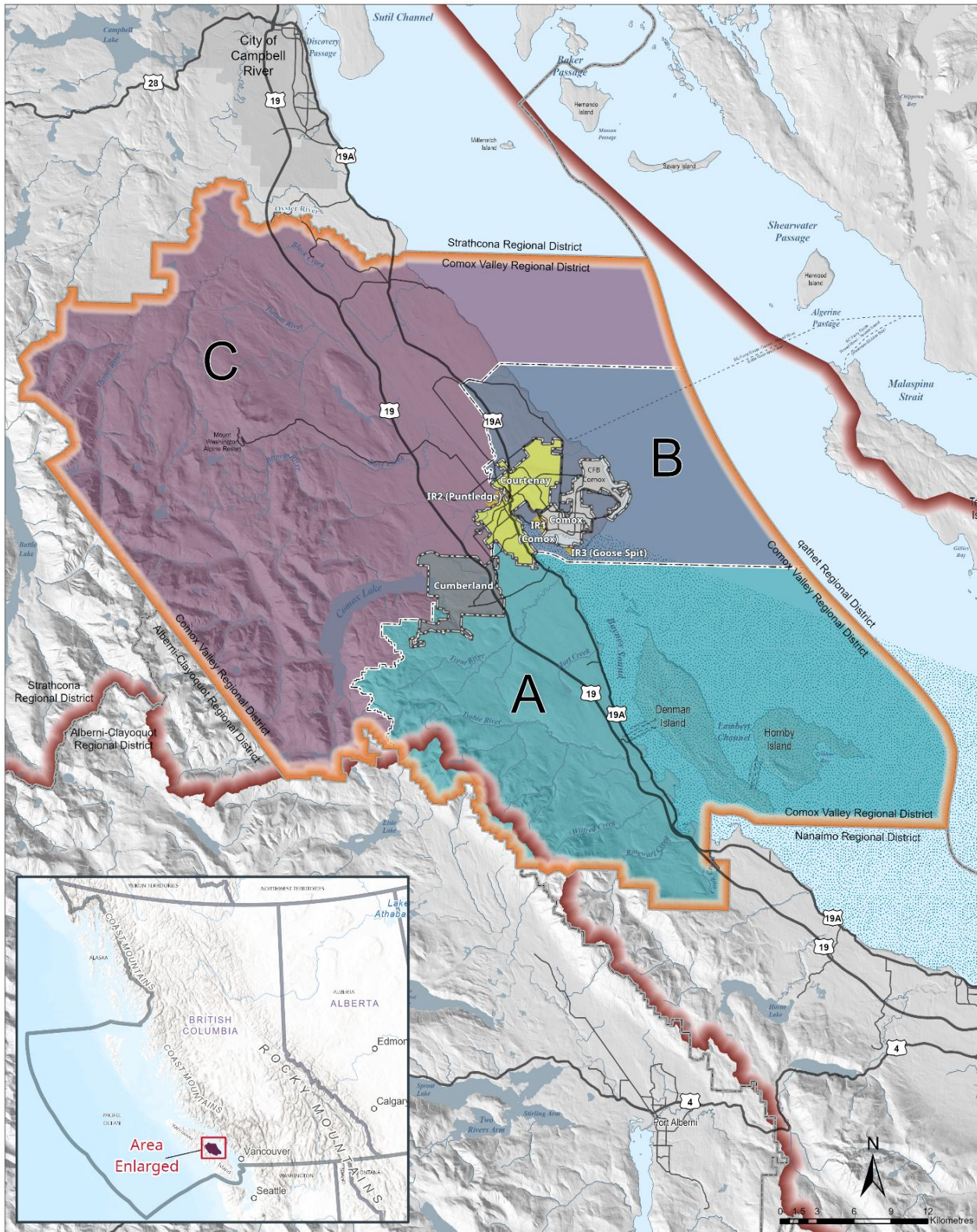
choices, reduce public servicing costs and achieve environmental benefits through compact growth.

6. Ensure the efficient use and financial viability of existing and planned investment in public infrastructure.
7. Promote intensification, compact growth and supportive public transit services throughout *Municipal Areas* as the primary means of accommodating population and employment growth.
8. Limit the number of existing and planned *Settlement Nodes* outside of the *Municipal Areas* and ensure that such nodes are developed in a compact and transit-supportive manner.
9. Identify areas of existing development on the fringes of *Municipal Areas* that should eventually be incorporated through boundary extensions and provided with publicly owned water and sewer services to address existing public health and environmental issues.
10. Identify areas for new development on the fringes of *Municipal Areas* that should eventually be incorporated through boundary extensions and provided with publicly owned water and sewer services to allow for new growth opportunities in a phased and orderly manner.
11. Protect the character of *Rural Areas* as primarily working landscapes, including agricultural and aquaculture areas, so that such functions can remain economically viable and grow.
12. Promote and support growth within *Rural Areas*, provided that the rural character and primary rural functions are maintained.
13. Maintain resource areas as primarily working landscapes for resource extraction.
14. Promote and support the overall economic viability of the municipal areas so that they can continue to provide primary base for residential, commercial and institutional activities.



Maps

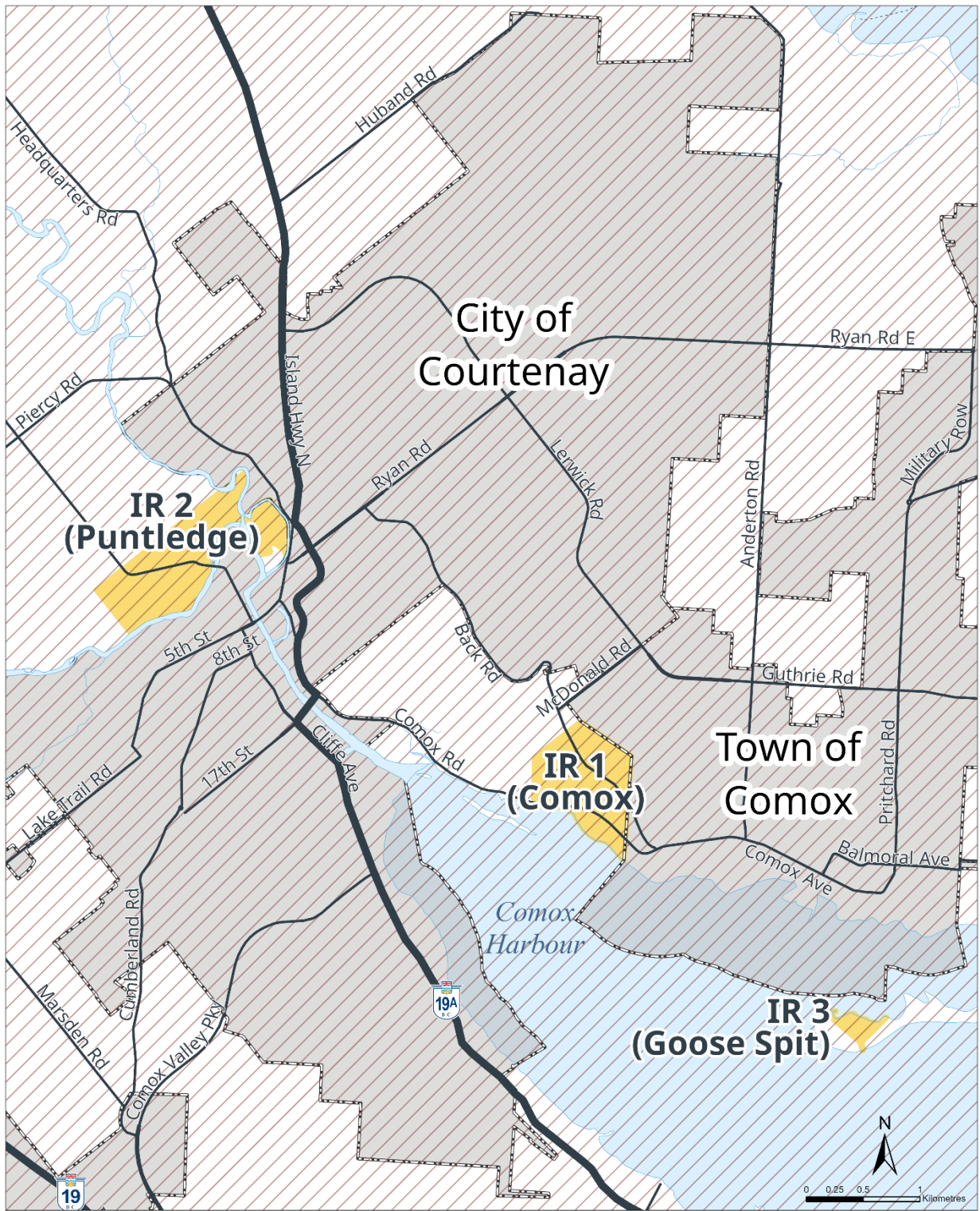
Map No. 1: Context Map	ii
Map No. 2: K'ómoks First Nation Traditional Territory	iii
Map No. 3: K'ómoks First Nation Lands	iv
Map No. 4: Regional Conservation Framework Concept	v
Map No. 5: Growth Management Map	vi





Context Map

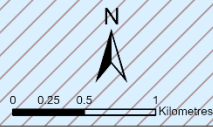
- K'ómoks First Nations Traditional Territory
- CVRD Boundary
- Within the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation
- Baynes Sound-Denman/Hornby Islands (Electoral Area 'A')
- Lazo North (Electoral Area 'B')
- Puntledge-Black Creek (Electoral Area 'C')
- City of Courtenay
- Town of Comox
- Village of Cumberland
- K'ómoks First Nations Reserve Lands
- Islands Trust
- Regional District Boundary

This map was prepared by the CVRD using geospatial information and is a best effort. It may not be used for any other purpose without the express written consent of the CVRD. The CVRD is not liable for any damages resulting from any reliance on this map.



K'ómoks First Nation Lands

-  K'ómoks First Nations Traditional Territory
-  K'ómoks First Nations Reserve Lands



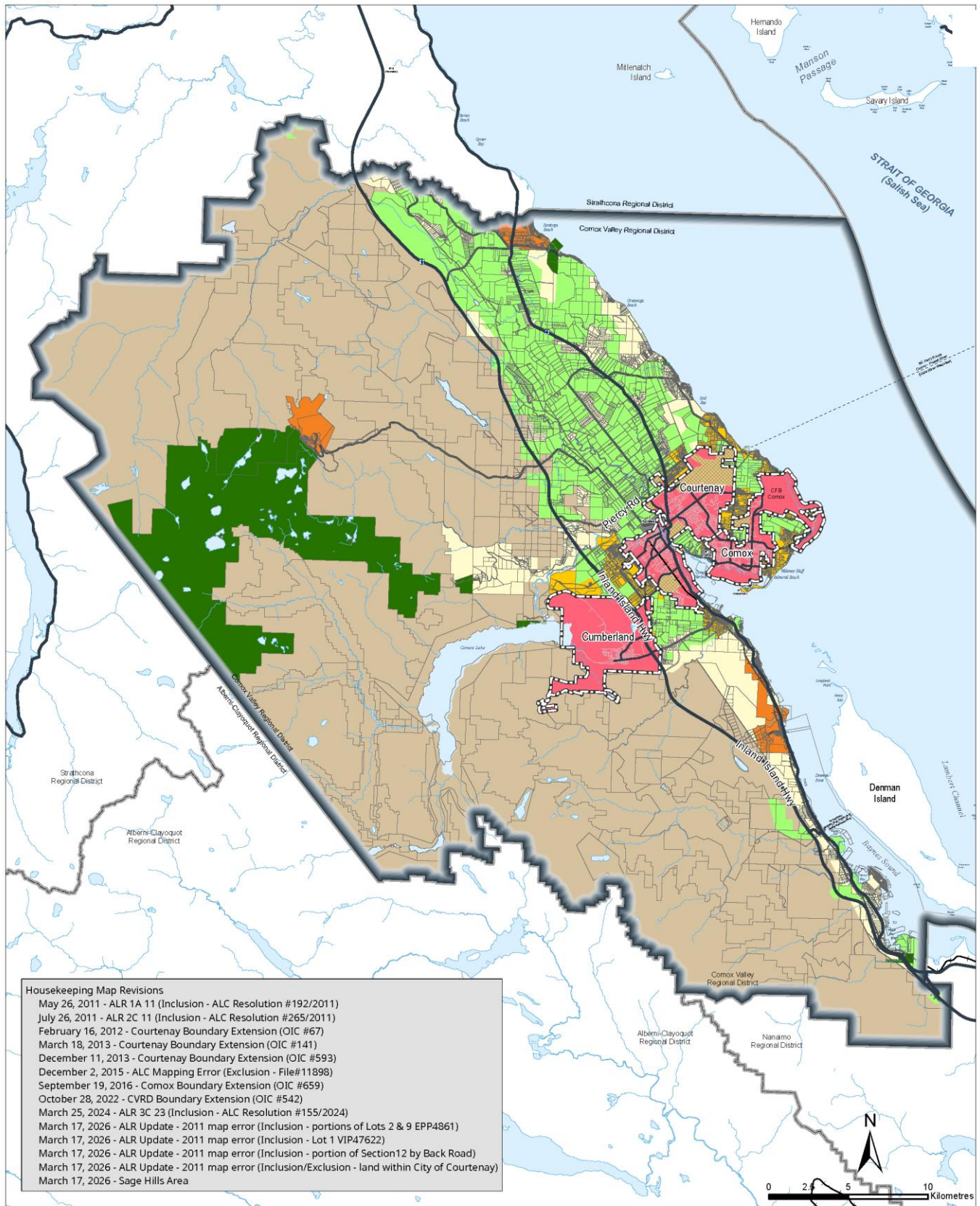
This map was prepared by the CVRD for planning purposes only, and is not a legal document. This map is a preliminary draft, and any use that is not approved by the CVRD is at the user's risk. The CVRD does not warrant the accuracy of the information shown on this map, and is not responsible for any errors or omissions.



Regional Conservation Framework Concept

- Estuaries (Fresh Water Atlas, GeoBC, 2025)
- Sensitive Ecosystems (SEI Inventory, CVRD/CVCS/CP/PWS, 2014)
- Other Important Ecosystems[^] (SEI Inventory, CVRD/CVCS/CP/PWS, 2014)
- Critical Watersheds (Fresh Water Atlas/CVD/Suavoi, 2023)
- Existing and Proposed Parks and Greenways (CVRD/Courtenay/Comox/Cumberland/GeoBC, Feb 2025)
- Existing and Proposed Trails (CVRD/Courtenay/Comox/Cumberland, Feb 2025)
- Proposed Biodiversity Corridors* (CVLT, 2011)
- Proposed Recreational Greenways (CVRD, 2021)
- Proposed Ecological Greenways (CVRD, 2021)
- CVRD Boundary (Feb 2025)
Within the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation
- Municipal Areas (GeoBC, Feb 2025)

* In Agricultural Areas, biodiversity corridors will be established on a voluntary basis.
[^] Other Important Ecosystems are seasonally flooded agricultural land and second growth forest.
 Note: Riparian Areas are associated with streams and wetlands. Such areas vary in width depending on the associated watercourse, vegetation and landforms.



Housekeeping Map Revisions

- May 26, 2011 - ALR 1A 11 (Inclusion - ALC Resolution #192/2011)
- July 26, 2011 - ALR 2C 11 (Inclusion - ALC Resolution #265/2011)
- February 16, 2012 - Courtenay Boundary Extension (OIC #67)
- March 18, 2013 - Courtenay Boundary Extension (OIC #141)
- December 11, 2013 - Courtenay Boundary Extension (OIC #593)
- December 2, 2015 - ALC Mapping Error (Exclusion - File#11898)
- September 19, 2016 - Comox Boundary Extension (OIC #659)
- October 28, 2022 - CVRD Boundary Extension (OIC #542)
- March 25, 2024 - ALR 3C 23 (Inclusion - ALC Resolution #155/2024)
- March 17, 2026 - ALR Update - 2011 map error (Inclusion - portions of Lots 2 & 9 EPP4861)
- March 17, 2026 - ALR Update - 2011 map error (Inclusion - Lot 1 VIP47622)
- March 17, 2026 - ALR Update - 2011 map error (Inclusion - portion of Section12 by Back Road)
- March 17, 2026 - ALR Update - 2011 map error (Inclusion/Exclusion - land within City of Courtenay)
- March 17, 2026 - Sage Hills Area



This map was prepared by the CVRD in partnership with the Comox Valley Regional District. This map is a composite of different maps and data sources. It is not intended to be used as a legal document. The map is not a guarantee of accuracy and is subject to change without notice.

Growth Management Map

Core Settlement Areas

- Municipal Areas
- Settlement Nodes
- Kómoks First Nation Lands
- Settlement Expansion Areas

Rural Areas

- Rural Settlement Areas
- Agricultural Areas
- Agricultural Areas within Municipal Areas
- Resource Areas and Provincial Parks**
- Resource Areas
- Provincial Parks

Other

- CVRD Boundary
- Within the unceded traditional territory of the Kómoks First Nation
- Regional District Boundary
- Municipal Boundary

Denman and Hornby Islands (part of Area A) are not included in the Comox Valley Regional Growth Strategy. Land use planning for these areas is carried out by the Islands Trust.